

# SCOTLAND'S PEOPLE AND NATURE SURVEY 2013/14 SPECIAL INTEREST REPORT NO.4

## ENGAGEMENT WITH THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT



### 1. Background

This summary report on engagement with the natural environment is one of a series describing how people in Scotland use, value and enjoy the outdoors. It uses data from the first year of Scotland's People and Nature Survey (SPANS) which ran between March 2013 and February 2014.

SPANS comprises a series of questions inserted on a rotational basis in the TNS monthly omnibus survey, the Scottish Opinion Survey (SOS). In 2013/14, a set of questions on how engaged people feel with the natural environment was included in the July 2013 wave of the SOS. As the SOS is a sample survey, SPANS results are subject to a margin of sampling error. More detailed information about SPANS, including the 2013/14 end year and technical reports, the complete special interest report series and the survey data, is available on the [SNH website](#).

### 2. Definitions

Within SPANS, the term '**outdoors**' includes mountains, moorland, farmland, forests, woods, rivers, lochs and reservoirs, beaches and the coast and open spaces in towns and cities. '**Visits to the outdoors**' refers to leisure trips taken from home or while away from home on holiday, provided the holiday was in Scotland. '**Outdoor recreation**' is defined as any non-motorised activity carried out for leisure purposes. It can include everyday activities such as walking the dog, informal family outings and participation in a range of other activities such as cycling, hill walking or kayaking.

### 3. Why is engaging people with the natural environment important?

Visiting the outdoors for recreation, learning or volunteering and taking an active interest in the natural environment can help deliver many social, environmental and economic benefits. These include better health and well-being, an improved quality of life, a greater commitment to looking after the natural world, wider use of sustainable forms of transport such as walking and cycling and economic benefits derived from expenditure incurred by outdoor visitors. Increasing the proportion of adults visiting the outdoors and ensuring that the benefits are shared by everyone in Scotland is a key target of the Scottish Government which measures progress via its [National Indicator](#), '*To increase people's use of Scotland's outdoors*'.

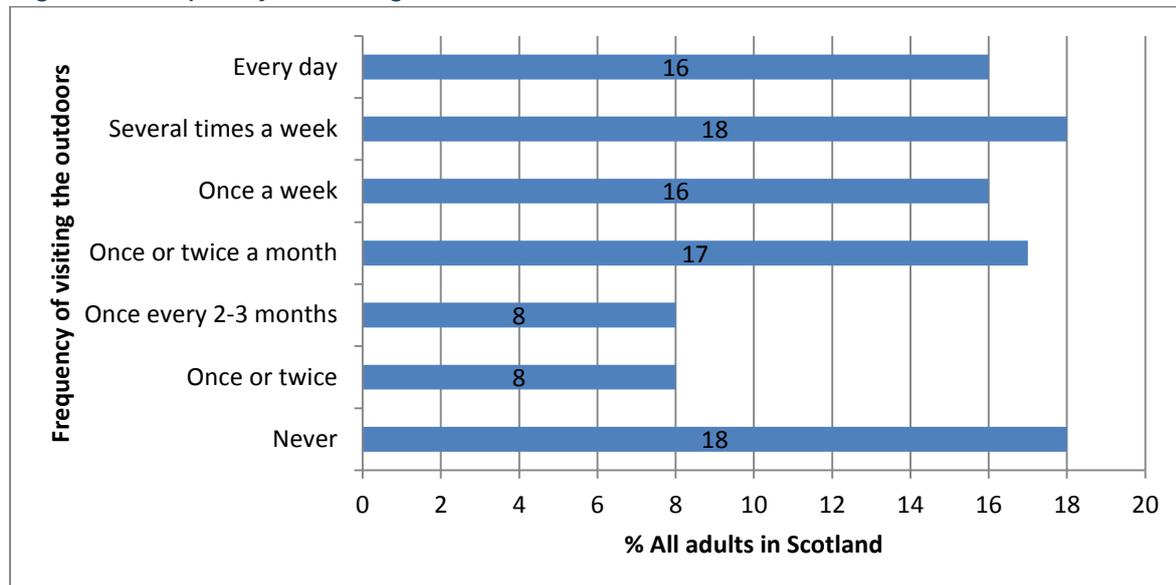
### 4. What types of engagement do people in Scotland have with the natural environment?

#### 4.1 Visiting the outdoors for leisure and recreation

Visiting the outdoors for leisure and recreation is one of the main ways in which people in Scotland engage with the natural environment. Between March 2013 and February 2014, 82% of adults in Scotland visited the outdoors, taking an estimated 396 million visits. Only half, however, visited the outdoors on a regular basis during this period (i.e. at least once a

week) with a further third visiting less frequently (32%). Almost a fifth of adults in Scotland didn't visit the outdoors at all (18%).

