

Statistical bulletin

# Coronavirus and self-isolation after being in contact with a positive case in England: 19 to 24 April 2021

Behaviour of individuals required to self-isolate after being in contact with a positive case of COVID-19, from the COVID Test and Trace Contacts Insights Survey. Includes information on the impact of self-isolation on well-being and finances. Experimental Statistics.

Contact:  
Lynsey Brown  
publicservicesanalysis@ons.gov.  
uk  
+44 (0)1633 456736

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# 1 . Main points

- Data collected from 19 to 24 April 2021, after further easing of coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions on 12 April 2021, show that the majority (92%) of those who had contact with a positive COVID-19 case fully adhered to the self-isolation requirements throughout their 10-day isolation period.
- Most people (95%) had no contact with non-household members for their full isolation period.
- Of those who reported non-adherent behaviour, around two-thirds (65%) left their house at least once during the isolation period for a non-permitted reason and 40% allowed one or more visitors into their homes.
- Of those who downloaded the Test and Trace app, almost half (47%) received a notification telling them to self-isolate.
- Approximately one-third (32%) of all respondents reported that self-isolation had a negative effect on their well-being and mental health, and 29% of respondents reported having lost income because of self-isolation.
- The results of this survey show no significant difference in understanding of self-isolation guidance, full adherence to the guidance, and having no contact with non-household members when compared with the results of the previous survey (1 to 10 April 2021), which was carried out before the latest easing of restrictions.
- The Test and Trace Contacts Insights Survey was undertaken in response to policy questions on the level of adherence to self-isolation requirements of those who have been notified by the NHS Test and Trace service to self-isolate, having been in contact with someone who had received a positive test result for COVID-19, and other information.

The statistics presented are Experimental Statistics, so care needs to be taken when interpreting them. It is worth noting this survey has a relatively small sample size of 1,194.

## Statistician's comment

“Today’s data continue to show a majority of respondents are following self-isolation requirements after being in contact with someone testing positive for COVID-19.

“Since our last results, we’ve seen significant lockdown restrictions eased so I’m pleased to see people are still aware of the risks of passing on the virus, even as we transition out of lockdown and infections are low.”

Tim Gibbs, Public Services Analysis Team, Office for National Statistics  
Follow the Public Services Analysis team on Twitter: [@HughStick](https://twitter.com/HughStick)

## 2 . Indicators of behaviour and experience during self-isolation

Since December 2020, there has been a legal duty in England to self-isolate for 10 days if you have received a positive test result, if you live in the same household as a person who has symptoms of the coronavirus (COVID-19), or if you have been in close contact with, but do not live with, a person who has tested positive for COVID-19.

The data presented in this bulletin were collected from individuals (“contacts”) who had been identified as having been in contact with someone who had tested positive for COVID-19. The data were collected at the point when this population had recently reached or were nearing the end of their self-isolation period.

These data were collected from 19 to 24 April 2021 during a period in which COVID-19 restrictions were easing. More information on identifying this group of people, self-isolation and collecting the data can be found in the [Glossary](#) and [Measuring the data](#) sections.

The majority (92%) of those required to self-isolate reported fully adhering to requirements throughout the whole self-isolation period. This has not changed significantly since the previous data collection period between 1 and 10 April 2021, which was prior to the latest easing of restrictions.

Table 1: Indicators of behaviour and experience during self-isolation of those who were in contact with a positive case of coronavirus (COVID-19)  
England, 1 to 10 April 2021 and 19 to 24 April 2021

