



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

STATISTICS, DOCUMENT

# Domestic GB tourism statistics (overnight trips in Wales): April to December 2021 (revised)

Data on overnight trips and day visits by British residents to destinations throughout Britain for 2021.

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# Introduction

This is a revised release of the main estimates for the volume and value of domestic overnight tourism trips taken by British residents in Wales and Great Britain in 2021. The statistics published in this release cover the period from the start of April to the end of December 2021. Data is not available for January to March 2021, due to coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions on travel during this period.

This release provides revised estimates for all reported measures including the estimates of the volume and value of overnight trips taken in Wales and Great Britain. Two separate revisions have been made to the survey data. The first revision is designed to manage the impact of individual reported trips that were identified as having a disproportionate impact on the overall estimates of trip volumes and expenditure. The second revision involves a recalibration of the volume and value estimates for the period from April 2021 to April 2022, due to a change in survey questions implemented in May 2022. Analysis showed that the change led to a substantial and unexpected reduction in trip volumes reported from May 2022 onwards. The effect of these revisions has been to reduce the monthly and total estimates for trip volume and expenditure reported in this publication for the period from April 2021 to December 2021, to make them comparable with estimates reported from May 2022 onwards. Where data in a table or chart has been revised, this is noted in the title of the table or chart.

Further information on these revisions is provided in the revised [GBTS Background Quality Report 2021](#).

This report includes estimates for the main purpose of overnight trips; holidays, visits to friends and relatives (VFR) and business trips, with the definitions for each of these provided in the relevant section of this report.

The report includes estimates and details of overnight trips taken in Wales, and

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in Great Britain for comparative purposes. Detailed results for England and Scotland are being published by [VisitEngland](#) and [VisitScotland](#).

These statistics are used to monitor domestic tourism demand and measure the contribution and impact of domestic tourism on the visitor economy. A key purpose of these statistics is to uncover insights into market trends over time. Changes in survey methodology introduced in 2021, together with the interruption in data collection due to COVID-19, mean that results published in this release are not directly comparable with data published for 2019 and previous years. Please refer to the section on [comparability and coherence](#).

The statistics are labelled as 'experimental' to enable testing and further modification to meet user needs. Further information on this is available on the [Office for National Statistics website](#). We are keen to check that the new tourism statistics meet user needs and invite you to provide feedback on the information in this output at [tourismresearch@gov.wales](mailto:tourismresearch@gov.wales).

## Main points

### Wales trips

- Between April and December 2021, Great Britain (GB) residents took 6.21 million overnight trips in Wales with 22.67 million nights and £1,231 million spent during these trips.
- 50% of overnight trips taken in Wales were holidays, 29% were visits to friends and relatives and 5% were for business purposes.
- Approximately 7% of all GB trips included an overnight stay in Wales, whilst the share of total GB nights was also 7% and the share of spend lower at 6%.
- There was a gradual increase in overnight trips taken in Wales from April 2021 onwards with a peak volume of 1.07 million trips taken in August.

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- The average duration of Wales trips during the reporting period was 3.7 nights with an average spend of £198 per trip.

## Great Britain trips

- Between April and December 2021, Great Britain residents took 86.2 million overnight trips in Great Britain with 302.6 million nights and £19.85 billion spent during these trips.
- 38% of overnight trips taken in GB during this period were holidays, 37% were visits to friends and relatives (VFR) and 6% were for business purposes.
- 85% of trips taken in GB included an overnight stay in England, 11% included an overnight stay in Scotland and 7% included an overnight stay in Wales.
- There was a gradual increase in overnight trips taken in GB from April 2021 onwards with a peak volume of 14.3 million trips taken in September.
- The average duration of GB trips during the reporting period was 3.5 nights with an average spend of £230 per trip.

## Trips, nights and spend to GB nations, 2021

**Table 1: Total volume of trips, nights and spend to the nations of Great Britain (April to December 2021, revised) [Note 1]**

	England	Scotland	Wales
<b>Trips (millions)</b>	73.29	9.83	6.21

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	<b>England</b>	<b>Scotland</b>	<b>Wales</b>
<b>% Great Britain trips</b>	85%	11%	7%
<b>Nights (millions)</b>	246.52	33.43	22.67
<b>% Great Britain nights</b>	81%	11%	7%
<b>Spend (£ millions)</b>	£16,413	£2,208	£1,231
<b>% Great Britain spend</b>	83%	11%	6%

Source: Great Britain Tourism Survey (GBTS), April to December 2021

[Note 1] Percentages do not sum to 100% as some trips included visits to more than one nation.

In the period from the start of April to the end of December 2021, there were 86.2 million overnight trips taken in GB by British residents with a total of 302.6 million nights and a total expenditure of £19.85 billion. During the same period there were 6.21 million overnight trips taken in Wales with a total of 22.67 million nights and a total expenditure of £1.23 billion. Approximately 7% of all domestic overnight trips by British residents were taken in Wales, compared to 85% taken in England and 11% taken in Scotland. The share of total GB nights taken in Wales was 7%, but the share of spend was lower at 6% due to a lower average spend on trips taken in Wales.

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**Table 2: Trips, nights and spend to Wales and Great Britain by purpose of visit (April to December 2021, revised) [Note 1]**

All Purposes	Trips (millions)	Nights (millions)	Spend (£ million)
Great Britain	86.16	302.62	£19,853
Wales	6.21	22.67	£1,231
Holiday	Trips (millions)	Nights (millions)	Spend (£ million)
Great Britain	32.58	125.62	£9,751
Wales	3.13	13.08	£763
VFR	Trips (millions)	Nights (millions)	Spend (£ million)
Great Britain	31.62	105.13	£4,678
Wales	1.79	5.91	£201
Business	Trips (millions)	Nights (millions)	Spend (£ million)
Great Britain	5.35	27.84	£1,491
Wales	0.28	0.80	£49
Miscellaneous/other	Trips (millions)	Nights (millions)	Spend (£ million)

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All Purposes	Trips (millions)	Nights (millions)	Spend (£ million)
Great Britain	16.61	44.02	£3,933
Wales	1.01	2.88	£217

