

BRITISH CONSUMERS: In the Middle

Greendex Score: 50.2 (Rank: Tied for 7th of 14)

British consumers (defined as consumers from England, Scotland and Wales) rank squarely in the middle of the Greendex standings, largely due to the relatively large footprints of their households and a middling showing in the transportation and goods categories. They rank in the top third in terms of food consumption habits. Though middle of the pack overall, Britons rank high among wealthy countries, alongside Germans and Australians.

Looking specifically at the **housing** sub-index, British consumers are in the bottom third, above only Japan and the United States. Those surveyed tend to have large homes, with 54% having seven or more rooms in their primary residence. In terms of individual choices related to housing, British consumers fare well in making some environmentally friendly choices, not so well in others. For example:

- Those who do have heating and cooling are among the least likely of all surveyed to indicate that they adjust the thermostat in order to save energy (19%).
- Just 10% of respondents wash clothes in cold water specifically to save energy, and only 13% minimize their use of fresh water, second to last for both.
- They are among the most likely to say they have taken a series of actions recently to improve the energy efficiency of their homes, such as sealing drafts (49%), installing insulation (45%), or installing thermal windows (44%).
- As another important indicator of household energy use, more than 40% have energy-saving appliances such as refrigerators/freezers and/or washing machines/dryers.

British consumers are among the least likely of all respondents to say they choose to live close to their usual destination to minimize the impact of **transportation** on the environment (8%). Exacerbating this situation, half (49%) of British consumers drive alone every day, and only one in 10 takes public transportation daily, far below average.

British consumers rank third-highest for sustainable **food** consumption. Only 16% drink bottled water daily, the lowest of all respondents in the study. A majority (61%) eats fruits and vegetables daily, and their weekly consumption of beef and pork is among the lowest. Consumption of locally produced food on at least a weekly basis is about average.

Looking at the components of the **goods** sub-index, British consumers are among the most frequent recyclers (54% do all of the time) and among those who most often use their own bag in a store (29%). However, despite above-average availability of green products such as energy-saving light bulbs, recycled paper products, and green cleaning supplies, consumers show a below-average frequency of buying environmentally friendly products (6% all the time) and for avoiding environmentally unfriendly products (8%) or those with excessive packaging (11%).

Looking at some of the primary **attitudinal drivers** for Greendex rankings, respondents in Great Britain are (along with Germans) the least likely to express concern about environmental problems. They are the least likely to believe environmental problems are having a negative impact on their health (only 6% strongly agree), and they are much less convinced than others that global warming will worsen their own way of life (13%). Few British consumers feel guilty about their own impact on the environment (9%), or strongly agree that they are trying very hard to reduce their own negative impact on the environment (13%). They are highly unlikely to have heard anything recently that has had a major impact on their environmental views, or to have been encouraged by others to be more environmentally responsible. Attitudinally, they are among the least environmentally engaged consumers surveyed.

Finally, looking at some related **citizen behaviors**, British consumers generally have a below-average tendency to engage in environmental activism. Among those surveyed, only 9% say they have written a letter to authorities about environmental concerns, 5% have attended a protest about environmental/social issues, and 17% say they have recently based a voting decision on environmental issues.