

# ARE AMERICANS ACTUALLY SUPPORTING SUSTAINABILITY?

Here's what they say.

An Ipsos Point of View

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GAME CHANGERS



## KEY FINDINGS:

- Sustainability and environmental issues are as important as ever for Americans, with three-quarters citing sustainability as an important consideration when shopping for any product.
- Half of Ipsos Online Community gen pop members feel sustainability is a shared responsibility between companies and consumers, and 40% have made changes in their day-to-day lives over the past couple years due to increased awareness of the issue.
- Ipsos research breaks down groups in the U.S. and their differing degrees of concern toward sustainability.



Americans rank sustainability and environmental issues as highly as they have for years, even during COVID and among other current top-of-mind issues like inflation.

In fact, 78% of Ipsos Online Community members currently cite sustainability as an important consideration when shopping for any product. Though it still can be polarizing and sometimes difficult to define, they feel sustainability is a smart decision even when it's not an easy one. While the impetus to enact change falls to [the government and companies](#), Americans also recognize that change begins with them, and many have already adopted small, everyday habits to address their sustainability concerns. These everyday efforts can inspire companies and individuals to continue to push the needle toward positive change.

“Sustainability will always be an ongoing issue that needs to change and adapt.”

—Ipsos Community Member

To better understand the current landscape of sustainability, including its perceived importance among other top-of-mind issues and solutions to addressing it, Ipsos segmented its syndicated U.S. community by their level of concern about the environment to uncover common and realistically actionable means to become and stay more sustainable, whether through the government, large companies, or individual citizens.

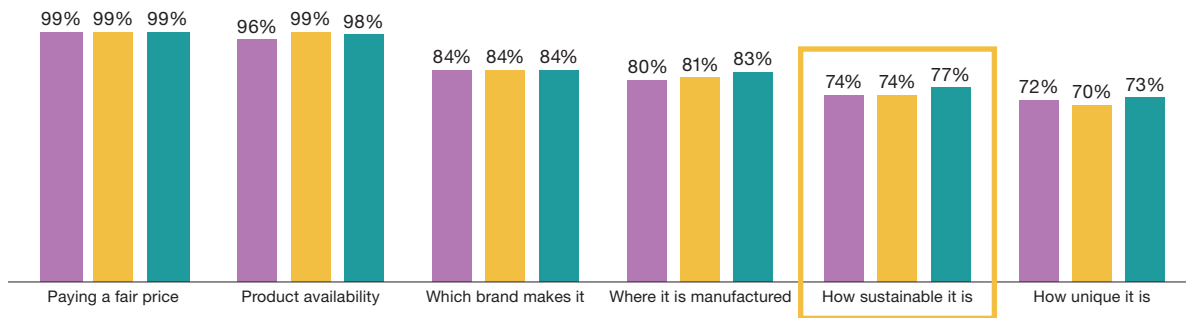
Sustainability remains a concern for Americans whether they are highly active in sustainability efforts or more disengaged, especially when it comes to thinking about the future.

Whether compared to the years before COVID or six months ago, Americans find sustainability to be as important an issue today as ever, even as other concerns like product availability and price increases are on the rise.

### The Importance of Sustainability

(T2B Extremely/Somewhat Important)

