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Scotland's People and Nature Survey

Participation in outdoor recreation: people living in the Central Scotland Green Network area



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SCOTLAND'S PEOPLE AND NATURE SURVEY – PARTICIPATION IN OUTDOOR RECREATION: PEOPLE LIVING IN THE CENTRAL SCOTLAND GREEN NETWORK AREA



1. Background

The Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN) project¹ aims to change the face of central Scotland by 2050 by restoring and improving the rural and urban landscape of an area stretching from Ayrshire and Inverclyde in the west to Fife and the Lothians in the east. By connecting green and blue spaces in towns and cities to the wider countryside and coast via a high quality 'green network', the project will help meet environmental, social and economic goals designed to improve people's lives, promote economic success, allow nature to flourish and help Scotland respond to the challenge of climate change.

This summary report uses data from Scotland's People and Nature Survey (SPANS), run in 2013/14 and 2017/18, and historical data from the [Scottish Recreation Survey](#) (ScRS), which ran annually between 2003 and 2012, to describe how people living in the CSGN area use, value and enjoy the natural environment.

The research methodology used for SPANS is identical to that used for the ScRS meaning that the two sets of survey data are directly comparable. As the survey findings are based on interviews conducted with a representative sample of adults living in Scotland, all estimates are subject to a margin of sampling error².

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 informal everyday activities (e.g. walking the dog, family outings) as well as a range of other types of activities such as cycling, hill walking or watersports.

3. Why are outdoor visits important?

Enjoyment of the outdoors, including greenspaces in towns and cities, the countryside around urban areas, and more remote and wild areas of land and water, can help deliver many social, environmental and economic benefits. These include better health and well-being, an improved quality of life, greater empathy with 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 at least once a week 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 Performance Framework](#).

¹ <http://www.centralscotlandgreennetwork.org/>

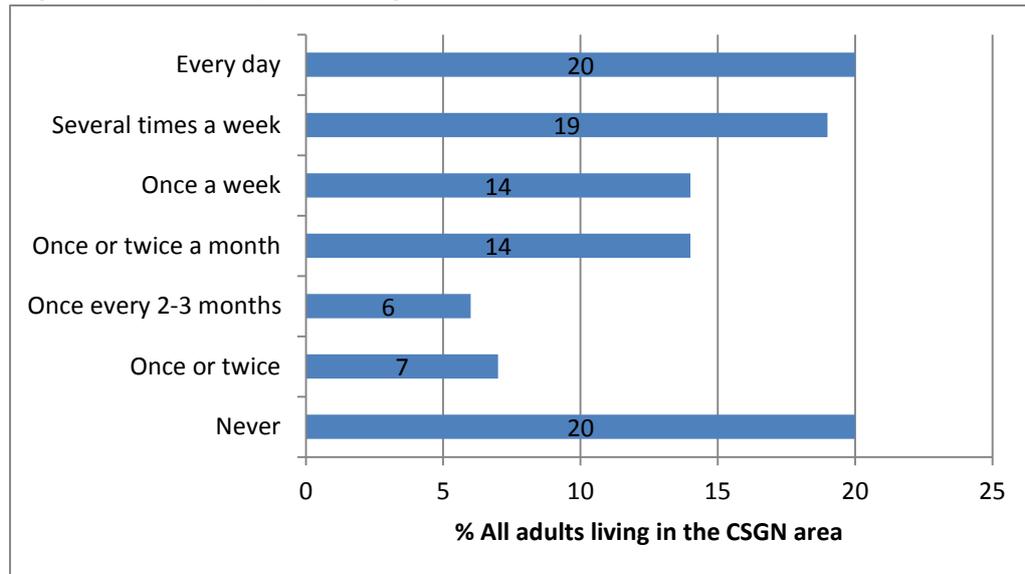
² See SPANS Technical Report <https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/land-and-sea-management/managing-access-and-recreation/increasing-participation/measuring-participation>

4. How frequently do people living in the CSGN area visit the outdoors for recreation?

Eighty per cent of adults living in the CSGN area visited the outdoors for leisure or recreation in the 12 month period between May 2017 and April 2018, taking an estimated 303 million outdoor visits.

Just over half of CSGN residents visited the outdoors at least once a week during this period (53%). Around a quarter visited less frequently (27%) and a fifth didn't visit the outdoors at all (20%).

