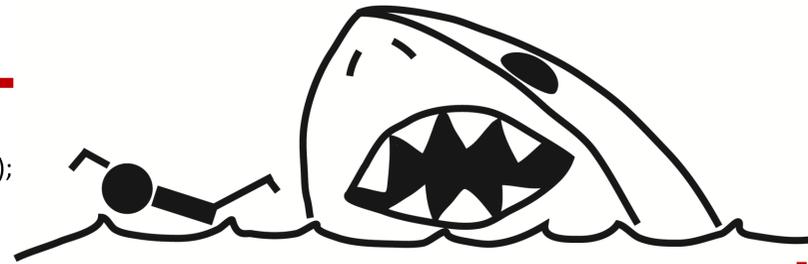


Environmental education: an effective tool to improve conservation of sharks and rays?

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INTRODUCTION

- Sharks, skates and rays usually evoke irrational, negative emotions (Mazzoldi et al., 2019);
- Fear is usually associated with poor knowledge (Giovos et al., 2021).

Can environmental education improve people's knowledge and perception about these species, and consequently increase willingness to protect sharks, skates and rays? (Ardoin et al., 2020)

MATERIALS AND METHODS

- QUESTIONNAIRES** to be submitted to people lacking specific knowledge about elasmobranchs **BEFORE (PRE)** and **AFTER (POST)** educational events of the **LifeLife project**.
- The two versions of the questionnaire are composed by the same 19 questions aimed at evaluating feelings towards, knowledge of, and willingness to protect sharks, skates and rays.
- DIRECT COMPARISON** of the answers will allow testing the effectiveness of the educational events.

English 66, Greek 175 and Italian 518 answers



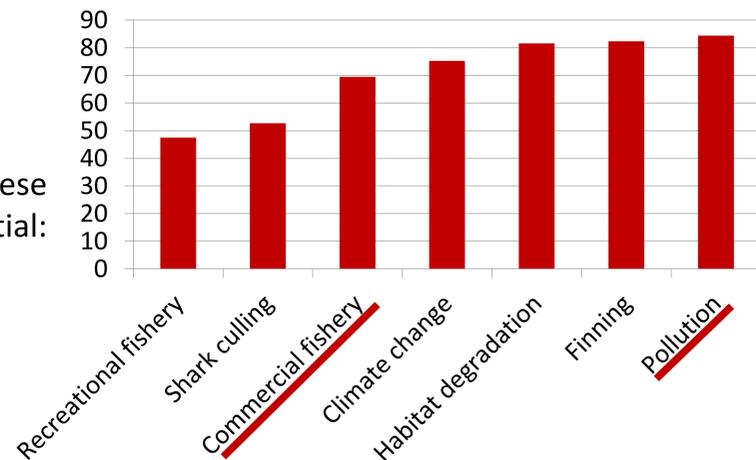
<https://www.elifeproject.eu/en/>

PRE version Italian & Greek **RESULTS**

Feelings

Respect: 84.8%
Interest: 77.9%
Awe: 76.2%
Fear: 27%
Danger: 32.3%

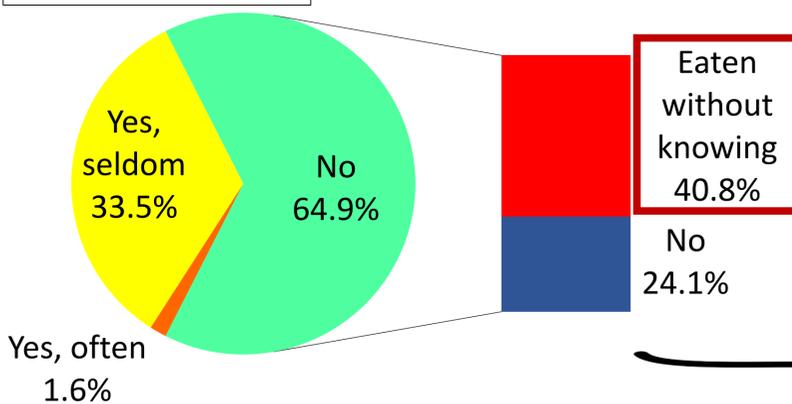
- HOWEVER**, 92.8% and 91.8% thinks it is **important to protect** sharks and rays species
 - And for 77.5%, sharks and rays species are endangered
- Percentage of people thinking these **threats** are strongly influential:



Correct species identification

- Only 17.6% of the respondents
- 2.7% and 19.3% identified **tunas** and **swordfishes** as sharks

Eaten shark meat?



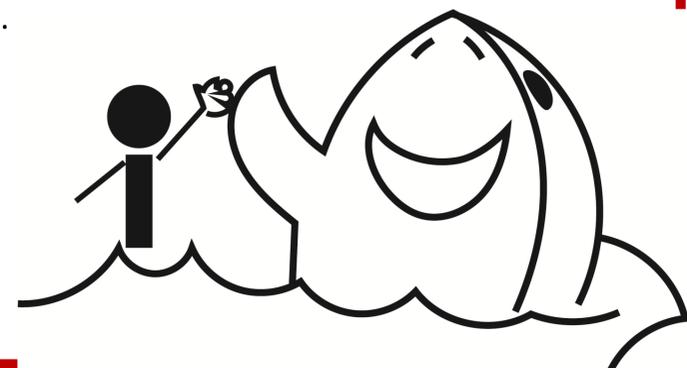
- BUT 92.8% are willing to change their behaviours, including:**
- Stop eating shark meat;
 - Sign petitions;
 - Donate or volunteer for pro-shark association;
 - Educate family and friends.

CONCLUSIONS

- Encouragingly, fear and danger are not the most common feelings and many believe it is important to protect these species;
- General poor knowledge of shark and ray species;
- But large propensity to change behaviour to improve conservation of sharks, skates and rays.

NEXT Submission of **AFTER questionnaire** to test the effectiveness of educational events in:

- further improving the perception of people towards shark;
- increasing the knowledge on sharks, skates and rays;
- inspiring behaviours that could improve shark, skate and ray conservation.



References: Mazzoldi et al., 2019. PLoS ONE 14(12): e0226810; Giovos et al., 2021. Marine Policy, in press; Ardoin et al., 2020. Biological Conservation 241:108224.