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Green Gauge® 2023 U.S. Report

Pathways to a Sustainable Future

A report preview from
GfK Consumer Life



What is Green Gauge?

- **GfK Green Gauge®** is a multi-decade syndicated study and consumer survey that provides leading global marketers and sustainability professionals with an in-depth look into sustainability-related consumer attitudes and behaviors.
- The following insights are a preview of the complete Green Gauge U.S. report.

Interested in a complete global or regional Green Gauge report? [Contact GfK](#) today.

Green Gauge 2023: Executive Summary

The mainstreaming of environmental sustainability continues



“Going green” continues its steady march into the American consciousness and consumer culture.

Current trends in environmentalism are **driven by rising concern for climate change, declining perceptions of environmental quality, and a population demanding more action** from government and companies alike.

Over half of the US population (**53%**) now says that **concern for the environment is very serious and should be a priority for everyone**. As has been the case historically, planet-forward Millennials tend to be even more concerned, with 61% agreeing concern is very serious and should be a priority for everyone.

Additionally, the value that people place on ***Preserving the environment and Being in tune with nature*** has seen steady growth in the past decade, with a notable spike during the pandemic. These gains have occurred across all demographic groups – age/generation, gender, income, race/ethnicity, and urbanicity.



Green Gauge 2023: Executive Summary

What has changed with today's consumer?



Inflation has caused a dip in attitudes towards sustainable products.

The number of Americans who cite price as a barrier to buying green products has grown.

The “circular economy” has also seen gains in the marketplace.

This is based on the reuse and regeneration of products and related materials in a way that substantially minimizes waste.

Growth in sustainable attitudes does not always move in a straight line, however. Consumers still grapple with perceptions of high prices and lower quality as it relates to green-marketed products.

Actions to aid the environment (like recycling) have remained relatively stable year-over-year, which is notable given historic levels of inflation. In the past, rising prices and economic strife negatively affected eco-actions.





The Macro View of Consumers and Environmental Issues

Elevated climate concern persists in the US

Impacts are felt across populations



Ranking of 24 societal concerns (US 2023)

- 1 Inflation and high prices
- 2 Money enough to live right and pay the bills
- 3 Crime and lawlessness
- 4 Cost of healthcare
- 5 Recession and unemployment
- 6 **Global climate change/Global warming**
- 7 Wrongdoing by/corruption of elected government officials
- 8 The future of the retirement/pension plans provided by government
- 9 Immigration
- 10 Misinformation presented as fact (e.g., fake news, propaganda)
- 11 Pandemics
- 12 Economic inequality in my country
- 13 Drug abuse
- 14 Personal information getting into the wrong hands
- 15 Terrorism
- 16 Relations between racial and ethnic groups
- 17 Environmental pollution
- 18 Educational quality
- 19 Gender inequality
- 20 Rise of authoritarian regimes around the world
- 21 Relations with foreign countries
- 22 Religious extremism/fundamentalism
- 23 The impact of technology on society
- 24 Trade restrictions impacting my country

Climate change threatening 'things Americans value most,' US report says

Climate change is unleashing “far-reaching and worsening” calamities in every region of the United States, and **the economic and human toll will only increase unless humans move faster to slow the planet’s warming.**

The Washington Post analysis of federal disaster declarations highlights how the **frequency of billion-dollar disasters has now increased from once every four months in the 1980s to once every three weeks in the present.** It finds that the United States is experiencing some of the most severe sea-level rises on the planet.

61%

agree environmental global climate change/global warming is somewhat/very serious



Mainstreaming environmental interest



Consumers have grown more aligned on the importance of **Preserving the Environment**

Preserving the Environment reached a high during the pandemic, when many consumers experienced the 'blue-sky' effect of lockdowns and spent more time exploring the outdoors. It has since edged down but seems to be staying on the pre-pandemic trendline of long-term growth.

