

DVS User Guidance

This guidance provides an overview of the DVS, including its background, purpose, research method and important considerations when interpreting the results, along with information on privacy and data security.

About the DVS

Purpose and scope

The Domestic Visitor Survey (DVS) was developed to address an information gap in New Zealand's tourism data system. It provides information on domestic visitor behaviours, experiences and travel intentions.

A Domestic Visitor Survey was recommended by the [Tourism Data Leadership Group \(TDLG\)](#) as a priority dataset for New Zealand. Stakeholder consultation included: Tourism New Zealand, Tourism Industry Aotearoa, Department of Conservation, RTO – Auckland RTO - Wellington NZ, RTO - Rotorua NZ, RTO – Timaru, and RTO – Mackenzie.

The Domestic Visitor Survey (DVS) provides insight into how New Zealanders travel within New Zealand. It measures domestic travel experiences, future travel intentions, and the factors that influence travel decisions, helping MBIE, Regional Tourism Organisations, and industry stakeholders better understand and respond to domestic tourism demand.

Table 1: Domestic Visitor Survey scope

What the DVS measures	What the DVS does not measure
Domestic travel experiences	Complete domestic tourism expenditure
Travel intentions	Total visitor volumes
Day trips and overnight trips	Actual tourism economic impact
Travel motivations	International visitors
Travel barriers	Tourism business performance
Decision-making behaviour	
Visitor characteristics and segmentation	

The DVS complements MBIE's existing tourism datasets by adding a domestic visitor perspective in New Zealand (see Table 2).

Table 2: MBIE tourism datasets

MBIE tourism dataset	What it measures	Primary tourism lens
Domestic Visitor Survey (DVS)	Domestic travel intentions, trip behaviour, motivations, barriers, activities, accommodation use, transport use, visitor profiles, satisfaction and NPS	Visitor behaviour and experience
Tourism Sentiment Survey (TSS)	Sentiment and perceptions of tourism among residents, domestic travellers, and tourism businesses, including tourism impacts, value, crowding and future tourism development	Tourism sentiment and social licence
Monthly Regional Tourism Estimates (MRTE)	Tourism expenditure by region, visitor origin, and industry	Tourism demand and economic activity
Tourism Volumes and Flows (TV&F)	Visitor presence, visitor days, visitor movements, and travel flows between origins and destinations	Visitor movement and visitation
Accommodation Data Programme (ADP)	Guest nights, occupancy, capacity utilisation, and accommodation activity	Accommodation demand
International Visitor Survey (IVS)	International visitor expenditure, activities, satisfaction, itinerary, and travel characteristics	International visitor behaviour and experience
Hospitality Sales	Electronic card spending in hospitality-related industries	Hospitality sector performance
Other Tourism Data Releases (including TSA and linked statistics)	Various tourism indicators including economic contribution and supporting tourism measures	Tourism system and economic contribution

Data and visualisations

Results are published through MBIE and the Tourism Evidence and Insights Centre (TEIC) as interactive dashboards, topline reports, downloadable datasets, technical documentation, and data visualisations.

MBIE's webpage [Domestic Visitor Survey \(DVS\) | Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment](#), including microdata and a data dictionary.

Online interactive charts for selected measures on TEIC [Domestic Visitor Survey | Tourism Evidence and Insights Centre](#)

Survey Design and Methodology

Verian (formerly Kantar Public New Zealand) is commissioned for data collection and processing. MBIE is responsible for the analysis and dissemination of survey results.

The DVS is funded to run for three years, with two waves of data each year. Two DVS surveys will be conducted each year, in October, and April, with MBIE releasing DVS data every six months. The first data collection point in October captures pre-summer season travel intentions and post-winter season travel behaviours and experiences. The second data collection in April captures pre-winter season travel intentions and post-summer season travel behaviours and experiences. Results are suitable for trend analysis across waves, subject to standard considerations around sampling variability and seasonality.

