

Statistical bulletin

Coronavirus and the latest indicators for the UK economy and society: 25 March 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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Table of contents

1. [Main points](#)
2. [Latest indicators at a glance](#)
3. [UK spending on debit and credit cards](#)
4. [Shipping](#)
5. [Roads and traffic camera data](#)
6. [Business impacts and insights](#)
7. [Online job adverts](#)
8. [Company incorporations and voluntary dissolution applications](#)
9. [Social impact of the coronavirus](#)
10. [Retail footfall](#)
11. [Weekly online food and drink basket](#)
12. [Data](#)
13. [Glossary](#)
14. [Measuring the data](#)
15. [Strengths and limitations](#)
16. [Related links](#)

1 . Main points

- The aggregated Clearing House Automated Payment System (CHAPS)-based indicator of debit and credit card purchases has gradually increased by 16 percentage points since 7 January 2021, to 81% of its February 2020 average, in the week to 18 March 2021 (Bank of England's CHAPS data). See [Section 3](#).
- There was an average of 352 daily ship visits in the week ending 21 March 2021, a 21% increase from the previous week and a bounce back to similar levels seen two weeks ago (350), but 7% lower than the same period a year ago (exactEarth). See [Section 4](#).
- The volume of motor vehicle traffic on Monday 22 March 2021 increased slightly compared with the previous week to 80% of the level seen on the same day of the first week in February 2020 (Department for Transport (DfT)). See [Section 5](#).
- Average daily car traffic counts in London increased by 7% in the latest week ending 21 March 2021 to 92% of their average level before the first UK-wide lockdown; this is the highest level observed in the city since mid-December 2020 (Transport for London). See [Section 5](#).
- In the final results of Wave 26, both the proportion of the workforce of all UK businesses on furlough (19%) and the proportion of businesses that were currently trading (74%) remained unchanged from the previous wave (Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS)). See [Section 6](#).
- Total online job adverts, on 19 March 2021, were at 94% of their average level in February 2020, with slight increases across all UK regions except for Northern Ireland and London compared with a week ago (Adzuna). See [Section 7](#).
- There were 5,266 voluntary dissolution applications in the week to Friday 19 March 2021, a 14% decrease from the previous week and the lowest level seen since the week ending 22 January 2021, following a gradual upward trend in recent months (Companies House). See [Section 8](#).
- The proportion of working adults in Great Britain who travelled to work (either exclusively or in combination with working from home) in the last seven days has decreased slightly by 2 percentage points to 51% in the week ending 21 March 2021, when compared with the previous week (Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN)). See [Section 9](#).
- Overall retail footfall in the week to 20 March 2021 was unchanged from its level in the week before; retail footfall rose by 4% at high streets over the week but fell by 4% and 2% at retail parks and shopping centres respectively (Springboard). See [Section 10](#).
- The overall price of items in the online food and drink basket was unchanged in the latest week to 21 March 2021. See [Section 11](#).

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

2 . Latest indicators at a glance

Data for Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) lodgements for both existing and new dwellings are unavailable this week because of a delay with the data processing.

3 . UK spending on debit and credit cards

These data series are experimental faster indicators for estimating UK spending on credit and debit cards. They track the daily Clearing House Automated Payment System (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 accompanying [methodology article](#).

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

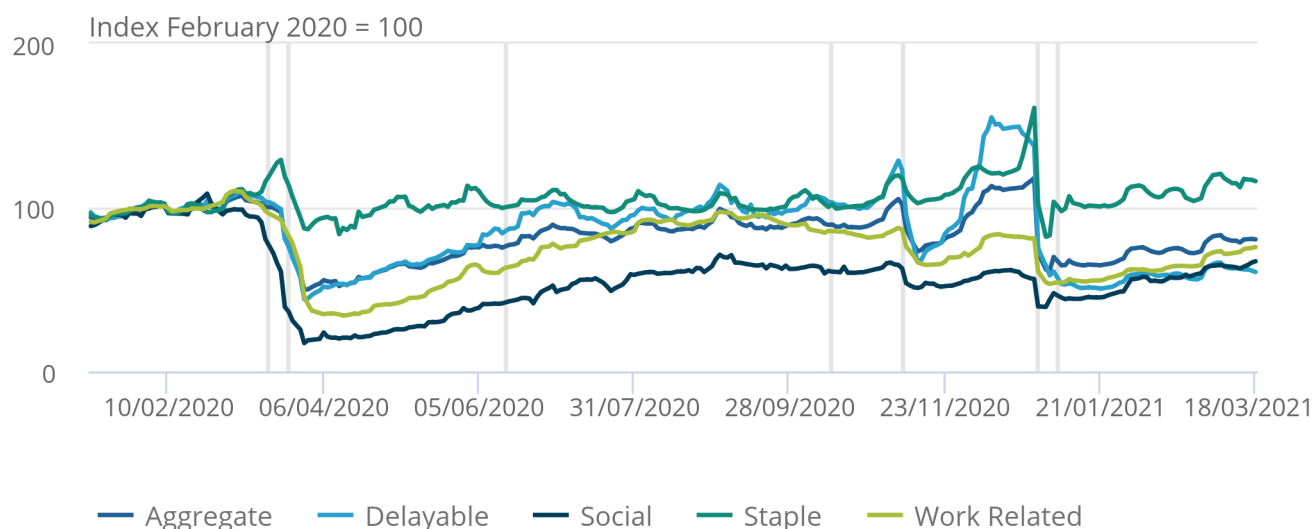
- “staples” refers to companies that sell essential goods, which households need to purchase, such as food and utilities
- “work-related” refers to companies providing public transport or selling petrol
- “delayable” refers to companies selling goods whose purchase could be delayed, such as clothing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

Figure1: The aggregate CHAPS-based indicator of debit and credit card purchases increased by 16 percentage points since 7 January 2021 to 81% of its February 2020 average in the week to 18 March 2021

Index February 2020 = 100, a backward looking seven-day rolling average, 13 January 2020 to 18 March 2021, non-seasonally adjusted, nominal prices

Figure 1: The aggregate CHAPS-based indicator of debit and credit card purchases increased by 16 percentage points since 7 January 2021 to 81% of its February 2020 average in the week to 18 March 2021

Index February 2020 = 100, a backward looking seven-day rolling average, 13 January 2020 to 18 March 2021, non-seasonally adjusted, nominal prices



Source: Office for National Statistics 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 slight time lag when compared with real-life events on the chart.
2. The vertical lines indicate key events. In order, the events are: PM COVID-19 announcement; Lockdown begins; Some non-essential shops allowed to reopen; Local COVID-19 alert levels; National restrictions begin in England; Christmas Eve; Lockdown begins in England and Scotland.
3. Percentage point difference is derived from current week and previous week index before rounding.

Figure 1 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 18 March 2021, the CHAPS-based indicator of credit and debit card purchases in aggregate increased slightly by 1 percentage point from the previous week to 81% of its February 2020 average. There was an increase in all individual consumption categories, except for “delayable”, which saw a 2 percentage point decrease from the previous week. “Social” spend saw a 4 percentage point increase from the previous week. In the latest week, card spending on “staples” was at 116% of its February 2020 average. On the other hand, “delayable”, “social” and “work-related” purchases were 61%, 67% and 76% of their levels in February 2020, respectively.

