

## Star Count 2014: a dark outlook for starry skies

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Milky way over Durdle Door, Dorset

Photo: Andrew Whyte

### Annual survey indicates growing light pollution in England.

A survey by rural campaigners and astronomers has revealed that the proportion of people living with severe light pollution around the country has grown. The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) is calling for more councils to control lighting in their areas by adopting Government policies designed to minimise the impact of lighting and protect our dark skies.

The results of the CPRE annual Star Count survey show that well over half (59 %) of the 1,000 people who took part could see ten stars or fewer within the constellation of Orion - indicating severe light pollution in their area [1]. This is the worst since 2011 and is up 5% on 2013 [2].

Worryingly, the number of participants who could see more than 30 stars, which indicates truly dark skies, fell from 5% to 4%. A Star Count map has been created to show how light pollution affected views of the night sky around the country.[3]

In 2012, the Government introduced the first ever planning policy to control light pollution, and many councils are now running street light switch off or dimming schemes in a bid to save money and energy.

The overwhelming majority - more than 4 out of 5 (83%) - of survey respondents said they wanted their local council to do more to tackle light pollution. Just one in ten people who took part in the Star Count lived in an area where street lights were either switched off after midnight or dimmed.

Emma Marrington, CPRE Dark Skies Campaigner, said: 'We are concerned that almost six out of ten people who took part in the Star Count saw fewer than ten stars in the Orion constellation. This suggests they have severe light pollution in their area. And the fact that 96% of respondents cannot experience truly dark skies where they live shows just how badly light pollution affects our lives.'

'We're hugely grateful to all those people who went outside and took part in Star Count this year - they helped us gather more evidence of the need to take action to roll back the veil of light spreading across the country.'

'Light pollution ruins the countryside's tranquil character, blurs the distinction between town and country, affects wildlife and denies us the experience of a truly deep, dark and starry sky.'

'We urge councils to do more to control lighting in their areas, and ensure that the right lighting is used only where and when it is needed. Everyone can do their bit to help reduce light pollution - for example by ensuring that outdoor lighting on their property is directed downwards and not spilling up into the night sky. We need to reclaim our wondrous night skies.'

[Star Count 2014 map](#) (8MB PDF)