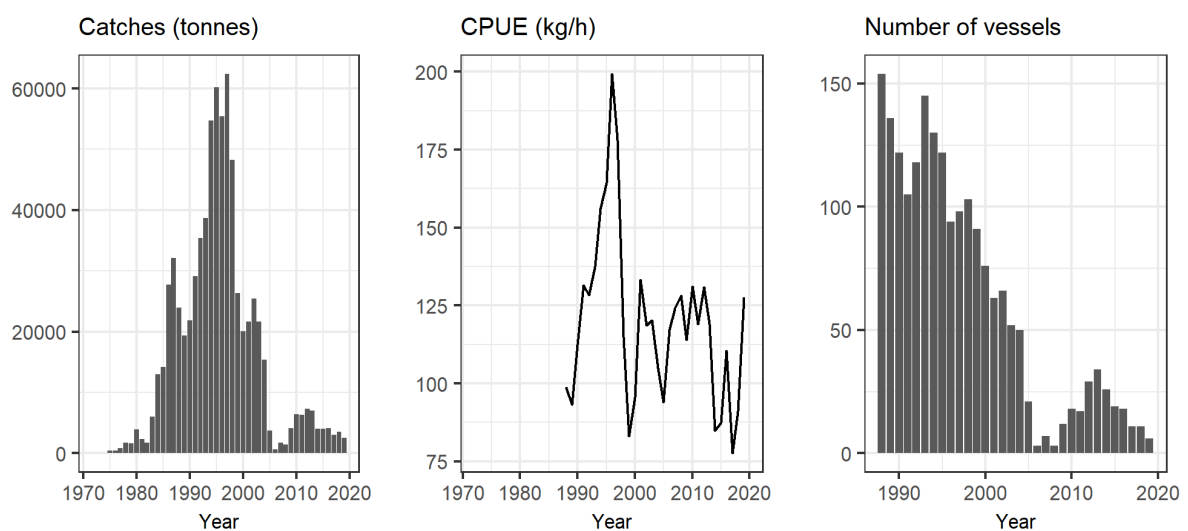


# OFFSHORE NORTHERN SHRIMP – ÚTHAFSRÆKJA

## *Pandalus borealis*

### THE FISHERY

Offshore shrimp fishing takes place in the waters north of Iceland and started in the early 1970's. Catch levels were low during the first decade but increased steadily from 1982 until it peaked in 1997 at 62 thous. tonnes. After 1997, the catch decreased sharply and reached a minimum of 600 tonnes in 2006 (Figure 1). CPUE increased from 1988 to a peak in 1996. CPUE decreased sharply between 1996 and 1999, then fluctuated between 2001 and 2013 when it decreased (Figure 1). In 2019, CPUE increased again to levels seen in 2001 to 2013. In 1988, 152 commercial vessels landed offshore shrimp. The number of commercial shrimp vessels steadily decreased from 1993 to 2006, when only one vessel landed offshore shrimp (Figure 1). The number of vessels increased again until 2013, when 34 vessels landed offshore shrimp, but since 2013 the number of vessels has decreased and in 2019 only 6 vessels landed offshore shrimp.



**Figure 1. Offshore northern shrimp. Total catch, catch per unit effort (CPUE), and number of commercial vessels.**

*Mynd 1. Úthafsrækja. Heildarafli, afli á sóknareiningu og fjöldi skipa.*

The main distribution of the fishery has varied over time (Figure 2). In 1988-2004, the main fishing ground was larger compared with 2006-2019. At that time, a high proportion of the catch was taken from Norðurkantur and around Kolbeinsey (north and northeast of the Vestfirðir peninsula). However, since 2008, the main catches were caught in the areas north of Skjálfandi and Öxarfjörður bays. Since 2004, no shrimp fishing has taken place northeast and east of Iceland.

