

Statistical bulletin

Attitudes towards COVID-19 among passengers arriving into the UK: March 2021 to August 2021

Monthly figures on the attitudes of UK and overseas residents arriving and departing the UK towards social distancing, mask wearing, and COVID-19 restrictions and the proportion who had been vaccinated, using unweighted results from the International Passenger Survey for the period covering March to August 2021 and the Civil Aviation Authority's Departing Passengers Survey for the period covering June to August 2021 (experimental statistics).

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1 . Main points

- The proportion of both UK residents and overseas residents arriving in the UK in August 2021 who said COVID-19 testing was very important (45% and 54% respectively) had fallen since July 2021 (53% and 61% respectively); August was the first month where less than half of UK residents interviewed felt testing was very important.
- Most UK residents arriving into the UK said they found following overseas coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions either difficult, or very difficult (79% in August 2021); conversely most overseas residents said that they understood UK COVID-19 restrictions either quite well, or very well.
- Just under three-quarters of both UK and overseas residents arriving in the UK in August 2021 said the wearing of face coverings made them feel safe during their journey.
- Most UK residents arriving back into the UK (82%) and departing the UK (96%), had been vaccinated in August 2021.
- In August 2021, most UK residents arriving back into the UK (82%) and departing from the UK (96%) said they'd received a COVID-19 vaccine.

This bulletin contains unweighted data. This means the results are based on the responses of only the people interviewed, and do not account for any differences in the respondent group compared with all people travelling during the period. Therefore, the results should not be considered indicative of the travelling population as a whole and cannot be compared with weighted data. See [Section 9](#).

[Departing Passenger Survey](#) (DPS) data from the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has been included for the first time in this publication. The CAA interviews passengers departing from a UK airport to either a domestic or international destination, although only data for passengers travelling internationally has been included in this bulletin. Passengers are interviewed at the airport departure gates. International Passenger Survey (IPS) findings currently contain data for passengers arriving in to the UK through UK airports and on the Dover ferries (domestic passengers, travelling within the UK, are excluded). Because of differences in the samples interviewed, caution should be applied when comparing IPS and DPS data. You can find more information about the two surveys and how they are conducted in [Section 9](#).

2 . Proportion of travellers, arriving in the UK, who had received at least one COVID-19 vaccination

In August 2021, 82% of UK residents and 85% of overseas residents arriving into the UK had received at least one dose of a coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine. This compares with 96% of UK residents and 93% of overseas residents interviewed departing the UK, who had received at least one dose of the vaccine.

The [UK Government's coronavirus dashboard](#), shows 89% of all UK residents had received at least one dose of the vaccine by 31 August. Older UK residents, arriving into the UK, continue to be more likely to have been vaccinated than younger UK residents, aligning with the progress of the vaccine rollout in the UK (Figure 1). Respondents in older age groups were more likely to have received their vaccine earlier during the vaccine rollout (March to August 2021), and proportions reporting that they have had at least one dose among these age groups remained stable in August, but increased in younger age groups.

Figure 1: Older UK and overseas residents, arriving into the UK, were more likely to have had a COVID-19 vaccination than younger travellers

Proportion of interviewed UK and overseas residents arriving into the UK who had received at least one COVID-19 vaccination by age group and month. UK, March 2021 to August 2021

[Download the data](#)

3 . Attitudes towards social distancing

More than half of UK residents (59%) and overseas residents (65%) interviewed arriving into the UK in August 2021 said that social distancing during their journey made them feel safe. For both UK and overseas residents, these proportions were the lowest since March 2021.

The Civil Aviation Authority's (CAA's) Departing Passenger Survey (DPS) asked travellers leaving the UK whether they felt satisfied with their ability to keep a safe distance from other passengers while at the airport. The majority of UK (81%) and overseas residents (80%) remained satisfied or very satisfied (Figure 3) in August 2021. This is consistent with July (78% for UK residents and 82% for overseas) but is a fall from June (87% and 87% respectively).

