



LIVE WELL WORK WELL

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Americans Are Happier in States That Spend More on Libraries, Parks, and Highways

Americans are happier in states where governments spend more on public goods, among them libraries, parks, highways, natural resources, and police protection, a Baylor University study has found. “Public goods are things you can’t exclude people from using -- and one person using them doesn’t stop another from doing so,” said researcher Patrick Flavin, Ph.D., associate professor of political science in Baylor’s College of Arts & Sciences. “They’re typically not profitable to produce in the private market, so if the government doesn’t provide them, they will either be under-provided or not at all.”

Public goods spending makes communities “more livable, with more amenities,” Flavin said. “If roads are completed and kept up, so that people aren’t stuck in traffic, they have more time to do things they enjoy doing. Large parks are social spaces -- and one clear finding of happiness studies is that people who are more socially connected tend to be happier.”

Another benefit of spending money on public goods is that such amenities generally boost home values, and “while higher property taxes generally accompany higher home values, it seems that the good outweighs the unfortunate part about having to pay higher taxes,” Flavin said.

“We can look at the city where people live, their neighborhoods, and see how public goods spending predicts happiness after taking other important factors, such as marital status, health, education and income, into account,” Flavin said.

He also found that public goods spending has broad benefits across income, education, gender, and race/ethnicity lines.

“Compared to a lot of the other government spending, public goods tend to be less controversial between liberals and conservatives, Democrats and Republicans, compared to poverty assistance or unemployment benefits, where there is definite disagreement between political parties,” Flavin said. “I think there is less political conflict over public goods spending simply because if the government doesn’t provide them, they won’t be provided at all.”

Flavin cautioned that there is not necessarily a cause-and-effect relationship between public goods and happiness.

“It could be that happier citizens self-select by moving to states that spend comparatively more on public goods,” he said. “It also is possible that happier citizens support higher spending on public goods and elect state officials to deliver on that policy.”

Because some spending for public goods comes from local government, Flavin hopes to do a study linking citizens to their local city instead of only to the state. And because living a happy and satisfying life is a nearly universal human goal, he predicts that a better understanding of how policies concretely impact quality of life will receive increasing attention from researchers in the years to come.

Baylor University. “Americans are happier in states that spend more on libraries, parks and highways: Such ‘public goods’ also are less likely to spark political conflict.” ScienceDaily. www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/01/190107075713.htm (accessed June 18, 2019).

Two Hours a Week is Key Dose of Nature for Health and Wellbeing

Spending at least two hours a week in nature may be a crucial threshold for promoting health and wellbeing, according to a new large-scale study.

Research led by the University of Exeter, published in Scientific Reports and funded by NIHR, found that people who spend at least 120 minutes in nature a week are significantly more likely to report good health and higher psychological wellbeing than those who don't visit nature at all during an average week.

University of Exeter. "Two hours a week is key dose of nature for health and wellbeing." ScienceDaily. www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/06/190613095227.htm (accessed June 18, 2019).



The study found that it didn't matter whether the 120 minutes was achieved in a single visit or over several shorter visits. It also found the 120 minute threshold applied to both men and women, to older and younger adults, across different occupational and ethnic groups, among those living in both rich and poor areas, and even among people with long-term illnesses or disabilities.

Dr. Mat White, of the University of Exeter Medical School, who led the study, said: "It's well known that getting outdoors in nature can be good for people's health and wellbeing but until now we've not been able to say how much is enough. The majority of nature visits in this research took place within just two miles of home so even visiting local urban greenspaces seems to be a good thing. Two hours a week is hopefully a realistic target for many people, especially given that it can be spread over an entire week to get the benefit."

Food Neophobia May Increase the Risk of Lifestyle Diseases

Food neophobia, or fear of new foods, may lead to poorer dietary quality, increase the risk factors associated with chronic diseases, and thus increase the risk of developing lifestyle diseases, including cardiovascular diseases and type 2 diabetes. These are some of the findings of a study conducted by the Finnish National Institute for Health and Welfare, the University of Helsinki, and the University of Tartu in Estonia.

