

# Air passenger experience of security screening: Results from CAA survey module (2011)

## 1. Key findings

- 1.1 Over 90% of air passengers surveyed in 2011 said they were very or fairly satisfied with their experiences at security screening and 3% were very or fairly dissatisfied.
- 1.2 The aspects of security screening with which passengers were least satisfied were:
- queuing (cited by 7%)
  - removal of shoes (6%)
  - restriction of liquids (5%)
  - slow speed of processing (4%).
- The majority of passengers (68%) said there was no aspect with which they were least satisfied.
- 1.3 The average time spent passengers said they spent queuing for security screening ranged from 5.1 minutes at Manchester to 8.3 minutes at Stansted.
- 1.4 Overall, 13% of passengers at the five airports surveyed said they did not have to queue, over half (56%) said they queued for 5 minutes or less and 10% said they queued for over 10 minutes.
- 1.5 The majority of passengers (89%) agreed that any inconvenience caused by the security screening was acceptable.
- 1.6 Among the three airports which have been surveyed each year since 2008, levels of satisfaction have improved at Heathrow and stayed more or less the same at Stansted and at Manchester, which has had consistently high levels of satisfaction. At Gatwick, which was also surveyed in 2009, satisfaction with security screening was higher in 2011 and perceived queuing time was lower.

## 2. Introduction

- 2.1 In 2011, over 20,000 passengers at Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted, Luton and Manchester airports were asked about their experience of security screening. The survey questions covered:
- satisfaction with security screening
  - the least satisfactory aspect
  - estimated queuing time
  - acceptability of any inconvenience caused.
- 2.2 These questions were sponsored by the Department for Transport and were included in the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) passenger survey. The results are summarised here, together with results from similar surveys in 2008 to 2010. Detailed results for earlier years are available on the Department's website.
- 2.3 The set of questions asked in 2011 is given in **Annex A**. As responses may be influenced by the passenger profile at each airport, an overview of passenger characteristics at the five airports surveyed in 2011 is given in **Annex B**. A detailed set of results for each question, including breakdowns by passenger and flight characteristics, is presented in **Annex C**.

## 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.

Additional information about the survey can be found at: [www.caa.co.uk/surveys](http://www.caa.co.uk/surveys)

In 2011, a set of four questions (see Annex A) relating to security screening was sponsored by the Department for Transport (DfT) 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. 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 2011.

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 and 2011 Heathrow Terminal 2 was not in operation.

### 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 didn't know) have been excluded from the analysis of that question.

Where sample sizes are sufficient, differences by flight and passenger characteristics have been examined. Similarly, where sample sizes permit, changes over time are identified for the airports surveyed in multiple years. However, due to the different subset of airports included each year, it is not possible to compare the overall results for each survey year.

Percentages may not add up to 100 in some tables due to rounding.

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 2011 is given in Annexes B and C.

### Changes to security screening

Passengers' experiences of security screening may be affected by changes to screening procedures, such as the introduction of security scanners at Heathrow and Manchester from February 2010.

### 3. Results

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

- 3.1 A large majority (over 90%) of passengers said they were very or fairly satisfied with their experience at security screening. Over half the respondents at each airport said they were very satisfied.
- 3.2 Satisfaction was highest at Manchester airport, where 76% of respondents said they were very satisfied with their experience and a further 18% were fairly satisfied. Satisfaction was also high at Gatwick, where 67% of passengers were very satisfied and a further 27% were fairly satisfied, and at Heathrow (65% and 28% respectively).
- 3.3 There was little difference in satisfaction between different types of passengers (such as by age, gender, purpose of flight).

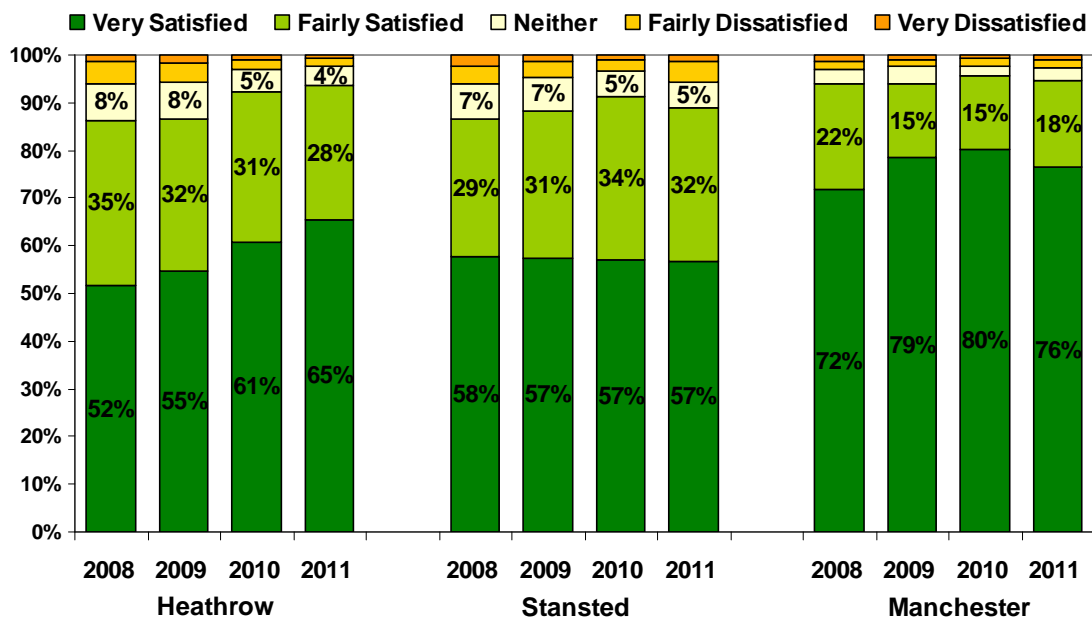
**Table 1: Satisfaction with security screening, 2008-2011**

