

# Data preparation ARS GSAs 8-9-10-11 for EWG 25-09

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## 1 Stock identity and Biology

In the Mediterranean, *Aristaeomorpha foliacea* (Risso, 1827) is a dominant species of bathyal megafaunal assemblages, and it is sympatric with *Aristeus antennatus*. Both species have considerable interest for fisheries. The giant red shrimp is mainly found in the epibathyal and mesobathyal waters of the Mediterranean. Due to a lack of enough information about the structure of giant red shrimp (*A. foliacea*) in the western Mediterranean, this stock was assumed to be confined within the GSAs 8, 9, 10 and 11 boundaries (Figure 1). In the GSA 9, *A. foliacea* is more abundant in the Tyrrhenian Sea, while lower concentrations are present in the Ligurian Sea, where the blue and red shrimp, *A. antennatus*, is more abundant, and the giant red shrimp considerably decreased over time (Masnadi et al., 2018). In GSA10, this species and the blue and red shrimp are characterised by seasonal variability and annual fluctuations of abundance (Spedicato et al., 1994), as reported for different geographical areas (e.g. Relini, 2007). The giant red shrimp is distributed beyond 350 m depth, but mainly in water deeper than 500 m. The giant red shrimp shows high densities and well-structured populations with a clear multimodal size pattern in the GSA 11. Seasonal changes have

been reported from southern Sardinia in both the vertical distribution and size-related spatial abundance of *A. foliacea*, with large females (preferentially) tending to move gradually deeper (to 650-740 m) from spring to summer (Mura et al., 1997).



Figure 1: Limit of Geographical Sub-Areas (GSAs) 8, 9, 10 & 11.

## 2 Growth Maturity and Natural Mortality

Several sets of von Bertalanffy growth function (VBGF) parameters have been reported in the DCF database for *A. foliacea*. VBGF curves by sex are available for the three main GSAs and they are summarize in Figure 2. In the previous assessment the parameter of GSA 10 was selected as the best proxy for the average of the VBGF parameters (Ref in Figure 2). The latter was compared with the VBGF obtained from the mean values of each GSA and the VBGF reported for the current year (2024). Despite the reference could not properly represents the VBGF of GSA 9, in particular for female, it was selected to be coherent with previous assessment and applied to build the stock assessment object. As done in the last assessments, the parameters were adjusted to shift length slicing by adding a value of 0.5 to the  $t_0$  value. A summary of the parameter obtained from the present analysis is shown in Table 1

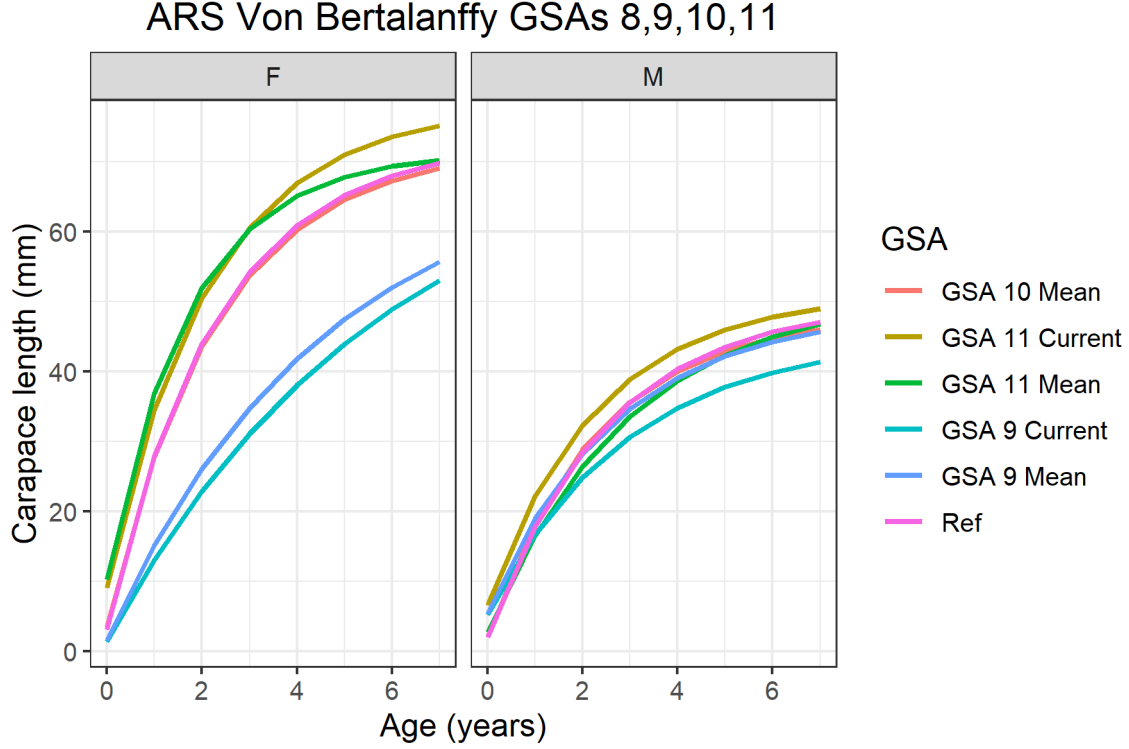


Figure 2: Comparison of the available Von Bertalanffy growth curve. Ref = VBGF parameters of GSA 10, current = VBGF available for 2024, mean = Mean of all available years

Table 1: VBGF parameters.

| sex | Linf     | k         | t0         | GSA            |
|-----|----------|-----------|------------|----------------|
| F   | 75.60000 | 0.1700000 | -0.1099995 | GSA 9 Current  |
| M   | 45.00000 | 0.3400000 | -0.3605086 | GSA 9 Current  |
| F   | 77.86000 | 0.4600000 | -0.2700000 | GSA 11 Current |
| M   | 51.15000 | 0.4300000 | -0.3200000 | GSA 11 Current |
| F   | 73.00000 | 0.4380000 | -0.1000000 | Ref            |
| M   | 50.00000 | 0.4000000 | -0.1000000 | Ref            |
| F   | 72.25000 | 0.4370000 | -0.1125000 | GSA 10 Mean    |
| M   | 48.16667 | 0.4333333 | -0.1000000 | GSA 10 Mean    |
| F   | 71.25077 | 0.5735385 | -0.2700000 | GSA 11 Mean    |
| M   | 51.52500 | 0.3325000 | -0.1625000 | GSA 11 Mean    |
| F   | 70.74286 | 0.2178571 | -0.1026119 | GSA 9 Mean     |
| M   | 48.84643 | 0.3735714 | -0.3143761 | GSA 9 Mean     |

For the Length-Weight relationship as well, several sets of parameters by sex are provided for the three main GSAs. In the previous assessment the parameter of GSA 10 in 2019 was selected as the best proxy of the average of the  $a$  and  $b$  parameters (Ref in Figure 4). The comparison carried out in the present report with the mean of combined GSAs and single GSAs shows a good agreement with the reference values. Therefore, to be coherent with previous assessment, the  $a$  and  $b$  parameters of GSA 10 available for 2019 were applied to build the stock assessment object. A summary of the parameters is shown in Table 2

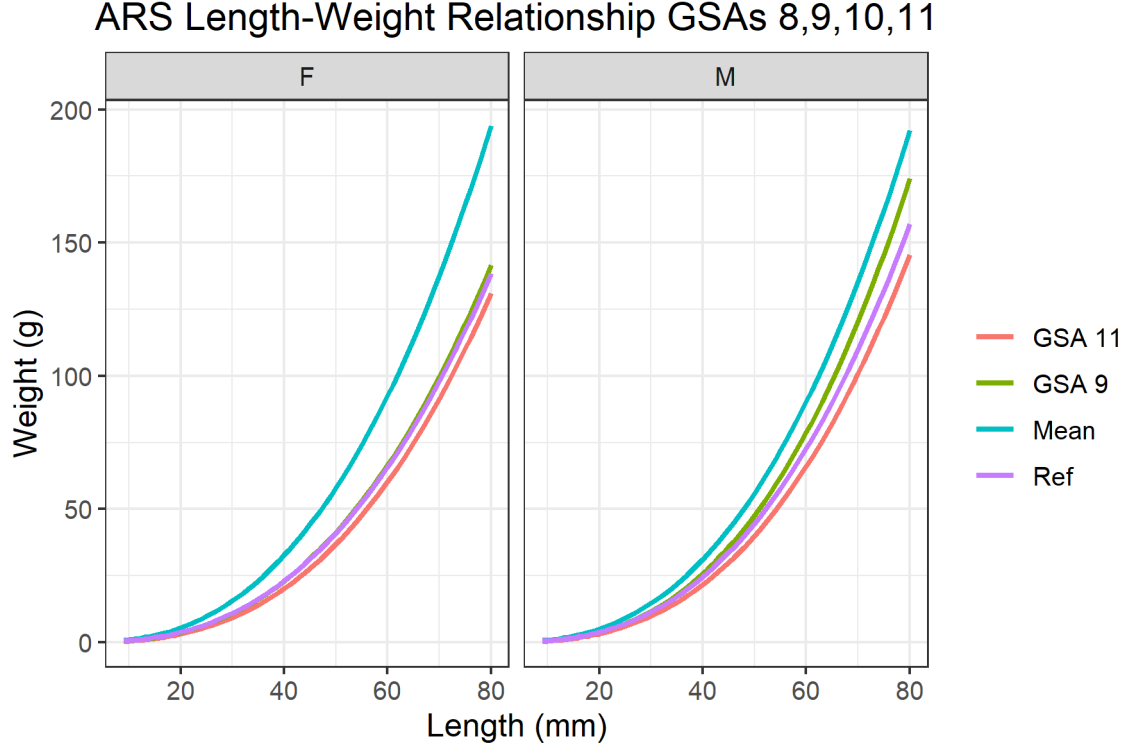


Figure 3: Comparison of the available  $a$  and  $b$  parameters for GSAs. Ref = available parameters for GSA 10 in 2019, Mean = mean of all available years of combined GSAs

Table 2: L-W relationship parameters.

| sex | a         | b        | GSA    |
|-----|-----------|----------|--------|
| F   | 0.0014400 | 2.623320 | GSA 9  |
| M   | 0.0009900 | 2.756010 | GSA 9  |
| F   | 0.0009500 | 2.700750 | GSA 11 |
| M   | 0.0008600 | 2.747280 | GSA 11 |
| F   | 0.0016400 | 2.588550 | Ref    |
| M   | 0.0012700 | 2.675740 | Ref    |
| F   | 0.0024968 | 2.569604 | Mean   |
| M   | 0.0019500 | 2.623973 | Mean   |

### 3 Catch

#### 3.1 Landings

The annual total landings of giant red shrimp available in the DCF database are reported in Table 3 and Figure 4. Landings data are available from 2003 for GSA 9 10 and 11, while for GSA 8 they are available only from 2021 (Italian data). In general, landings show a fluctuating pattern along the time series, with peaks in 2005, 2014 and 2019. In 2024 the landings decreased compared to 2023 for all the GSAs and there is a general declining trend from 2021 with the exception of GSA 9. GSA 10 account for the bulk of the capture, while the landings of GSA 8 are very low.

