



THE PERSONAL VALUE OF SHOOTING

The social, physical and personal wellbeing contribution of shooting in the UK

“How we spend our time and how we feel about it contributes to national wellbeing because it shapes our lifestyles, our relationships with others, our health and our collective individual wellbeing.”

— Office for National Statistics
Life in the UK report (March 2015)



“We’ll start measuring our progress as a country; not just by how our economy is growing, but by how our lives are improving; not just by our standard of living, but by our quality of life... [*The National Wellbeing Programme*] will help bring about a re-appraisal of what matters, and in time, it will lead to government policy that is more focused, not just on the bottom line, but on all those things that make life worthwhile.”

— The Prime Minister launching *The National Wellbeing Programme* in 2010

“Shooting is about far more than simply pulling a trigger - this is the tip of the iceberg. Leading up to this point is an interrelated mix of wellbeing benefits. It involves learning and developing skills and applying them.

“It involves working together with others towards a shared goal; putting physical effort into conservation and land management and enjoying the wildlife that thrives in and around the shoot.

“Shooting can be about immersing yourself in the natural environment, or the intense concentration on a target at the range or clay ground. Shooting is all-encompassing and for many it’s a way of life that delivers personal benefits far beyond the moment of firing a shot.”

— Peter Glenser, BASC Chairman, 2016

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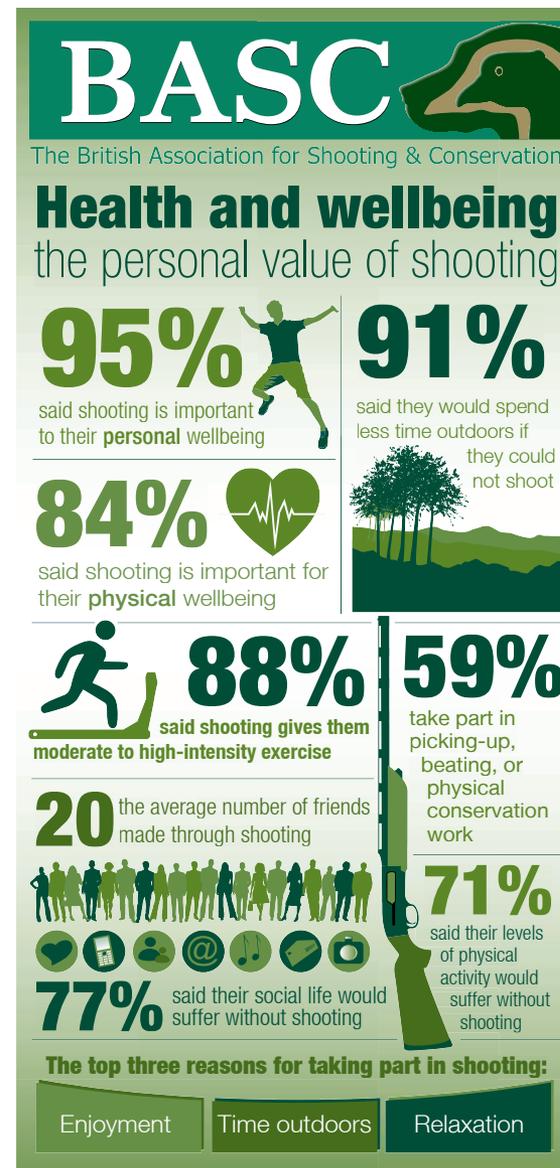
Wellbeing is used by policymakers and the Government as an indicator and measure of our quality of life. Sports and outdoor activity are increasingly being recognised as important for their contributions to our physical, personal and social wellbeing (e.g. Sport & Recreation Alliance 2016). Shooting and its associated activities such as beating, picking up or manual work, contribute to wellbeing. The results of this survey suggest that shooting is actively contributing toward Government wellbeing targets by providing personal, social and physical benefits.



KEY FINDINGS

1. Shooting makes an important contribution to health and wellbeing among people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities.
2. Shooting can help to get more adults active through sport and physical activity, reduce social isolation and promote personal wellbeing whilst encouraging people to engage with the natural environment.
3. Allowing for variations according to discipline, shooting and its associated activities are moderate to high intensity physical activities.