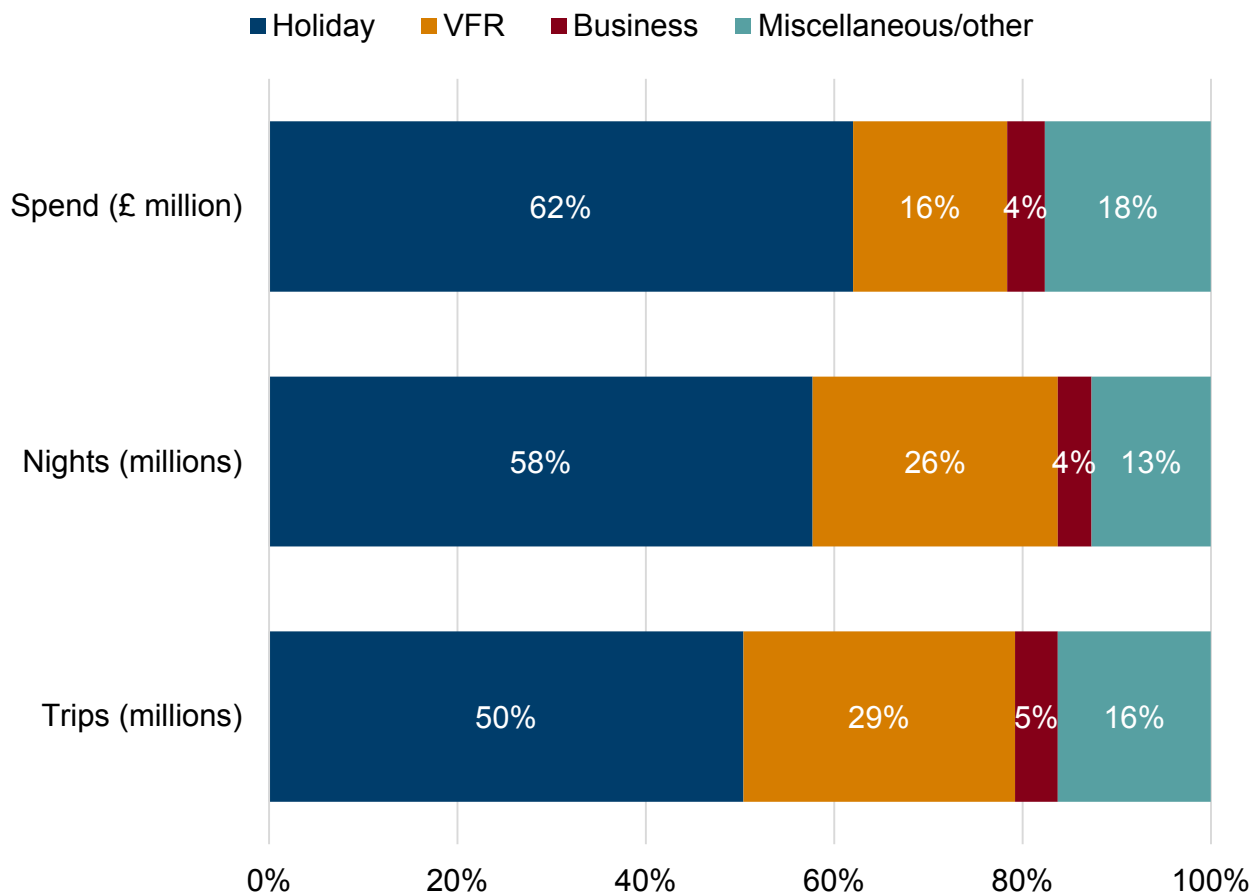
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Source: Great Britain Tourism Survey (GBTS), April to December 2021

[Note 1] Low base size for business trips to Wales, data should be treated with caution.



**Figure 1: Proportion of trips, nights and spend in Wales by main purpose of trip (April to December 2021, revised) [Note 1]**



Description of Figure 1: A stacked bar chart that shows holidays accounted for the majority of trips, nights and spending from GB residents who took trips to Wales.

Source: Great Britain Tourism Survey (GBTS), April to December 2021

[Note 1] Percentages for Wales nights do not sum to 100% due to a rounding

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issue.

Holiday trips made up the largest proportion of overnight trips taken in Wales between April to December 2021. This was followed by trips to visit friends and relatives (VFR). Business trips made up the lowest proportion of overnight trips to Wales and for GB as a whole. Trips for ‘miscellaneous’ purposes include a wide range of trips (see section on [definitions](#)), but the largest volume of miscellaneous trips taken in Wales were those being taken overseas that included an overnight stay in Wales, trips for a personal event and trips for a public event. A higher proportion of trips taken in Wales between April and December 2021 were for holidays (50%), compared to GB as a whole (38%). Trips taken in GB were more likely to be for VFR (37%) compared to Wales (29%) and business trips taken in GB made up a higher proportion of total trips taken in GB (6%) compared to Wales (5%).

## Characteristics of GB and Wales trips

**Table 3: Average spend and length of stay for main purpose of trip taken in Great Britain and Wales (April to December 2021, revised) [Note 1]**

All Purposes	Great Britain	Wales
Spend per trip £	£230	£198
Spend per night £	£66	£54
Nights per trip	3.5	3.7

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<b>All Purposes</b>	<b>Great Britain</b>	<b>Wales</b>
Holidays	Great Britain	Wales
Spend per trip £	£299	£244
Spend per night £	£78	£58
Nights per trip	3.9	4.2
VFR	Great Britain	Wales
Spend per trip £	£148	£112
Spend per night £	£44	£34
Nights per trip	3.3	3.3
Business	Great Britain	Wales
Spend per trip £	£278	£174
Spend per night £	£54	£61
Nights per trip	5.2	2.8

Source: Great Britain Tourism Survey (GBTS), April to December 2021

[Note 1] Low base size for business trips to Wales, data should be treated with caution.

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The average number of nights per trip to Wales (3.7) was slightly higher than for GB as a whole (3.5) due to a higher proportion of holiday trips in Wales and a longer average length of holidays taken in Wales (4.2) compared to GB as a whole (3.9). The average length of VFR trips taken in Wales and GB were similar.

