

RECREATIONAL FISHERIES IN LITHUANIA

Putting Lithuania on the Map of Recreational Fishing in Europe

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Algirdas Domarkas

The Union of Pisciculturists
Lithuania

Eglė Radaitytė

Lithuanian State Pisciculture
and Fisheries Research Centre
Lithuania

The goal of the presentation is to introduce the field of recreational fisheries in Lithuania, which has been going through dynamic changes in recent years.

The presentation will discuss:

- Angling in Lithuania;
 - Social and Economic Value of Recreational Fishing (data collected from actual surveys: Attitudes Towards Fishing, Money Spent on Fishing and Non-Observance of Fishing Rules);
 - Future of Recreational Fisheries.
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Angling in Lithuania

Angling has always been one of the most popular leisure pursuits in Lithuania. This is not surprising, as four percent (2,639 square km) of the country's territory is covered by water and, in addition, there is the Baltic Sea coast and the Curonian Lagoon, which are popular fishing locations as well.



Picture 1. River Basins in Lithuania

Angling in Lithuania

However, there has always been the common misconception that the development of recreational fishing and the introduction of fishing tourism could have no positive effect to increase fish stocks and assist conservation.



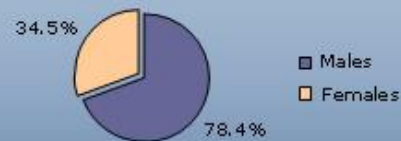
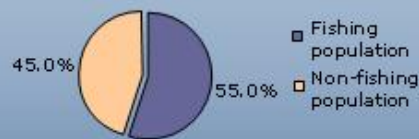
Photo: T. Kolesnikovs

It is only now after some research and the involvement of non-governmental organisations that the full potential can be seen.

Social and Economic Value of Recreational Fishing

“Attitudes Towards Fishing”

▪ The survey “Attitudes Towards Fishing” was conducted by Vilmorus, a market research company, on behalf of the Alliance of Associations “Žuvininkų Rūmai” (The Chamber of Pisciculturists, NGO, Lithuania) in 2002. The finding was that approximately 1.5 million (or 55 percent) of Lithuanian citizens quite often take fishing rods and spend their leisure time by the rivers and lakes. Angling is well liked for 8 males out of 10 and 3-4 females out of 10.

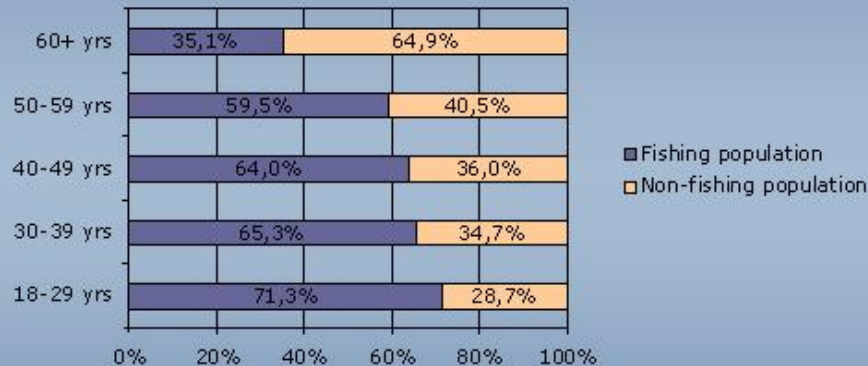


Picture 2. Percentage of fishing population.

Picture 3. Fishing population by sex.

Social and Economic Value of Recreational Fishing

- The survey showed that recreational fishing was the most popular among people of between 18 and 30 years of age. This is characteristic to 7 out of 10 of survey participants. It is interesting to note, that the age of angling enthusiasts correlates with the hobby: with age increasing, the comparative weight of fishermen tends to go down.



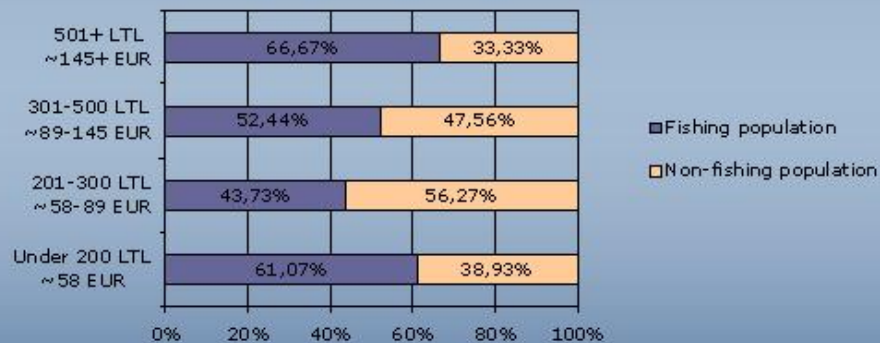
Picture 4. Age indicators of fishing population (2002).

