

Statistical bulletin

Overseas travel and tourism: April 2022 provisional results

Visits to the UK by overseas residents, visits abroad by UK residents and spending by travellers, using provisional passenger traffic data.

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Release date:
24 June 2022

Next release:
To be announced

Correction

16 August 2022 11:00

We have identified an issue with data collected from the International Passenger Survey (IPS) in 2021, linked to challenges collecting and publishing consistent data during the pandemic.

After correcting this issue, total visits to the UK by Overseas' residents show an increase from 6.2 million to 6.4 million. The number of nights has fallen from 99.3 million to 93.5 million and spend has also fallen from £5.8 billion to £5.6 billion.

UK residents made 19.1 million visits abroad in 2021, which is unchanged, the number of nights increased from 336.9 million to 340.9 million.

There are however bigger impacts to visitor and spend data at individual country level. These errors have been corrected within the relevant data tables.

Also, in the April 2022 publication, an additional processing error was identified which has also been corrected.

This affects the following releases:

[Travel trends: 2021](#)
[Overseas travel and tourism: April 2022 provisional results](#)

Publication of our monthly and quarterly overseas travel and tourism releases will resume as soon as possible.

We apologise for the inconvenience.

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1 . Main points

- There were 2.2 million visits to the UK by overseas visitors in April 2022; this compares with visits by air of just 65,000 in April 2021.
- Spending by overseas residents in April 2022 in the UK was £1.7 billion.
- Visits to the UK in April 2022 were still down significantly on pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic levels; visits were down 33% from 3.2 million in April 2019.
- UK residents made 5.6 million visits overseas in April 2022; this compares with total visits by air in April 2021 of 260,000.
- UK residents spent £4.1 billion while overseas in April 2022; this compares with total visits by air in April 2021 of 260,000.
- In April 2022 UK residents' visits overseas had not yet reached the level seen in April 2019; there were 5.6 million visits overseas in April 2022 compared with 8.4 million in April 2019 (33% decrease).

The estimates provided for 2022 should be treated with caution as the numbers are smaller than pre-coronavirus pandemic years. The data still exclude the EuroTunnel as the Office for National Statistics (ONS) was unable to interview at this site. No estimates are included for any travel across the Irish border. Data for the first six months of 2021 are shown for air visits only.

2 . Trends in visits to the UK by overseas residents

In April 2022, there were an estimated 2.2 million visits to the UK, compared with 65,000 visits by air in April 2021 when many travel restrictions were in force.

Spending by overseas residents in April 2022 was estimated to be £1.7 billion, compared with £87 million spent during visits by air in April 2021.

The large increase in visits can be attributed to the easing of coronavirus (COVID-19) travel restrictions by April 2022, which were still in place in April 2021. The majority of travel restrictions have now been lifted world-wide.

Since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, travel to and from the UK has been severely affected. As most travel restrictions are now lifted, it is worth looking back at travel numbers pre-coronavirus to see how the latest figures compare.

In April 2019, there were an estimated 3.2 million visits to the UK with an estimated £1.8 billion being spent. Visits in April 2022 decreased 33% and spending was down by 9%.