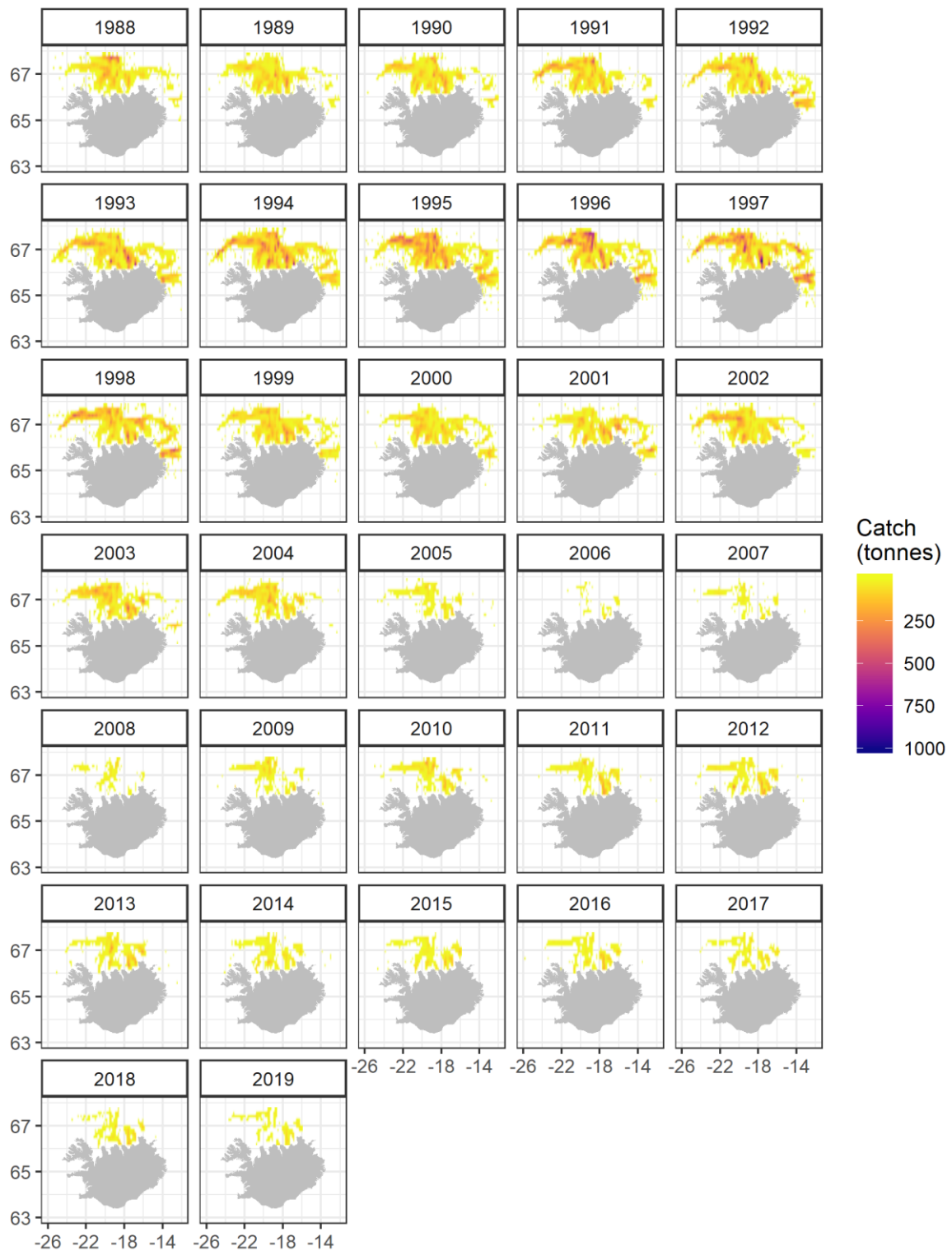
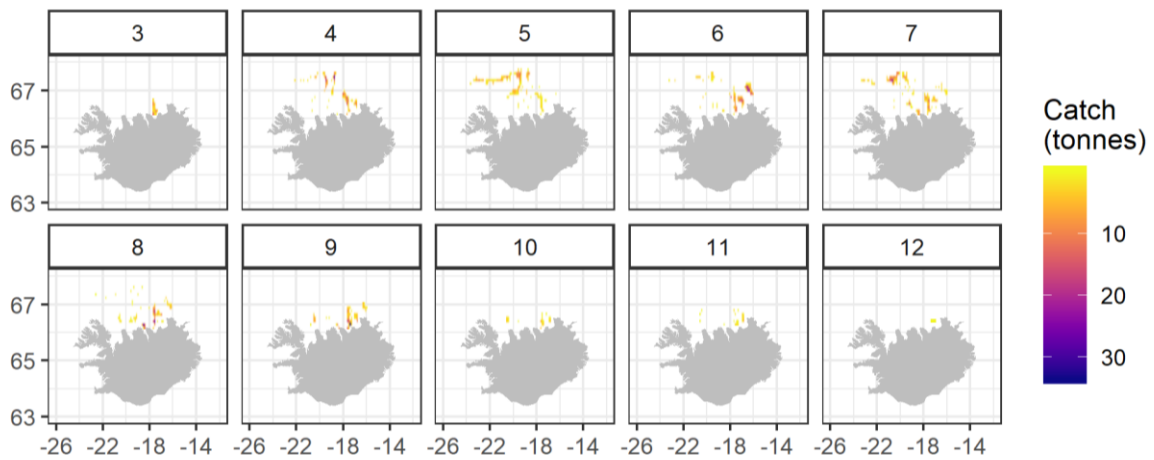


