

Statistical bulletin

Overseas travel and tourism: May 2016

Visits to the UK by overseas residents, visits abroad by UK residents, and spending by travellers, using provisional passenger traffic data.



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1. Main points

In the 3 months to May 2016 there were 9.2 million overseas residents' visits to the UK, a similar number to the corresponding period a year earlier. Overseas visitors spent £4.8 billion in the UK, 5% less than in the same three months in 2015.

UK residents made 16.4 million visits abroad in the 3 months to May 2016, a 4% increase compared with the 3 months to May 2015.

Expenditure on visits abroad by UK residents in the 12 months to May 2016 increased by 12% to £40.4 billion when compared with the previous year.

2. About the estimates

Overseas travel and tourism monthly estimates are revised during the processing of the quarterly dataset and again during the processing of the annual dataset. The most up-to-date and accurate estimates for all published months can be found in the latest edition of the [Overseas travel and tourism monthly statistical bulletin](#).

Estimates contained in this bulletin are produced from responses provided by international passengers arriving in and departing from the UK, sampled on the [International Passenger Survey](#) that we conduct.

This bulletin contains provisional overseas travel and tourism estimates for May 2016. Revised, final estimates for 2015 were published in [Travel trends 2015](#) on 20 May 2016. The monthly overseas travel and tourism estimates are produced using provisional passenger traffic data to inform the weighting process that is then revised for production of the quarterly estimates. The final data is then used in the production of the annual results published in Travel trends (see background note: Accuracy of IPS estimates). The title of the monthly overseas travel and tourism bulletin was renamed in December 2013 to "Overseas travel and tourism, provisional results for [month] 2013" to clarify that the data contained in these bulletins are provisional.

The sample profile and responses are calibrated to international passenger traffic for the reporting period.

Estimates are based on interviews conducted when passengers end their visit. Therefore any visits commencing in the reported month but not completed until later are not included in estimates for the reported month.

The reported spend for visits include any spending associated with the visit, which may occur before, during or after the trip.

In January 2015 the methodology for treating outliers was improved. For further information please contact the IPS team.

Parts of the bulletin refer to countries visited abroad. It should be noted that if a UK resident visited more than 1 country on a trip abroad, the country recorded as visited in this publication is the country that was visited for the longest period.

Estimates are subject to sampling error, and confidence intervals are provided to help readers interpret the estimates (see background note: Accuracy of IPS estimates). Further guidance is available about the quality of [overseas travel and tourism estimates](#).

3. Changes to overseas travel and tourism publications

The overseas travel and tourism monthly and quarterly bulletins have been updated to provide additional information about the revisions policy used to revise and finalise the estimates. As part of this improvement to the publications, the titles have been changed to indicate that the estimates are provisional. The final estimates for the overseas travel and tourism data are published in the annual Travel trends publication. The first publications to include the additional information are:

- "Overseas Travel and Tourism, Provisional Results for October 2013" published on 12 December 2013
- "Overseas Travel and Tourism, Provisional Results for Quarter 3, 2013" published on 16 January 2014

4. Main trends in figures and charts

Table 1: Main visit and spending estimates for overseas residents' visits to the UK in 2015 and 2016

	Overseas residents' visits to UK			
	Visits (thousands)	% change from year earlier	Earnings (£ million)	% change from year earlier
Non seasonally adjusted				
May 2016	3,530	-1	1,860	-8
Mar to May 2016	9,210	+0	4,770	-5
Year to date 2016	14,070	+3	7,170	-3
Latest 12 months	36,510	+4	21,830	-1
Seasonally adjusted				
December	3,020	+7	1,900	+3
January	3,040	+6	1,740	-3
February	3,060	+6	1,750	+3
March	3,070	+6	1,770	-6
April	2,940	-3	1,810	-1
May	3,050	-2	1,810	-7

