

The background of the slide features a silhouette of two people fishing in a body of water at sunset. The person on the left is wearing a cap and holding a fishing rod, while the person on the right is holding a fishing net. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, orange glow. The water is calm, and the sky is filled with soft clouds.

# Fish Code & Preliminary Angler Input

Shawn Crouse  
Chief, Freshwater Fisheries  
[shawn.crouse@dep.nj.gov](mailto:shawn.crouse@dep.nj.gov)





## The Fish Code (N.J.A.C. 7:25-6)

Current code expires January 2025.

### Timeline:

- Spring 2024 - identify potential regulation changes
- Summer 2024 - draft proposal
- September 2024 - Proposal Document to OAL & DAG for review
- March 2025 - NJ Register Filing
- April 2025 - NJ Register publication date (60 days)
- June 2025 - Public hearing
- July 2025 - Close of public comment period
- December 2025 - Adoption Document filed
- December 2025 - New Freshwater Digest (2026) released







# Trout Stocking Program & Regulations

---

- Add or remove waters
- Boundaries on rivers and streams
- Minimum size and daily limits
- Seasons and closures (preseason and in-season)
- Establishing Opening Day dates
- Add / remove / modify special regulation waters (TCAs, C&R, Wild Trout Streams, etc.)





Online Trout Angler Survey

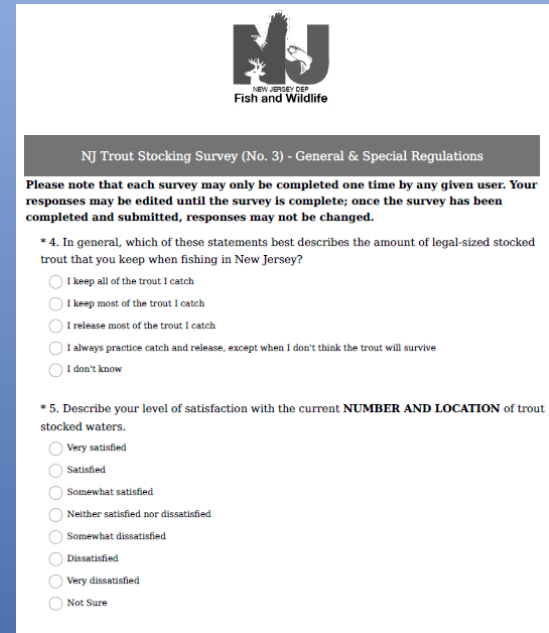


# Trout Survey Main Topics

- Survey #1: General Trout Angler Usage (2,146 anglers)
- Survey #2: Closures (1,265 anglers)
  - Catch and Release period
  - Pre-season closures
  - In-season closures
- Survey #3: Regulations (1,107 anglers)
  - General Trout Regulations
  - Special Regulations

2,704  
unique  
anglers

Only 2.9% of  
93,084 Trout  
Stamp buyers



The image shows a screenshot of a survey form titled "NJ Trout Stocking Survey (No. 3) - General & Special Regulations". At the top is the New Jersey Department of Fish and Wildlife logo. Below the title, a note states: "Please note that each survey may only be completed one time by any given user. Your responses may be edited until the survey is complete; once the survey has been completed and submitted, responses may not be changed." The form contains two questions, both with radio button options. Question 4 asks about the amount of legal-sized stocked trout kept, with options: "I keep all of the trout I catch", "I keep most of the trout I catch", "I release most of the trout I catch", "I always practice catch and release, except when I don't think the trout will survive", and "I don't know". Question 5 asks for the level of satisfaction with the current number and location of trout stocked waters, with options: "Very satisfied", "Satisfied", "Somewhat satisfied", "Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied", "Somewhat dissatisfied", "Dissatisfied", "Very dissatisfied", and "Not Sure".

# Limitations

- Only 2,704 unique anglers
  - (Only 2.9% of 93,084 Trout Stamp Buyers)
- Limitations
  - Only represents anglers interested in participating
  - Not representative of diverse angler involvement
  - Likely biased towards a certain angling “type”
    - Bait vs. Flies, keep most vs. keep few or none, etc.
  - Doesn’t likely represent infrequent anglers
- Problematic to assume it is a representative cross-section of the angling public.
- Attempt to get around the biases
  - Sent to all trout stamp buyers
  - Use other methods (Opening Day Angler Counts, etc.)
  - Public meetings and public comment periods



## NJ Trout Stocking Survey (No. 3) - General & Special Regulations

Please note that each survey may only be completed one time by any given user. Your responses may be edited until the survey is complete; once the survey has been completed and submitted, responses may not be changed.