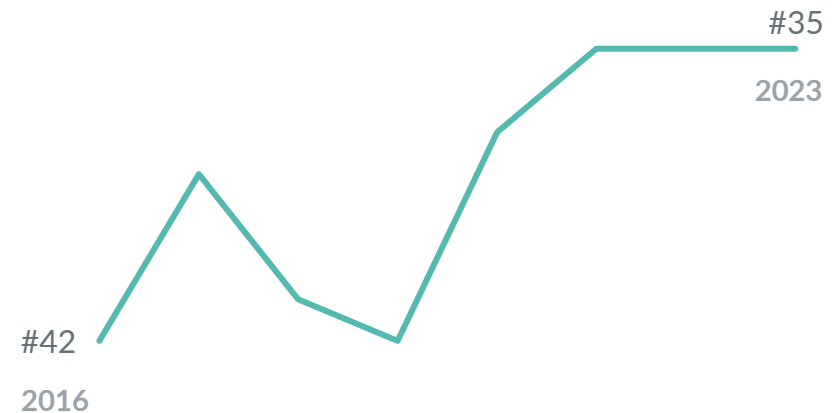
Ranking on a list of 57 values



Preserving the environment
Helping to preserve nature



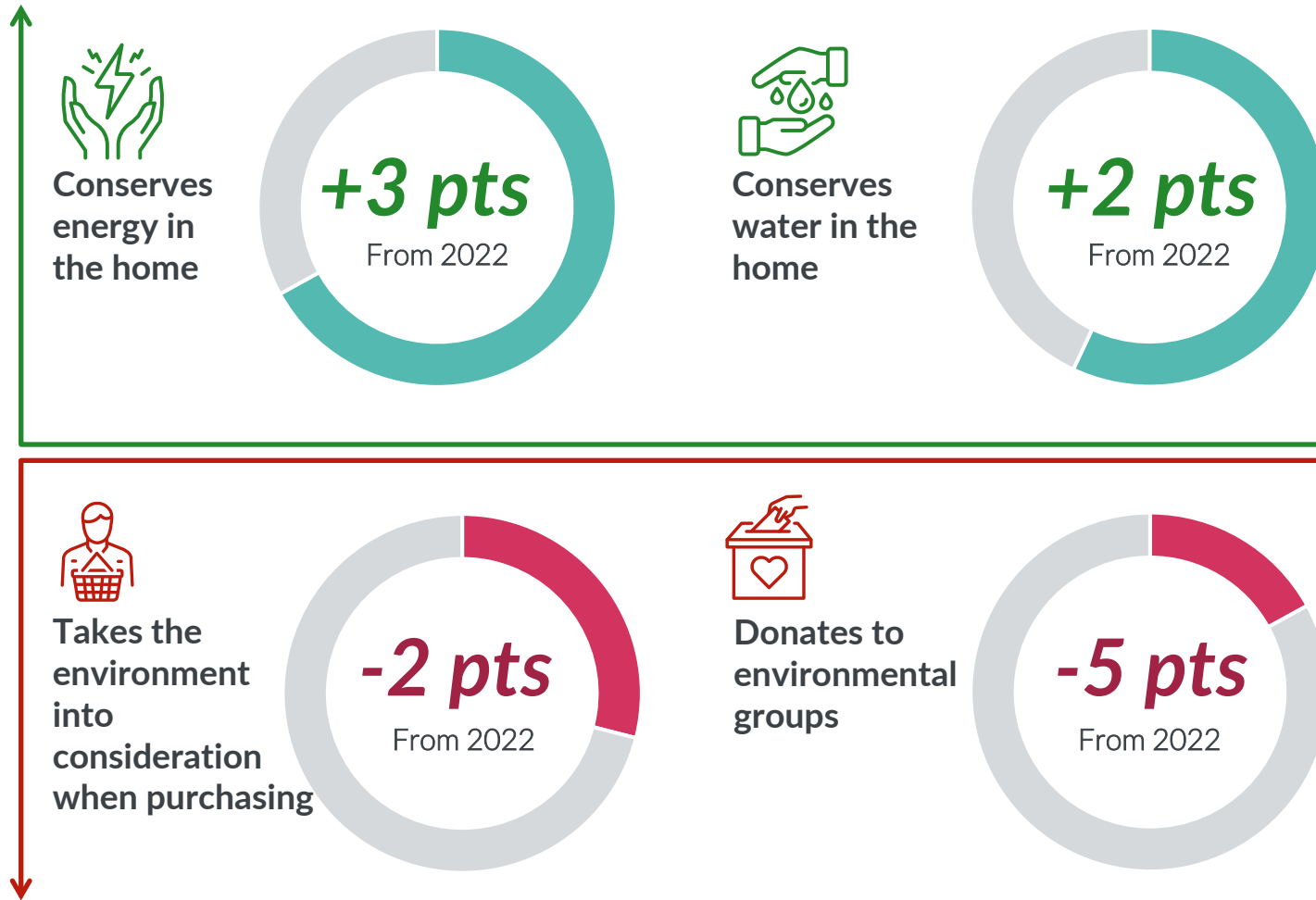
Being in Tune with Nature
Fitting into nature



