

Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment

The national survey on people and the natural environment



Headline Report from the 2014-15 survey



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Natural England Joint Report JP014

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Foreword

Natural England produces a range of reports providing evidence and advice to assist us in delivering our duties.

Background

In 2009 Natural England, Defra and the Forestry Commission commissioned TNS to undertake the Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) survey for the first time.

The data enables Natural England, its partners and data users to:

- Understand how people use, enjoy and are motivated to protect the natural environment.
- Monitor changes in use of the natural environment over time, at a range of different spatial scales and for key groups within the population.
- Inform on-the-ground initiatives to help them link more closely to people's needs.
- Evaluate the impact and effectiveness of related policy and initiatives.
- Measure the impact of and inform policy relating to the natural environment.

The MENE headline report

This report presents the headline findings for the sixth year of MENE fieldwork from March 2014 to February 2015, with comparisons to previous surveys as appropriate.

A separate report that will look more deeply at coastal themes within the MENE survey data and provide a preview of a future thematic report on urban greenspaces will follow and is due to be published early 2016.

Published alongside this report are:

- A Technical Report providing full details of the survey methodology, sampling, grossing and weighting and estimates of confidence intervals.
- An electronic data table viewer: an interactive tool which allows detailed analysis of the MENE dataset.

Please see GOV.UK for further outputs from the survey:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/monitor-of-engagement-with-the-natural-environment-survey-purpose-and-results>

National Statistics

The UK Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- Meet identified user needs.
- Are well explained and readily accessible.
- Are produced according to sound methods.
- Are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

The responsible Statistician for this publication is Haney King: haney.king@naturalengland.org.uk

Keywords: visits, engagement, natural environment, participation, motivations, barriers, activities and expenditure

This report can be downloaded from the Natural England website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/monitor-of-engagement-with-the-natural-environment-2014-to-2015>

For information on Natural England publications contact the Natural England Enquiry Service on 0845 600 3078 or e-mail **MENE@naturalengland.org.uk**.

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Haney King works for Natural England's Evidence Team and has been the responsible Statistician for the MENE survey since 2014. He is a member of the Government Statistical Service, and has overall responsibility for statistical capability within Natural England.

Duncan Stewart (Director at TNS) is an Associate Member of the Market Research Society with over 15 years of experience in undertaking tourism, leisure and outdoor recreation research. In his role as overall TNS MENE project lead, Duncan, in conjunction with Vicky Wilson, discusses the headline findings emerging from the MENE Year 5 data, as well as trends that have been seen to emerge from the first five survey years.

Russell Bradshaw is a director in TNS's Marketing Science Centre, an expert community of experienced quantitative researchers that specialise in and support a wide range of advanced analytical techniques. His contribution in this report has been in investigating the relationship between people's claimed concern for the environment and their actual behaviours.

Vicky Wilson is a Research Manager at TNS with over 11 years of experience in undertaking tourism, leisure and outdoor recreation research and is an Associate Member of the Market Research Society (MRS). In this publication, in conjunction with Duncan Stewart, she outlines the headline findings emerging from the MENE Year 5 data and discusses a number of trends that have been seen to emerge from the first five survey years.

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1 Introduction

- 1.1. This report summarises the headline findings from the sixth year of the Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) survey. Where appropriate, comparisons have been made with previous survey years. The survey was undertaken by TNS on behalf of Natural England, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the Forestry Commission.
- 1.2. A separate report containing in-depth analysis from the survey undertaken around several key themes will be available in early 2016.

Background

- 1.3. In the six years since the survey commenced, a wealth of evidence on outdoor recreation behaviour, attitudes and engagement with the natural environment has been collected. MENE has provided a basis for specific analysis on areas such as how members of different societal groups and children engage with the outdoors. The data set also provides scope for deeper exploration of the data in relation to areas such as well-being, the impact of seasonality on visit taking and the relationship between valuing the natural environment and actions taken to protect it.

