

The relationship between greenspace and health inequalities

Areas with the poorest access to local greenspace also often suffer the biggest health inequalities. Growing evidence suggests there is a positive relationship between increased proximity of accessible greenspace, improved health and increased activity (Mitchell & Popham; Marmot; Van Der Berg). Natural England in partnership with others has brought together a range of more detailed studies to explore if this correlative relationship holds up at the local level.

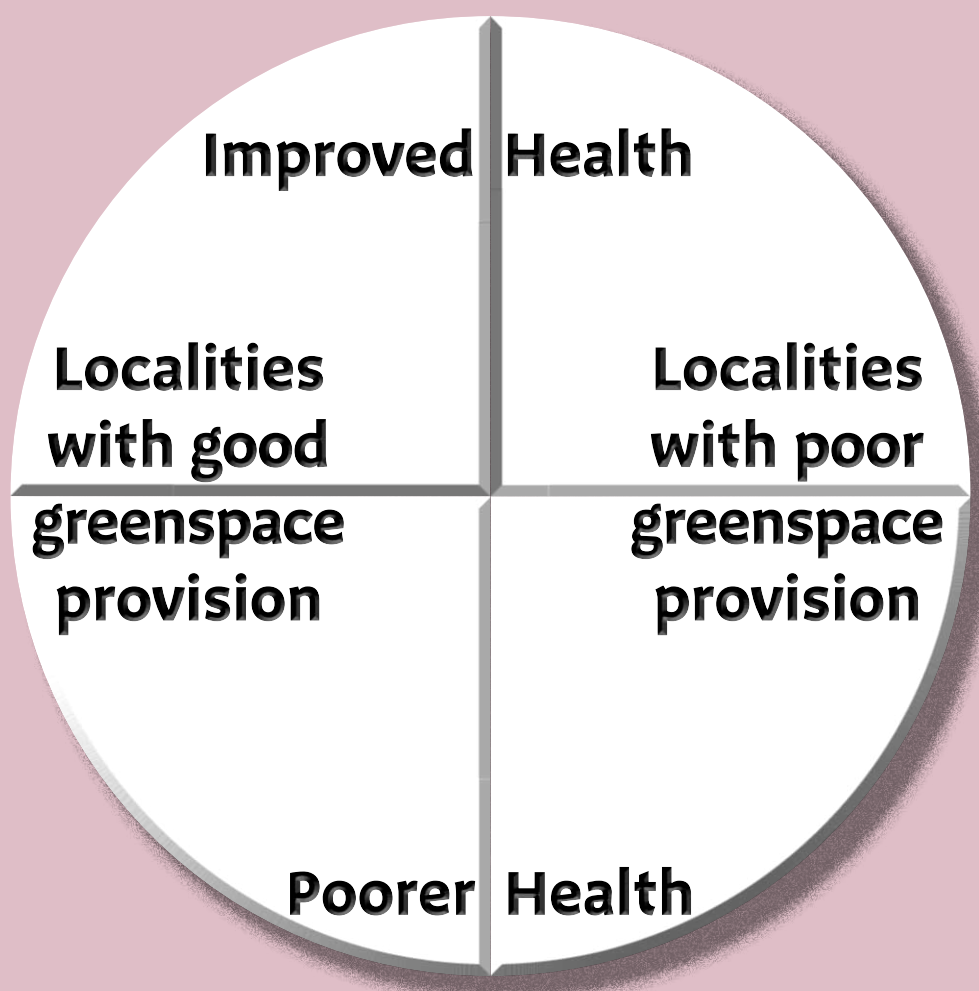
Greenspace access, greenspace use, physical activity and overweight ¹

About a third of respondents said that they used green spaces at least weekly. Those with easy greenspace access who used it at least weekly were also more likely to report physical activity at recommended levels.

Good access to urban green spaces is associated with higher physical activity levels, and a lower likelihood of being overweight or obese.

It is important that supportive environments are available to facilitate active lifestyles and green spaces provide a valuable resource in urban areas.

Is greenspace good for your health?