Since the substantial fall in spending at the beginning of 2021 that followed the Christmas period and introduction of national lockdowns across the UK, the CHAPS-based indicator of debit and credit card purchases has gradually increased in all four consumption categories and remains above the lowest levels observed during the spring 2020 lockdown.

The full data time series available for data on UK spending on debit and credit cards can be found in the [accompanying dataset](#).

4 . Shipping

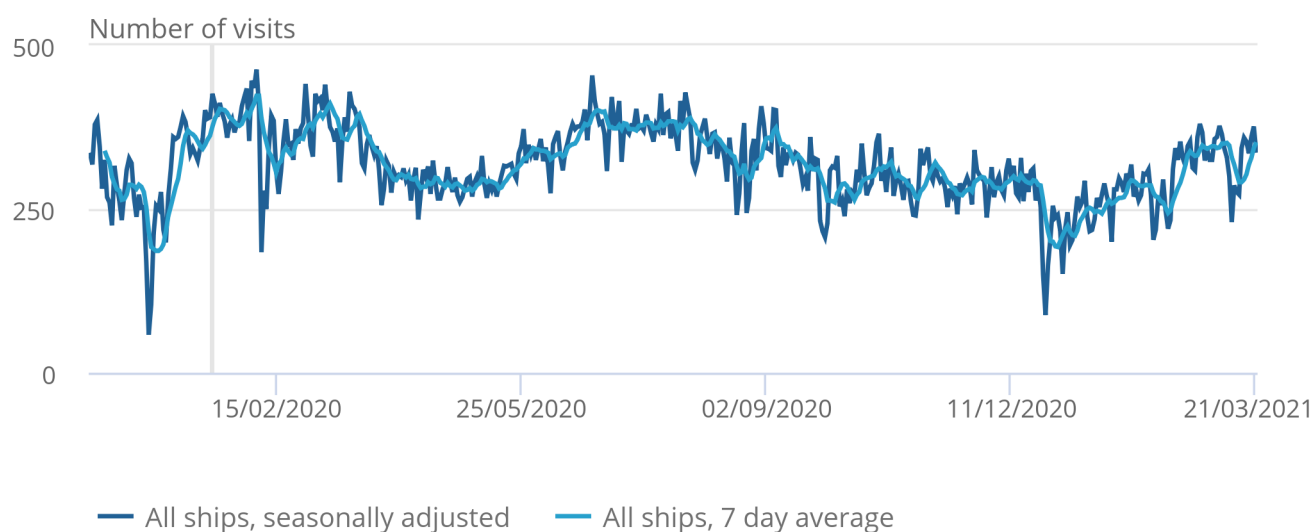
These shipping indicators are based on counts of all vessels, and cargo and tanker vessels. As discussed in [Faster indicators of UK economic activity: shipping](#), we expect the shipping indicators to be related to the import and export of goods.

Figure 2: There was an average of 352 daily ship visits in the week ending 21 March 2021, a 21% increase from the previous week but 7% lower than the same period a year ago

Daily movements in shipping visits, UK, seasonally adjusted, 1 December 2019 to 21 March 2021

Figure 2: There was an average of 352 daily ship visits in the week ending 21 March 2021, a 21% increase from the previous week but 7% lower than the same period a year ago

Daily movements in shipping visits, UK, seasonally adjusted, 1 December 2019 to 21 March 2021



Source: exactEarth

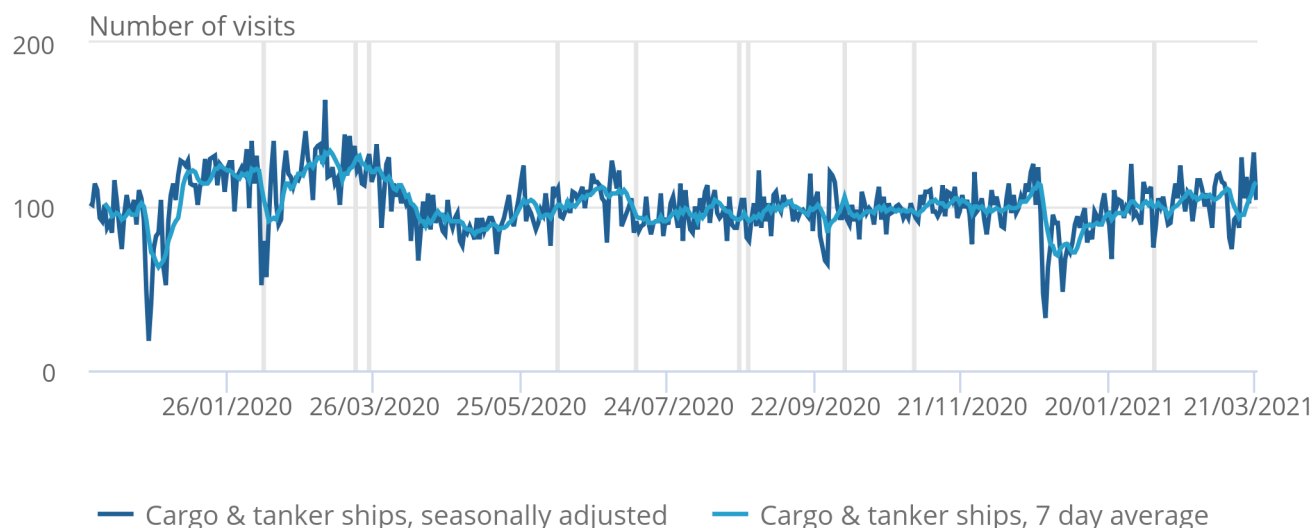
In the week ending 21 March 2021, the seven-day average of all daily ship visits was 352, a 21% increase from the 291 visits recorded the previous week and a bounce back to similar levels seen two weeks ago (350). This increase from the reduced activity in the previous week can be attributed to the strong winds on 11 March 2021 and the increased activity in numerous UK ports including Forth, Felixstowe and Liverpool in the latest week. This marks the return of a gradual upward trend seen since the beginning of the year. In the same week, the average number of daily ship visits were 7% lower than the same period a year ago, when 377 visits were recorded in the week ending 22 March 2020.

Figure 3: There was an average of 115 cargo and tanker ship visits in the week ending 21 March 2021, a 24% increase from the previous week but 9% lower than the same period a year ago

Daily movements in shipping visits, UK, seasonally adjusted, 1 December 2019 to 21 March 2021

Figure 3: There was an average of 115 cargo and tanker ship visits in the week ending 21 March 2021, a 24% increase from the previous week but 9% lower than the same period a year ago

Daily movements in shipping visits, UK, seasonally adjusted, 1 December 2019 to 21 March 2021



Source: exactEarth

Notes:

1. The vertical lines indicate key events. In order, the events are: Storm Ciara; FCO advises against all non-essential international travel; Lockdown begins; UK international travel quarantine begins; travel corridors to 59 countries come into force; Storm Ellen; Storm Francis; Storm Alex; Storm Aiden; Storm Darcy.
2. The number of visits for Hull are included in these data from 1 June 2020 onwards.
3. The seasonally adjusted estimates are produced using a modified version of the seasonal adjustment method TRAMO-SEATS. More information is available in the [Coronavirus and the latest indicators for the UK economy and society methodology](#).
4. The seasonal adjustment method may be limited as this is a short time series.
5. Daily and weekly shipping visits and unique visits are available by port in the [dataset](#), along with non-seasonally adjusted aggregate series.
6. The trend is now calculated as a rolling seven-day average of the number of daily ship and cargo and tanker ship visits. The presentation of the series has been shifted three days forward, this does not affect the calculation of the average.
7. Users should note that a reduction in shipping activity has been observed over the Christmas periods in 2019 and 2020.

