

Kent Environment Strategy: Public Opinion Survey – July 2016





Introduction and Background

This public opinion survey was conducted to support the Kent Environment Strategy: *a strategy for environment, health and economy*, one of a number of strategies which supports KCC's Strategic Statement and Vision to deliver better outcomes for Kent's residents, communities and businesses. For further information visit:

kent.gov.uk/environmentstrategy

Delivery of the strategy will support:

- Kent residents in having a high quality of life, saving money in warmer, healthier homes and benefitting from the many services provided through natural and historic assets both within their communities and across the county
- Communities and businesses in being resource efficient and prepared for severe weather and its impacts through an increased awareness of environmental risks and opportunities
- A competitive and resilient economy, with business innovation in low carbon and environmental services driving economic growth



The survey is intended to ensure that actions linked to the Environment strategy take account of Kent residents' views and behaviour by increasing understanding of:

- Public perceptions of the Kent environment
- Usage of the environment
- Environmental priorities
- Residents' personal activity around energy efficiency and other "environmentally conscious" behaviours

C. 600 interviews were conducted with Kent residents in July 2016, replicating a study originally run in 2014. The majority of questions were kept identical to those asked previously to enable comparison, with a few small changes and additions.

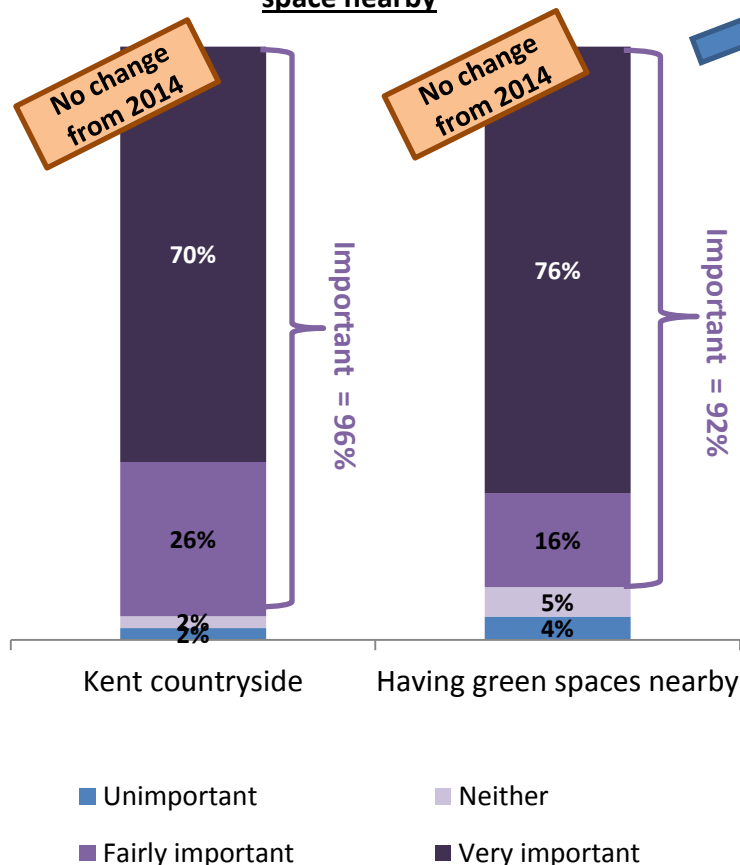


Attitudes Towards the Kent Environment



Importance of the Kent countryside and of having green spaces nearby

Importance of Kent countryside and having green space nearby



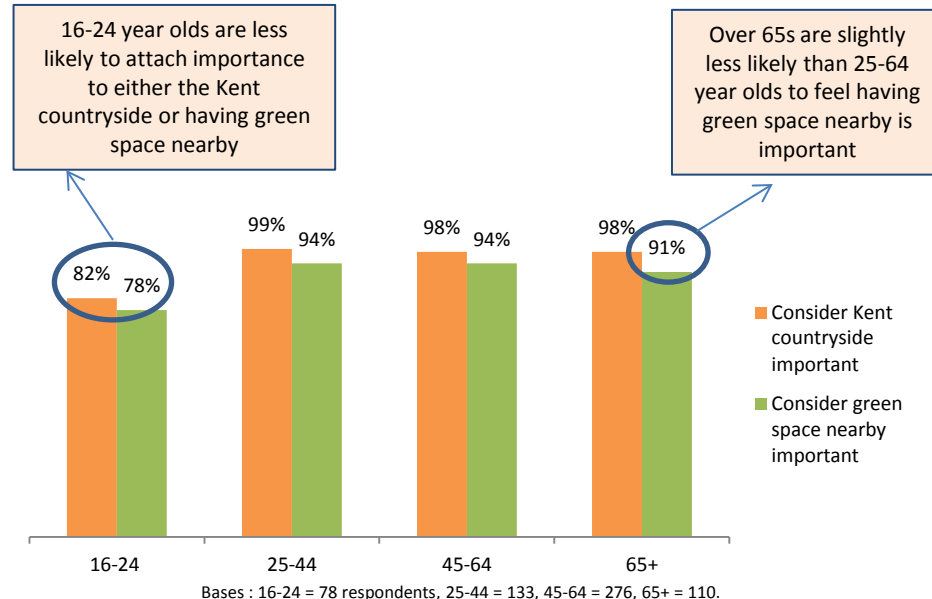
From Q3 "How important would you say the Kent countryside is to you?" and Q7 "How important is it to you to have green space nearby such as a local park or country park?". Base = 597 respondents.

Almost all Kent residents consider the Kent countryside important and more than 92% think that it is important to have green spaces nearby.

Green spaces are more likely to be considered "very important" but the overall proportion rating the Kent countryside as "important" is higher. For 6% of residents*, the Kent countryside is important as a *concept*, but they are less concerned about having green spaces close to them.

* % who rate the Kent countryside as important but do not consider it important to have green space nearby

Importance of Kent countryside and having green space nearby by age



Why do residents value the Kent Countryside?

Most common reasons for considering the Kent countryside important

A horizontal bar chart with blue bars. The y-axis lists 11 reasons, and the x-axis represents the percentage of respondents. The bars are ordered from highest to lowest percentage. The percentages are: 13%, 13%, 11%, 11%, 10%, 10%, 9%, 9%, 8%, 7%, and 7%.

Reason	Percentage
I live in the countryside	13%
Enjoy walking in the countryside	13%
Green/ wide open spaces are important	11%
Good for children/ raising children	11%
I love nature/ the countryside	10%
Countryside is attractive/ beautiful / pretty	10%
Relaxing - provides a respite from city / towns / restorative / better quality of life	9%
Too much building/ development	9%
Want it to stay as it is/ don't want things to change/ part of our heritage	8%
The environment/ conservation is important	7%
I am a dog owner/ good for dog walking	7%

From Q3 "Why do you say that?" Base = 597 respondents considering the Kent countryside important.

From Q3 "Why do you say that?" Base = 597 respondents considering the Kent countryside important.

Why is the Kent countryside important? – Word cloud

Larger words = more mentions. Word cloud created via Tagxedo (<http://www.tagxedo.com/app.html>).

Reasons given for valuing the Kent countryside are diverse.

Key themes relate to the activities that can be done in the countryside, as well as the importance of the countryside or nature *for its own sake*. Residents also commonly mention the importance of protecting the countryside, including preserving it for the next generation.

Comments illustrate the positive impact of the countryside on quality of life.

Reference was commonly made to Kent as the “Garden of England”, recognising the contribution of the countryside and rural environment to the county’s identity.

A number of respondents mentioned that they had moved to Kent specifically because of the county’s countryside or rural assets.

Key themes relate to the activities that can be done in the countryside, as well as the importance of the countryside or nature *for its own sake*. Residents also commonly mention the importance of protecting the countryside, including preserving it for the next generation.

Comments illustrate the positive impact of the countryside on quality of life.

Reference was commonly made to Kent as the “Garden of England”, recognising the contribution of the countryside and rural environment to the county’s identity.

A number of respondents mentioned that they had moved to Kent specifically because of the county's countryside or rural assets.



Why do residents value the Kent Countryside? (Verbatim comments)

"It is nice to get out of bed, look out of the window, see pretty trees and go for a walk in the countryside, whereas you can't do it in London. We went to visit our uncle in South Yorkshire and there just seemed to be roads and houses everywhere."

Female, 25-44, Dover

"It's a major part of the standard of living for me and my family."

Male, 45-64, Gravesham

"I think we need to focus more on our countryside and the planet."

Male, 16-24, Medway

"We value our countryside, it is quite unique with Kent being the garden of England."

Male, 65+, Thanet



"You have to go back to nature to recharge your batteries - And once it is gone or threatened it is gone for good. When they build a house on it, they'll never tear it down and make it back into a paddock or anything."

Female, 25-44, Sevenoaks

"I think the environment everywhere is important to everyone at all ages as it is something for us to hand over to our children and grandchildren to take care of."

Male, 65+, Shepway

"I love the countryside and the fact it has been kept in pristine condition means a lot to me."

Male, 45-64, Sevenoaks

"It's nice to have aesthetically pleasing scenery."

Male, 45-64, Tunbridge Wells



Why do some residents not consider the Kent Countryside important?

Reasons given for not considering the Kent countryside important centre on:

- General disinterest in the countryside
- Preferring town/ urban environments
- Being too busy to enjoy the countryside
- Finding the countryside difficult to access because of:
 - Disability/ age/ mobility issues
 - Practical considerations e.g. distance, having to rely on public transport

"I don't go into the countryside."

Male, 45-64, Medway

"I'm not a countryside person."

