

Statistical bulletin

Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators: 29 September 2022

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

Contact:
Tom Williams
realtime.indicators@ons.gov.uk
+44 1633 455932

Release date:
29 September 2022

Next release:
06 October 2022

Notice

29 September 2022

Visits to location types using Google Mobility data will no longer be published from next week. Google Community Mobility Reports are stopping in October 2022, [further information is available](#). The associated charts and commentary in previous bulletins will still be accessible.

Table of contents

1. [Main points](#)
2. [Latest indicators at a glance](#)
3. [Consumer behaviour](#)
4. [Business and workforce](#)
5. [Transport](#)
6. [Data](#)
7. [Glossary](#)
8. [Measuring the data](#)
9. [Strengths and limitations](#)
10. [Related links](#)
11. [Cite this statistical bulletin](#)

1 . Main points

Users should note that week-on-week movements in this bulletin will be affected by changes in activity related to the bank holiday for the State Funeral of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

- Consumer behaviour indicators showed decreased activity in the latest week, with falls in "automotive fuel" card spending (by 10 percentage points), UK seated diners (by 7 percentage points) and transactions in most Pret A Manger regional locations; meanwhile, overall retail footfall in the UK was 93% of the level in the previous week (Revolut, OpenTable, Pret A Manger, Springboard). [Section 3](#).
- Business and workforce indicators were generally flat this week, with online job adverts falling slightly on the week; they were 15% lower than in the equivalent week of 2021, having exhibited a downward trend since the highest point this year in mid-February (Adzuna). [Section 4](#).
- Of businesses not permanently stopped trading, 25% cited input prices inflation as their main concern for October 2022, while 22% were most concerned with energy prices (initial results from Wave 66 of the [Business Insights and Conditions Survey](#) (BICS)). [Section 4](#).
- The latest transport indicators mostly showed reduced activity compared with their 2019 baseline; the seven-day average of daily UK flights was broadly unchanged in the latest week having remained around 83% of its 2019 levels since mid-May, whereas Heathrow air passenger numbers in August were 80% of the equivalent month of 2019 (EUROCONTROL, Civil Aviation Authority). [Section 5](#).
- The System Average Price (SAP) of gas fell by 22% in the week to 25 September 2022; it is now 50% higher than the equivalent level seen on 26 September 2021 (National Grid).

Results presented in this bulletin are experimental and may be subject to revision. Data sources used to compile these indicators are regularly reviewed to ensure representativity and relevance which may mean indicators change at short notice.

2 . Latest indicators at a glance

Notes:

1. Comparisons of shipping visits for the UK are unavailable this week because of technical issues, but data for most ports and the UK total for the latest week are still available in our [accompanying dataset](#).
2. Revolut adjustments to user count are at an aggregate level and as such age bands may not adjust evenly.
3. Users should note that card spending over time is pushed upwards by the impacts of both inflation on value of transactions and cash-to-card conversion.
4. Users should note that the week-on-week and year-on-year changes in automotive fuel price and demand indicators are the point differences of the indexed numbers, so may not match the percentage levels provided in the commentary.
5. Users should note that week-on-week movements will be affected by changes in activity related to the bank holiday for the State Funeral of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.
6. For the road traffic indicator, week-on-two-week comparisons are made between Monday 12 September 2022 and Monday 26 September 2022, to avoid comparing against the lower level of motor vehicle traffic seen in the previous week.

3 . Consumer behaviour

Users should note that week-on-week movements in this section will be affected by changes in activity related to the bank holiday for the State Funeral of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

Pret A Manger transactions decreased at most locations in the week to 22 September 2022. The largest decreases were in London city worker, regional town and Manchester stores, which fell 8, 8 and 7 percentage points, respectively. Transactions at regional stores have generally trended downwards since 3 February 2022 when they reached their peak level this year.

Meanwhile, transactions at regional station stores increased by 5 percentage points in the latest week. Our [accompanying dataset](#): Transactions at Pret A Manger is available.

UK seated diners fell by 7 percentage points in the week to 25 September 2022. This is 11 percentage points lower than the previous year but 13 percentage points higher than the equivalent week of 2019. Seated diner levels in London decreased by 3 percentage points both week-on-week and compared with the previous year, and were 16 percentage points lower than the equivalent week of 2019.

Google Mobility data showed that in the week to 23 September 2022, visits to all location types decreased. The largest fall was in visits to "workplaces", falling by 9% to 72% of its pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) level. In the week to 23 September 2022, "park" and "grocery and pharmacy" were the only locations where visits were above their pre-coronavirus levels, at 138% and 103%, respectively. Our [accompanying dataset](#): Visits to location types using Google Mobility is available.

