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An assessment of American plaice in NAFO Div. 3LNO

by

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Abstract

Catches from this stock were generally in the range of 40,000 to 50,000 t per year throughout the 1970's and 1980's, before declining to low levels in the early 1990's. There has been no directed fishing on this stock since 1993. The TACs in 1995-2009 have been set at 0. Catch has been lower in recent years than in prior years; in 2007 it was 3600 t and in 2008 it was 2500 t, which was mainly taken in the NAFO regulatory area (NRA). The Canadian spring surveys show a large decline in abundance and biomass from the mid to late 1980's to the mid 1990's with the average biomass index of the last 2 years (expressed as mean weight per tow) being only 40% of that of the mid 1980's. The fall survey has also shown large declines and the biomass index is only 36 % of that of 1990. There may be a slight increase in both surveys since the mid 1990's. By Division, the largest decrease in both surveys for biomass and abundance has been in Div. 3L but has been stable since the mid-1990s. In general, there has been an increase in biomass in Divs. 3NO since the mid-1990s and abundance in these Divisions may be at or near levels of the late 1980s-early 1990s. Mortality on younger (less than 5) ages has remained high throughout the time series. For older ages mortality was high in the mid-1990s but has been lower since about 2002 in both surveys. Output from a VPA analyses including data from Canadian spring and fall surveys, as well as the Spanish Div. 3NO survey indicated that population abundance and biomass declined fairly steadily from the mid 1970's but have been slowly increasing since the moratorium in 1994. F increased fairly steadily from 1995 to 2000 but has generally been declining since then. Average F on ages 9-14 in 2007 was 0.17 and was lower in 2008, at 0.10. Since 2001 the SSB has been gradually increasing and is 41, 000 t in the current year, and is approaching 50, 000 t, the B_{lim} for this stock. Recruitment has been generally poor since the 1985 year class; however, the 2003 year class is the largest it has been for the past two decades.

TAC regulation

This stock has been under TAC regulation since 1973 when a TAC of 60,000 t was established. From 1973-87, the TAC varied from 47,000 t to 60,000 t (Table 1) but was lowered to 33,585 t in 1988. Further reductions followed, bringing the TAC to 10,500 t in 1993. In 1994, a TAC of 4,800 t was implemented, but the Fisheries Commission of NAFO stated that no directed fisheries were to take place on this stock. The TAC has been set at 0 since then.

Catch trends

Catches increased from about 20,000 t in the early 1960s to a peak of 94,000 t in 1967, were relatively stable around 45,000-50,000 t in 1973-82, then declined to 39,000 t in 1984-85 (Table 1, Fig. 1). Catches increased to 65,000 t in 1986 and then declined rapidly thereafter, to about 7,400 t in 1994. Following the moratorium in 1995, the catch (bycatch in other fisheries, mainly yellowtail flounder) declined for a couple of years but then began to increase. Catches

reached a high of 8 000 t, in 2003, and has been lower since. In 2006, the bycatch value was lower, due mainly to a lack of fishing of yellowtail flounder in that year, but since then bycatch has been gradually rising, reaching a value of 3,607 t in 2007 and 2, 515 t in 2008. In 2007, the Canadian catch totalled about 435 t and in 2008, it was about 878 t. The remainder of the catch occurred as by-catch in the skate, redfish and Greenland halibut fisheries in the NRA.

From 1977 to 1982, the catch was taken almost exclusively by Canadian vessels, but the catch by other nations increased rapidly from less than 2,000 t in 1981-82 to over 30,000 t in 1986 as new fisheries were developed in the Regulatory Area (Table 1). Considerable doubts have arisen about some nominal catches in the 1985 to 1994 period, resulting in various catch estimates being used. These include surveillance estimates, breakdowns of unspecified flounder catches by S. Korea prior to 1991 based on reported flounder catches, and any other estimates deemed by Scientific Council to be reliable. There is also some uncertainty regarding catches prior to 1973, when large amounts of unspecified flounder catches from some nations were broken down by species based on estimates of species composition. As well, estimates of discards are not available, and are believed to be substantial during some periods. In recent years there have been some problems in resolving catches, resulting in variation in estimates.

The amount of plaice caught as by-catch in the shrimp fishery was reviewed by Orr *et al.* (2008). The shrimp fishing area corresponding to Div. 3L is shrimp fishing area 7 (very little shrimp fishing occurs in Div. 3NO). For 2004-2007, the average amount of plaice taken annually in this fishery in this area was 3.3 t. It has increased slightly over that time period. There was only one length frequency available from 2004 and there were only 35 fish measured (all fish were less than 31 cm).

Canadian research vessel surveys

Poor Survey Coverage

In recent years there have been several problems with coverage and timing of the Canadian research vessel surveys, which has caused some data points to be excluded from the assessment model. Poor survey coverage has been an issue for the 2004 fall (incomplete coverage in Div. 3L) and the 2006 spring multi-species survey (no otoliths collected and incomplete survey in Div. 3NO) (Healey and Dwyer 2005; Dwyer *et al.* 2007). In 2007, Dwyer *et al.* (2007) removed the Canadian RV Autumn 2004 survey value from the analytical assessment. Although shown to produce very little change in the outcome of the assessment, examination of the age by age abundance indicated that the strata not surveyed significantly changed the age composition for that data point. There have also been years whereby the survey could not be completed in the fall and has run over into January (1995, 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005). In addition, in fall 2007 and 2008 the number of strata surveyed was substantially reduced, and in 2008 there were no deep strata surveyed in Div. 3L (see Healey and Brodie 2009 for a detailed examination of survey problems). With respect to American plaice, the fall 2008 survey will need to be examined in more detail once the ageing is completed for this survey in order to see whether it can be included in the next assessment.

Spring

Stratified-random surveys have been carried out on the Grand Bank by Canadian research vessels in the spring (April to June period) of each year from 1971 to 2008, with the exception of 1983. The stratification scheme used is shown in Figure 2. The data can be split into 3 time periods, based on the trawl used in each period: 1971-82 was Yankee 36, 1983-95 was Engel 145, and 1996-2008 was Campelen 1800 (see McCallum and Walsh (1996) for a description of the various trawls). Conversions exist for the first to second series (Gavaris and Brodie 1984), and from the second to the third (Morgan *et al.* 1998). However, data from the first series have not been converted to be comparable with the third series. Thus comparable data exist for 1971-95, and for 1984 to 2008. A full comparison between the Engel and Campelen data series is given in Brodie *et al.* (1998).

Biomass estimates for each Division by stratum and depth for 1996 to 2008 are given in Tables 2-4. Please note the shaded columns. In 2007, the spring survey biomass estimates for 3L, 3N and 3O were 46, 300, 140, 400 and 44, 400 t respectively. In 2008, the estimates for 3L, 3N and 3O were 50, 000, 132, 5000 and 51, 600 t. From 1996 to 1998 the estimate for Div. 3N biomass was approximately half of the estimate for Div. 3O while from 1999 to 2004 the estimates in the two divisions are about equal. However, from 2005 onwards the biomass estimate from Div. 3N is at least double the biomass estimate from Div. 3O. The biomass estimates in Div. 3L have generally been higher in recent

years (please note the 2006 data point should not be considered as part of this assessment). Biomass in Div. 3LNO combined was the highest it has been since 1996 but is still only 32% of that of the mid 1980s (Fig. 3).

In Figure 4 and 5 the biomass index is shown as mean weight per tow. In Figure 4 the index is presented by division and in Figure 5 for Div. 3LNO combined (top panel). Overall the combined index shows the same trend as the swept area estimate of biomass with a large decline in the late 1980s (which has been greatest in Div. 3L) followed by a slight increase since 1996. The average mean weight per tow for Div. 3LNO combined in the last 2 years is 40% of the average of the mid 1980's, an increase over the past few years. The mean weight per tow in Div. 3N has increased to the level it was at in the 1980s (Fig. 4).

Figure 6 shows the abundance for Div. 3LNO combined from 1985 to 2008 (top panel). The total abundance has fluctuated since 1996 with a slight increase over the period. Mean number per tow for Div. 3LNO combined shows the same trend (Fig. 7, top panel). As with the biomass estimate, mean number per tow has shown the greatest decline in Div. 3L (Fig. 8), with levels in Div. 3NO in recent years being the same level as in the beginning of the time series.

Tables 5-8 and Figure 9 show the abundance at age from the Canadian spring surveys by division and for Div. 3LNO combined. Although the proportion of fish that are ages 0 to 5 was lower in 2004, in recent years has been consistently above average for the time series. The abundance estimate in 2008 was among the highest estimates since 1991 (Table 8). In addition, the 1998 (somewhat smaller) and 2003 year classes are evident in Figure 9.

Figures 10 and 11 show the distribution plots (kg/tow standardized to tow length) of American plaice for 2005-2008. The largest concentrations of plaice seem to be in Div. 3N, mainly outside the 200-mile limit.

Fall

Stratified-random surveys have been conducted in Div. 3L in the fall from 1981 to 2008, usually in October-November, but in recent years this has been occurring later. From 1990 to 2008, fall surveys were also carried out in Div. 3NO. Surveys from 1983 to 1994 were done with the Engel trawl and starting in fall 1995, a Campelen 1800 trawl was used.

Biomass estimates by stratum and depth are given for each Division in Tables 9-11. Biomass estimates from the fall survey in 2007 were 50 900, 125 600 and 65 300 t for Div. 3L, 3N and 3O respectively. In 2008, the biomass estimates for these Divisions were 61 200, 169 000 and 103 100 t. Over the past number of years, there has been a large biomass estimate in Div. 3N fairly consistently, which is heavily influenced by large sets in stratum 360 (Table 10). This is true especially in 2008. In 2008, the estimate for Div. 3O was also very high compared to other years, but this was not due to large sets in any one stratum (though there were some large sets in stratum 353). During 1995 to 1997, Div. 3N constituted on average 40% of the Div. 3NO total while the average since 2000 has been about 70% of the Div. 3NO total.

The overall biomass for Div. 3LNO in the fall has shown a slight increasing trend since 1995 (Fig. 3). The biomass index remains well below that of 1990 with the average of the 2008 index representing only about 50% of that of 1990. The biomass index expressed as mean weight per tow shows the same overall trend with the average of the last 3 years being 39% of the level of 1990 (Fig. 5). Mean weight per tow has shown the largest decline in Div. 3L (Fig. 12). Mean weight per tow estimates from Div. 3N are at or above levels seen in 1996, while mean weight per tow in Div. 3O has not shown any real improvement, though the value in 2008 was higher than that seen for the past 14 years (Fig. 12).

Figure 6 shows the abundance for Div. 3LNO combined from 1990 to 2008. Abundance showed a substantial decline from 1990 to 1998 but has been increasing since 1998. Mean numbers per tow show the same pattern (Fig. 7). By Division, the largest decline was once again in Div. 3L (Fig. 13) but increases were shown in both Division 3N and especially in Div. 3O. The 2008 value was the highest in the time series (Fig. 13).

Tables 12-15 and Figure 14 show the abundance by age for 1990 to 2008. Abundance in Div. 3L declined in each year since 1995 to 2000 but increased in 2001 and has remained at that level ever since (with the exception of 2004, which was poorly covered by the survey). The age composition has seen younger ages making up a higher proportion of the population in the last few years (Table 15). The 2003 year class appears to be large in this survey (Figure 14).

Although there were no ages available at the time of this assessment for fall 2008, length frequency plots (not shown) indicate a peak at about 30-32 cm which may be indicative that this year class will appear in this survey.

Plots of distribution by weight (Fig. 15 and 16) for the fall surveys for 2005-2008 show that American plaice are distributed throughout the Div. 3LNO area. However the area of highest concentration is southern 3NO, particularly on the tail of the bank in Div. 3N.

Comparison of Spring and Fall Surveys

Biomass and abundance from the spring and fall surveys can be seen in Figures 3 and 6. Overall, abundance and biomass estimated from spring and fall surveys show an increasing trend, except in the most recent years, when the autumn survey index has continued to increase while the spring survey was stable (Figure 6), possibly due to survey timing changes and fish moving into and out of the survey area. Historically, both surveys have shown the largest decline in Div. 3L. There are some larger catches off the Grand Banks in Div. 3L in the fall but overall, distribution is also similar between the two surveys, with the majority of the fish being distributed in southern Div. 3NO (Figs. 10, 11, 15 and 16).

Catch to RV Biomass ratio

Examination of the catch/biomass ratios from Campelen data from 1985 to 2008 is shown in Figure 17. The Campelen ratios were highest in the 1991-94 period, and were reduced from 1995-1999, reflecting a period of reduced catches (Table 1). The catch/biomass ratios increased substantially over the 1999 to 2004 period, but were lower since then.

Maturities

Age and length at 50% maturity were produced from spring RV data. Maturity data were collected during research vessel surveys from 1960-2008. Stratified random surveys were used where possible (1971-2008). Data from earlier years came from surveys that were conducted mainly as line transects. The coverage of a stock area would generally not be as complete as the stratified random surveys. For the period of the stratified random surveys, observed proportion mature at age was calculated according to the method of Morgan and Hoenig (1997) to account for the length stratified method of sampling. Prior to this, only data from the aged fish were used without weighting by the length frequencies. This should not have a large impact on the model estimates (Morgan and Hoenig 1997). Data from 1985-1995 were converted to Campelen equivalents.

Estimates were produced by cohort. For males, A_{50} were fairly stable for cohorts of the 1960s to mid 1970s, with perhaps a slight increase over that time period (Figure 18). Male A_{50} then began a fairly steady decline to the 1991 cohort which had an A_{50} of just over 3 years. Male A_{50} has increased somewhat but is still below the 1960s and 1970s with an A_{50} of about 4 years compared to 6 years at the beginning of the time series (Fig. 18). For females, estimates of A_{50} have shown a large, almost continuous decline, since the beginning of the time series (Figure 18). For females the A_{50} for recent cohorts is about 7 years compared to 11 years for cohorts at the beginning of the time series.

Estimates of maturity at length were produced using the data described above and are presented by cohort in Figure 19. L_{50} declined for both sexes but recovered in recent cohorts. The current L_{50} for males of 18 to 19 cm is 3 to 4 cm lower than the earliest cohorts estimated. The L_{50} of most recent cohorts for females is in the range of 34-35 cm, somewhat lower than the 39 cm of the earliest cohorts.

Weights and lengths-at -age

Mean weights-at-age and mean lengths-at-age were calculated for male and female American plaice for Div. 3LNO using spring survey data from 1990 to 2008, except for 2006 when survey coverage was too poor to be considered representative. Means were calculated accounting for the length stratified sampling design. Although there is variation in both length and weight-at-age there is little indication of any long-term trend for either males or females (Fig. 20 and 21).

Mortality

Estimates of total mortality (Z) from the Campelen or equivalent, spring and fall survey data were calculated for ages 1 to 16 (Fig. 22 and 23). A Lowess smoother with a smoothing window of 0.5 is plotted to help illustrate trends. The spring survey indicates an increase in mortality up to the mid 1990s for most ages. This trend is also in the fall data but is not as evident. Mortality declined after the mid 1990s in both surveys. This was followed by an increase in the early 2000s. In both surveys, estimates are lower in the last few years for most ages.

Spanish Div. 3NO survey

Numbers at Age

Since 1995, Spain has carried out a stratified random spring bottom trawl survey in Div. 3NO of the NAFO Regulatory Area. In 2001, the trawl vessel (*C/V Playa de Menduiña*) and gear (*Pedreira*) were replaced by the R/V *Vizconde de Eza* using a *Campelen* trawl. Canadian spring RV age length keys (for Div. 3N only, as the Survey by Spanish Div. 3NO survey only covers a small portion of Div. 3O) were applied to Spanish length frequency data (separate sexes, mean number per tow) from 1998-2000 converted data and 2001-2008 Campelen data (González Troncoso et al., 2009). Combined spring Canadian ALKs from 1997-2005 were applied to the 2006 length frequencies, as there were no otoliths collected from the Canadian 2006 spring survey. This data is found in Table 25 and is used as input into the assessment. The 2003 year class is also evident in this survey (Figure 24). Overall, age composition for this survey was similar to the Canadian RV spring survey, except at age 14 (Figure 25).

Catch at age

Results of the catch at age calculations for American plaice catches in 1993-2006 are given in detail in Morgan et al. (1999a, b, 2001, 2002, 2003,) and Dwyer et al (2005, 2007). In 2007 and 2008, sampling data were available from by-catch of *A. plaice* in Canadian fisheries targeting other species in Div. 3LNO. As has been the case since it reopened in 1998, much of the Canadian sampling data in 2007-08 came from observer coverage in the yellowtail fishery. In 2006, the Canadian catch of *A. plaice* in Div. 3LNO was only 92 tons, due to corporate restructuring and a labour dispute in the main harvesting company, which practically eliminated the yellowtail fishery in that year. This relatively small quantity of *A. plaice* came mainly as by-catch in the redfish fishery in Div. 3O.

Total Canadian catches of *A. plaice* in 3LNO in 2007 and 2008 were 434 and 880 tons. In both years, over 96% of the catch came from the directed fishery for yellowtail flounder in Div. 3LNO. This percentage was similar in 2005.

Since the beginning of 2000, fishing for yellowtail has been permitted in Div. 3L, resulting in some by-catch of American plaice there, although most of the catch in recent years, including 2008 (56%) has come from Division 3N. However, in 2007, 53% of the Canadian catch occurred in Div. 3O. There were also seasonal differences between 2007 and 2008, with most of the catch (62%) in 2007 occurring in the last quarter (Tables 16 and 17). In 2008, catches were more evenly spread throughout the year, with 51% being taken in May to July (Table 17). Annual by-catch rates of *A. plaice* in the yellowtail fishery have often been highest in this period, although catches usually decline during the summer. This is due to closure of the yellowtail fishery during mid June to late July, which is intended to cover the spawning period for yellowtail, although this closure did not occur during 2008.

Sampling of the Canadian catch of *A. plaice* in 2007 (434 t) consisted of 9825 length measurements, and 627 otoliths. The corresponding numbers for the 2008 catch of 880 t were 15,497 measurements and 808 otoliths. These sampling levels (measurements/ton) were similar to the 2005 level (2007 was higher and 2008 lower), but lower than 2004, which was the last full year where 100% observer coverage existed in the yellowtail fishery. In 2006, only 1 length frequency, consisting of 282 measurements was collected, and no otoliths were taken, as by-catches of *A. plaice* totaled only 92 tons (Dwyer et al. 2007), due to the reduction of Canadian fishing operations in 2006 noted above.

The same weight-length relationship was used as in recent years ($\log \text{weight} = 3.3247$, $\log \text{length} - 5.553$) and the sum of products check in 2007 and 2008 was within 3.7% of the catch. The Canadian catch in 2007 consisted of about 0.59 million *A. plaice*, compared to 1.38 million for the 2008 catch, which was about double the weight of the

2007 catch (Tables 18 and 19). Ages in the catch ranged from 4 (2007) or 5 (2008) to 22, and catch in both years was comprised mainly of fish aged 7 to 11 years old, with the peak being the 1999 year class in both years. The peak age in the catch numbers declined from 9 or 10 in 1999-2001 to age 8 in 2002-03 and to age 7 in 2004-05, but increased in 2007 (age 8) and 2008 (age 9). Age 6 comprised about 2% of the catch numbers in 2007-08, compared to about 7% for this age in 2005, and almost 20% in 2004 (Tables 18 and 19). Fluctuations such as these are not uncommon, depending on year class strengths as well as the location and timing of the by catches. Overall, the catch at age in 2007-08 was similar to that calculated for 1999-2005, as well as that from the Canadian fishery for *A. plaice* on the Grand Bank in the early 1990s (Brodie et al. 1994).

The mean fish weight in the 2007 catch (0.749 kg/fish) was almost identical to the 2005 value of 0.751 kg., up from 2003 and 2004 (about 0.715 in both years). The 2008 value of 0.660 kg/fish was lower, but very similar to the values in 2000-01. Individual weights at age in 2007 were within the range of values observed from 2002-2005, but were lower in 2008 than in 2007. The 2008 values were very similar to those observed in 1999-2000. Reasons for the differences between the values for 2007 and 2008 are likely due to the seasonal and temporal differences in the catches in these years, as noted above.

For 2007 length frequency data were available from Portugal, Russia and Spain and for 2008, length frequency data were available from Russia and Spain, while there was only one length frequency sample available from Portugal and Estonia. Details on the sampling levels and descriptions of the fisheries are contained in Vaskov et al. (2008), Skryabin et al. (2009), González et al. (2008, 2009) and Vargas et al. (2008, 2009). In all cases, age-length keys from the Canadian spring surveys in Div. 3LNO in 2007 and 2008 respectively were used to derive age compositions, which were then combined and adjusted to the total catch to account for all non-sampled catches. Catch at age, weight at age (using the weight-length relationship used above) and sum of products (SOP) for 2007 and 2008 are given in Table 20 and 21.

In 2007, catch from all countries indicated a large peak at age 7 -10. In 2007, age 9 (1998 YC) was still the most abundant age in Russian, Spanish and Portuguese catches, but there were also some older fish in the catch especially in the Spanish fleets. In 2008, age 8 was the peak age in the commercial catch. Mean lengths and weights at age in the Canadian fishery were slightly higher at younger ages than in international catches, likely a result of larger mesh size used in the Canadian fishery and also the use of research vessel age-length keys for the catches of non-Canadian fleets.

Virtual Population Analysis (VPA)

A formulation of ADAPT using the same base structure that was used in the accepted VPA from the 2007 assessment (Dwyer et al., 2007, 2008) was run. The ADAPT used catch-at-age for ages 5 to 14 with an age 15 plus group which included all catch from ages 15 to 22 (Table 23). The ratio of F on the plus group to F on the last true age was set at 1.0. M was set at 0.2 except at 0.53 for all ages from 1989 to 1996 (Morgan and Brodie, 2001; Dwyer et al., 2008). Beginning of the year weights-at-age and maturities-at-age are given in Tables 24 and 25. The calibration matrix consisted of the following input data:

- Canadian spring RV survey (1985-2008) (no 2006 data point) abundance at age (ages 5-14);
- Canadian autumn RV survey (1990-2007) (no 2004 data point) abundance at age (ages 5-14); and
- Spanish Div. 3NO survey (1998-2008) MNPT (ages 5-14) (Table 22a, b, c).

