



# Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment Spatial Report

2009 - 2011

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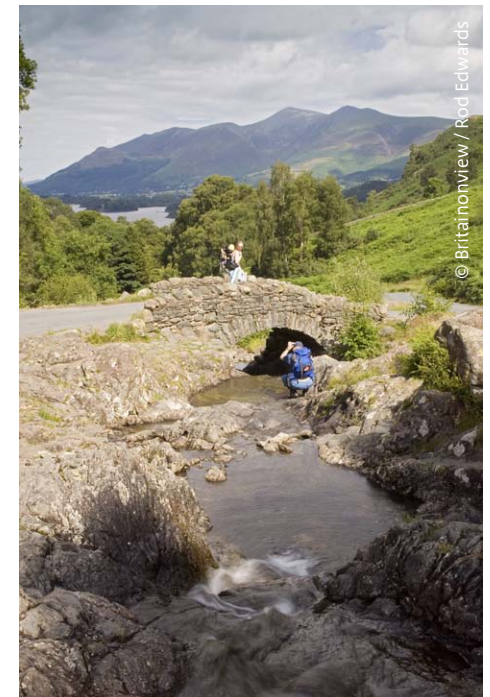


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Early morning sunburst through trees illuminates walkers on woodland path, Somerset



Walkers at Ashness Bridge in the Lake District, with Skiddaw in the distance, Cumbria,

# Foreword



by Dr Tim Hill,  
Director of Evidence  
and Analysis,  
Natural England.

The Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment survey (MENE) provides the most comprehensive dataset yet available on how people use and enjoy the natural environment. It is already widely used to:

- detect the variation between the ways social groups use and engage with the natural environment;
- indicate how leisure visits to the outdoors are changing over time
- inform and evaluate policies on access to the countryside and green space;
- improve the quality and increase the value of the natural environment across England.

Natural England routinely uses geography to map, understand and prioritise our work. Since the MENE survey began in 2009 we also have collected spatial information to identify where people travel to and from. For the first time, we have sufficient spatial data to begin to use and publish this information.

The MENE Spatial Report is an exciting new development that allows us to visualise and analyse the survey data geographically. This means we can map which places people visit, how far they will travel and where the opportunities for enjoying the environment are in relation to where people live. As a result we now have a better understanding of people's needs that will help us and others provide access in ways and places that will meet the needs of local groups and local people.

This report contains just an example of the sort of analysis that can be achieved and the questions that can be asked. We know the scope for further investigation is huge, and this is something that can be extended even further by supplementing MENE with other sources of data. We believe MENE has enormous potential for supporting the development of new policy, or as a means to answer specific questions – such as establishing the impact of a new initiative to encourage access to green space in local areas. For that reason, Natural England welcomes wider interest or requests for MENE information from those wishing to conduct their own analyses. Details of how to obtain the data are given in the introduction to the report, which follows this foreword.

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Cartography by Alan Booth.

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# Welcome

## to the Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment Spatial Report

Natural England is Government's advisor on the Natural Environment. Our purpose is defined in legislation to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development. We want people to be inspired to use and enjoy the natural environment, and to appreciate its intrinsic value.

The Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment survey (MENE) was commissioned to support our work in this area. Each year, it generates the most comprehensive dataset available on people's use and enjoyment of the natural environment.

“ **...this report highlights only a fraction of what is possible...** ”

This report presents the findings from spatial analyses of the first two years' survey data, gathered between March 2009 and February 2011. We feel this report highlights only a fraction of what is possible using the data collected by MENE in its first two years. Although the MENE evidence base already covers tens of thousands of visits to the natural environment, the scope of analyses will increase as more data is accumulated over time – allowing for more powerful and discriminating analyses in the future.

Further information about the survey can be found by visiting the MENE page on Natural England's website: <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/enjoying/research/monitor/default.aspx> Here you will be able to view:

- MENE Annual Reports from 2009/10 and 2010/11;
- technical information about how the survey is being run;
- a series of related reports, such as a comparison with the 2005 England Leisure Visits Survey (ELVS), and a report on public attitudes towards the natural environment; and
- an interactive statistical results viewer which allows you to conduct your own analysis of the MENE results at different levels of geography.

For any MENE related enquiries please email:

[mene@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:mene@naturalengland.org.uk)

In the meantime, take a look at the report and see what's possible!

## Who goes and why?

We want to know more about who visits the natural environment, what motivates them to go, and ultimately what experience they get from visiting.

The MENE survey, jointly commissioned by Natural England, the Department of Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the Forestry Commission, includes information on visits to the natural environment, as well as other ways of using and enjoying the natural environment - such as time spent in the garden and watching nature programmes on television.

The survey relates to engagement with the natural environment. By natural environment we mean all green open spaces in and around towns and cities as well as the wider countryside and coastline. The main focus of the survey is on day visits to the natural environment, and by visits we mean time spent outdoors in the natural environment, away from the home and private gardens.

In addition to the information collected through the survey, we've also worked with Defra to create segments of the population based on the responses to key MENE questions. The segments help us to better understand how different groups within the population interact with the natural environment, so that we and others are better placed to design ways of improving and increasing engagement. You'll find a description of the segments later in this report.



A family out dog walking on the Greenwich World Heritage Site, London.

© Britainonview / Simon Kreitem

# What's different about this report

## Finding out where people *actually* go

We asked people where they go when they visit the natural environment. This gave us some indication of the general types of places visited, like the coast, the countryside, or green spaces in towns and cities, as well as information on more specific places such as woodland, farmland, paths, rivers, urban parks, and playgrounds.

We also request further information about the places people actually visit. With this information we are able to pinpoint specific start and end points of a visit, and allocate a grid reference or 'geocode' on a map.

“ **Geocoding brings another dimension to the data, and presents huge potential for further analysis and understanding at a local level.** ”

The geocodes give us an indication of the pattern of visits. They also enable us to allocate visits to designated landscapes such as National Parks, which would otherwise be very difficult. They also help us to determine popular destinations, and those that receive less visits.

Geocoding brings another dimension to the data, and presents huge potential for further analysis and understanding at a local level. As such you'll find that the geocodes are used for more detailed analysis later on in this report.

MENE bases the geocode on two survey questions:

- “What is the name of the city, town or village or nearest city, town or village to the place you visited?”; and
- “Now please provide the name of the actual place you visited, for example the park, wood or canal”.

These questions are asked of one randomly selected visit only, taken by respondents during the seven days prior to interview. We only pursue this information from one visit to avoid an excessively long interview period.

During the interview we aim to find the visit destination from a database. Where the visit destination cannot be found, the interviewer records as many details as possible to allow the location to be identified later.

During the first two years of the survey, geocodes were allocated to 80 percent of visits. A lack of information from respondents prevented us from identifying a geocode with sufficient accuracy for the remaining 20 percent.

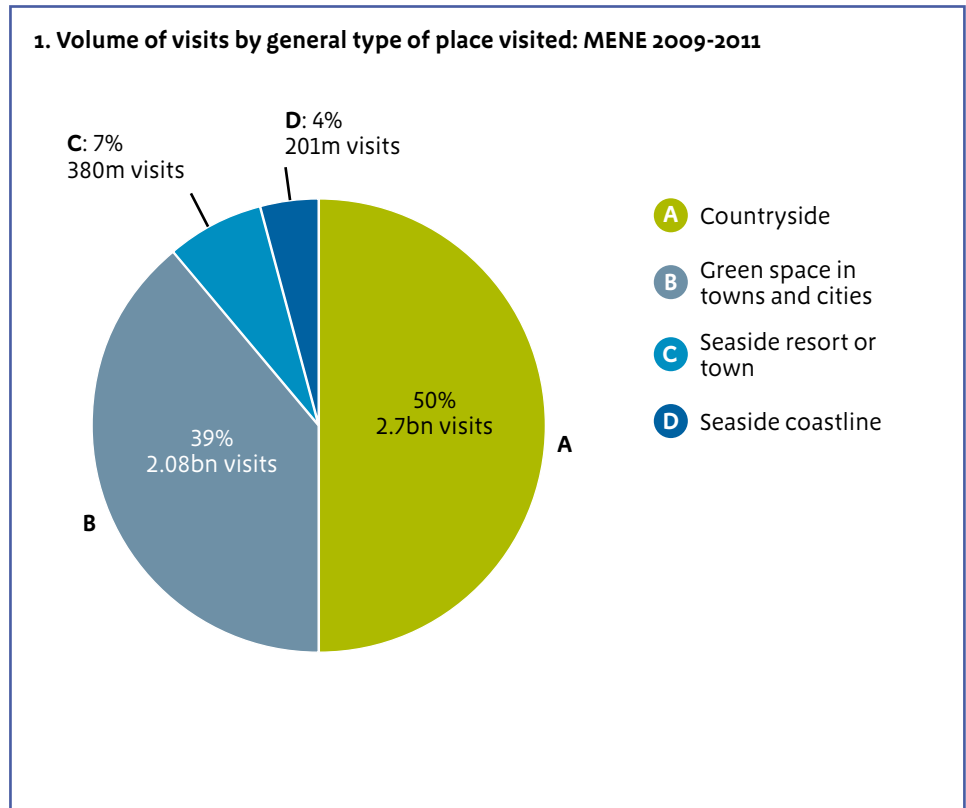
In the report we have indicated where we have used the geocodes to produce maps, figures and commentary. An important point to note here is that the geocodes represent the information provided for a single visit, and that single visit cannot be said to represent hundreds, thousands or even millions of visits.

# Where people go

## General places visited

MENE tells us that the English adult population took some 5.4 billion visits to the natural environment during the period March 2009 to February 2011. Figure 1 shows the overall volume of visits by general place visited. Visits to the countryside account for the majority (50 percent), although green spaces in towns and cities also feature prominently (39 percent). In total 11 percent of visits were taken in seaside locations.

