

Rural-urban disparities in outdoor recreation

A deep-dive report providing additional analysis of POMNI data (Nov 2020-Oct 2021)



Overview of People in the Outdoors Monitor for Northern Ireland

The People in the Outdoors Monitor for Northern Ireland (POMNI) is funded by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and Sport Northern Ireland to support the work of the cross-government Strategic Outdoor Recreation Group (SORG). Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland was commissioned to undertake this survey and partnered with 56 Degree Insight to make it happen.

The evidence and data provided in the report below comes from six waves of surveying the Northern Ireland adult population during the following months:

- November 2020 – 1,001 interviews
- December 2020 – 1,008 interviews
- March 2021 – 1,002 interviews
- April 2021 – 1,030 interviews
- August 2021 – 1,007 interviews
- October 2021 – 1,000 interviews

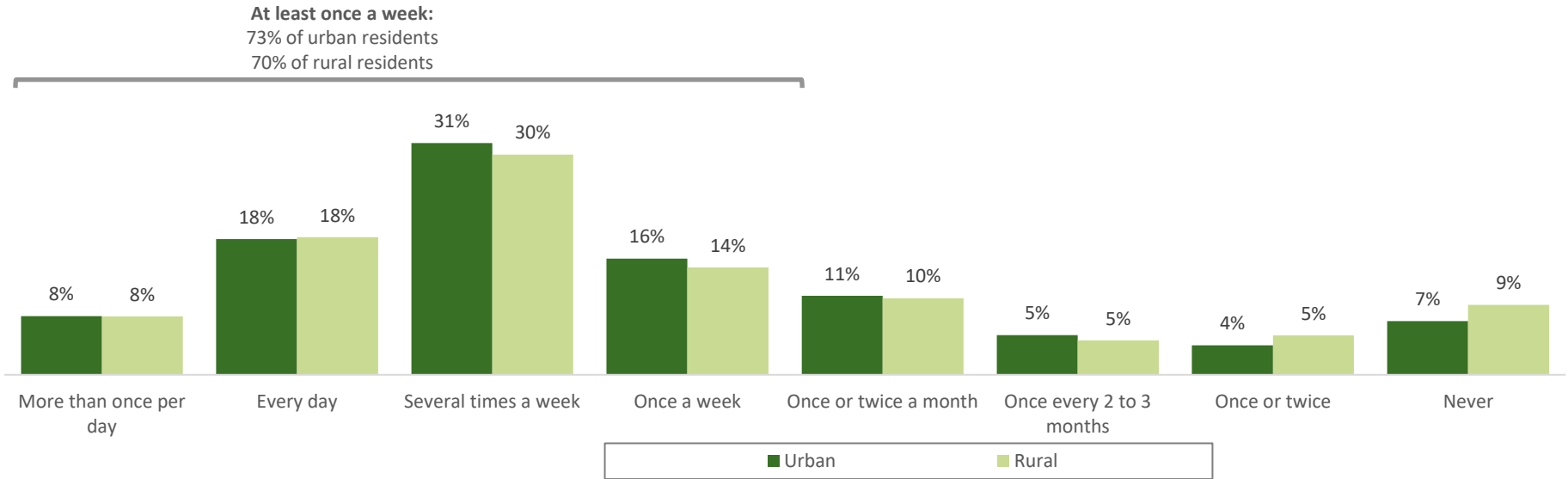
In total 6,048 interviews were undertaken providing robust data accurate to +/-1% at the 95% levels of confidence. When using the results, it is important to bear in mind that surveying was undertaken during the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic including periods of 'lockdown' when restrictions were in place which impacted upon levels of participation in outdoor recreation.

Information on the survey approach, fieldwork timings and how these related to different levels of Coronavirus related restrictions during each period of fieldwork are provided in the Appendix of the POMNI 2020-2021 Report.

Given the substantive sample size, deep-dive analyses were undertaken by 56 Degree Insight on three topics: the impact of deprivation on outdoor recreation, urban-rural disparities in outdoor recreation, and the experiences of outdoor recreation for people with a disability. This report focuses on the urban-rural disparity in outdoor recreation.

Urban residents are slightly more likely than rural residents to visit the outdoors for leisure at least once a week.

