



TAKING INVENTORY OF OUR HABITS

In this activity, learners read the findings of published surveys on the general public's opinions on various issues relating to marine litter. They then prepare and conduct their own survey of local residents from their school area so as to identify perceptions, attitudes and behaviours related to marine litter.

SUBJECTS

Environmental Studies, Maths, Language

LEARNERS' AGE

14-15 yrs

DURATION

Research, questionnaire preparation, data collection & synthesis: approximately 1 month

OBJECTIVES

- To disassociate concepts of factual knowledge, perception, opinion, attitude and behaviour from one another.
 - To prepare a questionnaire on a specific marine litter theme of the learners' interest.
 - To conduct a survey using the principles of the scientific method.
 - To analyse the survey's data and draw conclusions.
- To think of alternative consumption habits that could help prevent marine litter.

INTERNET SOURCES

MARLISCO survey: [www.psy.plymouth.ac.uk/MARLISCO/\(S\(xff4ckietgbqp1cd5xb0jx5a\)\)/brief.aspx?Lang=EN](http://www.psy.plymouth.ac.uk/MARLISCO/(S(xff4ckietgbqp1cd5xb0jx5a))/brief.aspx?Lang=EN)

EVS survey: www.eui.eu/Research/Library/ResearchGuides/Economics/Statistics/DataPortal/EVS.aspx

SECTION B

LAND & SEA
BASED SOURCES



**KNOW
FEEL
ACT!**

to Stop Marine Litter



A UK based survey

A survey carried out in 2008 in the UK revealed:

- 37% of respondents believe that a lack of bins justifies littering
- 91% consider increasing the number of bins as the most effective way to reduce litter
- 42% of smokers and 16% of non-smokers consider cigarette related litter as acceptable.

The European Values Study

The European Values Study (EVS) is a cross-national survey repeated every nine years since 1981. It focuses on how European citizens think about life, family, work, religion, politics and society. Two questions of the 2008 EVS survey addressed the issue of littering:

(A) Can throwing litter in public places be justified? On average, 69% of respondents felt that littering in public places is not justified. With over 80% of the respondents agreeing that it is 'Never Justified', Malta, Croatia, Latvia, Romania and Denmark were the highest performing countries. The lowest, with more than 50% agreeing that it is 'Never Justified', were Belarus, Slovakia, Finland and Sweden.

(B) How many of your fellow citizens throw litter in public places? Across all surveyed countries, 15% of respondents claimed that almost all of their fellow citizens litter in public places. The highest percentage figured for Hungary (77%). Other countries with lower but significantly negative social norms were Turkey, Northern Ireland, Greece, Finland and Belarus (28% to 23%). The highest performing countries were Denmark, Belgium, Latvia and the Netherlands (4%), France (6%), and Austria (9%). According to the EVS survey, older people compared to younger ones and women compared to men, are less likely to consider littering as acceptable. This finding is in line with results from other relevant surveys.

The Keep Britain Tidy survey

"Keep Britain Tidy" is a sophisticated analysis that looked at distinct groups of people who litter. Based on their responses, attitude and behaviour, they were categorized in the following groups:

- The **"Well-behaved"** comprised 43% of the littering population. They left behind no more than apple cores, small pieces of paper, and quite often did not regard this as a problem. This group's members were more likely to be female, non-smokers, aged 25 and below;
- The **"Justifiers"** were the next largest group comprising 25% of the total littering population. They justified their behaviour based on the lack of bins or the claim "everyone else is doing it". Justifiers considered people who litter as lazy and they would be embarrassed if someone caught them littering and would subsequently pick up the item. The Justifiers were mostly men, smokers and aged 34 and under;
- The **"Life is too short"** group were aware that littering was wrong but had more important things to worry about.
- Related to this group was the **"Am I bothered?"** group who were either completely unaware of the consequences of littering or simply did not care. No one would feel guilty if someone caught them littering and they would not offer to pick up the item. In some cases, they would become quite verbal and even aggressive. They would, however, consider it rude if someone dropped litter in front of them. This group was more likely to be comprised of young male smokers;





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- Members of the “**Guilty**” group comprised 10% of the total littering population. They understood throwing litter was wrong and felt guilty when doing so. But if it were inconvenient to carry or keep their litter until they found a bin, they would continue to litter. Members of this group will litter when nobody is watching, in the car or during public gatherings. They would feel guilty if caught littering and immediately offer to pick up the item. They regard people who litter as lazy and inconsiderate. They are primarily female, non-smokers and aged 25 and under;
- The “**Blamers**” constituted 9% of the littering population. They blamed their behaviour on the local council for inadequate bin provision. They also blamed fast food operators, teenagers and manufacturers for over packaging. Members of this group would be embarrassed if someone caught them littering and would pick up the item while making excuses for their behaviour. They thought people who littered were lazy, but justified their actions when bins were either full or lacking. This was a predominantly young, male, smoking population.

MARLISCO survey on European attitudes and perceptions on marine litter

The results of MARLISCO’s baseline survey indicate that the majority of Europeans notice litter on most or every visit to the coast. Respondents were concerned about marine litter, perceiving it to be an important problem and considered coasts as

being highly valuable. More specifically, respondents believed that the quantity of marine litter is on the rise and that it poses a present threat that will cause lasting damage. They also believed that it is a problem facing us all - not just coastal communities or other countries.

Litter was considered to be found everywhere in the marine environment, particularly near urban areas and on beaches but least likely in polar seas. Respondents believed that litter entered the marine environment predominantly through direct releases into the sea and less likely through landfill and sewage pathways. On average, respondents estimated that the plastic proportion of marine litter is around 46%, which is a serious underestimation as it is actually 75% according to research findings.

Respondents held the government, industry, commercial users and the general public as highly responsible yet less competent and even less motivated to take action on reducing marine litter. In comparison, least responsible were independent scientists and environmental groups who were perceived as the most competent and motivated. Educators were the only group who were perceived as equally responsible, competent and motivated.

Respondents reported that they considered themselves as being likely to take several actions to reduce marine litter but with little intention to ask others to pick up litter if they saw them littering.





Materials and Equipment

Notebooks and pens

Instructions step by step

In class, learners discuss the possibility of developing their own survey questionnaire. What aspect of marine litter would they like to investigate? Learners may wish to explore the following concepts:

- People's *factual knowledge*: This refers to information that is scientifically based and cannot be altered (e.g. aluminium sinks in water).
- Peoples' *behaviours and habits* (self-reported): This could refer to the frequencies of how certain actions are carried out (e.g. I recycle: i) never, ii) occasionally, iii) in most cases, iv) always).
- People's *perceptions*: This could refer to their conviction or certainty of phenomena (e.g. I consider/ believe/ think that a glass object will last longer than a plastic one in the sea).
- People's *opinions* and point of view on a certain issue (e.g. I consider recycling futile).
- People's *attitudes* in favour or against certain actions (e.g. I am in favour of recycling).

Before drafting their questionnaire, learners research and consult similar surveys. Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), universities, etc. commonly publish or make such research accessible.

Learners decide which type of questions to use: open-ended or closed; Multiple-choice; etc.

Working in groups, they create a questionnaire to investigate people's behaviours and opinions. The target group may include parents, friends, neighbours, related professionals, beach goers, etc.

Responses may be collected online or via interviews. Learners make sure to collect a sufficient number of completed questionnaires. They could complete the questionnaire themselves as well!

Learners analyse their results with their educator's help. They draw conclusions about the "marine litter profile" of residents in their area.

