

**U.S. CONSUMERS: Rock Bottom Again**

**Greendex Score: 43.7 (Rank: 17<sup>th</sup> of 17)**

↑ **1.3 points since 2008**

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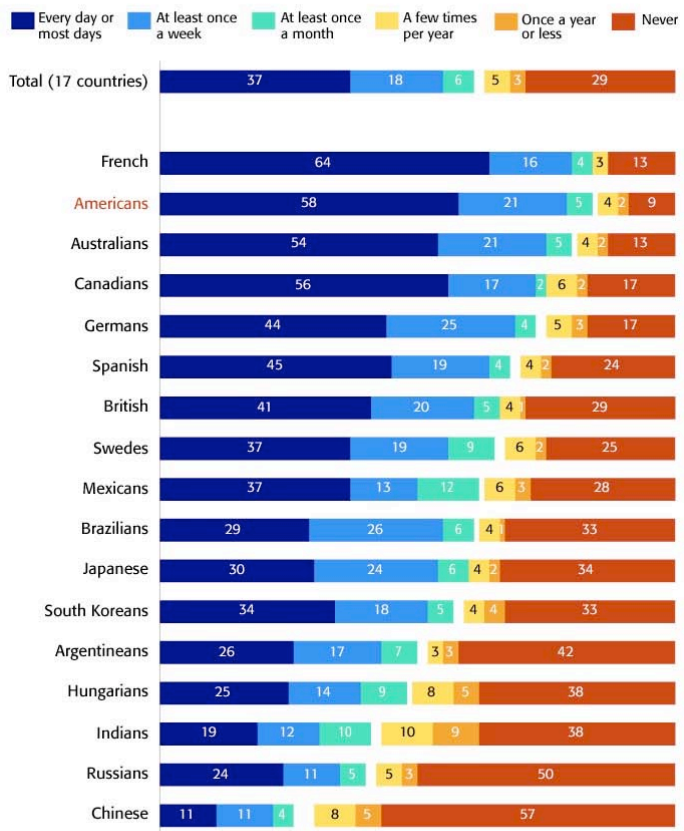
Consumers in the United States continue to occupy the bottom spot on the Greendex, and have only achieved a modest increase in their overall score from 2008. Consistent with 2008 results, U.S. consumers score last on housing, transportation, and goods. They continue to rank close to the bottom on food.

On **housing**, U.S. consumers continue to come in last despite a 6-point improvement in their score on this sub-index. Their homes tend to be among the largest: 30 percent have nine or more rooms compared with the 17-country average of 8 percent. They are among the most likely to have home heating, running hot water, and air conditioning, and among the least likely to have any type of on-demand water heaters. On the other hand, U.S. homes are typically insulated against heat loss and contain energy-efficient appliances more often than homes in other countries. U.S. consumers commonly keep their heating/cooling settings on low (67 percent), and they have improved 8 points on this measure. Also improved from the previous year is the percentage of Americans who regularly use cold water to launder clothing, increasing their score by 10 points to 58 percent, which is just above average.

**Transportation** scores for U.S. consumers have decreased from last year, and their scores on this sub-index continue to be the lowest of all those surveyed. The reasons for this low ranking are consistent with the 2008 findings. The vehicles that U.S. consumers drive tend to be large: American ownership rates of minivans and SUVs, and trucks and full-size vans are the highest of the countries surveyed. U.S. drivers are also among the most likely to drive alone (58 percent do so daily), and they are among the least likely to drive compact cars, to use public transportation or trains, or to walk or bike to their destinations.

Only on the **food** sub-index do U.S. consumers not place last; they rank 13<sup>th</sup> and have improved almost 3 points since 2008. A contributing factor is an increase in eating locally grown foods at least several times a week (up 6 points, but still below average) and a decrease in drinking bottled water at least several

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



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

times/week (down 8 points and on par with the 17-country average). U.S. consumers continue to eat beef more frequently than average and to be among the least likely to eat self-grown foods. On the positive side, they also continue to be relatively infrequent consumers of imported foods. Processed foods are popular among U.S. consumers, with 47 percent eating these at least several times a week, an increase of 6 percent over the previous year.

On **goods**, U.S. consumers once again rank lowest, their overall score very similar to last year. Their low rank is driven by having higher rates of ownership of large appliances such as dishwashers and motorized lawn equipment, and of multiple televisions. They are less likely to avoid excess packaging and are the least likely to use their own bags in stores, though they have improved significantly on this measure (up 14 points). There have been some changes in the purchase behavior and attitudes of U.S. consumers, possibly tied to the economic changes of the past year. Preference for repairing versus replacing broken items is up 8 percent, and preference for buying used versus new is up 9 percent. On the other hand, more U.S. consumers this year agree that the extra cost of environmentally friendly products makes them “not worth it” (up 7 points).

American **attitudes** towards the environment are not dramatically different from those of consumers in many of the other countries surveyed, nor have they changed from the previous year. Their responses indicate a stronger-than-average belief that an individual’s environmental efforts can make a difference. U.S. consumers also exhibit less concern about the environment than do many others; in particular they are less likely than average to feel their personal lifestyle is harmful, to feel guilty about their environmental impact, to feel that environmental problems are bad for their health, or to agree that global warming will worsen their way of life.