

DPIPWE Recreational Fisheries

2020 Scallop Post-Season Survey Summary

Almost 500 respondents participated in an online, post-season survey of the 2020 Tasmanian recreational scallop season. The primary aim of the survey was to give licensed scallop fishers an opportunity for feedback about the timing of the season which changed because of Covid restrictions.

The 2020 season opening was delayed from 4 April until 5 June. The season then ran later than its scheduled closure of 31 July and ended on 30 November. This provided an ideal opportunity to seek views from licensed scallop fishers about season dates and other management topics.

The survey feedback will be considered in future scallop management planning.

Key results include:

- The best months for scallop catch rates and meat quality are August to September.
- Catch rates declined as the season progressed with fishers taking slightly more time to catch their bag limit.
- Fishers catch their bag limit on most fishing trips.
- White Beach, Coles Bay/Schouten Island and Mercury Passage/Maria Island were the main fishing areas in 2020.
- Most respondents reported that the 2020 season was better than the 2019 season.
- The majority of respondents think the current bag limit is about right.
- Most respondents support a boat limit for scallops.
- Some respondents indicated that on-water catch sharing and group fishing should be considered.
- Overall, respondents were satisfied with current management of recreational scallop fishery.
- Other general comments related to more policing, resource sharing and more research about the sustainability of scallop stocks.

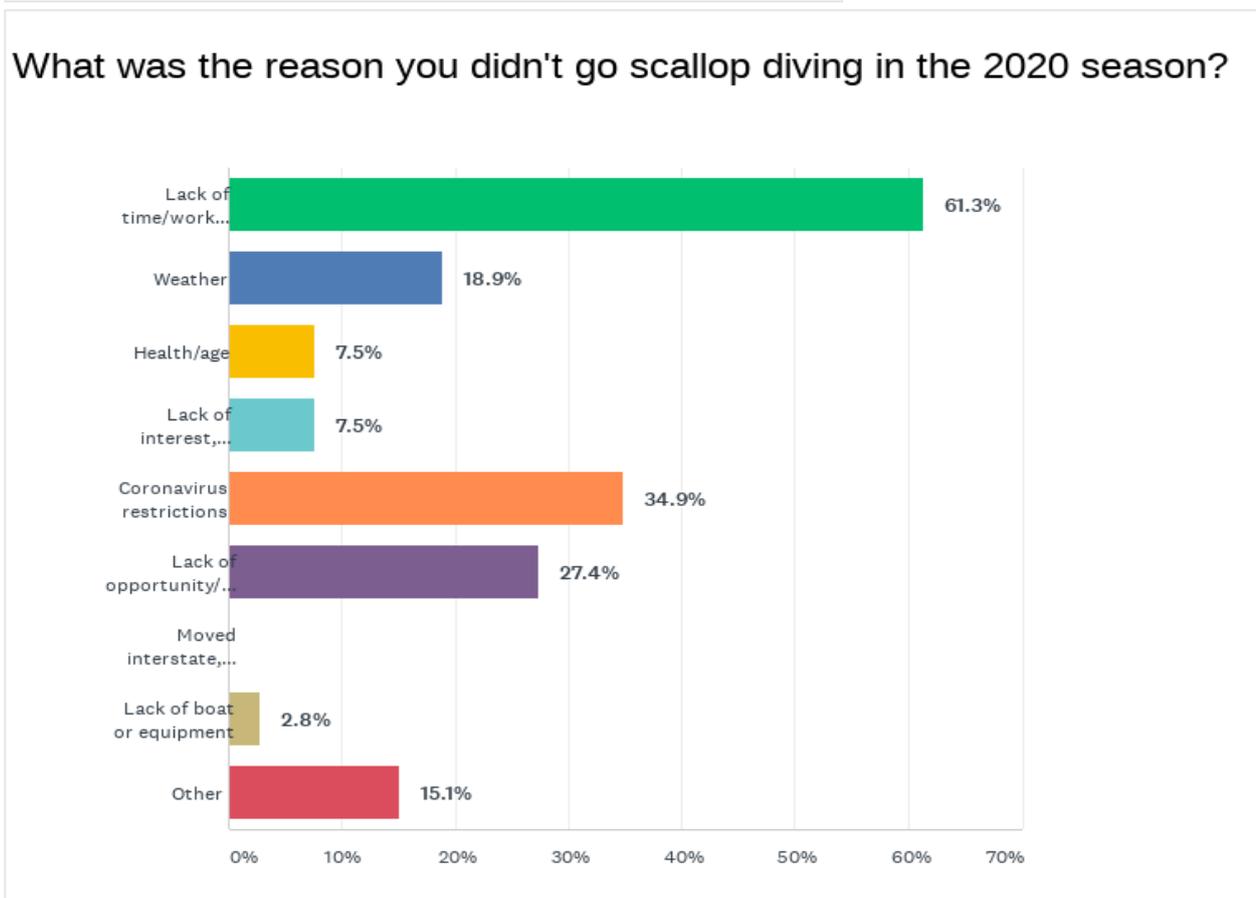
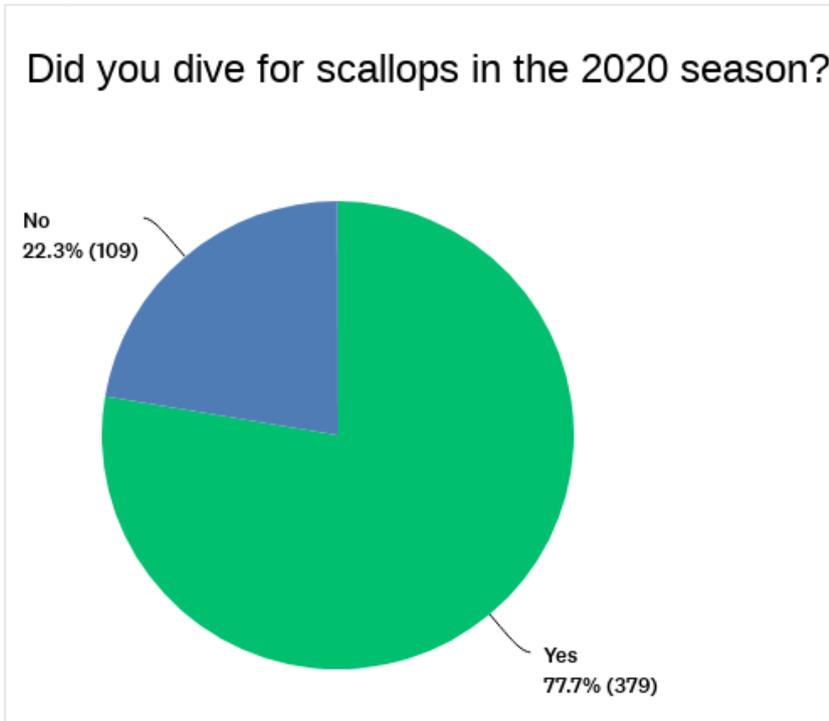
About the survey