RESULTS AT A GLANCE



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“It’s a traditional pastime which is all-inclusive. Many see it as a sport for the rich. Nothing could be further from the truth.”

- Survey respondent, aged 64

ABOUT THE SURVEY

This survey investigated the extent to which people receive wellbeing benefits from taking part in shooting and shooting related activity. We surveyed a random selection of BASC members and non-members. This approach helped build a more representative picture of the shooting community. We adapted the well-known ‘Dillman method’ of surveying, and took several measures to reduce survey bias.

Surveys were run online in March 2015 and 1,457 people responded (84 per cent were BASC members and 16 per cent were non-members). Demographic analyses revealed that the sample of members was, demographically speaking, broadly representative of the BASC membership. Respondents were given equal opportunity to answer survey questions either positively or negatively, and care was taken to design non-leading questions.

Where percentages are presented in this report, it should be noted that these often relate to percentages of people who answered each question in the survey rather than the entire survey sample. However, most of the results in this report relate to questions answered by over 1,000 people. The quotes appearing throughout this report are from survey respondents, describing in their own words what shooting means to them.

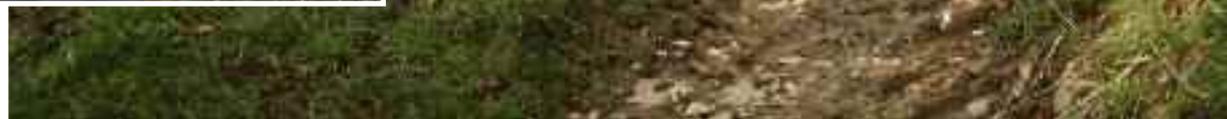


“To me, shooting relies largely upon intuitive abilities, as distinct from conscious skills or techniques. The interaction I enjoy with people in this sphere, and with nature itself, makes shooting an absolutely essential cornerstone of my social life. The things I have learned to do, through shooting, have broadened my outlook on life, bringing balance to my view of the world as someone who spends a good deal of their time in an urban environment. My sense of self-worth has grown as my capabilities have and I have often noticed, that people with no insight into shooting are wholly impressed by the breadth of the endeavour, once they have the time to gain an insight into this very special world. The odd thing is, so many people are touched by shooting and the attendant conservation practices it demands, and yet they have no idea about the workings of the sport and the framework in which it is couched.”

— Survey respondent, aged 23

SHOOTING IMPROVES PERSONAL WELLBEING

Shooting activity produces significant economic and environmental benefits which improve people's wellbeing in a national context: by providing jobs for people, strengthening local economies, and nurturing a rich landscape for everyone to enjoy (*The Value of Shooting* 2014). But the personal wellbeing benefits generated by shooting stretch even further – from helping people develop skills, to improving their happiness and enjoyment of life, to raising their self-esteem and much more. It is perhaps unsurprising then, that the overwhelming majority (95 per cent) of respondents said shooting was important to their personal wellbeing, with 68 per cent deeming it very important. Over half (57 per cent) of respondents said the feeling of wellbeing shooting gave them was a reason for taking part.





“For me it is a multi-faceted experience with physical, intellectual and social elements which contribute enormously to my health and sense of wellbeing.”

— Survey respondent, aged 58

The top five areas people said would be negatively affected if they could no longer take part in shooting were:

- Enjoyment of life **86%**
- Engagement with the natural environment **84%**
- Happiness **78%**
- Opportunity for relaxation **77%**
- Engagement in sport **72%**

Reasons for taking part in shooting were wide-ranging. They included ‘the fieldcraft’ (56%), ‘to improve skills’ (61%) and ‘for the challenge’ (72%).

The top three reasons for taking part were:

- Enjoyment **94%**
- Spending time outdoors and in nature **88%**
- Relaxation **80%**

“The freedom and relaxation that comes through being involved in nature, and the food provided by careful and selective shooting.”

- Survey respondent, aged 64

ENCOURAGING ENGAGEMENT WITH THE ENVIRONMENT

The benefits of connecting with the great outdoors are well documented, and shooting is an important driver of people's engagement with the natural environment. If shooting were no longer possible, a huge 91 per cent of respondents said they would spend less time outdoors and in nature, and 75 per cent would spend less time on conservation work. Overall, 84 per cent said their engagement with the natural environment would suffer if they could no longer be involved in shooting.

