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(Appendix 4 to W9/1)

Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment

The national survey on people and the natural environment

NATURAL ENGLAND

Headline Report from the 2015-16 survey

TNS

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NATIONAL STATISTICS

Foreword

Natural England produces a range of reports providing evidence and advice to assist us in delivering our duties.

Background

In 2009 Natural England, Defra and the Forestry Commission commissioned TNS to undertake the Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) survey for the first time.

The data enables Natural England, its partners and data users to:

- Understand how people use, enjoy and are motivated to protect the natural environment.
- Monitor changes in use of the natural environment over time, at a range of different spatial scales and for key groups within the population.
- Inform on-the-ground initiatives to help them link more closely to people's needs.
- Evaluate the impact and effectiveness of related policy and initiatives.
- Measure the impact of and inform policy relating to the natural environment.

The MENE headline report

This report presents the headline findings for the seventh year of MENE fieldwork conducted between March 2015 to February 2016, with comparisons to previous surveys as appropriate.

A separate report that looks more deeply at urban greenspaces using the MENE survey data will follow and is due to be published later in 2017.

Published alongside this report are:

- A Technical Report providing full details of the survey methodology, sampling, grossing and weighting and estimates of confidence intervals.
- An electronic data table viewer: an interactive tool which allows detailed analysis of the MENE dataset.

Please see GOV.UK for further outputs from the survey:
https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/monitor-of-engagement-with-the-natural-environment-survey-purpose-and-results

National Statistics

The UK Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- Meet identified user needs.
- Are well explained and readily accessible.
- Are produced according to sound methods.
- Are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

The responsible Statistician for this publication is Stephen Herbert:
Stephen.Herbert@naturalengland.org.uk

Keywords: visits, engagement, natural environment, participation, motivations, barriers, activities and expenditure

This report can be downloaded from the Natural England website:
www.gov.uk/government/statistics/monitor-of-engagement-with-the-natural-environment-2015-to-2016

For information on Natural England publications contact the Natural England Enquiry Service on 0845 600 3078 or e-mail **MENE@naturalengland.org.uk.**

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1 Introduction

1.1. This report summarises the headline findings from the seventh year of the Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) survey running March 2015 to February 2016. Where appropriate, comparisons have been made with previous survey years. The survey was undertaken by TNS on behalf of Natural England, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the Forestry Commission.

1.2. A separate report containing in–depth analysis from the survey undertaken around several key themes will be available later in 2017.

Background

1.3. In the seven years since the survey commenced, a wealth of evidence on outdoor recreation behaviour, attitudes and engagement with the natural environment has been collected. MENE has provided a basis for specific analysis on areas such as how members of different societal groups and children engage with the outdoors. The data set also provides scope for deeper exploration of the data in relation to areas such as well-being, the impact of seasonality on visit taking and the relationship between valuing the natural environment and actions taken to protect it.

Survey aims and objectives

1.4. This survey aims to provide information about the relationship between people and the natural environment. Whilst the main focus of the survey is on visits to the natural environment, it also seeks to capture other ways of using or enjoying the natural environment such as time spent in the garden and watching nature programmes on television.

1.5. The objectives of the survey are to:

- Provide estimates of the number of visits to the natural environment by the English adult population (16 years and over).
- Measure the extent of participation in visits to the natural environment and identify the barriers and drivers that shape participation.
- Provide robust information on the characteristics of visitors and visits to the natural environment.
- Measure other ways of using and enjoying the natural environment.
- Identify patterns in use and participation for key groups within the population and at a range of spatial scales.

Survey scope

1.6. The survey relates to engagement with the natural environment. By natural environment we mean all green open spaces in and around towns and cities as well as the wider countryside and coastline.

1.7. The main focus of the survey is on leisure visits to the outdoors in the natural environment, away from home and private gardens. This could be anything from a few minutes to all day. These may include time spent close to a person's home or workplace, further afield or while on holiday in England. Routine shopping trips or time spent in a person's own garden are not included in the definition of a leisure visit in MENE.

