



Marine  
Management  
Organisation

# Management measures for Lyme Bay Sole Fishery

## Consultation results

### September 2023



...ambitious for our seas and coasts

## Overview of consultation

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) ran a consultation from 29 March to 28 May 2023 on potential new management measures for the sole fishery in Lyme Bay.

This consultation was created in response to feedback from some fishers in Lyme Bay who have experienced competition for space and gear conflict. Some fishers also reported a reduction in the amount and size of sole caught.

The potential management interventions included in the consultation were developed in partnership with a steering group of fishers, scientists, government policy makers and managers.

The consultation was split into three parts. The first part focused on gaining views on the environmental, social, and economic sustainability of the fishery, the second part asked for information from commercial fishers and the third part asked for opinions on potential management measures, their area of implementation and any other suggestions for management.

Further information on the background of the fishery, reasoning for the consultation and the consultation questions is available [here](#). MMO's response to the consultation and next steps is available [here](#).

## Consultation Results

The consultation ran from 29 March to the 28 May, hosted on Citizen Space, via the gov.uk website. Information was available on the website regarding the reason for initiating the consultation and the background on the sole fishery in Lyme Bay. Responses were collected by direct input online, at face-to-face events and a telephone line was available but not utilized.

The Regional Fisheries Group team at MMO ensured a high response rate to this consultation by discussing the consultation in person with fisheries stakeholders in ports across the area including Mevagissey, Brixham, Beer, Axmouth, Exmouth, Lyme Regis and Weymouth and by offering to fill out the consultation offline with fisheries stakeholders.

In total, 247 responses were received from a wide range of fisheries stakeholders including commercial fishers using all gear types, recreational anglers, fish mongers and others working in the fishing industry and some community members. It is important to note that some responses represented individual views whilst others submitted a response representative of organisations or communities.

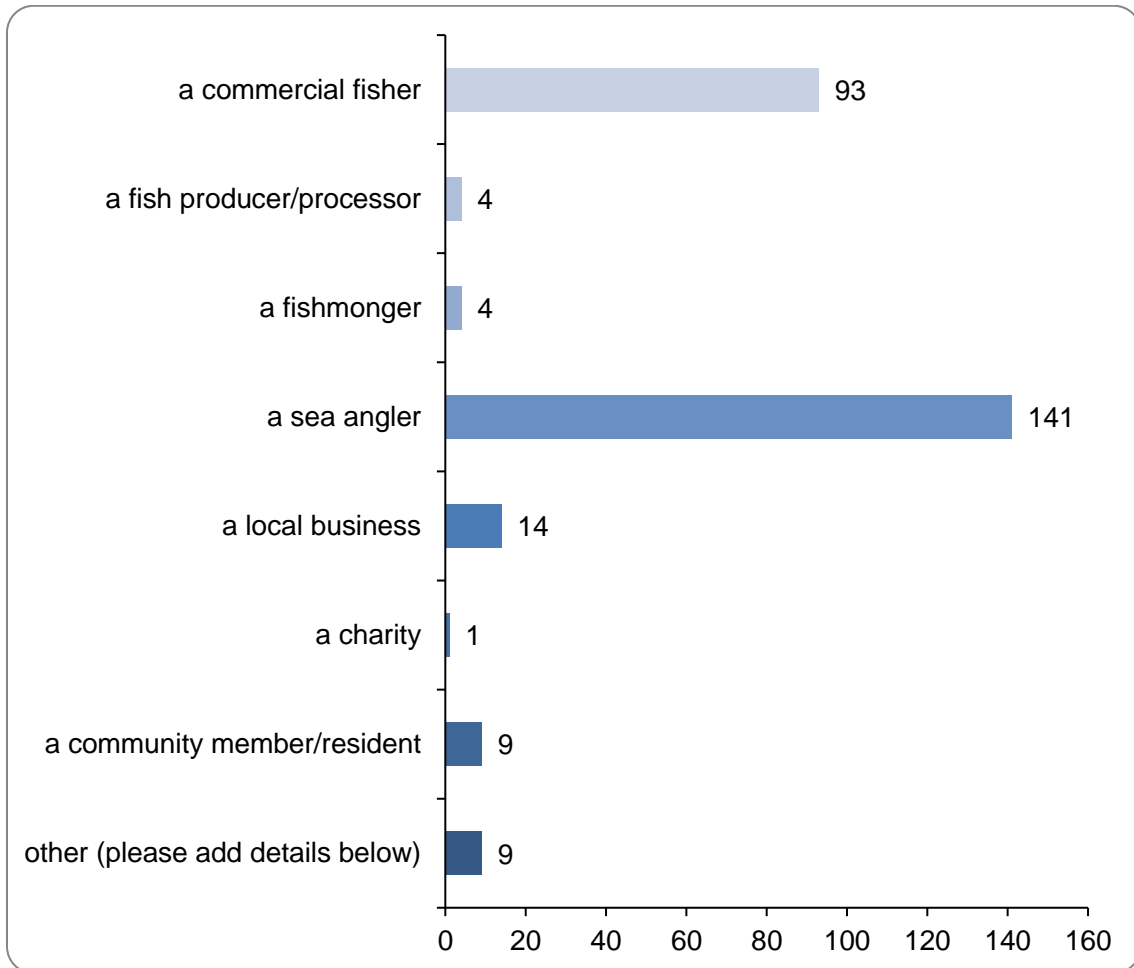
## Section 1: Your relationship with the Lyme Bay sole fishery

We would like to understand the impact of the sole fishery on all users of the Lyme Bay area and any concerns they may have.

1.1. Are you or your organisation affected by the sole fishery in Lyme Bay?

196 respondents answered yes and 44 responded no.

