Statistical bulletin

Coronavirus and the latest indicators for the UK economy and society: 28 May 2020

Early experimental data on the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) on the UK economy and society, including online price changes data. These faster indicators are created using rapid response surveys, novel data sources and experimental methods.

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Release date:
28 May 2020

Next release:
4 June 2020

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1 . Main points

- 79% of businesses in the UK had applied for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, whilst 42% of businesses had less than six months of cash reserves.

- Of the 14% of businesses who reported they had paused trading but are intending to restart trading in the next two weeks, they expect 31% of their workforce will return from furlough leave.

- There was a fall in the proportion of people in Great Britain staying at home (other than leaving for work, exercise, essential shopping or medical need) from 81% between 14 to 17 May to 73% between 21 to 24 May.

- Online job adverts declined by more than 50% from the start of March to the start of May 2020.

- Overall, prices of items in the high-demand products (HDP) basket decreased by 0.1% between the week ending 17 May 2020 and the week ending 24 May 2020.

- After a marked downward trend in daily ship visits from mid-March to mid-April 2020, daily ship visits to major UK ports have been steady over the last few weeks, with an average of 315 daily ship visits from 18 May to 24 May 2020.

- New declarations for Universal Credit and new claim advances have both gradually declined to 19 May 2020, following peaks on 27 March and 6 April, respectively.

Online price change analysis is experimental and should not be compared with our regular consumer price statistics. The Business Impact of COVID-19 Survey (BICS) is voluntary and currently unweighted, so may only reflect the characteristics of those who responded. Results presented are experimental.

2 . Indicators included in this release

This bulletin contains:

- Initial results from Wave 5 of the Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS) of UK businesses for the period 4 May to 17 May 2020.

- Final results from Wave 10 of the Opinions and Lifestyle (OPN) Survey, covering the period 21 May to 24 May 2020 exploring the social impact of the coronavirus on individuals in Great Britain .

- Experimental online job advert indices covering the UK job market for January 2019 to May 2020 using data from job advert aggregating website Adzuna.

- Experimental online price indices for high-demand products (HDPs) for 16 March to 24 May 2020.

- Weekly shipping data for the UK up to week commencing 18 May 2020 and daily shipping data up to 24 May 2020.

- Weekly management information on Universal Credit declarations (claims) and advances for reference period 1 March to 19 May 2020 (see Section 8 on Universal Credit); this information is published every Tuesday by the Department for Work and Pensions and will continue to be updated until at least the end of June.

We will add new experimental data and indices as and when new data become available, and list them in this section.

This release does not contain data on the number of deaths involving the coronavirus (COVID-19). Our weekly deaths bulletin and accompanying dataset provides the most up-to-date figures on deaths involving COVID-19 in England and Wales.

More about coronavirus
- Find the latest on coronavirus (COVID-19) in the UK.
- All ONS analysis, summarised in our coronavirus roundup.
- View all coronavirus data.

- Find out how our studies and surveys are serving public need.

3 . Business impact of the coronavirus

This section presents initial results from Wave 5 of the Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS) collected between 18 May and 26 May 2020 for reference period 4 May to 17 May 2020 (questions referring to future expectations are relative to the time each business completes their questionnaire). Out of 20,566 businesses in the UK sampled, 24% had responded as of 26 May 2020. Wave 5 data collection closes on 31 May 2020.

Figure 1: 79% of responding businesses had applied for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, whilst 42% of responding businesses had less than six months of cash reserves

Headline indicators from the Business Impact of Coronavirus Survey, 4 to 17 May 2020, UK

Download the data

Notes

1. Initial results, Wave 5 of ONS Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey. (Response rate = 24%)

2. Although businesses that reported as having permanently closed in a previous wave are not expected to continue to respond to subsequent waves some have continued to respond as being permanently closed.

3. Businesses were asked for their experiences of furloughing staff for the reference period 4 May to 17 May 2020, but for questions regarding future expectations businesses may respond relative to the point of completing their questionnaire (responses collected 18 May 26 May 2020).

4. All percentages are a proportion of the number of businesses who responded apart from the percentages on furlough leave which are a proportion of the workforce apportioned by workforce size.

