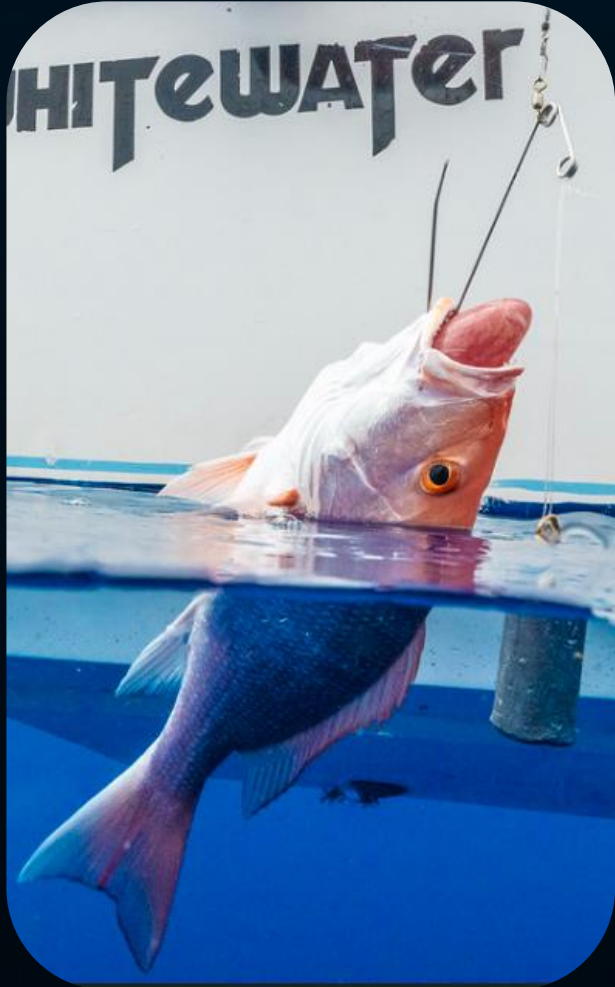


RETURN 'EM RIGHT

Measuring Behavior Change through Angler Surveys



RETURN 'EM
RIGHT



NANCY MONTES, CHARLES SIDMAN, NICK HADDAD, JAMES REINHARDT



RETURN 'EM RIGHT

Earn Another Fight

Barotrauma

As fish are reeled up from deep water, **gases in the body cavity** and internal organs expands, often displacing the organs and leaving the **fish severely bloated**.



Goals

- **Reduce mortality** from barotrauma and release of reef fish
- Improve angler experiences with **release gear**

We provide the **training** and **gear** to anglers in the Gulf of Mexico to improve the survival of reef fish and benefit the health of the fishery



RETURN 'EM RIGHT

Angling Community

Reef Fishing Anglers



Who are they?

What do they **know** about Best Release Practices?

- Venting
- Fish descending devices

How are they releasing fish?

Attitudes & perceptions?

What are the **barriers** for adopting Best Release Practices?

- Knowledge
- Getting tools/devices
- Other anglers



Southwick
survey

Angling Community

Reef Fishing Anglers



Angling Community

Reef Fishing Anglers



Human Dimensions Survey (Southwick)

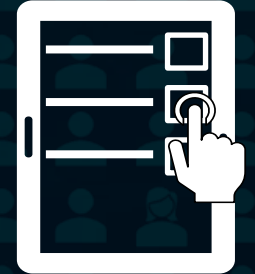
Behavior

Help fish return to depth

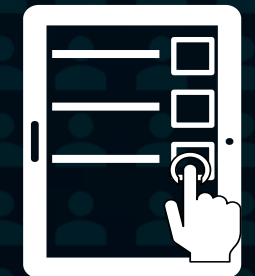
Main components

- Knowledge
- Past experiences
- Perceived barriers
- Attitude
- Social norm - influence of others
- Perceived control (skills, equipment)
- Behavioral intention

2021 Survey
(n=3,905)



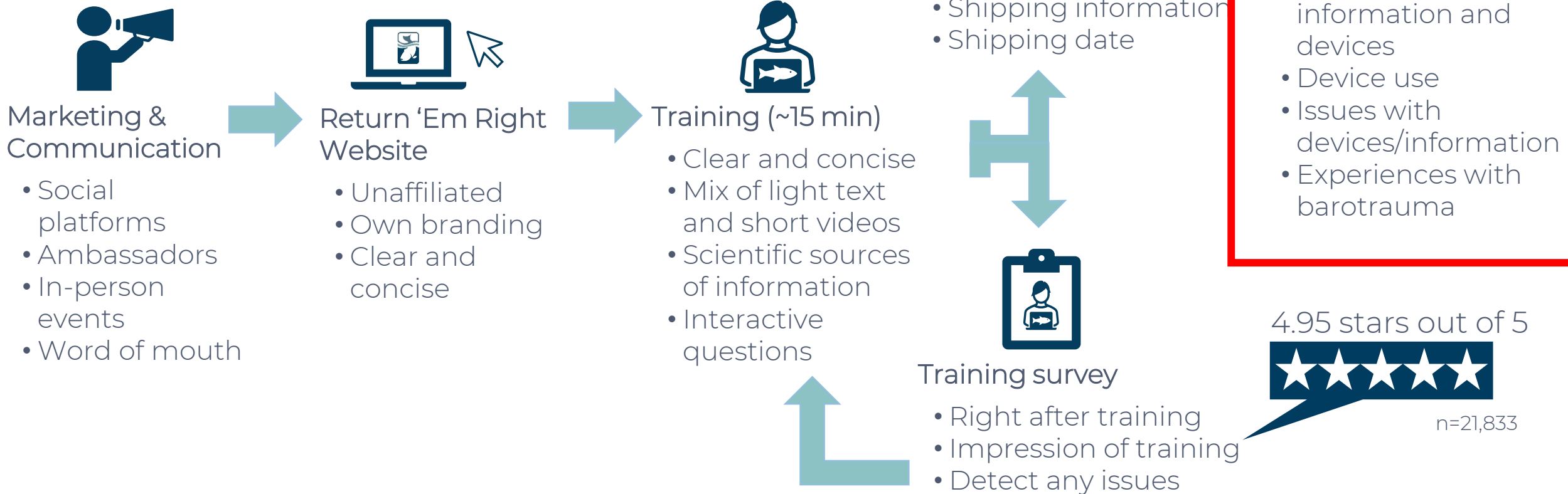
2024 Survey
(n=3,413)



