

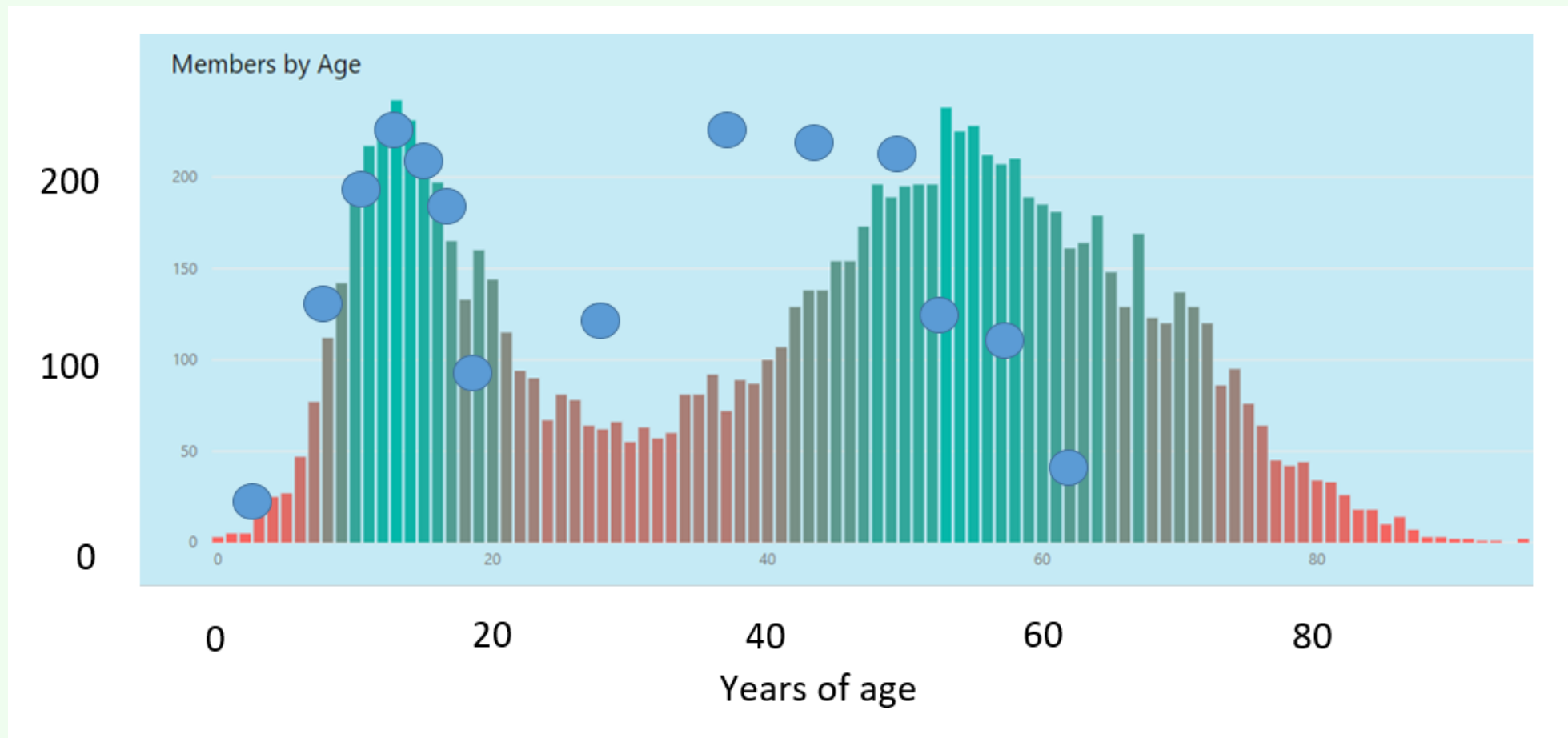
# Children's and Young People's Participation in Outdoor Recreation

- Measures of level of participation: common features and trends across age and against time
  - Measures are spread across a range of ways of engaging with the outdoors
  - Measures from academic research, government agencies, youth groups, charitable trusts, etc.: only a few examples presented here
  - The focus is on Scotland, but some sources are beyond Scotland
- Barriers and opportunities in outdoor participation
- Reasons to be optimistic about increasing participation

