
**What's wrong with official fishery statistics?
Evidence from tuna catch data from the Gulf of Guinea**

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Official fishery statistics are indispensable for effective marine environmental management. However the statistics are useful to management authorities and other decision-makers only if they are derived from reliable raw data. This article assesses the reporting accuracy of tuna catch data from the Gulf of Guinea using statistical methods based on Benford's law. We find that the leading digits of reported catch data fail to obey Benford's law, thus suggesting anomalies in the data used to produce official fishery statistics. Our results reinforce the need for management authorities to design more sophisticated control and surveillance schemes so that reliable raw data can be collected, without which a sustainable management of marine resources would be extremely difficult.

Keywords: Benford's law; evidence-based fishery policy; official fishery statistics.