	Survey year	Very or fairly satisfied	Neither	Very or fairly dissatisfied	Unweighted sample size
Heathrow	2008	86%	8%	6%	4,876
Heathrow	2009	87%	8%	6%	6,220
Heathrow	2010	92%	5%	3%	6,154
Heathrow	2011	93%	4%	2%	5,453
Stansted	2008	87%	7%	6%	4,059
Stansted	2009	88%	7%	5%	4,458
Stansted	2010	91%	5%	4%	4,799
Stansted	2011	89%	5%	6%	4,311
Manchester	2008	94%	3%	3%	3,854
Manchester	2009	94%	4%	3%	4,732
Manchester	2010	96%	2%	2%	4,270
Manchester	2011	95%	3%	3%	5,076
Gatwick	2009	87%	8%	5%	5,212
Gatwick	2011	94%	4%	2%	4,361
Luton	2009	87%	7%	6%	1,345
Luton	2011	89%	6%	5%	1,392
Bristol	2008	86%	6%	8%	1,803
Edinburgh	2009	94%	3%	2%	2,688
Inverness	2009	89%	6%	5%	509
Leeds Bradford	2010	94%	3%	3%	1,059

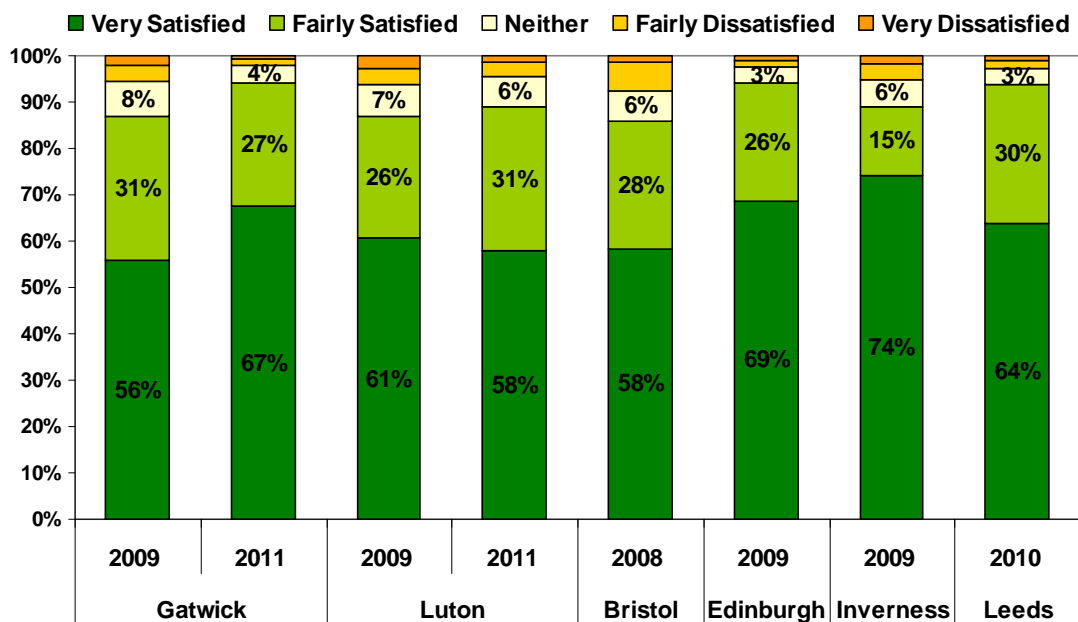
Source: CAA Passenger Survey 2008 to 2011 – DfT module. Weighted results.

- 3.4 The proportion of respondents who were very or fairly satisfied with their experience of security screening at Gatwick increased from 87% in 2009 to 94% in 2011. Satisfaction at Heathrow has also increased since the airport was first

**Figure 1a: Satisfaction with security screening: Heathrow, Stansted and Manchester, 2008-2011**



**Figure 1b: Satisfaction with security screening: other airports surveyed in 2008-2011**



Source: CAA Passenger Survey 2008-2011 – DfT module. Weighted results.

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

- 3.5 The majority (68%) of respondents said there was no aspect of security screening with which they were least satisfied. This was the case for 80% of respondents at Manchester, over two-thirds at Heathrow (68%), Luton (68%) and Gatwick (67%) and nearly two-thirds (62%) at Stansted.
- 3.6 The aspect of security screening with which passengers at all five airports were least satisfied was queuing, which was cited by 12% at Luton, 9% at Gatwick, 7% at Stansted, 6% at Heathrow and 4% at Manchester.
- 3.7 This was followed by removal of shoes, which was cited by 6% of all passengers surveyed, and restriction of liquids, cited by 5%.
- 3.8 At Stansted, 7% mentioned the slow speed of the screening process and 5% mentioned staff attitude; these proportions were lower at the other four airports.
- 3.9 The proportion of passengers saying there was no aspect with which they were least satisfied increased from 57% in 2010 to 68% at Heathrow and from 76% to 80% at Manchester; conversely the proportion identifying particular problems decreased at these airports.

