

Statistical bulletin

Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators: 8 December 2022

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

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15 December 2022

Notice

8 December 2022

This week the bulletin contains a reduced suite of indicators as we assess our future publication schedule. This will continue to be a weekly release, but the frequency of some indicators may change. If you have any questions or comments regarding this, please contact realtime.indicators@ons.gov.uk

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1 . Main points

- The System Average Price (SAP) of gas rose by 137% in the week to 4 December 2022, which was the largest week-on-week increase observed to date in 2022; this price was 31% above the level of the equivalent week of 2021 but 38% below the peak level recorded on 28 August 2022 (National Grid). [Section 3: Energy and housing.](#)
- Consumer behaviour indicators mostly showed increased activity in the latest week, in line with expected pre-Christmas trends, with UK credit and debit card purchases increasing by 13 percentage points (Bank of England CHAPS data) and overall retail footfall at 105% of the previous week (Springboard). [Section 4: Consumer behaviour.](#)
- The total number of online job adverts was unchanged on 2 December 2022 compared with the previous week but was 18% lower than the peak level reported in February 2022; the number of adverts decreased in 16 of the 28 job categories compared with the previous week, increasing in 10 and remaining unchanged in 2 (Adzuna). [Section 4: Business and workforce.](#)
- Accounting for expected seasonal fluctuations, more than a quarter (29%) of businesses currently trading expect turnover to decrease in January 2023 (initial results from Wave 71 of the [Business Insights and Conditions Survey](#) (BICS)). [Section 5: Business and workforce.](#)
- The average daily number of ship visits to major UK ports increased by 13% in the week to 4 December (exactEarth). [Section 6: Transport.](#)

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 they are representative and relevant, which may mean indicators change at short notice.

2 . Latest indicators at a glance

Notes:

1. Revolut adjustments to user count are at an aggregate level and as such age bands may not adjust evenly.
2. Users should note that card spending over time is pushed upwards by the impacts of both inflation on value of transactions and cash-to-card conversion.
3. The breaks in the shipping series are caused by technical issues.

Download the data

[.xlsx](#)

3 . Energy and housing

System Average Price (SAP) of gas

This is the average price of all gas traded through the balancing market. Market participants post bids or offers for volumes of gas a day-ahead and within-day trades. The SAP aggregates the trades conducted on the On-the-Day Commodity Market (OCM). This is the market that the National Grid use in their role as residual balancer. Other markets exist for wholesale gas trading in Great Britain.

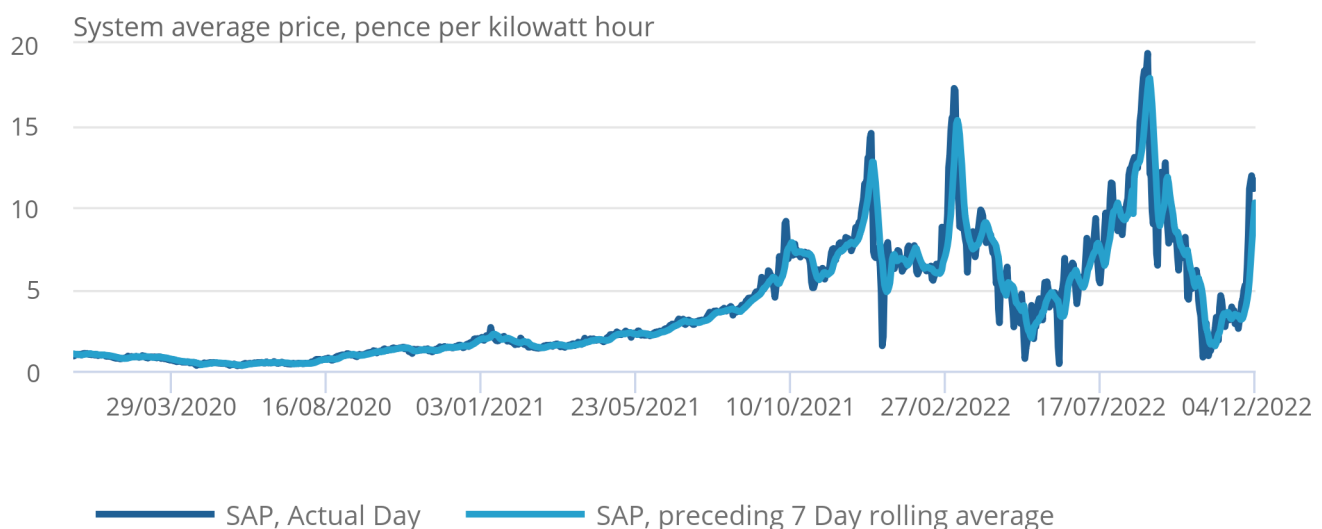
These data can be used to understand the general trend of gas prices within the UK. However, the data should be treated with caution as these can be subject to extreme within-day trading prices and may skew actual traded prices. It must also be noted that while these prices reflect spot prices on the day, traders can opt for futures contracts where the buyer and the seller agree the market-determined price for gas for a future date. The daily SAP is used to determine the futures price and is therefore a useful indicator of supply constraints and demand pressures.

