

Statistical bulletin

Coronavirus and self-isolation after testing positive in England: 5 July to 10 July 2021

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 5 and 10 July 2021 show that the majority (79%) of all individuals who tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) reported fully adhering to the requirements throughout their self-isolation period.
- Adherence to requirements in July 2021 is consistent with adherence reported between 7 and 12 June (79%) but is statistically significantly lower than adherence reported between 10 and 15 May (86%).
- In July 2021, adherence was statistically significantly lower in those aged between 18 and 34 years (75%) compared with those aged between 35 and 54 years (86%).
- The majority (78%) of those who tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) reported having no contact with non-household members while they had any symptoms of illness or during the self-isolation period; this is statistically significantly lower than the percentage reporting no contact between 10 and 15 May (84%).
- Approximately 4 in 10 (42%) 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 (936) and the behaviour of respondents during self-isolation is self-reported.

Statistician's comment

“Full adherence to self-isolation requirements after testing positive for COVID-19 remains high, though we have seen a drop from May to July.

“Self-isolation can have a negative impact on well-being and finances; nearly one third of people reported they lost income as a result of adherence and 4 in 10 said self-isolation had a negative impact on their well-being and mental health.

“With restrictions having relaxed further, it is important we continue to monitor the behaviour of those required to self-isolate.”

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

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

2 . Indicators of behaviour and experience during self-isolation

In September 2020, a new legal duty was introduced in England, requiring people to self-isolate for 10 days if they tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19). [For more information on self-isolation, please see the Glossary.](#)

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. These data were collected between 5 and 10 July 2021, during a period in which national lockdown restrictions had eased to step three of the [four-step roadmap out of lockdown in England](#). More information on identifying this group of people, lockdown and collecting the data can be found in the [Glossary](#) and [Measuring the data](#) sections.

The data collected between 5 and 10 July 2021 show that the majority (79%) of those who tested positive reported fully adhering to requirements throughout the whole of their self-isolation period. Adherence to the self-isolation requirements has remained stable since the previous month (79% between 7 and 12 June) but is [statistically significantly](#) lower compared with data collected between 10 and 15 May (86%).

One in five people (20%) reported carrying out at least one activity during self-isolation that was not adherent to the requirements, for example, leaving the home or having visitors for a reason not permitted under legislation.

The main indicators of experience during self-isolation, such as impact on well-being and finance, have remained broadly stable since May 2021.

Table 1: Indicators of behaviour and experience during self-isolation
England, 2021

	10 to 15 May	7 to 12 June	5 to 10 July
Percentage reporting full adherence to the requirements for their full isolation period or until the point of the survey ¹	86%	79%	79%
Percentage reporting no contact with non-household members while they had symptoms or during their isolation period ¹	84%	80%	78%
Percentage who fully understood the self-isolation requirements	82%	80%	82%
Percentage who agreed that "it was easy for me to self-isolate"	82%	85%	81%
Percentage reporting self-isolation had a negative effect on their well-being and mental health	37%	41%	42%
Percentage reporting having lost income due to self-isolation	27%	28%	31%
Of those who did not adhere to the requirements, percentage leaving the house for a non-permitted reason	85%	90%	90%
Of those who did not adhere to the requirements, percentage who had one or more visitors to their home (excluding visits for personal care)	29%	21%	21%

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

Notes

1. Percentage was statistically significantly different between wave 4 (10 and 15 May) and wave 6 of the survey (5 and 10 July).
2. If not specified, percentages are of those who tested positive.

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

Non-adherent behaviour was most likely to take place in the period between the onset of symptoms (which required self-isolation) and receiving a positive coronavirus (COVID-19) test result.

Of those individuals with symptoms prior to their test, 78% fully adhered to requirements between the onset of symptoms and a positive test result. This compares with 98% who adhered to the requirements in the 24 hours following a positive result, and 96% in the period after the first 24 hours until the end of self-isolation (or until the time of the survey if isolation was ongoing).

