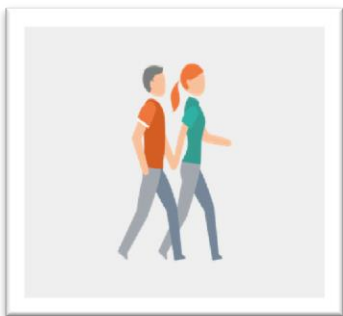
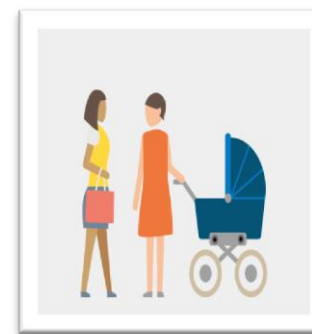
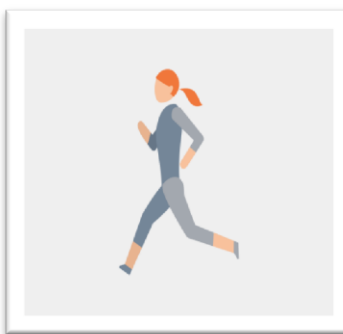
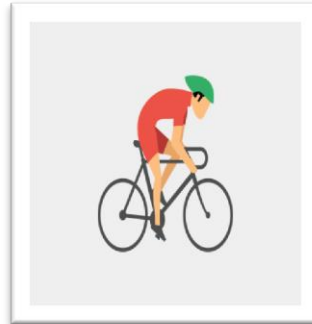
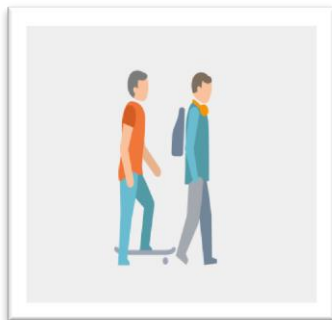


## Scottish Natural Heritage

# Young adults and nature: key research findings



Published: May 2019

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## INTRODUCTION

Connecting young people with nature is an important part of Scottish Natural Heritage's (SNH) work and this report summarises some of the most recent research findings relating to the behaviour and attitudes of young adults aged between 16 and 24. It includes data on participation in outdoor recreation and looks at the extent to which young adults are aware of and engaged with, for example, wildlife, biodiversity loss and climate change.

The main data sources used are Scotland's People and Nature Survey (SPANS) and the Scottish Nature Omnibus Survey (SNO) which are commissioned by SNH on a regular basis to provide insights into how people in Scotland use, value and enjoy the natural environment. The report also includes data from the Scottish Government's Scottish Household Survey. Each of these surveys are based on interviews with a representative sample of the adult population (aged 16 and over) living in Scotland. More information on SPANS and the SNO is available on the [measuring participation](#) page of the SNH website. More information on the Scottish Household Survey is available [here](#).

Please note that for some survey questions, data for more than one year of fieldwork have been aggregated to provide a robust sub-sample of respondents aged between 16 and 24.

## HEADLINE RESEARCH FINDINGS

- Participation in outdoor recreation among 16-24 year olds (and among younger adults more generally) is higher than average.
- The main factors that motivate this age group to visit the outdoors are health and exercise, relaxation and spending time with family and friends. A quarter of the outdoor visits taken by 16-24 year olds are accompanied by friends.
- Almost half of the outdoor visits taken by 16-24 year olds are taken in urban areas with local parks the most popular type of destination.
- Walking is the main mode of transport used by 16-24 year olds on outdoor visits. Compared to the population as a whole, this age group is less likely to use a car and more likely to travel by bike or use public transport.
- Awareness of the range of wildlife species that exist in Scotland and understanding of the issues around wildlife management is relatively low among the population as a whole and lower than average among 16-24 year olds. Around a quarter of this age group say they feel concerned about Scotland's wildlife.
- A growing proportion of 16-24 year olds now view climate change as an immediate and urgent problem. The proportion of people who subscribe to this view has increased across all age groups since 2013 with the biggest increase occurring in the 16-24 year old group.
- More than half of 16-24 year olds anticipate biodiversity loss in Scotland over the next 50 years although relatively few describe themselves as very interested, very concerned or feel that the subject is personally relevant.
- Most 16-24 year olds say they've done something to help look after the natural environment in the last 12 months, typically by being a green consumer or a green traveller. Significantly fewer have volunteered, signed a petition or taken part in a campaign, or are members of an organisation which looks after nature or wildlife.

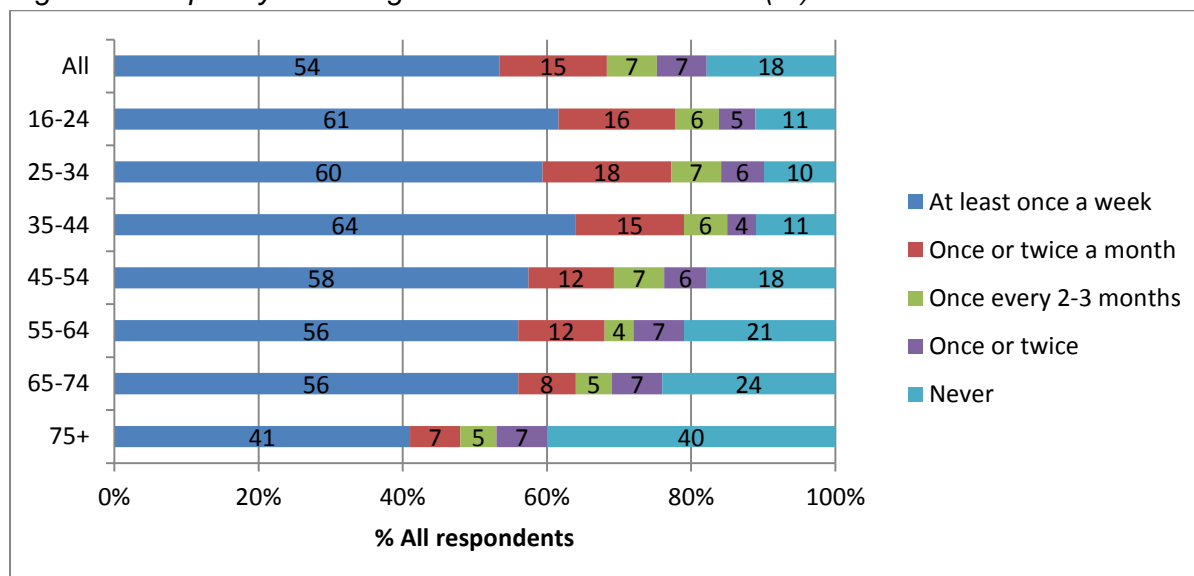
## DETAILED RESEARCH FINDINGS

### 1. Participation in outdoor recreation

#### 1.1 Frequency of participation in outdoor recreation

Most 16-24 olds visit the outdoors for recreation (89%) and more than half do so on a regular weekly basis (61%). As shown in Figure 1, below, the level of participation in outdoor recreation among 16-24 year olds (and among younger adults in general) is higher than average.

