

## Directorate General Strategy, People and Data

October 2024

### Experimental statistics on payments with cards issued in Spain related to travel abroad by tourists resident in Spain

External Current and Capital Account Unit

---

#### 1. Introduction

Regulation (EU) 2020/2011 of the European Central Bank on payment statistics (hereafter the Regulation) entered into force in 2022. This Regulation requires payment service providers (PSPs) and other operators (mainly banks) to report data on transactions carried out through credit transfers, direct debits, cheques, e-money payments and card-based payments. The ECB uses this information, which is compiled and sent by the different national central banks to the ECB, to prepare payment statistics.<sup>1</sup>

The European working groups engaged in preparing balance of payments and cross-border tourism statistics are analysing how to use this information to enrich the existing data on the external sector. Specifically, the possible use of the quarterly information on payments with cards issued by PSPs resident in Spain, shown in Table 9 of the Regulation, is under analysis. As shown in the following figure, this information distinguishes: (a) whether or not transactions are initiated electronically;<sup>2</sup> and (b) for those initiated electronically, whether they are non-remote or remote payments,<sup>3</sup> broken down by the merchant's sector of activity based on the merchant category code (MCC).<sup>4</sup> In all cases, information is requested by individual country (the country where the terminals are located, in the case of non-remote transactions, or the main country of business operations, in the case of remote transactions).

---

<sup>1</sup> The payment statistics published by the ECB can be consulted [here](#). The corresponding press releases are available [here](#).

<sup>2</sup> Transactions initiated electronically (around 95% of the total on 2023 data) include those initiated at a physical point of sale where electronic fund transfers can be made (point of sale (POS) terminals located at merchants), at ATMs and at other types of terminals where e-payments can be initiated. Transactions not initiated electronically include those whose information is captured manually on paper vouchers (former manual credit card imprinters) and those initiated by e-mail or by telephone.

<sup>3</sup> A remote payment transaction is initiated through the internet or through a device that can be used for communicating remotely. A non-remote payment transaction is initiated at a physical point of sale terminal (POSs at merchants).

<sup>4</sup> This is an extensive list of around 300 codes that classifies merchants by sector (types of goods or services). Originally, this classification was designed based on the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC). The full list can be found in the auxiliary tables of the technical application of the Regulation, available on the [payment systems statistics](#) section on the Banco de España website.

---

# PAYMENTS WITH BANK CARDS ISSUED IN SPAIN

QUARTERLY INFORMATION SINCE 2022 Q1 DATA

NON-REMOTE

REMOTE

BROKEN DOWN BY:

TYPE OF MERCHANT

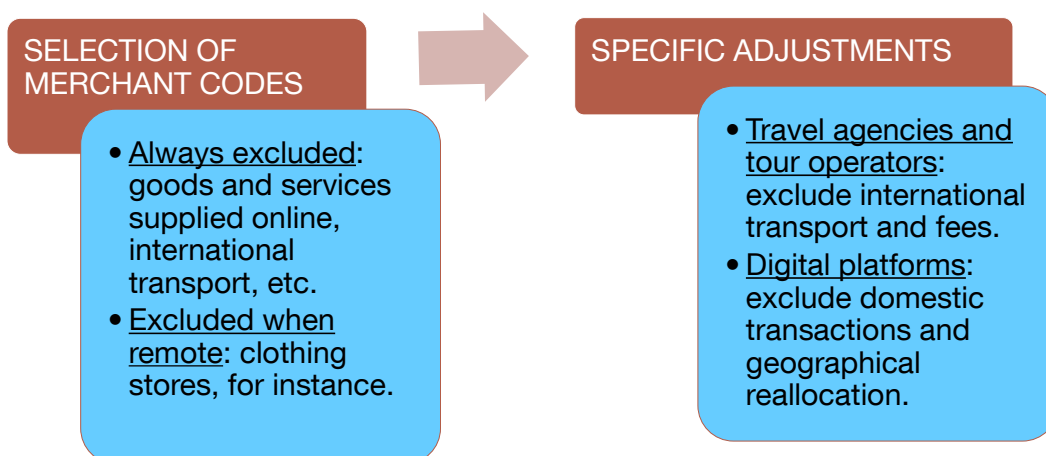
COUNTERPART  
COUNTRY

As a preliminary exploration of the potential uses of the new information, experimental statistics on payments with cards issued in Spain which could, in principle, be related to travel abroad of tourists resident in Spain are published. The intention is to exclude, among other things, purchases of goods or services consumed in Spain. These statistics focus on the most important business categories and provide information on both the merchant's activity and the counterpart country.