The survey was conducted by DPIPWE Wild Fisheries Management Branch by inviting licensed scallop fishers to participate through the Recreational Fisheries email service (contact emails are provided when fishers buy a licence).

This is not a scientific based survey about fishery status or assessment. The purpose is to seek views which can be considered when developing future management proposals. Any future proposals would be developed in consultation with the Recreational Fishery Advisory Committee and the peak body, TARFish, then undergo the required public consultation processes.

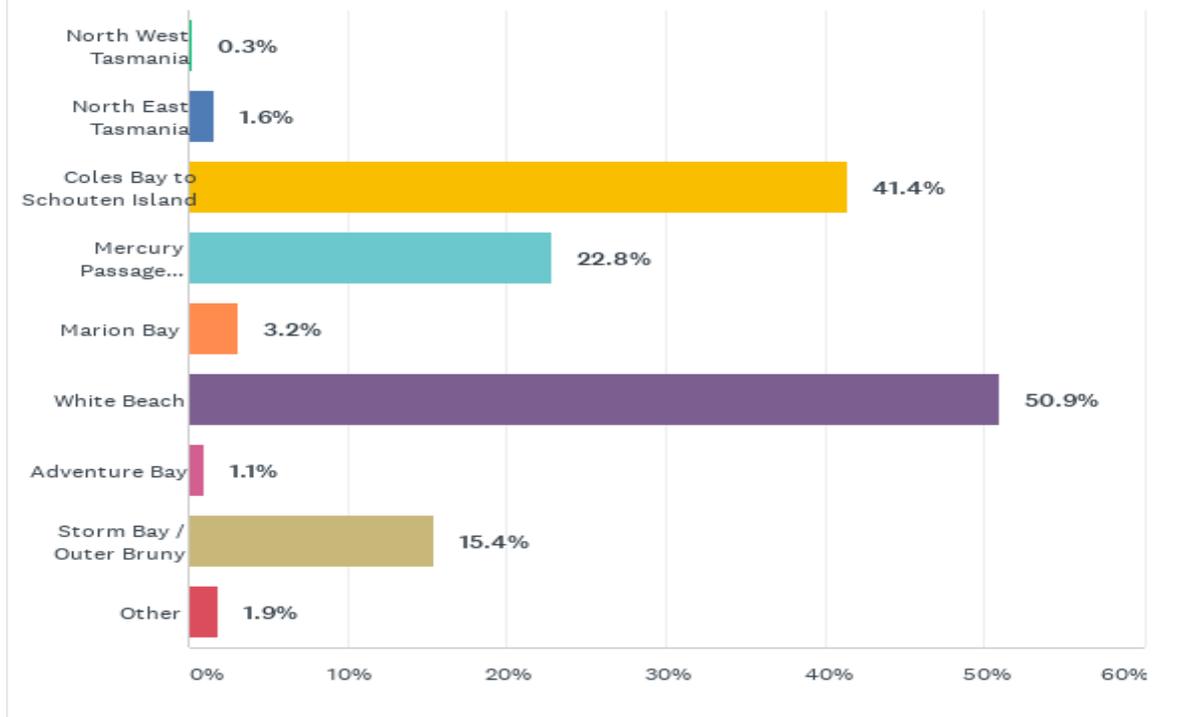
No personal details were collected during the survey.

