



## Department for Transport

# Air passenger experience of security screening: 2016

### 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 2016.

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 2018

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In 2016 the majority (85%) of air passengers surveyed said they were very satisfied or satisfied with their **experiences of security screening**. Four per cent said they were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied.



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

- queuing (cited by 5%)
- slow speed of processing (3%)
- 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 7.1 minutes, ranging from 4.0 minutes at Gatwick to 10.8 minutes at Stansted.



The majority of passengers (91%) strongly agreed or agreed that any **inconvenience caused by the security screening was acceptable**.

Acceptance of inconvenience and average queue time at the five airports combined were similar in 2016 in comparison with 2015, although there were some differences between 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 2011-2016.

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.

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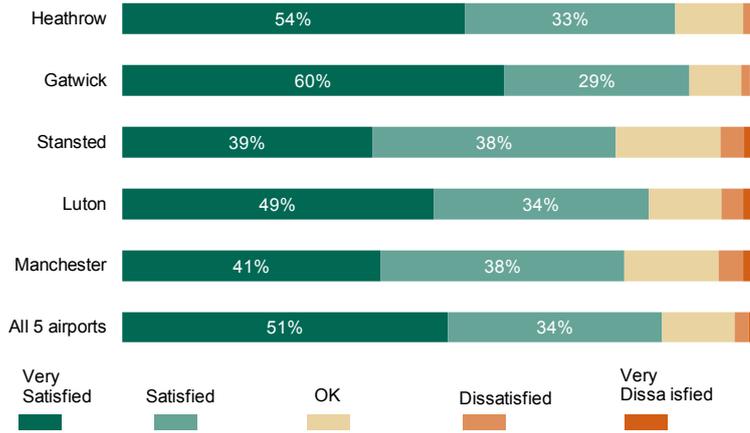
Public: [aviation.stats@dft.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:aviation.stats@dft.gsi.gov.uk)



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



### What changed in 2016?

The options available to the respondents when answering this question have been slightly rephrased. For this reason, no changes over time can be identified for this question.

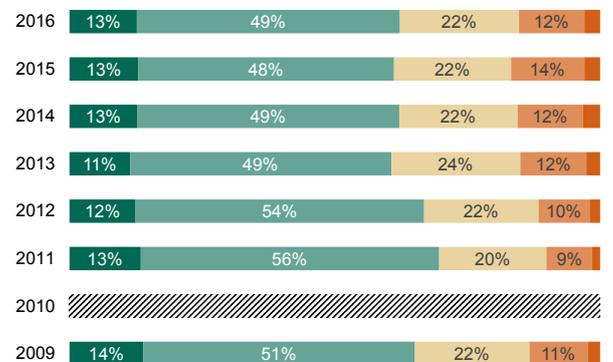
- The majority (85%) of respondents surveyed in 2016 at the five airports combined (Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted, Luton & Manchester) said they were either very satisfied or satisfied with their experience of security screening, with just over a half (51%) saying they were very satisfied.
- There was some variation between airports. In 2016, more passengers were very satisfied at Gatwick compared with other airports. The proportion of passengers who were very satisfied or satisfied ranged from 78% at Stansted to 89% at Gatwick.



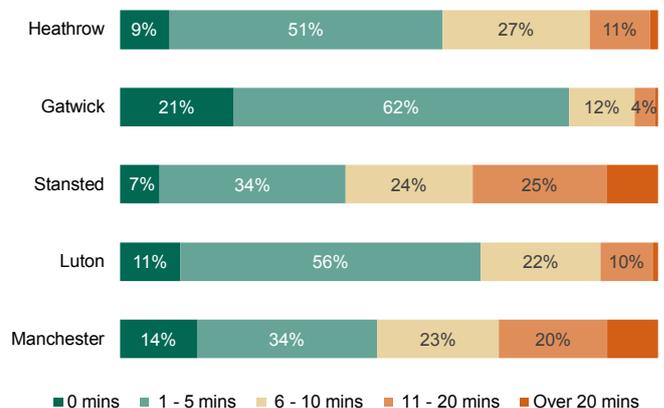
## For how long, in minutes, did you queue when waiting to be screened?

- The average queue time in 2016, based on passengers' estimates of how long they queued, was 7.1 minutes, which is the same as in the two preceding years. The majority (62%) 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 2016 ranged from 4.0 minutes at Gatwick, where 83% said they queued for 5 minutes or less, to 10.8 minutes at Stansted, where 42% said they queued for 5 minutes or less.
- Conversely, the proportion who said they queued for over 10 minutes ranged from 4% at Gatwick to 34% at Stansted.

