

# Environmental behaviour

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Promoting the financial benefits of car sharing can inhibit other pro-environmental behaviours, new research led by the University has shown.

Professor Greg Maio and a team of researchers from the School of Psychology tested the effects of telling people about the money saving benefits of car sharing and its impact on subsequent recycling rates.

Eighty Cardiff students were each asked to read statements about car sharing. One group was told that it saved money, a second that it is good for the environment and a [control group](#) was told neither. They were also asked to discard an information sheet at the end of the session. In the room was a small metal bin, commonly used for general waste and a tall cardboard container featuring a large recycling logo.

Fifty further students took part in a second version of the experiment

containing three experimental groups like those in the first experiment, and a group that was told about both environmental and financial benefits.

The team showed that recycling rates are dependent on the information [participants](#) receive about car sharing. In both experiments, they found that participants who were given financial reasons to car share, or both financial and environmental reasons, later recycled no more than those who had been given no reasons to car-share. In contrast, those who were given environmental reasons to car-share recycled significantly more than participants who were not given any reasons to car-share.

Professor Maio said: "Campaigns to promote green behaviour often emphasise how a person can benefit by performing a green action. For instance, we can save money by installing low-energy light-bulbs, become healthier by cycling, and become more efficient by working on a train instead of driving. This emphasis on self-interest stems from the dominant approach to marketing commercial goods, but is it appropriate for motivating green behaviour?"

"Our results suggest that positive spill over from an environmental message to a different behaviour -- in our case from car-sharing to recycling -- may occur only when environmental reasons alone are made salient. This extends prior research and evidence on social values, which suggests that a focus on self-transcending values such as benefits to the environment will spill over and promote other self-transcending behaviours, while a focus on self-interest will not."

**More information:** The paper, Self-interest and pro-environmental behaviour (Evans, Maio, Corner, Hodgetts, Ahmed & Hahn) is published in the journal *Nature Climate Change*.

Provided by Cardiff University

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