

Pilot Project to Assess Behavior and Attitudes Regarding Discarded Trash and Ocean Health

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Project Conducted Summer 2012
Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center
The Ocean Project



Strategy Session with The Ocean Project

June 2012

Learned about market research

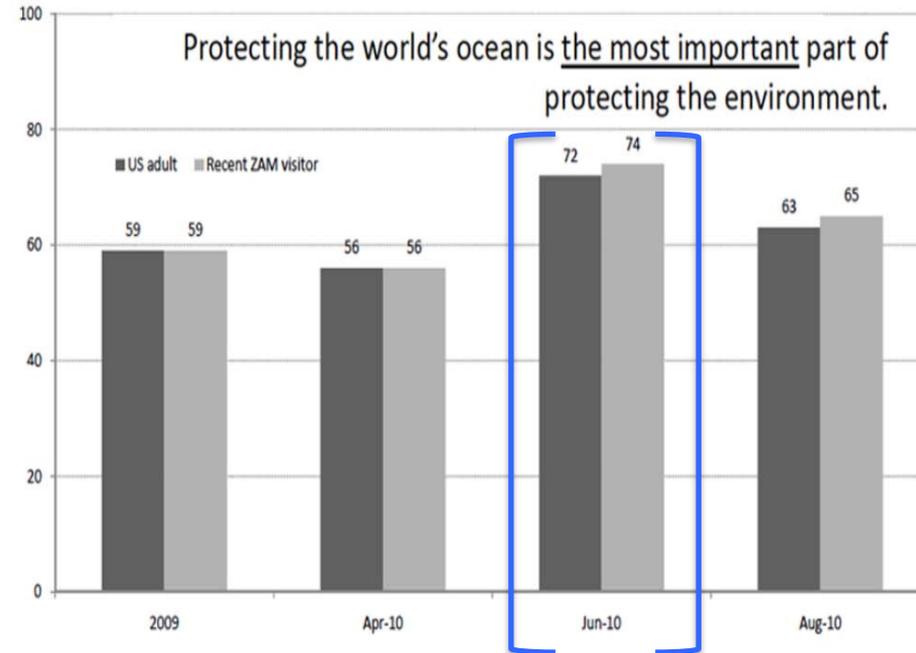
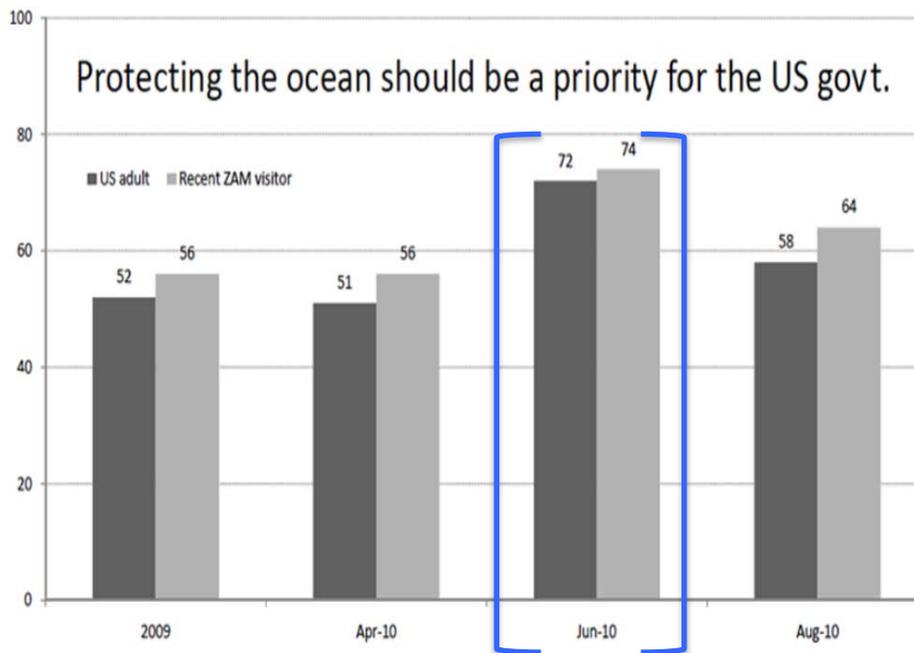
Decided on pilot project

The Ocean Project Findings

1. Concern for the ocean

“Less a matter of ambivalence, more a matter of perceived urgency”

EXAMPLE: Impact of the oil spill



Strongly disagree "1" ← → Strongly agree "100"
Scalar variable responses indicate a level of agreement with a proposition.



