

Statistical bulletin

Coronavirus and the latest indicators for the UK economy and society: 7 January 2021

Early experimental data on the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) on the UK economy and society. These faster indicators are created using rapid response surveys, novel data sources and experimental methods.

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Release date:
7 January 2021

Next release:
14 January 2021

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1 . Main points

This week's bulletin covers the period prior to Christmas 2020 through to early January 2021. Please note time periods for each indicator will vary.

Local and national restrictions changed during this period. An overview of the restrictions for each UK nation is available in [Measuring the data](#) and should be considered against movements shown in the data.

Estimates of online job adverts provided by Adzuna are not available for this week's bulletin. Data covering the period since 11 December 2020 will be provided in a future bulletin.

Update: 8 January 2021

[Online job advert estimates](#) data now available.

Shipping

According to exactEarth seasonally adjusted shipping data, the seven-day average number of daily cargo ship visits in the UK fell to 77 visits in the week ending 27 December 2020, from 111 visits the week before. It remained at 77 visits in the week ending 3 January 2021.

The seven-day average of all daily ship visits fell to 201 in the week ending 27 December 2020, from 294 in the previous week, then increased slightly to 224 in the week ending 3 January 2021.

These patterns are broadly comparable with those seen over the Christmas period 2019.

Roads and traffic camera data

According to the Department for Transport (DfT) non-seasonally adjusted road traffic data, on Monday 4 January 2021, the volume of all motor vehicle traffic increased by 19 percentage points compared with the bank holiday Monday of the previous week. However, traffic volumes remain lower than the pre-Christmas levels.

According to traffic camera activity in the week ending 3 January 2021, in Northern Ireland, all categories of road traffic except buses decreased. Counts of cars and vans in Northern Ireland both decreased to 69% of the level seen in the previous week. Counts of pedestrians and cyclists decreased to 61% of the level seen in the previous week. This large weekly decrease can be explained by the [recent additional coronavirus restrictions](#) for Northern Ireland put in place on 26 December 2020.

In Manchester, all categories of road transport decreased compared with the previous week. Counts of trucks decreased to 84% of the level seen in the previous week, cars decreased to 87% of the previous week's levels while pedestrians and cyclists decreased to 93%.

In London, motorbike traffic increased to 24% above the levels seen in the previous week, while pedestrians and cyclists increased to 17% above the previous week's levels. Counts of cars were 4% below the levels seen in the previous week.

UK footfall

Overall footfall dropped to 38% of the level seen in the same week of the previous year, a 10 percentage point decrease compared with the previous week. This level of footfall remains above the lowest point seen in the spring lockdown (week ending 12 April 2020).

Footfall across all retail locations in the UK saw a drop compared with the previous week. There was a decrease of 12 percentage points in shopping centres and a decrease of 9 percentage points in both retail parks and in high streets.

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Regional footfall

In the week ending 3 January 2021, footfall in Northern Ireland dropped significantly to 22% of the level seen on the same week last year, a 29-percentage point decrease on the previous week. This large fall can be attributed to the [tightened government restrictions](#) that came into effect on 26 December 2020.

In the East Midlands and West Midlands, footfall decreased by 18 percentage points compared with the previous week, and weekly footfall in Scotland fell by 17 percentage points, coinciding with the [Scottish Government's introduction of further level four restrictions](#) in mainland Scotland.

In Greater London, overall footfall fell to 29% of the level seen on the same week last year but remained similar to the previous week.

Wales saw a decrease of 2 percentage points in overall footfall from the previous week, to 27% of the level seen in the same week last year [as it remained at alert level 4](#).

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Business impact of the coronavirus

According to final results from Wave 20 of the Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (30 November to 13 December 2020), 84% of UK businesses are currently trading, an increase from 80% in Wave 19 (16 to 29 November).

Of all businesses, excluding those who have permanently ceased trading, 11% of their workforce are on furlough leave, a decrease from 16% in Wave 19.

Social impacts of the coronavirus on Great Britain

According to the latest Opinions and Lifestyle Survey, in the week ending 3 January 2021, around 44% of adults travelled to work (both exclusively and in combination with working from home). This figure shows a decrease of 13 percentage points from the week ending 20 December 2020.

Company incorporations and voluntary dissolution applications

According to Companies House data, in the week ending Friday 1 January 2021 there were 8,248 company incorporations, down from 9,326 in the previous week. However, this was higher than the amount of company incorporations observed in the first week of 2019 (5,876) and 2020 (7,366).

In the week ending Friday 1 January 2021, there were 2,955 company voluntary dissolution applications, a slight increase from 2,939 in the previous week. The corresponding figures for the first week of 2019 and 2020 were 3,095 and 4,109 respectively.

OpenTable seated diner estimates

According to OpenTable on Sunday 3 January 2021, the percentage of seated diners at restaurants from online, phone, and walk-in reservations in the UK decreased to 2% of their level on the same day of the equivalent week of 2020 (Sunday 5 January 2020), the lowest recorded since the end of November 2020. The corresponding figure for restaurants in London was 0%.

Online price change in the food and drink basket

There was an overall decrease of 0.5% in basket prices between the week ending 27 December 2020 and week ending 3 January 2021. The main downwards contributors in the latest week were sugar, jam, syrup, chocolate and confectionery with a 3.9% price decrease.