Visits by the English adult population March 2009 – February 2011.			
All visits:	Visits to the countryside:	Visits to green spaces in towns and cities:	Visits to the seaside:
5.4 Billion	2.7 Billion	2.1 Billion	0.6 Billion

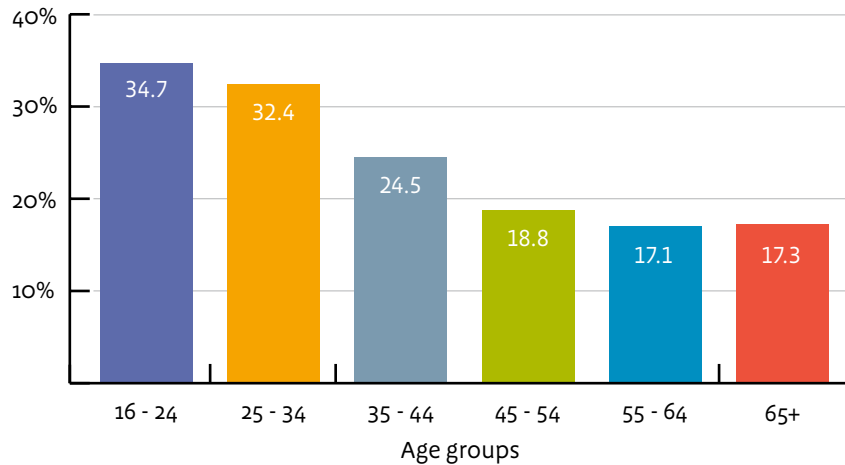


## Specific places visited

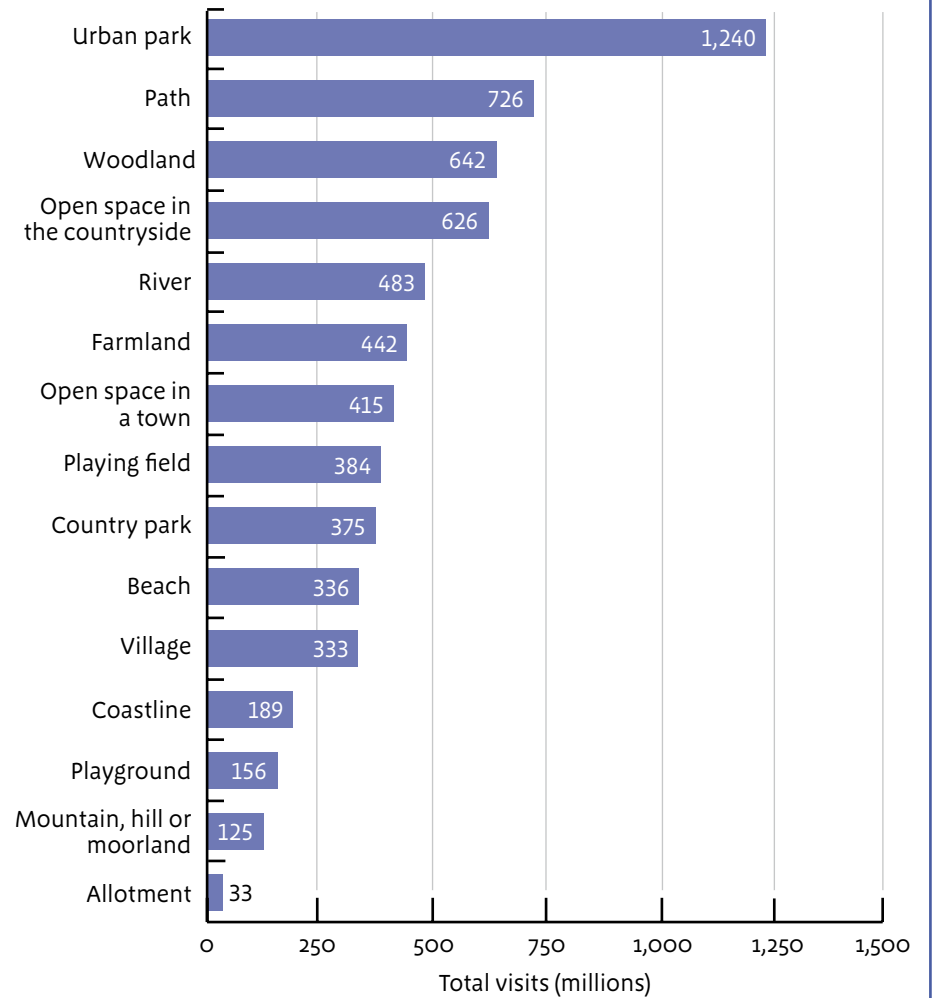
Turning now to the specific places visited, we see that urban parks are the most visited type of green space, appealing to many who live in and around towns and cities.

MENE reveals that the likelihood of visits to urban parks significantly decreases with age. As Figure 3 shows, around a third of the visits taken by 16-34 year olds are to urban parks, making them twice as likely to visit these places as those aged 55 or over.

3. Proportion of each age group visiting urban parks: MENE 2009-2011



2. Volume of visits to specific place: MENE 2009-2011





## So what attracts the younger crowd?

Before answering this question, it's useful to consider the segmentation mentioned earlier. The segmentation splits the population by age group (three groups aged 16 to 34, three aged 35 to 54 and two aged 55 and over) and by responses to attitudinal statements about the natural environment; lifestyle factors such as leisure activities; and socio-economic factors such as employment and income.

The 'Good for me and the kids' and 'Locally limited' market segment groups are attracted to the sorts of things urban parks offer, such as amenities, opportunities to exercise, and the availability of space to spend time with family and socialise. These groups are more likely to have children in the visiting party, so the convenience of a park close to home is likely key to influencing their decision about where to go.



Family feeding ducks at Slapton Ley, Devon

### Good for the kids and me

**Aged 16-34.** Typically young mothers, plan their busy lives around parenting, work and socialising.

### Locally limited

**Aged 16-34.** A low income, low car ownership and low interest in health and physical activity. More enthusiasm for socialising, watching TV and going out.

### Competing interests

**Aged 35-54.** Typically busy with work, children and projects like DIY or gardening. Enjoy social outings, the pub, cinema, etc.

### Mature explorers

**Aged 55+.** Contented, fulfilled and with a busy schedule. Typically retired, children have left home and have a wide network of friends.

### Reluctant and uninspired

**Aged 35-54.** Worry about health, money and family issues. Busy with work they have little in the way of free time.

### Nostalgic inactives

**Aged 55+.** Largely retired or nearing retirement, commitments to family and friends and as carers often limit leisure activity.

### Pressured but engaged

**Aged 35-54.** Typically career focused high achievers working long hours. Family & friends are important, they are in good health and enjoy physical activity.

### Friends and sport

**Aged 16-34.** Typically young single males. Spend a lot of time socialising, having fun, playing sport.

## It's a walk in the park!

In this section we've focused on a handful of key destination types in order to look at travel distances in greater detail.

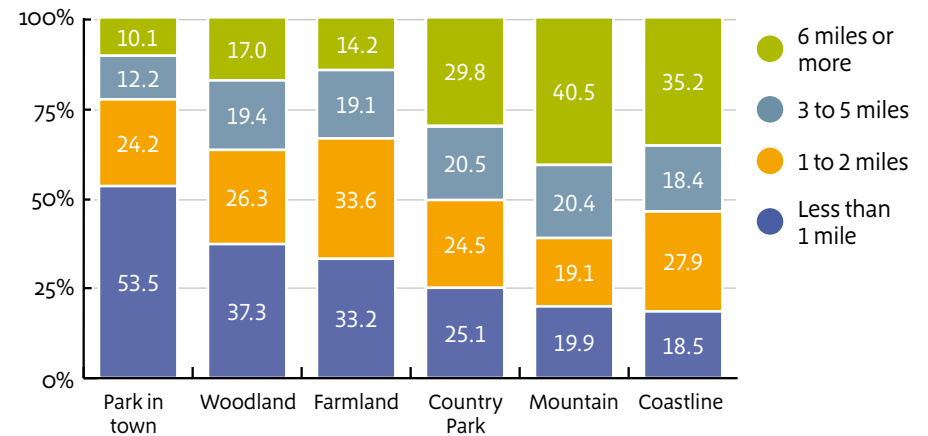
Overall two thirds (66 percent) of visits involve a journey of less than 2 miles, while only four percent involve over 40 miles of travel.

In comparison to the overall England average, over three quarters of visits taken to urban playing fields and parks involve a journey of up to 2 miles (74 percent and 76 percent respectively) while visits to the coast and upland areas are more likely to involve longer journeys of over 2 miles.

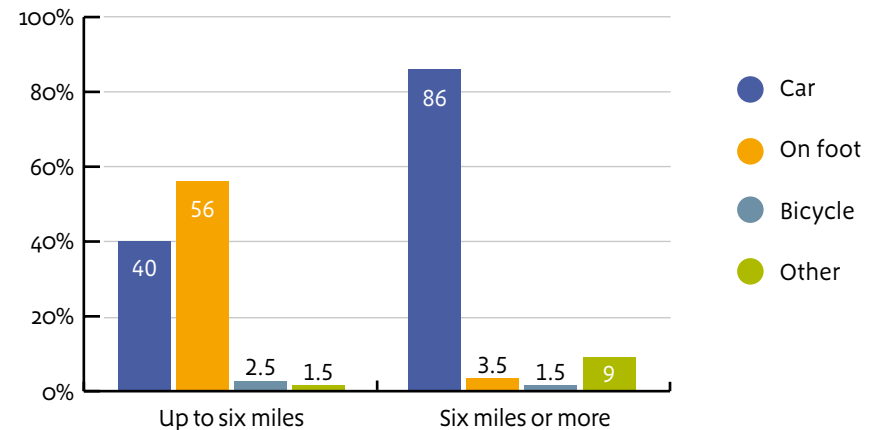
Country Parks are there for people to access and enjoy countryside close to home. Figure 4 shows almost three quarters of visits (70 percent) to Country Parks require a journey of less than six miles. Further analysis of visits to Country Parks reveals that longer journeys of six miles or more are more likely to involve travel by car than by foot (figure 5). This may be a demonstration of how successful some sites are at attracting an audience wider than their local residents, and it would be interesting to see how the catchment area for Country Parks varies by site through further research.

“ ...two thirds (66 percent) of visits involve a journey of less than 2 miles

4. Distance travelled by types of place visited: MENE 2009-2011



5. Transport by distances travelled to Country Parks: MENE 2009-2011



## Farmland and woodland: just a rural gem?

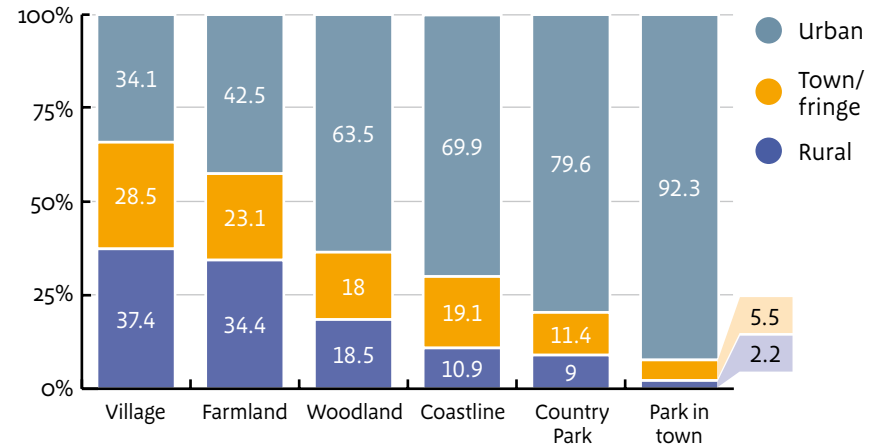
Right on our doorstep, our farmlands can offer abundant wildlife, interesting landscapes and an insight into England’s agricultural heritage. Over half (58 percent) of visitors to farmland live in rural and town/fringe areas - much higher than the proportion of the English adult population who took visits from these areas as a whole (28 percent). This underlines the importance of farmland as a visit destination for those in town fringe areas.

In total, farmland visitors took an average of over 200 visits per year over the period March 2009 to February 2011, compared to just 64 visits across the population as a whole.

On the other hand, woodland visits are enjoyed by a greater mix of urban and rural residents, with 64 percent of visitors from urban areas and 36 percent from rural and town/fringe.

These results could reflect the investment in woodland initiatives since the late 1980s including Community Forests, and the availability of woodland areas in and around urban areas promoted by organisations such as the Woodland Trust and Forestry Commission.

