

# Communicating About Ocean Health and Protection

An Analysis of Research  
for

The OCEAN Project  
by

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American Viewpoint

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# Objectives of the Research

1. To provide aquariums, zoos, and science museums guidance on developing messages, themes, and images that engage the public and increase concerns for the health of the oceans.
2. Identify targeted segments for specific messages.

# Methods

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Review of Existing Data

Six Focus Groups

National Survey: n=1,500

Margin of sampling error  
+/- 3.0

Interviewing: July 24 to  
August 8, 1999

# Main Findings

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1. Oceans are viewed as powerful, vast, relaxing, and fun.
2. Little awareness of ocean health, especially beyond the beach.
3. Protecting the oceans is not an urgent issue -- important but not really important.
4. Public possesses only superficial knowledge of the oceans, their functions, and their connection to human well being.
5. Oceans are viewed as vulnerable to lasting damage, but the public does not see individual actions having a great impact.

# Main Findings

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6. Currently low levels of personal importance for protecting oceans.
7. Most effective values framework: balance of nature.
8. Effective messages: recreation, responsibility, and future. Most salient threat: pollution.
9. Americans may sacrifice to protect the oceans.
10. Five attitudinal groups on the oceans.

# 1. Connections to the Oceans

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	<b>Very well</b>	<b>Somewhat</b>	<b>Not very well</b>	<b>Not at all</b>
powerful	80%	14	2	3
vast	71%	20	4	3
relaxing	64%	26	4	4
fun	59%	30	4	6
important for my emotional well being	36%	32	12	18
polluted	36%	49	8	5
overused	25%	41	16	15
frightening	22%	31	12	34

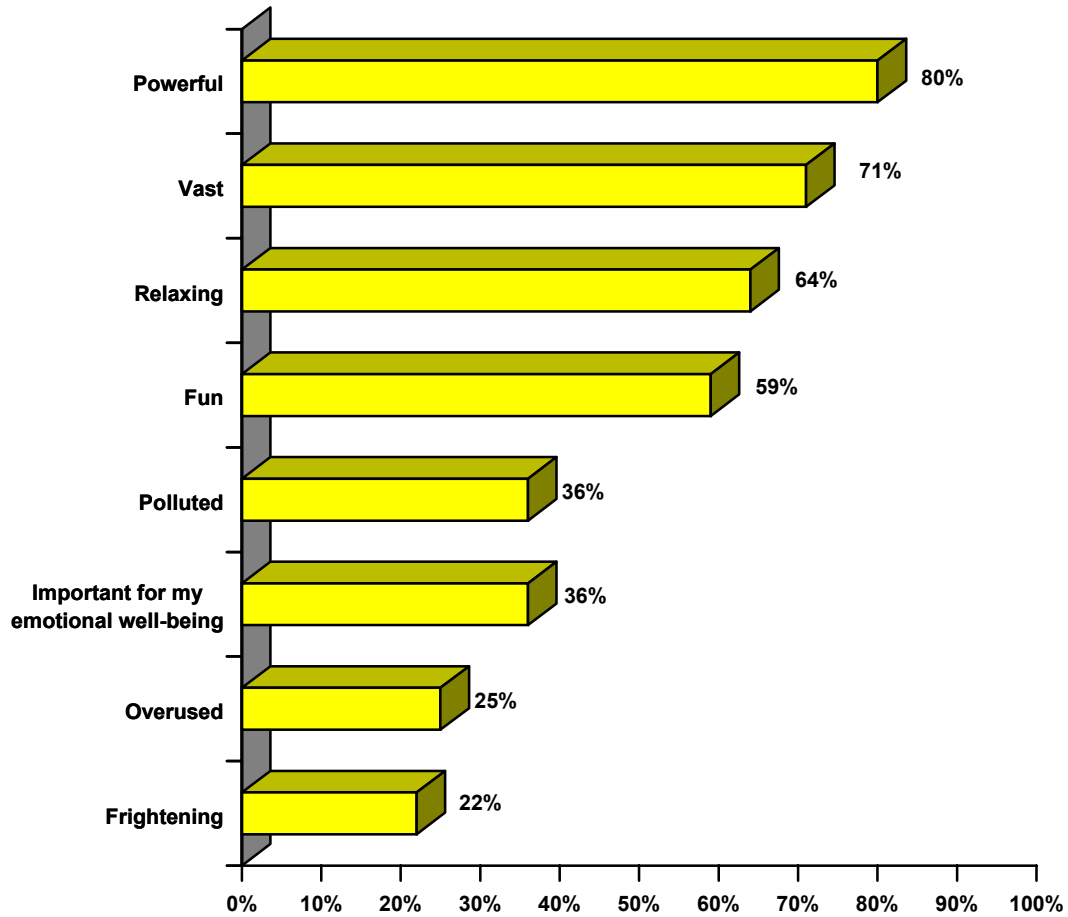
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Q20-Q27 People use different terms and phrases to describe how they feel about the oceans. Please tell me if each of the following words or phrases describes the oceans for you personally very well, somewhat, not very well, or not at all? The oceans are ...

