England Biodiversity Indicators 2020

This document supports
13. Awareness, understanding and support for conservation

**Technical background document:
Measuring public engagement with biodiversity loss in
England: awareness, concern and action**

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For further information on the England Biodiversity Indicators visit
https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/england-biodiversity-indicators

Technical background document – measuring public engagement with biodiversity loss in England: awareness, concern and action

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Introduction

1. This indicator monitors progress against Aichi target 1:

   By 2020, at the latest, people are aware of the values of biodiversity and the steps they can take to conserve and use it sustainably.

   It addresses public awareness of biodiversity, concern about biodiversity loss, and support for performing actions that can help to conserve it.

2. A hierarchical system is used to group people in England according to the extent to which they are aware of the threat to biodiversity in England, their level of concern about the loss of biodiversity and the number and type of actions they take to support and protect it.

3. Data for this indicator comes from questions on awareness of, concern for, and actions taken to prevent biodiversity loss, which have been incorporated into the Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) survey in England. More details on this survey can be found in Annex 1.

4. The questions used to inform this indicator are based on questions used to define the 'Public Engagement with Loss of Biodiversity' system in the 2013 Defra *Engaging people in biodiversity issues* report.

5. The tier system developed in the Defra Study was defined using rigorous quantitative analysis of survey data and resulted in a set of evidence-based criteria and decision rules that could be used to assign people from the general population into 5 discrete groups, reflecting different levels of engagement in biodiversity issues. The tier definitions developed gave internally consistent findings across the (extensive) survey in terms of attitudes and behaviours, and tiers were of sufficient size to allow further analysis and policy targeting.

6. In order to try and ensure this biodiversity indicator is equally representative of the general population and a useful way of monitoring progress against Aichi target 1, key questions have been extracted from the Defra report (those that were identified as the most effective for deciding which groups people belonged to); these are used in a similar manner to classify survey respondents into the 5 groups in the indicator.

7. A complete list of the questions incorporated into the MENE survey can be found in Annex 2.

Group definitions

The indicator groups respondents as follows:

Group 1: Does not anticipate a loss of biodiversity in the UK (exact wording of question varied between surveys).

Group 2: Believes there will be a loss of biodiversity in the future but is not concerned about the loss of biodiversity.

Group 3: Believes there will be a loss of biodiversity; is concerned about a loss of biodiversity and performs 0 to 2 'day-to-day' actions to support and protect biodiversity.

Group 4: Believes there will be a loss of biodiversity, is concerned about that loss and performs all 3 'day-to-day' actions or 1 to 2 'day-to-day' actions and at least one 'higher effort' action.

Group 5: Believes there will be a loss of biodiversity, is concerned about that loss and performs all 3 'day-to-day' actions as well as 1 to 2 'higher effort' actions.

Respondents that fall into group 1 are labelled as 'not aware', respondents in group 2 are labelled as 'not engaged', respondents in group 3 are said to show 'some engagement' and respondents in group 4 or group 5 are combined and said to show 'high engagement'.

A 'higher effort' action is a behaviour that has the capability to persuade others and lead to changes that might impact on biodiversity loss at a national level. Higher effort behaviours require the participant to act outside the realms of regular daily life and are adopted by only a niche group of people. The higher effort actions asked about in the questions used to inform this indicator are:

- 'volunteered with a project or organisation to help protect the environment/wildlife'; and
- 'signed a conservation petition or participated in a conservation campaign (online or other)'.

'Day-to-day' behaviours are more a measure of engagement than behaviours that will actually prevent biodiversity loss. The day-to-day behaviours asked about in the questions used to inform this indicator are:

- wildlife gardening;
- green consumerism;
- and membership of an organisation that helps to look after wildlife or the natural environment.

Data is analysed by country, before being compiled to give UK figures. The results of each of the 4 countries are weighted by population size to ensure the UK figure is as representative as possible. Estimate of population size are taken from the Office for National Statistics website.

Indicator assessment

At present, there are only 3 data points in the data series, so it is not possible to assess this indicator. In the future, the total proportion of people that fall within groups 4 and 5 (and can therefore be said to show 'high engagement') will be assessed. An assessment of change in the indicator will be made by comparing the proportion of people in groups 4 and 5 in a given year to the proportion of people in the baseline year (2014). A threshold of 3% will be used to say if the indicator is increasing, decreasing or has shown no change.

Web links for further information

Defra Awareness research: Engaging people in biodiversity issues
Office for National Statistics: UK population estimates

Annex 1: Survey for indicator questions in England

Survey name: Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment

Total sample size (approx.): ~45,000 a year, but individual questions can be inserted for quarters (periods of 3 months)

Frequency of survey cycle: Continuous data collection: 800 interviews/week

Frequency of reporting: Annual

Survey start date: 2009

Survey method: Face-to-face interviews

Sample size for the 2014 indicator: 3,419

Sample size for the 2017 indicator: 3,666

Sample size for the 2018 indicator: 3,498

Annex 2: Indicator questions in the Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment Survey (MENE) in England

Awareness

We would like you to think about the variety of all species of animals and plants that are alive on our planet.

Thinking about the variety of life in the next 50 years, which of the following statements do you most agree with?

In England, there will be less variety of life = code 1
In England, there will be no change to the variety = code 2
In England, there will be more variety of life = code 3

Concern

How concerned are you about the consequences of a loss of variety of life in England?

Not at all concerned = code 1
Not concerned = code 2
Neither concerned or unconcerned = code 3
Concerned = code 4
Extremely concerned = code 5
Don't know = code 6

Actions

Thinking about the last 12 months, which of the following environment-related activities do you do? Please choose all that apply.

- I usually buy eco-friendly products and brands

- I am a member of an environmental or conservation organisation

- I volunteer to help care for the environment

- I donate my time at least once every three months to an environmental or conservation organisation (**NB.** a yes to this action or the one above counts as a yes to 'volunteering' for indicator purposes)

- I have signed a conservation petition or participated in an online/other conservation campaign

Thinking about your garden or communal garden, which of the following statements, if any, do you agree with? Select all those that apply to you.

- I encourage wildlife in my garden