

# Public Opinion of Forestry 2019

## Northern Ireland

Release date:

28 March 2019

Coverage:

Northern Ireland

Geographical breakdown:

None

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## Introduction

The Forestry Commission has conducted surveys of public attitudes to forestry and forestry-related issues since 1995.

Information has been collected for Northern Ireland, on behalf of the Forest Service, through UK-wide surveys since 2003 and in separate Northern Ireland surveys (around 1,000 adults) carried out in 2005, 2007, 2010, 2014 and 2019.

This publication presents results from the Northern Ireland Public Opinion of Forestry Survey 2019 on:

- Forestry in the media;
- Benefits of forestry;
- Climate change;
- Changes to woodland;
- Consultation on Forest Service forests; and
- Woodland recreation.

A copy of the questionnaire used in this survey, giving complete wording of questions and response options, is provided in the Annex at the end of this report.

Reports providing results from previous surveys are available on the Forest Research website at <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/statistics/statistics-by-topic/public-opinion-of-forestry/>. Reports from surveys run across the UK as a whole, in Scotland and in Wales, are also available from this web page.

Comparisons with earlier years (from Northern Ireland surveys run in 2005, 2007, 2010 and 2014) are included where possible. Results for Northern Ireland from UK-wide surveys are not included, given the small sample sizes involved

Results from the 2019 survey are published for the first time in this release. Figures for earlier years have not been revised from those previously released. For further details, see the Revisions section of the Annex.

As the data are obtained from a sample survey, there is a range of uncertainty (confidence interval) associated with any results produced. This means that small differences between results could reflect differences in the samples that have been selected, rather than genuine differences within the population. When comparing across surveys for questions asked to all respondents, for example, a difference of more than  $\pm 6.6\%$  suggests there is a significant

difference between results from the 2019 and the 2014 surveys. Any differences highlighted in the text are statistically significant at the 95 per cent confidence level unless otherwise stated. For further details, see the Data Sources and Methodology and the Quality sections of the Annex.

### Key findings

The main findings are:

- 61% of adults in Northern Ireland have seen or read about Northern Ireland's forests and woodlands in the media in the last 12 months.
- 97% of respondents believed that there was at least one benefit of forestry worth supporting with public money.
- 82% agree or strongly agree that 'trees are good because they remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store it in wood'.
- 93% agree or strongly agree that 'more information should be provided about the ways in which forests and woodlands can lessen our impact on the environment'.
- 82% of respondents would like to see more woodland in their part of Northern Ireland.
- 71% of respondents thought that preventing the spread of disease was an acceptable reason for cutting down trees.
- 23% of respondents were aware that the Forest Service consults on the management of Forest Service forests and 49% would, in principle, like to be consulted in future.
- 80% of respondents who indicated they would like to be consulted on the management of their local forest would like to be asked about protecting the environment.
- 78% of respondents have visited forests or woodlands in the last few years.
- 82% of respondents, who had visited woodlands, considered the outdoors to be good for relaxing and unwinding and 81% considered it good for spending time with family and friends.

### Forestry in the media

Respondents were asked whether they had seen or read about Northern Ireland's forests and woodlands in the media (television, radio, internet, social media, etc) in the last 12 months. Most respondents (61%) recalled seeing or reading about at least one topic in 2019 (Table 1).

The proportion of respondents who recalled seeing or reading about 'walking, running, cycling, mountain biking, horse riding' represents a significant increase over the 2014 figure (from 27% to 34%). A significant increase was also found in 'forests and woodlands as places to visit' (from 21% in 2014 to 31% in 2019). There was a significant decrease in 'tree pests and diseases' (from 27% in 2014 to 19% in 2019), although the 2019 figure remains above the level in earlier years.

**Table 1 Respondents who had seen or read about Northern Ireland’s forests and woodlands in the last 12 months<sup>1,2</sup>**

percent of respondents

<b>Topic<sup>4,5</sup></b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2019</b>
Walking, running, cycling, mountain biking, horse riding	..	..	..	27	34
Forests and woodlands as places to visit	12	13	21	21	31
Tree planting	22	28	33	24	26
Birds and other animals in forests and woodlands	13	19	29	21	25
The role of forests and woodlands in helping to reduce the impacts of climate change <sup>3</sup>	..	17	22	15	21
Forests and woodlands for the use of local people and communities	..	..	13	12	21
Tree pests and diseases	2	6	7	27	19
Public right of pedestrian access to forests <sup>3</sup>	7	10	15	14	19
Wood for fuel/ firewood <sup>3</sup>	3	8	13	10	18
Protection of ancient woodland	..	..	..	14	17
Removal of woodland or trees due to development or other land uses	..	..	..	..	17
Flowers and other plants in forests and woodlands	7	11	16	12	14
Labelling to show that wood products are produced from sustainable sources <sup>3</sup>	1	3	11	6	12
New native woodland	5	9	10	6	9
At least one topic	38	51	62	61	61

Source: Northern Ireland Public Opinion of Forestry Surveys.

Note:

1. Figures are based on all respondents: Weighted totals - 2005 (1,004), 2007 (1,021), 2010 (1,011), 2014 (994), 2019 (1,000).
2. .. denotes data not available (response option not included in that year’s survey).
3. Changes to the wording of these options may have resulted in inconsistencies over time.

