

Official Statistics in Development

The People and Nature Survey for Wales: 2021 – 2022

Headline Results

30th September 2024

What is the People and Nature Survey for Wales?

Natural Resources Wales (NRW), in partnership with Natural England, have commissioned Verian (formerly Kantar Public) to undertake a population level survey (every 2 years) to gather evidence and trend data relating to people's enjoyment, access, understanding of and attitudes to the natural environment, and its contributions to their wellbeing. The People and Nature Survey for Wales (PaNSW) is an online panel based survey of approximately 6,000 adults that is statistically robust and representative of the population of Wales.

Data from the PaNSW enables users to:

- Understand how people in Wales use and enjoy the natural environment, and how often they do so
- Understand how being in the natural environment can influence wellbeing
- Monitor changes, over time, in the use of the natural environment – for key population groups and at a variety of spatial scales.
- Understand environmental attitudes and behaviours and the actions people take to protect the environment.

In this report we present the headline results from the PaNSW. The PaNSW uses 'green and natural spaces' to describe the variety of outdoor places people visit, these include urban playgrounds and parks, gardens, the sea and coast, woodlands, rivers and lakes, country parks, nature reserves and the wider countryside.

It is highlighted that 2020 saw the emergence of the Covid 19 pandemic in the UK and subsequent lockdown and restriction periods set by both the UK and Welsh Governments covered some of the timespan of this survey.

Some percentages below may not sum to 100% owing to rounding.

PaNSW builds on, but does not replicate the [Wales Outdoor Recreation Survey](#) (2013 – 2016) and the [Recreation Modules within the National Survey for Wales](#) (2016 – 2020). Owing to the different collection methods and changes to questions we do not recommend making direct comparisons between PaNSW and WORS and/or the NSW.

Visits to green and natural spaces

- Over the previous 12 months 20% of adults in Wales spent time outside in green and natural spaces every day and 40% did so twice a week or more (but not daily). The picture is similar for children, with 20% spending time outdoors every day and 52% doing so twice a week or more over the last year.
- Sixty five percent of adults had visited green and natural places in the preceeding 14 days and 14% of these can be classed as frequent visitors (10 or more visits during the preceding 14 days). However, 21% of people had not visited green and natural spaces at all in the previous fortnight. Overall, 87% of adults said they would like to spend more time in green and natural spaces and 94% said they would like their child to spend more time in greenspace.
- Amongst those that had not spent any free time in green and natural spaces over the preceding 14 days, 40% cited bad/poor weather as the reason whilst poor physical health/illness, too busy at home and too busy at work/with family commitments were cited by 20% each. Sixteen percent did not spend time outdoors in greenspace to help stop the coronavirus spreading or because of Government restrictions.
- Although 30% of those who hadn't visited green and natural space or greenspaces in the last 14 days had no overarching concerns about visiting the outdoors, a quarter (25%) were concerned about lack of facilities such as toilets or benches, 22% about anti social behaviour and 21% about contracting or spreading coronavirus. Fourteen percent said they weren't leaving home at all because of restrictions introduced for managing the Covid pandemic.
- Since the Covid restrictions began in Wales, 49% of respondents had increased the amount of time they spent outdoors and 29% increased the amount of time they spent exercising outdoors. Of these two groups respectively, 91% said they would like to continue spending more time outdoors and 85% wanted to continue exercising outdoors.

Where do people go and what do they do?

- Eighty eight percent of people have access to a private or shared garden and 29% typically spent time in it every day whilst a further 41% spent time in the garden twice a week or more (but not every day).

- People who had visited green and natural spaces (excluding private or shared gardens) in the last 14 days were asked to think about their most recent visit: how they travelled, the activities they undertook, who they went with and the type of location they visited.
- Most respondents (68%) had walked to their chosen destination, and given that Government Covid guidelines emphasised visiting places close to home this is no surprise. A further 29% had travelled by motor vehicle (car, van, motorbike).
- Forty-four percent of people had visited a green and natural space less than a mile from home, with a further 25% visiting a destination between 1 and 2 miles away. Only 7% had travelled between 11 and 50 miles, with a further 3% travelling over 50 miles away from home.
- Whilst 26% of people had visited the outdoors alone, 38% had visited with friends and/or family; 15% with children and 37% had taken their dog on the visit.
- Urban green spaces, like parks and playgrounds, were the main destination for 24% of people, whilst 19% visited more open countryside (fields and farmland). Beaches, sea and coastline attracted 16% whilst woodlands and forests were visited by 15%.
- Activities undertaken whilst on this visit were varied: eighty one percent of people cited walking (including walking a dog); 30% wildlife watching, 16% eating or drinking out/picnicking and 12% playing with children. Respondents were able to select as many responses as were applicable. When asked about the main activity undertaken, whilst walking remained popular (60%), wildlife watching and playing with children both fell to 9% and eating out/picnicking to 6%.

