

Visits to the Natural Environment

Monthly update – September 2011



7th November 2011

During September 2011, the adult population in England (aged 16 and over) took an estimated 237 million visits to the natural environment. This is 11 percent lower than the 267 million visits taken in August 2011, however, it is 13 percent higher than the 206 million visits in September 2010. On average, 44 percent of the adult population visited the natural environment in the previous seven days during September 2011. A total of 2.6 billion visits were taken between October 2010 and September 2011.

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

- The volume of visits in September 2011 was lower than the August 2011 figure (237.4 and 267.3 million visits respectively), returning to a similar level as in June 2011 (233.4 million).
- The volume of visits in September 2011 was higher than in both September 2010 (206.0 million) and September 2009 (226.0 million).
- These variations may relate to unusually high temperatures towards the end of the month in 2011.

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

- In September 2011, around half of visits were taken to places in the countryside (50 percent), a slightly lower proportion to that recorded across all visits taken in the 12 months from October 2010 to September 2011 (53 percent).
- 39 percent of visits were taken in towns and cities in September 2011, while 11 percent were taken in coastal locations.

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

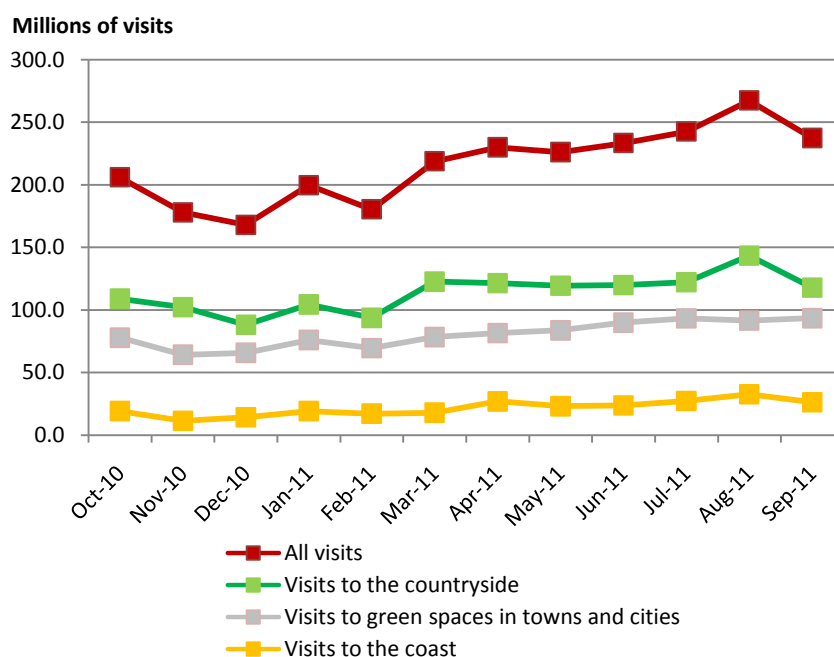


Table 1 - Volume of visits to the natural environment by place visited (millions of visits and percentage of total).

	Sep 2011	Oct 2010 – Sep 2011
By general type of place		
Countryside	117.9 (49.6%)	1364.3 (52.7%)
Town and city	93.4 (39.3%)	964.6 (37.3%)
Coast	26.2 (11.0%)	259.1 (10.0%)
By specific type of place		
Park in a town or city	58.3 (24.5%)	584.9 (22.6%)
Path, cycleway, bridleway	34.0 (14.3%)	384.7 (14.9%)
Woodland/forest	29.8 (12.6%)	340.8 (13.1%)
Another open space in the countryside	28.0 (11.8%)	296.2 (11.4%)
Farmland	23.4 (9.9%)	243.7 (9.4%)
Playing field or other recreation area	21.6 (8.8%)	208.3 (9.1%)
River, lake, canal	20.5 (8.6%)	259.5 (10.0%)
Village	20.3 (8.6%)	189.1 (7.3%)
Another open space in town or city	19.2 (8.1%)	201.6 (7.8%)
Country park	18.7 (7.9%)	184.2 (7.1%)
Beach	14.9 (6.3%)	154.9 (6.0%)
Other coastline	9.6 (4.0%)	88.3 (3.4%)
Children's playground	8.2 (3.5%)	75.9 (2.9%)
Mountain, hill, moorland	7.1 (2.9%)	59.5 (2.3%)
Allotment/community garden	2.0 (0.8%)	19.5 (0.8%)

Respondent base: Sep 2011 (N=4,418), Oct 2010 to Sep 2011 (N=45,759)

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 September 2011, 48 percent of visits involved walking with a dog, while just over a quarter of visits (26 percent) involved walking without a dog.
- Other significant activities included playing with children and eating or drinking out.
- Compared to the overall October 2010 to September 2011 period, a higher proportion of the visits taken in September 2011 involved playing with children (11 percent compared to nine percent).

