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SHARK FIN DEMAND IN THAILAND

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WILDAID

ABOUT WILDAID

WildAid’s mission is to end the illegal wildlife trade in our lifetimes by reducing demand through public awareness campaigns and providing comprehensive marine protection.

The illegal wildlife trade is estimated to be worth over \$10 billion per year and has drastically reduced many wildlife populations around the world. Just like the drug trade, law and enforcement efforts have not been able to resolve the problem. Every year, hundreds of millions of dollars are spent protecting animals in the wild, yet virtually nothing is spent on stemming the demand for wildlife parts and products. WildAid is the only organization with a mission focused on reducing the demand for these products, with the strong and simple message: **When the buying stops, the killing can too.** WildAid works with hundreds of Asian and Western celebrities, business leaders, sports and political figures, including the Duke of Cambridge, Yao Ming, Jackie Chan, Li Bingbing, Tony Jaa and Sir Richard Branson, to dissuade people from purchasing endangered wildlife products. These public service messages and educational initiatives reach hundreds of millions of people per week in Asia through donated media space.

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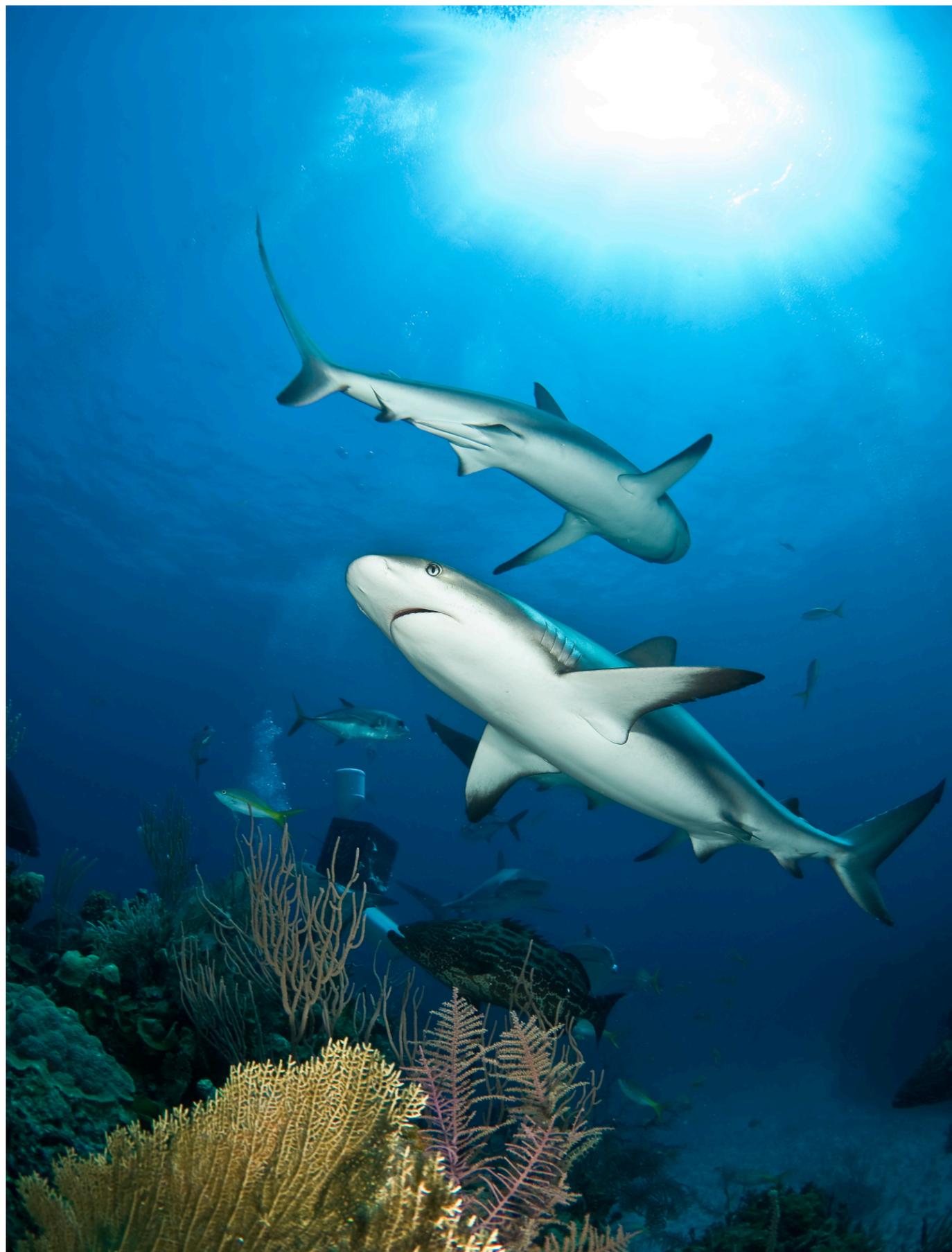
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COVER PHOTO CAPTION
*Under the morning light, an auction note is visible on the rows of adult bull sharks, *Carcharhinus leucas*, at Ranong fish landing site, Ranong, Thailand. After the auctions, these sharks are sent to the processing factory prior to being butchered for different kinds of consumption.*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Many of the planet’s vulnerable shark species face extreme population pressures owing to overfishing, often driven by demand for shark fins. To address this issue, WildAid focused its initial demand reduction efforts for shark fin in the main consumer markets – mainland China and Hong Kong. Using high-impact multimedia campaigns featuring celebrity ambassadors, WildAid created TV advertisements and billboards, along with print, online and social media messaging designed to educate consumers about the impacts of the shark fin trade and persuade them not to buy or consume shark fin soup. With extensive state and private media partnerships, WildAid secured pro-bono placement for these messages, amounting to US\$286 million in 2016 in China alone. Media reports estimate that there has been a 50 to 70% decrease in shark fin consumption in China since 2011. In October 2016, China’s CITES management authority announced that shark fin consumption in China had fallen by more than 80% since 2011. WildAid surveys have indicated that the campaigns have been broadly viewed and reportedly have prompted many people to give up shark fin.

