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#### Sections

[Latest News](#)
[Scotland](#)
[- Aberdeen](#)
[- Dundee](#)
[- Edinburgh](#)
[- Glasgow](#)
[- Inverness](#)
[UK](#)
[International](#)
[Politics](#)
[Sci-Tech](#)
[Health](#)
[Education](#)
[Entertainment](#)
[Gaelic](#)
[Opinion](#)
[Obituaries](#)
[Article Index](#)

#### Other Sections

[Supplements](#)

#### Topics

[Topics A-Z](#)

#### Other Sites

[The Scotsman](#)
[Scotland on Sunday](#)
[Evening News](#)
[Heritage & Culture](#)
[Living](#)
[Dating](#)
[Announcements](#)
[Money](#)
[Scotsman Shop](#)
[Scotsman Hotels](#)
[Fantasy Golf](#)
[Photos Today](#)
[Local Pages](#)
[Edinburgh Festivals](#)
[Homecoming](#)
[Whisky](#)
 [What's this?](#)


## Munros are no longer our bag

**Published Date:** 27 May 2009

**By Jenny Haworth, Environment correspondent**

THE traditional practice of Munro bagging – climbing all Scotland's highest peaks – has started to go out of fashion, research suggests.

A study by a team from Durham University has found that even though Munro bagging is perceived to have increased in popularity, numbers of people ticking all 284 peaks off the list is actually falling.

The number of people completing the mammoth task peaked in 1999 at 247. Since then it has levelled off, averaging 204 between 2000 and 2008.

Paul Ormerod, co-author of the report, said: "It's presented as becoming more and more fashionable, but the people who are seriously intent on completing the whole set seems to have plateaued over the last ten years."

He does not think climbing mountains has become unpopular, just that there are other ways people also enjoy spending their time. He said: "If you drive along on a Sunday and suddenly see a cluster of cars you know that's where a Munro is.

"More and more people are actually enjoying the Scottish outdoors, but maybe they are not as dedicated to completing the whole set (of Munros].

"There are more things to do now. You can do mountain biking, kayaking; there's a whole range of things that, going back 20 years, were not available on the same scale."

Mr Ormerod said another once-popular challenge has gone even more dramatically out of fashion – that of bagging Munro "Tops". These are peaks that, like Munros, are above 3,000ft, but which are not separate mountains.

"They have clearly gone out of fashion," he said. "Only eccentrics complete them now."

He thinks the research adds weight to the idea that we generally copy other people when it comes to popular culture.

He added that a similar methodology could be used to analyse any market, to "identify how the strength of social influence, of imitating the choices made by others, evolves over time".

Dr Alex Bentley, also from Durham University, said whereas some fashions come and go quickly, others, like Munro bagging, change gradually over generations. "Something like the fascination with Crocs (shoes) is everywhere and then it has gone," he said.

"Then there are long-term changes. People going to pubs has been declining for the last decade and people buying beer at the supermarket has been increasing. That's a long-term generational change.

"The Munros have been a long-term sustained activity over the generations, but then there's this subset, the Tops, that was more of a flash in the pan.

"So it's an interesting way to look at the two phenomena."

The research is published in the Scottish Journal of Political Economy.

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**Last Updated:** 26 May 2009 9:44 PM**Source:** The Scotsman**Location:** Edinburgh**Related Topics:** [Walking and climbing](#)**Bookmark:**[Del.icio.us](#)[Digg](#)[Facebook](#)[reddit](#)[StumbleUpon](#)**1** **madrab**,Edinburgh 27/05/2009 07:28:30

Another report from England looking down on Scotland.

How do this team know if I have climbed all the Munros?

What utter drivel.

[Report Unsuitable](#)**2** **nabodican**,Rural Scotland 27/05/2009 07:35:28

#1 - Exactly, the only people that know how many munros I have done are myself and my wife.

