

Recreational Diving In New Zealand

A summary of key points from the NZUA 2020
'Survive the Dive' survey



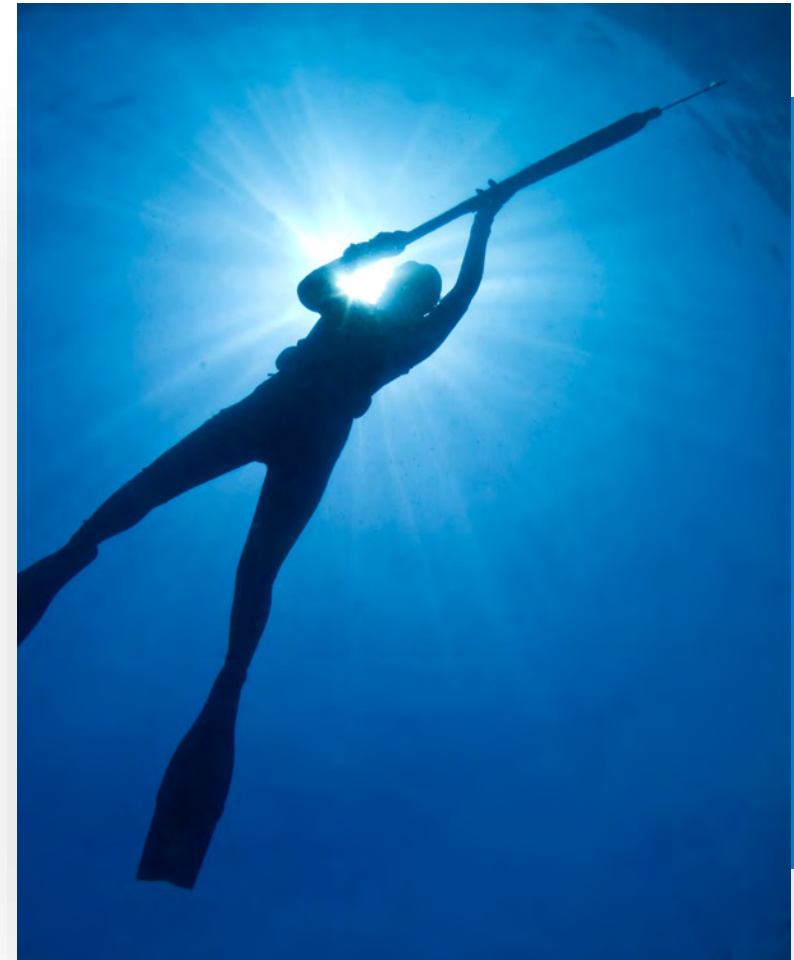
Introduction

In April and May 2020, the New Zealand Underwater Association conducted its survey of recreation divers in New Zealand.

It is the first survey of its kind to be conducted by the New Zealand Underwater Association.

The initiative serves several purposes:

- To establish a baseline of diver safety knowledge in New Zealand, in order to track progress over the time.
- To inform decision processes pertaining to future safety priorities.
- To understand more about New Zealander diver behaviours and attitudes across a wide range of criteria.