Source: International Passenger Survey - Office for National Statistics

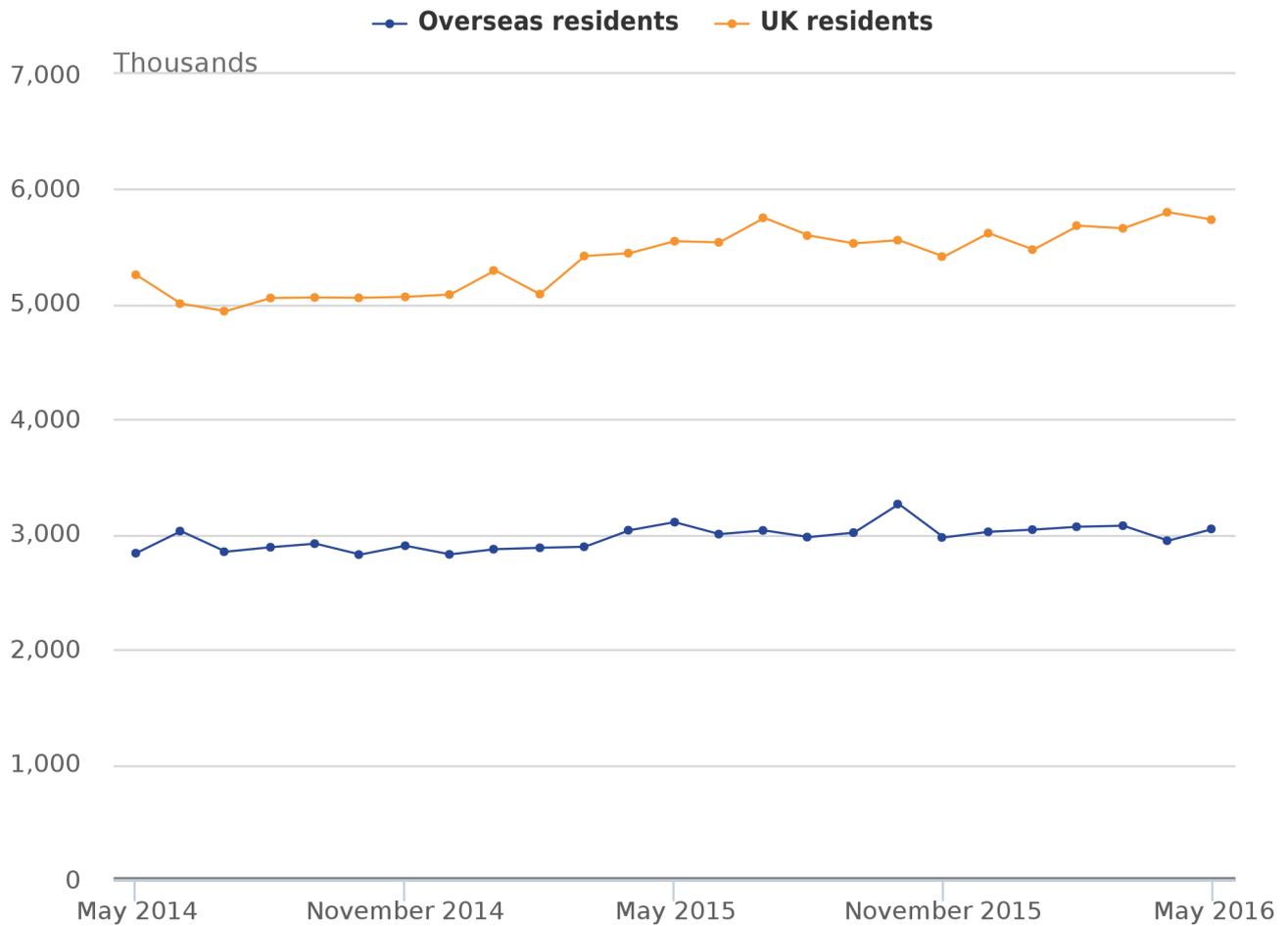
Table 2: Main visit and spending estimates for UK residents' visits abroad in 2015 and 2016

	UK residents' visits abroad			
	Visits (thousands)	% change from year earlier	Expenditure (£ million)	% change from year earlier
Non seasonally adjusted				
May 2016	6,010	-1	3,460	+6
Mar to May 2016	16,380	+4	9,570	+10
Year to date 2016	24,860	+7	14,540	+11
Latest 12 months	67,280	+8	40,420	+12
Seasonally adjusted				
December	5,620	+11	3,400	+18
January	5,480	+4	3,120	+2
February	5,680	+12	3,510	+17
March	5,660	+4	3,440	+4
April	5,800	+7	3,610	+19
May	5,730	+3	3,410	+8