RETURN 'EM RIGHT

Earn Another Fight

How it works:





Angling Community

Reef Fishing Anglers

RER Device Follow-up Survey



Training

 **42,565**

Completions

Eligible

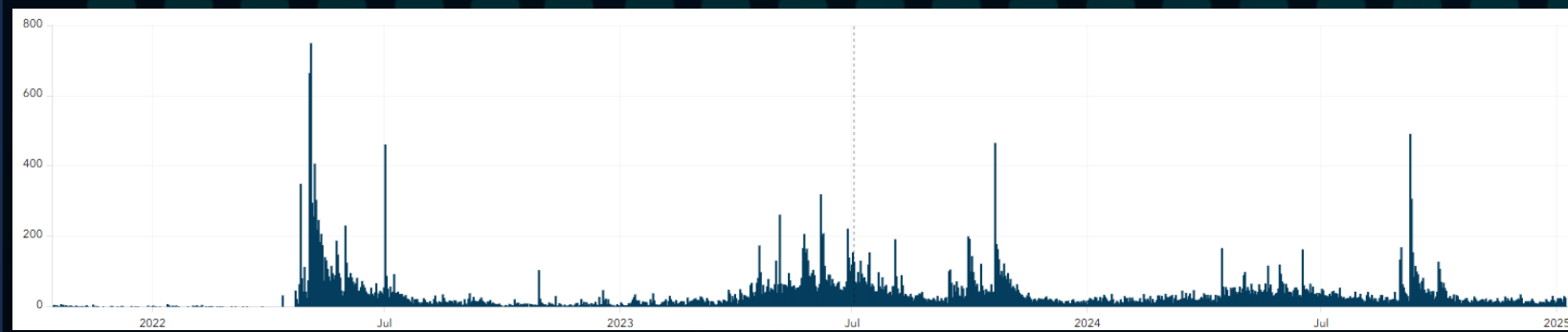
 **40,799**

Anglers

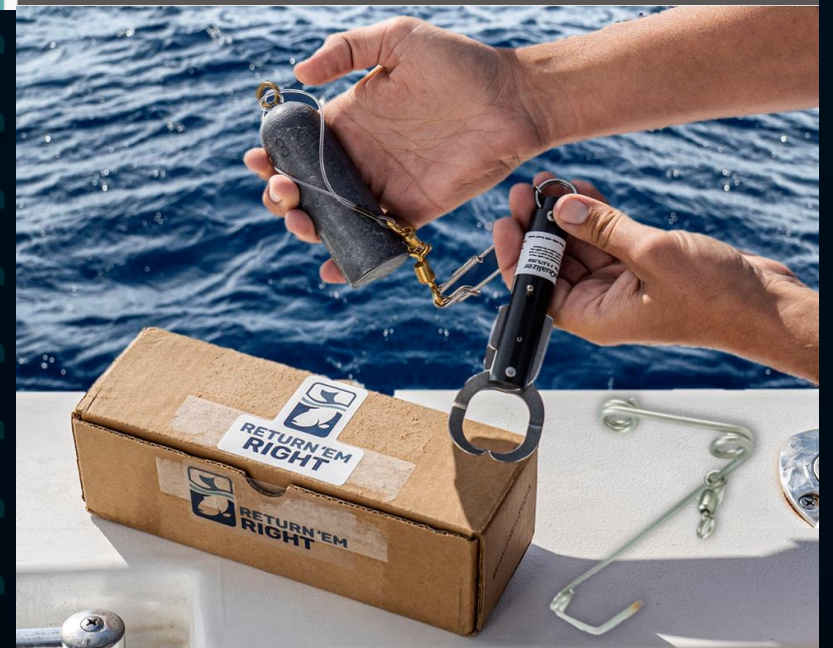
Shipping

 **39,543**

Completed



RER Participation through time



The Anglers...

RER Device Follow-up Survey



How often did you go reef fishing in the GOM?



Options	2022	2023	2022	2023
Never	200	212	14%	17%
A few times	570	576	39%	47%
Once a month	174	103	12%	8%
A few times a month	394	247	27%	20%
Once a week	77	35	5%	3%
A few times a week	56	37	4%	3%
Daily	9	6	1%	0%
n	1480	1216		

Where did you go reef fishing in 2023?

