

Statistical bulletin

Overseas travel and tourism, provisional: April to June 2020

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

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1 . Main points

- Overseas residents made 398,000 visits to the UK in Quarter 2 (Apr to June) 2020; this was 96% fewer than Quarter 2 2019 as travel reduced because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.
- Overseas residents spent £218 million on their visits to the UK in Quarter 2 2020; this was 97% less than in Quarter 2 2019.
- UK residents made 939,000 visits abroad in Quarter 2 2020, which was 96% fewer than the corresponding period the previous year and was because of the coronavirus pandemic.
- UK residents spent £402 million on visits abroad in Quarter 2 2020; this was 98% less than in Quarter 2 2019.
- Data collection by the International Passenger Survey (IPS) was suspended for the period covered by this release, so the figures in this release are based on administrative sources and modelling.

2 . Travel and tourism statistics and the coronavirus (COVID-19)

Travel and tourism statistics are usually based on the results of the International Passenger Survey (IPS), but the survey was suspended on 16 March 2020 because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. No IPS data will be collected for the period when the survey is not operational. We are working to resume interviewing as soon as it practical and safe to do so. More information will be made available as soon as possible.

The figures published in this article, for April to June 2020, are based on administrative sources and modelling, and the methods used are described in [Section 6: Data sources and quality](#). The statistics have been produced to the highest quality possible, but the methods used have not been subject to full review and scrutiny. Also, we have made assumptions that some previous trends have continued, for example, the proportions of passengers travelling for business or holidays. The results should therefore be viewed with caution. We have produced these estimates to provide users with as much information as possible about international travel over this period. The figures presented for the period April to June 2020 have not been shown to meet the high standards required for designation as [National Statistics](#).

The range of variables published here are much more limited than in the regular quarterly publications, and the usual supporting dataset has not been produced. Some cells in the tables presented are not populated because the relevant breakdown was not produced.

This article also presents data for the period January to March 2020 in the charts and tables. As IPS survey data were not collected after 16 March 2020, incomplete information was obtained. Every effort was made to ensure the quality of these statistics, but in the circumstances we cannot be confident that they meet the high standards required for designation as National Statistics. For this reason, the National Statistics status of these statistics for the period January to March 2020 was temporarily suspended under the [provisions made](#) for exceptional difficulties encountered in compiling statistics because of the coronavirus pandemic.

3 . Visits to the UK in April to June 2020

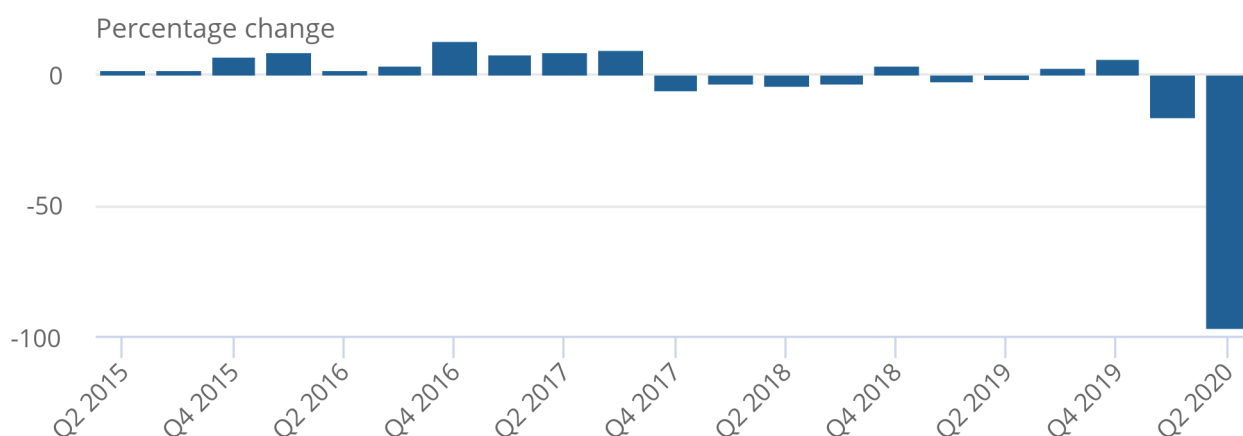
Overseas residents made a total of 398,000 visits to the UK during Quarter 2 (Apr to June) 2020, a decrease of 96% compared with the same period a year earlier, (Figure 1). The large fall is attributable to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, with travel restrictions and reluctance to travel becoming widespread.