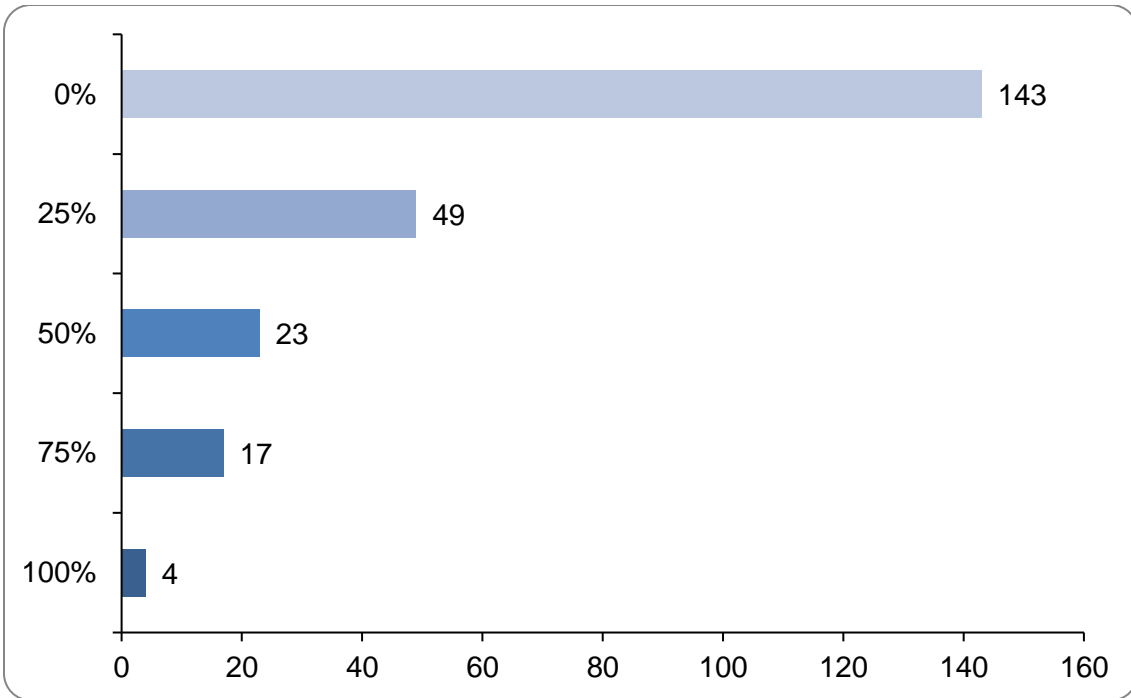
Are you? (Select all that apply)



There were 15 responses to providing more details on 'other' as part of their answer to the question. Most responses fell within the categories above and provided more information, for example a local business that sold bait, retired commercial fishers or 'concerned environmentalist', local swimmer or Producer Organisation representative.

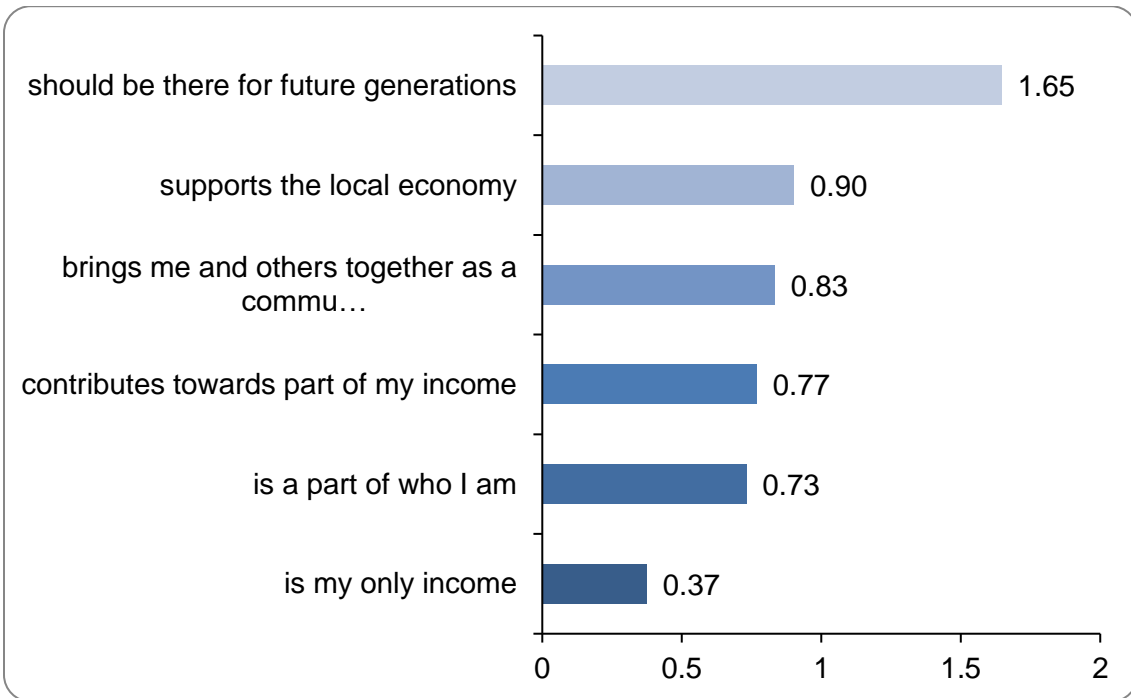
1.2. What percentage of your annual income is derived from the sole fishery in Lyme Bay, either directly or indirectly?

Note: "sole fishery" includes any by-catch when fishing for sole



1.3. Why is the sustainable management of the Lyme Bay sole fishery important to you? (please rank the top three most important elements to you)

Overall Ranking:



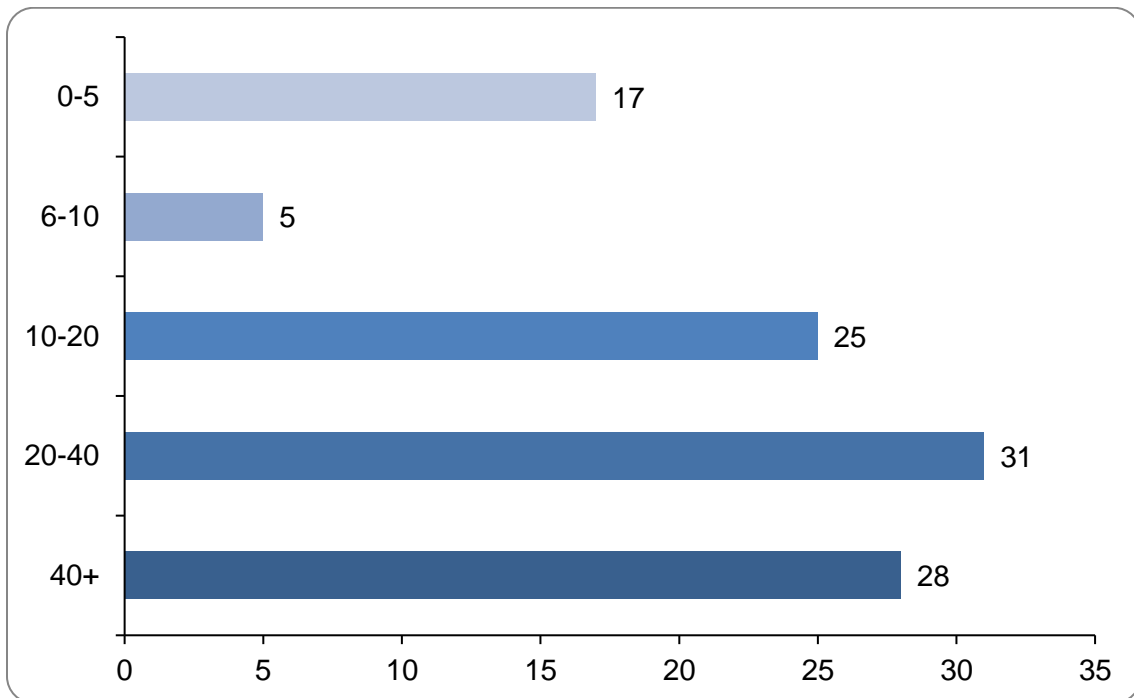
## Section 2: Fishing activity

Commercial fishers were asked to complete this section and non-commercial fishers were asked to complete question 1 and skip the remainder of the section.

