



Department for Transport

Air passenger experience of security screening: 2017 (revised)

About this release

This statistical release summarises results from a set of four questions about passengers' attitudes to security screening, which were included in the Civil Aviation Authority Departing Passenger Survey in 2017.

Over 20,000 respondents from this survey were asked about their experience of security screening at five airports: Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted, Luton and Manchester.

Next Update: June 2019

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Revisions: The underlying data has been subject to minor amendments since this release was first published on 27 June 2018. Although the main findings remain unchanged, this has resulted in a number of small changes to the figures presented in this release.



In 2017 the majority (85%) of air passengers surveyed said they were very satisfied or satisfied with their **experiences of security screening**. Three per cent said they were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied, remaining at a similar level to 2016.



The **aspects of security screening** with which passengers were least satisfied were:

- queuing (cited by 4%)
- slow speed of screening process (3%)
- general organisation (3%)
- staff attitude/politeness (2%)

The majority of passengers (80%) said there was no aspect with which they were least satisfied.



The average time passengers reported that they spent **queuing for security screening** was 7.1 minutes, ranging from 3.5 minutes at Gatwick to 11.4 minutes at Stansted.



The majority of passengers (93%) strongly agreed or agreed that any **inconvenience caused by the security screening was acceptable**.

Acceptance of inconvenience and average perceived queue time at the five airports combined in 2017 were similar to results reported in 2016, although there were some differences at individual airports.

How to interpret the results

Any differences over time or between groups described in this publication are **statistically significant** at the 5% level (i.e. it is 95 per cent certain that the difference exists in the passenger population at the surveyed airports).

Note on the data coverage & survey design changes

This module of questions was first included in the CAA Passenger Survey in 2008, with the exception of the question "What aspect of security screening were you least satisfied with?", which was added in 2011. Passengers at Heathrow, Stansted and Manchester have been surveyed in each year since 2008 while passengers at Gatwick and Luton were surveyed in 2009 and 2011-2017.

At the beginning of 2016 there were changes to the way in which passengers' responses were recorded with a transition from paper to an electronic device. This transition has affected two out of four questions and, in turn, determines how results are reported in this publication. All other aspects of the survey are unaffected. (Please see Annex C for details)

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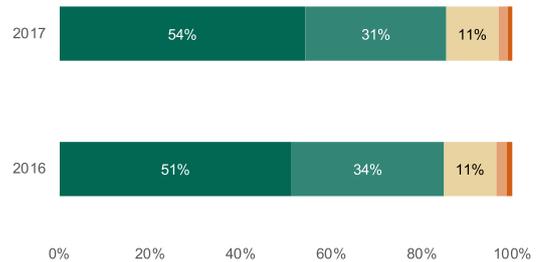
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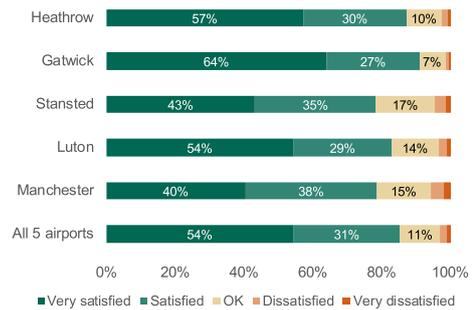
How satisfied are you with your experience of the security screening used at the airport today?

- The majority (85%) of respondents surveyed in 2017 at the five airports combined (Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted, Luton & Manchester) said they were either very satisfied or satisfied with their experience of security screening, with over a half (54%) saying they were very satisfied.
- More people were very satisfied in 2017 when compared to 2016, although overall levels of satisfaction remained at a broadly similar level between 2016 and 2017. Gatwick reported highest number of very satisfied or satisfied passengers for the second consecutive year. The highest proportions of very dissatisfied or dissatisfied passengers were served at Manchester.

Satisfaction with experience of security screening:
[Table C2a](#)
Five airports combined, 2016 - 2017



Individual survey airports, 2017

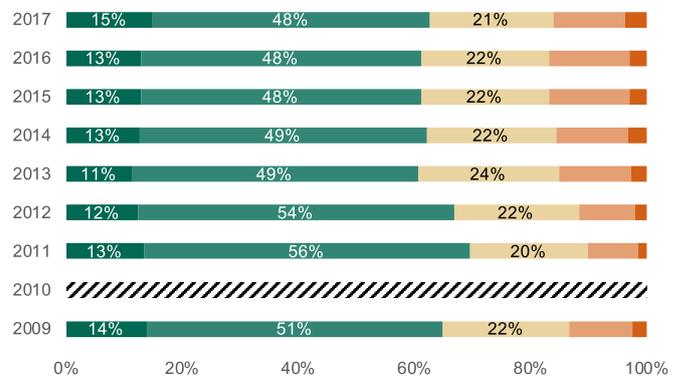


For how long, in minutes, did you queue when waiting to be screened?

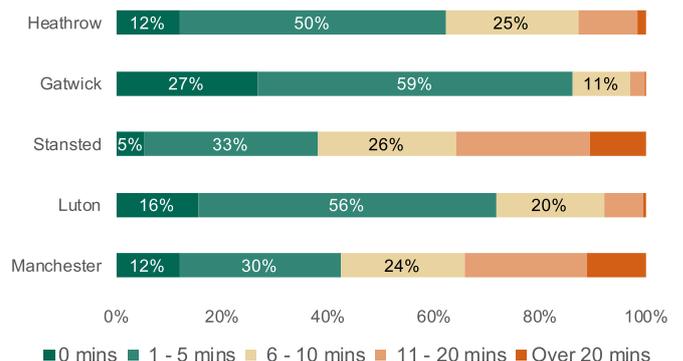
- The average queue time in 2017, based on passengers' estimates of how long they queued, was 7.1 minutes, which is in line with what was reported in the two preceding years. The majority (63%) of passengers surveyed said they queued for 5 minutes or less whilst 16% queued for more than 10 minutes.
- The average perceived queuing time in 2017 ranged from 3.5 minutes at Gatwick, where 86% said they queued for 5 minutes or less, to 11.4 minutes at Stansted, where 38% said they queued for 5 minutes or less.
- Conversely, the proportion who said they queued for over 10 minutes ranged from 3% at Gatwick to 36% at Stansted.

