

**Standard Report
On
Methods and Quality

For
The Household Travel Survey**

**This documentation applies to the reporting period:
2017**

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1 Overview

The purpose of the Household Travel Survey (HTS) is to measure domestic and outbound travel patterns involving overnight stays and associated details (expenditure, purpose of trip, type of accommodation used etc.) of Irish residents. It is a voluntary postal survey of private households, which is carried out each month. The HTS is a stratified random sample of 4,600 private households (approximately 0.3% of all private households). The form needs to be completed for every member of each household surveyed. The sample is selected randomly from the Electoral Register and stratified by District Electoral Division. The most recent results for Quarter 4 2017 were published in T+3 months. The principal outputs are the number of trips taken; number of nights spent away from home and total expenditure on domestic and outbound travel by Irish residents. It is one of several CSO surveys conducted to comply with the requirements of Regulation (EU) No 692/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the collection of statistical information in the field of tourism. The data is also used extensively by all tourism agencies (e.g. Failte Ireland, Tourism Ireland), Government Departments, academia and the general public.

2 General Information

2.1 Statistical Category

Primary statistical survey.

2.2 Area of Activity

Tourism and Travel.

2.3 Organisational Unit Responsible, Persons to Contact

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2.4 Objectives and Purpose; History

The purpose of the HTS, which commenced in the first quarter of 2000, is to measure domestic and outbound travel patterns involving overnight stays and associated details (expenditure, purpose of trip, type of accommodation used etc.) of Irish residents. It is used to satisfy national demands for tourism statistics and also to meet with some of the obligations of EU legislation.

2.5 Periodicity

The survey is conducted each calendar month with each sample of households changing from month to month. The Household Travel Release published quarterly data until Q4 2009. Annual data was published for 2010 and 2011. Both annual and quarterly data are published from 2012 onwards.

2.6 Client

National/EU level requirement.

2.7 Users

- Failte Ireland.
- Tourism Ireland.
- Research centres and universities.
- International Embassies in Ireland Survey.
- Eurostat and other International Tourism Organisations.
- The general public.

2.8 Legal basis

The Household Travel is conducted in part to comply with the following EU regulations:

- Council Directive 95/57/EC- up to then end of 2011
- Regulation (EU) No 692/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council – from 2012 onwards

3 Statistical Concepts, Methods

3.1 Subject of the Statistics

The subject matter is the domestic and outbound travel patterns involving overnight stays of Irish residents.

3.2 Units of Observation/Collection Units/Units of Presentation

The survey population is individuals living in private households. The units of collection are trips taken by members of the household, the number of nights away from home, the amount spent on these trips and several other variables. The units of presentation are the number of trips taken (thousands), the number of nights spent away (thousands), the total amount spent on travel (€m).

3.3 Data Sources

All survey data is collected via postal survey of private households on a monthly basis by the Central Statistics Office.

3.4 Reporting Unit/Respondents

The survey includes the travel patterns of all individuals in a household during the survey reference month.

3.5 Type of Survey/Process

Sample survey.

3.6 Characteristics of the Sample/Process

3.6.1 Population and Sampling Frame

The reference population is all private households in Ireland. All individuals in the household are included. The sample was chosen using the 2011 Electoral Register as the sampling frame. From Quarter 2 2016 onwards the sample is taken from the 2015 Electoral Register.

3.6.2 Sampling Design

The HTS is a random stratified sample. Each month, over 4,600 households (or approximately 0.3% of all private households) are randomly selected from the Electoral Register where the selection is stratified by District Electoral Division.

3.7 Survey Technique/Data Transfer

Survey questionnaires are distributed and returned by post. A reminder form is issued to non-responding households three weeks after the initial form was issued.

3.8 Questionnaire (including explanations)

The HTS questionnaire contains some demographic questions on the household, for example, age and gender of each member. It also asks the following questions about all overnight trips taken in the survey month:

- Destination
- Number of persons on each trip
- Date returned from trip
- Main purpose of journey

- Total nights spent away
- Main type of accommodation used
- Method of booking
- Main type of transport used
- Total expenditure on each trip
- Number of nights spent in Ireland as part of any foreign trip
- Breakdown of expenditure (e.g. expenditure on accommodation, transport, valuables, durable consumer goods and all other expenditure).