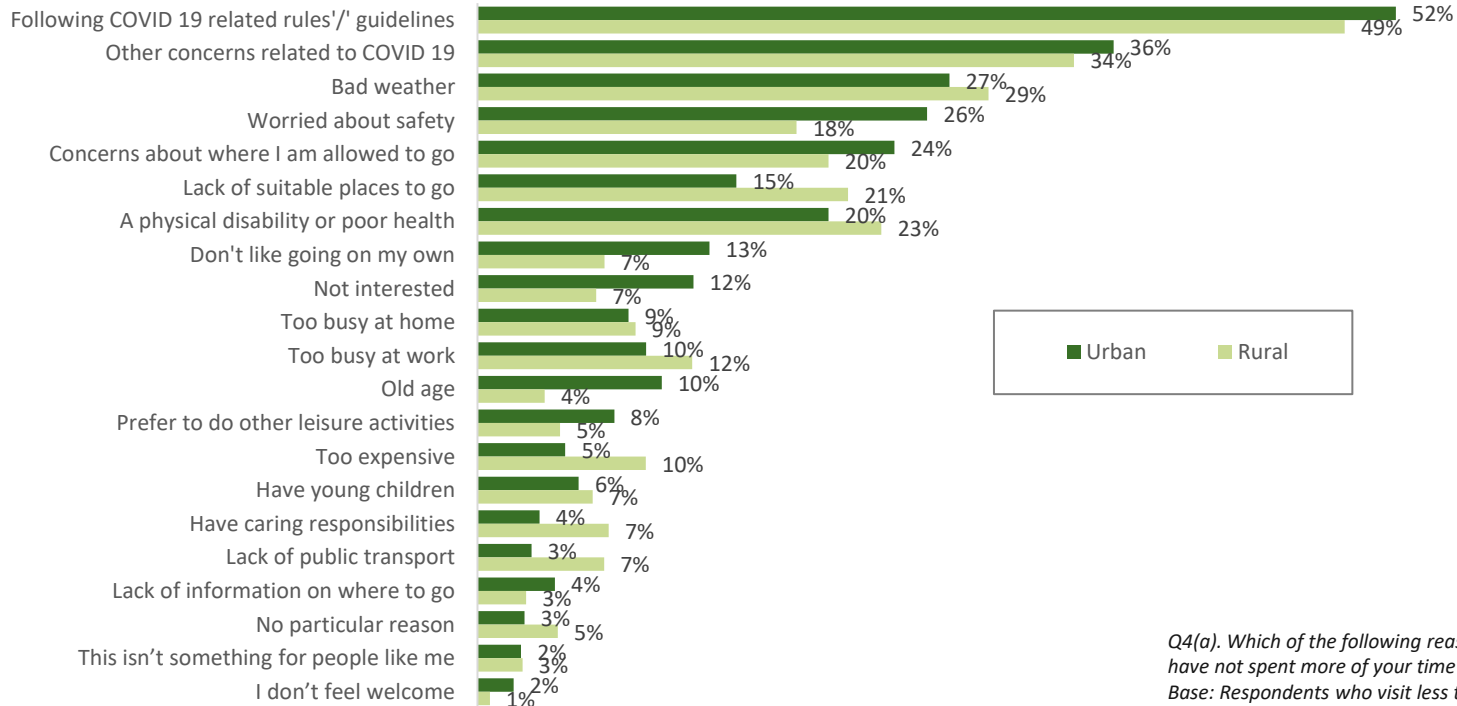
Figure 1 – Frequency of visits to the outdoors in the last 12 months



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: Urban and Rural respondents (3,311, 1,357)

While COVID-19 related restrictions reduced frequency of visits for both urban and rural residents, rural residents were also more likely to mention a lack of suitable places to go as a barrier.

Figure 2 – 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?

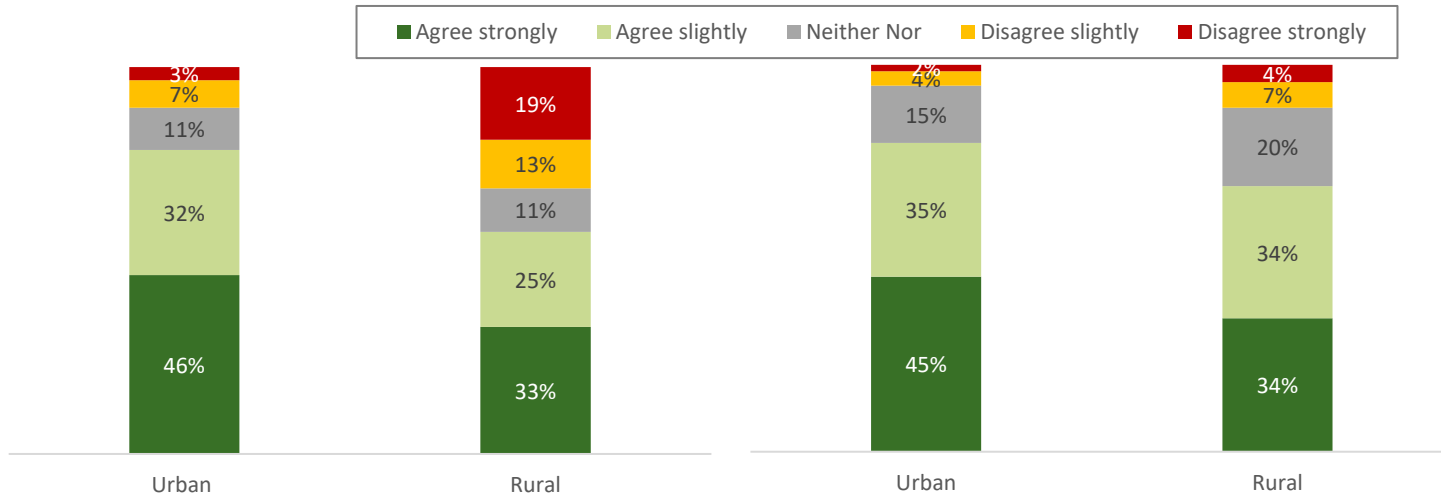
Base: Respondents who visit less than once a month (621, 255)

