Office for National Statistics

Article

Comparison of furloughed jobs data: May to July 2020

An overview of the similarities and differences between the fortnightly Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) survey furlough estimates and HMRC's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme data, over the period 1 May to 31 July 2020.

Contact:
Gareth Allmand
bics@ons.gov.uk
+44 (0)1633 456248

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1 . Main points

- At a top level, estimates of the proportion of furloughed jobs from the Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS) are similar to HMRC's proportion of employments furloughed, for the months of May, June and July 2020.

- On a sector level, estimates of the proportion of furloughed jobs from the Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS) mainly align to some degree to HMRC's proportion of employments furloughed, for the months of May, June and July 2020.

- There are some distinct differences in timeliness, sample and methodology between these two outputs of furlough estimates that explain why these estimates do not match exactly.

2 . Overview

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) was announced by the UK Government on 20 March 2020. It enabled employers to claim support per employee furloughed to cope with the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) on the workforce and reduced business demand.

The voluntary fortnightly Business Impact of Coronavirus Survey (BICS) collects proportions of the workforces' working arrangements during the coronavirus pandemic from responding businesses in each iteration of the survey over a two-week reference period. For each wave these proportions are then apportioned by workforce size for each sector surveyed using the employment recorded for each business on the Interdepartmental Business Register (IDBR) so that estimates are more representative of workforce size.

The sampling frame used in BICS was designed to achieve adequate coverage of the listed industries from the monthly business survey, for the first six waves. The sample size has increased over the waves to improve the coverage of regions and different businesses sizes.

The sample design for Wave 7 of BICS was reviewed and refreshed and went live from Monday 15 June 2020 for the two-week period. This new sample design is the basis for future waves and the questionnaire has gone to approximately 24,000 businesses from Wave 7 onwards. This sample redesign improves our coverage for the smaller-sized businesses.

BICS sent out surveys to 23,900 businesses in our latest release of Coronavirus and the economic impacts on the UK: 24 September 2020. Because of the voluntary nature of BICS , the response rate varies between different waves – in our latest release, Wave 13, it was 25.1% as 5,998 businesses responded.

Final results of each wave of BICS are published in the fortnightly bulletin Coronavirus and the economic impacts on the UK and flash headline figures are presented in the weekly Coronavirus and the latest indicators for the UK economy and society publication.

Comparatively, the Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) coronavirus (COVID-19) statistics we use in this bulletin are published on a monthly basis, with the first release being published on 11 June 2020, and the latest release being published on 18 September 2020.

The most up to date HMRC statistical release summarising the estimates of the number and value of claims made to the CJRS to HMRC (by employer size, sector and region) covers the period 1 March 2020 (the earliest date where CJRS claims could be made) to 31 July 2020. It also includes several time series of the number of employments furloughed up to 31 July 2020, which is the primary data source that will be used in this article. These time series are subject to revision as methodological and data handling improvements are made.

This article's aim is to give our users a better understanding of the similarities and differences between BICS furloughing estimates and HMRC furloughing figures, in order to better inform further analysis based on these data sources. We have adhered to the GSS principles of Comparability and Coherence in our comparisons to ensure we are producing quality statistics as recommended by the Code of Practice for Statistics.

3 . Description of methods

Within the Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS), the apportionment of workforce methodology used for these data does not involve grossing for UK-wide estimation for the periods involved in this comparison (Waves 5 to 10). Estimates of the proportion of the workforce furloughed are from responses of those who responded they had not permanently stopped trading in each wave and includes those were "currently trading" and those "temporarily closed or paused trading". A detailed breakdown by trading status of the proportions of the workforce furloughed is available in the detailed dataset alongside each of wave and should be referenced because of the difference in proportions between trading status. The BICS estimates for proportion furloughed relate to the two-week reference period where we ask what percentage of a business' workforce was furloughed.

Unweighted estimates apportioned by employment from BICS are used in this comparison article. Weighted estimates for selected variables have recently been made available from the detailed BICS release. Weighted estimates for our most recent release, Wave 13, have shown that the proportion furloughed estimates are very close and follow similar trends over time. Further details of this can be found in Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey: preliminary weighted results.