In the week ending 21 March 2021, the seven-day average of all daily cargo and tanker ship visits was 115, a 24% increase from the 93 visits recorded the previous week. As observed for total ship visits, this is a bounce back to similar levels seen two weeks ago (108) following the large decrease last week, which was in part attributed to the strong winds on 11 March 2021. It also marks the return to a gradual recovery seen since the beginning of the year. In the same week, cargo and tanker visits were 9% lower than the level observed in the same period last year when 126 visits were recorded for the week ending 22 March 2020.

5 . Roads and traffic camera data

According to Department for Transport (DfT) non-seasonally adjusted road traffic data, on Monday 22 March 2021, the volume of all motor vehicle traffic saw a weekly increase of 2 percentage points to 80% of the level seen on the same day of the first week in February 2020. This is a continuation of the recent upward trend but is still 20 percentage points below the level seen on the same day in the first week of February 2020 and continues to remain below pre-Christmas levels.

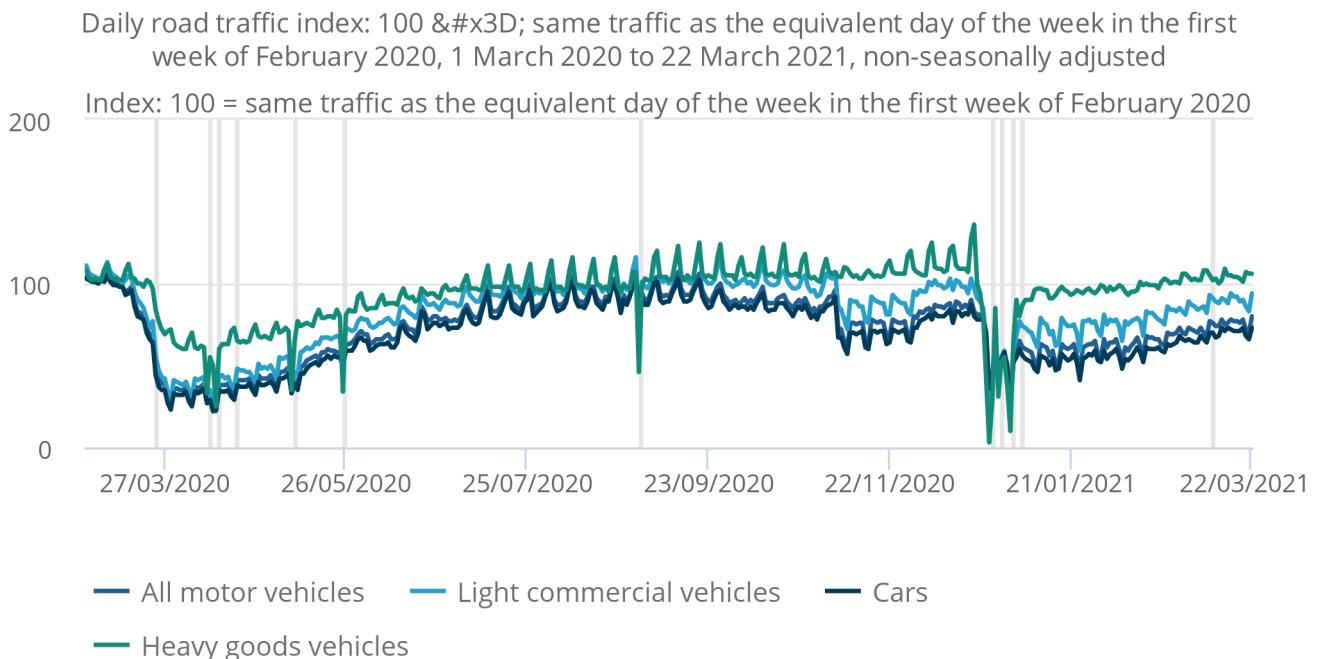
Car and heavy goods vehicle (HGV) traffic each showed slight increases of 1 percentage point on the previous week's figures to 73% and 106% of the level seen on the same day of the first week in February 2020, respectively.

Light commercial vehicle traffic remained unchanged from the previous week at 94% of the level seen on the same day of the first week in February 2020.

Figure 4: The volume of motor vehicle traffic on Monday 22 March 2021 saw a slight increase compared with the previous week, to 80% of the level seen on the same day in the first week of February 2020

Daily road traffic index: 100 = same traffic as the equivalent day of the week in the first week of February 2020, 1 March 2020 to 22 March 2021, non-seasonally adjusted

Figure 4: The volume of motor vehicle traffic on Monday 22 March 2021 saw a slight increase compared with the previous week, to 80% of the level seen on the same day in the first week of February 2020



Source: Department for Transport – Road traffic statistics: management information

Notes:

1. The vertical lines indicate key events. In order, these events are: First National lockdowns imposed; Good Friday; Easter Monday; Bank holiday; Bank holiday; National restrictions begin in England; Christmas Day; Boxing Day; New Year's Day; Lockdowns announced in England and Scotland.
2. For full details on the dates when countries/regions entered their respective tiers and restrictions refer to [Section 14: UK regional lockdown restrictions](#).

The daily DfT estimates are indexed to the first week of February 2020 and the comparison is with the same day of the week. The data provided are useful as an indication of traffic change rather than actual traffic volumes. More information on the methods, quality and economic analysis for these indicators can be found in the [DfT methodology article](#).

Traffic camera activity

Traffic cameras are a valuable source for understanding the level of activity in towns and cities as well as changing patterns of mobility. The UK has thousands of publicly accessible traffic cameras with providers ranging from national agencies to local authorities. Further information on the methodology used to produce these data is available in our [methodology article](#) and [Data Science Campus blog](#).

In the [accompanying dataset](#), the following categories are available as non-seasonally adjusted, seasonally adjusted and trend data:

- cars
- motorbikes (only available for London and the North East)
- buses
- trucks
- vans
- pedestrians and cyclists

The categories are available for the following regions, which give a broad coverage across the UK and represent a range of different-sized settlements in urban and rural settings:

- [London](#)
- [Greater Manchester](#)
- [North East](#)
- [Northern Ireland](#)
- [Southend](#)
- [Reading](#)

Figure 5: Average daily counts of car traffic in London increased by 7% to 92% of their pre-lockdown levels in the week ending 21 March 2021

Traffic camera activity in selected areas, daily counts of cars, buses, pedestrians and cyclists, UK, seasonally adjusted, March 2020 to March 2021

Notes:

1. The three regions shown here were selected to be representative of the six regions available.
2. Traffic camera images capture the appearance of buses, but they give no indication of the number of passengers using public transport.
3. Due to technical issues data for Northern Ireland on 6 March 2021 is mostly imputed.

