Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators: 10 February 2022

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

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1 . Main points

- In the week to 5 February 2022, overall retail footfall in the UK increased by 3% when compared with the previous week, the fourth consecutive week-on-week increase (Springboard). Section 3.

- In the week to 3 February 2022, the aggregate CHAPS-based indicator of credit and debit card purchases increased by 6 percentage points from the previous week, to 96% of its February 2020 average (Bank of England CHAPS data). Section 4.

- Shelf availability of items between 4 and 7 February 2022 was lowest for "paracetamol", with 19% of these items marked as "none" or "low"; shelf availability was highest for "beer", with 74% of this item recorded as "high" (Kantar Public). Section 5.

- For the fourth consecutive week, transactions in Manchester Pret A Manger stores registered the largest weekly rise of all locations; transactions in Manchester stores increased by 18 percentage points in the latest week, to 114% of its January 2020 average level (Pret A Manger). Section 6.

- The System Average Price (SAP) of gas decreased by 11% in the week to 6 February 2022 (National Grid). See the accompanying dataset.

- Nearly three-quarters (72%) of currently trading importing businesses with 10 or more employees reported they had experienced a challenge importing in the last month; meanwhile for exporting this figure was 67% (final results from Wave 49 of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS)).

- The total volume of online job adverts on 4 February 2022 was at 145% of its February 2020 average level, a 3% increase from the previous week; the highest level of job adverts relative to pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) February 2020 continued to be in the "transport, logistics and warehouse" category, at 264% (Adzuna). Section 7.

- The seven-day average estimate of UK seated diners increased by 6 percentage points in the week to 7 February 2022 to 112% of the level in the equivalent week of 2020 (OpenTable). Section 8.

- There was an average of 256 daily ship visits in the week to 6 February 2022, which was an 8% decrease from the previous week; the average number of daily cargo and tanker ship visits decreased by 2% (exactEarth). See the accompanying dataset.

- The seven-day average number of UK daily flights increased 17% from the previous week and was 59% of the level seen in the equivalent week of 2020 (EUROCONTROL). See the accompanying dataset.

- In December 2021, the average vehicle flows of large vehicles on the Strategic Road Network around Dover returned to normal levels, after increases in September and October 2021 (Highways England). See the accompanying dataset.

- In the week ending 6 February 2022, the seasonally adjusted average counts of traffic camera activity for "pedestrians and cyclists" in London and Manchester decreased by 5% and 14% from the previous week, respectively (Transport for London and Transport for Greater Manchester). See the accompanying dataset.

- The volume of motor vehicle traffic on Monday 7 February 2022 was at 93% of its level in the first week of February 2020, which was broadly unchanged from the previous week (Department for Transport).

- There were 16,614 company incorporations in the week to 4 February 2022, 7% higher than the previous week (15,579) and 4% higher than the equivalent week of 2021 (15,974) (Companies House). See the accompanying dataset.

- A net 6% of all industry firms reported decreasing turnover on the month in December 2021; this was the largest net decrease since April 2020 when there was a net 16% decrease (HM Revenue and Customs' Value Added Tax (VAT) returns). Section 9.

Results presented in this bulletin are experimental and may be subject to revision.

2 . Latest indicators at a glance

Notes:

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

2. *Comparisons in OpenTable data are made with the equivalent week in 2019 until December 2021. From 1 January 2022 comparisons are made to the equivalent week in 2020. This is likely to change in the coming weeks and revert back to 2019 comparisons across the series.

3. Advanced notification of potential redundancies data is available in the accompanying dataset.

4. Users should note that, for the week ending 6 February 2022, there was a large number of Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) lodgements for existing dwellings in Yorkshire and the Humber from a housing association contract. Caution should be taken when interpreting this data.

3 . Retail footfall

National retail footfall

National retail footfall figures are supplied by Springboard, a provider of data on customer activity. They measure the following for overall UK retail footfall, as well as by high street, retail park and shopping centre categories:

- daily retail footfall as a percentage of its level on the same day of the equivalent week of 2019; for example, Saturday 5 February 2022 is compared with Saturday 2 February 2019

- total weekly retail footfall as a percentage of its level in the equivalent week of 2019

- the percentage change in weekly footfall compared with the previous week; for example, Week 5 of 2022 is compared with Week 4 of 2022

Springboard's weekly data are defined over a seven-day period running from Sunday to Saturday. Week 5 of 2022 therefore refers to the period Sunday 30 January to Saturday 5 February 2022.

Because of data offsets between 2021 and previous years, footfall data from Springboard for the following days have been omitted: 22 to 23 December 2021, 25 to 26 December 2021, 29 December 2021 and 1 January 2022.

Users should note that all quoted figures have been rounded to the nearest integer.

