

# Green? – Attitudes, Behaviors and the New Green

by Michael D. Lieberman

## **Editor's Note**

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## **Introduction**

Everybody is going Green.

*U.S. News and World Report's* popular rankings of the nation's best universities, medical and law schools now include a green rating. *Newsweek* recently devoted the majority of a an issue (Green Speed, A Global Ranking of Nations with the Best, and Worst, Environmental Track Records, July 14, 2008) to national green attitudes.

The market research industry is keeping up with these developments, with an increasing amount of green segmentations commissioned. Major research firms and ad agencies are racing to establish their own propriety green score for companies. Something for the marketing departments to harp on. Green - the new color of presidential politics – is not referring to money.

Just what are green beliefs? How do they impact voting behaviors? Is it true that Democrats are greener than Republicans?

This article examines the results of a nationwide survey of more than 30,000 respondents, including the segmentation of issues impacting voting choice, whether voting choices match how people view an issue's effect on their quality of life, and how attitudes towards government and individual responsibility jive with green beliefs.

## **Influence of Issues – Segmentation**

In our survey, respondents were asked to rate a series of 13 questions, "When Voting In A National Election, How Much Influence Will Each Of The Following Issues Have On Who You Decide To Vote For," on a seven point scale.

Comparing top box (6,7) percentages, Global war and terrorism (72%), Healthcare (66%), and State of the U.S. economy (63%) top the list (this omnibus was conducted before the precipitous rise of gas prices).

We can now see how these particular attributes cluster together. Factor Analysis identifies underlying variables (factors) that explain the pattern of correlation

within a set of observed variables by grouping attributes or variables into ‘families’ – called factors.

We then classify each respondent based on outcome of the factor segmentation, with the software creating new variables based on these factor segments. After respondents receive a factor coefficient for each segment variable, the respondent is placed in the segment group for which they have the highest factor coefficient.

**Figure 1: When Voting in a National Election, How Much Influence Will Each of the Following Have on Who You Decide to Vote For?**

	Social and Financial Security Minded	Social Protectors	Problem Solvers	Roe v. Waders
State of the U.S. economy	0.75	0.30	0.21	-0.01
Business and finance issues	0.70	-0.06	0.53	0.00
Global war and terrorism	0.69	0.21	-0.07	0.25
Crime	0.64	0.25	0.12	0.33
Energy prices	0.58	0.44	0.19	0.04
Social Security or medicare reform	0.56	0.54	0.04	0.11
Healthcare (access, quality, insurance)	0.35	0.78	0.10	0.07
Environmental issues	0.13	0.68	0.39	0.11
Quality of public education	0.24	0.66	0.18	0.22
Science and technology issues	0.17	0.23	0.79	0.15
Diet, health and nutrition	0.06	0.43	0.58	0.22
Abortion issues	0.00	0.15	0.11	0.82
Gun rights/control	0.33	0.08	0.16	0.71

Figure 1 analyzes 13 voting influence attributes by classifying respondents into one of four segments: *Social and Financial Security Minded*; *Social Protectors*; *Problem Solvers*; and *Roe vs. Waders*.

*Social and Financial Security Minded* people are most concerned with issues relating to their social and financial well-being, which they care about deeply. They occupy around thirty percent of the population.

*Social Protectors* have a heart, and though healthcare is their dominant issue, they show higher concern for environmental issues than for other social causes. There are about as many Social Protectors as Security Minded People, 30%.

*Problem Solvers*, making up a quarter of the survey, have strong scores across all thirteen attributes. They are distinguished by their concern for two issues rated low by the other groups, ‘Science and Technology Issues,’ and ‘Diet, Health and Nutrition.’

*Roe vs. Waders*, about 20% of the population, while demonstrating concern for all ‘World’ issues such as the war on terror and healthcare, are dominant in the two areas that define the segment – the right of a woman to choose and gun control.

In the table below we see a breakdown of top 2 box percentages across our four families.