Figure 1: Frequency of visiting the outdoors for leisure or recreation 2013/14



Base: 12,104 respondents

Source: SPANS 2013/14, Q REC1

Propensity to visit the outdoors is influenced by a variety of demographic and other factors, particularly age, social grade, residency, health and ethnicity:

- **age**, with those aged 55 or over less likely to visit;
- **affluence**, with those in the AB, C1 and C2 social grades<sup>1</sup> more likely than those in the DE social grade to visit
- **residency**, with those living in rural areas<sup>2</sup> and those living outside the CSGN<sup>3</sup> area more likely to visit;
- **disability and health**, with people in bad health or with a long-term illness or disability less likely to visit.
- **ethnicity**, with those from BME<sup>4</sup> groups less likely than people of white ethnicity to be regular outdoor visitors

#### 4.2 Other types of engagement with the natural environment

The vast majority of adults in Scotland also take part in other activities connected to the natural environment on at least an occasional basis (91%). The most popular of these are sitting or relaxing in the garden (65%), choosing to walk through local parks or greenspaces on the way to other places (53%) and watching or listening to nature programmes on TV (51%).

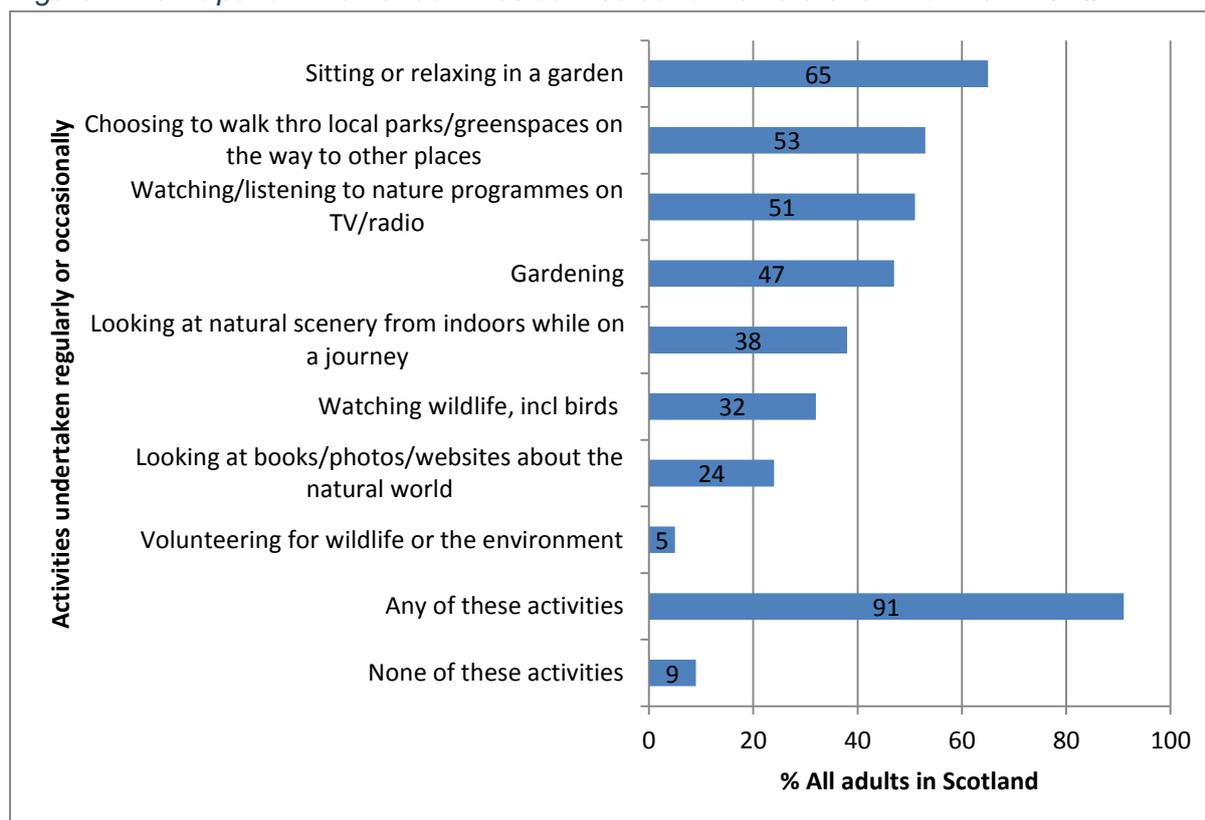
<sup>1</sup> Social grade is a household classification system based on the occupation of the Chief Income Earner in the household: AB - higher and intermediate managerial, administrative and professional; C1 - supervisory, clerical and junior managerial, administrative and professional; C2 - skilled manual workers; DE - semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers, casual and lowest grade workers, state pensioners and others who depend on the state for their income.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/About/Methodology/UrbanRuralClassification>

<sup>3</sup> Central Scotland Green Network <http://www.centalscotlandgreennetwork.org/>

