

# Consultation: proposed future approach to measure travel and tourism statistics

5 October 2021 to 21 December 2021



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# Consultation: developing the approach for the future of travel and tourism statistics

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is currently conducting a [review](#) of travel and tourism statistics. This review aims to fully understand the users' needs of these statistics and recommend how tourism statistics should be transformed, including approach, methods and data sources, to better meet those needs.

Extensive user engagement has been undertaken to identify, collate and prioritise the needs of users. Alongside this, ONS has identified and researched alternative data sources, assessing their feasibility for use in the production of the required statistics. This has led to the development of a proposed approach for the future measurement of travel and tourism statistics. This proposed approach sets out a high-level vision for these statistics and represents a move away from more traditional survey-based data collection only to an approach that maximises the use of alternative data sources alongside survey data. The combination of alternative data and survey data aims to provide more robust and timely statistics which will better meet the needs of users.

The approach aims to deliver statistical outputs that better meet the needs of users, maximise the use of alternative data sources, use surveys only where necessary, and deliver improved coherence across all travel and tourism statistics.

Since meeting the needs of users is a primary aim of the review, we are seeking feedback from users, through a public consultation, at an early stage. The consultation will run from Tuesday 5 October to Tuesday 21 December 2021. The feedback collated will be used to guide future development of the approach and help draw an appropriate balance between alternative and survey data. This feedback will inform the final recommendations of the review that will be published in Spring 2022.

# Introduction

## Travel and tourism review

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is currently conducting a [review of travel and tourism statistics](#). This review aims to fully understand the range of user needs for the statistics including the needs for tourism information at the UK level and at smaller regional and local geographies. It also aims to recommend how tourism statistics should be transformed, including responsibilities, approach and data sources, to better meet the needs of users.

Concerns have been raised about the extent to which existing international tourism statistics meet the needs of their users, resulting in a [compliance check](#) conducted by the Office for Statistics Regulation in October 2019. Key issues reported include timeliness, accuracy and level of disaggregation as well as poor levels of user engagement. In addition, in March 2020, data collection for the IPS was paused as a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This also highlighted a key weakness in the current approach to data collection and the resulting lack of survey data was taken as an opportunity to bring forward existing plans to introduce the use of alternative data sources in the compilation of migration statistics (which also used the IPS as a base for its statistics).

The review pulls together work achieved since the COVID-19 pandemic began, which includes the exploration of alternative data sources and ongoing work to improve the understanding of users' needs.

The review intends to be both radical and ambitious in approaching the improvement of travel and tourism statistics. It also provides an opportunity to gain a comprehensive understanding of users' needs, and to explore how best they can be met in a changing environment.

The review has investigated the availability of alternative data sources and statistical methods that could be used to produce travel and tourism statistics in the short and long term.

## Scope

The scope of the travel and tourism review includes:

- all visits made by foreign residents to the UK and characteristics of those visits e.g. spend, location, purpose of visit, and duration of stay
- all visits made by UK residents abroad and characteristics of those visits e.g. spend, destination, purpose of visit, and duration of stay.
- all visits made by UK residents within the UK and characteristics of those visits e.g. spend, destination, purpose or visit, and duration of stay.

The scope excludes statistics that relate to business capacity and performance for businesses involved in supply of tourism services. An example of this is hotel occupancy rates and the contribution of tourism to the UK economy.

## Current travel and tourism statistics

The [International Passenger Survey \(IPS\)](#) is currently the main source to measure international travel and tourism, and underpins the statistics we have traditionally published.

The data collected are used to understand patterns and behaviours of UK travellers visiting overseas and international visitors spending time in the UK. Tourism agencies and the devolved administrations use these statistics to inform policy decisions, and the data feed into the UK National Accounts - in particular, trade and household expenditure statistics.

Domestic travel and tourism responsibility lies with the devolved nations and statistics are jointly managed by the National Tourism Organisations. The main data source used is the [Great Britain Tourism Survey \(GBTS\)](#), which measures the volume, value and profile of overnight trips taken by British residents to destinations in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (NI). There is also the [Great Britain Day Visits Survey \(GBDVS\)](#), which collects information on British residents' day visits to destinations in England, Scotland and Wales.

These statistics are undergoing a [transformation change](#) with the aim to better meet user requirements. Northern Ireland additionally collects and produces [statistics on domestic overnight and day visits](#) by NI residents, to the Republic of Ireland (RoI) and Great Britain.

