

Article

# Comparison of furloughed jobs data, UK: March 2020 to January 2021

An overview of the similarities and differences between the fortnightly Business Insights and Conditions Survey furlough estimates and HMRC's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme statistics, over the period 23 March 2020 to 7 February 2021.

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# 1 . Main points

- The proportion of the workforce on full furlough has increased from early December 2020 to the end of January 2021.
- Approximately two in five businesses were furloughing staff in January, according to both Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) furlough and Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) statistics' provisional estimates.
- London is the UK region with the highest proportion of the workforce on furlough, according to both BICS estimates and CJRS official statistics.
- HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) official statistics and the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) estimates on proportions of the workforce on furlough are very closely matched when conceptual differences are considered.

## 2 . Overview

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) was announced by the UK Government on 20 March 2020 and was originally due to end on 31 October 2020. It has since been extended to 30 April 2021, and subsequently until 31 September 2021. It enables employers to claim support per employee furloughed to cope with the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) on the workforce and reduced business demand.

This article's aim is to give users a better understanding of the similarities and differences between BICS furloughing estimates and HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) CJRS furloughing official statistics, in order to better inform further analysis based on these data sources. The recommended source for furlough estimates is the CJRS official statistics, however, BICS furlough estimates have proved a reliable early indicator on the proportion of the private sector workforce on furlough.

The voluntary fortnightly Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS; previously the Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey) 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 weighted and apportioned by employment so that estimates are representative of UK workforce size. For more information on the different weighting methods please see [Business Insights and Conditions Survey: preliminary weighted results](#).

Final weighted results of each wave of BICS are published in the fortnightly bulletin [Business insights and impact on the UK economy](#) and flash headline figures are presented in the weekly [Coronavirus and the latest indicators for the UK economy and society publication](#).

Comparatively, the [Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme statistics](#) used in this bulletin are published on a monthly basis, with the [first release](#) published on 11 June 2020, and the [latest release](#) published on 25 February 2021.

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 to 31 January 2021. The earliest date claims could be made was 20 April 2020 where the earliest period claims could cover was from 1 March 2020. It also includes several time series of the number of employments furloughed up to 31 January 2021, which is the primary data source that will be used in this article. The CJRS official statistics' January time series is subject to revision as methodological and data handling improvements are made.

Previous analysis comparing the unweighted BICS furloughing estimates and CJRS official statistic's furloughing estimates can be found in [Comparison of furloughed jobs data: May to July 2020](#). Estimates might differ from this previous release:

- because of revisions made to the CJRS official statistic's furloughing estimates
- because weighted BICS furlough estimates are being used rather than unweighted estimates

Despite methodological changes in BICS, the weighted by employment estimates follow similar trends to previously published unweighted results.

Further information on the methods used for comparison of the two data sources can be found in the [Description of methods](#) section.

### 3 . Full and partial furlough comparison

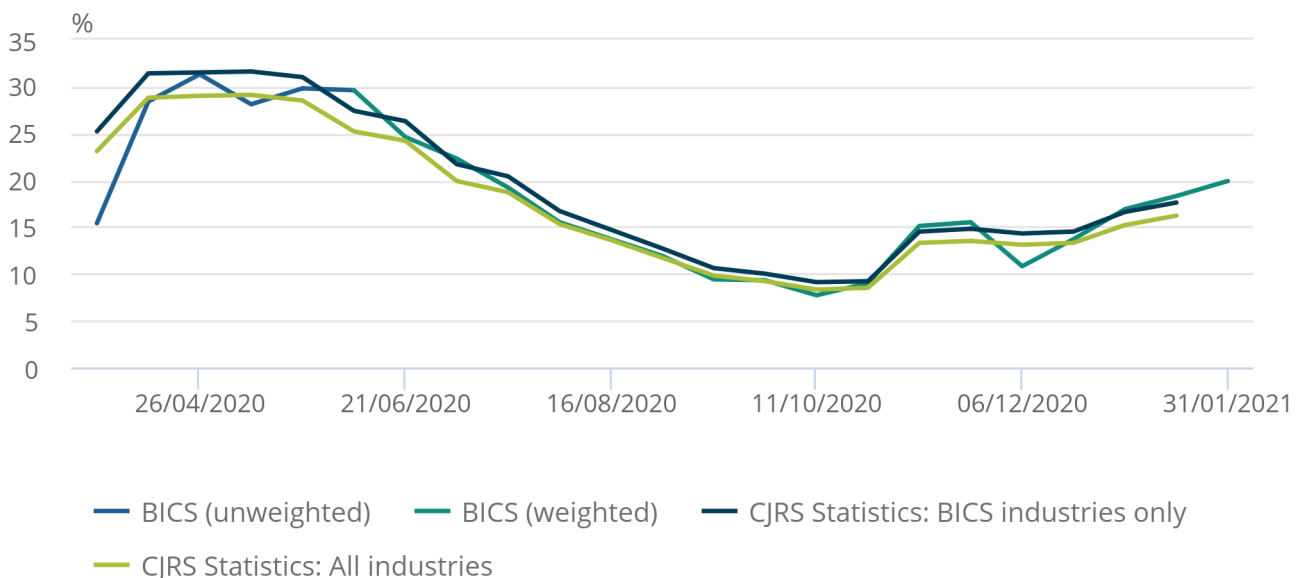
Figure 1 shows HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) official statistics on the proportion of employments furloughed, averaged over fortnightly periods from March 2020 to January 2021 (excluding the industries that the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) does not sample). BICS furlough estimates are unweighted between Wave 2 (23 March to 5 April 2020) and Wave 6 (18 to 31 May 2020) and weighted between Wave 7 (1 to 14 June 2020) and Wave 24 (25 January to 7 February 2021).