## Children's and Young People's Participation in Outdoor Recreation



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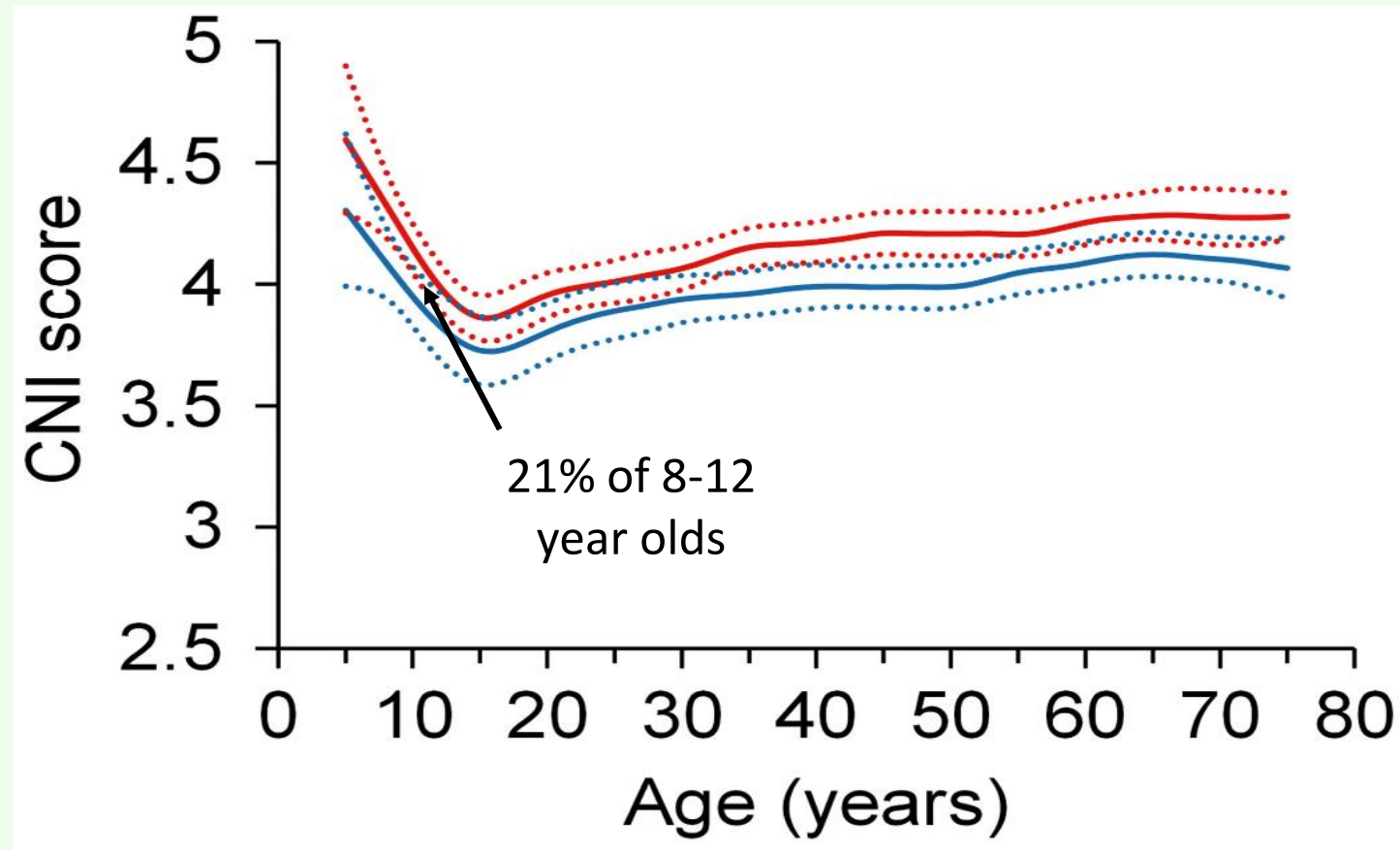


