

# **UK Biodiversity Indicators 2023**

This document supports  
A1. Awareness, understanding and support for conservation

This indicator was not updated in 2023  
It was last updated in 2020

**Technical background document:  
Measuring public engagement with biodiversity loss in  
England and the UK: awareness, concern and action**

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For further information on A1. Awareness, understanding and support for conservation  
visit <https://jncc.gov.uk/ukbi-a1>

For further information on the UK Biodiversity Indicators visit <https://jncc.gov.uk/ukbi>

## Technical background document – measuring public engagement with biodiversity loss in England and the UK: awareness, concern and action

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October 2020 update

### Introduction

1. This indicator monitors progress against Aichi target 1:

*By 2020, at the latest, people are aware of the values of biodiversity and the steps they can take to conserve and use it sustainably.*

It addresses public awareness of biodiversity, concern about biodiversity loss, and support for performing actions that can help to conserve it.

2. A hierarchical system is used to group people in the UK according to the extent to which they are aware of the threat to biodiversity in the UK, their level of concern about the loss of biodiversity and the number and type of actions they take to support and protect it.
3. Data for this indicator comes from questions on awareness of, concern for, and actions taken to prevent biodiversity loss, which have been inserted into surveys already running in England (Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment), Scotland (Scottish Nature Omnibus), Northern Ireland (Continuous Household Survey) and Wales (Wales Outdoor Recreation Survey). More details on individual surveys and sample sizes can be found in Annex 1.
4. The questions used to inform this indicator are based on questions used to define the 'Public Engagement with Loss of Biodiversity' system in the 2013 Defra [Engaging people in biodiversity issues](#) report.
5. The tier system developed in the Defra Study was defined using rigorous quantitative analysis of survey data and resulted in a set of evidence-based criteria and decision rules that could be used to assign people from the general population into 5 discrete groups, reflecting different levels of engagement in biodiversity issues. The tier definitions developed gave internally consistent findings across the (extensive) survey in terms of attitudes and behaviours, and tiers were of sufficient size to allow further analysis and policy targeting.
6. In order to try and ensure this biodiversity indicator is equally representative of the general population and a useful way of monitoring progress against Aichi target 1, key questions have been extracted from the Defra report (those that were identified as the most effective for deciding which groups people belonged to); these are used in a similar manner to classify survey respondents into the 5 groups in the indicator.
7. A complete list of the questions that were inserted into each survey can be found in Annexes 2 to 5.

## Group definitions

The indicator groups respondents as follows:

Group 1: Does not anticipate a loss of biodiversity in the UK (exact wording of question varied between surveys).

Group 2: Believes there will be a loss of biodiversity in the future but is not concerned about the loss of biodiversity.

Group 3: Believes there will be a loss of biodiversity; is concerned about a loss of biodiversity and performs 0 to 2 'day-to-day' actions to support and protect biodiversity.

Group 4: Believes there will be a loss of biodiversity, is concerned about that loss and performs all 3 'day-to-day' actions or 1 to 2 'day-to-day' actions and at least one 'higher effort' action.

Group 5: Believes there will be a loss of biodiversity, is concerned about that loss and performs all 3 'day-to-day' actions as well as 1 to 2 'higher effort' actions.

Respondents that fall into group 1 are labelled as 'not aware', respondents in group 2 are labelled as 'not engaged', respondents in group 3 are said to show 'some engagement' and respondents in group 4 or group 5 are combined and said to show 'high engagement'.

A 'higher effort' action is a behaviour that has the capability to persuade others and lead to changes that might impact on biodiversity loss at a national level. Higher effort behaviours require the participant to act outside the realms of regular daily life and are adopted by only a niche group of people. The higher effort actions asked about in the questions used to inform this indicator are:

- 'volunteered with a project or organisation to help protect the environment/wildlife'; and
- 'signed a conservation petition or participated in a conservation campaign (online or other)'.

'Day-to-day' behaviours are more a measure of engagement than behaviours that will actually prevent biodiversity loss. The day-to-day behaviours asked about in the questions used to inform this indicator are:

- wildlife gardening;
- green consumerism;
- and membership of an organisation that helps to look after wildlife or the natural environment.

Data is analysed by country, before being compiled to give UK figures. The results of each of the 4 countries are weighted by population size to ensure the UK figure is as representative as possible. Estimate of population size are taken from the [Office for National Statistics](#) website.

