



Redevelopment of the International Visitor Survey: Frequently asked questions

Why did you change the method?

The Ministry initiated the redevelopment of the International Visitor Survey (IVS) in late 2011 as part of the Tourism Data Improvement Programme implementing the Tourism Domain Plan. Although the previous IVS provided good quality estimates of total tourism spend, redevelopment was required to solve a number of problems, including:

- A lack of precision within expenditure estimates from tourism markets smaller than Australia
- Significant gaps in the sampling frame. Business lounge users, Queenstown airport departees, and anyone not available in the departure lounge with 20+ minutes to spare could not be sampled
- Excessive collection costs and a high respondent burden. The average IVS respondent interview time exceeded 20 minutes.

How much have you revised the spend upwards?

On average, \$1.7 billion per year when making a like for like comparison (ie excluding education from both series – see question below on education).

The revision was based on comparing results from a dual run in the first six months of 2013, when both the old and the new method surveys were run concurrently. Based on those results, historical figures were revised upwards.

Why did you change the way spend is captured?

With the goal of simplifying the survey and the movement of the survey online, changes naturally followed. With the survey questionnaire emailed to respondents, most respondents are assumed to complete the survey at their usual place of residence and are likely to have access to their financial records, bank and credit card statements when they complete the questionnaire. Consequently, expenditure questions are now aligned to totals by payment method so respondents can make use of these resources. Previously, New Zealand expenditure estimates were collected by broad expenditure group; for example, “accommodation” spend, and “food and beverage” spend. Respondents can now also report total spend if they prefer.

There is reason to believe that the old method, which collected spend data from the “bottom up” (how much was spent on accommodation, how much on food and beverage, etc) lent itself to respondents forgetting items, and the “where did it all go?” phenomenon – issues which are addressed by examining spend from the “top down”. This method is also consistent with the methodology used by Statistics New Zealand for surveying returning New Zealand tourists about their spend while overseas.

Extensive testing in 2012 showed that the new questionnaire worked well.



Why is Visiting Friends and Relatives average spend so high now?

During the dual run, the data clearly showed that the mode effect from the two different survey instruments differed according to the visitor's purpose of visit. It is possible that the old survey with its prompts by commodity biased respondents towards reporting spend on traditional leisure activities, and did not offer sufficient prompts for the type of expenditure characteristic of those visiting friends and relatives.

Further investigation of this sort of issue would be valuable, whether it is by the Ministry or by other interested parties.

Why have you excluded International education visitors?

The target population of the IVS now excludes those whose purpose of visit to New Zealand was to attend a recognised educational institute, and are foreign-fee paying students.

Previous research into the spending and travel patterns of international students has found that the IVS does not provide robust estimate of spend, therefore, the expenditure of these visitors is now estimated via an education series developed by Statistics New Zealand and Education New Zealand.

Why don't we record which activities are done in which regions anymore?

To reduce respondent burden and increase reliability and validity, elements of the questionnaire were identified for simplification. Collecting information on activities by location was one of the areas identified. Furthermore, data collected on activities by location were not very reliable and seldom if ever used.

Why don't you record itinerary order any more?

To reduce respondent burden. Limited use was made of the data on direction of tourist travel and it was decided that this was one area that questionnaire time could be reduced. The old IVS unit record data remain available as a valuable source for in-depth research in this area, but we will not be (and have not in the past been) monitoring trends on changes in tourism flows using survey data.

The new survey still records information on where within New Zealand people have visited, just not the order in which those locations were visited.

Why aren't cruise passengers included?

Cruise passengers who depart by ship are not included in the survey due to constraints on the sampling method. A separate project will look at improving data on cruise visitors in 2014.



Will the IVS data still be available? Why has the online database not been updated?

The Ministry is in the process of developing a new online database for the dissemination of the IVS data along with its other tourism series. The online database will utilise the expertise of Statistics New Zealand and will be disseminated through their NZ.Stat platform. The database will be able to be accessed through the Ministry's website as well as via NZ.Stat.

In the interim, a revised spend series with the most commonly queried dimensions (country of permanent residence, and purpose of visit) is available on the Ministry's website

The online database will go live by February 2014. Over 2014, more tourism data will be made available on NZ.Stat than has previously been available through other means.

What will happen to the historical data?

Historical IVS unit record data will be made available on request.

As part of developing the new online database, where possible the historical data will be mapped to the new questionnaire to allow for analysis of changes over time. The Ministry has worked with Statistics New Zealand to adjust historical spend information to produce a revised expenditure series.

Where can I find further information on the changes to IVS?

The Ministry has released a paper on the changes to the IVS that can be accessed on our website.

Link: <http://www.med.govt.nz/sectors-industries/tourism/tourism-research-data/international-visitor-survey/ivs-revision-2013>

Where can I find information on the redeveloped IVS?

Information on the redeveloped IVS can be found on our website.

Link: <http://www.med.govt.nz/sectors-industries/tourism/tourism-research-data/international-visitor-survey/about-ivs>

Surely people who say they had a package but don't record package spend are recording their package costs under prepaid spend?

The instructions are clear not to do this and there's no evidence they are misunderstood. Analysis of mean spend under prepaid for those who indicate they were on a package is not large enough to realistically be their whole package.