Title of Project: Use of outdoor spaces during times of stress

Researcher name: Dr Leanne Martin

Invitation and brief summary:

You are being invited to take part in a two-part online survey, led by researchers at the University of Exeter, examining people's use of outdoor spaces during times of stress. We are especially interested to hear from those who have experienced a major life change or stressful event within the last six months. Before you decide whether to participate in this study it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully.

Purpose of the research:

The aim of this survey is to find out how people use outdoor spaces during times of stress. These can be green spaces such as parks and the countryside, or blue spaces such as the coastline, lakes and rivers (i.e. including water). There is some evidence that using these places may be related to people's health, however this is yet to be fully investigated amongst individuals experiencing stressful life events (e.g. divorce, financial difficulty) over longer periods of time.

Why have I been approached?

This study is being undertaken in collaboration with PROTECT researchers. Participants who have registered online for the host PROTECT study who have previously completed mental health questionnaires are being invited to take part in this add-on project. We hope to recruit around 2000 participants.

What does taking part involve?

This is a two-part online survey study. Data are collected via the host PROTECT research study platform.

Screening survey: your eligibility to take part in this project is assessed by some brief screening questions:

1. Whether you have experienced any major life changes (e.g divorce, bereavement, financial difficulty) or stressful life events in the last six months (yes/no/prefer not to answer). You are not asked to provide ANY details about these events within the screening survey.
2. Time at current address

Main surveys: eligible participants will be invited to complete a short survey now, as well as a follow-up survey in twelve months later. Both surveys include questions on:

- Your use and feelings about outdoor spaces.
- Ratings of your overall physical and mental health.

- Indicating what kinds of stressful life event(s) you have experienced in the last 6 months (e.g divorce, bereavement, financial difficulty).You will not be asked to provide any descriptive details about these events, but to indicate whether a list of common life events apply to you, and if so, how recently.
- We will also collect some personal information, such as your age, gender, marital status. Some of the questions are sensitive and may be difficult to answer. For all question related to physical/mental health and stressful events, there is an option to select 'prefer not to answer' and move on.

Each of the main surveys should take no longer than 20 minutes to complete.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

There is unlikely to be any personal benefit for you taking part in this study. There may be some benefits to scientific knowledge and society arising from the study findings, but this cannot be assured at the start of the research project.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

No harm is expected to come to participants as a result of taking part in the study, however some of the survey questions pertain to potentially sensitive topics including stressful life events and mental health. Should you feel any discomfort or doubt about taking part you can withdraw from the study at any point, without penalty.

If the topics raised in this study cause you any concerns, or anxiety, please use the online resources below to access the necessary information and support:-

Mental health resources:
www.mind.org.uk
www.samaritans.org
www.stress.org.uk

Illness & Bereavement:
www.mariecurie.org.uk/
https://www.supportline.org.uk/problems/bereavement/
www.cruse.org.uk/

Relationship difficulties:
www.relate.org.uk
www.familylives.org.uk

Financial difficulties:
www.citizensadvice.org.uk/debt-and-money/financial-advice/getting-financial-advice
www.stepchange.org

To report a crime or obtain legal advice:
https://www.police.uk/pu/contact-the-police/report-a-crime-incident/
https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/law-and-courts/legal-system/finding-free-or-affordable-legal-help/

What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?

If you decide at any point that you no longer wish to take part in this study you are free to do so, without consequence to yourself, or with regards to your ongoing involvement in the host PROTECT study, or your wider rights or involvement elsewhere.

You can withdraw from the survey at any time by simply leaving the online questionnaire page or closing your internet browser window. In line with PROTECT protocols anonymised data will be retained following withdrawal. However, you can choose to remove your personally identifiable information, from this study or the wider PROTECT project, by contacting the PROTECT helpdesk.

How will my information be kept confidential?

The University of Exeter processes personal data for the purposes of carrying out research in the public interest. The University will endeavour to be transparent about its processing of your personal data and this information sheet should provide a clear explanation of this. If you do have any queries about the University's processing of your personal data that cannot be resolved by the research team, further information may be obtained from the University's Data Protection Officer by emailing informationgovernance@exeter.ac.uk. or at https://www.exeter.ac.uk/departments/cgr/ig/

All responses that you provide within this survey and the follow up survey will be recorded. For some questions, you may indicate that you do not wish to answer them by selecting the 'Prefer not to answer option'. Your responses will be securely linked to historical data collected as part of the main PROTECT survey (i.e. data that you have previously provided) by the PROTECT team. This includes mapping your home postcode to environmental data, for example levels of greenspace and deprivation within your neighbourhood. An anonymised dataset, with postcodes removed, will be returned to named researchers involved in the current study - meaning you cannot be personally identified in any way from the analysis.

All data will be securely stored and shared, and can only be accessed by selected individuals at the University of Exeter. Research papers may be published using this data, but again, your responses will not be identifiable in the research results.

Will I receive any payment for taking part?

There are no monetary or material incentives for participating in this research.

What will happen to the results of this study?

At the end of the project, the results of the study may be published scientific journals, and where possible through mainstream media, e.g., social media, press releases, and through the University of Exeter's communication networks. A summary of the main findings may also be included in the PROTECT study newsletter. Findings will be reported in aggregate form, such that no individual responses will be singled out during or identifiable within the research results.

Who is organising and funding this study?

The survey is being conducted by the University of Exeter as part of a project funded by the European Union and UK Research and Innovation Fund.

Researchers working on this project include:

Dr Leanne Martin; Dr Ben Wheeler; Dr James Grellier and Dr Lewis Elliott from the European Centre for Environment and Human Health, University of Exeter Medical School (https://www.ecehh.org).

Prof Anne Corbett, University of Exeter Medical School (https://www.protectstudy.org.uk/).

Who has reviewed this study?

This project has been reviewed by the UEMS & HCP Research Ethics Committee at the University of Exeter (Reference Number 3672085)

Contact for any questions or requests regarding your participation in this research:

In the event of queries or requests you may contact us using the following contact information.

Please email support.protect@exeter.ac.uk or l.martin5@exeter.ac.uk

To contact the Research Ethics Committee please email uemsethics@exeter.ac.uk

You can also contact the University Research Ethics and Governance Team if you wish to make a complaint or comment
please email cgr-reg@exeter.ac.uk,

or

Dr Antony Walsh
Head of Research Governance, Ethics and Compliance
University Corporate Services, University of Exeter
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DD: 01392 726621 email A.Walsh3@exeter.ac.uk

Thank you for your interest in this project.

Consent to Take Part

- I confirm that I have read and understand the Participant Information Sheet version 2 dated 20.03.24 for the above sub-study, sponsored and led by the University of Exeter. I have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions, which have been answered satisfactorily.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my medical care or legal rights being affected.
- I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes explained to me via the Participant Information Sheet. I understand that such information will be handled and stored in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and other Data Protection Laws.
- I give my consent for the researchers to access relevant information already being collected about me from the PROTECT Study.
- I understand that my information may be subject to review by responsible individuals from the University of Exeter on for monitoring and audit purposes.
- If I chose to withdraw, I understand that all anonymised data will be retained in the study up to the point of my withdrawal, and no further data will be collected.
- I agree to take part in the PROTECT sub-study: Use of outdoor spaces during times of stress