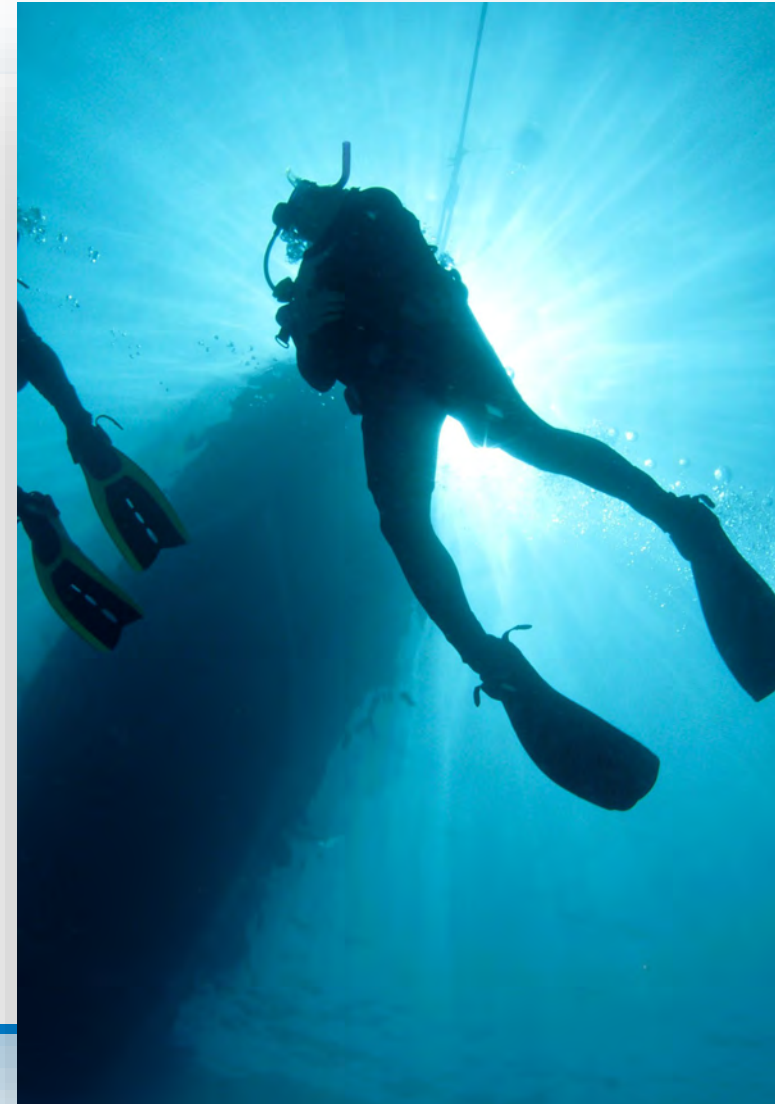


Distribution

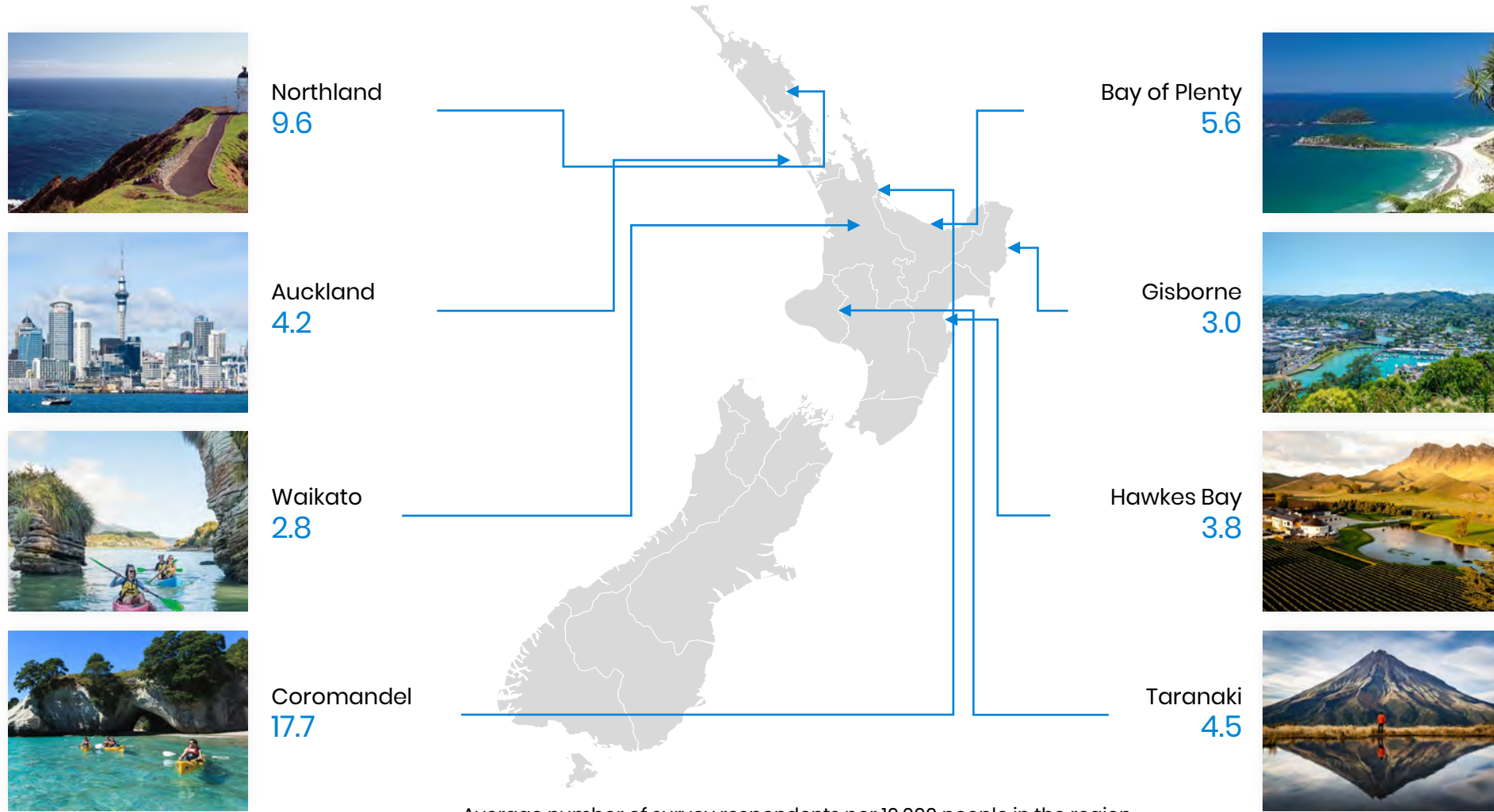
The survey was distributed across multiple channel

- Social media
- Native advertising on high priority sites such as Stuff.co.nz and NZHerald.co.nz
- Through the NZUA's network of partners
- Email newsletter

2,195 divers from around New Zealand took part.