Download the data

[.xlsx](#)

In the week ending 21 March 2021, average daily car traffic counts in London increased by 7% compared with the previous week, to 92% of the average level seen between 11 March and 22 March 2020 (before the first lockdown). This is the highest level observed in the city since mid-December 2020.

Average daily car traffic counts were broadly unchanged compared with the previous week in the North East, standing at 85% of their pre-lockdown average level. In Northern Ireland they increased 3% week-on-week.

In London, the average daily bus counts increased by 9% compared with the previous week and are now at 95% of their pre-lockdown level. In the North East, average daily bus counts decreased slightly by 2% compared with the previous week and now stand at 102% of their pre-lockdown average level. In Northern Ireland the average daily bus count decreased by 16% in the latest week.

Average daily counts of pedestrians and cyclists increased in all areas between the weeks ending 14 March and 21 March 2021. In London and the North East, average daily cyclist and pedestrian counts increased by 20% and 13% to 99% and 79% of their pre-lockdown average counts, respectively. In Northern Ireland the average daily cyclists and pedestrian counts increased by 37% in the latest week.

Caution should be taken when interpreting weekly changes for Northern Ireland because of the relatively low numbers of counts across all categories. In addition, similar pre-lockdown comparisons to that for London and the North East cannot be made for Northern Ireland as data are only available from May 2020.

6 . Business impacts and insights

Final results from Wave 26 of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) cover the reference period 22 February 2021 to 7 March 2021, with a response rate of 25.7% (10,374 responses). The survey was live for the period 8 to 21 March 2021.

These dates should be kept in mind in relation to local and national lockdown measures in place during the reference period and the date when the business responded.

For experimental single site weighted regional estimates that have been updated up to Wave 21 (29 December 2020 to 10 January 2021), please see [Understanding the business impacts of local and national restrictions: February 2021](#).

Figure 6: The proportion of the workforce of all UK businesses (excluding those permanently ceased trading) on furlough remains unchanged at 19%

Headline indicators from the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS), 22 February to 21 March 2021

Notes:

1. Final weighted results, Wave 26 of Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS).
2. Businesses were asked for their experiences for the reference period (22 February to 7 March 2021). However, for questions regarding the last two weeks (furlough estimates), businesses may respond from the point of completion of the questionnaire (8 to 21 March 2021).
3. A detailed description of the weighting methodology and the weights used for each variable is available in [Business Insights and Conditions Survey \(BICS\): preliminary weighted results](#).

Download the data

[.xlsx](#)

The final result of 19% of businesses' workforce on furlough leave through the end of February and March 2021 equates to approximately 6.1 million people. These numbers are based on multiplying the BICS-weighted furlough proportions by the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR) total annual employment. This will not be consistent with employment estimates from [Labour market statistics](#) as these are based on different sources over different time periods, but provides an indication of the use of furlough. Additionally, the BICS proportion furloughed figure does not include the public sector, financial sector and parts of agriculture.

Across all UK industries in Wave 26:

- 72% of businesses had been trading for more than the last two weeks (unchanged from Wave 25)
- 2% of businesses had started trading within the last two weeks after a pause in trading (unchanged from Wave 25)
- 4% of businesses had paused trading but intend to restart in the next two weeks (broadly unchanged from Wave 25)
- 19% of businesses had paused trading and do not intend to restart in the next two weeks (a decrease from 21% in Wave 25)
- 3% of businesses had permanently ceased trading (broadly unchanged from Wave 25)

7 . Online job adverts

The number of job adverts over time is an indicator of the demand for labour. These figures use job adverts provided by [Adzuna](#), an online job search engine, and include [experimental estimates](#) of online job adverts by Adzuna category and by UK country and [NUTS1](#) region. 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.

Methodological improvements

De-duplication

From 25 March 2021 onwards we are publishing additional indices in the [dataset accompanying this bulletin](#). These indices were generated from source data that have had a de-duplication method applied to them, removing some duplicate job adverts. More detail on this de-duplication technique can be found in [Using Adzuna data to derive an indicator of weekly vacancies](#).

Users should note that this de-duplication process has not been applied to the figures presented and analysed in this bulletin, and that indices based on de-duplicated data are available only in the accompanying dataset. Analysis of de-duplicated data within the bulletin is planned in future, after further improvements have been put in place to remove a more substantial proportion of duplicate job adverts. Indices based on de-duplicated data are clearly marked as such in the accompanying dataset.

Improved geo-location allocation

Users should note that from 18 March 2021 onwards, an improved process has been put in place to generate more accurate estimates of weekly job adverts by NUTS1 region. This change has been backdated so that it applies across the entirety of all indices, from 7 February 2020 onwards. More detail is provided in [Using Adzuna data to derive an indicator of weekly vacancies](#).

This geo-location improvement has been applied to the statistics analysed in this bulletin as well as the accompanying dataset. It has been applied to all indices in the dataset, including those based on de-duplicated data.

Job adverts by category

Figure 7: On 19 March 2021, total UK online job adverts stood at 94% of their February 2020 average level, broadly unchanged from a week ago

Index of job adverts on Adzuna by category, 100 = average job adverts in February 2020 to 19 March 2021, non-seasonally adjusted

Notes:

1. The observations were collected on a roughly weekly basis; however, before June 2020 they were not all observed at the same point in each week, leading to slightly irregular gaps between some observations.
2. Data have not been seasonally adjusted. Job adverts observed in February are generally representative of their level throughout the year.
3. These series have a small number of missing weeks in the data, the latest of which is in February 2021. Values for missing weeks have been imputed using linear interpolation. The data points that have been imputed are clearly marked in the accompanying dataset.
4. February 2020 average job adverts were calculated using an arithmetic mean of the four recorded observations that month.
5. 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](#).

Download the data

[.xlsx](#)

According to Adzuna, on 19 March 2021, total online job adverts stood at 94% of their average level in February 2020, broadly unchanged from the figure a week before. This is the highest volume of online job adverts observed since 12 March 2020, before the first national lockdown was imposed across the UK.

Excluding the “unknown” category, compared with 12 March 2021, the volume of online job adverts increased in 17 out of 28 categories, fell in five, and was unchanged in six others. The largest seven-day increases in online job adverts were in the “transport and logistics” and “construction and trades” categories, rising by 11 and 9 percentage points respectively. The largest decrease was in “healthcare and social care”, which fell by 9 percentage points over the same period.

Job adverts by region

Figure 8: The volume of online job adverts increased in all regions of the UK except Northern Ireland and London between 12 March and 19 March 2021

Index of job adverts on Adzuna by category, 100 = average job adverts in February 2020, UK, 7 February 2020 to 19 March 2021

Notes:

1. There is a level shift in the Northern Ireland series from 17 October 2019 because of a large source of Northern Ireland job adverts being removed, and another level shift from 7 August 2020 because of a new source being included.
2. Data have not been seasonally adjusted. Job adverts observed in February are generally representative of their level throughout the year.
3. These series have a small number of missing weeks in the data, the latest of which is in February 2021. Values for missing weeks have been imputed using linear interpolation. The data points that have been imputed are clearly marked in the dataset.
4. February 2020 average job adverts were calculated using an arithmetic mean of the four recorded observations that month.

