

Statistical bulletin

Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain: 17 December 2021

Indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey covering the period 1 to 12 December to understand the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on people, households and communities in Great Britain.

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Release date:
17 December 2021

Next release:
7 January 2022

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1 . Main points

Throughout the period of 1 to 12 December 2021, based on adults in Great Britain:

- The proportion of adults reporting they wore a face covering when outside their home in the past seven days increased to 94% (up from 84% in the previous period from 18 to 28 November 2021), with the greatest increase seen in England (94%, up from 83%) following the [announcement](#) making face coverings mandatory in shops, on public transport, and in other settings from 30 November 2021.
- Since this announcement, most adults (88%) reported wearing a face covering often or always while shopping (up from 71% in the previous period) and 84% said they wore one the whole time while travelling on public transport (up from 70% in the previous period).
- There has also been a significant increase in the proportion of adults who noticed others wearing face coverings compared with the previous period: 47% said that everyone or almost everyone was wearing a face covering when shopping (up from 19%) and 45% said the same for public transport (up from 21%).
- Around half of adults (46%) reported having received two coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccines and a booster, compared with 34% in the previous period (18 to 28 November 2021).
- The majority of adults who had received two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine, but not yet a booster, said they would be very likely or fairly likely (89%) to have a booster vaccine if offered to them, while 5% said they would be very unlikely or fairly unlikely to have it if offered.
- Prior to the recent approval of mandatory use of the NHS COVID pass in some venues in England, fewer than 1 in 10 (8%) adults had been asked to show proof of COVID-19 vaccination or a recent negative COVID-19 test in the past seven days (excluding for travel abroad), most commonly to attend a theatre or comedy performance (25%), a work or training event (21%), an indoor concert (17%), a care home (13%) or a nightclub or bar (11%).
- Over the Christmas period, around 6 in 10 adults (62%) reported they are planning to visit family or friends in their homes, while around 5 in 10 (48%) plan to have family or friends visit them in their home, though 8 in 10 (80%) are planning to stay at home if feeling unwell to help reduce the spread of COVID-19.
- Around 7 in 10 working adults (72%) reported travelling to work at some point in the past seven days, while around 3 in 10 (32%) worked from home at some point, with over a third of all working adults (37%) reporting that compared with before the pandemic, they are now more likely to work from home if they have a cold.
- Around 4 in 10 adults (39%) reported they do not expect life to return to normal for more than one year (a rise from 18% in a similar period last year, 2 to 6 December 2020), while 56% of adults were very or somewhat worried about the impact of the pandemic on their lives (a fall from 67% in a similar period last year).

Estimates included in this release are based on data collected between 1 and 12 December 2021, prior to and during which new measures against the Omicron variant were introduced. Changes to guidance are specified in relevant sections throughout this release. See [here](#) for the latest guidance in England, Wales, and Scotland.

2 . Social impacts of coronavirus

Face coverings

Rules on face coverings varied across [England](#), [Scotland](#) and [Wales](#) during this period (1 to 12 December). As of [30 November](#), face coverings were made compulsory in shops and many other indoor settings, including banks, post offices and hairdressers in England. From 10 December, this was extended to almost all indoor settings. In Scotland and Wales, wearing a face covering was legally required on public transport and in many indoor settings.

Most adults (94%) in Great Britain reported they wore a face covering when outside their home in the past seven days: 94% in England (83% in the previous period, 18 to 28 November), 94% in Wales (92% in the previous period) and 98% in Scotland (97% in the previous period).

This proportion appeared to increase with age, reported by 90% of those aged 16 to 29 years, 95% of those aged 30 to 49 years, 95% of those aged 50 to 69 years, and 96% of those aged 70 years and over.

Among those who left home to shop in the past seven days, 88% of adults reported wearing a face covering often or always, while almost half (47%) reported seeing everyone or almost everyone wearing a face covering when doing so.

Among those who travelled on public transport in the past seven days, 84% of adults reported wearing a face covering for the whole journey, while over 4 in 10 (45%) reported seeing everyone or almost everyone wearing a face covering while doing so.

Among those who had been inside a restaurant, café, or bar in the past seven days, around 1 in 3 (28%) reported often or always wearing a face covering when doing so. At the same time, around 1 in 5 (19%) reported seeing everyone or almost everyone wearing a face covering in these settings.