# 1. Connections to the Oceans

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Percent saying describes oceans very well

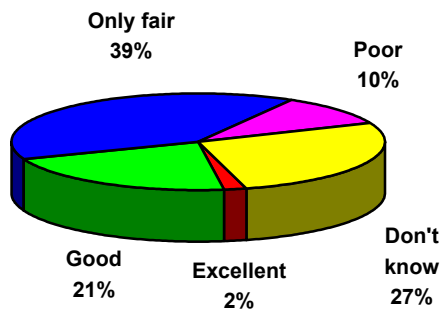


Q20-Q27 People use different terms and phrases to describe how they feel about the oceans. Please tell me if each of the following words or phrases describes the oceans for you personally very well, somewhat, not very well, or not at all? The oceans are ...

## 2. Awareness of Ocean Health

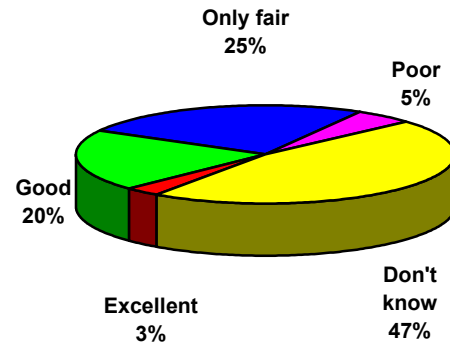
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**Coastal Waters**



Q17 Thinking about coastal waters and ocean beaches, would you rate their health as excellent, good, only fair, poor or don't you have an opinion on this?