**Table 2: Least satisfactory aspects of security screening, 2011<sup>1</sup>**

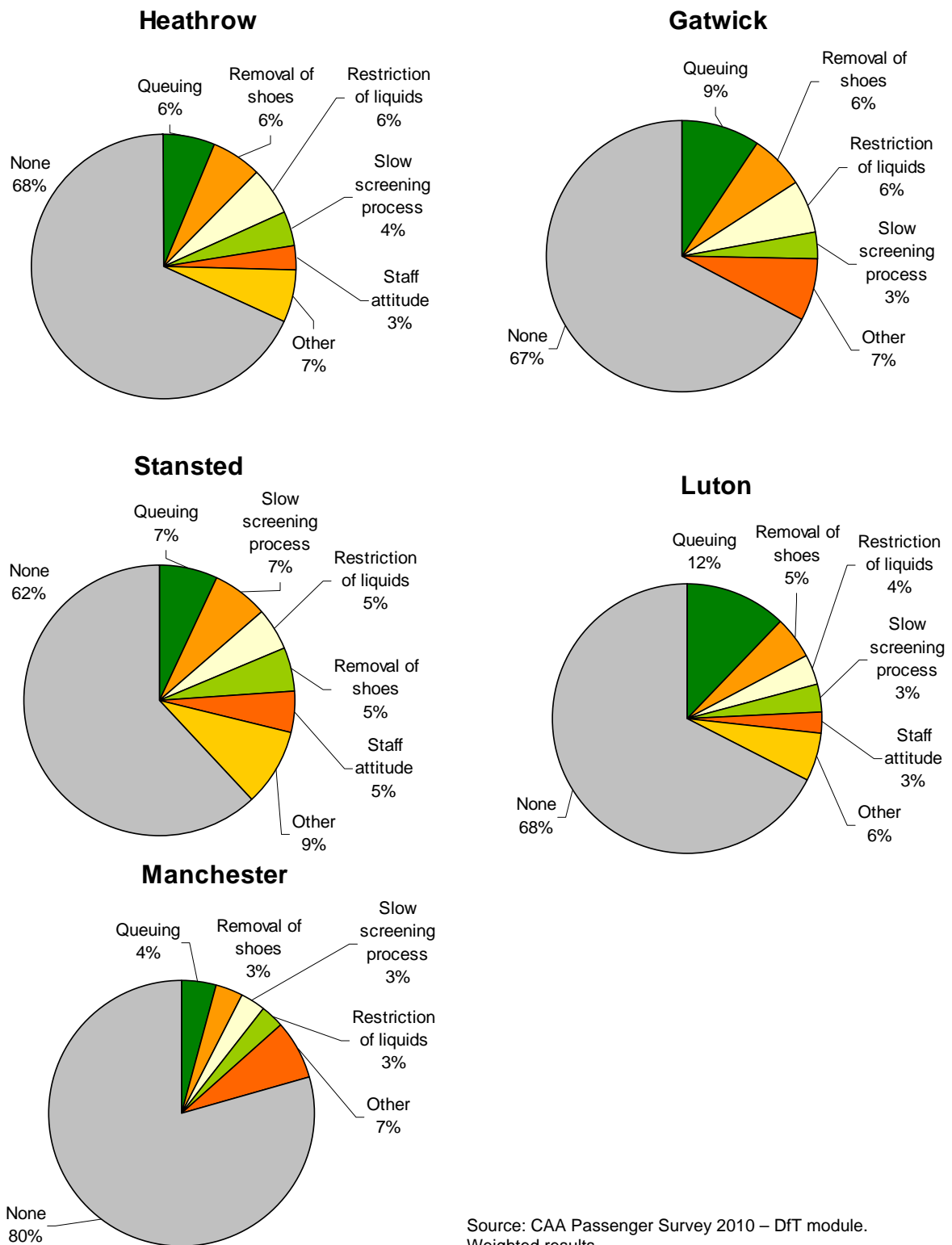
	Heathrow	Gatwick	Stansted	Luton	Manchester
Queuing	6%	9%	7%	12%	4%
Removal of shoes	6%	6%	5%	5%	3%
Restriction of liquids	6%	6%	5%	4%	3%
Slow speed of screening process	4%	3%	7%	3%	3%
Staff attitude/politeness	3%	1%	5%	3%	1%
Staff handling during body search	1%	1%	1%	-	1%
Intrusive checking of bag	1%	1%	1%	-	-
Staff handling during bag search	1%	1%	1%	-	-
Thoroughness of Security	1%	1%	-	1%	-
Removal of belt/jacket	-	1%	-	-	-
Purchase of Liquids bag	-	-	-	1%	-
Lack of space at security	-	0	-	-	-
Staff Awareness	-	-	-	-	-
Unprepared Passengers	-	-	-	-	-
Intrusion of Privacy	-	-	-	-	-
Removal of laptop	-	-	-	-	-
Information	-	0	-	-	-
General Organisation	-	0	-	-	-
Help with young children	-	-	0	-	-
Lack of Seating	-	0	0	-	-
Other	2%	2%	5%	1%	3%
None	68%	67%	62%	68%	80%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Unweighted sample size	5,369	4,343	4,285	1,340	4,987

Source: CAA Passenger Survey 2011 – DfT module. Weighted results.

