



# Sustainable Living and Lifestyles

# COVID-19 IMPACTS

FOOD/STUFF/MOVE/MONEY/FUN

**UN**   
environment  
programme

# APPROACH

This desktop research aims to understand, address, and eventually influence the lifestyle areas which have the greatest sustainability impacts. Though most available sources reflect developed country contexts, they remain relevant as the growing urban middle class throughout the world aspire to similar lifestyles. These aspirations also affect ('set the bar') for lower class consumption and emerging economies, reinforcing rising consumption patterns.

This research reflects how COVID-19 is influencing people's lives and lifestyles around the world. It is based on the climate impactful actions people can take as identified in the Anatomy of Action (15 key actions in 5 domains - food, stuff, move, money, fun). Led by the Sustainable Lifestyles and Education team, within the Economy Division, it has been reviewed, refined and improved from inputs by: The One Planet Network Programme experts (food, tourism, buildings and construction) and internal UNEP sector experts. This research is not meant to be a comprehensive analysis of COVID19 impacts, but offers a snapshot of how lifestyles are changing and highlights areas of future interest.

Within each of the five living areas, the main trends (with geographical references) are presented. Comments are offered on possible positive or negative environmental impacts and some possible longer-term consequences are presented. The evidence, findings and updated AoA messages are presented in this way:

Evidence / Trends:



Findings / environmental impact consequences



Messages (Original AoA – fine tuned AoA)

If you have any other evidence of how Covid-19 has affected living and lifestyles let us know!

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# FOOD

## PROTEIN SWAP

In the **US and China**, people are eating less meat for health and safety reasons[1]. In **EU and US**, people are looking for nutritious, affordable, and tasty meals[2]. In **Latin America**, people are searching for food with preventative health benefits and to boost immune systems[3].



People moving towards plant-based diets - less meat eaten has positive impacts



While at home, adopt more plant-based options - a diversified diet can be delicious, nutritious, healthier, cheaper, and boost your immune system!

## USE ALL YOUR FOOD

In **developed economies**, citizens are managing food better in lockdown (trend could outlast the pandemic)[4].



Reduced food waste is positive. Related lockdown behavior can be encouraged



Continue to design your meals to use up the entire food product, to buy only what you can finish and discover new recipes to save leftovers

### GROW YOUR OWN & BUY LOCAL

In US and EU, there is growing interest in local products[5]; in US there is growing interest to grow one's own food[6].

➡ A shorter food circuit has a positive environmental impact

➡ Grow your own and connect where it comes from to save money, support the local economy and reduce your carbon footprint

### WILD CARD - ONLINE FOOD DELIVERY

Globally, as people are not going to restaurants as much, online food delivery has sharply increased[7].

➡ Waste generated[8] by online food delivery increase is negative

➡ For home food delivery, consider apps that offer waste reduction help like opting out of disposable cutlery. Let restaurants know you want less plastics and packaging





# STUFF

## BEYOND BUYING

Worldwide, more time online[10] has led to a rise in e-commerce. But as salaries are contracting and disposable income reduces there has been a significant decrease in amount spent offline as well as online (-48% in electronics, -43% in fashion)[9]. Yet globally, during lockdowns e-commerce and delivery have surged and the trend is here to stay. [11] [12]

➡ People are buying less “stuff”. This could be a positive impact. But more packaging is used for delivery and this is negative

➡ If you are not going out as much, discover new cultural and tourism experiences online without leaving home and take time to enjoy movies, books and board games with your family and friends. Reduce the frequency and number of online purchases to combine shipping and avoid more packaging ; request your delivery services to use more sustainable and reusable packaging methods



## FASHION SLOWDOWN

In the US in 2020 the broader fashion retail sector is projected to shrink 23%, and the online secondhand market to grow 27%[13]. In UK and Germany, 65% of people surveyed are planning to purchase more durable fashion items and 71% are planning to keep the items they already have for longer[14].



