

Visits to the Natural Environment



Monthly update – April 2011

6th June 2011

During April 2011, the adult population in England (aged 16 and over) took an estimated 230 million visits to the natural environment. On average, 47 percent of the adult population took a visit to the natural environment in the previous seven days, the highest proportion recorded in the last 12 months. A total of 2.46 billion visits were taken in the 12 months from May 2010 to April 2011.

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

- Visits were lowest in November and December 2010 (178 and 168 million respectively) and February 2011 (180 million).
- Visits were highest in May 2010 and April 2011 (232 million and 230 million respectively).
- The volume of visits in April 2011 is higher than in March. As in previous years, this reflects improved weather conditions, the timing of the Easter holiday period and a number of other bank holidays falling within this month.

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

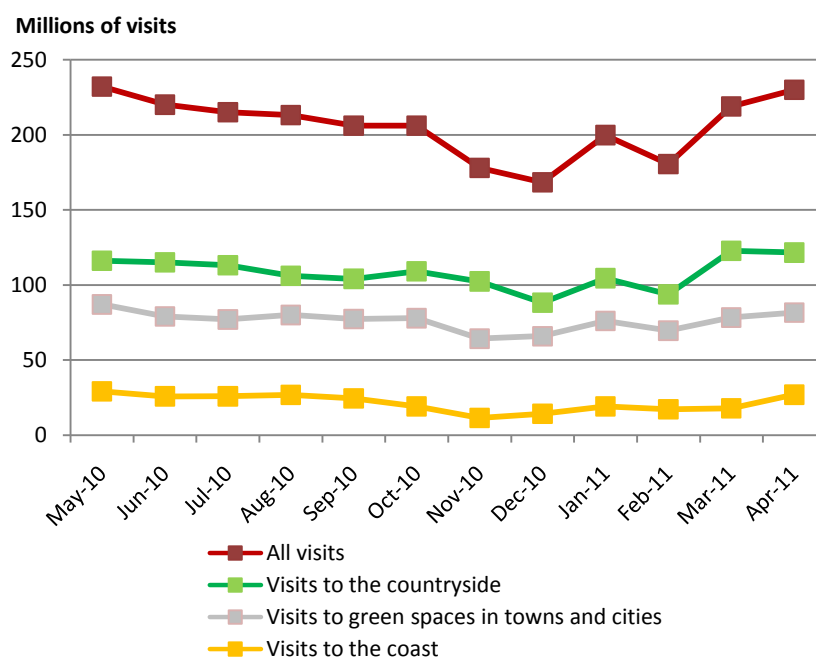


Table 1 illustrates the estimated volume of visits by type of place visited in April 2011 and over the 12 months from May 2010 to April 2011.

- In April 2011, just over half of visits were taken to places in the countryside (53 percent), an equal proportion to that recorded across all visits taken in the 12 months from May 2010 to April 2011.
- The proportion of visits to coastal areas was higher in April 2011 (12 percent) than for the May 2010 to April 2011 period (10 percent).
- 35 percent of visits were taken to open spaces in towns and cities.

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

	Apr 2011	May 2010 – Apr 2011
By general type of place		
Countryside	121.5	1295.7
Town and city	81.5	913.3
Coast	26.9	258.3
By specific type of place		
Park in a town or city	51.9	551.9
Path, cycleway, bridleway	38.5	345.5
Woodland/forest	28.7	324.1
River, lake, canal	28.5	247.2
Another open space in the countryside	25.8	300.3
Farmland	22.1	212.9
Beach	19.2	157.1
Country park	18.8	177.1
Playing field or other recreation area	16.9	195.4
Village	16.5	153.6
Another open space in town or city	16.0	190.2
Other coastline	9.9	90.3
Children's playground	8.1	79.0
Mountain, hill, moorland	4.6	59.1
Allotment/community garden	0.7	16.1

Respondent base: Apr 2011 (N=3,545), May 2010 to Apr 2011(N=45,766)

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

- During April 2011, 46 percent of visits involved walking with a dog, while a quarter of visits (27 percent) involved walking without a dog.
- Other significant activities included playing with children, eating and drinking out and visiting an attraction.
- A higher proportion of the visits taken in the May 2010 to April 2011 period involved dog walking (51 percent) and slightly less playing with children (nine percent) and eating out (six percent).