Survey aims and objectives

- 1.4. This survey aims to provide information about the relationship between people and the natural environment. Whilst the main focus of the survey is on visits to the natural environment, it also seeks to capture other ways of using or enjoying the natural environment such as time spent in the garden and watching nature programmes on television.
- 1.5. The objectives of the survey are to:
 - Provide estimates of the number of visits to the natural environment by the English adult population (16 years and over).
 - Measure the extent of participation in visits to the natural environment and identify the barriers and drivers that shape participation.
 - Provide robust information on the characteristics of visitors and visits to the natural environment.
 - Measure other ways of using and enjoying the natural environment.
 - Identify patterns in use and participation for key groups within the population and at a range of spatial scales.

Survey scope

- 1.6. The survey relates to engagement with the natural environment. By natural environment we mean all green open spaces in and around towns and cities as well as the wider countryside and coastline.
- 1.7. The main focus of the survey is on leisure visits to the outdoors in the natural environment, away from home and private gardens. This could be anything from a few minutes to all day. These may include time spent close to a person's home or workplace, further afield or while on holiday in England. Routine shopping trips or time spent in a person's own garden are not included in the definition of a leisure visit in MENE.
- 1.8. The survey also includes a smaller section of questions regarding engagement with the natural environment other than that experienced during visits. This includes activities such as time spent in private gardens, watching nature programmes on television, undertaking pro-environmental activities such as recycling and access to a private garden.

1.9. Throughout this report, the following terminology is used to describe the timings of survey fieldwork:

Date	Also referred to as:	Fieldwork period
2009/10	Year one	Mar 2009 – Feb 2010
2010/11	Year two	Mar 2010 – Feb 2011
2011/12	Year three	Mar 2011 – Feb 2012
2012/13	Year four	Mar 2012 – Feb 2013
2013/14	Year five	Mar 2013 – Feb 2014
2014/15	Year six	Mar 2014 – Feb 2015

1.10. Please note that any trends or variations between results highlighted in the text are statistically significant unless stated otherwise. This means that differences between results, for example when comparing two years or two population groups, have been proven through statistical analysis as likely to be real differences at the 95 per cent confidence limits, as opposed to differences which are the result of sampling error or chance¹.

Further publications from the survey

1.11. This annual report forms one part of a larger family of outputs from the survey. Published alongside this report are a technical report, an electronic data viewer, quarterly reports, SPSS and Excel data sets. To access these, go to:

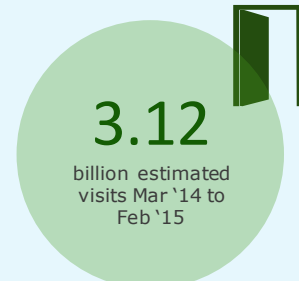
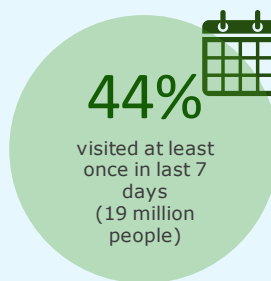
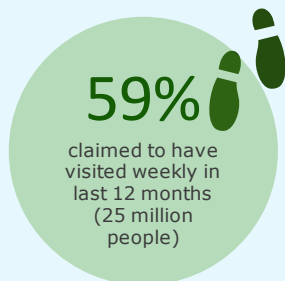
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/monitor-of-engagement-with-the-natural-environment-survey-purpose-and-results>

¹ An Independent Samples T-Test has been used to determine statistical significance. Only differences with a p-value of less than 0.05 have been presented in this report as likely to be real differences.

2 Headline findings

Summary

In year six...



827 million visits
Parks in towns/ cities (26%)



1.51 billion visits
Walking with a dog (48%)



456 million visits
Paths/ cycleways/ bridleways (15%)



866 million visits
Walking, no dog (28%)



417 million visits
Woodlands/ Forests (13%)



326 million visits
Playing with children (10%)

Frequency of visits

- 2.1. As shown in Figure 2.1 below, between the 2009/10 and 2014/15 survey period there was a significant increase in the proportion of the population who claimed to visit the natural environment once a week or more rising from 54 per cent in year one to 59 per cent in year six.
- 2.2. The largest variations in visit behaviour have been recorded for the frequency rather than the overall level of visits taken. The proportion of those who indicated that they never visit the natural environment has been relatively stable, particularly over the past five years.