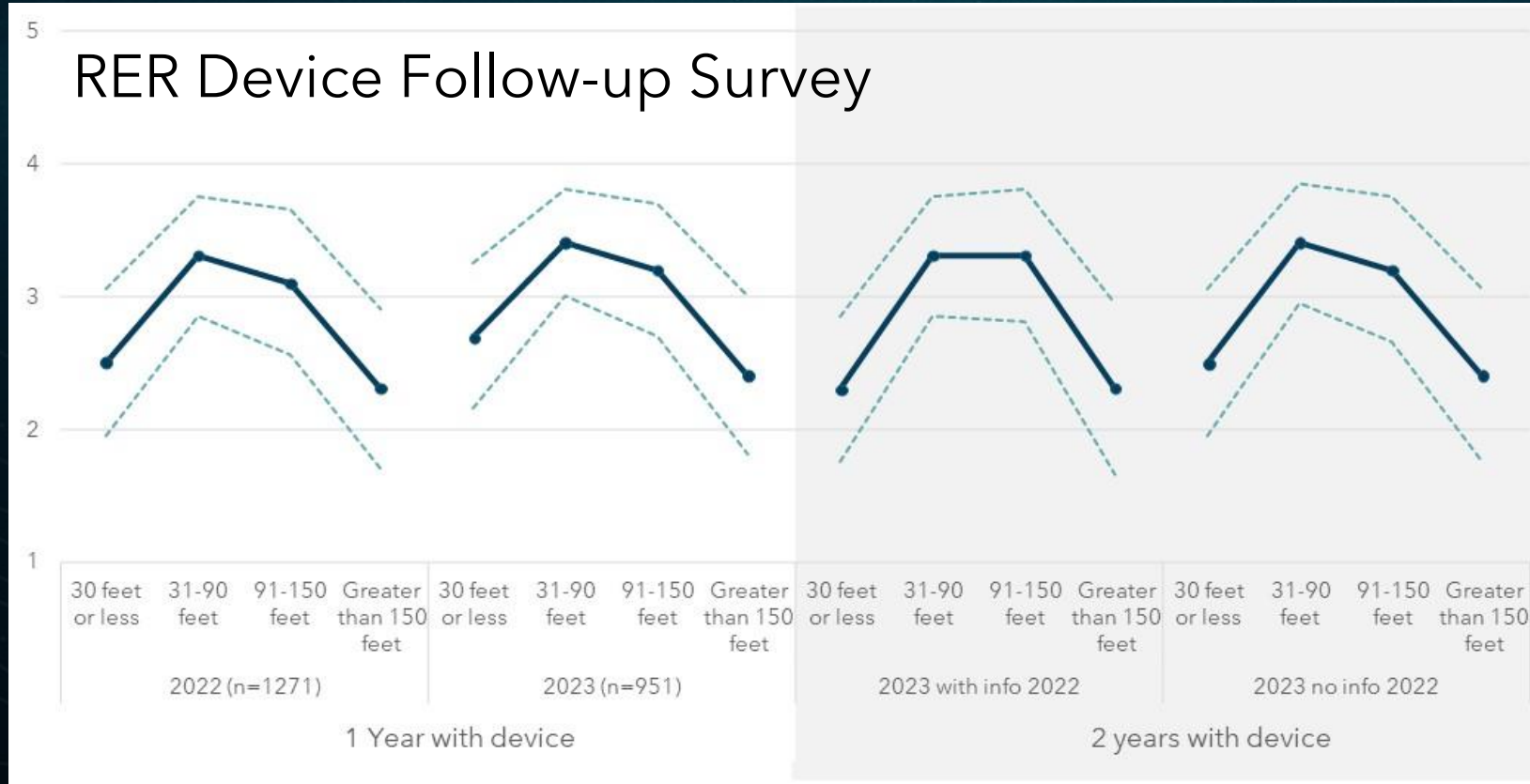
Options	2023	2023
Atlantic Ocean	182	86%
Pacific Ocean	16	8%
Other	8	4%
Caribbean Sea	5	2%
n	211	

The Anglers...

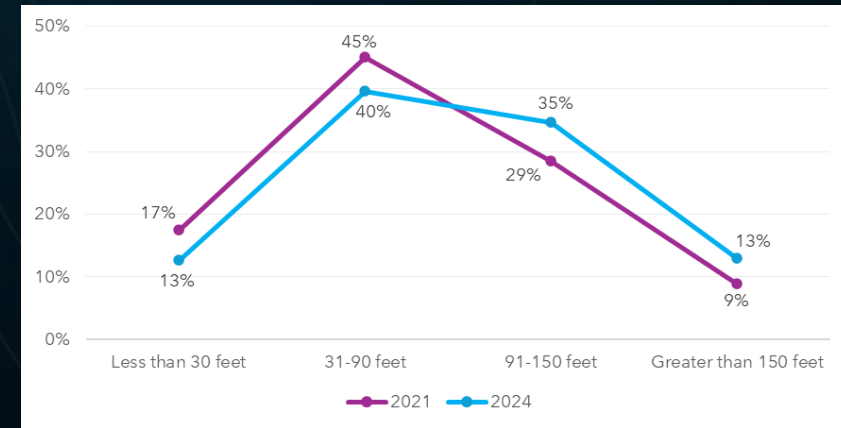


How often did you target the following fishing depths ranges:

Most of the RER participants are using depths between 31-150 feet.



Southwick survey: Although this question is using a different format (this is a select one option), the general pattern is alike with the responses from the RER surveys left graph). A greater number of Southwick survey respondents are using depth between 31-150 feet.



Circles represent mean values. Dotted lines represent confidence intervals for mean.

Y scale: 1=never, 2=rarely, 3=sometimes, 4=often, 5=always

Anglers feedback on PACKAGE

RER Device Follow-up Survey

- Overall anglers were **extremely satisfied** with the **devices** provided.

Were you satisfied with the PACKAGE containing free descending gear you received from Return 'Em Right?



Options	Responses		Percentages	
	2022	2023	2022	2023
Extremely dissatisfied	8	8	0%	0%
Somewhat dissatisfied	7	1	0%	0%
Neither	29	29	2%	2%
Somewhat satisfied	86	69	5%	4%
Extremely satisfied	1584	1500	92%	93%
Total	1714	1607	1	1

Responses options were given on a 5-point scale (1=extremely dissatisfied to 5=extremely satisfied).

Anglers feedback on PACKAGE

RER Device Follow-up Survey

BAROTRAUMA	2022	2023	2022	2023
Extremely dissatisfied	3	3	0%	0%
Somewhat dissatisfied	1	2	0%	0%
Neither	32	32	2%	2%
Somewhat satisfied	135	106	8%	7%
Extremely satisfied	1463	1399	90%	91%
Total	1634	1542	1	1

SeaQualizer instructions	2022	2023	2022	2023
Extremely dissatisfied	3	5	0%	0%
Somewhat dissatisfied	7	5	0%	0%
Neither	44	44	3%	3%
Somewhat satisfied	226	173	14%	11%
Extremely satisfied	1354	1315	83%	85%
Total	1634	1542	1	1

SeaYaLater instructions	2022	2023	2022	2023
Extremely dissatisfied	5	4	0%	0%
Somewhat dissatisfied	6	4	0%	0%
Neither	123	103	8%	7%
Somewhat satisfied	263	186	16%	12%
Extremely satisfied	1237	1245	76%	81%
Total	1634	1542	1	1

Were you satisfied with the INFORMATION included in the package?

