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**Sympathy for the Misunderstood Shark:
Over 80% of Hong Kong Respondents Cite Environmental Concerns
for Consuming Less Shark Fin**

Sociological research shows rising support for conservation and better management

In the past five years, nearly 70 per cent of Hong Kong residents have reduced or entirely stopped consuming shark fin soup, according to a new study by the Social Sciences Research Centre of The University of Hong Kong (HKUSSRC). Indicating a clear trend, 81 per cent of those interviewed said they have decreased their consumption of shark fin, citing environmental concerns as the driving force behind their decision.

In 2009, BLOOM collaborated with HKUSSRC on a sociological survey to understand how the Hong Kong residents felt about the perceived cultural preference for consuming shark-related food products. The original survey revealed that of over 1,000 residents interviewed, almost 80 per cent found it acceptable to exclude shark fin soup from wedding banquets. The majority of those who consume shark fin soup did so simply because it was part of a set menu, and did not select the soup as an autonomous choice. In 2014, the survey was replicated, and the results are encouraging.

In just five years, the acceptability of excluding shark fin soup at weddings increased to 92 per cent in 2014. A vast majority of respondents said they were open to using other foods, such as corn soups or vegetarian shark fin soups. Additionally, less than 1 per cent saw shark fin soup as irreplaceable at banquets.

Recent support shown by the Hong Kong Government on marine conservation issues may also have helped bring sharks into the spotlight: Almost 93 per cent of those surveyed responded positively to the government's decision to stop shark fin soup and other dishes containing certain marine species from being served at all official functions. Up to 87 per cent of respondents agreed that the Hong Kong Government plays an important role in shark protection.

"The momentum that we are gaining for the goal of sustainable shark resourcing is encouraging, and we welcome the government taking the lead and doing more for marine conservation," said Stan Shea, Chief Marine Programme Co-ordinator of BLOOM. "But conservation work isn't done. The government has yet to implement any regulation on the sale

of endangered species products beyond international trade protections for the seven species of sharks and rays agreed to in 2013. Therefore, as long as endangered species of shark and other marine species are still being traded, review and enforcement of trade regulations are necessary.”

“Seventy-three species of shark are still classified as Critically Endangered, Endangered, or Vulnerable by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. Time and resources invested in conservation need to be sustained, so that the pro-conservation attitudes in the public can continue to grow.”

Hong Kong is one of the world’s largest traders of shark fin-related products and handles approximately 50 per cent of the globally traded volume every year. By an age-old tradition, shark fin-related products are used to make shark fin soup—a core component of Chinese banquets, especially wedding banquets.

“These survey results are promising and show that even in the hub of the global trade of shark fins, public support for protecting sharks is growing,” said Imogen Zethoven, Director of The Pew Charitable Trusts’ Global Shark Conservation Campaign. “We know that approximately 100 million sharks are killed each year in commercial fisheries, mostly to meet the demand for shark fins. Reducing consumption will save more sharks. These results show that demand in Hong Kong is decreasing, which is very good news for sharks and the overall ocean health they help to maintain.”

Not only have Hong Kong residents shown support for shark conservation by cutting back on their own consumption, but 84 per cent of respondents said human activities threaten shark survival worldwide. Furthermore, 94 per cent of those surveyed understand that shark populations are in decline.

Key findings of the 2014 survey:

- 81 per cent of those surveyed cited environmental concerns as the reason they have decreased consumption of shark fin soup. The original survey revealed that of over 1,000 residents interviewed, almost 80 per cent found it acceptable to exclude shark fin soup from wedding banquet and 59 per cent had decreased consumption due to environmental concerns.
- Consumption at wedding banquets has fallen from 91 per cent in 2009 to 72 per cent in 2014.
- Consumption at Chinese Lunar New Year has fallen from 38 per cent in 2009 to 14 per cent in 2014.
- 94 per cent of respondents said they would not eat a species if they knew it was threatened.
- 84 per cent of those surveyed said the Hong Kong Government could do more to protect sharks through education and outreach to the public, and 69 per cent said the Hong Kong Government could promote sustainable seafood to protect sharks.

- 69 per cent of respondents considered sharks to be facing a high risk of extinction within the next 100 years.
- Apart from commenting on sharks, 70 per cent of respondents considered the bluefin tuna also to be facing a high risk of extinction within the next 100 years, and 56 per cent thought the same for the humphead wrasse.

Note:

- 1. Percentages are rounded to the nearest integer.*
- 2. Other significant findings can be found in the enclosed Press Kit.*

About BLOOM

BLOOM is a non-profit organization dedicated to marine conservation. BLOOM launched in Hong Kong in 2009 on June 8, World Ocean Day, with a view to protecting vulnerable marine species and habitats as well as promoting sustainable fisheries.

About The Pew Charitable Trusts

The Pew Charitable Trusts is driven by the power of knowledge to solve today's most challenging problems. Pew applies a rigorous, analytical approach to improve public policy, inform the public, and invigorate civic life.

About the Social Sciences Research Centre (HKUSSRC)

HKUSSRC is an independent research centre to undertake contract research on behalf of the Faculty of Social Sciences at HKU for the government, NGOs and other institutions. The Centre has over 20 years of research experience, and is now directed by Prof. John Bacon-Shone.

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