Figure 1: Frequency of visiting the outdoors for recreation (%)



Source: SPANS 2017/18

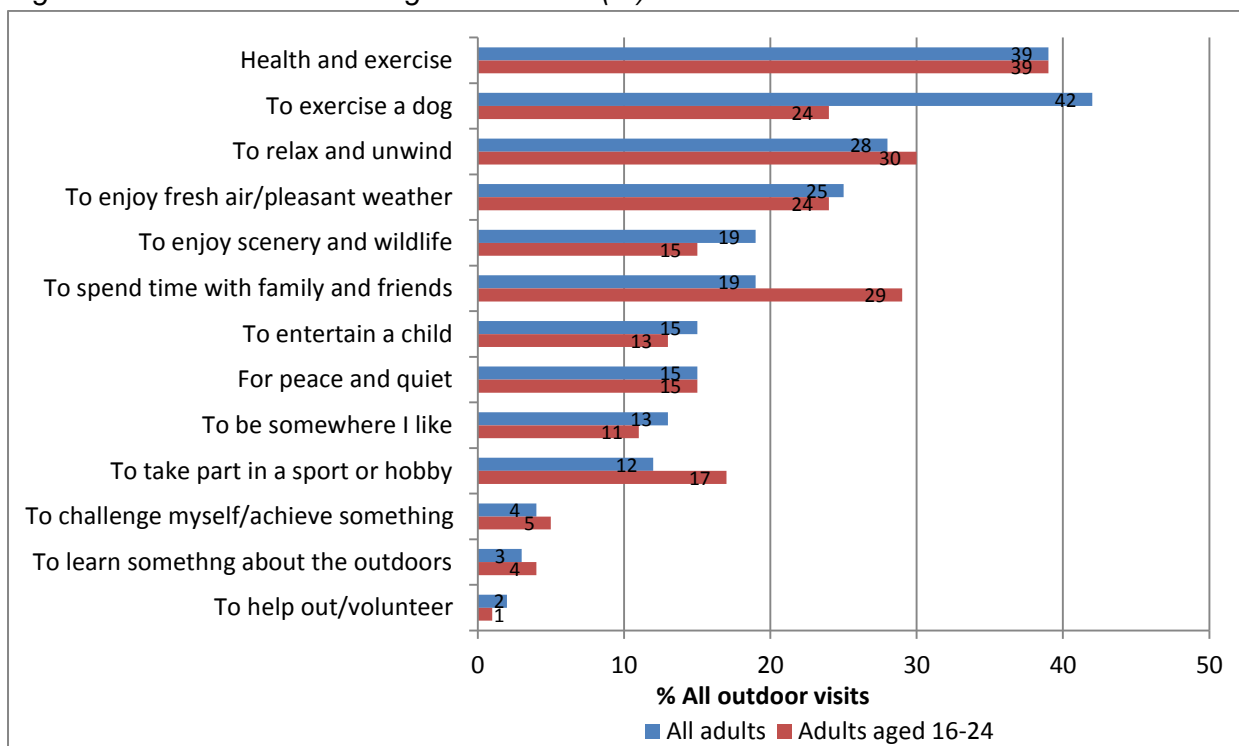
Base: All adults = 12,502 respondents; all adults aged 16-24 = 1,306 respondents

#### 1.2 What motivates people to visit the outdoors?

Young adults aged 16- 24 visit the outdoors for a variety of reasons but health & exercise (39% of visits), relaxation (30%) and spending time with friends and family (29%) are the main motivating factors.

Compared to the population as a whole, 16-24 year olds are more likely to visit the outdoors to spend time with friends and family or to take part in a sport or hobby and less likely to cite dog walking as a motivation for their visit.

Figure 2: Motivations for visiting the outdoors (%)



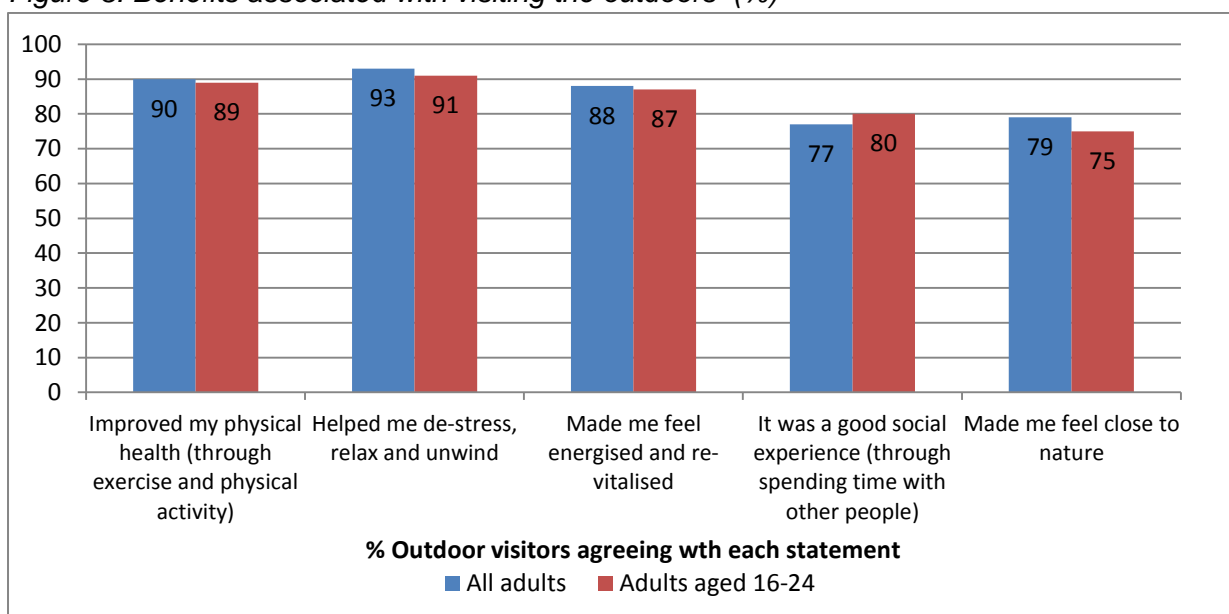
Source: SPANS 2013/14 and 2017/18 combined

Base: All adults = 2,490 respondents; all adults aged 16-24 = 300 respondents

### 1.3 What benefits do people get from their outdoor visits?

Most 16-24 year olds agree, when prompted, that they benefit from their outdoor visits, with around 9 in 10 reporting improvements to their mental and physical health. A majority also enjoy the social aspect of visiting the outdoors (80%) and feel that the experience helps bring them closer to nature (75%).

