



IVS Methodology

The International Visitor Survey represents the most comprehensive source of information on international visitors to Australia. It has been operating since the early 1970s and is jointly funded by the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments under the guidance of the Australian Standing Committee on Tourism.

Managing the Survey

The survey design and management is the responsibility of Tourism Research Australia Survey Sections. The section works closely with the consultants, key stakeholders and industry to develop and maintain high data quality and relevant outputs.

The International Visitor Survey contains over 70 questions supported by 'show-cards' that are used to help the respondent answer particular sections. The interviewer asks the respondent for factual details, among other things, about number of nights in Australia; travel arrangements; reasons for visiting; places visited; information sources about Australia prior to leaving home country; impressions of aspects of Australia; income earned and expenditure on the trip.

The International Visitor Survey samples 40,000 departing, short-term international travellers over the age of 15 years who have been visiting Australia. The survey is conducted by Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) in the departure lounges of the eight major international airports; Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Cairns, Perth, Adelaide, Darwin and the Gold Coast.

The data collection is based on a proportionate stratified sample. The total number of interviews conducted with residents of each country or region is distributed among airports by selecting monthly samples of departing flights and visitors on those flights to achieve acceptable sample sizes in various categories. Surveying is conducted every day of the year. When field work is concluded for the day, the CAPI databases are up-loaded and stored on a central database. At the end of each quarter the data is downloaded for cleaning, weighting and processing.

Weighting the Results

The International Visitor Survey is weighted to the Overseas Arrivals and Departures (OAD) data supplied by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC), with the assistance of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). OAD data are published by the ABS on a monthly basis. By weighting the International Visitor Survey to the OAD data, the estimates are more reflective of the actual target population.

The weighting system that is used by Tourism Research Australia is a complex process that utilises variables such as country of residence, main purpose of journey, airport of departure, age and sex of the visitor. Essentially it has three stages:

A weight is derived for each of the target markets to match the number of interviews to the population of all international visitors based on the airport which they are departing from.

The survey sample is adjusted to the OAD total arrivals data for each target markets by age and gender.

Lastly, the sample is further adjusted to match total arrivals for each target market by purpose of visit and state of arrival.

Managing and improving the Data

Following weighting, the International Visitor Survey data is thoroughly validated and built into Online Data. Quarterly results are in the publication *International Visitors in Australia, Quarterly results of the International Visitor Survey*.

Tourism Research Australia is constantly seeking new ways to improve the survey and data quality. Some of the most recent improvements include:

- Following changes to OAD statistics in purpose of visit categories, refinements were made to the International Visitor Survey weighting methodology in order to account for growth in the smaller education/employment markets over time. All data back to and including the March quarter 1999 have been re-estimated making the time series fully comparable.
- Since 2004, the International Visitor Survey has surveyed international visitors in four languages; English, Japanese, Mandarin and Korean. The total number of interviews conducted with particular residents of each country or region is distributed among airports by selecting monthly samples of departing flights and visitors on those flights to achieve acceptable sample sizes in various categories.
- In 2005, the sample size was doubled and so the survey now more accurately reflects the target population, delivering larger and more robust sample sizes for the smaller states and territories.
- In 2005 the country markets list was expanded so that more countries are specifically targeted within the International Visitor Survey sampling distribution system. These markets are individually benchmarked to OAD as published by the ABS. The new full list of weighted countries are: USA, Canada, United Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy, Scandinavia (includes Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Norway), the Netherlands, Switzerland, Other Europe, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Japan, Korea, China, Taiwan, India, Other Asia, New Zealand and Other markets.