

Reconnecting with nature key for the health of people and the planet

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Drake's Place Gardens at the University of Plymouth. A new study led by the University shows individuals who visit natural spaces weekly report better physical and mental wellbeing. Credit: University of Plymouth

Individuals who visit natural spaces weekly, and feel psychologically connected to them, report better physical and mental wellbeing, new research has shown.

Alongside the benefits to [public health](#), those who make weekly nature visits, or feel connected to nature, are also more likely to behave in ways which promote [environmental health](#), such as recycling and conservation activities.

The findings of the study, published in the *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, indicate that reconnecting with nature could be key to achieving synergistic improvements to human and planetary health.

The study was conducted by researchers at the University of Plymouth, Natural England, the University of Exeter and University of Derby, and is the first to investigate—within a single study—the contribution of both nature contact and connection to human health, wellbeing and pro-environmental behaviours.

The findings are based on responses to the Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) survey, commissioned by Natural England as part of DEFRA's social science research programme. The team looked at people's engagement with nature through access to greenspace, nature visits and the extent to which they felt psychologically connected to the [natural world](#).

Lead author Leanne Martin, of the University of Plymouth, said: "In the context of increasing urbanisation, it is important to understand how engagement with our planet's natural resources relate to human health and behaviour. Our results suggest that physically and psychologically reconnecting with nature can be beneficial for [human health](#) and wellbeing, and at the same time encourages individuals to act in ways which protect the health of the planet."

Marian Spain, Chief Executive of Natural England added: "It's a top priority for Natural England to unlock the potential of the natural environment to help address the challenges we are facing as a society:

poor physical health and [mental wellbeing](#); the climate change crisis and the devastating loss of wildlife.

"These findings give vital new insights of the need to not just increase contact with nature, but about the sorts of experience that really help people build an emotional connection, which is key to unlocking health benefits as well as inspiring people to taking action to help their environment. We look forward to using the research as we work with our many partners to support more people from all walks of life to benefit from thriving nature."

More information: Leanne Martin et al, Nature contact, nature connectedness and associations with health, wellbeing and pro-environmental behaviours, *Journal of Environmental Psychology* (2020). [DOI: 10.1016/j.jenvp.2020.101389](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2020.101389)

Provided by University of Plymouth

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