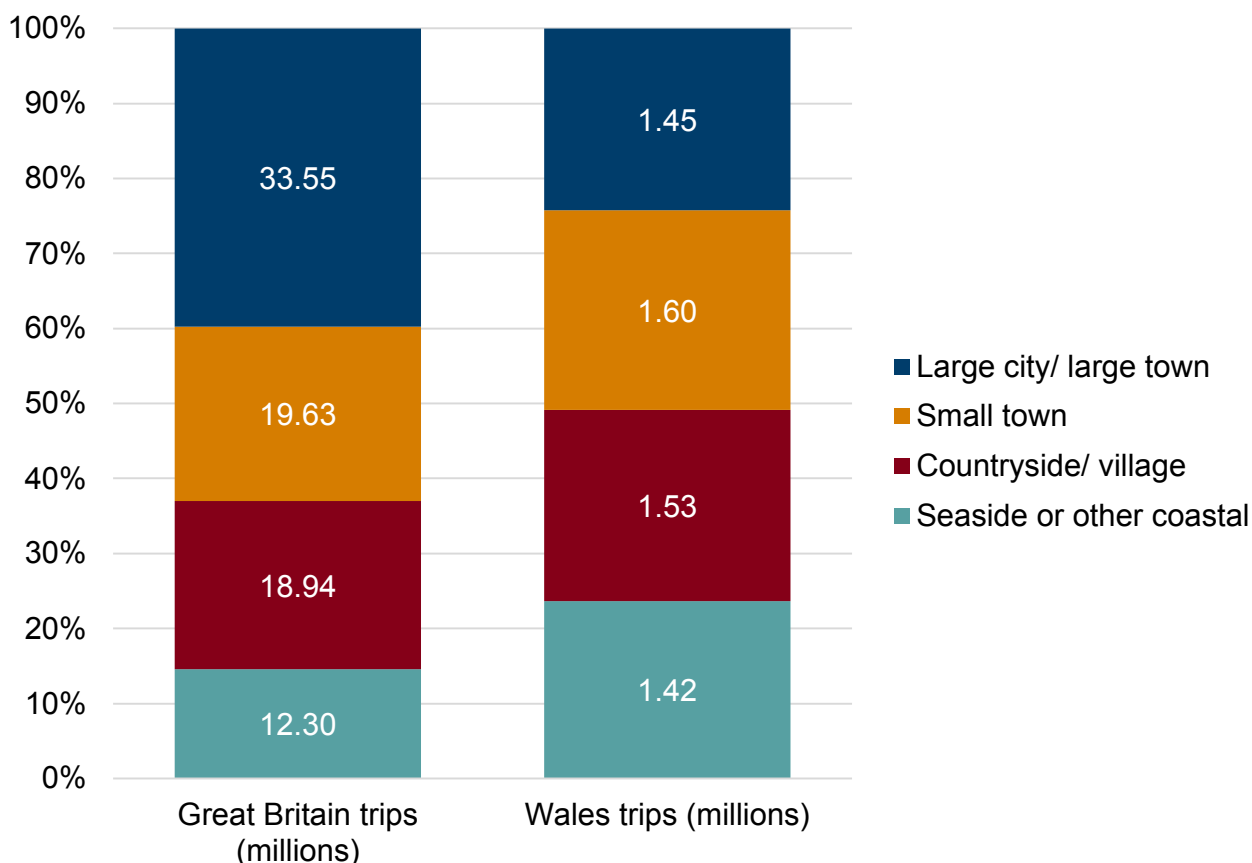
Despite the longer average trip lengths in Wales, the average expenditure on trips taken in Wales is lower than GB with an average spend per trip of £198 and an average spend per night of £54. There is a lower average spend on trips taken in Wales for all trip purposes. The average spend per night on overnight business trips (£61) and holidays (£58) in Wales is notably higher than visits to friends and relatives (£34).

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**Figure 2: Volume and proportion of trips taken in Great Britain and Wales by main location visited (April to December 2021, revised) [Note 1]**



Description of Figure 2: A stacked column chart showing trips to large cities/ large towns made up the largest proportion of GB trips, while in Wales there was a more even spread of trips to different types of location.

Source: Great Britain Tourism Survey (GBTS), April to December 2021

[Note 1] The numbers within the coloured segments are the number of trips taken to each main location in millions. For instance, from April to December

2021, there were 1.53 million tourism day trips to a countryside/village location taken in Wales.

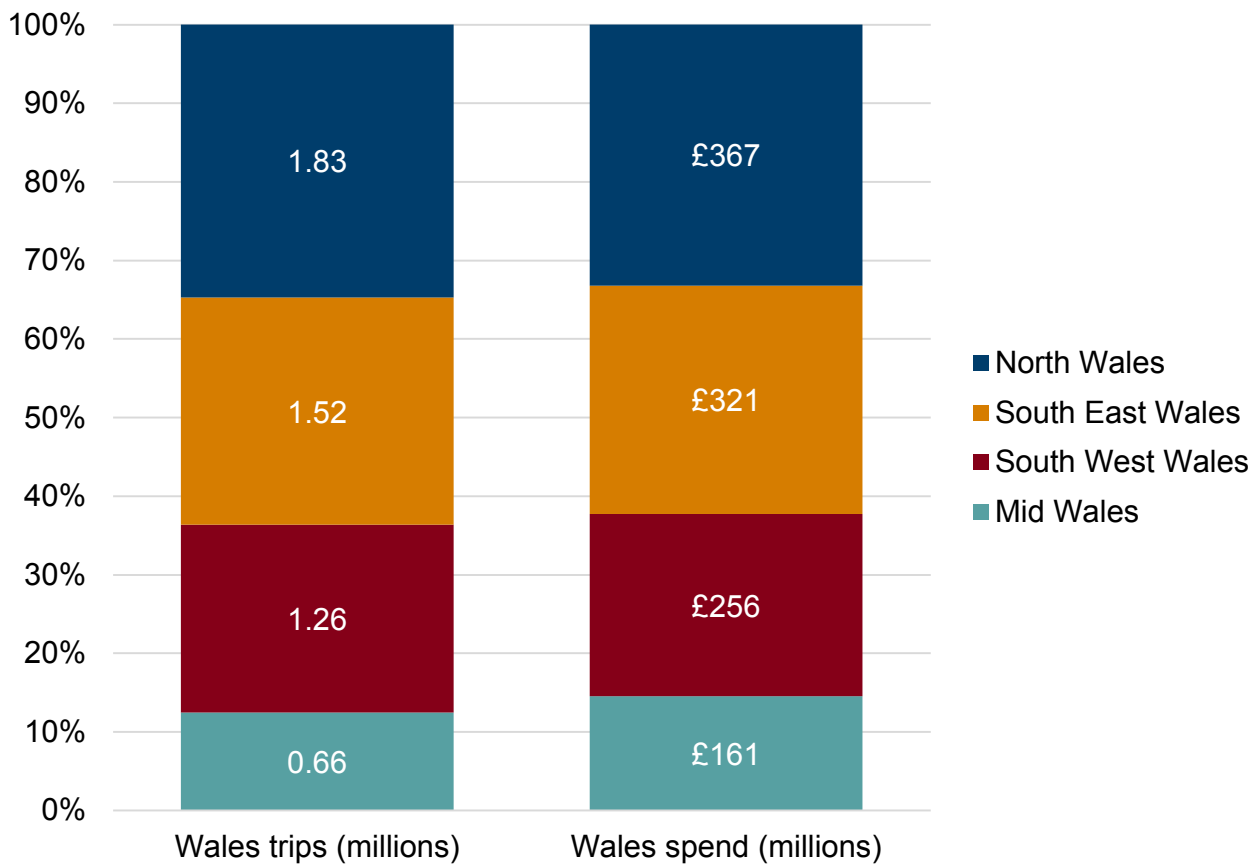
There was an even spread of trips to different types of location across Wales. A much higher proportion of trips taken in Wales were to the seaside and coastal areas compared to GB as a whole. In contrast, a much lower proportion of trips to Wales were taken to large city and towns. This reflects the higher proportion of holiday trips taken in Wales, as well as more rural and coastal destinations in Wales.

