

Statistical bulletin

# Coronavirus and self-isolation after testing positive in England: 28 March to 2 April 2022

Behaviour of individuals advised to self-isolate after testing positive for COVID-19, from the COVID-19 Attitudes Study. Includes information on the impact of self-isolation on well-being and finances. Experimental Statistics.

Contact:  
Rebecca Jones  
publicservicesanalysis@ons.gov.  
uk  
+44 1633 456922

Release date:  
10 May 2022

Next release:  
Discontinued

## Notice

### 10 May 2022

This is the last bulletin in the series; because of policy changes we will no longer be collecting data on self-isolation behaviours and attitudes.

# Table of contents

1. [Main points](#)
2. [Self-isolation after testing positive data](#)
3. [Glossary](#)
4. [Measuring the data](#)
5. [Strengths and limitations](#)
6. [Related links](#)

# 1 . Main points

- Respondents in this survey tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) on 22 or 25 March 2022, when self-isolation was advised but not legally required; interviews took place between 28 March and 2 April 2022, during which time new guidance was released.
- The level of full compliance for this period (51%) was in line with that reported in mid-March 2022 (53%) and is statistically significantly lower than those reported in early March 2022 (64%) and February 2022 (80%).
- Around 7 in 10 respondents (67%) had no contact with non-household members, which is in line with the level reported in mid-March 2022 (67%) but is statistically significantly lower than levels reported for early March 2022 (78%) and February 2022 (77%).
- Of those who had self-isolated since testing positive but had stopped isolating at the time of interview, around 85% had isolated for six days or more.
- The proportion of respondents who left the house and reported wearing a mask on every occasion (44%) is in line with the level reported in mid-March 2022 (45%), but is statistically significantly lower than levels reported in February 2022 (66%) and January 2022 (75%).
- Of those who did not fully follow the advice, 93% reported leaving the house for a non-compliant reason; the most common reason reported was for outdoor recreation or exercise (37%).
- Almost all (94%) 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 are Experimental Statistics, care needs to be taken when interpreting them. The survey has a relatively small number of respondents (765) and the behaviour of respondents during self-isolation is self-reported. The statistics presented in this bulletin were collected between 28 March and 2 April 2022, during which the [guidance for those testing positive or experiencing symptoms of COVID-19](#) was changed. For more information see [Section 4. Measuring the data](#).

## Statistician's comment

"Only half of those who tested positive for COVID-19 adhered fully to self-isolation guidance. While this is a similar proportion to what we reported in mid-March 2022, it however represents a significant decrease to levels of adherence seen earlier this year.

This is our last planned release examining self-isolation and I would like to thank everyone who has taken part for their contributions."

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

Follow the Public Services Analysis team on Twitter: [@HughStick](#)

# 2 . Self-isolation after testing positive data

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

Dataset | Released 10 May 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). On 24 February 2022, the legal requirement to self-isolate for those testing positive for COVID-19 was removed, but adults and children who tested positive were advised to stay at 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. Respondents in this survey tested positive after this policy change and were therefore not legally required to self-isolate.

On 1 April 2022, the government released new guidance aimed at all those who had either tested positive for COVID-19 or were experiencing symptoms of any a respiratory infection including COVID-19. The guidance advises those with symptoms to try to stay at home and avoid contact with other people, especially those at higher risk of becoming seriously unwell, until they no longer have symptoms or feel unwell. The guidance also advises that additional measures are taken when leaving the home including wearing a face covering and avoiding crowded places. Those that test positive are advised to follow this guidance for five days from the day they took their test. This change occurred during the data collection period for this survey.

For more information, see [People with symptoms of a respiratory infection including COVID-19](#) on the gov.uk website.

### Symptoms

Symptoms that indicate an individual should self-isolate prior to a positive test result are:

- a high temperature
- a new continuous cough
- loss of sense of smell or taste

Symptoms reported by respondents that do not indicate a need to self-isolate 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

From 1 April 2022, NHS England published an [updated list of coronavirus \(COVID-19\) symptoms](#). They advised that individuals should try to stay at home and avoid contact with other people if they have symptoms of COVID-19 and either have a high temperature or do not feel well enough to go to work or do normal activities. This change happened during the data collection period for this survey.

## 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 release, [Uncertainty and how we measure it for our surveys](#).

## 4 . Measuring the data

This is the last bulletin in the series; because of policy changes we will no longer be collecting data on self-isolation behaviours and attitudes.

### 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 14

This is the 14th and last bulletin in this series. The 14th wave of data was collected between 28 March and 2 April 2022. The number of respondents for this wave was 765. As this is the last wave of the series, we will no longer be collecting data and reporting on the behaviour of individuals advised to self-isolate after testing positive for coronavirus (COVID-19).

Following the Prime Minister's announcement that contact tracing would cease from 24 February 2022, the data source used for sampling from Wave 13 onwards is different from previous waves. Earlier waves contained data collected as part of the contact tracing process, whereas the database used in Waves 13 and 14 contain only information collected at the time of registering a positive test. Respondents were sampled from this database using implicit stratification by region, sex and age.

The characteristics of people taking COVID-19 tests have also likely changed. Since 24 February 2022, close contacts are no longer informed by the contact tracing system that they may be infected; this will likely change test-taking behaviour in different demographic groups.

Respondents were aged 18 years and over and had tested positive for COVID-19 on either 22 or 25 March 2022. The survey was conducted over the telephone and all answers were self-reported.

Around one in ten respondents (11%) completed their telephone survey on or after 1 April 2022 and were therefore subject to the latest guidance.

The majority (more than 99%) of respondents were interviewed between 5 and 10 days after starting their self-isolation. The remaining up to 1% of respondents were interviewed on day 11 after starting their self-isolation.

Of the potential respondents who were successfully contacted by an interviewer, the response rate was 77% with 765 (19%) total achieved interviews. When including cases where contact was attempted but not made, the response rate was 28%.

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 28 February and 27 March inclusive.

### 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 (765) 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.

### [People with symptoms of a respiratory infection including COVID-19](#)

Webpage | Last updated 27 April 2022

Guidance for people with symptoms of a respiratory infection including COVID-19, or a positive test result for COVID-19.

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

Webpage | Last updated 6 May 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 Office for National Statistics (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.