

Northern Ireland Tourism Statistics July 2016 – June 2017

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**4.8m
trips**



**16.3m
nights**



**£907m
spent**

The key points are:

- There were an estimated **4.8 million overnight trips** (domestic & external) in the year to June 2017.
- **Expenditure** associated with these trips was an estimated **£907 million**.
- There were **16.3 million nights** spent in Northern Ireland on these trips.
- Over the same period, in total **2.09 million room nights** were sold in Northern Ireland in the year to June 2017.
- In the year to June 2017, there were up to 161,000 passengers & crew on board the **111 cruise ships** visiting local ports.

[Click here for definitions of tourism statistics common terms used in this report](#)

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Theme: People, Places and Culture

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National Statistics status

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value.

All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the Office for Statistics Regulation. The Office for Statistics Regulation considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.

It is NISRA's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected of National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Office for Statistics Regulation. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.



Introduction

This report provides a picture of Northern Ireland tourism. The report informs the Assembly and Executive, tourism bodies, the tourism industry and the public on data relating to tourism in Northern Ireland. Further information on the use of tourism statistics can be accessed at [link](#).

Measuring tourism locally is challenging with no single statistic providing a definitive measure. Therefore this report includes a variety of data to paint a more complete picture. A primary aim was to measure progress towards the Programme for Government targets on tourism in Northern Ireland-further information on this can be found in [background note 9](#). The report includes 4 sections:

1. [Overnight trips in Northern Ireland \(Trips, spend\)](#)
2. [Hotel accommodation occupancy](#)
3. [Passenger activity at Northern Ireland air and sea ports](#)
4. [Other sources \(Tourism jobs, cruise ships at NI ports\)](#)

The report also includes background notes which provide information on the methodology and background to these statistics. A key methodological issue is noted in the box below.

Overnight: Headline overnight trip statistics are measured using standard UN definitions. The UN use the concept of “overnighting”. This is broadly defined as staying away from your usual place of residence for one night or more. This does not need to be for holiday, it can also relate to visiting relatives, business etc. As well as overnighting of visitors to Northern Ireland the statistics also include overnights of local residents within NI. Note that overnighting excludes day trips, which will be a significant part of the local tourism

Overnight tourism statistics are survey based estimates and, as such, they are subject to associated confidence intervals. (see [background note 10](#)).

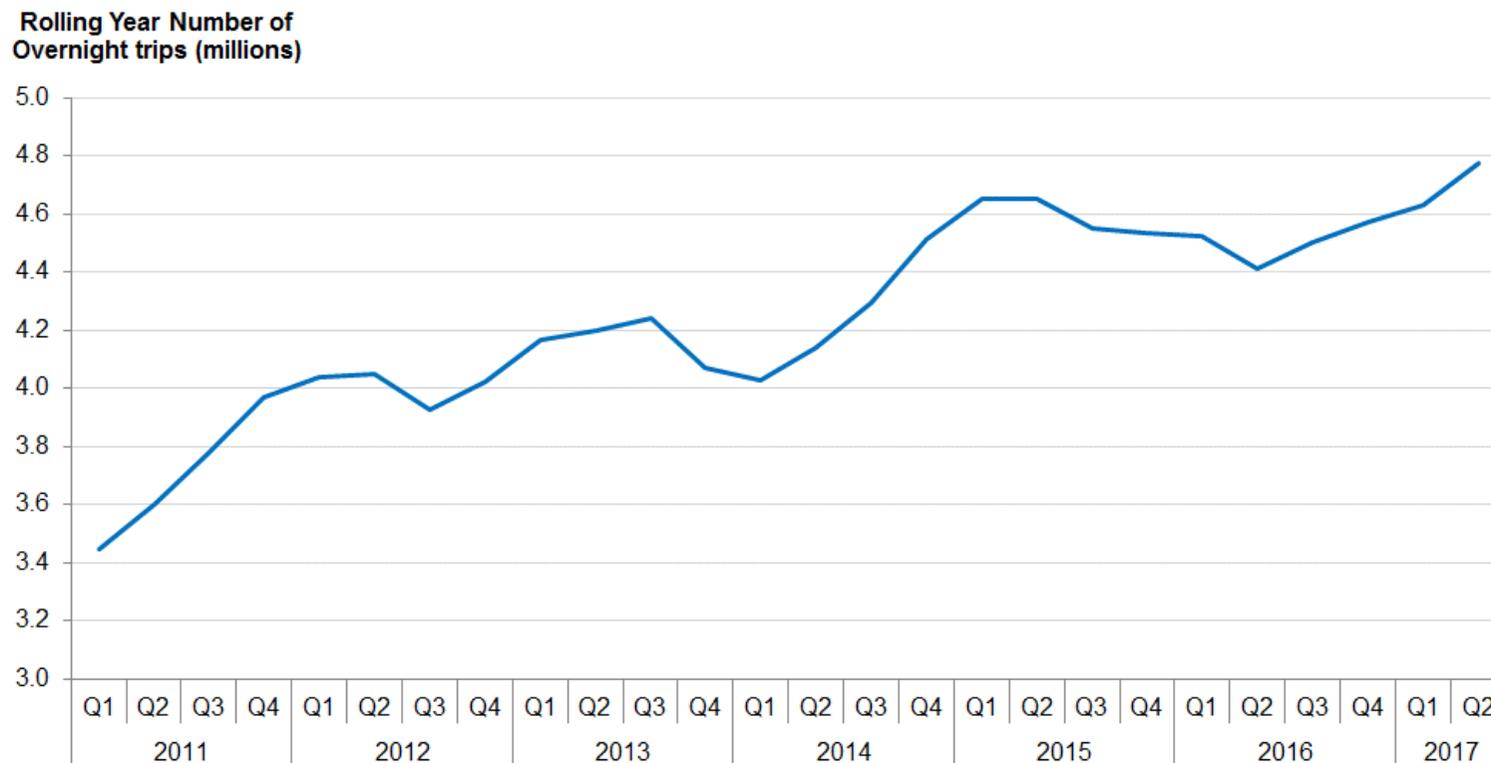
Section 1: Overnight trips in Northern Ireland (Trips, spend)