Perceived security screening queuing time (banded) based on passenger estimates:  
Five airports combined, 2009 - 2016



Individual survey airports, 2016



**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.



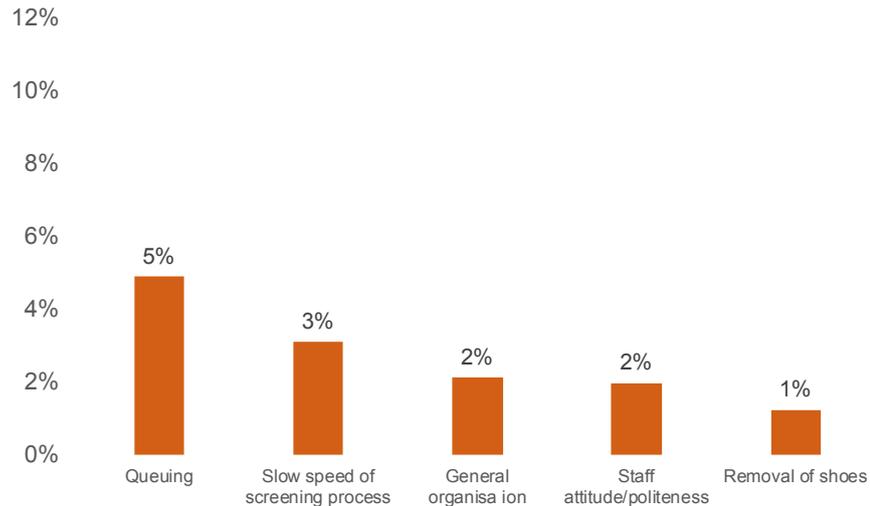
## What aspect of the security screening were you least satisfied with?

### What changed in 2016?

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.

For this reason, no changes over time can be identified for this question.



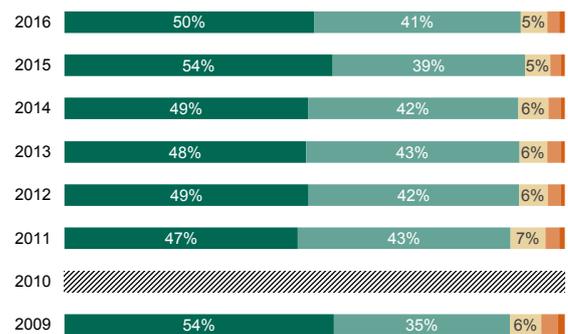
- When asked which aspect of security screening they were least satisfied with, the most common responses given by respondents were queuing (mentioned by 5%) and slow speed of screening process (3%). Staff attitude/politeness and general organisation were both mentioned by 2%.
- Over a fifth (21%) of 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 13% at Gatwick to 36% at Stansted.



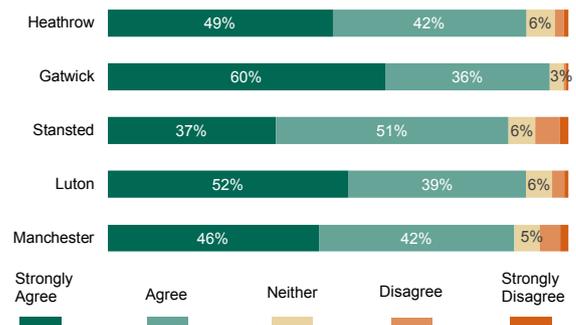
## How strongly do you agree with the following statement: "Any inconvenience caused by the security screening was acceptable?"

- A large majority (91%) of passengers agreed or strongly agreed that any inconvenience caused by security screening was acceptable. This is a slight decrease compared to 2015, but similar to 2014.
- The proportion of passengers who disagreed or strongly disagreed increased to 4% in 2016.
- Acceptance was highest at Gatwick (96% agreed or strongly agreed), where satisfaction with security screening was also highest. Conversely, acceptance was lowest at Stansted (87%), where satisfaction was also lowest.

Agreement with acceptability of any inconvenience caused by security screening: Five airports combined, 2009 - 2016