**Figure 1: CJRS official statistics and BICS estimates on proportions of the workforce on furlough are very closely matched**

Proportion of workforce on furlough, broken down by wave, UK, 23 March 2020 to 7 February 2021

Figure 1: CJRS official statistics and BICS estimates on proportions of the workforce on furlough are very closely matched

Proportion of workforce on furlough, broken down by wave, UK, 23 March 2020 to 7 February 2021



Source: Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs – Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme statistics and Office for National Statistics – Business Insights and Conditions Survey

Notes:

1. Final unweighted results, Wave 2 to Wave 6, and final weighted results, Wave 7 to Wave 24, of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS); businesses not permanently ceased trading.
2. Weighted estimates are available from Wave 7 onwards only. The sample redesign in Wave 7 improved our coverage for the small-sized businesses, allowing for weighted results to be truly reflective of all businesses.
3. Businesses were asked for their experiences for the reference period. However, for questions regarding the last two weeks, businesses may respond from the point of completion of the questionnaire.
4. CJRS January estimates are provisional and subject to revision.
5. Only industries included in the BICS samples are included in the "CJRS Statistics: BICS Industries only" series, but all industries are included in "CJRS Statistics: All industries" series.
6. An "employment" in the HMRC CJRS Official Statistics is defined as anyone who meets the scheme criteria set out within the published guidance, and data comes from the whole population of HMRC CJRS claims (those applied) and PAYE Real Time Information systems (RTIs).
7. The CJRS official statistic's proportion furloughed is an average of the number of employments furloughed over the two-week BICS reference period, divided by the total eligible employments. Further information on the BICS reference periods can be found in Table 6.
8. The dates used in the plot are for the middle of each BICS Wave.

At the start of December 2020, BICS showed a decrease in the proportion furloughed before increasing again towards the end of December 2020. This is likely because of the survey collection period falling over Christmas, where there was a slight dip in response rate. Despite this the BICS results and CJRS official statistics published estimates show a closely matched trend (with an average of 1 percentage point difference for weighted BICS and CJRS official statistics), even though final BICS estimates are published just four days after the survey closes. CJRS statistics results are provisional for up to four weeks after the time period, which is a feature of the claims deadline, but they do offer a wider range of breakdowns, for example, by local authority, gender and age.

Table 1 shows the close match between the BICS and CJRS official statistics results when averaged monthly.

Table 1: CJRS official statistics figures and BICS estimates of proportions of the workforce furloughed by month  
Proportion of workforce on furlough, broken down by month, UK, 23 March 2020 to 31 January 2021

<b>Month</b>	<b>BICS</b>	<b>CJRS Official Statistics: BICS industries only</b>	<b>CJRS Official Statistics: All industries</b>
March 2020	15.4%	22.2%	20.4%
April 2020	29.9%	31.3%	28.7%
May 2020	29.0%	31.3%	28.8%
June 2020	27.1%	26.7%	24.6%
July 2020	20.8%	20.6%	18.9%
August 2020	13.7%	14.7%	13.5%
September 2020	9.4%	10.5%	9.7%
October 2020	8.4%	9.0%	8.3%
November 2020	15.3%	14.6%	13.4%
December 2020	12.3%	14.4%	13.2%
January 2021	18.4%	17.5%	16.1%

Source: Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs – Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme statistics and Office for National Statistics – Business Insights and Conditions Survey