Urban residents were more likely than rural residents to rate their local greenspaces positively in terms of both accessibility and quality.

Figure 3 – Rating of local greenspaces

My local greenspaces are within easy walking distance from my house

My local greenspaces are of a high enough standard to want to use them



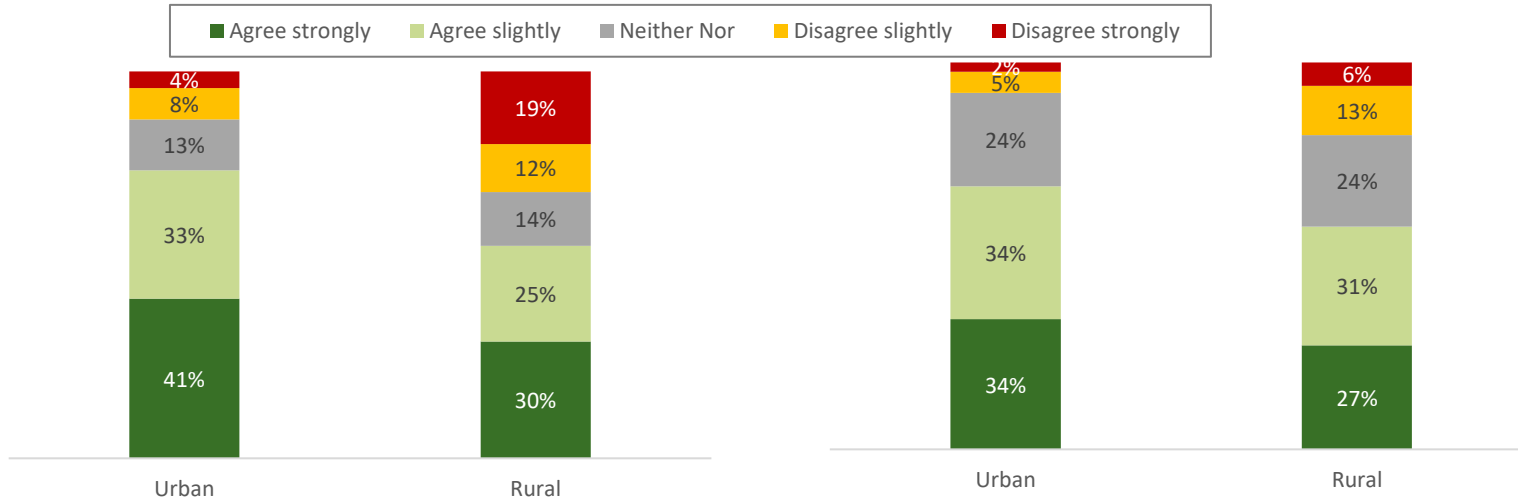
Q16 How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements relating to your nearest greenspace areas and paths and trails? Base: Urban and Rural respondents (3,311, 1,357)

Urban residents also provided higher ratings than rural residents for the accessibility and quality of trails.

