



Outdoors in Northern Ireland

Results of population survey
undertaken in November and
December 2020

29th January 2021

Outdoor Recreation
Northern Ireland
DAERA



Summary of key results	3
Introduction and method	5
Participation levels and influencing factors	6
Profile of visits	20
Benefits of visits	31
Technical annex	40



Florence Court Forest Trail

Visiting the outdoors during November and December 2020

- During November and December 2020 an average of 70% of adults in Northern Ireland reported that they had normally spent leisure time outdoors at least once a week during the previous 12 months.
- However, this level was lower amongst a number of population groups including the oldest age groups, least affluent socio-economic groups and people with a long term illness or disability.
- While concerns relating to Covid-19 were the most common reason for not spending more leisure time outdoors during this period, other common barriers included safety concerns, a lack of suitable places to go and personal circumstances such as poor health, old age or being too busy.

Availability of greenspaces, paths and trails

- Around a quarter of the population indicated that they do not have greenspaces and/or paths and trails within easy walking distance and a similar percentage provided low ratings for these quality of these facilities. In general women, unemployed people, people with a disability and residents of rural areas provided the lowest ratings.

Impacts of Covid-19

- While 44% of the Northern Ireland population spent less time taking part in outdoor recreation during this period than over the same period in 2019, 22% had increased the amount of time they spent outdoors.
- People most likely to decrease their time outdoors included those with disabilities, the oldest age groups, residents of the most deprived areas and people with no car access. Concerns over Covid-19 were the predominant reason for decreasing time outdoors.
- People most likely to increase their time outdoors included the youngest age groups, those with children at home and those who were working full time. Amongst these groups the most common reasons for spending more time outdoors included an increased amount of free time, a desire to stay fit and healthy and needing to do something to relieve boredom.
- Outdoor activities undertaken during this period reflected the Covid-19 restrictions in place. Three in five of those who had spent time outdoors had taken part in short walks (58%) while much smaller percentages participated in other outdoor pursuits (15% played with children, 12% ran, 9% hill walked). The majority of visits were taken on foot (55%) and the most visited types of place included woodland (20% of visits), paths and cycleways (19%) and parks in towns and cities (17%).

Summary of key results

Benefits of outdoor visits

- The majority of those taking part in outdoor visits were motivated to spend time outdoors because they wanted to get some exercise or improve their health (73%) or for wellbeing related reasons such as relaxing and unwinding (56%).
- Furthermore, after spending time outdoors, the vast majority of participants reported feeling calm and relaxed and/or refreshed and revitalised (86%).
- While these health and wellbeing benefits were particular significant during this period, the survey also provided clear evidence of the other benefits provided from participation in outdoor recreation including economic benefits from the expenditure made during visits, environmental benefits resulting from the increased connection to nature obtained from time spent outdoors and educational and learning benefits gained, particularly amongst children.

Implications

- XXXXX



Mourne Cycle Trail

Background

Outdoor recreation plays a vital role in Northern Ireland, bringing benefits to society by contributing in a wide range of areas, including health and well-being, social inclusion, community cohesion, environmental protection, rural development and economic development. These benefits support the work undertaken by a range of organisations from government departments and local authorities to organisations in the voluntary sector.

However, although these benefits are widely evidenced in general, until now a lack of specific information on outdoor recreation participation in Northern Ireland has made it hard to provide an accurate picture of the value it brings.

Given this lack of a baseline measurement, it has been difficult to demonstrate the quantum of contribution of outdoor recreation to the delivery of government department outcomes in Northern Ireland and consequently there are no Programme for Government targets directly related to outdoor recreation.

A new survey of the Northern Ireland adult population

In this context, following the publication of the report 'The development of a quantitative baseline for Outdoor Recreation in Northern Ireland', a partnership including Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland (ORNI), the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and the Strategic Outdoor Recreation Group (SORG) commissioned 56 Degree Insight to undertake this research.

This study has involved two phases:

- **Phase 1** - Carrying out a detailed analysis of relevant data collected in the Continuous Household Survey (CHS), Health Survey Northern Ireland (HSNI) and other relevant studies to identify the headline metrics which can be used to demonstrate and track the value of outdoor recreation in Northern Ireland.
- **Phase 2** – designing and undertaking a new survey of the Northern Ireland adult population in late 2020 to collect new data which further helps to demonstrate the importance of outdoor recreation in areas related to Programme for Government outcomes.

This report provides the results this survey of the Northern Ireland adult population undertaken during November and December 2020 as part of Phase 2. When using the results, it is important to bear in mind that this survey was undertaken during the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic and periods of 'lockdown' when restrictions were in place which impacted upon levels of participation in outdoor recreation.

Further details on the effects of lockdown are included in the results in the next section. Information on the survey approach, fieldwork timings and how these related to different levels of Coronavirus related restrictions are provided in the Appendix.

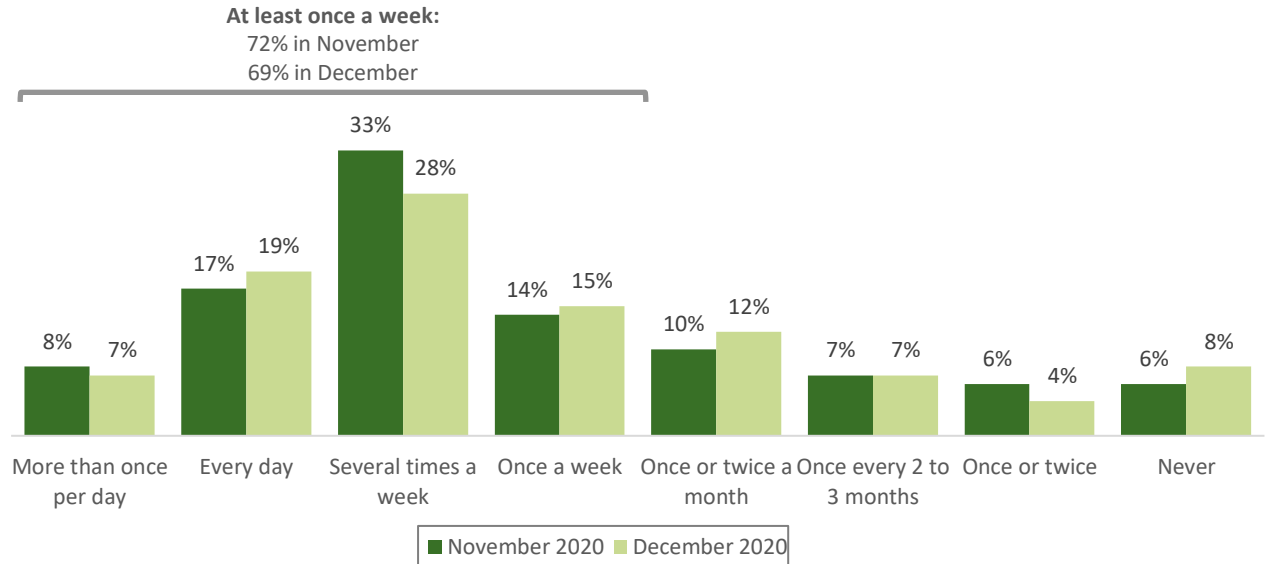
Participation levels and influencing factors



Around 7 in 10 adults living in Northern Ireland normally spent time outdoor for leisure at least once a week

- During both November and December 2020, around 7 in 10 normally took part in outdoor visits at least once a week with the largest share visiting 'several times a week'.
- As shown on page 8, on average across the two months, 70% took visits at least once a week but the percentage was higher amongst younger age groups, students and people in employment, people with secondary school age children, residents of the 10% least deprived areas and residents of areas classified as a mix of urban and rural.
- Other groups more likely to visit at least once a week included members of the more affluent ABC1 socio-economic groups (77%) and people who own or have access to a car (72% vs 63% with no car).
- By comparison the 2017-18 Continuous Household Survey recorded that 72% of the Northern Ireland population at least once a week.

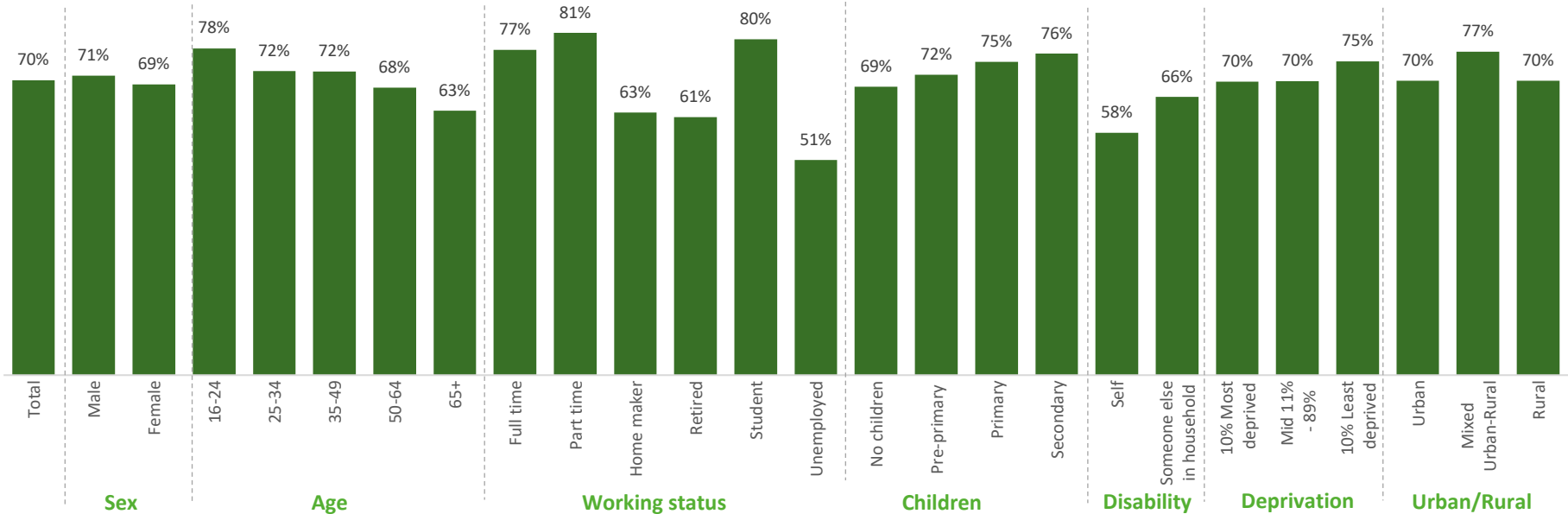
Figure 1 – Frequency of visits to the outdoors in the last 12 months



Q1. Thinking about the last 12 months, how often, on average, have you spent your leisure time out of doors, away from your home?
Base: All November and December respondents (1,001, 1,008)

The percentage visiting at least once a week varied significantly between demographic groups

Figure 2 – Normally visited the outdoors at least once a week in the last 12 months – by key demographics

