

Foraging in Thurnscoe - What barriers exist and how can we remove them?

What is foraging and why is it important?

Foraging is the collection of wild plants that grow naturally, and is an ancient human practice, once needed for survival (Sardeshpande and Mabhaudhi, 2025).

Today, foraging helps develop our connection with nature and our local neighbourhood, which is beneficial for both mental and physical health.

It is also a useful tool against food insecurity and a rising cost of living. Trussell, a leading UK foodbank, report providing 2.9 million emergency food parcels in 2024 - a 51 % increase over the past five years (Trussell, 2025). Foraging could help reduce foodbank reliance.

What does other research about foraging say?

14 other relevant studies were examined in a literature review as part of the research.

These studies showed participants enjoyed spending time in nature and often learnt to forage as a child (Sharman, 2025).

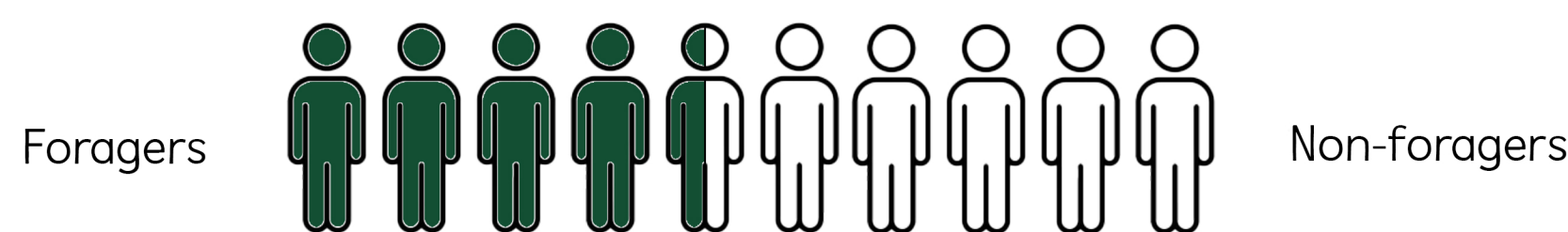
Studies in the western part of the world showed a trend of majority female foragers (Landir-Yagamata et al., 2018).

The barriers established in these studies were primarily a lack of knowledge and safety concerns (Poe et al., 2013, Synk et al., 2017).

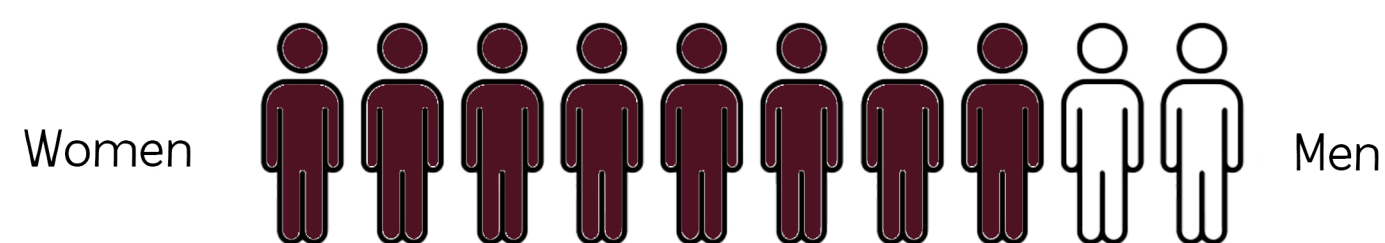
What did we learn about foraging in Thurnscoe?

This study surveyed 109 people living in the Thurnscoe area, by way of a Google survey, posted on social media, and sent out by the Dearne Community Engagement Team. It was also posted online in a local foraging group.

Of those surveyed, 45% were already foragers.



