

Seedbed intervention

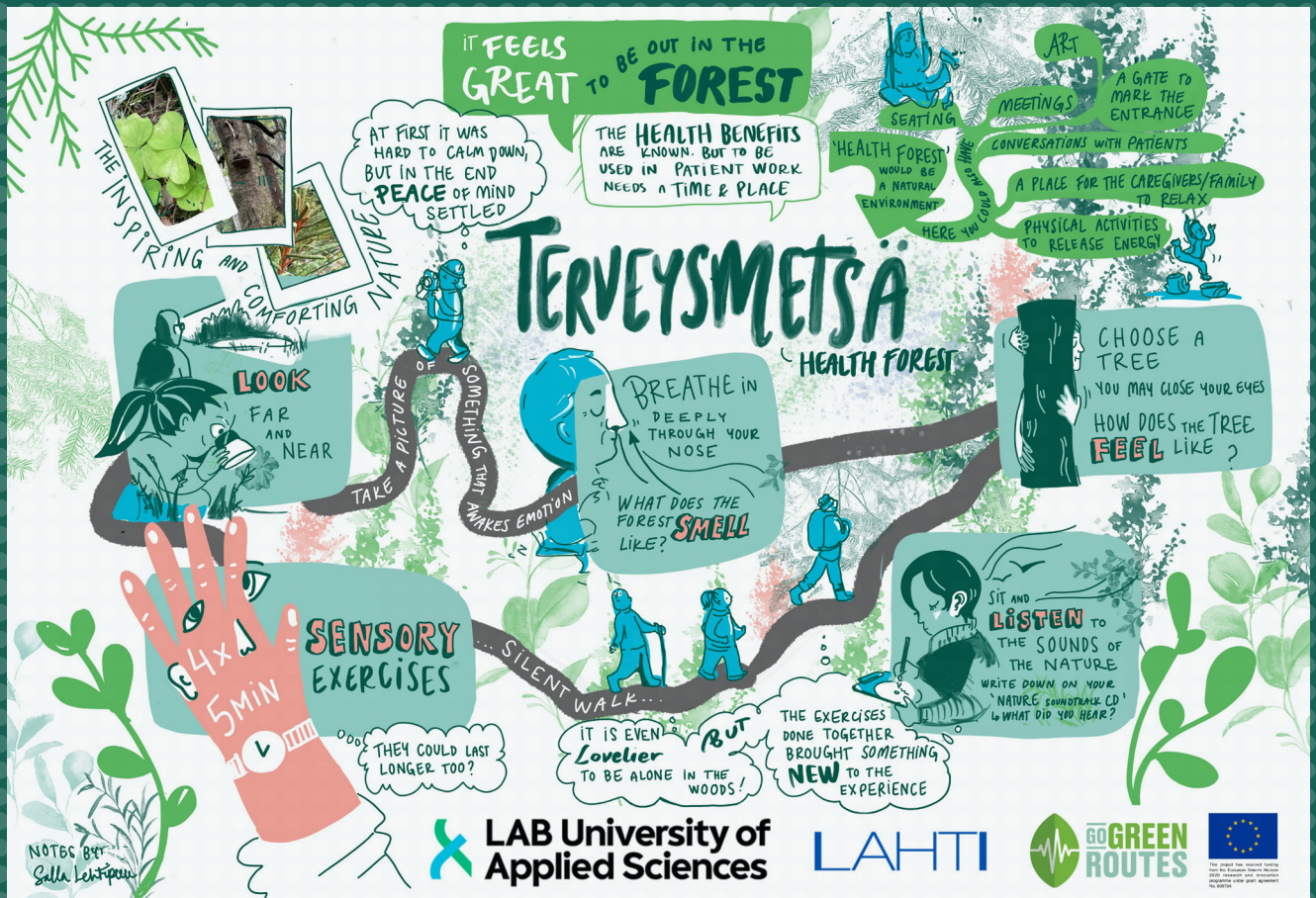


Fig. 73 Illustration based on canvas input by the participants/ picture credit: Salla Lehtipuu

