

Statistical bulletin

Coronavirus and self-isolation after testing positive in England: 4 to 8 January 2022

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.

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1 . Main points

- The data collected between 4 and 8 January 2022 show that the majority (79%) of respondents who tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) fully adhered to self-isolation requirements, broadly in line with the levels reported for September (78%), November (75%) and December 2021 (74%).
- Adherence to self-isolation requirements was statistically significantly lower between the onset of symptoms requiring self-isolation and receiving a positive test result (76%), compared with the 24 hours following a positive result (97%) and the remainder of the self-isolation period (91%).
- Almost half (49%) of respondents were concerned about the new Omicron variant.
- A quarter (26%) of respondents experienced difficulty accessing COVID-19 tests before taking their test.
- Of those who were not retired, 25% reported they lost income as a result of isolating, and 17% reported that self-isolating meant they are likely to lose their job or miss out on work.
- Approximately one-third (34%) of those who tested positive reported that self-isolation had a negative effect on their well-being and mental health.

The statistics presented are Experimental Statistics, so care needs to be taken when interpreting them. The survey has a relatively small number of respondents (792) and the behaviour of respondents during self-isolation is self-reported.

Statistician's comment

“Once again, a majority of those testing positive for COVID-19 are following self-isolation requirements.

“Today’s data reveal more about Omicron, with almost half of respondents reporting they were concerned about the variant.

“We can also see the negative impact of self-isolation in the data: of those who are not retired, 25% reported they lost income as a result of isolating.”

Tim Gibbs, Head of the Public Services Analysis Team, Office for National Statistics

Follow the Public Services Analysis team on Twitter: [@HughStick](https://twitter.com/HughStick)

2 . Testing behaviours and experiences

On 22 December 2021, the self-isolation advice for people in England who tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) changed. Those who tested positive could end self-isolation after seven days following two negative lateral flow tests (LFTs) taken 24 hours apart on days 6 and 7 of their self-isolation. Respondents in this survey will have been subject to these rules.

As of 17 January 2022, the self-isolation period reduced to five days on the condition that the individual has two negative LFTs taken on day 5 and day 6 and does not have a high temperature. This policy change occurred after the data collection period.

The data presented in this bulletin were collected from individuals who had tested positive for COVID-19 and had recently reached or were nearing the end of their self-isolation period. The individuals sampled began isolating on 23 December 2021 and 26 December 2021. Because of the timing of the change in policy, some respondents may not have been aware of the changes and therefore may have followed the previous 10-day self-isolation advice.

More information on identifying this group of people and collecting the data can be found in the [Glossary](#) and [Measuring the data](#) sections.

Between 4 and 8 January 2022, 1 in 10 (10%) respondents reported testing positive for the new Omicron variant, and the majority (83%) reported that they did not know if they had been infected with Omicron.

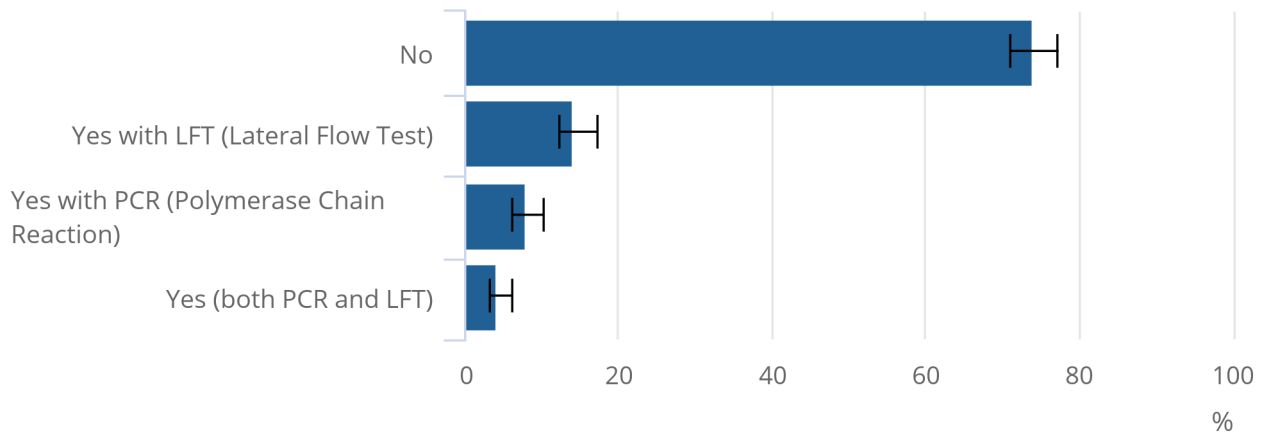
Before taking their test, approximately one-quarter (26%) of respondents experienced difficulty accessing COVID-19 tests, either LFTs, polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests, or both. Of those who confirmed they were positive by conducting a test at home (41% of all respondents), 43% said this test was part of taking daily rapid LFTs. More information on taking daily rapid LFTs can be found in [Rapid lateral flow coronavirus \(COVID-19\) tests](#).