Table 3: Domestic Visitor Survey wave descriptions

DVS wave description	Travel experiences over last 6 months	Travel intentions over next 6 months
April 2026 wave (Wave 2)	October 2025-April 2026	April 2026-October 2026
October 2025 wave (Wave 1)	April 2025-October 2025	October 2025 – April 2026

The target population for the Domestic Visitor Survey (DVS) is New Zealanders aged 15 years and over. The DVS uses an online panel survey, with demographic quotas on age by gender, region, and ethnicity. The 15-minute questionnaire was cognitively tested and piloted before use in the main fieldwork. The questionnaire for each wave can be found on the MBIE webpage.

The total sample size of the DVS for the April 2026 wave is 2,581 New Zealanders aged 15 years and over. The DVS survey carries a maximum margin of error of +/-1.9% (at the 95% confidence level and assuming simple random sampling).

The DVS is weighted in a way that means that the results can be considered representative of the New Zealand population aged 15 years and over. Post fieldwork, data were weighted on age by gender within region, ethnicity, and individual regions to match 2023 Census population characteristics.

Understanding the Results

What the DVS measures

Definitions used in the survey questionnaire

- **Overnight trip:** An overnight trip is where a person stays away from home for at least one night.
- **Same-day trip:** A same-day trip is to an area outside of where a person usually works or lives. The trip must involve travel of at least 40 kilometres one way from home, or travel by aeroplane or ferry service.

Treatment of multiple overnight trips:

- **Planned domestic travel (next six months):** For respondents with multiple planned overnight trips, the survey records the total number of planned trips and the destinations and number of nights for the first two trips. Additional detail—such as timing, motivations, accommodation, and expected barriers—is then collected for the first planned trip only.
- **Domestic travel in the past six months:** Where respondents have taken multiple overnight trips in the last six months, the survey first captures the total number of overnight trips. Respondents may then list the names of up to five trips. From these, two trips are randomly selected, and for each of those trips the destination and number of nights in each place are collected. More detailed follow-up questions, including spend, are asked about one of the randomly selected trips.

Regional level data: Regional-level analysis is possible through access to the survey microdata. Users should consider effective sample sizes and associated uncertainty measures, such as Relative Margins of Error (RME) before drawing conclusions for smaller areas.

Regional-level analysis could include:

- Destination-based measures: Use these where the trip location is the analytical focus eg, Share of overnight trips by destination region/RTO
- Origin-based measures: Use these where the resident traveller's home region matters eg Future travel intention by origin region.
- Origin–destination measures. eg Origin region to destination region/RTO flows for day trips.

MBIE is currently developing regional DVS visualisations for future publication. We are also in the process of undertaking additional cohort analysis and expanding the range of measures available through the Tourism Evidence and Insights Centre (TEIC).

Net Promoter Score (NPS): The NPS is a widely used measure of customer loyalty and satisfaction. It assesses the likelihood that visitors would recommend their destination to family or friends following an overnight trip. Respondents are asked to rate this likelihood on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 indicates "not at all likely" and 10 indicates "extremely likely".

The Net Promoter Score (NPS) is calculated using responses to the recommendation question and is defined as:

$$\text{NPS} = \% \text{Promoters} - \% \text{Detractors}$$

Where:

- Promoters = respondents who give a score of 9 or 10
- Passives = respondents who give a score of 7 or 8
- Detractors = respondents who give a score of 0 to 6

The resulting NPS can range from -100 (all respondents are detractors) to +100 (all respondents are promoters).

Users should exercise caution when comparing NPS results across different surveys, as survey design, target populations, data collection methods, and question wording may differ. For example:

- Domestic Visitor Survey (DVS) applies NPS to *all* domestic trips in the past six months, including short, routine or low-emotion trips, which naturally lowers scores.
- International Visitor Survey (IVS) reflects international travel where visitors may have travel purposes other than holiday/vacation. It is also possible that international visitors have higher expectations and stronger overall visitor experiences, leading to higher NPS. Note that, unlike the International Visitor Survey (IVS), DVS NPS results will not be grouped into reliability categories.
- Domestic Satisfaction Report (DSR) captures a traveller's *most recent leisure trip* over the past year — typically a memorable, positive experience — which lifts NPS.

