

## Survey on shark consumption habits and attitudes in Hong Kong

### 香港消費者對魚翅及鯊魚副產品 之 消費習慣與態度研究

Results Press Conference  
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## Selected Data

BLOOM commissioned the University of Hong Kong Social Sciences Research Centre (HKUSSRC) to carry out the survey on consumption habits of shark fins and shark-related products in Hong Kong. The study is the most comprehensive on the subject ever completed. More than 1,000 interviews were conducted successfully.

### 1. Frequency of eating shark cartilage products in the 12-month period to January 2010:

About once a year	1.0%
About 2 – 3 times a year	2.3%
About 4 – 6 times a year	1.0%
About 7 – 10 times a year	0.4%
More than 10 times a year	1.2%
Did not eat in the last 12 months	15.3%
Never	78.7%

### 2. Frequency of eating shark meat in the 12-month period to January 2010:

About once a year	1.1%
About 2 – 3 times a year	1.4%
About 4 – 6 times a year	0.2%
About 7 – 10 times a year	0.1%
More than 10 times a year	0.1%
Did not eat in the last 12 months	15.6%
Never	81.5%

### 3. Frequency of consuming shark oil capsules in the 12-month period to January 2010:

About once a year	0.5%
About 2 – 3 times a year	0.4%
About 4 – 6 times a year	0.2%
About 7 – 10 times a year	0.1%
More than 10 times a year	2.1%
Did not eat in the last 12 months	9.3%
Never	87.4%

### 4. Frequency of eating shark fin soup at home in the 12-month period to January 2010:

About once a year	9.4%
About 2 – 3 times a year	8.7%
About 4 – 6 times a year	2.8%
About 7 – 10 times a year	0.7%
More than 10 times a year	0.9%
Did not eat in the last 12 months	19.8%
Never	57.8%

**5. Frequency of eating shark fin soup in a restaurant in the 12-month period to January 2010:**

About once a year	16.7%
About 2 – 3 times a year	30.2%
About 4 – 6 times a year	16.7%
About 7 – 10 times a year	3.4%
More than 10 times a year	3.4%
Did not eat in the last 12 months	17.5%
Never	12.2%

**6. On which occasions would normally eat shark fins soup in a restaurant:**

Wedding banquets	89.7%
Birthday banquets	55.5%
Family unions	39.7%
Lunar New Year	35.0%
Corporate events	29.9%
Friends' gatherings	24.5%
Festivals	23.9%
Don't know	0.9%

**7. Acceptance of not including shark fin soup in a wedding banquet:**

Very acceptable	19.6%
Acceptable	58.8%
Not so acceptable	16.5%
Not acceptable at all	5.1%

**8. Whether shark fin soup is usually ordered as part of a set menu or as a separate dish:**

As part of a set menu	86.9%
As a separate dish	9.0%
Half and half	4.2%

**9. Frequency of consuming shark fin soup over the past 5 years:**

Increased a lot	0.6%
Increased a little	5.1%
Stayed the same	58.1%
Decreased a little	12.5%
Decreased a lot	23.7%

**10. Reasons for decreasing respondents' consumption of shark fin soup over the past 5 years:**

	Yes	No
Environmental concerns	56.8%	43.2%
Cost of shark fin soup	36.9%	63.1%

**11. Whether thought of an alternative dish to replace shark fin on the menu:**

Yes	No
42.8%	57.2%

### 12. Acceptability of replacement for shark fin:

	Very acceptable	Acceptable	Not so acceptable	Not acceptable at all
Fish maw	13.3%	65.7%	14.0%	7.0%
Sea cucumber	10.3%	62.9%	17.7%	9.0%
Vegetarian shark fin	11.7%	49.5%	23.9%	14.9%
Chinese caterpillar fungus stewed soup	11.0%	48.7%	25.5%	14.8%
Bird's nest	9.8%	48.9%	24.7%	16.5%

