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BACKGROUND, DOCUMENT

Domestic tourism statistics: statement on methodological review

This statement describes plans to undertake a review of the methodology of domestic overnight tourism statistics during Spring 2024.

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2021 to 2023: a summary

From 2011 to 2019, domestic overnight tourism statistics for Great Britain were collected through the Great Britain Tourism Survey. In 2019, following a review of the requirements and methods for producing these statistics, substantial changes were introduced as part of a new combined online survey collecting data on both domestic overnight trips as well as domestic day trips. This represents a fundamental change in the way data is collected for overnight visits, and a break in the statistical series. Therefore, estimates of domestic overnight tourism for 2019 and earlier are not comparable to estimates for 2021 and later.

The new methodology was scheduled for implementation in 2020. However, this was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns. As the lockdowns restricted movement and did not allow leisure trips to be undertaken, 2020 was used as a pilot year, allowing for the new methodology to be tested and for additional analysis to be undertaken.

All estimates published under the new methodology have been labelled as 'experimental statistics', and later 'official statistics in development', to enable testing and further modification to meet user needs ^[footnote 1]. **Further information on official statistics in development is available from the Office for National Statistics website.**

The **Background Quality Reports** describe the methodology used from 2021 onwards, as well as any revisions that were made, the reasons for those revisions, and their impact upon estimates.

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Methodological review

When full year estimates for 2023 became available, analysts from VisitEngland, VisitScotland and Visit Wales reviewed the data for 2022 and 2023, with a view to gain a clearer view of emerging trends in domestic tourism in the post-pandemic period. It was agreed that there was considerable volatility in this data, and that this volatility sometimes produces estimates and trends that do not appear credible and contradict findings from other sources, such as the [Domestic Sentiment Tracker \(Visit Britain\)](#), as well as [occupancy data for Wales](#) and for [Great Britain as a whole \(Visit Britain\)](#). For instance, current estimates for October to December 2023 indicate a 20% decrease in the volume of domestic overnight trips taken in Great Britain, compared to October to December 2022. It was also agreed that leaving this volatility unchecked would negatively affect the accuracy of estimates, the time series, and any identified emerging trends. Therefore, the decision was taken to begin a methodological review.

The methodological review will examine key aspects of the current methodology and consider how the current methodology can be improved. The review will be a collaborative process, involving analysts at VisitEngland, VisitScotland and Visit Wales. Due to the comprehensive nature of the review, and the complexity of the methodology, it is not possible to determine what will be changed at this time. However, given the volatility observed in the data, it is likely that improving the performance of caps will be addressed in the review.

Following the conclusion of the review, data for domestic overnight trips in 2022 and 2023 will be reprocessed and revised accordingly. It is not possible to state

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how estimates for 2022 and 2023 will change, but it is anticipated that revised estimates will provide a more accurate view of trends over time, due to reduced volatility in the data. The review will examine domestic overnight trips, but learnings from this review will be applied to domestic day trips where appropriate.

Next steps

Until revised estimates are published for domestic overnight trips in 2022 and 2023 are published, users are advised to exercise caution in using and interpreting current estimates. The methodological review is expected to take at least 10 weeks to complete. As a result, scheduled publications in this statistical series have been postponed. It is expected that scheduled publications will be published approximately 3 months later than previously planned.

Footnotes

[1] In September 2023, the term ‘experimental statistics’ was replaced by ‘official statistics in development’. Further information on this change is available from the [Office for Statistics Regulation website](#).

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