

National Survey Finds Most Americans are ‘Accidental Environmentalists’

Consumers Are Seeking Greener Products, but Not Because They Want to Save the Planet; They Want to Save Money, or Their Lives

KNOXVILLE, TN -- A national survey released today found that most consumers are searching for greener products, but not because they want to protect the environment. Instead they're trying to save money or their lives.

The survey, which polled 1,000 consumers across the country, found 64 percent of Americans are searching for greener products, up from 60 percent last year. This, despite their belief in global warming taking a nosedive (only 48 percent of Americans now believe humans are responsible for global warming, compared to 58 percent last year).

“Americans aren’t going green to save the planet. Americans are looking for energy-efficient products that lower their utility bills, or natural cleaning products that won’t harm their children,” said Suzanne Shelton, president of Shelton Group, which conducted the study. “We’re a nation of Accidental Environmentalists.”

The survey found that the primary reason for buying greener personal-care products was “to limit my and my family’s exposure to toxins and chemicals” (21 percent), compared to 10 percent who want “to preserve natural resources for future generations.”

The primary reason to buy greener home improvement products was “to save money” (17 percent) compared to 10 percent who want “to save natural resources.”

“While die-hard environmentalists might be annoyed, this is actually good news,” Shelton said. “Even if folks are not trying to protect the environment, their ‘accidental’ actions are contributing to a healthier planet, so, in the end, everybody wins.”

In other good news for the environment, green purchasing hasn’t been hurt by the troubled economy. The survey found 48 percent said they were buying the same amount of green products, with 21 saying they were buying more green products.

Specifically, consumers who said they were searching for greener products said they were doing so primarily in the following three product categories – all of them considered “affordable”:

- Home cleaning products -- 69 percent
- Laundry and dishwashing detergents -- 66 percent
- Paper products – 65 percent

Respondents with children were significantly more likely to be looking for greener home improvement products (49 percent) than those with no children in the home (41 percent); while those with no children were significantly more likely to be looking for greener food and beverage products (54 percent vs. 45 percent of respondents with kids).

“Parents want to protect their children from toxic chemicals, so it’s no surprise that they’re seeking greener home-improvement products,” Shelton said. “Fewer are seeking greener food and beverages because they’re swamped with busy schedules, and the easiest-to-prepare foods aren’t always the greenest.”

About the Eco Pulse® survey

The survey, called Eco Pulse®, was geographically stratified to mirror the geographic distribution of the population age 18-74 (208,697,527 people) in the United States. The survey yielded 1,000 complete responses, for a 3.1 percent margin of error.

About Shelton Group

Shelton Group, founded in 1991 by Suzanne Shelton, is an advertising agency located in Knoxville, Tennessee, focused exclusively on motivating mainstream consumers to make sustainable choices. The agency conducts four proprietary consumer opinion studies annually – Eco Pulse, Energy Pulse®, Utility Pulse and Green Living Pulse.

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