Figure 1: While most respondents had no difficulty accessing COVID-19 tests, 26% had difficulty accessing LFT, PCR, or both tests

Percentage of all respondents reporting whether they had difficulty accessing COVID-19 tests, England, 4 to 8 January 2022

Figure 1: While most respondents had no difficulty accessing COVID-19 tests, 26% had difficulty accessing LFT, PCR, or both tests

Percentage of all respondents reporting whether they had difficulty accessing COVID-19 tests, England, 4 to 8 January 2022



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

Notes:

1. The categories “Don’t know” and “Prefer not to say” are not included because of low sample counts.
2. The error bars show 95% confidence intervals highlighting the degree of uncertainty around an estimate. Non-overlapping confidence intervals suggest a statistically significant difference between groups (See [Glossary](#)).

The majority (95%) of all respondents were aware of the new government guidance for seven-day self-isolation. Of those who were aware of this guidance, 84% took an LFT on day 6 and 7 with the intention of leaving isolation if they were both negative. Of those who were aware of the new guidance but did not take an LFT on day 6 and 7, a third (32%) reported that the reason was they “did not want to”.

The majority (91%) of all respondents reported that they would take an LFT on day 6 and 7 of their self-isolation period if they tested positive for COVID-19 in the future.

More about coronavirus

- Find the latest on [coronavirus \(COVID-19\) in the UK](#).
- [Explore the latest coronavirus data](#) 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](#).

3 . Adherence to self-isolation requirements

The majority (70%) of those testing positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) fully understood the self-isolation requirements regarding permitted reasons to leave the home. Most respondents (79%) fully adhered to these requirements during their self-isolation period. More information on defining understanding of and adherence to requirements can be found in [the Coronavirus and self-isolation after testing positive in England methodology](#).

Of those who were aware of the new guidance introduced on 22 December 2021 and took a lateral flow test (LFT) on day 6 and 7 of their isolation, the majority (79%) were adherent to self-isolation requirements. Of those who were aware of the new guidance but did not take a LFT on day 6 and 7 of their isolation, 75% fully adhered to self-isolation requirements. There was no [statistically significant](#) difference in adherence between these groups.

