

Statistical bulletin

Overseas Travel and Tourism: Provisional results for September 2015

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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1. Main points

- Visits to the UK by overseas residents rose by 3% to 35.2 million in the 12 months to September 2015 compared to a year earlier and earnings decreased 2% to £21.6 billion.
- UK residents' visits to abroad rose 9% to 22.5 million in the 3 months to September 2015 compared to the same period a year earlier, and 9% more was spent on these visits.

2. About the estimates

Overseas Travel and Tourism monthly estimates are revised during the processing of the quarterly dataset and again during the processing of the annual dataset. The most up-to-date and accurate estimates for all published months can be found in the latest edition of the [Overseas Travel and Tourism monthly statistical bulletin](#).

The UK Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs
- are well explained and readily accessible
- are produced according to sound methods
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

Estimates contained in this bulletin are produced from responses provided by international passengers arriving in and departing from the UK, sampled on the [International Passenger Survey \(350.4 Kb Pdf\)](#) that we conduct.

This bulletin contains provisional overseas travel and tourism estimates for September 2015. Revised, final estimates for 2015 will be published in Travel Trends, 2015 in spring 2016. The monthly overseas travel and tourism estimates are produced using provisional passenger traffic data to inform the weighting process that is then revised for production of the quarterly estimates, and final data is then used in the production of the annual results published in Travel Trends (see background note: Accuracy of IPS estimates). The title of the monthly overseas travel and tourism bulletin was renamed in December 2013 to "Overseas Travel and Tourism, Provisional Results for [Month] 2013" to clarify that the data contained in these bulletins are provisional.

The sample profile and responses are calibrated to international passenger traffic for the reporting period.

Estimates are based on interviews conducted when passengers end their visit. Therefore any visits commencing in the reported month but not completed until later are not included in estimates for the reported month.

Spending associated with visits includes anything spent before, during and after the trip.

In January 2015 the methodology for treating outliers was improved. For further information please contact the IPS team.

Parts of the bulletin refer to countries visited abroad. It should be noted that if a UK resident visited more than one country on a trip abroad, the country recorded as visited in this publication is the country that was visited for the longest period.

Estimates are subject to sampling error, and confidence intervals are provided to help readers interpret the estimates (see background note: Accuracy of IPS estimates). Further guidance is provided about the quality of [overseas travel and tourism estimates \(404.8 Kb Pdf\)](#).

3. Changes to overseas travel and tourism publications

The overseas travel and tourism monthly and quarterly bulletins have been updated to provide additional information about the revisions policy used to revise and finalise the estimates. As part of this improvement to the publications, the titles have been changed to indicate that the estimates are provisional. The final estimates, for the overseas travel and tourism data, are published in the annual Travel Trends publication. The first publications to include the additional information are:

- "Overseas Travel and Tourism, Provisional Results for October 2013" published on 12 December 2013
- "Overseas Travel and Tourism, Provisional Results for Quarter 3, 2013" published on 16 January 2014

4. Main trends in figures and charts

Table 1: Main visit and spending estimates for overseas residents' visits to the UK in 2015

	Visits (Thousands)	% change from year earlier	Earnings (£ million)	% change from year earlier
Non seasonally adjusted				
Sep 2015	3,030	+2	2,180	0
July 2015 to Sep 2015	10,320	+3	6,950	-6
Year to date 2015	27,130	+3	16,470	-2
Latest 12 months	35,180	+3	21,560	-2
Seasonally adjusted				
April	3,040	+7	1,800	+5
May	3,130	+9	1,930	+11
June	2,990	-1	1,940	+4
July	2,970	+5	1,700	-11
August	2,920	+1	1,730	-6
September	2,980	+2	1,820	0

Source: International Passenger Survey - Office for National Statistics

Table 2: Main visit and spending estimates for UK residents' visits abroad in 2015

	Visits (Thousands)	% change from year earlier	Expenditure (£ million)	% change from year earlier
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Non seasonally adjusted

Sep 2015	7,030	+7	4,290	+3
July 2015 to Sep 2015	22,450	+9	13,850	+9
Year to date 2015	51,960	+9	30,460	+7
Latest 12 months	64,170	+8	37,400	+6

