

AMERICANS' ACTIONS TO CONSERVE ENERGY, REDUCE WASTE, AND LIMIT GLOBAL WARMING IN NOVEMBER 2011



Anthony Leiserowitz, PhD
Yale Project on Climate Change Communication
School of Forestry & Environmental Studies, Yale University

Edward Maibach, MPH, PhD
Center for Climate Change Communication
Department of Communication, George Mason University

Connie Roser-Renouf, PhD
Center for Climate Change Communication
Department of Communication, George Mason University

Nicholas Smith, PhD
Yale Project on Climate Change Communication
School of Forestry & Environmental Studies, Yale University

Jay D. Hmielowski, PhD
Yale Project on Climate Change Communication
School of Forestry & Environmental Studies, Yale University



George Mason University
Center for Climate Change Communication



George Mason University
Center for Climate Change Communication

Americans' Actions to Conserve Energy, Reduce Waste, and Limit Global Warming in November 2011

Interview dates: October 20, 2011 – November 16, 2011. Interviews: 1,000 Adults (18+)

Margin of error: +/- 3 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

NOTE: All results show percentages among all respondents, unless otherwise labeled. Totals may occasionally sum to more than 100 percent due to rounding.

This study was conducted by the Yale Project on Climate Change Communication and the George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication, and was funded by the Surdna Foundation, the 11th Hour Project, and the Grantham Foundation for the Protection of the Environment.

Principal Investigators:

Anthony Leiserowitz, PhD
Yale Project on Climate Change Communication
School of Forestry & Environmental Studies, Yale University
(203) 432-4865 anthony.leiserowitz@yale.edu

Edward Maibach, MPH, PhD
Center for Climate Change Communication
Department of Communication, George Mason University
(703) 993-1587 emaibach@gmu.edu

Connie Roser-Renouf, PhD
Center for Climate Change Communication
Department of Communication, George Mason University
(707) 825-0601 croserre@gmu.edu

Nicholas Smith, PhD
Yale Project on Climate Change Communication
School of Forestry & Environmental Studies, Yale University
(203) 432-1208 nicholas.smith@yale.edu

Jay D. Hmielowski, PhD
Yale Project on Climate Change Communication
School of Forestry & Environmental Studies, Yale University
(203) 432-0773 jay.hmielowski@yale.edu

Cite as: Leiserowitz, A., Maibach, E., Roser-Renouf, C., Smith, N. & Hmielowski, J.D. (2011) *Americans' Actions to Conserve Energy, Reduce Waste, and Limit Global Warming: May 2011*. Yale University and George Mason University. New Haven, CT: Yale Project on Climate Change Communication. <http://environment.yale.edu/files/BehaviorNovember2011.pdf>

Household Behaviors

Q1 - Q3.¹ How often do you do the following things?²

In the winter, set the thermostat to 68 degrees or cooler.

	Nov 2011	May 2011	June 2010	Jan 2010	Nov 2008
Always	23	26	34	33	38
Often	25	19	22	19	24
Sometimes	20	18	16	20	16
Rarely	12	11	10	10	8
Never	13	15	10	11	5
Not Applicable	7	10	7	8	9

Use³ public transportation or carpool.

	Nov 2011	May 2011	June 2010	Jan 2010	Nov 2008
Always	7	6	6	4	9
Often	9	7	7	8	9
Sometimes	16	12	14	14	15
Rarely	20	20	19	18	19
Never	36	40	40	41	35
Not Applicable	12	14	14	16	13

Walk or bike, instead of driving.

	Nov 2011	May 2011	June 2010	Jan 2010	Nov 2008
Always	4	5	7	5	8
Often	9	10	14	11	11
Sometimes	22	18	20	24	20
Rarely	24	24	30	25	20
Never	32	33	24	27	31
Not Applicable	9	11	6	9	9

¹ Items not shown in this report are being released separately.

² 2010 wording: How often do you do this now?