Table 3: Landings by GSA and total landings.

| <b>year</b> | <b>GSA 10</b> | <b>GSA 11</b> | <b>GSA 9</b> | <b>GSA 8</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|-------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| 2003        | 147.9863      | 71.83020      | 30.04292     | NA           | 249.8594     |
| 2004        | 206.5937      | 313.91254     | 142.69772    | NA           | 663.2040     |
| 2005        | 505.0900      | 170.66686     | 77.39838     | NA           | 753.1553     |
| 2006        | 419.6169      | 128.67191     | 62.60995     | NA           | 610.8987     |
| 2007        | 300.2677      | 81.68139      | 36.65032     | NA           | 418.5994     |
| 2008        | 120.1344      | 67.11518      | 33.82538     | NA           | 221.0750     |
| 2009        | 211.6815      | 117.43395     | 34.29335     | NA           | 363.4088     |
| 2010        | 190.2240      | 98.60755      | 54.55408     | NA           | 343.3857     |
| 2011        | 140.8548      | 94.72759      | 68.43207     | NA           | 304.0144     |
| 2012        | 159.8017      | 117.25722     | 61.96762     | NA           | 339.0265     |
| 2013        | 399.3778      | 124.11800     | 23.07843     | NA           | 546.5742     |
| 2014        | 454.0862      | 123.85500     | 16.81916     | NA           | 594.7604     |
| 2015        | 232.1295      | 97.78200      | 44.18901     | NA           | 374.1005     |
| 2016        | 179.1250      | 127.55168     | 35.81900     | NA           | 342.4957     |
| 2017        | 325.9973      | 249.17500     | 33.59272     | NA           | 608.7651     |
| 2018        | 416.1510      | 188.42500     | 36.35781     | NA           | 640.9338     |
| 2019        | 530.3360      | 141.05212     | 44.10243     | 18.247       | 733.7376     |
| 2020        | 224.6280      | 96.29900      | 30.15900     | NA           | 351.0860     |
| 2021        | 317.1270      | 170.60945     | 30.81789     | 0.327        | 518.8813     |
| 2022        | 224.2350      | 138.27500     | 42.51951     | 0.638        | 405.6675     |
| 2023        | 172.7900      | 113.34434     | 113.58319    | 1.955        | 401.6725     |
| 2024        | 165.1710      | 114.66174     | 22.97372     | 1.445        | 304.2515     |

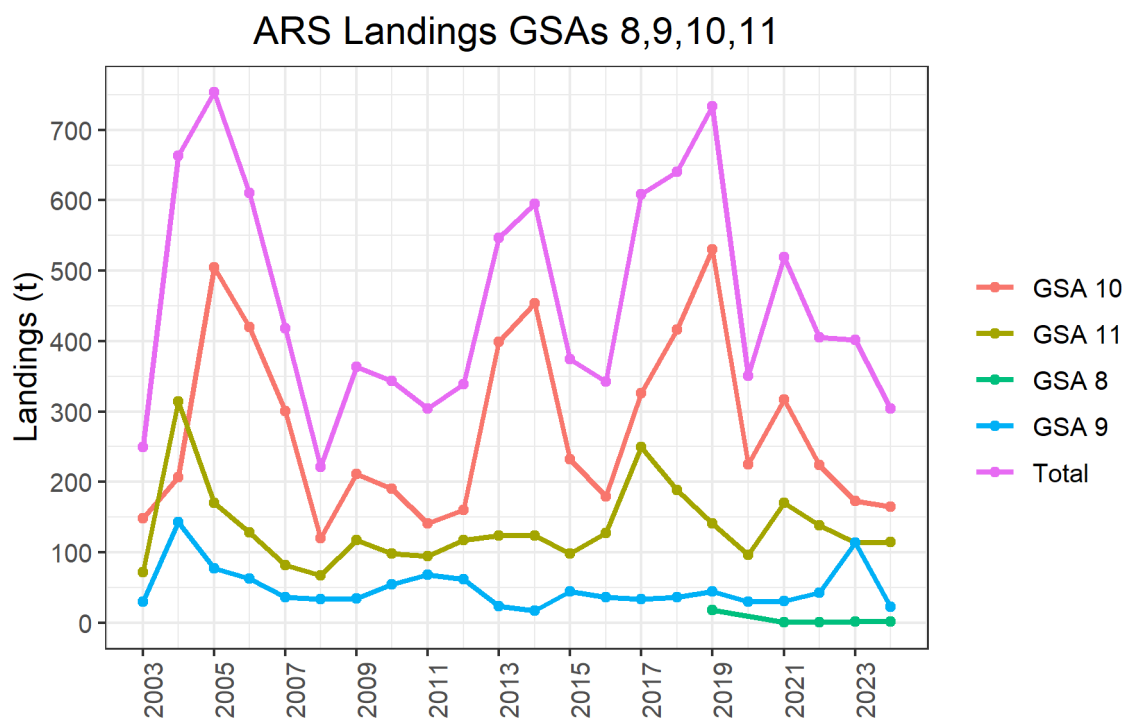


Figure 4: Landings by GSA and total

The time series of landings by GSA and gear is shown in Table 4 and 5 and Figure 5. The bulk of the capture comes from the Otter Trawls fleet, while, until 2014, a small proportion of the catch came from the trammel nets in GSA 10. A detailed otter trawls landings is shown in Figure 6.

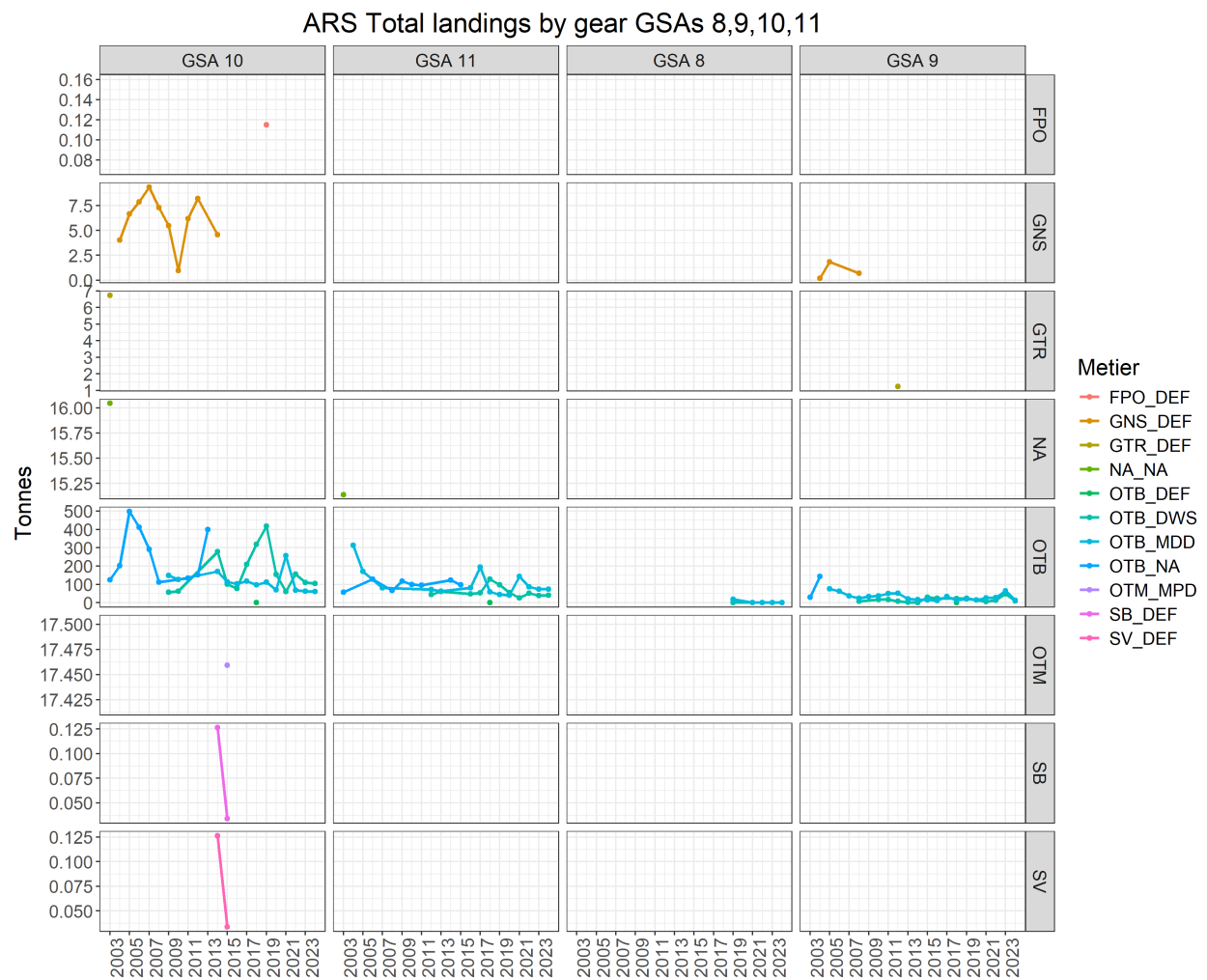


Figure 5: Landings by GSA and gear

## ARS total landings OTB GSAs 8,9,10,11

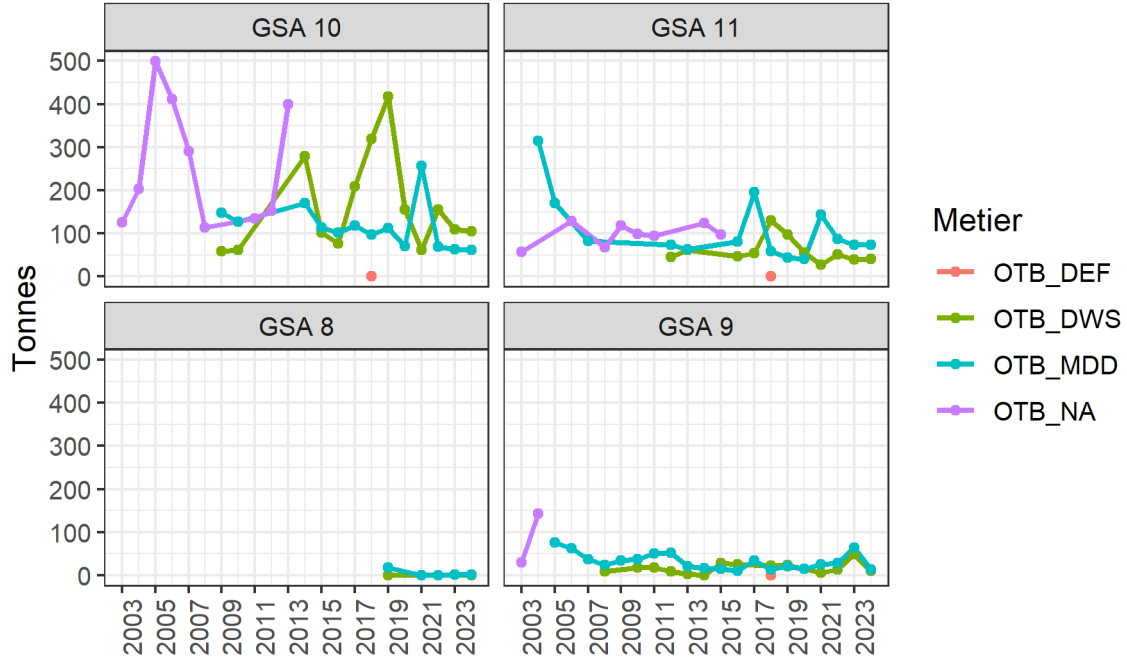


Figure 6: Landings by OTB metier and GSA

Table 4: Landings by GSA and gear.

| year | gear  | GSA 10    | GSA 11    | GSA 9     | GSA 8 |
|------|-------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------|
| 2003 | OTB   | 125.19545 | 56.69202  | 30.04292  | NA    |
| 2003 | Other | 22.79086  | 15.13818  | NA        | NA    |
| 2004 | OTB   | 202.55883 | 313.91254 | 142.52726 | NA    |
| 2004 | Other | 4.03488   | NA        | 0.17046   | NA    |
| 2005 | OTB   | 498.42363 | 170.66686 | 75.54915  | NA    |
| 2005 | Other | 6.66639   | NA        | 1.84923   | NA    |
| 2006 | OTB   | 411.76002 | 128.67191 | 62.60995  | NA    |
| 2006 | Other | 7.85686   | NA        | NA        | NA    |
| 2007 | OTB   | 290.92094 | 81.68139  | 36.65032  | NA    |
| 2007 | Other | 9.34675   | NA        | NA        | NA    |
| 2008 | OTB   | 112.83067 | 67.11518  | 33.12687  | NA    |
| 2008 | Other | 7.30376   | NA        | 0.69851   | NA    |
| 2009 | OTB   | 206.20399 | 117.43395 | 34.29335  | NA    |
| 2009 | Other | 5.47752   | NA        | NA        | NA    |
| 2010 | OTB   | 189.26366 | 98.60755  | 54.55408  | NA    |
| 2010 | Other | 0.96037   | NA        | NA        | NA    |
| 2011 | OTB   | 134.68963 | 94.72759  | 68.43207  | NA    |



Table 5: Landings by GSA and gear.