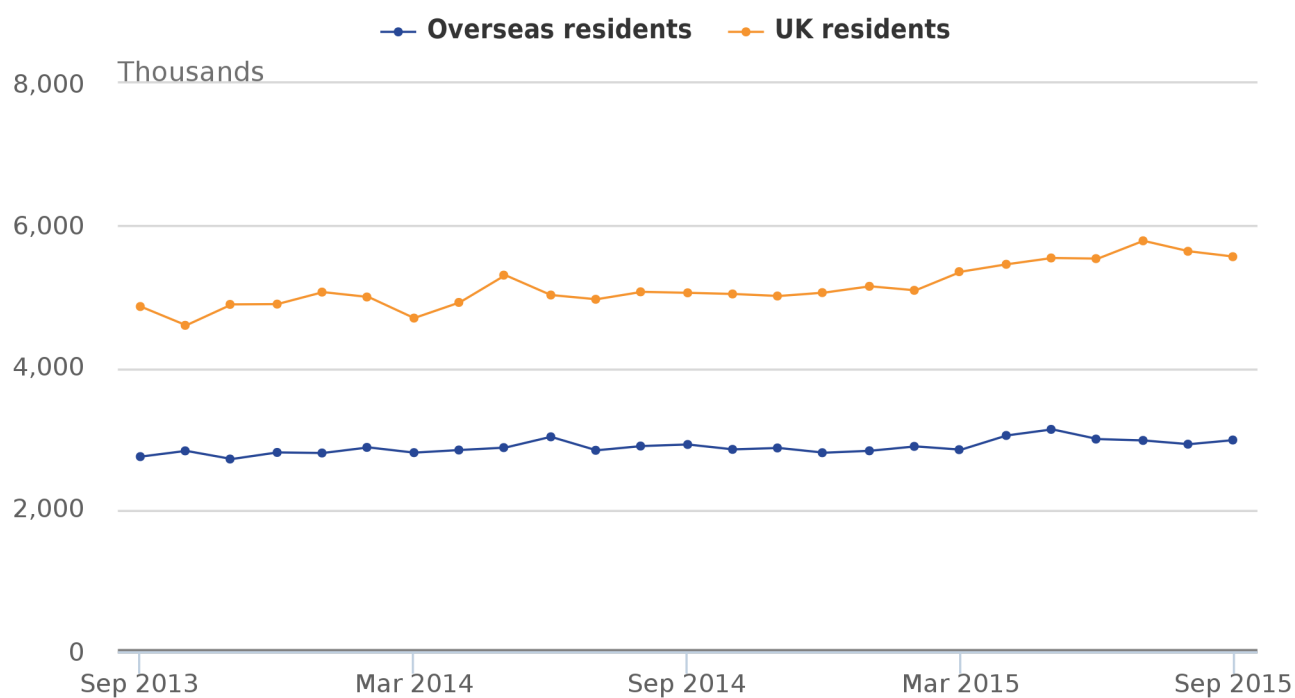
Seasonally adjusted

April	5,450	+11	3,040	+6
May	5,540	+5	3,090	+4
June	5,530	+10	3,140	+9
July	5,780	+17	3,450	+20
August	5,640	+11	3,130	+6
September	5,560	+10	3,130	+3

Source: International Passenger Survey - Office for National Statistics

Figure 1: Overseas residents' visits to the UK and UK residents' visits abroad (seasonally adjusted)