³ 2010 wording: Take public transportation or carpool

Q4-Q6. For each of the actions below, over the next 12 months, would you like to do this more frequently than you are now, less frequently than you are now, or about the same as you are now?⁴

In the winter, set the thermostat to 68 degrees or cooler.

	Nov 2011	May 2011	June 2010	Jan 2010	Nov 2008
More frequently	18	17	24	20	26
About the same	72	73	73	76	70
Less frequently	10	11	3	3	4

Use⁵ public transportation or carpool.

	Nov 2011	May 2011	June 2010	Jan 2010	Nov 2008
More frequently	14	17	14	9	17
About the same	68	63	76	81	68
Less frequently	18	20	10	11	15

Walk or bike, instead of driving.

	Nov 2011	May 2011	June 2010	Jan 2010	Nov 2008
More frequently	20	28	26	20	24
About the same	65	53	70	73	63
Less frequently	15	19	4	7	13

Q39. How many of the light bulbs in your home are energy-efficiency compact fluorescent lights (CFLs)?⁶

	Nov 2011	May 2011	June 2010	Jan 2010	Nov 2008
All	19	19	14	14	12
Most	36	34	38	33	28
Some	21	18	19	19	22
A few	13	14	16	16	16
None	8	11	10	15	18
Don't know	4	4	4	4	5

⁴ 2010 wording: In the coming year do you intend to do this less often, the same, or more often?

⁵ 2010 wording: Take public transportation or carpool

⁶ 2008 wording: How many of the light bulbs in your home are high energy-efficiency compact fluorescents (CFLs)?

People who said “some,” “a few,” or “none” on Q39 were asked the following question.

Q40A. Over the next 12 months, how likely are you to change most of the light bulbs in your house to energy-efficiency compact fluorescent lights (CFLs)?⁷

	Nov 2011	May 2011	June 2010	Jan 2010	Nov 2008
Yes, I'd like to and probably will	33	34	36	40	44
Yes, I'd like to but probably won't	23	30	26	26	26
No, I don't want to	24	22	17	22	17
I don't know	20	13	21	12	13
<i>Number of respondents</i>	<i>413</i>	<i>430</i>	<i>489</i>	<i>527</i>	<i>1,190</i>

N45 – N47. If you wanted to do each of the following, how confident are you that you would be able to do it most of the time?

In the winter, set the thermostat to 68 degrees or cooler.

	Nov 2011	May 2011	June 2010	Jan 2010	Nov 2008
Completely confident	41	-	-	-	-
Moderately confident	23	-	-	-	-
A little bit confident	14	-	-	-	-
Not at all confident	12	-	-	-	-
Not Applicable	10	-	-	-	-

Use public transportation or carpool.

	Nov 2011	May 2011	June 2010	Jan 2010	Nov 2008
Completely confident	16	-	-	-	-
Moderately confident	13	-	-	-	-
A little bit confident	19	-	-	-	-
Not at all confident	28	-	-	-	-
Not Applicable	25	-	-	-	-

Walk or bike, instead of driving.

	Nov 2011	May 2011	June 2010	Jan 2010	Nov 2008
Completely confident	15	-	-	-	-
Moderately confident	18	-	-	-	-
A little bit confident	20	-	-	-	-
Not at all confident	27	-	-	-	-
Not Applicable	20	-	-	-	-

⁷ 2008 wording: Which of the following best describes what you are likely to do over the next 12 months? Change most of the light bulbs in your home to high energy-efficiency compact fluorescents (CFLs)

N48. If you wanted to change most of the light bulbs in your house to energy-efficient compact fluorescent lights (CFLs), how confident are you that you would be able to do it?

	Nov 2011	May 2011	June 2010	Jan 2010	Nov 2008
Completely confident	56	-	-	-	-
Moderately confident	17	-	-	-	-
A little bit confident	15	-	-	-	-
Not at all confident	7	-	-	-	-
Not Applicable	5	-	-	-	-

N100 – N103. How effective do you think the following actions are in reducing an individual American’s personal contribution to global warming, if done most of the time?

In the winter, setting the thermostat to 68 degrees or cooler.