Figure 1: In the week to 5 February 2022, overall retail footfall in the UK increased by 3% and was 83% of the level seen in the equivalent week of 2019

Volume of daily retail footfall, percentage compared with the equivalent day of the equivalent week of 2019, 1 March 2020 to 5 February 2022, UK

Source: Springboard, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

Notes:

1. The vertical lines indicate notable events and coronavirus (COVID-19) restriction changes.

2. Users should note that week-on-week changes in retail footfall volumes are outlined as percentages, rather than as percentage point changes. Percentage change figures quoted in the commentary will therefore not necessarily match the percentage point changes observed in the chart.

According to Springboard, in the UK in the week to 5 February 2022, the volume of overall retail footfall:

- in high streets increased by 3% from the previous week and was 80% of the level seen in the equivalent week of 2019

- in retail parks increased by 3% from the previous week and was 96% of the level seen in the equivalent week of 2019

- in shopping centres increased by 3% from the previous week and was 77% of the level seen in the equivalent week of 2019

Figure 2: In the week to 5 February 2022, South West England had the highest levels of retail footfall compared with the equivalent week of 2019, at 90%

Volume of daily retail footfall, percentage of the level recorded on the same day of the equivalent week of 2019, seven-day rolling average, UK countries and English regions, 1 March 2020 to 5 February 2022
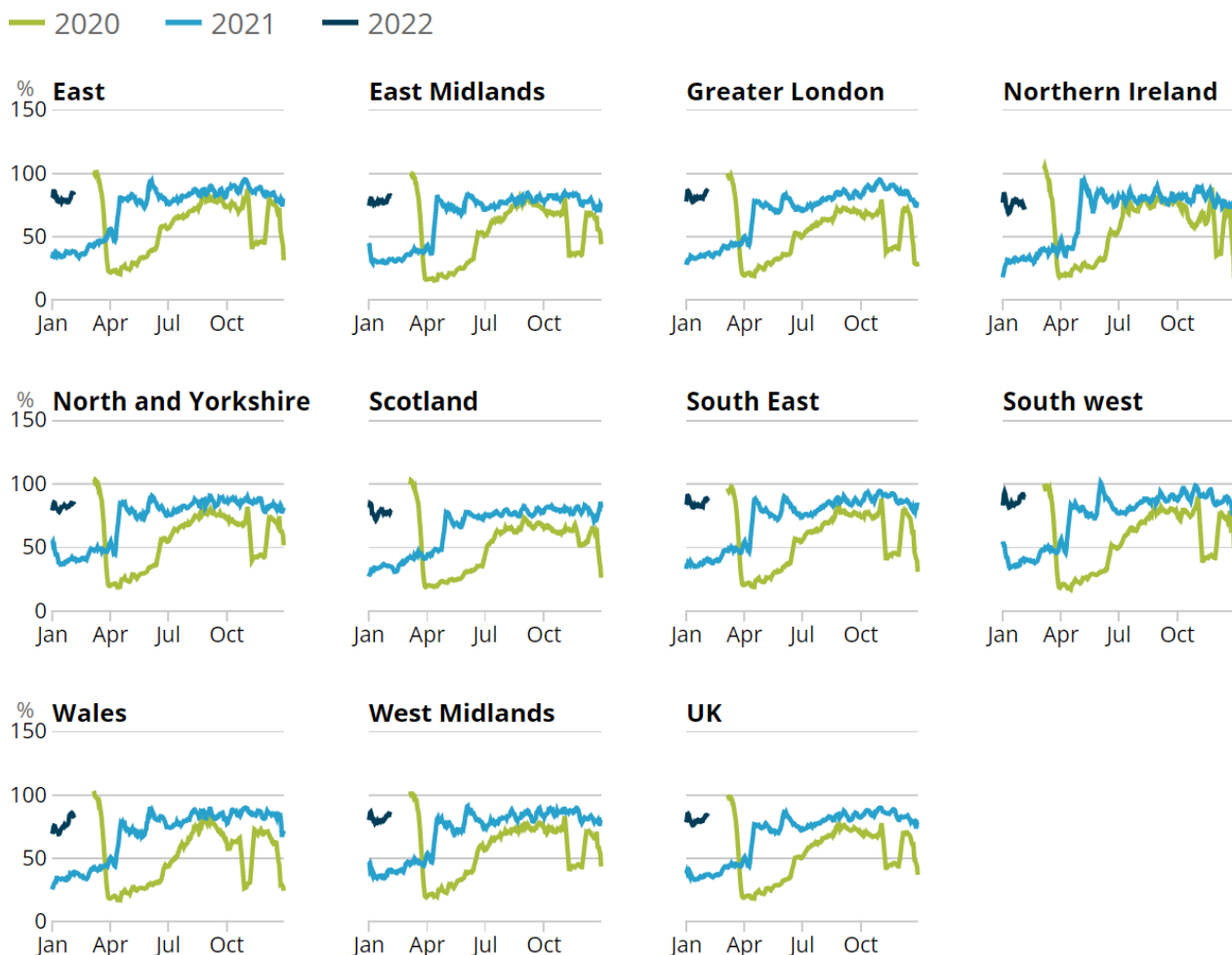
In the week to 5 February 2022, there were increases in retail footfall in 8 out of the 10 English regions and UK countries. The largest weekly increase was in Greater London, which rose by 5% when compared with the previous week. This was in part driven by a 7% week-on-week increase in high street footfall.