The Ocean Project Findings

2. Understanding of the threats

“No evidence to indicate an increase in the public’s awareness and understanding of the major threats to the ocean”

Implications

- Discuss threats in context of specific places or species
- View increasing knowledge and inspiring action as separate goals

The Ocean Project Findings

3. Willingness to act

“Americans see themselves as green-friendly and are looking for ways to reinforce and project that self perception”

Implications

- Start with solutions
- Position audience as part of solutions
- Focus on impact asks
- (Reminder) View increasing knowledge and inspiring action as separate goals

The Ocean Project Findings

4. Importance of teens

“Highest level of concern, most open to new information and most confident in their ability to make a difference”

Implications

- Focus on youth when seeking to advance ocean conservation
- Engage youth in development of programs

The Ocean Project Findings

5. Expectations of ZAMs

“The public (and especially our public) expects and trusts ZAMs to provide information about the ocean and conservation”

Implications

- ZAMs have an important role in providing action steps
- On site and online



Photos:
Bill McLellan
UNCW

Marine Debris

A familiar issue for
the Aquarium's
Stranding Response Program



Aquarium Pilot Project:
***Assess Impact of Communication Measures
Related to Marine Debris***

**Measure discarded trash on campus
Survey visitor attitudes on ocean health**

Three time periods, different conditions:

- 1) No changes to campus**
- 2) Addition of recycle and butt bins to outdoor lots**
- 3) Addition of inspirational signage with animal focus**

Conducted July-August 2012

Establish Areas for Trash Collection



Google earth



Enlist Awesome Volunteers!