Download the data

[.xlsx](#)

According to Adzuna, between 12 March and 19 March 2021, the volume of online job adverts increased in all regions of the UK except Northern Ireland, where they fell by 9 percentage points, and London, where they remained broadly unchanged.

The largest increases in online job adverts were in Scotland, the North East, Yorkshire and The Humber, the East Midlands and the West Midlands, where they all rose by two percentage points to 89%, 126%, 105%, 115%, 107% of their average February 2020 level, respectively.

The large week-on-week fall in online job adverts in Northern Ireland compared with relatively modest increases elsewhere explains why total UK job adverts on 19 March 2021 remained broadly unchanged from the week before.

On 19 March 2021, the volume of online job adverts exceeded or were equal to their average February 2020 level in 7 out of the 13 UK NUTS1 countries and regions. The recovery in online job adverts has been weakest in London, with its volume of job adverts standing at 81% of its average February 2020 level on 19 March 2021.

8 . Company incorporations and voluntary dissolution applications

Incorporations

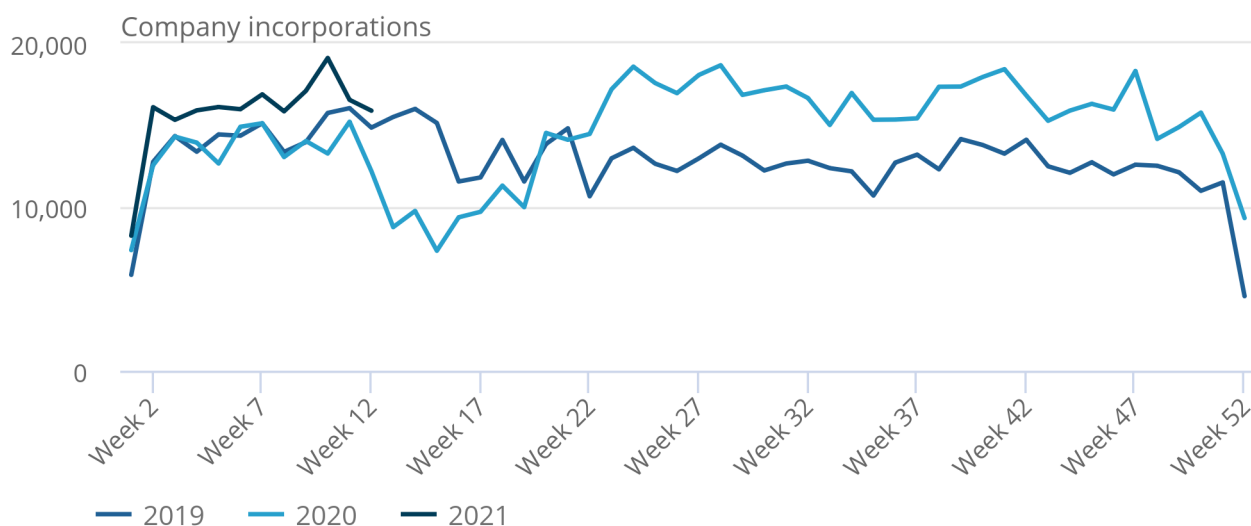
According to Companies House, in the week to Friday 19 March 2021, there were 15,885 company incorporations in the UK, a 4% decrease from the previous week. This is 7% and 30% higher than the number of company incorporations in Week 12 of 2019 and 2020 respectively. However, caution should be taken when interpreting differences between Week 12 of 2020 and 2021 as this period last year coincides with the early impacts of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in the UK. As with last week, this week's decrease is a fallback from higher levels recorded in the first week in March because of a backlog of applications.

Figure 9: There were 15,885 company incorporations in the UK in the week to 19 March 2021, a 4% decrease from the previous week

Total weekly company incorporations, UK, from week ending Friday 4 January 2019 to week ending Friday 19 March 2021

Figure 9: There were 15,885 company incorporations in the UK in the week to 19 March 2021, a 4% decrease from the previous week

Total weekly company incorporations, UK, from week ending Friday 4 January 2019 to week ending Friday 19 March 2021



Source: Companies House and Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Week 1 refers to the period week ending 4 January 2019, 3 January 2020 and 1 January 2021. Week 12 refers to the period week ending 22 March 2019, 20 March 2020 and 19 March 2021.
2. The dips in December 2019 and December 2020 are explained by two bank holidays in the week ending 27 December 2019 and 25 December 2020.
3. Weekly data are for week commencing Saturday to Friday, as incorporation requests received on Saturdays and Sundays are typically processed on subsequent weekdays. For more information, see the accompanying [Companies House methodology page](#).

Voluntary dissolution applications

In the week to Friday 19 March 2021, there were 5,266 voluntary dissolution applications in the UK according to Companies House. This is a 14% decrease from the previous week and slightly lower than the levels seen in the equivalent weeks of 2019 and 2020, by 2% and 3% respectively.

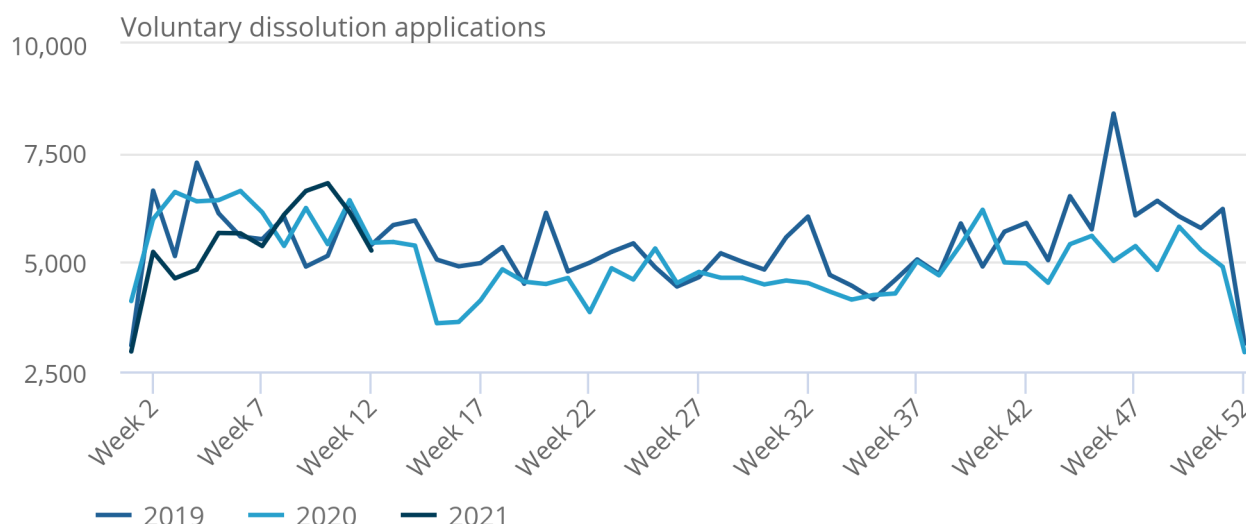
Similar to that for company incorporations, this week's decrease is a fallback from higher levels in previous weeks because of a backlog of applications and is the lowest level of voluntary dissolutions recorded since the week ending 22 January 2021.