Responses to Questions:



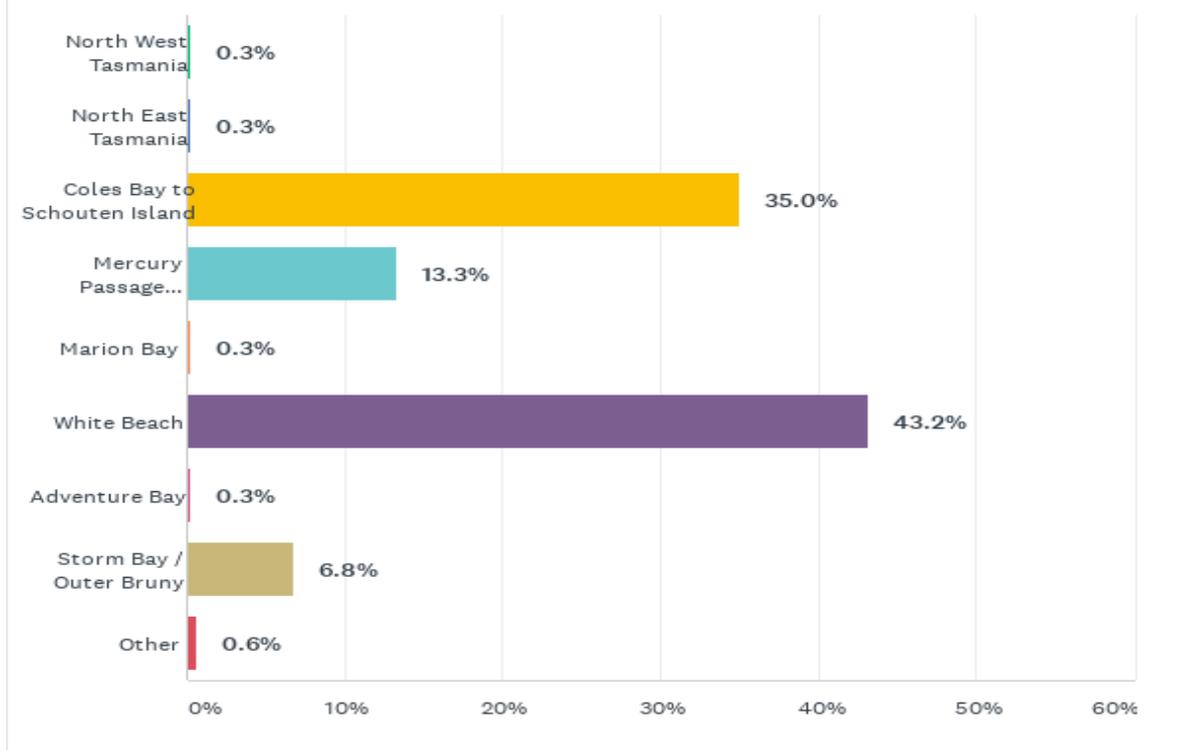
About 25% respondents reported that they did not dive for scallops during the 2020 season. Besides work, family and fishing partner reasons, COVID restrictions became one of the major barriers.

Where did you dive for scallops?