The majority of adults (90%) reported they felt wearing a face covering was important or very important in slowing the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) (85% in the previous period, 18 to 28 November). This proportion appeared to increase with age; 85% of those aged 16 to 29 years, 88% of those aged 30 to 49 years, 92% of those aged 50 to 69 years, and 95% of those aged 70 years and over reported this.

Social distancing

Around 40% of adults reported they always or often maintained social distancing when outside their home in the past seven days, which was similar to the previous period (39%).

Most adults (87%) reported they felt social distancing was important or very important in slowing the spread of COVID-19 (unchanged from the previous period).

Physical contact outside and inside the home

Almost 6 in 10 adults (57%) reported they avoided physical contact with others outside their home in the past seven days (56% in the previous period).

When friends and family had come into their home, the most common actions adults reported to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 were:

- washing hands regularly (32%; unchanged from the previous period)
- opening windows or doors (20%; 21% in the previous period)
- maintaining social distancing (17%; 18% in the previous period)
- cleaning touch points (13%; 14% in the previous period)

Over 4 in 10 adults (45%) reported friends and family had not come into their home in the past seven days, similar to the previous period (43%).

Self-isolation

The proportion of adults who reported self-isolating in the past seven days was 5%, up slightly from the two previous periods (4% during 18 to 28 November, and 3% during 3 to 14 November). The main reasons the adults self-isolated were:

- having been in contact with someone who had tested positive for COVID-19 (29%)
- having tested positive for COVID-19 (23%)
- being worried about catching COVID-19 (16%)

Personal well-being measures

Personal well-being measures in this period were broadly similar to those in the previous period. Life satisfaction, feeling that the things done in life are worthwhile, and happiness all fell slightly, while anxiety increased somewhat from the previous period. The personal well-being measures for this period were:

- life satisfaction: 7.0; 7.1 in the previous period (6.8 in a similar period last year, 2 to 6 December 2020)
- feeling that the things done in life are worthwhile: 7.3; 7.4 in the previous period (7.3 in a similar period last year)
- happiness: 7.0; 7.1 in the previous period (6.8 in a similar period last year)
- anxiety: 4.0; 3.8 in the previous period (4.1 in a similar period last year)

Return to normal

Of all adults, 7% reported that they expected life to return to normal in less than six months (unchanged from the previous period, and down from 28% in a similar period last year). Around 4 in 10 (39%) reported that they expect life to return to normal in more than a year (33% in the previous period, and an increase from 18% in a similar period last year), while around 1 in 7 (14%) said that they never expect this to happen (16% in the previous period, and 4% in a similar period last year).

Impact on life

Among all adults, more than half (56%) were very or somewhat worried about the effect that the pandemic is having on their lives (47% in the previous period, and 67% in a similar period last year). Meanwhile, around 1 in 6 (16%) reported that they are only somewhat unworried or not worried at all about the impact on their lives (20% in the previous period, and 12% in a similar period last year).

Location of work

Estimates are based on data collected prior to updated work-from-home guidance in [England](#), introduced on 13 December. Work-from-home guidance remained in place in [Wales](#) and [Scotland](#).

Among working adults:

- around 7 in 10 (72%) reported travelling to work at some point in the past seven days (71% in the previous period)
- more than 3 in 10 (32%) reported working from home at some point in the past seven days (29% in the previous period)
- around 1 in 5 (18%) reported both working from home and travelling to work in the past seven days (15% in the previous period)
- almost 4 in 10 (37%) reported that, compared with before the pandemic, they are more likely to work from home if they have a cold (33% in the previous period)

3 . Coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccinations

Estimates are based on data collected prior to the change in rules from 15 December for visiting certain venues and events in [England](#), which now require proof of vaccination, a recent negative coronavirus (COVID-19) test or exemption from vaccination.

In this period, we asked adults about their likelihood of having a COVID-19 booster vaccine, the likelihood of children aged 12 to 15 years living in their household being vaccinated, and whether they had been required to provide proof of their COVID-19 vaccination status to attend any settings in the last seven days.

COVID-19 booster vaccine

Almost half of adults (46%) reported having received two COVID-19 vaccinations and a booster, compared with 34% in the previous period (18 to 28 November 2021). Among adults who have received two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine but not yet a booster, around 9 in 10 (89%) said they would be very likely or fairly likely to have a booster COVID-19 vaccine if offered to them. Meanwhile, 5% said they would be very unlikely or fairly unlikely to have a booster vaccine if offered.

