

Statistical bulletin

Coronavirus and the latest indicators for the UK economy and society: 6 May 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:
6 May 2021

Next release:
13 May 2021

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1 . Main points

- This week's bulletin is reduced because of the Early May Bank Holiday. Datasets are still available and content will be included as normal from next week's release (13 May 2021).
- From next week onwards, the title of this release will change to "Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators". This reflects our commitment to provide ongoing experimental faster indicators on the economy and society, not only in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19).
- Estimates of online job adverts provided by Adzuna are not available for this week's bulletin. Data covering the period 24 to 30 April 2021 will be provided in a future bulletin.

Seated diner reservations

Estimates for UK seated diner reservations on Saturday 1 May 2021 were at 71% of the level seen on the same Saturday of 2019, up 9 percentage points from the equivalent figure in the previous week. This follows the reopening of restaurants, cafés and bars in Scotland and Wales on 26 April 2021, and Northern Ireland on 30 April 2021.

Estimates for Manchester and London on Saturday 1 May 2021 had increased by 7 and 2 percentage points from the previous week to 90% and 43% of the levels seen on the equivalent Saturday of 2019, respectively. These slight increases follow the notable rise in estimates seen for Manchester and London since outdoor dining re-opened in England on 12 April 2021 (OpenTable).

UK spending on debit and credit cards

In the week to 29 April 2021, the CHAPS-based indicator of credit and debit card purchases in aggregate remained broadly unchanged from the previous week at 99% of its February 2020 average. "Delayable" spending fell by 5 percentage points over the week (its first decline since the reopening of non-essential retail stores in England on 12 April 2021). However, "work-related", "social" and "staples" consumption all increased, by 3, 3, and 4 percentage points, respectively.

In the latest week, both "staples" and "delayable" spending were above their February 2020 average level at 115% and 106% respectively. "Social" and "work-related" spending were at 74% and 99% of their average levels in February 2020, respectively (Bank of England's Clearing House Automated Payment System (CHAPS) data).

Business impacts and insights

The percentage of businesses currently trading has increased from 77% in early April to 83% in late April 2021. This is now at a similar level to that seen in mid-December 2020 (Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS)).

Final data for Wave 29 of the BICS can be found at [Business insights and impacts on the UK economy: 6 May 2021](#).

Further information can also be found in the [Business insights and impact on the UK economy](#) dataset.

Retail footfall

In the week to 1 May 2021, UK retail footfall saw a slight weekly decrease of 2% but remained much stronger than the levels seen earlier in the year, at 74% of its level in the equivalent week of 2019. The recent rise in retail footfall follows the easing of lockdown restrictions in England on 12 April 2021, and in the other UK countries since. Footfall as a proportion of its level in the equivalent week of 2019 remained strongest at retail parks, standing at 97%; the equivalent figures for shopping centres and high streets were 70% and 65%, respectively.

In the week to 1 May 2021, all UK regions also saw week-on-week decreases in retail footfall, except for Scotland and Northern Ireland, which saw substantial weekly increases of 75% and 46%, respectively. These increases coincide with the easing of lockdown restrictions in the two countries on 26 April and 30 April 2021, respectively. Greater London, South West England and the North and Yorkshire saw the largest week-on-week decreases by 6% (Springboard).

Social impact of the coronavirus

In the period ending 3 May 2021, the proportion of working adults that had travelled to work (both exclusively and in combination with working from home) in the last seven days was 60%. This proportion has been gradually increasing since mid-February (44% in the period 10 to 14 February 2021).

Of the 95% of adults who reported that they had left their home in the last seven days, the proportion that did so to shop for things other than food or medicine remained unchanged from the previous week at 28% (Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN)).

These are provisional results covering the period 28 April to 3 May 2021. Users should note that field work was extended by one day from 2 May 2021 because of the bank holiday weekend. 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 due to be published 7 May 2021](#).

Road traffic in Great Britain

On Monday 3 May 2021, the proportion of all motor vehicle traffic was 68% of the volume seen on the first Monday of February 2020. This is a decrease of 26 percentage points from the previous week. Note that Monday 3 May 2021 was the Early May Bank Holiday and that a decrease in the volume of road traffic on this day is consistent with previous bank holidays (Department for Transport (DfT)).