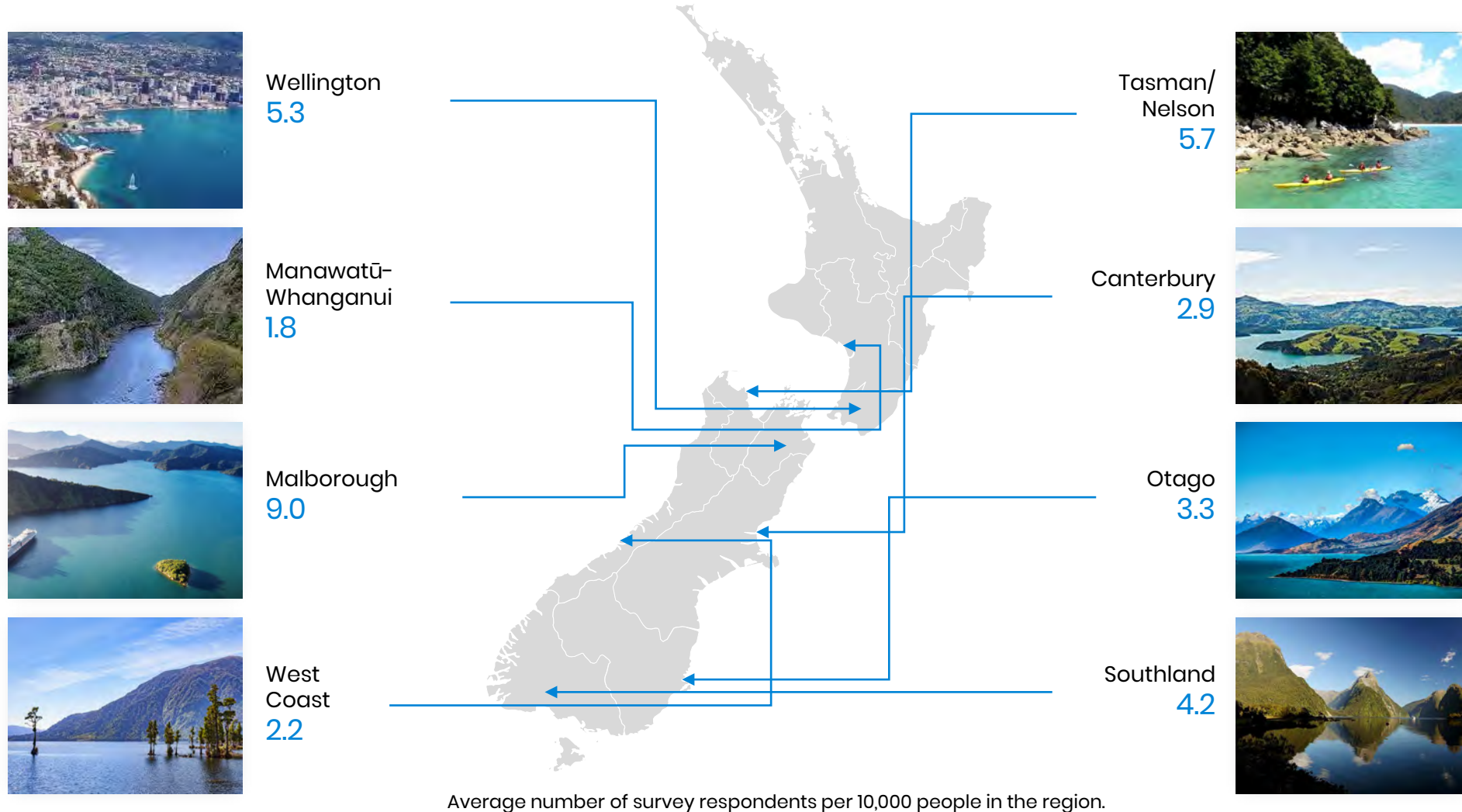


Regional Representation – Upper/Mid North Island



Average number of survey respondents per 10,000 people in the region.

