

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

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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)





- Marmot review (2010):

Argues for fair distribution of health, well-being and sustainability

Recommends improvements to: *'access and quality of open and green spaces available across the social gradient'*

- Equitable distribution of individual and community benefits from use of and engagement with woodlands and forests





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:

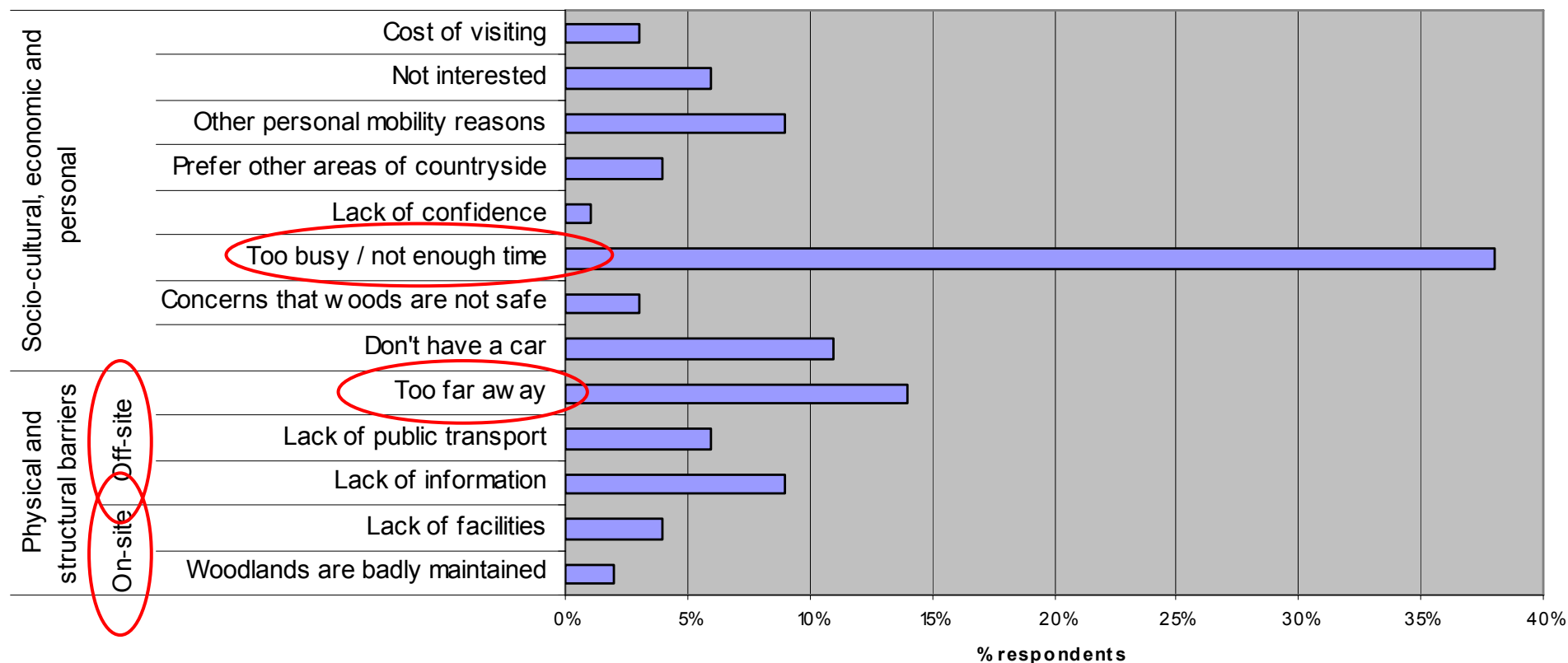
- Why are certain sections of society under-represented?
- What's stopping these groups from visiting / engaging?
- If there is a disconnect between access and accessibility, what are the appropriate forest policy and management responses?
- How can forestry in the UK achieve a shift in the profile of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



