



Forest Research

# **Access for all? Barriers to accessing woodlands and forests in the UK**

**Jake Morris, Liz O'Brien, Bianca Ambrose-Oji, Anna Lawrence & Claudia Carter**

Social and Economic Research Group  
Forest Research

**Trees & Forests in British Society**

**Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh, UK. April 13th-15th 2010**

**Access legislation:**

- Public Forest Estate = Dedicated Access Land
- Scottish Land Reform Act (2005)
- Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000
  
- Require Forestry Commission to promote access for all and an inclusive approach to management of the countryside

**Equality legislation:**

- Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- Race Relations Act 1976
- Race Relations Amendment Act 2000
- Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 and 2005
- Equality Act 2006
  
- Require the Forestry Commission to ensure and advance equality in the provision of goods and services

- DEFRA’s Diversity Action Plan “Outdoors for All?” (2008):  
Increase awareness and use of natural environment by under-represented groups
- Forestry strategies include reference to diversity, inclusion and equality:  
Focus on ‘hard to reach’ groups and individuals and those who are or not currently involved
- Increased focus on urban forestry:  
‘Priority areas’ (England)  
‘Repositioning’ (Scotland)







## Providing equality of rights to access is not achieving equality of actual access

**POFS 2009 - Have you visited woodlands in the last few years?  
(England)**

**Social grade** – ABC1 85% / C2DE 68%

**Ethnic Group** – white 80% / not white 51%

**Marital Status** – married 80% / not married 71%

**Age** – aged 16-54 (80%) / aged 55+ (69%)

**Working status** – working 83% / not working 67%

**Disability/health problem** – with disability/health problem 64% / without 80%

Questions for research into barriers, their social distribution and possible solutions:

- Why are certain sections of society under-represented?
- What's stopping these groups from visiting / engaging?
- If there is a disconnect between access and accessibility, what are the appropriate forest policy and management responses?
- How can forestry in the UK achieve a shift in the profile of woodland visitors so that it more closely represents the socio-demographic make-up of the population?