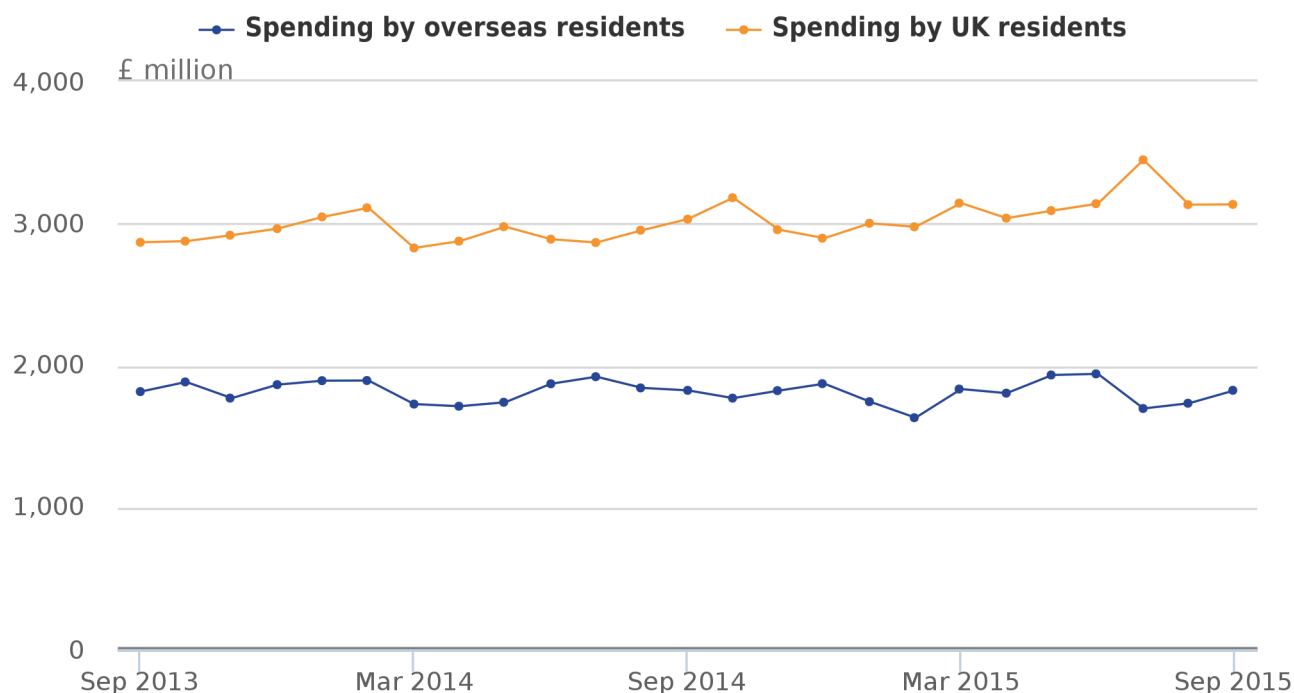
September 2013 to September 2015



Source: Office for National Statistics

Figure 2: Spending by overseas residents in the UK and spending by UK residents overseas by month (seasonally adjusted)

September 2013 to September 2015



Source: International Passenger Survey (IPS) - Office for National Statistics

5. Trends in visits to the UK by overseas residents non seasonally adjusted (Reference tables 1,2,5)

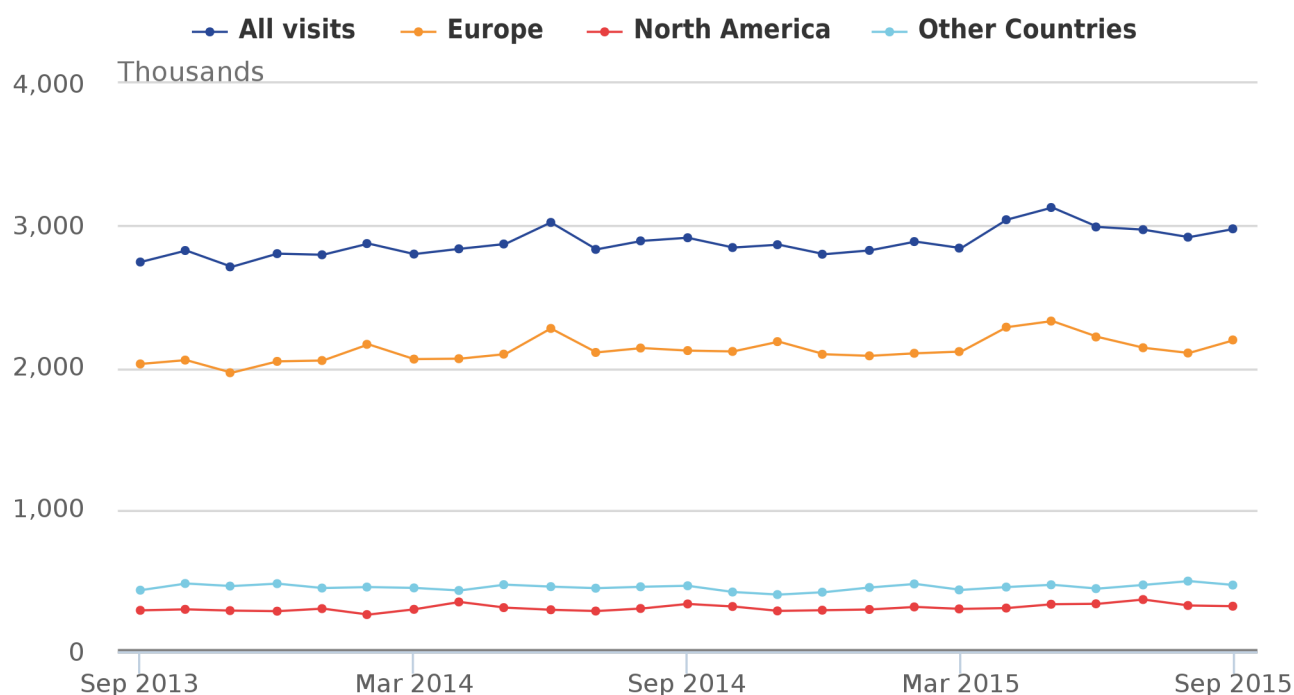
The number of visits to the UK by overseas residents in September 2015 was 3.0 million, an increase of 2% when compared to September 2014. Overseas residents spent £2.2 billion in the UK during these visits.

