

Statistical bulletin

# Attitudes towards COVID-19 among passengers arriving into the UK: October 2021 to March 2022

Monthly figures on the attitudes of UK and overseas residents arriving in the UK towards coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions and guidance, and the proportion who had been vaccinated, using unweighted results from the International Passenger Survey for the period covering October 2021 to March 2022 (Experimental Statistics).

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# 1 . Main points

- The proportion of travellers arriving in the UK that had received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccination increased from 1 in 10 passengers in February 2021 to over 9 in 10 in March 2022.
- The proportion of passengers arriving in the UK who had received more than two COVID-19 vaccinations increased from 11% to 74% for UK residents and from 7% to 57% for overseas residents between November 2021 (when the NHS booster programme for third doses began) and March 2022.
- Travellers consistently reported feeling safe with social distancing measures, the wearing of face coverings, and the provision of hand sanitiser at airports between February 2021 and March 2022.
- The proportion of travellers arriving in the UK who thought COVID-19 testing was important for travelling fell from 73% to 31% for UK residents, and from 75% to 35% for overseas residents, between February 2021 and March 2022.

This bulletin contains unweighted data. This means the results are based on the responses of only the people interviewed, and do not account for any differences in the respondent group compared with all people travelling during the period. Therefore, the results should not be considered indicative of the travelling population as a whole and cannot be compared with weighted data. See [Section 9](#).

## 2 . How have the data changed over the course of a year?

Data regarding the attitudes of travellers arriving in the UK towards coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions, guidance and vaccinations have been collected on the International Passenger Survey from February 2021 to March 2022. Over this period vaccination rates of travellers have changed dramatically. In February 2021, less than 1 in 10 travellers arriving in the UK had received a vaccination for COVID-19 (7% of UK residents and 9% of overseas residents), by March 2022 more than 9 in 10 travellers had received at least one vaccination (92% of UK residents and 91% of overseas residents).

This increase also reflects the rise in the proportion of travellers who had received a third booster dose of COVID-19 vaccination. The proportion of travellers who had received a third dose of COVID-19 vaccination rose from 11% of UK residents and 7% of overseas residents in November 2021 to 74% of UK Residents and 57% of overseas residents in March 2022.

Attitudes towards COVID-19 prevention measures remained consistent over the year, with travellers feeling safe with social distancing, the wearing of face coverings, and the provision of hand sanitiser at airports. The only prevention measure that fell in importance for travellers over the course of the year was testing for COVID-19 prior to travelling. In February 2021, 73% of UK residents and 75% of overseas residents arriving in the UK said that COVID-19 testing was very important for safety. By March 2022, the proportions had fallen to 31% among UK residents and 35% among overseas residents. This decrease may have been because of the increasing vaccination levels among travellers over the course of the year.

UK residents consistently found it either “easy” or “very easy” to follow overseas restrictions between February 2021 and March 2022. Similarly, overseas residents consistently understood UK restrictions and were confident in accessing information about them over the year.

### 3 . Coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination among international passengers

In March 2022, 9 in 10 travellers arriving in the UK had received at least two COVID-19 vaccinations (92% of UK and 89% of overseas residents). The proportion of travellers who had received more than two vaccinations has continued to increase. Three-quarters (74%) of UK residents and over half (57%) of overseas residents arriving in the UK in March had received more than two COVID-19 vaccinations (Figure 1). These proportions have consistently risen month on month since December (29% and 18%, respectively).

The UK Coronavirus dashboard shows 92% of all UK residents had received at least one vaccination by 31 March 2022, with 86% having received two vaccinations and 68% having received a booster or three vaccinations. In line with the vaccine rollout programme, UK residents arriving into the UK in the older age groups were more likely to have received their first vaccine earlier in the year. Proportions reporting that they have had at least one vaccination have remained stable among these older age groups from October 2021 but have increased in younger age groups.