	Nov 2011	May 2011	June 2010	Jan 2010	Nov 2008
Completely effective	11	-	-	-	-
Moderately effective	32	-	-	-	-
A little bit effective	43	-	-	-	-
Not effective at all	14	-	-	-	-

Using public transportation or car pooling

	Nov 2011	May 2011	June 2010	Jan 2010	Nov 2008
Completely effective	16	-	-	-	-
Moderately effective	41	-	-	-	-
A little bit effective	32	-	-	-	-
Not effective at all	11	-	-	-	-

Walking or biking instead of driving

	Nov 2011	May 2011	June 2010	Jan 2010	Nov 2008
Completely effective	24	-	-	-	-
Moderately effective	35	-	-	-	-
A little bit effective	30	-	-	-	-
Not effective at all	12	-	-	-	-

N103. How effective do you think that changing most of the light bulbs in a home to energy-efficient compact fluorescent lights is in reducing an individual American's personal contribution to global warming?

	Nov 2011	May 2011	June 2010	Jan 2010	Nov 2008
Completely effective	13	-	-	-	-
Moderately effective	38	-	-	-	-
A little bit effective	35	-	-	-	-
Not effective at all	14	-	-	-	-

Q51. Thinking about the energy-saving actions you're already taking and those you'd like to take over the next 12 months: If you did most of these things, how much do you think it would reduce your personal contribution to global warming?⁸

	Nov 2011	May 2011	June 2010	Jan 2010	Nov 2008
A lot	8	7	11	-	13
Some	24	26	27	-	35
A little	50	48	47	-	36
Not at all	18	20	16	-	16

Q52. If most people in the United States did these same actions, how much would it reduce global warming?

	Nov 2011	May 2011	June 2010	Jan 2010	Nov 2008
A lot	24	26	31	-	42
Some	34	34	34	-	36
A little	33	28	27	-	14
Not at all	9	13	8	-	8

Q53. If most people in the modern industrialized countries around the world did these same actions, how much would it reduce global warming?

	Nov 2011	May 2011	June 2010	Jan 2010	Nov 2008
A lot	42	39	46	-	60
Some	30	31	29	-	25
A little	21	20	18	-	9
Not at all	6	11	7	-	6

⁸ 2008 wording: Think back to the energy-saving actions you're already doing and those you'd like to do over the next 12 months: If you did most of these things, how much do you think it would reduce your personal contribution to global warming?

Consumer Behavior

Q201. Over the past 12 months, how many times have you rewarded companies that are taking steps to reduce global warming by buying their products?

	Nov 2011	May 2011	June 2010	Jan 2010	Nov 2008
Many times (6+)	9	8	5	4	5
Several times (4-5)	12	9	8	7	11
A few times (2-3)	20	22	15	17	22
Once	5	6	5	5	4
Never	55	56	67	68	58

Q202. Over the past 12 months, how many times have you punished companies that are opposing steps to reduce global warming by NOT buying their products?

	Nov 2011	May 2011	June 2010	Jan 2010	Nov 2008
Many times (6+)	10	10	9	5	7
Several times (4-5)	6	6	6	7	8
A few times (2-3)	16	14	11	13	14
Once	6	4	4	3	3
Never	62	67	71	72	69

Q203. Over the next 12 months, would you like to punish companies that are opposing steps to reduce global warming by NOT buying their products...

	Nov 2011	May 2011	June 2010	Jan 2010	Nov 2008
More frequently than you are now?	37	35	35	32	40
About the same as you are now?	55	55	55	58	53
Less frequently than you are now?	9	10	10	10	7

Q204. Over the next 12 months do you intend to buy the products of companies that are taking steps to reduce global warming...