In comparison, HMRC has published four releases of experimental coronavirus (COVID-19) statistics that provide estimates of the number and value of claims made to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) up until 31 July 2020. The three most recent releases, July 2020, August 2020, and September 2020, contain data on the number of employments eligible for the CRJS, which are broken down by employer size, sector and geographical region. The August 2020 and September 2020 releases include time series of employments furloughed broken down by sector and employer size.

Support under the CJRS can be claimed by Pay As You Earn (PAYE) schemes. The HMRC release explains that PAYE schemes can be considered broadly equivalent to employers for statistical purposes. "Employments" are defined according to the CJRS criteria. An important part of these criteria is that the furloughed employee must have been employed on 19 March 2020 and the employer must have submitted a Real Time Information (RTI) submission to HMRC for the employee by this date.

The differences in methodology and available data sources means that these data will not match exactly, and comparison should be treated with caution based on the voluntary nature of BICS. Detailed outlines of the methodologies used between these two data sources can be found in the background notes of each respective publication.

The HMRC CJRS proportions of employments furloughed used in this article were calculated by dividing the numbers of employments furloughed from the time series by the numbers of eligible employments.

The number of eligible employments is not given in a time series, however, as the number is identical in the July 2020, August 2020 and September 2020 releases, the number of eligible employments has been taken to be consistent across the period through which we are comparing BICS estimates and HMRC figures.

Table 1 shows HMRC's proportion of employments furloughed averaged over May, June and July 2020, including all industries and excluding the industries that BICS does not sample.

Table 1: HMRC figures and BICS estimates of proportions of the workforce furloughed, May to July 2020

	BICS Wave 5: (4 -17 May 2020)	BICS Wave 6: (18 - 31 May 2020)	BICS Wave 7: (1 - 14 June 2020)	BICS Wave 8: (15 - 28 June 2020)	BICS Wave 9: (29 June - 12 July)	BICS Wave 10: (13 - 26 July)
BICS proportions of Workforce Furloughed (apportioned by workforce size)	28.1%	29.8%	23.4%	21.5%	18.5%	13.7%
HMRC CJRS: Proportion Furloughed averaged over	May 2020[1]		June 2020[1]		July 2020[1]	
All Industries	28.8%		24.5%		16.9%	
BICS Industries Only[2]	30.8%		26.2%		18.0%	

Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs - Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme statistics

Notes

1. [1]HMRC CJRS: proportion furloughed - Figures are provisional and subject to revision.
2. [2]HMRC CJRS: proportion furloughed - BICS industries only: for the purpose of comparison with BICS, the following total number of employments furloughed have been subtracted from HMRC's industry totals number of employments furloughed based on BICS sampling frame; Agriculture, forestry and fishing; Energy production; Finance and insurance; Public administration and defence; Trade union, religious, political and repair; Domestic employers; and Unknown and other and divided this by the equivalent total numbers of eligible employee jobs from HMRC data.
3. BICS furlough estimates are proportions of businesses continuing to trade and those temporarily paused or ceased trading.
4. BICS proportions of workforce furloughed data do not involve grossing for UK-wide estimation. These figures represent the proportion of responses to each question from businesses, apportioned using the employment recorded for each reporting unit on the Interdepartmental Business Register (IDBR) for each sector.

4 . Sector comparison

In order to provide comparison between HMRC and Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS) furlough estimates, by sector, the data needed to be converted into the same format as BICS and proportions of the workforce furloughed by employees needed to be derived from HMRC raw estimates.

Subsequently, HMRC’s “total number of employments furloughed” estimates (defined as anyone who meets the scheme criteria set out within the published guidance) provide the closest comparable data against the proportions of the workforce submitted by businesses responding to BICS.

To compare with the HMRC CJRS proportions furloughed averaged over May, June and July 2020, BICS estimates for May, June and July 2020 have been produced. These are shown in Table 2.

