



# Department for Transport

## Air passenger experience of security screening: 2019

### 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 2019.

Over 29,000 respondents from this survey were asked about their experience of security screening at seven airports: Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted, Luton, Manchester, and new to this survey this year Birmingham and London City.

### How to interpret results

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

### In this publication

Overall findings .....	p1
Satisfaction with experience of security screening .....	p2
Perceived queuing times ....	p3
Aspects of security screening .....	p4
Acceptance of inconvenience caused by security screening .....	p5
Individual airport results .....	p6
Background information .....	p9
Annexes .....	p12

### Overall findings for 2019



In 2019 the majority (86%) of air passengers surveyed said they were satisfied or very satisfied with their **experiences of security screening**.

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



- queuing (cited by 6%)
- slow speed of screening process (4%)
- staff attitude/politeness (2%)
- general organisation (2%)

The majority of passengers (79%) said there was no aspect with which they were least satisfied.



The average time passengers reported that they spent **queuing for security screening** was 8.7 minutes, ranging from 5.0 minutes at Gatwick to 12.7 minutes at Manchester. Gatwick remains the airport with the quickest perceived waiting time whilst Manchester also remains the airport with the longest perceived waiting time at security.



Over 90% of passengers agreed or strongly agreed that any **inconvenience caused by the security screening process was acceptable**.

### Comparing findings from 2019 to 2018

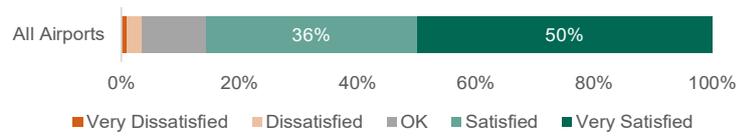
Across the five airports that were surveyed in both 2018 and 2019, the levels of passenger satisfaction with security screening remains high at 85%.

The proportion of passengers that reported queuing for 0 minutes decreased by 4 percentage points (pp) compared to 2018, while passengers reporting queuing over 10 minutes has increased by 3pp. This is supported by the fact queuing remains the least satisfactory aspect to security screening, increasing by 1pp to 6%.

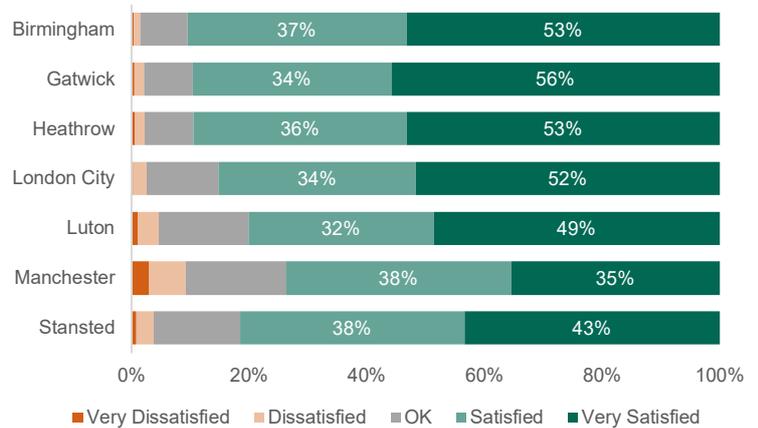


- The majority (86%) of respondents surveyed in 2019 at the seven airports combined said they were either satisfied or very satisfied with their experience of security screening, with half (50%) saying they were very satisfied.
- Birmingham reported the highest proportion of satisfied or very satisfied passengers (91%), closely followed by Gatwick (90%).
- The highest proportions of dissatisfied or very dissatisfied passengers was reported at Manchester (9%).
- Manchester airport is currently undergoing renovations which are due to finish in 2024, which could be linked to the reason for higher proportions of dissatisfied passengers. Further information on these renovations can be [found here](#).

### Satisfaction with experience of security screening: Seven airports combined, 2019



### Individual survey airports, 2019



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

In 2019, Manchester reported **notably less** passengers being **very satisfied** with their experience of security screening than any other surveyed airport.

Among all surveyed airports in 2019, female passengers reported being **very satisfied more** than male passengers with security screening

**More** passengers aged 65+ reported being **very dissatisfied** with their experience at security screening across all airports compared to anyone under the age of 45.

In 2019, Birmingham, Heathrow and Gatwick reported **more** passengers being **satisfied or very satisfied** with their experience of security screening than the four other surveyed airports.

