



national union of **students**

Student perceptions on trees, woods and people

Research for the Woodland Trust

January 2017



Summary

An online survey with students, delivered in November 2016, received c.4500 responses revealing that...

- A lack of time (45%) and bad weather (44%) are seen as the main reasons for not visiting woods more often, or at all. Access is also an issue with just over a quarter saying they are prevented due to not having a car (28%) or because woods are too far away (26%).
- The main reasons respondents have visited woods in the last year are to go for a walk or run (64%) or to relax and de-stress (54%).
- The majority of respondents agree that woods are important places for wildlife (95%) and that they make areas nicer places to live (93%). Respondents are less likely to agree that woods get them involved in local issues (31%).
- Respondents are most frequently report looking after or planting trees in their own garden (47%). Just 7% say they take part in a conservation group.
- On the whole, respondents recognise the positive effect of trees on health and wellbeing (91%) and also believe they have intrinsic value (90%). Respondents also recognise they can play a role within only 12% saying they can do nothing to help protect the UK's trees, woods and forests.
- Three quarters of respondents report their college / university grounds to have trees present, and over a third (39%) would like to know more about the trees on these grounds. Conservation / wildlife clubs and societies are the most commonly reported activity relating to trees taking place at respondents place of study.

Research summary

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Response:

A final sample of around **4500** responses was achieved.

Objectives:

To gather stories based on students' experiences with trees and woodlands to feed in to the development of the Charter for Trees, Woods and People.

To gather insight into use of trees and woodland areas

To gather insight into attitudes and values towards trees and woodlands

Method:

Prize draw of a share of £1000 to encourage response.

The survey was advertised online via the NUS Extra student database, and promoted as a survey about what they do in their spare time.

The survey took approximately 10 minutes to complete.

