



This bulletin describes the main findings of the Outdoor Recreation section of the 2016-2017 National Survey for Wales. Full results and an interactive Results Viewer can be found at <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/national-survey/?lang=en>.

Who Participates in Outdoor Recreation?

Overall, participation in outdoor recreation is very high, with 81% of adults living in Wales taking part in one or more activity at least once in the last 12 months. The average (mean) number of visits to the outdoors in the last 4 weeks was 8, while the median was 4. Only a minority of people (18%) were 'frequent' participants, based on those who reported 20 or more visits to the outdoors in the last 4 weeks.

The results of the Survey suggest that there are gender differences in participation in outdoor recreation. On the whole, men reported significantly more visits to the outdoors in the last 4 weeks than women. The difference was particularly apparent for people aged 65-74; men in this age group reported an average (mean) of 9 visits in the last 4 weeks, compared to an average of 7 visits by women.

There were significant differences in visit numbers between age groups. Visits in the last 4 weeks decline slightly with each age band (from 9 for 16-24-year-olds to 8 for 65-74-year-olds), then more sharply to just over 4 for those over the age of 75.

People living in rural areas made slightly but significantly more visits (9 over 4 weeks) than those in urban areas (8 visits in 4 weeks).

The relationship between outdoor recreation and deprivation appears somewhat complex. Respondents in the most deprived quintile on the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivations made significantly fewer visits in the last 4 weeks than those in the least deprived quintile, but the relationship between the number of visits was not linear (people in the third quintile made more visits than those in the fourth).

What Activities Do People Take Part In?

Walking was the main activity undertaken by nearly three quarters (72%) of all adults in Wales during the last 12 months. Social recreation activities were also very popular, with nearly a third of people enjoying a picnic (31%), taking children to the playground (31%), or taking part in informal games such as playing Frisbee (20%). The popularity of these activities reflects the importance of 'easy to do' pursuits that require little if any specialist equipment, skills, or facilities.

More 'active' outdoor pursuits are also popular, with running (17%), road cycling (13%) and mountain biking (9%) being the most commonly undertaken activities.

Wildlife watching was also a commonly undertaken activity (16%), especially with older people over 65.

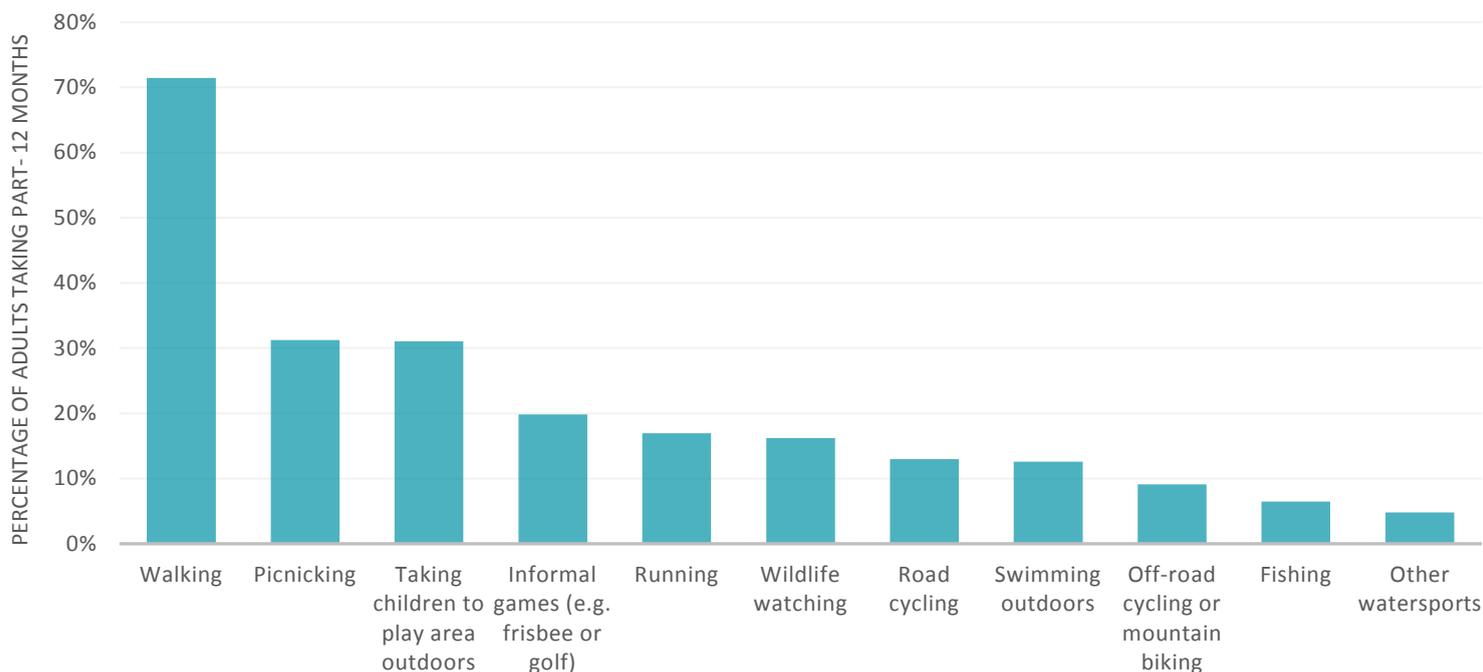
People have also taken part in a diversity of water-based activities in the last 12 months, including outdoor swimming (13%); fishing (6%), and non-motorised watersports (5%).