Male, 45-64, Thanet

"I'm old and don't get out as much as I should do."

Male, 65+, Medway

"I've never taken any interest in geography or anything to do with that."

Female, 16-24, Maidstone

"It's not my sort of thing really."

Male, 16-24, Maidstone

"It's because I'm young but when I grow up a bit I might care a bit more for the environment."

Male, 16-24, Sevenoaks





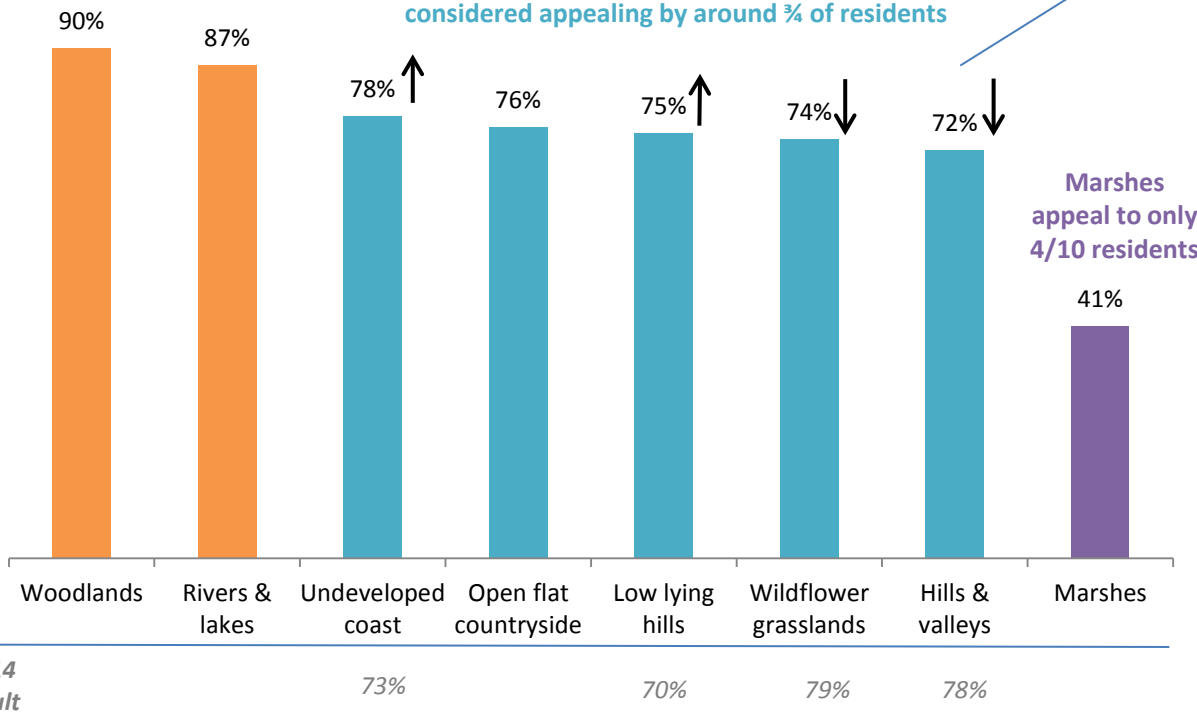
Appeal of different aspects of the Kent countryside

Appeal of different aspects of the Kent countryside (% considering appealing)

Woodlands and rivers & lakes are appealing to 9/10 residents

Most environmental features asked about are considered appealing by around ¾ of residents

Undeveloped coast and open flat countryside have increased in appeal since 2014 while wildflower grasslands and hills & valleys have declined.



Marshes appeal to only 4/10 residents



From Q8 "On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very appealing and 5 is not at all, can you tell me how appealing the following parts of the Kent countryside are to you?" 2016 base = 597 respondents, 2014 base = 601 respondents. Comparative results from 2014 are not available for all countryside aspects.



Appeal of different aspects of the Kent countryside by age

Ranking of appeal of different aspects of the Kent countryside by different age groups (% considering appealing)

16-24	25-44	45-64	65+
1. Rivers & lakes (86%)	1. Woodlands (96%)	= 1. Woodlands (87%)	1. Woodlands (85%)
2. Woodlands (85%)	2. Rivers & lakes (88%)	= 1. Rivers & lakes (87%)	2. Rivers & lakes (84%)
3. Open flat countryside (74%)	3. Open flat countryside (83%)	3. Undeveloped coast (84%)	3. Wildflower grasslands (82%)
4. Undeveloped coast (70%)	4. Low lying hills (79%)	4. Hills & valleys (80%)	4. Undeveloped coast (81%)
5. Wildflower grasslands (69%)	5. Wildflower grasslands (70%)	= 5. Low lying hills (78%)	5. Hills & valleys (75%)
6. Low lying hills (65%)	6. Undeveloped coast (73%)	= 5. Wildflower grasslands (78%)	6. Low lying hills (72%)
7. Hills & valleys (54%)	7. Hills & valleys (69%)	7. Open flat countryside (74%)	7. Open flat countryside (66%)
8. Marshes (21%)	8. Marshes (38%)	8. Marshes (49%)	8. Marshes (52%)

From Q8 "On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very appealing and 5 is not at all, can you tell me how appealing the following parts of the Kent countryside are to you?"

Bases : 16-24 = 78 respondents, 25-44 = 133, 45-64 = 276, 65+ = 110.

There are differences in the way different age groups see the relative appeal of different aspects of the Kent countryside.

While wildflower grasslands are ranked 6th by all residents in terms of appeal (see previous slide), this is the 3rd most appealing environment for those aged 65+.

Open flat countryside has much stronger appeal for those under 44 (ranked 3rd) than for those aged 45+ (ranked 7th).

16-24 year olds rate all aspects of the countryside as less appealing than older residents.



Perceptions of the Kent Environment

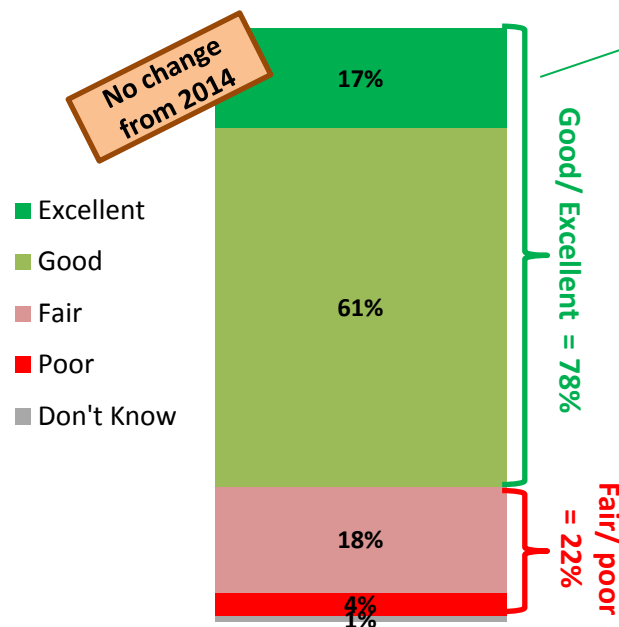
Perceived condition of Kent's natural and historic countryside and environment

78% of Kent residents rate the condition of the county's natural environment as "good" or "excellent".

However, a significant minority feel that it is "fair" or "poor".

20% of residents consider Kent's countryside important but rate its condition as only "fair" or "poor" suggesting that this is an area of concern for them.

Perceived condition of Kent's natural and historic countryside and environment



Residents of Ashford (29%) and Canterbury, Dartford and Dover (all 23%) are significantly more likely to consider the condition of the Kent countryside as "excellent" than those in Swale (8%).

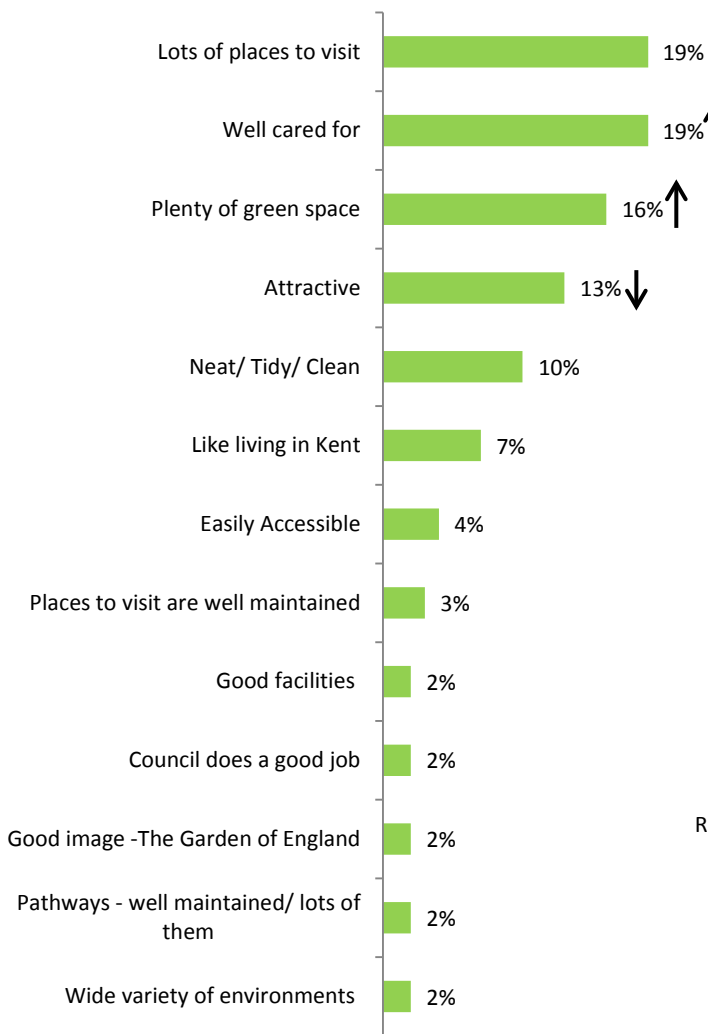
Those who use the Kent countryside only infrequently (less than once per month) are less likely than those who use it frequently (more than once every 2 weeks) to rate its condition as "fair" or "poor" (27% compared with 20%).

