



Department for Transport

Sea Passenger Statistics: Summary of User Feedback

Background information

Our latest statistical publication on sea passengers and note to users can be found on our [{maritime and shipping statistics}](#) page.

The background quality report for the sea passenger statistics and the notes and definition can be found on our [{maritime and shipping statistics information}](#) page.

In this publication

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As part of a review of the Sea Passenger Statistics the Department for Transport (DfT) conducted a user survey in December 2018. A total of 6 respondents completed the survey. There were 5 full responses and 1 partial response.

The aim of the survey was to understand if the sea passenger statistics continue to meet user needs, and whether the statistics are of sufficient quality for purposes to which the data are used. Answers to the questions give insight into the usefulness and reliability of the statistical publications. The survey also asked for user views on the changes the department made as part of the sea passenger release (in November 2018), and proposed changes the department plans to make. The following sections cover what we asked users, what their responses were and what course of action the department plans as a result.

Questions on quality and value of the statistics

About the respondents

There were 6 respondents, representing the following groups; central government or agency, local government, member of public, port authority, monthly sea passenger statistics contributor (x 2).

Relevance

We asked: how satisfied are you with the sea passenger statistics in meeting your needs?

Users response: 4/6 were either extremely satisfied or satisfied, 1/6 was somewhat unsatisfied and the other respondent chose 'don't know / not sure'. The respondent who was somewhat unsatisfied, explained the reason for concern was due to a mismatch between two of our data tables (SPAS0401 and PORT0301). After engaging with the respondent and explaining the small differences were due to different methodologies used for the production of these tables, the respondent seemed content

to use PORT0301 as the alternative. The respondent also acknowledged the superiority the PORT0301 has over SPAS0401 in the additional detail included.

One of the respondents that stated they are 'somewhat satisfied', expressed some sort of dissatisfaction with the sea passengers statistics. The respondent made the case that the series, specifically the domestic river ferries, are far from complete, due to the arbitrary use of qualifying criteria relating to passenger kilometres and vessel weights.

Our response: the department acknowledges the sample size of the survey is small, making it harder to generalise the survey findings to the wider uses of the sea passenger statistics. Nonetheless, the finding gives us the confidence to continue in delivering user needs as majority of the respondents were either very satisfied or satisfied with the sea passenger statistics.

The data for waterborne journeys are restricted to vessels over 100 gross tonnes, travelling distances greater than 500 metres and passenger kilometres is greater than 500. The use of the arbitrary criteria relating to passenger kilometres and weight is used for consistency. It would be extremely difficult to capture data from all operators, especially smaller ones who have no obligation under the Statistical Returns [Carriage of Goods and Passengers by Sea Regulations 1997 (S.I. No. 2330)]. Also, unlike their larger counterparts, the response burden on the smaller ferry operators would be much higher. With the larger operators, it is considered in most cases the figures can be easily extracted from their administrative/management information systems (with the data being recorded for other purposes), the same consideration cannot be made for the smaller operators.

Accuracy and reliability

We asked: Are you confident with the accuracy and reliability of the sea passenger statistics?

Users response: 4/6 respondents were either extremely confident or somewhat confident, and 2 respondents chose 'don't know / not sure'. The respondent who stated that they are 'somewhat confident' provided the following suggestion in what the department can do to improve the series, 'As little or no detail on methods of collection and verification is offered, users must take these data on trust. I have no reason to suppose that there is deliberate bias, but what audit checks are run?'

Our response: we are confident with the accuracy and reliability of the sea passengers statistical series, and there were no responses indicating users were not confident.

In response to the respondent who stated 'little or no detail on methods of collection and verification is offered', we have recently published a background quality report for the sea passengers statistics, and have updated our strengths and notes document, both of which can be found on our [{maritime and shipping statistics information}](#) page. The quality report provides users with information on the quality of the outputs, measured against different dimensions of statistical quality, which includes the collection and the verification process the department uses. The notes and definition document details collection and methodology used, and also details routes covered in the statistical release.

Changes we proposed to make

SPAS0103 (UK international short sea passenger movements, by overseas country: from 1950)

We said: We are proposing to backdate the time-series of SPAS0108 and drop SPAS0103 next year.

Users response: 4/5 respondents have indicated the change will not affect their area of work. The respondent who indicated the change will affect their area of work, later in the comment section retracted their choice by stating 'n/a - alternative will suffice'.

