

## Introducing Young Children to Nature – Report of a National Survey, May 2014

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A nationally representative survey (N=2000, representative by age and sex) was conducted for the Fairyland Trust [www.fairylandtrust.org](http://www.fairylandtrust.org) in December 2013, as part of the British Values Survey run by Cultural Dynamics Strategy and Marketing, CDSM [1]. The questions were fielded by GMI and each had a Likert scale of options 1 – 5, ‘strongly agree, slightly agree, neither agree nor disagree, slightly disagree, strongly disagree’. The survey was conducted online using a sample weighted to be representative.

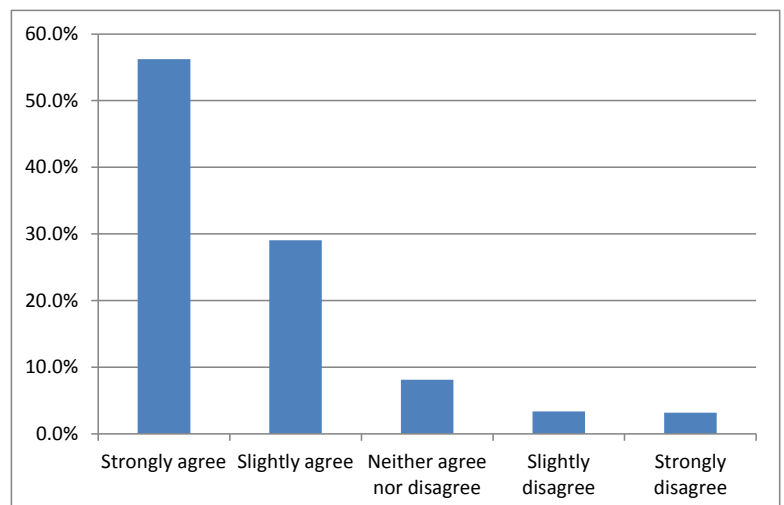
The key question asked for the Fairyland Trust ([www.fairylandtrust.org](http://www.fairylandtrust.org) – contact Chris Rose, Director at [chris@fairylandtrust.org](mailto:chris@fairylandtrust.org) ) was agreement/disagreement with the statement “it is vital to introduce young children to nature”. (Respondents were also segmented by motivational values. That analysis will be subject to a subsequent report).

56.2% opted for ‘strongly agree’ and 29% ‘somewhat’. Only 6.6% actively disagreed and just 8.1% opted for ‘neither agree nor disagree’.

Chris Rose, Director of the Fairyland Trust who commissioned the survey says: “The overwhelming support for the idea of introducing children to nature is fantastic news, as research has shown most children now cannot recognize most common wild plants and animals, and some haven’t even seen a bumble bee”.

The poll also found that women agree somewhat more strongly than men, and older people more than younger people. (Whether or not people are *actually* engaged in nature is a different matter – see blog at <http://threeworlds.campaignstrategy.org/> ).

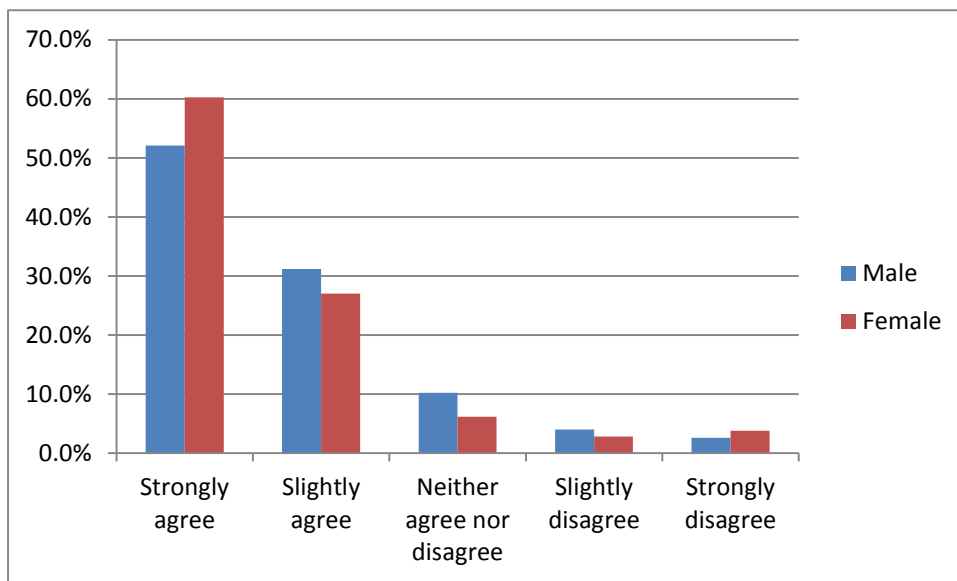
It is vital to introduce young children to nature.	
Strongly agree	56.2%
Slightly agree	29.0%
Neither agree nor disagree	8.1%
Slightly disagree	3.4%
Strongly disagree	3.2%



