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Actual catches in the Arctic between 1950 and 2006 are 75 times higher than reported, according to a study. (Photo: Erika Acuna, NOAA)

## Canada, US, Russia misreport Arctic catches: study



**CANADA**

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Neither Canada, the US nor Russia have been reporting their fisheries catches in the Arctic accurately, say researchers at the [University of British Columbia](#) (UBC).

The researchers believe fisheries catches in the Arctic reached 950,000 tonnes from 1950-2006 -- nearly 75 times greater than the amount actually reported to the [United Nations \(UN\) Food and Agriculture Organisation](#) (FAO) in this period, according to a study published this week in the journal *Polar Biology*.

"Ineffective reporting, due to governance issues and a lack of credible data on small-scale fisheries, has given us a false sense of comfort that the Arctic is still a pristine frontier when it comes to fisheries," commented lead author Dirk Zeller, a senior research fellow at UBC's Fisheries Centre. "We now offer a more accurate baseline against which we can monitor changes in fish catches and to inform policy and conservation efforts."

Fisheries catch data from various sources was examined, including that from limited governmental reports and anthropological records of indigenous people, for FAO's Area 18, which spans Arctic coastal areas in northern Siberia, Arctic Alaska and the Canadian Arctic. The researchers came from the Fisheries Centre and department of earth and ocean sciences, *The Vancouver Sun* reports.

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FAO's official data on fish catches in the Arctic noted from 1950-2006, on the other hand, were founded only on statistics provided by Russia and reached just 12,700 tonnes.

Even though the Alaska branch of the [US National Marine Fisheries Service](#) (NMFS) now reports zero catches for the Arctic area to FAO, the [Alaska Department of Fish and Game](#) (ADFG) has gathered commercial data and done studies on 15 coastal communities in the Alaskan Arctic that depend on fisheries for their food and livelihood. For this period, the estimated fish catch there amounted to 89,000 tonnes, the UBC researchers concluded.

Canada has not reported any catches to FAO, but the study found that commercial and small-scale fisheries catches came to 94,000 tonnes in the same time period.

Russia's total fisheries catch was almost 12,000 tonnes per year at 770,000 tonnes from 1950-2006.

"Our work shows a lack of care by the Canadian, US and Russian governments in trying to understand the food needs and fish catches of northern communities," stated Daniel Pauly, whose Sea Around Us Project at UBC has demonstrated a drift of fish stocks towards polar regions due to warming waters caused by increasing climate change.

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