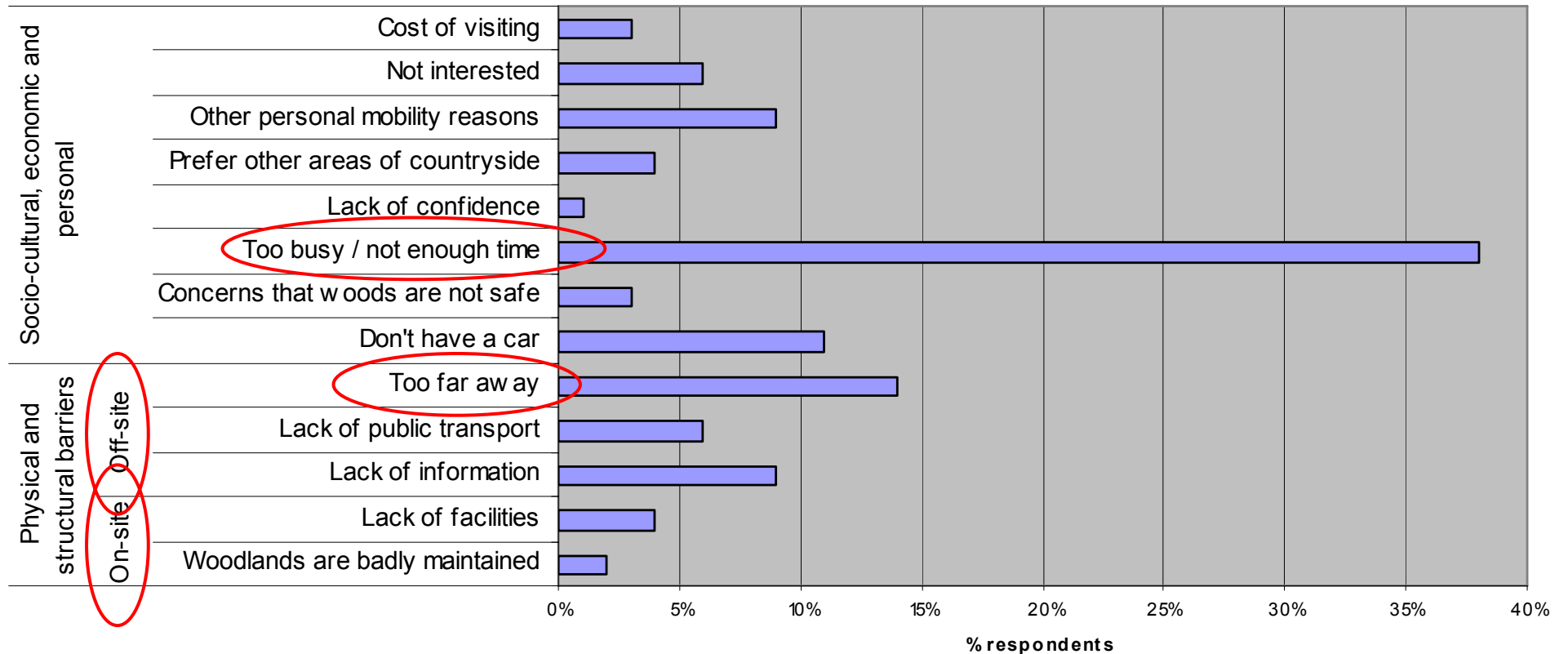


<b>Methods / analysis</b>	<b>Quantitative</b> (surveys) - 'popularity' & social distribution of barriers	<b>Qualitative</b> research – respondents' experiences of barriers
<b>Relevance to forest policy / management</b>	Identification of key barriers Identification of 'target groups' for interventions	Informs design of appropriate responses from policy / management
<b>Research project / study</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Public Opinion of Forestry Surveys (GB)</li> <li>- Study of the Public Forest Estate (England)</li> <li>- Economic and social benefits of Forestry for People in Scotland</li> <li>- Monitoring &amp; evaluating quality of life linked to forest policy (England)</li> <li>- Active England - evaluation of woodland projects</li> <li>- Study of Chopwell Wood</li> <li>- Study of Peabody Hill woodland</li> </ul> <p><b>SERG national, on-site &amp; catchment surveys &gt; 9000 respondents</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Study of the Public Forest Estate (England)</li> <li>- Economic and social benefits of Forestry for People in Scotland</li> <li>- Active England - evaluation of woodland projects</li> <li>- Volunteering - motivations and impacts</li> <li>- Barriers to accessing woodland in Scotland</li> <li>- Equal access for disabled users of forests</li> <li>- Disabled perceptions and use of forest resources</li> <li>- Offenders and Nature schemes</li> <li>- Study of Chopwell Wood</li> <li>- Race Equality and the Forestry Commission</li> <li>- Study of Peabody Hill woodland</li> <li>- West Midlands health project</li> <li>- Study of Hill Holt Wood</li> <li>- Social and cultural values in northwest and south east England</li> </ul> <p><b>SERG interviews / focus groups ≈ 1000 respondents</b></p>

Barrier category	Barrier sub-category	Details / examples
Physical & structural	<b>General / over-arching</b>	Bad weather
	<b>On-site</b>	Lack of access points / routes Lack of facilities Poorly maintained
	<b>Off-site</b>	Lack of information Lack of public transport Too far away
Socio-cultural, economic and personal	<b>Social, cultural &amp; economic</b>	Cost of visiting Deprivation Lack of cultural norm
	<b>Personal characteristics, experience and abilities</b>	Lack of time, interest, motivation Lack of confidence / feeling out of place Low income Restricted mobility