From Q1 "How would you rate the condition of Kent's natural and historic countryside and environment? Would you say it is ...". Base = 597 respondents.

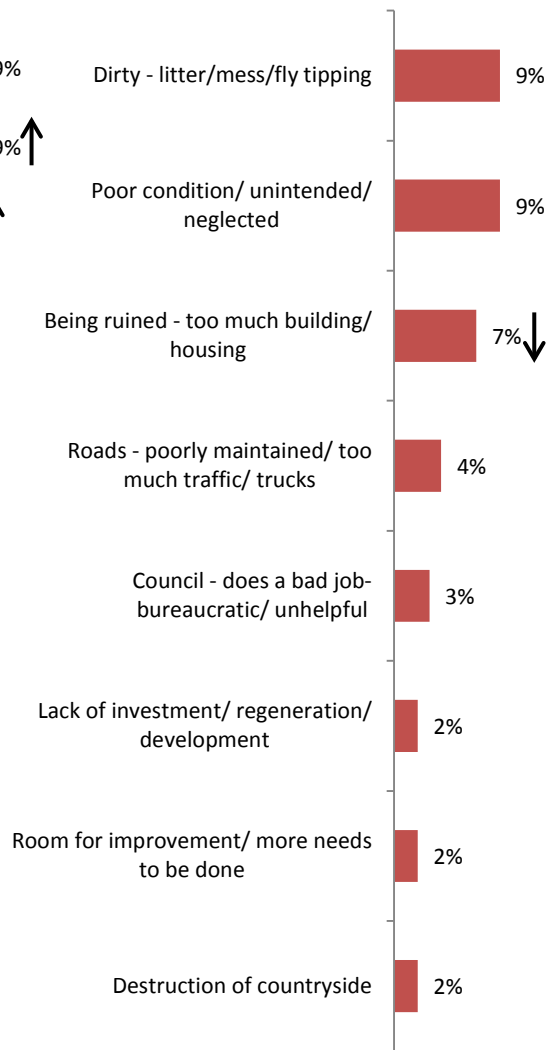


Rationale for positive and negative perceptions of the condition of Kent's countryside/ environment

Condition of the Kent countryside: Most common positive feedback



Condition of the Kent countryside: Most common negative feedback



As well as praise for the general condition of natural and historic assets, the fact that these assets are **well looked after** was commonly mentioned, with recognition of the efforts of Kent County Council and of other bodies such as the National Trust and English Heritage, as well as the work of volunteers.

The most commonly raised concerns about the condition of Kent's environment relate to issues such as fly tipping or rubbish not being cleared, giving residents the feeling that the countryside is not being well maintained. There are also concerns about the level of development/ house building in the area.

Key changes from 2014

More residents feel the Kent countryside is well cared for (19% compared with 14%) and more praise the amount of green space (16% compared with 11%). Fewer are concerned about building/ housing (7% vs 11%).

Positive

Female, 45-64, Swale

Male, 45-64, Canterbury



Male, 65+, Maidstone

Male, 65+, Canterbury

Female, 45-64, Dover

Male, 16-24, Tonbridge & Malling

Negative

Female, 45-64, Maidstone

Female, 45-64, Shepway



Female, 65+, Sevenoaks

Male, 25-44, Swale

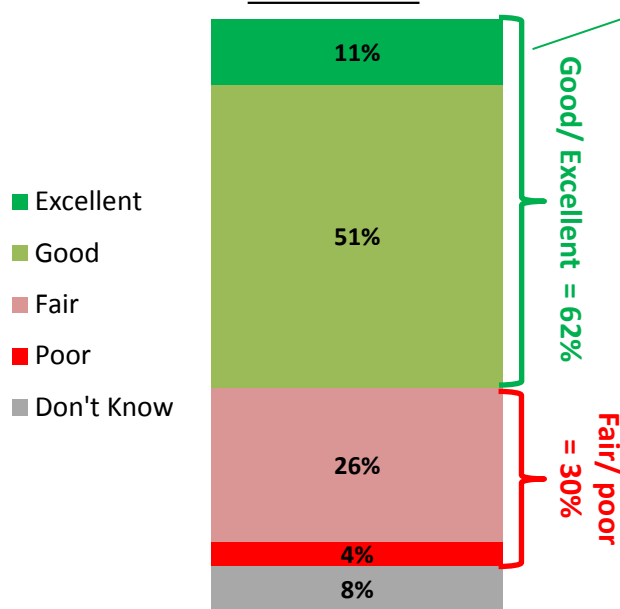
Male, 65+, Thanet

Perceived range of social, cultural and sporting opportunities within Kent's natural and historic environment

Kent residents are twice as likely to rate the range of social, cultural and sporting opportunities available within the Kent environment as "good"/ "excellent" than as "fair"/ "poor".

However, they are less positive about these opportunities than about the **condition** of the natural environment in Kent (rated "good"/ "excellent" by 78% of residents and "excellent" by 17%).

Perceived range of social, cultural and sporting opportunities within Kent's natural and historic environment



Residents of Ashford and Tonbridge & Malling (both 73%) are most likely to rate the range of opportunities as "good"/"excellent".
Men give a more positive rating of the range of opportunities than women (66% rate as "good"/ "excellent" vs 58% of women).

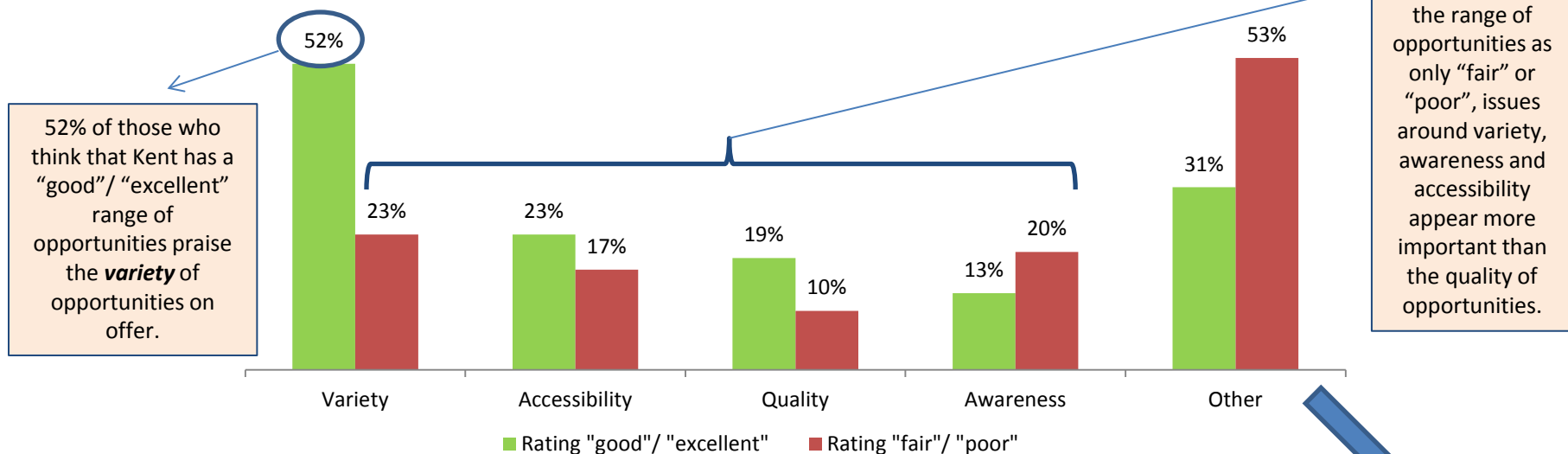
16-24 year olds are more likely than the over 65s to rate the range of opportunities as "fair"/ "poor" (37% compared with 23%).
"Fair"/ "poor" ratings are most commonly given by those living in Maidstone (41%) or Sevenoaks (38%) .

From Q8a "How would you rate the range of social, cultural and sporting opportunities within Kent's natural and historic environment? Base = 597 respondents. Note: Question asked in 2016 only.



Reasons for perceptions of the range of social, cultural and sporting opportunities within Kent's natural and historic environment

Reasons for perceptions of the range of opportunities available



From Q8b "Why do you say that?" Bases: Rating "good"/"excellent" = 307 respondents, Rating "fair"/"poor" = 177 respondents. Note: Question asked in 2016 only.

Other reasons driving perceptions of the opportunities available include:

For those rating as "good"/ "excellent":

- A feeling that the opportunities available are good but could be improved further
- A feeling that there is particularly good provision for certain groups of the Kent population e.g. children

For those rating as "fair"/ "poor":

- The **cost** of the opportunities/ activities available
- A call for more opportunities for specific types of activity (e.g. cycling) or for activities aimed at specific groups e.g. older people or children

"There could be more done. All the space is not being used to its full potential, especially for children."

Male, 25-44, Tonbridge & Malling (rating "good")

"It's good but I'd like to see more events for the elderly."

Male, 65+, Tunbridge Wells (rating "good")

"We need more opportunities for cyclists."

Female, 65+, Sevenoaks (rating "fair")

"There's not enough for teenagers to do and it's too expensive."

