

Public Opinion of Forestry 2023: UK and England

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The research agency of the
Forestry Commission

Forest Research is the research agency of the Forestry Commission and is the leading UK organisation engaged in forestry and tree related research.

The agency aims to support and enhance forestry and its role in sustainable development by providing innovative, high quality scientific research, technical support and consultancy services.

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Introduction

Forest Research (and previously the Forestry Commission) has conducted biennial surveys of public attitudes to forestry and forestry-related issues since 1995. These surveys are used to inform and monitor policy development.

The UK Public Opinion of Forestry 2023 survey was commissioned by Forest Research on behalf of the Forestry Commission, Forestry England and Defra. Results are presented for the UK and for England on:

- woodland recreation;
- engagement with forests and woodlands;
- importance of forests and woodlands;
- attitudes to forests and woodlands since the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic;
- climate change; and
- tree health.

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

Surveys have also been run in Wales, in Scotland and in Northern Ireland. Separate reports, providing results from these surveys, can be found on the [Public Opinion of Forestry surveys homepage](#).

Results for the latest survey are shown alongside results from earlier surveys, where appropriate. However, it should be noted that the COVID-19 restrictions that were in place in early 2021 led to a change in methodology, with the survey being run online for the first time in 2021 (previously, face-to-face interviewing had been used). Consequently, results for the 2021 and 2023 surveys may not be fully

consistent with previous surveys. Further information on the methodology is provided in the Annex.

Results for earlier years have not been revised from those previously released unless stated. 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 (margin of error, or confidence interval) associated with any results produced. Any differences referred to 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.

Unless otherwise specified, this report refers to woodlands and trees in both urban and rural settings. The Glossary in the Annex provides further information on terms used.

Key findings

In 2023:

- Seventy-four percent of respondents in the UK and England had visited forests or woodlands in the last few years. Of those, 21% (in the UK and in England) reported an increase in the number of visits in the last 12 months; no change was reported by 52% in the UK (53% in England) and a decrease by 23% (in the UK and in England).
- Nine percent of respondents in the UK (10% in England) were involved in volunteer work, organised tree planting events, community-based woodland groups or consultations associated with woodlands in the past 12 months.
- Ninety-two percent in the UK and in England agreed that forests and woodlands are important because they are important places for wildlife.
- Ninety-one percent in the UK and England agreed that forests and woodlands they have visited are important to them personally because they provide a space to relax and de-stress.
- Around one half of respondents who had visited forests or woodlands in the last few years (51% in UK and England) reported an increase in their level of happiness when in forests and woodlands since the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.
- The majority of respondents who had visited woodlands (84% in the UK and England) agreed or strongly agreed that “A lot more trees should be planted” in response to the threat of climate change.
- Around eight in ten respondents (82% in the UK and England) agreed or strongly agreed that “action should be taken by authorities and woodland managers to protect trees from damaging pests and diseases”.

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, type of woodland visited, reasons for not visiting woodlands, changes in visiting, frequency of visits, duration of visits, activities undertaken, distance travelled and management of woodland.

Proportion visiting woodland

Just under three-quarters of respondents to the 2023 survey (74% in both the UK and England) reported that they had visited forests or woodlands for walks, picnics or other recreation in the last few years (Table 1). For both the UK and England, this represents a statistically significant increase from the proportions reported in the 2021 survey (69% in both the UK and in England).

Table 1: Proportion of respondents who visited woodland in the last few years, UK and England, 2003 to 2023

| Year | UK | England |
|------|----|---------|
| 2003 | 67 | 66 |
| 2005 | 65 | 65 |
| 2007 | 77 | 76 |
| 2009 | 77 | 77 |
| 2011 | 67 | 68 |
| 2013 | 66 | 65 |
| 2015 | 56 | 55 |
| 2017 | 61 | 62 |
| 2019 | 63 | 63 |
| 2021 | 69 | 69 |
| 2023 | 74 | 74 |

Footnote:

1. Results are based on all respondents. Weighted totals: UK: 2003 (4,120), 2005 (3,892), 2007 (4,018), 2009 (2,011), 2011 (2,068), 2013 (1,927), 2015 (1,804), 2017 (2,113), 2019 (2,174), 2021 (5,119), 2023 (11,055); England: 2003 (3,412), 2005 (3,367), 2007 (3,339), 2009 (1,685), 2011 (1,733), 2013 (1,615), 2015 (1,512), 2017 (1,780), 2019 (1,831), 2021 (4,304) 2023 (9,297).

Type of woodland visited

Around four-fifths of respondents who visited forests and woodlands in the last few years reported that they had visited “woodlands in the countryside” (82% in both the UK and in England) (Table 2a and 2b). More than two-thirds (70% in both the

UK and in England) reported visiting “woodlands in and around towns” and over one half of respondents (54% in the UK and 53% in England) reported visiting woodlands and forests in both locations.

Table 2a: Proportion of respondents and type of woodland visited, UK, 2009 to 2023

| Type of woodland | 2009 | 2011 | 2013 | 2015 | 2017 | 2019 | 2021 | 2023 |
|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| In the countryside | 86 | 84 | 85 | 80 | 86 | 82 | 75 | 82 |
| In and around towns | 64 | 62 | 70 | 71 | 67 | 72 | 63 | 70 |
| Both | 48 | 47 | 55 | 51 | 53 | 53 | 39 | 54 |

Footnote:

1. Results are based on all respondents. Weighted totals: UK: 2009 (2,011), 2011 (2,068), 2013 (1,927), 2015 (1,804), 2017 (2,113), 2019 (2,174), 2021 (5,119), 2023 (11,055); England: 2009 (1,685), 2011 (1,733), 2013 (1,615), 2015 (1,512), 2017 (1,780), 2019 (1,831), 2021 (4,304) 2023 (9,297).
2. Results for 2023 exclude the 2% (in both the UK and England) who answered “don’t know/can’t recall”.

Table 2b: Proportion of respondents and type of woodland visited, England, 2009 to 2023

| Type of woodland | 2009 | 2011 | 2013 | 2015 | 2017 | 2019 | 2021 | 2023 |
|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| In the countryside | 84 | 84 | 85 | 81 | 85 | 82 | 75 | 82 |
| In and around towns | 61 | 62 | 68 | 72 | 67 | 72 | 63 | 70 |
| Both | 45 | 46 | 53 | 53 | 52 | 54 | 38 | 53 |

Footnote:

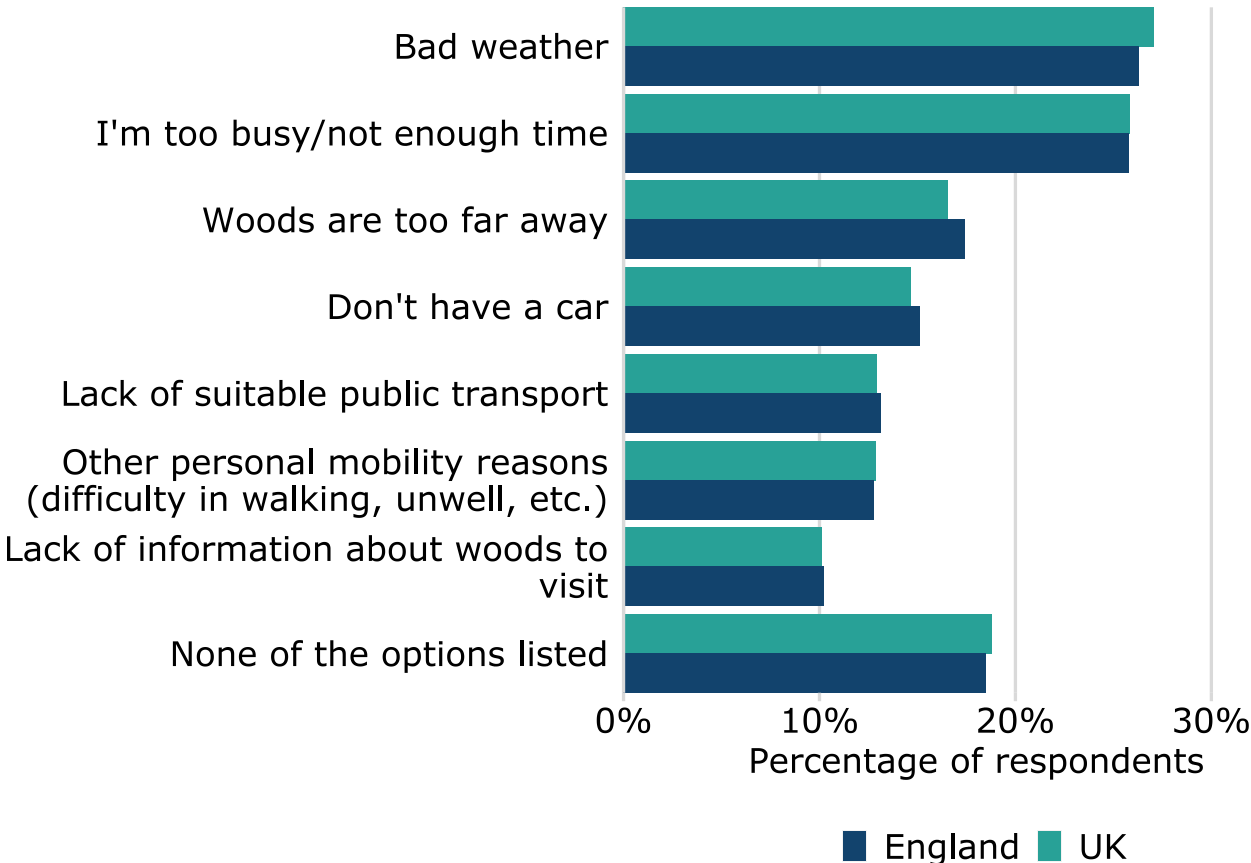
1. See Table 2a for more information.