The BICS May estimates were derived by averaging the proportions of workforce furloughed in Waves 5 and 6, and therefore cover the period 4 to 31 May 2020. The BICS June estimates were derived by averaging the proportions of workforce furloughed in Waves 7 and 8, and therefore cover the period 1 to 28 June 2020. Similarly, the BICS July estimates were derived by averaging the proportions of workforce furloughed in Waves 9 and 10, and therefore cover the period 29 June to 26 July 2020.

Table 2: BICS furlough estimates for the months of May to July 2020

Industry	BICS May Estimate: (4 to 31 May 2020)	BICS June Estimate: (1 to 28 June 2020)	BICS July Estimate (29 June to 26 July)	Employment[1] (to nearest thousand)
All Industries	29.0%	22.5%	16.1%	32,565,586
Manufacturing	27.5%	17.5%	13.4%	2,561,364
Water Supply, Sewerage, Waste Management and Remediation Activities	11.5%	4.9%	3.3%	180,556
Construction	38.5%	24.2%	15.3%	1,625,234
Wholesale And Retail Trade; Repair Of Motor Vehicles And Motorcycles	21.9%	12.1%	7.3%	4,940,202
Transportation and Storage	36.1%	30.7%	22.1%	1,441,076
Accommodation and Food Service Activities	81.7%	64.1%	38.1%	2,500,603
Information and Communication	12.7%	12.1%	7.3%	1,352,368
Real Estate Activities	27.5%	20.1%	13.5%	644,019
Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities	14.2%	12.1%	9.9%	2,555,070
Administrative And Support Service Activities	32.3%	29.6%	27.8%	2,897,647
Education	10.5%	10.3%	9.6%	3,211,097
Human Health And Social Work Activities	7.3%	7.4%	6.0%	4,141,629
Arts, Entertainment And Recreation	75.3%	70.6%	55.1%	769,830

Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey

Notes

1. BICS estimates represent the proportion of the workforce furloughed from businesses apportioned using the employment recorded for each reporting unit on the Interdepartmental Business Register (IDBR) for each sector.
2. BICS furlough estimates are proportions of businesses continuing to trade and those temporarily paused or ceased trading.
3. Mining and quarrying and Other services estimates are not shown separately in this table to ensure BICS survey respondent confidentiality but these sectors are included in “All industries”.
4. For BICS, the following industries are excluded from the “All industries” total: Agriculture, Public administration and defence, Public provision of education and health, and Finance and insurance.
5. [1]Employment registered for each sector on the IDBR.

Table 3 presents HMRC data of the number of employments furloughed averaged over May, June and July 2020 alongside the HMRC CJRS proportions furloughed averaged over May, June and July 2020. This is presented alongside the number of eligible employments. Further information can be found in [Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme statistics: September 2020](#).

Table 3: HMRC CJRS statistics: average number and proportion of employments furloughed estimates, May to July 2020

Industry	HMRC CJRS: Employments furloughed averaged over May 2020	HMRC CJRS: Proportion Furloughed averaged over May 2020	HMRC CJRS: Employments furloughed averaged over June 2020	HMRC CJRS: Proportion Furloughed averaged over June 2020	HMRC CJRS: Employments furloughed averaged over July 2020	HMRC CJRS: Proportion Furloughed averaged over July 2020
All Industries	8,739,252	28.8%	7,450,707	24.5%	5,127,077	16.9%
Manufacturing	861,194	35.3%	646,580	26.5%	442,103	18.1%
Water Supply, Sewerage, Waste Management and Remediation Activities	36,703	21.0%	27,707	15.8%	19,097	10.9%
Construction	655,739	51.2%	463,140	36.1%	295,510	23.1%
Wholesale and Retail Trade; Repair Of Motor Vehicles And Motorcycles	1,785,235	39.4%	1,427,440	31.5%	826,616	18.3%
Transportation And Storage	379,532	28.7%	325,533	24.6%	216,852	16.4%
Accommodation And Food Service Activities	1,595,887	72.8%	1,489,500	68.0%	1,062,661	48.5%
Information And Communication	201,803	16.2%	187,020	15.0%	148,152	11.9%
Real Estate Activities	149,590	34.6%	116,393	26.9%	79,310	18.4%
Professional, Scientific And Technical Activities	573,048	25.9%	501,973	22.7%	390,284	17.7%
Administrative And Support Service Activities	815,687	29.6%	730,910	26.5%	541,242	19.6%
Education	314,935	9.4%	292,790	8.8%	210,390	6.3%
Human Health And Social Work Activities	386,903	9.5%	341,677	8.3%	250,142	6.1%
Arts, Entertainment And Recreation	458,242	67.9%	430,137	63.7%	317,223	47.0%