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**Figure 3: Volume and proportion of trips and spend where a region of Wales is main place of visit (April to December 2021, revised) [Note 1] [Note 2]**



Description of Figure 3: A stacked column chart showing that of the Welsh regions, North Wales received the most trips and the highest spending from GB residents.

Source: Great Britain Tourism Survey (GBTS), April to December 2021

[Note 1] Low base sizes for some regions – data should be treated with caution.

[Note 2] The numbers within the coloured segments are the number of trips taken in Wales in millions, and the amount spent on trips taken in Wales in millions of pounds, for each region of Wales. For instance, from April to December 2021, there were 1.26 million tourism day trips to South West Wales.

North Wales was the most visited region in 2021. It was the main destination for 29% of trips taken. This compares to South East Wales, the main destination for 24% of trips taken in Wales. South West Wales was the main destination for 20% of trips, and Mid Wales was the main destination for 11% of trips taken in Wales. The remaining trips in Wales were to various destinations where the main place visited was outside of Wales.

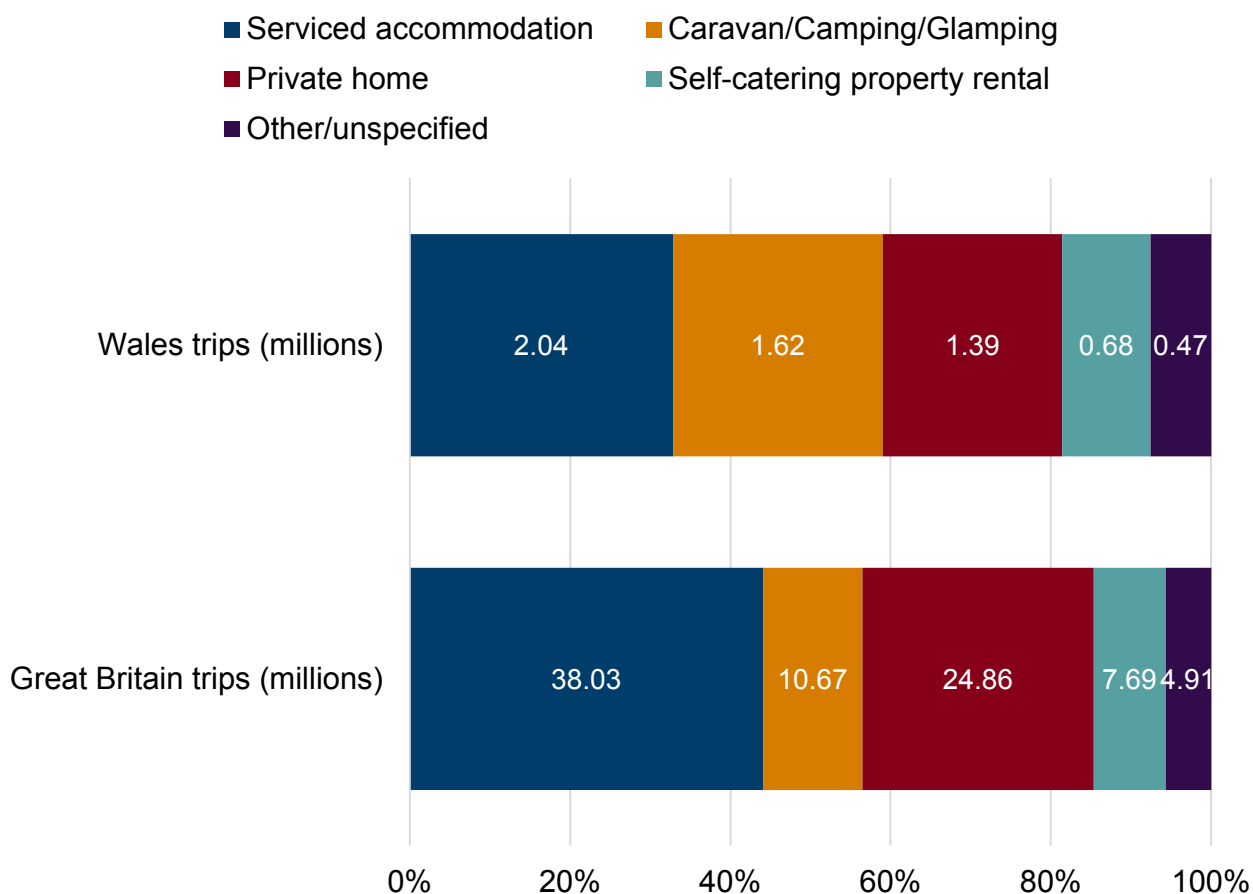
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**Figure 4: Volume and proportion of trips taken in Great Britain and Wales by main type of accommodation used (April to December 2021, revised) [Note 1]**



Description of Figure 4: A stacked bar chart showing that serviced accommodation was the most commonly used type of accommodation for GB residents taking trips in GB and in Wales.

