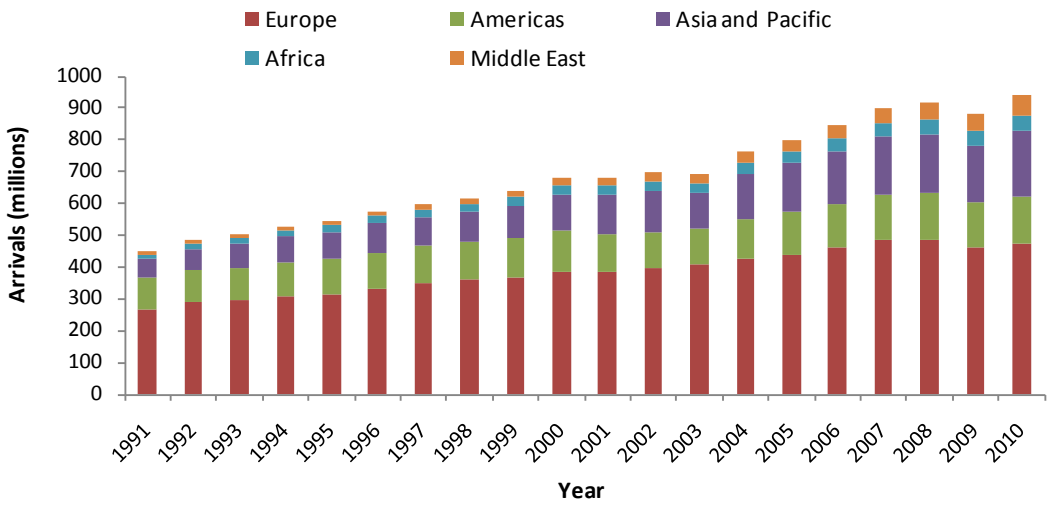
Travel and Migrant Health Section
Health Protection Services, Colindale
17 February 2012

Global and UK travel trends 2010

Global

Source of data: World Tourism Organization [1]

Figure 1 International tourist arrivals by region of destination: 1991 – 2010



In 2010, there were 939 million international tourist arrivals, a 6.5% increase compared to 2009 and a 2.4% increase over the previous peak in 2008. Provisional data for 2011 show that international tourism is recovering after the dip in 2009 and is still on target to reach 1.6 billion international arrivals predicted by 2020 [1]. Major events affect international travel and this is reflected in global travel trends as shown in Figure 1:

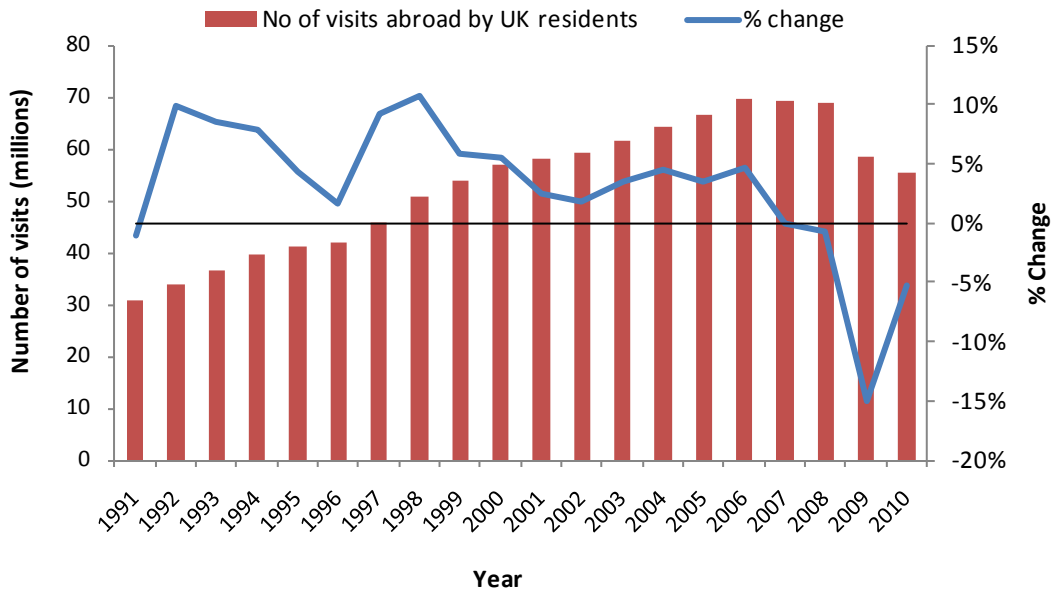
- 2001: 9/11
- 2002: Bali bombings
- 2003: SARS
- 2004: Indian Ocean tsunami
- 2008/09: global credit crisis
- 2009 Pandemic flu

UK travel

Source of data: Office for National Statistics, International Passenger Survey [2]

How many UK residents travel abroad?

