

Outdoor Partnerships Annual User Survey 2022



Shropshire's
**GREAT
OUTDOORS**

The Shropshire Outdoor Partnerships Service is part of Shropshire Council. The service maintains and develops recreational access, conserves and enhances the natural environment and encourages people to be 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 23 May 2021 and 5 August 2022

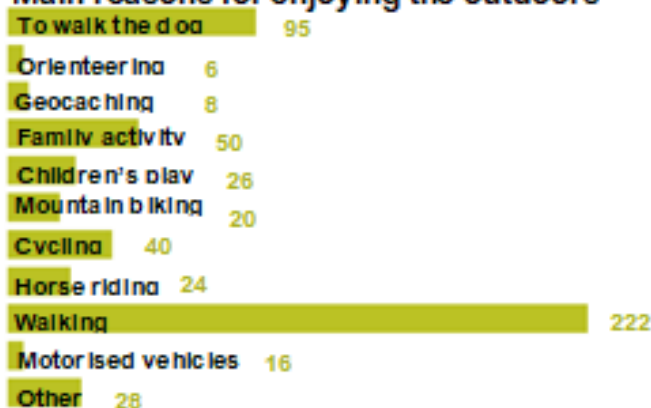
244 people completed the survey



96% Of respondents give 'improve health/exercise' as the main reason for enjoying the great outdoors

100% of respondents use footpaths, bridleways and other rights of way. 70% visit countryside sites and 18% participate in outdoor partnerships volunteering activity.

Main reasons for enjoying the outdoors



83% of the survey respondents use outdoor partnerships provision once a week or more. This has remained the same as last year.

67% use outdoor partnerships provision for 2 hours or more. This has remained the same as last year.

49% of respondents are members or a local walking group, **22%** in a community or volunteer group and **15%** in a riding group.

Top reasons for joining walking groups and other outdoor groups (e.g. cycling, riding):

- To make friends (59%)
- To learn new walks/ routes (49%)
- To get more active (49%)



64% of people enjoy the great outdoors with a dog, friends or family. 10% with an organised group.

18% enjoy the great outdoors alone.

Survey respondents top outdoor facilities:

- Circular walks (86%)
- Countryside parks and sites walks (65%)
- Long distance walking routes (52%)
- Circular bridleways (46%)
- Local parks and sites walks (53%)
- Long distance bridleways (46%)

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

- 90% felt better for taking some exercise
- 90% enjoyed themselves and want to do more outdoors
- 36% found out more about the community
- 51% discovered something new

Example comments:

"Dog walking and my space away from work"

"I believe walking is good for the individual's mental health"

43% are satisfied with the rights of way network in their area.

49% are satisfied with parks and sites in their area.

20% of people have noticed improvements to the rights of way network and 18% have noticed improvements to the parks and sites, in their area in the last 12 months.

2% of respondents said they are inactive and 7% of respondents moderately inactive. This has not changed since last year.

60% of respondents said they were either active or very active. This has increased from 58% a year ago.

Respondents were asked how they **found out about activities and facilities** within the great outdoors. These included:

- Social media feeds (41%)
- Printed leaflets and guidebooks (30%)
- Local websites (27%)
- Shropshire Great Outdoors website (26%)

Volunteering is one way to enjoy the great outdoors with **24%** of respondents saying they are involved in volunteering. Volunteer roles include:

- Parish paths partnership (11%)
- 'Friends of' groups (4%)
- Walk leader, Walking for Health (2%)

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

- More circular walks
- Better signage
- More online guides and interpretation
- More information and map boards
- More walks with gates rather than stiles

Obstacles to enjoying the great outdoors:

- Overgrown vegetation (54%)
- Lack of signposts/ way markers (42%)
- Dog mess (25%)
- Physical obstructions (33%)
- Intimidating livestock (32%)
- Problems with stiles (33%)



When asked for the specific reasons if activity levels have decreased in the last year the main reasons were

- Ill Health (38%)
- Change in circumstances (16%)

Example comments

"Workload has increased"

"Foot injury stops me walking so much"

71% of people report that getting into the great outdoors has a very positive impact on their **quality of life** (28% report a positive impact).

None of the survey respondents felt that getting into the great outdoors impacted on their quality of life in a negative way. Survey respondents commented on the range of other outdoor activities they participate in such as running, trail running, wildlife and nature activities, path/route maintenance litter picking, outdoor swimming and many more....

Example comments:

"We are lucky in Shropshire to have good access to the countryside. Thanks to the Council"

"It would enhance Shropshire's tourism offering if footpaths were improved, stiles replaced with gates and there were car parks enabling access to more sites"

"Very pleased to see footpaths being restored. New metal kissing gates are fabulous"

"I really love getting out into the Shropshire countryside whether on horseback, bicycle or walking. It brings me huge mental and physical health benefits. Please keep up the good work. Thank you"

"Overall a really great service. Would just like to be easily able to walk the dogs without worrying about access"