

Article

Travel and tourism review: October 2021

Update on progress on the travel and tourism statistics review, including proposed future approach and details of a user consultation.

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1 . Overview of project progress

- This article presents an update on the ongoing review of travel and tourism statistics, due to conclude in Spring 2022.
- Since the previous update, good progress has been made with particular emphasis on user engagement and researching potential data sources.
- This initial research has been used to develop a proposed approach for the future of travel and tourism statistics which aims to better meet the needs of users while maximising the use of alternative data sources.
- We are welcoming feedback from users on this approach through the launch of a public consultation.

2 . Introduction

We are currently conducting a review of travel and tourism statistics. The review aims to better understand the needs of users and investigate potential alternative data sources and methods that could be used to compile more relevant travel and tourism estimates in the future. A series of recommendations to transform the statistics will be published in Spring 2022.

This article presents an update on progress and follows on from a previous update given in [June 2021](#).

3 . General progress

Since our last update in June 2021, we have continued to engage with a wide range of stakeholders using a range of mechanisms. These include an expert panel, online forum, mailing list, and one-to-one meetings to gather views from different types of users. A new travel and tourism strategic group has also been established with members from across government to help steer the review and provide a joint effort in producing travel and tourism statistics.

Progress has also been made to research alternative data sources and approaches that could be used to compile travel and tourism statistics in the future. This aims to provide more robust and consistent estimates, which meet users' needs better. This research has led to the development of a proposed approach for the future of travel and tourism statistics. Further information about this preferred approach can be found below as well as details of the research, [methods and sources](#) used in this approach and our [consultation](#).

4 . Proposed approach for future travel and tourism statistics

Background to the approach

Throughout the review, we have intended to be radical and ambitious in approaching the improvement of travel and tourism statistics. The review provides the opportunity to gather a comprehensive understanding of user needs, and to explore how best they can be met in a changing environment.

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 maximises the use of alternative data in the aim to provide granular geographies and expenditure breakdowns, delivers the greatest efficiencies across organisations and delivers the most coherent UK estimates.

In the development of this approach, we considered and assessed several options including data collection methods, data sources and feasibility of implementation. After careful deliberation, we established an approach which we propose is taken forward. This approach is not finalised at this stage as we are currently gathering feedback through a [formal public consultation](#).

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.

We aim to make use of [mobile connection data](#) to provide further granularity at lower-level geographies and financial transactions data for more detailed estimates of expenditure than what is currently available. In all instances, alternative data sources will be received in an anonymised and aggregated form to address any privacy concerns. Other sources have been considered as part of the review and there is potential that further sources could be included to offer added benefits to users in the future.

We intend to use surveys alongside alternative data to ensure estimates are representative because of limitations in the coverage of the alternative data sources stated above. Estimates of the number of visits and associated spend of foreign visitors, along with other information, will continue to be measured using a passenger survey. To measure estimates for international and domestic visits of UK residents, a household survey will be used.

We are also exploring the potential to harmonise the passenger survey with the [Civil Aviation Authority departing passenger survey](#) and [Northern Ireland Passenger Survey](#) for better coherence and efficiency.

Similar considerations are being made for the potential to harmonise, combine, or add to existing domestic tourism surveys across Great Britain ([Great Britain Tourism Survey and Great Britain Day Visits Survey](#)) and Northern Ireland ([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. These faster indicators will offer users a timelier 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.

Next steps

This approach has been led by prioritising user needs. The development of this approach has been carefully considered to maximise its usefulness for users while offering the best value for money. We have been engaging with experts across the UK to design an approach that best meets current user needs and can be adapted to meet needs in the future.

We want to gain feedback from a wide range of users on this proposed approach. Therefore, a [formal consultation](#) will open on Tuesday 5 October 2021 to gather comments from all users.

5 . User consultation

We want to make sure we engage with all users of travel and tourism statistics throughout the review process. Therefore, a [formal consultation](#) has been opened today (5 October 2021) to invite all users to provide feedback on our proposed approach.

We would like to get views on:

- how content users are with our proposed approach
- the extent to which users feel the proposed approach will meet their needs
- any suggestions users have for changes to the proposed approach or additional data sources that could be considered

Further details on the proposed approach and how to respond are available.

The consultation will close on Tuesday 21 December 2021.

6 . Future developments

We will gather feedback from the formal user consultation and respond within 12 weeks of it closing on Tuesday 21 December 2021. We will then build on this consultation response by publishing our planned way forward for travel and tourism statistics in Spring 2022.

If you would like to stay updated with our ongoing travel and tourism work and receive our bi-monthly newsletter, please sign up to our [mailing list](#). Alternatively, you can join our forum, a user group that will meet regularly throughout the review, by emailing us at travel.and.tourism@ons.gov.uk .

7 . Related links

[Using mobile phone data for enhancing IPS traveller counts](#)

Blog | 05 October 2021

Details of research conducted to compare estimates of visitor numbers using mobile phone and International Passenger Survey (IPS) data

[Proposed future approach to measure travel and tourism statistics](#)

Consultation | 5 October 2021

Details of the travel and tourism statistics consultation, including proposed future approach and questions for users.

[Travel and tourism review methodological research progress update: October 2021](#)

Methodology | Released 5 October 2021

Proposed methodological changes to the production of travel and tourism statistics

[Travel and tourism review: June 2021](#)

Article | Released 2 June 2021

Details of a review of travel and tourism statistics, including reasons for the review, progress so far and future developments.