Table 1- Outdoor Activities

Activity	Percentage of adults taking part in last year
Walking	71.4%
Picnicking	31.3%
Taking children to play area outdoors	31.1%
Informal games (e.g. frisbee or golf)	19.8%
None of these	19.5%
Running	16.9%
Wildlife watching	16.2%
Road cycling	13.0%
Swimming outdoors	12.6%
Off-road cycling or mountain biking	9.1%
Fishing	6.5%
Other watersports	4.8%
Rock climbing or caving	3.6%
Field sports (shooting / hunting)	3.5%
Horse riding	3.0%
Off-road driving or motorcycling	2.9%
Other outdoor activities	2.9%
Motorised watersports	1.5%
Don't know	0.2%

Responses recorded under "Other outdoor activities" included camping, beach visits and paintballing.

Fig. 1- Top 10 Outdoor Activities

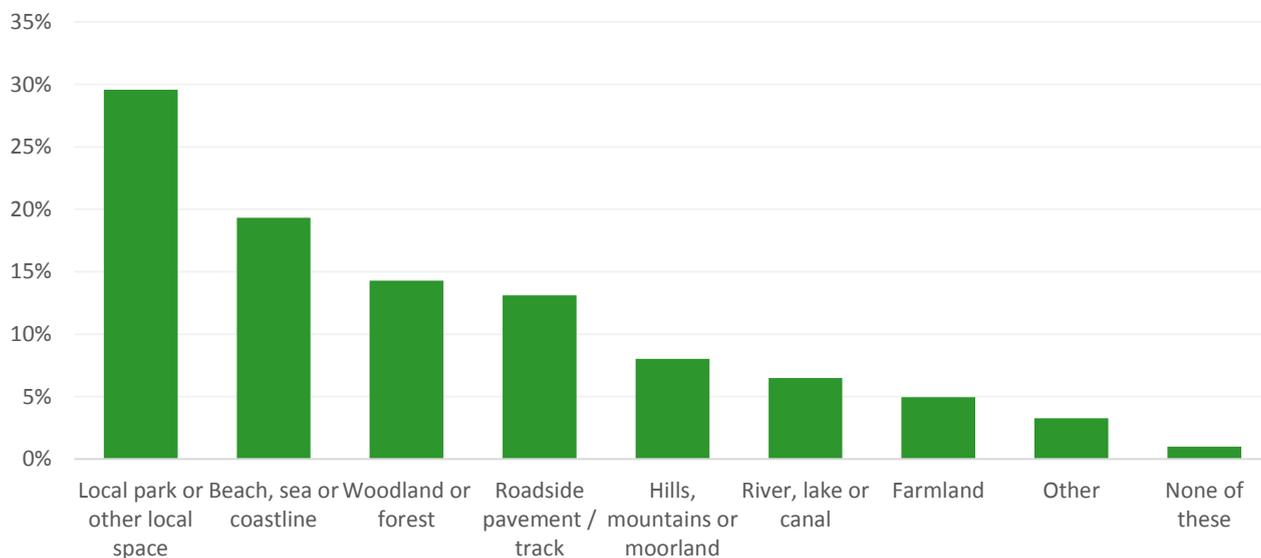


There were significant gender differences in the types of activities that people took part in, with women much more likely than men to say that had taken children to playgrounds, or been for a picnic. In contrast, men were much more likely to have taken part in virtually all active outdoor pursuits, particularly road cycling, mountain biking, and fishing.

