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Linking Gender Perception Stereotypes to Eco-Friendly and Sustainable Consumption

Meghann O'Berry

Boise State University

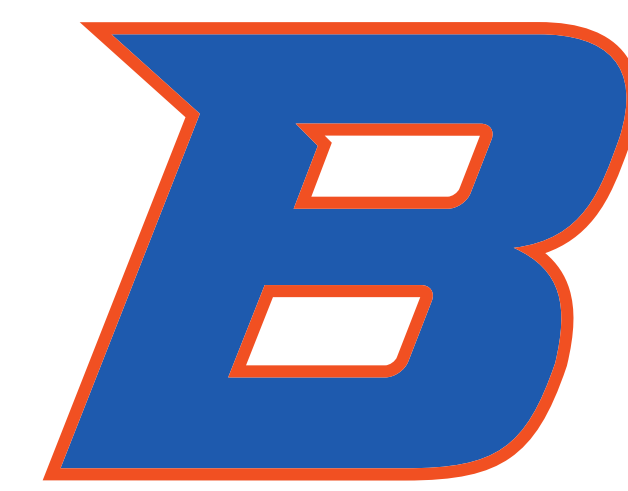
Jessica Mancha

Boise State University

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Abstract

As the earth continues to see the negative and highly devastating impacts caused by climate change, it is now more than ever increasingly important to make an effort to implement more sustainable and eco-friendly behavior into our day-to-day lifestyle. An obstacle we have identified prior to our research was the feminine gendered implication toward more eco-friendly and sustainable ways of living. Gender perception and marketing styles have highly impacted the use of more eco-friendly and sustainable products. In this study, a survey was conducted to gauge the perspective of people regarding sustainable consumption. In our results, we found that men agreed that women are more eco-friendly than men. We also found that a majority of people believe sustainable products are marketed more towards women. We conclude that as a society, we need to start evaluating our impact on this earth, regardless of gender. Sustainable behaviors are highly dependent on established societal norms and gendered roles; to help solve this problem a societal shift needs to occur in how we perceive gendered stereotypes, particularly when it comes to sustainable consumption.



BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY

Linking Gender Perception Stereotypes to Eco-Friendly and Sustainable Consumption

Meghann O’Berry- Environmental Studies Boise State University
Jessica Mancha – Environmental Studies Boise State University

Sustainable Living



Figure 1. Man tending to environment. Source: “thestar.com”
<https://www.thestar.com.my/lifestyle/health/2020/08/16/women-find-eco-friendly-men-attractive>

Introduction

As the earth continues to see the negative and highly devastating impacts caused by climate change, it is now more than ever increasingly important to make an effort to implement more sustainable and eco-friendly behavior into our day-to-day lifestyle. Though an obstacle we have identified prior to our research was the implication toward more eco-friendly ways of living as more feminine. This implication has possibly decreased environmental consciousness behavior from people whose self and social perception is or wants to be more masculine.

Background

Gender Perception

American adults often associate more sustainable/eco-friendly behaviors and act as more feminine. Having this feminine stereotype in eco-friendly products has affected the engagement of masculine identities. Associating feminine behavior with eco-friendly consumption often creates this social construct of gendered behaviors. This social construct in eco-friendly behaviors has disengaged those who identify or want to be perceived as more manly/masculine. As green behavior is associated with feminine behavior engaging in green behaviors can threaten or affirm gender identity. Those who may not adhere to one specific gender role or perceive a feminine gender identity are more likely to engage in more sustainable consumption tactics. Concerns of self-perception and acceptance by others may be the driving force behind the eco-friendly and sustainable consumption behavior implementation.

SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AFFECTED BY GENDER PERCEPTION AND MARKETING

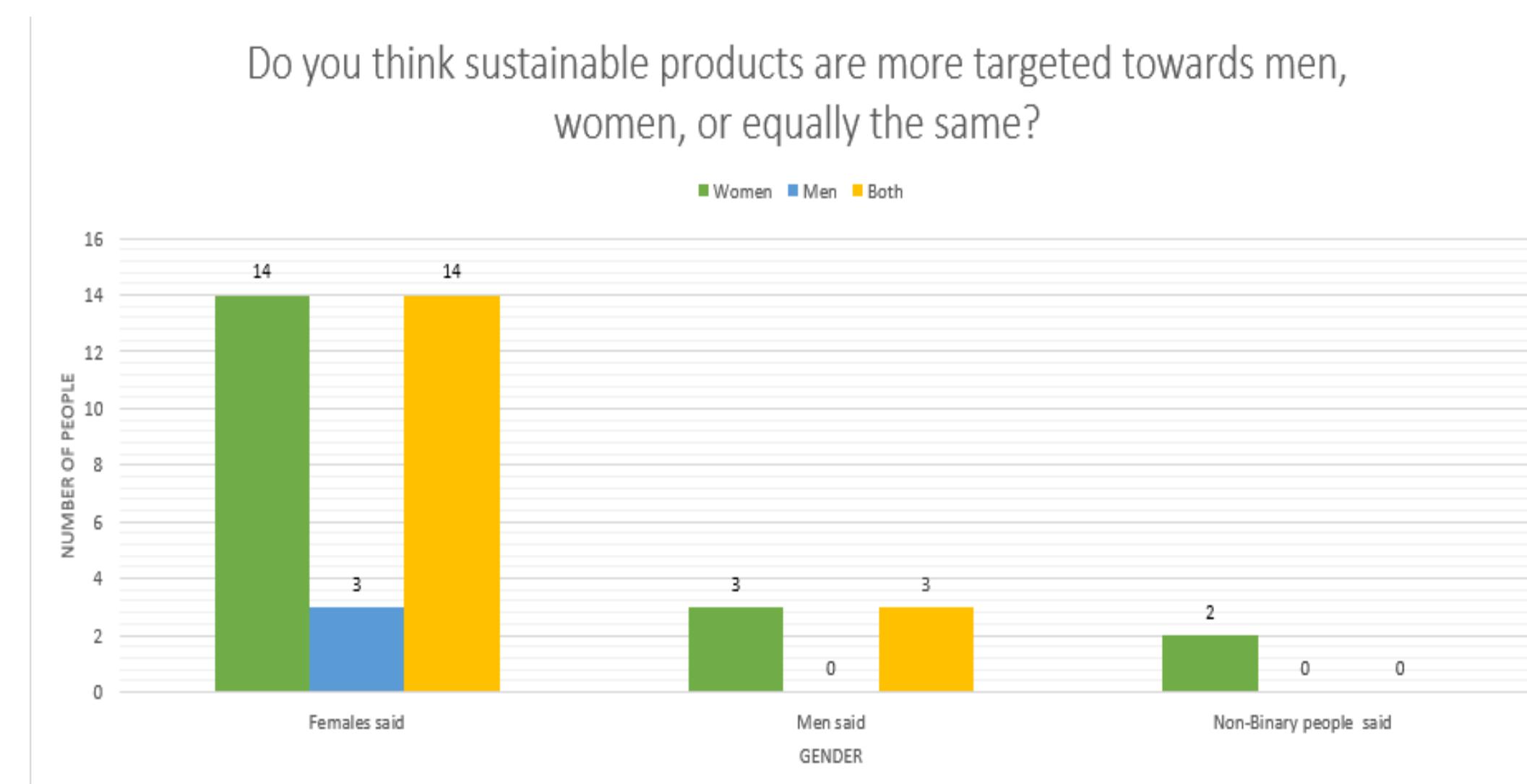
Marketing

Eco-friendly and sustainable behavior among men who want to secure their masculine identity for themselves and/or for society will more likely refrain from sustainable consumption (Aaron R Brough, 2016). Sustainable consumption is seen as more feminine, because of this, marketing for sustainable products is often seen to be directed towards women (Aaron R Brough, 2016). We see a good example of this in an article called “Is Eco-Friendly Unmanly? The Green-Feminine Stereotype and Its Effect on Sustainable Consumption.” The authors intentionally market charities and sustainable products towards women and men. They see that men are more likely to go for the marketing intended for them rather than the products and charities marketed for women, and vice versa for the women (Aaron R Brough, 2016). Additionally, we also see this in the electric car industry. For example, Tesla markets their electric vehicles more towards men, because of this, their top consumers are men rather than women (Bomey, 2019). Marketing plays a significant role in the sustainable consumers’ market. By changing the way these products are marketed (making them more gender-neutral), it is likely we will see an increase in men becoming more eco-friendly.