Figure 1: Visits to the UK by overseas residents decreased by 96% in Quarter 2 2020 compared with the same period a year earlier

Quarterly change from a year earlier in visits to the UK from overseas residents, Quarter 2 (Apr to June) 2015 to Quarter 2 2020

Figure 1: Visits to the UK by overseas residents decreased by 96% in Quarter 2 2020 compared with the same period a year earlier

Quarterly change from a year earlier in visits to the UK from overseas residents, Quarter 2 (Apr to June) 2015 to Quarter 2 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics - Overseas travel and tourism

Notes:

1. Q1 means Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar); Q2 means Quarter 2 (Apr to June); Q3 means Quarter 3 (July to Sept); and Q4 means Quarter 4 (Oct to Dec).

Extrapolating from past trends, taking holidays was the most popular reason for visiting the UK in Quarter 2 2020, with 177,000 visits. This was a 96% decrease compared with Quarter 2 2019. Business visits decreased to 85,000, 96% fewer than in 2019. Visits to friends and relatives decreased by 96% to 112,000.

Similar trends were observed for different areas of the world. Visits by North American residents decreased by 97% to 40,000, and visits by residents of "other countries" (countries outside of Europe and North America) decreased by 97% to 60,000. Visits by European residents decreased by 96% to 298,000.

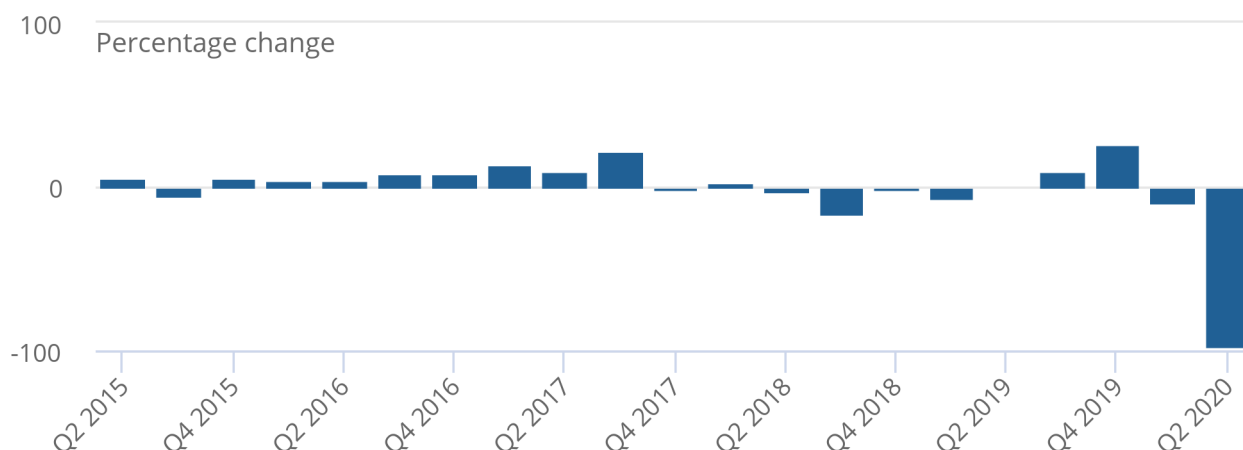
Estimated spending in the UK by overseas visitors decreased by 97% to £218 million in Quarter 2 2020 when compared with Quarter 2 2019.