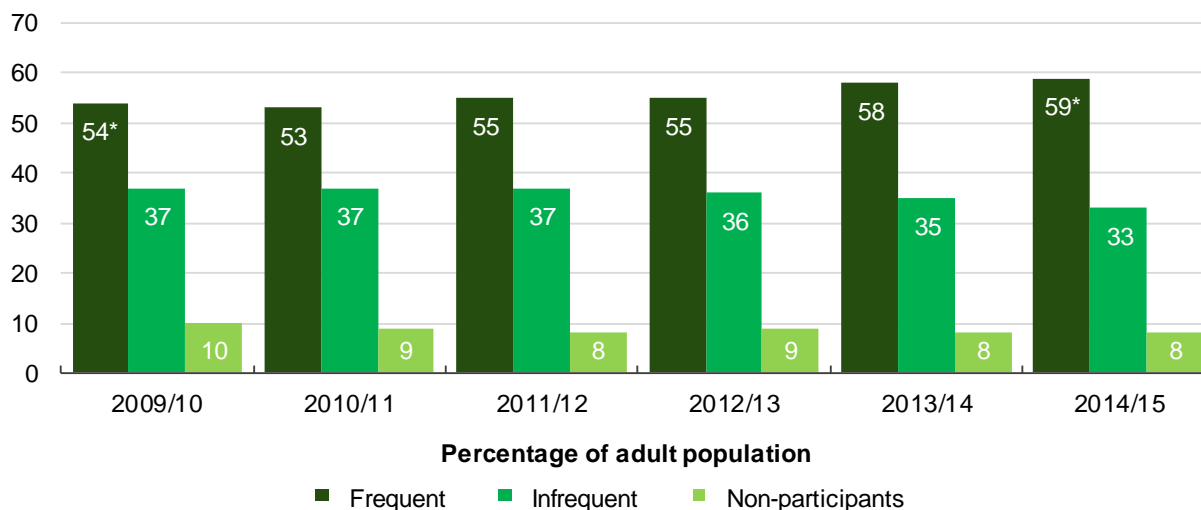


Figure 2.1 Frequency of participation in visits to the natural environment

Q17 Thinking about the last 12 months, how often on average have you spent your leisure time out of doors, away from home? (Base: 2009/10 N=11,107; 2010/11 N=10,630; 2011/12 N= 10,587; 2012/13 N=10,544; 2013/14 N=10,552; 2014/15 N=10,471)

* Indicates a statistically significant variation between the highlighted results

- 2.3. As shown in Figure 2.2 overleaf, between March 2014 and February 2015, an average of 44% of the population had visited the outdoors in the last seven days. This was the first significant increase since year three and an overall increase from year two of the survey.
- 2.4. With the exception of year two, the highest proportion of the population visiting the natural environment has tended to be recorded for the June to August period, and the December to February quarter has tended to record the greatest variation in the proportion of visits. As shown in Figure 2.2, there was a significant increase in the proportion of visits recorded in this last quarter from a third in 2009/10 to around four in ten in 2014/15.