Figure 2 Number of visits abroad by UK residents: 1991 - 2010



In 2007, the number of visits abroad started to decrease for the first time since 1991 [Figure 2]. In 2009, there was a record 15% decrease compared to 2008, although there were some changes in the methodology of the International Passenger Survey conducted in 2009, which resulted in some downward discontinuity of approximately 3% for UK visits abroad. Data for 2009, therefore, may not be directly comparable with previous years and should be interpreted with caution. For more information about this see: http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_transport/Announcement.pdf. In 2010, the number of visits abroad decreased by 5.2% compared to 2009.

Why do UK residents travel abroad?

The majority of visits abroad by UK residents are for holidays [Figure 3]. In 2010, 65.55% of visits abroad by UK residents were for a holiday, 19.53% were to visit friends and relatives (VFR), 11.97% for business and 2.97% travelled for other reasons; these proportions were similar to 2009. In 2003, VFR travel overtook business travel for the first time and has continued to increase, despite the overall decrease in trend into 2010. Between 2000 and 2010, the number of visits abroad to see friends and relatives increased by 45% compared to an overall decrease of 0.5% (for all reasons for travel) and an increase of 1.0% in holiday travel. Visits for business reasons have been steadily decreasing, with a 25% decrease since 2000 [Figure 4].

Figure 3 Number of visits abroad by UK residents by purpose of travel: 2001 - 2010

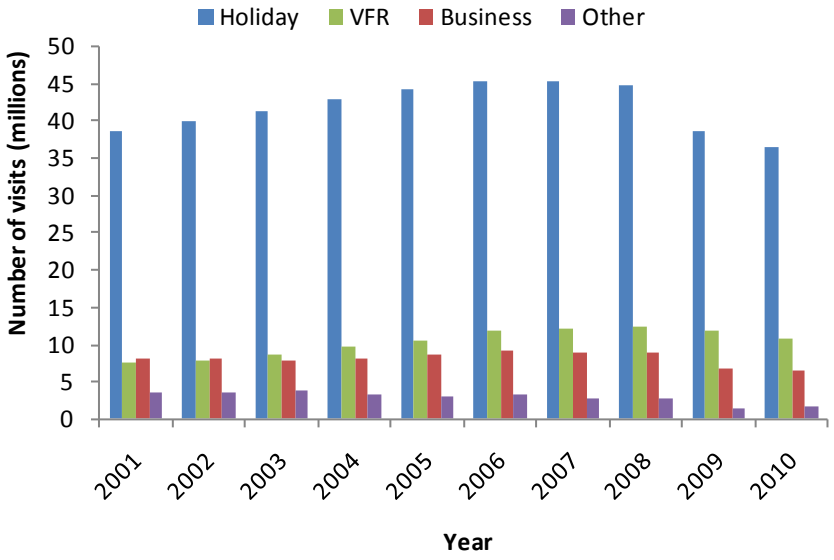
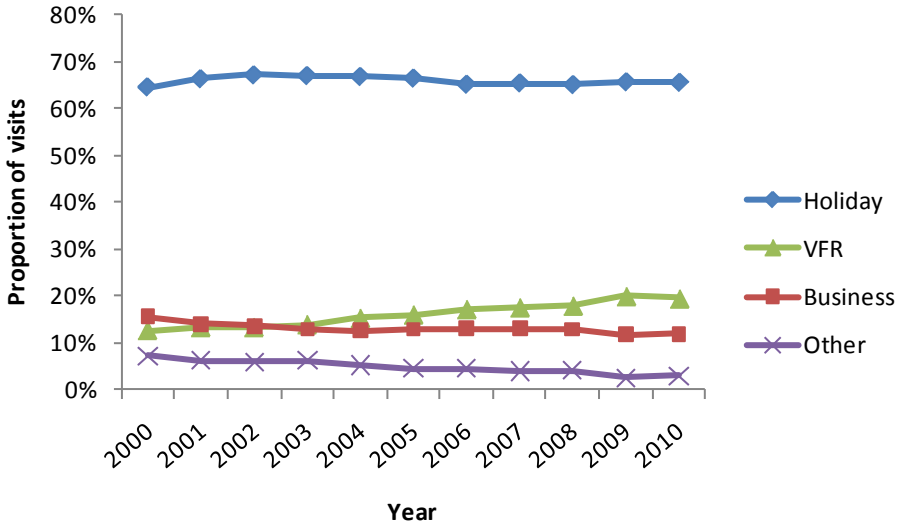
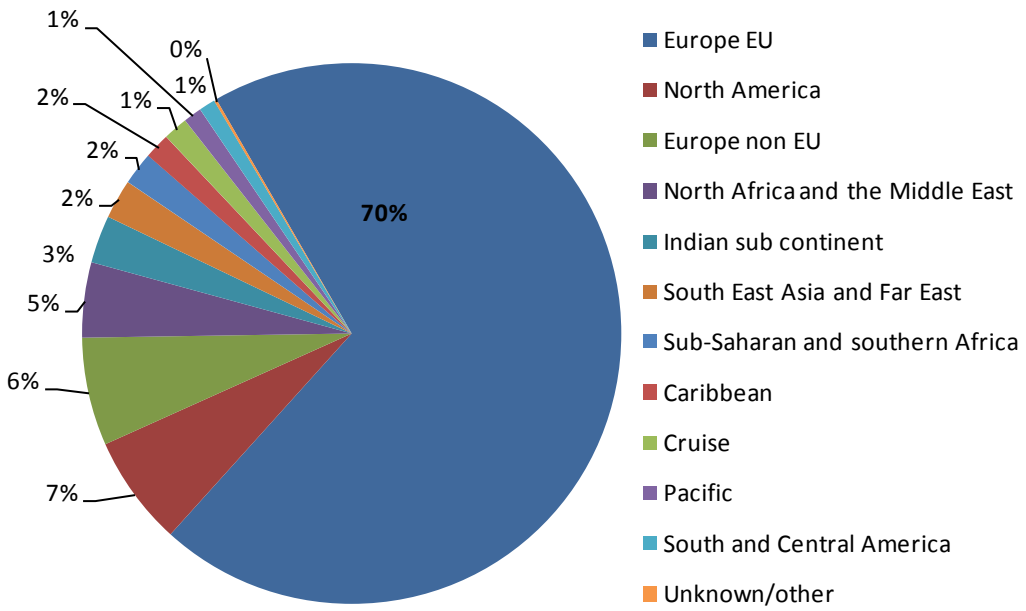


