

Environmental Actions – A Historical Comparison

	2003	2001	2000
1. Do you recycle aluminum cans?			
Yes - 83.8%	Yes - 90%	Yes - 81%	
2. Have you ever refused to buy something because you felt it was harmful to the environment?			
Yes - 48.8%	Yes - 54%	Yes - 67%	
3. Have you ever contributed money to an environmentalist group?			
Yes - 44.4%	Yes - 39%	Yes - 46%	
4. Have you ever volunteered for an environmental improvement project? (question not asked in 2001, 2000)			
Yes - 27.5%	-	-	
5. Are you more likely to vote for a political candidate known to be an environmentalist?			
Yes - 44.4%	Yes - 42%	Yes - 49%	
6. Would you be willing to pay \$5 a month more for your electricity if it was generated through non-polluting wind power?			
Yes - 57.4%	Yes - 63%	Yes - 73%	
65.0% would pay only \$5 a month more	65.0% were willing to pay \$3 more a month for electricity generated by non-polluting methods	65.0% were willing to pay \$3 more a month for electricity generated by non-polluting methods	
25.3% would pay \$10 a month more			
9.7% would pay more than \$10 a month			
7. Are you a member of an environmental group? (question not asked in 2001, 2000)			
Yes - 4.9%	-	-	
7.7% used to be			

The Public Mind Survey

The Public Mind Survey of Mansfield University is an annual statewide telephone survey, begun in 1990, of randomly selected Pennsylvania adults, which focuses upon issues facing the Pennsylvania General Assembly. The JCC sponsors a series of environmental questions.

More than 2,200 Pennsylvanians were contacted for the 2003 survey. Respondents are proportionately represented demographically within the state to ensure an accurate sample. The margin of error in the 2003 survey is plus or minus 2.1 percent.

The 2003 survey was conducted in February and March under the direction of Mansfield University professors Drs. Timothy Madigan and Richard Feil.



CONTACTS AND STAFF

Phone:
717-787-7570

Mail:
Joint Conservation Committee
PA House of Representatives
House Box 202254
Harrisburg, PA, 17120-2254

Fax:
717-772-3836

Drop By and Visit:
Room 408, Finance Building
Harrisburg

Visit our Internet Website:
<http://jcc.legis.state.pa.us>

Committee Staff
Executive Director:
Craig D. Brooks
cbrooks@jcc.legis.state.pa.us

Administrative Officer:
Lynn Mash
lmash@jcc.legis.state.pa.us

Research Analyst:
Tony M. Guerrieri
tguerrieri@jcc.legis.state.pa.us

Research Analyst:
Jason H. Gross
jgross@jcc.legis.state.pa.us

Communications Specialist:
Geoff MacLaughlin
gmaclaughlin@jcc.legis.state.pa.us



What kind of environmentalists can be found in Pennsylvania?

Have you ever wondered how many “environmentalists” are out there? What makes an individual an environmentalist? Are there more today than there were a couple of years ago?

These were some of the questions the Joint Legislative Air and Water Pollution Control and Conservation Committee (JCC) set out to answer with the help of Mansfield University. Mansfield’s annual statewide telephone survey, “The Public Mind”, questioned some 2,200 Pennsylvanians about their level of environmental concern and how they displayed that through their actions. The JCC sponsored the series of questions, which were similar to questions posed by the committee in 2000 and again by Mansfield in 2001.

The statistical details of the survey results are depicted graphically throughout this document, and a number of trends emerged.

What makes an environmentalist?

