

Forestry Statistics 2016

A compendium of statistics about woodland, forestry and primary wood processing in the United Kingdom



Chapter 6: Recreation

Contents

6 Recreation: Introduction.....2

 6.1 Visits to woodland - household surveys..... 3

 6.2 Visits to woodland - on-site surveys 11

 6.3 Public access to woodland..... 14

Sources.....17

6 Recreation

Introduction

This chapter contains statistics on:

- the number and profile of visits to all woodlands from household surveys;
- the number and profile of visits to Forestry Commission/ Natural Resources Wales/ Forest Service woodlands from on-site surveys and administrative sources; and
- public access to woodland.

Geographical coverage for recreation statistics varies. Estimates are presented at country level and, where possible, UK or GB totals are included. Further information on the data sources and methodology used to compile the figures is provided in the Sources chapter.

Most of the statistics presented in this chapter have been previously released by other organisations. The latest year figures for day visitors to Forest Service sites in Northern Ireland are published for the first time in this release. Figures for earlier years have not been revised from those previously published. For further details on revisions, see the Recreation section of the Sources chapter.

Further information on the advantages and disadvantages of household surveys and of on-site surveys is provided in the Recreation section of the Sources chapter.

A copy of all recreation tables is available to download as an Excel spreadsheet from the [Tables for Download page](#).

Key findings

The main findings are:

- There were an estimated 447 million visits to woodland in England in 2015-16. Walking with a dog was the most commonly reported activity, undertaken on around two thirds of visits in England. (Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment 2014-15, 2015-16).
- There were an estimated 90 million visits to woodland in Scotland in 2013. 63% of the Scottish population had visited woodland in the previous 12 months. (Scotland's People and Nature Survey 2013).
- There were an estimated 68 million visits to woodland in Wales in 2014. Walking was the main activity undertaken on around two thirds of visits in Wales. (Welsh Outdoor Recreation Survey 2014).
- Over one half of the UK population have visited woodland in the last few years. (UK Public Opinion of Forestry Survey 2015).
- Around 9.1 million visits are made annually to Forestry Commission Scotland woodlands. (All Forests Surveys).
- Around 432 thousand people visited Forest Service sites where a charge is made in Northern Ireland in 2015-16.
- Around one half (50%) of the UK woodland area was estimated to be publicly accessible in 2014. (Woods for People).

6.1 Visits to woodland - household surveys

The information shown below in Table 6.1 has been obtained from the following general population household surveys.

- UK Day Visits Surveys (1994, 1996, 1998)
- GB Day Visits Survey (2002/3)
- Scottish Recreation Survey (2004 to 2012)
- England Leisure Visits Survey (2005)
- Welsh Outdoor Recreation Survey (2008, 2011, 2014)
- Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (England, 2009-10 onwards)
- Scotland's People and Nature Survey (2013)

It is likely that differences in survey design and methodology have contributed to a considerable proportion of the differences in results between these surveys. The figures in Table 6.1 should not be interpreted as time trends but instead as separate results from each survey. Further information on the differences between surveys is provided in the Recreation section of the Sources chapter.

In common with all sample based surveys, the results from each survey are subject to the effects of chance, depending on the particular survey method used and the sample achieved, thus confidence limits apply to all results from these surveys.

Results from the Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment 2015-16 quarterly reports estimate a total of 447 million visits to woodlands in England (Table 6.1). This is not significantly different from the 2014-15 figure.

The Welsh Outdoor Recreation Survey 2014 estimates a total of 68 million visits to woodlands in Wales. This is a statistically significant decrease from the estimated total of 86 million in 2011, but similar to the 2008 estimate (64 million).

Scotland's People and Nature Survey 2013 reports an estimated total of 90 million visits to woodlands in Scotland. This is a statistically significant increase from the 2012 estimate of 62 million visits from the Scottish Recreation Survey. This increase is partly the result of applying a new population estimate in the calculation of total visits for 2013.

Chapter 6: Recreation
Visits to Woodland – Household Surveys

Table 6.1 Number of visits to woodland

Year	Journey starting point			
	England	Wales	Scotland	GB
1994	273	12	18	303
1996	308	11	26	346
1998	321	11	22	355
2002	222	12	18	252
2004	..	..	70	..
2005	170	..	62	..
2006	..	..	76	..
2007	..	..	72	..
2008	..	64	62	..
2009	317	..	57	..
2010	326	..	63	..
2011	358	86	65	..
2012	357	..	62	..
2013	378	..	90	..
2014	417	68	..	..
2015	447	..	..	..

