

Tourism Direct Gross Domestic Product and other aggregates

The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of an economy is defined as the sum of the gross value added generated by all industries. Tourism GDP corresponds to the part of GDP generated by all industries in response to internal tourism consumption. A further distinction must be made between direct tourism GDP and indirect tourism GDP. Put simply, **tourism direct GDP** reflects the direct value-added generated by industries directly in contact with visitors, while indirect tourism GDP reflects all of the upstream value-added generated by industries supplying inputs to industries directly in contact with the visitors. The TSA Framework limits its recommendations to the evaluation of direct tourism GDP. The evaluation of indirect tourism GDP would require the use of input-output techniques or adjustments (for imports) of expenditure-based measures.

Domestic, inbound and outbound tourism

A variety of different data sources are used to measure flows of visitors. Data can be collected directly from individuals about their tourism trips. These 'demand-side' sources include visitor or border surveys to measure inbound tourism flows, and resident travel or household surveys to measure domestic and outbound tourism flows. These surveys feed into the tourism consumption (i.e. demand) tables of the TSA (Tables 1-4). Data on domestic and inbound visitors can also be collected from accommodation providers ('supply-side').

Data from tourism demand surveys are presented in the country profile statistical tables. In the absence of data from these sources, or where data gaps exist, data from accommodation surveys are published.

For more detailed information on the data sources for individual countries, please refer to relevant datasets and metadata in the online tourism database [OECD Tourism Statistics](#).

Balance of Payments and International Investment Position Manual – Sixth Edition

The following items of the Balance of Payments are used to assess the monetary flows of visitors.

Travel

Travel credits (**international travel receipts**) cover goods and services for own use or to give away acquired from an economy by non-residents during visits to that economy. Travel debits (**international travel expenditure**) cover goods and services for own use or to give away acquired from other economies by residents during visits to these other economies.

The goods and services may be purchased by the persons concerned or by another party on their behalf (e.g. business travel). The standard component breakdown of travel is between business and personal travel. *Business travel* covers goods and services acquired for personal use by persons whose primary purpose of travel is for business. *Personal travel* covers goods and services acquired by persons going abroad for purposes other than business, such as vacations, participation in recreational and cultural activities, visits with friends and relatives, pilgrimage, and education- and health-related purposes. This breakdown allows for closer links with tourism satellite accounts as well as supply and use tables.

Passenger services

Passenger services cover the transport of people. This category covers all services provided in the international transport of non-residents by resident carriers (credit or **international passenger transport**

Executive summary

Tourism has proven resilient in recent years, reaffirming its role as a driver of economic growth despite rising uncertainty. However, economic and geopolitical tensions, including the conflict in the Middle East, are putting new pressures on the sector, while structural shifts continue to reshape how it is developed, managed and experienced. Flexible, anticipatory and co-ordinated policies are needed for a sustainable, resilient and competitive future.

Tourism resilience being tested by uncertainty

Strong demand has pushed tourism to record levels in many OECD countries in recent years, reinforcing its economic significance. International tourist arrivals to OECD countries rose by 8.1% to 819.5 million in 2024, surpassing pre-pandemic levels, and the sector directly contributed 4.0% of GDP and 19.3% of services exports, while generating extensive upstream spillovers across transport, retail, agriculture and other sectors. Growth continued through 2025 with international arrivals rising by an estimated 3.4%.

Positive momentum was, however, disrupted in early 2026 by the conflict in the Middle East. Travel to the region, and destinations reliant on the Gulf aviation hubs, have been most affected. The Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding is expected to help restore confidence, but the situation remains fragile, and travel patterns, particularly in the near term, may continue to be shaped by considerations around safety, potential disruptions, and affordability.

Longer term impacts are uncertain. While long-term demand overall remains strong, businesses and destinations need to be prepared to meet challenges and take advantage of opportunities that may emerge from potential shifts in demand. Reinforcing policy frameworks to manage tourism growth and strengthen crisis preparedness will be key, not only to geopolitical shocks but also to increasingly frequent extreme weather-related events and local pressures, to better account for impacts on and benefits to host communities.

Evolving priorities support competitiveness, sustainability and resilience

Governments are increasingly rethinking tourism development and management, adopting more strategic approaches to balance economic, social and environmental outcomes while strengthening competitiveness and resilience. Concentrated visitor flows are placing pressure on infrastructure and communities in some destinations, while less-visited destinations miss out on tourism benefits. At the same time, rising risks from extreme weather-related events are increasing operational and safety pressures, reshaping tourism demand and creating both challenges and opportunities.

Tourism success is increasingly defined by the sector's ability to generate sustained economic value through enhanced resilience, environmental sustainability and positive outcomes for local communities. Strategic approaches to manage tourism, supported by governance frameworks designed to improve

Tourism resilience being tested by uncertainty

Tourism has navigated and been resilient to several shocks and pressures in recent years, reaffirming its importance as a driver of economic growth and development. Its extensive cross-sectoral footprint places the sector at the centre of national and sub-national policy agendas, from transport, trade and investment to entrepreneurship and regional development. At the same time, heightened economic, geopolitical and environmental uncertainty alongside rapid digital, demographic and social change is exposing structural vulnerabilities and reshaping how tourism is developed, managed and experienced. These dynamics underscore the need for flexible, co-ordinated and whole-of-government approaches that reflect tourism's strategic and cross-cutting nature, to build a sustainable, resilient and competitive tourism economy.