Develop Inspirational Signage



**Ocean Waste
is Bad Taste**



*Thank you for keeping
Aquarium grounds and local
waterways litter free*



**Don't Let Your Trash
Become Their Problem**



**All Drains Lead to a Waterway.
Please Dispose of Litter Properly.**



Develop Inspirational Signage



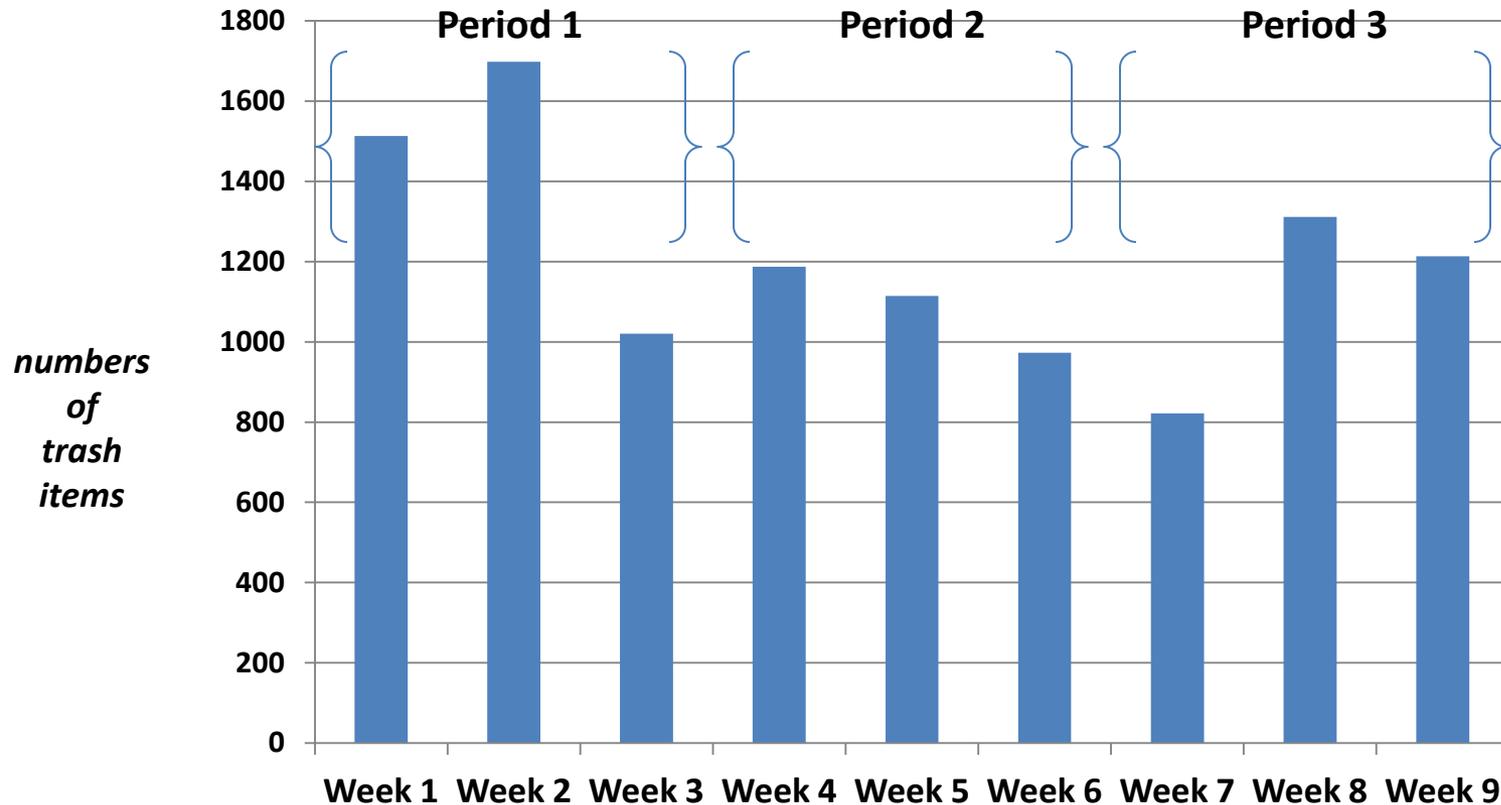
Develop Visitor Surveys