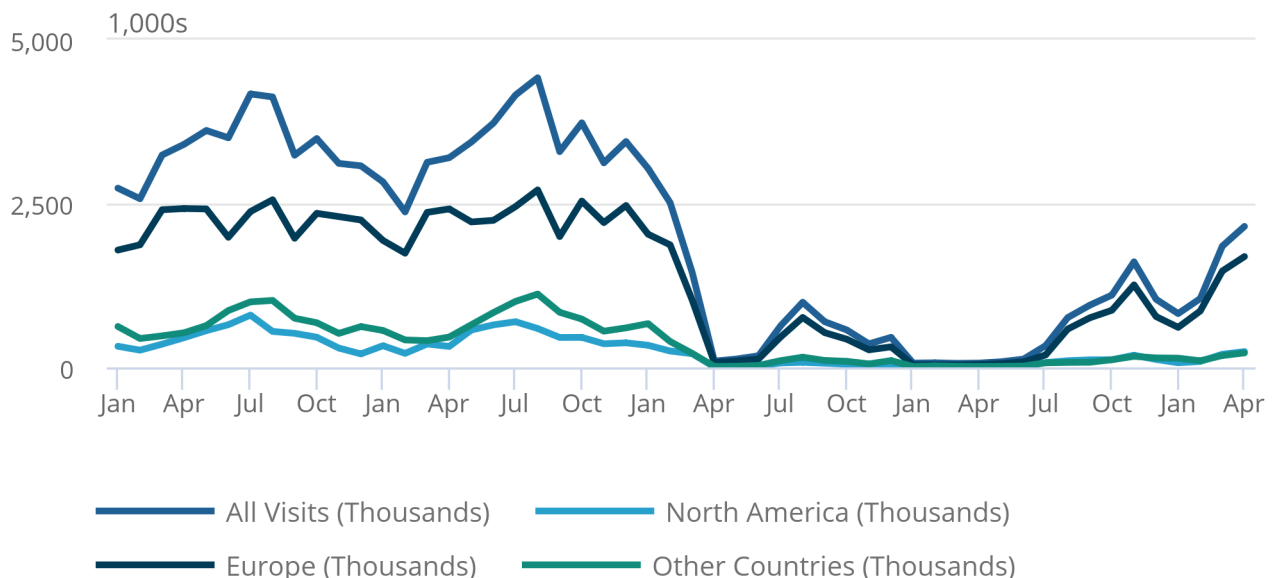
“Visiting friends or relatives” was the most common reason for overseas residents visiting the UK with 800,000 visits being made for this reason. This represents 37% of the total. The next most common reason was “Holiday” at 34%.

Figure 1: European residents helped to push visits to the UK in April 2022 up higher than the previous year

Overseas residents’ visits to the UK by month, January 2018 to April 2022

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Overseas residents’ visits to the UK by month, January 2018 to April 2022



Source: Office for National Statistics – International Passenger Survey

3 . Trends in overseas visits by UK residents

April 2022 saw UK residents make 5.6 million visits overseas. This compares with 260,000 visits by air in April last year.

The amount of money UK residents spent in April was £4.1 billion compared with £310 million spent during visits by air in April 2021.

As with visits to the UK, the lifting of coronavirus (COVID-19) travel restrictions can explain the large increase in numbers.

There were 8.4 million overseas visits made by UK residents in April 2019 before the coronavirus pandemic. These visitors spent an estimated £5 billion. In April 2022 visits fell 33% and spending also decreased by 18%.

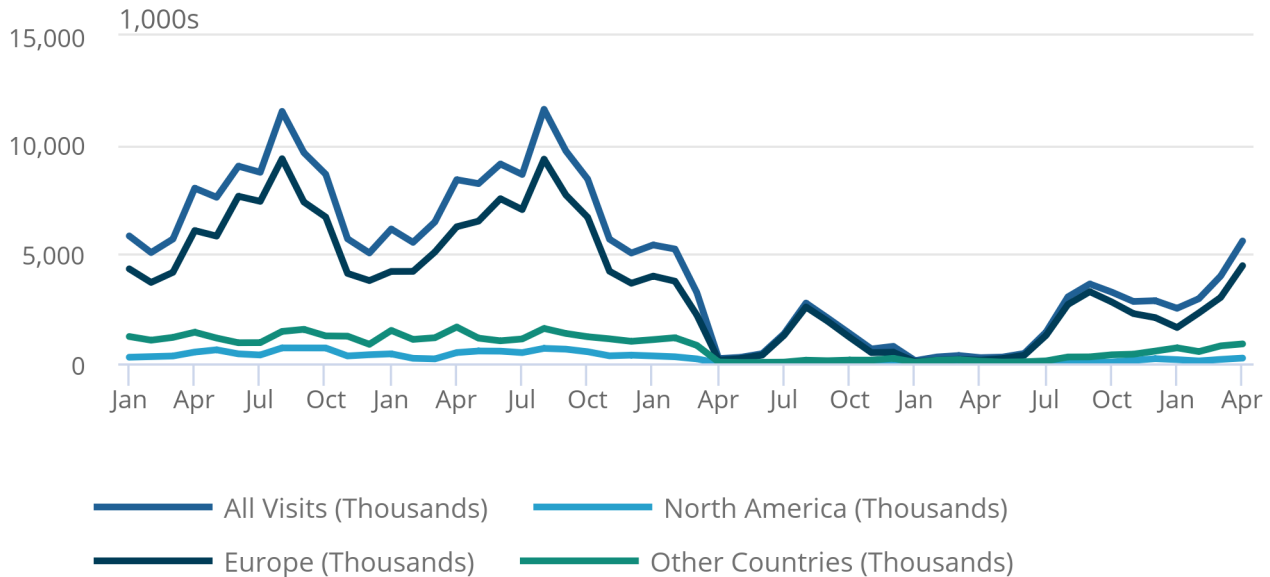
The most common reason for UK residents travelling overseas was going on holiday with 61% (3.4 million) of visits being made for this reason. After “holiday”, “visiting friends and family” was the next most common reason for travel. There were 1.7 million visits were made for this reason in April 2022.

