

# *America, the Ocean, and Climate Change: New Research Insights for Conservation, Awareness, and Action*

# youth

## **Market Research Findings FAQ: Youth**

### **Who fits within the research definition of “youth”?**

Tweens and teens, especially those between the ages of 12 and 17. For zoos, aquariums, museums (ZAMs) and other organizations interested in advancing conservation, our research showed this age group is one to focus much more on to help bring about long-term positive changes connected to climate, ocean conservation and other related environmental issues.

### **But does this age group have any influence?**

Absolutely, and not only in the future. American parents with children under age 18 believe that their children are excellent sources of information about the environment. Moreover, the research indicated that adults look to teens and tweens for guidance on environmental issues. The adults may remain the "decision makers" but their children are increasingly becoming the "opinion-makers." More research is needed, but the implications of the data to date are profound and compelling – youth have a lot of influence on their household's conservation-related behaviors.

### **How strong is youth interest in environmental issues?**

Stronger than that of any other age groups. Importantly, more than 80% of Americans now self identify either as an “active participant” (22%) or as someone “sympathetic to” (59%) the environmental movement; these numbers are strongest for youth. On the specific question of confronting the challenge of climate change, approximately 75% of those under 20 said this was a top priority, while only 50% of those over 65 said the same.



### **Does youth interest in environmental issues extend out to the oceans?**

Youth expressed a high level of concern that cut across all environmental issues, and they had the highest level of concern about the state of the world's oceans. However, this is not to say that they are ahead of the curve when it comes to connecting their concern for climate change with their concern for the ocean -- the bridge between these two issues still needs to be built for all age groups.

### **Are these “top of mind” concerns?**

For most youth, these are not issues that are always on their minds. For all age groups, youth included, the indications are that they must be asked about these issues in order to be engaged on them.

### **Are youth willing to act upon their concerns?**

Absolutely. The research found that youth not only had a higher level of awareness of ocean-related issues, but also a greater propensity to modify their behaviors and engage in advocacy than adults. In fact, youth tend to see themselves as already active, claiming to be engaged in at least one ocean conservation action.

### **Are youth open to further education or new ideas about protecting the environment?**



Although youth were the most likely to express an interest in environmental issues, and the most likely to be acting on that interest, they also were the least likely to believe that they were well informed on these issues.

### **Who do youth trust for information about ways to protect the ocean?**

Their local aquarium for one. The research found that all age groups generally agreed, while youth strongly agreed with the statement, “Aquariums are the best source of information about ways to protect and conserve the ocean.” ZAMs in general are trusted resources for information on how to help.

### **Do youth want ZAMs to provide them with specific suggestions as to what to do?**

Absolutely. Youth expressed great enthusiasm for aquariums, in particular, suggesting specific ways to help conserve the ocean. They were the most likely to express a belief that individuals are responsible for protecting the environment, and were therefore among the most interested in solution-oriented actions that they could take on their own.

### **So should we expect to see long lines of youth at the gate?**

Not necessarily on-site, but perhaps online. The research suggests that the key is connecting with youth online, and, notably, this is meeting them on their preferred web sites (e.g. Facebook), not just trying to get them to come to a ZAM web site.

**Find out more on [Motivating Teens and Tweens to Protect the Ocean](#).**

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