

Visits to the Natural Environment

Monthly update – March 2011



2nd May 2011

During March 2011, the adult population in England (aged 16 and over) took an estimated 219 million visits to the natural environment. This represents a four percent decrease on the 229 million visits recorded in March 2010. On average, 40 percent of the adult population took a visit to the natural environment in the previous seven days during March 2011. A total of 2.47 billion visits were taken in the 12 months from April 2010 to March 2011.

Figure 1 illustrates the monthly volume of visits taken to the natural environment in the 12 month period from April 2010 to March 2011.

- Visits were lowest in November and December 2010 (178 and 168 million respectively) and February 2011 (180 million).
- Visits were highest in April and May 2010 (242 million and 232 million respectively).
- The volume of visits in March 2011 is higher than in February. This is in keeping with previous years where visits have increased as the year progresses into spring; weather improves; and hours of daylight increase.

Figure 1 - Volume of visits to the natural environment by month and type of place visited, Apr 2010 to Mar 2011 (millions of visits). Base: Minimum of 3,400 respondents per month

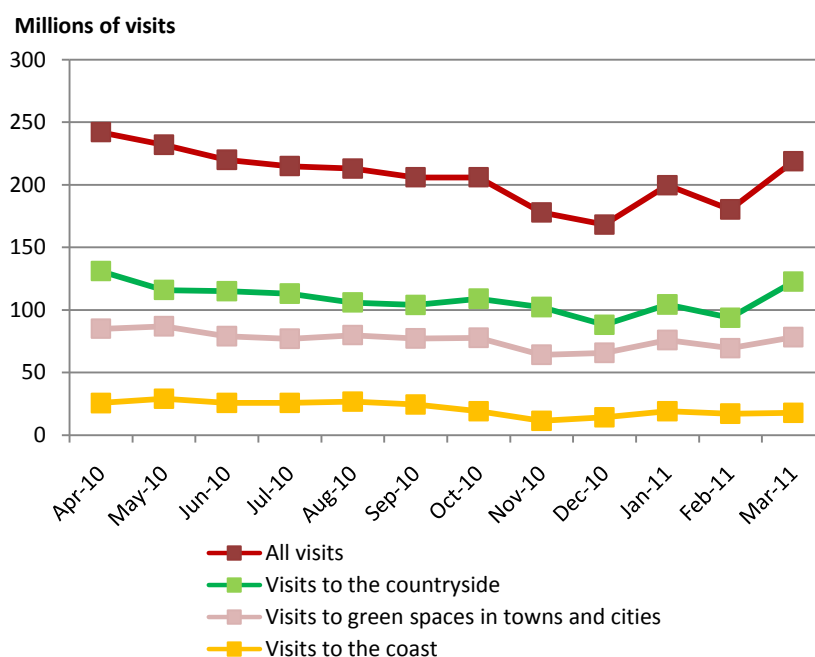


Table 1 illustrates the estimated volume of visits by type of place visited during March 2011, and over the 12 months from April 2010 to March 2011.

- In March 2011, over half of visits were taken to places in the countryside (56 percent), a higher proportion than that recorded across all visits taken in the 12 months from April 2010 to March 2011.
- 36 percent of visits were taken to open spaces in towns and cities and eight percent were taken to the coast.

Table 1 - Volume of visits to the natural environment by place visited (millions of visits).

	Mar 2011	Apr 2010 – Mar 2011
By general type of place		
Countryside	122.6	1305.2
Town and city	78.3	916.8
Coast	17.9	257.0
By specific type of place		
Park in a town or city	46.6	556.2
Woodland/forest	34.4	34.4
Path, cycleway, bridleway	28.9	342.4
Another open space in the countryside	28.0	305.9
River, lake, canal	24.5	236.3
Farmland	19.6	218.9
Country park	17.3	177.9
Playing field or other recreation area	15.4	194.5
Village	15.0	151.8
Another open space in town or city	14.7	187.9
Children's playground	8.3	79.2
Other coastline	6.8	88.9
Mountain, hill, moorland	5.8	61.1
Beach	5.6	153.5
Allotment/community garden	2.5	16.6

Respondent base: Mar 2011 (N=4,411), Apr 2010 to Mar 2011(N=46,903)

Table 2 shows the volume of visits by type of activity undertaken.

