
2023 Licence Holder Engagement Surveys

B Quirey

Preamble

Strategic priority: *Increased knowledge of Otago F&G role and activity by licence holders results in improved perceptions of value for money in a licence.*

Otago Fish & Game Council has bolstered its communications efforts in the past five years to advance the above strategic priority. To monitor progress, we have conducted repeat engagement surveys for fishing and game bird whole season licence holders in 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2023. (In 2022, a stakeholder perceptions survey was conducted rather than licence holder engagement surveys.)

The most recent engagement surveys were emailed to licence holders on November 17, 2023. Separate surveys were conducted for anglers and game bird hunters, and the scope was limited to resident licence holders. The following questions were asked:

1. How do you rate your understanding of the role of Otago Fish & Game Council?
2. On a scale of 1 to 9, how do you rate your Otago Fish & Game Council's [fishing/game bird hunting] licence in terms of value for money?
3. What two things could the Otago Fish & Game Council do to improve your rating for the previous question?
4. Do you have any further comments about the work of the Otago Fish & Game Council?
5. Which of the following best describes you?
6. How many seasons have you purchased a [fishing/game bird hunting] licence?
7. What is your age?

An additional question was introduced in the 2023 survey to test survey participants' understanding:

What proportion of Otago Fish & Game revenue do you think comes from central government?

Fishing: A total of 4,135 fishing licence holders (36%) were invited to take part out of 11,548 whole season licence holders. These included family, adult whole season, loyal senior and local area licences. There were 762 responses, 6.60% of all whole season fishing licence holders. The margin of error was 3%.

Game bird hunting: A total of 2,674 game bird hunters (59%) were invited to take part out of 3,907 whole season licence holders. There were 382 responses, 9.08% of all whole season game bird licence holders. The margin of error was 5%.

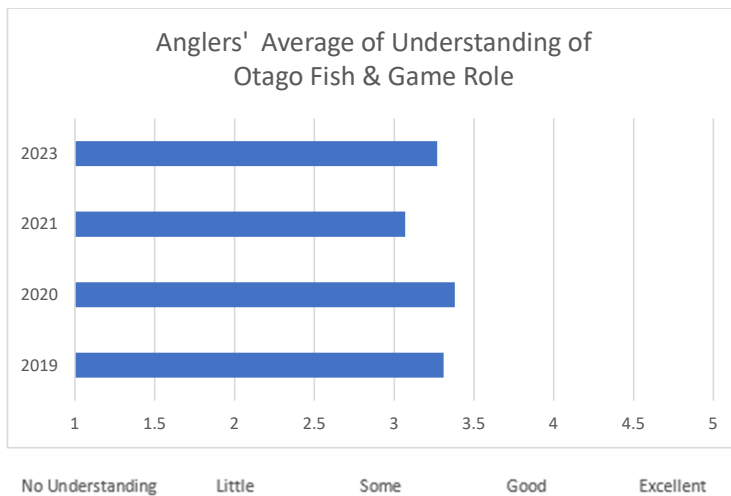
2023 Licence Holder Engagement Surveys		
	Fishing	Game Bird Hunting
Total number of whole season holders in 2023	11,548	3,907
	FWFA, FWA, FSLA, FLAA	
Licence holders invited to participate in the survey	4,135	2674
% of whole season licence holders invited	36%	59%
Responses	762	382
% of whole season licence holders who responded	6.60%	9.08%
Margin of error	3%	5%

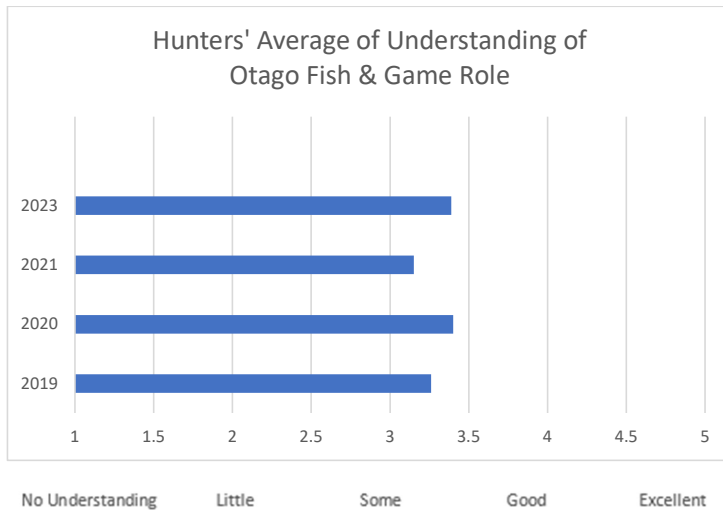
Understanding of Otago Fish & Game Role

Over the past four surveys, licence holders' perceived understanding of the role of Otago Fish & Game has fluctuated up and down (see charts below). The level of understanding improved between 2021 and 2023.

