

## **The Environment...Are We Doing All We Can?**

### *Recycling and Paying Bills Online Top Long List of Things People are Doing to Play Their Part*

According to the results of a new nationwide Harris Poll of 2,602 U.S. adults surveyed online between May 5 and 12, 2008 by Harris Interactive®:

- Almost three-quarters (72%) of U.S. adults believe their personal actions are significant on the environment while just over one in five adults (22%) believe their actions are not significant;
- Women are much more likely than men (77% versus 67%) to believe that their actions are significant. In fact over one-third (35%) of women believe their actions are very significant on the environment compared to 21 percent of men who believe the same;
- Republicans are less likely to say their personal actions on the environment are significant (63% vs. 78% for Democrats and 77% for Independents);
- More than half of U.S. adults have made changes in their lives that they believe will help sustain the environment;
- When it comes to making changes, Independents are the most likely to have done so (63%), followed by Democrats (57%) and Republicans (44%).

This non-commissioned survey, conceived and developed by Harris Interactive with valuable input from The Nature Conservancy, also found that:

- Although the phrase "environmental sustainability" appears to be popular, it may not be registering with all Americans. Over half (58%) say they have not heard the phrase "environmental sustainability" used while 42 percent have heard it;
- Just under half of Echo Boomers (those aged 18-31) and Gen Xers (those aged 32-43) have heard the phrase used (46% and 47% respectively), while just three in ten (30%) Matures (those aged 63 and older) have heard it used.

After assessing initial familiarity, Harris Interactive provided a definition of "environmental sustainability" (i.e., taking from the earth only what it can provide indefinitely, thus leaving future generations as much as we have access to ourselves). In this case:

- Just over half of Americans (53%) say they have done something to change their lifestyle to make it more environmentally sustainable, while one-quarter (25%) say they have not;
- Education seems to play a role in whether people have made a change. Just under half of those with a high school education or less (46%) have changed their lifestyle compared to two-thirds (65%) of those with a post graduate degree.

### **What Lifestyle Changes are People Making?**

- Almost everyone who has made a change to their lifestyle is recycling (91%);
- Seventy-three percent are paying bills online and/or receiving paperless statements;
- Just about half (49%) are buying more locally produced food and/or goods;
- Many are buying green household products (47%) and installing resource friendly appliances (46%);
- Some are no longer purchasing plastic water bottles (30%), commuting to work in ways other than by car (16%), carpooling (16%), changing light bulbs (4%) and buying a hybrid (3%).

But not everyone is doing something to change their lifestyle. The top reason cited by one-third (34%) of those who have not changed their lifestyle is that they do not know what to do. Three in ten (29%) say that they haven't changed their lifestyle as it won't make any difference followed by 22 percent who say they just tend to forget until afterwards to do something differently. One in five (19%) have not done anything as it is too expensive while one in ten (10%) say they don't have the time.

"This poll shows that green living is certainly at the forefront of our minds," said Stephanie Meeks, acting president and CEO of The Nature Conservancy, which advised Harris Interactive on the development of this latest poll. "Yet people are getting lost in the maze of information on how to lessen our environmental impact. The bottom line is that even the smallest lifestyle change can have significant impact in the long-run."

### So What Does it All Mean for Our Future?

Thinking about the future and the possibility of living a sustainable life, two-thirds of Americans (67%) say it will be possible for people to actually live an environmentally sustainable life, while 22 percent say it will not be possible. One thing to note is that just one in five (20%) say it definitely will be possible while almost half (47%) believe it probably will be possible. And while 64 percent of those with a high school degree or less say it will be possible, more adults (78%) with a post graduate degree believe the same.

Regina Corso, Director of *The Harris Poll*, said, "In the end, the environment and sustainable living are issues that will not be going away anytime soon. As we move into the November presidential election, it will be interesting to see how much of an impact, if any, the environment has on the campaign. And how this impacts the tone of the election may be a sign as to how it would influence either a McCain or Obama White House."

**TABLE 1**

### PERSONAL ACTIONS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

"How significant do you think your personal actions are on the environment?"