Sources:

1994, 1996, 1998: *UK Day Visit Surveys*, carried out by National Centre for Social Research (not available online); 2002: *GB Day Visits Survey 2002-03*, carried out by TNS Travel & Tourism; England 2005: *England Leisure Visits Survey (ELVS)*, carried out by Research International; England 2009 on: *Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE)*, carried out by TNS; Wales 2008, 2011, 2014: *Welsh Outdoor Recreation Survey* carried out by IPSOS-MORI (2008) and by TNS (2011, 2014); Scotland 2004 - 2012: *Scottish Recreation Survey (ScRS)*, carried out by TNS; Scotland 2013: *Scotland's People and Nature Survey (SPANs)*, carried out by TNS.

Notes:

1. The UK and GB Day Visits Surveys collected data about day trips from home, for all countries of GB. The 1994, 1996 and 1998 surveys covered calendar years; the 2002-03 survey covered a 12-month period starting in March 2002.
2. ELVS and MENE covered trips taken in England, including those from holiday bases, by respondents living in England. ELVS ran for 12 months from February 2005. MENE results relate to 12 month periods from March to February.
3. The Welsh Outdoor Recreation Survey totals shown are for trips with woodland as the main destination.
4. The Scottish Recreation Survey ran from July 2003 until December 2012. It was replaced by Scotland's People and Nature Survey that ran from March 2013 to February 2014. Both surveys covered visits to the outdoors for leisure and recreation in Scotland by people living in Scotland. The total shown is for all trips that included a visit to woodland.
5. In each survey, visits to overseas destinations are excluded.

.. Denotes data not available.

These figures are outside the scope of National Statistics

6.1.1 England

Household surveys in England

In March 2009 fieldwork commenced on the Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) survey, which includes collecting information on visits to the outdoors in England. Further information on the survey, including copies of annual reports and online data viewers to access more detailed results, is available at www.gov.uk/government/collections/monitor-of-engagement-with-the-natural-environment-survey-purpose-and-results

Table 6.2 shows the main characteristics of visits to woodlands over the most recent 5 years. Around two thirds of visits to woodland involved walking with a dog and around one fifth involved other walking. Walking was the main mode of transport for around three fifths of visits to woodland. Around three fifths of visits to woodland were within 2 miles.

Table 6.2 Woodland visit characteristics¹ - England 2010-11 to 2014-15

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Activities on trip (multi response)					
Walking with a dog	68	70	67	69	67
Other walking	21	21	21	20	21
Wildlife watching	5	5	5	5	5
Playing with children	5	5	4	5	6
Eat/ drink out	4	4	3	3	5
Visiting an attraction	3	2	2	2	2
Off road cycling or mountain biking	2	2	2	3	2
Road cycling	2	2	2	2	2
Main mode of transport					
On foot	62	65	65	62	60
Car/ van	34	32	31	33	36
Bicycle	2	2	3	3	2
Distance travelled (one way)					
Less than 1 mile	36	30	31	36	39
1 to 2 miles	27	32	29	27	25
3 to 5 miles	19	22	23	22	19
6 to 10 miles	8	7	8	7	9
Over 10 miles	10	9	9	8	8

Source: Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE), carried out by TNS, for Natural England, Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) and Forestry Commission.

Notes:

1. All trips that included a visit to woodland.

.. Denotes data not available.

These figures are outside the scope of National Statistics

6.1.2 Scotland

Household surveys in Scotland

Scotland's People and Nature Survey (SPANS), which measures and collects details about the Scottish adult population's participation in outdoor recreation in Scotland, ran from March 2013 until February 2014, with 1,000 adults interviewed in their home each month. The survey replaced the previous Scottish Recreation Survey (ScRS).

Further information on SPANS and the ScRS, including copies of annual reports and online data viewers to access more detailed results, is available from the Scottish Natural Heritage website at www.snh.gov.uk/land-and-sea/managing-recreation-and-access/increasing-participation/measuring-participation/

Table 6.3 shows the frequency of visits to woodland by the Scottish adult population in the previous 12 months. 63% of respondents had visited woodland at least once in the previous year. This compares with results from the Scotland Public Opinion of Forestry Survey (table 6.5), showing that 76% of respondents to the 2013 survey had visited woodland in the last few years. Around one third (34%) of respondents had visited woodland at least once a month in the previous 12 months.