Figure 3: Benefits associated with visiting the outdoors (%)



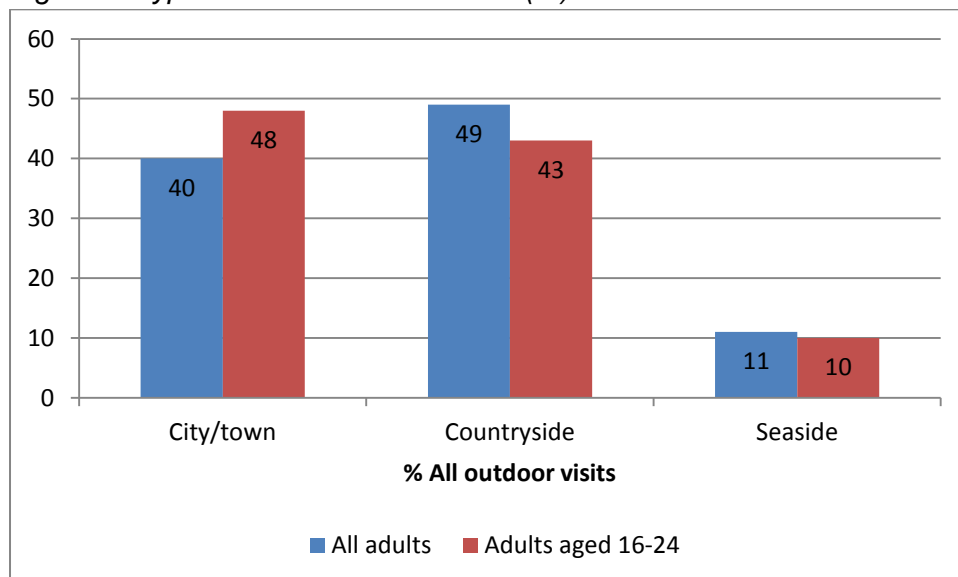
Source: SPANS 2013/14 and 2017/18 combined

Base: All adults = 2,490 respondents; all adults aged 16-24 = 300 respondents

#### 1.4 Where do people go on their outdoor visits?

Around half of the outdoor visits taken by 16-24 year olds are taken in towns and cities (48%) and 43% are taken in the countryside; a minority of visits are taken in coastal locations (10%). As shown in Figure 4, below, 16-24 year olds are more likely than average to visit the outdoors in an urban environment and less likely to visit the countryside.

Figure 4: Types of environment visited (%)

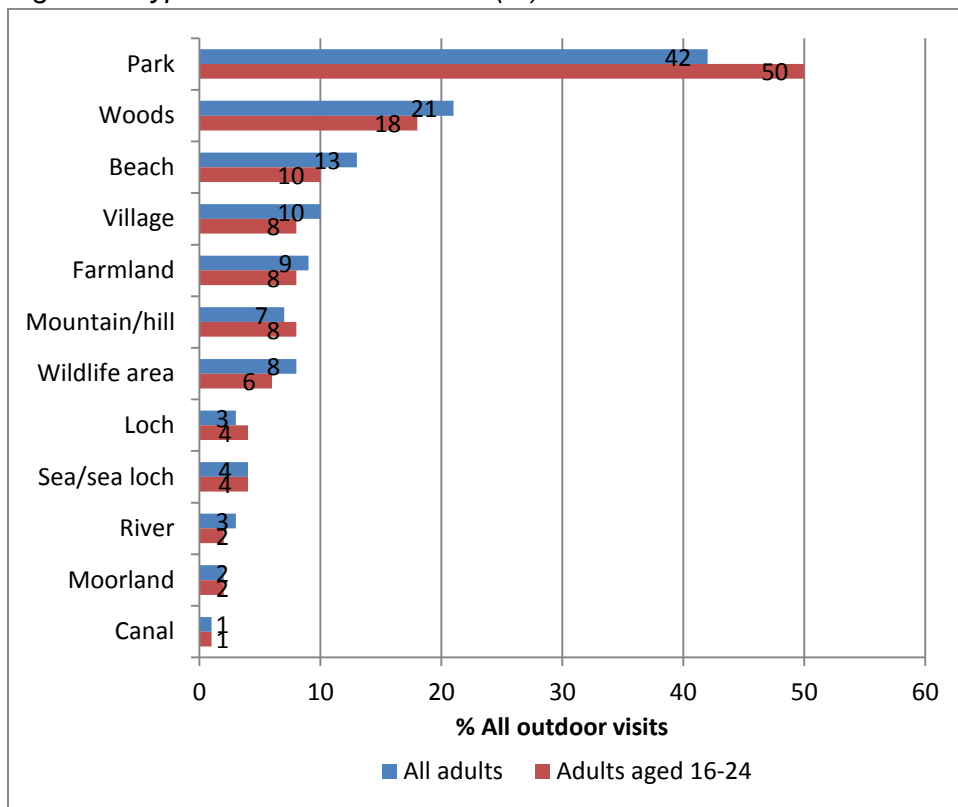


Source: SPANS 2017/18

Base: All adults = 4,113 respondents; all adults aged 16-24 = 501 respondents

In terms of the specific types of **destinations** which young adults visit, local parks and other open spaces are most popular, accounting for an above average proportion of their outdoor visits (50% of visits taken by 16-24 year olds compared to 42% of all visits). Woodland and beaches are the next most popular types of destination.

Figure 5: Types of destination visited (%)



Source: SPANS 2017/18

Base: All adults = 4,113 respondents; all adults aged 16-24 = 501 respondents

### 1.5 Outdoor visits – distance travelled, duration of visits and transport used

Most of the outdoor visits taken by 16-24 year olds are relatively short in terms of the distance travelled and the duration of the visit. Around three quarters involve a travel distance of 5 miles or less (73%) and 61% last for less than two hours.

Figure 6: Distance travelled on outdoor visits (%)

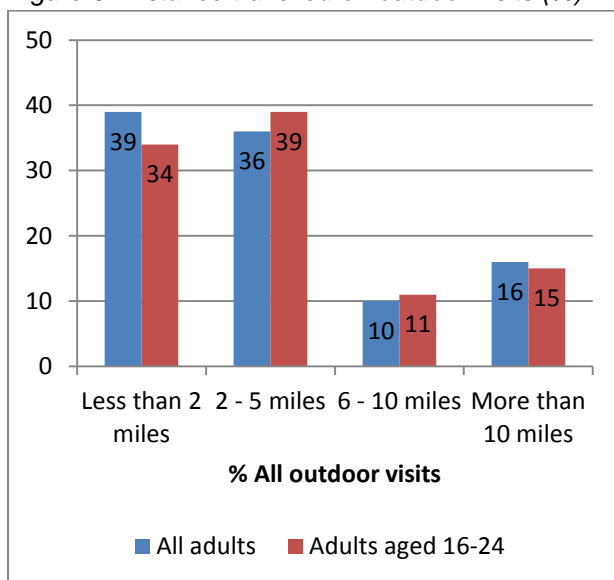
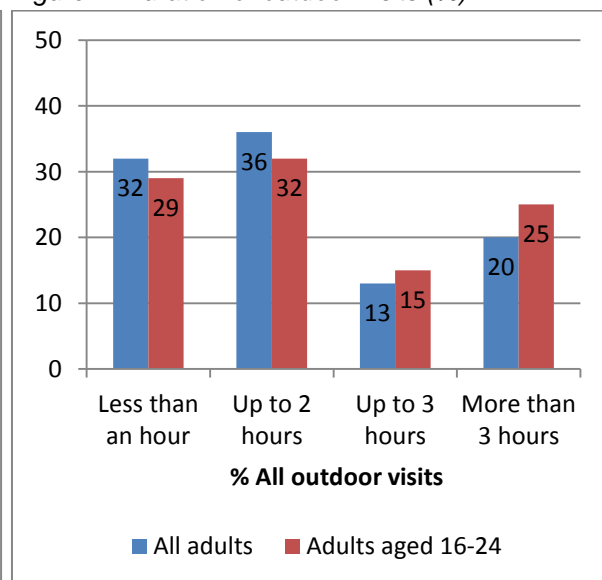


Figure 7: Duration of outdoor visits (%)

