

Green Gets Real

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...Current Economic Environment Subduing Green Enthusiasm but Driving Practical Action

GfK Roper Consulting, a division of GfK Custom Research North America, today announced results from its 2008 GfK Roper Green Gauge study, revealing that consumers are not only more aware of green issues, but are finding practical ways to be eco-friendly while also saving money in today's difficult economic times.

Nearly three-quarters (72%) of Americans say they know a lot or a fair amount about environmental issues and problems (up 7 points from 2007) and 28% often seek out environmental information (up 5 points).

The most common green actions are those that are helping Americans save money in their day-to-day lives. Seventy-six percent have bought energy efficient light bulbs and 58% have purchased energy saving appliances. Consumers are also considering gas mileage in their next vehicle purchases more than ever before (81% up 15 points from 2007).

While money matters, not all of the top green purchases are savings inspired. Individuals are purchasing paper products made from recycled papers (72%), green household cleaning products (64%) and environmentally-safe laundry detergent (57%) despite the fact that they cost more. While many Americans are participating in more eco-friendly practices, less than a third (32%) feel they are doing enough for the environment.

"Americans are taking notice of the dual benefits of making simple eco-friendly changes that help both the planet and their wallets," explains Kathy Sheehan, a senior vice president with GfK Roper Consulting. "However, financial benefits are not the only driver behind green action. As awareness rises, many recognize the necessity to increase environmentally friendly behaviors for the good of the planet."

Economic Concerns Taking Their Toll

The majority of consumers continue to agree there needs to be a balance between economic growth and protecting the environment (78% in 2008 and 75% in 2007). However, among these consumers, those who say the environment is a greater concern than the economy has dropped from 69% in 2007 to 55% in 2008, potentially a result of the economic downturn.

While the environment remains a significant issue for Americans, there has been a shift from broad-based green thinking to more practical green action and a focus on activities that have both near and long-term economic implications.

When asked to rank the most serious environmental issues, "fuel and energy shortages" and the "depletion of non-renewable resources such as coal, gas and oil to create electric energy" have both made a jump from 2007, while concerns around the destruction of rainforests, "water pollution" and "outdoor air pollution from factories, vehicle exhaust and power plants" have fallen.

"While the economic crisis may have been the push U.S. consumers needed to begin living a little more green, the financial pressure may limit future action," adds Sheehan. "If the economic climate continues to decline, environmental steps that do not offer cost savings may be put on hold."

Family Tree Getting Greener

According to the study, 72% of parents discuss the importance of protecting the environment with their children on a regular basis (up 11 points from 2007). Not only are more American families having the "green talk," they are also emphasizing actionable issues.

More are discussing recycling (86% up 3 points), conserving energy (79% up 5 points) and conserving water (76% up 7 points); -- all simple ways to save money in a down economy, but there is a decrease in the dialogue around air pollution (48% down 8 points) and global climate change (36% down 4 points) have decreased.

Additionally, 88% of parents say they teach the importance of protecting the environment to their children by example (up 6 points from 2007). The younger generation appears to be absorbing the message as 70% of parents report their kids encouraging them to take action in protecting the environment.

Green Expectations! Corporate America Not Off the Hook, Personal Responsibility on the Rise

When asked who should take the lead in addressing environmental problems, consumers ranked the federal government first (46% down 4 points from 2007), followed by individual Americans with more feeling the environment is a personal responsibility (39% up 4 points) and corporate America came in third (32% down 3 points). While Americans aren't expecting businesses to take the lead, the majority (70%) say companies aren't fulfilling their environmental

responsibilities.

Even when corporate America takes action, many individuals remain skeptical about their motives, with 68% saying these steps are taken to help the company image and only 29% saying they are done for the good of the environment.

At the same time, companies that aren't taking green action are running the risk of a potential backlash. Nearly a third (30%) of consumers make an effort to avoid buying products from corporations they don't feel are environmentally responsible and 22% boycott those that are harming natural resources.

Green Not Black and White

Digging into the green psyche of Americans, the study identified six key segments based on consumer attitudes and behaviors:

Genuine Greens (17%) – These are the environmental activists. They are the most likely to think and behave green and do not feel there are any barriers to action.

Not Me Greens (21%) – This segment has strong attitudes, however, this thinking has yet to turn into action except for certain easier behaviors like recycling. There is a sense among this group that the issue is too large for them to handle.

Go-With-the-Flow Greens (16%) – This group can be considered moderate in terms of their environmental behaviors and attitudes. They are more likely to take easy actions such as recycling. They also may be less concerned about environmental problems such as global warming.

Dream Greens (13%) – While they tend to have limited green behavior, their environmentally friendly attitudes are stronger than the general population. The biggest barrier to this group behaving more green is lack of information.

Business First Greens (21%) – Generally less concerned about environmental issues and problems, their green behaviors are less than those of the total population. This group is also less likely to believe that industry needs to take steps to improve the environment.

Mean Greens (11%) – These Americans are cynical and apprehensive about environmentalism. They are more likely to think that the environmental movement is a front for political interest groups.

For more information or for a copy of the 2008 GfK Roper Green Gauge Study, please contact us .

About GfK Roper Green Gauge

The GfK Roper Green Gauge report sampled over 2000 adults 18 years of age or over in the United States.

Respondents were interviewed for this study using the GfK Online Consumer Panel. Interviews were completed May 13-June 12, 2008.

About GfK Roper Consulting

With offices in the US and UK, GfK Roper Consulting is a division of GfK Custom Research North America. Offering over 30 years of syndicated research and analysis, GfK Roper Consulting is responsible for GfK Roper Reports US and GfK Roper Reports Worldwide, the most up-to-the-minute view of the consumer marketplace in the US and around the globe.

In addition, in the US the division has an ongoing study of consumers' attitudes towards the environment -- GfK Roper Green Gauge and insights into the US Youth market through the GfK Roper Youth Report™.

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