Perceived security screening queuing time (banded) based on passenger estimates:
[Table C4a](#)

Five airports combined, 2009 - 2017



Individual survey airports, 2017



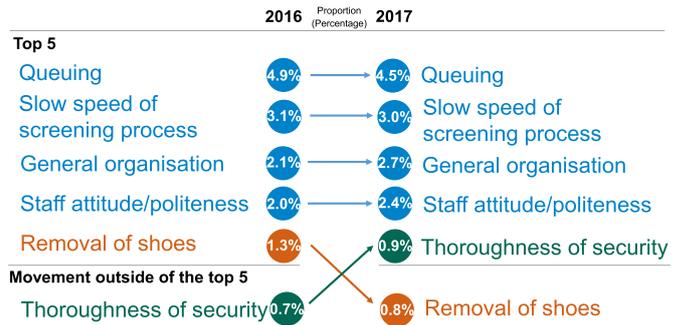
Technical note: Passengers tend to overestimate their queuing time so these figures are likely to be higher than actual times at these airports. However, they give some indication of relative queuing times between airports and the extent to which these have changed over time.



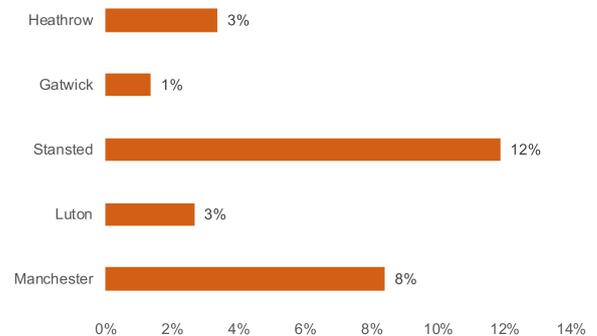
What aspect of the security screening were you least satisfied with?

- When asked which aspect of security screening they were least satisfied with, the most common responses given by respondents were queuing (mentioned by 4%), slow speed of screening process (3%) and general organisation (3%). Furthermore, staff attitude/politeness was mentioned by two per cent of respondents.
- A fifth (20%) of respondents identified a least satisfactory aspect of security screening.
- The proportion of passengers who identified a particular aspect with which they were least satisfied ranged from 12% at Gatwick to 39% at Stansted.
- The ban on some electronic equipment introduced in March 2017 on inbound flights to the UK from some countries in Northern Africa and the Middle East did not have a significant impact on results of this survey (more details in Annex C).

Top 5 least satisfactory aspects of security screening:
[Table C3a](#)
Five airports combined, 2016 - 2017



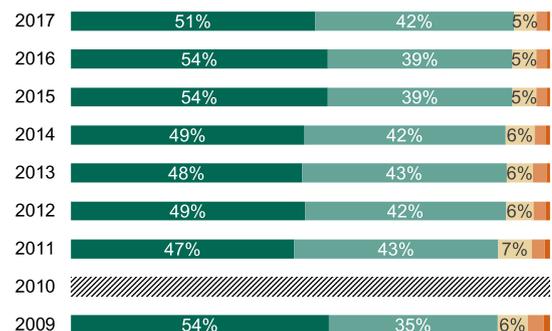
Distribution of respondents reporting queuing as least satisfactory aspect: [Table C3a](#)
Individual survey airports, 2017



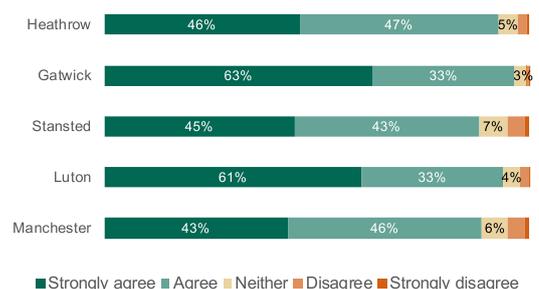
How strongly do you agree with the following statement: "Any inconvenience caused by the security screening was acceptable?"

- A large majority (93%) of passengers agreed or strongly agreed that any inconvenience caused by security screening was acceptable.
- The proportion of passengers who disagreed or strongly disagreed has remained at a broadly similar level over the last 5 years - at around 3 per cent.
- Agreement with the statement was highest at Gatwick (96% agreed or strongly agreed), where satisfaction with security screening was also the highest. Conversely, agreement with the statement was lowest at Stansted (88%), where satisfaction was also the lowest.

Agreement with acceptability of any inconvenience caused by security screening: [Table C5a](#)
Five airports combined, 2009 - 2017