1.8. The survey also includes a smaller section of questions regarding engagement with the natural environment other than that experienced during visits. This includes activities such as time spent in

private gardens, watching nature programmes on television, undertaking pro-environmental activities such as recycling and access to a private garden.

1.9. Throughout this report, the following terminology is used to describe the timings of survey fieldwork:

Date	Year reference	Fieldwork period
2009/10	One	Mar 2009 – Feb 2010
2010/11	Two	Mar 2010 – Feb 2011
2011/12	Three	Mar 2011 – Feb 2012
2012/13	Four	Mar 2012 – Feb 2013
2013/14	Five	Mar 2013 – Feb 2014
2014/15	Six	Mar 2014 – Feb 2015
2015/16	Seven	Mar 2015 – Feb 2016

1.10. Please note that any trends or variations between results highlighted in the text are statistically significant unless stated otherwise. This means that differences between results, for example when comparing two years or two population groups, have been proven through statistical analysis as likely to be real differences at the 95 per cent confidence limits, as opposed to differences which are the result of sampling error or chance[1].

Further publications from the survey

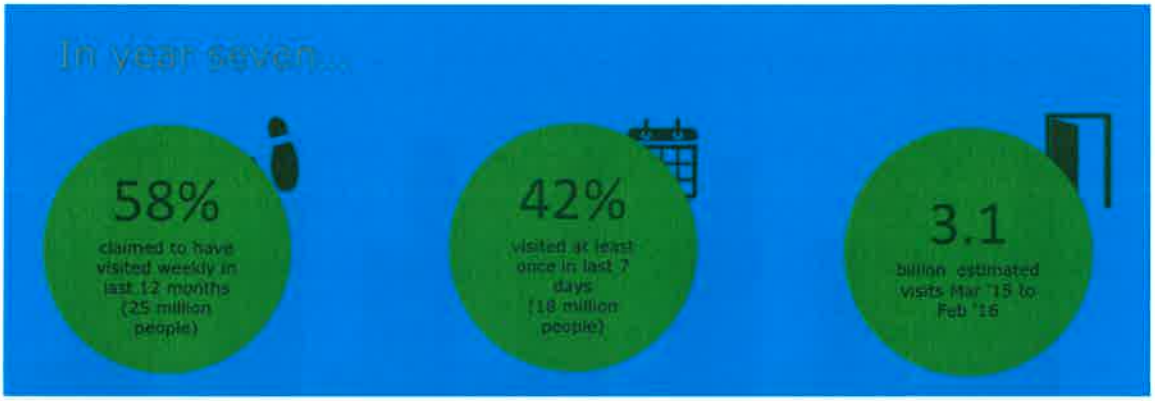
1.11. This annual report forms one part of a larger family of outputs from the survey. Published alongside this report are a technical report, an electronic data viewer, quarterly reports, SPSS and Excel data sets. To access these, go to:

https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/monitor-of-engagement-with-the-natural-environment-survey-purpose-and-results

[1] An Independent Samples T-Test has been used to determine statistical significance. Only differences with a p-value of less than 0.05 have been presented in this report as likely to be real differences.

2 Headline findings

Summary



879 million visits
Parks in towns/ cities (28%)

519 million visits
Paths/ cycleways/ bridleways (17%)

446 million visits
Woodlands/ Forests (14%)

1.51 billion visits
Walking with a dog (48%)

869 million visits
Walking, no dog (28%)

312 million visits
Playing with children (10%)

Frequency of visits

2.1. As shown in Figure 2.1, between the 2009/10 and 2015/16 survey period there was a significant increase in the proportion of the population who claimed to visit the natural environment once a week or more rising from 54 per cent in year one to 58 per cent in year seven.

2.2. The largest variations in visit behaviour have been recorded for the frequency rather than the overall level of visits taken. The proportion of those who indicated that they never visit the natural environment has been relatively stable over the past seven years.

