



Working together for the UK's hedgerows

Local hedgerow surveys 2006 - 2008

A review

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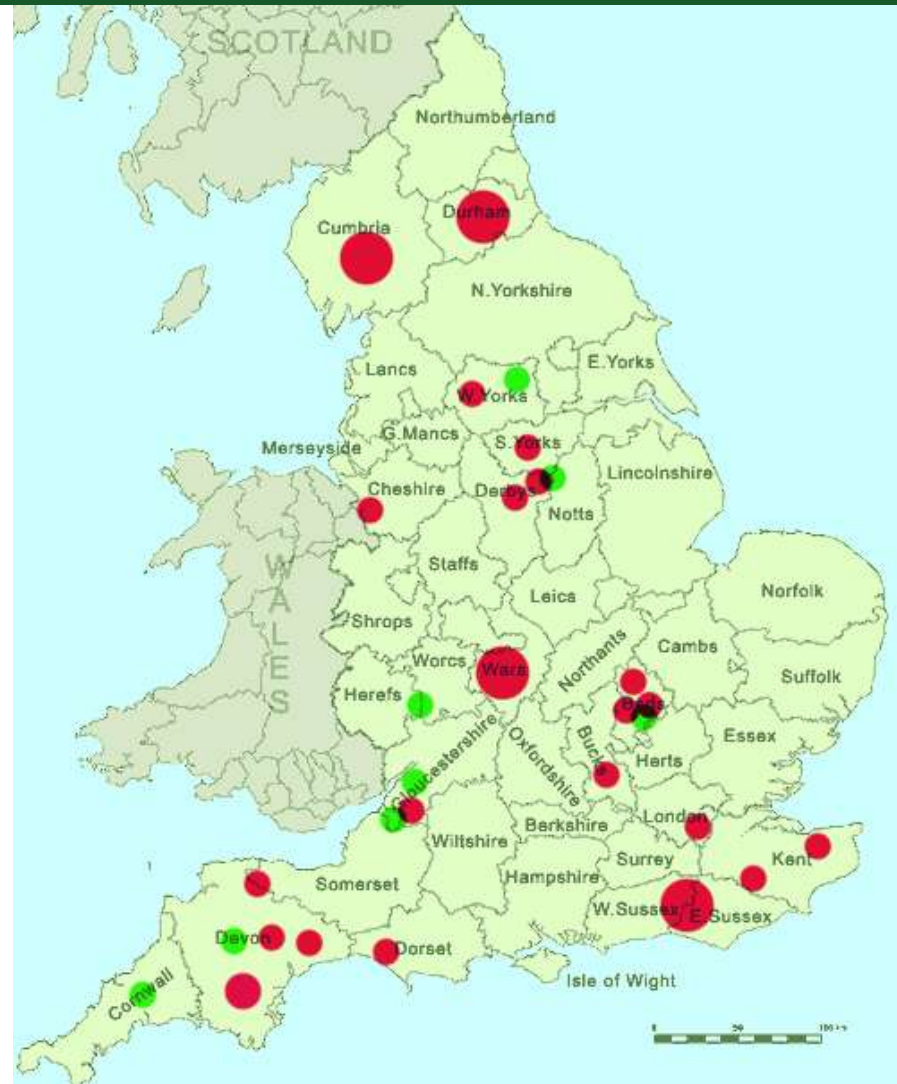
Surveys to date

- 22 surveys sponsored by Defra in England between 2006, when revised survey method became available, and 2008
- Reports available for 19 of these (Aug 09)
- A further 8 surveys sponsored in 2009