Table 6.3 Frequency of visits to woodland¹ - Scotland

Frequency	2013-14
per cent of respondents	
At least once a week	18
Once or twice a month	16
Once every 2-3 months	13
Once or twice	16
Never	37
Total	100

Source: Scotland's People and Nature Survey, carried out by TNS, for Scottish Natural Heritage, Forestry Commission Scotland, National Park authorities and Greenspace Scotland.

Base: 6,042 respondents.

Note:

1. All trips that include a visit to woodland.

These figures are outside the scope of National Statistics

6.1.3 Wales

Household surveys in Wales

Natural Resources Wales and its predecessors (Countryside Council for Wales and Forestry Commission Wales) commissioned a Welsh Outdoor Recreation

Chapter 6: Recreation
Visits to Woodland – Household Surveys

Survey (WORS) in 2008, 2011 and 2014. The survey provides data on Welsh residents' participation in informal outdoor activities and visits to the outdoors, including woodland. Further information on the survey, including copies of reports and data tables, is available at <http://naturalresources.wales/our-evidence-and-reports/welsh-outdoor-recreation-survey/?lang=en>

Table 6.4 shows the main characteristics of recreation visits where the main destination of visit was woodland, from the Welsh Outdoor Recreation Surveys. Walking was reported as the main activity in around two thirds of visits to woodland. Car or van was the main mode of transport for around three fifths of visits to woodland. Around one quarter of visits to woodland in 2014 were within 1 mile and around one third were for less than two hours. Respondents were accompanied by a dog in around one half of visits to woodland.

Table 6.4 Woodland visit characteristics¹- Wales, 2008, 2011 & 2014

Woodland visit characteristics	2008	2011	2014
per cent			
Main activity during visit			
Walking	68	68	64
Off road cycling, mountain biking	8	7	3
Horse riding	4	4	2
Running	4	7	6
Sightseeing or visiting an attraction	4	3	1
Main transport			
Car/ van	47	57	56
On foot	43	37	37
Bicycle/ mountain bike	7	1	3
Distance travelled (one way)			
0 distance, up to 1 mile	44	48	25
Over 1 mile, up to 5 miles	26	30	47
Over 5 miles, up to 20 miles	18	14	20
Over 20 miles	12	8	8
Duration of visit (round trip)			
Up to 1 hour	10	8	5
Over 1 hour, up to 2 hours	29	34	26
Over 2 hours, up to 3 hours	25	21	24
3 hours or more	36	37	45
Accompanied by a dog			
	60	53	54

Source: Welsh Outdoor Recreation Survey 2008, carried out by Ipsos-MORI, and Welsh Outdoor Recreation Survey 2011, carried out by TNS, for Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) and Forestry Commission Wales, and Welsh Outdoor Recreation Survey 2014, carried out by TNS for Natural Resources Wales.

Notes:

1. Visits where the main destination was woodland.
These figures are outside the scope of National Statistics

6.1.4 Public Opinion of Forestry Survey - woodland visitors

Public Opinion of Forestry survey - woodland visitors

The Public Opinion of Forestry Survey is carried out every two years and obtains people's attitudes to forestry and forestry-related issues, including visits to woodland. Copies of reports and detailed data tables are available at www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-5zyl9w.

The results shown in Tables 6.5 and 6.6 and Figure 6.1 have been taken from the UK and country reports on the latest surveys in 2014 and 2015, and from surveys in earlier years. The reports also include other recreation-related results, such as whether the woodlands visited were in towns or the countryside and any reasons given by survey respondents for not visiting woodlands.

In the UK 2015 survey, over one half (56%) of respondents said that they had visited woodland in the last few years for walks, picnics or other recreation (Table 6.5). This is significantly lower than the results for earlier years.

Table 6.5 Woodland visitors¹

Year	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland	UK
per cent of respondents					
2003	66	62	64	77	67
2005	65	69	50	67	65
2007	76	79	75	62	77
2009	77	..	57	..	77
2010	..	..	..	72	..
2011	68	68	75	..	67
2013	65	64	76	..	66
2014	..	..	..	75	..
2015	55	64	78	..	56

Source: UK/GB, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland Public Opinion of Forestry Surveys

Base: UK/GB = 4,000 respondents (2003 to 2007), 2,000 respondents (2009 to 2015);
Scotland and Wales = 1,000 respondents each;
Northern Ireland = 120 respondents (2003), 1,000 respondents (2005, 2007, 2010, 2014).