Figure 1: Frequency of visiting the outdoors for leisure or recreation 2017/18

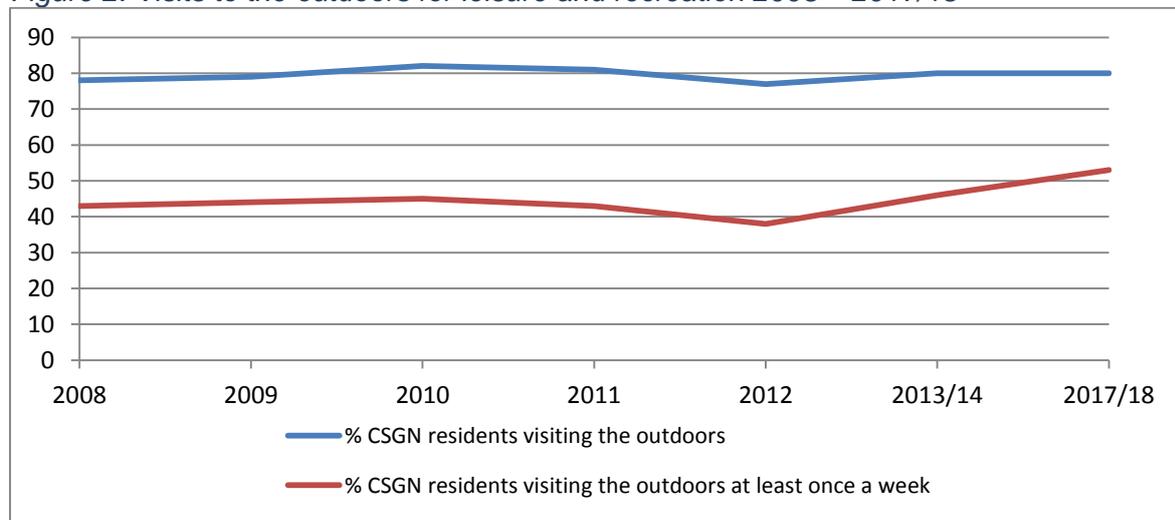


Base: 7,827 respondents

Source: SPANS 2017/18, Question REC1

The proportion of CSGN residents visiting the outdoors has remained fairly stable since 2008; the proportion visiting the outdoors on a **regular weekly basis** has, however, increased significantly since 2012 (up from 37% in 2012 to 53% in 2017/18)

Figure 2: Visits to the outdoors for leisure and recreation 2008 – 2017/18



Source: ScRS 2008 - 2012, Question1; SPANS 2013/14 and 2017/18, Question REC1

The increase in weekly participation among CSGN residents shown in Figure 2, above, is in line with an increase observed across Scotland as a whole. Nevertheless, CSGN residents remain slightly less likely than average to visit the outdoors (80% of CSGN residents visited in 2017/18 versus 82% of adults in Scotland).

5. What are the main barriers to visiting the outdoors?

As shown in Figure 1, a fifth of CSGN area residents never visit the outdoors for leisure and recreation (20%) and a similar proportion visit very infrequently, i.e. less than once a month (21%).

In 2013/14³ 'lack of time' (mentioned by 37% of respondents) and 'poor health' (mentioned by 21%) were the main reasons given by CSGN residents who rarely or never visited the outdoors for leisure and recreation. Those more likely to mention 'lack of time' included younger people (aged under 55), people working full-time and those with children in their household. Those more likely to mention 'poor health' included older people (aged 55 and over), people in the DE social grade⁴ and those who were retired or not working.

There has been little variation over time in the proportions of CSGN respondents mentioning each of the reasons shown in Table 1, below.

Table 1: Main reasons for rarely or never visiting the outdoors for recreation 2013/14

	% Respondents mentioning:
Lack of time	37
Poor health	21
Poor weather	15
No particular reason	10
Old age	8
Not interested	5
Can't afford it	4

Base: 607 respondents

Source: SPANS 2013/14, Question REC2

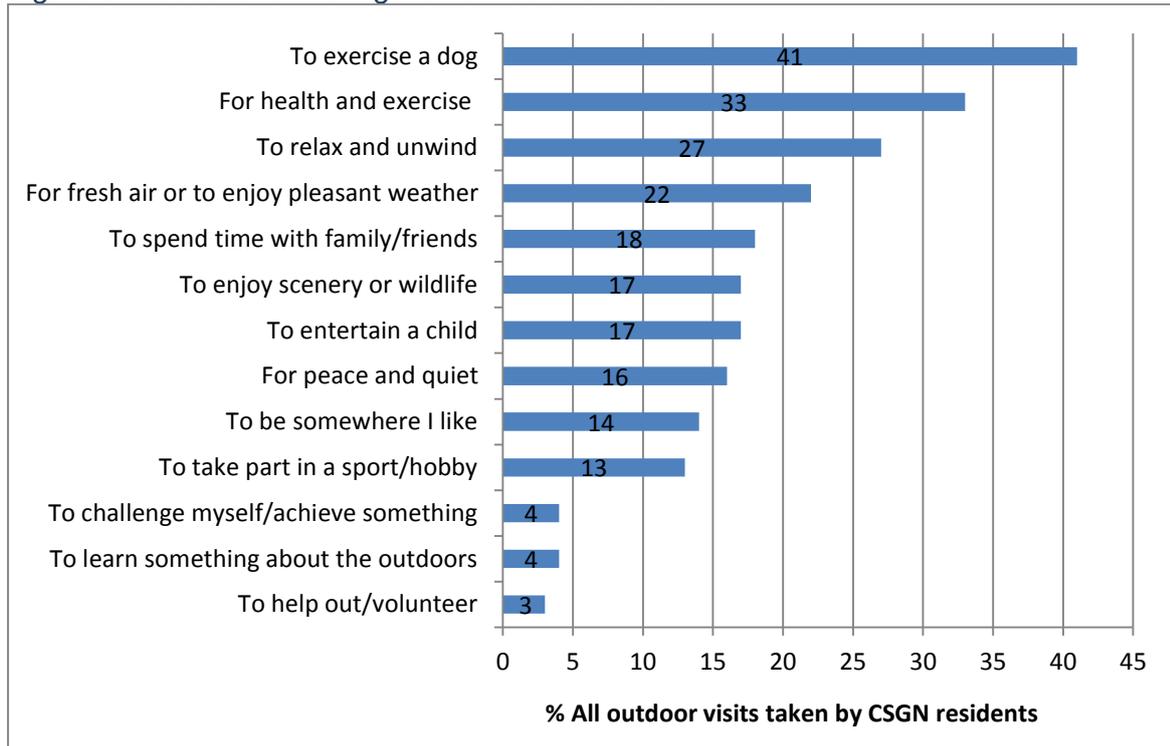
6. What motivates people to visit the outdoors?