Source: International Passenger Survey - Office for National Statistics

Figure 1: Overseas residents' visits to the UK and UK residents' visits abroad (seasonally adjusted)

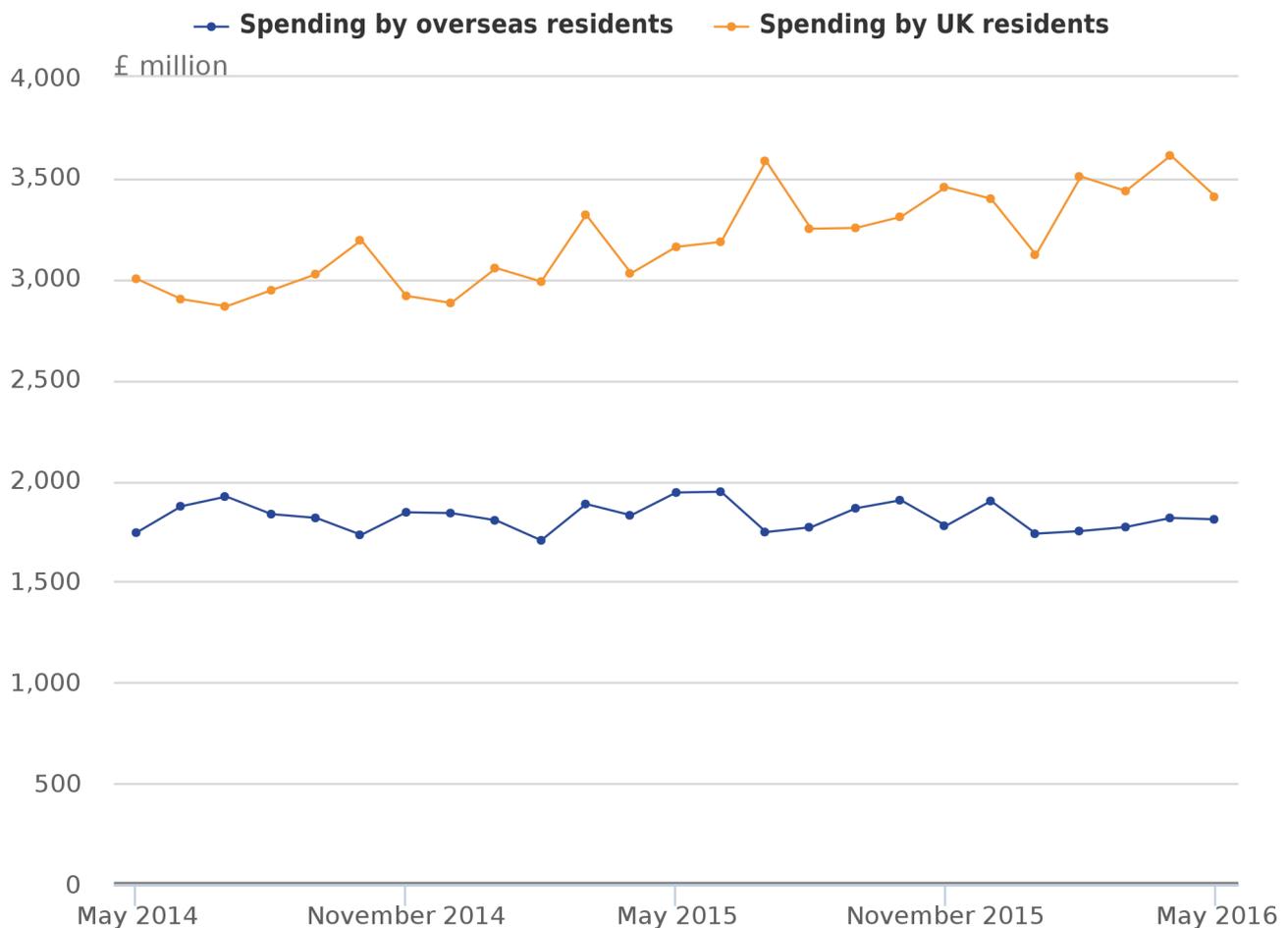
May 2014 to May 2016



Source: International Passenger Survey (IPS) – Office for National Statistics

Figure 2: Spending by overseas residents' in the UK and spending by UK residents overseas by month (seasonally adjusted)