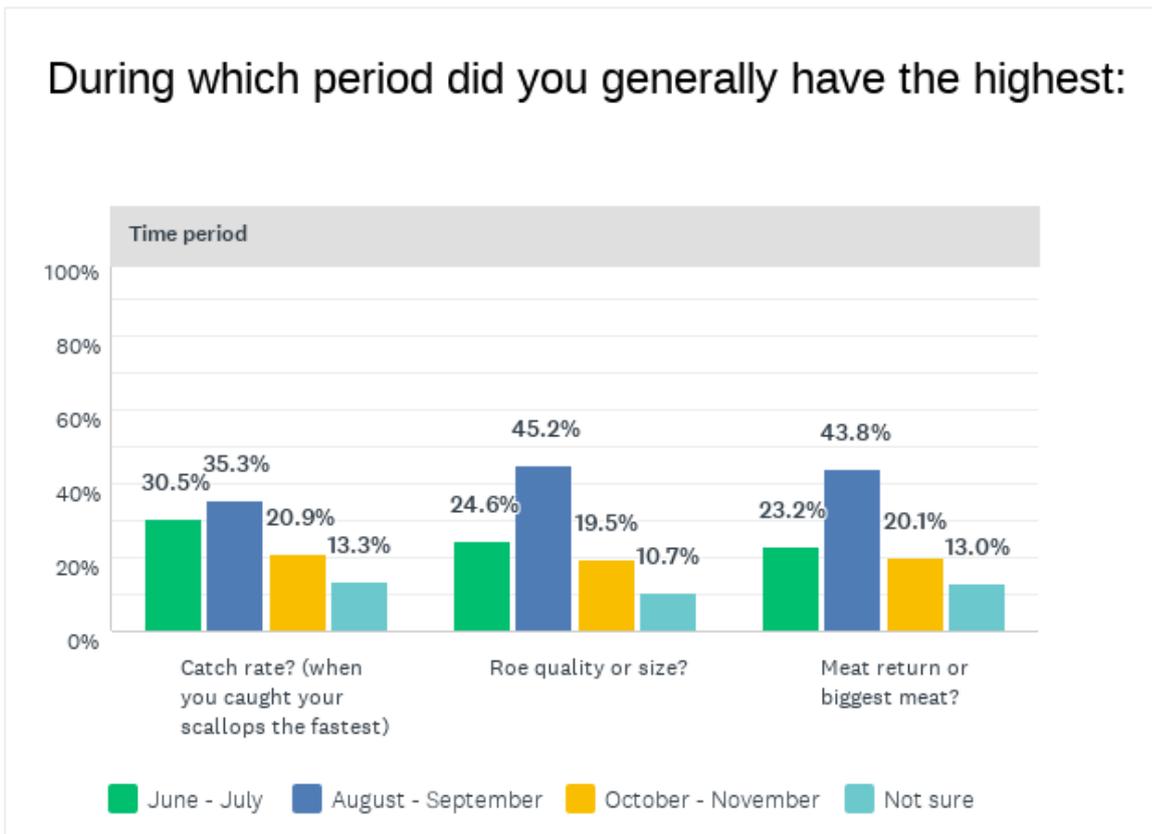
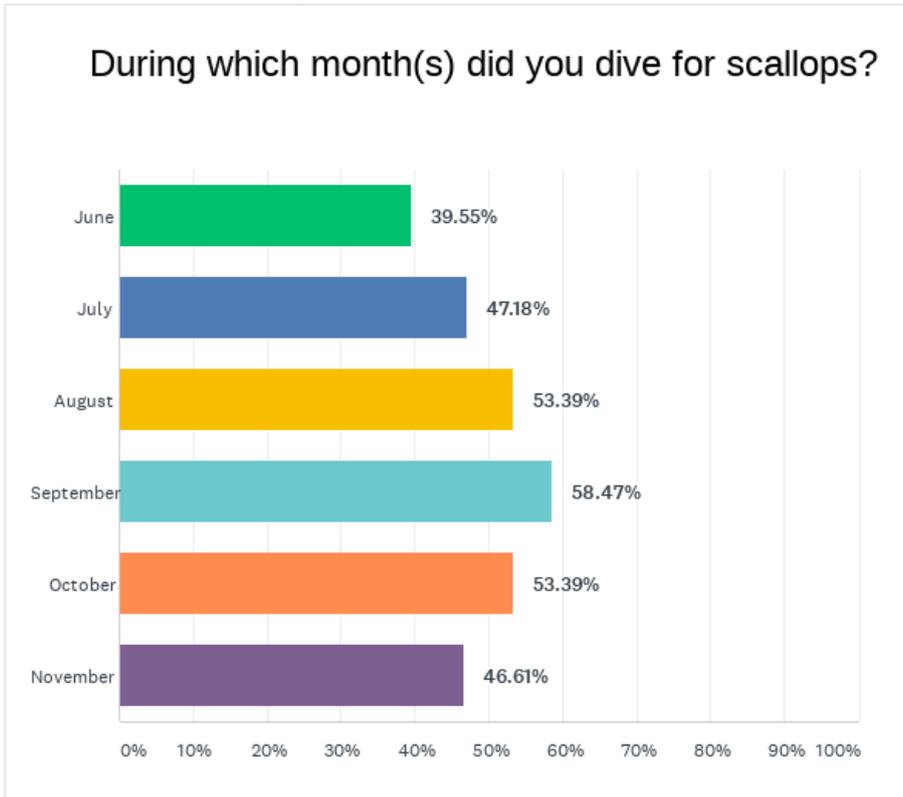


White Beach, Coles Bay to Schouten Island and Mercury Passage including Maria Island were the most dived areas for scallops. About 15% reported that they had also dived for scallops at Storm Bay/Outer Bruny, but this was not the most fished area.