Frequently misinterpreted results

Past travel versus planned travel

- Past trip questions relate to trips that respondents have already taken within the last six months and describe their actual behaviour.
- Future intention questions relate to trips respondents expect or plan to take within the next six months and describe their intended behaviour.
- Future intention questions should not be interpreted as forecasts or predictions of future travel. They represent the respondents' plans at the time of taking the survey and may differ from what will occur eg, 60% *intend* to travel does not mean 60% definitely *will* travel.

Results changed between the survey waves. Differences may reflect *sampling variability* or *seasonal patterns*. Change does not necessarily mean:

- Behaviour changed
- Policy caused the change
- Market conditions changed

Correlation versus causation: The DVS identifies patterns and associations but does not prove causal relationships.

Commonly used calculations

Counts versus percentages: Counts describe the survey sample, while percentages describe the population the sample is intended to represent. Counts treat each respondent equally, whereas percentages account for the survey weights assigned to each respondent.

- Count is the actual number of survey respondents who selected a response. Every respondent contributes equally, regardless of how many people they represent in the population (unweighted). Counts are useful for understanding sample size and data reliability but are not used to calculate measures.
- Percentages (often labelled as proportions) are the estimated share of the population associated with a response. Proportions are calculated using survey weights, so respondents who represent more people in the population have a greater influence on the result. Percentages displayed in graphs may not total 100% due to rounding, or because respondents were able to select multiple response options.
- Weighted estimates use survey weights to produce population level estimates from the survey sample. They account for differences in selection and response rates and make sure that survey results are representative of the whole/target population.

Median versus mean:

- Mean (average): Add up all trips taken and divide by the number of people.
- Median: The middle value when everyone's number of trips is ordered from lowest to highest. Half of people took fewer trips than the median, and half took more.

In the Domestic Visitor Survey (DVS), the mean trip cost is more than the median because most people spend a modest amount on their domestic trips, while a small number of travellers spend very large amounts. These high spend trips raise the average (mean), but they do not affect the middle value (median) nearly as much.

Multiple responses: Many of the questions in the survey allow for multiple responses ie, the respondent can choose as many options as applicable from a list of options. This means totals per question may add up to more than 100 per cent.

Ethnicity: Ethnicity is self-reported. In the survey participants could select more than one group ethnicity. In reporting (eg, demographic differences) we did not use prioritised ethnicity, for example if someone is Chinese and Māori, they are counted in both the Asian AND the Māori group data.

Statistical significance

All survey estimates are subject to sampling error because the DVS surveys a sample rather than the entire population. Confidence intervals should be used when interpreting results and comparing estimates. Relative Margin of Error (RME) should be used to assess the reliability of detailed estimates, particularly for smaller regions and population groups. The DVS survey carries a maximum margin of error of +/-1.9% (at the 95% confidence level and assuming simple random sampling).

RMEs are calculated at the 95% confidence level as $RME = 1/100(0.021 + 0.0025\sqrt{n})$. Microdata users can reproduce MBIE estimates using the following R code:

```
margins_of_error <- function(sample_count){ 1 / (100 * (0.021 + 0.0025 * sqrt(sample_count)))}
```

The Relative Margin of Error (RME) indicates the size of that uncertainty relative to the estimate itself. Lower RME values indicate more reliable results, while higher RME values indicate greater uncertainty relative to the estimate. This can occur when the number of respondents is small. Estimates with a high RME should be used with caution as small differences between results may not reflect real differences in the population.

Example using a lower Relative Margin of Error (RME): 60% of respondents plan to take a holiday to Auckland in the next six months with a 5% RME.

Step 1: We calculate the 5% margin of error of 60% as: $5\% \times 60\% = 3$ percentage points.

