

Northumberland IFCA European Lobster (*Homarus gammarus*) Fishery Status Report 2025

Landings and Effort

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 European lobster (*Homarus gammarus*) fishery is presented in the Multiple Indicator Framework (MIF) (Table 1).

Landings per unit effort (LPUE), expressed as kilograms landed per 100 pots hauled (kg/100 pots), is a critical metric for analysing seasonal and temporal trends in the fishery (Figure 1). Since 2011, LPUE has remained relatively stable, though a general upward trend is evident. Notably, there has been a significant increase in LPUE since 2021, with 2024 recording the highest average LPUE since data collection began in 2011, increasing by 19.2% from 2023 to 13.27 kg/100 pots. In 2024, there were 65 active vessels, down from 69 in 2023 (Table 1), and overall fishing effort declined by approximately 12% (~280,000 pots hauled).

Despite the improvement in LPUE, total landed lobster weight has declined since its peak in 2019. However, in 2024, landed weight rose by 8% (23,378 kg) to 321.55 tonnes, despite reduced effort (Figure 2), accounting for 18% of all lobster landed into English ports in 2024. The increased landings within the NIFCA district corresponded with a 6% rise in the fishery's value, reaching £4.95 million.

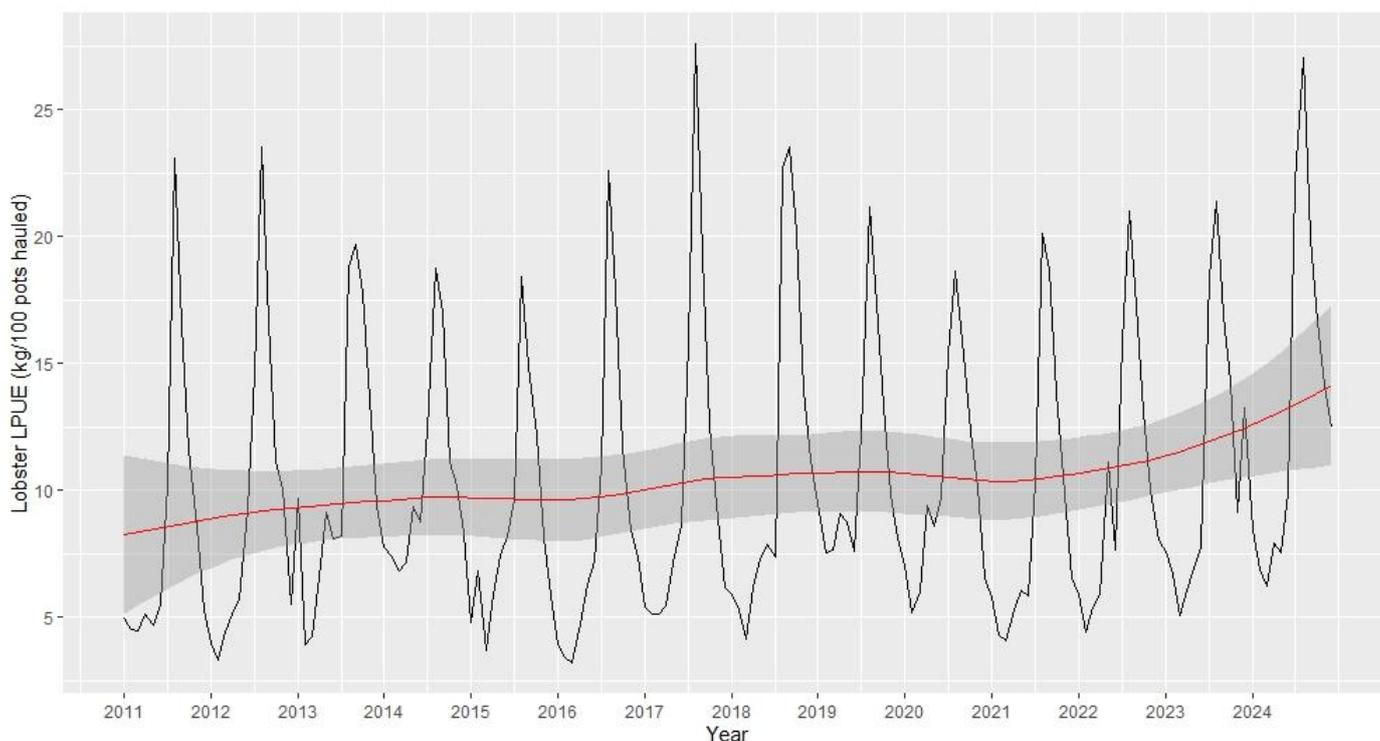


Figure 1: Monthly lobster landings per unit effort (LPUE) data 2011-2024, including a moving average across the same period (red) with a 95% confidence interval (grey shading), highlighting the seasonal variation in LPUE, but overall increasing trend over time and increased LPUE in 2024.

