

**HOW WOODLANDS AND GREENSPACES CAN CONTRIBUTE TO PEOPLE'S
HEALTH AND WELL-BEING:
a focus on inequalities and under-represented groups**

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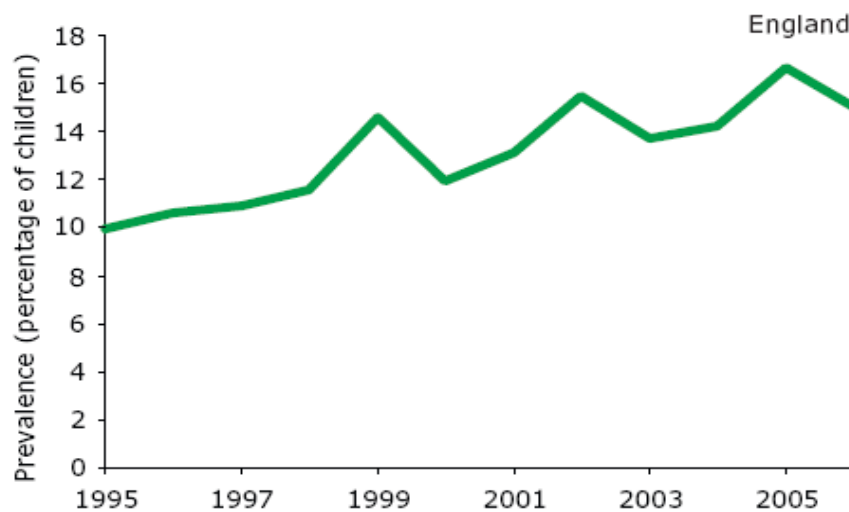
- Policy context and health inequalities
- What FC has been doing
- Examples of research
 - Environmental volunteering
 - Active England Programme
- Targeting under-represented groups
- Lessons learnt
- Papers and publications



Policy Context

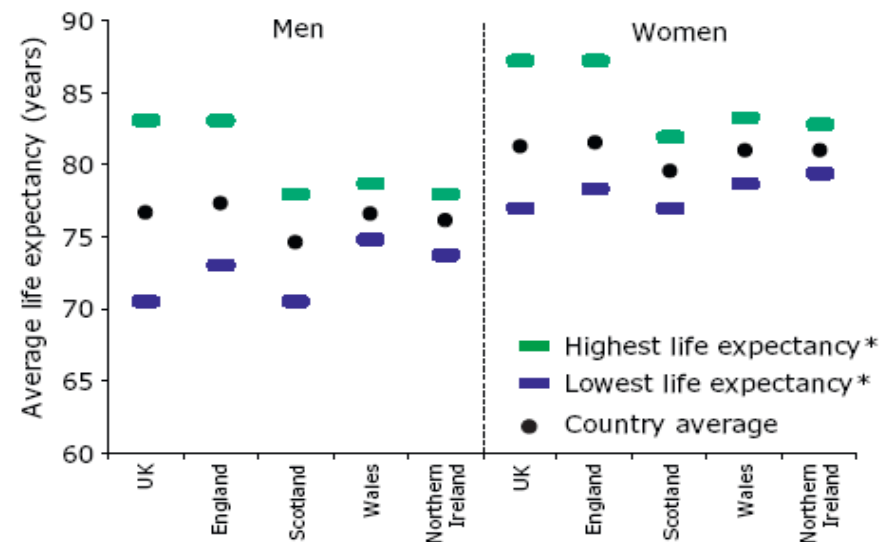
- Healthy weight, healthy lives
 - Rise in obesity
 - WHO concerns about mental well-being
 - Increased focus on health promotion
- CMO physical activity recommendations
 - Increasing sedentary population
 - Stress related illness increasing
 - Health inequalities

Prevalence of obesity in 2-10 year-olds, 1995 to 2006



Source: DH, The Information Centre

(b) Life expectancy: differences in average life expectancy between local authority areas, 2004-6



*Highest and lowest average amongst Local Authority Districts.