In 2017, WildAid and Rapid Asia conducted an online survey in Thailand to better understand shark fin consumption and overall awareness and attitudes on issues relating to sharks and the shark fin trade. The survey was part of a regional effort to better understand shark fin consumption in Southeast Asia.

Survey results show that the consumption of shark fin in Thailand is already widespread with potential to become a significant market for the shark fin trade, with 57% having, on occasion, consumed shark fin. Twenty-nine percent had consumed shark fin within the previous 12 months, with 86% of those having eaten the dish at least 2-5 times during that period. It is also common for shark fin to be eaten at multiple social events, especially weddings (72%), family meals at restaurants (61%) and business meetings (47%). Alarming, the majority of respondents (61%) believe they will consume shark fin in the future, citing curiosity and having heard from others that it tastes good, although shark fin itself has no flavor (flavor comes mostly from the broth that it is cooked in and added ingredients).

WildAid also surveyed the Thai public to better understand how aware they are of issues facing sharks and found worrying results. Only 50% of those surveyed knew that sharks are often killed just for their fins.

The combination of a high number of consumers willing to try shark fin in the future, along with the large proportion of people unaware about the magnitude and cruelty of the shark fin trade, could indicate potential for increased demand for fins in Thailand.



EVERY YEAR, APPROXIMATELY 100 MILLION SHARKS ARE KILLED GLOBALLY, WITH FINS FROM UP TO 73 MILLION USED FOR SHARK FIN SOUP.

THREATS TO SHARKS

Estimates of global fishery mortality of sharks range from 63 to 273 million sharks per year, with a conservative annual estimate of 100 million sharks. Most shark species targeted by fishers are large-bodied and slow to reproduce, making these high rates of offtake unsustainable.