2.1. Are you a commercial fisher?

95 respondents answered yes and 144 answered no.

2.2. How many years have you been fishing commercially?



2.3. Are you a skipper or crew member on a commercial fishing vessel?

88 respondents answered skipper and 8 answered crew

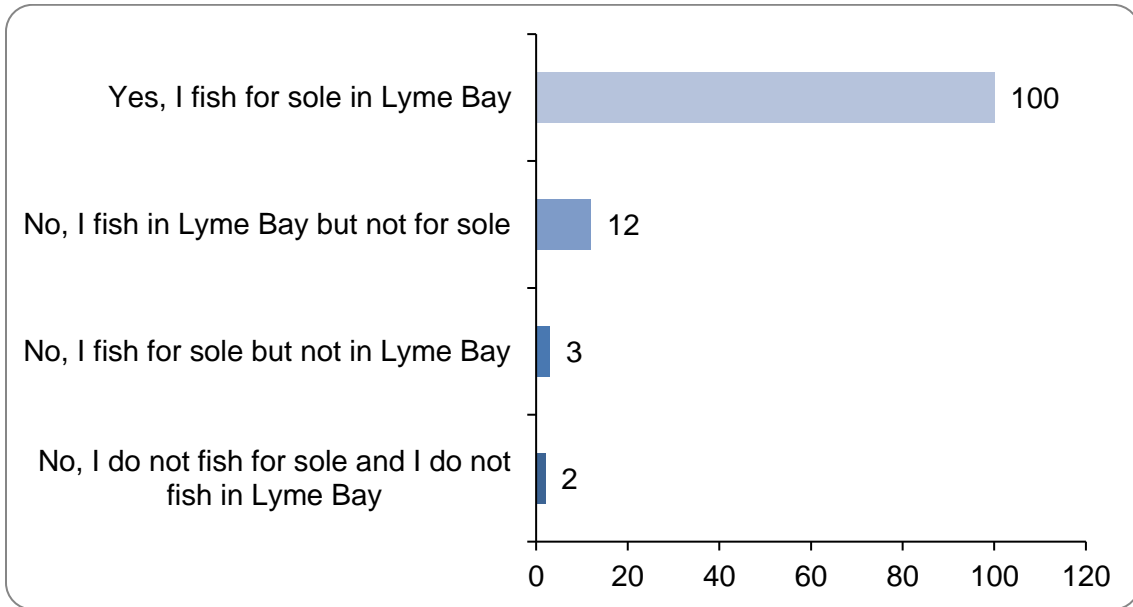
2.4. Do you own your own fishing vessel(s)?

77 respondents answered yes and 37 answered no

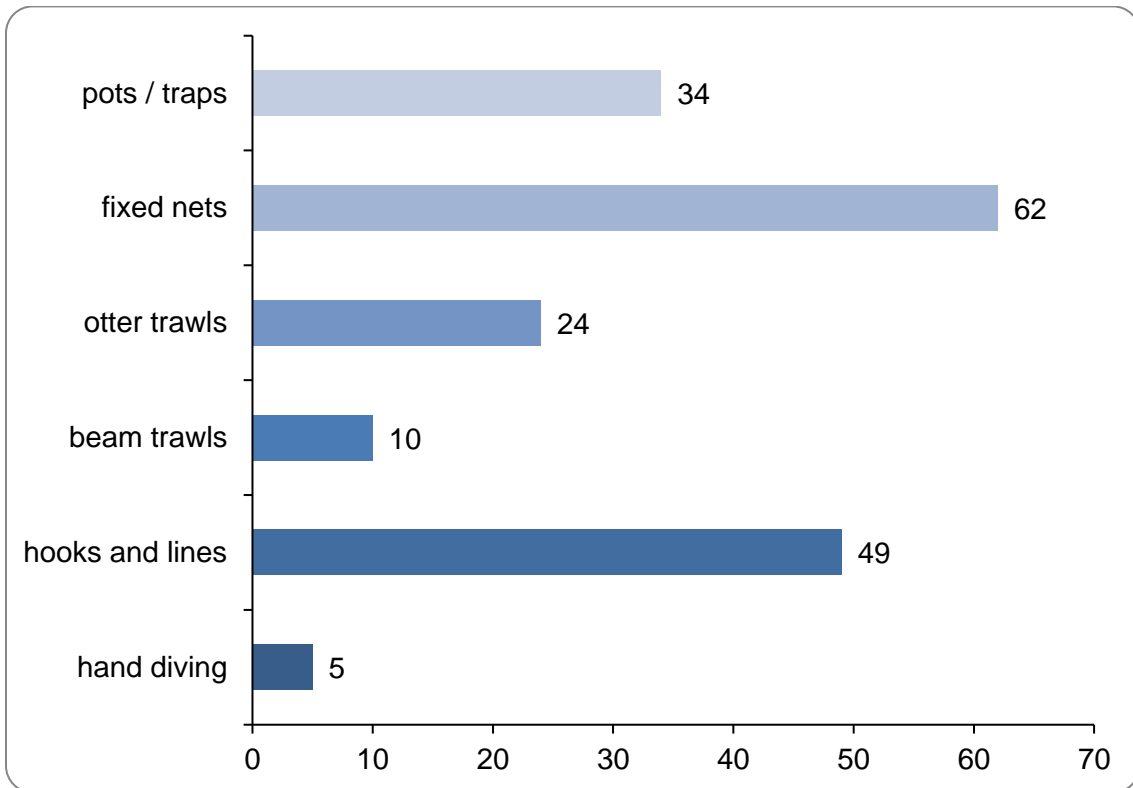
2.5. How many people does your fishing business employ?

People responded with a range of answers suggesting people were employed across different sectors such as sales (43 responses), processing (43 responses), admin (62 responses) and crew (93 responses). Respondents may have chosen more than one sector in their answers and included a number greater than 1.