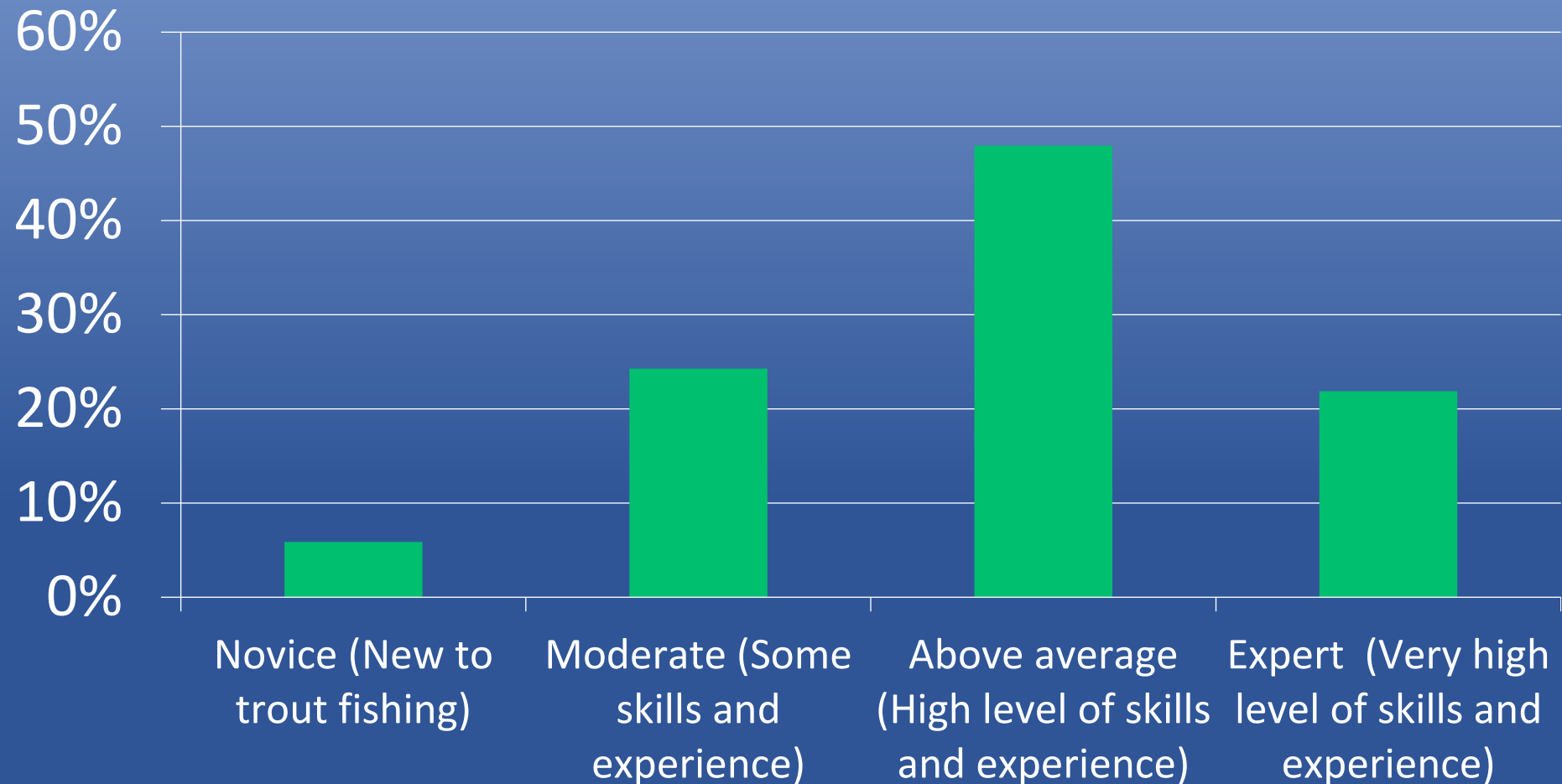
\* 4. In general, which of these statements best describes the amount of legal-sized stocked trout that you keep when fishing in New Jersey?