6. Rural/urban profile of visits to key destinations: MENE 2009-2011



Walking amongst bluebells, Ashridge Estate, Hertfordshire.

## Parklife!

The vast majority of visitors to parks in towns and cities are from urban areas. In addition, over three quarters (78 percent) of visits to urban parks are within two miles, underlining the importance of urban green space in providing access opportunities to the natural environment for people in urban areas.

What's more, urban green spaces are by far and away the most popular destination for people living in the most deprived areas in the country. As the following figure shows, over two thirds (70 percent) of close to home visits taken by people living in the bottom ten percent most deprived areas on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) – a ranking of every small area in England according to the deprivation experienced by the people living there - are to greenspaces in towns and cities, more than double the finding for the top ten percent least deprived areas.

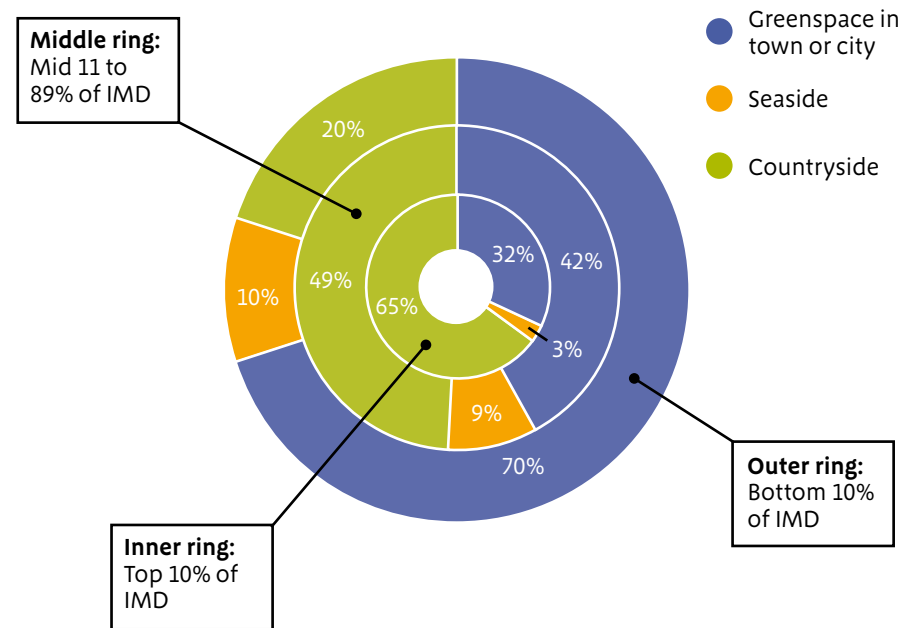
View of the city from Primrose Hill, London.



© Brianonview / Pawel Libera

“ ...over three quarters (78 percent) of visits to urban parks are within two miles, underlining the importance of urban green space in providing access opportunities to the natural environment for people in urban areas.

7. Percentage of IMD category visiting general types of place: MENE 2009-2011





## I do like to be beside the seaside!

The coast has something for most! Whether it's a beach, seaside resort or cliffs of a rural coastline, the coast has something to offer many visitors. The chart highlights the percentage of visits taken to each general type of place by each market segment.

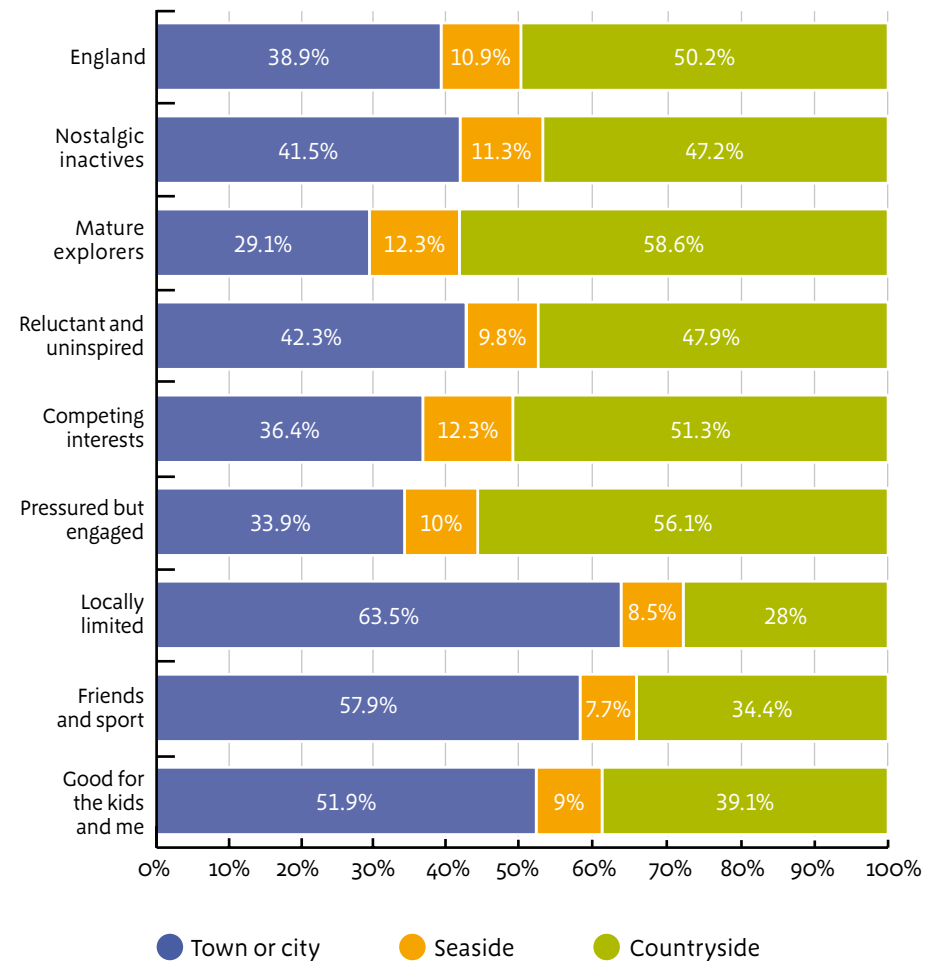
We can see that the 'Competing interests' are the group most likely to visit the seaside, notably more than found amongst the general population. This group are likely to see time as a barrier to visiting the natural environment, typically because of children. They are therefore more likely to take full days out rather than lots of shorter close to home visits.



**Top:** Walking above Durdle Door on the Jurassic Coast of Dorset.  
**Right:** The shingle beach at Deal, Kent.



**8. General places visited by market segment: MENE 2009-2011**



## Linger longer by the sea

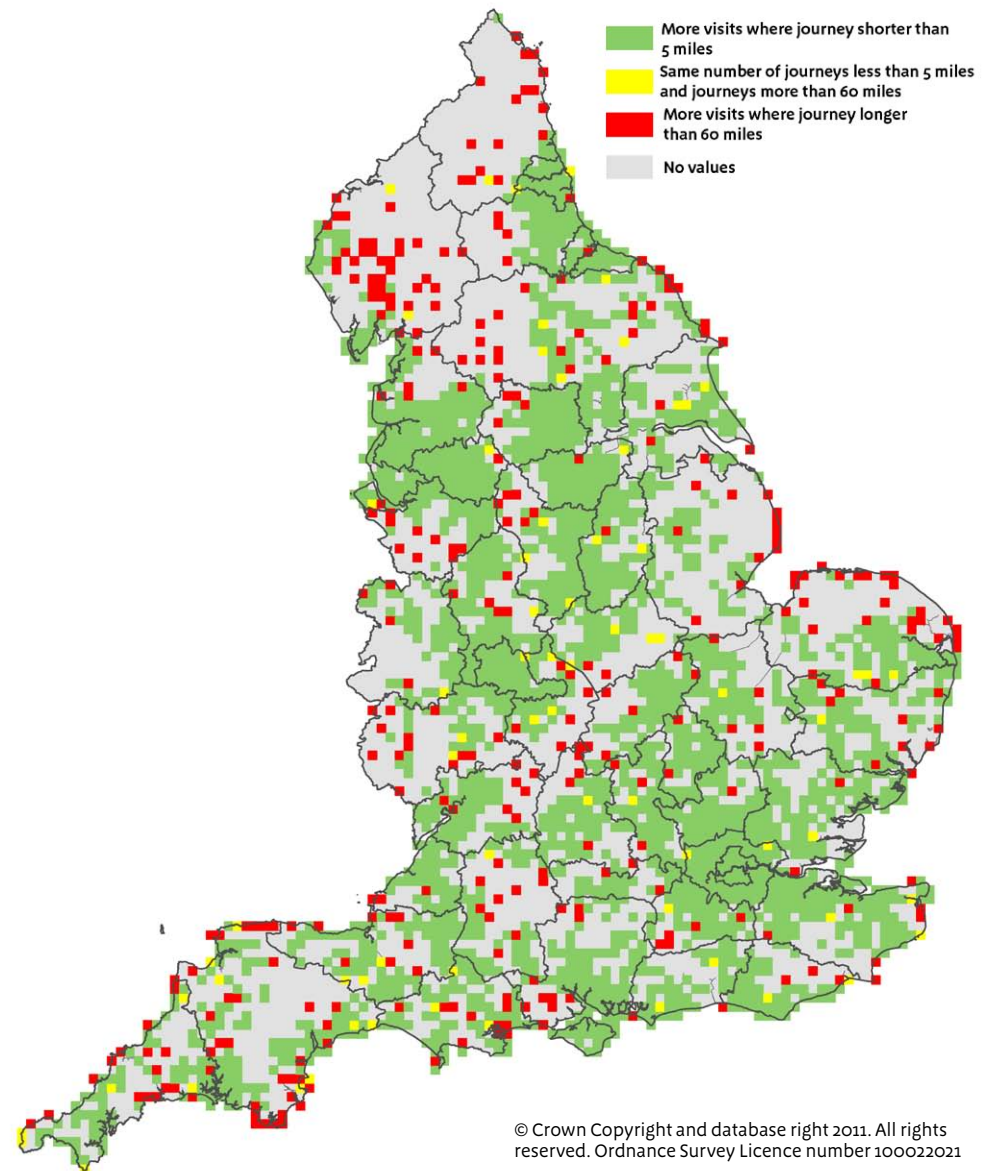
Visits to the coast tend to last longest, with an average visit lasting almost 3 hours. This compares to less than 2 hours average time spent in a town or city green space. These findings are consistent with other results from MENE, which tell us that visits that are taken close to home are often for routine reasons such as dog walking. In contrast visits to the coast, although taken less frequently taken, more often than not involve a full 'day out'.

The ability of coastal locations to pull in visitors from far and wide is illustrated by the map that follows, which was built using geocodes. This shows the ratio of long and short visits per five kilometres square across England. Notice the coincidence of red squares (more visits where the associated journey was greater than 60 miles) spread along coastal regions – especially in the south west and east.



© Britainonview / Rod Edwards

Walking on the beach at Kingsgate Bay, Kent.



## More than just buckets and spades...

We asked people about what they experienced while taking trips to the natural environment. From the responses we know that visits to coastal locations are more likely to result in outcomes where people strongly agree that they enjoyed their visit, and that they took time to appreciate their surroundings.

