

Statistical bulletin

Attitudes towards COVID-19 among passengers arriving into the UK: June 2021 to November 2021

Monthly figures on the attitudes of UK and overseas residents arriving in and departing the UK towards COVID-19 restrictions and guidance, and the proportion who had been vaccinated. This analysis used unweighted results from the International Passenger Survey and the Civil Aviation Authority's Passenger Survey for the period covering June to November 2021 (experimental statistics).

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1 . Main points

- In November 2021, most UK residents (92%) and overseas residents (93%) arriving into the UK said they had received at least one dose of a coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine.
- Most UK residents arriving into the UK said they found following overseas coronavirus restrictions either easy, or very easy to follow (83% in November 2021); similarly, most overseas residents said that they understood UK coronavirus restrictions either quite well, or very well (95%).
- In November 2021, 83% of UK residents and 90% of overseas residents said they found COVID-19 testing prior to arrival “quite important” or “very important”.
- In November 2021, three-quarters of both UK and overseas residents said that the wearing of face coverings and availability of hand sanitiser during their journey made them feel safe.

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.](#)

Data from the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) Passenger Survey is included in this month’s publication. The CAA interviews passengers departing from UK airports to domestic or international destinations. Only data for passengers travelling internationally have been included in this bulletin. Passengers are interviewed at the airport departure gates.

International Passenger Survey (IPS) findings contain data for passengers arriving into 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 CAA data. You can find more information about the two surveys and how they are conducted in [Section 8](#) and [Section 9](#).

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

In November 2021, more than 9 in 10 travellers arriving or departing from the UK had received at least one dose of a coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine. Among those arriving into the UK, 92% of UK residents and 93% of overseas residents had received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) Passenger Survey found that 98% of UK residents and 99% of overseas residents interviewed departing the UK had received at least one dose of a vaccine.

The [UK Coronavirus Dashboard on the GOV.UK website](#) shows 89% of all UK residents had received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine by 30 November 2021. Older UK residents arriving into the UK are still more likely to have been vaccinated than younger UK residents, aligning with the progress of the vaccine rollout into the UK (Figure 1). Respondents in the older age groups were more likely to have received their vaccine earlier during the first phase of the vaccine rollout (December 2020 to April 2021). The amount of people who report that they have had at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine has remained stable among older age groups from August 2021 but has 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, June to November 2021

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

In November 2021, 83% of UK residents returning from abroad said that they found it “easy” or “very easy” to follow the coronavirus (COVID-19) restriction information for the country that they had visited. This has remained consistent since February 2021 (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Most UK residents arriving into the UK find it easy or very easy to follow overseas coronavirus restrictions

Proportion of interviewed UK residents arriving into the UK categorised by how difficult they found it to follow overseas coronavirus restrictions, by month, UK, June to November 2021

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In November 2021, a new question was added to the International Passenger Survey (IPS). This question asked UK residents who found it either “difficult” or “very difficult” to follow overseas coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions why that was the case.

The three main reasons UK residents found the coronavirus restrictions either “difficult” or “very difficult” to follow were: “I found them difficult to follow, or overly restrictive” (23%), “They kept changing over time” (20%) and “Information was not accessible” (13%).

The majority of overseas residents arriving into the UK said they understood UK coronavirus restrictions either “quite well” or “very well”. This is a trend that has remained consistent since March 2021 (Figure 3). In November 2021, 29% of overseas residents said that they understood UK restrictions “quite well”, and 66% said they understood them “very well”. Very few said they did not understand restrictions very well (2%) or did not understand them at all (1%).

Figure 3: Most overseas residents arriving into the UK understand UK coronavirus restrictions very well or quite well

Proportion of interviewed overseas residents arriving into the UK, categorised by how well they understood UK coronavirus restrictions, by month, UK, June to November 2021

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In November 2021, 96% of overseas residents said that they were “very confident” or “somewhat confident” accessing information about the UK’s coronavirus restrictions. Only 2% said that they felt “not at all confident” or “not very confident” in accessing information about the UK’s coronavirus restrictions. These proportions have remained consistent since February 2021 (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Most overseas residents arriving into the UK are very confident or somewhat confident accessing information about UK coronavirus restrictions

Proportion of interviewed overseas residents arriving into the UK, categorised by how confident they are accessing information about UK coronavirus restrictions, by month, UK, June to November 2021

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In November 2021, the IPS included a new question. This question asked overseas residents who were either “not at all confident” or “not very confident” in accessing UK coronavirus restrictions how they found out about them. The main way overseas residents found out about the restrictions was on the internet, 46% answered “Myself, online”.