Figure 10: In the week to Friday 19 March 2021 there were 5,266 voluntary dissolution applications, a 14% decrease from the previous week and the lowest level recorded since the week to 22 January 2021

Total weekly company voluntary dissolution applications, UK, from week ending Friday 4 January 2019 to week ending Friday 19 March 2021

Figure 10: In the week to Friday 19 March 2021 there were 5,266 voluntary dissolution applications, a 14% decrease from the previous week and the lowest level recorded since the week to 22 January 2021

Total weekly company voluntary dissolution applications, UK, from week ending Friday 4 January 2019 to week ending Friday 19 March 2021



Source: Companies House and Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Week 1 refers to the period week ending 4 January 2019, 3 January 2020 and 1 January 2021. Week12 refers to the period week ending 22 March 2019, 20 March 2020 and 19 March 2021.
2. The dips in December 2019 and December 2020 are explained by two bank holidays in the week ending 27 December 2019 and 25 December 2020.
3. Weekly data are weeks from Saturday to Friday, as voluntary dissolution requests received on Saturdays and Sundays are typically processed on subsequent weekdays. For more information, see the accompanying [Companies House methodology page](#).
4. Increased Companies House operational activity during week ending 8 November 2019 caused a spike in total weekly company voluntary dissolution applications. This data point should be treated with caution.

9 . Social impact of the coronavirus

This section includes some provisional results from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) covering the period 17 to 21 March 2021. The survey went out to 6,027 adults in Great Britain and had a response rate of 74%.

Further information to help understand the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on people, households and communities in Great Britain, will be available in [Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain published on 26 March 2021](#).

Travelling to work

In the week ending 21 March 2021, the proportion of working adults in Great Britain who in the last seven days:

- travelled to work (either exclusively or in combination with working from home) decreased slightly by 2 percentage points from the previous week to 51%
- worked exclusively from home increased slightly by 2 percentage points from the previous week to 32%
- neither travelled to work nor worked from home remained broadly unchanged from the previous week at 17%

The previous week saw relatively large changes in the proportion of working adults that travelled to work and worked exclusively from home following the re-opening of schools in England; this has since stabilised in the latest week.

Shopping

Of the 93% of adults that reported they had left home in the last seven days, the proportion that did so to shop for food and medicine remained unchanged compared with the previous week at 74%.

The proportion of these adults who shopped for things other than food and medicine in the last seven days remained unchanged compared with the previous week at 11%. The continued low level coincides with the ongoing lockdowns throughout the UK.

10 . Retail footfall

Indexing update

Users should note that the daily and weekly year-on-year indices normally presented in this bulletin compare retail footfall against its level in the same period one year prior. The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic first began to have an effect on retail footfall levels from mid-March 2020. Therefore, the most recent indices (for the week to 20 March 2021) compare footfall in the latest week against its level in an atypical period. For this reason, no analysis of year-on-year indices will be presented in this week's bulletin, although for completeness, charts showing both national and regional time-series can be found in [Section 15](#).

We are in discussion with Springboard to introduce year-on-two-year indices to allow comparison of retail footfall against its level in a corresponding normal period. We anticipate these to be introduced from early April 2021. We will continue to receive year-on-year indices from Springboard to compare retail footfall levels against their level in 2020 and will publish analysis on these on an ad-hoc basis.

National retail footfall

According to Springboard, in the week to 20 March 2021 overall retail footfall was unchanged from its level in the week before. Retail footfall increased at high streets, rising by 4% over the week but fell by 4% and 2% at retail parks and shopping centres, respectively, over the same period. Users should note that Springboard's weekly data are defined over a seven-day period running from Sunday to Saturday.

11 . Weekly online food and drink basket

A timely indication of weekly online price change for a selection of food and drink products from several large UK retailers has been developed, covering the period 1 June 2020 to 21 March 2021. Details of the methodology used for these indicators can be found in [Online price changes methodology](#). This analysis is experimental and should not be compared with our [regular monthly consumer price statistics](#).

The data time series, weekly growth rates, and contributions to the weekly change for all individual food and drink items, along with sample sizes, are published in a [dataset](#) alongside this release.

As mentioned in last week's [18 March 2021 publication](#), a data processing error for the Ready meal index series is present in the dataset. This will be rectified in the coming weeks as part of a larger methodological update to [introduce new items for the 2021 basket](#) in line with the headline CPIH.

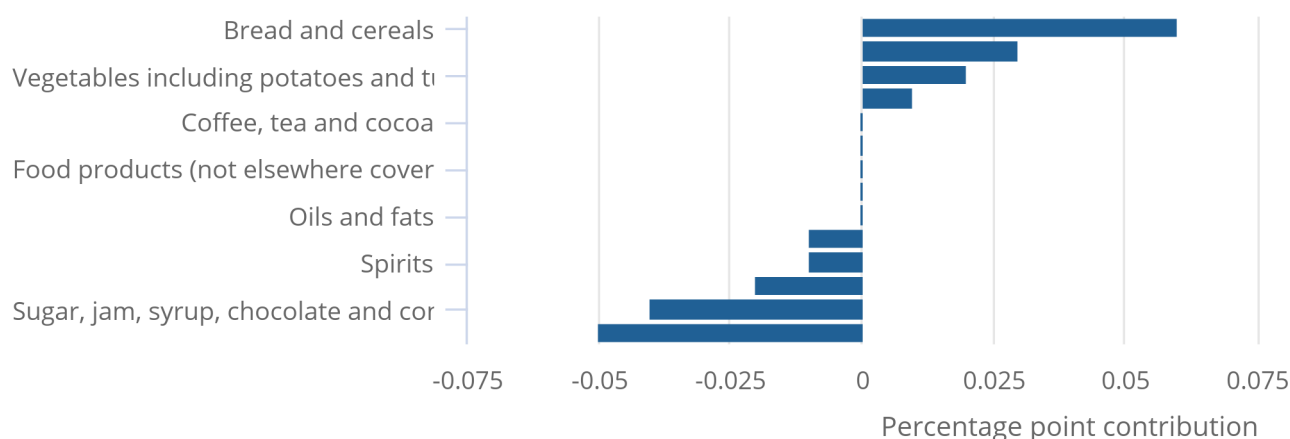
Ready meals make up a small proportion of the basket by weight (0.7%) and the category to which it belongs, "food products, not elsewhere covered" consistently provides one of the smaller contributions to the overall weekly change, so the impact of this error on the headline series will be minimal. Data will be revised back to January 2021 to incorporate these changes. Further details of this update will be provided in this publication and the associated methodology note on the week of its implementation.

Figure 11: The overall price of items in the online food and drink basket was unchanged in the latest week

Percentage point contributions to online price changes for food and drink, UK, between the week ending 14 March 2021 and the week ending 21 March 2021

Figure 11: The overall price of items in the online food and drink basket was unchanged in the latest week

Percentage point contributions to online price changes for food and drink, UK, between the week ending 14 March 2021 and the week ending 21 March 2021



Source: Office for National Statistics - Online price collection

Notes:

- Contributions may not always sum to the weekly change, as a result of rounding.

The overall price of items in the online food and drink basket was unchanged between the week ending 21 March 2021 and the previous week, with five categories providing negative contributions to the overall price movement, four providing positive contributions and five making negligible contributions to the overall movement.