Traffic camera activity

In the week ending 2 May 2021, average daily traffic camera activity in London for buses, pedestrians and cyclists, and cars all increased from the previous week, by 5%, 9% and 2%, respectively. They rose to 99%, 123% and 118% of their respective average levels in the week immediately prior to the March 2020 lockdown (week ending 22 March 2020) (Transport for London).

Ship visits

There was an average of 358 daily ship visits in the week to 2 May 2021. This is a decrease of 2% from the previous week (366), but broadly similar to the average level seen in the equivalent week of 2019 (355).

In the same week, the average number of daily cargo and tanker ship visits also decreased, by 2%, from the previous week to 106 visits. This is 9% higher than the equivalent week of 2019 (97) (exactEarth).

Users should note that comparisons with the equivalent week in 2019 are referring to the week commencing 22 April 2019. This is the same week that Storm Hannah took place, which is likely to have had an impact on the number of ship visits that week, so data should be interpreted with caution.

Company incorporations and voluntary dissolution applications

There were 15,476 company incorporations in the week to 30 April 2021, an 8% increase on the previous week (14,292) and 10% higher than the equivalent week of 2019 (14,097).

In the same week, there were 6,976 voluntary dissolution applications, a 23% increase on the previous week (5,676) and 31% higher than the equivalent week of 2019 (5,343). The large weekly increase can in part be attributed to a backlog of applications that were processed in the week ending 30 April 2021 (Companies House).

Experimental quarterly statistics on business births and deaths from the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR) were published this week. Further information can be found at [Business demography, quarterly experimental statistics, UK: January to March 2021](#).

Weekly online food and drink basket

The overall price of items in the online food and drink basket remained unchanged in the week ending 2 May 2021. The main downward contribution came from "bread and cereals", but this was offset by small price increases across several categories in the latest week (online price collection).

2 . Latest indicators at a glance

Notes:

1. Users should note that the latest CHAPS data estimates are provisional. This is to allow a three working day lag to capture any retailers that are no longer receiving daily payments from their merchant acquirer via CHAPS before removing the retailer from the sample, and these days have not elapsed yet because of the bank holiday. Therefore, the provisional estimates for the latest week may be subject to revision in the publication next week. For more information see the [methodology article](#).

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 . Data

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

Dataset | Released 6 May 2021

Experimental indicator for monitoring UK retail purchases derived from the Bank of England's Clearing House Automated Payment System (CHAPS) data.

[Shipping indicators](#)

Dataset | Released 6 May 2021

Experimental weekly and daily ship visits dataset covering UK ports.

[Traffic camera activity](#)

Dataset | Released 6 May 2021

Experimental daily traffic camera counts data for busyness indices covering the UK.

[Company Incorporations and Voluntary Dissolutions](#)

Dataset | Released 6 May 2021

The number of weekly Companies House Incorporations and Voluntary Dissolution applications accepted.

[Online weekly price changes](#)

Dataset | Released 6 May 2021

Experimental estimates of online price changes for a selection of food and drink products from several large UK retailers.

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

Dataset | Released 6 May 2021

Responses from the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS).

4 . Glossary

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.

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.

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.

5 . Measuring the data

UK Coronavirus Restrictions

A full overview of coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions for each of the four UK constituent countries is available:

- [England](#)
- [Scotland](#)
- [Wales](#)
- [Northern Ireland](#)

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

6 . Strengths and limitations

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

7 . Related Links

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

Webpage | Updated as and when data become available

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

[Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain: 30 April 2021](#)

Bulletin | Released 30 April 2021

Latest indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey.

[Deaths registered weekly in England and Wales, provisional: week ending 23 April 2021](#)

Bulletin | Released 5 May 2021

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

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Infection Survey, UK: 30 April 2021](#)

Bulletin | Released 30 April 2021

Initial data from the COVID-19 Infection Survey (delivered in partnership with IQVIA, Oxford University and UK Biocentre).