

Statistical bulletin

# Coronavirus and self-isolation after being in contact with a positive case in England: 1 to 5 June 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 wellbeing and finances. Experimental Statistics.

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# 1 . Main points

- Data collected from 1 to 5 June 2021 show that the majority (87%) of those who had contact with a positive coronavirus (COVID-19) case fully adhered to self-isolation requirements throughout their full isolation period, though this result was statistically significantly lower than the results of the previous two surveys (93% between 4 and 8 May 2021, and 92% between 19 and 24 April 2021).
- Around one-third (35%) of all respondents reported experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, and this is significantly higher than seen in the previous two surveys (21% between 4 and 8 May 2021, and 26% between 19 and 24 April 2021).
- Adherence to self-isolation requirements was significantly higher among those who developed symptoms (93%) compared with those who did not (84%).
- More than half of respondents (57%) had downloaded the NHS Test and Trace app, which was a significant increase from 45% between 19 and 24 April 2021.
- Most respondents (93%) reported having no contact with non-household members for their full period of isolation.
- Of those who reported non-adherent behaviour, 83% left their house at least once during the isolation period for a non-permitted reason.
- Over one-third (37%) of all respondents reported that self-isolation had a negative effect on their wellbeing and mental health, and 27% reported having lost income because of self-isolation.

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 968.

## Statistician's comment

"Most of those who are contacted through Test and Trace and asked to self-isolate are still following the rules around self-isolation, however, we've seen a decrease in those following the requirements in June, compared with April and May.

"More people are reporting experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 whilst in self-isolation, reflecting the increasing infection rates seen across the UK, so it's really crucial everybody adheres to self-isolation guidelines if they are notified to do so.

"We will continue to monitor adherence to self-isolation requirements and the impact it can have on people."

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 live in the same household as a person who has symptoms of 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 near to) the end of their self-isolation period.

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.

Between 1 and 5 June 2021, the majority (87%) of respondents reported fully adhering to requirements throughout the whole self-isolation period, as shown in Table 1.

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, 19 to 24 April, 4 to 8 May and 1 to 5 June 2021

	19 to 24 April	4 to 8 May	1 to 5 June
<b>Percentage reporting full adherence to the requirements for their full isolation period or until the point of the survey</b>	92%	93%	87% <sup>1,2</sup>
<b>Percentage reporting no contact with non-household members for their full isolation period or until the point of the survey</b>	95%	97%	93% <sup>1</sup>
<b>Percentage who fully understood the self-isolation requirements</b>	74%	72%	76%
<b>Percentage who developed COVID-19 symptoms</b>	26%	21%	35% <sup>1,2</sup>
<b>Percentage who agreed that 'it was easy for me to self-isolate'</b>	80%	79%	80%
<b>Percentage reporting self-isolation had a negative effect on their wellbeing and mental health</b>	32%	34%	37%
<b>Percentage reporting having lost income due to self-isolation</b>	29%	25%	27%
<b>Percentage who downloaded the NHS Test and Trace app</b>	45%	51%	57% <sup>2</sup>
<b>Of those who did not adhere to the requirements, percentage leaving the house for a non-permitted reason</b>	65%	87%	83% <sup>2</sup>
<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>	40%	15%*	21%*
<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>	97%*	95%*	95%*

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

#### Notes

1. The percentages between 1 to 5 June 2021 and 4 to 8 May 2021 are statistically significantly different.
2. The percentages between 1 to 5 June 2021 and 19 to 24 April 2021 are statistically significantly different.
3. If not specified, percentages are based on everyone who was in contact with a positive case.
4. 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 an asterisk (\*).

### 3 . Adherence to self-isolation requirements

Figure 1 shows the proportion of respondents who fully adhered to self-isolation requirements following contact with a positive case of coronavirus (COVID-19), according to selected characteristics.