**Figure 2: When Voting in a National Election, How Much Influence Will Each of the Following Have on Who You Decide to Vote For?**  
Top 2 Box (6 7) Percentages

	Social and Financial Security Minded	Social Protectors	Problem Solvers	Roe v. Waders
Global war and terrorism	91.1%	69.2%	54.6%	77.7%
State of the U.S. economy	86.2%	60.9%	59.5%	48.6%
Social Security or medicare reform	66.6%	67.1%	42.4%	46.2%
Healthcare (access, quality, insurance)	65.0%	89.9%	55.9%	57.1%
Business and finance issues	62.5%	10.1%	50.3%	21.3%
Energy prices	62.3%	53.7%	44.7%	35.9%
Crime	57.5%	33.3%	34.6%	45.1%
Quality of public education	43.4%	71.5%	48.2%	51.6%
Environmental issues	32.5%	67.8%	55.4%	41.1%
Gun rights/control	29.7%	15.6%	26.7%	54.5%
Abortion issues	16.3%	25.9%	28.5%	75.2%
Science and technology issues	14.3%	16.1%	51.8%	18.7%
Diet, health and nutrition	5.3%	18.0%	30.4%	12.3%

### Influence of Issues – Quality of Life

Respondents were asked to rate how much influence each of the 13 attributes has on their quality of life. Not surprisingly, their responses closely parallel the influence of these issues on voting decisions. As Tip O’Neill, the famed speak of the house once said, ‘all politics are local.’ Indeed.

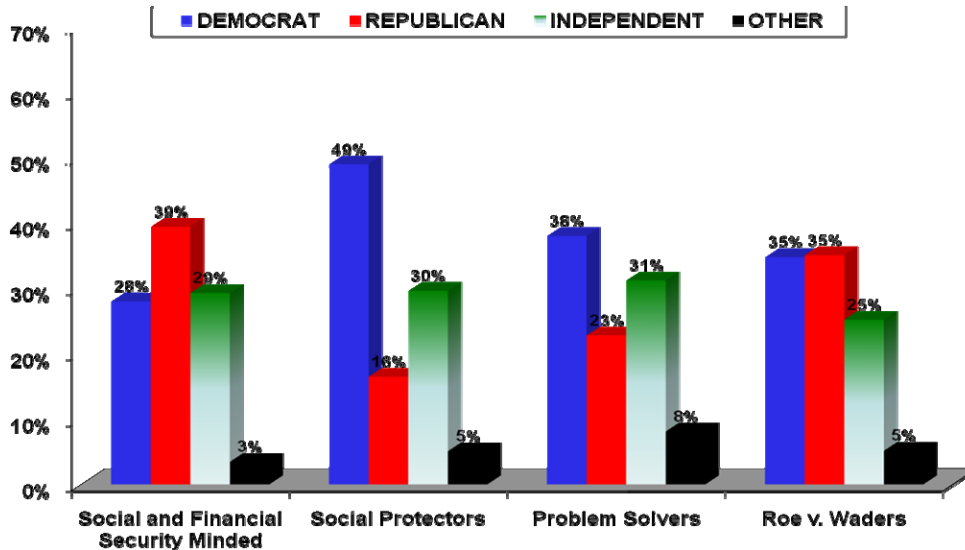
### Issues Segments Vs. Political Parties and Voting Patterns

Importantly, and somewhat surprisingly, consumers are not strongly differentiated on these issues by their political party identification.

As one would expect, social protectors and problem solvers skew Democratic and security minded skew Republican. However, there are plenty of self-identified Democrats who fall into the security minded and Republicans in the Roe vs. Waders segments.

Further, Independents are close to equally represented in each of the segments. Thus, we cannot assume that all members of either political party feel the same about issues. In fact, there appear to be more similarities among members of different parties than differences.

### Figure 3



According to the survey, consumers do not strongly associate any of the leading Democratic or Republican candidates with a particular set of issues. The likelihood of voting for a Democratic or Republican candidate in each party's primary is very similar across the influence segments.

### The Green Perspective Crosses All Segments

Given all the media attention, it is not surprising that 'Global Warming' tops the list of environmental concerns. Pollution, resource depletion and overall population also have relatively high concern levels.

**Figure 4: Which Of The Following Environmental Issues Are Especially Important To You And Your Family?**

	Social and Financial Security Minded	Social Protectors	Problem Solvers	Roe v. Waders
Global warming and climate change	47.5%	69.7%	62.1%	51.1%
Air pollution / acid rain / air quality /smog	55.6%	49.8%	50.3%	52.5%
Resource depletion (e.g., of trees, fish, minerals other natural resources)	43.1%	51.0%	47.1%	44.7%
Water pollution / oil spills / water quality	51.9%	42.7%	42.7%	47.5%
Overpopulation / congestion / open spaces	31.0%	25.5%	29.8%	28.4%
Deforestation (reduction in forests/rain forest)	16.7%	22.6%	21.2%	20.4%
Toxic waste sites / Nuclear power waste disposal	20.1%	13.6%	15.4%	18.6%
Endangered animal species	9.7%	14.6%	13.4%	15.5%

Social Protectors beats Social and Financial Security Minded on global warming by more than 20%; however, on 'Pollutions that affect daily life,' the politically-similar Social and Financial Security Minded and Roe vs. Waders have higher levels of concern than the two social sectors. Social and Financial Security Minded don't give a hoot about endangered species – they are busy worrying about toxic waste dumps and overpopulation.

