

Forestry Commission

Forestry Statistics 2006

Recreation

The Forestry Commission obtains information about woodland visits and visitors from the household surveys and on-site monitoring programmes.

Visits to woodland

The information in Table 5.1 is taken from *UK Day Visits Surveys* (1994, 1996 and 1998), and the *GB Day Visits Survey* (2002/3), which collected data about day trips from home during these years. The 1994, 1996 and 1998 surveys covered a calendar year, while the 2002/3 survey covered a 12-month period starting in March 2002. Despite the name of the early surveys, they did not cover visits by people living in Northern Ireland. Visits to overseas destinations were also excluded. Although the methodology used in the 2002/3 survey was largely the same as in earlier surveys, differences between practices in the two surveys may be responsible for some of the differences in results.

Table 5.2 shows the main characteristics of woodland visits in 2002/3. Similar information for the 1996 and 1998 surveys is provided in *Forestry Statistics 2002*.

The GB Day Visits Survey was a sample survey, so the results are subject to the effects of chance, depending on the sample achieved. Confidence limits apply to all results from the survey. For example, when confidence limits are included, the first line of data in Table 5.2 gives figures of 8%±10.9% in GB, 8%±11.0% in England, 9%±11.7% in Scotland and 7%±11.5% in Wales. Further information about confidence limits can be found in the *GB Leisure Day Visits Survey 2002/3 Technical Report*.

It is estimated that around 252 million day visits from home were made to woodland in GB in 2002/3. Of those surveyed in 2002/3, 8% had visited woodland in the previous 2-week period, while 40% had visited woodland in the last year.

Table 5.1 Number of day visits to woodland

millions of visits				
Journey starting point				
	GB	England	Scotland	Wales
1994	303	273	18	12
1996	346	308	26	11
1998	355	321	22	11
2002/03	252	222	18	12

Source: 1994, 1996 & 1998: *UK Day Visits Survey*, carried out by National Centre for Social Research (not National Statistics). 2002/3: *GB Day Visits Survey*, carried out by TNS Travel & Tourism (not National Statistics).

Table 5.2 Woodland visit characteristics - 2002/3

percentage ¹					
Journey starting point					
		GB	England	Scotland	Wales
Most recent woodland visit	Within last 2 weeks	8	8	9	7
	Within last year	40	40	36	40
Season of year	January-March	27	28	20	15
	April-June	22	21	28	27
	July-September	38	39	28	35
	October-December	14	12	25	23
Day of week	Weekday	55	54	62	66
	Weekend	45	46	38	34
Duration of visit (round trip)	Up to 1 hour	39	41	23	25
	Over 1, up to 2 hours	28	28	29	31
	Over 2, up to 3 hours	10	9	16	13
	Over 3 hours	23	22	32	31
Distance travelled (round trip)	Up to 2 miles	26	27	21	22
	Over 2, up to 5 miles	36	38	24	29
	Over 5, up to 20 miles	22	21	31	30
	Over 20 miles	16	14	25	19
Group composition	One adult only	50	51	42	48
	Two adults only	20	18	31	31
	Three or more adults only	8	9	6	4
	Group with children	21	22	21	16
Perceived owner or manager	Local Authority	33	35	22	22
	Forestry Commission	21	20	27	29
	Voluntary organisation	7	7	7	9
	Private owner	23	23	19	21
	Other	6	7	3	7
	Don't know	9	8	22	12

Source: 2002/3 GB Day Visits Survey (not National Statistics).

1. 'Most recent woodland visit' figures refer to % of respondents, others refer to % of trips.

Scotland

In Scotland, the Day Visits Survey has been replaced by the Scottish Recreation Survey. This survey measures and collects details about the Scottish population's participation in outdoor recreation in Scotland. The Scottish Recreation Survey began in July 2003 and will run for ten years, with 1,000 adults being interviewed each month. The focus of the Scottish Recreation Survey and the methodology used is different from that of the Day Visits Survey, so results from the two surveys may not be comparable.

In 2003/4 an estimated 53 million recreation visits were made by the Scottish population to woodland in Scotland, either as a main destination or other destination; (22 million to Forestry Commission woodland, 31 million to other woodland). It is estimated that during 2004/5, 24 million recreational visits were made to Forestry Commission woodland and 26 million recreational visits were made to other woodland.

Table 5.3 shows the findings relating to recreation visits from the first two years of the Scottish Recreation Survey where the main destination was woodland.