The respondents

The respondents

LEVEL OF STUDY

Higher Education



Further Education



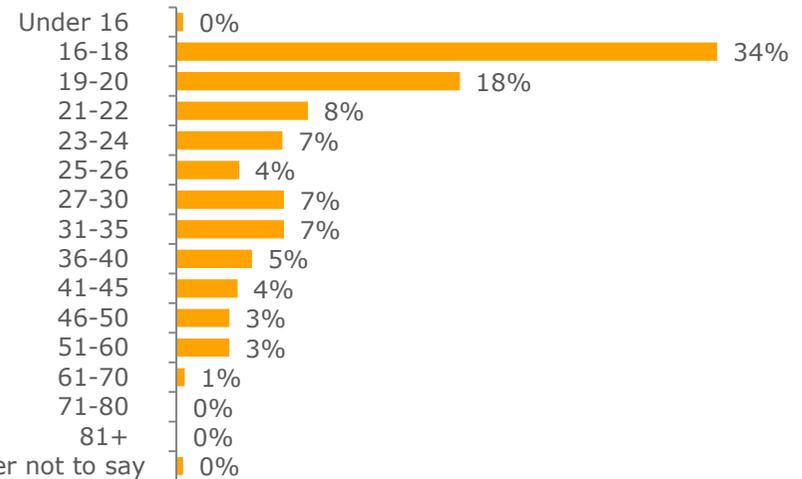
Apprenticeship



Other



AGE



I would prefer not to say 0%

GENDER IDENTITY

58%

Woman

36%

Man

0.5%

In another way

6%

Not given

NATIONALITY



88%
UK



5%
EU

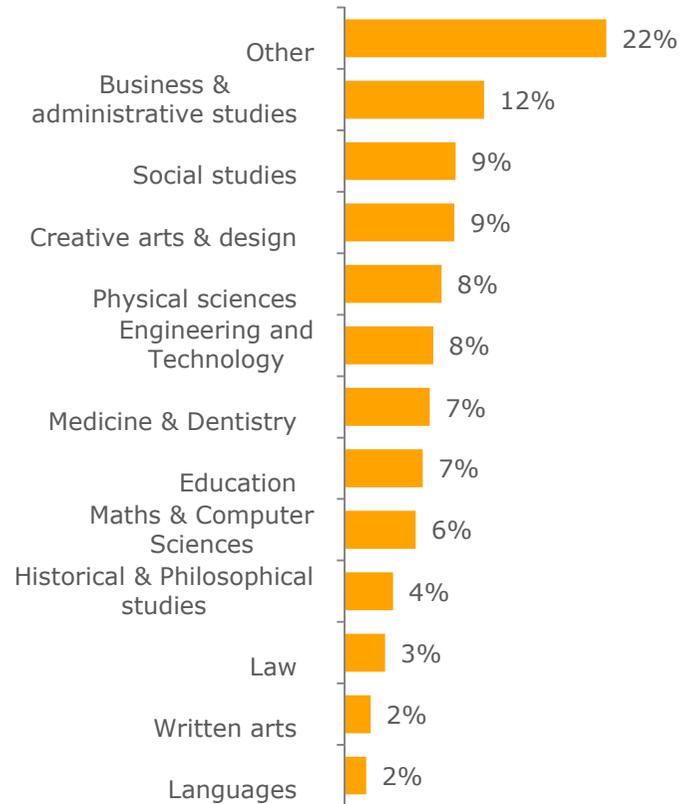


5%
NON-EU

1.5% Prefer not to say

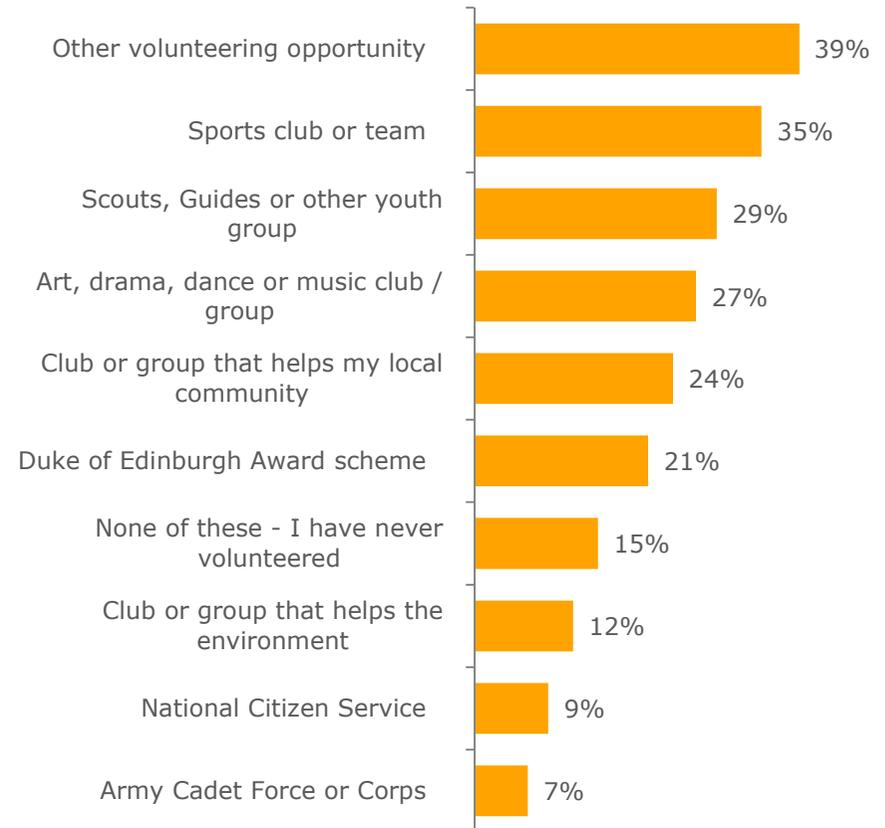
The respondents

SUBJECT



D6. And which of the below most closely matches with your course subject?