Female, 45-64, Medway (rating "poor")

"If you want to do any sport locally you have to pay for it."

Male, 45-64, Shepway (rating "fair")

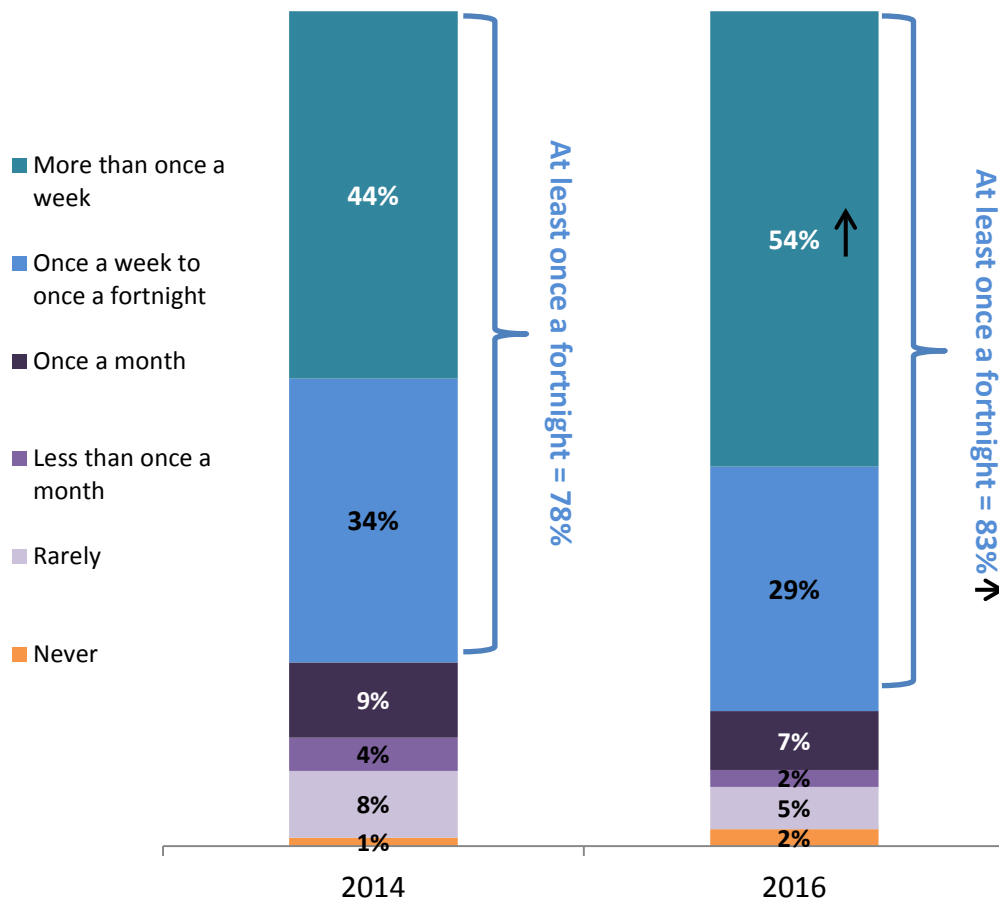


Use of the Kent Environment



Frequency of use of the natural environment

Frequency of using the natural environment



From Q5. "How often would you say you use the natural environment, for example a local park, gardens or wider countryside, for leisure or recreation?" 2014 base = 601, 2016 base = 597. Note small change in wording; 2016 question mentions gardens, 2014 question does not.

83% of residents use the natural environment at least once a fortnight

- 91% use it at least once a month
- 54% use it at least once a week

Reported frequency of using the natural environment has increased since 2014

- This primarily reflects a shift towards using the environment at least once a week away from using it between once a week and once a fortnight

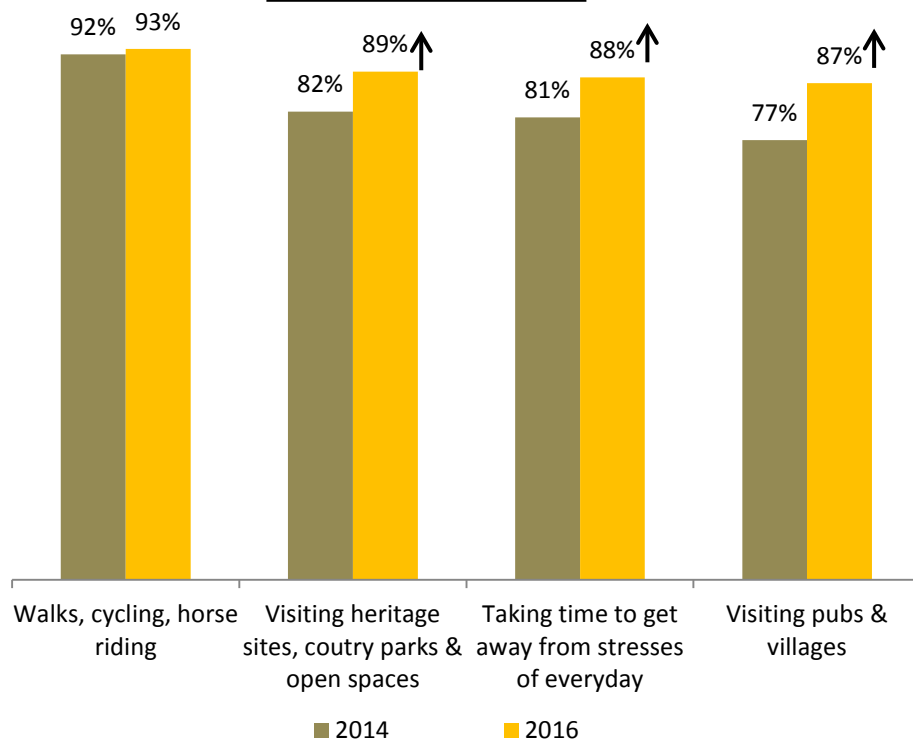
90% of 25-44 year olds and 97% of Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge & Malling residents use the natural environment at least once a fortnight compared with only 72% of Dover residents.

↑↓ = statistically significant increase/decrease since 2014



Activities undertaken in the natural environment

Activities undertaken by those using the natural environment



From Q6. "How often [over the year] do you participate in the following activities in the natural environment? Base = those using the natural environment at least once a month. 2014 base = 527, 2016 base = 535. Figures shown are the % of respondents not answering "rarely" or "never".

Of those who use the natural environment once a month or more, around 99% undertake each of the key activities listed at least occasionally.

Visiting pubs & villages has increased significantly since 2014.

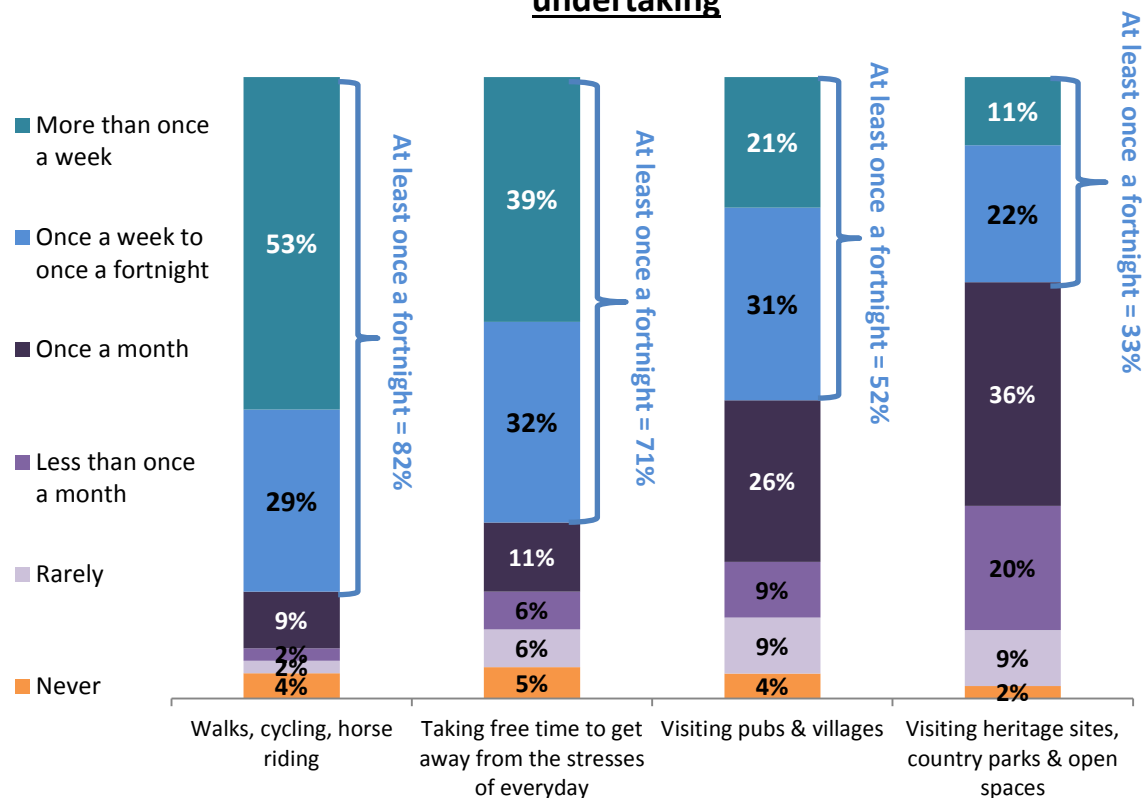
- Visiting heritage sites, country parks and open spaces and "taking time in the natural environment to get away from the stresses of everyday" has also increased
- There has been no increase in the proportion users of the environment taking part in walks, cycling or horse riding – but these activities were already being undertaken by more than 90% of those using the natural environment regularly.

