



Counting the catch

Background reading for teachers

This reading gives you the background for each slide, with sources you can check.

Pacoureau and others, 2021

Using the Living Planet Index (57 abundance time series for 18 oceanic shark and ray species) and the Red List Index (all 31 oceanic species), the study found global abundance of oceanic sharks and rays declined by 71% since 1970, owing to an 18-fold increase in relative fishing pressure, and that three-quarters of these species are now threatened.¹

Worm and others, 2024

Total fishing mortality increased from at least 76 to 80 million sharks between 2012 and 2019, about 25 million of them threatened species. Mortality increased 4% in coastal waters and decreased 7% in pelagic fisheries. Anti-finning legislation did not reduce mortality, but regional shark fishing or retention bans had some success.² Including sharks not identified by species, the 2019 estimate rises to 101 million, and coastal fisheries account for 95% of deaths.³

Sources

1. Pacoureau, N. and others (2021). Half a century of global decline in oceanic sharks and rays. *Nature* 589: 567-571.
2. Worm, B. and others (2024). Global shark fishing mortality still rising despite widespread regulatory change. *Science* 383: 225-230.
3. Dalhousie University (2024). Shark alert. dal.ca

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