

## Research Paper

Everyday places to get away – Lessons learned from Covid-19 lockdowns<sup>☆</sup>

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## HIGHLIGHTS

- During Covid-19 people visited a wide range of nearby places to get away from everyday demands, without needing to travel.
- People engaged with a wide range of activities in those places, but many activities were place dependent.
- All place visits benefitted hedonic and eudemonic wellbeing, but outdoor activities were more beneficial than indoor activities.
- Place and activity choices varied between people. Younger people and those living in urban areas visited less outdoor places.
- To support wellbeing for all it is important to identify the variety of nearby places people visit and manage access and provision of such places.

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## ABSTRACT

Being able to get away from everyday stressors and demands, even if close to home and just for a few minutes, is important for wellbeing. During the Covid-19 lockdown periods, people's ability to get away changed significantly. An increase in visits to nearby natural places is well documented. Little is known about other types of places people visited to get away. An online UK survey was conducted in 2020 ( $N = 850$ ) investigating what places people visited to get away during the pandemic, what they did in those places, how place and activity choices were related to each other and to demographic variables, and to recalled hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing during those visits. Participants visited a rich array of places and engaged in a variety of activities that supported their hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing needs. Responses were grouped into four types of places (at home outdoors, at home indoors, away from home outdoors, and away from home indoors) and seven activity types (cognitive, walks, nature engagement, social activities, technology use, relaxing, and exercise). Place and activity choices were strongly linked. Visiting outdoor places was most beneficial for wellbeing (and most common), especially when it involved mindful engagement with nature (bird watching, gardening) or exercise. Staying indoors, engaging with technologies (computers, television) was least beneficial and more common among those with no degree or job, living in urban areas, and identifying as male. The findings demonstrate the importance of understanding place-activity interactions to support the wellbeing benefits derived from visits to places to get away.

## 1. Introduction

Everyday life can be stressful, boring, and demanding. Getting away, for a few minutes, a few hours, or a whole day, can be important to

feeling happy, relaxed, and positive (Arden, 2010). Being able to get away from everyday environments and visit places that are different, novel, and removed from those in which people work, live and study is important for health and wellbeing (Carpiano, 2009). Moreover, getting

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away and looking for peace and quiet is central to motivations for and experiences of outdoor recreation (Hammit, 2000; Puhakka, 2021), and the extent to which people experience a sense of being away in the places they visit is linked to the wellbeing benefits they derive from those visits (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989).

During the Covid-19 lockdown periods, travel restrictions and management of health risks meant people's ability to get away was often severely constrained. The home became the primary place for work, leisure, and family life, for many people. Finding places that provided a sense of being away may have been difficult, if not impossible, for many. This situation provided a unique opportunity for researchers to examine the types of nearby places people sought out to get away, what they did there, and how they felt (in terms of hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing) when visiting those places.

## 2. Wellbeing

The Covid-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns have been linked to a wide range of negative psychological impacts (Martarelli & Wolff, 2020), including feelings of boredom (Brodeur et al., 2020; Chao et al., 2020), loneliness (Brodeur et al., 2020; Groarke et al., 2020; Marston et al., 2020), crowding (Fornara et al., 2022), and a loss of purpose or meaning due to job losses and restricted interaction with other people (Brodeur et al., 2020). Being able to get away, even if only for a brief period, might have supported a range of different hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing needs.

(Keyes & Annas (2009) describe hedonic wellbeing as "feeling well" and eudaimonic wellbeing as "functioning well". Hedonic wellbeing is closely linked to affective restoration or stress recovery (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989), while eudaimonic wellbeing encapsulates aspects such as a sense of purpose or meaning, connectedness to others, and autonomy (Huta & Waterman, 2014; Ryan et al., 2008). To take a more holistic view of wellbeing, this research examined recalled hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing in the places people visited to get away during the pandemic.

Different theoretical perspectives exist to explain why and how visits to places may contribute to wellbeing experiences. These perspectives tend to focus on either place characteristics or the activities undertaken in those places. Relatively little research has examined both, or how they are related, especially not under constraint conditions such as the Covid-19 pandemic. This research explores what types of places people visited to get away during the pandemic, what they did when they were there, and how place choices and activities contributed to hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing experienced in those places.

## 3. Places

Certain types of environments are associated with greater positive place experiences and positive wellbeing than others. A vast and growing body of evidence demonstrates visits to natural places are particularly beneficial for wellbeing (Bowler et al., 2010; Bratman et al., 2019), and can benefit both hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing (Capaldi et al., 2015). Moreover, numerous studies have shown that natural environments provide people with a sense of being away from demanding and stressful environments (Hammit, 2000; Panno et al., 2020; von Lindern, 2017), and people often choose natural places, such as parks, gardens, the coast, woodlands and the wider countryside, to get away (Hammit, 2000).

Different theoretical perspectives have been proposed to try to explain how place characteristics may contribute to these positive effects. Psychological restoration theories (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989; Ulrich et al., 1991) suggest that exposure to environments with restorative properties can support recovery from stress and mental fatigue, more than resting without this exposure. For instance, Ulrich et al. (1991)'s Psycho-Evolutionary Theory proposes that exposure to non-threatening natural environments supports stress recovery by providing positive

distraction from pain and stress. This is because people are evolutionarily predisposed to respond positively to environments associated with life. Attention Restoration Theory (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989) suggests that some environments contain features that engage involuntary attention (e.g., ripples in a pond, flickering leaves in the sunshine), thereby supporting recovery from directed attention fatigue (resulting from concentration on demanding tasks). In addition to these *soft fascinating features*, Attention Restoration Theory (ART) proposes three further environmental factors that are important to support restoration from mental fatigue and stress: *extent*, (linked to openness), allowing the mind to wander, a sense of *being away* psychologically from the sources of everyday demands and stressors, and *compatibility* between a person's needs and abilities and the environment.

Although the theories tend to be used to explain the restorative qualities of natural environments in particular, there is also evidence that other environments can have restorative qualities, such as monasteries (Ouellette et al., 2005) or historical sites in cities (Scopelliti et al., 2019). Moreover, people's self-reported favourite places are often, but not always, natural places (Subiza-Pérez et al., 2021). Favourite places, including every day favourite places can be highly restorative (Korpela & Hartig, 1996; Korpela et al., 2008). They have been found to improve mood and self-esteem (Korpela & Ylén, 2007; Korpela & Ylén, 2009) and support cognitive and emotional self-regulation (Korpela, 1992; Korpela et al., 2001). When asked to report their favourite places, more than a third of participants in Newell (1997)'s research mentioned the home. Ratcliffe and Korpela (2016) found that 15 % of respondents identified places such as cities, pubs, and homes as their favourite places.

To summarise, visiting places where the environment contains restorative properties can benefit wellbeing through restoration of stress and mental fatigue (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989). Natural environments are particularly restorative, and people often (but not always) choose natural environments to get away (Bowler et al., 2010; Hammit, 2000). However, what people do in different places may be as important as the places themselves (Staats et al., 2010). Psychological restoration studies may often inadvertently compare restorative qualities of environments as well as engagement in restorative activities. Hartig et al. (2014) propose natural environments can support wellbeing through exposure to clean air, by supporting physical activity and social contact, as well as by helping to reduce stress and mental fatigue (restoration). The ways in which people engage with the environment mediates effects of nature exposure on wellbeing outcomes. What people do in different environments, therefore, may matter as much as the type of environment they visit.

## 4. Activities

Leisure activities are defined as recreational behaviours that provide people with an opportunity to mentally disengage from productive activities such as work (Sonnentag, 2012). Engagement in leisure activities contributes to wellbeing (Mansfield et al., 2020; Sirgy et al., 2017) and different theoretical explanations have been proposed to explain these effects.

The experience of flow is often highlighted as one possible explanation for the wellbeing benefits people derive from engaging in leisure activities. Flow is a psychological state in which people lose sense of space and time and are completely immersed in an activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014; Csikszentmihalyi & LeFevre, 1989). People experience flow when they are engaged in activities that provide an optimum balance between their skills and the challenges of the activity.

The benefits theory of leisure and wellbeing (Lee et al., 2023; Sirgy et al., 2017) proposes that engagement in leisure contributes to wellbeing by satisfying a range of human needs, including basic needs (safety, health, sensory, escape) and eudaimonic or growth needs (symbolic, aesthetics, moral, mastery, relatedness, distinctiveness). These benefits are enhanced when leisure activities match a person's personality (Coughlan & Filo, 2016).