During the period July 2015 to September 2015, overseas residents' visits to the UK rose by 3% compared with the corresponding period a year earlier and spent 6% less during this period.

In the 12 months to September 2015, the number of visits to the UK was 3% higher than a year earlier and earnings decreased by 2% during this period. Visits from North America and Europe (see "Background notes: Geographical areas") were up by 6% and 3% respectively and visits from Other Countries fell by 1%. Business trips grew 7%, holiday visits by 1% and visits to friends or relatives by 4%.

Figure 3: Overseas residents' visits to the UK by month (seasonally adjusted)

September 2013 to September 2015



Source: International Passenger Survey (IPS) - Office for National Statistics

6. Trends in visits abroad by UK residents non seasonally adjusted (Reference tables 3,4,5)

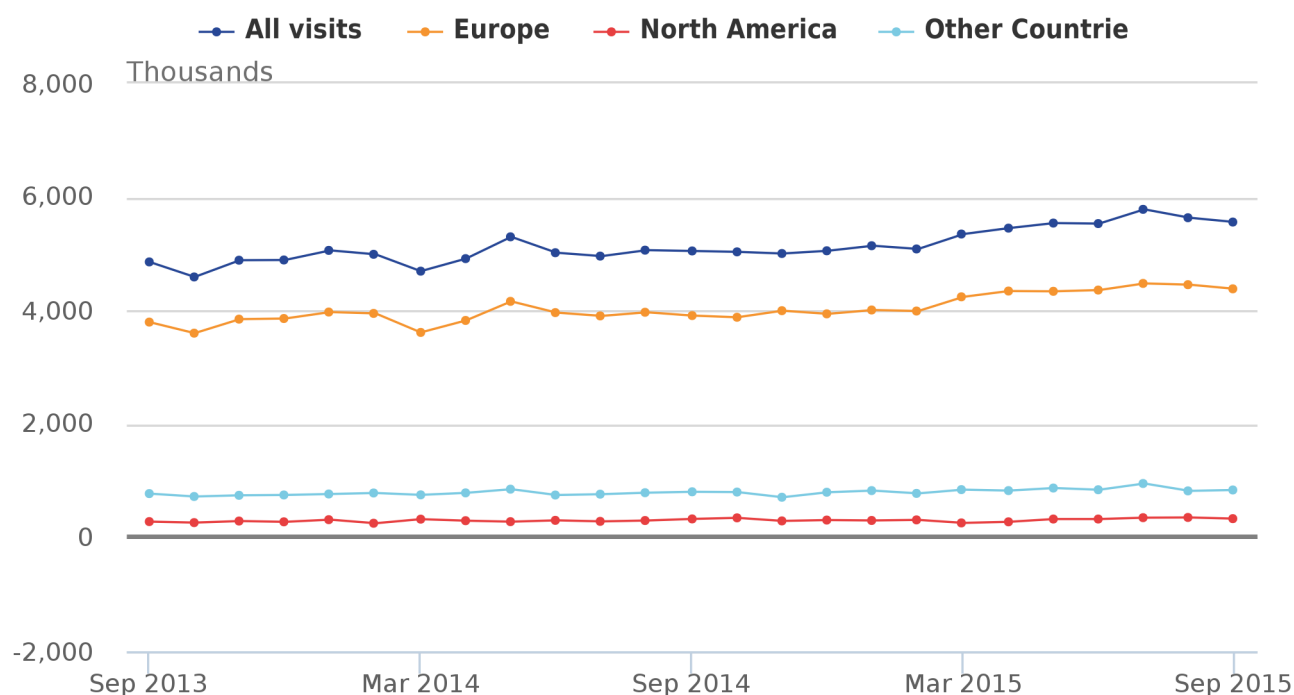
The estimated number of visits abroad by UK residents in September 2015 was 7.0 million. UK residents spent £4.3 billion during visits abroad in September 2015.