#### Figure 1: The majority of UK and overseas residents, arriving in the UK, had received at least two COVID-19 vaccinations

Proportion of interviewed UK and overseas residents, arriving in the UK, categorised by number of COVID-19 vaccinations received by month, UK, October 2021 to March 2022

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### 4 . Understanding and accessibility of UK and overseas coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions

The majority of UK residents (75% in March 2022) returning from abroad said that they found it “easy” or “very easy” to follow the COVID-19 restriction information for the country that they had visited (Figure 2). Of those who reported finding it “difficult” or “very difficult” to follow the COVID-19 restrictions, the main reason given was that the information was “difficult to follow” or “overly restrictive” (27% in March 2022). These proportions have remained consistent since February 2021.

#### Figure 2: Most UK residents, arriving in the UK, find it “easy” or “very easy” to follow overseas COVID-19 restrictions

Proportion of interviewed UK residents, arriving in the UK, categorised by how difficult they found it to follow overseas restrictions by month. UK, October 2021 to March 2022

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The majority of overseas residents arriving in the UK said they understood UK COVID-19 restrictions well and could confidently access information about the restrictions. This trend has remained consistent since March 2021. In March 2022, 81% of overseas residents said that they understood UK restrictions “quite well” or “very well”, and 82% that they felt “very confident” or “somewhat confident” in accessing UK restriction information.

Only 3% felt “not at all confident” or “not very confident” in accessing information about UK COVID-19 restrictions.

## 5 . Attitudes towards prevention measures

Most travellers arriving in the UK think that having a coronavirus (COVID-19) test prior to arrival is either “very important” or “quite important” for safety (56% of UK residents and 63% of overseas residents in March 2022). In March 2022, one-third of all travellers arriving in the UK said that they think having a COVID-19 test prior to arrival is “very important” for safety; 31% of UK residents (down from 45% in October 2021) and 35% of overseas residents (down from 53% in October 2021), (Figure 3).

### Figure 3: UK and overseas residents, arriving in the UK, said COVID-19 testing was “quite important” or “very important” for safety, over time

Proportion of interviewed UK and overseas residents, arriving in the UK, categorised by how important they think taking a COVID-19 test is for safety by month, UK, October 2021 to March 2022

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Travellers continue to feel that the wearing of face coverings and the provision of hand sanitiser made them feel safe during their journey. In March 2022, over half of travellers (59% of UK and 65% of overseas residents) said that the wearing of face coverings made them feel safe during their journey into the UK (Figure 4). Over half of travellers also said that the availability of hand sanitiser during their journey made them feel safe (56% of UK and 59% of overseas residents).

In England, on 10 December 2021, the [legal requirement to wear face coverings](#) was reintroduced for indoor settings and on public transport, having been previously removed on 19 July 2021. The legal requirement to wear face coverings was then removed on 22 February 2022. However, individual settings can advise the wearing of face coverings or the use of hand sanitiser and most major UK airports and airlines chose to continue to do so throughout March 2022.

### Figure 4: The majority of UK and overseas residents arriving in the UK said that the wearing of face coverings made them feel safe during their journey

Proportion of interviewed UK and overseas residents, arriving in the UK, categorised by how safe they felt because of the wearing of face coverings by month. UK, October 2021 to March 2022

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## 6 . Attitudes towards coronavirus (COVID-19) among passengers arriving in the UK data

[International Passenger Survey findings on COVID-19](#)

Dataset | Released 4 May 2022

Results from the International Passenger Survey for the period covering February 2021 to March 2022 includes monthly figures on the attitudes of UK and overseas residents arriving in the UK towards social distancing, wearing face coverings, and COVID-19 restrictions and the proportion who had been vaccinated. These data are unweighted (Experimental Statistics).

## 7 . Glossary

## Overseas resident

A person who, being permanently resident in a country outside the UK, visits the UK for a period of less than 12 months. UK citizens resident overseas for 12 months or more coming home on leave are included in this category. Visits abroad are visits for a period of less than 12 months by people permanently resident in the UK (who may be of foreign nationality).