Two key measures of tourism activity are the number of overnight trips and the associated expenditure. To estimate these measures two sets of rolling annual surveys of passengers and households are undertaken.

- (i) Firstly, **surveys of passengers** at air and sea ports in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland are undertaken to identify overnight trips to Northern Ireland by people living outside the island of Ireland.
- (ii) Secondly **household surveys** in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland are undertaken to identify Northern Ireland based overnight trips of Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland residents.

The overnight trip statistics presented relate to the combined overall picture. In assessing changes it is advisable to compare volumes over a rolling twelve month period. Figure 1 shows the trend in the estimated number of overnight trips over a rolling twelve month period. The estimated number of overnight trips (domestic and external) in the year to June 2017 was 4.8 million.

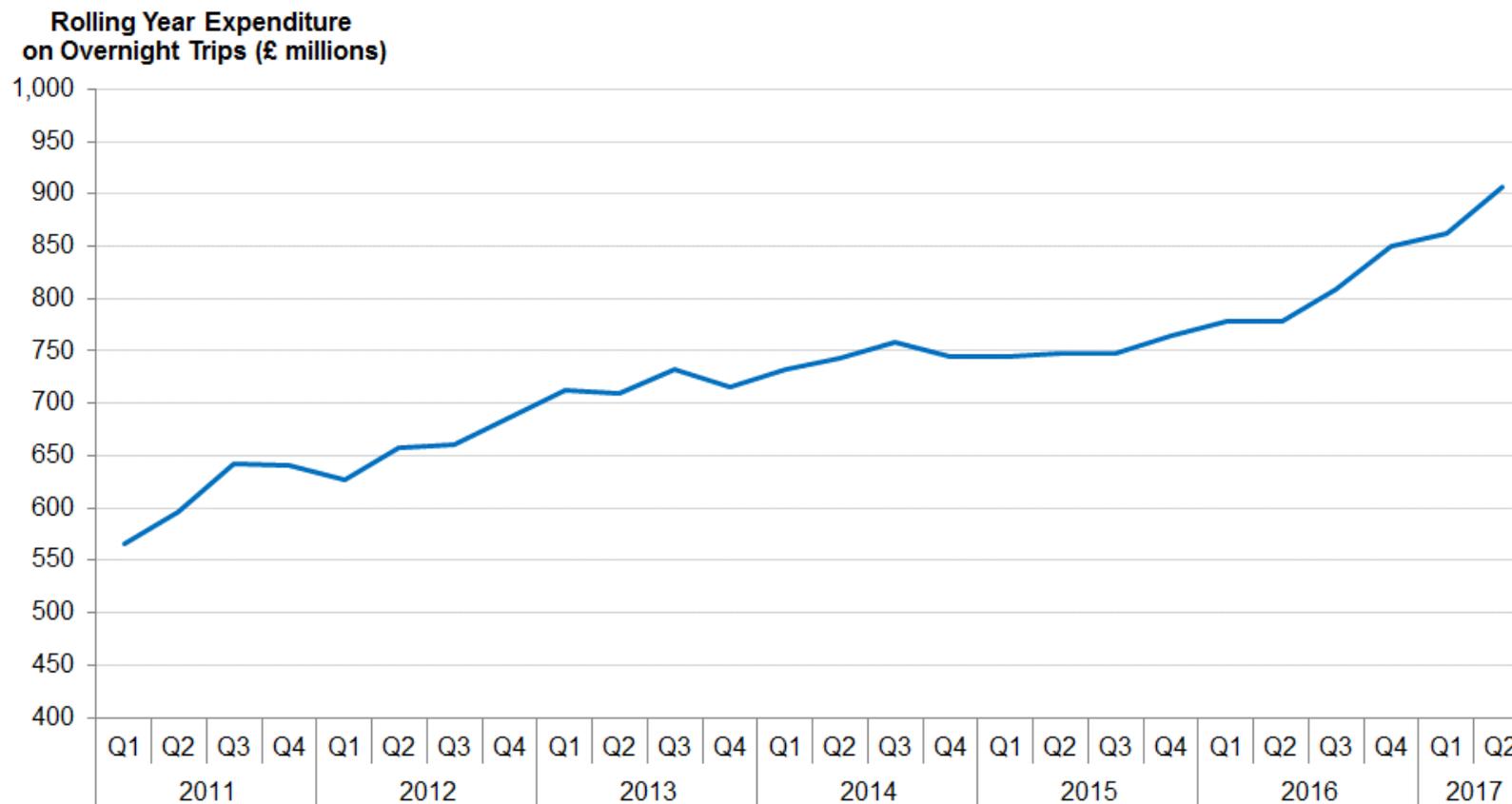
Figure 1: Rolling year estimated number of overnight trips, Quarter 1 2011 to Quarter 2 2017 (non-zero y axis)



