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Nature adds color to life: Less boredom in natural versus artificial environments

Boredom is a common and unpleasant experience associated with a range of problematic correlates and consequences. We examined a catalyst and its putative remedy all but neglected in the psychological science of emotion, and boredom in particular: the living environment. Specifically, we proposed and tested that 'artificial' (e.g., urban) environments elicit boredom and propose that natural environments may counter it. We also tested whether color vividness would partially explain this difference. In Study 1, a naturalistic induction of a natural environment (vs. an artificial environment) provided initial support for the hypothesis that natural environments produce less boredom than artificial ones. Study 2, using Twitter and satellite data, found that people who live in areas with more natural geography expressed less boredom on social media. This negative association between natural environments and boredom did not co-occur with changes in happiness (Study 1), awe (Study 1) or sadness (Study 1 & 2). Study 3 replicated the effect of natural (vs artificial) environments on boredom in a controlled experimental, and Study 4 found that this remedial effect of natural environments on boredom can be partially attributed to the higher vividness of natural environments. The main purpose of preregistered Study 5 was to test whether natural environments reduce boredom, artificial environments increase boredom, or possibly both. Comparing boredom before (control) and after viewing either natural or artificial landscapes, the findings showed that artificial environments elevated boredom relative to control, with natural environments not leading to a significance change in boredom. All in all, these findings provide systematic and experimental evidence of the importance of the living environment for boredom and illustrate the effects that changes in one's environment can have on emotion experiences.