Yearly shifts highlight the impact inflation is having on sustainability



When money is tight, people will conserve more and purchase and donate less



Inflation has caused a dip in attitudes towards sustainable products, but Americans are still finding ways to express their sustainable attitudes.

Notably, the conservation of energy and water in the home has grown.

The home is the frontline for conservation behaviors (e.g., limiting the use of appliances, being mindful about turning off lights), and 80% of Americans want environmentally friendly home energy options to be more accessible.

Focusing on future generations is a winning strategy in communications



Most people are concerned about what happens to the next generation

8 in 10 consider future generations

% agree “I am concerned about the impact that our environmental behavior will have on future generations (Total US).

This is led by **84%** of Millennials that agree.

A complete generational analysis is available in the full Green Gauge report.

[Contact GfK](#) for access options today.



“Placing Future Generations at the Heart of Sustainable Development”

The United Nations and the Institute for Sustainable Development wants to shift global policy making to focus on the long-term impacts on future generations. They recommend focusing on concrete and practical steps like appointing a special UN envoy for special generations and establishing an intergovernmental forum on future generations.

“The inescapable, uncomfortable and unrelenting reality is that our planet is getting hotter, and it’s humanity’s fault. Now is the time to act. ‘Beer For Your Grandchildren’ is all about doing things right today to protect future generations. We hope in 50 years we’ll still be around brewing beer for your grandchildren, as they deserve to enjoy this planet.. and, of course, great beer, too.”

-James Watt, Brewdog CEO



Hot Topics in Sustainability Today

Including:

- Climate Change and Resiliency
- Electrified Mobility
- The Circular Economy

Consumers care about carbon emissions and the response from brands



Authentic marketing around climate protection can be a win

72% are interested in buying products with labels about their carbon footprint/emissions



Consumers will increasingly use their wallets to help fight climate change with carbon-offset purchases

Carbon offsets will increasingly be embedded in many purchasing decisions that retail consumers make each day. Deloitte predicts consumer purchases of carbon offsets will become pervasive and grow into a nearly US \$100 billion market in developed economies by 2030... There is already a growing appetite for products that have a sustainability label; roughly two-thirds of US consumers say they would pay more at the pump for gas that offsets its greenhouse gas emissions.

EAT WITH PURPOSE

Our food choices have a direct impact on the Earth.

just salad



EARTH BOWL
450 CAL 0.74kg CO₂e



STRAWBERRY BANANA
310 CAL 0.3kg CO₂e



“Just Salad became one of the first US chain restaurants to show the estimated carbon footprint of every item on our menu in 2020. Our original carbon labels were calculated in partnership with a team at the NYU Stern School of Business ... In March 2022, we updated all carbon labels to reflect cradle-to-grave estimates verified by Planet FWD.”