May 2014 to May 2016



Source: International Passenger Survey (IPS) – Office for National Statistics

5. Trends in visits to the UK by overseas residents, non-seasonally adjusted (monthly overseas travel and tourism dataset tables 1,2,5)

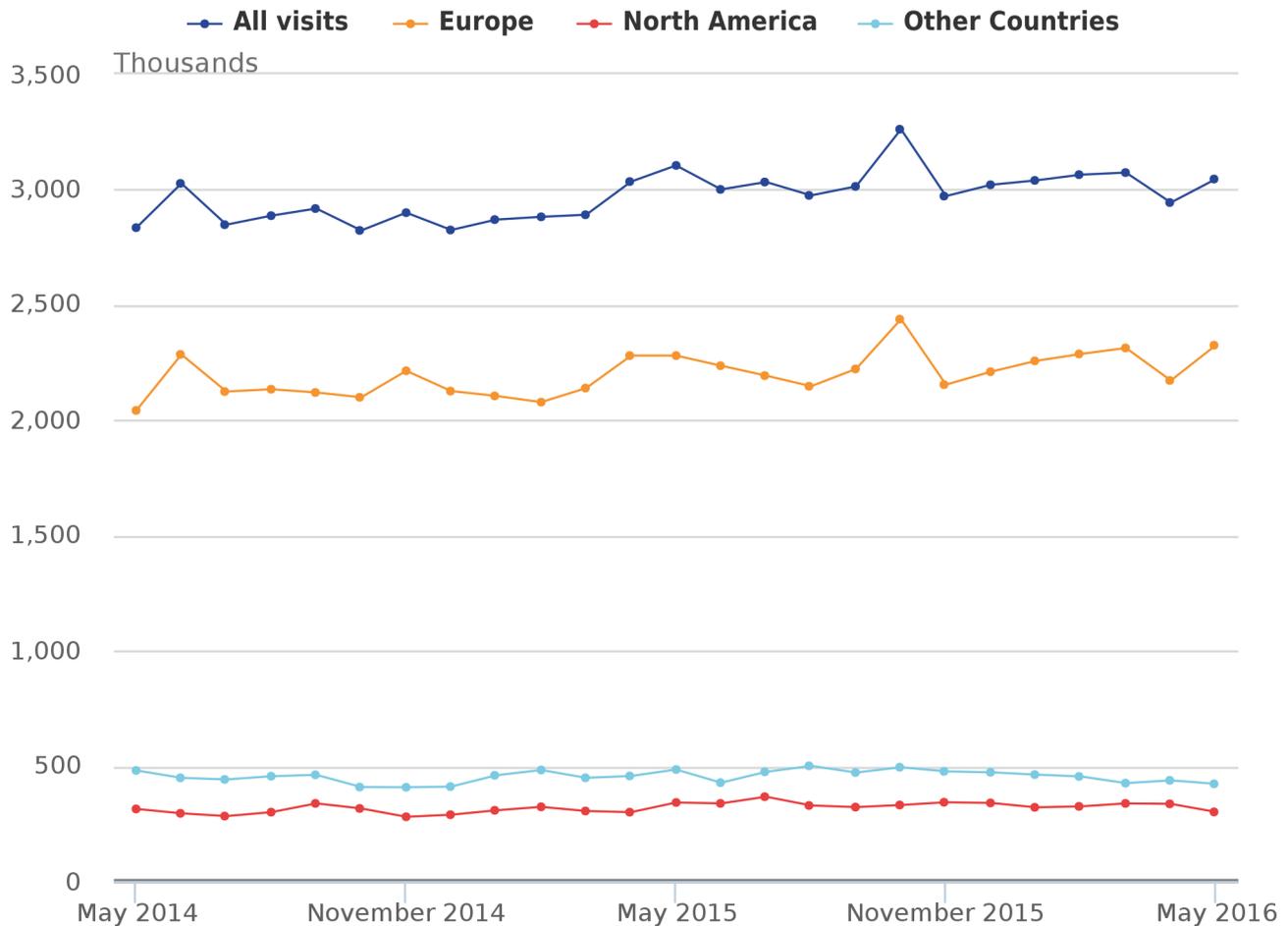
The number of visits to the UK by overseas residents in May 2016 was 3.5 million, a decrease of 1% when compared with May 2015. Overseas residents spent £1.9 billion in the UK during these visits.