Utilize iPads for surveys

Collect 250 surveys each period



Pilot Project Results

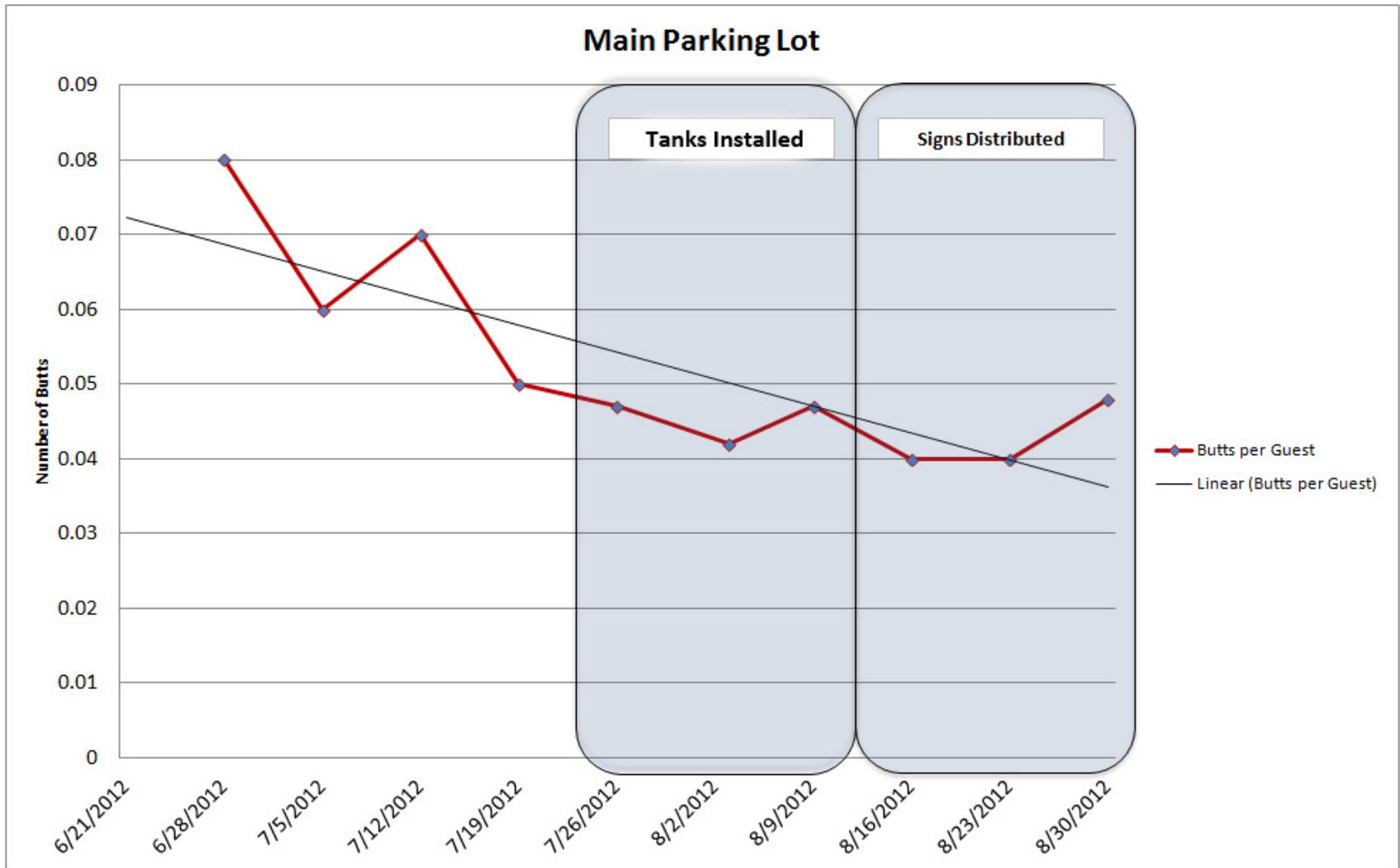


Week 4 – recycle bins installed

Week 7 – signage installed

Pilot Project Results

Cigarette Butts



Visitor Survey Demographics

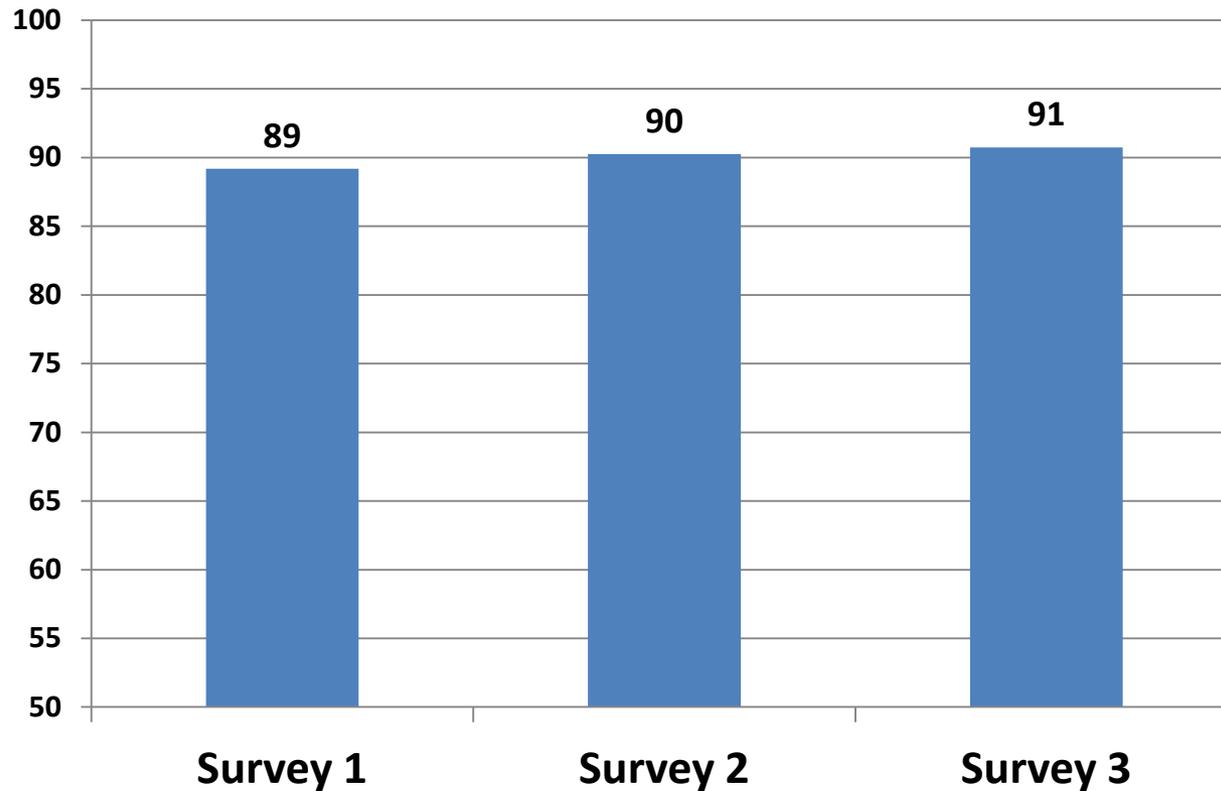
Visitors Surveyed (% of total): 2.3 – 4.1%

