

Visits to the Natural Environment

Monthly update – 4th January 2012



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During November 2011, the adult population in England (aged 16 and over) took an estimated 211 million visits to the natural environment. This is 25 million visits less than the 236 million visits taken in October 2011 but higher than the 178 million visits in November 2010. On average, 38 percent of the adult population visited the natural environment in the previous seven days during November 2011. A total of 2.6 billion visits were taken between December 2010 and November 2011.

Figure 1 illustrates the monthly volume of visits taken to the natural environment in the 12 month period from December 2010 to November 2011.

- The volume of visits in November 2011 was slightly lower than the October 2011 figure (211.3 and 236.3 million visits respectively), returning to a similar level as that in March 2011 (218.8 million).
- The volume of visits in November 2011 was higher than in November 2010 (177.9 million) when the poor winter weather was likely to have impacted on outdoor visits.

Table 1 illustrates the estimated volume of visits by type of place visited in November 2011 and over the 12 months from December 2010 to November 2011.

- In November 2011, around half of visits were taken to places in the countryside (50 percent), a slightly lower proportion to that recorded across all visits taken in the 12 months from December 2010 to November 2011 (52 percent).
- 44 percent of visits were taken in towns and cities in November 2011, a higher proportion than in the 12 months from December 2010 to November 2011 (38 percent), while 10 percent were taken in coastal locations.

Figure 1 - Volume of visits to the natural environment by month and type of place visited, Dec 2010 to Nov 2011 (millions of visits). Base: Minimum of 3,400 respondents per month

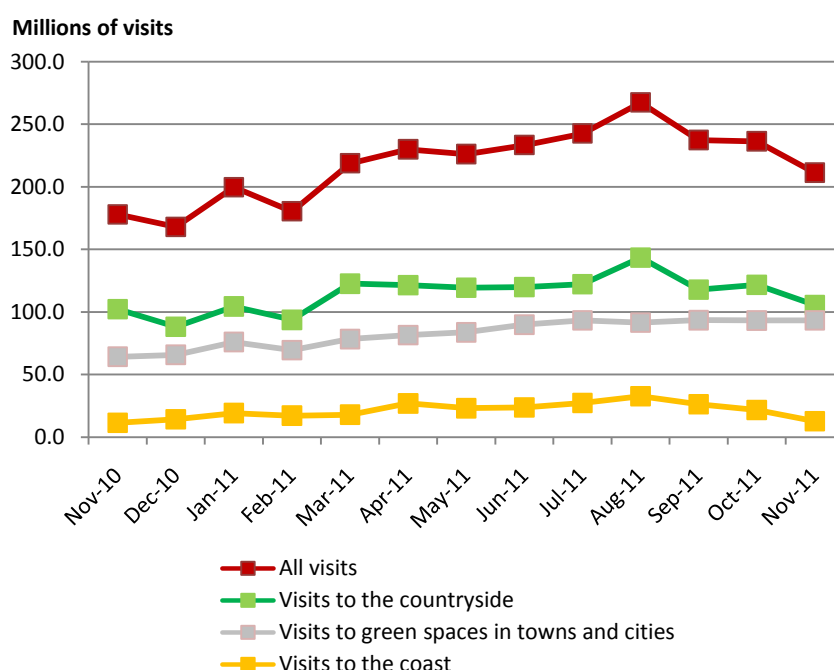


Table 1 - Volume of visits to the natural environment by place visited (millions of visits and percentage of total).

	Nov 2011	Dec 2010 – Nov 2011
By general type of place		
Countryside	105.5 (49.9%)	1380.1 (52.1%)
Town and city	93.2 (44.1%)	979.8 (38.0%)
Coast	12.7 (6.0%)	262.7 (9.9%)
By specific type of place		
Park in a town or city	50.5 (23.9%)	601.3 (22.7%)
Path, cycleway, bridleway	43.3 (20.5%)	406.2 (15.3%)
Woodland/forest	27.8 (13.1%)	344.1 (13.0%)
Another open space in the countryside	27.3 (12.9%)	302.5 (11.4%)
Playing field or other recreation area	19.5 (9.2%)	216.1 (8.2%)
River, lake, canal	18.3 (8.6%)	256.7 (9.7%)
Village	17.8 (8.4%)	199.2 (7.5%)
Another open space in town or city	16.9 (8.0%)	206.6 (7.8%)
Country park	14.0 (6.6%)	196.9 (7.4%)
Farmland	13.3 (6.3%)	243.6 (9.1%)
Beach	6.4 (3.0%)	157.3 (5.9%)
Children's playground	5.9 (2.7%)	78.6 (3.0%)
Mountain, hill, moorland	4.6 (2.2%)	66.9 (2.5%)
Other coastline	3.5 (1.7%)	88.4 (3.3%)
Allotment/community garden	0.6 (0.3%)	19.0 (0.7%)

Respondent base: Nov 2011 (N=3,767), Dec 2010 to Nov 2011 (N=46,616)

Note percentages for specific type of place may total more than 100 because respondents could select more than one type of place per visit.

Table 2 shows the volume of visits by type of activity undertaken.

