

AUSTRALIAN CONSUMERS: Some Good News

Greendex Score: 50.5 (Rank: 12th of 17)

↑ 2.7 points since 2008

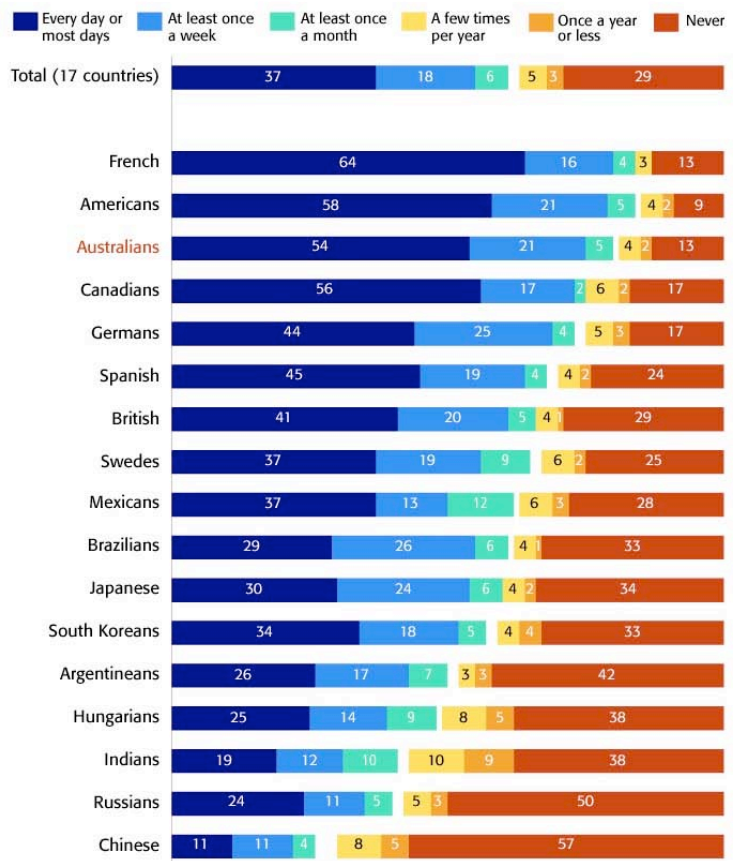
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Overall on the Greendex, Australian consumers have slipped to 12th spot from 10th last year, although much of the drop in the ranking is due to the addition of new countries to the survey. Overall their score has increased almost 3 points, one of the larger increases of all countries surveyed. Australian consumers rank second on food, but in the bottom half for housing, transportation, and goods.

As is the case in other countries, the **housing** score among Australian consumers improved this year. While they are up 7 points overall, Australians continue to rank in the bottom half. Australians' homes are among the largest — 58 percent contain seven or more rooms. They are also among the most likely to have hot water (98 percent) and air conditioning (72 percent). These housing characteristics all affect the Australian score negatively. On the flip side, Australians demonstrate such positive behaviors as minimizing their use of fresh water and using cold water for laundry. They do so more consistently than most others, likely due to water shortages that have plagued the country in recent years. Australian homes are also quite likely to contain energy-efficient appliances. Encouragingly, Australians have improved on all three of these measures.

Australian consumers continue to rank poorly on the **transportation** sub-index. Consistent with 2008, they place close to the bottom, ahead of only Canadians and Americans this year. The Australian transportation score is almost unchanged from a year ago. The key factors driving their poor showing continue to be their high ownership rate for cars/trucks (92 percent), high rate of driving alone (54 percent do so daily) and low rate of using public transportation (just 15 percent do so at least weekly). On all three of these measures, Australians are very much like Canadians and

Frequency of Driving Alone in a Car/Truck
Percentage of Consumers in Each Country, 2009



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

Americans. One encouraging finding is a 7-point drop this year in the percentage of Australians driving alone daily.

On the **food** sub-index, Australians continue to rank second to Indians. Their overall food score has seen a modest improvement. Australian consumption of beef is among the highest, a primary reason for ranking behind Indians who are the least frequent consumers of beef. However, high weekly consumption rates among Australians for locally grown foods (87 percent), self-grown foods (34 percent), and fruits and vegetables (97 percent) have positive implications for their food score. Another positive factor is their comparatively low rate of drinking bottled water; only 25 percent do so at least several times a week, which is a decline of 7 points from a year ago. With the exception of declining bottled water consumption, Australian food habits are unchanged this year.

Australians are tied for 12th place out of 17 on the **goods** sub-index this year. While Australians' overall score is fairly consistent with 2008, consumers in other countries experienced modest gains this year. In addition, all three new countries to the survey outperform Australians on this measure, contributing to this year's lower ranking. Putting Australians in the bottom half is the greater-than-average likelihood that their homes contain multiples of big-ticket items such as refrigerators, laundry machines, and televisions. Mitigating factors include having the highest rate of recycling (88 percent do so often), being less likely to prefer disposables, being more likely to avoid excess packaging, and being more likely than many to use their own bags when shopping. They have improved on three of these four measures this year. As well, they have increased in their preference to repair rather than replace broken items, to buy used rather than new, and frequency of buying environmentally friendly products.

Economic worries have surpassed those over the environment this year among Australians. In 2008, 36 percent of Australians named the environment as their nation's most important issue, while only 16 percent identified the economy. This year, the environment falls to second place (22 percent) far behind economic problems (54 percent). Consistent with the 2008 findings, Australians appear to be less anxious than others about environmental problems; they are less likely to agree that environmental problems have a negative effect on their health. Agreement with this statement has declined this year. They are also unlikely to agree that their personal lifestyle is harmful or that they feel guilty about their environmental impacts. At the same time, Australians tend to have greater faith in the actions of both government and individuals to positively affect the environment. Although they continue to be average on this measure, there has been an increase in agreement that society needs to consume less in order to improve the environment for future generations.