

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

climate change

Market Research Findings FAQ: Climate Change

To what extent is the American public concerned about climate change?

The research found that climate change is without a doubt the environmental issue about which the public is now most concerned, much more so than even air and water pollution.

Should zoo, aquarium, and museum (ZAM) staff expect a lot of questions about climate change?

Not necessarily. While the public is concerned about climate change, the issue is not “top of mind.” Unlike issues such as the economy or national security, the public must be asked about climate change in order to be engaged on it.

Is the public currently connecting their concern about climate change with their concern about the health of the natural world, and, more specifically, the health of the ocean?

There appears to be a disconnect. When asked to list the impacts of climate change on the ocean, the public is still eight times more likely to answer “don’t know” than to give any other answer.

Are certain segments of the public more interested in climate change than others?

Yes, youth are much more concerned. While more than 80% of Americans now self identify as either an “active participant” (22%) or “sympathetic to” (59%) the environmental movement, these numbers are strongest for those between the ages

Environmental Issues of Greatest Concern

| November 2008 | | | September 2009 | | |
|---------------|---------------------------------|-------|----------------|---------------------------------|-------|
| | Lexical Analysis Summary | Index | | Lexical Analysis Summary | Index |
| 1 | Climate change (global warming) | 237.9 | 1 | Climate change (global warming) | 265.3 |
| 2 | Sustainable/renewable energy | 123.5 | 2 | Sustainable/renewable energy | 155.9 |
| 3 | Air pollution | 88.0 | 3 | Offshore oil drilling | 80.7 |
| 4 | Offshore oil drilling | 83.4 | 4 | Air pollution | 80.4 |
| 5 | Water shortages | 74.2 | 5 | Water pollution | 71.3 |
| 6 | DNK | 55.5 | 6 | Nuclear waste | 49.2 |
| 7 | Water pollution | 53.9 | 7 | Medical waste | 47.0 |
| 8 | Nuclear waste | 47.7 | 8 | Industrial waste | 46.5 |
| 9 | Medical waste | 43.8 | 9 | DNK | 45.8 |
| 10 | Drilling for oil | 40.1 | 10 | Drilling for oil | 43.7 |

of 12 and 17. 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. Moreover, the research indicated that parents look to their teens and tweens for guidance on environmental issues.

Does the public expect ZAMs to talk about climate change?

Absolutely. As with other environmental issues, the public expects ZAMs to inform and guide them on how to respond to climate change. Moreover, the public trusts the environmental information they receive from ZAMs much more than what is presented by government agencies or the corporate world.

What type of information are they seeking from our institutions?

The clear majority of the public accepts that climate change is a problem, and is looking for ways to be part of the solution. Americans are especially interested in how they can act as individuals to help. An increasing percentage of the public now believes that their own actions can have a “fair amount” or a “great deal” of impact when it comes to solving problems like climate change. And they not only want, but expect ZAMs to provide this type of information.

Isn't there already too much information out there about climate change?

Yes and no. There is a lot of information about climate change presented by a wide range of sources, but there is not enough information about solution steps individuals can take coming from trusted sources such as ZAMs.

How are ZAMs addressing this issue?

Many ZAMs, especially zoos and aquariums, are discussing climate change as a threat to the natural environment, often focusing on the way climate change is harming a particular animal and steps visitors can take to help. As one aquarium official put it, “We know our visitors are interested in marine mammals, so we are using [the impact of climate change on marine mammals] as ‘the hook’ to engage audiences.”

Here is how two aquariums are using the market research:

[Monterey Bay Aquarium](#)

[North Carolina Aquarium at Fort Fisher](#)

We will be adding more examples like these of ZAMs using our market research. If you, have a case study you would like to have us share, please [contact us](#).



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