

# Attending local events strengthens neighborhood bonds, survey reveals

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From farmers markets to food festivals, art exhibitions and how-to workshops, local community events are often the lifeblood of thriving neighborhoods.

Researchers at the University of South Australia have investigated how often people visit and actively participate in local events and how this affects their sense of place or their connection to their community.

A survey of almost 400 households in the state's coastal council area of the City of Holdfast Bay found that people who frequently attend local events or participate as volunteers, organizers or exhibitors, have a stronger sense of place, meaning their neighborhood is important to them and they feel connected to the area.

The findings are [published](#) in the journal *Tourism Recreation Research*.

Those who regularly attend local events are also likely to be more satisfied with their neighborhood and are more willing to live there longer. While owning a home or living there for a long time are influential factors in a person developing a sense of place, this study found that regularly attending local events had a greater impact on fostering a sense of place than length of residency and home ownership.

More than half (61%) of survey respondents had attended at least one local event in the three years between 2017 and 2019, while almost a third (32%) had attended at least six events in that time.

UniSA tourism and event management expert Dr. Sunny Son, who is also a member of UniSA's Center for Enterprise Dynamics in Global Economies (C-EDGE), says local events can be particularly useful for loosely connected communities or newly developed neighborhoods.

"Local event attendance can be particularly meaningful for multicultural societies such as in Australia where events can provide an important means of engaging all residents, including those more established as well as newcomers who are wanting to make new connections," she says.

"Events provide positive experiences for people to participate in and socialize, build trust, create networks, and promote intercultural learning. These are all major contributors to cultural sustainability, and they can help break down prejudices and promote social harmony by generating a community of acceptance and diversity."

UniSA's Dr. Chris Krolkowski, an expert in urban tourism, says the findings validate the importance of events not only as economic tools but as crucial components to the social structure of [local communities](#).

"These [social benefits](#) are particularly important to rebuilding local communities after the pandemic, during which social connections and broader community life were affected by lockdowns and social distancing measures," he says.

"On a broader level, popular local events can also become attractions for visitors by showcasing the culture of the area. By contributing to uniqueness of places, events are well positioned to play an essential role in developing the tourism sector of urban and regional destinations.

"We still need to further our understanding of the role that events play in social sustainability. Understanding how events can help build socially [sustainable communities](#) is vital in justifying government investment in local events."

**More information:** Insun Sunny Son et al, Developing a sense of place through attendance and involvement in local events: the social sustainability perspective, *Tourism Recreation Research* (2024). [DOI: 10.1080/02508281.2024.2335749](https://doi.org/10.1080/02508281.2024.2335749)

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