**Deep Oceans**

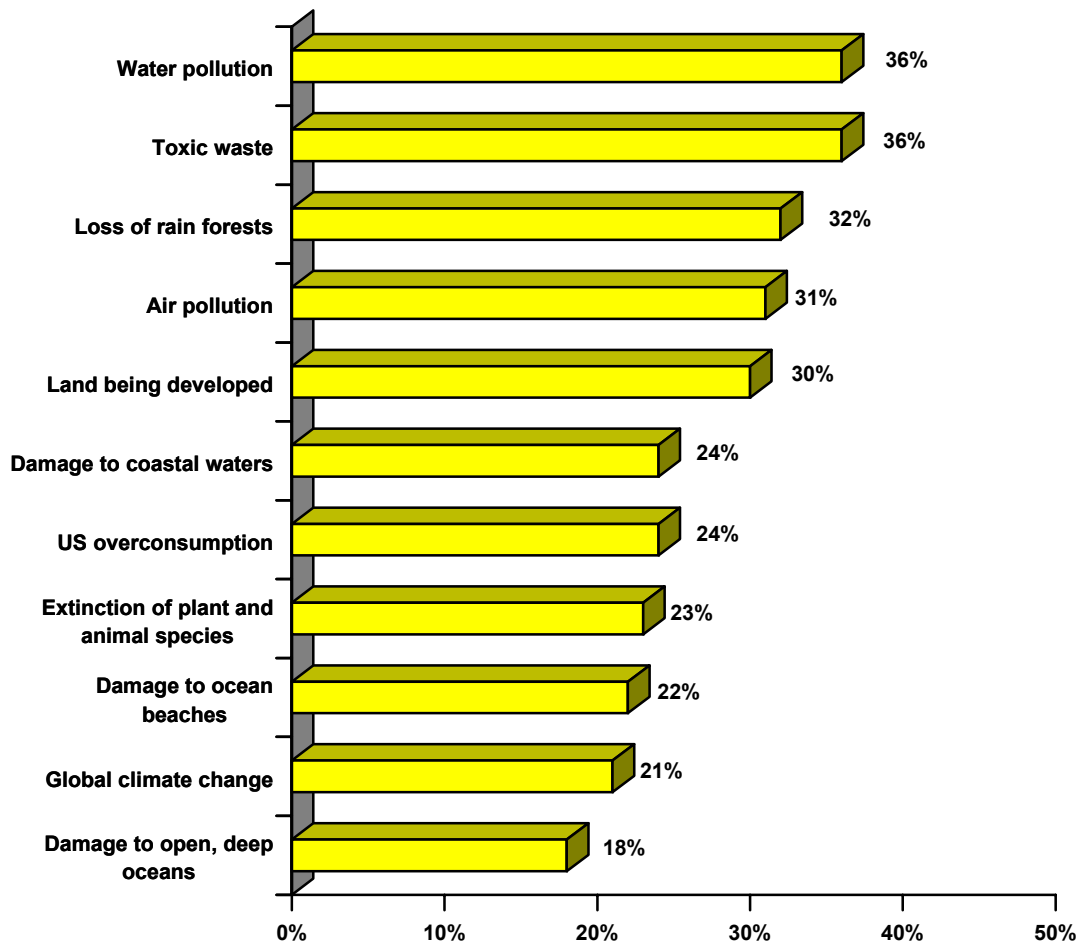


Q18 Thinking about the open, deep oceans away from the coasts, would you rate their health as excellent, good, only fair, poor or don't you have an opinion on this?

# 3. Environmental Concerns

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Percent rating each problem “extremely serious”



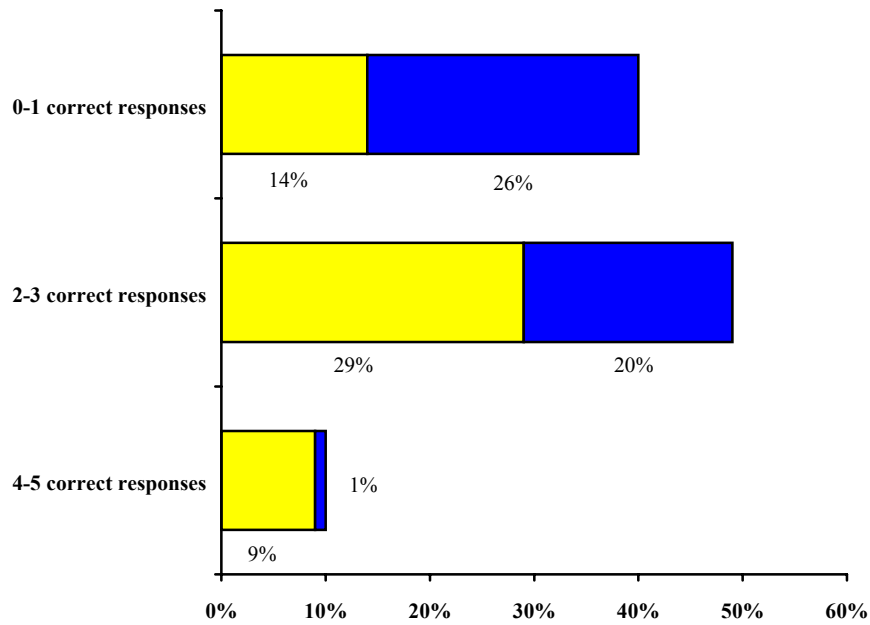
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Q6-Q16 Thinking specifically about **environmental** issues, please tell me how serious a problem you think each of the following is. Use a scale of 1 to 10 where one means something is not a problem at all and 10 means it is an extremely serious problem:

# 4. Knowledge of Oceans

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Knowledge Scale



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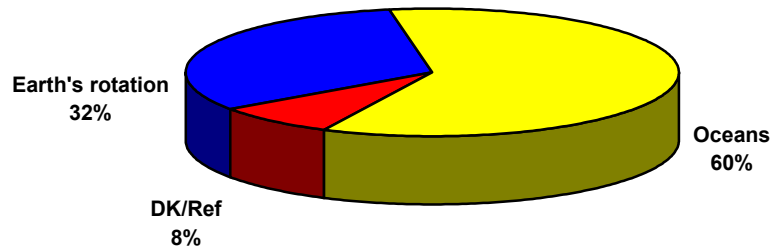
% giving correct responses to five questions on knowledge of oceans

# 4. Knowledge of Oceans

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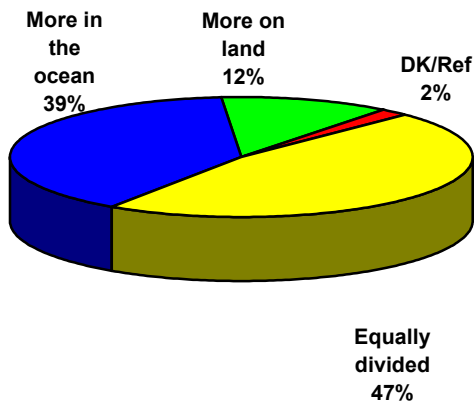
## Climate and Rainfall

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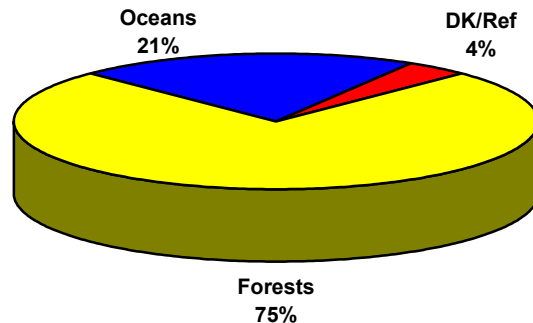
Q37. As far as you know, is the climate and the amount of rainfall on earth regulated more by the rotation of the earth or by the oceans?

## Plant and Animal Life



Q33. As far as you know, is more plant and animal life found on land, more in the ocean, or is it about equally divided?

## Production of Oxygen

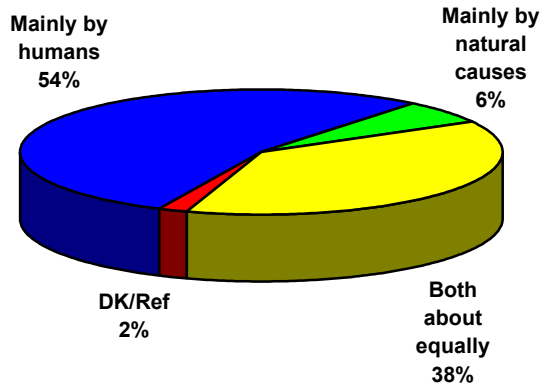


Q34. As far as you know, is more of the earth's oxygen produced by the forests or the oceans?