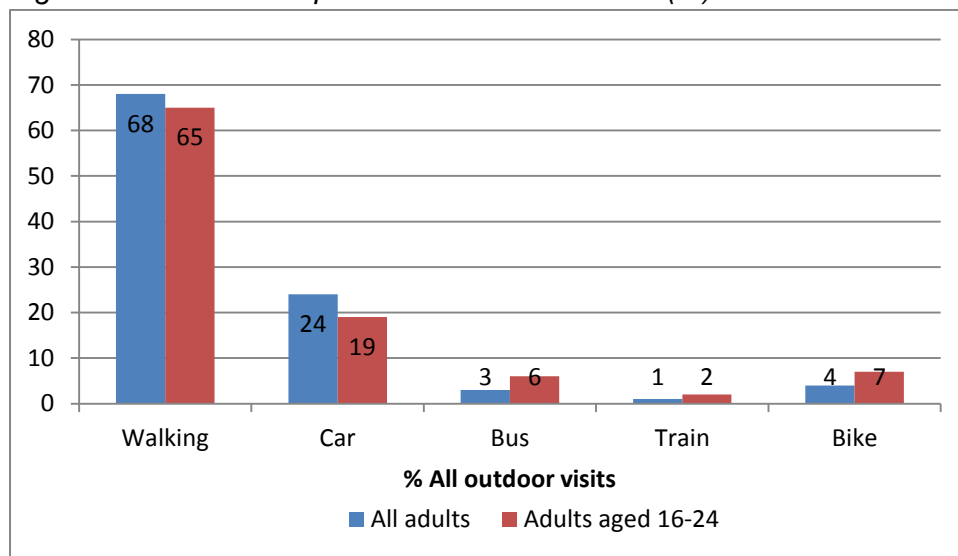


Source: SPANS 2013/14 and 2017/18 combined

Base: All adults = 5,007 respondents; all adults aged 16-24 = 568 respondents

Walking is the main mode of transport used on almost two thirds of the outdoor visits taken by 16-24 year olds (65%). Compared to the population as a whole, 16-24 year olds are less likely to use a car and more likely to cycle or use public transport on their outdoor visits.

Figure 8: Mode of transport used on outdoor visits (%)



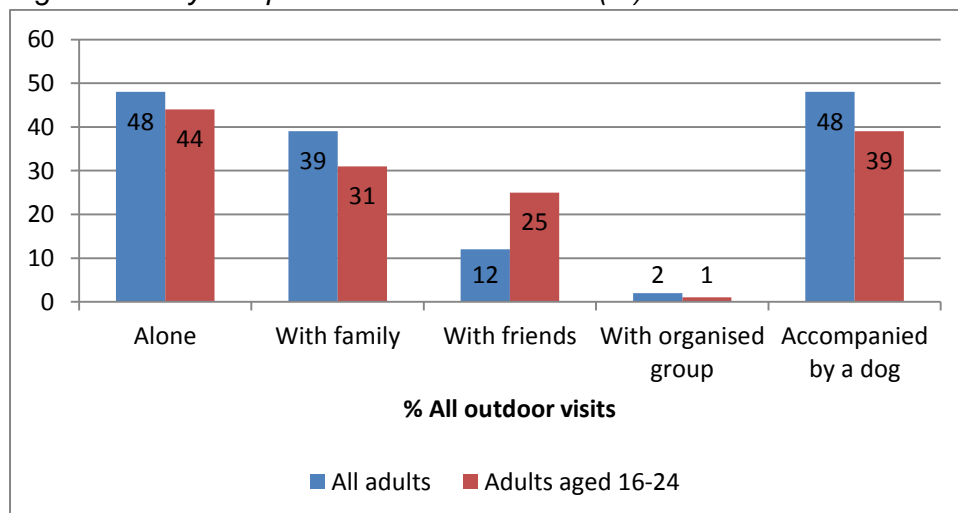
Source: SPANS 2013/14 and 2017/18 combined  
 Base: All adults = 5,007 respondents; all aged 16-24 = 568 respondents

### 1.6 Who do people visit the outdoors with?

Young adults aged 16-24 are slightly more likely than average to visit the outdoors in the company of other people rather than visit alone (56% of visits taken by 16-24 year olds include other people compared to 52% of all visits). Almost a third of visits taken by 16-24 year olds are accompanied by family members (31%) and a quarter by friends (25%), with friends more likely than average be included in the party.

16-24 year olds are less likely than average to be accompanied by a dog on their outdoor visits.

Figure 9: Party composition on outdoor visits (%)

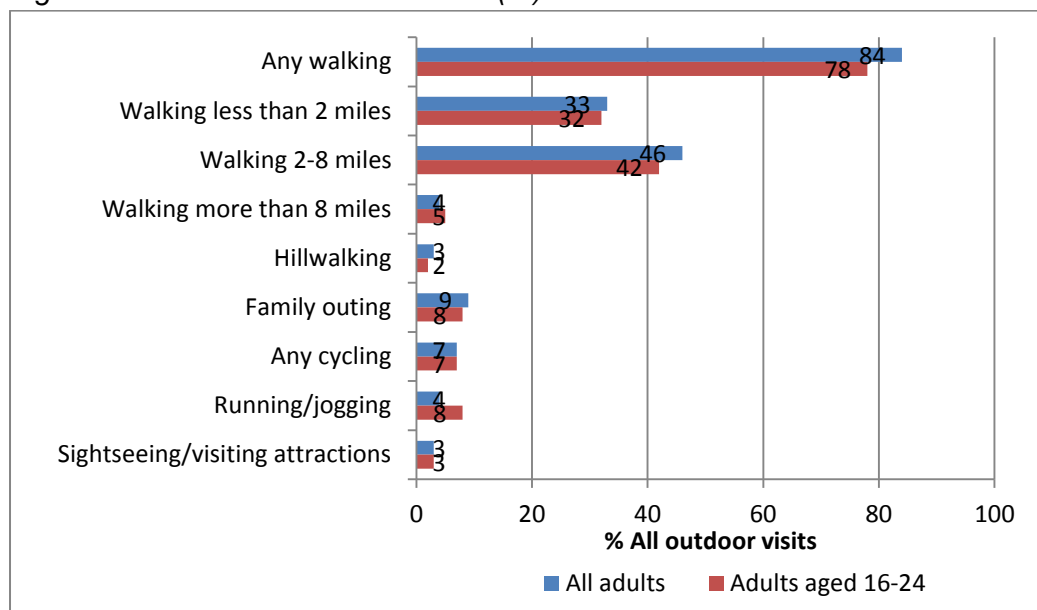


Source: SPANS 2013/14  
 Base: All adults = 2,294 respondents; all adults aged 16-24 = 252 respondents

## 1.7 What do people do on outdoor visits?

Around three quarters of outdoor visits taken by 16-24 year olds involve a walk (77%), slightly lower than the average for all visits (83%). Family outings (9% of visits), cycling (9%) and jogging (9%) are the next most popular outdoor activities among this age group.