Above: national result, 2000 representative adults.

It is vital to introduce young children to nature		
	SEX	
	Male	Female
Strongly agree	52.1%	60.2%
Slightly agree	31.2%	27.0%
Neither agree nor	10.2%	6.2%
Slightly disagree	4.0%	2.8%
Strongly disagree	2.6%	3.8%

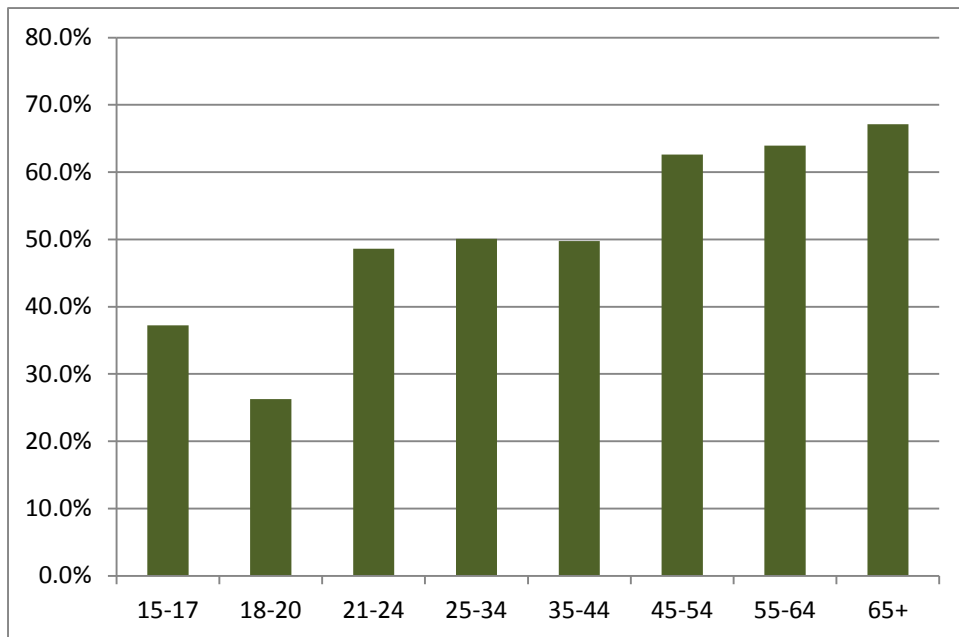
Above and below: differences amongst men and women. The great majority of both sexes agree that it is 'vital to introduce young children to nature'



It is vital to introduce young children to nature.								
	AGE							
	15-17	18-20	21-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Strongly agree	37.2%	26.3%	48.6%	50.1%	49.7%	62.6%	63.9%	67.1%

Above table and below graph: "strongly agree" 'it is vital to introduce young children to nature' by age

Other evidence suggests that engaging young children in nature has the greatest influence on them as adults [2]. This means 'young' as in three to four years of age up to about eight to eleven years.



Above 'strongly agree' by age.

Below: tables shows the significances by age. There is a clear age difference. Older people are significantly more likely to agree and less likely to disagree, and younger ones show the opposite skew.