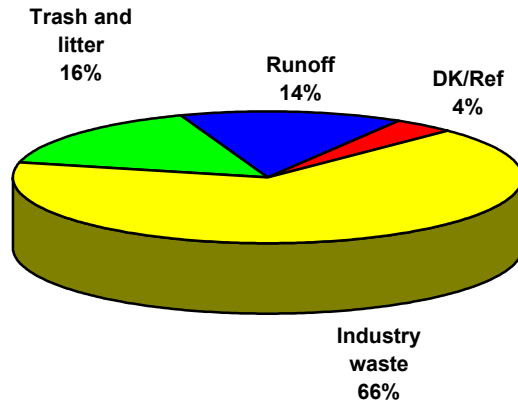
# 4. Knowledge of Oceans

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**Causes of Extinction**



**Causes of Pollution**



Q35. As far as you know, is extinction of plant and animal life in the oceans being caused mainly by humans, mainly by natural causes, or both about equally?

Q36. As far as you know, is most ocean pollution being caused by: runoff from yards, pavements and farms, trash and litter washed into the oceans from beaches or waste dumped by industry?

# 5. Human Impact on the Oceans

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	<b>Very much agree</b>	<b>Somewhat agree</b>	<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	<b>Very much disagree</b>
Oceans are so large, it is unlikely that humans will cause any lasting damage to them	9%	10	24	56
Polluted oceans are able to clean themselves	6%	21	26	46
We do not need to worry about the health of the oceans because we will develop new technologies to keep them clean	6%	13	26	55
What I do in my life doesn't impact ocean health much at all	21%	23	30	25

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Q28-Q32 Now, please tell me if you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? Do you agree/disagree very much or somewhat?

# 6. Personal Importance of Protecting Oceans

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**% saying extremely important**

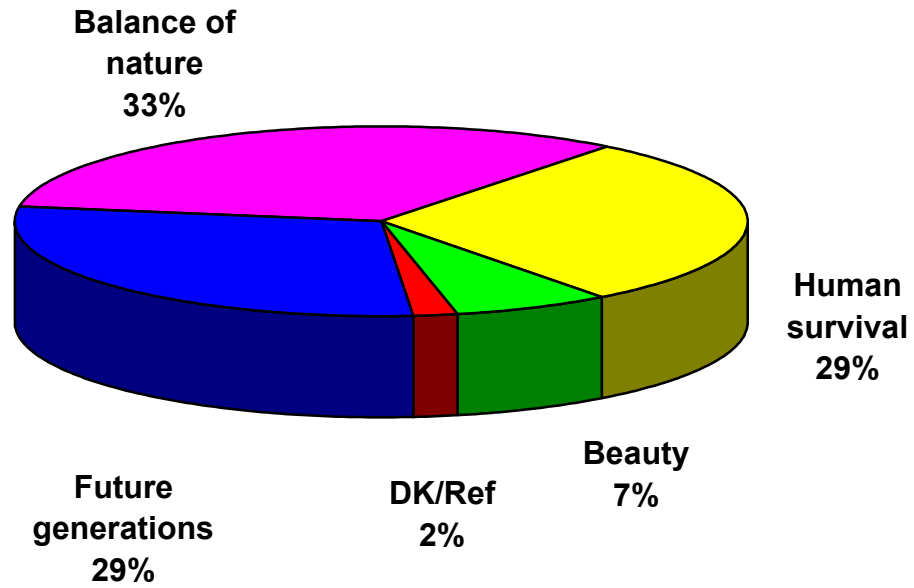
<b>Total</b>	<b>26%</b>
Male	22%
Female	28%
White	23%
Black	34%
Hispanic	33%
Less than HS/HS	33%
Some College	26%
College/Grad	17%
Less than \$25K	30%
\$26K-\$49K	27%
\$50K - \$74K	23%
\$75K +	15%
Near Ocean	32%
Not near ocean	22%

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Q19. Compared to dealing with other issues you are concerned about, how important to you personally is protecting the environmental quality of the oceans on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 means not at all important and 10 means extremely important?