Expenditure associated with overnight trips

Figure 2 shows a rolling twelve month trend in estimated expenditure associated with overnight trips. Estimated expenditure associated with overnight trips in the twelve months to June 2017 was £907 million. To put this expenditure in context – the 2015 estimate for NI Gross Value Added stands at just under £34.4 billion. Indicating that in monetary terms spending on overnight trips broadly equates to 2.6% of the local economy.

Figure 2: Rolling year estimated expenditure on overnight trips, Quarter 1 2011 - Quarter 2 2017 (non-zero y axis)

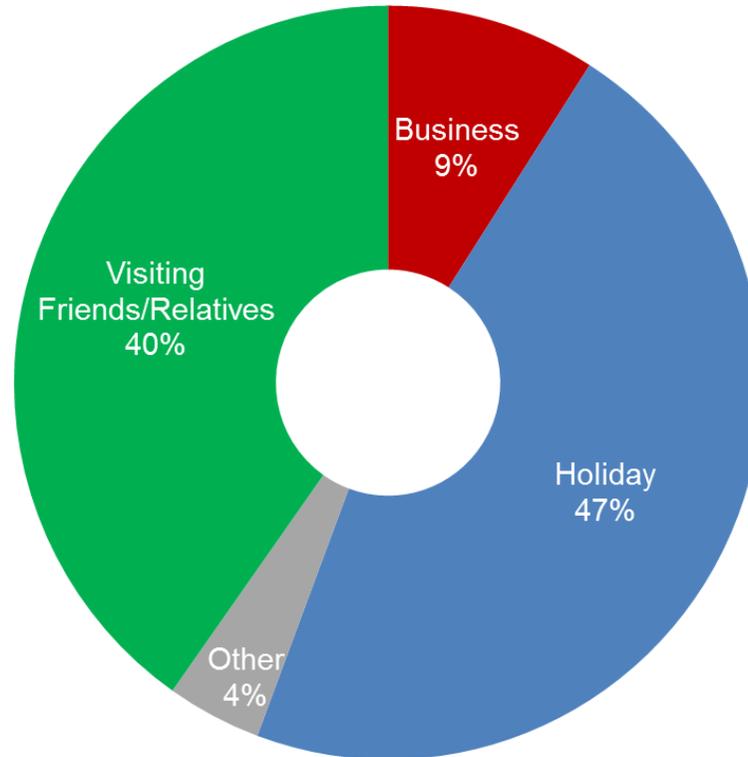


See [link](#) for data

Reason for overnight trip

Survey respondents are also asked the reason for their overnight stay. The result for all overnight trips, regardless of place of origin¹, is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Reason for overnight trip in Northern Ireland (July 2016 – June 2017)