Location of surveys

2006 - 2008 surveys

2009 surveys



Survey sampling

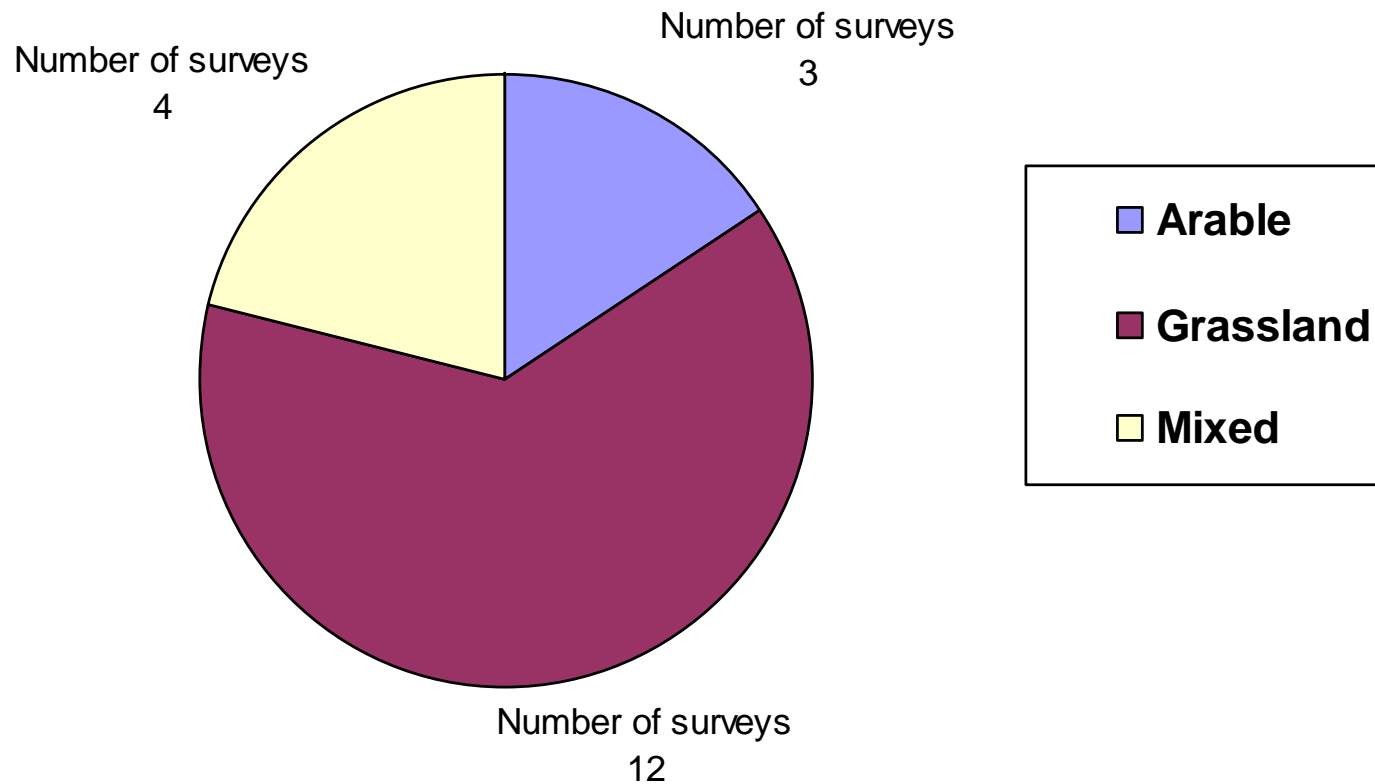
- Full census 5
- Random sampling 12
- Non-random 2