- Overall anglers were **extremely satisfied** with the **information** provided.



Responses options were given on a 5-point scale (1=extremely dissatisfied to 5=extremely satisfied).

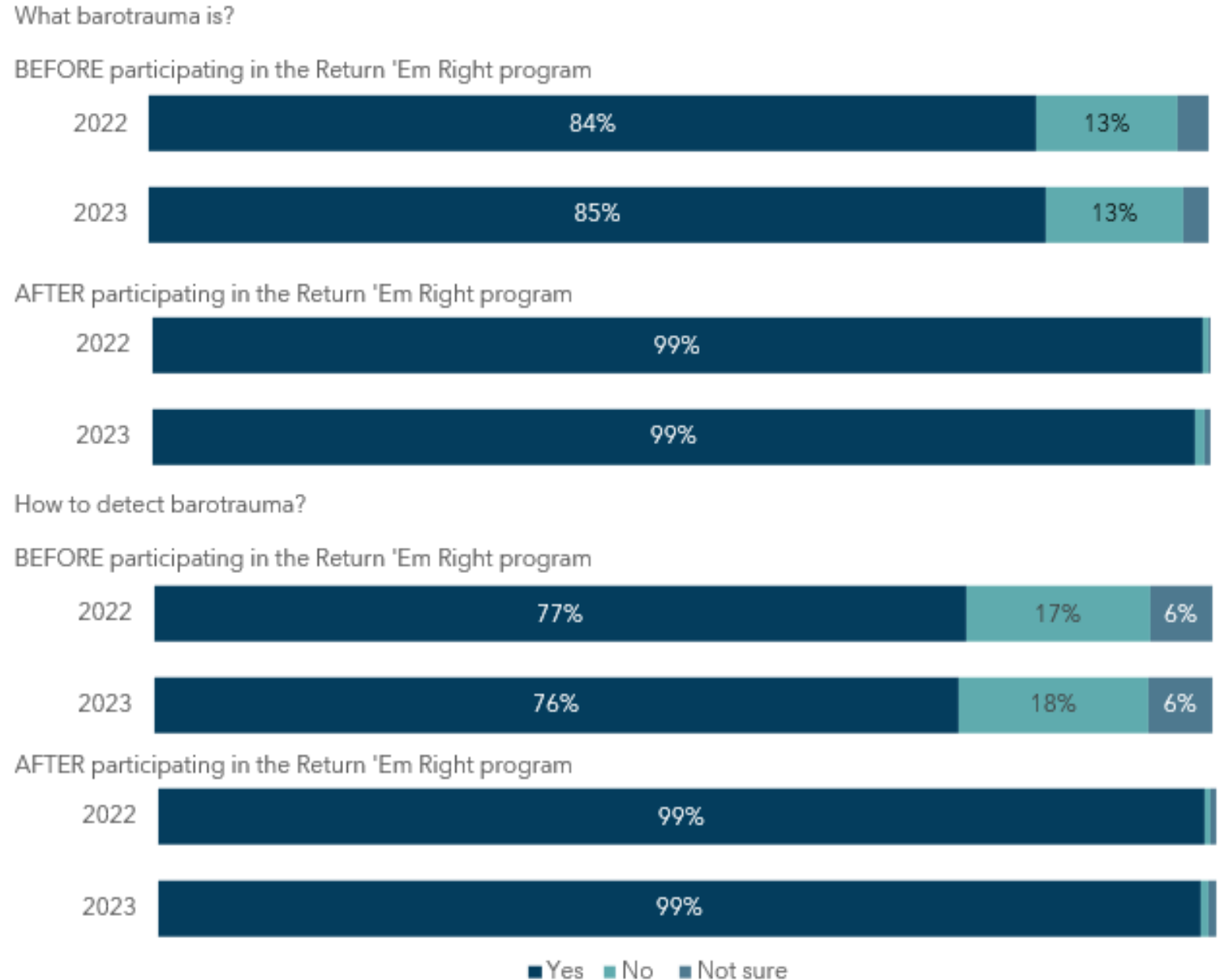
Anglers feedback – Knowledge



RER Device Follow-up Survey

Overall, there is an increase of 10-15% for the participants' perception regarding their knowledge about what barotrauma is and between 15-22% for their knowledge about how to detect barotrauma.

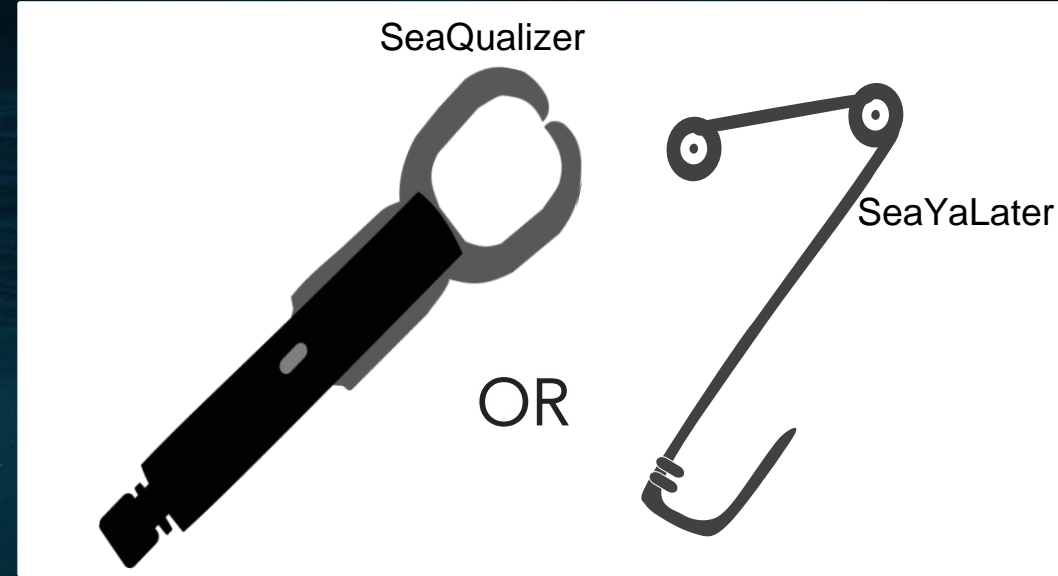
No major differences between years.



