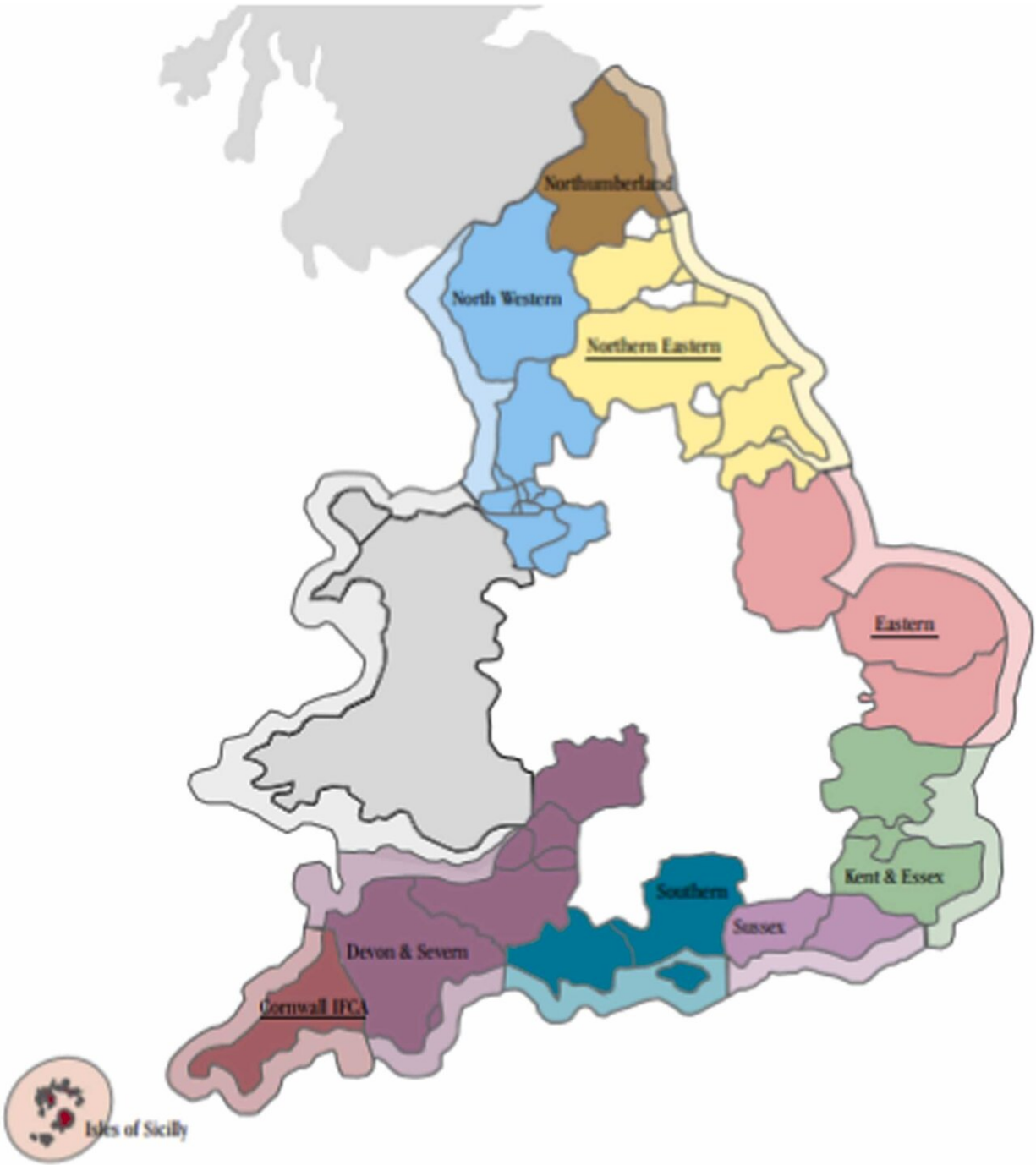


New research finds low levels of trust in fisheries institutions post-Brexit

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Map of the ten IFCA regions, with the Northern Eastern IFCA and Eastern IFCA on the east coast and the Cornwall IFCA in the south-west. Credit: *Marine Policy* (2024). DOI: 10.1016/j.marpol.2024.106034

Rebuilding trust in fisheries governance will be vital to create a sustainable industry post-Brexit England, according to new research.

Strong trust between managers and fishers is essential for achieving [sustainable fisheries](#), but new research from the University of East Anglia has found worryingly low levels of trust in fisheries following the UK's departure from the European Union.

The research is [published](#) in the journal *Marine Policy*.

The survey pioneered a methodology assessing different elements influencing trust. It revealed perceived incompetence, indifference to fishers' livelihoods, and inadequate consultation as major drivers of fishers' distrust towards fishery regulators.

Lead researcher of the Pyramids of Life project Dr. Silvia Ferrini, of the Centre for Social and Economic Research on the Global Environment (CSERGE), at the School of Environmental Sciences at the University of East Anglia, said, "We found continued low levels of trust, possibly made worse by Brexit, with further deterioration compared to previous research."

Lead author Maximilian Dixon, also of CSERGE at UEA, added, "It is evident that a history of failing to deliver and of broken promises has undermined trust in the institutions which govern fisheries in England and that they are weakly resilient to various potential disturbances such as natural disturbances, changes in policy, performance failure or personnel turnover.

"However, there are opportunities to improve trust relations by directly involving the fishing communities in the processes of governance. An institutional commitment to improve trust relations and to learn from extreme events that impact the fishing industry could improve relations."

The survey was distributed between July and August 2022 in a variety of ways using mailing lists, official social media platforms and an article in a newspaper for fishers, *Fishing News*.

The survey used novel methodology that allowed researchers to capture diverse types of trust and build a more nuanced picture. Of the 94 responses collected, only 52 were complete, and after removing responses from outside of England, the researchers used 46 in the analysis, representing around 0.94% of English fishers.

In particular, the research explores the effects of mass mortality of crustaceans along the coast of Teeside and Yorkshire in winter 2021, which heavily impacted the fisheries sector, including commercially important crabs and lobsters.

The survey found that the way it was handled by the Northern Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (NEIFCA) and Defra, as well as a subsequent string of reports into the cause, have likely affected trust relations, with elements such as transparency, competence and communication playing a large role in the conflict.

However overall, local institutions inspired relatively more trust, benefiting from better communication.

Co-researcher Dr. Gaetano Grilli, Lecturer at UEA's Norwich Business School, said, "Improved communication between fishers and local fishery officers could rebuild trust, enhancing confidence in institutions' competence and commitment to fishers' futures. This foundation of trust at the local level is pivotal for the co-operative management needed to ensure the long-term sustainability of England's fisheries."

The research was in co-operation with Dr. Rosalind Bark, Associate Professor in Ecological Economics at UEA's School of Environmental

Sciences, and Dr. Bryce Stewart, Reader at the University of York's Department of Environment and Geography.

More information: Maximilian Dixon et al, The importance of rebuilding trust in fisheries governance in post-Brexit England, *Marine Policy* (2024). [DOI: 10.1016/j.marpol.2024.106034](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2024.106034)

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