**Gender: 66% Female
34% Male**

**Age: 48% were 34 or less
52% were 35 or more**

Visitor Survey Questions

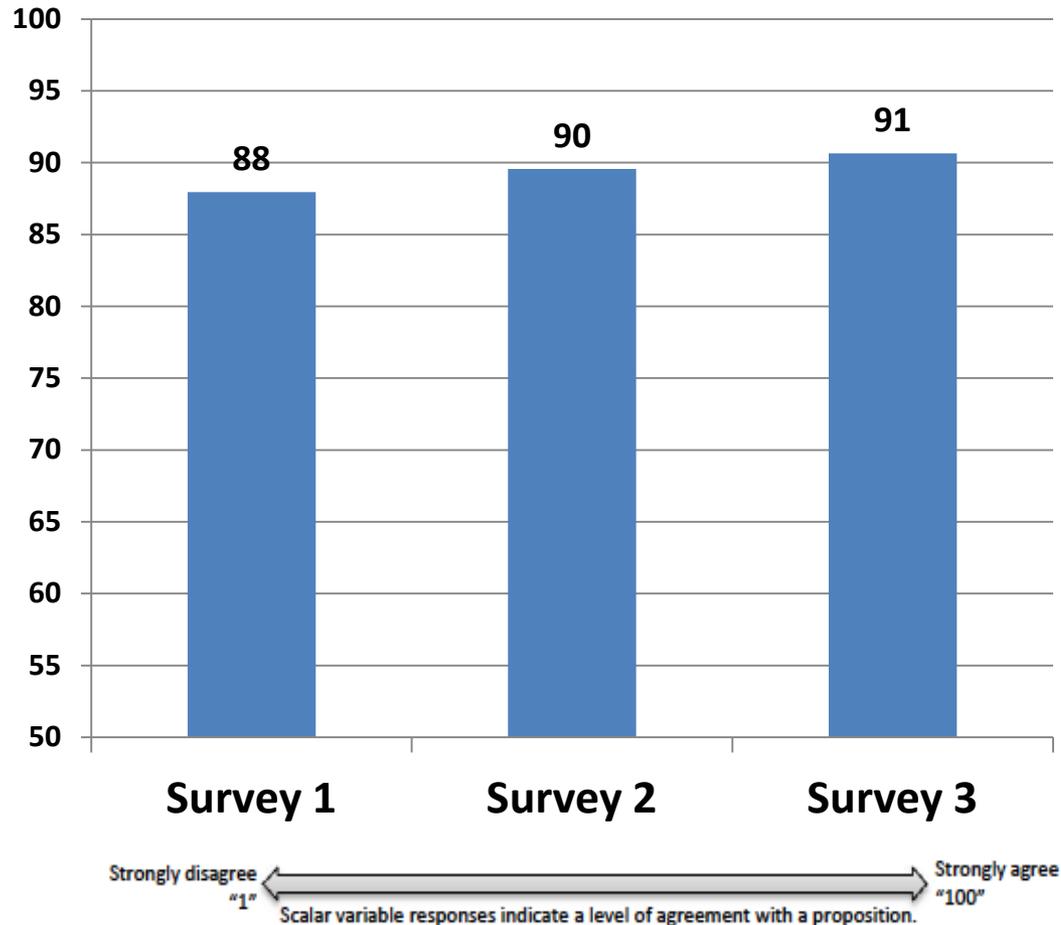
The health of the ocean and its animals is affected by the actions of the general public?



Strongly disagree "1" ← → Strongly agree "100"
Scalar variable responses indicate a level of agreement with a proposition.