Figure 1: The preceding seven-day rolling average gas price increased by 137% in the week to 4 December 2022 but was 38% lower than the peak level recorded in August 2022

System average price, pence per kilowatt hour, 1 January 2020 to 4 December 2022, GB, non-seasonally adjusted

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System average price, pence per kilowatt hour, 1 January 2020 to 4 December 2022, GB, non-seasonally adjusted



Source: National Grid

Notes:

1. The price trends observed will differ from that of the monthly Producer Price Inflation (PPI) series published by the ONS because of the differences in data sources and methods.

4 . Consumer behaviour

In the week to 27 November 2022, the estimated demand for fuel per transaction was unchanged from the previous week and 91% of the level seen in the equivalent week of 2021. Average fuel prices were 118% of the level in the equivalent week of 2021 but had decreased by 2 percentage points from the previous week. Total fuel sales were 96% of the level in the equivalent week of 2021. Our [accompanying dataset: Automotive fuel spending](#) is available.

According to [data from OpenTable](#), the number of UK seated diners decreased by 3 percentage points in the week to 4 December 2022 to 109% of the level in the equivalent pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) week of 2019. In London, the number was broadly unchanged but was 9 percentage points higher than the equivalent week of 2021.

UK Spending on debit and credit cards

Debit and credit card spend data showed increased activity in the latest week, in line with expected pre-Christmas trends.

Revolut debit card transaction data showed increased spending in all reported sectors in the week to 4 December 2022, except "retail", which saw a 1-percentage-point decrease. The "entertainment" sector saw the biggest increase of 13 percentage points but remained the only sector not to return to its pre-coronavirus baseline levels. Total spending across all sectors increased by 4 percentage points in the week to 4 December 2022 and was 17 percentage points above the same period last year. "Travel and accommodation" was the only sector to remain below the level reported in the same period last year, seeing a 13-percentage-point decrease. These data are not adjusted for potential effects of inflation on the value of transactions. Our [accompanying dataset: Revolut spending on debit cards](#) is available.

Daily CHAPS-based indicator

These data series are experimental real-time indicators for estimating UK spending on credit and debit cards. They track the daily CHAPS payments made by credit and debit card payment processors to around 100 major UK retail corporates. These payments are the proceeds of recent credit and debit card transactions made by customers at their stores, both via physical and via online platforms. More information on the indicator is provided in the accompanying [methodology article](#).

Companies are allocated to one of four categories based on their primary business:

- "staples" refers to companies that sell essential goods that households need to purchase, such as food and utilities
- "work-related" refers to companies providing public transport or selling petrol
- "delayable" refers to companies selling goods whose purchase could be delayed, such as clothing or furnishings
- "social" refers to spending on travel and eating out