## Putting Your Money Where Your Mouth Is – Eco-Friendly Behavior and Purchase Intent

The extent to which awareness and concern about environmental behavior translates into actual action is moderate. Only two actions have become common environmental practices, 'Set household water heater to a lower temperature', and 'Recycle cans, bottles and/or newspapers', particularly among Social Protectors (not surprising, Social Protectors beats the other segments in almost every behavior). The largest gap between Social Protectors and the others is 'Avoid using chemicals in your yard/garden' (Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Which Of The Following Do You Do?**

	Social and Financial Security Minded	Social Protectors	Problem Solvers	Roe v. Waders
Set household water heater to a lower temperature	66.5%	68.2%	61.9%	64.4%
Recycle cans, bottles and/ or newspapers	57.5%	61.3%	57.7%	58.1%
Drink water from reusable containers or glasses rather than disposable plastic bottles	33.8%	36.9%	34.6%	33.4%
Use grocery store bags you can re-use	33.3%	33.7%	31.2%	28.4%
Limit the use of water in your home, lawn and/ or garden	32.0%	35.4%	32.6%	30.6%
Replace traditional incandescent light bulbs with compact florescent ones	32.0%	35.4%	32.6%	30.6%
Boycott products of companies with poor environmental reputations	32.0%	35.4%	32.6%	30.6%
Turn off computer and computer monitor when not in use	27.1%	31.1%	30.6%	27.8%
Used environmentally sensitive building materials(e.g., FSC certified wood, granite or recycled materials)	26.9%	33.9%	32.2%	26.7%
Avoid using chemicals in your yard/ garden	18.7%	28.6%	24.5%	21.4%
Buy electricity from a utility that uses renewable resources	12.8%	14.1%	14.2%	12.3%
Turn off lights whenever leaving a room	11.9%	11.5%	13.8%	10.6%
Often use group mass transportation (e.g., train, bus) or walk or car pool rather than driving alone	7.4%	11.9%	12.5%	10.9%
Work for a company with a good reputation on environmental issues	5.8%	10.0%	11.2%	7.0%
Do volunteer work for or donate to a group that helps the environment	5.8%	8.8%	10.4%	7.2%
Get a home energy audit	5.7%	5.1%	7.2%	4.8%
Go out of your way to buy products from companies with good environmental reputations	5.0%	9.1%	9.2%	6.5%

Both levels of concern as well as actual action have more to do with personal factors such as time availability and occupation than with their impact on resource usage. The following five behaviors are practiced among less than 10% of the population, with the exception of Social Protectors:

- Often use group mass transportation (e.g., train, bus) or walk or car pool rather than driving alone
- Work for a company with a good reputation on environmental issues
- Do volunteer work for or donate to a group that helps the environment
- Get a home energy audit
- Go out of your way to buy products from companies with good environmental reputations

**Figure 6: Which Of The Following Have You Gotten In The Last 12 Months?**

	Social and Financial Security Minded	Social Protectors	Problem Solvers	Roe v. Waders
Home Improvement	22.7%	23.3%	23.6%	20.6%
Home Appliances	20.3%	20.5%	20.0%	18.9%
Home Heating/Cooling	13.7%	11.2%	13.0%	9.7%
Computer/Communications	10.4%	10.0%	12.3%	8.8%
Furnishing	7.2%	10.3%	10.0%	8.0%
Travel	6.1%	6.2%	7.2%	5.7%
Automotive	5.0%	5.1%	6.0%	4.6%
Financial	3.3%	4.4%	5.9%	3.8%
Residence	1.6%	1.4%	2.3%	1.4%