In terms of hedonic needs, leisure activities may support wellbeing if they are safe, benefit people's health, are economically attractive and provide positive sensory experiences (e.g., feeling the sun on your skin), while avoiding negative sensory experiences (noise, smell) (Sirgy et al., 2017). Moreover, leisure activities help satisfy people's basic need for escape. They are freely chosen and provide an opportunity to escape from coercion or obligation (Sirgy et al., 2017) and help people disengage from work demands (Sonnentag, 2012).

Leisure activities are also proposed to help satisfy eudaimonic or growth needs including several social needs such as symbolic needs (expressing identity or status) and relatedness (being with, or feeling connected to, others) (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Moreover, certain types of leisure activities may support eudaimonic aesthetic needs (pleasure derived from beauty) (Mastandrea et al., 2019). Finally, some leisure activities can provide people with a sense of mastery or competence (achieving something) (Sirgy et al., 2017; Stebbins, 2016, 2018).

Some of these beneficial effects may be associated with place types or features, as well as activities. For instance, environmental stressors (noise, smell) provide negative sensory experiences. Positive sensory experiences may be derived from soft fascinating features, as described in Attention Restoration Theory (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989). Moreover, beautiful natural scenery can support satisfaction of aesthetic needs. Indeed, perceived beauty in nature has been linked to restorative experiences (van den Berg et al., 2003).

It may not always be easy to determine whether place characteristics, activities, or both, predict wellbeing experienced in places. Some activities will be strongly place dependent. For instance, walking requires (outdoor) space, whereas other activities are (almost) independent of place. For instance, someone can listen to music in a wide range of environments, indoors as well as outdoors. And finally, some activities may enhance wellbeing because of specific environmental properties, and vice versa. For instance, several authors have suggested that activities involving more immersive or mindful engagement with nature maximise the wellbeing benefits derived from being in nature (Macaulay et al., 2022; PANS, 2021; Passmore et al., 2022; Pretty, 2004; Wyles et al., 2017).

To summarise, activities in places visited to get away may enhance wellbeing through satisfaction of a range of hedonic and eudaimonic needs and flow experiences. Moreover, activities as well as place types or features are likely to play a role, and these may be related.

## 5. Wellbeing, places, and activities in the context of Covid-19

During Covid-19 lockdown periods, many countries saw a significant increase in visits to local natural spaces, including gardens (Corley et al., 2021; Soga et al., 2021). People indicated they visited nature more frequently to help cope with increased pandemic health risks (Lu et al., 2021; Pouso et al., 2021). Moreover, having access to greenspace, including gardens, during the pandemic was associated with greater wellbeing (Dzhambov et al., 2021; Hubbard et al., 2021; Lehberger et al., 2021; Poortinga et al., 2021; Tomasso et al., 2021). However, not everybody had access to natural spaces, either at home or in close proximity.

Some people tried to gain a sense of being away in virtual worlds through social media (Xu et al., 2021) and gaming (Barr & Copeland-Stewart, 2021). Relatively little is known about the range of different places people chose to visit to get away during the pandemic, and how they felt (in terms of hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing) when they were there.

During the pandemic, the use and meaning of places will have changed significantly. Many people had more leisure time (time not working or commuting), although for others, work-leisure boundaries were significantly blurred (Lee Ludvigsen et al., 2023). Moreover, many leisure places became inaccessible. Engagement in leisure activities during the pandemic has been shown to benefit wellbeing in multiple ways (Chen, 2020). On the other hand, reduced engagement in existing

leisure activities during the pandemic has been linked to increased risks of depression symptoms (Kulbin & Kask, 2022). Overall, engagement with different types of leisure activities changed (Kulbin & Kask, 2022). For instance, there is significant evidence of a reduction in physical activity (Stockwell et al., 2021). Moreover, access to spaces such as pubs and cafés were closed, reducing opportunities to support social needs. A special issue in the journal *Leisure Studies* (Lee Ludvigsen et al., 2023) demonstrates how leisure practices changed during the pandemic and how leisure spaces were reconfigured in people's everyday lives. Where access to some leisure spaces disappeared new leisure spaces emerged and were given new meaning. The places that people visited to get away during the pandemic are likely to also have changed significantly due to the restrictions. However, little is known about these places, what people did in those places, or how places visits affected their wellbeing.

## 6. This research

Gaining a sense of being away (especially during a pandemic) is important for wellbeing. Being somewhere different, as well as doing something different, are important (Hammit, 2000), and the two are linked. This research examines what places people visited during the Covid-19 pandemic to get away, what they did in those places, and how wellbeing experienced in those places depends on place type and activity.

Place choices and activities are likely to vary with demographic factors, such as urban or rural living, age, gender, and socio-economic status. For instance, living near nature (rural areas) is linked to more nature visits (Colley et al., 2022; Lenaerts et al., 2021). Younger people have been shown to spend more time with technologies and less time outdoors (Michaelson et al., 2020; Richardson et al., 2018). Visits to, and experiences in, natural spaces and gardens are linked to age and gender (Bhatti, 2006; Parry et al., 2005; Saleem & Kamboh, 2013). Knowing how places and activity choices are linked to demographic variables is important, to control for spurious relationships between place choices and experiences. It can also provide valuable insight into the ways in which participants from different demographic groups benefit more (or less) from visiting places to get away.

The overarching aim of this research is to explore what most benefitted wellbeing when people tried to get away during the pandemic. The following questions guided the research:

1. What types of places did people choose to visit to get away during the pandemic?
2. How did place choices differ between demographic groups?
3. What types of activities did people engage in when visiting these places?
4. How did activity choices differ between demographic groups?
5. How are place choices and activity choices related?
6. Does recalled hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing during place visits depend on place type and activity choices?

## 7. Method

### 7.1. Sample and recruitment

A nationally representative sample was recruited using an online panel company (Prolific Academic). Participants were paid £8.50 per hour. The survey was completed by 850 participants in 2020, who were similar to the national average of that time in terms of gender, ethnicity, and income (see Table 1). However, compared to the UK average, the sample was slightly older, fewer participants had children, participants were more likely to have a degree, and live in rural areas.

**Table 1**  
Sample demographics.

	Sample	ONS* statistics 2020
Age	$M = 46, SD = 16$	Mean age = 40
Income**	Average £30-£40 K	Average income = £37,100
Gender	51 % women	51 % of the population
Children	28 % with children	45 % of families with dependent children
Work	68 % work or study	75 % employment rate
Degree	52 % have a degree	34 % of those 16 and over
Ethnicity	83 % white	85 % white in England and Wales
Living conditions	91 % own garden 26 % live rural	88 % have garden in Great Britain 17 % of population in England living in rural areas

Note. \*ONS (Office for National Statistics) data: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/>; \*\*Income:  $M = 4.04 (SD = 2.22)$  on 10-point scale: 1 = < 15 K, 4 = 30–40 K, 5 = 40–50 K, 10 > 150 K.

## 7.2. Measures

### 7.2.1. Need and ability to get away

The first section of the survey was used to prime participants to reflect on what it was like to get away during the pandemic for them. They were asked to think about the height of the pandemic (Spring 2020) and recall “How often do you remember feeling the need to get away from the following: the people you lived with, the strains and demands of everyday life, and the monotony and tediousness of everyday life (1 = (almost) never, 5 = (almost) always)”. They were also asked “How easy or difficult was it for you to get away from those things during lockdown?” (1 = very difficult, 5 = very easy).

### 7.2.2. Places to get away and activities once there

Two open-ended questions were used to assess people’s place choices and activities undertaken in those places. The questions were worded as follows: “Take a second to think of ONE place where you typically went during the Covid-19 lockdown to get away. You can think of any kind of space: small (a corner of a room), large (a woodland), it could be indoors or outdoors, and even virtual (a game)”, then “In a couple of words, please describe this place (for example, your bathtub, the local park, your armchair, your back garden, your spare room, a nature reserve)”. After that they were asked “What did you tend to do in this place when you were there? (For example, walking the dog, listening to music, sitting down and watching the birds, playing games etc.)”.

### 7.2.3. Recalled wellbeing in visited places

Hedonic experiences were measured with six items to cover a range of emotions as identified in the circumplex of affect (Russell, 1980). These items have been used previously to assess affective appraisals of environments (Russell & Lanius, 1984). Participants rated how often (1 = (almost) never, 5 = (almost) always) they felt relaxed, stressed, bored, excited, happy, and sad when they were in that place. One scale was created to capture positive hedonic place experiences by reverse coding negative emotions and calculating the mean across the six items ( $\alpha = 0.84$ ).