Notes:

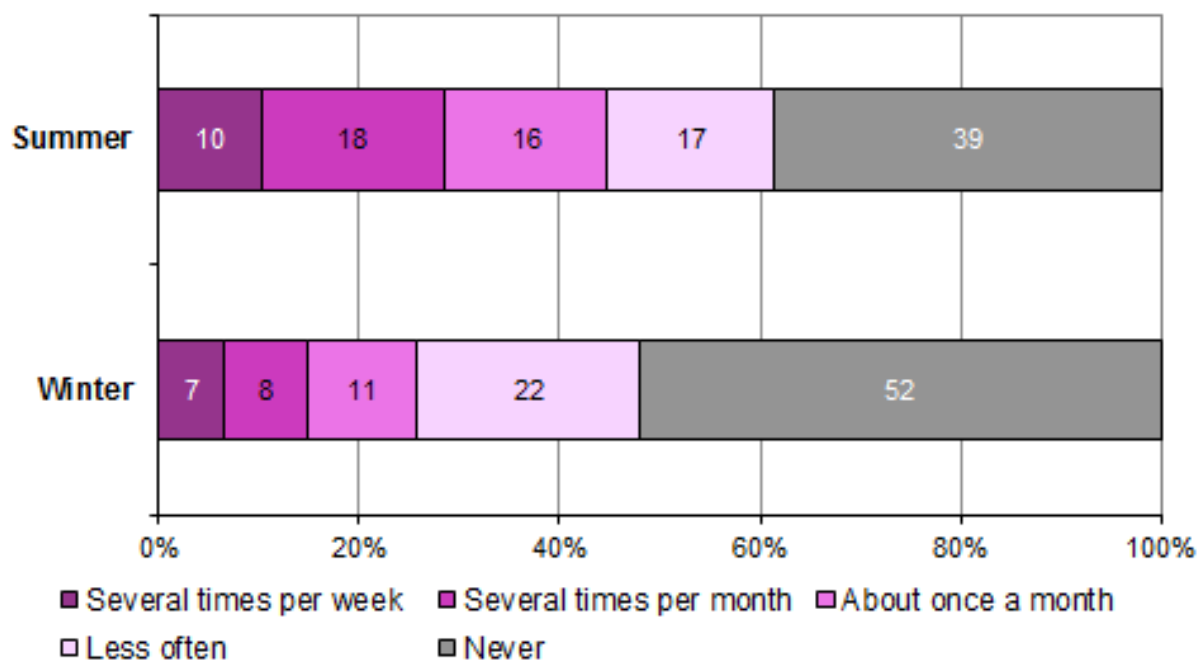
1. Those stating that they had visited woodland in the last few years.

.. Denotes data not available (survey not run that year or question not asked)

These figures are outside the scope of National Statistics

Survey respondents were asked how frequently they had visited during the previous summer and winter. Figure 6.1, which presents aggregated UK results for the 2011 to 2015 surveys, shows that respondents visited much more often during the summer, with around two fifths of respondents (44%) visiting at least once a month in the summer compared to around one quarter (26%) in the winter.

Figure 6.1 Frequency of visits to woodlands



Source: UK Public Opinion of Forestry Surveys, 2011 to 2015.

Base: Average visit frequencies from last three UK surveys: 2,000 respondents per survey.

These figures are outside the scope of National Statistics

6.1.5 Public Opinion of Forestry Survey - woodland visitors by age group

Public Opinion of Forestry surveys - woodland visitors by age group

In the UK 2015 Public Opinion of Forestry survey, around three fifths (62%) of respondents aged 35 to 54 said that they had visited woodland in the last few years for walks, picnics or other recreation (Table 6.6). This compares with around one half of respondents aged 16 to 34 (54%) and aged 55 or over (53%).

Chapter 6: Recreation
Visits to Woodland – Household Surveys

Table 6.6 Woodland visitors¹ by age group

Year	Aged 16 to 34	Aged 35 to 54	Aged 55 and over	Total
per cent of respondents				
1999	73	74	55	67
2001	75	77	63	72
2003	71	72	60	67
2005	66	74	56	65
2007	79	82	69	77
2009	78	84	69	77
2011	65	74	63	67
2013	62	75	60	66
2015	54	62	53	56

Source: UK and GB Public Opinion of Forestry Surveys, 1999 to 2015.