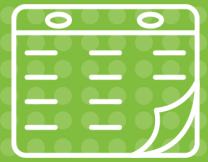


Lahti



Fig. 74 Drawing outside/ photo credit: Juha Tanhua

Lahti



5th to 8th of September 2022
2 pm – 5 pm
Kintterö



20 staff members from the local hospital participated in guided sensory walks



20 people filled out the survey



Fig. 75 Taking a breath in the health forest/
photo credit: Juha Tanhua

The City of Lahti's seedbed intervention took place at the Lahti health forest (pilot area). There are discussions on connecting the pilot area with the nearby Likolampi route to increase the positive impacts on health and wellbeing. The nature reserve of Kintterö is located on the western side of the city of Lahti right next to the Päijät-Häme Central Hospital. Therefore, easy accessibility for the hospital staff and patients is important. This area is going to be transformed with NBS interventions in 2023.

Staff members of the Joint Authority of Health and Wellbeing (PHHYKY) volunteered for the Seedbed intervention in the Lahti health forest. The intervention consisted of guided sensory walks over the period where each day five staff members participated. Before, as well as after the intervention, the volunteers were asked to answer a short survey about their feelings and experiences in the health forest. At the end of the Seedbed intervention a group interview was conducted with the volunteers which was recorded. The canvas and photovoice methods were also implemented during and at the end of the walks. The volunteers were also provided with information about the project GoGreenRoutes along with a goodie bag to take home.



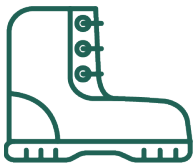
Fig. 76 Drawing outside/
photo credit: Juha Tanhua



Scan me to find more pictures from the event!



Fig. 77 Collage of seedbed interventions/ photo credit: Juha Tanhua



For the main activity the city organised guided sensory walks in the pilot area which took participants along a possible trail in the health forest. The senses of listening, smelling, seeing and touching were recorded at different points and parts of the walk to understand how they feel, when they hear, smell, see and touch nature.

At first it was difficult to calm down but in the end the peace of mind settled



The aim of the guided sensory walks was to generate a sense of nature connectedness and understand if the participants felt rejuvenated and refreshed from the walks in the health forest. They were later asked about what they missed and how their experience went.

The health benefits are known. But to be used in patient work needs time and place



The health forest is an open forest for all, especially for the hospital staff and patients nearby. With the sensory walks and exercises, the emotional mapping was a key outcome. This was done to ascertain what hospital individuals wish for the health forest, to know what they would value in the health forest and to understand their collective picture of nature.

Because of the interactions with the hospital staff, the city of Lahti now has a better idea of what the nature-based solutions could look like. The volunteers and the local task force helped to plan activities which will be made accessible to all. In addition, the learnings will support the planning on designing the area.



Pictures of the day



Fig. 78 Starting point of the guided sensory walk through the health forest/ photo credit: Juha Tanhua

Hospital staff volunteers and project partners gathered around to hear about the project as well as the event details from the city official. With goodie bags on our shoulders and fresh energy and inspiration, we all entered into the health forest to kick off the seedbed intervention.



Fig. 79 Feeling nature connectiveness/ photo credit: Juha Tanhua

Acknowledging the sense of relaxation and comfort when being surrounded by the trees, the volunteers took moments like this to feel the nature connectedness.



Fig. 80 Talking about individual experiences/ photo credit: Juha Tanhua

Towards the end of the event, the participants sat on a fallen tree trunk and talked with the city officials about their perceptions about the health forest and the several benefits nature brings to people. What seemed like a lively discussion (in local language) went on for about an hour before the media persons came for a further interview that was broadcasted in Finnish national media.

