

## FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

### Fishing-fleet evolution

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Credit: Michael Howes / Alamy Stock Photo

Because fish do not live by country borders, the sustainable management of marine life increasingly requires global governance. Understanding the patterns of fishing efforts and associated changes in fish stocks is crucial.

Yannick Rousseau from the University of Tasmania, Australia, and colleagues reconstructed the quantity of fishing fleets around the world's oceans since 1950. They compiled data from different sources, distinguishing industrial and both powered and unpowered artisanal boats. Increased use of engines has driven a doubling of fishing fleets since 1950. The fleet growth trends are exponential in all regions, except for Europe and North America where this growth plateaued between the 1980s and

1990s. However, while the fishing capacity has increased, the catch has decreased per unit of fishing effort. This meant that, in 2015, it was five-times harder to catch the same amount of fish than in 1950. The most remarkable reduction in catch per unit of effort occurred in Latin America, where fishing large amounts was much easier than elsewhere during the 1960s and 1970s. All regions but Europe display sharp declines in fish abundance, especially since the 1980s. In future years, a further increase in fishing capacity is expected in developed countries.

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