Reasons for not visiting woodlands

All respondents were asked to indicate the main reasons for them not visiting woodland or forests more often or at all (Figure 1).

Out of the response options provided, "bad weather" (27% in the UK and 26% in England) and "I'm too busy/not enough time" (26% in both the UK and in England) were the most commonly selected reasons for not visiting woodland in 2023 (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Proportion of respondents and main reasons for not visiting woodlands, UK and England, 2023



Footnote:

1. Results are based on all respondents. Weighted totals: 11,055 (UK); 9,297 (England).
2. Respondents could select more than one reason.
3. Chart excludes reasons selected by fewer than 10% of respondents. See accompanying data set for breakdown of all responses.

Changes in visits to forests and woodlands

Three new questions were introduced in the 2021 survey and continued in the 2023 survey to identify how visits to forests and woodlands had changed in the last 12 months, compared to the previous year. These questions were asked of respondents who reported visiting forests or woodlands in the last few years and covered the number of visits, the duration of visits and the distance travelled to visit.

In terms of the number of visits taken to forests and woodlands in the last 12 months, 21% of respondents to the 2023 survey who had visited in the last few years in both the UK and in England reported an increase (Table 3a and 3b), 52% in the UK (53% in England) reported no change and 23% (in both the UK and in England) reported a decrease.

Similar responses were provided for the duration of visits with 21% of respondents (in the UK and in England) who had visited forests or woodlands reporting an increase in the time they spent there during last 12 months. No change was reported by 52% (in both the UK and in England) and 24% in the UK (23% in England) reported a decrease.

Fifteen percent of respondents who had visited forests or woodlands in the UK (14% in England) had increased the distance they travelled, 66% (in the UK and in England) reported no change and 14% (in the UK and in England) reported a decrease.

Table 3a: Proportion of respondents and change in woodland visiting habits in the last 12 months, UK, 2023

| Change | Number of visits | Total duration | Distance travelled |
|--------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Increased a lot | 6 | 5 | 3 |
| Increased a little | 16 | 16 | 12 |
| No change | 52 | 52 | 66 |
| Decreased a little | 14 | 15 | 8 |
| Decreased a lot | 9 | 9 | 6 |
| Don't know | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Footnote:

1. Results are based on respondents who had visited woodlands. Weighted totals: 8,186 (UK), 6,864 (England).

Table 3b: Proportion of respondents and change in woodland visiting in the last 12 months, England, 2023

| Change | Number of visits | Total duration | Distance travelled |
|--------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Increased a lot | 6 | 5 | 3 |
| Increased a little | 16 | 16 | 11 |
| No change | 53 | 52 | 66 |
| Decreased a little | 14 | 15 | 8 |
| Decreased a lot | 9 | 9 | 6 |
| Don't know | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Footnote:

1. See Table 3a for more information.

Frequency of visits to forests and woodlands

Of the 2023 survey respondents who indicated they had visited woodlands in the last few years, around three-fifths (60% in both the UK and in England) said that they visited at least once a month during the previous summer (between April 2022 and September 2022) (Table 4a and 4b). In both the UK and in England, 4% of respondents who had visited woodlands in the past few years said that they did not visit during summer 2022. This is a statistically significant fall from the 11% who said that they did not visit during the summer of 2020, during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, but is similar to the levels reported in earlier years.

Table 4a: Proportion of respondents and frequency of woodland visits in the previous summer (April to September), UK, 2013 to 2023

| Frequency | 2013 | 2015 | 2017 | 2019 | 2021 | 2023 |
|------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Several times per week | 16 | 18 | 16 | 17 | 14 | 9 |
| Several times per month | 31 | 26 | 30 | 32 | 28 | 25 |
| About once a month | 26 | 25 | 31 | 26 | 23 | 26 |
| Less often than once a month | 24 | 28 | 19 | 22 | 24 | 31 |
| Never | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 11 | 4 |

Footnote:

1. Results are based on respondents who had visited woodlands. Weighted totals: UK: 2013 (1,272), 2015 (1,015), 2017 (1,296), 2019 (1,360), 2021 (3,557), 2023 (8,186); England: 2013 (1,056), 2015 (826), 2017 (1,100), 2019 (1,151), 2021 (2,956), 2023 (6,864).
2. Results in 2023 exclude 5% of respondents who answered "don't know".

Table 4b: Proportion of respondents and frequency of woodland visits in the previous summer (April to September), England, 2013 to 2023

| Frequency | 2013 | 2015 | 2017 | 2019 | 2021 | 2023 |
|------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Several times per week | 15 | 16 | 15 | 17 | 14 | 9 |
| Several times per month | 30 | 25 | 30 | 32 | 27 | 25 |
| About once a month | 26 | 26 | 33 | 26 | 23 | 26 |
| Less often than once a month | 26 | 30 | 19 | 22 | 25 | 32 |
| Never | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 11 | 4 |

Footnote:

1. See Table 4a for more information.

Of the 2023 survey respondents who indicated they had visited woodlands in the last few years, under one half (44% in the UK and 43% in England) said they visited at least once a month during the previous winter (between October 2022 and March 2023) (Table 5a and 5b). In the UK, 16% of respondents (17% in England) said they did not visit woodland during winter 2022/23.

Table 5a: Proportion of respondents and frequency of woodland visits in the previous winter (October to March), UK, 2013 to 2023

| Frequency | 2013 | 2015 | 2017 | 2019 | 2021 | 2023 |
|------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Several times per week | 11 | 11 | 10 | 10 | 12 | 7 |
| Several times per month | 13 | 13 | 15 | 14 | 22 | 16 |
| About once a month | 17 | 17 | 20 | 21 | 18 | 20 |
| Less often than once a month | 36 | 38 | 30 | 32 | 24 | 34 |
| Never | 23 | 20 | 26 | 22 | 24 | 16 |

Footnote:

1. Results are based on respondents who had visited woodlands. Weighted totals: 2013 (1,272), 2015 (1,015), 2017 (1,296), 2019 (1,360), 2021 (3,557), 2023 (8,186); England: 2013 (1,056), 2015 (826), 2017 (1,100), 2019 (1,151), 2021 (2,956), 2023 (6,864).

Table 5b: Proportion of respondents and frequency of woodland visits in the previous winter (October to March), England, 2013 to 2023

| Frequency | 2013 | 2015 | 2017 | 2019 | 2021 | 2023 |
|------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Several times per week | 10 | 9 | 9 | 10 | 12 | 7 |
| Several times per month | 12 | 14 | 14 | 15 | 22 | 16 |
| About once a month | 17 | 18 | 20 | 22 | 18 | 20 |
| Less often than once a month | 36 | 39 | 31 | 33 | 24 | 35 |
| Never | 23 | 21 | 26 | 21 | 24 | 17 |

Footnote:

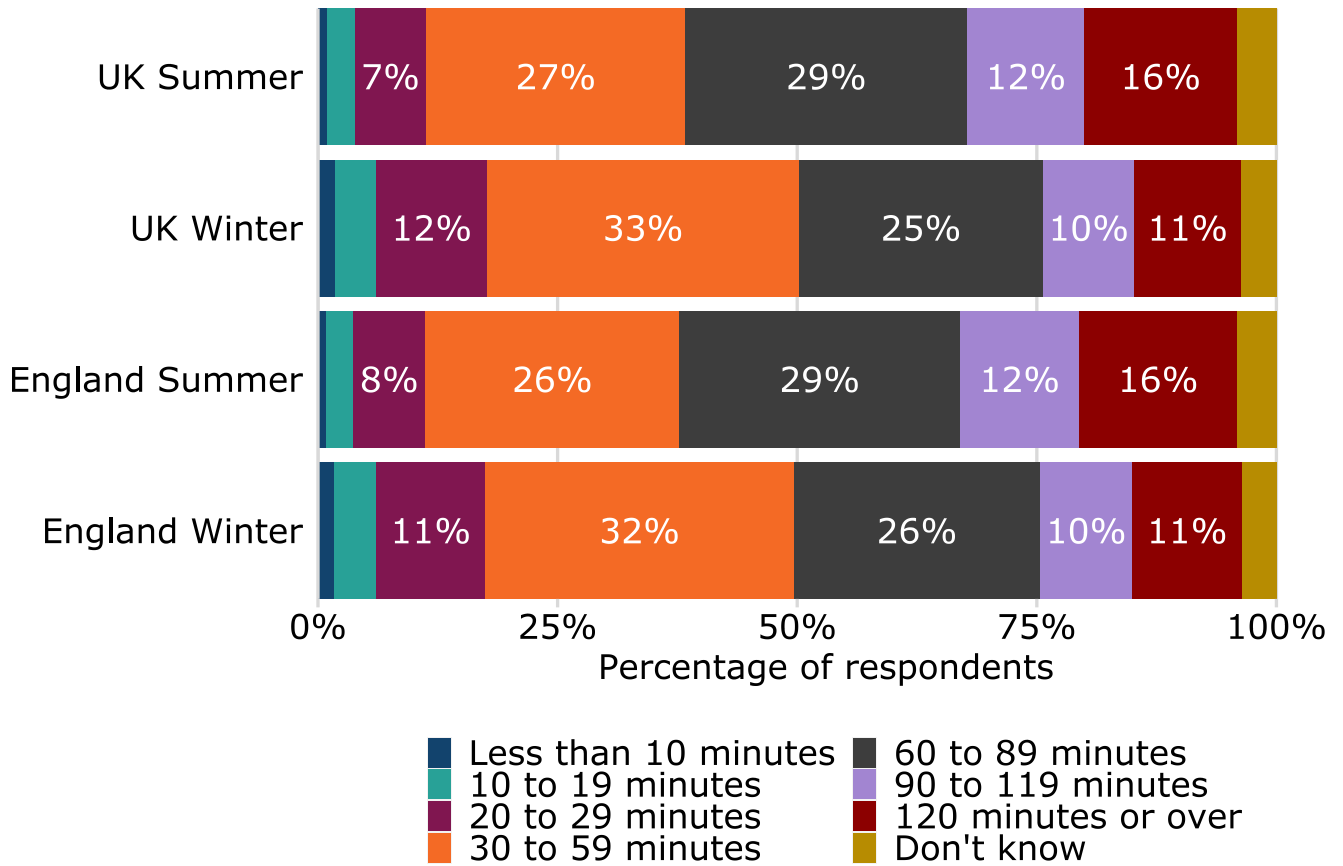
1. See Table 5a for more information.

Duration of visits to forests and woodlands

Respondents who had visited in the previous summer were asked for further information on their most recent visit to woodland in that period. Similarly, those who had visited in the winter of 2022/23 were asked about their most recent visit then.

Winter visits tended to be shorter than summer visits, with 11% of summer visits (in the UK and in England) and 18% of winter visits (in the UK and in England) lasting less than 30 minutes. In contrast, more than one half of summer visits (58% in the UK and in England) but only 47% of winter visits (in the UK and in England) lasted more than 1 hour.

Figure 2: Proportion of respondents and duration of their most recent woodland visit, UK and England, 2023



Footnote:

1. Results for summer are based on respondents who visited woodlands between April 2022 and September 2022. Weighted totals: 7,481 (UK), 6,271 (England).
2. Results for winter are based on respondents who visited woodlands between October 2022 and March 2023. Weighted totals: 6,416 (UK), 5,367 (England).

Activities undertaken on visits to forests and woodlands

Walking was the most-commonly reported activity undertaken on visits to forests and woodlands, reported by over one half of those who had visited in summer

(57% in the UK and in England) and in winter (58% in the UK and 57% in England) (Table 6).

Table 6: Respondents' main recreational activity undertaken on most recent visit to forests and woodlands, UK and England, 2023

| Activity | UK Summer | UK Winter | England Summer | England Winter |
|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Walking | 57 | 58 | 57 | 57 |
| Dog-walking | 20 | 22 | 20 | 22 |
| Wildlife watching | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Children's playground | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Picnicking | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| Running | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Other | 11 | 10 | 11 | 10 |

Footnote:

1. Results for summer are based on respondents who visited woodlands between April 2022 and September 2022. Weighted totals: 7,481 (UK), 6,271 (England).
2. Results for winter are based on respondents who visited woodlands between October 2022 and March 2023. Weighted totals: 6,416 (UK), 5,367 (England).

Distance travelled to get to forests and woodlands

Respondents tended to travel further to visit forests and woodlands in the summer than in winter, with trips of up to 2 miles accounting for one third (33% in both the UK and in England) of winter visits and around three in ten (29% in both the UK and in England) summer visits (Table 7).

Table 7: Distance travelled to forests and woodlands on most recent visit, UK and England, 2023

| Distance | UK Summer | UK Winter | England Summer | England Winter |
|--------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Less than 1 mile | 13 | 14 | 12 | 14 |
| 1 to 2 miles | 17 | 19 | 17 | 19 |
| 3 to 10 miles | 42 | 42 | 41 | 41 |
| 11 to 50 miles | 19 | 18 | 20 | 18 |
| More than 50 miles | 4 | 3 | 4 | 3 |
| Don't know | 6 | 4 | 6 | 5 |

Footnote:

1. Results for summer are based on respondents who visited woodlands between April 2022 and September 2022. Weighted totals: 7,481 (UK), 6,271 (England).
2. Results for winter are based on respondents who visited woodlands between October 2022 and March 2023. Weighted totals: 6,416 (UK), 5,367 (England).

Management of woodland visited

Respondents who had visited woodlands in the last few years were then asked two questions relating to the management of woodland.

Around four in ten respondents (41% in the UK and 42% in England) reported that they did not know who managed the woodlands they had visited most recently (Table 8).

Local authorities were identified as the manager by 20% of those who had visited woodlands (in both the UK and in England).

The National Trust (or National Trust for Scotland) was reported as the manager by 13% of those who had visited woodlands (both in the UK and in England). The

Woodland Trust was identified as the manager by 7% in the UK (8% in England), while Forestry England was identified as the manager by 8% in England.

Table 8: Manager of woodland on respondents' most recent visit, UK and England, 2023

| Manager | UK | England |
|---|-----------|----------------|
| Local Authority | 20 | 20 |
| National Trust or National Trust Scotland | 13 | 13 |
| Woodland Trust | 7 | 8 |
| Forestry England | 7 | 8 |
| Community Managed Woodland | 3 | 3 |
| Forestry and Land Scotland | 2 | 1 |
| Natural Resources Wales | 2 | 1 |
| Other | 5 | 5 |
| Don't know | 41 | 42 |

Footnote:

1. Results are based on respondents who had visited woodlands. Weighted totals: UK: 8,186; England: 6,864.

Respondents who had visited woodlands in the last few years were then asked how often they had visited woodland managed by Forestry England in the previous 12 months.

In 2023, 45% of respondents in the UK who had visited woodlands and 38% of those in England reported that they had not visited Forestry England woodland in the previous 12 months (Table 9). Around 11% in the UK and 12% in England reported visiting Forestry England woodlands at least once a month.

Table 9: Proportion of respondents by frequency of visits to Forestry England woodland in last 12 months, UK and England, 2021 to 2023

| Frequency | England 2021 | UK 2021 | England 2023 | UK 2023 |
|-----------------------------|--------------|---------|--------------|---------|
| None | 35 | 41 | 38 | 45 |
| Once or twice | 25 | 23 | 32 | 28 |
| 3-5 times | 14 | 12 | 13 | 12 |
| 6-10 times | 7 | 7 | 5 | 4 |
| About once a month | 8 | 7 | 7 | 6 |
| About once a fortnight | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| About once a week | 3 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| About twice a week | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| About once a day | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| About twice a day | [low] | [low] | [low] | [low] |
| More often than twice a day | 1 | 1 | [low] | [low] |

Footnote:

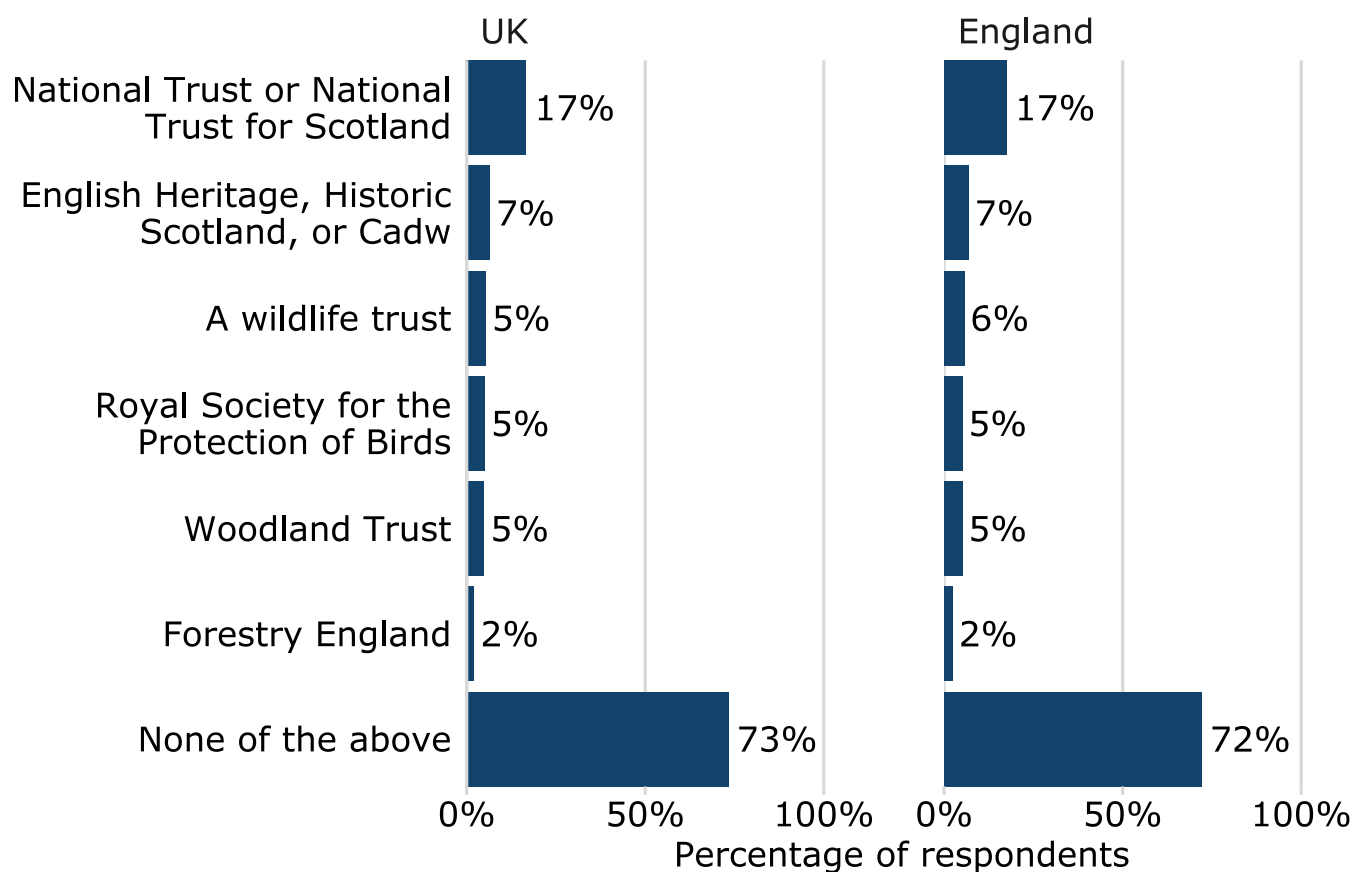
1. Results are based on respondents who had visited woodlands. Weighted totals: UK: 2021 (3,557), 2023 (8,186); England: 2021 (2,956), 2023 (6,864).
2. [low]: less than 0.5%.

Engagement with forests and woodlands

Respondents were asked two questions on engagement with forests and woodlands. These covered membership of organisations and involvement with forest issues.

In 2023, most respondents (73% in the UK and 72% in England) stated that they were not members of any of the organisations listed (Figure 3). Of the organisations we listed, the National Trust (or National Trust for Scotland) had the highest membership (17% in both the UK and in England).

Figure 3: Proportion of respondents and membership of organisations, UK and England, 2023



Footnote:

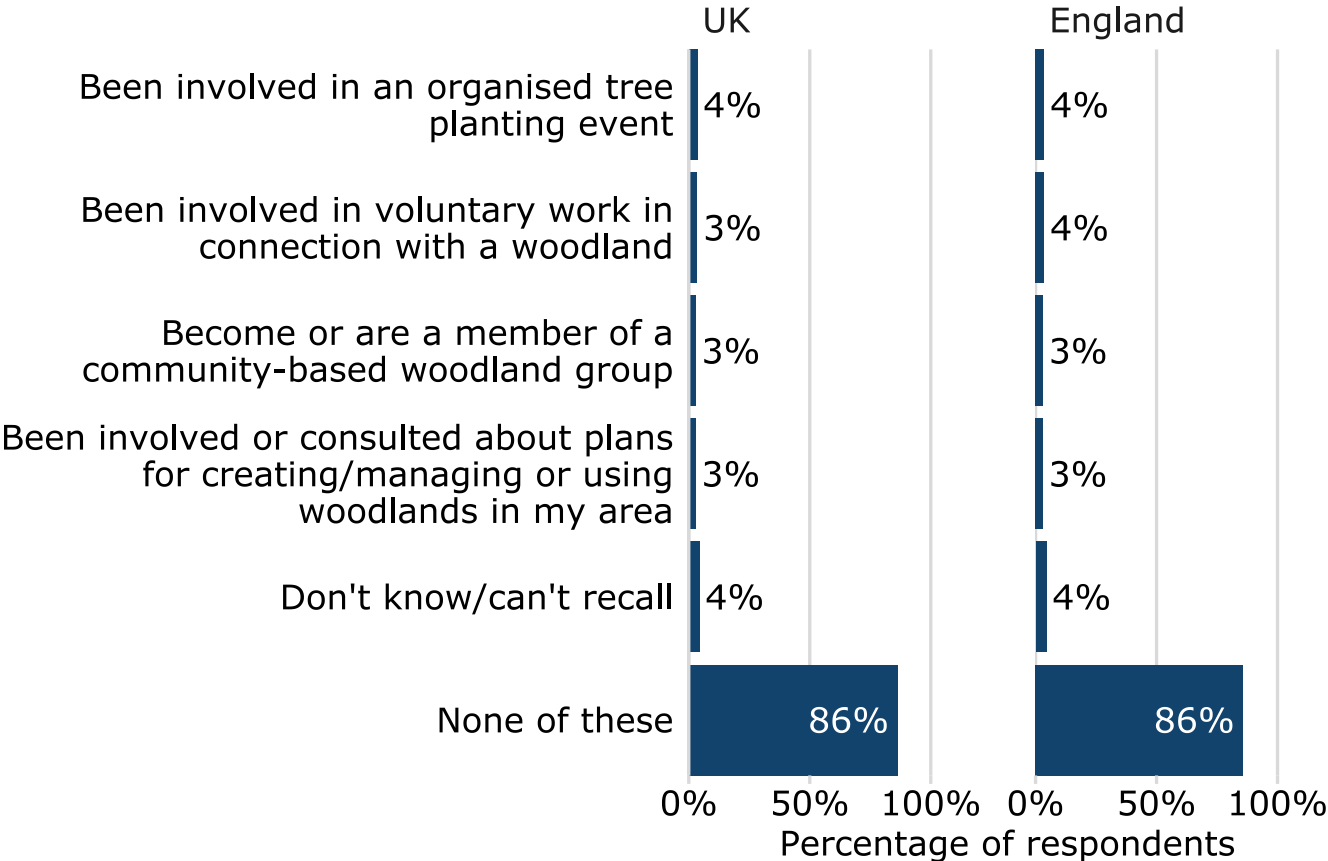
1. Results are based on all respondents. Weighted totals: UK: 2023 (11,055); England: 2023 (9,297).

Respondents were asked whether they had been involved in woodland consultations or any volunteer groups and organised events associated with woodlands. In 2023, nine percent of respondents in the UK (10% in England) said that they had been engaged with forest issues in the previous 12 months (Figure 4).

In terms of the specific types of engagement reported in the 2023 survey:

- 4% of respondents in the UK and in England had been involved in an organised tree planting event;
- 3% of respondents in the UK (4% in England) had been involved in voluntary work in connection with a woodland (e.g., physical work in a wood, administration, fund raising, running a group);
- 3% (in the UK and in England) were or had become a member of a community-based woodland group (e.g., a Community Trust or 'Friends of' group); and
- 3% (in the UK and in England) had been involved or consulted about plans for creating/managing or using woodlands in their area.