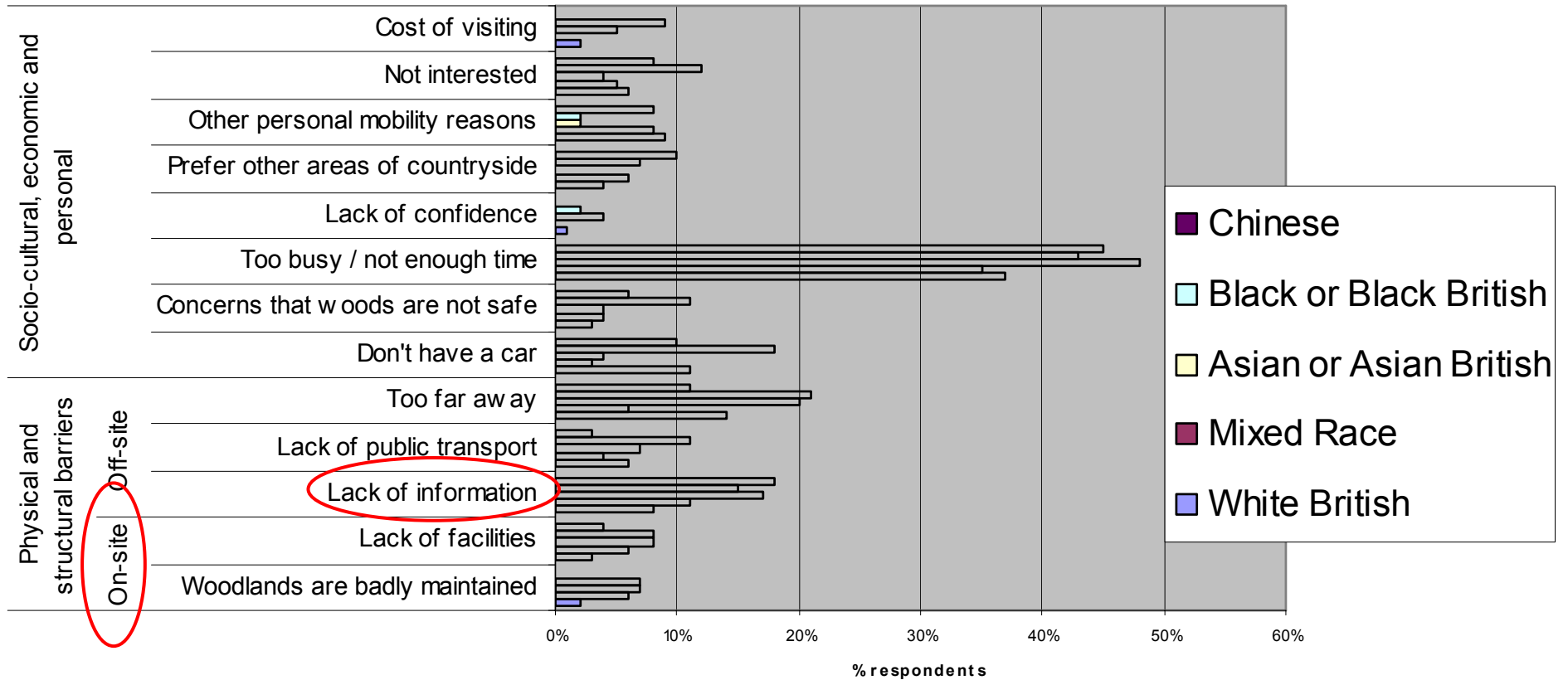


POFS 2009 - reasons for not visiting woodland



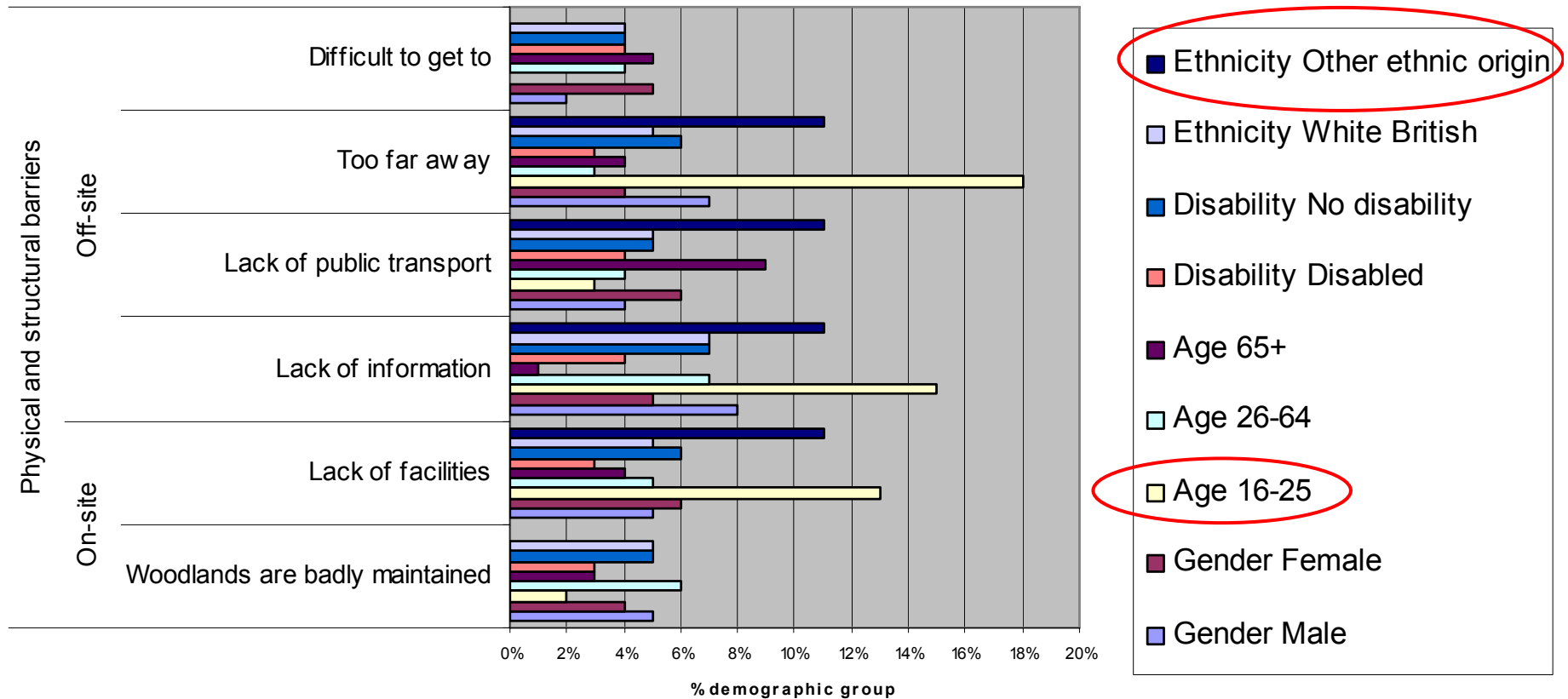


POFS 2009 – Reasons for not visiting woodland





Birches Valley catchment survey – Reasons for not visiting woodland



- **Active England** - established in 2003 with £94.8 million from Lottery and Sport England
- Aim of programme – to increase community participation in sport and physical activity in England
- **Target groups**
  - People on low incomes
  - People with disabilities
  - Women and girls
  - Black and ethnic minorities
  - Young people (under 16)
  - 45+ age group
- SERG evaluation of 5 woodland projects – involved qualitative research with **‘non-users’**