#### Notes

1. Final unweighted results Wave 2 to Wave 6 and final weighted results, Wave 7 to Wave 24, of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS); businesses not permanently ceased trading.
2. Weighted estimates are available from Wave 7 onwards only. The sample redesign in Wave 7 improved our coverage for the small-sized businesses, allowing for weighted results to be truly reflective of all businesses.
3. CJRS January estimates are provisional and subject to revision.
4. An "employment" in the HMRC CJRS Official Statistics is defined as anyone who meets the scheme criteria set out within the published guidance, and data comes from the whole population of HMRC CJRS claims (those applied) and PAYE Real Time Information systems (RTIs).
5. Only industries included in the BICS samples are included in the "CJRS Statistics: BICS Industries only" series, but all industries are included in "CJRS Statistics: All industries" series.
6. To compare with the HMRC CJRS proportions furloughed averaged monthly, monthly BICS estimates have been produced averaging the proportions of workforce furloughed in waves, covered in that month.

Table 2 compares the number of employees who have been furloughed each month.

Table 2: CJRS official statistics and BICS estimates of number of employments furloughed  
Employments furloughed estimates in millions, broken down by month, UK, 23 March 2020 to 31 January 2021

<b>Month</b>	<b>BICS</b>	<b>CJRS Official Statistics: BICS industries only</b>	<b>CJRS Official Statistics: All industries</b>
March 2020	5.0	6.1	6.2
April 2020	9.7	8.6	8.7
May 2020	9.4	8.6	8.7
June 2020	8.8	7.3	7.5
July 2020	6.8	5.6	5.7
August 2020	4.5	4.0	4.1
September 2020	3.0	2.9	3.0
October 2020	2.7	2.5	2.5
November 2020	5.0	4.0	4.0
December 2020	4.0	3.9	4.0
January 2021	6.0	4.7	4.9

Source: Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs – Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme statistics and Office for National Statistics – Business Insights and Conditions Survey

#### Notes

1. Final weighted results Wave 2 to Wave 24, of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS); businesses not permanently ceased trading.
2. Weighted estimates are available from Wave 7 onwards only. The sample redesign in Wave 7 improved our coverage for the small-sized businesses, allowing for weighted results to be truly reflective of all businesses.
3. CJRS January estimates are provisional and subject to revision.
4. An "employment" in the HMRC CJRS Official Statistics is defined as anyone who meets the scheme criteria set out within the published guidance, and data comes from the whole population of HMRC CJRS claims (those applied) and PAYE Real Time Information systems (RTIs).
5. Only industries included in the BICS samples are included in the "CJRS Official Statistics: BICS industries only" series, but all industries are included in "CJRS Official Statistics: All industries" series.
6. To compare with the HMRC CJRS proportions furloughed averaged monthly, monthly BICS estimates have been produced averaging the proportions of workforce furloughed in waves, covered in that month.

Both BICS and CJRS official statistics breakdown the furlough data by partial and fully furloughed employments. This breakdown started in July 2020 for CJRS statistics, when flexible furlough was first possible, and in October 2020 (Wave 16) for BICS, allowing for a smaller window of comparison.

Figure 2 shows CJRS official statistic's proportion of employments fully and partially furloughed, averaged over fortnightly periods from October 2020 to January 2021, for all industries (not limited to BICS only industries).

## Figure 2: Both sources suggest that the rate of employees on full furlough has increased at a faster pace than those on partial furlough

Full and are partial furlough estimates, broken down by Wave, UK, 5 October 2020 to 7 February 2021

Notes:

1. Final weighted results, Wave 16 to Wave 24, of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS); businesses not permanently ceased trading.
2. CJRS official statistic's January estimates are provisional and subject to revision.
3. Businesses were asked for their experiences for the reference period. However, for questions regarding the last two weeks, businesses may respond from the point of completion of the questionnaire.
4. An "employment" in the HMRC CJRS Official Statistics is defined as anyone who meets the scheme criteria set out within the published guidance, and data comes from the whole population of HMRC CJRS claims (those applied) and PAYE Real Time Information systems (RTIs).
5. For the purpose of comparison with BICS, the CJRS official statistic series include all industries and are not limited to BICS only industries, as a similar industry comparison is not available.
6. The CJRS proportion furloughed is an average of the number of employments furloughed over the two-week BICS reference period, divided by the total eligible employments. For information on BICS reference periods can be found in Table 6.
7. BICS partial furlough estimates were calculated by multiplying the proportion of the workforce to be reported on furlough leave, by the proportion reported that are not fully furloughed, for each Wave.
8. The dates used in the plot are for the middle of each BICS Wave.

[Download the data](#)

The BICS proportion of employments partially furloughed estimates across "All industries" is almost identical to the CJRS official statistics from October to December 2020 but differs slightly in January 2021. This is despite the CJRS official statistics including multiple industries that the BICS estimate do not cover. There is greater variation in the proportion of employments fully furloughed between BICS and CJRS official statistic's estimates, which may be because data includes different industries, and it is collated over the different time frames (fortnightly versus daily).

