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One in Three Gen Zers Believe They Won't Have Enough Clean Water in the Future

Gen Z's concerns about water issues cross party lines, span various regions

WASHINGTON D.C. – September, 25, 2024 – The Walton Family Foundation and Gallup released a [new report](#) today examining Gen Z's experiences with climate change through the lens of water. The new research reveals that 31% of Gen Z believes their generation will definitely or probably not have enough clean water in the future. Worries about climate are present in Gen Z's future outlooks, with the results showing that 36% percent of Gen Z worry at least somewhat that they will need to move from where they currently live due to climate change and its impacts on water.

When thinking about the future of their town or city, about three-quarters (73%) of Gen Zers worry about at least one type of water-related problem such as too much pollution in the water, risk of floods or not having enough access to clean drinking water. Seventy-two percent of Gen Zers worry about pollution of lakes, rivers, and oceans, 66% worry about the health of fish and oceans, and 58% worry about the food supply in the U.S.

“Gen Z has grown up experiencing climate change through water. Floods, major storms, droughts, and wildfires - water makes the realities of climate change very tangible in people's lives,” said Moira McDonald, Environment Program Director of the Walton Family Foundation. “An entire generation of young people is telling us that they are very unified on the need to take action around water and climate change. We need solutions so people and nature can both thrive together.”

The findings reveal Gen Z is more aligned than not on many of these issues regardless of political and regional backgrounds. Nine in ten (93%) of voting-age Gen Zers agree protecting oceans, lakes, and rivers from pollution is somewhat or very important, and majorities of both parties worry some or a great deal about water pollution, including 60% of Republicans and 89% of Democrats. Additionally, belief about the availability of clean water in the future varies only slightly by census region, with those in the Northeast being most likely to say they will definitely or probably not have enough clean water (35%), and those in the Midwest being the least likely to say the same (27%).

Gen Z also shows consensus on holding politicians and governments accountable for improving the quality of water resources. Eighty-eight percent agree that national politicians and governments should be very or somewhat responsible for improving water resources, and the same percentage believes local politicians and governments should bear this responsibility. Gen Zers do not think the country is doing enough on this issue, with a majority (73%) saying the U.S. is definitely or probably not doing enough to protect water.

“As part of a wider body of research on Gen Z’s perspective on the environment, this report finds that water is playing an essential role in how Gen Z thinks about climate change,” said Stephanie Marken, senior partner at Gallup. “It’s especially important to note that many of the water issues Gen Z is thinking about transcend political, regional and racial differences. This generation’s consensus on these issues highlights their potential as a unifying focus for change.”

Methodology

Results are based on a Gallup Panel™ web survey conducted August 6 – August 14, 2024, with a sample of 2,832 12- to 27-year-olds from across the U.S. The Gallup Panel is a probability-based panel of U.S. adults who are randomly selected using address-based sampling methodology. Gallup also recruits using random-digit-dial phone interviews that cover landline and cellphones. Weighting was conducted to match national demographics of gender, age, race, Hispanic ethnicity, education, and census region. Demographic weighting targets were based on the most recent American Community Survey 5-year estimates for ages 12 to 27.

Overall, 1,255 12- to 18-year-old children were reached through adult members of the Gallup Panel who indicated they had at least one child 18 or younger living in their household; the additional 1,577 18- to 27-year-old respondents are members of the Gallup Panel.

For the total sample of 2,832 Gen Z respondents, the margin of sampling error is ± 2.9 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Margins of error for subgroups are higher.

About the Walton Family Foundation

The Walton Family Foundation is at its core, a family-led foundation. Three generations of the descendants of our founders, Sam and Helen Walton, and their spouses, work together to lead the foundation and create access to opportunity for people and communities. We work in three areas: improving education, protecting rivers and oceans and the communities they support, and investing in our home region of Northwest Arkansas and the Arkansas-Mississippi Delta. To learn more, visit [waltonfamilyfoundation.org](https://www.waltonfamilyfoundation.org).

About Gallup

Gallup delivers analytics and advice to help leaders and organizations solve their most pressing problems. Combining more than 80 years of experience with its global reach, Gallup knows more about the attitudes and behaviors of employees, customers, students and citizens than any other organization in the world.