SPARE TIME

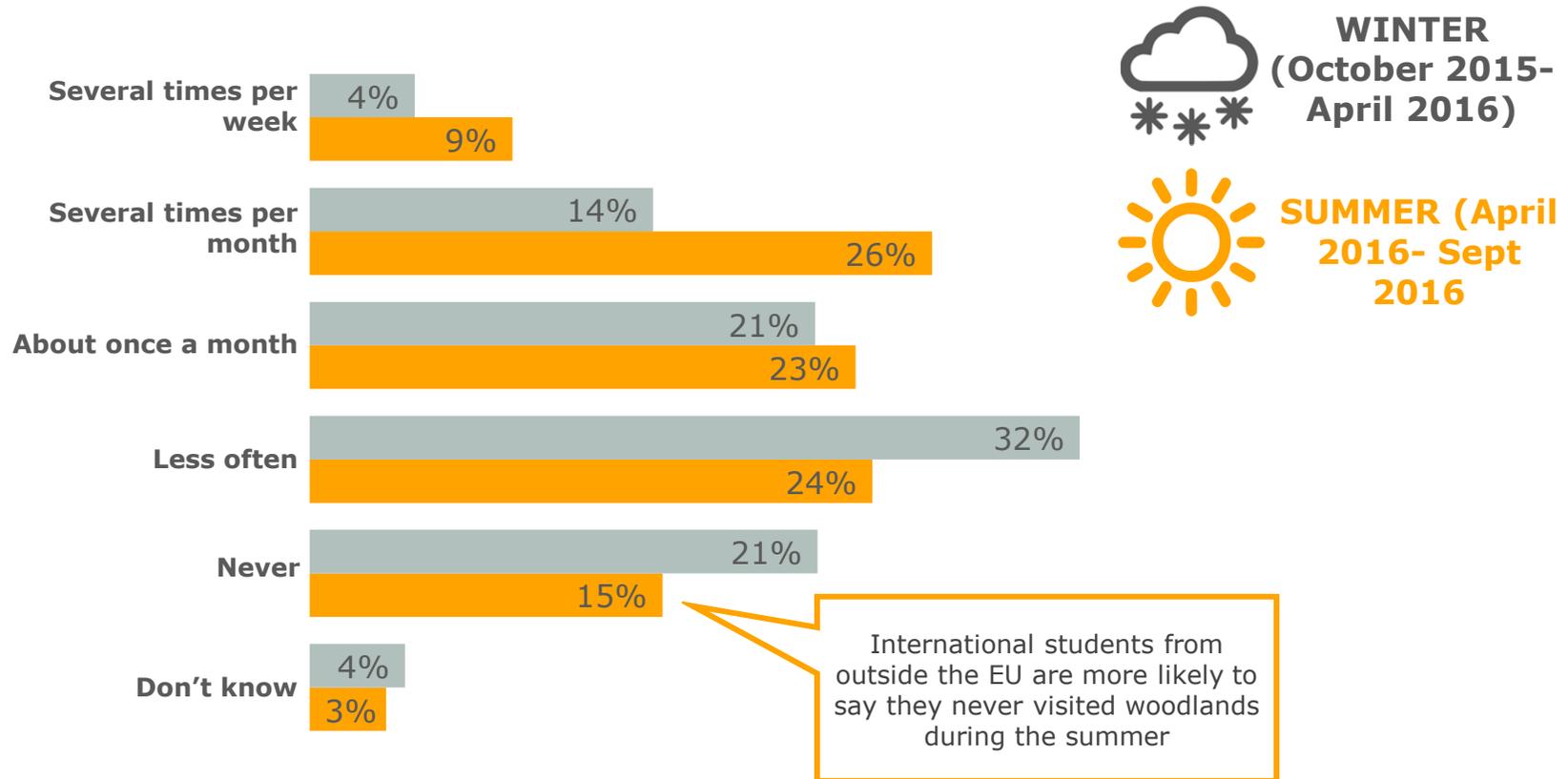


D5. What other volunteering activities, if any, have you ever taken part in?

Please think only about volunteering you have completed outside of formal school, college or university hours