Step 2: We calculate the confidence interval

- Lower bound: $60\% - 3$ percentage points = 57%
- Upper bound: $60\% + 3$ percentage points = 63%

Step 3: We interpret this by saying that we are 95% confident that the true value lies between 57% and 63%. This is a relatively narrow range ($RME < 10$) which indicates that the estimate is reliable.

Another way to say this is that an RME of 5% means the estimate could vary by about 5% of its value due to sampling error. For an estimate of 60%, that equates to 3 percentage points. Therefore, while the survey estimate is 60%, the true population value is likely to be somewhere between 57% and 63%.

Example using a higher Relative Margin of Error (RME): Suppose 4% of respondents plan to take a cruise holiday in the next six months, and the estimate has a Relative Margin of Error (RME) of 40%.

Step 1: Calculate the margin of error as: $40\% \times 4\% = 1.6$ percentage points

Step 2: Calculate the confidence interval

- Lower bound: $4\% - 1.6$ percentage points = 2.4%
- Upper bound: $4\% + 1.6$ percentage points = 5.6%

Step 3: We interpret this by saying we can be 95% confident that the true population proportion lies between 2.4% and 5.6%.

Although the estimate suggests that cruise holiday intentions are relatively uncommon, the high RME indicates substantial uncertainty around the result. Small estimates typically have larger RMEs because sampling error represents a larger proportion of the estimate. Estimates with an RME of 40% should be interpreted with caution, and the confidence interval should be considered alongside the point estimate.

Survey Quality, comparability and time series use

Sample error

As with all sample surveys, there are inherent limitations related to coverage and non-response that cannot be fully corrected. These factors mean that, unlike a Census, the DVS findings may not perfectly reflect the true attitudes or behaviours of the target population.

Weighting the data to align with known population characteristics helps to reduce these biases, but only in relation to the variables used for weighting (age, gender, and ethnicity). For example, disability is not explicitly controlled for in the DVS which means it may differ from the population distribution in the 2023 Census (this is typical for sample surveys).

Quality and privacy standards

Verian, as the survey provider, carried out a series of data checks and cleaning before providing the data to MBIE. This included identifying potentially incorrect data eg numerical outliers, which are then manually edited where necessary. Verian noted that data cleaning was only required for a small number of respondents.

On receipt of the data, MBIE carried out its own data checks. This included checking the completeness of the data, and benchmarking Verian's results against MBIE's internally generated figures.

This research has been carried out in accordance with the Research Association of New Zealand Code of Practice and Privacy 2023, the ESOMAR code of conduct, and ISO 20252 standards. All survey responses were collected and stored in accordance with data privacy standards. Respondent identities remain anonymous and no personally identifiable information is reported.

Respondents were told that the survey is about trips people take for holiday or leisure reasons in New Zealand.

Comparability and Time Series Use

Questionnaire consistency: The DVS questionnaire remained largely unchanged between the October 2025 wave and the April 2026 wave, meaning most results can be compared confidently across waves. Core measures such as travel intentions, destinations, expenditure, accommodation, transport, activities, satisfaction, and NPS are consistent between survey waves.

When comparing results, users should be aware of three key caveats:

- **Seasonality:** Questions referring to travel in the "last six months" or "next six months" cover different calendar periods in each wave. Differences between waves may therefore reflect seasonal travel patterns as well as changes in behaviour.
- **Trip timing questions:** Some holiday and travel timing response options vary between survey waves to reflect the relevant travel period. Comparisons of detailed timing categories should therefore be treated with caution.
- **Repeat respondents:** The April 2026 wave acknowledges that some respondents may have participated in a previous wave. Results continue to be designed to represent the target population and does not create a new analytical variable by itself but repeat participation should be considered when undertaking any analysis.

In future iterations of this User Guidance, we plan to update sections on:

- Ongoing quality assurance and validation
- Sample design and weighting consistency
- Revisions, modifications and updates
- Geography and regional results
- Demographic analysis
- Comparisons with other datasets

Document status

This resource is version 1 of MBIE's Document DVS User Guidance and takes effect from September 2026.

Document history		
Version	Date	Changes
1.0	28 September 2026	-