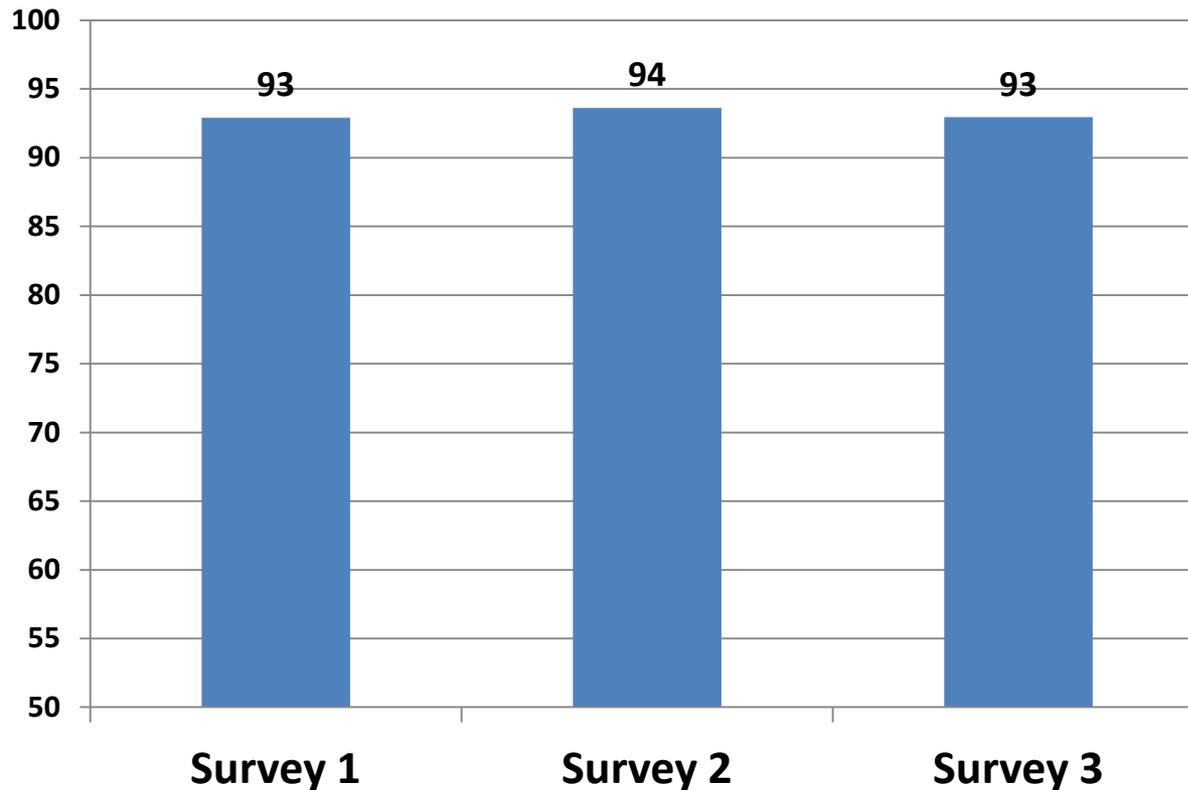
Visitor Survey Questions

Aquariums should suggest or recommend ways for the general public to help protect the ocean and its animals?



Visitor Survey Questions

I believe the following pose a risk to the health of the ocean and its animals: Plastic pollution and marine debris

