

## Impact of COVID 19 on Tourism Statistics in NI

Tourism data is derived from a variety of sources. NISRA will continue to publish as much data as possible and give indications from other sources where the original source is affected.

### Summary

Overnight Trips/Nights and Expenditure are derived from four sources. While it is unlikely that tourism is happening currently, there is no way of measuring it as all the below surveys are on hold. The CHS (NI domestic) has changed format and from the 6<sup>th</sup> April it is hoped to complete a telephone survey.

The occupancy surveys are continuing, although all accommodation providers have now been asked to close. However, these will still give an indication of tourism in NI.

As most flights (bar one twice a day between Belfast and London) are now grounded, the air passenger statistics have also been suspended. While NISRA will be unable to get a breakdown on the people who are travelling – passenger numbers will still be produced showing the overall numbers passing through the airports.

### Table on Sources and Impact of COVID-19

Source	Methodology (brief)	Current position	Impact	What next?
<a href="#">Northern Ireland Passenger Survey (NISRA)</a>	Random sampled face to face survey of passengers leaving NI ports (air/sea) Produces estimates on “External visitors”	The last shift for Q1 2020 was 17 <sup>th</sup> March 2020. Belfast International Airport now closed to passengers. Most airlines suspended	Due to FlyBe collapse (3 <sup>rd</sup> March), Belfast City Airport passenger flow had already dropped so response numbers had already dropped at this airport. Belfast International Airport now closed to flights It is remaining open for emergency medical and cargo operations –but tourism is not going to be through the airports. If anything there could be returning residents to NI, not “departing” visitors.  While the ferries are still running, the survey is not being carried out so we do not have a sense on the numbers involved yet. We have asked the ferry providers to give indications on passenger numbers, we still expect this to be low given the guidance to UK residents to remain in their homes unless it is essential travel (i.e. not include tourism).	It is unlikely that there are any tourism trips being taken in NI by external visitors due to COVID-19.  IPS in ONS are exploring alternative sources for data which we could learn from

<a href="#">Continuous Household Survey (NISRA)</a>	Random sample of households through NI provide estimates on “Domestic Tourism” (NI residents taking a trip within NI)	The CHS surveys finished on the 17 <sup>th</sup> March. Residents told not to leave households (bar for essential work, essential food or medical supplies, exercise or caring for others)	No surveys have been carried out since 17 <sup>th</sup> March (may have been a lesser sample size in March as interviewers can choose when they do their surveys-this needs explored)	A new telephone survey is being launched on 6 <sup>th</sup> April. Tourism questions on overnight trips are still included. The recall has been increased from 4 weeks to 8 weeks so the missing timescale from the stopping of old survey to beginning of new survey will be captured. It is unlikely that NI residents are taking any overnight trips as the government has told residents to stay at home since 20 <sup>th</sup> March (schools closed).
<a href="#">Survey of Overseas Travellers (Failte Ireland)</a>	Random sample of visitors who exit the ports in RoI Used to produce estimates on external visitors	The SOT has been postponed	No alternative. Unlikely to be any external tourism during this time.	Asked Failte Ireland if they have alternative measures in place (CSO suggested there may be other surveys in place) however it is unlikely there will be any external tourism.
<a href="#">Household Travel Survey</a>	Random sample of households in RoI providing estimates on overnight trips taken by RoI residents	The HTS has been suspended. The publication of HTS statistics was already suspended since Q1 2019.	CSO have already been exploring issues with the HTS. This break might allow them to have a split in data until they begin collecting again. However this may be too early to decide.	CSO had already indicated that Failte Ireland were looking into ways to gauge domestic tourism trends in RoI, but this is unlikely to cover NI. The future might mean that CSO can have a break in the data and publish afresh when the survey recommences.
<a href="#">Monthly Hotel/ B&amp;B/ Guesthouses and Guest Accommodation Surveys</a>	Census of Hotels and random sample of B&Bs/ Guesthouses and Guest Accommodation are asked to provide a breakdown on the numbers of beds and rooms available and rented throughout the month.	Hotels and other businesses were told to close from the 26 <sup>th</sup> March.	In our monthly return for March we have asked accommodation providers to indicate which date they closed on because of COVID 19 as some did close their doors before government advised them to.  It should be noted there may be postal returns in the office. None of the tourism team have been in the office for 2 weeks, but as the occupancy statistics published each month are preliminary we can revise them at the annual publication (usually published in May/June 2021).	We are beginning to chase up returns for the March survey (sensitively given that businesses have now been told to close). We have sent out a form for April as we are unsure if the businesses will open again, but also gave an opportunity to forward on advise from Tourism Northern Ireland to the businesses and also a link to the TNI impact of COVID 19 survey.

