

# Visits to the Natural Environment

Monthly update – 5<sup>th</sup> December 2011



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During October 2011, the adult population in England (aged 16 and over) took an estimated 236 million visits to the natural environment. This is 1 million visits less than the 237 million visits taken in September 2011; however, it is fifteen percent higher than the 206 million visits in October 2010. On average, 42 percent of the adult population visited the natural environment in the previous seven days during October 2011. A total of 2.6 billion visits were taken between November 2010 and October 2011.

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

- The volume of visits in October 2011 was slightly lower than the September 2011 figure (236.3 and 237.4 million visits respectively), returning to a similar level as in June 2011 (233.4 million).
- The volume of visits in October 2011 was higher than it was in both October 2010 (206.0 million) and October 2009 (218.0 million).
- These variations may relate to unusually high temperatures that many parts of England experienced during the month.

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

- In October 2011, around half of visits were taken in the countryside (51.5 percent), a slightly lower proportion to that recorded across all visits taken in the 12 months from November 2010 to October 2011 (52.6 percent).
- In total, 39 percent of visits were taken in towns and cities in October 2011, higher than recorded across all visits during the 12 months from November 2010 to October 2011 (37 percent). Coastal locations accounted for nine percent of visits.

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

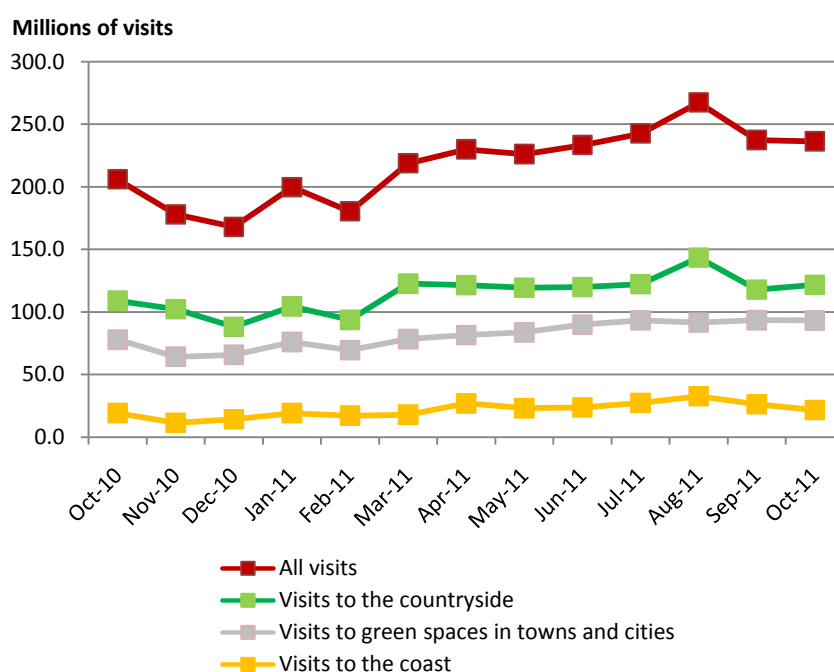


Table 1 - Volume of visits to the natural environment by place visited (millions of visits and percentage of total).

	Oct 2011	Nov 2010 – Oct 2011
<b>By general type of place</b>		
Countryside	121.6 (51.5%)	1376.9 (52.6%)
Town and city	93.1 (39.4%)	979.8 (37.4%)
Coast	21.6 (9.1%)	261.5 (10.0%)
<b>By specific type of place</b>		
Park in a town or city	50.1 (21.2%)	590.4 (22.6%)
Path, cycleway, bridleway	33.9 (14.3%)	390.8 (14.9%)
Woodland/forest	30.9 (13.1%)	341.8 (13.1%)
Another open space in the countryside	28.5 (12.1%)	297.9 (11.4%)
Farmland	24.8 (10.5%)	245.4 (9.4%)
Playing field or other recreation area	19.6 (8.3%)	217.1 (8.3%)
River, lake, canal	16.1 (6.8%)	253.1 (9.7%)
Village	20.8 (8.8%)	195.4 (7.5%)
Another open space in town or city	18.9 (8.0%)	204.2 (7.8%)
Country park	19.9 (8.4%)	193.0 (7.4%)
Beach	13.4 (5.7%)	158.8 (6.1%)
Other coastline	7.7 (3.3%)	89.7 (3.4%)
Children's playground	7.6 (3.2%)	75.9 (2.9%)
Mountain, hill, moorland	8.3 (3.5%)	64.9 (2.5%)
Allotment/community garden	1.0 (0.4%)	19.1 (0.7%)

Respondent base: Oct 2011 (N=3,964), Nov 2010 to Oct 2011 (N=46,290)

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 October 2011, 50 percent of visits involved walking with a dog, while 28 percent of visits involved walking without a dog.
- Other significant activities included playing with children and eating or drinking out.
- Compared to the overall November 2010 to October 2011 period, a higher proportion of the visits taken in October 2011 involved walking without a dog (28 percent compared to 27 percent).