The evolving conflict in the Middle East has disrupted global travel flows and tested the resilience of tourism. Air services through the strategic aviation hubs in the Gulf region have been severely restricted, with commercial flights significantly lower than prior to the conflict. Energy prices soared, putting pressure on airfares and transport costs, while tightening jet fuel markets and longer flight paths also resulted in flight cancellations (OECD, 2026^[1]). Tourism businesses more widely are experiencing higher operating costs, linked with higher energy costs, as well as the increased administrative burden of managing operational changes and flexible itineraries. These dynamics are leading to shifts in visitor flows, with some destinations experiencing declines while others benefit.

The recent signing of the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding is expected to help restore confidence; however, the situation remains fragile at the time of finalising this report. Travel patterns, particularly in the near term, may continue to be shaped by considerations around safety, potential disruptions, and affordability, while any renewed instability could lead to more sustained and widespread impacts. These dynamics present ongoing challenges for businesses and destinations, while also, in some cases, creating potential opportunities as demand shifts.

Strong performance has sustained tourism's economic role

Strong performance has continued to underpin tourism's economic value and importance in recent years. Tourism directly accounts for 4.0% of GDP (Figure 1.1), 6.3% of employment (Figure 1.2) and generated 19.3% of service-related exports (Figure 1.3), on average in OECD countries. This reflects the strong recovery and performance in recent years, reinforcing tourism's role in the economy. While these figures remain slightly below pre-pandemic levels (4.4% of GDP, 6.6% of employment and 22.0% of service exports), they in turn highlight that while tourism is vulnerable to disruption, the sector continues to demonstrate a notable ability to bounce back from shocks and provide economic gains, including in periods of heightened uncertainty. These figures also highlight the relative weight of tourism in OECD economies, compared with sectors such as mining (1.5% of GDP), agriculture¹ (1.6%), construction (5.1%) and information and communication (6.1%) (OECD, 2026^[2]).

The significant indirect and cross-sectoral impacts of tourism mean the sector can be strategically leveraged to promote economic growth and development. Tourism generates extensive spillovers across a wide range of sectors, including transport, retail and agriculture, amplifying its contribution beyond direct impacts. Tourism demand stimulates local supply chains and supports employment across both urban and rural areas, including for small and medium-sized enterprises. Moreover, tourism investment can catalyse infrastructure development and improve public services that benefit residents as well as visitors. When effectively integrated into broader policy frameworks, tourism can act as a lever for diversification, regional development, and economic growth.

In this context, travel patterns may continue to be shaped by evolving perceptions of safety, possible disruption, and affordability, at least in the near term. These dynamics present challenges for businesses and destinations, while also, in some cases, creating potential opportunities as demand adjusts. This could contribute to a shift toward more affordable destinations, shorter stays and lower-cost travel options, with implications for overall expenditure levels and the distribution and quality of tourism-related value added. Changes in spending patterns could place pressure on margins, shift demand between higher- and lower-value segments and influence the capacity of destinations and businesses to generate and retain economic value. More broadly, these dynamics underscore tourism's sensitivity to external shocks and interconnected risks, even as the sector continues to demonstrate resilience, supported by accumulated experience and strengthened risk management practices to adapt, recover and thrive.

Digitalisation meanwhile is a cross-cutting transformation reshaping the tourism system, from business models and service delivery to visitor management and destination planning. The increasingly use of digital tools and data-driven approaches, including Artificial Intelligence, is enabling more personalised services, optimising operations, and supporting real-time management of visitor flows. It is also enhancing the evidence base for decision making, through improved data collection, integration and forecasting capabilities. These shifts are lowering barriers to entry for entrepreneurs, stimulating new business models and driving greater connectivity across the tourism value chain. At the same time, the pace of change highlights the need for forward-looking policies to support adoption, strengthen digital skills, and ensure that digital transformation contributes to sustainable tourism development.

Recent OECD work for the G7 and APEC highlights the significant opportunities that AI developments offer to boost innovation and strengthen resilience across the sector (OECD, 2024^[8]) (OECD, forthcoming, 2026^[9]). At the same time, these developments raise important policy challenges related to skills, data governance, and the responsible use of technology, underscoring the need for coherent policy frameworks and supports for SMEs to ensure digital transformation promotes sustainable tourism development. (OECD, 2024^[8]). A recent OECD survey has highlighted that while SME adoption of AI tools is increasing rapidly, with sustained uptake of off-the-shelf AI applications, strategic, targeted and secure integration within business operations remains uneven (OECD, 2026^[10]). Governments have a key role to play in creating enabling conditions that help tourism businesses of all sizes harness the benefits of AI, other new technologies and the digital transformation while managing emerging risks.

Environmental pressures including water scarcity, land-use constraints and heightened exposure to natural hazards are prompting countries to reassess traditional tourism development models. At the same time, the increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events are adding further complexity, reinforcing the need for more resilient and adaptive tourism systems. Extreme heat, wildfires, floods and severe storms are already affecting destinations, damaging infrastructure and influencing travel behaviour. As highlighted in Chapter 4, the sector's reliance on natural assets and safe, predictable conditions means that proactive policies and targeted investments will be needed to prepare the sector for the growing scale of extreme weather impacts. Strengthening preparedness and adaptive capacity will be essential to safeguard tourism assets, sustain visitor confidence, and support the long-term resilience and sustainability of the sector.

Other structural trends reshaping tourism include rapid income growth and expansion of the middle class in emerging economies, which are increasingly important drivers of demand. By 2030, the global middle class is projected to reach around 5 billion people, up from about 4 billion in the early 2020s (Kharas, 2026^[11]). This expanding consumer base is expected to significantly boost tourism demand (World Economic Forum, 2025^[12]), building on major source markets such as China and the fast-growing Indian market. Realising this opportunity will require adapting tourism offers to evolving preferences while managing associated social and environmental impacts.

In addition to emerging markets, evolving travel preferences among younger generations are expected to further shape tourism demand and drive diversification of products. By 2030, Millennials and