↑↓ = statistically significant increase/ decrease since 2014



Frequency of undertaking key activities in the natural environment

Activities in the natural environment by frequency of undertaking



From Q6. "How often [over the year] do you participate in the following activities in the natural environment?"
Base = those using the natural environment at least once a month = 535. No comparable question in 2014.

The majority of those who engage in walks, cycling/ horse riding or taking time to get away from the stresses of everyday life do this on a frequent basis.

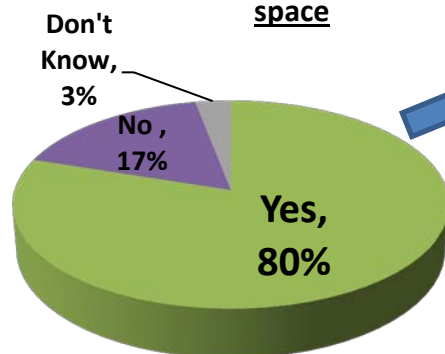
Visiting pubs & villages or heritage sites, country parks & open spaces is generally undertaken on a more occasional basis.





Further use of green space

Consideration of more frequent use of green space

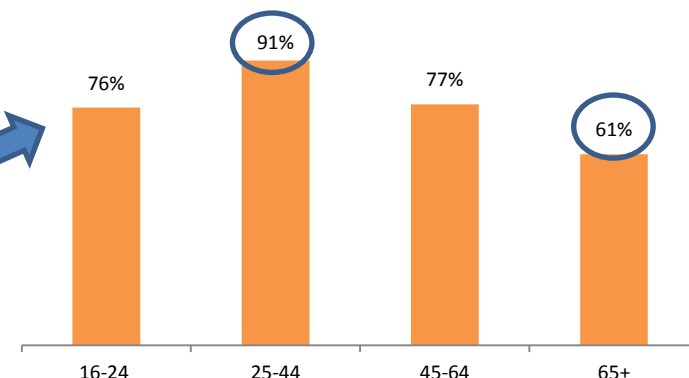


From Q7a. "Would you consider more frequent use of green space?".
Base = 597. No comparable question in 2014.

80% of Kent residents would consider using green space more frequently.

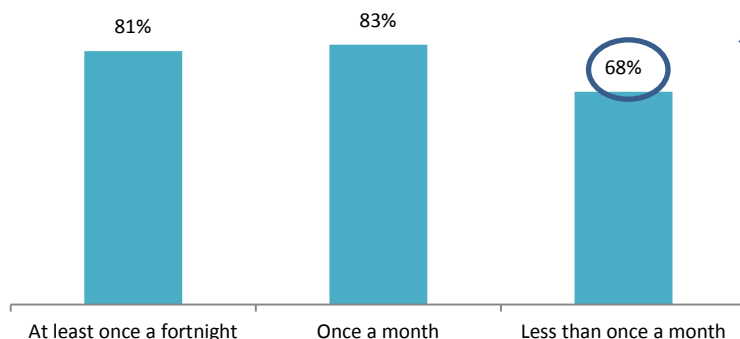
This rises to **91%** of **25-44 year olds** but is true of only **61%** of **over 65s**.

Consideration of more frequent use of green space by age



Bases : 16-24 = 78 respondents, 25-44 = 133, 45-64 = 276, 65+ = 110.

Consideration of more frequent use of green space by current frequency of use of the natural environment



Bases : At least once a fortnight = 487 respondents, Once a month = 48, Less than once a month = 61.

Those who already use the natural environment at least once a month are most likely to consider doing so more often.

However, **68%** of those currently using the environment only infrequently would consider increasing their usage.

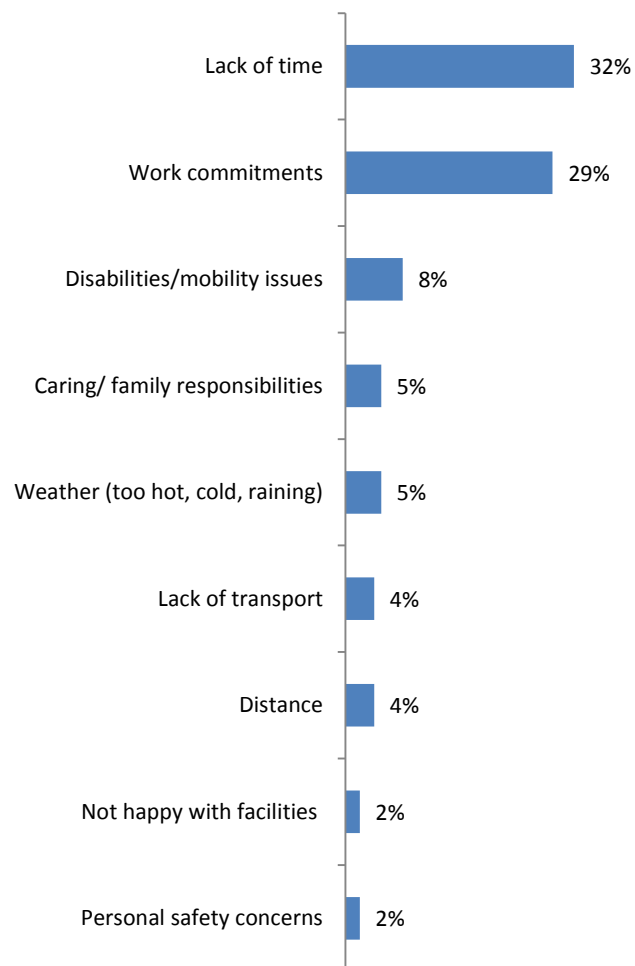
This equates to **6%** of the Kent population who are not currently accessing the natural environment regularly but who may wish to do so.

Likelihood to consider more frequent use of green space is highest in Dartford (88%) and Tunbridge Wells (92%).



Barriers to more frequent use of green space

Most common issues preventing those who would consider using green space more frequently from doing so



From Q7b. "Are there any reasons preventing you from doing so?". Base = 459 respondents who would consider using green space more frequently. No comparable question in 2014.

"Internal" barriers such as lack of time, work commitments or disabilities appear most important in preventing Kent residents from using green space more frequently.

As could be expected, lack of time and work commitments are more important as a barrier for under 65s (lack of time mentioned by 34% and work commitments by 31% compared with 12% and 3% among those aged 65+).

For the over 65s, disability/ mobility issues are more important (mentioned by 34%). These issues are also a barrier for 11% of 45-64 year olds.

Lack of time is more important as a barrier in Sevenoaks (50%) and Tunbridge Wells (43%), possibly reflecting high levels of commuting in these districts.

The top barriers for those residents who currently use the environment less than once a month but who would consider doing so more often are:

- Lack of time (24%)
- Disabilities/ mobility issues (22%)
- Work commitments (19%)
- Lack of transport (10%)
- Personal safety concerns (6%)



Barriers to more frequent use of green space: Implications

The key reasons preventing those who would consider using green spaces more frequently from doing so suggest that additional use of green space could be encouraged by:

- Ensuring site accessibility for those with disabilities/ mobility problems
- Promoting accessible sites and providing **reassurance** to those who may be unsure about using them
- Promoting ways to use the countryside that are not time consuming and helping to raise awareness of local green spaces that can be accessed quickly with minimal need for travel



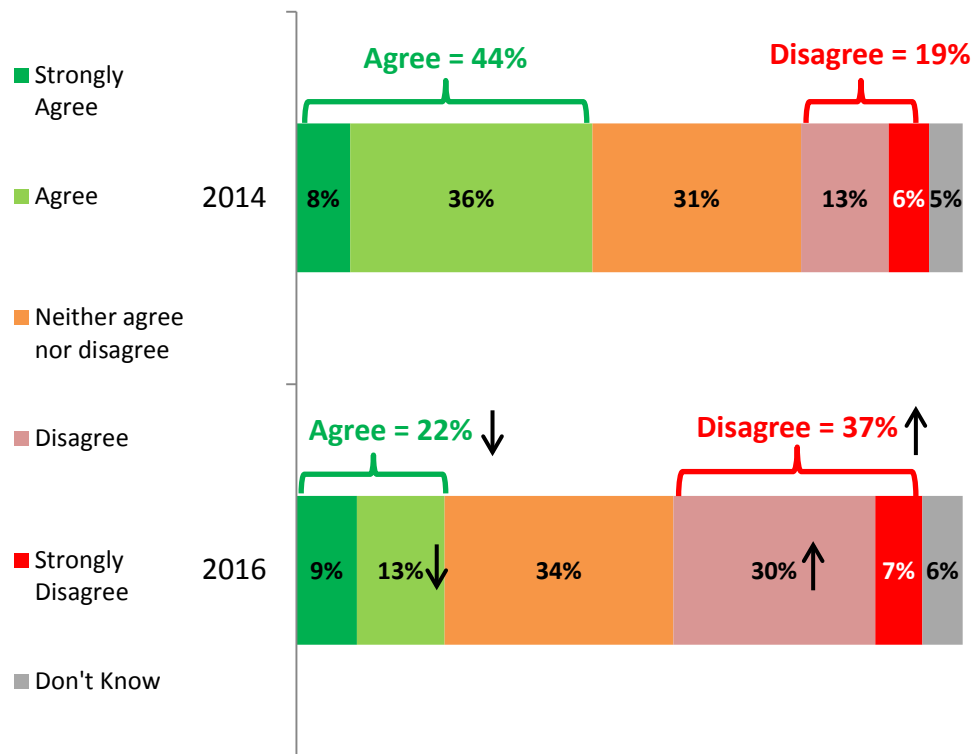


**Supporting/
Protecting the Kent
Environment:
“Public Realm” Activity**



Perceived consideration of the local environment by the local authority

Agreement/ disagreement that the local authority considers the environment when making decisions



From Q9. "To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement, 'The local authority consider the natural and historic environment in Kent and Medway when making decisions'? 2014 base = 601 respondents, 2016 base = 597 respondents.