### Indicator assessment

At present, we do not have a data series, so are unable to assess this indicator. In the future, the total proportion of people that fall within groups 4 and 5 (and can therefore be said to show 'high engagement') will be assessed. An assessment of change in the indicator will be made by comparing the proportion of people in groups 4 and 5 in a given year to the proportion of people in the baseline year (2014). A threshold of 3% will be used to say if the indicator is increasing, decreasing or has shown no change.

### Web links for further information

Reference	Title	Website
Defra Awareness research	Engaging people in biodiversity issues	<a href="http://randd.defra.gov.uk/Default.aspx?Module=More&amp;Location=None&amp;ProjectID=18411">http://randd.defra.gov.uk/Default.aspx?Module=More&amp;Location=None&amp;ProjectID=18411</a>
Office for National Statistics	UK population estimates	<a href="https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates">https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates</a>

**Annex 1: Surveys for indicator question distribution in the UK**

Country	Survey name	Total sample size (approx.)	Frequency of survey cycle	Frequency of reporting	Survey start date	Survey method	Sample size for the 2014 indicator	Sample size for the 2017 indicator	Sample size for the 2018 indicator
England	Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment	~45,000 a year, but individual questions can be inserted for quarters (periods of 3 months)	Continuous data collection: 800 interviews/week	Annual	2009	Face-to-face interviews	3,419	3,666	3,498
Scotland	Scottish Nature Omnibus	~1,125	Every 6 months	Every 6 months	2009	Face-to-face interviews	1,141	1,062	1,062 <sup>(a)</sup>
Wales	Welsh Outdoor Recreation Survey	~6,300	Every 3 years	Every 3 years	2008	Telephone interviews	6,000	6,000 <sup>(a)</sup>	6,000 <sup>(a)</sup>
Northern Ireland	Continuous Household Survey	~3,600 a year	Annual	Annual	1983	Face-to-face interviews	1,215	1,215 <sup>(a)</sup>	1,215 <sup>(a)</sup>

(a) This indicator is built from survey results obtained separately by each of the 4 countries in the UK - which each run surveys in a slightly different manner. Some changes have occurred to the surveys over time.

**England** run the Monitor of Engagement in the Natural Environment survey annually.

**Scotland** run the Scottish Nature Omnibus Survey every 2 years. Data from the 2017 survey has been used in this publication and carried forward to calculate a UK 2018 total.

**Wales** run an annual survey. Data relating to this indicator used to come from the Wales Outdoor Recreation Survey (WORS). The WORS Survey was discontinued in 2015. Sections of WORS were incorporated into the new National Survey for Wales, but not a direct transcription of the questions previously used for this indicator, so the data for Wales for 2014 from WORS have been carried forward into the UK totals for 2017 and 2018.

**Northern Ireland** run an annual survey, the Continuous Household Survey (CHS). The specific questions relating to this indicator ceased being asked in the CHS 2015/16, so the data from the CHS 2014/15 have been carried forward into the UK totals for 2017 and 2018.

## Annex 2: Indicator questions in the Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment Survey (MENE) in England

### Awareness

*We would like you to think about the variety of all species of animals and plants that are alive on our planet.*

*Thinking about the variety of life in the next 50 years, which of the following statements do you most agree with?*

		There will be less variety of life	There will be no change to the variety of life	There will be more variety of life
SINGLE CODE, ASK ALL	In England	1	2	3

### Concern

*How concerned are you about the consequences of a loss of variety of life in England?*

SINGLE CODE, ASK ALL	<b>Not at all concerned</b>	<b>Not concerned</b>	<b>Neither concerned or unconcerned</b>	<b>Concerned</b>	<b>Extremely concerned</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
	1	2	3	4	5	6

### Actions

*Thinking about the last 12 months, which of the following environment-related activities do you do? Please choose all that apply.*

- I usually buy eco-friendly products and brands
- I am a member of an environmental or conservation organisation
- I volunteer to help care for the environment
- I donate my time at least once every three months to an environmental or conservation organisation (**NB.** a yes to this action or the one above counts as a yes to 'volunteering' for indicator purposes)
- I have signed a conservation petition or participated in an online/other conservation campaign

*Thinking about your garden or communal garden, which of the following statements, if any, do you agree with? Select all those that apply to you.*

