



Woodlands.co.uk

Research Report: Why People Buy Small Woodlands & How They Manage Them

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Overview.

- A survey of 149 owners of small woodlands has shown that woodland owners are a vital part of UK woodland management. The report shows in detail how they:
 1. Do a great deal of management in their woods.
 2. Visit their wood frequently taking family, friends, neighbours and work colleagues with them.
 3. Are passionate about conservation and wildlife.
 4. Co-operate closely with woodland neighbours and residential neighbours. Many have set up associations of fellow wood owners in their area.
 5. Plan to keep ownership of their woods within the family for the next generation.
- There is clearly scope for small private woodland owners to be more fully involved in managing Britain's woodlands.

Woodland Owner Facts

Managing The Woods

- More than three quarters of owners have planted new trees in their woods (78%) or are coppicing their woods (76%).
- Over the years Woodlands.co.uk owners have planted more than 220,000 new trees.

Frequent Visitors

- On average owners visit their woods more than 60 times per year and are accompanied by at least one other person on each visit.

Love of Wildlife

- Almost all (89%) say that their love of wildlife was an important factor in buying their wood.
- Over the years Woodlands.co.uk owners have built more than 10,000 dead wood log piles (as a habitat for insects).

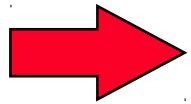
Neighbours

- Four out of five owners (82%) say that they have got to know owners of the neighbouring woods
- A sixth (17%) have formed/take part in associations of local woodland owners.

Long-term Owners.

- Not one of the owners who replied to the survey envisaged selling their wood in the foreseeable future.
- Well over three-quarters planned to pass the wood on to future generations of their family.

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Introduction.

- Woodlands.co.uk is keen to understand more about why private owners buy woods, the uses they make of the woods they purchase and the satisfaction that they and others gain from them and the impact that buyers of small woods have on their management.
- In order to understand this more fully a two-part programme of research was devised. In the first part, a series of interviews was conducted with woodland owners to find out more about how they viewed woodland ownership. The findings of this qualitative stage were then used to help in creating a structured online survey that was then sent out (as a weblink) to woodland owners who are members of the Small Woodland Owners Group (SWOG) many of whom have purchased woods from Woodlands.co.uk since the company was established in 1988. Their responses were then analysed.
- This report combines the findings of these qualitative and quantitative stages and provides a picture both of the structure of activities and motives of the owners along with individual examples. The report is built around the results of the survey and is amplified by the comments that people made in the interviews. These are shown throughout the report in the yellow boxes in italics. In reporting the results of the structured survey, the size of the sample for any given question or group is indicated by the use of the letter N followed by the number in the group (eg N=149).

Methodology. The methodology of the research is outlined below.

1. Qualitative Stage – Depth Interviews with Woodland Owners.

- A total of 10 depth interviews were conducted by telephone between Wednesday 2nd and Thursday 10th March 2011.
- The interviews were undertaken with members of the Small Woodland Owners Group and were structured to ensure that there was a representation from owners who were both male and female and had owned their wood for differing lengths of time. The sample was divided into those who had owned their wood for between 6 months and a year, between a year and 18 months and for more than 18 months.
- The interviews lasted on average 20 minutes and consisted of a conversation covering the topic areas listed below:

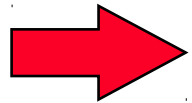
Topics			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reasons for purchasing the wood.• Uses of the wood.• How the wood has been managed.• Who has used the woods – frequency of visits by owner, family and guests.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enjoyment of ownership.• How levels of knowledge have changed over time.• Spend on the wood and income from it.• Sources of advice and training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relationships with neighbouring owners.• Length of time they intend/plan to own the wood for.

2. Quantitative Stage – Structured Survey Conducted Online.

- A structured online survey was created and uploaded to the web. After initial testing, an email was sent on 23rd March 2011 to the 560 members of SWOG who have email addresses inviting them to take part in the survey. Everyone taking part received a Woodlands.co.uk high-visibility vest and a book about woodland ownership.
- The survey was live from Wednesday 23rd March to Sunday 3rd April 2011 and a total of 149 completed responses was received. This represents a response rate of 26.6%. This rate of response is high and may reflect the interest that these owners have in their wood and potentially higher than average rates of activity and involvement as woodland owners.
- A pdf version of the survey can be found at <http://www.woodlands.co.uk/reports.php>

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Executive Summary.

- The research that Woodlands.co.uk has undertaken into woodland owners reveals the emotional depth of the relationship that owners have with their woods. This bond is manifest in a number of ways.
- Purchase is driven by a desire to gain a window on the outdoors free from the constraints of modern life for themselves, their children and grandchildren and their friends. It is also driven by a desire for conservation of our natural environment, to allow wildlife a place to flourish and, for many, an opportunity to help restore part of our natural heritage through planting native broadleaf trees. Motives that relate to the tax benefits or investment opportunities that woodland ownership may offer play only a small part.
- Once people become owners they are extremely active in both learning about the woods they own, getting to know their neighbouring wood owners but most significantly in helping restore their woods by replacing conifers with broadleaf trees and supporting wildlife through, for example, creating dead wood log piles, building nestboxes, digging ponds and installing beehives. Over the years, Woodlands.co.uk owners are estimated to have planted over 220,000 trees in their woods.
- Woodland owners take a long term view of ownership. Not one of the owners who replied to the survey envisaged selling their wood in the foreseeable future. The vast majority planned to pass their wood on to future generations; they see their personal ownership as only a short part in the long history of their wood and many wanted their children and grandchildren to become owners in turn.
- Although owners enjoy their woods for their solitude and the relaxation they can gain, a core part of the pleasure is sharing it with others. This is most obviously seen in the large number of visits that are made to woods by family members but this extends further to visits from friends, neighbours from home, work colleagues and members of community groups. This is very much an amenity that is shared amongst the wide range of people that owners know.
- The result is an almost universal agreement by owners that they are pleased that they bought their woods and that they have enjoyed their woods far more than they expected they would.

Summary. Purchasers of woodlands are first and foremost interested in creating a place where they can relax and where they can indulge a love of wildlife and conservation. Considerations that they might have of woods as tax efficient forms of investment play a relatively minor role.

- Woodland owners purchase their woods for reasons that relate principally to having a place where they, their family and friends can relax in some solitude, a love of wildlife and conservation and biodiversity, as a location where they can gain practical skills relating to woodland management and to have a source of woodfuel to use themselves or sell on to others. The leading reasons for purchase are listed below. Interestingly motives that relate to financial gain have a relatively low level of importance. Just 10% say that the purchase of the wood as an investment was a very important reason and only 2% say that its purchase for tax purposes was very important.

	90% Or More Thought This Reason Was Quite/Very Important	More Than 80% Thought This Reason Was Quite/Very Important	More Than 70% Thought This Reason Was Quite/Very Important	More Than 60% Thought This Reason Was Quite/Very Important
Reasons That Were Quite Or Very Important (% of owners that felt this is shown in brackets)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a place of recreation for yourself (94%) As a place to relax/get away from it all (90%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Love of wildlife (89%) Desire for conservation/ interest in ecology (86%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Source of woodfuel (75%) Always wanted to own a wood (75%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To learn woodland management (66%) Opportunity to take physical exercise to keep fit (65%) Bird watching (63%) Encourage butterflies (62%) Place for friends to visit (62%)

- The activities that owners then engage in when they visit their woods also reflect this mix of recreation, practical woodland management and watching wildlife and more specific nature conservation.

	70% Or More Undertake This Every Time They Visit/Often	More than 30% Undertake This Every Time They Visit/Often	More than 20% Undertake This Every Time They Visit/Often
Activities That Owners Undertake Either Every Time Or Often When They Visit Their Wood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management of the wood (89%) Watching wildlife (75%) Collecting/cutting wood for fuel (71%) Conservation of flora and fauna (70%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enjoyment with friends and family (62%) Light campfire/bonfire (52%) Encouraging butterflies (42%) Photography, painting, drawing/ creative arts (37%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Woodcrafts (28%) Dog walking (26%) Camping (26%) Bushcrafts (22%)

Woodland owners are active guardians of their woodland. The vast majority have planted new trees in their woods and many have supported wildlife by building woodpiles, putting up nestboxes, installing beehives and digging ponds. Many are working to replace conifers with broadleaf trees.

- This engagement with wildlife and conservation comes across further in the types of work that owners have done or are planning to undertake with a focus on tree planting, restoration of woodland and planting of broadleaf trees and support for wildlife through creation of nestboxes for birds and opening up of spaces (which has benefits for fauna such as butterflies).

	More than 70% Have Done/Plan To Do	More than 50% Have Done/Plan To Do	More than 30% Have Done/Plan To Do
Types Of Work That Owners Have Done Or Are Planning To Do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearing/ opening space(s) in the wood (86%) • Tree planting (78%) • Coppicing (76%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating/ improving tracks through the wood (66%) • Restoration of woodland (63%) • Creating nest boxes for birds (62%) • Clearing infestations of unwanted plants (55%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving access to the wood (47%) • Creating/improving fencing (42%) • Replacing conifers with native broadleaf species (41%) • Learning about the archaeology of the area (37%)

- Owners are avid improvers and guardians of their woods. Over the years purchasers of woods from Woodlands.co.uk are estimated to have:

Planted 220,000 trees
(average 164 new trees per owner)

Built 10,000 Dead Wood Logpiles (for habitat)
(average 7.5 per owner)

Put up 3,800 nestboxes
(average 2.9 per owner)

Dug 350 ponds
(average 0.3 per owner)

Installed 350 beehives
(average 0.3 per owner)

- For many there is a real interest in restoring woods to their native condition by replacing conifer with broadleaf trees. As well as the activities noted above, 56% of owners agreed that they are keen to replace conifers with broadleaf trees. As one owner said *“(We want to) take out some Western Hemlock, that is the gloomiest bit of the wood and replace that with broadleaf trees.”*

The owners see themselves very much as guardians of the wood and playing their part in their long term story. They plan to pass woods on to their children and grandchildren. None planned to sell in the foreseeable future. Owners, family members and friends made frequent visits to the woods.

- Owners are very much looking to the long term. They form strong relationships with the owners of neighbouring woods. Four out of five owners (82%) say that they have got to know owners of the neighbouring woods, a quarter (23%) work with neighbours on common tasks and a sixth (17%) have formed/take part in associations of local woodland owners.
- When asked when they were planning to sell their woods, not one (out of the 149 respondents) said that they were planning to sell in the next few years or even when the price was right. A fifth said that they planned to sell when they were no longer able to actively look after the wood and the remainder (80%) said that they planned to pass the wood on to future generations of their family.
- These themes of being owners for the long term, being guardians rather than owners and the ownership of the wood playing a role for a wider community than simply themselves come across in other ways too.

• 91% of owners visit their wood with family members.
• 78% visit with friends.

• 88% of owners agree that owning a wood is a benefit to the local environment.

• 88% of owners agree strongly that they see themselves as much as a guardian of the wood as its owner.

One owner said *“You describe yourself as a ‘guardian’ of the wood ...it will be around long after us.”*

- Owners are extremely active visitors to woods and bring many others with them to visit. On average owners visit their woods more than 60 times per year and are accompanied by at least one other person on each visit. Thus in the course of a year (throughout the woods that Woodlands.co.uk has sold to date) a total of more than 175,000 visits are made to woodlands by owners, their families, friends and neighbours and members of the local community.

Privately owned woodlands thus act as a important way of increasing access to Britain’s woodlands.

- The pleasure that children and grandchildren can gain from woods is important to owners. As we have seen, a prime motive for ownership is handing on woods to future generations and younger family members are also frequent visitors to the woods. More than three-quarters (77%) of owners have children and a third (36%) have grandchildren. **Parents see the woods as places where their children (even when they are adults) and grand- children can gain access to the outdoors and have a place where the whole family can spend active time together.**

As well as seeking to improve their wood, for most, ownership also involves learning more about how to manage a wood and nurture its wildlife. The over-riding feeling that comes across is the delight that owners take in their enjoyment of their wood and the satisfaction it gives them.

- Owners are also on a journey of learning and increasing knowledge. For them owning a wood is not just about gaining a possession. As well as their clear desire to make improvements to it, owners are keen to learn more about the flora and fauna in their wood and learn more about woodland management.

• 91% of owners agree that there is a lot to learn about woodland management once you own a wood.

• 69% of owners agree that they know the names of a lot more species of trees than before they owned their wood.

• 97% of owners have undergone some kind of training or received advice about owning a wood.

• 62% of owners have received training in using a chainsaw.

- Many owners express their delight at their enjoyment of woodland ownership...

• 98% agree strongly that they are very pleased that they bought their wood.

• 80% agree that they have enjoyed owning a wood much more than they ever thought they would.

- ...and this is evidenced most clearly by what they say about the pleasure that they gain.

“Magical place to unwind and relax from the stress and strain of daily living.”

“Best thing I ever did.”

“Escape from suburbia, peace and freedom to do what you want, back to a simple life no with pressures. Bringing back childhood memories.”

“Waking up in the woods in the morning, just can't believe how lucky we are.”

“Quite simply our woodland is our heaven.”



As well as looking at the owners as a whole, it is possible to pick out smaller distinctive groups from amongst them. Below are pen-portraits of four sub-groups: 1) Nature Lovers; 2) Family Foresters; 3) Creatives and 4) Bush Crafters.

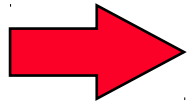
(NB The figures in brackets in the grey boxes show the average for this elements across the whole survey)

Name & Size of Group	Nature Lovers (57 owners – 38%)	Family Foresters (128 owners – 86%)	Creatives (53 owners – 36%)	Bush Crafters (31 owners – 21%)
Definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage in watching wildlife every time they visit their wood. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree strongly with the statement <i>“I feel I am as much a guardian of the wood as its owner”</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage in photography, painting, drawing & creative arts either often or every time they visit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage in bushcraft either often/every time they visit.
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 47% engage in conservation of flora & fauna every visit (ave = 21%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 48% manage the wood every visit (ave=46%) 12% encourage butterflies every visit (ave=10%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 26% enjoy visits with family/friends every visit (ave=17%) 47% watching wildlife every visit (ave=38%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 45% Light camp/bonfire every visit (ave=23%) 45% Collect/cut wood for fuel every visit (ave=30%)
Attitudes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 88% agree strongly that they are keen to create wildlife havens (ave = 67%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 63% agree strongly that owning a wood is a benefit to the local environment (ave=58%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 81% agree strongly that they are keen to create havens for wildlife in their wood (ave=67%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 45% agree strongly that they are keen to replace conifers with broadleaf trees in our wood (ave=33%)
Planting & Habitat Creation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ave 347 trees planted (ave=164) Ave 5.3 nestboxes put up (ave=2.9) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ave 236 trees planted (ave=164) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ave 331 trees planted (ave=164) Ave 5.4 nestboxes put up (ave=2.9) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ave 13.2 deadwood logpiles put up (ave=7.5)
Profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 40% aged 45 to 54 (32%) 3.4 average years owned (ave=4.2) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Average wood size 7.9 acres (ave=9.2) 37% aged female (27%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 77% male (ave=73%) 23% aged 35 to 44 (11%) 13% have grandch (24%)
Quote(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“Providing for the birds and wildlife pays for years of pleasure gained”</i> <i>“Found several dormouse nests”</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“One of the reasons I decided to buy a wood was that it grows in value (in a way no financial advisor understands) and gives us great pleasure”</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“Escape from suburbia, peace and freedom to do what you want, back to a simple life no pressure. Bringing back childhood memories”</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“Time spent between dusk and dawn are priceless when you camp with a fire”</i>. <i>“Learning new skills whilst putting something back into the natural environment.”</i>
Overall Character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interest in watching wildlife is backed up by actions such as high levels of tree planting and putting up nestboxes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large group so all scores are close to the average. Strongly aware of the environmental benefits of ownership and active tree planters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creativity is matched by love of and encouragement of wildlife both through a desire to create havens, planting trees and creating nestboxes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very active and practical owners through collecting wood for fuel, making fires. Tend to be slightly younger than other owners.