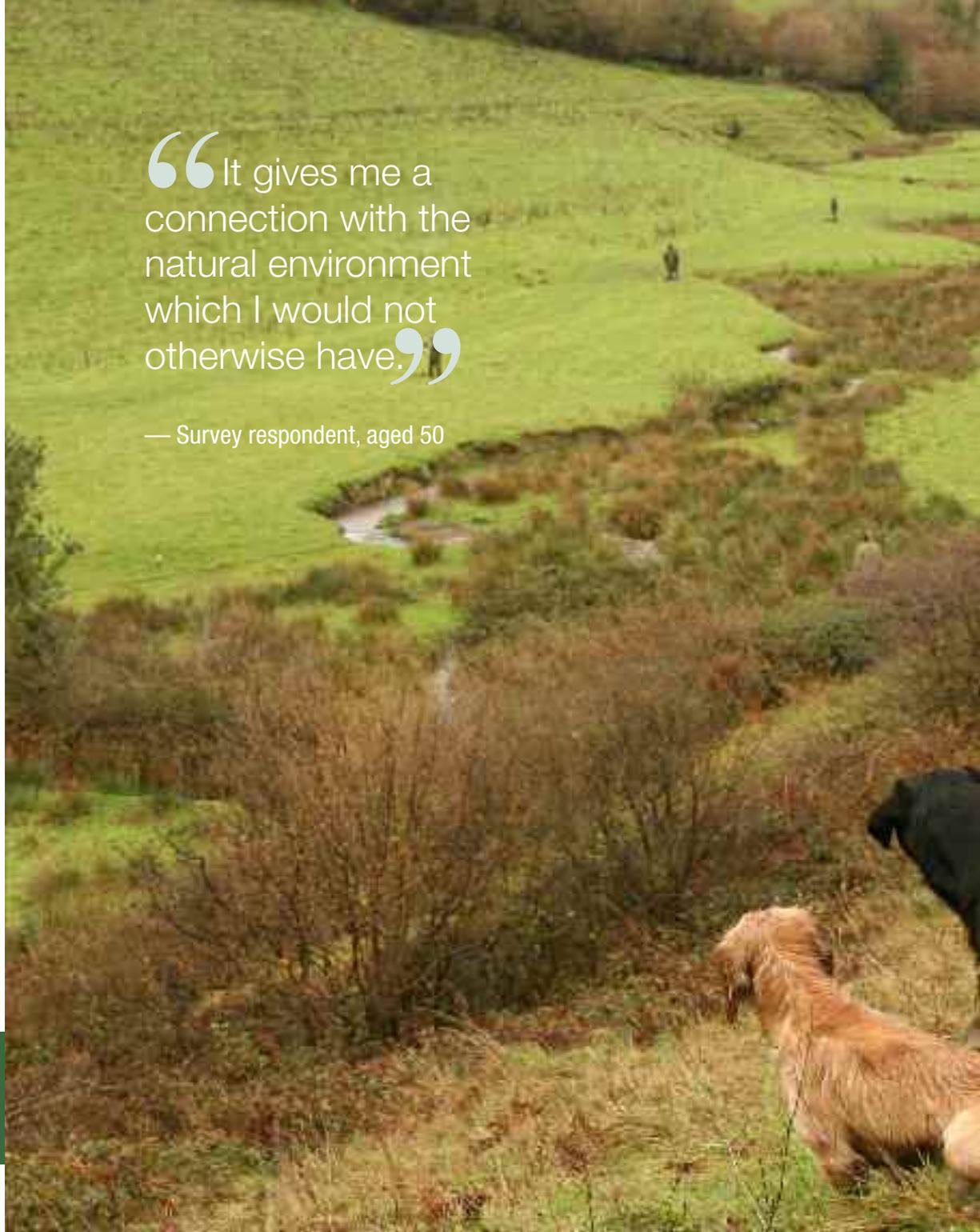
Shooting is a form of 'ecotherapy', which is defined as an activity which improves mental and physical health and wellbeing by supporting people to be active outdoors. Outdoor activity has been shown to help support mental wellbeing (e.g. Natural England 2016; 2016a), and can deliver economic benefits for people, communities and the wider economy, while reducing demand for medication and health and social care services (Mind 2013).