	<b>1 to 10 April 2021</b>	<b>19 to 24 April 2021</b>
<b>Percentage reporting full adherence to the requirements for their full isolation period or until the point of the survey</b>	90%	92%
<b>Percentage reporting no contact with non-household members for their full isolation period or until the point of the survey</b>	94%	95%
<b>Percentage who fully understood the self-isolation requirements</b>	71%	74%
<b>Percentage who developed COVID-19 symptoms</b>	30%	26%
<b>Percentage who agreed that ‘it was easy for me to self-isolate’</b>	75%	80%
<b>Percentage reporting self-isolation had a negative effect on their well-being and mental health</b>	32%	32%
<b>Percentage reporting having lost income due to self-isolation</b>	27%	29%
<b>Of those who did not adhere to the requirements, percentage leaving the house for a non-permitted reason</b>	78%	65%
<b>Of those who did not adhere to the requirements, percentage who had one or more visitors to their home (excluding visits for personal care)</b>	33%	40%
<b>Percentage who downloaded the NHS Test and Trace app</b>	50%	45%
<b>Of those who had applied and received the NHS Test and Trace Support payment, percentage who had no contact with non-household members within 24 hours of receiving a notification to self-isolate*</b>	96%	97%

Source: Office for National Statistics – COVID Test and Trace Contacts Insights Survey

#### Notes

1. The percentage differences between the results of the two surveys are not statistically significant.
2. If not specified, percentages are based on everyone who was in contact with a positive case.
3. Some percentages in this table are based on sample counts of fewer than 30 respondents and should be treated with caution. These categories are marked with a \*.

### 3 . Adherence to self-isolation requirements

A minority (8%) reported not adhering to the requirements during the self-isolation period, for example, by leaving the home or having visitors for a reason not permitted within legislation. In the first 24 hours after being notified to start self-isolating, the percentage who did not adhere to the isolation requirements was 3%, compared with 6% during the period after the first 24 hours until the end of self-isolation.

Of those who did not adhere, around two-thirds (65%) left their house at least once for a non-permitted reason, for example, for outdoor recreation or exercise, and 4 in 10 (40%) reported having one or more visitors to their home during the isolation period.

Adherence with isolation requirements for the full period was [statistically significantly](#) higher among those who understood the guidance (95%), compared with those who misunderstood or were unsure of the guidance (82%).

### 4 . Contact with non-household members

The majority of people (95%) had no contact with non-household members for their full isolation period (or until the point of the survey). This was almost unchanged from the data collected between 1 and 10 April 2021 (94%).

Respondents were just as likely to have no contact with non-household members in the first 24 hours (97%) as for the remainder of the isolation period (96%). Of those who had contact with non-household members, approximately two-thirds (65%) had contact in the form of visitors to their home and around 4 in 10 (42%) had contact while out of the house (although the latter estimate is based on a sample of fewer than 30).

#### More about coronavirus

- Find the latest on [coronavirus \(COVID-19\) in the UK](#).
- [Explore the latest coronavirus insights](#) from the ONS and other sources.
- All ONS analysis, summarised in our [coronavirus roundup](#).
- View [all coronavirus data](#).
- Find out how we are [working safely in our studies and surveys](#).