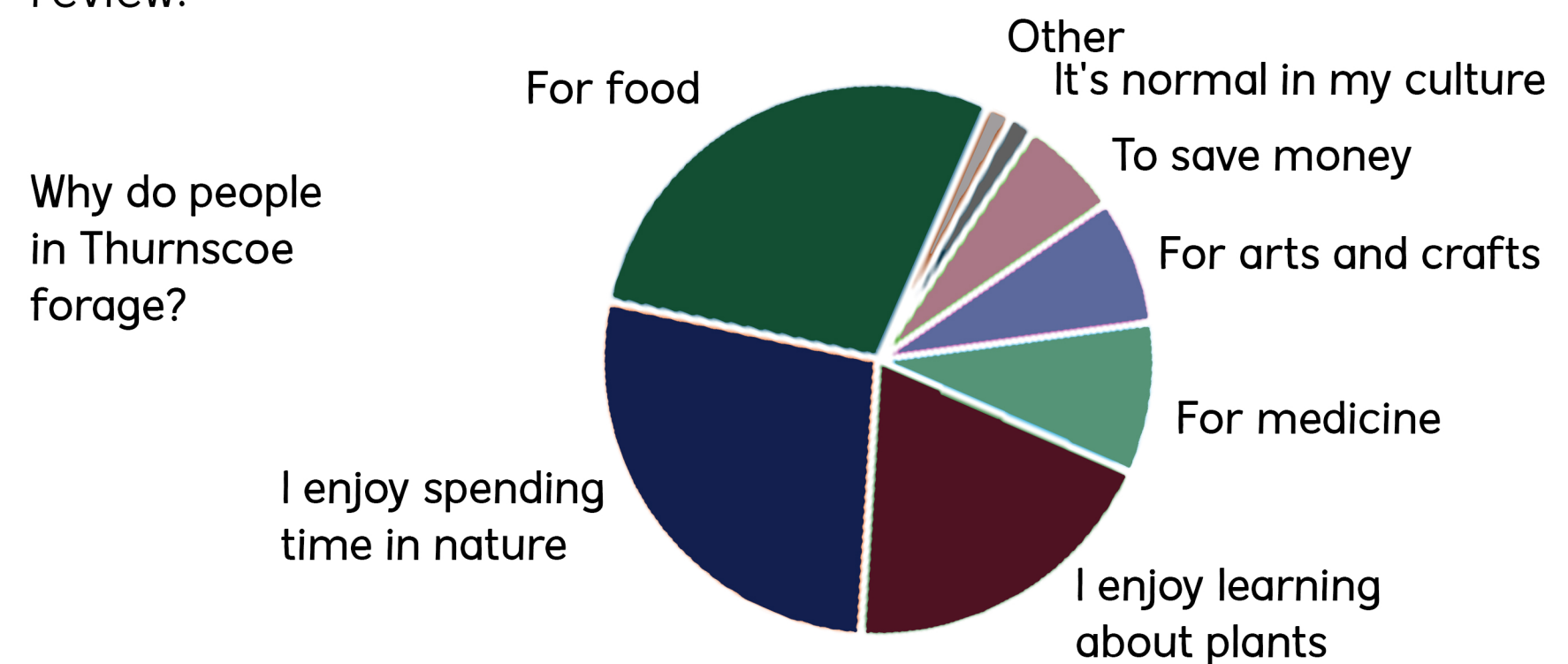
Across foragers, we saw a high gender divide - 80% of our foragers are women. This is consistent with the literature review.



Most respondents in Thurnscoe learnt to forage from adults as a child - another trend in the literature review - but the internet and social media play a big part too.

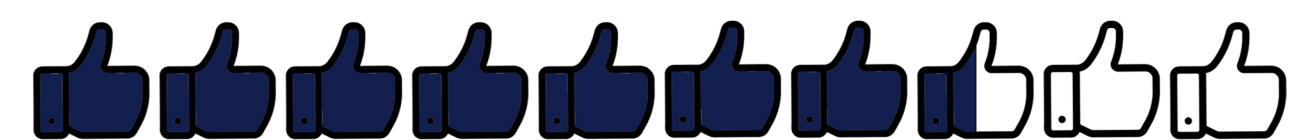
Foragers tend to do clerical / administrative jobs, or be in a position that allows them to be at home more.

Respondents in Thurnscoe forage for two main reasons: for food, and because they enjoy spending time in nature - also seen in the literature review.