- negligible (less than 0.5%)

<sup>1</sup> This question was asked for the first time in 2010

**Figure 2: Least satisfactory aspects of security screening, 2011**



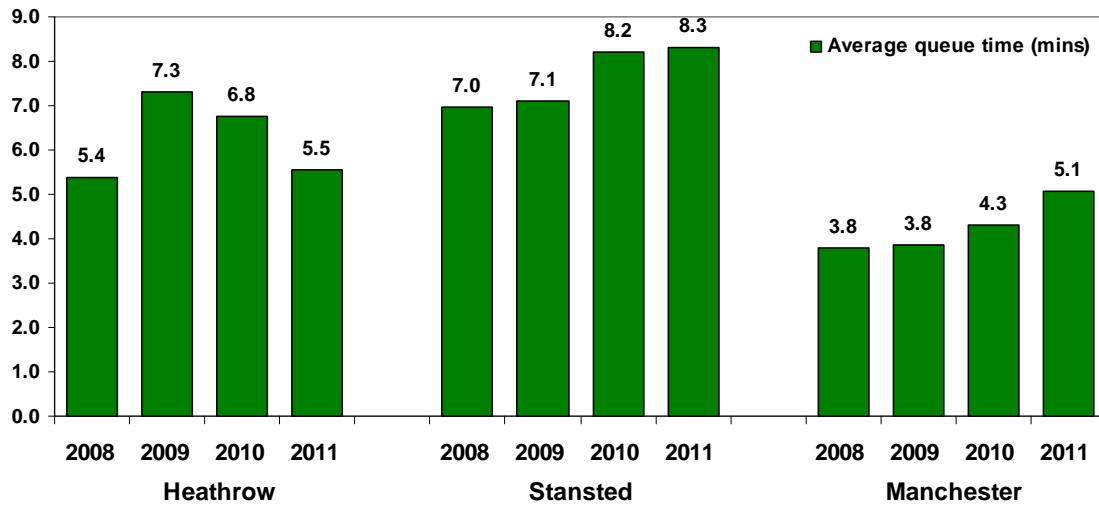
Source: CAA Passenger Survey 2010 – DfT module. Weighted results

3.10 People travelling on domestic flights were more likely to mention queuing as the aspect with which they were least satisfied, with 11% mentioning this compared to 8% of passengers on short-haul flights and 5% on long-haul flights.

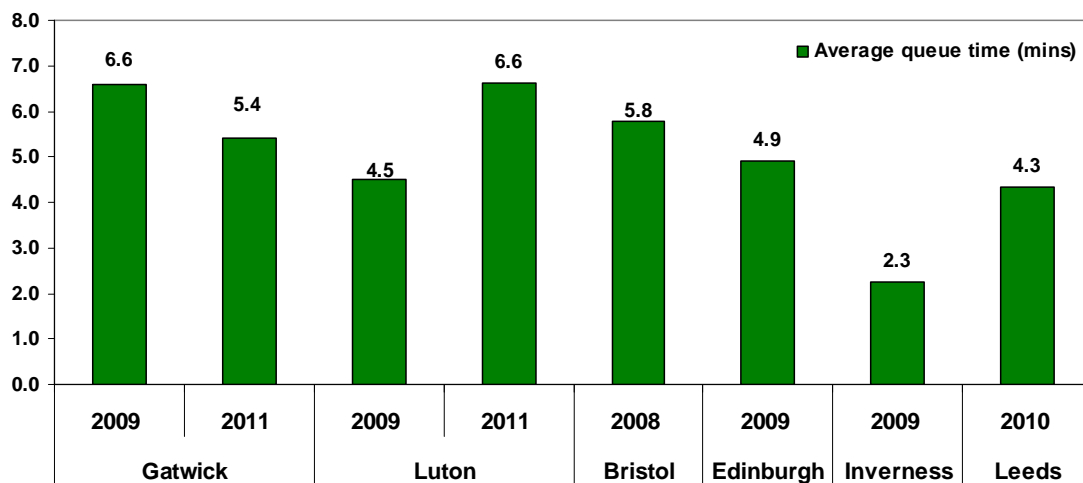
**For how long, in minutes, did you queue when waiting to be security screened?**

3.11 On average, passengers at Stansted said they queued for the longest amount of time (8.3 minutes) followed by Luton (6.6 minutes). Passengers at Heathrow, Gatwick and Manchester said they queued for between 5.1 and 5.5 minutes on average.

**Figure 3a: Perceived average queuing time at security screening based on passenger estimates: Heathrow, Stansted and Manchester, 2008-2011**



**Figure 3b: Perceived average queuing time at security screening based on passenger estimates: other airports surveyed in 2008-2011**



Source: CAA Passenger Survey 2008-2010 – DfT module. Weighted results.

3.12 In 2011 the average time passengers said they spent queuing at security screening fell at Heathrow for the second consecutive year, from 7.3 minutes in 2009, to 6.8 in 2010 and 5.5 in 2011. Manchester saw the opposite pattern, with average perceived queuing time increasing from 3.8 minutes in 2009 to 4.3 in 2010 and 5.1 in 2011.

3.13 At Stansted, the queuing time was similar in 2011 to 2010 (at 8.3 and 8.2 minutes respectively), having increased from 7.1 in 2009.

3.14 At Gatwick, the average perceived queuing time has fallen from 6.6 minutes in 2009 to 5.4 in 2011 while at Luton it has increased from 4.5 minutes to 6.6 over the same period.