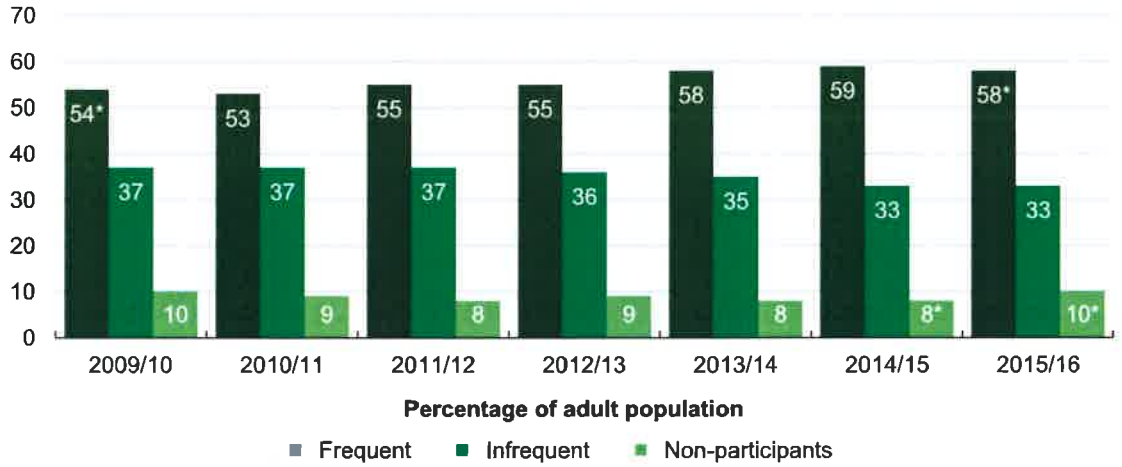


Figure 2.1 Frequency of participation in visits to the natural environment

Q17 Thinking about the last 12 months, how often on average have you spent your leisure time out of doors, away from home? (Base: 2009/10 N=11,107; 2010/11 N=10,630; 2011/12 N= 10,587; 2012/13 N=10,544; 2013/14 N=10,552; 2014/15 N=10,471; 2015/16 N=10,676)
* Indicates a statistically significant variation between the highlighted results

2.3. As shown in Figure 2.2, between March 2015 and February 2016 an average of 42 per cent of the population had visited the outdoors in the last seven days. This is a similar level as recorded in all previous years apart from 2010/11 (39 per cent).

2.4. Since the study began, the highest proportion of the population visiting the natural environment has always been recorded for the June to August quarter, however this is the first year a similar proportion has visited the natural environment between March and May as June to August (47 per cent). The December to February quarter continues to record the greatest variation, yet lowest proportion of visits to the natural environment. As shown in Figure 2.2, there was a significant decrease in the proportion of visits recorded in this last quarter from around four in ten in 2014/15 (39 per cent) to a third in 2015/16 (34 per cent).