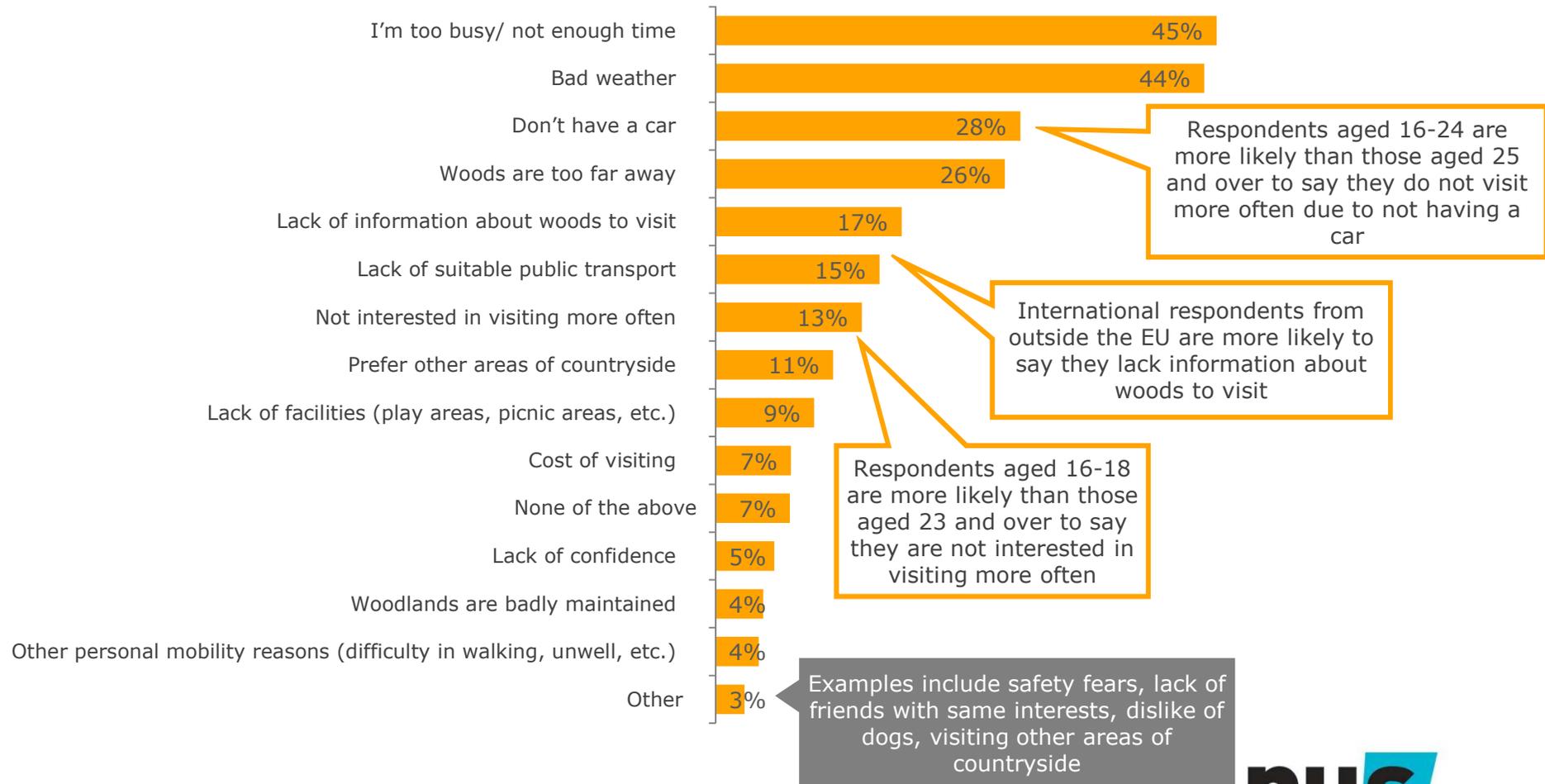
Findings in detail

Respondents say they visited woods more often in the summer than in the winter with a quarter (26%) saying they visited several times a per month during April-Sept 2016.