Individual survey airports, 2017

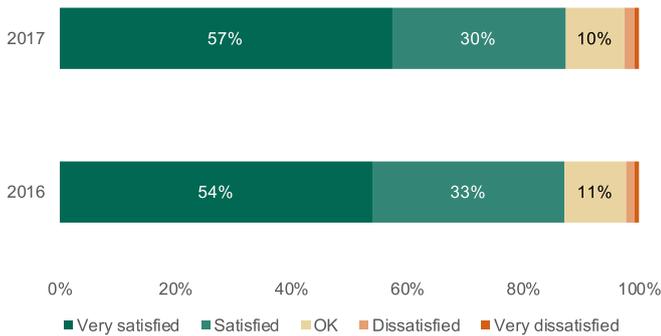


Results for individual airports

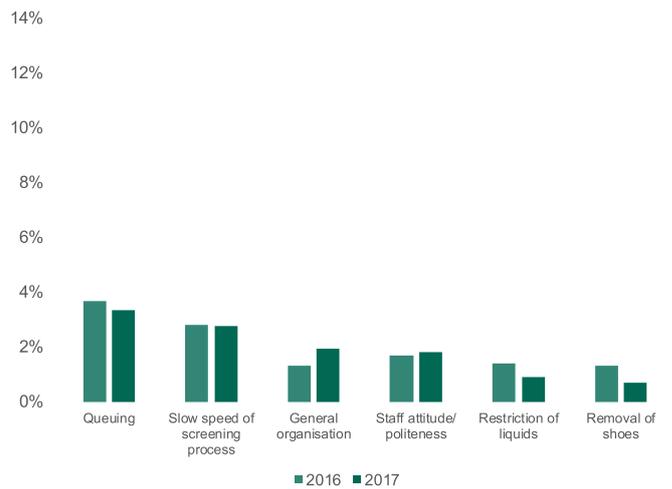
Heathrow

- The proportion of passengers who said they were very satisfied or satisfied with their experiences of security screening was 87%. This is the second highest after Gatwick airport.
- Passengers at Heathrow reported queuing (3%) as the least satisfactory aspect of security screening, followed by slow speed of screening process (3%), general organisation (2%), staff attitude/politeness (2%) and restriction of liquids (1%).
- Average queuing time, based on passenger estimates, has fluctuated since 2008. In 2017 it remained similar to the levels reported since 2014 at 6.7 minutes. In comparison to 2016, significantly more people reported queuing for 0 minutes.

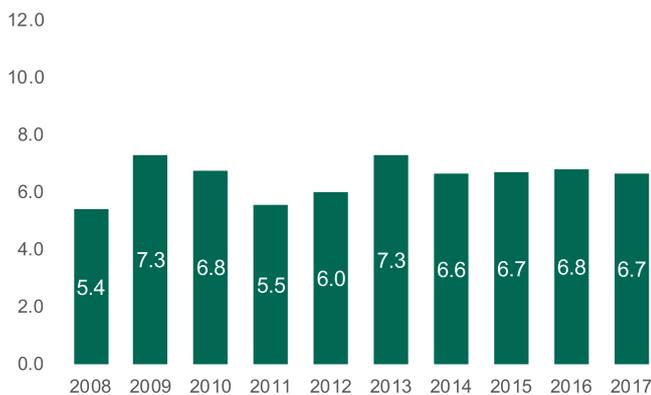
 **Satisfaction with security screening, 2016 - 2017**
[Table C2a](#)



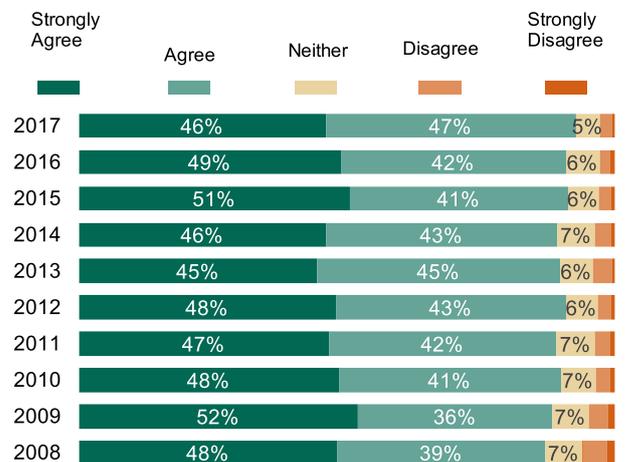
 **Aspect with which passengers were least satisfied, 2016 - 2017**
[Table C3a](#)



 **Perceived queuing time, 2008 - 2017**
[Table C4a](#)

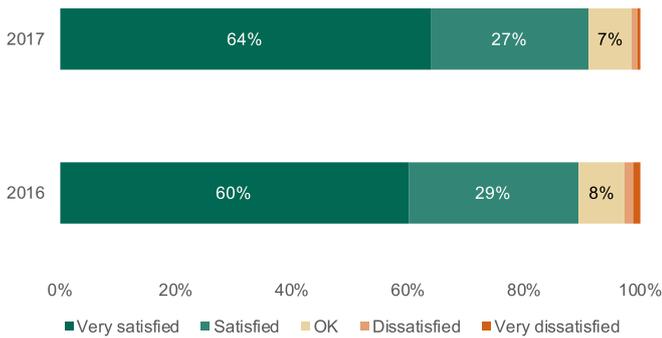


 **Agreement that "Any inconvenience caused by the security screening was acceptable", 2008 - 2017**
[Table C5a](#)

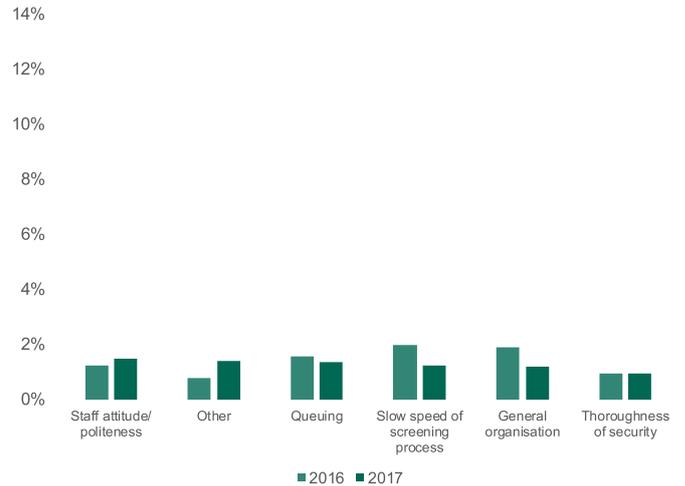


- The proportion of passengers who said they were very satisfied or satisfied with their experiences of security screening was 91%. Gatwick reported the largest proportion of passengers that were very satisfied or satisfied among all five surveyed airports.
- Staff attitude/politeness (2%), other (1%) and queuing (1%) were most commonly reported by passengers as aspects they were least satisfied with. The proportion saying there is no aspect with which they are least satisfied was the highest among all five airports (88%).
- Average perceived queuing time has been falling since Gatwick was first surveyed, from 6.6 minutes in 2009 to new low at 3.5 minutes in 2017, with a slight increase to 5.2 minutes in 2015. This can be partially accounted for by a much larger proportion of passengers reporting queuing times of 0 minutes.

