



# 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.**

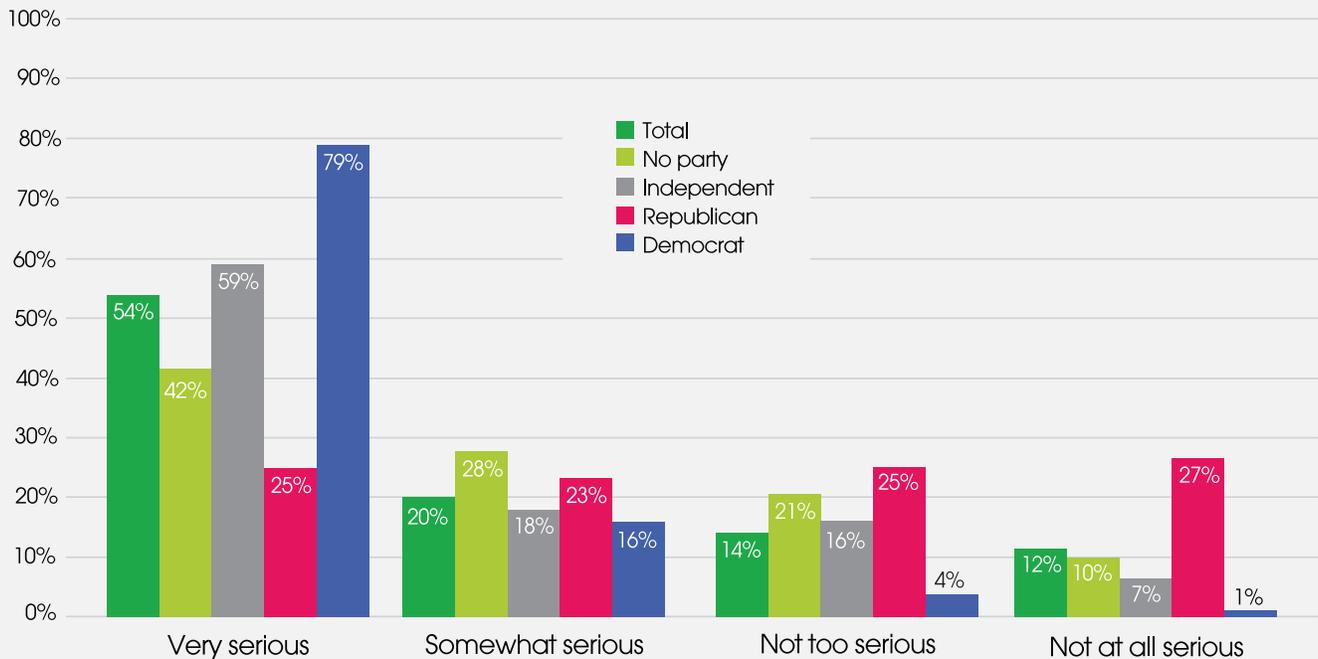
Findings revealed that people see the condition of the ocean as important to their country's economy and their family's well-being, because it is a source of food and home to wildlife. The vast majority of people across all six countries also see climate change as a serious threat.

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](https://oursharedseas.com/insights/SupportForAction).

## The environment is a concern for most Americans

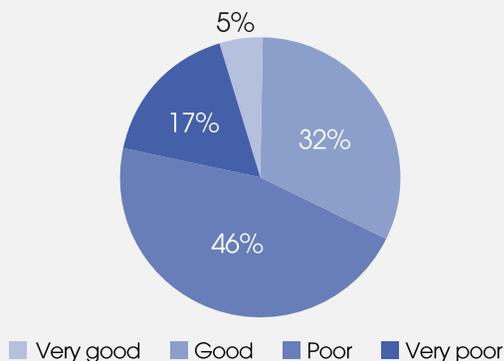
Most Americans (80%) say the environment is a major concern for them, with concern being highest among women and those living in coastal areas.<sup>1</sup> When asked how serious a threat climate change is to the quality of life in the U.S., 54% perceive it to be a “very serious” threat, and a further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



