Northumberland IFCA Edible Crab (*Cancer pagurus*) Fishery Status Report 2025

Landings

Landings data are collected monthly from shellfish catch returns submitted by permitted vessels to NIFCA. These returns provide detailed information on fishing effort and landings of key commercial species, offering valuable insights into trends within the NIFCA district. A summary of key statistics from the edible crab (*Cancer pagurus*) fishery is presented in the Multiple Indicator Framework (MIF) (Table 1).

Landings per unit effort (LPUE), measured as kilograms per 100 pots hauled (kg/100 pots), is a key indicator of seasonal and temporal trends in the fishery (Figure 1). LPUE for the edible crab fishery shows seasonal variation, peaking in winter (November–February) when effort typically shifts offshore. Since 2011, LPUE has fluctuated, peaking in 2017 and remaining relatively stable since, with a slight increase in 2024.

In 2024, there were 65 active vessels, down from 69 in 2023 (Table 1), with total effort falling by ~12% (~280,000 pots). Like LPUE, landed weight peaked in 2017 but has declined steadily, largely due to reduced effort. In 2024, landed weight dropped by 0.5% to 600.51 tonnes, despite the 12% reduction in effort, with NIFCA landings comprising about 6% of total edible crab landings into English Ports in 2024 (Figure 2). Landed value peaked in 2019 due to demand from the emerging Chinese market. Although average value/kg has since remained stable, the total fishery value rose by 4% in 2024 to £1.42 million (Table 1), despite lower landings.