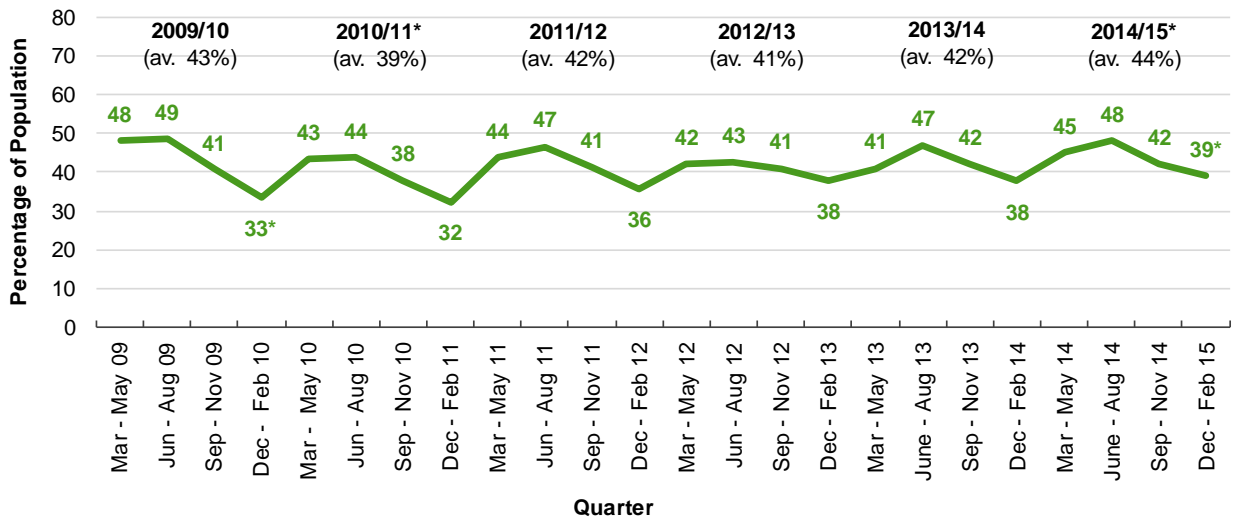


Figure 2.2 Percentage of adult population taking visits to the natural environment in the previous seven days

Q1 How many times, if at all, did you make this type of visit? (Base: All respondents, weekly questions 2009/10 N=48,514; 2010/11 N=46,099; 2011/12 N=47,418; 2012/13 N=46,749; 2013/14 N=46,785; 2014/15 N=42,341)

* Indicates a significant variation between the highlighted results

Places and activities

2.5. The trend noted in previous years of increased visits to destinations in towns/ cities continued in year six when almost half of visits were taken to this type of destination (48 per cent) compared to just under two-fifths in year two (37 per cent). The proportion of visits to countryside destinations and the proportion of visits to seaside/ coastal areas have remained relatively consistent.

Table 2.1 Proportion of visits by general place visited by survey year

Q2 Which of the following best describes where you spent most of your time on this visit? (Base: All visits, weekly questions 2009/10 N=58,653; 2010/11 N=47,825; 2011/12 N=53,898; 2012/13 N=53,208; 2013/14 N=55,897; 2014/15 N=55,573)

	Volume of visits (billions)					
	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Countryside	1.38	1.31	1.41	1.35	1.31	1.31
Towns and cities	1.16	0.92*	1.05*	1.22*	1.36*	1.50
Seaside resort	0.21	0.17*	0.16	0.19	0.17	0.20
Other coastal	0.11	0.09	0.10	0.10	0.09	0.11
Total (billions)	2.86	2.49	2.73	2.85	2.93	3.12

* Denotes a significant variation from previous year

2.6. As shown in the Table 2.1, the annual estimate for visits taken to towns and cities was 1.50 billion in year six, a 29 per cent increase on the year one estimate of 1.16 billion.

2.7. Parks in towns and cities continued to be the most visited specific destination with around a quarter, or an estimated 827 million, visits recorded in 2014/15 taken to this type of destination. An estimated 456 million visits were taken to paths/ cycleways/ bridleways and 417 million visits to woodlands/ forests.

2.8. Walking continued to be the most commonly undertaken activity on outdoor visits, particularly walking with a dog which was undertaken on around half of visits in 2014/15, or an estimated 1.51 billion visits. Walking without a dog accounted for fewer than three in ten visits (an estimated 866 million visits), while around one in ten visits included playing with children (an estimated 326 million visits).

Motivations and attitudes

2.9. Health and exercise continued to be one of the most frequently cited motivations for visiting the outdoors. The proportion of visits where this was cited as a motivation rose from around a third in year one to just under half in year four, a level that has been maintained for the past three years (as shown in Figure 2.3 below).

