



**NatureScot**

Scotland's Nature Agency  
Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba

# **Scottish Household Survey 2019**

## **Headline findings relating to the natural environment**

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People and Places Activity

NatureScot

Great Glen House

Leachkin Road

Inverness IV3 8NW

For further information please contact [Aileen.Armstrong@nature.scot](mailto:Aileen.Armstrong@nature.scot)

## 1. Background

The Scottish Household Survey (SHS) is an annual survey commissioned by the Scottish Government to provide data on the composition and characteristics of Scottish households and the attitudes and behaviour of people living in Scotland. The survey was first commissioned in 1999 and covers topics linked to a wide range of policy areas (e.g. housing, transport, volunteering, sports participation, the environment). The data can be disaggregated both geographically and by population sub-group.

An SHS annual report is published in September each year, covering the previous calendar year's research findings. This short paper provides headline findings from the [Scottish Household Survey 2019](#) (published in September 2020), focusing on the 'people' and 'places' findings of most interest to NatureScot, i.e.

- *Volunteering*
- *Participation in physical activity and sport (including recreational walking)*
- *Visits to the outdoors*
- *Local greenspace*
- *Local neighbourhoods*
- *Participation in local decision-making*
- *Participation in land use decisions*
- *Attitudes to climate change*

Please note that the 2019 SHS does not capture the impact of the subsequent COVID-19 pandemic on the lives of people in Scotland; this period will be covered in the 2020 survey.

More detailed reporting on the topics above (and on other topics included in the SHS) is available [here](#). Local-authority level data are available on the [SHS Data Explorer](#). Ad hoc analysis is available on request from the SHS team.

## 2. Headline findings

### 2.1 Volunteering

A set of questions on '*formal volunteering*' (described as providing unpaid help to other people or to a cause through a group, club or organisation) has been included in the SHS since 2009.

- In 2019, 26% of adults had undertaken formal volunteering. Levels of formal volunteering have remained relatively stable over the last ten years, in the range 26% to 31% of all adults.
- In 2019, 28% of women and 24% of men had undertaken formal volunteering. The incidence of formal volunteering was highest among those aged 35 to 44 (30%); those aged over 75 are least likely to volunteer (20%).
- In general, the percentage of adults undertaking formal volunteering increases along with household income: in 2019, 18% of adults with a net household income of £15,000 or less had volunteered compared to 35% of those with a net household income of more than £40,000. Levels of formal volunteering remain lower among those living in the 20% most deprived areas (16%) compared to those living in the 20% least deprived areas (33%).

- The incidence of formal volunteering remains higher in rural areas than in urban areas. In 2019, an estimated 33% of those living in remote rural areas and 32% of those living in accessible rural areas had volunteered compared to 24% of those living in large urban areas or in other urban areas.
- Levels of formal volunteering are highest among people in employment (28%) and slightly lower among those who are permanently retired from work (25%).
- The profile of formal volunteers has remained stable over the last ten years, with the incidence of volunteering higher among women; people from higher income groups; people living in rural areas; and people living in the least deprived areas.
- Adults who had participated in formal volunteering in the previous 12 months were most likely to have provided unpaid help to 'youth or children's activities outside of school' (23% of volunteers), 'local community or neighbourhood groups' (22% of volunteers), activities associated with 'children's education and schools' (19% of volunteers) and 'health, disability and wellbeing groups' (18% of volunteers). Five per cent of volunteers had undertaken unpaid work involving environmental protection. The level of participation in formal volunteering for the environment has remained largely unchanged since 2012.

In 2018, a set of questions on '*informal volunteering*' (e.g. keeping in touch with someone at risk of being lonely, helping to improve your local environment) was added to the SHS for the first time. These questions were not asked in 2019 survey but will be included again in 2020. The data below are for 2018.

- In 2018, 36% of adults had undertaken informal volunteering.
- The profile of informal volunteers is similar to that of formal volunteers.
- In 2018, adults who had participated in informal volunteering in the previous 12 months were most likely to have provided unpaid help in the form of 'keeping in touch with someone at risk of being lonely' (18% of volunteers), 'baby-sitting or looking after a child' (15% of volunteers), 'doing shopping, collecting pension, collecting benefits or paying bills' (12% of volunteers) and 'routine household chores' (11% of volunteers). Four per cent of informal volunteers had undertaken unpaid work to help improve their local environment.
- In 2018 almost three quarters of adults who had not undertaken any formal or informal voluntary work in the last 12 months said that there was 'nothing' that would encourage them to undertake voluntary work in future (72%).

