

Statistical bulletin

Coronavirus and self-isolation after testing positive in England: 7 to 12 February 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.

Contact:
Bella Beynon and Rebecca
Jones
publicservicesanalysis@ons.gov.
uk
+44 1633 455330

Release date:
1 March 2022

Next release:
To be announced

Table of contents

1. [Main Points](#)
2. [Testing behaviours and attitudes](#)
3. [Well-being and financial stability](#)
4. [Self-isolation after testing positive data](#)
5. [Glossary](#)
6. [Measuring the data](#)
7. [Strengths and limitations](#)
8. [Related links](#)

1 . Main Points

- The data collected between 7 and 12 February 2022 show that the majority (80%) of respondents who tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) fully adhered to self-isolation requirements; this is in line with the levels reported for January 2022 (79%).
- Adherence to self-isolation requirements was statistically significantly lower between the onset of symptoms requiring self-isolation and receiving a positive test result (73%), compared with the 24 hours following a positive result (98%) and the remainder of the self-isolation period (91%).
- Approximately 9 in 10 (92%) respondents reported that they had no difficulties in accessing COVID-19 tests; this is statistically significantly higher than in January 2022 (74%).
- Around 7 in 10 (72%) respondents reported that they would continue to self-isolate if they became infected with COVID-19, even if it were no longer a legal requirement.
- Almost two-thirds (63%) of respondents would take a COVID-19 test if they had to buy one; this was broadly the same for those from the most deprived areas (59%) and those in the least deprived areas (64%).
- Approximately one-third (35%) of those who tested positive reported that self-isolation had a negative effect on their well-being and mental health.

The statistics presented in this bulletin were collected prior to 24 February 2022, when the legal requirement to self-isolate for those testing positive for COVID-19 in England was removed. Respondents were legally required to self-isolate for a minimum of 5 full days.

Statistician's comment

“Today’s data reveal more about attitudes to self-isolation among those who have tested positive for COVID-19.

“Around 7 in 10 respondents reported that they would continue to self-isolate if they became infected with COVID-19, even if it was no longer a legal requirement.

“Self-isolation has played a critical part in helping to stop the spread of COVID-19, so it is encouraging to see that people understand its importance.”

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

Follow the Public Services Analysis team on Twitter: [@HughStick](https://twitter.com/HughStick)

2 . Testing behaviours and attitudes

On 17 January 2022, the self-isolation advice for people in England who tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) changed. Those who tested positive could end self-isolation after five full days, following two negative lateral flow tests (LFTs) taken 24 hours apart on days five and six of their self-isolation. Respondents in this survey will have been subject to these rules.

More information on identifying this group of people and collecting the data can be found in the [Glossary](#) and [Measuring the data](#) sections.

Two-thirds of respondents (67%) fully understood self-isolation guidance regarding permitted reasons to leave the home. Adherence among those who fully understood the guidance (84%) was statistically significantly higher compared with those who misunderstood or were unsure on self-isolation guidance (72%).

Most respondents (97%) reported that they were fully aware of the new isolation guidance. Of those who were aware, 88% took an LFT on days five and six of their isolation; of these, 73% tested positive in at least one LFT.

Since 11 January 2022, people living in England who tested positive for COVID-19 with an LFT were no longer required to confirm they were positive with a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test. Exceptions to this rule included those who wished to apply for a payment through the NHS Test and Trace Support Payment scheme. [Other exceptions are on the gov.uk website.](#)

Almost 9 in 10 (86%) respondents were aware of this policy change; however, of these, 34% still reported taking a PCR test. Of those who were aware of the policy change and took a PCR test, 90% did not apply for payment through the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme.

Government guidance advises that to be classified as fully vaccinated, you need to have two doses of a recognised vaccine. Almost two-thirds (64%) of respondents thought that they needed a booster to be fully vaccinated.

On 24 February 2022, the self-isolation advice for people in England who tested positive for COVID-19 changed. The legal requirement to self-isolate following a positive test was removed. 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 tests results on consecutive days. Respondents in this survey were not subject to these new rules.