Standardized age by age abundance (using mean and standard deviation of each index) was plotted using an exploratory data analysis package, Fisheries Library in R (FLR; www.flr-project.org) for all Canadian surveys (Engels and Campelen) and compared with Spanish Div. 3NO survey (Dwyer et al., 2007; Fig. 25). Surveys seemed to show the same trends in abundance at age, somewhat less at older ages.

The results of an ADAPT run using the formulation described above are given in Table 26 and Figures 26-29. The model provides a good fit to the data. The mean square of the residuals was 0.28. Relative errors on the population estimates ranged from 0.16 to 0.38. The relative errors on the catchabilities (q) were all less than 0.2. The residuals from the Canadian spring survey showed an increasing trend over the time series, with more negative residuals at the beginning of the time series; whereas the Canadian fall survey appears to decline slightly over time. The residuals from the Spanish Div. 3NO survey showed very little pattern (Fig. 26). There is some tendency for there to be a lag between the predicted and observed survey estimates at age for the fall survey (especially in recent

years there is not a good fit) but a better fit for the spring survey. The fit of predicted and observed survey estimates is not a good fit for the Spanish Div. 3NO survey (Fig. 27). Residuals are larger for the older ages in the fall survey but are fairly low overall (Fig 28). The value for age 5s in the Spanish Div. 3NO survey is also high. Survey qs showed that q is lower for the youngest fish and also older fish but is fairly constant across age (Fig. 29). Qs from the Spanish Div. 3NO survey show a different pattern than the other surveys and may catch a larger proportion of older fish.

Population numbers and F from this run are shown in Tables 27 and 28. Biomass was calculated by multiplying the population numbers at age by the beginning of the year weights at age. The VPA analyses showed that population abundance and biomass declined fairly steadily from the mid 1970's. Biomass has been relatively stable since 1995 (Fig. 30), increasing over the last number of years. Average F on ages 9 to 14 and ages 11 to 14 showed an increasing trend from about 1965 to 1985. There was a large peak in F in 1993, which may be an artifact of extremely low catches during the moratorium. F since 1995 has been generally lower than in the earlier period but increased fairly steadily from 1995 to 2000. F has been decreasing since then. Average F on ages 9-14 in 2007 was 0.25 and in 2008 was 0.16 (Table 28, Fig. 30).

Spawning stock biomass was calculated by multiplying the biomass at age by the female maturity ogive (Table 25). SSB has shown 2 peaks, one in the mid 1960s and another in the early to mid 1980s. It declined to a very low level (less than 10 000 t) in 1994 and 1995 (Figure 31, Table 29). Since then the SSB has been increasing, reaching about 41,000 t in the current year. SSB is approaching 50,000 t, the B_{lim} for this stock. Recruitment has been poor since the 1984 year-class but the 2003 year class is well above average for the recent time period (Figure 31). An examination of the stock recruit scatter shows that there has been only good recruitment observed above 155 000 t and no good recruitment observed at SSB below 50 000 tons (B_{lim}) (Fig. 32). The strength of the 2003 year class can be seen on this plot.

Retrospective Analysis

A retrospective analysis was conducted by sequentially removing one year of data from the most recent year for a comparison of 6 years. The results of this analysis are shown in Figure 33 and 34 and Tables 30 and 31. There were no major patterns in the retrospective analysis.

Projections

Deterministic projections were carried out for 3 years to examine the trajectory of the spawning stock biomass under 3 scenarios of fishing mortality: $F = 0$, $F = F_{2008}$ (0.16) and $F = F_{0.1}$ (0.2). F_{max} is difficult to determine for this stock but since STACFIS has been able to determine F_{lim} (0.4), projections were provided for that limit reference point as well. For these deterministic projections the results of the 2009 VPA were used. F_{2008} was set as the average F on ages 9 -14 for 2008 and was 0.16. PR and weights were averaged over the last 3 years. Recruitment was the average R/S for the last 3 year-classes and was equal to 3.21. The average R/S has been considerably higher in recent years (especially for 2008) and thus the assumed recruitment value used in projections is higher than in 2007 projections. In addition the following values were used:

| Age | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15+ |
|--------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| M | 0.20 | 0.20 | 0.20 | 0.20 | 0.20 | 0.20 | 0.20 | 0.20 | 0.20 | 0.20 | 0.20 |
| PR | 0.01 | 0.03 | 0.14 | 0.20 | 0.36 | 0.54 | 0.87 | 1.27 | 1.40 | 1.55 | 1.55 |
| Stock Weight | 0.15 | 0.24 | 0.35 | 0.47 | 0.58 | 0.68 | 0.84 | 1.06 | 1.22 | 1.43 | 1.42 |
| Maturities | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2010 | 0.036 | 0.114 | 0.317 | 0.632 | 0.866 | 0.985 | 0.987 | 0.994 | 0.999 | 1.000 | 1.000 |
| 2011 | 0.036 | 0.114 | 0.317 | 0.632 | 0.866 | 0.960 | 0.997 | 0.997 | 0.998 | 1.000 | 1.000 |
| 2012 | 0.036 | 0.114 | 0.317 | 0.632 | 0.866 | 0.960 | 0.989 | 0.999 | 0.999 | 0.999 | 1.000 |

The stock is estimated to increase and will likely surpass B_{lim} by 2010 under all fishing mortality scenarios considered, with the exception of F_{lim} (Table 32; Figure 35).

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Table 1. Nominal catches (t) of American plaice for NAFO Divisions 3LNO, 1960-2003 and TACs from 1973 to 2008.

| Year | Canada | Other | Total | STACFIS ^a | TAC |
|-------------------|--------|--------|--------|----------------------|---------------------|
| 1960 | 21,353 | 20 | 21,373 | - | - |
| 1961 | 14,897 | 1,476 | 16,373 | - | - |
| 1962 | 15,210 | 982 | 16,192 | - | - |
| 1963 | 24,591 | 1,594 | 25,719 | - | - |
| 1964 | 35,474 | 3,773 | 38,567 | - | - |
| 1965 | 45,365 | 12,440 | 53,261 | - | - |
| 1966 | 51,225 | 25,270 | 65,011 | - | - |
| 1967 | 54,190 | 75,362 | 94,413 | - | - |
| 1968 | 48,674 | 48,244 | 73,167 | - | - |
| 1969 | 64,815 | 29,115 | 79,437 | - | - |
| 1970 | 54,929 | 21,956 | 66,653 | - | - |
| 1971 | 49,394 | 36,105 | 67,888 | - | - |
| 1972 | 41,605 | 32,175 | 59,361 | - | - |
| 1973 | 38,586 | 26,773 | 52,843 | 60,000 | 60,000 |
| 1974 | 35,101 | 21,270 | 46,297 | 60,000 | 60,000 |
| 1975 | 34,015 | 17,317 | 43,221 | 60,000 | 60,000 |
| 1976 | 47,806 | 7,726 | 51,824 | 47,000 | 47,000 |
| 1977 | 42,579 | 2,700 | 43,981 | 47,000 | 47,000 |
| 1978 | 48,634 | 2,491 | 50,021 | 47,000 | 47,000 |
| 1979 | 47,131 | 2,752 | 48,568 | 47,000 | 47,000 |
| 1980 | 48,296 | 1,391 | 49,086 | 47,000 | 47,000 |
| 1981 | 48,177 | 3,723 | 50,158 | 55,000 | 55,000 |
| 1982 | 49,620 | 1,253 | 50,337 | 55,000 | 55,000 |
| 1983 | 35,907 | 3,582 | 37,720 | 55,000 | 55,000 |
| 1984 | 33,756 | 4,363 | 36,028 | 55,000 | 55,000 |
| 1985 | 40,024 | 13,600 | 48,018 | 54,212 | 49,000 |
| 1986 | 33,409 | 45,350 | 57,449 | 64,570 | 55,000 |
| 1987 | 33,967 | 36,529 | 53,457 | 55,012 | 48,000 |
| 1988 | 26,832 | 22,080 | 38,925 | 40,835 | 33,585 ^c |
| 1989 | 27,901 | 24,803 | 41,206 | 43,369 | 30,300 |
| 1990 | 22,600 | 2,073 | 24,006 | 32,501 | 24,900 |
| 1991 | 22,510 | 4,026 | 25,503 | 34,681 | 25,800 |
| 1992 | 9,663 | 1,808 | 10,870 | 13,350 | 25,800 |
| 1993 ^b | 7,454 | 761 | 7,916 | 17,122 | 10,500 |
| 1994 | 73 | 973 | 560 | 7,378 | 4,800 ^d |
| 1995 | 67 | 962 | 548 | 637 | 0 |
| 1996 | 49 | 1,641 | 875 | 913 | 0 |
| 1997 | 75 | 2,573 | 1,365 | 1,401 | 0 |
| 1998 | 227 | 2,640 | 1,560 | 1,618 | 0 |
| 1999 | 323 | 4,203 | 2,436 | 2,565 | 0 |
| 2000 ^e | 623 | 3,932 | 2,600 | 5,176 | 0 |
| 2001 | 1,618 | 2,753 | 2,998 | 5,739 | 0 |
| 2002 | 1,343 | 3,452 | 3,117 | 4,870 | 0 |
| 2003 ^e | 1,607 | 2,215 | 3,822 | 8,727 | 0 |
| 2004 | 1,295 | 1,563 | 2,858 | 6,158 | 0 |
| 2005 | 1,472 | 2,638 | 4,110 | 4,110 | 0 |
| 2006 | 94 | 2,734 | 2,828 | 2,828 | 0 |
| 2007 | 435 | 3,172 | 3,607 | 3,606 | 0 |
| 2008 | 874 | 1,641 | 2,515 | 2,515 | 0 |
| 2009 | | | | | |

Values for countries back to 2007 are provisional.

^aMay include some catch estimated from surveillance reports or miscellaneous information. See text for details.

^b Catch may have been as high as 19,400.

^c Effective TAC.

^d No directed fishing.

^e STACFIS unable to determine precise estimates because of discrepancies between various sources.

Table 4. Biomass estimates ('000t) of *A. plaice*, by stratum and depth zone (m), from Canadian spring surveys in Div. 3O in 1996-2008 (Campelen). (+) indicates biomass <50 t, (-) means stratum not surveyed.

| Biomass | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------|---------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Depth | Stratum | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 |
| 57-92 | 330 | 3.8 | 0.8 | 6.9 | 3.5 | 5.9 | 4.2 | 2.1 | 1.3 | 2.9 | 6.5 | 4.9 | 4.7 | 6.5 |
| | 331 | 1.4 | 0.3 | 0.3 | 2.7 | 2.3 | 2.6 | 2.2 | 2.6 | 0.8 | 0.9 | - | 2.5 | 1.9 |
| | 338 | 6.0 | 5.7 | 6.0 | 4.0 | 2.3 | 6.0 | 3.1 | 5.0 | 4.3 | 4.5 | 6.4 | 3.2 | 2.5 |
| | 340 | 2.2 | 1.7 | 1.8 | 2.9 | 1.9 | 1.7 | 0.5 | 1.5 | 0.7 | 1.7 | 1.4 | 2.4 | 3.5 |
| | 351 | 2.9 | 4.4 | 3.8 | 4.6 | 3.4 | 6.5 | 3.2 | 2.4 | 3.5 | 4.5 | 3.2 | 6.0 | 4.4 |
| | 352 | 9.1 | 13.8 | 10.6 | 14.2 | 13.4 | 17.5 | 18.6 | 10.1 | 10.0 | 13.2 | 10.7 | 8.9 | 4.9 |
| | 353 | 7.8 | 8.3 | 10.9 | 21.5 | 21.1 | 20.6 | 14.8 | 25.2 | 21.2 | 10.1 | 15.9 | 7.8 | 10.6 |
| Total | | 33.2 | 34.9 | 40.3 | 53.4 | 50.3 | 59.1 | 44.5 | 48.0 | 43.4 | 41.3 | 42.5 | 35.6 | 34.3 |
| 93-183 | 329 | 1.6 | 1.4 | 4.4 | 4.7 | 3.9 | 1.9 | 1.4 | 1.8 | 3.1 | 2.3 | - | 2.8 | 3.4 |
| | 332 | 3.9 | 2.5 | 3.8 | 2.2 | 0.9 | 2.2 | 3.1 | 1.4 | 1.9 | 2.2 | - | 1.0 | 3.1 |
| | 337 | 4.6 | 1.9 | 3.2 | 2.7 | 1.5 | 1.2 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 1.6 | 2.5 | - | 0.7 | 2.5 |
| | 339 | 1.4 | 0.8 | 0.8 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 2.6 | 0.9 | 0.9 | 0.7 | 1.7 | 1.2 | 1.0 | 1.3 |
| | 354 | 1.6 | 1.1 | 5.0 | 9.0 | 1.3 | 1.6 | 6.4 | 5.3 | 8.1 | 1.9 | - | 2.7 | 6.9 |
| Total | | 13.1 | 7.8 | 17.2 | 20.7 | 9.7 | 9.5 | 13.2 | 10.9 | 15.3 | 10.7 | 1.2 | 8.2 | 17.2 |
| 184-274 | 333 | + | 0.3 | 0.1 | 0.1 | + | + | 0.3 | + | + | 0.2 | - | 0.1 | 0.0 |
| | 336 | 0.2 | 0.3 | + | 0.2 | + | 0.1 | + | + | + | 0.1 | - | 0.2 | 0.0 |
| | 355 | 0.5 | 0.3 | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.4 | 0.4 | 0.6 | 0.3 | 0.2 | - | 0.2 | 0.0 |
| Total | | 0.7 | 0.9 | 0.2 | 0.4 | 0.1 | 0.5 | 0.7 | 0.6 | 0.3 | 0.5 | 0.0 | 0.5 | 0.1 |
| 275-366 | 334 | 0.2 | 0.8 | 0.0 | 0.1 | + | + | 0.2 | 0.2 | + | + | - | 0.1 | 0.0 |
| | 335 | 0.2 | 0.2 | 0.0 | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | - | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| | 356 | 0.1 | + | + | 0.1 | + | + | + | 0.4 | + | + | - | 0.1 | 0.0 |
| Total | | 0.5 | 1.0 | + | 0.2 | + | + | 0.2 | 0.5 | + | 0.1 | 0.0 | 0.1 | 0.0 |
| 367-549 | 717 | 0.2 | 1.7 | + | 0.1 | 0.0 | + | 0.4 | 0.2 | 0.0 | 0.1 | - | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| | 719 | 0.1 | 0.5 | + | + | 0.0 | + | + | + | + | + | - | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| | 721 | 0.2 | 0.1 | + | 0.1 | + | 0.2 | + | 0.1 | 0.0 | + | - | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Total | | 0.5 | 2.2 | + | 0.2 | + | 0.2 | 0.4 | 0.3 | 0.0 | 0.1 | - | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| 550-731 | 718 | + | 0.1 | + | + | 0.0 | + | + | 0.3 | 0.0 | 0.0 | - | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| | 720 | + | 0.1 | + | + | 0.0 | 0.1 | 0.0 | + | 0.0 | 0.0 | - | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| | 722 | 1.0 | 4.2 | 0.0 | 0.2 | 0.1 | 0.2 | 0.1 | 0.2 | 0.0 | 0.0 | - | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Total | | 1.0 | 4.4 | + | 0.2 | 0.1 | 0.2 | 0.1 | 0.2 | 0.0 | 0.0 | - | - | - |
| 732-914 | 764 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| | 768 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| | 772 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Total | | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 915-1097 | 765 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| | 769 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| | 773 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Total | | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Grand Total | | 49.0 | 51.2 | 57.7 | 75.1 | 60.2 | 69.5 | 59.1 | 60.5 | 59.0 | 52.6 | 43.7 | 44.4 | 51.6 |

Table 8. Abundance index at age (millions) for American plaice in NAFO Div. 3LNO from Canadian spring surveys from 1985 to 2000

Table 16. Canadian catches of *A. plaice* by Division, month and gear during 2007.

| | 3L | | 3N | | 3O | | 3LNO | |
|--------------|----------|-----------|----|------------|------------|-------|------------|--|
| | OT | Gillnet | OT | OT | | Total | | |
| Jan | | | | | | | | |
| Feb | | | | | | | | |
| Mar | | | | | | | | |
| Apr | | | 10 | | | | 10 | |
| May | | | 9 | | | | 9 | |
| Jun | | | | | | | | |
| Jul | | 1 | 47 | | 6 | | 54 | |
| Aug | 1 | 12 | 54 | | | | 67 | |
| Sep | | | 23 | | 3 | | 26 | |
| Oct | | | 11 | | 76 | | 87 | |
| Nov | | | 10 | | 144 | | 154 | |
| Dec | | | 24 | | 3 | | 27 | |
| Total | 1 | 13 | | 188 | 232 | | 434 | |

Summaries: GN=13 3L=14
 OT=421 3N=188
 3O=232

By-catch in directed yellowtail fishery = 420
 By-catch in directed G.halibut fishery = 11
 By-catch in other directed fisheries = 3

Table 17. Canadian catches of *A. plaice* by Division, month and gear during 2008.

| | 3L | | 3N | | 3O | | 3LNO | |
|--------------|------------|----------|------------|------------|----------|--|------------|--|
| | OT | Gillnet | OT | OT | GN | | Total | |
| Jan | | | 47 | | | | 47 | |
| Feb | | | 29 | | | | 29 | |
| Mar | | | 19 | | 1 | | 20 | |
| Apr | | | 36 | | 21 | | 57 | |
| May | 14 | | 100 | | 94 | | 208 | |
| Jun | 88 | | 67 | | 1 | | 156 | |
| Jul | 21 | 1 | 65 | | 1 | | 88 | |
| Aug | 1 | 3 | 31 | | 46 | | 81 | |
| Sep | | | 18 | | 52 | | 70 | |
| Oct | | | 31 | | 38 | | 69 | |
| Nov | | | 30 | | 8 | | 38 | |
| Dec | | | 16 | | 1 | | 17 | |
| Total | 124 | 4 | 489 | 262 | 1 | | 880 | |

Summaries:

GN=5

3L=128

OT=875

3N=489

3O=263

By-catch in directed yellowtail fishery = 876

By-catch in directed G.halibut fishery = 2

By-catch in other directed fisheries = 2

Table 18. Catch at age (000 of fish) and mean length (cm) and weights (kg) at age from Canadian catch of *A. plaice* in Div. 3LNO in 2007. S.O.P. is catch numbers x mean weight
An asterisk indicates catch of less than 500 fish.

| Age | 3L ¹ | 3N | 3O | 2007 | | | 3LNO | |
|-------|-----------------|-----|-----|-------|--------|----------|----------|------------|
| | | | | Total | Pctg | Mean len | Mean wgt | S.O.P. (t) |
| 4 | * | * | 1 | 1 | 0.17 | 31.5 | 0.287 | 0.3 |
| 5 | | 3 | 1 | 5 | 0.85 | 33.7 | 0.351 | 1.8 |
| 6 | | 9 | 2 | 11 | 1.87 | 33.2 | 0.325 | 3.6 |
| 7 | | 37 | 25 | 64 | 10.89 | 36.3 | 0.439 | 28.1 |
| 8 | | 123 | 54 | 183 | 31.15 | 39.7 | 0.588 | 107.6 |
| 9 | | 104 | 55 | 164 | 27.92 | 41.6 | 0.688 | 112.8 |
| 10 | | 21 | 15 | 38 | 6.47 | 44.2 | 0.857 | 32.6 |
| 11 | | 31 | 11 | 44 | 7.49 | 44.6 | 0.882 | 38.8 |
| 12 | | 11 | 13 | 24 | 4.09 | 47.9 | 1.113 | 26.7 |
| 13 | | 7 | 7 | 15 | 2.55 | 51.6 | 1.423 | 21.3 |
| 14 | | 7 | 12 | 19 | 3.23 | 53.6 | 1.613 | 30.6 |
| 15 | | 4 | 5 | 9 | 1.53 | 54.2 | 1.685 | 15.2 |
| 16 | | 3 | 3 | 6 | 1.02 | 54.6 | 1.740 | 10.4 |
| 17 | * | 2 | | 3 | 0.51 | 59.4 | 2.237 | 6.7 |
| 18 | * | 1 | | 0.9 | 0.15 | 56.8 | 1.988 | 1.8 |
| 19 | | * | | 0.21 | 0.04 | 62.1 | 2.574 | 0.5 |
| 20 | | * | | 0.17 | 0.03 | 67.3 | 3.349 | 0.6 |
| 21 | | * | | 0.16 | 0.03 | 63.6 | 2.774 | 0.4 |
| 22 | | * | | 0.05 | 0.01 | 68.5 | 3.549 | 0.2 |
| Total | | 360 | 206 | 587 | 100.00 | | | 440 |
| | | | | | | catch= | | 434 |

¹ 3NO total age composition adjusted to total 3LNO catch
to account for 14 t of unsampled 3L catch

Table 19. Catch at age (000 of fish) and mean length (cm) and weights (kg) at age from the Canadian catch of *A. plaice* in Div. 3LNO in 2008. S.O.P. is catch numbers x mean weights. An asterisk indicates catch of less than 500 fish.