During the period July 2015 to September 2015, UK residents' visits abroad rose by 9% compared with the corresponding period a year earlier and they spent 9% more during this period.

In the 12 months to September 2015, the number of visits abroad by UK residents was 8% higher when compared with a year earlier and expenditure on these visits rose by 6% during this period. Visits to North America rose by 8%, Europe by 8% and Other Countries by 7%. Visits to friends or relatives rose by 8%, holiday visits rose by 10% and business visits rose by 1%.

Figure 4: UK residents' visits abroad by month (seasonally adjusted)

September 2013 to September 2015



Source: International Passenger Survey (IPS) - Office for National Statistics

7. Other overseas travel and tourism releases

More detailed analysis of overseas travel and tourism trends are provided in the publications:

- [Overseas Travel and Tourism Quarterly](#), latest publication for Quarter 2 April to June 2015 was published on 15 October 2015. This publication provides more detailed analysis of visits and spending, isolating aspects such as countries of visit, mode of travel used, nationality of visitors and regions of the UK visited. Quarter 3, July to September 2015 data will be published on 21 January 2016
- [Travel Trends](#), latest publication Travel Trends 2014 was published on 20 May 2015, the next publication (Travel Trends 2015) will be published in spring 2016. This publication provides final overseas travel and tourism estimates and more detailed analysis of visits and spending, including analysis by demographics, towns in the UK visited and countries visited by residents of different parts of the UK
- [TravelPac](#) is a data set which allows users to conduct their own analysis of quarterly and annual data on main variables. The datasets are provided in SPSS and Excel

Note that estimates are subject to revision between the monthly statistical bulletin and the quarterly publication and again when Travel Trends is published. Revisions result from more accurate passenger figures being made available. More information about the IPS revisions policy is available in the [Quality and Methodology Information \(350.4 Kb Pdf\)](#). The most up-to-date and accurate estimates for all published months can be found in the latest edition of the [Overseas Travel and Tourism monthly statistical bulletin](#).

Note that, although data by the International Passenger Survey (IPS) also feeds into the calculation of migration statistics, the Overseas Travel and Tourism publications do not provide any information relating to international migration.

8. Reference tables definitions

Abbreviations used in the tables:

NA ...not available

SA ...seasonally adjusted

NSA ...not seasonally adjusted

† ...point of earliest revision due to the most recent quarterly benchmarking

1 ...estimate (rounded to nearest 10,000 visits or £10 million)

Constituent items in the tables may not add exactly to totals due to rounding.

9. Exclusions

Trippers who cross the Channel or the North Sea but do not alight from the boat.

Migrants and persons travelling overseas to take up prearranged employment, together with military or diplomatic personnel, merchant seaman and airline personnel on duty.

Overseas residents passing through the UK on their way to other destinations (often known as transit passengers) but who do not stay overnight (however any, spending whilst here is included in the figures for earnings).

10. Background notes: Definitions

1. 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. The count of visits relates to UK residents returning to this country and to overseas residents leaving it.
2. **Day-visits** (that is, 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 figures for visits and expenditure. Please note they do not cover day visits to or from the Irish Republic across the land border, although they are included in total visits.
3. An **overseas visitor** means a person who, being permanently resident in a country outside the United Kingdom, 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).
4. When a resident of the UK has visited more than 1 country the entire visit, expenditure and stay are allocated to the **country stayed in for the longest time**.
5. 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.

6. Adjustments are made to the reported cost of an **inclusive tour** so that only the amount earned by the country of visit (for example, accommodation costs, car hire, etc.) is included. This estimate is then added to an individual's spending to give the total spending in the country of visit (see also note 7).
7. **Earnings and expenditure** figures cover the same categories of travellers as do the number of visits, except that in addition, the earnings figures include the expenditure by same day transit passengers, and the foreign exchange earnings and expenditure due to travel relating to the Channel Islands. They exclude payments for air, sea and rail travel to and from the UK. For any traveller on an inclusive tour an estimate of the return fare is deducted from the total tour price.
8. Earnings do not include the personal export of cars that have been purchased in the United Kingdom by overseas residents. Similarly spending excludes the personal import of cars by UK residents.
9. An estimate for purchases by overseas visitors at airport **duty free** shops is included in the figures for earnings. Such purchases on British carriers are still excluded.
10. The question to identify whether the cost of fares and accommodation can be separated was simplified in the 2014 questionnaire. Up to December 2013 the question read: "Was your accommodation abroad paid for as part of an inclusive tour or holiday where fares and accommodation cannot be separated?" From January 2014 the question read: "Can you separate the cost of your fares and accommodation?" The routing to this question has remained constant and all respondents are routed to this question, regardless of purpose of visit. If they answer yes they are then asked to supply the breakdown of costs. Respondents whose purpose for visits was not "holiday" are still able to answer that they cannot separate fare and accommodation costs. This change should improve the cost breakdown of information collected.

