Office for National Statistics

Statistical bulletin

Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators: 21 April 2022

Early experimental data and analysis on economic activity and social change in the UK. These faster indicators are created using rapid response surveys, novel data sources, and experimental methods.

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1 . Main points

- In the latest week the number of UK seated diners was 138% of the equivalent week in 2019, the highest relative level since early September 2021; visits to "retail and recreation" locations increased by 8% in the latest week to 91% of pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) levels (OpenTable, Google Mobility). See Section 3.

- In the week to 14 April 2022, the aggregate CHAPS-based indicator of credit and debit card purchases was broadly unchanged from the previous week, at 105% of its February 2020 average level; "work-related" spending, which includes the purchasing of road fuel, increased by 8 percentage points (Bank of England CHAPS data).

- In late March 2022, over a quarter (29%) of businesses that had not permanently stopped trading reported that their production and/or suppliers had been affected by recent increases in energy prices, up from 25% in early March 2022; the accommodation and food service activities industry reported the highest percentage, at 56% (final results from Wave 54 of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS)).

- Transport indicators showed a mixed picture this week: total ship visits increased by 6% and cargo and tanker ship visits decreased by 2%, while road traffic fell by 14 percentage points, consistent with previous bank holidays, because of falls in heavy goods and light commercial traffic of 67 and 33 percentage points, respectively (exactEarth, Department for Transport). See Section 4.

- Total online job adverts increased by 4% in the week to 14 April 2022, to 144% of their February 2020 average level; meanwhile, a net 2% of firms reported increasing turnover in March 2022 compared with the previous month (Adzuna, Insolvency Service, HM Revenue and Customs). See Section 5.

- The System Average Price (SAP) of gas decreased by 22% in the week to 17 April 2022, with the level now 41% of that on 10 March 2022, when prices peaked in the rolling seven-day series; the SAP is 234% higher compared with the same period last year (week ending 18 April 2021) (National Grid).

Results presented in this bulletin are experimental and may be subject to revision. Data sources used to compile these indicators are regularly reviewed to ensure representativity and relevance which may mean indicators change at short notice.

2 . Latest indicators at a glance

Notes:

1. The break in the available shipping data (from 14 to 19 June 2021) is when the data collection system changed.

2. Data for the CHAPS-based indicator of credit and debit card purchases are provisional for the week to 14 April 2022.

3. Because of the bank holiday, Adzuna online job adverts run only to Thursday 14 April 2022. Caution is advised when comparing these data as this is not the Friday-to-Friday comparison period historically used.

4. Seasonal events such as the weather and holiday periods may affect movements in the data.

3 . Consumer behaviour

Mobility

Google Mobility data provide an indicator of changes in the volume of visits to different location types compared with a pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) baseline.

Visits are calculated based on publicly available anonymised data from Google users in the UK who have opted into Location History for their Google account, so are based on a subset of users. Full details of Google's methods used to compile the data are available.

We have transformed the publicly available anonymised data into an indexed seven-day moving average to smooth the weekdays and weekends.

We have used data for the location types:

- grocery and pharmacy: grocery stores, supermarkets, farmers' markets, specialty food shops and pharmacies

- parks: parks, public beaches, marinas, public gardens and other public open spaces

- retail and recreation: restaurants, cafes, shopping centres, theme parks, museums, libraries, theatres and cinemas

- workplaces: places of work

Figure 1: Visits to retail and recreation locations were at 91% of the pre-coronavirus levels in the week to 15 April 2022 and 8% higher than the previous week

Volume of visits, seven-day rolling average, index: 100 = the median value for the corresponding day of the week between 3 January and 6 February 2020, 21 February 2020 to 15 April 2022, UK

Figure 1: Visits to retail and recreation locations were at 91% of the pre-coronavirus levels in the week to 15 April 2022 and 8% higher than the previous week

