

# Society for Conservation Biology



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## Key Research Findings and Recommendations

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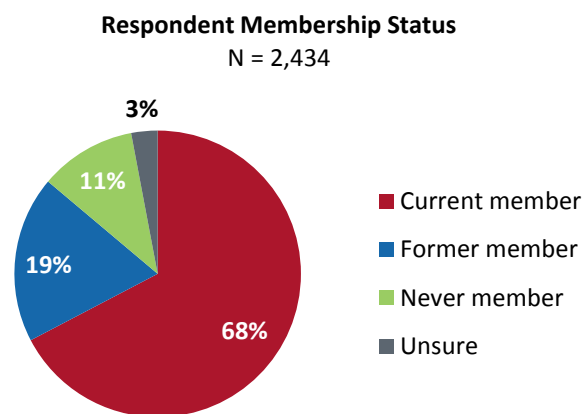
## Introduction and Methodology

The Society for Conservation Biology (SCB) retained McKinley Advisors to conduct comprehensive research in order to gain a better understanding of the needs, perceptions, expectations, and challenges of key member and non-member audiences in the field of conservation biology. The overall goal of the research initiative was to gain a well-balanced view of SCB today and a better understanding of emerging challenges and trends to help inform SCB's upcoming strategic planning efforts.

The project has included several research steps, including 30 telephone interviews with current, former and never members across a broad geographic representation. Findings from the telephone interviews have been submitted under separate cover and were subsequently used to develop an electronic survey instrument to better quantify the needs of conservation professionals and the field overall.

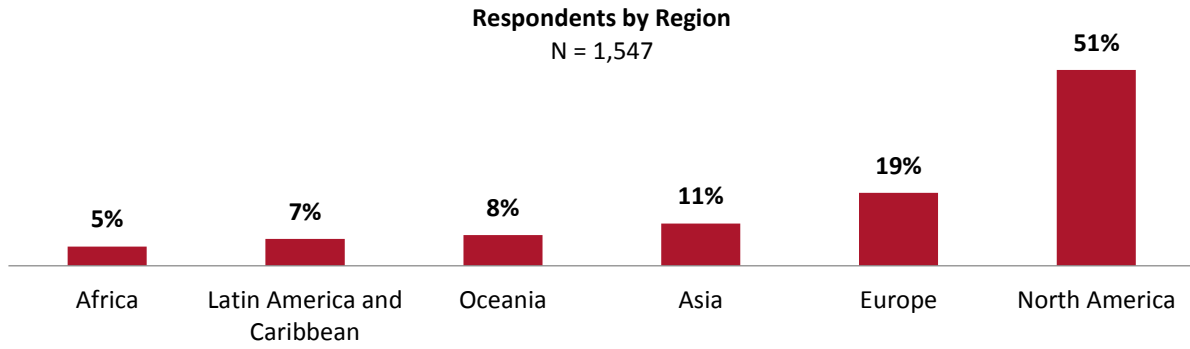
The electronic survey was distributed to SCB member audiences as well as lapsed and never members who have previously participated in SCB conferences. The survey was fielded over a period of 21 days between May 21<sup>st</sup> and June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2015. In total, 2,090 completed and partially completed survey questionnaires were submitted online for an overall response rate of 23.8%. In addition, McKinley utilized respondent referral strategies in order to find non-member conservation professionals to participate in the survey, which resulted in an additional 418 survey responses. If the surveys completed through referral methods were included with those completed by respondents with contact information, the overall response rate would be 25.6% (2,508 completed/partially completed surveys out of the grand total of 8,775).

While the majority of survey respondents represented current members of SCB (68%), a significant percentage were also comprised of non-member respondents, including 19% who were former members, 11% who were never members, and 3% of participants who were unsure of their current membership status. In terms of geographic representation, 51% of respondents currently reside in North America, with slightly less than half (46%) located in the United States. As illustrated by the chart below, the remaining



respondents represented a broad range of geographic locations across the world. A more detailed overview of respondent demographics is provided in the appendix on page 46.





The following report summarizes the key findings from the survey and presents implications and recommendations based on the research. Data has not only been analyzed in full, but also according to various demographic factors, such as professional tenure, location, professional role, age, membership tenure, and more.



## Executive Summary

The following is a summary of key findings that emerged from the research and are outlined in this report.

- **Meetings, keeping abreast on the latest trends and networking are central to the membership value proposition.** SCB members are collaborative and information-driven, and survey respondents overwhelmingly joined the association to attend meetings, access information and network to share knowledge. Further, an opportunity analysis showed that facilitating networking and collaboration were the areas where SCB has the greatest opportunity to deliver greater value and impact to its members. Satisfied members were also the most likely to indicate high quality publications and networking as a reason for their high level of satisfaction. Dissatisfaction, on the other hand, was primarily driven by a lack of communication on how to get involved with the Society.
- **Satisfaction with SCB membership was found to be high and the majority of members plan to renew.** Only 5% of members indicated that they were not satisfied with their SCB membership and the vast majority (75%) indicated that they plan to renew their membership in the future. However, several key themes emerged in conducting further analysis on the remaining 25% of respondents who were less likely to indicate a high likelihood of renewal. Students, for example, were less likely to indicate a high likelihood of renewal as were members residing in Europe, pointing to an opportunity for the Society to build loyalty among these segments. By contrast, members with greater professional tenure and those living in Latin America were more likely than others to indicate a high likelihood of renewal.
- **SCB is widely perceived as a trusted source of information and as a critical resource serving a need in the field:** An overwhelming majority of participants agreed that SCB is a trusted source for information and research in the field (83%) and that SCB fills a niche or a need in the conservation field (82%). Participants did not tend to see SCB as effectively bridging the gap between research and management (46%), although this emerged as an area of top concern impacting the field for many respondents. Respondents were also very unlikely to agree that they turn to SCB to help solve day-to-day professional challenges (15%). In fact the majority of respondents (70%) turn to a number of other scientific or environmental professional societies for information and resources, with the Ecological Society of America and the Wildlife Society being cited among SCB's top competitors.
- **Respondents noted a vast number of issues and trends impacting the field and their professional careers in the coming years.** More than 70% of respondents rated 17 different issues and challenges as having a significant impact on the field or their professional careers in the next 5 to 10 years. In considering SCB's role in helping them to address each of these issues, respondents rated the Society as being least effective in providing resources and solutions to address continued population growth, growth in aggregate consumption, lack of funding, lack of



public awareness, overlooking scientific results in management, climate change and helping scientists to better communicate results to policymakers.

- **In considering future priorities for the Society**, respondents were most interested in seeing SCB focus on enhancing collaboration and dialogues between a diversity of players in the field, increasing the use of quality science in decision-making, and influencing policy and change at regional (as opposed to global) levels around the world. These findings reinforce an opportunity to continue to focus of strengthening the Society's local networks of chapters, working groups and sections into the future.