Figure 2. Offshore northern shrimp. Spatial distribution of catch.

Mynd 2. Úthafsækja. Dreifing afla.

The main offshore shrimp fishing takes place from April to September (Figure 3). From April to July shrimp catches are caught in the more northerly locations whereas shrimp fishing was closer to land in August to December.



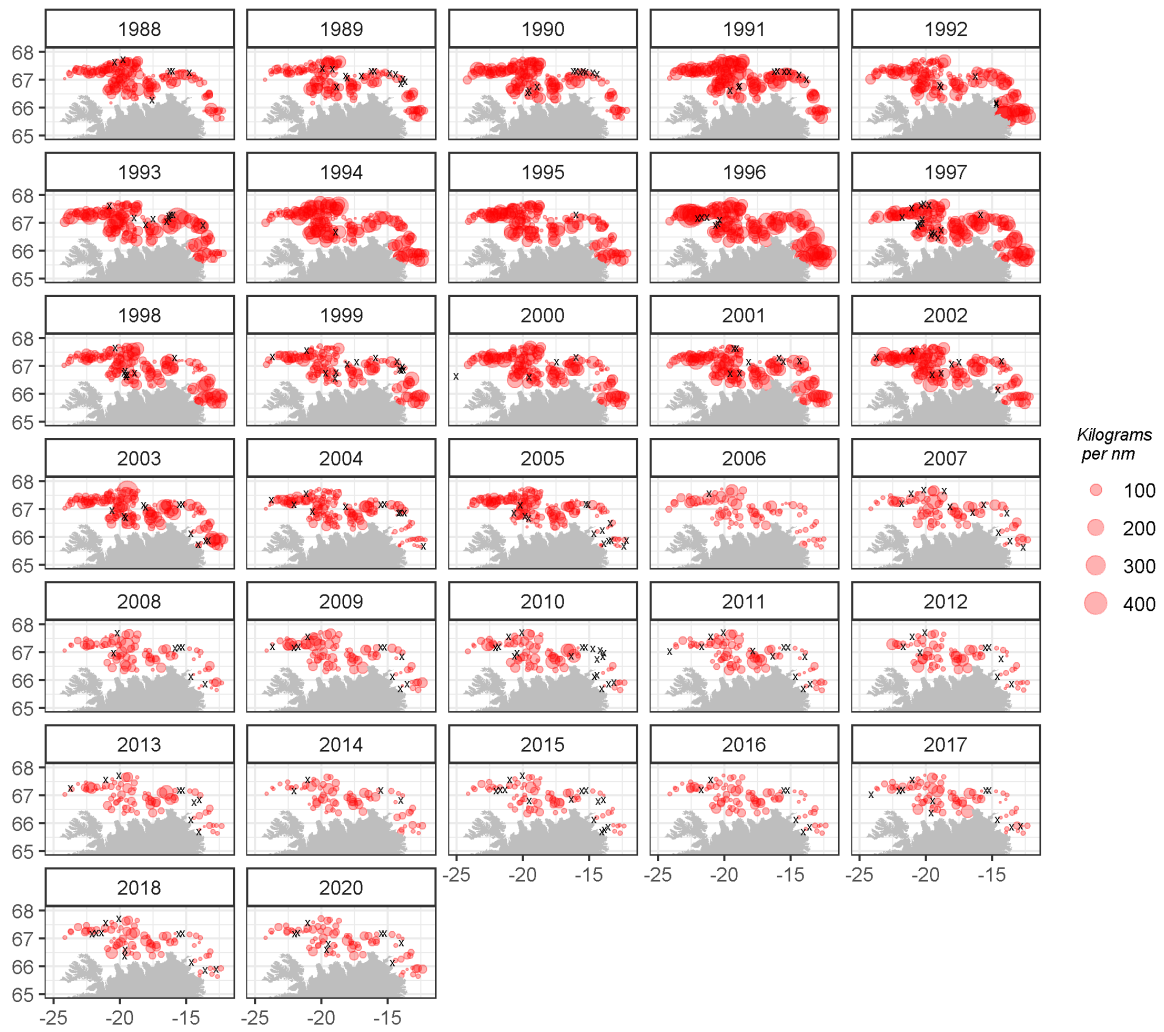
**Figure 3. Offshore northern shrimp. Spatial distribution of catch by months in 2019.**