Coastal visits are also those most likely to result in visitors learning something new about the natural world. As shown in table 1, coastal visitors are also twice as likely to strongly agree that they felt close to nature during their visit, compared to visitors to urban green spaces.

Recognising the vast number of people who live in urban areas, the challenge of reconnecting people with nature is a focus of the recent Natural Environment White Paper. Is there more that can be done to engage people in nature during their visits – especially in towns and cities?



The sandy beaches of Southend-on-Sea, Essex.

**Table 1. General type of place visited by outcome: MENE 2009-2011**

Outcome	Percentage strongly agreeing			
	In a town or city	Seaside resort or town	Other seaside coastline	In the
I enjoyed it	40.4	52.9	58.5	51.8
It made me feel calm and relaxed	28.4	39.1	42.3	35.7
It made me feel refreshed and revitalised	26.1	37.7	39.8	33.4
I took time to appreciate my surroundings	24.6	41.4	45.7	34.2
I learned something new about the natural world	9.6	12.6	17.1	8.2
I felt close to nature	16.9	30.7	35.4	29.1

“...we know that visits to coastal locations are more likely to result in outcomes where people strongly agree that they enjoyed their visit, and that they took time to appreciate their surroundings.



## Mountains, hills and moorlands: an upland adventure!

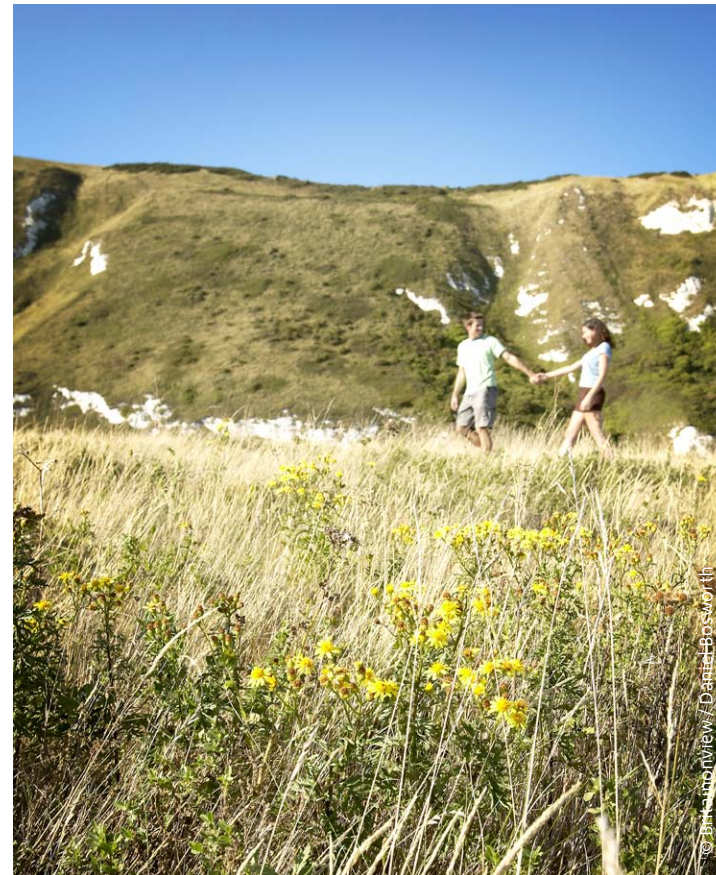
The dramatic landscapes and open vistas of England's upland areas offer adventure and escape from the hustle and bustle of daily life. Visits usually last longer and include a wide range of leisure activities such as walking, mountain biking, eating out or picnicking and appreciating scenery and wildlife.

Almost 2 in 5 visitors (37 percent) to mountains, hills and moorlands are in the older 'Mature Explorers' market segment, despite the fact that this group have typically higher levels of disability than other groups, and account for almost two fifths (39 percent) of disabled people overall. Just under a fifth (18 percent) of Mature Explorers who visit these locations do so despite having a long standing illness or disability.

**Table 2. Segmentation profile of visitors to mountains, hills and moorland: MENE 2009-2011**

Segment	Percentage
Good for the kids and me	5.7
Friends and sport	4.6
Locally limited	2
Pressured but engaged	22.3
Competing interests	19
Reluctant and uninspired	4.3
Mature Explorers	36.6
Nostalgic inactives	5.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

Despite this potential for adventure and activity, only five percent of visitors are from the 'Friends and Sport' segment. This younger group are less likely to have a disability and more likely to be from a Black Asian or Minority Ethnic background, and cite activity and adventure as a reason for going outdoors. Further research is needed to uncover ways of encouraging more of this group to visit places like mountains, hills and moorlands more often.



**Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, along the Folkestone to Dover Heritage Coast, Kent**



## Why go and where?

As we've seen earlier, MENE allows us to gain more insight into the reasons people visit the natural environment. This could be anything from routine trips to walk a dog, to visits further away to visit and attraction.

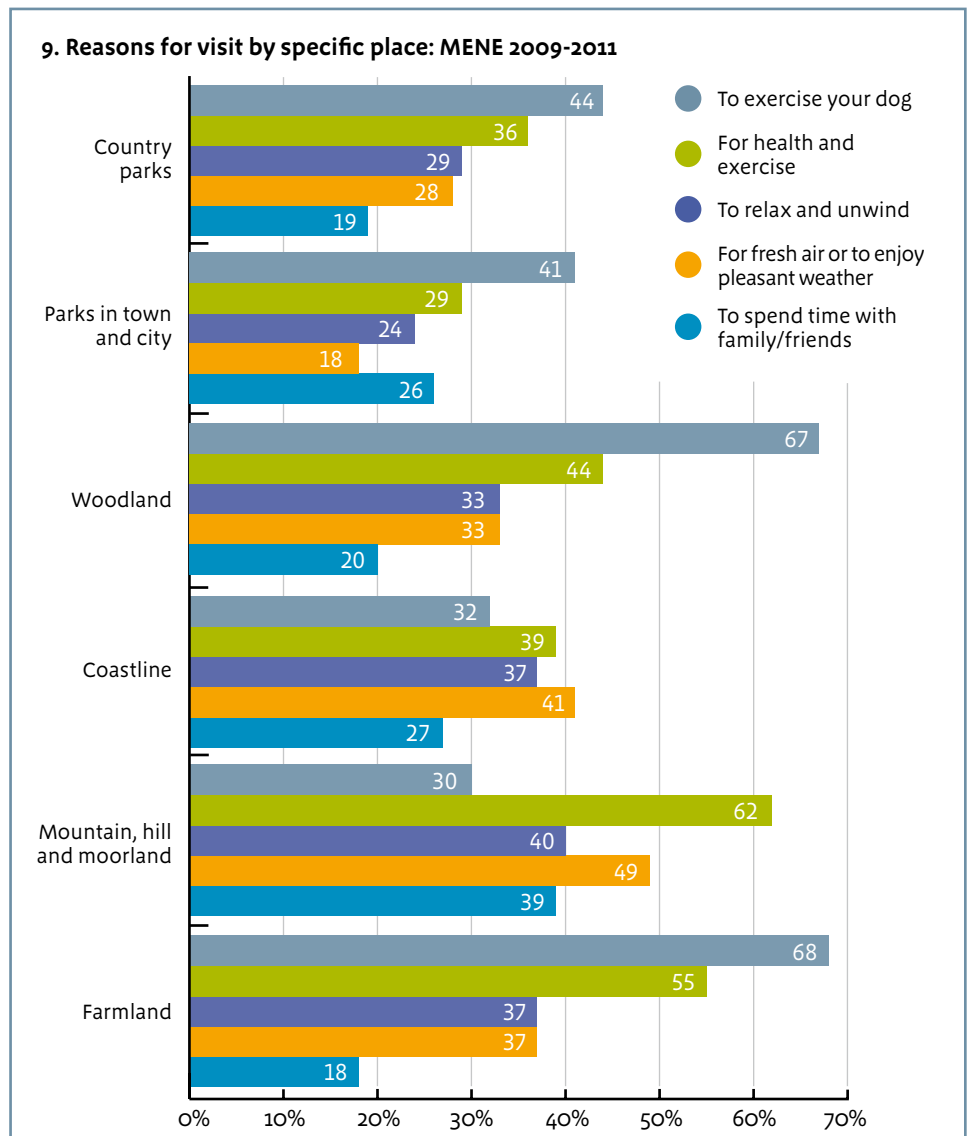
Figure 9 shows the five most frequently cited reasons for visiting specific places. Note that respondents can cite more than one reason per visit, hence why the responses per place don't add up to 100 percent.

Reflecting the greater proportion of visits taken with children to places such as parks, visits taken in urban green spaces were more likely than those taken to Country Parks to be motivated by the chance to spend time with family or friends (26 percent and 19 percent respectively).

The majority of visits taken to woodland and farmland were taken to exercise a dog (67 per cent and 68 percent respectively) while most visits to mountains, hills and moorland were taken for personal health and exercise (62 percent).

Compared to the visits taken to urban green spaces, visits taken to woodland, rural coastline and mountains, hills and moorlands are significantly more likely to be motivated by the opportunities to enjoy fresh air, pleasant weather and scenery. Furthermore, almost two fifths (39 percent) of visitors to mountains, hills and moorland said socialising with friends or family was their reason to visit.

Being out in the fresh air and enjoying the weather was an important reason to visit for a third (33 percent) of woodland visitors. This compares to just 18 percent of urban green space visitors going for this reason.



## It's good for me!

Being amongst nature can be good for your health and wellbeing. Recent evidence tells us that access to natural greenspaces for fresh air, exercise and quiet contemplation has benefits for both physical and mental health. Research provides good evidence of reductions in heart disease, obesity and depression where people live close to greenspaces.

We've already seen how important close to home greenspace is – providing access to the natural environment in urban areas, especially to those living in areas of deprivation.

We decided to take a closer look at visit characteristics in a local area using MENE's geocoding information. For this example we chose Birmingham, but the methodology could be equally applied to other local areas, and we would urge anyone interested in pursuing this to request the data using the contact details provided on page four.

We isolated all of the visits we sampled with destinations in the Birmingham City area over the two year survey period. Although the sample size is relatively small (354 visits), it does still allow for an indicative study of the pattern and characteristics of visit-taking.

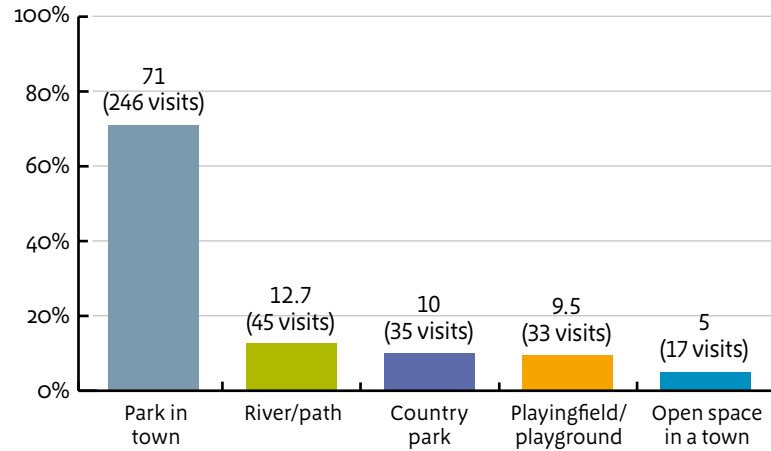
Analysis reveals that the vast majority (86 percent) of these visits were taken by local residents within five miles of the start point, and that half of the visits were taken on foot. The remainder of visits were taken by car (39 percent) or by other means.