Figure 4 – Rating of local paths and trails

My local paths and trails for walking, running and cycling are within easy walking distance from my house

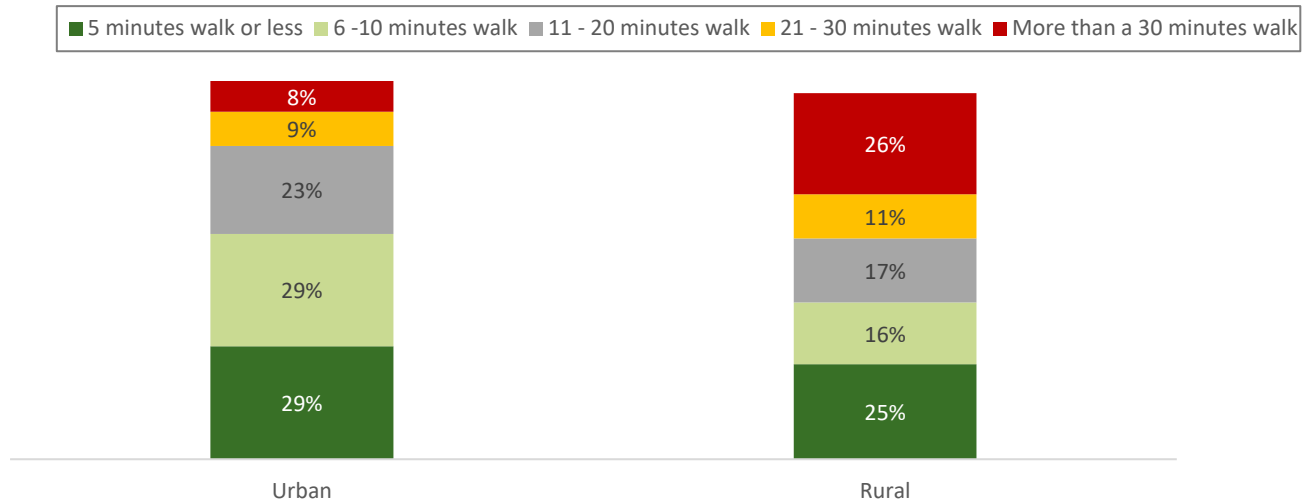
My local off-road paths and trails are of a high enough standard to want to use them



Q16 How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements relating to your nearest greenspace areas and paths and trails? Base: Urban and Rural respondents (3,311, 1,357)

Almost three in five urban residents stated that they lived within a 10-minute walk of their nearest green or blue space, a much higher percentage than amongst rural residents.

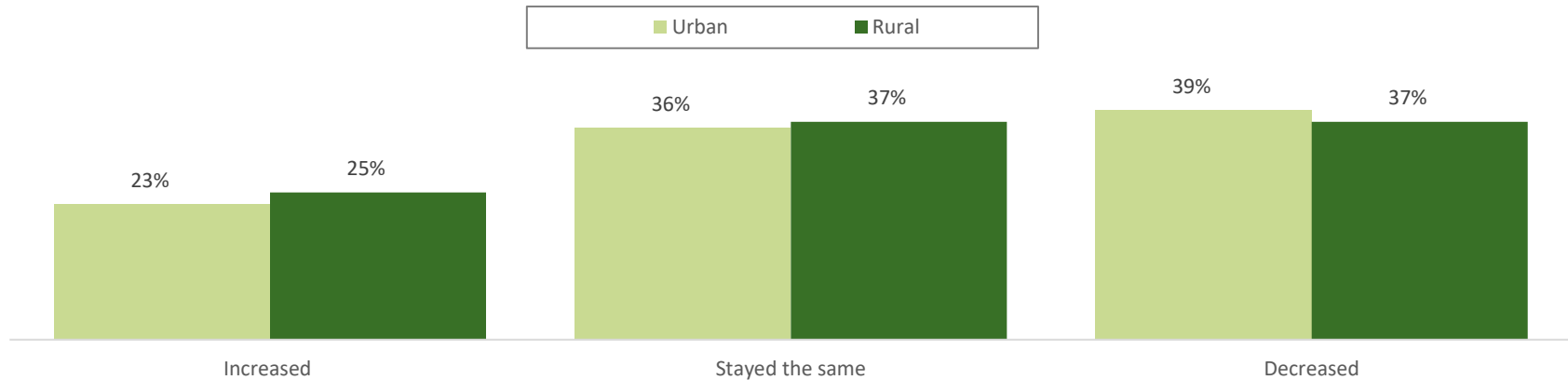
Figure 5 – Perceived distance to local green or blue spaces



'Q17. How far away from your home is your nearest green or blue space area? By this we mean any open space areas such as parks ` playing fields ` woodland ` beaches or rivers or other natural places you could spent time in Base: Urban and Rural respondents (3,311, 1,357)

Changes in frequency of outdoor recreation during the COVID-19 pandemic were similar amongst both urban and rural residents.

