

Consumption | Individual communication

IC - (20898) - THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19 AND STARTING UNIVERSITY ON YOUNG PEOPLE'S GREEN BEHAVIOURS

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Background and objectives

Moments of change are periods in people's lives characterised by significant changes in the physical or social surrounding, which could serve as windows of opportunity for behaviour change in the domain of pro-environmental behaviours. Examples of these life transitions include starting a new job, transferring from school to university. The latter one is specific to people in their late adolescence. They represent an understudied but crucial population given their high levels of concern about climate change but sometimes lower levels of engagement with tackling the issue. In the present research we investigate locking in green habits after undergoing two moments of change: the end of COVID-19 restrictions in the UK in July 2021, and the start of university for new students in October 2021.

Process and methods (for empirical research)

This is done using data from two longitudinal experiments. In both studies the participants were between the ages of 16 and 25, they were randomly assigned to one of three groups: self-affirmation, behaviour self-reflection, control group. All three groups were shown two posters: 1) informing them about the consequences of climate change and 2) giving information about climate-friendly behaviours. Food waste, consumption, and commuting behaviours data was collected at baseline, at a seven-day follow-up, and a 30-day follow-up.

Main results (or main arguments in the case of critical reviews)

The findings revealed these two moments of change had a significant effect on the pro-environmental behaviours (particularly food waste and consumption) of people in their late adolescence. Specific to the second experiment, we discuss the possible stronger effect for young people who had experienced a physical change (relocation) compared to those who had not.

Implications for research and practice/policy | Importance and originality of the contribution

The present research identified and tested the application of two different intervention techniques on a distinct sample of participants, i.e. young people. It further shed more light on a novel moment of change (COVID-19) compared to a more traditional one (starting university).

Palavras-chave : adolescence, leaving home, moments of change, sustainable lifestyles