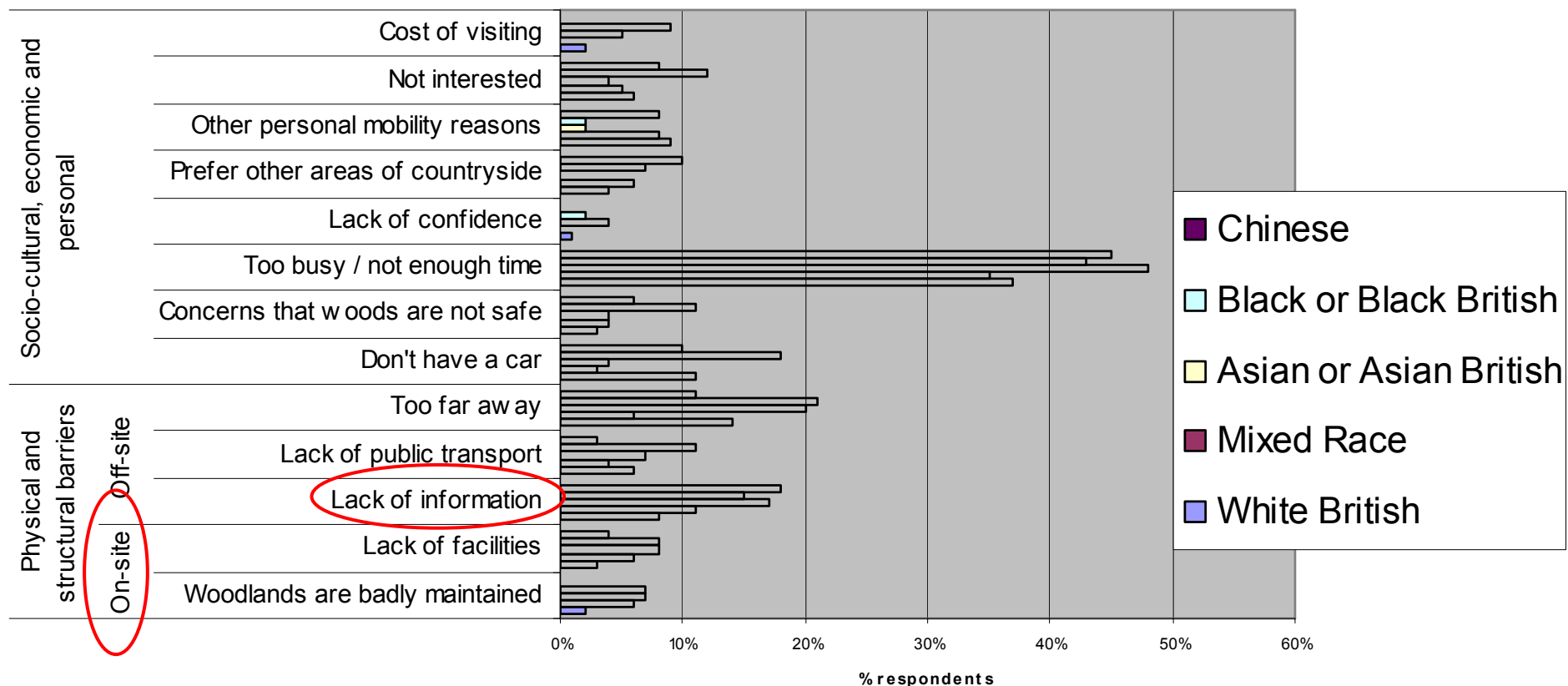
Methods / analysis	Quantitative (surveys) - 'popularity' & social distribution of barriers	Qualitative research – respondents' experiences of barriers
Relevance to forest policy / management	Identification of key barriers Identification of 'target groups' for interventions	Informs design of appropriate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

