



The Green Gathering Festival Research
Influencing Behaviour Change Beyond the Festival

The Green Gathering
in association with
A Greener Future

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1. Research Findings Summary

The research set out to discover to what extent The Green Gathering festival influences its attendees towards more sustainable practices. Data was gathered using an online survey in the period from August to November 2023. There were 242 completed surveys collected representing 7% of The Green Gathering's attendees.

The demographic data showed that the average age of the survey participant was 42 years old in 2023, slightly older than the UK average of 39 years old (Ticket Master 2019).

The Green Gathering has a very loyal community with 84% of respondents having been before and 14% of these having been more than 10 times. Of the first-time visitors 21% said friends and family had recommended the festival. Nearly 40% said they attended because of the festival's ethos and activism.

Five areas of behavioural change were identified for the survey. The research found that for over a third of the respondents, the festival does influence behavioural change in each of the five areas.

The research further identified that the festival had a social impact. In particular 20% of respondents said that attending the festival had influenced them to become more engaged in community activities and climate change activism.

The Green Gathering requested an analysis of the festival's CO₂e emissions in 2023 (see our AGF CO₂e analysis report). Total emissions were calculated to be 7 kg CO₂e per festival attendee at the festival. The result is comparatively lower than the average daily carbon footprint of a UK resident which has been calculated at 19.5 kg CO₂e per day.

It's important to acknowledge that it's unclear how the UK average footprint has been calculated and whether it is directly comparable to that of a festival attendee.



2. Introduction

2.1 The Green Gathering Festival

This is perhaps the oldest dedicated green festival in the UK having been in existence for four decades. It is a four-day camping festival held annually at Piercefield Park, a green field site, just outside Chepstow in the Welsh borders. It is a small festival with a capacity of 5000.

The Green Gathering festival is dedicated to low impact living, featuring music, arts, activism, permaculture, and more. It's powered by renewable energy, recycles up to 90% of its waste, offers both vegan and vegetarian food, and promotes gender diversity among its artists. The festival's organising team is involved in year-round climate and social justice initiatives. This event encourages positive change and provides attendees with the mindset and skills to transform their lives and the world.

2.2 A Greener Future

AGF (A Greener Future) is an award-winning not-for-profit company, dedicated to helping events, festivals, tours and venues to be more sustainable and to reduce environmental impacts. Established in 2006, AGF is internationally recognised for its research, consultancy, and analysis of sustainability strategies, actions, and communications for the live events industry. Its certifications - Greener Festival, Greener Event, Greener Arena, Greener Supplier and Greener Tour - set the standard for sustainable event management and delivery. AGF's environmental assessor training is undertaken by venue and event sustainability professionals around the world, further building a knowledge base within the industry to drive positive impacts.

2.3 Background to Research

It is said that festivals which promote green practices seek to influence the behaviour of their audiences beyond the festival to their everyday lives.

".... green festivals in general are staged with the intention of encouraging visitors to adopt more sustainable practices" Tolkes and Butzmann (2018).

Indeed, The Green Gathering quotes anecdotal evidence from the audience on its festival website to this effect, saying that attending the festival has influenced changes in their everyday lives.

"Festival-goers frequently say that attendance at a Green Gathering inspired them to change their outlook, habits and lifestyle. Where many festivals are all about forgetting responsibilities and enjoying the show, GG aims to trigger a sense of responsibility and to equip festival-goers with the mindset and skills to transform their lives, and the world, for the better." The Green Gathering festival website (2024).

Whilst some studies have been carried out to find out whether and to what extent green festivals do influence their audiences towards sustainable practices (Tolkes and Butzmann, 2018; Brennan et al., 2019) the literature is limited.

This research has been initiated by The Green Gathering charity, to find out to what extent The Green Gathering festival does influence its attendees to more sustainable practices.

2.4 Aims and Objectives of Research

The research firstly sets out to see if there is evidence to support this view about the behavioural impact of The Green Gathering festival and by so doing, to also add to the current literature in the area.

The Green Gathering is representative of a group of festivals, mostly independent, where green is an integral part of the ethos of the festival.

For note, we distinguish between those festivals where being green is an integral part of the ethos of the festival as opposed to those festivals which carry out green practices but where being green is not embedded into the ethos of the festival.

Secondly, the research focuses on the ways in which The Green Gathering influences attendee behaviour away from the festival, in people's everyday lives, as opposed to the festival influencing attendees to adopt sustainable practices whilst at the festival.

3. Methods

3.1 About the Research Methods

A scope of the literature around green festivals and behavioural change was carried out, to find any previous studies around the influence of green festivals on behavioral change beyond the festival.

A new survey was developed for Green Gathering's community, which incorporated questions in three groupings. The first, questions 1-6, were designed to provide context which included questions about the participant's age demographic, where they were from, by what means and how far they had travelled to the festival. This section also asked about the participants festival-going habits. For example, questions were included to find out whether they had been to Green Gatherings before and if so, how many times and whether they also went to other festivals.

The second group of questions, questions 7-10, focused on why the survey participants chose to go to The Green Gathering festival, and if they had been before, why they came back and what aspects of the festival they liked the most and least.