| <b>year</b> | <b>gear</b> | <b>GSA 10</b> | <b>GSA 11</b> | <b>GSA 9</b> | <b>GSA 8</b> |
|-------------|-------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| 2003        | OTB         | 125.19545     | 56.69202      | 30.04292     | NA           |
| 2011        | Other       | 6.16515       | NA            | NA           | NA           |
| 2012        | OTB         | 151.61706     | 117.25722     | 60.72631     | NA           |
| 2012        | Other       | 8.18465       | NA            | 1.24131      | NA           |
| 2013        | OTB         | 399.37780     | 124.11800     | 23.07843     | NA           |
| 2014        | OTB         | 449.26245     | 123.85500     | 16.81916     | NA           |
| 2014        | Other       | 4.82377       | NA            | NA           | NA           |
| 2015        | OTB         | 214.60257     | 97.78200      | 44.18901     | NA           |
| 2015        | Other       | 17.52697      | NA            | NA           | NA           |
| 2016        | OTB         | 179.12499     | 127.55168     | 35.81900     | NA           |
| 2017        | OTB         | 325.99735     | 249.17500     | 33.59272     | NA           |
| 2018        | OTB         | 416.15100     | 188.42500     | 36.35781     | NA           |
| 2019        | OTB         | 530.22100     | 141.05212     | 44.10243     | 18.247       |
| 2019        | Other       | 0.11500       | NA            | NA           | NA           |
| 2020        | OTB         | 224.62800     | 96.29900      | 30.15900     | NA           |
| 2021        | OTB         | 317.12700     | 170.60945     | 30.81789     | 0.327        |
| 2022        | OTB         | 224.23500     | 138.27500     | 42.51951     | 0.638        |
| 2023        | OTB         | 172.79000     | 113.34434     | 113.58319    | 1.955        |
| 2024        | OTB         | 165.17100     | 114.66174     | 22.97372     | 1.445        |

### 3.2 Discards

Discards of giant red shrimp are negligible. Nevertheless, the available discards presented in Table 6 were added to the landings for the assessment to generate the catch table shown in Tables 7-10

Table 6: Discard by GSA.

| <b>year</b> | <b>GSA</b> | <b>fishery</b> | <b>discard</b> |
|-------------|------------|----------------|----------------|
| 2010        | GSA 9      | OTB_MDD        | 0.45335        |
| 2011        | GSA 10     | OTB_NA         | 0.05099        |
| 2012        | GSA 10     | OTB_NA         | 0.35069        |
| 2017        | GSA 10     | OTB_DWS        | 0.96424        |

### 3.3 Catch

Table 7: Catch by GSA and gear.

| year | fishery | GSA 10    | GSA 11    | GSA 8 | GSA 9     |
|------|---------|-----------|-----------|-------|-----------|
| 2003 | GTR_DEF | 6.74611   | NA        | NA    | NA        |
| 2003 | NA_NA   | 16.04475  | 15.13818  | NA    | NA        |
| 2003 | OTB_NA  | 125.19545 | 56.69202  | NA    | 30.04292  |
| 2004 | GNS_DEF | 4.03488   | NA        | NA    | 0.17046   |
| 2004 | OTB_NA  | 202.55883 | NA        | NA    | 142.52726 |
| 2005 | GNS_DEF | 6.66639   | NA        | NA    | 1.84923   |
| 2005 | OTB_NA  | 498.42363 | NA        | NA    | NA        |
| 2006 | GNS_DEF | 7.85686   | NA        | NA    | NA        |
| 2006 | OTB_NA  | 411.76002 | 128.67191 | NA    | NA        |
| 2007 | GNS_DEF | 9.34675   | NA        | NA    | NA        |
| 2007 | OTB_NA  | 290.92094 | NA        | NA    | NA        |
| 2008 | GNS_DEF | 7.30376   | NA        | NA    | 0.69851   |
| 2008 | OTB_NA  | 112.83067 | 67.11518  | NA    | NA        |
| 2009 | GNS_DEF | 5.47752   | NA        | NA    | NA        |
| 2009 | OTB_DWS | 57.88350  | NA        | NA    | NA        |
| 2009 | OTB_MDD | 148.32049 | NA        | NA    | 34.29335  |
| 2010 | GNS_DEF | 0.96037   | NA        | NA    | NA        |
| 2010 | OTB_DWS | 62.07427  | NA        | NA    | 17.70095  |
| 2010 | OTB_MDD | 127.18939 | NA        | NA    | 37.30648  |
| 2011 | GNS_DEF | 6.16515   | NA        | NA    | NA        |
| 2011 | OTB_NA  | 134.74062 | 94.72759  | NA    | NA        |

Table 8: Catch by GSA and gear.

| year | fishery | GSA 10    | GSA 11    | GSA 8 | GSA 9    |
|------|---------|-----------|-----------|-------|----------|
| 2003 | GTR_DEF | 6.74611   | NA        | NA    | NA       |
| 2012 | GNS_DEF | 8.18465   | NA        | NA    | NA       |
| 2012 | OTB_NA  | 151.96775 | NA        | NA    | NA       |
| 2013 | OTB_NA  | 399.37780 | NA        | NA    | NA       |
| 2014 | GNS_DEF | 4.57079   | NA        | NA    | NA       |
| 2014 | OTB_DWS | 278.53096 | NA        | NA    | 0.61360  |
| 2014 | OTB_MDD | 170.73149 | NA        | NA    | 16.20556 |
| 2014 | SB_DEF  | 0.12649   | NA        | NA    | NA       |
| 2014 | SV_DEF  | 0.12649   | NA        | NA    | NA       |
| 2015 | OTB_DWS | 100.96675 | NA        | NA    | 28.96271 |
| 2015 | OTB_MDD | 113.63582 | NA        | NA    | 15.22630 |
| 2015 | OTM_MPD | 17.45935  | NA        | NA    | NA       |
| 2015 | SB_DEF  | 0.03381   | NA        | NA    | NA       |
| 2015 | SV_DEF  | 0.03381   | NA        | NA    | NA       |
| 2016 | OTB_DWS | 76.83191  | 47.22768  | NA    | 25.12600 |
| 2016 | OTB_MDD | 102.29308 | 80.32400  | NA    | 10.69300 |
| 2017 | OTB_DWS | 209.06178 | 54.25400  | NA    | NA       |
| 2017 | OTB_MDD | 117.89981 | 194.92100 | NA    | 33.59272 |
| 2018 | OTB_DEF | 0.04400   | 0.15000   | NA    | 0.03873  |
| 2018 | OTB_DWS | 319.18100 | 129.30500 | NA    | 22.42133 |
| 2018 | OTB_MDD | 96.92600  | 58.97000  | NA    | 13.89775 |

Table 9: Catch by GSA and gear.

| year | fishery | GSA 10    | GSA 11    | GSA 8  | GSA 9    |
|------|---------|-----------|-----------|--------|----------|
| 2003 | GTR_DEF | 6.74611   | NA        | NA     | NA       |
| 2019 | FPO_DEF | 0.11500   | NA        | NA     | NA       |
| 2019 | OTB_DWS | 417.43500 | 97.04193  | 0.135  | 23.85064 |
| 2019 | OTB_MDD | 112.78600 | 44.01019  | 18.112 | 20.25179 |
| 2020 | OTB_DWS | 154.76100 | 54.95000  | NA     | 14.60200 |
| 2020 | OTB_MDD | 69.86700  | 41.34900  | NA     | 15.55700 |
| 2021 | OTB_DWS | 60.88700  | 26.89982  | NA     | 5.58932  |
| 2021 | OTB_MDD | 256.24000 | 143.70963 | 0.327  | 25.22857 |
| 2022 | OTB_DWS | 155.16600 | 51.73700  | NA     | 14.04863 |
| 2022 | OTB_MDD | 69.06900  | 86.53800  | 0.638  | 28.47088 |
| 2023 | OTB_DWS | 109.33600 | 39.63134  | 1.030  | 48.87205 |
| 2023 | OTB_MDD | 63.45400  | 73.71300  | 0.925  | 64.71114 |
| 2024 | OTB_DWS | 104.33300 | 40.92347  | 0.420  | 10.14108 |
| 2024 | OTB_MDD | 60.83800  | 73.73827  | 1.025  | 12.83264 |
| 2004 | OTB_MDD | NA        | 313.91254 | NA     | NA       |
| 2005 | OTB_MDD | NA        | 170.66686 | NA     | 75.54915 |
| 2007 | OTB_MDD | NA        | 81.68139  | NA     | 36.65032 |
| 2009 | OTB_NA  | NA        | 117.43395 | NA     | NA       |
| 2010 | OTB_NA  | NA        | 98.60755  | NA     | NA       |
| 2012 | OTB_DWS | NA        | 44.54844  | NA     | 8.34909  |
| 2012 | OTB_MDD | NA        | 72.70878  | NA     | 52.37722 |

Table 10: Catch by GSA and gear.

| year | fishery | GSA 10  | GSA 11  | GSA 8 | GSA 9    |
|------|---------|---------|---------|-------|----------|
| 2003 | GTR_DEF | 6.74611 | NA      | NA    | NA       |
| 2013 | OTB_DWS | NA      | 60.769  | NA    | 2.56350  |
| 2013 | OTB_MDD | NA      | 63.349  | NA    | 20.51493 |
| 2014 | OTB_NA  | NA      | 123.855 | NA    | NA       |
| 2015 | OTB_NA  | NA      | 97.782  | NA    | NA       |
| 2006 | OTB_MDD | NA      | NA      | NA    | 62.60995 |
| 2008 | OTB_DWS | NA      | NA      | NA    | 8.73874  |
| 2008 | OTB_MDD | NA      | NA      | NA    | 24.38813 |
| 2011 | OTB_DWS | NA      | NA      | NA    | 17.62392 |
| 2011 | OTB_MDD | NA      | NA      | NA    | 50.80815 |
| 2012 | GTR_DEF | NA      | NA      | NA    | 1.24131  |

### 3.4 Length frequency Distribution

In 2024 at least one metier was sampled for each GSA as shown in Figure 7. Unlike in 2023, all quarters were covered in 2024 as shown in Figure 8. In GSA 10 no samples were carried out for LFD in 2023 and few quarters were sampled in 2019,2020 and 2021. Therefore, the LFD was for these years was computed merging the LFD data with the average of the LFD data from the same years from GSA 9 and 11, and then expanded it to match the production of GSA 10 as described also in the previous assessment (STECF 24-10). No data for GSA 8 are present in the MED and BS data call.



Figure 7: LFD data availability along the time series by GSA



Figure 8: LFD data availability along the time series by quarter and GSA

The landings structure is shown in Figures 9, 10 and 11. In 2024 the bulk of capture is composed by small individuals, despite in GSA 9 a bimodal distribution was detected (Figure 10).

