

February 27, 2019

## HOW YOUNG CONSUMERS REALLY FEEL ABOUT ECO-FRIENDLY PRODUCTS, IN 5 STATS

DO MILLENNIALS AND GEN Z ACTUALLY CARE ABOUT HOW ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY A PRODUCT IS? OUR DATA TELLS THE STORY OF THEIR (NOT ALWAYS STRAIGHTFORWARD) VIEWS ON ECO-FRIENDLY GOODS AND BRANDS...

Millennials have long been considered eco-warriors, and their dedication to environmental issues has influenced brands to go green for years. And with Gen Z jumping on the eco bandwagon, young consumers are shaping an environmental movement that stretches beyond hashtags and into real action. In 2018 this reached fever pitch. In December, 15-year-old Swedish student Greta Thunberg [grabbed headlines](#) when she told members of the U.N. they “weren’t mature enough” to stop climate change. Just a month before that, 21 teens and tweens [sued the U.S. government](#) over climate change. And then there’s Zero Hour, a youth-led coalition [driving the movement](#) to call for action on climate change and environmental justice globally (demonstrations are planned for March 15th in the U.S.).

Millennials and Gen Z also led a major revolt against plastic last year, causing Reason.com to call 2018 “the year that hating plastic straws went mainstream.” With pressure from the [#StopSucking](#) movement, which aimed to get brands and companies to drop useless plastic straws, companies as far-reaching as Starbucks, Disney, Hyatt, American Airlines, Alaska Airlines, SeaWorld, and more [pledged to ditch the plastic straw](#). While some have criticized that this movement is a drop in the eco-bucket when it comes to saving the planet, Millennials and Gen Z know they have to start somewhere. As the CEO of sustainable retailer For Days [told us](#), “Young consumers are becoming more and more aware of how their choices and consumer habits affect the planet,” an awareness they’re using to [push brands to go zero-waste](#) and, of course, get politicians on the eco train.

At the same time, however, it’s been remarked that the level of eco-advocacy among Millennials has dwindled in recent years, and we hear brands wondering just how much eco-friendly products actually matter to young consumers. While [a poll in 2014](#) found that Millennials cared more about the environment than previous generations, in 2018, [another study](#) found that the gen has similar or less engagement on global warming than other generations. Pew Research also found that Millennials are [the least likely generation](#) to describe themselves as “environmentalists” (32% compared to 42% for Gen X), even though the cohort overwhelmingly supports clean energy tech (71%) and believes in global warming (64%) regardless of political leanings. Our own research has seen environmental causes slip down the list of issues young consumers care about—in 2018, “global warming” ranked number six for [issues they’re most passionate about](#); [this year](#) it ranked number eight. With this in mind, we wanted to know—how much do Millennials and Gen Z care about eco-issues today? Here are five stats that show how important eco-friendly products are to them right now:

### **1. Half of young consumers say they’re more likely to buy a product described as “sustainable.”**

Young consumers are using their wallets to support the causes they believe in, and half will pull them out for sustainable products. They’re almost as likely to respond positively to an “eco-friendly” label, with 46% of 13-36-year-olds saying they’re more likely to buy a product with that description. And despite having less overall brand loyalty than other generations, studies show that 45% of Millennials say they could be swayed to purchase products from eco-

conscious companies, [according to Total Retail](#), a reality they found true across all product categories, including pet, apparel, beauty, and food and beverage. Case in point: When a Facebook video highlighting Lush Shampoo Bars' environmental impact [went viral](#), young consumers came out in droves to support the brand. Lush sold 12,000 bars in 48 hours, and Millennials and Gen Z got to feel good about supporting a zero-waste, eco-conscious company.

**2. ONLY 10% say they don't care about how eco-friendly a product is.**

These generations do care about how the products they buy impact the environment. Only 10% of Millennials and Gen Z told us they don't care about how eco-friendly a product is. When stacked against other issues, it becomes more clear how important the environment is: "Environmental issues" [ranked as](#) the fourth *most* important cause to them. Though overall, the environment just cracked the top ten list of issues Millennials and Gen Z are [passionate about today](#), when we asked them to tell us the cause that is *most* important to them, "environment/conservation issues" made its way up the list. Gen Z teens are actually more likely to say they don't care about how eco-friendly a product is (at 19%).

**3. Over half say while they'd like to buy more eco-friendly products, they care about price more.**

Yes, they want products to be eco-friendly, but if it comes down to deciding between the environment and a lower price tag, the majority are going with the savings. Sixty-one percent say they'd like to buy more eco-friendly products, but they care more about price. Millennials are a thrifty bunch, and they're not always able to afford to consistently support the causes they believe in. Of course, if looking at two similar products with the same price point, the sustainable option will win—but that's not always the case.

**4. But over a third would pay 10% more for eco-friendly products.**

The majority have to put budget before green, but not all: 36% of 13-36-year-olds say they'd pay 10% more for an eco-friendly product. The higher the price goes though, the fewer are willing to pay: 19% would be willing to pay 25% more, and 7% would be willing to pay a full 50% more. In other words, there is room for a premium on eco-friendly products, but it's not huge. Again, teens are less likely to care about eco-friendly causes here, with 48% saying that they would not pay more for a product that is eco-friendly, compared to 35% of 18-36-year-olds. There is a chance that this is age-related and not a sign of a generational value: teens generally have less disposable income and so less luxury in deciding when to spend more.

**5. A third of young consumers say ads that show what a brand is doing to help the environment makes them feel more positively about the brand.**

When we ask 13-36-year-olds what kinds of ads will make them feel more positively about a brand, 33% say those that show them what the brand is doing to help the environment. To put this into context, this kind of ad ranks 9th in a list of 19 potential marketing approaches, above "Make me feel good about myself," "Make me feel good about the world," "Tell me how they support a cause I believe in," and "Tell me why they are better than competitors." In fact, 79% say that buying products from brands that have social good components makes them feel better about spending money—and 30% want that social cause to be global warming, while 26% think it should be environmental issues in general.

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