Figure 10: Activities on outdoor visits (%)



Source: SPANS 2017/18

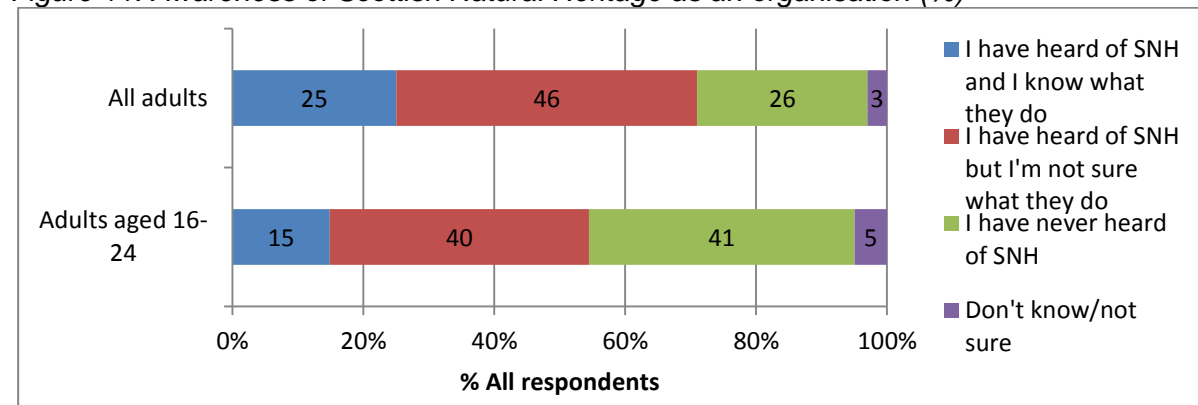
Base: All adults = 4,113 respondents; all adults aged 16-24 = 501 respondents

## 2. Awareness of Scottish Natural Heritage as an organisation

### 2.1 Awareness of SNH

Awareness of Scottish Natural Heritage as an organisation is lower than average among 16-24 year olds, as is awareness of SNH's role: just over half of 16-24 year olds (55%) say they've heard of SNH (compared to 71% of all adults) but only 15% claim to understand what SNH actually does (compared to 25% of all adults). Recognition of SNH's logo is also lower than average among 16-24 year olds (20% of 16-24 year olds claim to recognise the SNH logo compared to 39% of all adults).

Figure 11: Awareness of Scottish Natural Heritage as an organisation (%)



Source: SNO 2014, 2015 and 2017 combined

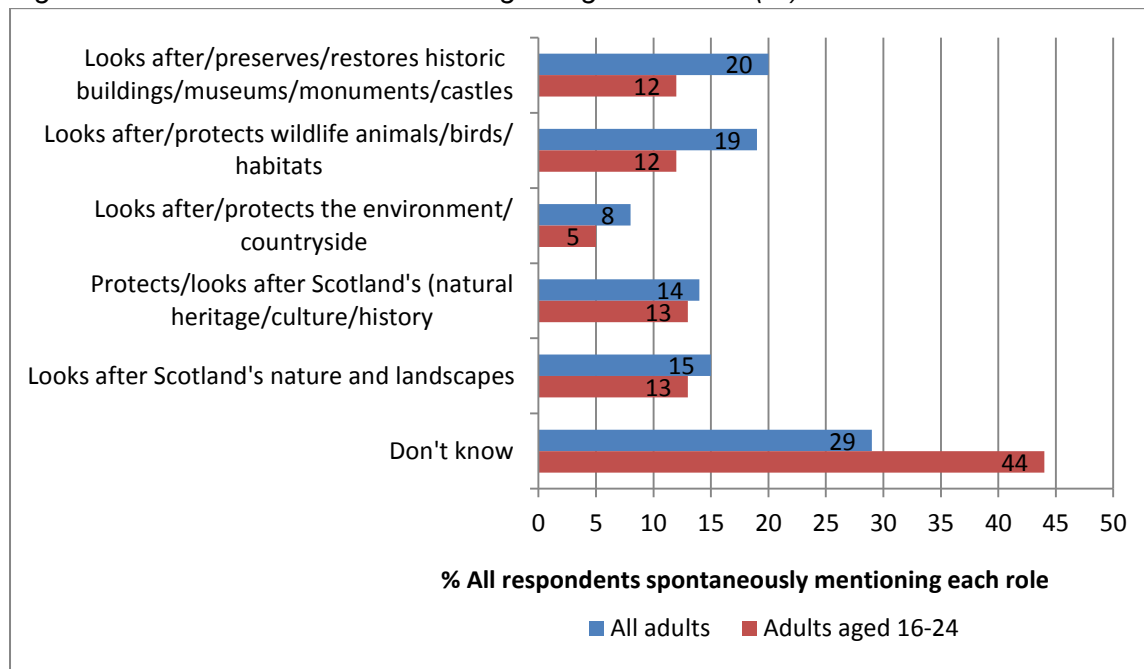
Base: All respondents = 3,355; all respondents aged 16-24 = 459



## 2.1 Understanding SNH's role

When asked what they think SNH does, 36% of 16-24 year olds (compared to 45% of all adults) are able to suggest a role which contains at least some correct elements. As is the case among the population as a whole, the two roles which 16-24 year olds most frequently associate with SNH are looking after historic buildings and monuments (mentioned by 12%) and looking after or protecting wildlife, animals, birds and habitats (12%).

Figure 12: Main associations made regarding SNH's role (%)

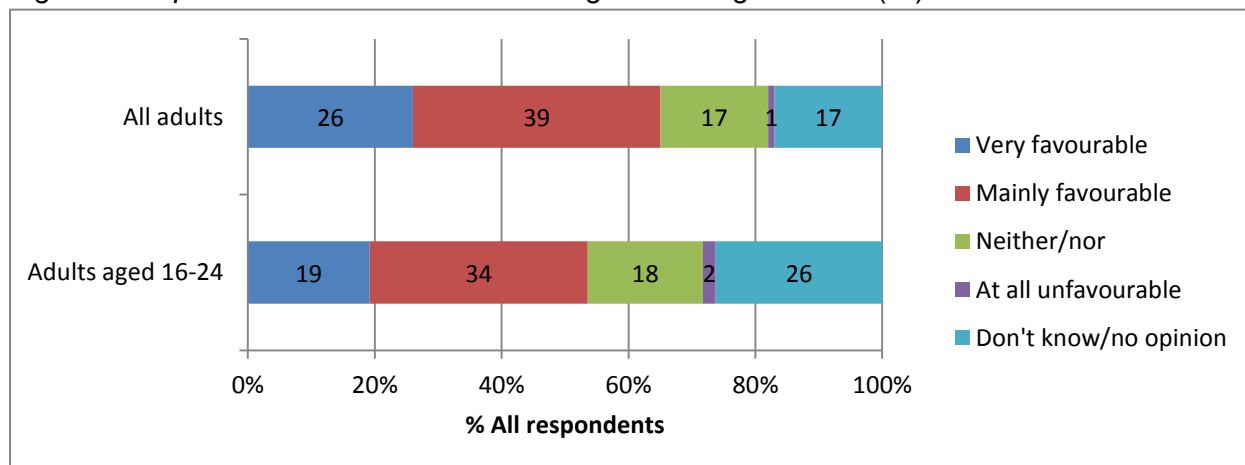


Source SNO 2014, 2015 and 2017 combined  
Base: All respondents = 3,355; all respondents aged 16-24 = 459

## 2.3 SNH's corporate image

Despite a relatively low level of familiarity, just over half of 16-24 year olds express a favourable opinion of SNH (53%), slightly below the average for the population as a whole (65%).