Preparation by the city

The Lahti seedbed intervention was prepared since quite some time by the city partner in charge of the GoGreenRoutes project. The involved city official then took into account the scientific and research needs to understand the significance of health forest for the hospital staff in the area. Although there was a change in staff in Lahti, the methodology used in the intervention was transferred well to the new city staff taking in Lahti. In addition to a new coordinator staff within the city, a trainee was involved in the preparation and the implementation of the intervention. A graphic illustrator and a professional photographer were hired as well, mostly for the for days of the intervention. In Lahti, the intervention was spread across four days, allowing for five staff members per visit to the intervention site of the health forest, and only one day was considered the main day for the intervention where all different methods were applied as well as the press were invited, along with the graphic illustrator and the photographer. The city partner and the trainee also arranged for transport of the material such as the canvas and the GoGreenRoutes banner prior to the seedbed intervention and placed them at the last resting spot, before closing the event. The survey was pre-filled by the hospital staff who had volunteered to join, resulting in 20 filled-in surveys in advance to the seedbed intervention.

The project partners, RWTH, ICLEI and CtD had previously discussed the entire concept, methods, and logistics of the seedbed intervention. It was clear that the seedbed intervention in Lahti would have a different and unique touch, since it would be focusing on hospital staff specifically, and not targeted towards the wider public. This was agreed upon, since it supported the overall research focus of GoGreenRoutes, as well as the adoption of the methods for fewer people, yet those who are affected the most by the design and the area in question for NBS implementation.

The involvement of a professional photographer and a graphic illustrator in advance was beneficial. The researchers and city officials were able to brief them on what angles of the seedbed intervention would be most relevant and interesting to focus on. It was also interesting to have different guided sensory walks, some with silence along the way while in others talking about the forest and the nature connectedness and hence connecting with others on the walk, was encouraged.



Fig. 81 Concentrating on thoughts and feelings/ photo credit: Juha Tanhua

Day of intervention

On the day of the seedbed intervention, everyone gathered at the entrance to the health forest, where a board depicting the area and the diverse information related to the area was displayed. This installation had been there previously. Since it was a small group of people, everyone got a chance to introduce themselves and say a few words on why they were there and what they would like to get out of this engagement/activity. The city staff offered goodie bags, with informational pamphlets of the GGR project, a small water bottle filled with water and some snacks for the walk. All communication was done in Finnish solely, making it difficult for the project partners to actively participate. On one hand, it was good to allow for local context to be at the centre but it affected the documentation and observational parts to be done by the project partners.



Fig. 82 Walking through the health forest/photo credit: Juha Tanhua

The guided sensory walk with intermittent stops at places to rest and do exercises of engaging different senses in the surrounding forest space lasted around three hours. Over the course of the walk, the photographer and the illustrator were busy capturing interesting moments. From time to time the project partners also encouraged the five hospital staff volunteers to reach out and take the polaroid camera in their hand and take a picture of the area based on their emotional connection to it. They also noted any feeling they had. Most people shared they were comforted and excited to be in the area. They also shared that the guided walk helped focus attention on their senses, breathing, smelling, touching, and seeing, to which they would usually not pay the same amount of attention if they did it alone. However, they also said they would like to go on their own from next times and continue exploring the health forest without the guidance as well.

At the last resting spot, there were hammocks and the canvas as well as the photovoice method were all displayed. A focus group interview also took place which the city conducted for their purposes of understanding the opinion of the volunteers on the walk. The YLE media people came in after some time and interviewed the city partner, the volunteers based on consent as well as the project partner from ICLEI.

Timeline

- 2:00 - 2:15pm
Introduction
- 2:15 - 2:30pm
Overview of the project and event
- 2:30 - 3:30pm
Guided sensory walk through the health forest
- 3:30 - 4:00pm
Canvas method and group interview
- 4:00 - 4:30pm
Media interviews with finnish national broadcasting station YLE
- 4:30pm
Wrap up



Fig. 83 Taking time to relax and feel the nature connectedness/photo credit: Juha Tanhua

There was a dedicated and organised effort by the city partner to ensure an optimal setting for a relaxed but also conducive environment. This was helpful in collecting the opinions of the volunteers with least influence from the present city and project partners. The volunteers felt it was refreshing for them to be in nature and go along the health forest trail. Although they confessed that they hardly could make time due to work to come and enjoy the nature, even though it is close to their workplace.