Where Do People Visit?

When asked about their most recent visit to the outdoors, 47% of adults in Wales had travelled less than a mile from home, with 30% of visits being to a local park. This suggests that access to ‘doorstep opportunities’ is an important factor for engagement in outdoor recreation for many people.

Fig. 2 – Location of Most Recent Visit



However, people enjoy visiting a diversity of places. The results show that Wales' beaches, coast, and sea are the second most commonly visited destination (19%), whilst many people enjoyed a visit to woodlands and forests (14%)

There were distinct gender differences in the types of places that people visited, with women much more likely than men to visit their local park or beach / coast; whilst men were more likely to visit woodlands & forests, along with hills, mountains and moors.

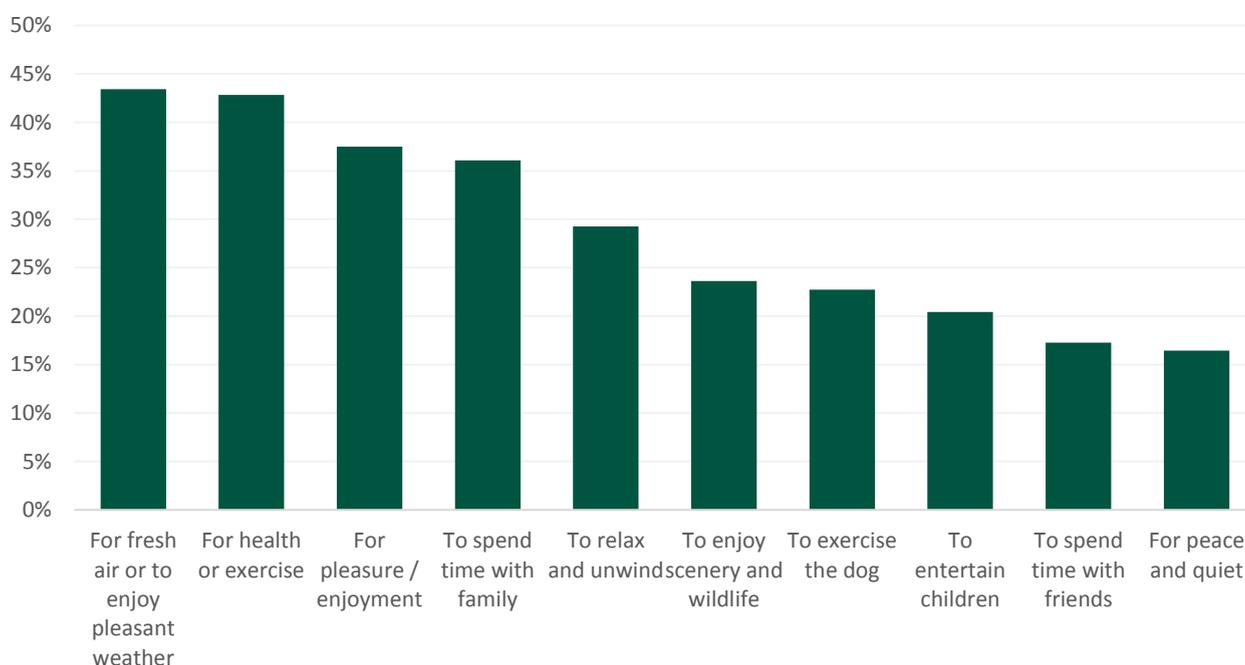
Similarly, there are differences by age, with younger people more likely to visit local parks, and older people to head for the beach and coast.