Figure 4: Proportion of respondents and involvement in forest issues in last 12 months, UK and England, 2023



Footnote:

1. Results are based on all respondents. Weighted totals: UK: 2023 (11,055); England: 2023 (9,297).

Importance of forests and woodlands

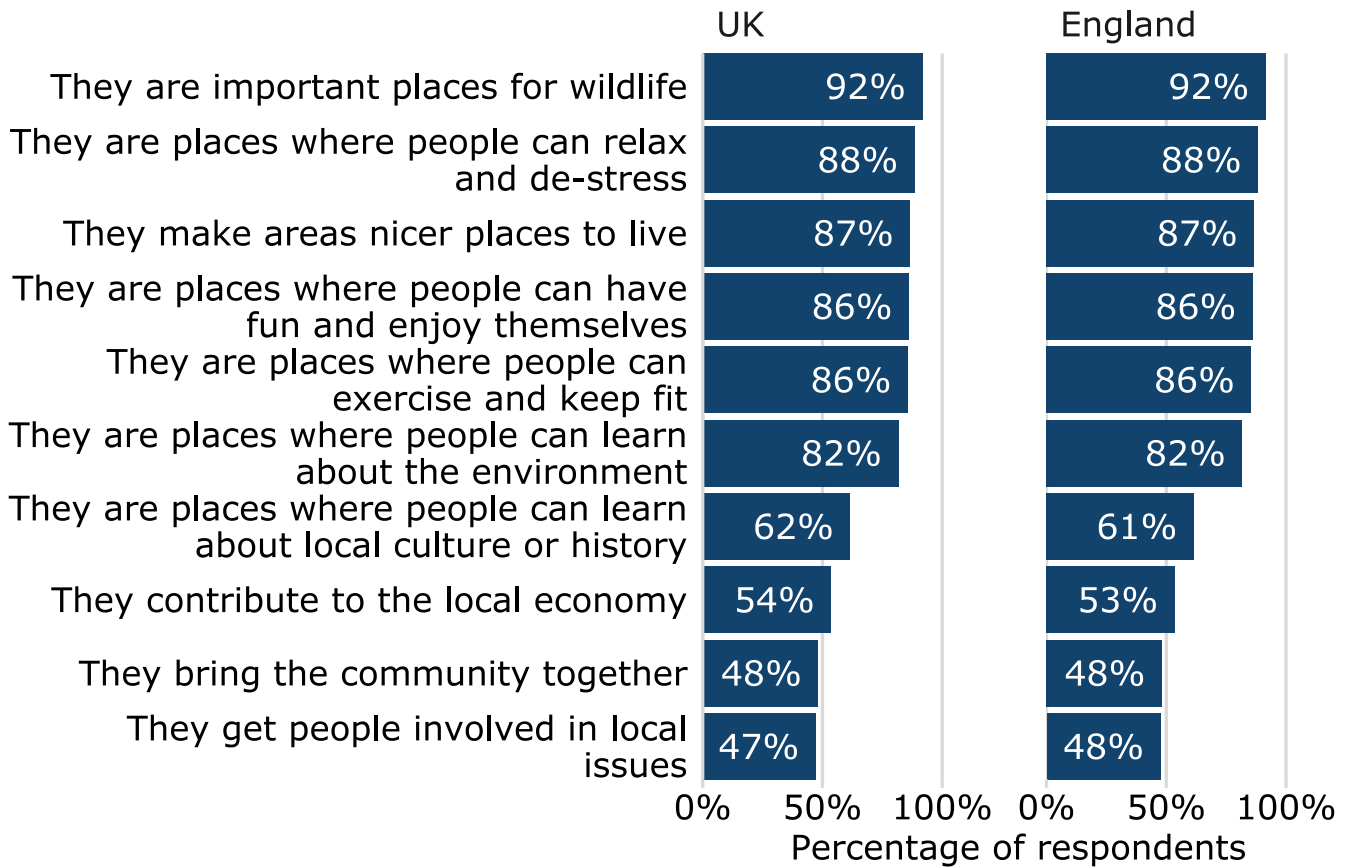
Respondents were asked two questions that assessed their level of agreement with a list of statements on the importance of forests and woodlands, firstly to the public and then to themselves.

Figure 5 shows the percentage of respondents who agreed (in the UK and in England, respectively) with each of the statements relating to the importance of forests and woodlands to the public.

The highest levels of agreement (including those who selected “Strongly agree” and “Agree”) were with the following statements:

- “They are important places for wildlife” was selected by 92% of respondents in both UK and in England; and
- “They are places where people can relax and de-stress” (88% in the UK and in England agreed).

Figure 5: Proportion of respondents and importance of woodlands and forests to the public, UK and England, 2023



Footnote:

1. Results are based on all respondents. Weighted totals: 11,055 (UK); 9,297 (England).

Respondents who had visited woodlands in the last few years were asked to what extent they agreed with a list of statements on why woodlands and forests are important to them personally.

Most respondents in 2023 agreed (selected “Strongly agree” or “Agree”) with most of the statements, but the highest level of agreement was with the following statements (Figure 6):

- “They are places where I can relax and de-stress” (91% in the UK and England);
- “They are places where I can have fun and enjoy myself” (85% in both the UK and England); and
- “They are places where I can exercise and keep fit” (82% in both the UK and England).

The lowest levels of agreements in 2023 were with the following statement:

- “They get me involved in local issues” (27% in both the UK and in England).
- “They are good places for me to socialise” (45% in both the UK and in England)

Figure 6: Proportion of respondents and importance of woodlands and forests to individuals, UK and England, 2023



Footnote:

1. Results are based on respondents who had visited woodlands. Weighted totals: UK: 8,186; England: 6,864.

Attitudes to forests and woodlands through the coronavirus pandemic

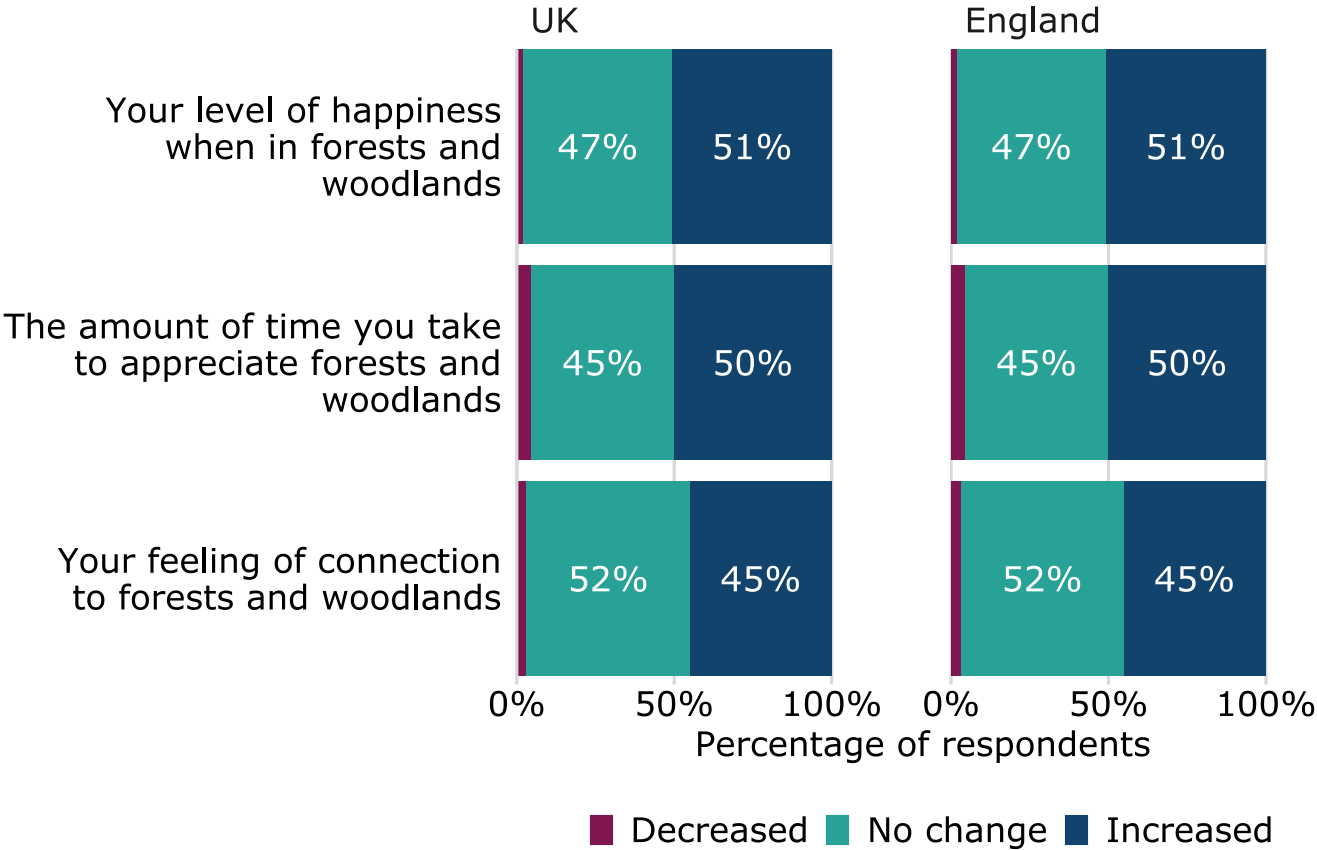
Three questions were added to the 2021 survey to explore the extent to which attitudes to forests and woodlands had changed due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions that had come into place from 23 March 2020 onwards. The questions were asked of all respondents who had visited woodlands in the last few years. These questions were asked again in the 2023 survey, to explore changes in public attitudes to forests and woodlands before (2019 survey), during (2021 survey) and after the pandemic (2023 survey).