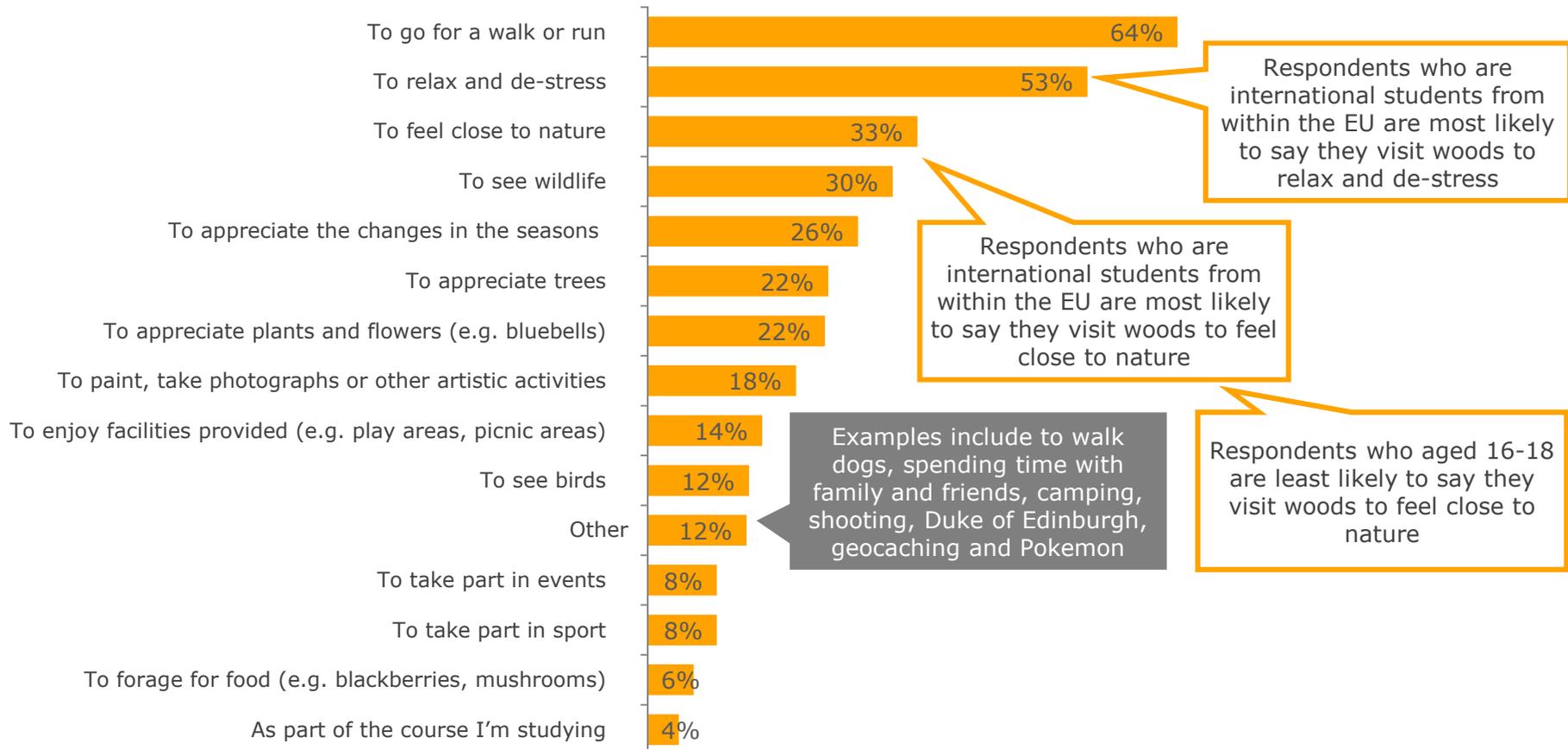
B1. How often, if at all, did you visit a wood in...?
[Base: 4616 (summer) and 4551 (winter) Balance: No response]

A lack of time (45%) and bad weather (44%) are seen as the main reasons for not visiting woods more often, or at all. Access is also an issue with just over a quarter saying they are prevented due to not having a car (28%) or because woods are too far away (26%).



B2: Which of the following, if any, are the main reasons for not visiting woods more often or at all?
 [Base: 4598 Balance: No response]

The main reasons respondents have visited woods in the last year are to go for a walk or run (64%) or to relax and de-stress (54%).