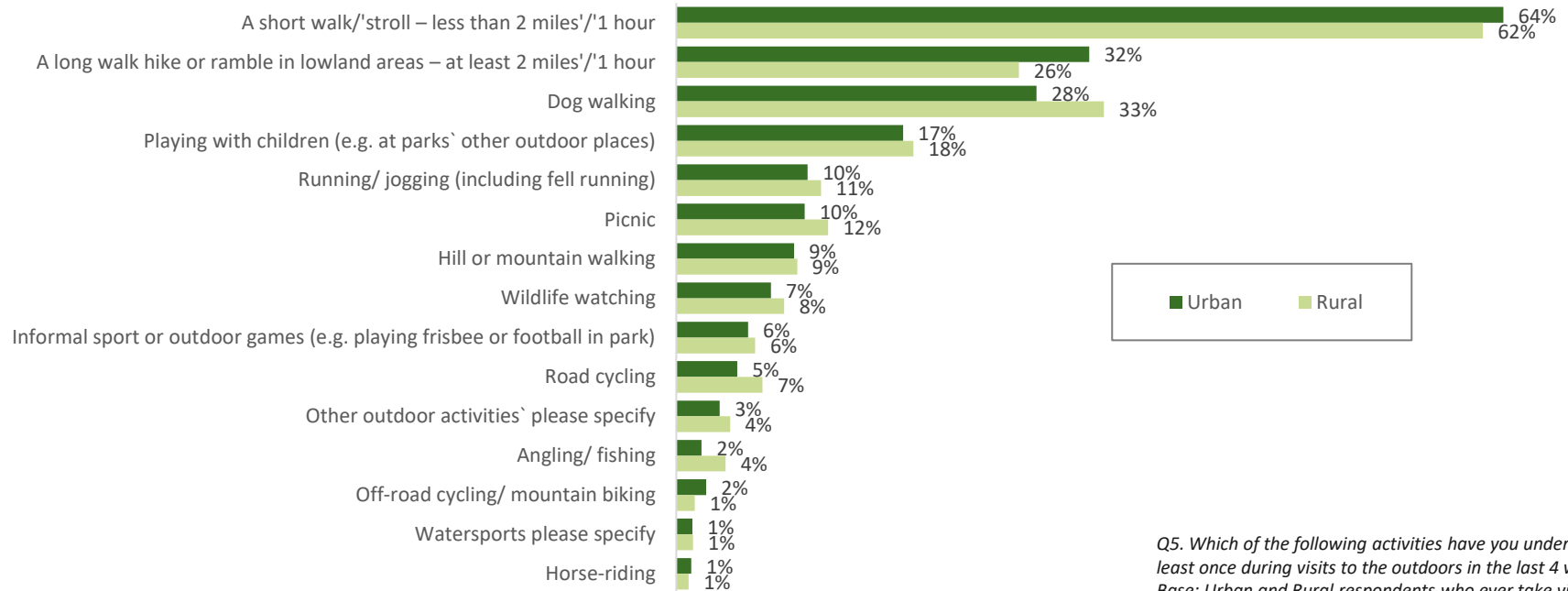
Figure 6 – Frequency of visits to outdoors compared to this time last year – overall and by key demographics



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: Urban and Rural respondents (3,311, 1,357)

Rural residents were more likely than urban residents take part in dog walking while rural residents were more likely to take longer hikes.

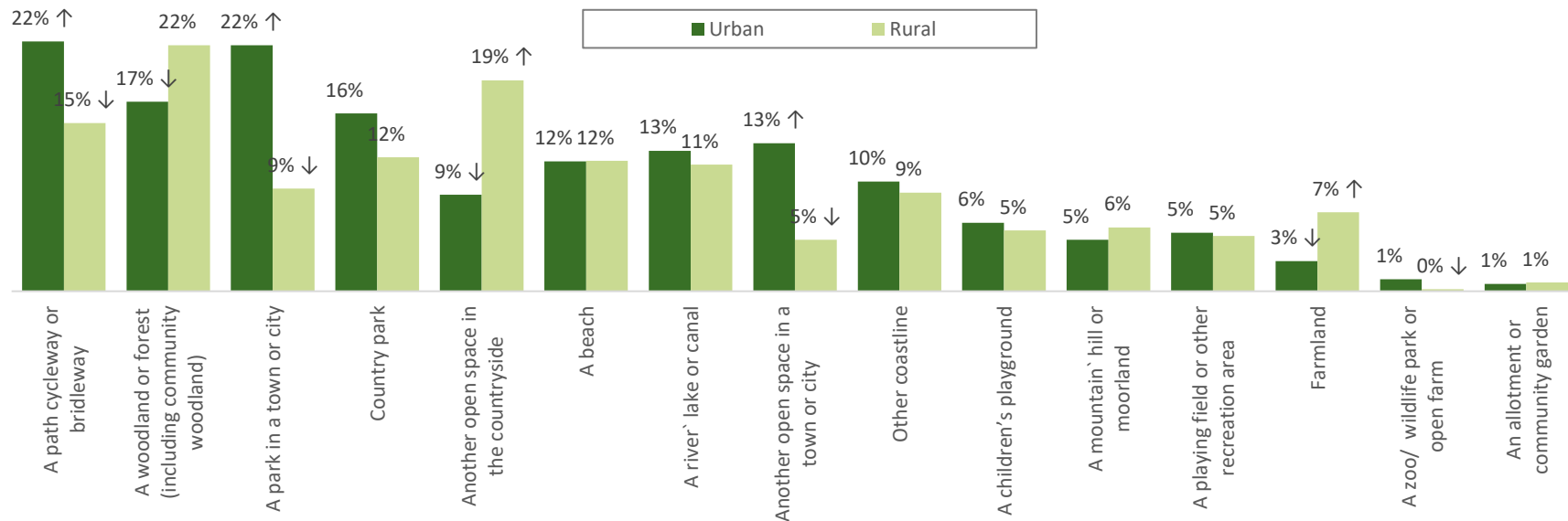
Figure 7 – Activities undertaken on visits to outdoors taken in the last 4 weeks (amongst those ever visiting outdoors)