- I encourage wildlife in my garden

### Annex 3: Indicator questions in the Scottish Nature Omnibus (SNO) in Scotland

#### Awareness

*Biodiversity is the variety of all living things – animals, birds, plants, trees, fish, insects and human beings themselves – that exist in the world.*

*Thinking about biodiversity, or the variety of life, over the next 50 years, which of the following statements do you most agree with?*

	In Scotland
There will be less variety of life	1
There will be no change in the variety of life	2
There will be more variety of life	3

#### Concern

*How CONCERNED are you about the loss of biodiversity, or variety of life, in Scotland?*

	Very	Slightly	Neither	Not very	Not at all	Don't Know
How CONCERNED are you about the loss of biodiversity, or variety of life, in Scotland?	1	2	3	4	5	6

#### Actions

*Please can you tell me whether you have done any of the following in the last 12 months?*

**Garden for wildlife** e.g. let wild flowers grow in the garden, use peat free compost, plant native trees and plants,

	Garden for wildlife
Yes, I try to do everything	1
Yes, but I only do a couple of things	2
No, but I'd like to do something	3
No, I'm not interested	4
N/A / No garden	5
Don't know /no opinion	6

**Be a green consumer** e.g. buy local or British food, buy from farmers' markets, buy biodegradable products, use energy-efficient appliances

	Be a green consumer
Yes, I try to do everything	1
Yes, but I only do a couple of things	2
No, but I'd like to do something	3
No, I'm not interested	4
N/A	5
Don't know /no opinion	6

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**Volunteering to help the environment** e.g. clean up local green spaces, record wildlife, take part in fundraising activities

	<b>Volunteering to help the environment</b>
Yes, I try to do everything	1
Yes, but I only do a couple of things	2
No, but I'd like to do something	3
No, I'm not interested	4
N/A	5
Don't know /no opinion	6

*Are you a member of any organisation which helps look after wildlife or the natural environment?*

Yes 1  
No 2

*In the last 12 months, have you signed a conservation petition or participated in a conservation campaign (on-line or other)?*

Yes – about a local issue 1  
Yes – about an issue that affects the whole of Scotland 2  
Yes – about an issue that effects the whole of the UK 3  
Yes – about an international issue 4  
No – but I might if it was something I felt strongly about 5  
No – and I'm not interested 6  
Don't know / can't remember 7



## **Annex 4: Indicator questions in the Continuous Household Survey (CHS) in Northern Ireland**

### **Awareness**

*I would now like you to think about the variety of all species of animals and plants that are alive on the planet. Thinking about the variety of life in the next 50 years, do you think that in Northern Ireland...*

1. there will be less variety of life
2. there will be no change to the variety of life
3. or there will be more variety of life?

### **Concern**

*How concerned are you about the consequences of a loss of variety of life in Northern Ireland?*

1. Not at all concerned
2. Not concerned
3. Neither concerned or not concerned
4. Concerned
5. Extremely concerned

### **Actions**

*Which, if any, of the following actions have you taken in the last 12 months?*

1. Done things to encourage wildlife in your garden
2. I usually buy eco-friendly products and brands
3. I am a member of an environmental or conservation organisation
4. I volunteer to help care for the environment
5. I have signed a conservation petition or participated in an online/other conservation campaign

## **Annex 5: Indicator questions in the Wales Outdoor Recreation Survey (WORS) in Wales**

### **Awareness**

*Biodiversity is the term used to describe the variety of all life on earth, this includes all species of animals and plants*

*Will there be a change in the variety of species in Wales in the future?*

1. Yes, there will be an increase
2. Yes, there will be a decrease
3. There will be no change
4. Don't know

### **Concern**

*And generally, how concerned are you about any changes, past or future, to the variety of species in Wales? Please use the scale of 1 to 5, where 5 is very concerned and 1 is not at all concerned.*

- 5 – Very concerned
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1 – Not at all concerned

### **Actions**

*Finally, can I ask which of the following activities you have done at least once in the last 12 months to help protect the environment and nature?*

1. Bought eco-friendly products
2. Gardened for wildlife (including bird feeding)
3. Been a member of an environmental, wildlife, or conservation group (includes paid membership of national organisations such as RSPB etc)
4. Actively volunteered with a project or organisation to help protect the environment or wildlife
5. Signed a conservation petition or participated in a conservation campaign (online or other)