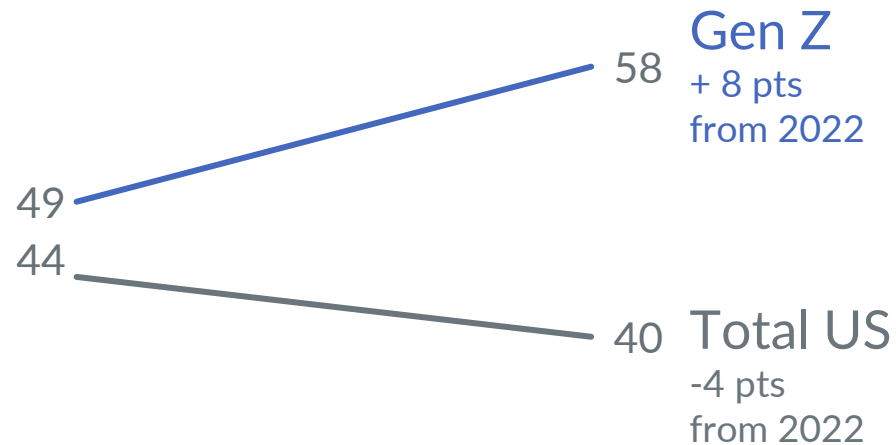
The Electric Vehicle market is at a crossroads

Younger consumers still lead excitement, but the marketplace continues to grapple with lagging infrastructure and other barriers



Gen Z is the only generation gaining in EV consideration YOY

% would consider an electric vehicle in next purchase



A complete generational analysis is available in the full Green Gauge report. [Contact GfK](#) for access options today.

“America passed the EV ‘tipping point,’ but many buyers still want gas. Once EVs cross 5 percent of new sales, they generally take over. US hesitation could hinder that.

...But even as the nation’s EV market appears to be teetering on the edge of an electric takeover, a hesitant American public – and a still-subpar charging infrastructure – could still hold the country back. A Washington Post-University of Maryland poll shows the current limits of U.S. enthusiasm for the new vehicles, with nearly half of adults (46 percent) saying they prefer to own a gas-powered car or truck. That compares with 19 percent who want a full-electric vehicle, 13 percent who want a plug-in hybrid and 22 percent who want a traditional hybrid vehicle.

-Washington Post/University of Maryland Poll

Circularity emerging as a sustainable strategy for consumers



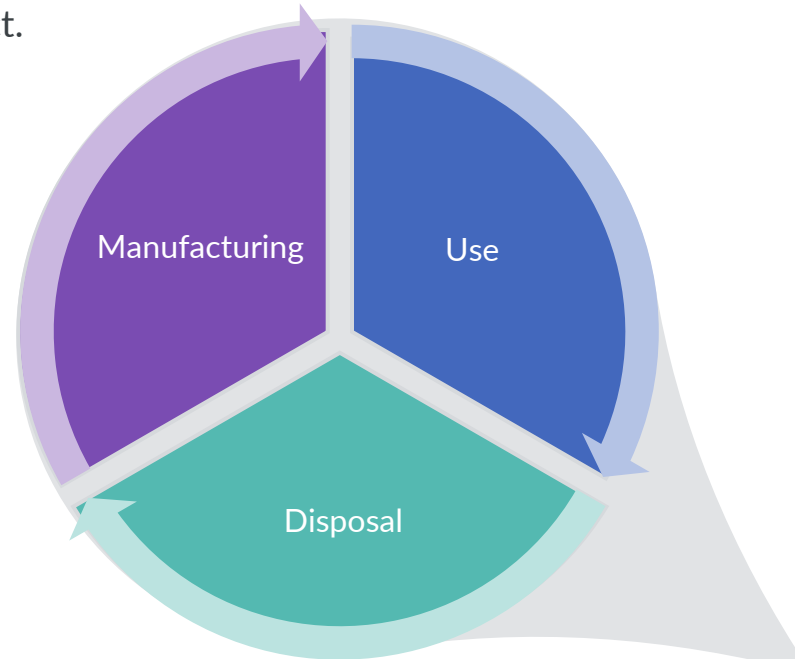
A circular economy focused on a zero-waste lifecycle of products