People visit the outdoors for a variety of reasons but 'dog walking' (41% of all outdoor visits) and 'health and exercise' (33%) and are mentioned most frequently by CSGN residents.

³ This question was not included in SPANS in 2017/18

⁴ 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.

Figure 3: Reasons for visiting the outdoors 2017/18

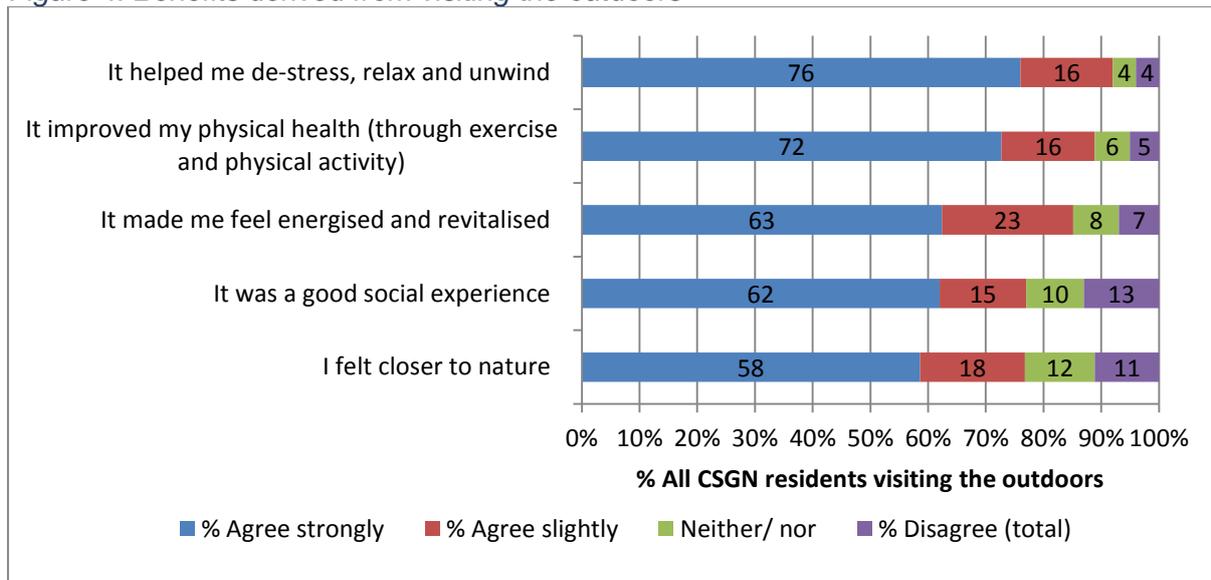


Base: 804 respondents
 Source: SPANS 2017/18 Question BEN1

7. What benefits do people feel they get from their outdoor visits?

When prompted, most people agree that they benefit from their outdoor visits, with almost 9 in 10 CSGN area residents reporting improvements to their mental and physical health and an increase in their energy levels. The proportion of respondents 'agreeing strongly' with each of the statements shown in Figure 4 is higher in 2017/18 than in 2013/14.

Figure 4: Benefits derived from visiting the outdoors



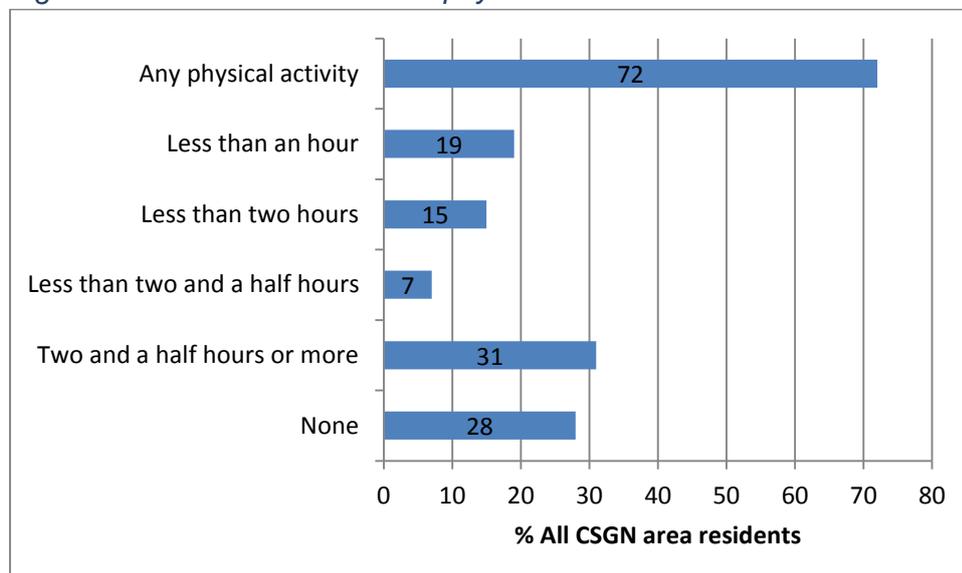
Base: 804 respondents
 Source: SPANS 2017/18 Q BEN2