## 4 . Employers furloughing comparison

Another feature of the weighted Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) results is we can compile an estimate to the number of UK employers furloughing staff, either partially or fully. Table 3 shows approximately two in five businesses were furloughing in January, according to both BICS furlough estimates and Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) provisional official statistics.

Table 3: Approximately two in five businesses were furloughing staff in January, according to both BICS and CJRS provisional estimates

Proportion of employers' furloughing, broken down by month, UK, 1 July 2020 to 31 January 2021

Month	BICS	CJRS Official Statistics: BICS industries only	CJRS Official Statistics: All industries
July 2020	40.4%	41.7%	44.5%
August 2020	32.2%	35.3%	37.7%
September 2020	29.2%	31.4%	33.6%
October 2020	25.9%	28.3%	30.3%
November 2020	31.6%	36.1%	38.9%
December 2020	31.6%	36.0%	38.7%
January 2021	38.8%	41.0%	44.0%

Source: Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs – Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme statistics and Office for National Statistics – Business Insights and Conditions Survey

#### Notes

1. Final weighted results Wave 9 to Wave 24, of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS); businesses not permanently ceased trading.
2. CJRS official statistic's January estimates are provisional and subject to revision.
3. Businesses were asked for their experiences for the reference period. However, for questions regarding the last two weeks, businesses may respond from the point of completion of the questionnaire.
4. Only industries included in the BICS samples are included in the "CJRS Official Statistics: BICS industries only" series, but all industries are included in "CJRS Official Statistics: All industries" series.
5. To compare with the HMRC official CJRS statistic's proportions furloughed averaged monthly, monthly BICS estimates have been produced averaging the proportions of workforce furloughed in Waves, covered in that month.
6. HMRC use the term "employer" to be considered equivalent to a PAYE scheme.
7. To compare the number of employers furloughing staff, the weighted count of businesses reporting they were furloughing staff was divided by the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR) total employer count for industries covered in the BICS sample.

The BICS estimates are consistently lower than the CJRS official statistics whether they include BICS industries or not, but all estimates follow the same trend over time. In July 2020, all three estimates reported their highest share of businesses that were furloughing staff, whilst their lowest estimates were in October 2020.

## 5 . Sector comparison

### Figure 3: Sector comparison of the CJRS official statistic's and BICS estimates of proportions of the workforce furloughed

Furlough estimates, broken down by sector, UK, 23 March 2020 to 7 February 2021



## Notes:

1. Final unweighted results, Wave 2 to Wave 6, and final weighted results, Wave 7 to Wave 24, of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS); businesses not permanently ceased trading.
2. Weighted estimates are available from Wave 7 onwards only. The sample redesign in Wave 7 improved our coverage for the small-sized businesses, allowing for weighted results to be truly reflective of all businesses.
3. Mining and quarrying estimates are not shown for disclosure purposes.
4. BICS real estate and other services industry estimates were not published for some earlier BICS waves for disclosure purposes.
5. Businesses were asked for their experiences for the reference period. However, for questions regarding the last two weeks, businesses may respond from the point of completion of the questionnaire.
6. CJRS January estimates are provisional and subject to revision.
7. An "employment" in the HMRC CJRS Official Statistics is defined 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 PAYE Real Time Information systems (RTIs).
8. The CJRS proportion furloughed is an average of the number of employments furloughed over the two-week BICS reference period, divided by the total eligible employments. Further information on the BICS reference periods can be found in Table 6.
9. The dates used in the plot are for the middle of each BICS Wave.

## [Download the data](#)

There are some industries, such as wholesale and retail, professional, scientific and technical and health and social work industries, where proportions do not align as closely as others, which may be explained by:

- the voluntary nature of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) and that the data is compiled from a sample rather than an administrative source covering all that are eligible
- the availability of CJRS claim data, which is available to HMRC, alongside PAYE Real Time Information (RTI)
- the differences between HMRC's eligible employments and the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Interdepartmental Business Register (IDBR) registered employment totals

## 6 . Country and regional comparison

The Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) sub-national data is produced by focussing on UK businesses that have a single business site only (defined as having zero or one site on the [Inter-Departmental Register \(IDBR\)](#)), where each business is representative of its one site in a specific location, based on its address registered on the IDBR. Overall, of the 2.31 million businesses registered in the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR), 2.27 million are single site businesses. While the single site approach is not representative of all UK businesses (as it excludes businesses with multiple sites), weighted single site estimates are representative of all UK single site businesses, which make up 98% of all businesses in the UK and approximately half of UK employment, and allows us to track furlough numbers in different regions over time. However, this may lead to differences in BICS and Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) official statistics estimates, as multi-site businesses are included in CJRS official statistics estimates and may impact the proportions differently between countries or regions. BICS calculate the proportion of the workforce furloughed, of single site businesses not permanently stopped trading, weighted by employment.