Figure 1 shows that overall 42% of responding businesses had less than six months of cash reserves, rising to 58% for businesses who had temporarily paused trading. This compared with 39% of businesses continuing to trade. Overall, 4% of responding businesses had no cash reserves; this rose to 7% for businesses who had paused trading.

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme was the most popular government support scheme, with 79% of all responding businesses applying; 27% of the workforce in these businesses had been furloughed. Of responding businesses who have not permanently ceased trading, 16% applied for business grants funded by the UK and devolved governments, while 15% applied for government-backed accredited loans or finance agreements.
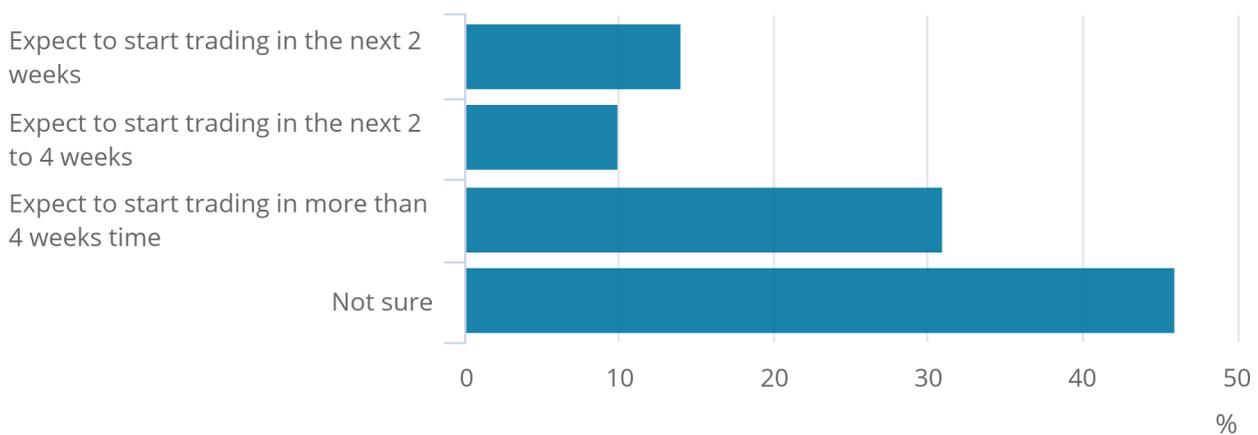
Some businesses who temporarily ceased trading are reopening. Of businesses who responded as trading, 8% said they had started trading again in the last two weeks. Of those who had temporarily closed or paused trading, 99% reported the closure or pause started more than two weeks ago.

Figure 2: 24% of businesses who have currently paused trading expect to start trading again in the next four weeks, compared with 31% who expect to start trading in more than 4 weeks' time

Percentage of surveyed businesses who have temporarily closed or paused trading, UK, 4 May to 17 May 2020

Figure 2: 24% of businesses who have currently paused trading expect to start trading again in the next four weeks, compared with 31% who expect to start trading in more than 4 weeks' time

Percentage of surveyed businesses who have temporarily closed or paused trading, UK, 4 May to 17 May 2020

Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Impact of Coronavirus Survey

Notes:

1. Initial results, Wave 5 of ONS Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (response rate = 24%).

2. Businesses were asked for their experiences for the reference period 4 May to 17 May 2020, but for questions regarding expectations in the next two weeks businesses may respond from the point of completion of the questionnaire (18 May to 26 May 2020).

Of surveyed businesses who have temporarily closed or paused trading, 14% reported they expect to restart trading in the next two weeks, 31% to restart in more than four weeks' time and 46% reported they were unsure when they would restart trading.

Of the 14% of businesses who reported they are intending to restart trading in the next two weeks, apportioned by workforce size, 31% of the workforce will return from furlough while 15% will return from remote working (though these businesses reported as pausing trade, they may have had skeleton staff working during the temporary closure, before returning to normal trade).