During the period March to May 2016, the number of overseas residents' visits to the UK was similar to the corresponding period a year earlier, at 9.2 million, while the total amount spent by visitors was 5% lower, at £4.8 billion.

In the 12 months to May 2016, the number of visits to the UK was 4% higher than a year earlier, while the total amount spent by visitors decreased by 1%. Visits from North America and Europe (see background note: Geographical areas) were up by 9% and 4% respectively, and visits from other countries (countries other than Europe and North America) grew by 4%. The number of holiday visits decreased by 1%, business trips grew 5% and visits to friends or relatives grew 9%.

Figure 3: Overseas residents' visits to the UK by month (seasonally adjusted)

May 2014 to May 2016



Source: International Passenger Survey (IPS) – Office for National Statistics

6. Trends in visits abroad by UK residents, non-seasonally adjusted (monthly overseas travel and tourism dataset tables 1,2,5)

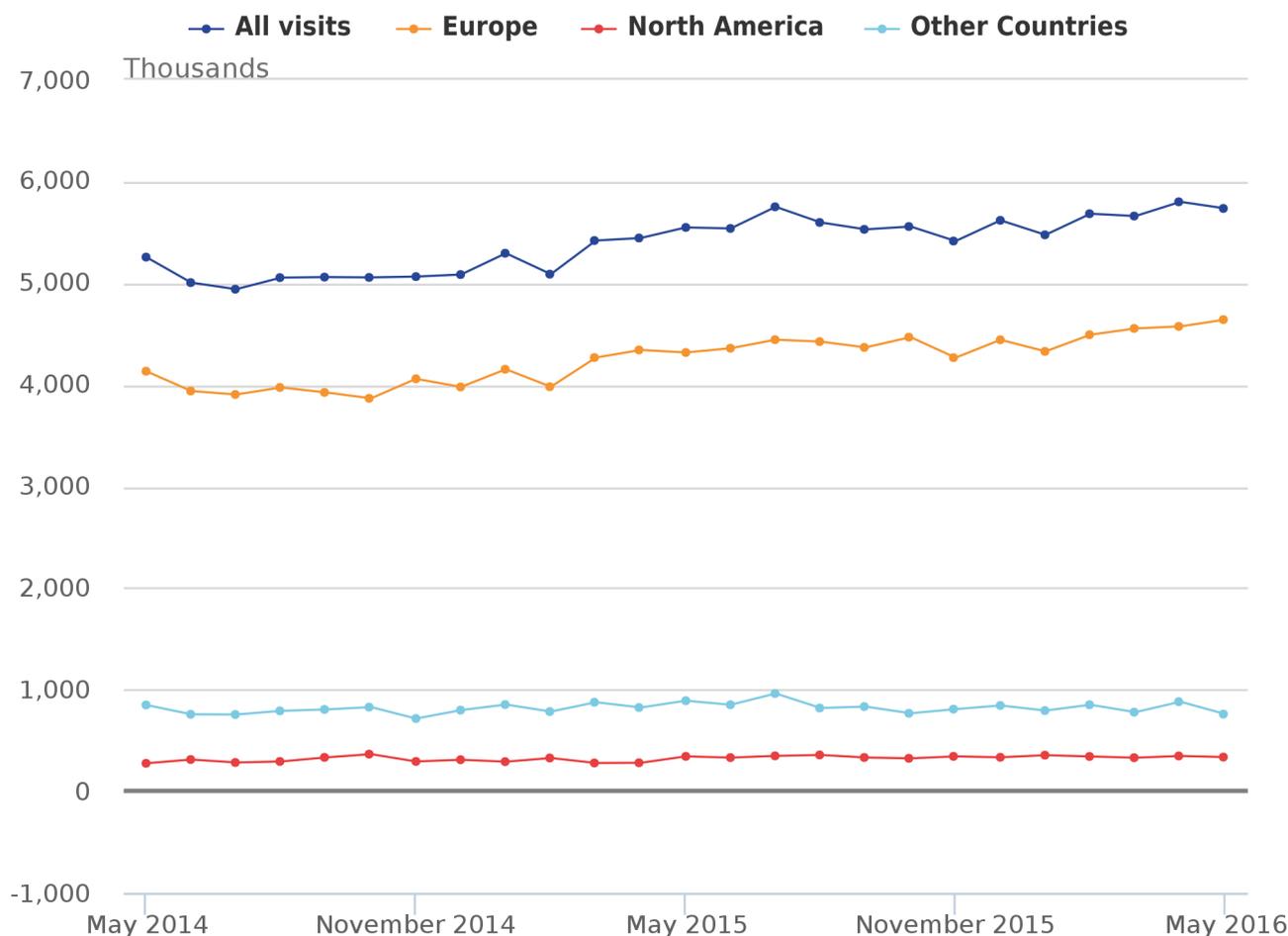
The estimated number of visits abroad by UK residents in May 2016 was 6.0 million. UK residents spent £3.5 billion during visits abroad in May 2016.