In August 2021 a new response category 'No social distancing in place' was added to the International Passenger Survey. [See Section 9.](#)

Figure 2: Most UK and overseas residents arriving into the UK said that social distancing had made them feel safe during their journey

Proportion of interviewed UK and overseas residents, arriving into the UK, categorised by how safe they felt because of social distancing during their journey and by month. UK, March 2021 to August 2021

[Download the data](#)

Figure 3: Most UK and overseas residents, departing the UK, were satisfied with their ability to keep a safe distance from other passengers at the airport, but less were very satisfied over time

Proportion of UK and overseas residents interviewed departing the UK, categorised by how satisfied they were with their ability to keep a safe distance from other passengers at the airport by month UK, June 2021 to August 2021

[Download the data](#)

4 . Attitudes towards wearing of face coverings

Over two-thirds of UK (72%) and overseas (74%) residents said that the wearing of face coverings made them feel safe during their journey into the UK (Figure 4).

The Civil Aviation Authority's (CAA's) Departing Passenger Survey (DPS) asked travellers leaving the UK whether they felt satisfied with the number of travellers wearing face coverings at the airport. The majority of UK (87%) and overseas (88%) residents said they were satisfied or very satisfied.

In England, on 19 July 2021, the [legal requirement](#) to wear face coverings in indoor settings or on public transport was removed. However, individual settings can require mask wearing beyond this date and most major UK airports and airlines have chosen to continue to do so. A new category 'Face masks not worn by others' was added to the International Passenger Survey in August 2021, see [Section 9.](#)

Figure 4: The majority of UK and overseas residents arriving into the UK said that the wearing of face coverings made them feel safe during their journey

Proportion of interviewed UK and overseas residents categorised by how safe they felt because of the wearing of face coverings by month. UK, March 2021 to August 2021

[Download the data](#)

Figure 5: The majority of UK and overseas residents, leaving the UK, were satisfied with the number of passengers wearing face coverings at the airport

Proportion of interviewed UK and overseas residents, leaving the UK, categorised by how satisfied they were with the number of passengers wearing face coverings at the airport by month. UK, June 2021 to August 2021

[Download the data](#)

5 . Attitudes towards COVID-19 testing

In August 2021, 45% of UK residents and 54% of overseas residents arriving into the UK said that they thought a coronavirus (COVID-19) test was very important for safety (Figure 6). There has been a steady decline among both groups of travellers since February 2021 (73% and 75% respectively) and August was the first month that the proportion of UK residents who thought testing was very important fell below 50%. However, around a third of both UK residents and overseas residents (36% and 32% respectively) said that testing was "quite important", meaning that overall COVID-19 testing remains "important" for the majority of travellers arriving into the UK.

Figure 6: Less UK and overseas residents, arriving into the UK, said COVID-19 testing was very important for safety, over time

Proportion of interviewed UK and overseas residents, arriving into the UK, categorised by how important they think taking a COVID-19 test is for safety by month. UK, March 2021 to August 2021

[Download the data](#)

6 . Understanding and accessibility of UK and overseas COVID-19 restrictions

In August, the majority of UK residents arriving into the UK said that they had found it either difficult (47%) or very difficult (32%) to follow overseas coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions (Figure 7). These figures have remained broadly consistent over time.

Figure 7: Most UK residents, arriving into the UK, find it difficult or very difficult to follow overseas COVID-19 restrictions

Proportion of interviewed UK residents, arriving into the UK, categorised by how difficult they found it to follow overseas restrictions by month. UK, March 2021 to August 2021

[Download the data](#)

Conversely, the majority of overseas residents arriving into the UK said they understood UK COVID-19 restrictions either quite well or very well, a trend that has remained consistent since March 2021 (Figure 8). In August 2021, 29% of overseas residents said that they understood UK restrictions quite well, and 65% understood them very well. Very few said they did not understand restrictions very well (3%) or did not understand them at all (1%).

Figure 8: Most overseas residents, arriving into the UK, understand UK COVID-19 restrictions very well or quite well

Proportion of interviewed overseas residents, arriving into the UK, categorised by how well they understood UK COVID-19 restrictions by month. UK, March 2021 to August 2021

[Download the data](#)

Although overseas residents were more likely to say they understood UK COVID-19 restrictions very well, in August 2021, 67% of overseas residents said that they were not at all confident accessing information about the UK's COVID-19 restrictions. This proportion has remained consistent since February 2021 (Figure 9). In August 2021, 27% said they were not very confident accessing this information. Only 3% felt somewhat confident or very confident accessing information about the UK's COVID-19 restrictions.

