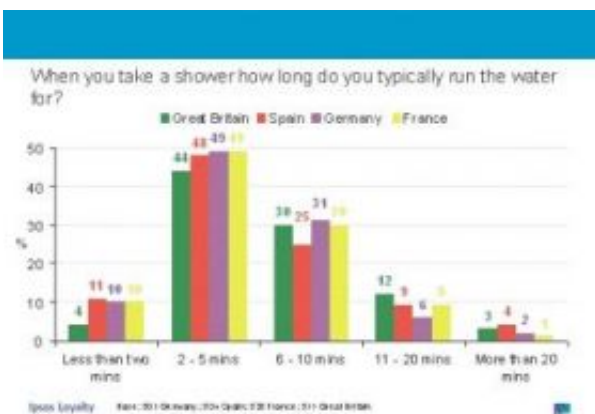


British showers most wasteful and inconsiderate in Western Europe

July 14 2008



Bar chart showing lengths of showers for people in Western Europe. Credit: RSC / Ipsos MORI 2008

Water-wasting and uncaring about gels, shampoos and soap going down the plughole: that's how the British emerge from a survey on showering habits of western Europeans.

Women in Britain are particularly guilty of wasting shower water and not caring about contaminants, says the report for the *Royal Society of Chemistry*.

But men in Britain have little to be proud of because they don't care about what they wash down the drain. The most glaring contrast in the survey shows that only 35% of British men give thought to contaminants

compared nearly two-thirds of Spanish women who do care about them.

The French and Spanish emerge most commendably from the survey, demonstrating greater restraint in water conservation and concern about washing contaminants into the water system.

Adults in Western Europe are most likely to shower for between two and five minutes, indicates the report, conducted by Ipsos MORI.

The opinion research company carried out the survey as part of the Royal Society of Chemistry's current campaigning on water supply and quality internationally.

Respondents in Great Britain, France, Germany and Spain were asked how long they typically ran the water for when taking a shower.

Overall adults in France and Spain showed the highest level of concern for contaminants that are washed away during showering, with a higher proportion very or fairly concerned than in Britain or Germany.

They were asked how concerned they were about contaminants from gels, soaps and shampoos that are washed into the water system.

The recent RSC report Sustainable Water highlighted the need for research into the effects of flushing contaminants down the drain into the sewage system.

Richard Pike, chief executive of the *Royal Society of Chemistry*, said today:

"It's an embarrassment that the British appear to be a right shower when it comes to caring about water. We are an island surrounded by water and criss-crossed by rivers but also highly and densely populated.

"We must not wait until the 59th minute before we tackle impending environmental disasters. Are we so short-sighted that we act only when the consequences are already upon us?"

"We have to take on board the critical message that water is a precious resource and in the years to come it is going to become increasingly scarce. We can save water massively by using less when washing, without compromising hygiene.

"One should be able to shower thoroughly in a couple of minutes; we hear stories of people staying in the shower for half an hour at a time, which is absurd and self-indulgent. They say that it helps them relax.

"Well, if we had a population of five million and not 60 million such self-indulgence might be tolerable.

"But today, with the world facing water shortages, that simply doesn't wash."

Source: Royal Society of Chemistry

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