Source: ONS



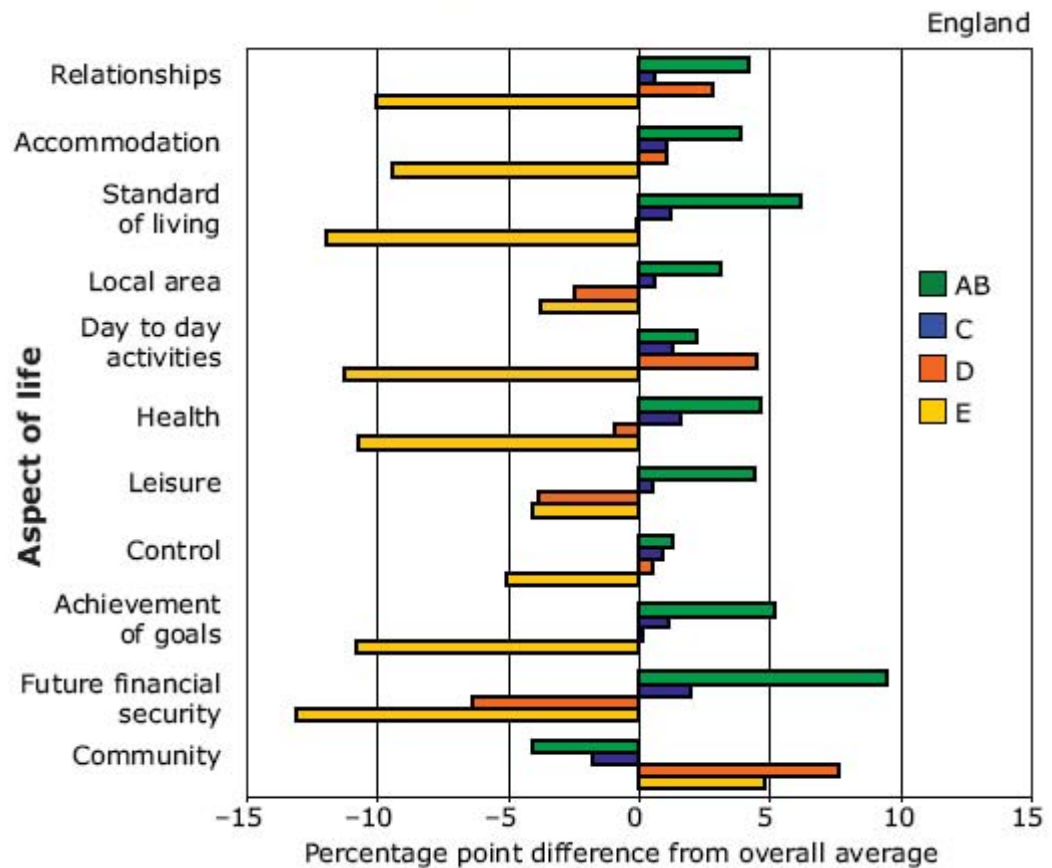
Social inequalities:

For most aspects of life proportions of people in group AB (higher socio-economic status) who were satisfied were higher than other groups

Conclusion: wellbeing is unequally distributed across society

(d) Satisfaction with aspects of life, by social grade

Percentage of people fairly or very satisfied with selected aspects of life, by social grade, 2007





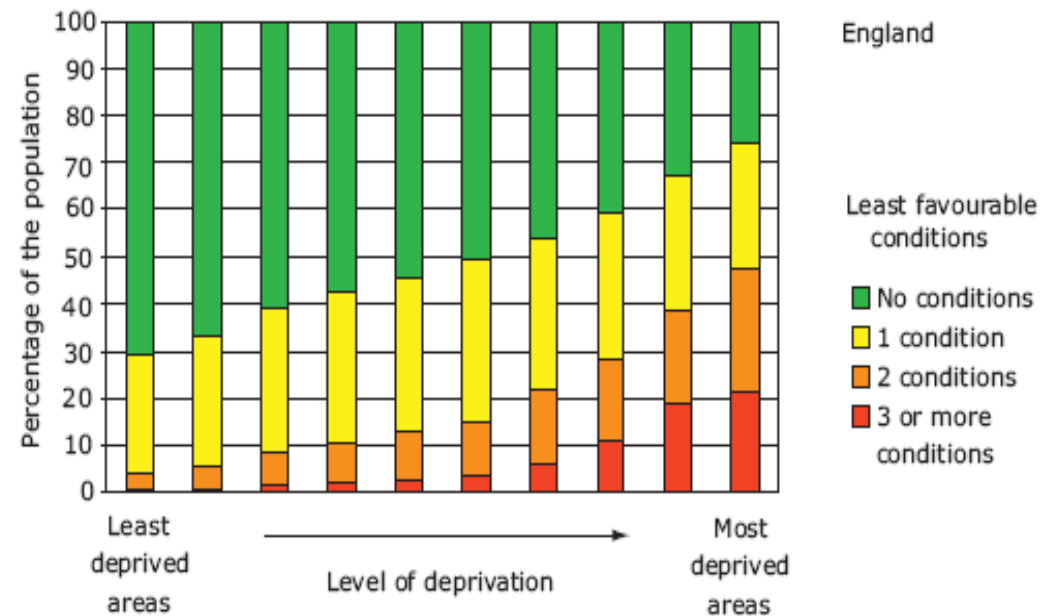
Environmental inequalities:

A higher proportion of people in the most deprived areas in England may live in areas with multiple environmental conditions that are in relative terms the 'least favourable', compared with populations living in less deprived areas.

