

Outdoor Partnerships Annual User Survey 2019



Shropshire's
**GREAT
OUTDOORS**

The Shropshire Outdoor Partnerships Service is the part of Shropshire Council that maintains and develops recreational access, conserves and enhances the natural environment and encourages people to improve their wellbeing by being active outdoors. The annual survey considers the use, maintenance and protection of public rights of way, country parks, countryside and heritage sites, greenspaces and play areas.

The survey ran for 11 weeks between 14 January 2019 and 31 March 2019

895 people completed the survey

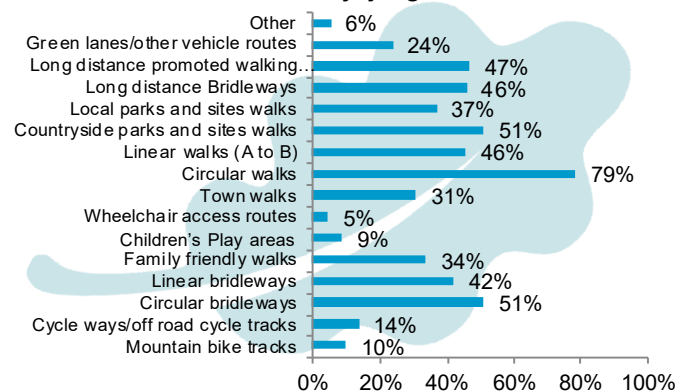
More than double the response from 2018 and 200 more than the 2017 total.



90% Of respondents give 'improve health/exercise' as the main reason for enjoying the great outdoors.

53% of respondents use footpaths, bridleways and other rights of way. 29% visit countryside sites and 18% participate in outdoor partnerships volunteering activity.

Main reasons for enjoying the outdoors



79% of the survey respondents use outdoor partnerships provision once a week or more.

78% use outdoor partnerships provision for 2 hours or more.

73% of people enjoy the great outdoors with a dog, friends or family or an organised group (15.8% enjoy the great outdoors alone).

When using parks and sites 47% of people say they find out more about their community, 91% enjoyed it and would like to do more and 94% felt better for taking some exercise.

Survey respondents top outdoor facilities:

- Circular walks (79%)
- Circular bridleways (51%)
- Countryside parks and sites walks (51%)
- Long distance walking routes (47%)

39% of respondents are members or a local walking group, 23% participate in walking for health and 23% in ramblers groups. Top reasons for joining walking groups and other outdoor groups (e.g. cycling, riding):

- To make friends
- To learn new walks
- To get more active



Other reasons for enjoying the great outdoors:

"To be out, enjoying the countryside and see it from places you can only get to on the bridleways and byways".

"To give my daughter the experience of playing in parks and in green spaces."

"Safe places for little ones to learn to walk/run/cycle."

"To improve my mental health/wellbeing."

"As a carer spending a huge amount of time looking after my parents around the clock, to be able to run outdoors in green spaces gives me a sense of freedom and is essential to promote my mental health and well-being."

"To enjoy and appreciate the scenery."

51% are satisfied with the rights of way network in their area.

52% are satisfied with parks and sites in their area.

36% of people have noticed improvements to the rights of way network and **24%** have noticed improvements to the parks and sites, in their area in the last 12 months.

83% of respondents are more active than they were a year ago.

Of those who were inactive or moderately inactive a year ago 22 are now more active.

150 people commented on reasons for reduced activity including ill health (32%), changes in circumstances (19%). Getting older was another common reason given.

45% of respondents find out about activities and facilities within the great outdoors through printed leaflets and guidebooks. This is the main source of information people use followed by:

- organised groups (44%)
- Shropshire's Great Outdoors website (33%)
- Local newspapers (29%)

Volunteering is one way to enjoy the great outdoors. Survey respondents were asked if and how they would like to be involved. The results were:

- Parish Paths Partnerships (21%)
- Walking for Health Walk Leader (12%)
- Rights of way surveys (6%)
- Volunteer rangers (4%)

We asked about **improvements** to encourage more use of rights of way, country parks and heritage sites. Suggestions included:

- Better signage
- More circular walks
- Gates rather than stiles
- Walks linked to public transport

Obstacles to enjoying the great outdoors:

- Overgrown vegetation (52%)
- Physical obstructions (37%)
- Lack of signposts/ waymarkers (37%)
- Intimidating livestock (32%)
- Problems with gates (31%)
- Dog mess (24%)



When people last used Shropshire's rights of way network or parks and countryside sites.....

- 94% felt better for taking some exercise
- 91% enjoyed themselves and want to do more outdoors
- 55% discovered something new
- 47% found out more about the community

76% of people report that getting into the great outdoors has a very positive impact on their quality of life (24% report a positive impact):

"I've always been active but, as I've got older, felt I wanted to walk more just for pleasure and exercise."

"When I moved to Shrewsbury 2 years ago I joined the Walking for Health Group to maintain my mental health, as well as my physical health. Having had mental health issues in the past, I did not want to become isolated. This group has been a life saver."

"We are a group of friends who regularly walk together for our own enjoyment, for the enjoyment of each others company and the countryside in which we live."

44% of respondents already volunteer
Only 506 of the 895 respondents don't volunteer

Example comments:

"Thank you for what you do, and keep doing more."

"I think the small team who look after our Rights of Way do a fantastic job..."

"Access to public outdoor spaces is extremely important for the physical and mental health of residents. The rights of way, parks and heritage sites should be supported and improved and not allowed to become victims of the latest round of public funding cuts."