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

POFS 2009 - reasons for not visiting woodland

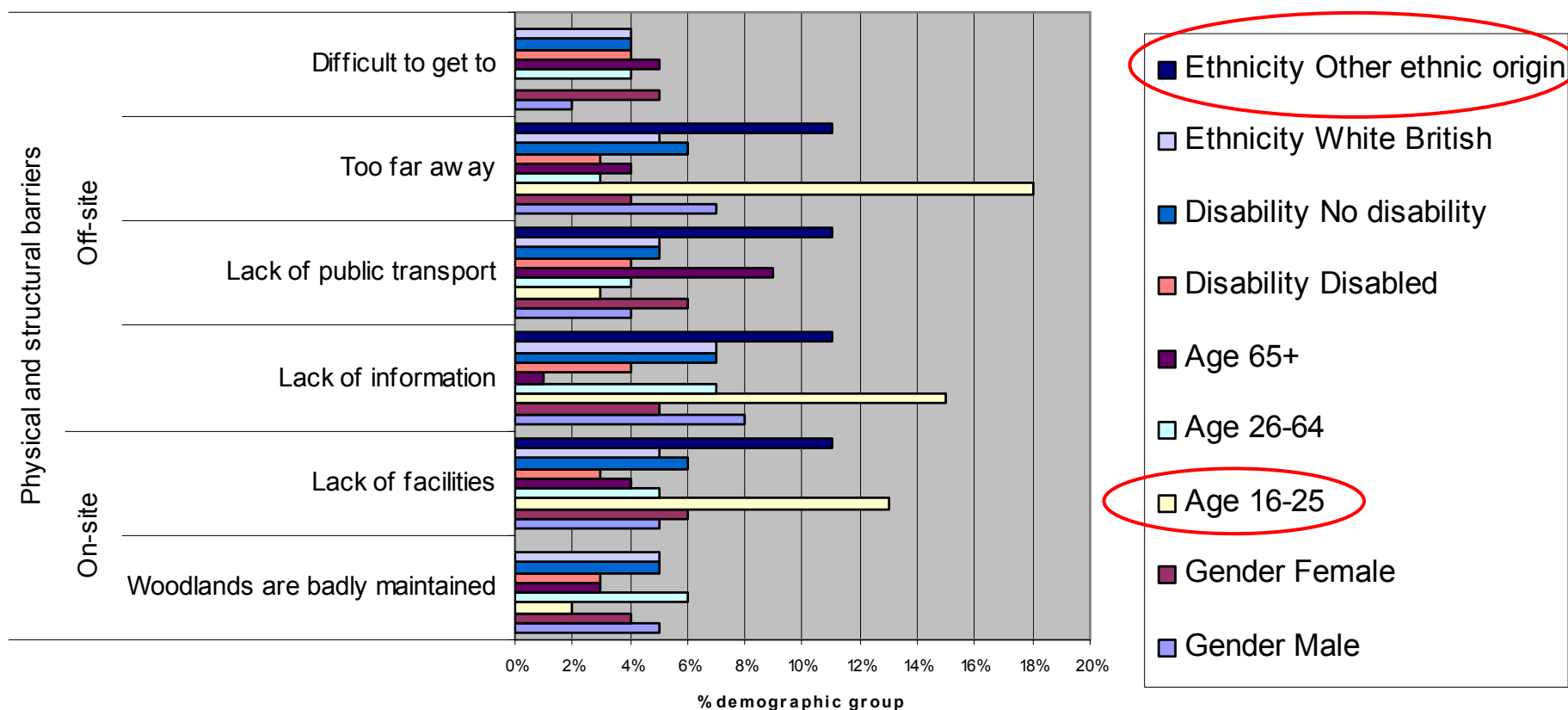


POFS 2009 – Reasons for not visiting woodland





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

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

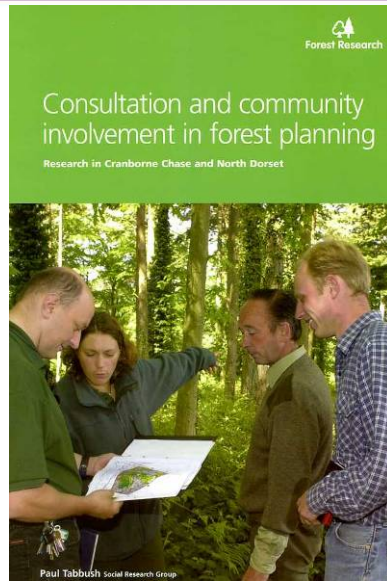
Over 45s – lack of confidence

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



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