Our response: We have discontinued SPAS0103, as no users expressed any concern, and the alternative (SPAS0108) is sufficient. We have backdated the time series for overseas country to 1950, and for port to 1998. Therefore as a result no information has been lost.

SPAS0105 (All UK international short sea, long sea and cruise passenger movements, by type of route: quarterly from 2009)

We said: We are unsure whether there is user interest in the quarterly breakdown, as we publish an aggregated annual table, therefore we are proposing to drop this table. Please indicate if this will affect your area of work.

Users response: 3/5 users have indicated that this will not affect their area of work, 1 respondent indicated they don't know / not sure, and 1 respondent indicated that this will affect their area of work. The respondent who indicated this will affect their area of work, provided the following reason 'I use this to cross-check against the International passenger survey data, to sense check weightings (ad-hoc basis)'

Our response: We have engaged with the respondent who indicated the change will affect their area of work, and suggested an alternative (SPAS0107) they can use, which we publish every month. The respondent agreed SPAS0107 would be sufficient for general quarterly figure purposes. Therefore we have dropped SPAS0105.

SPAS0202 (UK domestic sea passenger movements, by type of route: quarterly from 2009)

We said: We are unsure whether there is user interest in the quarterly breakdown, as we publish an annual aggregated table (SPAS0201), therefore we are proposing drop SPAS0202. Please indicate if this will affect your area of work.

Users response: 3/5 have stated it will not affect their area of work, and 2 have checked the 'don't know / unsure' option.

Our response: We have dropped this table as no respondents have stated that this will affect their area of work.

SPAS0501 (All UK international and domestic sea passenger movements, by UK country: from 2002)

We said: This table includes data on domestic and international passengers by country - International passenger numbers are found in the SPAS01 series and domestic passenger numbers are found in the SPAS02 series. Therefore we are proposing to drop this table as no information will be lost. Please indicate if these changes will affect your area of work.

Users response: All respondents (5/5) have stated it will not affect their area of work.

Our response: We will be dropping this table (which will take effect from November 2019) as no users have stated this will affect their area of work.

Changes we have made already

SPAS0301 (International Short Sea and Channel Tunnel Passengers: 1990 - 2016)

We said: We have discontinued SPAS0301 as all data are found in SPAS0101. Please indicate if you are happy with the changes.

Users response: 3/5 have stated they 'don't know / unsure', and 2/5 have said this will not affect their area of work.

Our response: We will continue to not publish SPAS0301 as the alternative is sufficient, however we will also continue to engage with users should the circumstances change.

SPAS0302 (distribution of international ferry passengers by port group)

We said: We have discontinued SPAS0302 as the data can be found in SPAS0101. Please indicate whether you are happy with the change.

Users response: 4/5 have stated they 'don't know / don't mind', and 1/5 have said this will not affect their area of work.

Our response: We will continue to not publish SPAS0302 as the alternative is sufficient, however we will also continue to engage with users should the circumstances change.

SPAS0401 (Accompanied passenger vehicles by port)

We said: We have discontinued SPAS0401 as all figures in this table are also shown in table PORT0301 of the Port Freight statistics published by DfT.

Users response: 3/5 have stated they 'don't know / don't mind', 1 respondent was happy with the change and another 1 was unhappy with the change. The respondent that was unhappy with the change, provided the following reason 'I am happy that the figures are more exact, but they don't seem to match for the UK totals prior to 2015'.

Our response: See previous section 'Questions on quality and value', question 2 on 'Relevance' for a full response to the same respondents SPAS0401 query. Having taken everything into consideration, and PORT0301 table being the better alternative, we will stick by our decision to not publish SPAS0401.

SPAS0402 (Accompanied passenger vehicles by route)

We said: We have discontinued SPAS0402 as the majority of the figures in this table are also shown in table PORT0205 of the Port Freight statistics published by DfT. Please indicate if you are happy with the change.

Users response: 3/5 chose 'don't know / don't mind' and 2/5 were happy with the change.

Our response: As none of the respondents were unhappy with the change, we are confident to carry on not publishing SPAS0402.

Further feedback

We welcome any feedback about this summary, or any of the statistical releases we publish. Please send any comments or feedback to: maritime.stats@dft.gov.uk



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