Figure 2: Spending in the UK by overseas residents decreased by 97% in Quarter 2 2020 compared with the same period a year earlier

Quarterly change from a year earlier in earnings from visits to the UK, Quarter 2 (Apr to June) 2015 to Quarter 2 2020

Figure 2: Spending in the UK by overseas residents decreased by 97% in Quarter 2 2020 compared with the same period a year earlier

Quarterly change from a year earlier in earnings from visits to the UK, Quarter 2 (Apr to June) 2015 to Quarter 2 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics - Overseas travel and tourism

Notes:

1. Q1 means Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar); Q2 means Quarter 2 (Apr to June); Q3 means Quarter 3 (July to Sept); and Q4 means Quarter 4 (Oct to Dec).

Overseas residents made an estimated 176,000 visits to the UK in June 2020, which was 95% fewer than in June 2019 (Figure 3). Overseas residents spent £60 million on visits to the UK in June 2020, which was 98% less than in June 2019 (Figure 4).

Overseas residents made an estimated 127,000 visits to the UK in May 2020, which was 96% fewer than in May 2019 (Figure 3). Overseas residents spent £79 million on visits to the UK in May 2020, which was 97% less than in May 2019 (Figure 4).

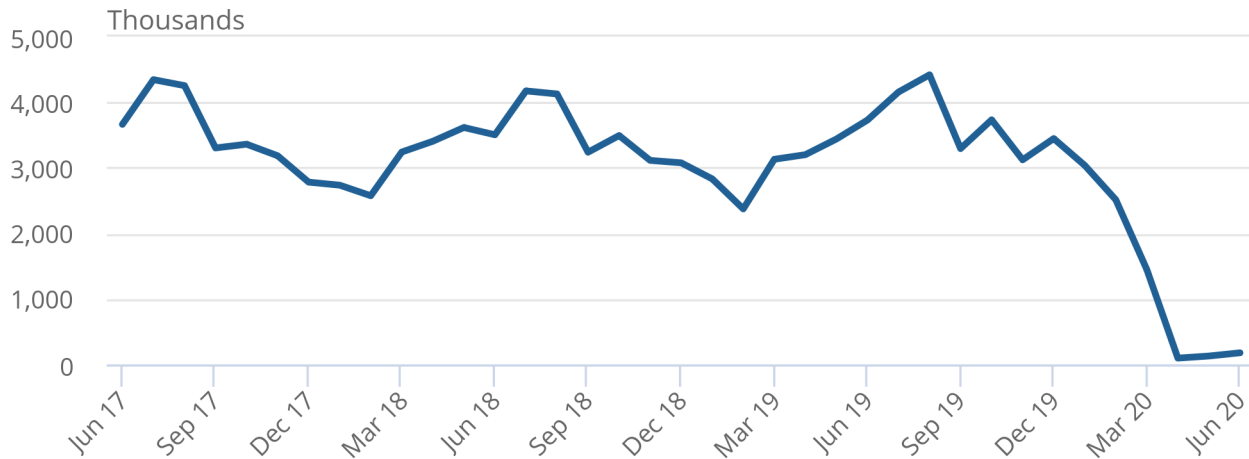
Overseas residents made an estimated 95,000 visits to the UK in April 2020, which was 97% fewer than in April 2019 (Figure 3). Overseas residents spent £79 million on visits to the UK in April 2020, which was 96% less than in April 2019 (Figure 4).

Figure 3: Visits to the UK by overseas residents dropped off sharply in April 2020 compared with the same period a year earlier, but they began to increase slightly by June 2020

Overseas residents' visits by month, June 2017 to June 2020

Figure 3: Visits to the UK by overseas residents dropped off sharply in April 2020 compared with the same period a year earlier, but they began to increase slightly by June 2020

Overseas residents' visits by month, June 2017 to June 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics - Overseas travel and tourism

Notes:

Visits to the UK by overseas residents dropped off sharply in April 2020 compared with the same period a year earlier, but begins to increase slightly by June 2020.