3.9 Participation in the Survey

Voluntary.

3.10 Characteristics of the Survey/Process and its Results

Definitions

Tourism

Means the activity of visitors taking a trip to a main destination outside their usual environment, for less than a year, for any main purpose, including business, leisure or other personal purpose, other than to be employed by a resident entity in the place visited.

Usual environment

The usual environment of an individual is defined as the geographical area (though not necessarily a contiguous one) within which an individual conducts his/her regular life routines. Places that are frequently visited are part of a person's *usual environment* even though they may be located at a considerable distance (or in another country) from the place of residence.

For the purposes of this survey, trips taken on a weekly or more frequent basis are considered to be within a respondent's usual environment and are thus excluded from estimates for tourism trips. The one exception being that of holiday homes which although may be frequently visited, are considered outside the *usual environment* according to the UNWTO 2008 International Recommendations on Tourism Statistics (IRTS).

Trip

A trip refers to the travel by a person from the time of departure from his/her usual residence until he/she returns: it thus refers to a round trip. A trip is made up of visits to different places.

Domestic tourism

Domestic tourism is defined as the activities of residents of the Republic of Ireland travelling to and staying in places only within the Republic of Ireland but outside their usual environment.

The following are excluded from domestic travel:

- Residents travelling within the country with the intention of changing their usual residence.
- Persons who travel to work temporarily in institutions within the country.
- Persons who travel regularly or frequently between neighbouring localities to work or study.
- Nomads and persons without fixed residence.
- Armed forces on manoeuvre.

Outbound tourism

Outbound tourism is defined as the activities of residents of the Republic of Ireland travelling to and staying in places outside the Republic of Ireland and outside their usual environment. From 2012 onwards expenditure on outbound travel includes expenditure on car imports. Car imports were over €300 million in 2017.

The following are excluded from outbound travel:

- Persons leaving the country as migrants, including dependants accompanying or joining them.
- Persons, known as border workers, residing near the border in the Republic of Ireland but working in the North of Ireland.
- Diplomats, consular officers and members of the armed forces when travelling outside of the Republic of Ireland on assignment. This includes dependants and household employees accompanying or joining them.
- Persons travelling as refugees or nomads.

National tourism

National tourism is defined as *Domestic* tourism plus *Outbound* tourism.

Overnight visitor

An overnight visitor is a visitor who stays at least one night in collective or private accommodation in the place, county or country visited. A visitor is defined as any person travelling to a place other than that of usual environment for less than 12 months and whose main purpose of trip is other than the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited (i.e. work). Consequently the following are excluded:

- Short-distance local transport and commuting i.e. more or less regular trips between place of work/study and place of residence.
- Routine or regular visits e.g. visiting parents every weekend.
- For visits of more than 12 consecutive months, a traveller will be considered a resident of that place (from a statistical definition).
- Migratory movements for work purposes.

Tourism Expenditure (up to the end of 2011)

Total consumption expenditure is any expenditure made by a visitor or on behalf of a visitor during their trip and stay at their destination.

Tourism expenditure includes purchases of consumer goods and services inherent in travel and stay, purchases of durable goods for personal use, souvenirs and gifts for family and friends.

The following outlays or acquisitions are excluded:

- Purchases for commercial purposes, for resale, purchases made on behalf of an employer during a business trip.
- Capital type investments or transactions engaged in by visitors, such as land, housing, real estate, works of art and other important acquisitions (such as cars, caravans, boats, second houses), even though they may be used in the future for tourism travel purposes.
- Cash given to relatives or friends during the trip, which does not represent payment of tourism goods or services, as well as donations made to institutions.

Tourism Expenditure (from 2012 onwards)

Total consumption expenditure is any expenditure made by a visitor or on behalf of a visitor during their trip and stay at their destination.

Tourism expenditure includes purchases of consumer goods and services inherent in travel and stay, purchases of durable goods for personal use, souvenirs and gifts for family and friends.

Expenditure on valuables such as paintings, works of art, jewellery and on durable consumer goods such as cars, boats, mobile homes and caravans are also included.

The following outlays or acquisitions are excluded:

- Purchases for commercial purposes, for resale, purchases made on behalf of an employer during a business trip.
- Investments or transactions engaged in by visitors, such as land, housing or real estate.
- Cash given to relatives or friends during the trip, which does not represent payment of tourism goods or services, as well as donations made to institutions.