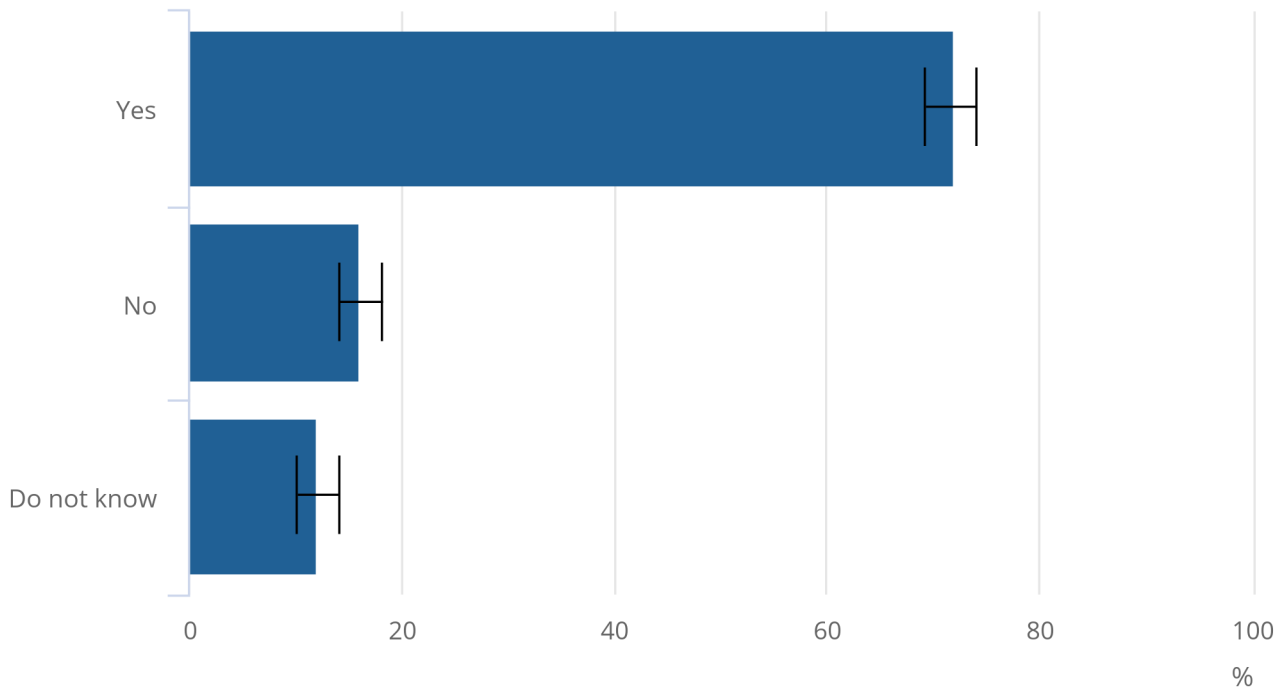
Around 7 in 10 (72%) respondents reported that they would continue to self-isolate if they became infected with COVID-19, even if it were no longer a legal requirement. This was statistically significantly higher among respondents who agreed that COVID-19 poses a risk to either themselves personally, one or more of their friends and family, or society (73%), compared with those who disagree (34%). This percentage is based on sample counts of less than 30 and should be treated with caution.

Figure 1: Most respondents (72%) reported that they would be willing to self-isolate even if it is no longer a legal requirement

Percentage of all respondents reporting their willingness to self-isolate even if it was no longer a legal requirement, England, 7 to 12 February 2022

Figure 1: Most respondents (72%) reported that they would be willing to self-isolate even if it is no longer a legal requirement

Percentage of all respondents reporting their willingness to self-isolate even if it was no longer a legal requirement, England, 7 to 12 February 2022



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

Notes:

1. The category “Prefer not to say” is not included because of low sample counts.

From 1 April 2022, the government will no longer provide free universal symptomatic and asymptomatic testing for the general public in England.