Proximity also has a significant impact on the place that people visit, with those living in urban areas being more likely to visit their local park, whilst people living in rural areas are more likely to go to woodlands, hills, mountains, and moors, and farmland.

Motivations

Fresh air (43%) and health/exercise (43%) were the most common reasons given for respondents' last visit. The 10 most common responses are shown in Figure 3 below.

Fig. 3- Top 10 Reasons for Last Visit to the Outdoors



There were significant gender differences in people's motivations, with men much more likely to visit the outdoors in order to participate in a specific hobby (16% of men compared to only 9% of women). In contrast, women were much more likely to want to spend time with family, or to entertain children. This reflects the gender differences that were also found in respondents' activity choices.

There were also notable differences in the reasons people gave for visiting specific places. In particular, people who visited the beach and coast were more likely to be motivated by fresh air, good weather and relaxation, whilst those going to the hills and mountains were motivated by health and exercise, along with enjoying the scenery. Local parks had a more focused appeal for those looking to spend time with family and to entertain children, whilst people going to woodlands were more likely to want to visit in order to walk the dog.

Barriers

For those reporting no visits in the last year, the single most common reason (28%) was a perceived lack of free time, whilst 24% cited physical disability, 19% other health reasons and 19% old age. In contrast, only 2% said there was nowhere suitable for them to go, and 1.7% said they didn't know where to go.

However, there were some significant gender and age-related differences. For older people (over 65), the main barriers were old age (41%) and physical disability (34%). For younger adults (16-44) the main barrier was lack of time (57%). Equally, women were more likely to cite physical disability and old age as their main barrier, whilst for men it was lack of time.

For respondents who reported not having made a visit to the outdoors in the last four weeks, the most common reason (46%) was bad weather.

Physical Activity

Outdoor recreation is recognised as a significant contributor to people's overall physical activity levels, with the health benefits being derived from a combination of frequency, duration, and intensity of participation.

Almost half (44%) of people said that the effort put into the main activity during their most recent visit had raised their breathing rate, made them out of breath or made them sweat. Adults aged between 45 and 54 were most likely (51%) to agree with this question, followed by 16-24 year-olds (45%). Thirty-seven per cent of respondents aged over 75 agreed. Nineteen per cent of visits lasted over 2 ½ hours, meeting the guidelines for 150 minutes of activity weekly.

Most visits were relatively short; 50% lasted an hour or less. A substantial majority (77%) were two hours or less.

18% of respondents said that they'd visited the outdoors 20 or more times in the preceding 4 weeks, meeting the threshold for frequent activity.

Economic Activity

On nearly half of all visits to the outdoors (46%) participants stated that they spent some money, reflecting the contribution that recreation makes to the Welsh economy. On 28% of visits people spent between £1 and £10, whilst on 15% of visits people spent over £20.

The higher costs may represent, as examples, fuel, food or the hire or purchase of equipment such as canoes.

There is a significant positive correlation¹ between distance travelled and expenditure. Trips to the beach, sea or coastline were the most expensive on average, with a spend of £21. Respondents found trips to local parks and other local spaces the least expensive, with an average spend of £5.

Metadata

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) is a partner in the new National Survey for Wales; this is NRW's first publication from the new Survey. The National Survey incorporates topics previously covered by the Welsh Outdoor Recreation Survey (WORS), which was commissioned by NRW.

The WORS survey was a 15 minute telephone interview. It covered around 6,000 people. As the new National Survey is face-to-face, longer, and with a larger sample size there are discontinuities between these results and those from WORS. They should not be compared directly.

Technical information on the Survey is available from Welsh Government at <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/national-survey/design-methodology/technical-information/?lang=en>.

The information within this report is categorised as Official Statistics, and has been produced and published according to arrangements approved by the UK Statistics Authority.

This bulletin was first published on 3rd October 2017. A correction was issued on the 30th April 2018.

Responsible Statistician:

Richard Cardwell

Email:

richard.cardwell@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk

Social Scientist: Susan Williams

Email:

susan.a.williams@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk

Press enquiries:

communications@naturalresources.wales

¹ (Pearson's $r=0.438$, $p<0.001$)