In developed economies, people have a higher awareness of sustainable fashion behaviors. This could have positive impacts



With more time at home, give your clothes a second chance: Share, Reuse, Repair, Recycle, Sell and donate for second hand use

## DITCH DISPOSABLES

Worldwide, considerable waste and plastic generated during COVID-19[15,16,17]. The mismanagement of PPE (masks and gloves) is resulting in widespread environmental contamination[18].



Surge in packaging and single use items is a negative impact



While health and safety remain a top priority, there is no evidence that single use items or plastic packaging is making things safer[19]. So keep looking on how to reduce waste and plastic!



# MOVE

## KEEP ACTIVE

Worldwide, urban cycling (and walking) is increasing significantly[20,21,22,23].



Increase in active mobility can be positive for GhG emissions, air pollution and people's health



Keep or take up walking and cycling, and advocate for your government to provide safer side walk and cycling lane options


*Note: increase and success of cycling behaviors linked to both more demand AND facilitation by cities through infrastructure efforts.*



## SHARE YOUR RIDE


Around the world, people are and will reduce public transportation in favor of walking, cycling or driving their own car[24]. But in many places, Ethiopia for example, most people have no choice except public transportation[25]. Overwhelmed public transport expose the poorest.


 Decrease in use of public transportation can be negative

 If you are not comfortable using public transportation, consider walking or cycling, you'll save money and keep in shape! And if you have to commute by car, create a bubble of people (carpool) with who you feel comfortable sharing a ride (e.g. family or colleagues)

## GO CLEANER

Worldwide numbers of new cars sold has plunged yet in Europe and China, electric vehicle markets remain resilient[26]. Also, in UK and India, demand for second-hand cars on the rise[27] [28].

 Increase in individual motorized mobility is negative. Yet, growing interest for electric vehicles is positive

 If you buy a new or a second-hand car, scooter or motorbike, consider investing in a cleaner one!

*Note: mobility related to leisure is presented in the FUN section.*





# MONEY

## ETHICAL INVESTMENT/ DIVESTMENT

Worldwide investment in green solution is seen as a top priority for climate and biodiversity loss[29]. Also, worldwide (but primarily Europe), there is an increase in global inflows into sustainable funds from Q2 to Q3 2020[30].



Heightened visibility in growth of green investment is key and positive



Sustainable investment options are becoming more available - look into it!

## ENERGY POSITIVE HOME

Worldwide, as people spend more time at home, 40% note an increase in general utility bills[31]. In developed economies, single person household make up to a third of the total households, but more and more people are once again choosing to live together. In fact, the pandemic may merely have accelerated an existing trend[32].

➡ Increase in utility bills (and energy use) is generally a negative consequence. But people moving in shared accommodation is generally positive

➡ If you are spending more time at home, enhance your comfort, save energy and money by adapting your home and habits to be more efficient and consider looking into renewable options. Sharing is caring, move in a shared flat rather than staying alone at home