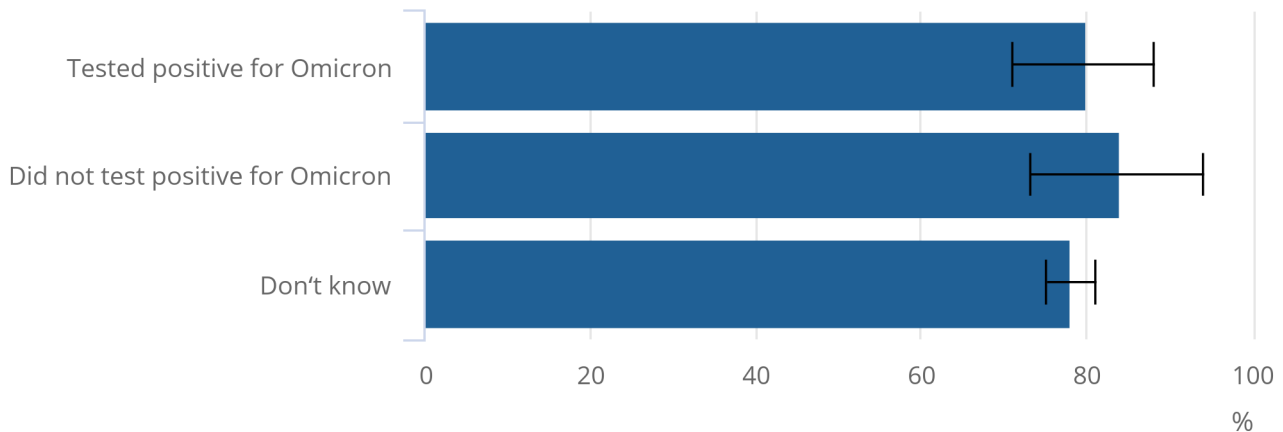
Of those who tested positive for the Omicron variant, 80% fully adhered to self-isolation requirements. Of those who did not test positive for the Omicron variant, 84% adhered to self-isolation requirements. Of those who did not know whether they tested positive for the Omicron variant, 78% adhered to self-isolation requirements. There were no [statistically significant](#) differences in adherence between these groups.

Figure 2: Adherence to self-isolation requirements was similar regardless of whether the respondents knew they had tested positive for the Omicron variant

Percentage of those who fully adhered to self-isolation requirements, by whether they tested positive for the Omicron variant, England, 4 to 8 January 2022

Figure 2: Adherence to self-isolation requirements was similar regardless of whether the respondents knew they had tested positive for the Omicron variant

Percentage of those who fully adhered to self-isolation requirements, by whether they tested positive for the Omicron variant, England, 4 to 8 January 2022



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

Notes:

1. The category “Prefer not to say” is not included because of low sample counts.
2. The error bars show 95% confidence intervals highlighting the degree of uncertainty around an estimate. Non-overlapping confidence intervals suggest a statistically significant difference between groups (See [Glossary](#)).

4 . Well-being and financial stability

Approximately one-third (34%) of those who tested positive reported that self-isolation had a negative effect on their well-being and mental health.

Average (mean) life satisfaction of respondents was 7.9 (out of 10). Of those who were aware of the new government guidance introduced on 22 December 2021 and took the day 6 and 7 tests, average life satisfaction was 7.9. Of those who were aware of the new guidance but did not take the day 6 and 7 tests, average life satisfaction was 7.6. There was no [statistically significant](#) difference in average life satisfaction between these groups.

Almost half (49%) of respondents agreed that they were concerned about the new Omicron variant of coronavirus (COVID-19). Of those who were concerned about the Omicron variant, 80% of respondents were adherent to self-isolation requirements. Of those who were not concerned about the Omicron variant, 77% of respondents were adherent to self-isolation requirements. Adherence to self-isolation requirements was not [statistically significantly](#) different between these groups.

Of those testing positive for COVID-19 who were not retired, 25% reported they lost income as a result of isolating, and 17% reported that self-isolating meant they were likely to lose their job or miss out on work.

Table 1: Indicators of well-being and financial stability during self-isolation
England, 2021 to 2022

	1 to 6 Nov 2021	29 Nov to 4 Dec 2021	4 to 8 Jan 2022
Of those who were not retired, percentage reporting having lost income as a result of self-isolation	30%	27%	25%
Of those who were not retired, percentage reporting that self-isolation meant they were likely to lose their job or miss out on work	15%	15%	17%
Percentage reporting self-isolation had a negative effect on their well-being and mental health	34%	33%	34%
Average life satisfaction (out of 10)	8.0	7.9	7.9

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

Notes

1. Percentages (and average life satisfaction) were not statistically significantly different between these periods.
2. If not specified, percentages are of those who tested positive.

5 . Self-isolation after testing positive data

[Coronavirus and self-isolation after testing positive in England](#)

Dataset | Released 26 January 2022

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.