- ☐ I keep all of the trout I catch
- ☐ I keep most of the trout I catch
- ☐ I release most of the trout I catch
- ☐ I always practice catch and release, except when I don't think the trout will survive
- ☐ I don't know

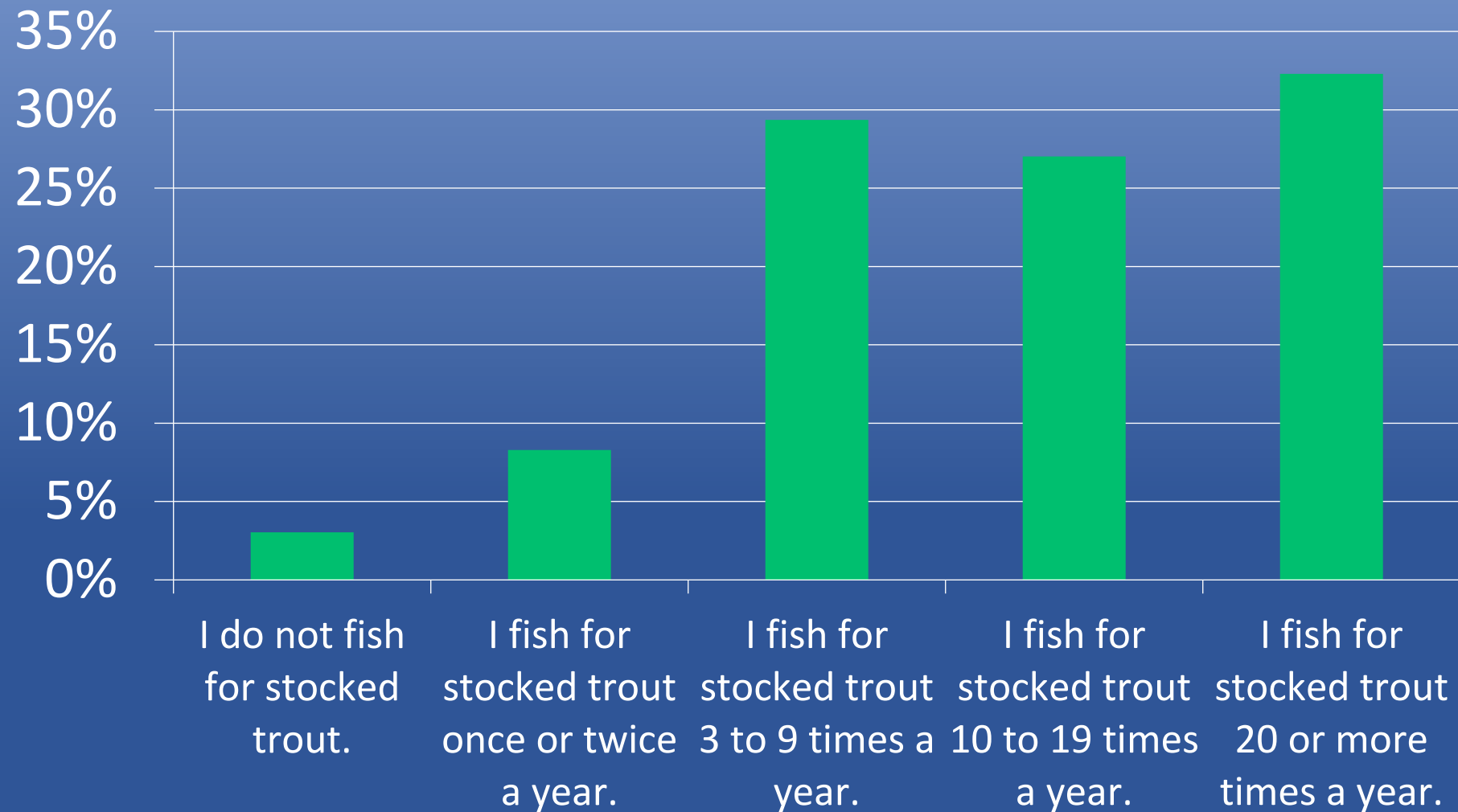
\* 5. Describe your level of satisfaction with the current **NUMBER AND LOCATION** of trout stocked waters.

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Satisfied
- ☐ Somewhat satisfied
- ☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- ☐ Somewhat dissatisfied
- ☐ Dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied
- ☐ Not Sure

Describe your ability as an angler for stocked trout.