All but one surveys followed 2nd edition of Hedgerow Survey Handbook

Number and length of hedgerows surveyed

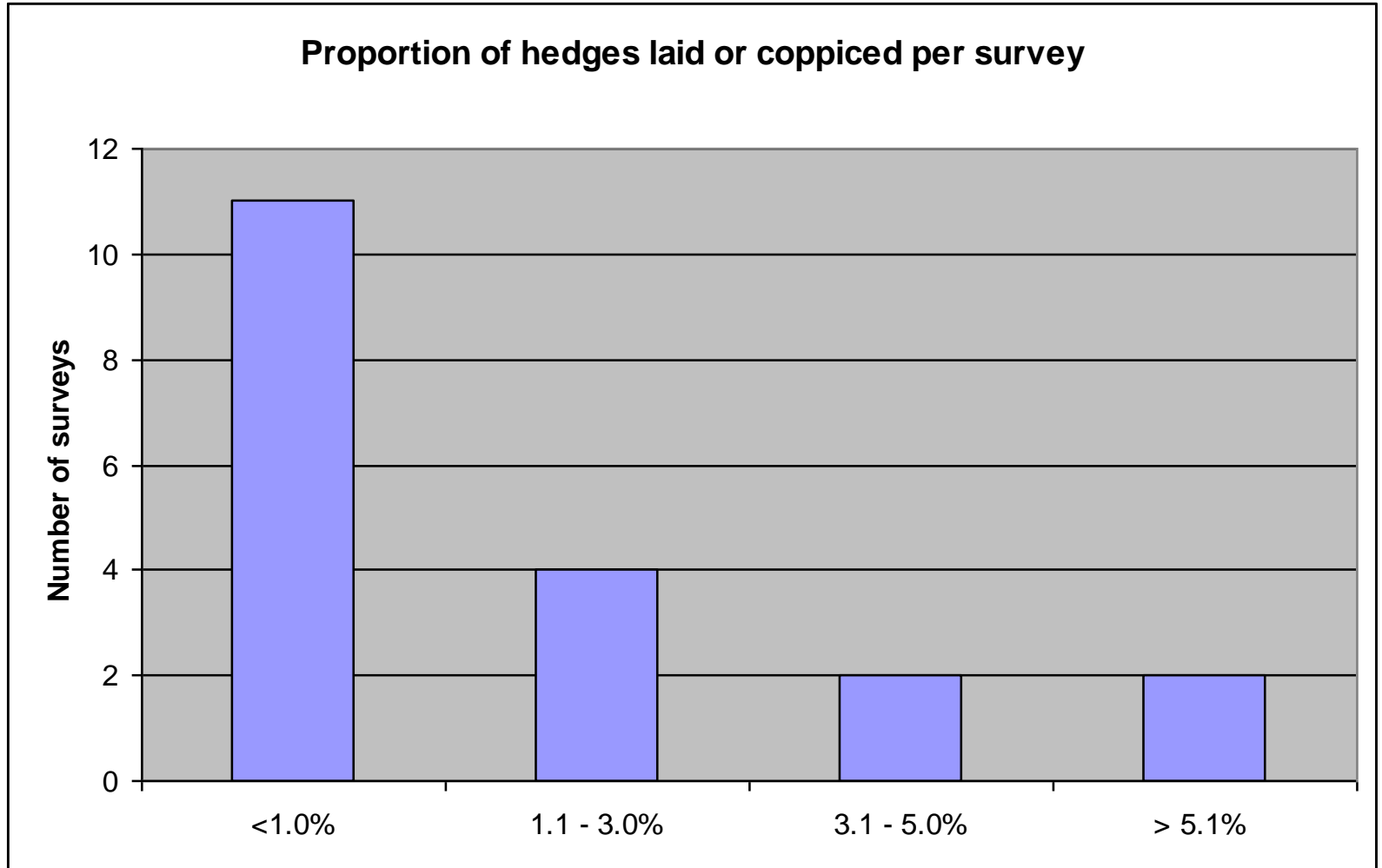
- Total number 4,023
- Total length 760km (0.14% of hedgerows in England)
- Total area sampled approx 12% of England