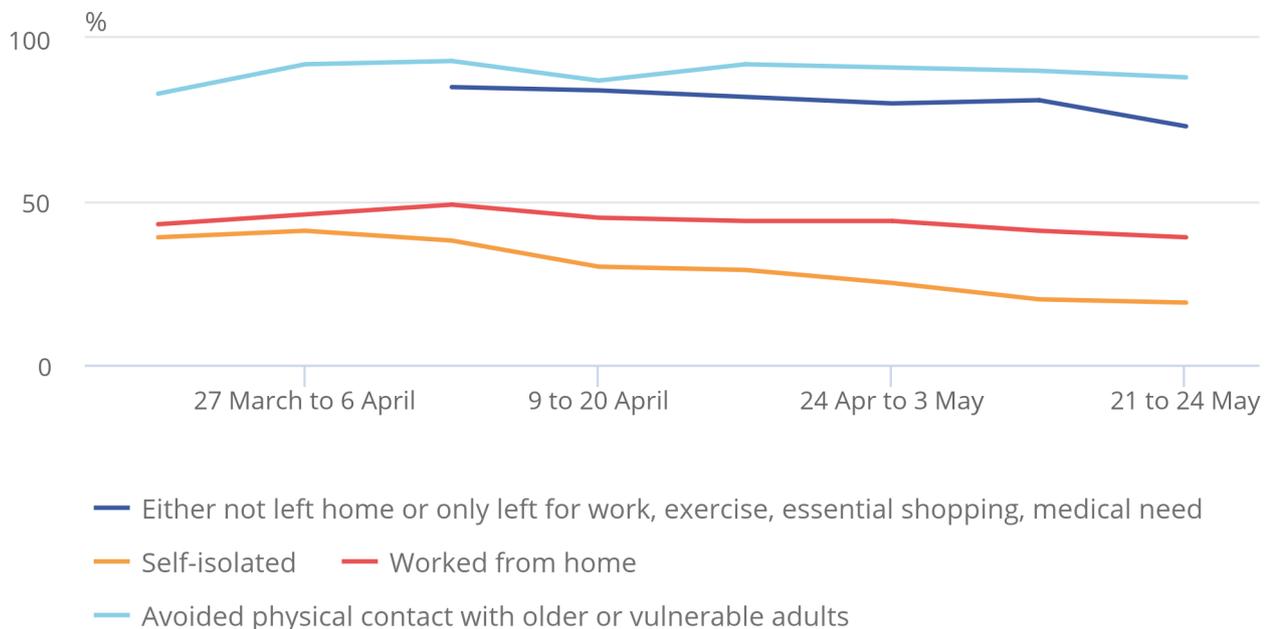# 4 . Social impacts of the coronavirus on Great Britain

This section includes headline results from Wave 10 of the Opinions and Lifestyle (OPN) Survey covering the period 21 May to 24 May 2020. The full results will be published in Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain, on 29 May 2020.

Figure 3: 73% of people had either not left home or only left for work, exercise, essential shopping or medical need between 21 and 24 May, down from 81% between 14 and 17 May

Proportion of adults, Great Britain, 20 March to 24 May 2020

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Proportion of adults, Great Britain, 20 March to 24 May 2020

— Either not left home or only left for work, exercise, essential shopping, medical need
— Self-isolated — Worked from home
— Avoided physical contact with older or vulnerable adults

Source: Office for National Statistics - Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

Notes:

1. Questions: In the past seven days, have you avoided contact with older people or other vulnerable people because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak?; In the past seven days, for what reasons have you left your home?; In the past seven days, have you worked from home because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak?; In the past seven days, have you self-isolated because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak?

2. Full response categories for reasons to leave home were: Travelling to and from work; For exercise, for example a run, walk or cycle; Shopping for basic necessities; and Any medical need, or to provide care or to help a vulnerable person.

3. Base population for Work from home series: adults that had a paid job, either as an employee or self-employed; or did any casual work for payment; or did any unpaid or voluntary work in the previous week.

5 . Online job adverts

These figures use job adverts provided by Adzuna, an online job search engine, which collates adverts from thousands of different sources. Each value in the series measures the number of job adverts at a point in time, indexed to the average for 2019. The number of job adverts over time is an indicator of the demand for labour.