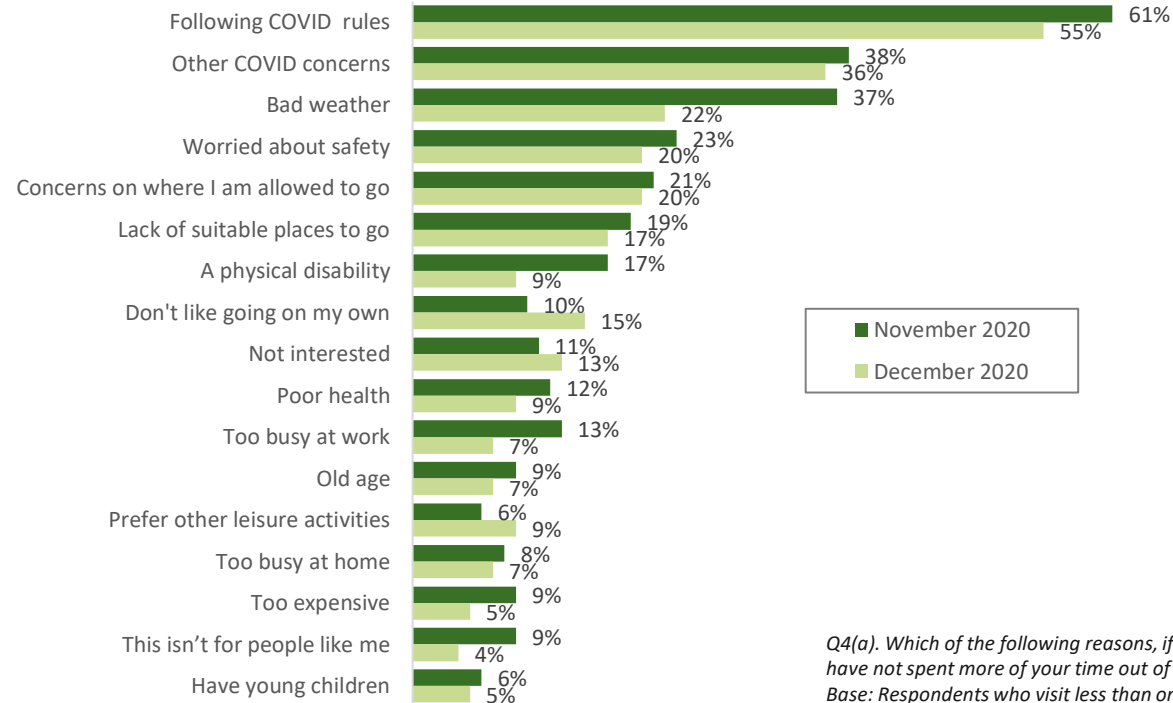


Q1. Thinking about the last 12 months, how often, on average, have you spent your leisure time out of doors, away from your home? Base: All November and December respondents (1,001, 1,008)

The most frequently provided reasons for not visiting the outdoors more often related to Covid-19, bad weather and safety concerns

- Those people who stated that they normally visited the outdoor less often than once a month were asked to indicate why they did not spend more time outdoors.
- As might be expected, in both months the majority (66% overall) mentioned that they were following rules relating to Covid-19 or that they had other Covid-19 related concerns.
- Other common concerns included bad weather (particularly in November), worries about safety, concerns about where they were allowed to go and a lack of suitable places to go.

Figure 3 – Reasons for not visiting the outdoors more often during last 12 months (those who visited less than once a month)



Q4(a). Which of the following reasons, if any, describe why you have not spent more of your time out of doors?
Base: Respondents who visit less than once a month (203, 207)

Barriers to taking visits to the outdoors varied between demographic groups

- Figure 4 illustrates how the key 'barriers' to visiting the outdoors varied between key demographic groups (based on November and December results combined).
- Notably, while women were more likely than men to mention Covid-19 related concerns, safety worries, poor health or disability or a lack of places to go, men were more likely than women to state that they were not interested or that old age was an issue.
- Also members of the more affluent ABC1 socio-economic groups were more likely to mention Covid-19 or worries about safety as barriers.

Figure 4 – Reasons for not visiting the outdoors more often during last 12 months (those who visited less than once a month) - key demographic variations



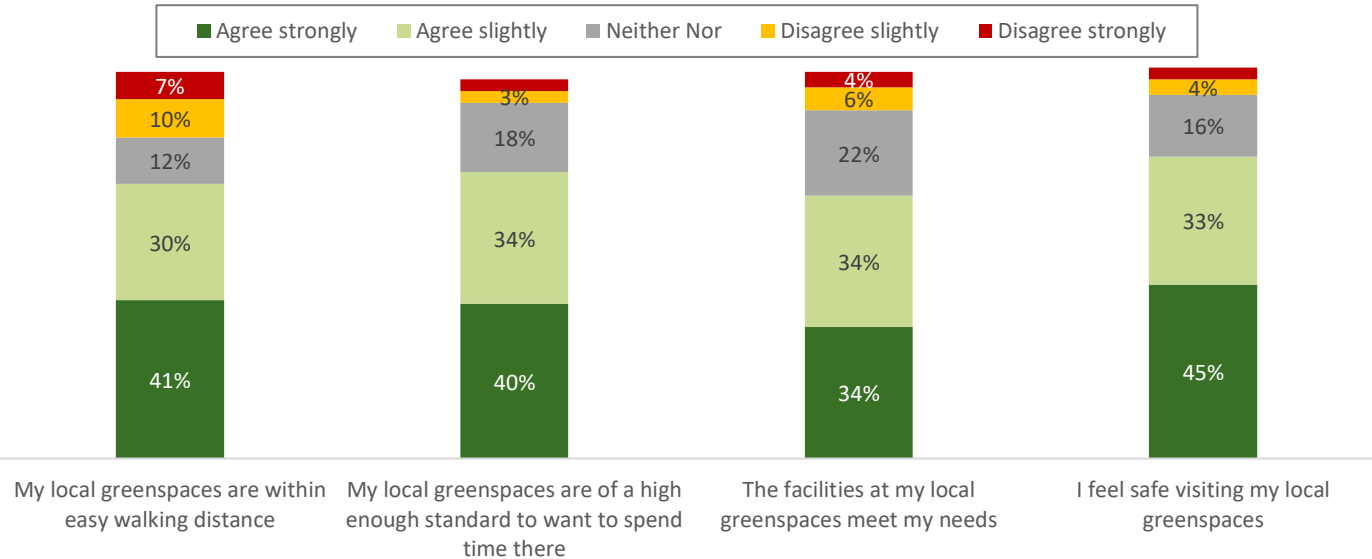
Q4(a). Which of the following reasons, if any, describe why you have not spent more of your time out of doors?

Base: Respondents who visit less than once a month (203, 207)

While most of the population feel broadly satisfied with their local greenspaces, a significant minority provided negative ratings

- A series of questions were asked to further explore how the population rated the availability of suitable greenspace and paths and trails in their local area.
- While the majority of the population agreed that their local greenspaces were within easy walking distance (71%), of a high enough standard to want to spend time in (77%), had suitable facilities (69%) and felt safe (78%), less than half agreed strongly with these statements and a significant minority disagreed.
- As shown on the next two pages, ratings of local greenspaces varied across the population, tending to be lower amongst women, unemployed people, parents with pre-primary age children, people with a disability and in rural areas.

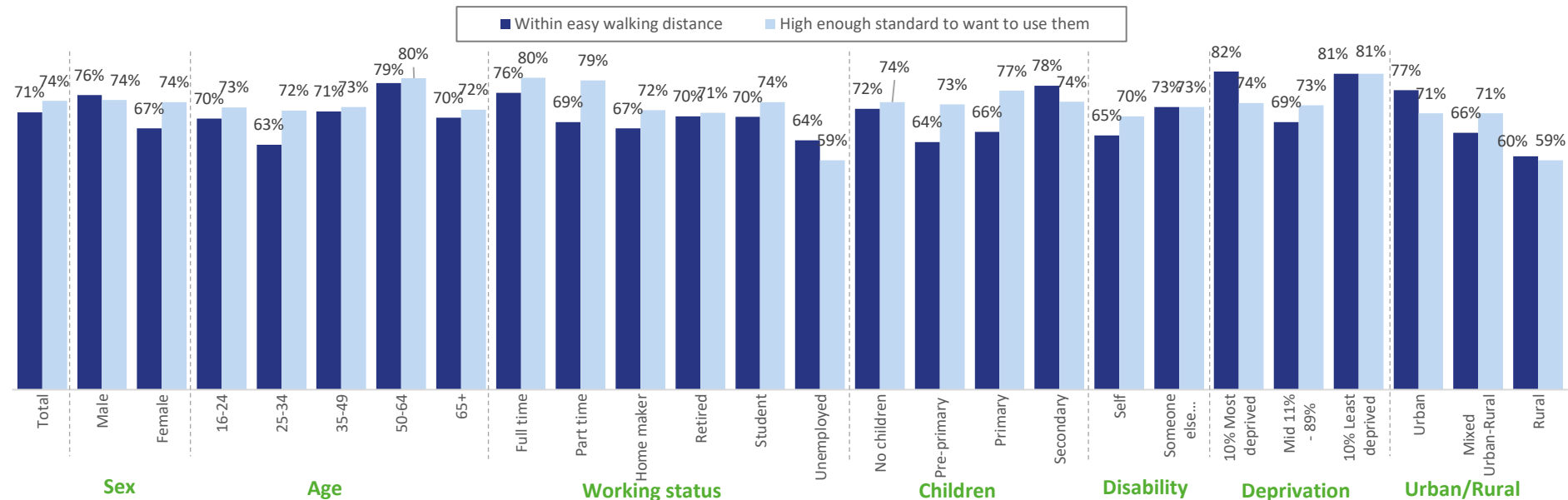
Figure 5 – Rating of local greenspaces



Q16 How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements relating to your nearest greenspace areas and paths and trails? Base All November and December respondents (1,001, 1,008)

The lowest ratings for the proximity of greenspace was provided by women, unemployed people and people with pre-primary age children

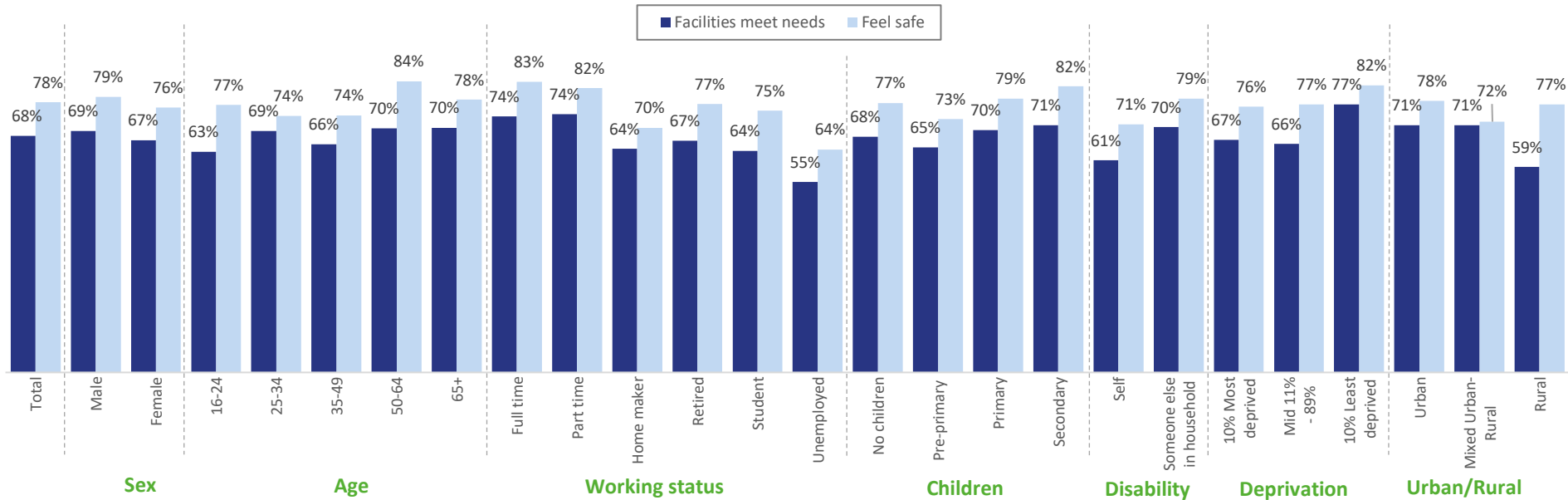
Figure 6 – Rating of local greenspaces by key demographics - % agreeing with statements



