

# WEEKLY BRIEFING

22 July 2022

## COVID-19 UPDATE

As per the Office for National Statistics, the risk of COVID-19 reinfection was approximately five times higher in the period when the Omicron variants were dominant (20 December 2021 to 1 July 2022), compared with when the Delta variant was dominant (17 May to 19 December 2021). Younger people were more likely to be reinfected than older people from 2 July 2020 to 1 July 2022. The percentage of people who tested positive for COVID-19 and reported symptoms in June 2022 remained similar to that in May 2022. In June, the most commonly reported symptoms continued to be a cough, sore throat, fatigue and headache.

## ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL UPDATE

### **One-in-five are borrowing more**

Around 21% of adults reported they had to borrow more money or take out more credit in the past month compared with a year ago, according to the latest data from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (collected between 6 July and 17 July 2022). Almost half of adults (46%) said they will not be able to save any money in the next 12 months, while 89% reported that their cost of living had continued to rise. Half (50%) of adults reported that they were buying less when food shopping, while 50% of adults reported having to spend more than usual. These proportions have increased from 8% and 18% respectively from when the data was first collected in autumn 2021. Among adults who had travelled abroad in the last four weeks, a third (33%) said they had experienced disruptions. For those travelling by plane, the most common disruptions were delayed flights or more time waiting on the plane (92%) and longer than normal queues at the airport (54%). Half of adults reported that they were spending more when food shopping in the past two weeks.

### **Retail sales volumes fall despite pick-up from Queen's Platinum Jubilee**

Overall retail sales volumes fell by 0.1% in June 2022, continuing a downward trend since summer 2021. Volumes in June 2022 were 2.2% above their pre-February 2020 levels. Food store sales volumes rose by 3.1%, with retailers confirming increased sales because of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations. Despite the pick-up in June, food sales volumes have been decreasing since summer 2021 following restrictions being lifted on hospitality. In recent months retailers have highlighted a decline in volumes sold because of increased food prices and the impact of the cost of living.

## **TRADE UPDATE**

### **Three quarters of families to holiday abroad this summer**

Three quarters of British families are set to take an overseas holiday this summer, according to new data from ABTA. According to research carried out by the association, almost half of families are planning a beach break (47%) with a third opting for an all-inclusive holiday (33%) and one in five choosing a city break (19%).

### **Demand for agents' advice soaring post-COVID-19**

Demand for travel advice from agents, and for package holidays, remains high according to new data from ABTA as the industry gears up for what is tipped to be the busiest summer season since the onset of the pandemic. According to ABTA's findings, people are currently 37% more likely to book with an agent now than before the pandemic. Reasons given by consumers are for their up-to-date advice (45%), the security of a package holiday (43%) and for help with COVID-19 requirements (41%). The findings also show high confidence in the ABTA brand, with 70% of consumers saying they are more likely to book with a company using the ABTA logo than one which is not, and more than a third (36%) saying they are willing to spend more on a holiday booked through an ABTA member.

### **Demand for weddings-at-sea 'definitely there' say agents**

Agents believe there would be demand for cruise ship weddings should the law be changed to broaden the range of venues where weddings can take place. Couples in England and Wales could soon be free to tie-the-knot onboard cruise ships under new recommendations to reform wedding law put forward by the Law Commission. The Commission has branded the current legislation "confusing, out-of-date and restrictive", and stressed it is preventing people from getting married in "more meaningful" settings.

Asked by the government to review the law, the Commission on Tuesday (18 July) recommended focusing regulation on the officiant responsible for the wedding rather than the venue.

### **Canada reintroduces random COVID-19 testing on arrival**

Canada has reintroduced random COVID-19 testing for international arrivals amid concerns about rising rates of new infections in the country. After making their customs declaration, international travellers arriving into Calgary, Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver will be alerted by email if they have to test within 15 minutes. The Public Health Agency of Canada said the tests would be completed via in-person appointments with select partners external to the airport, or virtually via a self-swab test. All passengers could be eligible for testing, irrespective of vaccination status. Random testing was temporarily suspended on 11 June to assess how offsite testing could be done. PHAC said the move to reintroduce testing would allow the country to respond quickly to new Covid-19 variants of concern or "changes to the epidemiological situation".

### **Heathrow facing fresh three-day strike threat this week**

Heathrow is facing a fresh threat of summer strike action this week after refuellers serving several major airlines – including Emirates and Virgin Atlantic – turned down a revised pay deal. Workers employed by Aviation Fuel Services (AFS) will walk out from 5am on Thursday (21 July) until 4.59am on Sunday (24 July). The Unite union has, though, stressed the action could be avoided even at the 11th hour was AFS to come back to the negotiating table with a "substantially improved" offer. AFS workers are responsible for refuelling half of the non-British Airways traffic at Heathrow, said Unite. Airlines that could be affected include Virgin Atlantic, Emirates, Delta, United, American Airlines, KLM, Air France and Singapore Airlines.

### **More than 50,000 passport applications exceed 10-week target**

Approximately 550,000 people were waiting for new passports at the end of June, as civil servants struggled with record numbers of applications. MPs were told on Wednesday (July 20) that one in 10 applications exceeded the 10-week turnaround that the Passport Office advises people to allow for.