**Table 3. Visit characteristics - Birmingham City area: MENE 2009-2011**

Distance	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 1 mile	151	42.7
1 or 2 miles	86	24.3
3 to 5 miles	66	18.6
6 to 10 miles	22	6.2
11 to 60 miles	14	4.0
More than 60 miles	15	4.2
Transport		
On foot/ walking	178	50.3
Car/van	138	39.0
Public bus or coach	15	4.2
Train	9	2.5
Bicycle/ mountain bike	9	2.5
Other	5	1.4

“ Being amongst nature can be good for your health and wellbeing.

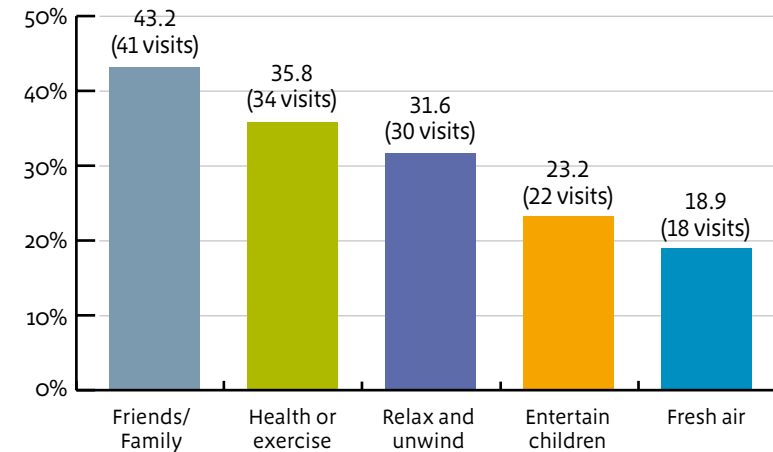
### 10. Specific places visited within Birmingham City: MENE 2009-2011



We analysed the data and charted the top five visit locations. Notice in the chart how popular local urban green space is for people visiting the natural environment within Birmingham City. If it was no longer there, what would replace it, and how would people in urban areas engage with the natural environment?

We were also interested in understanding the reasons behind the visits to Birmingham City. Again, although the overall sample is small, the results give an indication of the importance visit takers place on the areas they are visiting for socialising, entertaining children and providing well-being and health.

### 11. Reasons for visits to Birmingham City: MENE 2009-2011



Walking through golden autumn woodland at Alderley Edge, part of the National Trust in Cheshire.

The following map pinpoints the destinations of people visiting the Birmingham City area.

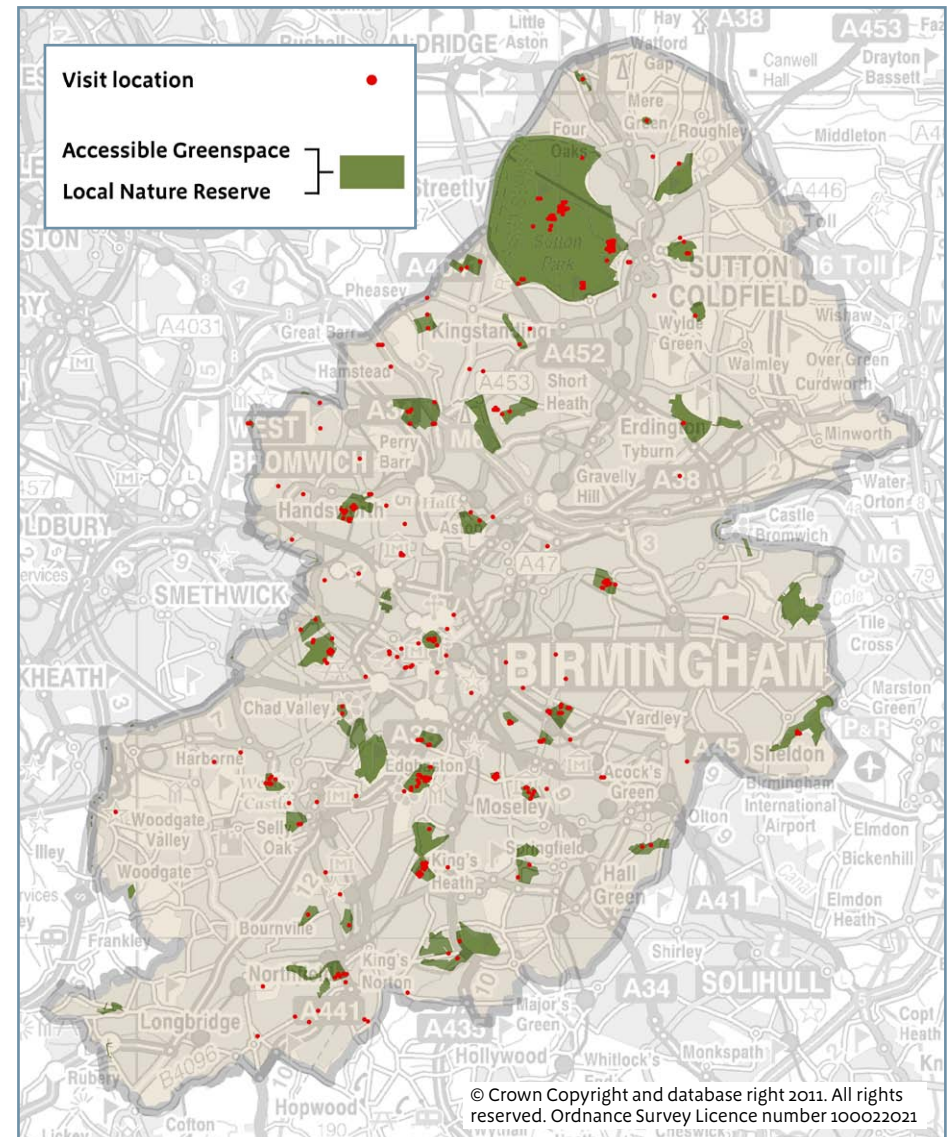
To illustrate the importance of green space in towns and cities, we've overlaid those places: parks; playing fields; Local Nature Reserves; local wildlife sites; cemeteries, and other open spaces we hold information on.

Again, notice how there seems to be a general spatial correlation between the pockets of greenspace and visitor destinations. The reasons for these visits are the very same given above in the last chart.

Finally in this section we again used MENE data in conjunction with a spatial analysis method to produce a heat map of visit-taking by local residents.



One of the many ponies in Sutton Park, Birmingham.





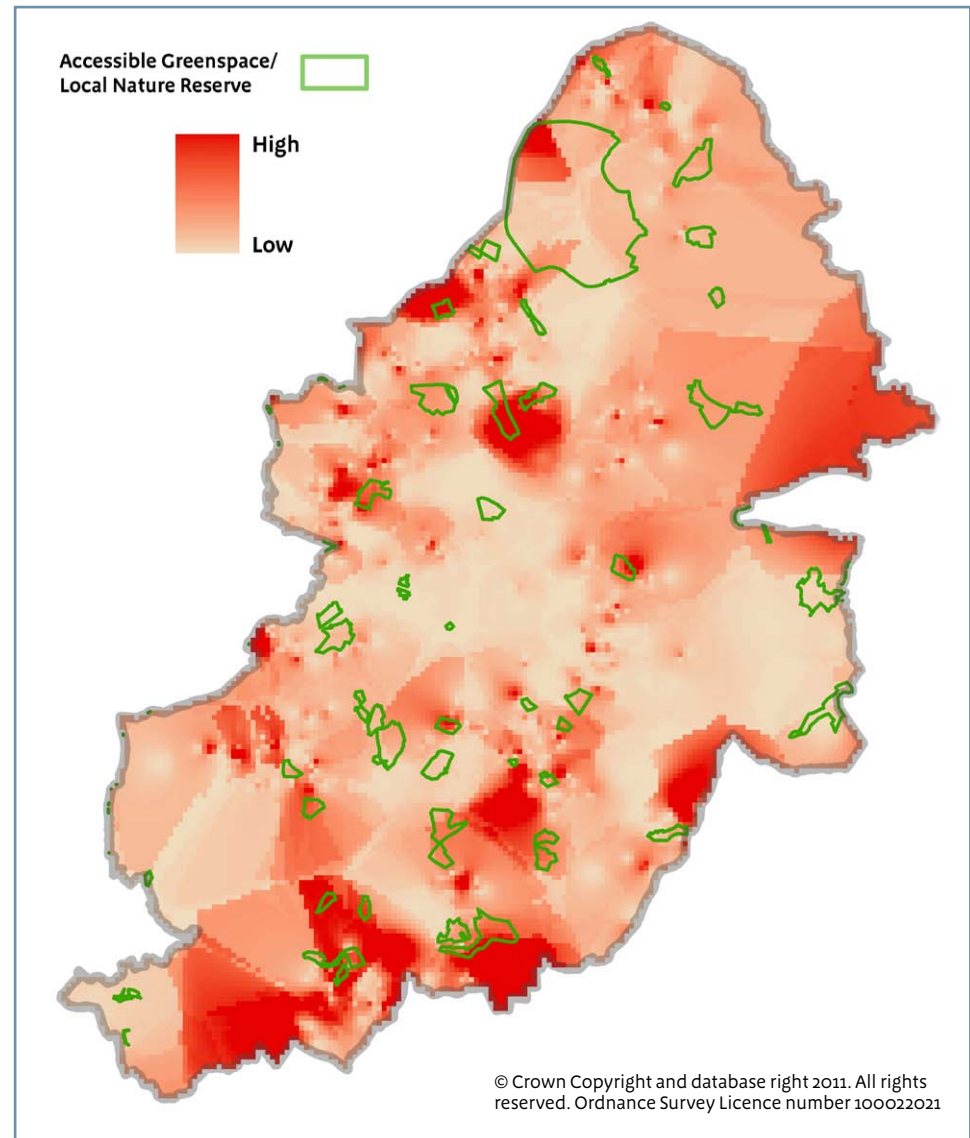
On this map, areas characterised by respondents who take the greatest number of visits show up as bright red patches, whereas areas with respondents who take less (or no) visits show in a lighter colour. This map tells us how many visits each respondent took over the seven days prior to interview at various sample postcode points. Note this is different to the map above which pinpointed a single visit destination.

The map isn't entirely conclusive, but do note that the hotspots tend to be closest to the pockets of green space. Although we can't say for definite that all of the visits a respondent took were to the local area, the results do suggest that the presence of available local greenspace is associated with higher levels of visit-taking. More thorough analysis will be possible at this local level as the dataset increases in size over time.

“ ...the results do suggest that the presence of available local greenspace is associated with higher levels of visit-taking.



Walking in a field by the River Thames near Rushey Lock in Oxfordshire.