### 5 . Understanding of self-isolation requirements

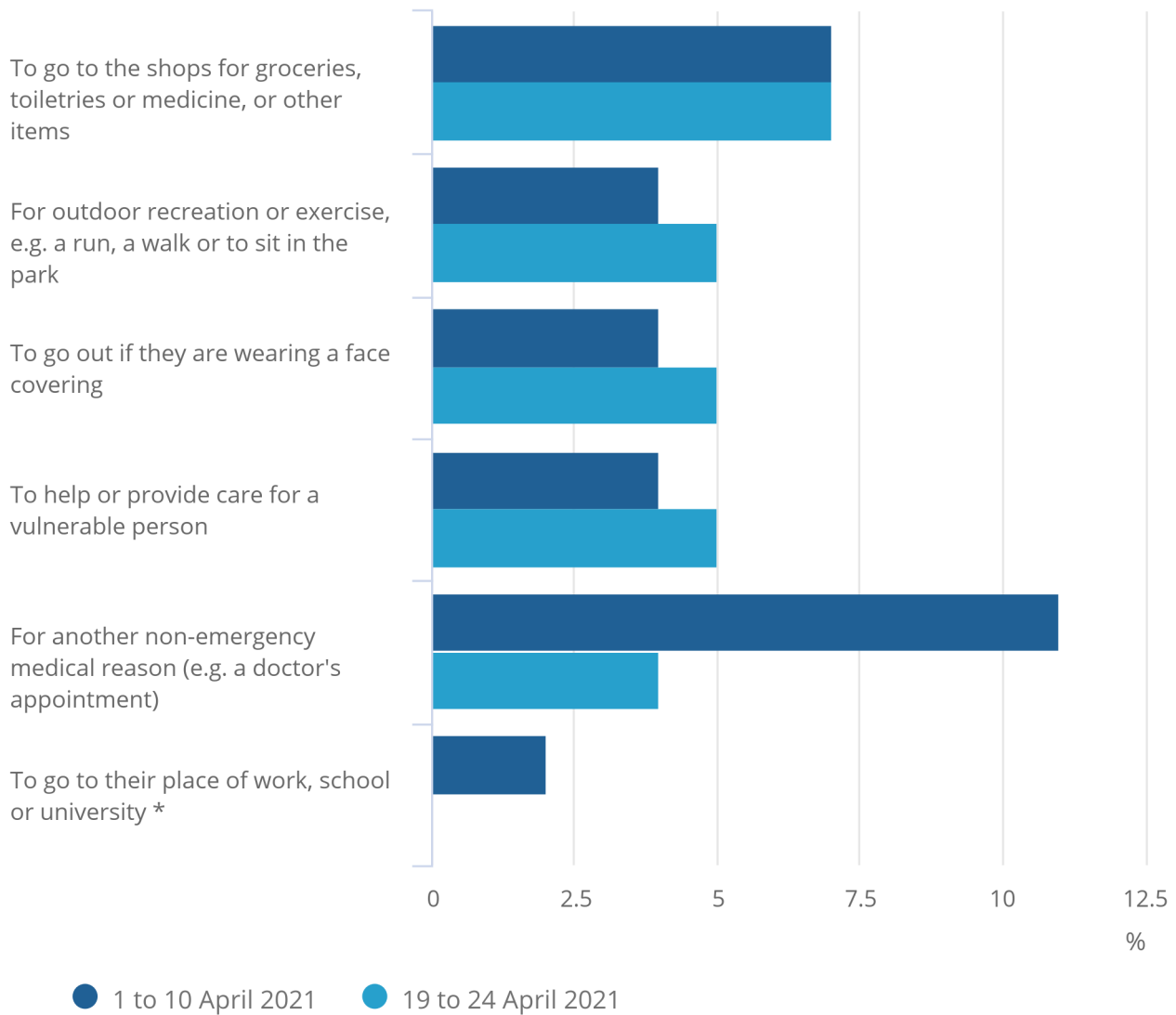
Respondents were asked about their interpretation of the requirements for self-isolation to determine how well they understood them. Around three-quarters (74%) fully understood the requirements, compared with around one-quarter (26%) who either misunderstood or were unsure. The activity that was incorrectly reported as being allowed most often was going to the shops for groceries, medicine, or other items (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Fewer than 1 in 10 incorrectly believed that going to the shops was allowed during the self-isolation period**

Percentage of all respondents who believe that a non-permitted activity is allowed during self-isolation, England, 1 to 10 April 2021 and 19 to 24 April 2021

Figure 1: Fewer than 1 in 10 incorrectly believed that going to the shops was allowed during the self-isolation period

Percentage of all respondents who believe that a non-permitted activity is allowed during self-isolation, England, 1 to 10 April 2021 and 19 to 24 April 2021



Source: Office for National Statistics – COVID Test and Trace Contacts Insights Survey

Notes:

1. The category "To go to their place of work, school or university" for 1 to 10 April 2021 is based on a sample count of fewer than 30 and should be treated with caution. This is marked with a \*.
2. The category "To go to their place of work, school or university" for 19 to 24 April 2021 is not shown because the sample count is fewer than 10.
3. Attending routine medical appointments, such as doctors' appointments, is not allowed during self-isolation but there are exceptions for medical emergencies. In the 1 to 10 April 2021 survey, "For another non-emergency medical reason (e.g. a doctor's appointment)" did not include the term "non-emergency". Those who reported that this activity was allowed may have been referring to the medical emergency exception, so it is possible that understanding of guidance was higher than was found in that survey.