There is additional methodological information on the experimental single site weighted regional estimates in [Business insights and impact on the UK and sub-national economy](#). For the latest results up to January 2021, please see [Understanding the business impacts of local and national restrictions: February 2021](#).

In contrast, geographic breakdowns of HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) claims are based on an employee's last known address to HMRC, not the address of the employer. As such, geographic breakdowns do not directly translate to the employee's usual place of work, or where their employer has a base of operations.

### **Figure 4: Country comparison of CJRS official statistics and BICS estimates of proportions of the workforce furloughed**

Proportion of workforce on furlough, broken down by country, UK, 1 September to 27 December 2020

Notes:

1. Final weighted results, Wave 16 to Wave 21, of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS); single site businesses not permanently ceased trading.
2. CJRS official statistic's January estimates are provisional and subject to revision.
3. Businesses were asked for their experiences for the reference period. However, for questions regarding the last two weeks, businesses may respond from the point of completion of the questionnaire.
4. An "employment" in the HMRC CJRS Official Statistics is defined 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 PAYE Real Time Information systems (RTIs).
5. Geographic breakdowns of HMRS CJRS claims are based on an employee's last known address to HMRC. As such, geographic breakdowns do not directly translate to the employee's usual place of work, or where their employer has a base of operations.
6. BICS data refers to proportion of the workforce furloughed, of single site businesses not permanently stopped trading, weighted by employment. As such, geographic locations are based on location of employment.
7. For the purpose of comparison with BICS, the CJRS statistics' series include all industries that they have data for and are not limited to BICS only industries, as a similar industry comparison is not available.
8. The CJRS proportion furloughed is an average of the number of employments furloughed over the two-week BICS reference period, divided by the total eligible employments. For information on BICS reference periods can be found in Table 6. In addition, the CJRS series include all industries and are not limited to BICS only industries.
9. The dates used in the plot are for the middle of each BICS Wave.

[Download the data](#)

The BICS estimates across the UK and England are the most closely matched to the CJRS official statistics compared with the other UK countries. Comparing the BICS and CJRS official statistics, the proportion of employments furloughed for other countries and regions is more variable. These differences are likely to be a result of the CJRS official statistic's figure including multiple industries that the BICS estimate does not cover, the BICS estimate being limited to a sample of single site businesses (so likely to be more volatile at sub-national levels), and the BICS estimates based on employer address, whereas the CJRS official statistic's estimate is based on the employee address.

Table 4. CJRS and BICS estimates of proportions of the workforce furloughed in English regions  
Proportion of workforce on furlough, broken down by country, UK, 1 September to 31 December 2020

		<b>September</b>	<b>October</b>	<b>November</b>	<b>December</b>
<b>North East</b>	<b>Weighted BICS</b>	10.3%	8.3%	12.8%	12.7%
	<b>CJRS official statistics</b>	8.0%	6.8%	12.1%	11.8%
<b>North West</b>	<b>Weighted BICS</b>	9.4%	6.7%	11.3%	10.5%
	<b>CJRS official statistics</b>	9.1%	7.9%	13.1%	12.3%
<b>Yorkshire And The Humber</b>	<b>Weighted BICS</b>	8.8%	7.1%	12.1%	10.0%
	<b>CJRS official statistics</b>	8.3%	7.0%	12.5%	11.5%
<b>East Midlands</b>	<b>Weighted BICS</b>	8.4%	6.9%	11.2%	10.2%
	<b>CJRS official statistics</b>	8.4%	7.0%	12.0%	11.8%
<b>West Midlands</b>	<b>Weighted BICS</b>	11.3%	8.1%	12.4%	10.3%
	<b>CJRS official statistics</b>	9.5%	7.9%	12.7%	12.2%
<b>East</b>	<b>Weighted BICS</b>	10.6%	8.5%	13.7%	11.3%
	<b>CJRS official statistics</b>	8.9%	7.4%	12.6%	12.4%
<b>London</b>	<b>Weighted BICS</b>	15.7%	12.9%	19.5%	16.9%
	<b>CJRS official statistics</b>	12.4%	10.5%	16.2%	15.8%
<b>South East</b>	<b>Weighted BICS</b>	10.3%	8.7%	14.2%	12.7%
	<b>CJRS official statistics</b>	9.1%	7.5%	13.1%	12.8%
<b>South West</b>	<b>Weighted BICS</b>	8.0%	7.3%	11.5%	8.4%
	<b>CJRS official statistics</b>	8.4%	6.8%	13.6%	12.3%