4. Respondents could select more than one topic.
5. Excludes other responses (1% of respondents in 2019) and options included in earlier years only.

### Benefits of forestry

Respondents were asked to select, from a list of possible public benefits, good reasons to support forestry in Northern Ireland with public money.

Table 2 shows that, in 2019, 97% of respondents believed there was at least one benefit of forestry worth supporting with public money.

As in previous years, the most popular reason to support forestry in Northern Ireland with public money was 'to provide places for wildlife to live' with 70% of respondents in 2019 selecting this as a benefit. 'To provide places for recreation' (58%), 'to provide places for families to play' (56%) and 'to provide places for relaxation and stress relief' (56%) were also seen as important reasons to support forestry with public money.

**Table 2 Reasons to support forestry with public money<sup>1,2</sup>**

percent of respondents

<b>Reason<sup>4,5</sup></b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2019</b>
To provide places for wildlife to live	55	60	72	62	70
To provide places for recreation (such as walking, running, cycling and horse riding)	..	..	61	44	58
To provide places for families to play	..	..	48	55	56
To provide places for relaxation and stress relief <sup>3</sup>	39	37	51	40	56
To combat climate change <sup>3</sup>	43	46	47	37	53
To improve the countryside landscape	47	43	56	39	52
To help rural tourism	39	33	46	41	51
To provide better access to forests and woodlands <sup>3</sup>	24	24	38	30	45
To support the economy in rural areas	30	29	44	37	44
To provide renewable energy <sup>3</sup>	21	24	40	36	42
To provide places for learning	..	..	45	33	41
To provide timber	17	19	32	30	34
To make us more self-sufficient in timber and wood products <sup>3</sup>	18	19	30	27	30
To provide farm diversification as an alternative land use	..	..	..	..	29
<b>At least one reason</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>97</b>

Source: Northern Ireland Public Opinion of Forestry Surveys.

Note:

1. Figures are based on all respondents: Weighted totals - 2005 (1,004), 2007 (1,021), 2010 (1,011), 2014 (994), 2019 (1,000).
2. .. denotes data not available (response option not included in that year's survey).
3. Changes to the wording of these options may have resulted in inconsistencies over time.
4. Respondents could select more than one reason.
5. Excludes other responses (not included in 2019 survey response options).



### Climate change

Since 2007, respondents have been asked to indicate their level of agreement with two sets of statements related to woodlands and climate change.

### Woodlands' impact on climate change

Respondents were asked about their level of agreement with a set of statements regarding the ways in which forests and woodlands in Northern Ireland can impact on climate change.

Table 3 shows that the highest level of agreement in 2019, where respondents selected 'strongly agree' or 'agree', was with the following statement:

- 'Trees are good because they remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store it in wood' (82% agreed).

The lowest levels of agreement in 2019 were with the following statements:

- 'Using wood for fuel makes climate change worse because it releases carbon dioxide' (45% agreed);
- 'Using wood for building is better for climate change than using materials such as concrete and steel' (48% agreed); and
- 'Cutting down forests and woodlands makes climate change worse, even if they are replanted' (48% agreed).

**Table 3 Ways in which forests and woodlands can impact on climate change<sup>1</sup>**

percent of respondents who agree or strongly agree

	<b>2007</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2019</b>
Trees are good because they remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store it in wood	78	86	82	82
Northern Ireland could offset all its greenhouse gas emissions by planting more trees	49	55	62	62
Using wood for fuel is better for climate change than using fuels such as coal and gas	51	55	55	61
Cutting down forests and woodlands makes climate change worse, even if they are replanted	59	49	53	48
Using wood for building is better for climate change than using materials such as concrete and steel	39	45	43	48
Using wood for fuel makes climate change worse because it releases carbon dioxide	29	25	40	45

Source: Northern Ireland Public Opinion of Forestry Surveys.

Note:

1. Figures are based on all respondents: Weighted totals - 2007 (1,021), 2010 (1,011), 2014 (994), 2019 (1,000).

## Forest management in response to climate change

Respondents were presented with a series of statements regarding the way in which forests and woodlands in Northern Ireland should be managed in response to the threat of climate change.

Table 4 shows that the majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that:

- 'More information should be provided about the ways in which wood can be used to lessen our impact on the environment' (93% in 2019);
- 'A lot more trees should be planted' (90%); and that
- 'Different types of trees should be planted that will be more suited to future climates' (86%).

**Table 4 Management of Northern Ireland's forests in response to the threat of climate change<sup>1</sup>**

percent of respondents who agree or strongly agree

	<b>2007</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2019</b>
More information should be provided about the ways in which forests and woodlands can lessen our impact on the environment	81	86	86	93
A lot more trees should be planted	85	87	91	90
Different types of trees should be planted that will be more suited to future climates	75	79	84	86

Source: Northern Ireland Public Opinion of Forestry Surveys.

Note:

1. Figures are based on all respondents: Weighted totals - 2007 (1,021), 2010 (1,011), 2014 (994), 2019 (1,000).

## Changes to woodland

Respondents were asked a series of questions regarding changes to woodland area; with respondents indicating if they desired more or less woodland, the preferred location of new woodland and the acceptable reasons for cutting down trees.

### Desire for change in woodland area

Respondents were asked whether or not they would like to see more woodland in their part of Northern Ireland. Most respondents in 2019 (82%) said they would like to see more woodland in their part of Northern Ireland, a further 14% reported that they would like to see 'neither more nor less' and 1% said they would like to see less (Table 5).