The largest upward contributor to the overall price movement in the latest week was “bread and cereals”, which contributed positive 0.06 percentage points and experienced a 0.4% price rise. As in previous weeks, the rising price of breakfast cereals was the main driver behind this category’s price rise. The price of breakfast cereals increased at two retailers.

The main downward contributor was “wine”, which contributed negative 0.05 percentage points towards the overall price movement. The price of wine has fallen by 0.7% in the latest week because of the falling prices of red wine and white wine across several retailers.

The second largest downward contribution came from “sugar, jam, chocolate, syrup and confectionery”. This category contributed negative 0.04 percentage points and experienced a price fall of 0.5% in the latest week; this was predominantly because of falling prices for chocolate at one retailer.

12 . Data

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

Dataset | Released 25 March 2021

These data series are experimental faster indicators for monitoring UK retail purchases derived from the Bank of England's Clearing House Automated Payment System (CHAPS) data.

[Weekly and daily shipping indicators](#)

Dataset | Released 25 March 2021

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

[Traffic camera activity](#)

Dataset | Released 25 March 2021

Experimental dataset for busyness indices covering the UK

[Online weekly price changes](#)

Dataset | Released 25 March 2021

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 shed light on changes in prices at online retailers faced by consumers.

[Online job advert estimates](#)

Dataset | Released 25 March 2021

Experimental job advert indices covering the UK job market.

[Company incorporations and voluntary dissolutions](#)

Dataset | Released 25 March 2021

Weekly dataset showing the number of Companies House Incorporations and Voluntary Dissolution applications accepted.

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

Dataset | Released 25 March 2021

Responses from the voluntary fortnightly Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS), which captures businesses responses on how their turnover, workforce prices, trade and business resilience have been affected in the reference period.

13 . 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.

14 . Measuring the data

End of EU Exit Transition period

As the UK enters into a new Trade and Cooperation Agreement with the EU, the UK statistical system will continue to produce and publish our wide range of economic and social statistics and analysis. We are committed to continued alignment with the highest international statistical standards, enabling comparability both over time and internationally, and ensuring the general public, statistical users and decision makers have the data they need to be informed.

UK regional lockdown restrictions

The following is a summary of coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions in each of the four UK constituent countries between Monday 15 March and Monday 22 March 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](#).

Restrictions as of Monday 15 March 2021

Scotland

- All of mainland Scotland and the Western Isles are under lockdown restrictions; Orkney and the Shetland Islands are under Level 3 restrictions.
- Since 12 March 2021 four people from two households have been allowed to meet outdoors.
- All arrivals from outside of the Common Travel Area (UK and Ireland) must self-isolate for 10 days at a managed quarantine hotel.
- Students returned to schools on a part-time basis on 15 March 2021.

Wales

- All of Wales is under “stay local” rules after national lockdown restrictions were eased on 13 March 2021.
- Travellers who have been in a [red list country](#) in the last 10 days are not allowed into Wales and must self-isolate for 10 days in a managed quarantine hotel in either England or Scotland.
- Arrivals from other countries not on the red list must self-isolate for 10 days and undertake testing.

England

- England is under a full national lockdown.
- UK and Irish nationals arriving from [red-list countries](#) must quarantine at hotels selected by the government. With some exceptions, non-UK and non-Irish nationals are not permitted to travel to the UK from red list countries.
- Arrivals from other countries must self-isolate at home for 10 days and are required to present evidence of a negative COVID test before boarding planes.
- Schools and colleges are open to all students.

Northern Ireland

- Northern Ireland is under a full national lockdown.
- Arrivals from other countries outside of the Common Travel Area must self-isolate at home for 10 days and are required to present evidence of a negative COVID test before boarding planes.

22 March 2021

Wales

- Garden centres are allowed to open and supermarkets can again sell non-essential items.

Northern Ireland

- Primary schools reopen for face-to-face learning.

15 . Strengths and limitations

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](#). We will summarise any crucial updates or warnings in this section in the future.

Retail footfall

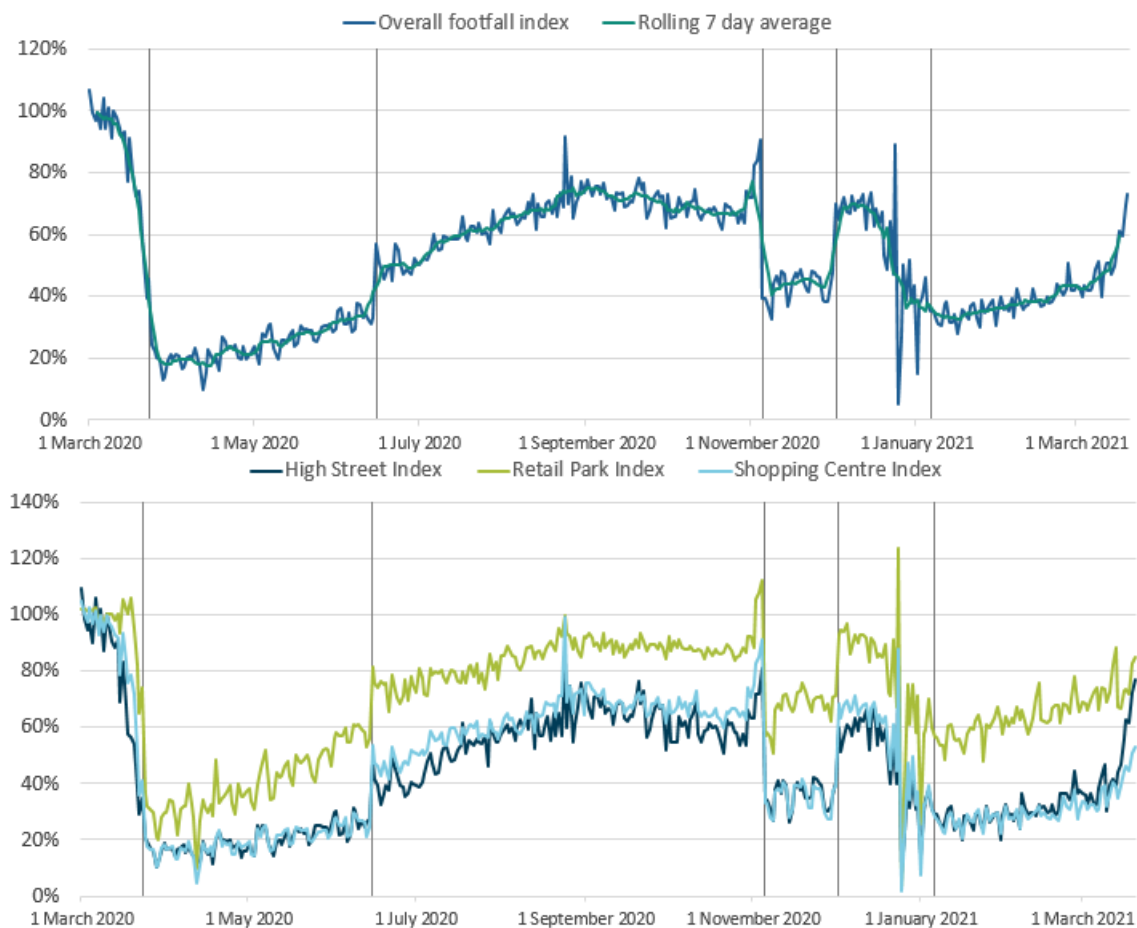
Charts for year-on-year daily national and regional retail footfall indices are shown in this section for completeness. Users should note that the most recent indices (for the week to 20 March 2021) compare footfall in the latest week against its level in an atypical period; they should therefore be interpreted with caution.