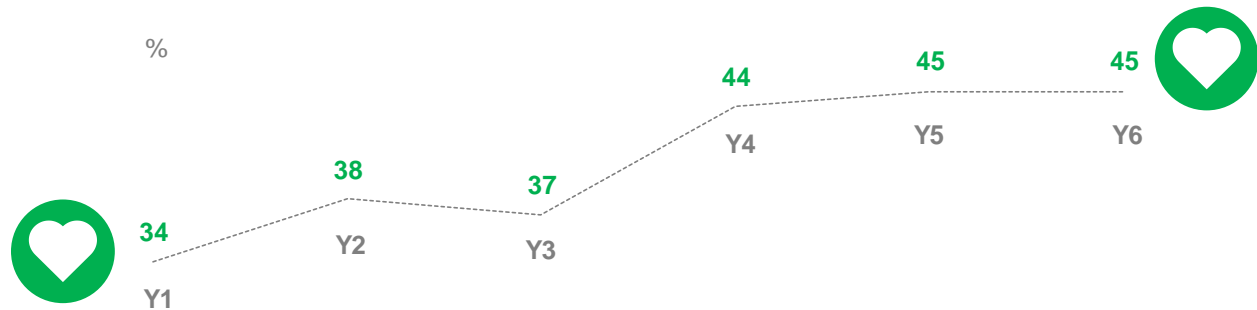


Figure 2.3 Proportions of visits where health/ exercise cited as a motivation

Q12 Which of the following, if any, best describe your reasons for this visit? (Base: Random visits, weekly questions March to February 2013/14 N=18,658)

- 2.10. In terms of other visit motivations, just under half of visits in year six were taken to exercise a dog (47 per cent), while around three in ten were taken to relax/ unwind (29 per cent) and/or to enjoy fresh air or pleasant weather (29 per cent).
- 2.11. The reasons given for not visiting the outdoors frequently, or indeed at all, have not varied significantly over the years. A lack of time due to work remained the most frequently cited barrier in year six cited by three in ten infrequent/ non-visitors.
- 2.12. The visit outcomes reported over the years have not varied significantly with enjoyment consistently recorded as the most prevalent outcome. Almost all of those who had taken visits in 2014/15 agreed that they enjoyed their visit while over four-fifths felt refreshed/ revitalised, appreciated their surroundings and/or felt calm and relaxed.

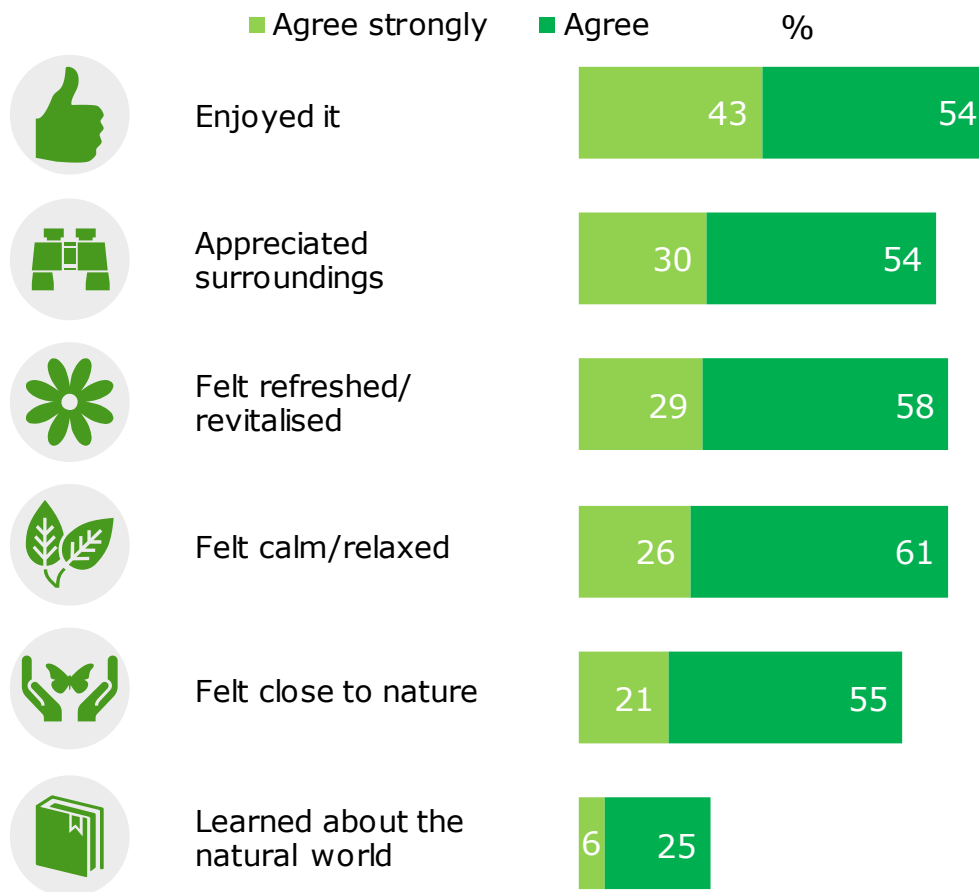


Figure 2.4 Outcomes of visits to the natural environment

E1 Thinking of this visit, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (Base: Random visits, quarterly questions March to February 2014/15 N=1,385)