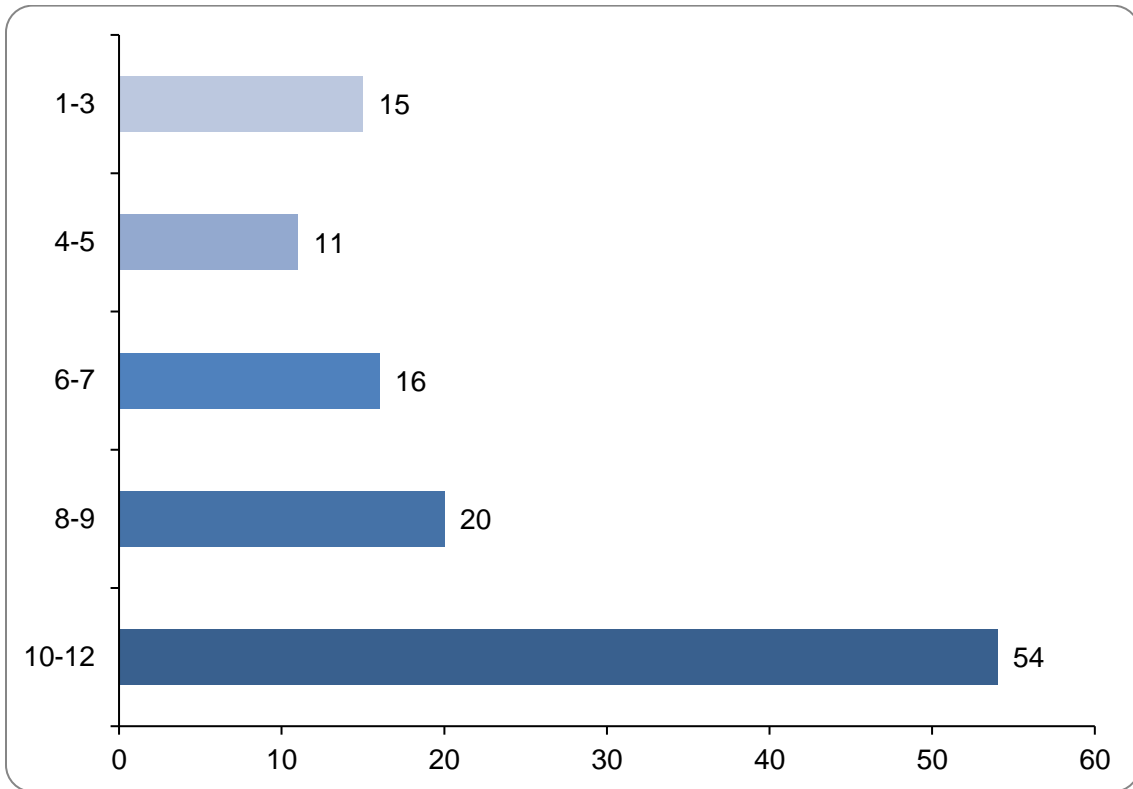
2.6. Do you fish for sole in Lyme Bay (30E6 and 30E7)?



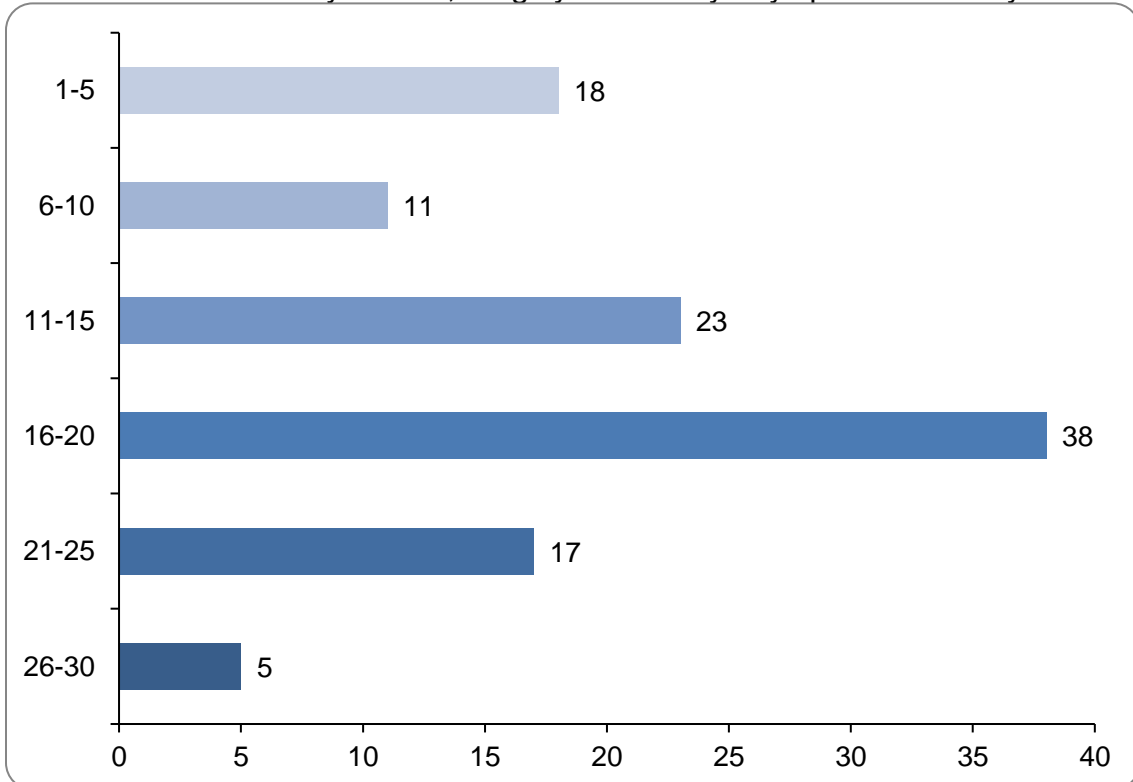
2.7. What gear type(s) do you use for fishing in Lyme Bay (select all that apply)?



