Office for National Statistics

Statistical bulletin

Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators: 18 April 2024

Early data on the UK economy and society. These faster indicators are created using rapid response surveys, novel data sources and innovative methods. These are official statistics in development.

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25 April 2024

Notice

18 April 2024

The chart title for Figure 5 previously stated that the preceding seven-day rolling average of the System Price of electricity fell to the lowest level since March 2020. We have updated this to since July 2020.

Table of contents

1 . Main points

- Consumer behaviour indicators showed increased activity in the latest week, with aggregate UK spending on credit and debit cards increasing by 1% compared with the previous week and transactions at Pret A Manger stores increasing in 9 of the 10 location categories; meanwhile, overall retail footfall remained broadly unchanged. (Bank of England CHAPS, Pret A Manger, MRI OnLocation). Section 3: Consumer behaviour.

- The total number of online job adverts on 12 April 2024 decreased by 2% when compared with the previous week; this was 19% below the level seen for the equivalent period of 2023 (Adzuna). Section 4: Business and workforce.

- In March 2024, 5% more firms reported a decrease than an increase in turnover on the previous month, falling from a net increase of 2% in February 2024 (HM Revenue and Customs Value Added Tax returns). Section 4: Business and workforce.

- Nearly half (49%) of trading businesses reported they were not considering raising prices in May 2024; in comparison, labour costs (24%) were reported as the top reason for businesses considering doing so, both broadly stable with April 2024 (final results from wave 106 of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey).

- In the week ending 14 April 2024, the System Price of electricity decreased by 40%, falling to the lowest level since July 2020, while the System Average Price (SAP) of gas increased by 6%; both remained below the levels seen for the equivalent week of 2023 at 68% and 31% lower, respectively (Elexon, National Gas Transmission). Section 5: Energy.

- In the latest week, the daily average number of UK flights increased by 2% when compared with the previous week, and the average traffic camera activity for cars in London increased by 5% (EUROCONTROL, Transport for London). Section 6: Transport.

These are official statistics in development, and we advise caution when using the data. The data sources used to compile these indicators are regularly reviewed to ensure they are representative and relevant, which may mean indicators change at short notice. Read more in Section 9: Measuring the data section.

2 . Latest indicators at a glance

Notes:

1. Card spending over time is pushed upwards by the impacts of both inflation on value of transactions and cash-to-card conversion.

2. Revolut adjustments to user count are at an aggregate level and as such age bands may not adjust evenly.

3. Indicators with SA in the title have been seasonally adjusted.

3 . Consumer behaviour

UK spending on debit and credit cards: weekly, seasonally adjusted CHAPS-based indicator

Figure 1: In the week to 11 April 2024, the seasonally adjusted CHAPS aggregate index of credit and debit spending increased by 1%

Index of credit and debit card spending, seasonally adjusted, nominal prices, UK, week ending 6 January 2022 to week ending 11 April 2024

Figure 1: In the week to 11 April 2024, the seasonally adjusted CHAPS aggregate index of credit and debit spending increased by 1%

Index of credit and debit card spending, seasonally adjusted, nominal prices, UK, week ending 6 January 2022 to week ending 11 April 2024
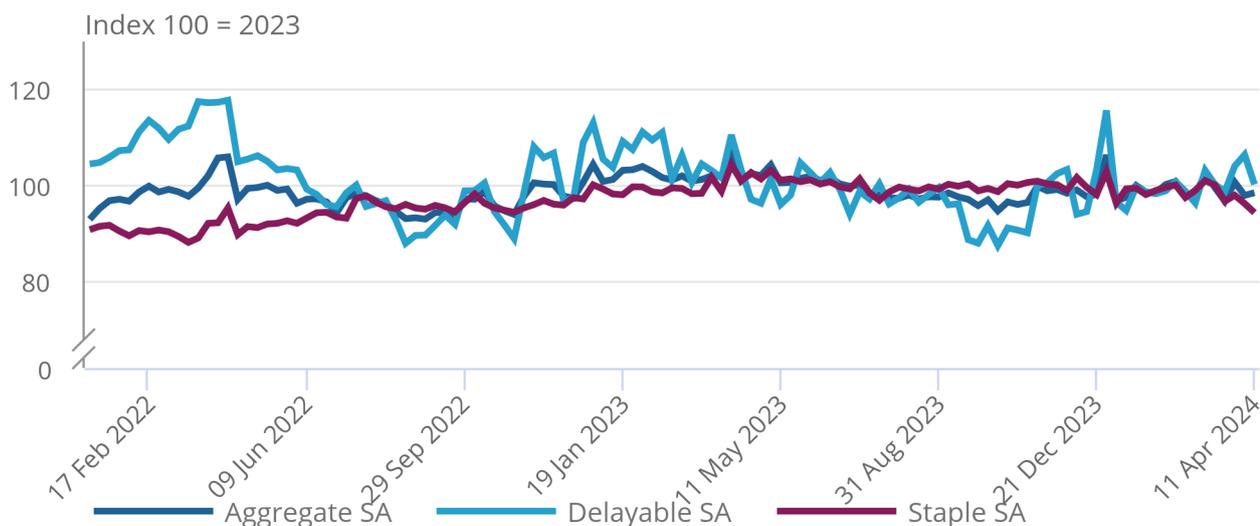
Source: Calculations from the Office for National Statistics and Bank of England