When asked about the amount of time they had taken to appreciate forests and woodlands, 50% of respondents (both in the UK and in England) reported spending more time appreciating forest and woodlands since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 (Figure 7). Almost one half (45% in the UK and in England) reported no change and 5% (in the UK and in England) reported a decrease.

When asked about their feeling of connection to forests and woodlands, 45% of respondents (in the UK and in England) reported an increase, 52% (in the UK and in England) reported no change, and 3% (in both the UK and in England) reported a decrease.

Around one half (51%) of respondents who had visited woodlands (in the UK and in England) reported an increase in their level of happiness when in forests and woodlands. Almost one half (47% in the UK and in England) reported that their level of happiness stayed about the same while few reported a decrease (2% in both the UK and in England).

Figure 7: Proportion of respondents and views of forest and woodlands since the coronavirus pandemic, UK and England, 2023



Footnote:

- 1. Results are based on respondents who had visited woodlands in the last few years. Weighted totals: 8,186 (UK), 6,864 (England).

Climate change

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with a series of statements regarding the way in which UK forests and woodlands should be managed in response to the threat of climate change.

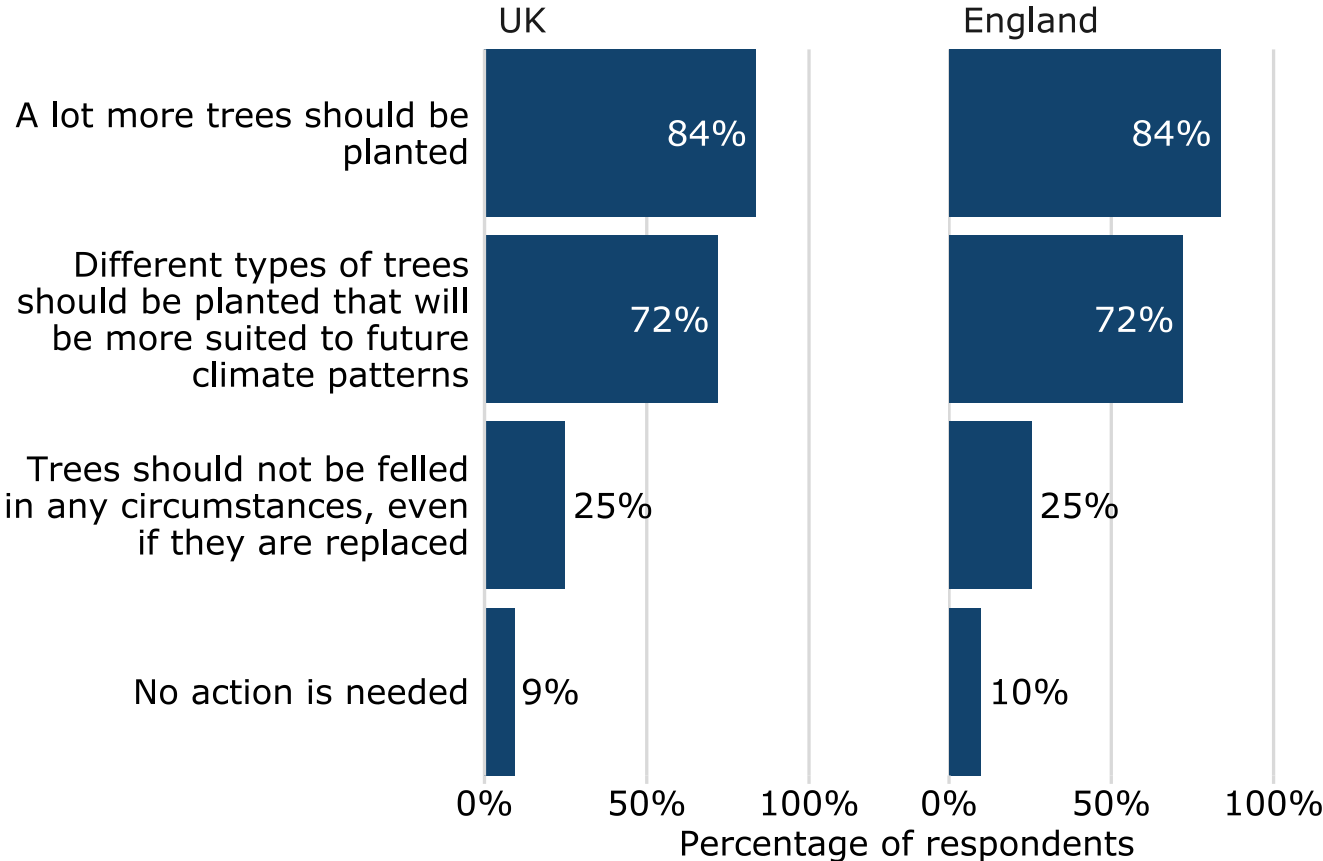
The majority of respondents in 2023 agreed or strongly agreed that (Figure 8):

- “A lot more trees should be planted” (84% in both the UK and in England); and
- “Different types of trees should be planted that will be more suited to future climates” (72% in both the UK and England).

Conversely, in 2023, relatively fewer respondents agreed or strongly agreed that:

- “No action is needed” (9% in the UK and 10% in England). This is a statistically significant decrease from the 30% (in the UK and in England) who said no action is needed in 2021; and
- “Trees should not be felled in any circumstances, even if they are replaced” (25% in both the UK and in England).

Figure 8: Respondents' views on the management of UK forests in response to the threat of climate change, UK and England, 2023



Footnote:

- 1. Results are based on all respondents. Weighted totals: UK: 11,055; England: 9,297.

Tree health

Respondents were presented with a series of statements relating to tree health and asked to indicate their level of agreement (Table 10). The majority of respondents to the 2023 survey agreed or strongly agreed that:

- “Action should be taken by authorities and woodland managers to protect trees from damaging pests and diseases” (82% in both the UK and in England); and that
- “Everyone should take action when visiting woodlands to help prevent the spread of damaging tree pests and diseases” (69% in both UK and England).

Relatively few respondents in 2023 agreed or strongly agreed that:

- “There is very little that anyone can do to prevent the spread of damaging pests and diseases” (15% in the UK and 16% in England); and that
- “I am aware that possible tree pests and diseases can be reported using the Tree Alert app or website” (17% in both the UK and in England). This represents a statistically significant fall in awareness of the Tree Alert app/website compared with 2021.

Table 10: Respondents' views on issues related to tree health and diseases, UK and England, 2021 to 2023

| Statement | UK 2021 | England 2021 | UK 2023 | England 2023 |
|---|--------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Action should be taken by authorities and woodland managers to protect trees from damaging pests and diseases | 77 | 76 | 82 | 82 |
| Everyone should take action when visiting woodlands to help prevent the spread of damaging tree pests and diseases | 69 | 69 | 69 | 69 |
| I would be willing to look out for and report sightings of pests and diseases on trees, if appropriate information and advice was available to me | 62 | 61 | 64 | 65 |
| If I buy an imported tree, it is more likely to carry tree pests and diseases than a tree grown in the UK | 44 | 44 | 38 | 38 |
| I am aware that possible tree pests and diseases can be reported using the Tree Alert app or website | 29 | 29 | 17 | 17 |
| There is very little that anyone can do to prevent the spread of damaging tree pests and diseases | 24 | 24 | 15 | 16 |

Footnote:

1. Results are based on all respondents. Weighted totals: UK: 2021 (5,119), 2023 (11,055); England: 2021 (4,304) 2023 (9,297).

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

Biosecurity

A set of precautions that aim to prevent the introduction and spread of harmful organisms. These may be pests, pathogens or invasive species.

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.

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.

Design factor

A factor applied in the calculation of confidence intervals to take account of the survey design (clustering, weighting, stratification) used in selecting the sample. A design factor of 1.5 is commonly assumed by Market Research companies for omnibus surveys of the population.

Forest

In the United Kingdom, there is no formal definition of “forest”; the term is often used for large woodland areas (especially conifers) or for old Royal hunting preserves such as the New Forest or the Forest of Dean.

Forest Research (FR)

The Forestry Commission agency responsible for forestry and tree related research (including statistics).

