

## **Webscraping – Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic update**

The information produced by ONS is more important than ever and is being used by government to manage the UK's response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. As set out in [Coronavirus and the effects on UK GDP](#), ONS face challenges in maintaining business survey response rates, particularly as number of businesses have temporarily or permanently ceased trading. Understanding the characteristics of businesses who have not responded is key to producing accurate estimates of UK GDP.

ONS has partnered with an external supplier to undertake web scraping of 500,000 websites of UK businesses. This is a quick and effective way to ascertain information about their trading status, given the difficulties we are facing using our normal approach to contacting businesses.

The ONS [Web Scraping policy](#) outlines our ambition to contact businesses in advance of web scraping to give them the opportunity to opt out, however due to the speed at which the data is required, the coronavirus pandemic is an exception to this notice period.

If your business would like to opt out of this operation please contact [Data.Acquisition@ons.gov.uk](mailto:Data.Acquisition@ons.gov.uk) with an explanation of your reasons why. The ONS team will engage with you promptly to address any concerns and to negotiate the next steps, including other means of sharing the information. The ONS is ready to discuss other concerns your business may have and come to any suitable arrangements if required.