Individual survey airports, 2016



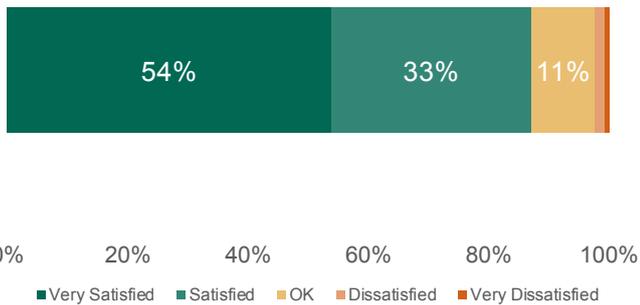
## Results for individual airports

### Heathrow

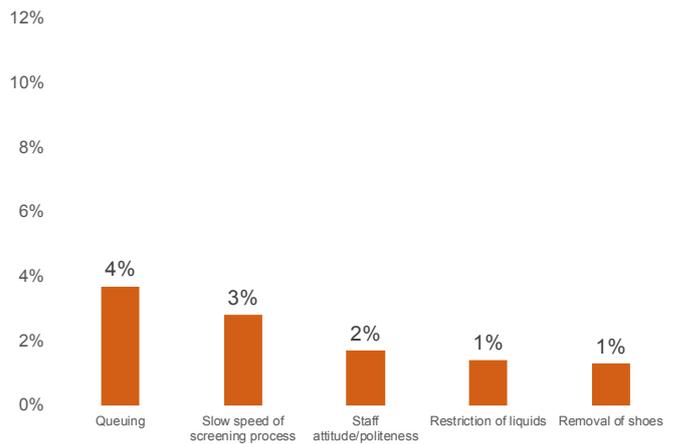
- The proportion of passengers who said they were very satisfied or satisfied with their experiences of security screening was 87%. This is the second highest after Gatwick airport.
- Passengers at Heathrow reported queuing (4%) as the least satisfactory aspect of security screening, followed by slow speed of screening process (3%), staff attitude/politeness (2%), restriction of liquids (1%) and removal of shoes (1%).
- Average queuing time, based on passenger estimates, has fluctuated since 2008. In 2016 it remained similar to 2015 at 6.8 minutes. Estimated actual queueing times, published on Heathrow's website as part of the Service Quality Rebate<sup>1</sup> suggest an increase in queue times in 2016 compared to 2015.



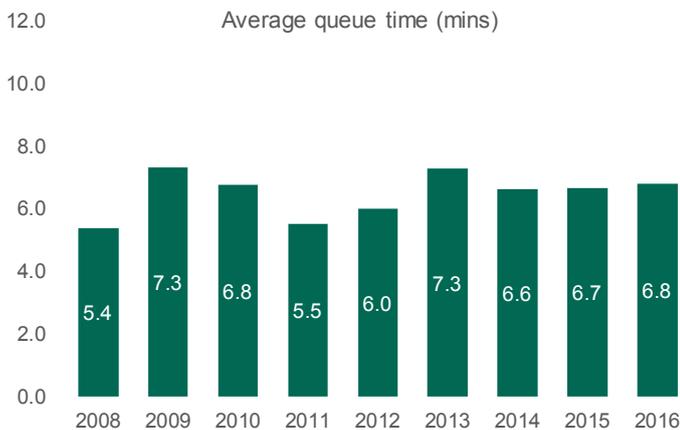
#### Satisfaction with security screening, 2016



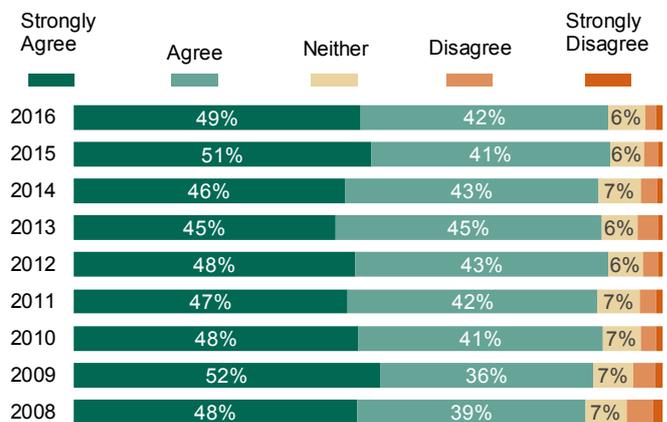
#### Aspect with which passengers were least satisfied, 2016



#### Perceived queuing time, 2008 - 2016



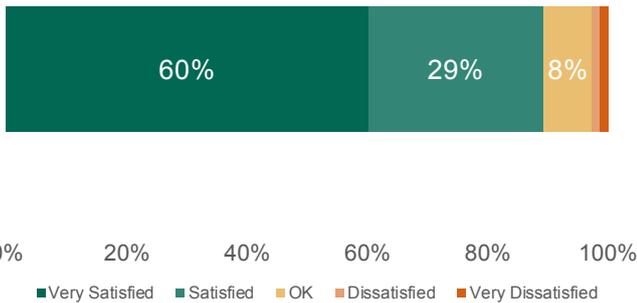
#### Agreement that "Any inconvenience caused by the security screening was acceptable", 2008 - 2016