The final section of the survey, question 11, was about behavioural change. The question incorporated five key aspects of our daily lives chosen because they were readily identifiable and areas where behavioural change is relatively easy. For example, changes in diet and spending habits. These were areas that The Green Gathering focuses on through its programme of talks and activities, and they were thought to be the areas where the festival might have the most influence to potentially reduce the participants' impact on the environment.

The research adopted a mixed methods approach to data collection. Utilising an online survey (survey monkey) the participants were self-selected. The survey questions included a mix of closed, quantitative, and open qualitative questions. The research also drew from quantitative data produced by AGF in a separate report which analysed the CO2e impact of the festival.

The Green Gathering describes itself as a community with the intention that attendance at the festival will inspire change in outlook and behaviours beyond the festival, thus the survey was sent to audience, crew, artists, and traders by the festival organisers using the festival's own data base.

Survey data was collected between the months of August and November 2023 with the majority of responses collected in the month following the 2023 edition.

3.2 The Survey Questions

The results, discussion and conclusion draws upon the findings from the following survey questions; -

Q.1 Are you crew/artist/trader OR public ticket buyer?

Q.2 How old are you?

Q.3 Where did you travel from?

- Q.4 How did you travel to The Green Gathering? Your answer should be the mode for the longest distance travelled.
- Q.5 How many times have you visited Green Gathering before?
- Q.6 Do you go to any other festivals?
- Q.7 If you have never been to The Green Gathering before, why did you choose to visit the festival this year?
- Q. 8 If you have been more than once, why did you come back?
- Q.9 What were the best and worst parts of the festival?
- Q.10 10. Which was your favourite...
- Q.11 This question asks you whether the things you have seen, heard and learned at GG have influenced you in your everyday life.

The full survey can also be found in [Section 7, Appendix 1, P. 21](#)

4. Results

4.1 Survey Responses

In 2023 the festival sold 1900 tickets and had about the same number of crew, artists, traders. and a small number of welfare and accessibility staff.

The total number from which the survey responses was drawn was approximately 3800 attendees. There were 242 survey responses which represents a 7% response rate.

The survey was completed by this mix of audience, crew, artist, welfare, and accessibility staff. Over half of the responses were provided by the ticket buying public, with around 45% completed by the other elements of the Green Gathering community. The results can be seen in figure 4.1.

Public Ticket Buyers.	55.4%
Crew, Artist or Trader	42.2%
Other	2.4%

Figure 4.1 Breakdown of groups participating in survey.

4.2 Demographics

Around 60 % of the respondents were 45 years or over with 11% of this group aged 65 or over. It is notable that festivals in general are seeing a gradual widening of their age demographic into this higher age group. However, there was also an element of younger age groups where 8% of the respondents

were under 24 years old. Overall, in 2023, this sample group of the festival community had an average age of 42 years which is slightly higher than the UK festival average which has been reported to be 39 years old (Ticket Master, 2019). A breakdown of age groups can be seen in figure 4.2.

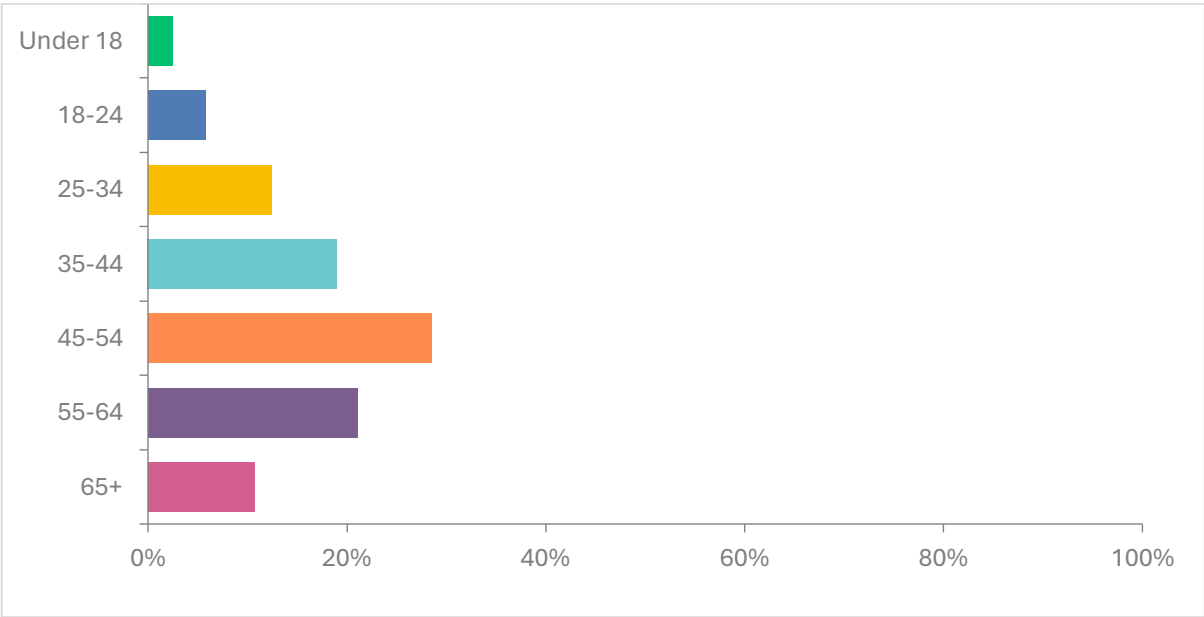


Figure 4.2. The Green Gathering age demographics 2023.