Among all surveyed airports in 2019, passengers travelling long-haul were **notably more satisfied or very satisfied** with the security screening process than both domestic and short-haul passengers at all airports.

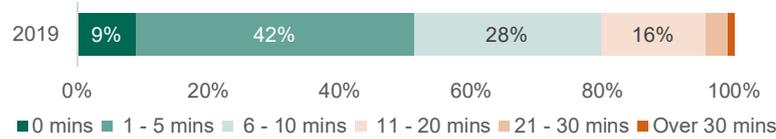
UK residents were **more satisfied or very satisfied** than foreign residents on their experience with security screening.



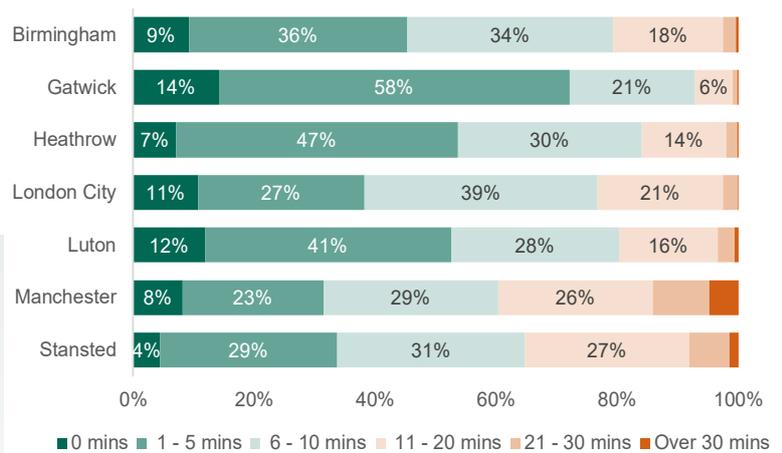
- For all surveyed airports the average queue time in 2019, based on passengers' estimates of how long they queued, was 8.7 minutes.
- The majority (51%) of passengers surveyed said they queued for 5 minutes or less whilst 20% reported queuing for more than 10 minutes.
- The average perceived queuing time in 2019 ranged from 5.0 minutes at Gatwick, where 72% said they queued for 5 minutes or less, to 12.7 minutes at Manchester, where 31% said they queued for 5 minutes or less.

### Perceived security screening queuing time (banded) based on passenger estimates:

#### Seven airports combined, 2019



#### Individual survey airports, 2019



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

**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

In 2019, Gatwick reported **extensively more** passengers with a perceived queuing time of 1 to 5 minutes than any other surveyed airport.

At Heathrow passengers reported perceived queuing times of no queue (0 minutes) **considerably less** than the previous year, 2018. This suggests queuing at Heathrow in 2019 took longer than 2018.

At Manchester airport passengers reported queuing 0 minutes and 1 to 5 minutes **notably less** in 2019 compared to the previous year, 2018.

In 2019, Stansted reported **less** passengers reporting perceived queuing times of 0 minutes and 1 to 5 minutes compared to the previous year, 2018.

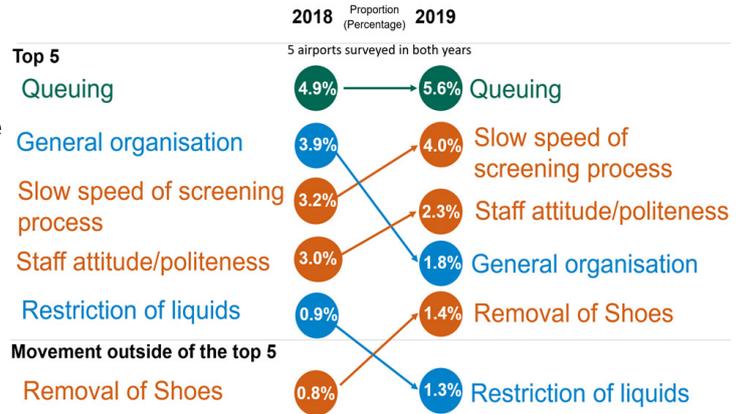
Among all surveyed airports in 2019, passengers at Manchester were **more likely to report** a perceived queuing time of over 20 minutes.

There were no statistically significant differences in perceived queuing times between different genders and age groups among all surveyed airports.

