

# WHY ARE SHARK ATTACKS RISING IN AUSTRALIA?



A new data resource, the [Australian Shark-Incident Database](#), has revealed that human-shark conflict has been increasing for several decades. Let's take a look at the data and try to figure out why.

**Peter Whelan**

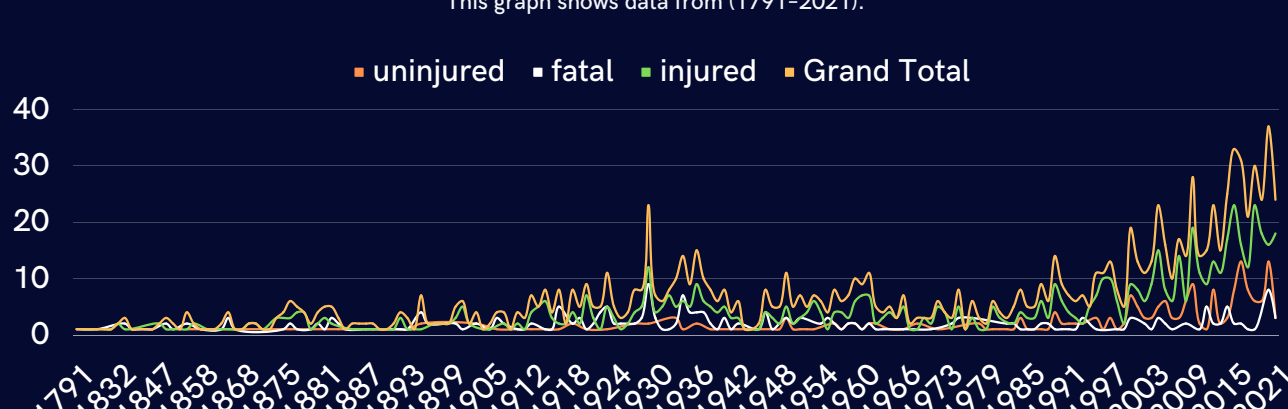
A dataset documenting shark attacks in Australia since 1791 has shown an increase in reported human-shark conflict in recent decades.

The Australian Shark-Incident Database is maintained by the Toronga Conservation Society in collaboration with Flinders University and includes early records of human-shark conflict after European settlement and the Australian Shark-Attack File founded in the 1980's.

Categories in the database are subject to thorough assessment and include the location, weather conditions and activities being undertaken at the time of the incident, as well as the shark species and the victim's recovery status.

## SHARK ATTACKS IN AUSTRALIA BY YEAR

The ASID contains comprehensive reports of 1,196 shark bites that have occurred in Australia over 231 years. This graph shows data from (1791-2021).



The database, detailing over 1000 shark-human interactions over 230 years, "is the most comprehensive [database] that we have," said Dr Phoebe Meagher, the curator of the ASID.

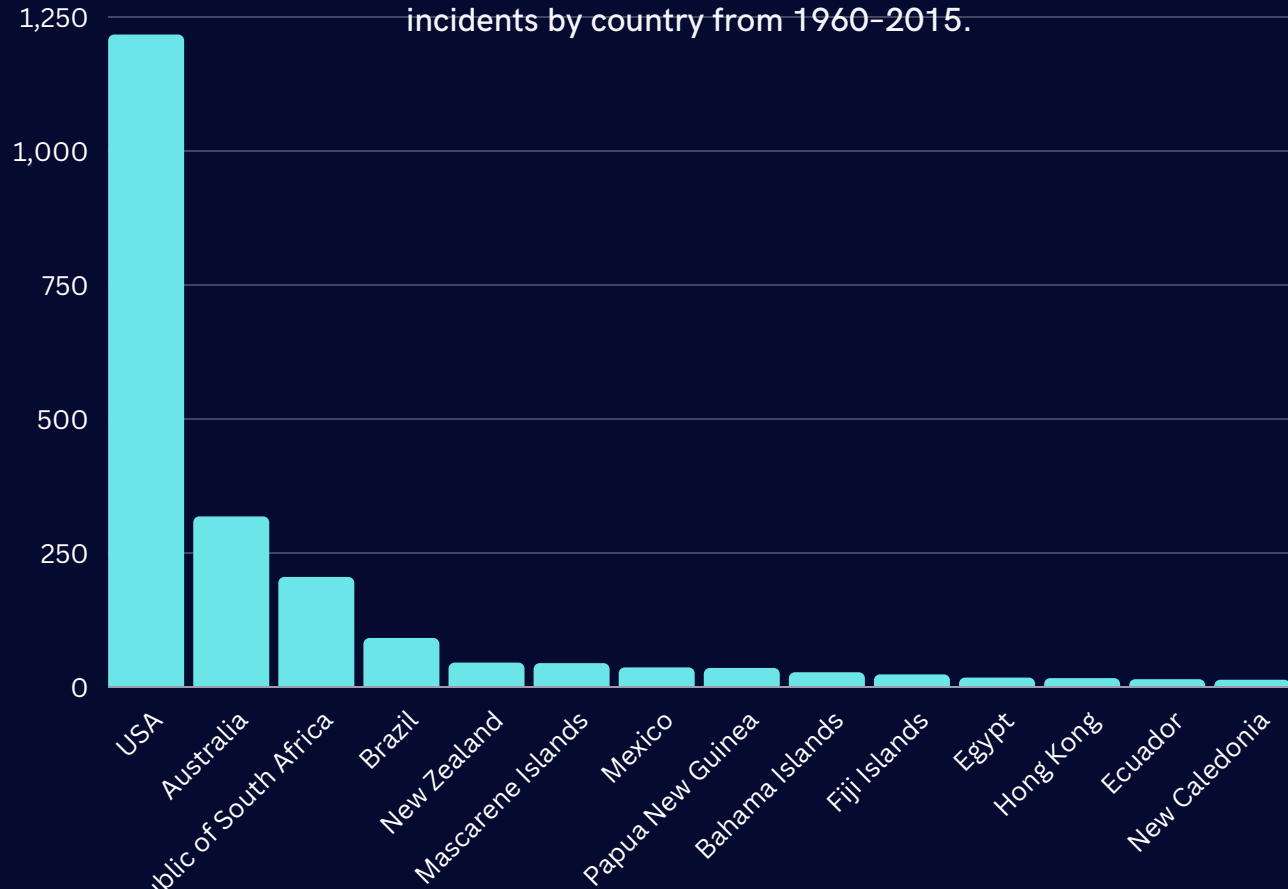
The scope of the data will allow scientists to understand the "larger patterns and processes at play," Dr Meagher said.