4 . UK Spending on debit and credit cards

Daily CHAPS-based indicator

These data series are experimental faster 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 through physical and online platforms.More information on the indicator is provided in the accompanyingmethodology 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 3: The aggregate CHAPS-based indicator of credit and debit card purchases increased by 6 percentage points in the week to 3 February 2022 to 96% of its February 2020 average

Index February 2020 = 100, a backward looking seven-day rolling average, 13 January 2020 to 3 February 2022, non-seasonally adjusted, nominal prices

Figure 3: The aggregate CHAPS-based indicator of credit and debit card purchases increased by 6 percentage points in the week to 3 February 2022 to 96% of its February 2020 average

Index February 2020 = 100, a backward looking seven-day rolling average, 13 January 2020 to 3 February 2022, non-seasonally adjusted, nominal prices
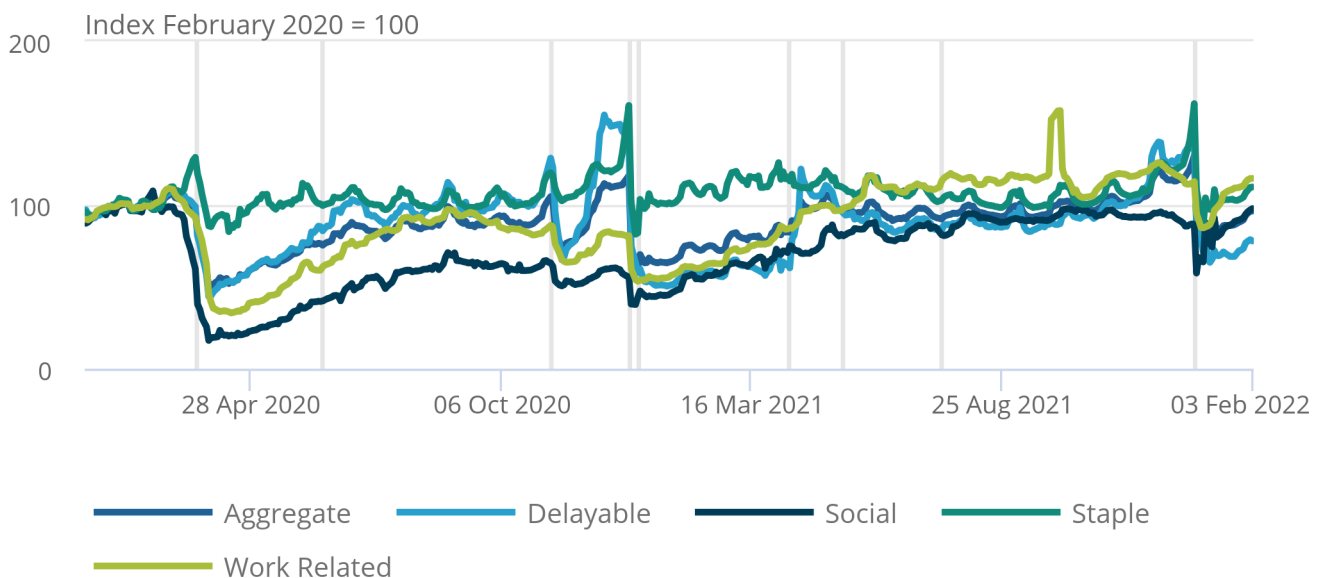
Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS) and Bank of England calculations

Notes:

1. Users should note the daily payment data are 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 3 shows changes in the value of CHAPS payments received by large UK corporates from their credit and debit card processors, "merchant acquirers".

In the week to 3 February 2022, the CHAPS-based indicator of credit and debit card purchases increased by 6 percentage points from the previous week, to 96% of its February 2020 average level. This increase follows the further relaxation of restrictions throughout the UK, at the end of January and the cyclical rise in spending around the end of the month.

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

- "work-related" increased by 5 percentage points

- "social" increased by 6 percentage points

- "delayable" increased by 6 percentage points

- "staple" increased by 7 percentage points

"Work-related" and "staple" spending were above their February 2020 average levels at 116% and 111%, respectively. "Social" and "delayable" spending meanwhile were below their February 2020 average levels at 98% and 78%, respectively.

Monthly CHAPS-based indicator

In January 2022, the monthly CHAPS-based indicator of aggregate credit and debit card spending was at 87% of its February 2020 average level, 27 percentage points lower than in December 2021. This fall is consistent with a reduction in spending following the Christmas period.

