

CANADIAN CONSUMERS: Once Again Second Last

Greendex Score: 47.5 (Rank: 16th of 17)

↑ 1.2 points since 2008

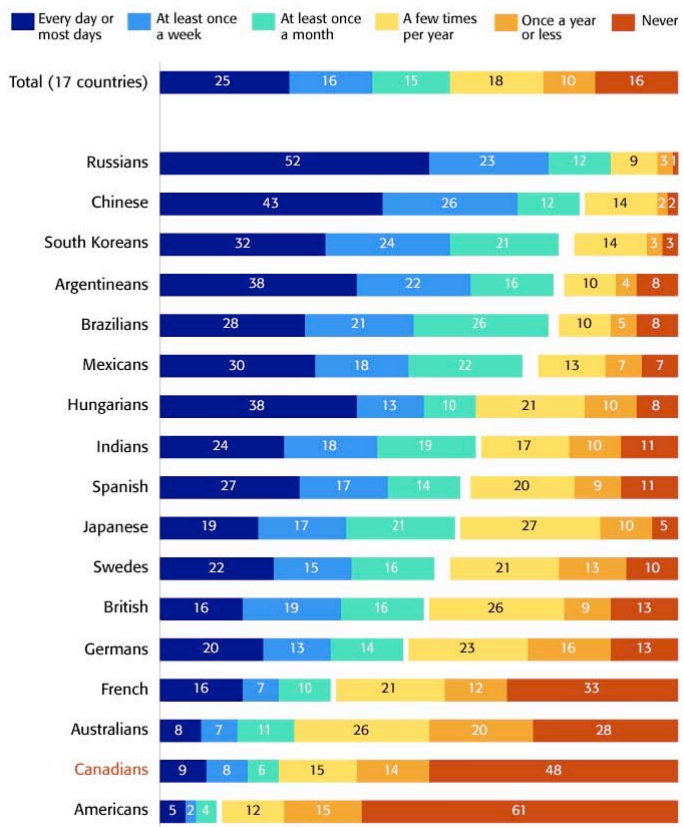
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Canadian consumers' Greendex score places them second from the bottom for the second year in a row, with their rank on the four sub-indices ranging from middling to poor. Their overall score has only increased slightly, resulting from an increase in Canadians' housing score, despite slight decreases in transportation and food. On the goods sub-index, Canadians' score has remained relatively stable.

There has been an improvement of 7 points in Canadian consumers' **housing** score. However, as this trend is evident elsewhere as well, Canadians continue to rank near the bottom, placing 14th overall. Dragging down their score are large home sizes; over half of Canadian homes have seven rooms or more compared with 19 percent of the 17-country average. A high incidence of home heating (92 percent) and hot running water (95 percent) coupled with a scarcity of on-demand water heaters also contribute to their housing score. On the positive side, the degree to which Canadians use wall insulation (83 percent), seal drafts (39 percent), use cold water for laundry (64 percent), set their heating/cooling setting on low (65 percent), and own energy-saving appliances is above average. In the past year, 14 percent of Canadian consumers have installed an energy-efficient furnace, the highest rate among all those surveyed and no doubt a wise investment for those dealing with long winters. The improvement in the overall housing score is due in part to an increase in ownership rates of energy-efficient televisions, dishwashers, and refrigerators/freezers.

In terms of **transportation**, Canadian consumers place next to last, down 3 points from 2008. Transportation behaviors are among the worst across a number of measures, and there are no notable improvements this year. Car and truck ownership is above the 17-country average (86 percent compared with 74 percent) and, of those who drive, Canadians are among the most likely to drive large vehicles. Canadians have the third highest rate of driving alone most days (56

Frequency of Using Local Public Transportation
Percentage of Consumers in Each Country, 2009



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

percent). They are among the least likely to use public transit (17 percent do so at least weekly compared with the overall average of 41 percent), or to walk or bike (34 percent), and these methods of transportation have decreased in popularity from 2008.

On the **food** sub-index, Canadian consumers are in the middle, in ninth position, and their food score has changed little since 2008. Pulling this score down is above-average consumption of beef and chicken (38 percent and 46 percent, respectively), with a 7 percent increase in chicken consumption since last year. While use of bottled water among Canadians is slightly below average (45 percent versus the average of 54 percent), there has not been a significant decrease in its popularity, although this behavior is down among consumers in other countries.

Canadian consumers rank 12th in terms of the **goods** sub-index. Their overall score for this measure is unchanged since 2008 despite some improvements in purchasing behavior, including an increased preference for repairing over replacing broken items, buying used rather than new, avoiding environmentally unfriendly products, and avoiding excess packaging. Canadian rates of recycling are above average, with 78 percent doing so often. They are less likely than others to choose disposable over reusable household products. However, Canadians are among the most likely to own dishwashers and motorized lawn equipment, which impacts negatively on their goods score.

Attitudes among Canadian consumers suggest that economic worries have, not surprisingly, overshadowed concerns about the environment this year. In 2008, 15 percent of Canadians said that economic problems were their most important national issue, while the environment was mentioned by 16 percent; this year, 58 percent say the economy is the most important national issue compared with only 3 percent saying the environment. Many of the attitudinal measures collected suggest an easing of concern about the environment. Canadians are less likely to agree that they are very concerned about the environment, that they have been encouraged by others to be more environmentally responsible, that environmental problems negatively impact their health, and that global warming will worsen their way of life. Similarly, they are less likely to agree that their personal lifestyle has a harmful effect on the environment or that they feel guilty about their environmental impacts. Canadians do indicate a sense of empowerment, with 55 percent disagreeing that an individual can do little about the environment and 51 percent agreeing that they are trying hard to reduce their negative environmental impact. Most Canadians (68 percent) disagree that the environmental movement is a passing fad.