

A: The International Visitor Survey (IVS)

Q-A1: What is the International Visitor Survey (IVS)?

A-A1

The IVS is a national statistical survey designed to estimate consumption by international visitors to Japan during their stay in Japan. The Japan Tourism Agency (JTA) of the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism conducts the IVS quarterly to obtain baseline information for designing and evaluating measures to attract foreign tourists.

Q-A2: How are the findings of the IVS used?

A-A2

The findings of the IVS are widely used by not only the central and local governments but also private companies and research institutions to understand how, and how much, international visitors to Japan spend during their stay in Japan. The latest findings are often reported by newspapers and other media.

The findings of IVS are mainly used for the following purposes:

- Baseline information for *Balance of Payments*, compiled and released by the Bank of Japan and the Ministry of Finance.
- Baseline information for calculating the tourism satellite account (TSA).
- Analysis of consumption and travel behavior of international visitors to Japan in such government documents as the *White Paper on Tourism* and the *White Paper on Small and Medium Enterprises in Japan*.
- Reports by research institutions of the Bank of Japan, etc.
- Baseline information for designing measures for government offices (e.g. the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries; the Ministry of the Environment; and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs).
- Reports by economists and papers by scholars.
- Analysis by universities, research institutions, and prefectural governments on consumption and travel behavior of international visitors to Japan.

B: Survey method

Q-B1: What kind of people does the IVS cover? Tourists only?

A-B1

The IVS covers international visitors to Japan excluding transit passengers, flight and ship crews, and those who have stayed in Japan for one year or more.

More specifically, the IVS covers those who have visited Japan not only for sightseeing or leisure but also for business, a visit to relatives or acquaintances, or study for a period of less than one year. Cruise ship passengers who have disembarked in Japan are also covered.

Q-B2: How does the IVS conducted?

A-B2

In the departure lobbies at major air/seaports across Japan, surveyors who can speak a foreign language ask international visitors to Japan to cooperate with an interview survey, asking them to answer questions on a voluntary basis while showing them a tablet- or paper-based questionnaire.

Q-B3: Can the IVS collect accurate responses?

A-B3

For the sake of accuracy, the IVS takes the following measures:

- The IVS is an interview survey, in which the answers are recorded by surveyors, making it possible to obtain more accurate answers than in the case of a self-answering survey, in which respondents fill out a questionnaire.
- Multiple languages are used in questionnaires and interviews.
- The use of a tablet terminal makes it possible for the input system to prevent any inconsistencies in answers.
- Itemized questions on transportation expenses, shopping expenses, etc. allow the respondents to recall their memories more easily than questions on the total of each of these types of expenses, contributing to reducing omissions.
- The JTA provides sufficient training to surveyors to maintain and improve the quality of answers. Such training involves, among other things, providing regular briefing sessions and a manual for them.

C. Privacy protection

Q-C1: Does the IVS collect personal information?

A-C1

The IVS does not collect information that can identify specific individuals such as name, address, telephone number, e-mail address, and place of employment.

Q-C2: Might the information I gave in the IVS be leaked outside?

A-C2

Ensuring confidentiality

The IVS is conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Statistics Act and other laws. People engaged in IVS (central government employees, supervisors, surveyors, etc.) have a duty of confidentiality that prohibits them to divulge secrets they have learned in the course of the survey. Anyone who neglects this duty is subject to punishment. The restriction on the use of questionnaire information is also provided for by law. Confidentiality is thus ensured.

Completed paper-based questionnaire forms are strictly stored so that they will not be viewed by outsiders; they undergo dissolution treatment after the compilation process is completed.

Training surveyors

As part of confidentiality efforts, the JTA provides a manual for surveyors to further ensure the protection of information contained in the responses.

D. Precision of survey results

Q-D1: Not all international visitors to Japan are covered. Do the survey results contain any margin of error?

A-D1

Any statistical survey cannot escape some margin of error in its results unless it is a complete survey.

The IVS covers some international visitors to Japan, and not all of them. In other words, IVS is a sample survey. Because a sample survey does not cover a great majority of the population, it entails a gap between its resulting value and the value that could have been gained if a complete survey had been conducted (“true value”). This gap is called a “sampling error.”

Q-D2: Tell me how to interpret a sampling error and how to calculate it.

A-D2

The general indicator for evaluating the sampling error is called the “standard error,” which generally means the standard deviation of the sample mean. This indicates the range the true value –the value that could be obtained with a complete survey –falls within.

The interval of about twice the standard error either side of the value estimated based on the survey results (sample mean) is called the “95 percent confidence interval.” If a sample survey is conducted 100 times for the same population, the sample mean is expected to fall within this interval 95 times.

The IVS uses the standard error ratio –the standard error divided by the sample mean –as the indicator of statistical precision. The standard error ratio shows how large the standard error is in relation to the sample mean. The standard error ratio is calculated according to the following formula:

$$R = \frac{SE}{\bar{x}} * 100 \quad SE = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_i (x_i - \bar{x})^2}{n(n-1)}}$$

R: Standard error ratio
SE: Standard error
x_i: Response value for Respondent (i)
 \bar{x} : Average of response values
n: Sample size

The sample size for the IVS is established so as to achieve the standard error ratio target for the representative estimated value. The representative estimated value is “total travel expenditure per capita” by nationality/region in A: National Survey, and “item-based spending per trip per person per night” by prefecture in B1: Regional Survey. After establishing the appropriate standard error ratio target for each estimated value, the sample size necessary to achieve the goal is derived.