

Sustainability | Individual communication

IC - (21337) - INCREASE IN PRO-ENVIRONMENTAL ATTITUDES DUE TO COVID-19

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Background and objectives

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic claimed millions of lives and caused unprecedented disruptions. Despite these negative impacts, there is optimism the pandemic may shift public opinion on other global crises by fostering a sense of collective efficacy. Using propensity score matching to compare New Zealanders assessed before ($n = 12,304$) and after ($n = 12,370$) nationwide lockdowns in 2020, we tested a preregistered mediation model with COVID-19 lockdown experience predicting increases in pro-environmental attitudes via enhanced socio-political efficacy. As hypothesized, socio-political efficacy increased after the successful nationwide lockdowns. In turn, socio-political efficacy amplified respondents' pro-environmental attitudes including climate beliefs and concern, as well as support for a government subsidy for public transport and opposition to government spending on new motorways. The pandemic also enhanced respondents' satisfaction with the quality of the natural environment, which was unmediated by socio-political efficacy. The crisis might offer an opportunity to foster collective pro-environmental actions.