Although numerous measures of eudaimonic wellbeing exist (Cooke et al., 2016), no short place-specific measure was found. Thus, a short, five-item measure was created, based on Waterman’s PEAQ (Personally Expressive Activities Questionnaire) (Waterman & Schwartz, 2024). Questionnaire items from the PEAQ were modified so wording reflected recalled wellbeing during place visits. Each item reflected a different underlying concept of the PEAQ (e.g., feeling alive, a sense of meaning). For instance, participants were asked to indicate on a 5-point scale (1 = (almost) never, 5 = (almost) always) to what extent they agreed that “Being in this place gave me the greatest feeling of really being alive”,

“Being in this place gave me the strongest feeling of who I really am”, and “When I was there, I felt more complete or fulfilled than I did when I was somewhere else”. One scale was created to capture positive eudaimonic wellbeing in place ( $\alpha = 0.90$ ).

## 7.3. Procedure

The survey was administered through Qualtrics in October 2020 [available on Open Science Framework: <https://osf.io/y6uwf/>]. The survey consisted of two parts; the first part (the focus of this paper) included questions about getting away, and the second part (findings published elsewhere) focused on visiting natural spaces. It took, on average, 15 min to complete the whole survey ( $M = 15.03, SD = 8.44$ ). The recruitment material, survey introduction, and information sheets made no specific reference to natural environments. After reading the information sheet and providing informed consent, participants were asked to think about the height of the pandemic (Spring 2020) and recall how often they felt the need and ability to get away. They were then asked where they would normally go to get away, what they did there, and how they felt when they were there. The survey ended with demographic information questions. The study was self-assessed for ethical considerations in line with the University’s ethical review procedures (Reference: 640816–640807-65813897).

## 7.4. Analyses and results

Table 2 summarises the analyses. It outlines what data were used and created in each step to answer the different research questions. This section first explores participants’ reported need and ability to get away during the pandemic (prime check). It then describes the three-step approach that was used to help answer Research Questions 1 and 3

**Table 2**

Overview of different data and analytical techniques used to answer the research questions.

	Data	Analyses	Output	New variables
Research questions 1 and 3				
Step 1	Participant answers: Where did you go? What did you do there?	Basic content analysis in NVivo	32 places codes 38 activity codes	70: one for each code (0 = not mentioned) (1 = mentioned)
Step 2	Place and activity codes	Manual thematic analysis	4 place themes 11 activity themes	15: one for each theme (0 = not mentioned) (1 = mentioned)
Step 3	Place and activity type variables: 4 place types and 10 activity types (crying excluded)	Two-step cluster analysis in SPSS	4 place clusters 7 activity clusters	2: one for place clusters and one for activity clusters
Research questions 2 and 4				
	Place and activity cluster variables Demographic variables	$\chi^2$ test and ANOVA in SPSS	n/a	n/a
Research question 5				
	Place and activity cluster variables	$\chi^2$ test in SPSS	n/a	n/a
Research question 6				
	Place and activity cluster variables Reported hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing	MANCOVAs in SPSS	n/a	n/a

(identifying place and activity types) and to create new variables for further analyses. Finally, it describes the findings for Research Questions 1 and 2 (place choices and demographic differences), 3 and 4 (activity choices and demographic differences), 5 (relationships between place and activity choices), and 6 (wellbeing related to place and activity choices).

### 7.5. Perceived need and ability to get away (prime check)

Perceived need and ability to get away were rated moderate (just above the mid-point of the 5-point scale). Participants were less likely to express a need to get away from other people ( $M = 2.79$ ,  $SD = 1.55$ ), than from strains and demands ( $M = 2.94$ ,  $SD = 1.20$ ) and tediousness and monotony ( $M = 3.10$ ,  $SD = 1.22$ ;  $F(2,745) = 120.83$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.245$ ). They felt slightly more able to get away from strains and demands ( $M = 2.77$ ,  $SD = 1.13$ ) than from monotony ( $M = 2.60$ ,  $SD = 1.14$ ), or other people ( $M = 2.61$ ,  $SD = 1.19$ ;  $F(2,664) = 8.72$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.026$ ).

### 7.6. Analysing place and activity choices

Although participants were asked two separate questions to identify place choices and place activities (as outlined above), many participants referred to place features and activities in response to both questions. Therefore, the open responses were first combined into one data set for further analyses. The open text data were then analysed in three steps.

**Step 1.** The first step aimed to identify the variety of different places and activities mentioned by participants. The combined open responses dataset was analysed in NVivo 12, using basic content analysis with an inductive approach (Drisko & Maschi, 2016). Because of the large number of participants, the data were split between coders. Coder A reviewed responses from the first 468 participants and developed two working lists of codes, one relating to places and the other relating to activities. Data consisted of the presence (1) or absence (0) of a code in the responses of each participant. Participants could mention more than one activity or place in their response, and so codes were not mutually exclusive. Two other coders (B and C) then used these codes to analyse responses from the first 85 participants (10 % of responses). Findings were discussed with Coder A, who subsequently refined the coding lists. The inter-coder reliability was calculated (in SPSS 28) between each pair of coders, for each code in the 85 responses, using a series of Cohen's Kappa analyses (123 analyses). The resulting Kappa values ranged between 0.49 and 1.00 with 82.9 % of codes reaching almost perfect agreement, 15.4 % substantial agreement, and 1.6 % moderate agreement (Landis & Koch, 1977). Given the high level of agreement between coders, Coder B then analysed the remaining dataset using the refined coding lists. The final codes are discussed later in this results section and can be found in Tables 3 (place choices) and 5 (activities).

**Step 2.** In Step 2, the two sets of codes (one for places and one for activities) were further grouped at a thematic level. Four distinct place types were identified and eleven distinct activity types. These types (with the specific codes they are based on) can also be found in Tables 3 and 5 and are discussed below. Based on this analysis, four dichotomous place type variables and 11 dichotomous activity type variables were created and entered into SPSS (0 = *did not*, 1 = *did mention* the place/activity).

**Step 3.** Many participants mentioned multiple places or place types and multiple activities. As a result, it is not possible to use the variables created in Step 2 for the later analyses. For instance, wellbeing in place may differ between participants who do and do not mention walking. However, those who do not mention walking may mention a whole range of other activities instead, making it difficult to know what is being compared. Therefore, two segmentation analyses were performed using two-step cluster analyses which helped to segment the sample into distinct groups based on their place choices and their activity choices. The two sets of dichotomous variables described in Step 2 were used as

**Table 3**

The number and percentage of participants mentioning each being away place.

Place Themes (in bold) and Place Codes	N	%
<b>Outdoors away from home</b>	<b>426</b>	<b>50.0</b>
Public park - park, urban park, public gardens, university campus, recreational or playing field, pitches	147	17.3
Paths, footpaths, walking routes, cycle path or bike ride, lanes, bridleways, byways, horse gallops, bus lanes, trails, small roads	51	6.0
Fields, grassy areas, meadows, moors, moorland	41	4.8
Beach, coastline, seaside, harbour, marshes, quayside, headland	40	4.7
Countryside, country, country park, common, golf course	39	4.6
River, riverside, stream, canal	34	4.0
Settlement - village, town or city (incl. going around the block, neighbourhood, housing estate, street)	26	3.1
Nature reserve, nature park, National Park, nature path	19	2.2
Lake, loch, reservoir, pond, body of inland water	15	1.8
Hills or mountains	14	1.6
Outside, outdoors, nature (where nonspecific about place)	8	0.9
Farm, farmyard, stables	7	0.8
Greenspace	5	0.6
Graveyard or cemetery	3	0.4
<b>Outdoors at home</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>24.0</b>
Private garden - garden, back garden, back yard, vegetable garden, greenhouse, allotment, shed, summer house, hot tub, driveway	190	22.4
Porch, balcony, fire escape area, conservatory (zone between house and outdoors)	14	1.6
<b>Indoors at home</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>23</b>
Bedroom, bed, own room	83	9.8
Lounge, living room, sitting room, den, front room, sofa, armchair	28	3.3
Bath, bathtub, bathroom	21	2.5
Digital Environment - in a game, virtual world	20	2.4
Home office, study, computer room, music studio	18	2.1
Spare bedroom, spare room	7	0.8
Garage	5	0.6
Home, own house, flat	5	0.6
Sewing room, sewing zone, craft room	5	0.6
Kitchen	4	0.5
Home gym - exercise machines, running machine, turbo trainer	2	0.2
<b>Indoors away from home</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>2.0</b>
Work	4	0.5
Supermarket, shops	11	1.3
Place of worship	1	0.1
<b>Excluded*</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>1.5</b>
Driving - being in car/scooter, carpark, (going) driving around	11	1.3
Monument or landmark building (e.g. lighthouse)	2	0.2

Note. Themes (place types) and codes (specific places) are not mutually exclusive. Therefore, numbers do not add up to 100%. \* Some places were excluded as they could not be clearly classified as indoor or outdoor, near or far away from home.

input for these two analyses. Two-step cluster analysis was used, as it can handle dichotomous data (Tkaczynski, 2017). It first explores the optimum number of clusters in the dataset using a distance measure and then tests the validity of this solution using a probabilistic approach. The results of the cluster analyses are discussed below.