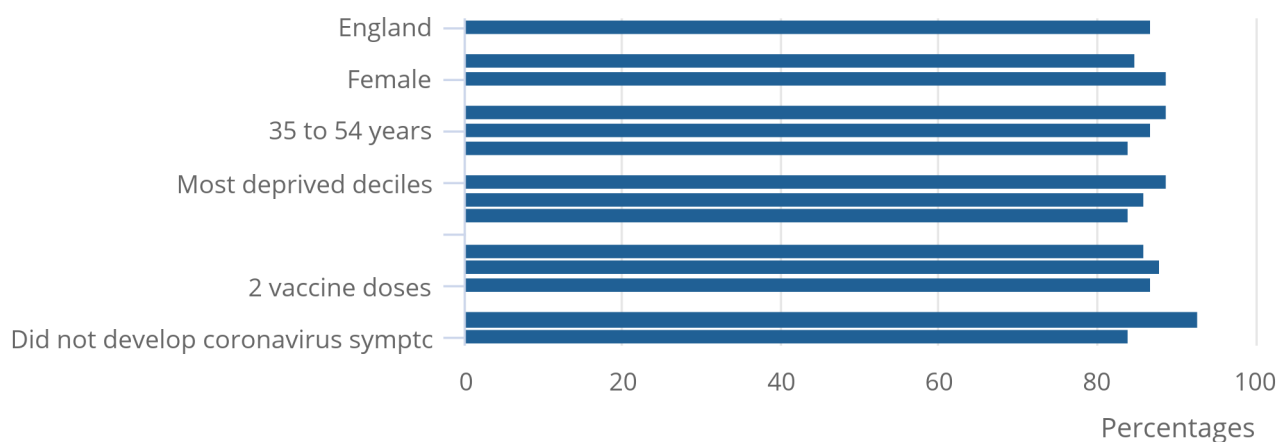
Adherence to self-isolation requirements was [statistically significantly](#) higher among those who developed COVID-19 symptoms (93%) compared with those who did not develop symptoms (84%). Differences within other groups (by sex, age, area deprivation and vaccination status) were not significant.

**Figure 1: Adherence to self-isolation requirements was significantly higher among those who developed COVID-19 symptoms compared with those who did not**

Percentage of respondents who fully adhered to self-isolation requirements: by selected characteristics, England, 1 to 5 June 2021

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Percentage of respondents who fully adhered to self-isolation requirements: by selected characteristics, England, 1 to 5 June 2021



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

Notes:

1. Deprivation was measured using the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). Areas have been grouped into deciles and then further grouped into three categories: Most deprived deciles (deciles 1 to 3); Middle deciles (deciles 4 to 7); and Least deprived deciles (deciles 8 to 10).

The proportion of those who had contact with a positive COVID-19 case and did not adhere to self-isolation requirements throughout their 10-day isolation period increased significantly to 12% between 1 and 5 June 2021, compared with 7% between 4 and 8 May 2021. This result follows the easing of certain lockdown restrictions on 17 May 2021.

## 4 . Contact with non-household members

The majority (93%) of those required to self-isolate following contact with a positive case of coronavirus (COVID-19) reported having no contact with non-household members throughout the whole self-isolation period. This has significantly decreased from 97% in the previous survey (4 to 8 May 2021), which was prior to the easing of restrictions on 17 May 2021.

The proportion of respondents who did not have contact with a non-household member was similar in the first 24 hours of self-isolation (97%) compared with the rest of the isolation period (96%). Of those who had contact with a non-household member at least once, around one-third (32%) met two to five non-household members during their isolation. (Please note that the latter estimate is based on a sample of fewer than 30.)

## 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 (76%) fully understood the requirements, compared with around one-quarter (24%) who either misunderstood or were unsure. This was similar across all age groups.

In the first 24 hours after they had been informed to self-isolate, those who understood the guidance were significantly more likely to adhere to it (97%) compared with those who misunderstood or were unsure of the guidance (91%). Across the whole period of self-isolation, the proportion of those who understood the guidance and adhered to it was higher than for those who misunderstood or were unsure of the guidance (88% and 83% respectively), though this was not statistically significant.

## 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 18 June 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 wellbeing 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. Step 3 (which eased limits on social contact and allowed further re-opening of businesses and activities) was implemented on 17 May 2021. Both of these steps occurred before the data in this survey were collected.

## 8 . Measuring the data

### Survey information

The 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 1 and 5 June 2021. The sample consisted of 968 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 4 and 31 May 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 58.6%. When including cases where contact was attempted but not made, the response rate was 15.3%. 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, to minimise recall bias. The longest time between the end of self-isolation and interview was five 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 11 June 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: 10 May to 15 May 2021](#)

Bulletin | Released 2 June 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 wellbeing and finances. Experimental Statistics.