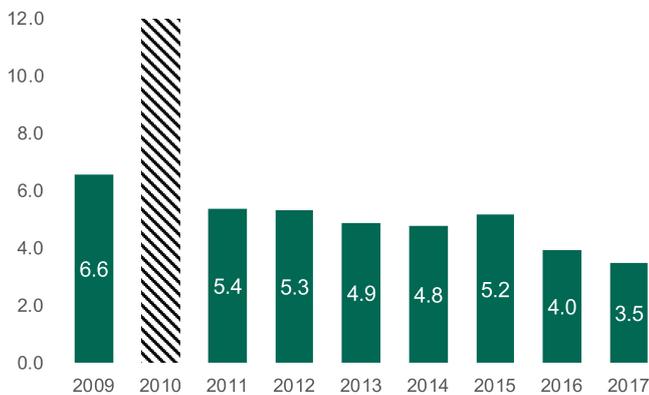
 **Satisfaction with security screening, 2016 - 2017**
[Table C2a](#)



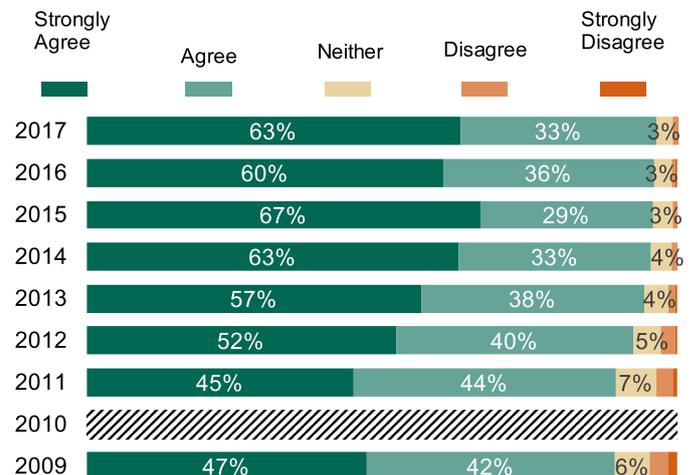
 **Aspect with which passengers were least satisfied, 2016 - 2017**
[Table C3a](#)



 **Perceived queuing time, 2009, 2011 - 2017**
[Table C4a](#)



 **Agreement that "Any inconvenience caused by the security screening was acceptable", 2009, 2011 - 2017**
[Table C5a](#)

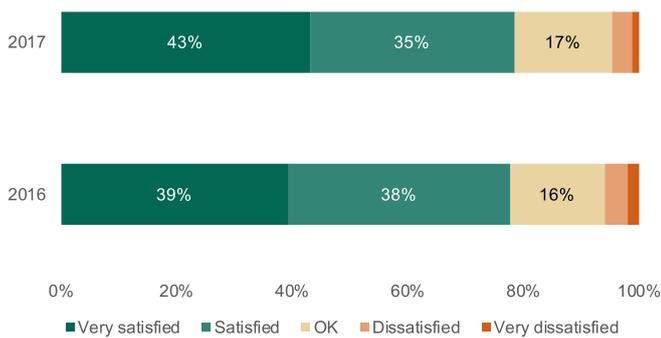


- Over three quarters (78%) of passengers reported they were very satisfied or satisfied with security screening.
- The most common aspect cited as least satisfactory was queuing (12%), followed by slow speed of processing (6%) and general organisation (5%). More respondents identified a least satisfying aspect than at any other surveyed airport (39%).
- The proportion of passengers who reported queuing for 0 minutes (5%) has decreased since 2016. Although the difference is not significant, it contributed to bringing up the average perceived queuing time at Stansted to 11.4 minutes.
- Although the proportion of people strongly agreeing or agreeing that “Any inconvenience caused by the security screening was acceptable” remained in line with results from 2016, people were more likely to choose strong agreement in 2017.



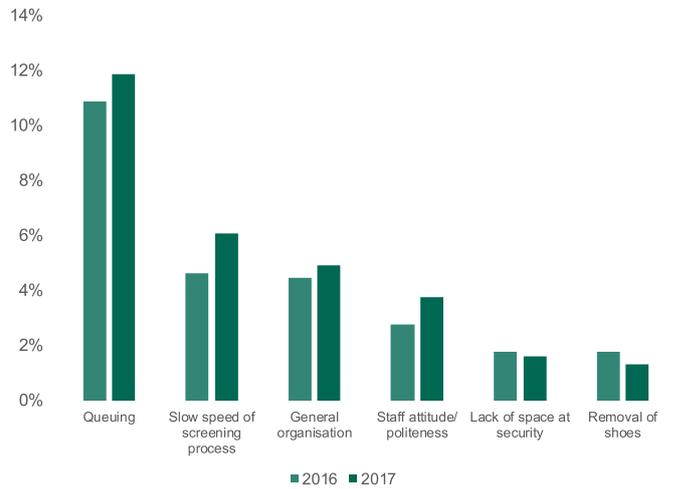
Satisfaction with security screening, 2016 - 2017

[Table C2a](#)