■ Before COVID-19 ■ Late 2022 ■ Early 2023

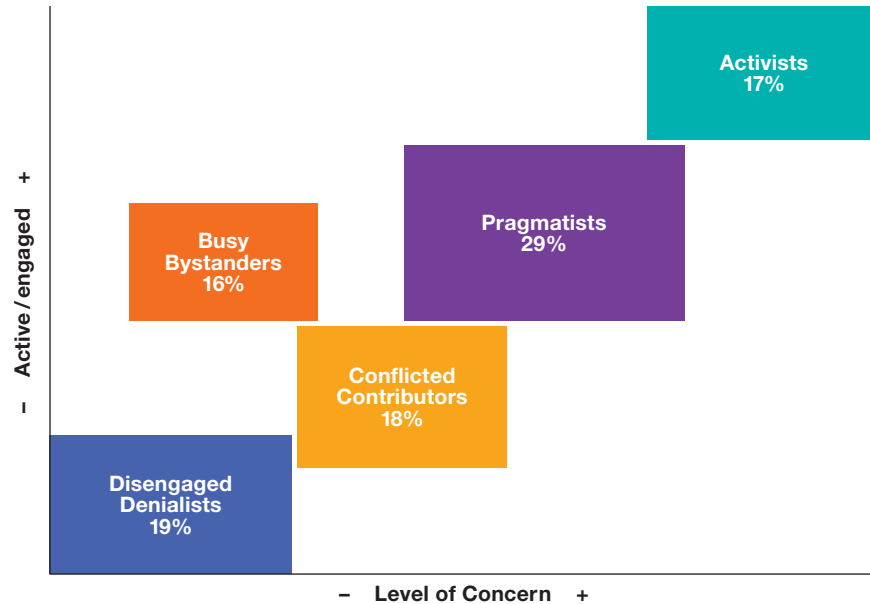


Source: Ipsos U.S. Syndicated Community, March 2023, n=965



Naturally, various facets of the American population have differing degrees of concern toward the topic of sustainability. [The Ipsos Global Sustainability Segmentation](#)<sup>1</sup> has defined these populations as:

### Overview of segments across two dimensions— level of concern and action/engagement



Base: 10,000 adults aged 18–74 in Canada and the United States and aged 16–74 in Australia, Brazil, China, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, India, Japan, Mexico, South Africa, South Korea, and the United Kingdom.  
Source: Ipsos Essentials.

<p><b>Activists:</b> Younger and more likely to be female. Believe environment is at a critical stage and the world must act now. Will compromise lifestyle for environment.</p>	<p><b>Pragmatists:</b> Older and affluent. Concerned about the environment and will take action through low-cost, home-oriented actions. Will compromise if necessary.</p>	<p><b>Conflicted Contributors:</b> Concerned about the environment but their financial situation takes precedence.</p>	<p><b>Busy Bystanders:</b> Think concern for climate change is overblown. See many barriers to action on climate change, believing that it is inconvenient, expensive and not a priority.</p>	<p><b>Disengaged Denialists:</b> Environment is either not a concern, not immediate or largely overblown. Less inclined to take environmental action nor believe government/companies should act.</p>
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These segments also tend to hold habits that closely reflect their concern over the issue. For instance, Activists have higher concern and are also doing more to combat concerns over sustainability, whereas Disengaged Denialists react conversely.

While groups like Busy Bystanders and Disengaged Denialists tend to feel that issues such as aiding the economy should take precedence over sustainability and environmental concerns, it is interesting to note that three in 10 of the least sustainability-engaged Americans still consider themselves sustainable consumers and believe that companies are not doing enough to support sustainability practices.

<sup>1</sup> Ipsos, 2022: Environmental Sustainability: Who Cares? <https://www.ipsos.com/en/environmental-sustainability-who-cares>



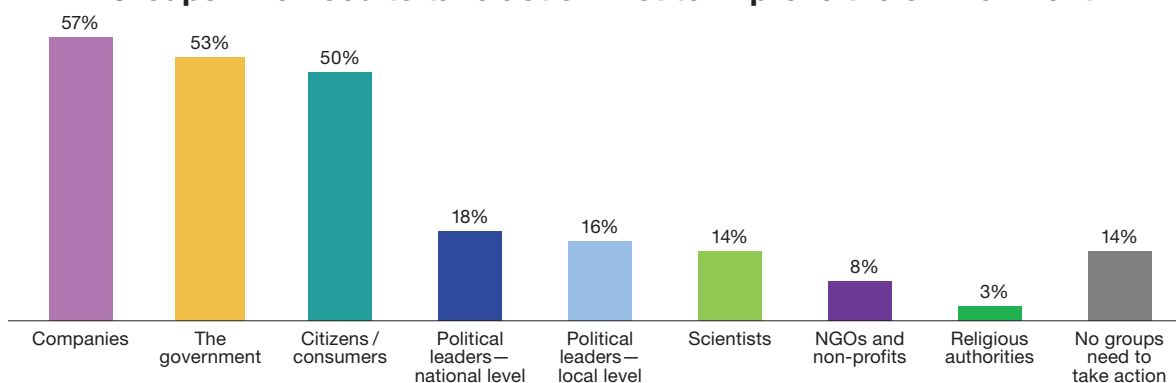
To this end, it is imperative to understand what practices certain Americans are taking to address sustainability concerns to translate for others the small, yet important, everyday habits that can be adopted to ensure we are caring for our future.