“ A circular economy is an economic system that aims to eliminate waste throughout an entire value chain – including throughout manufacturing, production and use. ”

- World Economic Forum

Maximizing efficiency and incorporating recycled materials to minimize environmental impact.

Maximizing product life to reduce purchase turnover.



Disassemble a product in part or whole and find new uses for elements that are no longer able to function as intended – thus reducing waste.

80% agree a waste-free lifestyle is a possibility in the next 20 years



Design “radiate(s) across the entire system, affecting sourcing, production, and how we use things. Importantly, they also determine ‘what happens next’ and what is possible after something has been used. Does it become waste? Or can it be part of a circular economy?”

Ellen MacArthur Foundation

Circular buying increases YOY



A trend so hot it may be hurting the low-income population it can help support

Why Circular:

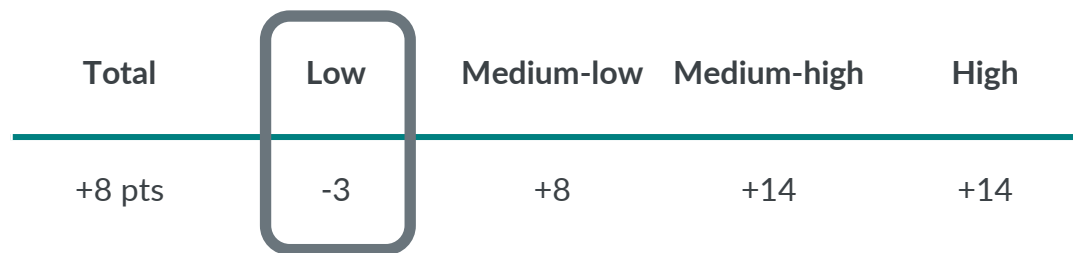
The circular economy addresses “climate change and other global challenges like biodiversity loss, waste, and pollution, by decoupling economic activity from the consumption of finite resources.” Put more simply, this means “designing for durability, reuse, remanufacturing, and recycling to keep products, components, and materials circulating in the economy.”

The Ellen MacArthur Foundation

↑ 8 points

A noticeable increase in consumers who bought something second-hand in the past year.

Change in % who bought something second-hand in past year by income quartile (2013 - 2023)



The PROs and CONs of circular buying:

PRO: Secondhand shopping is winning

CON: The popularity of secondhand shopping is pricing people out



Sustainability in the marketplace

Consumers value corporate environmental responsibility

It is also a top expectation of companies today



↑ **4** points

“It is important that companies take environmentally responsible actions, such as using environmentally friendly materials or ingredients”
(% agree/somewhat agree)

Most important responsibilities of companies *(Ranking on list of 19 items)*

- #1** Paying all employees fairly (regardless of gender, ethnicity, etc.)
- #2** Producing good quality products or services
- #3** Charging reasonable prices for products and services
- #4** **Being environmentally responsible**



