



Australian Government

Great Barrier Reef  
Marine Park Authority

# GREAT BARRIER REEF Outlook Report 2019

© Matt Curnock

## RECREATIONAL FISHING

Recreational fishing remains one of the most popular activities on the Great Barrier Reef.

Ensuring fisheries are ecologically sustainable is important for maintaining a healthy and resilient Reef.

Illegal fishing continues to add pressure to an already deteriorating system, and concerns exist for some species harvested by commercial and recreational fishers.

As Reef waters heat due to climate change, fishers may need to target different species and there may be more disease prevalence in fish and crustaceans.

### What the Outlook Report 2019 says about recreational fishing

Even though more than half of Queensland's recreational fishers live in the south-east of the state, the highest participation rates (up to 30 per cent of the residential population) are in regional areas. Species targeted by recreational fishers vary along the Region's coastline (see Figure). A comprehensive understanding of patterns in use and impact of recreational fishing is lacking.

#### Benefits of recreational fishing

Fishing is one of the most popular recreational pastimes in the Region, generating somewhere between \$70 and \$311 million in expenditure on recreational fishing and related equipment in 2015–16. Recreational fishing is an integral part of the cultural identity of coastal communities.

People enjoy recreational fishing for the opportunity to catch fresh local seafood, for appreciating the Region's natural beauty and for social enjoyment. Recreational fishers also identify environmental and wellbeing benefits, including fostering respect and connection with the environment and enhancing community cohesion.

### Impacts of recreational fishing

Fishing removes biomass from the Region. When fishing reduces the abundance of target species to below critical levels, sustainability issues arise.

Illegal recreational fishing in the Region is an increasing concern. The number of reported offences has averaged around 500 each year since 2012–13, with a trend of gradual increase to 653 reported offences in 2017–18. The increasing trend in non-compliance has coincided with increased surveillance efforts and new technologies, such as new high-speed patrol vessels capable of night-time detections.

#### Management of recreational fishing

Ensuring ecological sustainability of fisheries is critical. Management arrangements for all recreational (and commercial) fisheries in the Region are currently under review as part of the implementation of the *Queensland Sustainable Fisheries Strategy 2017–2027*.



Top three species caught and kept by recreational fishers during a 12-month period 2015–2016. Source: DAF (Qld) 2017.

TOP THREE SPECIES KEPT IN 2016

	Common coral trout	Spanish mackerel	Mangrove jack	Barred javelin	Pikey bream	School mackerel	Sand whiting	King threadfin
Cairns	🐟	🐟	🐟					
Hinchinbrook	🐟			🐟	🐟			
Townsville		🐟		🐟		🐟		
Mackay				🐟	🐟		🐟	
Rockhampton		🐟				🐟		🐟