Data published

Please see section 3.8 for details of information that is collected in the survey. The most recent release is available at <http://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/tourismandtravel/>

The release focuses on domestic and outbound travel patterns and expenditure.

In relation to domestic travel, the number of trips taken, number of nights spent away and the average length of stay is published according to the following classifications:

- Domestic region visited (NUTS2)
- Reason for journey
- Accommodation type

Total expenditure on domestic travel is published by the following categories:

- Reason for journey.
- Region visited (NUTS2)

Outbound travel patterns are also published by the number of trips taken, number of nights spent away and the average length of stay according to the following classifications:

- Region visited (broad categories, e.g. EU, North America etc.).
- Detailed breakdown of country/region visited.
- Reason for journey
- Accommodation type

Total expenditure on outbound travel is published by the following categories:

- Reason for journey
- Region visited (broad categories)
- Detailed breakdown of country/region visited

Additional data and tables (both quarterly and annual data) are also published on the StatBank on CSO website.

<http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/statire/SelectTable/Omrade0.asp?Planguage=0>

3.11 Classifications used

There are a number of different classifications used in the publication of the Household Travel Survey. Examples include age groups, gender, type of accommodation used, method of booking, region/country visited, purpose of trip, type of transport used.

3.12 Regional Breakdown of Results

The domestic regional classifications for the survey are based on the NUTS (Nomenclature of Territorial Units) classification used by Eurostat. The NUTS 3 regions correspond to the eight Regional Authorities established under the Local Government Act, 1991 (Regional Authorities) (Establishment) Order, 1993, which came into operation on 1 January 1994. The NUTS 2 regions, which were proposed by Government and agreed by Eurostat in 1999, are a more aggregated version of the NUTS 3 regions. Data is published at NUTS2 level. The classification is as follows:

1. NUTS2 Regions

Border, Midland and Western

Cavan	Laois
Donegal	Longford
Leitrim	Offaly
Louth	Westmeath
Monaghan	Galway City & County
Sligo	Mayo
Roscommon	

Southern and Eastern

Dublin City	South Tipperary	Clare
Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown	Waterford City	Limerick City
Fingal	Waterford County	Limerick County
South Dublin	Wexford	North Tipperary
Kildare	Cork City	
Meath	Cork County	
Carlow	Kerry	
Kilkenny	Wicklow	

4 Production of the Statistics, Data Processing, Quality Assurance

4.1 Data Capture

Data is collected from households by means of a postal questionnaire. This is returned directly from the households to the CSO Tourism and Travel Section. The returned questionnaires are then scanned and verified using Teleform technology at the CSO. A reminder form is issued to non-responding households three weeks after the initial form was issued.

4.2 Coding

There is limited coding for this survey. All travel destinations listed by respondents on the completed HTS forms are coded at verification stage.

4.3 Data Editing

Forms are verified and information not identified by the scanning process is checked and confirmed. Edit programs are then run to test for inconsistencies and missing values within the data (e.g. number of nights, destination,

expenditure, age, gender etc.). Most missing data is either imputed (e.g. cost of journey data and missing age) or estimated. Grossed up results are checked against results for previous periods.

4.4 Imputation (for Non-Response or Incomplete Data Sets)

Most missing data is either imputed or estimated. The principle variables imputed are expenditure incurred on the trip and also age. It is assumed that non-responding households have the same patterns as those households that respond. These procedures are carried out using SAS.

4.5 Grossing and Weighting

From Quarter 1 2012 onwards, survey results for domestic travel are weighted using population estimates broken down by *sex, age group and region (NUTS 3)*. These population estimates are provided by the CSO's Demography Unit.

A two way weighting process is used for outbound travel. From Quarter 1 2012 onwards, survey data for outbound travel is weighted to agree with population estimates broken down by *sex, age group and region (NUTS3)*. The population estimates are provided by the CSO's Demography Unit. The results for outbound travel are further weighted to agree with the Tourism and Travel results.

Break in series

Arising from these changes in methodology, a discontinuity in all of the series relating to domestic and outbound travel has occurred from 2012 onwards and therefore these results are not directly comparable with the results prior to 2012.