Source: Great Britain Tourism Survey (GBTS), April to December 2021

[Note 1] The numbers within the coloured segments are the number of trips

taken in Wales and in Great Britain in millions, where a certain type of accommodation was used as the main type of accommodation. For instance, from April to December 2021, serviced accommodation was the main type of accommodation used on 2.04 million trips to Wales.

Trips to Wales in April to December 2021 were most likely to be in serviced accommodation or caravan/camping/glamping although a private home (including the home of friends/relatives and second homes) was used in a substantial number of trips. Compared to GB, visitors staying in Wales were more likely to stay in caravan and camping accommodation, but there was lower use of serviced accommodation and private homes.

## Profile of visitors taking trips to Wales

**Table 4: Volume of trips and total expenditure in Wales by nation of residence of visitors (April to December 2021, revised) [Note 1]**

	Trips (millions)	Spend (£ millions)	% of Wales trips
<b>England</b>	4.48	£969	72%
<b>Scotland</b>	0.16	£39	3%
<b>Wales</b>	1.57	£223	25%

Source: Great Britain Tourism Survey (GBTS), April to December 2021

[Note 1] Low base size for Scotland, data should be treated with caution.

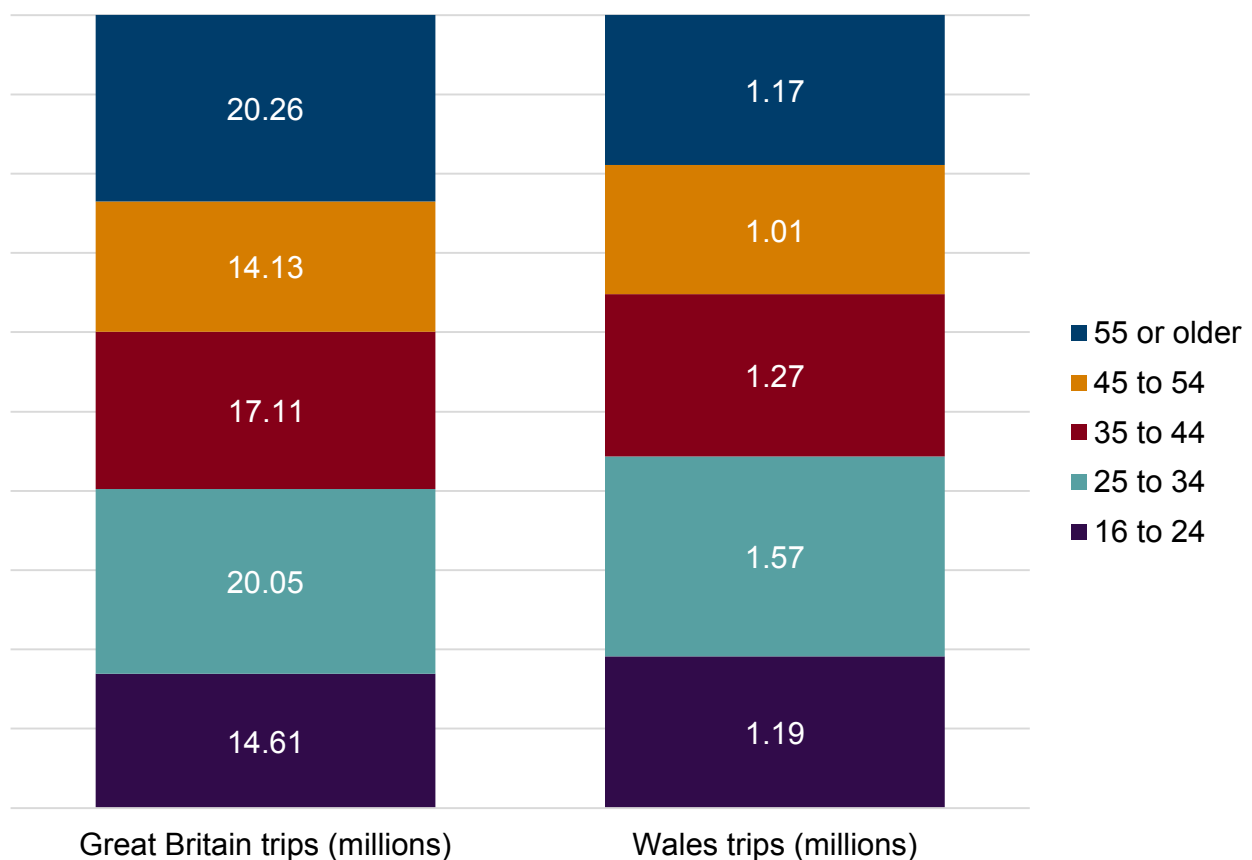
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GB residents living outside of Wales generated three quarters of all overnight trips taken in Wales, with residents of England generating the most trips and expenditure. Residents of Wales generated 1 in 4 trips taken in Wales in 2021.

**Figure 5: Volume and proportion of trips taken in Great Britain and Wales by age group (April to December 2021, revised) [Note 1]**



Description of Figure 5: A stacked column chart showing trip-takers aged 25-34 years were the largest age group of visitors to Wales, while among visitors to GB, those aged 55 or older were the largest age group of trip-takers.

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Source: Great Britain Tourism Survey (GBTS), April to December 2021

[Note 1] The numbers within the coloured segments are the number of trips taken by each age group in millions. For instance, from April to December 2021, visitors aged 45 to 54 took 1.01 million trips to Wales.

Trips to Wales were spread across different age groups, but those in the age range 25 to 34 years old generated the highest volume of trips taken in Wales. Visitors from the age group 55 years or older made up a higher proportion of visitors to GB than to Wales. Wales visitors had a slightly larger average travel party size of 3.1 visitors compared to 2.8 visitors for GB, and 37% of trips taken in Wales included children in the travel party compared to 34% in GB as a whole.