## **2.2 Adult participation in physical activity and sport (including recreational walking)**

A set of questions on adult participation in physical activity and sport in the previous four weeks (including recreational walking) has been included in the SHS since 2007.

- In 2019, 80% of adults stated that they had participated in physical activity and sport (including recreational walking) in the previous four weeks. There has been a gradual increase in participation in physical activity and sport over the last ten years, up from 73% in 2008 to 80% in 2019. This increase (which has levelled off since 2017) is largely attributable to a steady rise in the proportion of adults participating in recreational walking: the percentage of adults walking (for at least 30 minutes) has increased from 56% in 2008

to 68% in 2019. If recreational walking is excluded from the analysis, the level of participation in physical activity and sport falls to 54% of all adults; this proportion has remained relatively constant since 2008 (in the range 51% and 54%).

- Frequency of participation in physical activity and sport among those who are active has also increased since 2008. The proportion of active adults reporting frequent participation (i.e. on more than 14 days in the past four weeks) has increased from 37% in 2008 to 51% in 2019.
- The increase in participation in physical activity and sport (including walking) is evident across most age groups. The greatest increase has occurred among adults aged 60 and over, with participation up 10 percentage points between 2008 and 2019 (from 56% to 66%).
- Participation in physical activity and sport (including walking) remains higher among men (82%) than women (78%) and this gap widens when recreational walking is excluded from the analysis (58% of men and 50% of women participating). In general, men are more likely than women to participate in most sporting activities with the exception of walking, swimming, dancing, keep-fit and bowls.
- Participation in physical activity and sport declines with age, especially when walking is excluded from the analysis. Excluding walking, participation is highest among those aged 16-34 (67%), declining to 57% among those aged 35-59 and to 36% among those aged 60 and over. When walking is included in the analysis, the drop off in participation is slightly less pronounced, declining from 88% among 16-34 year olds, to 83% of those aged 35-59 and 66% of those aged 60 and over.
- In terms of educational attainment, participation in physical activity and sport (including walking) is highest among adults with an HNC, HND, degree or professional qualification (90%) and lowest among those with no qualifications (54%). This difference is even greater when walking is excluded from the analysis (67% versus 25%).
- Participation in physical activity and sport (including walking) also varies according to area deprivation levels, with 70% of those living in the 20% most deprived areas participating compared to 90% of those living in the 20% least deprived areas. This pattern is repeated when walking is excluded from the analysis (42% of those living in the 20% most deprived areas participating compared to 67% of those living in the 20% least deprived areas). The gap in participation in physical activity and sport (including recreational walking) between the most and least deprived areas has been consistent over time.
- People with a long-term limiting physical or mental health condition were less likely to participate in physical activity and sport (including walking) than those without (for example, 54% of those with a limiting health condition participated in physical activity and sport in 2019 compared to 85% of those with a non-limiting health condition and 88% of those without a health condition). There was also a marked difference in participation in recreational walking between those with and without long-term physical and mental health conditions (44% and 75%, respectively, participated in walking).
- In 2019, 68% of adults stated that they had participated in recreational walking (lasting for at least 30 minutes) in the last four weeks. Recreational walking remains the most prevalent sporting activity undertaken by both men (67%) and women (69%). It is also the most popular activity irrespective of deprivation although those in the least deprived

areas participate significantly more than those in the most deprived areas (78% and 57%, respectively).

- Participation in recreational walking has increased among all age groups since 2008, although participation levels have plateaued in recent years. In 2019, participation was highest in the 16-34 and 35-59 age groups (72% in both), declining to 58% among those aged 60 and above.
- Compared to walking, levels of participation in any other individual sporting activity are significantly lower. Swimming comes next in terms of popularity (17% of adults had participated in the previous four weeks) followed by multi-gym/weight training (16% of adults), running/jogging (14% of adults), keep fit (13% of adults), and cycling (lasting for at least 30 minutes) (11% of adults). Between 2008 and 2019 there have been significant increases in the proportion of adults participating in cycling (up from 9% to 11%) and running/jogging (up from 9% to 14%).
- Participation in some types of sport and exercise is particularly associated with age (e.g. football, running/jogging and weight training have much higher participation rates among younger people); other sports show less of a correlation with age while some, like walking, swimming, cycling and golf, initially increase with age before declining at a later stage.