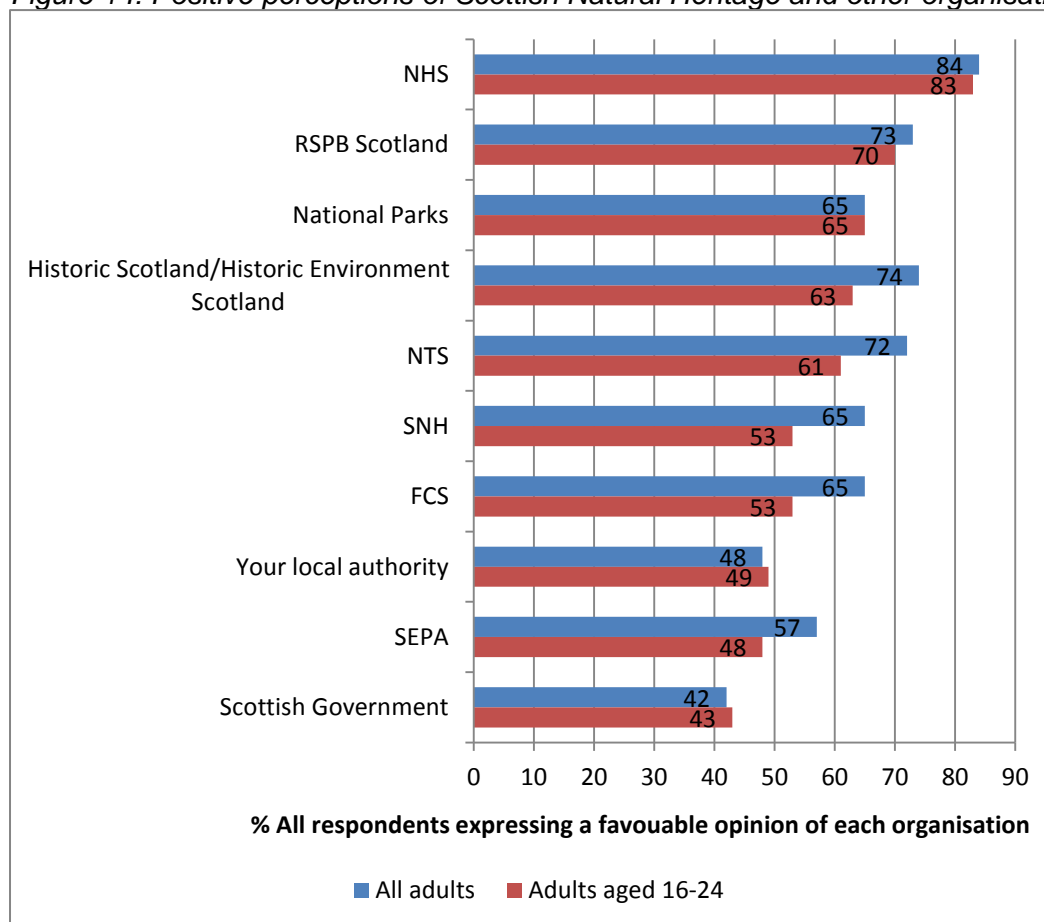
Figure 13: Opinion of Scottish Natural Heritage as an organisation (%)



Source SNO 2014, 2015 and 2017 combined  
Base: All respondents = 3,355; all respondents aged 16-24 = 459

Some of SNH's partner organisations are rated more favourably than SNH by 16-24 year olds, for example, RSPB Scotland, the National Parks, HES and the NTS. FCS (now Scottish Forestry) receives a similar level of positive ratings as SNH.

Figure 14: Positive perceptions of Scottish Natural Heritage and other organisations (%)



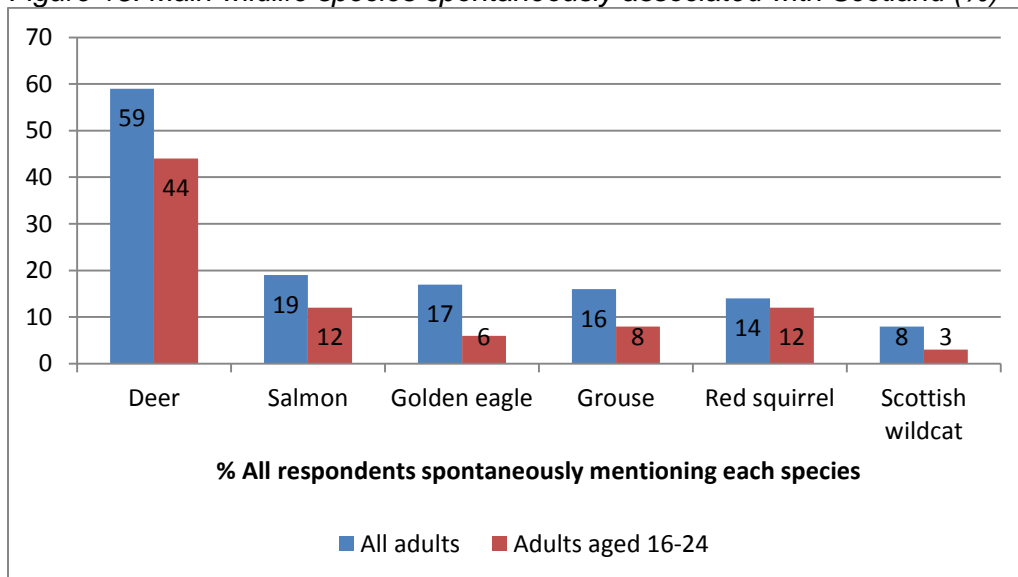
Source SNO 2014, 2015 and 2017 combined  
 Base: All respondents = 3,355; all respondents aged 16-24 = 459

### 3. Engagement with the natural environment

#### 3.1 Wildlife and wildlife management

While more than two thirds of 16-24 year olds agree that Scotland's wildlife makes an important contribution to the economy (72%), spontaneous awareness of the wildlife species that exist in Scotland is lower than average amongst this age group. As in the population as a whole, deer is the wildlife species most likely to be mentioned by 16-24 year olds (44%). Spontaneous awareness of any other wildlife species is at a significantly lower level.

Figure 15: Main wildlife species spontaneously associated with Scotland (%)

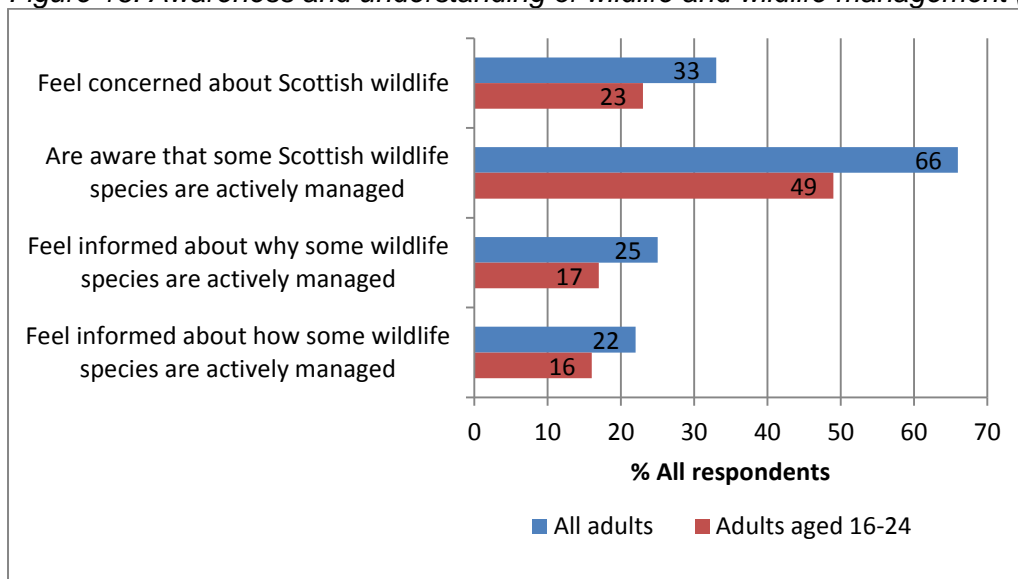


Source SNO 2014, 2015 and 2017 combined  
 Base: All respondents = 3,355; all respondents aged 16-24 = 459

Only around a fifth of 16-24 year olds (23%), compared to a third of all adults (33%), claim to feel concerned about Scottish wildlife.