In the week to 18 September 2022, the estimated demand for fuel per transaction fell by 2 percentage points to 89% of the level in the equivalent week of 2021. Average fuel prices were at 129% of the level seen in the equivalent week of 2021, broadly unchanged from the previous week. Our [accompanying dataset](#): Automotive fuel spending is available.

National Retail Footfall

From 29 September 2022, we are reintroducing a national retail footfall indicator, last featured in this bulletin on 7 April 2022.

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

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

Springboard's weekly data are defined over a seven-day period running from Monday to Sunday. Week 38 of 2022 therefore refers to the period Monday 19 September to Sunday 25 September 2022. Users should note that all quoted figures have been rounded to the nearest integer.

Figure 1: In the week to 25 September 2022, overall weekly retail footfall was 83% of the level in the equivalent week of 2019

Volume of daily retail footfall, percentage compared with the equivalent week of 2019, 1 January 2020 to 25 September 2022, UK

Download the data

[.xlsx](#)

According to Springboard, in the UK in the week to 25 September 2022, the volume of overall weekly retail footfall for:

- the overall springboard index was 93% of the previous week, and 83% of the equivalent week of 2019
- high streets were 94% of the previous week, and 85% of the level in the equivalent week of 2019
- retail parks were 91% of the previous week, and 87% of the level in the equivalent week of 2019
- shopping centres were 90% of the previous week and 74% of the level in the equivalent week of 2019

In the week to 25 September 2022, there were decreases in retail footfall in all 12 English regions and UK countries. The largest week-on-week fall in retail footfall was in the East of England, at 91% of the level in the previous week.

Revolut debit card transactions: daily card spending by sector

Revolut is a financial technology company with over five million users within the UK financial payment ecosystem. Revolut data are presented on a per-account basis to account for Revolut's high user-growth over time, so that comparisons can be made on a like-for-like basis over a longer data time series. Revolut customers tend to be younger and more metropolitan than the average UK consumer, so spending may not be representative of the overall UK macroeconomic picture.

"Betting" expenditure can be erratic and is omitted from the data as its inclusion would lead to volatility in the spending category "entertainment" that affects user interpretation.

More information on Revolut data is provided in the accompanying [methodology article](#): Using Revolut cardholder data to derive real-time indicators of consumer spending.

Sectoral card spending shows consumer value spending over time across spending categories, which may provide insights into consumer behaviour in response to changing current events, preferences, governmental policy and other factors. These series are comprised of aggregated and mutually exclusive Merchant Category Codes, which are business attributes that classify businesses dependent upon their primary business category:

- "retail spending" includes clothing, department, mixed retail, services and household stores
- "food and drink" includes supermarkets, convenience stores and other food providers
- "entertainment" includes membership clubs, cinemas, ticketed events, sports, galleries and tourist attractions
- "pubs, restaurants, and fast food" includes pubs, nightclubs, restaurants and fast food
- "travel" includes airlines, hotels and motoring
- "automotive fuel" includes service stations and automated fuel dispensers

Figure 2: Card spending on “automotive fuel” fell by 10 percentage points in the week to 25 September 2022 having trended downwards since peaking in mid-August

Total spend by sectoral group, seven-day average, week ending 1 January 2020 to 25 September 2022, UK, non-seasonally adjusted, nominal prices

Notes:

1. Percentage point differences are derived before rounding.

Download the data

[.xlsx](#)

There were falls in five of the six sectors in the week to 25 September 2022. The largest of which was in "automotive fuel" spending, which decreased by 10 percentage points. However, "automotive fuel" spending was 12 percentage points higher than it was in the equivalent week of 2021. Though users should note that card spending over time is pushed upwards by the impacts of both inflation on value of transactions, and cash-to-card conversion.

"Food and drink" spending fell 5 percentage points in the latest week and has been falling steadily since this years' peak in mid-August 2022. "Retail" spending meanwhile increased by 8 percentage points in the latest week though this is in line with the cyclical monthly spending patterns that we expect.

Total debit card spending was broadly unchanged in the week to 25 September 2022. Spending for those in the 18 to 34 and 35 to 54 age categories was unchanged in the latest week. Over the same period however, debit card spending for those aged 55 years and over fell by 7 percentage points. Spending for those in this category has trended upwards since the turn of the year from a low in mid-January 2022.

