

# SHARK FACTS & ATTACK STATISTICS



## Shark Attacks. Are the Waters Safe?

Many people have a firm view on sharks, however the following shark attack statistics will highlight the truth behind these majestic creatures. Sharks are intensely beautiful creatures. I have long been fascinated by them. From the monstrous creatures of Jaws and the Meg to the real creatures that gracefully dominate our oceans, sharks are all around tremendous animals.

Global total of unprovoked shark bites significantly lower than average. The 2022 worldwide total of 57 confirmed unprovoked cases is lower than the most recent five-year (2017-2021) average of 70 incidents annually. There were nine shark-related fatalities this year, five of which are assigned as unprovoked.

## Here are some interesting shark facts:

There are three different types of shark attacks.

- a. Hit and run attack: Often unseen, a shark will attack quickly, take a bite and disappear. A hit-and-run attack is the most common shark interaction.
- b. Bump and bite attack: The bump and bite is most commonly related to feeding. These are most often severe or fatal attacks. Sharks bump their prey before circling back for multiple attacks.
- c. Sneak attack: Sneak attacks are a combination of the above. They occur without warning and often result in multiple bites.

Most sharks attacking humans do so out of curiosity. Remember, they don't have hands and therefore, their mouths are used to "touch" things.

Great white sharks are most commonly involved in human-shark interactions.

Out of around 1,000 species of sharks and rays, only three have reached the double attack digits.

The state of Florida, has reported almost twice as many shark attacks than the whole of Australia.

What is the smell range of sharks? A shark's sense of smell is more a matter of concentration levels than distance. While a great white shark can catch a scent from close to 2 miles away, a real quantitative measure is on the scent concentration in parts per million. Many sharks' sense of smell is so intense they can detect their prey with as little as a 1 in 10 billion DNA concentration.

There is no objective evidence to suggest that sharks actively hunt humans in the water.

The incidence of fatal shark attacks is 1 in 3,748,067.

The rate of people getting drowned is higher than getting bitten by a shark as per a study by the International Shark Attack File, you are more likely to die by drowning than be bitten by a shark. To further quantify those statistics, you are 3,820 times more likely to drown than die from a shark bite. The chances of drowning are 1 in 1,134 compared to the 1 in 4,332,817 odds of being bitten by a shark.

Shockingly, deaths due to selfies are higher than being eaten by sharks. In an article published in the NY Post, more people have died while taking a selfie in recent years than from shark attacks. Between 2011 and 2017, 259 people died while taking a selfie, as opposed just to just 50 shark-related deaths in the same time span.

Board sports and surfing are involved in 51% of shark attacks. In a report published by the ISAF, more than half of all reported shark attacks are a direct result of board sports and surfing. The article specifies that surface recreationalists lead the way by being involved in 51% of shark attacks. In most instances, the sharks mistake people on boards as seals, sealions and sea turtles.

Shark attacks are highest in the month of September. The ISAF is the only known repository for shark altercation statistics. According to their research, the most active month for shark attacks is September. The data relates to shark attacks in Florida, which is the most active location in the US for shark bites.

Stats show several factors, including climate change, are involved in shark attacks. A BBC report concludes that a rise in the rate of shark attacks on humans is related to a number of different factors. As unprovoked bites worldwide seem to be on the increase, the reasoning behind it is linked to multiple environmental factors. Climate change is altering water temperatures worldwide, and as a result, sharks' habitats and shark attack migration paths are growing. In addition, conservation efforts are seeing seal and other shark prey populations increase, and thus lure even more sharks into coastal waters.

The highest number of unprovoked shark attacks occur in the US. Shark attack data for 2021 confirms that the US is the geographical home for shark bites. As reported in UPI, 64% of all shark bites in 2021 occurred in the United States. Within those statistics, Florida accounts for 60% of that figure. Incidentally, Florida accounts for 38% of unprovoked bits worldwide.

The second place with the highest number of shark attacks after the US is Australia. An attack map published by SurferToday confirmed that after the US, Australia is the second most active country for shark attacks.

In 2021, Hawaii recorded six shark attacks, while California recorded three attacks. The NY Post published an article that confirmed 2021 was the first year in several years that saw a dramatic increase in the number of unprovoked human-shark interactions. A total of 73 attacks were reported in 2021. This was an increase from 52 in 2020. Within those attacks, Hawaii recorded 6 attacks and California 3.

A fatal shark attack occurred in Massachusetts (where HAWS took place) for the first time since 1936. As reported in EcoWatch, 2018 saw the first fatal shark bite recorded in Massachusetts in 82 years. Before the attack on the 15th of September 2018, the most recent fatal attack was recorded in 1936. Many believe the surging population of seals on the coast have beckoned greater numbers of Great White sharks to the area.

# Shark Attack Statistics by Species

Here are some fascinating shark attack statistics by species.

