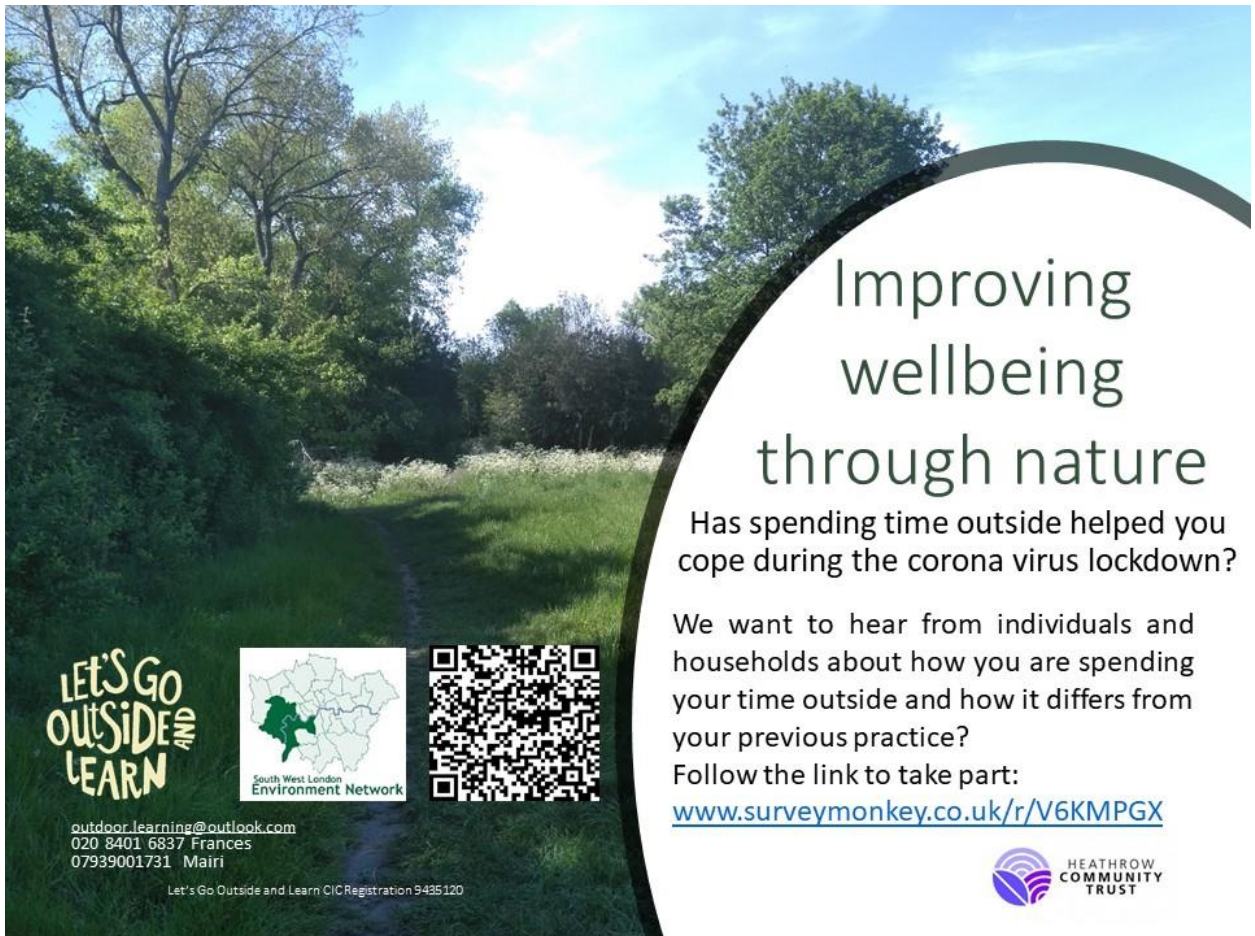




Improving wellbeing through nature

This survey took place at a time of unprecedented events when people were required to limit the time that they spent outdoors in order to protect their health.

LET'S GO
OUTSIDE AND
LEARN



Improving
wellbeing
through nature


Has spending time outside helped you cope during the corona virus lockdown?

We want to hear from individuals and households about how you are spending your time outside and how it differs from your previous practice?