# 7. Values Frameworks

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# 7. Values Frameworks

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	% saying 10
<p><b>All living things are connected.</b> When pollutants destroy plants or animals in the oceans that impacts our quality of life and health of the whole planet. (Base = 374)</p>	41%
<p><b>The oceans are essential to human survival.</b> Pollution in the oceans eventually ends up in the food we eat, affects the earth's climate, and the air we breathe. (Base = 374)</p>	38%
<p><b>We need to think about what we are leaving future generations.</b> There are more pollutants in the oceans than ever before. We need to take responsibility for ocean health today to ensure that there are healthy oceans for future generations. (Base = 372)</p>	38%
<p><b>The oceans are beautiful and inspiring,</b> but this beauty is being harmed by pollution in the water and on beaches. (Base = 380)</p>	28%

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Q44-Q53 Here are some reasons people have told us why they believe we need to do more to save the oceans. Now I'd like to know what your reaction is to these different ideas. As I read each one, please tell me how convincing a reason it is to you personally to want to do more to protect the health of the oceans. Think of a scale of 1 to 10 on which 1 means that the **statement is not convincing to you at all** and 10 means it is **extremely convincing to you to protect the oceans**. Use any number from 1 to 10.

## 8. Messages: Recreation, responsibility, and future

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	% saying 10
Oceans provide us with water to swim in, places to go fishing, and beaches to play on. To continue to enjoy the oceans, we need to stop careless use that pollutes them.	44%
Each of us has a personal responsibility to protect the oceans and reduce the damage done by our actions. Each year, individuals dump 180 million gallons of used motor oil into sewage drains, that is 15 times more oil getting into the oceans than the Exxon Valdez spill. (Base = 751)	42%
Each of us has a personal opportunity to protect the oceans and reduce the damage done by our actions. Each year, individuals dump 180 million gallons of used motor oil into sewage drains, that is 15 times more oil getting into the oceans than the Exxon Valdez spill. (Base = 749)	40%
The oceans contain millions of yet to be discovered species of plants and animals which will provide us with cures for diseases and sources of food, if the oceans stay healthy.	38%
The oceans contain the last unexplored areas on earth.	38%

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# 8. Messages: Special qualities and functions of oceans

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	% saying 10
The oceans help regulate the earth's climate and produce 70% of our oxygen.	33%
Coral reefs and other ocean habitat are unique places in nature that deserve special protection. 20% of the world's coral reefs have been destroyed by tourism, fishing, pollution, and mining.	33%
More plants, fish, and animals live in the ocean than live on land, but destructive and wasteful fishing practices are endangering thousands of species of fish and marine life.	30%

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Q44-Q53 Here are some reasons people have told us why they believe we need to do more to save the oceans. Now I'd like to know what your reaction is to these different ideas. As I read each one, please tell me how convincing a reason it is to you personally to want to do more to protect the health of the oceans. Think of a scale of 1 to 10 on which 1 means that the **statement is not convincing to you at all** and 10 means it is **extremely convincing to you to protect the oceans**. Use any number from 1 to 10.

# 8. Messages: Development and fishing

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	% saying 10
Development of homes and businesses in coastal areas harm coastal habitats and decrease plant and animal populations. 75% of endangered mammals and birds rely on coastal habitats. (Base = 749)	26%
The current rate of building new homes, roads, and other development along the coasts is destroying the coasts' natural beauty. (Base = 751)	26%
Almost all of US commercial fisheries are at their limit or overfished. Overfishing in New England has lead to a loss of over 14,000 jobs.	22%

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Q44-Q53 Here are some reasons people have told us why they believe we need to do more to save the oceans. Now I'd like to know what your reaction is to these different ideas. As I read each one, please tell me how convincing a reason it is to you personally to want to do more to protect the health of the oceans. Think of a scale of 1 to 10 on which 1 means that the **statement is not convincing to you at all** and 10 means it is **extremely convincing to you to protect the oceans**. Use any number from 1 to 10.