| Age | | | | 2008 | | | 3LNO | |
|-------|-----|-----|-----|-------|--------|----------|----------|------------|
| | 3L | 3N | 3O | Total | Pctg | Mean len | Mean wgt | S.O.P. (t) |
| 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.00 | | | 0.0 |
| 5 | 1 | 6 | 4 | 9 | 0.65 | 29.4 | 0.222 | 2.0 |
| 6 | 1 | 10 | 9 | 27 | 1.96 | 34.7 | 0.375 | 10.1 |
| 7 | 12 | 72 | 30 | 128 | 9.30 | 35.9 | 0.420 | 53.8 |
| 8 | 46 | 203 | 97 | 331 | 24.04 | 37.8 | 0.501 | 165.8 |
| 9 | 57 | 228 | 136 | 406 | 29.49 | 39.9 | 0.602 | 244.4 |
| 10 | 39 | 130 | 81 | 228 | 16.56 | 41.7 | 0.703 | 160.3 |
| 11 | 12 | 54 | 25 | 87 | 6.32 | 44.0 | 0.834 | 72.6 |
| 12 | 9 | 27 | 17 | 56 | 4.07 | 47.1 | 1.046 | 58.6 |
| 13 | 7 | 20 | 9 | 36 | 2.61 | 48.6 | 1.150 | 41.4 |
| 14 | 7 | 16 | 8 | 28 | 2.03 | 50.1 | 1.291 | 36.1 |
| 15 | 3 | 10 | 3 | 19 | 1.38 | 51.7 | 1.410 | 26.8 |
| 16 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 9 | 0.65 | 54.9 | 1.783 | 16.0 |
| 17 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 6 | 0.44 | 56.3 | 1.858 | 11.1 |
| 18 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 0.36 | 55.6 | 1.801 | 9.0 |
| 19 | * | * | 0 | 0.4 | 0.03 | 64.5 | 2.906 | 1.2 |
| 20 | * | 1 | * | 1 | 0.07 | 58.5 | 2.100 | 2.1 |
| 21 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.18 | 0.01 | 64.5 | 2.906 | 0.5 |
| 22 | 0 | * | 0 | 0.19 | 0.01 | 70.5 | 3.905 | 0.7 |
| Total | 198 | 789 | 423 | 1377 | 100.00 | | | 913 |
| | | | | | | catch= | | 880 |

c. Spanish Div. 3NO survey

| | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|-------|
| 1998.5 | 8.582 | 14.252 | 29.988 | 48.494 | 33.834 | 13.683 | 5.388 | 1.968 | 0.950 | 1.028 |
| 1999.5 | 12.890 | 37.921 | 32.147 | 42.532 | 60.516 | 50.117 | 20.463 | 9.189 | 5.005 | 1.871 |
| 2000.5 | 10.996 | 19.645 | 49.713 | 39.491 | 51.904 | 46.981 | 29.088 | 13.556 | 6.375 | 0.973 |
| 2001.5 | 4.815 | 11.438 | 30.592 | 28.505 | 27.167 | 20.443 | 21.202 | 8.264 | 2.273 | 0.962 |
| 2002.5 | 38.405 | 11.404 | 10.045 | 18.840 | 14.277 | 8.863 | 10.671 | 7.449 | 1.841 | 1.030 |
| 2003.5 | 235.167 | 56.430 | 22.530 | 16.910 | 19.425 | 8.112 | 8.500 | 10.412 | 3.875 | 1.732 |
| 2004.5 | 76.802 | 204.706 | 47.136 | 12.832 | 11.172 | 11.953 | 6.443 | 7.897 | 4.393 | 3.803 |
| 2005.5 | 40.627 | 91.456 | 121.134 | 42.371 | 17.815 | 6.106 | 4.385 | 4.292 | 3.295 | 2.381 |
| 2006.5 | 105.848 | 85.837 | 92.851 | 78.663 | 57.880 | 25.601 | 11.867 | 6.464 | 3.468 | 2.280 |
| 2007.5 | 97.644 | 33.625 | 61.137 | 45.089 | 56.795 | 10.917 | 3.752 | 3.071 | 2.240 | 2.266 |
| 2008.5 | 282.606 | 121.995 | 36.946 | 75.106 | 38.907 | 32.571 | 8.910 | 4.688 | 1.692 | 2.441 |

Table 32. Estimated spawning stock biomass, biomass and catch using 3 year deterministic projections under four fishing mortality scenarios.

| Year | SSB ('000 t) | | | |
|------|--------------|--------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| | F=0 | F ₂₀₀₈ = 0.16 | F _{0.1} = 0.2 | F _{lim} = 0.4 |
| 2009 | 41 | 41 | 41 | 41 |
| 2010 | 55 | 52 | 51 | 47 |
| 2011 | 74 | 65 | 63 | 55 |
| 2012 | 91 | 76 | 73 | 61 |

| Year | Biomass ('000 t) | | | |
|------|------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| | F=0 | F ₂₀₀₈ = 0.16 | F _{0.1} = 0.2 | F _{lim} = 0.4 |
| 2009 | 81 | 81 | 81 | 81 |
| 2010 | 100 | 96 | 95 | 91 |
| 2011 | 119 | 110 | 108 | 99 |
| 2012 | 139 | 123 | 120 | 108 |

| Year | Catch (t) | | | |
|------|-----------|--------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| | F=0 | F ₂₀₀₈ = 0.16 | F _{0.1} = 0.2 | F _{lim} = 0.4 |
| 2009 | 0 | 4242 | 5219 | 9671 |
| 2010 | 0 | 5640 | 6756 | 11058 |
| 2011 | 0 | 6657 | 7795 | 11611 |
| 2012 | 0 | 7857 | 9050 | 12746 |

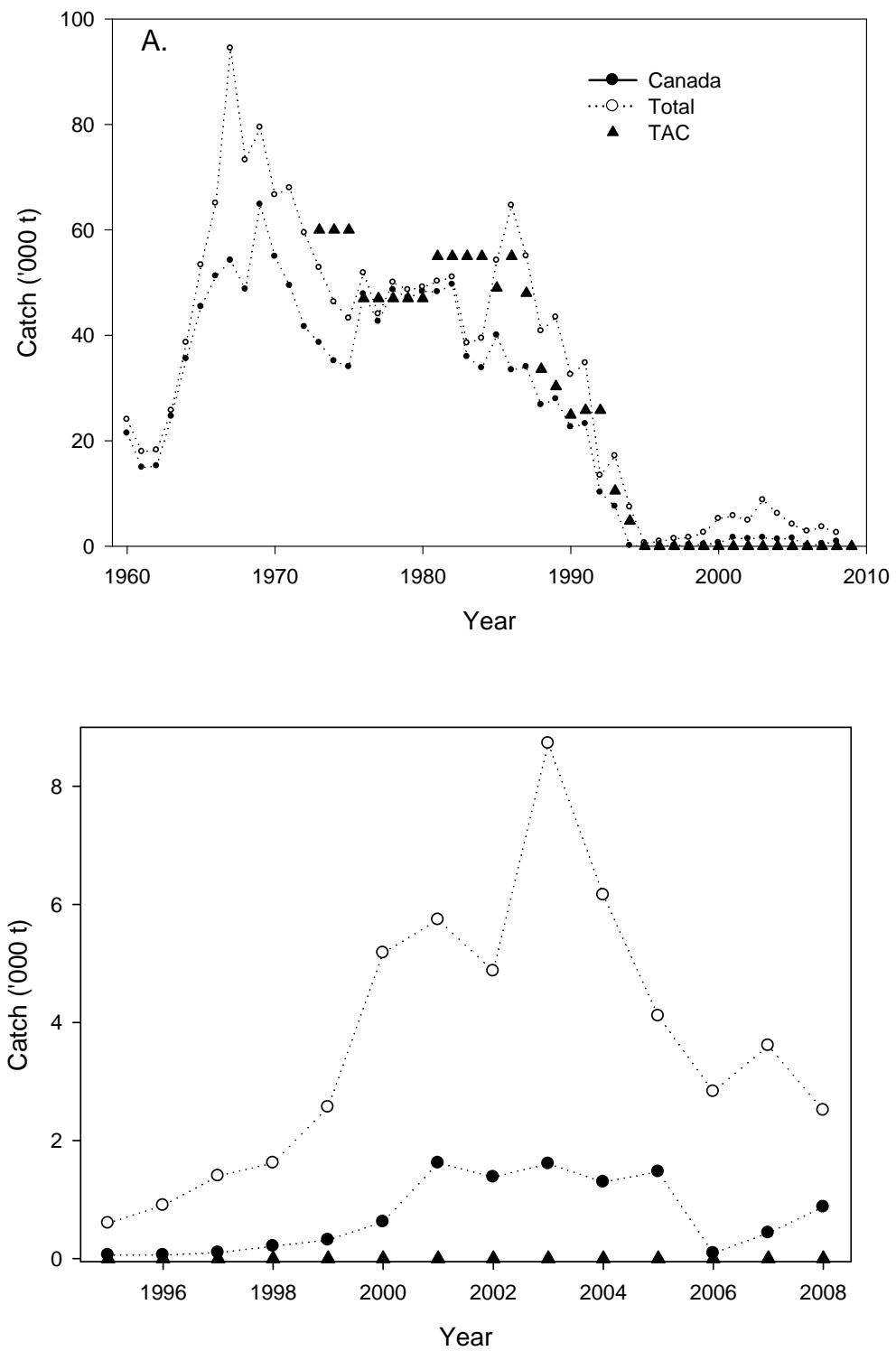


Figure 1. American plaice catches ('000 tons) from 1960 – 2008 (A) and since the moratorium (1995-2008) (B).

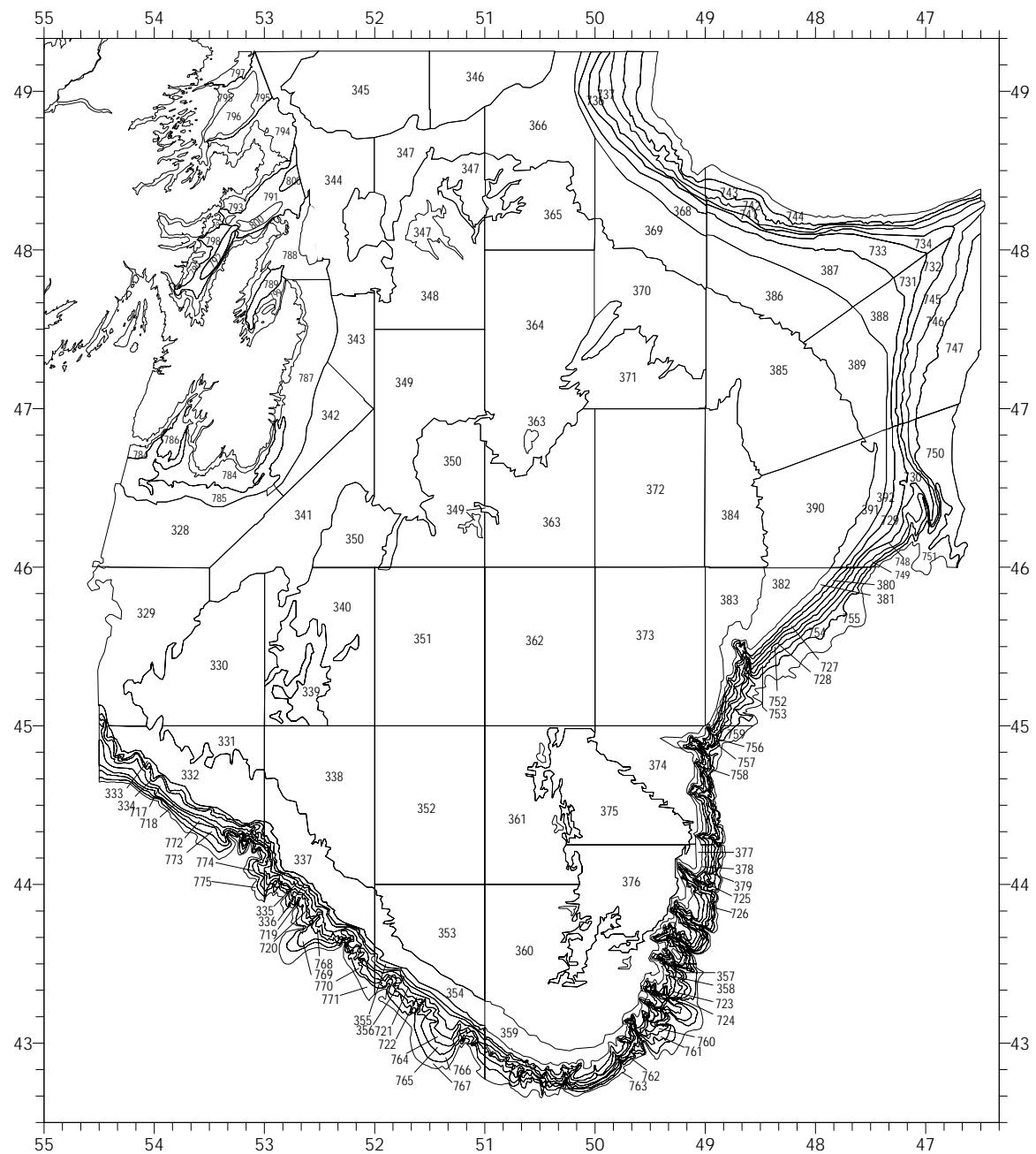


Figure 2. Stratification scheme used in Canadian research vessel surveys of Div. 3LNO.

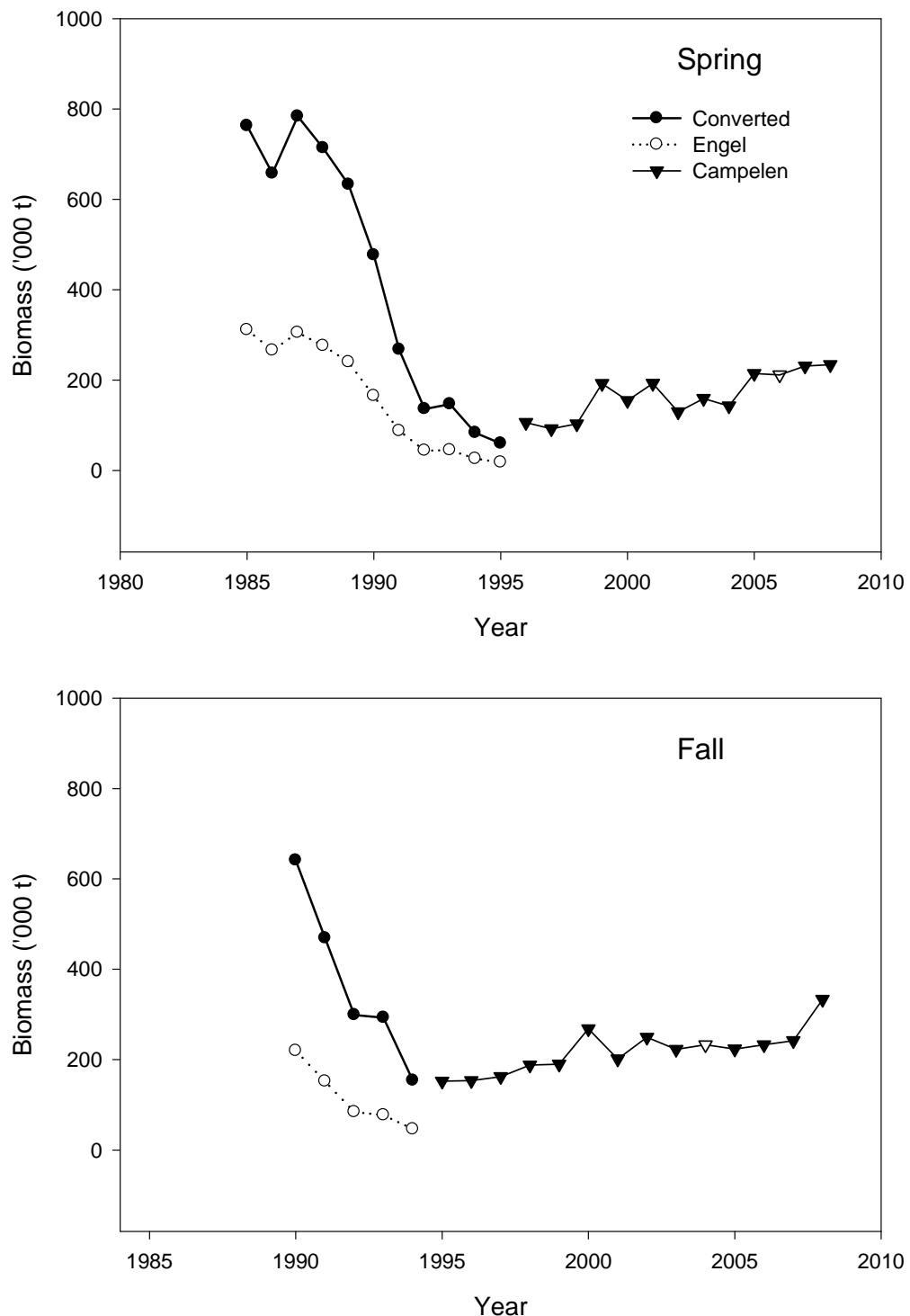


Figure 3. Biomass ('000 tons) of American plaice from spring and fall Canadian surveys in Div. 3LNO combined. Note that open symbol represents years when survey coverage was poor.

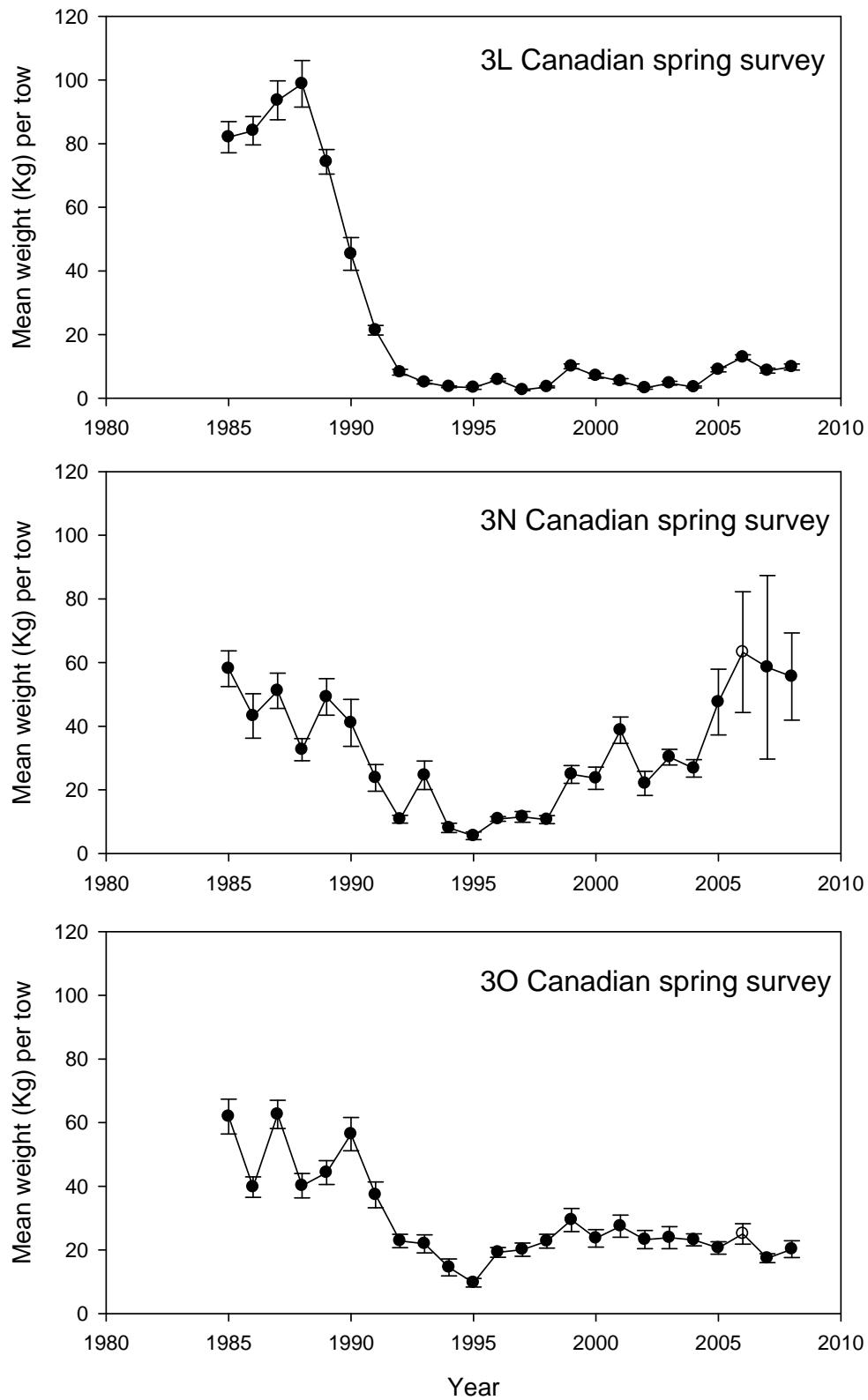


Figure 4. Mean (± 1 Std. dev.) weight per tow (Kg) of American plaice from Canadian spring surveys in Div. 3L, 3N and 3O. Note that open symbol represents years when survey coverage was poor.

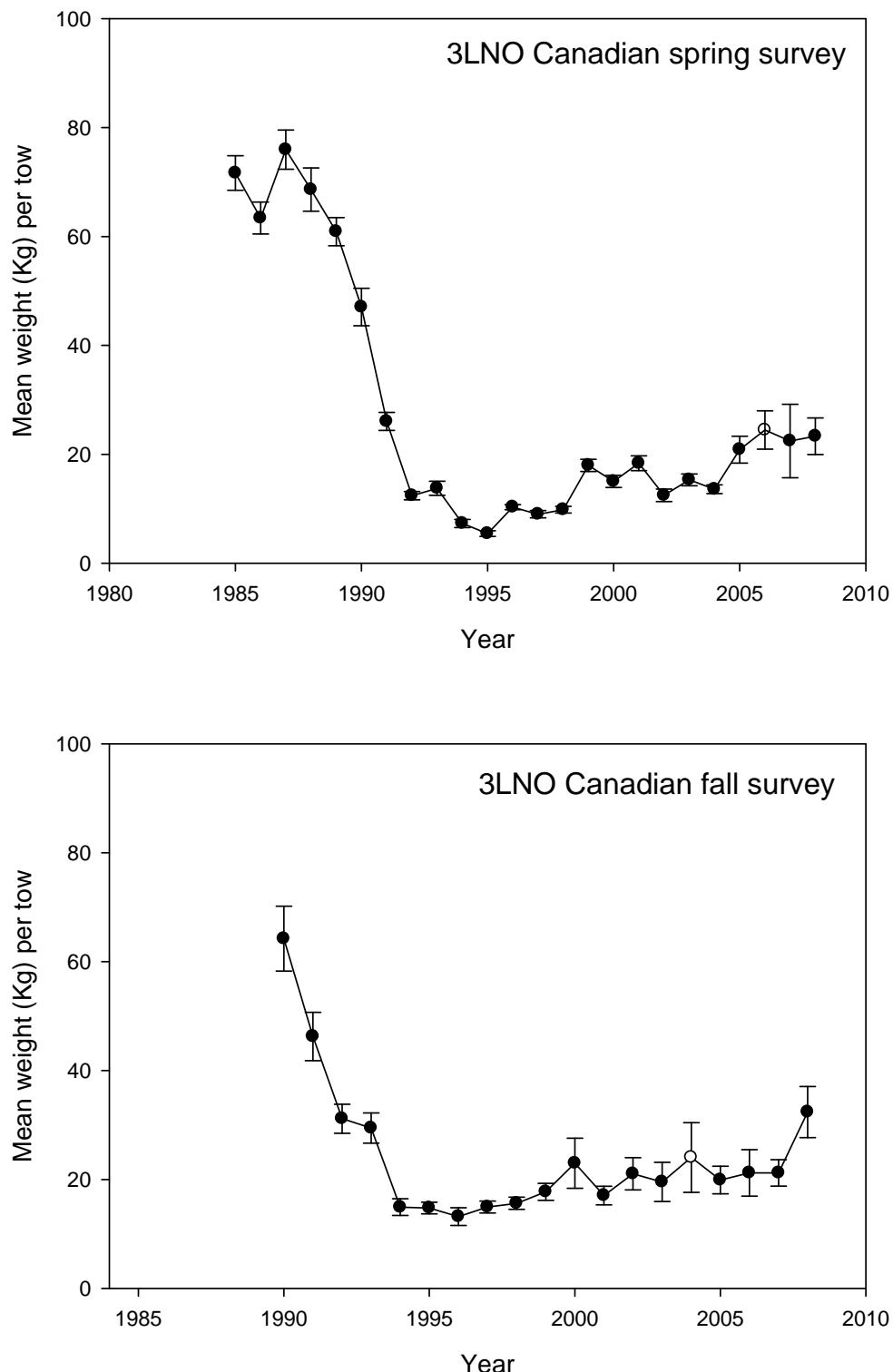


Figure 5. Mean weight per tow (± 1 Std. dev.) of American plaice from Canadian spring and fall surveys of Div. 3LNO combined. Note that open symbol represents years when survey coverage was poor.