	Nov 2011	May 2011	June 2010	Jan 2010	Nov 2008
More frequently than you are now?	36	39	36	34	40
About the same as you are now?	55	54	55	58	56
Less frequently than you are now?	9	8	10	8	4

Proportion who intend to engage in consumer activism over the coming year.⁹

Nov 2011	May 2011	June 2010	Jan 2010	Nov 2008
55	55	51	51	58

Citizen Behavior

Q206. Over the past 12 months, how many times have you volunteered with or donated money to an organization working to reduce global warming?²

	Nov 2011	May 2011	June 2010	Jan 2010	Nov 2008
Many times (6+)	1	1	1	1	1
Several times (4-5)	3	2	3	1	1
A few times (2-3)	9	7	5	5	4
Once	6	8	8	7	7
Never	81	82	84	87	87

Q208. Over the past 12 months, how many times have you written letters, emailed, or phoned government officials about global warming?¹⁰

	Nov 2011	May 2011	June 2010	Jan 2010	Nov 2008
Many times (6+)	1	1	1	1	1
Several times (4-5)	2	1	2	1	1
A few times (2-3)	7	4	4	5	3
Once	3	4	4	4	4
Never	87	90	89	88	92

Respondents in 2010 and 2011 who had contacted government officials were asked the following question.

Q209. When you contacted a government official did you...

	Nov 2011	May 2011	June 2010	Jan 2010	Nov 2008
Urge them to take action to reduce global warming?	76	77	71	72	-
Urge them to not take action to reduce global warming?	20	20	18	22	-
Other	4	3	11	7	-
<i>Number of respondents</i>	<i>118</i>	<i>96</i>	<i>107</i>	<i>104</i>	-

⁹ Includes all those who have rewarded and/or punished companies in the past year and plan to continue to do so about the same or more frequently, and all those who have never engaged in these actions, but intend to do so more frequently in the coming year.

¹⁰ 2008 wording: Over the past 12 months, how many times have you written letters, emailed, or phoned government officials to urge them to take action to reduce global warming?

Q210. Over the next 12 months, would you like to volunteer with or donate money to an organization working to reduce global warming ...?

	Nov 2011	May 2011	June 2010	Jan 2010	Nov 2008
More often	13	17	13	12	16
About the same	68	64	69	64	68
Less often	19	20	18	24	16

Q212. Over the next 12 months, would you like to write letters, email, or phone government officials about global warming ...?¹¹

	Nov 2011	May 2011	June 2010	Jan 2010	Nov 2008
More often	10	12	11	13	13
About the same	69	66	71	64	71
Less often	21	23	19	23	17

Respondents who said they would like to contact their government officials the same or more often were asked the following question.

If you were to contact government officials about global warming, would you:

	Nov 2011	May 2011	June 2010	Jan 2010	Nov 2008
Urge them to take action to reduce global warming?	76	72	71	69	-
Urge them to not take action to reduce global warming?	11	15	14	19	-
Other	14	13	15	12	-
<i>Number of respondents</i>	<i>741</i>	<i>726</i>	<i>783</i>	<i>711</i>	<i>-</i>

¹¹ 2008 wording: Over the next 12 months, would you like to write letters, email, or phone government officials to urge them to take action to reduce global warming...?

Methodology

These results come from nationally representative surveys of American adults, aged 18 and older. The samples were weighted to correspond with US Census Bureau parameters for the United States. The surveys were designed by Anthony Leiserowitz of Yale University and Edward Maibach and Connie Roser-Renouf of George Mason University and conducted by Knowledge Networks, using an online research panel of American adults.

- November 2011: Fielded October 20 through November 16 with 1,000 American adults. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 3 percent, with 95 percent confidence.
- May 2011: Fielded April 23 through May 12 with 1,010 American adults. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 3 percent, with 95 percent confidence.
- June 2010: Fielded May 14 through June 1 with 1,024 American adults. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 3 percent, with 95 percent confidence.
- January 2010: Fielded December 24, 2009 through January 3, 2010 with 1,001 American adults. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 3 percent, with 95 percent confidence.
- November 2008: Fielded October 7 through November 12 with 2,164 American adults. Data was collected in two waves: wave 1 from October 7 through October 20 and wave 2 from October 24 through November 12. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 2 percent, with 95 percent confidence.