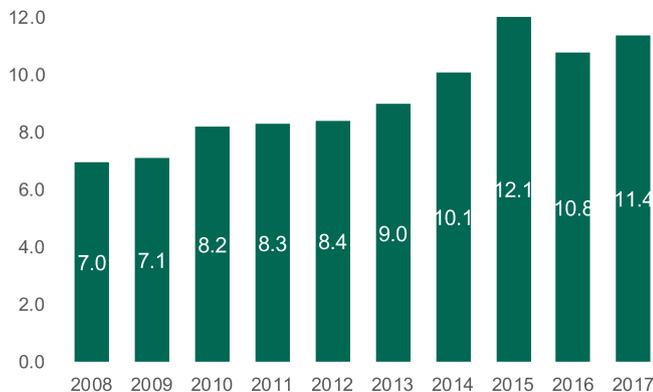
Aspect with which passengers were least satisfied, 2016 - 2017

[Table C3a](#)



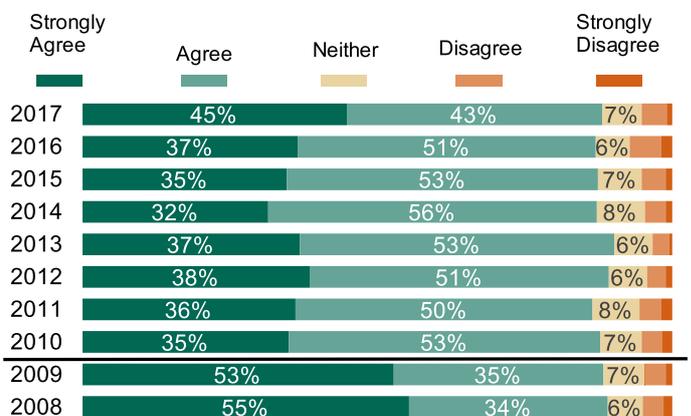
Perceived queuing time, 2008 - 2017

[Table C4a](#)



Agreement that “Any inconvenience caused by the security screening was acceptable”, 2008 - 2017*

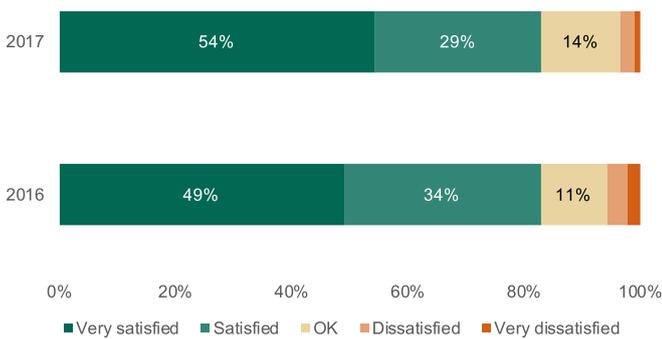
[Table C5a](#)



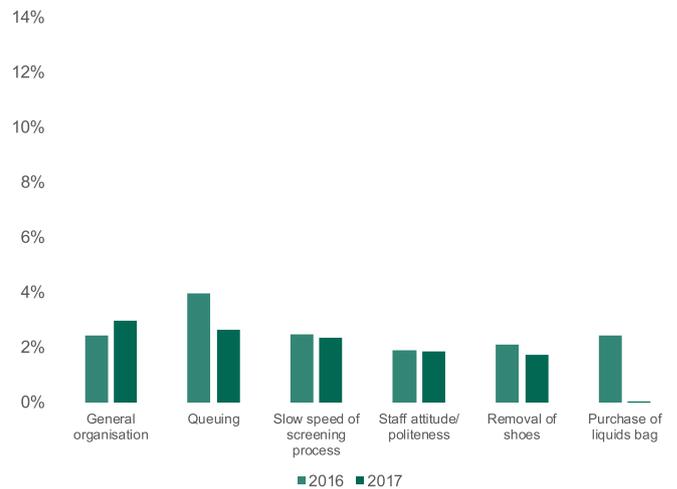
* There is a discontinuity in the series between 2008/2009 and 2010. Prior to 2010 the interviewers did not ask all respondents this question, particularly at Stansted and Manchester. This is likely to explain the step change in the proportions who 'agree' and 'strongly agree' at these airports in 2010.

- The proportion of passengers who said they were very satisfied or satisfied with their experiences of security screening was 83%. This proportion was greater than at Manchester and Stansted but lower than at Gatwick and Heathrow.
- General organisation (3%), queuing (3%), and slow speed of screening process (2%) were most commonly reported as the least satisfying aspects of passengers' experience of security screening. Over three quarters (84%) of passengers reported there was no such aspect.
- 2017 continues a decreasing trend in perceived queuing time at Luton, with average queue time decreasing from 8.4 minutes in 2013 to a 5.3 minutes in 2017.
- The proportion of passengers who strongly agreed or agreed that "Any inconvenience caused by the security screening was acceptable" increased to 94% in 2017 - the highest level since the survey was introduced at Luton airport.

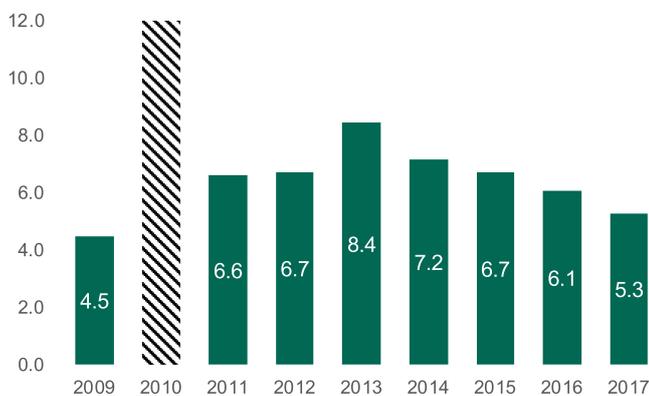
 **Satisfaction with security screening, 2016 - 2017**
[Table C2a](#)