While shark products used by humans include meat, skin, teeth and oil, it has been the far higher market value of shark fins, primarily in China, that has driven the demand for these animals and their population declines in the wild. Of the fourteen shark species most prevalent in the shark fin trade (Table 1), four are classified by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as Near Threatened and ten are classified as Vulnerable or Endangered, meaning that they are considered to be at high/very high risk of extinction in the wild. All fourteen species have experienced regional population declines, ranging from 40-99% (Table 1).



Buckets of different species of whaler sharks from the Andaman Sea are arranged at the landing port of the Fish Marketing Organization in Phuket, Thailand.
© Sirachai Arunrugstichai

TABLE 1

COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	FIN PRODUCT NAME	IUCN RED LIST STATUS	IUCN TREND	DECLINE*	CITES LISTING
BLUE SHARK	<i>Prionace glauca</i>	Ya Jian	NT	Unknown	60–87%	Not listed
SHORTFIN MAKO SHARK	<i>Isurus oxyrinchus</i>	Qing Lian	VU	Decreasing	40–99%	Not listed
SILKY SHARK	<i>Carcharinus falciformis</i>	Wu Yang	NT	Decreasing	60–91%	Appendix II
DUSKY SHARK	<i>Carcharinus obscurus</i>	Hai Hu	VU	Decreasing	62–92%	Not listed
SANDBAR SHARK	<i>Carcharinus plumbeus</i>	Bai Qing	VU	Decreasing	65–97%	Not listed
TIGER SHARK	<i>Galeocerdo cuvier</i>	Ruan Sh	NT	Unknown	65 ->97%	Not listed
SMOOTH/ SCALLOPED HAMMERHEAD	<i>Sphyrna lewini/ zygaena</i>	Chun Chi	EN/VU	Unknown/ Decreasing	64 - >99%	Appendix II
GREAT HAMMERHEAD	<i>Sphyrna mokarran</i>	Gu Pian	EN	Decreasing	79%–total collapse	Appendix II
COMMON/ BIGEYE/ PELAGIC THRESHER SHARK	<i>Alopias spp.</i>	Wu Gu	VU	Decreasing	50–83%	Appendix II
BULL SHARK	<i>Carcharinus leucas</i>	Sha Qing	NT	Unknown	98.6–99.99%	Not listed
OCEANIC WHITETIP	<i>Carcharinus longimanus</i>	Liu Qiu	VU	Decreasing	70–99%	Appendix II

* Regional declines cited from scientific literature (see references). The range in numbers is due to studies of declines in different regions over different time periods. Most estimates refer to declines over a 20-30 year period.

NT=Near threatened, VU=Vulnerable, EN= Endangered



Clockwise from left: A shark fin trader trims cartilage from a pectoral fin of a bull shark, *Carcharhinus leucas*, caught from the Andaman Sea in a shark processing factory in Ranong, Thailand;

Laborers drag an adult bull shark, *Carcharhinus leucas*, onto a motorcycle trailer after the auction at a fish landing site in Ranong, Thailand;

A pile of newborn bull sharks, *Carcharhinus leucas*, arranged for auction at a fish landing site in Ranong, Thailand.

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TRADE

Over the past several years, as international awareness of the ecological importance of shark species as apex predators has grown, more than 30 countries have banned the practice of “finning”, defined as removing fins and discarding the sharks’ bodies at sea to maximize cargo space for the more valuable fins. In some of these countries, the ban takes the form of a prohibition on landing fins unless they are naturally attached to the body of the shark. A further 22 countries have adopted bans on shark fishing. Of these, twelve ban shark fishing altogether, while the remainder ban commercial fishing for sharks, or operate time/area closures of shark fisheries.

However, given the prevalence of illegal, unregulated, unreported (IUU) fishing, and the fact that most countries still do not ban finning, the practice continues globally. In Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand – among the top ten shark fin exporting countries – shark finning remains legal.

