This report looks at the following areas:

- Consumers’ attitudes towards sustainable living
- Sustainable lifestyles and behaviors in the US
- Current engagement and opportunities within the circular economy
- Consumers’ perceptions of and expectations for brands’ sustainability

The global climate crisis continues to escalate despite sustainability initiatives. Emissions continue to rise, carbon-cutting efforts fail to have a sufficient impact, and human activity continues to transform the planet at a record pace. Yet, the climate crisis remains only one of several global issues that have people concerned and on high alert. As inflation, political division, and international affairs outweigh many Americans’ concerns about the climate crisis, US consumers are looking to brands to provide sustainability solutions.

“Stress and concern over non-stop social, political and personal issues has consumers deprioritizing sustainable living. Instead they are placing the onus of addressing the climate crisis on brands, governments and other consumers.”

– Lisa Dubina, Associate Director | Culture and Identity
State of Sustainability - US - 2023

What you need to know
This Report looks at the following areas
Definition
Market context

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Top Takeaways
Consumer trends
Only a third of consumers feel sustainability is an important consideration in daily life
Although unsustainable actions are more common, consumers remain engaged with small acts of sustainability
Consumers have high expectations for brands’ sustainability, but are also skeptical of brands’ sustainability claims
Opportunities and competitive strategies
Repairing and buying refurbished have the opportunity to grow in popularity, especially among young consumers
Collaboration between brands and the government are needed to educate and encourage sustainability among consumers

CONSUMER SUSTAINABILITY BY THE NUMBERS

Consumers’ consideration of and dedication to sustainability greatly varies
Segments
Earnest Optimists (33%)
Overestimating Enthusiasts (28%)

Did you know?
This report is part of a series of reports, produced to provide you with a more holistic view of this market.
All Mintel 2020 reports contain specific COVID-19 related research and forecasts. The world’s leading brands rely on Mintel reports for the most complete, objective and actionable market intelligence.

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OVERVIEW

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CONSUMER SUSTAINABILITY BY THE NUMBERS
• Guilty Underperformers (20%)  
Figure 11: Sustainability segments: Guilty Underperformers, 2023  
• Old-School Skeptics (19%)  
Figure 12: Sustainability segments: Old-School Skeptics, 2023

MARKET FACTORS
• The climate crisis accelerates to critical levels

CONSUMER SUSTAINABILITY – FAST FACTS

OUTLOOK ON SUSTAINABILITY
• Only a third of consumers deem sustainability an important consideration in their day-to-day life  
Figure 13: Importance of sustainability in daily life, 2023  
Figure 14: Importance of sustainability in daily life, by sustainability segments, 2023  
• Millennials and parents are more likely to prioritize sustainability in their everyday life  
Figure 15: Importance of sustainability in daily life, by generation, 2023  
Figure 16: Importance of sustainability in daily life, by parental status, 2023  
• The majority of consumers feel they’re doing their part, and few feel guilty for their unsustainable habits.  
• Trend spotlight: Hyper Fatigue has consumers checked out of sustainability goals  
Figure 17: Outlook on personal behaviors, by sustainability segments, 2023  
• Gen Z adults are less likely to feel they are doing their part when it comes to sustainability  
Figure 18: Outlook on personal behaviors, by generation, 2023  
• Consumers feel brands and private individuals are equally responsible to improve sustainability efforts  
Figure 19: Responsibility for improving sustainability, by sustainability segments, 2023  
• Younger consumers more likely to look to the government to address sustainability  
Figure 20: Responsibility for improving sustainability, by generations, 2023

LIFESTYLE AND BEHAVIORS
• Nearly half of the population believe it’s easy to live a sustainable lifestyle
Figure 21: Ease of sustainably living, by sustainability segments, 2023

- Although unsustainable actions are more common, consumers remain engaged with small acts of sustainability
- Consumers’ sustainable and unsustainable behaviors don’t always align with their perceptions of their sustainability
- Incremental sustainability looks different across generations
- Younger consumers, especially Millennials, take the time to learn and stay up to date on ways to be more sustainable
- Greater financial affluence seems to correlate with a larger share of both sustainable and unsustainable behaviors

CIRCULAR ECONOMY OPPORTUNITIES
- The majority of people have participated in some facet of the circular economy
- Repairing and refurbished electronics have the opportunity to grow in popularity, especially among young consumers
- Brand spotlight: Back Market hacks Apple stores

SUSTAINABILITY AND BRANDS
- Consumers have high expectations for brands’ sustainability, despite being skeptical of their efforts
Consumers feel the transportation industry has the largest negative impact on sustainability

Gen Zs and Millennials are more attuned to the sustainability impact of the food industry and fast fashion, yet knowledge and behaviors do not always align

Consumers expect brands to be reducing, transparent and proactively educating customers

Younger consumers actually have lower expectations for brands’ sustainability efforts, indicating cooperation between brands and government is needed

Competitive strategies and market opportunities

- Brands must provide convenience and education in sustainability strategies
- Package Free offers convenient and all-encompassing sustainable laundry kits
- NIVEA Brazil educates and enables employees to live more sustainably
- US brands can take inspiration from sustainability strategies abroad
- Lotte Department Store hosts “plogging” event for customers
- Austrian government offers repair vouchers to encourage a repair-and-reuse culture

Appendix – data sources and abbreviations

- Data sources
- Consumer survey data
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Report Price: £3695 | $4995 | €4400

The above prices are correct at the time of publication, but are subject to change due to currency fluctuations.

- Consumer qualitative research
- Abbreviations and terms
- Abbreviations
- Terms

What’s included

Executive Summary
Full Report PDF
Infographic Overview
Powerpoint Presentation
Interactive Databook
Previous editions

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