The monthly data time series is available in the [accompanying dataset](#) 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.

5 . Shelf availability in UK shops

Shelf availability research for shops across the UK has been undertaken by Kantar Public. Collectors gathered information on a range of items from up to three different stores across multiple locations. They recorded availability across four categories: "none", "low", "medium" or "high".

It is important to note these categories are subjective as they are recorded by individual collectors. The data were collected between 4 and 7 February 2022. This series is updated fortnightly.

Figure 4: Shelf availability of items was lowest for "paracetamol" and "ibuprofen" in the latest period, with 19% and 16% of these items' availability marked as either "none or low", respectively

Item availability in stores across 132 locations covering UK countries and English regions, between 4 and 7 February 2022

Source: Kantar Public

Notes:

1. Shelf availability does not imply stock availability in warehouses or storage units and is simply the level of available products in a selected sample of shops at the time of data collection.

2. In this period, 269 shops were visited and 5,639 observations were made.

3. Categories in this chart have been rounded for illustrative purposes and may not sum to category total or 100.

In the most recent period (4 to 7 February 2022), the overall proportion of observations for all categories recorded as "high" was 54%; this was unchanged from the previous four-day period (21 to 24 January 2022). Observations for all items recorded as "none" or "low" was at 8%, broadly similar to the previous period.

Across the four availability categories, the largest proportion of observations recorded as "high" was "beer" at 74%, followed by "fresh chicken" at 66%. The items with highest proportion of availability recorded as either "none" or "low" were "paracetamol" and "ibuprofen" at 19% and 16%, respectively.

Data for all categories are available in the [accompanying dataset](#).

6 . Transactions at Pret A Manger

Pret A Manger is a sandwich and coffee shop franchise chain, operating around 400 stores across the UK. Its transactional data are presented as an index and show total weekly till transactions at Pret A Manger shops as a proportion of the average weekly level in the first four weeks of 2020 (between Friday 3 January and Thursday 30 January 2020). Because of this comparison across the data time series, users should expect an element of seasonality in the data.

More information on the areas featured is available in the Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators methodology. These data are also made available every Tuesday via Bloomberg.

Figure 5: For the fourth consecutive week, transactions in Manchester Pret A Manger stores registered the largest weekly rise of all locations relative to the January 2020 average

Transactions in stores, index: 100 = January 2020 average, week ending 4 March 2021 to 3 February 2022, non-seasonally adjusted

Figure 5: For the fourth consecutive week, transactions in Manchester Pret A Manger stores registered the largest weekly rise of all locations relative to the January 2020 average