Kent residents are now much less likely to feel that the local authority considers the environment when making decisions than was the case in 2014

- This reflects a shift away from "agree" towards "disagree" – the proportion who *strongly* agree or disagree has remained broadly constant.

Older residents aged 45+ are most likely to agree that the local authority takes the environment into consideration (35% agree or strongly agree compared with 17% of under 45s).

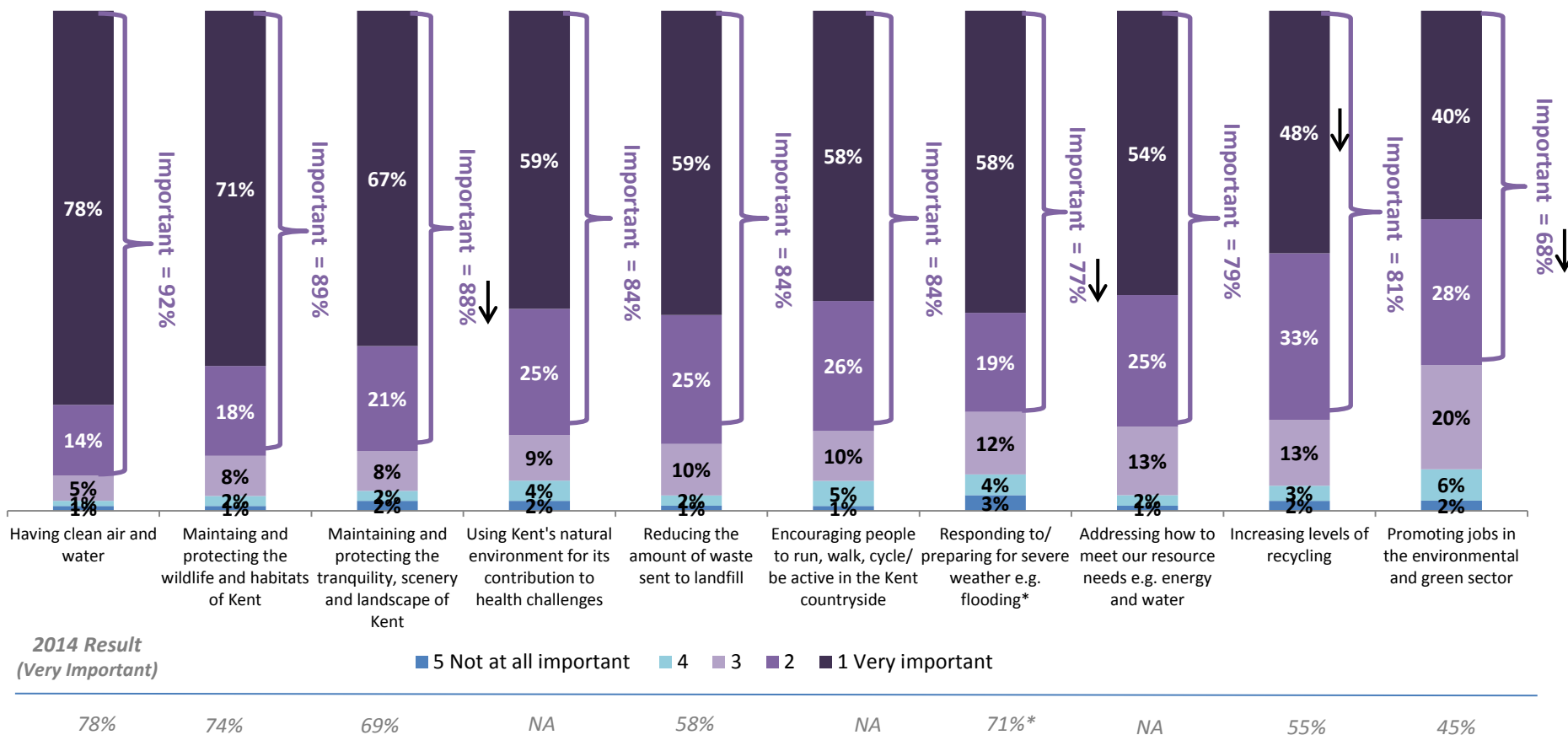
- Only 12% of 16-24 year olds agree with this statement while 41% disagree

Agreement is strongest in Maidstone (33%) and Thanet (32%) and weakest in Shepway (11%), Tunbridge Wells (13%) and Tonbridge & Malling (14%). Ashford residents are most likely to actively *disagree* (53%).



Environmental Priorities

Importance to Kent residents of 10 environmental priorities



From Q11 "How important would you say the following statements are for Kent?" 2016 base = 597 respondents, 2014 base = 601 respondents. Not all statements were covered in 2016. Note change in wording of severe weather statement: 2016 = 'Responding to and preparing for severe weather for example flooding', 2014 = 'Responding to severe weather for example flooding'.



Environmental Priorities: Comments

9 of the 10 environmental priorities asked about are considered important by at least 80% of residents – The exception is promoting jobs in the environmental and green sector, considered important by 68%.

Residents attach the highest importance to having clear air and water, followed by maintaining and protecting Kent's wildlife and habitats and tranquillity, scenery and landscape (all considered important by around 90% of residents).



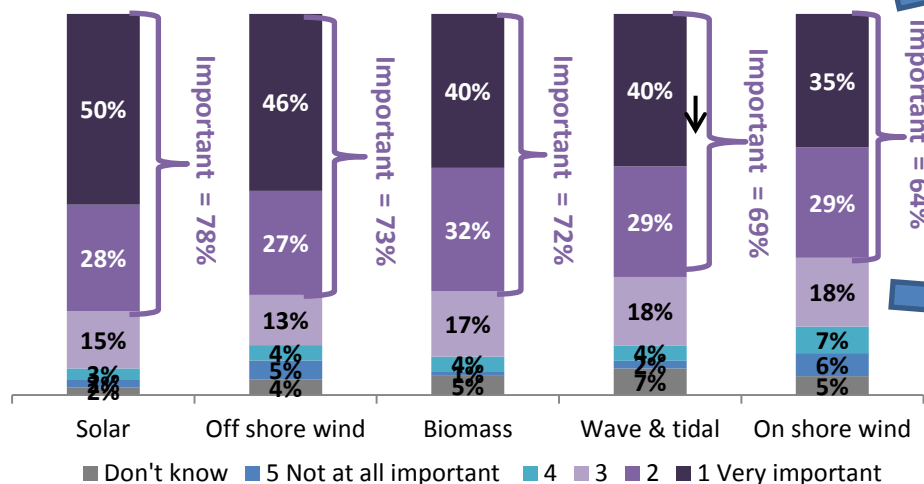
The importance attached the key environmental priorities in 2016 is broadly in line with findings in 2014.

However, some priorities have declined in importance, particularly “responding to and preparing for severe weather such as flooding”, considered very important by 58% of residents in 2016 compared with 71% in 2014 (although a slight change in the wording of this statement should be borne in mind), and “increasing levels of recycling” (considered very important by 58% in 2014 but only 48% in 2016).



Green Energy Priorities

Importance attached to different types of green energy in Kent



From Q16 "On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being very important and 5 being not at all, how important would you say each of the following energy types are for green energy in Kent?" 2016 base = 597 respondents, 2014 base = 601 respondents.

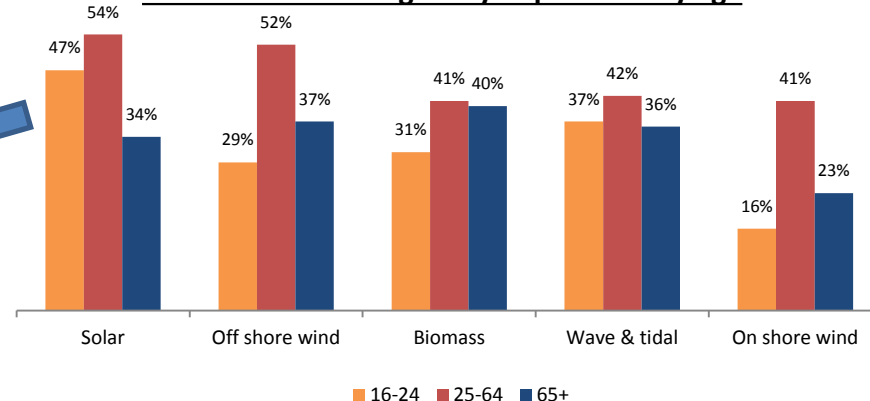
Kent residents attach more importance to solar energy and offshore wind (considered "very important" by around 50% of residents) than to biomass, wave & tidal energy or offshore wind (considered "very important" by around 40%).

Residents' views of the importance of different green energy sources have generally not changed since 2016. The exception is wave & tidal energy, which is now considered "very important" by only 40% of residents, compared with 46% in 2014, putting it on a par with the perceived importance of biomass.

↑↓ = statistically significant increase/ decrease since 2014

Residents aged 25-64 are more likely than those aged either 16-24 or 65+ to consider all green energy sources "very important", but this is particularly true of wind power (both on shore and off shore) and solar energy.