Out of all fishing spots, the most fished areas were



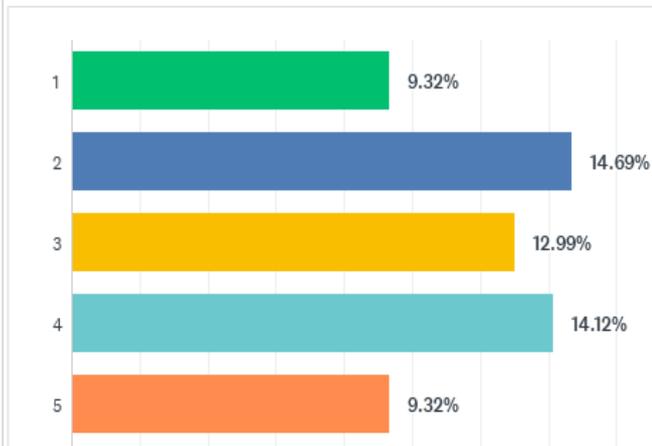
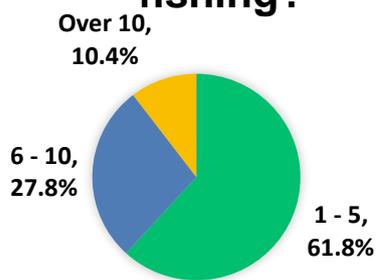
Catch Rates, Quality and Meat Return



The peak period for scallop diving was mid-season, around August to October.

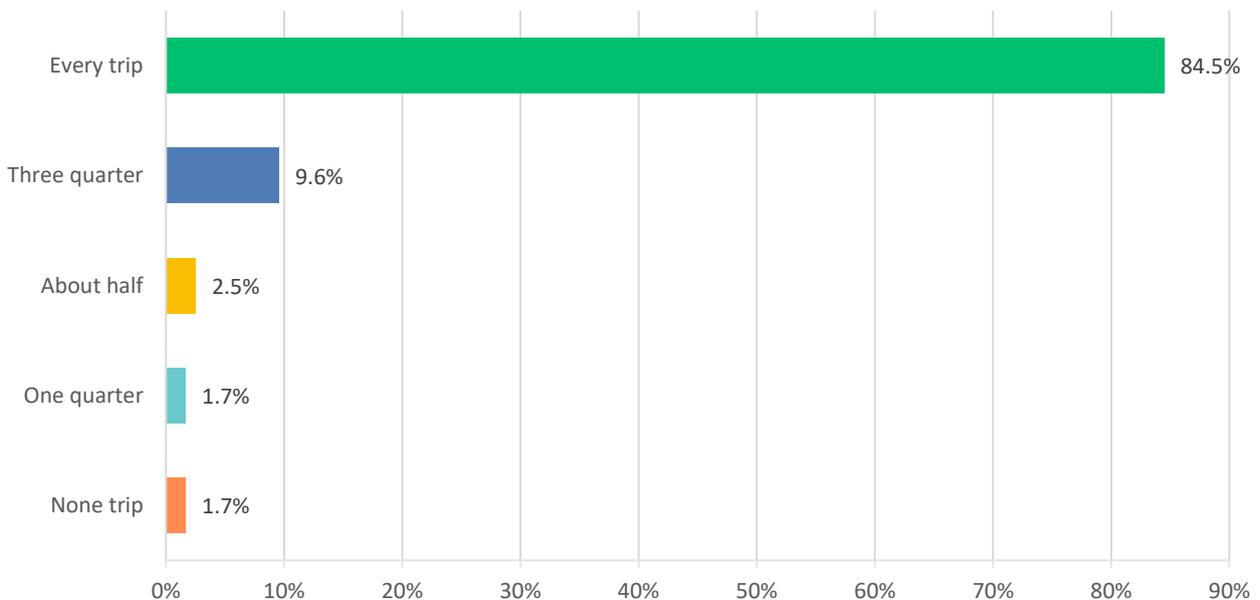
The August to September period had the highest catch rate, roe quality and meat return.

