

Music festivals let people try out more sustainable lifestyles

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Summer is the time of music festivals—and a new study published in the scientific journal *Geoforum* has suggested that they offer an opportunity for people to try out more sustainable lifestyles.

Researchers from The University of Manchester, University College London and Lund University in Sweden attended two [music festivals](#) in England, where they interviewed 60 attendees as well as issuing 250 questionnaires.

In the interviews, it emerged that many [festival](#)-goers packed soap, shampoo and towels which were left unused during the events—people came expecting to shower and wash themselves, but then quickly accepted the festival culture of not doing so—even if there were showering facilities available.

For many of the interviewees, daily showering at the festival was seen as just too difficult, a waste of leisure time, or a breach of 'social contracts' with friends to just let go and have a good time. This small change can have a big impact. At a four-day festival with up to 150,000 attendees—and assuming an average shower uses 62 litres of [water](#)—this change in washing habits could save up to 37m litres of water.

Some festival-goers do choose to use wet wipes instead—but many of these are non-biodegradable, and have their own sustainability implications.

"Everyone who has been to a festival expects to be a little dirty for a few days, but our results show something deeper—namely how fast participants adapted to the new norms. This shows us that while our everyday practices of [cleanliness](#) and hygiene mostly happen in private and behind closed doors, our ideas about cleanliness are actually social, and can shift stubborn practices when we connect with new social situations, or encounter different infrastructures," says Dr. Alison Browne, one of the researchers leading the study.

This has much broader implications that just festival hygiene—as a result of climate change, the availability of water will become a real

problem, and this is even beginning to be felt in parts of the UK. As we start to think more seriously about water demand, the authors argue that we shouldn't just focus on new infrastructure to build more supply capacity, but also experiment with new practices that reduce our overall water demand.

"Our study, together with an increasing number of other scientific articles, reveals that there is a fairly large adaptability in cleanliness practices," say the authors. "People can adapt the way they shower, wash and launder depending on energy and water supplies available to them. Cleanliness conventions are socially contingent, and thus flexible. Climate change adaptation isn't just about new technologies or new infrastructures but how we adjust, together, the mundane routines we all do in our everyday lives."

Provided by University of Manchester

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