

Public Attitudes to Angling 2010 – Key Results

from a survey of attitudes and participation in England and Wales
for the Environment Agency



How many people have been freshwater fishing?

- 20% of the population over 12 years old said they had been freshwater fishing in the last ten years, about 9 million people
- 9% had been fishing in the last two years, about 4 million people.
- 7% had been fishing in the last year, about 3 million people.

These estimates have a precision of 1% or so each way.

Has the number of people fishing in freshwater increased?

The law requires anglers to have an Environment Agency rod licence before fishing. Over the last decade, annual sales of rod licences have increased by 35% to almost 1.5 million in 2009/10.

The population in England and Wales increased by 6% from 2001 to 2008. But there was no evidence from the survey that the proportion of the population that goes freshwater fishing has changed significantly over the last ten years. It is possible that some change occurred but was within the precision of the survey estimates and so undetected.

It is likely that the increase in licence sales is due to:

- more anglers being encouraged to comply with the law; and
- an increase in the population

There is some evidence that some anglers may be fishing more frequently so may be buying more short-term licences. Some increase in the proportion of the population going fishing cannot be discounted.

How does the public feel about angling ?

Overall, as shown in Figure 1, attitudes to angling remain positive:

- 74% agreed that angling is an acceptable pastime, 7% disagreed
- 64% agreed that angling is an indicator of good water quality
- 9% disagreed with the view that anglers care for the environment
- 61% agreed that angling fits in well with others activities
- 20% agreed that angling is a cruel pastime.

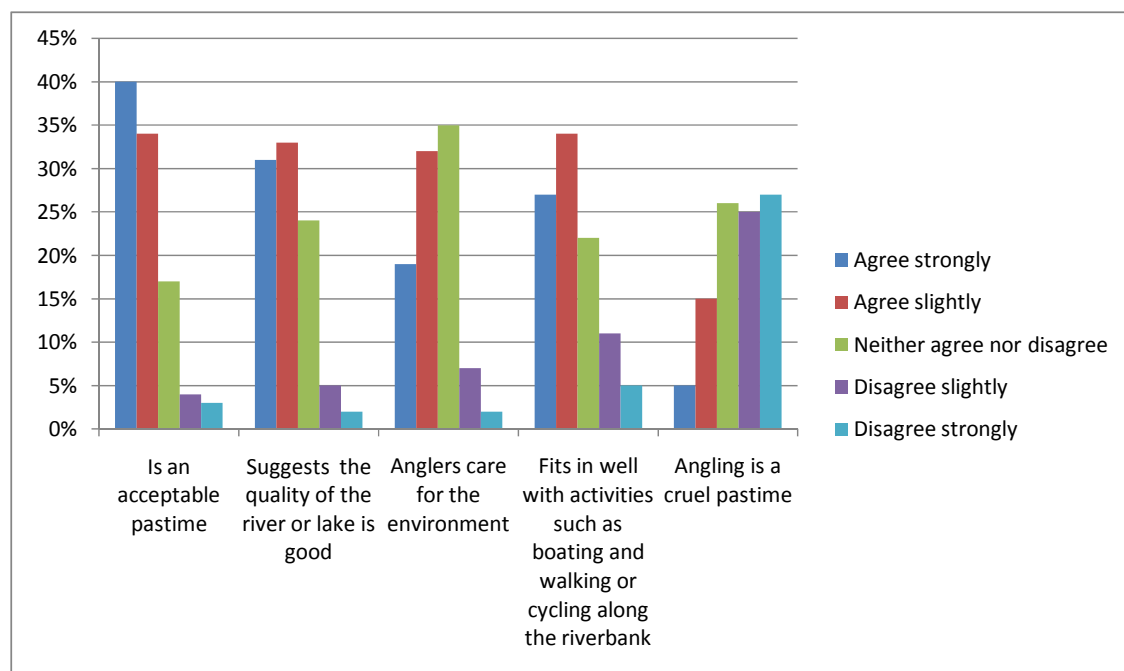


Figure 1: Attitudes to angling in 2010 for those over 12 years old

Have attitudes to angling changed?

Attitudes have become more positive since 2005 for the population as a whole. Amongst those aged 12-16 years, a greater proportion (60%) now consider angling 'an OK thing to do'.

How many people are interested in freshwater fishing?

Interest in going fishing has increased. 12% of those people who have not been fishing in the last two years are 'very' or 'fairly interested' in going in future. This is more than 5 million potential freshwater anglers.

Combined with the 4 million people who have been freshwater fishing in the last two years, 21% of the population (one in every five people) has some interest in freshwater fishing. That is over 9 million people.

Amongst those aged 12-16 years, the level of interest is much greater, almost double that of the population as a whole.

What would encourage people to go fishing?

For potential anglers, the most important factors were having:

- Someone to go with
- Local places to fish
- Information on how to fish.

Initiatives such as:

- Take a friend fishing
- The distribution of guides to local fisheries (1 million distributed in 2009) and
- Angling events such as National Fishing Month.

should help to meet these needs.

Shouldn't more people be buying Environment Agency rod licences?

Yes, apparently. About 3 million people over 12 years old had been freshwater fishing in the year before the survey, about double the number who bought a rod licence.

This appears to conflict with the experience of fisheries officers who generally find that about 5 of the anglers they check are fishing without a licence. However, occasional anglers are less likely to be checked by a fisheries officer.

So two possible explanations are suggested:

- Most licence evaders only fish occasionally
- In responding to the survey, some people interpreted 'going fishing' as just accompanying an angler rather than actually fishing themselves.

Youths (12-16 years old) and females were least likely to have a rod licence.

How can I find out more about the survey?

Only selected key results have been mentioned here. The full report, by Diane Simpson and Guy Mawle, contains more detail including new estimates of the number of sea anglers and is called:

Public Attitudes to Angling 2010. Environment Agency, Bristol. 66 pages.
Product code GEHO0610BSOS-E-E

It can be downloaded free from the publications catalogue on the Environment Agency's website. Just press the Ctrl button and click on:

<http://publications.environment-agency.gov.uk/epages/eapublications.storefront/4c286ecd006ab088273fc0a8029606d1/Product/View/GEHO0610BSOS&2DE&2DE>

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