**Table 3: Perceived queuing time at security screening based on passenger estimates, 2008-2011**

	Survey year	0 minutes	1-5 minutes	6-10 minutes	Over 10 minutes	Unweighted sample size
Heathrow	2008	14%	58%	19%	8%	4,886
Heathrow	2009	10%	48%	26%	16%	6,201
Heathrow	2010	10%	50%	27%	13%	6,139
Heathrow	2011	12%	59%	21%	8%	5,447
Stansted	2008	10%	52%	25%	14%	4,051
Stansted	2009	8%	53%	25%	15%	4,457
Stansted	2010	7%	46%	27%	20%	4,790
Stansted	2011	7%	46%	25%	21%	4,305
Manchester	2008	27%	59%	10%	5%	3,811
Manchester	2009	28%	57%	10%	5%	4,662
Manchester	2010	30%	51%	12%	7%	4,265
Manchester	2011	16%	61%	15%	8%	5,071
Gatwick	2009	17%	50%	20%	14%	5,226
Gatwick	2011	17%	56%	19%	9%	4,372
Luton	2009	18%	62%	13%	6%	1,345
Luton	2011	15%	49%	22%	15%	1,390
Bristol	2008	22%	48%	19%	11%	1,799
Edinburgh	2009	14%	63%	18%	5%	2,678
Inverness	2009	56%	36%	5%	3%	509
Leeds Bradford	2010	33%	45%	14%	8%	1,060

Source: CAA Passenger Survey 2008 to 2011 – DfT module. Weighted results.

3.15 At Heathrow, Gatwick and Manchester, over 70% of passengers said they queued for 5 minutes or less compared to 64% at Luton and 53% at Stansted.

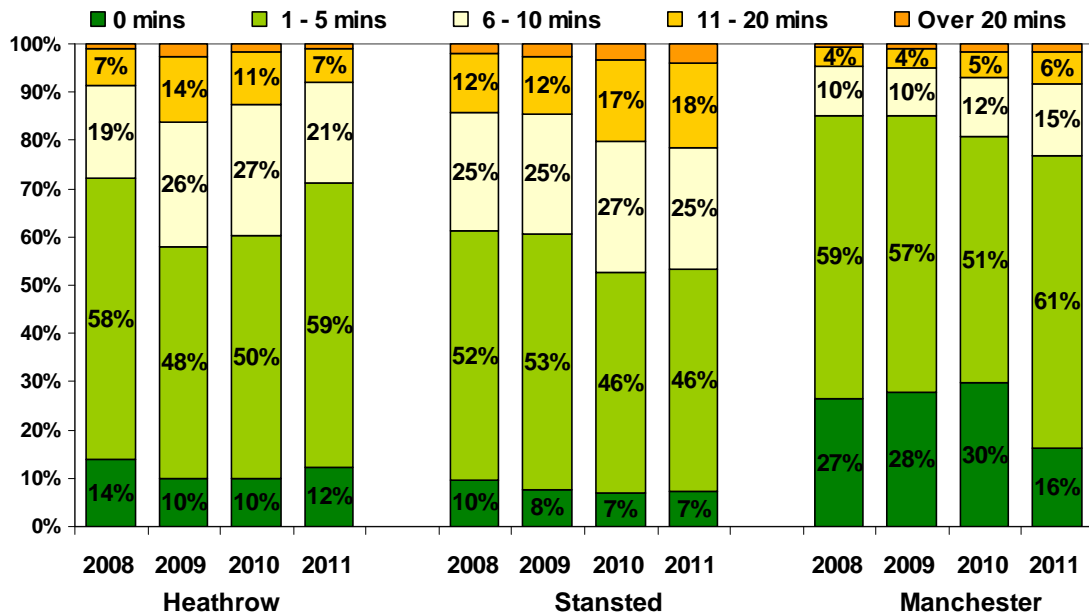
3.16 Conversely, the proportion who said they queued for over 10 minutes was lower at Heathrow, Gatwick and Manchester (8%-9%), than at Luton 15% and Stansted (21%). The proportion saying they queued for over 20 minutes ranged from 1% at Heathrow and Gatwick to 4% at Stansted.

3.17 It is worth noting that passengers tend to over-estimate their queuing time so these figures are likely to be higher than actual queuing times at these airports. They should nonetheless given an indication of relative queuing times between airports and the extent to which these have changed at the three airports surveyed each year.