Volume of visits, seven-day rolling average, index: 100 = the median value for the corresponding day of the week between 3 January and 6 February 2020, 21 February 2020 to 15 April 2022, UK
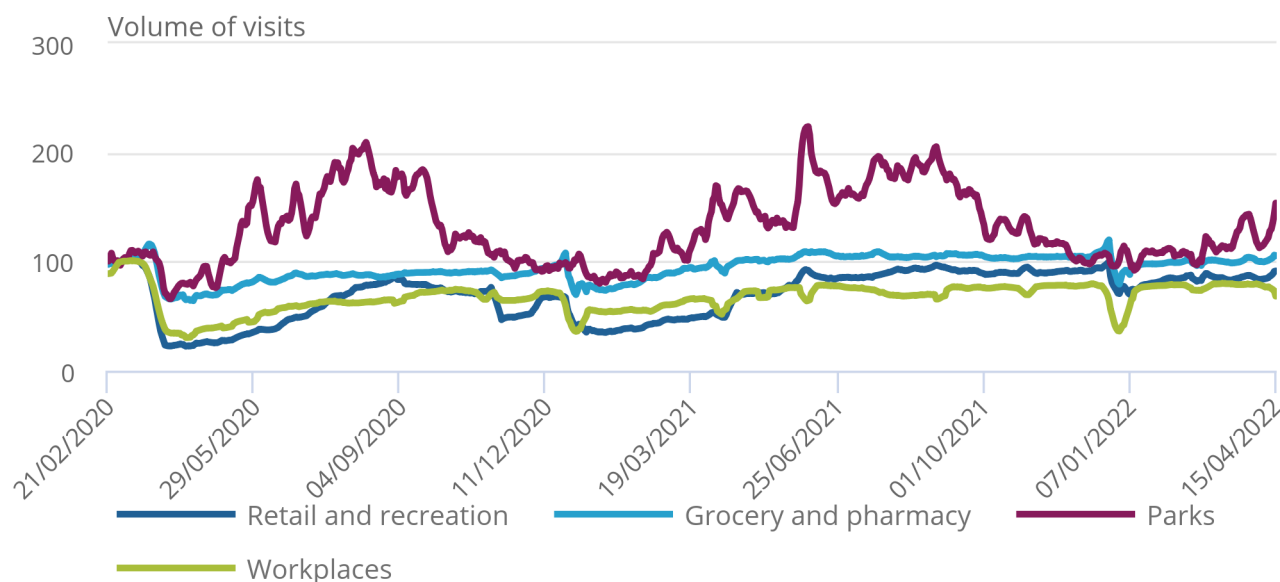
Source: Google LLC "Google COVID-19 Community Mobility Reports" https://www.google.com/covid19/mobility/ Accessed: 19 April 2022

Notes:

1. These data have not been seasonally adjusted. Users should consider seasonal events, such as the weather and holiday periods, which may affect movements in the data.

Visits to each location type in the UK in the week to 15 April 2022:

- in parks increased by 30% from the previous week and were 54% above pre-coronavirus levels

- in grocery and pharmacy increased by 5% and were also 5% above pre-coronavirus levels

- in retail and recreation increased by 8% but were 9% below pre-coronavirus levels

- in workplaces decreased by 11% and were 32% below pre-coronavirus levels

Users are reminded that the latest period includes the Good Friday bank holiday.

The full data time series can be found in our accompanying [Visits to location types using Google Mobility dataset](#).

These are experimental indicators, which we are working to develop further. However, [further geographical breakdowns of the Google Mobility data](#) are available.

4 . Transport

Road traffic in Great Britain

The volume of all motor vehicle traffic on the bank holiday, Monday 18 April 2022, decreased by 14 percentage points from the previous week (11 April 2022). It was 81% of the level seen on the Monday of the first week in February 2020, according to the Department for Transport (DfT) non-seasonally adjusted road traffic data. This decrease in the volume of road traffic is consistent with previous bank holidays.

Coinciding with the Easter holiday, traffic volumes for heavy goods vehicles decreased by 67 percentage points in the latest week. They were 40% of the level seen on the Monday of the first week in February 2020. Light commercial vehicle traffic volumes decreased by 33 percentage points, to 76% of the level on the same date. Meanwhile, car traffic volumes fell by 6 percentage points, and were 85% of the level in the first week in February 2020.

Figure 2: The volume of all motor vehicle traffic on bank holiday Monday, 18 April 2022, decreased by 14 percentage points from the previous week and was 81% of the level seen on the Monday of the first week in February 2020

Daily road traffic index: 100 = same traffic as the equivalent day of the week in the first week of February 2020, 1 March 2020 to 18 April 2022, non-seasonally adjusted, Great Britain

Notes:

1. The blue shaded areas refer to periods when restrictions across the UK were in effect.

The daily DfT estimates are indexed to the first week of February 2020 and the comparison is with the same day of the week. The data provided are useful as an indication of traffic change rather than actual traffic volumes. More information on the methods, quality and economic analysis for these indicators can be found in the [DfT methodology article](#).

Download the data

[.xlsx](#)

5 . Business and workforce

Self-isolation rates in the workforce by sector and for working-age population by country

Data from the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Survey (CIS) were used to provide modelled estimates of the proportion of the workforce self-isolating because of coronavirus. These were measured by work sector and the proportion of the working-age population self-isolating because of coronavirus, by country.

In the two weeks ending 9 April 2022, the percentage of people self-isolating because of coronavirus decreased in all work sectors, except for "manufacturing or construction" where it remained stable.

Figure 3: The percentage of the working-age population self-isolating because of coronavirus (COVID-19) decreased in England in the week ending 9 April 2022

Estimated percentage of the working-age population (aged 17 to 69 years) self-isolating because of coronavirus from 20 February to 9 April 2022, UK

Notes:

1. All results are provisional and subject to revision.

2. These statistics refer to self-reported self-isolation occurring in working-age adults (aged 17 to 69 years), regardless of employment status, living in private households.

3. During the period shown, self-isolation requirements were frequently updated with different changes taking place at different times across the UK countries.