# FUN/STAY CURIOUS

## ENJOY THE JOURNEY

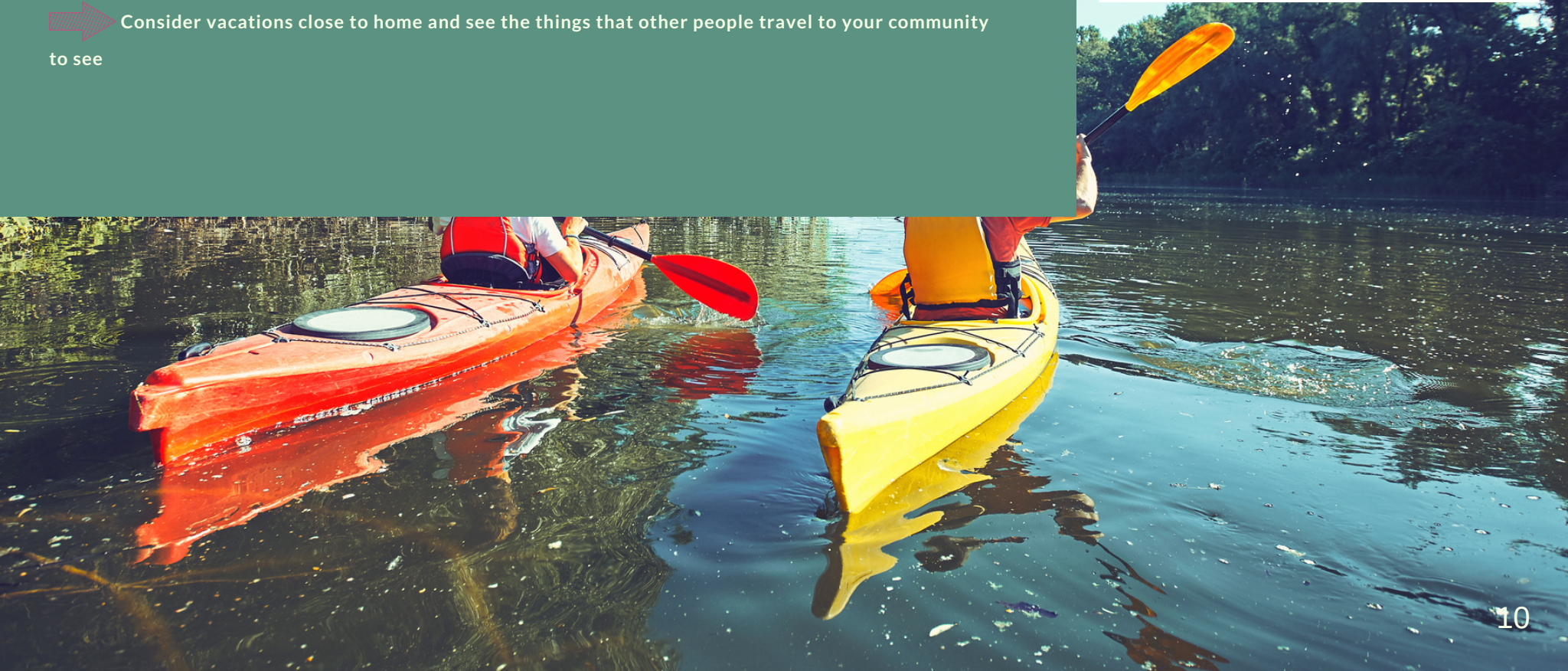
Worldwide sharp decreases in international tourism (~65% in first half 2020)[33]. In UK or Spain for example, domestic tourism forecasted to decrease by 45-50% by end of 2020 (compared to 2019)[34] but domestic and non-air travel expected to drive recovery in the sector[35].



Limited travel has (temporary) positive impacts: sharply reduced GhG emissions and impacts on eco systems




Consider vacations close to home and see the things that other people travel to your community to see






## STAY CURIOUS


Worldwide more time spent on online entertainment and socializing[36]. Gaming is one of the few COVID-19 growth industries[37]. Many museums have shifted to digital platforms, exemplifying digitalizing of the cultural and tourism sectors[38].


 Less moving by motorized travel is generally positive but impacts of increase in digital experiences have yet to be determined

 If you are not going out as much, discover new cultural and tourism experiences online without leaving your home but don't forget to keep active as well. Take the time to enjoy movies, books and board games with your family and friends

## CHOOSE EXPERIENCES

Worldwide, travellers are cautious and prefer less crowded destinations[39] and more outdoor activities[40] [41] [42] (hiking, trekking).

 Outdoor activities generally positive and bring one closer to nature, possibly generating a stronger commitment to care for the planet.

 Spend more time connecting with nature and natural spaces. Opt for active recreational choices for increased health and well-being (sports, games, and outdoor activities)



## WILD CARD: WORK FROM HOME (WFH)

Worldwide, WFH is likely to reduce carbon footprint if your journey to work is by car and greater than ~6 kilometers. For short car or public transport commutes, WFH could increase CO<sub>2</sub> emissions due to extra residential energy consumption[43]. WFH potential is higher in developed economies[44].



WFH, a mix of positive and negative consequences, depending on the context more has yet to be determined



Keep or take up walking and cycling to work and enhance your comfort, save energy and money by adapting your home and your habits to be more efficient

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