

Statistical bulletin

Coronavirus and self-isolation after testing positive in England: 7 June to 12 June 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 7 and 12 June 2021 show that the majority (79%) of all those required to self-isolate reported fully adhering to the requirements throughout their self-isolation period; this percentage was statistically significantly lower than in the previous wave of this survey (86%, between 10 and 15 May 2021).
- Among those who misunderstood or were unsure of self-isolation requirements, adherence showed a statistically significant decrease from 84% between 10 and 15 May to 70% between 7 and 12 June 2021.
- Non-adherent behaviour was most likely to take place in the period between the onset of symptoms (prompting a test) and receiving a positive coronavirus (COVID-19) test result.
- Adherence with self-isolation requirements between the onset of symptoms and receiving a positive test result was 79%; once a positive test result was received, reported adherence was statistically significantly higher in the first 24 hours after (98%) and the remainder of the isolation period (95%).
- The majority (80%) 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.
- 4 in 10 (41%) 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 (1,090) and the behaviour of respondents during self-isolation is self-reported.

Statistician's comment

"The majority of people who have tested positive for COVID-19 are still following the rules on self-isolation. However, we have seen a statistically significant decrease in this figure compared with the previous wave of the survey in May.

"We've recently seen a delay to the easing of lockdown restrictions and infection levels are starting to creep back up. This is why it's so important that people are following self-isolation rules and helping to stop the spread of the virus, especially as we transition out of the lockdown and restrictions are eased further."

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

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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 [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 7 and 12 June 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 7 and 12 June 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 guidance was [statistically significantly](#) lower in June (79%, 7 to 12 June 2021) compared with the previous month (86%, 10 to 15 May 2021). When comparing adherence in June with earlier waves of the survey, adherence is not [statistically significantly](#) different (82%, 8 to 13 March 2021 and 84%, 12 to 16 April 2021).

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 behaviour have remained broadly stable since April 2021.

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

	12 to 16 April	10 to 15 May	7 to 12 June
Percentage reporting full adherence to the requirements for their full isolation period or until the point of the survey¹	84%	86%	79%
Percentage reporting no contact with non-household members for their full isolation period or until the point of the survey	84%	84%	80%
Percentage who fully understood the self-isolation requirements	79%	82%	80%
Percentage who agreed that "it was easy for me to self-isolate"	83%	82%	85%
Percentage reporting self-isolation had a negative effect on their well-being and mental health	37%	37%	41%
Percentage reporting having lost income due to self-isolation	27%	27%	28%
Of those who did not adhere to the requirements, percentage leaving the house for a non-permitted reason	84%	85%	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)	24%	29%	21%

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

Notes

1. Percentage was statistically significantly different between wave 4 (10 May and 15 May) and wave 5 of the survey (7 June and 12 June).
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 with symptoms prior to their test, the percentage who fully adhered to requirements between onset of symptoms and a positive test result was 79%. This compares with 98% who adhered to the requirements in the 24 hours following a positive result, and 95% in the period after the first 24 hours until the end of self-isolation (or the point of the survey if isolation was ongoing).

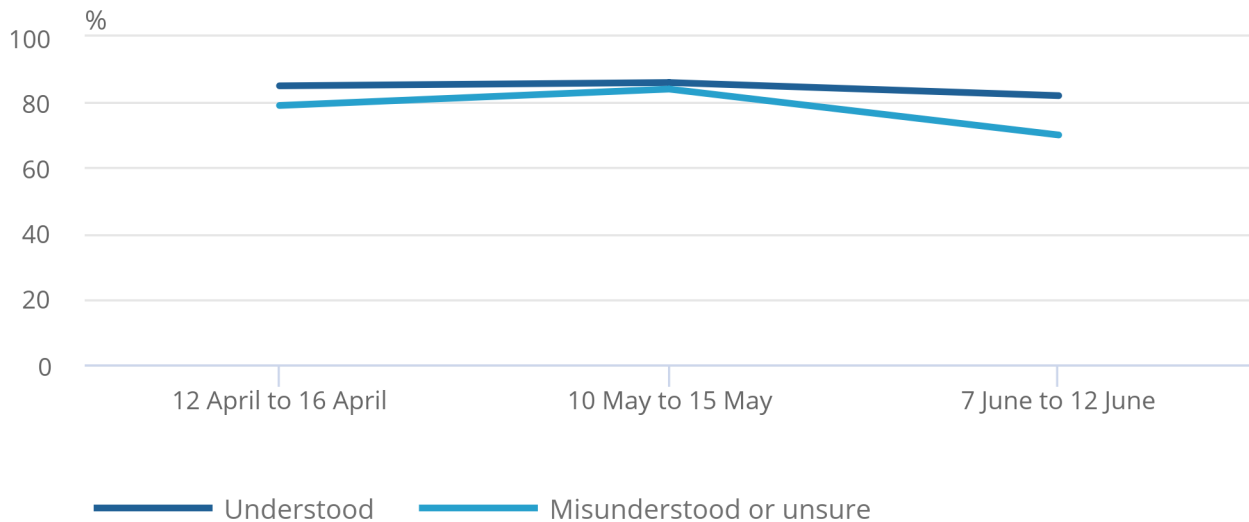
Those who understood self-isolation requirements were [statistically significantly](#) more likely to adhere to requirements (82%) than those who misunderstood or were unsure of requirements (70%). Adherence among those who misunderstood or were unsure of self-isolation requirements was [statistically significantly](#) lower than in the previous wave of the survey (84%, between 10 and 15 May). There was no [statistically significant](#) change in adherence among those who understood the guidance since May 2021.

Figure 1: Adherence among those who misunderstood self-isolation requirements was statistically significantly lower compared with May 2021

Percentage of those who fully adhered to isolation requirements, by their understanding of the requirements, England, 2021

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Percentage of those who fully adhered to isolation requirements, by their understanding of the requirements, England, 2021



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

Notes:

1. Adherence among those who misunderstood or were unsure of self-isolation requirements was statistically significantly lower in June 2021 compared with May 2021.

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 [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 (80%) 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.

Of those who had contact with non-household members, 84% did so while out of the house. Approximately a quarter (26%) 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 28 June 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 receive 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 NHS guidance [When to self-isolate and what to do](#).

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 NHS guidance [When to self-isolate and what to do](#)). 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 or 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.

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

Estimates for Wave 5

This is the fifth bulletin in this series. The fifth wave of data was collected between 7 and 12 June 2021. The number of respondents was 1,090.

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 6 and 10 June 2021.

The majority (55%) of respondents were interviewed within 4 days following the end of their self-isolation period (days 11 to 14), 25% were interviewed on the last day of their self-isolation period (day 10), and 19% were interviewed on day 9, just before the end of their isolation period. The remaining 1% of respondents were interviewed between 5 and 6 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 61%. When including cases where contact was attempted but not made, the response rate was 19%.

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 or over) who had tested positive for COVID-19 and began their self-isolation period between 10 May and 6 June 2021.

7 . Strengths and limitations

Information on the strengths and limitations of this survey are available in [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.

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Stay At Home guidance](#)

Webpage | Updated 11 June 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 \(COVID-19\) roundup](#)

Blog | Updated as and when data become available

Catch up on the latest data and analysis related to the coronavirus pandemic and its impact on our economy and society.

[Coronavirus and self-isolation after being in contact with a positive case in England: 1 to 5 June 2021](#)

Bulletin | Released 18 June 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.