Of those who have received two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine, but not yet a booster, the proportion of respondents who were very or fairly likely to have a booster vaccine appeared to increase with age, with the exception of adults aged 70 years and over. Older adults were prioritised in the booster vaccination rollout and, at the time of this survey, 95% of those aged 70 years and over reported they had already received a booster (92% in the previous period). Of those remaining, 74% said they were very or fairly likely to have one (91% in the previous period). This drop suggests that older adults who have not received a booster may have deep-rooted concerns about having it.

Among other age groups:

- around two-thirds (70%) of 50- to 69-year-olds had received a booster vaccine (42% in the previous period), while 94% of this group who had not received a booster reported they were very or fairly likely to have it
- under 1 in 10 (9%) of 16- to 29-year-olds had received a booster vaccine (7% in the previous period), while 84% of this group who had not received a booster reported they were very or fairly likely to have it
- under 1 in 4 (23%) of 30- to 49-year-olds had received a booster vaccine (14% in the previous period), while 91% of those who had not received a booster reported they were very or fairly likely to have it

The most common reasons respondents gave for being very or fairly unlikely to have the booster vaccine if offered were:

- thinking the booster vaccine would not offer them any extra protection (58%)
- being worried about long-term effects on their health (47%)
- thinking the first and second vaccine would be enough to keep them safe (44%)
- being worried about having a bad reaction to the booster jab (30%)

COVID-19 vaccination for children aged 12 to 15 years

Of all adults with a child aged between 12 and 15 years living in their household, half (50%) said the child had already received a COVID-19 vaccine. Just under one-third (30%) reported the child would be very likely or fairly likely to receive it, a slight increase from 27% in the previous period, while around 1 in 10 (13%) reported the child would be very unlikely or fairly unlikely to receive it, similar to the previous period (12%).

Proof of COVID-19 vaccination

Among adults in Great Britain, 8% had been asked to show proof of COVID-19 vaccination (excluding when travelling abroad) in the past seven days. The most frequently reported settings where adults were asked for proof of vaccination or a recent negative COVID-19 test in order to attend were:

- a theatre or comedy performance (25%)
- a work or training event (21%)
- an indoor concert (17%)
- a care home (13%)
- a nightclub or bar (11%)

The estimates presented in Section 3 are based on self-reports from a sample of adults and may differ from [official administrative data](#) on the number of individuals, including children aged 12 to 15 years, who have received COVID-19 vaccines and booster vaccines in Great Britain and its constituent countries.

4 . Plans for Christmas

In this period (1 to 12 December), we asked adults about their travel and social plans for Christmas, actions they will take to help reduce the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19), and spending habits with respect to buying and pre-ordering items for Christmas.

The most frequently reported travel and social activities planned over the Christmas period were:

- to visit family or friends in their homes (62%)
- to have family or friends visit me in my home (48%)
- to meet up with family or friends in restaurants, pubs, bars or cafes (34%)
- to visit a Christmas market (22%)

The most commonly reported actions, if any, that adults are planning to take to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 over the Christmas period were:

- to stay at home if feeling unwell (80%)
- to wash their hands regularly (79%)
- to socially distance where possible (71%)
- to wear a face covering (71%)

Of all adults, only 19% reported that they had bought items for Christmas that they would normally buy later in the year, while over three-quarters (78%) said that they had not bought or pre-ordered any items for Christmas earlier than normal.

Among those adults who stated that they had bought or pre-ordered items for Christmas, the most commonly reported items purchased were:

- food (61%)
- toys (48%)
- clothes, shoes or accessories (42%)
- drinks (33%)

5 . Goods shortages

In this period, we continued to ask adults whether they had experienced shortages of any goods at any time in the past two weeks. Just over 3 in 10 (31%) adults reported experiencing shortages (36% in the previous period).

Food

Around 1 in 10 (13%) reported they had not been able to buy essential food because it was not available, down from 17% in the previous period. When food shopping, just over 6 in 10 (61%) reported experiencing some differences compared with the usual. The most commonly reported differences were:

- less variety in the shops (40%)
- items needed were not available, but a replacement was found (20%)
- spending more than usual to get what I normally buy (20%)
- items needed were not available, and a replacement could not be found (16%)

Medicine

Around 1 in 5 (22%) adults who had tried to buy medicine or get a prescription reported experiencing some differences compared with the usual (27% in the previous period). The most commonly reported differences were:

- having to wait longer for their prescription (13%)
- items needed were not available, but a replacement could be found (4%)
- having to go to more pharmacies to find what they needed (3%)
- items needed were not available, and a replacement could not be found (3%)

6 . Social impacts on Great Britain data

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

Dataset | Released 17 December 2021

Indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) to understand the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on people, households, and communities in Great Britain. Includes breakdowns by age, sex, and region.

[Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain: Christmas plans and shopping](#)

Dataset | Released on 17 December 2021

Data from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) on the ways in which people are planning for Christmas, steps taken to help reduce the spread of COVID-19, and spending behaviours, covering the period 1 to 12 December 2021.

[Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain: Personal experience of shortage of goods](#)

Dataset | Released on 17 December 2021

Data from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) on whether people experienced shortage of goods such as food, medicine, and fuel when shopping, covering the period 1 to 12 December 2021.

7 . Measuring the data

This release contains data and indicators from a module being undertaken through the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) to understand the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on British society.

Breakdowns by age, sex, region and country, including [confidence intervals](#) for the estimates, are contained in the [Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain dataset](#).

Where changes in results from previous weeks are presented in this bulletin, associated confidence intervals should be used to assess the [statistical significance](#) of the differences.

Sampling and weighting

In the period between 1 to 12 December, we sampled 4,496 households. These were randomly selected from those that had previously completed the Labour Market Survey (LMS) or OPN. The responding sample contained 3,276 individuals, representing a 73% response rate. This sample size is slightly smaller than in previous periods to help ensure the survey remains sustainable.

Survey weights were applied to make estimates representative of the population (based on June 2021 population estimates). Further information on the survey design and quality can be found in the [Opinions and Lifestyle Survey Quality and Methodology Information](#) (QMI).

8 . Related links

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

Web page | Updated as data become available

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

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) latest insights](#)

Web page | Updated as data become available

An interactive tool to explore the latest data and trends about the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and other sources.

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) harmonisation guidance](#)

Webpage | Updated frequently

This page provides harmonisation guidance on how best to collect data about the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Users can also find a bank of questions from multiple Office for National Statistics (ONS) surveys related to COVID-19 to be used in other surveys to further support harmonisation and questionnaire development. This bank also provides users with an understanding of what data ONS have in relation to the coronavirus pandemic.

[Coronavirus and changing attitudes towards vaccination, England: 7 to 16 September 2021](#)

Bulletin | Released 9 November 2021

Changes in uptake and attitudes towards the coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccines, among adults who previously reported vaccine hesitancy.

[Coronavirus and behaviour of the vaccinated population after being in contact with a positive case in England: 25 to 30 October 2021](#)

Bulletin | Released 18 November 2021

Behaviour of fully vaccinated individuals not required to self-isolate after being in contact with a positive case of coronavirus (COVID-19), from the COVID Test and Trace Contacts Behavioural Insights Survey. Experimental Statistics.

[Eight in ten adults think social distancing is important – but four in ten actually do it](#)

Article | Released 22 October 2021

Data and analysis on the percentage of adults in Great Britain practicing preventative measures to slow the spread of coronavirus and how important these measures are considered to be.

[Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators: 16 December 2021](#)

Bulletin | Released 16 December 2021

Early experimental data and analysis on economic activity and social change in the UK. These faster indicators are created using rapid response surveys, novel data sources, and experimental methods.

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Infection Survey, characteristics of people testing positive for COVID-19, UK: 1 December 2021](#)

Bulletin | Released 1 December 2021

Characteristics of people testing positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) from the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Survey. This survey is being delivered in partnership with the University of Oxford, the University of Manchester, Public Health England, and Wellcome Trust. This study is jointly led by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) working with the University of Oxford and Lighthouse Laboratories to collect and test samples.

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Infection Survey: antibody and vaccination data, UK: 8 December 2021](#)

Bulletin | Released 8 December 2021

Antibody and vaccination data by UK country and regions in England from the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Survey. This analysis has been produced in partnership with the University of Oxford, the University of Manchester, Public Health England, and Wellcome Trust. This study is jointly led by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) working with the University of Oxford and Lighthouse Laboratories to collect and test samples.

[Coronavirus and depression in adults, Great Britain: July to August 2021](#)

Article | Released 1 October 2021

Analysis of the proportion of the adult population of Great Britain experiencing some form of depression in summer 2021, based on the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN). Includes analysis by age, sex, and other characteristics and comparisons with early 2021, 2020 and pre-pandemic estimates.