Participation in outdoor recreation also contributes towards the achievement of national targets for physical activity⁵. These recommend that adults aged 19 to 64 should undertake at least 150 minutes of ‘moderate’ intensity activity per week, accumulated in bouts of 10 minutes or more (equivalent to 30 minutes of exercise on at least 5 days of the week); or 75 minutes of ‘vigorous’ activity spread across a week; or a combination of both.

The most recent Scottish Health Survey (2017)⁶, used by the Scottish Government to monitor adherence to these guidelines, estimates that 65% of adults in Scotland (aged 16 and over) currently meet the recommended level of physical activity.

In 2017/18 SPANS estimated that 72% of CSGN area residents use the outdoors for some sort of physical activity each week, including 31% of residents who meet the Scottish Government’s weekly recommended level of at least 150 minutes (or two and a half hours) of moderate physical activity simply through outdoor exercise⁷, underlining the significant role the natural environment plays as a setting for physical activity.

Figure 5: Use of the outdoors for physical exercise in the last week 2017/18



Base: 1,316 respondents

Source: SPANS 2017/18 Question BEN3

8. Are some population groups more likely to visit the outdoors than others?

Propensity to visit the outdoors is influenced by a variety of demographic and other factors, including age, social grade, residency and health. As in Scotland as a whole, younger and more affluent CSGN residents, along with those living in rural areas,⁸ are more likely than average to visit the outdoors on a regular basis; CSGN residents with a long-term illness or disability and those who describe their general health as ‘bad’ are less likely than average to do so.

⁵ UK-wide physical activity guidelines were adopted by the Scottish Government in July 2011

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/ArtsCultureSport/Sport/physicalactivity/paguidelines>

⁶ <https://www.gov.scot/Publications/2018/09/9247>

⁷ In SPANS, outdoor exercise is defined as an ‘activity which is enough to make you feel warmer, breath harder and make your heart beat faster’. It could include outdoor visits where the main activity is aerobic; active travel; participation in outdoor sport; and participation in other outdoor activities such as gardening.

⁸ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/About/Methodology/UrbanRuralClassification>

Table 2: Visiting the outdoors by population group

Population group	Visit the outdoors at all	Visit the outdoors at least once a week
	%	%
All CSGN area residents	80	53
Age		
34 or under	88	56
35 - 54	84	57
55 or over	70	47
Social grade		
AB	91	63
C1	87	59
C2	80	54
DE	65	39
Residency		
Urban	80	53
Rural	83	57
Residency - SIMD⁹		
15% most deprived areas	72	42
Other areas	83	57
Have long-term illness or disability		
Yes	58	34
No	87	57
Self-reported general health		
Good	87	58
Fair	69	40
Bad*	43	23

Source: SPANS 2017/18 Q CLASSIF1, Q CLASSIF2, Q CLASSIF3

9. Where do people go on their outdoor visits?

We know from the 2012 Scottish Recreation Survey¹⁰ that the vast majority of outdoor visits taken by CSGN residents start directly from home (94%) with the remainder taken while away from home, for example, while on holiday elsewhere in Scotland (6%).

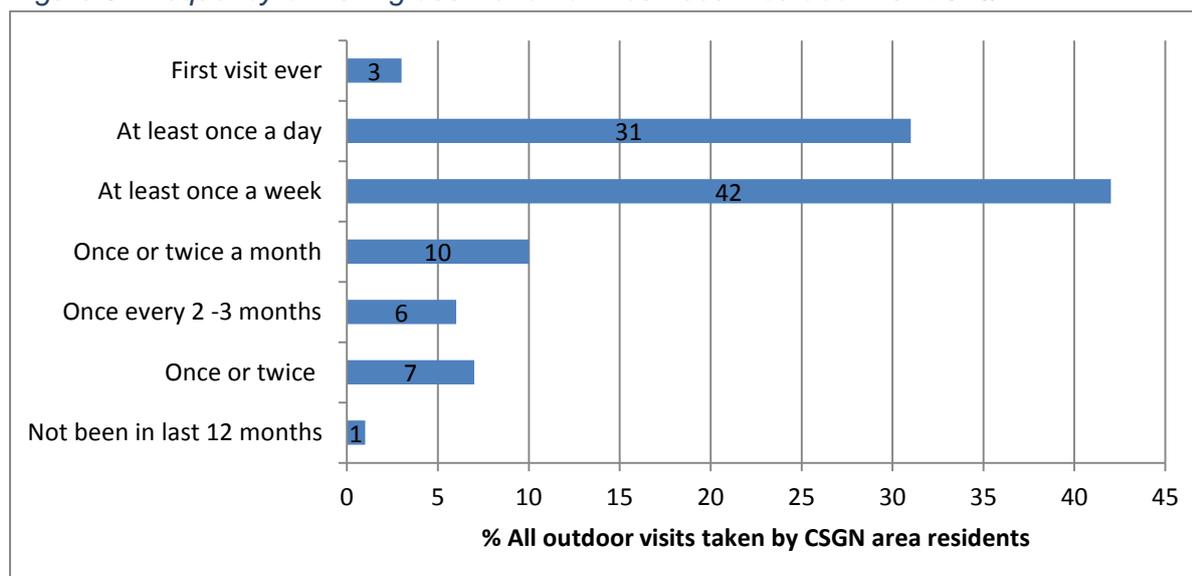
In 2013/14¹¹, SPANS estimated that 79% of the outdoor visits made by CSGN residents were taken within the CSGN area. Almost all of the visits taken by CSGN residents were 'repeat visits' to familiar places (97%); around three quarters were taken to places which were visited once a week or more often (73%), suggesting that most outdoor visits were of an 'every day' nature, for example to walk a dog or to take regular exercise.