# 9. Support for Protecting Oceans

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	<b>Strngly agree</b>	<b>Smwht agree</b>	<b>Smwht disagree</b>	<b>Strngly disagree</b>
I would support actions to protect the oceans, even if it meant paying more for fish and seafood.	42%	39	10	8
I would support actions to protect the oceans, even if it meant having fewer choices of where to vacation. (Base = 751)	42%	36	12	8
I would support actions to protect the oceans, even if it meant closing more beaches to public use. (Base = 749)	37%	37	15	10
I would support actions to protect the oceans, even if it meant the government spending more tax dollars.	37%	39	12	12

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Q54-Q56 Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. Is that strongly or somewhat agree/disagree?

# 9. Effective Solutions

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	<b>Very effctve</b>	<b>Smwht effctve</b>	<b>Not very effctve</b>	<b>Not at all effctve</b>
Recycle used motor oil by taking it to local service stations	78%	18	2	1
Stop using any pesticides	47%	40	9	4
Only eat fish that was caught or farmed in a way that protects the oceans	44%	41	10	4
Get involved in a local environmental project in your community	35%	51	8	5
Use less water at home by taking shorter showers, watering lawns less, and washing clothes less	33%	45	14	8
Write email, or telephone an elected official about the importance of laws to protect the oceans	30%	47	15	8
Buy fewer consumer goods	18%	46	22	12

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Q58-Q64 Here are some ways individuals can take part in protecting the oceans. Please rate how effective, as far as you know, each of the following is as a way for individuals to protect the oceans -- very effective, somewhat effective, not very effective, or not at all effective...

# 10. Attitudinal Groups

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	Population
1. Young Beachlovers	20%
2. Zoo Aquarium Museum Goers	30%
3. Older Beachlovers	20%
4. Unconnected and Unconcerned	20%
5. Landlocked and Unconcerned	10%

# 1. Young Beachlovers      20% of population

## **Who they are:**

- Among Youngest (29% <30; 58% <45%)
- More Women (58%)
- Have Children (40%)
- High minority (black 15%; Hispanics 14%)
- Low HH income (60% < \$50,000)
- More Democrats (38%) and independents (25%)

## **Where to find them:**

- At the ocean:      46% live near ocean  
                             60% visited beach last year  
                             16% gone fishing last year
- Visiting aquariums (32% last year)
- Visiting science museums (28% last year)
- Environmental donors (35% last year)
- Zoo or aquarium donors (23% last year)

# 1. Young Beachlovers      20% of population

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## Attitudes:

- Place highest personal importance on ocean protection (100% rate protecting ocean a 9 or 10).
- Most likely to see damage to oceans as extremely serious and to rate ocean health as poor.
- 100% *disagree* that they do *not* personally impact oceans health.
- Recognize the oceans' vulnerabilities.
- Most likely to view oceans as relaxing (76%), fun (68%), vast (76%), and important for their emotional well-being (63%).

## Communications:

- Reinforce connection to oceans as places of fun and relaxation that we all need to protect.

## 2. Zoo Aquarium Museum Goers 30% of pop.

### **Who they are:**

- Among youngest (27% <30; 58% <45)
- Slightly more educated (35% College+)
- Work in white-collar jobs (30%)

### **Where to find them:**

- Aquariums (35% last year); zoos (44%); and science museums (33%)
- Enjoying Nature:
  - Visiting beach (55% last year)
  - Boating (23%)
  - Fishing (14%)
  - Visiting National or State Parks (64%)
- Environmental donors (35% last year)
- Zoo or Aquarium donors (20% last year)
- Volunteering (55% last year)

## 2. Zoo Aquarium Museum Goers 30% of pop.

### **Attitudes:**

- Place only moderate personal importance on ocean protection (100% rate protecting the oceans a 4 to 8).

Less likely to see damage to oceans as serious.

- 99% *disagree* that they do *not* personally impact ocean health.
- Recognize oceans' vulnerabilities.

### **Communications:**

- Educate about the current state of oceans' health and the need to act.
- Educate about the role of oceans in the balance of nature.
- Reinforce personal connection to ocean and nature.

### 3. Older Beachlovers

20% of pop.

