

Sustainability | Individual communication

IC - (20946) - THE IMPORTANCE OF NATURE DURING COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS: A LONGITUDINAL STUDY EXAMINING HOW AND WHY NATURE PROVIDED A HAVEN DURING A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

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Background and objectives

The health and wellbeing benefits of spending time in nature is well recognised (Capaldi et al., 2014; Coventry et al., 2021). When the world experienced severe lockdowns and restrictions, interfering in people's everyday lives and introducing the world to new global stressors, nature was especially used and found to help improve people's health and wellbeing (Hubbard et al., 2021; Poortinga et al., 2021). But what was it about these experiences that had these positive impacts? Were these experiences heightened and more sensitive during the most severe lockdowns? (How) did people's experiences of nature change after the restrictions subsided? And ultimately, what can we learn from this disruptive time for both theory and application?

Process and methods (for empirical research)

To examine the key features, mechanisms and potential changes in experiences with nature, a longitudinal questionnaire survey was conducted. Recruiting a nationally representative sample of 850 UK households, individuals shared their experiences of spending time in nature during the first UK lockdown (March-June 2020) and after the lockdown (October 2020 and October 2021).

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

Preliminary analysis indicates that spending time in nature was similarly beneficial for mood after the lockdown as it was during the lockdown. However, the key predictors and the strength of these key predictors on the positive experiences did differ. This talk will overview the role of numerous factors on mood at both time points (during restrictions vs. after), including the importance of the type of environment visited (e.g. key features, the extent the Attention Restoration Theory's properties were met), *how* people engaged with the environment, and the importance of their connection to nature.

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

Findings will advance the scientific insight on how and why nature is beneficial to our wellbeing and can also aid recommendations on how we can best engage with nature to maximise the benefits it can have on us.

Palavras-chave : restoration, nature, covid-19, connectedness to nature, wellbeing