It should be noted that there are some differences between the Household Travel Survey and Tourism and Travel Survey:

- The HTS includes travel to Northern Ireland while the TTS only includes overseas travel (it excludes travel to Northern Ireland).
- The HTS only includes travel where there is at least one overnight stay while the TTS covers both same-day trips and overnight trips.

4.6 Computation of Outputs, Estimation Methods Used

All records are scanned and verified and any information not identified by the scanning process is confirmed. Edit programs are then run to test for inconsistencies and missing values within the data (for example, number of nights, destination, and cost of journey). Some missing data is imputed (e.g. cost of journey and age data). Survey results are then weighted to agree with population estimates broken down by *gender, age group and region (NUTS3)*. Results for outbound travel are subsequently further weighted to agree with the results of the Tourism and Travel survey.

4.7 Other Quality Assurance Techniques Used

Due to the fact that the survey is distributed by post, there is no fieldwork operation.

Results for each year/quarter are checked against the same period from previous year for consistency.

5 Quality

5.1 Relevance

The HTS is one of a number of CSO Tourism surveys carried out to meet the requirements of Regulation (EU) No 692/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 July 2011.

It is an important indicator of domestic and outbound travel by Irish residents and the data is extensively used by Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland and the macroeconomic divisions of the CSO.

5.2 Accuracy and Reliability

5.2.1. Sampling Effect & representivity

Not currently available.

5.2.2. Non-Sampling Effects

5.2.2.1 Quality of the Data Sources used (other than survey register)

The only external source of data (apart from the survey register) is the population estimates from the CSO's Demography Unit– these are used for grossing of the results.

5.2.2.2 Register Coverage

The sampling frame is currently based on the 2011 Register of Electors file. From Quarter 2 2016 onwards the sample is taken from the 2015 electoral Register. This register would appear to over represent the older age groups while the opposite is true for the younger age groups. In addition, this register also under represents non nationals (as they may not have been registered to vote) so their travel patterns and expenditure may be understated.

5.2.2.3 Non-response (Unit and Item)

While the extent of item non response has not been quantified, the question on age and employment status can be sensitive and respondents may not be prepared to reveal this information.

Overall response rate for the most recently published results (year 2017) was 42.2%. The most common reasons for non-response are:

- The household does not wish to participate in the survey.
- Household member(s) are deceased/ gone away.

5.2.2.4 Measurement Errors

Measurement error is not formally measured for this survey; however the following should be noted:

1. Questionnaire

- The purpose of the survey and how the respondent was selected is stated clearly on the front of the form.
- It is ensured as much as possible that the questionnaire is clear with definitions provided as appropriate
- Each question is clearly laid out and exact requirements are detailed.
- A telephone number and email address is provided on the form in the event that a respondent needs help or advice on completing the form.

2. Data collection method

- The collection method is by post. This method is by itself unlikely to be a source of measurement error.

3. Interviewer

- This is a postal survey and therefore this section does not apply. However, staff in Tourism and Travel Section are available to answer queries and to help people complete the form.

4. Respondent

- As it is a monthly survey, the recall period is thus one month and this should not present problems for respondents remembering every overnight trip that they took during that period.
- Each question has a heading which facilitates understanding by the respondent.
- Questions asked are specific and in most cases are in tick box style.
- An 'Other' category is provided in the list of possible answers to questions where appropriate.
- The questionnaire does not include any questions of a personal nature, for example, income questions.
- Confidentiality is clearly emphasised on the front of the questionnaire.

5.2.2.5 Processing Errors

a. Data capture errors

All valid survey forms are scanned and verified when they are returned to the office. Any information not identified by the scanning process are shown as edits, are checked and changed as necessary by staff in Tourism and Travel Section.

b. Data editing

A series of edit programs are then run to test for inconsistencies and missing values within the data - examples include:

- Respondent indicated that a trip was taken but no details on trip entered.
- Missing gender and/ or age details.
- Range checks, e.g. for domestic trips, code entered for destination county outside of range of acceptable values, month respondent returned from trip falls outside survey month.

Most missing data is imputed (e.g. total expenditure on trip, missing age data) or estimated.

c. Coding error

The extent of processing error is very small as there is a very limited level of coding done in the HTS.

5.2.2.6 Model-related Effects

It is assumed for the purposes of imputing missing expenditure/age data that non-respondents have the same patterns as respondents.