As in the population as a whole, awareness and understanding of wildlife management is at a relatively low level among 16-24 year olds. Around half are aware that some wildlife populations in Scotland are actively managed (49% of 16-24 year olds compared to 65% of all adults) but significantly fewer feel informed about why (17% feel informed) and how (16% feel informed) wildlife management is undertaken.

Figure 16: Awareness and understanding of wildlife and wildlife management (%)

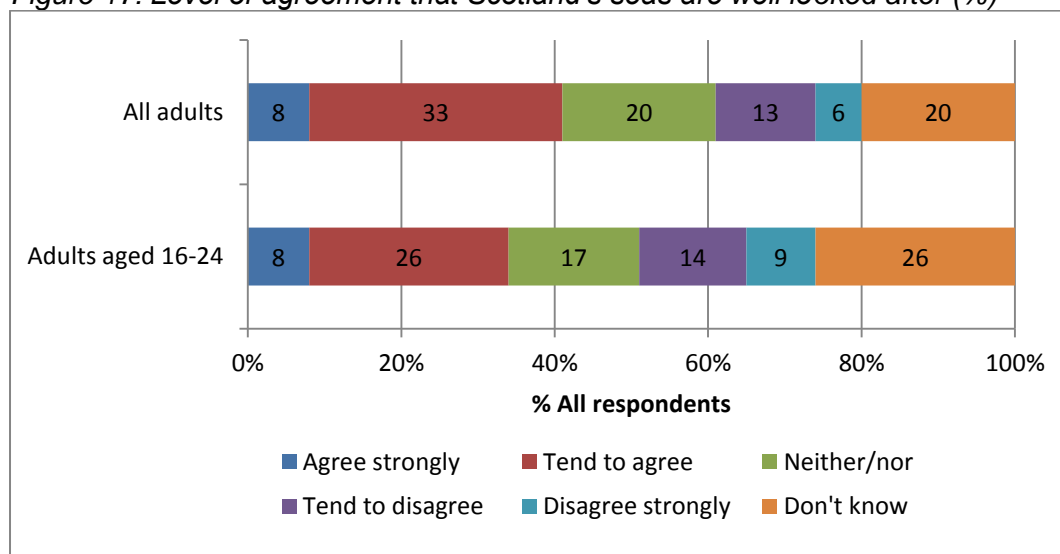


Source SNO 2014, 2015 and 2017 combined  
 Base: All respondents = 3,355; all respondents aged 16-24 = 459

### 3.2 Marine management

Only a third of 16-24 year olds (34%) agree that Scotland's seas are well looked after, slightly below the average for all adults (41%). As many as 26% of 16-24 year olds say they don't know.

Figure 17: Level of agreement that Scotland's seas are well looked after (%)



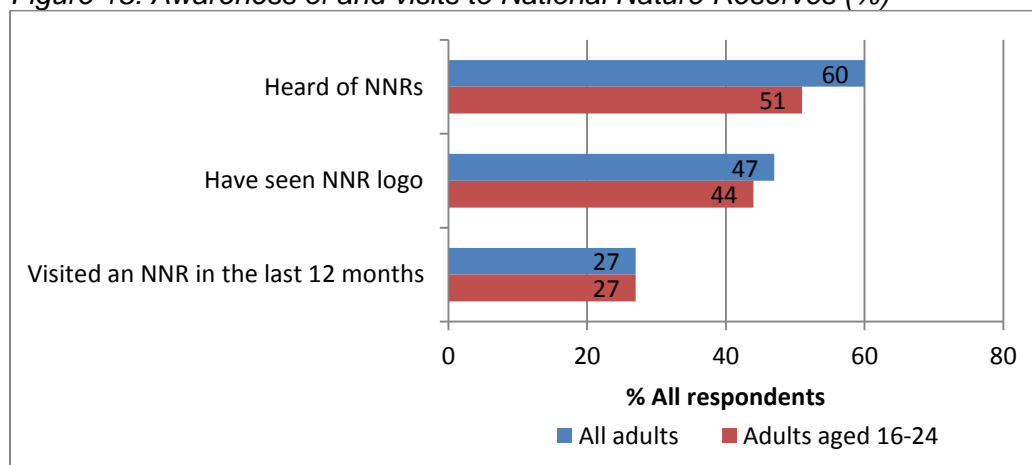
Source SNO 2014, 2015 and 2017 combined  
 Base: All respondents = 3,355; all respondents aged 16-24 = 459

Awareness that Scotland has Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) is lower than average among 16-24 year olds (37% are aware compared to 51% of all adults).

### 3.3 National Nature Reserves

Half of 16-24 year olds are aware of National Nature Reserves (51%), slightly below the average for all adults (60%). Forty-four per cent claim to recognise the NNR logo and 27% state that they've visited an NNR in the last 12 months.

Figure 18: Awareness of and visits to National Nature Reserves (%)



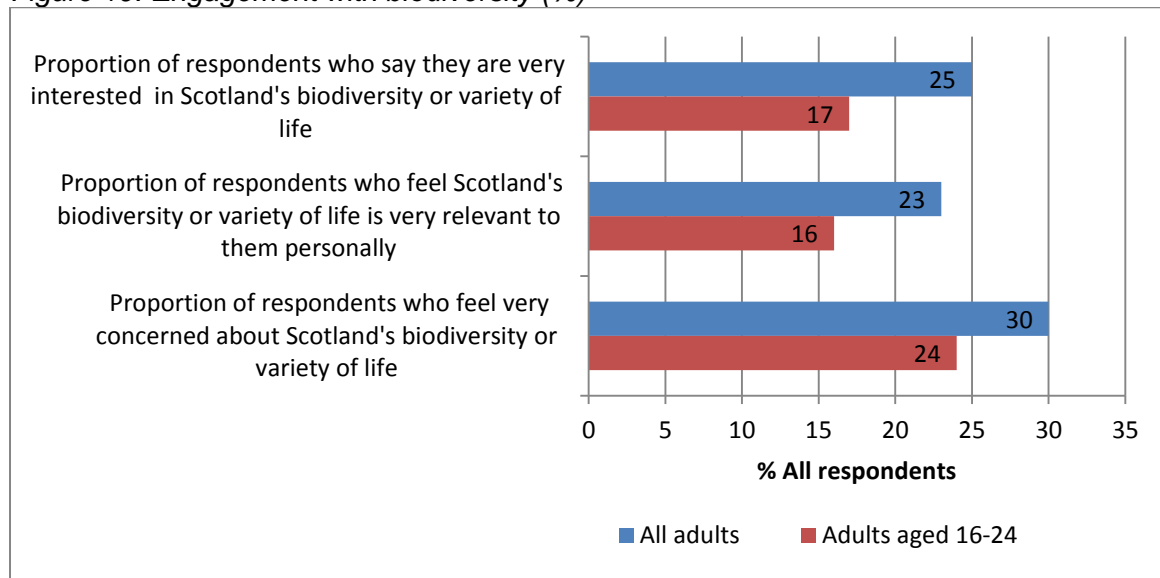
Source SNO 2014, 2015 and 2017 combined  
 Base: All respondents = 3,355; all respondents aged 16-24 = 459

### 3.4 Biodiversity

Just over half of 16-24 year olds anticipate biodiversity loss in Scotland over the next 50 years (56%), similar to the average for the population as a whole (59%).

