



# GULF OF GUINEA MARITIME INSTITUTE

## WORLD OCEAN DAY, 2021 THE OCEAN: LIFE AND LIVELIHOODS

REPORT ON OCEAN LITERACY FOR EFFECTIVE  
ACHIEVEMENT OF UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT GOAL 14 (ONLINE SURVEY)

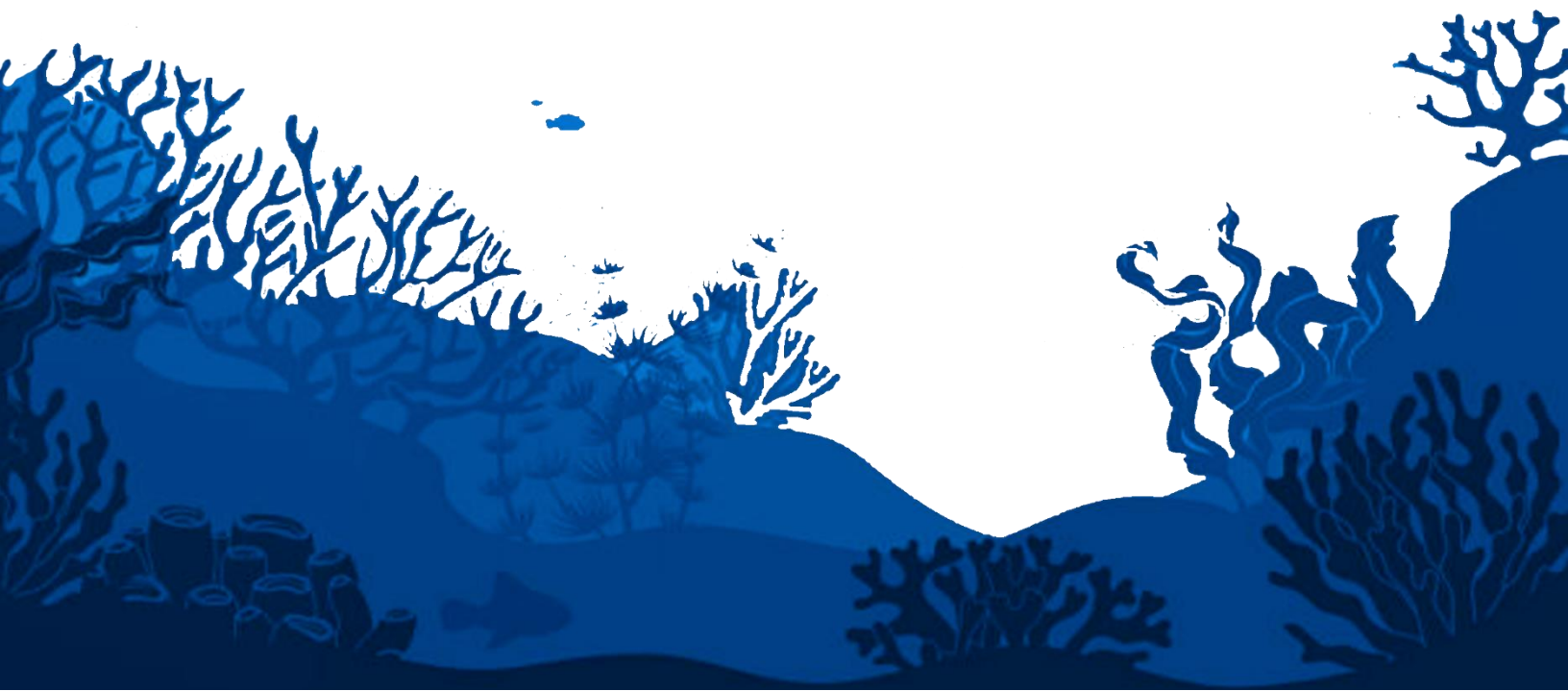
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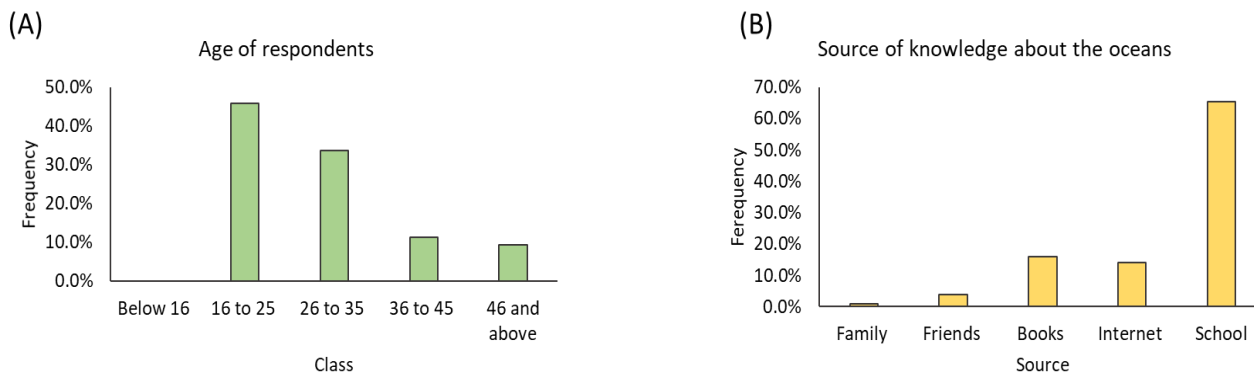
## 1. Knowledge Gaps Affect the Oceans