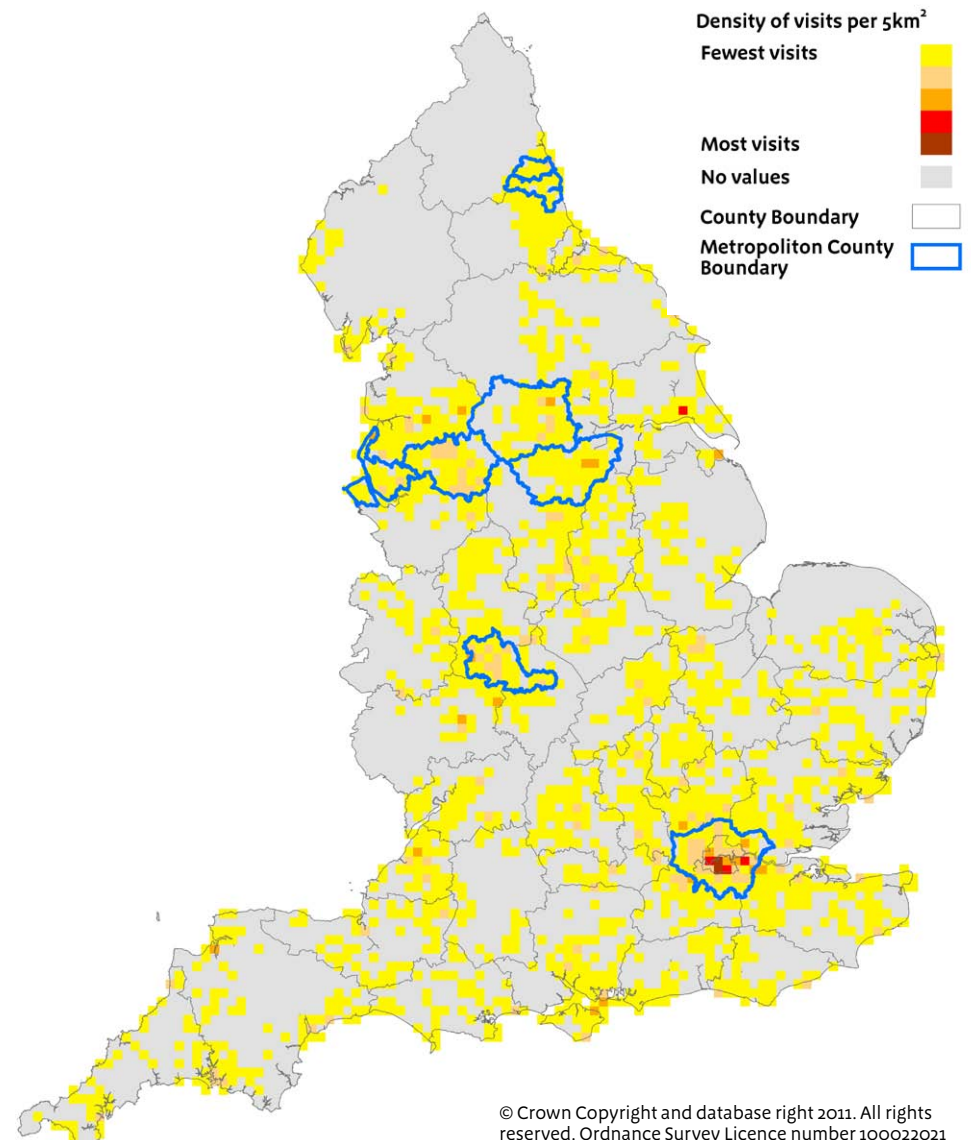
## Close to home, and further afield

We saw earlier that most visits are taken within five miles of home. The next maps, built using geocodes, reinforce this. We broke England up into five kilometre squares and mapped the density of short close to home visits within five miles of the start point.

We can see that where there is a higher density of population in larger towns and cities, there are a higher number of visits – especially within the Metropolitan County boundaries which we've marked on the map.

The second map shows that visits over 60 miles have the greatest density in coastal areas, and in London. We know this about the coast, but it is notable that there are relatively few longer visits to the North East coast, which is further from population centres.

Seaside towns such as Whitby and Scarborough in North Yorkshire stand out. Clearly these are popular destinations, and most people have to travel further from larger population centres to visit them.



## Designated beauty spots – will that make us go?

We have some beautiful landscapes in England, some with special designations for public access and enjoyment, such as National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). But, how much influence does a special designation have over a visitor in their choice of where to go, and how far will people travel to experience it?

Using geocode data to determine whether visits included these types of designated place is much more accurate than the alternative of asking individuals whether they visited designated areas – as people are not always aware of whether they are within a designated area or not. For this next section we decided to look at National Parks, but the methodology could equally be applied to other designated areas too.

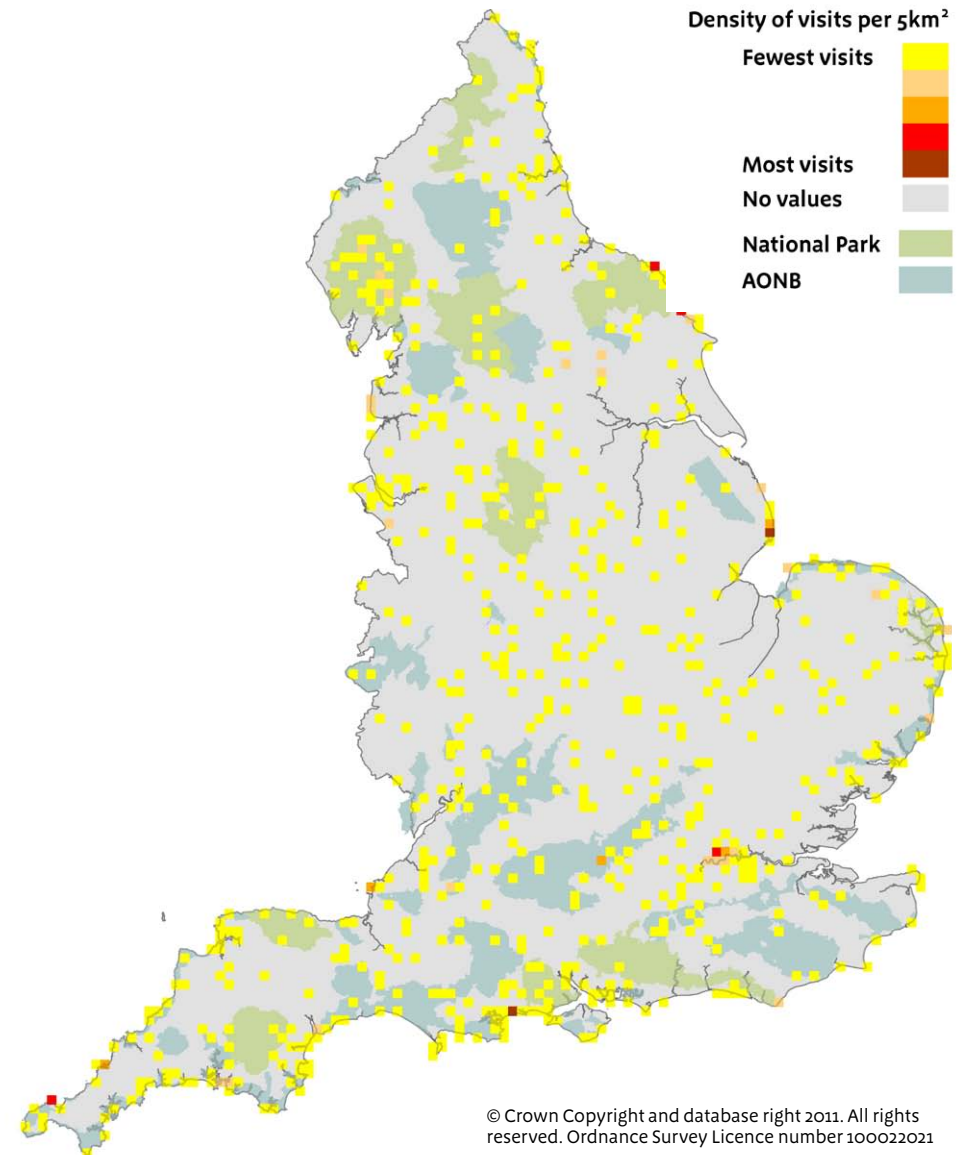
MENE tells us that there were approximately 127 million visits made to National Parks during the period March 2009 to February 2011. In total, almost a third (30.5 percent) of these visits involved a journey of more than ten miles, while 6.5 percent or 8 million visits involved a journey of more than 60 miles.

Walkers in the Dales National Park with Ingleborough in the background.



# 127 Million

Number of visits made to the National Parks during the period March 2009 to February 2011



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**Table 4. Distance travelled during visits to National Parks: MENE 2009-2011**

	Count	Percentage
Less than 1 mile	23 million	18
1 or 2 miles	26 million	20.4
3 to 5 miles	24.5 million	19.3
6 to 10 miles	15 million	11.8
11 to 60 miles	30.5 million	24
More than 60 miles	8 million	6.5

What is perhaps surprising about this finding is that around 70 percent of visitors to National Parks are relatively local – travelling up to ten miles to reach the Park for the purposes of a visit.

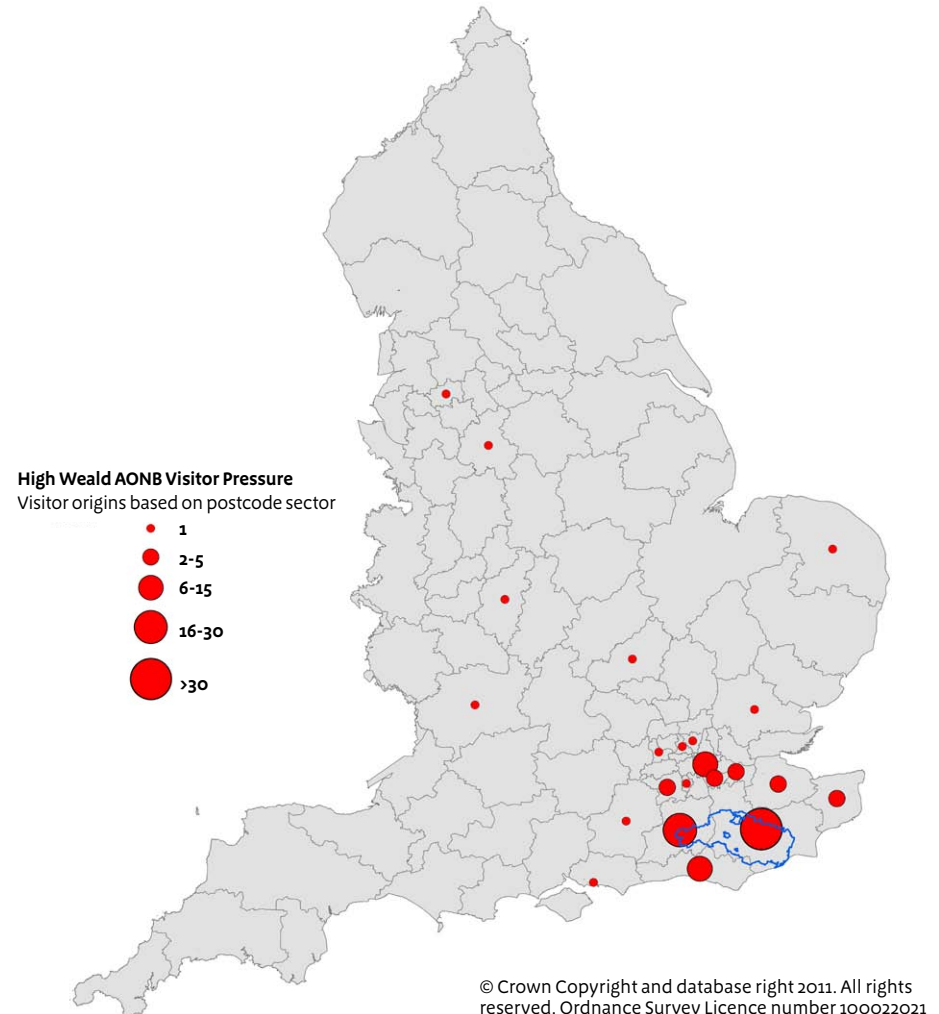
## Visitor locations

The following series of visitor location maps illustrate the 'catchment area' that different areas have in England. These maps were made using geocodes.