Figure 2: The number of UK residents' visits abroad increased between April 2021 and April 2022 but were still two-thirds of the pre-coronavirus numbers

UK residents' visits overseas by month, January 2018 to April 2022

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UK residents' visits overseas by month, January 2018 to April 2022



Source: Office for National Statistics – International Passenger Survey

Notes:

1. The monthly figures for Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) and Quarter 2 (Apr to June) 2021 do not match the total quarterly figures as these estimates do not include visits and spend for sea travel.

4 . Overseas travel and tourism data

[Overseas travel and tourism monthly](#)

Dataset | Released 24 June 2022

Monthly estimates of overseas residents' visits and spending in the UK and UK residents' visits and spend abroad from the International Passenger Survey

[Overseas travel and tourism time series](#)

Dataset | Released 24 June 2022

Monthly, quarterly and Annual estimates of overseas residents' visits and spending in the UK and UK residents' visits and spend abroad from the International Passenger Survey

5 . Glossary

Visits

The figures relate to the number of completed visits, not the number of visitors. Anyone entering or leaving more than once in the same period is counted on each visit.

Day visits

Trips that do not involve an overnight stay abroad by UK residents, as well as day trips to the UK by overseas residents, are included in the total figures for visits and expenditure. However, figures presented at lower levels of geography relate to overnight stays only.

Overseas visitor

A person who, being permanently resident in a country outside the UK, visits the UK for a period of less than 12 months. UK citizens resident overseas for 12 months or more coming home on leave are included in this category. Visits abroad are visits for a period of less than 12 months by people permanently resident in the UK (who may be of foreign nationality).

Visiting multiple countries

When a resident of the UK has visited more than one country, expenditure and stay are allocated to the country stayed in for the longest time.

Miscellaneous visits

Visits for miscellaneous purposes include those for study, to attend sporting events, for shopping, health, religious, or for other purposes, together with visits for more than one purpose when none predominates (for example, visits both on business and on holiday). Overseas visitors staying overnight in the UK on their way to other destinations are also included in miscellaneous purposes.

Earnings and expenditure

Earnings refer to spending in the UK by overseas residents, whereas expenditure refers to spending abroad by UK residents.

6 . Measuring the data

International Passenger Survey (IPS) data are collected by a team of over 200 interviewers who are recruited and trained specifically to work on the IPS. They carry out interviews at air and sea ports, on board vessels leaving or returning to the UK, or on board the Eurotunnel Trains. Interviews are carried out on all days of the year, apart from Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day.

We have made methodological improvements to the travel and tourism estimates from the IPS. These relate to the survey's weighting process and were used to produce the data presented in this bulletin. The improvements were introduced in our [Travel trends: 2019 article](#) and are described in Section 5: [Improved methodology for the estimates](#). A detailed technical paper will be published in due course, comprehensively setting out the changes. These changes affect only travel and tourism and not estimates of long-term international migration.

The new method was used to produce final results for 2019 and a revised series for 2009 to 2018. The effects of the new method, and how these differ from the old, are presented in Section 6: [Impacts of the new IPS methodology of the Travel trends: 2019 article](#).

7 . Data sources and quality

Methods used to produce these estimates

Apart from the time when the survey was not running (16 March 2020 to 18 January 2021) figures shown are produced from results of the International Passenger Survey. These results do not include any travel via the Channel Tunnel vehicle trains as the trains were isolated and no interviewing could take place. It was also not possible to obtain any survey results from Dover to France until August 2021. It should be noted that there was very little travel related traffic at that time. Results for when the survey was not operating were limited to totals and the method used can be found here [Overseas travel and tourism, provisional: April to June 2020](#) publication in [Section 6: Data sources and quality](#). Although traffic volumes have increased during 2021 figures should be treated with caution as the numbers are much smaller than in the past and are subject to higher sampling errors than previous estimates released.

