

How a Lack of Green in the Residential Environment Lowers the Life Satisfaction of City Dwellers and Increases Their Willingness to Relocate [1]

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The paper investigates whether various forms of green spaces in the residential environment are associated with city dwellers' life satisfaction and their willingness to relocate. Previous research has focused mostly on the health benefits of nature, rather than on nature as a source of well-being [2]. Comprehensive literature reviews provide evidence for the claim that people living in greener environments have better mental health and report fewer physical symptoms than those deprived of access to nature [3-5]. Overall, there is evidence for direct effects of green spaces on city dweller's well-being, but we know little about how much green is needed for beneficial influences and whether green spaces affect the decision to relocate.

The data used for the analysis come from the first wave of a primary survey carried out in two large German cities, Cologne and Hamburg, each with more than 1 million inhabitants. The field period was from September 2020 to February 2021 and yielded a total sample of 1,909 respondents. Selection criteria were that respondents were at least 18 years old and had lived for at least 12 months at their current residence, so that everyday routines were well established. We address the research question with a two-equation model that estimates respondents' considerations to relocate while accounting for life satisfaction. With this strategy, we are able to test which aspects of residential greenery (window view, green environment, green yard, own garden, balcony) are associated with one or both outcomes, controlling for life-course events and demographic characteristics.

This article contributes to answering the research question from two sides. It analyses whether city dwellers' perceptions of a lack of green spaces in their living environment is associated with decreased life satisfaction, and whether such a lack triggers residential relocation. The results show that not having green elements in the window view, not having a green yard, and – exclusively for parents – not having a garden increase the likelihood of considering residential relocation. Not having a balcony and not having a garden are directly associated with decreased life satisfaction, and decreased life satisfaction triggers the willingness to relocate.

References

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