



Blue Economy Survey: Insights Into Ocean Management And Public Perceptions

A recent survey on Seychelles' Blue Economy provides valuable insights into public knowledge and satisfaction with ocean management, alongside attitudes toward marine protected areas (MPAs) and sustainable practices. Out of 659 respondents, 49% reported their ocean management knowledge as neither low nor high, while 16% demonstrated high knowledge and only 6% very high knowledge. Conversely, 21% and 8% categorized their knowledge as low and very low, respectively. This distribution indicates a significant proportion of respondents were unsure of their own expertise, which could reflect a tendency to choose a neutral option. These findings suggest the need for enhanced public education and communication to clarify the complexities of ocean management and empower citizens with more definitive knowledge.

Regarding satisfaction with the management of Seychelles' MPAs, 73% of the 533 respondents expressed satisfaction, with an additional 4% stating they were very satisfied. This overwhelming satisfaction outweighed dissatisfaction and was consistent across sex, age groups, and islands. The lack of significant differences between demographic categories suggests a broad consensus about the effective management of Seychelles' MPAs. This positive feedback reflects the efforts of MPA managers and underscores public awareness of the achievements in marine conservation. Notably, the designation of 30% of Seychelles' Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) as MPAs in 2020, ten years ahead of the global 2030 target, stands out as a landmark achievement. The 13 newly designated MPAs, part of the Seychelles Marine Spatial Plan (SMSP), include areas of high and medium biodiversity.

Similarly, satisfaction levels with Seychelles' broader ocean and marine resource management were high, with trends indicating increased satisfaction among older age groups. Respondents aged 45 and above expressed greater appreciation for management efforts, likely due to their longer-term perspective on changes and improvements over time. This generational difference highlights the importance of historical context in shaping public perceptions of environmental stewardship.

The Blue Economy in Seychelles is also intricately tied to socioeconomic development. Under the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement (SFPA), the European Union (EU) provides €2.8 million annually (2020–2026) to support sustainable fisheries management and small-scale fisheries

development. This financial assistance underscores the importance of fisheries to Seychelles' economy and aligns with public awareness of efforts to balance economic growth with environmental sustainability.

Aquaculture, the fastest-growing food supply sector globally, mirrors this balance by contributing to food security while fostering sustainable practices. The Blue Economy in Seychelles is viewed through a predominantly environmentally supportive lens, with 91% of respondents agreeing that it promotes marine resource protection. However, attitudes toward oil and gas exploration contrast sharply, with only 26% of respondents supporting such ventures, reflecting widespread concern about the environmental risks associated with extractive industries.

In addition to environmental sustainability, the Blue Economy is seen as a driver of equity and economic opportunity.

A significant majority of respondents (81%) agreed that it has positively impacted Seychelles' business environment, while 84% recognized its role in promoting healthy lifestyles and driving sustainable wealth creation. Despite these overwhelmingly positive perceptions, barriers persist. Issues such as unclear definitions, limited employment opportunities, and restricted access to information about the Blue Economy were identified as challenges. These areas received lower scores, though over 50% of responses remained positive. Notably, 84% of respondents considered the Blue Economy relevant to their lives, underscoring its significance to the Seychellois population.

These findings highlight the need for clear and consistent communication about the Blue Economy's objectives and benefits. Addressing gaps in public understanding and access to information will not only enhance engagement but also support the long-term success of Seychelles' efforts to balance environmental preservation with sustainable development. The results of this survey provide a valuable foundation for shaping future initiatives and ensuring that the Blue Economy continues to serve as a model for inclusive and sustainable growth.

Reference: Ministry of Fisheries and Blue Economy. (2024, June 7). *Home - Ministry of Fisheries and Blue Economy*. <https://mofbe.gov.sc/>