PROTECTION

CITES currently lists twelve species of shark on Appendix II: White shark (*Carcharodon carcharias*), Whale shark (*Rhincodon typus*), Basking shark (*Cetorhinus maximus*), Porbeagle shark (*Lamna nasus*), Oceanic whitetip shark (*Carcharhinus longimanus*), Silky shark (*C. falciformis*), Bigeye thresher shark (*Alopias superciliosus*), Common thresher shark (*Alopias vulpinus*), Pelagic thresher shark (*Alopias pelagicus*), Scalloped hammerhead shark (*Sphyrna lewini*), Smooth hammerhead shark (*S. zygaena*) and Great hammerhead shark (*Sphyrna mokarran*). CITES defines Appendix II species as “[those] not necessarily threatened with extinction, but in which trade must be controlled in order to avoid utilization incompatible with their survival.” This definition does not uniformly reflect the status of the same species as assessed by the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (Table 1).



Early morning at Songkhla fishing port, fishing crew unloads Fossil sharks, *Hemipristis elongata*, from the cold storage room, Songkhla, Thailand.
© Sirachai Arunrugstichai

THAILAND'S ROLE IN THE SHARK FIN TRADE

A pair of shark fins can sell for as much as US\$1,000 per kg in Asia. Some shark populations have declined by up to 98% in the last 15 years and nearly one third of pelagic shark species are considered threatened by the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

According to a 2015 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) report, "State of the global market for shark products", Thailand occupies a significant position in the global market for shark fins. Thailand imported at least 136 tonnes of shark fin between 2007 and 2012. The country also plays a primary role in the world market as the major exporter of low-value, processed shark fins.



A large pile of endangered Scalloped hammerhead sharks, *Sphyrna lewini*, at Ranong fish landing site, Ranong, Thailand.
© Sirachai Arunrugstichai

According to Food Intelligence Centre Thailand (<http://fic.nfi.or.th/index.php>), between 2012 and 2016 alone Thailand has exported over 22,467 tonnes of shark fin and processed shark fin products and imported over 451.57 tonnes. These exports were valued at 3275.53 Million THB and the import value was 124.6 million THB over the five-year period 2012-2016. It is not clear where the raw material for Thailand's shark fin exports is sourced from, as its domestic shark population would appear insufficient to account for reported quantities. This data ranks Thailand as the world's number one exporter of shark fin.

See below data from Food Intelligence Centre Thailand:

EXPORT DATA (JANUARY-DECEMBER)						
DETAILS	2012		2013		2014	
	QUANTITY (TONNES)	VALUE (MILLION THB)	QUANTITY (TONNES)	VALUE (MILLION THB)	QUANTITY (TONNES)	VALUE (MILLION THB)
PROCESSED SHARK FIN	4,123.51	721.31	3,568.01	605.94	3,269.59	509.84
PROCESSED SHARK FIN IN AIR-TIGHT CONTAINER	1,318.87	108.90	318.70	27.13	772.72	54.76
SHARK FIN	11.95	8.46	4.91	5.71	7.41	8.73
TOTAL	5,454.33	838.68	3,891.61	638.78	4,049.72	573.34

EXPORT DATA (JANUARY-DECEMBER)				
DETAILS	2015		2016	
	QUANTITY (TONNES)	VALUE (MILLION THB)	QUANTITY (TONNES)	VALUE (MILLION THB)
PROCESSED SHARK FIN	4,740.13	650.72	3,874.53	529.08
PROCESSED SHARK FIN IN AIR-TIGHT CONTAINER	296.04	20.30	144.83	12.16
SHARK FIN	7.09	4.39	9.35	8.09
TOTAL	5043.27	675.41	4,028.71	549.32

*Processed shark fin: Shark fin prepared with additives/preserved for instant consumption.

*Processed shark fin in air tight container: Shark fin prepared with additives/preserved for instant consumption in air tight container, presumably canned.

*Shark fins: Before 2007, Thai customs recorded shark fins under one code only, with the description "shark fins, dried, whether or not salted". In 2007, this code was changed and the (presumed) equivalent category was simply renamed "sharks fins".