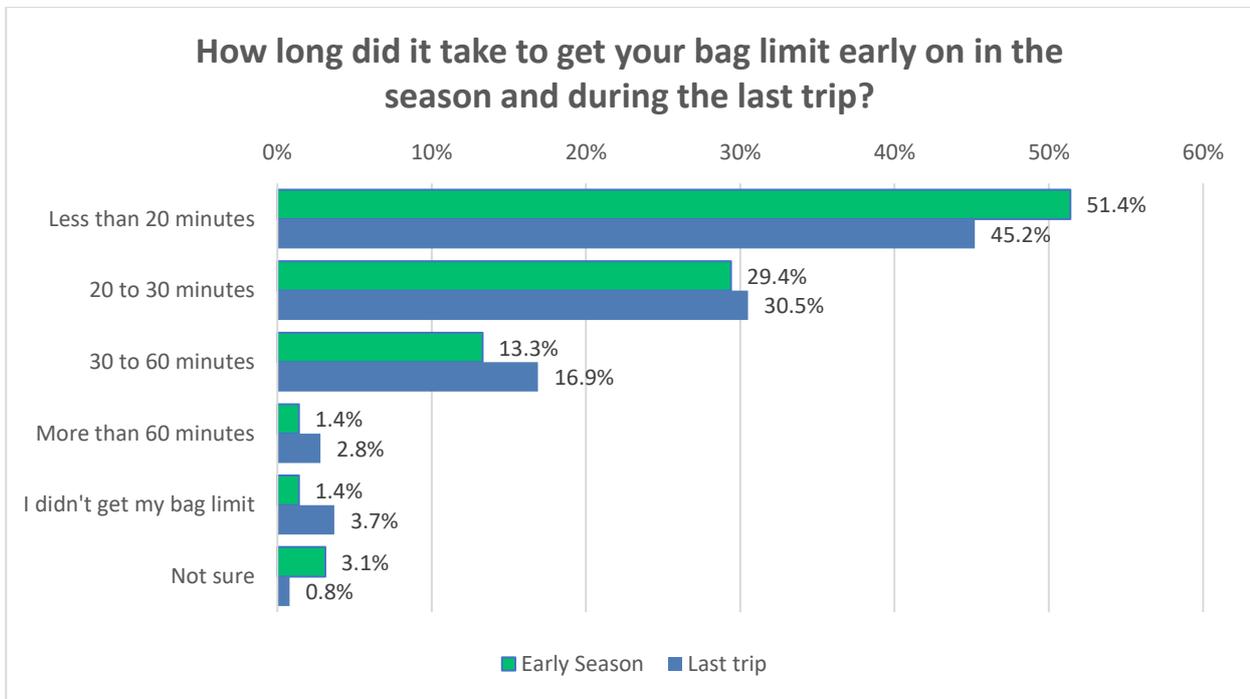
How many times did you go scallop fishing?



Around 60% of respondents went scallop fishing five or fewer times. A further 27% went fishing between six to ten times during the season. Interestingly, there were three respondents who went scallop fishing nearly every weekend during the season.

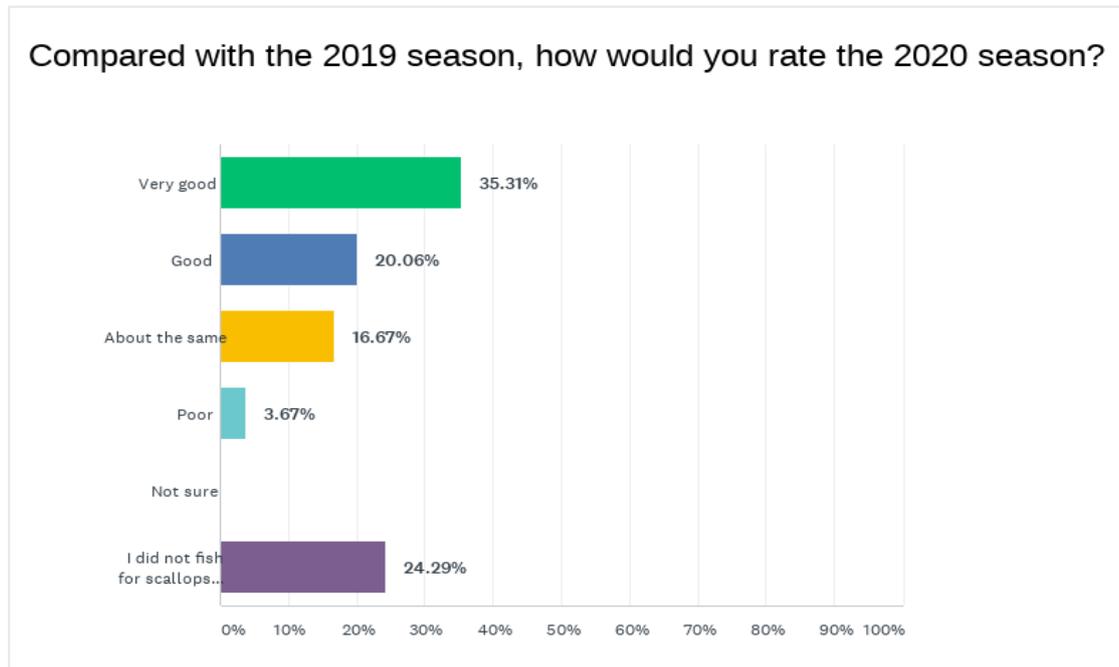
On how many trips did you get your bag limit?