Figure 9: Most overseas residents, arriving into the UK, are not at all confident or not very confident accessing information about UK COVID-19 restrictions

Proportion of interviewed overseas residents, arriving into the UK, categorised by how confident they are accessing information about UK COVID-19 restrictions by month. UK, March 2021 to August 2021

[Download the data](#)

7 . Attitudes towards COVID-19 among passengers arriving into and out of the UK data

[International Passenger Survey findings on COVID-19](#)

Dataset | Released 5 October 2021

This dataset includes data collected from the International Passenger Survey and the Civil Aviation Authority's Departing Passengers Survey.

Results from the International Passenger Survey for the period covering March to August 2021 includes monthly figures on the attitudes of UK and overseas residents arriving into the UK towards social distancing, mask wearing, and COVID-19 restrictions and the proportion who had been vaccinated. This data is unweighted (experimental statistics).

Results from the Civil Aviation Authority's Departing Passenger Survey for the period covering June to August 2021 includes monthly figures for the proportion that have been vaccinated and attitudes on how satisfied passengers were with the ability to socially distance at the airport and with the number of passengers wearing face coverings at the airport. This data is unweighted (experimental statistics).

8 . Glossary

Overseas resident

A person who, being permanently resident in a country outside the UK, visits the UK for a period of less than 12 months. UK citizens resident overseas for 12 months or more coming home on leave are included in this category. Visits abroad are visits for a period of less than 12 months by people permanently resident in the UK (who may be of foreign nationality).

Traffic light system

For the period these data cover there was a [coronavirus \(COVID-19\) traffic light system for travel](#) in place, banding countries into "green", "amber" and "red" lists. It is important to note that the categorisation of countries has changed throughout this period of March to August 2021, and this should be considered when analysing the results of the data on understanding and accessing information on restrictions. On 4 October 2021 [the traffic light system was replaced](#) with a single red list of countries with the system simplified for arrivals from the rest of the world.

Vaccine rollout

The rollout of the coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine across the UK, phase one of which began in December 2020, follows the Department for Health and Social Care's [full UK COVID-19 vaccines delivery plan](#).

9 . Measuring the data

Methods used to produce these findings - International Passenger Survey

This bulletin uses data from the International Passenger Survey (IPS). IPS data are regularly released in the [Travel and Tourism](#) series. The data presented in this bulletin are based on new questions which have been added to the IPS to collect data measuring the attitudes towards and experiences of coronavirus (COVID-19) and associated restrictions, among travellers arriving into the UK. We have published information on the [International Passenger Survey methodology](#).

All COVID-19 questions were asked of all respondents arriving into the UK with the following exceptions:

The following two questions are only asked to overseas residents:

- "How well do you understand the coronavirus (COVID 19) regulations that will apply to you during your visit to the UK?"
- "How confident are you that you know how to access official information on Coronavirus (COVID 19) regulations for the UK?"

The following question is only asked to UK residents:

1. "Overall, how easy or difficult did you find it to follow coronavirus (COVID 19) regulations during your stay overseas?"

Totals shown, and those used to calculate percentages, include all overseas arrivals (international visitors to the UK and UK residents arriving back into the UK). Questions were not asked of travellers leaving the UK. Residents of the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man have been counted as overseas residents (as have all Crown dependencies). Sea and tunnel data are excluded as the numbers are too small except for Dover ferries; because of coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions it was not possible to interview on board the Eurotunnel. Overall, sea and tunnel numbers are much lower than pre-coronavirus and show a 75% drop in passengers.

Additional responses were added to questions in August 2021 on social distancing, face masks and hand sanitiser in response to relaxations in Government policy. The additional response categories may lead to decreases in the proportion responses to other categories in these questions compared to previous months.

This release will continue to be updated monthly; therefore, in November we will publish data up to September 2021.

Methods used to produce these findings - Civil Aviation Authority Departing Passenger Survey

This month, we have included data in the bulletin from the Civil Aviation Authority's Departing Passenger Survey (DPS) asked of passengers travelling domestically and internationally from UK airports. The IPS is designed to interview travellers arriving in the UK through all ports (sea ports, airports and international train stations), but currently is only interviewing international passengers travelling through airports and on Dover ferries because of COVID-19 restrictions. The IPS data used in this bulletin include both travellers arriving into the UK by air and by sea. DPS data included in this bulletin are only for passengers travelling internationally, data for passengers travelling domestically have been excluded to be consistent with the IPS.