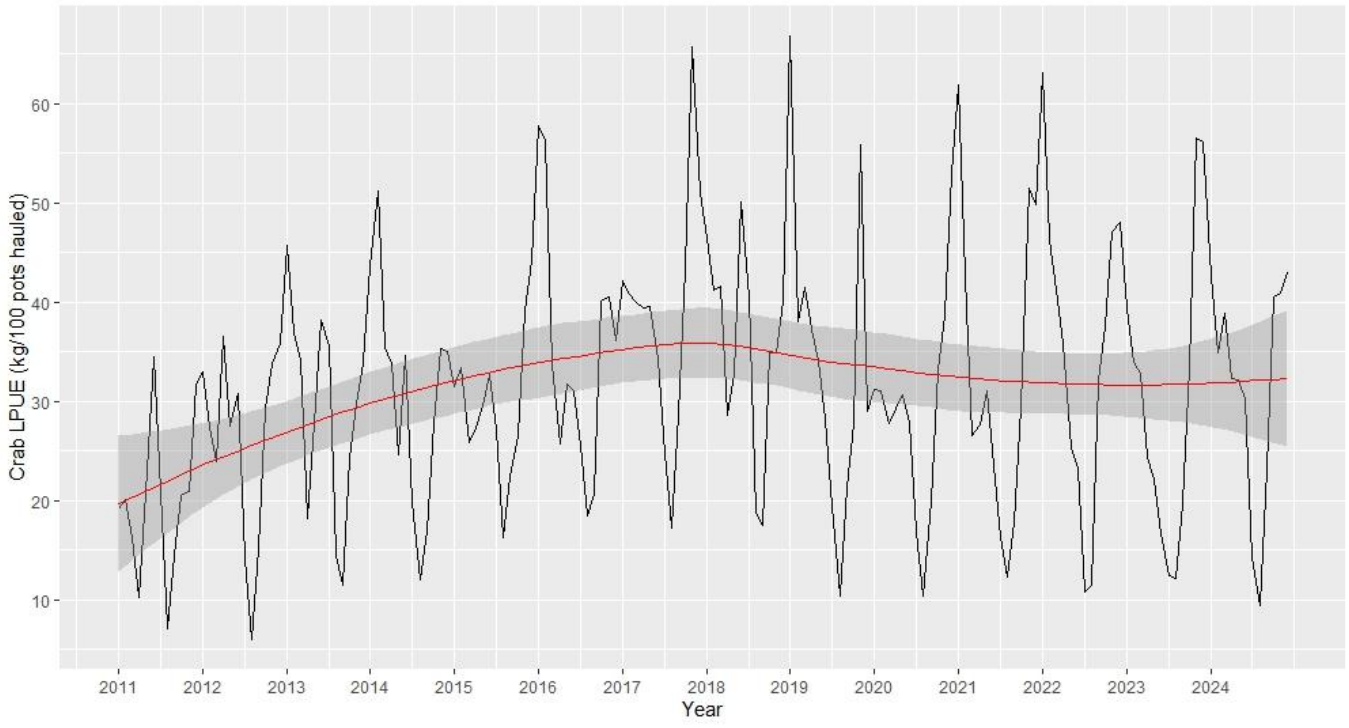

Figure 1: Monthly edible crab landings per unit effort (LPUE) data 2011-2024, including a moving average across the same period (red) with a 95% confidence interval (grey shading), highlighting the seasonal variation in LPUE.

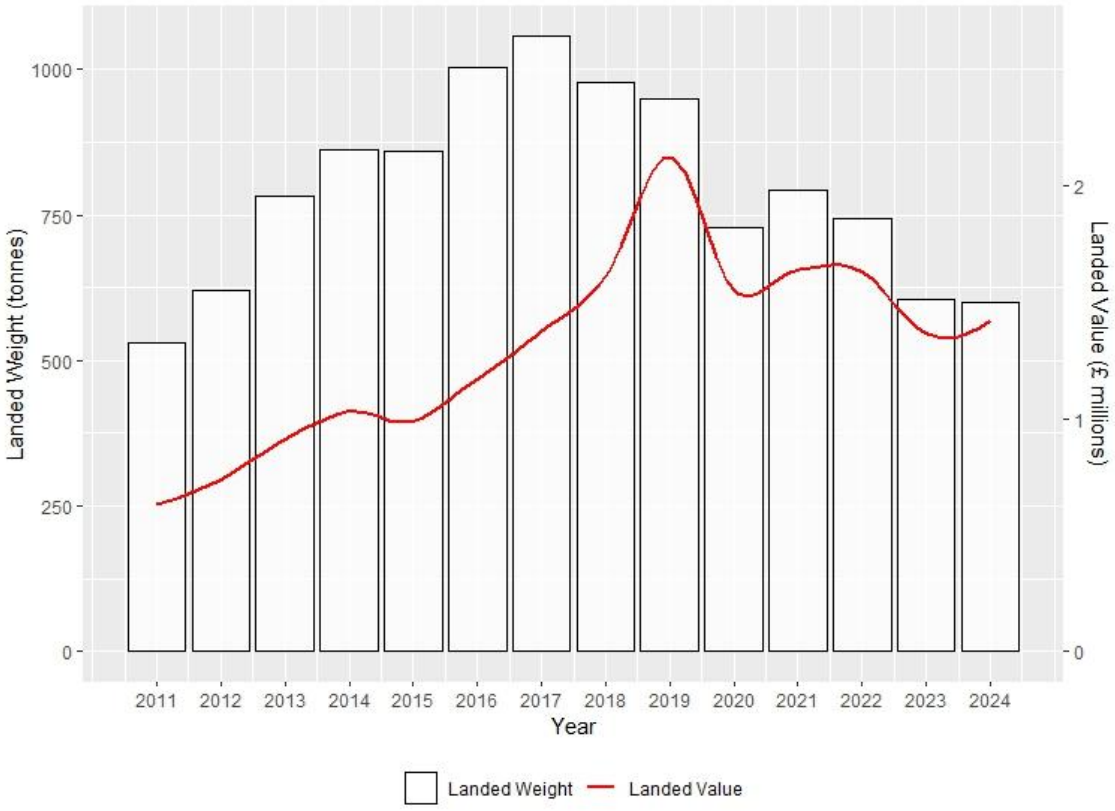

Figure 2: Edible crab landed weight and landed value taken from permit returns and officer reports for price/kg with the estimated value of landed weight from the fishery annually.

Biometric Data

Biometric data are collected through a combination of offshore sampling on board fishing vessels, targeted fleet sampling at sea, and shore-based sampling of landed catches. The spatial distribution of at-sea surveys conducted by NIFCA officers between 2018 and 2024 is illustrated in Figure 3. Since 2018, 363 fleets have been surveyed for edible crab as part of this survey programme.