Regional Representation – Lower NI & South Island





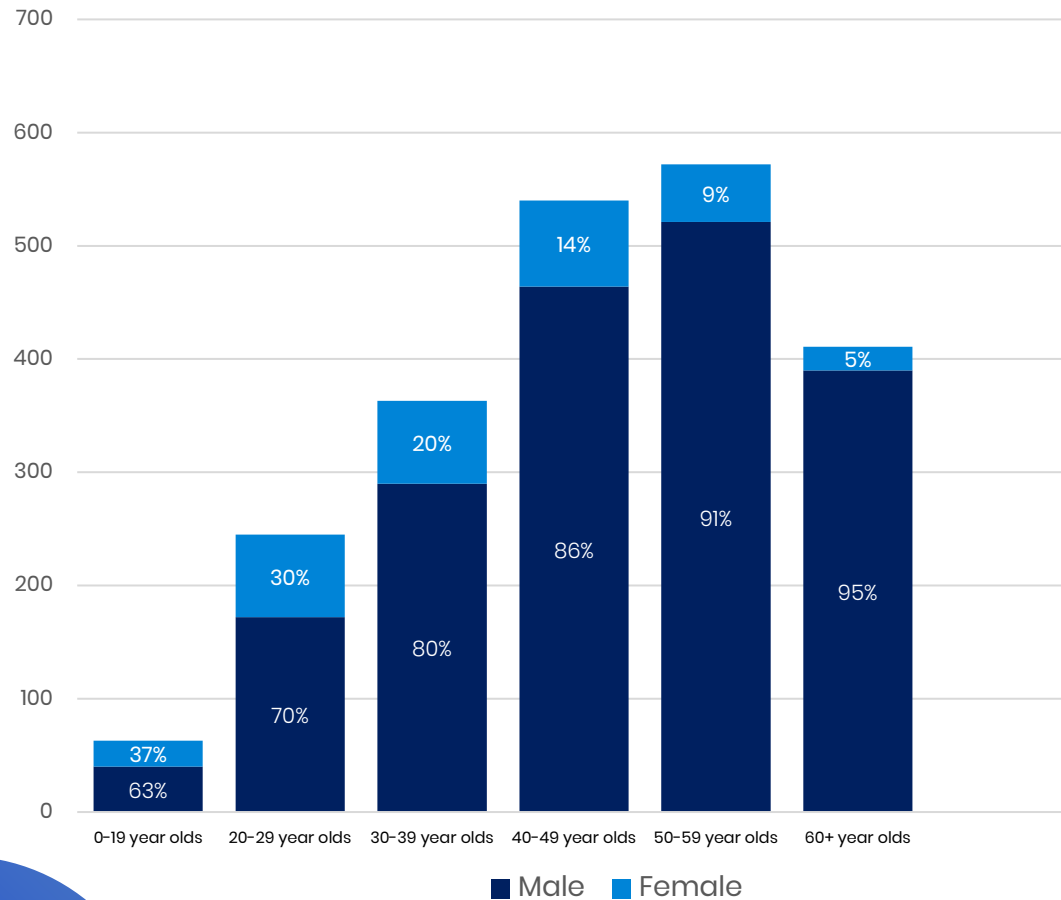
Divers are found nationwide

Average number of respondents per 10,000 people in NZ = 4.3

- People from almost all of New Zealand took part in the survey. The Chatham Islands is the only region not to be specifically noted by a respondent
- On average there were 4.3 respondents for every 10,000 people.
- Looking at the level of respondents by region, per 10,000 people:
 - Regions with landlocked cities such as Waikato and Manawātū – Whanganui had lower numbers of respondents as a proportion of population.
 - Regions renowned for their coastal attractions had the highest number of respondents by proportion of population
 - The Coromandel region had far more respondents than any other region, with 17.7 respondents per 10,000 people – that's over four times the national average of 4.3.
 - Northland (9.6) and Marlborough (9.0) had the second and third highest number of respondents per 10,000 people – over twice the national average.
 - It is unknown if travel to holiday destinations has affected this data

Who is Diving?

