

# National tourism indicators, fourth quarter 2020

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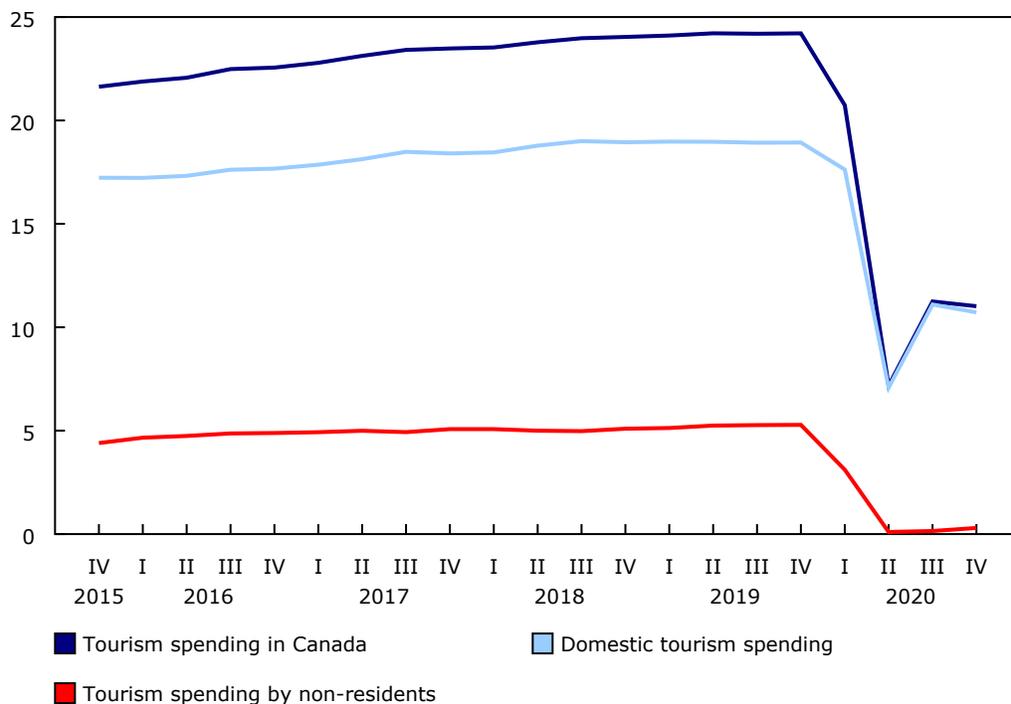
Tourism spending in Canada declined 2.0% in the fourth quarter, closing an otherwise volatile year in the tourism sector. Tourism spending was almost cut in half (-48.1%) in 2020. Tourism gross domestic product (GDP) decreased 3.3% in the fourth quarter and was down 47.9% annually.

Tourism was among the hardest hit sectors of the economy in 2020 as a result of physical distancing measures to contain the spread of COVID-19. Tourism spending in the first quarter was stunted by the declaration of a global pandemic in mid-March and the accompanying physical distancing measures to prevent its spread. The second quarter was almost entirely subject to these restrictions. Many restrictions were eased in the third quarter in conjunction with fewer COVID-19 cases, which provided more tourism spending opportunities. The fourth quarter saw increased restrictions in many provinces during the second wave of the pandemic, limiting the availability of services generally purchased by tourists.

The decline in tourism spending in the fourth quarter was mostly driven by lower spending on food and beverage services (-11.6%), which coincided with tighter restrictions on indoor dining. Spending on vehicle fuel (-3.6%) also contributed to the decline. The drop was partially offset by a 23.6% increase in passenger air transport, which continued to recover from the 94.9% decline in the second quarter. Annually, passenger air transport was down by almost three-quarters (-72.4%), the largest contributor to the overall decline in tourism spending in 2020.