⁹ Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation <http://simd.scotland.gov.uk/publication-2012/introduction-to-simd-2012/overview-of-the-simd/what-is-the-simd/>

¹⁰ This question was not included in SPANS

¹¹ This question was not included in SPANS in 2017/18

Figure 6: Frequency of visiting destination of most recent outdoor visit 2013/14



Base: 1,370 respondents

Source: SPANS 2013/14 Q REC13

In 2017/18 around half of the outdoor visits taken by CSGN residents were taken in urban areas (49%); countryside trips accounted for 42% of the total and trips to the seaside accounted for the remaining 9%.

Compared to the Scottish population as a whole, CSGN residents are slightly more likely than average to visit the outdoors in an urban environment (49% of CSGN residents' visits versus 40% of visits taken in Scotland) and slightly less likely than average to visit the countryside (42% of CSGN residents' visits versus 49% of visits taken in Scotland).

Table 3: Location of visits to the outdoors taken by CSGN residents 2017/18

Location	No. visits	% visits
Town/city	148 million	49
Countryside	128 million	42
Seaside	27 million	9
Total	303 million	100

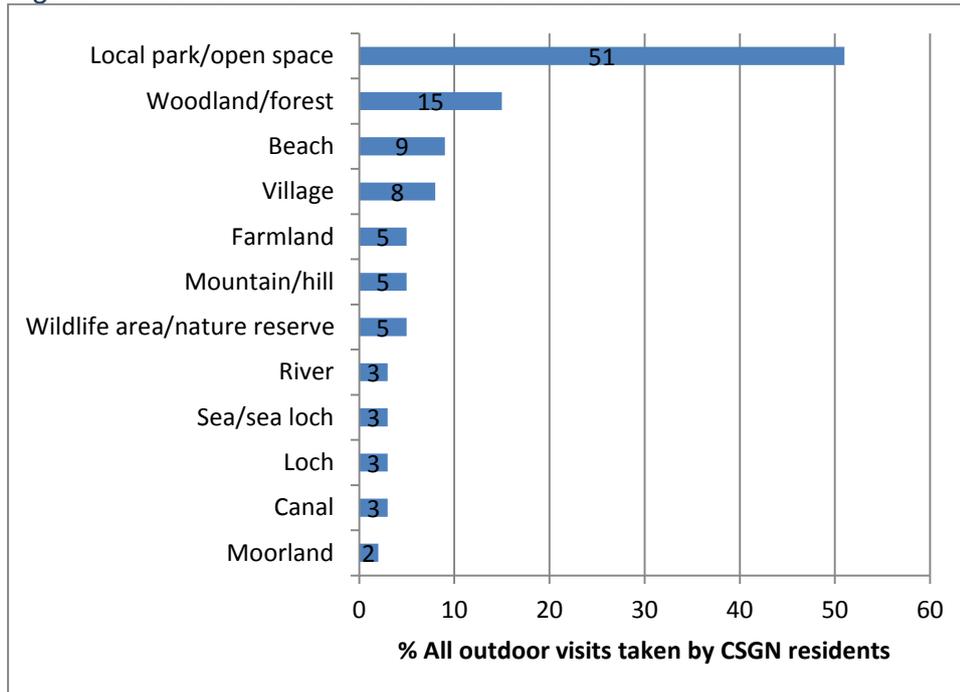
Base: 2,421 respondents

Source: SPANS 2017/18 Question REC5

In terms of the outdoor destinations visited, local parks are most popular among CSGN residents and are included in half of all outdoor visits (51%).

Compared to the Scottish population as a whole, CSGN residents are more likely to visit local parks (51% of CSGN residents' visits compared to 42% of visits taken in Scotland) and less likely to visit other destinations such as woodlands/forests, farmland, beaches and wildlife/nature reserves.