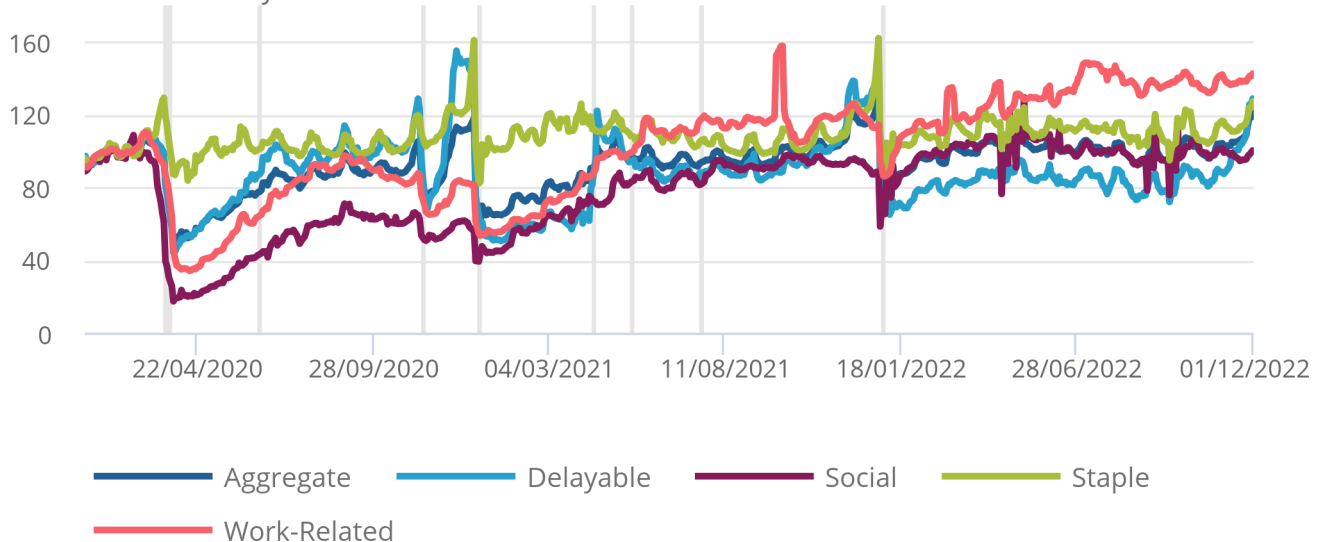
Figure 2: In the week to 1 December 2022, the aggregate CHAPS-based indicator of credit and debit card purchases increased by 13 percentage points and was unchanged compared with the same week in 2021

Index February 2020 = 100, a backward-looking seven-day rolling average, 13 January 2020 to 1 December 2022, non-seasonally adjusted, nominal prices.

Figure 2: In the week to 1 December 2022, the aggregate CHAPS-based indicator of credit and debit card purchases increased by 13 percentage points and was unchanged compared with the same week in 2021

Index February 2020 = 100, a backward-looking seven-day rolling average, 13 January 2020 to 1 December 2022, non-seasonally adjusted, nominal prices.

Index February 2020 = 100



Source: ONS and Bank of England calculations

Notes:

1. Users should note the daily payment data is the sum of card transactions processed up to the previous working day, so there is a slight time lag when compared with real-life events on the chart.
2. The vertical lines indicate notable events and coronavirus (COVID-19) restriction changes.
3. Percentage point difference is derived from current week and previous week index before rounding.

Figure 2 shows changes in the value of CHAPS payments received by large UK corporates from their credit and debit card processors, "merchant acquirers".

The spending categories recorded the following changes in the latest week:

- "delayable" increased by 22 percentage points
- "staple" increased by 13 percentage points
- "social" increased by 5 percentage points
- "work-related" increased by 4 percentage points

When compared with the same week in 2021, the spending categories recorded the following changes:

- "delayable" decreased by 10 percentage points
- "staple" increased by 2 percentage points
- "social" increased by 5 percentage points
- "work-related" increased by 16 percentage points

UK spending on debit and credit cards: monthly CHAPS-based indicator

The monthly data time series is available in the [accompanying dataset: UK spending on credit and debit cards](#) and includes methodological notes that users should bear in mind. The monthly CHAPS index is calculated by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), rather than being an additional series that is produced and validated by the Bank of England.

The monthly CHAPS-based indicator of aggregate credit and debit card spending in November 2022 was 5 percentage points higher than in October 2022 and 2 percentage points higher than in November 2021.

All spending categories in the monthly CHAPS-based indicator except "social" increased from October to November 2022, with the largest increase observed in the "delayable" category, which was up 14 percentage points. All categories except "delayable" increased when compared with the equivalent period last year. "Work-related" spending saw the largest year-on-year increase of 20 percentage points.