During the period March to May 2016, UK residents' visits abroad rose by 4% compared with the corresponding period a year earlier and they spent 10% more during this period.

In the 12 months to May 2016, the number of visits abroad by UK residents was 8% higher when compared with a year earlier; expenditure on these visits also increased by 12% during this period. Visits to all areas of the world rose: North America by 10%, Europe by 9% and other countries by 2%. Travelling abroad also grew across the range of reasons for visiting, including holidays (8%), business (9%), and visits to friends and relatives (9%).

Figure 4: UK residents' visits abroad by month (seasonally adjusted)

May 2014 to May 2016



Source: International Passenger Survey (IPS) – Office for National Statistics

7. Accuracy of IPS estimates

Figures for the most recent months are provisional and subject to revision in light of (a) more accurate data on passenger figures becoming available at the end of each quarter and (b) additional passenger data obtained at the end of each year.

International Passenger Survey (IPS) monthly estimates are revised in line with the IPS revisions policy. The revisions policy is available in the [IPS quality and methodology report](#), to assist users in the understanding of the cycle and frequency of data revisions. Users of this bulletin are strongly advised to read this policy before using this data for research or policy-related purposes.

Planned revisions usually arise from either the receipt of revised passenger traffic data, or the correction of errors to existing data, identified later in the quarterly and annual processing cycle. Those of significant magnitude will be highlighted and explained.

Revisions to published monthly IPS estimates can be expected at the following times in the normal overseas travel and tourism publication schedule:

- monthly estimates for the current reference year will usually be revised and statistically benchmarked across the quarter, following the publication of the quarterly estimates which that month falls within
- monthly and quarterly estimates for the current reference year will be revised in the survey year's annual data release (Travel trends)
- monthly estimates for the full calendar year will be statistically benchmarked as part of the annual data processing, and the monthly estimates for the year will then be replaced in the monthly release, with the benchmarked estimate following publication of the annual report (Travel trends)

All other revisions will be regarded as unplanned and will be dealt with by non-standard releases. All revisions will be released in compliance with the same principles as other new information. Please refer to [our guide to statistical revisions](#).

The main series are seasonally adjusted. This aids interpretation by identifying seasonal patterns and calendar effects and removing them from the unadjusted data. The resulting figures give a more accurate indication of underlying movements in the series.

The estimates produced from the IPS are subject to sampling errors that occur because not every traveller to and from the UK is interviewed on the survey. Sampling errors are determined both by the sample design and by the sample size: generally speaking, the larger the sample supporting a particular estimate, the proportionately lower its sampling error. The survey sample size is approximately 25,000 per month. However, as the intensity of the sampling varies at each port, figures of a similar magnitude will not necessarily have the same percentage sampling error.

The IPS has a clustered sample design. The full effects of this complex sample design upon each of the main estimates is calculated and it is calculated the "complex" sampling errors which are quoted.