Figure 4 Proportion of total visits abroad by UK residents by reason for travel: 2001 - 2010



Where in the world do UK residents travel?

Figure 5 Visits abroad by region of the world: UK residents, 2010



The vast majority of UK residents travel to countries in the European Union (EU) [Figure 5]. The regional proportions have remained broadly the same over recent years, with a slight variation in the European regions due to new accession countries to the EU [3].

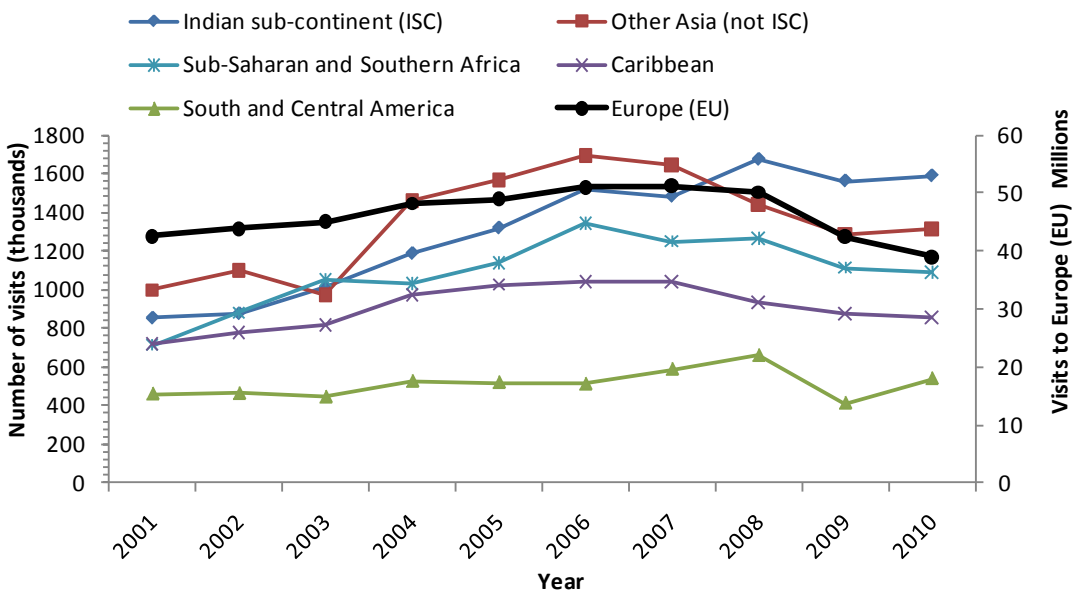
Table 1 Top 10 countries of travel: UK residents, 2010

