



Perceptions of the ocean and environment

United States Country Brief

The David and Lucile Packard Foundation works with partners to ensure the long-term health of the ocean by investing in country-level and global strategies that help improve our ocean's sustainability. To better engage citizens and governments alike, the Foundation partnered with Kantar to conduct a robust public opinion study of people's perceptions on the ocean and related environmental issues in six Pacific Rim countries where the Foundation supports work to promote ocean health: The United States, China, Japan, Indonesia, Mexico, and Chile.

Unprecedented in scale and depth, Kantar's survey found near-unanimous support across all six countries for government action to protect the ocean.

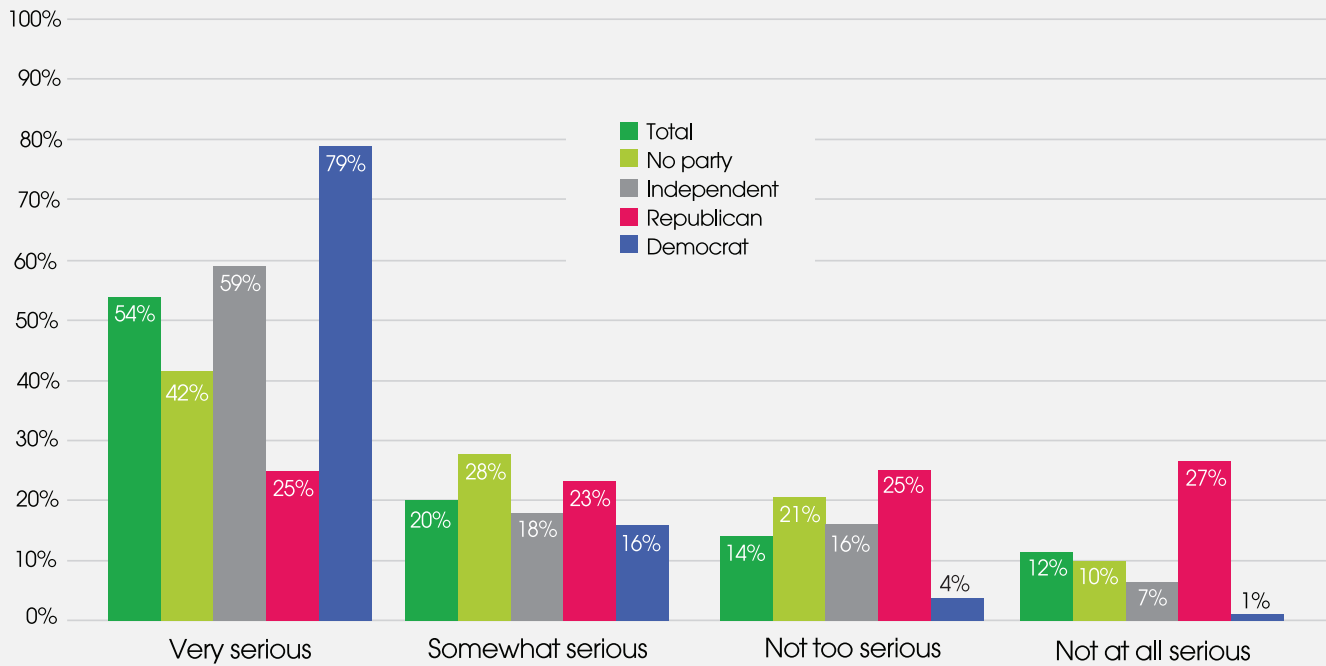
Findings revealed that people see the condition of the ocean as important to their country's economy and their family's well-being, because it is a source of food and home to wildlife. The vast majority of people across all six countries also see climate change as a serious threat.

In the United States, Kantar conducted a telephone survey with a national, random probability sample of 1,000 Americans aged 18+ on their perceptions of ocean and other environmental issues. The survey (conducted between May and August 2019) covered people living in all 50 states, representing 97% of the U.S. population.

You can find the full results of Kantar's six nation survey at: oursharedseas.com/insights/SupportForAction.

The environment is a concern for most Americans

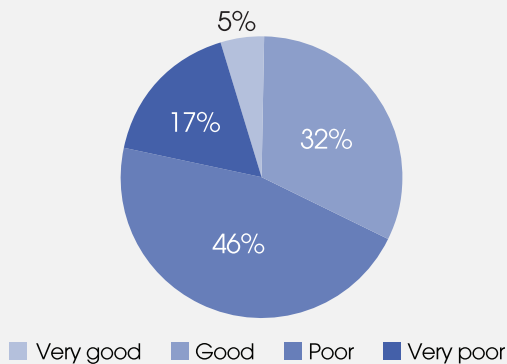
Most Americans (80%) say the environment is a major concern for them, with concern being highest among women and those living in coastal areas.¹ When asked how serious a threat climate change is to the quality of life in the U.S., 54% perceive it to be a “very serious” threat, and a further 20% believe it is a “somewhat serious” threat.² Concerns about climate change vary considerably by political affiliation, as shown in the chart below.