- During November 2011, 56 percent of visits involved walking with a dog, while 24 percent of visits involved walking without a dog.
- Other significant activities included playing with children and eating or drinking out.
- Compared to the overall December 2010 to November 2011 period, a higher proportion of the visits taken in November 2011 involved walking with a dog (56 percent compared to 51 percent).

Figure 2 shows how the proportion of adults taking visits in the last 7 days has varied since March 2009.

- During November 2011, an average of 38 percent of the adult population reported taking one or more visits to the natural environment in the previous 7 days.
- This is four percentage points lower than during October 2011 (42 percent) but four percentage points higher than the November 2010 figure (34 percent) and close to November 2009 (37 percent).

The average duration of visits in November 2011 was 1 hour and 42 minutes and the average distance travelled was 5.1 miles. The average duration of visits is lower than recorded for the overall December 2010 – November 2011 period and also lower than the October 2011 duration of 1 hour and 50 minutes reflecting the shorter daylight hours.

Around one in five (20 percent) visits in November 2011 involved expenditure with the average spend per visit being £20. This is less than the 12 month average (£25).

Table 2- Volume of visits to the natural environment by activity (millions of visits and percentage of total).

	Nov 2011	Dec 2010 – Nov 2011
Activity		
Walking, with a dog	117.5 (55.6%)	1,345.9 (50.8%)
Walking, not with a dog	55.1 (26.0%)	707.6 (26.7%)
Playing with children	15.2 (7.2%)	237.6 (8.9%)
Eating or drinking out	10.2 (4.8%)	155.8 (5.8%)
Running	6.8 (3.2%)	78.8 (3.0%)
Informal games and sport	5.9 (2.8%)	74.3 (2.8%)
Wildlife watching	4.7 (2.2%)	76.4 (2.9%)
Visiting an attraction	4.0 (1.9%)	85.8 (3.2%)
Road cycling	3.3 (1.6%)	54.3 (2.0%)
Appreciating scenery from your car	2.6 (1.2%)	51.1 (1.9%)
Visits to the beach, sunbathing, paddling in the sea	1.9 (0.9%)	51.5 (1.9%)
Off road cycling/mountain biking	1.4 (0.7%)	27.9 (1.0%)
Picnicking	1.0 (0.5%)	58.3 (2.2%)
Fishing	1.0 (0.5%)	15.9 (0.6%)
Horse riding	0.6 (0.3%)	29.5 (1.1%)
Watersports	0.4 (0.2%)	13.3 (0.5%)
Swimming outdoors	0.2 (0.1%)	11.8 (0.4%)
Fieldsports	0.2 (0.1%)	8.5 (0.3%)

Figure 2 - Percentage of adult population taking visits in the previous 7 days by month, Mar-2009 to Nov-2011

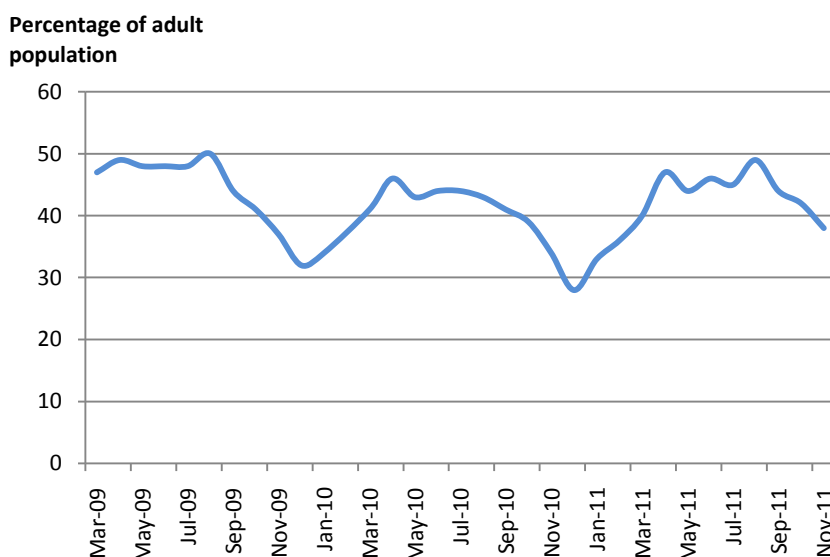


Table 3 - Visit duration, distance travelled and expenditure during visits

	Nov 2011	Dec 2010 - Nov 2011
Average duration of visits	1 hour 42 minutes	1 hour 57 minutes
Average distance travelled to reach visit destination	5.1 miles	6.1 miles
Percentage of visits involving any expenditure	20%	25%
Average expenditure per visit (excluding visits with no spend)	£20	£25

Respondent base for distance and duration: Nov 2011 (N=3,767), Dec 2010 to Nov 2011 (N=46,616)
Respondent base for expenditure: Nov 2011 (N=861), Dec 2010 to Nov 2011 (N=10,602)

The Monitor of Engagement with the Natural environment (MENE) survey is undertaken weekly across England. It focuses on people's use and enjoyment of the natural environment, defined as the green open spaces in and around towns and cities as well as the wider countryside and coast. It excludes time spent in private gardens.

To find out more about the survey visit: <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/research/mene.aspx>

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