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EXPLORING WAYS PEOPLE THRIVE DURING A PANDEMIC: QUALITATIVE MEASURES

Although the COVID-19 pandemic brought uncertainty, this project uses a mixed-method research design to study the ways people thrive during a pandemic. Two hundred and five participants, ages 18 to 83 years, completed an online survey with 102 quantitative questions consisting of 5 inventories, a number of demographic questions, such as access to green space, living situation, sexual and gender identification, as well as 5 qualitative questions. This presentation focuses on the qualitative results of the study. Qualitative data were collected in two waves. Participants first responded to five questions exploring ways people experienced personal growth, relationships with animals and nature, spirituality and supporting beliefs, and potential sustainable changes to carry forward. Six-months later, participants who provided their emails in wave one were sent a follow-up online questionnaire exploring additional information addressing continued and sustainable growth, engagement, subjective meaning, and key personal

learning that supports thriving. A thematic analysis, resulted in the emergence of themes that supported thriving including self-prioritization, resilience, and a unique experience of time during a pandemic. The results of the quantitative data analysis informed our thematic analysis. For example, participants' connection with nature and pets was a subcategory leading to an awareness of the importance of self-prioritization. Another significant finding of this research was the reprioritization that took place regarding participants' relationships, goals, and their overall improvement to personal well-being. Overwhelmingly, it was reported that individuals took time to reassess what they wanted in life which resulted in better investments into their overall health and well-being. The results of the quantitative portion of this study are presented in another presentation in this research forum.

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