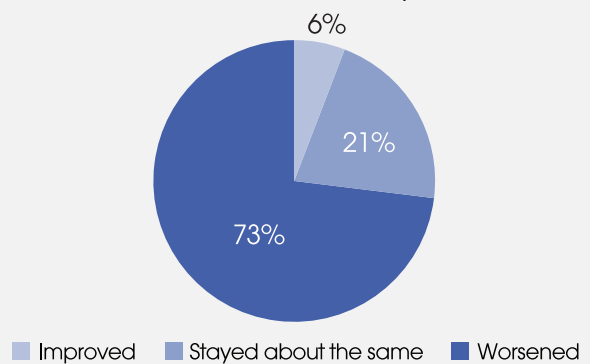
Americans believe ocean health is important

Americans widely believe the condition of the ocean is important to the U.S. economy (94%).³ Most Americans rate ocean health today as “poor” or “very poor,” (63%),⁴ and 73% of Americans think the condition of the ocean has “worsened” in the last 10 years.⁵

Perceptions of ocean health today



Perceived changes in ocean condition in the last 10 years

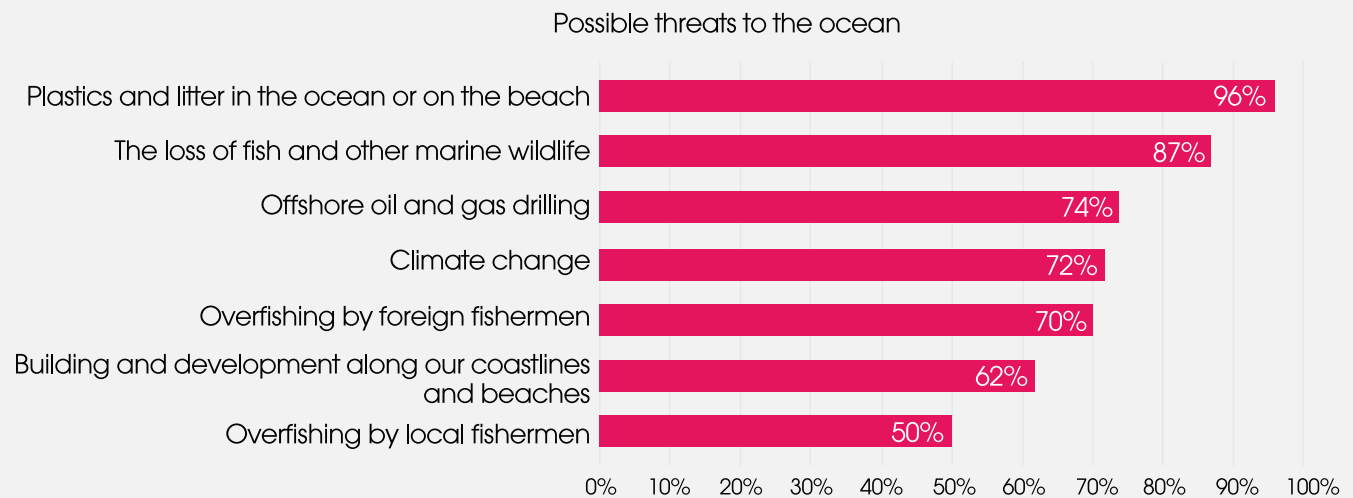


The vast majority of Americans (87%) think the ocean is being negatively impacted by human activities, and this belief is particularly pronounced among those living along the coast, and women.⁶

Americans support protecting the environment and the ocean

Nearly all Americans (92%) believe government regulations are necessary to protect the ocean.⁷ Specifically, 95% of Americans support establishing marine protected areas—areas off-limits for fishing and commercial use—to protect ocean wildlife and habitats.⁸ Further, 78% of Americans think the government should establish more environmental conservation regulations to protect the ocean and 69% say the government is not doing enough to protect the ocean.

In terms of threats to the ocean, 96% of Americans consider plastics and litter in the ocean or on the beach as a major threat, and 87% consider the loss of fish and other marine wildlife as a major threat.⁹ Importantly, 70% recognize that climate change is a serious threat to the quality of life in the United States.



¹ Question 2: Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree: the environment is a major concern for me.

² Question 5: How serious of a threat is climate change to the quality of life in the U.S.?

³ Question 11: How important is the condition of the ocean surrounding the U.S. to our economy?

⁴ Question 7: Thinking about the overall health of the ocean today surrounding the U.S., would you rate it as very good, good, poor, or very poor?

⁵ Question 10: Over the past 10 years, do you think the condition of the ocean has improved, stayed about the same, or worsened?

⁶ Question 14: Please indicate the extent to which you agree/disagree: The ocean surrounding the U.S. is being negatively impacted by human activities.

⁷ Question 18: Please indicate the extent to which you agree/disagree: Government regulations are necessary to protect the ocean.

⁸ Question 19: Marine protected areas are areas off-limits for fishing and commercial use. Do you support marine protected areas to protect wildlife and habitats?

⁹ Question 15: I'm now going to read you a list of possible threats to the ocean surrounding the U.S. For each one, please indicate if you think it is a major threat.