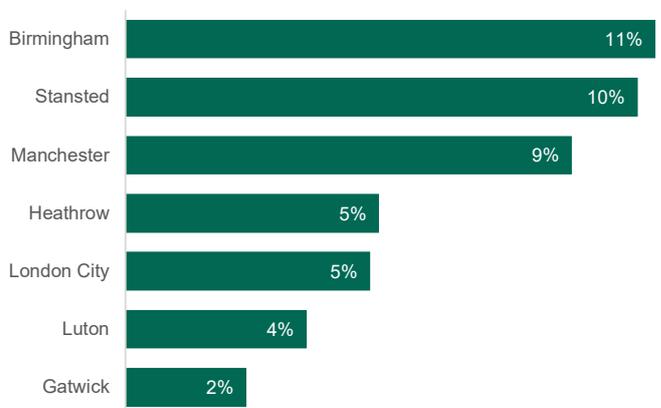


- For the 5 airports that were surveyed in both 2018 and 2019, queuing remained the least satisfactory aspect of security screening.
- For the 5 airports that were surveyed in both 2018 and 2019, general organisation fell to the fourth least satisfactory aspect compared to second in 2018.
- For the 5 airports that were surveyed in both 2018 and 2019 the removal of shoes replaced the restrictions of liquids in the top 5 least satisfactory aspects of security screening.
- For all 7 airports surveyed in 2019 just over a fifth (21%) of all respondents identified a least satisfactory aspect of security screening.
- The proportion of passengers who identified an aspect with which they were least satisfied ranged from 12% at Gatwick to 32% at Stansted and Manchester.
- Birmingham reported the highest percentage of passengers stating queuing as the least satisfactory aspect of security screening (displayed in the graph).

**Top 5 least satisfactory aspects of security screening: Airports (Gatwick, Heathrow, Luton, Stansted and Manchester), 2018 - 2019**



**Distribution of passengers reporting queuing as the least satisfactory aspect: Individual survey airports, 2019**



Among all surveyed airports in 2019, passengers at Gatwick were **less likely to report** a least satisfactory aspect of the security screening process with only **12% reporting a least satisfactory aspect**.

At London City passengers are **more likely to report lack of seating, removal of belt/jacket and unprepared passengers** as the aspects they are least satisfied with compared to all other surveyed airports.

Females at all airports were more likely to state the restriction of liquids (1.5%) as the least satisfied aspect of security screening, with this being reported **slightly more** than males (1%).

Passengers aged 65+ report the **removal of shoes (2%)** as the least satisfied aspect of the security screening **slightly more** than anyone younger than 65 (1%).

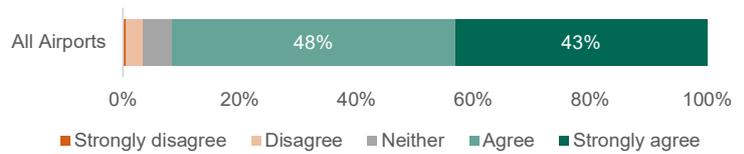
Passengers flying long-haul are more likely **not to report** a least satisfactory aspect of the security screening process than domestic and short haul passengers.

Males at all airports were slightly more likely to state the removal of belt/jacket (0.4%) and removal of laptop (0.2%) as the least satisfactory aspect of security screening than females.

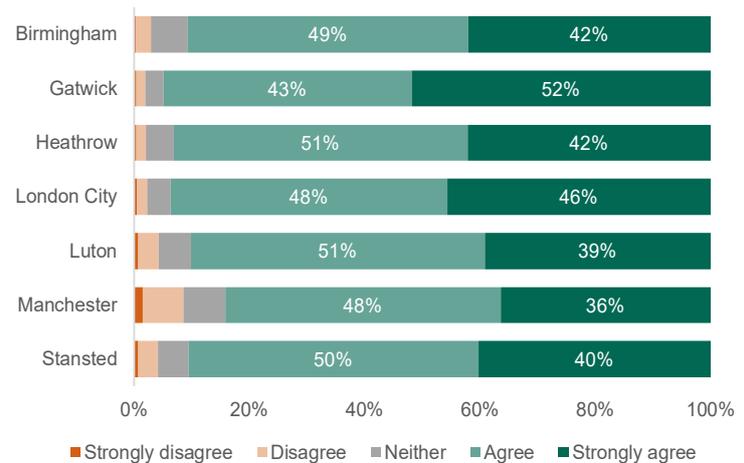


- A large majority (92%) of passengers agreed or strongly agreed that any inconvenience caused by security screening was acceptable.
- For the same five airports which have been surveyed each year (Gatwick, Heathrow, Luton, Manchester and Stansted) the proportion of passengers who disagreed or strongly disagreed has remained at 3%, this has remained broadly stable since 2012.
- Agreement that inconvenience was acceptable was highest at Gatwick (95% agreed or strongly agreed), where satisfaction with security screening was also the highest. Conversely, agreement with the statement was lowest at Manchester (84%), where satisfaction was also the lowest.