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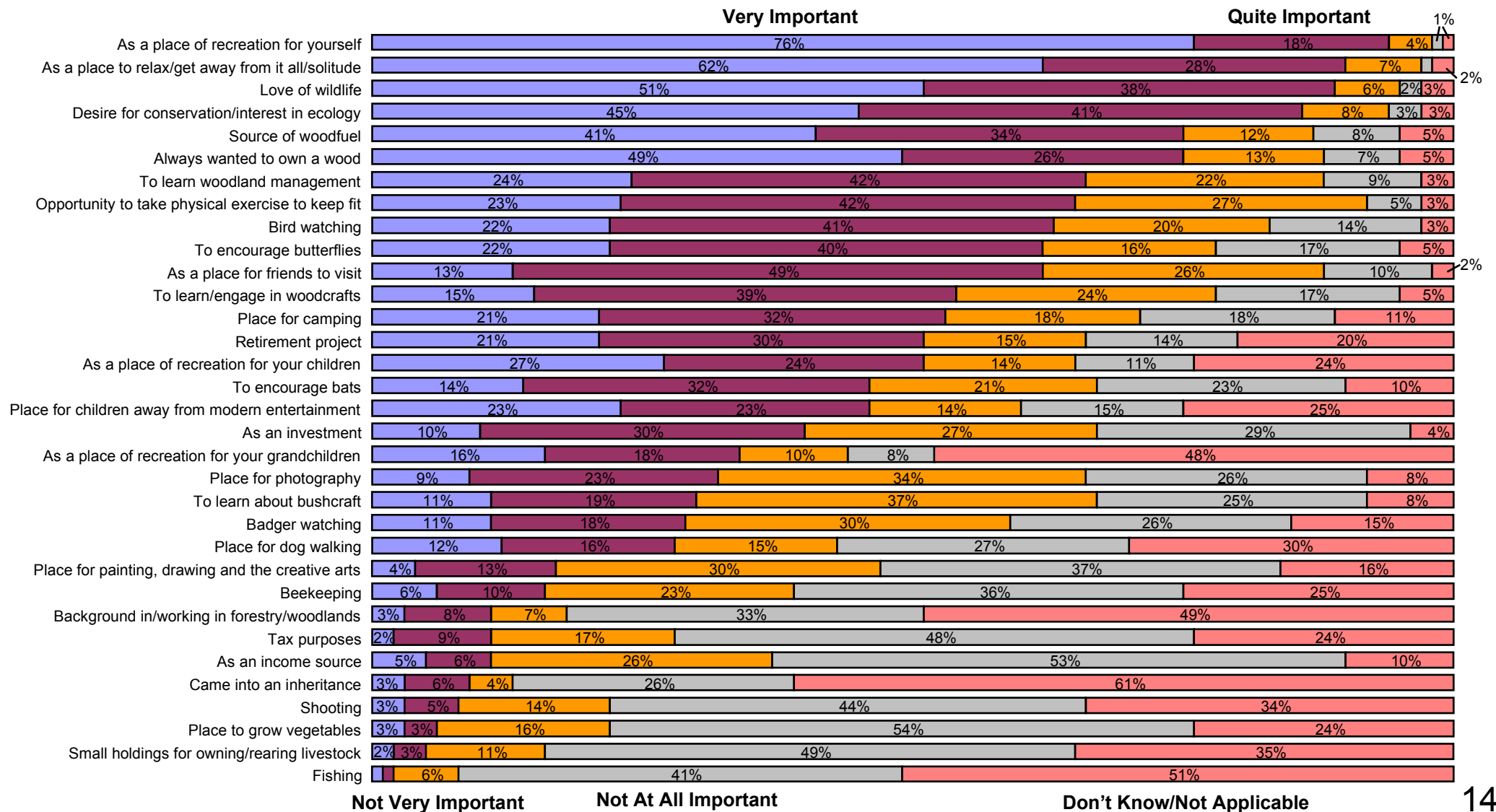


Research Findings



There are six major factors as to why people decide to buy a wood; 1) it is a place for recreation and 2) relaxation; 3) they have always wanted to own a wood; 4) they have a love of wildlife and 5) an interest in conservation; 6) it is a source of woodfuel.

Importance Of Factors In Deciding To Buy Their Wood (BASE – All Respondents (N=148))



The other factors that owners mention as important focus on an interest in nature and wildlife and conservation, a place for themselves and family members to visit and its being a location for specific interests that they might have such as charcoal making.

- The other factors that were mentioned by those who replied to survey as playing a part in their decision to buy the wood were:

- Ark for the next generation an educational project and a survival project, keeping alive, survival skills and the facility for surviving naturally.
- Better than leaving money in HBOS - it imploded after we bought our wood.
- Bought as a nature trail for a retail concern
- Charcoal-making.
- Convert conifer plantation to broad leaf woodland
- Create ideal red squirrel habitat
- Creating a Forest Garden (perennial layered edible landscape)
- Enjoy and promote conservation in the locality
- Enjoyment for my nieces and, one day, their children.
- General conservation for the public
- Grow trees for personal enjoyment
- Help the small bird population
- Intend to earn a living there as a smallholding and artists' workshop. Also want to live there.
- Local history
- Naturism
- Occasional live music
- Place for running fitness classes, and for use by community groups
- Plant a few fruit trees to have fruit 'on tap' for day-trip picnics
- Play my part in maintaining our working woodlands for future generations
- Preserving an unspoilt 'wilderness' area
- Somewhere to be alone and spiritual
- Study of insects
- The wood came with the house, interest has grown since then.
- Try out renewable energy
- Watch the deer that visit our wood, also the wild moorland ponies.
- Wild orchid research



In the interviews, owners fleshed out more fully what owning a wood meant to them. For many it was a long cherished dream and the wood was a place where they could relax and recall the freedom of their childhood. Others wanted to enjoy their wood but also for it to be productive.

Whilst many purchasers are motivated by a long held desire to own a wood or a desire to have a healthier life in an outdoor environment...

...and to engage with an outdoor world that they experienced more fully earlier on in their lives...

...others have made their purchase when they have received a sum of money. They view the purchase of their wood as a more meaningful investment than those that people generally make.

Whilst owners derive pleasure from their woods, many are keen to emphasise the fact that they see woods as places for productive endeavour and not solely for leisure of relaxation. Many owners are keen to make changes that will allow their wood to be productive...

...or at least give them a valuable economic return.

A small number of owners purchase their wood as a commercial venture based around the wood that is produced or its setting.

*"We always loved the thought of owning a little bit of England."
"35 years behind a desk and lot of driving was a lot of stress. This is my green gym. I have lost weight since I left work and started working here."*

"I remember the magic of a place like this as a child. When you see fallen trees I see places that you can have as a play area."

*"We had recently retired in 2007 and a year before the crash no one knew what would happen so I thought I would buy something concrete and not have the bankers run off with my £30,000."
"I remember saying to my daughter that I did not know what to do with my lump sum when I get it. She said have you thought about investing in woodlands. She was thinking about shares in a forest but for me it was proper trees."*

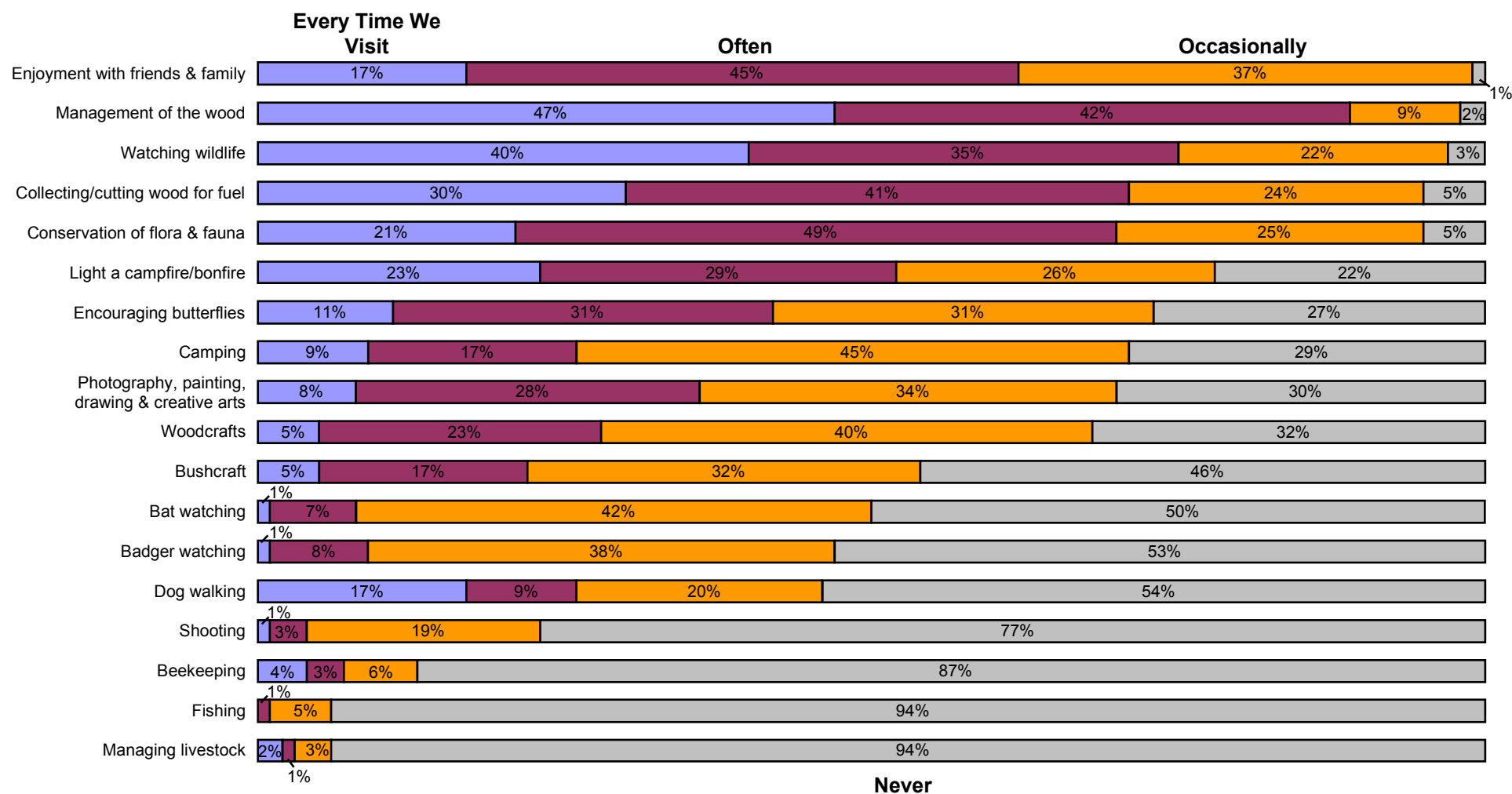
*"I want to reinstate the hazel coppices. I want it to be a working woodland."
"I am worried that woodland is being bought for recreation. Some people just use it as a place to stay in but do not look after it. It can get tangled and overgrown and it should be productive."*

"I was interested in using less energy but living in a 60s leaky house I thought that the options were very expensive so I thought the simplest thing is to buy a wood stove. I thought I would do that and if we have a wood we would have a supply so there was an economic factor there."

*"I always wanted to own a wood land then I thought I can run workshops from there. Here I have total control on my site...it is a commercial venture."
"...predominantly as an investment and to have a secure supply of timber. That would be more useful for future generations."*

The core activities that most owners undertake when they visit their wood are management, watching and helping conserve wildlife & collecting wood for fuel. Other popular activities include dog walking, camping and lighting bonfires, wood crafts and encouraging fauna such as butterflies.

Frequency Of Involvement In Selected Activity On Visits To The Wood (BASE – All Respondents (N=146))



The peace and quiet of the woods are a major draw as is watching wildlife (eg birds of prey). Of note is the way in which activities and interest can deepen over time eg with owners gaining a greater understanding of the archaeology of their woods or going on to take formal courses of study.

- Those who responded to the survey also listed other activities that they got involved with when they visited their wood.

Other Activities That Owners Engage In When They Visit Their Woods
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Archaeology • Bothy Building • Buddhist meditation retreats, solitary and group meditation • Charcoal making using our kiln, during the summer months mostly. • Charcoal-making • Cooking on the fire • Deer watching and feeding the birds on every visit. • Enjoy the peace and tranquillity and always engage in some aspect of management • Exploring woods, investigating woods • Help small birds (feed and boxes) • Monitoring orchid populations • Naturism • Peaceful retreat • Planting our veg patches, maintaining the woodland, grass cutting, charcoal burning, etc • Study insects

- In the interviews, owners gave examples of some of the activities they engaged in. Over time this can lead people to a degree of involvement and absorption that they could not have envisaged when they first purchased their wood.