- Consequently, fishing as a way of recreation can be linked with employable age: 2 out of 3 respondents of working age enjoy angling, while this type of recreation loses its attraction in the retirement age, with merely 1 out of 3 of surveyed pensioners taking their fishing rods and spending time by the rivers and lakes.

Social and Economic Value of Recreational Fishing

“Attitudes Towards Fishing”

- Speaking about financial conditions of living, they are related with fisheries in several different ways: 6 out of 10 persons with low income (up to 200 Litass per household member or approximately 58 Euros) seek financial benefit, i.e., a source of income, rather than relaxation in angling.



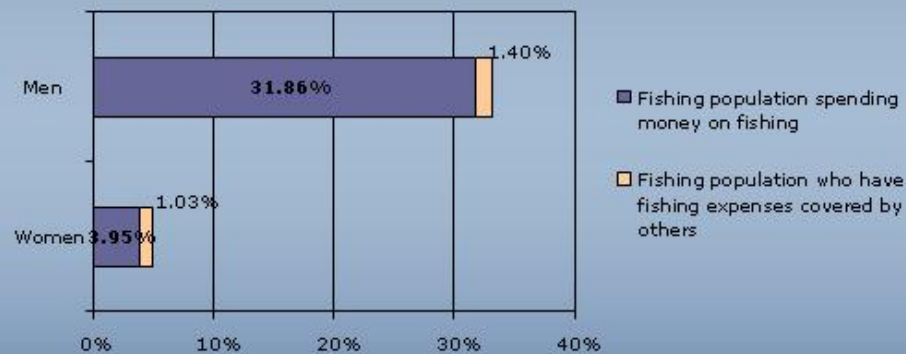
Picture 5. Income indicators of fishing population (2002).

Increasing income changes motivation of angling considerably.

Social and Economic Value of Recreational Fishing

"Money Spent on Fishing"

- The survey "Money Spent on Fishing" carried out in 2003 showed that one angler in Lithuania spent an average of 140 Litas (approximately 40.5 Euros) on angling needs per surveyed year.



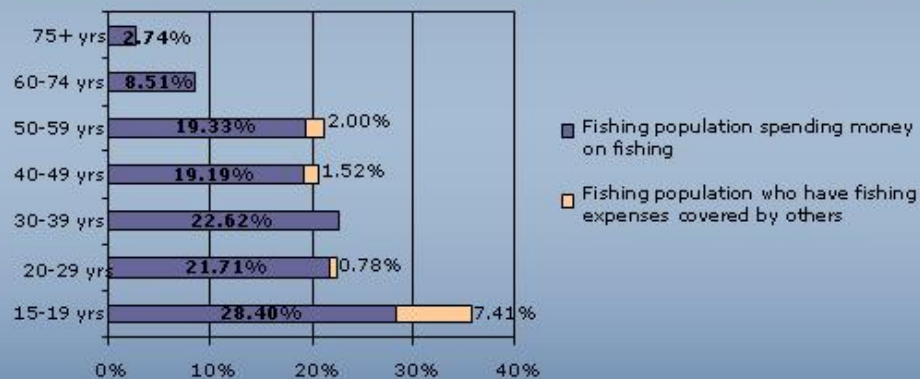
Picture 6. Distribution of fishing expenses by sex (2003).

- Without any doubt, men spend money on fishing needs more often (or they get more fishing rods as gifts) than women do. Some 33.3 percent of men and merely 5.0 percent of women spend money on fishing.

Social and Economic Value of Recreational Fishing

"Money Spent on Fishing"

- Young people tend to spend money on their fishing needs more often, with the indicator reaching 29 percent in the age group of 15-19 years. Persons of 75 and more years of age have least angling-related expenses.