See [link](#) for data

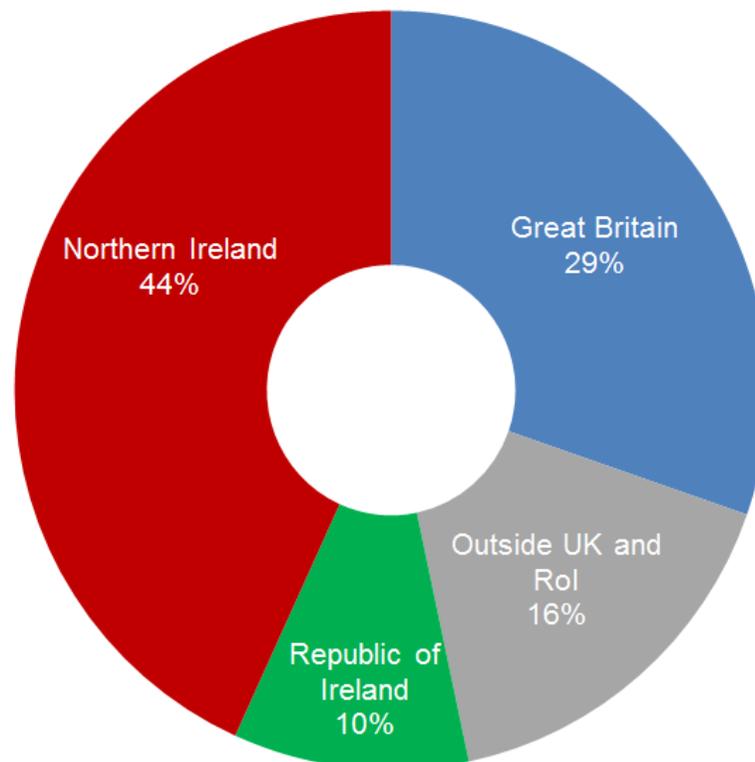
A significant element of the local overnight market is people holidaying. This makes up 47% of all overnight volume. A further 40% of overnight trips were due to people visiting friends and relatives in Northern Ireland.

¹ It is important to remember that this graphic also includes overnight trips of local residents within Northern Ireland.

Place of origin

We can also determine the place of origin of people who overnight in Northern Ireland. In total almost half (44%) of all overnight trips (2.1 million) are by local residents (domestic trips). For example, someone from Belfast going to Fermanagh for the weekend either on holiday or to visit friends/relatives. A further 29% of overnight trips (1.4 million) were by people living in Great Britain. The figures point to the continuing importance of the domestic and Great Britain markets; see Figure 4.

Figure 4: Place of origin of overnight visitors (July 2016 – June 2017)