Figure 4: Spending in the UK by overseas residents dropped off sharply in April to June 2020 compared with the same period a year earlier

Overseas residents' spending by month, June 2017 to June 2020

Figure 4: Spending in the UK by overseas residents dropped off sharply in April to June 2020 compared with the same period a year earlier

Overseas residents' spending by month, June 2017 to June 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics - Overseas travel and tourism

Notes:

Spending in the UK by overseas residents dropped off sharply in April to June 2020 compared with the same period a year earlier.

Table 1: Main visit and spending estimates for overseas residents' visits to the UK in April to June 2020

	Visits (Thousands)	% change from year earlier	Earnings (£ million)	% change from year earlier
Non seasonally adjusted				
April 2020	95	-97	79	-96
May 2020	127	-96	79	-97
June 2020	176	-95	60	-98
April to June 2020	398	-96	218	-97
Year to date 2020	7,390	-60	4,560	-61
Latest 12 months	29,550	-26	21,310	-18

Source: Office for National Statistics - Overseas travel and tourism

Table 2: Overseas residents' visit estimates to the UK by region and reason for visit for April to June 2020

	Visits (Thousands)	% change from year earlier	Earnings (£ million)	% change from year earlier
Region of the world				
North America	40	-97	-	-
Europe	298	-96	-	-
Other Countries	60	-97	-	-
Reason for visit				
Holiday	177	-96	-	-
Business	85	-96	-	-
Visit friends or relatives	112	-96	-	-
Miscellaneous	24	-96	-	-
Total	398	-96	218	-97

Source: Office for National Statistics - Overseas travel and tourism

4 . Visits abroad by UK residents

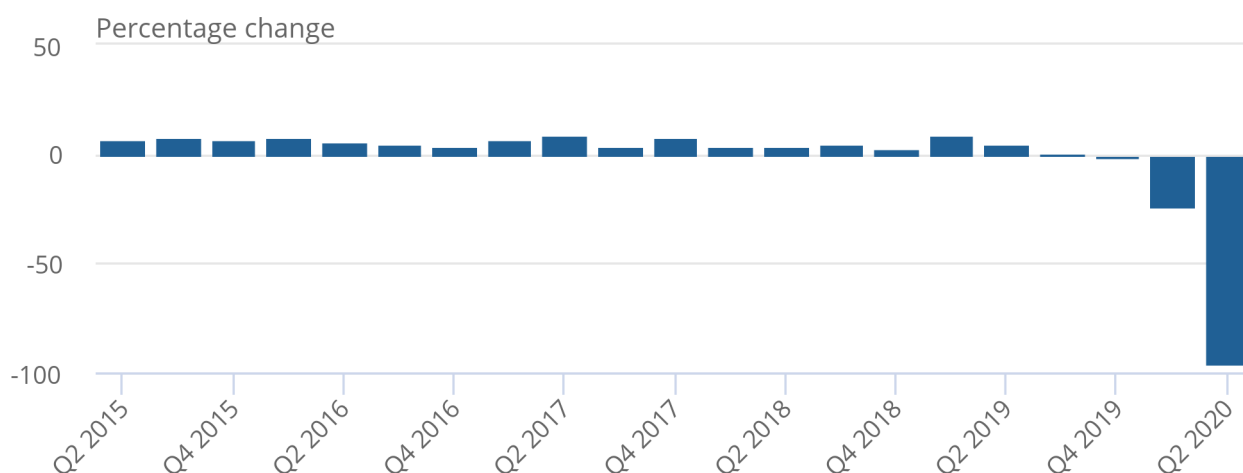
UK residents made 939,000 visits abroad in Quarter 2 (Apr to June) 2020, 96% fewer than Quarter 2 2019 (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Visits overseas by UK residents decreased by 96% in Quarter 2 2020 compared with the same period a year earlier

Quarterly change from a year earlier in visits abroad by UK residents, Quarter 2 (Apr to June) 2015 to Quarter 2 2020

Figure 5: Visits overseas by UK residents decreased by 96% in Quarter 2 2020 compared with the same period a year earlier

Quarterly change from a year earlier in visits abroad by UK residents, Quarter 2 (Apr to June) 2015 to Quarter 2 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics - Overseas travel and tourism

Notes:

1. Q1 means Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar); Q2 means Quarter 2 (Apr to June); Q3 means Quarter 3 (July to Sept); and Q4 means Quarter 4 (Oct to Dec).