### 7.7. Place choices (RQ 1)

All participants mentioned at least one nearby place where they got away during the Covid-19 pandemic. Table 3 shows the wide variety of nearby places that participants identified. These included smaller (a bathtub), larger (mountains), indoor (garage), and outdoor (parks) places. The responses were grouped at thematic level into four place types (Step 2, described earlier): outdoor places *away from* home, outdoor places *at* home, indoor places *at* home, and indoor places *away from* home. A couple of answers were excluded from further analyses at this point, as they could not be grouped into any of the four themes. For instance, some participants referred to driving - which could be classified as indoor (inside the car) as well as outdoor (outside the house), others referred to visiting places where it was not clear whether they would be indoors or outdoors (e.g., monuments).

**Table 4**  
Place choices and demographic variables.

		Home outside	Home inside	Away outside	Away inside
		%	%	%	%
Ethnicity	$\chi^2 = 14.17, p = .003$	White <b>24</b>	<b>19</b>	47	10
		Other <b>17</b>	<b>33</b>	43	7
Rural	$\chi^2 = 19.12, p < .001$	Urban <b>20</b>	<b>24</b>	47	9
		Rural <b>31</b>	<b>14</b>	43	12
Degree	$\chi^2 = 17.50, p < .001$	Yes 23	<b>18</b>	<b>52</b>	7
		No 23	<b>25</b>	<b>40</b>	12
Employed	$\chi^2 = 17.89, p = .002$	Yes 21	20	<b>51</b>	9
		No 26	25	<b>38</b>	12
		<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>
Age	$F(3,846) = 16.50, p < .001$	52(14) <sub>a</sub>	42(16) <sub>b</sub>	45(15) <sub>c</sub>	49(15) <sub>a</sub>

Note. After applying Bonferroni correction  $p < .005$ , no significant differences were found between men and women ( $\chi^2 = 11.05, p = .01$ ), between those with or without children ( $\chi^2 = 0.59, p = .898$ ), and there was no difference between clusters in household size ( $F(3,846) = 2.51, p = .058$ ) or income ( $F(3,800) = 3.45, p = .016$ ). Bold percentages signify differences between demographic groups in the top half of the table. Means with different subscripts in the bottom part of the table were found to be significantly different in post hoc tests ( $p < .05$ ).

For all other responses, a clear distinction between indoor and outdoor places, and places at home versus those that were away from home could be made. Half of participants (50 %) mentioned an outdoor place away from home, such as parks. Outdoor places at home (gardens, patios, balconies) were mentioned by about a quarter of the participants. A similar number (24 %) mentioned indoor places at home, such as specific rooms. Not surprisingly, due to pandemic restrictions, few people (2 %) mentioned indoor places away from home.

Two-step cluster analysis segmented the sample based on participants' place choices (Step 3, described earlier). A 4-cluster solution was identified as optimum. Fit statistics (Schwartz's Bayesian criterion: BIC), showed a steady increase in model fit for each additional cluster (from 1 (minimum) to 4 (maximum with 4 variables)). The Silhouette measure of cohesion and separation was very good: 1.0 (-1.0 - 0.0 = poor, > 0.5 - 1.0 = good). However, the ratio of cluster sizes was poor (4.77, ideally it would be < 2.00). Although a 3-cluster solution had a better ratio (2.09) with a good Silhouette (0.9) it revealed less meaningfully distinct clusters (including multiple places within different segments) and so a 4-cluster solution was used to segment the sample based on their place choices.

The four clusters (or segments) largely reflected the four place themes. The largest cluster ( $N = 391$ ) included 92 % of those who had chosen an outdoor place away from home. Very few people in this cluster mentioned other place types. The second largest cluster ( $N = 193$ ) included 95 % of those who had chosen an outdoor place at home. A similarly sized cluster ( $N = 183$ ) included almost all (96 %) of the participants who had chosen an indoor place at home. The smallest cluster ( $N = 82$ ) grouped together participants with a range of different place choices. This cluster included all ( $N = 15$ ) participants who had chosen an indoor place away from home. However, it also included some participants who had mentioned each of the other three place types.

7.8. Place choices and demographics (RQ 2)

Table 4 shows how place choices were linked to demographic variables, showing for each place choice cluster or segment the percentage of people in different demographic groups (ethnicity, rural-urban level, education, and employment) and average age. A place at home outdoors

**Table 5**  
The number and percentage of participants mentioning each activity.

Activity Themes (in bold) and Activity Codes	N	%
<b>Nature engagement</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>36.8</b>
Pets – walking, watching, cuddling, playing with, caring for (dogs, cats, horses)	86	10.1
Gardening – caring for plants, watering, planting or collecting flowers, admiring, maintaining garden fencing or furniture, landscaping, doing things or being in garden e.g. BBQ, firepit	84	9.9
Nature, fauna – watching, feeding, acknowledging, talking to, animals, birds, insects	66	7.8
Nature, flora – looking at, observing, contemplating, engaging with, at one with, enjoying	59	6.9
Natural sounds - listening to birds, trees	30	3.5
Views or scenery – taking it in, appreciating it, observing	27	3.2
Weather – enjoying, experiencing, observing, being in (warm, hot, sunny), sunbathing	27	3.2
Being outside, getting or enjoying fresh air	23	2.7
Watching sunset, sky, stars, night sky	7	0.8
Exploring	3	0.4
Touch – feeling natural elements e.g., feet in mud	2	0.2
<b>Walking</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>31.4</b>
Walking - walking, strolling, stretching legs, pacing	267	31.4
<b>Cognitive</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>27.0</b>
Listening to music, podcasts, radio	119	14.0
Reading – books, digital books, newspapers	86	10.1
Art, crafts, sewing, drawing, painting, creative tasks, playing or recording music, DIY, maintenance of house, garden, car	33	3.9
Photography, taking photos, videography	19	2.2
<b>Relaxing</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>25.0</b>
Resting - resting, sitting down, relaxing, lounging around, chilling, unwinding, doing nothing, being quiet or at peace, lying down, napping, sleeping	149	17.5
Thinking, contemplating, reflecting, planning, meditating, mindfulness	40	4.7
Peace and quiet – enjoying, appreciating, being in calm, quiet, tranquillity, experiencing quiet in the environment	21	2.5
Taking time to self, alone time, hiding away, being alone	15	1.8
Escaping, switching off, immersing self in something else	9	1.1
Bathing	4	0.5
<b>Technology use</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>14.0</b>
Gaming – video gaming, console gaming, playing on computer, board games	63	7.4
Watching TV, films, movies, videos on any medium	48	5.6
Phone, computer, tablet – internet, social media, browsing, playing on phone	28	3.3
<b>Exercise</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>11.0</b>
Cycling or bike ride	30	3.5
Exercising, getting fit, playing sports, kicking a ball	32	3.8
Running or jogging	32	3.8
<b>Social activities</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>9.2</b>
Socialising, spending time, being with, seeing, waving to, talking to friends, family, children, spouses, others – either physically, virtually, or on phone	58	6.8
Children - playing, children's activities, watching, running around, building dens, climbing trees	13	1.5
People watching	7	0.8
Helping others, litter picking	3	0.4
<b>Drinking and smoking</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>6.0</b>
Drinking, eating, snacking – alcohol, tea, coffee, other beverages	40	4.7
Smoking or vaping	14	1.6
<b>Work and study</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>3.5</b>
Working, studying, writing	24	2.8
Housework – cooking, tidying	8	0.9
<b>Shopping</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1.3</b>
Shopping – buying groceries or essential items, retail therapy	11	1.3
<b>Exclude*</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0.2</b>
Crying	2	0.2

Note. \* Crying was excluded from further analyses as it could not be grouped clearly into one of the other categories and was the only example of a specific act of emotional expression.

appears to be chosen more often by those who identify as white, who live in rural areas, and those who are older. Places at home indoors are more likely to be chosen by those who identify as non-white, those who live in urban areas, and those who do not have a degree. The average age in this segment is also lowest. A place outside away from home is more often chosen by those with a degree, and those who are employed. Places away from home indoors appear less related to demographic variables; they are chosen least often overall.