Transactions in stores, index: 100 = January 2020 average, week ending 4 March 2021 to 3 February 2022, non-seasonally adjusted
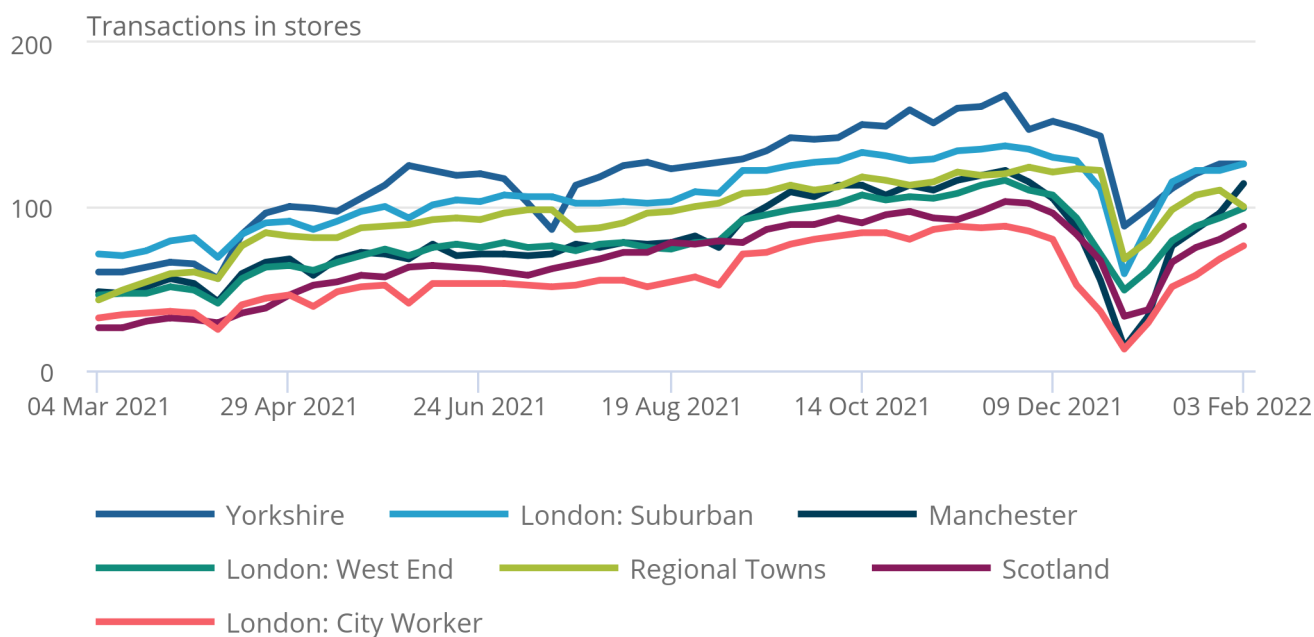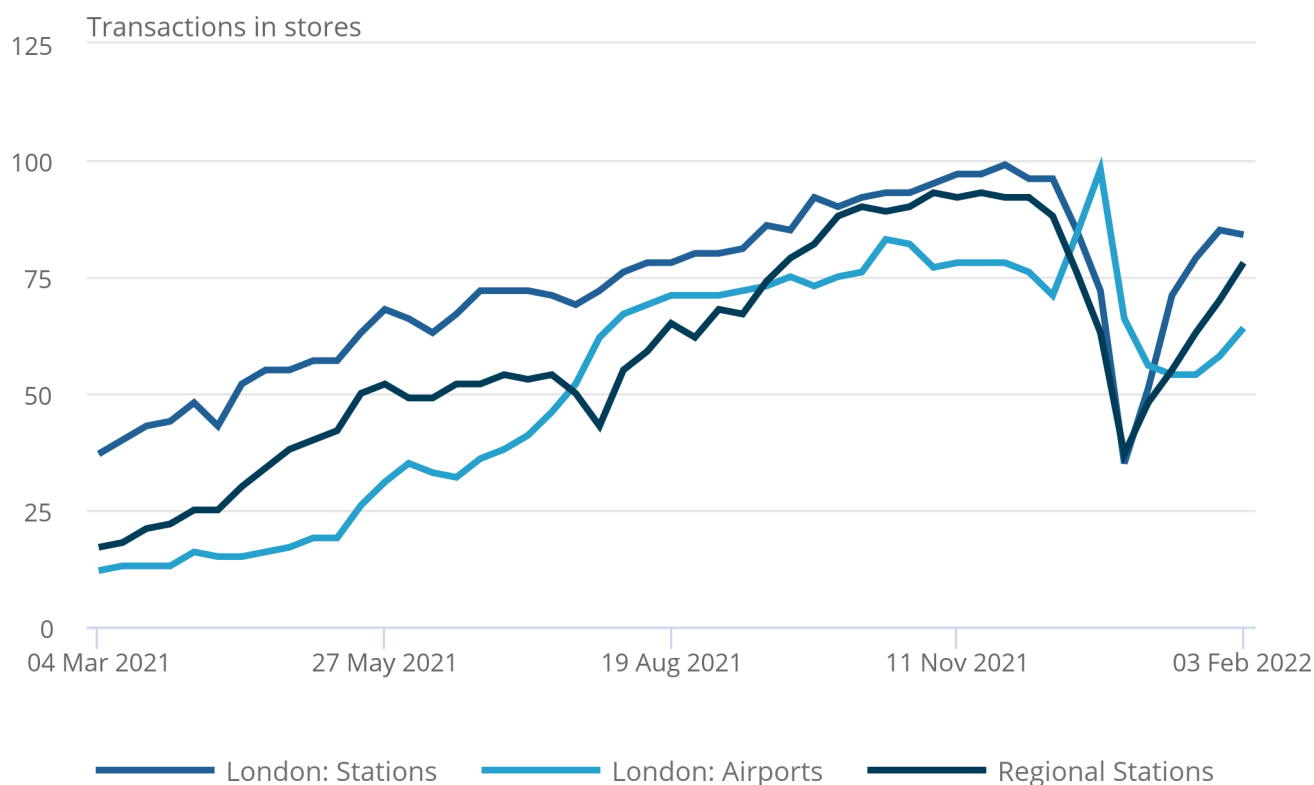
Source: Pret A Manger

Notes:

1. Dine-in services in England were suspended during the third national lockdown, which remained in place until Step 3 (17 May 2021) of England's roadmap out of lockdown.

2. Users should note not all store locations reopened as coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions were eased.

3. The index begins on 4 March 2021 as most stores were closed before this therefore the corresponding indices were mostly zero.

Figure 6: Transactions at stores in regional stations increased by 8 percentage points in the latest week to 78% of the January 2020 average

Transactions in stores, index: 100 = January 2020 average, week ending 4 March 2021 to 3 February 2022, non-seasonally adjusted

Figure 6: Transactions at stores in regional stations increased by 8 percentage points in the latest week to 78% of the January 2020 average

Transactions in stores, index: 100 = January 2020 average, week ending 4 March 2021 to 3 February 2022, non-seasonally adjusted

Source: Pret A Manger

7 . Online job adverts

Job adverts by category

These figures are experimental estimates of online job adverts provided by Adzuna, an online job search engine, by category and by UK country and English region. The number of job adverts over time is an indicator of the demand for labour. The Adzuna categories used do not correspond to Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) categories, so these values are not directly comparable with the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) Vacancy Survey.