It is vital to introduce young children to nature.									
Sum of CWSARMG	AGE								
Q7R1	15-17	18-20	21-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	Grand Total
Strongly agree	15 37.2%	22 26.3%	92 48.6%	165 50.1%	161 49.7%	213 62.6%	178 63.9%	279 67.1%	1125 56.2%
	1.4%	1.9%	8.2%	14.7%	14.3%	18.9%	15.9%	24.8%	
	66	47	86	89	88	111	114	119	
Slightly agree	18 44.1%	28 34.0%	60 31.7%	114 34.4%	117 36.1%	81 23.7%	71 25.3%	93 22.5%	581 29.0%
	3.1%	4.8%	10.3%	19.6%	20.1%	13.9%	12.2%	16.0%	
	152	117	109	119	124	82	87	77	
Neither agree nor dis.	3 7.5%	20 24.7%	26 13.6%	35 10.6%	26 8.0%	22 6.5%	15 5.4%	16 3.8%	163 8.1%
	1.9%	12.4%	15.7%	21.5%	15.8%	13.6%	9.2%	9.8%	
	92	303	166	130	98	80	66	47	
Slightly disagree	3 8.3%	11 13.9%	10 5.1%	10 3.0%	14 4.3%	14 4.2%	3 1.1%	2 0.5%	68 3.4%
	5.1%	16.9%	14.2%	14.8%	20.7%	20.9%	4.4%	3.0%	
	247	412	150	90	128	123	31	14	
Strongly disagree	1 2.8%	1 1.1%	2 1.1%	6 1.8%	6 1.8%	10 3.0%	12 4.3%	25 6.1%	64 3.2%
	1.8%	1.4%	3.1%	9.5%	9.3%	16.1%	18.8%	39.8%	
	89	35	33	57	58	95	135	192	
Grand Total	41 2.1%	82 4.1%	189 9.4%	330 16.5%	323 16.2%	340 17.0%	279 14.0%	415 20.8%	2000

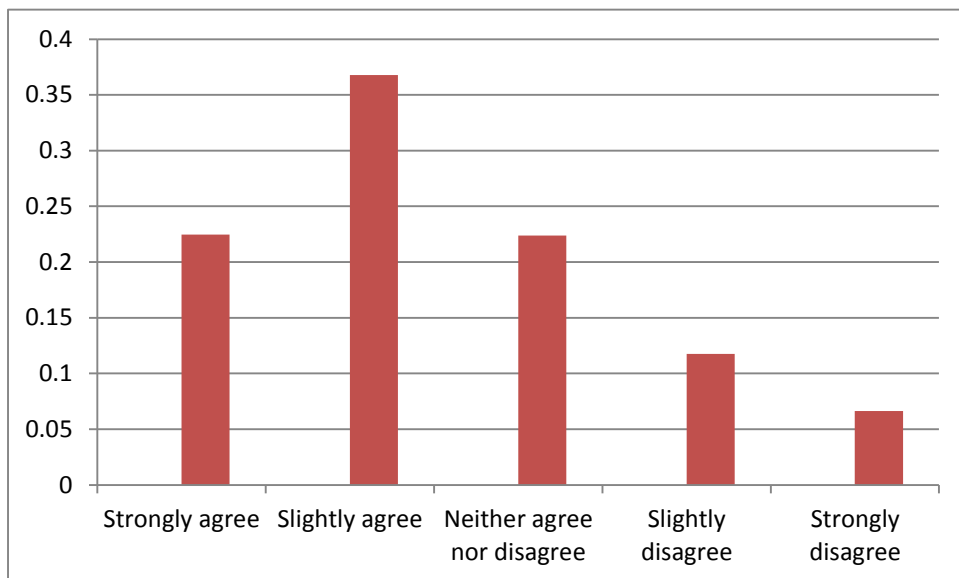
Coloured cells show 'index' which takes account of the size of each age segment in the population when assessing the significance of differences in response. Red indicates statistically significant positive result at 99% confidence level. Eg people over 65 have an

index of 119, meaning they are 19% more likely than by chance, to ‘strongly agree’. 15 – 17 year olds index at 66 meaning they are 44% less likely than the population as a whole to ‘strongly agree’. Orange indicates significant positive result at 97.5% level, blue significant negative at 99%, green significant negative at 97.5%.

### Two Other Questions

The survey also included two other statements related to places, magic and folklore: “I am interested in real British folklore, magic, ancient places and legends”, and “I have a favourite place which makes the hair stand up on the back of my neck”.