Q16 How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements relating to your nearest greenspace areas and paths and trails? Base: All November and December respondents (1,001, 1,008)

Facilities in greenspaces received the lowest rating from unemployed people and people with disabilities

Figure 7 – Rating of local greenspaces by key demographics - % agreeing with statements

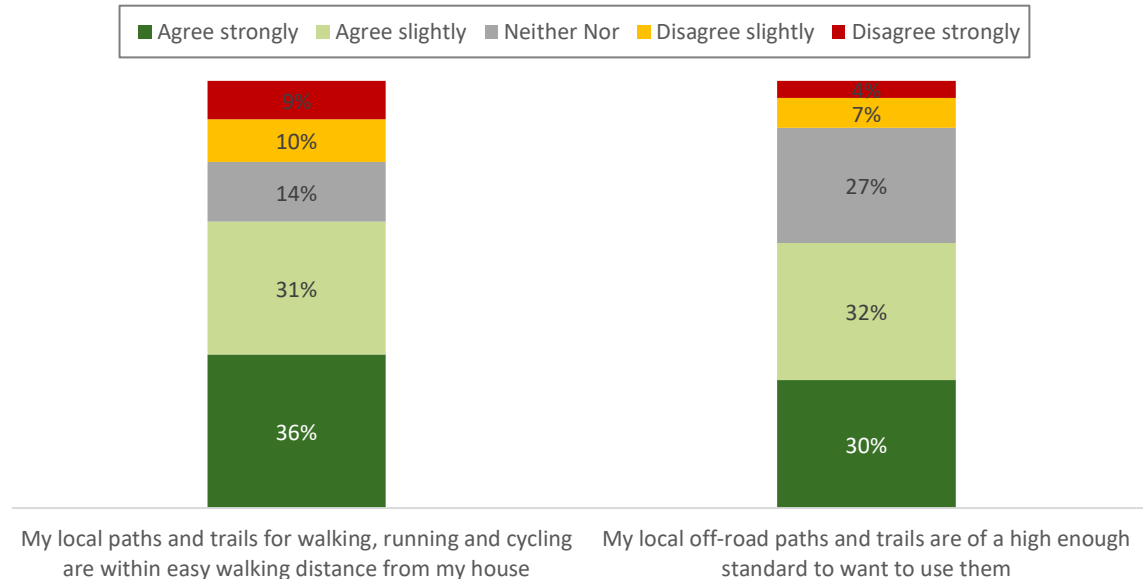


Q16 How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements relating to your nearest greenspace areas and paths and trails? Base: All November and December respondents (1,001, 1,008)

Access to and the standard of local paths and trails also received varied ratings with many people less than fully satisfied

- Similar to the situation with local greenspaces, while most people agreed with statements regarding the proximity and standard of their local paths and trails, only a minority were in strong agreement.
- As shown on the next page, ratings of local paths and trails varied across the Northern Ireland population, tending to be lower amongst women, younger age groups, unemployed people, people with a disability and residents of rural areas.

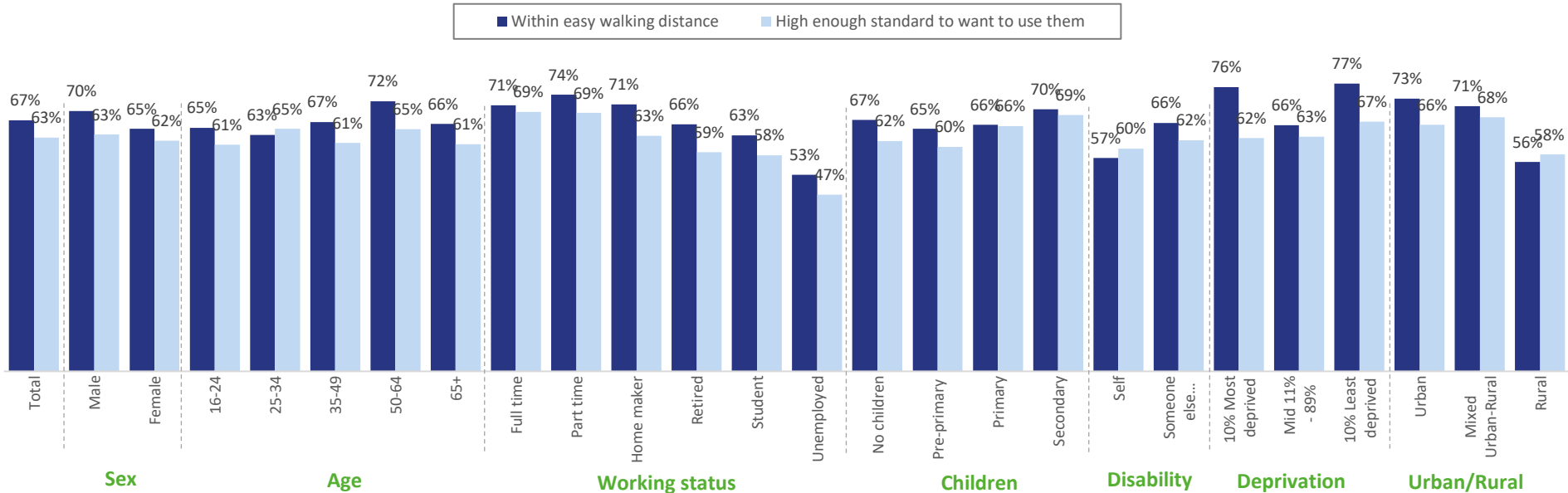
Figure 8 – Rating of local paths & trails



Q16 How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements relating to your nearest greenspace areas and paths and trails? Base: All November and December respondents (1,001, 1,008)

Unemployed people provided the lowest ratings for both the proximity and standard of their local paths and trails

Figure 9 – Rating of local paths and trails by key demographics - % agreeing with statements

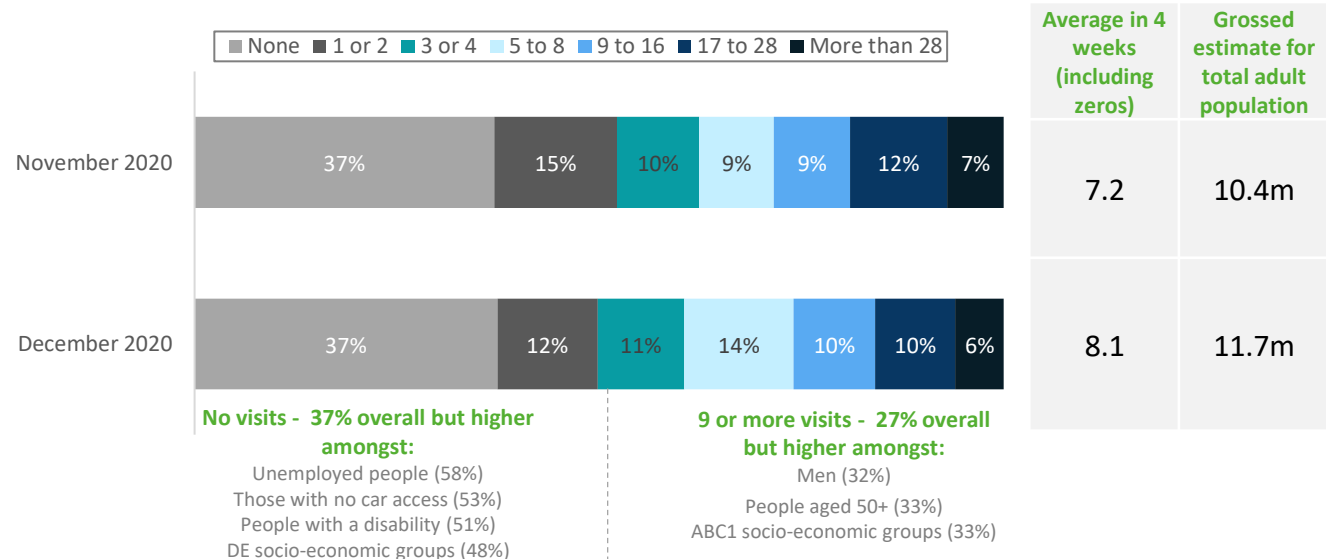


Q16 How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements relating to your nearest greenspace areas and paths and trails? Base: All November and December respondents (1,001, 1,008)

During this period the average adult in Northern Ireland took between 7 and 8 visits to the outdoors per month

- Survey respondents were asked to specify how many visits they had taken to the outdoors for leisure during the preceding 4 weeks.
- As shown in Figure 10, a wide range of responses were provided with over a third of the population taking no visits while a significant minority reported taking over 16 visits during the 4 week period (19% in November and 16% in December).
- Applying the average number of visits taken per adult to the 1.45 million adult population in Northern Ireland suggests that around **22 million visits** were taken in total over the two months.

Figure 10 – How many visits to outdoors taken in last 4 weeks amongst those taking any visits



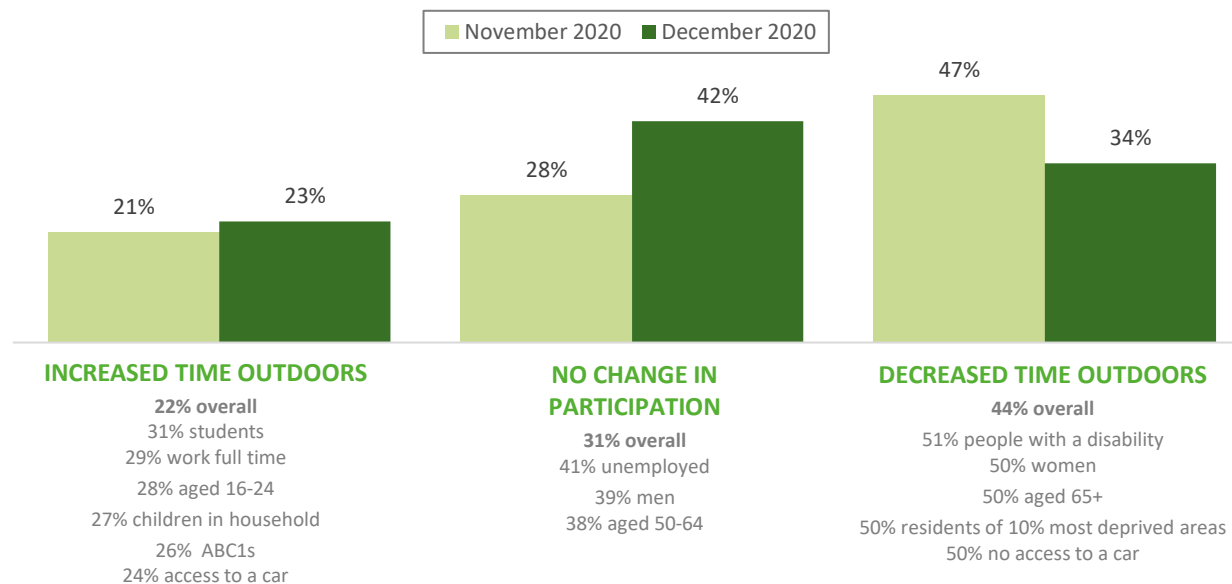
Q6. How many visits to the outdoors for leisure and recreation in Northern Ireland have you made in the last 4 weeks? You may have made more than one visit to the outdoors for leisure and recreation each day.