Using modelling to extrapolate from past trends, holidays continued to be the most common reason for UK residents' visits abroad. In Quarter 2 2020, there were 617,000 holidays; this decreased by 96% when compared with a year previously. Visits to friends or relatives decreased by 96% to 219,000, while business visits decreased by 97% to 87,000. The number of visits for miscellaneous reasons decreased by 97%, although the numbers are smaller.

There was a 97% decrease in visits to North America (43,000 visits), and visits to European countries decreased by 96% (745,000 visits). Visits to "other countries" decreased by 96% to 152,000.

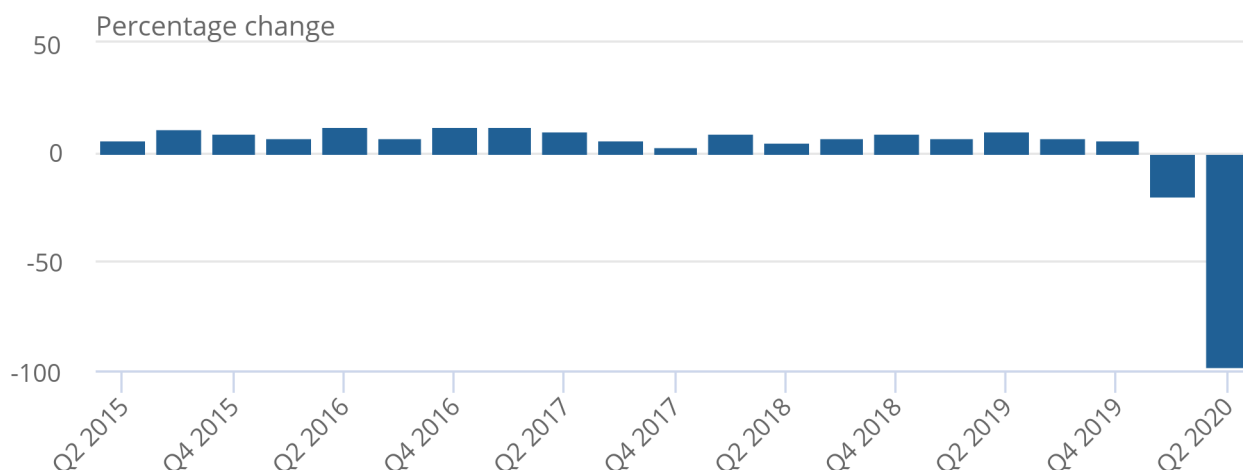
UK residents spent £402 million during visits abroad in Quarter 2 2020; this was a decrease of 98% when compared with the same period in 2019.

Figure 6: UK spending abroad decreased by 98% when compared with the same period in 2019

Quarterly change from a year earlier in expenditure from UK residents' visits abroad, Quarter 2 (Apr to June) 2015 to Quarter 2 2020

Figure 6: UK spending abroad decreased by 98% when compared with the same period in 2019

Quarterly change from a year earlier in expenditure from UK residents' visits abroad, Quarter 2 (Apr to June) 2015 to Quarter 2 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics - Overseas travel and tourism

Notes:

1. Q1 means Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar); Q2 means Quarter 2 (Apr to June); Q3 means Quarter 3 (July to Sept); and Q4 means Quarter 4 (Oct to Dec).

There were an estimated 445,000 visits overseas by UK residents in June 2020, which was 95% fewer than in June 2019 (Figure 5). This large fall in visits overseas resulting from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic mirrors the fall in visits to the UK. UK residents spent £119 million on visits overseas in June 2020, which was 98% fewer than in June 2019 (Figure 6).