<a href="#">Self Catering Survey</a>	<p>Random sample of self-catering establishments across NI</p>	<p>All serviced accommodation should not be used since 26<sup>th</sup> March including self catering. The 2019 survey is currently being collected</p>	<p>The self catering survey will not be carried out until the end of the year so we will know how long businesses will have been told to close at that stage. We can also think about how we ask if they closed for longer due to COVID 19.</p> <p>Some 2019 paper returns may be in the office which none of the tourism team have been to since middle of March. Currently the annual 2019 results will go out in June but these may be provisional depending on late returns (it is unlikely late returns will make a big difference to results).</p>	<p>While some self-catering and air B+B's have been noted to be letting out to key workers – this is not seen as tourism and will need to recognise that this is the case.</p> <p>NISRA will remember and consider how to record the impact of COVID 19 in the 2020 returns.</p>
<a href="#">Visitor Attraction Survey</a>	<p>All visitor attractions are contacted to provide information</p>	<p>The 2019 survey is in field. Businesses have been closed since 26<sup>th</sup> March and residents advised against going to busy places.</p>	<p>The 2019 returns will not be impacted (although there may be paper returns in the office which may be counted as late returns for the annual publication).</p> <p>We can consider our 2020 form to find out the impact of COVID 19 and remember when the businesses have been closed.</p>	<p>NISRA will remember and consider how to record the impact of COVID 19 in the 2020 returns.</p>
<a href="#">Northern Ireland Air Passenger Flow</a>	<p>Various sources are used to come together to provide Air Passenger Flow statistics. These are mostly administrative sources and sample surveys.</p>	<p>Most flights are now grounded and airports closed (bar freight). No surveys are being carried out at airports.</p>	<p>The NISRA and CSO surveys stopped in the middle of March meaning that we do not have a breakdown on who is passing through the airports. However, actual passenger numbers will still be collected.</p>	<p>The publication of passenger numbers and the routes can still be published and useful for users. The breakdown will not be available and can be considered.</p> <p>The CHS stopped asking about flights from the middle of March but the question is regarding travel in the previous 12 months so it is possible that NISRA can look at the weighting system to see if estimates can still be made, bearing in mind residents have been advised not to travel so it is unlikely that anyone is making a trip anywhere as most countries in the world are limiting tourism and travel due to COVID 19.</p>

## Alternative Sources

While NISRA are still exploring alternative sources of tourism statistics to Northern Ireland, some may be to explore tourism statistics published by other organisations or tourist boards (for example, the largest proportion of “external” visitors to NI are from GB so possibly there will be statistics from the [GBTS](#)). Similarly there may be figures on outgoing tourism from other countries, however it is likely that these will not specify NI rather they will have data to Ireland.

NISRA has also looked into “big data” in the past such as mobile phone trends and credit card usage, so there may be trends within these but they will not provide numbers of visitors to NI.

## Further Information

We welcome feedback from users on the content, format and relevance of the tourism statistics. Contact details are provided below. (We recommend you use the electronic means as currently no one from the tourism team is in the office.

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