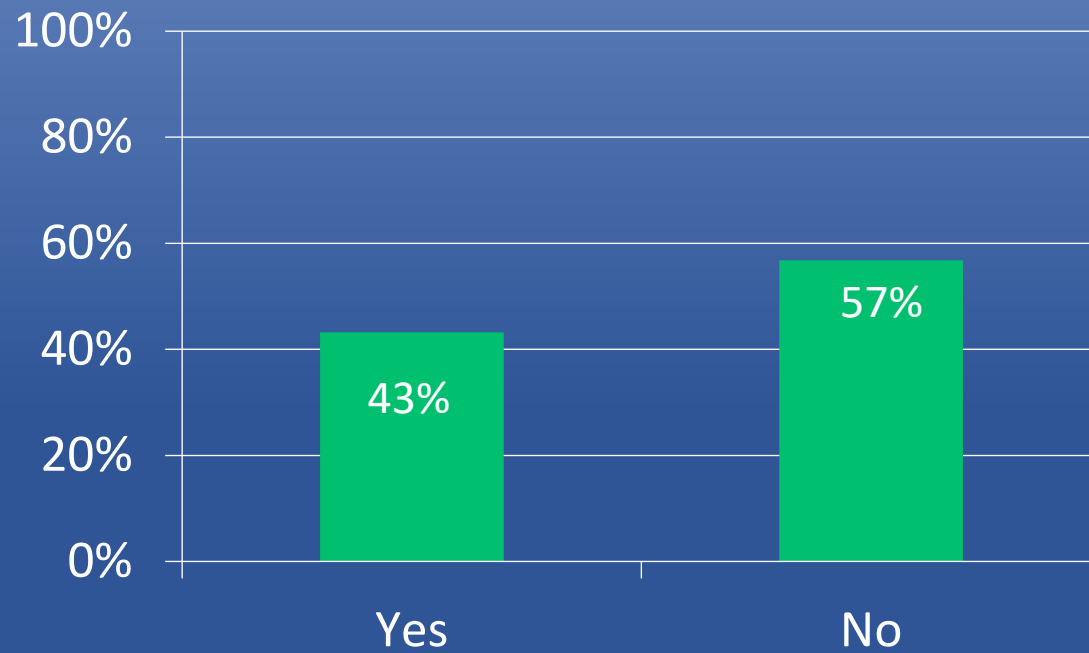
# Frequency as a stocked trout angler



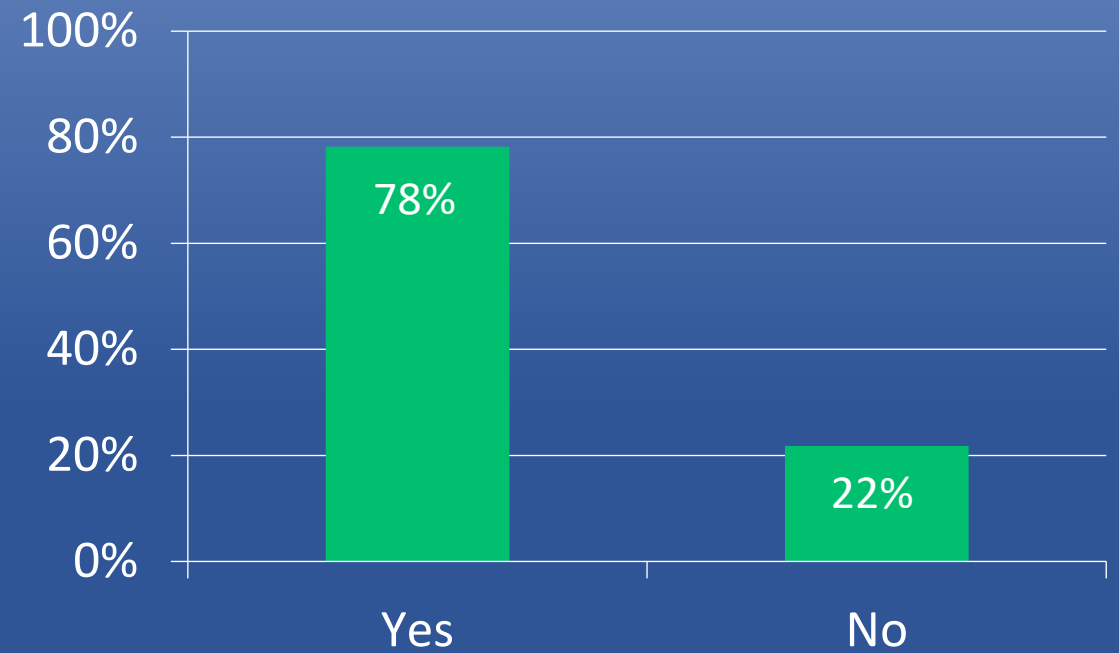


# Lakes/Ponds vs. Rivers/Streams

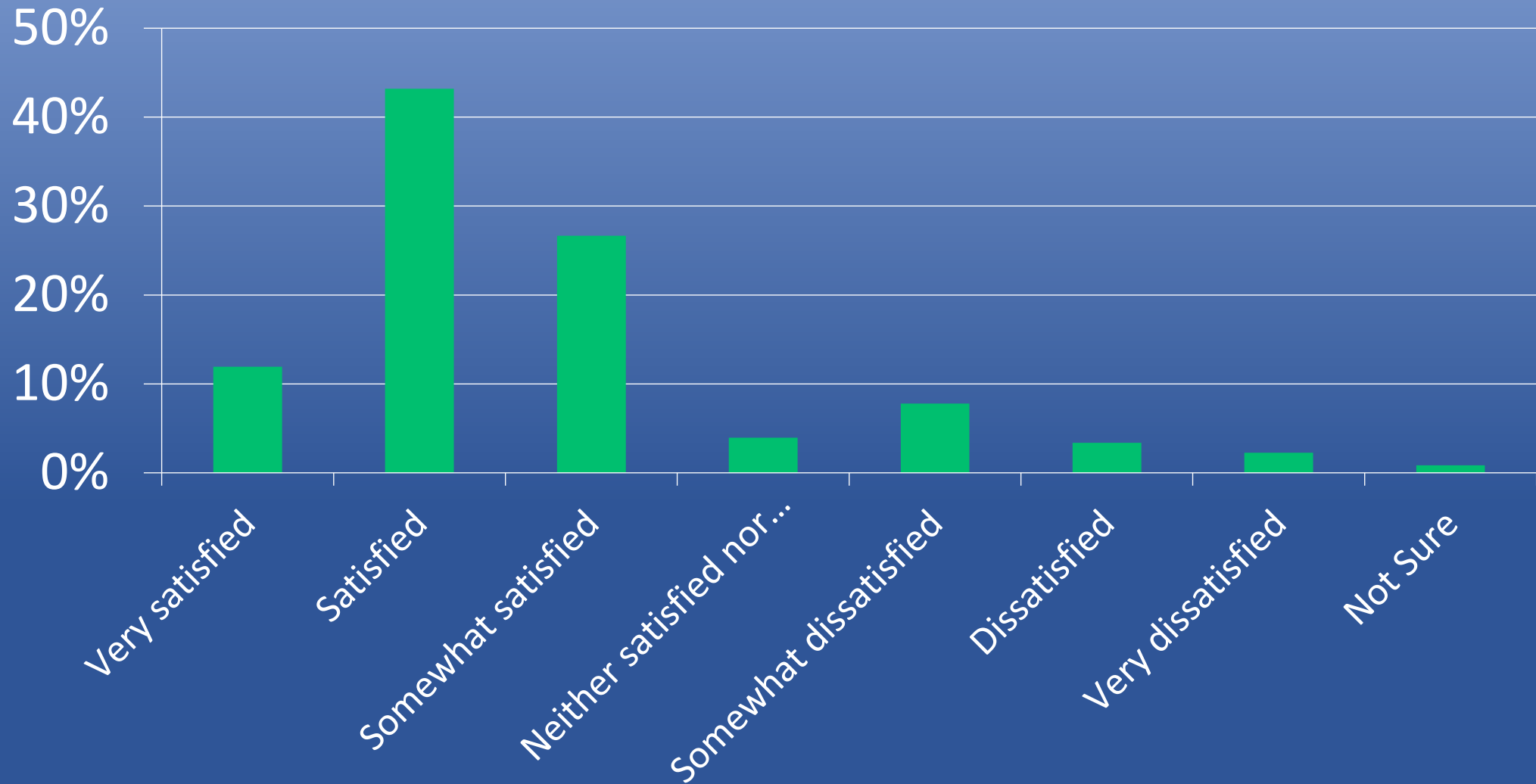
Did you fish for stocked trout in lakes/ponds in New Jersey during Spring 2023?



Did you fish for stocked trout in rivers/streams in New Jersey in Spring 2023?



# Overall Satisfaction of Trout Stocking Program





## Popularity and Satisfaction

### Most Fished Lakes & Ponds

<b>Waterbody</b>	<b># of Anglers</b>	<b>Very Satisfied &amp; Satisfied</b> <small>(mean 50%)</small>
Round Valley Reservoir	101	59%
Lake Aeroflex	69	62%
Echo Lake	66	43%
Merrill Creek Reservoir	65	58%
Lake Ocquittunk	59	62%

### Least Fished Lakes & Ponds

<b>Waterbody</b>	<b># of Anglers</b>	<b>Very Satisfied &amp; Satisfied</b>
Alms House Pond	4	0%
Warinanco Park Pond	5	40%
Blair Lake	6	60%
West Hudson County Park Pond	6	50%
Westville Pond	7	14%