Accuracy of the estimates is expressed in terms of confidence intervals. The confidence interval is a range within which the true value of a proportion lies with known probability. For example, the 95% confidence interval represents the range into which there are 19 chances out of 20 that the true figure would fall had all passengers been sampled. This is obtained as plus or minus 1.96 the standard error.

Table 3: Confidence intervals relating to overseas travel and tourism estimates in May 2016

May 2016 monthly estimates	Estimate	Relative 95% Confidence Interval (+/- % of the estimate)
Visits to UK by overseas residents (thousands)	3,530	7.4%
Earnings from visits to UK (£ million)	1,860	7.6%
Visits abroad by UK residents (thousands)	6,010	4.2%
Expenditure on visits abroad (£ million)	3,460	5.8%

Source: International Passenger Survey - Office for National Statistics

Confidence intervals for [quarterly](#) and [annual](#) estimates are provided in our relevant overseas travel and tourism publications.

One indication of the reliability of the main indicators in this release can be obtained by monitoring the size of revisions. Table 4 records the size and pattern of revisions to the quarterly IPS data that have occurred over the last 5 years to the following main seasonally adjusted estimates:

- the number of visits by overseas residents to the UK (GMAT)
- the number of visits abroad by UK residents (GMAX)
- earnings made from overseas residents in the UK (GMAZ)
- expenditure abroad by UK residents (GMBB)

Table 4: Revisions over the last 5 years

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	Value in the latest period (2016 quarter 1, Jan to Mar 2016)	Revisions between first publications and estimates 3 years later	
		Averages over the last 5 years (bias)	Average over the last 5 years without regard to sign (average absolute revision)
GMAT	9,110	12.00	105.00
GMAX	16,590	106.00	265.00
GMAZ	5,170	*65.50	*100.50
GMBB	10,020	*158.50	*182.50

Source: International Passenger Survey - Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Units: GMAT and GMAX in thousands.
2. A statistical test has been applied to find out if the revision to each key indicator is statistically different from zero. An asterisk (*) indicates where the mean revision has been significantly different from zero.

8. Other overseas travel and tourism releases

More detailed analysis of overseas travel and tourism trends are provided in the publications:

- [Overseas travel and tourism quarterly](#): the latest publication (for Quarter 1 January to March 2016) was published on 14 July 2016 – this provides more detailed analysis of visits and spending, isolating aspects such as countries of visit, mode of travel used, nationality of visitors and regions of the UK visited. Quarter 4 figures can be found in Travel trends 2015.
- [Travel trends](#): the latest publication (Travel trends 2015) was published on 20 May 2016, the next publication (Travel trends 2016) will be published in spring 2017. This provides final overseas travel and tourism estimates and more detailed analysis of visits and spending, including analysis by demographics, towns visited in the UK and countries visited by residents of different parts of the UK
- [Travelpac](#) is a dataset that allows users to conduct their own analyses of quarterly and annual data on main variables – the datasets are provided in SPSS and Excel

Note that estimates are subject to revision between the monthly statistical bulletin and the quarterly publication, and again when Travel trends is published. Revisions result from more accurate passenger figures being made available. More information about the IPS revisions policy is available in the [Quality and Methodology Information](#). The most up-to-date and accurate estimates for all published months can be found in the latest edition of the [Overseas travel and tourism monthly statistical bulletin](#).

Note that, although data by the International Passenger Survey (IPS) feed into the calculation of migration statistics, the Overseas travel and tourism publications do not provide any information relating to international migration.

9. Further statistics and other analyses

IPS data files

International Passenger Survey (IPS) data for the years from 1993 onwards are available online from the [Leisure and Tourism publications 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](#) available from:

Office for National Statistics,
Government Buildings,
Cardiff Road,
Newport,
NP10 8XG.

Telephone: +44 (0)1633 455678

Further statistics

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

Other analyses

For general questions about the IPS and requests for user-requested data analysis (a service governed by our Income and charging policy), please get in touch using the contact details accompanying this release.

10. Quality and methodology

The [International Passenger Survey Quality and Methodology Information](#) document contains important information on:

- the strengths and limitations of the data
- the quality of the output: including the accuracy of the data, how it compares with related data
- uses and users
- how the output was created

The [International Passenger Survey background notes](#) outline dataset definitions, sample methodology, geography and purpose groupings.