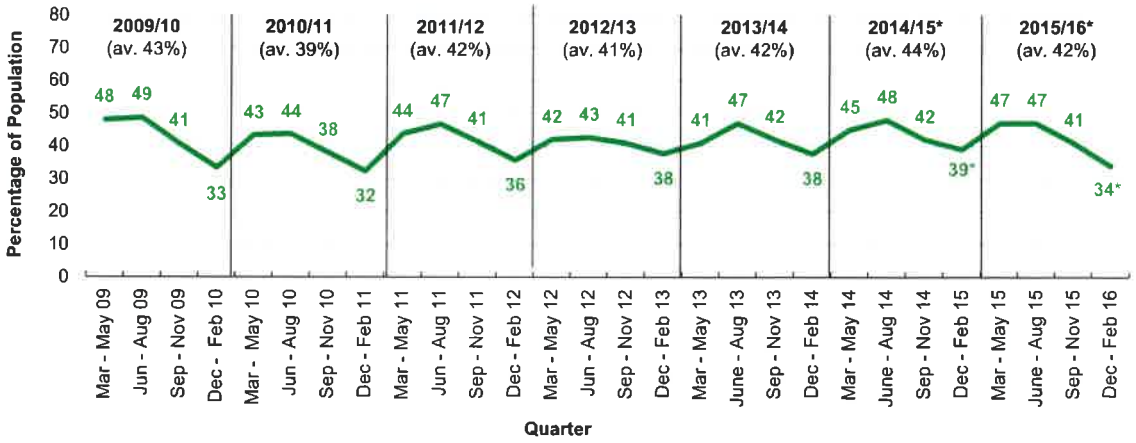


Figure 2.2 Percentage of adult population taking visits to the natural environment in the previous seven days

Q1 How many times, if at all, did you make this type of visit? (Base: All respondents, weekly questions 2009/10 N=48,514; 2010/11 N=46,099; 2011/12 N=47,418; 2012/13 N=46,749; 2013/14 N=46,785; 2014/15 N=42,341; 2015/16 N=45,965)
* Indicates a significant variation between the highlighted results

Places and activities

2.5. In year seven, the most visited destination continued to be towns/ cities with almost half of recorded visits (46 per cent), however, visits to countryside destinations did record a significant increase from year six. The proportion of visits to seaside/ coastal areas has remained relatively consistent.

Table 2.1 Proportion of visits by general place visited by survey year

Q2 Which of the following best describes where you spent most of your time on this visit? (Base: All visits, weekly questions 2009/10 N=58,653; 2010/11 N=47,825; 2011/12 N=53,898; 2012/13 N=53,208; 2013/14 N=55,897; 2014/15 N=55,573; 2015/16 N=56,097)

	Volume of visits (billions)						
	2009/10	**2010/11**	**2011/12**	**2012/13**	**2013/14**	**2014/15**	**2015/16**
Countryside	1.38	1.31	1.41	1.35	1.31	1.31	1.35*
Towns and cities	1.16	0.92*	1.05*	1.22*	1.36*	1.50	1.45
Seaside resort	0.21	0.17*	0.16	0.19	0.17	0.20	0.22
Other coastal	0.11	0.09	0.10	0.10	0.09	0.11	0.10
Total (billions)	**2.86**	**2.49**	**2.73**	**2.85**	**2.93**	**3.12**	**3.12**

* Denotes a significant variation from previous year

2.6. As shown in the Table 2.1, the annual estimate for visits taken to towns and cities was 1.45 billion in year seven, a 25 per cent increase on the year one estimate of 1.16 billion.

2.7. Parks in towns and cities continued to be the most visited specific destination type with around three in ten (or an estimated 879 million) visits recorded in 2015/16. An estimated 519 million visits were taken to paths/ cycle ways/ bridleways and 446 million visits to woodlands/ forests.

2.8. Walking continued to be the most commonly undertaken activity on outdoor visits, particularly walking with a dog which was undertaken on around half of visits (48 per cent, or an estimated 1.51 billion visits). Walking without a dog accounted for fewer than three in ten visits (an estimated 869 million visits), while around one in ten visits included playing with children (an estimated 312 million visits).

Motivations and attitudes

2.9. Health and exercise continued to be one of the most frequently cited motivations for visiting the outdoors. The proportion of visits where this was cited as a motivation rose from around a third of visits in year one (34 per cent) to just under half in year seven (47 per cent, as shown in Figure 2.3).