*Mynd 3. Úthafsækja. Dreifing afla eftir mánuðum árið 2019.*

## SURVEY DATA

The annual offshore Icelandic shrimp survey has been conducted since 1988. Originally, the number of stations were about 190, but in 2006 the number of stations was reduced to 92 covering the same area as before with less density of stations. Since 2014 the survey includes 86 fixed stations at depths to 700 m. The survey indices are calculated based on all available stations within the area that has been sampled annually since 1988. All information on sampling procedure can be found in Jónsdóttir et al. (2017). No survey was conducted in 2019. The 2020 survey was conducted 14 – 25 July.

The density of shrimp has decreased after 1996, when the biomass index was highest. Since 2004, density has been low east and northeast of Iceland (Figure 4). In 2020, higher abundance was east of Iceland compared with 2018 but lower abundance was at the western part of the area.



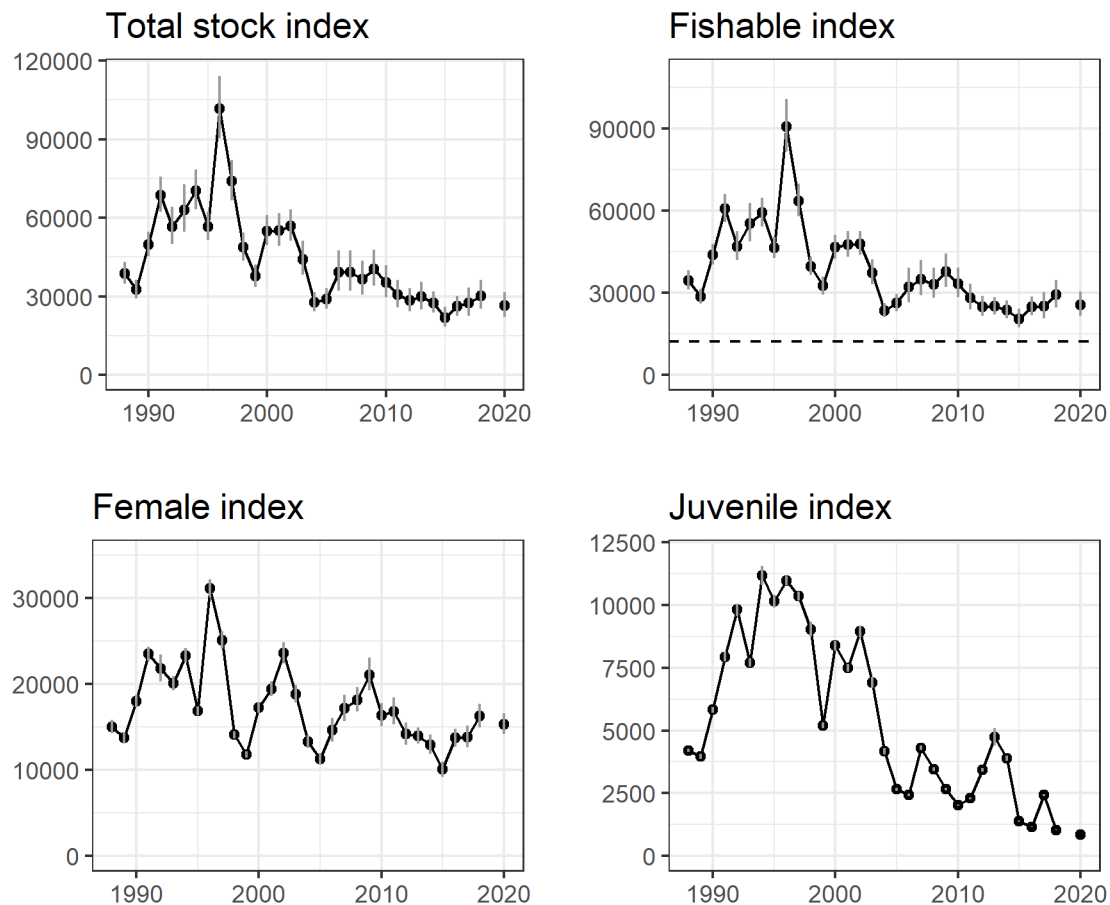
**Figure 4. Offshore northern shrimp. Distribution and abundance in the annual shrimp survey. x indicates no shrimp.**

