C.2. Characteristics of visitors

2.94. Though not required for international comparison purposes, countries are encouraged to collect information on their visitors’ personal characteristics, such as age, gender, economic activity status, occupation, annual household, family or individual income, education, etc. (IRTS 2008, paras. 3.6-3.8). These data might help to identify different market segments: families travelling with small children, middle-aged travellers, young travellers, retirees, high income travellers, etc. Additionally, these characteristics might correlate with characteristics of trips, a fact of interest for the current estimation of tourism flows and expenditure.

2.95. Some countries restrict their descriptions and analyse in respect of visitors to those above a certain age, for the most part because children cannot be expected to answer questionnaires on purpose of travel, expenditure, etc. [1]. Administrative counts of visitor flows (immigration data) treat children like any other travellers: they require and are sold air, train or bus tickets, food, shelter, etc. Children should therefore not be excluded, as they are not excluded from household budget surveys, although they do require special treatment (see sect. B.3.4. above).

2.96. The IRTS 2008 (para. 3.6) offers a range of characteristics that can be observed but makes no specific recommendations on the use of information on visitor characteristics. Each country should evaluate the relevance of some or all of the variables and, in particular, how such information might be used and what it might entail in terms of the requirements for statistical design and observation procedures (e.g., greater sample size will be required if characteristics are to be crossclassified).

2.97. Personal characteristics considered meaningful should be taken into consideration during the statistical design of the sample, particularly in the case of travel parties. In addition to the characteristics of the actual (or self-designated) head or leader of a party, the characteristics of each individual in the party should also be identified. This ensures a true and fair picture of visitor characteristics.

2.98. Other characteristics crucial to the determination of different forms of tourism are a visitor’s country of residence and place of usual residence within that country. These aspects will be discussed in section D directly below.

[1] States members of the European Union must comply with the detailed requirements set out in EU regulations.