“It was a clear evidence of nature connectedness feeling and so relatable to see a volunteer express their emotions with tears in their eyes, talking about how hugging a tree in peace and quiet made them feel comforted from all worries and stresses of daily life.”
(Project Partner, ICLEI)

A very interesting outcome of the intervention is that the trainee in the city will be using the information collected to work on her thesis in the field of health and nature. Also, a researcher from LAB University was on-site during the seedbed intervention, meaning there is great potential for knowledge transfer from primary source to research. Additionally, with the canvas method it became clear that the volunteers would rather have less interventions in the area but more promotion and awareness raising for the people living close to the health forest to make use of the trail. In concrete infrastructural changes, there were ideas to make a yoga space, install swings or so (inspired by hammocks in the forest, during the intervention) and perhaps picnic spots for people to rest and take in the beauty of the nature of the health forest.

Canvas

The canvas was brought to the last resting spot of the trail of the planned forest route in the health forest in Lahti already in advance, along with the GoGreenRoutes Banner. While the information flyer was already distributed to all participants in goodie bags including water and snacks, prior to the start of the walk. This allowed participants an opportunity to get familiar with the project site, and reasons for the selection of the seedbed intervention site and to understand why they were invited to the guided forest walk, which was also explained to them in person by the city partner. Everyone was also asked to introduce themselves before starting the forest walk. Based on the feedback received during the guided forest walks, at the end of the walk and through the canvas method, the participants value the existing natural environment of the health forest and apart from a few ideas such as swings, or signages, they would like it to remain as such. In fact, they also mentioned that such walks are best had alone and in silence to be able to reflect and rejuvenate. However, they did appreciate the guided sensory walk concept which focused their attention to specific senses of smell, touch, see and hear at appropriate moments and designated spaces along the trail. For some it was an emotional and specifically comforting experience, and everyone enjoyed the walk thoroughly. Developments to make the health forest more attractive and accessible, the participants wished for designated place(s) to eat, silence, swings, chairs to relax, barrier-free route, art and a place where different kinds of feelings would be featured, and people could think how they feel. The last wish could be in fact met by adding simple signage such as icons to show smell, touch/feel, hear and see on trees in the area or as special standing signposts.



Fig. 84 Implementing the canvas method/ photo credit: Juha Tanhua

“We noticed that it was very important to make this kind of seedbed intervention and we got a lot of information and new thoughts on how to develop the forest in the future.”

(City Partner)

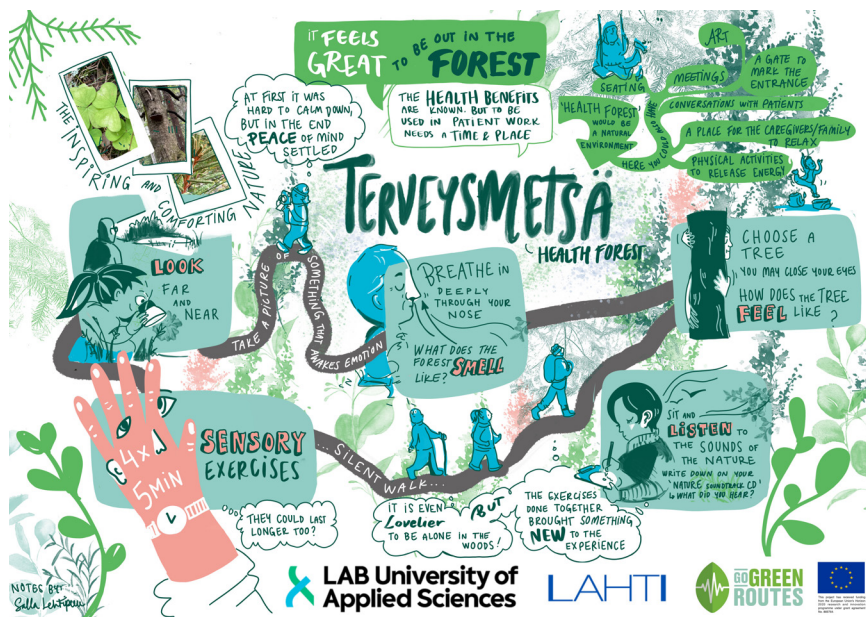


Fig. 85 Illustration based on canvas input by the participants/ picture credit: Salla Lehtipuu

Leaving the health forest as it is but also ensuring easy access and attractiveness for all with facilities for recreation such as yoga spots, places to eat and signage to remind people to take a break and observe the surroundings, is a hard balance to strike. However, the city is interested and motivated to ensure it supports the needs of the community in the best possible manner to ensure the city offers improved health and wellbeing for all.

