

Maximising well-being post COVID-19

Approach for applying the Nature's Futures Framework to Te Papa's Ta Au | The Current

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Much has changed in New Zealand since the New Zealand Government imposed a nation-wide lockdown in response to the COVID-19 pandemic on 26 March 2020. Analysis of responses to Te Papa's Te Au | The Current, undertaken by social researchers from Manaaki Whenua – Landcare Research provides insights into how people navigated their COVID-19 response and what that means for their, and New Zealand's, continued well-being.

Nature helps us get through lockdown

Analysis of responses to Te Papa's [Te Au | The Current](#), a platform that poses questions to help solve New Zealand's toughest nature challenges, indicates that many young people (24 years old and under) see themselves and wider society as part of and dependent on nature, rather than separate from it. It is useful to understand how young people articulate their relationship with nature, given the connected ecological and social challenges they are facing and will inherit.

In 2020 the question below was posed on Te Au | The Current – 'Nature helps us get through lockdowns – workplaces should give back one day a month for nature'. Participants were invited to select one of five options and to complete an open text box.



Social researchers from Manaaki Whenua – Landcare Research analysed 1,558 meaningful responses to the open text box from young people (24 years old and under). They used a [Nature Futures Framework](#) from research by the [Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services \(IPBES\)](#) to analyse how people express their relationship with nature in relation to the question. The framework provides three broad categories for how people express their relationships with nature (see Fig. 1).

While all three perspectives are important, some may be prioritised over others at certain times and places. People might also find themselves in intermediate positions of the preference space where all

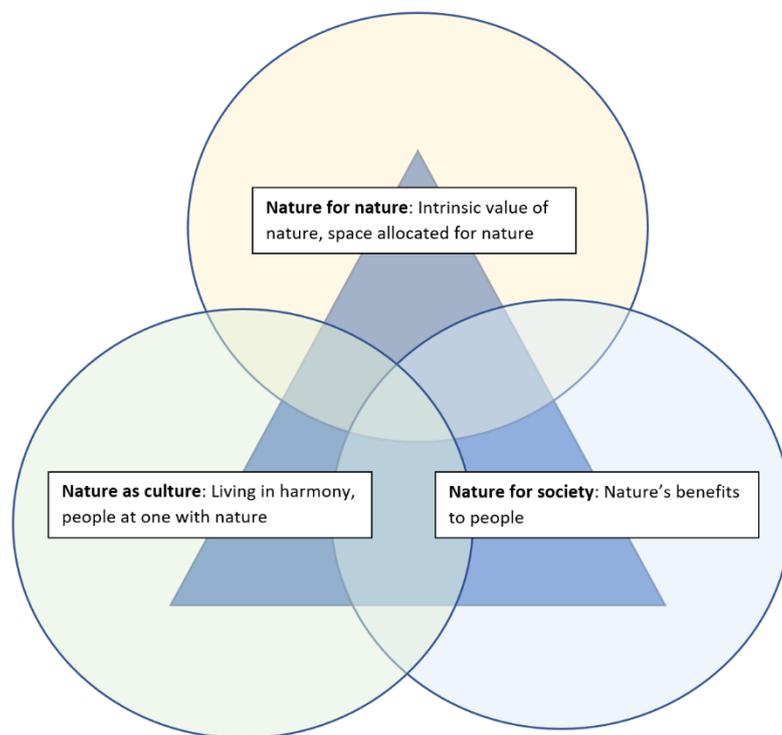


Figure 1: Nature Futures Framework

perspectives coexist. Table 1 illustrates the key themes that emerged through young people’s responses to the Te Au | The Current question, using the Nature Futures Framework.

Table 1: Key themes

Nature Futures Framework	Count ¹	Examples
Nature as culture	850	Positive: Great idea/cool/rad, giving back to nature, educational benefits, love for nature, being outdoors, caring for nature/planet, connecting with nature, a good investment, links to Papatūānuku, good chance for nature to recover, post COVID we need to look after nature. Negative: Don’t care, nature is dumb, stupid, gross, scary. Who will pay? Workplaces shouldn’t have to cover the cost. Life is pointless, and the planet is doomed.
Nature for society	361	Helps with mental health and well-being, future generations, economy depends on nature, religious beliefs, nature is calming, good, beautiful, gives people fresh air and life.
Nature for nature	116	Intrinsic importance of nature, trees, birds, environment, nature is inherently beautiful and precious.
Other	53	

¹ Number of young people’s responses that reflected this theme.

The social researchers then used the themes to collate a range of responses that were formatted like poems. Some worked well as poems and others remain as prose. The number(s) at the end of these poems is the code that corresponds to a participant's response. For example, [Refs: C658, C663, C678, C690] means that four participants' responses were used to create the poem.

Nature as culture

Positive responses for 'Nature as culture' focus on caring for the environment and Papatūānuku so that future generations will have "a brighter, a cleaner future". Participants expressed a strong connection between being a New Zealander and our environment.