### 2.3 Visits to the outdoors

In 2013, the SHS became the data source used for monitoring progress on the Scottish Government's National Indicator on **Visits to the outdoors** (measured as the proportion of adults making one or more visits to the outdoors per week). NatureScot's Scottish Recreation Survey data were used previously, between 2006 and 2012.

- In 2019, 56% of adults visited the outdoors for recreation at least once a week, a decrease from 59% in 2018 but still higher than in any other year between 2012 and 2017 (weekly participation was 42% in 2012, 46% in 2013, 48% in 2014, 49% in 2015, 48% in 2016 and 52% in 2017). The annual increase of seven percentage points between 2017 and 2018 remains the largest increase observed in the time series.
- The proportion of men visiting the outdoors at least once a week in 2019 was higher than the proportion of women (58% and 54%, respectively).
- Twelve per cent of adults took no outdoor recreational visits at all in 2019, compared to 20% in 2012.
- In 2019, weekly participation in outdoor recreation was highest among younger age groups (60% among 16-39 year olds and 58% among 40-64 year olds) and lowest among those aged 65 and over (46%). More than a fifth of those aged 65 or over didn't visit the outdoors at all which may reflect declining mobility and accessibility issues (23%).
- Adults who report their health to be good or very good are significantly more likely than those with poor self-reported health to visit the outdoors on a weekly basis (63% and 29%, respectively). In 2019, 41% of those who describe their health as poor did not visit the outdoors at all in the previous 12 months.
- The incidence of visiting the outdoors also varies by area deprivation level: 43% of those living in the 20% most deprived areas visited the outdoors on a weekly basis in 2019 compared to 66% of those living in the 20% least deprived areas. Nineteen per cent of

those living in the 20% most deprived areas didn't visit the outdoors at all in 2019, compared to just 4% of those living in the 20% least deprived areas.

- Adults living in rural areas remain more likely than those living in urban areas to visit the outdoors on a weekly basis (64% and 54%, respectively in 2019).

## 2.4 Local green, blue or open spaces

A set of questions on green, blue or open spaces has been included in the SHS for a number of years. In 2010, NatureScot and greenspace scotland requested amendments to the wording of these questions to provide a more accurate measure of accessibility, use and perceptions of the quality of local greenspace. These data were available for the first time in 2012.

The SHS question on accessibility to green, blue or open spaces is currently included in the survey on an annual basis. The questions on use of local green, blue or open spaces and perceptions of the quality of local green, blue or open spaces were included in the survey annually until 2017 and once every second year thereafter.

In 2013, the question on accessibility to greenspace was amended to ask about greenspace within a 5 minute walk from home rather than within a 6 minute walk from home. In 2019, for one half of the sample, the wording in all three questions was changed slightly so that instead of referring to 'green or open spaces' it referred to 'green, blue or open spaces' to check if including the word 'blue' made any difference to the response given. No statistically significant difference was found.

Since 2016 the SHS question on walking distance from green, blue or open spaces has been the data source used to monitor progress on the Scottish Government's National Indicator on **Access to green and blue space** (measured as the proportion of people who live within a 5 minute walk of their local green or blue space).

- In 2019, around two thirds of adults in Scotland had access to a useable green or blue space within a 5 minute walk of their home (66%). This is similar to the proportion reported in the three previous years (65% in 2018, 2017 and 2016).
- People living in more deprived areas have poorer access to green or blue spaces than those living in less deprived areas. In 2019, 62% of those living in the 20% most deprived areas lived within a 5 minute walk of green or blue space compared to 67% of those living in the 20% least deprived areas.
- More than three quarters of adults use their local green and blue spaces (78%), with around half using them once a week or more (49%). Twenty two per cent of adults don't use their local green and blue spaces at all. The frequency with which people use their local green and blue spaces has remained stable over the last few years (between 49% and 50% of adults visiting weekly).
- There is an association between how far people have to walk to reach their local green and blue spaces and how often they use them: adults who live within a 5 minute walk of green and blue spaces are more likely to use them every day or several times a week (44%) than those who live within a 6 - 10 minute walk (24%) or further away (13%). Less than a fifth of those living within a 5 minute walk of their local green and blue spaces never

use them (17%) compared to 25% of those living within a 6-10 minute walk and 38% of those living further away.