Base: 2,000 respondents (1999, 2001, 2009 to 2015); 4,000 respondents (2003, 2005, 2007).

Notes:

1. Those stating they had visited woodland in the last few years.

These figures are outside the scope of National Statistics

6.2 Visits to woodland - on-site surveys

The previous section provided information on visits to all woodlands (regardless of ownership), based on data from household surveys. This section provides information on visits to Forestry Commission/ Natural Resources Wales/ Forest Service woodland only, based on data from on-site surveys and administrative sources.

The information provided in this section covers:

- Visits to the National Forest Estate in Scotland (Forestry Commission Scotland woodlands) from the All Forests Scotland surveys run from 2004 to 2007 and in 2012-13.
- Day visitors to Northern Ireland Forest Service sites where an admission charge was made.

Further information on these and other sources of on-site visit data are available from the Sources chapter and from the recreation statistics web pages at www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/ahen-5gcdvl.

6.2.1 Scotland All Forests Survey

On site surveys - Scotland All Forests surveys

All Forests surveying in Scotland has been undertaken on two occasions. The first All Forests Survey in Scotland was carried out across a three-year period from June 2004 to June 2007, with over 5,000 hours of fieldwork undertaken over 1,158 days, achieving almost 2,700 face to face interviews. The study estimated that around 8.2 million visits are made annually to Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) woodland. An estimated 150-200 thousand visits to events in forests and around 300 thousand visits during the hours of darkness (when fieldwork was not undertaken) were also made, giving an overall total of around 8.7 million visits per year.

The second All Forests Survey was carried out from November 2012 to October 2013. The survey made greater use of data from automatic counters, but also achieved over 400 days of fieldwork and 1,970 face-to-face interviews.

The 2012-13 survey estimated an annual total of 9.1 million visits (including visits to events and in the hours of darkness) to Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) woodland. This represents a 5% increase on the estimated overall total of 8.7 million visits from the 2004-2007 survey.

Table 6.7 provides a summary of the key characteristics and results obtained from the Scotland All Forests surveys and appears to show some change in visit characteristics over time, with a general trend towards longer, more distant and less frequent visits. From the 2012-13 survey, around two thirds of visitors to Forestry Commission Scotland woodlands were on a day trip from home. Walking (with or without a dog) was the main activity undertaken by around three quarters of visitors. Over four fifths travelled to the site by car or van and around one third travelled more than 15 miles to get to the site. Around one

Chapter 6: Recreation
Visits to Woodland – On-Site Surveys

third of visitors were on short trips, spending one hour or less in the forest. Around one half of respondents visited the site at least monthly.

Table 6.7 Woodland visit characteristics - Scotland All Forests Survey

Woodland visit characteristics	2004-2007	2012-13
Type of trip		
Day trip	82	67
Overnight trip	18	33
Main activity during visit		
Dog walking	50	43
Other walking	29	29
Cycling	11	8
Main transport		
Car / van	78	85
Walked	18	11
Cycled	2	2
Distance travelled (one way)		
Less than 6 miles	58	43
6 to 15 miles	19	25
16 to 25 miles	10	12
Over 25 miles	12	20
Duration of visit (time spent in forest)		
Up to 1 hour	59	35
Over 1 hour, up to 2 hours	24	36
Over 2 hours, up to 3 hours	10	16
Over 3 hours	7	13
Frequency of visit to site of interview		
More than once a day	7	3
Once a day	13	9
1 to 3 times per week	25	22
1 to 3 times per month	17	14
1 to 3 times per year	17	18
Less often	5	7
First ever visit	16	27

Source: Scotland All Forests Survey 2004-2007 and All Forests Survey 2, carried out by TNS.

These figures are outside the scope of National Statistics

6.2.2 Northern Ireland Forest Service day visitors

Day visitors to Northern Ireland Forest Service sites

Information on visitors to Forest Service sites in Northern Ireland is provided by the Forest Service and relates only to sites where an admission charge is made.

In Northern Ireland in 2015-16, 432 thousand people visited those Forest Service sites where an admission charge was made (Table 6.8). This represented a 9% increase from the previous year.