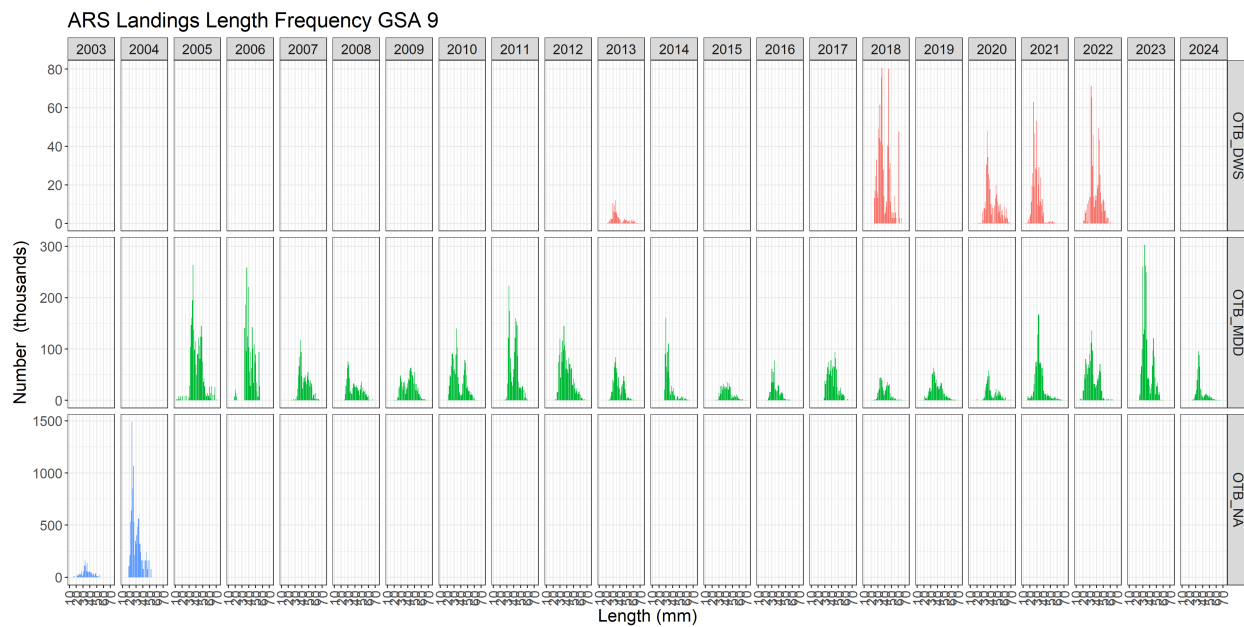


Figure 9: LFDs of landings by year and gear of giant red shrimp in GSA 9

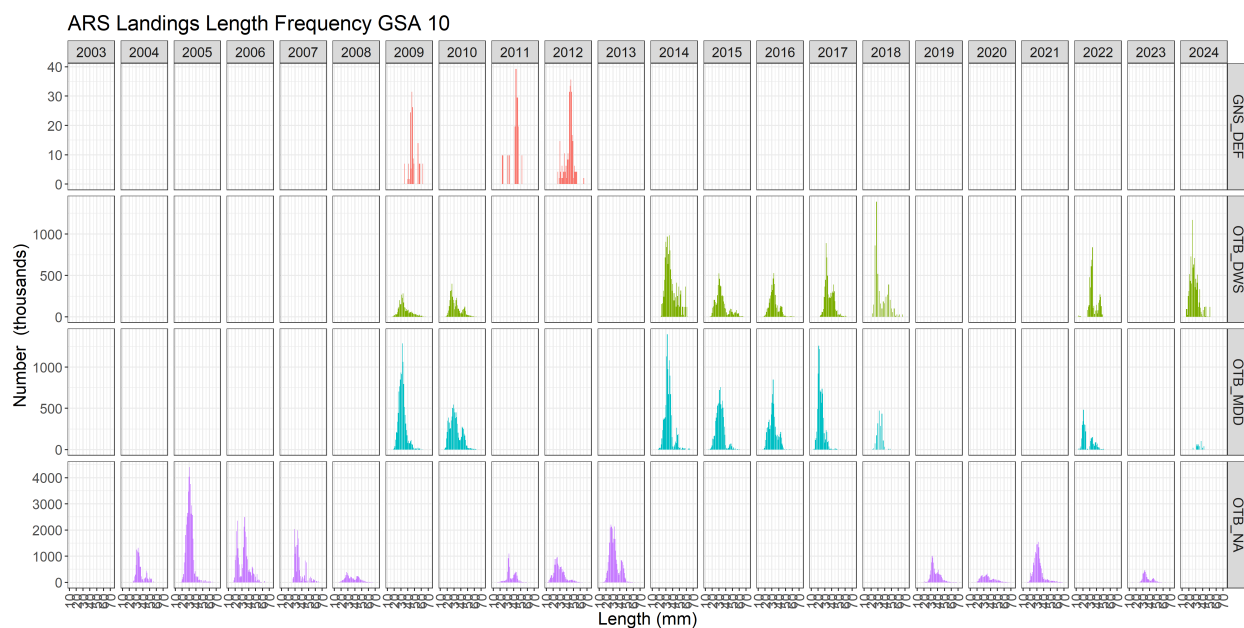


Figure 10: LFDs of landings by year and gear of giant red shrimp in GSA 10

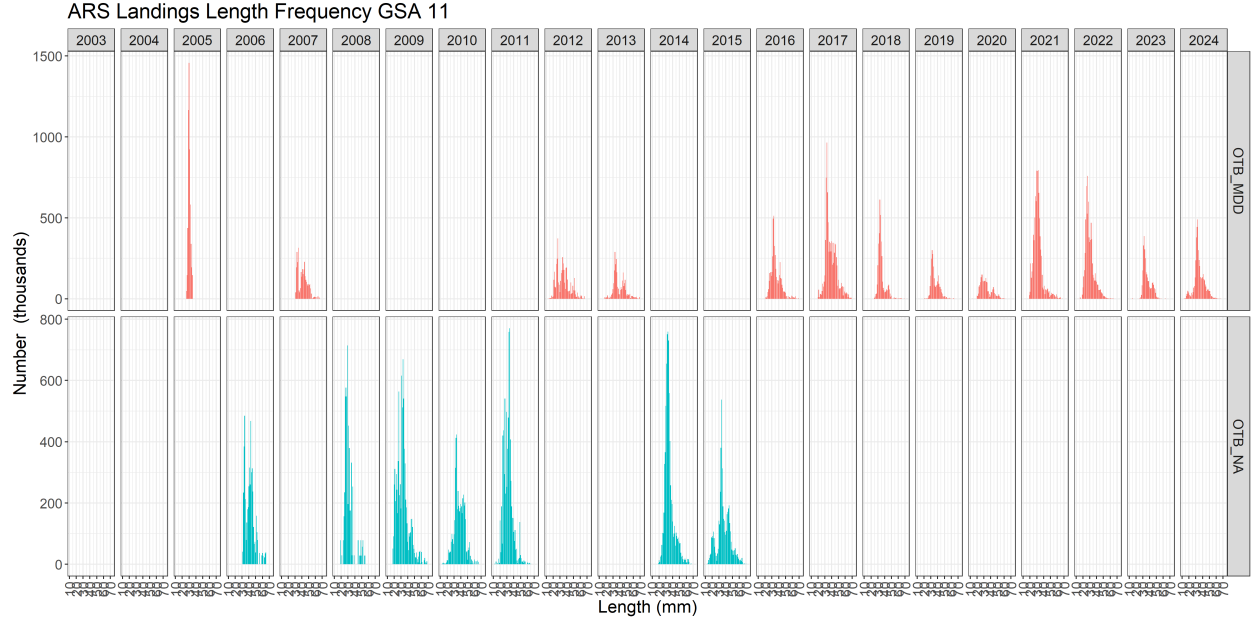


Figure 11: LFDs of landings by year and gear of giant red shrimp in GSA 11

Despite the low values of discards, the available LFDs shown in Figure 12 were included in the stock object.

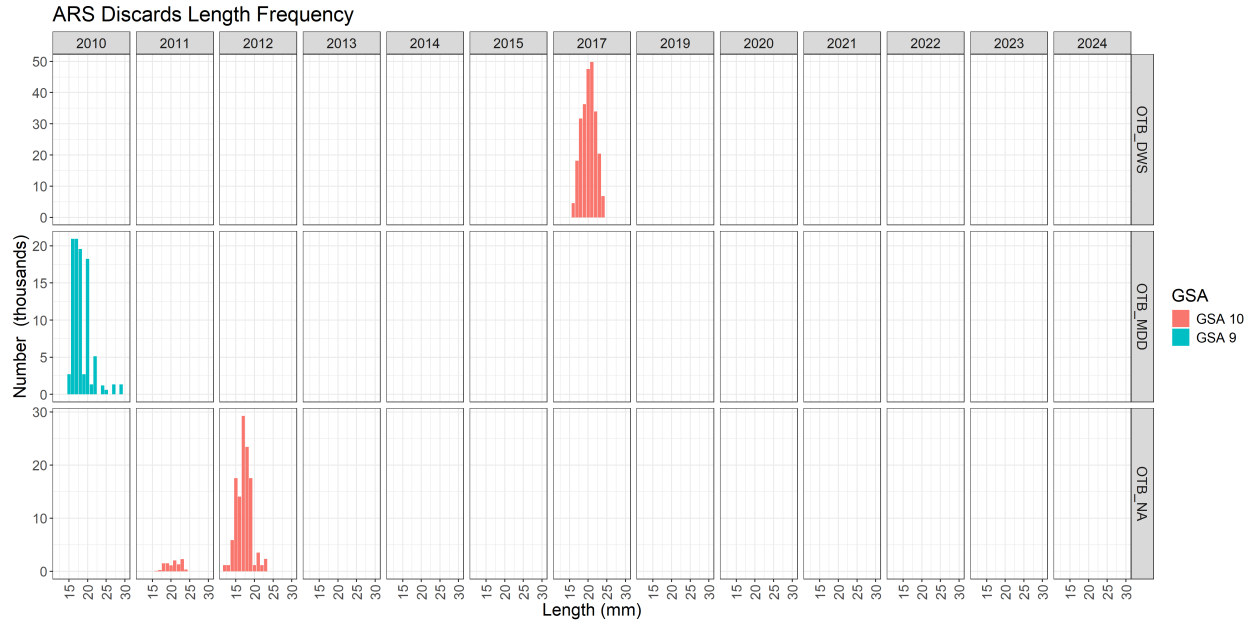


Figure 12: LFDs of discard by year, GSA and gear of giant red shrimp

## 4 Survey data

Since 1994, MEDITS trawl surveys had been regularly carried out each year (centred in the early summer). A random stratified sampling by depth (five strata with depth limits at 50, 100, 200, 500 and 800 m)

is applied. Haul allocation was proportional to the stratum area. All the abundance data (number and total weight of fish per surface unit) are standardized to the km<sup>2</sup> using the swept area method. Length distributions represented an aggregation (sum) of all standardized length frequencies (subsamples raised to standardized haul abundance) over the stations of each stratum. Aggregated length frequencies were then raised to stratum abundance\*100 (because of low numbers in most strata) and finally aggregated (sum) over the strata to the three GSAs. Medits has been regularly carried out since 1994 mainly during the spring-summer season. In 2024 a total of 289 valid hauls were performed in GSA 8, 9, 10 and 11. In 2002 and 2020 the survey was not carried out in GSA 8 while in 2022, the survey was not conducted in the Italian GSAs.

#### 4.1 Survey period and spatial distribution

In some years (2017, 2020, 2021 and 2023) surveys were delayed in some GSAs. In 2023, in particular, in GSA 8 the survey was done in spring, in GSA 11 in summer, in GSA 9 in autumn while in GSA 10 at the end of autumn (and not all the hauls were performed).

MEDITS in 2024 was carried out between spring and early summer as shown in Figure 13 and 14. Figure 14 underline a shift in the period compared to 2020, 2021 and 2023, while it is in line with other years along the time series.