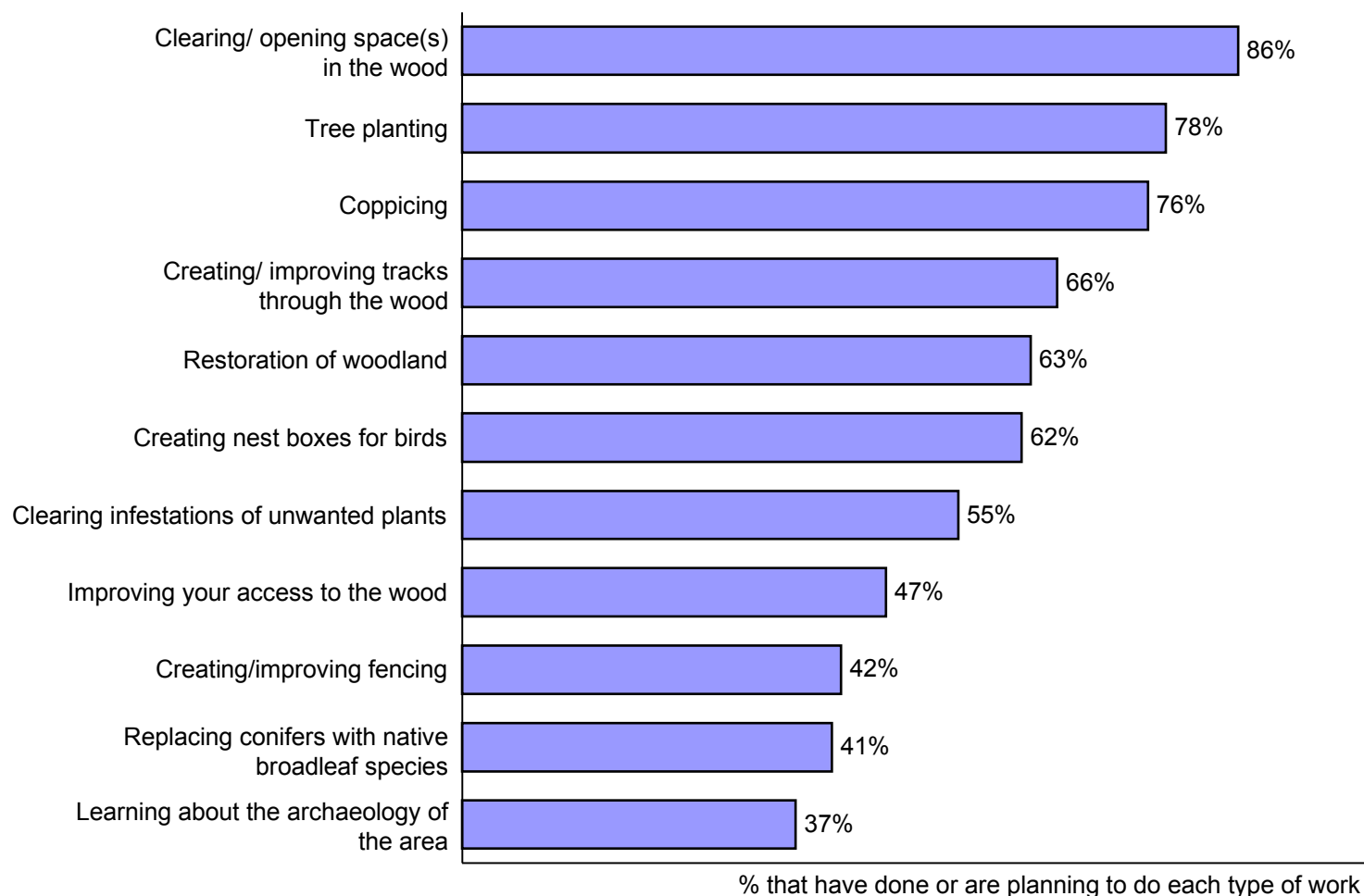
Camping	<i>"People who know we spend time in the woods think we must be terribly tough but we are not. As long as you are well versed in relation to knowing how to start fires, how to keep the rain off, how to stay warm, then if you can do it, it is good to exercise those skills."</i>
Collecting/cutting wood for fuel	<i>"It has kept us with a supply of dry wood over the winter." "We get all the wood for the stove from there."</i>
Watching wildlife	<i>"We had sparrow hawks nest in the wood and spotted a flycatcher. They are hard to photograph elsewhere."</i>
Encouraging butterflies	<i>"I am interested in butterflies and where it has been opened up is an interesting place for butterflies."</i>
Conservation of flora & fauna	<i>"We are opening up wildlife corridors...opening up clearings as social spaces and for wildlife. We have put up bird and bat boxes to try to improve it as a wood and create resources and for the wildlife."</i>



*"I kept a diary over the years so built up a record of what I see and how it has changed."
 "We got an archaeologist to wander around the bigger wood and it opened our eyes to know that bank along the edge was a medieval boundary and that we are now part of that story."
 "I became interested in the ecology of the woodland. It prompted me to go and do an ecology course with the University of Leicester. It was really helpful to see the woodlands as system and how it all joins together."*

The vast majority of owners focus on improving the physical character of their wood by clearing spaces, planting trees and coppicing and improving tracks. Other management involves improving fencing and clearing unwanted plants. Many are also replacing conifers with native tree species.

Types Of Work That Owners Have Done Or Are Planning To Do (BASE – All Respondents (N=149))



Other Activities That Owners Have Done Or Are Planning To Do

- Bat boxes
- Build a home and workshops
- Charcoal making
- Creating a Forest Garden
- Creating a new wood with mostly native broadleaved saplings and some marginal shrubs
- Creating other habitats e.g. opening out ditches to fill with water
- Decreasing access to the woods to prevent disturbances
- Developing our woodland as a venue for art workshops
- Planting and managing meadows and hedgerows, planting a new woodland on former arable site, making ponds.
- Planting conifers for squirrels (red), plants for dormice, butterflies etc.
- Planting fruit trees
- Planting young saplings amongst mainly mature woods
- River bank protection
- Soil conservation
- Translocating orchids

The purpose of much management is to reverse previous neglect of the wood, to allow it to fulfil its potential as a haven for nature conservation and to plant broadleaf trees in the place of softwoods. Only a small proportion believes in a very hands-off approach to managing their wood.

There are a number of themes to how owners approach managing their woodlands. Many are keen to reverse previous neglect.

"The caring and the nurturing of the wood was neglected. We love our restoration project to put it back to a better condition than when it was purchased."

A major part of this is opening up dense areas of wood to allow more light in with the benefits that has for nature conservation.

*"The main thing is to get it less dense...to let some more light in to the rest of the place for it to flourish. If so, we can open up a glade area."
"We want to clear a glade to use as a camp area. It is good to open up as it creates a diverse habitat."*

Many are looking to replace softwoods with broadleaf trees.

*"Take out some Western Hemlock, that is the gloomiest bit and replace that with broadleaf trees."
"There was some Corsican pine that had not been thinned. It was dense and dark and we wanted to open it up to broaden the tree species."*

Coppicing has wide appeal although the area that owners are looking to coppice tends to be relatively small.

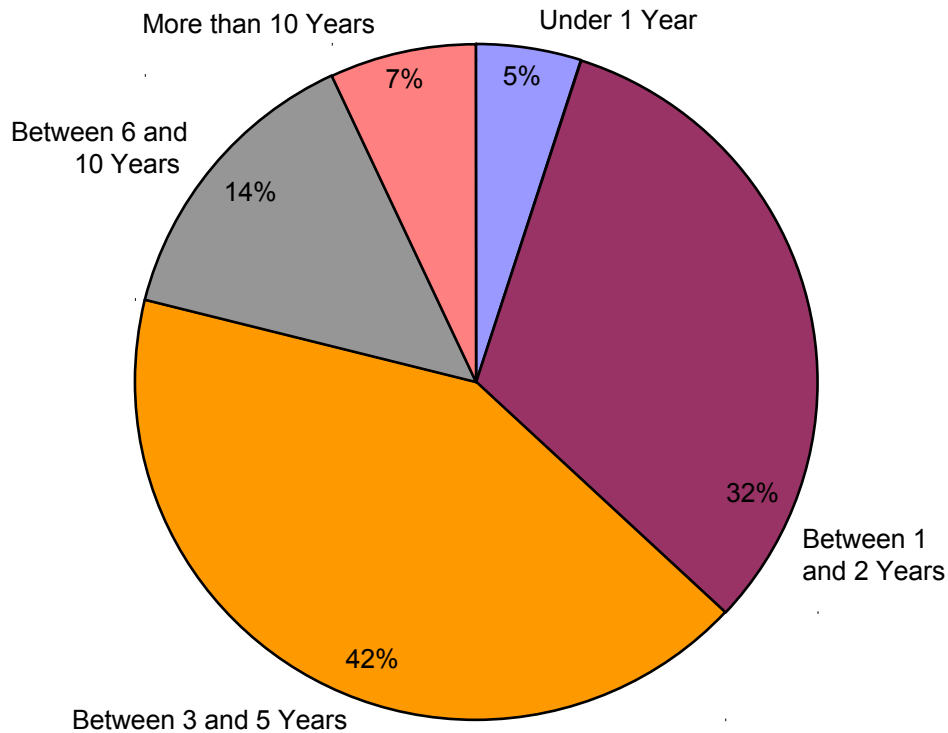
*"We want to play at coppicing. We talked to an expert and they say coppice half an acre."
"...coppicing leads to diverse habitats."*

A smaller group, however, thinks that less is more and that owners should take a less active role in managing the wood than they do.

"People do over manage their woods. If you leave them there is a natural cycle and coppicing is not natural. I am not saying "don't coppice" but it should not be the essential thing across a large landscape."

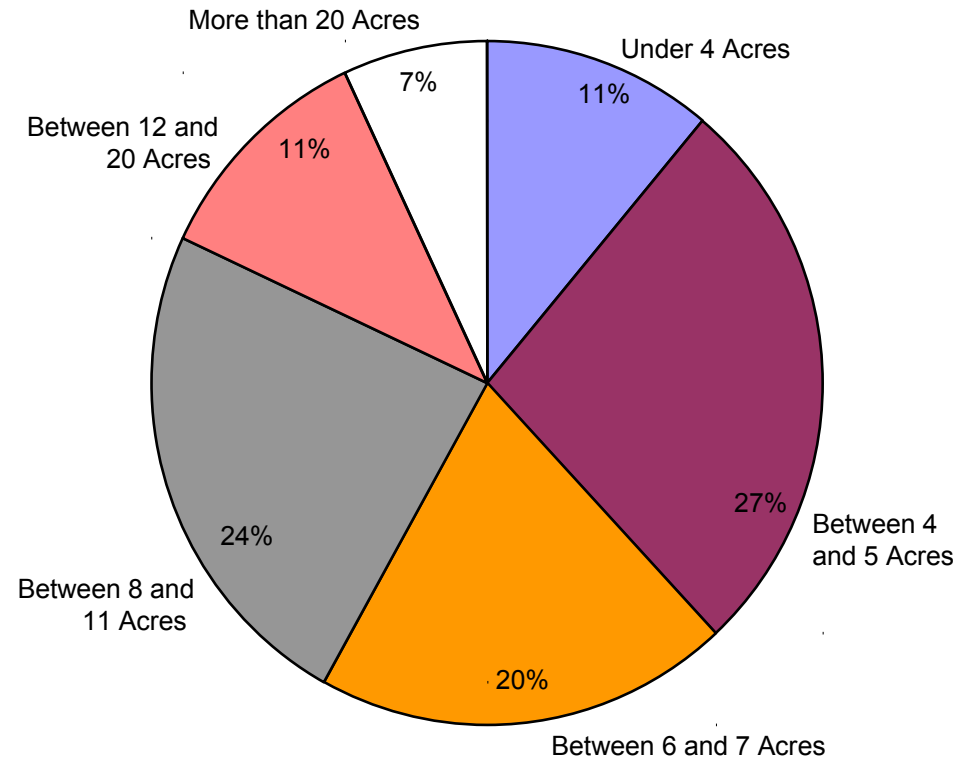
Around a third of the owners surveyed (37%) had purchased their wood within the past 2 years. Just over a fifth (21%) had been owners for more than 6 years. In terms of the size of the woods, almost half (47%) were between 4 and 7 acres and a further quarter (24%) were between 8 and 11 acres.

Number Of Years Ago That Owners Purchased Their Woods
(BASE – All Respondents (N=148))



Average Length Of Ownership – 4 Years

Size Of Wood In Acres* (BASE – All Respondents (N=147))

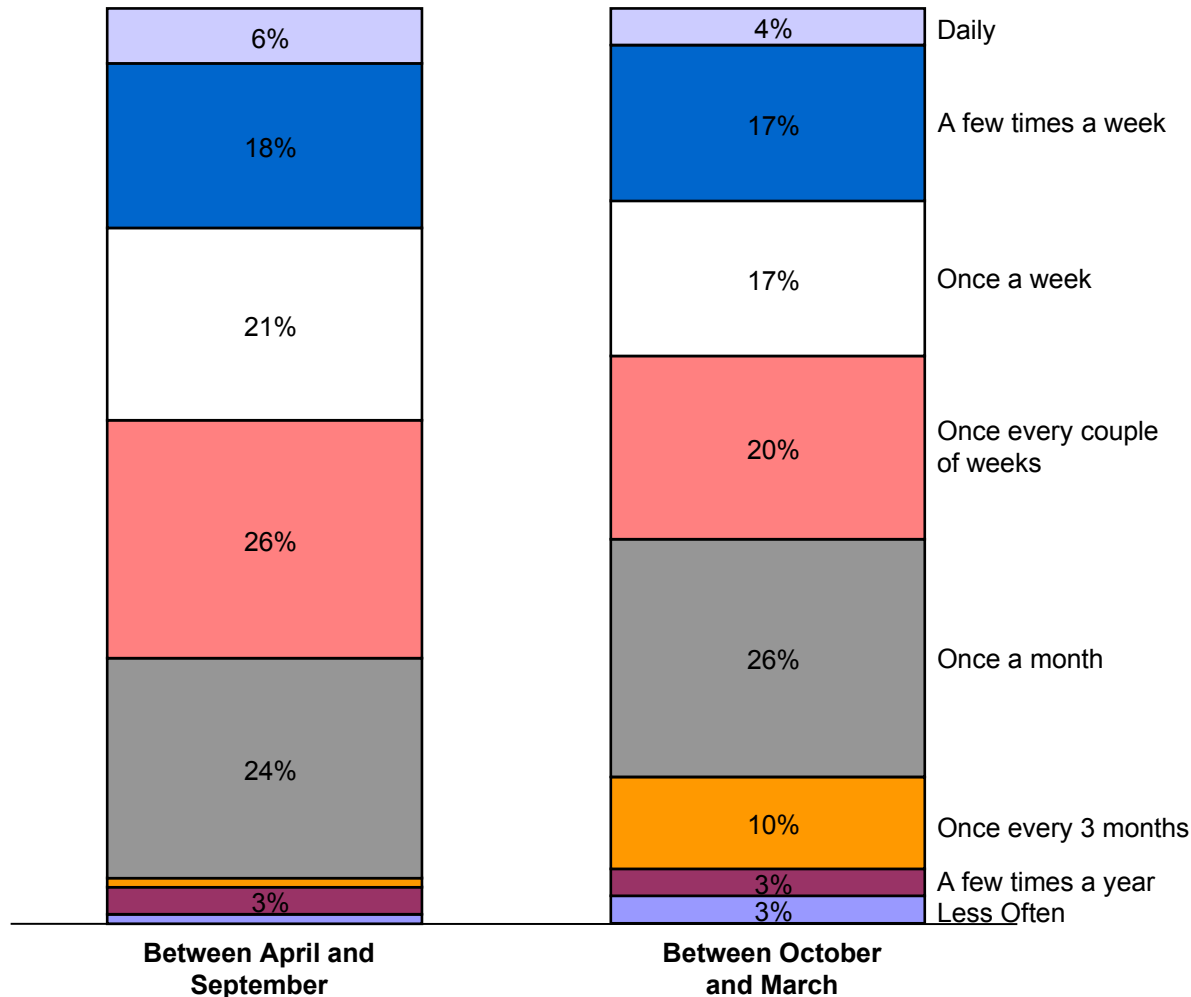


Average Size Of Wood – 9.2 Acres

*10 out of the 147 respondents gave the size of their wood in hectares. These figures have been re-calculated in acres.