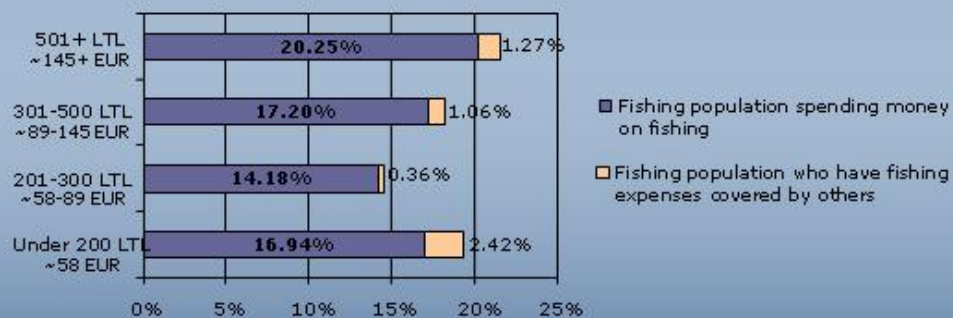


Picture 7. Distribution of fishing expenses by age (2003).

Social and Economic Value of Recreational Fishing

“Money Spent on Fishing”

- By income per member of a household, the highest percentage of persons having fishing expenses was in the group with over 500 Litas of income per month (21.6 percent) and among those with under 200 Litas of monthly income (19.3 percent).



Picture 8. Income indicators of fishing population (2003).

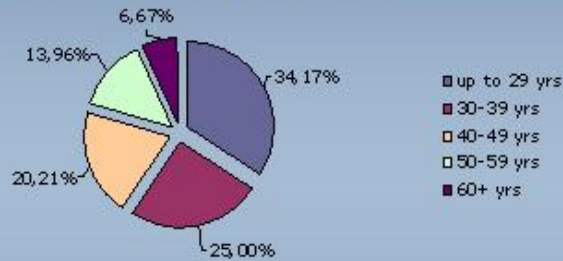
Social and Economic Value of Recreational Fishing

“Non-Observance of Fishing Rules”

- Meanwhile, the main barrier for the development of recreational fisheries still is illegal fishing, which mostly affects the fish stocks of small water bodies.
 - The survey “Non-Observance of Fishing Rules” conducted in 2004 indicates that Lithuanian citizens had severely breached fishing regulations on up to 0.7 million occasions per year.
 - According to the results of the survey, fishing regulations were violated on ~4.86 million occasions over the year. The survey cannot be considered as highly precise. Sociologists have noted years ago that people tend to lie when asked about disgraceful issues. If an activity is seen as not fully acceptable, respondents are likely to varnish such data. Poaching is not listed as a virtue, so the actual figures referring to violations of fishing regulations may be even bigger.
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Social and Economic Value of Recreational Fishing

- As a rule, young people under the age of 29, especially pupils and students, are more likely to breach fishing rules than the older population. This implies that failure to take efficient measures might lead to yet higher number of violations in the sector.



Picture 10. Age indicators of fishing population who have breached fishing rules (2004).

- According to the data published in Lithuanian media, environmental agencies solved 4,462 violations of fishing rules in 2003 and imposed fines of 183 Litas (approx 53 Euros) on an average. A comparison of the survey's data with results provided by fisheries agencies, merely 1 or 0.1 percent of 1,000 violations of fisheries regulations are solved in the country.
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Future of Recreational Fisheries

- All the above-mentioned figures indicate that the current polarisation of freshwater fisheries towards small-sized commercial fishing has no future and might doom anglers to years of poverty.
 - One of the ways out is the redirection of the industry branch towards recreational fisheries and fishing tourism.
 - In a number of countries, the branch of industry is listed as state priority and granted relevant funding, mainly due to altered public interest and an enormous economic effect.
 - The increase in the popularity of angling makes possible the development of an entire specialised infrastructure.
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Future of Recreational Fisheries

- Lithuanian State Pisciculture and Fisheries Research Centre breeds many fish, however, raises no specific objects for recreational fishing (grayling, brown trout, etc.) because the institution's bylaws still stipulate it should restore fish with commercial value.
 - Insufficient pisciculture and fish-protection efforts have led to impoverished stock of fish in most water bodies, which, as a result, lost their appeal to anglers. All these reasons are main factors hindering the development of recreational fisheries market.
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Future of Recreational Fisheries

- The collected data convinced the governmental institutions to pay attention to those problems as well. The Law on Amateur Fishing was approved in 2004.
 - It should be noted that recreational fishing has priority against commercial fishing, as emphasized in the law.
 - To evaluate and develop regulations on angling, there was a Board of Amateur Fishing Development established from governmental and non-governmental organisations.
 - These steps are expected to form a new perspective for the development of recreational fisheries in Lithuania.
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