4. 3 How did they travel to The Green Gathering

The survey question asked respondents about the travel mode they had chosen for the longest part of their journey to the festival.

By far the most common choice of travel was by car or van with around 52% of respondents saying they had driven to the festival. A further 32% said that they were passengers in either a car or van. Only 9.5% had travelled by train despite a busy railway station only a mile away in Chepstow. An even smaller number, 3% had travelled by bus. The survey included participants who were traders and most likely to use a van to bring supplies and equipment to the festival. This would account for at least some of the 32% who said that they were either van drivers or passengers.

These results tend to reflect the relatively high use of motor vehicles to many green field festival sites. The results are shown in figures 4.3 and 4.4.

The high use of motor vehicles for travel to the festival is reflected in the results of the carbon footprint analysis carried out by AGF in 2023. This analysis highlights that travel was by far the biggest contributor to the festival’s carbon footprint. Out of a total of 146.13 tonnes of CO2e, audience transport emitted 51.1 tonnes, staff and festival crew 53 tonnes, and a further 6.2 tonnes was emitted by artist travel (AGF, 2023).

Whilst this research did not seek to answer why participants travelled in the way they did it is suggested that further research could be done to understand the high level of vehicle travel and whether there are any measures that could be put in place to change the balance and reduce the environmental impact of travel to the festival. Further research could also look at whether there is any discernible move to biofuels or electric vehicles by traders which would also cut the transport emissions.

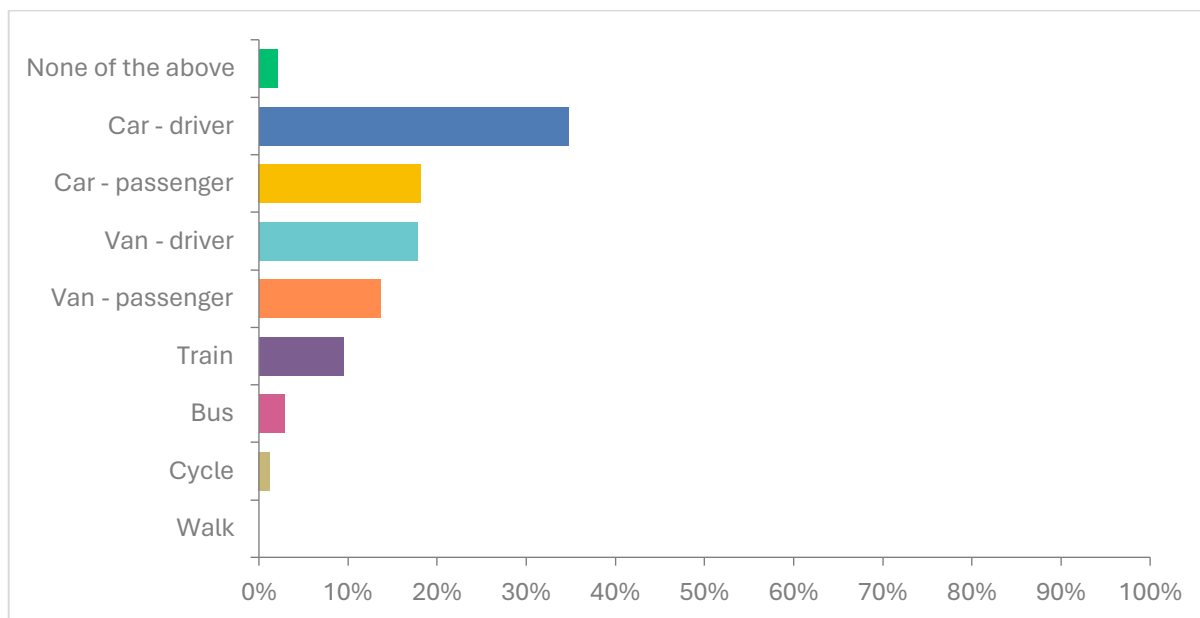


Figure 4.3 A breakdown of travel modes to the festival.

ANSWER CHOICES-	RESPONSES-
- None of the above	2.07% 5
- Car – driver	34.71% 84
- Car – passenger	18.18% 44
- Van – driver	17.77% 43
- Van – passenger	13.64% 33
- Train	9.50% 23
- Bus	2.89% 7
- Cycle	1.24% 3
- Walk	0.00% 0
TOTAL	242

Figure 4.4 How participants travelled to the festival by percentage.

4.4 A Loyal Audience

The Green Gathering festival has a very loyal audience with 84% of respondents saying that they had been to the festival before. Of those that hadn't been before it was clear that friends and family had the biggest influence on their decision to attend in 2023, with 20.5% saying this was the reason they attended.