See below data from Food Intelligence Centre Thailand:

IMPORT DATA (JANUARY-DECEMBER)						
DETAILS	2012		2013		2014	
	QUANTITY (TONNES)	VALUE (MILLION THB)	QUANTITY (TONNES)	VALUE (MILLION THB)	QUANTITY (TONNES)	VALUE (MILLION THB)
PROCESSED SHARK FIN	76.39	26.53	39.24	11.33	52.81	17.74
PROCESSED SHARK FIN IN AIR-TIGHT CONTAINER	27.21	5.62	10.95	2.82	34.37	10.26
SHARK FIN	2.25	0.27	1.12	0.13	5.06	0.61
TOTAL	105.85	32.41	51.31	14.28	92.24	28.62

IMPORT DATA (JANUARY-DECEMBER)				
DETAILS	2015		2016	
	QUANTITY (TONNES)	VALUE (MILLION THB)	QUANTITY (TONNES)	VALUE (MILLION THB)
PROCESSED SHARK FIN	46.38	20.18	39.86	14.02
PROCESSED SHARK FIN IN AIR-TIGHT CONTAINER	74.41	8.58	36.08	5.53
SHARK FIN	2.38	0.51	3.06	0.47
TOTAL	123.17	29.27	79	20.02

DETAILS	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	TOTAL
EXPORTS OF SHARK FIN PRODUCTS (QUANTITY- TONNES)	5454.33	3891.61	4049.72	5043.27	4028.71	22,467.64 TONNES
EXPORTS OF SHARK FIN PRODUCTS (VALUE-MILLION THB)	838.68	638.78	573.34	675.41	549.32	3275.53 MILLION THB
IMPORT OF SHARK FIN PRODUCTS (QUANTITY- TONNES)	105.85	51.31	92.24	123.17	79	451.57 TONNES
IMPORT OF SHARK FIN PRODUCTS (VALUE-MILLION THB)	32.41	14.28	28.62	29.27	20.02	124.6 MILLION THB



Chefs are seen preparing bowls of shark fin soup in the kitchen of a Chinese restaurant in Chinatown, Bangkok, Thailand. © Sirachai Arunrugstichai

Additionally, market research carried out in Thailand by WildAid recently showed a wide range of prices for a bowl of shark fin soup, from as low as 300 Baht on the streets to as high as 4,000 Baht in a high-end restaurant in downtown Bangkok. Also, from preliminary research there are at least 100 restaurants recorded serving shark fin in Bangkok, fueling the demand for shark fin, a major threat to population of sharks worldwide.

Thailand is home to an active domestic market for fins, with many consumers unaware of the wasteful practice of “finning” behind each bowl of shark fin soup: a shark’s fins are often cut off at sea and the rest of the animal is thrown back into the water to die. Although in Thailand, targeted shark fishing has declined due to decreasing shark populations. Two significant landing sites are Ranong province in Thailand and Myanmar’s Dawei port, though it is unclear where the sharks were originally caught. For the sharks that end up at Thai landing sites, often the entire shark is used and not just the fin.

Shark Guardian in Thailand has been collecting concentrated data on sharks since 2012 through their eShark/eOceans portal which allows Thailand’s divers to contribute observations from every dive. The e-Oceans concentrated census covers 101 sites and 5,000 divers per year. They have collected data from over 25,000 dives and found that there are 13 species of shark that can occasionally be found in Thai waters: Silvertip shark (*Carcharhinus albimarginatus*), Blacktip reef shark (*C. melanopterus*), Grey reef shark (*C. amblyrhynchos*), Whitetip reef shark (*Triaenodon obesus*), Tiger shark (*Galeocerdo cuvier*), Whitespotted bamboo shark (*Chiloscyllium plagiosum*), Brownbanded bamboo shark (*Ch. punctatum*), Grey bamboo shark (*Ch. griseum*), Leopard or zebra Shark (*Stegostoma fasciatum*), Tawny nurse shark (*Nebrius ferrugineus*) and Whale shark (*Rhincodon typus*) – and almost every species is at risk of ending up in the shark fin trade.

