

Statistical bulletin

Attitudes towards COVID-19 among passengers arriving into the UK: July 2021 to December 2021

Monthly figures on the attitudes of UK and overseas residents arriving and departing the UK towards COVID-19 restrictions and guidance and the proportion who had been vaccinated. Unweighted results from the International Passenger Survey and the Civil Aviation Authority's Passenger Survey for the period covering July to December 2021 (experimental statistics).

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1 . Main points

- In December 2021, most UK residents (92%) and overseas residents (89%) arriving in the UK said they had received at least two coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccinations.
- In December 2021, 28% of UK residents and 18% of overseas residents arriving in the UK had received more than two COVID-19 vaccinations.
- Most travellers arriving in the UK continue to think that having a COVID-19 test prior to arrival is either "very important" or "quite important" for safety (87% of UK residents and 92% of overseas residents in December 2021).

This bulletin contains unweighted data. Results are based only on the responses of people interviewed, and do not account for differences in the respondent group compared with all travellers. The results should not be considered indicative of the travelling population as a whole and cannot be compared with weighted data. See [section 7](#).

2 . COVID-19 vaccination among international passengers

In December 2021, 9 in 10 travellers arriving in the UK had received at least two coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccinations (92% of UK and 89% of overseas residents). The percentage of UK residents arriving in the UK who had received more than two COVID-19 vaccinations rose from 11% in November to 28% in December 2021 (Figure 1). There was also an increase in the number of overseas residents arriving in the UK who had received more than two COVID-19 vaccinations (7% in November and 18% in December).

The increase in the percentage of UK residents who had received more than two vaccinations reflects the expansion of the NHS booster programme to all adults aged 18 years or over, with those eligible to have been offered a vaccination by the end of January 2022. This follows the advice given to UK health departments by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) in light of the new Omicron variant.

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) Passenger Survey found similar levels of vaccination to the International Passenger Survey (IPS): 98% of both UK and overseas residents interviewed departing the UK had received at least one vaccination (December 2021).

The [UK Coronavirus dashboard](#) shows 90% of all UK residents had received at least one vaccination by 31 December, with 83% having received two vaccinations and 59% having received a booster or three vaccinations. In line with the vaccine rollout programme, UK residents arriving into the UK in the older age groups were more likely to have received their first vaccine earlier in the year. Proportions in these age groups reporting that they have had at least one vaccination remain stable from August but have increased in younger age groups.

Figure 1: The majority of UK and overseas residents arriving in the UK had received at least one coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination

Proportion of interviewed UK and overseas residents arriving in the UK who had received at least one COVID-19 vaccination by month, UK, July to December 2021

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

The majority of UK residents (83% in December 2021) returning from abroad say that they found it "easy" or "very easy" to follow the coronavirus (COVID-19) restriction information for the country that they had visited (Figure 2). Of those who reported finding it "difficult" or "very difficult" to follow the COVID-19 restrictions, the proportion who said that this was because the information "kept changing over time" almost doubled between November and December (from 20% to 39%). This reason replaced "I found them difficult to follow, or overly restrictive" (23% in November and 19% in December) as the main reason for finding COVID-19 restrictions difficult to follow.

Figure 2: Most UK residents arriving in the UK found it easy or very easy to follow overseas coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions

Proportion of interviewed UK residents arriving in the UK, categorised by how difficult they found it to follow overseas restrictions by month, UK, July to December 2021

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The majority of overseas residents arriving in the UK said they understood UK COVID-19 restrictions well and could confidently access information about the restrictions, a trend that has remained consistent since March 2021. In December 2021, 96% of overseas residents said that they understood UK restrictions "quite well" or "very well", and 96% that they felt "very confident" or "somewhat confident" in accessing UK restrictions.

Only 3% felt not at all confident or not very confident in accessing information about the UK's COVID-19 restrictions; 38% of these respondents accessed the information themselves online.

4 . Attitudes towards prevention measures

Most travellers arriving in the UK think that having a coronavirus (COVID-19) test prior to arrival is either "very important" or "quite important" for safety. In December 2021, 87% of UK residents and 92% of overseas residents said they thought COVID-19 testing prior to arrival is "quite" or "very important" (Figure 3).

However, the proportion of travellers arriving in 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 a half in August (45%) and has stayed consistently around half since (55% in December 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 December, 60% of overseas residents said that they thought COVID-19 testing prior to travel was "very important".

Figure 3: UK and overseas residents arriving in the UK said coronavirus (COVID-19) testing was quite or very important for safety, over time

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

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Travellers continue to feel that the wearing of face coverings and the provision of hand sanitiser made them feel safe during their journey. In December 2021, four-fifths of travellers (80% of UK and 82% of overseas residents) said that the wearing of face coverings made them feel safe during their journey to the UK (Figure 4). Three-quarters of travellers said that the availability of hand sanitiser during their journey also made them feel safe (78% of UK and 77% of overseas residents).

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. In December 2021, the majority of UK (88%) and overseas (86%) residents said they were satisfied or very satisfied (Figure 5).

In England, on 10 December 2021, the [legal requirement](#) to wear face coverings was re-introduced for indoor settings and on public transport, having been previously removed on 19 July 2021. The legal requirement to wear face coverings was then removed on 22 January 2022. However, individual settings can require the wearing of face coverings or the use of hand sanitiser and most major UK airports and airlines have chosen to do so.

Figure 4: The majority of UK and overseas residents arriving in 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, July to December 2021

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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, July to December 2021

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5 . Attitudes towards COVID-19 among passengers arriving in the UK data

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

Dataset | Released 9 February 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 February to December 2021 includes monthly figures on the attitudes of UK and overseas residents arriving in the UK towards social distancing, wearing face coverings, and COVID-19 restrictions and the proportion who had been vaccinated. This data is unweighted (experimental statistics).

Results from the Civil Aviation Authority's Passenger Survey for the period covering July to December 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).

6 . 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 in "green", "amber" and "red" lists. It is important to note that the categorisation of countries has changed throughout the period of July to December 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 simplified to a single red list of countries which is reviewed every 3 weeks.

Vaccine rollout

The rollout of the 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](#).

7 . Measuring the data

Methods used to produce these findings - International Passenger Survey

This bulletin uses data from questions added to the International Passenger Survey (IPS) in February 2021 measuring the attitudes towards and experience of coronavirus (COVID-19) and associated restrictions, among travellers arriving in the UK.

Totals used to calculate percentages include all overseas arrivals (international visitors to the UK and UK residents arriving back in the UK) and exclude travellers leaving the UK. For the purpose of this bulletin, all Crown dependencies have been counted as overseas residents and data from travel via tunnel and sea (except for Dover ferries) have been excluded because of small numbers.

This release will continue to be updated monthly; therefore, in March we will publish data up to January 2022.

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

The Civil Aviation Authority's Passenger Survey (CAA) interviews passengers departing from UK airports to domestic or international destinations. Only the data for passengers travelling internationally have been included in this bulletin to ensure consistency 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 to that collected by the IPS.

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, however caution is advised. Both the CAA and IPS use unweighted data, therefore caution should be applied when interpreting the results.

8 . Strengths and limitations

The International Passenger Survey (IPS) sample used for both UK and overseas residents arriving in the UK across the study (July to December 2021) totals 57,024. Individual breakdowns by residency and month cannot be supplied because of disclosure control of low counts.

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

It is difficult to predict interview numbers as interviews are being conducted under coronavirus restrictions 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 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.

Further information can be found in [Section 10 of the previous release](#).

9 . 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](#)

In depth analysis | 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, UK, provisional: July to September 2021](#)

Bulletin | Released 7 February 2022

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](#)

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.