4.5 How many visits to the festival

The results show a high number of repeat visits to the festival. Whilst crew, artist and traders make up 42% of responses where this might be expected with regular traders and crew, the data indicates that amongst the audience there is a high degree of loyalty to the festival with many having made multiple visits. Only 16% of respondents had never been to GG before whereas 14.5% had been more that 10 times. The results are shown in figure 4.5.

Whilst a loyal audience who make repeat visits to the festival is to be valued it is now recognised that this can also create problems for festivals. For example, it indicates that the age demographic of the festival is steadily rising, indeed this is also indicted in the data discussed in Section 4.2. Anecdotal evidence from festivals such as Oya Festival in Norway suggests that this can create issues around attracting new and younger attendees, preventing a decline in audience numbers, and keeping the programme relevant both for existing audiences and to attract new audiences.

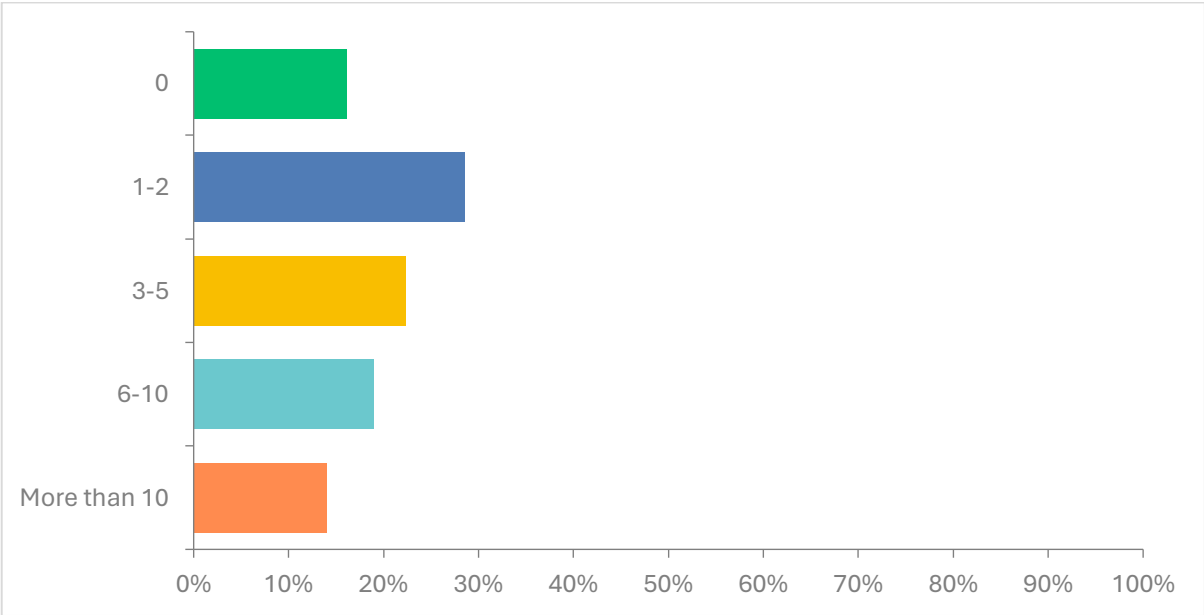


Figure 4.5 Visits to The Green Gathering

4.6 Do they go to other Festivals?

Whilst 59% said they went to other festivals for the most part there were a limited number of festivals they visited. Some of the most frequently mentioned were Glastonbury, Shambala, Unearthed, Green Man and Bearded Theory, all of which reflect aspects similar to that of The Green Gathering festival.

4.7 How did they hear about the festival?

The small number who had not been to the festival before and where it was not recommended by friends or family found out about it mainly through social media, 5.4% and the festival's own website or newsletter, 6.65% which can be seen in figure 4.6.

These results reinforce those discussed in section 4.5 about a loyal audience making repeat visits to the festival.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
NA - I have been to The Green Gathering previously	63.59%	124
Social Media	5.64%	11
Friends & Family	20.51%	40
The Green Gathering website	4.62%	9
The Green Gathering newsletter	2.05%	4
Flyers or Posters	0%	0
A review of last year's Green Gathering festival	0.51%	1
Other (please specify in Comments)	9.74%	19
TOTAL		208

Figure 4.6 How survey participants heard about the festival.

4.8 The Festival Ethos

In response to the question;-

“if you've been to The Green Gathering before, why did you come back?”

by far the biggest response was that it was the ethos and activism which attracted respondents to the festival, with 37% of responses falling into this category. This tends to indicate that for this group being green is the most important choice factor in their decision to attend the festival along with finding out about making change happen. The results are shown in figure 4.7.

It is a similar result to the responses to the question about behaviour change where around a third said that the festival impacted their daily lives discussed in section 4.10 below.