Agreement with acceptability of any inconvenience caused by security screening: Seven airports combined, 2019



Individual survey airports, 2019



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

In 2019, Gatwick reported a larger proportion of passengers that **strongly agreed or agreed** that inconvenience was acceptable compared to all the other airports surveyed.

At Manchester airport, a **higher** proportion of passengers reported **disagreeing or strongly disagreeing** with the acceptance of inconvenience caused by the security screening compared to all other airports surveyed.

Among all surveyed airports, business travellers were **more** likely to **disagree or strongly disagree** with the acceptance of inconvenience than passengers travelling for leisure.

Passengers travelling long-haul were **more likely to accept any inconvenience** caused by the security screening than domestic or short haul passengers.

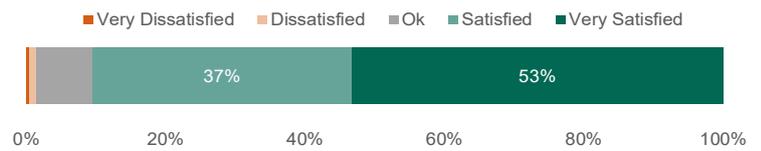
UK residents were **more likely to accept any inconvenience** caused by the security screening than foreign residents.

At Luton, there was a **notably lower** proportion of passengers that reported **agreeing** with the acceptance of inconvenience by the security screening in 2019 compared to 2018.

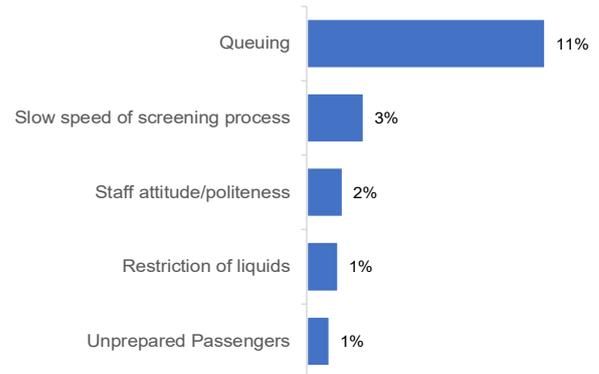
## Birmingham

- Birmingham airport is newly included in the security screening survey.
- Birmingham reported the largest proportion of satisfied passengers.
- Around 11% of Birmingham passengers stated queuing was the least satisfactory aspect of security even though 45% of passengers had a perceived queuing time of 5 minutes or less.
- 91% agree or strongly agree with the statement of acceptable inconvenience at Birmingham. This is an average proportion compared to other surveyed airports this.

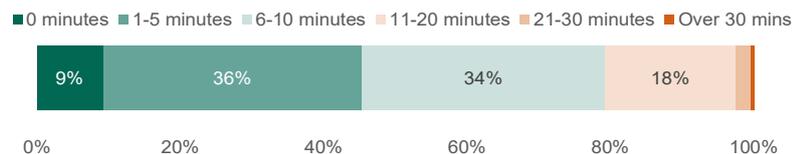
### Satisfaction with security screening, 2019



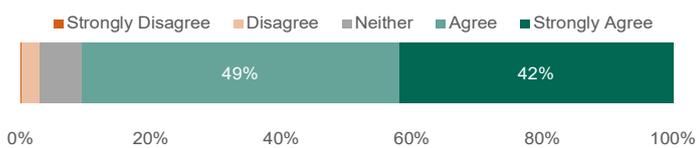
### Least satisfactory aspect of security process, 2019



### Perceived queuing times, 2019



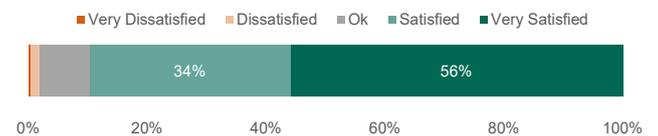
### Agreement that inconvenience was acceptable, 2019