Base: November and December respondents taking visits involving outdoor activities in last 4 weeks (679, 687)

Covid-19 and the related restrictions have had a significant impact on the amount of time people are spending outdoors

- As shown in Figure 11, in both November and December 2020 the majority of the population stated that they had changed the amount of time they were spending outdoors compared to a year ago.
- 22% were spending more time outdoors. Younger age groups and more affluent socio-economic groups were more likely to say this was the case.
- However, double this percentage (44%) had decreased their time outdoors with older people, women and people who live in the most deprived areas most likely to state this was the case.

Figure 11 – Frequency of visits to outdoors compared to this time last year – overall and by key demographics

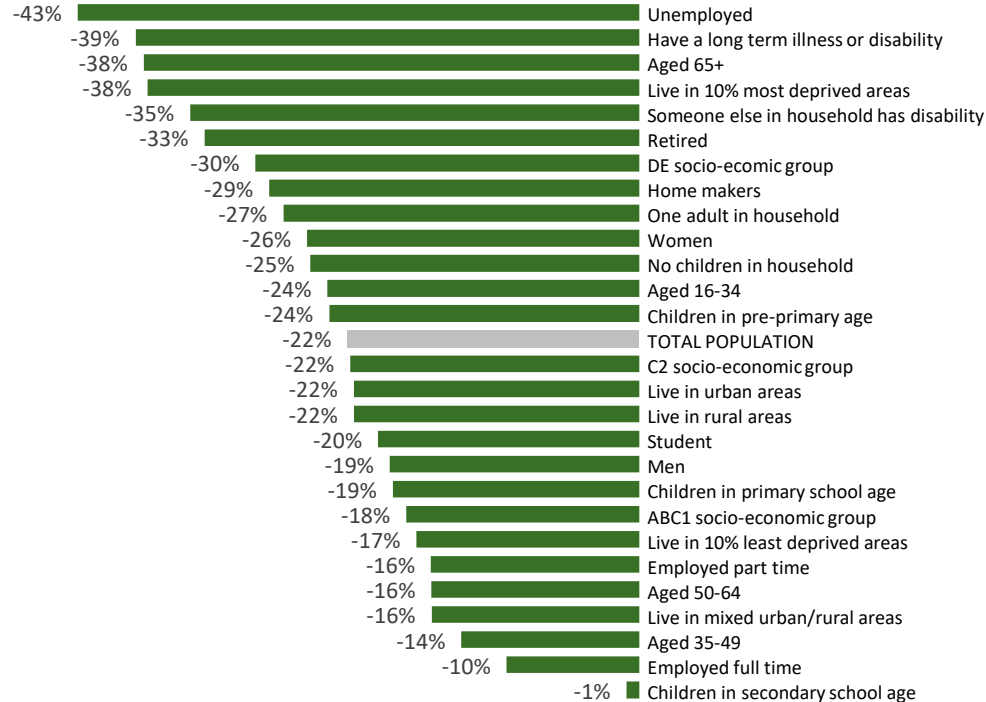


Q2. Compared to this time last year, has the frequency that you spend your leisure time out of doors, away from home, increased, decreased or stayed the same? Base: All November and December respondents (1,001, 1,008)

Overall there is a net decreased in time outdoors but this is most significant amongst the least affluent, oldest and people with disabilities

- With 22% spending more time outdoors and 44% spending less time – the net change in time spent outdoors across the total population is -22.
- However, as shown in Figure 12 this net change varied significantly with the most significant decreases amongst the least affluent members of the population, the oldest age groups and people with a long term illness or disability.
- In contrast, the net decline in time outdoors was smaller amongst people aged 35-64, people who work full or part time, residents of mixed urban/rural areas, residents of least deprived areas and people with children in secondary school.

Figure 12 – Frequency of visits to outdoors compared to this time last year - net change by key demographic groups



Q2. Compared to this time last year, has the frequency that you spend your leisure time out of doors, away from home, increased, decreased or stayed the same? Base: All November and December respondents (1,001, 1,008)

While restrictions and worries about Covid-19 have caused some people to decrease time outdoors, others increased time as they had more free time

- Respondents who had either increased or decreased their time outdoors compared to a year ago were asked to state why this was the case.
- Not surprisingly concerns about Covid-19 and following restrictions were the primary reasons given by those who were spending less time outdoors.
- Those who were spending more time outdoors gave a wider range of reasons including an increase in spare time, a desire to stay healthy and boredom/ a lack of other things to do.

Figure 13 – Reasons for increased or decreased visits to outdoors compared to this time last year

REASONS FOR DECREASING TIME OUTDOORS

Covid-19 Lockdown\Guidelines	36%
Covid-19 Unspecified	33%
Worried about catching Covid-19	12%
Due to poor health	6%
No reason	5%
Shops/ High Street closed	4%
Poor weather/ short days	2%
Too busy	2%

REASONS FOR INCREASING TIME OUTDOORS

More free time	22%
Covid-19 Lockdown\Guidelines	20%
Stay healthy \ Exercise	11%
Like being outdoors	8%
Boredom \ Nothing else to do	8%
No reason	6%
Improve mental health	6%
Going out for more walks	5%
Gym or usual exercise closed\unavailable	4%
Shops\High street closed	4%
To walk the dog	3%
Working from home	3%
Going outside is a safe option	3%

Q3 Why do you think this is? Please give as many details as possible on why you spend more or less time outdoors than previously Base: All November and December respondents (1,001, 1,008)

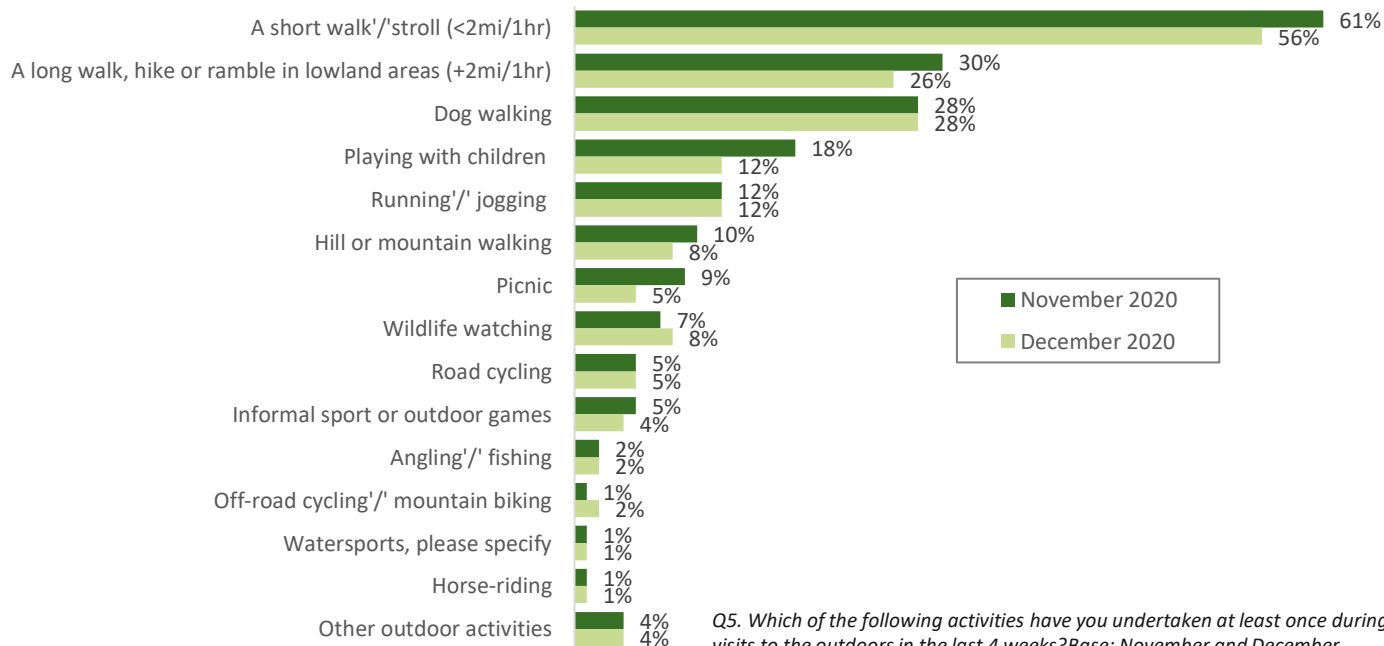
Profile of visits



Over half of those who took visits in November and December had taken short walks or strolls

- When asked which activities they had undertaken on any visits to the outdoors during the last 4 weeks, the majority indicated that they had taken short walks or strolls lasting less than an hour or less than 2 miles long (61% in November 56% in December).
- Longer walks and dog walking were also frequently undertaken, both mentioned by just over a quarter of respondents.
- Other activities undertaken by 10% or more of the population included hill walking, running and playing with children.
- Reflecting the Covid-19 restrictions in place during the survey period and the time of year, other outdoor pursuits were undertaken by much smaller percentages.