### 13. Descriptions of sharks:

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Shark populations are vulnerable / endangered	39.7%	40.3%	7.3%	10.0%	2.7%
Sharks are scary / threatening	18.2%	30.3%	14.6%	26.5%	10.3%
Sharks are attractive	7.6%	24.3%	22.8%	28.0%	17.3%

### 14. Perception of shark population size:

Growing	1.5%
The same	9.6%
Declining	88.9%

### 15. Awareness that shark fins are sometimes obtained by cutting fins off sharks and the de-finned sharks thrown back to sea:

Yes	No
61.1%	38.9%

### 16. Remembered any past publicity campaigns against the practice of shark finning:

Yes	No
58.5%	41.5%

### 17. Whether shark fins can grow back after being cut off and sharks can survive without their fins:

	Yes	No	Maybe
Fins can grow back after being cut off	9.0%	89.0%	2.0%
Sharks can survive without their fins	16.7%	79.0%	4.4%

### 18. Feeling about eating endangered fish:

Very comfortable	1.5%
A little comfortable	2.1%
Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable	29.9%
Not so comfortable	38.9%
Not comfortable at all	27.6%



**19. Whether the HK government should prohibit the sale of products that involving killing endangered species:**

Yes	No
87.9%	12.1%

**20. Support for the prohibition of the import of shark fins to Hong Kong:**

Strong support	31.1%
Moderate support	54.2%
Weak support	11.4%
Not support at all	3.3%

**21. Perception of the quality of the HK marine environment:**

Excellent	1.0%
Good	13.4%
Not so good	63.6%
No good at all	21.9%

**22. Seen the film “Jaws” before:**

Yes	No
77.5%	22.5%

**23. Whether the film has influenced respondents’ attitude to sharks**

Yes	No
48.1%	51.9%

## Shark Facts

- Sharks have been around for approximately 400 million years, and have seen the rise and fall of dinosaurs.
- Sharks are inherently vulnerable to overfishing, as they are:
  - Long-lived
  - Slow-growing
  - Late to reach sexual maturity
  - Have relatively few young
- Scientists estimate that up to 73 million sharks are killed per year for their fins and other products. That's approximately 147 per minute, or 200,000 per day.
- Research suggests that shark catches are underreported by
- Some shark populations have decreased by 90% over the last 50 years (Worm et al., 2006).
- Of the shark species that could be assessed, 74 were classified as Critically Endangered, Endangered or Vulnerable by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List and a further 67 were at risk of extinction in the near future in 2010.

## Spotlight on Hong Kong Shark Fin Trade

- Hong Kong handles at least 50% on average of the global trade in shark fin and related products each year

Year	Total weight in Kilogram (kg)	Total weight Metric ton (t)
2006	9,362,486	9,362.5
2007	10,183,381	1,0183.3
2008	9,949,556	9,950

Source: HK Census & Statistics Department, 2009

- Hong Kong shark fin traders are supplied by at least 145 countries.
- Imports from Spain consistently represent between one-quarter to one-third of all global imports into Hong Kong. In 2008, Spain was the top exporter of shark fin to Hong Kong.


## Species composition of 40% of the shark fin trade

DNA analysis has shown that approximately 40% of the auctioned fin weight in the Hong Kong shark fin market comes from 14 shark species, all of which have been listed on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species.