# Popularity and Satisfaction

## Most Fished Rivers & Streams

<b>Waterbody</b>	<b># of Anglers</b>	<b>Very Satisfied to Satisfied</b> <small>(mean 63%)</small>
Musconetcong River (not TCA)	540	71%
Raritan River S/B (not C&R Area)	401	66%
Pequest River (not TCA)	303	71%
Big Flat Brook (not C&R Area)	288	73%
Ken Lockwood Gorge C&R Area	250	69%

## Least Fished Rivers & Streams

<b>Waterbody</b>	<b># of Anglers</b>	<b>Very Satisfied to Satisfied</b>
Pophandusing Creek	2	100%
Neldon Brook	2	0%
Brookaloo Swamp	2	0%
Furnace Brook	5	60%
Dry Brook	5	20%



# COVID Stocking Modifications 2019-2022

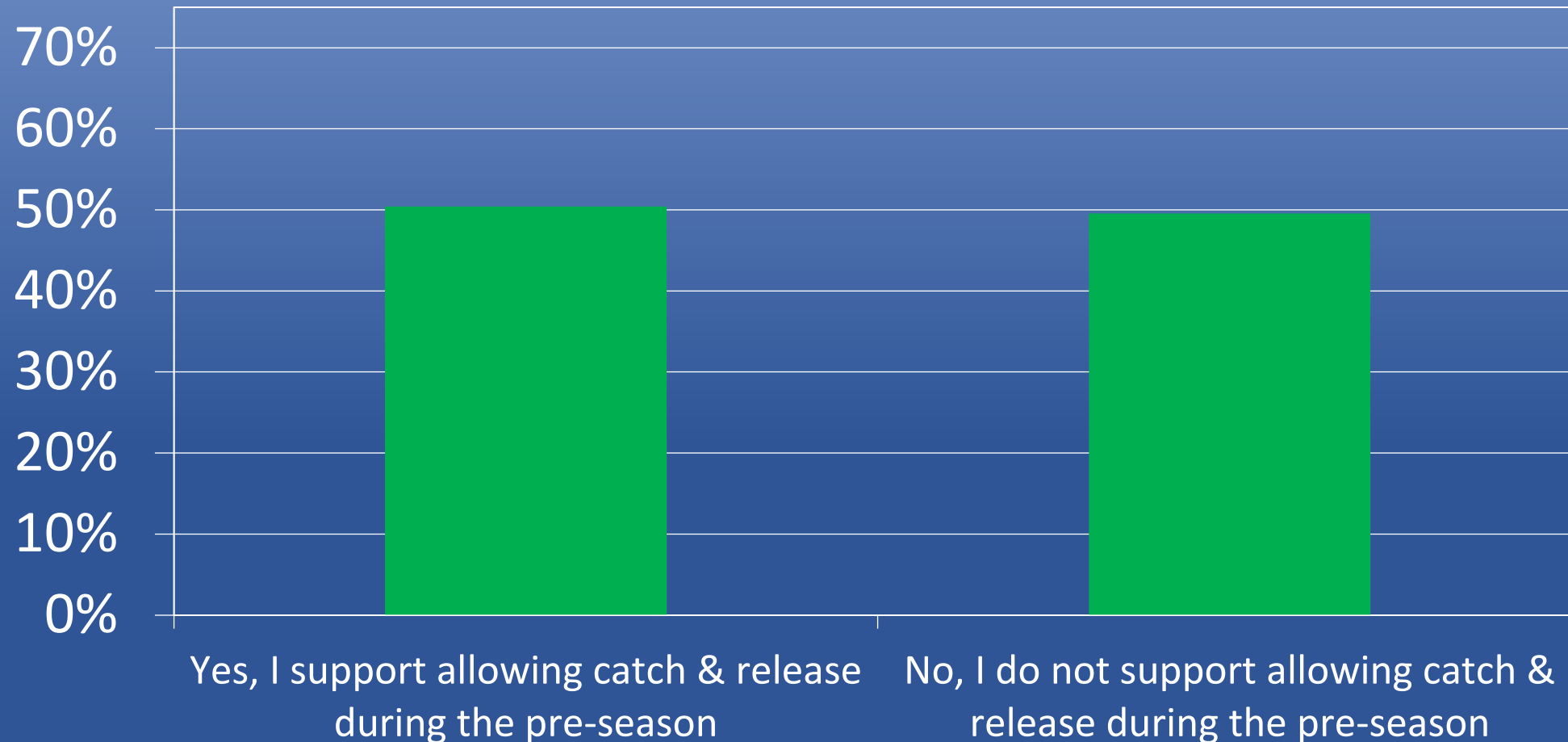
	Normal	2020 - 2021	2022	2023&24
Total Trout	570,000+	570,000+	570,000+	570,000+
Preseason (weeks / trout)	3 / 184,000	4 / 500,000	3 / 254,000	3/ 184,000
Preseason closure	yes	April 1 (C&R)	yes	yes
In-season (weeks / trout)	7 / 386,000	1 / 70,000	7 / 316,000	7/ 386,000
In-season closures (14)	yes	no	yes	yes
Bonus Broodstock ponds	yes	no	yes	yes
Use of Volunteers	yes	no	no	yes

