

# International Passenger Survey methodological information

The International Passenger Survey background notes outline dataset definitions, sample methodology, geography and purpose groupings.

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## Table of contents

1. [Exclusions](#)
2. [Definitions](#)
3. [Sample methodology](#)
4. [Important change in IPS sampling](#)
5. [Changes to the IPS in 2009](#)
6. [Special events](#)
7. [Further statistics and other analyses](#)

# 1 . 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 pre-arranged 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 there is included in the figures for earnings).

# 2 . Definitions

## 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. The count of visits relates to UK residents returning to this country and to overseas residents leaving it.

## 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 figures for visits and expenditure. Please note they do not cover day visits to or from the Republic of Ireland across the land border, although they are included in total visits.

## 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 1 country the entire visit, 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.

## **Inclusive tours**

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 4).

## **Earnings**

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

## **Earnings and expenditure**

Earnings and expenditure figures cover the same categories of travellers as do the number of visits, except that the earnings figures also include the expenditure by same day transit passengers, and 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.

Earnings do not include the personal export of cars that have been purchased in the UK by overseas residents. Similarly, spending excludes the personal import of cars by UK residents.

## **Duty free**

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.

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.

## **3 . Sample methodology**

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.

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 some 289,000 interviews were conducted in 2015. Only interviews carried out at the end of a visit are used to generate estimates of expenditure and stay. Of these interviews, around 45,500 provided the published information on foreign visitors to the UK and around 61,000 were used for the estimate of UK residents travelling abroad. The interviews were conducted on a purely voluntary and anonymous basis.

Despite the introduction in April 1999 of interviewing on air and sea routes to and from the Republic of Ireland, the results from the IPS are still supplemented with estimates of travel between UK and the Republic of Ireland over the land border where no IPS interviewing takes place. Estimates of travel by land are based on information provided by the Central Statistics Office of the Republic of Ireland. 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.

Around 90% of passengers entering and leaving the UK (excluding those travelling by land to and from the Republic of Ireland) 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.

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.

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.

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.

A complex weighting procedure is used in the survey results taking account of passengers' movement statistics produced by the BAA plc and AGS Airports Limited for air traffic, by the Department for Transport for sea traffic, EuroTunnel and EuroStar for tunnel traffic. In addition, for the monthly travel and tourism estimates, air passenger movement statistics from Manchester, Birmingham, Bristol, Edinburgh and East Midlands Airports are also incorporated where final CAA statistics are not yet available. 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. The organisations previously mentioned, that carried out the original collection and analysis of the passenger flow data, bear no responsibility for the further analysis or production of outputs and interpretation.

For further information please read the [IPS Methodology Report](#).

## **4 . Important change in IPS sampling**

Traffic at all airports and seaports is monitored regularly to assess if they should be included in the International Passenger Survey (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 2.5 million" international passengers, while at Prestwick there was a five-fold increase to nearly "1.5 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, Doncaster, Bournemouth, Southampton and Heathrow Terminal 5 were added to the sample. In 2009 Aberdeen and Belfast International airports were added. The new Heathrow Terminal 2 was re-introduced 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 IPS sample. In October 2015, data collection for the Portsmouth routes changed to being entirely quayside in the UK. From Quarter 2 (Apr to June) 2016, Prestwick and Bournemouth airports were removed from the sample along with Ashford and Ebbsfleet Eurostar stations.

## 5 . Changes to the IPS in 2009

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](#).

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 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.

## 6 . 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 on the information collected in those series.

## 7 . Further statistics and other analyses

### IPS data files

IPS data for the years 1993 onwards are available online from the [Leisure and Tourism all articles page](#). 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: 2015](#).

### Monthly figures of overseas travel and tourism

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

### Further statistics

More detailed statistics covering 1980 to 2014 may be found in our 2015 annual report, [Travel trends](#).

### Other analyses

For general questions about the IPS and requests for user-requested data analysis (a service governed by our [Income and charging policy](#)):

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