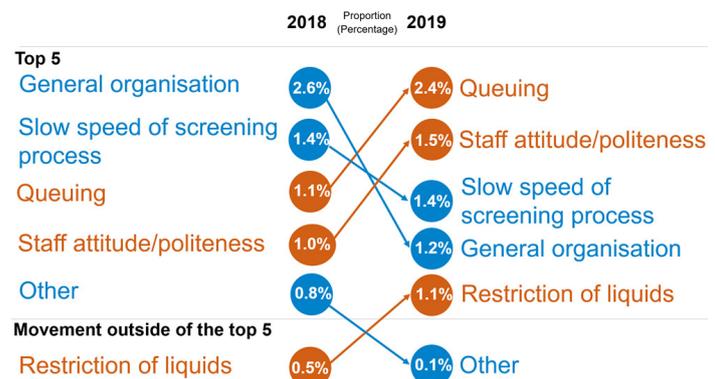
## Gatwick

- 90% of passengers at Gatwick reported being satisfied or very satisfied with security screening, a 1pp decrease from the previous year.
- Gatwick passengers state queuing and staff attitudes as the least satisfactory aspect of the security process.
- The proportion of passengers reporting general organisation as the least satisfactory aspect fell to 1% in 2019, and was much lower when compared to 2018.
- 72% of passengers reported perceived queuing times of 5 minutes or less.
- 95% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement of acceptable inconvenience at Gatwick, this is the same as the previous year (2018).

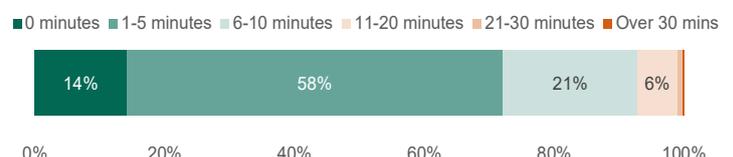
### Satisfaction with security screening, 2019



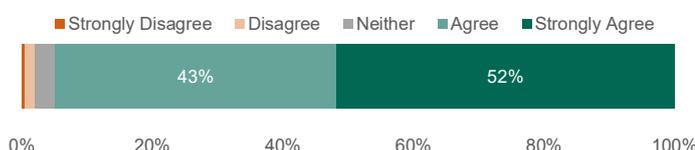
### Least satisfactory aspect of security process



### Perceived queuing times, 2019



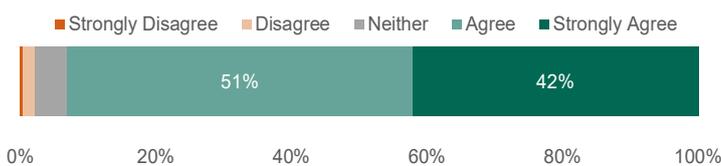
### Agreement that inconvenience was acceptable, 2019



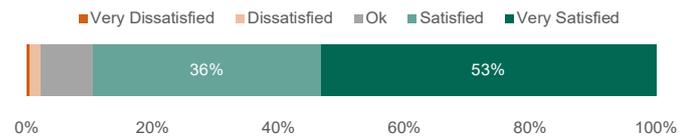
## Heathrow

- 89% of passengers at Heathrow reported being satisfied or very satisfied with security screening, a 2pp increase from the previous year.
- Heathrow passengers stated queuing (5%) and slow speed of screening process (3%) were the least satisfactory aspect of the security process.
- General organisation is 1%, this is significantly less than the previous year.
- 54% of passengers reported a perceived queuing times of 5 minutes or less.
- 93% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement of acceptable inconvenience, this is 1pp more than the previous year (2018).

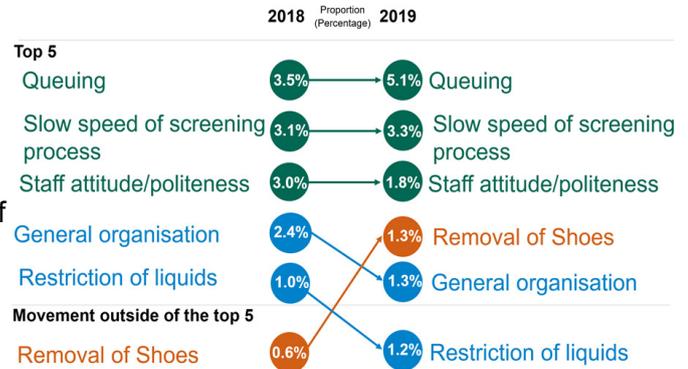
### Agreement that inconvenience was acceptable, 2019