Trade category in Hong Kong	Species name	IUCN Red List status
Ya Jian	Blue shark ( <i>Prionace glauca</i> )	Near Threatened
Qing Lian	Shortfin mako shark ( <i>Isurus oxyrinchus</i> )	Vulnerable
Wu Yang	Silky shark ( <i>Carcharhinus falciformis</i> )	Near Threatened
Hai Hu	Dusky shark ( <i>Carcharhinus obscurus</i> )	Vulnerable
Bai Qing	Sandbar shark ( <i>Carcharhinus plumbeus</i> )	Vulnerable
Ruan Sha	Tiger shark ( <i>Galeocerdo cuvier</i> )	Near Threatened
Chun Chi	Smooth & Scalloped hammerhead shark ( <i>Sphyrna zygaena</i> & <i>S. lewini</i> )	Vulnerable & Endangered
Gu Pian	Great hammerhead shark ( <i>Sphyrna mokarran</i> )	Endangered
Wu Gu	Thresher shark (all 3 species) ( <i>Alopias</i> spp.)	Vulnerable
Sha Qing	Bull shark ( <i>Carcharhinus leucas</i> )	Near Threatened
Liu Qiu	Oceanic whitetip shark ( <i>Carcharhinus longimanus</i> )	Vulnerable
<b>NT → VU → EN → CR → EW → EX</b>		

Source: Clarke et al. (2006a)


## Momentum & Trends: Growing movement worldwide to ban shark fin consumption

Ø Hong Kong and Asia  Global


### Before 2010

-  **June 2003:** An EU Directive on the removal of fins of sharks on board vessels prohibits the removal of fins at sea, but loopholes still exist. EU countries can issue special permits to certain vessels, which allow the practice and also permit the separate landing of carcasses and fins.
- Ø **June 2005:** Hong Kong's children and students unite to call on Disneyland Hong Kong to prohibit the sale of shark fin soup on its premises.
- Ø **From 2007:** WWF-HK launches a corporate pledge and signs up large companies such as HSBC, Hang Seng Bank, and Hong Kong and China Gas Company.
- Ø **January 2009:** The Fairmont Hotel in Singapore announces the removal of shark fin soup from its menu. The same month, Ali Baba, an e-commerce platform for small businesses, bans the sale of shark fins on its website.
- Ø **February 2009:** A local grass-roots campaign launches a Facebook group encouraging Hong Kong people to “say no to shark fin soup”. Joined by more than 19,000 people
- Ø **June 2009:** BLOOM launches in Hong Kong with the sole objective of researching and acting on the shark problem.

### 2010

- Ø **March 2010:** Another Facebook group calls on people to “cut gift money for shark fin banquets” – asking guests to give 30% less gift money to couples who serve shark fin at their wedding banquet. Over 9,000 fans
-  **May 2010:** The Hawaii legislature pass a State Bill prohibiting the possession, sale and distribution of sharks fin in the state, effective from July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010.
- Ø **June 2010:** Green Sense, a Hong Kong NGO, convinces 180 Hong Kong schools out of 1,000 to pledge not to serve shark fin soup at official functions.
- Ø **July 2010:** The Hong Kong Shark Foundation launches a campaign against Citibank to cancel a shark fin promotion across Asia Pacific. Later, Citibank pledges not to serve shark fin soup at all corporate banquets.
- Ø **September 2010:** A coalition of nine NGOs ask Hong Kong Chief Executive Donald Tsang to “please say no to shark fin” and remove shark fin from government banquet menus. Currently 3,000 fans support the initiative.

### 2011

-  **January:** The US Shark Conservation Act prohibits finning at sea and any boat from carrying shark fins without the corresponding number and weight of carcasses, all sharks must be brought to port with their fins attached.
- Ø **January:** Dah Sing Bank, Hong Kong launched a promotion campaign that offers “free shark-fin-soup banquet for gifts for it loan service. Due to pressure from local NGOS the promotion was scrapped almost as soon as it was announced.





Ø **January:** The Rt Hon Audrey E, who supports a reduction in shark fin consumption, raises the issue in Hong Kong's Legislative Council.

■ **January:** The Commonwealth of the North Mariana Islands passes a bill prohibiting the possession and sale of shark fin in the Commonwealth islands of Saipan, Tinian and Rota, becoming the first US territory to introduce legislation that addresses the shark fin trade.

■ **January:** Oregon – A House bill proposes prohibiting a person from possessing, selling, offering for sale, trading or distributing shark fins.

■ **February:** California – An Assembly bill proposes making it unlawful to trade shark fin or shark fin derivative product, process or prepare it for consumption.