Anglers feedback on DEVICES

RER Device Follow-up Survey

- Overall, participants are using more the **SeaQualizer** than the SeaYaLater device.



On average, how many trips have you used:

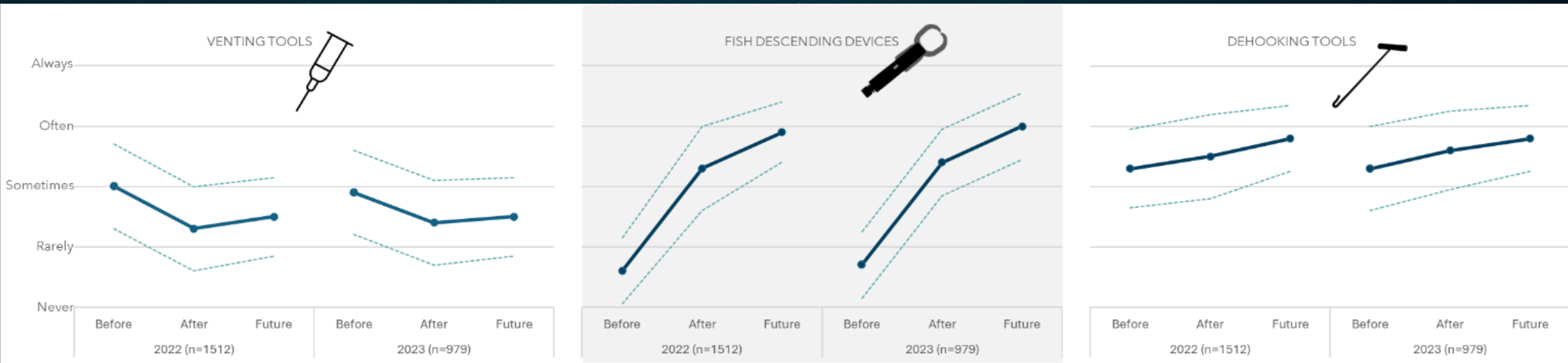
Year	Mean	St. Dev	Max	n
SEAQUALIZER				
2022	7	32	820	1582
2023	7	17	300	719
SEAYALATER				
2022	3	8	200	1582
2023	2	6	75	720



Anglers feedback on DEVICES

RER Device Follow-up Survey

Regardless of the year, participants were using more venting tools before their training, but after the training and receiving their descending devices, they are using more descending and slightly more dehooking devices.



Circles represent mean values. Dotted lines represent the confidence intervals for mean.



Anglers feedback on DEVICES

Southwick survey:

Are you **AWARE** of the following reef fish handling protocols? Please check the box for each of the protocols you are familiar with (even if you don't use them).

Item	2021	2024	Difference
Use venting method	71%	80%	9%
Use descending devices	32%	58%	26%
Use dehooking devices	77%	80%	3%
Take efforts to minimize the handling of fish	74%	82%	8%
Use non-stainless steel circle hooks	66%	68%	2%
Change locations	47%	62%	15%
Use rubberized landing nets	36%	Not asked	Na
Cut the line	55%	54%	1%
Hold the fish horizontally	25%	25%	0%
Throw the fish up in the air	4%	4%	0%
I'm not aware of options	5%	4%	-1%
n	3905	3413	

Southwick survey:

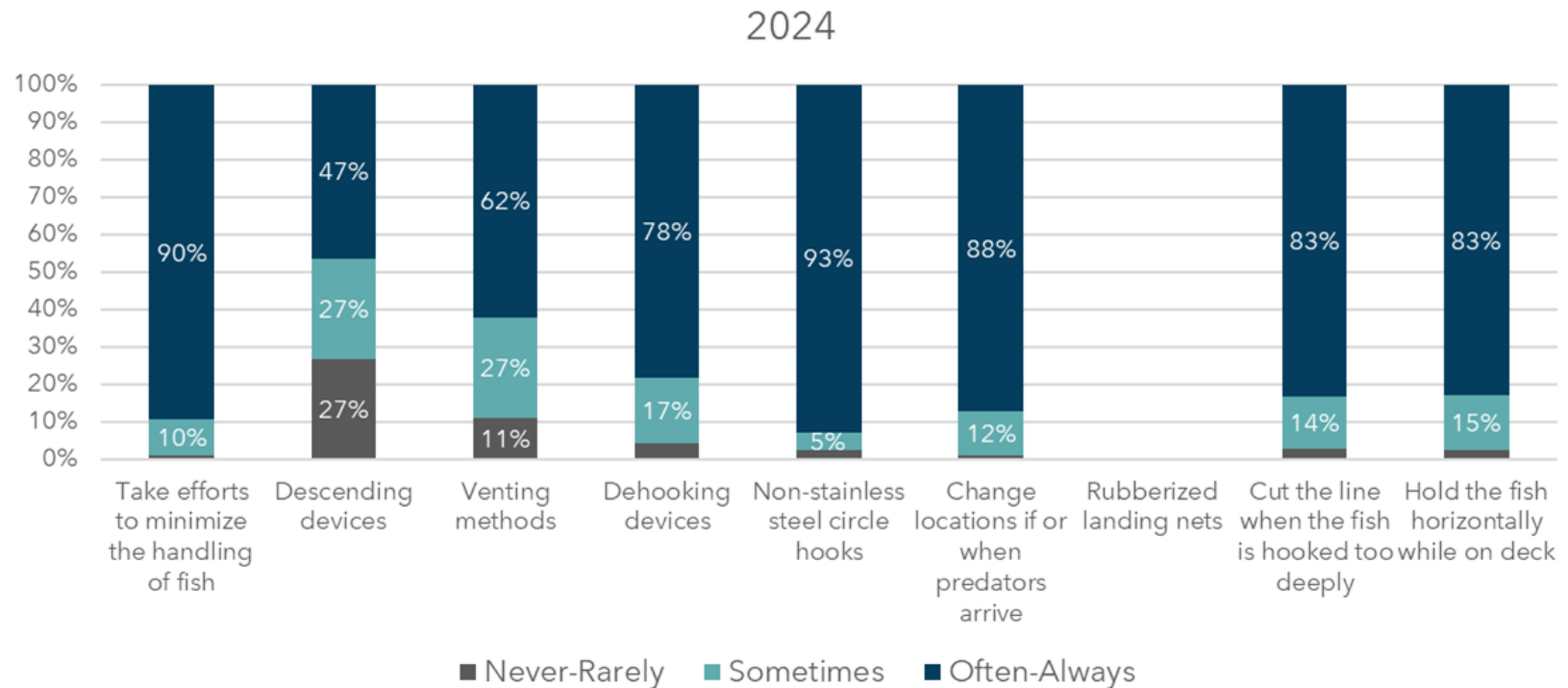
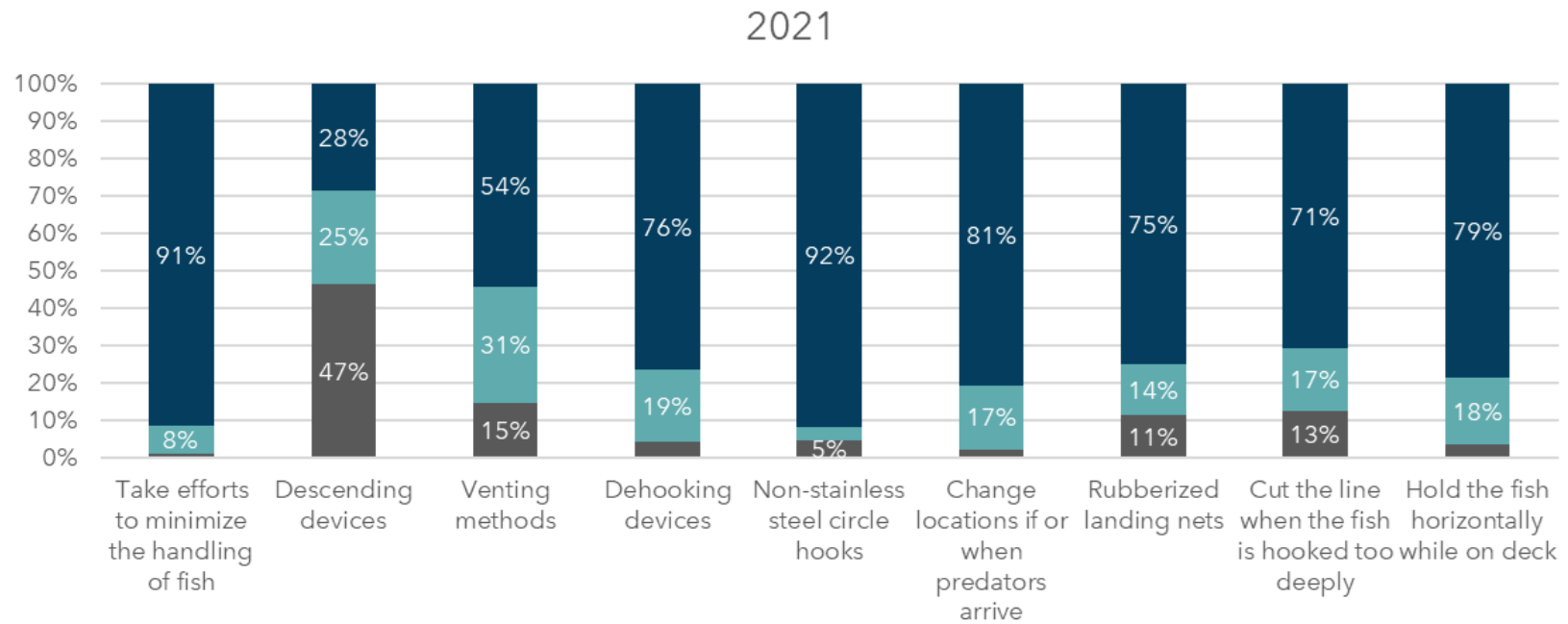
When fishing for reef fish, how OFTEN do you ...

*Displaying only the people who knew about the handling protocol

In 2021, less respondents were using FDD (53%) than in 2024 (74%).

In 2024, more respondents are changing locations if or when predators arrive (often/always category is 7% up)

In 2024, more respondents are cutting the line when the fish is hooked too deeply (often/always category is 12% up)



Anglers feedback on DEVICES



RER Device Follow-up Survey:

How likely is it that you would buy a fish descending device if needed?

	2023-Y1	2023-Y2	All	2023-Y1	2023-Y2	All
Unlikely	47	27	74	5%	9%	6%
Neither	35	22	57	4%	8%	4%
Likely	679	194	873	68%	67%	68%
I already bought FDD	237	46	283	24%	16%	22%
	998	289	1287	1	1	

Southwick survey: Where did you get a descending device you use when reef fishing? Asked only of people who used an FDD at least some of the time.

Where FDD was obtained	n	Percent
I bought it online	261	16%
I bought it at a tackle shop	397	24%
I received it from the Return 'Em Right program	545	33%
It belonged to someone else	292	18%
I don't remember	141	9%
Total	1,636	

Anglers feedback on DEVICES



Southwick survey:

Have you ever heard of, or received outreach information from the "Return 'Em Right" (RER) program?

Options	2021	2024	Difference
Yes, I heard about RER	4%	21%	17%
Yes, I received the FDD and information materials	Na	11%	na
No, I haven't heard about RER	87%	56%	-31%
I am not sure if I heard about RER	9%	13%	4%

RER Device Follow-up Survey:

Since participating in the RER program, how many anglers have you talked to about using descending devices?