“It gives me a connection with the natural environment which I would not otherwise have.”

— Survey respondent, aged 50

75%

said they would spend less time on conservation work were they not involved in shooting





“Shooting is connection with seasons and land, with animals and nature, and the natural cycle of predated and predator; eating what I shoot, creating a better ecosystem as a result, and connecting with ancient skills, field and bushcraft, while being active and engaged.”

— Survey respondent, aged 42

“It’s a way to get back to nature. I enjoy knowing I’ve sourced my own food in a quick and humane way and nothing is wasted. I also enjoy the conservation side and helping local farmers out with pest control – it makes me feel I’m helping the local community.”

— Survey respondent, aged 26

“Shooting plays a vital role in the balance of the British ecosystem - from the management of waterways and woodland to coastal and moorland environments. It is with pride that I play my part, however small that may be; knowing that we, the shooting community, are keeping everyone’s bit of Great Britain great, for now and for our future generations.”

— Survey respondent, aged 33



91%

said they would spend less time outdoors and in nature if they were not involved in shooting



“It gives me a sense of physical and mental wellbeing. It’s my release from the daily grind and to see the conservation benefits to all wildlife from habitat management is immensely rewarding. It also gives an opportunity to put back into the countryside as a thank you for all the enjoyment I take from it.”

- Survey respondent, aged 42

“Shooting has permeated my very being. It defines my life. If I were to stop shooting my sense of belonging would disappear along with an entire social group. My physical and mental health would suffer. Yes, my bank account might grow, but at an unacceptable cost.”

- Survey respondent, aged 45

“My year would be monotony without the expectation, preparation, and exhilaration of the shooting seasons.”

- Survey respondent, aged 36

“Shooting has made me the man I am today. It taught me how to be a responsible and safe member of society. It provided me with underpinning knowledge which has allowed me to fulfil a successful career in the countryside. It has taught me more about nature than any wildlife documentary could.”

- Survey respondent, aged 33

“There is no other personal activity I take part in that provides such a complete sense of existential validation.”

- Survey respondent, aged 38

“Shooting helps me escape from life’s worries. I enjoy it every time I go out shooting.”

- Survey respondent, aged 30

“Shooting is the main reason I feel part of the community.”

- Survey respondent, aged 52

“I, as with many of my friends, live for shooting and the countryside.”

- Survey respondent, aged 23

AN ACTIVITY WITH MEANING FOR PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES

In many cases, shooting is the glue that holds communities and people together. The benefits shooting produces for local communities and businesses (in addition to the national economy) were clearly highlighted by PACEC (2014). Shooting provides a real cultural and local business benefit and in some cases, even helps to reduce rural depopulation (e.g. BASC 2015).

Just over half of people surveyed (52 per cent) said one of their reasons for taking part in shooting was for food. A large proportion (70 per cent) said they took part to control pests and predators. Pest and predator control is an important service provided by shooters, which in itself helps to maintain the security of our food chain and supports farmers.

“It’s an essential element in maintaining physical and mental wellbeing, high quality of life and equilibrium in the work/life balance.”

— Survey respondent, aged 56

84%

said shooting benefited their local economy and business



76%

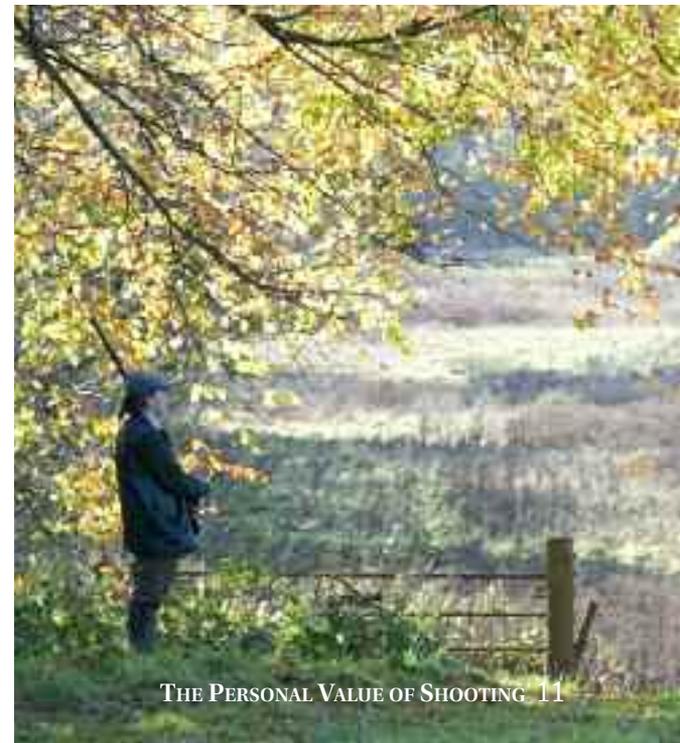
said shooting activity was of benefit to local people