Respondents by age & gender



Age Groups

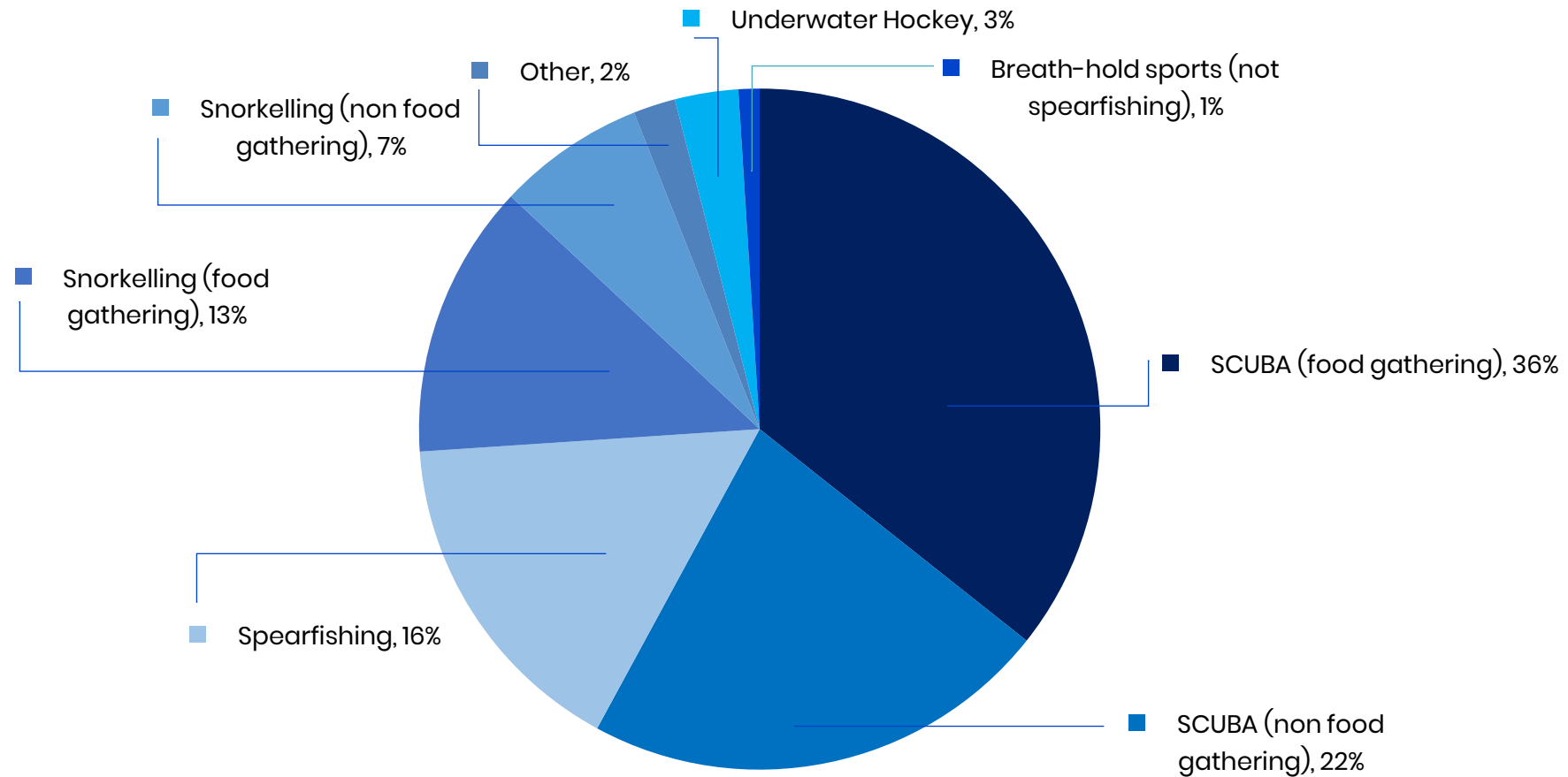
The diving community is aging with new participants in younger age groups declining:

- Over two thirds (69%) of survey respondents are 40+ years old.
- 40-59-year olds are the biggest age group by far – over half of survey respondents are in this group.
- The numbers are lower for younger survey respondents, with less than a third (28%) between 20-39 years old and only 3% under 19
- This is a globally recognised trend

Gender

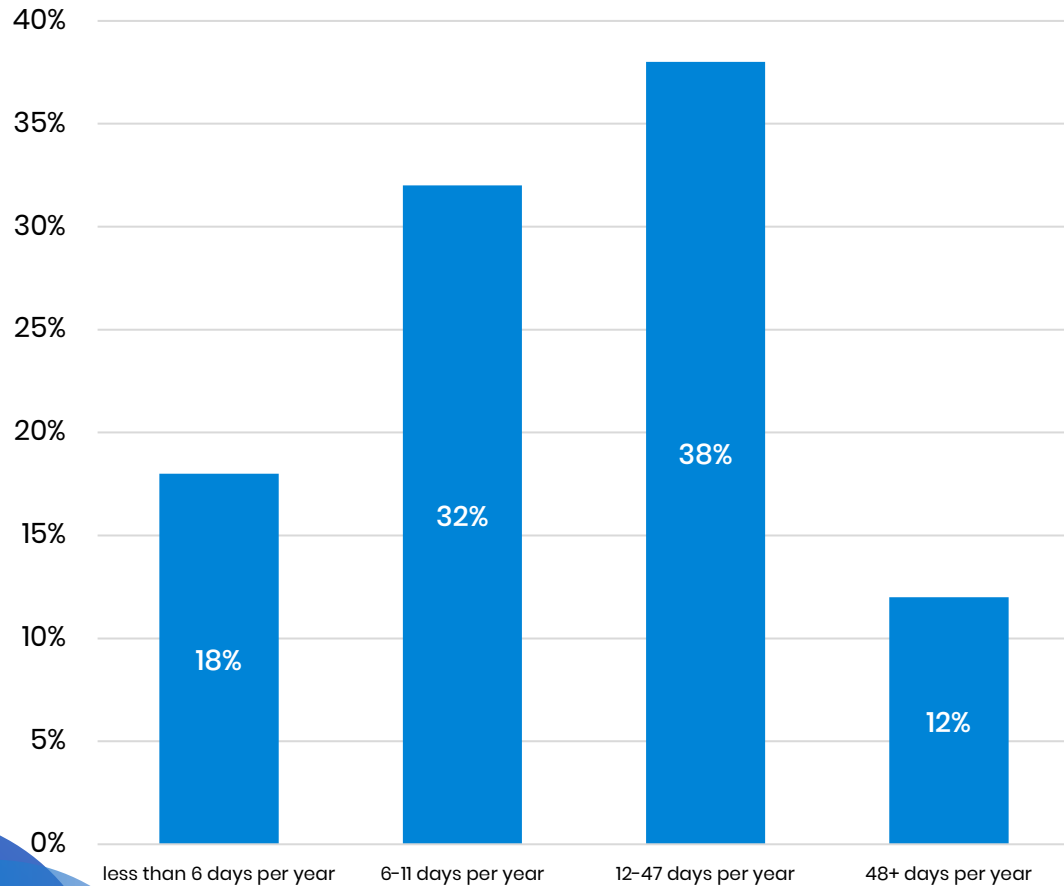
- We see many more male survey respondents than females. Overall all 86% of respondents are male.
- The proportion of males to females increases by age group. In the 50+ age group, over 90% of respondents are male.
- In the younger age groups the proportion of males to females is encouraging but still not representative of the population – e.g. under 19-year olds are 63% male/37% female.
- The retention of female participants as they age could be an area of focus