Figure 7: The total volume of online job adverts on 4 February 2022 increased by 3% to 145% of its February 2020 pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) average level

Volume of online job adverts by category, index: 100 = February 2020 average, 4 January 2019 to 4 February 2022, non-seasonally adjusted

Notes:

1. Further category breakdowns are included in the [Online job advert estimates dataset](#) and more details on the methodology can be found in [Using Adzuna data to derive an indicator of weekly vacancies](#).

2. Users should note that week-on-week changes in online job advert volumes are outlined as percentages, rather than as percentage point changes. Percentage change figures quoted in the commentary will therefore not necessarily match the percentage point changes observed in the charts and [accompanying dataset](#).

[Download the data](#)

Of the 28 categories, 23 saw an increase in the number of online job adverts, while three decreased and two remained unchanged when compared with the previous week. The largest weekly increases were in "travel and tourism" and "wholesale and retail", which rose by 10% and 9%, respectively. Meanwhile, the largest weekly decrease was in "creative, design, arts and media", which fell by 2%.

The category with the highest level of online job adverts when compared with its February 2020 pre-coronavirus average level continues to be "transport, logistics and warehouse" at 264%.

Job adverts by region

Figure 8: The volume of online job adverts increased in all 12 UK countries and English regions when compared with the previous week

Volume of online job adverts by UK countries and English regions index: 100 = February 2020 average, 4 January 2019 to 4 February 2022, non-seasonally adjusted

[Download the data](#)

The volume of online job adverts increased for all 12 English regions and UK countries on 4 February 2022 when compared with the previous week. The largest weekly increase was in Northern Ireland, which rose by 12%. However, it should be noted that this series displays a high volatility caused by a lower number of adverts in comparison with other regions.

8 . OpenTable seated diners

Figure 9: The seven-day average estimate of UK seated diners increased by 6 percentage points in the week to 7 February 2022 to 112% of the level in the equivalent week of 2020

Seated diners, seven-day average, percentage compared with the equivalent week of 2019/2020*, week ending 24 February 2020 to week ending 7 February 2022, UK, London and Manchester

Figure 9: The seven-day average estimate of UK seated diners increased by 6 percentage points in the week to 7 February 2022 to 112% of the level in the equivalent week of 2020

Seated diners, seven-day average, percentage compared with the equivalent week of 2019/2020*, week ending 24 February 2020 to week ending 7 February 2022, UK, London and Manchester
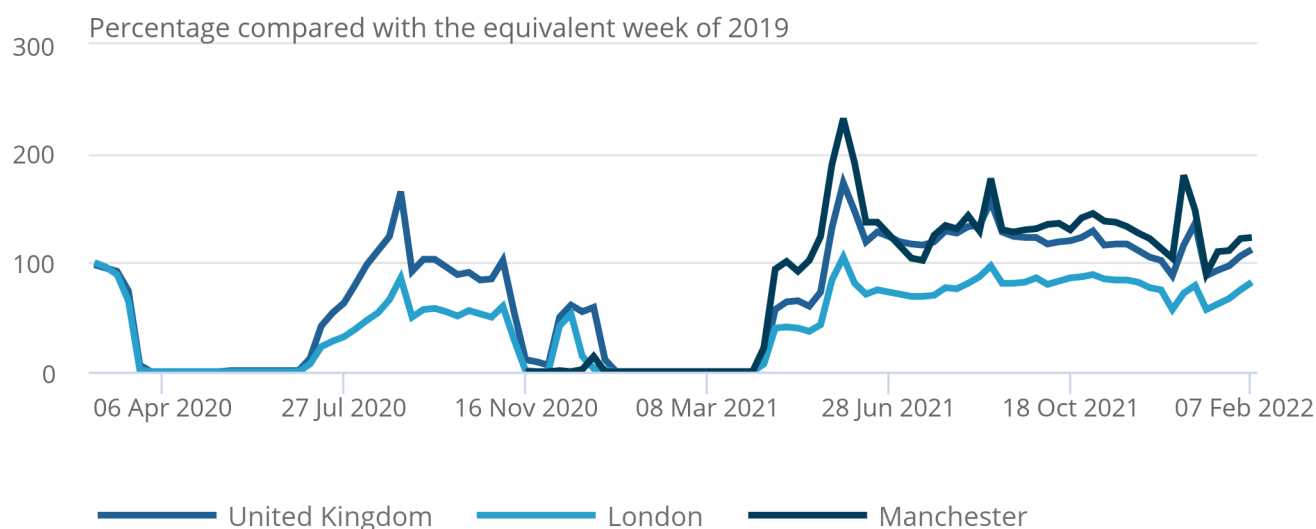
Source: OpenTable

Notes:

1. Please note that data for Manchester are only available from week ending 16 November 2020.

2. *Comparisons in OpenTable data are made with the equivalent week in 2019 until December 2021. From January 2022 comparisons are made to the equivalent week in 2020. This is likely to change in the coming weeks and revert back to 2019 comparisons across the series.

