

The Canadian Travel Survey (CTS) is a supplement of the Labour Force Survey (LFS). The target population is the civilian, non-institutionalized population 15 years of age or more in Canada's ten provinces. Excluded from LFS coverage are residents of the Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut, persons living on Indian reserves, full-time members of the Canadian Armed Forces, and persons living in institutions (e.g., inmates of penal institutions and patients in hospitals or nursing homes who have resided in the institution for more than six months); together, these groups represent an exclusion of less than 3% of the Canadian population aged 15 and up.

Like other surveys such as the International Travel Survey, the CTS is a major source of data used to measure the size and status of Canada's tourism industry. Developed to measure the volume, characteristics and economic impact of domestic travel, it gathers data on more than 30 variables, including socio-economic profiles, trip characteristics, and expenditures.

The main users of Survey data are the Canadian Tourism Commission (CTC), the provinces, and tourism boards. Other users include the media, businesses, consultants and researchers.

The CTS is conducted by Statistics Canada with the cooperation and support of the Canadian Tourism Commission and ten provincial governments. In 1997, Statistics Canada's Project to Improve Provincial Economic Statistics (PIPES) also became involved: annual detailed provincial information on interprovincial travel is indispensable to the Project, the aim of which is to produce data needed for estimating harmonized sales tax totals and provincial distributions.

For CTS purposes, three criteria are used to define travel: length of stay, distance, and completion date.

In keeping with the distance criterion, residents of every province but Ontario must report all day trips of at least 80 km (one-way only); Ontario residents must report all day trips of at least 40 km (one-way only). This criterion does not apply to trips involving one overnight stay or more.

In keeping with the completion-date criterion, all qualifying travel must have been made during the reference month in question.

Furthermore, the following are not considered travel: commutes between home and work or school; one-way moves to a new residence; trips made by members of the operating crew of a bus, plane, truck, etc.; ambulance rides to hospitals or clinics; trips originating outside Canada; and trips lasting more than one year.

Please note that destination is not used as a selection criterion for CTS travel. Regardless of whether the destination is in Canada or elsewhere, all trips are considered travel if they meet the other selection criteria and do not fall into any of the excluded categories mentioned previously.

Those CTS data published, however, are limited to a sub-set of Survey data. This sub-set, called DOMESTIC TRAVEL, includes trips of at least 80 km (one-way only) to Canadian destinations. This restriction is made to comply with the definition of domestic travel and instructions from the World Tourism Organization (WTO).

Moreover, data on travel outside the country is gathered by the INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL SURVEY, the OFFICIAL survey used by Statistics Canada to collect information on foreign travel.

The Canadian Travel Survey was conducted for the first time in 1979, and, beginning in 1980, every two years until 1996. It became annual in 1997. From 1980 to the first quarter of 1992, the Survey was carried out quarterly, i.e. respondents were contacted at the end of every three-month period and asked to report all travel completed during that time. Starting in the second quarter of 1992, the reference period was reduced to one month, with the same respondents contacted for each month of the quarter in question. Finally, in an effort to improve data quality, the collection method was adjusted again in 1994 in order to draw on a new sample of respondents every month. This method is still being used. The improved collection method, however, interrupted the time series, with the result that data from 1992 and 1994 are not comparable with those gathered since 1996. Although no major methodological adjustments have been made to the Survey since 1996, various minor changes have occurred.