These estimates are experimental and will be developed over the coming weeks. More details on the methodology can be found in Using Adzuna data to derive an indicator of weekly vacancies , and the full series are available in the Online job advert estimates dataset.

Figure 4: Total online job vacancies declined more than 50% from the start of March to the start of May 2020

Total weekly job adverts on Adzuna, UK: index 2019 average = 100

Download the data

Notes

1. The observations were collected on a roughly weekly basis; however, they were not all observed at the same point in each week, leading to slightly irregular gaps between each observation.

2. These series have a small number of missing weeks, mostly in late 2019, and latest is in January 2020. These values have been imputed using linear interpolation. The data points which have been imputed are clearly marked in the accompanying dataset.

3. The figure for total adverts in Education on the 21 March 2019 was anomalous and has been replaced with an imputed value.

The total number of online job adverts was relatively stable from the start of 2019 until the beginning of March 2020, after which it began to decline rapidly. This decline continued for two months, with total job adverts levelling off from the start of May to around 43% of its 2019 average.

The categories of catering and hospitality, and wholesale and retail, both saw very large declines in job adverts across this period, stabilising in May between 20% and 25% of their 2019 averages. In contrast, education saw a far smaller decline to around 80% of its 2019 average. The volume of job adverts in health and social care saw little or no change from March to May.

The "Education", "Healthcare / Social Care" (aggregated from Healthcare and Social Care), "Retail/Wholesale" and "Catering/Hospitality" categories were selected because they are likely to be of particular interest to users, and more closely track trends in ONS vacancies data. Further category breakdowns not presented here are included in the Online job advert estimates dataset.

The Institute for Employment Studies are also using Adzuna data to produce weekly vacancy indicators, and more granular breakdowns of these data can found in their release .

6 . Online price change for high-demand products (HDPs)

A timely indication of weekly price change for high-demand products (HDPs) has been developed, covering the period 16 March to 24 May 2020. This analysis is [experimental](#) and should not be compared with our regular consumer price statistics.
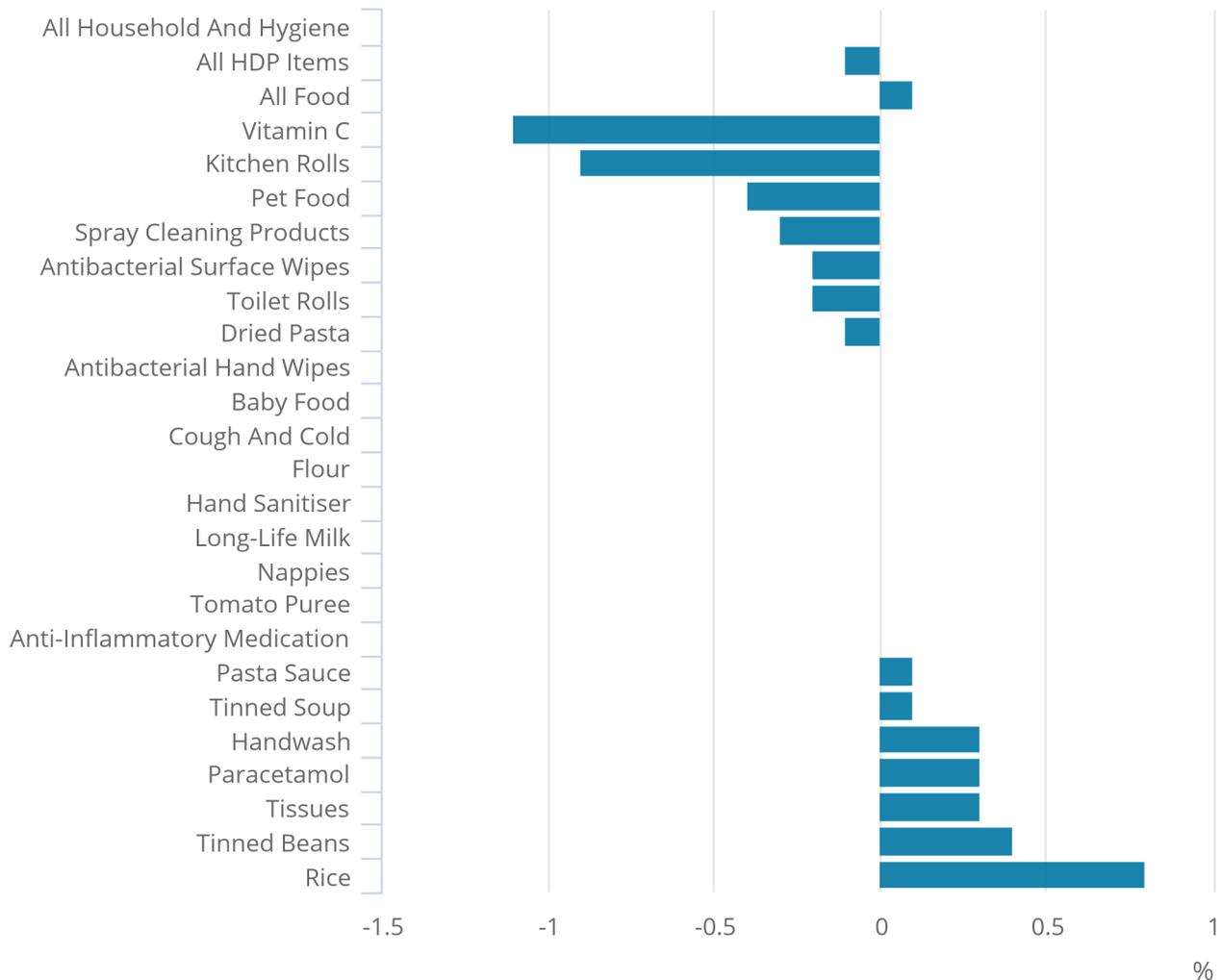
As experimental indices, these data are subject to revisions as we develop our methodology and systems.