“There is no other personal activity I take part in that provides such a complete sense of existential validation.”

— Survey respondent, aged 38

89%

said shooting activity benefited their local environment





“The camaraderie and the solitude, the different disciplines of shooting offer. The broad spectrum of participants from all walks of life interacting with a common interest.”
— Survey respondent, aged 48

20

The average number of friends made through involvement in shooting activity

A SOCIABLE ACTIVITY THAT CREATES FRIENDSHIPS...

The Office for National Statistics' *Life in the UK* report (ONS 2015) notes that having good social relationships is even more important to wellbeing than the influence of physical activity. Social activity is particularly important in isolated rural communities.

Shooting makes it easy to meet people from all walks of life, and spending time with like-minded people – through shooting, work days or social events – helps foster lifelong friendships. The vast majority of people surveyed (97 per cent) regularly mixed with at least one person due to their shooting activity. The average number of people mixed with as a result of shooting was 23. On average 10 of these were non-shooters, beaters for example. The average number of friends made purely through involvement in shooting activity was 20.

Shooting activity fosters close knit, supportive communities with a focus on collaboration and teamwork. Just over half of those surveyed (52 per cent) said that supporting others was one of the reasons they took part. Results indicated that shooting involvement confers a positive social benefit across all age groups.

Without shooting:

- **68%** said meeting new people would be harder
- **63%** said making new friends would be harder
- **62%** said maintaining friendships would be harder
- **77%** said their social life in general would be poorer

“On one hand, it’s the comradeship and team spirit among the shooting fraternity. On the other hand, it’s the quiet solitary calm while out alone, taking in your surroundings with nature, even if you leave your rifle in its slip and just sit, watch and listen.”

— Survey respondent, aged 64

...BUT ALSO HELPS PEOPLE ‘GET AWAY FROM IT ALL’ AND RELAX

Of those surveyed, 65 per cent said the social side of shooting, and 33 per cent said spending time alone were reasons for taking part. But 264 people chose both options, meaning they enjoyed both the social and solitary nature of shooting.

The average number of people mixed with through shooting varied according to people’s main shooting activity. Those who primarily shot driven game, beaters and pickers up mixed with 30 or more people on a regular basis through shooting. People whose primary shooting activity was airgun shooting or pest control regularly mixed with fewer people on average (7-8).

“Shooting provides me with the opportunity to be in peace in a world increasingly dominated by technology.”

— Survey respondent, aged 43



“I wouldn’t be able to deal with living a professional life with lots of daily stress without knowing I will be able to go shooting at the weekend to relax, exercise, socialise, develop skills and just break away from the run of the mill everyday stresses.”

— Survey respondent, aged 40

HEALTH AND FITNESS BENEFITS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

Active pursuits boost wellbeing (ONS 2015). Shooting offers health and fitness benefits throughout the year – some shooting activities are seasonal; others occur year-round. A shooter might take part in both seasonal (e.g. game) and non-seasonal (e.g. target) activities in a typical year. On average, people said they took part in four different shooting types.

Health and fitness benefits are not simply confined to the activity of shooting itself. Activities associated with shooting, such as beating, picking up or manual work (e.g. habitat management and site maintenance) are also important sources of physical activity. Overall, 77 per cent of non-shooters and 59 per cent of shooters surveyed took part in such shooting-related physical activity. In cases where people's main shooting activity is less physically demanding than other types, taking part in additional shooting-related physical activity can maximise health and fitness benefits. In fact, 54 per cent of those whose main shooting activity was 'less active' (target/rifle shooting, clay shooting or driven game shooting) also took part in beating, picking up or shooting-related manual work. Overall, 80 per cent of shooters surveyed were likely to be undertaking physical activity either for, or related to shooting.