**Table 5 Desire for change in woodland area<sup>1,2</sup>**

	percent of respondents				
	<b>2005</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2019</b>
More	75	78	77	79	82
A lot more	..	56	51	43	47
A little more	..	23	26	36	36
Neither more nor less	15	10	18	16	14
Less	1	1	3	3	1
A little less	..	1	2	2	0
A lot less	..	0	1	1	0
Don't know	9	10	3	2	3
All respondents	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Northern Ireland Public Opinion of Forestry Surveys.

Note:

1. Figures are based on all respondents: Weighted totals - 2005 (1,004), 2007 (1,021), 2010 (1,011), 2014 (994), 2019 (1,000).
2. .. denotes data not available (response option not included in that year's survey).

## Location of new woodland

Respondents who indicated that they would like to see more woodland in their part of Northern Ireland were then asked where they thought any new woodlands should be created.

In 2019, 60% of respondents who would like to see more woodland in their part of Northern Ireland thought that new woodlands should be created 'next to rivers and lakes' and 60% thought they should be created 'next to existing forests and woodlands'. 'In mountain areas' and 'close to towns and villages' were each reported by over half (54%) of respondents.

**Table 6 Location of new woodland<sup>1,2,3</sup>**

	percent of respondents		
	2010	2014	2019
Next to rivers and lakes	..	..	60
Next to existing forests and woodland	..	..	60
Close to towns and villages	71	62	54
In mountain areas	18	42	54
On less intensively farmed land e.g. pasture	18	25	32
On intensively farmed land	6	12	12
Other answers	3	3	2
Don't know	3	..	3

Source: Northern Ireland Public Opinion of Forestry Surveys.

Note:

1. Figures are based on all respondents who would like more woodland: Weighted totals - 2010 (775), 2014 (787), 2019 (823)
2. Respondents could select more than one location.
3. .. denotes data not available (response option not included in that year's survey).

## Acceptable reasons for cutting down trees

A question was introduced in 2014 to seek respondents' views on acceptable reasons for cutting down trees and was asked again in the 2019 survey.

Table 7 shows that respondents in 2019 thought that preventing the spread of disease was the most acceptable reason for cutting down trees (71%). 42% thought that providing timber, with the area being replanted afterwards and 33% thought that restoring priority habitats were acceptable reasons for cutting down trees. Each of the other options were considered acceptable by fewer than one fifth of respondents. Few respondents (9%) thought that there were no acceptable reasons for cutting down trees.

**Table 7 Acceptable reasons for cutting down trees<sup>1,2,3</sup>**

percent of respondents

	<b>2014</b>	<b>2019</b>
To prevent the spread of tree disease	73	71
To provide timber, with area replanted after	46	42
To restore priority habitats	..	33
For open habitat restoration	16	..
To use the land for agriculture	16	19
To create space to build wind farms	10	17
To create space for development	14	15
For larger scale recreation projects	8	13
For tourism initiatives	7	11
Other answers	2	1
None of these	7	9

Source: Northern Ireland Public Opinion of Forestry Surveys.

Note:

1. Figures are based on all respondents: Weighted totals - 2014 (994), 2019 (1,000)
2. Respondents could select more than one reason.
3. .. denotes data not available (response option not included in that year's survey).

## Consultation on Forest Service forests

The survey asked respondents a number of questions about the management of Forest Service Forests.

Around one quarter of respondents (23%) indicated they were aware that the Forest Service consults about forest management and around one half (49%) of respondents indicated they would, in principle, like to be consulted in the future (Table 8).

**Table 8 Knowledge and potential engagement with Forest Service management<sup>1</sup>**

	percent of respondents			
	<b>2007</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2019</b>
Aware that Forest Service consults	10	13	15	23
(In principle) would like to be consulted <sup>2</sup>	26	33	24	49