Conclusion: Ecosystem services and environmental quality are unequally distributed across society

60. Environmental equality

Populations living in areas with, in relative terms, the least favourable environmental conditions, 2001-6





Forestry Commission activities

- Interventions/projects – try different approaches
- Use of grants to develop health projects
- Partnership working with health sector
- Campaigns – ‘Active Woods’
- Health Concordat 2005
- Part of the Outdoor health forum
- Conferences/seminars
- Participation in COST E39 ‘Forestry and Human health’
- Research/evaluation



Environmental volunteering

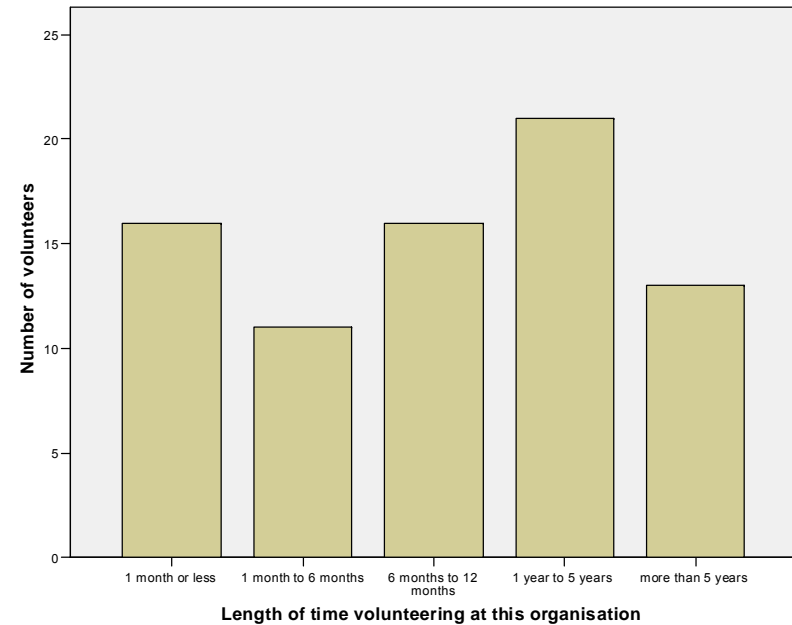
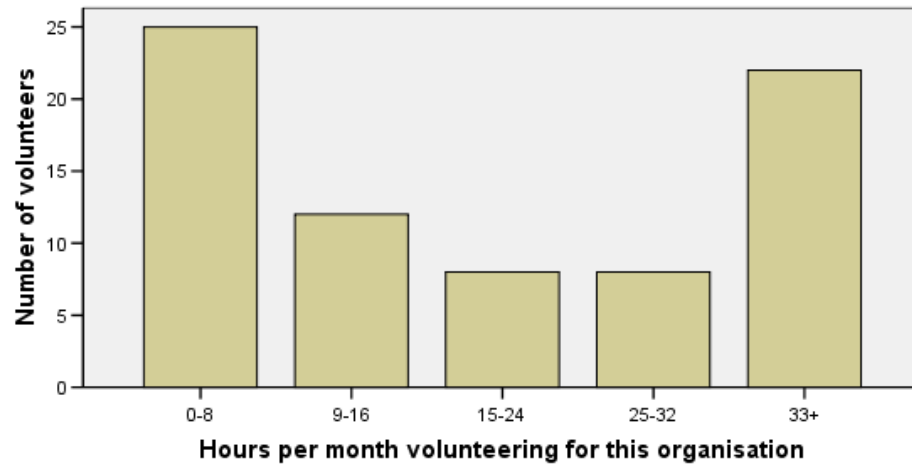
Exploration of motivations and benefits

- Hands on engagement with nature
- Practical activities – tree thinning, footpath repairs, habitat creation, removal of invasive species
- Study in northern England/southern Scotland
- On site with volunteers across 10 different groups (88 volunteers and 26 organisation staff)