<sup>4</sup> Black and minority ethnicity

Figure 2: Participation in other activities connected to the natural environment 2013/14



Base: 1,000 respondents

Source: SPANS 2013/14, Q ENVIR1

Participation in most of the activities shown in Figure 2 is, again, influenced by a number of factors but most strongly associated with:

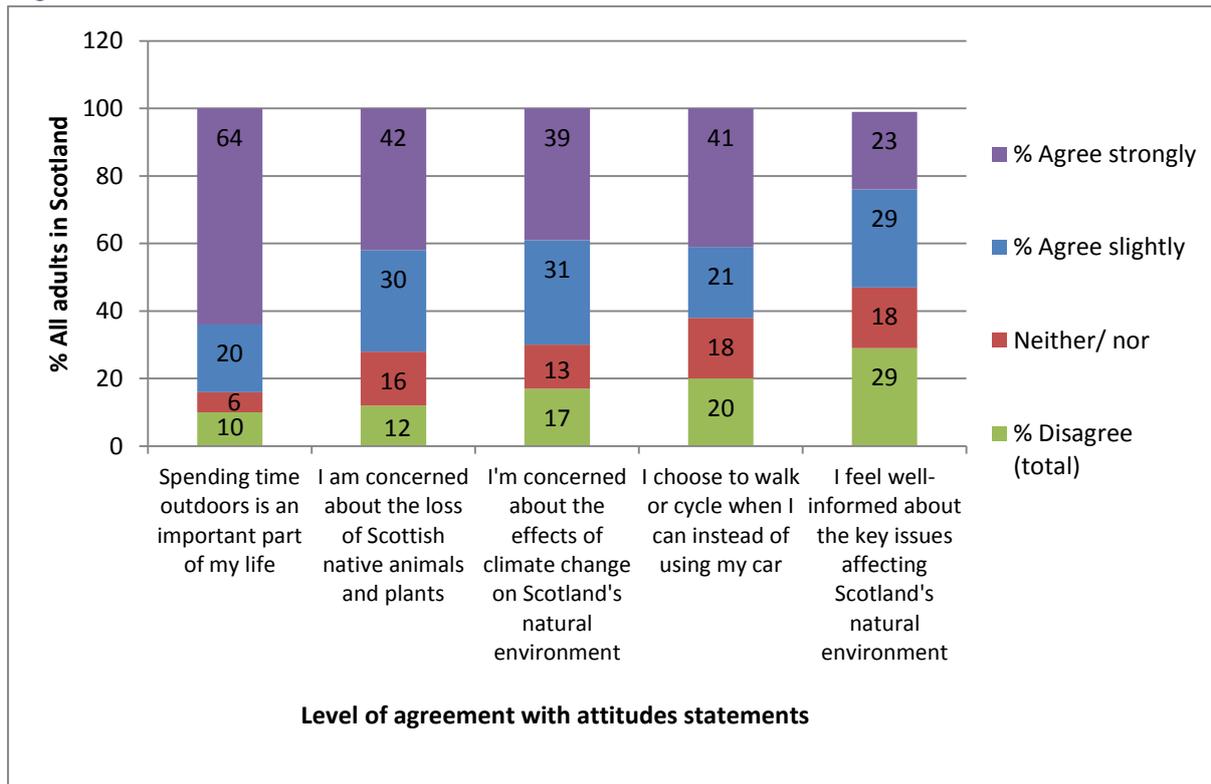
- **affluence**, with those in the AB social grade, those who own their homes and those who own a car more likely than average to participate;
- **residency**, with those living in rural areas and those living outside the CSGN area more likely to participate;
- **frequency of visiting the outdoors** for recreation, with those visiting at least once a week more likely to participate than those visiting less often.

## 5. How do people feel about Scotland's natural environment?

To help measure the level of interest and empathy people in Scotland have for the natural environment, SPANS respondents were read a series of statements and asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with each one. Their responses are summarised in Figure 3, below.

Most people in Scotland agree strongly that spending time outdoors is an important part of their life (64%). Significantly fewer, however, feel strongly about the loss of biodiversity in Scotland or the effects of climate change on Scotland's natural environment (42% and 39%, respectively); and less than a quarter feel strongly that they are well informed about these and other issues affecting the natural world (23%).

Figure 3: Attitudes towards the natural environment 2013/14



Base: 1,000 respondents

Source: SPANS 2013/14, Q ENVIR1

In general, the highest levels of engagement with the statements shown in Figure 3, above, were found among people aged 35 and over and among some of the population groups also identified as being most likely to participate in activities connected with the natural environment, i.e. people in the AB social grade, those living in rural areas and people who visit the outdoors on a regular basis.

For further information on SPANS, please contact

[Aileen.Armstrong@snh.gov.uk](mailto:Aileen.Armstrong@snh.gov.uk)

Scottish Natural Heritage

People and Places Unit

November 2014