Figure 14 – Activities undertaken on visits to outdoors taken in the last 4 weeks (amongst those ever visiting outdoors)

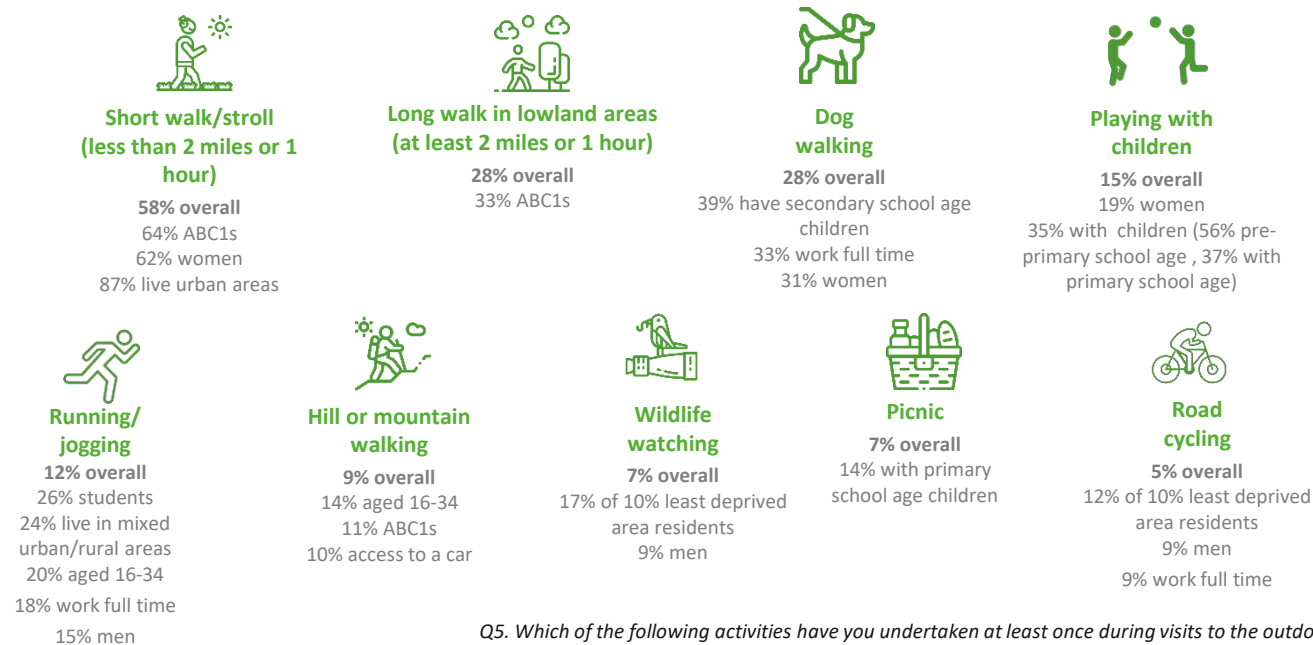


Q5. Which of the following activities have you undertaken at least once during visits to the outdoors in the last 4 weeks? Base: November and December respondents who ever take visits to outdoors (955, 946)

The outdoor activities undertaken in the last 4 weeks varied between demographic groups

- As shown in Figure 15, the percentages of the population undertaking different activities during the previous 4 weeks varied by sex, age, socio-economic status and other key demographics.
- While levels of participation in short walks, dog walking and playing with children were higher amongst women, men were more likely to take part in running, wildlife watching or road cycling.

Figure 15 – Activities undertaken on visits to outdoors taken in the last 4 weeks (amongst those ever visiting outdoors) -- demographic variations

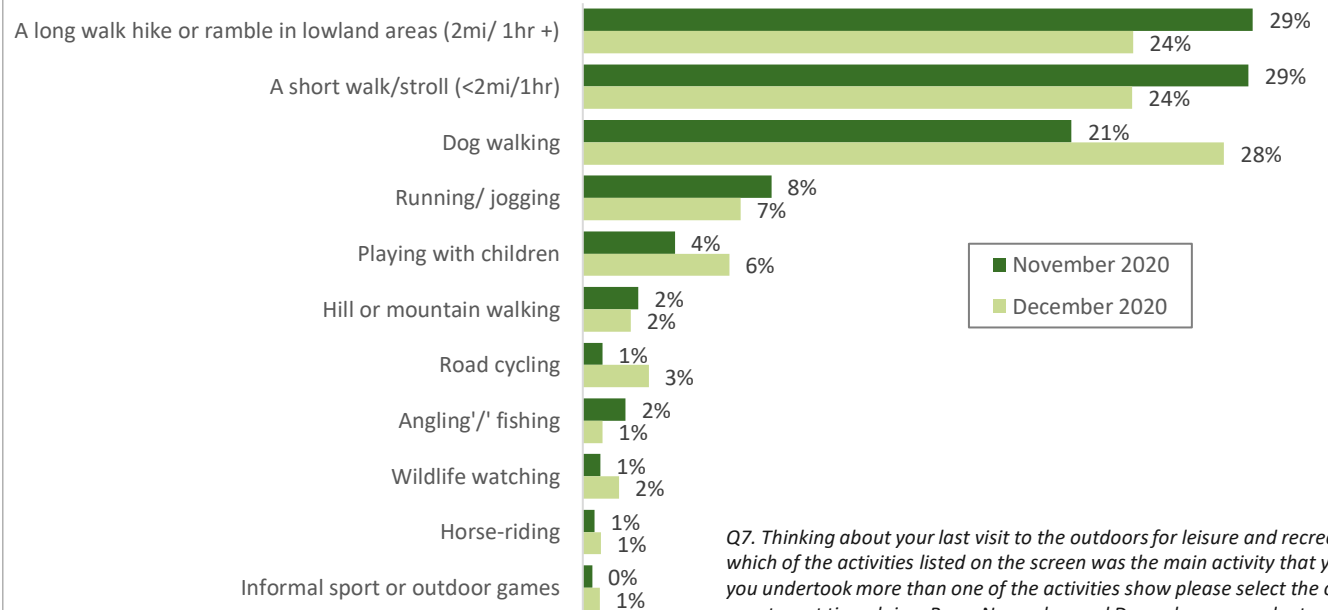


Q5. Which of the following activities have you undertaken at least once during visits to the outdoors in the last 4 weeks? Base: November and December respondents who ever take visits to outdoors (955, 946)

Walking was the main activity in nearly all visits taken during November and December

- Focusing further on visits taken during November and December 2020* while walking was included in the majority of visits, it is notable that equal percentages of visits included long and short walks. Also, in both months the main activity was dog walking in over a fifth of outdoor visits.
- While across the two months an average of 5% of visits included playing with children, this increased to 38% amongst people with pre-primary age children and 12% amongst those with primary school age children.
- Other activities were undertaken in a very small percentage of visits.

Figure 16 – Main activities undertaken during visits taken in November and December 2020



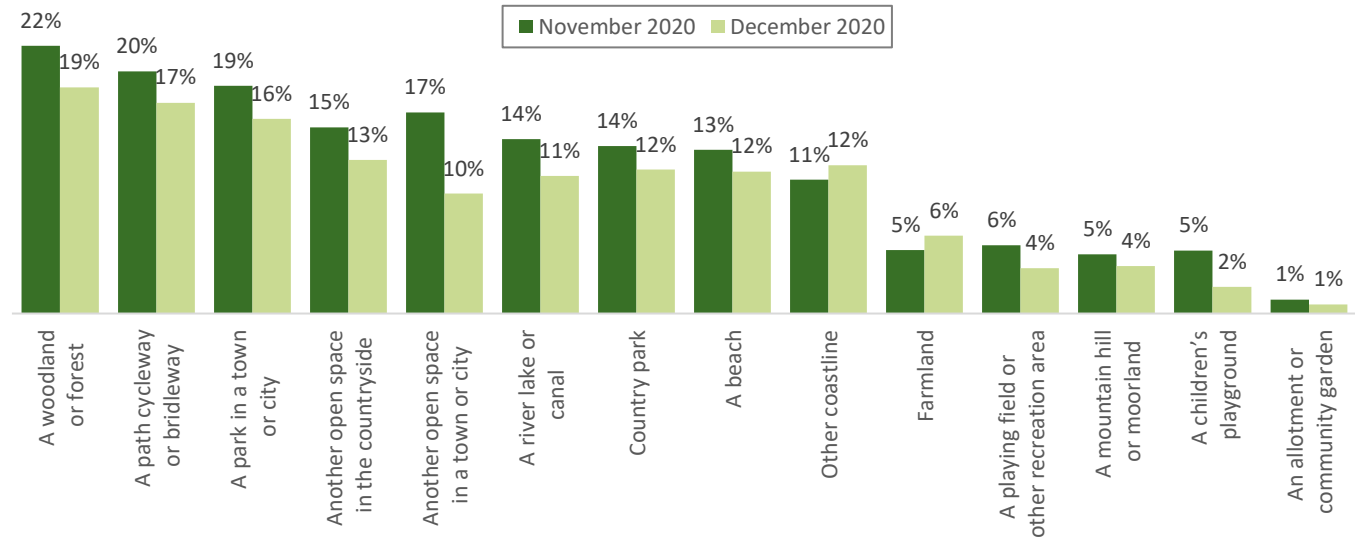
Q7. Thinking about your last visit to the outdoors for leisure and recreation, which of the activities listed on the screen was the main activity that you did? If you undertook more than one of the activities show please select the one you spent most time doing. Base: November and December respondents who had taken visits in the last 4 weeks (485, 413)

*results shown in Figures 16 to 34 are percentages of all visits taken

The most commonly visited places on outdoor visits were woodland, paths and cycleways and urban parks

- Woodland was the most frequently visited type of place during outdoor visits taken in both November and December 2020.
- Large percentages of visits also included pathways and parks in towns and cities.
- Possibly reflecting the travel restrictions during this period, other types of place were included in a much smaller percentage of visits.

Figure 17 – Places visited during visits taken in November and December 2020

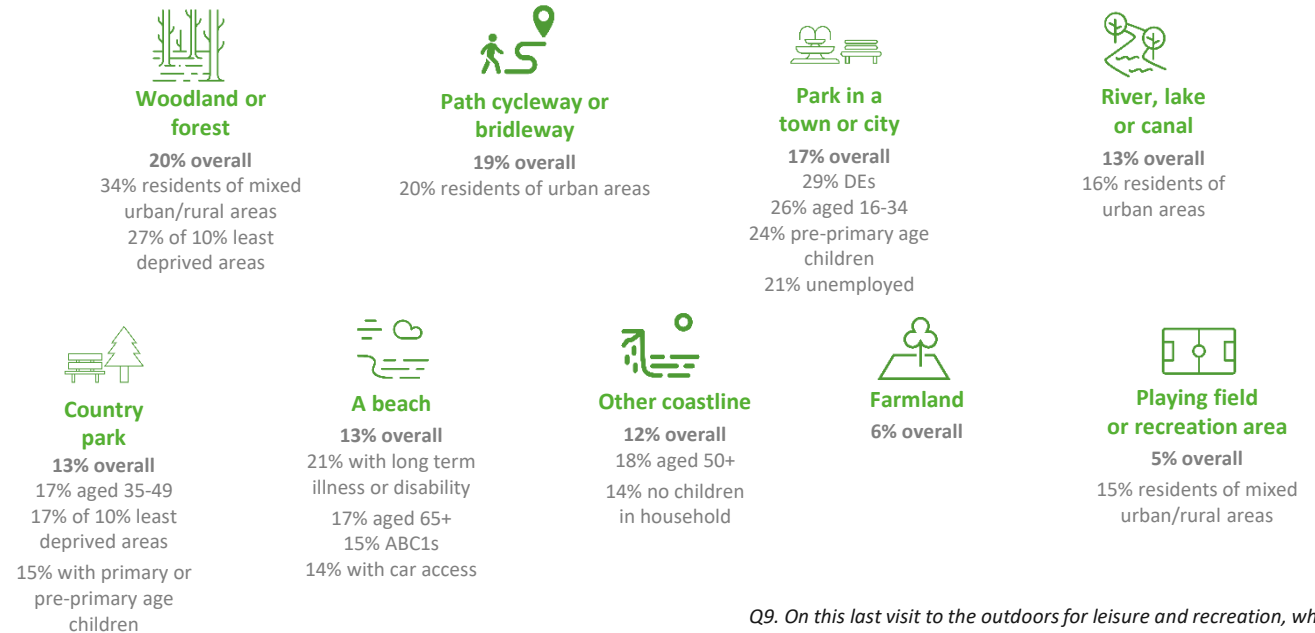


Q9. On this last visit to the outdoors for leisure and recreation, what types of location or destination did you go to? Base: November and December respondents who had taken visits in the last 4 weeks (485, 413)

The types of place included in visits varied somewhat between demographic groups

- While a particularly high percentage of visits taken by people who live in the 10% least deprived areas and in areas classified as a mix of urban and rural included woodland, people who lived in urban areas were more likely to visits paths and cycleways or rivers, lakes or canals.
- Parks in towns and cities were more likely to be included in visits taken by the least affluent DE socio-economic groups while ABC1s were more likely to visit a beach.

