

Nine In Ten Americans Believe Biodiversity Is Important To Human Beings

But only one in four are aware of recent announcements regarding wildlife population losses

NEW YORK , N.Y. - December 16, 2014 -December 28 marks the anniversary of Richard Nixon signing the Endangered Species Act (ESA) into law. It's been four decades since the 1973 signing, but a recent **report** (http://assets.worldwildlife.org/publications/723/files/original/WWF-LPR2014-low_res.pdf?1413912230) from World Wildlife Fund indicating that [between 1970 and 2010], population sizes of vertebrate species have dropped by half points to a continued need to protect wildlife species.

When The Harris Poll asked American adults whether they were aware of these findings from WWF, one quarter (25%) affirmed that they had. Other recent environmental announcements earned the same or similar awareness levels, such as:

- The Pentagon's announcement that climate change represents an immediate threat to national security (25%)
- The announcement by NASA that Antarctic sea ice extent reached a record high in September (25%)
- The EPA's announcement that average fuel economy for cars and trucks available in the U.S. has hit a record high (24%)

Over half of Americans (56%) are aware that California recently became the first state to ban single-use plastic bags.

These are some of the results of **The Harris Poll®** of 2,205 U.S. adults surveyed online between October 15 and 20, 2014.

Biodiversity

Though the relatively low awareness of the WWF's report might lead some to assume that Americans don't feel this issue affects humans, 90% of adults do believe that variety of life forms on earth, also known as biodiversity, is important to the well-being of humans, with 50% believing it is very important. Moreover, nine in ten American adults (91%) also believe biodiversity is important to the overall earth's well-being, with over half (55%) feeling it is very important.

- Opinions change along political alignments, with Democrats and Independents more convinced than Republicans that biodiversity is very important to the well-being of human beings (57% & 54% vs. 38% respectively) and the earth overall

represents an immediate threat to national security	25	21	22	27	39	31	20	22	31	26
Announcement by NASA that Antarctic sea ice extent reached a record high in September	25	21	23	26	37	29	22	21	28	28
Announcement by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) that the Earth has lost half of its wildlife population over the past 40 years	25	26	23	23	27	26	23	13	33	27
The EPA's announcement that average fuel economy for cars and trucks available in the U.S. has hit a record high	24	20	23	26	35	30	20	25	25	26
None of these	31	37	36	28	13	28	33	30	31	24

TABLE 2

LIKELIHOOD HUMAN BEHAVIOR IS THE PRIMARY CAUSE OF WILDLIFE POPULATION DECLINE

by Political Party

Regardless of whether you were aware of the announcement regarding drops in the Earth's wildlife population prior to this survey, how likely or unlikely do you believe it is that human behavior is the primary cause of this decline in wildlife population?

Base: U.S. Adults

	Political Party			
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
Likely (NET)	86	76	93	86

Very likely	49	34	59	50
Somewhat likely	37	42	34	36
Not Likely (NET)	14	24	7	14
Not very likely	10	17	5	10
Not at all likely	4	7	1	4

TABLE 3

IMPORTANCE OF BIODIVERSITY TO THE WELL-BEING OF HUMAN BEINGS

by Political Party

How important, if at all, do you believe variety of life forms on Earth (also known as biodiversity) is to the well-being of human beings?

Base: U.S. Adults

	Total	Political Party		
		Rep	Dem	Ind
		%	%	%
Important (NET)	90	86	93	91
Very important	50	38	57	54
Somewhat important	40	48	36	37
Not Important (NET)	10	14	7	9
Not very important	8	12	4	8
Not at all important	2	2	2	1

TABLE 4

IMPORTANCE OF BIODIVERSITY TO THE WELL-BEING OF THE EARTH OVERALL

by Political Party

And how important, if at all, do you believe biodiversity is to the well-being of the Earth overall?

Base: U.S. Adults

	Total	Political Party		
		Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
Important (NET)	91	87	92	92
Very important	55	43	60	61
Somewhat important	36	44	32	32
Not Important (NET)	9	13	8	8
Not very important	7	11	5	6
Not at all important	2	2	2	2

Methodology

This **Harris Poll** was conducted online within the United States between October 15 and 20, 2014 among 2,205 adults (aged 18 and over). Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, The Harris Poll avoids the words margin of error as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Poll surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the adult population. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in our panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

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