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

	Sep 2011	Oct 2010 – Sep 2011
Activity		
Walking, with a dog	114.5 (48.2%)	1322.4 (51.1%)
Walking, not with a dog	61.3 (25.8%)	681.6 (26.3%)
Playing with children	25.6 (10.7%)	230.1 (8.9%)
Eating or drinking out	16.0 (6.7%)	151.5 (5.9%)
Visiting an attraction	9.0 (3.4%)	88.7 (3.4%)
Wildlife watching	7.5 (3.2%)	76.8 (3.0%)
Informal games and sport	7.4 (3.1%)	73.0 (2.8%)
Picnicking	6.9 (2.9%)	57.8 (2.2%)
Running	6.7 (2.8%)	76.7 (2.9%)
Visits to the beach, sunbathing, paddling in the sea	6.5 (2.7%)	50.0 (1.9%)
Appreciating scenery from your car	5.9 (2.5%)	49.8 (1.9%)
Road cycling	5.1 (2.1%)	52.7 (2.0%)
Off road cycling/mountain biking	3.5 (1.0%)	27.0 (1.0%)
Fishing	2.3 (1.0%)	15.9 (0.6%)
Horse riding	2.2 (0.9%)	29.2 (1.1%)
Watersports	2.2 (0.9%)	17.2 (0.7%)
Swimming outdoors	1.7 (0.7%)	12.2 (0.5%)
Fieldsports	0.7 (0.3%)	9.3 (0.4%)

Respondent base: Sep 2011 (N=4,418), Oct 2010 to Sep 2011 (N=45,759)

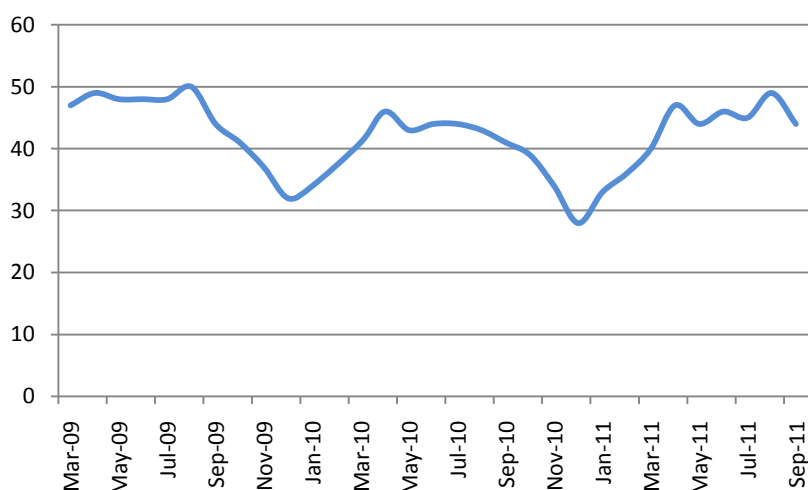
Note percentages for activity may total more than 100 because respondents could select more than one activity per visit.

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

- During September 2011, an average of 44 percent of the adult population took one or more visits to the natural environment in the previous seven days.
- This is five percentage points lower than the figure recorded during August 2011 (49 percent) and at the same level as was recorded in May 2011 (44 percent).

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

Percentage of adult population



The average duration of visits during September 2011 was 2 hours and 8 minutes and the average distance travelled was 6.6 miles. The average duration of visits is slightly higher than found during October 2010 – September 2011 period but lower than the August 2011 duration of 2 hours and 26 minutes reflecting the changing seasons.

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

	Sep 2011	Oct 2010 - Sep 2011
Average duration of visits	2 hours 8 minutes	1 hour 57 minutes
Average distance travelled to reach visit destination	6.6 miles	6.2 miles
Percentage of visits involving any expenditure	27%	25%
Average expenditure per visit (excluding visits with no spend)	£23	£27

Respondent base for distance and duration: Sep 2011 (N=4,418), Oct 2010 to Sep 2011 (N=45,759)
Respondent base for expenditure: Sep 2011 (N=895), Oct 2010 to Sep 2011 (N=10,614)

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>