

Tourism Statistics User Group Meeting minutes

Tuesday 17th December 2013

Netherleigh

The Code of Practice for Official Statistics requires producers of official statistics to engage effectively with users of statistics to promote trust and maximise public value and to investigate and document user needs. To this end, a tourism statistics user group meeting was held on 17th December with the aim of updating users on progress in response to the public consultation (held in May 2013) and an overview of the latest results.

Attendees:

Name	Organisation
1. James Gillan	DFP
2. Ruth Fulton	DFP
3. Phillip Billsborough	DFP
4. Chris Ganley	DFP
5. Patricia Wyers	DFP
6. Joanne Henderson	DFP
7. Shane Murphy	DETI
8. Gareth Hetherington	NICEP, UUI
9. Patricia McDowell	DARD
10. William Taylor	DARD
11. Chris Morris	Statistical Advisory Committee
12. Tony Dignan	Economic Research
13. Anne-Marie Montgomery	NITB
14. Don Wilmont	Causeway Coast and Glens
15. Esther Ervin	Statistical Advisory Committee
16. James Edgar	Belfast City Council
17. John Douglas	Banbridge District Council
18. Kerrie McGonigle	Moyle District Council
19. Lorraine Fleming	DETI
20. Paul Rutherford	DETI
21. Michelle Boyle	Newry and Mourne District Council
22. Odhran Dunne	Derry Visitor Bureau
23. Pei Pei	AFBI
24. Mark Mohan	Down District Council
25. Rosemary Richardson	Ards Borough Council
26. Tanya Cathcart	Fermanagh Lakelands Tourism

Background:

- NISRA officials summarised the purpose of the user group meeting, explaining the context of user engagement in the development and production of tourism statistics. This is a requirement on producers of official statistics under the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.
- NISRA presented a summary of developments to date in response to the public consultation (in May 2013). An overview of the main headlines from the latest (quarter 2) tourism publication and results by Local Government District were also presented.

Discussion:

- Users broadly welcomed the changes to the format and frequency of publications whereby a range of individual bulletins were brought together to provide a comprehensive quarterly picture of tourism activity.
- NISRA officials confirmed that they are awaiting Central Statistics Office (CSO) Ireland results for quarter 3 2013 to compile a complete picture of overnight trips, nights and expenditure in Northern Ireland. These results are expected from around end January/start February
- There was discussion on how best to draw users' attention to small sample sizes contained within tables. NISRA agreed to review the presentation of these tables.
- NISRA officials explained the use of confidence intervals and how they should be used to interpret results. It was suggested that a clear explanation of their use should be included in publications to aid the interpretation of the statistics by non-statisticians. It was also noted that more explanation/commentary on why some figures may fluctuate would also help users gain a better understanding of the statistics.
- Users welcomed the recent (December) publication of tourism statistics at LGD level. Users indicated that further disaggregation of sub-regional data would be beneficial and could facilitate more detailed comparison of the impacts of tourism, across events and areas within NI. It was recognised that the recent LGD publication was insightful but users would welcome the development of a model which would enable systematic comparisons of the impact of events between LGDs or KTAs.
- NISRA officials acknowledged the value of measuring the impact of events and tourism at a sub-regional level but also reminded the group that the current design of tourism surveys was to enable assessment of Programme for Government targets at the NI level. NISRA officials drew the group's attention to ONS publications on methodology for measuring the impact of tourism locally. It was pointed out that nevertheless there were practical and cost limitations around the level of sub-

regional disaggregation that tourism surveys conducted at the country level could support. Best practice was to conduct standardised local surveys of events linked to available sub regional official statistics.

- The use of occupancy data to improve the coverage of tourism statistics was discussed. NISRA officials mentioned the positive impact support from a local official had on occupancy response rates for that area. Members of the user group agreed to work with accommodation providers in their respective areas to encourage increased response rates to surveys. It was discussed how if the occupancy surveys were more regular and to a larger sample (or census), local area statistics might be able to be based on this data.
- NISRA officials confirmed they hold information on NI residents' day trips, but that more analysis of methodology is needed to ensure comparability with previously published data. It was also stated that this information would not provide a complete picture of day visits due to sample size constraints and the lack of coverage of such visitors from the RoI and of itself could not be used to analyse events.
- NISRA officials confirmed that, alongside CSO, they are investigating the use of Passenger Card Inquiry (PCI) information to gather more information on those leaving NI through RoI air and sea ports. However, it was noted that this source had known limitations and provided no information on the expenditure of passengers visiting NI or the purpose of their visit.
- The following action points were raised:
 - i. AP 1: NISRA will investigate how best to present small sample sizes in tables. For example, colour coding tables or data based on confidence intervals around the change.
 - ii. AP 2: NISRA will provide more guidance on what confidence intervals mean in future publications.
 - iii. AP 3: NISRA will liaise with users to encourage responses to the occupancy surveys.
 - iv. AP 4: NISRA will investigate the possibility of producing day trips analysis in NI at a lower geographical level.
 - v. AP 5: NISRA will investigate the demand for a more frequent self-catering survey and increasing the sample size for B&Bs/Guesthouses/Guest accommodation to facilitate lower geographical analysis.
 - vi. AP 6: NISRA will provide further analysis from the domestic survey on why NI residents do not take any tourism trips.
 - vii. AP 7: NISRA have agreed to advise DETI/LGD on how to explore a more systematic approach for analysis of tourism activity at local level.

If you require more information about any of the topics discussed above, please contact NISRA via the details below. In addition, if users have any views on DFP statistical services, official statistics data quality or the format and timing of reports, please provide your comments via the details below:-

Email: Tourismstatistics@dfpni.gov.uk

Contact: Patricia Wyers

Address: Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency

Department of Finance and Personnel

Room 69

Netherleigh

Massey Avenue

Belfast

BT4 2JP

Phone: 028 90529636