There were an estimated 275,000 visits overseas by UK residents in May 2020, which was 97% fewer than in May 2019 (Figure 5). UK residents spent £147 million on visits overseas in May 2020, which was 97% fewer than in May 2019 (Figure 6).

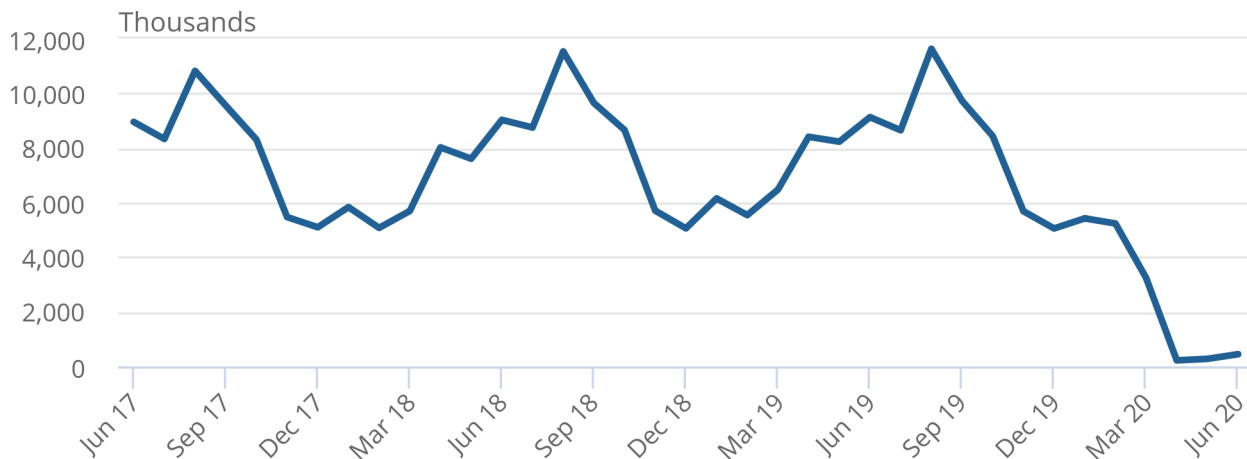
There were an estimated 219,000 visits overseas by UK residents in April 2020, which was 97% fewer than in April 2019 (Figure 5). UK residents spent £136 million on visits overseas in April 2020, which was 97% fewer than in April 2019 (Figure 6).

Figure 7: UK residents' visits abroad dropped off sharply in April but began to increase slightly through May and June 2020

UK residents' visits abroad by month, non-seasonally adjusted, June 2017 to June 2020

Figure 7: UK residents' visits abroad dropped off sharply in April but began to increase slightly through May and June 2020

UK residents' visits abroad by month, non-seasonally adjusted, June 2017 to June 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics - Overseas travel and tourism

Notes:

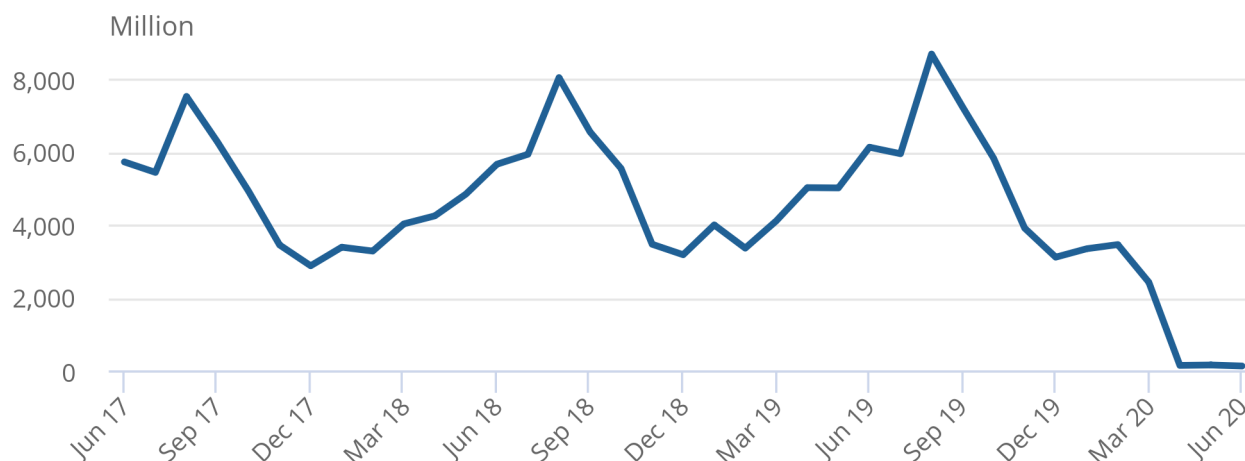
UK residents' visits abroad also dropped off sharply in April but began to increase slightly through May and June 2020.

