

Statistical bulletin

Coronavirus and self-isolation after testing positive in England: 28 February to 8 March 2022

Behaviour of individuals advised 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

- Respondents in this survey tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) prior to 24 February 2022, when the legal requirement to self-isolate was removed; interviews took place between 28 February and 8 March 2022, when self-isolation was advised but not legally required.
- The levels of full compliance for this period (64%) are statistically significantly lower than those reported in February 2022 (80%), when self-isolation was a legal requirement.
- Of those who had self-isolated since testing positive but had stopped isolating at the time of interview, around 29% had isolated for 10 days or more.
- Almost all (99%) respondents agreed that it was important to follow self-isolation advice.
- Of those who did not fully follow the advice, 94% reported leaving the house for a non-compliant reason; this was statistically significantly higher than in the previous period (85%), when self-isolation was a legal requirement.
- Almost all (96%) respondents who were in work (full time, part time, or unpaid), or receiving sick pay or unpaid leave from work, reported that their employer was aware that they were advised to self-isolate, despite the removal of the legal obligation to inform employers.

The statistics presented in this bulletin were collected after 24 February 2022, when the legal requirement to self-isolate for those testing positive for COVID-19 in England was removed. However, respondents had tested positive up to two days prior to this [policy change](#).

Statistician's comment

“Now the legal requirement to self-isolate after testing positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) has been removed in England, our data today reveal more about adherence to these rules.

Compliance with self-isolation rules was significantly lower than the level reported in February 2022, when self-isolation was a legal requirement. Despite this, we are seeing that almost all respondents agreed that it was important to follow self-isolation advice.”

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

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2 . Self-isolation after testing positive data

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

Dataset | Released 29 March 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.

3 . Glossary

Self-isolation

Self-isolation refers to not leaving your home because you have, or might have, coronavirus (COVID-19). As of 24 February 2022, it is no longer a legal requirement to self-isolate if you test positive for COVID-19. Respondents in this survey tested positive prior to this policy change and were therefore legally required to self-isolate until up to two days into their isolation period, when the legal requirements changed to guidance.

Until 1 April 2022, adults and children who test positive continue to be advised to stay home and avoid contact with other people for at least five full days, and to follow the guidance until they have received two negative test results on consecutive days. If you are self-isolating, you are advised not to 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 5 to 10 full days. If you still have symptoms after 10 days, you are advised to continue self-isolating until they are gone.

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

Symptoms

Symptoms that indicate an individual should 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 indicate 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](#).

4 . 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 12

This is the 12th bulletin in this series. The 12th wave of data was collected between 28 February and 8 March 2022. The number of respondents was 1,369.

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 six of their self-isolation period between 28 February and 8 March February 2022. The survey was conducted via the telephone and all answers were self-reported.

Following the Prime Minister's announcement that contact tracing would cease from 24 February 2022, the CTAS database stopped being updated beyond this date. The sample was limited to those who had provided a valid phone number and who had been entered onto the CTAS database at the point of sampling.

The majority (80%) of respondents were interviewed between 6 and 10 days after starting their self-isolation. The remaining 20% of respondents were interviewed between 11 and 14 days after starting their self-isolation.

Of the potential respondents who were successfully contacted by an interviewer, the response rate was 64%. When including cases where contact was attempted but not made, the response rate was 19%.

A low response rate can be expected because the target population may have been unwell with COVID-19, and therefore 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 31 January to 24 February 2022.

Experimental statistics

The statistics presented are Experimental Statistics, so care needs to be taken when interpreting them. The survey has a relatively small number of respondents (1,369) and the behaviour of respondents during self-isolation is self-reported.

5 . Strengths and limitations

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

6 . Related links

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

Methodology | 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.

[COVID-19: people with COVID-19 and their contacts](#)

Webpage | Last updated 22 March 2022

Guidance from the UK Health Security Agency for people with coronavirus (COVID-19) and their contacts.

[COVID-19 Response: Living with COVID-19](#)

Webpage | Last updated 23 February 2022

The government's plan for removing the remaining legal restrictions while protecting people most vulnerable to COVID-19 and maintaining resilience.

[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 live 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: 21 to 26 February 2022](#)

Bulletin | Released 14 March 2022

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. Includes analysis of daily rapid lateral flow testing. Experimental Statistics.