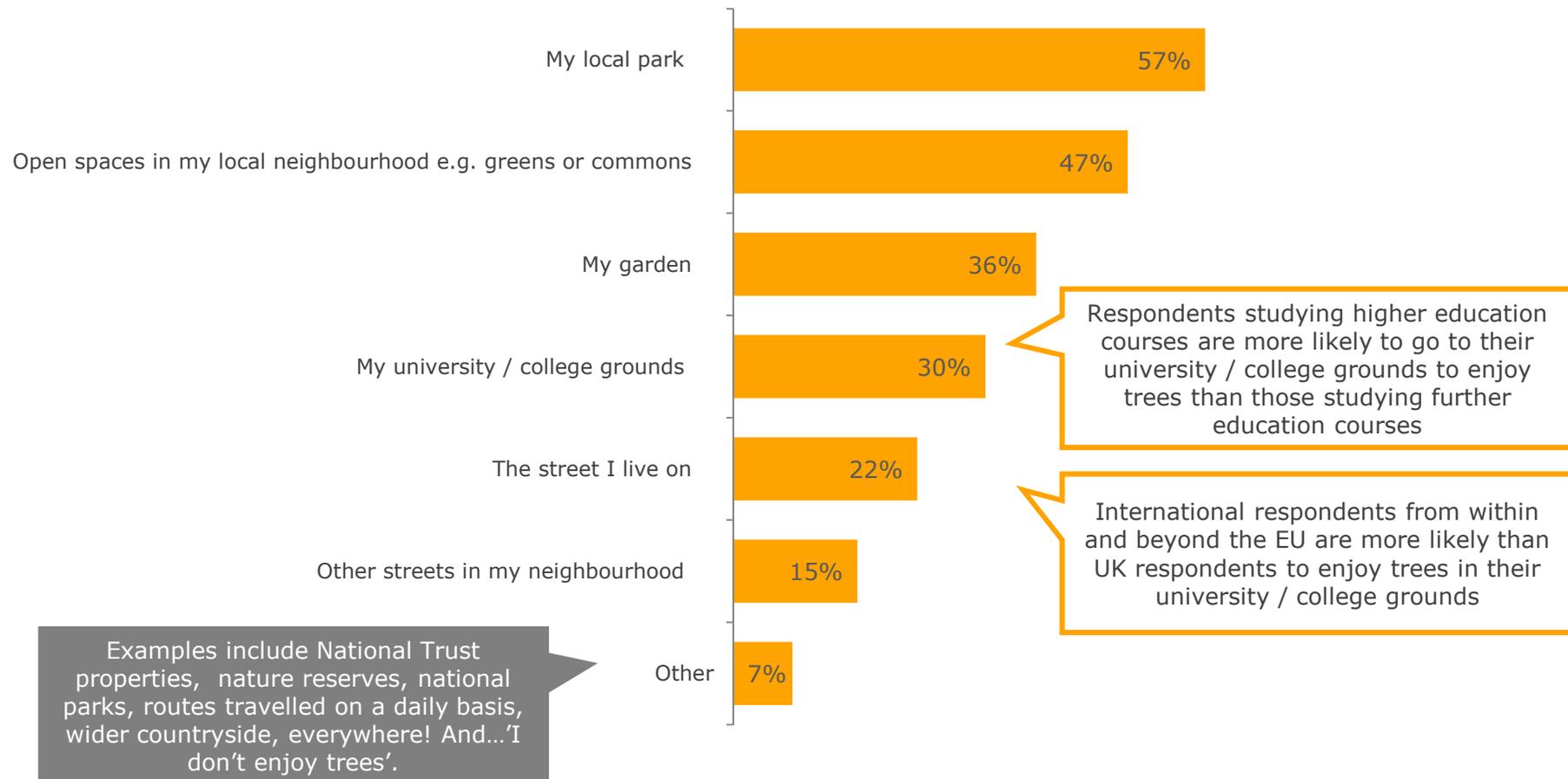


B3: Which of the following are the main reasons you visited woods in the last year?
 [Base: 4450 Balance: No response]

For those who have visited woodlands as part of their course, the reasons include...