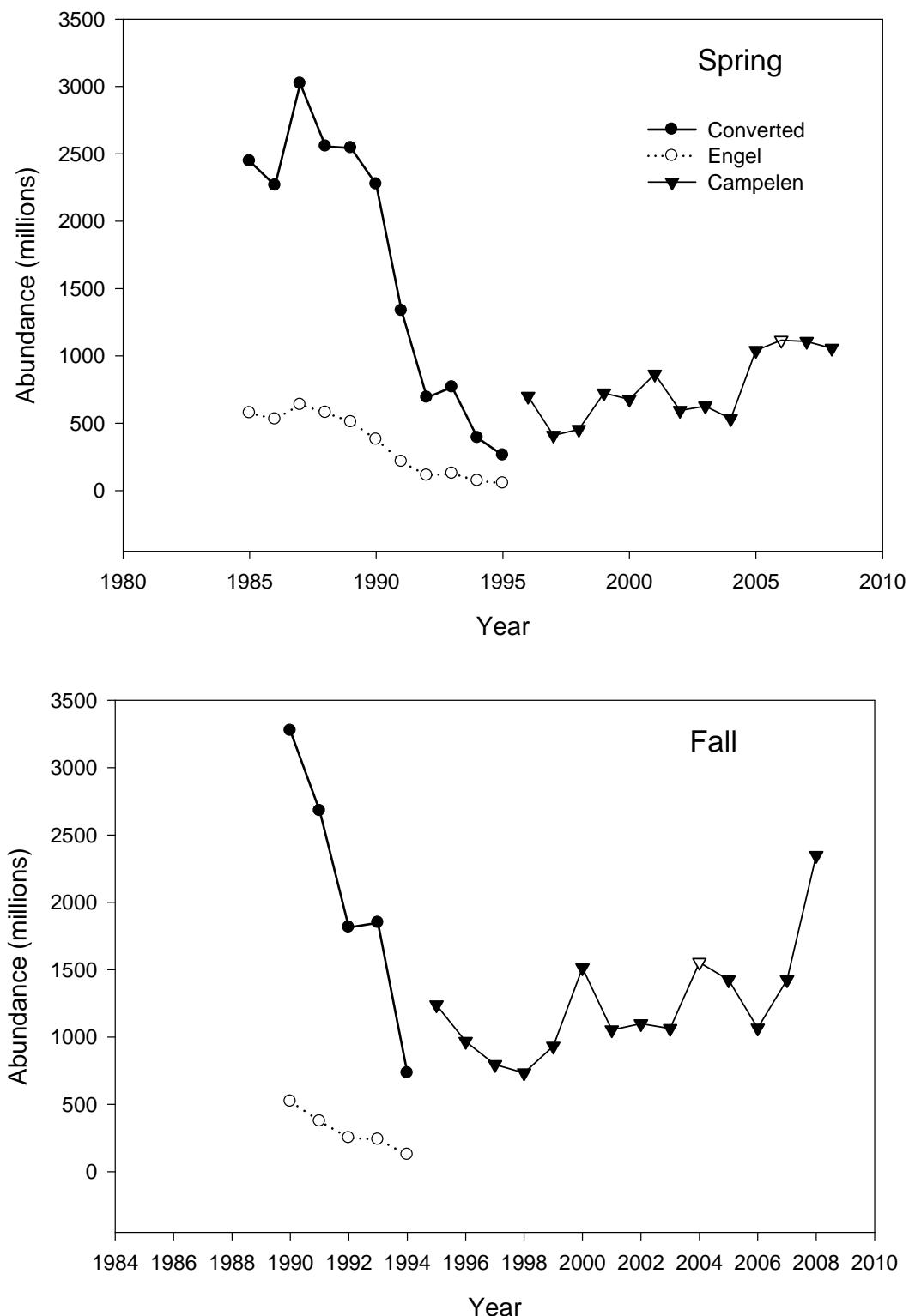


Figure 6. Abundance (millions) of American plaice from spring and fall Canadian surveys in Div. 3LNO combined. Note that open symbol represents years when survey coverage was poor.

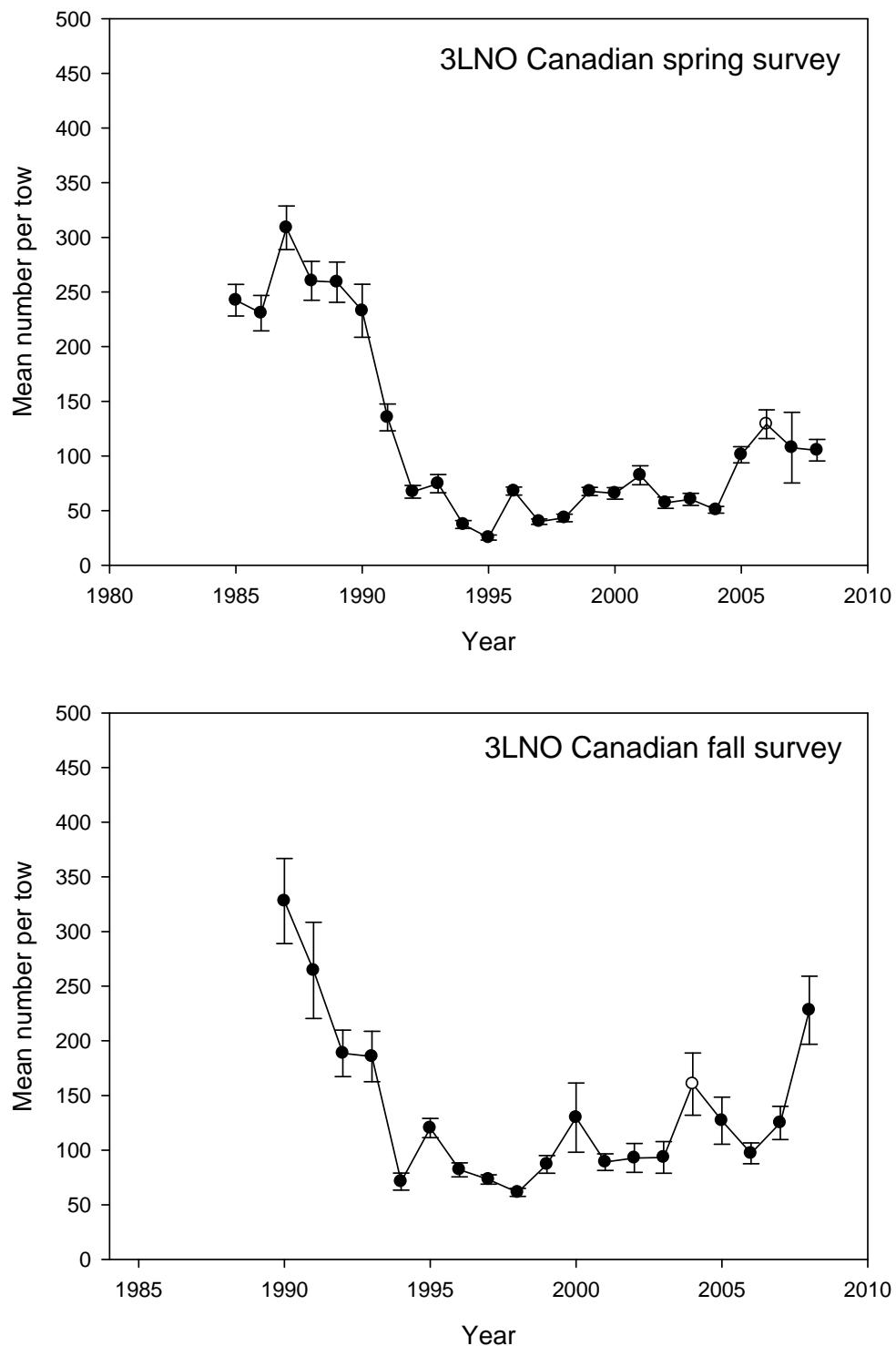


Figure 7. Mean (± 1 Std. Dev.) number per tow of American plaice from Canadian spring and fall surveys of Div. 3LNO combined. Note that open symbol represents years when survey coverage was poor.

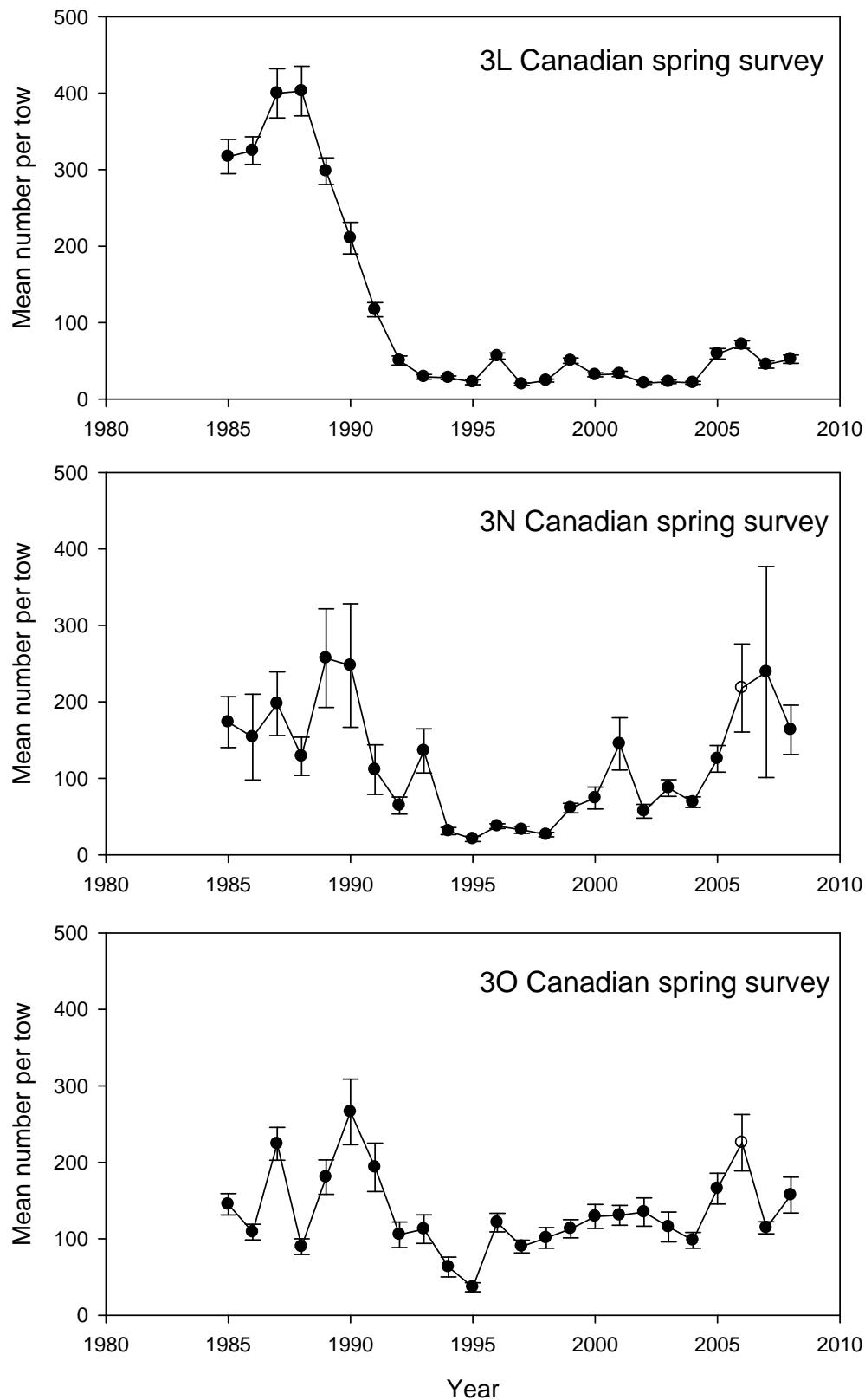


Figure 8. Mean (± 1 Std. Dev.) number per tow of American plaice from Canadian spring surveys of Div. 3L, 3N and 3O. Note that open symbol represents years when survey coverage was poor.

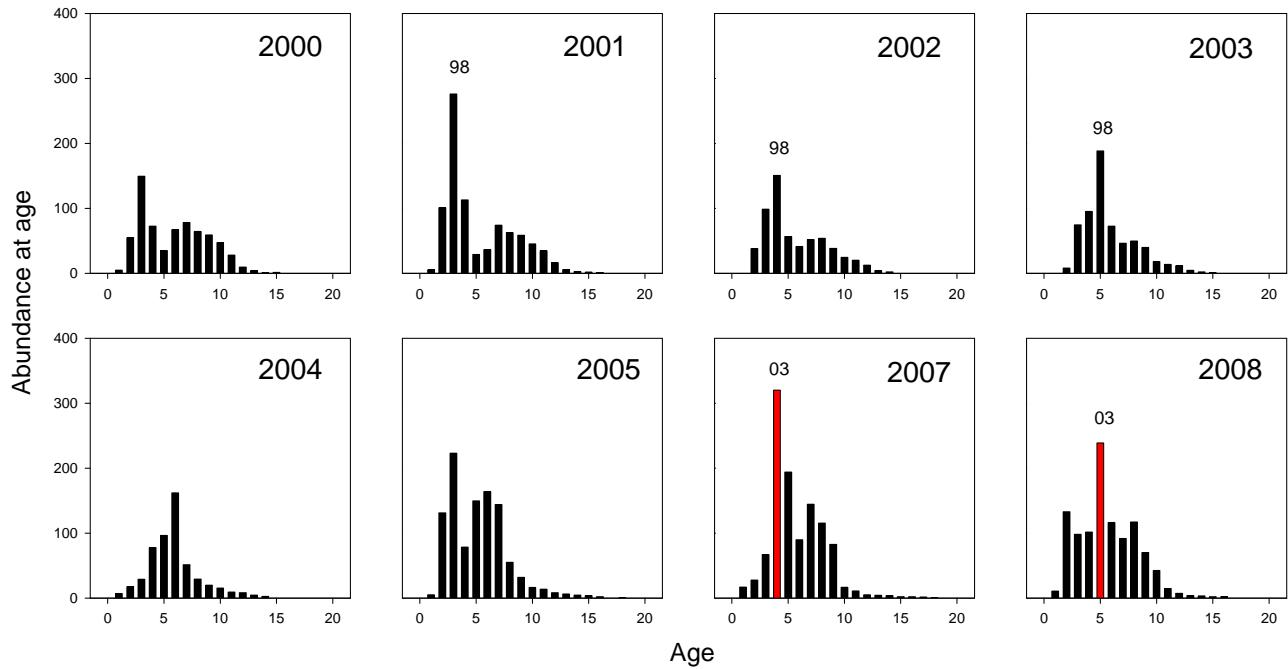


Figure 9. Abundance at age (millions of fish) from 2000 – 2008 in the Canadian spring surveys. Note the survey from 2006 is not present. The 1998 and 2003 year classes are labelled.

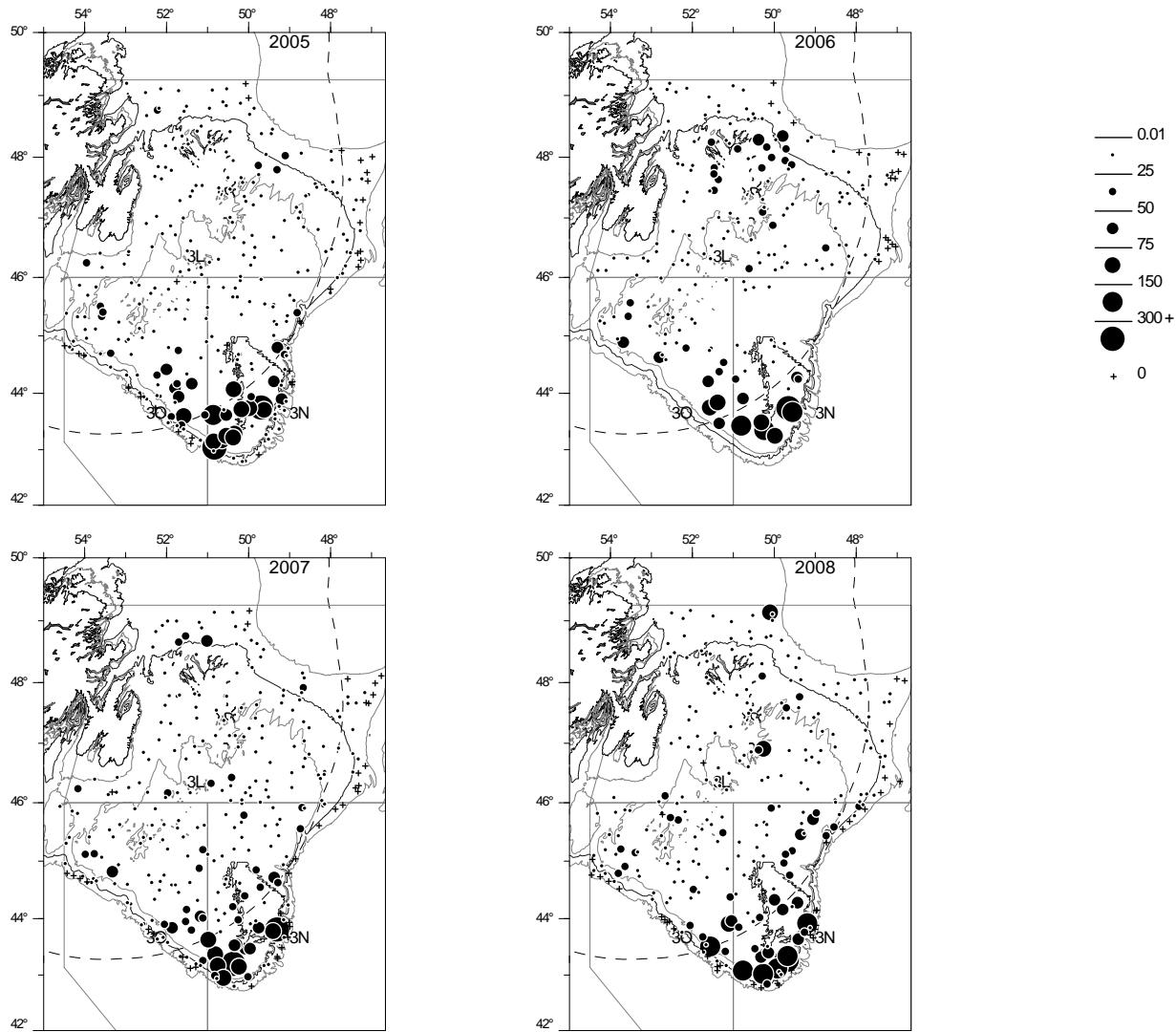


Figure 10. Distribution of American plaice (kg per tow) from Canadian spring surveys in NAFO Divisions 3LNO from 2005-2008.
Note survey coverage in 2006 in Div. 3NO.

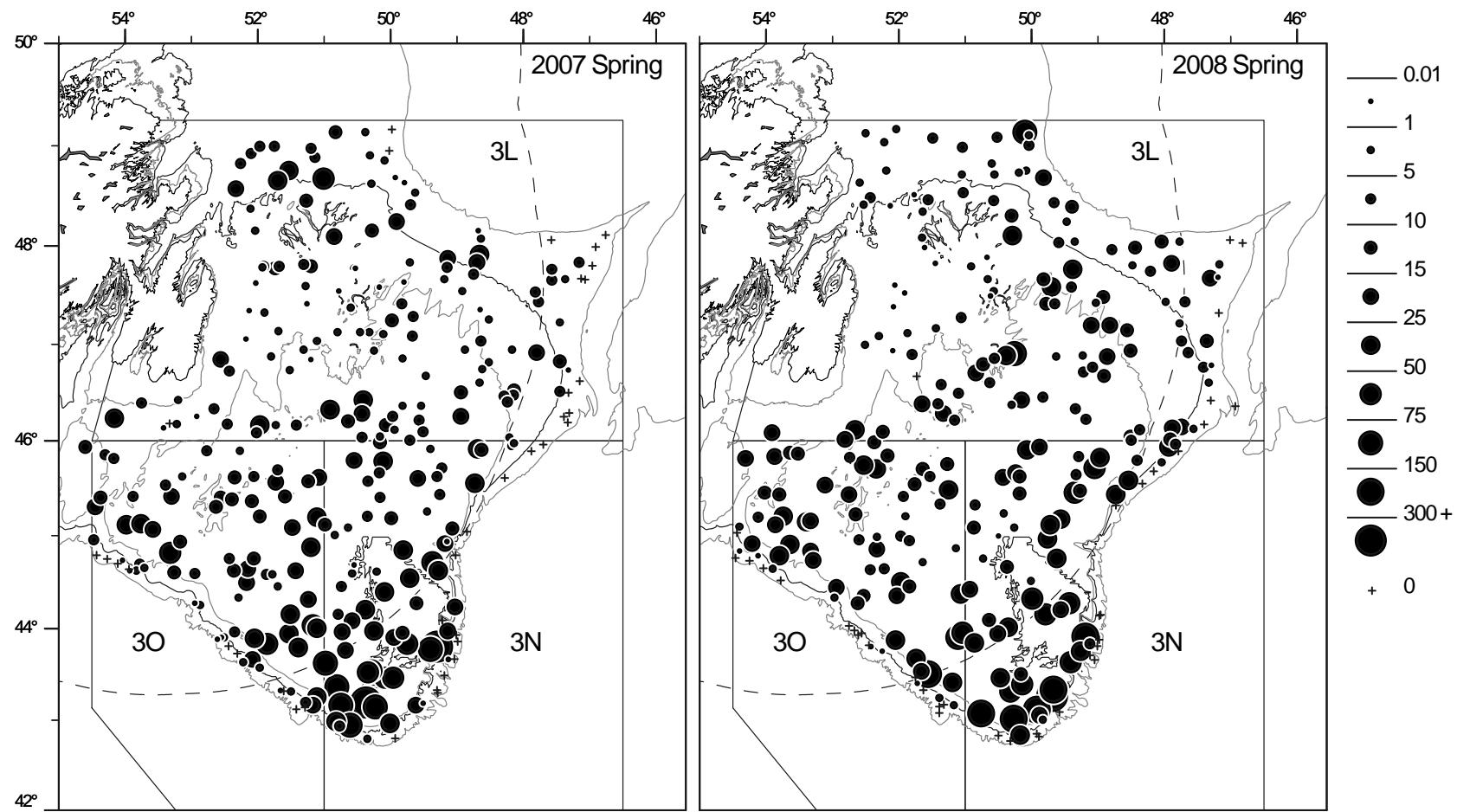


Figure 11. Distribution of American plaice (kg per tow) from Canadian spring surveys in NAFO Divisions 3LNO in 2005 and 2006. Note survey coverage in Div. 3NO.

