



Counting the catch

Lesson plan: interpret two major global studies of shark declines and fishing mortality, and evaluate which policies work



Ages	14 to 18 (grades 9 to 12)
Time	60 minutes
Group	Groups of three or four
Where	Any classroom. No internet needed.
You need	The slides and the evidence cards sheet

What students learn

- What global studies show about shark declines and fishing deaths.
- How scientists measure and estimate hard-to-count quantities, and report uncertainty.
- Why banning finning did not reduce deaths, while catch and retention limits did.
- How to evaluate policy using evidence.

Before the lesson

1. Print the **evidence cards** sheet. Half the groups get card A and half card B, or all groups can do both.

The lesson

- 1 The big picture **15 minutes, slides 1 to 3.**
- 2 Finning bans **10 minutes, slides 4 and 5.**
- 3 Evaluate the evidence **25 minutes, slide 6.** Groups analyse their card and report back.
- 4 Wrap up **10 minutes, slide 7.**

Answers and what to listen for

Key point: finning bans regulate how sharks are killed, not how many. Measures that limit the number caught or kept, such as catch limits and retention bans, are what reduced mortality in the data.

Making it easier or harder

- **Older groups:** read the abstracts of both papers and compare their methods in more detail.
- **Link:** the younger Sharks module covers the fin trade and ecotourism in the Philippines.

Curriculum links

- **Biology:** human impact and conservation.

- **Maths and statistics:** interpreting estimates and uncertainty.
- **Social studies:** policy evaluation.

The teacher reading has the science behind every slide, with links to the sources.

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