

Connecting American Youth with Nature Summary

This is a summary of the article “Connecting American Youth with Nature: Key Findings from Opinion Research”, written by Dave Metz and Lori Weigel (2011). The interviews were conducted online with 602 youth between the ages of 13-18 from July 28th – August 4th, 2011 by the bipartisan research team of Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates, and Public Opinion Strategies.



Current Connections between Youth and Nature Facts

- Currently, youth are more likely to report engaging with electronic media than any other activities.
- Youth are split between wanting to spend time indoors and outdoors.
- Youth who are obese have a preference for indoor activities.
- Youth name a diverse variety of reasons for spending time in nature such as “it’s relaxing/stress relieving”, and that “it’s fun being outdoors”
- When youth are in nature, it is most often with their friends, followed by their parent/guardian
- Most youth report having had an experience that connects them with nature – while those who have not still care about nature.
- Regular participants in certain outdoor activities are *more* likely to say they have had a meaningful experience in nature.
- Obese youth are *less* likely to have had a meaningful experience in nature.

Environmental Attitudes among American Youth Facts:

- *American youth are far more concerned about bullying, crime, education quality, and jobs than about environmental issues.*
- *Urban youth and youth of color express greater concern about these issues, including environmental issues.*
- *Youth express notably more concern than adults about a lack of places for outdoor recreation.*
- *Youth are about as likely as adults to label themselves “environmentalists.”*
- *Those who have had a meaningful outdoor experience are more likely to see themselves as environmentalists.*
- *Youth who identify themselves as environmentalists are more likely to say they regularly act to protect the environment.*
- *The more time youth spend in natural areas, the stronger their pro-environmental sentiments*
- *Youth who have had a personal experience that made them appreciate nature are more likely to say they prefer spending time outdoors, express concerns about environmental issues, prioritize environmental protection over economic growth, and considers themselves as environmentalists*
- *In thinking about solutions for environmental problems, youth have little confidence in government or in prior generations. But at the same time, they are confident climate change can be addressed.*

Obstacles to Connecting Youth with Nature

- *Convenience, lack of access, and discomfort come up regularly as reasons for not spending time in nature.*
- *Certain obstacles are more prevalent for urban youth and youth of color.*

For more information please visit: http://ltabc.ca/images/LTABC_Toolkit/Youth%20Poll-LEAF%20Presentation%20Final.pdf