Table 5.3 Woodland visit characteristics - Scotland

		percentage ¹	
		2003/04	2004/05
Main activity during visit	Walking	69	67
	Family outing	9	11
	Cycling	7	7
Main transport	Car/ van	64	63
	On foot	25	28
	Cycling	7	7
Distance travelled	Up to 2 miles	14	12
	Over 2, up to 5 miles	21	21
	Over 5, up to 20 miles	29	30
	Over 20 miles	36	37
Duration of visit (round trip)	Less than 1 hour	12	9
	1 - less than 2 hours	21	24
	2 - less than 3 hours	17	18
	3 hours or more	50	49
Frequency of visit to main destination	At least once a day	9	8
	Several times a week	13	10
	Once a week	10	10
	1-2 times a month	21	23
	Once every 2-3 months	17	17
	Less often	20	23
	First ever visit	10	9
Party composition (multiple responses possible)	Alone	16	18
	With family	60	56
	With friends	21	22
	Organised group	3	3
Accompanied by a dog?	Yes	31	29
	No	69	71

Source: Scottish Recreation Survey - carried out by TNS (not National Statistics).

1. Percentage of respondents whose main destination of last trip was woodland.

England

An England Leisure Visits Survey was carried out in 2005, and is due to report in late 2006.

Public Opinion

The Public Opinion of Forestry Survey is carried out every 2 years and covers people's attitudes to forestry and forestry-related issues, including visits to woodland.

The Public Opinion of Forestry Survey 2005 (not National Statistics) is a set of four surveys of representative samples of adults covering:

- 4000 across Great Britain;
- 1000 across Scotland;
- 1000 across Wales; and
- 1000 across Northern Ireland

The information in Figures 5.1 and 5.2 and Tables 5.4 and 5.5 is taken from the GB and country reports on the 2005 survey, which included comparisons with previous surveys. The survey was carried out in March 2005. Results from the GB survey of 4000 adults are accurate to within +/-2.3% for questions where all respondents gave an answer.

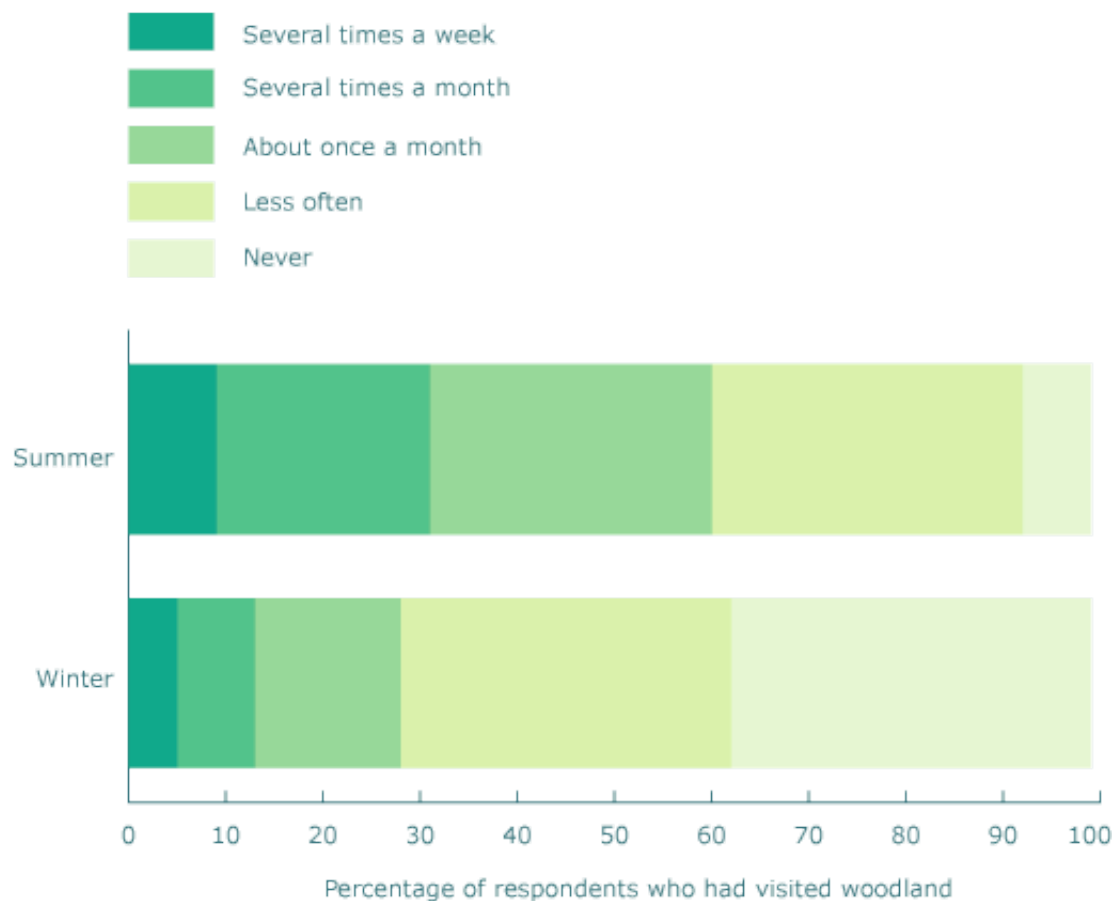
In the 2005 survey, 65% of respondents said they had visited woodland in the last few years for walks, picnics or other recreation.