Most frequent land use next to surveyed hedges



Hedgerow management

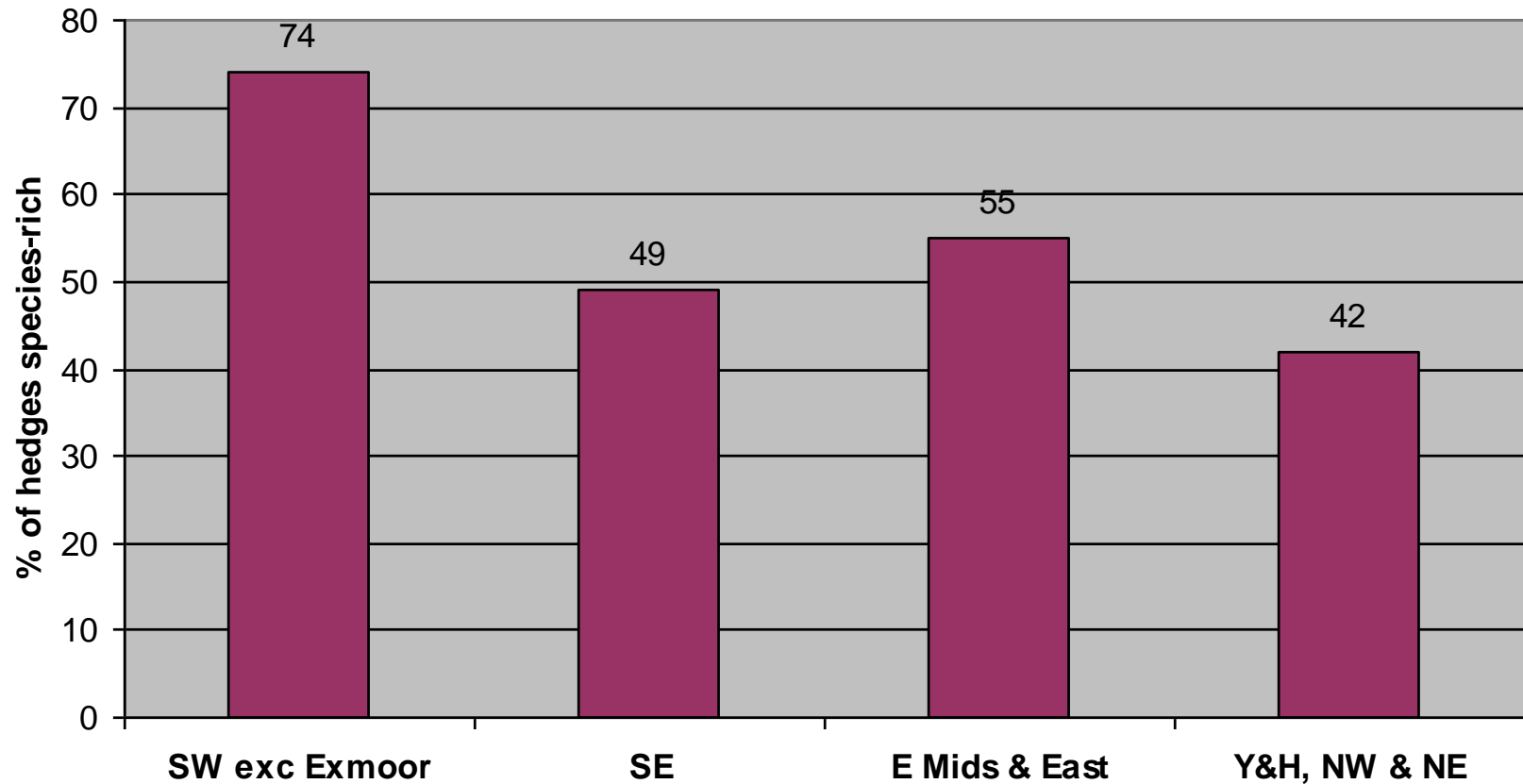
- Excluding Exmoor, the three Devon surveys (66, 78 & 80%) had the highest proportion of trimmed hedges
- The four surveys in the Chilterns and Bedfordshire (51, 51, 56 & 75%), and that in Calderdale, W Yorkshire (67%), had the highest proportion of untrimmed hedges



Hedge laying and coppicing

- 5% need to be rejuvenated every 2 years to maintain condition, assuming 40 year cycle.
- But just 1.8% of hedgerows laid or coppiced in last 2-3 years, on average per survey
- In 5 surveys no recent laying or coppicing at all.
- Highest rates of laying and coppicing were in ESAs - Exmoor and East Devon (7% each).