2.8. How many months a year do you fish in Lyme Bay? (Inside rectangles 30E6 and 30E7)

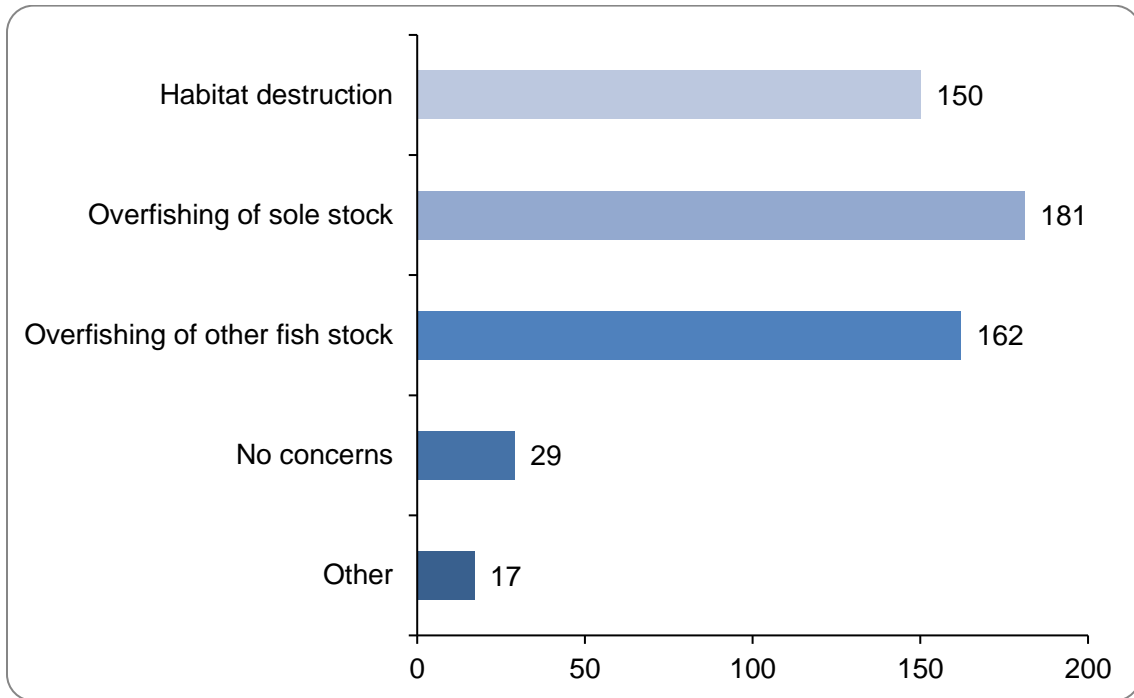


For those months that you fish, roughly how many days per month do you fish?



### Section 3: Potential management measures

#### 3.1. Do you have any environmental concerns for Lyme Bay?



There were 62 responses to the free-form part of the question. A summary of their responses is below:

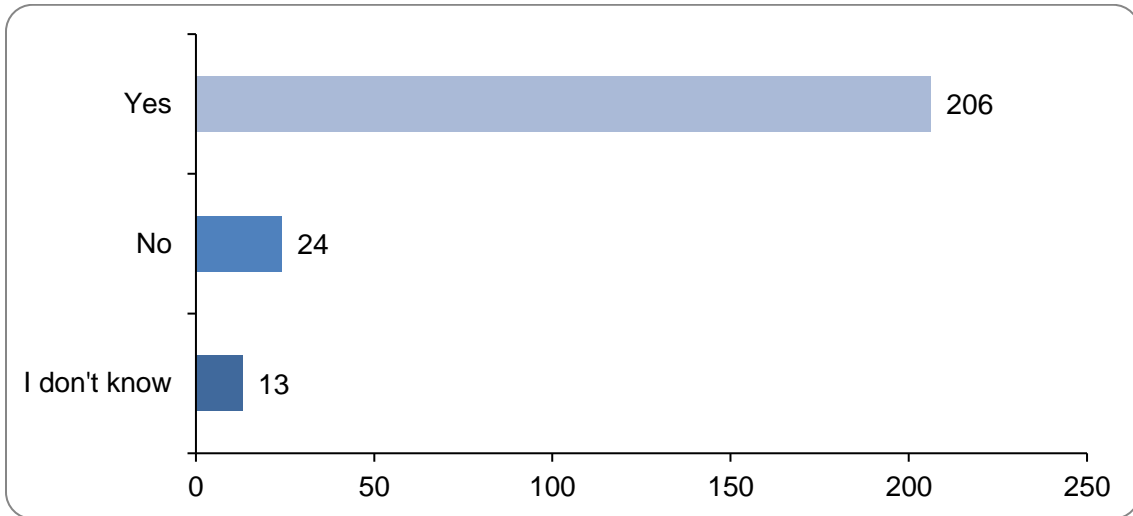
Numerous comments relate to environmental concerns on the wider ecosystem, both in relation to habitats and species and in consideration of the wider area beyond 7.e There were nine mentions of concern of bycatch including mammals, birds, and crustaceans. There were twenty-one mentions of dredging and trawling impact on seafloor habitats including reefs, seagrass and nursery grounds. There were five responses on the impact scallop dredges have when they are catching sole. In particular, it was felt that there has been an increase in scalloper activity in Lyme Bay targeting soles.

The issue of ghost gear, and the negative environmental impact this has, was mentioned eleven times. This includes both nets that are towed by trawlers and/or discarded nets, as well as discarded drums used for whelking.

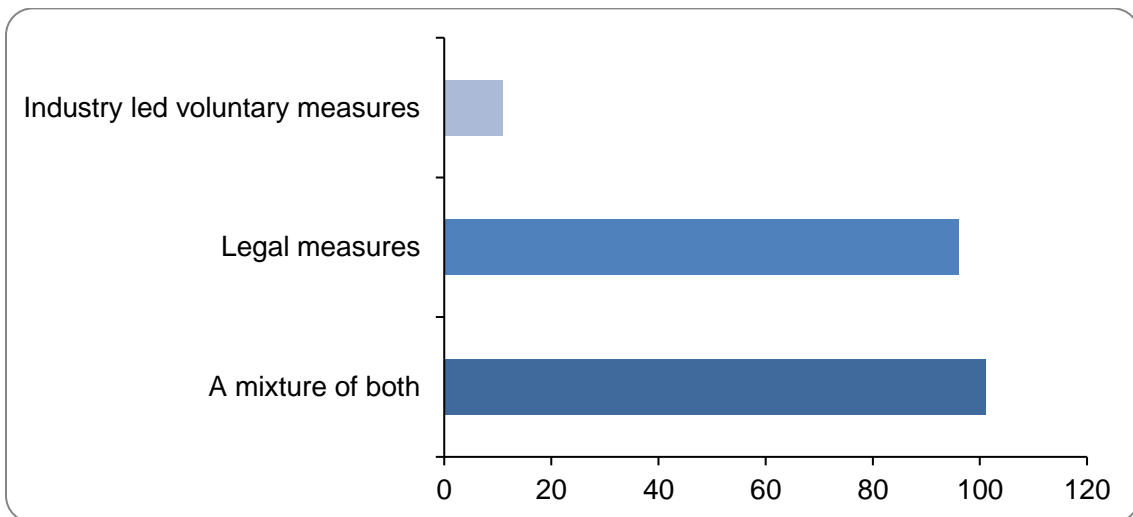
There were four suggestions that the sole stock is being overfished, with three other suggestions that some fishers use too much net. There were eight suggestions that fishers shoot their nets too close to the shoreline.



### 3.2. In your opinion are changes required to fisheries management in Lyme Bay?



If yes, would you prefer to see industry lead voluntary measures or legal measures?