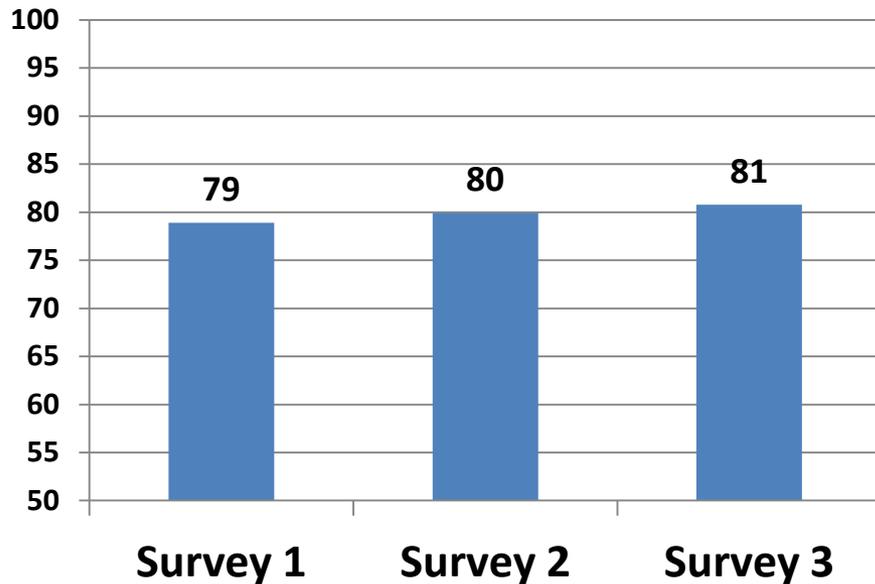


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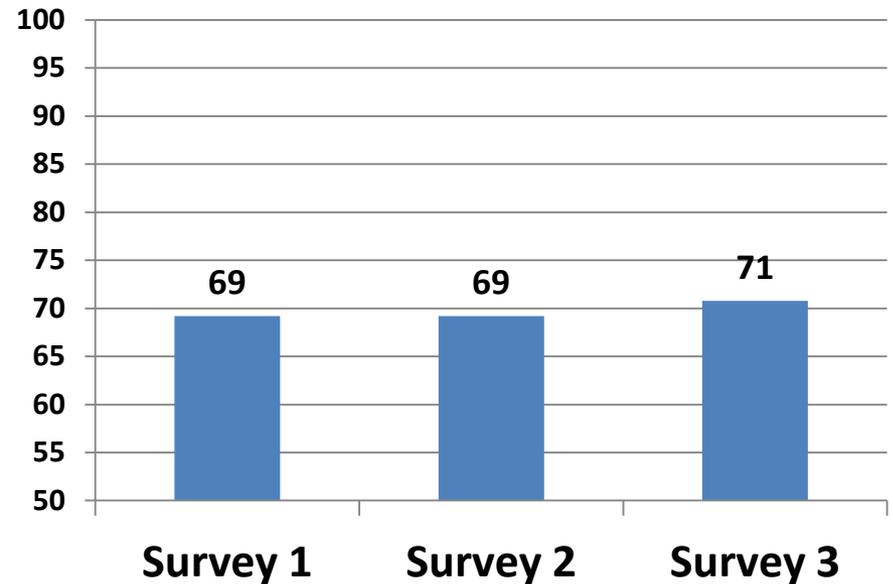
Visitor Survey Questions

After my experience at the Aquarium today, I am likely to speak with friends and family about:

Recycling and/or properly disposing of non-recyclable trash



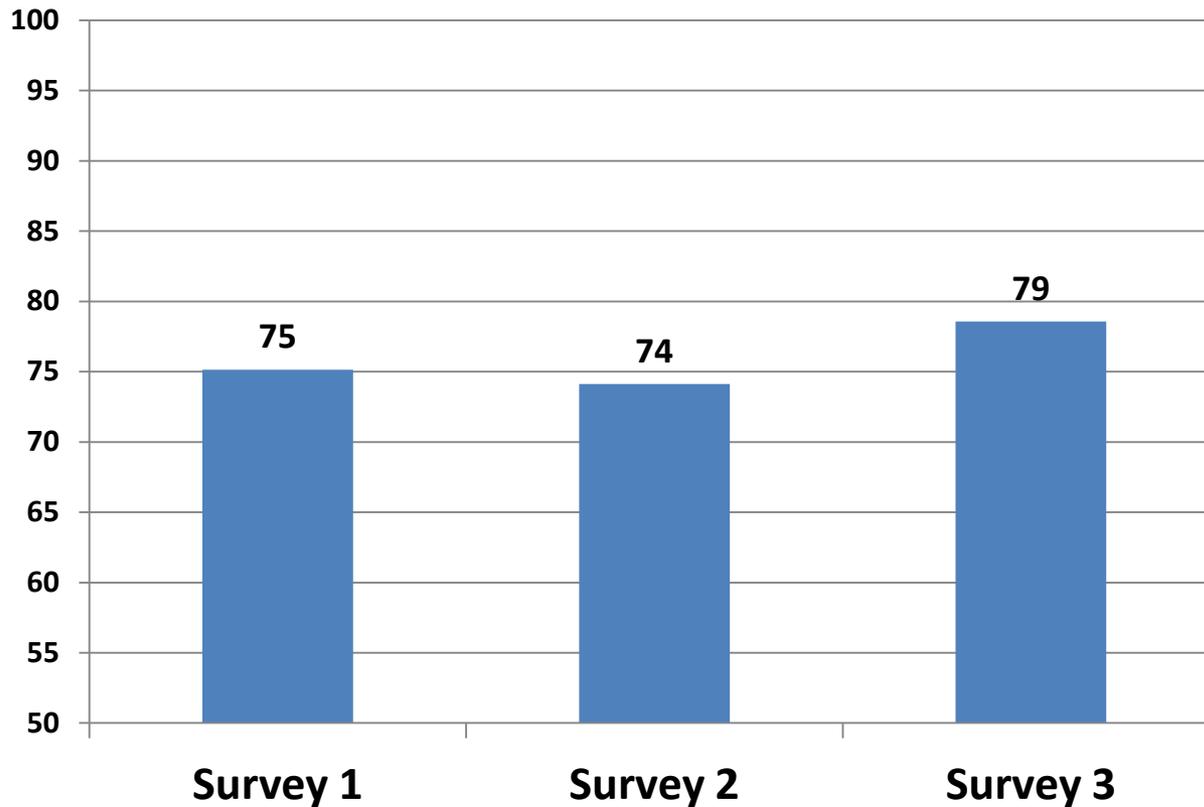
Participating in an outdoor clean-up in our community