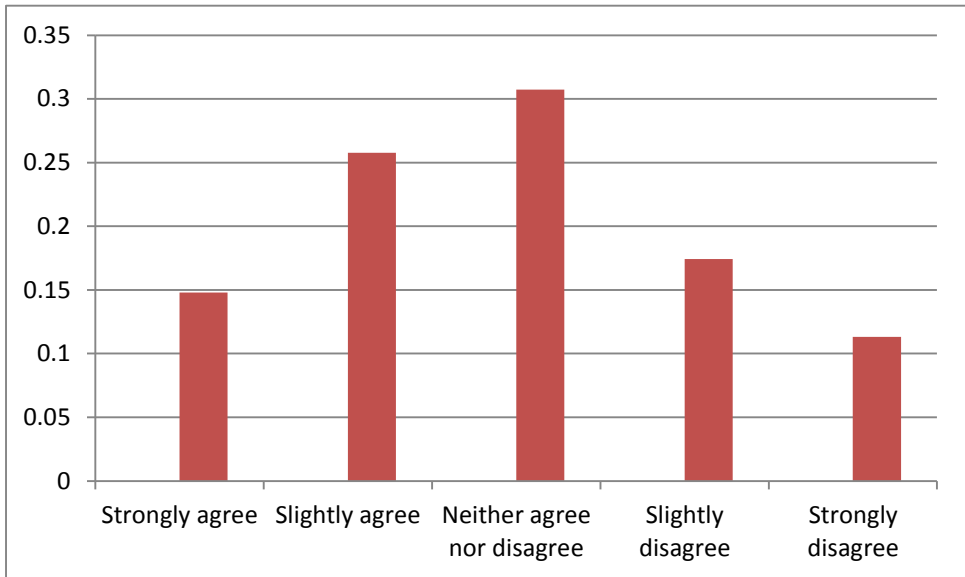
<b>I am interested in real British folklore, magic, ancient places and legends.</b>	
Strongly agree	22.5%
Slightly agree	36.8%
Neither agree nor disagree	22.4%
Slightly disagree	11.7%
Strongly disagree	6.6%



Above: “I am interested in real British folklore, magic, ancient places and legends”

Most people agree: 59.3%, while just 18.3% actively disagree. This presumably is one reason for the appeal of (or a reflection of the influence of) the work of groups like the National Trust, and generations of ‘antiquarians’ of all stripes, as well as books like Lord of the Rings. Psychologist, University Professor and shaman Brian Bates brings these together in his exploration of [‘The Real Middle Earth’](#), by which he means contemporary Britain and its direct links to the ancient pre-Christian world evoked in Tolkein’s books.

I have a favourite place which makes the hair stand up on the back of my neck.	
Strongly agree	14.8%
Slightly agree	25.8%
Neither agree nor	30.7%
Slightly disagree	17.4%
Strongly disagree	11.3%



40.6% say yes, 14.8% ‘strongly’, to this more personal connection to a specially evocative or magical place. The most popular choice is ‘neither’, although we don’t know without qualitative research whether this is due to ambivalence about the question, or simply because people have not really considered it before.

Ends

[1] [www.cultdyn.co.uk](http://www.cultdyn.co.uk) – contact Pat Dade, Director, at [pat@cultdyn.co.uk](mailto:pat@cultdyn.co.uk)

[2] eg (a) Childhood Development and Access to Nature: A New Direction for Environmental Inequality Research, Susan Strife and Liam Downey. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3162362/> “Research has shown that regardless of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, early childhood experiences in nature significantly influence the development of lifelong environmental attitudes and values”.

(b) Ricahrd Louv, *Last child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature Deficit Disorder*, (Atlantic Books 2010), p 150:

‘In 1978 Thomas Tanner at Iowa State University conducted a study of environmenatlists formative influences’. He found that “Far and away the most frequently cited influence was childhood experience of natural, rural or other relatively pristine habitats”. ‘For most of

these individuals, the natural habitats were accessible for unstructured play and discovery nearly every day when they were kids'. Studies in many countries have replicated his findings and in 2006 Nancy Wells and Kristi Lekies went beyond studying the childhood influences of environmentalists; they looked at a broad sample of urban adults, ages eighteen to ninety. The study indicated that adult concern for, and behavior related to, the environment derives directly from participating in such wild nature activities" as playing independently in the woods, hiking, fishing and hunting before the age of eleven".

(c) "children younger than 12 were willing to attribute emotional feelings to trees as well as animals, and that their interpretation of a story about a tree "seems to be closely associated with feelings of empathy for the tree and appears to permit them to assume its perspective"

Chalawa

[http://www.peecworks.org/peec/peec\\_reports/01795CA8-001D0211.34/jdpchawla.pdf](http://www.peecworks.org/peec/peec_reports/01795CA8-001D0211.34/jdpchawla.pdf)