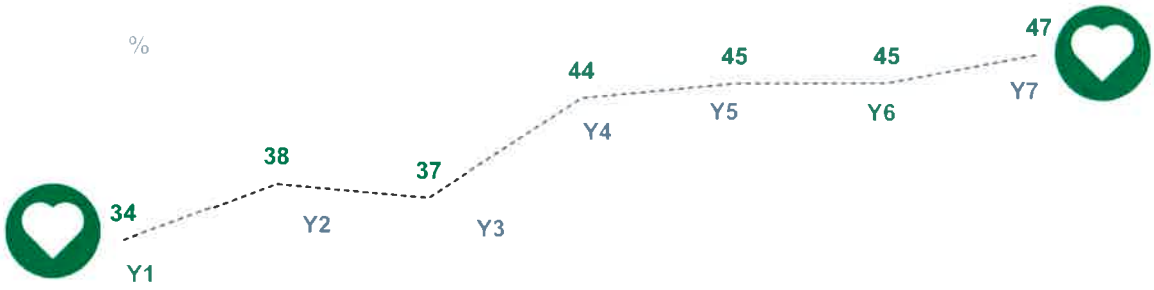


Figure 2.3 Proportions of visits where health/ exercise cited as a motivation

Q12 Which of the following, if any, best describe your reasons for this visit? (Base: Random visits, weekly questions 2015/16 N=18,429)

2.10. In terms of other visit motivations, just under half of visits in year seven were taken to exercise a dog (47 per cent), while around three in ten were taken to relax/ unwind and/or to enjoy fresh air or pleasant weather (30 per cent).

2.11. The reasons given for not visiting the outdoors frequently, or indeed at all, have not varied significantly over the years with a lack of time due to work remaining the most frequently cited barrier in year seven (30 per cent).

2.12. As in previous years, the vast majority of visit takers agreed that they 'enjoyed' their visit with around half (48 per cent) agreeing 'strongly' with this statement. The proportion agreeing 'strongly' that their visits made them 'feel calm and relaxed' increased from 25 per cent in year 6 to 31 per cent in year 7, moving its overall position from fourth to second most cited visit outcome (as shown in Figure 2.4).

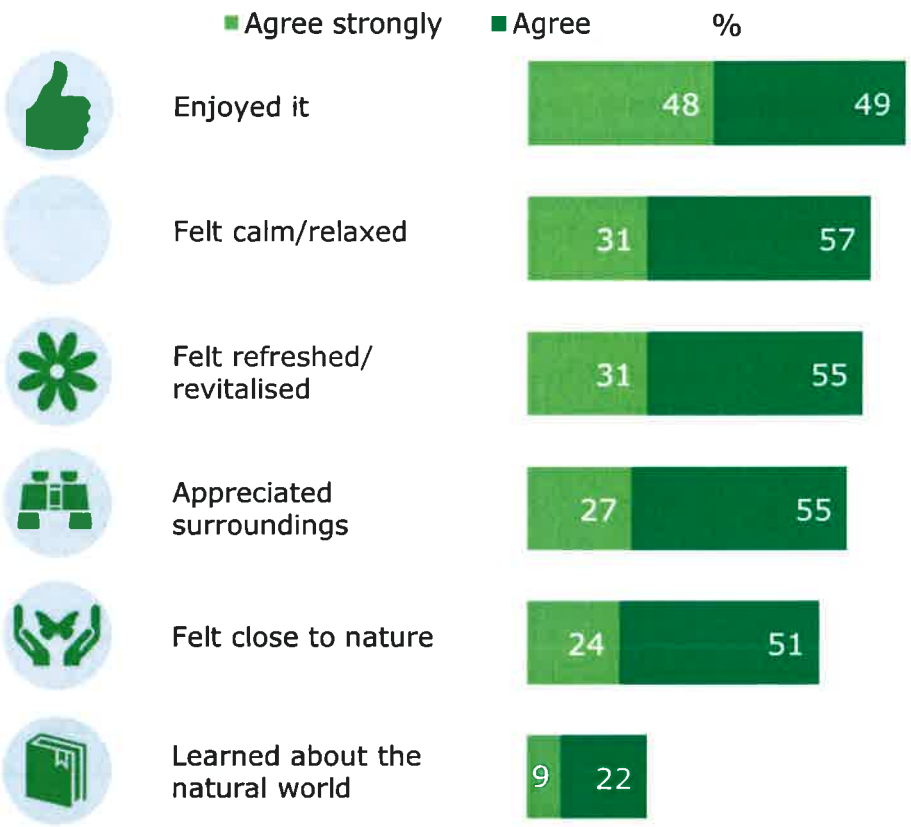


Figure 2.4 Outcomes of visits to the natural environment

E1 Thinking of this visit, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (Base: Random visits, quarterly questions 2015/16 N=1,387)

2.13. While participation in pro-environmental behaviours such as recycling and volunteering have not varied significantly over time, there have been changes recorded with regards to willingness to make lifestyle changes to benefit the environment (Figure 2.5).

