

We really do like to be beside the seaside, app confirms

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Spending time by the sea is one of the keys to happiness, according to a study that uses mobile technology to track people's wellbeing in different environments.

The study was led by Dr George MacKerron, of the University of Sussex Department of Economics and LSE, and Professor Susana Mourato of

LSE's Department of Geography and Environment.

Marine and coastal environments produced the most positive responses from more than 22,000 people who downloaded an app – *Mappiness*, which was developed specifically for the study – on their mobile devices.

The app, which is the first of its kind, beeps users daily to record their levels of [happiness](#), and uses [satellite positioning](#) (GPS) to discover their location while they answer. Response locations are linked to environmental data, which is then fed into statistical models of wellbeing. More than one million responses have been recorded in the study.

Being outdoors, near the sea, on a warm, sunny weekend afternoon is the perfect spot for most. In fact, participants were found to be substantially happier outdoors in all natural environments than they were in [urban environments](#).

Dr MacKerron says: "People recorded the highest levels of happiness in marine and coastal locations, followed by mountains and moors, forests and farms."

Professor Mourato said the study was the first of its kind to use [smart phones](#) to record states of happiness and how they rise and fall during the day in relation to the surrounding environment.

Sport and recreational activities, such as running, gardening or bird-watching – most of which occur outdoors in a natural setting – are also associated with increased wellbeing and happiness.

Designated areas such as National Parks were similarly found to be positively and significantly related to happiness ratings.

The study also shows that women experience a greater sense of wellbeing in some natural environments than men do, while older people are happier being outdoors relative to the rest of the population.

Dr MacKerron says: "This study provides new lines of evidence linking nature with wellbeing.

"There are at least three reasons why we should expect natural environments to be positively related to health, wellbeing and happiness. These environments reduce stress; they have less noise and pollution; and people are more likely to engage in physical exercise and recreation and to interact with others there."

The findings of the study, "Happiness is greater in [natural environments](#)," are published in the latest issue of *Global Environmental Change*.

More information: [www.sciencedirect.com/science/ ...
ii/S0959378013000575](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/.../S0959378013000575)

Provided by University of Sussex

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