“Ocean blindness” has been associated with people’s limited knowledge about how their actions affect the health and sustainability of the ocean and its diverse resources, or how the health of the ocean affects their daily lives. The full extent of the medical, economic, socio-cultural, political, environmental and security importance of the oceans remains obscure to many ([Read more](#)). The world’s oceans are among the most vulnerable ecosystems in the world, bedeviled with many challenges sourcing from anthropogenic activities, including pollution, overexploitation, degradation, among others, thereby necessitating global ocean policies that will sustain healthy ocean ecosystems. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 was a stand-alone goal that was developed for the ocean with the main aim of conserving and sustainably using the oceans, seas, and marine resources. Effective implementation of SDG14, requires a paradigm in our relationship with the seas and oceans, which can be achieved through the acquisition of new skills, values, and attitudes that lead to more sustainable ocean-oriented societies ([Read more](#)).

## 2. Ocean Literacy

The UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021-2030 (referred to as ‘the Ocean Decade’) has been recently launched ‘to catalyse transformative ocean science solutions for sustainable development, connecting people and our ocean’. The Ocean Decade was declared to support efforts to reverse the cyclical decline in ocean health and mobilize ocean stakeholders worldwide behind a common framework that ensures ocean science can fully support countries in achieving SDG 14. ([Read more](#)). Ocean literacy is at the heart of the Ocean Decade. Ocean literacy involves informing or educating the public and maritime stakeholders about the importance of the ocean and fostering an understanding of the societal impacts of pertinent ocean issues and corresponding research to create an ocean-literate society able to make informed and responsible decisions on ocean resources and ocean sustainability ([Read more](#)). Mainstreaming ocean literacy in policy formulation, formal education, corporate action, and community engagement, are the four priority areas for ocean literacy during the Ocean Decade.

The 14-member High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy (the Ocean Panel), of which the President of Ghana is a member, recently committed to “bold transformations towards a sustainable ocean economy where environmental protection and conservation, and economic production and prosperity, go hand in hand” ([Read more](#)). ‘Ocean Knowledge’, which consists of developing literacy and skills, sharing and applying knowledge of how ocean ecosystems work, and how they respond to stressors to better inform decision-making, was one of the five key areas of transformation presented by the Heads of States in conformity with the Ocean Decade, to secure ocean health and wealth for generations to come.



### 3. Engaging the Ghanaian Public on Ocean Knowledge for Improved and Sustainable Ocean Use.

As part of the Gulf of Guinea Maritime Institute’s celebration of the 2021 World Ocean Day, an online survey was launched to investigate the public’s understanding of their connection with the oceans and vice versa and explore the need to intensify action for ocean literacy in Ghana. The survey sought to examine the extent of Ghana’s participation in Ocean Literacy during the Ocean Decade and the Ocean Panel’s commitments to achieve transformations in ocean knowledge. One hundred and seven (107) random respondents participated in the survey which was conducted within a three-week period from May-June, 2021. The respondents were reached through various online social media platforms including Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, GoGMI webpage and LinkedIn. Respondents were requested to answer 10 questions comprising of multiple choice and open-ended questions. Responses received at the end of the survey were analysed using descriptive statistics and presented in graphs for easy interpretation.

#### 3.1 Description of participants

As presented in Figure 1, the highest percentage of the population, representing 46%, were youth - between the age range of 16 – 25 years. Only 9% of the respondents were 46 years and above and none of the respondents were below 16 years. This could be attributed to the means employed in reaching the respondents. About 60% of the respondents had known about the ocean from school.