Those in the youngest age group (18 to 34 years) were significantly more likely to report that going to the shops was allowed, at 10%, in comparison with 5% of those in the middle age bracket (35 to 54 years).

## 6 . Data on self-isolation after contact with a positive case

[Coronavirus and self-isolation after being in contact with a positive case in England](#)

Dataset | Released 14 May 2021

Behaviour of individuals required to self-isolate after being in contact with a positive case of COVID-19, from the COVID Test and Trace Contacts Insights Survey. Includes information on the impact of self-isolation on well-being and finances. Experimental Statistics.

## 7 . Glossary

### Self-isolation

Self-isolation refers to not leaving your home because you have been informed by NHS Test and Trace that you are a contact of a person who has had a positive test result for the coronavirus (COVID-19). You must stay at home and complete 10 full days of isolation. It is a legal requirement to self-isolate if you have been notified to by the NHS Test and Trace service. Your isolation period includes the date of your last contact with them and the next 10 full days. If you develop symptoms, stay at home and arrange to have a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test for COVID-19.

In addition to staying home, if you are self-isolating you should not receive visitors, unless the purpose of the visit is to provide essential care.

For further information please see NHS guidance [When to self-isolate and what to do](#).

### Lockdown

On 5 January 2021, the UK government announced a further national lockdown for [England](#). On 22 February 2021, the UK government published a four-step [roadmap](#) to ease lockdown restrictions in England. Step 2 of the roadmap, which allowed the re-opening of more businesses and activities, was implemented on 12 April 2021 (before this survey took place).

## 8 . Measuring the data

### Survey information

Latest quality and methodology information on data from the COVID Test and Trace Contacts Insights Survey can be found in [Coronavirus and self-isolation after being in contact with a positive case in England methodology](#).

### Estimates for this survey

The data were collected between 19 and 24 April 2021. The sample consisted of 1,194 adults and was stratified to be representative of the age, sex and regional distribution of the “contacts” population.

Percentages in this report are based on weighted counts that are representative of the population of adults (aged 18 years or over) notified as being in contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 between 22 March and 18 April 2021 and are adjusted to address age, sex and regional bias in responses.

Of those potential respondents who were successfully contacted by an interviewer, the response rate was 49.5%. When including cases where contact was attempted but not made, the response rate was 17.8%. As with all surveys, these estimates have an associated margin of error.

Respondents were randomly sampled through the Contact Tracing and Advice Service (CTAS) database, held by NHS Test and Trace. The majority (99%) of respondents were interviewed within four days of the end of their self-isolation period, in order to minimise recall bias. The longest time between the end of self-isolation and interview was six days.

## 9 . Strengths and limitations

Information on the strengths and limitations of this survey are available in [Coronavirus and self-isolation after being in contact with a positive case in England methodology](#).



## 10 . Related links

### [Coronavirus and self-isolation after being in contact with a positive case in England methodology](#)

Methodology article | Released 14 May 2021

Latest quality and methodology information on data from the COVID Test and Trace Contacts Insights Survey and its use to examine the adherence to self-isolation guidelines. Experimental Statistics.

### [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Guidance for contacts](#)

Webpage | Updated 26 April 2021

Guidance for contacts of people with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection who do not live with the person.

### [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) latest data and analysis](#)

Webpage | Updated as and when data become available

Latest data and analysis on the coronavirus (COVID-19) in the UK and its effect on the economy and society.

### [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) roundup](#)

Blog | Updated as and when data become available

Catch up on the latest data and analysis related to the coronavirus pandemic and its impact on our economy and society.

### [Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain](#)

Bulletin | Weekly

Indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) to understand the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on people, households and communities in Great Britain.

### [Coronavirus and self-isolation after testing positive in England: 12 April to 16 April 2021](#)

Bulletin | Released 4 May 2021

Behaviour of individuals required to self-isolate after testing positive for COVID-19, from the COVID Test and Trace Cases Insights Survey. Includes information on the impact of self-isolation on well-being and finances. Experimental Statistics.