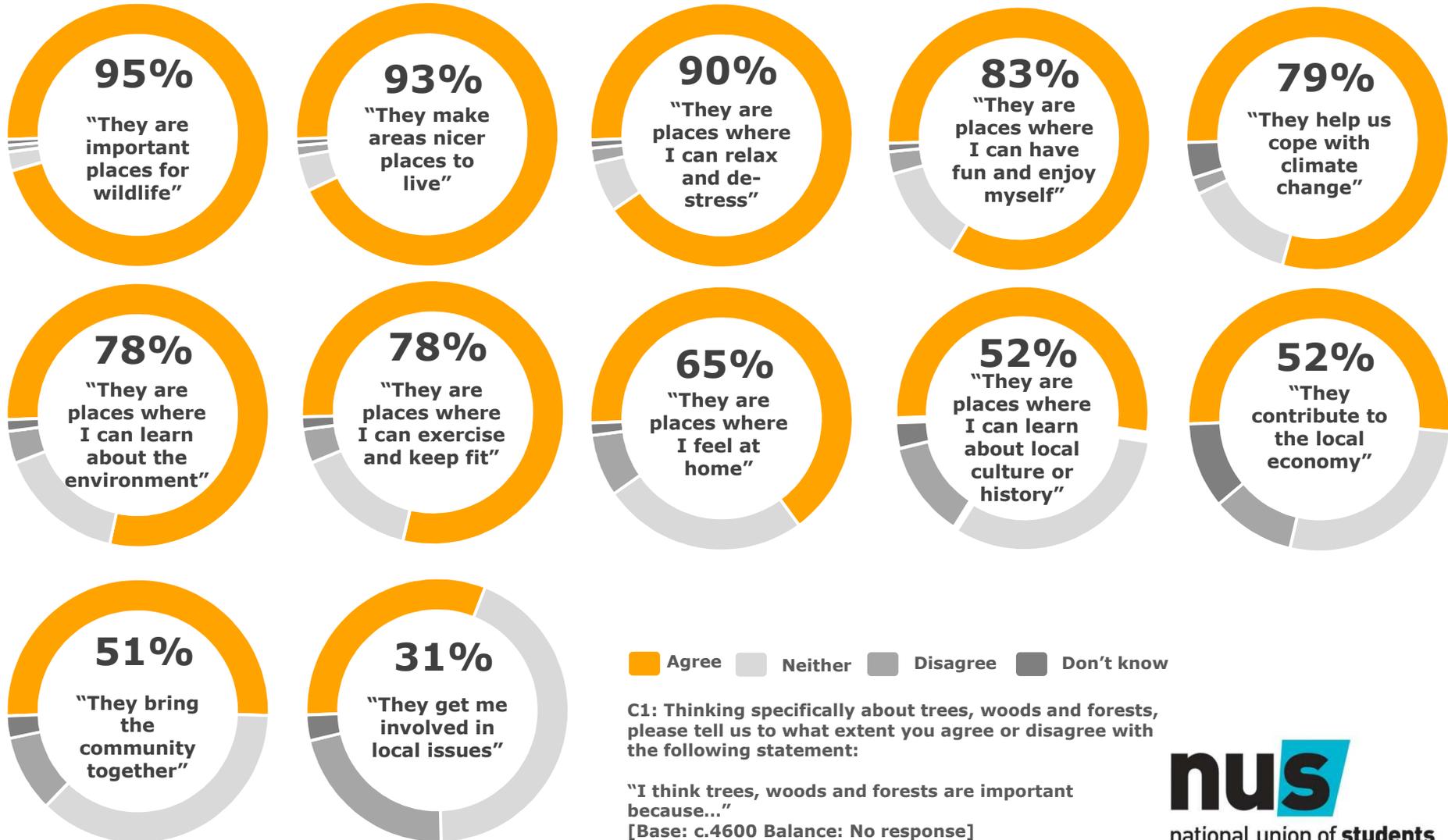
Creative activities e.g. painting, drawing, photography	53	<p>"I am doing a Drawing Degree so I have frequently visited the woods near me to take photos and collect items of foliage and such for my subject matter."</p> <p>"I'm able to take pictures of trees, leaves and other items found within a forest. I could use them images to create textures as part of my Games Development Course."</p>
Activities for courses linked to the environment	77	<p>"I'm studying zoology - we had a field course last year which involved going around the woods/parks and for example collecting invertebrates."</p> <p>"I'm studying countryside management so looking at diverse and interrelated habitats with a view to maintaining restoring and in some cases replacing them. Woodland are of particular personal interest to me and the course allows me the freedom to work them in to the content and out put of my study."</p>
Outdoor activities for team building	8	<p>"Visiting the woods and completing different activities increasing teamwork and other important skills, this can range from communication to personal confidence. These skills are vital for my course (Public services) and a wooded area can provide the needed experience."</p>
Activities for health and wellbeing courses	2	<p>"By studying therapeutic methods I have become fascinated by the positive impact of spending time outside in natural environments. Especially through environmental arts therapy methods"</p>
Activities for education courses	11	<p>"I took part in a forest school session as an enrichment activity for my course, BA (Hons) Special Educational Needs and Inclusion. This was to learn about how the outside could enhance learning for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities."</p>
Other courses	9	<p>"I study the search and location of body deposition sites in rural locations, so I visit woods to study sub-conscious decision points, attractants, deterrents, route planning, navigation, tracking. I also visit woodlands as part of Lowland Search and Rescue training."</p>

Other than woods, local parks (57%) and open spaces in the local neighbourhood (47%) are the most commonly visited areas to enjoy trees.



B5: We're also interested in finding out about the trees you come into contact with in your day to day life. Which of the following places do you go to in order to enjoy trees?
[Base: 4613 Balance: No response]

The majority of respondents agree that woods are important places for wildlife (95%) and that they make areas nicer places to live (93%). Respondents are less likely to agree that woods get them involved in local issues (31%).



Respondents are most frequently report looking after or planting trees in their own garden (47%). Just 7% say they take part in a conservation group.