Table 5.4 Woodland visitors

	% of respondents				
	UK	England	Scotland	Wales	N Ireland
Visited woodland in last few years	65	65	50	69	67

Source: Public Opinion of Forestry Survey 2005 (not National Statistics).

Those who had visited woodland were asked how frequently they had visited during the previous summer and winter. Figure 5.1 shows that the respondents visited much more often during the summer, with 60% visiting at least once a month in summer 2004 compared with 28% in winter 2004/5.

Figure 5.1 Frequency of visits to woodland

Source: Public Opinion of Forestry Survey 2005 (not National Statistics).

Respondents were also asked who they thought owned any of the forests or woodlands they had visited (Table 5.5). Voluntary bodies (e.g. National Trust, Woodland Trust) and the Forestry Commission/Forest Enterprise were the most popular responses (more than one response was possible for this question).

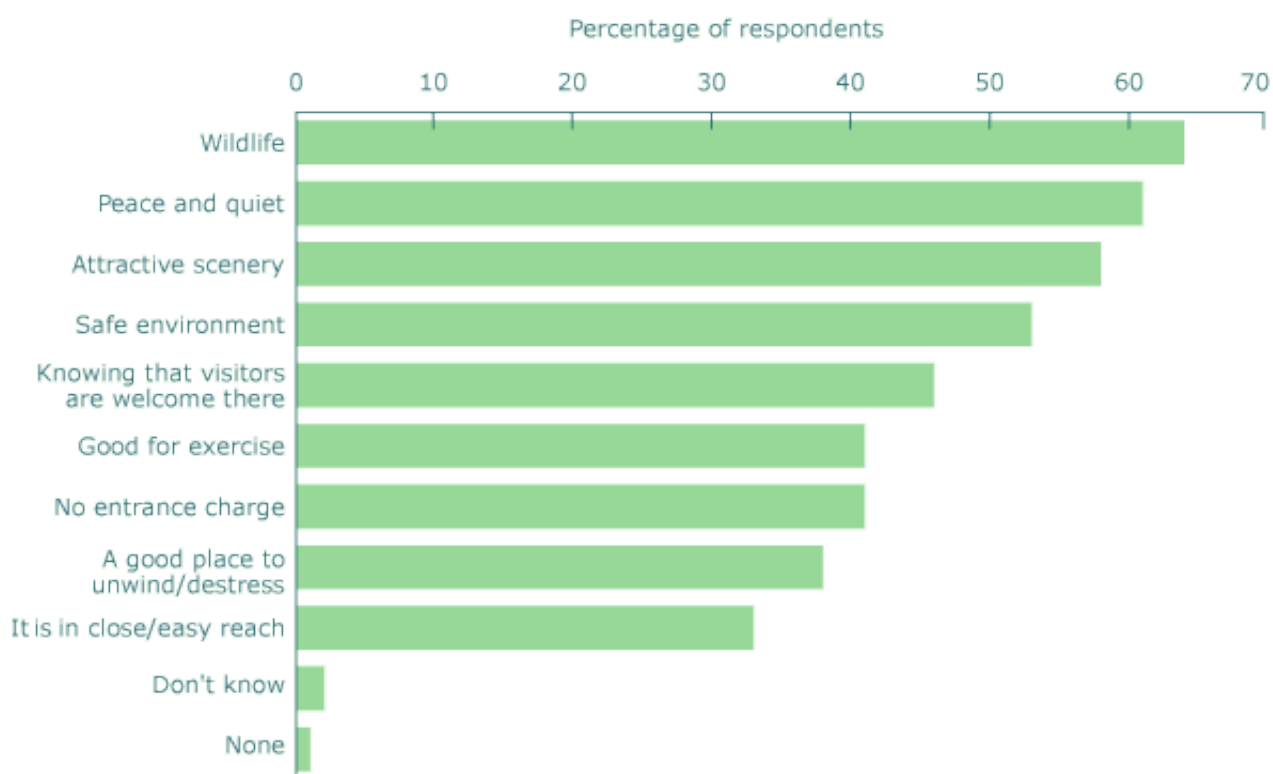
Table 5.5 Ownership of woodland visited

	% of respondents who had visited woodland
Forestry Commission/Forest Enterprise	36
Voluntary bodies	49
<i>National Trust/National Trust for Scotland</i>	40
<i>Woodland Trust</i>	17
<i>Other voluntary body</i>	3
Local authorities	30
Private owners	18
None/Don't know	17

Source: Public Opinion of Forestry Survey 2005 (not National Statistics).

Respondents to the survey were asked to identify the factors that were important to them when choosing to visit a woodland. Wildlife (64%), peace and quiet (61%), attractive scenery (58%) and a safe environment (53%) were the most frequently stated reasons.

Figure 5.2 Factors important when choosing to visit a woodland



Source: Public Opinion of Forestry Survey 2005 (not National Statistics).

On-Site Visitor Monitoring

Until 2002, a visitor monitoring programme (not National Statistics) was carried out at selected Forestry Commission woodland sites in England, Scotland and Wales. Year-on-year changes in visitor numbers were estimated by the Trends Index, which used data from traffic counters and other counters (Visitor Monitoring Trends Index Report). Information about visitors and their views on facilities were collected by on-site visitor surveys and the results summarised in Forest Visitor Surveys.