*Figure 1: Age of respondents (A) and the source of their knowledge about the oceans (B)*

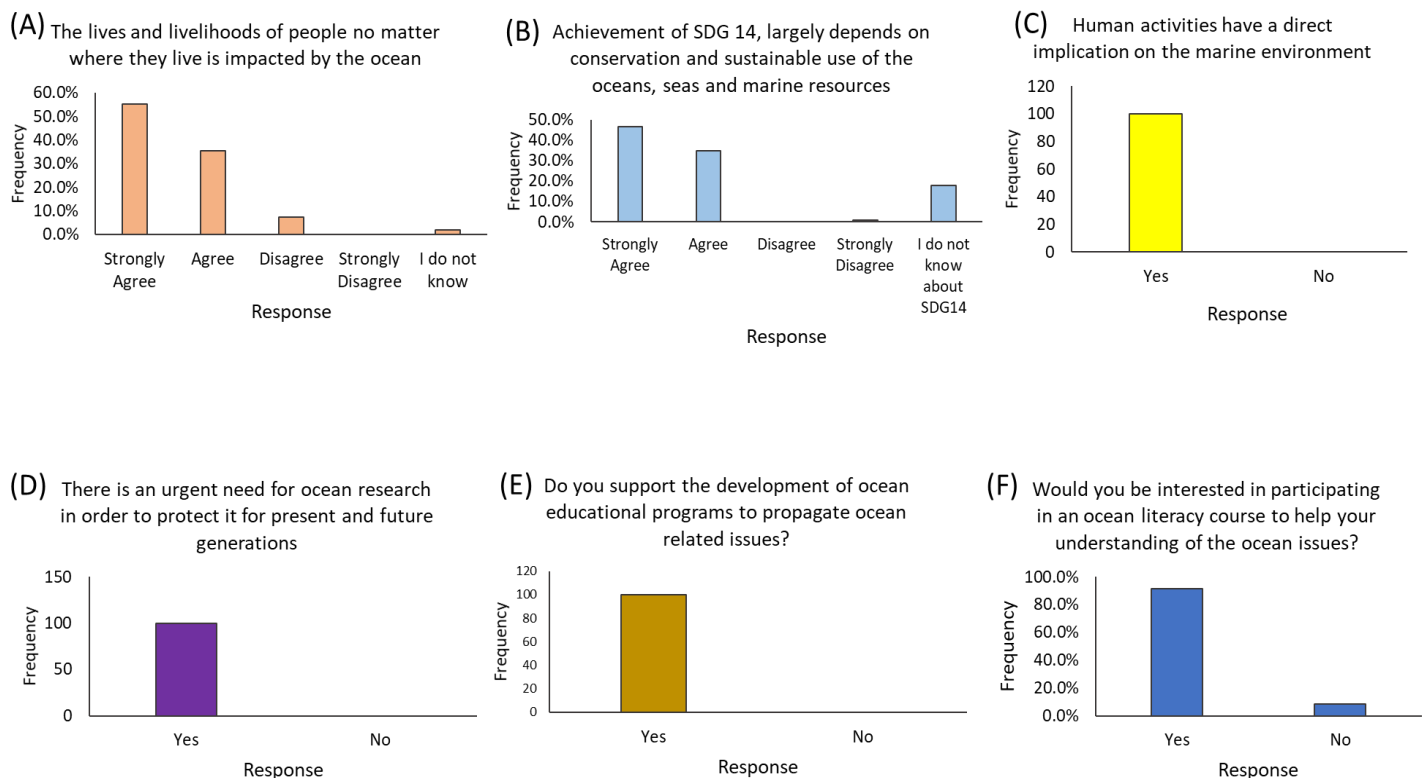
#### 3.2 Respondents express their views about the ocean

Public views were sought about human impacts on the ocean, knowledge on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 and its main tenets, implications of



human activities on the marine environment, the need for ocean research, support for ocean educational program development and their interest in participating in ocean literacy courses. Figure 2 presents the results.

- Referring to the responses in Figure 2(A), the highest percentage of respondents (55%) agreed with surety that irrespective of where people are located, their lives and livelihoods are impacted by the ocean, while 36% agreed with less surety to the statement. However, 7% disagreed with the statement and 2% indicated that they did not know about the ocean's impact on people's lives and livelihoods.
- From Figure 2(B), 47% of the respondents strongly agreed and 35% agreed to the statement that achievement of SDG14 largely depends on conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources. One percent of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement and 18% had no idea about what SDG 14 is.
- All the respondents affirmed the assertion that human activities have a direct implication on the marine environment (Figure 2C) and also that there is an urgent need for research in order to protect it for present and future generations (Figure 2D). Again, all the respondents indicated positive support for the development of ocean educational programs to propagate ocean related issues (Figure 2E).
- When asked whether they would be interested in participating in an ocean literacy course to help their understanding of the ocean issues, 92% of the respondents responded "yes" and 8% responded "no" (Figure 2F).