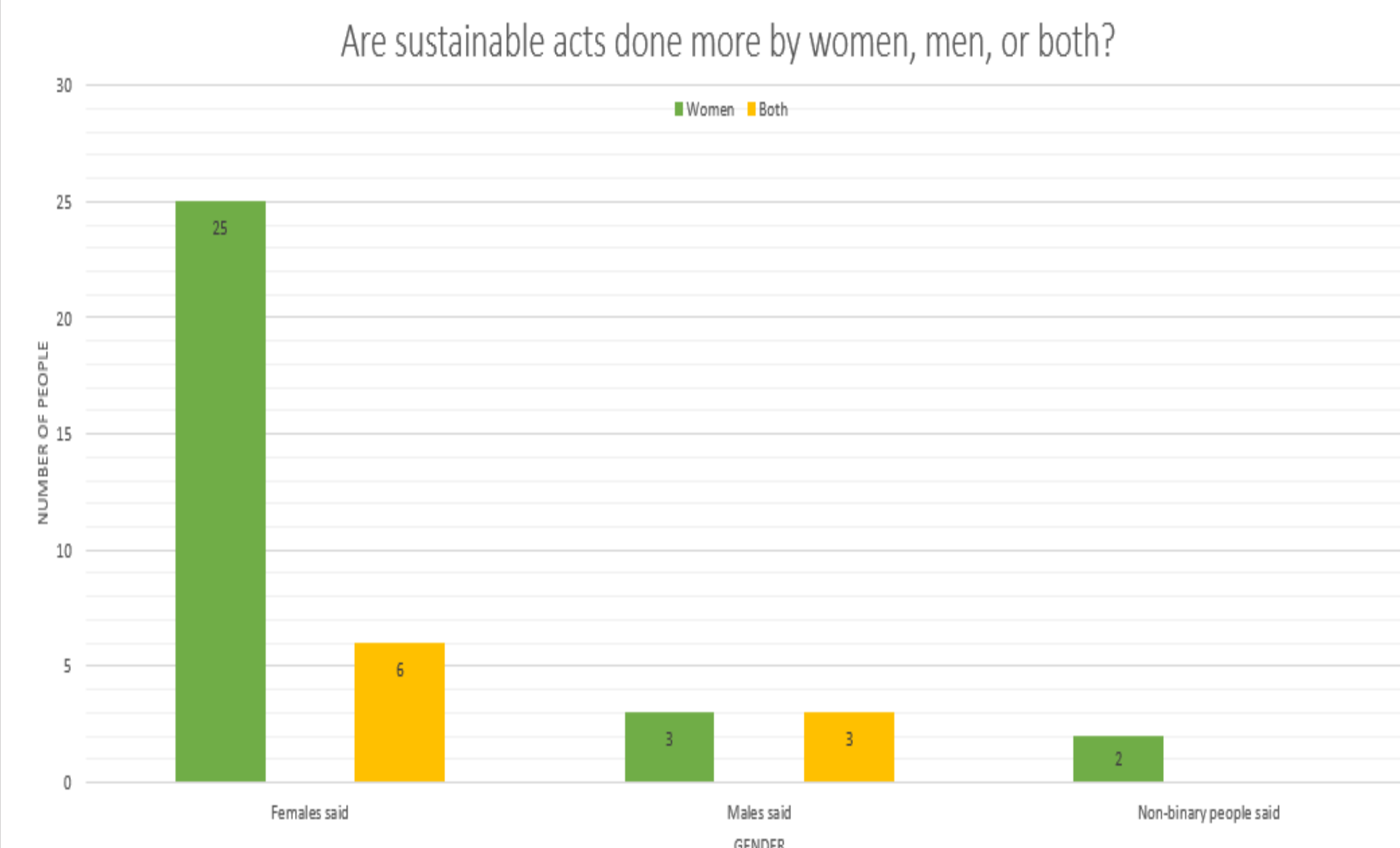
Methodology

The purpose of this study is to see how people perceive eco-friendly products and think about climate change. Our research concluded that most people think of sustainable products and acts as more feminine. We chose to conduct a survey for our primary research to compare the thoughts of our respondents with our background research. We received 39 responses in total, with the majority of our respondents being women. We aimed for any demographic of people to take our survey, to stray away from any biased results. However, we ended up with much more responses from women than men. This was unanticipated and accounted for while analyzing our results.

