

FRENCH CONSUMERS: Near the Bottom

Greendex Score: 46.5 (Rank: 12th of 14)

French consumers rank third-lowest overall, and lowest among Europeans. They rank 10th of 14 on the **housing** sub-index. Their homes are relatively large, and nearly all have home heating (95%), nearly a quarter by oil. Fewer than half have insulation in their walls, and just three in 10 have acted to seal up drafts and cracks for more efficient heating or cooling in the past five years, well below average. French consumers are less likely than most others surveyed to have installed energy-saving appliances in their homes in the past five years, and are among the least likely by far to wash their laundry in cold water to save energy (only 12% do all the time). An unusual feature in most European households, home air-conditioning is rare among French consumers (9%, the lowest surveyed). French consumers also get points for minimizing their use of fresh water.

French consumers perform relatively poorly on **transportation**: 62% drive alone daily, the highest measured and just 14% use public transportation daily, among the lowest.

Overall, French consumers fall in the middle of the **food** index. French respondents report high consumption of beef and seafood, and 54% drink bottled water daily, among the highest of countries surveyed. They are well below average in their daily consumption of locally grown food. Together with those in Great Britain and Germany, French consumers report the highest availability of organically raised meats, fruits and vegetables, and coffee and tea. However, people in these countries also report relatively low consumptions of organic foods — the French report the lowest levels of all 14 countries surveyed.

On the **goods** sub-index, French consumers rank near the bottom. While they are among the most likely to practice conventional environmental behavior such as recycling (46% always do) and using their own shopping bags (61%), they are significantly above average in their ownership of items such as dishwashers and motorized landscaping tools (lawnmowers, leaf blowers, etc.). Interestingly, the French are more likely to say they always avoid environmentally unfriendly products (21%) than to say they always buy environmentally friendly ones (10%).

Similar to their counterparts in North American and in other European countries surveyed, French consumers indicate below-average concern about environmental problems (25% strongly agree they are concerned). Very few have recently learned something that had an impact on their environmental actions, and they are least likely of all respondents to say they have been encouraged by others to be more environmentally responsible. While they are average or below average on most **attitudinal measures** of environmental engagement, French consumers are ranked at or near the top in agreeing that we must leave a better environment for future generations, and that the media and advertising are encouraging us to consume far more than is responsible.

French consumers are about average on most **citizen behaviors** measured — like others surveyed, they are fairly unlikely to have attended a demonstration about environmental issues, to base their voting decisions on environmental concerns, or to have written a letter to a company or their government expressing their environmental concerns. Also similar to consumers in other countries, roughly half have sought out more information about environmental issues, talked to others about climate change, or encouraged others to be more environmentally responsible. There was only one behavior in this category in which the French were standouts: they were the least likely of consumers in any country to have volunteered for or donated money to an environmental group.