The question about understanding of Fish & Game's role is reliant on licence holders' self-appraisal of their knowledge about this organisation. Survey responses were ranked on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 = no understanding and 5 = excellent understanding). The weighted averages across four seasons of surveying indicates the average game bird licence holder has *some* understanding of the role of the Otago Fish & Game Council.

Commented [IH1]: Id tip this chart on its side and have the full scale from 1 to 5. Looks like a big shift there but it isnt really.

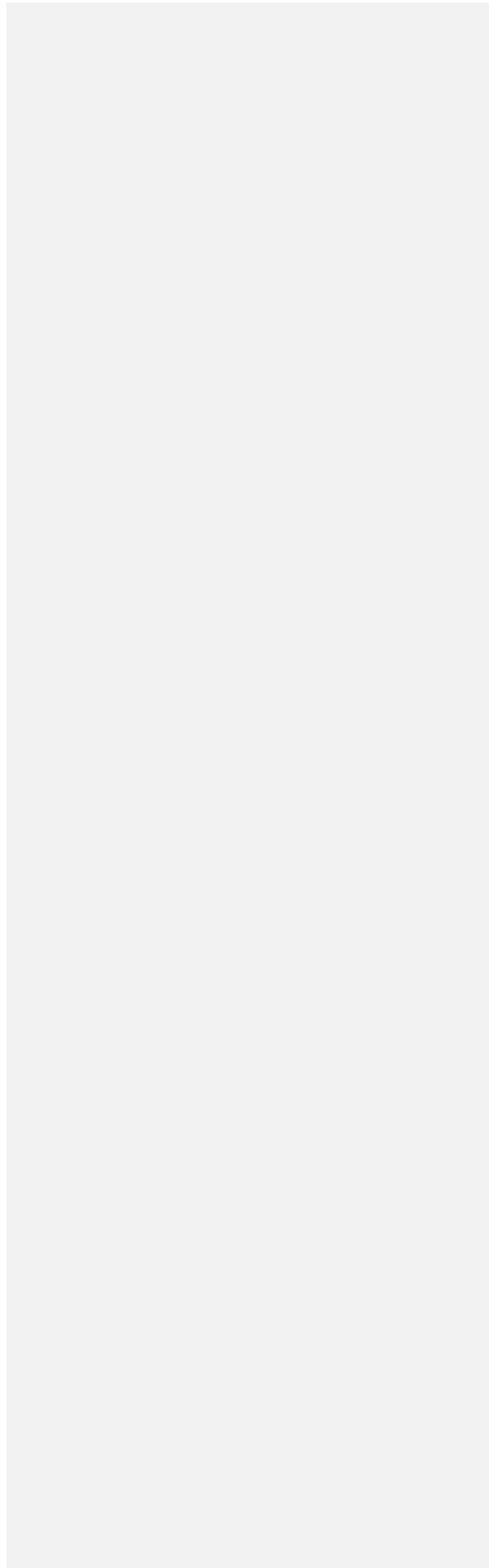


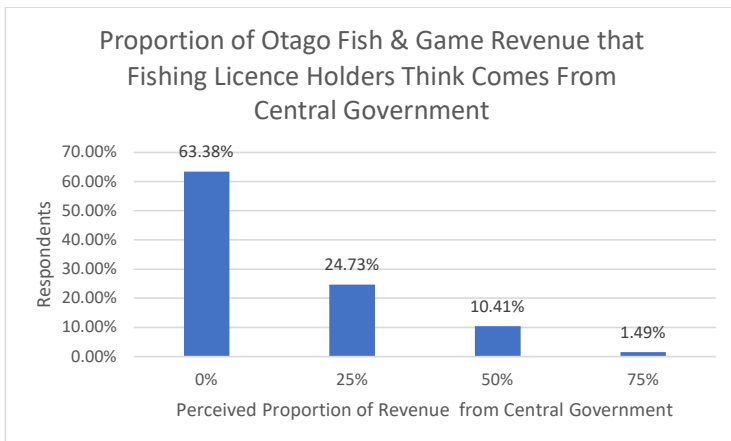
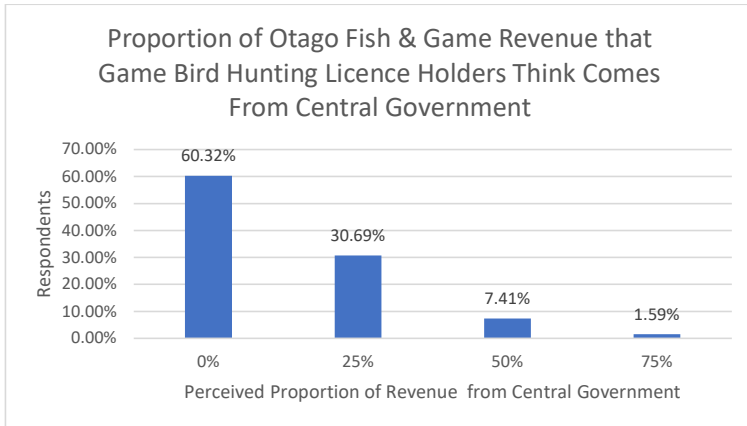


It should be noted that survey participants are likely to be the most engaged licence holders. It is possible to surmise these participants will have a higher-than-average knowledge about Fish & Game than other licence holders.