- 2.13 While participation in pro-environmental behaviours such as recycling and volunteering have not varied significantly over time, there have been changes recorded with regards to willingness to make lifestyle changes to benefit the environment (Figure 2.5).
- 2.14 Notably, the proportion of the population that indicated that they like their lifestyle and were 'not likely to change' has risen overall from just over a quarter (26 per cent) in year 1 to just over a third (35 per cent) in year six. Over the 6 years of the study, those aged 55 and over have consistently been more likely than younger people to indicate that they are not likely to change their lifestyle.

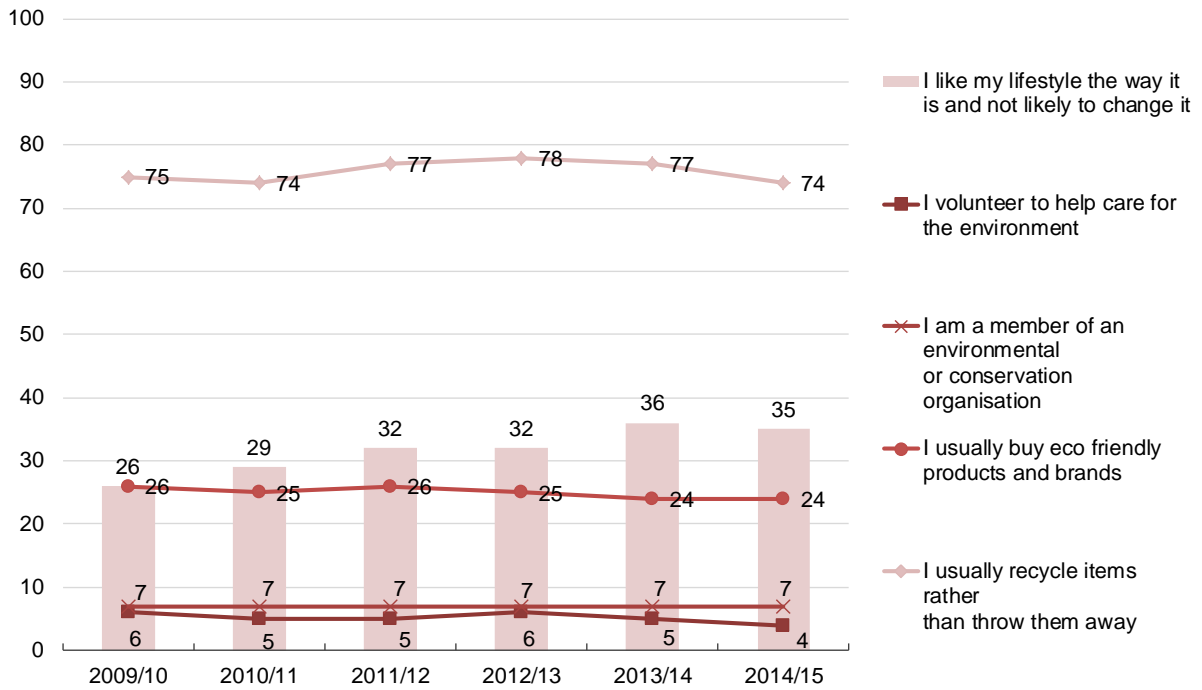


Figure 2.5 Pro-environmental behaviours (lines) and proportion of population not likely to change lifestyle (bars) (%)

E4 Thinking about the last 12 months, which of the following environment-related activities did you do?
 E5 Please think about whether or not you are likely to make changes to your lifestyle to protect the environment, for example by recycling rather than throwing things away, using your car less and buying local food. Which of these statements best describes your intentions? (Proportions selecting 'I like my lifestyle the way it is and not likely to change it' as a response)

(Base: All respondents, quarterly questions 2009/10 N=3,549; 2010/11 N=3,568; 2011/12 N=3,544; 2012/13 N=3,528; 2013/14 N=3,535; 2014/15 N=3,419)