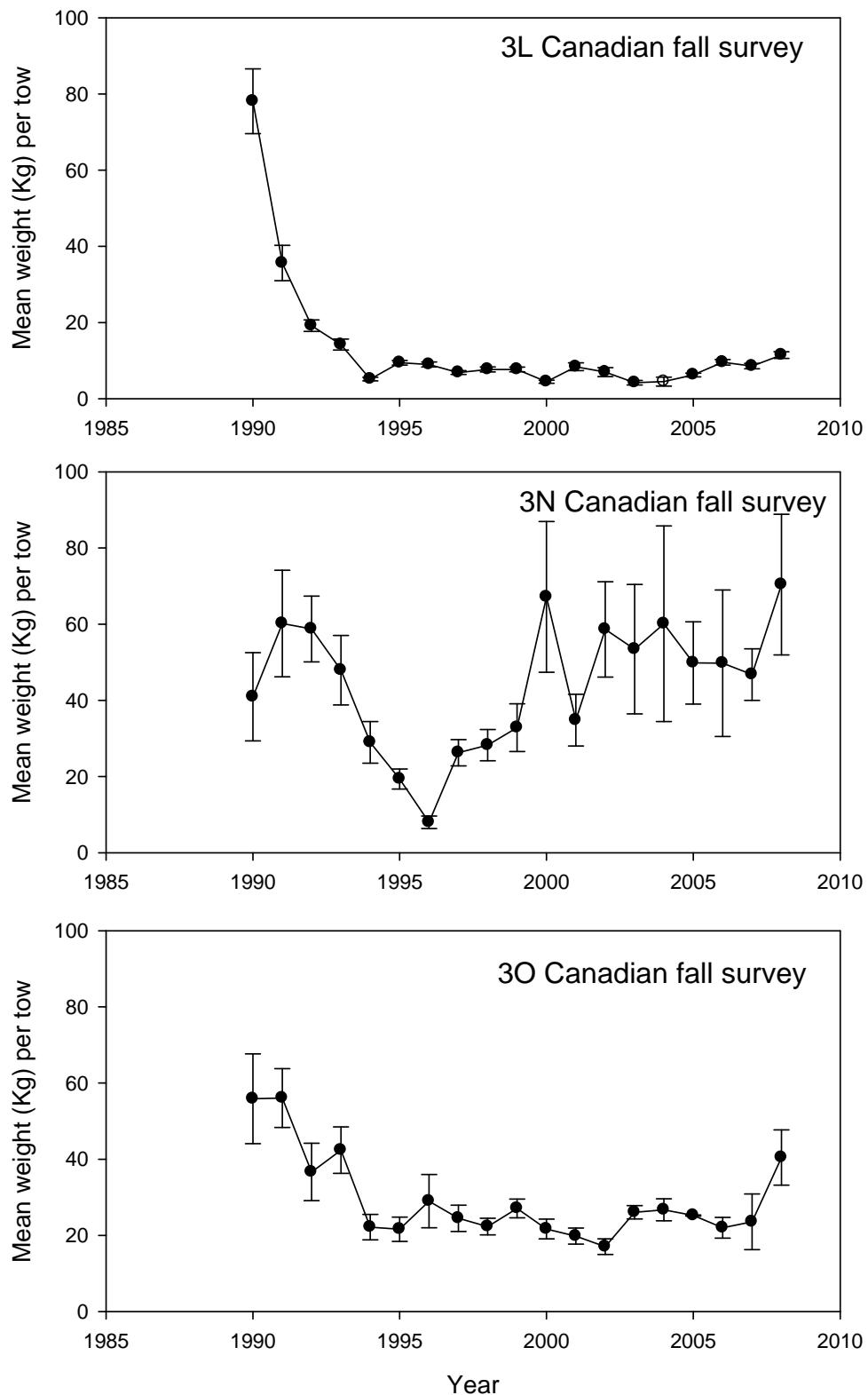


Figure 12. Mean (± 1 Std. Dev.) weight (Kg) per tow of American plaice from Canadian fall surveys in Div. 3L, 3N and 3O. Note that open symbol represents years when survey coverage was poor.

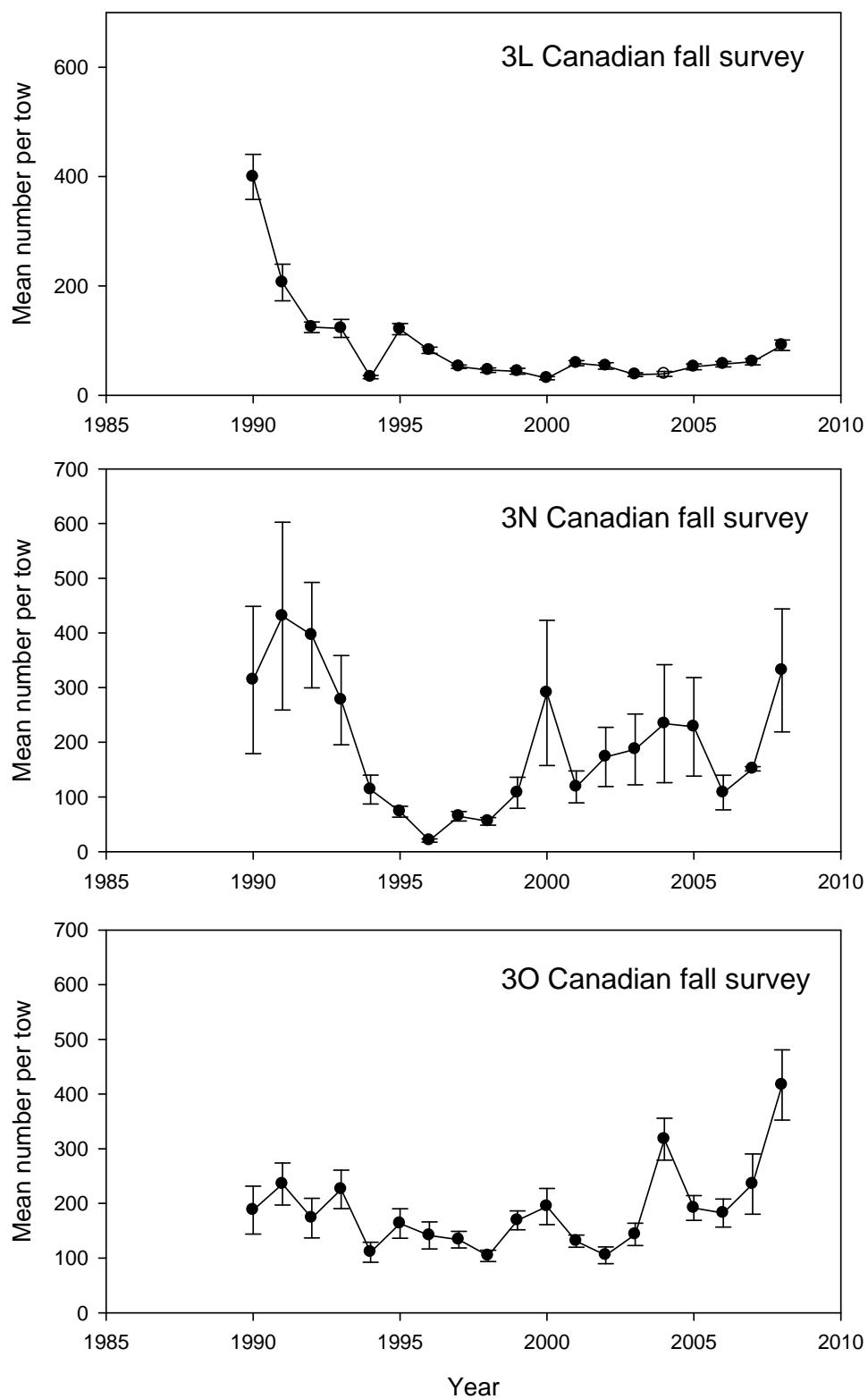


Figure 13. Mean (± 1 Std. Dev.) number per tow of American plaice from Canadian fall surveys of Div. 3L, 3N and 3O. Note that open symbol represents years when survey coverage was poor and are not included in 2009 assessment.

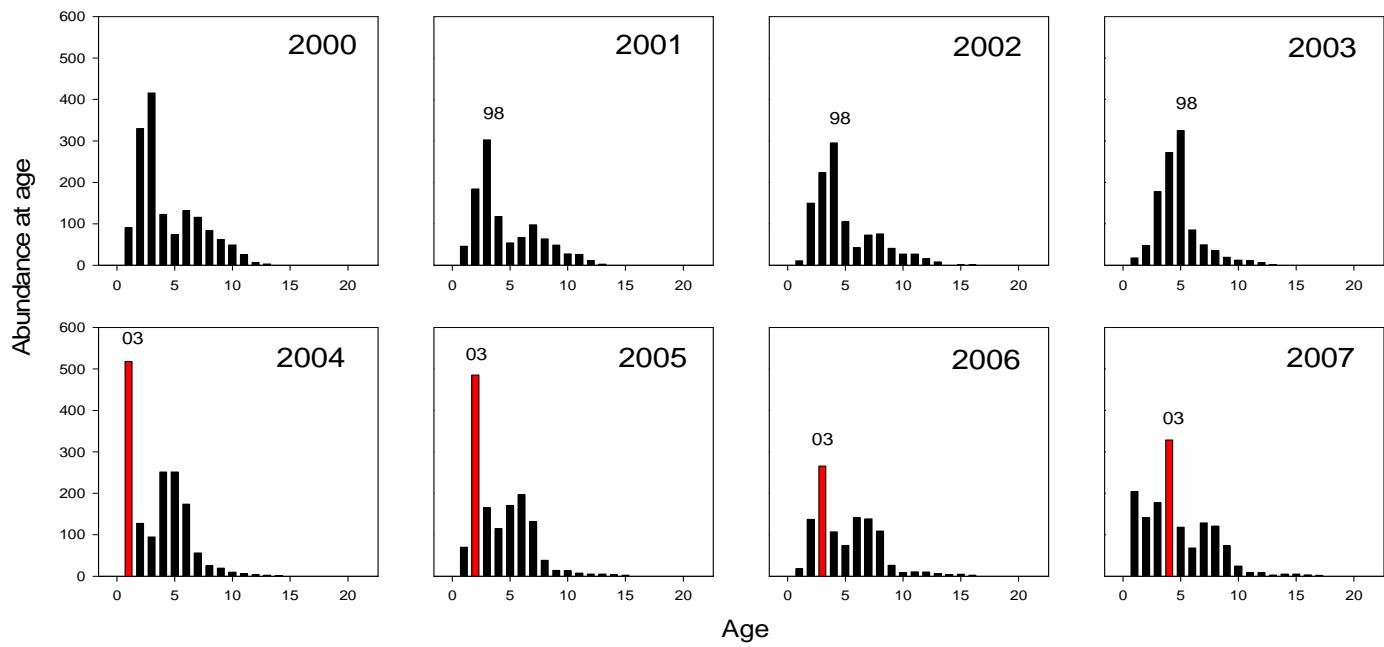


Figure 14. Abundance at age (millions of fish) from 2000 – 2007 in the Canadian fall surveys. The 1998 and 2003 year classes are labelled.

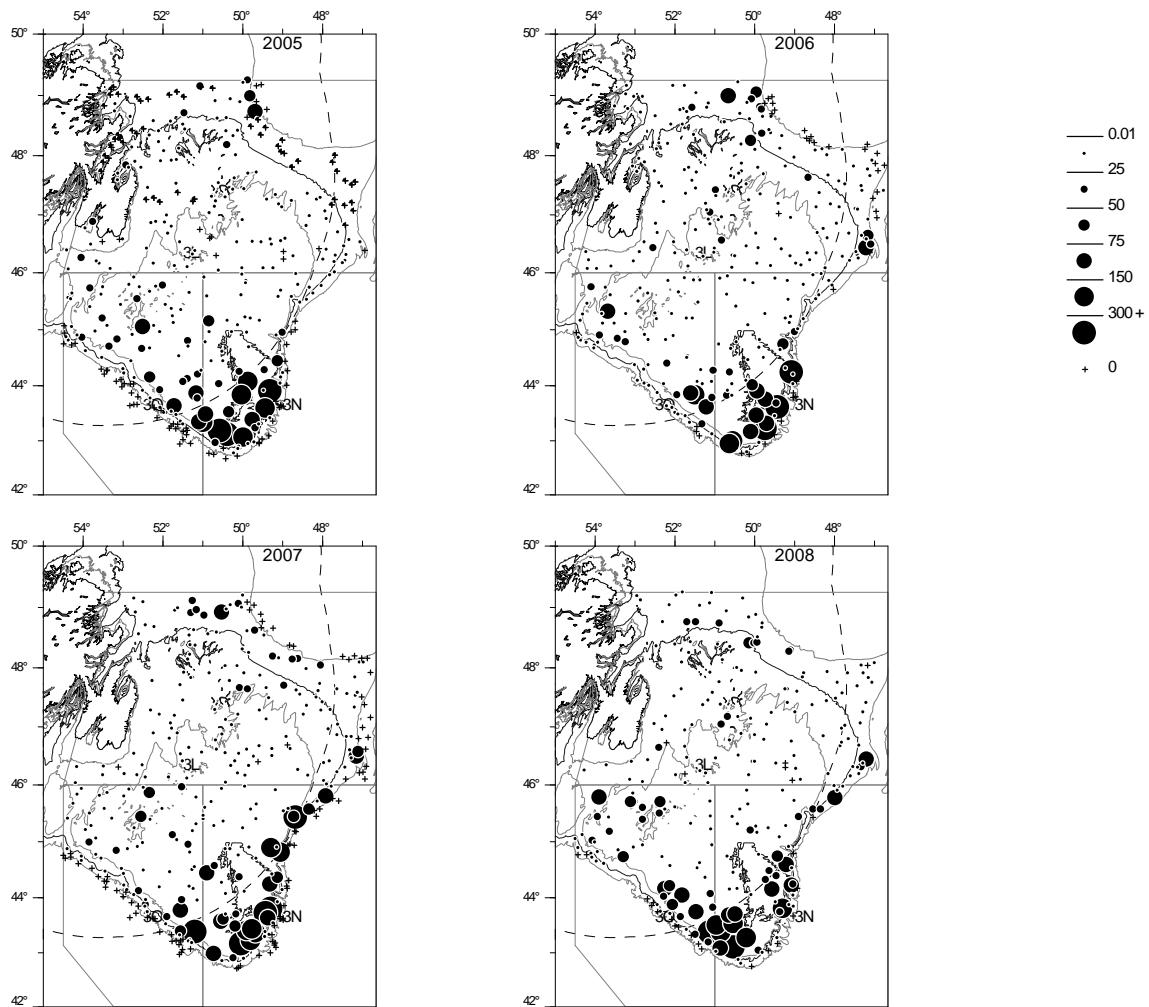


Figure 15. Distribution of American plaice (kg per tow) from Canadian spring surveys in NAFO Divisions 3LNO from 2005-2008.

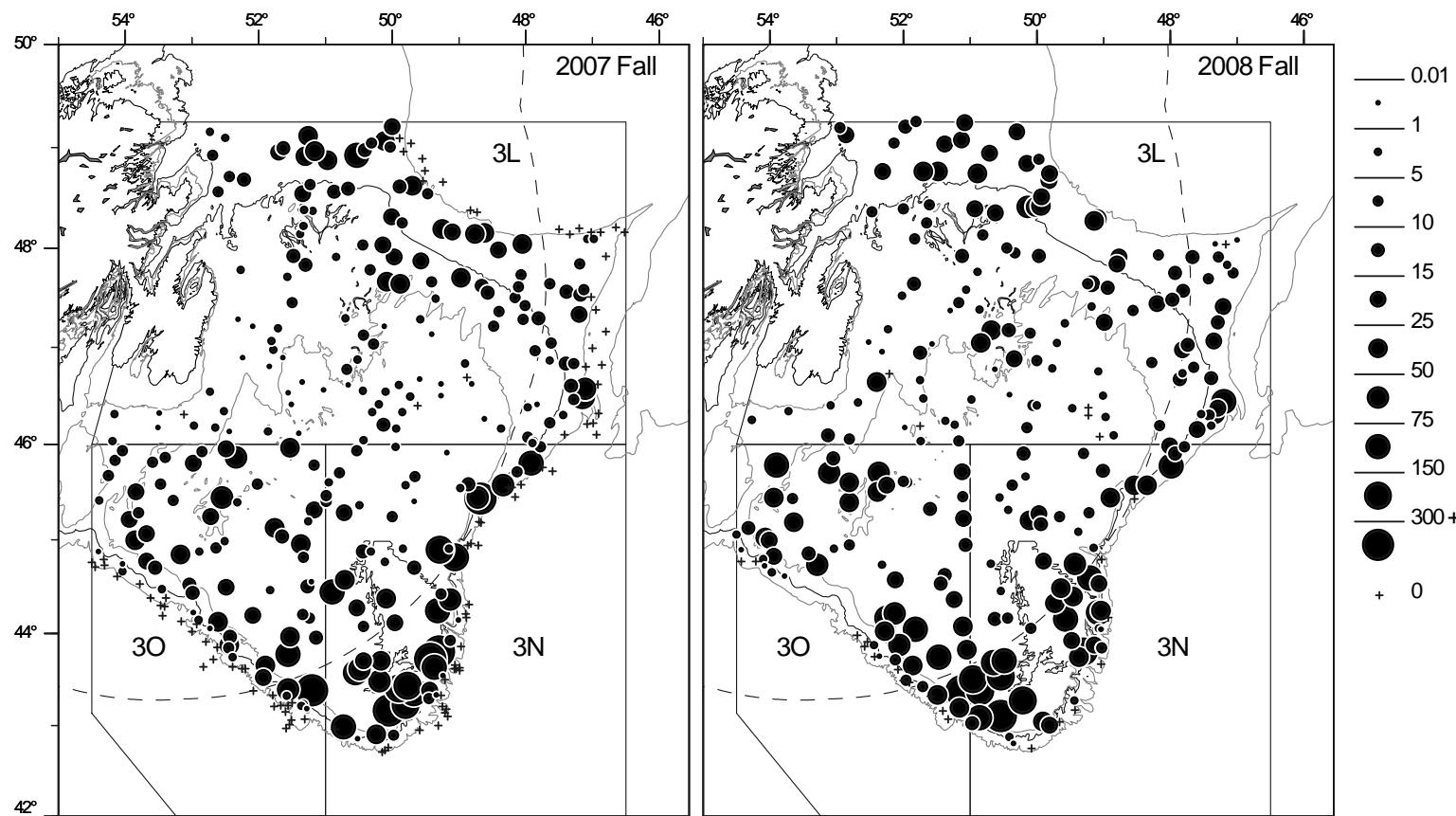


Figure 16. Distribution of American plaice (kg per tow) from Canadian fall surveys in NAFO Divisions 3LNO for 2007 and 2008.

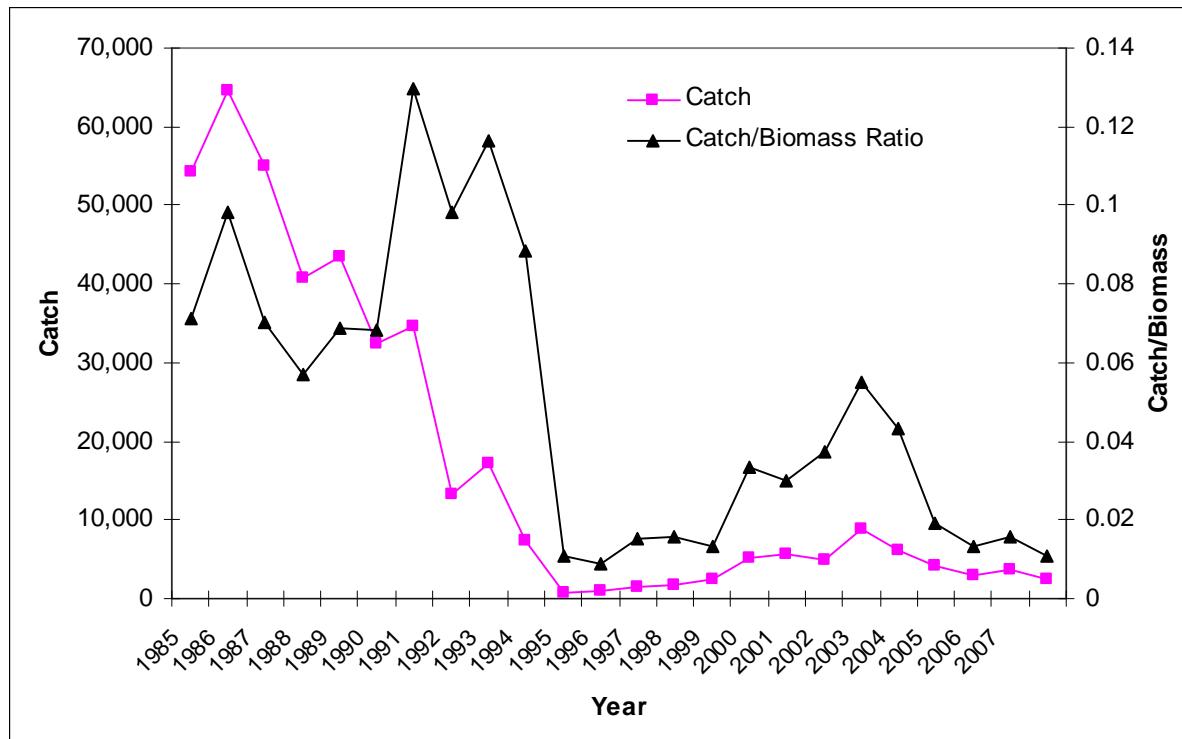


Figure 17. Total catch from 1985 to 2008 and the catch/biomass ratio for the same period.