### 7.9. Activity choices (RQ 3)

Table 5 shows the wide range of activities mentioned. It is notable that participants associated being away with such a wide range of activities. Walking was one of the most often mentioned activity (by 31 %). Activities such as listening to music (radio or podcasts) were mentioned by 14 %, and almost 18 % mentioned some form of relaxing. Most of the activity codes, however, captured only small numbers of people, highlighting the variety of distinct activities mentioned.

The reported activities were grouped at thematic level, into eleven distinct activity types: nature engagement, walking, cognitively stimulating activities (arts, crafts, reading), relaxing, technology use, exercising, socialising, drinking (and smoking), work (and study), shopping, and crying (Table 5). Crying was subsequently excluded as it could not be grouped clearly into one of the other ten categories and was the only example of a specific act of emotional expression.

Walking was mentioned by nearly a third of participants. Similarly, nearly a third mentioned an activity which involved intentional engagement with natural (non-human and not built or synthetic) entities, including engaging with pets, gardening, listening to birds, and watching sunsets. Just under a third of the participants mentioned cognitively stimulating activities. This involves activities which require attention or concentration to engage with (but not physical activity) such as arts and crafts or reading. A quarter of the participants mentioned activities associated with relaxation (resting, seeking peace and quiet). This was often mentioned alongside other activities, such as going for a relaxing walk. Almost 20 % mentioned social activities (helping others, socialising). Clearly, despite the Covid-19 restrictions, social interaction was still feasible and valuable for many people. Fourteen percent of the participants mentioned using technology when trying to gain a sense of “being away”. This includes computer use, watching TV, and gaming. The theme exercise includes physical activities such as running, cycling, exercising, and playing sports, and was mentioned by 89 participants (11 %). A small number of people (6 %) mentioned drinking or smoking; this was almost always mentioned alongside other activities such as walking or relaxing. Finally, a small number of participants (3.5 %) mentioned work or study and just over 1 % mentioned shopping.

Based on the two-step cluster analysis, the sample was segmented into seven distinct groups based on activity choices. Fit statistics (BIC) showed a steady increase in model fit with each additional cluster. However, a plot of BIC change showed a clear dip at 7 clusters suggesting an optimum solution was found and improvements in model fit declined after 7 clusters. The average Silhouette measure of cluster cohesion and separation was fair (0.40) and the ratio measure of cluster sizes was satisfactory (2.06).

The seven segments captured people with different types of activity patterns. The largest segment ( $N = 179$ ) included people who indicated they engaged with *cognitive activities*. Participants in this segment all mentioned cognitively stimulating activities (this was 77 % of all those who mentioned it), often in combination with walking (mentioned by  $N = 47$ ), relaxing ( $N = 49$ ), or nature engagement ( $N = 44$ ). The second largest segment ( $N = 157$ ) captured people who tended to mention *relaxing outdoor walks*. All participants in this segment mentioned walking, with some mentioning it in combination with relaxation ( $N = 31$ ) or nature engagement ( $N = 50$ ). The third largest cluster ( $N = 123$ ) captured people who only mentioned *nature engagement*. People in this

cluster did not mention any other activities. The fourth ( $N = 112$ ) segment captured those who engaged in different types of *social activities*. It included most people (90 %) who mentioned *social activities* and all of those who mentioned drinking and smoking. Participants in this segment also often mentioned a range of other activities alongside these two including walking ( $N = 39$ ), relaxing ( $N = 28$ ), nature engagement ( $N = 44$ ), or cognitive stimulation ( $N = 34$ ). The fifth cluster ( $N = 104$ ) was labelled *indoor activities* and included all of those who mentioned work or study and many of those ( $N = 67$ ) who mentioned technology use. The sixth segment ( $N = 88$ ) captured people who mentioned *other relaxing activities*. All participants in this segment mentioned relaxing. The most distinctive feature of this cluster was the mention of relaxing in combination with technology use ( $N = 20$ ), although some also mentioned nature engagement ( $N = 32$ ). The smallest segment ( $N = 87$ ) included all those who mentioned *exercise*; some of these participants also mentioned walking ( $N = 24$ ).

### 7.10. Activity choices and demographics (RQ 4)

Activity choices were related to demographic variables (Table 6). Engagement with cognitive activities was more likely among those identifying as female than male. Walking was more common among middle-aged people (compared to younger people) and those in employment. Engaging with nature was more common among those in full- or part-time employment. Engaging with social activities was more common among older participants and those living in households with fewer people (living alone). Engaging with indoor activities (generally involving use of technology) was more common among men, those with no degree or employment, and younger participants. Physical activity was slightly more common among men.

### 7.11. Relationships between place and activity (RQ 5)

A Chi-Square test was conducted to test the relationship between places and activities (Table 7), using the two segmentation variables. As expected, activities mentioned differed with places visited ( $\chi^2 = 469.36$  (18),  $p < .001$ ). Table 7 shows for each activity type the percentage of participants undertaking that activity, in each of the four places (>20 % shown in bold). Some activities were less place dependent than others. For instance, those who engaged with cognitive activities (e.g., arts and crafts) did so in different places, except indoor places away from home. In contrast, socialising was more common outdoors. Similarly, nature engagement was most likely undertaken outdoors (at home or away), as were relaxing walks and exercise. Other forms of relaxing were reported at home, indoors as well as outdoors. Finally, indoor activities (working and technology use) were almost exclusively undertaken indoors at home.

### 7.12. Place choices, activities, and wellbeing in place (RQ 6)

Finally, the research examines whether recalled hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing during place visits varied depending on the type of place visited, and type of activity in those places. Overall, wellbeing in the places visited was positive ( $M_{hedonic} = 3.90$ ,  $SD = 0.67$ ;  $M_{eudaimonic} = 3.37$ ,  $SD = 0.86$ ; both on scales from 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always). Hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing were significantly correlated ( $r = 0.45$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $N = 850$ ).

First, it was examined whether recalled hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing differed between types of places (see Figs. 1 and 2). A multiple analysis of covariance (MANCOVA), controlling for demographic variables, found that wellbeing outcomes did differ depending on type of place ( $V = 0.054$ ;  $F(6,1590) = 7.39$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = 0.027$ ; significant covariates were age,  $p < .001$ , and income,  $p = .001$ ). Post hoc tests revealed visiting outdoor places away from home was associated with significantly more recalled positive hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing than visiting places indoors at home ( $p < .001$ ) or indoors away from

**Table 6**  
Activity choices and demographic variables.

			Cognitive	Walk	Nature	Social	Indoor	Relax	Physical
Gender	$\chi^2 = 38.29$ , $p < .001$	M	<b>20</b>	19	13	<b>10</b>	<b>15</b>	8	<b>15</b>
		F	<b>30</b>	18	16	<b>16</b>	<b>9</b>	12	<b>6</b>
Degree	$\chi^2 = 18.55$ , $p = .005$	Y	23	20	14	15	<b>9</b>	8	11
		N	19	17	15	12	<b>16</b>	13	9
Employ	$\chi^2 = 21.72$ , $p = .001$	Y	23	<b>23</b>	<b>12</b>	13	<b>10</b>	10	11
		N	18	<b>14</b>	<b>18</b>	13	<b>16</b>	11	9
			<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>
			( <i>SD</i> )	( <i>SD</i> )	( <i>SD</i> )	( <i>SD</i> )	( <i>SD</i> )	( <i>SD</i> )	( <i>SD</i> )
Age	$F(6,843) = 9.20$ , $p < .001$		44 (16)	48 <sub>b</sub> (15)	43 (15)	53 <sub>b</sub> (14)	41 <sub>a</sub> (17)	44 (14)	48 (20)
Nr people	$F(6,843) = 3.50$ , $p = .002$		1.91 (1.34)	1.76 (1.38)	2.11 (1.48)	1.59 <sub>a</sub> (1.09)	1.79 (1.22)	2.10 (1.35)	2.30 <sub>b</sub> (1.68)

Note. M = Male, F = Female, Y = Yes, N = No, Nr = Number. After applying Bonferroni correction  $p < .005$ , no significant differences were found between those who do or do not report having children ( $\chi^2 = 14.12$ ,  $p = .028$ ), between those living in rural or urban areas ( $\chi^2 = 10.12$ ,  $p = .120$ ), or between those who identified as white or not ( $\chi^2 = 14.74$ ,  $p = .022$ ). There was no difference between clusters in income ( $F(6,797) = 2.41$ ,  $p = .026$ ). Bold percentages signify differences in the top half of the table. Means with different subscripts in the bottom part of the table were found to be significantly different in post hoc tests ( $p < .05$ ).