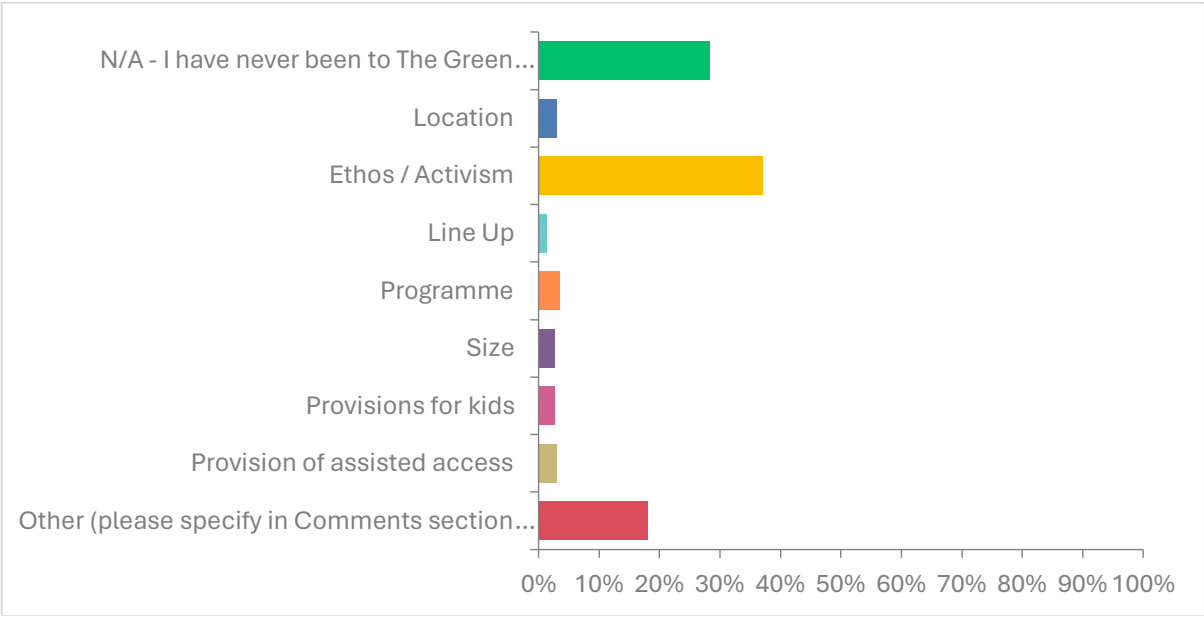


Figure 4.7 The aspects of The Green Gathering that attract the festival community.

4.9 What were the best and the worst aspects of the festival?

The most typical responses to this question were that the best aspects of the festival were the people. Some 17 respondents specifically said that the people at the festival were the best aspect. The other most referred to aspect was the atmosphere. 20 participants referred to the atmosphere. A further 23 participants combined these aspects by referring to like-minded people, friendliness along with the vibe. In other words, over a quarter or 26% of responses fell into one these categories. The rest of the responses were much more varied with aspects such as accessibility, the crew, security and the sessions mentioned.

As for the worst parts of the festival, responses included particular reference to the shuttle bus from the car park to the festival, the weather and the toilets.

The number of responses identifying their favourite parts of the festival were evenly spread across the different aspects of the festival. Approximately the same number liked the workshops, venues, bands and musicians. It appeared that the speakers and alternative acts such as poets and comedy were slightly less popular. The results are shown in Figure 4.8.