Q5. Which of the following activities have you undertaken at least once during visits to the outdoors in the last 4 weeks?
Base: Urban and Rural respondents who ever take visits to outdoors 3,104, 1,253)

Places visited reflected the local environment with urban residents more likely to use local paths and parks while rural residents were more likely to spend time in woodland, farmland or other open countryside.

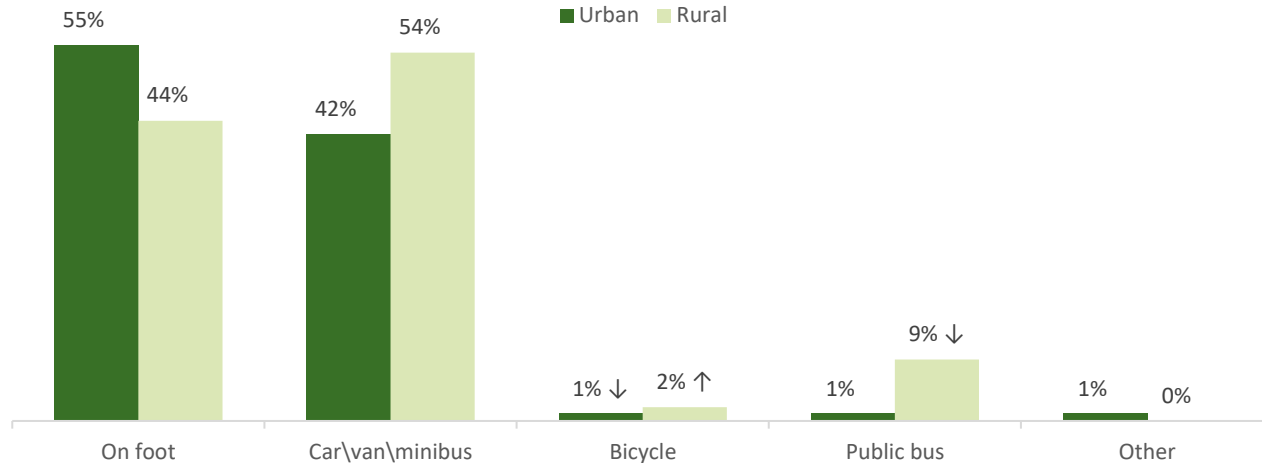
Figure 8 – Places visited during visits taken



Q9. On this last visit to the outdoors for leisure and recreation, what types of location or destination did you go to? Base: Urban and Rural residents who had taken visits in the last 4 weeks (2,774, 1,094)

Possibly reflecting the lack of accessible paths or greenspaces for many, rural residents were more likely than urban residents to drive to the place visited on outdoor recreation visits.