Forestry Commission (FC)

The government department responsible for forestry matters in England. The Forestry Commission’s functions in Wales transferred to the Welsh Government and to Natural Resources Wales on 1 April 2013. The Forestry Commission’s functions in Scotland transferred to Scottish Forestry and to Forestry and Land Scotland on 1 April 2019. The Forestry Commission is supported by two agencies; Forestry England and Forest Research.

Forestry England (FE)

The Forestry Commission agency responsible for managing the national forests in England. Prior to April 2019, Forestry England was known as Forest Enterprise England.

Great Britain (GB)

England, Wales and Scotland.

Proportion

A weighted percent.

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 minimum size of 0.5 hectares (0.1 hectares in Northern Ireland) and a canopy cover of at least 20%, or having the potential to achieve this, including integral open space, and including felled areas that are awaiting restocking.

Data sources and methodology

Background

Forest Research (and previously the Forestry Commission) has conducted biennial surveys of public attitudes to forestry and forestry-related issues since 1995. The surveys have evolved since then as follows:

- In the initial surveys, a representative sample of 2,000 adults across Great Britain (GB) was surveyed;
- In 2001, with more interest in country-level results within GB, additional questions were asked of representative samples of 1,000 adults in each of Scotland and Wales;
- Information has also been collected for Northern Ireland in the past through UK wide surveys in 2003 and the separate Northern Ireland surveys (1,000 adults) carried out in 2005, 2007, 2010, 2014, 2019 and 2023;
- In 2021, three separate surveys were carried out for the UK, for Wales and for Scotland. Some questions were asked in all three of the surveys conducted in 2021, but a number of questions have become survey-specific.
- In 2023, four separate surveys were carried for the UK, for Wales, for Scotland and for Northern Ireland. Some questions were asked in all four of the surveys conducted in 2023, but a number of questions have become survey-specific.

All surveys run until 2019 were conducted using face-to-face interviewing. The restrictions in place across the UK in early 2021 as a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic led to a change in methodology for the 3 surveys conducted that year. The 2021 survey in Scotland changed to use telephone interviews, whilst

the surveys across the UK and in Wales changed to use an online methodology. For the 2023 survey, Scotland again changed to an online methodology, meaning all four surveys in 2023 were conducted online.

A summary of the previous surveys, including the approximate number of adults interviewed for each country, is shown in Table A1. Results for England are a subset of the UK survey.

Table A1: Approximate sample sizes for the Public Opinion of Forestry surveys, UK, 2001 to 2023

| Year | UK ¹ | England ² | Wales | Scotland | Northern Ireland |
|------|-----------------|----------------------|-------|----------|------------------|
| 2001 | 2,000 | [x] | 1,000 | 1,000 | [x] |
| 2003 | 4,000 | 3,400 | 1,000 | 1,000 | [x] |
| 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 | [x] |
| 2010 | [x] | [x] | [x] | [x] | 1,000 |
| 2011 | 2,000 | 1,700 | 1,000 | 1,000 | [x] |
| 2013 | 2,000 | 1,600 | 1,000 | 1,000 | [x] |
| 2014 | [x] | [x] | [x] | [x] | 1,000 |
| 2015 | 2,000 | 1,500 | 1,000 | 1,000 | [x] |
| 2017 | 2,000 | 1,800 | 1,000 | 1,000 | [x] |
| 2019 | 2,200 | 1,800 | 1,000 | [x] | 1,000 |
| 2021 | 5,000 | 4,300 | 1,000 | 1,000 | [x] |
| 2023 | 11,100 | 9,300 | 1,000 | 1,000 | 1,000 |

Footnote:

1. 2001 and 2005 surveys covered Great Britain only (i.e., excluding Northern Ireland).
2. Results for England are derived from UK surveys.
3. [x]: no data available (no survey that year).

Survey Design

The 2023 survey results presented in this report are taken from a YouGov survey carried out from 27 February to 6 March 2023. The survey was based on a representative sample of 11,055 adults (aged 16 or over) from across the UK, of whom 9,313 adults were in England.

Kantar carried out the previous three surveys, using their CAPI Omnibus in 2017 and 2019 and their OnLineBus in 2021. The 2009 to 2015 surveys were obtained from the GfK NOP Random Location Omnibus survey. The UK 2007 survey data were also obtained from the Kantar TNS CAPI Omnibus survey and the 2003 and 2005 survey data were obtained from the TNS RSGB General Omnibus. These surveys had a similar sample size of 4,000 adults for UK/GB.

Methodology

All results for 2023, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 11,055 adults (aged 16 and over). Fieldwork was undertaken between 27 February and 6 March 2023. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults (aged 16 and over).

Emails are sent to panellists selected at random from the base sample. The email invites them to take part in a survey and provides a generic survey link. Once a panel member clicks on the link they are sent to the survey that they are most required for, according to the sample definition and quotas. The responding sample is weighted to the profile of the sample definition to provide a representative reporting sample. The profile is normally derived from census data or, if not available from the census, from industry accepted data.

Questionnaire

A copy of the 2023 questionnaire is provided at the end of this release. This covers the questions requested by Forest Research. 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, country/region) and some of these are also 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.

Quality

Results from the survey are weighted to population profiles to correct for imbalances between the profiles of the sample and the population, and therefore ensure that the weighted results are representative of the UK adult (aged 16 and over) population. Weighting is applied using population estimates from the Office for National Statistics. Each respondent is assigned a weight which reflects the number of people that they represent in the population.

For the 2023 survey, weighting has resulted in a decrease in the apparent number of respondents in England, from a total of 9,313 adults who completed the survey to a weighted total of 9,297.

The results quoted in this report are presented as proportions, which are percentages calculated from the weighted totals of respondents.

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) – this is known as a design factor and is commonly assumed to be around 1.5 for surveys of this type.

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 and includes an assumed design factor of 1.5:

- For questions asked in 2023 to the whole UK sample of 11,055, the range of uncertainty around any figure should be no more than $\pm 1.4\%$ ($\pm 1.5\%$ for the 9,297 respondents in England).
- For responses of subgroups, i.e., questions not posed to the whole sample of respondents, the range of uncertainty is correspondingly higher. For example, the uncertainty for statistics asked only to those who visited woodland (8,186 respondents in the UK and 6,864 in England) should be no more than $\pm 1.6\%$ for the UK and no more than $\pm 1.8\%$ for England.
- For questions asked to whole samples, differences of more than 2.5% (UK) or 2.7% (England) between the 2023 results and 2021 results are statistically significant.
- For questions asked only to those who had visited woodland, differences of more than 3.0% (UK) or 3.2% (England) between the 2023 results and 2021 results are statistically significant.

Given the small sample size of respondents living in Wales (weighted total = 531), Scotland (929) and Northern Ireland (298) in the UK survey, it is not recommended that the UK survey be used to provide results for these countries. Instead, please

refer to the [separate survey reports for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland](#) for relevant results.

For more information, see the [quality of official statistics page](#).

Revisions

Results for 2023 are published for the first time in this release. All results are final.

The proportion of respondents in England in 2019 who reported that they had visited forests or woodlands in the last few years has been revised from 62% to 63% to correct for an error. All other results for earlier years have not been revised from those previously released.

At time of publication, it was incorrectly reported that questions on climate change were asked to respondents who visited woodlands in the last few years. In 2023, these questions were asked to all respondents. This has been corrected.

[Our revisions policy](#) sets out how revisions and errors to these statistics are dealt with.

Further information

[Accompanying data sets](#) to this release provide more detailed results, showing standard breakdowns.

Proportions (weighted percentages) throughout the report and accompanying data set have been independently rounded, so may not add to the totals shown.

Release schedule

The UK and England Public Opinion of Forestry survey is a biennial survey, next due to run in early 2025 with results likely to be available in summer 2025.

Official Statistics

This is an Official Statistics publication. For more information about Official Statistics is available from the [UK Statistics Authority](#).

Public Opinion of Forestry Survey 2023: UK and England Questionnaire

[All.]

Q1a In the last few years have you visited forests or woodlands for walks, picnics or other recreation?

(Single answer)

- Yes, I have
- No, I have not

[Ask if answered "Yes" to Q1a.]

Q1b Did you visit woodlands in the countryside or woodlands in and around towns or both?

(Single answer)

- Woodlands in the countryside
- Woodlands in and around towns
- Both
- Don't know/can't recall

[All.]

Q1c Which, if any, of the following, are the main reasons for you not visiting woodland/forests more often or at all?