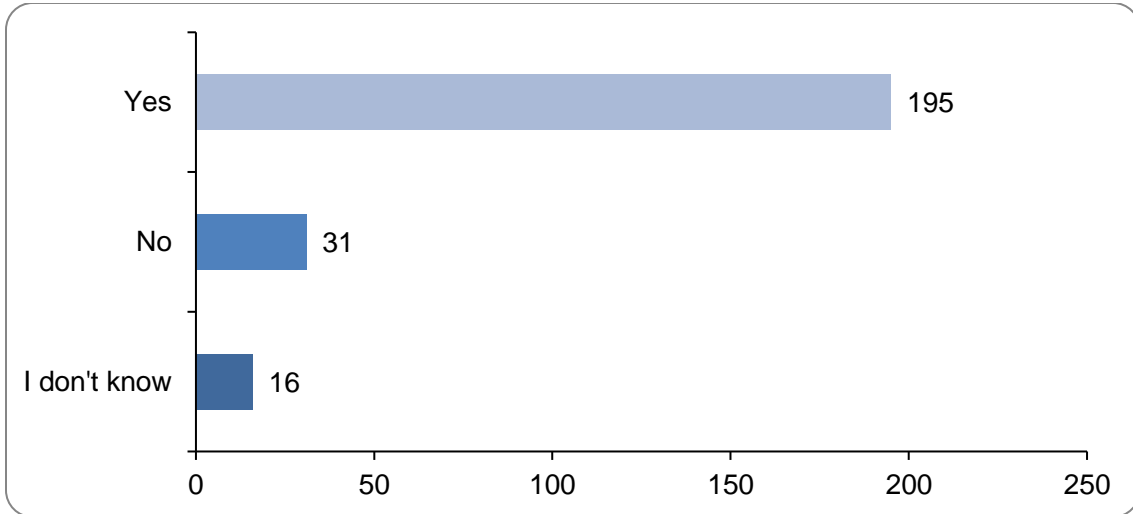
There were 130 free form text responses to this part of the question which are summarised as follows:

Generally, participants felt any changes to management needed to be legal, this was due to a feeling that those who followed any voluntary measures would be at a disadvantage and that in the past voluntary arrangements had not worked. Respondents were also concerned about enforcement and the ability of regulators to effectively enforce changes to management (particularly spatial).

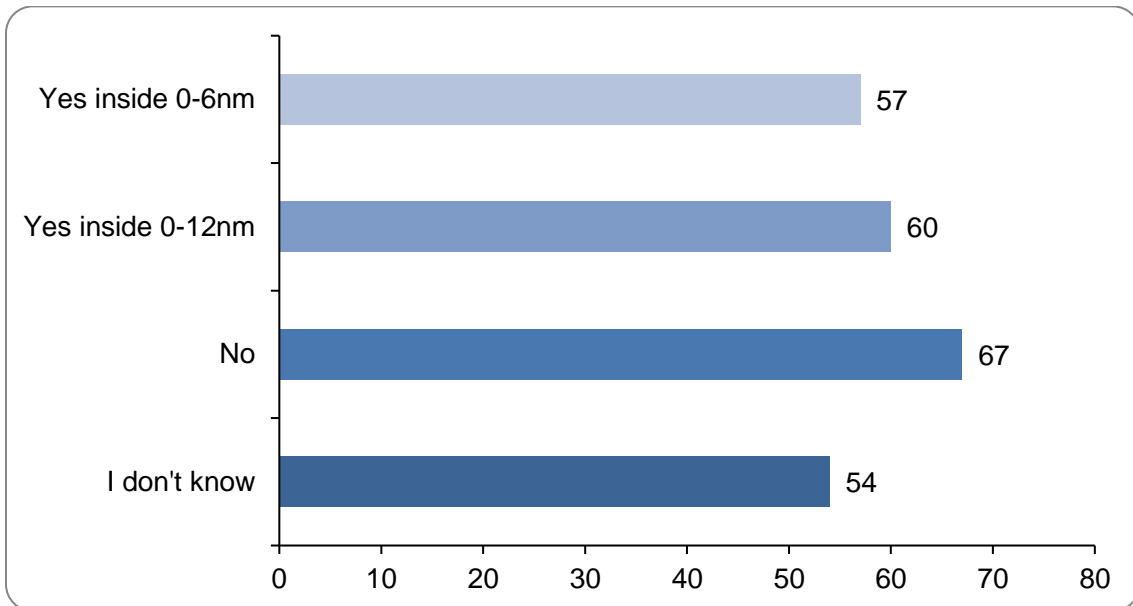
Recreational anglers were especially concerned with commercial activity close to the shore and had concerns about overfishing. Generally, the participants favored restricting towed gear and scalloping - this is mainly due to the make-up of participants and perceptions of participants that these practices have most

environmental impact. Commercial fishers' views were more diverse, dependent on their gear type and the port they fish from.

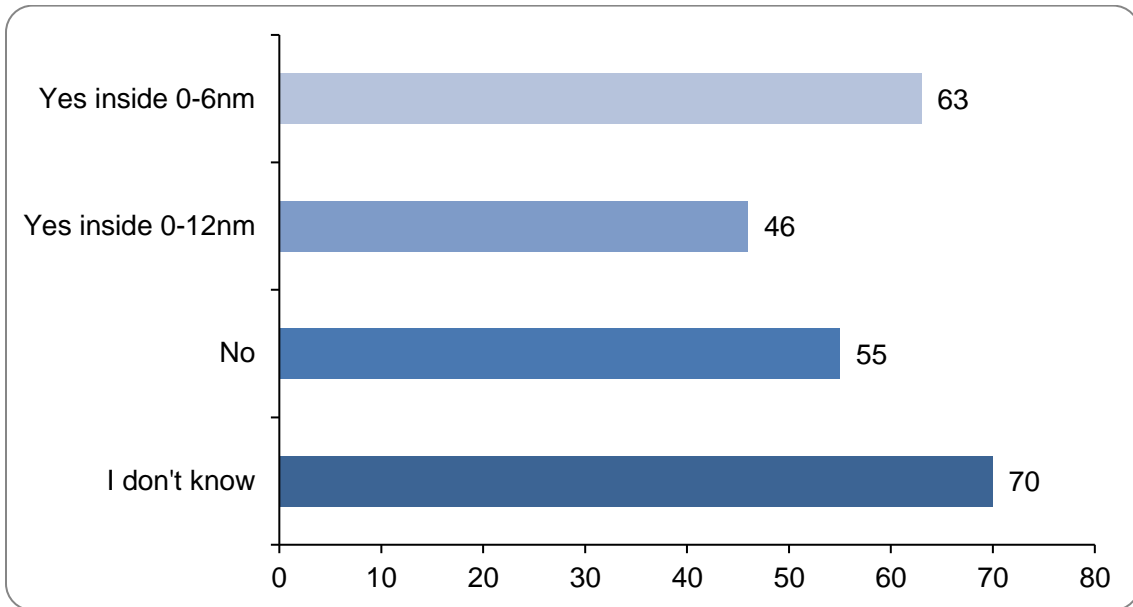
3.3. In your opinion should there be an increase in the minimum landing size to 28cm for sole in 7.e to match the size at which 50% of sole are considered sexually mature?



3.4. Do you think there should be a separate catch limit for sole when fishing inside 30E6 and 30E7 compared to the rest of Area 7.e?