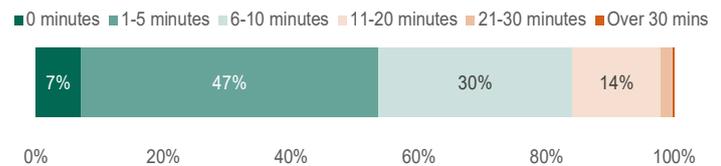
### Satisfaction with security screening, 2019



### Least satisfactory aspect of security process



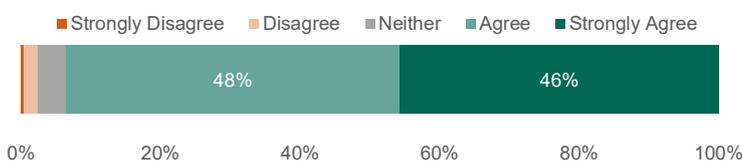
### Perceived queuing times, 2019



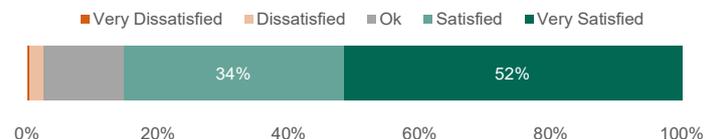
## London City

- London City is a newly included airport in the security screening survey for 2019.
- London City reported 86% of passengers being satisfied or very satisfied in 2019.
- Passengers stated queuing (5%), unprepared passengers (4%) and slow speed of screening process (4%) are the least satisfactory aspects of the security process.
- 38% of passengers reported perceived queuing times of 5 minutes or less.
- 97% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement of acceptable inconvenience.

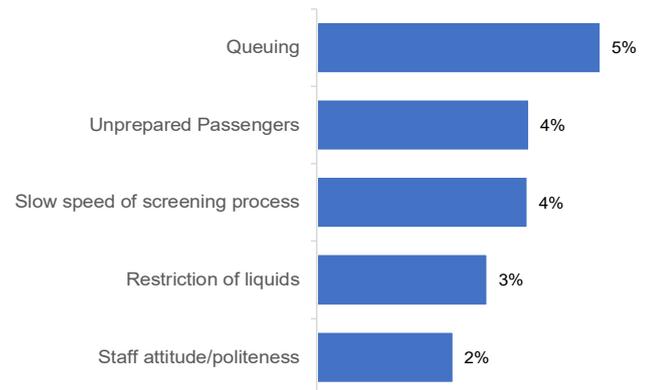
### Agreement that inconvenience was acceptable, 2019



### Satisfaction with security screening, 2019



### Least satisfactory aspect of security process, 2019



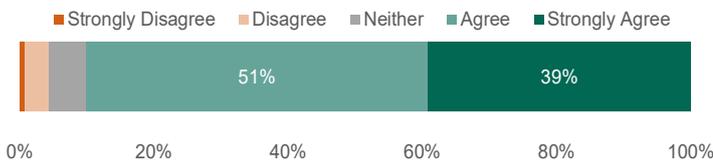
### Perceived queuing times, 2019



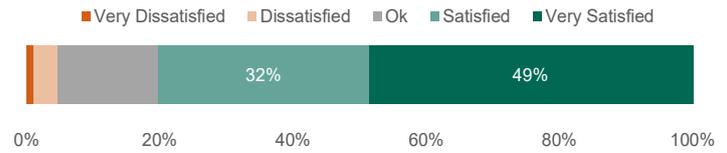
## Luton

- Luton reported 80% of passengers being satisfied or very satisfied with security screening in 2019, this is notably less than 2018 (85%).
- The proportion of passengers stating slow speed of screening process as the least satisfactory aspect of security screening was significantly more than in 2018.
- 53% of passengers reported perceived queuing times of 5 minutes or less.
- 90% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement of acceptable inconvenience.