“Sustainability is a concept related to the development of products, goods, and services that involves meeting our present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to fulfill their own needs. Sustainability as a concept recognizes that the environment is an exhaustible resource. Therefore, it is important to use the environment and its resources rationally and protect it for the good of the Earth, our environment, humanity, and all living things.”

—Ipsos Community Member

But where exactly does the responsibility to course-correct fall? While six in 10 Americans believe it is the responsibility of companies to enact this change, half do not deny that this responsibility is shared and also falls to us, the citizens and consumers.

### Groups who need to take action first to improve the environment



We asked our online community what changes they would personally make to address climate change in small or large ways. They mentioned changes such as recycling more, driving less, and even paying the extra dollar for sustainable products or packaging.

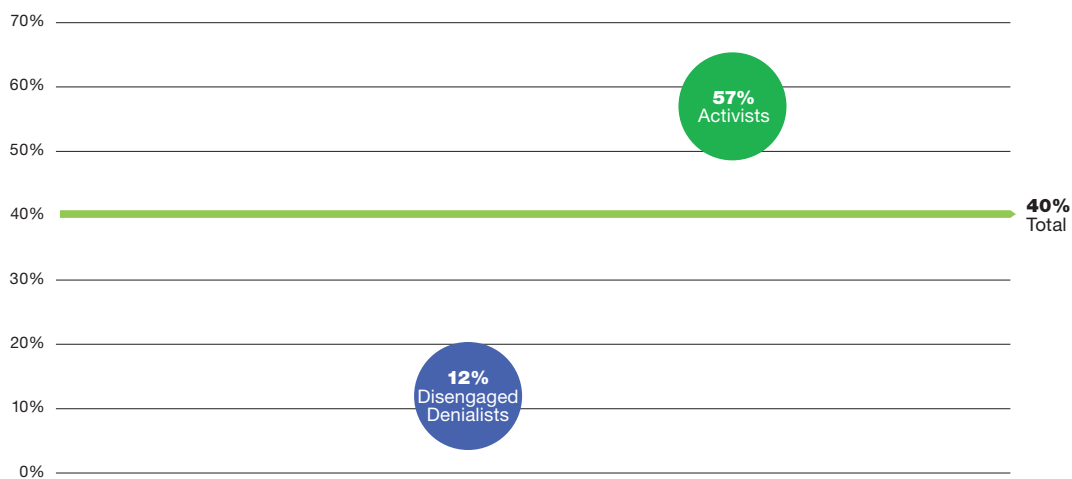
“ I have always felt a responsibility to recycle and make purchases that I know are cruelty-free, and I still feel that way. I am more actively trying to shop responsibly, like thrift stores.”

—Ipsos Community Member

“ I use more sustainable products to be reused, easy to disassemble, to allow recycling, or are repairable and thus reduce my negative energy and environmental impact.”