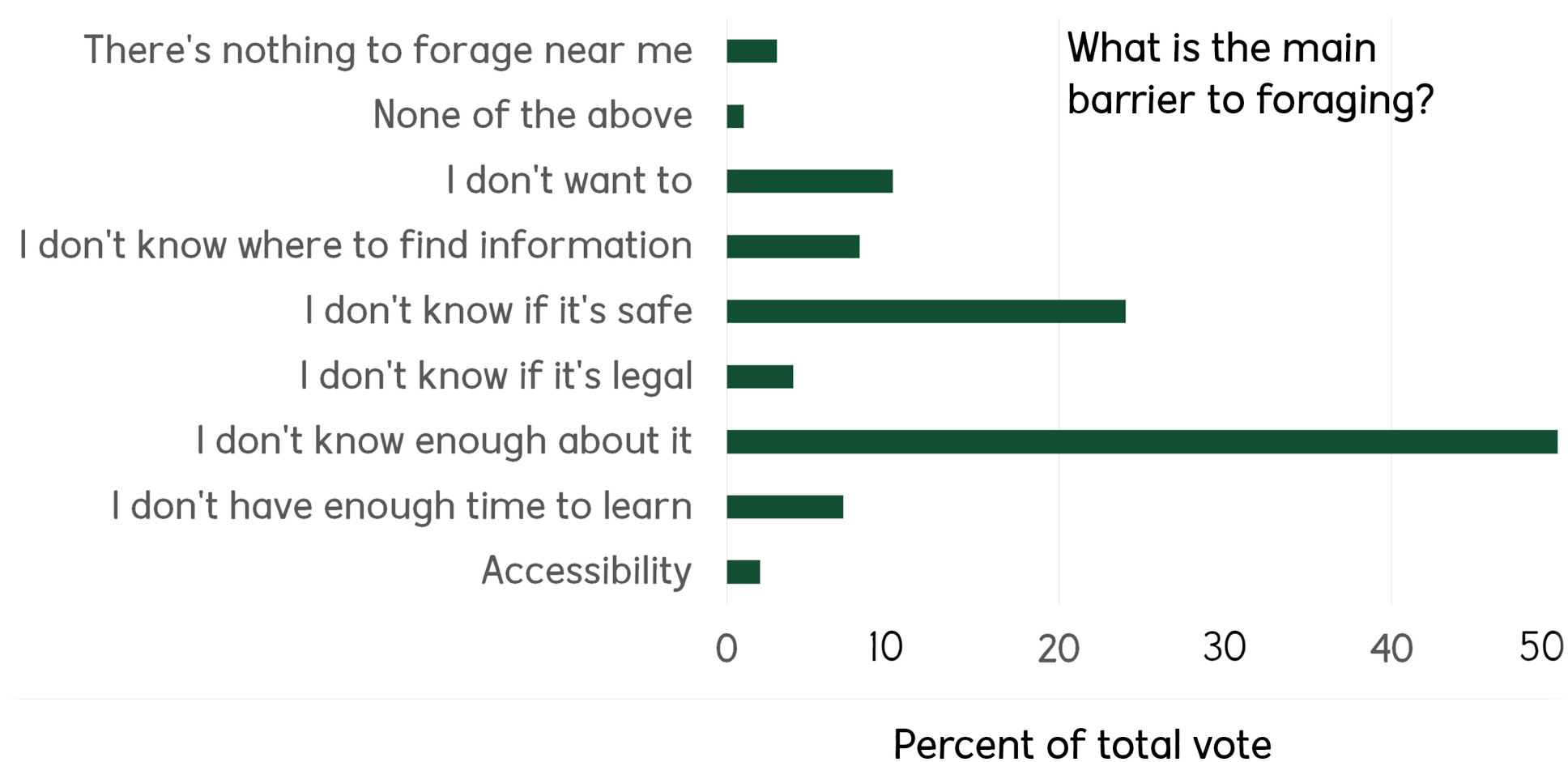
Most foragers gather a few times a year, and while they tend to prefer to stay local, they will travel 4 miles or more if needed.

Foraging was widely seen as a good thing, with an 84% favourability rating across foragers and none foragers.



What are the main barriers?

The study found the main barrier to foraging was a lack of knowledge, with 50% choosing this answer. Safety concerns came in second place, with 25% of the vote. These barriers are consistent with what was found in the literature review.

