

AMERICAN CONSUMERS: Last but Improving

Greendex Score: 45.0 (Rank: 17th of 17)

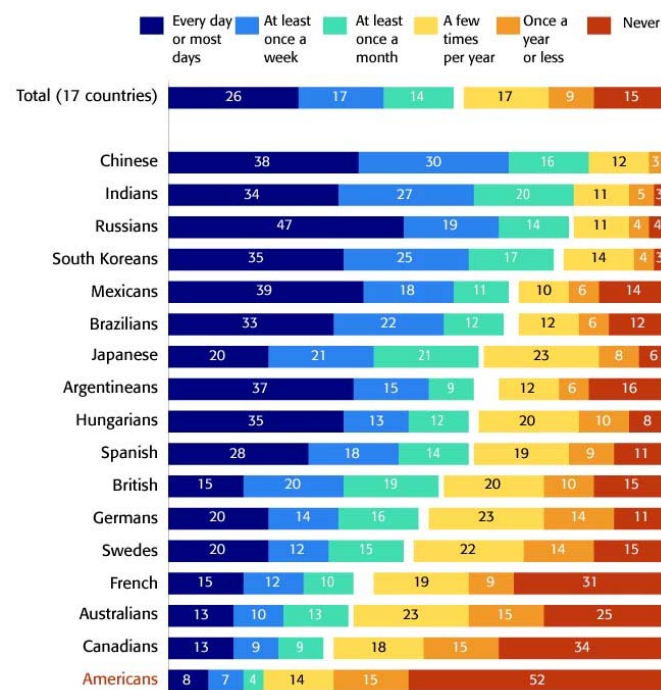
↑ 1.3 point since 2009

Americans' overall Greendex score ranks lowest at 17th place for the third consecutive year. Nonetheless, their score is up 1.3 points from 2009 and 2.6 points from 2008, indicating a trend. Americans continue to score the lowest on housing, goods, and transportation, but they have slightly higher scores than in 2009. On food, they are in the bottom third again with a slightly lower score than in 2009.

Americans' housing sub-index score has increased by 3 points from last year. Americans—and Canadians—continue to have the largest homes, with 16 percent each containing 10 or more rooms compared to the 17-country average of less than 1 percent. Also bringing down their score is the fact that they continue to be more likely to have energy-intensive features in their homes, such as heating (94 percent), air conditioning (82 percent), and hot running water (97 percent). Americans are less likely to report that they purchase electricity that is sold as “green” or from renewable sources (14 percent versus 22 percent on average). Still, Americans have become more likely to have made energy-saving changes around their homes: In particular, more have sealed up cracks to minimize drafts (38 percent, up from 27 percent) and installed thermal windows (14 percent, up from 8 percent). Along with Canadian consumers, they are also most likely to have insulation in their walls (83 percent versus 42 percent on average). Moreover, Americans continue to be more likely than others to use energy-efficient major appliances and to commonly adjust temperature settings at home and work to save energy (67 percent versus 57 percent average).

With a score similar to last year's, Americans maintain the lowest rank on the **transportation** sub-index. They are more likely than other consumers to have 3 or more cars or trucks per household (19 percent versus the 17-country average of 7 percent), with many of them being larger ones such as vans, SUVs, and trucks (53 percent versus 21 percent on average). Second only to the French, Americans report often driving their vehicles alone (79 percent). They are also the least likely to use public transportation, with only 15 percent commuting this way at least once a week compared to the 17-country average of 43 percent. Americans are also the least likely to walk or cycle to their destinations (30 percent versus 54 percent on

Frequency of Using Local Public Transportation
Percentage of Consumers in Each Country, 2010



The white space in this chart represents "DK/NA."

average).

Americans continue to be near the bottom on the **food** sub-index, and score 2 points less than they did last year. They are relatively less likely than other consumers to eat locally grown foods (37 percent versus the 17-country average of 51 percent), and they are among the most likely to eat beef (79 percent) and chicken (85 percent, up from 79 percent) at least once a week. On the positive side, more are now eating organic food (37 percent eat it at least once a week, up from 27 percent)

On **goods**, Americans once again rank at the very bottom. Contributing to this low score is the fact that they are the most likely to have major appliances in their household such as a set of laundry machines—likely a washer and a dryer (48 percent)—and a dishwasher (67 percent). Having three or more televisions is also relatively common in American households (57 percent versus 33 percent on average). Further bringing down their score is a tendency to be less environmentally conscious than others when making decisions about purchases. For example, they are among the least likely to report that they frequently buy environmentally friendly products (31 percent versus 39 percent on average) or avoid those that are harmful to the environment (32 percent versus 42 percent on average), including excessively packaged items (28 percent versus 39 percent on average), or to use their own reusable shopping bags (39 percent versus 54 percent on average). On the other hand, many more Americans are now recycling their electronic items (51 percent, up from 38 percent). Also, after Indians, Americans are the most likely to prefer buying pre-owned rather than new things (35 percent versus 17-country average of 25 percent); similarly, they prefer to repair broken items rather than to replace them (63 percent versus 53 percent on average).

Compared to the **attitude** of the average consumer in other countries, Americans express less concern about environmental problems, and increasingly consider the seriousness of environmental issues to be exaggerated (31 percent, up from 25 percent). In particular, Americans are less worried than most about climate change or global warming (45 percent versus the 17-country average of 64 percent), water pollution (54 percent versus 66 percent on average), and loss of species and habitat (48 percent versus 59 percent on average). Consistent with this relatively low concern, Americans are less likely to think that environmental problems are having a negative impact on their health today (26 percent versus 39 percent on average) or that global warming will worsen their way of life within their own lifetime (32 percent versus 45 percent on average). However, the majority of Americans believe that the typical lifestyle in the USA is not sustainable for future generations (70 percent), though they are more optimistic than others that individuals can improve the environment—25 percent disagree that society's impact is so severe that there is little that individuals can do about it versus 17 percent on average.