**Mynd 4. Úthafsækja. Útbreiðsla og magn í stofnmælingu. x sýnir hvar engin rækja fannst.**

## INDICES

Four indices are used to assess the state of the offshore shrimp stock: total biomass, fishable biomass, female biomass, and juvenile biomass. Juveniles include all individuals equal to and below 13 mm carapace length, while the fishable biomass include all individuals equal to and above 15.5 mm carapace length. The fishable biomass index is used for calculation of the advice. Individuals between 13 and 15.5 mm carapace length are divided between the juvenile and fishable biomass indices. The female biomass includes all females and is equivalent to the spawning stock biomass of various fish species.

The total biomass index and the fishable index increased until 1996, after which they declined until 2004 (Figure 5). The indices increased slightly in 2006-2009, but decreased between 2009 and 2011, and have remained relatively stable since then, with the exception of 2015, when they reached historically low levels. In 2020, the indices were at similar levels as observed in 2016 and 2017. The fishable index was above the reference level where the state of the stock is considered critical. The fishable index value of 20% of the mean of the mean of the three highest indices ( $I_{lim}$ ) is used as a proxy for  $B_{lim}$ . The female index has fluctuated during the study period with a general downward trend. The juvenile index increased from 1988 to 1994. Since then it has decreased and reached historically low levels in 2020.