(Multi-answer)

- Don't have a car
- Lack of suitable public transport

- Other personal mobility reasons (difficulty in walking, unwell, etc.)
- Woods are too far away
- Cost of visiting
- Lack of information about woods to visit
- Concerns that woods are not safe
- Woodlands are badly maintained
- Lack of confidence
- Lack of facilities (play areas, picnic areas, etc.)
- Not interested in visiting more often
- I'm too busy/not enough time
- Prefer other areas of countryside
- Bad weather
- Too difficult to maintain social distancing while outside (e.g., because of other people or a lack of space)
- Concerns about infection (e.g., from touching gates)
- None of the above
- Don't know

[Ask if answered "Yes" to Q1a.]

Q2 How, if at all, has the number of visits you have taken to forests and woodlands changed in the last 12 months (i.e., since 1 March 2022), compared to the previous year?

(Single answer)

- Increased a lot
- Increased a little
- No change
- Decreased a little

- Decreased a lot
- Don't know

[Ask if answered "Yes" to Q1a.]

Q3 How, if at all, has the total amount of time you spent visiting forests and woodlands changed in the last 12 months (i.e., since 1 March 2022), compared to the previous year?

(Single answer)

- Increased a lot
- Increased a little
- No change
- Decreased a little
- Decreased a lot
- Don't know

[Ask if answered "Yes" to Q1a.]

Q4 How, if at all, has the distance you travel to visit forests and woodlands changed in the last 12 months (i.e., since 1 March 2023), compared to the previous year?

(Single answer)

- Increased a lot
- Increased a little
- No change
- Decreased a little
- Decreased a lot
- Don't know

[Ask if answered "Yes" to Q1a.]

We are now going to ask you about your visits to forests and woodlands in the last 12 months; first about last summer, and then since then.

Q5a How frequently, if at all, did you visit forests and woodlands last summer, i.e., the six months between April and September 2022?

(Single answer)

- Several times per week
- Several times per month
- About once a month
- Less often than once a month
- Never
- Don't know

[If answered "Never" to Q5a, go to Q6.]

Thinking about your most recent visit to a forest or woodland in those six months between April and September 2022...

Q5b What was the duration of your visit to the forest or woodland?

(Single answer)

- Less than 10 minutes
- 10 to 19 minutes
- 20 to 29 minutes
- 30 to 59 minutes
- 60 to 89 minutes
- 90 to 119 minutes
- 120 minutes or over
- Don't know

Q5c Which, if any, was the main recreational activity you undertook on this visit?

(Single answer)

- Walking
- Dog-walking
- Running
- Wildlife watching
- Picnicking
- Children's playground
- Woodland crafts
- Horse riding
- Climbing
- Hunting
- Fishing
- Off-road driving/motorcycling
- Off-road cycling/mountain biking
- Sightseeing/visitor attractions
- Swimming outdoors
- Other (please specify)
- Don't know

Q5d Approximately how far in miles did you travel to get to the forest or woodland? (If you're not sure, please select your best estimate.)

(Single answer)

- Less than 1 mile
- 1 to 2 miles

- 3 to 10 miles
- 11 to 50 miles
- More than 50 miles
- Don't know

[If answered "Yes" to Q1a.]

Now thinking about your visit forests and woodlands since October 2022...

Q6a How frequently, if at all, did you visit forests and woodlands this winter, i.e., the six months between October 2022 and March 2023?

(Single answer)

- Several times per week
- Several times per month
- About once a month
- Less often than once a month
- Never
- Don't know

[If answered "Never" to Q6a, go to Q7.]

Thinking about your most recent visit to a forest or woodland since October 2022...

Q6b What was the duration of your visit to the forest or woodland?

(Single answer)

- Less than 10 minutes
- 10 to 19 minutes
- 20 to 29 minutes
- 30 to 59 minutes
- 60 to 89 minutes

- 90 to 119 minutes
- 120 minutes or over
- Don't know

Q6c What was the main recreational activity you undertook on this visit?

(Single answer)

- Walking
- Dog-walking
- Running
- Wildlife watching
- Picnicking
- Children's playground
- Woodland crafts
- Horse riding
- Climbing
- Hunting
- Fishing
- Off-road driving/motorcycling
- Off-road cycling/mountain biking
- Sightseeing/visitor attractions
- Swimming outdoors
- Other (please specify)
- Don't know

Q6d Approximately how far in miles did you travel to get to the forest or woodland?

(Single answer)

- Less than 1 mile
- 1 to 2 miles
- 3 to 10 miles
- 11 to 50 miles
- More than 50 miles
- Don't know

[If answered "Yes" to Q1a.]

Q7 Who, if anyone, managed the forest or woodland you visited most recently?

(Single answer)

- Community Managed Woodland
- Forestry England
- Forestry and Land Scotland
- Natural Resources Wales
- Local Authority
- National Trust or National Trust Scotland
- Woodland Trust
- Other (specify)
- Don't know

[If answered "Yes" to Q1a.]

Thinking back about all of your visits to forests or woodlands over the last 12 months (i.e., since 1 March 2022)...

Q8 How many times, if any, did you visit a forest or woodland managed by Forestry England? (If you are not sure please select your best estimate)

(Single answer)

- None
- Once or twice
- 3-5 times
- 6-10 times
- About once a month
- About once a fortnight
- About once a week
- About twice a week
- About once a day
- About twice a day
- More often than twice a day

[All.]

Q9 Which, if any, of the following organisations are you a member of?

(Multi-answer)

- English Heritage, Historic Scotland, or Cadw
- Forestry England
- National Trust or National Trust for Scotland
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
- A wildlife trust

- Woodland Trust
- None of the above

[All.]

Q10 Which, if any, of the following have you done in the past 12 months (i.e., since 1 March 2022)?

(Multi-answer)

- Been involved or consulted about plans for creating/managing or using woodlands in your area
- Been involved in an organised tree planting event
- Been involved in voluntary work in connection with a woodland (e.g., physical work in a wood, admin, fund raising, running a group)
- Become or are a member of a community-based woodland group such as a Community Trust or "Friends of" group
- None of these
- Don't know

[All.]

Now thinking specifically about forests and woodlands...

Q11 To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

(1) strongly agree, (2) tend to agree, (3) neither agree nor disagree, (4) tend to disagree, (5) strongly disagree

- They contribute to the local economy
- They are places where people can relax and de-stress
- They are places where people can exercise and keep fit

- They are places where people can have fun and enjoy themselves
- They are places where people can learn about the environment
- They are places where people can learn about local culture or history
- They are important places for wildlife
- They bring the community together
- They make areas nicer places to live
- They get people involved in local issues

[If answered "Yes" to Q1a.]

Now thinking specifically about forests and woodlands you have visited...

Q12 To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

(1) strongly agree, (2) tend to agree, (3) neither agree nor disagree, (4) tend to disagree, (5) strongly disagree

They are places where I can relax and de-stress

- They are places where I can exercise and keep fit
- They are places where I can have fun and enjoy myself
- They are good places for me to socialise
- They are places where I can learn about the environment
- They are places where I can learn about local culture or history
- They get me involved in local issues
- They are places where I feel at home

[If answered "Yes" to Q1a.]

Thinking specifically about forests and woodlands you have visited...

Q13 How has each of the following changed, if at all, from before the start of the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic (March 2020) compared to now?

(1) significantly increased, (2) some increase, (3) stayed the same, (4) some decrease, (5) significantly decreased

- Your feeling of connection to forests and woodlands
- Your level of happiness when in forests and woodlands
- The amount of time you take to appreciate forests and woodlands (e.g., listening to bird song, noticing butterflies)

[All.]

Thinking about managing UK forests and woodlands in response to climate change...

Q14 To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

(1) strongly agree, (2) tend to agree, (3) neither agree nor disagree, (4) tend to disagree, (5) strongly disagree, (6) don't know

- No action is needed
- A lot more trees should be planted
- Trees should not be felled in any circumstances, even if they are replaced
- Different types of trees should be planted that will be more suited to future climates

[All.]

Q15 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements relating to tree health?

(1) strongly agree, (2) tend to agree, (3) neither agree nor disagree, (4) tend to disagree, (5) strongly disagree, (6) don't know

- Everyone should take action when visiting woodlands to help prevent the spread of damaging tree pests and diseases (e.g., by brushing the soil from their bikes, boots, buggies and clothing between visits to parks, woodlands and gardens).
- I would be willing to look out for and report sightings of pests and diseases on trees, if appropriate information and advice was available to me.
- There is very little that anyone can do to prevent the spread of damaging tree pests and diseases.
- Action should be taken by authorities and woodland managers to protect trees from damaging pests and diseases.
- If I buy an imported tree, it is more likely to carry tree pests and diseases than a tree grown in the UK.
- I am aware that possible tree pests and diseases can be reported using the Tree Alert website.

[All]

Q16a Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last for 12 months or more?

(Single answer)

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

[Ask if answered "Yes" to Q16a, else to END.]

Q16b Do any of these conditions or illnesses affect your use of woodlands/forests or other greenspaces?

(Single answer)

- Yes

- No
- Don't know/not sure

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