Without shooting:

- **71%** said their physical activity level would decrease
- **72%** said their engagement in sport would decrease

A photograph of a man in his 60s, wearing a dark hat, a green jacket, and green trousers, walking a golden retriever in a grassy field. He is smiling and holding a pheasant in his left hand. The background shows a line of trees and a clear sky.

“My GP tells me I am fitter and healthier than most men half my age and I attribute a great deal of this to my rural activities and shooting. I have other hobbies, but would give them all up before giving up shooting. I coach and load, and do all I can to encourage others to join this King of Sports.”

— Survey respondent, aged 66

88% of respondents (shooters and non-shooters) said one or more of their shooting-related activities was moderate to high intensity

Two measures were used to explore the physical intensity of shooting and its associated activities. One was asking people whether they felt each activity was low, moderate or high intensity. The other was the presence of physical indicators. This involved asking people whether they usually experienced a raised breathing rate (indicates moderate intensity), being out of breath or sweating (indicates high intensity), or neither of these (low intensity) while participating in each activity. This method was based on previous research into the physical intensity of sport, including Sport England’s Active People Survey which is used by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) in their National Wellbeing Programme. Over 1,200 people answered each of the questions on intensity. Both the self-reported intensity and

the physical indicators showed that overall, shooting and its associated activities were moderate to high physical intensity. The majority (88 per cent), said one or more of their shooting-related activities was moderate to high intensity. In contrast, in the Active People Survey technical report (TNS BMRB 2013), shooting is currently listed as a ‘light intensity only’ sport.

We asked respondents to estimate their ‘active days’ due to shooting: how many days a year they were physically active for at least 30 minutes due to shooting-related activity. The overwhelming majority (94 per cent) reported active days due to shooting activity. Furthermore, 85 per cent reported active days due to shooting and reported that one or more of their shooting activities were moderate to high intensity.



80% of shooters surveyed were taking part in physical activity related to shooting

“It’s the item most important in keeping me healthy, active, independent, and away from the doctor.”

— Survey respondent, aged 73

“Shooting is very important to me to maintain my physical fitness – I’m 68 years old. Also, I love to see nature in the raw at all times of year – just to stop and watch can make my heart beat faster. I don’t have to shoot something to feel I have achieved my goal.”

— Survey respondent, aged 68

Activity	Intensity measure	Low	Moderate or high
Shooting	Self-report	27%	73%
	Physical indicator	39%	62%
Beating / picking up	Self-report	5%	96%
	Physical indicator	11%	88%
Shooting-related manual work	Self-report	8%	92%
	Physical indicator	15%	86%

Figures are rounded and may not add up to exactly 100%

AN ACCESSIBLE, INCLUSIVE SPORT FOR ALL

Shooting is not only a sport for those who live in rural areas. In fact, shooting has no clear cut urban-rural divide. This can be illustrated by taking a look at a distribution map of BASC's membership of more than 145,000. Shooting is also a sport for all ages. The sport can deliver particular benefits to particular age groups, such as helping young people develop their character, skills and learn about responsibility, while helping older people engage with others and stay active and healthy in mind and body.

Shooting is a versatile activity. It can be moulded to fit people's needs and circumstances. It is accessible. The Disabled Shooting Project say: "Target shooting is the most accessible, inclusive and integrated of all mainstream sports."

The Scouts say: "Shooting allows those who are less physically able to participate and gain the self-esteem from competing on equal terms with physically able young people."



"It's a traditional pastime which is all-inclusive. Many see it as a sport for the rich. Nothing could be further from the truth."

— Survey respondent, aged 64

"Shooting is a great leveller – men and women can shoot alongside each other on an equal basis while having a fun, enjoyable and sociable day out."

— Survey respondent, aged 53

“I am partially disabled and due to my injuries I have had to give up contact sports. As a former serviceman, who was used to being very active, I find the physical exercise I can get while shooting still enables me to remain active and more importantly, try to carry on ‘normally’.”

— Survey respondent, aged 48

“In my experience the shooting community is diverse and inclusive regardless of gender, race, age or disability and I am proud to belong to that community.”