The statistics are intended to serve as supplementary (rather than alternative) information to the payments in the balance of payment's tourism heading.<sup>5</sup>

## 2. Methodology

The method used to prepare the experimental statistics on card payments is explained below.<sup>6</sup> More specifically, details on the selection of merchant codes that has been carried out and some specific adjustments that have been implemented (in the case of Travel agencies and Tour-operators and Digital platforms), are provided.



### 2.1 Selection of merchant category codes

<sup>5</sup> For further details on the study conducted, see "Spanish experience in the use of data generated by the private sector with an application to estimation of Tourism data", Alvarez and Velasco IFC Bulletin, 62, 2024, available [here](#).

<sup>6</sup> The methodology is largely based on the work carried out by the Travel Workshop, a group where representatives of central banks and statistics institutes from 27 European countries participate, all of which are responsible for estimating the tourism data that are recorded in the balance of payments.

Considering that Table 9 of the Regulation includes around 300 merchant codes to cover any sector of activity (hospitality, transport, insurance, health, education, fashion, etc.), the first step for approximating tourist spending is to select which codes to take into account. This selection must also consider whether purchases are non-remote or remote. In the case of non-remote purchases, most categories can generally be associated with purchases by tourists. However, in the case of remote purchases, many transactions which are very unlikely to be related to travel abroad need to be discarded.<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, in order to adjust the Table 9 data, the codes are divided into two groups:

- Codes that must always be excluded (regardless of whether they are non-remote or remote transactions). For instance, those related to business services (consulting, advertising or administrative services), those relating to goods and services that can be supplied online (games, e-books and IT applications) and those related to international transport (because they are recorded in the balance of payments as non-travel services).
- Codes to be excluded only in the case of remote purchases. These include, for example, those related to health, education and clothing stores.

## **2.2 Adjustments to data for Travel agencies and tour operators**

One of the merchant categories is Travel agencies and tour operators. Adjustments are needed to exclude payments corresponding to:

- Trips where Spain is the destination, even if they were arranged with agencies not resident in Spain.
- International transport and fees. These two balance of payment items are recorded as non-travel services.

These adjustments are based on information from the INE's Residents' Travel Survey (ETR, by its Spanish acronym), which provides data on the percentage of domestic and outbound trips out of the total number of trips taken by residents and the various services arranged (accommodation, transport, bars and restaurants and others).

## **2.3 Adjustments to transactions through digital intermediation platforms (DIPs)**

In card payments, adjustments are also needed to those corresponding to purchases of goods and services through DIPs. Two types of payment are distinguished, based on merchant category.

### **2.3.1 Payments associated with hotels, travel agencies and theatrical productions<sup>8</sup>**

---

<sup>7</sup> Approximately 95% of non-remote transactions reported in Table 9 are considered tourism-related, compared with only around 10% of remote transactions.

<sup>8</sup> These three categories accounted for 75% of remote payments in 2022.

Investigations, based on direct contact with the main reporting agents, found that these payment transactions were primarily concentrated in Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

For such payments, the following is required:

- The exclusion of any payments corresponding to goods and services that, while made to a foreign counterparty, are consumed in Spain (domestic travel). As with the adjustments to travel agency data, this is performed using the ETR.<sup>9</sup>
- The geographical reallocation of transactions that may indeed pertain to expenditure abroad, given that the country indicated is the platform's main country of business operations rather than the traveller's final country of destination. This reallocation is based on the geographical breakdown of non-remote transactions reported using the code for Hotels, motels and resorts.

### **2.3.2 Payments associated with motor vehicles with driver, cable television and fast food restaurants**

Lastly, other merchant categories are excluded where, a priori, most remote payment transactions correspond to the consumption of goods and services in Spain, and for which, moreover, no information is available to distinguish those pertaining to goods and services consumed abroad.

## **3. Dissemination of Information**

These experimental statistics are disseminated through various charts that show card payments, both remote and non-remote transactions, related to outbound tourism. In the charts, the merchant type, the country where the payments are made and the data reference quarter can be selected. Data for the main business categories are shown. There are plans to expand the list of published categories in the near future. The selection can be filtered based on the number of countries and their relevance (percentage of the total). Furthermore, clicking on the bar of the reference series will display its historical performance.

These experimental statistics were first published on 23 October 2024, presenting the results from the first reference quarter available (2022 Q1) to 2024 Q2. Henceforth, they will be published approximately two months after the end of the data reference quarter.

---

<sup>9</sup> According to the ETR, domestic travel accounts for approximately 70% of all trips taken by residents.