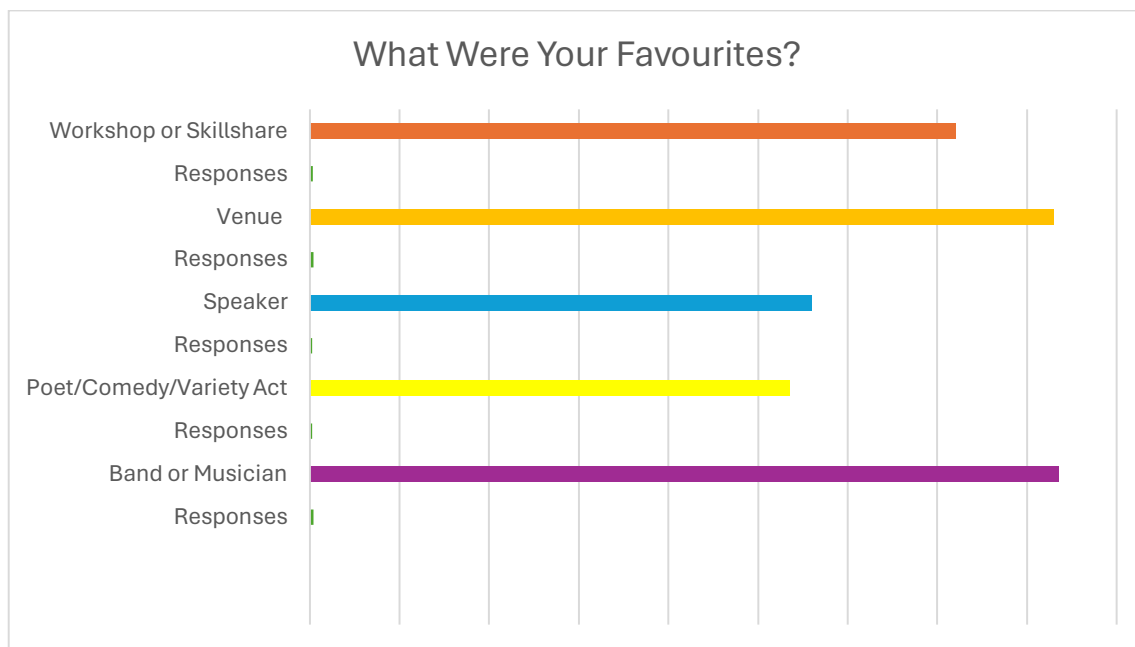


Figure 4.8 Favourite aspects of the festival

4.10 Influencing Behavioural Change

The purpose of question 11 of the survey was to find out to what extent if any the festival's green practices and messaging changed the way that people live their everyday lives. A range of different aspects were included in the question from how people travel, what they eat, reduction of food waste, what and how much they buy.

4.11 Green Gathering's Positive Behavioural Change Influence

Approximately a third of responses to each part of the categories in this question resulted in a positive answer. In other words, these respondents felt that the festival had influenced their lives beyond the festival. Although there is currently no tangible benchmark to assess the results against, it was a higher percentage than expected. It is noted that this level of response also reflects the number who said that they attend the festival because of the green ethos which was 37% and is discussed in Section 4.8.

Over a third, 36%, said that the festival had influenced what they eat at home, a third said that they had reduced food waste and a further third said that they had changed and/or reduced the amount of things that they buy.

One of the themes that emerged from the "yes" responses was that they were reconsidering their energy supplier as a result of a talk at the festival. Some of the comments illustrating this point are:-

"Considering greener heating/energy options".

"Will look into changing my energy supplier".

This result could be down to the impact of one speaker. It was clear that the speaker Dale Vince from Ecotricity had been influential, he was specifically referred to as a speaker they liked by 20 of the survey participants, more than any other of the speakers.

It is important to note though, that whilst the participants may be considering changing energy supplier this does not mean that they will go ahead and do so.

Another identifiable although smaller theme from the qualitative data was recycling. Comments such as:-

“Even bigger focus on recycling”.

“The extensive recycling made me much more aware of my own rubbish management”.

However, the results indicate that the most striking effect that The Green Gathering festival had on influencing behavioural change was to do with its social impact. Amongst a variety of responses, two themes are identified. The first is to do with becoming more involved in community as a result of visiting the festival. Participants mentioned that the festival had inspired them to spend more time with like-minded people, spreading Green Gathering values amongst their own communities at home and by doing things like volunteering. In particular participants mentioned that they had been inspired to become more involved in their community in one way or another. For example, one of this group of participants said:-

“I’m looking at organisations and charities I might be able to get involved with through volunteering and support”.

The second and largest group of responses were to do with becoming more active in the fight against climate change. Some 15 participants specifically mentioned that they have been inspired by the festival to become engaged in activism. Representative of this type of response was this one:-

“It rekindled my faith in activism after 35 years doing it, it can get lonely and exhausting. Most of all Green Gathering encourages me to be politically active around climate change and other issues.”

The comments about how the festival had influenced respondents to become more engaged in their community and activism represented 20% of all comments made in response to whether there was “anything else” or other ways in which they had been influenced to change their behaviour in everyday life.

4.12 Where the festival did not influence the participants in their daily lives.

Not all respondents felt that the festival influenced their lives under every category and approximately two thirds said that the festival did not have an influence on their daily lives.

The highest “no” response from 72.31% of participants was that the festival had not affected how they travelled away from the festival. Whilst the question focuses on changes to behaviour in their everyday lives this result may also reflect the results from Question 4. about how the community travelled to the festival. Here 53% said they had travelled by car and a further 32% by van either as driver or passenger. As discussed in section 4.3 it’s recognised that a number of the 32% of van respondents are from the festival traders. However, the overall result is an indicator that changing travel habits away from the motor vehicle is not easy to influence, be it to the festival or in people’s daily lives.

Of those who said “no” attending the festival had not had an influence on their behaviour a closer scrutiny of the responses indicated that there was more to this answer than first appeared. Here the qualitative data from the survey, what people said in response to the question, sheds more light on the “no” responses. For where respondents said no to the individual aspects of the question, the majority (67% of this group) qualified their answer by saying that they had already made changes to their lifestyle which included using different modes of travel, switching to vegan food and cutting down on waste.

This result could also indicate that for this group they are attracted to The Green Gathering festival because they have already adopted a greener lifestyle and the festival perhaps validates these choices rather than influences them. For example, some said that they were already carrying out green practices in their daily lives such as this response:-

“I answered no to all, but that doesn’t mean I didn’t learn anything; that my actions and beliefs weren’t reaffirmed. Keep doing what you are doing, it was great.”

Whilst another said:-

“No. But only because I’ve been around this kind of information for a long time”.

Yet another said:-

“More than change my behaviour/habits it’s given me a boost of morale which I had noticed being low since Covid, making me feel more like myself again, more on track with who I am and what I love doing”.

The results for each of the 5 areas for behavioural change identified in the survey question are shown in figures 4.9 and 4.10.