Figure 18 – Places visited during visits taken in November and December 2020 – demographic variations

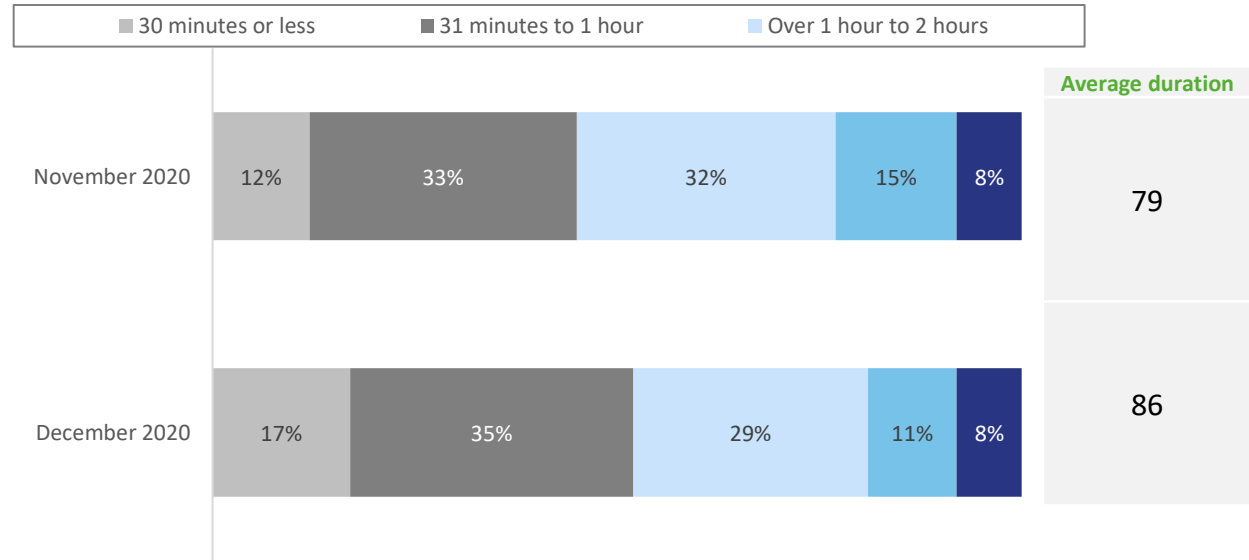


Q9. On this last visit to the outdoors for leisure and recreation, what types of location or destination did you go to? Base: November and December respondents who had taken visits in the last 4 weeks (485, 413)

Time spent undertaking activities during outdoor visits varied somewhat with an average duration of around 80 minutes

- The amount of time spent undertaking activities average at just over 1 hour and 20 minutes.
- However, durations varied somewhat with around half of visits involving taking part in activities for less than an hour while around a fifth involved over 2 hours of participation.

Figure 19 – Duration spent undertaking main activity during visits taken in November and December 2020 (minutes)

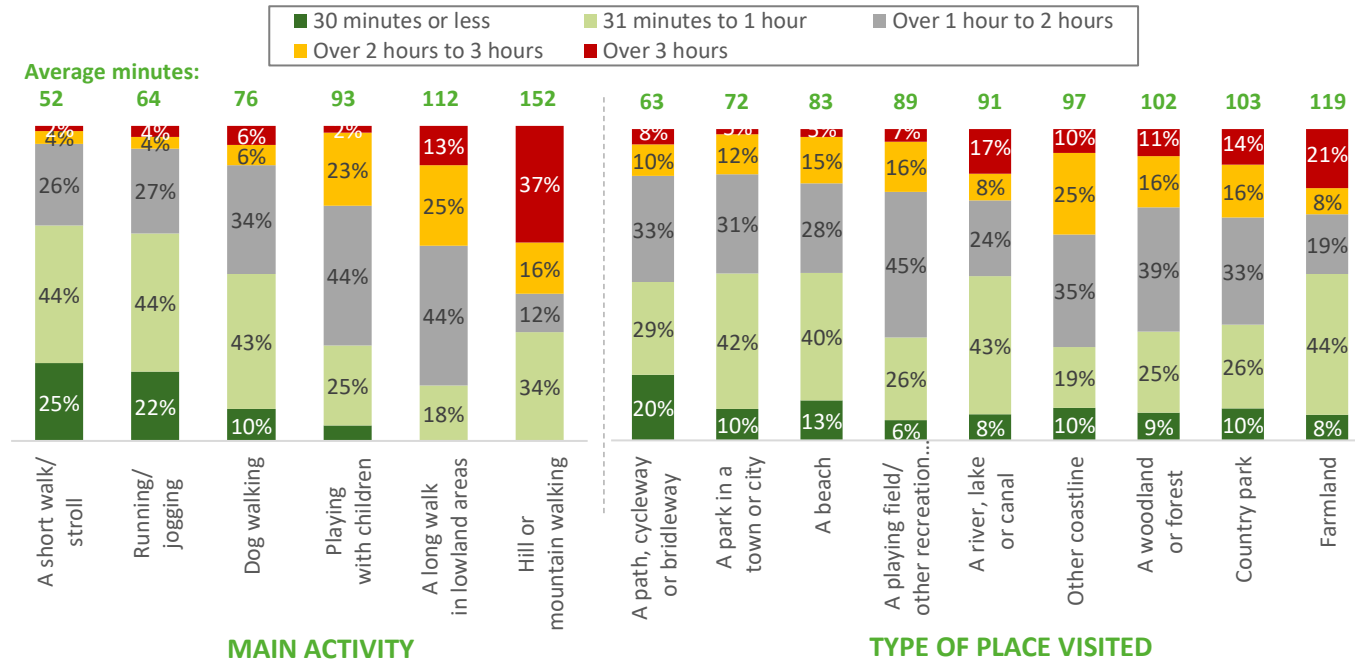


Q8 During this visit, how long did you spend [INSERT ANSWER FROM Q7] in the outdoors? Base: November and December respondents who had taken visits in the last 4 weeks (485, 413)

Duration of participation in activities varied by activity and type of place visited

- As shown in Figure 20, the duration of time spent undertaking activities varied somewhat by activity and the type of place visited.
- In general the time spent participating was shortest when visits included short walks, running or dog walking and in visits taken on paths and cycleways and to urban parks.
- In contrast, time spent participating in activities was longest when the visit included long walks in lowland areas or hill walking and in visits taken to woodland, country parks or in farmland areas.

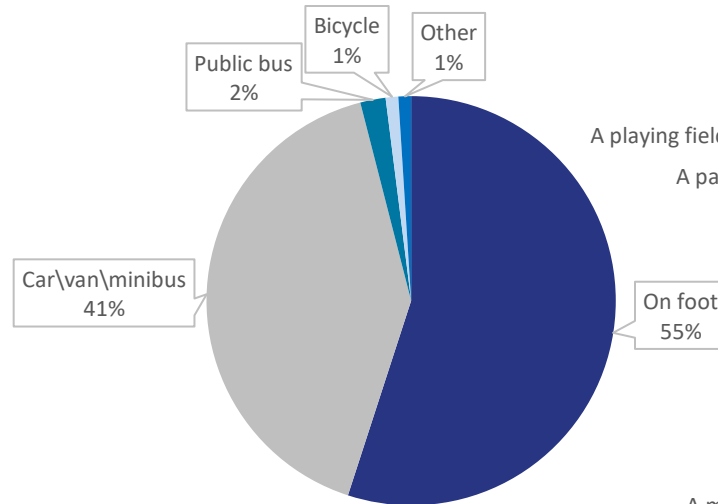
Figure 20 – Duration spent undertaking main activity during visits taken in November and December 2020 (minutes)



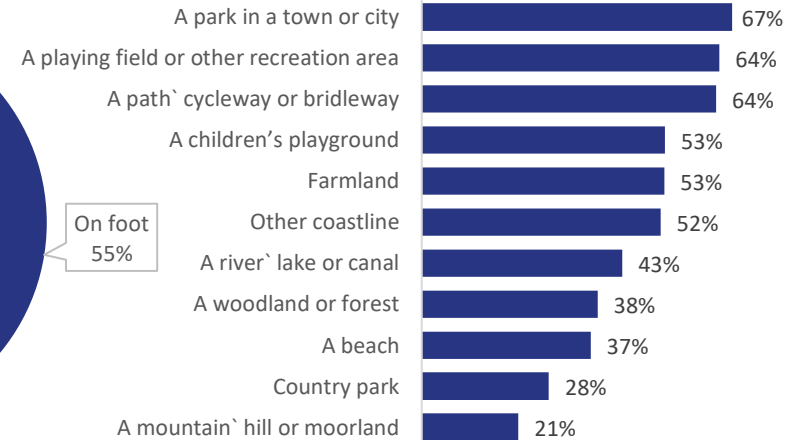
Just over half of visits were taken on foot

- Just over half of visits taken in November and December 2020 involved walking to the place visited (54% in November, 56% in December) while most of the remaining visits involved a journey by car or other private vehicle.
- Potentially reflecting the Covid-19 restrictions on travel and transport, a very small percentage of visits involved public transport.
- The percentage of visits taken on foot was highest when the place visited was more likely to be close to home (e.g. urban parks, playing fields).
- Whether or not someone had access to a car impacted on transport mode used. 78% of visits taken by people with no car were on foot and 12% used public transport. However, amongst those with a car, 46% drove to the place they visited.