Figure 7: Destinations of outdoor visits 2017/18

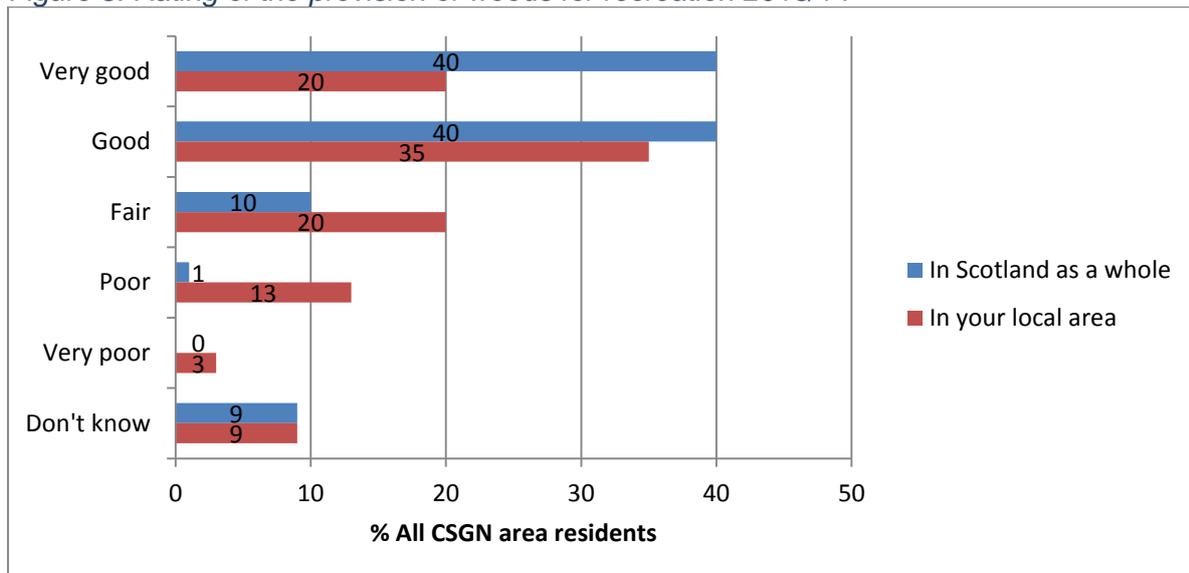


Base: 2,421 respondents

Source: SPANS 2017/18 Question REC6

Woodlands and forests are the second most popular type of outdoor destination visited by CSGN residents (included in 15% of their visits). In 2013/14¹², when asked about the provision of woods for recreation, 80% of CSGN residents rated their provision across Scotland as a whole as 'very good' or 'good' compared to only 55% who gave a positive rating to the level of provision in their local area.

Figure 8: Rating of the provision of woods for recreation 2013/14



Base: 2,636 respondents

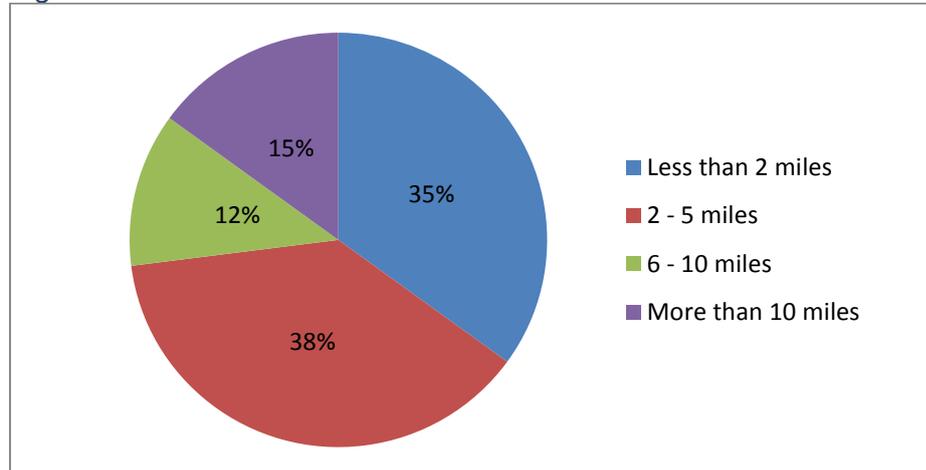
Source: SPANS 2013/14 Q FOR4

¹² This question was not included in SPANS in 2017/18

10. Outdoor visits – distance travelled, duration of visits and transport used

Most outdoor visits taken by CSGN area residents are relatively short, both in terms of their duration and the distance people travel to and from the destination. Eighty five per cent of visits involve a travel distance to and from the destination of ten miles or less (85%), with around a third of visits taken within 2 miles of home (35%). The average distance travelled to and from the destination on visits to the outdoors is just less than 9 miles.