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

- During October 2011, around 42 percent of the adult population reported taking one or more visits to the natural environment in the previous seven days.
- This is two percentage points lower than the figure recorded during September 2011 (44 percent) and seven percentage points lower than that recorded during August 2011 (49 percent).

The average duration of visits in October 2011 was 1 hour and 50 minutes and the average distance travelled was 5.6 miles. The average duration of visits is lower than the September 2011 duration of 2 hours and 8 minutes reflecting the shorter daylight hours and shorter distance journeys likely to be taken now schools are back from holidays.

Around three in ten (28 percent) visits in October 2011 involved expenditure with the average spend per visit being £25. This is identical to the 12-month average (£25).

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

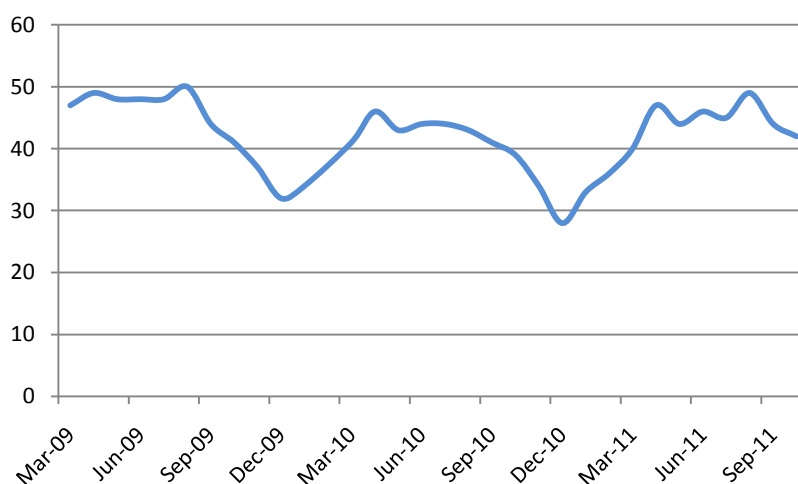
	Oct 2011	Nov 2010 – Oct 2011
<b>Activity</b>		
Walking, with a dog	118.8 (50.3%)	1,329.6 (50.8%)
Walking, not with a dog	66.9 (28.3%)	696.3 (26.6%)
Playing with children	20.6 (8.7%)	233.4 (8.9%)
Eating or drinking out	12.3 (5.2%)	152.9 (5.8%)
Visiting an attraction	5.4 (2.3%)	85.6 (3.3%)
Wildlife watching	5.0 (2.1%)	75.6 (2.9%)
Informal games and sport	4.8 (2.0%)	71.6 (2.7%)
Picnicking	2.3 (1.0%)	57.9 (2.2%)
Running	7.2 (3.0%)	77.3 (3.0%)
Visits to the beach, sunbathing, paddling in the sea	3.5 (1.5%)	50.8 (1.9%)
Appreciating scenery from your car	3.9 (1.7%)	50.7 (1.9%)
Road cycling	4.7 (2.0%)	54.0 (2.1%)
Off road cycling/mountain biking	2.7 (1.1%)	27.5 (1.1%)
Fishing	1.1 (0.5%)	15.2 (0.6%)
Horse riding	4.2 (1.8%)	30.7 (1.2%)
Watersports	0.9 (0.4%)	13.1 (0.5%)
Swimming outdoors	0.3 (0.1%)	12.3 (0.5%)
Fieldsports	0.5 (0.2%)	8.9 (0.3%)

Respondent base: Oct 2011 (N=3,964), Nov 2010 to Oct 2011 (N=46,290)

Note percentages for activity may total more than 100 because respondents could select more than one activity

**Figure 2 - Percentage of adult population taking visits in the previous 7 days by month, Mar 2009 – Oct 2011.** Base: Minimum of 3,200 respondents per month

Percentage of adult population



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

	Oct 2011	Nov 2010 - Oct 2011
<b>Average duration of visits</b>	1 hour 50 minutes	1 hour 56 minutes
<b>Average distance travelled to reach visit destination</b>	5.6 miles	6.1 miles
<b>Percentage of visits involving any expenditure</b>	28%	25%
<b>Average expenditure per visit (excluding visits with no spend)</b>	£25	£25

Respondent base for distance and duration: Oct 2011 (N=3,964), Nov 2010 to Oct 2011 (N=46,290)

Respondent base for expenditure: Oct 2011 (N=849), Nov 2010 to Oct 2011 (N=10,593)

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>

For questions about this statistical release please contact: **Stephen Herbert: MENE@naturalengland.org.uk**