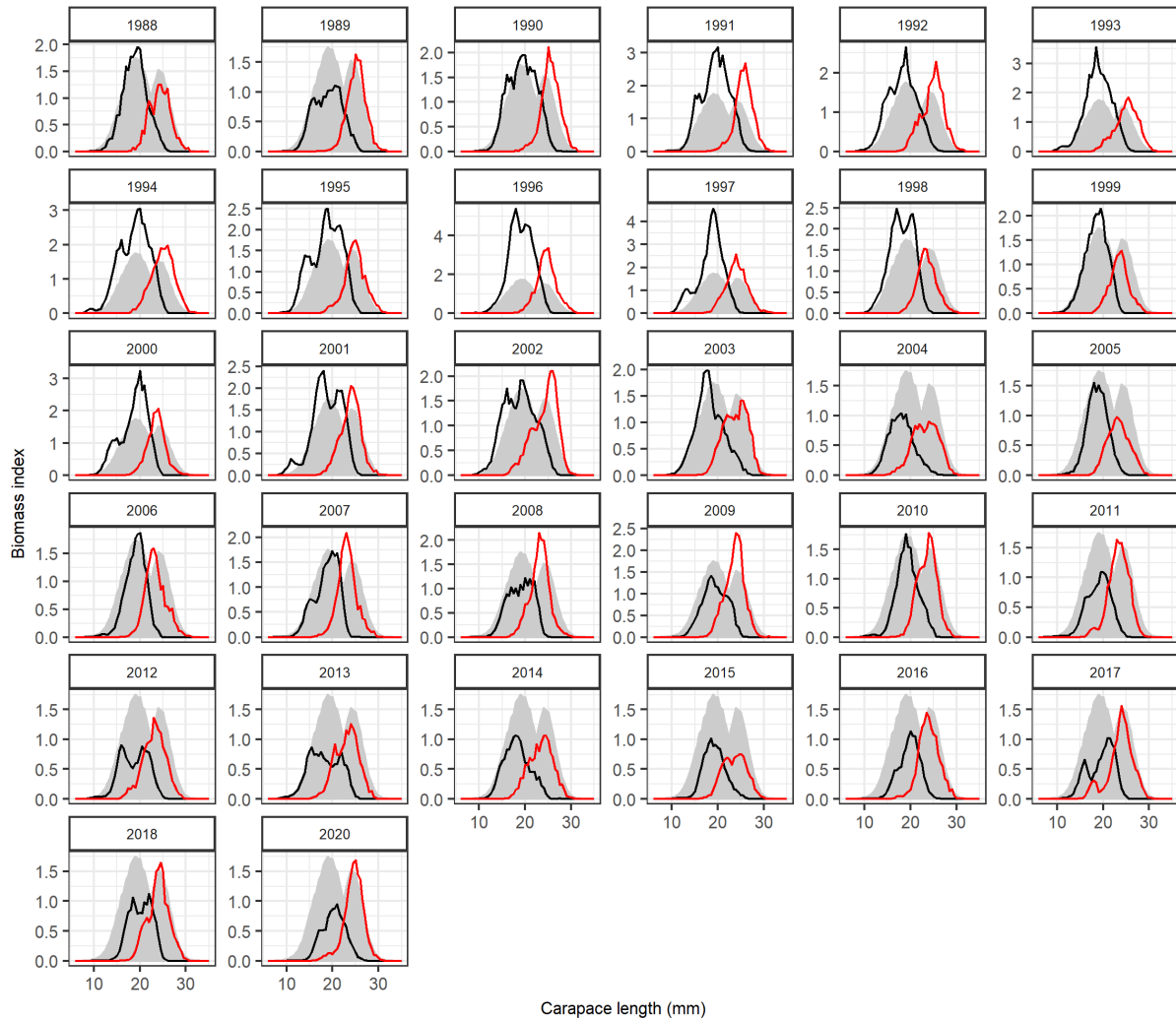


**Figure 5. Offshore northern shrimp. Stock biomass index, fishable biomass index, female biomass index and juvenile biomass index. The horizontal line indicates a  $I_{lim}$  which is a proxy for  $B_{lim}$  (20% of the mean of the three highest indices).**

**Mynd 5. Úthafsrækja. Heildarstofnsvísitala, veiðistofnsvísitala, kvendýravisitala og vísitala ungrækju. Lárétt lína sýnir varúðarmörk  $I_{lim}$  nálgun á  $B_{lim}$  (20% af meðaltali þriggja hæstu vísitalna).**

## LENGTH DISTRIBUTION

Because of slower growth in the offshore area compared with inshore areas, it is difficult to estimate age and hence, cohorts, of offshore shrimp. The number of males has decreased and has been around or below average since 2004. Since 2015 the smallest individuals were missing in the survey (Figure 6).