11. Background notes: Geographical areas

- North America:

Canada (including Greenland and St Pierre et Miquelon), USA (including Puerto Rico and US Virgin Islands).

- Europe:

All countries within the European Union (see below for listing) plus the following central and Eastern European countries: North Cyprus, Gibraltar, Iceland (including Faroe Islands), Norway, Switzerland (including Liechtenstein), Turkey, the former USSR and the states of former Yugoslavia.

- EU15:

All countries that joined the European Union before January 1 2004: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France (including Monaco), Finland, Germany, Greece, Irish Republic, Italy (including San Marino and Vatican City), Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal (including Azores and Madeira), Spain (including Canary Islands, the Balearic Islands and Andorra) and Sweden. Note that the UK is among the 15 countries that formed the European Union prior to January 2004, but due to the nature of the data displayed in the IPS reference table's data for the UK is excluded.

- European Union:

All countries that are current members of the European Union: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia**, Cyprus*, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France (including Monaco), Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Irish Republic, Italy (including San Marino and Vatican City), Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal (including Azores and Madeira), Romania, Spain (including Canary Islands, the Balearic Islands and Andorra), Slovakia, Slovenia and Sweden. Note that the UK is a member of the European Union but due to the nature of the data displayed in the IPS reference table's data for the UK is excluded.

- Other European Union:

All countries that joined the European Union from 1 January 2004 onwards: Bulgaria, Croatia**, Cyprus*, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

*Only the south of Cyprus is a member of the EU but the IPS is unable to separate North and South Cyprus for the period before May 2004 and so all of Cyprus is included in the European Union section until May 2004. From May 2004, only southern Cyprus is included in the European Union figures.

**Croatia joined the European Union on 1 July 2013 and data relating to Croatia collected from that date onwards has been included in the "European Union", "Other EU" and "Europe" categories. Data relating to Croatia collected prior to 1 July 2013 is included in the "Europe" category only.

12. Background notes: Purpose groupings

1. Holiday: Holiday or pleasure, to play amateur sport, cruise.
2. Business: Business.
3. Visit friends or relatives: Visit family, visit friends.
4. Miscellaneous: Other reasons or cases where the respondent is not able to give a single purpose as the main reason for visit.
5. People migrating (to or from the UK) or travelling as crew of aircraft, ships or trains are excluded from analysis in this publication.

13. Background notes: Sample methodology

1. The International Passenger Survey (IPS) produces estimates that are based on interviews with a stratified random sample of passengers entering and leaving the UK on the principle air, tunnel and sea routes. The main features of the stratification are: mode of transport (that is air, tunnel or sea), port and time of day.
2. The frequency of sampling within each stratum depends mainly on the variation of tourist expenditure and on the volume of migrants, for which the survey is also used to collect statistics. To collect overseas travel and tourism information, travellers passing through passport control are randomly selected for interview and in all some 281,000 interviews were conducted in 2014. Only interviews carried out at the end of a visit are used to generate estimates of expenditure and stay. Of these interviews, around 44,000 provided the published information on foreign visitors to the UK and around 57,000 were used for the estimate of UK residents travelling abroad. The interviews were conducted on a purely voluntary and anonymous basis.
3. Despite the introduction in April 1999 of interviewing on air and sea routes to and from the Irish Republic, the results from the IPS are still supplemented with estimates of travel between UK and the Irish Republic over the land border where no IPS interviewing takes place. Estimates for travel by land are based on information provided by the Central Statistics Office of the Irish Republic. Estimates of earnings and expenditure are also supplemented with figures from the Economic Advisor's Office of the States of Jersey, who provide information about the Channel Islands.
4. Over 95% of passengers entering and leaving the UK (excluding those travelling by land to and from the Irish Republic) travel on routes covered by the survey. The remainder are either passengers travelling at night when interviewing is suspended, or on those routes too small in volume to be covered. For those passengers, estimates are made and input into the main results of the survey.
5. At the major airports a sample of half days is taken and a fixed proportion of passengers are interviewed, whilst the smaller airports are sampled occasionally with the number of visits depending on the number of international passengers.
6. On the sea routes either particular cross-channel sailings are sampled and a fixed proportion of passengers interviewed on board, or a sample of days is taken and the passengers interviewed on the quay side.

