Statistical bulletin

Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators: 28 October 2021

Early data and analysis for UK economy and society. Includes activity and change in business, spending, travel and jobs using rapid-response surveys, novel data sources and experimental methods.

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1 . Main points

- Average counts of all vehicles on the strategic roads network around English ports increased in August 2021, reaching the highest level since February 2020; the only month-on-month decrease this year occurred in July 2021, down 5 percentage points from the previous month (Highways England). See the accompanying dataset.

- Transactions at Pret A Manger stores in the week ending 21 October 2021 remained lowest in London airports and London city stores at 83% and 84% of the January 2020 average, respectively (Pret A Manger). Section 3.

- 11% of UK businesses not permanently stopped trading reported that production and/or suppliers were affected by the recent increases in wholesale gas prices; within "accommodation and food service activities" 36% were affected (initial results from Wave 42 of Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS)). Section 4.

- The system average price (SAP) of gas decreased by 2% in the week to 24 October 2021; this was the first time there were two consecutive weekly declines since 28 February 2021 (National Grid). See the accompanying dataset.

- There was an average of 283 daily ship visits in the week to 24 October 2021, a 2% fall from the previous week; the average number of daily cargo and tanker ship visits fell by 5% to 89 (exactEarth). See the accompanying dataset.

- The seven-day average number of UK daily flights was 3,654 in the week ending 24 October 2021; this was 59% and 166% of the level seen in the equivalent week of 2019 and 2020, respectively (EUROCONTROL). See the accompanying dataset.

- The seasonally adjusted average count of traffic camera activity in London had decreased for all vehicle types in the week ending 24 October 2021; when compared with the previous week, cars, vans and trucks fell by 5%, 5% and 3%, respectively (Transport for London). See the accompanying dataset.

- The volume of motor vehicle traffic on 25 October 2021 was at 96% of its level in the first week of February 2020, unchanged from the previous week (Department for Transport).

- The total volume of online job adverts on 22 October 2021 decreased by 6% from the previous week, to 134% of its February 2020 average level; the highest level of job adverts relative to February 2020 continues to be in the "transport, logistics and warehouse" category, at 390% (Adzuna). See the accompanying dataset.

- In the week to 21 October 2021, the aggregate CHAPS-based indicator of credit and debit card purchases was broadly unchanged from the previous week, at 97% of its February 2020 average. There was a decrease in the "social" spending category by 2 percentage points, and an increase in the "delayable" category by 1 percentage point; spending categories "staple" and "work related" were both broadly unchanged. (Bank of England CHAPS data). See the accompanying dataset.

- In the week to 23 October 2021, overall retail footfall in the UK decreased by 2% from the previous week and was at 85% of the level seen in the equivalent week of 2019; this was wholly driven by a 4% decrease in high street footfall (Springboard).

- The seven-day average estimate of UK seated diners in the week to 25 October 2021 was 123% of the level in the equivalent went of 2019, an increase of 3% from the previous week (OpenTable).

- There were 16,574 company incorporations in the week to 22 October 2021, an increase of 17% from the previous week and 33% higher than the equivalent week of 2019 (12,487) (Companies House). See the accompanying dataset.

- There were 5,764 voluntary dissolution applications (an application from a company to dissolve) in the week to 22 October 2021, a decrease of 14% from the previous week but 14% higher than the equivalent week of 2019 (5,045) (Companies House). See the accompanying dataset.

- There were 6,178 compulsory dissolution first gazettes (a notice issued by Companies House indicating their intention to remove a company from the register) in the week to 19 October 2021 (Companies House). See the accompanying dataset.

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

2 . Latest indicators at a glance

Notes:

1. Users should note that the break in the available shipping data (from 14 to 19 June 2021) is when the data collection system changed.

3 . Transactions at Pret A Manger

Pret A Manger are a sandwich and coffee shop franchise chain, operating around 400 stores across the UK. Their transactional data are presented as an index and show total weekly till transactions at Pret A Manger shops as a proportion of their average weekly level in the first four weeks of 2020 (between Friday 3 January and Thursday 30 January 2020). Because of this comparison across the time series, users should expect an element of seasonality in the data.