Table 6.8 Day visitors to Northern Ireland Forest Service sites ¹

Year	Visitors to Forest Service sites
2006-07	410
2007-08	518
2008-09	451
2009-10	473
2010-11	468
2011-12	430
2012-13	340
2013-14	364
2014-15	397
2015-16	432

Source: Forest Service

Notes:

1. Number of people visiting sites where an admission charge was made, excluding campers.

These figures are outside the scope of National Statistics

6.3 Public access to woodland

The Woods for People project (led by the Woodland Trust) has created a UK-wide provisional inventory of accessible woodland.

As a result of the information gathered on accessible woodland, the Woodland Trust has undertaken a major analysis of woodland access provision and deficit across the UK. This project, named Space for People, has used the accessible woodland data from the Woods for People project to develop targets for increasing woodland access.

Further information on the Woodland Trust is available at www.woodlandtrust.org.uk

6.3.1 Woods for People

Woods for People

The Woods for People project has created a UK-wide provisional inventory of accessible woodland.

At present, it does not include woodlands where the only access is on public rights of way. For Scotland, the Land Reform Act gives a right of responsible access to almost all land, but the dataset only includes woods that encourage access. Table 6.9 shows the proportions of woodland with public access (permissive) as identified by the Woods for People database.

The changes between versions of the dataset (2004 to 2014) are the result of several factors, including the development of the database between versions as areas are updated by land owners; one significant change was a reduction in England and Wales as a result of a fall in the amount of Walkers Welcome data. More recently, the exclusion of areas where access is constrained in England has led to a decrease in accessible woodland in 2011.

Around one half (50%) of the UK woodland area was identified as being publicly accessible in 2014 (Table 6.9).

Table 6.9 Woods for People: Publicly accessible woodland

Year	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland	UK
per cent of all woodland area ¹					
2004 ²	37	49	57	66	49
2006	32	39	58	64	46
2007	34	40	58	64	47
2008	34	40	58	64	48
2009	37	42	59	64	49
2010	39	42	59	64	50
2011	35	42	58	65	48
2012	36	43	58	66	49
2013	38	43	58	66	50
2014	38	43	59	66	50

Source: Woods for People (Woodland Trust)

Notes:

1. The total woodland area estimated in 2004 for the Woods for People project, not updated for later reports. This differs from the area shown elsewhere in Forestry Statistics for 2004 to 2014.

2. The 2004 data are from version 1 of the Woods for People project, re-analysed in September 2007 to count only woodland areas. The higher results originally presented in the 2004 Woodland Trust Spaces for People report were based in part on total land areas, rather than woodland areas.

3. Data for 2006 to 2014 are from versions 3 to 11 of the Woods for People dataset, based on woodland areas.

These figures are outside the scope of National Statistics

6.3.2 Space for People

Space for People

As a result of the information gathered on accessible woodland, the Woodland Trust has undertaken a major analysis of woodland access provision and deficit across the UK. This project, named "Space for People", has used the accessible woodland data from the Woods for People project to develop targets for increasing woodland access.

The Space for People analysis proposes a Woodland Access Standard for people to have access to a woodland of an adequate size near to where they live. The report estimates the proportion of the population with access to nearby woods, the extent to which this could be increased by improving access and the amount of new woodland that would have to be created to give the rest of the population this level of access. Three full reports have been published so far, giving data for 2004, 2009 and 2012; these are available at www.woodlandtrust.org.uk.

The most recent data suggests that almost one fifth of the UK population live within 500 metres of a wood of 2 hectares or more and that around two thirds live within 4 kilometres of a larger wood (of 20 hectares or more) (Table 6.10).

Table 6.10 Space for People: Publicly accessible woodland

% of population with access to:	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland	UK
2 ha or more wood within 500 metres					
2004	10.2	15.7	15.3	7.5	10.8
2009	14.5	17.4	27.8	7.2	15.6
2012	16.8	22.8	32.2	7.2	18.2
20 ha or more wood within 4 km					
2004	55.2	72.3	54.4	50.3	55.8
2009	63.0	76.7	83.0	40.2	64.8
2012	65.8	80.8	86.9	40.2	67.6

Source: Space for People - Targeting action for woodland access (Woodland Trust, 2010, 2015).