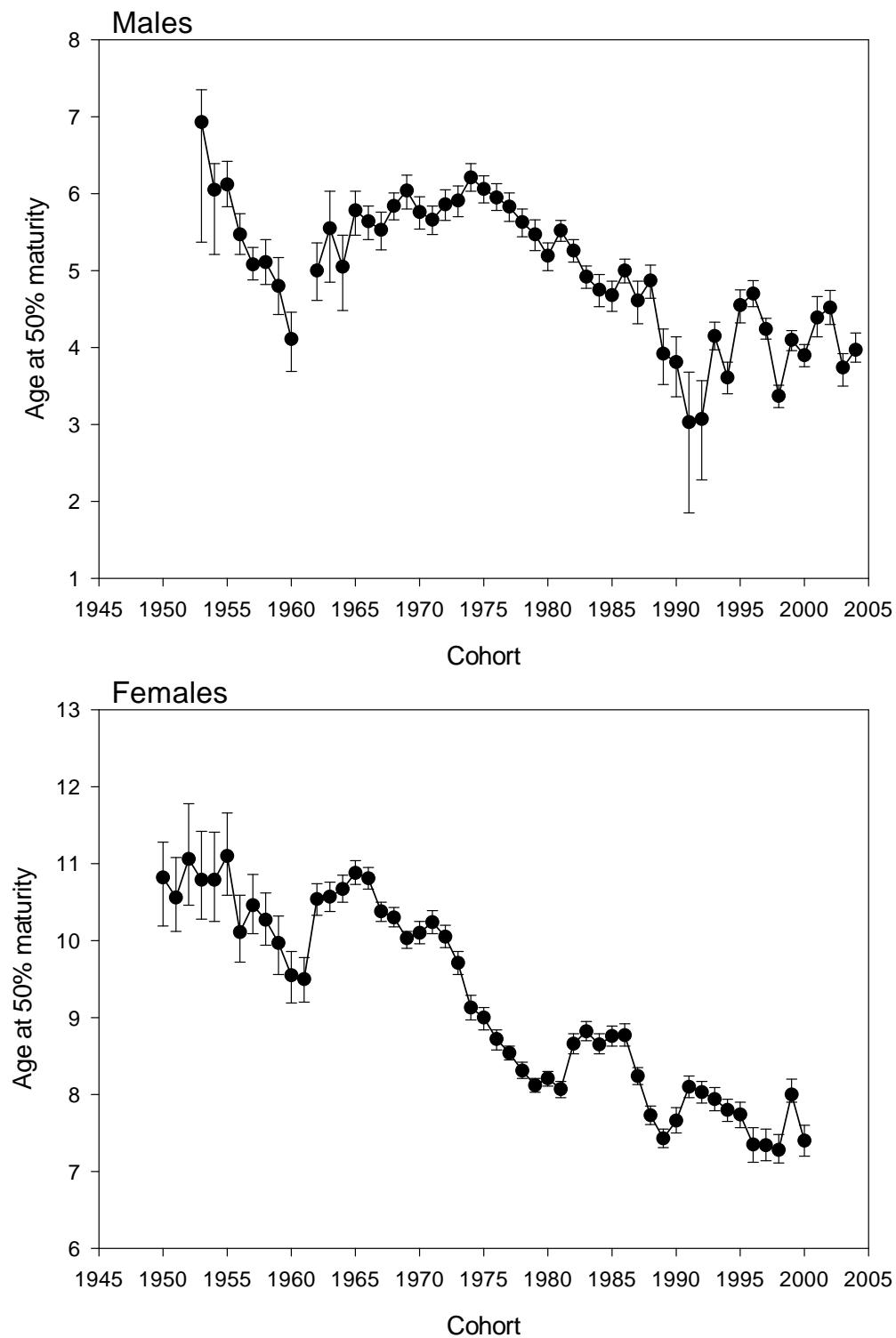


Figure 18. Age at 50% maturity ($\pm 95\%$ fiducial limits) by cohort for male and female American plaice in NAFO Div. 3LNO.

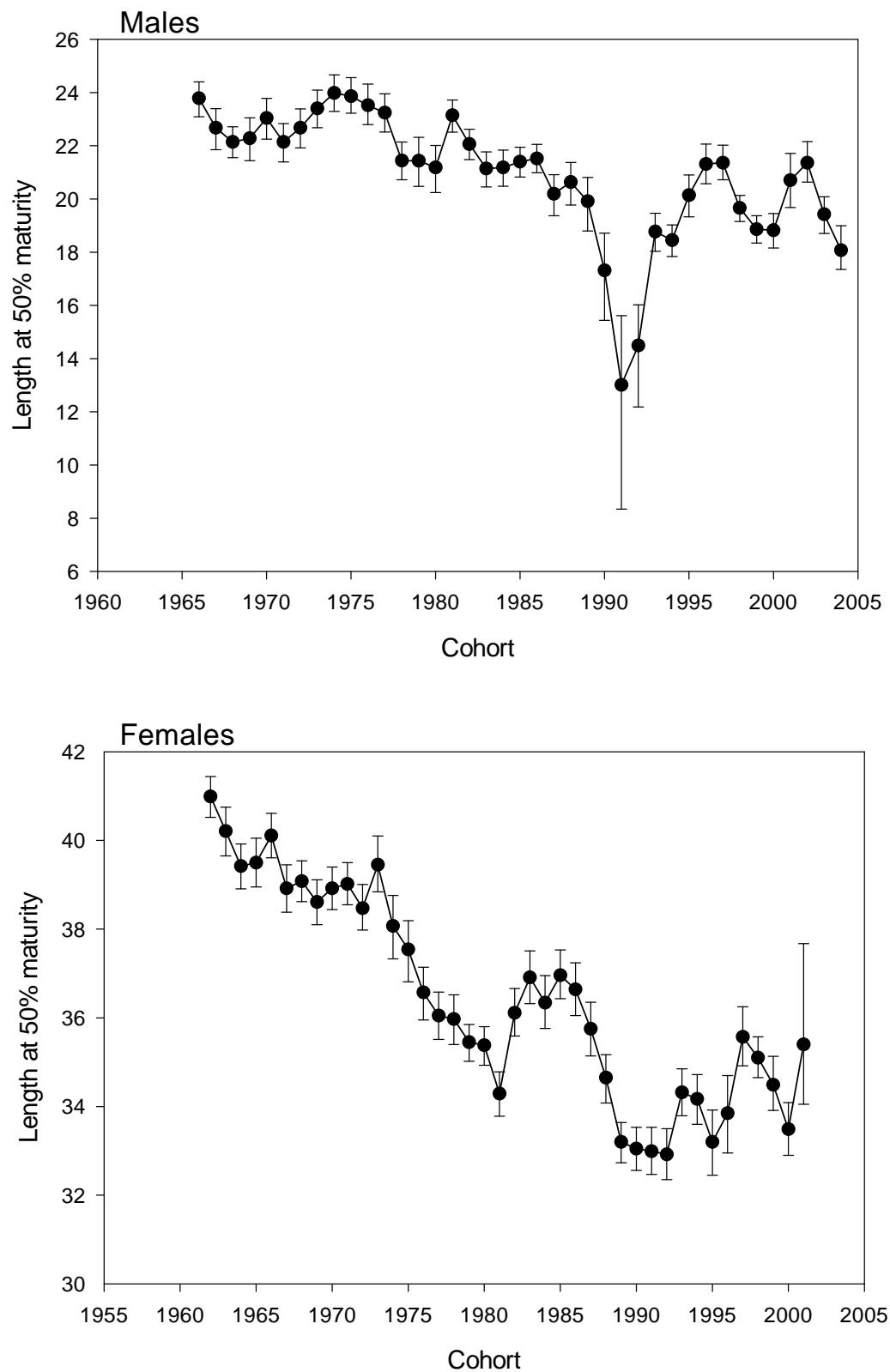


Figure 19. Length at 50% maturity (\pm 95% fiducial limits) by cohort for male and female American plaice in NAFO Div. 3LNO.

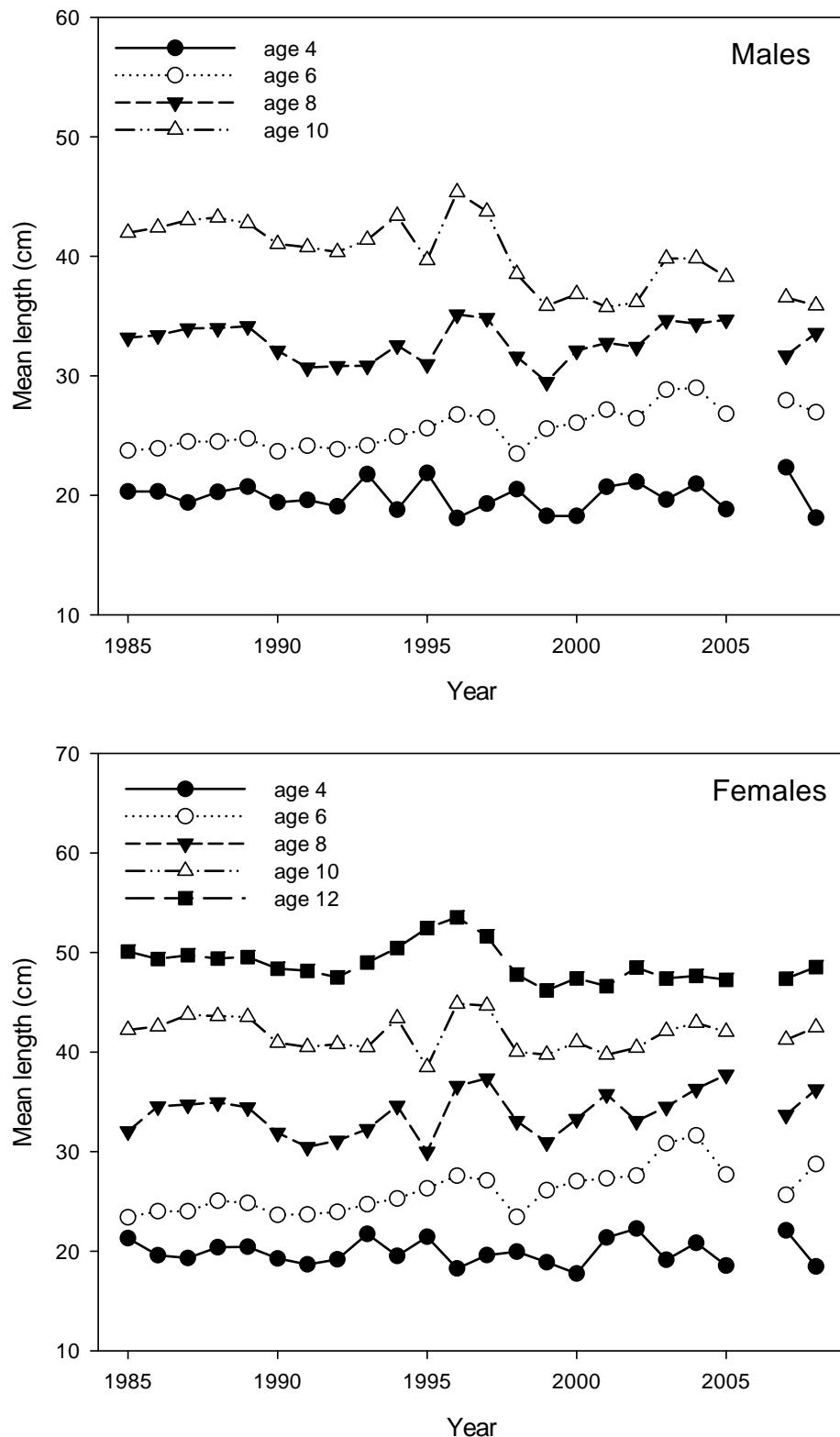


Figure 20. Mean length-at-age for selected ages of Div. 3LNO American plaice from Canadian spring RV surveys.

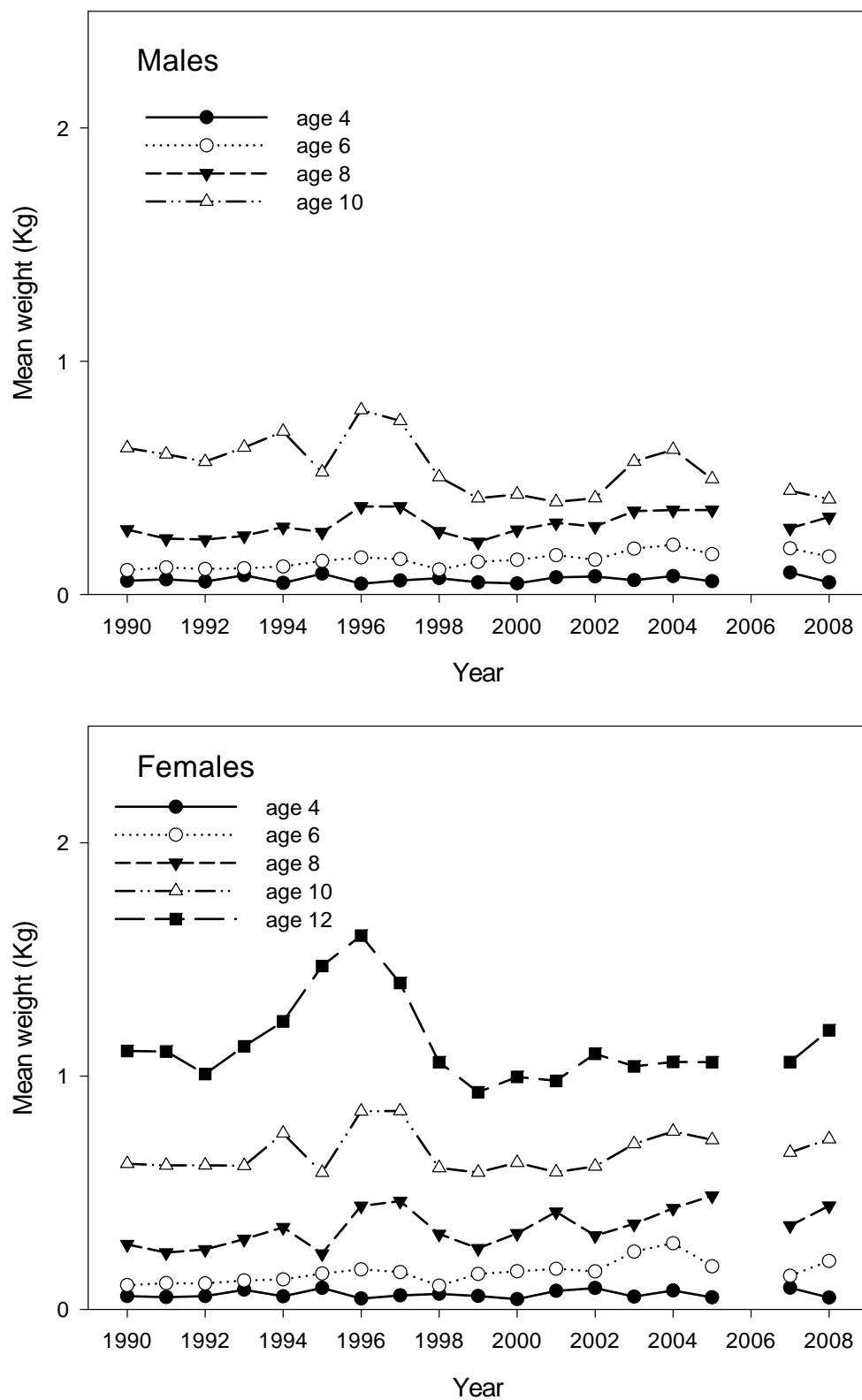


Figure 21. Mean weight-at-age for selected ages of Div. 3LNO American plaice from Canadian spring RV surveys.

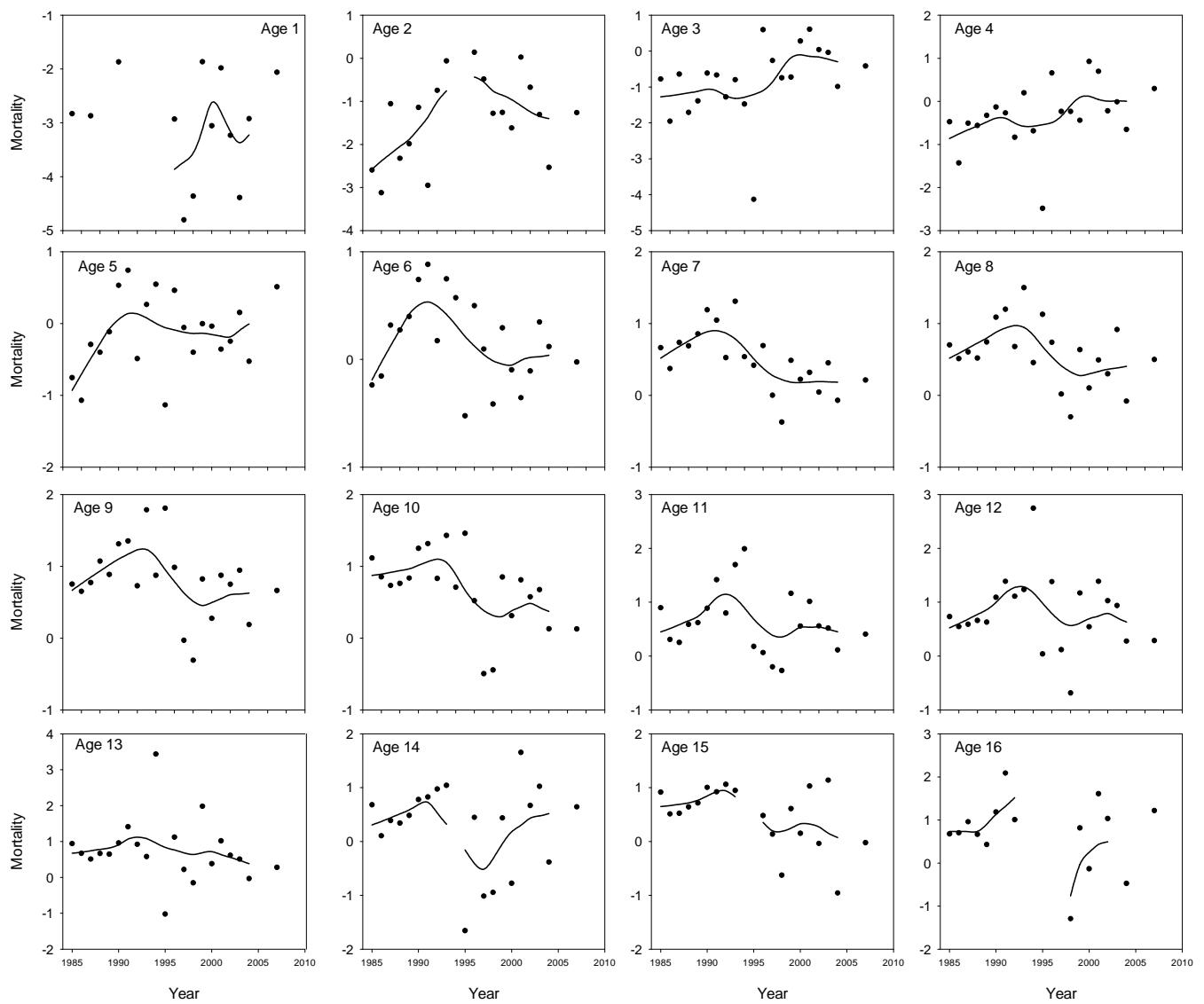


Figure 22. Estimates of mortality for ages 1 to 16 from Canadian spring surveys from 1985 to 2008.

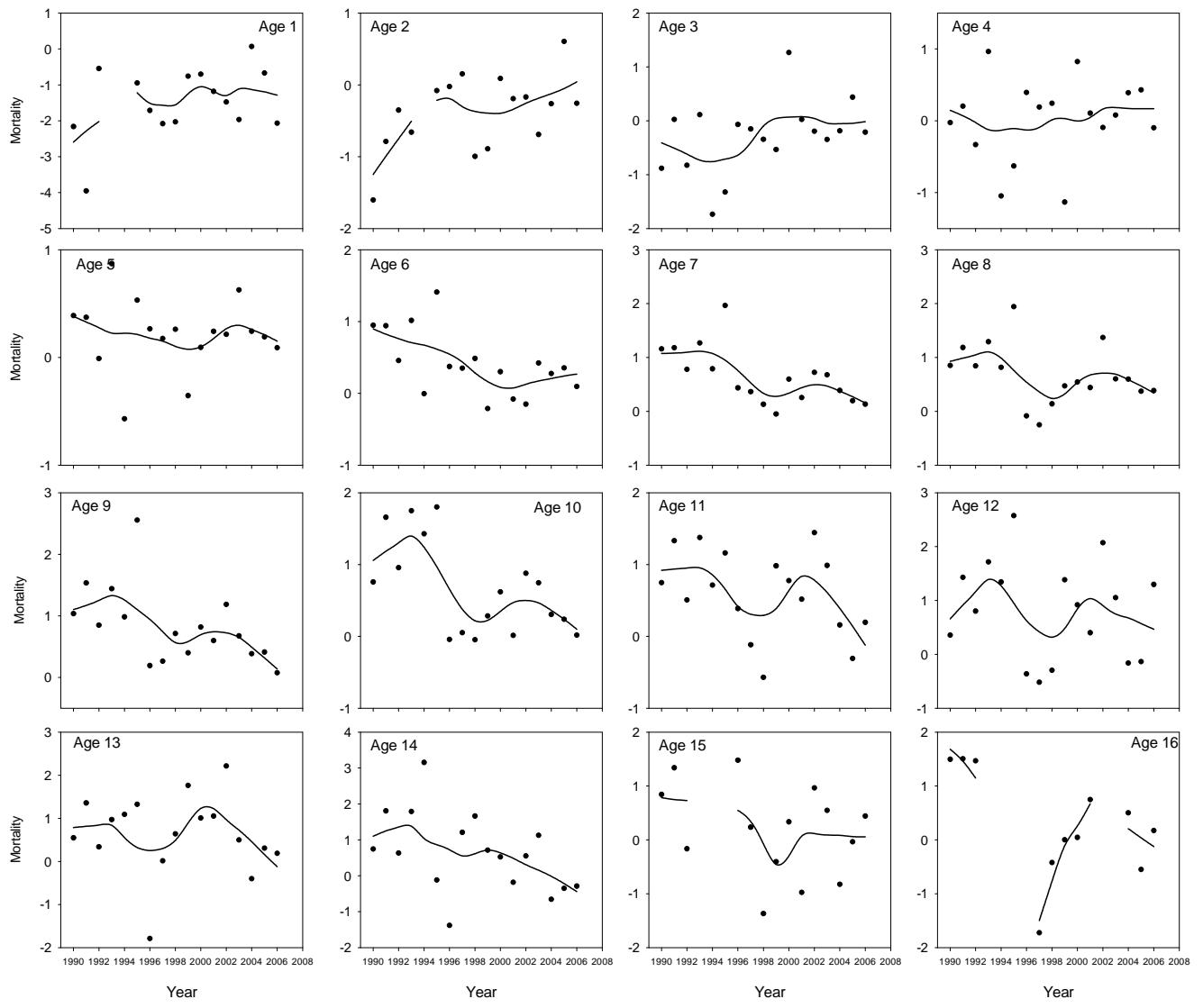


Figure 23. Estimates of mortality for ages 1 to 16 from Canadian fall surveys from 1990 to 2007.