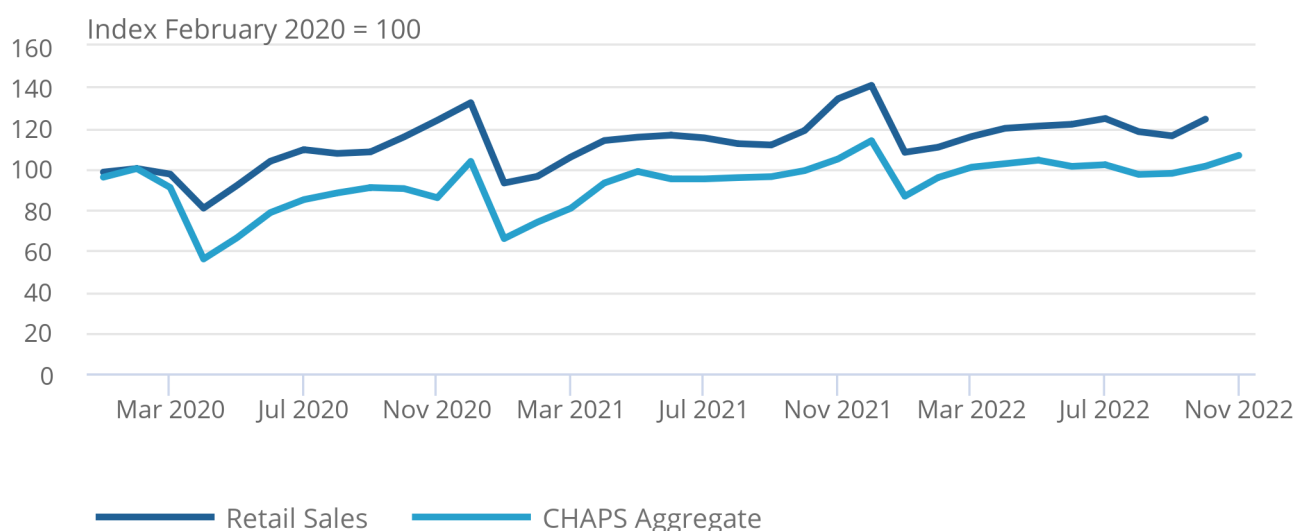
The monthly CHAPS-based aggregate index can provide an indication of the direction of retail sales data, having followed similar trends since the CHAPS index was established in January 2020. The ONS publishes retail sales data around the middle of each month, approximately two weeks after the monthly CHAPS index is published in this bulletin.

Figure 3: Retail sales data follow a similar trend to the CHAPS index of aggregate credit and debit card spending

Indices: February 2020 = 100, monthly average, non-seasonally adjusted, nominal prices and retail sales values, January 2020 to November 2022

Figure 3: Retail sales data follow a similar trend to the CHAPS index of aggregate credit and debit card spending

Indices: February 2020 = 100, monthly average, non-seasonally adjusted, nominal prices and retail sales values, January 2020 to November 2022



Source: Office for National Statistics – ONS calculations on Bank of England data and the ONS Monthly Business Survey – Retail Sales Inquiry

Notes:

1. CHAPS uses a broader definition of retail than the Retail Sales Inquiry, including expenditure on train fares and social activities such as meals or drinks in pubs and restaurants.
2. The CHAPS index is not adjusted for seasonality as there is not currently enough back data to test. Non-seasonally adjusted data will reflect the impact of factors such as the number of trading days in the month and bank holidays.
3. The monthly CHAPS index is calculated by ONS, rather than being an additional series that is produced and validated by the Bank of England.
4. The [retail sales bulletin's](#) main measure is seasonally adjusted volume, which differs to the series presented in this figure.

National retail footfall

National retail footfall figures are supplied by Springboard, a provider of data on customer activity. The breakdowns in this indicator are as follows:

- overall footfall, which is the sum of the average footfall in each destination type weighted by their respective footfall volumes
- shopping centre, which is a space that does not form part of the public highway, and is owned and managed by a single landlord
- high street, which is the central part of the main business and commercial area of a town
- retail parks and shopping parks, which comprise retail warehouse units, wholly owned and managed by a single landlord

Springboard's weekly data are defined over a seven-day period running from Monday to Sunday. Week 48 of 2022 refers to the period Monday 28 November to Sunday 4 December 2022. All quoted figures have been rounded to the nearest integer.

