

Press release: People are spending more time outside in the natural environment than ever before

New national statistics published today by Natural England show that more people than ever before are visiting and spending time in the natural environment.

The proportion of adults visiting nature at least once a week has increased from 54 per cent in 2010 to 62 per cent in 2018.

Natural England's [Monitoring of Engagement with the Natural Environment](#) (MENE) report also found that this trend could be seen across population groups, including groups where levels of participation have historically been lower.

This year's report further found the proportion of people living in England's most deprived areas visiting the natural environment at least once a week has increased by 13 per cent from 38 per cent in 2009/10 to 51 per cent in 2017/18.

This year's report also found:

- In 2017/18 health and exercise was the main motivation for spending time in the natural environment (reported for over half of all visits).
- In 2017/18, 86% people were concerned about damage to the natural environment. Choosing to walk instead of taking the car is on the up (reported by 48 per cent of people in 2017/18 compared with 40% in 2009/10) but other pro-environmental behaviours remain predominantly static (such as volunteering for environment or conservation causes which has remained at 5 per cent over the last nine years).
- Despite high levels of concern, only a third of people think they are likely to make future lifestyle changes to protect the environment.

The government's 25 Year Environment Plan aims to connect more people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing and encourage them to take action to improve the natural world.

Principal Specialist for People and the Environment at Natural England, Rose O'Neill, said:

Over the last nine years there has been a real change in how people think about and experience the natural world.

It is great that more people than ever before, from across all sections of society, are spending increasing amounts of time

enjoying the natural environment.

Research has also shown that one of the main motivations for people engaging with the natural environment is the benefits to health and wellbeing, underlining the important role of nature in everyday lives.

The MENE survey is funded by Natural England, with support from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

The MENE survey was first commissioned in 2009 and has provided a wealth of evidence relating to outdoor recreation, behaviour and attitudes. The biggest long-running survey of its kind in the world allows us to track changes over time and provides a valuable insight into how people use and relate to the natural environment.

Natural England uses the research to understand how people use, enjoy and are motivated to protect the natural environment and to help monitor changes in use of the natural environment over time.