Target group	Barriers to accessing woodlands and green spaces
<b>Low income target group</b>  Bedgebury young low income group Great Western CF Dads group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of transport.</li> <li>• Health problems and restricted mobility either physically or mentally.</li> <li>• Money issues (cost of transport/buses, cost of paying for treats for children e.g. ice creams etc.</li> <li>• Lack of information, knowing where to go and what to expect, lack of sign posting on site.</li> <li>• Embedded deprivation restricting social and actual mobility and motivation.</li> <li>• Being moved on by police (adolescents)</li> </ul>
<b>Women target group</b>  Great Western CF women and children Great Western Forest School women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of transport</li> <li>• Loss of green space to development – business or housing</li> <li>• Lack of facilities for children e.g. good play areas, car free roads.</li> <li>• Safety concerns for themselves and for children.</li> <li>• Work patterns and time constraints</li> <li>• Littering – rubbish, needles used for drugs.</li> </ul>
<b>BME target group</b>  Rosliston Pakistani women Rosliston Asian Male health walkers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of transport</li> <li>• Wet weather, bad weather</li> <li>• Lack of information, knowing where to go and what to expect, lack of sign posting on site.</li> <li>• Lack of awareness that the site/s were public access sites. Minimal cultural norms of accessing these sorts of spaces</li> <li>• Confidence – to feel able to access a site, to feel that one does not stand out from other users.</li> </ul>
<b>Over 45s target group</b>  Greenwood over 45s Greenwood over 50s walkers Haldon over 55s group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of transport</li> <li>• Confidence – to feel able to access a site, to feel that one does not stand out from other users.</li> <li>• Wet weather, bad weather</li> <li>• Lack of information, knowing where to go and what to expect, lack of sign posting on site.</li> <li>• Safety concerns for themselves and for children.</li> <li>• Littering – rubbish, needles used for drugs.</li> <li>• Being on own e.g. recently bereaved or divorced or lacking a partner.</li> </ul>

**Common to all groups:**

- Transport
- Lack of information
- Weather

**Specific to certain groups:**

**BME** - Lack of cultural norms / feeling out of place

**Low income** – ‘embedded’ deprivation restricting mobility, awareness & motivation

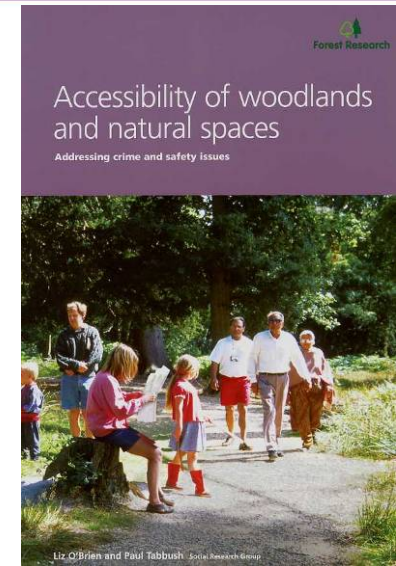
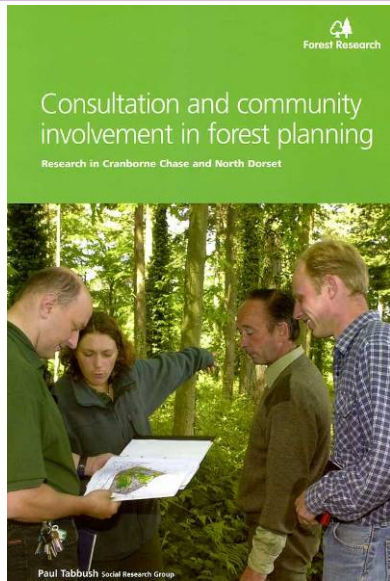
**Women** – personal safety

**Over 45s** – lack of confidence

**More relevant target groups:**

- (BME women)
- (Women with children)
- (Over 45s bereaved / without partner)

- Many barriers lie outside ‘conventional’ remit of forestry
- Focus on physical forest (access) to be balanced with focus on issues of lifestyle, choice, cultural make-up, personal situation (accessibility)
- Freedom to define ‘target groups’ and tailor services to them
- ‘Facilitated access’ is essential for many groups



To find out more about our work:  
[www.forestry.gov.uk/peopleandtrees](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/peopleandtrees)