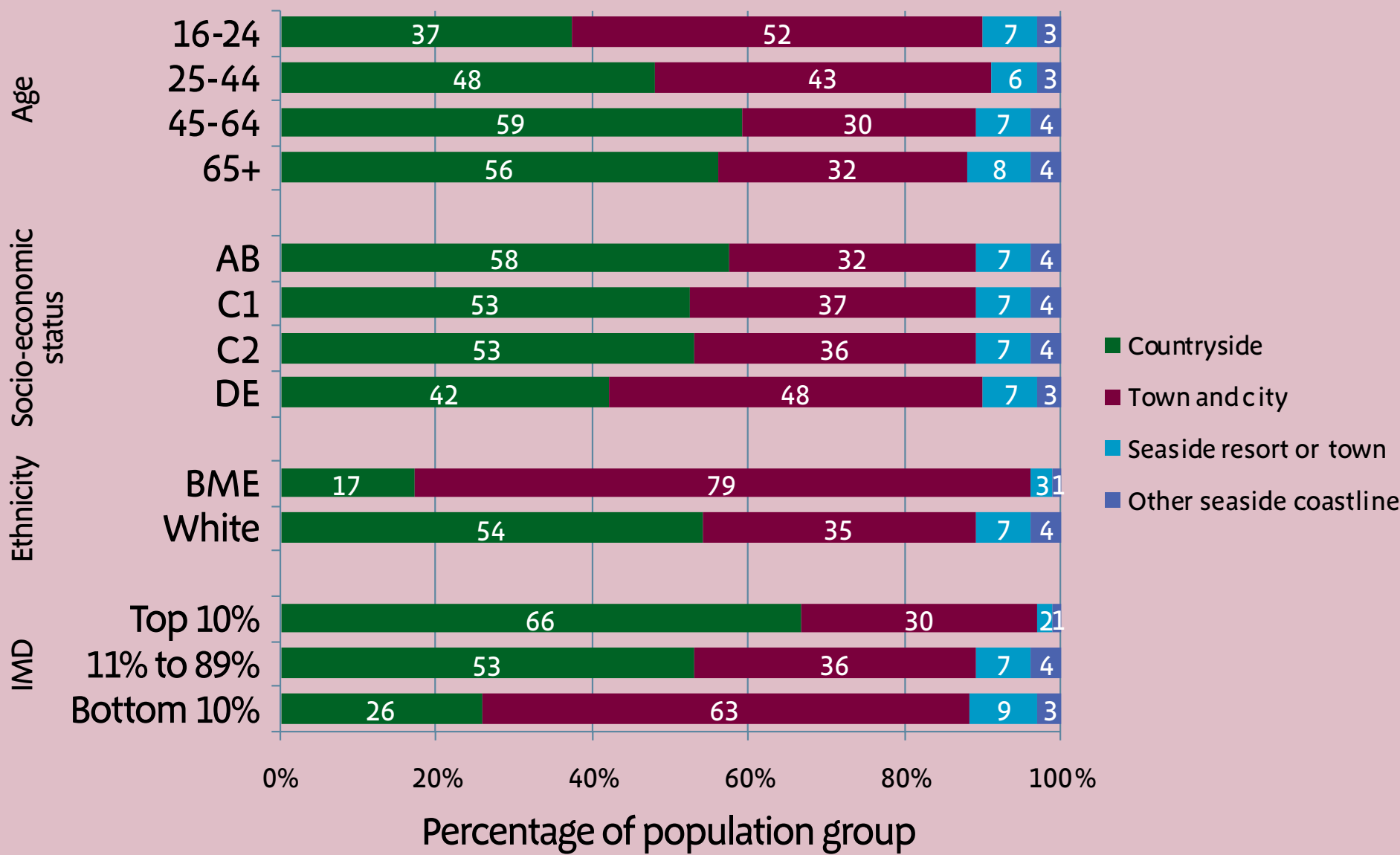
Monitoring of Engagement with the Natural Environment²

March 2010 - Feb 2011, 41.7 million adults took 2.49 billion visits to the natural environment³ 0.92 billion were to green spaces within a town or city.

66% of all visits were taken within two miles highlighting the importance of locally accessible green space.

People from deprived areas were more likely to visit urban destinations and to places closer to home with 46% of visits (by DE social grades) being within one mile of their starting point.

Type of place visited by age, socio-economic status, ethnicity and Index of Multiple Deprivation (%)²



An analysis of the results taken from Greenspace access, greenspace use, physical activity and overweight and Monitoring of Engagement with the Natural Environment indicate that there is a correlative relationship between greenspace and health outcomes especially in urban areas.



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Walking for Health supports the largest network of community led health walk schemes across England. Established in 2000 it has over 600 local schemes contributing to improving the health of 75,000 walkers nationwide. Natural England has monitored information about walkers and walks using the Outdoor Health Questionnaire and the WfH Database and complements this with a range of other research some complete and some still ongoing, together with case stories and toolkits for people wanting to set up local schemes.

duncanmackay@naturalengland.org.uk
belindadavis@naturalengland.org.uk

References:
1. HILLSDON, M., JONES, A. & COOMBES, E. 2011. Green space access, green space use, physical activity and overweight. Natural England Commissioned Reports, Number 067.
2. TNS Research International. 2010 & 2011. Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment: The national survey on people and the natural environment. Commissioned by Natural England, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the Forestry Commission.
3. Taking account of margins of error, at the 95% confidence level estimated total visits range from 2.43 to 2.56 billion