— Survey respondent, aged 54

“It focuses the mind utterly on the present and sharpens the senses, thus enhancing life and sense of wellbeing. For me it is also a link to the past (tradition) and future (I can always feed myself if needed). It is part of my sense of identity and something I am proud of, particularly as a middle aged woman.”

— Survey respondent, aged 49

“It is a sport, whether live quarry or not, that can be participated in when age and other factors prevent participation in the more headline sports. While a degree of skill is needed, the variation between the best and the worst does not make a difference. Above all, it enables like-minded people to come together.”

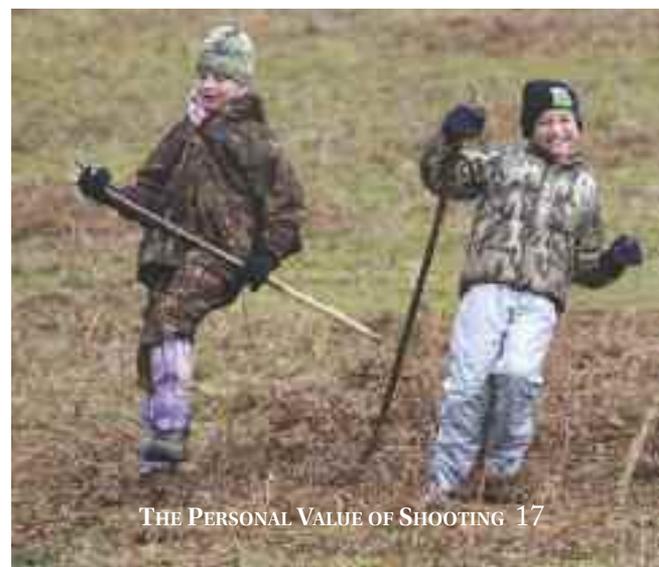
— Survey respondent, aged 64

“The challenge to improve never stops. But the ability to shoot is not limited by age, gender, social background or disability. This makes the sport accessible to all and that is what I value most.”

— Survey respondent, aged 49

“We wouldn’t be a family without shooting.”

— Survey respondent, aged 17



Conclusions

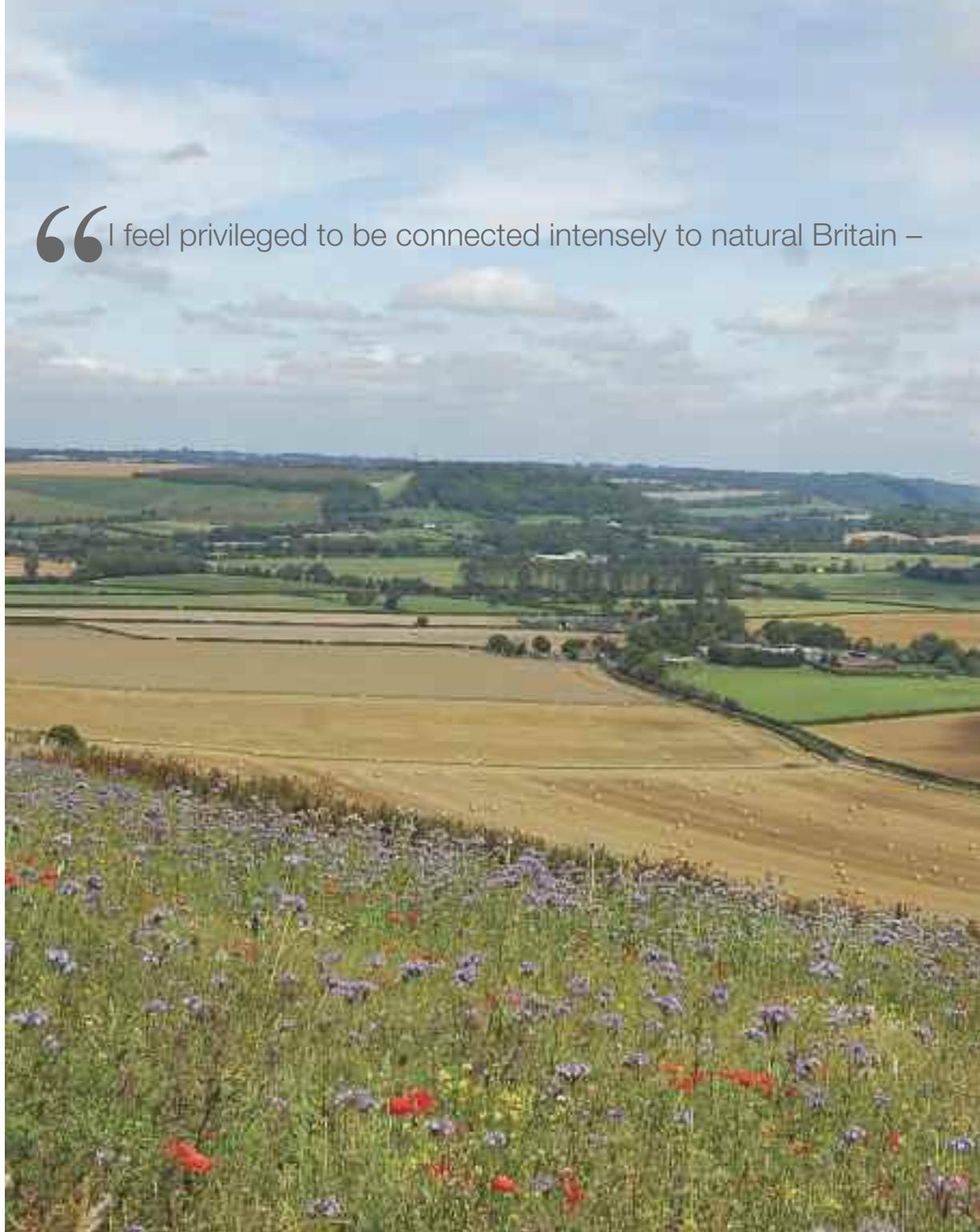
How people spend their time and how they feel about it contributes to national wellbeing by shaping lifestyles, relationships, health and collective individual wellbeing (ONS 2015).