6 . Glossary

Self-isolation

Self-isolation refers to not leaving your home because you have, or might have, coronavirus (COVID-19). It is a legal requirement to self-isolate if you test positive for COVID-19. In addition to staying at home, if you are self-isolating you should not have visitors unless the purpose of the visit is to provide essential care. At the time of data collection, your self-isolation period includes the day your symptoms started (or the day you had the positive test result if you do not have symptoms) and the next 7 to 10 full days. If you still have symptoms after 10 days, you must continue self-isolating until they are gone.

More information can be found in the [NHS guidance on when and how to self-isolate](#).

On 22 December 2021, the self-isolation advice for people in England who tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) changed. Those who tested positive could end self-isolation after seven days following two negative lateral flow tests (LFTs) taken 24 hours apart on days 6 and 7 of their self-isolation. Respondents in this survey will have been subject to these rules. As of 17 January 2022, the self-isolation period reduced to five days on the condition that the individual has two negative LFTs taken on day 5 and day 6 and does not have a high temperature. This policy change occurred after the data collection period.

More information can be found in [Self-isolation for COVID-19 cases reduced from 10 days to 7 days following negative Lateral Flow Device \(LFD\) tests](#) and [Self-isolation for those with COVID-19 can end after 5 full days following 2 negative LFD tests](#).

Symptoms

Symptoms that require an individual to self-isolate prior to a positive test result are a high temperature, a new continuous cough, or loss of sense of smell or taste.

Symptoms reported by respondents that do not require self-isolation if experienced without a high temperature, a new continuous cough, or loss of sense of smell or taste are:

- shortness of breath or trouble breathing
- runny or stuffy nose
- muscle or body aches
- headaches
- sore throat
- fatigue
- vomiting
- diarrhoea
- severe stomach pain

Statistical significance

The term "significant" refers to statistically significant changes or differences. Significance has been determined using the 95% confidence intervals, where instances of non-overlapping confidence intervals between estimates indicate the difference is unlikely to have arisen from random fluctuation. More information is available on our [uncertainty pages](#).

7 . Measuring the data

Survey information

The latest quality and methodology information on data from the COVID Test and Trace Cases Insights Survey can be found in the [Coronavirus and self-isolation after testing positive in England methodology](#).

Estimates for Wave 10

This is the 10th bulletin in this series. The 10th wave of data was collected between 4 and 8 January 2022. The number of respondents was 792.

Respondents were sampled through the Contact Tracing and Advisory Service (CTAS) database, held by NHS Test and Trace, using implicit stratification. Respondents were aged 18 years and over, had tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) and reached day 10 of their self-isolation period between 2 and 5 January 2022.

The majority (95%) of respondents were interviewed between 11 and 14 days after starting their self-isolation. The remaining 5% of respondents were interviewed between 15 and 16 days after starting their self-isolation.

Of the potential respondents who were successfully contacted by an interviewer, the response rate was 59%. When including cases where contact was attempted but not made, the response rate was 13%.

A low response rate can be expected, as the target population may have been unwell with COVID-19 and so less likely to participate.

Percentages in this report are based on weighted counts that are representative of the population of adults (aged 18 years and over) who had tested positive for COVID-19 and began their self-isolation period between 6 December 2021 and 2 January 2022.

8 . Strengths and limitations

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

9 . Related links

[Coronavirus and self-isolation after testing positive in England methodology](#)

Methodology article | Released 4 May 2021

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

[Stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#)

Webpage | Updated 17 January 2022

Guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection.

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

Webpage | Updated as and when data become available

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

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

Blog | Updated as and when data become available

A roundup of the latest data and trends about the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic from the ONS and other sources.

[Coronavirus and self-isolation after being in contact with a positive case in England: 9 to 16 August 2021](#)

Bulletin | Released 8 September 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.

[Coronavirus and behaviour of the vaccinated population after being in contact with a positive case in England: 22 to 27 November 2021](#)

Bulletin | Released 17 December 2021

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