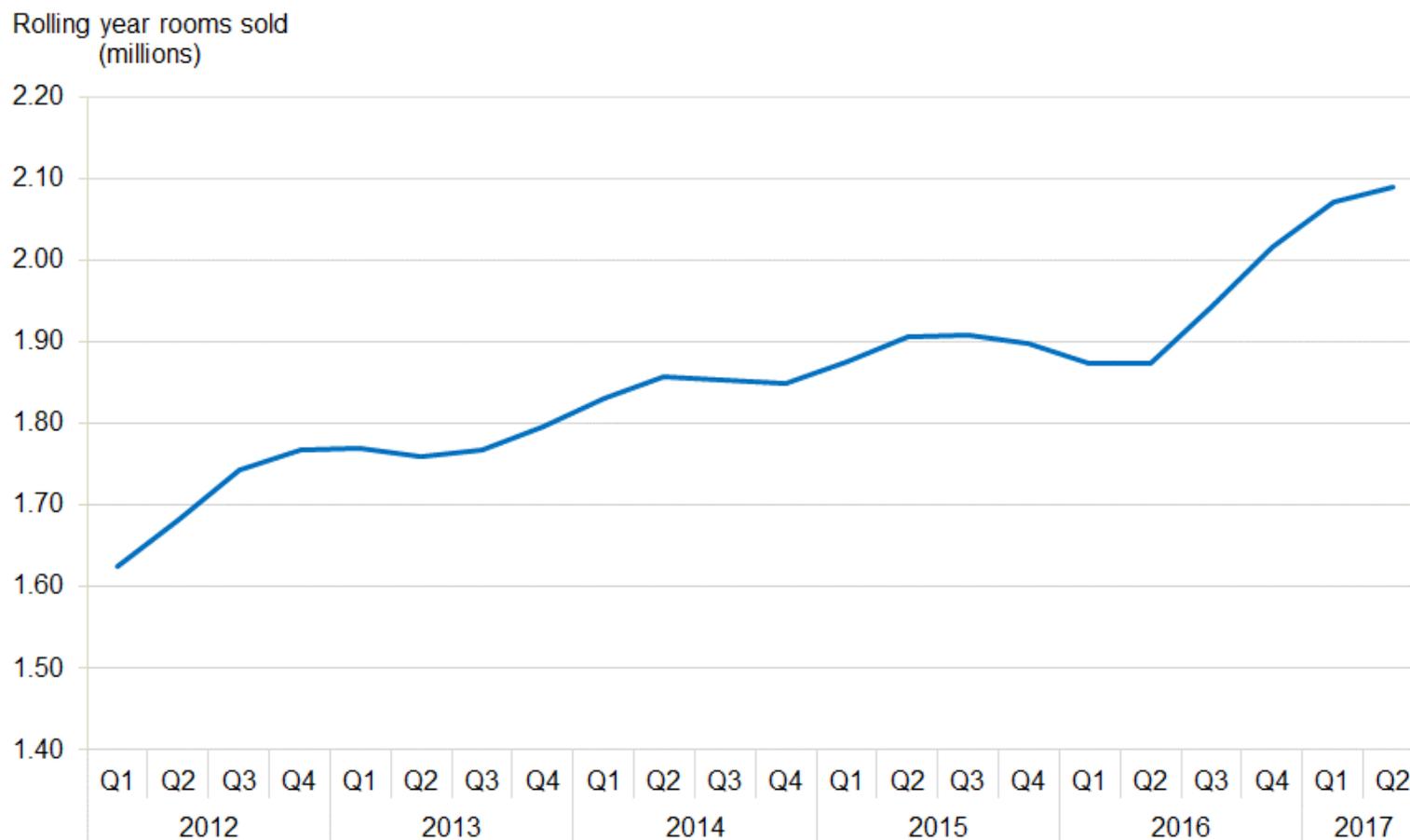
See [link](#) for data

In total 45% or 2.2 million overnight trips to Northern Ireland are by people who live outside the island of Ireland. The majority (90%) of Great Britain visitors arrive through Northern Ireland ports. Looking in more detail – Great Britain visitors include a significant volume of people visiting friends and relatives in Northern Ireland (0.8 million overnight trips). In contrast the majority of visitors from outside UK & Republic of Ireland come through Republic of Ireland ports (62% Republic of Ireland ports and 38% Northern Ireland ports). Detailed statistics are available on our [website](#).

Section 2: Hotel accommodation occupancy

Alongside passenger and household surveys, NISRA conduct a monthly occupancy survey of local hotels. Quarterly statistics on the number of rooms sold are shown in Figure 5. The detailed figures show that over the latest 12 month period (July 2016 – June 2017) the number of rooms sold was 2.09 million. The average daily number of hotel rooms available for the period was under 8,000.

Figure 5: Rolling year Northern Ireland Hotel rooms sold (millions) Quarter 1 2012 - Quarter 2 2017 (non-zero y axis)