Many organisations are involved in the compilation of travel and tourism statistics. At this stage we are not defining future roles and responsibilities. However, one of the primary focuses of the review is to ensure that future tourism outputs are coherent.

## **Changing the way we produce travel and tourism statistics**

We are focused on continuing to improve communication and engagement with stakeholders. We have sought to increase our understanding of the range of user needs and have worked closely with stakeholders to gather requirements for the purpose of improving travel and tourism data.

Our findings have highlighted that the current method to produce international travel and tourism statistics does not fully meet users' needs. We are currently unable to provide the level of granularity, accuracy and timeliness that users need. Therefore, we have developed a proposed future approach to address these issues.

## **Proposed approach for future travel and tourism statistics**

### **Aims of the approach**

We have undergone an extensive user engagement exercise to gather a wide range of views from users on their needs for travel and tourism statistics. Additionally, we have continued to investigate the usefulness of alternative data sources in better meeting user needs.

This combined research has led to the development of a proposed approach for the future of travel and tourism statistics. The

approach sets out a vision for the future of travel and tourism statistics with the aims to:

- deliver statistical outputs that better meet the needs of users
- maximise the use of alternative data sources, using surveys only where absolutely necessary
- deliver improved coherence across all travel and tourism statistics

At this stage we are consulting on the high-level vision for the future of travel and tourism statistics to gather views from users at an early stage.

While it is a primary aim of the review to improve the extent to which user needs are met, it is important that the proposed approach delivers value for money and achieves a balance between meeting those needs and the cost associated with both implementation and ongoing delivery of the statistics. As a result, a prioritisation exercise of user requirements was undertaken with the outcome that more accurate and timely regional estimates could be achieved for some variables over others. As with all improvements, it is therefore not expected that all user needs will be fully met through the implementation of the proposed approach.

We are not yet able to define methods in detail or outline the statistical outputs that will be available. However, we will continue to engage with users throughout the project as more information becomes available.

## **Approach**

We are proposing that travel and tourism statistics are compiled using a hybrid method which maximises the use of alternative data sources in combination with surveys. This proposal represents a first key step towards a longer-term vision of using alternative data sources as the basis for travel and tourism statistics, as and when suitable data sources become available.

[Mobile connection data](#) will be used to provide granular estimates of the number of visits, with financial transactions data used to estimate

expenditure at a more detailed level than available currently. In all instances alternative data sources will be received in an anonymised and aggregated form to address any privacy concerns. Additional data sources have been considered as part of the review and there is potential that further sources could be included to offer additional benefits to users in the future.

Due to limitations in the coverage of these alternative data sources, surveys will be used alongside the alternative data to ensure estimates are representative of the target population. However, we will continue to monitor this and adapt as further developments to alternative data sources are made. Estimates of the number of visits and the associated spend of foreign visitors will be measured using a passenger survey, with data collected from foreign residents on departure from the UK and the end of their visit.

We will seek to harmonise the passenger survey with the [Civil Aviation Authority departing passenger survey](#) and [Northern Ireland Passenger Survey](#) for better coherence and efficiency. It is also anticipated that Home Office data could be used to provide total passenger counts to calibrate the survey estimates.

Estimates for international and domestic visits of UK residents will be measured using a household survey. This could be done by building on the transformation work started by the domestic travel surveys and harmonising with the GBTS and GBDVS. Alternatively, a new household survey could be developed. The survey will also be harmonised with Northern Ireland's Continuous Household Survey.

In addition, we plan to produce faster indicators of travel and tourism that will be published alongside the transformed statistics to provide users with estimates prior to the publication of official figures. These faster indicators will offer users a more timely measure of visitor numbers and spend and will be produced using alternative data sources and statistical models.

As access, coverage and accuracy of alternative data sources improves, this could reduce the need for surveys in the long-term.

Further information about the methods and data sources proposed can be found in the [methods article](#) published at the same time as this consultation.



## Future plans

Following the end of the consultation on Tuesday 21 December 2021, we will work to provide a consultation response within 12 weeks. We will then build on this consultation response by publishing our planned way forward for Travel and Tourism Statistics in Spring 2022.

We will continue to engage with users throughout the transformation process ensuring we gather feedback at critical stages throughout the project.

## General information

### Why we are consulting

We are consulting to give users the opportunity to provide feedback on our proposed approach in producing travel and tourism statistics.