In 2002 and 2003, the Forestry Commission developed new visitor monitoring systems to replace the existing national visitor monitoring programme. The "All Forests Visitor Monitoring" survey provides more accurate estimates of the number of visits to Forestry Commission woodland, whilst continuing to gather information on the profile of visitors. This survey has been adopted in Wales (over a 1 year period) and Scotland (over a 3 year period), with surveying starting in 2004. The "Quality of Experience" survey combines quantitative and qualitative methods to measure the quality of visitor experience at a site. This survey was adopted in England in 2004 and in Wales in 2006, with 5-6 surveys now being carried out per year at selected sites. Reports from these surveys are published on the Forestry Commission website when results become available.

Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland in 2005-06, 433 thousand people visited those Forest Service sites where an admission charge was made.

Table 5.6 Day visitors to Northern Ireland Forest Service sites¹

Year (ending 31/3)	thousands of people visiting sites	
	N Ireland	
1996-97	537	
1997-98	458	
1998-99	382	
1999-00	403	
2000-01	402	
2001-02	403	
2002-03	460	
2003-04	446	
2004-05	508	
2005-06	433	

Source: Forest Service.

1. Only covers sites for which an admission charge is made.

Woodland recreation facilities

Forest Parks are areas of Forestry Commission land which are of national importance for recreation. Recreation facilities are also available at many smaller woodland sites. Information is only available for Forestry Commission woodland, but many woodland sites managed by local authorities, voluntary organisations, and other private owners also provide recreation facilities. Forest Parks cover around 145 thousand hectares in Scotland, 135 thousand hectares in England and around 16 thousand hectares in Wales. The largest is Galloway Forest Park, which covers a total area of 77 thousand hectares, followed by Kielder Forest Park, at 60 thousand hectares.

Table 5.7 Size of Forest Parks

		hectares
England	New Forest	27 000
	Forest of Dean	11 000
	Delamere	1 100
	Sherwood Pines	1 300
	Thetford	19 000
	North Riding	12 000
	Whinlatter	1 200
	Grizedale	2 700
	Kielder	60 000
	Total England	135 300
Scotland	Glenmore	3 600
	Tay	17 000
	Queen Elizabeth	20 000
	Argyll	21 000
	Galloway	77 000
	Tweed Valley	6 400
	Total Scotland	145 000
Wales	Afan Argoed	6 500
	Coed-y-Brenin	3 100
	Gwydyr	6 100
	Total Wales	15 700

Source: Forestry Commission.