Figure 9: Distance travelled to and from destination on visits to the outdoors 2017/18

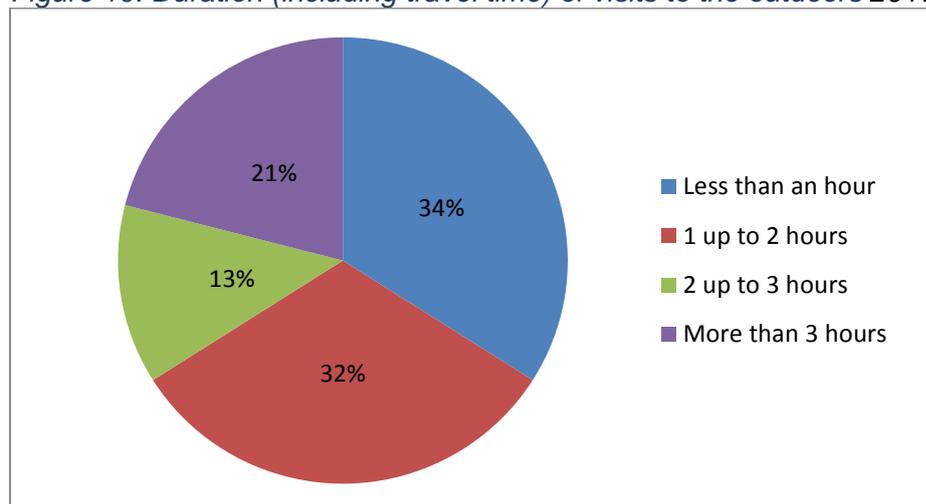


Base: 1,625 respondents

Source: SPANS 2017/18 Question REC10

Seventy-nine per cent of visits taken by CSGN area residents last for three hours or less, including any travelling time, and around a third last for less than an hour (34%). The average duration (including travelling time) of visits to the outdoors is just over two hours.

Figure 10: Duration (including travel time) of visits to the outdoors 2017/18

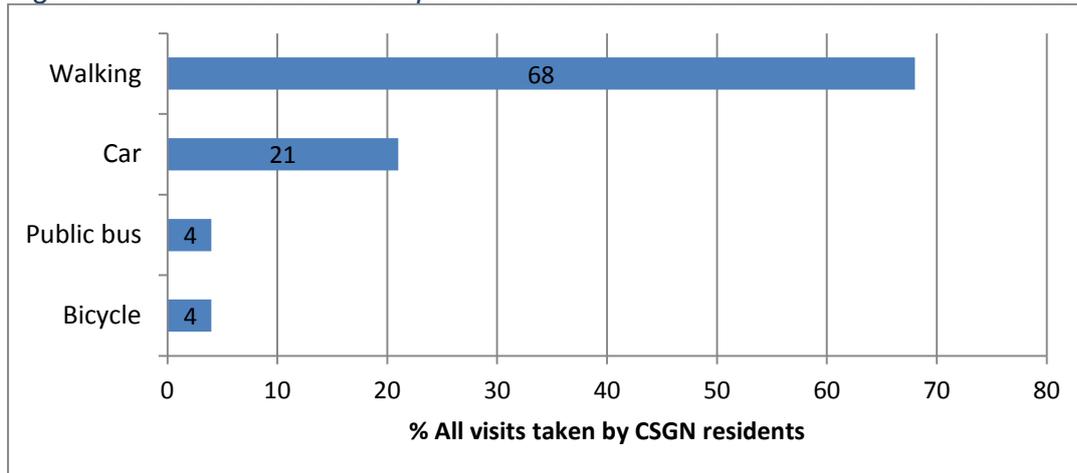


Base: 1,625 respondents

Source: SPANS 2017/18 Question REC11

Walking is the main mode of transport used by CSGN residents to reach the destination of their outdoor visits (68% of all visits); in comparison, cars are used on 21% of visits; public buses and bikes are each used on 4% of visits.

Figure 11: Main means of transport used to reach the destination of outdoor visits



Base: 1,625 respondents

Source: SPANS 2017/18 Question REC9

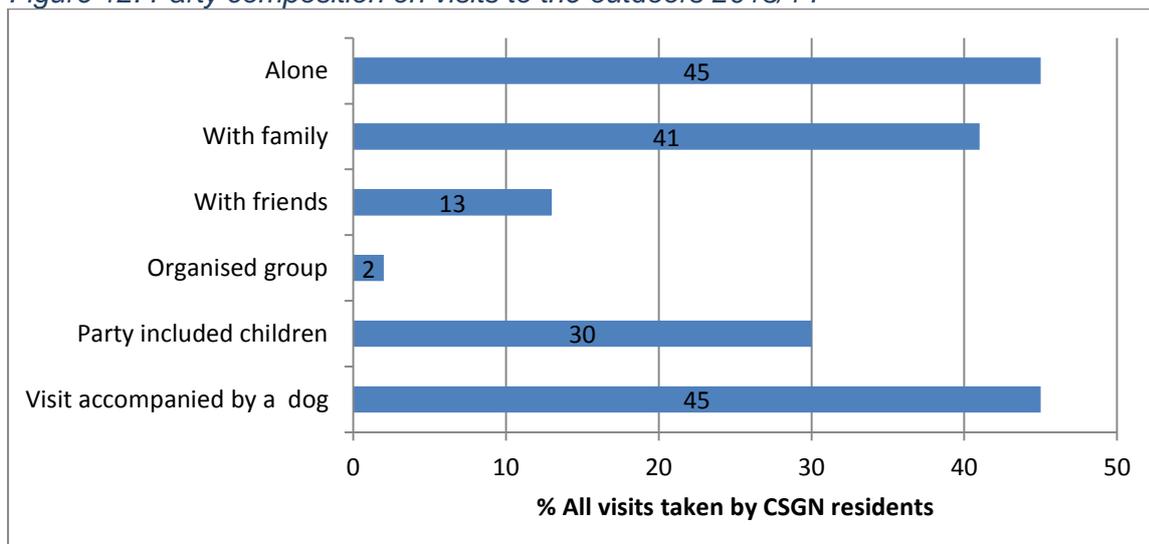
12. The use of paths on outdoor visits

In 2013/14¹³ SPANS estimated that most outdoor visits taken by CSGN residents involved the use of a path or path network (73%) and more than half involved the use of paths with signposting or waymarking (57%).