Visits by owners to their woods remains relatively consistent between the summer and winter months. In summer almost a quarter (24%) are visiting at least a few times a week and almost all (95%) at least once a month.

Frequency Of Visiting The Woods (BASE – All Respondents (N=147))

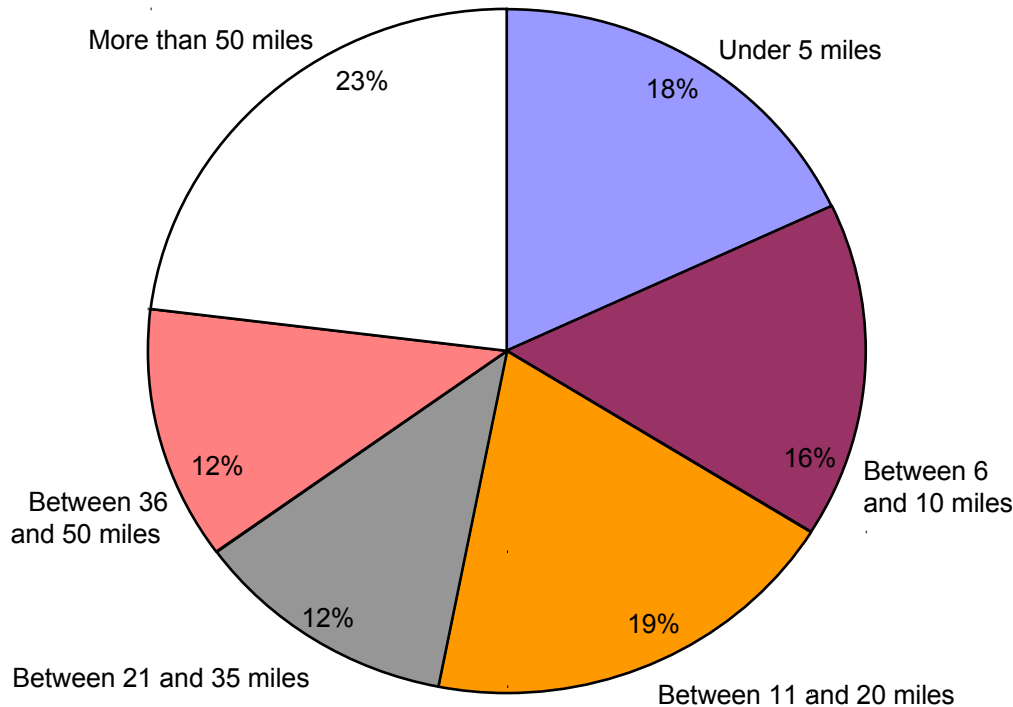


- Although the frequency of visits does fall in the autumn and winter months, many owners still try to visit as often as possible. *"I go there every week even in the winter. I must go there over 40 out of 52 weeks of the year. I just go there for a couple of hours and do some tidying up."*
- Levels of visiting can partly remain high as the purpose of visits changes between the seasons. When the weather is less good, that is when the work gets done; in the summer months, the opportunities exist to enjoy the woods more. *"I go down in the summer to enjoy it. The winter is a time to work on it."*
- Those with livestock visit daily to feed and check on their animals. *"I go up there every day mostly on my own to feed the animals."*

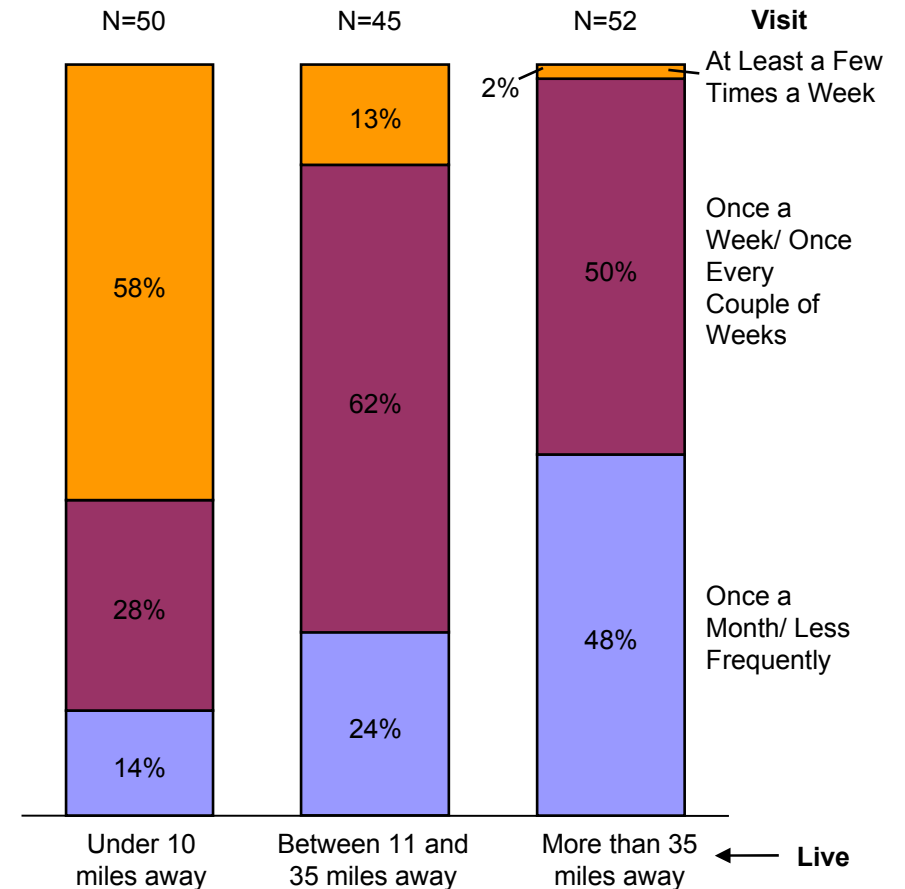
Makes a total of 9,147 visits per year amongst our sample woodland owners.

More than a third of owners (34%) live within 10 miles of their wood. How far away owners live affects how often they visit. Over half (58%) of those living within 10 miles visit at least a few times a week compared to just 2% of those living more than 35 miles away.

How Far Owners Live From Their Woods
(BASE – All Respondents (N=147))



Relationship Of Frequency Of Visits To Wood* & Distance Lived (BASE – All Respondents (N=147))

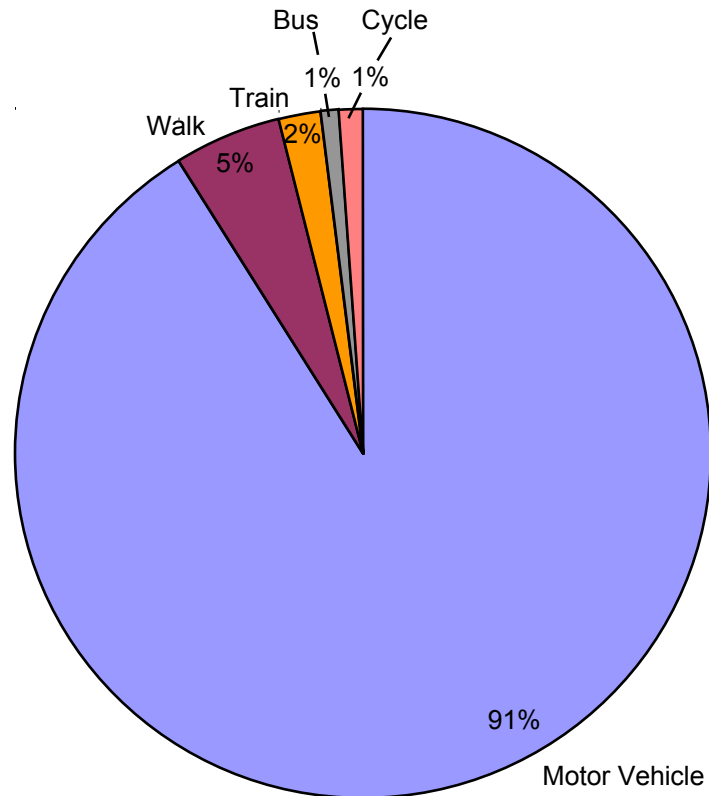


- How far away the wood is has a significant effect on how often people visit.
“20 minutes drive. That was a factor that the distance was not too far away. I could have gone up to 45 minutes but longer than that is too far.”
- Once the distance increases to over 35 miles, visits become more about a day out than popping over for an hour or two.
“An hour and 10 minutes away. That is fine. You can go down and have a great day.”

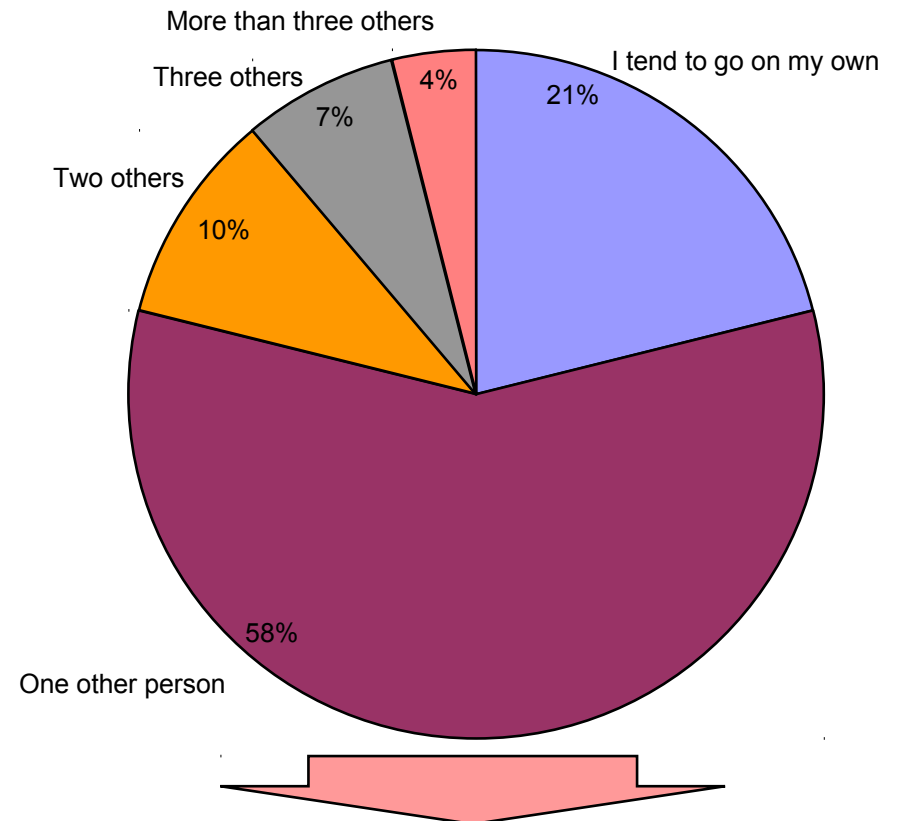
*Between April & September

The vast majority of visits to woods are made by car (91%). Around a fifth of owners (21%) tend to visit on their own; well over half (58%) normally travel with another person.

Usual Mode Of Transport For Visiting The Wood
(BASE – All Respondents (N=147))



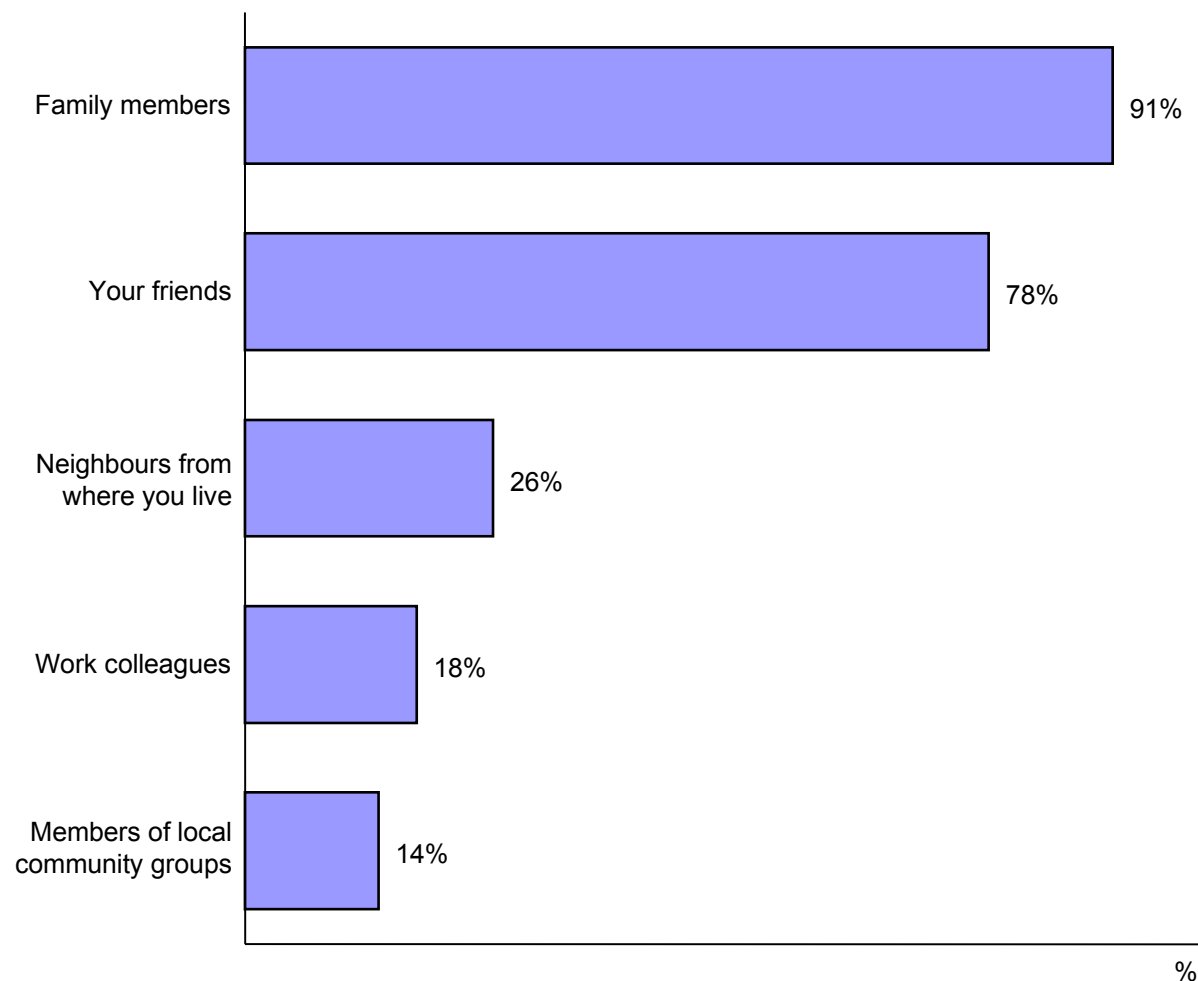
Average Numbers Who Travel To The Woods
(BASE – All Respondents (N=147))



- Average of 2.16 people per visit.
- Thus if there are an average of 9,147 visits per year and an average of 2.16 people per visit then there are an average of 177,820 visits per year across the woods that have been sold by Woodlands.co.uk.