3.5. Do you think that there should be some form of separation between the use of certain gear types in certain areas at certain times inside 30E6 and 30E7?

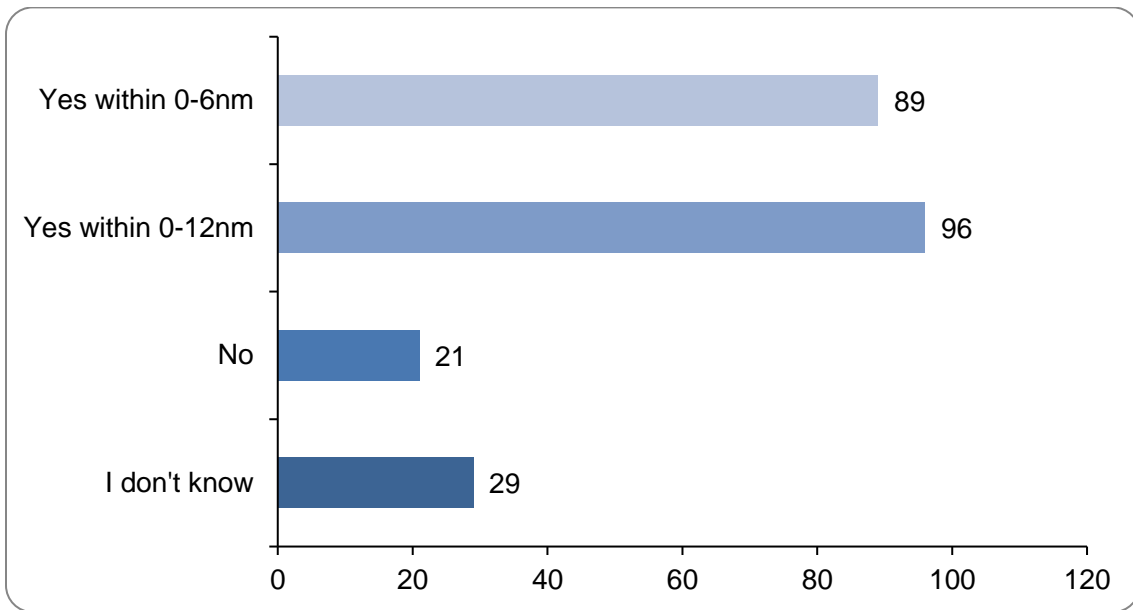


If yes which gear types and when? Please explain why

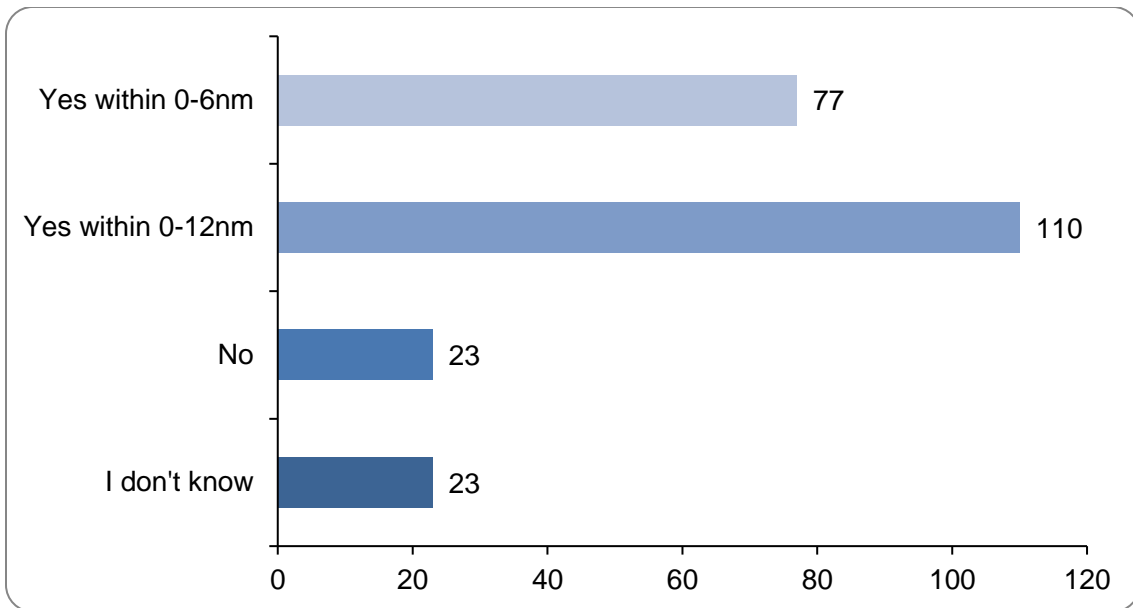
There were 63 responses to this part of the question they are summarised as follows:

Respondents had conflicting opinions on which gear types should be restricted, largely based on how they impact the individual responding. There was a lot of support for separating gear types but it was not always clear in the answers as to whether they should operate at different times or in different areas. There were several responses requesting either just fixed nets, just bottom towed gear, or a ban on all commercial gear close to shore, with suggested distances varying from 500 yrds to 12 nm.

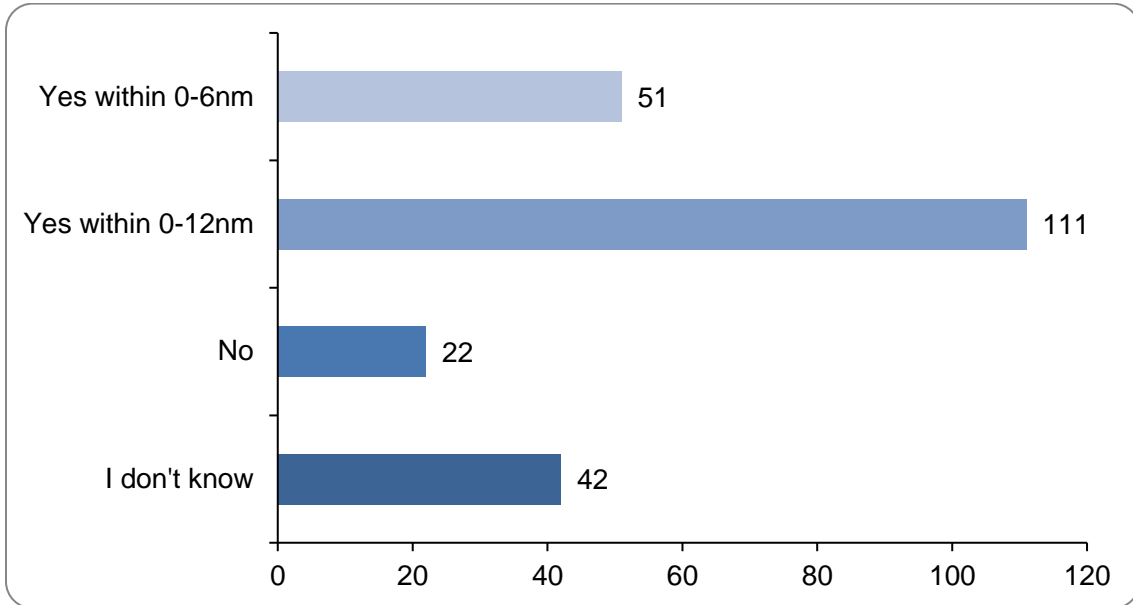
3.6. Do you think there should be enhanced visibility requirements for fixed net markers in Lyme Bay e.g. the use of flags or specifically coloured marker buoys? When fishing for sole inside 30E6 and 30E7?