Demographics of the volunteers



88 volunteers – 25 female and 63 male

10 different organisations

Age range 16 – 76 years

32.5% worked full time

26% were retired

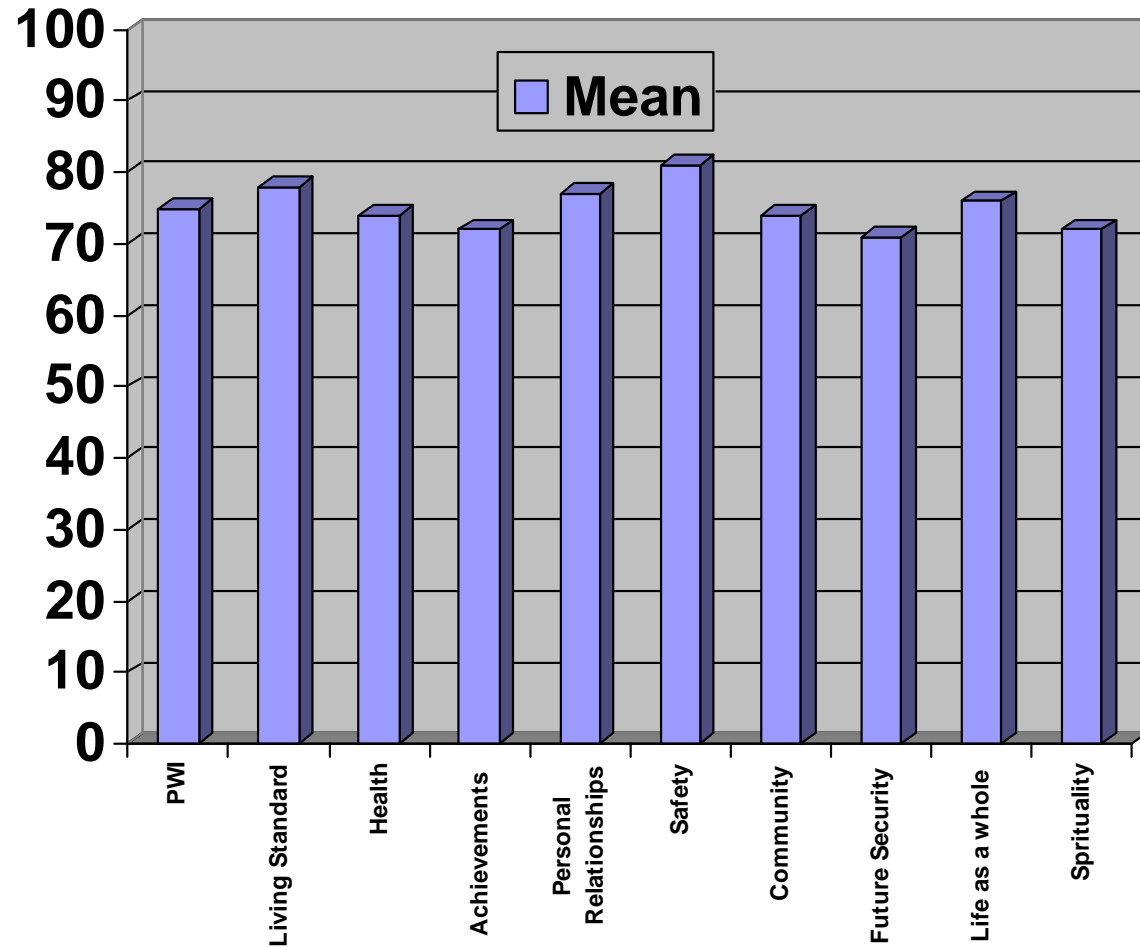
19.5% unemployed

5.2% ill or disabled, 6.5% students

Quantitative data collection

Personal well-being index

On average the volunteers were very satisfied with life





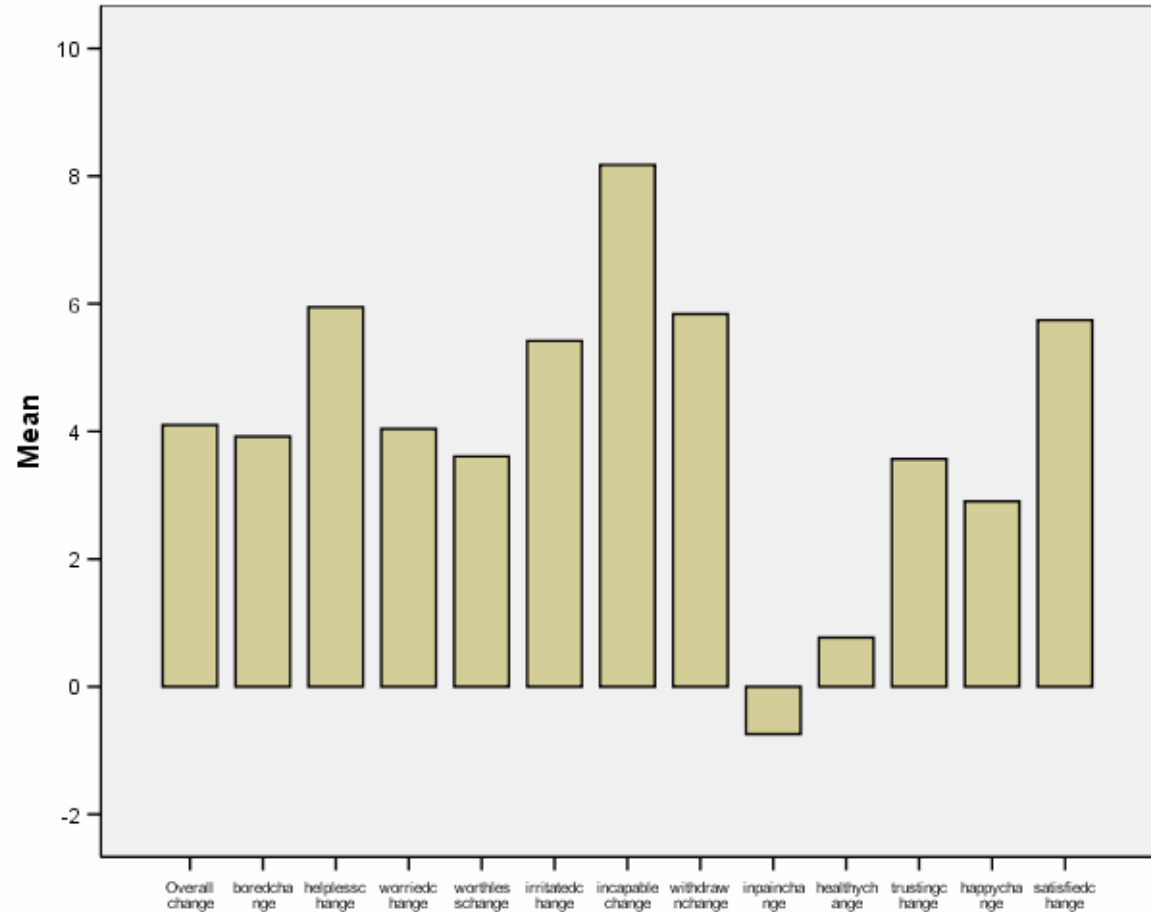
Emotional state scale (ESS)