Follow the link to take part:
www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/V6KMPGX


LET'S GO OUTSIDE AND LEARN

South West London Environment Network



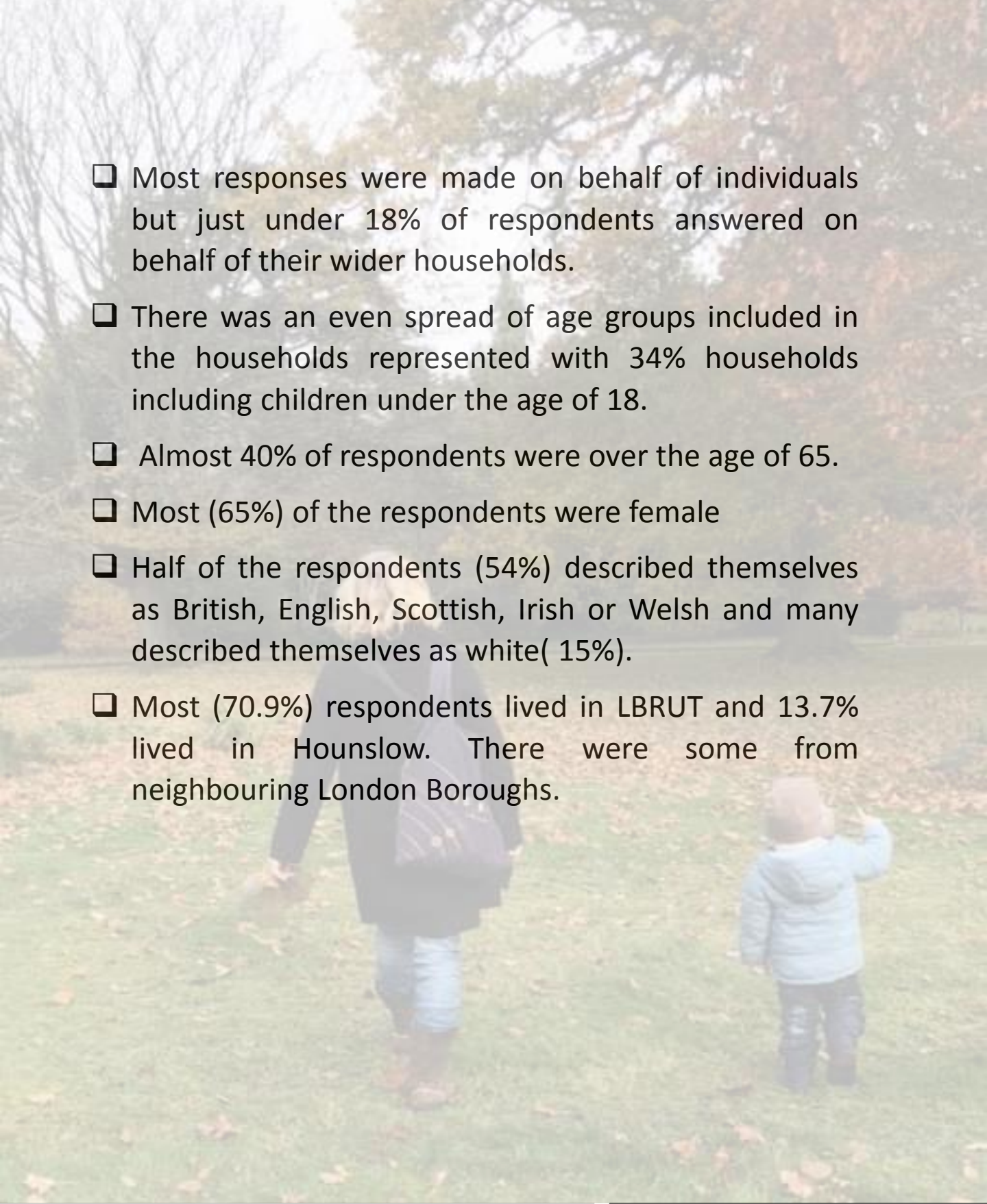
outdoor.learning@outlook.com
020 8401 6837 Frances
07939001731 Mairi