Notes:

1. Users should note that the weekly payment data show the sum of card transactions processed up to the previous working day, so there is a time lag when compared with real-life events on the chart.

2. Percentage difference is derived from the current and previous index value before rounding.

3. Seasonal adjustment and trend estimates are calculated by the Office for National Statistics using data provided by the Bank of England.

4. Users should note that all series have been re-indexed, using their average value from 2023.

The spending categories, when seasonally adjusted, recorded the following changes in the latest week:

- "aggregate" increased by 1%

- "delayable" decreased by 6%

- "staple" decreased by 2%

The increase in the "aggregate" CHAPS series is potentially owing to an increase in the "social" and/or "work-related" spending categories. These categories were withdrawn in early 2024 because of the sample population series but are still used to contribute to the total "aggregate" series.

When compared with the same week in 2023, the spending categories, when seasonally adjusted, recorded the following changes:

- "aggregate" decreased by 2%

- "delayable" decreased by 3%

- "staple" decreased by 7%

The weekly and monthly seasonally adjusted CHAPS indices, and the daily and monthly non-seasonally adjusted CHAPS indices, are available in our accompanying UK spending on credit and debit cards dataset.

National retail footfall

Figure 2: Overall retail footfall in the week to 14 April 2024 remained broadly unchanged when compared with the previous week and the previous year

Index of daily retail footfall volumes, non-seasonally adjusted, UK, 1 January 2023 to 14 April 2024

Figure 2: Overall retail footfall in the week to 14 April 2024 remained broadly unchanged when compared with the previous week and the previous year

Index of daily retail footfall volumes, non-seasonally adjusted, UK, 1 January 2023 to 14 April 2024

Index: 100 = January 2022

Source: MRI OnLocation (previously known as Springboard)

Notes:

1. The decrease in the final weeks of 2023 and early 2024 is in line with seasonal trends seen in previous years.

Overall retail footfall in the week to 14 April 2024 remained broadly unchanged when compared with the level seen in the previous week, and also when compared with the level for the equivalent week of 2023.

Retail park footfall decreased to 95% of the previous week, showing the biggest change across the three location categories. High street footfall increased to 103%, while shopping centre footfall decreased to 98%. When compared against the equivalent week in 2023, the largest changes were observed in high street footfall, which increased to 105% of the same week in the previous year, and retail park footfall, which decreased to 95% of the same week in the previous year.

Overall retail footfall decreased in 6 of the 12 UK countries and regions, remaining broadly unchanged in three and increasing in three, when compared with the previous week. The largest change occurred in Northern Ireland, where footfall decreased to 88% of the level seen in the previous week.

When compared against the equivalent week of the previous year, overall retail footfall decreased in 6 of the 12 UK countries and regions. The largest decreases were seen in Northern Ireland and Scotland, falling to 87% and 94% of the equivalent week in 2023, respectively.

Transactions at Pret A Manger

In the week to 11 April 2024, the number of in-store transactions at Pret A Manger stores increased in 9 of the 10 location categories, when compared with the previous week. The largest increases were seen in Manchester and London city worker stores, increasing by 54% and 39%, respectively. The only location category to decrease in the week to 11 April 2024 was London airports stores, decreasing by 4% in the latest week.

Compared with the equivalent week of 2023, the number of in-store transactions at Pret A Manger increased in 6, decreased in 3, and remained broadly unchanged in 1 of the 10 location categories. The location category with the largest increase was Manchester stores, increasing by 30%, while the largest decrease was seen in London stations stores, decreasing by 11%. Scotland stores was the only category to remain broadly unchanged.

Our accompanying [Transactions at Pret A Manger dataset](#) is available.

