

Forestry Statistics 2020

Sources: Social

Release date:

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11.7 Sources: Social

Introduction

There are two main approaches to visitor monitoring:

- General population surveys of individuals at their home. This approach is employed for Scotland's People and Nature Survey, the National Survey for Wales, the Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (England) and the Public Opinion of Forestry surveys. (Tables 6.1 to 6.5).
- Surveying and counting of visitors to a specific area or woodland. On-site surveying has been employed for the All Forests surveys. In addition, the Northern Ireland Forest Service keep records of visitors who pay an admission charge to their sites. (Table 6.6).

There are advantages and disadvantages to each approach, related to factors such as representativeness, feasibility and cost; each approach provides different types of information.

In general, on-site studies provide information on visitor interaction with local or specific woodland areas and include all categories of visitors to a site, regardless of their country of residence and interests.

In contrast, general population studies are limited to residents of a certain country or area, are often carried out by market research companies at a national level, and include people who do not visit woodlands.

Data Sources and Methodology

Household surveys

The information shown in Table 6.1 has been obtained from the following general population household surveys.

- Scottish Recreation Survey (to 2012)
- Welsh Outdoor Recreation Survey (2011, 2014)
- Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (England 2009/10 onwards)
- Scotland's People and Nature Survey (2013 and 2017/18)

The Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment has also been used to provide information on visitor characteristics in table 6.2. For further information on this survey, see www.gov.uk/government/collections/monitor-of-engagement-with-the-natural-environment-survey-purpose-and-results.

Scotland's People and Nature Survey has replaced the Scottish Recreation Survey. Further information on both surveys are available at www.nature.scot/.

The National Survey for Wales has replaced the Welsh Outdoor Recreation Survey and provides statistics on visitor characteristics (Table 6.3). Further information on the National Survey is available at: <https://gov.wales/national-survey-wales>.

Public Opinion of Forestry Surveys have been run, usually every 2 years, by Forest Research on behalf of the Forestry Commission, Scottish Forestry, Welsh Government/ Natural Resources Wales and the Northern Ireland Forest Service. The surveys cover public attitudes to forestry and forestry-related issues, including visits to woodland (Tables 6.4 to 6.5 and Figure 6.1). Further information is available on the previous page.

On-site surveys

All Forests Surveys were run at a sample of Forestry and Land Scotland sites in Scotland from 2004 to 2007 and in 2012-13, to provide estimates of the numbers of visits to the National Forest Estate in Scotland. An All Forests Survey was also run in Wales in 2004. More recent estimates of the number of visitors to the National Forest Estate in Scotland has been produced by Forestry and Land Scotland, updating the All Forests Survey estimates using automatic counters and, for sites without counters, using the results from the 2012-13 All Forests Survey and advice from local managers.

Estimates for numbers of visits to the Public Forest Estate in England are provided in the Forestry England Natural Capital Accounts, available at www.forestryengland.uk/article/natural-capital-accounts.

Statistics on the day visitors to Forest Service sites in Northern Ireland where an admission charge is made is provided by the Forest Service. Further information on the Forest Service is available at <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/topics/forestry>.

Quality

It is notable from Table 6.1 that different surveys have provided some quite different estimates of the aggregate number of visits to woodlands. It is likely that differences in survey design and methodology have contributed to a considerable proportion of the differences in results between these surveys. As the scope of the surveys has evolved over time, the figures in Table 6.1 should not be interpreted as time trends but instead as separate results from each survey.

In common with all sample based surveys, the results from each survey are subject to the effects of chance, depending on the particular survey method used and the sample achieved, thus confidence limits apply to all results from these surveys.

Technical reports, providing further information on household surveys run or commissioned by other organisations, are available from relevant websites (see above).

Revisions

Most of the statistics in the Social chapter have been previously released in other publications, usually by other organisations. The latest year figures for day visitors to Forest Service sites in Northern Ireland are published for the first time in this release. Figures for earlier years have not been revised from those published in Forestry Statistics 2019.

Our revisions policy sets out how revisions and errors are dealt with and can be found at www.forestresearch.gov.uk/documents/4355/FCrevisions.pdf.

Further information

Further information on social statistics and access to individual survey reports is available from www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/statistics/statistics-by-topic/recreation-statistics/.

Release schedule

For information on the release schedules of statistics produced by others, see relevant websites (above).

The next Public Opinion of Forestry survey is expected to run in early 2021, with results available in summer 2021.

"Forestry Statistics 2021" and "Forestry Facts & Figures 2021" will be released on 30 September 2021.