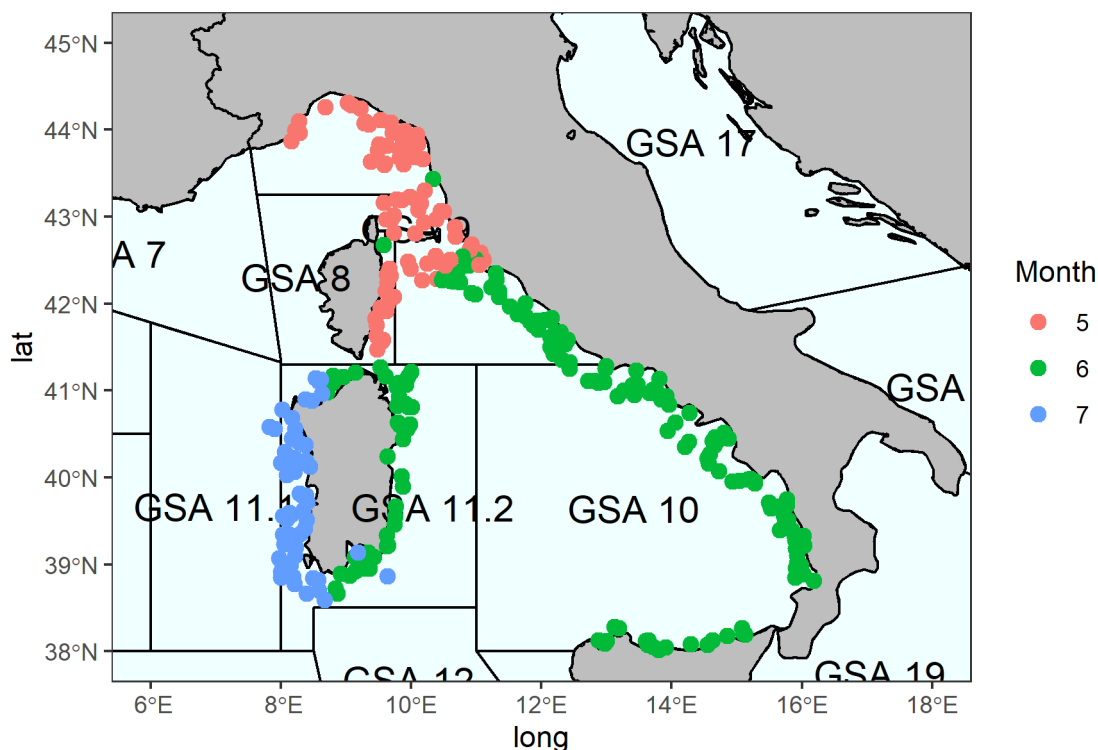


Figure 13: Hauls distribution of MEDITS 2024 by month



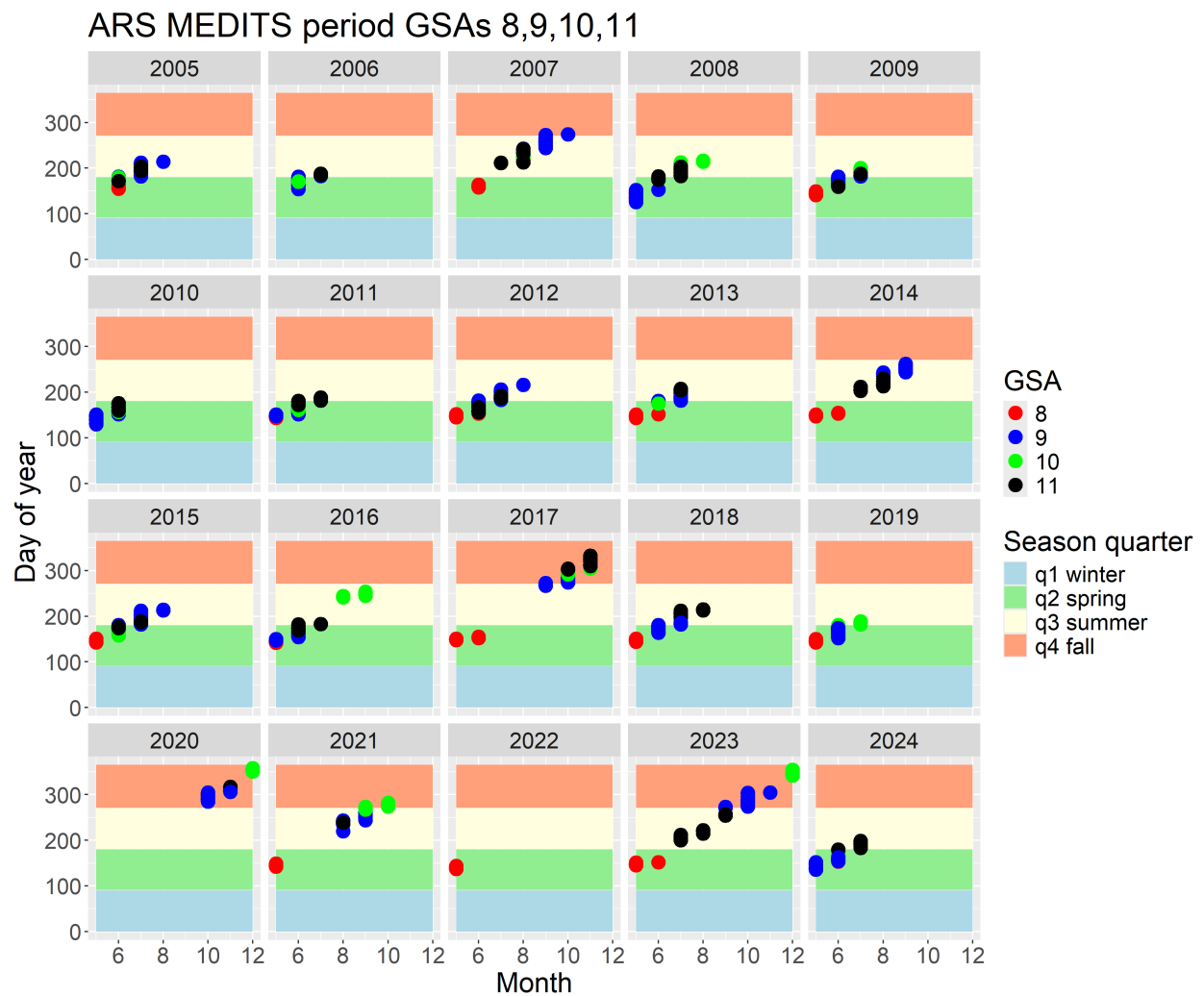


Figure 14: Survey periods MEDITS 1994-2024 in GSAs 8,9,10,11

A map showing the spatial distribution of adults and juveniles in 2024 was made by splitting the dataset based on the maturity stage of the individual collected during MEDITS. Figure 15 shows that the adults are mostly concentrated in GSA 11 following by an high occurrence between GSA 9 and GSA 8 and an high density area also in the southern part of GSA 10. Conversely, the juveniles are more present in the southern area of GSA 10 and in GSA 9, with low density in GSA 11.

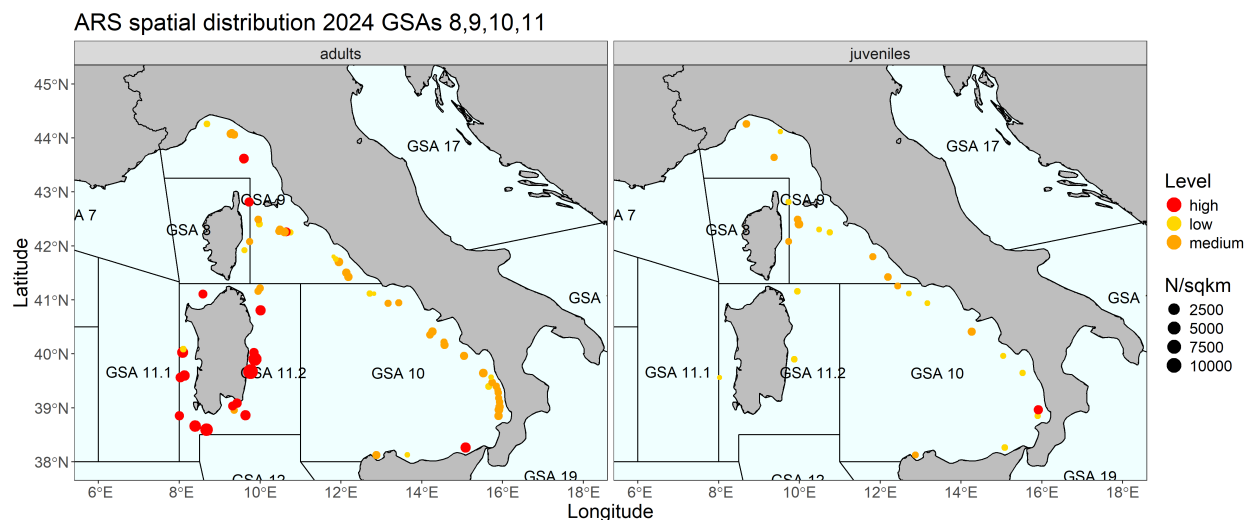


Figure 15: Distribution map of juveniles and adults in 2024 from MEDITS abundance data

The time series spatial distribution maps shown in Figure 16 underline that the resources is more widespread in GSA 10 and 11 with a general low density in GSA 9 and 8. Despite the results could be affected by the shifting period of MEDITS shown in Figure 14, no clear trend of geographical shift was observed along the time series.

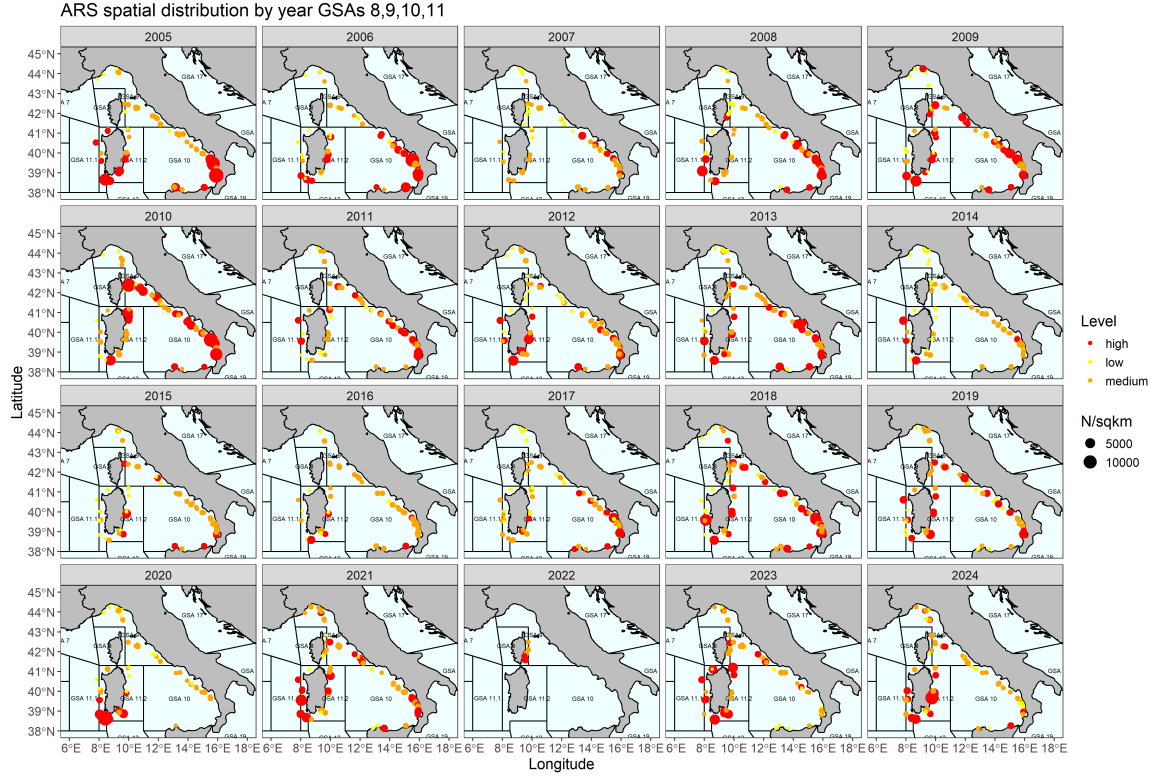


Figure 16: Distribution pattern of abundance along the available time series of MEDITS

## 4.2 Trend in abundance and biomass

The abundance and biomass trend of combined GSAs is shown in Figure 17. The time series are characterized by wide fluctuations with two main peaks in 2005 and 2010. A slightly decreasing trend can be observed for the abundance index with a value of 167 n/km<sup>2</sup> registered in 2024. No clear trend is observed for biomass with a value of 3.09 kg/km<sup>2</sup> registered in 2024. However, both indexes shown a reduction from 2021.