British Orienteering membership by age

Vertical bars: 2018

Blue dots: 2000

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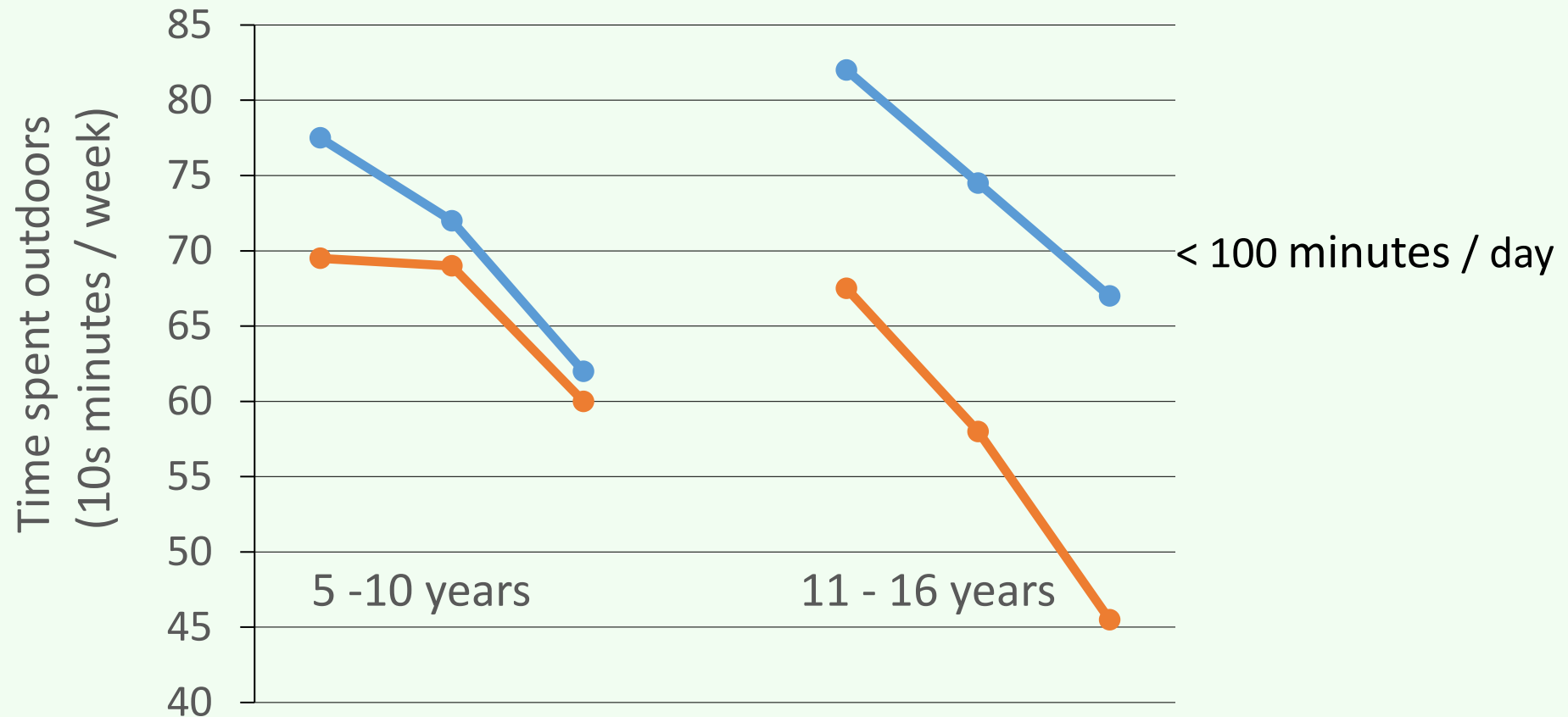


Connection to Nature Index against age.

Red: females; blue: males.

(Hughes et al., 2019; sponsored by RSPB)