Source: Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs – Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme statistics and Office for National Statistics – Business Insights and Conditions Survey

Notes

1. Final weighted results Wave 16 to Wave 21, of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS); single site businesses not permanently ceased trading.
2. CJRS January estimates are provisional and subject to revision. Businesses were asked for their experiences for the reference period. However, for questions regarding the last two weeks, businesses may respond from the point of completion of the questionnaire.
3. An "employment" in the HMRC CJRS Official Statistics is defined 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 PAYE Real Time Information systems (RTIs).
4. Geographic breakdowns of HMRC CJRS claims are based on an employee's last known address to HMRC. As such, geographic breakdowns do not directly translate to the employee's usual place of work, or where their employer has a base of operations.
5. BICS data refers to proportion of the workforce furloughed, of single site businesses not permanently stopped trading, weighted by employment. As such, geographic locations are based on location of employment.
6. For the purpose of comparison with BICS, the CJRS series include all industries that they have data for and are not limited to BICS only industries.

Table 4 shows how London is the English region with the highest proportion of the workforce on furlough, according to both BICS estimates and CJRS official statistics. This is likely due to the large number of businesses in arts, entertainment and recreation and accommodation and food services sectors, which consistently show the largest proportion on furlough.

## 7 . Description of methods

Within the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS), estimates of the proportion of the workforce furloughed, either partially or fully, are from businesses who responded they had not permanently stopped trading in each wave and includes those "currently trading" and those "temporarily closed or paused trading". The BICS estimates for proportion furloughed relate to the two-week reference period where we ask what percentage of a business' workforce was furloughed.

The sampling frame initially 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 redesign at Wave 7 significantly improved our coverage of the smaller-sized businesses. This improvement to our coverage has provided a suitable foundation for weighting to be applied to the then unweighted estimates. The sample size was increased once again in Wave 17 to approximately 39,000, further improving the coverage across regions and different businesses sizes.

In comparison, HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has published nine releases of [Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme statistics](#) that provide daily estimates of the number and value of claims made to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) up to 31 January 2020.

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 the CJRS criteria is that 1) the furloughed employee must have been employed on 19 March 2020 and 2) the businesses made a PAYE RTI submission to HMRC between the 20 March 2020 and 30 October 2020, notifying a payment of earnings for that employee. This may differ when employees have been made redundant, or they stopped working on or after 23 September 2020 and have subsequently been re-employed. When the CJRS was extended, covering the period 1 November 2020 to 31 April 2021, the criteria was that an employee must be employed on 30 October 2020.

The HMRC CJRS proportions of employments furloughed used in this article were calculated by dividing the average numbers of employments furloughed from the time series, by the number of eligible employments for that period. The CJRS official statistics employments furloughed timeseries has been averaged in two different ways in this article; by month and by BICS reference period. Using the BICS reference period allows for a time matched comparison between the two data sources. More information on the BICS reference periods can be found in [Table 6](#).

As the UK national lockdown commenced on the 23 March 2020, the HMRC average for March 2020 only covers the period 23 to 31 March 2020, rather than from 1 March 2020, when HMRC allowed for claims to be back dated to. This restriction on the HMRC dates enables comparison against the BICS proportion furloughed for this period at the start of the pandemic.

The number of eligible employments provided by CJRS official statistics is not given in a time series. The eligible population is based on a list of employees employed on 19 March 2020 and included in PAYE Real Time Information submissions for the 2019 to 2020 tax year. There are two eligible populations; March to October 2020 (as published from September 2020), and for November 2020 to April (as published in February 2021).

## **Making BICS comparable with CJRS official statistics furlough estimates**

For the purpose of comparison with BICS, only industries included in the BICS samples are included in the "CJRS Official Statistics: BICS industries only" series, but all industries are included in "CJRS Official Statistics: All industries" series. The BICS sampling frame excludes the following industries:

- Agriculture, forestry and fishing
- Energy production
- Finance and insurance
- Public administration and defence
- Trade union, religious, political and repair (in the other services sector)
- Domestic employers
- Unknown and other

Further information on the BICS sample can be found in the Measuring the data section of the [Business insights and impacts on the UK](#) release.

## **Employers furloughing staff**

To compare the proportion of employers furloughing staff, the weighted count of businesses reporting they were furloughing staff was divided by the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR) total employer count for industries covered in the BICS sample. This is not necessarily the best source, as the IDBR takes the employment from various sources (such as Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) and other administrative data) which are not necessarily updated at the same point in time. Additionally, this total does not include the public sector, financial sector and parts of agriculture.