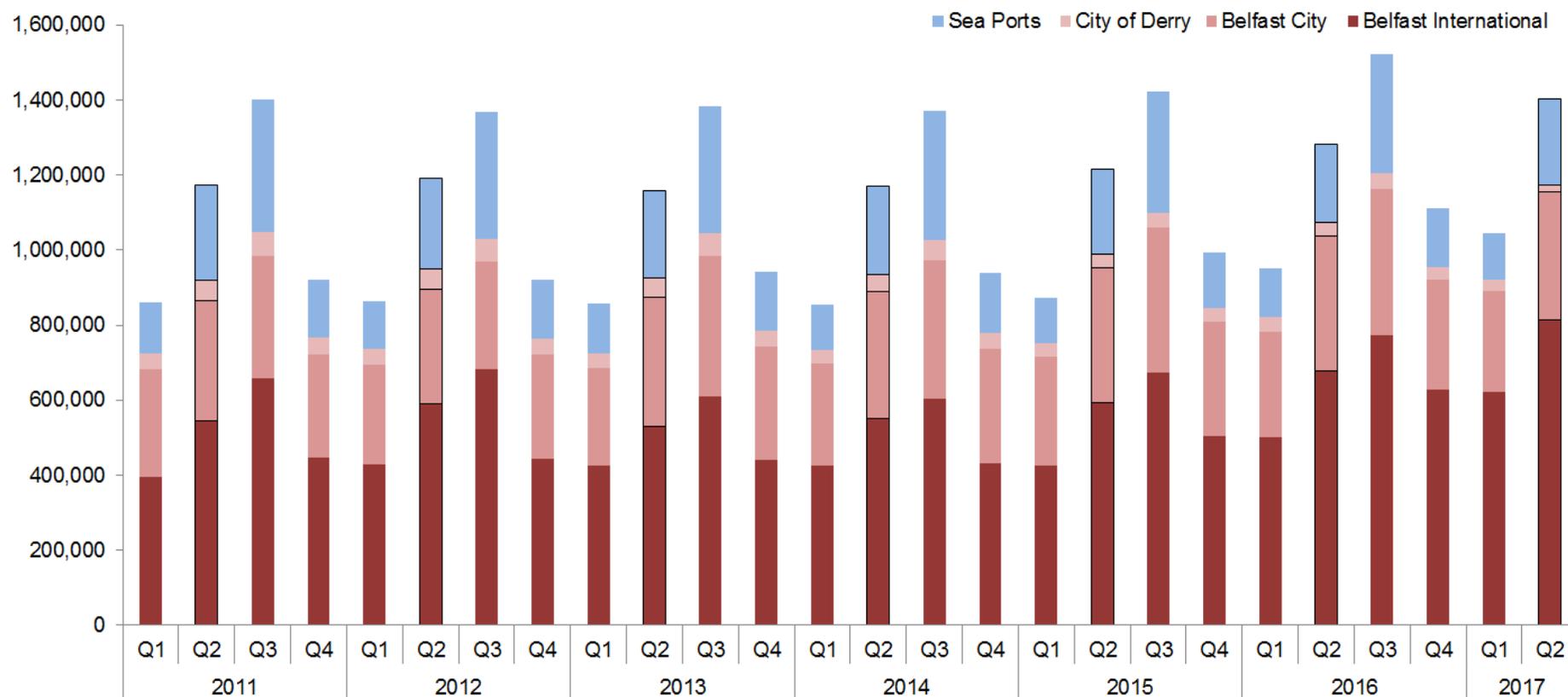
See [link](#) for data

More detailed hotel occupancy statistics are available on our [website](#). Official Statistics for occupancy in guesthouses, bed & breakfasts and guest accommodation and also self catering occupancy can also be found on our [website](#).

Section 3: Passenger activity at Northern Ireland air and sea ports

The Civil Aviation Authority collects passenger information from NI airports (Belfast International, Belfast City and City of Derry). Port authorities in Belfast and Larne collect data on sea passengers. The latest combined quarterly data on outgoing passengers are shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Quarterly outgoing passengers Northern Ireland ports (Quarter 1 2011 - Quarter 2 2017)



See [link](#) for data

Latest quarterly statistics show an increase of 9% in outgoing passengers in the twelve months to June 2017 (5.1 million) compared to the twelve months to June 2016 (4.7 million). Over the longer term total passenger throughput (in and out) at local air and sea ports has risen from 2.8 million passengers in 1978 to 9.8 million passengers in 2016.