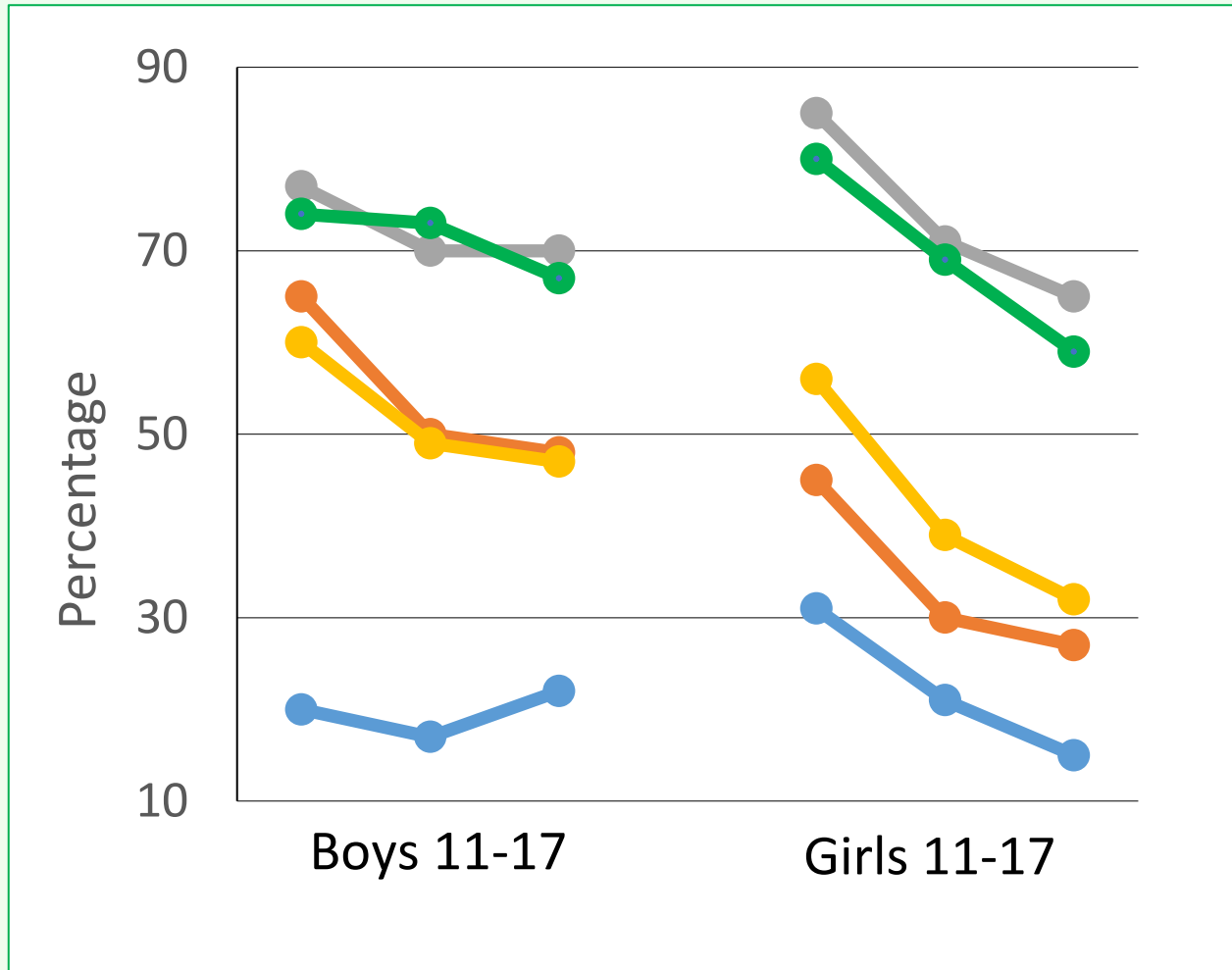
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Time spent outdoors after school by metropolitan Australian children: 5 year longitudinal study. (Cleland et al. (2010))

Red: females; blue: males.

## Children's and Young People's Participation in Outdoor Recreation



Grey: show an interest in trying a new outdoor activity

Green: visit the outdoors at least once a week

Orange: say they enjoy spending time outdoors a lot

Red: have membership of an outdoor sport/activity club

Blue: rate time doing things outdoors as one of their most enjoyable free-time activities

Notes:

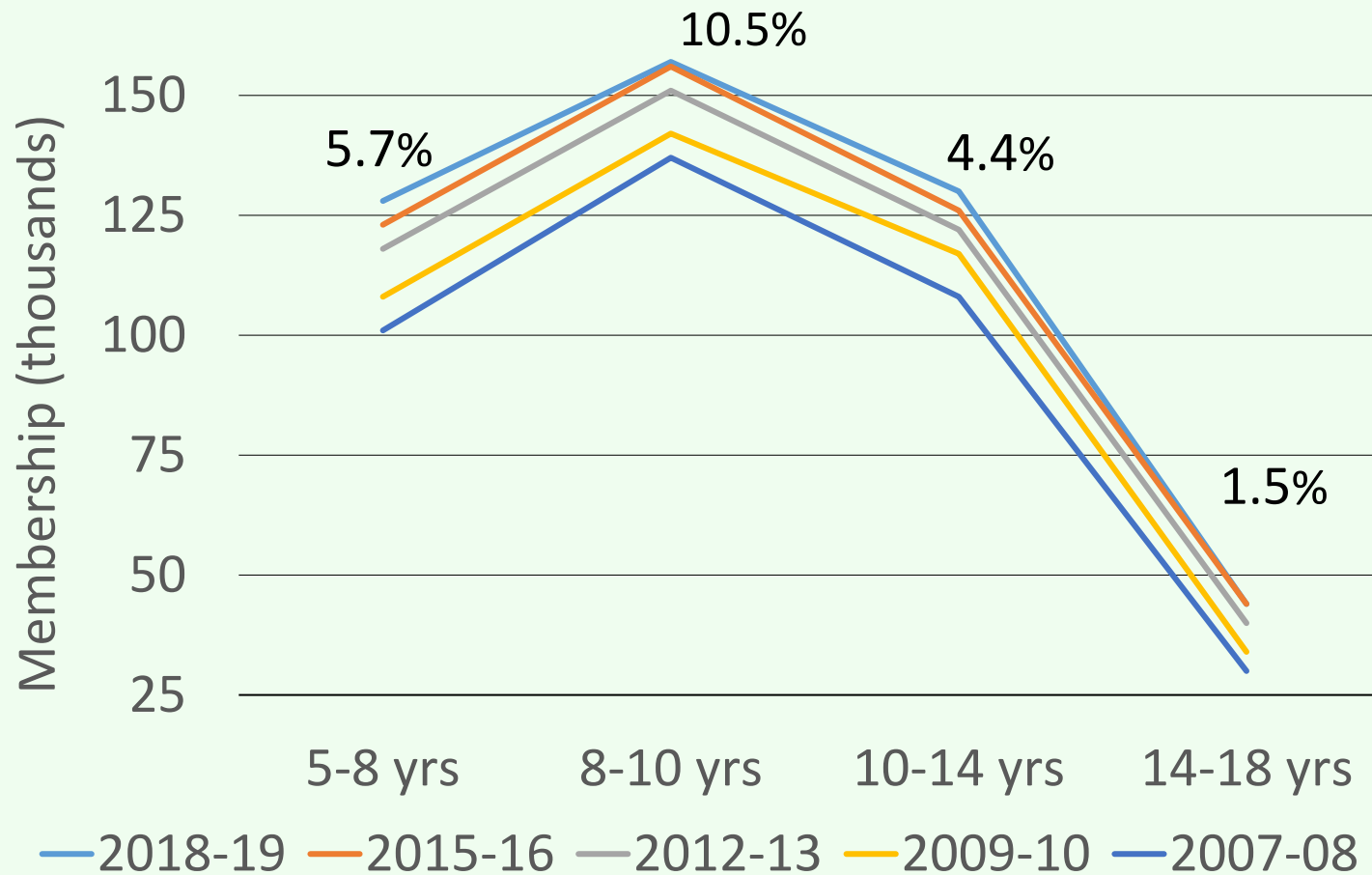
Grey, Green, Orange correlate well together

Blue typically 20-30% lower than these

Percentage of Scottish boys (B) and girls (G) 11-17 years old who.....

Source: Scottish Natural Heritage Report 470 (2011)

## Children's and Young People's Participation in Outdoor Recreation



Children's and Young People's membership of UK Scouting, 2008-2019.