## Number of employees on furlough

The BICS estimate of the number of employees on furlough, full or partial, has been calculated by multiplying through the BICS furlough proportions by the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR) total employment. This is not necessarily the best source, as the IDBR takes the employment from various sources (such as Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) and administrative data) which are not necessarily at the same point in time. Additionally, the BICS proportion does not include the public sector, financial sector and parts of agriculture.

The BICS estimate of the number of employees on furlough, full or partial, has been calculated by multiplying through the BICS furlough proportions by the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR) total employment. This is not necessarily the best source, as the IDBR takes the employment from various sources (such as Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) and administrative data) which are not necessarily at the same point in time. Additionally, the BICS proportion does not include the public sector, financial sector and parts of agriculture.

BICS captures the proportion of the workforce on furlough in a two-week reference period, while CJRS statistics compile the number of employments furloughed in a time series and in monthly tables. To compare with the HMRC CJRS proportions furloughed averaged monthly, monthly BICS estimates have been produced averaging the proportions of workforce furloughed in Waves, covered in that month. For example, 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. However, BICS periods do not cover exact months, meaning there could be days from either side of the month included in the BICS monthly estimates.

The differences in methodology and available data sources between CJRS official statistics and BICS outputs means that these data will not match exactly, and comparison should be treated with some caution based on the voluntary nature of BICS. An outline of the differences between these two data sources can be found in Table 5 with full details on the methodologies in the background notes of each respective publication.

Table 5: Summary of differences between BICS and CJRS estimates

	<b>BICS</b>	<b>CJRS statistics</b>
<b>Time periods</b>	Two weeks	Daily time series & monthly
<b>Representativeness</b>	Prior to Wave 7 unweighted but apportioned by responding business employment size. Wave 7 onwards results are weighted by employment to represent all employees in the UK.	All UK employers.
<b>Coverage – industry</b>	All industries excluding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agriculture, forestry and fishing</li> <li>• Energy production</li> <li>• Finance and insurance</li> <li>• Public administration and defence</li> <li>• Trade union, religious, political and repair (in the other services sector)</li> <li>• Domestic employers</li> <li>• Unknown and other</li> </ul>	All industries.
<b>Source</b>	Survey (~39,000 businesses selected).	Administrative data (census of those accessing scheme), PAYE Real Time Information data and industry codes from the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR).
<b>Timeliness</b>	Published 2 weeks after reference period.	Published around four weeks after reference period.
<b>Accessibility</b>	Business insights and impacts on the UK	Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme statistics: February 2021
<b>Source of employment estimates</b>	Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR).	The eligible population, used to calculate take-up figures and the breakdown by employer size, is based on a list of employees employed on 19 March 2020 covering the period March to October 2020 and employees employed on 30 October for the CJRS extension period 1 November 2020 to 31 April 2021. This includes PAYE Real Time Information submissions for the 2019 to 2020 tax year.
<b>Regional Estimates</b>	The region the single site business is classified in on the IDBR.	The residential address information that HMRC holds for employees. This does not directly translate to the employee's usual place of work, or employer's centre of operations which may be in a different region.

Source: Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs – Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme statistics and Office for National Statistics – Business Insights and Conditions Survey

#### Notes

1. Further information on methodology for HMRC CJRS estimates can be found in the Measuring the data section of HMRC CJRS statistic's release.



## 8 . Glossary

### Coronavirus

Coronaviruses are a family of viruses that cause disease in people and animals. They can cause the common cold or more severe diseases, such as COVID-19.

### COVID-19

COVID-19 is the name used to refer to the disease caused by the SARS CoV-2 virus, which is a type of coronavirus. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) takes COVID-19 to mean presence of SARS-CoV-2 with or without symptoms.

### Furlough

Furlough is a temporary absence from work allowing workers to keep their job while the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continues.

### Reporting unit

The business unit to which the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) questionnaires are sent is called the reporting unit. The response from the reporting unit can cover the enterprise as a whole or parts of the enterprise identified by lists of local units.

## 9 . Data sources and quality

The Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) is voluntary and may only reflect the characteristics of those that responded; the results are [experimental](#).

The BICS survey provides timely insights into the impact on businesses' financial performance, workforce, prices, trade and business resilience over a fortnightly period, and the [survey questions](#) are available.