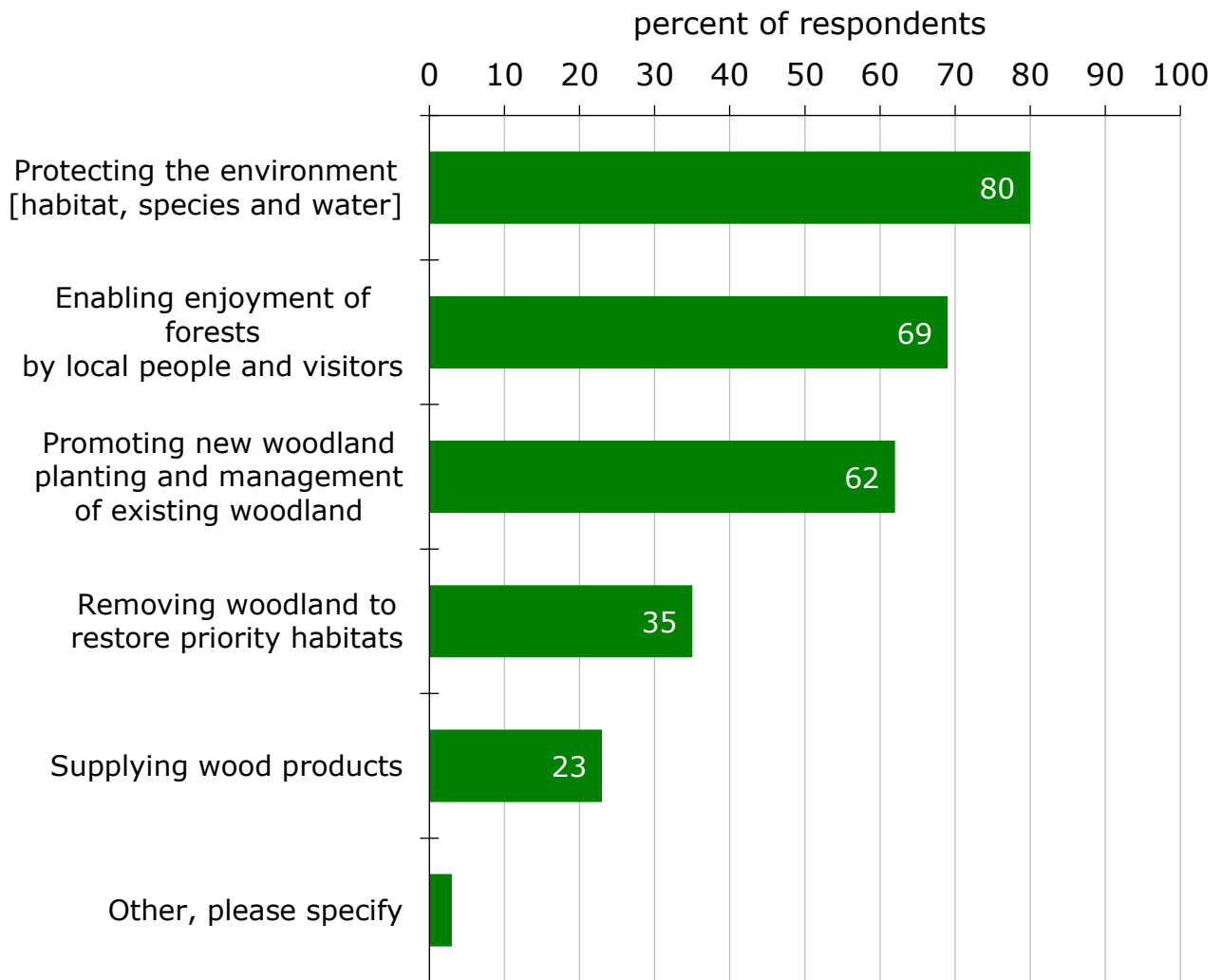
Source: Northern Ireland Public Opinion of Forestry Surveys.

Note:

1. Figures are based on all respondents: Weighted totals - 2007 (1,021), 2010 (1,011), 2014 (994), 2019 (1,000).
2. Changes to the wording of this question for the 2019 survey (to ask 'in principle') may have resulted in some inconsistency with earlier years.

If respondents indicated they would, in principle, like to engage with the Forest Service about the management of their local forest they were asked which issues they would like to be asked about. Most respondents indicated they would like to be asked about protecting the environment (80%). 'Enabling enjoyment of forests by local people and visitors' (69%) and 'promoting new woodland planting and management of existing woodland' (62%) were also chosen as topics of discussion by the majority of respondents.

Figure 1 Issues that respondents would like to be asked about<sup>1,2</sup>



Source: Northern Ireland Public Opinion of Forestry Survey 2019.

Note:

1. Figures are based on respondents who, in principle, wanted to be consulted about forest management: Weighted total = 488.
2. Respondents could select more than one topic.



## Woodland recreation

The survey asked respondents a number of questions about visits to woodland. This included whether the respondent had visited woodland in the last few years for recreation, frequency of visits, benefits to health and wellbeing and reasons for not visiting.

## Proportion visiting woodland

As in previous years, respondents to the 2019 survey were asked whether they had visited forests or woodlands in Northern Ireland for walks, picnics or other recreation in the last few years.

In 2019, 78% of respondents said they had visited forests or woodlands in the last few years for walks, picnics or other recreation (Table 9). This is a significant increase from the levels reported in 2005 and 2007.

**Table 9 Visited woodland in last few years<sup>1</sup>**

percent of respondents

<b>Year</b>	<b>%</b>
2005	67
2007	62
2010	72
2014	75
2019	78

Source: Northern Ireland Public Opinion of Forestry Surveys.

Note:

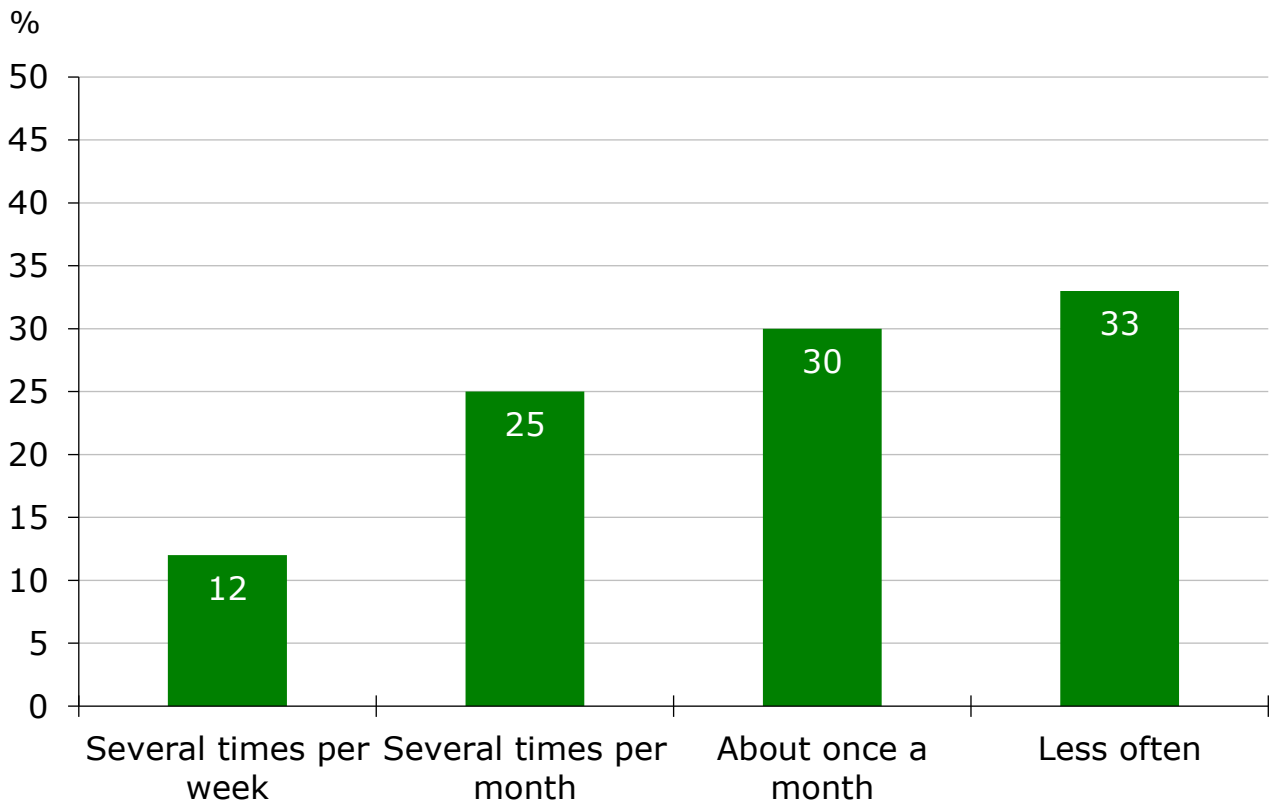
1. Figures are based on all respondents: Weighted totals - 2005 (1,004), 2007 (1,021), 2010 (1,011), 2014 (994), 2019 (1,000).

## Frequency of woodland visits

Respondents who stated that they had visited forests and woodland (in Northern Ireland) for walks, picnics and other recreation in the last few years were then asked how often they had visited. This question differed from previous surveys, where respondents had been asked separately about visits in summer and in winter, so results for 2019 are not comparable with earlier years.

Two thirds (66%) of respondents who had visited woodland in the last few years reported that they had visited at least once a month in the last year (Figure 2).

Figure 2 Frequency of woodland visits last year<sup>1</sup>



Source: Northern Ireland Public Opinion of Forestry Survey 2019.

Note:

1. Figures are based on all respondents who had visited woodland in the last few years: Weighted total = 780.

## Benefits from visiting woodlands

Respondents who had visited woodlands were asked about the aspects of their health and wellbeing that benefited from visiting forests and woodlands. Almost all respondents who had visited woodland (99%) said that they benefited from at least one aspect.

Looking at the individual aspects (Table 10):

- 82% considered visits to woodlands and the outdoors to be good for relaxing and unwinding;
- 81% reported that visits to woodlands and the outdoors provided an opportunity to spend time with family and friends.
- 74% said that physical exercise was a benefit; and

**Table 10: Health benefits from visiting woodlands<sup>1,2</sup>**

<b>Benefits<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2019</b>
It's a good place for me to relax and unwind from the stress of everyday life	70	82
It's a good place for me to spend time with family and friends	63	81
It's a good place for me to do some physical exercise	65	74
All of these	34	58
At least one benefit	100	99

Source: Northern Ireland Public Opinion of Forestry Surveys.

Note:

1. Figures are based on all respondents who had visited woodland in the last few years:  
Weighted total - 2014 (748), 2019 (780)
2. Respondents could select more than one benefit.

## Reasons for not visiting forest or woodland

Respondents who had not visited woodland in the last few years were asked to state their main reason for not visiting woodland.

Table 11 shows that the most commonly cited reasons for not visiting woodland in the last few years were 'not interested in going' (30%) and 'I'm too busy/not enough time' (23%).

**Table 11 Main reason for not visiting woodland in last few years<sup>1,2</sup>**  
percent of respondents who had not visited woodlands

Main reason	2005	2007 <sup>3</sup>	2010 <sup>3</sup>	2014	2019
Not interested in going	38	45	37	33	30
I'm too busy/ not enough time	..	..	..	13	23
Other personal mobility reasons (difficulty in walking, unwell, etc.)	11	11	16	12	17
Don't have a car	14	13	15	19	10
Prefer other areas of countryside	5	6	6	4	3
Forests/ woodlands are too far away	9	8	16	7	3
Lack of suitable public transport	0	..	..	4	2
Lack of information about forests and woodlands to visit	2	2	4	1	2
Concerns that woodlands are not safe	1	3	4	1	1
Paths are badly maintained	..	..	..	0	1
Lack of facilities	3	1	4	..	0
Cost of visiting	..	..	..	1	0
Other answers	17	18	18	4	8

Source: Northern Ireland Public Opinion of Forestry Surveys.