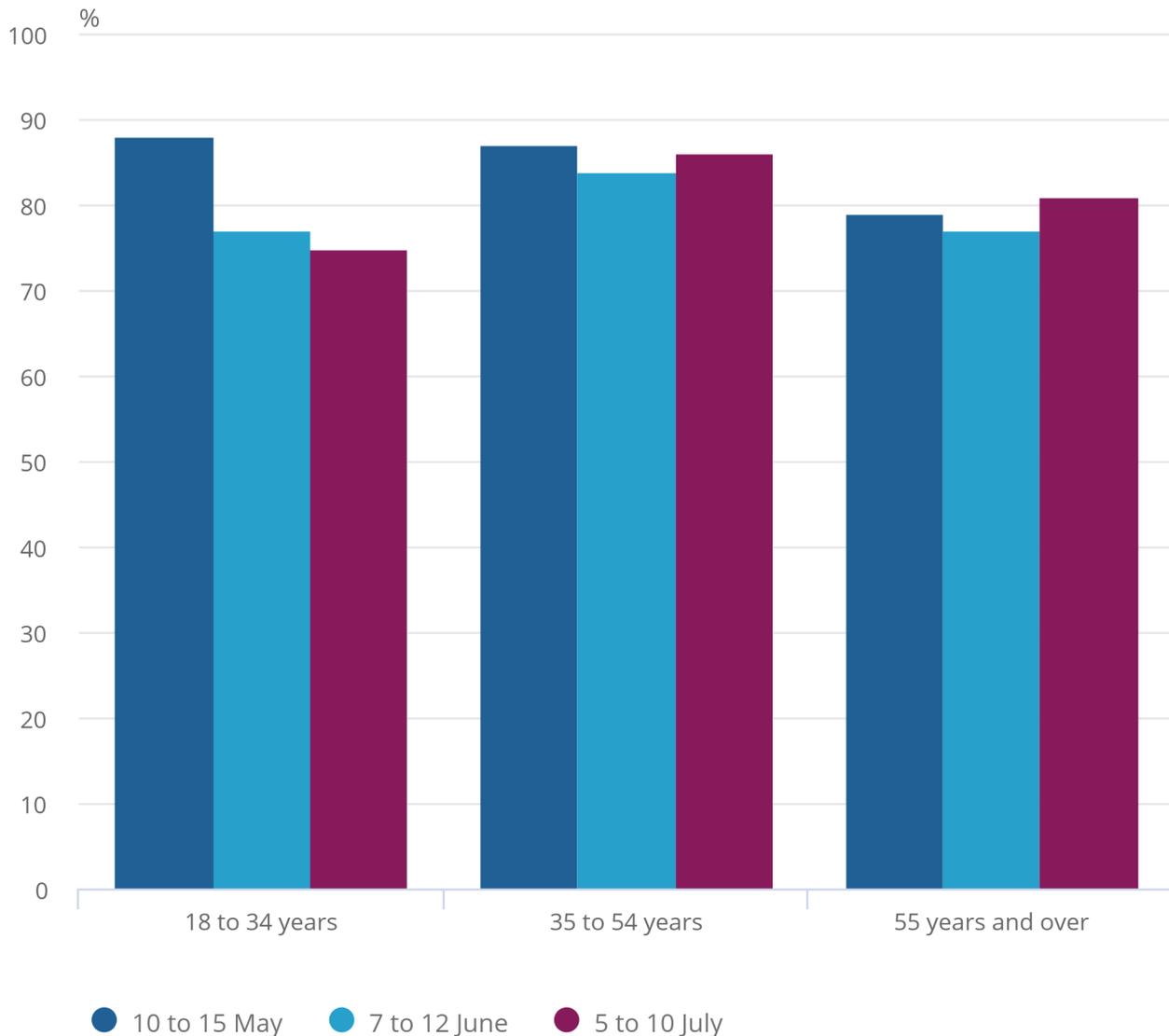
Between 5 and 10 July 2021, adherence to the requirements was [statistically significantly](#) lower among those aged between 18 and 34 years (75%) compared with those aged between 35 and 54 years (86%). There were no other statistically significant differences between age groups. Adherence among those aged between 18 and 34 years showed a statistically significant decrease between May and June 2021 (88% to 77%) and has remained broadly stable in July, at 75%. There has been no statistically significant change in adherence for other age groups since May 2021.

Figure 1: Adherence of those aged between 18 and 34 years was statistically significantly lower in June and July 2021 compared with May 2021

Percentage of those who fully adhered to isolation requirements, by age, England, 2021

Figure 1: Adherence of those aged between 18 and 34 years was statistically significantly lower in June and July 2021 compared with May 2021

Percentage of those who fully adhered to isolation requirements, by age, England, 2021



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

To understand the risk of COVID-19 spreading outside the household, respondents were asked whether they had contact with non-household members at any point when they felt ill or were self-isolating. More information on defining contact with non-household members and adherence to requirements can be found in [the Coronavirus and self-isolation after testing positive in England methodology](#). When considering the risk of COVID-19 spreading, we consider those with any symptoms of illness before their test, for example, a sore throat.

The majority (78%) of those who tested positive for COVID-19 reported having no contact with non-household members while they had any symptoms of illness or during the self-isolation period. This is statistically significantly lower than the percentage reporting no contact with non-household members between 10 and 15 May 2021 (84%).

Of those who had contact with non-household members, 87% did so while out of the house. Approximately a quarter (24%) of those who had contact with non-household members had visitors to their home.

4 . Self-isolation after testing positive data

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

Dataset | Released 29 July 2021

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.

5 . 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. 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 10 full days. If you still have symptoms after 10 days, you must continue self-isolating until they are gone.

For further information please see [the NHS guidance on when and how to self isolate](#).

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 (see [the NHS guidance on when and how to self isolate](#)).

Symptoms reported by respondents that do not require self-isolation prior to a positive test, if not experienced alongside 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

Roadmap out of lockdown

On 5 January 2021, the UK government announced a further national lockdown for England.

On 22 February 2021, [the UK government published a four-step roadmap to ease lockdown restrictions in England](#).

An update was published on 5 July 2021 with more information on [moving to Step 4 of the roadmap](#).

6 . 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 6

This is the sixth bulletin in this series. The sixth wave of data was collected between 5 and 10 July 2021. The number of respondents was 936.

Respondents were sampled through the Contact Tracing and Advice 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 4 and 7 July 2021.

The majority (89%) of respondents were interviewed within four days following the end of their self-isolation period (days 11 to 14) and 11% were interviewed on the last day of their self-isolation period (day 10). The remaining 1% of respondents were interviewed between five and six days (days 15 to 16) after the end of self-isolation.

Of the potential respondents who were successfully contacted by an interviewer, the response rate was 56%. When including cases where contact was attempted but not made, the response rate was 14%.

A low response rate can be expected, as the target population was likely 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 7 June and 4 July 2021.

7 . 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](#).

8 . 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 19 July 2021

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: 28 June to 3 July 2021](#)

Bulletin | Released 16 July 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.