*Figure 2: Views of respondents about human impacts on the ocean (A), conservation and sustainable use of oceans for achievement of SDG 14 (B), implications of human activities on the marine environment (C), need for ocean research (D), support for ocean educational programs (E) and participation in ocean literacy courses (F)*

Various issues were listed as challenges facing the ocean currently. Figure 3 displays the top 10 issues per the public's perspectives. The most common issue indicated by the respondents as a critical challenge to the ocean was Pollution (including plastics, sewage, domestic waste and chemical waste). This was followed by Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) fishing; Oil spillage; Climate change; Overexploitation of marine resources; Open defecation; Biodiversity loss; Habitat destruction; Maritime crime and Sand wining. This gives an indication of the major issues of concern facing the oceans according to public perception.

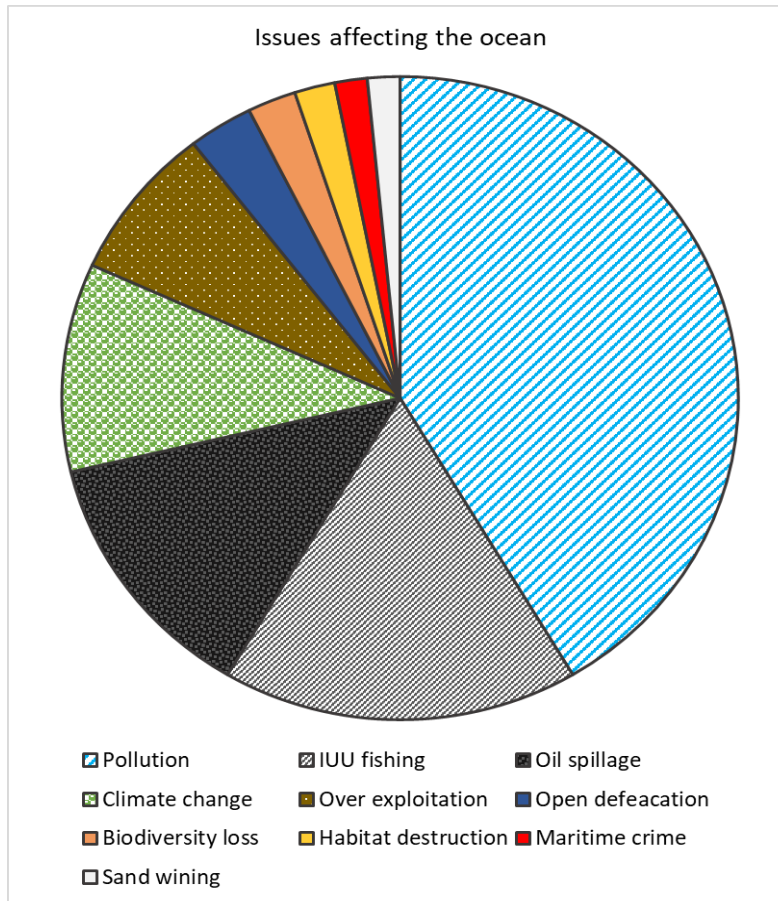


Figure 3: Top ten issues affecting the ocean.

#### 4. Reflections

- There was evidence of formal ocean literacy among the respondents since most of them had their knowledge about the ocean from school. However, lower scores for family and friends as ocean knowledge sources depicted low levels of non-formal ocean literacy among the public. It also suggested that discussion about the ocean in non-formal settings among family and friends was low and thus more effort in advancing non-formal ocean literacy is necessary.
- With about half of the respondents agreeing with certainty that the lives and livelihoods of people irrespective of their location are impacted by the ocean, it can be concluded that the Ghanaian public generally appreciates the human interaction with the ocean. Nonetheless, since there were some respondents who disagreed or did not know about this fact, it depicts the need to increase ocean literacy efforts.
- A considerable number of the respondents did not know about SDG14, the main SDG dedicated for the ocean to achieve its sustainable use. This calls for continued sensitization about the Goal and related activities to achieve its targets.

- d. There was a unanimous support for continued ocean research and development of ocean educational programs to propagate ocean related issues from the respondents, indicating the need for actions to address ocean knowledge gaps.
- e. The high expression of interest by the respondents to participate in ocean literacy courses to aid their understanding of ocean issues buttressed the public's support for ocean literacy in Ghana.

The ocean that we all share and depend on, remains a vital support system to life on earth and a critical economic driver for many nations. To achieve sustainable ocean economies in Ghana, it is imperative for the nation to embark on ocean literacy campaigns to enhance people's understanding of the ocean's functions and processes, influence sustainable human relationships with the ocean and make informed and responsible decisions regarding the use of the ocean and its resources.