Note:

1. Figures are based on all respondents who had not visited woodland in the last few years: Weighted totals - 2005 (326), 2007 (384), 2010 (278), 2014 (246), 2019 (220).
2. .. denotes data not available (response option not included in that year's survey).
3. Respondents could select more than one reason in 2007 and 2010, so results are not directly comparable.

## Annex

### Introduction

This annex provides background information on the statistics presented in this release. It covers the data sources and methodology used to produce the statistics, information on quality measures and on any revisions to historic data and links to further information.

### Glossary

#### Confidence interval

An estimated range of values that is likely to include an unknown population parameter (i.e. a fixed value for the population as a whole). The confidence interval around an estimate is derived from the sample data, and is used to indicate the reliability of the estimate.

#### Clustering

A sampling technique where the entire population is divided into groups, or clusters, and a random sample of these clusters are selected. All (or a selection of) observations in the selected clusters are included in the sample. Cluster sampling is often used when a random sample would produce a list of subjects so widely scattered that surveying them would prove to be far too expensive.

#### Forest

In the United Kingdom, there is no formal definition of “forest”; the term is often used for large woodland areas (especially conifers).

#### Forest Service (FS)

An Executive Agency of the Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs responsible for forestry matters in Northern Ireland.

#### Forestry Commission (FC)

The government department responsible for forestry matters in England, Scotland (until March 2019) and Wales (until March 2013). The Forestry Commission’s functions in Wales transferred Natural Resources Wales, on 1 April 2013. The Forestry Commissions functions in Scotland will transfer to Scottish Forestry and to Forestry and Land Scotland on April 1 2019.

#### Great Britain (GB)

England, Wales and Scotland.

### Quota sampling

A method of sampling where interviewers are each given a fixed number of subjects of specified type to interview.

### Statistical significance

A statistical assessment of whether observations reflect an actual pattern rather than just chance.

### Stratification

A sampling technique where the entire population is divided into groups, or strata, and a random sample is selected within each group. Stratified sampling is often used to ensure that sufficient numbers from each group are included in the overall sample, particularly where results are required for each group.

### United Kingdom (UK)

Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

### Weighting

A set of factors assigned to survey responses to ensure that the resulting weighted results are representative of the population as a whole.

### Woodland

Land under stands of trees with a canopy cover of at least 20% (25% in Northern Ireland), or having the potential to achieve this, including integral open space, and including felled areas that are awaiting restocking.

## Data Sources and Methodology

### Background

The Forestry Commission has conducted surveys of public attitudes to forestry and forestry-related issues since 1995.

Information has been collected for Northern Ireland through UK-wide surveys since 2003 and in separate Northern Ireland surveys (around 1,000 adults) carried out in 2005, 2007, 2010, 2014 and 2019.

The table below is a summary of the previous surveys and presents the approximate number of adults interviewed for each country.

**Table A1 Sample sizes for Public Opinion of Forestry surveys since 2001**

approximate number of adults interviewed

<b>Year</b>	<b>UK<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>England<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Wales</b>	<b>Scotland</b>	<b>Northern Ireland<sup>3</sup></b>
2001	2,000		1,000	1,000	
2003	4,000	3,400	1,000	1,000	
2005	4,000	3,400	1,000	1,000	1,000
2007	4,000	3,300	1,000	1,000	1,000
2009	2,000	1,700	1,000	1,000	
2010					1,000
2011	2,000	1,700	1,000	1,000	
2013	2,000	1,700	1,000	1,000	
2014					1,000
2015	2,000	1,500	1,000	1,000	
2017	2,000	1,800	1,000	1,000	
2019 <sup>4</sup>	2,200	1,800	1,000		1,000

Note:

1. 2001 and 2005 surveys shown in the "UK" column covered Great Britain only (i.e. excluding Northern Ireland).
2. Results for England are derived from UK surveys.
3. Sample sizes shown for Northern Ireland relate to surveys run solely in Northern Ireland. UK-wide surveys have also included some respondents from Northern Ireland (around 120 in 2003 and 2007, around 50-60 in 2009 and 2013 and around 50 in 2015 and 2017).
4. Results from other surveys are expected to be published in summer 2019.

## Survey Design

The 2019 survey results presented in this report are taken from the Cognisense Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey carried out from the 7th to 18th January 2019. The survey was based on a representative sample of 1006 adults (aged 16 or over) across Northern Ireland. More details of the sample method are given below.

The 2005, 2007 and 2010 surveys were obtained from the Millward Brown Ulster Omnibus Survey and the 2014 survey was obtained from the Ipsos MORI Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey. These surveys employed different survey designs so comparisons should be taken with care.

## Methodology

### 2019 survey

The Cognisense Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey is a twice monthly face-to-face survey conducted amongst a representative sample of the Northern Ireland population. The survey consisted of a freshly drawn sample of 1000 adults aged 16+ years and was quota controlled to represent the Northern Ireland population in terms of sex, age and social class. 80 electoral wards are drawn using a stratified random sampling method to ensure that the sample is representative in terms of region. Data collection was digital and fieldwork was conducted according to the standards of the IQCS (Interviewer Quality Control Scheme) and in accordance with the MRS (Market research Society) code of conduct.