Year	Mean	Max	St. Dev	n
2022	11	>300 (9 over 300)	27.3	1505
2023	9	>300 (1 over 300)	23.8	975

Anglers feedback on DEVICES



Southwick survey: Where did you first hear about the "Return 'Em Right" program?

Options	Southwick 2024	RER module	Difference
From another angler	24%	28%	4%
Other	14%	13%	1%
Facebook	13%	13%	0%
Other social media	12%	5%	7%
Magazine/newspaper	10%	11%	1%
YouTube	9%	17%	8%
Search engine	6%	3%	3%
In-person presentation	5%	3%	2%
TV/Radio	5%	4%	1%
Instagram	2%	2%	0%
Twitter/X	1%	0%	1%

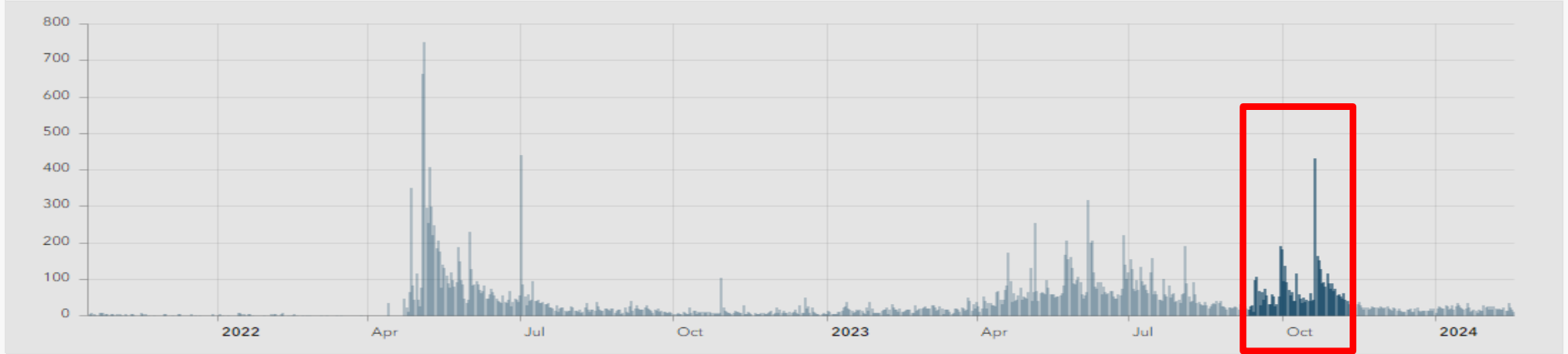
SOURCE

Dashboard

This information is based on the training question: Where did you find out about the Return 'Em Right Training?

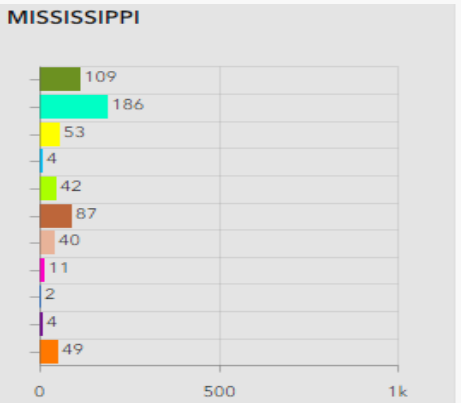
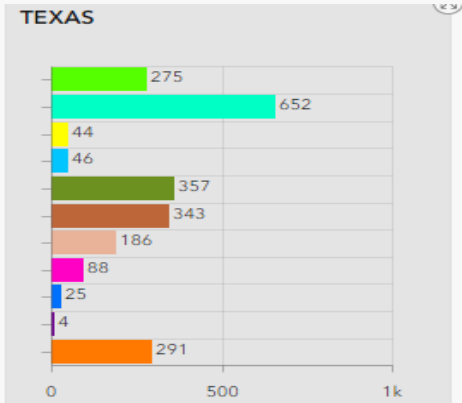
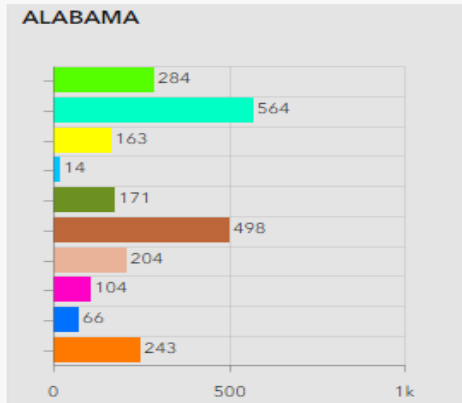
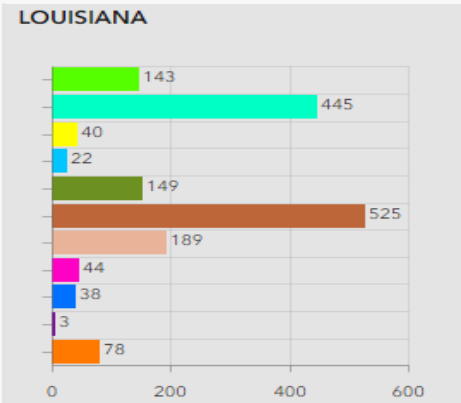
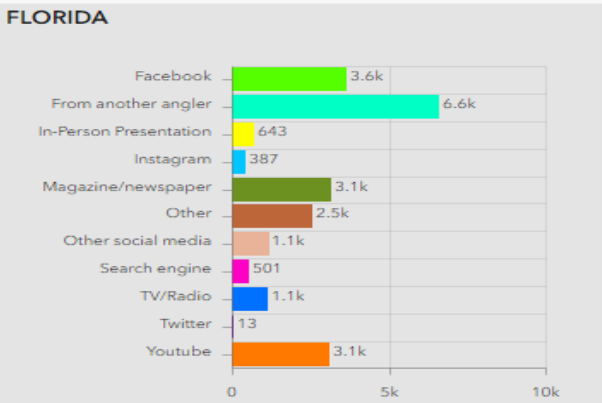
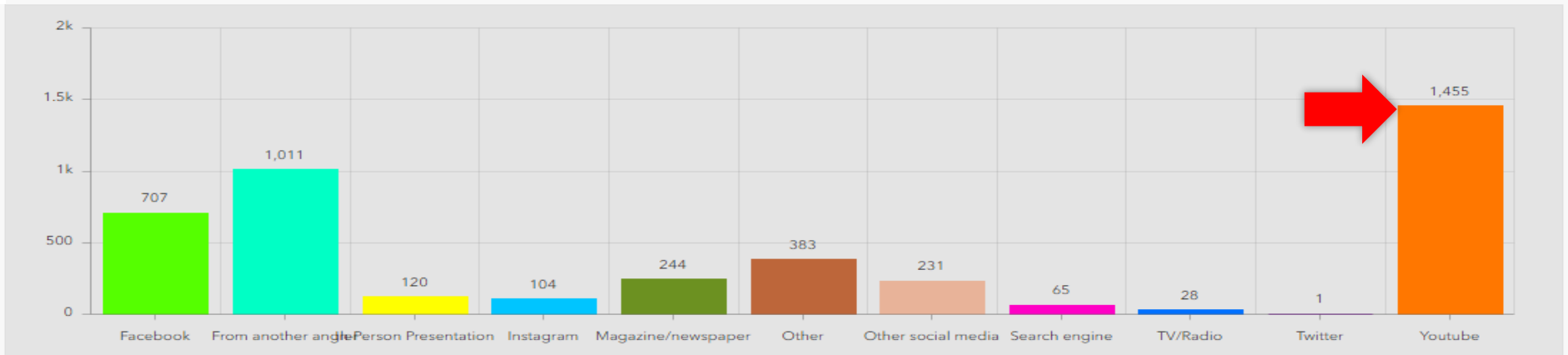
SOURCE - ALL TIMEFRAME