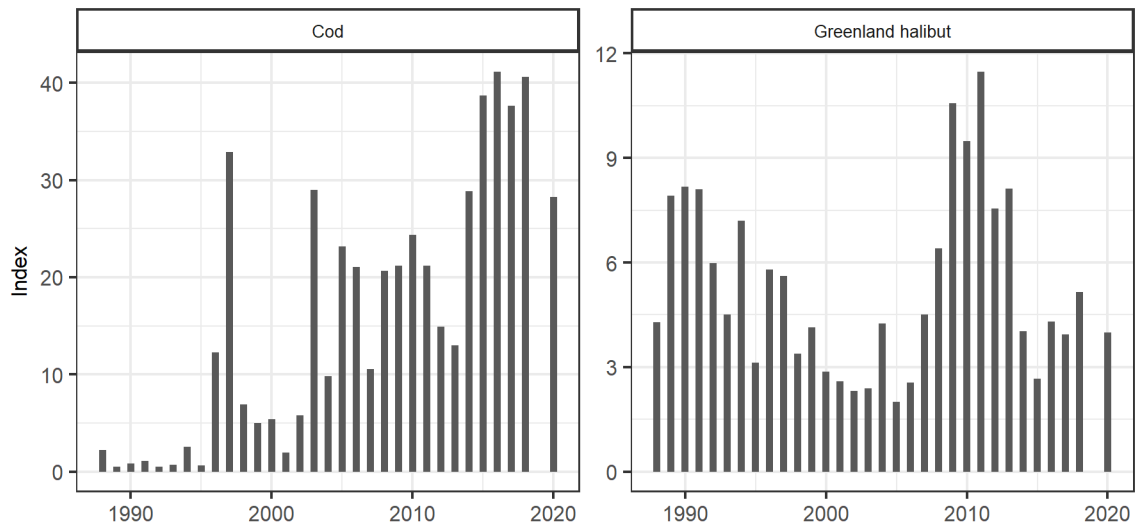


**Figure 6. Offshore northern shrimp. Length distribution. The black line indicates males and the red line females. The grey area is the mean length distribution of both sexes for the whole study period.**

*Mynd 6. Úthafsækja. Lengdardreifing í stofnmælingu. Svört lína sýnir karldýr og sú rauða kvendýr. Gráa svæðið sýnir meðallengdardreifingu beggja kynja allt rannsóknatímabilið.*

## ABUNDANCE OF COD AND GREENLAND HALIBUT

The abundance of cod was very low from 1988 to 1995 (Figure 7). Since 2003 it has remained much higher than between 1988 and 1995 and has increased sharply from 2013-2016. The cod abundance has remained high from 2015-2018 but decreased again in 2020. The Greenland halibut abundance decreased from 1991 to 2005. It increased sharply until 2011 when it started to decrease again. The Greenland halibut abundance remained relatively stable from 2014-2020.



**Figure 7. Cod and Greenland halibut. Abundance indices in the annual offshore shrimp survey.**

*Mynd 7. Þorskur og grálúða. Vísitölur í stofnmælingu úthafsækju.*

## MANAGEMENT

The Ministry of Industries and Innovation is responsible for management of the Icelandic fisheries and implementation of legislation. The Marine Research Institute (MRI) first recommended TAC for offshore shrimp in 1987 and the fishery has been managed with TAC since then, except for the quota years 2010/2011 to 2013/2014, when the offshore shrimp fishery was open to all boats without a national TAC.

The quota year from 1 September to 31 August took an effect on 1 September 1991.

**Table 1. Offshore northern shrimp. Fishable biomass index, state of the stock (relative to the mean of the three highest indices), advice, catch (tonnes in calendar year) and  $F_{proxy}$ .**

*Tafla 1. Úthafsrækja. Veidistofnsvísitala, ástand stofns (vísitala miðað við meðaltal þriggja hæstu vísitölu gilda), ráðgjöf, afli og vísitala veiðihlutfalls ( $F_{proxy}$ ).*

