

Study shows young people living in deprived coastal areas have worst health

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Young people living in deprived coastal areas are likely to become unhealthier young adults than those living in deprived inland communities, according to new research.

The study, led by the University of Essex's Centre for Coastal Communities, is thought to be the first of its kind to map the impact of living in a disadvantaged coastal community as a teenager and how it relates to developing poorer health in adulthood.

Using data from the UK Household Longitudinal Survey, Understanding Society, the researchers compared the data of nearly 5,000 English teenagers living in deprived areas—more than 4,000 from inland areas and more than 750 from coastal areas.

In four out of five measures of health, the research found teenagers who had lived in poorer, coastal areas were worse off in terms of their health as young adults.

"Given that it has been widely reported that living near 'blue space' is linked to better health and well-being, it is unclear why young adults living in the most deprived coastal communities have worse health than equivalent places inland," said lead author Dr. Emily Murray.

As Director of Essex's Centre for Coastal Communities, Dr. Murray and her team will now focus their research on identifying the key drivers of poor [mental health](#) in these areas.

"There is a global youth mental health crisis, and to find that in England, this is a particular issue with mental health among young people in deprived coastal areas is striking and needs to be addressed urgently," Dr. Murray added.

According to the UK Office for National Statistics, half of all coastal towns in England and Wales are deprived—compared to 30% of non-coastal towns.

Recent UK policy initiatives—such as the current "leveling-up"

agenda—have taken into account that where people live is related to their health.

"However, an excess of poor health in deprived coastal communities is a conundrum and a concern," added Dr. Murray. "Our findings suggest that strategies to level up the health of the English population need to pay particular attention to the health of young people living in these deprived [coastal areas](#).

"We need to look at what is driving poorer health among coastal [young adults](#) and design effective solutions to reduce this health inequality."

The research, which also involved Dr. Cara Booker, from the Institute for Social and Economic Research, and colleagues from University College London, is [published](#) in the journal *Health and Place*.

More information: Emily T. Murray et al, Residence in coastal communities in adolescence and health in young adulthood: An 11-year follow-up of English UKHLS youth questionnaire respondents., *Health & Place* (2024). [DOI: 10.1016/j.healthplace.2024.103239](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.healthplace.2024.103239)

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