### Survey sampling

After the initial stratified random selection of sampling points, the Cognisense Omnibus Survey then employs a quota sampling methodology. The sampling points were randomly selected from a sampling frame based on Northern Ireland electoral wards and comprising of 311 sampling points. Quotas on gender, age and social class were used to minimise bias and ensure the sample was representative.

## Questionnaire

A copy of the 2019 questionnaire is provided at the end of this release. This covers the questions requested by Forest Service. In addition, a small number of additional questions are included as standard in the omnibus surveys run by Market Research companies (e.g. gender, age, region) and the answers to some of these questions are used in analysing the results from the survey.



Most questions are retained from one survey to the next, to enable comparisons over time. However, changes are sometimes made to reflect changing circumstances or priorities, or to improve the wording of questions. The following changes were made for the 2019 survey:

- Addition of new response options to questions on forestry in the media (Q1), reasons to support forestry (Q2) and location of new woodland (Q7);
- The full list of response options for the question on topics to be asked about (Q14) was replaced with a new set of options;
- The number of questions asked about recreation has been reduced; and
- All questions on woodfuel have been dropped.

### Quality

Results from the Cognisense Omnibus Survey are weighted on the basis of gender, age, social class and region, using 2011 Census. The results quoted in this report are based on weighted data.

### Design effect

All results are subject to the effects of chance in sampling, so a range of uncertainty (confidence interval) should be associated with any result from the survey. The confidence intervals take into account the effect of clustering, weighting and stratification in the survey design (see methodology, above, for more details).

The Cognisense Omnibus Survey uses a quota sampling approach, which means that the likelihood of individuals within the population being interviewed cannot be measured. Any confidence intervals calculated are also indicative. Due to the survey design, a 'design effect' of 1.5 should be applied to confidence intervals calculated for data from this survey.

Confidence intervals are most commonly reported at the 95% level. This means that there is a 95% chance that the true population value lies within the confidence interval. The following provides a guide to interpreting the results in this report on the basis of a 95% confidence interval:

For questions asked to the whole Northern Ireland sample of 1000, the margin of error should be no more than  $\pm 4.6\%$ .

For questions not asked of the whole sample and sub-groups within the sample, margin of error will increase. For example:

- By gender (male n=485; female n=515), the confidence intervals should be no more than  $\pm 6.7\%$ ;
- For those who visited woodland in the last few years (n=779), the confidence interval should be no more than  $\pm 5.3\%$ .

For questions asked to whole samples, differences of more than  $\pm 6.6\%$  between the 2019 and 2014 surveys are statistically significant.

Further quality information on FC Official Statistics is available at:

<https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/statistics/about-our-statistics/code-of-practice/quality-of-official-statistics/>.

### Revisions

Figures for 2019 are published for the first time in this release.

All figures are final. Figures for earlier years have not been revised.

The Forestry Commission's revisions policy sets out how revisions and errors to these statistics are dealt with, and can be found by downloading our revisions policy that can be found here: <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/statistics/about-our-statistics/code-of-practice/quality-of-official-statistics/>.

### Further information

Accompanying tables to this release, available at <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/statistics/statistics-by-topic/public-opinion-of-forestry/>, provide more detailed figures, showing standard breakdowns.

Figures in tables have been independently rounded, so may not add to the totals shown.

### Official Statistics

This is an Official Statistics publication. For more information about Official Statistics and the UK Statistics Authority visit [www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk](http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk).

# Northern Ireland Public Opinion of Forestry Survey 2019: Questionnaire

**Q1** [All - Multi answer]

**You may have heard about Northern Ireland's forests and woodlands in the media (including tv, radio, newspapers, internet, social media etc).**

**Which, if any, of these topics have you heard about in the last 12 months?**

- Birds and other animals in forests and woodlands
- Flowers and other plants in forests and woodlands
- Forests and woodlands as places to visit
- Forests and woodlands for the use of local people and communities
- Tree planting
- Tree pests and diseases
- Wood for fuel/ firewood
- Protection of ancient woodland
- New native woodland
- Public right of pedestrian access to forests
- Labelling to show that wood products are produced from sustainable sources
- The role of forests and woodlands in helping to reduce the impacts of climate change
- Walking, running, cycling, mountain biking or horse riding
- Removal of woodland or trees due to development or other land uses
- Other (please specify)
- None of these

**Q2** [All - Multi answer]

**In Northern Ireland public money is given to support forestry and the planting and management of all types and sizes of forests and woodlands, because it is believed to be of public benefit.**

**From this list, please tell me which of the following you think are good reasons to support forestry in this way?**

- To support the economy in rural areas
- To help rural tourism
- To provide timber
- To provide renewable energy
- To make us more self-sufficient in timber and wood products
- To provide better access to forests and woodlands
- To combat climate change
- To provide places for wildlife to live
- To provide places for recreation (such as walking, running, cycling, horse-riding)
- To provide places for relaxation and stress relief
- To provide places for families to play
- To provide places for learning
- To improve the countryside landscape
- To provide farm diversification as an alternative land use
- None of these

### Q3 [All]

**To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the ways in which forests and woodlands in Northern Ireland can impact on climate change?**

(1 strongly agree, 2 agree, 3 neither agree or disagree, 4 disagree, 5 strongly disagree)