Table 5.8 presents information on Forestry Commission recreation facilities and activities that were included on the Forestry Commission website in August 2006. A total of 653 sites were featured on the website: 294 (45%) in Scotland, 242 (37%) in England and 117 (18%) in Wales.

84% of sites had parking facilities and 76% included walking activities.

Table 5.8 Forestry Commission recreation facilities and activities^{1, 2} - 2006

as at August 2006				
Facility	GB	England	Scotland	Wales
Total sites on FC website	653	242	294	117
Facilities				
Parking - Free	487	178	230	79
Parking - Paid	63	39	12	12
Information	244	113	110	21
Easy Access	152	92	41	19
Toilet	147	74	56	17
Refreshments	83	53	22	8
Visitor Centre	54	28	20	6
Shop	39	23	11	5
Activities				
Walking	495	177	235	83
Cycling	253	108	108	37
Picnic	247	115	91	41
Horse Riding	187	71	58	58
Wildlife Activities	130	66	53	11
Education	110	55	41	14
View Point	92	27	53	12
Heritage	67	25	37	5
Fishing	57	23	20	14
Orienteering	55	33	15	7
Play Area	52	29	17	6
Barbecue	52	32	6	14
Camping	35	21	11	3
Arts	30	17	13	0
Forest Drive	26	15	10	1
Arboretum	14	7	3	4
Watersports	9	4	3	2
Skiing	1	0	1	0

Source: Forestry Commission.

1. Number of sites where a given facility or activity is present. These data are not directly comparable with numbers published for years before 2003.
2. A small number of facilities or activities are double counted as they appear more than once in the database used for the website.

Community Forests

England's 12 Community Forests are the product of a partnership between the Forestry Commission, the Countryside Agency and a host of other local and national partnerships. Since their inception in 1991, the Community Forests have helped to revitalise areas around many of England's towns and cities, delivering economic, social and environmental benefits to local communities.

Table 5.9 provides information on the 12 Community Forests in England and five other community forestry initiatives in Great Britain. These 17 community forests cover a land area of 1.1 million hectares. A total of 27 thousand hectares of new planting had been achieved by March 2006. This has increased the woodland cover in these forests from an initial 6% to 9% of the total area by March 2006.

Table 5.9 Community Forests

Name of Forest	Land area ¹ (ha)	Initial woodland area (ha)	Initial % woodland cover	Target new planting (ha)	Achieved new planting to Mar 2006 (ha)	Population ² (millions)
Community Forests						
Forest of Avon	57 300	3 380	6	6 726	605	1
Forest of Mercia	23 000	1 344	6	5 656	706	4
Forest of Marston Vale	15 800	569	4	4 120	964	1
Great North Forest	24 870	1 970	8	4 000	1 236	1
Great Western Community Forest	39 000	1 170	3	7 588	1 242	1
Greenwood Community Forest	43 800	4 530	10	5 750	1 283	2
Mersey Forest	92 500	3 700	4	8 140	2 833	4
Red Rose Forest	76 000	2 960	4	10 000	1 331	4
South Yorkshire	50 530	3 800	8	3 670	620	2
The Tees Forest	34 970	2 410	7	5 870	1 159	1
Thames Chase Community Forest	10 406	824	8	2 260	496	5
Watling Chase Community Forest	18 800	1 690	9	1 930	293	3
Other community forestry initiatives						
Black Country Urban Forest	36 000	364	1	1 000	370	1
Central Scotland Forest	160 000	17 000	11	17 000	7 951	1
ELWOOD (East Lancashire)	126 000	10 691	8	1 000	526	0
The National Forest	50 200	3 010	6	13 554	5 434	10
White Rose Forest	202 100	9 100	5	12 126	238	2
Total	1 061 276	68 512	6	110 390	27 288	

Source: Forestry Commission.

1. Area is total area designated as extent of Community Forest. Only a limited proportion of this will ever be covered by trees.
2. The population is usually the population living within 20 km. In a few cases however, it is the population of the area served, which may represent a larger area (e.g. those living within a 90 minute drive for the National Forest).
3. New planting figures for Central Scotland Forest in 2005-06 are not yet available. These figures are the new planting achieved to March 2005.