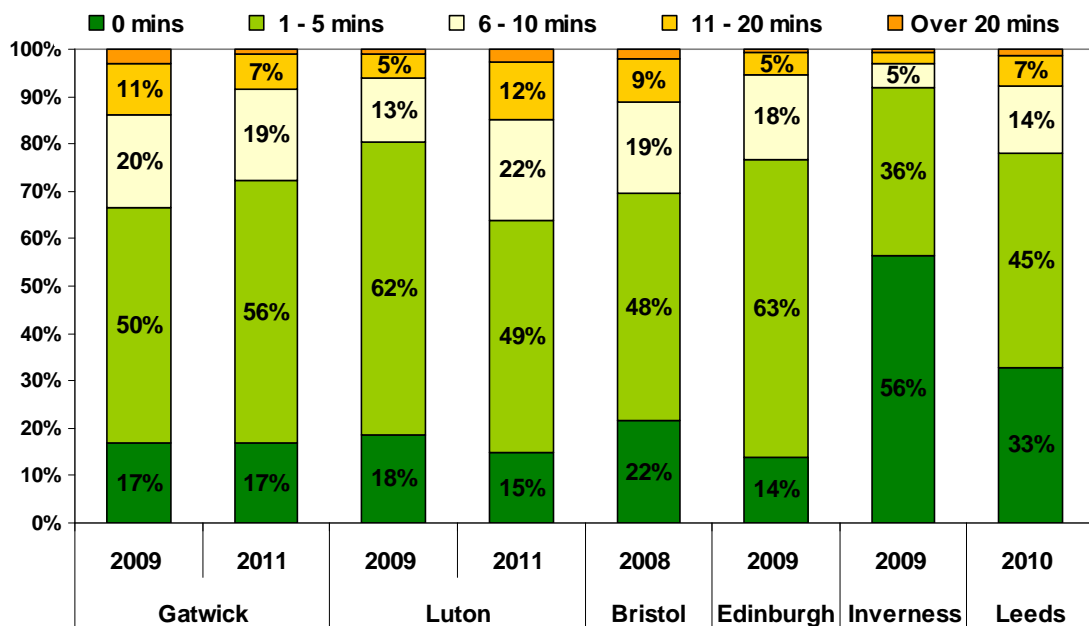


3.18 Estimates of actual queuing times are available for the three regulated airports (Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted) as part of the Service Quality Rebate (SQR) scheme. Both sources suggest that average queuing times have improved at Gatwick between 2009 and 2011 and worsened at Stansted. The picture for Heathrow is less clear; the SQR results suggest some variation in performance between 2010 and 2011 according to the terminal and the measure used (the proportion queuing less than 5 minutes or less than 10 minutes).

**Figure 4a: Perceived security screening queue time (banded) based on passenger estimates: Heathrow, Stansted and Manchester, 2008-2011**



**Figure 4b: Perceived security screening queue time (banded) based on passenger estimates: other airports surveyed in 2008-2011**



Source: CAA Passenger Survey 2008-2011 – DfT module. Weighted results.

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

3.19 Overall, a large majority (89%) of passengers agreed or strongly agreed that any inconvenience caused by security screening was acceptable, ranging from 87% at Stansted and Luton to 93% at Manchester. Among all passengers surveyed, 4% disagreed with this statement.

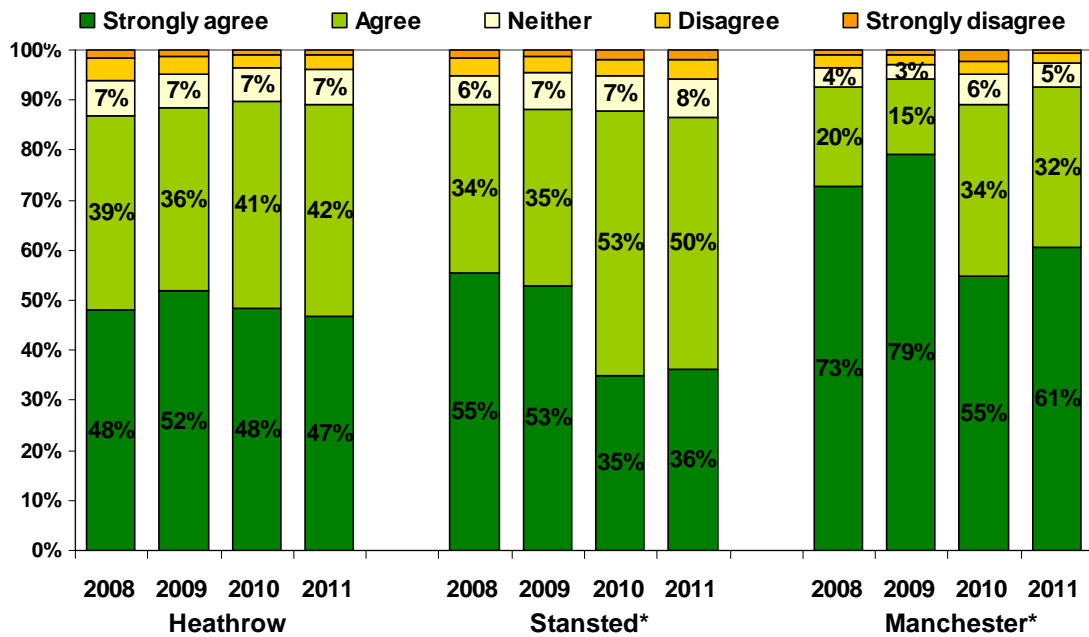
3.20 The proportion agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement was slightly higher among passengers on charter than scheduled flights (94% compared with 89%), among passengers travelling for leisure than on business (90% and 87% respectively) and among those travelling long-haul than domestic or short-haul (91% compared to 88%).

**Table 4: Agreement with acceptability of any inconvenience caused by security screening**

	Survey year	Strongly agree or agree	Neither	Strongly disagree or disagree	Unweighted sample size
Heathrow	2008	87%	7%	6%	5,037
Heathrow	2009	88%	7%	5%	6,189
Heathrow	2010	90%	7%	4%	6,127
Heathrow	2011	89%	7%	4%	5,415
Stansted	2008	89%	6%	5%	3,767
Stansted	2009	88%	7%	5%	4,142
Stansted	2010	88%	7%	5%	4,718
Stansted	2011	87%	8%	6%	4,255
Manchester	2008	93%	4%	3%	3,247
Manchester	2009	94%	3%	3%	3,149
Manchester	2010	89%	6%	5%	4,167
Manchester	2011	93%	5%	3%	4,962
Gatwick	2009	89%	6%	5%	5,136
Gatwick	2011	90%	7%	4%	4,299
Luton	2009	88%	6%	6%	1,347
Luton	2011	87%	9%	5%	1,381
Bristol	2008	89%	5%	6%	1,801
Edinburgh	2009	95%	3%	2%	2,671
Inverness	2009	93%	4%	4%	507
Leeds Bradford	2010	94%	4%	3%	1,055

