

2018

Environmental Consumer Report

An exploration of the perceived divide
between self-identified green and conventional
consumers in America.

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Introduction

For its first annual Environmental Consumer Report, Vivint Solar polled more than 3,000 Americans to gain insight into the perceived divide between green and conventional consumers.

In analyzing the responses of these self-identified groups, it became apparent that while people expect green and conventional consumers to be miles apart in their political persuasions, diets and activities, they are actually within steps of each other. From Trump support to cannabis reform, the majority of consumers, green or conventional, have more in common than they realize. That's not to say there aren't differences between the two groups, chief among them divergent perspectives on climate change and the role of humans in contributing to and reversing it.

The results of this survey also challenge a common stereotype about millennials, the generation lauded as champions of the green movement, revealing that millennials may not perceive themselves to be as green as other generations generally believe them to be.

Lastly, this survey sheds light on the hang-ups conventional consumers have about being more green.

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Who are Green Consumers?

Three-fifths of respondents self-identify as “green consumers,” meaning they are generally more conscious of the impact their lifestyle choices and buying habits have on the environment.

The study revealed a wealth of information about this group, including the major contributing factors to their eco-consciousness and which sides of the aisle they sit on.

Characteristics of Green Consumers

Highly educated

Green consumers are more likely to have higher education levels than conventional consumers, highlighting the importance of education in driving adoption of green initiatives. 39 percent of people identifying as environmentally conscious reported having a four-year degree or higher, compared with 27 percent of conventional consumers.

Frugally minded

Although 80 percent of consumers go green because they care about the environment, nearly two-thirds of green consumers identify as frugal.

Emergency ready

Over half of green consumers (53 percent) feel prepared for a natural disaster, versus one in three conventional consumers. Taking readiness to a ridiculous extreme, green consumers feel more prepared for a zombie apocalypse (27 percent) than conventional consumers (18 percent).

Satisfied with life

74 percent of self-identified green consumers say they are satisfied with life (as compared to 67 percent of self-identified conventional consumers).

Green Consumers Cross Party Lines

There are self-identified green consumers on both sides of the aisle, yet party affiliation clearly influences the perceptions respondents hold about green consumers.

In this survey, green consumers were twice as likely to be Democrats (36 percent) as Republicans (18 percent), with the bulk identifying as Independents (43 percent).

Republicans

Party perception

48%

48 percent of Republicans think green consumers are conservative

Democrats

Party perception

41%

41 percent of Democrats think green consumers are liberal

Both sides of the aisle believe they're green.

Self perception

28%

28 percent of green consumers describe themselves as conservative

Self perception

28%

28 percent of green consumers describe themselves as liberal

Green consumers are just as likely to identify as conservative as they are liberal.

Is There a Green Generation Misperception?

Millennials are often thought of as driving the green revolution. Our research found that baby boomers self-identify as being green more readily than millennials.

“Do you consider yourself to be an environmentally conscious or ‘Green’ person?”



Fewer millennials consider themselves green than older generations

Two-thirds of baby boomers consider themselves environmentally conscious, compared to 58 percent of millennials and 57 percent of Gen Xers.

Millennials are the least likely to go green for the environment

Seventy-one percent of green millennials cite the environment as a factor for going green, compared to 82 percent of green Gen Xers and 93 percent of green baby boomers.

Millennials are the most likely to go green for savings and loved ones

Compared to older generations, millennials are more likely to cite cost savings (47 percent) and their friends (17 percent) as a factor for going green. They are also the most likely age group to be introduced to an eco-friendly way of life by their parents (20 percent).

What Do Green & Conventional Consumers Have In Common?

Across entertainment, diets and even politics, self-identified green and conventional consumers have a lot in common.

Green Lifestyle

Many conventional consumers already live a green lifestyle

Although conventional consumers believe green consumers make significant lifestyle changes, such as driving an electric vehicle or composting, the reality is conventional consumers already do many of the activities that green consumers do. In fact, their three most common activities – recycling, using reusable bags, and saving water – are identical.*

Green consumers don't radically alter their diet

While there is a perception that green consumers adopt stricter diets, this isn't typically the case. 24 percent of conventional consumers believe green consumers are vegan, but just 4 percent of green consumers describe themselves this way. In fact, 88 percent of green consumers eat meat or believe they have a balanced diet.