Base: All adults

|                              | Total     | Gender    |           | Political Party |           |             |
|------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------------|-----------|-------------|
|                              |           | Men       | Women     | Republican      | Democrat  | Independent |
|                              | %         | %         | %         | %               | %         | %           |
| <b>SIGNIFICANT (NET)</b>     | <b>72</b> | <b>67</b> | <b>77</b> | <b>63</b>       | <b>78</b> | <b>77</b>   |
| Very significant             | 28        | 21        | 35        | 20              | 34        | 31          |
| Somewhat significant         | 44        | 46        | 42        | 43              | 44        | 46          |
| <b>NOT SIGNIFICANT (NET)</b> | <b>22</b> | <b>29</b> | <b>15</b> | <b>31</b>       | <b>15</b> | <b>21</b>   |
| Not very significant         | 17        | 21        | 13        | 24              | 13        | 17          |
| Not at all significant       | 5         | 8         | 2         | 7               | 2         | 5           |
| Not sure                     | 6         | 4         | 8         | 6               | 7         | 2           |

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding.

**TABLE 2**

### HEARD OF ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

"Have you heard the phrase environmental sustainability used?"

Base: All adults

|     | Total | Generation           |               |                      |               |
|-----|-------|----------------------|---------------|----------------------|---------------|
|     |       | Echo Boomers (18-31) | Gen X (32-43) | Baby Boomers (44-62) | Matures (63+) |
|     |       | %                    | %             | %                    | %             |
| Yes | 42    | 46                   | 47            | 42                   | 30            |
| No  | 58    | 54                   | 53            | 58                   | 70            |

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding.

**TABLE 3**

### MAKING LIFESTYLE MORE ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE

"When we discuss the phrase environmental sustainability, we mean 'taking from the earth only what it can provide indefinitely, thus leaving future generations as much as we have access to ourselves.' Using this definition, have you done anything to change your lifestyle to make it more environmentally sustainable?"

Base: All adults

|          | Total | Education  |              |              |           | Political Party |          |             |
|----------|-------|------------|--------------|--------------|-----------|-----------------|----------|-------------|
|          |       | HS or less | Some College | College Grad | Post Grad | Republican      | Democrat | Independent |
|          |       | %          | %            | %            | %         | %               | %        | %           |
| Yes      | 53    | 46         | 57           | 59           | 65        | 44              | 57       | 63          |
| No       | 25    | 26         | 24           | 23           | 19        | 34              | 19       | 20          |
| Not sure | 22    | 28         | 19           | 18           | 16        | 22              | 25       | 18          |

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding.

**TABLE 4**

### CHANGES MADE TO LIFESTYLE

"What have you done to change your lifestyle to make it more environmentally sustainable."

Base: Have Changed Lifestyle

|                                                           | Total | Generation           |               |                      |               |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------|----------------------|---------------|----------------------|---------------|
|                                                           |       | Echo Boomers (18-31) | Gen X (32-43) | Baby Boomers (44-62) | Matures (63+) |
|                                                           |       | %                    | %             | %                    | %             |
| Recycling                                                 | 91    | 89                   | 90            | 91                   | 94            |
| Paying bills online and/or receiving paperless statements | 73    | 75                   | 77            | 76                   | 61            |