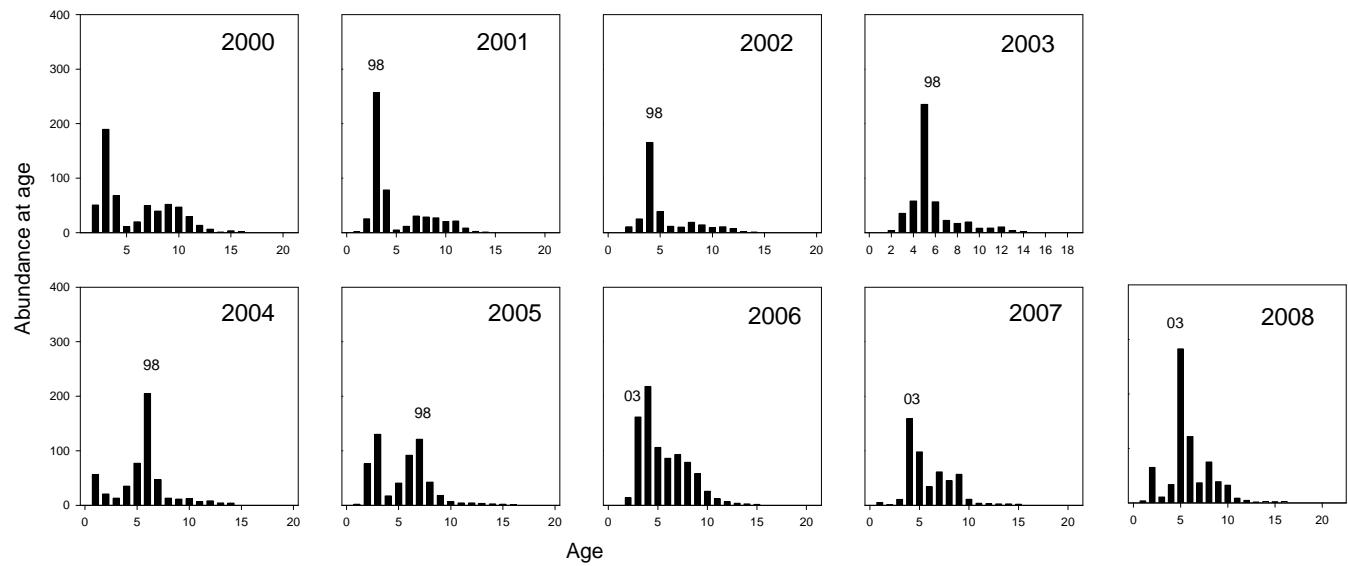
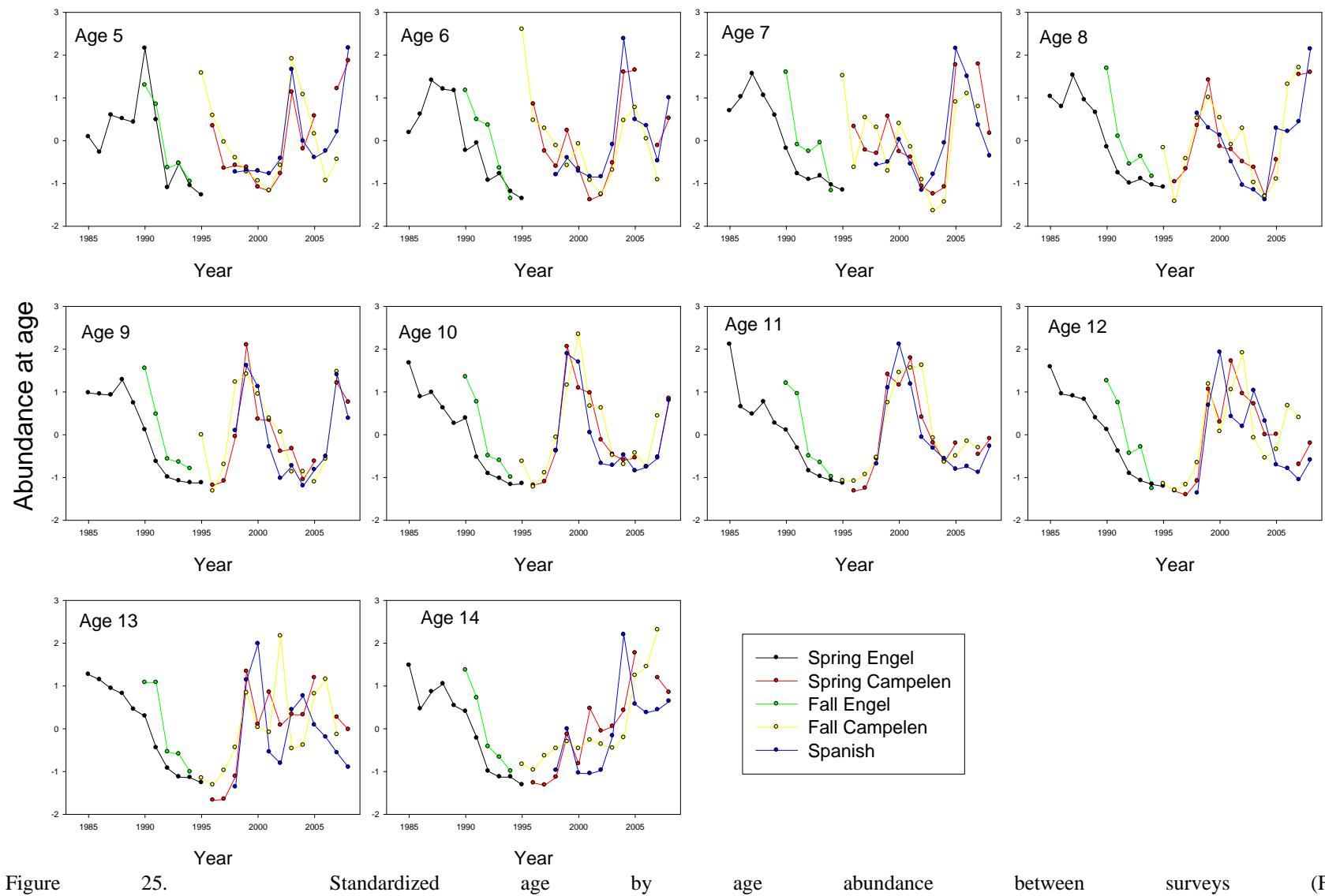


Figure 24. Abundance at age (millions of fish) from 2000 – 2008 in the Spanish Div. 3NO spring surveys. The 1998 and 2003 year classes are labelled.



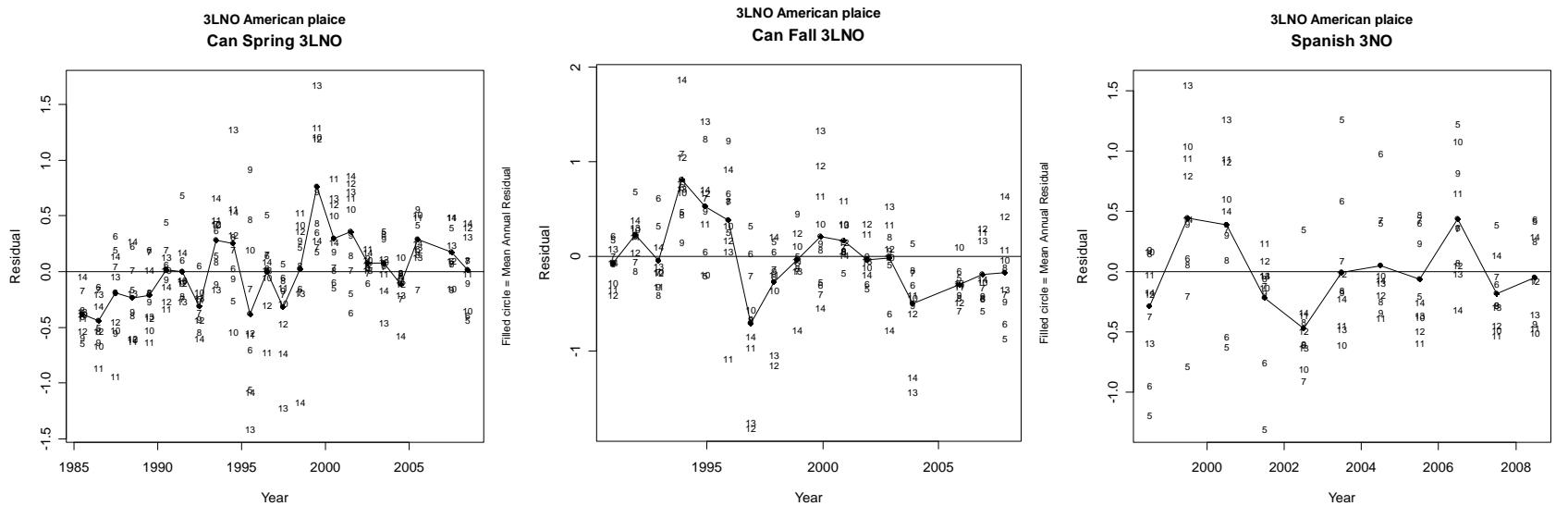


Figure 26. Residuals by year and month (numbers represent ages) for Canadian fall survey (top left), spring survey (top right) and Spanish Div. 3NO survey (bottom). Filled circle is the mean annual residual. Note the scales are different for each plot.

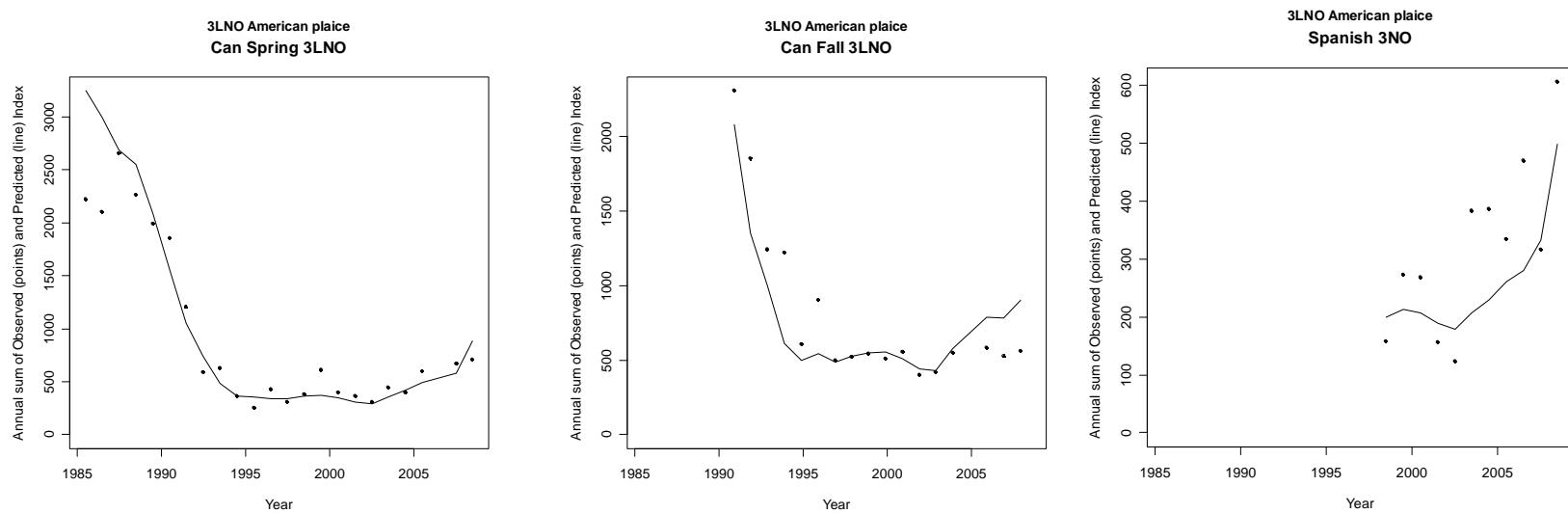


Figure 27. Observed versus predicted abundance for fall and spring indices over time.

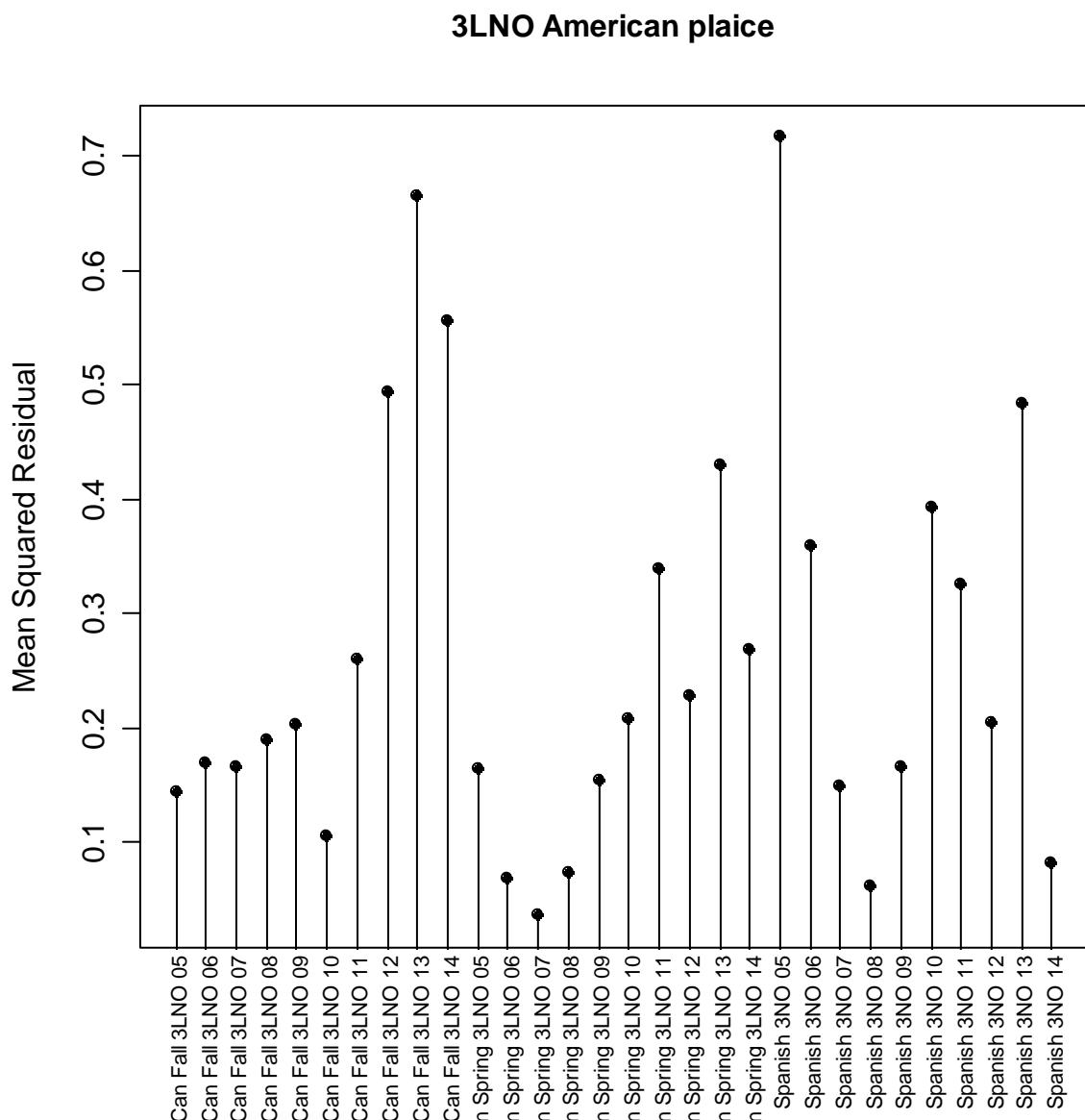


Figure 28. Mean squared residuals by age for fall, spring and Spanish Div. 3NO surveys.

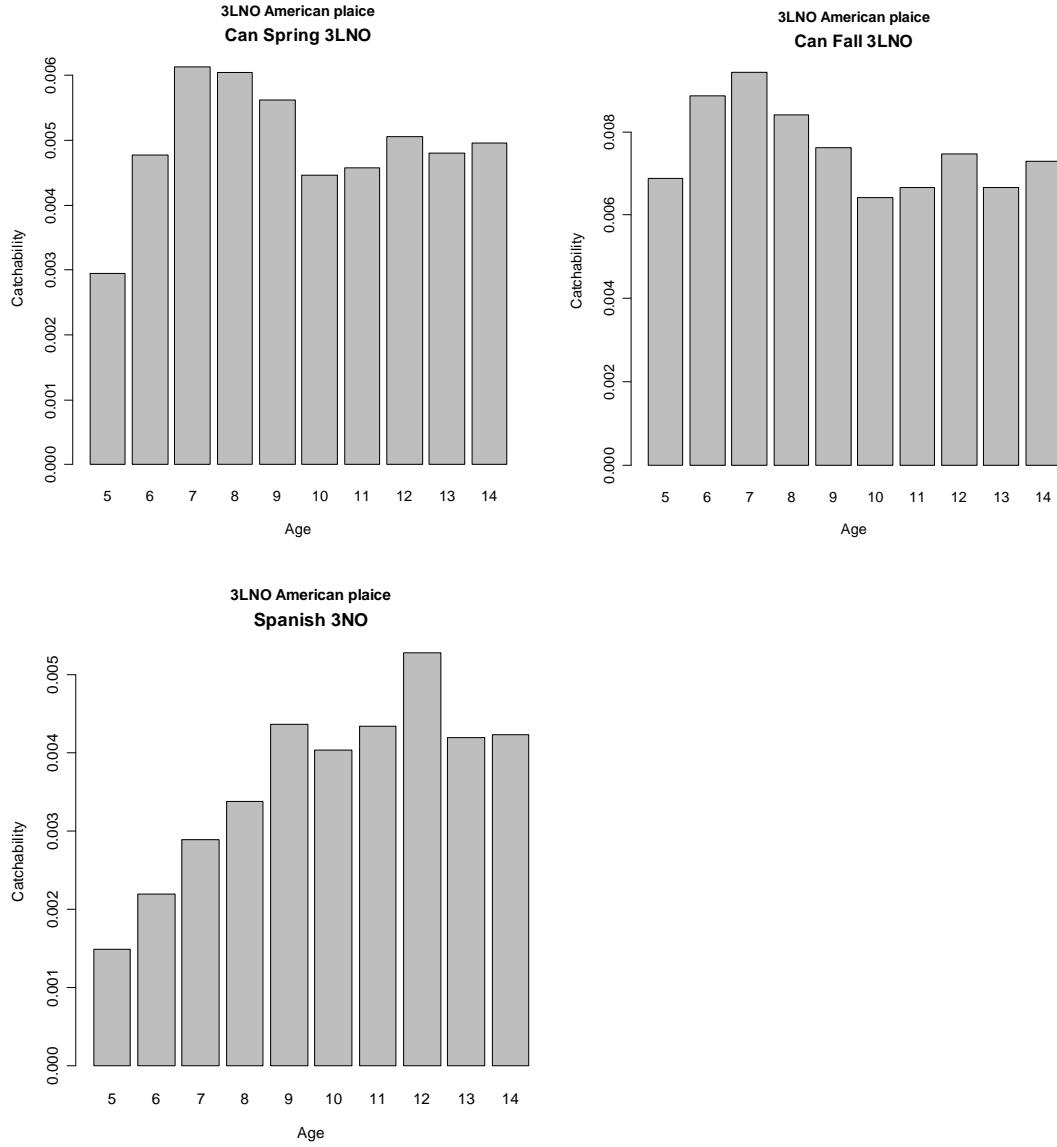


Figure 29. Bottom panel shows the survey catchabilities (q) for each survey by age. Please note Spanish Div. 3NO survey in mean numbers per tow at age, other surveys abundance at age.

