
Reforming Travel & Tourism Statistics

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Abstract

In October 2019, the Office for Statistics Regulation completed a compliance check of ONS Overseas Travel and Tourism statistics. In response, the Office for National Statistics reviewed the position to:

- Fully understand the needs of users of these statistics
- Recommend how tourism statistics should be transformed, including responsibilities, approach, and data sources
- Agree an implementation plan to deliver the transformation

The Travel & Tourism Reform Project (TTRP) commenced in May 2022. Two notable changes are envisaged under TTRP with regard to ONS's surveys:

First is a new Departures survey, which will replace the IPS Departures survey. Its main purpose is to collect:

- spend in the UK by overseas residents plus details of the trip undertaken
- pre-trip spend by UK residents plus details of the overseas trip just beginning

In addition, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) also conducts a survey of departing UK and overseas passengers at (some) UK international airports. The CAA survey has incorporated a core set of questions in harmonisation with ONS, which means we can pool the datasets; the resulting sample will be notably larger than the current IPS, which should result in much greater precision in estimates.

Second, we will stop ONS's IPS Arrivals survey, and in its place, the required travel-and-tourism-related questions are being added to Visit Britain's Great Britain Tourism Survey (GBTS) online panel to collect data from UK nationals about their recent trips abroad. Statistical Modelling of that expenditure data for UK nationals on overseas trips will then be used to predict the spend of UK-resident responders to the combined ONS + CAA departures survey data. Thus the combination of modeled/predicted expenditure with the Departures data on destinations and lengths of stay will allow total expenditure of UK residents to be estimated across the various output domains required.

Legal partnerships will be formed between ONS and VisitBritain, VisitScotland, VisitEngland and VisitWales, also ONS AND Civil Aviation Authority.