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Poll:

Most Americans See Population Growth as Threat to Wildlife, Climate



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If you feel like our crowded planet is taking a tough toll on the wild, you're not alone.

A new poll finds a clear majority of Americans believe the world's growing human population is driving wildlife species toward extinction and is making climate change worse. Respondents also said addressing the human population -- which topped 7 billion in 2011 -- is an important environmental issue and that society has a "moral obligation" to address wildlife extinctions related to population growth.

The national poll of 657 registered voters was commissioned by the Center for Biological Diversity. It was conducted by Public Policy Polling on Feb. 22, 23 and 24. The poll has a margin of error of +/-3.85 percent.

Population isn't talked about much, but this poll shows it's an emerging environmental issue that Americans recognize as a critical component of protecting wildlife from extinction.

We're hearing it from scientists, too, who say population growth as a driving factor in so many of our environmental issues today. You don't have to look far, whether it's sprawling development crowding out Florida panthers and sea turtles, loss of wild habitat for San Joaquin kit foxes in California or the climate crisis pushing polar bears ice seals toward extinction. It's heartening to see that most Americans understand these connections and don't want to see them ignored.

Here are some highlights from the poll:

•64 percent said that, with the human population expected to hit 10 billion by 2050, wildlife will be adversely affected.

•61 percent said they are already concerned about the rate that wildlife are disappearing.

•60 percent said they "strongly agreed" or "somewhat agreed" that human population growth is driving animal species to extinction.

•60 percent said our society has a "moral responsibility" to address wildlife extinctions in the face of a growing population.

•59 percent said they "strongly agreed" or "somewhat agreed" that addressing the effects of human population growth is "an important environmental issue."

•57 percent believe human population growth is "significantly impacting the disappearance of wildlife."

•57 percent said they "strongly agreed" or "somewhat agreed" that population growth is making climate change worse.

•54 percent said stabilizing population growth will help protect the environment.

The Center for Biological Diversity launched its human population campaign in 2009 to highlight the connection between the world's rapidly growing population and the effect it has on endangered

species, wildlife habitat, the climate and overall environmental health. As part of the campaign, the Center has given away nearly 500,000 Endangered Species Condoms intended as a way to get people talking about this critical issue.

The Center advocates for a number of ways to address population, including universal access and adequate funding for family planning services, empowerment of women, sustainable development, a reduction in the consumption of natural resources and personal decisions that lessen the impacts on wildlife and the environment.

If we're going to address some of the biggest environmental problems we face, population has to be part of the conversation. This poll is evidence that Americans are ready to start talking about population and dealing with impacts.