**70%** Percentage of visitors to National Parks who are relatively local – travelling up to ten miles to reach the Park for the purposes of a visit.

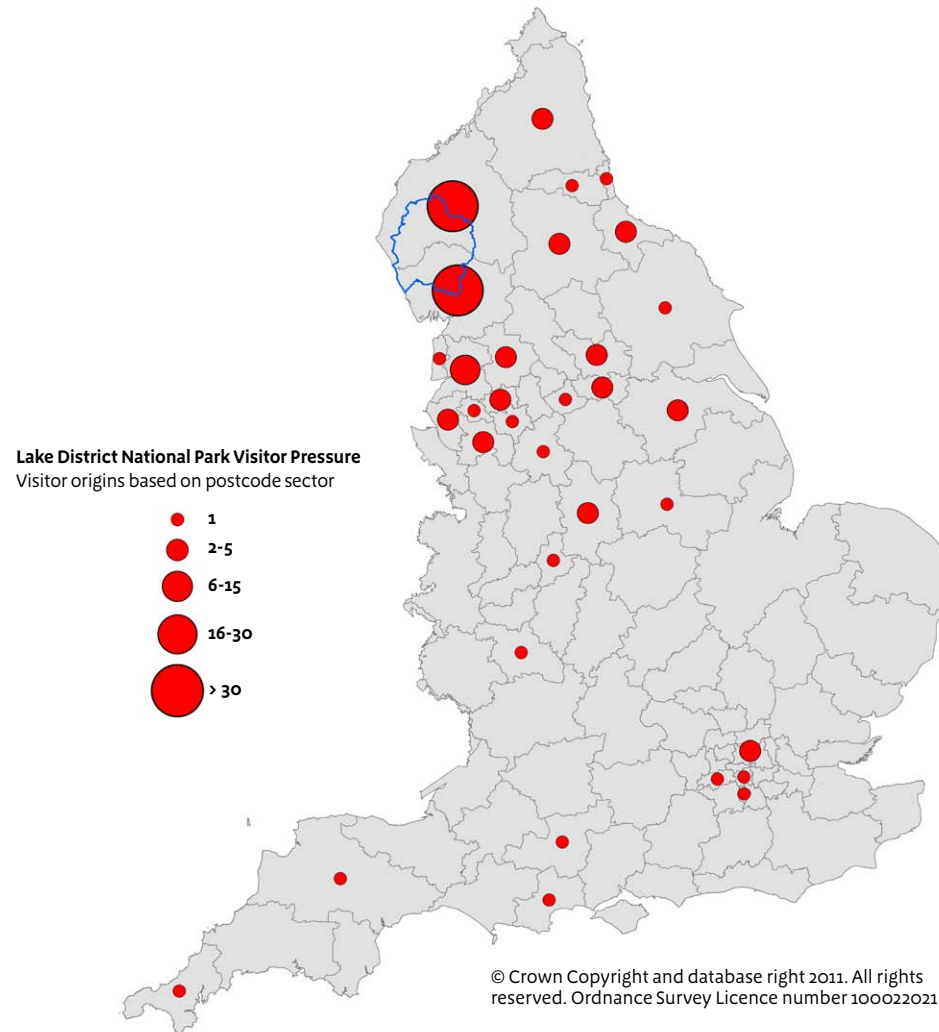
The circles represent the number of visitors to each area based on the postcode sector of the start point of the visit. The larger the circle, the more visitors there are from that area. Again the overall sample sizes are too small for any comprehensive volumetric estimates, so we're mainly concerned here with pattern and dispersion.

In the first map we see visitor pressure on an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Notice how visitor pressure is relatively localised around the site itself. We found this a common trait when looking at other AONBs too.

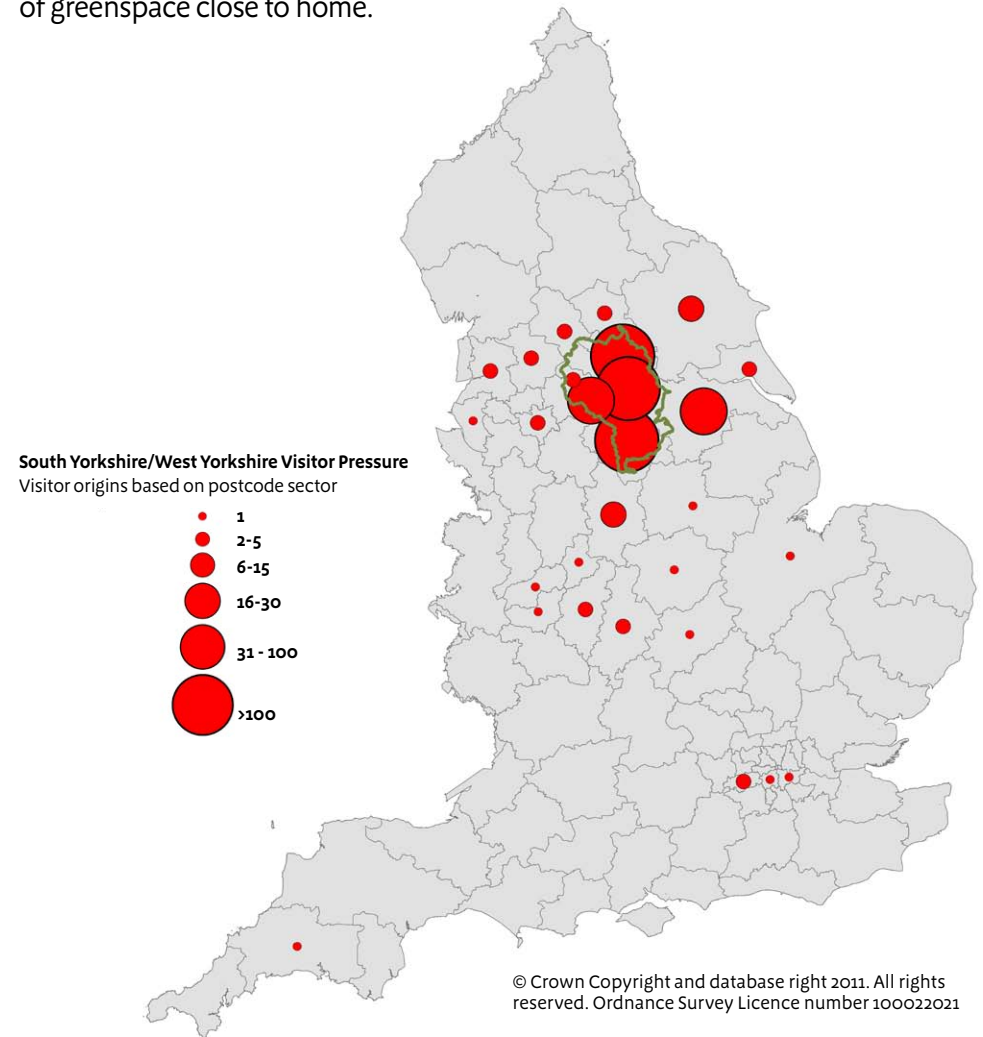




The next map is a complete contrast to the previous one. The Lake District National Park, as you might expect, has a huge draw, and produces a pattern of visitor pressure that is much more dispersed across the country.



Finally we mapped all the areas of greenspace within South and West Yorkshire and calculated the visitor pressure there too. There is a dramatic increase in visitor pressure from very local areas, which again underlines the importance of greenspace close to home.



# Money does grow on trees

## How much are visits to the natural environment worth?

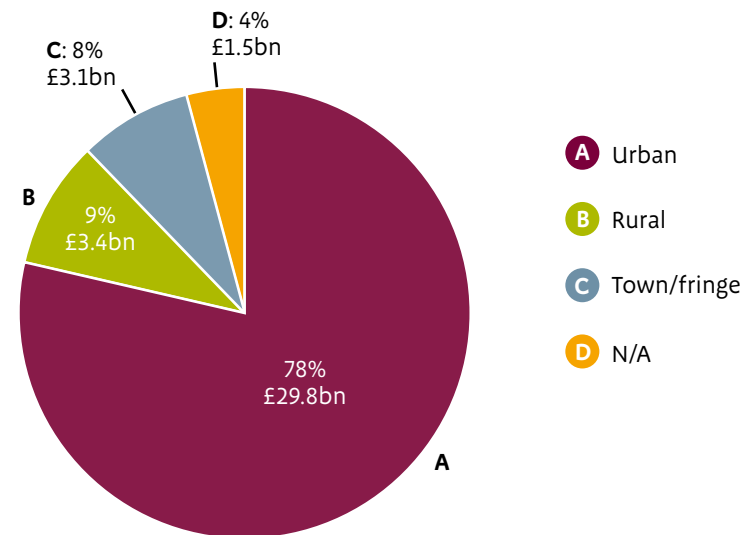
During the period March 2009 to February 2011, MENE estimates that the English adult population spent a total of £37.4 billion on visits, with the largest spends being on food and drink, transport costs such as fuel and parking, admission fees, and gifts or souvenirs. Around a quarter of visits to the natural environment involve expenditure.

Expenditure was most likely to be incurred on visits taken with children, or on visits to destinations further afield like National Parks or the seaside. In fact, although only seven per cent of visits were to seaside towns, this type of destination accounted for around a fifth (20 percent) of all expenditure.

Visitors from urban areas produce the biggest boost for the economy, with the average amount spent being around £7.70 – significantly higher than the average spent by a visitor from a rural or town/fringe area (£4.98 and £4.05 respectively).

Using the average spend estimates, the total value of visits by rural/urban classification for the period March 2009-February 2011 can be determined – as shown in figure 12.