**Table 7**  
Activities in different places.

Place	Activity type							Total
	Cognitive	Walks	Nature	Social	Indoor	Relaxing	Exercise	
Home outdoor	<b>51</b> 28 %	1 1 %	<b>58</b> 47 %	<b>39</b> 35 %	11 11 %	<b>24</b> 27 %	9 10 %	193 100.0 %
Away indoor	16 9 %	17 11 %	4 6 %	10 9 %	16 15 %	8 9 %	11 13 %	82 100.0 %
Home indoor	<b>54</b> 30 %	0 0 %	0 0 %	14 13 %	<b>73</b> 70 %	<b>42</b> 48 %	1 0.01 %	184 100.0 %
Away outdoor	<b>58</b> 32 %	<b>139</b> 89 %	<b>60</b> 49 %	<b>49</b> 43 %	4 0.04 %	15 17 %	<b>66</b> 76 %	391 100.0 %
Total	179 21 %	157 19 %	123 15 %	112 13 %	104 12 %	88 10 %	87 10 %	850 100.0 %

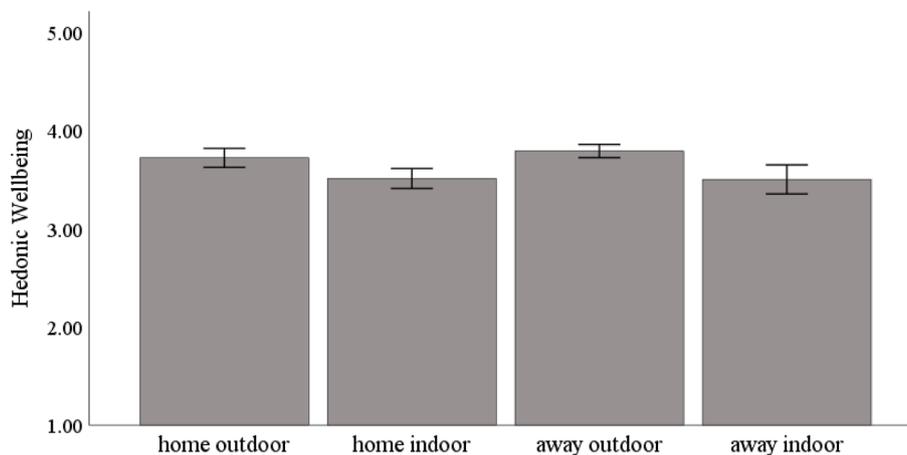


Fig. 1. Means (and 95% confidence intervals) for hedonic wellbeing in places to get away.

home ( $p_{hedonic} = 0.003$ ,  $p_{eudaimonic} < 0.001$ ). Places at home outdoors were also linked to more positive hedonic wellbeing than places at home indoors ( $p = .022$ ) and to more positive eudaimonic wellbeing than places indoors either at home ( $p = .007$ ) or away from home ( $p = .001$ ). There was no significant difference in recalled hedonic or eudaimonic wellbeing between place visits outdoors at home or away from home ( $p = 1.00$ ).

Recalled wellbeing was also significantly associated with activity choices ( $V = 0.063$ ;  $F(12,1584) = 4.28$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = 0.031$ ; significant covariates were income,  $p = .003$ , age,  $p < .001$ , gender  $p < .001$ ). Figs. 3

and 4 show exercise and nature engagement were linked to the most positive wellbeing, while relaxing activities (linked to technology use) and indoor activities were linked to lower wellbeing. Post hoc tests revealed exercise elicited greater hedonic wellbeing than cognitive activities ( $p = .004$ ), socialising ( $p = .001$ ), relaxing walks ( $p = .023$ ), indoor activities and other relaxing activities (all  $p < .001$ ). Nature engagement elicited significantly more hedonic wellbeing than socialising ( $p = .013$ ), or indoor activities, or other relaxing activities (linked to technology use) (all  $p < .001$ ). Relaxing appeared less beneficial for hedonic wellbeing than cognitive activities, exercise, nature engagement, walking

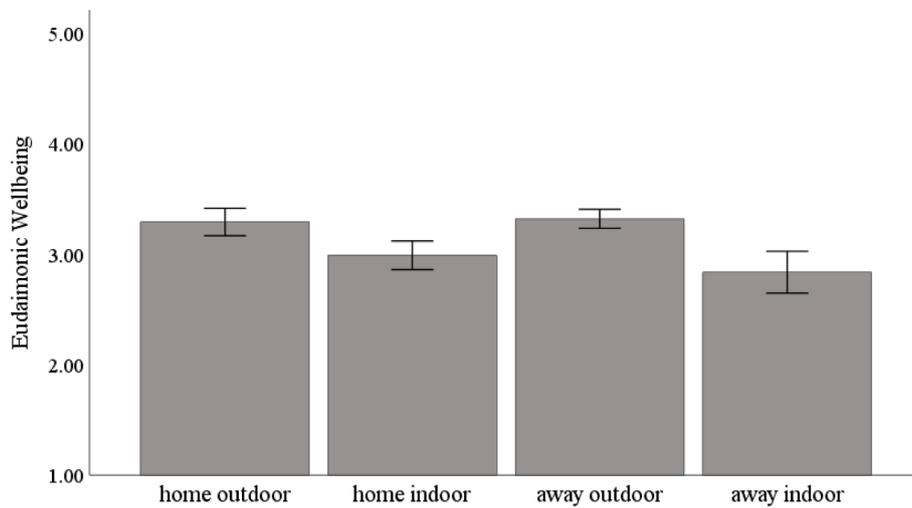


Fig. 2. Means (and 95% confidence intervals) for eudaimonic wellbeing in places to get away.

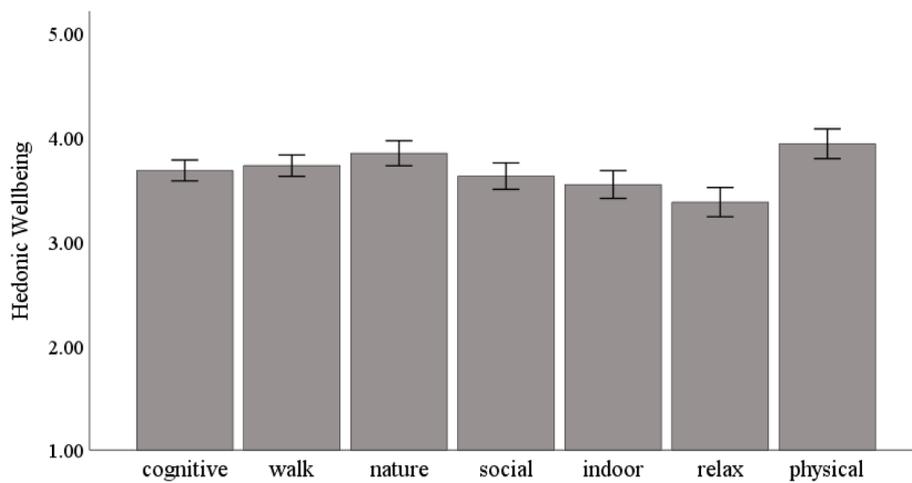


Fig. 3. Means (and 95% confidence intervals) for hedonic wellbeing while engaging in seven activities in places to get away.

