

Sustainability Perspectives Among Montana State University Billings Students

Abstract

The Honors Inquiry and Research class at Montana State University Billings set out to conduct a survey about sustainability amongst their fellow peers. The goal of this survey was to determine the knowledge and efficacy of students and to see if there were any trends or developments. Some of the trends examined were between political parties, knowledge and efficacy relationship, and gender. It was determined that Democrats were significantly more worried about climate change than over the Republicans and as an overall group they cared and knew more about sustainability. The next trend of if a higher knowledge means a higher efficacy was also proven correct. On average if you knew more about sustainability you also cared more. The next major category was gender trends between males and females. It was shown that not one gender knew more about sustainability. The knowledge data came out evenly making it difficult to decipher if there was a true lead. However, when it came to caring about sustainability there was a significant difference. Women cared way more about sustainability and sustainability issues than men. There were several "ones" given by the men about caring, the lowest number, and the women barely had any. These trends gave a perspective about what the next generation feels about sustainability.

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Approach

We surveyed current and former MSU Billings students. We asked them questions relating to sustainability and efficacy. The questions ranged from multiple choice knowledge questions to scales on how much you care about sustainability issues. There were also some fill in the blank options that evaluated how often they did sustainable practices such as turning off the lights when you leave a room or do you wash your clothes with cold water. Based on these questions I produced two research questions that I wanted to explore further and how I hypothesized they would turn out.

Research Question #3: Does gender affect how much a person knows about sustainability?
Hypothesis 3: Females will know and care more about sustainability than males do.

Research Question #4: Does gender affect how much a person cares about sustainability and/or sustainability issues?
Hypothesis 4: Females will care more about sustainability than males will.



Findings

Survey

Sample questions that were asked in the survey:

Knowledge

- What is the most common cause of pollution of streams and rivers?
- Which of the following is an example of sustainable forest management?
- Which of the following is the most commonly used definition of sustainable development?
- Which of the following is the most commonly used definition of economic sustainability?

Efficacy (Scale 1 being caring the least, 5 being the most) (Refer To Efficacy Table)

- 17. I feel a responsibility to deal with environmental problems.
- 18. I would like to learn more about sustainability in school.
- 19. I would act more sustainably if I knew how.
- 23. I am worried about climate change.

Fill In The Blanks

- Turn off the lights when you leave a room?
- Turn off the TV when leaving a room?
- Limit your time in the shower in order to conserve water?
- Wash your clothes with cold water?

Does gender affect how much a person knows about sustainability?

	Participant Identifier							
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Gender [1-5]	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1
Participant Knowledge (0-8)	5	6	2	6	4	5	5	5

The information given in the chart above disproves the hypothesis that females know more about sustainability than males. This is because there appears to be no significant relationship between gender and the knowledge on the topics. There were women that scored lower than the men and there were women that scored higher. Some of the data does align with the hypothesis, but there is not enough to prove the hypothesis correct. As a whole, the data is too inconsistent to show any proper correlation and because of this there appears to be no relationship between gender and intelligence on the issue of sustainability.

Does gender affect how much a person cares about sustainability and/or sustainability issues?

	Participant Identifier							
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Gender [1-3]	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1
Item 17 [1-5]	3	4	5	4	4	5	1	1
Item 18 [1-5]	2	4	4	4	2	5	1	3
Item 19 [1-5]	3	5	3	5	3	3	3	2
Item 23 [1-5]	1	3	5	2	1	5	1	1

The hypothesis that women care more about sustainability and/or sustainability issues than men is proven correct in the data chart given above. When you compare the numbers on the 1 to 5 scale (one being caring the least and five being caring the most) you will see significant differences between the two genders. For example, you will see way more ones on the male side than the female and there is nothing above a three given on the male side. Out of the six females there are only two ones given on the entire side and seven fives given. The prediction for research question five is heavily supported by the data that was obtained during the survey.

Sources

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