National retail footfall

Daily national footfall figures are supplied by [Springboard](#), a provider of data on customer activity. They measure daily footfall as a percentage of its level on the same day of the equivalent week of the previous year for overall UK retail, as well as by high street, retail park, and shopping centre categories. For example, Saturday 20 March 2021 is compared with Saturday 14 March 2020.

Figure 12: Overall retail footfall volumes remain substantially below their pre-pandemic levels

Volume of retail footfall, percentage compared with the same day of the equivalent week of the previous year, UK, 1 March 2020 to 20 March 2021



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

Notes:

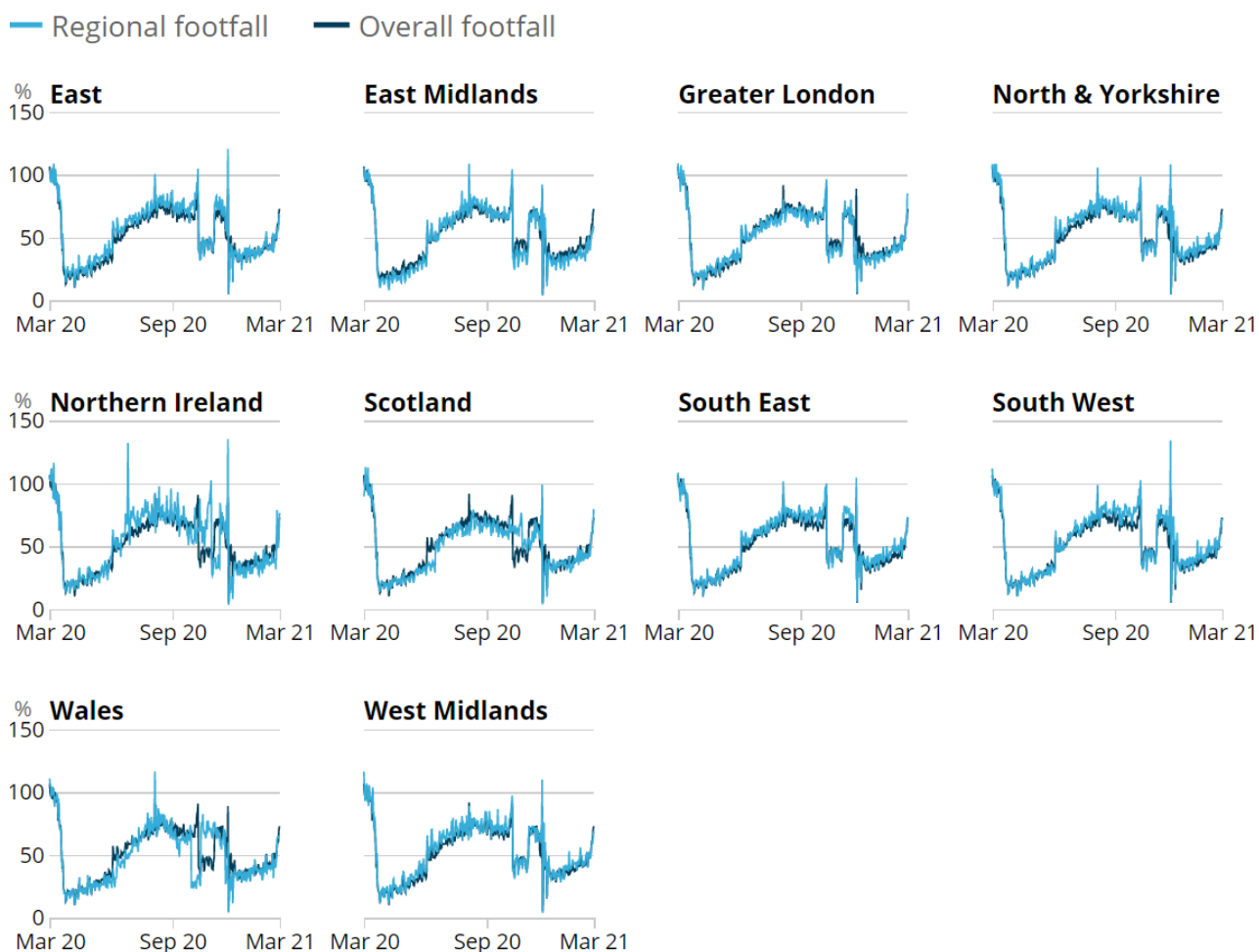
1. The vertical lines indicate key events. In order, the events are: First National lockdowns imposed; Lockdown restrictions begin to ease across the UK; Circuit-breaker lockdown in England; Regional restrictions begin in England; National lockdown begins in England.
2. The spike on Monday 24 August 2020 was caused by the comparison with 26 August 2019, which was bank holiday Monday with good weather. The bank holiday this year was a week later, on 31 August 2020.
3. The spikes on 23 December and 30 December 2020 are because of the year-on-year comparison with 25 December 2019 and 1 January 2020 respectively, which were bank holidays.
4. The rise in the value of the indices from mid-March onwards was caused by comparing footfall in 2021 against its level in a period of 2020 after which the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic had begun to have an impact. As such users should interpret them with caution.

Regional retail footfall

Regional footfall figures are also supplied by Springboard and show the volume of overall retail footfall compared with the same day of the equivalent week of the previous year, by UK region.

Figure 13: Retail footfall volumes in all areas of the UK remain substantially below their pre-pandemic levels

Volume of overall daily retail footfall, percentage of the level recorded on the same day of the equivalent week of the previous year, UK regions, 1 March 2020 to 20 March 2021



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

Notes:

1. The rise in the value of the indices from mid-March onwards was caused by comparing footfall in 2021 against its level in a period of 2020 after which the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic had begun to have an effect. As such values from this point onwards should be treated with caution.

16 . 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: 25 March 2021](#)

Bulletin | 25 March 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: 19 March 2021](#)

Bulletin | 19 March 2021

Latest indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey to understand the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on people, households and communities in Great Britain.

[Business insights and conditions Survey \(BICS\) questions](#)

Article | Last updated 8 March 2021

Latest questions from the Business Impact of COVID-19 Survey relating to the Coronavirus and the latest indicators for the UK economy and society bulletin.

[Deaths registered weekly in England and Wales, provisional: week ending 12 March 2021](#)

Bulletin | Released 23 March 2021

Provisional counts of the number of deaths registered in England and Wales, including deaths involving COVID-19, by age, sex and region, in the latest weeks for which data are available.

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Infection Survey UK: 19 March 2021](#)

Bulletin | Released 19 March 2021

Initial data from the COVID-19 Infection Survey. This survey is being delivered in partnership with IQVIA, Oxford University and UK Biocentre.