Source	Count
From another angler	8,410
Facebook	4,429
Other	3,993
Magazine/newspaper	3,826
Youtube	3,741
Other social media	1,739
TV/Radio	1,207



SOURCE - SELECTION

Source	Count
From another angler	8,410
Facebook	4,429
Other	3,993
Magazine/newspaper	3,826
Youtube	3,741
Other social media	1,739
TV/Radio	1,207





RETURN 'EM RIGHT EDUCATION MODULE SURVEY

Rate your experience (overall)

Scale: poor (0) to excellent (5)

Field	Mean	Min	Max	St. Dev	Responses
Rate	4.95	0.00	5.00	0.24	15589



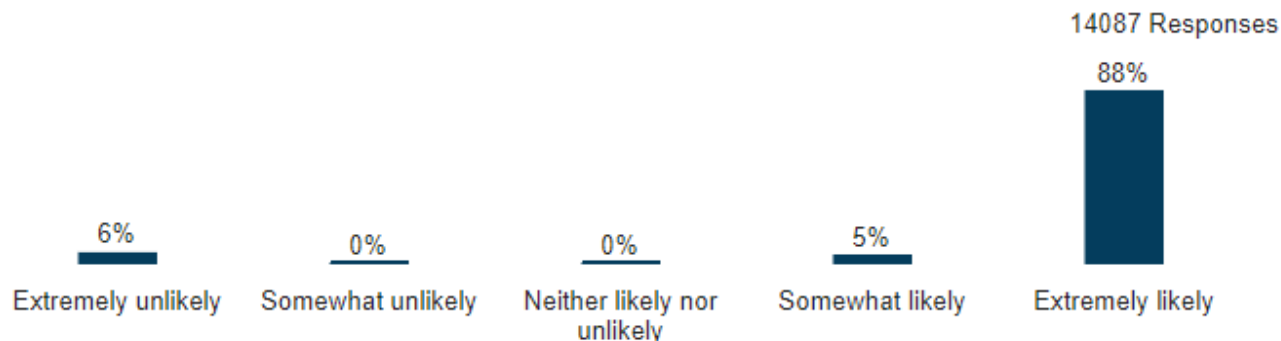
Live survey reports

Please rate your experience with...

Scale: poor (0) to excellent (5)

Field	Mean	Min	Max	St. Dev.	Responses
The training was easy to use	4.90	0.00	5.00	0.32	14352
The training was useful	4.91	0.00	5.00	0.30	14352
The information presented was clearly	4.91	0.00	5.00	0.32	14352
The information was presented in a creative way	4.85	0.00	5.00	0.40	14352
I liked the interactive experience of the training	4.88	0.00	5.00	0.37	14352

Would you recommend this training to others?





Participant Comments...



"Great program that really helps our fishing community"

Russ D., Florida

"A fantastic and free program that has significantly affected the way I catch and release fish."

Chris A., Florida

"Great educational program which I have shared with every Groundfish head boat I fish upon!!!"

Kenneth Y., New York

*"A fantastic program top to bottom. I got 5 of my fellow boat owners to register, take the class and use the devices. **They work great**, and thanks to your team for providing this to us anglers. **It makes it easy** for us to do our part."*

Riley R., Florida

*"Public education a lot of my friends **didn't know how to properly vent** a fish."*

Jeff S., Florida



**RETURN 'EM
RIGHT**

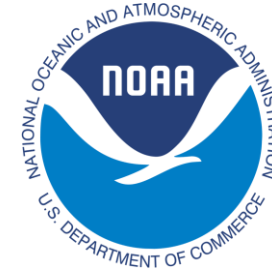
Key points

- We are using two surveys targeting different levels (GOM reef anglers and RER participants)
- By including a mechanism (such as the surveys) from the planning phase, we can monitor progress at different phases of this program
- Near-real time tools (live survey reports, dashboards, etc.) allow for a better communication among the different components of the RER Program.



Acknowledgements

CORE PARTNERS



ORGANIZATIONAL PARTNERS



ENHANCE • PROTECT • CONSERVE



MEDIA PARTNERS



INDUSTRY PARTNERS



FISHBRAIN