Data collected includes information on animal size to better understand the distribution of the population, both under and over the minimum conservation reference size (MCRS). Since 2018, 18,990 edible crabs have been measured as part of this work. A summary of sample numbers, average size, and maximum size is provided in Table 1.

Density plots for animals measured during offshore surveys between 2019 and 2024 are shown in Figure 4. There are no clear trends in animal size distribution across these years, although there have been some variations between these years. Continued monitoring of this information in future years will be done to identify any shifts in the edible crab population.

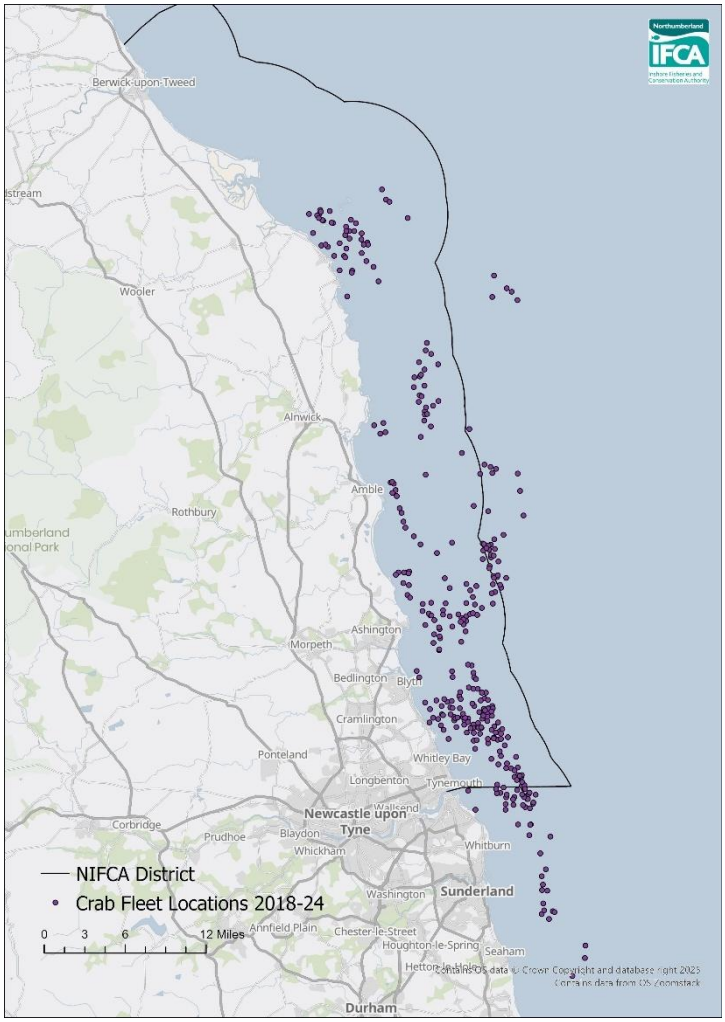

Figure 3: Distribution of fleets surveyed for crab between 2018 and 2024 in relation to the NIFCA district.