Country of travel	Visits 2010	% of total visits abroad 2010	Visits 2009	% change between 09 and 10
Spain (including Balearic and Canary Is)	10366568	18.7%	11551260	-10.3%
France	9044155	16.3%	9746987	-7.2%
USA	3236871	5.8%	3184123	1.7%
Ireland	2972377	5.3%	3549274	-16.3%
Italy	2247926	4.0%	2609553	-13.9%
Germany	2081868	3.7%	2126931	-2.1%
Portugal (including Azores and Madeira)	1867397	3.4%	1808898	3.2%
Turkey	1814754	3.3%	1622488	11.9%
Netherlands	1757713	3.2%	1839902	-4.5%
Greece	1671632	3.0%	1881305	-11.1%

As in previous years, Spain and France were the most popular countries of travel in 2010 (probably related to their proximity to the UK and therefore cost and convenience) [Table 1]. Turkey entered the top 10 for the first time in 2008 and has continued to increase in popularity with UK visitors - seeing a 12% increase in visits from the UK in 2010 compared to 2009. Mexico also saw a substantial increase in UK visits in 2010 (59%), after a decrease of 40% in 2009 during the influenza pandemic. Holiday was overwhelmingly the main reason for travel for Spain (89%), France (70%), USA (66%), Italy (70%), Portugal (86%), Turkey (90%) and Greece (92%). For Ireland, the main reason for travel was to visit friends and relatives (41%) and for Germany it was business (38%) closely followed by holiday (33%). The Netherlands also received a high proportion of visits from UK residents for business reasons (30%).

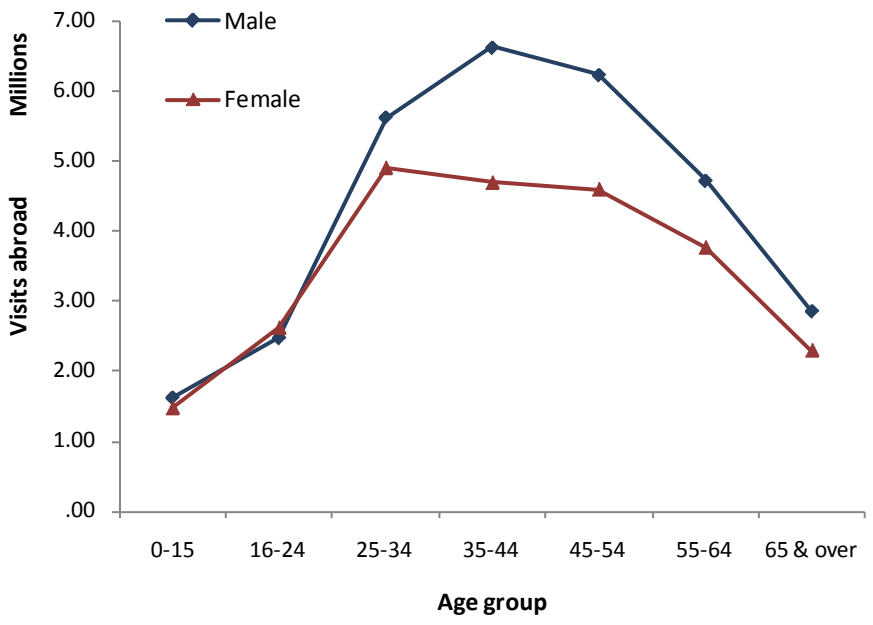
Despite the decrease of 12% in 2009, tropical destinations have been becoming more popular with UK travellers, with an average increase of 4% per year between 2000 and 2010. The Indian subcontinent and sub-Saharan and southern Africa have seen the largest increases of 65% and 48% respectively since 2000, possibly related to increased VFR travel by migrants in the UK from countries in these regions [4]. In 2010, visits to South and Central America accounted for the largest increase probably reflecting the increase in visits to Mexico [Figure 6].

Figure 6 Number of visits by UK residents to tropical regions of the world: 2001 – 2010



Who travels?

Figure 7 Number of visits by UK residents by age and sex: 2010



Age and sex were known for just over 54.5 million UK residents who travelled abroad in 2010. The majority of travellers were aged between 25 and 54 years (59%). In general, more males (55%) travelled than females (45%), with a more even split at the lower age groups (52% male for 0-15 years and 49% male for 16-24 years) and a larger difference in those aged 35-44 years (59% male) and 45-54 years (58% male).

References

1. World Tourism Organization. UNWTO World Tourism Barometer [accessed 14 February 2012]. Available online at: http://www.unwto.org/facts/eng/barometer.htm
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