Although family members are the most frequent visitors to woods, a wide range of others visit too. More than three-quarters (78%) invite friends; a quarter (26%) invite neighbours (from home). Many invite groups such as those with a fellow interest in conservation and groups of younger people.

Types Of People Who Ever Visit The Woods (BASE – All Respondents (N=148))

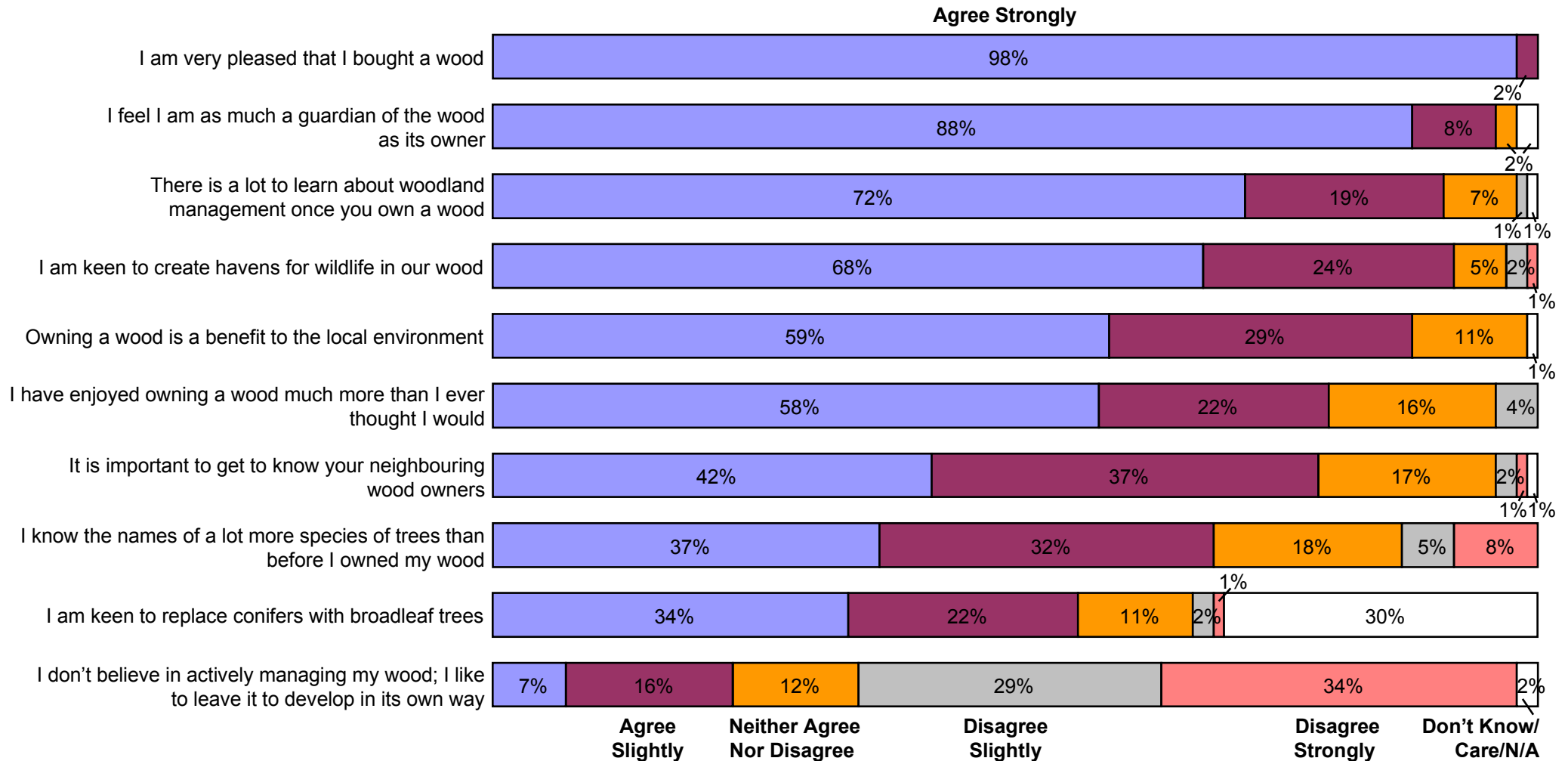


Other Visitors To The Woods

- Beekeeping Association
- Conservationists, bird watchers, amphibianists & ecologists.
- Customers to site
- Dog walkers
- Friends will come in due course and probably my new neighbours.
- General public
- Geocachers and we have the cottage next to the woods too.
- I have taken members of the Guide unit I run
- Teenagers from the charity we work for: for simple camps
- Natural history society
- New friends who live near woods...locals
- Other woodland owners
- Owners from adjacent woods.
- People with the same interest in woodlands
- Public open days and open evenings
- Students from my husband's art classes
- There is a public footpath through the wood
- Walkers on public paths through our wood.

Owners have very positive attitudes to their wood. Almost all are very pleased that they bought it and 80% agree they have enjoyed owning it more than they thought they would. The vast majority feels that there is a lot to learn about woodland management and are keen to support wildlife.

Attitudes To Woodland Ownership (BASE – All Respondents (N=146))



The sense of owners being guardians or custodians of their woods is very strong as they have a heritage that will outlast their current owner. Many owners see purchasing a wood as a natural extension of their love of the outdoor life and a place that is more real and alive than a garden.

Purchasers of woodlands come to see themselves as more than owners. The language they use is often about being its custodian. They have a role in its story and Britain's woodlands.

Many have long had a strong relationship with the outdoors and held dreams of owning a wood.

Owners echo the idea that they have gained much more from owning the woods than they originally envisaged.

The wood is a place of escape from the rigours of everyday life. It offers a chance to gain a perspective on life for both themselves...

...family members...

...and friends.

"You describe yourself as a guardian of the wood...it will be around long after us."

*"We have been outdoor enthusiasts over 30 years. One of our first interests was orienteering. We started to do more hill walking and camping and realised that we were restricted in the things we could do on Forestry Commission land. We then did canoe adventures and camping in woodland in Scandinavia. Our experiences in the UK were limited by comparison and we thought we needed own land to enjoy in private. That provided the primary reason for purchase."
"I was always into wildlife and woodlands and it was always a dream to own a patch of land. To get over 10 acres is fantastic from the wildlife point of view."*

"It is a hundred times better than I thought it would be. I go there most weekends. It is a nice way to unwind in the countryside. We have a reasonable garden but there is no comparison between the garden and the woods."

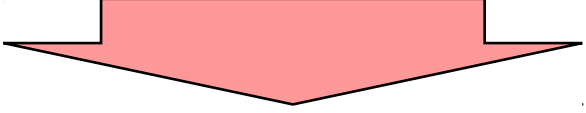
*"You can go there and relax and escape from the normal way of life. One of the benefits is that people who live in luxury do not appreciate it. In a wood you see the forest world but also when you come back everything seems so easy."
"If it is a nice day I spend all day up there. In the summer time I will be up there most of the time. It is lovely not seeing anybody."*

*"I have 4 grown up children and my son loves it. He works in a hospital and it is like a breath of fresh air for him."
"We have had parties at odd times of the year such as after Christmas. As long as there are fires it is great for a family gathering."*

*"It is a great social space for friends and family even if only for barbeques and parties. Just working together on a project is great."
"We get together with friends. We had a midsummer banquet with 24 friends. We have had baby naming ceremonies and a stag do. A friend died and we planted a tree. Some of our friends have a key and we are happy for them to walk and collect holly berries or take their children out for an afternoon."*

Almost two-thirds (63%) of owners have created dead wood logpiles as habitats for insects and thus birds. More than half of owners (53%) have planted trees and, amongst our sample, a total of almost 25,000 trees have been planted.

Levels of Planting & Habitat Creation Amongst Wood Owners (BASE – All Respondents (N=149))

	Dead Wood Logpiles built (for habitat)	Trees Planted	Nestboxes Put Up	Ponds Dug	Beehives Installed
% of Woodland Owners Who Had Planted/Created Any Of This Item	63%	53%	38%	17%	5%
Average Number Per Woodland Owner (All Respondents)	7.5	164	2.9	0.3	0.3
Total Number Planted/Created Amongst The Sample	1,114	24,489	426	39	39
					
Estimate* of Number Planted/Created by Woodlands Owners Over Time	10,026	220,401	3,834	351	351

*Based on our sample of 149 owners being representative of the activities of the total number of small woodland owners.

The highest level of annual spend is made on equipment (such as chainsaws and axes) – c£190pa. On average every owner spends almost half their annual total (c£400) on equipment. Planting represents around a sixth of total spend and contractors just over a fifth.

Levels of **Annual Spend On Managing The Woodland** (BASE – All Respondents (N=149))

	Equipment (chainsaws, axes etc)	Planting (trees, bulbs etc)	Contractors	Other Maintenance	Total Annual Spend
% of Woodland Owners Who Spent On This Item	72%	46%	17%	28%	77%
Average Spend Per Woodland (All Owners)	£186	£66	£89	£56	£397
Total Annual Spend (All Survey Owners (149))	£27,749	£9,835	£13,290	£8,270	£59,154

- The annual costs of running a wood can be low. Even with public liability insurance, annual running costs can be kept very low.
“The annual insurance premium is £120. Probably not very much else except expenses of fuel for chainsaws...so £150 a year max.”

When it comes to spend on infrastructure (rather than running costs), the most significant outlays are for permanent structures (such as for storage or shelter) with an average of just over £300 being spent. Owners have spent on average £160 on fencing and £200 on improving tracks and paths.

Spend On Infrastructure – Total Amount **Ever** Spent (BASE – All Respondents (N=149))

	Structures (such as for storage or shelter)	Improving paths and tracks	Fencing	Other Spends	Total Spend on Infrastructure
% of Woodland Owners Who Spent On This Item	34%	30%	21%	11%	56%
Average Spend To Date Per Woodland (All Owners)	£318	£199	£163	£227	£905
Total Annual Spend (All Survey Owners (149))	£47,320	£29,600	£24,215	£33,784	£134,919

• Although spend on infrastructure can be significant, the costs of getting started can also be kept to relatively low.
“Start up cost might be £500 in the first year or up to £1,000 with a shed but that is it at the start. A chainsaw is £200 or £300 normally but I bought one for £100. You spend £100 on trees and then there are some tools.”

The annual income generated by woods averages a little below the annual average expenditure (£345 compared with £397). Obviously this figure does not take into account the value of woodfuel which is a major benefit to many owners.

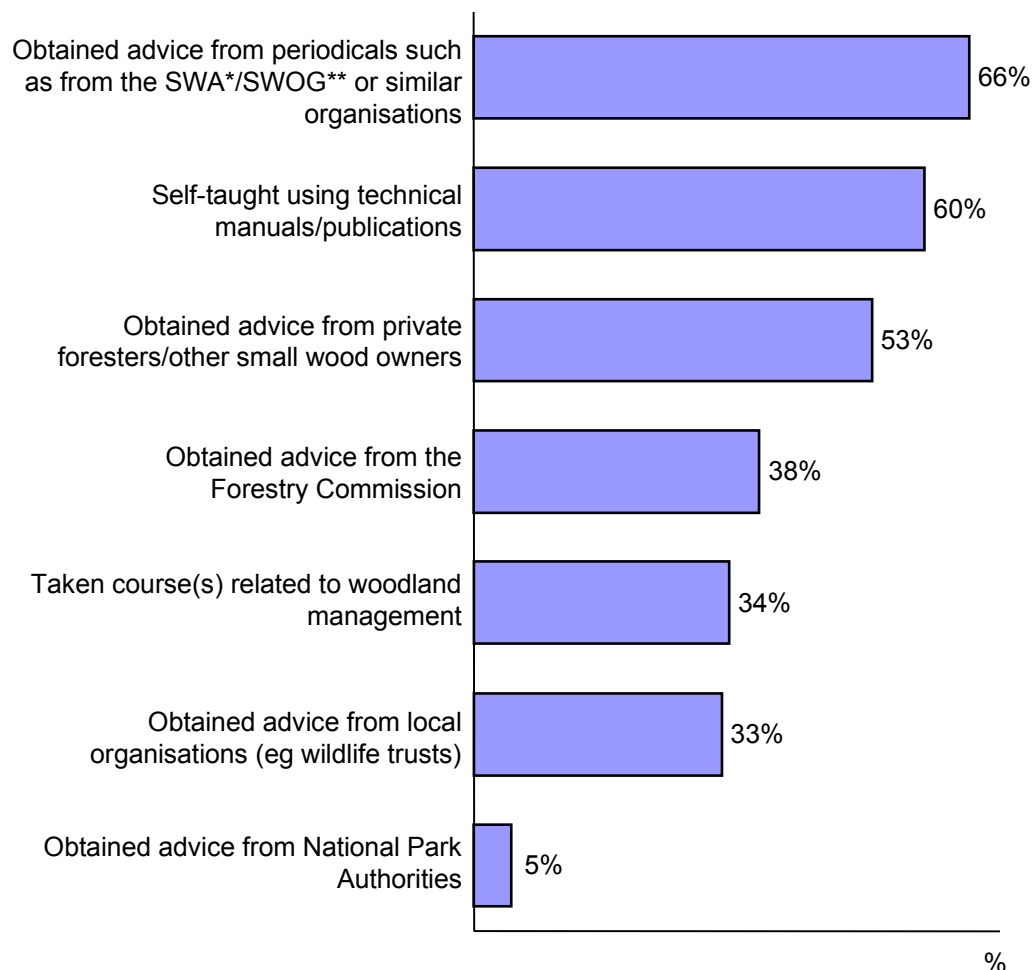
Levels Of **Annual** Income From Woods (BASE – All Respondents (N=149))

	Selling wood for fuel	Selling wood for other reasons	Wildlife related activities (eg running courses)	Other Income Generating Activities	Annual Income - Totals
% of Woodland Owners Who Obtained An Income From This Item	8%	4%	3%	3%	12%
Average Annual Income Per Woodland (All Owners)	£73	£11	£239	£23	£345
Total Annual Income (All Survey Owners (149))	£10,860	£1,580	£35,610	£3,450	£51,500

- As we have noted, many owners feel that creating some sources of income from the wood supports their desire for their wood to be productive and not solely be a place of recreation.
“If it is feasible to make money then it would be good. We are not just doing it for the amenity.”
- They may not make a great deal of money from the wood that they sell but even a small amount can go a long way to helping cover costs.
“I sell some to a guy. He takes 5 cords. I’ll never get rich on it but it pays for chain saws.”