**Chart 1**  
**Tourism spending declines**

billions of 2012 constant dollars



**Note(s):** Data are adjusted for seasonal variation and price change.  
**Source(s):** Table 36-10-0230-01.

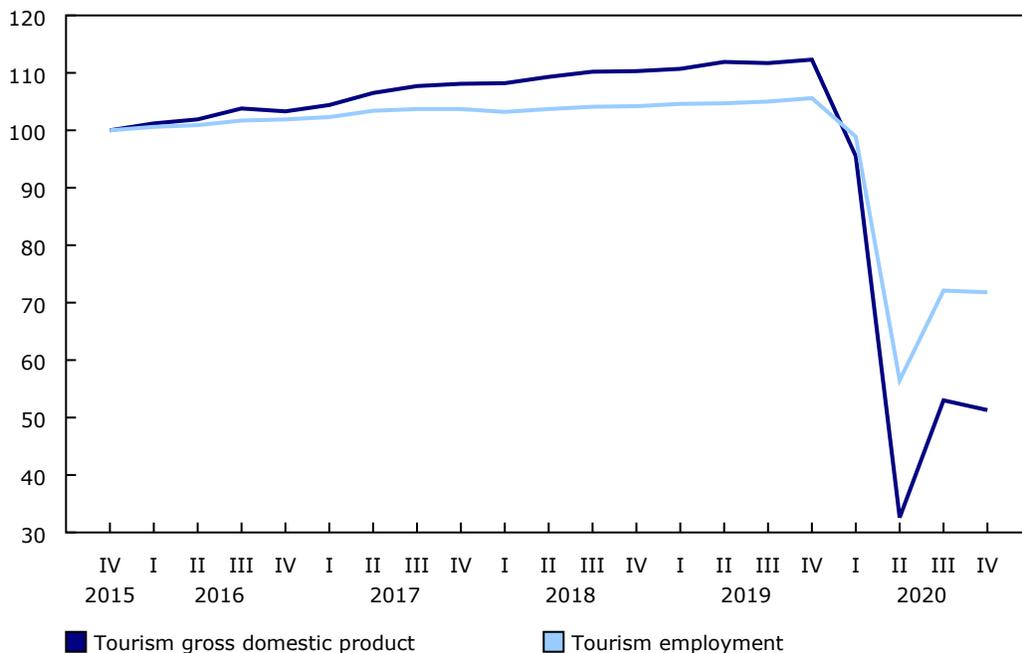
Tourism GDP decreased 3.3%, reflecting the weaker spending on tourism components as the overall economy grew 2.3% in the fourth quarter. Annually, economy-wide GDP fell (-5.4%) at a much slower pace in 2020 than the tourism sector (-47.9%). This contributed to a decline in tourism's share of GDP, which fell from 2.0% in 2019 to 1.1% in 2020.

Employment attributable to tourism edged down 0.4% in the fourth quarter, following a 27.5% increase in the third quarter. The decline was mostly due to fewer jobs in food and beverage services (-5.3%), which was partially offset by more jobs in accommodation (+5.1%).

Tourism jobs fell 28.7% annually in 2020, with most of the drop occurring in the second quarter. All tourism categories were down in 2020, with food and beverage services (-32.3%) and accommodation (-35.2%) contributing most to the overall decline. Tourism's share of employment fell from 3.8% in 2019 to 3.0% in 2020.

**Chart 2**  
**Tourism gross domestic product and jobs attributable to tourism decline**

index (fourth quarter 2015=100)



**Note(s):** Data are adjusted for seasonal variation. Tourism gross domestic product is adjusted for price change.  
**Source(s):** Tables 36-10-0234-01 and 36-10-0232-01.

**Tourism spending in Canada by Canadians decreases**

Tourism spending in Canada by Canadians decreased 3.4% in the fourth quarter, led by lower spending on food and beverage services (-12.6%) and vehicle fuel (-3.9%). The quarterly decline was partially offset by higher spending on passenger air transport (+18.5%).

Annually, domestic tourism spending declined 38.6% in 2020, but its share of total tourism spending rose from 78.4% in 2019 to 92.7% in the wake of the collapse of international visitors as a result of border closures to non-essential travel.

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## Spending by international visitors remains low

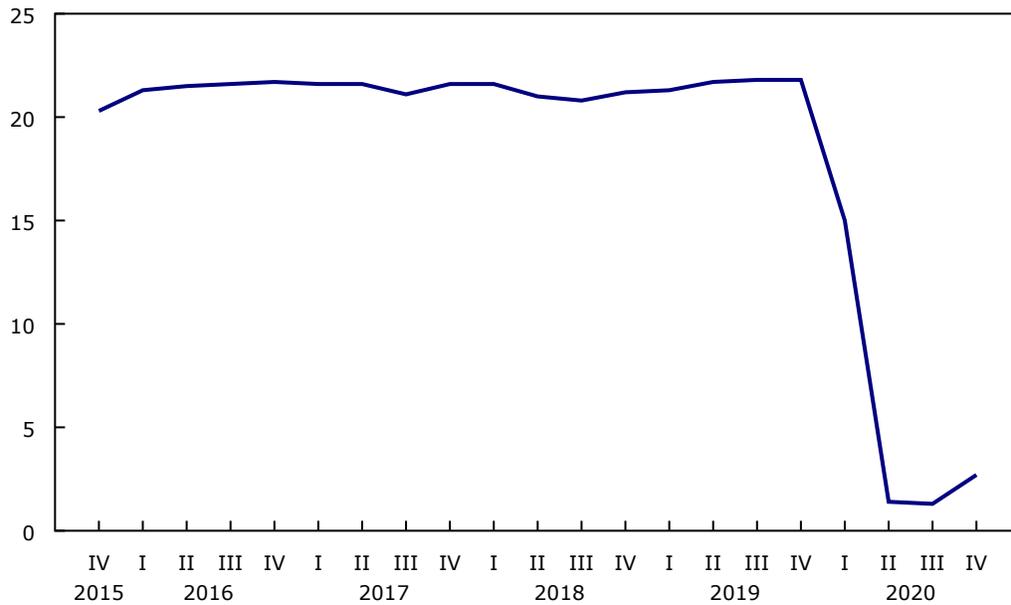
Tourism spending by international visitors to Canada rose 99.3% in the fourth quarter, following record low levels in the two previous quarters. Despite the increase, spending was well below pre-pandemic levels.