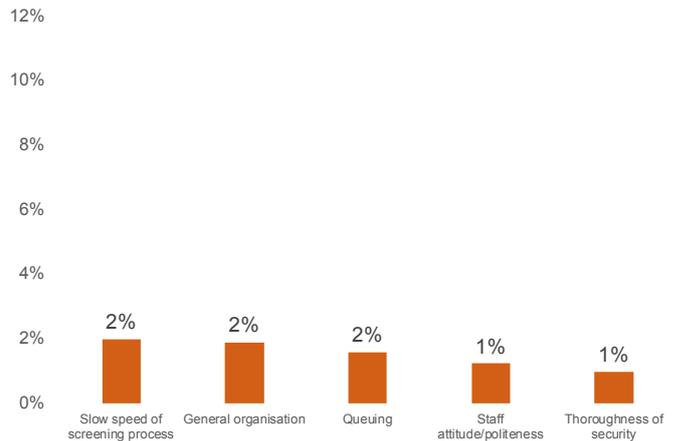
- The proportion of passengers who said they were very satisfied or satisfied with their experiences of security screening was 89%. Gatwick reported the largest proportion of passengers that were very satisfied or satisfied among all five surveyed airports.
- Slow speed of processing (2%), general organisation (2%) and queuing (2%) 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 - 87%.
- Average perceived queuing time has been falling since Gatwick was first surveyed, from 6.6 minutes in 2009 to 4.0 minutes in 2016, with a slight increase to 5.2 minutes in 2015. Results from the Service Quality Rebate, published on the airport’s website<sup>2</sup>, also suggest that average queuing times decreased slightly in 2016 compared to 2015 with Gatwick on average meeting their 95% target throughout the year.



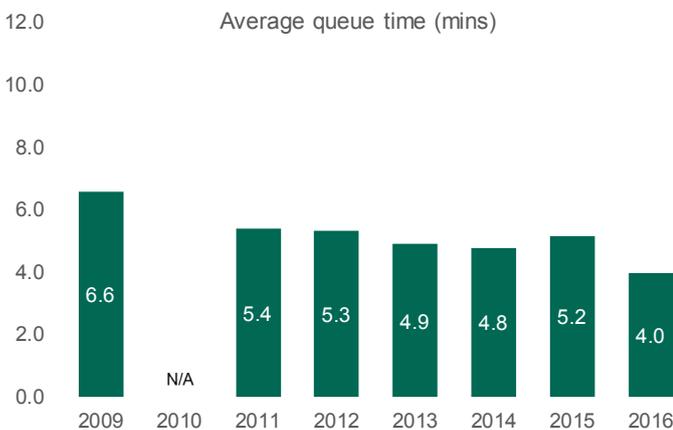
**Satisfaction with security screening, 2016**



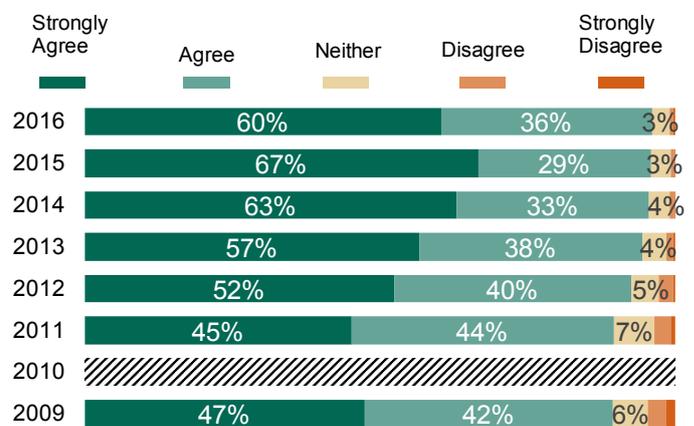
**Aspect with which passengers were least satisfied, 2016**



**Perceived queuing time, 2009, 2011 - 2016**



**Agreement that “Any inconvenience caused by the security screening was acceptable”, 2009, 2011 - 2016**



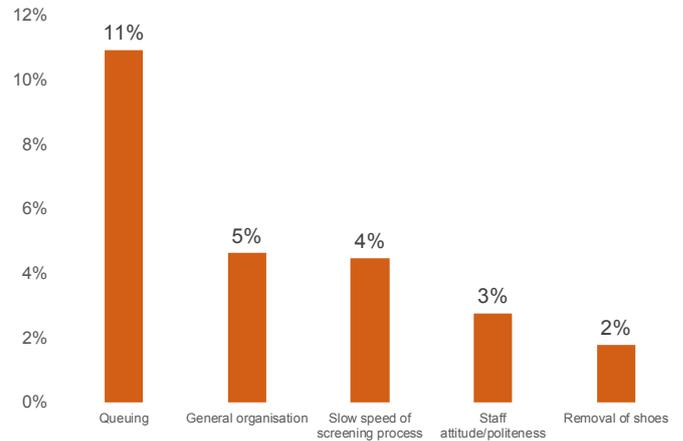
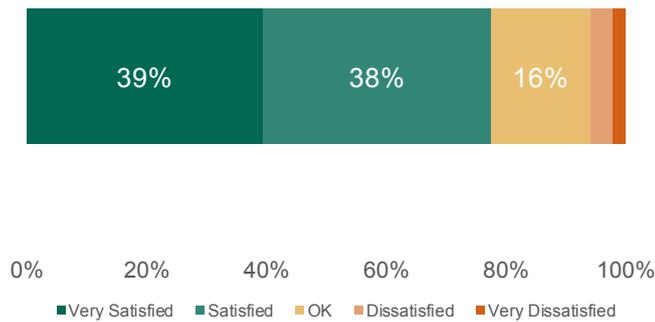
- Over three quarters (78%) of passengers reported they were very satisfied or satisfied with security screening.
- The most common aspect cited as least satisfactory was queuing (11%), followed by general organisation (5%) and slow speed of processing (4%). More respondents identified a least satisfying aspect than at any other surveyed airport (36%).
- The proportion of passengers who reported queuing for 0 minutes has increased since 2015. Conversely, there were fewer passengers who reported queue times of 11-20 minutes. This brought down the perceived queuing time at Stansted to 10.8 minutes.
- Estimates of actual queuing time, published as part of the Service Quality Rebate scheme<sup>3</sup>, suggest that the queue times have fallen, with Stansted meeting its targets in every month of 2016.