■ **February:** A Washington State and Senate bill proposes prohibiting removal of shark fins in Washington waters and making it unlawful to be involved with the sale or purchase of shark fins or shark fin derivative products for any commercial purposes, and to prepare or process a shark fin or derivative product for commercial human consumption or animal consumption.

■ **March:** The US Marshall Islands places a moratorium on the trade and export of shark fins.

■ **March:** The US Territory of Guam signs into law a bill banning the possession and trade of shark fins.

Ø **March:** Ding Liguo, delegate to the National People's Congress of China, proposes that the country's top legislature ban the trade of shark fin.

Ø **April:** BLOOM releases the results of the most comprehensive piece of research ever carried out into shark consumption habits and cultural attitudes in Hong Kong.

## Speakers' Bios

### **Professor John Bacon-Shone, Director of the Social Sciences Research Centre**

John Bacon-Shone is Associate Dean of Social Sciences, Director of the Social Sciences Research Centre and Professor at The University of Hong Kong. Previously, he served two terms as elected Dean of Social Sciences and was a member of the Statistics Department in The University of Hong Kong. John was educated at the University of Birmingham (PhD), University College London (MSc) and the University of Durham (BSc). He was headhunted to be a full-time Member of the Central Policy Unit of the Hong Kong SAR Government from 1998 to 2001. His current research interests encompass a wide range of topics including compositional data, gambling, immigration and population policy, privacy policy and telephone survey methodology.

John is an applied statistician with wide ranging methodological skills that he has applied to many research and policy questions during his 29 years in HKU. He designed the first computer-aided telephone interviewing system in Asia and currently has graduate students working on important issues in mobile phone survey methodology. He is Director of the Social Sciences Research Centre, which has built a reputation for high quality and innovative applied research for a wide range of government and NGO clients. He is currently chair of the Non-Clinical Human Research Ethics Committee of HKU.

### **Professor Yvonne Sadovy, Marine Biologist, University of Hong Kong School of Biological Sciences and IUCN Species Survival Commission**

Yvonne Sadovy is a marine biologist who has studied and dived throughout the tropics for over 25 years. After receiving a doctorate from the University of Manchester, UK, she worked for many years in Puerto Rico, first at the University and later as director of the national Fishery Research Laboratory. Her work was among the earliest to identify threatened marine species, especially those of commercial importance, and the loss of their important and spectacular spawning (reproductive) aggregations. She came to the University of Hong Kong, where she is now a professor, in 1993 and works extensively in the field and with fishing communities in Southeast Asia and the Pacific on marine biodiversity and sustainable fisheries. She has published over 100 papers, co-authored 3 books and co-produced and appeared in several films.



## ABOUT BLOOM

BLOOM is a non-profit organization dedicated to marine conservation that launched in Hong Kong on World Ocean Day, June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2009. Our principal areas of work are those issues that need urgent attention: **the protection of vulnerable species and habitats** – sharks and the deep sea – as well as **the promotion of small-scale sustainable fisheries**, and **the maintenance of fishermen's livelihoods**. We approach these issues across the following four axes of action: **raising awareness and increasing education; political & corporate advocacy; campaigning; and independent research.**

The BLOOM Hong Kong office was established after the creation of our Paris sister office in 2005. As a long-standing defender of biodiversity and an advocate for raising knowledge about vulnerable species and ecosystems, BLOOM sponsored the book THE DEEP (more than **150,000 copies** in **10 languages worldwide**) and co-produced the travelling exhibition THE DEEP (9 venues since 2007, more than one million visitors so far). Most recently on the display in Hangzhou, the exhibition started its China tour in Shanghai where it had close to **600,000** visitors. THE DEEP is the perfect platform for the dissemination of vital conservation messages. For the period 2007-2009, the **media impact** of the book and the exhibition combined is estimated at **136 million people**.

[www.bloomassociation.org](http://www.bloomassociation.org)

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