Figure 21 – Transport used to reach place visited during visits taken in November and December 2020



Visits taken on foot by type of place visited:

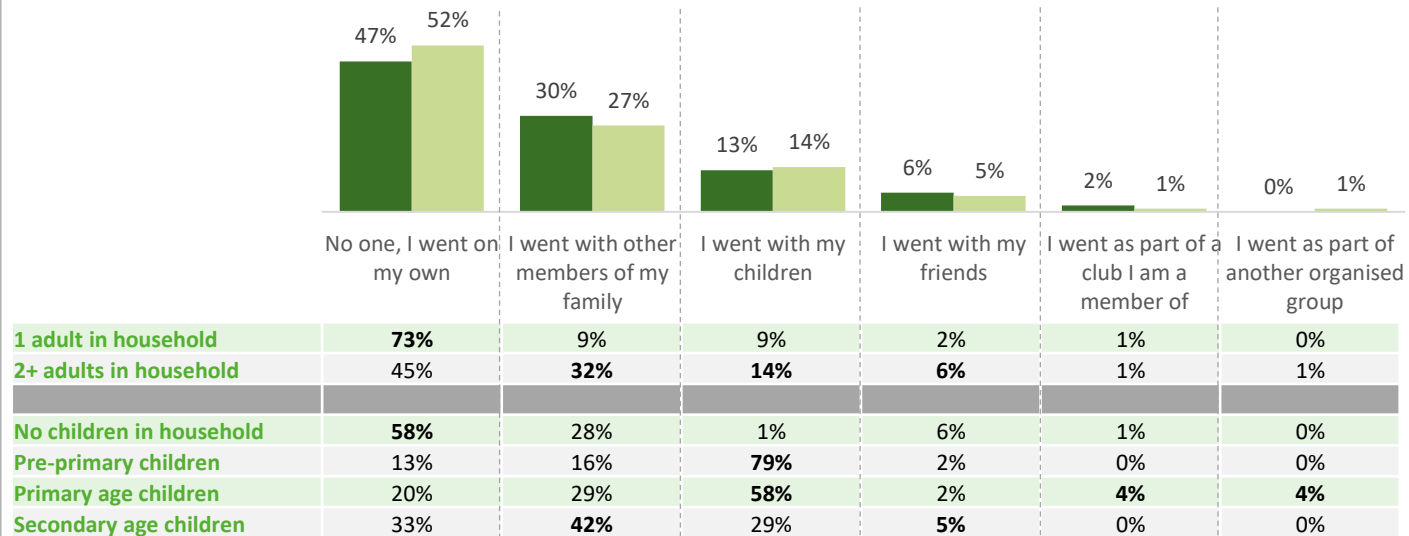


Q11. What was the main mode of transport you used to reach this place?
Base: November and December respondents who had taken visits in the last 4 weeks (485, 413)

The vast majority of visits were taken alone or with other household members

- Who visits were taken with is another area likely to have been influenced by the Covid-19 restrictions in place during November and December 2020.
- In both months the largest percentages of visits were taken alone or with other family members while much smaller percentages were taken with people from other households such as friends or club/organised group members.
- As shown in the table, party compositions varied according to household composition. For example 73% of visits by people who were the only adult in their household were taken alone compared to just 13% of those taken by people with pre-primary school age children.

Figure 22 – Party composition during visits taken in November and December 2020

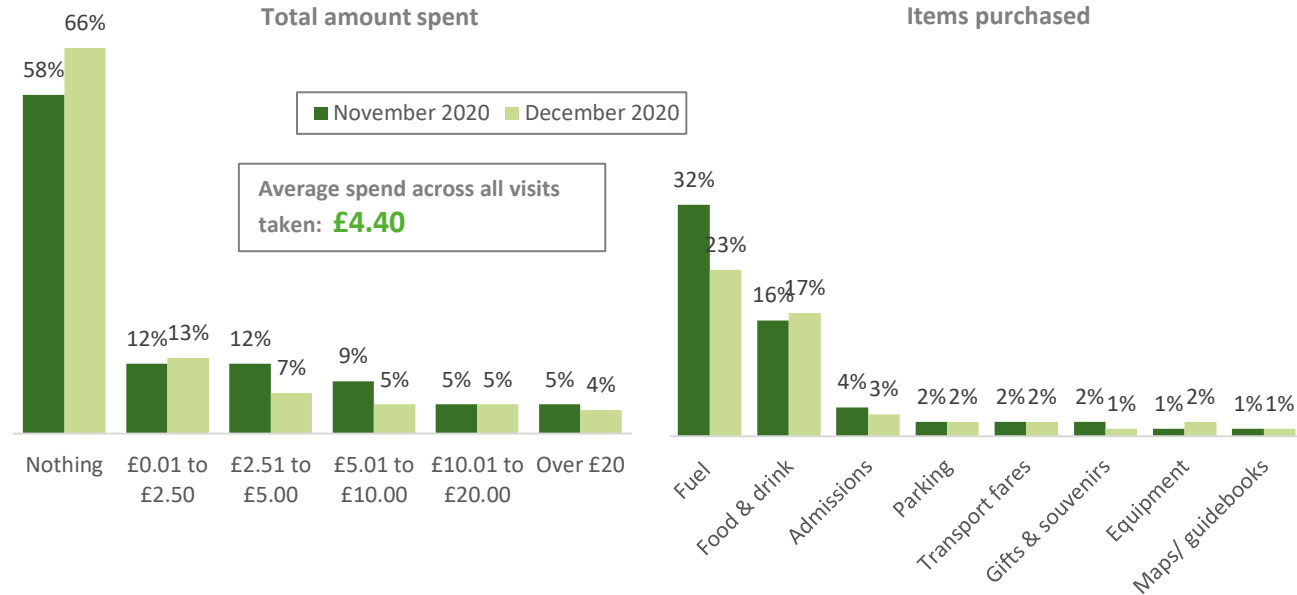


Q12. Which of the following, if any, best describes who accompanied you when you on this most recent visit to the outdoors? Base: November and December respondents who had taken visits in the last 4 weeks (485, 413)

While most visits involved no money being spent, the most commonly purchased items were fuel and food and drink

- A series of questions were asked regarding money spent during outdoor visits.
- In both months the majority of visits did not involve any expenditure (58% in November, 66% in December) and in the majority of cases when money was spent the amount spent was under £10. The average amount spent (across all visits including those with no spend) was £4.40.
- The most commonly purchased items were fuel and food and drink.
- It is likely that levels of expenditure were reduced during this period due to the restrictions related to Covid-19, in particular the closure of business such as cafes, restaurants and bars. By comparison, initial fieldwork undertaken by ORNI in March 2020, prior to the first lockdown, recorded average expenditure of £7.46 per visit.
- Further analysis of the expenditure results are provided on page 37.

Figure 23 – Expenditure during visits taken in November and December 2020



Q14 In total how much, if anything did you personally spend during this visit to the outdoors. This would include any money you spent on yourself or others on the following items Base: November and December respondents who had taken visits in the last 4 weeks (485. 413)

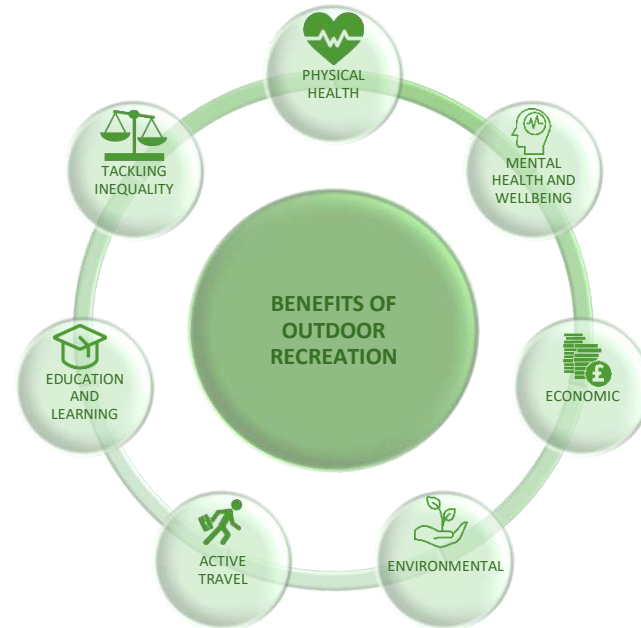
Benefits of visits



Identifying and measuring the benefits of outdoor recreation

- The links between outdoor recreation and the benefits highlighted in Figure 24 have been proven in many studies conducted over many years (see further details in Phase 1 report). All of these areas also have links to the NI Executive Programme for Government themes.
- As such the population survey sought to provide results which would provide evidence to illustrate the role of outdoor recreation in providing benefits to the population in each of these areas, as outlined in the following pages.

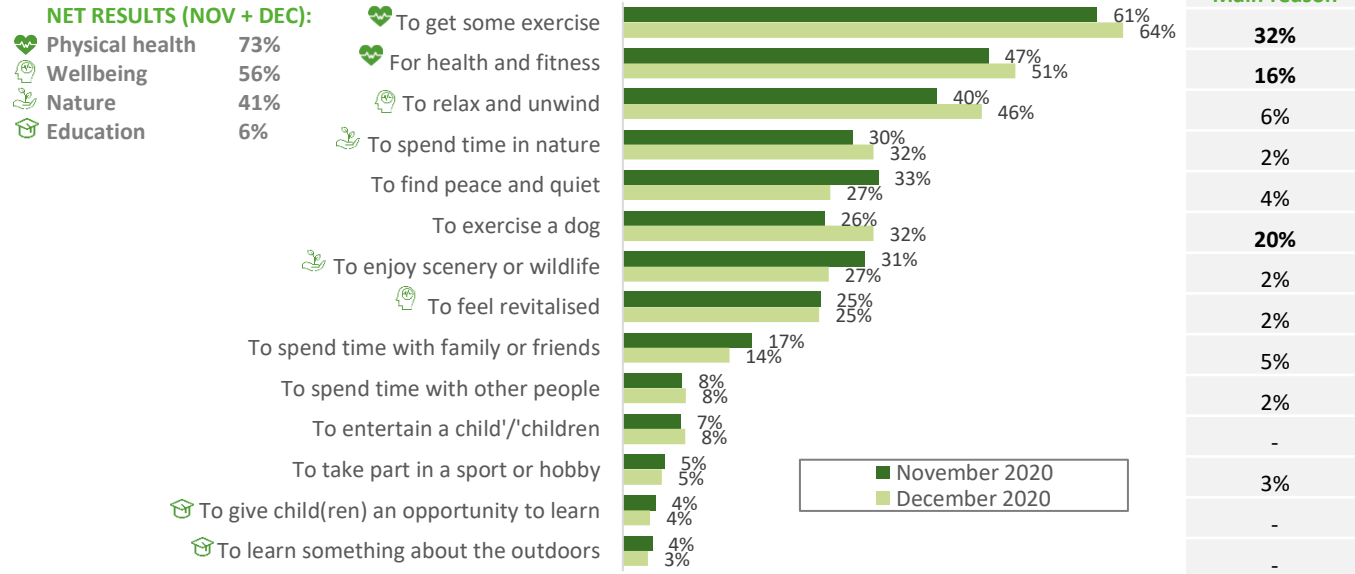
Figure 24 – Key benefits of outdoor recreation



Health is the primary motivation in the majority of outdoor visits taken

- Visit takers were asked to give details on the motivations for visits.
- Physical health related reasons were amongst the reasons given for almost three-quarters of visits taken during November and December (73%). ‘Getting some exercise’ was the primary reason in around a third of visits (32%).
- Reasons relating to wellbeing were also relevant in most visits with relaxing and unwinding and feeling revitalised relevant in 56% of visits. Social benefits such as spending time with family and friends were also frequently mentioned reasons for visits.

Figure 25 – Reasons for taking most recent visit to the outdoors



Q13(a). Which of the following reasons, if any, best describe why you made your last visit to the outdoors? Base: November respondents taking visits involving outdoor activities in last 4 weeks (N=819)

The majority of visits to the outdoors make participants feel calm, relaxed or refreshed and revitalised

- Respondents were shown the list of statements included in Figure 26 and asked which if any applied to their visit to the outdoors.
- Wellbeing benefits were recorded for over four in five visits (86%) with the majority of visits resulting in participants feeling calm, relaxed, refreshed and/or revitalised.
- In around a third of visits, participants felt closer to nature and the activities they did were intense enough to make them feel out of breath or sweaty in around fifth of visits.
- Further details on each of the key positive outcome areas are provided on the pages that follow.