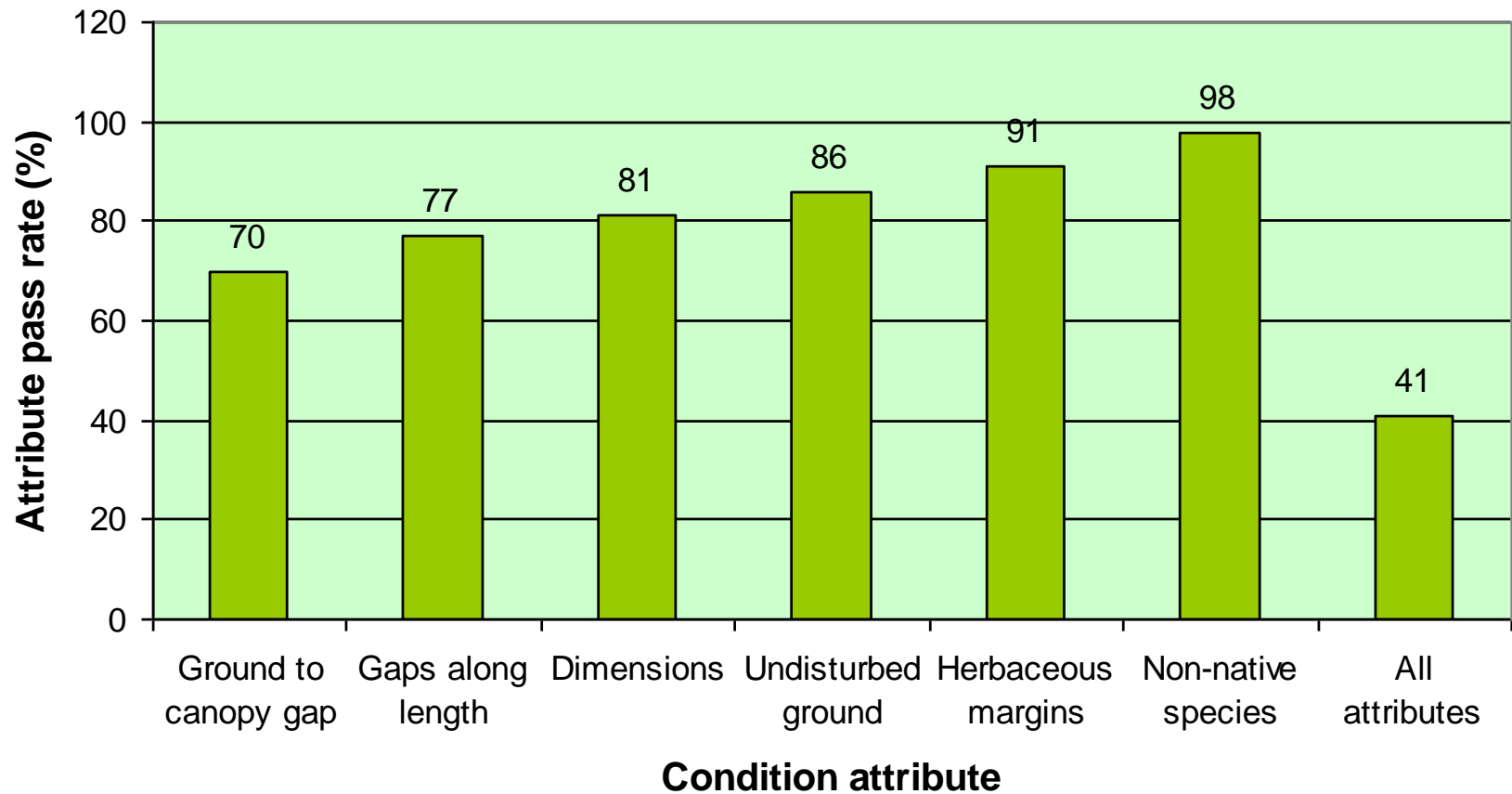
Average proportion of hedges which were species-rich per survey by regions (4-5 surveys per regional group)



Species-richness

- South West has highest proportion of species-rich hedges, but Exmoor only 15%
- Northern surveys had fewer species-rich hedges, but Rotherham has 61%

Average condition pass rates across surveys



Reasons for poor condition

1. Excessive gap between ground and canopy - 30% fail rate
2. Too many gaps along length - 23% fail rate
3. Too short or thin -19% fail rate
4. Less important reasons
 - a. Too little undisturbed ground -14%
 - b. Too narrow herbaceous margins - 9%

