

International Visitor Survey review 2018

Progress report 4

This is the fourth progress report of the International Visitor Survey (IVS) review, initiated by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE).

In this report we focus on progress in the past month and the upcoming draft report of the review.

Release of draft report to stakeholders

A draft report will be released to key stakeholders in June 2018, seeking their comments, prior to the publication of the final report in July.

The draft report was originally scheduled for release in May. The date has been extended to June so that we can complete an assessment of two specific areas, namely statistical benchmarking and outlier detection and treatment. This is a critical element of the review.

More details are provided in the next section on the need for revision.

Key stakeholders, as listed in the review terms of reference, are Kantar-TNS, Tourism Industry Aotearoa, Regional Tourism NZ, Tourism NZ, Department of Conservation, and Tourism Research Australia.

Need for revision to the IVS series

Deciding if there is a need to revise the IVS series is part of the final phase of the review and is driven by findings the review team has made during the earlier phases.

Our approach has been to systematically investigate possible sources of error and rule them in or out. These include:

- Kantar-TNS or MBIE changes to the processing systems
- errors in the exchange or use of data
- changes in the compositional mix of travellers and spend drivers
- errors or changes in statistical estimation and benchmarking
- errors or changes in outlier treatment.

Our progress report 3 in April reported that we had identified some improvements that should be made to the sample allocation process (in line with the original sample design specification) to improve representativeness of the sample, particularly at the country level. We also noted that MBIE had agreed and asked Kantar-TNS to implement these improvements immediately, rather than await the final report of the review.

The statistical impact of this improvement will become evident over the next 12 or so months. The review will also recommend some other potential improvements that will require further investigation. Within 12 months MBIE and Stats NZ will be in a better position to assess the combined impact of all the improvements.

We also reported in May that we had identified some areas where statistical processing and estimation should be improved. The key areas of focus are the way in which expenditure estimates are benchmarked to the international visitor population (calibration); and the way in which 'outliers' are detected and treated. Outliers are reported expenditure values that fall outside the expected range.

Consequently, the review team asked MBIE to re-process a test version of the data from the beginning of 2015 up to the end of 2017, using improved settings for outlier detection and calibration. The results of the re-processing exercise will help the review team formulate a view about the significance of these changes on the statistical series, both in future and historically.

The exercise will take several weeks to complete, which has affected our ability to release a draft report any earlier than June.

Next steps

We are compiling the draft report of the review, and intend to distribute it to key stakeholders in June. The final report, incorporating key stakeholder feedback, should be available in July 2018.

Signed 28 May 2018 on behalf of the governance committee of the International Visitor Survey review 2018:

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