- Use of local green and blue spaces also varies according to area deprivation level: 29% of those living in the 20% most deprived areas use local green and blue spaces every day or several times a week compared to 41% of those living in the 20% least deprived areas.
- There is also an association between health and use of local green and blue spaces: 40% of those reporting their health as 'good' or 'very good' use their local green and blue spaces every day or several times a week compared to 21% of those reporting their health as 'bad' or 'very bad'. Sixteen per cent of those in 'good/very good' health never use their local green and blue spaces compared to 49% of those in 'bad/very bad' health.
- As in previous survey years, around three quarters of adults say they are satisfied with their local green and blue spaces (73%). People who are satisfied with their local green and blue spaces are more likely to use them every day or several days a week than those who are dissatisfied (43% and 30%, respectively) and are less likely to never use them (12% and 28%, respectively).
- Those who describe their neighbourhood as a 'very good' or 'fairly good' place to live are more satisfied with their local green and blue spaces (80% and 68%, respectively, are satisfied) than those who rate their neighbourhood 'very poor' or 'fairly poor' (44% and 47%, respectively, are satisfied).
- Satisfaction levels also vary according to area deprivation level: 62% of those in the 20% most deprived areas express satisfaction with their local green and blue spaces compared to 81% of those living in the 20% least deprived areas. Conversely, 17% of adults living in the 20% most deprived areas report dissatisfaction with local green and blue spaces compared to only 6% in the 20% least deprived areas.

## 2.5 Local neighbourhoods

A set of questions on the public's perception of their local neighbourhood has been included in the SHS since the survey began in 1999.

The Scottish Household Survey is the data source used for monitoring progress on the National Indicator, **Perceptions of local area** (measured as the percentage of people who rate their neighbourhood as a 'very good' place to live).

- More than half of people in Scotland rate their neighbourhood as a 'very good' place to live (57%) and more than 9 in 10 rate it as a 'very' or 'fairly good' place to live" (94%). The proportion of people rating their neighbourhood 'very good' has remained relatively stable over the last ten years.
- Adults living in accessible or remote rural areas (70% and 80%, respectively) are more likely than those living in large or other urban areas (50% and 55%, respectively) to rate their neighbourhood as 'very good'.
- As found in previous survey years, the proportion of adults rating their neighbourhood as a 'very good' place to live increases as the level of deprivation declines: 32% of those living in the 20% most deprived areas, for instance, rate their neighbourhood 'very good' compared to 77% of those living in the 20% least deprived areas.

- Neighbourhood ratings have improved over the last decade amongst those living in the 20% most deprived areas: 25% rated their neighbourhood as a 'very good' place to live in 2008 compared to 32% in 2019.
- When rating their neighbourhood's strengths, residents were more positive about the people-based aspects (e.g. kindness and trust) and less positive about physical aspects (e.g. places where people can meet up).
- In 2019, 55% of adults reported that they had experienced a neighbourhood problem, with people living in the 20% most deprived areas and in large urban areas more likely to have done so (67% and 61%, respectively). As in previous survey years, the most commonly experienced neighbourhood problems were animal nuisance, e.g. noise or dog fouling, (experienced by 36% of adults) and rubbish/litter (experienced by 31% of adults).
- As in previous survey years, around three quarters of adults in 2019 felt a 'very' or 'fairly strong' sense of belonging to their immediate neighbourhood (78%). This sense of belonging was slightly stronger among older people (86% of those aged 60 and over) and slightly weaker among those living in the 20% most deprived areas (70%) and among members of the BME community (61%).
- There is a clear association between how adults rate their neighbourhood and how safe they feel in their communities: 83% of all adults said they felt 'very' or 'fairly safe' and 13% that they felt 'very' or 'a bit unsafe' when walking alone after dark in their neighbourhood or in their home alone at night. However, these proportions changed to 38% feeling 'very' or 'fairly safe' and 61% feeling 'very' or 'a bit unsafe' among those rating their neighbourhood as a 'very poor' place to live.

A survey question on **whether or not the local neighbourhood has improved** in recent years was not included in the 2018 or 2019 SHS and the data below are for 2017.