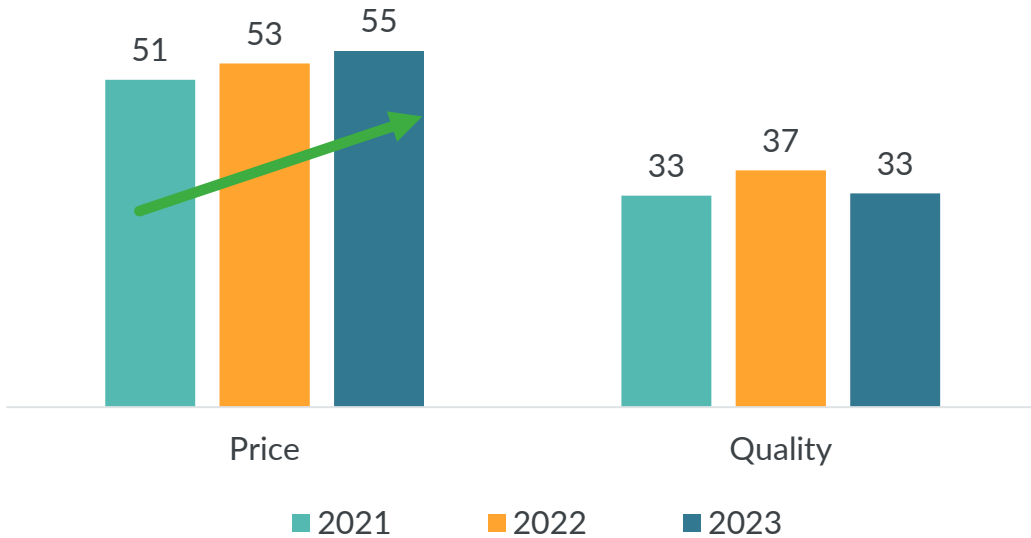
But consumer issues with eco-marketing are likely hampering further growth



Inflation impacts the market for green, but other problems like greenwashing persist

Barriers to sustainable purchasing.

Price ticks back up amid inflationary pressures



83% of Americans say companies do good things for the environment for their **public image**, not because they really care.

#3 on a list of 28 statements about sustainability, **+16 ranks** from the global average



Unilever research: Greenwashing fears thwart sustainability messaging among influencers

63% of influencers say they are creating more sustainability content compared to last year.

#1 barrier cited by Influencers to creating more content is the fear of potential **greenwashing accusations.**

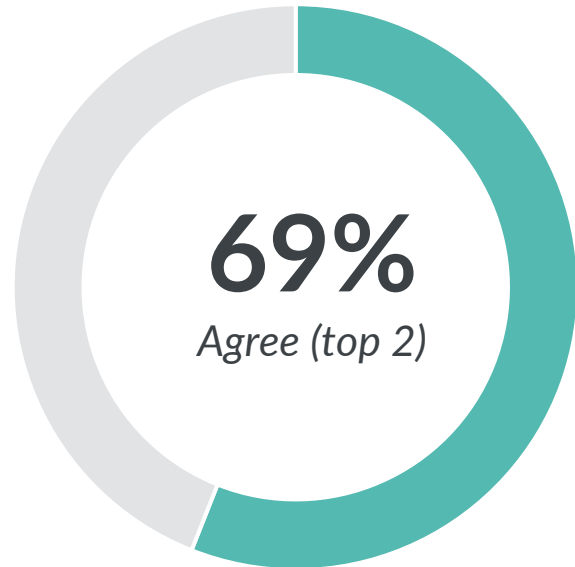
Consumers want to know what you are doing

Corporate transparency has quickly become the standard



I believe the environmental claims on labels and in advertising

% Total US

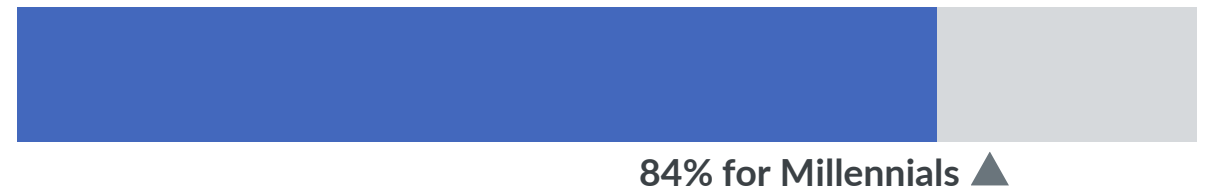


Linking Labels to Impact for Gen Z

Members of Gen Z say they are eager to make a difference, but they need better information in easily digestible formats.

