

Eurostat Report: Tourism in Europe – Does Age Matter?

Focusing on several aspects of the travel behaviour of residents from the EU Member States in

2006 this report deals with differences in travel behaviour of four different age groups, that is tourists aged 15 to 24 years, 25 to 44 years, 45 to 64 years and older than 64 years.



The age distribution of tourists corresponds approximately to the age distribution of the total population

People aged 25 to 44 years represent a share of 35% of the total population, while the same group accounts for 38% of all tourists. For the youngest age group (15 to 24 years), on the other hand, the percentages are identical. The oldest age group (65+ years) makes up the smallest proportion of both the population and the number of tourists.

However, it can be assumed, given the prevailing tendency of an ageing population, that this age pattern will change within the coming decades. Translating these numbers into the participation rate, that is the share of the population taking part in tourism, for the different age groups, the following picture emerges: the youngest group (15 to 24 years) is, with 55%, at the level of the overall average for the EU-27; with 61% and 59% respectively persons aged 25 to 44 and 45 to 64 years show a participation rate slightly above the average; while people aged 65 and over tend to take less part in tourism, with only 41% of them making at least one holiday trip of four nights or more.

Approximately one tourist in three is between 25 and 44 years old

In 2006, 213 million Europeans went on holiday at least once for four nights or more. Of these, some 80 million tourists are aged between 25 and 44 years. This is obviously a reflection of the fact that this age group also makes up the highest proportion of the total population. People aged 25 to 44 years make up the largest share of tourists in nearly all EU Member States. To recap, they represent 38% of all tourists as an EU-average with the highest proportion in Lithuania (48%) and Italy (44%). The exceptions, however, are Belgium and Finland where people between the ages of 45 and 64 make up the largest proportion of tourists.

Younger tourists aged between 15 and 24 years account for an average share of 15% of all tourists Europe-wide, with the lowest proportion in France (12%) and the highest proportion in Latvia (30%). There is evidence that, in this younger age group, the share of tourists tends to be higher for the new Member States than for the old ones.



Additionally, in the new Member States, the oldest age class measured as a percentage of the total number of tourists is generally 5 percentage points or more below the EU-27 average, except for Hungary. For the two remaining age classes (25 to 44 years and 45 to 64 years) it is not possible to detect any particular geographical difference. In five Member States, that is Germany, Spain, France, the Netherlands and the UK, the youngest group has the smallest percentage in the total number of tourists. Nevertheless, people older than 64 years represent the lowest proportion of tourists in fifteen EU Member States.

The demographic trend suggests, however, that the share of people older than 64 years in the total population will increase in the long run. Their share is expected to nearly double, reaching 30% by the year 2060. As a consequence, the share of older people in the number of tourists will also grow. Due to various influencing factors, e.g. improving health conditions, their share will most probably increase even faster than that expected on the basis of the demographic trend. Furthermore, many people who belong to the younger age groups nowadays actively participate in tourism as most of them have gone on holidays since childhood which is not always the case for the current older generation. Thus, they will most likely keep on travelling when they are older which will also increase the share of older people in the number of tourists.

In all age cohorts the majority make holidays in their country of residence

On a European average, 38% of the 438 million long trips of four nights or more in 2006 were undertaken by persons aged 25 to 44 years, while the age group of 45 to 64 year-olds accounted for 32% of all trips. The two other age classes each accounted for 15%. This approximately reflects the share of each age group in the total number of tourists. This feature suggests that there is little or no difference in the frequency with which each age group participates in tourism, meaning that all age classes travel to approximately the same extent. In addition, it can be assumed that a positive relationship between the number of tourists and the number of trips does exist.

Of these 438 million long trips, tourists made 61% within their respective country of residence, while the

remaining 39% were trips abroad. In Belgium, Ireland, Luxembourg and Slovenia, more than 70% of all trips were made to destinations outside the country of residence. In Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Poland, Portugal and Romania, on the other hand, more than 70% of all trips were within the borders of the respective country. The decision whether to go abroad or to stay within the country of residence is definitely influenced by the size of the respective country, as well as by its geographical location.

Consequently, this tendency is also reflected in all four age groups, meaning that in 2006 European tourists of every age group made more trips within their country of residence than to a foreign country. On closer inspection, it appears that travel behaviour in the individual Member States tends to follow a consistent pattern in most cases: either the majority of holiday trips throughout all age groups are made to a destination abroad or the majority of trips in all age groups are holidays in the respective home country.



To illustrate: Spanish people of all age groups make more trips within Spain than to destinations outside the country. The same applies to people from the Czech Republic, Greece, France, Italy, Hungary, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Finland and Sweden. In Belgium, Ireland, Luxembourg and the Netherlands this situation is the reverse. However, in six of the EU Member States, namely in Germany, Lithuania, Latvia, Slovakia, Slovenia and the United Kingdom, this trend is not consistent across the age classes.

Persons older than 64 years make on average the longest trips of all tourists

In general, Greek residents make the longest trips, spending 12.2 nights per trip, followed by residents of Belgium with 11.7 nights and residents of the Netherlands with 11.6 nights. In contrast, the trips undertaken by Finnish and Hungarian people are at least 2 nights shorter than the EU average.

As to the different age classes, once again it is the oldest age group (65 years and over) who makes the longest trips on average in the EU, spending 11.7 nights away on each trip. Thus, they make longer trips than the EU average, while people aged 15 to 24 years or 25 to 44 years generally make shorter trips than the average European tourist.

It is worth mentioning that the variation between the individual countries is smaller than it was for the average number of nights spent. The only group that deviates from the EU-27 average by more than five nights are Lithuanians aged between 15 and 24 years.

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Highlights

- People aged 25 to 44 years make up the largest share of the total number of tourists
- While on average 55% of the population makes at least one holiday trip of four nights or more during the year, this is only the case for 41% of the population aged 65 years and over
- More than 6 out of 10 holiday trips are spent within the own country, for the oldest age group more than 7 out of 10 trips are domestic trips
- Of all persons participating in tourism, tourists aged 65 and over make on average the most and the longest trips

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