Source: Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs - Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme statistics

Notes

1. Figures are provisional and subject to revision.

2. An “employment” in HMRC is defined within this release as anyone who meets the scheme criteria set out within the published guidance, and data come from the whole population of HMRC CJRS claims (those applied) and real time information systems (RTIs).

3. For the purpose of comparison with BICS, only industries included in the BICS samples are included in the table, but the HMRC total, including all industries that they have data for, are included in “All industries”.

4. Mining and quarrying and Other services estimates have consistently been removed for disclosure purposes but their totals are included in “All industries”.

In Table 4, the HMRC CJRS proportions of employments furloughed are presented alongside the BICS estimates for May, June and July 2020, so the proportions furloughed in each sector can be easily compared.

Table 4: Comparison by sector between BICS furlough estimates, apportioned by workforce size, and the proportions of employments furloughed from HMRC, May to July 2020

Industry	HMRC CJRS: Proportion Furloughed averaged over May 2020[1]	BICS May Estimate: (4 to 31 May 2020)	HMRC CJRS: Proportion Furloughed averaged over June 2020[1]	BICS June Estimate: (1 to 28 June 2020)	HMRC CJRS: Proportion Furloughed averaged over July 2020[1]	BICS July Estimate: (29 June to 26 July 2020)
All Industries	28.8%	29.0%	24.5%	22.5%	16.9%	16.1%
Manufacturing	35.3%	27.5%	26.5%	17.5%	18.1%	13.4%
Water Supply, Sewerage, Waste Management And Remediation Activities	21.0%	11.5%	15.8%	4.9%	10.9%	3.3%
Construction	51.2%	38.5%	36.1%	24.2%	23.1%	15.3%
Wholesale And Retail Trade; Repair Of Motor Vehicles And Motorcycles	39.4%	21.9%	31.5%	12.1%	18.3%	7.3%
Transportation And Storage	28.7%	36.1%	24.6%	30.7%	16.4%	22.1%
Accommodation And Food Service Activities	72.8%	81.7%	68.0%	64.1%	48.5%	38.1%
Information And Communication	16.2%	12.7%	15.0%	12.1%	11.9%	7.3%
Real Estate Activities	34.6%	27.5%	26.9%	20.1%	18.4%	13.5%
Professional, Scientific And Technical Activities	25.9%	14.2%	22.7%	12.1%	17.7%	9.9%
Administrative And Support Service Activities	29.6%	32.3%	26.5%	29.6%	19.6%	27.8%
Education	9.4%	10.5%	8.8%	10.3%	6.3%	9.6%
Human Health And Social Work Activities	9.5%	7.3%	8.3%	7.4%	6.1%	6.0%
Arts, Entertainment And Recreation	67.9%	75.3%	63.7%	70.6%	47.0%	55.1%

Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs - Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme statistics

Notes

1. [1]HMRC CJRS: proportion furloughed - figures are provisional and subject to revision.

2. Mining and quarrying and Other services estimates are not shown separately in this table to ensure BICS survey respondent confidentiality but these sectors are included in “All industries”.

3. For BICS, the following industries are excluded from the “All industries” total: Agriculture, Public administration and defence, Public provision of education and health, and Finance and insurance.