Figure 5: Overall, prices of items in the high-demand products (HDP) basket have decreased by 0.1% over the period Week 9 to Week 10

Online price change of high-demand products, UK, percentage change between Week 9 (11 May to 17 May 2020) and Week 10 (18 May to 24 May 2020)

Figure 5: Overall, prices of items in the high-demand products (HDP) basket have decreased by 0.1% over the period Week 9 to Week 10

Online price change of high-demand products, UK, percentage change between Week 9 (11 May to 17 May 2020) and Week 10 (18 May to 24 May 2020)

Source: Office for National Statistics – Faster indicators

Notes:

1. More information on the strengths and limitations of the online price changes data is available in the Online price changes of high-demand products methodology article.
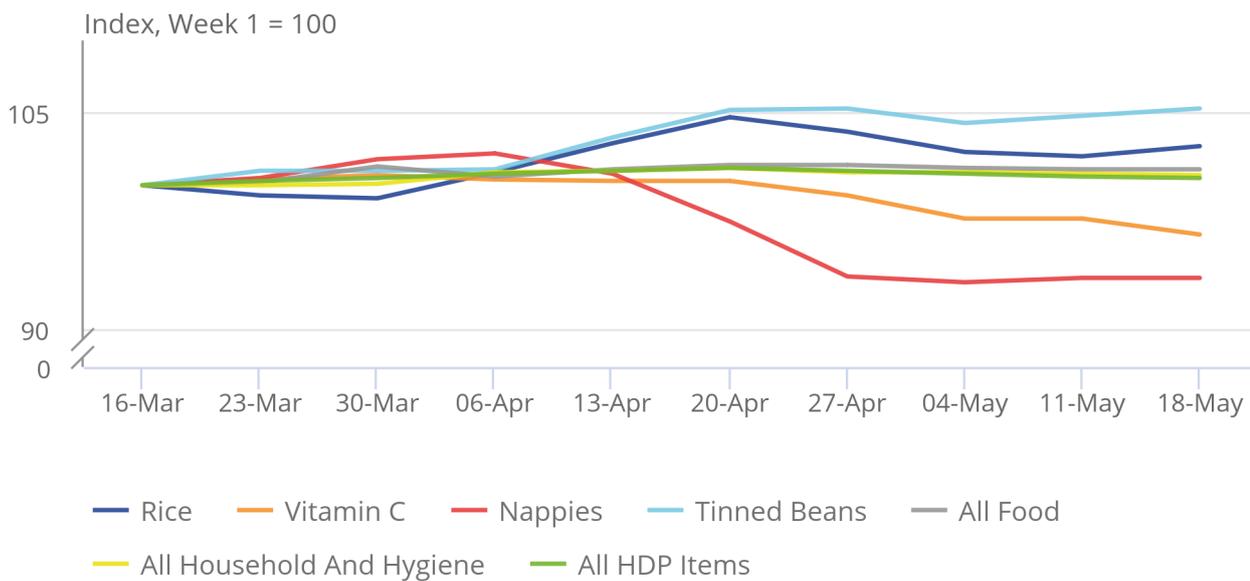
Figure 5 shows that overall the online prices of items in the HDPs basket have decreased by 0.1% between Week 9 (11 May to 17 May) and Week 10 (18 May to 24 May 2020). Vitamin C showed the largest decrease in prices in this period, while rice showed the largest increase.