UK Spending on debit and credit cards

Daily CHAPS-based indicator

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

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

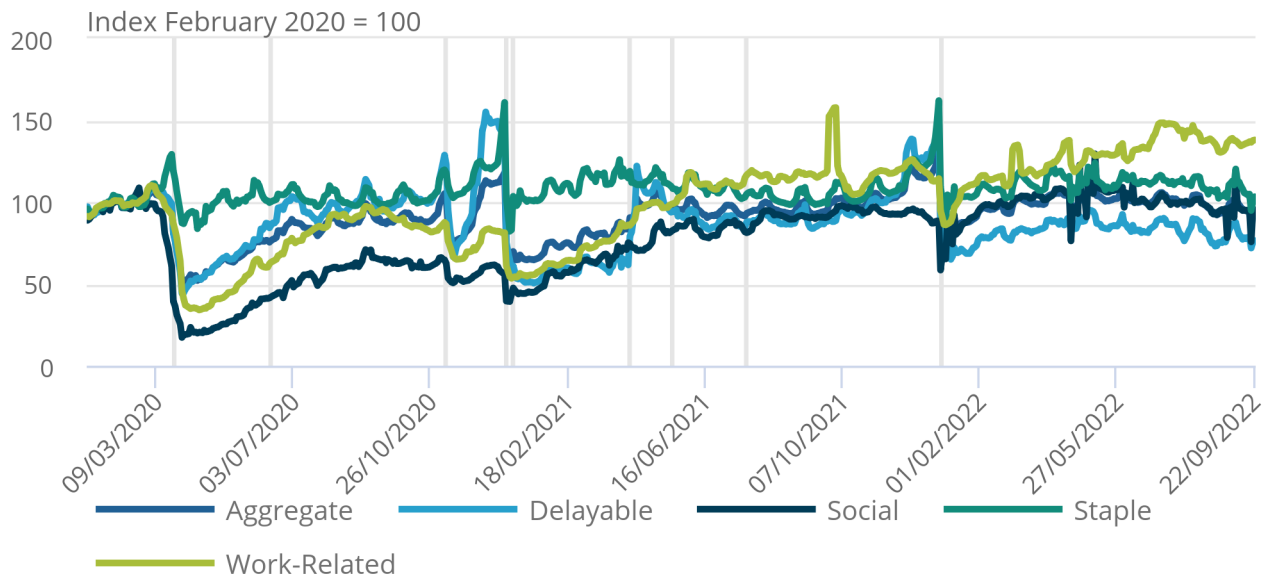
- "staples" refers to companies that sell essential goods that households need to purchase, such as food and utilities
- "work-related" refers to companies providing public transport or selling petrol
- "delayable" refers to companies selling goods whose purchase could be delayed, such as clothing or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

Figure 3: The aggregate CHAPS-based indicator of credit and debit card purchases decreased slightly by 1 percentage point in the week to 22 September 2022 and was 94% of its February 2020 average

A backward looking seven-day rolling average, 13 January 2020 to 22 September 2022, non-seasonally adjusted, nominal prices

Figure 3: The aggregate CHAPS-based indicator of credit and debit card purchases decreased slightly by 1 percentage point in the week to 22 September 2022 and was 94% of its February 2020 average

A backward looking seven-day rolling average, 13 January 2020 to 22 September 2022, non-seasonally adjusted, nominal prices



Source: ONS and Bank of England calculations

Notes:

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

Figure 3 shows changes in the value of CHAPS payments received by large UK corporates from their credit and debit card processors, "merchant acquirers".

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

- "work-related" (which includes spending on road fuel) increased by 2 percentage points
- "delayable" decreased by 2 percentage points
- "staple" decreased by 1 percentage point
- "social" remained broadly unchanged

"Work-related" and "staple" spending were above their February 2020 average levels at 138% and 103%, respectively. "Social" and "delayable" spending remained below their February 2020 average levels at 95% and 76%, respectively.

4 . Business and workforce

Users should note that many week-on-week movements in this section will be affected by changes in activity related to the bank holiday for the State Funeral of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

The number of total UK online job advertisements fell slightly in the latest week, with falls in 20 of the 28 online job advert categories. Total adverts have now decreased in 14 of the last 18 weeks, from 27 May to 23 September 2022.

The largest week-on-week fall was in the "scientific and QA" category, which fell by 8% and has been trending downwards since mid-March 2022. Adverts in the "healthcare and social care" category fell by 7% in the latest week and were 21% below the level on the equivalent day of 2021. The largest weekly increase meanwhile was in the "accounting and finance" category, which rose by 4%.

In the latest week, 9 of the 12 UK countries and English regions saw decreases in online job adverts. The largest week-on-week fall in regional online job adverts was in the North East, with a fall of 2%. After a steady recovery from a low in mid-May 2020, adverts in the North East have been steadily decreasing since mid-February 2022, moving more closely in line with the other English regions. Our [accompanying dataset](#): Online job advert estimates is available.