Proportion of Otago Fish & Game Revenue that Licence Holders Think Comes from Central Government

An additional question to this year’s survey found almost 37% of these “engaged” fishing licence holders and 40% of game bird licence holders think Otago Fish & Game receives central government funding. This is a telling indication that there remains a fundamental gap in understanding that Fish & Game is a user-pays, user-says democratic organisation with statutory powers that, in fact, receives *no* government funding. The following is an example of the challenges that Fish & Game faces to inform and educate its licence holders and the wider public in a crowded world of information and misinformation. Before the general election last year fabricated inaccuracies about Fish & Game funding were aired nationally on a commercial radio network and repeated two days later. The Fish & Game NZ CE was given the opportunity to correct the misinformation on the radio network at a different time slot the following week.





Common Themes about the Role of Otago Fish & Game

Anglers:

Anglers' understanding of the role of Otago Fish & Game Council includes advocacy with government and other groups on behalf of licensed freshwater sports anglers, protection and management of the fishery/hunting environment, education of licence/permit holders, representation in parliament, and monitoring activities such as fish counts, water quality, and licence compliance. Some anglers appreciate the council's efforts in managing fishing in the region, protecting waterways, and promoting recreational fishing and hunting. However, there are varying levels of awareness and opinions, with some expressing dissatisfaction or limited knowledge about the council's activities.

Game Bird Hunters:

Game bird hunters understand the role of Otago Fish & Game Council as primarily responsible for looking after fish and game bird habitats. This includes monitoring bird and fish populations, altering

regulations for a healthy population, promoting young anglers and hunters through initiatives like "Take A Kid Fishing" and junior hunting days. They engage in activities such as wetland restoration, advocating for water quality, conducting bird counts, and ensuring sustainable hunting practices. While some hunters express satisfaction with the council's efforts, others may have limited awareness or specific concerns about the allocation of funds and legal issues. Overall, there is a recognition of the council's role in managing and enhancing the region's recreational hunting and fishing resources.

Comparison of Themes between Anglers and Hunters:

Based on the feedback provided, there are some differences in the understanding of the role of Otago Fish & Game Council between anglers and game bird hunters:

Focus on Species:

- Anglers primarily emphasise the council's role in managing and protecting fisheries, including fish counts, stocking, and water quality monitoring.
- Game bird hunters, on the other hand, highlight the council's involvement in game bird habitat management, wetland conservation, and bird counts.

Activities and Initiatives

- Anglers often mention activities such as fish counting, fry release, licence patrols, securing access, and educational initiatives such as kids' fishing and new 'beat' systems on rivers.
- Game bird hunters frequently discuss wetland restoration, planting initiatives, and promoting hunting through events like junior hunting days and "Take a Kid Fishing".

Perception of Effectiveness:

- Anglers' feedback varies, with some expressing satisfaction with the council's work in managing fishing and protecting waterways, while others may express concerns or limited awareness.
- Game bird hunters generally seem to have a positive view of the council's efforts, acknowledging initiatives in wetland conservation, bird counts, and habitat protection.

Concerns and Criticisms:

- Anglers may express concerns about water quality, the management of waterways, and, in some cases, dissatisfaction with the allocation of funds or legal battles.
- Game bird hunters may not explicitly mention concerns or criticisms, with more emphasis on the positive aspects of habitat conservation and hunting initiatives.

Species-Specific Regulations:

- Anglers often mention regulations related to fish, including catch limits, season lengths, and compliance checks.
- Game bird hunters may discuss regulations related to bag limits, season lengths, and using licence fees to survey and conduct compliance checks on game bird hunters.

Community Engagement:

- Anglers may mention interactions with the council through angling clubs, online platforms, and newsletters, with varying levels of engagement.
- Game bird hunters often highlight positive interactions, with some mentioning personal connections or family members involved in the council.

Financial Concerns:

- Some anglers express concerns about the cost of licences and may question the value for money, particularly when targeting introduced species.
- Game bird hunters do not express similar financial concerns and seem more focused on the positive impact of licence fees on habitat protection and bird populations.

In summary, while there are common themes such as habitat protection and environmental advocacy, the specific activities, perceptions, and concerns of anglers and game bird hunters regarding Otago Fish & Game Council's role differ based on their respective recreational pursuits and priorities.