Better labeling and transparency of sustainable products also would improve their perception and likelihood to purchase these products...Almost a third say they would purchase them if they had clearer labels, and 29% say they would buy these items if there were more information about the product's climate impact.

78% agree annual environmental impact statements should be required from large companies





Green Gauge Segmentation

The marketer's playbook for engaging consumers
on environmental sustainability

Green Gauge® Segmentation

Gauging the world's eco-consciousness



The Green Gauge segmentation is built for the marketer seeking to identify **unifying themes and key distinctions** across different groups



Organizations use it to **target large groups of consumers** based on a holistic view of their sustainability perspective



The segmentation enables you to **identify which groups are the most/least receptive** to sustainability products and messaging



Comprehensive deep-dives into each segment let you tailor your strategies to their unique sensibilities

Meet the Green Gauge consumer segments:



Carbon Cultured



Glamour Green



Green in Deed



Green in Need








Jaded

Green Gauge® segmentation



Green Gauge segments provide marketing guidance across the spectrum of sustainability attitudes, behaviors, and opportunities

	 Green in Deed	 Glamour Green	 Carbon Cultured	 Green in Need	 Jaded
Approach to environment	The most active in environmental thought and action	Green is a badge of honor/status symbol – eager to showcase eco-friendly behaviors and purchases	Pro-environmental attitudes, but focus mostly on the “easy” behaviors	Willing, but not able...need the tools	Skeptical, cynical, but still participate sometimes
How to engage them	Highlight safety/wellness benefits; support social issues; invest in omnichannel retail	Showcase eco-status; align with busy lifestyle; leverage new technologies	Make going green easy; focus on need-to-know information; highlight affordability	Align with social values; offer value for money; educate about emerging retail	Focus on the basics; quell safety concerns; offer dynamic in-store marketing efforts

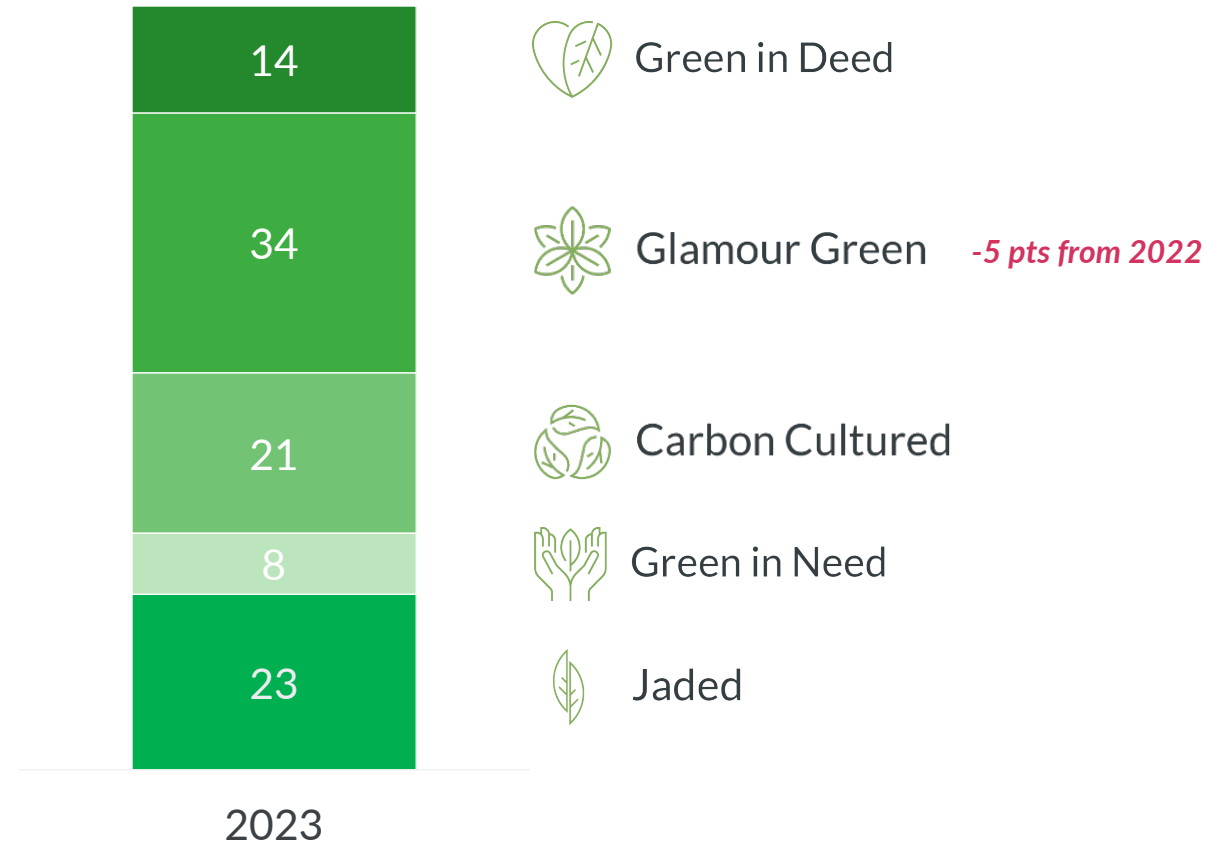
One in three Americans are Glamour Greens, but there has been a regression since last year