These figures are outside the scope of National Statistics

Sources: Recreation

Introduction

There are two main approaches to visitor monitoring:

- General population surveys of individuals at their home. This approach is employed for Scotland's People and Nature Survey, the Welsh Outdoor Recreation Survey, the Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (England) and the Public Opinion of Forestry surveys. (Tables 6.1 to 6.6).
- Surveying and counting of visitors to a specific area or woodland. On-site surveying has been employed for the All Forests surveys. In addition, the Northern Ireland Forest Service keep records of visitors who pay an admission charge to their sites. (Tables 6.7 to 6.8).

There are advantages and disadvantages to each approach, related to factors such as representativeness, feasibility and cost; each approach provides different types of information.

In general, on-site studies provide information on visitor interaction with local or specific woodland areas and include all categories of visitors to a site, regardless of their country of residence and interests.

In contrast, general population studies are limited to residents of a certain country or area, are often carried out by market research companies at a national level, and include people who do not visit woodlands.

Data Sources and Methodology

Household surveys

The information shown in Table 6.1 has been obtained from the following general population household surveys.

- UK Day Visits Surveys (1994, 1996, 1998)
- GB Day Visits Survey (2002/3)
- Scottish Recreation Survey (2004 to 2012)
- England Leisure Visits Survey (2005)
- Welsh Outdoor Recreation Survey (2008, 2011, 2014)
- Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (England 2009/10 onwards)
- Scotland's People and Nature Survey (2013)

The Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment has also been used to provide information on visitor characteristics in table 6.2. For further information on this survey, see www.gov.uk/government/collections/monitor-of-engagement-with-the-natural-environment-survey-purpose-and-results.

Estimates of frequency of visits to woodlands in Scotland (Table 6.3) has been produced from Scotland's People and Nature Survey, that ran from March 2013 to February 2014. Scotland's People and Nature Survey replaces the Scottish Recreation Survey. Further information on both surveys are available at www.snh.gov.uk/land-and-sea/managing-recreation-and-access/increasing-participation/measuring-participation/.

The Welsh Outdoor Recreation Survey also provides statistics on visitor characteristics (Table 6.4). Further information on this survey is available at <http://naturalresources.wales/our-evidence-and-reports/welsh-outdoor-recreation-survey/?lang=en>.

Public Opinion of Forestry Surveys have been run every 2 years by the Forestry Commission. The surveys cover public attitudes to forestry and forestry-related issues, including visits to woodland (Tables 6.5 to 6.6 and Figure 6.1). Further information is available on the previous page.

On-site surveys

All Forests Surveys were run at a sample of Forestry Commission sites in Scotland from 2004 to 2007 and in 2012-13 (Table 6.7), to provide estimates of the numbers of visits to the National Forest Estate in Scotland. An All Forests Survey was also run in Wales in 2004, but is no longer included in Forestry Statistics. Further information is available at www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-5wcmr4.

Quality of experience surveys have been run at selected Forestry Commission sites in England and Wales. Information on the surveys is no longer included in Forestry Statistics, but copies of the reports for each survey are available at www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-5wwjpt.

Statistics on the day visitors to Forest Service sites in Northern Ireland where an admission charge is made is provided by the Forest Service. Further information on the Forest Service is available at <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/topics/forestry>.

Public Access to Woodland

Data on public access to woodland are derived from sources belonging to the Woodland Trust:

- The Woods for People project created an inventory of accessible woodland in 2004. Annual updates have been undertaken since and the data available to date are included in Table 6.9.
- The Space for People project analyses information from the Woods for People inventory to produce estimates on the proportion of the population who live close to woods. Full reports have been published, giving data for 2004, 2009 and 2012. Summary results are in Table 6.10.

Further information is available at www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/.

Quality

It is notable from Table 6.1 that different surveys have provided some quite different estimates of the aggregate number of visits to woodlands. It is likely that differences in survey design and methodology have contributed to a considerable proportion of the differences in results between these surveys. As the scope of the surveys has evolved over time, the figures in Table 6.1 should not be interpreted as time trends but instead as separate results from each survey.

For England and GB, the 2002/3 GBDVS showed a lower number of visits to woodlands than previous surveys. For England, ELVS 2005 showed an even lower total. It is likely that the use of different market research companies and varying approaches and practices (in-home or telephone interview, changed questionnaire structure, etc) are responsible for a substantial proportion of the differences identified in the table. The questionnaire wording for MENE, starting in 2009/10, was intended to prompt the reporting of more of the short local trips, and this has resulted in a substantial increase in the total woodland visits reported.