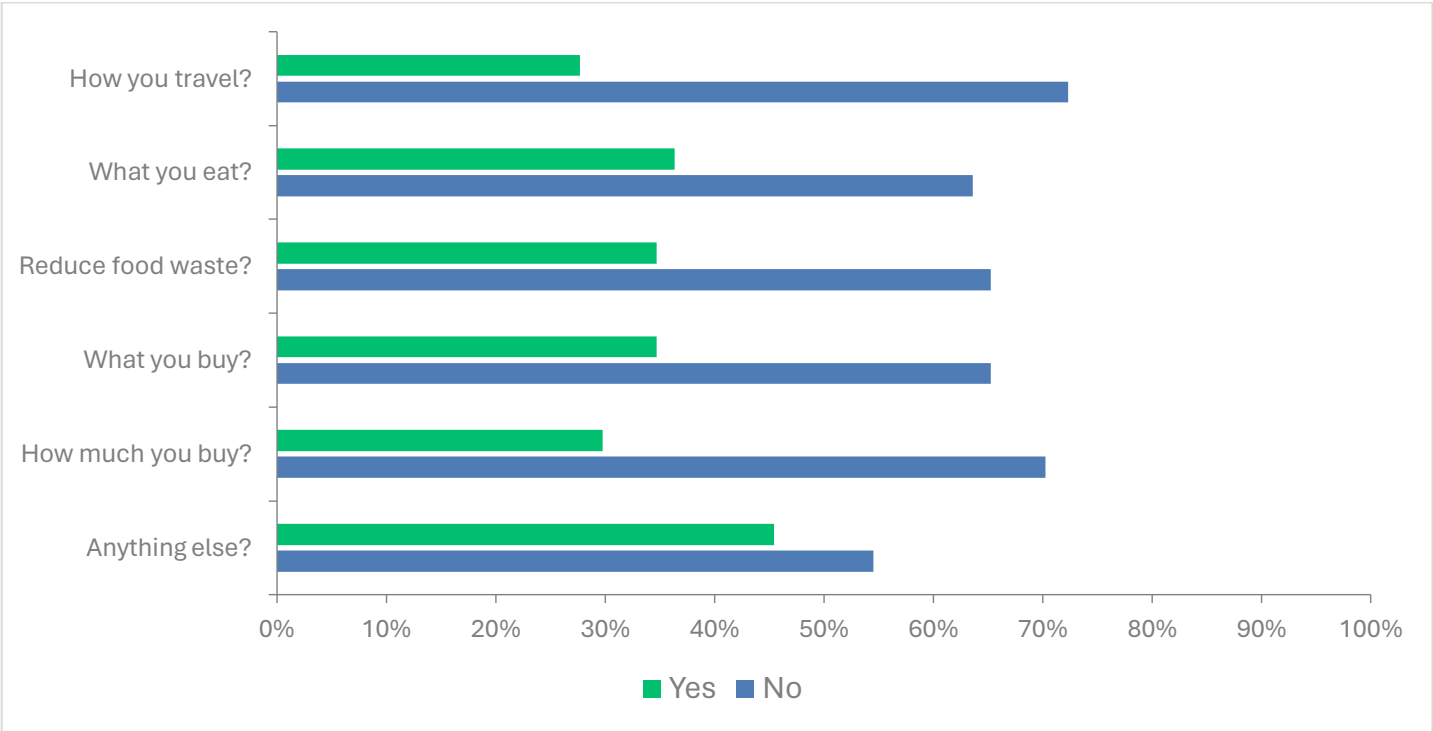


Figure 4.9 Behavioural change results

	YES	NO	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Anything else?	45.45% 110	54.55% 132	242	1.55
What you eat?	36.36% 88	63.64% 154	242	1.64
Reduce food waste?	34.71% 84	65.29% 158	242	1.65
What you buy?	34.71% 84	65.29% 158	242	1.65
How much you buy?	29.75% 72	70.25% 170	242	1.70
How you travel?	27.69% 67	72.31% 175	242	1.72

Figure 4.10 Influence of Festival on Behaviour

4.13 Individual CO₂e Emissions at the Festival and at Home

The Green Gathering Festival asked for a carbon footprint calculation for their 2023 edition. The analysis reveals an average carbon footprint of 7 kg CO₂e per festival attendee per day. Comparatively lower than the average daily carbon footprint of a UK resident which is approximately 19.5 kg CO₂e per day, and the average European household emissions are around 21.3 kg CO₂e per day (Office for National Statistics, 2022). Please refer to AGF's Carbon Analysis full report of the CO₂e emissions of the festival

It is important to acknowledge that it's unclear how the UK resident average footprint has been calculated and whether it's directly comparable to that of a festival attendee.

On the other hand, there are limitations of the carbon footprint calculation, as it relies on data provided by Green Gathering. This data includes a mix of primary, secondary data, and extrapolations. In instances where primary or secondary data is unavailable, proxies or estimates are utilised.