Photovoice

This method yielded five pictures of specific areas with emotions written on them from the volunteers. Majorly the consensus was feelings of relief, comfort and excitement to be in the forest. Having one volunteer express their feelings and tearing up explaining how beautiful the forest, and trees were and how it was comforting for them was very touching and just provides evidence of how the connection to nature is essential and can induce or reveal feelings in people.

"It was very interesting to see how participants relaxed during the sensory walk in the forest. Nature inspired, comforted and refreshed. It was a perfect place to have conversations and collect ideas."
(Taru Suutari)



Fig. 86 Explaining how to use the polaroid camera/ picture credit: Juha Tanhua

Survey results

Main findings in Lahti

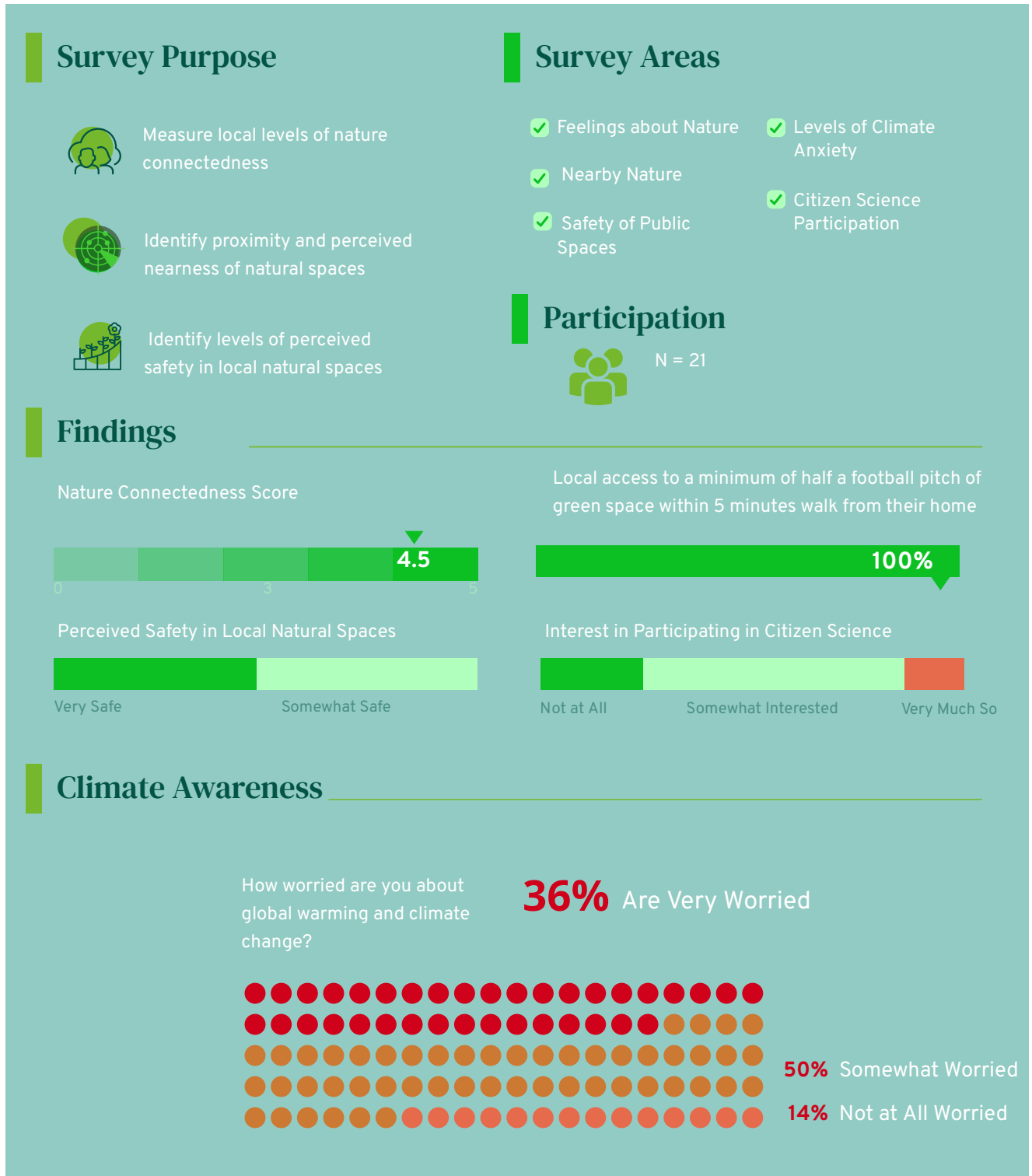


Fig. 87 Main findings of the survey/ credit: Tadhg Macintyre

Survey results

Main findings in Lahti

The total number of survey responses submitted for the city of Lahti was 21. 95% of those surveyed were women and 5% were men. All of the 21 responses came from those aged 18 and older.

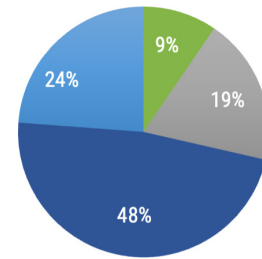
Results show that 48% of respondents agreed a little, that “My ideal vacation spot would be a remote, wilderness area”. Also, 57% of the respondents agree a little that “I always think about how my actions affect the environment”. Furthermore, over half of the respondents (57%) agreed strongly that their “connection to nature and the environment is part of their spirituality.”

87% of the 21 respondents strongly agreed that they take notice of wildlife wherever they are. Comparably, 81% strongly agree that their relationship with nature was an important part of who they are. Also, responses depicted that 38% agree a little that “I feel very connected to all living things and the earth”. The majority of those surveyed stated that reducing stress levels was the “main benefit of introducing more natural features in a neighbourhood or city.” The smallest number of people believed that learning and sharing was the most beneficial.