Let's Go Outside and Learn CIC Registration 9485120



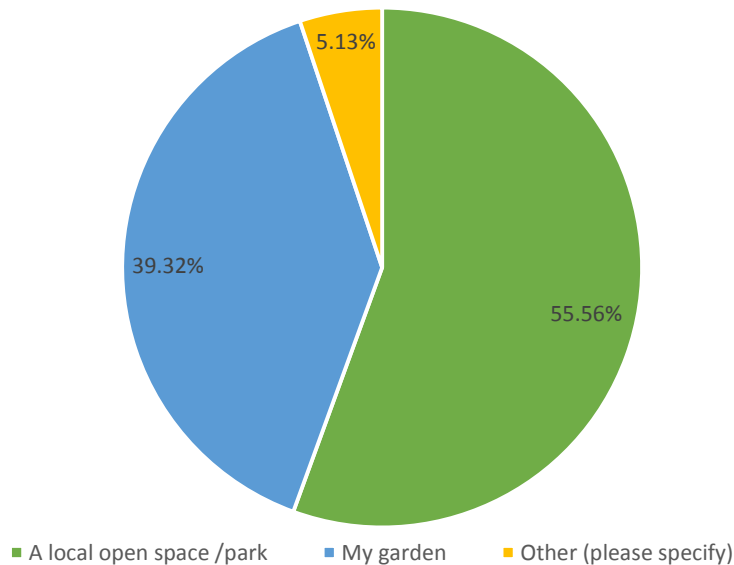
- The data was gathered between May 20th 2020 and 1st July 2020 at a time when the government advice was to stay at home as much as possible, work from home if you can, limit contact with other people, keep your distance from people not in your household (2 metres apart).
- Data was collected via an online survey. Working in partnership with the South West Environment Network the survey was promoted via social media throughout the period that it was open.
- There was a total of 117 responses over a period of 6 weeks just as government and local restrictions were easing.

The survey

- 
- A woman in a dark coat and a child in a light blue jacket are walking away from the camera on a grassy path. The background is filled with trees showing autumn foliage in shades of orange, red, and brown. The scene is slightly out of focus, creating a soft, natural atmosphere.
- ❑ Most responses were made on behalf of individuals but just under 18% of respondents answered on behalf of their wider households.
 - ❑ There was an even spread of age groups included in the households represented with 34% households including children under the age of 18.
 - ❑ Almost 40% of respondents were over the age of 65.
 - ❑ Most (65%) of the respondents were female
 - ❑ Half of the respondents (54%) described themselves as British, English, Scottish, Irish or Welsh and many described themselves as white(15%).
 - ❑ Most (70.9%) respondents lived in LBRUT and 13.7% lived in Hounslow. There were some from neighbouring London Boroughs.

Who took part?

Where did you spend most of your outdoor / nature / exercise time?
Please tick the box where you spent most of your time.



- Before** the corona virus crisis most (88.03%) respondents spent their leisure time outdoors at least once a week
- During** the corona virus emergency 51.28% of people spent time outside every day, and almost a third of respondents (30.77%) spent time outside several times a week.
- More than $\frac{1}{4}$ (25.49%) respondents spent more time outside every day than they had previously.
- 7.69% of people never spent their leisure time outside and, 0.84% i.e. one person had visited once.
- Nearly 10% (8.84%) of respondents do not have a garden or shared outdoor space.
- Over half of respondents (55.56%) visited parks.

We asked whether local respondents felt that green spaces **were safe to visit** and socially distance.

- Most respondents (85.47%) either agreed or strongly agreed that it was possible to socially distance while in a park.
- 11.11% disagreed with this statement.

We wanted to understand whether green spaces were **easy to get to by walking**.

- Most people (94%) responding to the survey felt that their green spaces were within easy walking distance

We wanted to understand whether having access to green spaces was **important**

- Most people (91.45%) strongly agreed that having open green spaces close to where they live was important to them at the time of the corona virus.
- A total of 97.43% of respondents told us that spending time in nature was important, (as opposed to spending time outdoors).

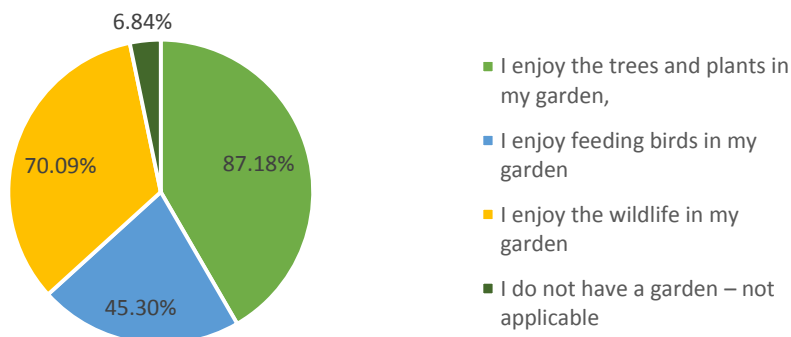
We explored how respondents spent their time outdoors during the weeks of the 2020 lockdown.

- ☐ More than 50% of respondents had spent time in the garden, watching wildlife, gardening. Watching nature programmes on TV, and looking at natural scenery from indoors were popular options.

