

A Green Gap Framework for exploring barriers, challenges & opportunities

There are lots of reasons to spend time in nature: exercise, respite, headspace, school run, volunteering, commute, dog walk, hobby, personal challenge, connect with wildlife, change of scene... That's just what around **three quarters of the UK population** has done in the past month - making use of local parks, woods, gardens, coasts and waters, and green and blue spaces in between.

Benefits to people and planet from links with nature are increasingly **evidenced and understood**. There are wins for physical health, mental wellbeing, and for the natural environment too. Nature connectedness is significant for individual lifestyles, for communities, for wider society and at a national level. It's a live - and vital - issue.

But **what about the 25% or so who haven't** spent time in nature? These 'low and non-users' spend **less than 1 day/month in nature settings, or never access them**. They are likely to be too busy, disinterested, ill, incapacitated, unaware of opportunities, or a complex combination of factors. Anyone can find themselves in this situation, however a disproportionate number are females, older adults, people from a lower socio-economic status, with a long-term illness or disability, or from a minority ethnicity group.

Why does this matter?

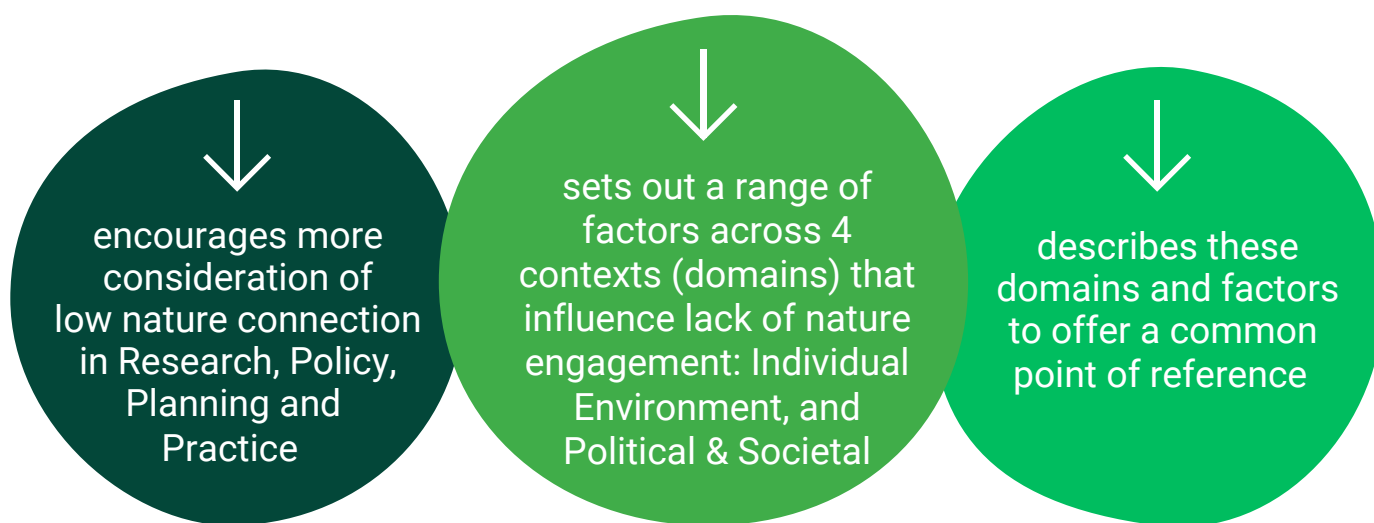
Aside from missing out on potential health benefits, these groups strongly overlap with those experiencing higher rates of chronic health conditions. Yes, it tends to be those with poor health, or at higher risk from it – such as cardiovascular disease, mental health conditions and obesity - who seem least likely to use their local nature spaces. On top of that, research also suggests that these are the people who might gain the most significant health improvements from a better connection with nature.

People who demonstrate the lowest nature engagement are effectively missing out on a wellbeing intervention that is potentially powerful, and cost-free. Addressing this can help to reduce not only risks of poor individual health but also population health inequalities. For individuals experiencing socio-economic stress and limited healthcare access, more interaction with local green and blue spaces could offer a significant health boost and serve as an equaliser.

More focus needed

The **Green Gap Framework prompts more focused attention on who doesn't access nature**.

For researchers, policy makers, planners and practitioners, it:



- Detailed discussion of the [Green Gap Framework](#) [Link to academic paper, references/[links to add/confirm](#)]
- The term 'nature spaces' is used to offer a broad interpretation; it can be interchangeable with phrasing such as 'greenspace', 'urban green and blue [spaces](#)'.
- Varied studies consistently show concerning levels of low frequency use e.g. **c26% of adults in Scotland** visit nature spaces less than once a month; research across 33 European cities noted **25%** as 'the share of non-users' of UK respondents who never use urban green spaces.