5.3 Timeliness and Punctuality

5.3.1 Provisional Results

There are no provisional results published for the HTS.

5.3.2 Final Results

Results were published on a quarterly basis until Quarter 4 2009 (only annual data was published for 2010 and 2011) and the most recent annual and quarterly release (Quarter 4 2017) was published in T+3 months. Data for 2017 was sent to Eurostat in t+3 months.

The publication contains tables, covering travel patterns and expenditure for domestic and outbound travel. The travel data (in terms of number of trips and number of nights spent) is categorised according to region of residence, region visited, gender, reason for journey, type of accommodation used, mode of transport and length of stay. Expenditure data is categorised according to region visited and reason for journey.

5.4 Coherence

The nearest comparisons can be made with the expenditure data from the Tourism and Travel frontier survey. The key item for comparison is that of expenditure by Irish residents while travelling abroad. The following table illustrates the results for 2000 – 2009 for both the HTS and the Tourism and Travel survey.

**Table 1 : Comparison of expenditure on foreign travel by Irish Residents
2000-2009: HTS and Tourism Survey**

	€m		
Year	HTS	Tourism & Travel	Difference
2000	3,187	2,804	383
2001	3,650	3,224	426
2002	2,252	3,952	-1,700
2003	4,092	4,158	-66
2004	4,258	4,179	79
2005	5,044	4,773	271
2006	6,134	5,318	816
2007	7,345	6,163	1,182
2008	7,187	6,912	275
2009	5,787	5,473	314

It is important to note that the HTS data includes all expenditure for Irish visitors abroad while the Tourism and Travel survey data includes international fares but excludes fares paid by Irish visitors abroad to Irish carriers.

The compilation of the HTS has undergone the following methodological change from 2010 onwards:

The methodology adopted to calibrate outbound travel data from the Household Travel Survey (HTS) to the frontier survey data has been changed from January 2010. The CSO compiles outward travel by Irish residents from two separate sources: (1) the Tourism and Travel Survey (TTS), which is a frontier survey of Irish air and sea ports and (2) the HTS which is a postal survey. While both of these surveys yield broadly comparable results, in order to avoid confusion, the aggregate results from the HTS are calibrated to match the totals on the TTS in respect of number of trips, bed nights and total expenditure. As the HTS has a more disaggregated breakdown of subcategories, the breakdowns shown in this release are those compiled in the HTS. It should be noted that the breakdowns shown in this release can be quite different to those shown in the Tourism and Travel release – this is due to the different types of survey and data collection methods involved.

5.5 Comparability

The HTS has been carried out since Q1 2000. Due to a change in weighting methodology there is a discontinuity in all of the series relating to outbound and domestic travel from 2012 onwards and therefore these results are not directly comparable with the results prior to 2012.

5.6 Accessibility and Clarity

5.6.1 Assistance to Users, Special Analyses

The HTS release is available on the CSO website at <http://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/tourismandtravel/>

Releases from previous survey reference periods is available at <http://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/tourismandtravel/archive/>

Summary details on the HTS methodology including a copy of the questionnaire is available at <http://www.cso.ie/en/methods/tourismandtravel/householdtravelsurvey/>

5.6.2 Revisions

Revisions may be made to the data as required. These are highlighted on the release.

5.6.3 Publications

5.6.3.1 Releases, Regular Publications

The survey results are published in the form of a release and this is available at <http://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/tourismandtravel/>

5.6.3.2 Internet

The release is available at <http://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/tourismandtravel/>

Additional quarterly and annual data are also available at <http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/statire/SelectTable/Omrade0.asp?Planguage=0>

5.6.4 Confidentiality

The confidentiality of all information provided by respondents to the CSO is guaranteed by law under the Statistics Act, 1993. All CSO office personal become 'Officers of Statistics' on appointment and are liable to penalties under this Act if they divulge confidential information to any outside person or body. Every precaution is taken to ensure that there are no violations of this principle throughout the survey process. All forms are scanned and verified as soon as they are received in the office and the original forms are then stored in a secure and locked cabinet. Data is only published in aggregate form only.

6 Additional documentation and publications

The Statistical Yearbook of Ireland contains statistics on all domains and is available at: <http://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/statisticalyearbookofireland/>