Figure 26 – Statements which apply to most recent visit to the outdoors



Q15. From the list of statements below select any which applied to your last visit to the outdoors? Base: November respondents taking visits involving outdoor activities in last 4 weeks (N=819)

Physical health benefits in more detail

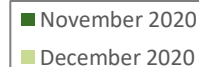
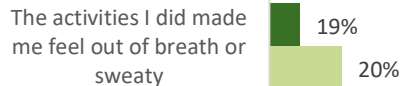
- As described previously, health benefits were the motivation for almost three quarters of visits taken (73%).
- Also, as shown on the right, an analysis of how often visits were taken over the 4 week period asked about, the activities undertaken, duration of participation and intensity of activity has made it possible to segment the population on the basis of their physical activity during outdoor visits.
- This analysis suggests that during November and December 2020, just over a quarter (27%) of the NI population met the physical activity guideline targets through outdoor recreation participation.



Motivations (net 73% of visits)

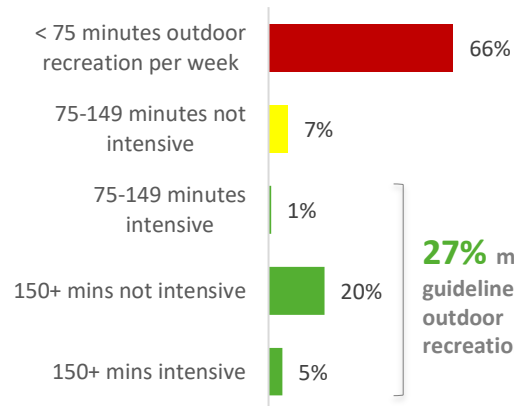


Benefits claimed (net 19% of visits)



Chief Medical Officer's physical activity guideline for adults:

Adults should aim to be active every day and do at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity every week. You can split this into 30 minutes of activity most days each week. If you prefer, you can do 75 minutes of vigorous activity every week



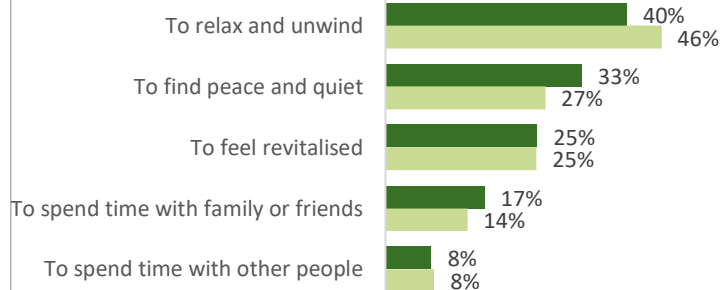
27% meeting guidelines via outdoor recreation

Wellbeing benefits in more detail

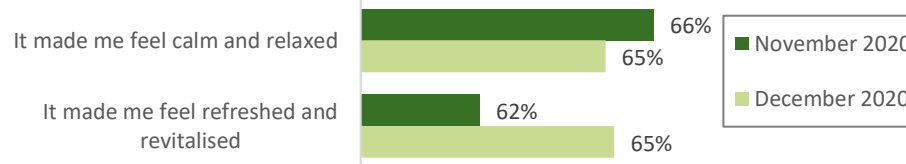
- As described previously, in the vast majority of visits (86%) participants claim to have received benefits relating to wellbeing including feeling calm and relaxed or refreshed and revitalised.
- Over half of visits are at least partly motivated by the desire to gain these types of visits.
- Also related to wellbeing, spending time with other people is both a motivation and positive outcome of some visits. Almost 1 in 5 of those who live with no other adults enjoyed spending time with other people during visits.



Motivations (net 56% of visits)



Benefits claimed (net 86% of visits)



Helping to address loneliness?

Amongst people who live in 1 adult households:

- 12% met with family, friends or organised group.
- 18% enjoyed spending time with family, friends or other people.

Economic benefits in more detail

- As mentioned in the previous sections, the average expenditure during visits to the outdoors taken in November and December 2020 was £4.40.
- If this average is applied to the estimated total visits taken in this period (22.1 million) it may be estimated that just under £100 million was spent in total during these visits.
- The largest share of this spend was on fuel for journeys (43 pence of every £1 spent) and food and drink (29 pence of every £1).



Average spend across all visits taken (including those with no money spent)

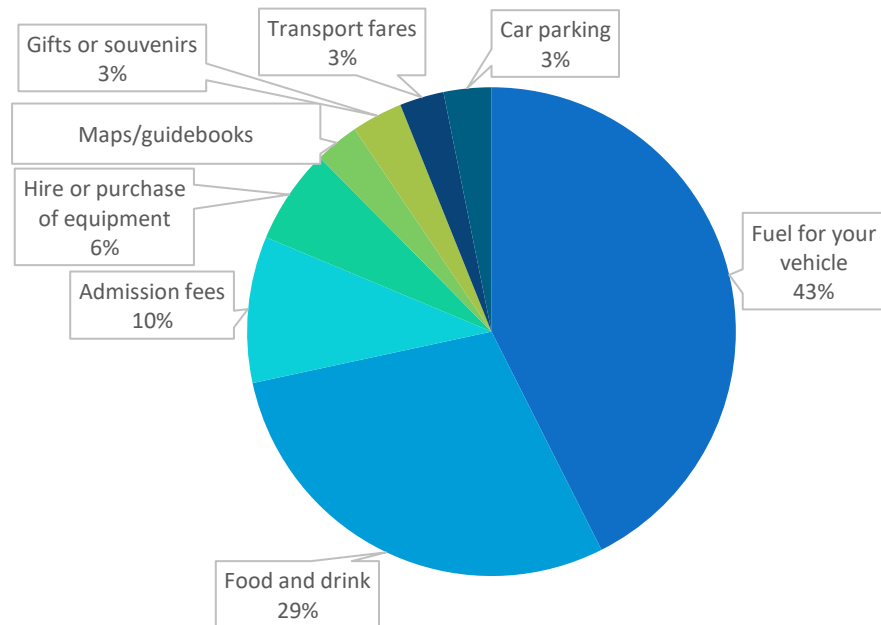
£4.40

Applied to estimated 22.1 million visits taken during November and December:

~£97 million

total expenditure during visits

Distribution of total spend by items purchased:

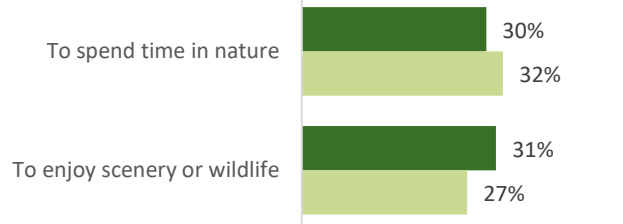


Environmental/ nature benefits in more detail

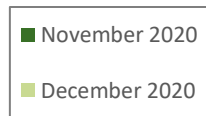
- Spending time in nature and enjoying scenery and wildlife was a motivation in around a third of visits while feeling closer to nature was a benefit claimed for a similar percentage of visits.
- As described in the Phase 1 report, evidence from other studies has shown that increased nature connection is correlated to increased levels of caring for the natural environment and pro-environmental behaviours.



Motivations (net 41% of visits)



Benefits claimed (net 32% of visits)



Feeling closer to nature highest amongst:

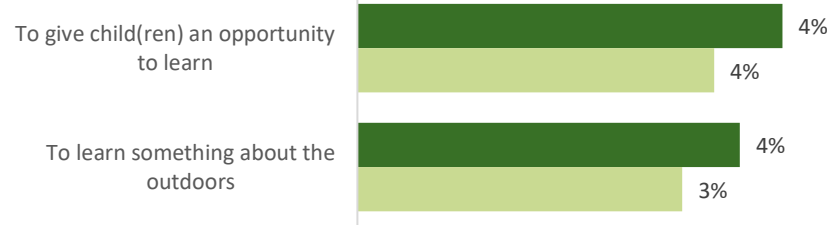
- People with pre-primary or primary school age children (70%)
- Residents of 10% least deprived areas (42%)
- Visitors to woodland (47%) and country parks (50%).

Education and learning benefits in more detail

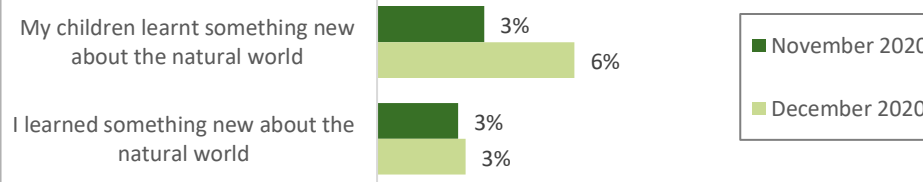
- Motivations and benefits relating to learning were recorded for relatively small percentage of visits taken.
- However, as shown on the right this outcome was much more relevant in visits taken with children.



Motivations (net 6% of visits)



Benefits claimed (net 7% of visits)



Focus on children

Amongst those who took visits with children:

- 32% stated that their children learned something new about the natural world.

Technical annex



Key details

The survey aimed to reach a representative sample of adults living in Northern Ireland to measure their levels of participation in outdoor recreation, details of recent visits taken and the benefits gained from these experiences. A copy of the questionnaire used is available separately.

Data collection

An online approach was used with questions included in the monthly online omnibus survey undertaken by Cognisense.

This approach involved contact being made with members of existing online consumer panels and target quotas applied to ensure that the sample interviewed was as representative of the population as possible in terms of gender, age, socio economic groups and region of residence.

Following this approach, a total of 2,009 interviews were undertaken between 5th November and 18th December 2020.

Given this large sample size it has been possible to analyse results by month and on the basis of a number of different demographic and geographic classifications. This includes the application of geographic profiles available from NISRA including the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure and the Urban – Rural classification.

Weighting

While the online approach aimed to ensure inclusion of key demographic groups and good geographical spread of respondents, weights were also applied to the data to further improve representivity.

Two different levels of weights have been applied as follows:

- **Demographic weighting** – applied to results where findings relate to the percentages of the Northern Ireland adult population. Weights ‘correct’ for any differences between the survey sample profile and population (gender, age and socio economic group).
- **Visit weighting** – applied to results where finding relate to percentages of the visits taken by the Northern Ireland population during the survey period. This weight incorporates the above Demographic Weighting and the number of visits taken by each respondent during the 4 week recall period.

Note on Coronavirus related restrictions

As the survey fieldwork was undertaken during the Coronavirus pandemic, patterns of outdoor recreation participation during this period were very different from normal. Fieldwork was undertaken from early November to late December 2020 with respondents asked about their visits to the outdoors during the 4 weeks before completing the questionnaire (i.e. from around mid October).

During this timescale the following restrictions were in place in Northern Ireland with implications on how much people were able to take part in outdoor exercise:

- **16 October – 20 November** – 4 week ‘circuit breaker’ lockdown begins, later extended by a week to 20 November. Advice that no unnecessary travel should be undertaken.
- **20 – 27 November** – restrictions eased for a week.
- **27 November – 11 December** – two week lockdown period. Strong stay at home message, travel only for essential purposes but parks and outdoor play areas remain open.
- **17 December** – NI Executive agree to commence another lockdown from 26 December.

Also during much of this period many businesses in the retail and hospitality sector and visitor attractions were closed or had restricted opening (e.g. take away sales only). This is likely to have further impacted upon the types of places visited and the nature of visits, particularly expenditure made during visits.



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