Potential redundancies in the week to 18 September 2022 were 61% of their pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) level, while the number of employers proposing redundancies are now 71% of their pre-coronavirus levels. Our [accompanying dataset](#): Advanced notification of potential redundancies is available.

Business impact and insights

Initial results from Wave 66 of the [Business Insights and Conditions Survey](#) (BICS) collected from 20 to 27 September 2022, with a response rate of 22.5% (8,535 responses).

Table 1: Input price inflation was reported as the main concern for a quarter (25%) of UK businesses for October 2022
Businesses main concerns, businesses not permanently stopped trading, weighted by count, UK, 1 to 31 October 2022

	All industries
Inflation of goods and services prices	24.7%
Energy prices	22.4%
No concerns for my business	21.1%
Not sure	8.3%
Competition	5.4%
Taxation	4.5%
Interest rates	3.0%
Supply chain disruption	3.0%
Exchange rates	2.9%
Other	2.7%
Business rates	1.9%

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

Notes

1. Initial weighted results Wave 66 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS).
2. Table may not sum to 100% because of rounding and percentages less than 1% being removed for disclosure purposes.

More than two-thirds (71%) of businesses reported they had some form of concern for their business for October 2022. The proportion that reported price inflation (25%) as their main concern has remained broadly stable since May 2022, with those reporting energy prices as their main concern (22%) remaining broadly stable since late March 2022.

Table 2: More than a third (38%) of UK businesses reported they had already passed higher costs on to prices in late September 2022

Impact on prices, businesses not permanently stopped trading, weighted by count, UK, 20 to 27 September 2022

	All industries
More than 75%	5.6%
Between 50 -74%	5.2%
Between 25 - 49%	9.6%
Less than 24%	17.2%
Not sure	20.1%
Business has not passed through any higher costs	42.4%

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

Notes

1. Initial weighted results Wave 66 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS).
2. Table may not sum to 100% because of rounding and percentages less than 1% being removed for disclosure purposes.

5 . Transport

On Monday 19 September 2022, the date of the State Funeral of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, the seasonally adjusted count of traffic camera activity for London recorded a fall of around 50% in both vans and trucks from the previous Monday. There was a fall of 22% for cars. Our [accompanying dataset](#): Traffic camera activity is available.

The average number of UK flights was broadly unchanged in the week to 25 September 2022 and was 83% of the level seen in 2019. Our [accompanying dataset](#): Daily UK flights is available.

Relative to the equivalent month of 2019, Heathrow passenger numbers had been rising steadily each month throughout the start of 2022, starting the year at 43% in January, before peaking in June 2022 at 83%. This figure decreased slightly in July and August 2022, to 82% and 80%, respectively. In August 2022, Heathrow passenger numbers decreased by 4% compared with the previous month but were 173% higher than the same period in the previous year. Our [accompanying dataset](#): Heathrow flight passengers is available.

Road traffic on 26 September 2022 was down 2 percentage points from Monday 12 September and was 3 percentage points lower than the level seen on the Monday of the first week in February 2020. Week-on-two-week comparisons were made to avoid comparing to periods that contained the bank holiday.

Data for the number of shipping visits for major ports in the UK in the latest week are available in our [accompanying dataset](#): Weekly shipping indicators.

6 . Data

[Advanced notification of potential redundancies](#)

Dataset | Released 29 September 2022

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

[Automotive fuel spending insights](#)

Dataset | Released 29 September 2022

Weekly dataset including estimated quantity of automotive fuel demand per average transaction; an experimental indicator used to isolate real demand after adjusting for growth in fuel prices.

[Revolut spending on debit cards](#)

Dataset | Released 29 September 2022

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

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

Dataset | Released 29 September 2022

Daily and rolling average System Average Price (SAP) of gas traded in the UK.

[Transactions at Pret A Manger](#)

Dataset | Released 29 September 2022

Weekly transactional data from approximately 400 Pret A Manger stores around the UK.

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

Dataset | Released 29 September 2022

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

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](#).

7 . Glossary

Real-time indicator

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

8 . Measuring the data

Information on the methodology used to produce the indicators in this bulletin is available in the [Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators methodology](#).

9 . Strengths and limitations

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

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

UK coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions

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

Seasonality

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

10 . Related links

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

Bulletin | Released fortnightly

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

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

Bulletin | Released fortnightly

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

11 . Cite this statistical bulletin

Office for National Statistics (ONS), published 29 September 2022, ONS website, statistical bulletin, [Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators: 29 September 2022](#).