- When asked if they felt their neighbourhood had improved in the last three years, most people in 2017 felt things had stayed the same (63%); the proportions of adults who thought things had got better or worse in the last three years were similar (16% and 15%, respectively). Adults living in the 20% most deprived areas were less likely to perceive that things had stayed the same in the last three years (53%), with similar proportions believing things had got better or worse (21%).

## 2.6 Participation in local decision-making

A set of questions on public participation in local decision-making has been included in the SHS since 2007. One of these questions is the data source used to monitor progress on the Scottish Government's National Indicator, ***Influence over local decisions*** (measured as the percentage of adults who agree they can influence decisions affecting their local area).

- In 2019, 18% of adults agreed they could influence decisions affecting their local area (down from 23% in 2017 and 20% in 2018, and the lowest level reported in the time series). Thirty per cent of adults said they would like to be more involved in the decisions taken by their local council that affect their local area (down from 38% a decade ago and the lowest level in the time series).
- Adults living in the 20% most deprived areas were slightly less likely than those living in the 20% least deprived areas to feel they could influence decisions in their local area

(16% and 19%, respectively) and slightly less likely to want to be involved in decision-making (28% and 32%, respectively).

- In terms of age, adults aged 65 and over were less likely than younger adults to want more involvement in local decision-making (21% versus 33% among 16-39 year olds and 32% among 40-64 year olds).

## **2.7 Land use decisions**

A set of questions about participation in land use decisions was added to the Scottish Household Survey in 2015. These questions were not included in the survey in 2016 or 2019 although they were asked in 2017 and 2018. They will be included in 2020 survey and biennially thereafter.

- When shown a list of the ways in which people can participate in decisions about land use, 15% of adults in 2018 (the same as in 2017 and 2015) reported that they had given their views in at least one of these ways. The most common ways of participating were by signing a petition (7% of adults), taking part in a consultation or survey (6%) or attending a public meeting or community council meeting (5%). The least common way of participating was through having discussions with a land owner or land manager (1%).
- As in 2015 and 2017, adults living in rural areas were more likely than those living in urban areas to have given their views on land use in 2018 (20% compared to 14%).

## **2.8 Attitudes to climate change**

A question on the immediacy of climate change as a problem has been asked annually in the Scottish Household Survey since 2013 (this question was previously asked in the Scottish Environmental Attitudes and Behaviour Survey (SEABS) in 2008). In addition, a series of four attitude statements about taking action to tackle climate change were included in the survey in 2015, 2017 and 2018.

- In 2019, 68% of adults viewed climate change as an immediate and urgent problem. This proportion has increased steadily since 2014 (from 45% in 2014, to 50% in 2015, 55% in 2016, 61% in 2017 and 65% in 2018). It is significantly higher than the proportion recorded by SEABS in 2008 (57%).
- Concern about climate change varies according to age. It is highest among 35-44 year olds and 45-59 year olds (both 72%), followed by 16-24 year olds (69%) and 25-34 year olds (67%). The level of concern remains lowest among those aged 75 and over (56%). While the level of concern has increased across all age groups since 2013, the greatest increase has occurred among the youngest and oldest age groups: 69% of 16-24 year olds, 68% of 60-74 year olds and 56% of those aged 75 and over now consider climate change to be an immediate and urgent problem (up from 38%, 42% and 33%, respectively, in 2013).
- Perceptions of climate change as a problem remain associated with educational attainment: in 2019, those with a degree or professional qualification were more likely

than those with no qualifications to view climate change as an immediate and urgent problem (80% and 49%, respectively).

- Climate change is more likely to be perceived as a problem by those living in the 20% least deprived areas compared to adults living in the 20% most deprived areas (76% and 60%, respectively).
- The proportion of people who perceive a link between their behaviour/lifestyle and climate change has increased in recent years, as evidenced by a reduction in the proportion of people agreeing with the statement '*I don't believe my behaviour and everyday lifestyle contribute to climate change*', down from 26% in 2015, to 23% in 2017 and to 21% in 2018. Over the same period, the proportion of people agreeing with the statement, '*It's not worth me doing things to help the environment if others don't do the same*', has also declined (down from 23% in 2015, to 19% in 2017, and to 16% in 2018). As in 2015 and 2017, around three quarters of adults in 2018 agreed with the statement, '*I understand what actions people like myself should take to help tackle climate change*' (74%).