Within this category, chocolate was the main driver behind the overall decrease because some retailers reduced their prices on or just after Christmas for various seasonal chocolate items. Bread and cereals saw a 1.1% price decrease.

Spirits and vegetables, including potatoes and tubers, each saw an increase, by 1.7% and 0.9% respectively. The increase in prices for spirits can be attributed to price increases for gin, whisky and vodka after the pre-Christmas sales.

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

2 . Latest indicators at a glance

3 . Business impact of the coronavirus

Final results from Wave 20 of the Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS) are for the period 30 November to 13 December 2020, which closed on 23 December 2020. Out of approximately 39,000 UK businesses sampled, 23.9% responded.

Please note that these data were collected over the period 14 December to 23 December 2020 and refer to the period 30 November to 13 December 2020. This should be kept in mind in relation to the timing of local and national lockdowns and dependent on the location and date when the business responded, as these could have an impact on the estimates.

Across all UK industries, in Wave 20:

- 79% of businesses had been trading for more than the last two weeks (an increase from 76% in Wave 19)
- 6% of businesses had started trading within the last two weeks after a pause in trading (broadly unchanged from Wave 19)
- 2% of businesses had paused trading but intend to restart in the next two weeks (a decrease from 7% in Wave 19)
- 11% of businesses had paused trading and do not intend to restart in the next two weeks (broadly unchanged from Wave 19)
- 2% of businesses had permanently ceased trading (broadly unchanged from Wave 19)

4 . Social Impacts of the coronavirus on Great Britain

This section includes some headline results from Wave 39 of the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) covering the period 22 December 2020 to 3 January 2021. The survey went out to 6,030 adults in Great Britain and had a response rate of 62%.

Travelling to work

In the week ending 3 January 2021, the proportion of working adults in Great Britain who:

- worked exclusively from home remained broadly similar compared with the previous period at 26%
- travelled to work (both exclusively and in combination with working from home) decreased from the previous period by 13 percentage points to 44%
- neither travelled to work nor worked from home increased by 15 percentage points to 30%

Shopping

Of those adults who reported that they left home in the last seven days, the proportion that shopped for food and medicine remained unchanged at 77%. The corresponding figure for those who shopped for things other than food and medicine decreased by 7 percentage points to 16%.

There was no change compared with the previous period in the percentage of adults using a face covering at 97%.

5 . Data

[Weekly and daily shipping indicators](#)

Dataset | Released 7 January 2021

The weekly and daily shipping indicators dataset associated with the faster indicators of UK economic activity.

[Traffic camera activity](#)

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Experimental dataset for busyness indices covering the UK.

[Online weekly price changes](#)

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The online price changes for a selection of food and drink products from several large UK retailers. These data are experimental estimates developed to deliver timely indicators to help understand the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

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Responses from the new voluntary fortnightly business survey, which captures businesses responses on how their turnover, workforce prices, trade and business resilience have been affected in the two-week reference period.

6 . Glossary

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.

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.

Voluntary dissolution applications

A voluntary dissolution application is when a company applies to begin dissolution proceedings. As such, they effectively chose 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.

7 . Measuring the data

The following is a summary of the changes in coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions in each of the four UK constituent countries between 20 December 2020 and 3 January 2021.

A full list of national restrictions is available for [England from gov.uk](#), for [Scotland from the Scottish Government](#), for [Wales the Welsh Government](#) and for [Northern Ireland from nidirect](#).

Lockdown restrictions as of 20 December 2020

England

- Tier 4 local restrictions for much of London, the South East and East of England.
- Tier 3 local restrictions for much of the North, and West Midlands.
- The remaining areas of England are in Tier 2 and 1.

Scotland

- Large parts of Central Scotland are in Level 3 restrictions.
- Much of southern Scotland and the Highlands are in Level 1 restrictions.

Wales

- All of Wales enters Tier 4 lockdown restrictions.

Northern Ireland

- Some pre-Christmas restrictions in place.

26 December 2020

England

- Six million further people in the East and South East of England enter Tier 4.
- Further areas move into Tier 3.
- Cornwall and Herefordshire move into Tier 2.

Scotland

- All of mainland Scotland enters Level 4 restrictions.
- Exceptions are Orkney, Shetland and parts of the Western Isles, which move into Level 3 restrictions.

Northern Ireland

- Northern Ireland enters a six-week lockdown.

31 December 2020

England

- More areas enter Tier 4 restrictions. The remaining areas of England, except the Isles of Scilly, are moved into Tier 3.

Detailed information on the data sources, quality and methodology of the different indicators included in this bulletin is available in the [Coronavirus and the latest indicators of the UK economy and society methodology](#).

We will summarise any crucial updates to the quality or methodology in this section in the future.

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Detailed information on the strengths and limitations of the different indicators included in this bulletin is available in the [Coronavirus and the latest indicators of the UK economy and society methodology](#).

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9 . Related links

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) latest data and analysis](#)

Webpage | Updated as and when data become available

Latest data and analysis on the coronavirus (COVID-19) in the UK and its effect on the economy and society.

[Business insights and impacts on the UK economy: 7 January 2021](#)

Bulletin | 7 January 2021

Latest analysis on responses from the voluntary fortnightly Business insights and impacts on the UK economy survey, which captures businesses' responses on how their turnover, workforce prices, trade and business resilience have been affected.

[Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain: 18 December 2020](#)

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[Business Impact of Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Survey \(BICS\) questions](#)

Article | Last updated 29 December 2020

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