Figure 4: In the week to 4 December 2022, overall weekly retail footfall was 89% of the level in the equivalent week of 2019

Volume of daily retail footfall, percentage compared with the equivalent week of 2019, 1 January 2020 to 4 December 2022, UK

Download the data

[.xlsx](#)

According to Springboard, in the week to 4 December 2022, the volume of overall weekly retail footfall for:

- the overall springboard index was 105% of the previous week and 89% of the equivalent week of 2019
- retail parks were 102% of the previous week and 96% of the level in the equivalent week of 2019
- high streets were 106% of the previous week and 89% of the level in the equivalent week of 2019
- shopping centres were 104% of the previous week and 81% of the level in the equivalent week of 2019

In the week to 4 December 2022, all 12 UK countries and English regions saw increased retail footfall compared with the previous week, in line with expected pre-Christmas trends. The largest increase was reported in the South West of England, which recorded 110% of the level in the previous week, followed by Wales, at 108% of the level in the previous week. Footfall in all regions was below 2019 levels, however, with the lowest level seen in Yorkshire and The Humber (83%).

5 . Business and workforce

The total number of online job adverts was unchanged on 2 December 2022 compared with the previous week and was 18% lower than the peak level in February 2022. Of the 28 job categories, 16 showed a decrease in the number of adverts, while 10 increased and two remained unchanged. The largest decrease was in the "Charity and voluntary" category, which fell by 5% and was 21% below its level in the equivalent week of 2021. Elsewhere, the largest increase was 8% in "HR & recruitment", though this category remained 29% lower than its level in the equivalent week of 2021.

In the 12 UK countries and English regions, the number of adverts was unchanged in six, decreased in four and increased in two. Adverts were below the level in the equivalent week of 2021 in all 12 UK countries and English regions, except Scotland where they were 10% above this level. The lowest performer compared with the equivalent week of 2021 was the East Midlands, which reported 30% fewer adverts. Our [accompanying dataset: Online job advert estimates](#) is available.

The number of potential redundancies reported in the week to 27 November 2022 was 73% above the level in the equivalent week of 2021, while the number of employers proposing redundancies increased by 104% compared with the level in the equivalent week of 2021. Our [accompanying dataset: Advanced notification of potential redundancies](#) is available.

Business impact and insights

Initial results from Wave 71 of the [Business Insights and Conditions Survey](#) (BICS) were collected from 28 November to 6 December 2022, with a response rate of 20.5% (7,999 responses).

Table 1: More than half (52%) of businesses currently trading experienced no change in turnover in November 2022 compared with the previous month, after accounting for usual seasonal fluctuations
Business turnover, businesses currently trading, weighted by count, UK, September to November 2022

	Turnover increased	Turnover stayed the same	Turnover decreased	Not sure
September 2022	14.0%	50.8%	26.3%	8.9%
October 2022	14.6%	50.1%	25.3%	10.0%
November 2022	12.3%	52.4%	26.9%	8.3%

Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS)

Notes

1. Initial weighted results, Wave 71 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS).
2. Table rows may not sum to 100% because of rounding and percentages less than 1% being removed for disclosure purposes.

Table 2: More than a quarter (29%) of businesses currently trading expected turnover to decrease in January 2023 beyond usual seasonal fluctuations, up from 24% expecting December 2022 turnover to decrease in the previous month

Business turnover expectations, businesses currently trading, weighted by count, UK, November 2022 to January 2023

	Expect turnover to increase	Expect turnover to stay the same	Expect turnover to decrease
November 2022	11.9%	53.4%	21.2%
December 2022	13.1%	48.6%	24.4%
January 2023	10.4%	47.3%	29.4%

Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS)

Notes

1. Initial weighted results, Wave 71 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS).
2. Table rows may not sum to 100% because of rounding and percentages less than 1% being removed for disclosure purposes.

6 . Transport

The latest data for traffic camera activity are available in our [accompanying dataset: Traffic camera activity](#).