Scale indicates change in emotional state across 12 parameters e.g. happy/unhappy
bored/interested
worthless/worthy

Scale used before and after volunteering activity

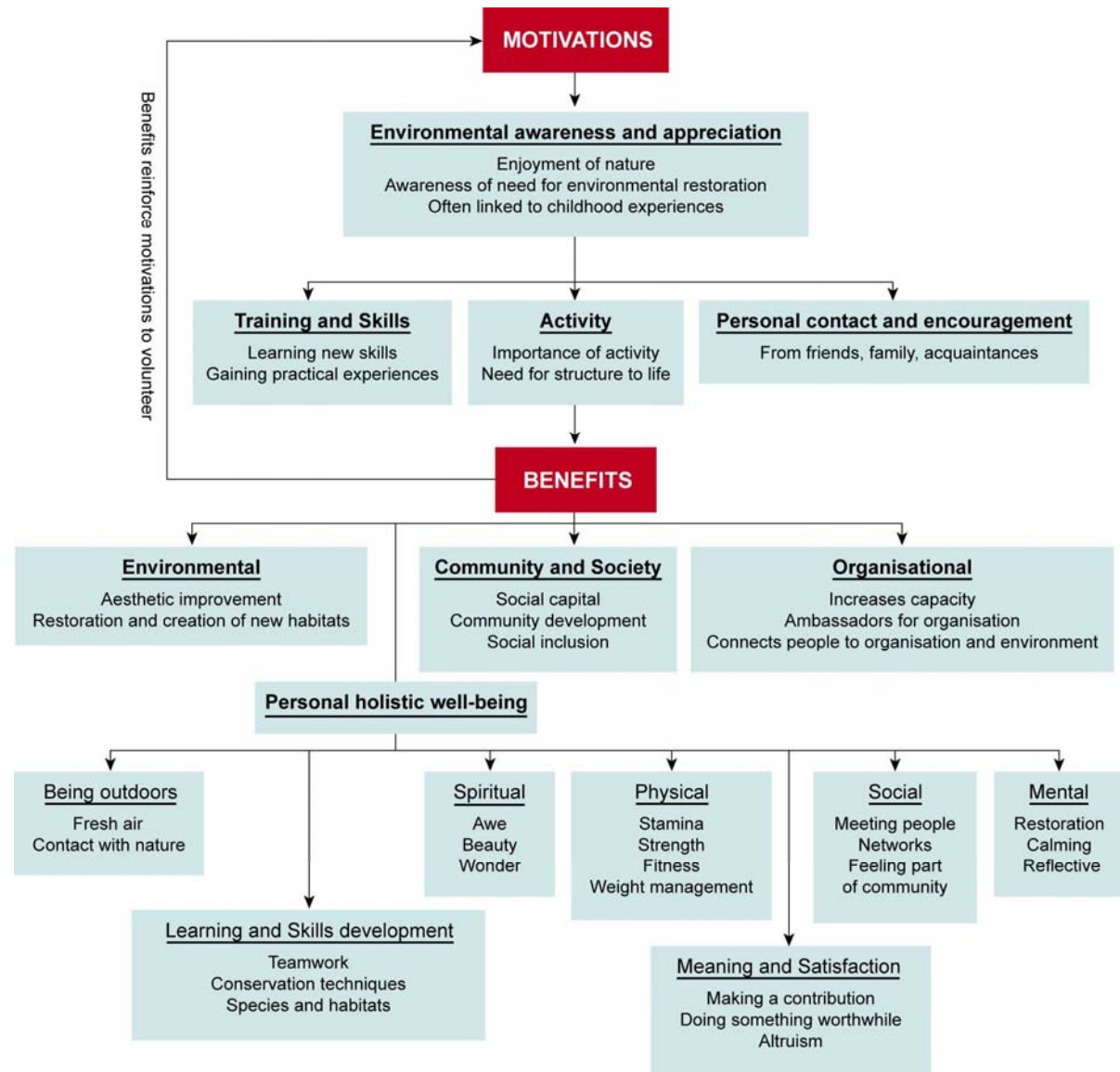
Change from 68.6 out of 85 before to 72.3 after. Mean difference 4.4 $p < 0.001$