—Ipsos Community Member

### In the past couple of years, my sustainable habits have become significantly or somewhat more “green”

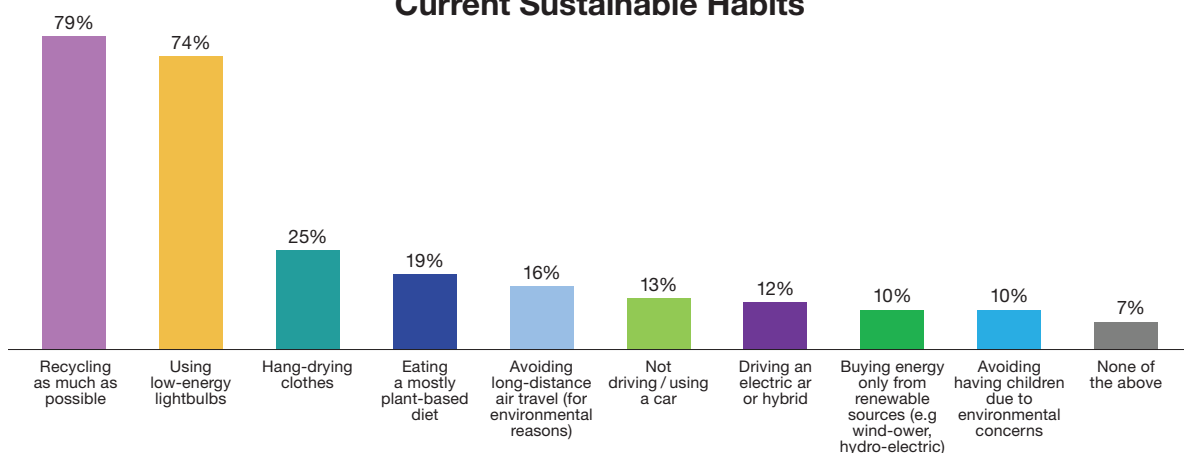


Source: Ipsos U.S. Syndicated Community, March 2023, n=965

Four in 10 Americans have made changes in their day-to-day lives over the past couple years due to increased awareness of the issue—and even some of the least-engaged Americans say they have made changes.

In fact, eight in 10 Americans are already currently recycling as much as possible. Nearly all Activists have already adapted this everyday practice and three in 10 Denialists have done as much, supporting the fact that many within even the harder-to-reach audiences of America have begun to take steps toward a sustainable future.

### Current Sustainable Habits



Source: Ipsos U.S. Syndicated Community, March 2023, n=965

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Americans feel that a company's effort toward sustainability should not look so different than their own, everyday practices: specifically, reduce the dependency on plastic and recycle as much as possible.

*“ Reduce plastic use! At least they could make sure they are using fully recyclable or compostable packaging.”*

—Ipsos Community Member

*“ Recycle, reuse as much as possible. Get rid of pollution as much as possible. Put people before greed! ”*

—Ipsos Community Member

Indeed, the move toward more sustainable packaging is not only an opportunity to help the planet but also a commercial opportunity, with consumers looking for more environmentally friendly solutions. Considering various environmental concerns, the accumulation of waste, packaging and plastic is the third-biggest concern across the globe (41%), after the threat posed by climate change (46%) and extreme climate events (43%). Three-quarters of people across 28 countries agree that single-use plastic should be banned as soon as possible and more than eight in 10 global citizens say they would like to see an international treaty to combat plastic.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Ipsos Global Advisor 2022: Attitudes Towards Single-Use Plastics <https://www.ipsos.com/en/attitudes-towards-single-use-plastics>



## WHAT'S NEXT:

- Market toward the sustainability benefits of your products, including recyclability and waste reduction, to highlight the impact of small changes
- Knowing sustainability is intrinsically tied into the idea of a better future for consumers, regularly communicate the brand's small and large initiatives which showcase an authentic and long-term commitment to sustainability
- Because consumers expect brands to join them in adopting sustainable practices, provide actionable tips and helpful resources to facilitate this expectation such as:
  - Offering single-use plastic alternatives
  - Providing refillable / reusable products
  - Highlighting instructions for recycling on product packaging

*"I only see a future of sustainability if everyone works together to make it happen. It needs to be important to both companies and consumers."*

—IPSOS COMMUNITY MEMBER

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## About Ipsos

At Ipsos we are passionately curious about people, markets, brands, and society. We deliver information and analysis that makes our complex world easier and faster to navigate and inspires our clients to make smarter decisions. With a strong presence in 90 countries, Ipsos employs more than 18,000 people and conducts research programs in more than 100 countries. Founded in France in 1975, Ipsos is controlled and managed by research professionals.

## Ipsos Online Communities

Want to understand a topic better? [Ipsos Online Communities](#) provide a collaborative, always-on environment for brands to connect with consumers and stakeholders through multidimensional, engagement-driven research designed to bring the whole human experience to the center of your business decisions.