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

- During April 2011, an average of 47 percent of the adult population reported taking one or more visits to the natural environment in the previous 7 days.
- Notably, this is the highest proportion recorded over the past twelve months, including the summer months of June and July 2010 (44 percent each).

The average duration of visits in April 2011 was 2 hours and 25 minutes and the average distance travelled was 8.5 miles. Both of these values are higher than the averages for May 2010 to April 2011, reflecting the increased propensity for visits to be taken further afield during the Easter holiday period and on bank holidays.

37 percent of visits in April 2011 involved any expenditure and the average spend per visit was £39. Both of these values were higher than the 12 month average.

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

	Apr 2011	May 2010 – Apr 2011
Activity		
Walking, with a dog	105.4	1250.8
Walking, not with a dog	62.0	652.4
Playing with children	27.1	215.0
Eating or drinking out	19.8	143.7
Visiting an attraction	10.3	86.7
Picnicking	9.1	47.8
Wildlife watching	8.9	72.5
Visits to the beach, sunbathing, paddling in the sea	8.0	52.8
Informal games and sport	6.6	65.5
Appreciating scenery from your car	6.4	49.0
Road cycling	5.8	49.9
Running	5.5	72.8
Off road cycling/mountain biking	4.2	27.0
Horse riding	4.1	28.0
Fishing	1.6	15.7
Swimming outdoors	1.4	13.8
Fieldsports	1.1	10.9
Watersports	1.1	15.8

Respondent base: Apr 2011 (N=3,545), May 2010 to Apr 2011 (N=45,766)

Figure 2 - Percentage of adult population taking visits to in the previous 7 days by month, Apr 2010 to Mar 2011. Base: Minimum of 3,200 respondents per month

Percentage of adult population

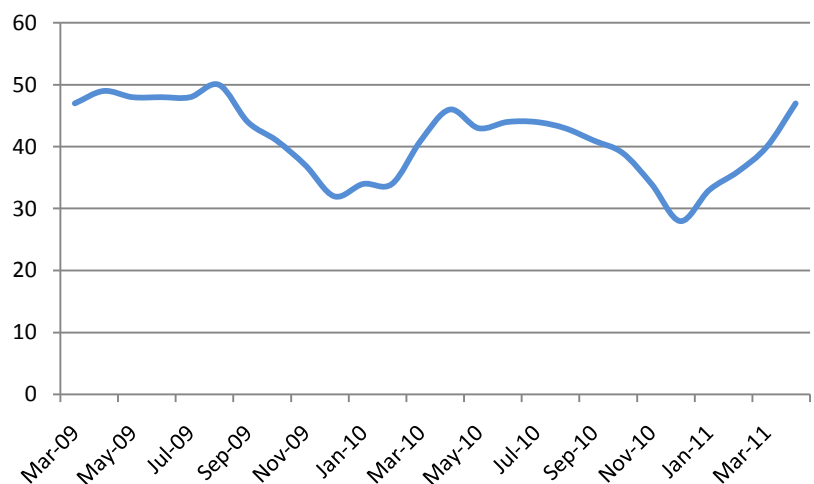


Table 3 - Visit duration, distance travelled and expenditure during visits

	Apr 2011	May 2010 - Apr 2011
Average duration of visits	2 hours 25 minutes	1 hour 59 minutes
Average distance travelled to reach visit destination	8.5 miles	6.5 miles
Percentage of visits involving any expenditure	37%	26%
Average expenditure per visit (excluding visits with no spend)	£39	£28

Respondent base for distance and duration: Apr 2011 (N=3,545), May 2010 to Apr 2011 (N=45,766). Respondent base for expenditure: Apr 2011 (N=897), May 2010 to Apr 2011 (N=10,591)

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>