Almost all owners have received advice/training in some form or another. Just 3% of owners have had none at all. Many people are self taught (from books and the internet) but many have benefited from informal sources such as talking to other owners and more formal ones such as the SWA*.

Sources Of Advice/Training About Owning/Managing Their Wood (BASE – All Respondents (N=149))



Other Sources Of Advice/Training

- Internet (**4 mentions**)
- Advice from Natural England. Wood is an SSSI (**2 mentions**)
- Chainsaw training
- Coed Cymru
- Employed arboriculturalist
- Friend trained me in chainsaws in my own wood
- Have been in touch with Forestry Commission but not got advice yet
- I attend SWOG and really enjoy it socially
- Info from local gamekeeper.
- Internet and books
- Multiple local wildlife specialist organisations have helped
- Obtained advice from friends who are also woodland owners
- Plan on taking courses
- Plans to go on courses, establish wetland/bog garden adjacent to the stream which has some boggy ground.
- Work in the landscape sector...30 years experience

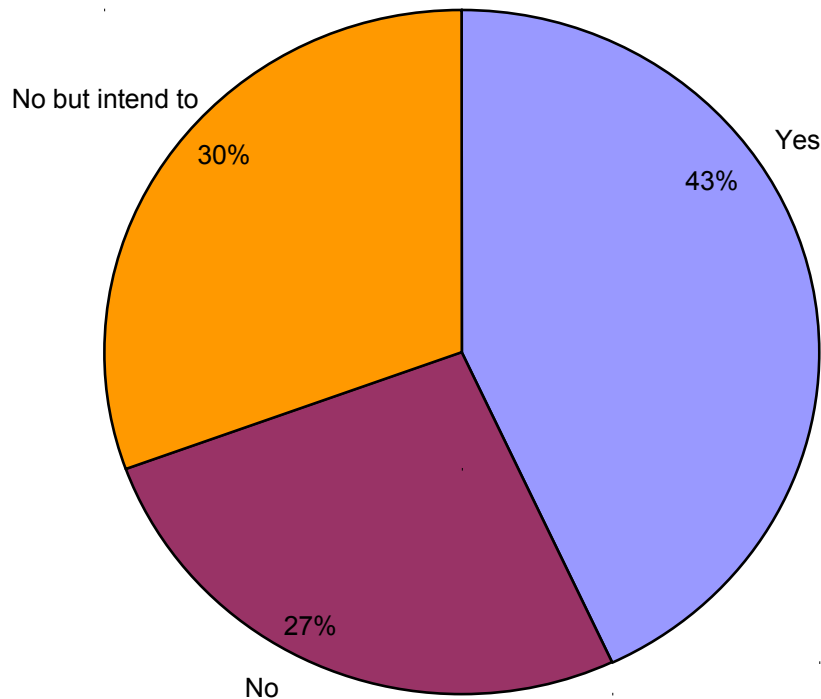
- Owners particularly recall the advice they have received from organisations such as the Forestry Commission...
"We have benefited from visits from other experts such as the Forestry Commission who have helped with developing a basic management plan."
- ...National Park Authorities...
"We discussed options with National Park Authority as they had authority over the land that we were on. They gave helpful advice especially on how to deal with our rhododendron ponticum infestation."
- ...and membership of the Small Woodland Owners Group.
"SWOG meets helped improve knowledge & awareness of other aspects."

* Small Woods Association

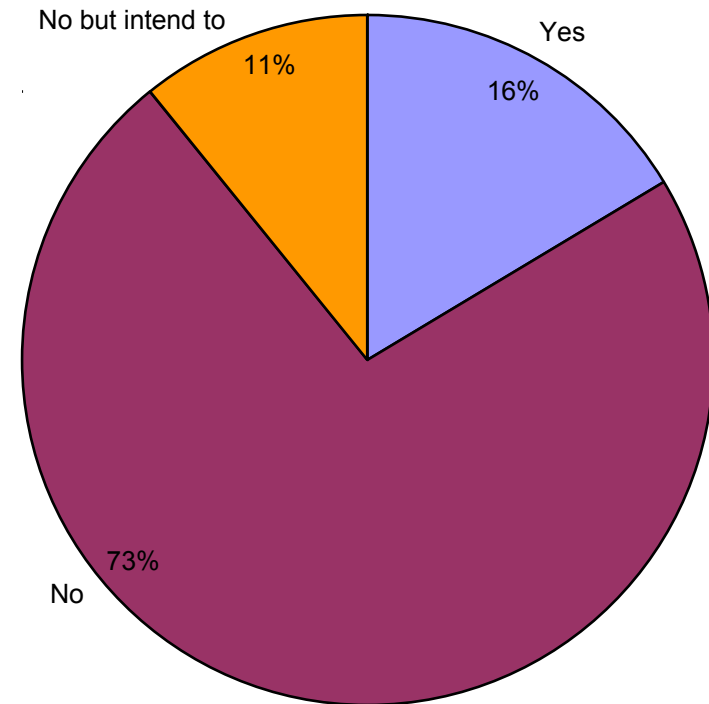
**Small Woodland Owners Group

Almost three-quarters (73%) of owners have either developed a woodland management plan or intend to. A far smaller proportion (27%) has either applied for a grant to improve their wood or they intend to.

Whether Owners Have Developed A Woodland Management Plan (BASE – All Respondents (N=128))



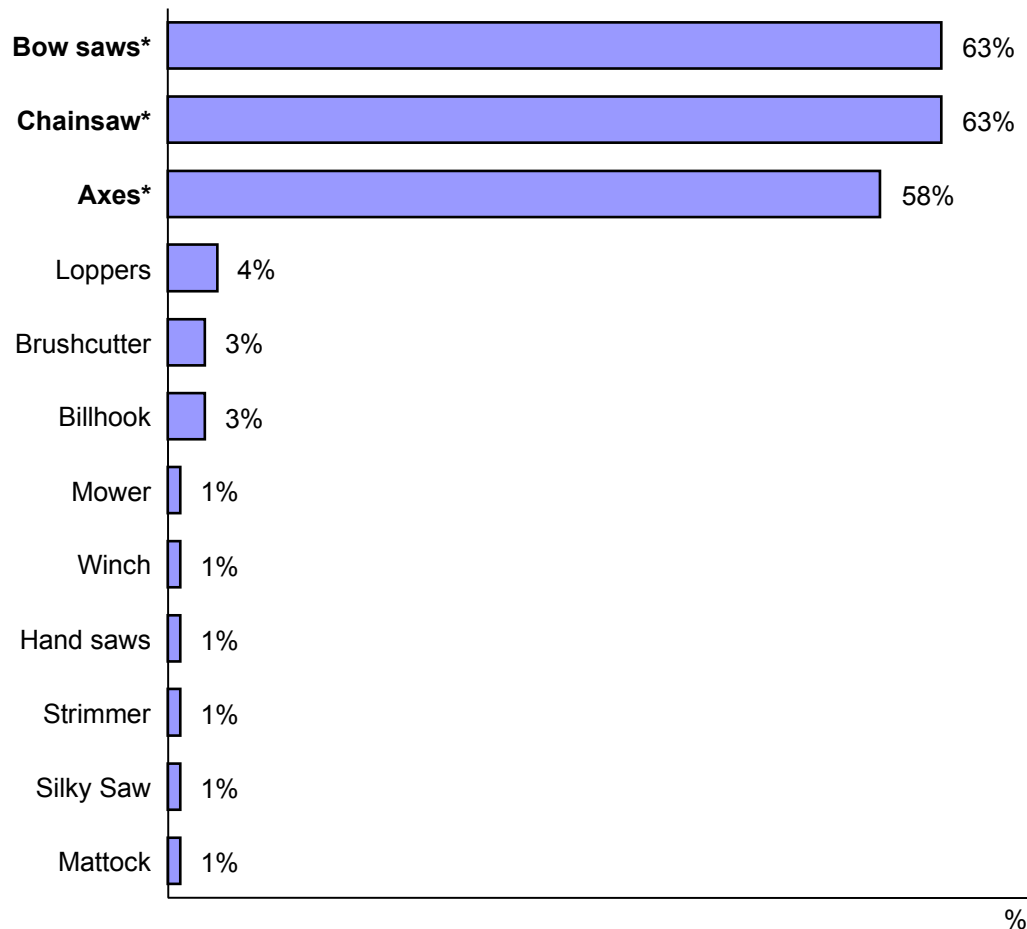
Whether Owners Have Applied For Grants To Improve Their Wood (BASE – All Respondents (N=129))



• Although only a small proportion of owners go through the formal process of applying for grants, those that do can find that it helps them plan ahead the improvements and changes they wish to make. *“We have a management plan for the next 5 years and a little bit of a grant and in the first year we will be improving paths and fences.”*

Almost two-thirds of owners make use of chainsaws and bow saws (63%). A slightly smaller proportion (58%) use axes. Owners spontaneously listed a variety of other tools they use to manage their woods. The most common were loppers (4%) and brushcutters and billhooks (3%).

Usage Of Tools In Managing The Woods (BASE – All Respondents (N=149))

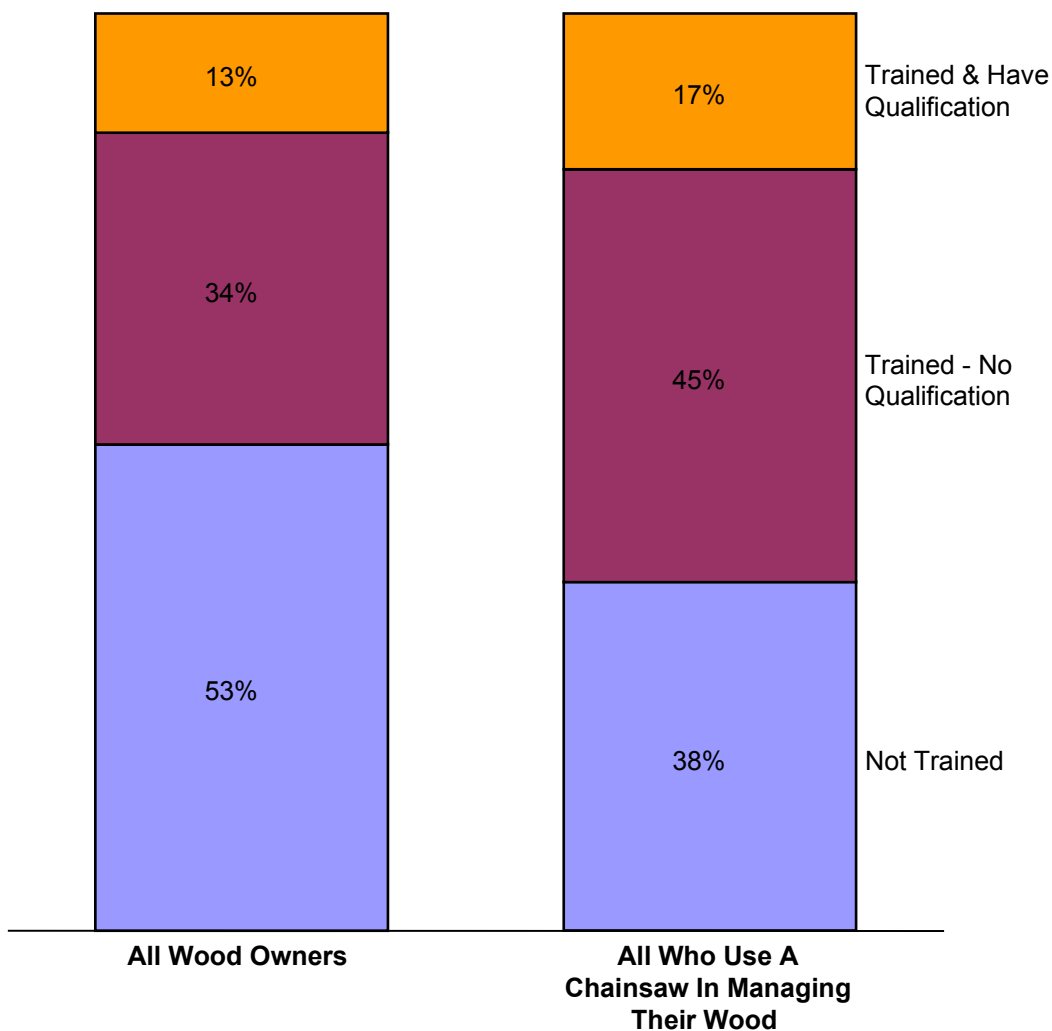


• Although most owners do make use of chainsaws, a small number prefer to use non-mechanised tools owing to the lower impact they have and the skills they can acquire from using them.
“You should be able to do this with hand tools so we do. Also I do not like the noise pollution from cars and jet engines so the noise of a chainsaw is an irritation and they are dangerous unless used with care and knowledge. One of the spin-offs has been learning how you handle trees using a bow saw and an axe. It is possible but you need to learn how to use them and maintain them.”

*Given as a prompt in the survey question; all other mentions were provided unprompted (in the “other” category).

Many owners were acutely aware of the dangers of owning chainsaws and many mentioned the need for formal training. many have been prompted by their woodland ownership to undergo training.