In the latest week, the seven-day average estimate of seated diners in Manchester was broadly similar to the previous week, at 123% of the level seen in the equivalent week of 2020. Meanwhile, in London there was a weekly increase of 7 percentage points, to 82% of the level seen in the equivalent week of 2020.

9 . Value Added Tax returns

New reporters

The new reporters index measures the number of firms sending Value Added Tax (VAT) returns for the first time, which is related to the number of firm creations.

Figure 10: The seasonally adjusted number of new Value Added Tax (VAT) reporters in January 2022 was 20,370, a 5% increase from December 2021 (19,490)

Number of new firm reporters, January 2015 to January 2022, seasonally adjusted and non-seasonally adjusted, UK

Figure 10: The seasonally adjusted number of new Value Added Tax (VAT) reporters in January 2022 was 20,370, a 5% increase from December 2021 (19,490)

Number of new firm reporters, January 2015 to January 2022, seasonally adjusted and non-seasonally adjusted, UK
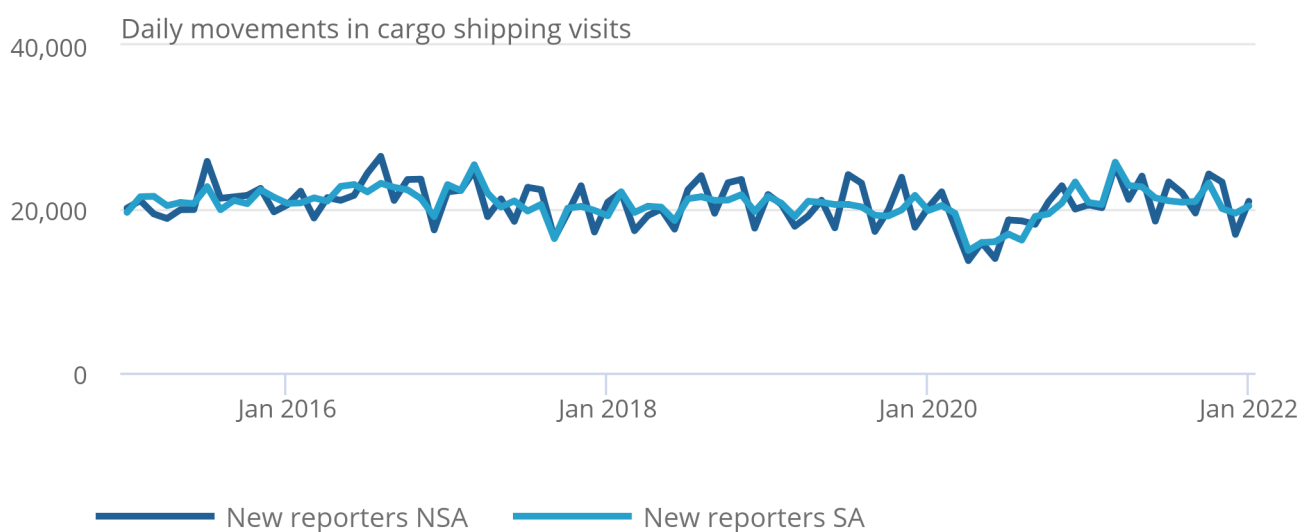
Source: Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC)

The seasonally adjusted number of new VAT reporters in the UK was 20,370 in January 2022, which was 5% higher than in December 2021. This is 3% lower than the 2015 to 2019 longer-term average (20,904).

The number of new VAT reporters in the production and services industries grew by 6% and 12%, respectively in January 2022 compared with the previous month. Despite this growth, the number of new VAT reporters in the production industry was 2% lower than in January 2021, while in the services industry it was broadly similar to January 2021.

In the construction industry the number of new reporters in January 2022 increased by 17% compared with December 2021, and was 16% higher than in January 2021.

The figures explained in this section refer to seasonally adjusted data. Non-seasonally adjusted data are available in the accompanying dataset.

Business turnover estimates

Turnover diffusion indices are an aggregate measure used to track whether most firms are reporting an increase or decrease in turnover in their VAT returns. They are calculated as the percentage of firms with increasing turnover minus the percentage with decreasing turnover.

The heatmap in Figure 11 is a visual way of showing the VAT diffusion indices based on the standard deviation from their historical 2008 to 2019 average. Larger deviations are more darkly coloured, with red representing a negative change, while teal represents a positive change when compared with the previous period.