Shipping

A changeover in the systems used to collect shipping data has introduced a level shift in the data time series from 14 June 2021 onwards. Users should not make comparisons between data before and after this date. The data produced before the change, from 1 April 2019 to 13 June 2021, can still be compared within that period.

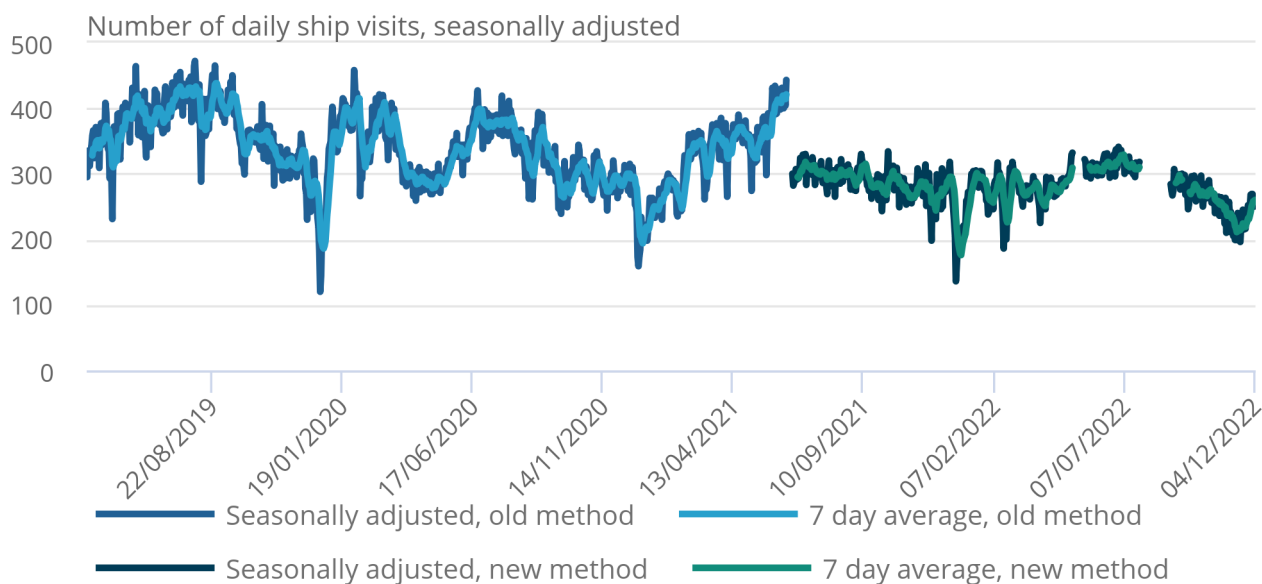
A full methodological review of our current method of shipping data collection is under way and data may be subject to revision once this is complete. We will continue to update the accompanying weekly shipping dataset using the current method until the review is complete.

Figure 5: The average number of daily ship visits to major UK ports increased by 13% to 260 in the week to 4 December 2022

Daily movements in shipping visits, UK, seasonally adjusted, 1 April 2019 to 4 December 2022, UK

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Daily movements in shipping visits, UK, seasonally adjusted, 1 April 2019 to 4 December 2022, UK