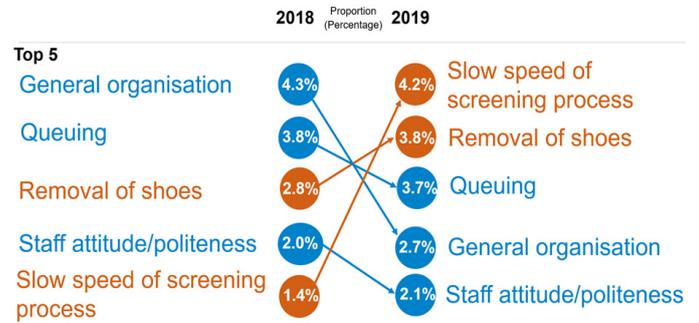
### Agreement that inconvenience was acceptable, 2019



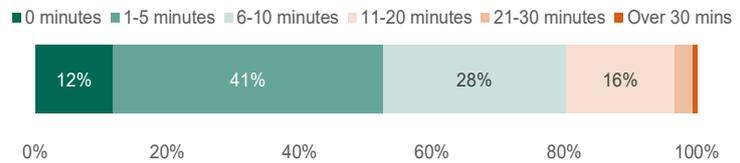
### Satisfaction with security screening, 2019



### Least satisfactory aspect of security process



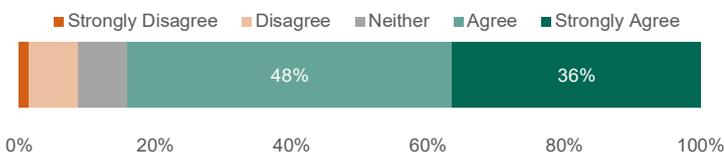
### Perceived queuing times, 2019



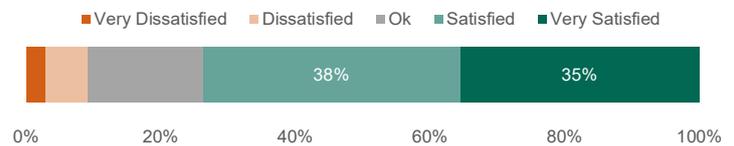
## Manchester

- 9% of passengers at Manchester reported being dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with security screening in 2019, this is significantly more than all other surveyed airports.
- Passengers at Manchester stated queuing (9%) and slow speed of screening process (9%) as the least satisfactory aspects of the security process.
- 40% of passengers reported perceived queuing times of more than 10 minutes. 31% of passengers reported queuing for 5 minutes or less.
- 9% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement of acceptable inconvenience, this is significantly higher than all the years between 2011 to 2018.

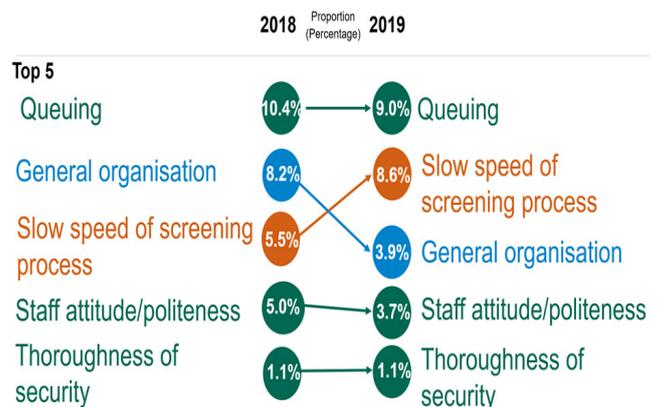
### Agreement that inconvenience was acceptable, 2019



### Satisfaction with security screening, 2019



### Least satisfactory aspect of security process



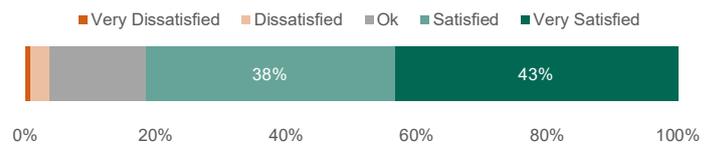
### Perceived queuing times, 2019



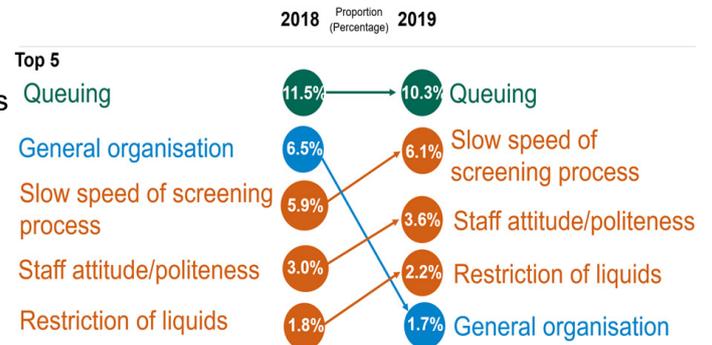
## Stansted

- 82% of passengers at Stansted reported being satisfied or very satisfied with security screening in 2019, this is 2pp more than the previous year.
- Passengers stated queuing (10%) and slow speed of screening process (6%) as the least satisfactory aspects of the security process.
- 34% of passengers reported perceived queuing times of less than 5 minutes, this is significantly less than the previous year (43%).
- 91% agree or strongly agree with the statement of acceptable inconvenience.