7. In all, approximately 281,000 travellers were interviewed in 2014; the proportion varies from port to port.
8. UK residents who left a cruise boat at a foreign port and returned home on a scheduled air or sea service (for example, fly-cruises) are included in the IPS. Information on the number of passengers on cruises finishing in the UK is estimated in terms of the number of visits, length of stay and expenditure. These estimates are added to the cruise data collected from the IPS and included under the headings for "other areas", "holiday", and "sea". In 2010 a review took place of the methodology used to estimate the number of such visits. This review has led to more accurate methodology for estimating these visits and has resulted in an annual increase from the approximately 20,000 to 200,000 of such visits. The new estimates have been included since the publication Travel Trends 2010, published in late July 2011.
9. A complex weighting procedure is used in the survey results taking account of passengers' movement statistics produced by the BAA plc and the Civil Aviation Authority for air traffic by the Department for Transport for sea traffic. For Heathrow, Gatwick and Manchester allowances are made for passengers in transit who do not pass through passport control and hence do not cross the IPS counting line.
10. For further information please read the [IPS Methodology Report](#).

14. Accuracy of IPS estimates

Figures for the most recent months are provisional and subject to revision in light of (a) more accurate data on passenger figures becoming available at the end of each quarter and (b) additional passenger data obtained at the end of each year.

IPS monthly estimates are revised in line with the IPS revisions policy. The revisions policy is available in the [IPS Quality and Methodology Information \(350.4 Kb Pdf\)](#) paper to assist users in the understanding of the cycle and frequency of data revisions. Users of this bulletin are strongly advised to read this policy before using this data for research or policy related purposes.

Planned revisions usually arise from either the receipt of revised passenger traffic data or the correction of errors to existing data identified later in the quarterly and annual processing cycle. Those of significant magnitude will be highlighted and explained.

Revisions to published monthly IPS estimates can be expected at the following times in the normal overseas travel and tourism publication schedule:

- monthly estimates for the current reference year will usually be revised and statistically benchmarked across the quarter following the publication of the quarterly estimates within which that month falls
- monthly and quarterly estimates for the current reference year will be revised in the survey year's annual data release (Travel Trends)
- monthly estimates, for the full calendar year, will be statistically benchmarked as part of the annual data processing and the monthly estimates for the year will then be replaced in the monthly release with the benchmarked estimate following publication of the annual report (Travel Trends)

All other revisions will be regarded as unplanned and will be dealt with by non-standard releases. All revisions will be released in compliance with the same principles as other new information. Please refer to [our guide to statistical revisions](#).

The main series are seasonally adjusted. This aids interpretation by identifying seasonal patterns and calendar effects and removing them from the unadjusted data. The resulting figures give a more accurate indication of underlying movements in the series.

The estimates produced from the IPS are subject to sampling errors that result because not every traveller to and 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 lower its sampling error. The survey sample size is approximately 25,000 per month. However, as the intensity of the sampling varies at each port, figures of a similar magnitude will not necessarily have the same percentage sampling error.

The IPS has a clustered sample design. The full effects of this complex sample design upon each of the main estimates is calculated and it is calculated the “complex” sampling errors which are quoted.

Accuracy of the estimates is expressed in terms of confidence intervals. The confidence interval is a range within which the true value of a proportion lies with known probability. For example, the 95% confidence interval represents the range into which there are 19 chances out of 20 that the true figure would fall had all passengers been sampled. This is obtained as +/- 1.96 the standard error.

Table 3: Confidence intervals relating to overseas travel and tourism estimates in September 2015

September 2015 monthly estimates	Estimate	Relative 95% Confidence Interval (+/- % of the estimate)
Visits to UK by overseas residents (thousands)	3,030	6.5%
Earnings from visits to UK (£ million)	2,180	10.3%
Visits abroad by UK residents (thousands)	7,030	3.5%
Expenditure on visits abroad (£ million)	4,290	4.6%

Source: International Passenger Survey - Office for National Statistics

Confidence intervals for [quarterly](#) and [annual](#) estimates are provided in the relevant overseas travel and tourism publications published by us.