| Year           | Biomass index | Relative state | Rec. TAC            | National TAC | Catch  | $F_{proxy}$ |
|----------------|---------------|----------------|---------------------|--------------|--------|-------------|
| <b>1988</b>    | 34 573        | 0.48           | 30 000              | 30 000       | 24 500 | 0.71        |
| <b>1989</b>    | 28 609        | 0.40           | 20 000              | 20 900       | 20 900 | 0.73        |
| <b>1990</b>    | 43 959        | 0.61           | 22 000              | 24 600       | 24 400 | 0.56        |
| <b>1991</b>    | 60 777        | 0.85           | 28 000              | -            | 30 700 | 0.51        |
| <b>1991/92</b> |               |                | 35 000              | 40 000       | 34 200 |             |
| <b>1992/93</b> | 46 892        | 0.65           | 35 000              | 40 000       | 41 800 | 0.89        |
| <b>1993/94</b> | 55 395        | 0.77           | 40 000              | 52 000       | 53 200 | 0.96        |
| <b>1994/95</b> | 59 256        | 0.83           | 60 000              | 62 000       | 61 200 | 1.03        |
| <b>1995/96</b> | 46 390        | 0.65           | 40 000              | 63 000       | 65 000 | 1.40        |
| <b>1996/97</b> | 90 689        | 1.26           | 55 000              | 60 000       | 57 300 | 0.63        |
| <b>1997/98</b> | 63 624        | 0.89           | 70 000              | 75 000       | 60 900 | 0.96        |
| <b>1998/99</b> | 39 731        | 0.55           | 40 000              | 40 000       | 30 700 | 0.77        |
| <b>1999/00</b> | 32 533        | 0.45           | 20 000              | 20 000       | 20 700 | 0.64        |
| <b>2000/01</b> | 46 615        | 0.65           | 25 000              | 25 000       | 22 100 | 0.47        |
| <b>2001/02</b> | 47 667        | 0.66           | 35 000              | 35 000       | 27 400 | 0.57        |
| <b>2002/03</b> | 47 924        | 0.67           | 30 000              | 30 000       | 24 300 | 0.51        |
| <b>2003/04</b> | 37 342        | 0.52           | 20 000              | 20 000       | 18 000 | 0.48        |
| <b>2004/05</b> | 23 498        | 0.33           | 5 000 <sup>1)</sup> | 10 000       | 5 100  | 0.22        |
| <b>2005/06</b> | 26 225        | 0.37           | 10 000              | 10 000       | 800    | 0.03        |
| <b>2006/07</b> | 32 234        | 0.45           | 7 000               | 7 000        | 1 600  | 0.05        |
| <b>2007/08</b> | 34 850        | 0.49           | 7 000               | 7 000        | 1 300  | 0.04        |
| <b>2008/09</b> | 33 158        | 0.46           | 7 000               | 7 000        | 3 200  | 0.10        |
| <b>2009/10</b> | 37 691        | 0.53           | 7 000               | 7 000        | 6 300  | 0.17        |
| <b>2010/11</b> | 33 310        | 0.46           | 7 000               | -            | 6 300  | 0.19        |
| <b>2011/12</b> | 28 263        | 0.39           | 7 000               | -            | 7 300  | 0.26        |
| <b>2012/13</b> | 24 961        | 0.35           | 5 000               | -            | 7 400  | 0.30        |
| <b>2013/14</b> | 25 099        | 0.35           | 5 000               | -            | 5 100  | 0.20        |
| <b>2014/15</b> | 23 711        | 0.33           | 5 000               | 5 000        | 4 100  | 0.17        |
| <b>2015/16</b> | 20 524        | 0.29           | 4 000               | 4 000        | 4 300  | 0.21        |
| <b>2016/17</b> | 24 985        | 0.35           | 4 100               | 4 100        | 3 100  | 0.12        |
| <b>2017/18</b> | 25 023        | 0.35           | 5 000               | 5 000        | 3 500  | 0.14        |
| <b>2018/19</b> | 29 262        | 0.42           | 5 852               | 5 852        | 2 500  | 0.09        |
| <b>2019/20</b> | -             | -              | 4 682 <sup>2)</sup> | 4 682        |        |             |
| <b>2020/21</b> | 25 682        | 0.37           |                     |              |        |             |

<sup>1)</sup> 2004/05: No recommended TAC but unchanged effort estimated to yield 15 000 tonnes.

<sup>2)</sup> 2019/20: Advice based on lowering previous years' advice by 20% (precautionary approach due to lack of survey data).



## REFERENCES

Jónsdóttir, I.G., Bragason, G.S., Brynjólfsson, S.H., Guðlaugsdóttir, A.K., Skúladóttir, U. 2017. Northern shrimp research in Icelandic waters, 1988-2015. Marine and Freshwater Research Institute, Reykjavík, Iceland. HV 2017-007.