Accuracy of the IPS estimates

Estimates produced from the IPS are subject to sampling errors that result because not every traveller to or from the UK is interviewed on the survey. Sampling errors are determined both by the sample design and by the sample size - generally speaking, the larger the sample supporting a particular estimate, the proportionately smaller is its sampling error. The survey sample size in 2021 is much smaller than in previous years because of the travel restrictions resulting from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The estimates presented in this article for the whole of 2020 must be treated with particular caution, since the methods used have not been fully scrutinised or tested.

The estimates presented in this article make the best use of the available data and methods to produce estimates of international visits and spending. However, as noted, the numbers are small, and the results should be treated with caution.

Uncertainty

The accuracy of the estimates is expressed in terms of [confidence intervals](#). For more information on how we measure and communicate uncertainty for our surveys, see our [Uncertainty and how we measure it page](#).

The following guidelines are provided to aid in the interpretation of the estimates, and to enable their reliability to be assessed:

- % confidence interval below 10%: precise
- % confidence interval between 10% and 20%: reasonably precise
- % confidence interval between 20% and 40%: acceptable
- % confidence interval over 40%: unreliable (these estimates should be used with caution for practical purposes).

Tables 3a, 3b, 3c and 3d show the 95% confidence intervals for the estimates of the total number of visits and expenditure for both overseas residents visiting the UK and UK residents going abroad.

Table 3a: Confidence intervals relating to overseas travel and tourism estimates, January 2022

January 2022 monthly estimates	Estimate	Relative 95% Confidence Interval (+/- % of the estimate)
Visits to UK by overseas residents (thousands)	820	10.2%
Earnings from visits to UK (£ million)	620	11.6%
Visits abroad by UK residents (thousands)	2,520	4.7%
Expenditure on visits abroad (£ million)	2,120	5.5%

Source: Office for National Statistics - International Passenger Survey

Table 3b: Confidence intervals relating to overseas travel and tourism estimates, February 2022

February 2022 monthly estimates	Estimate	Relative 95% Confidence Interval (+/- % of the estimate)
Visits to UK by overseas residents (thousands)	1,050	10.4%
Earnings from visits to UK (£ million)	740	11.9%
Visits abroad by UK residents (thousands)	2,960	5.2%
Expenditure on visits abroad (£ million)	2,350	7.3%

Source: Office for National Statistics - International Passenger Survey

Table 3c: Confidence intervals relating to overseas travel and tourism estimates, March 2022

March 2022 monthly estimates	Relative 95% Confidence	
	Estimate	Interval (+/- % of the estimate)
Visits to UK by overseas residents (thousands)	1,850	8.5%
Earnings from visits to UK (£ million)	1,300	8.2%
Visits abroad by UK residents (thousands)	4,000	5.9%
Expenditure on visits abroad (£ million)	3,020	11.9%

Source: Office for National Statistics - International Passenger Survey

Table 3d: Confidence intervals relating to overseas travel and tourism estimates, April 2022

April 2022 monthly estimates	Relative 95% Confidence	
	Estimate	Interval (+/- % of the estimate)
Visits to UK by overseas residents (thousands)	2,150	13.3%
Earnings from visits to UK (£ million)	1,660	8.9%
Visits abroad by UK residents (thousands)	5,600	5.5%
Expenditure on visits abroad (£ million)	4,110	6.2%

Source: Office for National Statistics - International Passenger Survey

8 . Related links

[Travelpac: travel to and from the UK](#)

Dataset | Released 24 July 2020

Quarterly data on travel to and from the UK, taken from the International Passenger Survey (IPS). Includes detail on age and sex of travellers, purpose and length of trip, and spending. These data are in a form suitable for small businesses and students. National Statistics designation applies to the data for all periods up to 2019. Designation has been temporarily withdrawn for Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2020 because of incomplete data collection as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19).

[Travel trends: 2021](#)

Article | Released 15 June 2022

Annual estimates of travel and tourism visits to the UK (of less than 12 months' duration) and associated earnings and expenditure between the UK and the rest of the world.

[Overseas travel and tourism, UK, provisional: July to September 2021](#)

Article | Released 7 February 2022

Visits to the UK by overseas residents, visits abroad by UK residents and spending estimates by travellers, using administrative sources of passenger travel data.

[Overseas travel and tourism: January, February and March 2020 provisional results](#)

Bulletin | Released 24 July 2020

Visits to the UK by overseas residents, visits abroad by UK residents and spending by travellers, using provisional passenger traffic data.