**Satisfaction with security screening, 2016<sup>^</sup>**



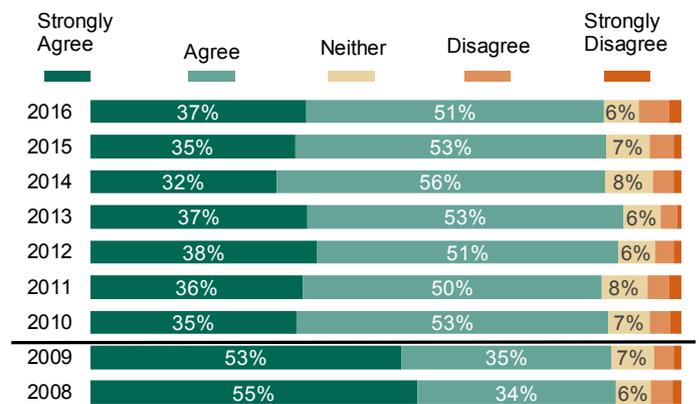
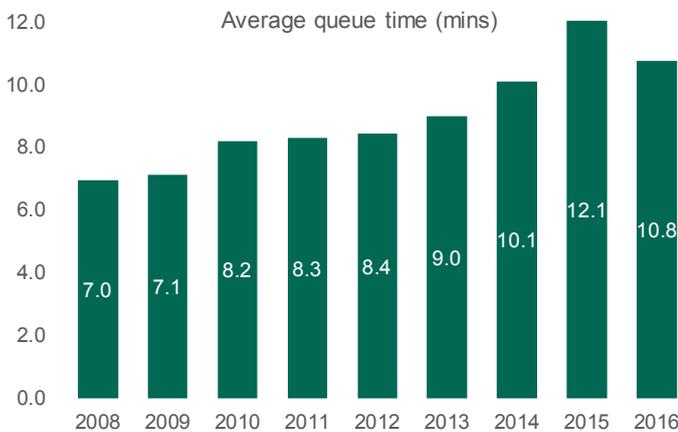
**Aspect with which passengers were least satisfied, 2016**



**Perceived queuing time, 2008 - 2016**



**Agreement that "Any inconvenience caused by the security screening was acceptable", 2008 - 2016\***

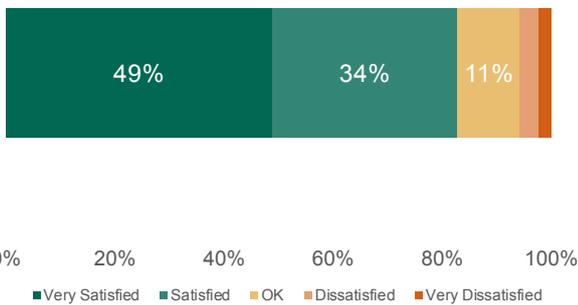


\* There is a discontinuity in the series between 2008/2009 and 2010. Prior to 2010 the interviewers did not ask all respondents this question, particularly at Stansted and Manchester. This is likely to explain the step change in the proportions who 'agree' and 'strongly agree' at these airports in 2010.

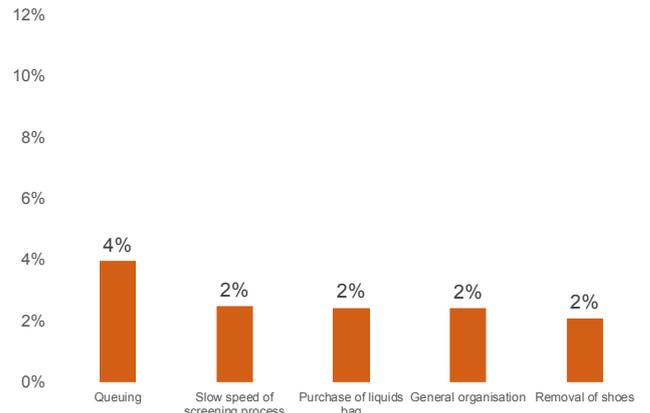
<sup>^</sup>Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding

- 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.
- Queuing (4%), slow speed of screening process (2%) and purchase of liquid bags (2%) were most commonly reported as the least satisfying aspects of passengers' experience of security screening. Over three quarters (79%) of passengers reported there was no such aspect.
- Since 2013 a decreasing trend in perceived queue times can be observed, taking average queue time from 8.4 minutes to 6.1 minutes in 2016.
- The proportion of passengers who strongly agreed or agreed that "Any inconvenience caused by the security screening was acceptable" has remained at 91% since 2015, the highest percentage since the survey began in 2009.