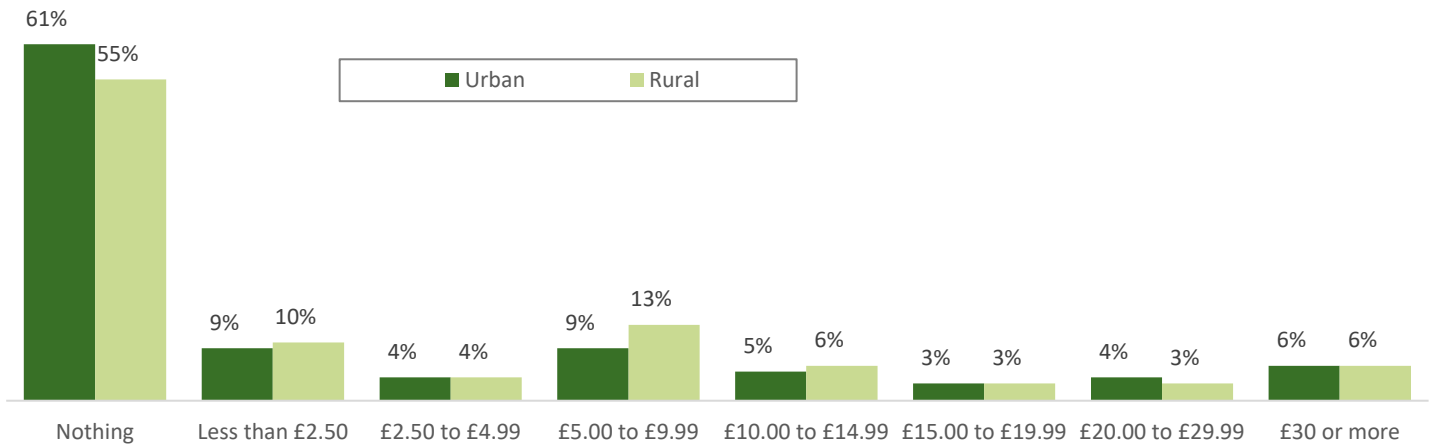
Figure 9 – Transport used to reach place visited



Q11. What was the main mode of transport you used to reach this place?
Base: Urban and Rural residents who had taken visits in the last 4 weeks
(2,774, 1,094)

45% of rural residents spent money during outdoor recreation visits, more than amongst urban residents (39%).

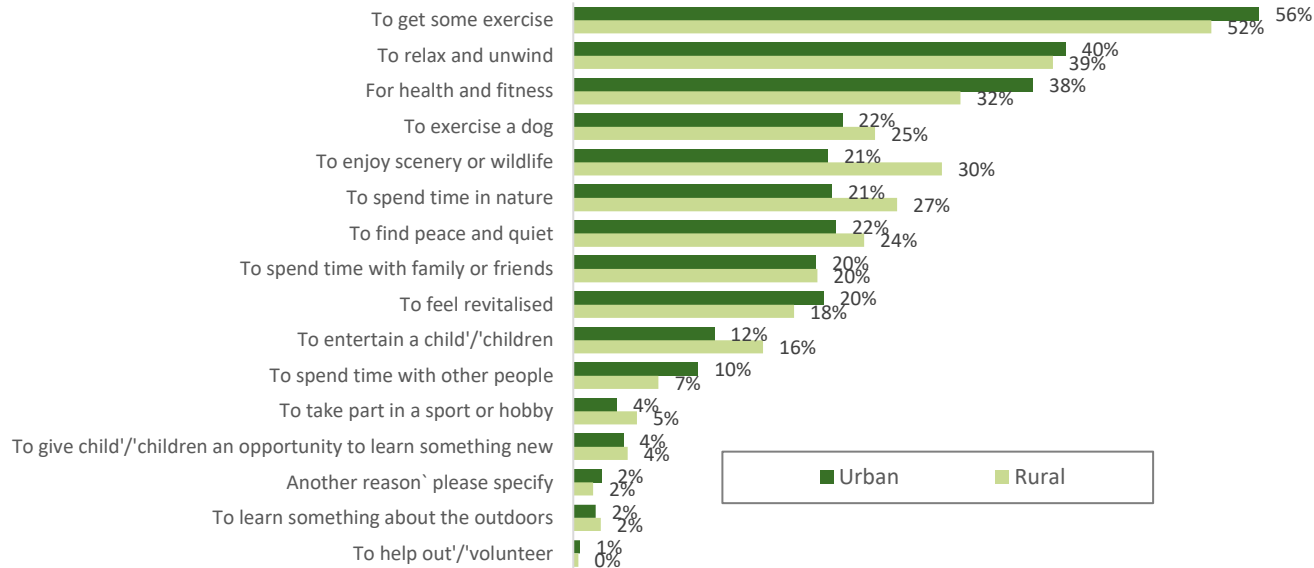
Figure 10 – Expenditure during visits taken



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: Urban and Rural residents who had taken visits in the last 4 weeks (2,774, 1,094)

Urban residents were more likely than rural residents to take visits for reasons relating to exercise or physical health, rural residents were more likely to be motivated by opportunities to enjoy nature.