**Table 5: Number of overnight trips, nights and expenditure in Great Britain by month of visit (April to December 2021, revised)**

	Trips (millions)	Nights (millions)	Spend (£ millions)
April	2.21	7.25	£408
May	6.00	19.01	£1,343
June	8.48	35.71	£1,710
July	10.20	41.20	£2,454
August	13.28	48.76	£3,463
September	14.32	47.17	£3,525

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	<b>Trips (millions)</b>	<b>Nights (millions)</b>	<b>Spend (£ millions)</b>
<b>October</b>	12.00	43.94	£2,846
<b>November</b>	8.11	23.72	£1,799
<b>December</b>	11.58	35.86	£2,307

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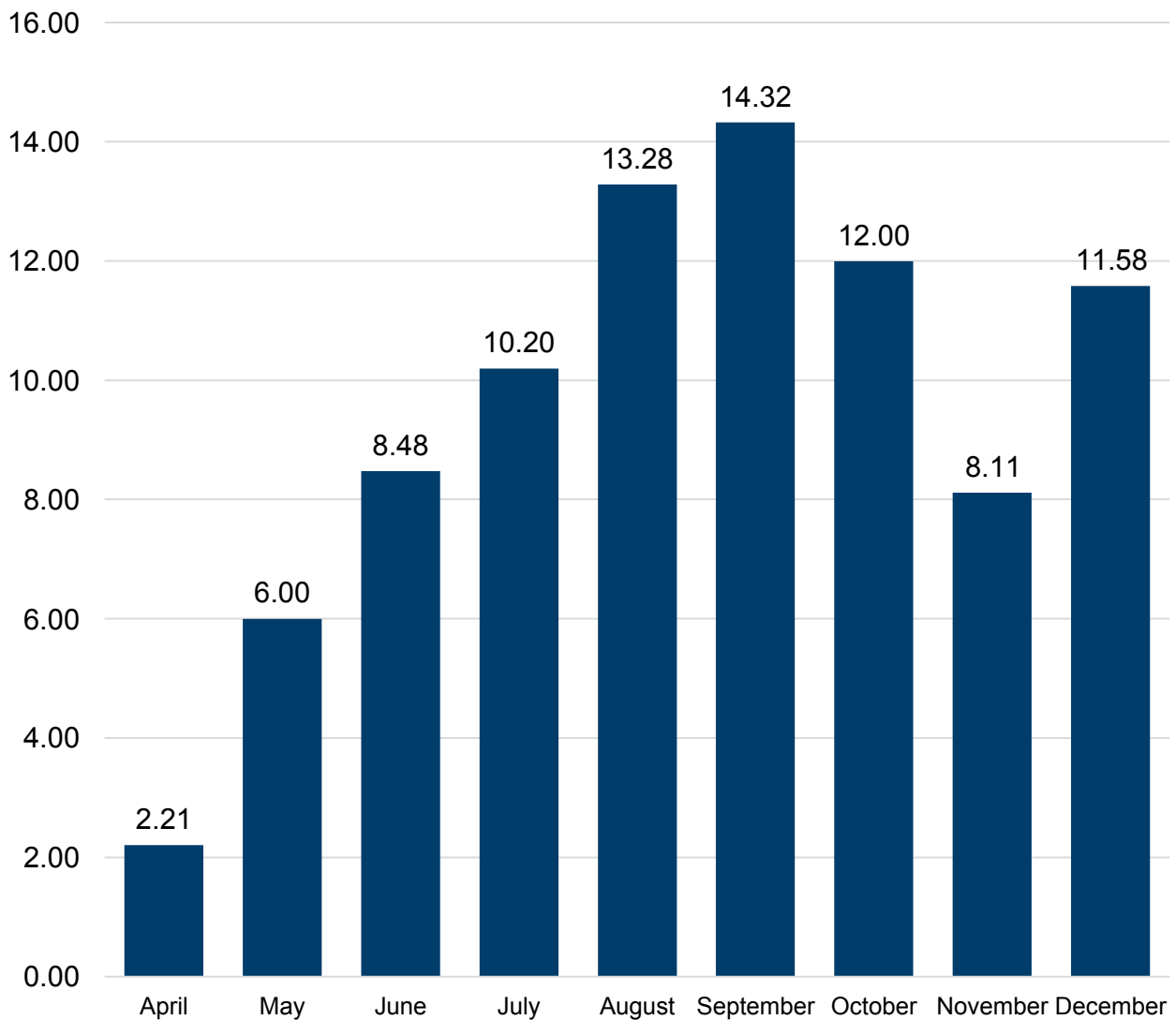
Source: Great Britain Tourism Survey (GBTS), April to December 2021

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**Figure 6: Volume of trips in millions in Great Britain by month of visit (April to December 2021, revised)**



Description of Figure 6: A column chart showing the volume of domestic trips taken in GB increased from April to September, decreased from September to November, and then increased again in December.

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Source: Great Britain Tourism Survey (GBTS), April to December 2021

There was a gradual increase in domestic overnight trips taken in Great Britain from April 2021 onwards with trips peaking in September, which recorded the highest level of holiday trips. Trips were lower in October and November, but increased again in December, which recorded the highest monthly volume of visits to friends and relatives.

**Table 6: Volume of trips, nights and expenditure in Wales by month of visit (April to December 2021, revised) [Note 1]**

	Trips (millions)	Nights (millions)	Spend (£ millions)
April	0.19	0.59	£20
May	0.38	1.19	£85
June	0.77	3.07	£155
July	0.88	3.06	£157
August	1.07	4.72	£268
September	0.96	3.67	£199
October	0.74	2.65	£137
November	0.58	1.66	£104

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	<b>Trips (millions)</b>	<b>Nights (millions)</b>	<b>Spend (£ millions)</b>
<b>December</b>	0.65	2.06	£106

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Source: Great Britain Tourism Survey (GBTS), April to December 2021

[Note 1] Low base sizes for April, May and November, data should be treated with caution.

There was a gradual increase in domestic overnight trips taken in Great Britain from April 2021 onwards with trips peaking in September, which recorded the highest level of holiday trips. Trips were lower in October and November but increased again in December which recorded the highest monthly volume of visits to friends and relatives.