Perhaps he should measure the length of queue at the "Inpin" on a nice day - it would be as good a guide as any.

[Report Unsuitable](#)**3** **Maurice**,27/05/2009 12:44:36

1 & 2 Of course they know. CCTV its everywhere in Britain

[Report Unsuitable](#)**4** **Dungbeetle**,Stravaig 27/05/2009 14:19:47

I reckon most self-respecting Munroists don't register their compleation with the SMC. I personally know five, none of whom have. Others who have not, have taken to other hills to avoid dual carriageways that mountain tracks have become and the hordes of mobile-jabbering morons these days who destroy what most hill-walkers seek.

[Report Unsuitable](#)**5** **Walkhighlands**,Isle of Skye 27/05/2009 14:53:27

So the numbers climbing the Munros can be gauged by looking at how many people are recording their compleations on the official SMC list? Nonsense; none of the people we know who have completed the Munros have had the fact recorded. And even if everyone did contact the SMC, the numbers actually out doing Munros probably rises much faster than the numbers completing them. The numbers recording their Munro ascents on [www.walkhighlands.co.uk](#) is doubling every six months.

All experience of the hills suggests the numbers are still increasing rapidly. Climbing the Corbetts is rocketing in popularity - see the paths that are appearing on them - partly due to the number that have actually finished the Munros being much greater than the official record, as well as the fact that the Corbetts have become more popular in themselves.

[Report Unsuitable](#)**6** **Sgian Dubh**,27/05/2009 16:42:22

Non-story. Nobody has recently asked me how many Munros I have ascended. To say the numbers have fallen away because less people are registering completion with the SMC is ludicrous.

[Report Unsuitable](#)**7** **Finlang**,Liaoning 28/05/2009 00:06:41

"... research suggests." Yawn. Another classic Scotsman non-story.

I'm ashamed that it's my alma mater that is responsible for this latest load of "academic" vacuity. And it took "a team" of them to come up with that conclusion? Wow.

Times change but social scientists never die for want of "research" subject-matter. Munro-bagging (so-called) is a curious exercise in oneupmanship (born in England?).

As others above mention, most of us don't give a monkey's about the number we have climbed. I ascended about 15 of them before I was 20 years of age, unaware of the statistical importance to some. And since then ... many, many, and often the same ones over and over because I like them. I can't be @rsed counting as the tally is a non-event.

[Report Unsuitable](#)**8** **Gordoon**,Scotland 29/05/2009 16:00:27

Agree with all, although perhaps not with Finlang on his "non event" however, this report is absolute rubbish. My father and a number of his friends completed all the munro's several years ago but never registered with SMC so the stats can not be relied upon. I am 29 and a keen bagger with a number of likeminded friends - if

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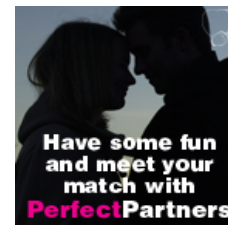
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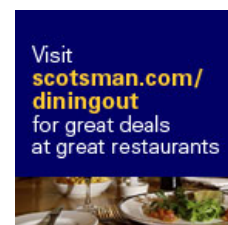
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 **9** Finlang,Liaoning 31/05/2009 03:14:14

#8 Gordoon

We can agree to disagree on the relevance or otherwise of Munro-bagging. For me, a mountaineer of many more (varied and interesting) years than you have clocked up of life on earth, I continue to choose the route of simple pleasure, of enjoyment of mountains. Not the statistical one.

If the latter is your preferred route, good and well. Enjoy. It all amounts to the same thing. There's no competition here. I used to live long-term in lovely mountainous areas such as the English Lake District, and Switzerland (not to mention my native Grampian Scotland), and still pop back and forward, whenever possible. And climb everything except built constructions, as again in China.

You and I just have different perceptions of how we view the statistical approach to our shared upland environment wherever it is. Not a problem. Each to his own.

[Report Unsuitable](#)

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