- During March 2011, 51 percent of visits involved walking with a dog, while a quarter of visits (27 percent) involved walking without a dog.
- Other significant activities included playing with children, eating and drinking out and running.
- By comparison, similar proportions of the visits taken in the April 2010 to March 2011 period involved dog walking (51 percent) and playing with children (nine percent) and slightly more eating out (six percent).

Figure 2 shows how the proportion of adults taking visits in the last 7 days has varied since March 2009.

- During March 2011, an average of 40 percent of the adult population reported taking one or more visits to the natural environment in the previous 7 days.
- This proportion represents a return to that last recorded during October 2010, and is higher than that recorded in January 2011 (33 percent) and February 2011 (36 percent).

As table 3 shows, the average duration of visits in March 2011 was 1 hour and 44 minutes and the average distance travelled on visits was 5.0 miles. Both of these values are less than the averages for April 2010 to March 2011, reflecting the closer to home profile of visits taken prior to the Easter holiday period and the summer months.

22 percent of visits in March 2011 involved any expenditure with an average spend per visit of £23.

Table 2 - Volume of visits to the natural environment by activity (millions of visits).

	Mar 2011	Apr 2010 – Mar 2011
Activity		
Walking, with a dog	112.4	1261.4
Walking, not with a dog	59.7	654.4
Playing with children	18.8	213.3
Eating or drinking out	10.6	137.9
Wildlife watching	6.6	71.0
Running	6.4	74.5
Informal games and sport	5.1	65.8
Visiting an attraction	4.9	86.1
Road cycling	4.0	49.2
Appreciating scenery from your car	3.7	47.3
Horse riding	3.4	27.1
Visits to the beach, sunbathing, paddling in the sea	2.5	49.9
Picnicking	2.2	44.3
Off road cycling/mountain biking	2.0	25.6
Fishing	1.2	15.0
Fieldsports	1.1	10.5
Watersports	1.0	15.6
Swimming outdoors	0.2	13.0

Respondent base: Mar 2011 (N=4,411), Apr 2010 to Mar 2011 (N=46,903)

Figure 2 - Percentage of adult population taking visits to in the previous 7 days by month, Apr 2010 to Mar 2011. Base: Minimum of 3,200 respondents per month

Percentage of adult population

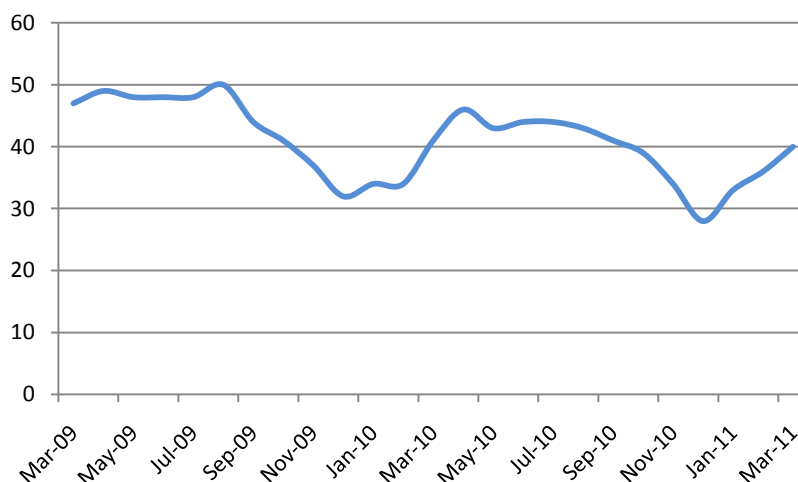


Table 3 - Visit duration, distance travelled and expenditure during visits

	Mar 2011	Apr 2010 - Mar 2011
Average duration of visits	1 hour 44 minutes	1 hour 57 minutes
Average distance travelled to reach visit destination	5.0 miles	6.4 miles
Percentage of visits involving any expenditure	22%	25%
Average expenditure per visit (excluding visits with no spend)	£23	£27

Respondent base for distance and duration: Feb 2011 (N=4,411), Mar 2010 to Feb 2011 (N=46,903). Respondent base for expenditure: Feb 2011 (N=901), Feb 2010 to Jan 2011 (N=10,613)

The Monitor of Engagement with the Natural environment (MENE) survey is undertaken weekly across England. It focuses on people's use and enjoyment of the natural environment, defined as the green open spaces in and around towns and cities as well as the wider countryside and coast. It excludes time spent in private gardens. To find out more about the survey visit: <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/research/mene.aspx>