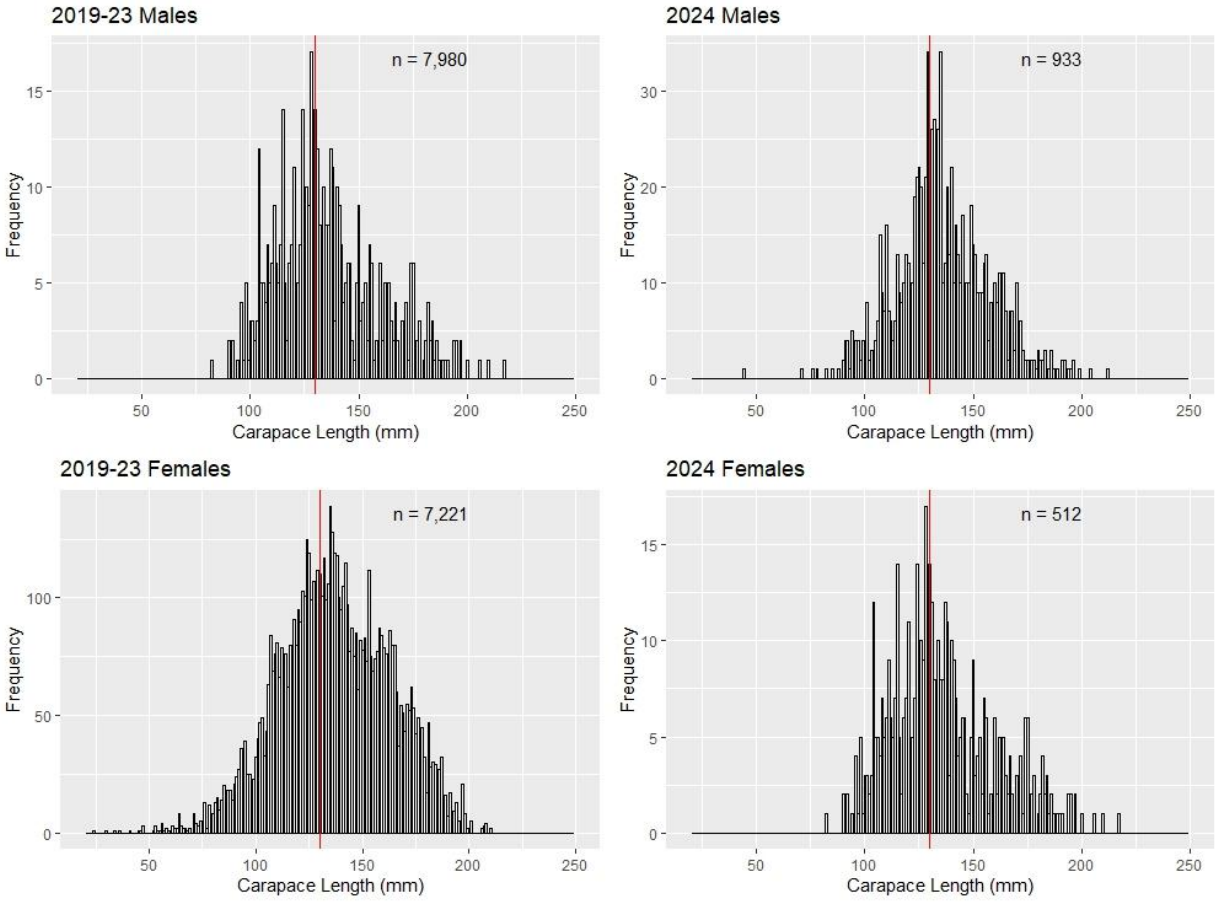

Figure 4: Amalgamated size distribution of lobster measured during offshore surveys between 2019-2023, compared to size distributions observed during offshore surveys in 2024, with the MCRS of 130mm indicated in red.

Table 1: Edible crab (*Cancer pagurus*) multiple indicator framework.