The majority of shark species are not covered by Thailand’s current laws and regulations, allowing the trade to take place freely. In June 2016, a proposal was approved by the cabinet to include whale shark as a protected species under Wildlife Preservation and Protection Act of BE2535. Major steps need to be taken by the government to strengthen the laws and increase protections for sharks.



Shark fin on display and for sale at a Chinese food counter inside a food court of a famous shopping centre in Bangkok, Thailand.
© Joakim Odelberg

THAILAND SHARK FIN AWARENESS & ATTITUDINAL SURVEY

In January 2017, WildAid with RapidAsia surveyed 866 residents in Thailand to gauge levels of awareness about sharks and the fin trade, better understand Thailand's shark fin consumers, and inform strategy to deter consumption. The online survey respondents were residents of Thailand's urban areas in the central, northeast, north and south regions. The number of respondents was weighted to bring it in line with the overall population distribution in terms of region, gender and age.

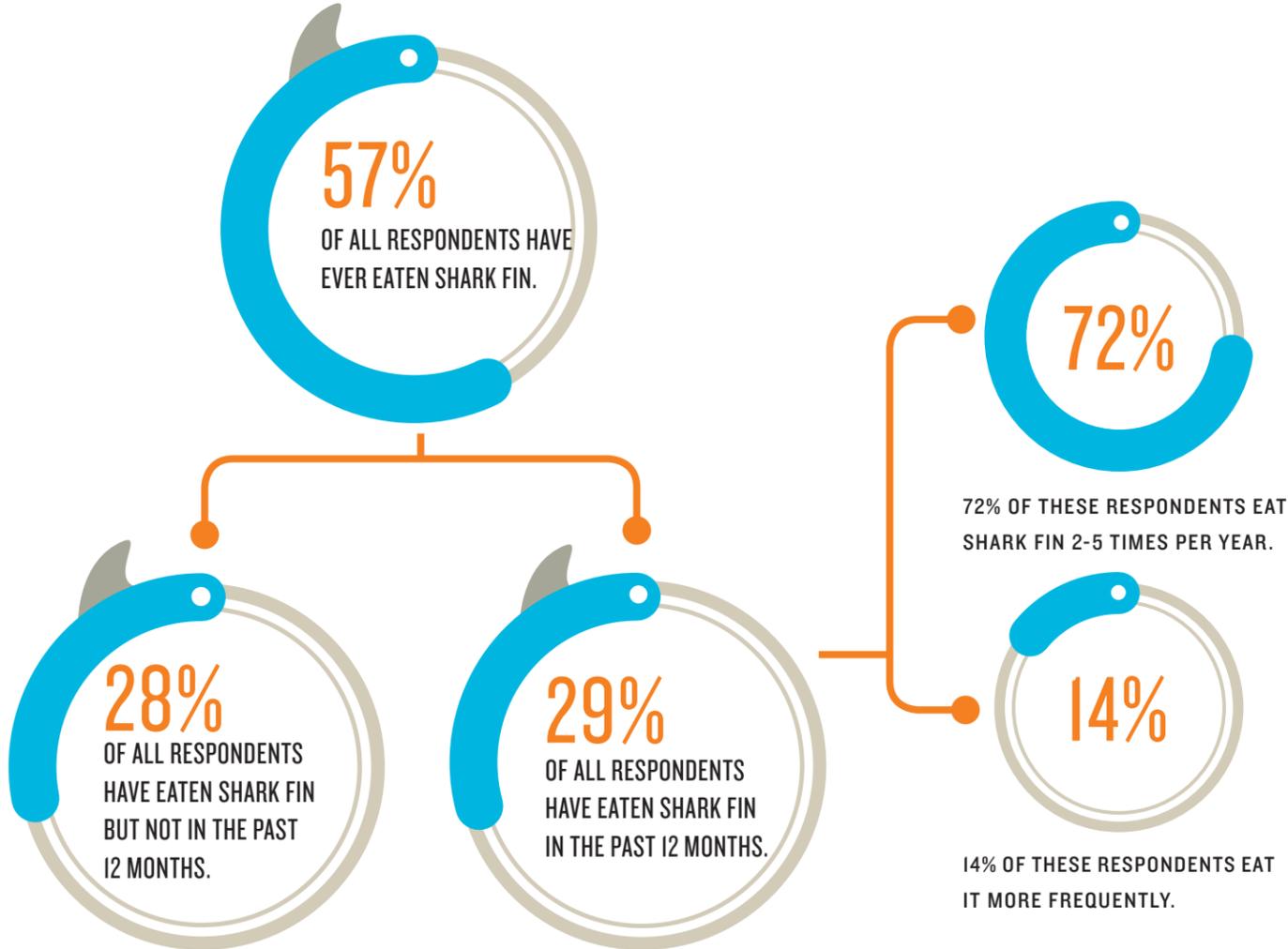
Survey results show that the consumption of shark fin in Thailand is already widespread and has the potential to become a significant market for the trade. Fifty-seven percent of urban Thais have consumed shark fin at some point and 29% have eaten it within the previous 12 months. Seventy-two percent of these more recent consumers (those who consumed it within the last 12 months; 21% of total) reported eating shark fin 2-5 times per year and 14% consume the dish even more frequently.