Favorite TV Shows

A shared love of TV shows

Green and conventional consumers could attend the same watch parties. “Friends” and “Stranger Things” were the most watched shows among all respondents. “Friends” is equally beloved by green consumers and conventional consumers (34 percent), whereas green consumers are slightly more into “Stranger Things” (38 percent vs. 29 percent).

* Selected from a list of over 25 activities associated with green behaviors

What Do Green & Conventional Consumers Have In Common?

Support for President Trump

Equal support of Trump

One quarter of green consumers voted for President Trump in the 2016 presidential election – the same ratio as conventional consumers.

25%

of self-identified green and conventional consumers alike voted for Trump

Stance On Cannabis Reform

Both groups support cannabis reform

A majority of self-identified conventional and green consumers support legalizing marijuana, with slightly more green consumers in favor (68 percent vs. 59 percent of consumers).

While similarities abound, differences still exist. The biggest gap between these self-identified groups concerns their opinions on a notoriously polarizing issue: climate change.

Disagreement over the issue of climate change

83 percent of green consumers believe climate change is real, while 30 percent of conventional consumers believe it is real but a natural occurrence. Green consumers are nearly twice as likely as conventional consumers to believe that climate change is caused by humans and can be reversed. Fourteen percent of conventional consumers, on the other hand, think climate change is inevitable and nothing can be done to stop it.

What's Preventing Conventional Consumers from Going Green?

The majority of self-identified conventional consumers want to live a greener lifestyle, with 59 percent wishing they were more environmentally conscious. Here are their biggest holdups:

41%

#1: Perceived costs

41 percent of conventional consumers say “going green” is too expensive

27%

#2: Convenience

27 percent say it is too inconvenient

25%

#3: Makes no difference

25 percent say it doesn't make a difference

Democrats are less apathetic

Republicans, independents and libertarians are all more likely than Democrats to think going green won't make a difference.

Solar Can Be the Gateway to Going Green

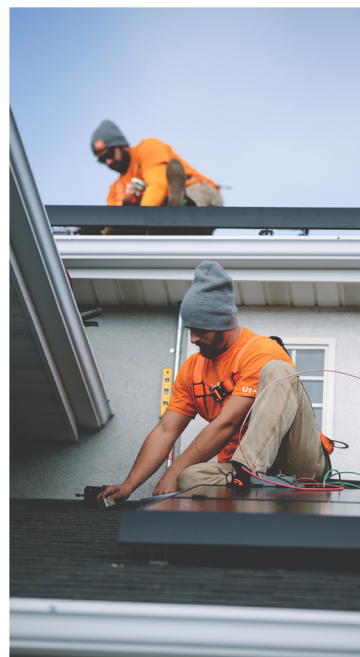
More than half of respondents had either already purchased solar or were likely to purchase in the next five years. Solar seemed to serve as a sort of gateway, connecting the head and the heart in respondents going green.

Solar can turn going green into seeing green

Green consumers who cited the cost savings of going green as a factor in their decision were more likely to have purchased solar or to be interested in purchasing solar in the next five years.

Millennials and Gen X will lead the way in solar adoption

Millennials and Gen Xers show the strongest interest in purchasing solar over the next five years.



Conclusion

While we often think adopting the “green” label requires a radical lifestyle transformation, it doesn’t at all. Voting for Trump or eating meat doesn’t prevent others from identifying as green consumers. In fact, it’s more than likely that everyone has a bit of green in them already.

These results highlight that a green consumer is not a zealot, but quite possibly the person staring back at them in the mirror.

About the Survey

Generated by Vivint Solar and fielded in March 2018, the survey collected online responses via Qualtrics from a nationally representative sample of over 3,000 U.S.-based consumers over the age of 18.

About Vivint Solar



Vivint Solar is a leading full-service residential solar provider in the United States.

With Vivint Solar, customers can power their homes with clean, renewable energy and typically achieve significant financial savings over time. Offering integrated residential solar solutions for the entire customer lifecycle, Vivint Solar designs and installs the solar energy systems for its customers, and offers monitoring and maintenance services. In addition to being able to purchase a solar energy system outright, customers may benefit from Vivint Solar's affordable, flexible financing options, power purchase agreements, or lease agreements, where available. Vivint Solar also offers solar plus storage systems with LG home batteries.

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