While an individual’s declaration of himself or herself to be an environmentalist – as nearly 64 percent of Pennsylvanians do declare (*see chart 1 below*) – is subjective, an environmentalist can be “defined” by his or her actions. Self-described environmentalists are more inclined to engage in a number of actions that would have an environmental impact. For example, while overall 83.8 percent of Pennsylvanians surveyed say they recycle aluminum cans, 91.3 percent of those who call themselves environmentalists say they recycle cans, as opposed to 71.3 percent of non-environmentalists. Similarly, in a “pocketbook” question, 65.9 percent of environmentalists are willing to spend more for electricity if it is generated by non-polluting wind power, as compared to only 43.7 percent of non-environmentalists. Others of seven specific actions provide similarly stark contrasts as depicted in the **Environmental Action Index** on the inside pages (*see chart 2 on pg. 2*).

Is there a “typical” environmentalist?

Generalizations are always subject to debate, but a profile does emerge, at least in how people see themselves (*see chart 3 on pg. 3*). Those who describe themselves as environmentalists are generally:

- **OLDER** – 74.7 percent of those age 65+, trending downward to 49 percent of those age 18-34;
- **FEMALE** - 67.5 percent of women compared to 59.7 percent for men;
- **BETTER EDUCATED** – 66.2 percent of college grads trending downward to 59.1 percent of non-high school graduates.

Geography appears to bear little influence, with self-assessments ranging from a high of 68.2 percent in the Northeast who consider themselves to be environmentalists to a low of 61.5 percent in the Central region of the state.

Geographic comparisons of actions taken show variations within the margin of error in nearly every instance.

DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF TO BE AN ENVIRONMENTALIST?

2003	Yes – 63.6%	No – 36.4%	Don’t know – 0.0%
2001	Yes – 59.0%	No – 36.0%	Don’t know – 5.0%
2000	Yes – 60.0%	No – 34.0%	Don’t know – 6.0%

How Are We Doing?

As depicted graphically in chart # 1, more Pennsylvanians consider themselves to be environmentalists in 2003 than in years past.

Actions speak louder than words and percentages of environmentalists following through with action remain basically stable compared to past years, given the margin of error of plus or minus 2.1 percent. For example, 91.3 percent of environmentalists recycle aluminum cans in 2003, compared to 93 percent in 2001. And, 60.1 percent have refused to buy something because it is harmful to the environment in 2003, compared to 64 percent in 2001.

In an area of change with a political implication, 58.3 percent say they are more likely to vote for a candidate for office known as an environmentalist, as opposed to only 51 percent in 2001. Similarly, 56.8 percent of 2003 respondents say they have contributed money to an environmental group, while only 45 percent said they had contributed to such groups in 2001.

Disregarding how people classified themselves and just looking at general responses, fewer people overall were recycling cans in 2003 compared to 2001 but more than in 2000. Fewer people in 2003 refused to buy something harmful to the environment. The percentage contributing to an environmental group was nearly equal to 2000 and greater than in 2001. The number more likely to vote for an environmental candidate in 2003 was slightly up from 2001 but down from 2000 (*see chart 4 on pg. 4*).

Environmental Action Index

Of those who do consider themselves environmentalists:

- 91.3% recycle aluminum cans
- 60.1% have refused to buy something because it is harmful to environment
- 56.8% have contributed money to an environmental group
- 58.3% are more likely to vote for an environmental candidate
- 65.9% are willing to spend more for electricity if comes from wind
- 34.2% have volunteered for an environmental improvement project
- 14.1% are or were a member of an environmental group

Of those who do not consider themselves environmentalists:

- 71.3% recycle aluminum cans
- 29.9% have refused to buy something because it is harmful to environment
- 22.3% have contributed money to an environmental group
- 20.3% are more likely to vote for an environmental candidate
- 43.7% are willing to spend more for electricity if it comes from wind
- 15.1% have volunteered for an environmental improvement project
- 9.3% are or were a member of an environmental group

Should we believe everything we are told?

Not necessarily. While the statistics bear out self-assessments in most cases, that's not universally so.