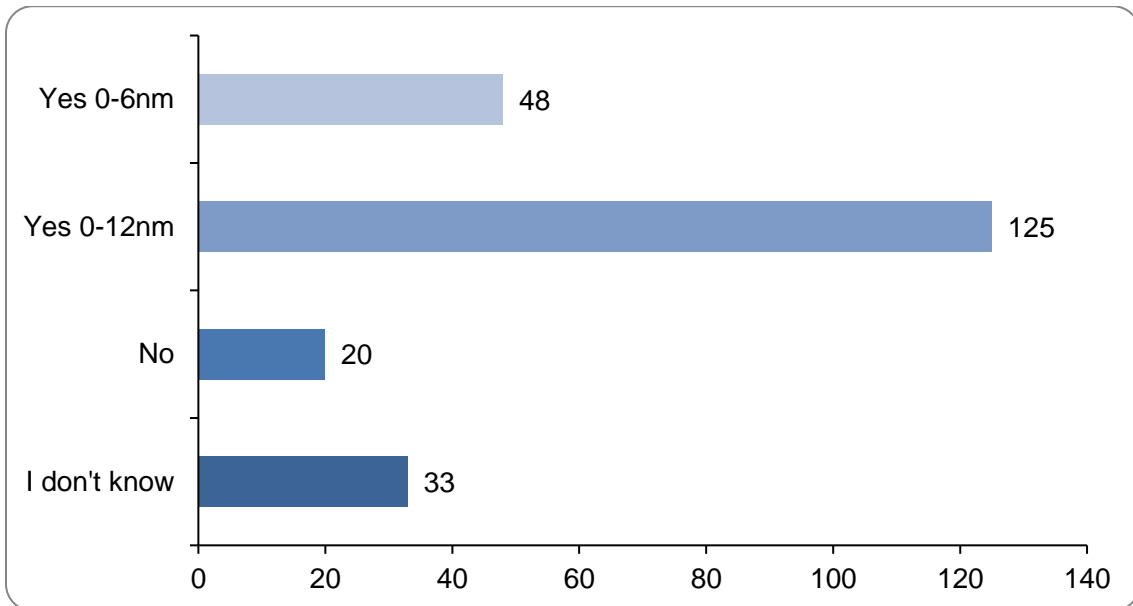
3.7. For fixed nets do you think the minimum mesh size should be increased to 5" (127mm) when fishing for sole inside 30E6 and 30E7?



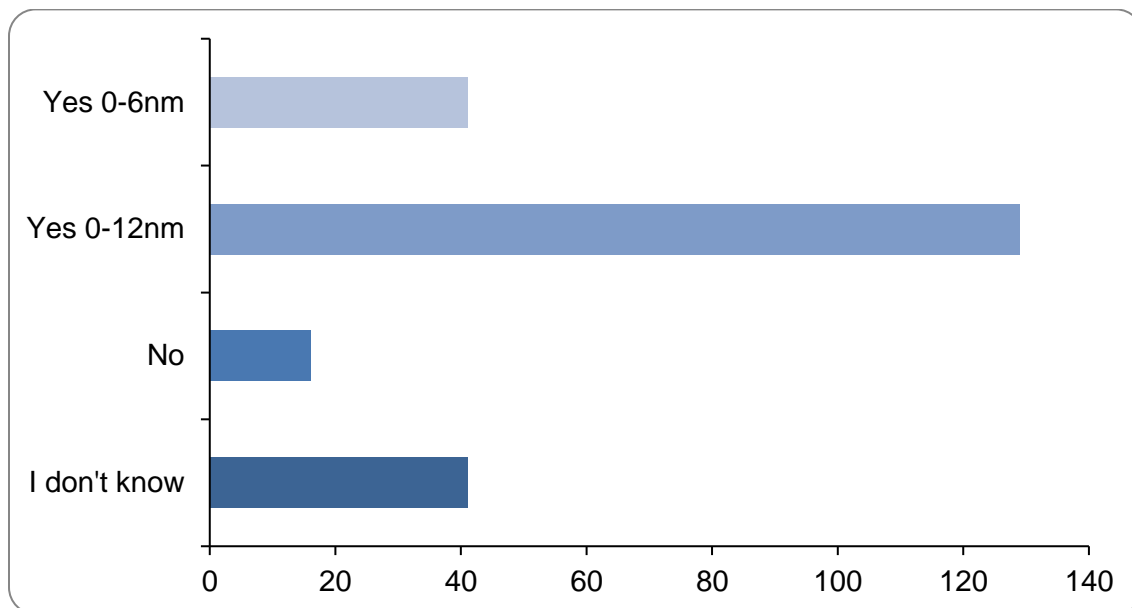
3.8. For otter trawls do you think the minimum mesh size should be increased above 80mm when fishing for sole inside 30E6 and 30E7?



3.9. For beam trawls do you think the minimum mesh size should be increased above 80mm when fishing for sole inside 30E6 and 30E7?



3.10. For scallop dredges do you think there should be increased selectivity requirements e.g. an escape mechanism for fish when fishing inside 30E6 and 30E7?



3.11. Do you have any other comments or suggestions for management of the sole fishery in Lyme Bay?

There were 101 responses to this part of the question as summarised below:

There was a lot of discussion about technical conservation measures (mesh size, net length) for fixed nets and for trawls. This seemed to stem from concerns about the stock and the environmental impact of certain types of fishing and increased pressure due to the increase in quota. Many favoured the increase in minimum landing size. There were concerns about the ability of regulators to effectively manage various aspects of the fishery and the environment - quota, stocks, habitats, regulations.

Some respondents felt they have been pushed off their local grounds by the presence of other vessels, either using fixed nets or mobile gear citing gear loss/conflict. Some explain that this was targeted, and intentional, as effective marking had not solved the problem. Some respondents cited the trawlers and dredgers as the cause of the issues and stating their belief that these gear types have the most impact on stocks and the environment and wanted to see trawling banned or restricted.

Many of the recreational angler responses pointed to the economic and mental health benefits of angling which they wanted the MMO to consider and many wanted an exclusion zone from the shore out a few 100 meters for anglers, stating that their activities had been impacted by the increased commercial activity in Lyme Bay.