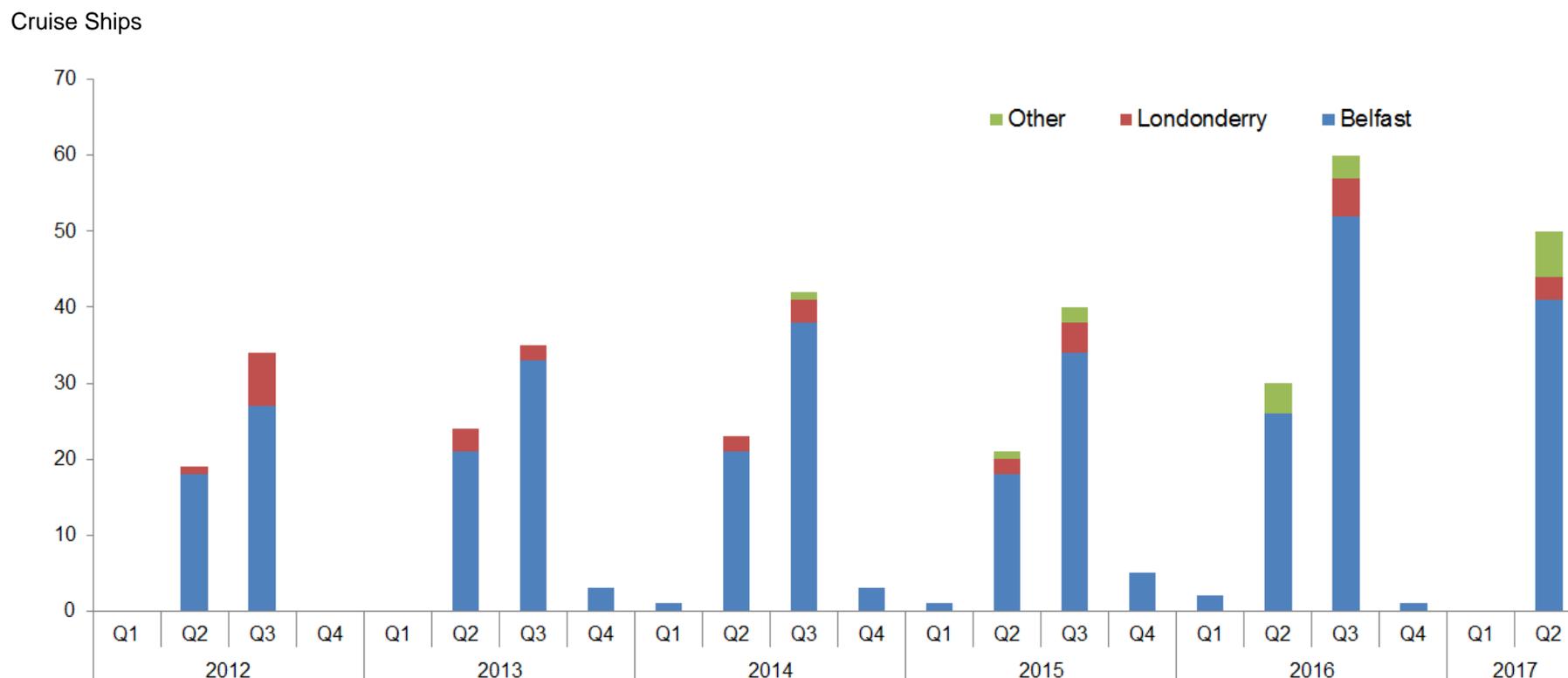
Section 4: Other sources (Tourism jobs, cruise ships)

At June 2017, the Quarterly Employment Survey estimated that there were 61,970 employee jobs in tourism and leisure industries in Northern Ireland. This is 8% of all employee jobs. The number of such jobs has increased by 4% from 59,740 jobs in June 2016. (see [background note 11](#))

Cruise Ships Visiting Northern Ireland

Cruise ships are one part of the day trip market for which there are reliable figures. Figure 7 shows the quarterly trend in the number of cruise ships visiting Northern Ireland ports. (see [background note 12](#)).

Figure 7: Total cruise ship numbers visiting Northern Ireland ports by quarter (Quarter 1 2012 - Quarter 2 2017)



*Other includes Bangor & Warrenpoint. For more information see [background note 12](#).
See [link](#) for data

Although not shown in figure 7, the number of cruise ships docking here has increased markedly over time. In the 2011 calendar year, 32 cruise ships docked in local ports with up to 58,000 passengers and crew onboard. In the 12 months to June 2017, there were up to 161,000 passengers and crew on board the 111 cruise ships that visited Northern Ireland.

Background notes

1. This report presents a summary of tourism information in the year ending June 2017. More detailed quarterly data is available on our website at this [link](#). It should be noted that 2017 data are provisional until publication of the 2017 annual tourism statistics report in Spring 2018.
2. Tourism data is derived from a variety of sources, more information on these sources can also be found at this [link](#). Tourism estimates are designed to provide timely data on tourism activity in Northern Ireland. The estimates may be subject to revision due to improvements to the survey/analysis methodology or the inclusion of data returned after the publication date. The figures in this document are the most up-to-date available at the time of publication. Northern Ireland Tourism statistics have undergone a series of organisational changes and revisions to methodology. Information on the sources, the data quality of each source and any revisions or changes in methodology can be accessed at this [link](#).
3. The production of tourism statistics is conducted in line with the UK Statistics Authority [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#). This means that the statistics
 - a. meet identified user needs,
 - b. are well explained and readily accessible,
 - c. are produced according to sound methods, and
 - d. are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest
4. Tourism statistics have recently undergone an assessment by the UK Statistics Authority. In May 2017 the Office for Statistics Regulation completed their review and confirmed the designation of new National Statistics on:
 - Northern Ireland Annual Tourism Statistics*
 - Northern Ireland Quarterly Tourism Statistics*
 - External Overnight Trips to Northern Ireland*
 - Northern Ireland Domestic Tourism*
 - Northern Ireland Hotel Occupancy*
 - Northern Ireland Local Government District Tourism Statistics*National statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and value.
5. NISRA uses the Survey of Overseas Travellers run by Fáilte Ireland to gain information on the visitors who took overnight trips in Northern Ireland and exited through Republic of Ireland ports. Information on Northern Ireland overnight trips is also now collected through a separate survey carried out by Central Statistics Office Ireland. NISRA researched the two sources and presented and agreed the findings at the all Ireland tourism statistics meeting with all relevant providers and users of the data. The findings can be accessed at [link](#).