4 . Business and workforce

Value Added Tax flash estimates

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

These estimates have been weighted according to each industry's contribution to the economy. As services have the greatest contribution, they have a greater contribution to the total index.

The indices are constructed to lie between 1 and negative 1. An index of 0.05 means that 5% more firms reported an increase in turnover compared with the previous month than those reporting a decrease in turnover. Conversely, an index of negative 0.05 means that 5% more firms reported a decrease in turnover compared with the previous month.

Figure 3: 5% more firms reported a decrease than an increase in turnover on the previous month in March 2024, falling 7 percentage points in the month and being outside of normal month on month variation

Weighted Value Added Tax turnover diffusion indices, UK, January 2020 to March 2024, seasonally adjusted

Notes:

1. These data are current price so may reflect elements of inflation.

2. The shaded areas represent the 95% confidence limits.

3. The confidence limits are 1.96 standard deviations of the seasonally adjusted series, centred around zero. If a data point is outside of these limits, it is a statistically significant difference.

In March 2024, 5% more firms reported a decrease than an increase in turnover on the previous month, falling 7 percentage points from the previous month.

The construction sector saw a net 7% of firms reporting a decrease in turnover in March 2024. This is a 12-percentage point fall from February 2024 and is outside of normal month-on-month variation.

The services sector reported a net 5% of firms with decreased turnover on the previous month in March 2024, which is outside of normal month-on-month variation.

The production sector saw a broadly equal normal number of firms reporting an increase or decrease on the previous month, remaining broadly unchanged from the previous month. This is within normal month-on-month variation. Meanwhile, the agriculture sector reported a net 2% of firms with decreased turnover in March 2024, which is within normal month-on-month variation.

The data are seasonally adjusted. More information on the compilation and methodology of these estimates can be found in our [Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators methodology](#).
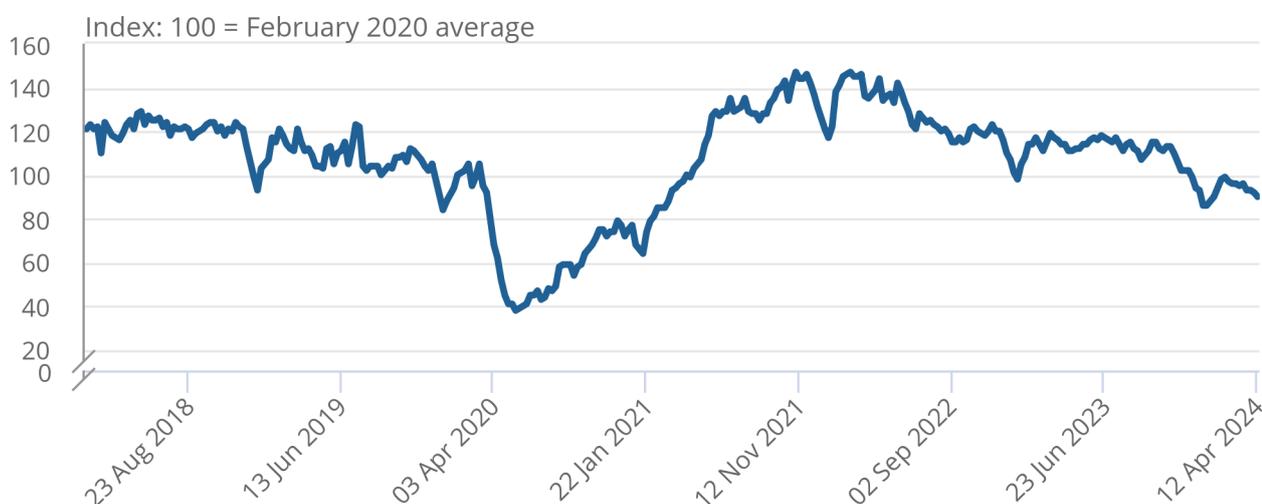
Online job adverts

These figures are innovative estimates of online job adverts by category, UK country, and English region, provided by Adzuna, an online job search engine. 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 our Vacancy Survey.

Figure 4: The total number of online job adverts on 12 April 2024 was 19% below the level seen in the equivalent period of 2023

Volume of online job adverts, non-seasonally adjusted, UK, 7 February 2018 to 12 April 2024

Figure 4: The total number of online job adverts on 12 April 2024 was 19% below the level seen in the equivalent period of 2023

Volume of online job adverts, non-seasonally adjusted, UK, 7 February 2018 to 12 April 2024

Source: Adzuna

Notes:

1. Further category breakdowns are included in our Online job advert estimates dataset, and more details on the methodology can be found in our Using Adzuna data to derive an indicator of weekly vacancies: Experimental Statistics methodology.