"Sharing this data in a de-identified, peer-reviewed manner means we can learn from these tragic events, and how to secure a shared ocean for sharks and people."

"The new opportunities for maximising the impact of this data, particularly around long-term climate patterns and shark behaviour is also an exciting possibility," she said.

## SHARK ATTACK INCIDENTS BY COUNTRY 1960 - 2015

Trends in Global Shark Attacks, published in 2019, identifies shark attack incidents by country from 1960-2015.



Data: Trends in global shark attacks

## COUNTRIES WITH HIGHEST CONCENTRATION OF SHARK ATTACKS



Data: Trends in global shark attacks

However, Dr Meagher acknowledged the dataset did have "some limitations."

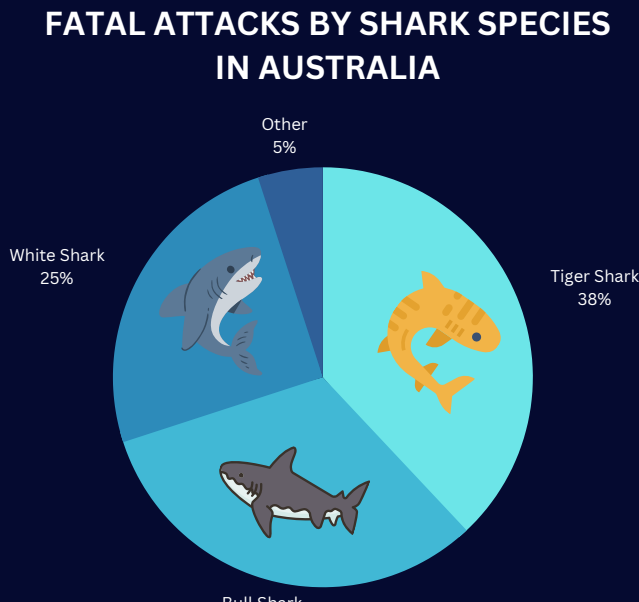
"Reporting over time has changed," she told the Guardian.

"In the last 10 years or so we've had social media and people are maybe more likely to report incidents than 50 or 100 years ago," she said.

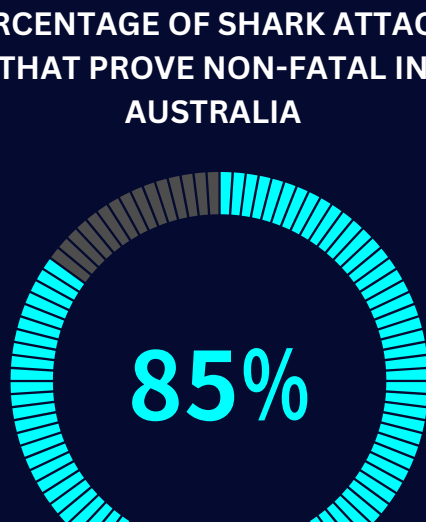
"People have to be aware of those limitations, but they can also get good information from the database and hopefully be able to understand [things like] long term climatic patterns and how they might impact sharks."

"High variability" means that the reasons for increased shark attacks remain unclear despite the new data, Professor Charlie Huvneers from Flinders University said.

## FATAL ATTACKS BY SHARK SPECIES IN AUSTRALIA



## PERCENTAGE OF SHARK ATTACKS THAT PROVE NON-FATAL IN AUSTRALIA



Data: [Australian Shark-Incident Database](#)

"It is unlikely to be linked to only one factor and a combination of reasons likely contributes to the increased number of shark bites, including a growing human population spending more time doing water-based activities and recovering shark populations or changes in shark occurrences along the coast," he told Science Daily.

Dr Huvneers also pointed to "environmental and habitat variation, such as changing water temperature, re-distribution of prey, and climate change" as important factors.

## Visit the Australian Shark-Incident Database

**The Australian Shark-Incident Database for quantifying temporal and spatial...**

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