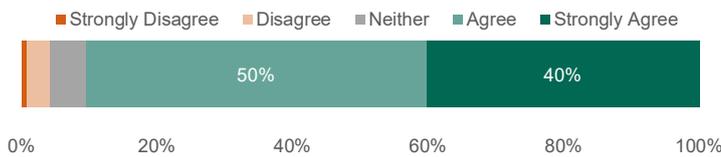
### Satisfaction with security screening, 2019



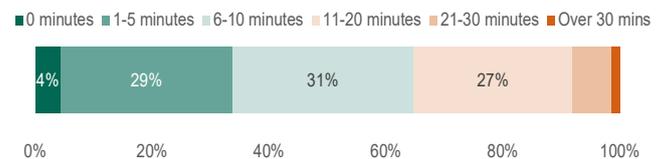
### Least satisfactory aspect of security process



### Agreement that inconvenience was acceptable, 2019



### Perceived queuing times, 2019



## Background information

### 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 at the departure gate. Additional information about the survey can be found at: <http://caa.co.uk/surveys>.
- In 2019, 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. 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. Sample sizes for 2019 security screening module are included below:

Airport	Birmingham	Gatwick	Heathrow	London City	Luton	Manchester	Stansted	Total
Surveyed Passengers	5,363	5,042	4,397	2,221	2,498	5,007	4,909	29,437

- These questions were asked of a sub-sample of the passengers responding to the main CAA passenger survey at Birmingham, Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted, London City, 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 2018. 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 2015.

- 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. The transition affected two out of four questions and, in turn, determines how results are presented in this publication. All other aspects of the survey were unaffected.

"How satisfied are you with your experience of the security screening used at the airport today?" In 2016 the options available to respondents when answering this question were slightly rephrased. For this reason, summarised figures prior to 2016 are reported separately.

"What aspect of the security screening were you least satisfied with?" With the adoption of electronic devices in 2016, respondents started facing a wider range of possible answers, which in turn had an impact on reported answers. For this reason, summarised figures from 2016 onwards are reported separately.

## Analysis

- 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.
- 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 only five airports were included in the survey (2009 and 2011-18). 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.
- 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.
- Security procedures may also be affected by passenger numbers, which increased at all seven airports in 2019. London City and Luton handled over 6% more passengers each in 2019 compared to 2018. Manchester handled around 3% more passengers, whereas Birmingham, Gatwick and Heathrow handled around 1% more each. Stansted handled 0.5% more passengers in 2019 compared to 2018.

## Quality

- Official for National Statistics are produced to the high professional standards set by the Code of Practice for Statistics. However, these statistics have not yet been assessed by the Office for Statistics Regulation.
- 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.

## Impact of coronavirus on the 2020 survey collection and publication timetable

The coronavirus pandemic has impacted both the overall volume of air passenger traffic at UK airports and the feasibility of surveying at airports in 2020. As a result, the CAA survey collection was suspended from mid-March 2020. The survey has resumed in October 2020 with a reduced questionnaire due to the operational challenges of conducting the a face-to-face survey in the context of the pandemic. Similar surveys conducted at ports and airports, such as the [International Passenger Survey](#) from the Office for National Statistics, have also been temporarily suspended.

Therefore the Department will not hold complete security screening data for 2020 and will be unable to publish its report on air passenger experience of security screening for 2020 which would have been due in June 2021.

The Department will continuously review the use of the survey and keep users updated on the status of the collection and publications through its page on the changes to [DfT statistics publications due to coronavirus](#).

## About DfT Statistics

- 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](mailto:aviation.stats@dft.gov.uk)



To hear more about DfT statistics publications as they are released please follow us on Twitter via our @DfTstats account: <http://www.twitter.com/DfTstats>. TWITTER, TWEET, RETWEET and the Twitter logo are trademarks of Twitter, Inc. or its affiliates

**Annex A: CAA Survey module on security screening for 2019**

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]

.....

**End of questionnaire**

## Annex B: Publication timeline

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

Year	LHR	LGW	STN	LTN	MAN	BRS	EDI	GLA	INV	LBA	BHX	LCY	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.	
2018	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓									
2019	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						✓	✓		