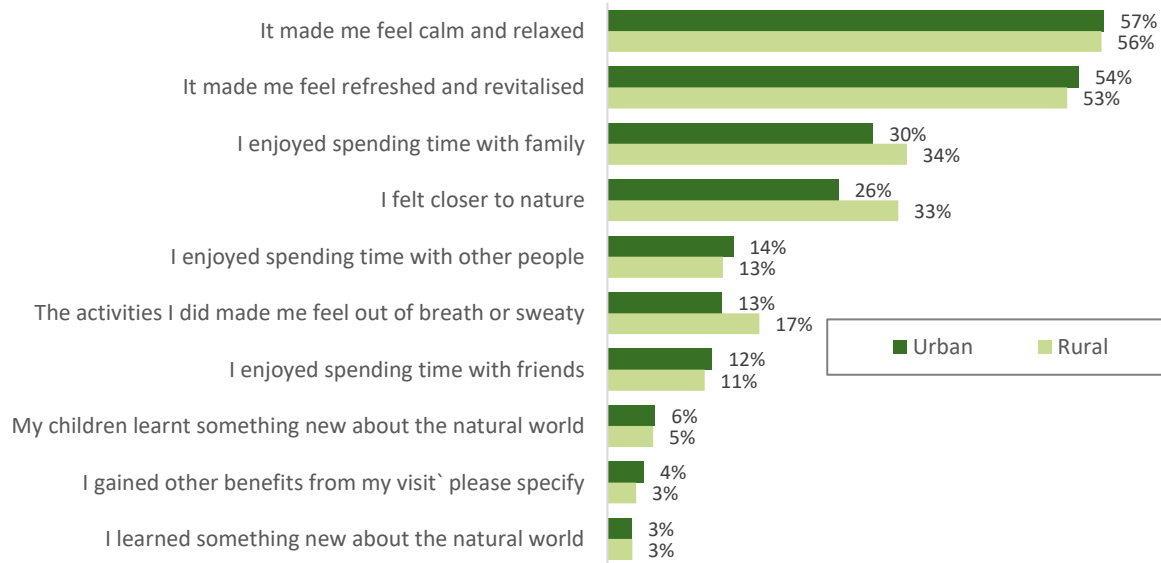
Figure 11 – Reasons for taking most recent visit to the outdoors



Q13(a). Which of the following reasons, if any, best describe why you made your last visit to the outdoors? Base: Urban and Rural residents who had taken visits in the last 4 weeks (2,774, 1,094)

Rural residents were more likely than urban residents to enjoy time spent with family or to feel closer to nature after their visit to the outdoors.

Figure 12 – Statements which apply to most recent visit to the outdoors



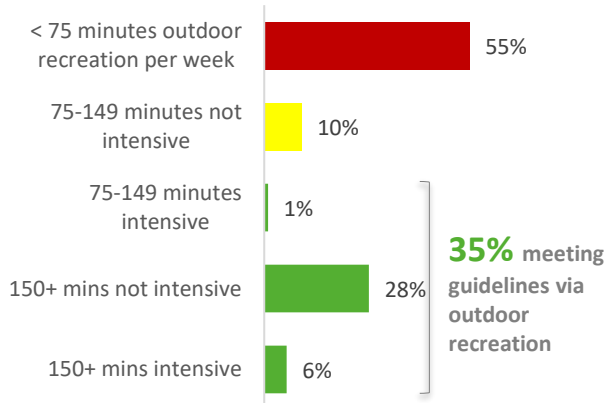
Q15. From the list of statements below select any which applied to your last visit to the outdoors? Base: Urban and Rural residents who had taken visits in the last 4 weeks (2 771 1 001)

The percentages of urban and rural residents meeting the CMO target through outdoor recreation were similar.

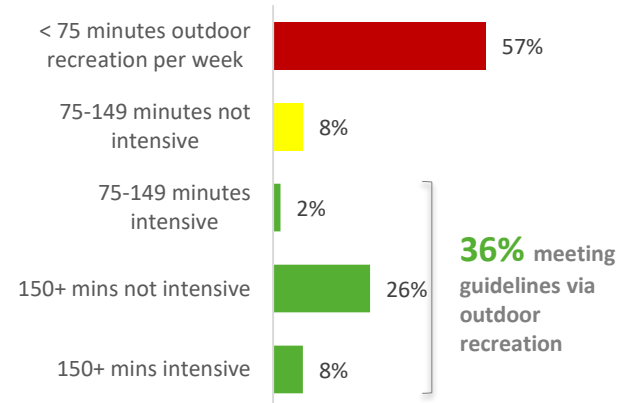
Chief Medical Officer's physical activity guideline for adults:

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

Urban residents:



Rural residents:



People in the Outdoors Monitor for Northern Ireland (POMNI) was undertaken by ORNI and 56 Degree Insight, with support from SORG, DAERA, and Sport NI.

For more information visit: www.outdoorrecreationni.com/POMNI