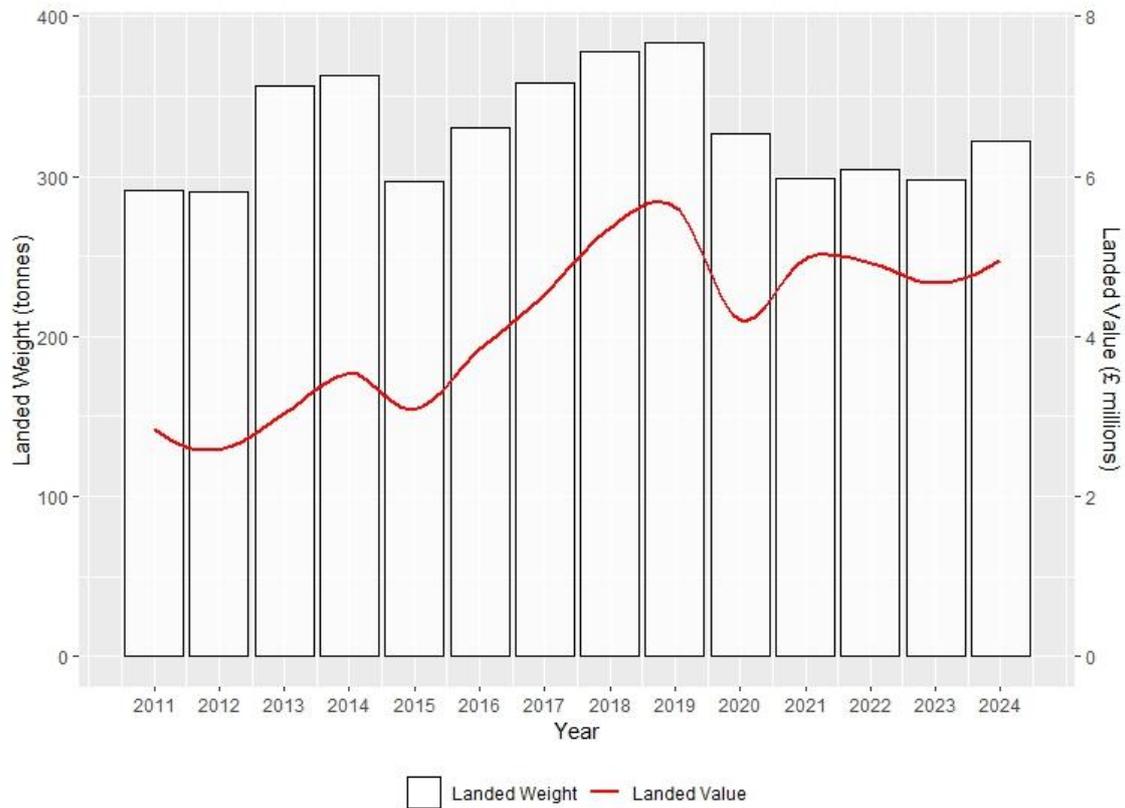


Figure 2: Lobster landed weight and landed value taken from permit returns and officer reports for price/kg with the estimated value of landed weight from the fishery annually.

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 2012 and 2024 is illustrated in Figure 3. Since 2012, 1,326 fleets have been surveyed for lobster as part of this survey programme.

The data gathered includes measurements of individual lobster sizes to assess population structure, both above and below the Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS). Figure 4 presents the size distribution of lobsters sampled during offshore surveys from 2019 to 2023, alongside data collected in 2024. A summary of sample numbers, average size, and maximum size is provided in Table 1. Since 2012, NIFCA officers have measured 41,031 lobsters, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the local lobster population and enabling the identification of trends in size and sex distribution.

In 2024, no significant shifts in size distribution were observed compared to previous years. However, continued monitoring across multiple size categories will be continued to detect any future changes in population structure.