Food neophobia is an eating behavior trait in which a person refuses to taste and eat food items or foods they are not familiar with. It has been observed to be a strongly hereditary trait: twin studies have found that up to 78% of it may be hereditary. The trait can be easily measured using the FNS questionnaire (Food Neophobia Scale), which contains ten questions charting the respondent's eating behavior.

The study found that food neophobia is linked to poorer dietary quality. Additionally, a significant association was found between food neophobia and an adverse fatty acid profile and increased level of inflammatory markers in blood. Subsequently, food neophobia also increases the risk of developing cardiovascular diseases or type 2 diabetes.

"The findings reinforce the idea that a versatile and healthy diet plays a key role, and even has an independent role, in health. If we can intervene in deviant eating [behaviors], such as food neophobia, already in childhood or youth[, this] will help to prevent potential future health problems early on," says Research Professor Markus Perola from the National Institute for Health and Welfare.

"Hereditary factors and our genotype only determine our predisposition to food neophobia. Early childhood education and care and lifestyle guidance in adulthood can provide support in the development of a diverse diet."



National Institute for Health and Welfare. "Food neophobia may increase the risk of lifestyle diseases." ScienceDaily. www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/06/190618104826.htm (accessed June 19, 2019).

Sunscreen Use Could Lead to Better Blood Vessel Health

A new study suggests that sunscreen protects the skin's blood vessel function from harmful ultraviolet radiation (UVR) exposure by protecting dilation of the blood vessels. Perspiration on the skin may also provide protection to the skin's blood vessels from sun damage.

UVR has been found to reduce nitric oxide-associated dilation of skin blood vessels (vasodilation) by reducing the amount of nitric oxide available in the skin. Nitric oxide is a compound essential for blood vessel health.



American Physiological Society. "Sunscreen use could lead to better blood vessel health: New study finds chemical sun protection preserves nitric oxide levels to maintain vascular health." ScienceDaily. www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/04/190407144224.htm

Researchers from Pennsylvania State University studied the effect of UVR exposure with sunscreen or sweat on nitric oxide's ability to promote vasodilation, or the nitric oxide-associated dilation of skin blood vessels. Healthy young adults with light-to-medium skin tone were exposed to UVR on one arm while the other arm served as a control and did not receive UVR treatment. Three sites on the UVR-exposed arm of each participant were randomly assigned one of three treatments:

- UVR only
- UVR with a chemical sunscreen on the skin and
- UVR with simulated sweat on the skin

The UVR-only site was found to have less nitric oxide-associated vasodilation than in the control arm. However, the sunscreen- and sweat-treated sites did not show these reductions in nitric oxide-associated vasodilation.

"For those who spend a lot of time working, exercising or participating in other various activities outdoors, using sunscreen may protect not only against skin cancer, but also against reductions in skin vascular function," wrote S. Tony Wolf, MA, first author of the study.

July Recipe Cucumber Blueberry Salad

Vinaigrette:

- 1 ½ Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
- 2 Tbsp. white balsamic vinegar
- 1 Tbsp. lime juice
- 1 tsp. sugar
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ⅛ tsp. pepper

Salad:

- 1 cup fresh blueberries
- 1 medium cucumber (chopped)
- 4 cups fresh arugula
- ¼ medium red onion (thinly sliced)
- ¼ cup crumbled reduced-fat feta cheese
- 2 Tbsp. walnuts (coarsely chopped)
- 4 slices whole-grain bread



In a small bowl, whisk together vinaigrette ingredients. In a separate large bowl, mix together all salad ingredients, except bread. When ready to serve, add vinaigrette to salad and toss. Toast bread and cut into four pieces, serve on the side with salad.

Yield: 4 servings. Each serving provides: Calories- 212, Carbs- 24g, Protein- 7g, Fat-10g, Dietary Fiber 4g, Saturated Fat 3g, Sodium 368mg, Total Sugars 10g

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