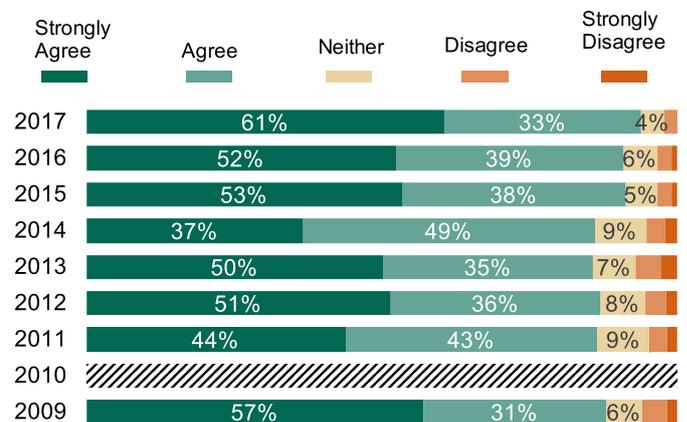
 **Aspect with which passengers were least satisfied, 2016 - 2017**
[Table C3a](#)



 **Perceived queuing time, 2009, 2011 - 2017**
[Table C4a](#)



 **Agreement that "Any inconvenience caused by the security screening was acceptable", 2009, 2011 - 2017**
[Table C2a](#)

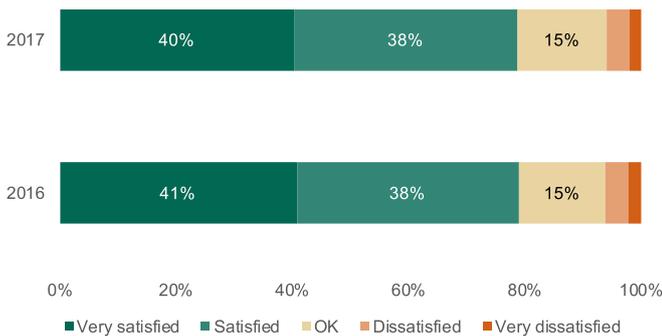


Manchester

- The proportion of respondents who were very satisfied or satisfied with their experience of security screening was 79% in 2017.
- The aspects of security screening passengers were least satisfied with was queuing (8%), general organisation (6%) and staff attitude/politeness (5%). The majority (68%) of passengers at Manchester airport did not identify a least satisfying aspect.
- Average perceived queuing time in 2017 was above 10 minutes for second consecutive year, reaching a new high at 11.3 minutes. Moreover, 2017 reported the biggest proportion of passengers reporting queue times of 10 minutes or more.
- The proportion of passengers disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the statement that “Any inconvenience caused by the security screening was acceptable” remained at a similar level to 2016.

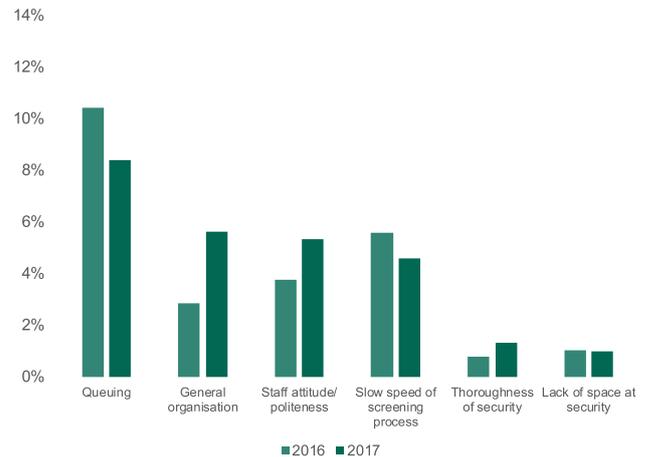
✓ Satisfaction with security screening, 2016 - 2017

[Table C2a](#)



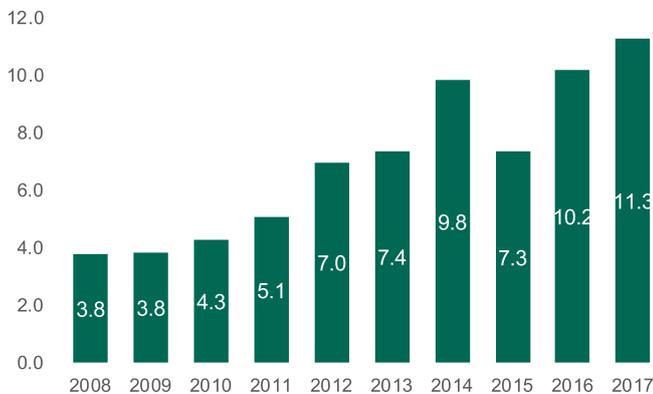
👤 Aspect with which passengers were least satisfied, 2016 - 2017

[Table C3a](#)



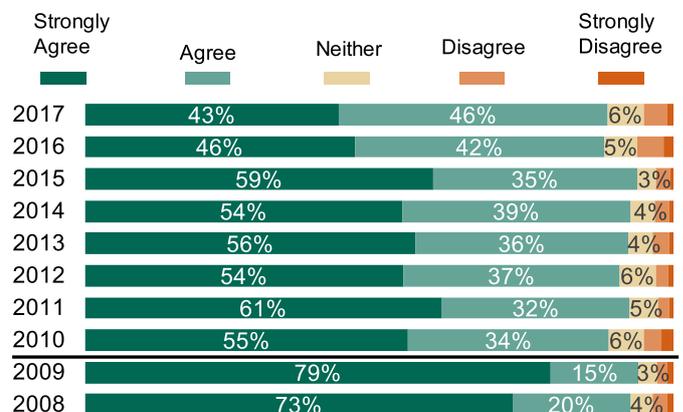
🕒 Perceived queuing time, 2008 - 2017

[Table C4a](#)



👍 Agreement that “Any inconvenience caused by the security screening was acceptable”, 2008 - 2017*

[Table C5a](#)



* There is a discontinuity in the series between 2008/2009 and 2010. Prior to 2010 the interviewers did not ask all respondents this question, particularly at Stansted and Manchester. This is likely to explain the step change in the proportions who 'agree' and 'strongly agree' at these airports in 2010.