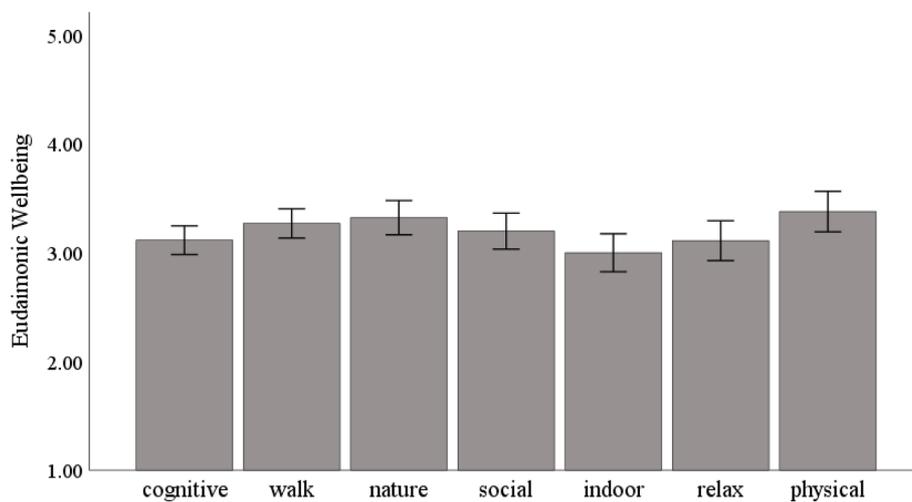


Fig. 4. Means (and 95% confidence intervals) for eudaimonic wellbeing while engaging in seven activities in places to get away.

(all  $p < .001$ ), or socialising ( $p = .009$ ). Indoor activities (working and technology use) were also significantly less beneficial than walking ( $p = .015$ ). Results were similar, but less pronounced, for eudaimonic

wellbeing. Nature engagement was most beneficial and significantly more so than cognitive activities ( $p = .044$ ) or indoor activities ( $p = .006$ ). Exercise was more beneficial than cognitive activities ( $p = .019$ ),

indoor activities ( $p = .002$ ), and relaxing ( $p = .035$ ). Indoor activities were also significantly less beneficial than walking ( $p = .008$ ).

Overall, it appears spending time outdoors on activities involving nature engagement and exercise were associated with the most positive wellbeing. Spending time indoors on activities that involve technology use (work, study, gaming, watching TV) appear to be least beneficial for wellbeing.

## 8. Discussion

Gaining a sense of being away from everyday stressors and demands is important for wellbeing (Korpela et al., 2001; von Lindern, 2017). During the 2020 Covid-19 lockdowns, people's ability to visit places outside their home was severely restricted, providing a unique opportunity to examine the types of nearby places people visited to get away during the pandemic, what they did there, and how they experienced those visits. Using an online survey with 850 UK participants this paper sought to address six research questions. What types of places (RQ1) did people visit during the pandemic to get away and what did they do there (RQ3)? Did place (RQ2) and activity choices (RQ4) differ between demographic groups (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity, urban living)? To what extent were place and activity choices related (RQ 5)? And does recalled hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing during those place visits depend on place type and activity choices (RQ6)?

Participants identified a wide range of places to get away (RQ1). These places were grouped into four types: outdoor places at home, such as the garden or balcony, indoor places at home, such as the bedroom or bathtub, outdoor places away from home, such as parks, the countryside, or beaches, and indoor places away from home, such as shops or workplaces. Participants were more likely to mention outdoor than indoor places. Most of those included references to natural aspects. This is in line with existing research pointing to the importance of outdoor places to get away (Hammit, 2000) and of visiting nearby nature during Covid-19 (Bijker & Sijtsma, 2017; Dzhambov et al., 2021; Hubbard et al., 2021; Poortinga et al., 2021; Tomasso et al., 2021).

Participants also mentioned a wide range of activities they undertook in the places they visited (RQ3). Some were physically active (walking, exercise), others more cognitively stimulating (reading, listening to music or podcasts, arts activities), and others were less specific (relaxing). Walking outdoors was mentioned most often, in line with other studies that found an increase in walks in nearby natural spaces for wellbeing during the pandemic (Poortinga et al., 2021). The findings point to a rich variety of different activities that participants engaged with. However, the sample could be clustered into seven segments with distinct activity patterns. The largest segment mentioned engagement in a range of *cognitively stimulating activities*, such as listening to music or engaging in arts and crafts, often in combination with walking, relaxing, or nature engagement. The second largest group mentioned *relaxing outdoor walks*. A similar number mentioned *nature engagement* (bird watching, gardening). Fewer participants mentioned *social activities*, *indoor activities* (often involving technology use), *relaxing* or *exercising*.

Overall, it appears that the sample can be segmented along activity. However, some activities were associated with a range of other activities. For instance, it appears that for some people, relaxing is linked to walking, while for others it is linked to cognitively stimulating activities or to technology use. Similarly, for some people, walking is linked to exercise whereas for others it is linked to relaxing or socialising.

Places choices and activity choices were related, although some activities were less place dependent than others (RQ5). For instance, participants engaged with cognitively stimulating activities in different places. However, relaxing walks were only undertaken outdoors away from home. Moreover, in line with pandemic restrictions, socialising was more common outdoors (at home or away from home). Nature engagement was most common outdoors (at home and away from home) and technology use was most common indoors at home.

All place visits were associated with positive wellbeing (RQ6).

However, not everyone engaged in what appeared to be the most beneficial experiences. For instance, just under a quarter of the participants chose an indoor place and an activity involving technology use such as watching television. Such activities were less beneficial for both hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing. Moreover, physical exercise was linked to greater positive wellbeing, but few participants mentioned exercise. Literature has highlighted a reduction in exercise and physical activity during the pandemic (Stockwell et al., 2021). Perhaps this is partly related to a reduced access to places, infrastructure, and people that support it.

Recalled hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing were most positive in outdoor (often natural) places (at home and away from home), in line with other research that has demonstrated the importance of nature engagement for wellbeing during the pandemic (Astell-Burt & Feng, 2021; Poortinga et al., 2021). Significant differences in recalled wellbeing, depending on activities, were also found. A large proportion of the participants referred to activities that involved some sort of active nature engagement (gardening, listening to the birds). Several authors have referred to the importance of more immersive engagement with nature to maximise the wellbeing benefits from being in nature (Macaulay et al., 2022; PANS, 2021; Pretty, 2004; Wyles et al., 2017). Macaulay et al. (2022) suggested wellbeing benefits of mindful engagement with nature may be particularly relevant when there are constraints on restorative experiences. Their study participants intentionally attended to the external environments to gain distance from work or stressful thoughts to gain more psychological distance. It seems many of the participants in the present study did the same. They found nearby places to get away and immersive engagement with nature (animals, plants, weather) in those places supported positive wellbeing experiences.

Places and activities may have contributed to wellbeing by satisfying a range of different hedonic and eudaimonic needs. Visiting outdoor natural spaces may have supported hedonic wellbeing through restoration of negative affect and mental fatigue (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989; Ulrich et al., 1991) as well as through satisfaction of aesthetic needs (e.g., beautiful natural scenery). Previous research has found a strong link between restorative qualities and perceived beauty of natural environments (van den Berg et al., 2003). Visits to these places also appear to have supported the satisfaction of social needs. Social activities, in our sample, were primarily undertaken outdoors. During the pandemic lockdowns, places designed for social interaction (cafés, restaurants) were closed. Participants found other ways to satisfy these needs. The changed meaning and use of natural spaces was also highlighted by King and Dickinson (King & Dickinson, 2023), who demonstrated that visits to urban green spaces during the pandemic provided people with a sense of purpose and supported social needs.

The largest activity cluster in our sample contained cognitively stimulating activities (reading, listening to music, arts and crafts). Such activities can help satisfy aesthetic needs as well as growth needs, through engagement with challenging activities (Sirgy et al., 2017). Arts and craft activities may have supported the experience of flow when an optimum balance between skills and challenges was found (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014; Csikszentmihalyi & LeFevre, 1989). Moreover, reading and listening to music or podcasts may have provided participants with an opportunity to escape into fictional worlds. We did not study these different needs in detail, and further research may want to test these hypotheses.

The findings suggest that both place and activity choices may have contributed to need satisfaction and wellbeing, and the two can be strongly interlinked. Theories and research that examine how place characteristics impact wellbeing during place visits, such as the Attention Restoration Theory (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989), tend to focus more on hedonic wellbeing (affective restoration) and attention restoration. These theories may not help explain eudaimonic wellbeing benefits (Capaldi et al., 2015). Moreover, participants in our research reported needing recovery from stress and mental fatigue, as well as boredom. Leisure theories (Sirgy et al., 2017) explore hedonic as well as

eudaimonic wellbeing. However, they focus primarily on leisure activities rather than place characteristics (Sirgy et al., 2017). Combining different perspectives and examining how place characteristics and activities impact wellbeing is important. A combination of different perspectives can provide greater insight into how place visits benefit hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing.