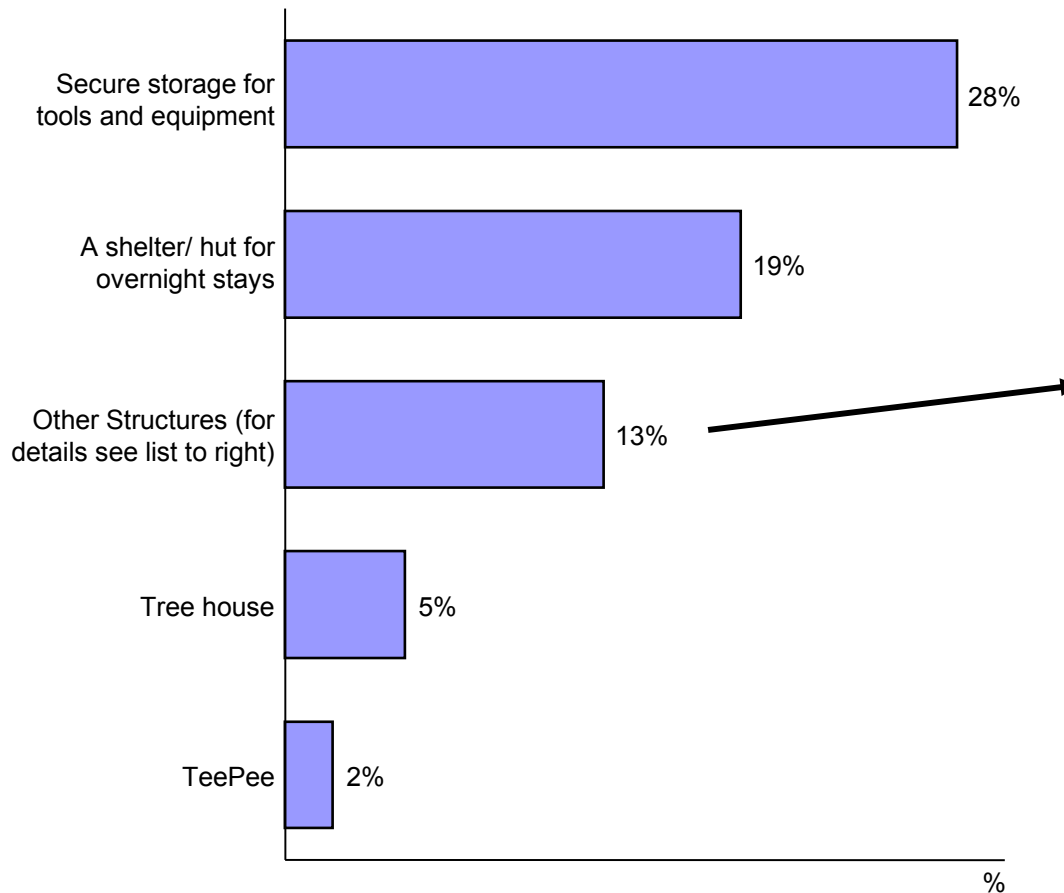
Levels Of Training/Qualifications To Use A Chainsaw
(BASE – All Respondents (N=127))



• Owners are conscious of the potential dangers from using a chainsaw and are aware of the need to have undergone training before they make use of them.
"I use a chainsaw and it is hard to manage without one but you have got to have training. I got a C&G in maintenance and safety at the local agricultural college. I use it for felling trees and cutting firewood. I have all the gear and that is important. I do not think that you should use it without training. It is just so easy to make a mistake."

Over a quarter of owners (28%) have created secure storage for tools and equipment in their wood and almost a fifth (19%) have created a shelter for overnight stays. The other structures that owners have created or plan to create include yurts, wildlife viewing platforms and tents.

Creation/Building Of Structures In The Wood (BASE – All Respondents (N=128))

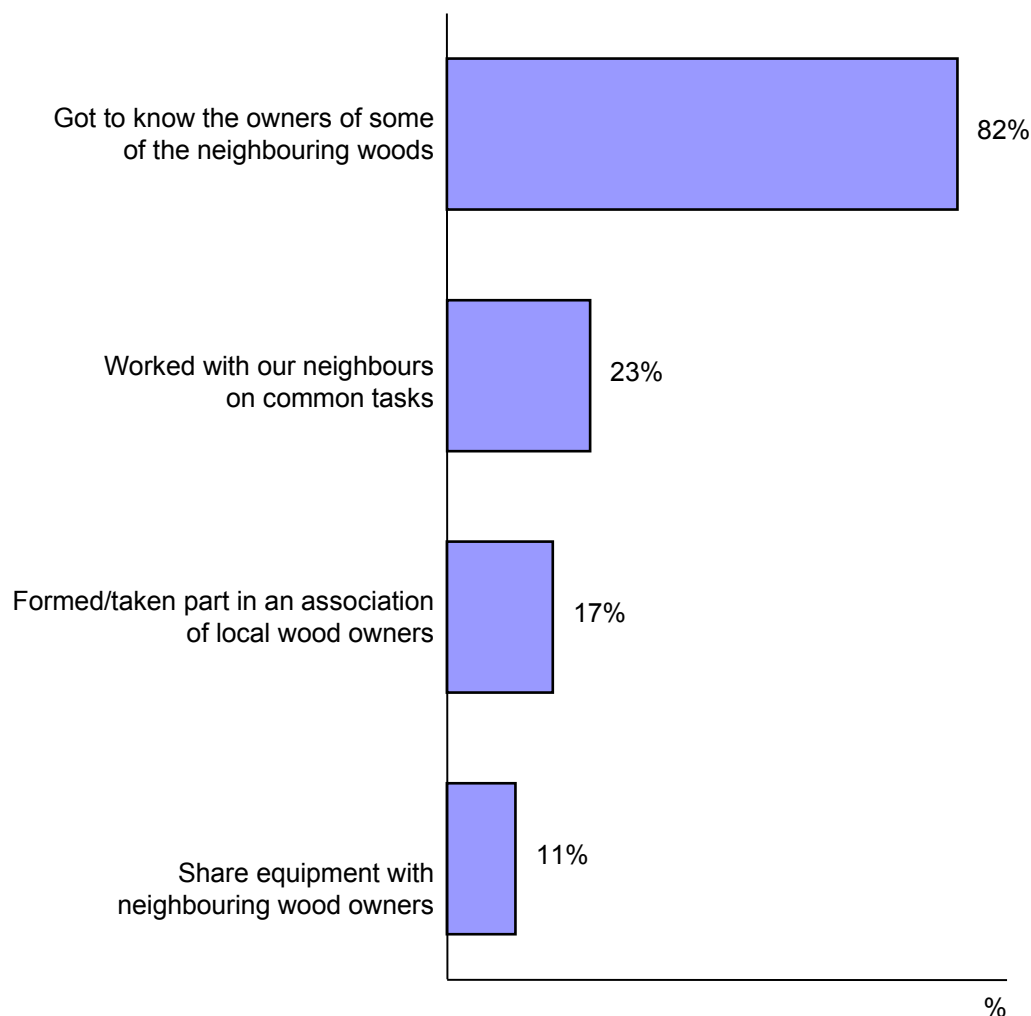


- Other Structures That Owners Have Built/Plan To Build In Their Wood**
- An open lean-to for shelter during daytime.
 - Basic wooden shed
 - Below ground safe box for tools, wattle walled compost toilet
 - Bench
 - Caravan
 - Caravan at the moment, but building a house
 - Hardstand planned for camper van
 - Hide
 - Not secure plastic box
 - Occasional tent
 - Open sided roof store
 - Open-sided log store.
 - Raised wildlife viewing platform
 - Seat
 - Shed for storage (but not secure) and covered wood stores
 - Simple shelter
 - Small area with fence style panels around to store tools, but not secure
 - Small yurt
 - The previous owner left a very good shed that we have re-erected
 - The woods is part of the cottage that we own with its own outbuildings
 - Use tarpaulins on poles for protecting stores. Tipi is removable.
 - We have a loo tent & use a main tent when camping

• Creating (secure) storage can save owners a great deal of time transporting tools from their vehicle and allowing them to keep them on site.
"It would be useful to have small lock up shed and water on that lower bit as we are taking stuff down from an upper storage area."
"We have a little storage shed 6 by 3 foot and a bird hide that is 10 by 3. You have to have your tools there."

The vast majority of owners (82%) get to know their woodland neighbours. A quarter (23%) work with them on tasks and just under a fifth (17%) have formed or take part in an association with fellow local wood owners. For some, these friendships are a real bonus of owning their woodland.

Relationships With Neighbouring Wood Owners
(BASE – All Respondents (N=128))



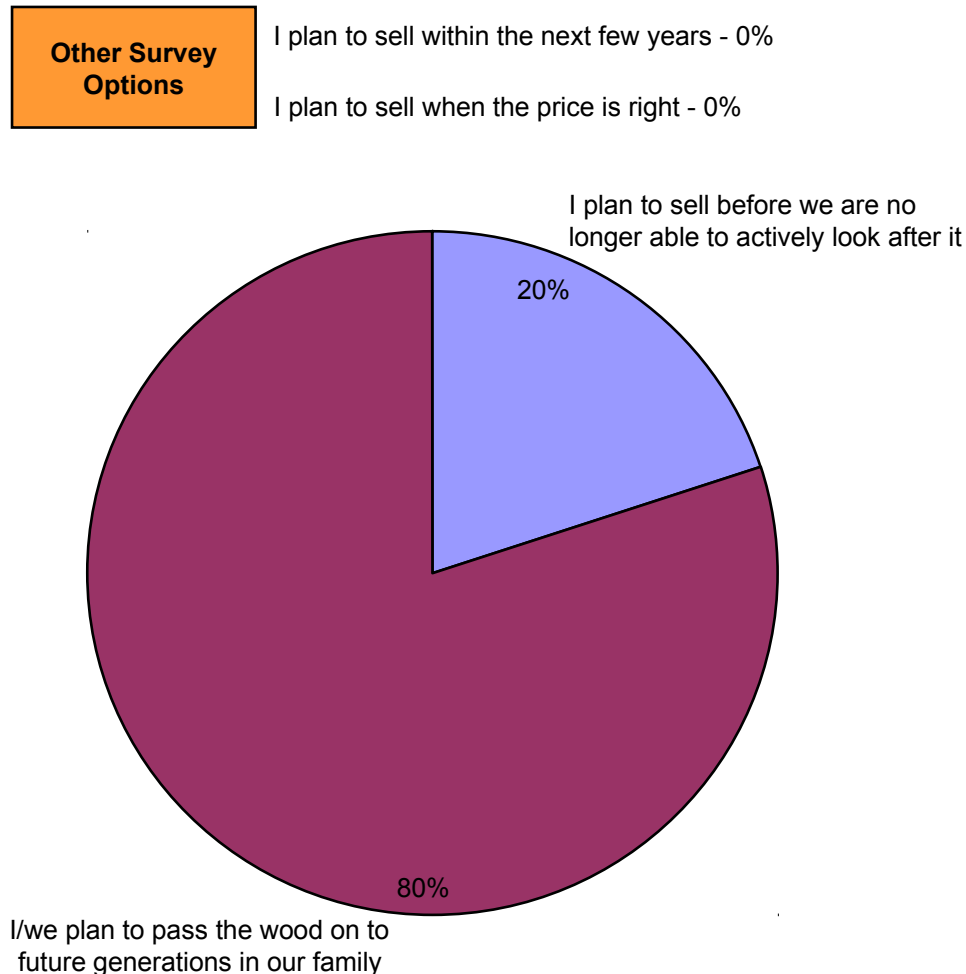
• Although some owners do not have a great deal of contact with neighbouring wood owners, most come across them at some point. Others go to considerable lengths to make friendships and relationships that not only increase their own enjoyment of their visits and their association with their woods but also serve to improve the quality of the management of the wood itself.

“We had no real concept that we would become part of a community of co – owners in our wood. There is a good network and we are all in email contact. We have regular meets to look at each other’s woods. We all approach it differently. Some have taken the entertaining aspect with barbeques and others have left their woods almost alone.”

“Altogether there are some twenty owners. In the first years we wrote to other owners and with the help of Woodlands.co.uk, we got involved with Kent Wildlife Trust and liked idea of the group having a more holistic view of the wood and to get an outline management plan. We set up coppicing training and got a grant from Kent County Council to look at archaeology. Of the twenty owners about 25% do not have much to do with it while 25% very are active and that group is very good and we have made very good friends. We try to have one event a year; a barbeque in May or June to see what we want to do. We have had bat walks.”

No one who filled in the survey was planning to sell their wood in the foreseeable future. All either planned to pass it on to future generations of their family in some way or would only consider disposing of it once they could no longer actively look after it.

Longer Term Plans For Ownership (BASE – All Respondents (N=130))

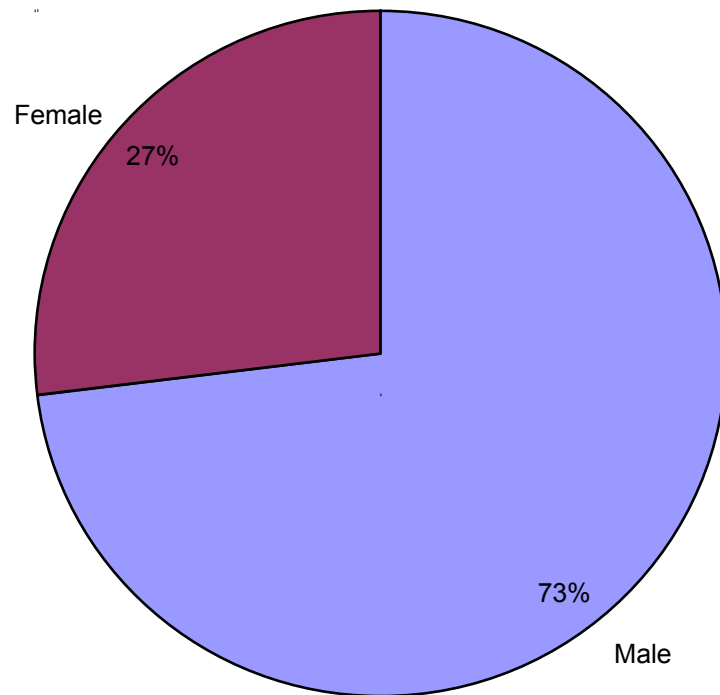


- Comments from the interviews echoed this long term commitment to ownership. Even if the wood did represent an investment, they did not see themselves as wishing to realise its value.
“Eventually I’ll be too old to stand up but I’ve no intention to sell it. We’ve no intention to make it an investment – perhaps it is perhaps not.”
- The dominant intention was to pass it on to members of their family...
“Assuming that the children would want to keep it after us maybe we will set up a trust. We hope that our children will continue to manage it. We like the idea of being custodians of it.”
“I think of it more as an investment for the future of the family. I hope that woodlands will come to play a greater part in the future of the country and I hope to pass it on to the children.”
- ...or if they had no children, to pass it on in some other way.
“I would imagine that I would keep it until no I am no longer around. I have no children to leave it to so I wonder about leaving it to a charity.”