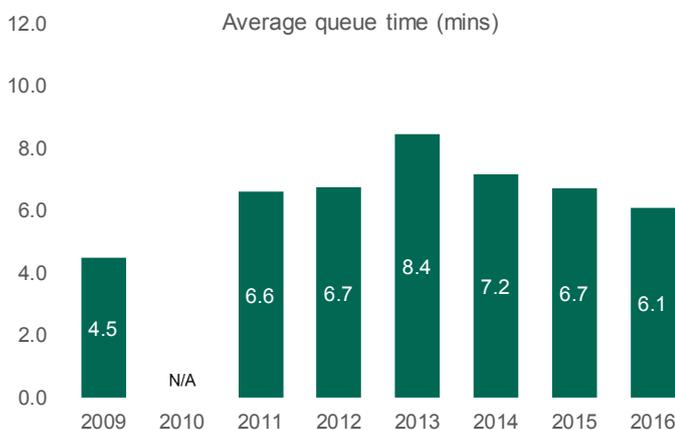
 **Satisfaction with security screening, 2016**



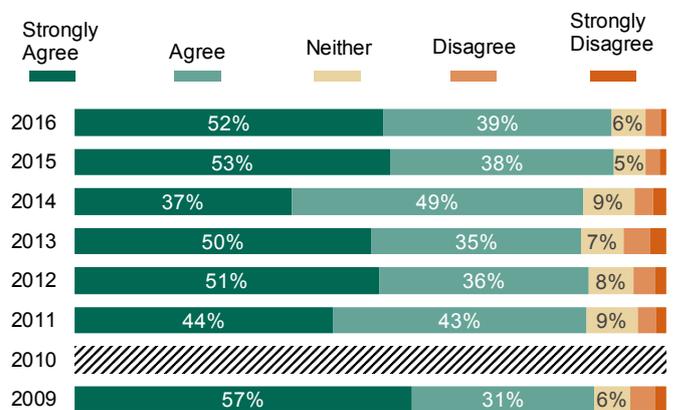
 **Aspect with which passengers were least satisfied, 2016**



 **Perceived queuing time, 2009, 2011 - 2016**



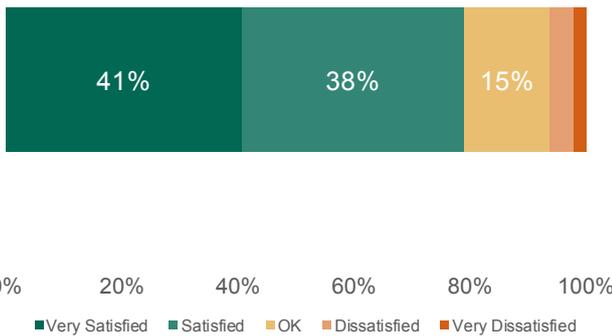
 **Agreement that "Any inconvenience caused by the security screening was acceptable", 2009, 2011 - 2016**



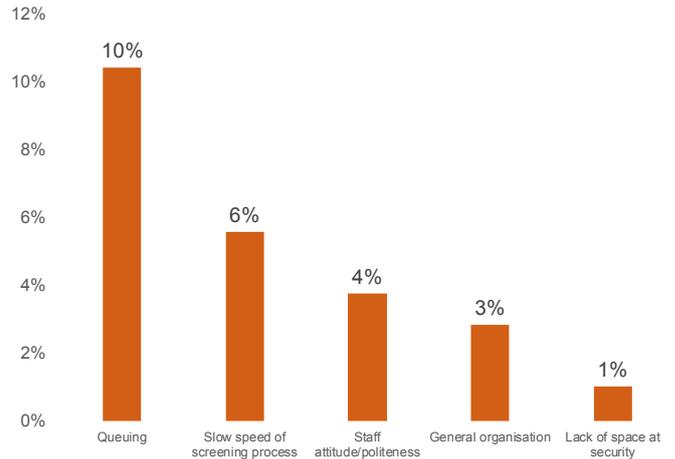
# Manchester

- The proportion of respondents who were very satisfied or satisfied with their experience of security screening was 79% in 2016.
- The aspect of security screening passengers were least satisfied with was queuing (10%), slow speed of screening process (6%) and staff attitude/politeness (4%). The majority (69%) of passengers at Manchester airport did not identify a least satisfying aspect.
- Perceived queuing time has gradually increased over recent years to surpass 10 minutes in 2016 for the first time. In comparison to 2015, there were fewer respondents reporting queue times of 0 minutes as well as 1-5 minutes.
- The proportion of passengers disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the statement that “Any inconvenience caused by the security screening was acceptable” was higher than all previous years.