12. Visit expenditure by rural/urban classification: MENE 2009-2011



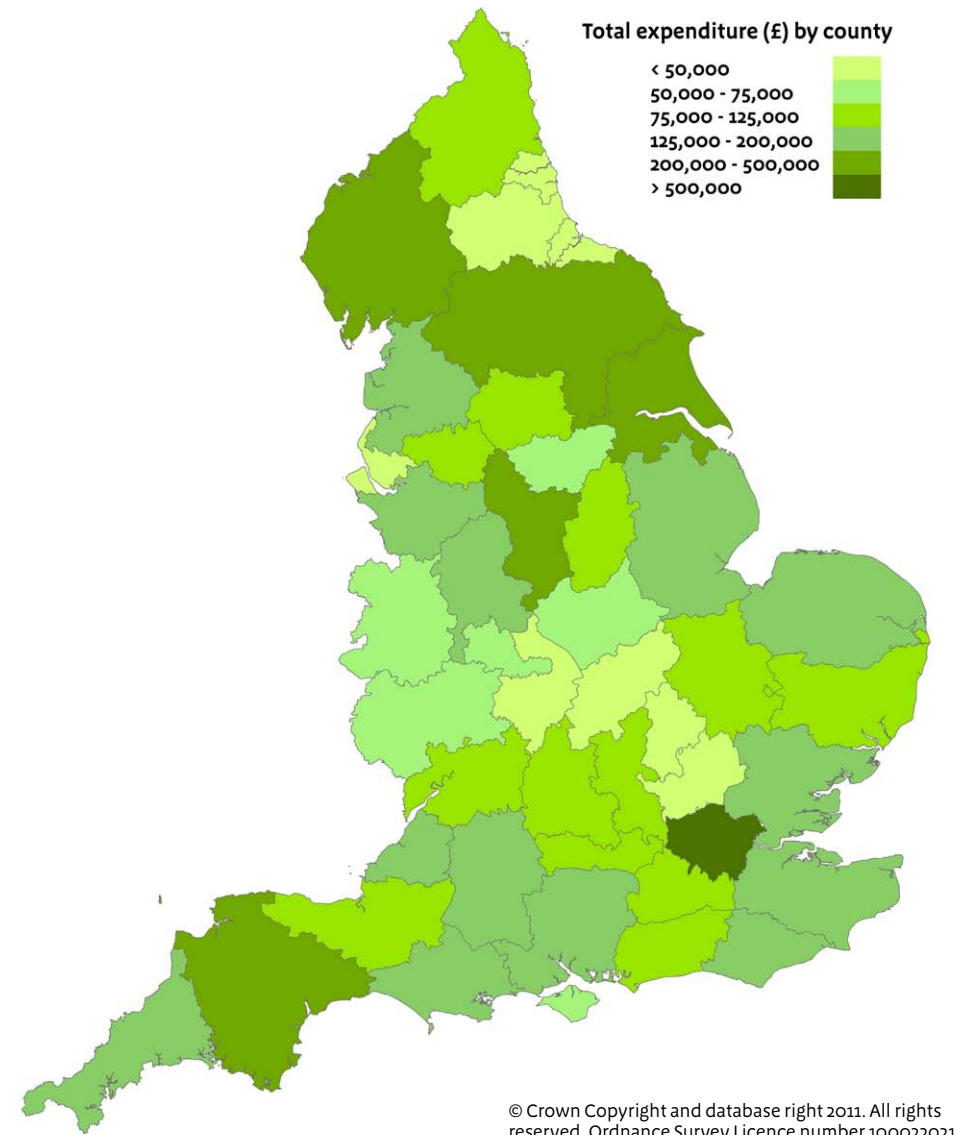
“ During the period March 2009 to February 2011, MENE estimates that the English adult population spent a total of £37.4 billion on visits...

The following map shows the variation in expenditure across the country. For this map the visit destinations were identified within each county, with the associated spend per visit (if any) used to calculate an approximate figure for total spend within each county over the two year period. Again sample sizes vary per county, which is why we've used wide intervals for the scale.

The pattern of spending looks to be logical – for example higher levels in Cumbria, Yorkshire, the Peak district and the South West. London has the highest overall spend – this is related to the number of visit samples taken in this area, and the prevalence of visits incurring expenditure on eating and drinking out, and visiting attractions.



A runner on the towpath at Mile end park canal, London.



# It's not for everyone!

## Those who do and don't visit

It's free to use and enjoy, and it benefits our health, but not everyone visits the natural environment. In fact over the period March 2009 to February 2011, almost one fifth of the population (17 percent) responded that on average they had visited the natural environment only once or twice or less over the previous 12 months.

We can explore the reasons for the results above by looking more closely at the segments who don't visit in order to understand more about their barriers and motivations. Alternatively we can also look at pockets of the country where there are fewer people taking visits, as in the map that follows.

**Left to right:** Walkers in Dovedale, Peak District; Children building sand castles, Kennack Sands, Cornwall; Child looking at heath spotted orchids, Devon.

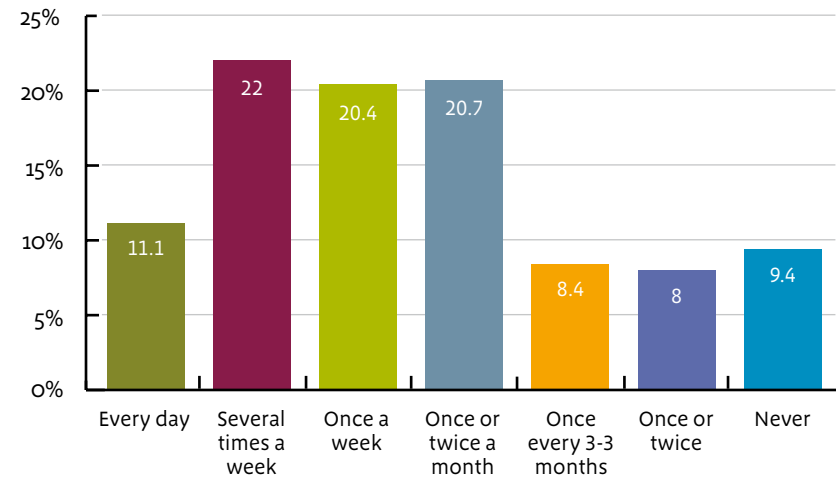


# 17%

Almost one fifth of the population (17 percent) responded that on average they had visited the natural environment only once or twice or less over the previous 12 months.



13. Frequency of visits over the previous 12 months: MENE 2009-2011





The map illustrates how people responded to the question about average visit taken over the previous 12 months. We counted the number of infrequent visitors in each county, and the number of frequent visitors. Green areas are those where the proportion of infrequent visitors was lowest, while counties where the proportion of infrequent visitors was greatest show up in red.

Note that the sample sizes vary per county, and we therefore have more confidence in the results for some areas rather than others.

The patterns represented by the map may be linked to the amount of available accessible green space in each county, as well as socio-economic factors.

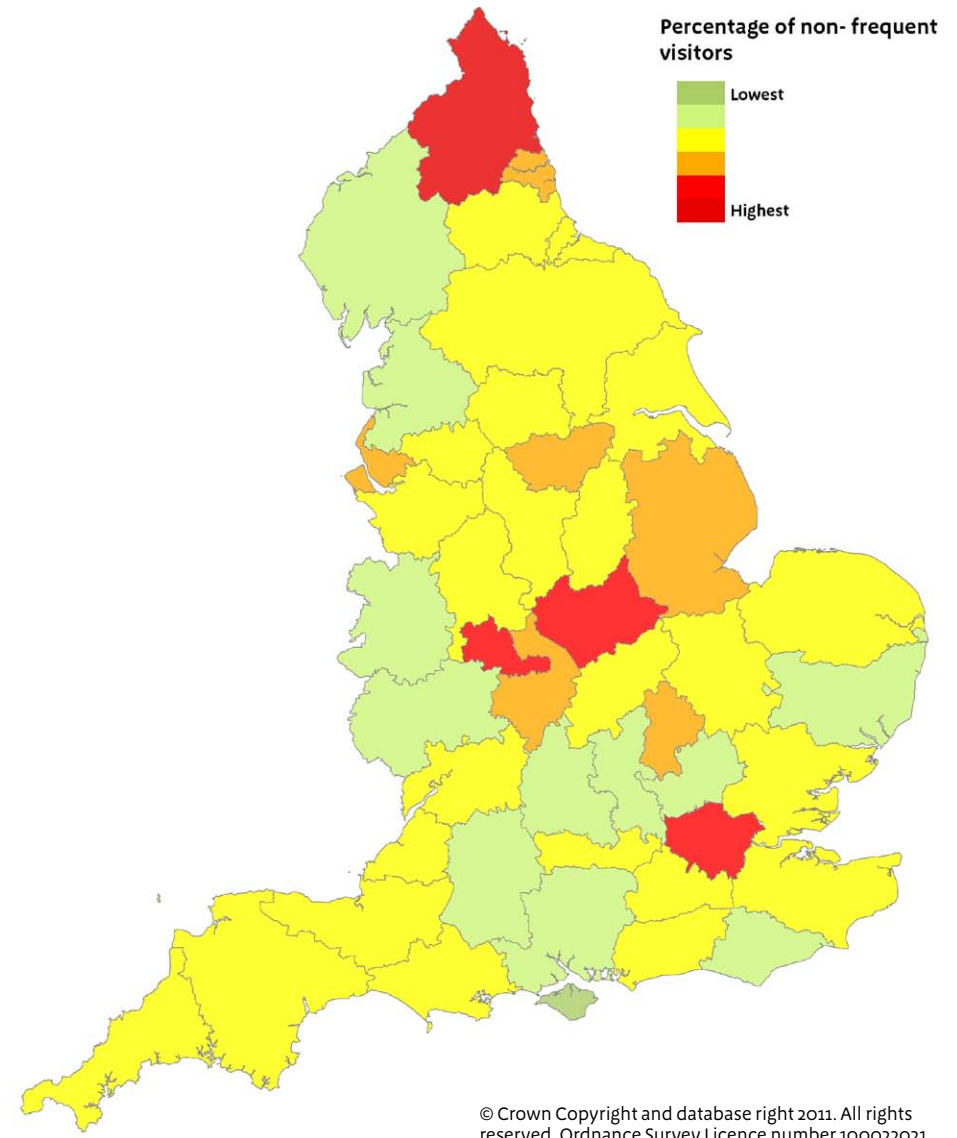


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**Top:** Walkers on Shapwick Heath, Somerset. **Right:** Cyclist on an off-road trail through the Sherwood Pines Forest Park, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire.



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# Conclusion

MENE is a fantastically rich source of information about engagement with the natural environment that can be analysed spatially in a variety of different ways. This report highlights just a handful of methods, but many more are available. Indeed Natural England is looking at how to make the spatial data more easily accessible to a wider audience as the survey moves into its fourth year and beyond, and would welcome wider interest or requests for MENE information from those wishing to conduct their own analyses.

As MENE demonstrates, around 30 percent of the population are visiting the natural environment less than once a month. Having this type of spatial data available will be an increasingly important tool for local decision makers who wish to evaluate the impacts of actions taken to reconnect people with nature.



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**Top:**View across the Wye Valley and Forest of Dean, Symonds Yat, Herefordshire.  
**Left:** Walking in Mad Bess Wood Site of Special Scientific Interest, Greater London.





**Front cover: View of the city  
from Primrose Hill, London.**

© Britainonview / Pawel Libera

**Back cover: The shingle  
beach at Deal, Kent.**

© Britainonview / Daniel Bosworth



We are here to secure a healthy natural environment for people to enjoy, where wildlife is protected and England's traditional landscapes are safeguarded for future generations.

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