More information on the areas featured is available in the Measuring the data section. These data are also made available every Tuesday via Bloomberg.

Figure 1: Transactions at Pret A Manger stores in the week ending 21 October 2021 remained lowest in London city stores at 84% of the January 2020 average

Transactions in stores, index: 100 = January 2020 average, week ending 4 March 2021 to 14 October 2021, non-seasonally adjusted

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100 = January 2020 average

Legend: Yorkshire, London: Suburban, Manchester, London: West End, Regional Towns, Scotland, London: City Worker

Source: Pret A Manger

Notes:

1. Dine in services in England were suspended during the third national lockdown remaining in place until Step 3 (17 May 2021) of England's roadmap out of lockdown.

2. Users should note not all store locations reopened as COVID-19 restrictions were eased.

3. The index begins on 4 March 2021 as most stores were closed prior to this therefore the corresponding indices were mostly zero.

In the week ending 21 October 2021, transactions at Pret A Manger stores in Scotland increased by 5 percentage points compared with the previous week. In the same period, stores in Manchester, the West End of London and regional towns saw weekly falls of 6, 3 and 3 percentage points, respectively.

In the latest week, the level of transactions at Pret A Manger stores was highest in Yorkshire and London suburbs, at 149% and 131% of the weekly average level in January 2020, respectively.

Figure 2: Transactions at Pret A Manger stores in London airports increased by 8 percentage points in the week to 21 October to 83% of the January 2020 average

Transactions in stores, index: 100 = January 2020 average, week ending 4 March 2021 to 14 October 2021, non-seasonally adjusted

Figure 2: Transactions at Pret A Manger stores in London airports increased by 8 percentage points in the week to 21 October to 83% of the January 2020 average

Transactions in stores, index: 100 = January 2020 average, week ending 4 March 2021 to 14 October 2021, non-seasonally adjusted
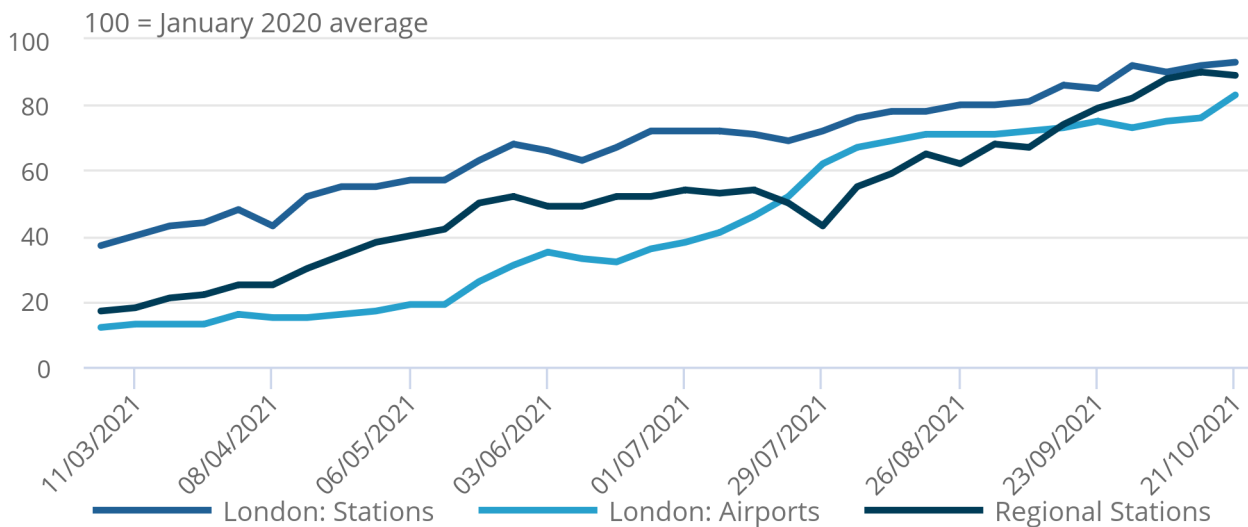
Source: Pret A Manger

The week ending 21 October 2021 saw the highest levels of transactions in both London airports and London stations since the index began. However, transactions in all transport-related stores remain below the January 2020 average level.