Only negative increase was pain. Interviews with volunteers highlighted that pain was not seen negatively by volunteers



Interviews on site with volunteers highlight benefits to well-being for volunteers, benefits they see for environment and society

Organisations that manage volunteers also highlighted benefits to environment and wider society as well as well-being benefits to volunteers





Holistic well-being

A number of volunteers spoke about holistic and/or general wellbeing

Others focused on specific physical, social, mental or spiritual benefits

'When you're retired it also keeps you fit, keeps you active. Some of it's quite hard physical stuff and you go home shattered. But it's what I call healthy tired. It's a good feeling. If I don't come out for any reason I miss it. (Male, Wildlife Trust)

'Health wise I haven't been really good and he [her husband] was really depressed because he's always worked...so having nothing to do was really getting him down. There's not a lot he can do in his condition, so this is great. It really makes him feel better and me as well' (Female, RSPB Motherwell)



Active England Programme

- Big Lottery Funding managed by Sport England
- Five woodland projects - aim to encourage under presented groups to become more active
 - Haldon Forest (Devon)
 - Bedgebury (Kent)
 - Rosliston (National Forest)
 - Great Western Community Forest (Wiltshire)
 - Greenwood Community Forest (Nottinghamshire)

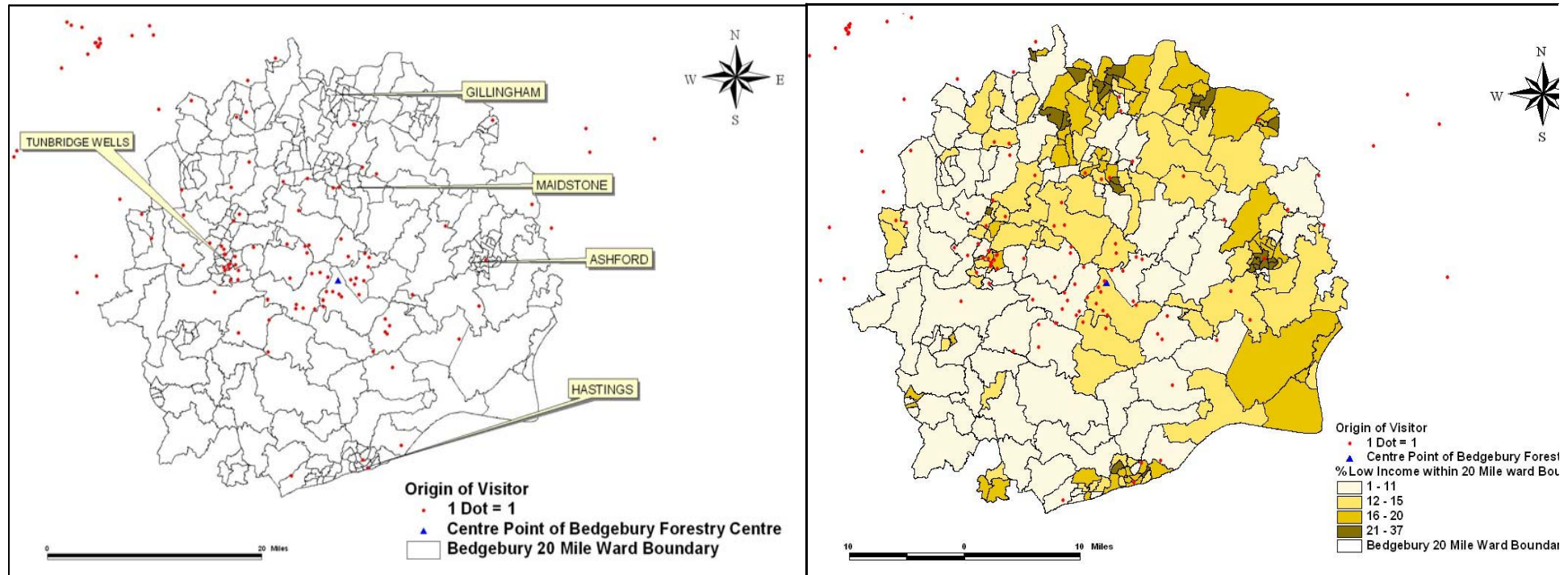
Running from 2005-2008

Infrastructure improvements and events and led activities





Bedgebury Catchment Profile

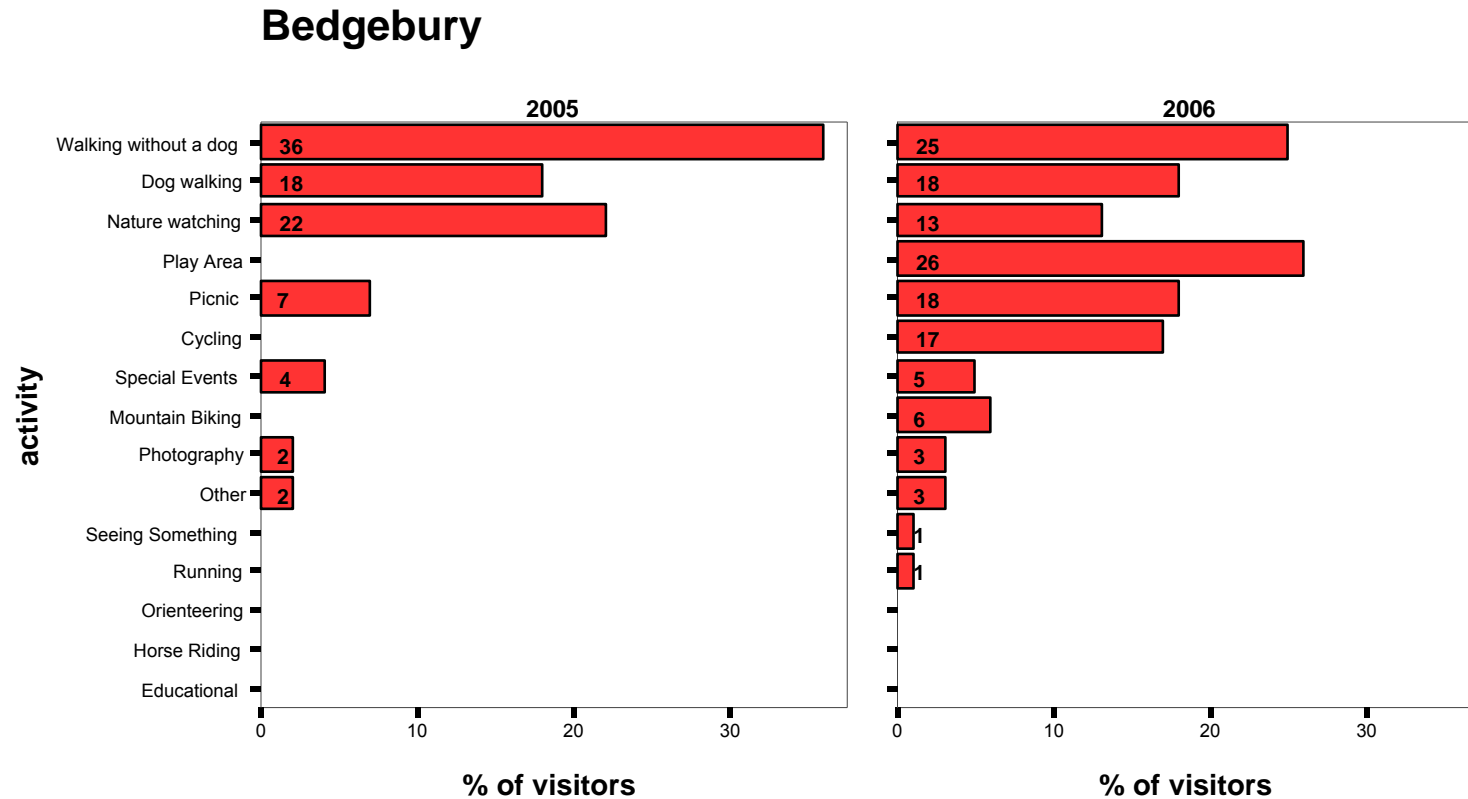


Post code data from the on site survey is used to map where visitors are coming from in relation to Bedgebury

This is then combined with census data to explore for example whether visitors are coming from low income wards



On site surveys – 2920 completed questionnaires across 5 sites



There was a significant ($p < 0.01$) increase in people doing multiple activities at Bedgebury from 42% in 2005 to 63% in 2006 ($p < 0.01$). There were significant increases in cycling from 1% (2005) to 17% (2006), in mountain biking 0% to 6% and in use of the play area from 0% to 26%.