Spending by international visitors declined 82.5% in 2020, with most of the spending occurring before the borders were closed in mid-March. As a result, the share of tourism exports to total tourism spending fell from 21.6% in 2019 to 7.3% in 2020.

### Chart 3 Tourism spending by international visitors remains low

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%, non-residents' share of tourism demand



Note(s): Data are adjusted for seasonal variation and price change.

Source(s): Table [36-10-0230-01](#).

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## Sustainable development goals

On January 1, 2016, the world officially began implementing the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)—the United Nations' transformative plan of action that addresses urgent global challenges over the next 15 years. The plan is based on 17 specific sustainable development goals.

The national tourism indicators are an example of how Statistics Canada supports the reporting on the global goals for sustainable development. This release will be used in helping to measure the following goal:



### Note to readers

Growth rates for tourism spending and gross domestic product (GDP) are expressed in real terms (that is, adjusted for price changes), using reference year 2012, as well as adjusted for seasonal variations, unless otherwise indicated.

Employment data are also seasonally adjusted.

Tourism's share of economy-wide GDP is calculated from seasonally adjusted nominal values.

Tourism's share of economy-wide employment is calculated using seasonally adjusted values.

For information on seasonal adjustment, see [Seasonally adjusted data – Frequently asked questions](#).

Associated percentage changes are presented at quarterly rates unless otherwise noted.

Economy-wide GDP is obtained from table [36-10-0104-01](#). Economy-wide employment is obtained from table [36-10-0207-01](#).

With the fourth quarter release of the national tourism indicators, data for the first, second and third quarters have been revised. Revisions over this period are expected to be higher than normal due to the volatile economic situation, particularly for the tourism sector.

The national tourism indicators are funded by Destination Canada.

### Next release

Data on the national tourism indicators for the first quarter will be released on June 29.

**Table 1**  
**National tourism indicators – Seasonally adjusted**

	Fourth quarter 2019	First quarter 2020	Second quarter 2020	Third quarter 2020	Fourth quarter 2020	Third quarter to fourth quarter 2020
	millions of dollars at 2012 constant prices					% change
<b>Total tourism expenditures</b>						
Tourism demand in Canada	24,211	20,735	7,180	11,247	11,017	-2.0
Tourism demand by non-residents	5,280	3,111	101	148	295	99.3
Tourism domestic demand	18,931	17,624	7,079	11,099	10,722	-3.4
<b>Transportation</b>						
Tourism demand in Canada	10,140	8,623	2,008	3,161	3,225	2.0
Tourism demand by non-residents	1,683	1,017	26	43	92	114.0
Tourism domestic demand	8,457	7,606	1,982	3,118	3,133	0.5
<b>Accommodation</b>						
Tourism demand in Canada	3,420	2,977	1,104	1,904	1,901	-0.2
Tourism demand by non-residents	1,227	749	18	28	67	139.3
Tourism domestic demand	2,193	2,228	1,086	1,876	1,834	-2.2
<b>Food and beverage services</b>						
Tourism demand in Canada	3,669	3,096	1,293	2,081	1,840	-11.6
Tourism demand by non-residents	919	506	9	15	35	133.3
Tourism domestic demand	2,750	2,590	1,284	2,066	1,805	-12.6
<b>Other tourism commodities</b>						
Tourism demand in Canada	3,294	2,846	1,587	2,139	2,122	-0.8
Tourism demand by non-residents	602	310	7	10	26	160.0
Tourism domestic demand	2,692	2,536	1,580	2,129	2,096	-1.6
<b>Other commodities</b>						
Tourism demand in Canada	3,688	3,193	1,188	1,962	1,929	-1.7
Tourism demand by non-residents	849	529	41	52	75	44.2
Tourism domestic demand	2,839	2,664	1,147	1,910	1,854	-2.9

Source(s): Table 36-10-0230-01.

Available tables: [36-10-0230-01](#) to [36-10-0235-01](#) .

Definitions, data sources and methods: [survey number 1910](#).

The data visualization product "[Provincial and Territorial Tourism Satellite Account](#)," which is part of *Statistics Canada – Data Visualization Products* ([71-607-X](#)), is available.

The [Economic accounts statistics](#) portal, accessible from the *Subjects* module of our website, features an up-to-date portrait of national and provincial economies and their structure.

The *Latest Developments in the Canadian Economic Accounts* ([13-605-X](#)) is available.

The *User Guide: Canadian System of Macroeconomic Accounts* ([13-606-G](#)) is available.

The *Methodological Guide: Canadian System of Macroeconomic Accounts* ([13-607-X](#)) is available.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; [STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca](mailto:STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca)) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; [STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca](mailto:STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca)).