

ACADEMIC WEEKLY DIGEST

YOUR WEEKLY DIGEST OF KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS



BEYOND WALKIES: EXPLORING THE VITAL ROLE OF THE UK'S SHARED OUTDOOR LEISURE SPACES FOR DOGS AND THEIR COMPANIONS

Shared outdoor leisure spaces (SOLS) such as parks, recreation grounds, woodlands, public footpaths, and beaches provide mental, physical, and social well-being benefits for multiple users including many dogs and dog guardians.

This study explores the importance of SOLS for people and their dogs, which was highlighted during the UK's first COVID-19 restrictions. This research was conducted by PhD Researcher [Lori Hoy](#), [Dr Brigitte Stangl](#), and [Prof Nigel Morgan](#)



LEISURE WITH DOGS IN THE UK: THE IMPORTANCE OF SHARED OUTDOOR LEISURE SPACES HIGHLIGHTED BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Lori Hoy, Dr Brigitte Stangl & Prof Nigel Morgan

Visiting shared outdoor leisure spaces (SOLS) represents one form of leisure in which humans and dogs can participate, and for many people who live with dogs in the UK, it is an integral part of their daily life. SOLS such as parks, recreation grounds, woodlands, public footpaths, and beaches provide mental, physical, and social well-being benefits for many people and their dogs.

This study explores the importance of SOLS for dog guardians, which was highlighted during the UK's first COVID-19 restrictions. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with dog guardians (n = 34). Thematic analysis was used to analyse the transcripts.

Five themes were generated: one related to the impact of COVID-19 restrictions; two related to the motivators to visit, namely human intrinsic motivation and dog well-being benefits; and two related to the importance of SOLS as valuable community amenities and as places that provide opportunities for social interaction.

The most surprising result of this research is that all participants, no matter where they lived, mentioned how lucky they felt to have access to their local SOLS with their dogs. Overall, results found that these spaces are very important to the daily lives of dog guardians and highly valued leisure spaces. The study's findings provide insights for stakeholders engaged in designing, managing, preserving, and promoting these spaces.

Having a variety of attractive local SOLS influences how people with dogs perceive their area, creates opportunities to socialise, and affects their level of participation and commitment toward leisure with their dogs.

Hoy, L. S., Stangl, B., & Morgan, N. (2024). Leisure with dogs in the UK: the importance of shared outdoor leisure spaces highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic. *Leisure/Loisir*
Link: bit.ly/3URtDXe