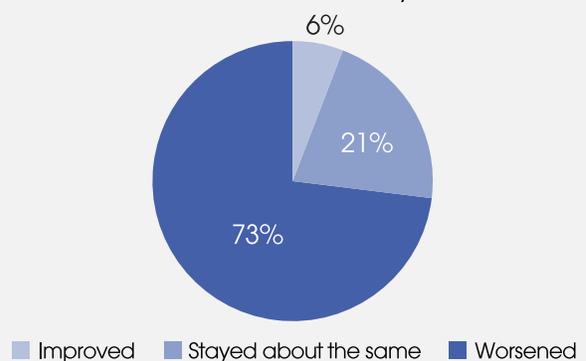
## Americans believe ocean health is important

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

Perceptions of ocean health today



Perceived changes in ocean condition in the last 10 years

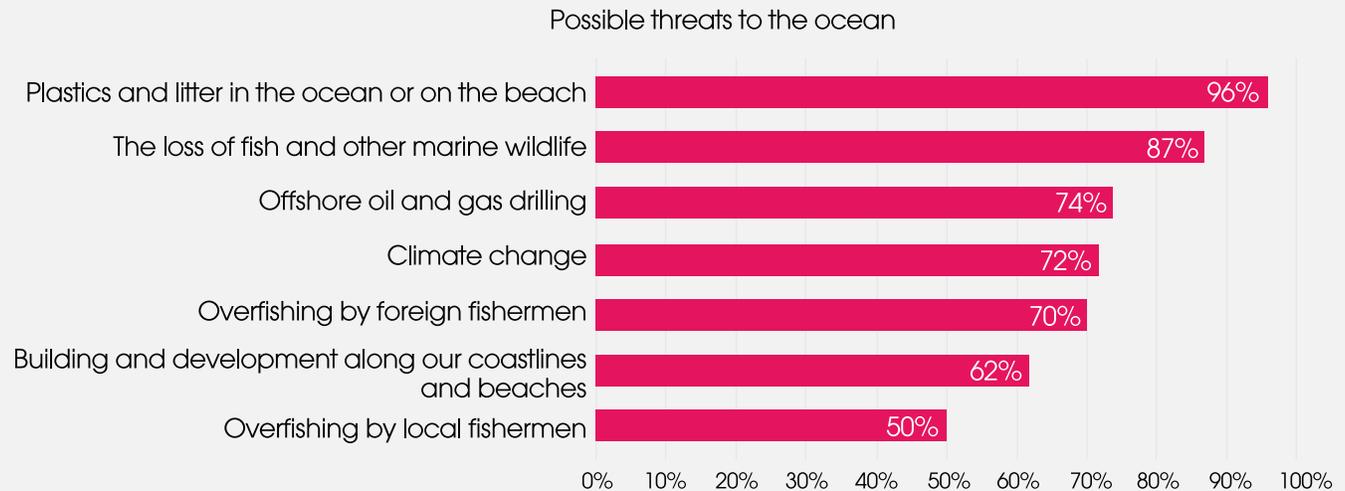


The vast majority of Americans (87%) think the ocean is being negatively impacted by human activities, and this belief is particularly pronounced among those living along the coast, and women.<sup>6</sup>

# Americans support protecting the environment and the ocean

Nearly all Americans (92%) believe government regulations are necessary to protect the ocean.<sup>7</sup> Specifically, 95% of Americans support establishing marine protected areas—areas off-limits for fishing and commercial use—to protect ocean wildlife and habitats.<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup> Importantly, 70% recognize that climate change is a serious threat to the quality of life in the United States.



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

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

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

<sup>4</sup> 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?

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

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

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

<sup>8</sup> 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?

<sup>9</sup> 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.