## Traffic light system

For the period these data cover, there was a coronavirus (COVID-19) traffic light system in place for travel, banding countries in “green”, “amber” and “red” lists. It is important to note that the categorisation of countries has changed throughout the period July to December 2021. This should be considered when analysing the results of the data on understanding and accessing information on restrictions. On 4 October 2021, the traffic light system was simplified to a single “red” list of countries, which is reviewed every three weeks.

## Vaccine rollout

The rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine across the UK, phase one of which began in December 2020, following the [Department for Health and Social Care’s full UK COVID-19 vaccines delivery plan](#).

# 8 . Measuring the data

This bulletin uses data from questions added to the International Passenger Survey (IPS) in February 2021. It measures the attitudes towards and experience of coronavirus (COVID-19) and associated restrictions, among travellers arriving in the UK.

Totals used to calculate percentages include all overseas arrivals (international visitors to the UK and UK residents arriving back in the UK) and exclude travellers leaving the UK. For the purposes of this bulletin, all Crown Dependencies have been counted as overseas residents and data from travel via tunnel and sea (except for Dover ferries) have been excluded because of small numbers.

This release is the final instalment of this series. Data regarding vaccination uptake of travellers arriving in the UK will continue to be collected as part of the International Passenger Survey.

# 9 . Strengths and limitations

The International Passenger Survey (IPS) sample used for both UK and overseas residents arriving in the UK across the study (October 2021 to March 2022) totals 61,942 people. Individual breakdowns by residency and month cannot be supplied because of disclosure control of low counts.

Around 90% of international traffic in and out of the UK is subject to IPS sampling. If a person aged under 16 years was sampled, they were not asked the coronavirus (COVID-19) questions unless their parent or guardian gave permission.

It is difficult to predict interview numbers as interviews are being conducted under coronavirus restrictions and passenger flow is likely to be very low. We have attempted to offset the effects of the low numbers of anticipated travellers by reducing sampling intervals (so a higher proportion are selected for interview).

## Using unweighted data

To provide the most timely insights, this bulletin contains unweighted data based on the actual numbers of people interviewed for the International Passenger Survey (IPS), meaning no account is taken of the different numbers of travellers represented by each respondent to the survey. Trends observed over time may be because of changes in the composition of survey respondents, rather than trends for the whole travelling population. Analysis comparing the weighted and unweighted data for the IPS for February and March 2021 found little difference in trends, suggesting this unweighted data can be considered as broadly indicative.

Further information can be found in [Section 8 of our January 2022 bulletin](#).

## 10 . Related links

### [Overseas travel and tourism, provisional: February to March 2021](#)

In depth analysis | Released 23 July 2021

Quarterly estimates of visits to the UK by overseas residents, air visits abroad by UK residents and estimates of spending by travellers, using the International Passenger Survey (IPS) and administrative sources of passenger travel data for the period covering April to December 2020.

### [Overseas travel and tourism: 2020](#)

In depth analysis | Released 24 May 2021

Annual estimates of visits to the UK by overseas residents, visits abroad by UK residents and estimates of spending by travellers, using administrative sources of passenger travel data for the period covering April to December 2020.

### [Travelpac: travel to and from the UK](#)

Dataset | Released 24 July 2020

Quarterly data on travel to and from the UK, taken from the International Passenger Survey (IPS). Includes detail on age and sex of travellers, purpose and length of trip, and spending. These data are in a form suitable for small businesses and students.

### [Travel trends: 2019](#)

In depth analysis | Released 22 May 2020

Annual estimates of travel and tourism visits to the UK (of less than 12 months' duration) and associated earnings and expenditure between the UK and the rest of the world.

### [Overseas travel and tourism, UK, provisional: July to September 2021](#)

In depth analysis | Released 7 February 2022

Visits to the UK by overseas residents, visits abroad by UK residents and estimates of spending by travellers, using administrative sources of passenger travel data.