The landscape for consumers and environmental sustainability continues to be driven by the **Glamour Green mindset** though it has fallen from its post-pandemic peak of 39% to 34%.

The regression of the Glamour Greens, highlights a broader re-assessment of sustainability by Americans from a badge of honor to a crisis.

% distribution of US by Green Gauge segments



Segment Snapshot: Who are Glamour Greens?

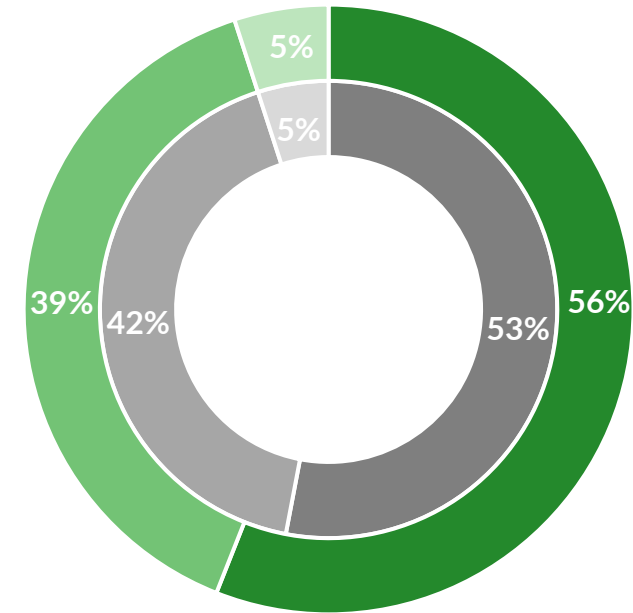
The **#1** segment by far in the US and world today, Glamour Greens are more likely than average to be high-income, Millennials or younger, and to exhibit an aspirational mindset. They are a natural fit for displaying their status through environmentally friendly behaviors and purchases.

Get a complete playbook of the Green Gauge consumer segments in the full report. [Contact GfK](#) today.



“I advertise my **environmentally friendly possessions and behaviors** to raise awareness for sustainability.”

Glamour Greens concern about the environment is...



- Very serious
- Somewhat serious
- Not at all serious
- General Population

Thank you for reading:

Green Gauge® 2023 U.S. Report

This presentation is a preview of the complete report that provides an in-depth look into sustainability-related consumer attitudes and behaviors.

For the complete report, regional insights and data sets, contact [GfK today](#).