### Consultation details

**Issued:** 05/10/2021

**Respond by:** 21/12/2021

### Enquiries to:

[ons.consultations@ons.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ons.consultations@ons.gsi.gov.uk)

### Audiences

We expect there to be 6 broad groups of people interested in this consultation:

1. Policymakers and analysts across government interested in tourism of UK residents and overseas resident's tourism to the UK
2. The media and general public using information on international and domestic travel and tourism
3. National and local tourism boards interested in tourism activities to particular areas of the UK
4. Representative industry bodies of the tourism sector
5. Businesses in the tourism sector

6. Anyone who uses other products/data provided by the International Passenger Survey

## **Territorial extent**

This consultation relates to travel and tourism statistics collected across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

## **After the consultation**

We will publish a response to the comments made approximately 12 weeks after the consultation closes.

## **How to respond**

We encourage you to respond online wherever possible.

However, responses in writing or via email submitted will also be accepted. Should you wish to submit your main response online and any supporting information via hard copy or email, please be clear that this is part of the same consultation response.

**Respond online:** <https://consultations.ons.gov.uk/external-affairs/proposedfutureapproachtomeasuretravelandtourism>

**Email to:** [ons.consultations@ons.gov.uk](mailto:ons.consultations@ons.gov.uk)

### **Write to:**

ONS Consultations Team  
Post Room  
Office for National Statistics,  
Segensworth Road,  
Fareham  
PO15 5RR

## **Accessibility**

All material relating to this consultation can be provided in braille, large print, or audio formats on request. British Sign Language interpreters can also be requested for any supporting events.

## Transparency, Confidentiality and Data Protection

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) needs your name and email address to receive your response. We may contact you about your response to the consultation.

We aim to be as open as possible in our decision-making process, which may include publishing consultation responses.

Please indicate in your response if you would like your personal name to be published alongside your response or not. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation or group, we will publish the organisation or group name alongside your response. We reserve the right to redact or withhold inappropriate or offensive comments.

Please be aware that, as a public authority, we are subject to the [Freedom of Information Act](#) and can never completely guarantee that names will not be published. We will not publish personal contact details, such as email addresses. To find out more, read our [Privacy Policy](#).

## Quality Assurance

This consultation has been carried out in accordance with the government's consultation principles, available here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consultation-principles-guidance>.

If you have any complaints about the way this consultation has been conducted, please email: [ons.consultations@ons.gov.uk](mailto:ons.consultations@ons.gov.uk).

# Annex 1 – Consultation Questions

## Your Details

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) needs your name and email address to receive your response. We may contact you about your response to the consultation. We aim to be as open as possible in our decision-making process, which may include publishing consultation responses. You can tell us below if you would like your personal name to be published alongside your response or not. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation or group, we will publish the organisation or group name alongside your response. We reserve the right to redact or withhold inappropriate or offensive comments. Please be aware that, as a public authority, we are subject to the [Freedom of Information Act](#) and can never completely guarantee that names will not be published. We will not publish personal contact details, such as email addresses. To find out more, read our [Privacy Policy](#).

### **1 What is your name?**

*(Required)*

### **2 When we publish your consultation response, are you happy for your personal name to be included?**

Yes, I consent to my personal name being published with my response

No, please remove my personal name before publishing my response

*Please select only one item*

*(Required)*

### **3 What is your email address?**

*(Required)*

## About Your Response

### **4 Are you responding to this consultation in a personal or a professional capacity?**

Personal

Professional

*Please select only one item*

*(Required)*

### **5 If responding in a professional capacity, what sector do you work in?**

Academia and research

Business

Government, including local government and public bodies

Third sector, including charities and think tanks

Other

*Please select only one item*

If other, enter sector below.

**6 Are you responding to this consultation on behalf of an organisation or a group?**

No, I am responding as an individual

Yes, I am responding on behalf of an organisation

Yes, I am responding on behalf of an informal group, such as a community or social media group

*Please select only one item*

*(Required)*

If you selected 'Yes', please provide the name of the organisation or group.

If you selected 'Yes', please state your title or role within the organisation or group.