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Figure 4: The sectors with the highest percentage of the workforce in self-isolation on 9 April 2022 were "health care" and "manufacturing or construction", both at 2.4%

Estimated percentage of the workforce self-isolating because of coronavirus (COVID-19), by work sector, 13 February to 9 April 2022, UK

Notes:

1. All results are provisional and subject to revision.

2. These statistics refer to self-reported self-isolation in working adults (aged 16 years and over) living in private households.

3. In the "health care" work sector, there is a 95% confidence interval from 1.9% to 3.2%.

4. In the "manufacturing or construction" work sector, there is a 95% confidence interval from 1.7% to 3.4%.

Download the data

.xlsx

More information on how these estimates were calculated is available in Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Survey estimates of the UK workforce in self-isolation by sector, published on 14 February 2022.

A breakdown of the CIS data is available in the accompanying dataset.

Value added tax (VAT) flash estimates

Turnover diffusion indices are an aggregate measure used to track whether most firms are reporting an increase or decrease in turnover in their VAT returns. They are calculated as the percentage of firms with increasing turnover minus the percentage with decreasing turnover. More information on the compilation and methodology of these estimates can be found in the [Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators methodology](#).

Table 1: A net 2% of firms reported increasing turnover in March 2022 when compared with the previous month
Value added tax turnover diffusion indices, day seven estimates, comparison with previous month, UK, seasonally adjusted

	Total	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	Production	Construction	Services
September 2021	0.01	0	0.03	0.01	0.02
October 2021	0	-0.04	0.09	-0.01	0.03
November 2021	0.03	0	0.04	0.02	0.06
December 2021	-0.06	-0.04	0.01	-0.03	-0.06
January 2022	0.05	0.02	0.09	0.02	0.05
February 2022	0.05	0.03	0.07	-0.01	0.08
March 2022	0.02	0.02	-0.06	0	0.02

Source: HM Revenue and Customs – Value added tax (VAT) returns

Notes

1. The contributions of these industries to monthly gross domestic product (GDP) are: agriculture 0.7% production 13.7%, construction 6.4% and services 79.2%.

Data for all available industries, including seasonally adjusted month-on-month estimates and non-seasonally adjusted month-on-month and month-on-year estimates, for turnover and expenditure, are available in the [accompanying dataset](#).

6 . Data

Advance notification of potential redundancies
Dataset | Released 21 April 2022
Weekly dataset showing the number of potential redundancies and employers proposing redundancies, submitted to Insolvency Service via HR1 forms.

Traffic camera activity
Dataset | Released 21 April 2022
Experimental daily traffic camera counts data for busyness indices covering the UK.

System Average Price (SAP) of gas
Dataset | Released 21 April 2022
Daily and rolling average System Average Price (SAP) of gas traded in Great Britain.

Weekly shipping indicators
Dataset | Released 21 April 2022
Experimental weekly and daily ship visits dataset covering UK ports.

Transactions at Pret A Manger
Dataset | Released 21 April 2022
Weekly transactional data from approximately 400 Pret A Manger stores around the UK.

Value added tax flash estimates
Dataset | Released 21 April 2022
Early estimates of turnover and expenditure diffusion indices from HM Revenue and Customs VAT data.

Users should note that this section lists a selection of the data available with this publication. For the full list of available datasets please see the accompanying dataset page.

7 . Glossary

Faster indicator

A faster indicator provides insights into economic activity using close-to-real-time big data, administrative data sources, rapid response surveys or Experimental Statistics, which represent useful economic and social concepts.

Diffusion index

The diffusion index tracks the growth in turnover and expenditure of firms. It is constructed to lie between negative one and one. For example, if 65% of firms have increasing turnover, 30% have decreasing turnover and 5% have turnover that remains unchanged, then the diffusion index is 0.35.

8 . Measuring the data

Information on the methodology used to produce the indicators in this bulletin is available in the Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators methodology.

9 . Strengths and limitations

These statistics have been produced to provide timely indicators of the effect of developing world events on the UK economy and society. They use close-to-real-time big data, administrative data sources, rapid response surveys or Experimental Statistics.

The data presented in this bulletin are reviewed and refreshed on a regular basis. Indicators are swapped in and out of the publication based on their suitability and availability.

UK coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions

A full overview of coronavirus restrictions for each of the four UK constituent countries can be found in:

- coronavirus in England

- coronavirus in Scotland

- coronavirus in Wales

- coronavirus in Northern Ireland

These restrictions should be considered when interpreting the data featured throughout this bulletin.

Seasonality

Seasonal fluctuations are likely to be present in many of these indicators so caution must be applied when interpreting changes in series that are not seasonally adjusted.

10 . Related links

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

Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain
Bulletin | Released 1 April 2022
Latest indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey.

Deaths registered weekly in England and Wales, provisional
Bulletin | Released 21 April 2022
Provisional counts of deaths registered in England and Wales, including deaths involving COVID-19, in the latest weeks for which data are available.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Survey, UK
Bulletin | Released 14 April 2022
Initial data from the COVID-19 Infection Survey (delivered in partnership with IQVIA, the University of Oxford and Lighthouse laboratories).