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Visitor Survey Questions

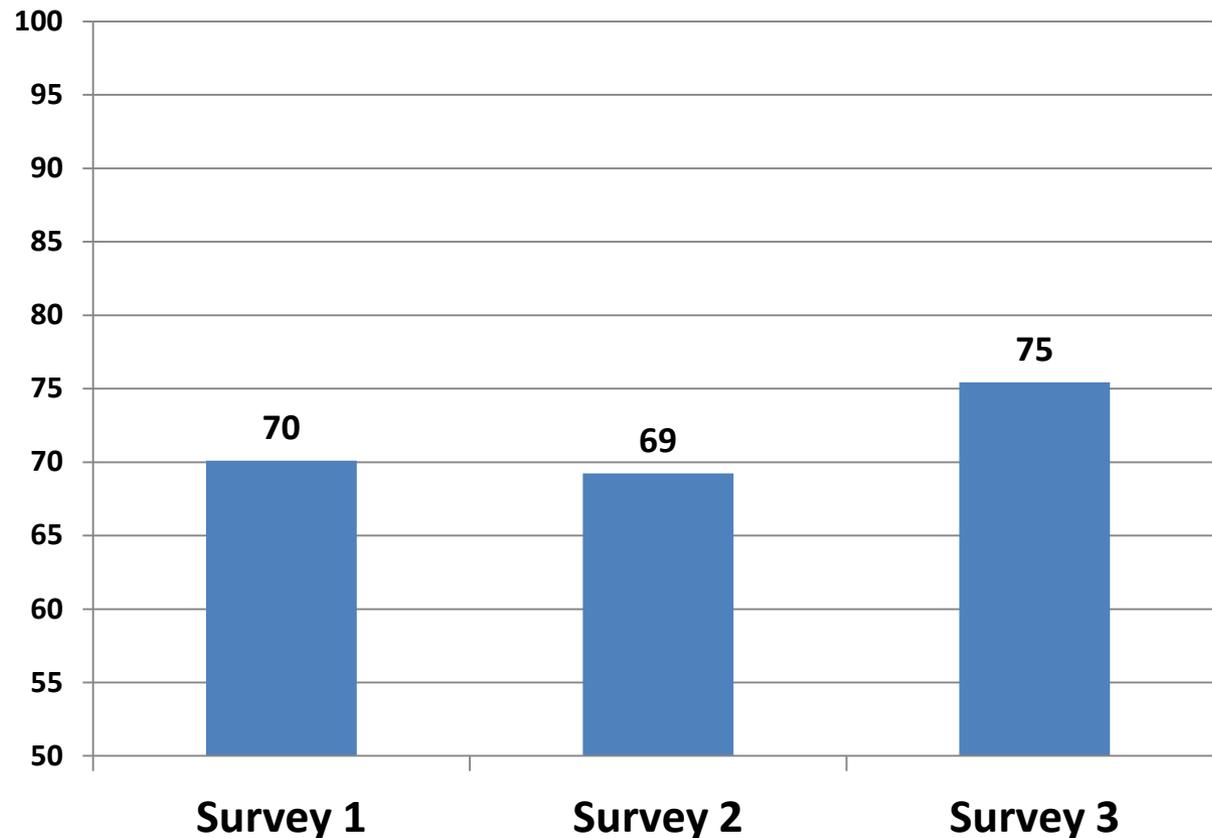
During my visit today, I learned about ways people like me can help protect our ocean and its animals?



Strongly disagree "1" ← → Strongly agree "100"
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Visitor Survey Questions

While in the parking lot or on the nature trail, did you stop to read the signs about the Aquarium's programs and/or exhibits?



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Summary of Results

- **Some evidence of trash reduction, especially cigarette butts**
- **Use of additional recycle bins, but unable to link to reduction in discarded waste**
- **Inspirational signage elicited positive response from visitors, staff and volunteers**
- **Aquarium visitors recognize that marine debris is a major threat to ocean health**
- **Aquarium visitors understand that their actions affect the health of the ocean and its animals, and believe that aquariums should suggest ways that they can help**

Acknowledgements

The Ocean Project – Douglas Meyer

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Virginia Aquarium Green Team

Virginia Aquarium Staff & Volunteers

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Shawn Reid, Jovonne Vrechek

***Mentoring Young Scientists* Students**

Keep Virginia Beautiful

Virginia Beach Clean Community Commission