## ARS abundance and biomass index GSAs 8,9,10,11

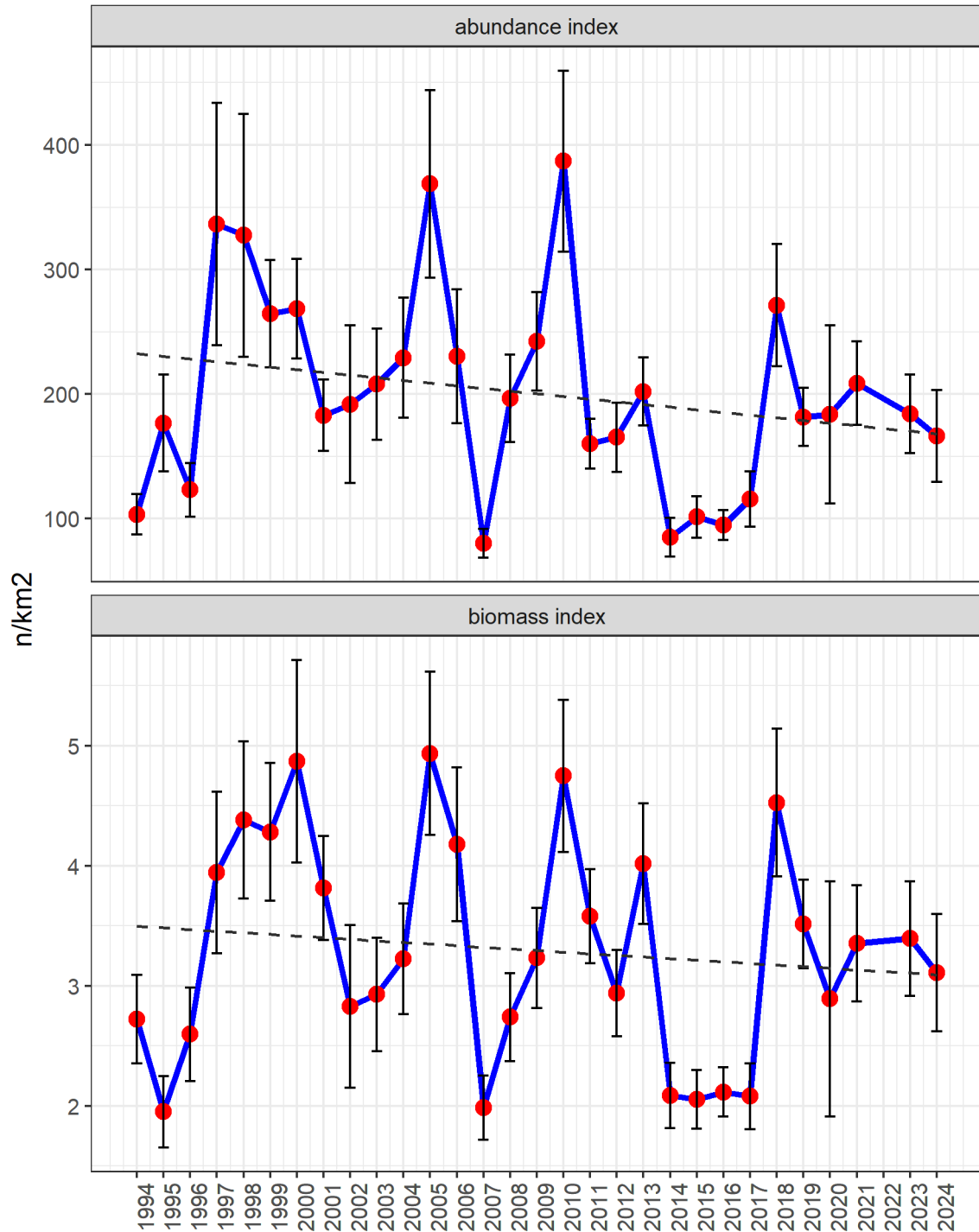


Figure 17: Standardized density index of ARS from MEDITS data. No data are presented for 2022 since the survey was not carried out

### 4.3 Length Frequency Distribution

The stratified abundance index was computed from MEDITS data by sex and length of combined GSAs. In order to improve the readability, only the data used in the assessment are shown in the figures below (2005-2024). Unlike 2023, the LFD in 2024 is multimodal (Figure 18) showing a distribution closer to the ones detected in 2011, 2016 and 2019. The change can be justified by the shifting period of the survey that was carried out mainly in summer and early autumn in 2023 and during spring and early summer in 2024, 2011, 2016 and 2019. Figure 19 shown a slight shift of capture towards bigger individuals in recent years compared to the past. However, the length frequency distributions observed are not noticeably different among years. Data for 2022 are available only for GSA 8 and were not used to build the stock object.

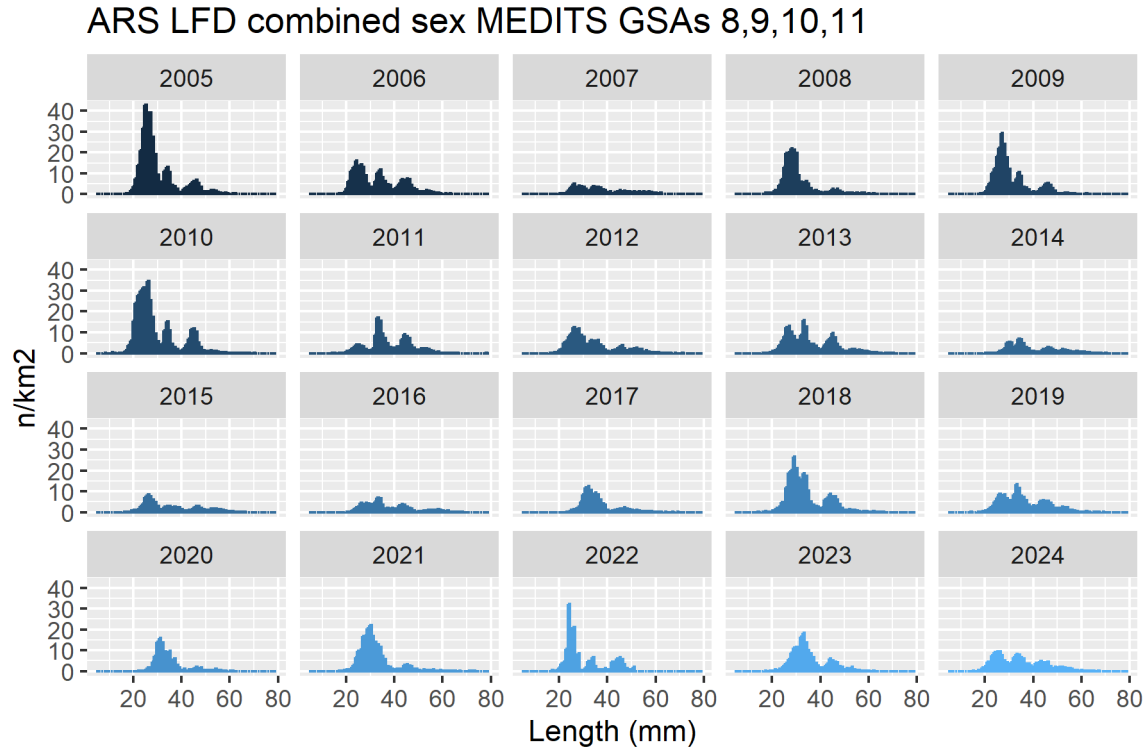


Figure 18: Sex combined stratified abundance index by size from MEDITS data. Data for 2022 are not available

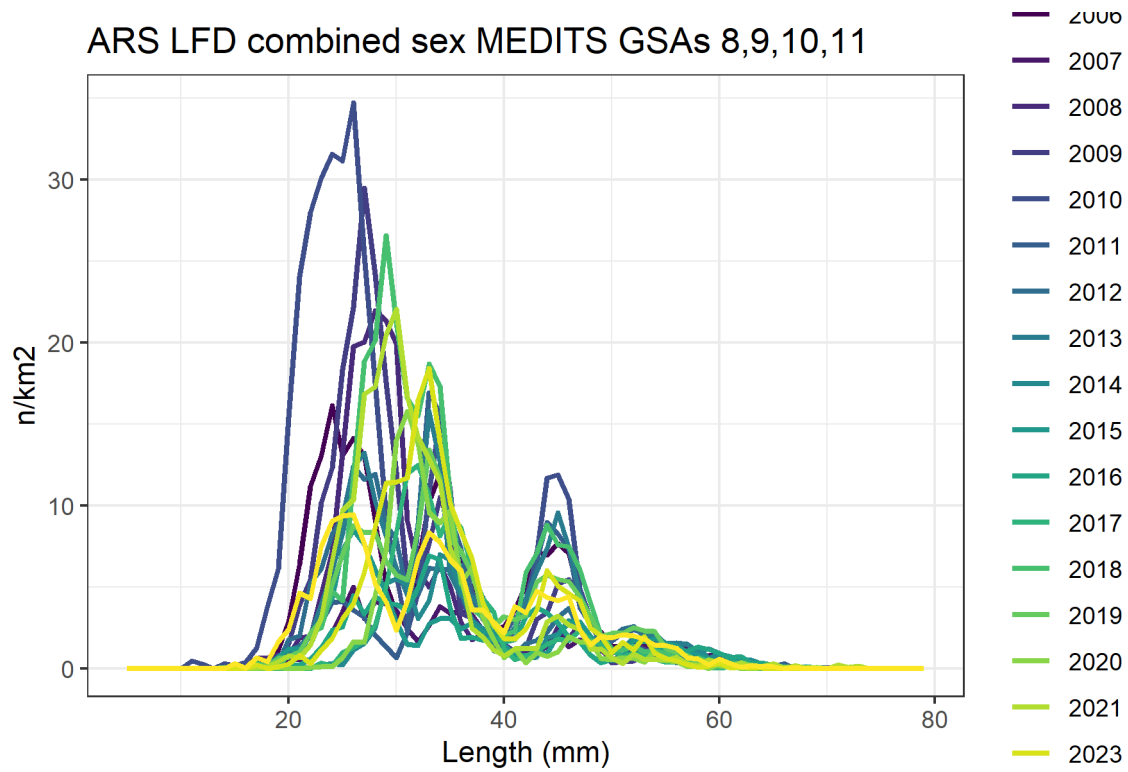


Figure 19: Sex combined overlapped stratified abundance index by size from MEDITS data. Data for 2022 are not available

The female LFD registered in 2024 is more comparable to one registered in the previous years being characterized by a bimodal distribution with two modes at approximately 25 and 45 mm as shown in Figure 20. The same shift of capture registered for combined sex can be observed for females that are characterized by an higher presence of bigger individuals compared to the past as shown in Figure 21.

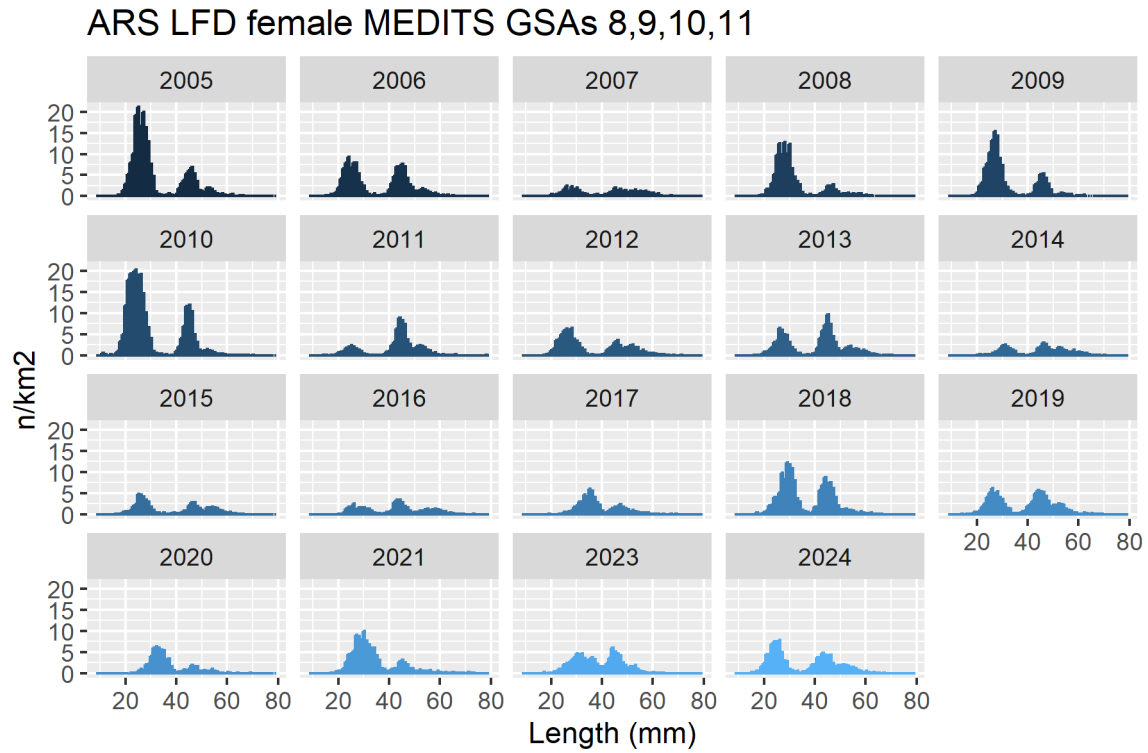


Figure 20: Female stratified abundance index by size from MEDITS data. Data for 2022 are not available