Most fishers caught their bag limit on every trip within 30 minutes. Around 50% reported they took less than 20 minutes. The time to catch the bag limit increased as the season progressed.

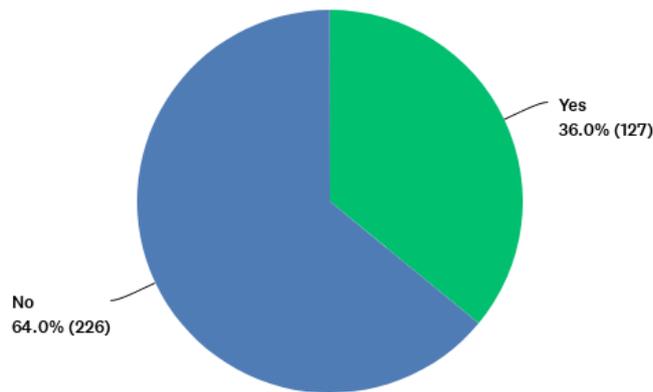
The proportion of respondents who did not get bag limit in their last trip more than doubled, compared with earlier season trips.



Most respondents were satisfied with the 2020 season compared to 2019. Many commented that the 2020 season had good numbers of large scallops with better roe quality and size. Others commented that the late start and extended season provided flexibility to plan trips when the water was warmer and to multiple destinations.

Some respondents indicated concern that the season was too long with too many scallops taken which may lower stocks and risk future fishing opportunities.

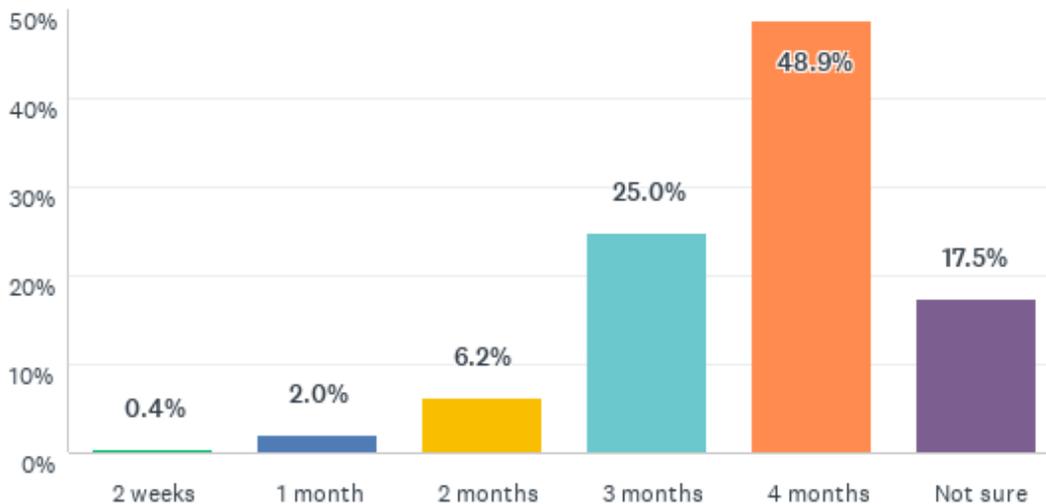
Were you checked by the Marine Police at any time during the 2020 scallop season?



About one third of respondents indicated they had been checked by the Marine Police during the season.

Responses about management

What do you think is the best length for a scallop season?