7% take part in a conservation group



13% plant or look after trees in their neighbourhood



15% donate money to conservation organisations



47% plant or look after trees in their own garden



C3: Do you take part in any of the following activities that help to plant, preserve or maintain trees or woods?
[Base: 3040 Balance: No response]

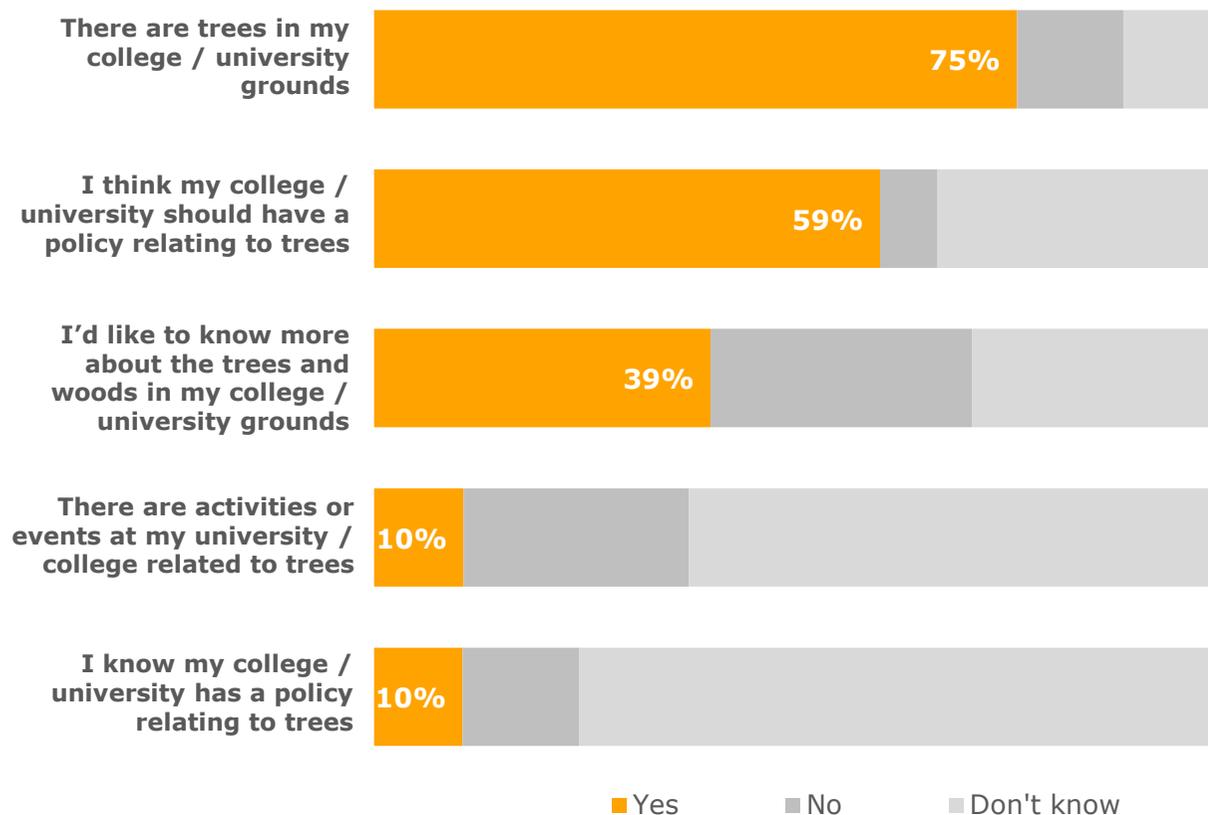
Respondents recognise the positive effect of trees on health and wellbeing (91%) and also their intrinsic value (90%). Respondents also recognise they can play a role within only 12% saying they can do nothing to help protect the UK's trees, woods and forests.



■ Agree
 ■ Neither
 ■ Disagree
 ■ Don't know

C4: To what extent, if at all, do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
 [Base: c.4600 Balance: No response]

Three quarters of respondents report their college / university grounds to have trees present, and over a third (39%) would like to know more about the trees on these grounds. Conservation / wildlife clubs and societies are the most commonly reported activity relating to trees taking place at respondents place of study.



Activities or events taking place at university or college

Conservation / wildlife / gardening clubs and societies	93
Memorial trees	7
Direct courses e.g. arboriculture, biology	41
Indirect courses e.g. primary education, art	11
Food growing societies	2
Broader environmental activities	1
Trees elsewhere e.g. rainforests	4
Institution sustainability / environment committees	2
Sporting events e.g. cross-country	3
Seasonal activities	7
Nature walks	15

Please contact [Rachel Drayson](#) – Insight Manager (Sustainability) for further information about this research.