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#### Who they are:

- Among oldest (23% 60+; 52% 45+)
- Slightly more women (56%)
- Slightly more blacks (14%) and Hispanics (12%)
- Blue collar workers (36%)
- Lowest HH income (26% <\$25,000; 61% <\$50,000)
- Lowest level of education (39% <college)
- More Democrats (42%) and independents (21%)

#### Where to find them:

- At the ocean:     42% live near ocean  
                          58% visited beach last year  
                          14% gone fishing last year
- More live in Northeast (24%) or South (39%)
- Less likely to visit aquariums (27% last year), zoos (35% last year), and science museums (23%).

### 3. Older Beachlovers

20% of pop.

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#### Attitudes:

- Place moderate to high personal importance on ocean protection (100% rate protecting the oceans an 8, 9, or 10).
- Among most likely to consider damage to oceans as extremely serious and to rate ocean health as poor.
- Majorities recognize the oceans' vulnerabilities.
- Among most likely to view the oceans as relaxing (73%), fun (72%), and important of their emotional well being (46%).
- But, 99% *agree* that they do *not* personally impact ocean health.

#### Communications:

- Educate about individual role in ocean destruction.

Reinforce personal connection to oceans.

## 4. Unconnected and Unconcerned 20% of pop.

### **Who they are:**

- Older (25% 60+; 52% 45+)
- Slightly more men (54%)

### **Where to find them:**

- Among most likely to visit science museums (29% last year) and aquariums (31%)
- Least likely to have visited a zoo (30%)
- Less likely to have visited the beach (46%)

## 4. Unconnected and Unconcerned 20% of pop.

### **Attitudes:**

- Place only moderate importance on ocean protection (100% rate protecting oceans between 4 and 7).
- Among least likely to consider damage to oceans as extremely serious.
- Among least likely to view oceans as relaxing (51%), fun (43%), or important for their emotional well-being (18%).
- 99% *agree* that they do *not* personally impact ocean health.
- But, they do recognize oceans' vulnerabilities.

### **Communications**

- Educate about ocean health and individuals' role in ocean destruction.
- Describe the balance of nature and the impact of oceans of their daily lives.

## 5. Landlocked and Unconcerned 10% of pop.

### **Who they are:**

- Older (26% 60 +; 51% 45+)
- More men (57%)
- Higher levels of education (41% college +)
- Professionals (29%)
- Most Republican (41%)

### **Where to find them:**

- Active in communities: Contacted elected official (34% last year)
- More in small city or town (37%) and in the Midwest (30%) or South (35%)
- No strong personal connections to oceans:
  - Not likely to live near the ocean (22%)
  - Least likely to visit aquarium (20% last year)
  - Less likely to visit beach (40%); go boating (13%); or fishing (8%)
- But, do visit zoos in same proportion as population overall (37%)

## 5. Landlocked and Unconcerned 10% of pop.

### **Attitudes:**

- Place lowest personal importance on ocean protection. (100% rate protecting the oceans between 1 and 5).
- Most likely to believe ocean health is good or excellent. More than nine in ten do not consider damage to oceans as extremely serious.
- Among least likely to view oceans as relaxing (43%), fun (43%), or important for their emotional well being (12%).
- Majority *agrees* that it does *not* personally impact ocean health (57% agree).
- Among the most likely not to recognize the oceans' vulnerabilities.
- Least likely to say oceans are essential to human survival (56% very much agree).

### **Communications:**

Educate about interconnectedness of all living things.

- Educate about the importance of ocean health and its impact on humans.
- May use a more utilitarian approach.

# Recommendations for Communications

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The Task: Need to increase the urgency of ocean protection.

1. Combine emotion and information.
2. Start with values.
3. Appeal to individual responsibility.
4. Connect values to message of recreation and healthy futures.
5. Need further education: destructive fishing practices and coastal development.

# Recommendations for Communications

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6. Generally persuadable targets: women, blacks, Hispanics and those who live in places close to the ocean.
7. Aquariums, zoos, and science museums should use specific messages to communicate to different attitudinal groups.