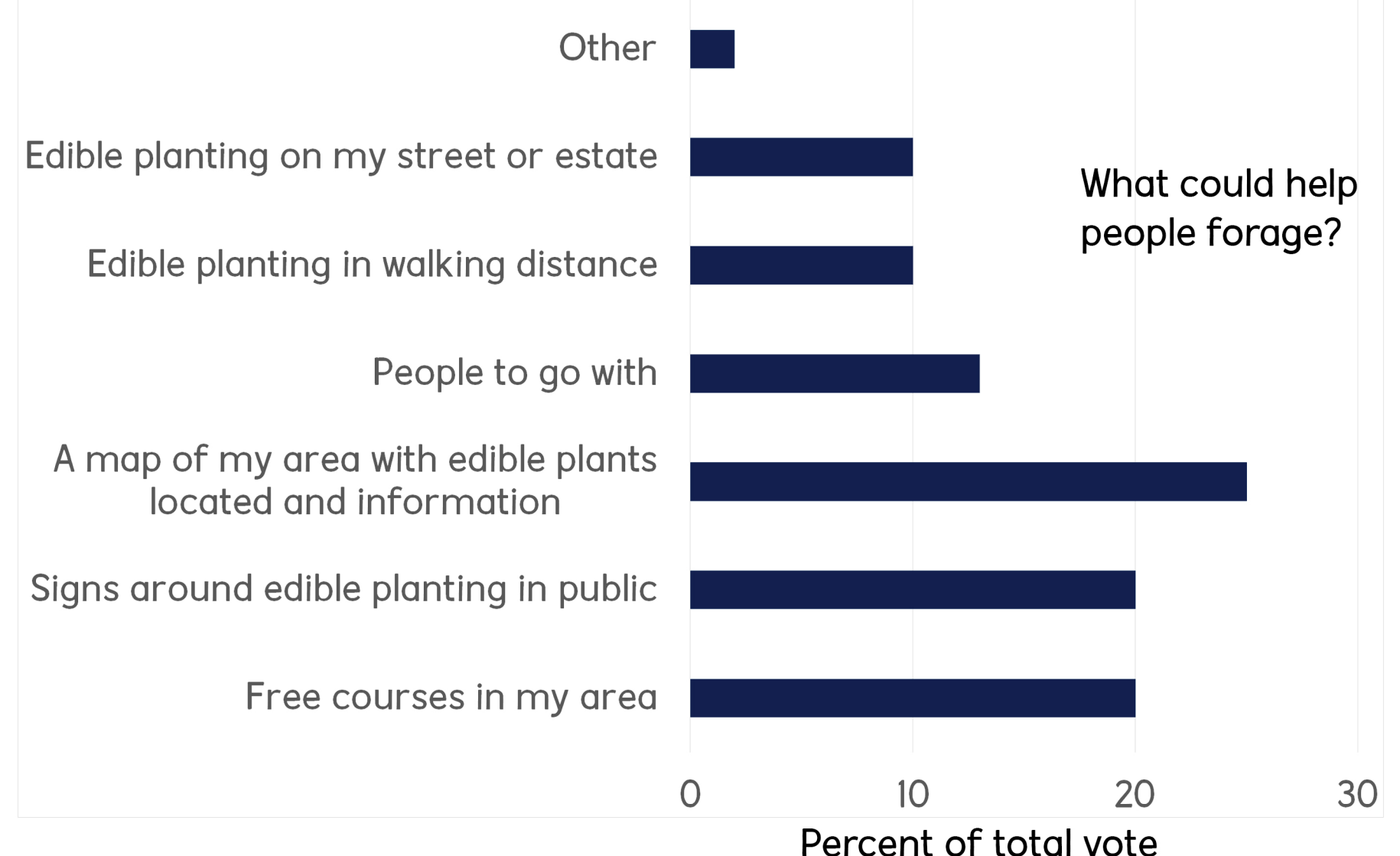


Barriers to foraging in Thurnscoe match those seen in wider research: a lack of knowledge and safety concerns. These barriers can be addressed by implementing some of the results from the "what could help people forage more?" section.

What could help people forage more?

We asked people what they thought would help. A labelled and informative map was identified as a clear winner, with 25% choosing this option.

Second place vote was split two ways, with 20% opting for free foraging courses, and another 20% identifying signs around public planting as a key tool in helping the public forage.



What's next?

With a continued rise in foodbank reliance, a rising cost of living, and an ever increasing disconnection from nature, foraging could provide a simple and effective tool for combatting food insecurity and fostering a deeper connection with nature, while also providing health benefits.

Following the results of the study, the Dearne Community Engagement Team are applying for funding to erect signage in Thurnscoe Flower Park. A comprehensive map of the area is also in development. Future research in this area could examine whether the interventions have been successful.