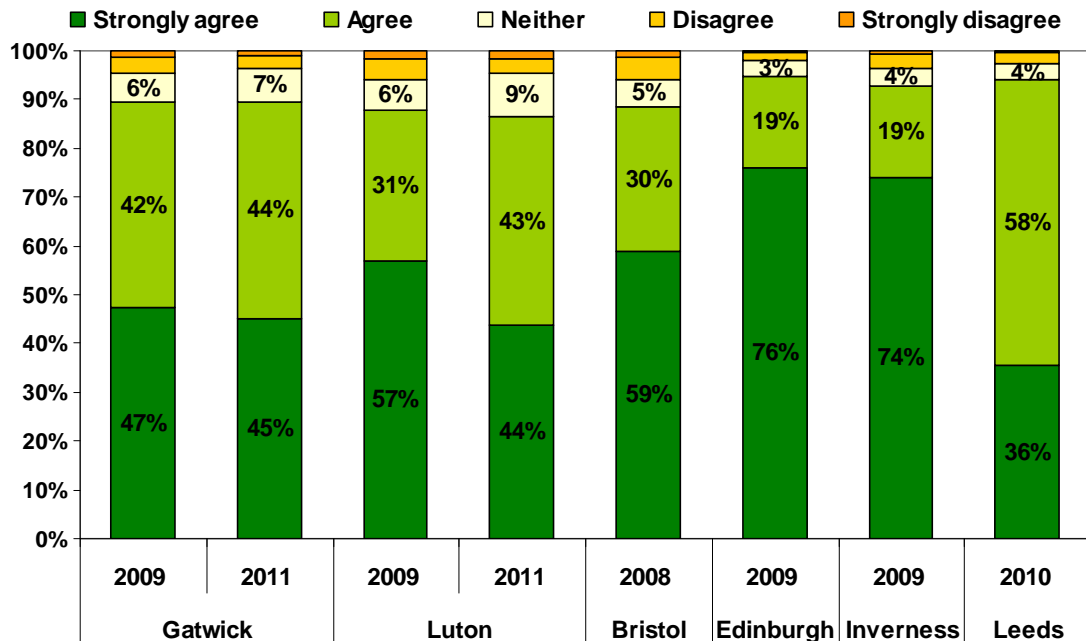
Source: CAA Passenger Survey 2008-2010 – DfT module. Weighted results.

**Figure 5a: Agreement with acceptability of any inconvenience caused by security screening: Heathrow, Stansted and Manchester, 2008-2011**



\* 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.

**Figure 5b: Agreement with acceptability of any inconvenience caused by security screening: other airports surveyed in 2008- 2011**



Source: CAA Passenger Survey 2008-2010 – DfT module. Weighted results.

CAA survey module on security screening for 2011

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]

.....

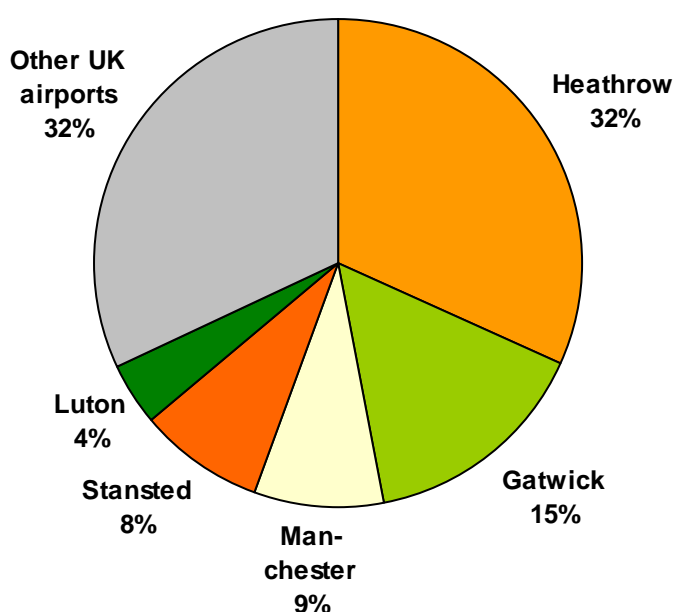
End of questionnaire

## Characteristics of passengers at the surveyed airports

In 2011, the five airports surveyed were the five largest UK airports in terms of the number of terminal passengers. They accounted for nearly 150 million terminal passengers, over two thirds (68%) of the 219 million passengers at all UK airports.

Heathrow was the largest airport, accounting for nearly a third (32%) of all terminal passengers, followed by Gatwick (15%). Manchester and Stansted accounted for a similar proportion (8-9%) while Luton accounted for roughly half this amount (4%).