## AIRLINE UPDATE

**Air Mauritius** - Air Mauritius has announced that from Tuesday 19 July 2022, Air Mauritius is moving all its London Heathrow flights to Terminal 4. Flight MK042 departing from Mauritius on 18 July 2022 will arrive at Terminal 4 on 19 July 2022. Flight MK 053 departing from London Heathrow on 19 July 2022 will be the first flight departing from Terminal 4.

**TUI** - Tui has reassured its customers it has "taken all the steps we can to ensure our customers can get away on holiday as planned this summer". It said it was one of only three airlines in the UK that managed to run more than 99% of its planned flying programme in June.

**EasyJet** - EasyJet and aerospace group, Rolls-Royce have unveiled a partnership called H2Zero to develop jet engines powered by hydrogen. The budget carrier said it is making a multimillion-pound investment in the initiative which aims to demonstrate that hydrogen has the potential to power planes from the mid-2030s onwards. The companies will support an early concept ground test of a Rolls-Royce AE2100 engine in the UK later this year. This will be followed by a full-scale ground test of a Rolls-Royce Pearl 15 jet engine.

**Delta** - Delta Airlines has ordered 100 Boeing 737 Max aircraft, with options for 30 more. The American carrier said the aircraft will be 20%-30% more fuel efficient than the retiring Delta planes that they replace when they begin delivery in 2025. The single-aisle aircraft will be used across the carrier's short and medium-haul routes, flying from hubs including New York, Boston, Atlanta, Detroit, Minneapolis-St Paul, Seattle and Los Angeles.

## TOUR OPERATORS, TRAVEL AGENTS, OTA UPDATE

**Jet2.com & Jet2 Holidays** - Jet2.com and Jet2holidays are on track to operate their "busiest-ever weekend" over Saturday (23 July) and Sunday (24 July), with almost 150,000 customers travelling to destinations across the Mediterranean and Canary Islands. This summer is the airline and operator's "biggest ever" summer programme, with capacity increasing by 14% compared to the same period in 2019. A fleet of 106 aircraft is in operation over the weekend, flying to more than 50 destinations from 10 UK bases. In total, the company will operate more than 800 flights over the weekend with more than 425 flights on Saturday (23 July) alone.

**Virgin Atlantic** - Virgin Atlantic said travel agency sales in June surpassed those seen in 2019 and reached record levels. Lee Haslett, Virgin Atlantic's global sales vice-president, told a *Travel Weekly* webcast how the carrier is recovering in both the leisure and business sectors, and hailed the role of agents. "In June, we were up versus 2019, we have set records across our commercial performance and records for travel agent performance with us," he said.

**InteleTravel** - Homeworking agency InteleTravel is expanding its Ambassadors programme, which sees elite travel advisors supporting recruits who are new to travel. Ambassadors are agents who have achieved a steady growth of sales and completed a training programme to help train, mentor and coach newer agents. Twelve Ambassadors have progressed through the dedicated training programme, with a further nine in training.

**Ice Travel Group** - Demand for summer 2022 remains high but holidaymakers are starting to plan 2023 breaks, according to Ice Travel Group – the parent of Icelolly.com and TravelSupermarket. The group's latest weekly tracker reveals search and booking trends on the two holiday comparison sites for the week to July 10. It shows August surpassed July as the most-searched departure month on Icelolly.com. Meanwhile, a further week-on-week increase for June 2023 travel means demand for summer 2023 now accounts for more than 12% of searches.

## SOCIAL UPDATE

### **Instagram launches test of 'Creator Marketplace'**

Instagram has launched an initial test of its Creator Marketplace. This new platform will enable advertisers to search for potential creators to partner with on campaigns. They will be able to manage the full campaign process, in partnership with chosen creators, including details like desired deliverables, payment, and other information. This could be an essential pathway to maximising marketing performance in the app.

### **Twitter develops 'unmention' capability**

Twitter is now giving all users the capacity to ['unmention' themselves from a Twitter chat](#). This will enable users to deactivate their profile links within conversations that they no longer feel comfortable taking part in. The username would be untagged from the original tweet and any replies, and no one would be able to mention that username again within the same reply chain.

## MICE UPDATE

### **'Grounds for optimism' as UKCAMS finds events doubled in 2021**

The number of conferences and meetings in the UK more than doubled year-on-year in 2021, generating almost £5 billion in direct spend, according to the UK Conference and Meeting Survey (UKCAMS). The 29th annual UKCAMS report reveals that an estimated 440,000 conferences and meetings took place in the UK in 2021, compared with just 195,000 in 2020, and still representing only 31% of 2019's conference and meetings activity. These events generated an estimated £4.9 billion of direct expenditure in venues and destinations, compared to £1.7 billion in 2020 and £17.6 billion in 2019.

## LIGHTER NOTE

### **UEFA Women's EURO 2022: England success bringing more fans to games**

This year's UEFA Women's EURO 2022 tournament is already a huge success with record-breaking numbers attending games and millions tuning in to watch. On 20 July, BBC News delayed as the Lionesses roared to a late quarter-final win over Spain and a record-breaking 68,871 supporters flocked to the opening game at Old Trafford. Read more [here](#).