4 . Business impacts and insights

Initial results from Wave 42 of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) cover the reference period 4 to 17 October 2021, with a response rate of 19.5% (7,460 responses). The survey was live for the period 18 to 26 October 2021.

Table 1: Of UK businesses not permanently stopped trading, 11% reported that production, and or, suppliers were affected by the recent increases in wholesale gas prices
Effects from recent increases in wholesale gas prices, businesses not permanently stopped trading, weighted by count, UK, 18 October to 26 October 2021

	Yes, production was affected	Yes, suppliers were affected	Yes, both production and suppliers were affected	No, my business was not affected	Not sure	Not applicable
Manufacturing	5%	8%	8%	41%	25%	14%
Construction	Less than 1%	5%	8%	29%	23%	34%
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	1%	9%	3%	41%	23%	24%
Accommodation and food service activities	8%	14%	14%	23%	26%	15%
Information and communication	Less than 1%	2%	1%	29%	10%	57%
Professional, scientific and technical activities	Less than 1%	2%	Less than 1%	34%	11%	52%
Administrative and support service activities	2%	3%	1%	31%	13%	49%
All Industries	2%	6%	4%	33%	17%	39%

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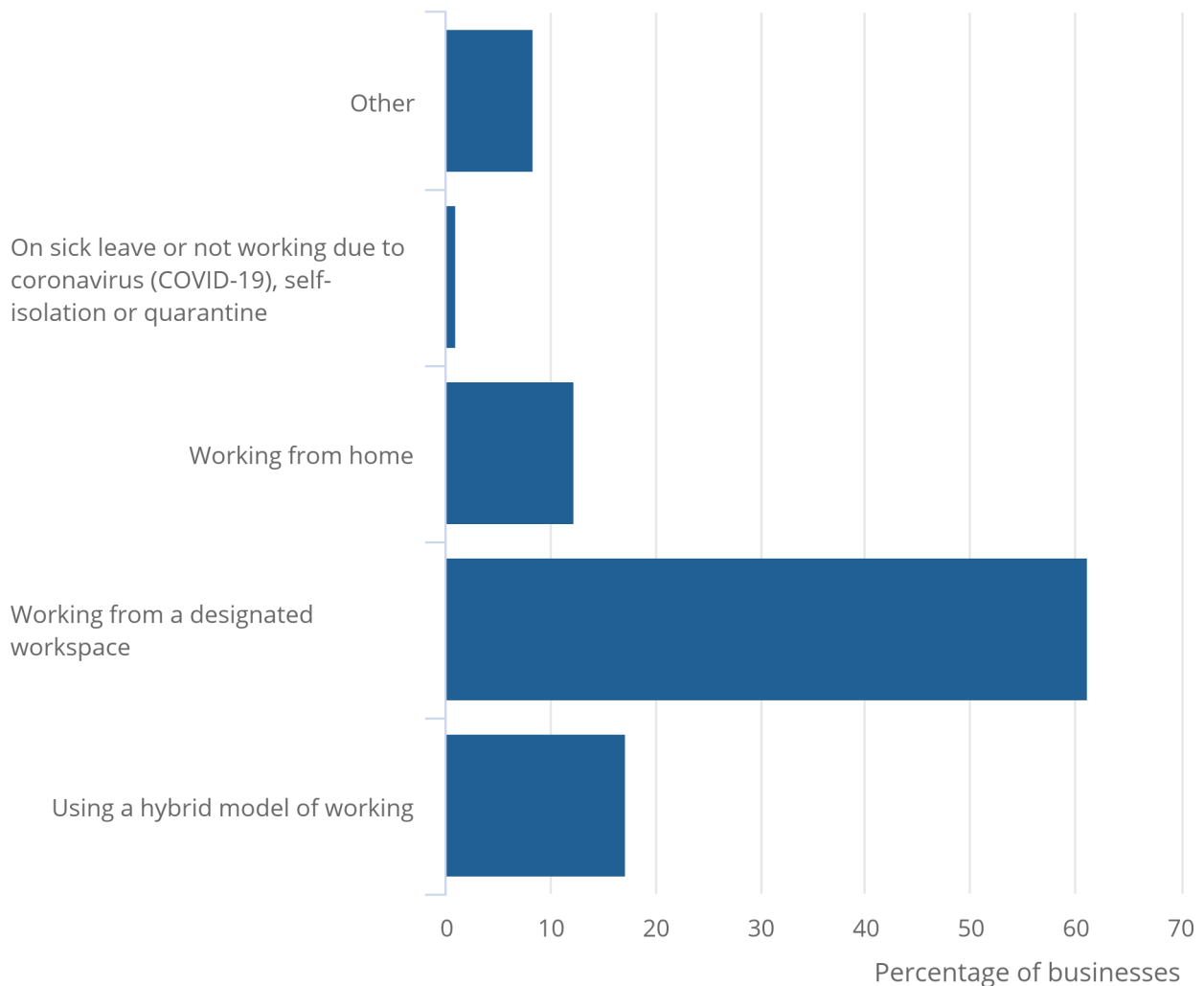
Notes