1. There are more than 500 shark species, among which only 5% are involved in attacks on humans (Florida Museum of Natural History). Between sharks and rays, there are approximately **1000 different species on the planet**, yet according to statistics from the Florida Museum of Natural History, only **34** have ever been involved in unprovoked bites on humans. This means that only between 3% and 5% of shark species have ever attacked a human.

2. Stats reveal that **Great White Sharks** are mostly involved in attacks on humans (Thoughtco). According to the DutchSharkSociety, the great white is the most dangerous shark to humans. While the chance of being attacked by a great white is still very small, they hold the record for being the most commonly reported perpetrator of shark-on-human attacks. The great white has been responsible for a record 52 human fatal bites over the centuries. They have also been involved in a staggering 326 unprovoked shark bites. According to Sharksider, the great white shark has a bite force of over 4,000 pounds per square inch (psi). To add some perspective, the force of a great white shark bite is approximately 10 times more than a lion!

3. The second most dangerous sharks in the world are **Tiger Sharks**. While great white sharks are regarded as the most aggressive ocean predator, they are followed close behind by the tiger shark. Tiger sharks are, according to the ISAF, unaggressive and often docile sharks, however, are still second in the number of human attacks and fatalities. Tiger sharks have been involved in 103 unprovoked attacks and caused 39 fatalities.

4. Stats show the incidence of **Bull Shark** attacks is highest in shallow waters. Bull sharks are clever creatures, that can move from fresh-water to saltwater without issue. As a result, they often move into shallow rivers and bodies of water. This brings the bull shark into close contact with humans. According to WeLoveSharks, bull sharks are also naturally inquisitive and use their mouth as a way of exploring and investigating.

5. **Hammered Shark** attacks on humans didn't cause any casualties. According to an article in Newsweek, hammerhead sharks have not been the cause of human fatality for over 120 years. While the hammerhead is the most recognizable of all shark species, it is highly placid. There have been just 16 incidents involving people, and none of them have been fatal.

6. The biggest shark in the world is the **Whale Shark**. However, as confirmed by Oceana.org, despite being the largest living fish, the whale shark is utterly harmless. One of three filter-feeding sharks, whale sharks pose no threat to humans.



## Shark Attacks by Humans Are Sharks Safe in the Waters? NOT AT ALL!

Here are nine eye-opening statistics on how many sharks are killed by humans.

1. Globally, there are more than 100 million shark deaths.

2. While sharks kill around 10 people a year, humans are responsible for killing over 100 million sharks. According to American Oceans, approximately 7% of all shark species are killed each year.

3. To further quantify that, there are approximately 11,000 sharks killed every hour!

4. In a piece published by the Smithsonian Ocean, it was reported that anywhere between 1.3 and 2.7 million sharks are killed every year for their fins. In shark finning, sharks are caught, their fins are removed, and the shark is returned to the ocean, alive, and left behind to drown.

5. Overfishing has dropped the level of sharks by 60-70% (Smithsonian Ocean). Research released in 2021 and published on Maritime Executive confirms that wild shark populations have dropped by 71% since 1970. The main reason behind this is the continued expansion of commercial fishing zones.

6. Overfishing of the oceans has seen a vast reduction in the amount of food available for most sharks. The follow-on from this is more sharks are dying, which, coupled with the relatively slow reproduction rate, means there are fewer sharks swimming in our oceans.

7. Ten critically endangered gray nurse sharks were killed in the nets in New South Wales from 2017-2018. As part of a shark deterrent system, nets were used around beaches in New South Wales with a focus on catching rogue tiger or white sharks, which pose the greatest risk to humans.

8. Between 1950 to 2008, 577 great white sharks and 353 tiger sharks were killed in nets. Shark attack mitigation nets in New South Wales, Australia, have caused the deaths of almost 1000 sharks between 1950 and 2008. These deaths were not the goal of the nets, but an unfortunate consequence of them.

9. As discussed on Taronga.org, there are better and more humane ways to limit interactions between humans and sharks. Especially when you consider that there were over 15,000 other marine animals also killed in the same nets during that time.

**For even more proof that these animals' bad rap is undeserved, check out the many things that are more likely to kill you than a shark:**

- Accidental poisoning
- An air or space accident
- A bike accident
- Wasps
- Boating
- Cancer
- A car accident
- Cows
- Contracting an infection in a hospital
- Drowning
- Eating
- Excessive cold
- Snake bite
- Vending machines
- Hot water tap
- Deer
- Beds
- Coconuts
- Jellyfish
- Falling
- Fireworks
- The flu
- Heart disease
- Hunting
- A ladder
- A lawnmower
- Lightning
- MRSA
- A rip current
- A stroke
- Murder
- Suicide
- Sun or heat exposure
- A tornado
- A train crash
- A sand hole collapse
- Hotdogs
- Mosquitoes
- Roller coasters
- Dogs
- Lightning
- Hippos
- Airplanes
- Bathtubs
- Volcano