**7 Where is your organisation or group based?**

*Select all that apply if your organisation or group is based in more than one location*

North East

North West

Yorkshire and the Humber

East Midlands

West Midlands

East of England

London

South East

South West

Northern Ireland

Scotland

Wales

A location outside of the UK

*Please select all that apply*

**Our Proposed Approach**

**8 On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very unhappy and 5 is very happy, what do you think of our proposed approach for the measurement of travel and tourism?**

1 - Very Unhappy

2 - Quite Unhappy

3- Neither Happy nor Unhappy

4- Quite Happy

5- Very Happy

*Please select only one item*

Please provide the reasoning behind your answer.

**9 On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not at all and 5 is needs fully met, to what extent do you feel the proposed approach will meet your needs in measuring travel and tourism?**

1 - Doesn't meet needs at all

2 - Mostly doesn't meet needs

3 - Somewhat meets needs

4 - Mostly meets needs

5 - Fully meets needs

*Please select only one item*

Please provide the reasoning behind your answer.

**10 On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not at all and 5 is fully, to what extent do you feel the proposed approach fulfils the aims we presented?**

Our aims

*The proposed approach aims to:*

- *Deliver statistical outputs that better meet the needs of users*
- *Maximise the use of alternative data sources*
- *Use surveys only where necessary and deliver improved coherence across all travel and tourism statistics*

1 - Doesn't fulfil aims at all

2 - Mostly doesn't fulfil aims

3 - Somewhat fulfils aims

4 - Mostly fulfils aims

5 - Completely fulfils aims

*Please select only one item*

Please provide the reasoning behind your answer.

**11 What elements of the proposed approach do you like?**

**12 Does this approach present any opportunities?**

**13 Is there anything we could change about the approach which would improve it?**

**14 What challenges or risks does this approach present to you?**

Your Needs

**15 How do you currently access official travel and tourism statistics?**

**Please select all that apply.**

ONS

Visit Britain (International)

Visit Britain (Domestic)

Other

*Please select all that apply*

If selected Other, please specify below.

**16 How often do you require official travel and tourism statistics to be compiled?**

More than once per month

Monthly

Quarterly

Annually

Less than once per year

*Please select only one item*

Please specify which variables you would like at the different frequencies.

**17 On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not useful at all and 5 is very useful, how useful would faster indicators of visitor numbers and spend be to you?**

**Faster Indicators**

*We plan to develop faster indicators of some travel and tourism variables to provide users with estimates prior to the publication of official figures. These faster indicators will offer users a more timely measure of visitor numbers and spend and will be produced using alternative data sources and statistical models.*

- 1 - Not at all useful
- 2 - Rarely Useful
- 3 - Occasionally useful
- 4 - Useful
- 5 - Very Useful

*Please select only one item*

Please provide the reasoning behind your answer.

**18 On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not useful at all and 5 is very useful, how useful would estimates of visitor numbers and spend at a UK level be to you?**

- 1 - Not at all useful
- 2 - Rarely Useful
- 3 - Occasionally useful
- 4 - Useful
- 5 - Very Useful

*Please select only one item*

Please provide the reasoning behind your answer.

**19 On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not useful at all and 5 is very useful, how useful would estimates of visitor numbers and spend at regional level be to you?**

- 1 - Not at all useful
- 2 - Rarely Useful
- 3 - Occasionally useful
- 4 - Useful
- 5 - Very Useful

*Please select only one item*

Please provide the reasoning behind your answer.

**20 What level of timeliness do you require from official travel and tourism statistics?**

- < 1 month after reference period
- 1-2 months after reference period
- 2-6 months after reference period
- 6-12 months after reference period

*Please select only one item*

Please specify which variables you would like at the different time reference periods.

**21 What range of data do you currently make use of?**

**22 What variables are of most importance to you?**

## Data Sources and Methods

**23 Do the data sources and methods proposed to compile travel and tourism statistics affect how you will use them?**

Yes

No

*Please select only one item*

Please provide the reasoning behind your answer.

**24 Do you have any suggestions of data sources, other than those specified in our approach, that may help us to measure travel and tourism?**

Yes

No

*Please select only one item*

Please provide the reasoning behind your answer.

**25 Do you have any concerns regarding the change in methodology we are proposing?**

Yes

No

*Please select only one item*

Please provide the reasoning behind your answer.

## ...and Finally

**26 Do you have any other comments about this consultation?**

**27 How did you, or the organisation or group that you are responding on behalf of, hear about this consultation?**

ONS website or blog

ONS email or newsletter

ONS event

Social media

Other

*Please select all that apply*

If other, please specify.