Survey details

- The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) Passenger Survey is undertaken to obtain information about air travellers that cannot be collected on a routine basis from the air transport industry. The survey includes questions on journey purpose, final and intermediate origins/destinations, means of transport to and from airports, route flown, country of residence and income.
- The CAA uses its own interviewers to conduct the survey and it runs continuously throughout the year at selected UK airports. Only departing passengers are interviewed. Additional information about the survey can be found at: <http://caa.co.uk/surveys>.
- In 2017, a set of four questions (see Annex A) relating to security screening was sponsored by the Department for Transport in order to monitor passengers' experiences at UK airports. These questions were asked of a sub-sample of the passengers responding to the main CAA survey at Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted, Luton and Manchester. The same set of questions was asked at Heathrow, Stansted, Manchester and Leeds Bradford in 2010 and at Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted, Luton and Manchester in 2011 to 2014. In 2008 and 2009 a longer set of questions on passenger experience was asked at a selection of airports including Heathrow, Stansted and Manchester; this included 3 of the 4 questions asked in 2010 to 2013.
- The questions relate to the security screening used when the passenger enters the departure lounge. This covers the bag x-ray machine, the metal detector, and the body and bag searches.
- In 2008 passengers using Heathrow Terminal 4 were not asked the questions on security screening as interviews were conducted prior to screening. In 2010 to 2013 Heathrow Terminal 2 was not in operation. It reopened in June 2014 so results for Terminal 2 only cover part of that year. Heathrow Terminal 1 remained closed after its closure in June 2015.

Analysis

- The responses have been weighted to reflect the actual distribution of passengers by airport terminal and flight destination (domestic, short-haul and long-haul).
- Passengers who did not answer a particular question (either because they refused or said they did not know) have been excluded from the analysis of that question.
- Where sample sizes are sufficient, some changes over time are identified for the years when all five airports were included in the survey (2009 and 2011-17). Also as a result of the large sample size some small changes have been identified as they are statistically significant.

- Percentages quoted in the text, tables and charts have been rounded to the nearest final digit so, in some cases, there may be an apparent discrepancy between the sum of the constituent items and the totals shown.
- Differences between airports, in terms of passenger profile, should be taken into account when interpreting the results and making comparisons between airports. A summary of key characteristics for each survey airport in 2017 is given in Annex B.
- Passengers' experiences of security screening may be affected by changes to screening procedures, such as the introduction of security scanners at Heathrow, Manchester, Gatwick and Stansted on a risk-assessed rollout which began in 2010. The "laptop ban" widely reported at the start of 2017 did not have an impact on the results of this publication, as it was solely focused on inbound flights, whereas the survey is being run on departing passengers only.
- Security procedures may also be affected by passenger numbers, which increased at all five airports in 2017. Heathrow, Gatwick and Manchester handled over two million more passengers in 2017 compared to 2016. Luton handled over a million more passengers, whereas Stansted handled nearly two million more.

Quality

- These official statistics are not designated National Statistics. However, they are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Statistics. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews and are produced free from any political interference.
- Details of ministers and officials who receive pre-release access to these statistics up to 24 hours before release can be found in the pre-release access list.



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We would be grateful for any feedback that users have on this publication so that we can consider how the release can better meet user needs and how the dissemination of information can be improved.

Within the Department for Transport the statistics are used:

- For ministerial briefing
- To answer public enquiries
- As a background for policy development

For any queries relating to the statistics presented in this release you can contact us by emailing: aviation.stats@dft.gov.uk

Annex A: CAA Survey module on security screening for 2017

I would now like to ask you a few questions about your experience of the security screening used when you entered the departure lounge. That is the bag x-ray machine, the metal detector, and the body and bag searches.

1. How satisfied are you with your experience of the security screening used at the airport today?

[SHOWCARD 1]

.....

2. What aspect of the security screening were you least satisfied with?

(Ask all passengers)

[PROMPT CARD 1]

.....

3. For how long, in minutes, did you queue when waiting to be security screened? **[If say did not queue then put 0 minutes]**

.....

4. And how strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement

“Any inconvenience caused by the security screening was acceptable”

[SHOWCARD 2]

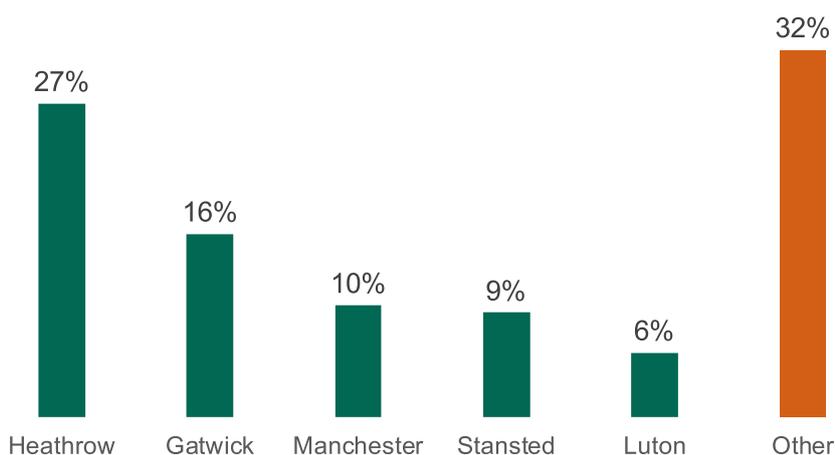
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End of questionnaire