When respondents were asked whether they would take a COVID-19 test if they had to buy one, 63% agreed that they would. There was no significant difference between those in the most deprived areas (59%) who agreed that they would pay for a test, and those in the least deprived areas (64%) who agreed that they would pay for a test.

3 . Well-being and financial stability

Approximately one-third (35%) of those who tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) reported that self-isolation had a negative effect on their well-being and mental health. The average (mean) life satisfaction for those who tested positive (all respondents) was 7.9 out of 10.0. Most respondents (96%) reported that they did not experience difficulties preventing them from self-isolating or getting a test.

From 24 February 2022, workers were no longer legally obliged to tell their employers that they are required to self-isolate. From 24 March 2022, coronavirus provisions within the Statutory Sick Pay and Employment and Support Allowance regulations will end; however, people with COVID-19 may still be eligible, subject to the normal conditions of entitlement. As this survey is based on those who began isolation on 1 and 4 February 2022, this policy change does not affect respondents in this survey.

Of respondents who were in full-time, part-time, or unpaid employment, or receiving sick pay or unpaid leave from work, most (98%) reported their employer was aware that they had to self-isolate. Of those testing positive for COVID-19 who were not retired, 24% reported they lost income because of isolation, and 16% reported that self-isolating meant they were likely to lose their job or miss out on work. Those who were not double-vaccinated were statistically significantly more likely to have lost income because of self-isolation (46%), compared with those with two or more coronavirus vaccine doses (23%). The previous percentage is based on sample counts of less than 30 and should be treated with caution.

Most respondents (94%) did not apply for a payment through the NHS Test and Trace Support Payment scheme. Of respondents who did not apply, 66% said they were aware of the scheme but not eligible for it, and a further 20% reported they were not aware of the scheme.

Table 1: Indicators of well-being and financial stability during self-isolation in England, 2021 to 2022

	29 Nov to 4 Dec 2021	4 to 8 Jan 2022	7 to 12 Feb 2022
Of those who were not retired, percentage reporting having lost income as a result of self-isolation	27%	25%	24%
Of those who were not retired, percentage reporting that self-isolation meant they were likely to lose their job or miss out on work	15%	17%	16%
Percentage reporting self-isolation had a negative effect on their well-being and mental health	33%	34%	35%
Average life satisfaction (out of 10)	7.9	7.9	7.9

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

Notes

1. Percentages (and average life satisfaction) were not statistically significantly different between these periods.
2. If not specified, percentages are of those who tested positive.

4 . Self-isolation after testing positive data

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

Dataset | Released 26 January 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.

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. 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 must continue self-isolating until they are gone.

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

On 22 December 2021, the self-isolation advice for people in England who tested positive for COVID-19 changed. Those who tested positive could end self-isolation after seven days, following two negative lateral flow tests (LFTs) taken 24 hours apart on days six and seven of their self-isolation.

As of 17 January 2022, the self-isolation period was reduced to five days, on the condition that the individual has two negative LFTs taken on days five and six and does not have a high temperature.

On 24 February 2022, the self-isolation advice for people in England who tested positive for COVID-19 changed. The legal requirement to self-isolate following a positive test was removed. 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. Respondents in this survey were not subject to these rules.

More information can be found in [Self-isolation for COVID-19 cases reduced from 10 days to 7 days following negative Lateral Flow Device \(LFD\) tests](#) and [Self-isolation for those with COVID-19 can end after 5 full days following 2 negative LFD tests](#).

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.

Symptoms reported by respondents that do not require 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](#).

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 11

This is the 11th bulletin in this series. The 11th wave of data was collected between 7 and 12 February 2022. The number of respondents was 1,006.

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 7 and 12 February 2022.

The majority (96%) of respondents were interviewed between six and nine days after starting their self-isolation. The remaining 4% of respondents were interviewed between 10 and 11 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 18%.

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 10 January to 6 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 (1,006) and the behaviour of respondents during self-isolation is self-reported.

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 15 February 2022

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 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 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: 31 January to 5 February 2022](#)

Bulletin | Released 23 February 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. Experimental Statistics.