% of residents rating "very important" by age



Bases : 16-24 = 78 respondents, 25-64 = 409, 65+ = 110.

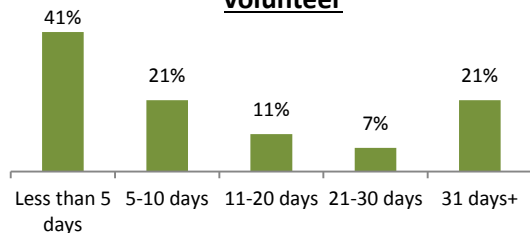


**Supporting/
Protecting the Kent
Environment:
Personal Activity**



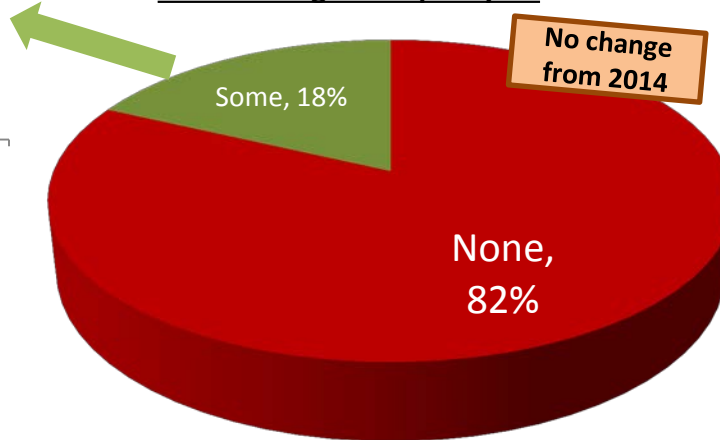
Environmental Volunteering

Extent of volunteering by those who volunteer



Base = 111 respondents engaging in environmental volunteering activity.

Participation in environmental volunteering in the past year



From Q10 "In the last year, how much time have you spent volunteering or as part of a community group related to the natural environment? Base = 597 respondents.

18% of Kent residents have engaged in some form of environmental volunteering in the past year, with 41% of these individuals undertaking "ad hoc" volunteering activity on between 1 and 5 days in the year.

This suggests that there may be scope to encourage more residents to take part in environmental volunteering activities or to increase the *extent* of their activity.

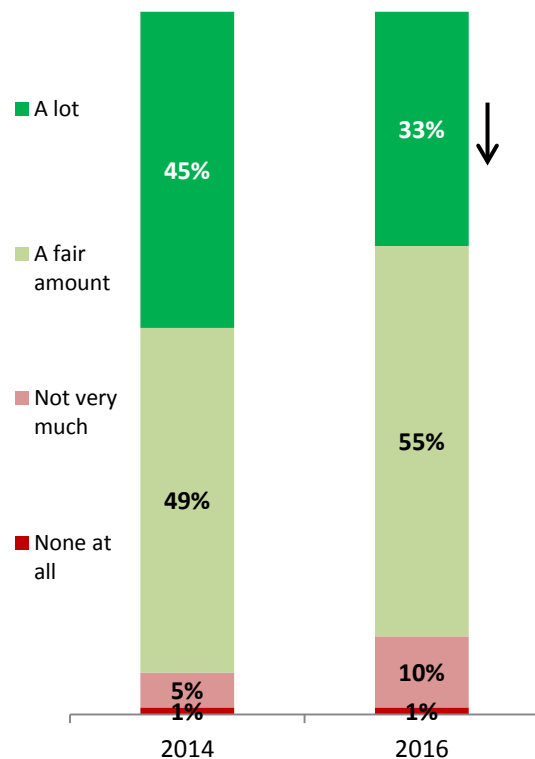
Canterbury residents are most likely to undertake environmental volunteering (36%). Those in Medway (8%) and Gravesend (9%) are least likely.





Thought Given to Energy Saving

Amount of thought given to saving energy at home



From Q13 "How much thought, if any, would you say you give to saving energy in your home? 2014 base = 601 respondents, 2016 base = 597 respondents.

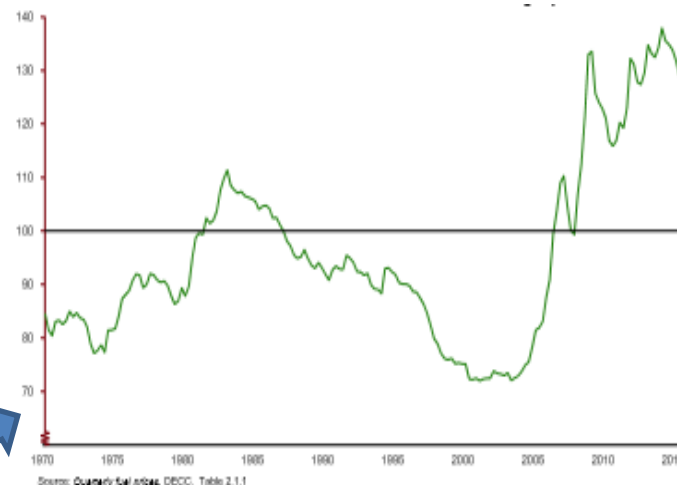
↑↓ = statistically significant increase/ decrease since 2014

The proportion of Kent residents who give a lot of thought to saving energy at home has decreased significantly since 2014.

This may reflect a declining trend in energy prices over this period, meaning that residents may be less likely to think about energy saving for **financial** reasons. However, it may be that residents are now more *used* to engaging in energy saving activity so tend to do so without having to think too deeply.

Under 24s are less likely to give a lot of thought to energy saving than older residents (15% compared with 37%), possibly because they are less likely to pay energy bills themselves.

Index of real domestic fuel and light prices (Q1 1987 = 100)



Source: House of Commons Library, Energy Prices Briefing Paper, 7 March 2016

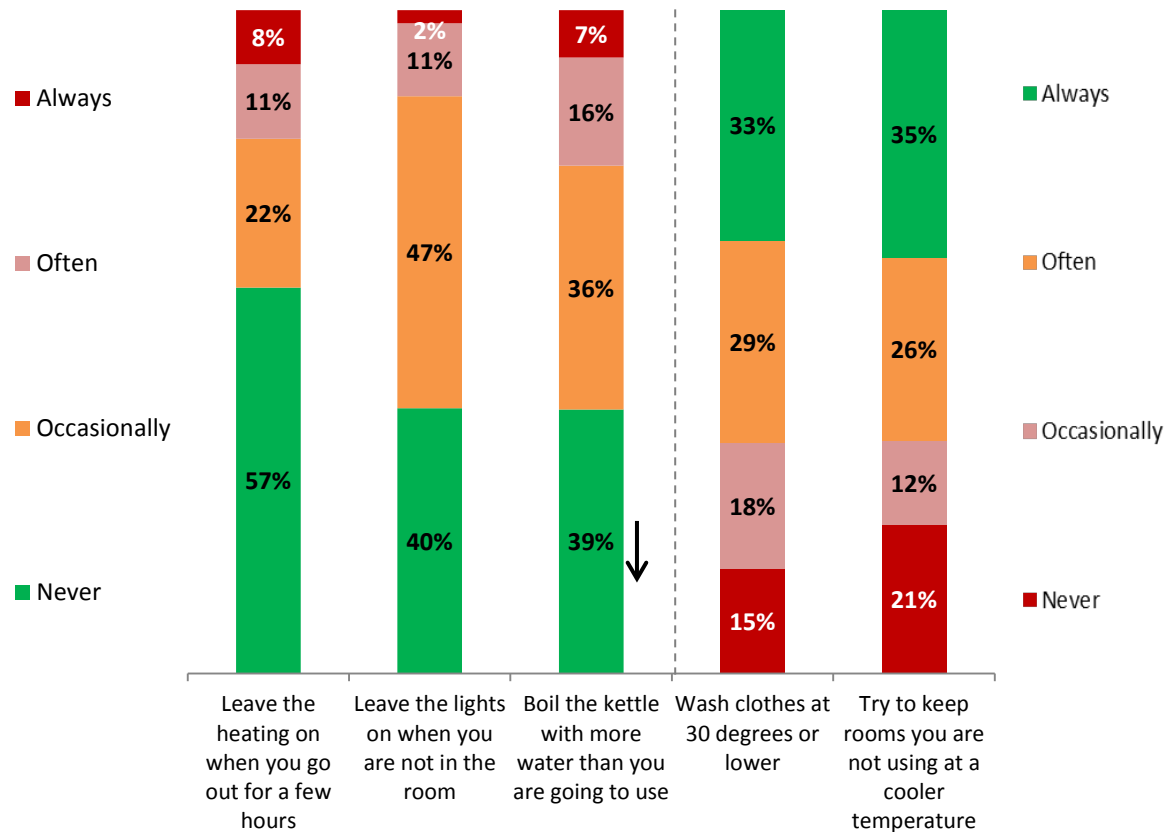
Residents of Swale (45%) and Dover (43%) are most likely to think a lot about energy saving. Those in Sevenoaks (19%) and Ashford (23%) are least likely.





Energy Efficient Behaviour

Level of engagement in energy saving activity



From Q14 "How often, if at all, do you personally do the following?" Base = 597 respondents.

Kent residents are more likely to save energy by never leaving the heating on when they go out (true of 57% of residents) than to do this by washing clothes at low temperatures or keeping rooms not in use at a lower temperature (both always done by around 35% of residents and never done by around 15-20%).

Levels of engagement in these activities have generally not changed since 2014. However, residents are now significantly less likely to say that they never boil the kettle with more water than needed (39% compared with 48%).