Figure 6: Though some high-demand products (HDP) items have varied over the period, the all HDP items index remains stable

Online price change of selected high-demand products: index Week 1 (16 to 22 March 2020) = 100, UK

Figure 6: Though some high-demand products (HDP) items have varied over the period, the all HDP items index remains stable

Online price change of selected high-demand products: index Week 1 (16 to 22 March 2020) = 100, UK

Source: Office for National Statistics – Faster indicators

Notes:

1. Index movements may not be exactly the same as percentage changes shown in Figure 5 as a result of rounding.

Figure 6 presents weekly price movements for aggregated indices and some selected items. The all HDP items, all food, and all household and hygiene indices are relatively stable after seeing slight increases earlier in March and April.

At the item level, nappies and tinned beans show the largest price fall and price increase respectively compared with week 1, although both have also stabilised in recent weeks. In the latest week, the downward movement in Vitamin C prices continues the overall trend for this item over the time series, compared with rice, which saw a price increase for the first time in three weeks.

The time series for all individual HDP items are published in a dataset alongside this release.
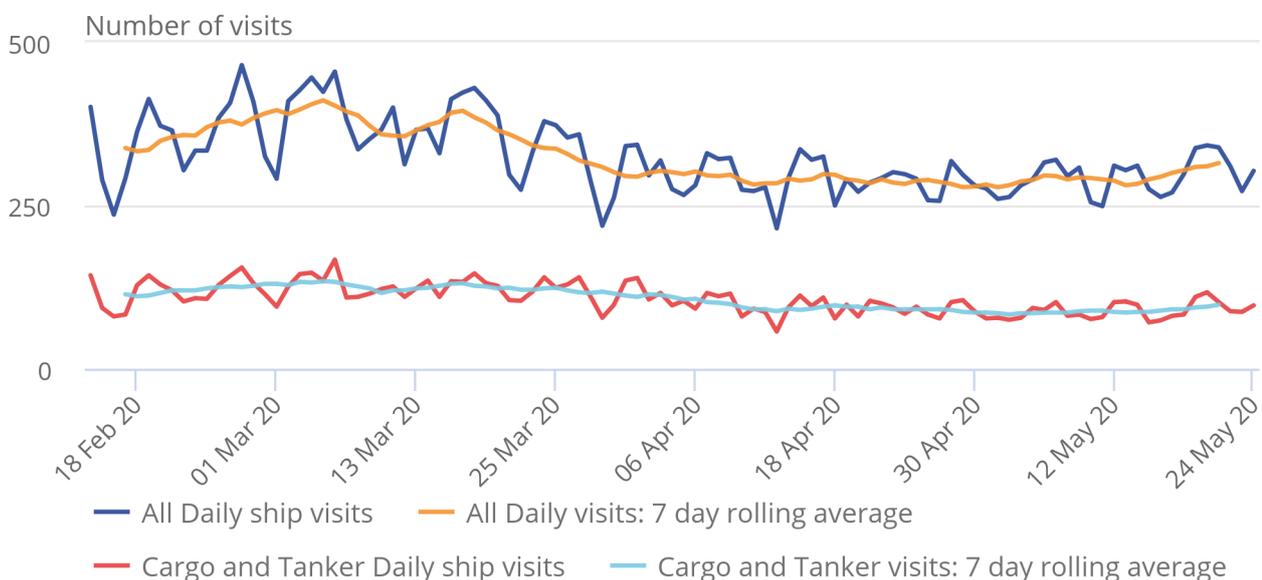
7 . Shipping