4 . Attitudes towards COVID-19 testing

Most travellers arriving into the UK think that having a coronavirus (COVID-19) test prior to arrival is either “very important” or “quite important” for safety. In November 2021, 83% of UK residents and 90% of overseas residents said they thought COVID-19 testing prior to arrival is “quite” or “very important” (Figure 5).

However, the proportion of travellers arriving into the UK who thought COVID-19 testing is “very important” fell from around three-quarters of UK residents in February 2021 (73%) to just under half in August 2021 (45%), before increasing to 51% in November 2021. While the proportion of overseas residents who thought COVID-19 testing was “very important” also fell during this period, it has not fallen below half of all travellers interviewed. In November, 56% of overseas residents said that they thought COVID-19 testing prior to travel was “very important”.

Figure 5: UK and overseas residents arriving into the UK said coronavirus testing was quite or very important for safety

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, June to November 2021

Download the data

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5 . Attitudes towards prevention measures

Since February 2021, three-quarters of travellers arriving into the UK said that the wearing of face coverings and the provision of hand sanitiser made them feel safe during their journey. In November 2021, 78% of UK and 82% of overseas residents said that the wearing of face coverings made them feel safe during their journey into the UK (Figure 6). The availability of hand sanitiser during their journey also made UK and overseas residents feel safe (both at 77%).

The Civil Aviation Authority's (CAA's) Passenger Survey asked travellers leaving the UK whether they felt satisfied with the number of travellers wearing face coverings at the airport. The majority of UK (80%) and overseas (79%) 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 the wearing of face coverings or the use of hand sanitiser beyond this date and most major UK airports and airlines have chosen to continue to do so. A new category for face coverings, “Face masks not worn by others”, and hand sanitiser, “None available”, were added to the International Passenger Survey (IPS) in August 2021. You can [find out more in Section 8](#).

Figure 6: 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, June to November 2021

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Figure 7: 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 to November 2021

Download the data

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6 . Attitudes towards COVID-19 among passengers arriving into the UK data

[Attitudes towards COVID-19 among passengers arriving into the UK](#)

Dataset | Released 11 January 2022

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

Results from the [International Passenger Survey](#) for the period covering June to November 2021 includes monthly figures on the attitudes of UK and overseas residents arriving into the UK towards social distancing, wearing face coverings, and COVID-19 restrictions and the proportion who had been vaccinated. This data are unweighted (experimental statistics).

Results from the Civil Aviation Authority's Passenger Survey for the period covering June to November 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 are unweighted (experimental statistics).

[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.

7 . 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 who are resident overseas for 12 months or more and 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 in "green", "amber" and "red" lists. It is important to note that the categorisation of countries has changed throughout this period of June to November 2021. 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 simplified to a single red list of countries, which is reviewed every three weeks.

Vaccine rollout

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

8 . 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 that have been added to the IPS. These questions measure 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 questions about coronavirus were asked of all respondents arriving into the UK with some exceptions.

The following three 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?"
- "If you weren't confident in accessing UK restrictions, how did you find out about them?"

The following questions are only asked of UK residents:

- "Overall, how easy or difficult did you find it to follow Coronavirus (COVID 19) regulations during your stay overseas?"
- "If you found it difficult to understand overseas restrictions, why was that the case?"

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; it was not possible to interview on board the Eurotunnel because of coronavirus restrictions. Overall, sea and tunnel numbers are much lower than they were before the coronavirus pandemic, and show a 75% drop in passengers.

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

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

Methods used to produce these findings - Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) Passenger Survey

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

Questions asked by the CAA are similar to those asked in the IPS, but are not identical, therefore caution should be applied when comparing the CAA data with that collected by the IPS. CAA results are presented from June 2021, when data collection commenced.

The CAA have published their methodology, outlining their sampling and validation methodologies. The composition of the samples has been analysed and is broadly similar with the IPS. Both the CAA and IPS use unweighted data, therefore caution should be applied when interpreting the results, as outlined in Section 10.

9 . Strengths and Limitations

The International Passenger Survey (IPS) sample used for both UK and overseas residents arriving into the UK across the study (June to November 2021) totals 55,559. 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 in and out of the UK is subject to IPS sampling. If a person aged under 16 years was sampled, they were not asked the coronavirus 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 Civil Aviation Authority Passenger Survey (CAA) and IPS are broadly similar. The CAA totals shown and those used to calculate percentages include all overseas departures (international visitors departing the UK and UK residents 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. This means that 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 statistically significant differences.

For the CAA data, 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.

10 . 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.

[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 2021](#)

Bulletin | Released 29 October 2021

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

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

Web page | Updated regularly

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.