Source: The Scout Association Annual Reports

## Children's and Young People's Participation in Outdoor Recreation

### Summary of measures

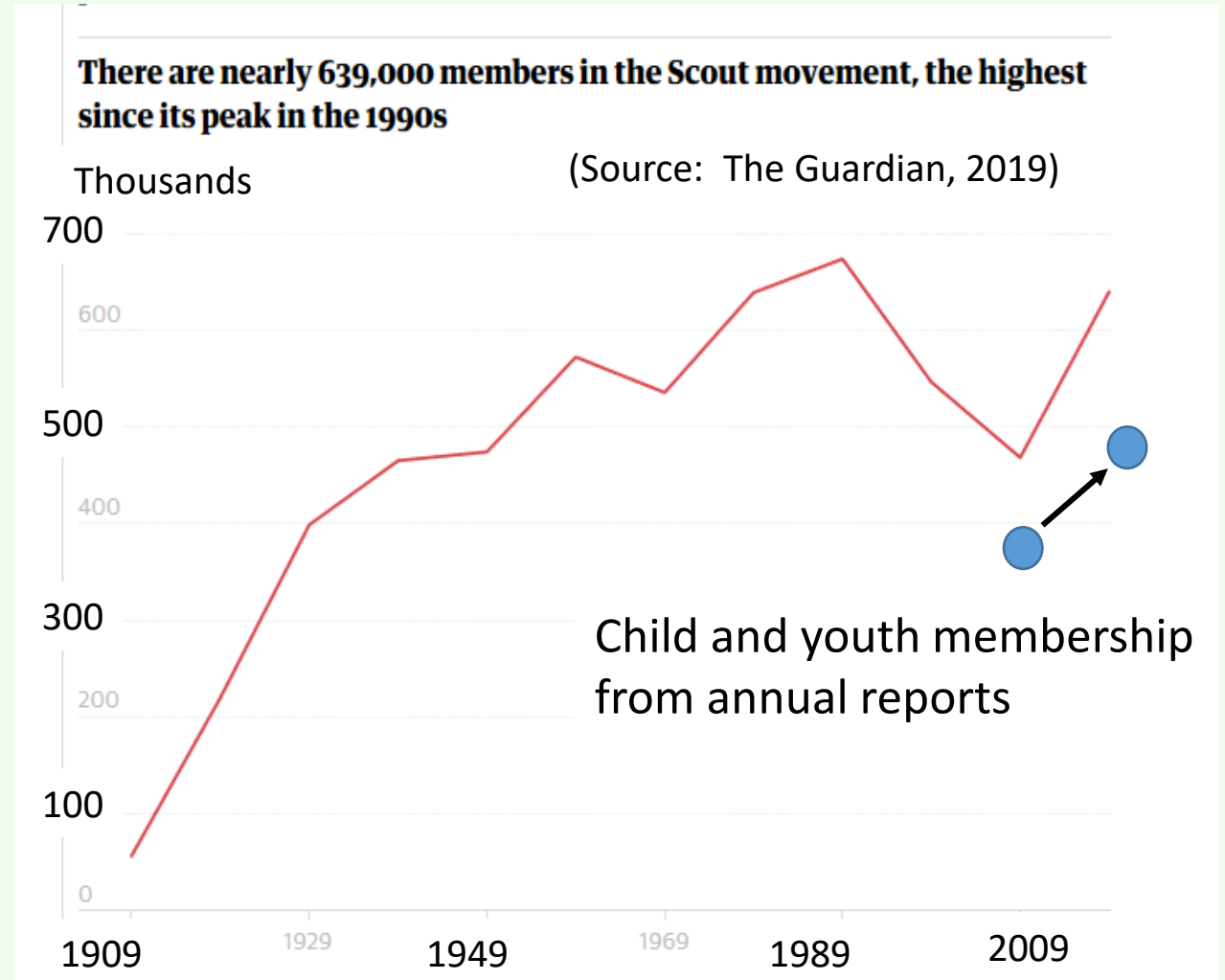
- There is a high level of consistency between different sources of information
- Appreciation of the benefits of being outdoors and interest in trying a new outdoor activity is as high as 80-90% and consistent between measures
- Much of this appreciation translates into “simple pleasures”, but amongst the most active participants these are balanced by “activity-based” pursuits. Least popular are nature-related activities
- Levels of active participation in individual outdoor-related organisations tend to be low (c.5-10%, e.g Scouts), but summed up across organisations, and including sports, might be in excess of 50%
- Participation declines dramatically with age in teenage years, and in some areas might start even earlier
- The pattern of decline in teenage years can be seen in surveys dating back to the 1990s.
- On the other hand, outdoor-related organisations (e.g. Scouts, Girlguiding, DoE, JMT Award) are now seeing growth



## Children's and Young People's Participation in Outdoor Recreation

### Factors that turned round membership of Scouts

- Relevant, “cool” and fun
- Parental trust
- Modern issues facing young people
- Meets regularly
- Very active/experiential
- Recruited in inner cities and deprived areas
- Multi-cultural



## Children's and Young People's Participation in Outdoor Recreation

### Barriers and opportunities influencing patterns of participation

#### The Wild Network

- Risk-averse culture
- Family, peer group and school demands on time
- The rise of social media, screen time (from 2005)
- Difficulty of access to the outdoors

#### Access (largely from SNH Report 470)

- Opportunities
- Information
- Motivation
- Time
- Skills
- Transport
- Cost, e.g. equipment

These two issues are related, yielding a correlation coeff. of +0.42 using Report 470 data

## Children's and Young People's Participation in Outdoor Recreation

### Reasons to be optimistic about increasing participation

- Children and young people recognise the benefits of going outdoors, and readily escape to the outdoors for “simple pleasures”, less so active engagement
- Outdoor learning, outdoor classrooms and learning for sustainability are on the increase, although not well resourced
- Media coverage of climate change and need for environmental protection is providing a sense of purpose
- Although starting from a low baseline, membership of outdoor-related organisations is increasing
- As a sector, we have an increasing understanding of the challenge



Sunrise over the Pentland Hills