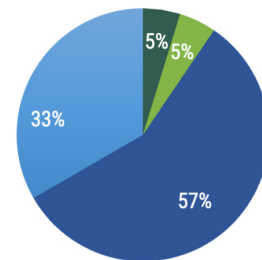
Data showed that 71% felt that this nature-based solution very much so “promote health” while only about half (52%) felt it very much so “promote nature and biodiversity”. Similarly, only 52% felt that this nature-based solution very much so “promote sustainable actions by you”. Nevertheless, respondents did feel strongly that this nature-based solution “promote coping with climate change” whereas only 5% felt this was not at all the case. However, when asked “How worried are you about global warming and climate change” only a small proportion of respondents (5%) were not very worried with most (57%) somewhat worried.

Moreover, it is of note that all 21 of those surveyed “have access to a minimum of 0.5 hectares green or blue natural space within 5 minutes’ walk of their home”. Regarding natural spaces, results show almost an even split between those who somewhat (52%) versus those who very much so “perceive natural public space (e.g., park) in your city to be safe” (48%). Also, results suggest strong favour toward the forest areas being participant’s favourite area to visit in their local area followed by seaside and coastal areas as well as shrubland. Also, 62% of responses indicate that participants are “interested in participating in nature-based citizen science” in their city.

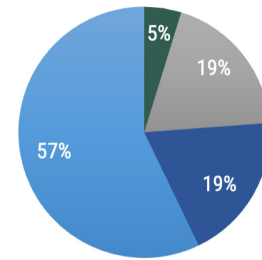
„My ideal vacation spot would be a remote, wilderness area“



„I always think about how my actions affect the environment“



„My connection to nature and the environment is a part of my spirituality“



- 1. Disagree strongly
- 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 5. Agree Strongly
- 2. Disagree a little
- 4. Agree a little

Fig. 88 Survey results/ credit: Jannis Meul