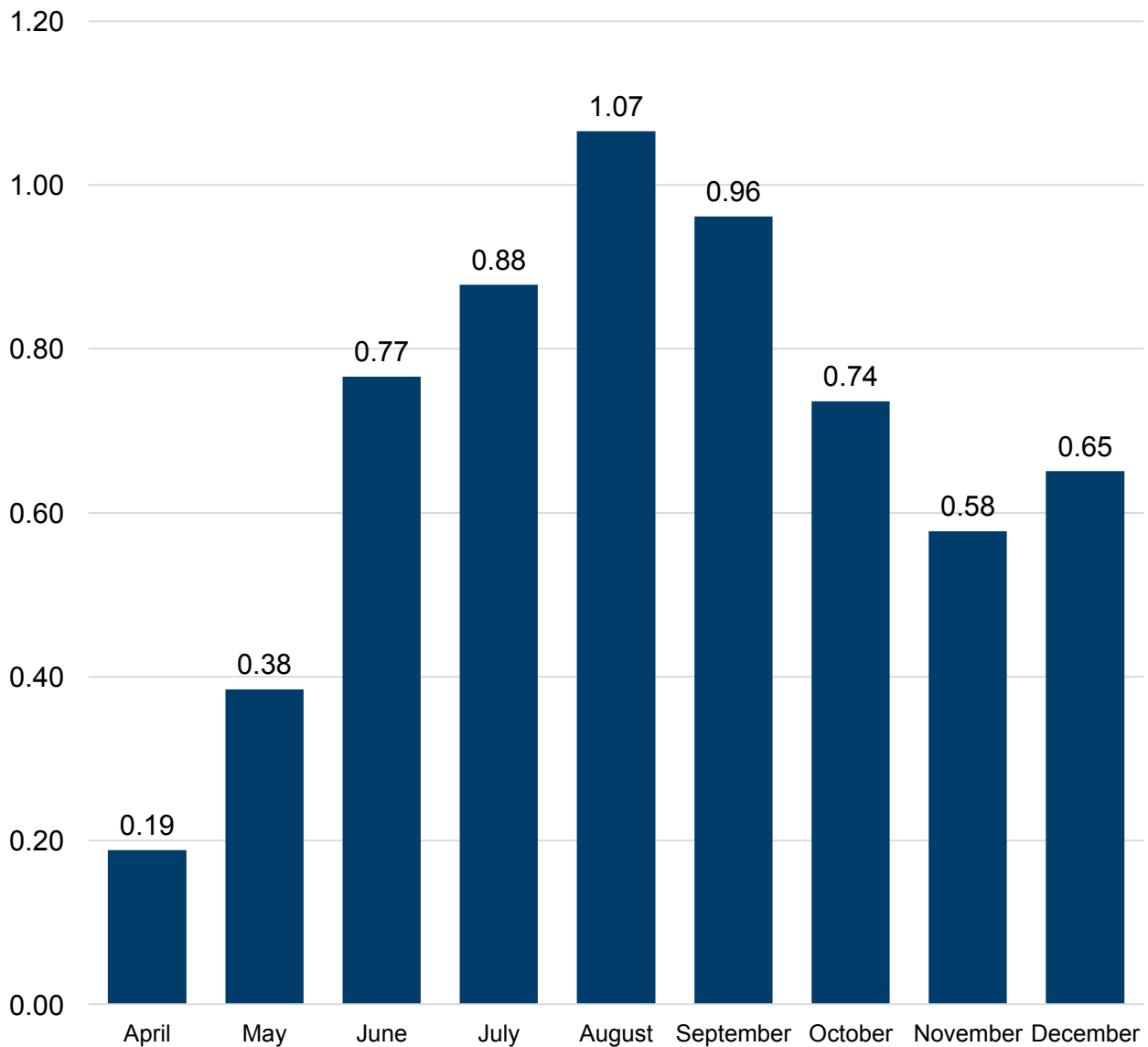
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**Figure 7: Volume of trips to Wales in millions by month of visit (April to December 2021, revised)**



Description of Figure 7: A column chart showing that the volume of domestic trips taken to Wales increased from April to August, decreased from August to November, and then increased again in December.

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Source: Great Britain Tourism Survey (GBTS), April to December 2021

Similar to the pattern across GB, there was a gradual increase in domestic overnight trips taken in Wales from April onwards, but trips peaked in August, which recorded the highest monthly volume of holiday trips. Similar to GB as a whole, the volume of trips taken in Wales was lower in the October and November but increased in December, which recorded the highest monthly volume of visits to friends and relatives.

## Quality and methodology information

### Definitions

To qualify as an eligible GB Domestic Overnight Trip the following criteria must be met:

- The trip involved a stay of at least one night in one or more of the GB nations; England, Scotland or Wales.
- The trip is not taken on a frequent basis (less often than once a week).
- For GB Domestic Overnight Holiday Trips; the main purpose of the trip was for holiday, pleasure or leisure.
- For GB Domestic Overnight VFR Trips; the main purpose of the trip was for visiting friends and relatives, including VFR trips that were combined with a holiday.
- For GB Domestic Overnight Business Trips; the main purpose of the trip was for business.
- For GB Domestic Overnight Miscellaneous/Other Trips; the main purpose of the trip was for another type of trip taken not covered by the above classifications including personal events, public events, or for study, medical, religious purposes, or any overnight stay in GB as part of an overseas trip.

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## Other definitions used in this publication

### Volume

An estimate of what the grossed-up number of overnight trips undertaken by the population would be if the survey sample is representative of the whole GB population. The reported volume of trips is an estimate of trips by individuals, so that a travel party of two people would count as two individual trips.

### Value

An estimate of what the total expenditure relating to the volume of overnight visits undertaken by the population would be if the survey sample is representative of the whole GB population.

### Bednights

An estimate of what the grossed-up number of nights spent on overnight trips undertaken by the population would be if the survey sample is representative of the whole GB population.

These definitions and the associated qualifying criteria have been revised as part of the new combined GBTS/GBDVS survey to align with agreed international standards. These changes impact the comparability of the published domestic overnight tourism estimates for 2021 with 2019 and previous years.

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## Methodology

In 2019, Visit Wales, VisitScotland and VisitEngland, undertook a review of the requirements and methods for producing the official GB domestic tourist statistics, to future-proof the data collection methods, whilst maintaining the reliability and robustness of the information reported. As a result, substantial changes were introduced as part of a new combined online survey collecting data on both domestic overnight trips as well as domestic day trips. This represents a fundamental change in the way data is collected for overnight visits including moving from the previous in-home face to face survey method to a new combined online survey covering both domestic overnight trips and day trips.