Annex B: Characteristics of passengers at the surveyed airports

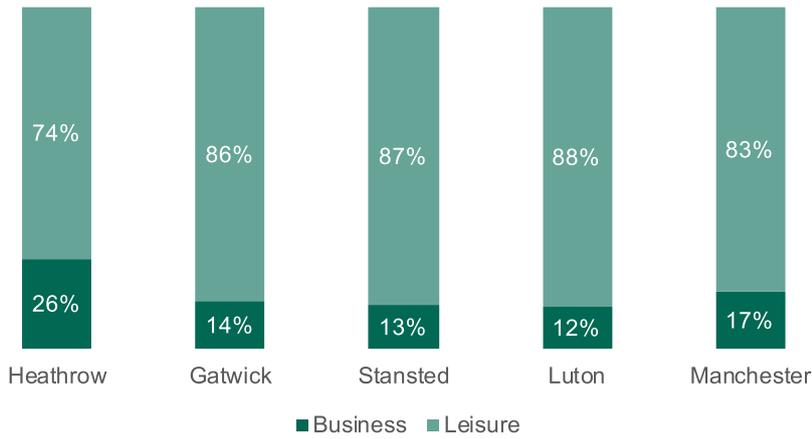
- In 2017, the five airports surveyed were the five largest UK airports in terms of the number of terminal passengers. They accounted for 193 million passengers, over two thirds (68%) of the 284 million passengers at all UK airports in 2017.
- Heathrow was the largest airport, accounting for over a quarter (27%) of all terminal passengers, followed by Gatwick (16%). Manchester and Stansted accounted for a similar proportion (10% and 9% respectively) while Luton accounted for just over half of this amount (6%).

Terminal passengers at the airports surveyed as a percentage of the total at all UK airports, 2017

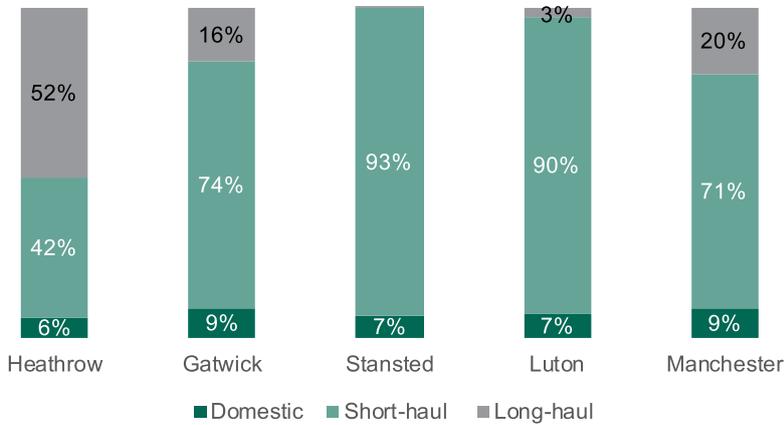


- The five airports surveyed differ not only in terms of size but also in terms of the type of passengers that use them (see Table C1). For example:
- In 2017, Heathrow had a much higher proportion of long-haul passengers (52%) and passengers who were foreign residents (59%) than the other airports. Relative to the other airports surveyed, Heathrow also had a higher proportion travelling on business (26%).
- Gatwick had some long-haul flights, accounting for 16% of their passengers, and one of the highest proportions of passengers on charter flights (6%).
- Manchester had the highest proportion of passengers on charter flights (9%) and, after Heathrow, this airport had the highest proportion of long-haul passengers in the sample (20%).
- Stansted had a high proportion of passengers on short-haul flights (93%) and a relatively high proportion of foreign residents (34%). The age profile of passengers using Stansted is relatively young, with half of adult passengers aged between 16 and 34 years.
- Luton had a relatively high proportion of passengers on short-haul flights (90%). It mainly handled UK residents (71%), passengers travelling for leisure (88%) and passengers on scheduled flights (97%).

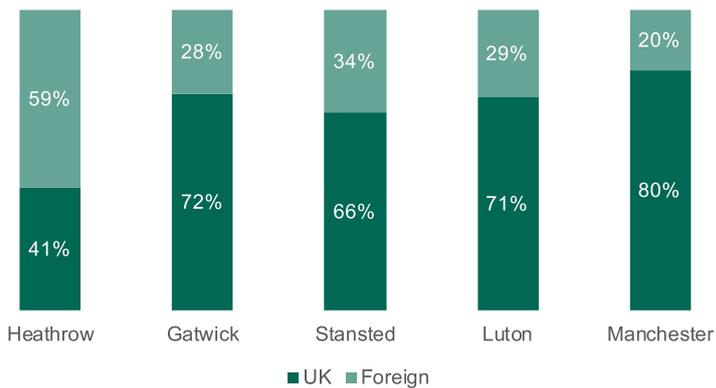
Terminal passengers by airport and purpose, 2017



Terminal passengers by airport and destination, 2017



Terminal passengers by airport and country of residence, 2017



Source: CAA Passenger Survey 2017

Annex C: Publication timeline

LHR - Heathrow, LGW - Gatwick, STN - Stansted, LTN - Luton, MAN - Manchester, BRS - Bristol, EDI - Edinburgh, GLA - Glasgow, INV - Inverness, LBA - Leeds Bradford

| Year | LHR | LGW | STN | LTN | MAN | BRS | EDI | GLA | INV | LBA | Changes to security screening | Survey design |
|-------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|--|--|
| 2008 | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | | Survey module consists of 11 questions, some of which are open. |
| 2009 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | | | |
| 2010 | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | Risk-assessed rollout of security scanners in February 2010 at UK airports, starting with LHR and MAN. Rest of the surveyed airports soon to follow. | Number of questions brought down to four, three of which same as in previous years (least satisfactory aspect being the new one). |
| 2011-2012 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | | | |
| 2013 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | EDI and GLA not covered for the whole year (only from March). |
| 2014 - 2015 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | | | |
| 2016 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | | | The options available to the respondents when answering 'satisfaction' question have been slightly rephrased. Prior to 2016, respondents who took their time answering were offered only an abridged set of answers to choose from. Adopting electronic devices in place of paper allowed interviewers to show a wider range of possible answers to the respondents. |
| 2017 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | | Introduction of limitations on electronic equipment allowed in the cabin of an airplane on flights between the UK and the following countries: Turkey, Lebanon, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Tunisia. | |