

Americans Want Government and Business to Do More To Protect The Ocean-National Marine Sanctuary Foundation/NORC Poll

Over 80 Percent of Americans favor protecting marine areas that have environmental, educational, or cultural importance.

WASHINGTON, DC, USA, September 28, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Americans, regardless of demographics, political party, or geographic location, care deeply about the ocean and its health. They want the government and business to do more to protect the ocean and ensure activities do not harm ocean life, according to a new [survey](#) conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago for the [National Marine Sanctuary Foundation](#).

The nationally representative survey of 1,086 Americans, the first of its kind, provides in-depth insights about the public's views of ocean protection and environmental policy. The findings demonstrate Americans' strong desire for leaders to act to protect the ocean, its health, and the life it sustains and highlight Americans' concern regarding ocean health. The poll shows broad public support for policies that will protect marine environments.

The survey reveals that Americans overwhelmingly support policies to reduce water pollution (86%), protect threatened and endangered marine species (85%), and reduce single use plastic



A sea lion swims through a kelp forest in Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary. Photo credit: Curtis Wee



Two children see a whale surface while on a whale watching excursion in Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary. Photo credit: Matt McIntosh

pollution (76%). Land-based pollution harms fragile ecosystems and species, and increasingly lead to human health concerns such as harmful algal bloom toxins and contaminated seafood.

“This poll makes it resoundingly clear that Americans want our government and business leaders to take more action to protect the ocean and all it provides to us,” said Kris Sarri, president and CEO of the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation. “From investing in marine sanctuaries and protecting awe-inspiring species to reducing pollution and addressing climate change, Americans are clear-eyed about what it will take to strengthen conservation efforts.

Without stronger federal support and sustainable business practices, our efforts to fight climate change and protect our ocean will undoubtedly fall short. As we celebrate the 50-year anniversary of national marine sanctuaries this year, we stand with the overwhelming majority of Americans committed to saving our spectacular places for generations to come.”

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Eighty (80) percent of Americans said they favor protecting marine areas that have environmental, educational, or cultural importance, including developing a system of protected areas along the coast and in the ocean, like our National Park System. They believe that conservation of ocean wildlife and habitats would be the highest priority for marine protected areas and favor the establishment of marine protected areas in which oil and gas drilling (70%), commercial fishing (69%), or mining (65%) is not allowed. Marine protected areas are one of the most effective tools to safeguard ocean health and the species that call the ocean home, yet only 1.9 percent of waters surrounding the continental U.S. are currently protected.



A diver surveys a shipwreck in Monitor National Marine Sanctuary, the first sanctuary to be designated in the National Marine Sanctuary System. Photo credit: Monitor National Marine Sanctuary/NOAA

“Life on earth is not possible without the ocean. The wide variety of life in our ocean and its ecosystems literally underpin the health of the planet and our social and economic well-being,” said Sarri. “Communities from Alaska to California and across to New York are calling on the Biden Administration to create new marine sanctuaries. And we stand with them in their efforts

to expand protection for a healthy ocean and the communities that rely on it.”

Americans overwhelmingly favor increasing funding for national marine sanctuaries. Sixty-seven percent support using money that the federal government earns from energy development in the ocean to support conservation programs. Sixty-six percent support collecting fees on uses such as mining, shipping, energy development, to support ocean protection and restoration. Similarly, 66% support increased federal funding for programs that protect and restore U.S. ocean waters.

Over half of Americans say that climate change is the biggest and fastest growing threat to the diversity of life in the ocean, and 53% agree that protecting and restoring ocean habitats and species would help to reduce climate change. Despite concerns, many are unfamiliar with some of the most urgent threats that climate change poses to the ocean. The ocean absorbs 26 percent of human-caused carbon emissions – 20 times more than what is absorbed by plants and soil on land. Most Americans, however, were unaware of the ocean’s role in regulating climate or negative impacts including ocean acidification.

Majorities of Americans agree that many of the benefits the ocean provides are very or extremely important. Of those benefits, most (83%) say that the ocean’s role in sustaining marine life and habitats is extremely or very important. Americans also recognize the critical life-sustaining services the ocean provides, such as the air we breathe and the food we eat.

Intensive use of our ocean and runoff from land-based pollution sources are just two of many factors that stress our fragile ecosystems—and increasingly lead to human health concerns. Waterborne infectious diseases, harmful algal bloom toxins, contaminated seafood, and chemical pollutants are other signals. Just as we can threaten the health of our ocean, so, too, can our ocean threaten our health.

[About the Study](#)

This survey was conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago with funding from the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation.

Data were collected using AmeriSpeak®, NORC’s probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. household population. Interviews for this survey were conducted between August 8 and 18, 2022, with adults age 18 or older representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Panel members were randomly draw from AmeriSpeak, and 1,086 completed the survey – 1,061 via the web and 25 via telephone.

The final stage completion rate is 20.6 percent, the weighted household panel response rate is 20.3 percent, and the weighted household panel retention rate is 78.4 percent, for a cumulative response rate of 3.3 percent. The overall margin of sampling error for the AmeriSpeak sample is +/-4.1 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level, including the design effect.

The proper description of the survey's authorship is as follows: This is a survey conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago for the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation.

The National Marine Sanctuary Foundation is the national non-profit partner for the National Marine Sanctuary System and a leading voice for U.S. protected waters. NORC at the University of Chicago is an independent research institution that delivers reliable data and rigorous analysis to guide critical programmatic, business and policy decisions.

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