2.14. Notably, the proportion of the population that indicated that they like their lifestyle and were 'not likely to change' has risen overall from just over a quarter (26 per cent) in year 1 to over a third (36 per cent) in year five, and then back down to a third (33 per cent) in year seven. Over the 7 years of the study those aged 55 and over have consistently been more likely than younger people to indicate that they are not likely to change their lifestyle.

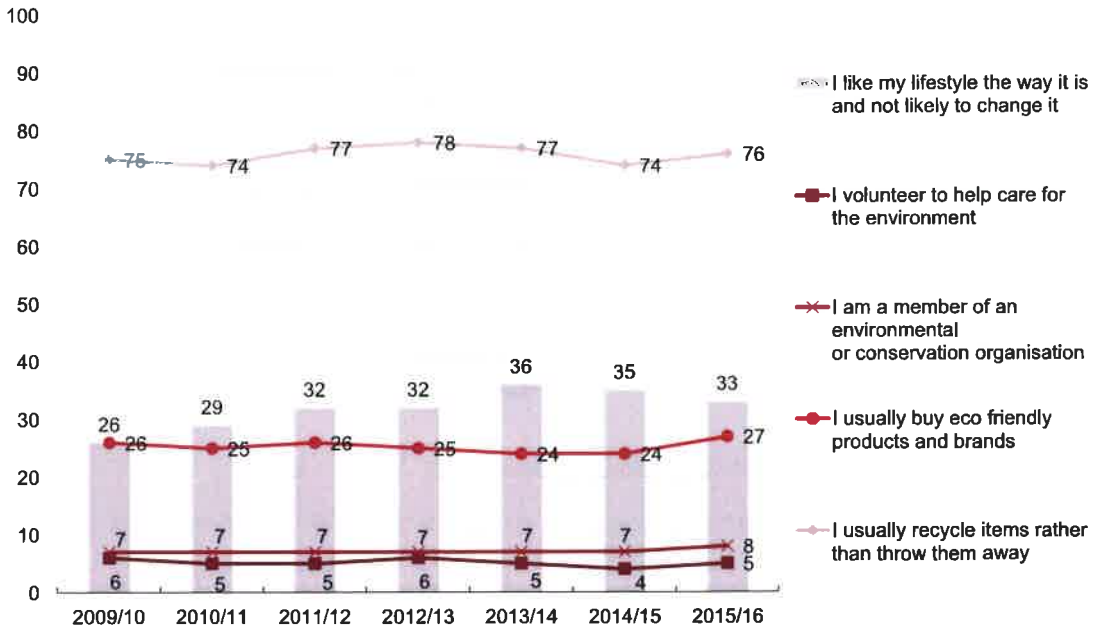


Figure 2.5 Pro-environmental behaviours (lines) and proportion of population not likely to change lifestyle (bars) (%)

E4 Thinking about the last 12 months, which of the following environment-related activities did you do? E5 Please think about whether or not you are likely to make changes to your lifestyle to protect the environment, for example by recycling rather than throwing things away, using your car less and buying local food. Which of these statements best describes your intentions? (Proportions selecting 'I like my lifestyle the way it is and not likely to change it' as a response)

(Base: All respondents, quarterly questions 2009/10 N=3,549; 2010/11 N=3,568; 2011/12 N=3,544; 2012/13 N=3,528; 2013/14 N=3,535; 2014/15 N=3,419; 2015/16 N=3,488)