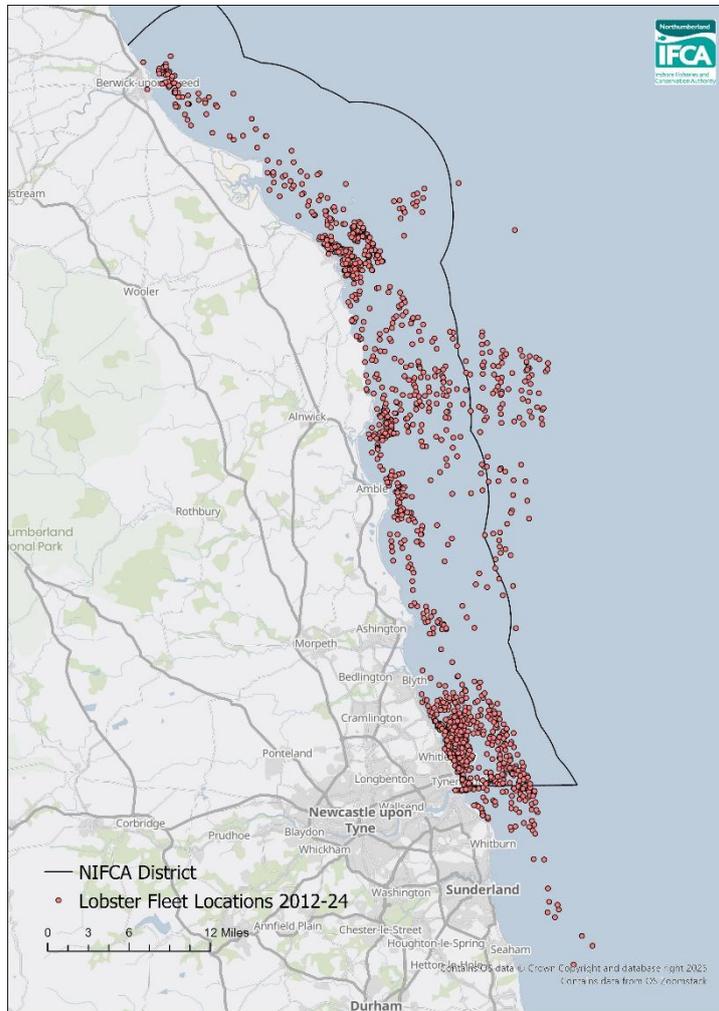


Figure 3: Distribution of fleets surveyed for lobster between 2012 and 2024 in relation to the NIFCA district.