Survey respondents reported that they consumed shark fin most often at weddings (72%), family meals at restaurants (61%) and business meetings (47%). Preliminary market research by WildAid recorded at least 100 restaurants serving shark fin in Bangkok.

Alarming, 61% said they will consume shark fin in the future, citing curiosity and having heard from others that it tastes good, although shark fin itself has no flavor (flavor comes mostly from the broth that it is cooked in and added ingredients). Though, 55% of those said they would not consume the product if it was illegal.

At least half of all respondents lack adequate awareness of the consequences of the fin trade on shark populations worldwide, both unaware that sharks are often killed just for their fins and that some shark populations have already declined by 98%, while 85% don't know that up to 100 million sharks are killed each year.

SHARK FIN CONSUMPTION IS WIDESPREAD



SHARK FIN IS CONSUMED AT VARIOUS SOCIAL EVENTS:



Shark fin soup served to guests at a wedding banquet in Bangkok, Thailand. © Sirachai Arunrugstichai



Shark fin on display and for sale at a Chinese restaurant in Bangkok, Thailand. © Tim Howard

FUTURE SHARK FIN CONSUMPTION IS WORRYING FOR SHARKS WORLDWIDE



61% OF ALL RESPONDENTS PLAN TO TRY SHARK FIN IN THE FUTURE, OUTNUMBERING THOSE WHO HAVE CONSUMED SHARK FIN IN THE PAST. THIS INDICATES THAT THE DEMAND HAS THE POTENTIAL TO INCREASE.



63% OF THESE RESPONDENTS PLAN TO TRY SHARK FIN SIMPLY OUT OF CURIOSITY.



55% ANSWERED THEY WERE NOT LIKELY TO CONSUME SHARK FIN IF IT BECAME ILLEGAL.

39% OF ALL RESPONDENTS NOT LIKELY TO CONSUME SHARK FIN IN FUTURE, REASONS INCLUDE:



56% BELIEVE IT'S WRONG AS SHARKS ARE KILLED IN A CRUEL WAY.



39% WANT TO PROTECT SHARKS.

LITTLE AWARENESS ABOUT THE MAGNITUDE AND CRUELTY OF THE SHARK FIN TRADE



85% OF ALL RESPONDENTS ARE UNAWARE THAT AN ESTIMATED 100 MILLION SHARKS ARE KILLED EACH YEAR.



50% OF ALL RESPONDENTS ARE UNAWARE THAT SOME SHARK POPULATIONS HAVE DECLINED BY 98%.



50% OF ALL RESPONDENTS ARE UNAWARE THAT SHARKS ARE OFTEN KILLED JUST FOR THEIR FINS.

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