These shipping indicators are based on counts of all vessels, and cargo and tanker vessels. As discussed in [Faster indicators of UK economic activity: shipping](), we expect the shipping indicators to be related to the import and export of goods.

Figure 7: There has been an average of 315 daily ship visits during the period 18 May to 24 May 2020

Daily movements in shipping visits, UK, not seasonally adjusted, 14 February 2020 to 24 May 2020

Figure 7: There has been an average of 315 daily ship visits during the period 18 May to 24 May 2020

Daily movements in shipping visits, UK, not seasonally adjusted, 14 February 2020 to 24 May 2020

Source: exactEarth

Notes:

1. The seven-day rolling average has been constructed using the three days before and after the reference point.

2. Daily and weekly shipping visits and unique visits are available by port in the [dataset]().

8 . Universal Credit

Figure 8: New declarations for Universal Credit and new claim advances have both gradually declined following peaks on 27 March and 6 April 2020, respectively

[Download the data]()

Note

1. These declaration figures have not been derived to the same methodology as official statistics, and therefore the management information and official statistics will not be directly comparable. Figures relate to Great Britain only, and Northern Ireland is not included.

The first chart in Figure 8 shows the number of new declarations, which is when an individual or household provides information on their personal circumstances to begin a Universal Credit claim. Note not all declarations will go on to receive a payment.

In the first half of March 2020, new declarations for individuals were steady between 11,000 and 16,000 each weekday (lower on weekends). This rose steeply following the advisory announcement on 16 March to avoid non-essential travel, bars, restaurants and other indoor leisure venues, and to work from home if possible, to peak on 27 March with 146,290 declarations on the fifth day of lockdown, which was announced on 23 March. Measures totemporarily close entertainment, hospitality and indoor leisure premises took effect from 20 March. Numbers then declined gradually in the subsequent weeks to 24,100 new individual declarations on 19 May.

The second chart in Figure 8 shows the number of new claim advances, which provide support to new claimants in financial need until they receive their first regular payment of Universal Credit.

At the beginning of March, advances for new claims were steady between 5,000 to 6,000 each weekday (lower on weekends). New claim advances peaked on 6 April at 35,280, which was 10 days after the peak of new declarations on 27 March. After the peak, new claim advances have steadily fallen to 9,050 on 19 May.

9 . Data

Weekly and daily shipping indicators
Dataset | Released 28 May 2020
The weekly and daily shipping indicators dataset associated with the faster indicators of UK economic activity.

Online price changes for high-demand products
Dataset | Released 28 May 2020
Weekly online price changes of selected high-demand products (HDP).

Online job advert estimates
Dataset | Released 28 May 2020
Experimental job advert indices covering the UK job market.

10 . 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.

High-demand product (HDP) basket

The HDP basket contains everyday essential items that were identified at the beginning of the crisis to have high consumer demand, including items from food, health and hygiene categories. The selection of these items was based on anecdotal evidence on patterns of consumer spend. The basket does not cover all items within these categories.

11 . Measuring the data

Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey

The business indicators are based on responses from the voluntary, fortnightly Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS), which captures business' views on impact on turnover, workforce, prices, trade and business resilience. The data relate to initial Wave 5 results, covering the survey period 4 May to 17 May 2020, and the survey questions for the period are available in Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey questions: 4 May 2020 to 17 May 2020 .

Estimates from the BICS are currently unweighted and should be treated with caution when used to evaluate the impact of COVID-19 across the UK economy. Each business was assigned the same weight regardless of turnover, size or industry.