One indication of the reliability of the main indicators in this release can be obtained by monitoring the size of revisions. Table 4 records the size and pattern of revisions to the quarterly IPS data which have occurred over the last 5 years to the following main seasonally adjusted estimates:

- the number of visits by overseas residents to the UK (GMAT)
- the number of visits abroad by UK residents (GMAX)
- earnings made from overseas residents in the UK (GMAZ)
- expenditure abroad by UK residents (GMBB)

Table 4: Revisions over the last 5 years

	Value in the latest period (2015 quarter 3, Jul to Sep 2015)	Revisions between first publications and estimates 3 years later	
		Averages over the last 5 years (bias)	Average over the last 5 years without regard to sign (average absolute revision)
GMAT	8,860	15.50	108.50
GMAX	16,980	112.50	271.50
GMAZ	5,250	*52.50	*99.50
GMBB	9,710	*154.00	*175.00

Source: International Passenger Survey - Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Units: GMAT and GMAX in thousands
2. A statistical test has been applied to find out if the revision to each key indicator is statistically different from zero. An asterisk (*) indicates where the mean revision has been significantly different from zero

15. Background notes: Important change in IPS sampling

Traffic at all airports and seaports is monitored regularly to assess if they should be included in the IPS sample. As a consequence Liverpool and Prestwick airports were introduced into the sample at the beginning of 2005. Between 2000 and 2004, traffic through Liverpool had quadrupled to "over 2 and a half million" international passengers, while at Prestwick there was a 5 fold increase to nearly "1 and a half million" passengers over the same period. The inclusion of these ports in the IPS sample was shown to cause a discontinuity in regional results and methodology was modified to account for this. Similarly in early 2008, each of Doncaster, Bournemouth, Southampton and Heathrow Terminal 5 were added to the sample and in 2009 Aberdeen and Belfast International airports were added. Heathrow Terminal 2 was added to the sample from August 2014. Newhaven to Dieppe crossing was added to the sample from October 2014. Heathrow Terminal 1 ceased operation in July 2015 and was therefore removed from the International Passenger Survey sample.

16. Background notes: Changes to the IPS in 2009

1. From January 2009, certain elements of the IPS have been revised to address recommendations put forward by the Interdepartmental Task Force on Migration Statistics, 2006. The changes involve revision to sample design, weighting and imputation methodology. These changes resulted in some discontinuity in estimates. An analysis was conducted and published in 2009. More details are available from the IPS team.
2. The model used to produce seasonal adjustment estimates is reviewed approximately every 2 years. A review was conducted in late 2009 and the new model was used for the first time to produce the seasonally adjusted estimates used in the December 2009 statistical bulletin publication. Details of the seasonal adjustment model can be obtained from the IPS team using the contact details attached.

17. Background notes: Special events

Statistical series are affected by special events. However, as explained in our special events policy, it is not possible to make an estimate of the effect of particular events only on the basis of information collected in those series. However, we publish a [special events calendar](#) which may help the reader put some context on reported estimates.

18. Background notes: Further statistics and other analyses

IPS data files

IPS data for the years 1993 onwards are available online from [our website](#). Travelpac is a free and simple to use dataset for those wishing to make further analyses of IPS data. It contains files provided in Excel and SPSS formats. More details can be found at [Travelpac, 2014](#).

Monthly figures of overseas travel and tourism

These are published in the [overseas travel and tourism statistical bulletin](#) available from:

Office for National Statistics
Government Buildings
Cardiff Road
Newport
NP10 8XG.

Telephone: +44 (0)1633 455296 or from [our website](#).

Further statistics

More detailed statistics covering 1980 to 2014 may be found in the 2014 annual report, Travel Trends which is produced by us. A copy can be downloaded at [Travel Trends, 2014](#).

Other analyses

For general questions about the IPS and requests for ad hoc data analysis (a service governed by our Income and Charging policy):

Telephone: +44 (0)1633 455678

Email: socialsurveys@ons.gsi.gov.uk

Notes for background notes: Further statistics and other analyses

1. The information provided to us by respondents is treated as strictly confidential as directed by the [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#). It is used to produce statistics that will not identify any individuals.
2. A list of the job titles of those given [pre-publication access](#) to the contents of this statistical bulletin is available on the website.

19. Background notes

1. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available by visiting www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html or from the Media Relations Office email: media.relations@ons.gsi.gov.uk