However, as shown in Figure 19, below, 16-24 year olds are slightly less engaged than average with biodiversity: 24% are 'very concerned'; 17% are 'very interested'; and 16% feel the subject is personally relevant.

Figure 19: Engagement with biodiversity (%)



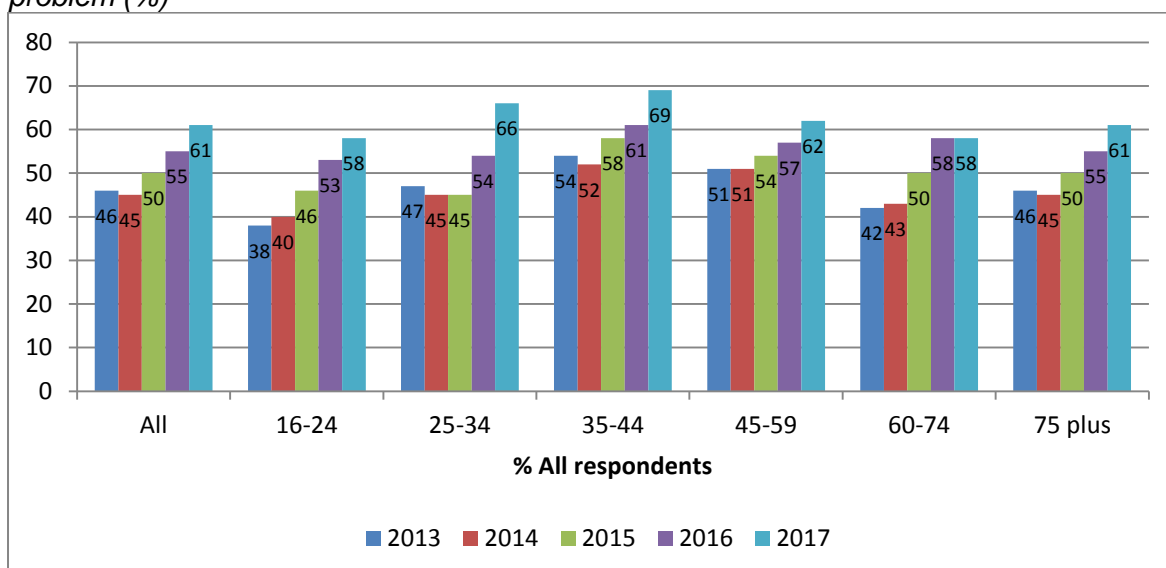
Source SNO 2014, 2015 and 2017 combined

Base: All respondents = 3,355; all respondents aged 16-24 = 459

### 3.5 Climate change

The perception that climate change is an immediate and urgent problem varies by age with those aged between 35-44 and 25-34 most likely to express this view (69% and 66% of people in these age groups respectively). The proportion of people sharing this view has increased among all age groups since 2013, with the largest increase occurring among 16-24 year olds (up from 38% in 2013 to 58% in 2017).

Figure 20: Proportion of adults who perceive climate change to be an immediate and urgent problem (%)



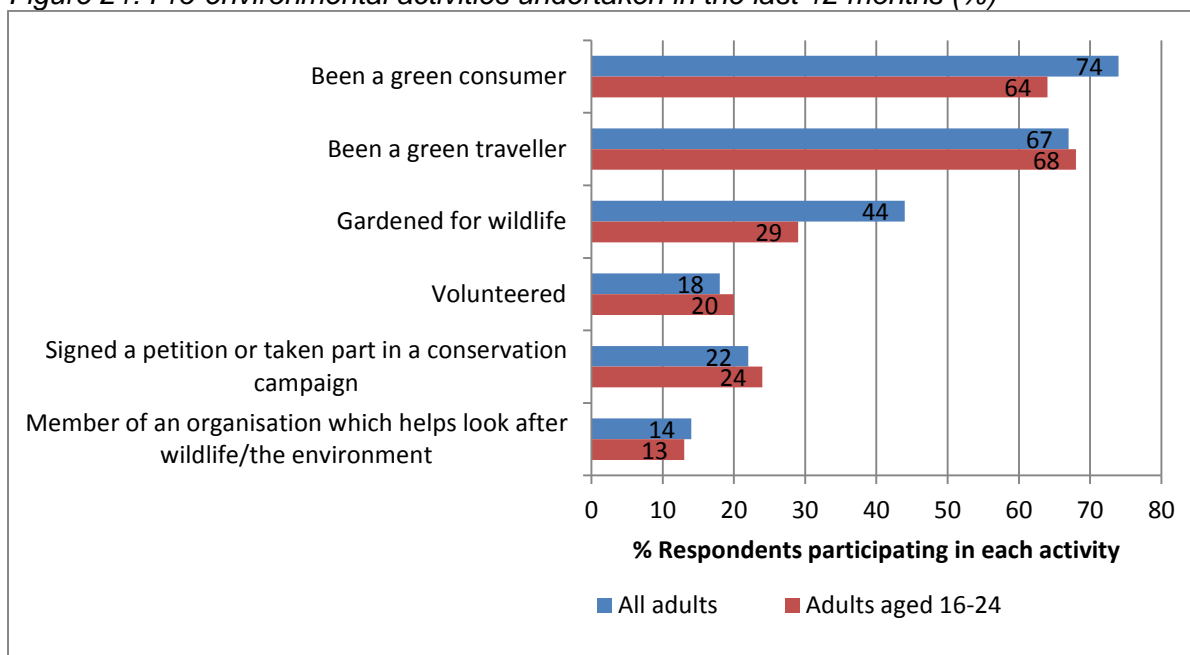
Source: Scottish Household Survey

### 3.6 Taking positive action for the natural environment

Most 16-24 year olds have done something in the last 12 months to help look after the natural environment. Around two thirds say they've done something to be a green traveller (68%) and a slightly lower than average proportion say they've done something to be a green consumer (64%).

Around a quarter of 16-24 year olds say they have signed a conservation petition or taken part in a conservation campaign in the last 12 months (24%); around a fifth have participated in environmental volunteering (20%); and 13% are members of organisations which help look after wildlife or the natural environment.

Figure 21: Pro-environmental activities undertaken in the last 12 months (%)



Source SNO 2014, 2015 and 2017 combined  
 Base: All respondents = 3,355; all respondents aged 16-24 = 459