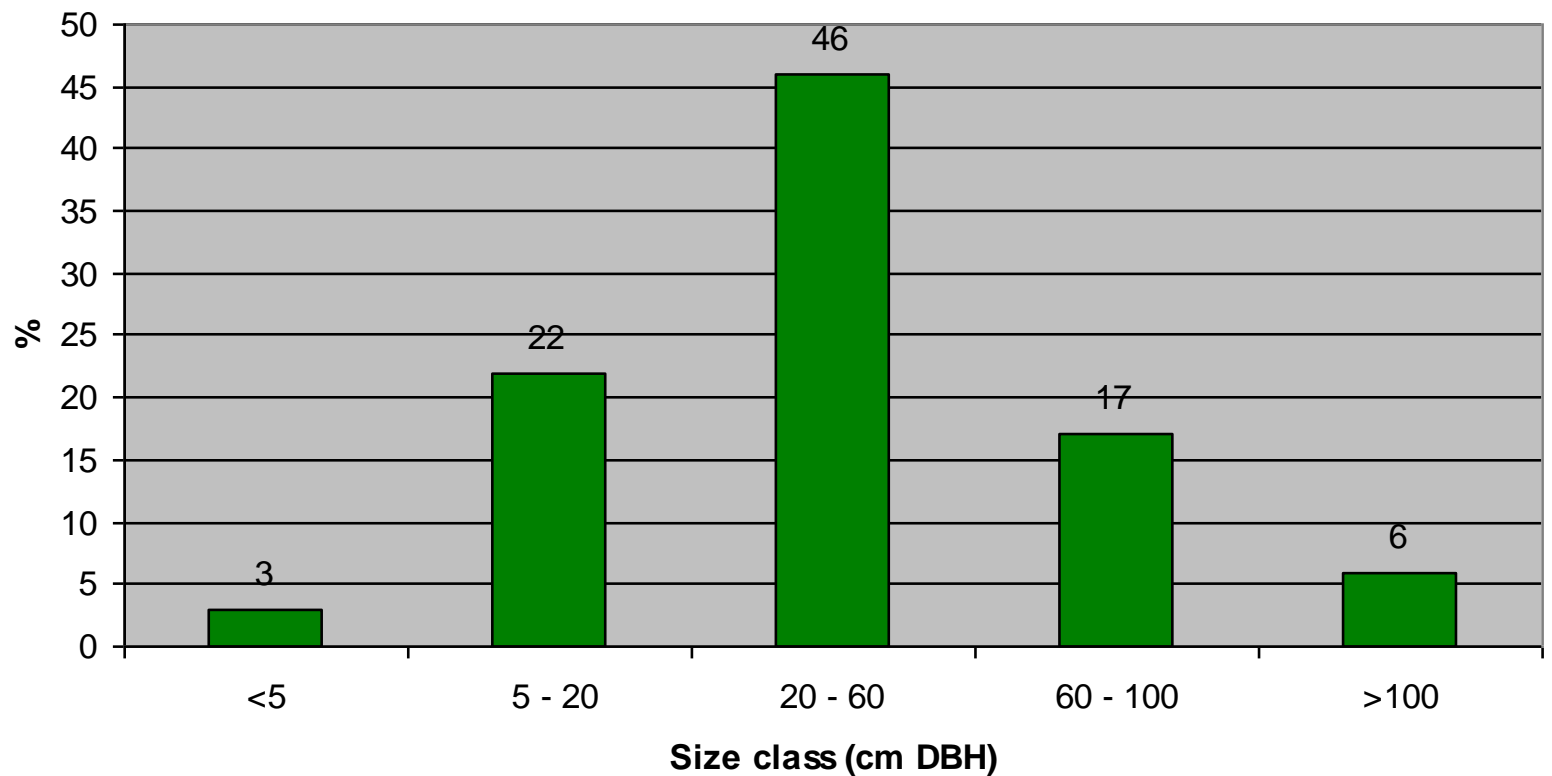
Overall hedgerow condition

- 41% of hedgerows on average in favourable condition for all attributes, ignoring nutrient enrichment
- In only 5 surveys were more than half of hedges in favourable condition: Chesterfield, Chilterns, Canterbury and two in Devon
- In Maulden (Bedfordshire) and Durham, just 17% of hedges passed
- 3 surveys in arable landscapes did well, 3 in areas of mixed farming poorly

Nutrient enrichment

- 38% of hedges failed because of excessive nettles, cleavers or docks
- Nutrient enrichment maybe single biggest cause of failure
- Problem more acute in grassland (39% failure) and mixed farming (43%) landscapes than in arable ones (31%)?

**Average proportion of hedgerow trees by size class across surveys
(total number of trees 7,506)**



Hedgerow tree recruitment

- 45+% of trees should be less than 20cm diameter for stable population.
- Countryside Survey - only 19% less than 20cm: local surveys suggest only 25% - we have a big problem!
- Large variation across country:
 - 13% on Exmoor
 - 17% on Chilterns
 - 42% in Maulden (Beds)
 - 65% Chalk Hills (Beds)

Key issues arising

1. Far too few hedges being laid or coppiced
2. C. 40% of hedges in favourable condition, ignoring nutrient enrichment
3. 38% fail on nutrient enrichment alone - probably biggest problem
4. Gaps, both horizontal and vertical, are next biggest
5. Far too few young hedgerow trees

Conclusions

1. Local surveys facilitate conservation action
2. Data valuable for national/regional overview: key issues and priorities; regional and local variation
3. Local surveys complement, support and challenge Countryside Survey
4. New national database will enhance value
5. Surveys in other countries, from eastern counties, and from arable landscapes especially welcome