*We take
our beautiful country for granted.
It's time
as New Zealanders to give back
to our land and ocean.
It needs
to be looked [after] and cared for
for many generations
to come.*

[Ref: C435]

Participants also recognised that if we give back to nature, nature will sustain and nurture us, and some felt that one day a month is not much to give. Suggestions for giving back to nature include planting more trees instead of cutting them down, consuming less, showing respect for nature, learning about our environment – "the different birds and old stuff". By taking time out in nature we can also recharge ourselves and improve our well-being or hauora.

...being stuck in four walls sucks the life out of me. [Refs:C644]

Nature calms my soul. [Ref:C656]

It would be a really great idea to get the community involved. WE ALL NEED TO DO OUR PART! [Ref:C40]

*Give back and connect
with nature, and support the
mana and mauri
of our Whenua,
and our individual,
collective hauora.*

[Ref: C79]

*Give back to nature
what nature gave to us, plant
more trees and care more.
Give back to nature
Though some may not listen to you.
The world needs us.*

[Refs: C34, C75, C87]

However, some negative responses in the 'Nature for culture' category thought a day off a month to spend time in nature was not realistic in the current economic climate. Participants asked who would pay for this day off and suggested that a day off would add a further burden to already struggling businesses because of the Covid 19 pandemic. Others just did not care about nature.

I don't think most people will even bother to go outside on those days [Ref: C32]

I think you should drive bulldozers over nature [Ref: C28]

*Who will pay for this?
Small businesses need support
to be able to
offer this during
hard times. Business owners need
mental health support.
Adds financial stress.
Who will pay employee wages?
Unemployed can do it.*

[Refs: C453, C454]

*I do not care!!!!!!! Cos,
I am not doing it. I
am happy to go
to the mall. I just
don't care!
I just don't care!*

[Refs: C658, C663, C678, C690]

Nature for society

Some participants thought that if people could spend one day a month in nature, they would be more productive at work and in the long run, employers (and the environment) would benefit. There is a sense that the Covid-19 pandemic and associated lockdown gave our society a chance to “slow down” and appreciate the world around us – “to take a breath”. Participants felt that the opportunity to spend more time in nature would benefit our mental and spiritual health:

Great idea. People need time to chill out and relax around nature. Regardless of the diversity of our personalities we all need time and space away from our consumer driven society...
[Ref: S90].

Being in nature is calming and also energising at the same time. it helps to clear the mind and de stress. [Ref: S135].

By normalising nature as part of ordinary life we instil protection feeling in people. We are the kaitiaki of Aotearoa and can still learn to act as such. [Ref: S351].

It is important to encourage everyone to look after nature. We work hard to teach children the importance of nature but stop talking about it once we enter the workplace. [Ref: S320].

*What's not to love? Great
for mental health, great for
te taiao, great for
Teamwork.*

[Ref: S173]

*Nature makes people
calmer and happier so
then there will be less
mental health issues.
People will appreciate nature more
and try and save it more.*

[Ref: S144]

Nature for nature

Some participants expressed concern about the environment and species becoming extinct – “the birds are disappearing rapidly. I hope birds cannot get Covid” [Ref N79]. There was a call for urgent action to protect and restore the environment for future generations and to help the native plants and species flourish:

So important to look after nature as when you see how many species have become extinct our generation needs to take urgent action. [Ref N37].

Beach cleans remove plastic from re-entering the ocean food web. [Ref N27].

*Nature is nature.
NATURE IS EVERYTHING.
Nature is cool and
nature rocks. Nature
is about survival. If
not for nature, no
animal would live.
Nature is important – is
fun. I love nature.*

[Refs: N513, N523, N693, N605, N706, N730,
N845]

*Our ecosystems,
natural environment –
unique, wonderful!
I hope we preserve
them. We are nature.
Aotearoa nature
is so beautiful.*

[Refs: N1169, N1368, N1321]

The responses and poems reflect the range of ways young people express their relationships with nature, and concerns about how society and the economy operate. While nature provides instrumental values to participants, they also connected to and value the intrinsic and relational benefits that nature provides for their health and well-being.

Methodology:

There were 9,478 responses to the open text box question. We focused on young people (24 years old and younger) as we were specifically interested in how younger people are articulating their understanding of, and relationship with nature, given the ecological and social challenges they are facing and will inherit. There were 2,468 responses by young people to the open text box question. These were screened and 1,558 responses were considered meaningful enough to analyse. Those responses not considered meaningful were either offensive/insulting, or incoherent (e.g. a collection of letters that did not spell anything). The 1,558 responses were grouped into one of the three broad Nature Futures categories. A small number of responses did not fit these categories ($n=53$). Once analysis was completed, individual responses were then selected and formatted into poems that reflected the key themes of the responses for each Nature Futures category.