More information on the quality and methodology, including response rates, sample size and weighting, is available in the "Measuring the data" section of the Coronavirus and the economic impacts on the UK bulletin .

Social impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) (OPN)

Data on the social impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) on Great Britain were collected from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN). The data relate to the final results for Wave 10, covering the period 21 May to 24 May 2020. In this wave, 2,010 individuals were sampled, with a response rate of 51% (or 1,028 individuals) for the survey.

More information on the quality and methodology of the OPN Survey is available in the "Measuring the data" section of the Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain bulletin .

Online job advert estimates

These estimates are experimental and will be developed over the coming weeks. More information on the methodology used to compile these estimates is in the article Using Adzuna data to derive an indicator of weekly vacancies: Experimental Statistics.

Online price change for high-demand products (HDP)

Prices were scraped daily from several large online UK retailers (typically supermarkets and other prominent high-street chains with an online presence) from 16 March to 24 May 2020 for selected items chosen to form the HDP basket (see Table 1 in the online price changes for HDPs methodology).

An average weekly price was then calculated for each unique product and a movement splice GEKS-Jevons index was calculated using a rolling window of five weeks. More information detailing our plan for data collection, compilation and publication of our various prices statistics following movement restrictions as a result of the coronavirus pandemic is available.

More information on the quality and methodology of the online price changes data is available in the Online price changes of high-demand products methodology.

Shipping

These weekly and daily faster shipping indicators data are created through new experimental methods and are not official statistics. More quality and methodology information is available in Faster indicators of UK economic activity: shipping.

12 . Strengths and limitations

Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey

The Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS) is voluntary and responses are qualitative, which should be treated with caution as results reflect the characteristics of those who responded and not necessarily the wider business population.

These data should not be used in place of official statistics. The survey was designed to give an indication of the impact of the coronavirus on businesses and a timelier estimate than other surveys.

More information on the strengths and limitations of the BICS data is available in the "Strengths and limitations" section of the Coronavirus and the economic impacts on the UK bulletin .

Social impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) (OPN)

More information on the strengths and limitations of the OPN Survey is available in the "Strengths and limitations" section of the Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain bulletin.

Online job advert estimates

These estimates are experimental and will be developed over the coming weeks. Information on the strengths and limitations of these estimates is in the article Using Adzuna data to derive an indicator of weekly vacancies: Experimental Statistics.

Online price change for high-demand products (HDP)

These experimental online price changes data should not be compared with the headline Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers' housing costs (CPIH). The CPIH is produced using different methods, data and quality thresholds, and incorporates a broader range of goods and services, such as housing.

More information on the strengths and limitations of the online price changes data is available in the Online price changes of high-demand products methodology.

Shipping indicators

It should be noted that these indicators are not intended to be an early measure or predictor of gross domestic product (GDP), and their potential relationship with headline GDP should be interpreted with caution. Instead, they provide an early picture of a range of activities that are likely to have an impact on the economy, supplementing official economic statistics.

Publication of coronavirus (COVID-19)-related data

We will publish this bulletin on a weekly basis during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This is to ensure we are meeting user needs for more timely data. We will be adding new data and experimental indicators as and when data become available each week.

This publication will include regularly updated data from the new fortnightly survey, BICS, online prices for high-demand products and weekly indicators from the OPN Survey on social impact of the coronavirus.

13 . Related links

Coronavirus (COVID-19) latest data and analysis
Webpage | 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.

Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS) questions: 4 May 2020 to 17 May 2020
Article | Released on 18 May 2020
Questions from the Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey for the period 4 May to 17 May 2020 relating to the coronavirus, the UK economy and society, latest indicators weekly bulletin.

Rapid review of coronavirus, the UK economy and society, faster indicators
Webpage | Released on 9 April 2020
Letter from Ed Humpherson, the Director General for Regulation at the UK Statistics Authority, endorsing the ONS's new experimental faster indicators.

Deaths registered weekly in England and Wales, provisional: week ending 15 May 2020
Bulletin | Released 26 May 2020
Provisional counts of the number of deaths registered in England and Wales, including deaths involving the coronavirus (COVID-19), by age, sex and region, in the latest weeks for which data are available.