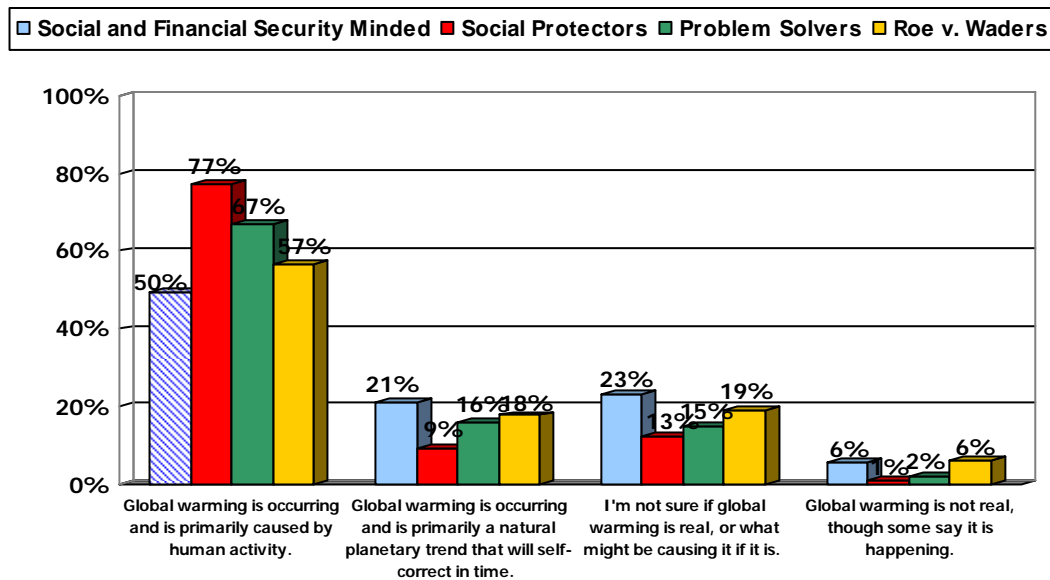
Respondents report some purchasing of eco-friendly durable goods and certain services, but the majority has yet to do so in any single category. Environmentalism starts in the home. The most commonly purchased items all had to do with the home, 'Home Improvement', 'Home Appliances', and 'Home Heating/Cooling' (see Figure 6). Interestingly, Problem Solvers, not Social Protectors, lead among eco-friendly purchases rather than eco-friendly attitudes.

Among some of the individual items (not shown in Figure 6) are lighting fixtures/lamps and lawn landscaping products. For home appliances, washer/dryers, vacuum cleaners and refrigerators/freezers were the eco-friendly products being purchased most often.

### **Opinions About Global Warming and the Environment**

One third of consumers evince skepticism about global warming, denying that it is real or caused primarily by human activity. These deniers are evenly split between the view that global warming is real but part of the natural planetary trend and those that are not really sure if it is real or what might be causing it. A handful believes that global warming is not real. These beliefs about global warming are one area where consumers diverge by segment, despite similarities in their environmental behaviors.

**Figure 7: Which Of The Following Statements Do You Agree With The Most?**



Among Democrats and members of the social protectors segment, more than three-fourths believe that global warming is real and caused by human activity. Similarly, two out of three problem solvers hold this belief. In contrast, only about one-third of Republicans and half of those in the social and financial security minded and Roe vs. Waders segments share this view of global warming.

Consumer attitudes towards global warming and the environment, as well as the way those attitudes diverge by segment, are detailed in the way they rate their agreement with 13 statements covering various aspects of the issue. The three statements below practically define social protectors' global warming beliefs:

- I strongly support the need for regulating on carbon emissions from cars, factories and power plants.
- Carbon emissions from automobiles contribute to global warming.
- American consumers are not doing everything they can to reduce their impact on global warming

**Figure 8: Please Rate Your Agreement With The Following Statements?**

	Social and Financial Security Minded	Social Protectors	Problem Solvers	Roe v. Waders
I strongly support the need for regulating on carbon emissions from cars, factories and power plants	56.1%	75.7%	62.5%	58.6%
Carbon emissions from automobiles contribute to global warming	53.0%	74.5%	61.7%	55.6%
American consumers are not doing everything they can to reduce their impact on global warming	50.8%	72.3%	59.7%	55.5%
I am concerned about global warming and its impact on the Environment	46.4%	72.7%	58.7%	50.9%
I would do more to reduce my impact on global warming, if it were easier to take steps to do so	45.0%	64.0%	51.4%	47.6%
I am concerned about global warming and its impact on me and/or my loved ones	43.8%	68.8%	54.9%	47.1%
I would like to know more about ways I could reduce my impact on global warming	40.2%	63.3%	50.2%	44.9%
Global warming has strong scientific evidence behind it	37.2%	62.6%	52.0%	44.2%
I can make a real difference by buying ecofriendly products and conserving energy	37.0%	58.6%	46.5%	41.4%
Household consumption of electricity contributes to global warming	32.0%	51.6%	45.1%	36.5%
The media is placing too much emphasis on global warming	30.8%	10.7%	17.0%	27.2%
Politicians are placing an appropriate amount of attention on global warming	12.6%	10.5%	11.8%	11.6%
Most people in the U.S. are knowledgeable about what behaviors and products they do and use that contribute to global warming	9.4%	9.4%	10.4%	7.9%