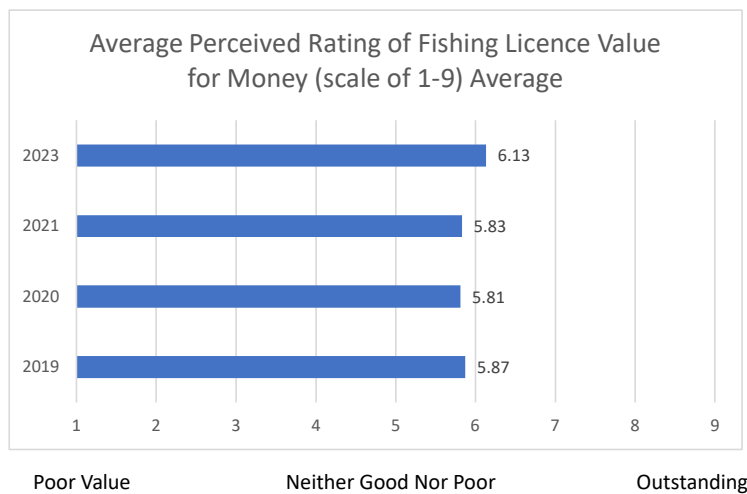
Previous surveys have shown a positive correlation between years of fishing and hunting experience and knowledge of Otago Fish & Game.

Perceived Value for Money for a Licence

Survey responses for perceived value for money for whole season licences were ranked on a 1 – 9 scale (with 1 = poor value and 9 = outstanding).

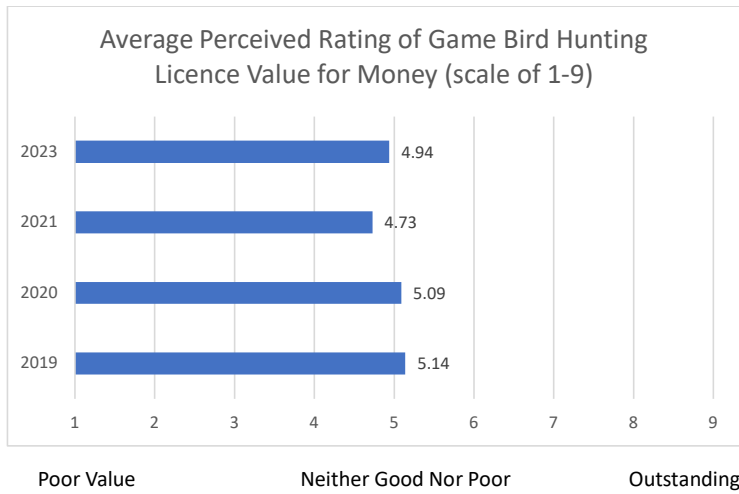
Anglers

On a scale of 1 – 9, the average perceived rating by anglers of fishing licence value for money is 6.13 in 2023 – on the positive side of Neither Good Nor Poor but not Outstanding. This latest outcome is the highest rating over all four surveys and is an improvement from 5.83 in 2021. The average across the four surveys is 5.91.

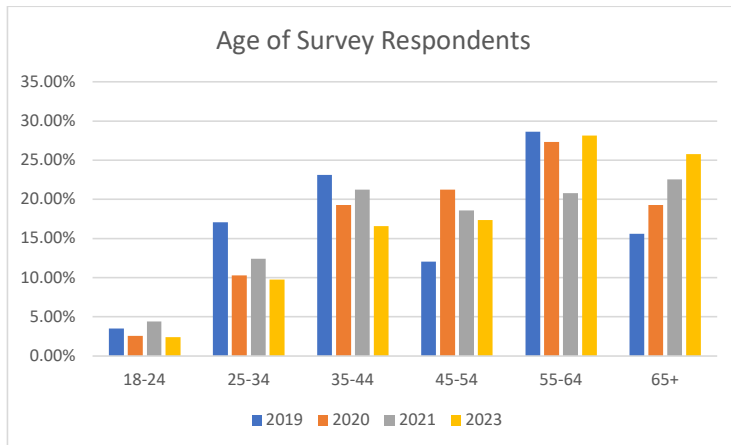


Game Bird Hunters

On a scale of 1 – 9, the average perceived rating by anglers of game bird licence value for money is 4.94 in 2023, which is just below Neither Good Nor Poor. While this is an improvement from 4.73 in 2021, it is below the highest rating (5.14) in the four surveys. The average across all four surveys is 4.96.



Age of Survey Respondents



Number of Years Survey Respondents Have Purchased a Licence



Number of Seasons Survey Respondents Have Gone Hunting



A PowerPoint presentation will be delivered to the Council at the February planning meeting.

Recommendation:

That this report be received.

Bruce Quirey

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January 31, 2024