13. Who do people visit the outdoors with?

In 2013/14¹⁴ SPANS estimated that 45% of outdoor visits taken by CSGN residents were taken alone, with the next greatest proportion taken in the company of family members (41%). Children were included in the party on 30% of all visits to the outdoors and on 54% of visits which aren't taken alone. Forty-five per cent visits are accompanied by a dog.

Figure 12: Party composition on visits to the outdoors 2013/14



Base: 955 respondents

Source: SPANS 2013/14 Question REC14

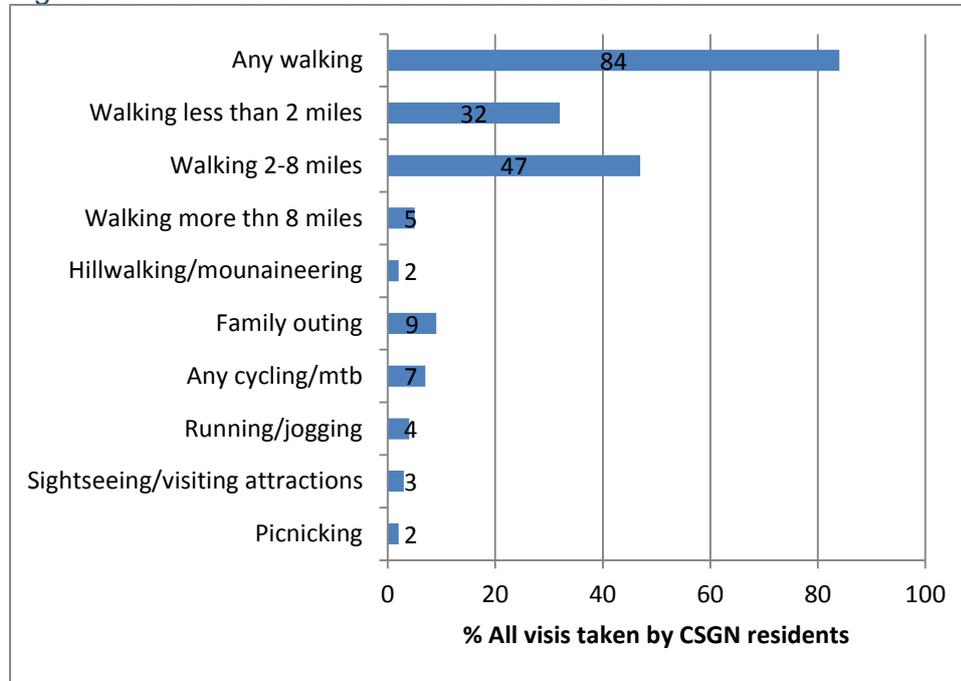
¹³ This question was not included in SPANS in 2017/18

¹⁴ Questions on party composition were not included in SPANS in 2017/18

14. What do CSGN residents do on outdoor visits?

Most outdoor visits taken by CSGN residents involve a walk (84%), typically a short walk of up to 2 miles (32% of visits) or a walk of between 2 and 8 miles (47% of visits). Nine per cent of visits are described as family outings and 7% include cycling or mountain biking.

Figure 13: Activities on visits to the outdoors 2017/18



Base: 2,421 respondents

Source: SPANS 2017/18 Question REC4

15. What proportion of outdoor visitors experience access problems or witness irresponsible behaviour?

When prompted, only a minority of CSGN area residents report experiencing access problems or witnessing irresponsible behaviour on their outdoor visits (31%). Litter, vandalism or graffiti are mentioned most frequently (encountered on 19% of visits in 2017/18 compared to 14% in 2013/14).

Table 4: Problems encountered/experienced on most recent outdoor visit 2017/18

	% outdoor visits on which problem encountered
Any problem experienced	31
No problem experienced	69
<i>Type of problem experienced</i>	
Litter, vandalism, graffiti	19
Other people behaving inconsiderately or irresponsibly (e.g. cyclists failing to consider the needs of walkers)	5
Well used or promoted path was difficult to use (e.g. uneven surface or gradient that caused me problems)	3
Well used or promoted path in poorer condition than expected (e.g. wet, muddy, overgrown)	3
A man-made obstruction intended to prevent me from taking my planned route (e.g. locked gate on a well-used path or track, barbed wire across a stile)	3
Well used or promoted path had insufficient resting/sitting places for my needs	2
A dog annoying me or my party	2
A sign that made me feel unwelcome or /unsure about what route to take (e.g. 'Private', 'No entry', 'Keep out').	2
A gate or stile which I had difficulty opening or crossing	1
I experienced another type of problem	4

Base: 795 respondents

Source: SPANS 2017/18 Question REC18

Further information about SPANS and other surveys commissioned by Scottish Natural Heritage is available on the [SNH website](#).