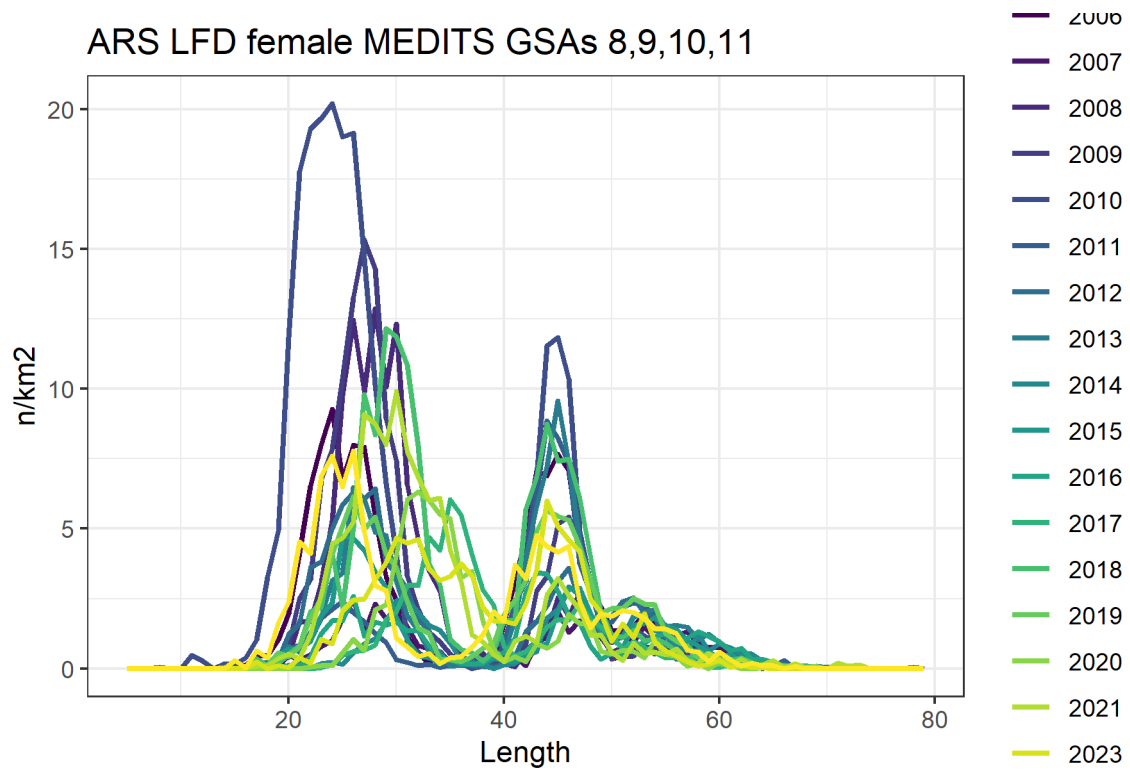


Figure 21: Female overlapped stratified abundance index by size from MEDITS data. Data for 2022 are not available

The male LFD registered in 2024 is bimodal and the bulk of the capture is composed by individuals of approximately 35 mm (Figure 22). No clear shift in the size structure along the time series is registered for males as shown in Figure 23.

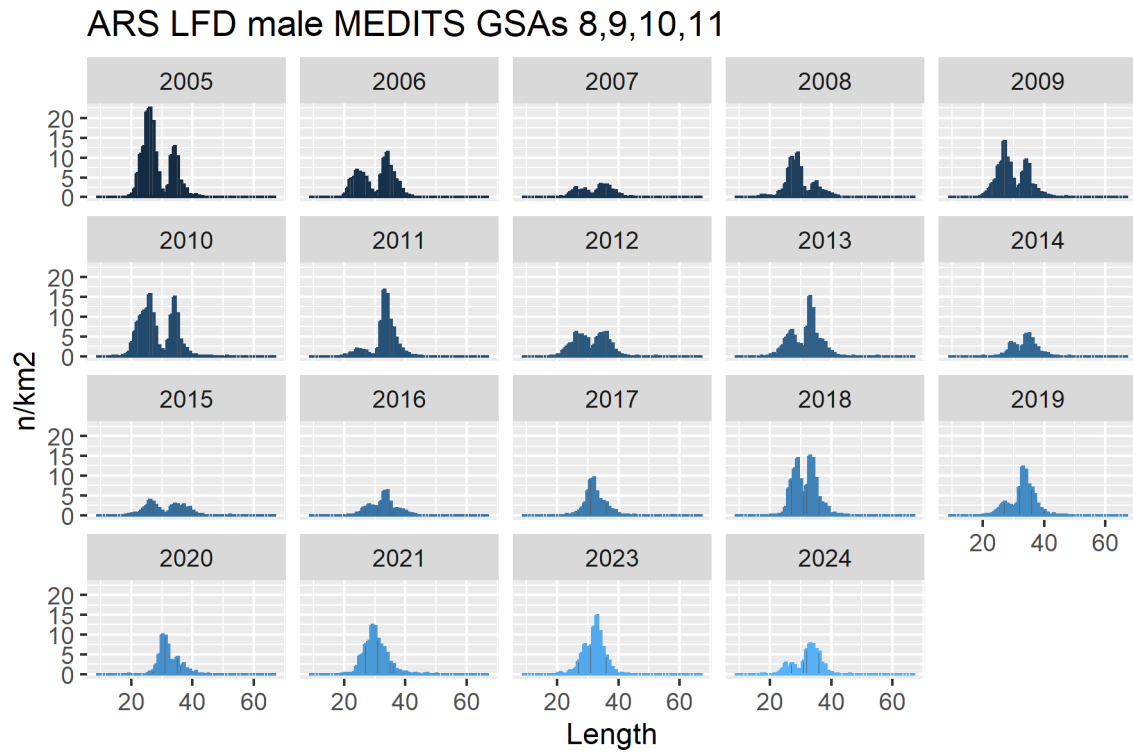


Figure 22: Male stratified abundance index by size from MEDITS data. Data for 2022 are not available



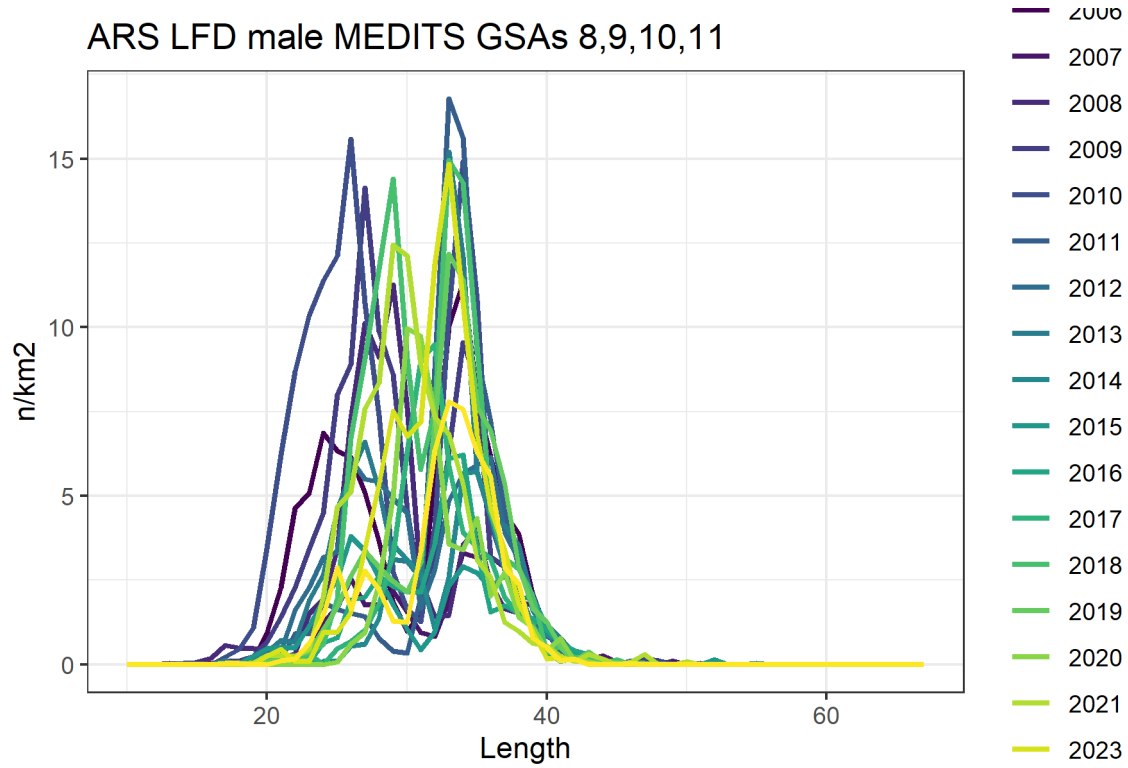


Figure 23: Male overlapped stratified abundance index by size from MEDITS data. Data for 2022 are not available

## 5 Stock assessment inputs

Length-frequency distributions of commercial catches and surveys were split by sex and then transformed in age classes (plus group was set at age 4) using length-to-age slicing with different growth parameters by sex. A correction of 0.5 was applied to  $t_0$  to align length slicing to assessment year to account for spawning at the middle of the year. The number of individuals by age relative to the catches was SOP corrected. In both catches and survey, a plus group at age 4 was set. The final data input are shown in the tables and figures below

Table 11: Survey index MEDITS values of numbers at age per year.

| age | 2005        | 2006       | 2007       | 2008        | 2009        | 2010       | 2011       |
|-----|-------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|------------|------------|
| 0   | 0.1537501   | 0.3446493  | 0.0130321  | 0.0284232   | 0.0768833   | 1.454389   | 0.1054268  |
| 1   | 170.2185994 | 81.7057835 | 19.5559716 | 103.3100981 | 107.8053219 | 204.676910 | 18.6117565 |
| 2   | 135.9221857 | 81.1187599 | 25.3683614 | 66.9888739  | 88.5652673  | 119.979526 | 56.1658976 |
| 3   | 54.2459952  | 56.3004654 | 24.9432690 | 19.7285332  | 37.7620729  | 54.426819  | 75.5302528 |
| 4   | 7.9173485   | 10.8452002 | 10.3066555 | 6.5362937   | 7.1640598   | 5.897901   | 9.1389980  |

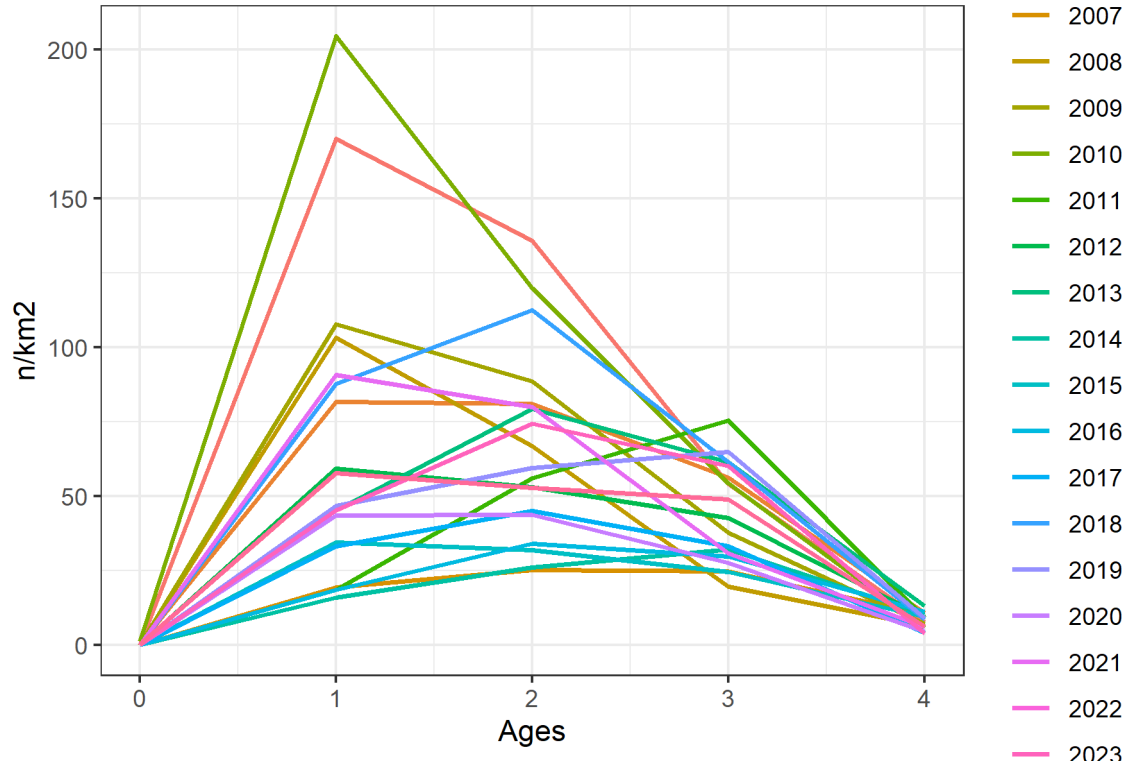


Figure 24: MEDITS index-at-age distribution by year

Table 12: Survey index MEDITS values of numbers at age per year.