Primary activities and frequency of diving (1)



Primary activities and frequency of diving (2)

Frequency of diving



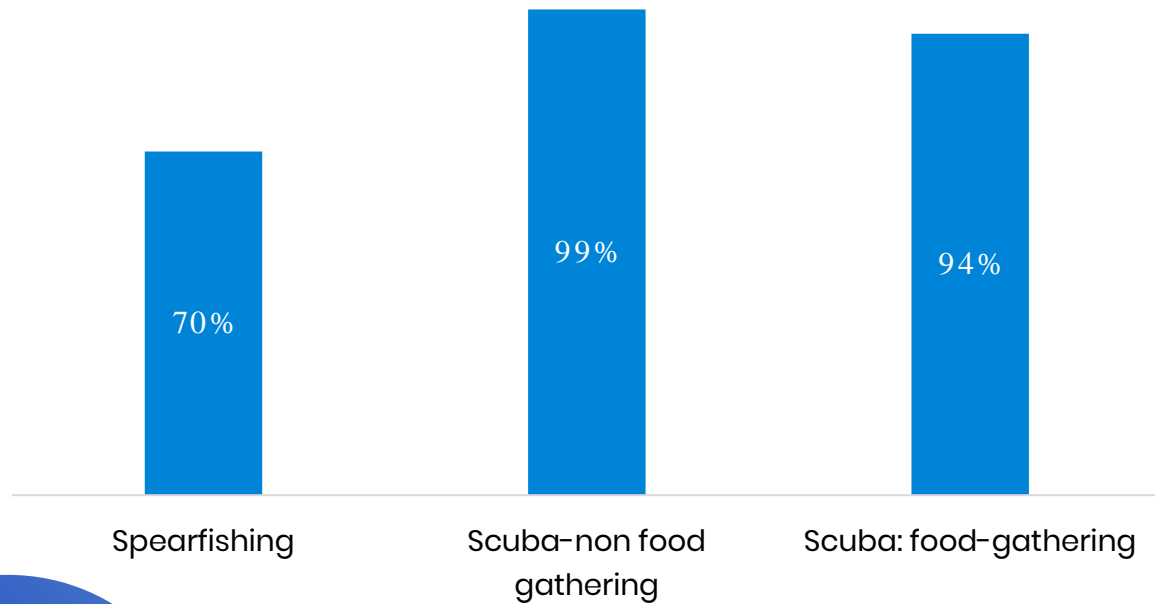
Comments

- 94% of all survey respondents are scuba-diving, snorkelling or spear fishing.
- At 16%, Spearfishing may be under-represented in the survey
- Food gathering remains the dominant reason for diving: almost 2/3s of survey respondents (65%).
- The remaining 35% dive for non-food gathering purposes such as photography, or are taking part in activities like underwater hockey or breath-hold sports.
- 50% of respondents dive less than once a month on average.
- 24% of respondents dive at least once per week
- 2% of respondents dive at least 5-days per week indicating a level of diving for work

Dive Training and Qualifications

83% of all respondents hold a dive qualification, however qualification rates vary by activity.