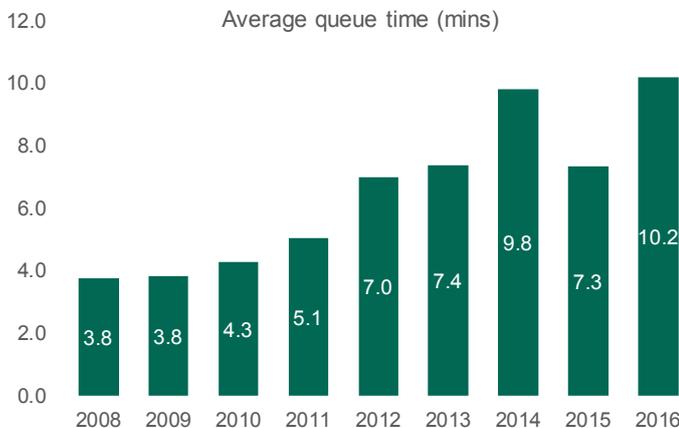
## Satisfaction with security screening, 2016



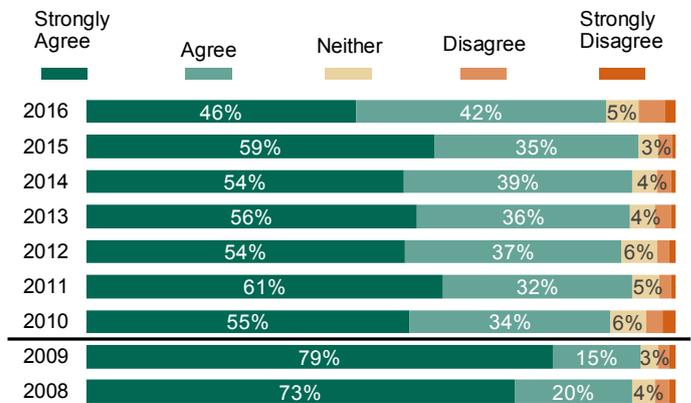
## Aspect with which passengers were least satisfied, 2016



## Perceived queuing time, 2008 - 2016



## Agreement that “Any inconvenience caused by the security screening was acceptable”, 2008 - 2016\*



\* 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 2016, 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 remains closed after its shutdown 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 didn't 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 2011-16). 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 2016 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 is not expected to have had an impact on the results of this publication.
- Security procedures may also be affected by passenger numbers, which increased at all five airports in 2016. Gatwick handled nearly three million more passengers in 2016 compared to 2015. Luton and Manchester handled over two million more passengers, whereas Stansted handled nearly two million more. Heathrow reported an increase of under a million.

## 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 Official 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.

## References

<sup>1</sup> Heathrow Performance Report: Service Quality Rebate and Bonus. (2017) . Heathrow Airport

Available at: <http://www.heathrow.com/company/company-news-and-information/performance/airport-operations/service-quality-rebate-and-bonus-scheme>

<sup>2</sup> Monthly Performance Reports. (2017) . Gatwick Airport

Available at: <http://www.gatwickairport.com/business-community/about-gatwick/performance-reports/monthly-performance-reports/>

<sup>3</sup> Service Quality Commitments: Monthly performance targets. (2017) . Stansted Airport

Available at: <http://www.stanstedairport.com/about-us/london-stansted-airport-and-mag/our-performance/customer-service/>



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

## Annex A: CAA Survey module on security screening for 2016

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]

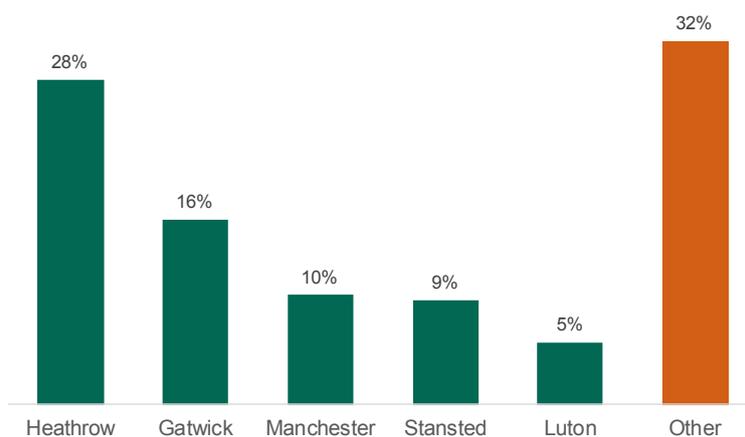
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**End of questionnaire**