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 chart and our Online job advert estimates dataset.

The number of online job adverts on 12 April 2024 decreased by 2% when compared with the previous week. Of the 12 UK countries and English regions, 11 decreased, while one remained broadly unchanged.

The total number of online job adverts fell by 19% when compared with the equivalent period of 2023, with all regions seeing a decrease when compared with the previous year. The largest decreases occurred in Scotland and London, decreasing by 32% and 26%, respectively.

When compared with the equivalent period of 2023, the total number of online job adverts fell in 25 of the 28 job categories. The largest decreases were seen in the "Domestic Help" and "Construction and trades" categories, falling by 54% and 47%, respectively. The remaining three job categories all increased.

Our accompanying Online job advert estimates dataset is available.

Advanced notification of potential redundancies

Calculated as a four-week rolling average, the number of potential redundancies in the week to 7 April 2024 was 1% above the level in the equivalent week of 2023. However, the number of employers proposing redundancies was 8% below the level in the equivalent week of 2023.

Comparisons with the equivalent period a year ago help account for any seasonal impacts. For more information, our accompanying Advanced notification of potential redundancies dataset is available.

5 . Energy

System Average Price of gas

The System Average Price (SAP) of gas increased by 6% in the week to 14 April 2024 when compared with the previous week. However, this was 31% below the level seen in the equivalent week of 2023.

Our accompanying System Average Price of gas dataset is available.

System Price of electricity

Figure 5: The preceding seven-day rolling average of the System Price of electricity decreased by 40%, falling to the lowest level since July 2020

System Price of electricity, pence per kilowatt hour, preceding seven-day rolling average, 5 January 2020 to 14 April 2024, Great Britain, non-seasonally adjusted

Figure 5: The preceding seven-day rolling average of the System Price of electricity decreased by 40%, falling to the lowest level since July 2020

System Price of electricity, pence per kilowatt hour, preceding seven-day rolling average, 5 January 2020 to 14 April 2024, Great Britain, non-seasonally adjusted
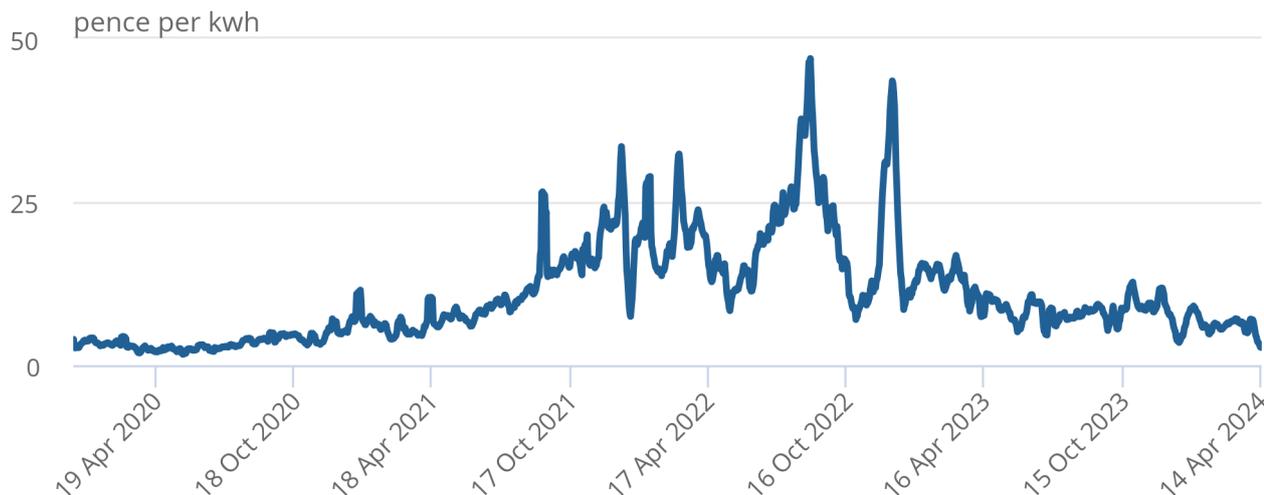
Source: Office for National Statistics calculations from BMRS data © Elexon Limited copyright and database right 2024

The System Price of electricity decreased by 40% in the week to 14 April 2024 when compared with the previous week. This was 68% below the level seen in equivalent week of 2023, falling to the lowest level since July 2020.