Percentage of Respondents with Training/Qualification

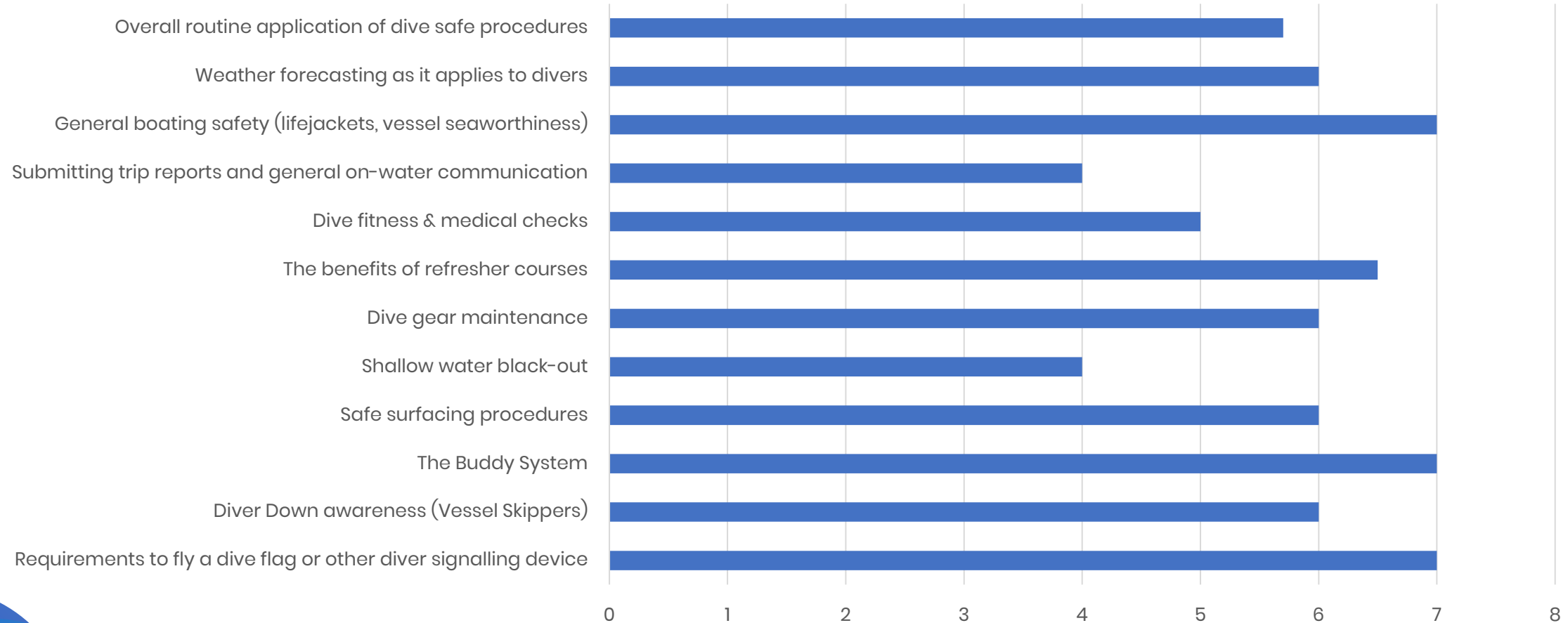


Comments

- Where survey respondents have a dive qualification, most have been trained through PADI, SSI or NZUA.
- Spearfishing offers limited formal training
 - Only 70% of respondents who primarily go spearfishing have been trained
 - It is likely that the training encountered by spearos was in the SCUBA discipline
 - Spearfishing respondents who participate less than six days per year have the lowest rate of qualifications (55%)
- SCUBA dive qualifications are valid for life
 - With 2/3s of respondents 40+ years old, it's likely some had their training years earlier and may not be up to speed with the latest training information.

How well are safety principles understood?

Knowledge of core safety principles is mixed.