Fishery Overview	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	**Value Ref**	**Data Source**
Total Landings (NIFCA)	*621.3*	*782*	*861.7*	*859.3*	*1,002.3*	*1,056.6*	*977.1*	*949.5*	*729.2*	*791.5*	*744.7*	*603.7*	*600.5*	Tonnes	NIFCA Returns
Amble Landings	*170.6*	*220.8*	*281.4*	*175.7*	*205.4*	*241.2*	*213.9*	*163.7*	*115.4*	*138.7*	*91.3*	*73.23*	*83.02*	Tonnes	NIFCA Returns
Blyth Landings	*42.5*	*56.3*	*112.6*	*105.0*	*161.8*	*100.9*	*92.8*	*160.7*	*124.6*	*157.9*	*161.2*	*120.31*	*42.88*	Tonnes	NIFCA Returns
Burnmouth Landings	*19.7*	*97.8*	*112.9*	*137.1*	*138.5*	*100.8*	*126.3*	*125.0*	*85.8*	*75.3*	*60.1*	*46.29*	*60.04*	Tonnes	NIFCA Returns
Holy Island Landings	*131.2*	*124.1*	*105.0*	*167.1*	*253.2*	*269.8*	*200.1*	*196.5*	*168.0*	*133.1*	*138.2*	*116.43*	*125.06*	Tonnes	NIFCA Returns
Seahouses Landings	*130.2*	*132.5*	*133.7*	*159.5*	*122.4*	*196.3*	*190.9*	*185.7*	*137.3*	*151.4*	*149.2*	*127.07*	*149.64*	Tonnes	NIFCA Returns
Total Effort (Pots Hauled)	*2.63*	*2.89*	*3.14*	*3.02*	*3.12*	*2.91*	*2.89*	*3.12*	*2.75*	*2.77*	*2.47*	*2.38*	*2.10*	Million	NIFCA Returns
Total Effort (Pots Set)	*32.82*	*35.22*	*37.98*	*36.58*	*33.80*	*34.39*	*35.94*	*37.74*	*39.64*	*39.70*	*35.71*	*33.48*	*28.30*	Thousand	NIFCA Returns
Q1 Catch Distribution (% of Annual Total)	*23*	*21*	*26*	*19*	*27*	*26*	*23*	*32*	*19*	*27*	*26*	*25*	*23*	Q1 %	NIFCA Returns
Q2 Catch Distribution (% of Annual Total)	*28*	*25*	*26*	*27*	*21*	*22*	*25*	*25*	*20*	*20*	*21*	*21*	*26*	Q2 %	NIFCA Returns
Q3 Catch Distribution (% of Annual Total)	*18*	*29*	*23*	*26*	*25*	*23*	*28*	*21*	*24*	*21*	*21*	*22*	*19*	Q3 %	NIFCA Returns
Q4 Catch Distribution (% of Annual Total)	*31*	*26*	*25*	*28*	*28*	*29*	*24*	*22*	*37*	*33*	*32*	*32*	*32*	Q4 %	NIFCA Returns
Primary Reference Points	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	**Value Ref**	**Data Source**
LPUE	*26.12*	*29.19*	*30.84*	*29.84*	*34.81*	*39.04*	*35.57*	*34.15*	*29.15*	*32.54*	*35.17*	*29.28*	*31.85*	KG/100ph	NIFCA Returns
Economic	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	**Value Ref**	**Data Source**
Average Annual Price	*1.19**	*1.17**	*1.19**	*1.15**	*1.17**	*1.30**	*1.65**	*2.25*	*2.08*	*2.06*	*2.19*	*2.24*	*2.37*	£/kg	NIFCA IFCO Reports*
Gross Catch Value	*0.74*	*0.91*	*1.03*	*0.99*	*1.18*	*1.39*	*1.61*	*2.14*	*1.55*	*1.64*	*1.63*	*1.36*	*1.42*	£ Million	NIFCA Returns
No. Active Vessels	*72*	*83*	*80*	*75*	*70*	*73*	*85*	*74*	*89*	*82*	*77*	*69*	*65*	#	NIFCA Returns
No. Employment	*151***	*174***	*168***	*158***	*147***	*153***	*179***	*155***	*187***	*172***	*162***	*114*	*113*	#	NIFCA IFCO Reports
Biometric	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	**Value Ref**	**Data Source**
Number of Animals Measured	*x*	*x*	*x*	*x*	*x*	*x*	*143*	*12,993*	*692*	*44*	*1,790*	*1,798*	*1,530*	#	NIFCA Survey
Average Carapace Length M (mm)	*x*	*x*	*x*	*x*	*x*	*x*	*132*	*136*	*138*	*83*	*139*	*130*	*136*	mm	NIFCA Survey
Average Carapace Length F (mm)	*x*	*x*	*x*	*x*	*x*	*x*	*156*	*141*	*139*	*87*	*140*	*126*	*138*	mm	NIFCA Survey
Max Carapace Length M (mm)	*x*	*x*	*x*	*x*	*x*	*x*	*191*	*207*	*200*	*158*	*211*	*206*	*212*	mm	NIFCA Survey
Max Carapace Length F (mm)	*x*	*x*	*x*	*x*	*x*	*x*	*207*	*210*	*207*	*160*	*210*	*208*	*217*	mm	NIFCA Survey
Sex Ratio (% Female)	*x*	*x*	*x*	*x*	*x*	*x*	*62.2*	*49.1*	*39.9*	*50.0*	*45.2*	*40.2*	*37.4*	%	NIFCA Survey

*This was taken from MMO landings data but has not changed to IFCO reports to allow for more region-specific figures.

**This is calculated by using an approximate crew number of 2.1 per vessel throughout the district. This is taken from a 2019 Effort Report by officers.