Shooting, and activities associated with shooting, are clearly vastly important to people's wellbeing. This is evident in both the responses to the survey and the comments people made about what shooting means to them. From encouraging people to engage with the environment, to offering them a unique outlet for relaxation and escape from the stresses of daily life; from keeping people's minds active through learning and developing new skills, to keeping them physically active and exercising regularly; from improving happiness to supporting family and community cohesion - all these aspects of shooting involvement actively contribute to the wellbeing of people from all ages and backgrounds.

Our Government (HM Government 2011) recognised the five ways to wellbeing are connecting with others, being active, being curious of the world around us, continuing to learn, and giving something back - through volunteering or joining a group, for example. Shooting is unmistakably well placed to deliver wellbeing benefits in each and every one of these areas. It can help get more adults - both shooters and non-shooters - active through sport and physical activity, reduce social isolation and promote personal wellbeing. Shooting provides important and influential personal, social and physical wellbeing benefits.

BASC works to ensure that policymakers are aware of the economic, environmental and personal benefits shooting delivers, including raising awareness of the enormity of unintended consequences unnecessary restrictions would cause for people throughout the UK.

“I feel privileged to be connected intensely to natural Britain –





a Britain most never see. ”

”

“ I am up in my wood before dawn – it's ever so quiet. The air is clean, the walk up wakes me up. I get to sit in this quiet totally still for hours sometimes. I have had such great experiences; owls landing on the branch right beside me and not noticing me. Birds of prey swooping to take rabbits right in front of me. Seeing stone curlew, crossbill, firecrest, every bird you can imagine. Most recently, a magnificent roebuck wandering innocently under my seat. When I spot my deer I know I have to be on the ball, to judge sex and species, to have patience to take the right shot and a safe shot. I always kill the animal cleanly and humanely. I do not shoot if I can't. I gralloch the animal myself. The meat goes to my family and my friends. I know the meat is organic, humanely sourced and 'fair trade'. I feel privileged to be connected intensely to natural Britain – a Britain most never see. I know the seasons and the weather and the flora and fauna well, and feel proud that I have the skills to hunt for myself. I feel connected to the landowner and the people who live on his land; to my friend the gamekeeper. I feel that I help the viability of the land as a commercial endeavour by shooting vermin, rabbit, foxes, and woodpigeon, and helping the vibrant community that depend on pest and predator control to carry on. When I get home after stalking or shooting I always feel more relaxed. ”

– Survey respondent, aged 40



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