Figure 11: A net 6% of all industry firms reported decreased turnover in December 2021 compared with November 2021, which was the largest change since April 2020 when there was a net 16% decrease

UK business turnover estimates, diffusion index standard deviation from the mean, up to December 2021, and new reporters, UK, up to January 2022

Notes:

1. Agri - Agriculture, forestry and fishing, All - All industries, SA - Seasonally adjusted, NSA - Not seasonally adjusted.

2. More information is available in the methodology article.

Download the data

The month-on-month, all-industry turnover estimate for December 2021 shows that a net 6% of firms reported decreasing turnover. This is the first time more firms have reported a fall in turnover on the month since July 2021, when a net 4% of firms reported decreasing turnover compared with the previous month. December 2021 was the largest net negative reported turnover since April 2020 when a net 16% decrease was reported.

Similarly, a net 6% of firms in the services industry reported decreasing turnover in December 2021. This was the first net negative turnover reported in the services industry since January 2021 when this was 2%. This was the largest change since April 2020 when a net 15% of firms reported decreasing turnover in the month.

In the production industry, a net 5% of firms reported decreasing turnover in December 2021 compared with the previous month. The equivalent figure for the construction and agriculture industries was a net decrease of 4% and 3%, respectively, and were the largest net decreases for both since July 2021.

The figures explained in this section refer to seasonally adjusted data. Non-seasonally adjusted data are available in the accompanying dataset.

10 . Data

System Average Price (SAP) of gas
Dataset | Released 10 February 2022
Daily and rolling average System Average Price (SAP) of gas traded in the UK.

Advance potential redundancies
Dataset | Released 10 February 2022
Weekly dataset showing the number of potential redundancies and employers proposing redundancies, submitted to Insolvency Service via HR1 forms.

Daily UK flights
Dataset | Released 10 February 2022
Experimental daily UK flight numbers and rolling seven-day average, including flights to, from, and within the UK.

Weekly shipping indicators
Dataset | Released 10 February 2022
Experimental weekly and daily ship visits dataset covering UK ports.

Traffic camera activity
Dataset | Released 10 February 2022
Experimental daily traffic camera counts data for busyness indices covering the UK.

Vehicle flows around ports
Dataset | Released 10 February 2022
Monthly data showing vehicle flows around major ports in England. Contains average 15-minute sensor counts by size of vehicle, and average speeds.

Daily vehicle flows around ports
Dataset | Released 10 February 2022
Daily data showing vehicle flows around major ports in England. Contains average 15-minute sensor counts by size of vehicle, and average speeds.

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

11 . 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.

Company incorporations

Incorporations are when a company is added to the Companies House register of limited companies. This can also include where an existing business applies to become a limited company, where it was not one before.

Voluntary dissolution applications

A voluntary dissolution application is when a company applies to begin dissolution proceedings. As such, they effectively choose to be removed from the Companies House register. For a company to be eligible to voluntarily dissolve, it should not have completed any trading activity for a period of three months.

Compulsory dissolutions

When a company fails to file the required financial accounts and/or confirmation statements, if no contact is received by Companies House following a series of letters to the company and its officers, a first gazette notice is published in the Gazette, a notice of the Registrar's intention to dissolve the company.

Diffusion index

The diffusion index tracks the growth in turnover and expenditure of firms. It is constructed to lie between negative 1 and 1. For example, if 65% of firms have increasing turnover, 30% have decreasing turnover and 5% turnover remains unchanged, then the diffusion index is 0.35.

New reporter

A new reporter is defined as a firm with a Value Added Tax (VAT) reference (that is, firm identification number), which has not previously reported its VAT returns. New reporters are published within one month of the end of the reporting period. The new reporting behaviour measure is classified by the month the data were received by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC), known as the receipt date; this is not necessarily the same as the reference period (the period for which the VAT return is made).

12 . Measuring the data

UK coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions

A full overview of coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions for each of the four UK constituent countries can be found here:

- England

- Scotland

- Wales

- Northern Ireland

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

13 . Strengths and limitations

Information on the strengths and limitations of the indicators in this bulletin is available in the Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators methodology.

The methodology for the advanced notifications of potential redundancies dataset can be found in the in the 3 February 2022 Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators publication. In the coming weeks there will be a full methodology paper published, which will be linked in this bulletin.

14 . Related links

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

Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain
Bulletin | Released 4 February 2022
Latest indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey.

Deaths registered weekly in England and Wales, provisional
Bulletin | Released 8 February 2022
Provisional counts of deaths registered in England and Wales, including deaths involving COVID-19, in the latest weeks for which data are available.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Survey, UK
Bulletin | Released 9 February 2022
Initial data from the COVID-19 Infection Survey (delivered in partnership with IQVIA, the University of Oxford and Lighthouse laboratories).