Perceived physical and mental health benefits

- The majority of people agreed that spending time outdoors is beneficial for their mental and physical health.
- Of those who had visited a green and natural space in the last 14 days, 96% agreed that this was good for their physical health and 94% agreed that this was beneficial for their mental health.
- When asked about the reason for visiting greenspace, 53% said for physical health and exercise whilst 41% said for their mental health and wellbeing. Overall, 85% of people felt that being in nature makes them happy.
- The health benefits of participation in physical activity in the outdoors are associated with either a moderate or high level of activity, described as enough to raise your breathing rate or being out of breath. Of those that had visited green and natural spaces in the last 14 days, 65% said that the activity they'd undertaken was enough to raise their breathing rate.
- Of those respondents that had children, 67% thought spending time outdoors in green and natural spaces was good for their child's physical health and 66% thought it beneficial for the child's mental health. Further, 56% felt the child benefitted from spending time with friends, family and other children outdoors and 52% thought that the children gained benefits from getting in touch with nature. Ninety-four percent wanted their child to spend more time outside in green and natural spaces.
- People who had not visited green and natural spaces in the last 14 days owing to poor physical health or illness were asked about the reasons that stopped them from visiting. Sixty three percent said that concerns around their mobility were very important, 48% cited tiredness and fatigue as very important and 27% said the fact they had no one to go with them or help them as very important.

Perceived quality of local green and natural spaces

- Overall, 41% of respondents said the quality of their local green space had improved in the last 5 years, but 20% of people thought the quality had declined.
- Seventy five percent of people agreed their local greenspace provides opportunities to see nature, whilst 73% agreed they were good places for mental health and wellbeing, 69% agreed they were places that encourage physical activity and 66% agreed they were good places for children to play. Whilst 65% agreed their local greenspace was within easy walking distance, nearly a quarter of people (24%) disagreed with this.
- When asked about what green and natural spaces *should be like*, 86% said within easy walking distance, 92% they should be good places for mental health and wellbeing and 91% said they should provide good opportunities to see nature.

Environmental attitudes and behaviours

- Ninety percent of people said that protecting the environment was important to them personally.
- This can be put into a wider context through consideration of responses when people were asked to select the top three issues facing the United Kingdom. The environment / climate change was the third most commonly selected issue facing the UK (31%). Overall 53% of people selected 'health / NHS / Covid' as the most important issue facing the UK, 35% selected our 'rising prices / inflation / cost of living' and 25% selected 'the economy'.
- When further asked to select the 3 most important specific issues facing the environment, 50% selected 'plastic pollution, 48% selected 'climate change' and 44% selected the 'decline / extinction of animal and plant life'.

- Whilst recycling was the most commonly cited action taken by people to protect the environment, they undertook a range of household, garden and lifestyle behaviours and 85% said they were going to make changes to their behaviours in order to protect the environment.
- When asked about actions taken in the last month 87% reported recycling, 83% using their own shopping bags, 79% switching off light and appliances and 73% composted or put food waste out for collection.
- Further questions about people's lifestyles showed that 67% of people agreed that they try to reduce buying things, 80% agreed they try to reduce wasting water and 82% agreed they try to reduce energy use. Forty percent agreed they try to reduce how often they eat meat or dairy products.

Further Information

The data tables for this survey are available for download. Click on the 'data' tab on this page (**check with UKDS**). If you use the data set for your own analysis please use the following citation:

Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru / Natural Resources Wales, 2024, People and Nature Survey Wales Dataset May 2021 – March 2022.

Here are further details on what kinds of questions/topics are being asked in the survey, some of which have not been focused upon in this headline report:

General experiences of green and natural spaces:

- Frequency of time spent outside in past 12 months
- Places visited
- General/local greenspace standards
- Nature connection

Visits taken to green and natural spaces in last 14 days:

- Total number of visits
- Main visit in past 14 days: destination/s, start place, distance, duration, activities, benefits of visit, transport, who with, physical exertion, money spent, reason for visit, quality of place/s visited
- Reasons for not visiting/barriers

Children (asking parent/guardian):

- Frequency of time spent outside in past 12 months
- Places visited
- Visit partners
- Benefits of time outdoors
- Reasons for not spending more time outdoors
- Time spent in private garden

Environmental attitudes:

- Importance of protecting the environment
- Reasons to look after the environment
- Concern about damaging natural environment
- Perceived variety of animal / plant life
- Concern about loss of variety
- Environmental issues that are of concern
- Environmental social action
- Environmental lifestyle choices
- Eating meat
- Driving
- Aeroplane use
- Energy use
- Water waste
- The number of things bought
- Responsibility for environmental damage

Gardens:

- Frequency of time spent in gardens
- Importance of gardens
- Reasons for spending time in garden
- Benefits of time in garden

- Description of garden
- Wildlife friendly gardening behaviours

Contact

If you have further queries please contact us at integratedevidence@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk and mark the subject line as 'People and Nature Survey Wales'.