Overall, this research suggests being somewhere different, as well as doing something different, may be beneficial for wellbeing (Hammit, 2000; Staats et al., 2010). The findings highlight the need for further theory development that examines place-activity interactions and how they impact hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing during visits to places to get away. This requires combining insights from theories that focus on place characteristics, such as Attention Restoration Theory (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989), and theories that focus on leisure activities (Sirgy et al., 2017). Three types of place-activity relationships may be relevant: activities and places that are (almost) entirely interdependent (playing football on a football pitch), activities and places that are (almost) entirely independent (listening to music), and activities and places that interact, where one may enhance wellbeing resulting from the other (mindful engagement with nature). The role of place features and accessible place types will vary between those, as will associated wellbeing benefits of place visits.

Demographic analyses (RQ2 and 4) suggested that older people, those who identified as white, those who worked, had a degree, and lived in rural areas were more likely to visit places associated with the most beneficial outcomes (outdoor places away from home). It appears that participants with less access to nearby natural spaces visited those spaces less, in line with existing literature (Colley et al., 2022; Lenaerts et al., 2021). Previous literature has also found gender differences in positive effects of nature visits (Bhatti, 2006; Parry et al., 2005; Saleem & Kambh, 2013). No significant gender differences were found in this research. It is not clear why this is the case. It may be because there was less variety between men and women in the types of natural places that were visited, due to reduced access and good weather. Further research will need to examine this.

Activities least likely to be associated with positive wellbeing (indoor at home, involving use of technology) were more common among men, those with no degree or employment, and younger participants, which complements previous work (Michaelson et al., 2020; Richardson et al., 2018). Engaging with social activities was more common among older participants and those living in households with fewer people (living alone). These findings suggest that place and activity choices are linked to accessibility to different spaces such as nearby natural spaces. However, they also point to the influence of motivational factors, as some of these differences (e.g., gender) cannot be explained by differences in accessibility alone.

## 9. Limitations and further research

The results presented here form part of a longer survey. Being mindful of survey length resulted in constraints to the number of questions that could be included to measure key constructs. For instance, the novel measure of eudaimonic wellbeing in place was useful, short, and found to be statistically reliable in our analysis, but further research needs to validate its psychometric properties. Moreover, the scale was developed based on a survey measuring recalled wellbeing during activities (Waterman, 2005). Further research may want to include the two versions of the scale, for activities and places, to help further understand how each contributes to psychological wellbeing.

All place visits were associated with positive wellbeing. However, participants recalled slightly more positive hedonic than eudaimonic wellbeing, when reflecting on their place visits. It is possible that participants found it easier to relate to the hedonic wellbeing questions than to the eudaimonic wellbeing questions. Future research will need to examine this.

Due to the timing of the research (Autumn 2020), people were asked

to reflect on their experiences during the height of the first Covid-19 lockdown in Spring 2020, meaning participants were not in strict lockdown at the time of the survey. Therefore, our findings are likely affected by a range of factors that influence memory and recalled experiences, including changes in the weather, ongoing restrictions, personal circumstances, and individual differences. Further research may want to examine in-the-moment wellbeing, during place visits and in other circumstances, for instance, through field research or experience sampling.

The majority of participants referred to an outdoor place to get away, in line with other research (Poortinga et al., 2021). It should be noted the weather was pleasant in the UK during the first lockdown that this study focused on (dry and relatively warm), which would have made it much more attractive for people to spend time outdoors. In addition, due to travel restrictions, there was significantly less traffic on roads making it potentially easier and more pleasant for people to find and visit nearby outdoor spaces. The Covid-19 pandemic created a unique situation where people's motivations, abilities, and opportunities to visit different spaces and engage in different activities changed significantly. Further research will need to examine whether the findings hold under other circumstances (e.g., comparing different lockdowns). Although the principle of place-activity interdependencies may hold, the conditions will also have altered some of these. For instance, social activities were not possible during the pandemic in places where they would normally be allowed. Participants used other places (outdoor natural spaces), to satisfy social needs. Once bars, pubs, and restaurants opened again, outdoor natural spaces may have fulfilled different functions.

Our data was collected in the UK. Similar lockdowns were introduced in other countries across the world. The findings of this research may be similar for other countries, but this needs further investigation. Many countries across the world found increased benefits from nature engagement during the pandemic (Lu et al., 2021; Poortinga et al., 2021; Soga et al., 2021) suggesting similar experiences. However, place and activity choices may also be related in different ways across countries and cultures, due to suitability and accessibility of different places for engagement in different activities.

## 10. Implications for policy and practice

Despite the unique situation that was being investigated, the findings may provide some valuable practical insights for policy and practice. The findings show that nearby places to get away can support satisfaction of important hedonic and eudaimonic needs. Investment in local places that enable everyone to find such places is important. Such investment could support wellbeing for all, including those less able or willing to travel distances. It would also help support wellbeing in the event of any future pandemic lockdown restrictions. Providing people with easy access to outdoor spaces at home (gardens, balconies) and away from (but near) the home (local parks, street trees) could be particularly beneficial.

The findings highlight that supporting the wellbeing of everyone requires understanding why people visit certain places and what might be preventing people from visiting the places that may be most beneficial for their wellbeing. Although most participants visited the most beneficial places, this was not the case for everyone. Alongside investing in local spaces it is essential to take account of what is preventing people from visiting places of most benefit and whether anything can be done to encourage them to visit those places.

The findings also suggest that providing access to such places is not necessarily enough without consideration of what people do when they get there. Providing a range of places to support different activities is key, but encouraging specific activities in those places may also be important. For instance, more active, immersive engagement with natural spaces, and physical activity in such spaces, will enhance the beneficial effects of exposure to natural environments. Providing suitable place-based interventions to promote wellbeing may require

several steps: 1) examining existing place-activity interactions, 2) examining what hedonic and eudaimonic needs can be supported by those place-activity interactions, 3) assessing hedonic and eudaimonic needs of the target population, and 4) providing access to, and encouraging engagement with, different place-activity packages that address those needs.

This study has demonstrated people can find nearby places to get away that support their wellbeing. During the height of the pandemic most people could not travel (far). They had to find nearby spaces to get away and were successful in doing so. This is a particularly important insight for supporting the wellbeing of those who cannot easily travel far. It is also important in the context of environmental impact, as a potential reduction in leisure travel can benefit environmental quality. Architecture, planning, and land management should aim to design, build, and manage local environments for people that enable easy access to a wide range of different spaces where people can get away and engage in the activities that benefit their wellbeing. Easy access to such spaces can help create vibrant local communities that are visited and used by a wide range of residents.

## 11. Conclusion

Supporting people to manage their wellbeing is a significant challenge, especially during times of significant strain such as the Covid-19 pandemic. Environmental psychology literature has pointed to the importance of people's use of different places to support their wellbeing (Korpela & Hartig, 1996) and leisure research has focused on the benefits of engaging with leisure activities (Sirgy et al., 2017). This research supports previous insights that highlight the ways in which people supported their wellbeing by visiting natural spaces to get away during Covid-19. However, it also highlights the rich variety of other places visited and the importance of activities undertaken in the places they visited. By combining theoretical perspectives of environmental psychology literature and leisure literature, a better perspective can be gained on when and how visits to places to get away may benefit wellbeing by supporting hedonic and eudaimonic need satisfaction.

## CRedit authorship contribution statement

**B. Gatersleben:** Conceptualization, Funding acquisition, Data curation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing, Visualization, Investigation, Validation, Formal analysis, Methodology, Supervision, Resources, Project administration. **E. White:** Conceptualization, Data curation, Writing – review & editing, Formal analysis, Methodology, Project administration. **K.J. Wyles:** Conceptualization, Funding acquisition, Writing – review & editing, Validation, Supervision. **S.E. Golding:** Conceptualization, Data curation, Writing – review & editing, Methodology, Project administration. **G. Murrell:** Data curation, Writing – review & editing, Formal analysis, Methodology. **C. Scarles:** Conceptualization, Funding acquisition, Writing – review & editing, Supervision. **T. Xu:** Writing – review & editing, Investigation, Supervision. **B.F.T. Brockett:** Conceptualization, Funding acquisition, Writing – review & editing, Supervision. **C. Willis:** Conceptualization, Funding acquisition, Writing – review & editing, Supervision.

## Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

## Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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