Figure 8: Spending abroad by UK residents dropped off sharply in April to June 2020 compared with the same period a year earlier

UK residents' spending abroad by month, non-seasonally adjusted, June 2017 to June 2020

Figure 8: Spending abroad by UK residents dropped off sharply in April to June 2020 compared with the same period a year earlier

UK residents' spending abroad by month, non-seasonally adjusted, June 2017 to June 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics - Overseas travel and tourism

Notes:

Spending abroad by UK residents dropped off sharply in April to June 2020 compared with the same period a year earlier.

Table 3: Main visit and spending estimates for UK residents' visits abroad in April to June 2020

	Visits (Thousands)	% change from year earlier	Expenditure (£ million)	% change from year earlier
Non seasonally adjusted				
April 2020	219	-97	136	-97
May 2020	275	-97	147	-97
June 2020	445	-95	119	-98
April to June 2020	939	-96	402	-98
Year to date 2020	14,830	-66	9,620	-65
Latest 12 months	64,000	-31	44,330	-27

Source: Office for National Statistics - Overseas travel and tourism

Table 4: UK residents' visit estimates abroad by region and reason for visit for April to June 2020

	Visits (Thousands)	% change from year earlier	Expenditure (£ million)	% change from year earlier
Region of the world				
North America	43	-97	-	-
Europe	745	-96	-	-
Other Countries	152	-96	-	-
Reason for visit				
Holiday	617	-96	-	-
Business	87	-97	-	-
Visit friends or relatives	219	-96	-	-
Miscellaneous	16	-97	-	-
Total	939	-96	402	-98

Source: Office for National Statistics - Overseas travel and tourism

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.

Overseas visitor

An overseas visitor is 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 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 . Data sources and quality

Methods used to produce these estimates

This section describes the methods and sources used to produce the estimates presented in this release. The primary approach used to estimate international visits was to model the relationship between past International Passenger Survey (IPS) estimates and the visits recorded in administrative data that are regularly used to weight the survey data. This means including:

- Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) data
- sea traffic data from the Department for Transport (DfT)
- Eurostar passengers
- Eurotunnel passengers

A time series was constructed from 2009 to Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2020 for the total monthly visits reported in IPS releases (overseas residents visiting the UK and UK residents visiting overseas, combined for all purposes). The administrative data and total visits reported in the IPS differ because of their definitional differences. For example, IPS estimates exclude transit passengers who do not pass through passport control in the UK, while working air crew and certain other categories of passenger are also excluded from the estimates.

The ratio of total survey visits over mean of admin arrivals and departures was calculated as the ratio of these two series.

A regARIMA time series model (including a significant Easter regressor to capture one week either side of Easter) was fitted to the data up to March 2020, and it was used to forecast the ratio between numbers in the administrative data and visits as reported by the IPS.

The total number of IPS visits for April to June 2020 was calculated from this forecasted ratio and the totals in the administrative data for arrivals and departures.