Questions asked on the DPS are similar to those asked in the IPS, but are not identical, therefore caution should be applied when comparing the DPS data to that collected by the IPS. DPS results are presented from June, when data collection commenced.

The [DPS methodology](#) is published by the Civil Aviation Authority, outlining their sampling and validation methodologies. The composition of the samples has been analysed and is broadly similar with the IPS. Both the DPS and IPS use unweighted data, therefore caution should be applied when interpreting the results, as outlined in [Section 10](#).

10 . Strengths and Limitations

The International Passenger Survey (IPS) sample used for both UK and overseas residents arriving into the UK across the study (March to August 2021) totals 26,082. Individual breakdowns by residency and month cannot be supplied because of disclosure control of low counts. Age groupings were based on self-reported data, which is not verified.

Around 90% of international traffic into and out of the UK is subject to IPS sampling. If a person under 16 years was sampled, they were not asked the COVID-19 questions unless their parent or guardian gave permission.

It is very difficult to predict interview numbers as interviews are being conducted under social distancing and passenger flow is likely to be very low. We have attempted to offset the effects of the low numbers of anticipated travellers by reducing sampling intervals (so a higher proportion are selected for interview).

The monthly sample sizes of the Departing Passenger Survey (DPS) and IPS are broadly similar. The DPS totals shown, and those used to calculate percentages, include all overseas departures (international visitors departing the UK and UK residents arriving departing the UK).

Using unweighted data

To provide the timeliest insights, this bulletin contains unweighted data based on the actual numbers of people interviewed for both the IPS and Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) surveys, meaning no account is taken of the different numbers of travellers represented by each respondent to the survey. Trends observed over time may be because of changes in the composition of survey respondents, rather than trends for the whole travelling population. Analysis comparing the weighted and unweighted data for the IPS for February and March 2021 found little difference in trends, suggesting this unweighted data can be considered as broadly indicative.

This also means no confidence intervals are provided and therefore caution must be taken when comparing figures and drawing conclusions from this sample time series. Comparison should not be extended to all passengers travelling during this period. Totals for the IPS should also not be compared with the weighted totals in the Travel and Tourism bulletins.

The IPS sample is drawn to be representative by quarter and therefore may not be evenly distributed across each month in terms of which traffic and mode of transport is sampled. For example, one month could have more weekend shifts than weekday shifts.

In the IPS some routes are overrepresented in the data because of the sample design, for example air travel to Heathrow. Policy changes that only affect one route or mode of transport could have an unrepresentative effect on the sample shown.

The smaller samples mean comparisons in this bulletin showing differences between the months are based on data observations and not on statistically significant differences.

For the DPS, the surveys are usually run on an annual basis, with shifts spread as evenly as practical over the year. Flights sampled are recorded to ensure all routes and most flight numbers are covered regularly. There is an assumption that passengers who are chosen for interview but are unwilling or unable to respond have the same characteristics as those successfully interviewed.

11 . Related links

[Overseas Travel and Tourism, provisional: January to March 2021](#)

Article | Released 23 July 2021

Quarterly estimates of visits to the UK by overseas residents, air visits abroad by UK residents and estimates of spending by travellers, using the International Passenger Survey and administrative sources of passenger travel data for the period covering April to December 2020.

[Overseas Travel and Tourism: 2020](#)

Article | Released 24 May 2021

Annual estimates of visits to the UK by overseas residents, visits abroad by UK residents and estimates of spending by travellers, using administrative sources of passenger travel data for the period covering April to December 2020.

[Travelpac: travel to and from the UK](#)

Dataset | Released 24 July 2020

Quarterly data on travel to and from the UK, taken from the International Passenger Survey (IPS). Includes detail on age and sex of travellers, purpose and length of trip, and spending. These data are in a form suitable for small businesses and students.

[Travel Trends: 2019](#)

Article | Released 22 May 2020

Annual estimates of travel and tourism visits to the UK (of less than 12 months' duration) and associated earnings and expenditure between the UK and the rest of the world.

[Overseas travel and tourism, provisional: April to June 2020](#)

Bulletin | Released 9 November 2020

Visits to the UK by overseas residents, visits abroad by UK residents and estimates of spending by travellers, using administrative sources of passenger travel data.

[Departing passenger survey | UK Civil Aviation Authority](#)

Web page

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has undertaken surveys of departing air passengers for over 50 years to help better understand some of the many complex drivers impacting passenger demand for air services to /from and throughout the UK.