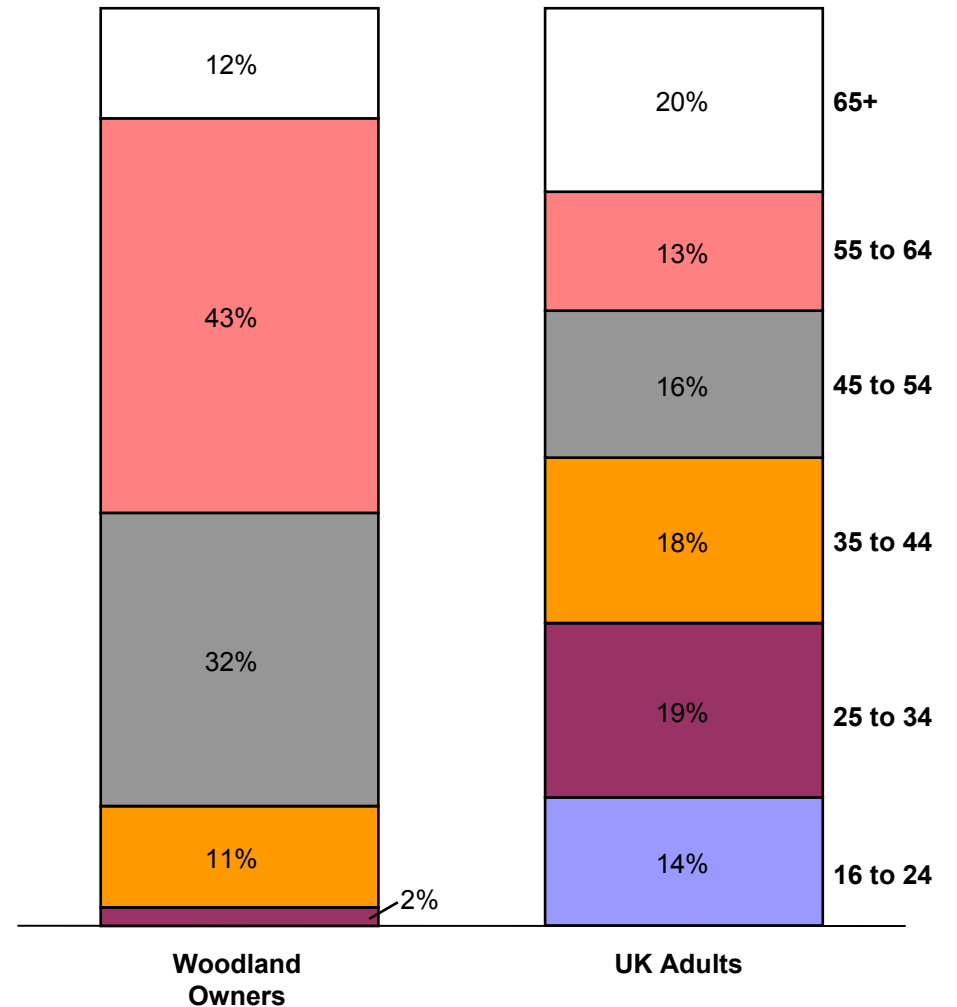


Demographic Profile. The majority of those who responded to the survey were male (73%). Owners were older than the UK population profile with three-quarters aged between 45 and 64 compared to a population average of 39%.

Gender (BASE – All Respondents (N=129))

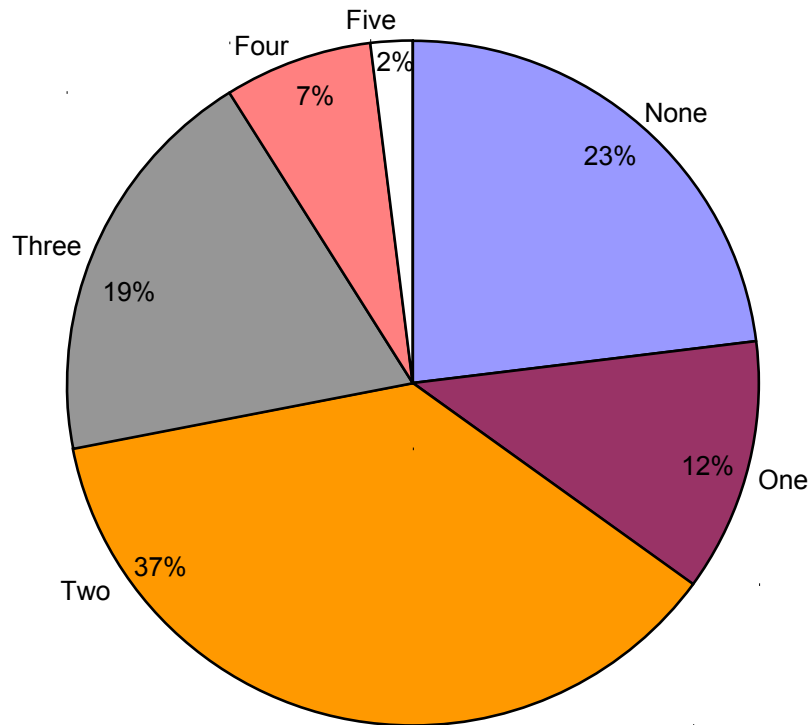


Age Group (BASE – All Respondents (N=128))

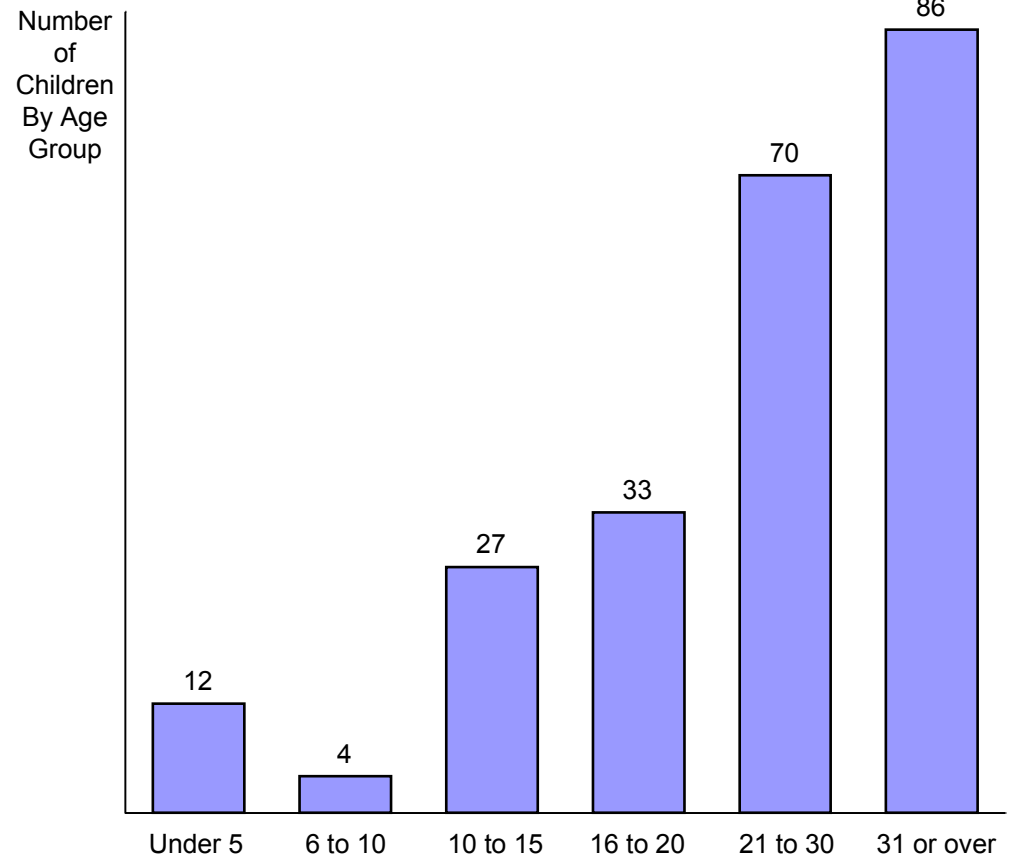


Demographic Profile. More than three-quarters (77%) of owners have children. As these owners are older than the population average so the age profile of their children tended to be that of young adults rather than young children. Two-thirds (67%) of the 232 children were aged 21 or over.

Number Of Children That People Have
(BASE – All Respondents (N=126))



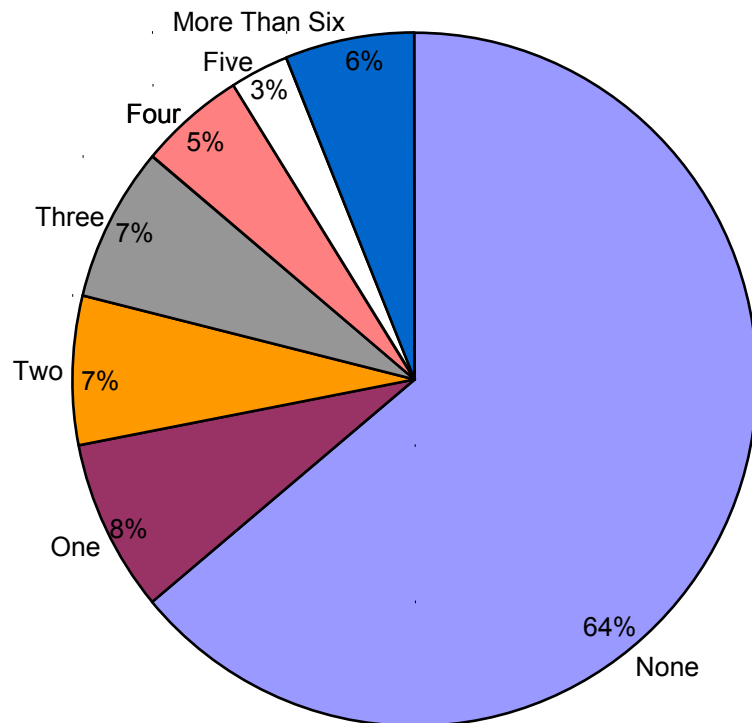
Ages Of Children (BASE – All Children (N=232))



The 126 respondents have a total of 232 children

Demographic Profile. A third of those who took part in the survey have grandchildren. There is some evidence* that more of those with grandchildren are planning to pass on their wood to future generations of their family.

Number Of Grandchildren That People Have
(BASE – All Respondents (N=108))



The 36 respondents with grandchildren have a total of 117 grandchildren

Relationship Between Having Grandchildren & Long-Term Ownership (BASE – All Respondents (N=130))

	Have Grandchildren (N=36)	No Grandchildren (N=94)
% plan to sell before we are no longer able to actively look after it	11%	23%
% plan to pass the wood on to future generations in our family	89%	77%

*This difference is not statistically significant at the 95% level.

Demographic Profile. Membership of SWOG is highest in the south-east of England and, as a result, there was a strong skew towards owners of woods in the south-east with just over a third (37%) of owners (where the county could be identified) coming from either Sussex, Kent, Surrey or London*.

County In Which The Owners Live (BASE – All Respondents (N=106))

Name of County	Number of Owners Living There
Sussex	19
Kent	9
Yorkshire	8
Surrey	7
London	4
Cheshire Devon Hampshire Staffordshire Wiltshire	3
Avon Buckinghamshire Cambridgeshire Carmarthenshire Dumfries & Galloway Essex Hertfordshire Lincolnshire	2

Name of County	Number of Owners Living There
Bedfordshire Ceredigion Derbyshire Dorset Durham Flintshire Gloucestershire Herefordshire Isle of Wight Lanarkshire Lancashire Leicestershire Merseyside North Wales Northamptonshire Pembrokeshire Perthshire Shropshire Somerset South Wales Strathclyde Suffolk Teesside Tyne and Wear Vale of Glamorgan Warwickshire West Midlands Worcestershire	1

*This skew towards the south-east broadly reflects the geographical profile of SWOG membership.

At the end of the survey, those who replied were offered the chance to make some comments about the experiences that they had had or the feelings about owning a wood that they might like to share. A total of 27 owners made comments which broke down into a number of areas.

General Feelings About Owning A Wood

- Magical place to unwind and relax from the stress and strain of daily living.
- Best thing I ever did.
- Escape from suburbia, peace and freedom to do what you want, back to a simple life no pressure. Bringing back childhood memories.
- Freedom from the town.
- Going to our wood is like passing through the door to another world.
- I only got my wood in Dec 2010 but already getting much enjoyment. It's opened up a whole new world.
- JUST DO IT NOW, DON'T HESITATE. I loooooove my woods.
- Providing for the birds and wildlife pays for years of pleasure gained.
- Quite simply our woodland is our heaven.
- We are very new to owning the wood but it is a wonderfully peaceful haven
- Waking up in the woods in the morning, just can't believe how lucky we are.
- Time between dusk and dawn is priceless when you camp with a fire.

Benefits Of Owning A Wood

- Cheaper than paying for going to a gym and more likelihood of getting good exercise from it. The advantage of learning new skills whilst putting something tangible back into the natural environment.
- 2 or 3 hours a week working in the wood is far healthier and more satisfying and effective than weekly sessions at the Gym.
- What I had not anticipated was getting to know other woodland owners and finding out what a thoroughly nice lot of people they are.

Considerations

- I got fed up with financial people offering advice on savings. One reason I decided to buy a woodland was that it quietly grows in value (in a way no financial advisor would ever understand) and gives us great pleasure.
- Depends how financially viable it is in retirement.

Experiences As A Wood Owner

- Main expertise (of necessity) is steep ground use and enjoyment. A lot of our knowledge now relates to accessing steep ground and how to camp on it in all seasons. We can talk & write about that.
- Main functional use is source of wood fuel for two stoves at home. But I'm very keen on conservation aspects too. Natural England were very helpful when giving their permission to coppice.
- Various wildlife encounters, including going behind a tree to go to the toilet - almost on top of a singing nightingale!
- We almost had our puppy turn into a tasty owl snack when we were enjoying a glass of wine after dark one night
- We are an isolated wood. However we have taken a great deal of trouble to get to know all our neighbours, be they farmers, British Waterways (we have a canal boundary), Wildlife Trusts, County Council parks.
- We contribute occasional articles to Small Woodland Owners Group newsletter.
- We have had our wood for just one year. It has been wonderful to see the changes throughout the year. I saw wild flowers last spring and summer which I had never seen before.
- The reason we bought our wood was that my wife woke up one Saturday morning and the first thing she said was "I want to buy a wood". We didn't know how to go about it but a friend had seen signs for Woodlands.co.uk and passed on the information.
- We have been delayed in planting trees this year because the snow meant we couldn't access the wood for over a month.
- I have found several dormouse nests.