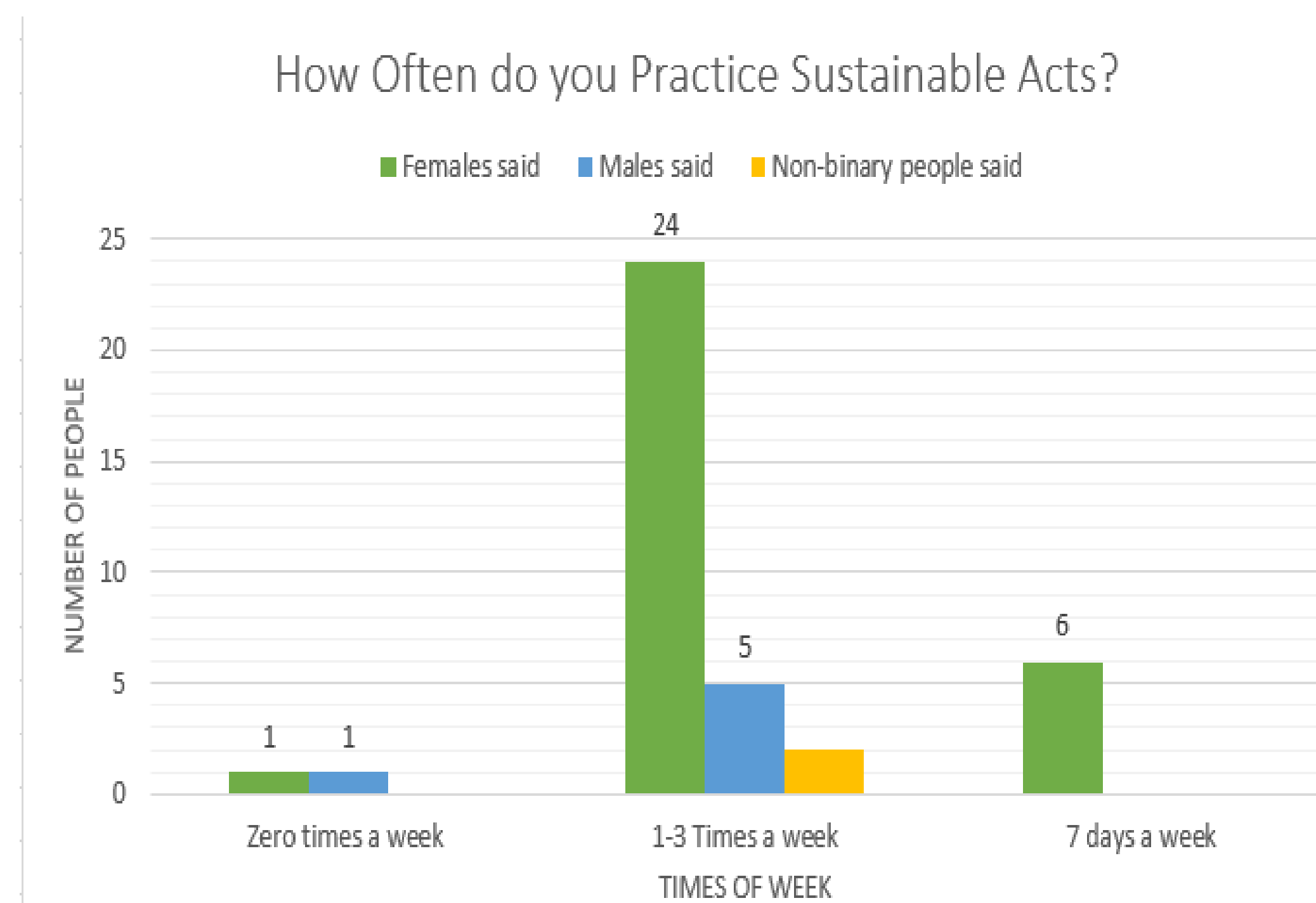
Data Analysis



Graph 1: The majority of our respondents said that sustainable products are targeted towards women.



Graph 2: Majority of women believe more sustainable acts are done by women. The majority of respondents believe sustainable acts are more done by women.



Graph 3: Majority of respondents engage in sustainable acts 1-3 times a week.

Results

According to our results, we saw that the majority of people believe climate change is happening. We saw that many people have never taken an environmental science course before, but still believe climate change is occurring. Additionally, we discovered more women are eco-friendly than men and more willing to do sustainable acts. We found that less men took our survey than women, but the majority of men agreed that sustainable products are marketed towards women. Additionally, we found that both men and women who took the survey thought women are more likely to do sustainable acts than men. Just as we predicted, our results aligned well with our background research.

Suggestions:

- Societal shift in Perception:
 - As a society, we need to alter how we perceive people and break gendered stereotypes, especially when it comes to sustainable consumption.
- Alter marketing tactics to include both genders (Less women targeted marketing).
- Sustainable solutions need input from different perspectives of marginalized groups, especially in leadership/governmental positions.
 - Groups that should be involved: Women, people of color, and other disproportionately affected groups.
- More women in politics to push for environmental change because this is a women-dominated field.

Conclusion

In conclusion, as a society, we need to start evaluating our impact on this earth, regardless of gender. Currently, eco-friendly acts and sustainable behaviors are highly dependent on established societal norms and gendered roles, through gender perception and marketing. By changing the way we see society, re-establish what is “feminine” and “masculine”, and allow for more women in politics, we could see a shift in the way people perceive sustainable consumption.

Works Cited

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