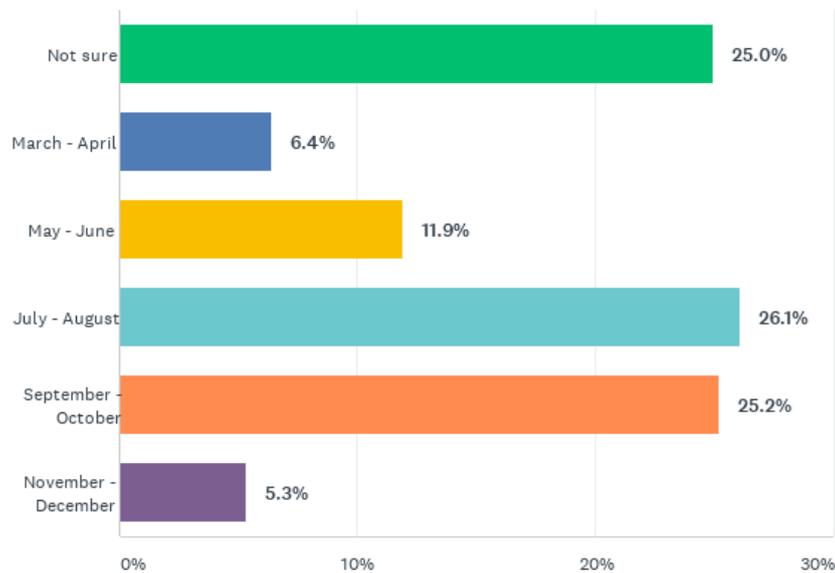


Over 70% respondents preferred the scallop season to be open for at least 3 months. Reasons for this view included: it allows fishers to avoid inclement weather conditions, avoid crowding at boat ramps, and provided fresh scallops.

Those respondents who preferred shorter seasons stated that it preserved scallop stocks for future seasons.

The 17.5% respondents who weren't sure about season length preferred evidence-based decision approaches saying that decisions should be based on scallop stock assessments for their availability and sustainability, rather than personal opinions.

What do you regard as the peak months that a scallop season should include?



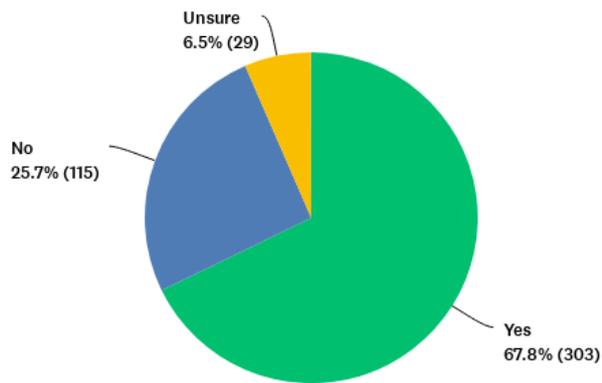
Periods that respondents chose were based on their experience with scallop meat quality, scallop quantities, weather conditions, water temperatures, and other diving experiences.

Most respondents indicated that July to October was the preferred timing for a scallop season.

Those indicating March to April stated their preference is based on the overlap with the Eastern Region Rock Lobster season which maximised the opportunity to take both species on a trip. Later months were highlighted by respondents who preferred warmer water and more stable weather. These months also involve less risk for less experienced divers.

Many respondents who indicated they were “Not sure”, stated the season should be science based around the most productive months.

The daily bag limit is 50, do you think this is about right?

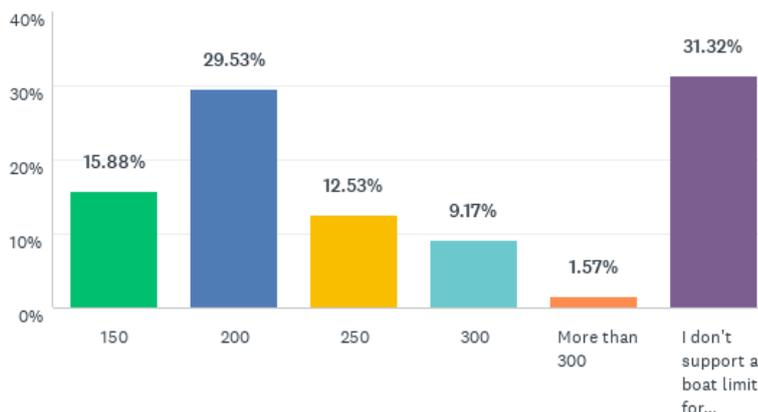


Most respondents indicated that 50 scallops is about right. Comments included that this a manageable catch amount; enough for a good family feed; and a reasonable reward for the effort and expense.

Around 15 % indicated it should be increased, many commenting more scallops will reflect the effort, time and cost for the trip, with some pointing out that they only dived occasionally. Some mentioned a bigger bag limit would allow sharing with deckhands.

About 10% of respondents indicated the number should be decreased to prevent overfishing or to reduce pressure on stocks. This may benefit more fishers or allow access to the fishery later in the season or in future seasons.

If a boat limit for scallops was being considered, what is an acceptable amount?



Some supported a boat limit because they normally have 3 to 5 divers. Around 30% indicated a boat limit of 200 would be acceptable. Some suggested that boat limits could allow increased catches, with the additional catch shared with other people on board. Several suggested that boat limits would reduce impacts, maintain stocks and protect resources for the future. This would also help prevent overfishing in some hotspots.

Just over 30% did not support a boat limit. Reasons included the impact on users of bigger boats leading to multiple trips, or multiple boat use with increased boat ramp traffic.