## Annex B: Characteristics of passengers at the surveyed airports

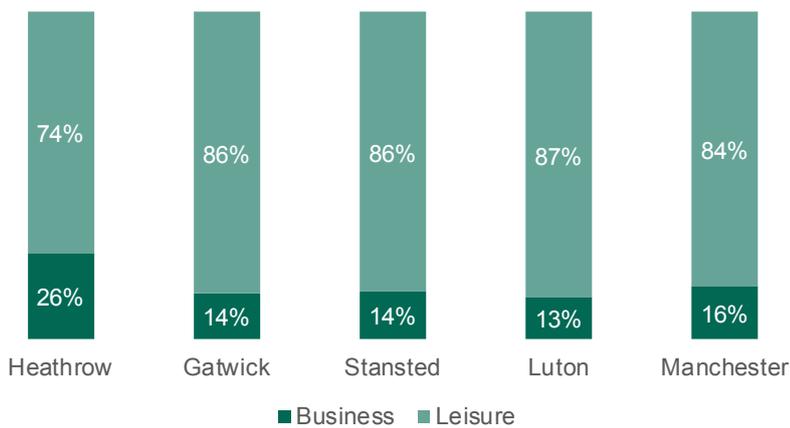
- In 2016, the five airports surveyed were the five largest UK airports in terms of the number of terminal passengers. They accounted for 183 million passengers, over two thirds (68%) of the 268 million passengers at all UK airports in 2016.
- Heathrow was the largest airport, accounting for over a quarter (28%) of all terminal passengers, followed by Gatwick (16%). Manchester and Stansted accounted for a similar proportion (10% and 9% respectively) while Luton accounted for roughly half this amount (5%)

### Terminal passengers at the airports surveyed as a percentage of the total at all UK airports, 2016

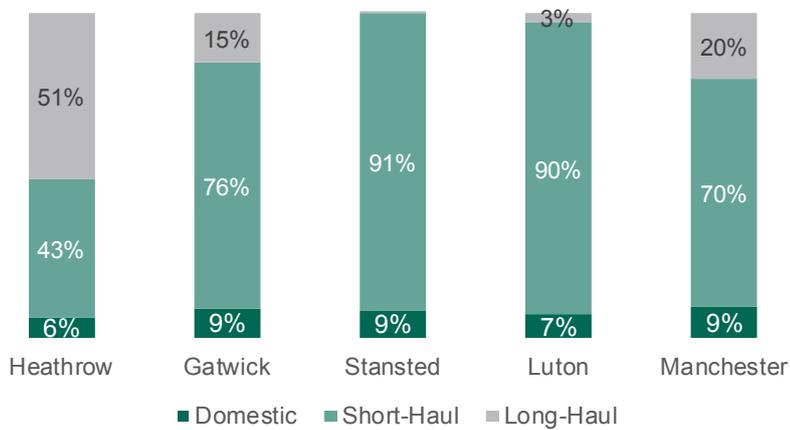


- The five airports surveyed differ not only in terms of size but also in terms of the type of passengers that use them (see Table C1). For example:
- In 2016, Heathrow had a much higher proportion of long-haul passengers (51%) and passengers who were foreign residents (60%) than the other airports. Relative to the other airports surveyed, Heathrow also had a higher proportion travelling on business (26%).
- Gatwick had some long-haul flights, accounting for 15% of their passengers, and one of the highest proportions of passengers on charter flights (7%).
- Manchester had the highest proportion of passengers on charter flights (11%) 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 (91%) and a relatively high proportion of foreign residents (36%). 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 (72%), passengers travelling for leisure (87%) and passengers on scheduled flights (97%).

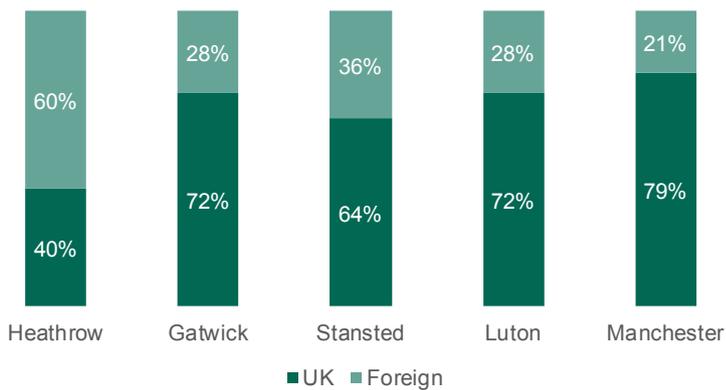
## Terminal passengers by airport and purpose, 2016



## Terminal passengers by airport and destination, 2016



## Terminal passengers by airport and country of residence, 2016



Source: CAA Passenger Survey 2016