6. Due to the nature of household surveys in Northern Ireland, users should be aware that statistics on overnight trips in Northern Ireland residents aged under 16 are excluded. NISRA is in the process of changing the methodology of data collection to capture this information from April 2015. NISRA also increased the sample size of the underlying survey used to measure domestic tourism from April 2017. Over the next year (2017/18), NISRA will explore the impact of both changes with a view to improving the overall estimates of domestic tourism and will update users on progress. Users can see the Tourism Statistics Plan at this [link](#)
7. Tourism statistics systems are designed to collect information for Northern Ireland as a whole. However, respondents do indicate where they stay during these overnight trips allowing for some analysis at Local Area level. The most recent 2016 results published at this level can be found at this [link](#). The 2017 Local Government results will be published in Summer 2018.
8. While the statistics are produced in as timely a way as possible, it is realised that early indicators would be useful. Early tourism indicators are published at this [link](#) and are updated monthly.
9. The measures reported in this report were the primary means of monitoring progress towards Programme for Government (PfG) targets related to tourism up to December 2015. The new draft PfG was out for public consultation and it is anticipated that expenditure by external visitors will be used as an indicator. Further information on the PfG and in particular, indicator 30 can be found at this [link](#).
10. The estimates in this bulletin are derived from sample surveys and are therefore subject to sampling errors. Sampling errors are determined both by the sample design and by the sample size. Generally speaking, the larger the sample supporting a particular estimate, the smaller the associated sampling error. Confidence intervals around the estimates of all overnight trips in Northern Ireland during 2016 stands at +/- 7% for the year (associated expenditure at +/- 11%). Note: based on the survey design confidence intervals for domestic tourism trips stands at +/-10% and external trips at +/-4% for trips taken in 2016. Confidence intervals for 2017 data will be available when the 2017 annual statistics publication is published in Spring 2018. Information on confidence intervals in Northern Ireland tourism statistics can be accessed at this [link](#).
11. This report includes estimates from the Quarterly Employment Survey (QES) on the number of jobs in 'tourism and leisure' industries. In other publications, NISRA report on 'tourism characteristic industries'. The tourism characteristic industries breakdown is unavailable on a quarterly basis. More information on the Quarterly Employment Survey methodology can be accessed at this [link](#).
12. The vast majority of cruise ships visit Northern Ireland on a single day basis, docking in the morning and then leaving in the evening. Thus under UN definitions cruise ship visits are considered day-trips and excluded from the overnight trips figures outlined in section 1. To address this statistics from [Visit Belfast](#), [Cruise North West](#) and Newry & Mourne Council relating to Warrenpoint port are included. Cruise ships can also drop anchor and tender passengers ashore at other parts of Northern Ireland (Bangor & Portrush).
13. Tourism estimates are designed to provide timely data on tourism activity for Northern Ireland as a whole. The estimates may be subject to revision due to improvements to the survey/analysis methodology or the inclusion of data returned after the publication date. The figures in this document are the most up-to-date available at the time of publication.

14. The number of overnight trips in Northern Ireland for the last 12 months (to June 2017) will have been influenced by events that have taken place here (e.g. Irish Open Golf in July 2017 and the Women's Rugby World Cup in August 2017). However, the macro statistics presented cannot be used to evaluate the success of these events – evaluation of major events is being undertaken separately by the organisations responsible. The results of the EU Exit referendum at the end of June 2016 coincided with a drop in the value of the pound which may have been a factor for the increase in the number of estimated overnight trip numbers and expenditure for visitors from the Republic of Ireland (RoI) and Outside the UK and RoI.
15. This report does not include information on local domestic day trips, however it is recognised that these would be important in providing a complete story of tourism here. NISRA collects information on day trips taken within Northern Ireland by local residents and NISRA is developing this information following a user group meeting in early 2016.
16. Follow NISRA on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#). We welcome feedback from users on the content, format and relevance of this release. Feedback can be sent by [email](#).

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