

What you need to know: Seismic survey report shows industry and fisheries can co-exist



A large-scale experiment conducted by Australian Institute of Marine Science found no evidence that seismic surveys – commonly used in offshore oil and gas exploration – affect the abundance or behaviour of commercially available fish in northwest Australia. We've summarised some of the key takeaways and findings from this important research.

"Multiple lines of evidence from our study suggested that seismic surveys have little to no impact on the composition, abundance, behavior, and movement of demersal fishes in the coastal shelf environment off northwestern Australia."

"There was no evidence for a significant decline in the relative abundance of any species or group of fishes in the high-exposure zone re control zones following exposure to the seismic source."

"We show that there were no short-term (days) or long-term (months) effects of exposure on the composition, abundance, size structure, behavior, or movement of this fauna."

"Analysis of the videos provided by the baited remote underwater video systems in our multiple before-after-control-impact experimental design found no evidence for major changes in the assemblage structure or species richness of fishes that could be attributed to seismic source exposure."

"...did not detect any major change in the size–frequency distributions of six species of commercial importance following exposure to the seismic source."

"Our study shows that careful experimental design and the use of appropriate sampling techniques can provide robust data to answer key questions about the effects of seismic surveys on the demersal fish assemblages of coastal shelf waters."

"Our results may allay, to some extent, the concerns frequently voiced by commercial fishing stakeholders over the negative impacts of seismic surveys on catches of demersal fishes..."

The Australian Institute of Marine Science is Australia's tropical marine research agency. AIMS undertakes research that addresses real needs and provides impartial, authoritative advice, and that supports both the protection and sustainable use of Australia's marine heritage, now and into the future.