Our accompanying System Price of electricity dataset is available.

6 . Transport

Traffic camera activity

The average traffic camera activity for cars in London increased by 5% in the week to 14 April 2024 when compared with the previous week. In the same period, average pedestrian and cyclist levels in London increased by 6%.

Our accompanying Traffic camera activity dataset is available.

Daily UK flights

The daily average number of UK flights increased by 2% in the week to 14 April 2024, and was 5% higher than the equivalent week of 2023.

Our accompanying Daily UK flights dataset is available.

7 . Data

Online job advert estimates
Dataset | Released 18 April 2024
Weekly snapshot of online job advert indices covering the UK job market. These are official statistics in development. Source: Adzuna.

UK spending on credit and debit cards
Dataset | Released 18 April 2024
Daily, weekly and monthly data showing seasonally adjusted and non-seasonally adjusted UK spending using debit and credit cards. These are official statistics in development. Source: CHAPS, Bank of England.

This section lists a selection of the data available in this publication. For the full list of available datasets, please see our accompanying dataset page.

8 . Glossary

Real-time indicator

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

9 . Measuring the data

Official statistics in development

These statistics are labelled as "official statistics in development". Until September 2023, these were called "experimental statistics". Read more about the change in our Guide to official statistics in development.

We are developing how we collect and produce the data to improve the quality of these statistics. Read more in our Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators methodology article.

Once the developments are complete, we will review the statistics with the Statistics Head of Profession. We will decide whether the statistics are of sufficient quality and value to be published as official statistics, or whether further development is needed. Production may be stopped if they are not of sufficient quality or value. Users will be informed of the outcome and any changes.

We value your feedback on these statistics. Contact us at realtime.indicators@ons.gov.uk.

Dataset release dates and frequency

Release dates and intended frequency of our associated datasets are available in the following list. If you would like further information about any of these datasets, please contact us at realtime.indicators@ons.gov.uk.

Weekly data

For [UK spending on credit and debit cards](#), the:

- latest release date is 18 April 2024

- intended publication frequency is weekly

For [Revolut spending on debit cards](#), the:

- latest release date is 1 February 2024

- intended publication frequency is weekly

For [Automotive Fuel spending](#), the:

- latest release date is 28 March 2024

- intended publication frequency is weekly

For [Online job advert estimates](#), the:

- latest release date is 18 April 2024

- intended publication frequency is weekly

For [Company incorporations, voluntary dissolutions and compulsory dissolutions](#), the:

- latest release date is 7 March 2024:

- intended publication frequency is weekly

For [Advanced notification of potential redundancies](#), the:

- latest release date is 18 April 2024

- intended publication frequency is weekly

For [System Average price of gas](#), the:

- latest release date is 18 April 2024

- intended publication frequency is weekly

For [System Price of electricity](#), the:

- latest release date is 18 April 2024

- intended publication frequency is weekly

For [Traffic camera activity](#), the:

- latest release date is 18 April 2024

- intended publication frequency is weekly

For [Weekly shipping indicators](), the:

- latest release date is 5 April 2024

- intended publication frequency is weekly

For [Daily UK Flights](), the:

- latest release date is 18 April 2024

- intended publication frequency is weekly

For [Transactions at Pret A Manger](), the:

- latest release date is 18 April 2024

- intended publication frequency is fortnightly

Monthly data

For [Monthly Direct Debit failure rate and average transaction amount](), the:

- latest release date is 14 March 2024

- intended publication frequency is monthly

For [Value Added Tax, flash estimates](), the:

- latest release date is 18 April 2024

- intended publication frequency is monthly

For [Renter affordability for new tenancies](), the:

- latest release date is 11 April 2024

- intended publication frequency is monthly

For [Sales and jobs in small businesses](), the:

- latest release date is 14 March

- intended publication frequency is quarterly

10 . Strengths and limitations

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

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

UK coronavirus restrictions

Coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions should be considered when interpreting the data featured throughout this bulletin.

Seasonality

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

11 . Related links

Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain
Bulletin | Released fortnightly
Social insights on daily life and events, including the cost of living, well-being and shortages of goods from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

Business insights and impact on the UK economy
Bulletin | Released fortnightly
The impact of challenges facing the economy and other events on UK businesses. Based on responses from the voluntary fortnightly business survey (BICS) to deliver real-time information to help assess issues affecting UK businesses and economy, including financial performance, workforce, trade, and business resilience. These are official statistics in development

12 . Cite this statistical bulletin

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