There is one statement which the Social and Financial Security Minded segment rates far higher than the other segments:

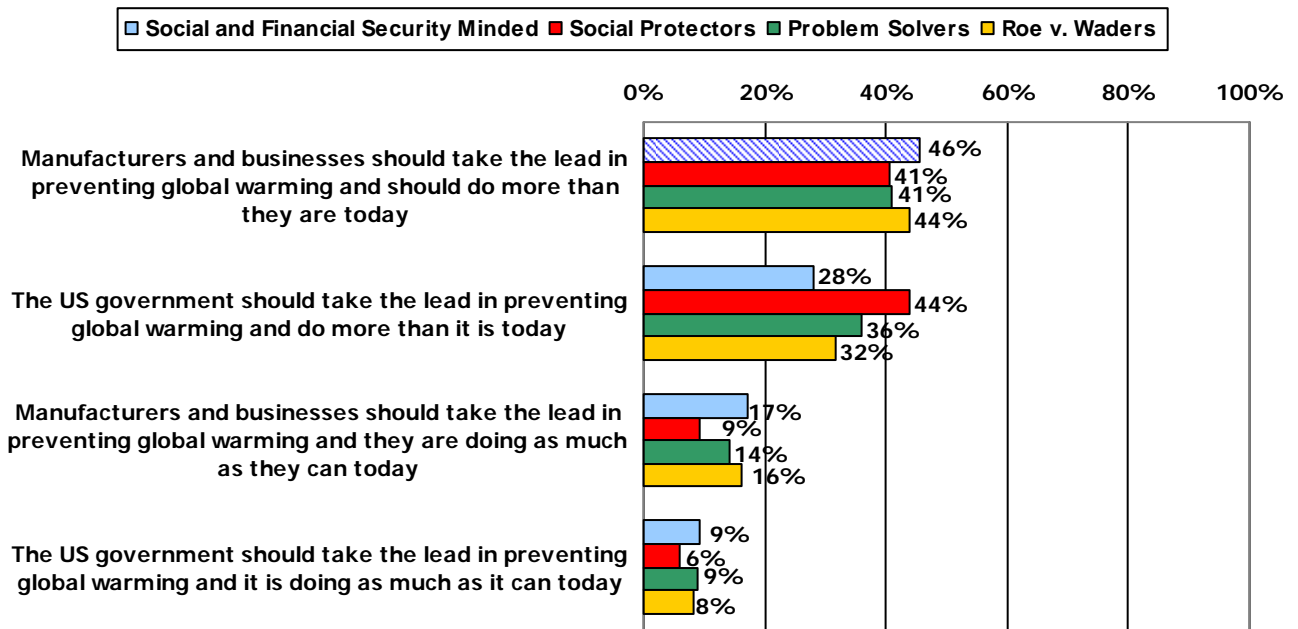
- The media is placing too much emphasis on global warming

Opinions about global warming appear to fall cleanly along party and segment lines. Except for the three lowest-rated statements, Democrats and members of the social protector segment are most likely to agree with each statement while Republicans and members of the security minded segment are least likely to agree. At the same time, Republicans and security minded members are relatively more likely than others to agree that there is too much media emphasis on global warming and that politicians are giving it sufficient attention. Independents and members of the problem solver and Roe vs. Wade segments tend to fall somewhere between these extremes.



When asked who should take a leading role, again, the Social and Financial Security Minded and Social Protectors express different opinions, while Problem Solvers and Roe vs. Waders fall in the middle.

**Figure 9: Which Of The Following Statements Do You Agree With The Most?**



**Green Actions Will Follow Green Attitudes**

According to the new 2009 Washington D.C./Baltimore Zagat Restaurants Survey guide, regional residents who dine out are clearly moving in a greener direction. BRIEF: Eco-Friendly Development Springs Up at Inlet Beach, Oregon. Green Fast Food: Really Here or a Green Dream? These are recent headlines, August 2008. The green dream approaches. As our article has shown, green attitudes are there, and evidence grows that green actions will follow. How soon will depend, certainly, on necessity.