

Follow the crowd to eco-friendly behaviour

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Lee-Ann Wilson's Green Study looked at what motivates people to make eco-friendly choices.

(Medical Xpress)—Is it your New Year's resolution to be eco-friendly? Consult your friends first.

A QUT Green Study of Brisbane residents has found that we're more likely to walk for transport and carry [reusable bags](#) if friends and family do.

Research fellow Lee-Ann Wilson, from the Institute of Health and Biomedical Innovation (IHBI) at QUT, surveyed 1535 Brisbane and [Moreton Bay](#) residents to explore what motivated people to be eco-

friendly.

She set out to understand four 'environmentally friendly' behaviours: walking for transport, switching off lights, turning [appliances](#) off at the wall and shopping with reusable bags.

Ms Wilson, who completed the research as part a PhD, found that people were more likely to be eco-friendly if their friends or neighbours were, and if they thought their family approved.

"It surprised me how much what we think other people are doing really mattered," she said.

"If we identify with someone who cares for the environment, such as our [family members](#) or neighbours, it influences our behaviour."

When survey participants were asked what motivated their actions, Ms Wilson found that most people were interested in saving time, money and face.

For example, the study found people switched off appliances at the wall when they were trying to save money and they believed their [friends](#) and neighbours switched off appliances.

Ms Wilson said participants who didn't switch off appliances said they didn't want to reset clocks and timers.

The study found survey participants were more likely to walk for transport if their closest friend also walked, while those who didn't walk thought it would be inconvenient.

Ms Wilson said the findings would help environmental groups and governments develop campaigns to encourage more sustainable

behaviour, particularly walking for transport.

For example, she said a campaign that encourages shopping with reusable bags might use the message: 'The majority of customers at our store bring their own bags. They feel great about protecting dugongs and turtles and keeping our fish stocks free of toxins.'

"That's the sort of message that has an impact," Ms Wilson said.

"Because social norms are so important, the best thing we can do as individuals is to make sustainable choices ourselves and be an example to the people around us.

"The goal is to make environmentally friendly behaviour the norm and what people see as the socially accepted way of behaving."

Provided by Queensland University of Technology

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