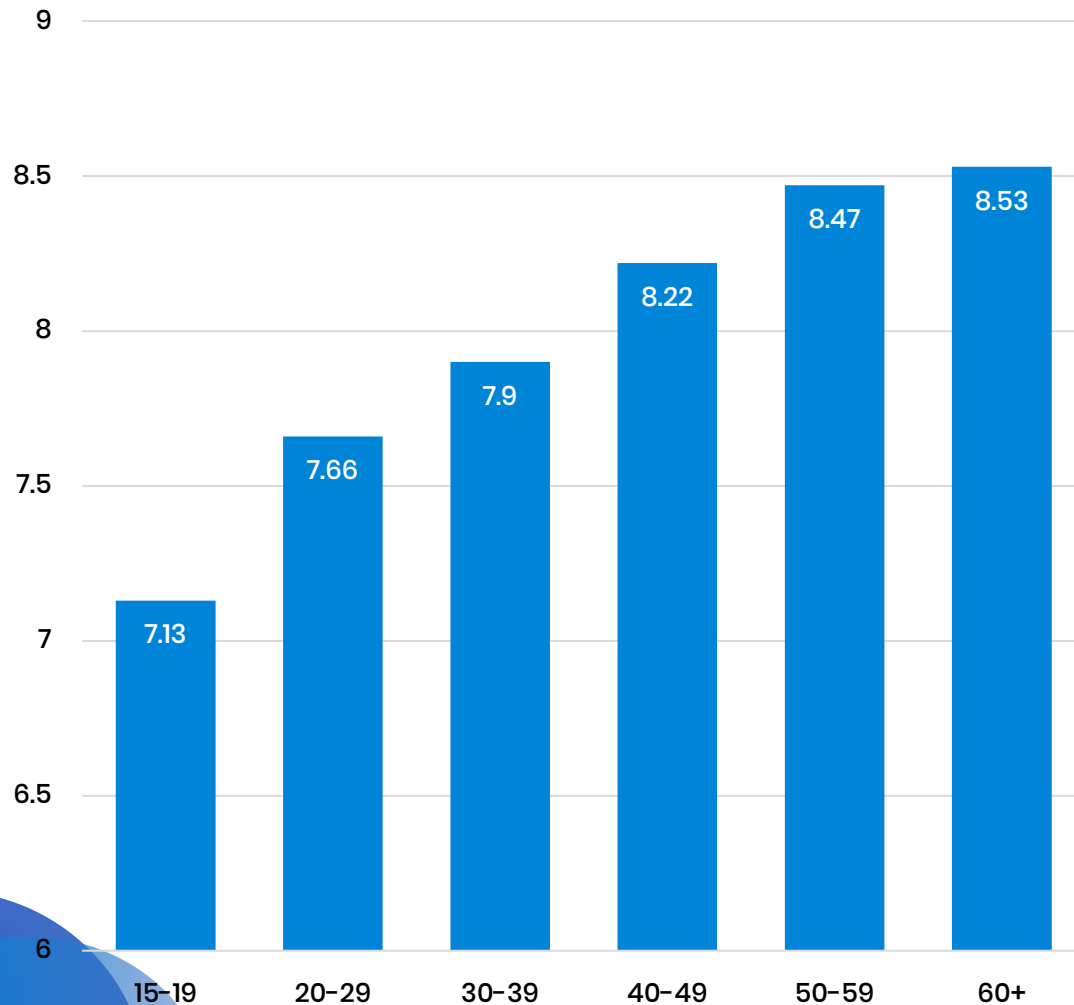
Self-rated response average for all divers to familiarity with dive safety principles on a scale of 0 to 10

How well are safety principles understood?

Comments

- Training works
 - 27% of unqualified divers rated overall safety knowledge at a '6' or less
 - Only 5% of qualified divers rated overall safety knowledge 6 or less
- Survey respondents rate the following areas at a 7 or more:
 - Use of dive flags or other diver signal devices,
 - The Buddy System
 - General boating safety
 - (7/10 average offers room for measurable improvement)
- Areas of significant concern by average rating 5 or less:
 - Shallow water blackout
 - Dive fitness and medical checks
 - Dive refresher courses
 - Submitting trip reports
- Safety is a key element of dive training courses and this is reflected in the higher overall ratings by respondents with dive qualifications.
- 2/3s of survey respondents are 40+ years old. The low average overall ratings of 5/10 for refresher courses and fitness/medical checks in this age group remains a concern
- A significant number of respondents who go spearfishing give the risk shallow water blackouts a low rating.
- The need for formal or informal trip reporting appears to be a concern across the board

Average safety knowledge trends by age



Self-rated levels of safety principle knowledge increases with age.



Self-rated safety knowledge increases by age even though formal training may have been decades in the past.



The benefit of refresher courses increases only marginally with age.



It is important to note that not every aspect of diver safety knowledge is necessary for every diver. For example, shallow-water blackout is very unlikely to affect SCUBA divers

General comments about self-rated safety principle ratings comparing food-gathering versus non food-gathering



Food gathering respondents have a lower rating for the Buddy System than non-food gathering respondents



Food gathering respondents have a significantly lower rating for their understanding of the need for medical checks and refresher courses than non-food gathering respondents – only 70% greater than 7 out of 10 versus 91% of non-food gathering



Generally, respondents who dive predominantly for food gathering have lower levels of knowledge than respondents who dive for non-food related reasons.

Brief Conclusions – Recreational Divers Survey 2020

While the NZUA acknowledges that distribution of future divers surveys needs improvement to ensure the sample group is not skewed by its network of highly engaged divers, the Association is pleased to take this first step in understanding the safety and behavioural landscape of the New Zealand diving community.



Key areas of focus include:

- The potential for formal training outside SCUBA specific activities, especially with the rising popularity of spearfishing
- A need to engage communities where food gathering is the dominant driver of activity.
- The need to continually reinforce the benefits of medical checks and refresher courses.
- Participation in younger age groups appears to be falling significantly. This is reinforced by global data.
- The industry may need to focus more on attracting and retaining females to the sport as a means of rebuilding participation and engagement in diving

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