

# Sharks Being Placed at Lower Levels of Importance Causes Conservation Neglect and Low Survival Rates

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## INTRODUCTION

Awareness on the environment's diminishing status has gained popularity over recent years as more and more negative effects from our personal and global habits are surfacing. More acts of conservation are being performed as these issues working at being reversed. Focusing specifically on sharks, they face a vast number of human-caused issues such as:

- shark finning
- overfishing
- plastic pollution



These issues can lead to population declines and endangerment. If sharks die out, the entire ecosystem becomes imbalanced. Focusing on these issues will help get our ocean back to the beautiful, mysterious thing it used to be many years ago.

## MEDIA IMPACT

Modern media of all variations has instilled false fear of sharks over the years. Platforms such as fictitious movies, news reports, and articles have all aided in influencing the way society views these natural predators. As sharks are viewed as vicious, cold killers more and more, their conservation is being placed at dangerously low levels of importance, leading to many issues they face being overlooked and ignored.

## PROBLEMS SHARKS FACE

### SHARK FINNING

Shark finning is the act of capturing a shark and cutting off its fins, then dumping the body back into the water. It originated in Southern China around 1000 CE. An estimated 73 million sharks are killed per year as a result from finning. The Shark Conservation Act of 2010 protects sharks in the United States from being captured and sold, but it is still huge problem in Asia and other international bodies of water.

### PLASTIC POLLUTION

Plastic pollution has detrimental effects on sharks and their survival. The sharks can get tangled in fish nets and die of strangulation, get fish hooks caught in their jaws, or the hooks can end up in their digestive tracts and cause severe intestinal damage. As more plastic is being used and wasted each year, more of it ends up in the ocean, harming our sharks, their prey, and their habitat.

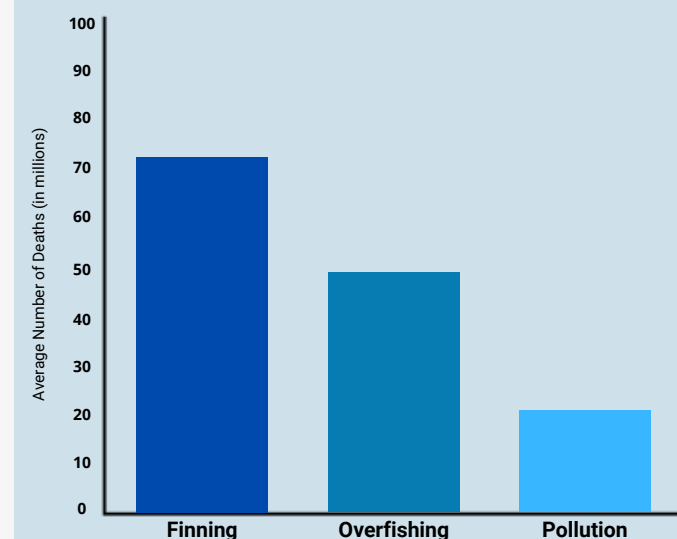
### OVERFISHING

Overfishing, when more fish are caught than what can naturally reproduce, causes fish populations to decline. When fish that sharks prey on start declining in numbers, it leaves sharks with less food to consume. Less food means more sharks dying of starvation and malnutrition.

### POPULATION DECLINE

Shark finning, plastic pollution, and overfishing all lead to declines in shark populations. With less food to eat, more plastic harming their bodies, and more sharks being dumped to die after having their fins cut off, less and less sharks are surviving and reproducing. While this may seem like a victory in human eyes because it means less shark attacks, it is detrimental to the ecosystem. With sharks as top predators, it throws off the whole food chain. Predators of various shark species will die of starvation. The prey of sharks that aren't affected by overfishing will overpopulate and eat more of what they prey on. This pattern will proceed throughout the entire marine food chain, throwing off the balance of the ocean. With the population declines of sharks follows the endangerment and eventually extinction of these beautiful animals.

Average Death Rates of Sharks caused by Finning, Overfishing, and Pollution



## CONCLUSION

These problems, along with many more, are causing less and less sharks to appear in our oceans. If the conservation of sharks continues to be placed at low levels of importance, we can expect to see the ecosystem fall apart, causing the fish and coral reefs to die and us to not have one of our best resources - the oceans. Our society must place these issues at the top of the list of problems to fix before they are irreversible.



Photo Credit: National Geographic, Andy Brandy Casagrande IV

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