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## **Humans Really Behave Like Sheep in a Herd**

*Just 5 % of us influence the behavior of the others*

What's more unpleasant to see than the herd spirit in humans? The manipulation led to the stage when humans behave like dumb sheep. Many times you may have wondered what the hell you were doing or how the heck you had got amongst a gang of seemingly idiots. A new research published in the *Animal Behavior Journal* and carried out at the University of Leeds shows that humans really flock like sheep and birds, subconsciously following just a bunch of individuals. Just 5 % of the crowd may herd, like cattle, the rest of 95 %. The results could be applied for directing the flow of large crowds, especially in case of disasters, when the noise or other factors could impede verbal communication. "There are many situations where this information could be used to good effect. At one extreme, it could be used to inform emergency planning strategies and at the other, it could be useful in organizing pedestrian flow in busy areas," said co-author Jens Krause, professor at the University's Faculty of Biological Sciences. His team made tests when groups of people had to walk randomly around a large hall. Just a few selected persons received more information about the direction to walk in. The subjects could not communicate with one another and had to remain within arms length of another. In all cases, the 'informed individuals' were followed by the others, resulting a self-organized snake-like formation. "We've all been in situations where we get swept along by the crowd. But what's interesting about this research is that our participants ended up making a consensus decision despite the fact that they weren't allowed to talk or gesture to one another. In most cases the participants didn't realize they were being led by others," said Krause. The various tested groups had different percentages of 'informed individuals'. The larger the crowds, the smaller the needed percentage of informed individuals was. Groups of over 200 did not require more than 5 % "shepherds". "We initially started looking at consensus decision making in humans because we were interested in animal migration, particularly birds, where it can be difficult to identify the leaders of a flock. But it just goes to show that there are strong parallels between animal grouping behavior and human crowds," said Krause.