The sample for the new combined online survey is a non-probability-based design sourced from 4 ESOMAR accredited online panel providers and includes quotas for key demographic variables to make the overall sample as representative as possible of GB population. The target annual sample size for the survey of overnight visitors is 60,000 completed interviews. Fieldwork for the new survey started in England and Wales in April 2021 and the number of interviews achieved for the period April to December 2021 is 47,008 interviews for GB residents including 6,840 interviews with Welsh residents. Not every person who is interviewed will have taken an eligible overnight trip and so the base sizes used for trip estimation are lower than the number of interviews. Base sizes are published in the [GBTs Background Quality Report 2021](#).

As part of the survey changes, a revised weighting scheme has been introduced to improve efficiency, whilst making the results as representative as possible of the GB population. However, the use of a non-probability online sample limits the extent to which the survey responses are truly representative of the full GB population, a limitation of similar online sample surveys. The new weighting scheme uses the National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC) mapped to approximate social grade for population statistics, for the purpose of quotas and weighting to the GB population. The change to using NS-

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SEC as the population statistics source will impact the estimation and reporting of trips compared to the previous reporting of social grade used for GBTS in 2019 and previous years. We are planning to introduce a new question in the survey during 2023 that captures household income that will be used to analyse and report on trips taken by different household income bands from 2023 onwards.

Further details of the changes to survey method, sample design, estimation approaches and the effects of applied caps and recalibration are available in the '[GBTS Background Quality Report 2021](#)'.

## Comparability and coherence

Statistics for domestic overnight tourism have been collected in a broadly similar way since 1989. However, the changes in survey methodology introduced in 2021, together with the interruption in data collection due to COVID-19, means that results published from April 2021 onwards are not directly comparable with data published for 2019 and previous years.

As part of the survey, respondents are asked about any overnight trips they have taken in the 4 full weeks prior to their date of interview (reference period). Trip and expenditure estimates are reported for individual calendar months as well as for quarterly and annual periods. As the interview reference periods do not exactly correspond with calendar months an adjustment is made using a 'seasonal smoothing factor' to improve monthly comparisons within and between years. The monthly estimates are subject to limitations on sample size and seasonal fluctuations in trip taking across the year. The monthly pattern of visits in 2021 will have also been influenced by any COVID-19 restrictions in place limiting travel at different times of the year. Users are advised to be aware of these limitations when making month on month comparisons.

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## Accuracy

The statistics produced from the Great Britain Tourism Survey in 2019 and previous years have been designated as official statistics, which provides reassurance to users that the statistics are produced to the very highest professional standards of trustworthiness, quality and value, set out in the **Code of Practice for Statistics (Office for National Statistics)**. Due to the changes in methodology and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the survey results for 2021 have been labelled as **'experimental statistics' (Office for National Statistics)**. The new survey and statistics have undergone a comprehensive programme of quality assurance including piloting of the survey, analysis of changes to the trip definitions, testing the impact of the new weighting scheme and a review of caps and imputation rules. Changes to the survey methodology and estimation have taken account of a review and advice provided by the Methodology Advisory Service of the Office for National Statistics.

As the statistics are produced using a non-probability online survey method, they are subject to the limitations and potential sources of bias and error associated with such surveys. These include:

- coverage error: due to part of the GB population not having online access
- sampling error: using a sample to measure the behaviour of the full GB population
- sample bias: including differences between people with online access and who are online panel members compared to those who are not
- measurement error: due to respondents entering incorrect values
- non-response error: including survey refusals and drop-outs and the availability of 'don't know' and 'prefer not to say' options

The GBTS data are weighted to correct for any imperfections in the achieved sample that might lead to bias and to rectify any differences between the sample and the target GB population. The survey uses a mix of accredited online panels

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to mitigate for possible panel specific biases, and the mix of panels is kept consistent over time. Demographic quotas are used to align the sample with the GB population. The survey script and data processing include bespoke checks to verify the accuracy of responses. Imputation is used to cover missing data and caps are used to minimise the impact of extreme values that are entered. Further caps were applied for this revised release, to mitigate the impact of individual trips that were identified as having a disproportionate impact upon the estimated volume of trips, bednights and spend. It is not possible to measure standard sample errors due to the non-probability sample being used, but base sizes are reported for eligible trip takers and users are advised to consider and be cautious of small base sizes, particularly for monthly data and lower-level geographies, when drawing inferences from the statistics.

Further details of quality assurance and trip base sizes are provided in the '[GBTS Background Quality Report 2021](#)'.

## Relevance

These statistics are used both within and outside the Welsh Government to monitor domestic tourism demand and measure the contribution and impact of domestic tourism on the visitor economy. A key purpose of these statistics is to uncover insights into market trends over time. The estimates released for 2021 will provide insights on the impact of COVID-19 on visitor levels and provide a baseline to measure performance across subsequent years.

As far as possible, the new combined GBTS and GBDVS survey provides consistency with previous information collected, but new questions capture enhanced information on activities undertaken, booking methods and responder profiles including protected characteristics. It is envisaged that this additional information will be of value for the various users of the survey. The current questionnaire is included in the GBTS 2021 Background Quality Report.

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The survey sponsors are planning to engage with the priority users of the statistics to check the new survey information meets their needs and we encourage users of the statistics to provide feedback on the data and this output at [tourismresearch@gov.wales](mailto:tourismresearch@gov.wales).

## Timeliness and punctuality

All outputs adhere to the Code of Practice by pre-announcing the date of publication through the upcoming calendar. Furthermore, should the need arise to postpone an output this would follow the [statement on revisions, errors and postponements](#). We aim to publish data as soon as possible after the relevant research time period. Disruption to the new combined GBTS and GBDVS survey due to COVID-19 and comprehensive testing and quality assuring of the new statistics have resulted in the reporting of 2021 statistics to be later than normal. It is anticipated that future results for Wales will be published on a quarterly basis, to ensure estimates are supported by robust trip base sizes. Specific publication timings will be notified on the WG website, but the aim is to publish quarterly statistics for Wales approximately 9 to 10 weeks after the end of each quarter based on the 4 week survey trip taking reference period and to allow for quality assurance and reporting timescales.

## Further information

[A summary of changes made to the GBTS survey in 2021 compared to 2019 and previous years](#)

[GBTS Background Quality Report 2021](#)

[Estimates for domestic overnight tourism in England are available from VisitEngland](#)

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Estimates for domestic overnight tourism in Scotland are available from VisitScotland

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