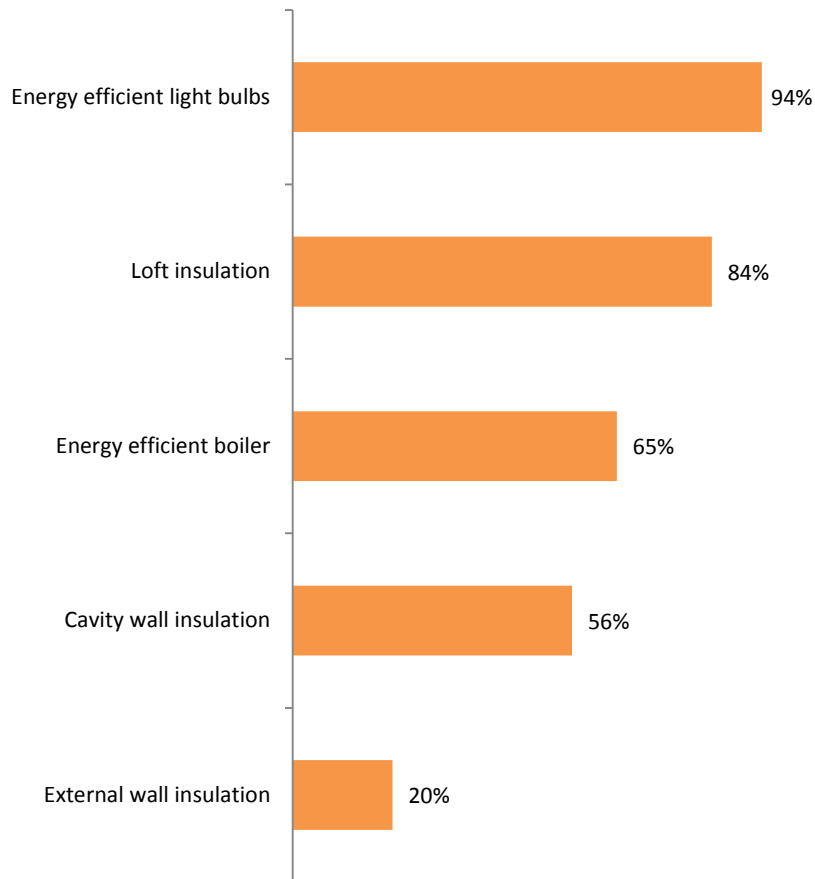
16-24 year olds are less likely than older residents to engage in most of these energy saving activities. The exception is leaving lights on when not in the room, where all age groups behave similarly.



Energy Efficient Measures at Home

No change
from 2014

% of residents with energy efficient measures at home



From Q15 "Which of the following energy efficient measures do you have in your house?"
Base = 597 respondents.

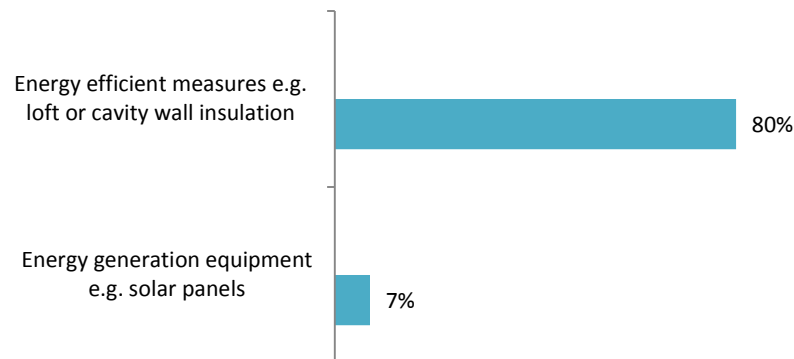
Almost all Kent residents have energy efficiency light bulbs in their home.

84% have loft insulation.

Energy efficient boilers and cavity wall insulation can each be found in the homes of around 60% of residents.

No change
from 2014

% of residents who have fitted energy efficiency/energy generation measures at home



From Q12 "Which of the following do you currently do if any?"
Base = 597 respondents.

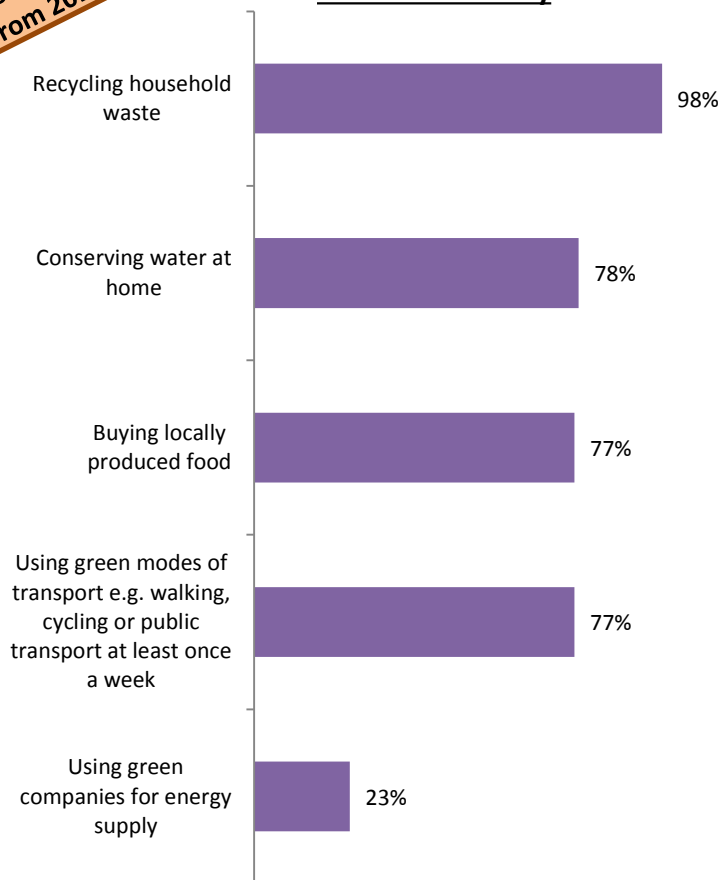
Kent residents are more than 10 times as likely to have fitted energy efficient measures in their home than energy *generating* measures, such as solar panels (done by less than 10% of residents).



Other Environmentally Conscious Behaviour

No change
from 2014

% of residents engaging in environmentally conscious activity



From Q12 "Which of the following do you currently do if any?"
Base = 597 respondents.

Engaging in key types of environmentally conscious behaviour is generally quite common in Kent, with most of these activities done by at least around 80% of residents.

However, residents are much less likely to use green energy suppliers (only 23% do so).

Engagement in some environmentally conscious behaviour varies by age e.g.:

- Conserving water is more commonly done by those aged 45+ (84% compared with 71% of under 45s),
- Using green transport is most common among 25-64 year olds (80% compared with 72% of 16-24s and 67% of over 65).





Key Messages



Key Messages

- There has been no change since 2014 in the importance Kent residents attach to the countryside in general and to having green space nearby, or in their perceptions of the condition of the Kent countryside. However, these were already at high levels, with more than 90% of residents rating the countryside and nearby green space as important and around 80% considering the condition of the countryside to be good or excellent.
- Residents are no more likely than in 2014 to have energy efficient measures in their home or to engage in environmentally conscious behaviour such as recycling or conserving water. Levels of activity of this kind are generally quite high, but there are areas with scope to encourage residents to engage further, for example use of green energy suppliers or installation of energy generation equipment such as solar panels at home.
- Compared with the last time this survey was conducted, residents are now more likely to feel that the Kent countryside is well cared for and that there is plenty of green space and less likely to feel that it is being ruined by too much building or housing.
- However, 20% of residents consider Kent's countryside very important but rate its condition as only fair or poor, suggesting that this is an area of concern for them. Key issues raised around the condition of the Kent countryside relate to issues such as fly tipping or rubbish not being cleared, giving residents the feeling that the countryside is not being well maintained.



Key Messages

- Those interviewed in 2016 appear to be accessing the local environment more frequently than was the case in 2014, with an increase in visiting heritage sites, country parks and open spaces and “taking time in the natural environment to get away from the stresses of everyday”.
- Compared with 2014, residents are less likely to have given a lot of thought to saving energy at home and a number of environmental priorities are now considered less important.
- Kent residents are now much less likely to believe that the local authority considers the environment when making decisions and younger residents aged 16-24 are least likely to feel that this is the case.
- For some residents, the environment as a *concept* is important, even if they do not intend to use green spaces. However, around 80% of residents would consider using green space more often. Among those who currently use green spaces less than once a month, this figure is 68%.
- The biggest barriers for those who would consider making more use of green space are lack of time or work commitments, followed by disability/ mobility issues. This suggests that additional use of green space could be encouraged by promoting ways to use the countryside that are not time consuming and helping to raise awareness of local green spaces that can be accessed quickly with minimal need for travel. Ensuring site accessibility for those with disabilities/ mobility problems, promoting accessible sites and providing **reassurance** to those who may be unsure about using them may also help some of those who would like to access green space more often to do so.



Key Messages

- 16-24 year olds attach less importance to the environment in general and to green energy sources than older residents and are less likely to engage in energy saving activities. They tend to use the natural environment less frequently than 25-44 year olds but are less likely to be satisfied with the range of social, cultural and sporting opportunities available, which suggests that promoting activities of this kind may encourage more young people to use and take interest in the environment.
- The level of engagement in environmental volunteering activity remains at only 18% of residents taking part in activity of this kind, often on a small scale, ad hoc basis. This suggests that there may be scope to encourage more residents to take part in environmental volunteering activities or to increase the *extent* of their activity.