AGF cannot independently verify all the data provided by Green Gathering, leading to uncertainty levels categorised as follows:

- Low uncertainty: Complete or near-complete primary data with minimal need for extrapolations, such as fuel used for plant machinery and shuttles.
- Medium uncertainty: Involves some secondary data, requiring estimates or extrapolation based on event data. For example, fuel for buggies estimated based on previous years' consumption, and staff, artist, and audience transport estimated and extrapolated based on survey results combined with information from the crew ticketing system database.
- High uncertainty: Occurs when the dataset is limited or incomplete, necessitating significant estimations, assumptions, or extrapolations. Examples include artist transport, where vehicle transport was not recorded, and an average "car, van, or campervan" emission factor was used. Similarly, for production supplies and materials purchased, many high-level assumptions were made to determine the weight and raw materials of the items. For food, assumptions were made regarding the specific ingredients and weight per serving, assuming that each attendee had one "average vegan meal and two savory snacks per day."

5. Conclusions

The purpose of this research conducted in 2023 was to find out to what extent The Green Gathering festival influences behavioural change in the daily lives of its community of festival goers. The research explored the demographic context of the festival's community, the reasons why they attend the festival and specifically what they said about the influence of the festival on their daily lives.

Those from Green Gathering's festival community who participated in the research are on average 42 years old, slightly above the average age of festival goers in the UK. The festival has a loyal following with 84% saying they had been before.

Nearly 40% of participants said that they attended the festival because of its ethos and focus on activism.

The results show that just over a third of participants said that The Green Gathering festival had influenced a change of behaviour in their everyday lives, in the categories set out in the question which ranged from changing what they eat, reducing food waste, to what and how much they bought.

Whilst around two thirds said that the festival had not changed their behaviour in these areas, on closer examination this was because they said that they already engaged in green practices - for example by being vegan or reducing food waste.

The finding that was most interesting was that 45% said that attending the festival had had some form of social impact on them. In particular a fifth of these respondents said that it had either encouraged them to become more engaged in their communities or in activism to do with climate change.

Whilst the 2023 survey was a good start to understanding how The Green Gathering festival influenced behaviour change beyond the festival, it raises several questions which deserve further investigation.

- It is recommended that there be follow-up research to explore more deeply the behavioural change that participants said they had made in their daily lives and whether this is sustained change.
- Future research could be directed specifically at the festival's ticket-buying audience rather than incorporating the whole community.
- Although not central to the theme of the research it is suggested that further research to do with travel to the festival could be undertaken to see if any changes made by the festival could influence a reduction in car and van use both to and from the festival.
- The figure for the average carbon footprint was 7 kg CO₂e per festival attendee per day. Recommendations provided in the AGF CO₂e analysis report include the need for more detailed data collection to improve the robustness of this figure.

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7. Appendices

7.1. Survey Questions

The Green Gathering Festival Survey 2023

in association with

A Greener Future

Context

1. Are you crew/artist/trader OR public ticket buyer?

2. How old are you?

under 18 / 18-24 / 25-34 / 35-44 / 45-54 / 55-64 / 65+

3. Where did you travel from?

UK County or City / Postcode..... Other.....

4. How did you travel to The Green Gathering? Your answer should be the mode for the longest distance travelled.

Car - driver / car - passenger / van - driver / van - passenger / train / bus / cycle /

walk / other (please describe)

5. How many times have you visited Green Gathering before?

0

1-3

3-5

5-10

More than 10

6. Do you go to any other festivals?

Yes..... Which ones?.....
No.....

Why Go to The Green Gathering

7. If you have never been to The Green Gathering before, why did you choose to visit the festival this year?

social media / friends or family / GG website / GG newsletter / flyers or posters / a review of last year's festival / other (please explain).....

8. If you have been more than once, why did you come back?

location / ethos, activism / line up, programme / size / kids' provision /

assisted access provision / other (please describe)

.....

9. What were the best and worst parts of the festival?

- Best?
- Second best?
- Third best?
- Worst?
- Second worst?
- Third worst?

10. Which was your favourite...

- **Area?** e.g. Crafts, Campaigns, Permaculture, Healing, Kids, Teens, Hill Village, Nature's Way & The Enchanted Woods, TrAd Village, Assisted Access, Markets (don't know what it was called? check out our website [give link])
- **Venue?** e.g. Triban, Soundscape, Floating Lotus, Raconteurs' Delight, Radical Flank, Speakers' Forum, Voices of Gaia
- **Band or Musician?** forgot their name? check the programme [give link]
- **Speaker?** forgot their name? check the programme [give link]
- **Poet, comedian or variety act?**
- **Workshop or skills share?** please say what area or venue it was in
- **Random happening?** tell us about something unique, cool & fun that happened while you were here!

Behavioural Change

11. This question asks you whether the things you have seen, heard and learned at GG have influenced you in your everyday life.

How you travel Yes..... please explain.....
 No...

What you eat Yes..... please explain.....
 No...

Reduce food waste Yes..... please explain.....
 No.....

What you buy Yes please explain.....
 No

How much you buy Yes..... please explain.....
 No.....

Are there any other things you have changed. Give examples.....

.....

Thank you for completing our survey.