Number of visits by residence and purpose and purpose of visit

Separate time series were constructed from 2009 to Quarter 1 2020 for the monthly visits reported by IPS, broken down by residence and purpose.

The total for each combination of residence and purpose was divided by total IPS visits to give a proportion for each purpose and residence out of the total visits.

For each purpose and residence, a separate time series model was fitted to the data up to March 2020 and used to forecast proportions for April to June 2020.

The forecasts were used to produce the estimates for Quarter 2 (Apr to June), with the UK residents' miscellaneous visits being the residual after the other purpose and residence groups were subtracted from the total. This was also in good agreement with the separately modelled estimate for UK residents and miscellaneous purpose.

The overall overseas residents totals were the sum of all purposes for overseas residents, and UK residents totals were the sum of all purposes for UK residents.

Regions of the world (Europe, North America and other)

The next step was to break the estimates down into visits to and from regions of the world. The available administrative data provided the overseas origin or destination port (air, sea or rail) for the immediate journeys to and from the UK. The IPS reports results primarily on the basis of main country visited (or country of residence). IPS data for 2016 to 2019 were used to model the relationship between these two sets of figures, and this was used to model visits to and from the regions of the world for the period April to June 2020.

International travel for this period was more frequent in routes where we normally observe high proportions of overseas residents compared to the totals, such as on the Channel Tunnel and routes outside Europe. As passengers may have chosen to travel by different routes during this time, we assumed that the overall proportion of overseas residents normally observed should be maintained in the estimates. Therefore, the proportion of overseas residents was constrained to the estimate from the time series models.

Spending

The suspension of the IPS has meant that some important users have utilised other sources to provide spending figures for the period of the survey's suspension. In our [UK trade release](#), we have taken the following approach:

“For Quarter 2 (Apr to June) 2020, we have worked with ONS's Data Science Campus to create new estimates using alternative data sources. The data sources that have been used include Civil Aviation Authority, Eurotunnel, Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers' housing costs (CPIH), airline stock figures and aggregated and anonymised foreign-issued card spend processed through Barclays Point-of-Sale (POS) and “card-not present” channels.”

In this release, we have utilised the data produced for the UK trade release to estimate spending in the UK by visiting overseas residents and spending in the UK by overseas visitors. We have applied adjustments to account for the definitional differences between the two outputs.

Different travel patterns: stranded passengers returning and other passengers

A feature of international travel at the start of the coronavirus pandemic was the delayed return of travellers who had been stranded because of the cancellation of their flights. We investigated this phenomenon by computing the expected numbers of UK residents overseas and overseas residents in the UK in mid-March, then looking at day-by-day numbers on flights in March, and then doing the same in April to June.

For most routes, and especially departures from the UK, the analysis showed that the numbers of passengers over this period substantially exceeded the numbers that could be expected to be stranded following the start of lockdown. Not all travellers were stranded passengers returning home: a substantial proportion seemed to be those starting their trips overseas after the initial lockdown in March.

Accuracy of the IPS estimates

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

Confidence intervals have not been provided for the April to June estimates because we would only be able to provide this based on how well the model predicts data already collected by the IPS. The trends observed this year are not like previous years, and therefore stating these confidence intervals would indicate a misleading level of confidence in the predictions, as the assumptions of the model may not be correct.

The usual source of travel and tourism statistics, the IPS, has been suspended since 16 March 2020.

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 methods are new and the results should be treated with caution. It has not been possible to produce the full range of variables normally presented in the quarterly publication.

7 . Future developments

Travel and tourism statistics are usually based on the results of the International Passenger Survey (IPS), but the survey was suspended on 16 March 2020 because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. No IPS data will be collected for the period when the survey is not operational. We are working to resume interviewing as soon as it practical and safe to do so. More information will be made available as soon as possible.

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. Travelpac comprises 14 of the most widely used variables, and the data are available for each year from 1993 onwards, in both SPSS and Excel formats

[Travel trends: 2019](#)

Article | Released 22 May 2020

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, provsional: January to March 2020](#)

Article | 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.

[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.