

Values influence where we spend our time and money

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A study carried out by the University of Western Australia has highlighted the important role values play in our daily behaviour, including where we invest our time and money.

The researchers looked at three core areas in the study – personal values, how people spend their [time](#) and their money.

Almost 7,500 people across Australia aged between 18 and 75 took part in a survey that asked them a series of questions on the focus areas over a 12 week period. The results were then analysed.

UWA Professor Julie Lee from the Centre for Human and Cultural Values said although people may not realise it, everyday choices were directly influenced by values.

"The study shows that people prioritise different values in life, including benevolence, tradition, conformity, security, [power](#), achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, protecting the environment, equality and justice and the welfare of others," Professor Lee said.

"Despite this, people tend to think of others as having similar values to them, when in fact there is a lot more diversity.

"Judgements most people make about others seem to reflect their own values rather than considering alternative viewpoints."

Professor Lee said people's investment of time was related to values.

"For example people involved in the study who gave high importance to [achievement](#) and power, worked on average around an hour longer on a work day and one and a half hours longer on a day off compared to those who didn't. As a result, they spent less time with family and engaged in less social activities," she said.

"The reverse is true for people who prioritise the welfare of others who by and large had a healthier work-life balance.

"It's interesting that a person who works longer hours often knows the importance of spending time with loved ones, but they still choose to work the longer hours if they prioritise personal success."

Professor Lee said the same could be said for people who prioritise stimulation and hedonism choosing to spend more money on alcohol, tobacco and gambling than those who don't.

"The influence our values have on everyday behavior has been underestimated. It might explain why some bad habits are difficult for people to break. When something is not good for us but it is fulfilling a value, the behaviour is likely to be more ingrained and harder to change."

Provided by University of Western Australia

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