|                                                                                           |    |    |    |    |    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|
| Buying more locally produced food and/or goods                                            | 49 | 39 | 44 | 56 | 53 |
| Buying green household products                                                           | 47 | 42 | 55 | 48 | 43 |
| Installing resource friendly appliances                                                   | 46 | 34 | 52 | 48 | 51 |
| Bringing my own bags to stores instead of using paper or plastic ones                     | 39 | 34 | 47 | 36 | 45 |
| Buying more used products                                                                 | 31 | 34 | 33 | 31 | 26 |
| Discontinuing purchases of plastic water bottles                                          | 30 | 30 | 35 | 29 | 28 |
| Composting                                                                                | 23 | 15 | 21 | 27 | 28 |
| Taking fewer airplane flights                                                             | 22 | 14 | 18 | 28 | 22 |
| Commuting to work in a way other than an automobile                                       | 16 | 25 | 21 | 15 | 3  |
| Carpooling                                                                                | 16 | 29 | 15 | 12 | 6  |
| Have considered/have become a vegetarian                                                  | 10 | 15 | 13 | 8  | 2  |
| Less driving (combine errands, walk more, etc.)                                           | 5  | 3  | 5  | 5  | 5  |
| Reduced utility use (energy efficient house/ windows, unplug appliances, wood heat, etc.) | 4  | 3  | 5  | 4  | 3  |
| Changed light bulbs                                                                       | 3  | 2  | 6  | 3  | 3  |
| Purchased a hybrid car                                                                    | 3  | 2  | 3  | 3  | 5  |
| Planted a garden/trees/more natural green space                                           | 2  | 1  | 5  | 2  | 1  |
| Use less disposable/highly packaged products                                              | 2  | 4  | 1  | 2  | *  |
| Conserving water                                                                          | 2  | 1  | 2  | 2  | 3  |
| Other                                                                                     | 8  | 7  | 11 | 7  | 3  |

Note: Multiple Responses Allowed

Note: \* indicates less than 0.5%

**TABLE 5**

**REASONS CHANGES HAVEN'T BEEN MADE TO LIFESTYLE**

"Why haven't you done anything to change your lifestyle to make it more environmentally sustainable?"

Base: Haven't changed lifestyle

|                           | Total | Generation           |               |                      |               |
|---------------------------|-------|----------------------|---------------|----------------------|---------------|
|                           |       | Echo Boomers (18-31) | Gen X (32-43) | Baby Boomers (44-62) | Matures (63+) |
|                           |       | %                    | %             | %                    | %             |
| I don't know what to do   | 34    | 40                   | 36            | 35                   | 19            |
| Won't make any difference | 29    | 23                   | 23            | 28                   | 49            |

|                                                             |    |    |    |    |    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|
| Tend to forget until afterwards to do something differently | 22 | 28 | 15 | 23 | 14 |
| It's too expensive                                          | 19 | 26 | 30 | 11 | 7  |
| Don't have the time                                         | 10 | 20 | 8  | 5  | 2  |
| Already doing what's needed                                 | 5  | 3  | 9  | 2  | 9  |
| Don't think it's necessary/Don't believe there is a problem | 4  | 2  | 7  | 5  | 1  |
| Don't care/Don't want to                                    | 3  | 2  | 2  | 4  | 4  |
| Other                                                       | 2  | 4  | 2  | 4  | *  |

Note: Multiple Responses Allowed

Note: \* indicates less than 0.5%

**TABLE 6**

**LIVING AN ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE LIFE**

"Thinking about the future, do you think it will be possible for people to actually live an environmentally sustainable life?"

Base: All adults

|                                 | Total     | Education  |              |              |           |
|---------------------------------|-----------|------------|--------------|--------------|-----------|
|                                 |           | HS or less | Some College | College Grad | Post Grad |
|                                 | %         | %          | %            | %            | %         |
| <b>POSSIBLE (NET)</b>           | <b>67</b> | <b>64</b>  | <b>68</b>    | <b>69</b>    | <b>78</b> |
| Definitely will be possible     | 20        | 17         | 23           | 20           | 31        |
| Probably will be possible       | 47        | 47         | 45           | 49           | 47        |
| <b>NOT POSSIBLE (NET)</b>       | <b>22</b> | <b>20</b>  | <b>23</b>    | <b>28</b>    | <b>18</b> |
| Probably will not be possible   | 19        | 17         | 19           | 25           | 14        |
| Definitely will not be possible | 4         | 4          | 4            | 3            | 4         |
| Not sure                        | 11        | 16         | 9            | 3            | 4         |

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding.

**Methodology**

This Harris Poll<sup>®</sup> was conducted online within the United States between May 5 and 12, 2008, among 2,602 adults (aged 18 and over). Figures for age, sex, race, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words "margin of error" as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the adult population. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in the Harris Interactive panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

***These statements conform to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.***

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Q705, 715, 720, 725, 730, 735