## Modifications were necessary to...

- Clear raceways in case of COVID outbreak among staff.
- Reduce staff interactions with public during stocking.
- Spread anglers out to reduce opening day crowds.
- Reduce anglers fishing out of state.

# Pre-Season Closure or C&R?

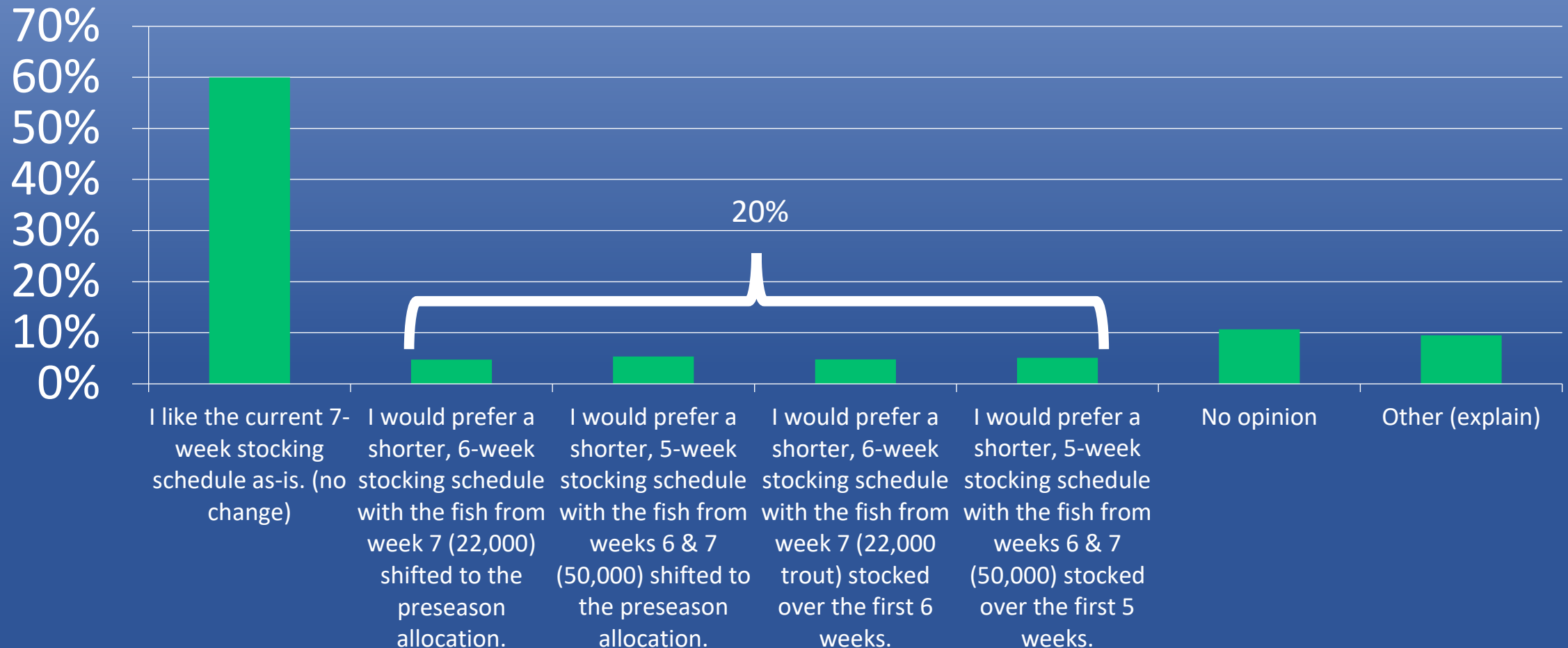
Traditionally, trout-stocked waters are closed for three weeks, prior to opening day (pre-season), allowing all waters to be stocked before fishing is allowed. In general, is allowing catch & release angling during this time something that should be considered as a permanent change to the trout stocking program?





