

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY ATTITUDES TOWARDS MARINE SANCTUARIES

Summary

In April 2011 Patterson Market Research undertook a quota controlled random dial survey of 604 adult Western Australians. The survey is a reliable assessment of community attitudes and opinions about the health and importance of the marine environment off the WA coast.

The main findings are:

1. Almost two thirds (63%) of respondents believe that WA's marine life is in decline.
2. Almost two thirds (61%) of respondents rate the Government acting to protect WA's marine life as being a "very important" issue and overall 92% believe it is at least "quite important".
3. 85% of respondents approve of the Premier taking action to protect marine life in the Kimberley with just 5% disapproving.
4. When considering the best way to protect WA's marine life, almost 8 out of 10 respondents believe that Marine and scientific institutions and Universities should have a high influence on Government. Two thirds (65%) believe that conservation organisations should have a high influence, 4 out of 10 believe that the recreational fishing groups (and the same proportion) that the commercial fishing industry should have a high influence and only 1 in 5 believe that the offshore mining industry should have a high influence on Government policy. Additionally, regular and frequent fishers are more likely to want Government policy driven by marine science than the opinions of the recreational fishing groups.
5. 8 out of 10 (81%) respondents support the WA Government working with the Federal Government to establish sanctuaries in Federal waters off the WA coast.
6. Some 64% of respondents believe that 30% or more of the waters off the WA coast should be put into marine sanctuaries and over 1 in 4 believe at this figure should be at least 50%. Support for up to 30% protection in sanctuaries reaches an average of 71% of respondents when they are described as being in Federal waters. Just 1% believe that no sanctuaries should be created, and 2% believe that up to 10% should be placed into marine sanctuaries.
7. 60% of frequent fishers, 67% ALP voters and 65% Liberals/National voters believe that it is acceptable for up to 30% of Federal waters off metropolitan Perth to be placed in marine sanctuaries. This increases to 73% of respondents finding it acceptable for up to 30% of Federal waters off the Kimberley to be placed in marine sanctuaries.
8. Just 7% of respondents report that they have fished in Federal waters in the last 12 months.
9. 56% of respondents indicate that they have undertaken no fishing activity in the last 12 months. Ten percent of respondents report they have fished more than 12 times in the last twelve months.