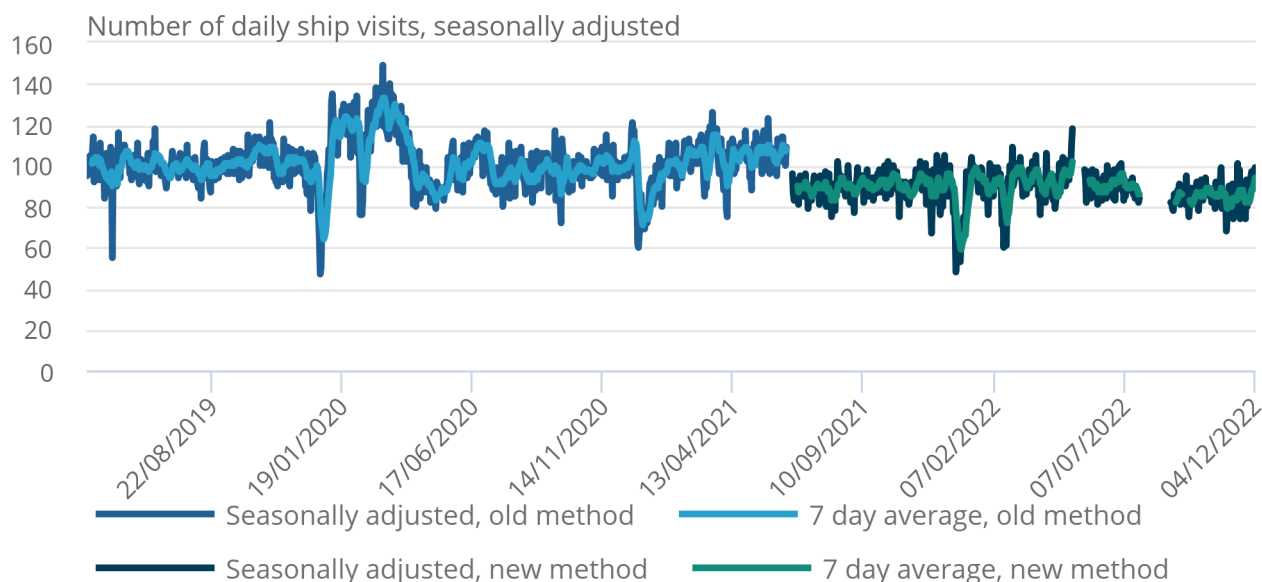
Source: exactEarth

Figure 6: The average number of daily cargo and tanker ship visits to major UK ports increased by 15% in the week to 4 December 2022 to 94 visits

Daily movements in cargo shipping visits, seasonally adjusted, 1 April 2019 to 4 December 2022, UK

Figure 6: The average number of daily cargo and tanker ship visits to major UK ports increased by 15% in the week to 4 December 2022 to 94 visits

Daily movements in cargo shipping visits, seasonally adjusted, 1 April 2019 to 4 December 2022, UK



Source: exactEarth

Notes:

1. The gaps in the shipping time series are the result of methods changes and technical issues.
2. See the [accompanying dataset: Weekly shipping indicators](#) for notable dates and weather events.
3. In the coming weeks, we will continue to review the seasonally adjusted estimates of shipping indicators data following the data's reintroduction with the discontinuity.

7 . Data

[Advanced notification of potential redundancies](#)

Dataset | Released 8 December 2022

Weekly dataset showing the number of potential redundancies and employers proposing redundancies, submitted to Insolvency Service via HR1 forms.

[Online job advert estimates](#)

Dataset | Released 8 December 2022

Experimental job advert indices covering the UK job market.

[Revolut spending on debit cards](#)

Dataset | Released 8 December 2022

Insight into the spending patterns of UK consumers from financial technology company Revolut.

[System Average Price \(SAP\) of gas](#)

Dataset | Released 8 December 2022

Daily and rolling average System Average Price (SAP) of gas traded in Great Britain over the On-the-Day Commodity Market (OCM).

[UK spending on credit and debit cards](#)

Dataset | Released 8 December 2022

Experimental indicator for monitoring UK retail purchases derived from the Bank of England's CHAPS data.

[Weekly shipping indicators](#)

Dataset | Released 8 December 2022

Experimental weekly and daily ship visits dataset covering UK ports.

This section lists a selection of the data available within this publication. For the full list of available datasets please see the [accompanying dataset page](#).

8 . Glossary

Real-time indicator

A real-time 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.

9 . 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](#).

10 . 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, using 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

Coronavirus 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.

11 . Related links

[Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain](#)

Bulletin | Released fortnightly

Social insights on daily life and events, including the cost of living, location of work, health and well-being from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

[Business insights and impact on the UK economy](#)

Bulletin | Released fortnightly

The impact of challenges facing the economy and other events on UK businesses. Based on responses from the voluntary business survey (BICS) to deliver real-time information to help assess issues affecting UK businesses and economy, including financial performance, workforce, trade and business resilience.

12 . Cite this statistical bulletin

Office for National Statistics (ONS), published 8 December 2022, ONS website, statistical bulletin, [Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators: 8 December 2022](#)