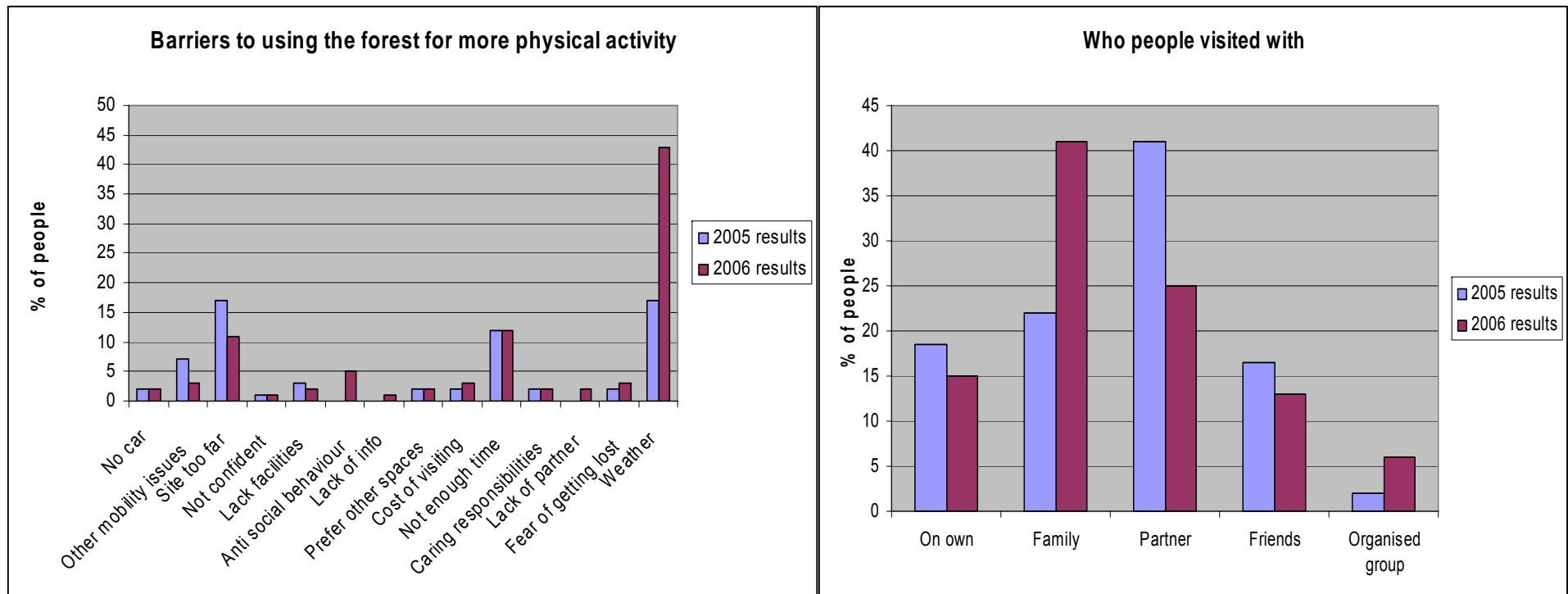
Significant increase in visitor numbers

Key barriers:

- weather
- site to far away
- not enough time

	Number of visitors at Bedgebury
2005/6	51,837 (before the project started)
2006/7	182,426
2007/8	273,081

Increase in families visiting the site and organised groups





Action research to explore impact of project with users and non users

(114 people involved in qualitative research - organised activities and focus groups)

Focus groups at Bedgebury with weekly health walkers:

- *'It makes you more conscious of what you should do' (Male, Bedgebury)*
- *'I think I am more aware now I won't catch a bus I'll walk instead' (Female, Bedgebury)*

Non user group of young people:

'Yeah most of us don't really exactly have a lot of money between us. To get up here is probably one of the hardest things to actually do. Apart from that we could come up here any time but it's just transport really' (Male, Bedgebury).

Key themes across the five sites from focus groups with users and non users



Benefits for users	Barriers for non users
Nature and childhood	Transport
Being outdoors/aesthetics	Money issues
Social networking	Health problems, restricted mobility
Health and well-being	Embedded deprivation
Enjoyment	Lack of information
Achievement and learning	Littering, anti-social behaviour
Wider impacts	Safety concerns



Targeting specific groups

- By targeting are we maintaining exclusion – how do we move to inclusion?
- Organised and supported visits/activities can give confidence to under-represented groups
- Potentially leading to future use and enjoyment
- How comfortable are staff with approaching under-represented groups?

Challenges

- Difficulties of reaching under-represented groups – time and effort needed
- Sustainability of projects/programmes
- What counts as evidence in monitoring and evaluation
- Partnerships



Lessons learnt

For evaluation

- Ensure monitoring and evaluation is embedded into projects/interventions from the beginning (5-10% of budget)
- Include a baseline before start of project to assess changes
- Longitudinal research - go back after the end of the project to see if change/activity is maintained in the long term

For projects/initiatives

- Bring together partners from an early stage so that each organisation can meet some of its own targets
- Use creative solutions to enthuse people and change behaviour
- A project leader or activity leader can act as a focus and motivator to get a project up and running
- Involve volunteers or train people to become volunteers in the project
- Publicise the project and its findings
- Exit or sustainability strategy



Reports and papers

O'Brien, L. 2006. Strengthens hearts and mind: using woodlands to improve mental and physical well-being. *Unasylva*, 57: 56-61.

O'Brien, L et al. 2006. Using woodlands and woodland grants to improve public health. *Scottish Forestry*. 60: 18-24.

O'Brien, L and Snowdon, H. 2007. Health and well-being in woodlands: a case study of the Chopwell Wood Health Project. *Arboricultural Journal*, 30: 45-60.

Weldon et al. 2007. New pathways to health and well-being: barriers to accessing woods. Report to FC.

Carter, C and O'Brien, L. 2008. Identity building in the woods: re-connecting with nature for health and well-being. *ECOS*, 29: 33-41.

<http://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/fr/INFD-5WBLHH>



Thank you

