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Status of key fish stocks

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Human use of the oceans (including fishing) and environmental conditions affect the abundance and health of fish stocks ¹ at national and global levels. In order to maintain fish stocks for future generations, it is important to track their status and adjust management measures (such as harvest rates and limits). This indicator reports on the status (Healthy, Cautious, Critical or Uncertain) of key Canadian fish stocks as found in the [Sustainability Survey for Fisheries](#). This indicator tracks progress on the [2022 to 2026 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy](#) target: By 2026, at least 55% of Canada's key fish stocks are in the Cautious and Healthy zone.

▼ National and by region

Key results

- Many of the new stocks added in recent years have an uncertain status
- Of the 195 key fish stocks assessed in 2022:
 - 66 stocks (34%) were in the Healthy zone
 - 24 stocks (12%) were in the Cautious zone
 - 23 stocks (12%) were in the Critical zone
 - 82 stocks (42%) could not be classified and have an uncertain status

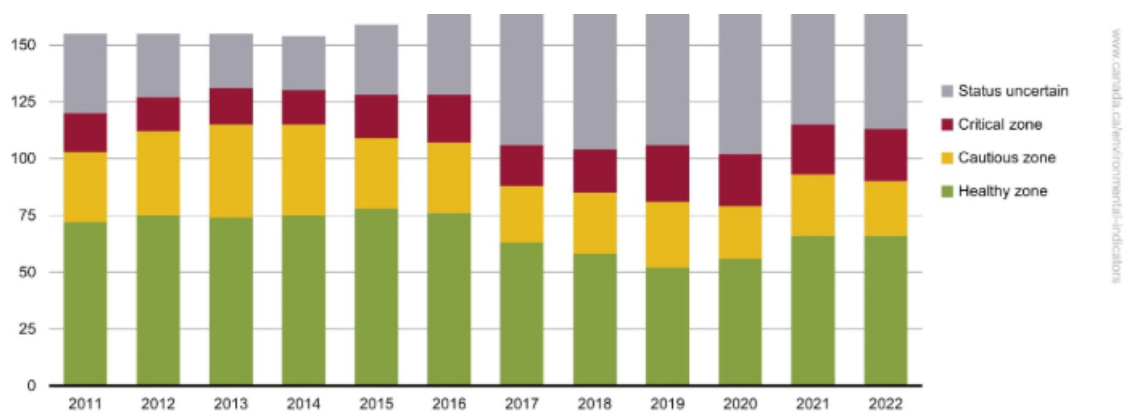
Status of key fish stocks, Canada, 2011 to 2022

Number of stocks

200

175





► [Data table for the long description](#)

How this indicator was calculated

Note: The status of fish stocks is determined by comparing stock indices, such as the abundance, to reference points. Stocks include a variety of harvested marine animal species, not only finfish. Comparisons between years should be made with caution, as the list of key fish stocks has changed.

Source: Fisheries and Oceans Canada (2024) [Sustainability Survey for Fisheries](#).

The increase in the number of stocks with an uncertain status starting in 2014 reflects a lack of sufficient information to reliably assess the status of some stocks, and the addition of stocks with uncertain status to the Sustainability Survey for Fisheries.

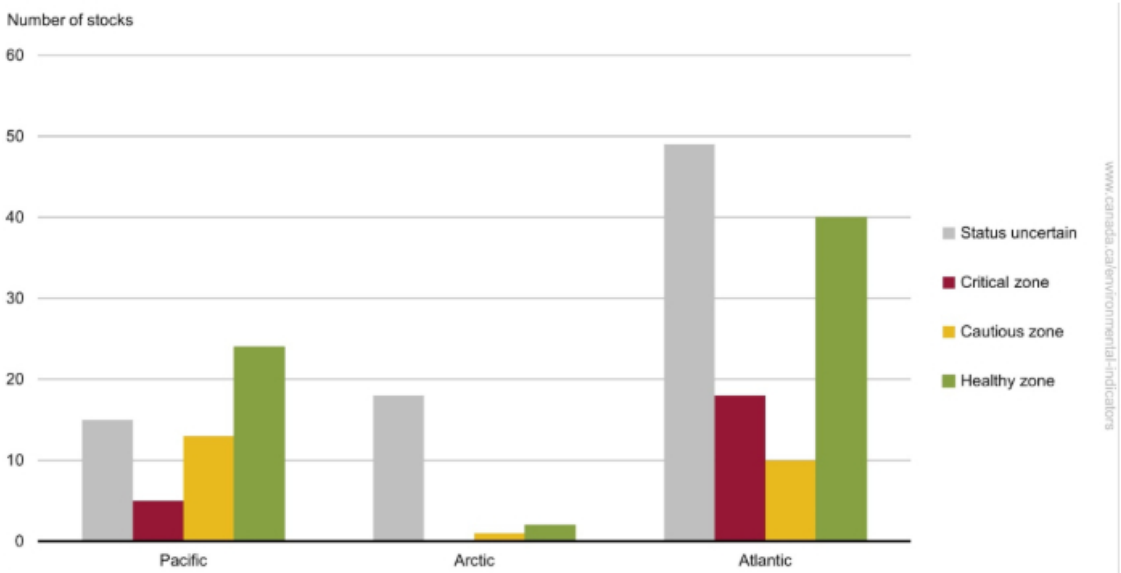
Changes in stock status typically happen slowly. Recovery time depends on the biology of the stock, environmental conditions and management actions. For example, environmental changes such as shifts in climate and ocean currents may cause some stocks to reproduce and grow more slowly. It may take many years for biological systems to respond to changes in management practices, such as limiting annual fish harvest.

Harvest levels are adjusted to help rebuild stocks that are not in the Healthy zone. Stock assessments for key fish stocks are peer-reviewed and made publicly available through the [Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat](#) reports. The stock status is reported as part of the [Sustainability Survey for Fisheries](#), which is a key planning, monitoring, and evaluation tool.

Stocks can be grouped according to the Fisheries and Oceans Canada region in which they are managed. The Pacific management region has the highest proportion of stocks in the Healthy zone. A greater proportion of stocks have an uncertain status in the Arctic region. Of the 3 regions, the Atlantic region has the highest number of key fish stocks and a high

proportion of those stocks have an uncertain status or are in the Healthy zone. For the purpose of this indicator, the Atlantic region includes Fisheries and Oceans Canada's Gulf, Maritimes, National Capital Region, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Quebec regions.

Status of key fish stocks by region, Canada, 2022



► [Data table for the long description](#)

[How this indicator was calculated](#)

Note: Stocks managed from the central National office were allocated to Atlantic and Arctic regions as appropriate.

Source: Fisheries and Oceans Canada (2024) [Sustainability Survey for Fisheries](#).

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- 1

A population of individuals of a species located in a particular area.
- 2

Straddling fish stocks migrate across the outer limit of coastal States and the adjacent high seas. Examples include cod, flounder and turbot.

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