| age | 2012       | 2013       | 2014       | 2015       | 2016       | 2017       | 2018        |
|-----|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| 0   | 0.0130321  | 0.0389846  | 0.0130321  | 0.0798352  | 0.0130321  | 0.0130321  | 0.0130321   |
| 1   | 59.3130950 | 45.3701317 | 15.9938527 | 34.6185541 | 18.6678139 | 33.2583889 | 87.7583234  |
| 2   | 53.1434437 | 79.4892534 | 26.2494796 | 31.9432535 | 34.0287070 | 45.0719826 | 112.5095660 |
| 3   | 42.7624722 | 61.4723159 | 32.2687983 | 24.6308764 | 29.7952505 | 33.2181335 | 61.4636449  |
| 4   | 9.5490567  | 13.2060060 | 10.3626600 | 9.4753185  | 11.3140857 | 4.1769250  | 8.7912743   |

Table 13: Survey index MEDITS values of numbers at age per year.

| age | 2019      | 2020       | 2021       | 2022 | 2023       | 2024       |
|-----|-----------|------------|------------|------|------------|------------|
| 0   | 0.075387  | 0.0130321  | 0.0260641  | NA   | 0.0130321  | 0.3318835  |
| 1   | 46.798857 | 43.5212483 | 90.7806783 | NA   | 45.2608023 | 57.9094088 |
| 2   | 59.629907 | 43.8313206 | 80.1229630 | NA   | 74.3279241 | 52.9200414 |
| 3   | 65.052560 | 27.6248987 | 30.8609793 | NA   | 60.2195107 | 48.9321364 |
| 4   | 9.066262  | 4.5331830  | 6.0433776  | NA   | 4.0466385  | 6.2792924  |

## 5.1 Natural mortality and proportion of mature

The same approach and weighted vectors used in the previous assessment was considered to the present analysis (STECF 24-10). The Chen and Watanabe equation was applied using the Ref growth parameters

reported in Table 14 to obtain a combined natural mortality vector. Due to the time constraints, no further exploration was done on natural mortality. Nevertheless, the Chen and Watanabe resulted the model with the lowest entropy in STECF 25-01.

The proportion of mature vector was computed through a weighed average starting from the mature by age data provided in MEDBS data call for GSA 9, 10 and 11.

Table 14: Natural mortality and proportion of mature vectors by age.

| <b>Natural mortality</b> | <b>Proportion of mature</b> |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1.8952478                | 0.1027012                   |
| 0.8685851                | 0.4217910                   |
| 0.6226113                | 0.9001410                   |
| 0.5257375                | 0.9462500                   |
| 0.4834982                | 0.9617667                   |

Table 15: SOP correction vector for combined GSA.

| <b>year</b> | <b>SOP</b> |
|-------------|------------|
| 2005        | 1.1333859  |
| 2006        | 0.9783727  |
| 2007        | 0.9832743  |
| 2008        | 1.0460232  |
| 2009        | 0.9534095  |
| 2010        | 1.0360272  |
| 2011        | 1.0447584  |
| 2012        | 1.1737948  |
| 2013        | 1.0786508  |
| 2014        | 0.9522105  |
| 2015        | 1.0960765  |
| 2016        | 1.2189084  |
| 2017        | 1.3895398  |
| 2018        | 2.8190199  |
| 2019        | 2.8263575  |
| 2020        | 2.0128155  |
| 2021        | 1.3144182  |
| 2022        | 1.6074346  |
| 2023        | 2.1417148  |
| 2024        | 1.5567621  |

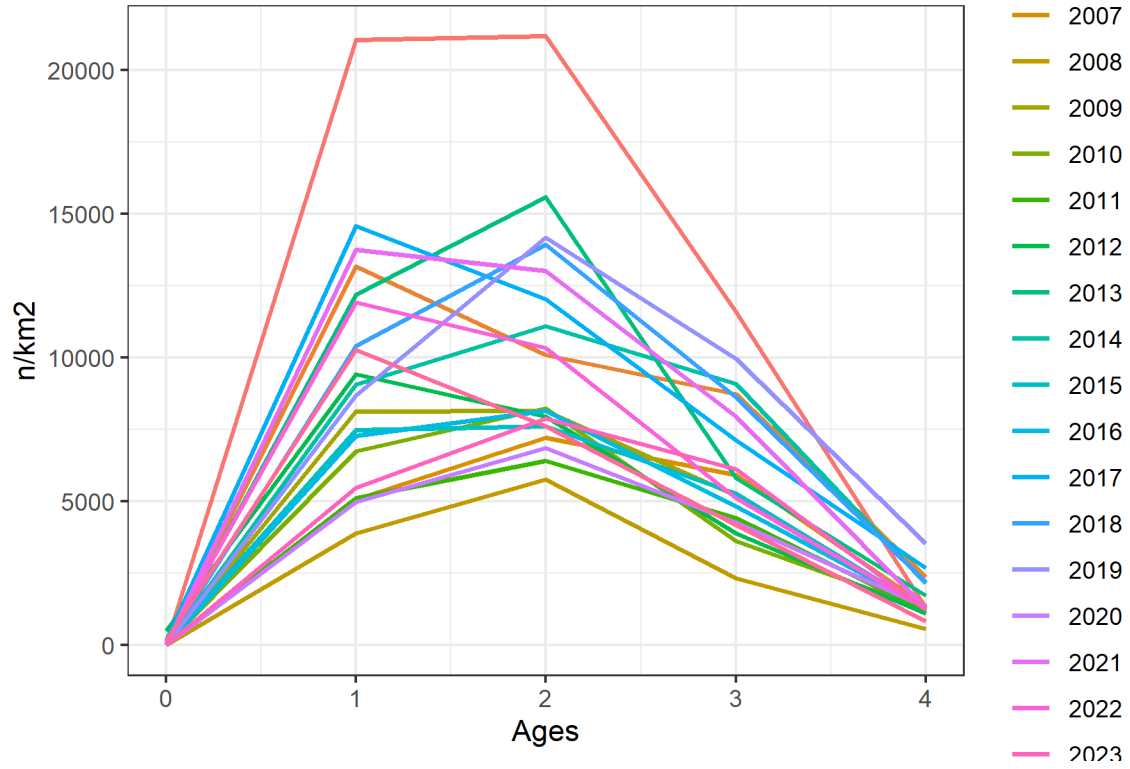


Figure 25: Catch at age distribution by year of the catches

Table 16: Values of catch at age number by year of stock assessment object.

| age | 2005        | 2006         | 2007         | 2008         | 2009         | 2010       | 2011       |
|-----|-------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------|------------|
| 0   | 18.95735    | 1.177159e-01 | 0.1183056    | 0.1258554    | 0.5567657    | 42.81583   | 16.63299   |
| 1   | 21055.55698 | 1.317327e+04 | 5064.7815512 | 3893.8710116 | 8133.8217884 | 6757.26538 | 5114.70525 |
| 2   | 21196.52645 | 1.010184e+04 | 7224.9885961 | 5776.1524635 | 8154.6006150 | 8247.04415 | 6405.94283 |
| 3   | 11585.05228 | 8.725306e+03 | 5927.1397507 | 2334.8977922 | 5207.8867325 | 3633.00104 | 4429.06098 |
| 4   | 1300.65676  | 2.368242e+03 | 1374.7398970 | 570.4926231  | 1106.8962135 | 1261.41932 | 1182.74524 |

Table 17: Values of catch at age number by year of stock assessment object.

| age | 2012     | 2013         | 2014         | 2015       | 2016        | 2017       | 2018         |
|-----|----------|--------------|--------------|------------|-------------|------------|--------------|
| 0   | 487.568  | 9.297519     | 1.145681e-01 | 43.34023   | 2.942327    | 168.2925   | 5.802051e-01 |
| 1   | 9428.078 | 12198.167650 | 9.072259e+03 | 7477.62184 | 7286.747701 | 14589.3216 | 1.041873e+04 |
| 2   | 7959.063 | 15587.099172 | 1.110929e+04 | 7626.60652 | 8151.075553 | 12030.7537 | 1.393337e+04 |
| 3   | 3900.729 | 5802.373947  | 9.080800e+03 | 5272.68986 | 4832.526769 | 7137.8856  | 8.620032e+03 |
| 4   | 1094.297 | 1718.579121  | 2.155913e+03 | 1246.26040 | 1305.938359 | 2685.6166  | 2.182215e+03 |

Table 18: Values of catch at age number by year of stock assessment object.

| age | 2019         | 2020       | 2021         | 2022      | 2023       | 2024       |
|-----|--------------|------------|--------------|-----------|------------|------------|
| 0   | 3.400618e-01 | 8.11037    | 4.386834     | 104.539   | 10.06262   | 169.8619   |
| 1   | 8.685028e+03 | 4973.27005 | 13752.010851 | 11924.869 | 5485.11785 | 10265.6296 |
| 2   | 1.418923e+04 | 6865.93019 | 13019.073437 | 10338.513 | 7889.04815 | 7618.4199  |
| 3   | 9.969468e+03 | 4277.12413 | 7943.034828  | 5120.718  | 6112.93436 | 4177.8675  |
| 4   | 3.525818e+03 | 1318.82936 | 1269.471209  | 1273.613  | 1229.77994 | 829.6872   |

Table 19: Values of mean weight at age by year of stock assessment object.

| age | 2005      | 2006      | 2007      | 2008      | 2009      | 2010      | 2011      |
|-----|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 0   | 0.0014474 | 0.0018375 | 0.0018375 | 0.0018375 | 0.0021467 | 0.0018384 | 0.0016645 |
| 1   | 0.0111002 | 0.0091109 | 0.0136781 | 0.0098344 | 0.0103801 | 0.0094095 | 0.0113479 |
| 2   | 0.0126544 | 0.0225533 | 0.0218459 | 0.0172864 | 0.0166232 | 0.0195471 | 0.0207753 |
| 3   | 0.0174424 | 0.0217766 | 0.0231881 | 0.0270809 | 0.0198743 | 0.0216094 | 0.0180039 |
| 4   | 0.0377539 | 0.0308421 | 0.0393148 | 0.0345328 | 0.0360637 | 0.0320792 | 0.0280455 |

Table 20: Values of mean weight at age by year of stock assessment object.

| age | 2012      | 2013      | 2014      | 2015      | 2016      | 2017      | 2018      |
|-----|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 0   | 0.0018468 | 0.0020310 | 0.0018375 | 0.0019342 | 0.0021467 | 0.0020847 | 0.0012541 |
| 1   | 0.0081974 | 0.0098859 | 0.0126885 | 0.0104679 | 0.0108713 | 0.0081441 | 0.0121257 |
| 2   | 0.0163390 | 0.0172442 | 0.0189130 | 0.0177461 | 0.0172543 | 0.0206149 | 0.0188384 |
| 3   | 0.0238917 | 0.0177412 | 0.0205484 | 0.0218097 | 0.0168896 | 0.0209665 | 0.0197994 |
| 4   | 0.0346830 | 0.0315589 | 0.0384714 | 0.0364315 | 0.0314042 | 0.0345886 | 0.0373220 |

Table 21: Values of mean weight at age by year of stock assessment object.

| age | 2019      | 2020      | 2021      | 2022      | 2023      | 2024      |
|-----|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 0   | 0.0018375 | 0.0015193 | 0.0019650 | 0.0017577 | 0.0018164 | 0.0021099 |
| 1   | 0.0131159 | 0.0105950 | 0.0103821 | 0.0087438 | 0.0135326 | 0.0085033 |
| 2   | 0.0222442 | 0.0194897 | 0.0134855 | 0.0173878 | 0.0225190 | 0.0146946 |
| 3   | 0.0197417 | 0.0263382 | 0.0192286 | 0.0167497 | 0.0189474 | 0.0193778 |
| 4   | 0.0304564 | 0.0393649 | 0.0376503 | 0.0280156 | 0.0276057 | 0.0285573 |

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