Table 6.1 also highlights large differences between UK/GBDVS and later surveys in the estimates for Scotland and Wales, with results for both countries dramatically higher in recent years (and despite the Welsh figure being limited to trips with woodland as main destination). It is again likely that this variation is primarily connected with the change in survey scope, design and methodology (UK and GB Day Visit Surveys until 2002/3, Scottish Recreation Survey for 2004 to 2012, Welsh Outdoor Recreation Survey 2008, 2011 and 2014).

A further inconsistency may have occurred between the Scottish Recreation Survey and Scotland's People and Nature Survey, resulting in an apparently large increase in the number of woodland visits between 2012 and 2013. The 2013 estimate uses a new population estimate to gross up the survey results to an estimate of the total number of visits by the population as a whole, and this change has contributed to at least some of the apparent increase.

In common with all sample based surveys, the results from each survey are subject to the effects of chance, depending on the particular survey method used and the sample achieved, thus confidence limits apply to all results from these surveys. For example, the range of uncertainty around the estimated 62 million visits to woodland in Scotland (by Scottish residents) in 2008, should be within +/-14%, i.e. the true figure is likely to be between around 55 and 69 million.

In the Scottish Recreation Survey, the reports produced by TNS calculate the total number of visits for each month based on the average number of visits in a 4-week recall period, scaled up to the number of days in the month, applied to the Scottish adult population. These estimates are then allocated to trip locations using a data set of individual visit-weighted data. In reports produced by TNS and earlier editions of Forestry Statistics, this allocation was done for each quarter using rounded percentages. From Forestry Statistics 2010 the calculation

was changed to use annual unrounded weighted data; this should be more accurate and ensures that "main destination" results add across categories.

The Wales 2008 total is not shown explicitly in the initial reports for WORS 2008. It is calculated from the following figures in the tables: 36.028 million visits in 4 weeks x 13 (the number of 4 week periods in a year) x 14% to woodland (where the 14% is derived, unrounded, from 820/6045 in the weighted results).

For England, woodland visits in MENE were identified in the part of the questionnaire that collected details for one visit per respondent. Appropriate visit weights were applied to each record in this data set, and weighted tables were then produced selecting all visits that included woodland.

Technical reports, providing further information on MENE, ScRS and WORS, are available from relevant websites (see above).

Comparison between household and on-site surveys in Scotland

The aggregate visit number estimates for Forestry Commission Scotland woodland obtained from the on-site All Forests Scotland surveys (9.1 million in 2012-13, Table 6.7) is substantially lower than the estimates derived from the Scottish Recreation Survey (around 27 million for 2012, see Forestry Statistics 2013, Table 6.3).

Although it would be unreasonable to expect that two surveys which employ such differing methods would produce consistent estimates, the magnitude of the difference is notable.

The methodology used in the All Forests Surveys is believed to produce a more reliable estimate of the total number of visits annually to Forestry Commission Scotland woodland. It is likely that the estimates derived from the Scottish Recreation Survey may include visits to woodlands owned by others (with respondents reporting "Forestry Commission" as the owner, as this is an organisation that they recognise).

Revisions

Most of the statistics in the Recreation chapter have been previously released in other publications, usually by other organisations. The latest year figures for day visitors to Forest Service sites in Northern Ireland are published for the first time in this release. Figures for earlier years have not been revised from those published in Forestry Statistics 2015.

When originally published by Woodland Trust, Woods for People data for publicly accessible woodland in 2004 included some non-woodland areas. They were revised in 2007, before their first inclusion in Forestry Statistics, to include woodland areas only.

Results for the Scottish Recreation Survey for years up to 2007 (Table 6.1) were amended in 2009 from previously published figures, to incorporate improved weighting procedures.

The Forestry Commission's revisions policy sets out how revisions and errors are dealt with and can be found at [www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FCrevisions.pdf/\\$FILE/FCrevisions.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FCrevisions.pdf/$FILE/FCrevisions.pdf).

Further information

Further information on recreation statistics and access to individual survey reports is available from www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/ahen-5qcdvl.

Release schedule

For information on the release schedules of statistics produced by others, see relevant websites (above).

The next Public Opinion of Forestry survey is expected to run in early 2017, with results available in summer 2017.

"Forestry Statistics 2017" and "Forestry Facts & Figures 2017" will be released on 28 September 2017.