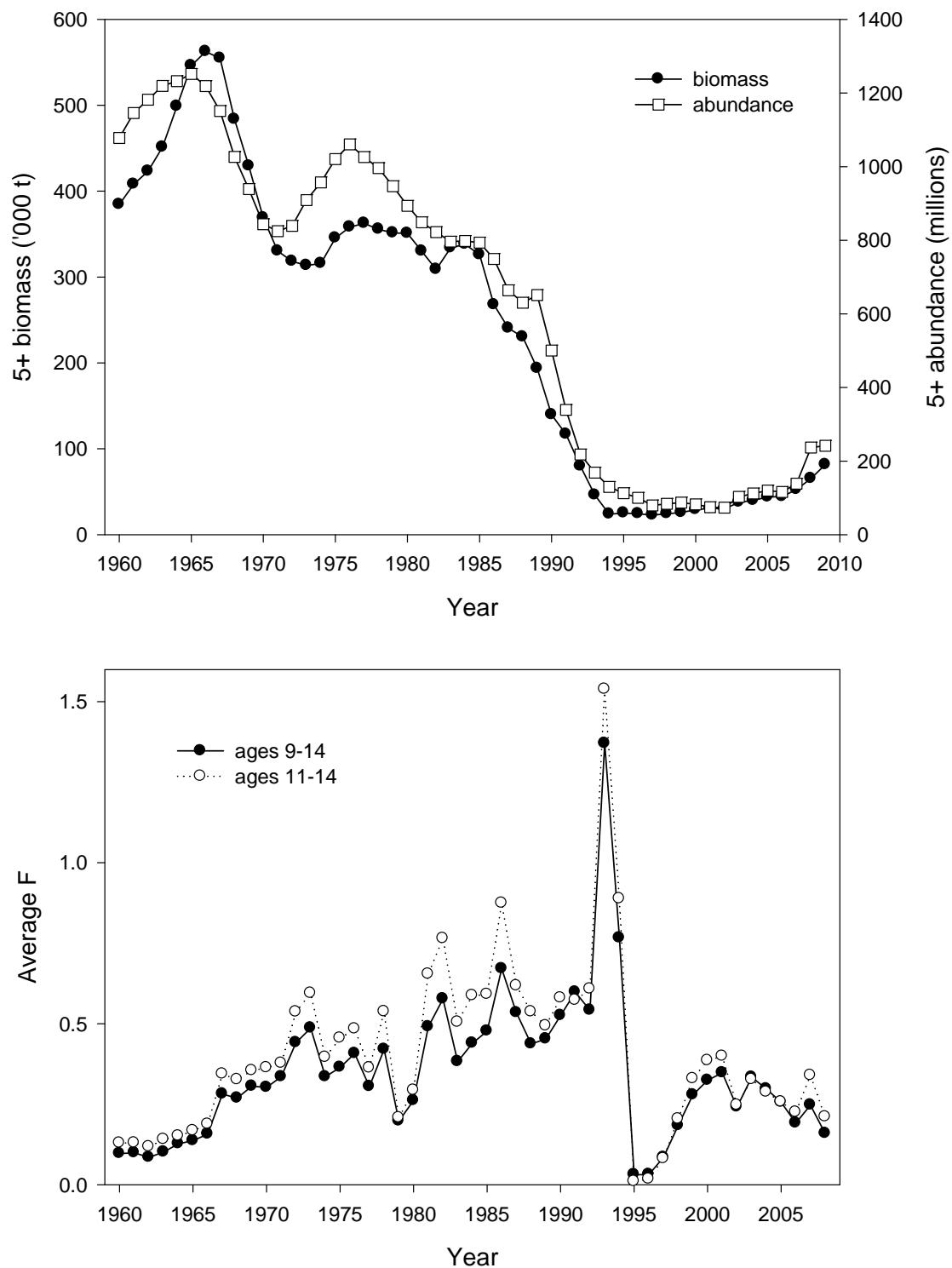


Figure 30. 5+ biomass and abundance (top) and average fishing mortality on ages 9 to 14 and ages 11 to 14 (bottom) from VPA.

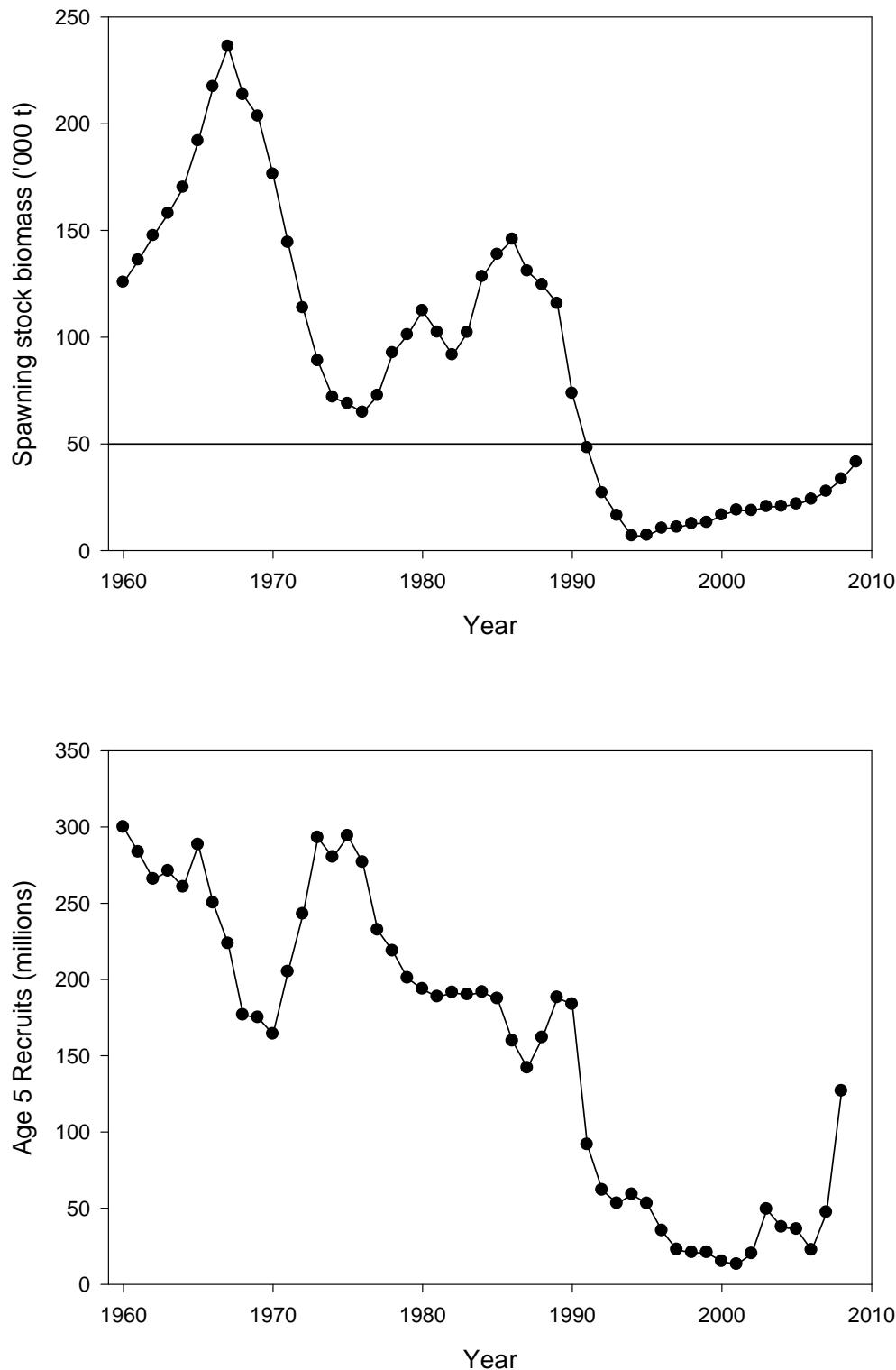


Figure 31. Spawning stock biomass ('000 t) (top panel) and age 5 recruits (bottom panel) from VPA. Horizontal line represents B_{lim} .

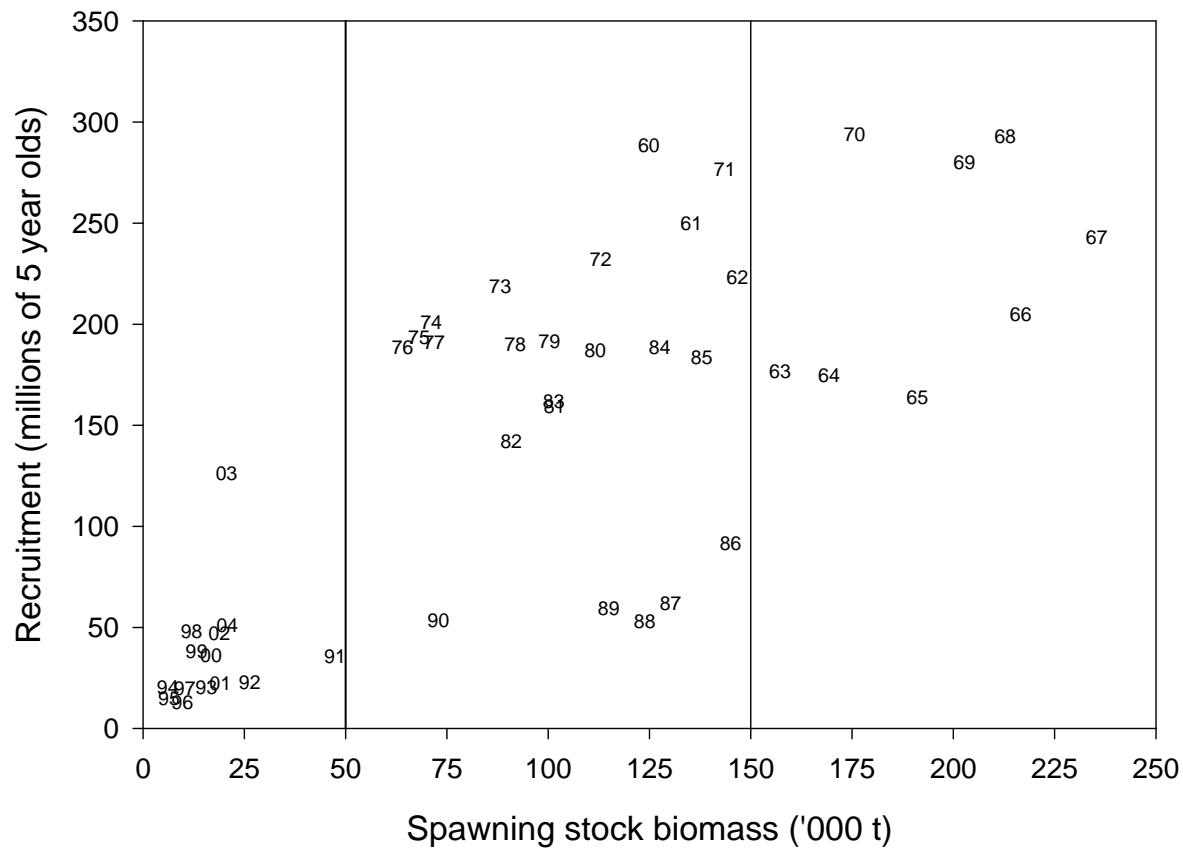


Figure 32. Observed stock recruit scatter. Vertical line at 50,000 t illustrates B_{lim} , vertical line at 150,000 t indicates SSB above which recruitment has been very good.

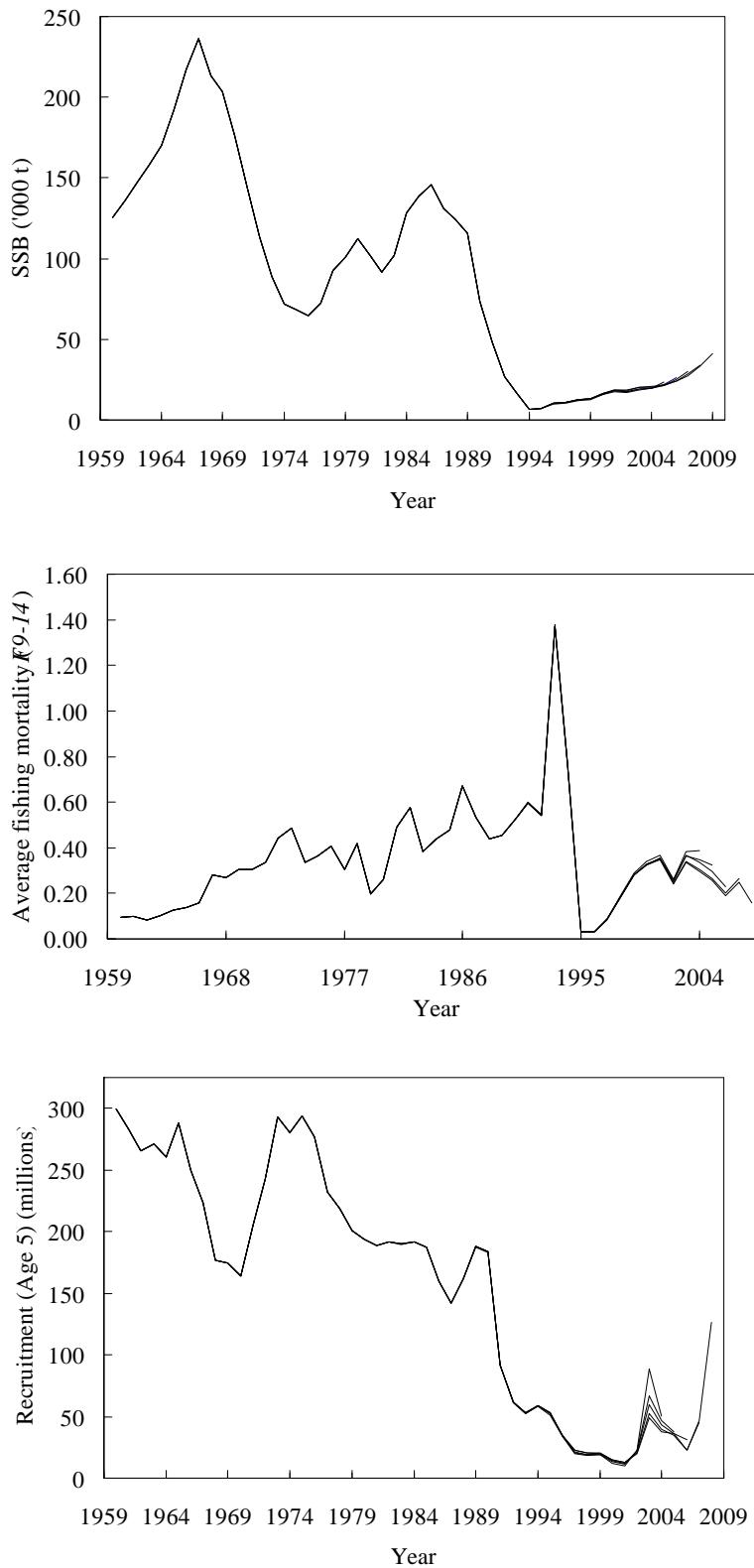


Figure 33. Results of retrospective analysis for Div. 3LNO American plaice. Top panel shows SSB, middle panel shows fishing mortality on ages 9-14 and bottom panel shows recruitment (age 5).

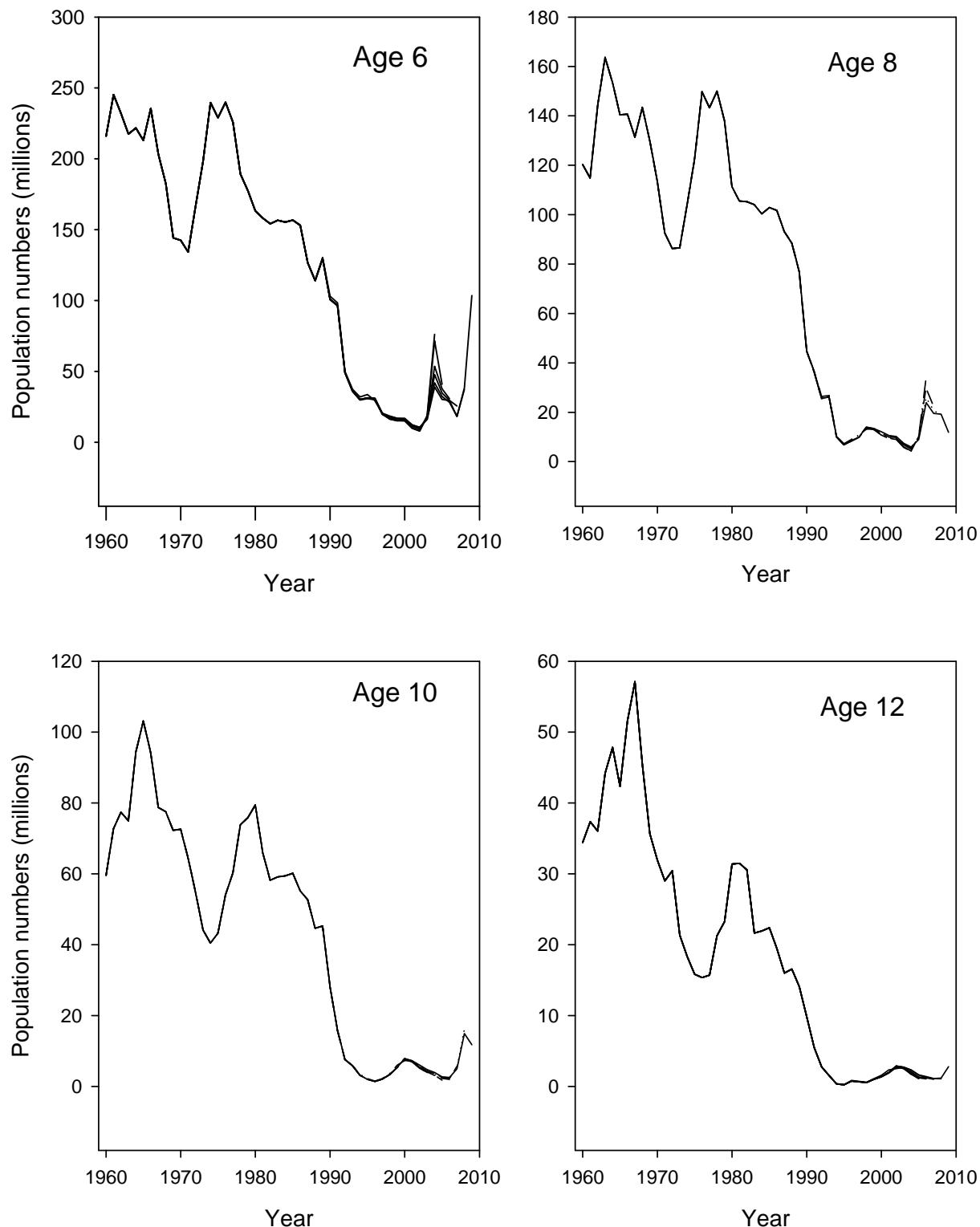


Figure 34. Results of retrospective analysis for Div. 3LNO American plaice. Population numbers (millions) for selected ages.

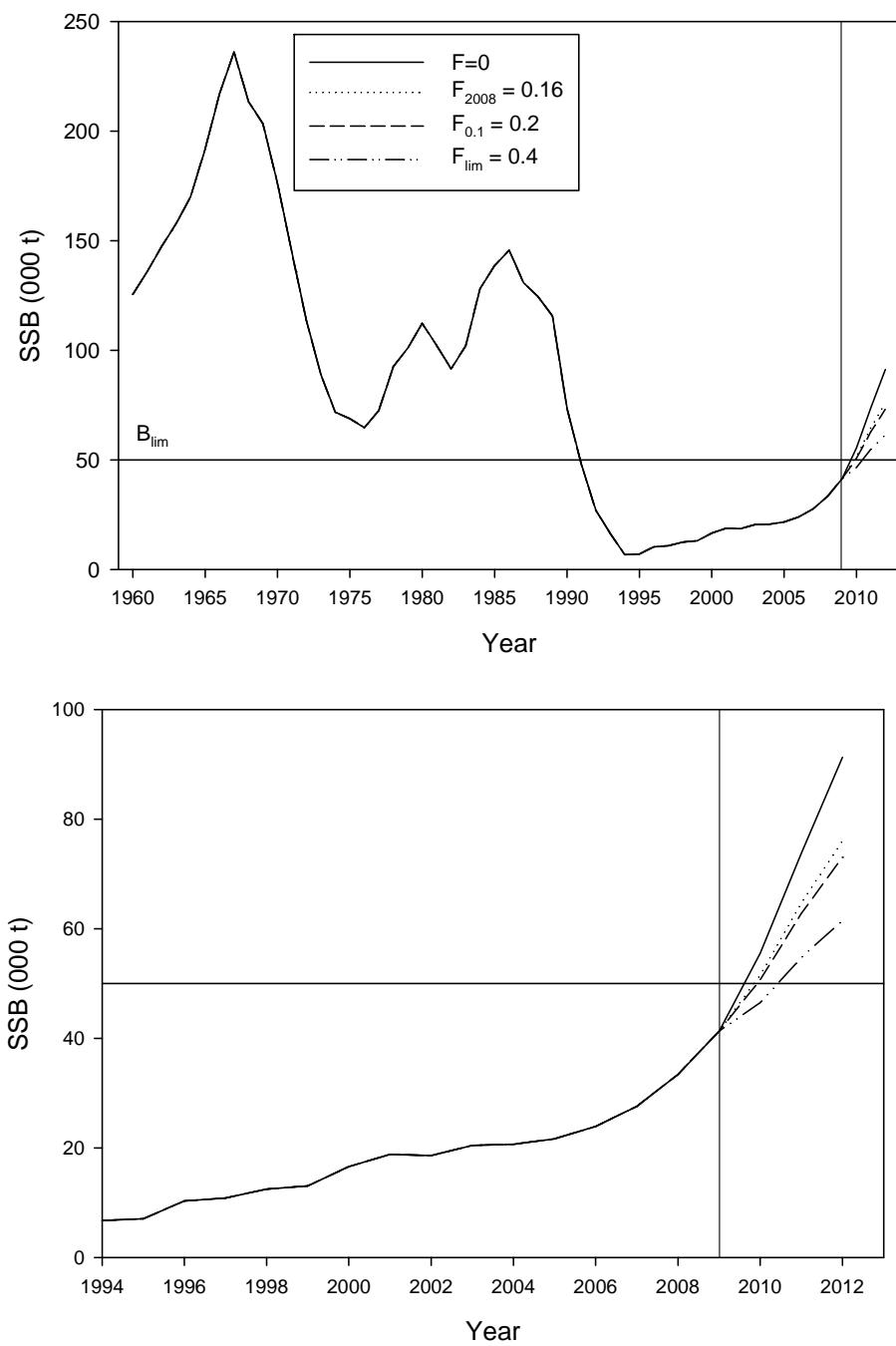


Figure 35. Estimated spawning stock biomass in medium term projections under 4 fishing mortality scenarios. The vertical line indicates the start of the projection period. The horizontal line gives the B_{lim} of 50 000 tons, the vertical line the point at which projections begin. The top panel shows the period of the projection along with the historic time series, the bottom panel shows only since 1994.