While older Pennsylvanians (ages 65+) lead the way in calling themselves environmentalists, the numbers do not tell the same story. The 65+ age group is either at the bottom or next to the bottom by a meaningful statistical margin in four of six action categories that help to define environmentalists. Fewer individuals age 65 and over refused to buy a product harmful to the environment, would pay more for electric power produced by non-polluting wind power, or have volunteered for an environmental improvement project than any other age group. And, they escape last place in willingness to contribute money to an environmental group by only four-tenths of one percent.

Conversely, the low percentage (49 percent) of those ages 18-34 who consider themselves to be environmentalists is borne out by the numbers. This age group ranks dead last in three of six categories and next to last in a fourth by meaningful statistical margins. Young people ranked first in one category by a narrow margin – having volunteered for an environmental improvement project. In that category, those ages 18-34 compiled a 34.8 percent ranking, edging out those age 35-49 at 30.2 percent.

According to the numbers, the prime years for environmental action are 35-64, with that age bracket ranking at the top in every action category.



Going With the Wind?

Wind power is an alternative form of producing electric energy that is experiencing growth (175.5 million Kwh nationwide in 2002, compared to 11.1 Kwh in 1995, according to the U.S. Department of Energy). The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and a number of universities in Pennsylvania have committed themselves to purchasing larger portions of their power generated by wind. Wind farms are sprouting up in several different locales across the state as well as around the world. Last year, the JCC visited the wind farm in Somerset County that catches motorists' attention as they travel the Pennsylvania Turnpike.

In certain cases, consumers can designate that a portion of the power they purchase from their supplier comes from "green" sources - that source very often being wind power. There is usually an increased cost attendant with that choice, often beginning in units of \$5/month depending on how much wind power you want to "use".

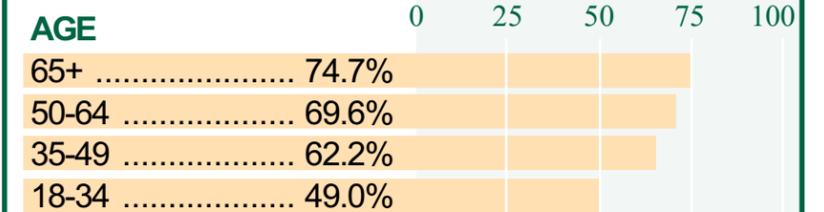
Accordingly, the JCC tweaked a question it had asked in the past to try to determine just how far Pennsylvanians might be willing to go to get power from a non-polluting source like wind. In previous years, the committee simply asked if one would be willing to pay \$3 more per month for power from a non-polluting source like wind or solar energy. This year, the committee used the \$5 per month figure and focused only on wind. The results demonstrated some shifting.

Overall, a solid majority – 57.4 percent – said they would be willing to pay more for electricity generated by wind power. Of that number, 65.0 percent were willing to ante up \$5 a month more. Another 25.3 percent said they would pay \$10 a month more and 9.7 percent were willing to pay more than \$10 a month.

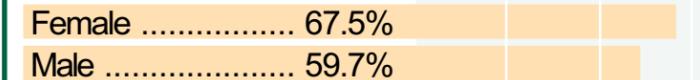
In 2000, 73 percent of those surveyed said they would be willing to pay \$3 a month more, and in 2001, the number was 63 percent.

Of those who consider themselves to be environmentalists, 63.2 percent were willing to pay \$5 a month more, 26.2 percent \$10 a month more and 10.6 percent more than \$10 a month.

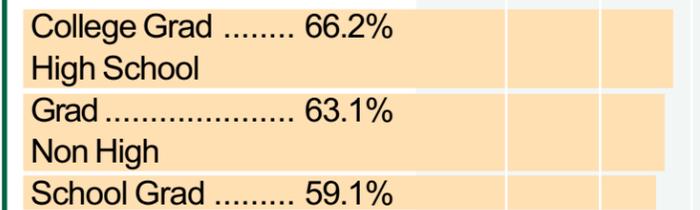
A Typical Environmentalist?



SEX



EDUCATION



GEOGRAPHY