**Figure B1: Total terminal passengers, 2011**



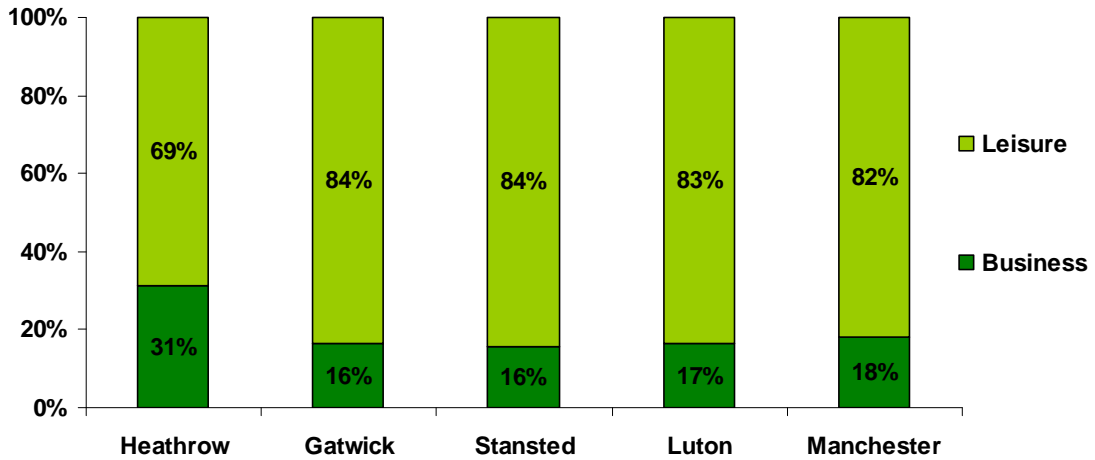
Source: CAA Airport Statistics 2011

The five airports surveyed differ not only in terms of size but also in terms of the type of passengers that use them (see Figures B2-4 and Table C1). For example:

- In 2011, **Heathrow** had a much higher proportion of long-haul passengers than the other airports at 53%. Heathrow also had a relatively high proportion of passengers who were foreign residents (56%) and travelling on business (31%).
- **Gatwick** had some long-haul flights, accounting for 15% of their passengers, and a higher proportion of passengers on charter flights than the other London airports (16%).
- **Stansted** had a high proportion of passengers on short-haul flights (91%) and a relatively high proportion of foreign residents (42%). The age profile of passengers using Stansted is relatively young, with nearly half (48%) of adult passengers aged between 16 and 34 years.
- **Manchester** had the highest proportion of passengers on charter flights (27%) and, after Heathrow, this airport had the highest proportion of long-haul passengers in the sample (25%).

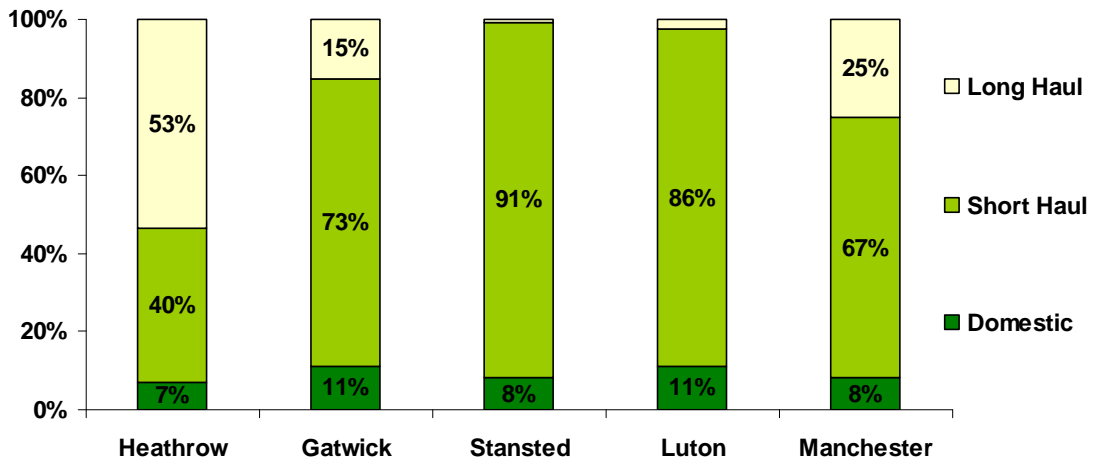
- **Luton** had a relatively high proportion of passengers on short-haul flights (86%). It mainly handled UK residents (72%), passengers travelling for leisure (83%) and passengers on scheduled flights (96%).

**Figure B2: Terminal passengers by airport and purpose**



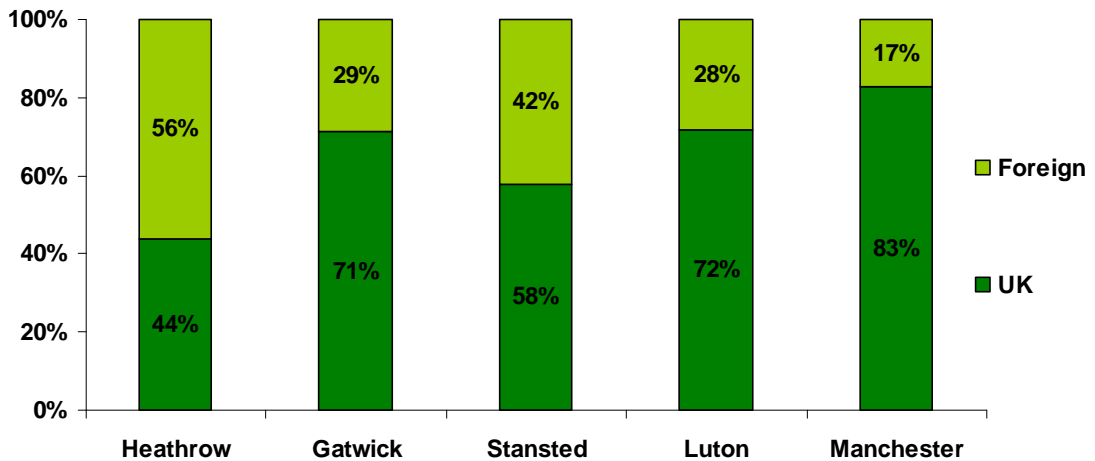
Source: CAA Passenger Survey 2011

**Figure B3: Terminal passengers by airport and destination**



Source: CAA Passenger Survey 2011

**Figure B4: Terminal passengers by airport and country of residence**



Source: CAA Passenger Survey 2011