Table 6: Dates of the reference and collection period of each wave of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey

<b>Wave</b>	<b>Reference period</b>	<b>Survey period</b>
Wave 2	23 March to 5 April 2020	6 to 19 April 2020
Wave 3	6 to 19 April 2020	20 April to 3 May 2020
Wave 4	20 April to 3 May 2020	4 to 17 May 2020
Wave 5	4 to 17 May 2020	18 to 31 May 2020
Wave 6	18 to 31 May 2020	1 to 14 June 2020
Wave 7	1 to 14 June 2020	15 to 28 June 2020
Wave 8	15 to 28 June 2020	29 June to 12 July 2020
Wave 9	29 June to 12 July 2020	13 to 26 July 2020
Wave 10	13 to 26 July 2020	27 July to 9 August 2020
Wave 11	27 July to 9 August 2020	10 to 23 August 2020
Wave 12	10 to 23 August 2020	24 August to 6 September 2020
Wave 13	24 August to 6 September 2020	7 to 20 September 2020
Wave 14	7 to 20 September 2020	21 September to 4 October 2020
Wave 15	21 September to 4 October 2020	5 to 18 October 2020
Wave 16	5 to 18 October 2020	19 October to 1 November 2020
Wave 17	19 October to 1 November 2020	2 to 15 November 2020
Wave 18	2 to 15 November 2020	16 to 29 November 2020
Wave 19	16 to 29 November 2020	30 November to 13 December 2020
Wave 20	30 November to 13 December 2020	14 to 23 December 2020
Wave 21	14 to 27 December 2020	29 December 2020 to 10 January 2021
Wave 22	28 December 2020 to 10 January 2021	11 January to 24 January 2021
Wave 23	11 January to 24 January 2021	25 January to 7 February 2021
Wave 24	25 January to 7 February 2021	8 to 21 February 2021

Source: Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs – Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme statistics and Office for National Statistics – Business Insights and Conditions Survey

## **Subnational BICS estimates**

Subnational BICS estimates have been created by using the results collected in the fortnightly business survey (BICS). Each survey return from each reporting unit is then applied to the reporting unit's one local site. We have removed businesses with multiple sites from the sample and results in this analysis are based on single site businesses only (as identified on the [IDBR](#)). Sections 2 and 3 of our [first sub-national BICS article](#) outlines in detail the methodology behind our single site subnational estimates and its impact compared with previously published results encompassing all businesses.

Aggregates of [Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics \(NUTS1\)](#) regions such as the UK or England may have higher or lower response proportions than any of their constituent regions because of differences in the sample composition in terms of company workforce.

Because the larger aggregate regions, such as the UK or England, generally have a larger proportion of smaller companies, if there is a substantial difference between the response proportions of larger and smaller companies, this will be reflected in the top-line figures.

## Weighting

Single site estimates in this release are weighted, ensuring estimates are representative of all single site businesses. A detailed description of the weighting methodology and its differences to unweighted estimates is available in [Business Insights and Conditions Survey \(BICS\): preliminary weighted results](#).

[Weighted estimates for Scotland for businesses with greater than nine employees](#) are available from the Scottish Government.

## HMRC data

The HMRC CJRS data is produced using data from both the HMRC's CJRS claims and HMRC's Pay as You Earn (PAYE) Real Time Information (RTI) system. It covers the whole population rather than a sample of people or employers, and it will allow for more detailed estimates of the population.

For these statistics, an "employer" is defined as a PAYE scheme, and "employments" are defined according to the CJRS criteria. For an employer to qualify for the scheme they need to have created a PAYE scheme by 19 March 2020. The rules for an employment to qualify to be covered by the scheme are set out in [guidance](#).

The dataset covers all CJRS claims made by employers from the start of the scheme up to 15 February 2021 for support for the wages of furloughed staff up to 31 January 2020. However, the data for January is incomplete as claims relating to January may still be filed; thus, the estimates for January 2021 should therefore be considered preliminary results and will be revised in future releases.

## 10 . Future Developments

Results presented in this article cover Waves 2 to 24 only, while sections such as partial furlough and the regional breakdown start from later waves. In the future we hope to continue monitoring the relationship between Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) furlough estimates and HM Revenue and Customs Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) official statistics published results.

## 11 . Related links

### [Understanding the business impacts of local and national restrictions: February 2021](#)

Article | Released 1 February 2021

Experimental estimates from the voluntary fortnightly business survey (BICS), for single site businesses only, on topics such as trading status, financial performance, workforce and business resilience. Geographical breakdowns include country, regional and local authority levels.

### [Comparison of furloughed jobs data: May to July 2020](#)

Article | Released 25 September 2020

An overview of the similarities and differences between the fortnightly BICS furlough estimates and HM Revenue and Customs' (HMRC's) Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) data, over the period 1 May to 31 July 2020.

### [Business 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 businesses' 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).

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

Article | Released 25 February 2021

The impact of the coronavirus pandemic and other events on UK businesses and the economy. Based on responses from the voluntary fortnightly business survey (BICS) about financial performance, workforce, prices, trade, and business resilience.