- Trees are good because they remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store it in wood
- Cutting down forests and woodlands makes climate change worse, even if they are replanted
- Using wood for fuel is better for climate change than using fuels such as coal and gas
- Using wood for fuel makes climate change worse because it releases carbon dioxide
- Using wood for building is better for climate change than using materials such as concrete and steel
- Northern Ireland could offset all its greenhouse gas emissions by planting more trees

### Q4 [All]

**To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding how Northern Ireland's forests and woodlands should be managed in response to the threat of climate change?**

(1 strongly agree, 2 agree, 3 neither agree or disagree, 4 disagree, 5 strongly disagree)

- A lot more trees should be planted
- Different types of trees should be planted that will be more suited to future climates
- More information should be provided about the ways in which forests and woodlands can lessen our impact on the environment

**Q5** [All - Multi answer]

**From this list, which of these do you think are an acceptable reason for cutting down trees?**

- To provide timber - with the area being replanted afterwards
- To prevent the spread of tree disease
- To restore priority habitats
- To create space for development, e.g. housing, roads
- To create space to build wind farms
- To use the land for agriculture
- For larger scale recreation projects e.g. mountain biking trails
- For tourism initiatives, e.g. chalets
- Other (Please specify)
- None of these

**Q6** [All – Single answer]

**Would you like to have more or less forests and woodlands in your part of Northern Ireland?**

- A lot more (Go to Q7)
- A little more (Go to Q7)
- Neither more nor less (Go to Q8)
- A little less (Go to Q8)
- A lot less (Go to Q8)
- Don't know (Go to Q8)

**Q7** [Ask if answered 'a lot more' or 'a little more' to Q6 – Multi answer]

**Where do you think new forests and woodlands should be created?**

- Close to towns and villages
- On intensively farmed land
- On less intensively farmed land e.g. pasture
- In mountain areas
- Next to existing forests and woodland
- Next to rivers and lakes
- Other (please specify)
- Don't know

**Q8** [All – Single answer]

**In the last few years, have you visited any forests or woodlands (in Northern Ireland) for walks, picnics or other recreation?**

- Yes (Go to Q9)
- No (Go to Q11)

**Q9** [Ask if answered 'yes' to Q8 – Single answer]

**On average how often did you visit (NI) forests and woodlands last year?**

- Several times per week
- Several times per month
- About once per month
- Less often
- Not visited

**Q10** [Ask if answered 'yes' to Q8 - Multi answer]

**In general, which, if any aspects of health and wellbeing do you feel benefit from visiting forests and woodlands?**

- It's a good place for me to do some physical exercise
- It's a good place for me to relax and unwind from the stress of everyday life
- It's a good place for me to spend time with family and friends
- All of these
- None of these

**Q11** [Ask if answered 'no' to Q8 – Single answer]

**What was the main reason that you did not visit a forest or woodland?**

- Not interested in going
- Don't have a car
- Lack of suitable public transport
- Other personal mobility reasons (difficulty in walking, unwell, etc.)
- Forests/woodlands are too far away
- Lack of facilities (play areas, picnic areas, toilets etc.)
- Lack of information about forests and woodlands to visit
- Prefer other areas of countryside
- Concerns that forests and woodlands are not safe
- Concerns about antisocial behaviour
- Paths are badly maintained
- Cost of visiting
- I'm too busy/not enough time
- Other (Please specify)

**Q12** [All – Single answer]

**Did you know that Forest Service engages with people about the management of Forest Service forests?**

- Yes
- No

**Q13** [All – Single answer]

**In principle, would you welcome being asked about the management of your local Forest Service forest?**

- Yes (Go to Q14)
- No (Go to Q15)



**Q14** [Ask if answered 'yes' to Q13 – Multi answer]

**Which of these issues would you like to be asked about?**

- Enabling enjoyment of forests by local people and visitors
- Protecting the environment [habitat, species and water]
- Promoting new woodland planting and management of existing woodland
- Supplying wood products
- Removing woodland to restore priority habitats
- Other (Please specify)

**Q15** [All – Multi answer]

**a) Do you consider yourself to have any of the following disabilities or health problems?**

- Mobility disability
- Visual impairment
- Hearing impairment
- Mental health problem
- Physical disability
- Other
- None of the above

[Ask all with a disability – Single answer]

**b) Does your disability affect your use of woodlands/ forests or other greenspaces?**

- Yes
- No

[Ask if answered yes to Q15b – Multi answer]

**c) If so, in which of the following ways does your disability affect your use of woodlands/ forests or greenspaces?**

- Lack of public transport to the woodland/forest or other green space
- Lack of suitable paths around the woodland/forest or other green space
- Lack of accessible facilities, e.g. toilets, cafe, visitor centre etc.
- Lack of suitable activities at the woodland/forest or other green space
- Lack of information to help inform a visit to the woodland/forest or other green space
- Lack of information at the woodland/forest or other green space
- Lack of information in a suitable format for your disability
- Attitude of staff at the woodland/forest or other green space
- Attitude of other visitors at the woodland/forest or other green space

**List of demographic variables covered by the 2019 survey:**

- Gender
- Age
- Marital status
- Number of people in household
- Number of children in household
- Tenure
- Working status
- Social grade
- Community background
- Religion
- Ethnic group
- Sexual orientation
- Region
- Area (urban/ rural)