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A bit happier outdoors

On average, people are a bit happier outdoors than indoors. Heathland and unbuilt coast areas in particular put people in a good mood.

These are the results of the HappyHier project. HappyHier is the app that environmental psychologist Sjerp de Vries and his colleagues launched four years ago. The app links how happy users feel (on a scale of 0 to 10) to where they are at that moment. Over 4000 people took part in the experiment. That resulted in more than 83,000 usable happiness scores. A quarter of those happiness measurements

took place in nature. The first conclusion is that we are happier outdoors than

indoors. But the differences in the scores are small. On average, the participants gave a score 0.3 points higher for outdoors compared to inside. The second conclusion is that it matters what the outdoor

setting is. Farmland does not boost our mood as much as forest, which increases the score by 0.6 points. But we are happiest on the coast, even when indoors with beach and dunes nearby.

Chicken and egg

But there is still the chicken and egg question. Do we go outdoors because we are feeling happy, or is it being outdoors itself that makes us happy? 'We correct for factors such as activity (work, leisure), the people you are with and the weather,' says De Vries. 'But you can never fully resolve that issue in this kind of research.' De Vries says the importance of the study lies primarily in the differences they found in happiness between the different types of environment. ^{RK}

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the coast**