We asked what respondents enjoyed in their gardens.

- ☐ 87% said that they had enjoyed the plants and trees,
- ☐ 70% said that they enjoyed the wildlife that they found there.

Thinking about your garden over recent weeks during the corona virus edidemic which of the following statements, if any, do you agree with?



- ❑ Most people said that their wellbeing was good or very good (90.59%)
- ❑ 8.54% told us that it was bad or very bad (0.85%).

Several of the comments indicate increased anxiety as a result of the corona virus.

- *Anxious*
- *Better before covid19*
- *Mood up and down a bit of a covid rollercoaster*
- *I was highly anxious at the start of lockdown but am now feeling more relaxed*
- *Some days are a lot harder than others.*

Other respondents commented on the positive impact to their wellbeing of spending time in nature:

- *Mental health in lockdown saved by local walks in greenspace - by river and in parks*
- *Lack of structure to my day and poor sleep patterns. Nature is where I recover and rebalance.*
- *Most days are OK, some days I can be low, these are the days when going for a walk in the local nature reserve has made all the difference. I'm also fortunate that I have also been able to work.*
- *Anxiety has been very heightened during lockdown – the park & my garden have been integral in managing this.*

We asked how satisfied people were with their lives.

- Most respondents told us that they were satisfied or very satisfied (67.52%) with their lives
- 35.42% were not satisfied
- 6% not at all satisfied.

The **comments suggested a number of themes:**

Frustration

- *Completely bored as not able to travel, visit galleries and museums and not able to celebrate birthdays etc with the family.*
- *I wish we had a private garden or green space on our doorstep. The road outside has got busier again and put up a mental barrier for me to making the journey out to the park or allotment.*
- *I'm locked down and can't do any of my normal activities or see family and friends*

Looking for positive:


- *Like most I'm finding lockdown hard, but am aware how privilege I am, particularly because of my access to green space. So those things balance each other out.*

Hoping for better times:

- *I feel one must just get along with what there is, look for the small pleasures, but would like to live the life I had before virus.*

All respondents commented on links between wellbeing and nature.

- ❑ Some (3%) of respondents felt other activities which benefited their wellbeing more. The example given was craft activities.
- ❑ Some respondents (6%) made general comments to show that spending time in nature had a **positive impact** on their wellbeing.
- ❑ Other respondents (3%) commented on how nature had **inspired** them
- ❑ Some (4%) found it important as a **social space** or a place to meet friends
- ❑ For others (9%) being outside was a place that they could use **for exercise**
- ❑ Some(8%) of indicated that the pandemic had given them an opportunity to spend **more time in nature** observing it.
- ❑ The **impact of the pandemic on nature** was mentioned by 8% of respondents. .
- ❑ Having an opportunity to **get outside** was a positive benefit to their wellbeing by 13% of respondents
- ❑ The **positive impact on mood** of spending time outside was mentioned by 17% of respondents
- ❑ Nearly a quarter (23%) of respondents commented on how being **close to nature** helped their well-being:

A person wearing a blue jacket and a dark hat is walking in a park. They are holding a white bag in their right hand and a small plant in their left hand. The background shows trees and a grassy area.

The study highlights the barriers to engaging with the natural environment during the period of lockdown:

- Poor physical health/illness
- People with limited mobility
- Poor mental health
- People living alone
- People with no access to provide gardens or shared outdoor spaces
- People with limited access to local green spaces due to distance
- Worry about contracting or spreading coronavirus while visiting green and natural spaces;
- Concerns about over-crowding and not being able to keep a safe distance from others;
- Lack of facilities such as public toilets, or benches.

These barriers have implications for the future provision of access to natural spaces for people at risk of isolation.

There were three significant themes that came out of this small survey:

Inequalities

While the survey showed that many people benefited from access to green spaces, and were able to use green spaces to support their health and wellbeing, The study has highlighted the barriers and inequalities to the benefits to be gained from accessing green space.

There is a need which needs to be addressed to ensure that everyone in the local community to benefit.

The need for well-maintained accessible nature-rich green space

The response of all respondents has highlighted the need for well-maintained accessible nature-rich green space near to peoples' homes and the importance of them to an urban population.

Creating meaning and purpose

The survey showed how parks and green spaces can be used improve the health, wellbeing, and general resilience of local people. The strongest impression from the comments of respondents was that at a time of isolation from the outside world, and at a time of chaos and uncertainty they used access to nature to create meaning and purpose in their lives in order to cope better with negative feelings.