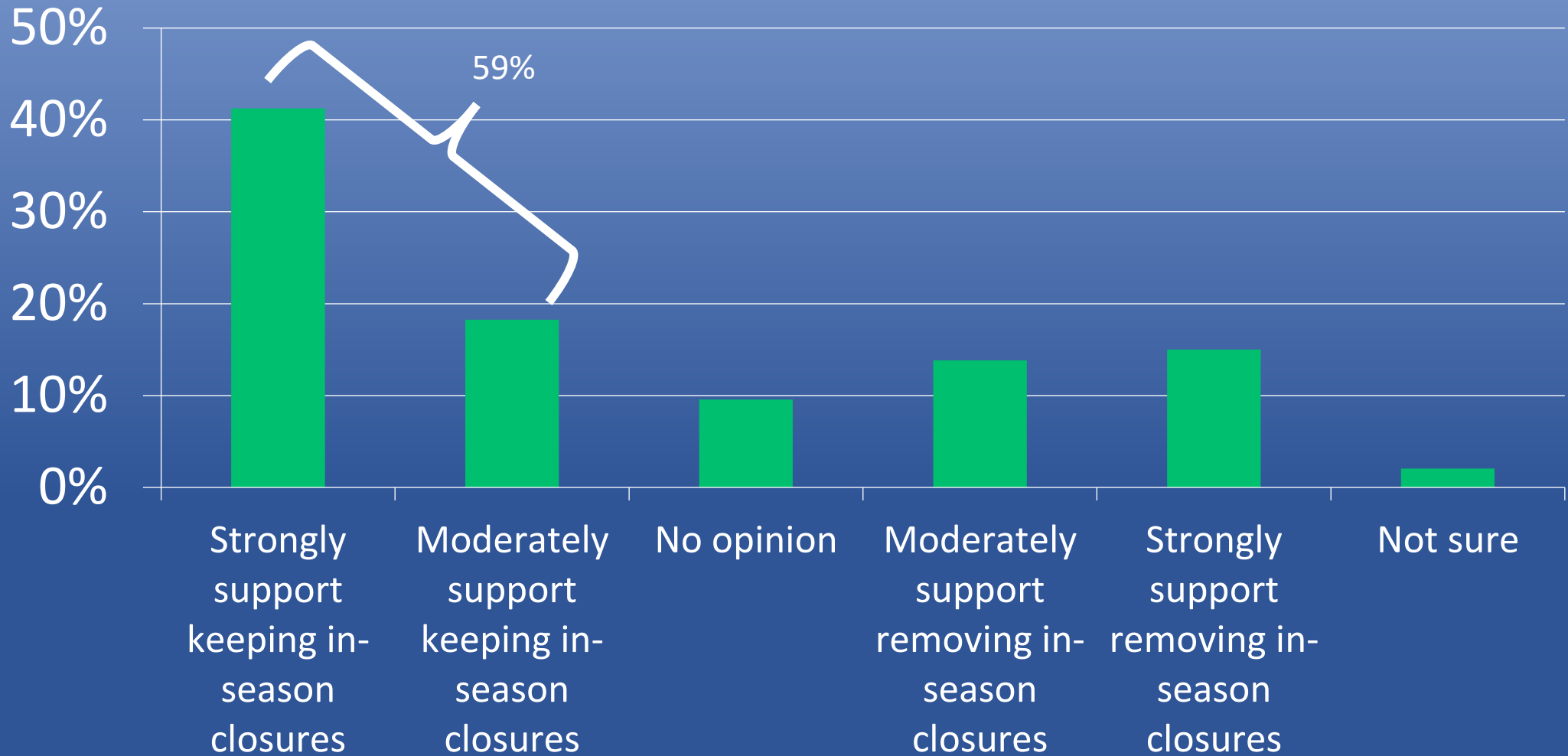
# Length of Spring Trout Stocking Season

How do you feel about the length of the Spring Trout Stocking season? The total baseline number of trout (570,000) will remain the same under each option below.



# In-Season Closed Rivers

Currently, 14 trout stocked waters are closed to fishing from 5 a.m. to 5 p.m. on in-season stocking dates. How do you feel about in-season closures?





# Special Regulation Areas

- Wild Brown Trout, Year-round TCAs, Seasonal TCAs, C&R Areas
- Overall satisfaction for each much more satisfied than dissatisfied
- “Unsatisfied” anglers want:
  - Regulations expanded to more waters
  - Daily limits decreased
  - TCAs converted to C&R areas





# From the Anglers ...



Brown Trout / other species  
(510 comments)



More Law  
Enforcement  
(184 comments)



Predators  
(45 comments)

Questions?