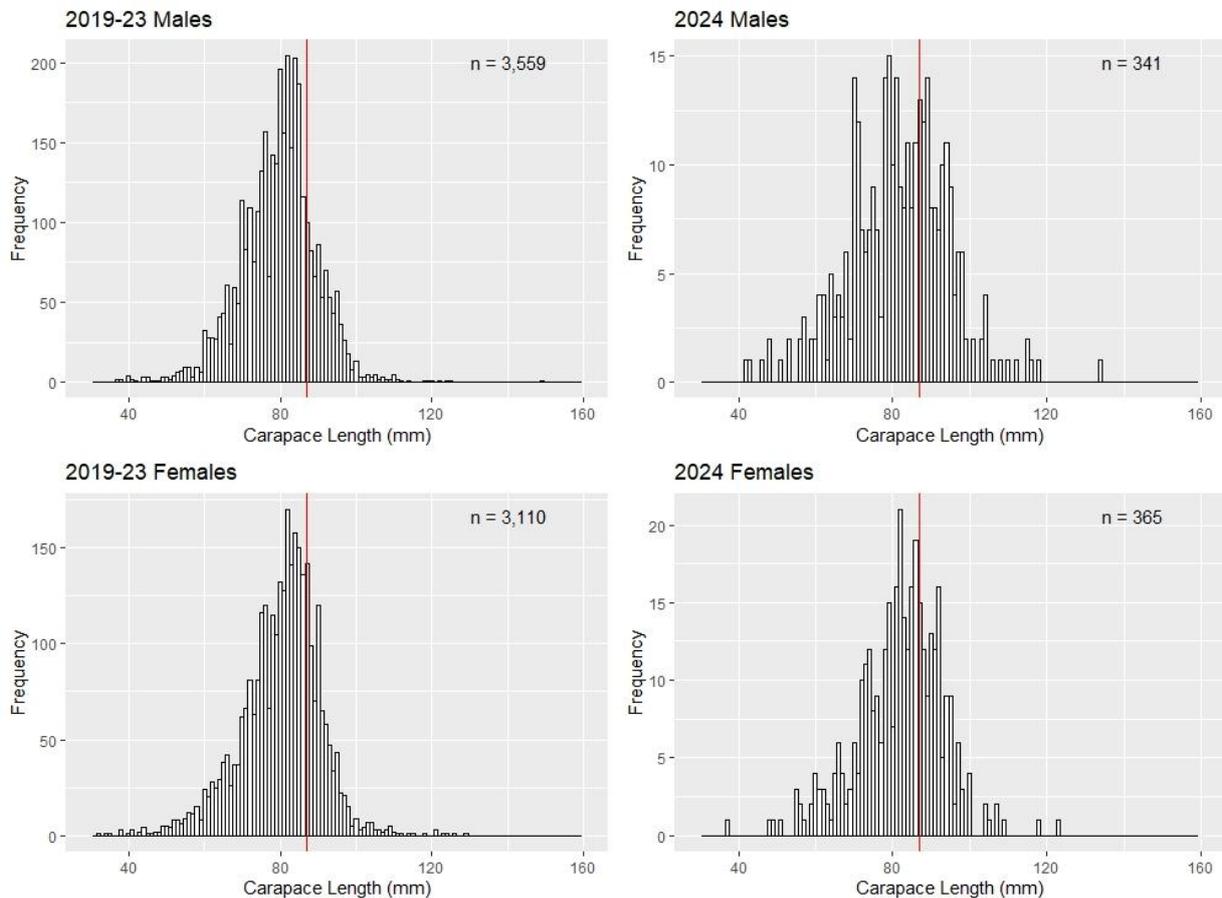


Figure 4: Amalgamated size distribution of lobster measured during offshore surveys between 2019-2023, compared to size distributions observed during offshore surveys in 2024, with the MCRS of 87mm indicated in red.

Table 1: European Lobster (*Homarus gammarus*) 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)	290.37	356.90	363.13	297.06	330.06	359.09	378.10	383.23	326.72	298.92	304.56	298.17	321.55	Tonnes	NIFCA Returns
Amble Landings	69.37	61.32	63.62	54.93	65.45	70.76	65.22	62.25	47.12	43.52	40.56	43.27	46.84	Tonnes	NIFCA Returns
Blyth Landings	30.65	32.21	26.32	23.99	32.54	28.12	33.19	44.73	38.53	33.54	33.76	39.87	37.37	Tonnes	NIFCA Returns
Burnmouth Landings	5.81	47.85	53.57	43.46	52.03	40.65	65.30	56.57	46.34	46.55	44.65	40.51	44.19	Tonnes	NIFCA Returns
Holy Island Landings	56.77	69.62	62.51	52.14	61.13	69.85	61.85	57.25	50.79	45.50	47.29	47.61	50.10	Tonnes	NIFCA Returns
Seahouses Landings	53.10	53.02	69.58	57.57	47.85	64.30	71.09	82.38	77.40	58.76	69.98	62.12	66.62	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	35.72	33.48	28.30	Thousand	NIFCA Returns
Q1 Catch Distribution (% of Annual Total)	7	7	10	9	6	10	7	13	9	8	7	9	8	Q1 %	NIFCA Returns
Q2 Catch Distribution (% of Annual Total)	13	15	17	19	13	12	12	16	14	11	15	15	13	Q2 %	NIFCA Returns
Q3 Catch Distribution (% of Annual Total)	61	51	54	50	61	61	54	55	56	59	58	59	57	Q3 %	NIFCA Returns
Q4 Catch Distribution (% of Annual Total)	19	27	19	22	21	16	27	16	21	22	20	17	21	Q4 %	NIFCA Returns
Primary Reference Points	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Value Ref	Data Source
LPUE	9.44	10.77	10.42	8.86	8.98	10.66	11.30	11.02	10.36	9.23	10.47	11.13	13.27	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	8.87*	8.49*	9.74*	10.37*	11.61*	12.62*	14.16*	16.75	14.71	18.83	20.17	18.54	19.14	£/kg	NIFCA IFCO Reports
Gross Catch Value	2.58	3.03	3.54	3.08	3.83	4.53	5.35	5.62	4.20	4.97	4.92	4.66	4.95	£ 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	881	1,828	11,428	8,685	1,095	3,257	3,232	1,022	110	419	1,992	4,945	1,250	#	NIFCA Survey
Average Carapace Length M (mm)	79	82	80	80	81	79	80	77	68	79	83	81	87	mm	NIFCA Survey
Average Carapace Length F (mm)	78	82	81	81	81	81	80	81	71	78	83	81	86	mm	NIFCA Survey
Max Carapace Length M (mm)	100	130	142	142	153	136	140	125	128	122	149	126	151	mm	NIFCA Survey
Max Carapace Length F (mm)	103	120	145	154	128	143	135	112	126	105	123	129	123	mm	NIFCA Survey
Sex Ratio (% Female)	42.5	44.1	49.6	47.5	48.2	51.9	47.9	61.4	48.2	52.0	50.1	44.6	45.6	%	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.