Table 4 shows that for the majority of industries, when apportioned by total number of employee jobs by industry, BICS furlough estimates align to some degree with HMRC figures by industry for May, June and July 2020.

In the BICS May estimate across "All industries" not permanently stopped trading in BICS, an average of 29.0% of the workforce were on furlough – nearly identical to the 28.8% HMRC figure for proportion of employments furloughed.

In the BICS June estimate across "All industries" not permanently stopped trading in BICS, an average of 22.5% of the workforce were on furlough – similar to the 24.5% HMRC figure for proportion of employments furloughed.

In the BICS July estimate across "All industries" not permanently stopped trading in BICS, an average of 16.1% of the workforce were on furlough – very similar to the 16.9% HMRC figure for proportion of employments furloughed.

Taking into account the BICS sampling frame and selecting only those industries that BICS samples, when deriving the proportion of the workforce furloughed using HMRC's eligible employments, the proportion of the workforce furloughed estimate rises to 30.8%, 26.2% and 18.0% for May, June, and July 2020 respectively. While slightly higher than the estimates provided by BICS, this is to be expected on the basis of sampling and methodological differences.

It should be noted that there are some industries where percentages do not align as closely as others, which may be explained by: the voluntary nature of the BICS survey and the much smaller sample sizes involved; possible differences in industry classification of businesses; and the availability of CJRS claim data to HMRC alongside "real time information" (RTI).

Another contributing factor may be the fact that the periods covered by BICS estimates and HMRC figures are slightly different. In addition, the differences between HMRC and BICS estimates for proportion furloughed may be caused by the differences between HMRC's eligible employments and the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Interdepartmental Business Register (IDBR) registered employment totals.

Further information on methodology for HMRC CJRS estimates can be found in the Measuring the data section of their release.

5 . Furloughed jobs data

Comparison of BICS furlough estimates with HMRC's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme Statistics
Dataset | Released 25 September 2020
An overview of the similarities and differences between the fortnightly BICS furlough estimates and HMRC's CJRS data, over the period 1 May to 31 July 2020.

6 . Related links

Coronavirus and the economic impacts on the UK: 24 September 2020
Bulletin | 24 September 2020
The indicators and analysis presented in this bulletin are based on responses from the voluntary fortnightly business survey, which captures businesses' responses on how their turnover, workforce prices, trade and business resilience have been affected. These data relate to the period 24 August 2020 to 6 September 2020.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) latest data and analysis
Web page | Updated as and when data become available
Latest data and analysis on the coronavirus (COVID-19) in the UK and its effect on the economy and society.

Latest questions for Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey respondents
Web page | Updated as and when data become available
The most up-to-date questions asked on the Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey.

Deaths registered weekly in England and Wales, provisional: week ending 11 September 2020
Bulletin | 22 September 2020
Provisional counts of the number of deaths registered in England and Wales, including deaths involving the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, by age, sex and region, in the latest weeks for which data are available.

Business impact of coronavirus, analysis over time, UK: Waves 2 to 5 panel
Article | Released 9 June 2020
The indicators and analysis presented in this article are based on selected responses over time from the new voluntary fortnightly business survey, which captures businesses' responses on how their turnover, workforce, prices, trade and business resilience have been affected in the two-week reference period. The data relate to the period 23 March 2020 to 17 May 2020 (Wave 2 to Wave 5).

Insights of the Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey: 23 March to 5 April (Wave 2) to 1 to 14 June (Wave 7) 2020
Article | Released 8 July 2020
Impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) on businesses' turnover, cash flow and workforce: analysis on responses to our new voluntary fortnightly business survey and how these have been affected in each two-week reference period. Covers the period 23 March 2020 to 14 June 2020.

Businesses Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey: preliminary weighted results
Article | Released 14 September 2020
Early estimates of weighted responses from the voluntary fortnightly business survey, focusing on business' responses on how turnover, workforce and trading status have been affected in two-week reference periods, from Wave 7 (1 to 14 June 2020) to Wave 12 (10 to 23 August 2020).