1. Initial weighted results, Wave 42 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') BICS.

2. Rows may not sum to 100% because of rounding and percentages less than 1% being removed for disclosure purposes.

3. Caution should be taken when interpreting these results as they are based on initial results and are still subject to revisions while the Wave is live.

4. "All Industries" includes all industries which are sampled in BICS, not the total of industries in the table.

Figure 3: UK businesses not permanently stopped trading reported that 12% of their workforce were working from home in early October 2021

Working arrangements, businesses not permanently stopped trading, weighted by employment, UK, 4 October to 17 October 2021

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

Notes:

1. Initial weighted results, Wave 42 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') BICS.

2. Bars may not sum to 100% because of rounding and percentages less than 1% being removed for disclosure purposes.

3. Response option "made permanently redundant" has been removed for disclosure purposes.

4. Businesses were asked for their experiences for the reference period 4 October to 17 October 2021. However, for questions regarding the last two weeks, businesses may respond from the point of completion of the questionnaire (18 October to 26 October 2021).

5 . Data

UK spending on credit and debit cards
Dataset | Released 28 October 2021
Experimental indicator for monitoring UK retail purchases derived from the Bank of England's CHAPS data.

Weekly shipping indicators
Dataset | Released 28 October 2021
Experimental weekly and daily ship visits dataset covering UK ports.

Traffic camera activity
Dataset | Released 28 October 2021
Experimental daily traffic camera counts data for busyness indices covering the UK.

Online job advert estimates
Dataset | Released 28 October 2021
Experimental job advert indices covering the UK online job market.

Company incorporations, voluntary dissolutions and compulsory dissolutions
Dataset | Released 28 October 2021
The number of weekly Companies House compulsory dissolutions issued, voluntary dissolution applications accepted and incorporations added to the register.

Daily UK flights
Dataset | Released 28 October 2021
Experimental daily UK flight numbers and rolling seven-day average, including flights to, from, and within the UK.

System Average Price (SAP) of gas
Dataset | Released 28 October 2021
Daily and rolling average System Average Price (SAP) of gas traded in the UK.

Vehicle flows around ports
Dataset | Released 28 October 2021
Monthly data showing vehicle flows around major ports in England. Contains average 15-minute sensor counts by size of vehicle, and average speeds.

6 . 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, when 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 choose 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.

Compulsory dissolutions

When a company fails to file the required financial accounts and/or confirmation statements, if no contact is received by Companies House following a series of letters to the company and its officers, a first gazette notice is published in the Gazette, a notice of the Registrar's intention to dissolve the company.

7 . Measuring the data

UK coronavirus restrictions

A full overview of coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions for each of the four UK constituent countries can be found here:

- England

- Scotland

- Wales

- Northern Ireland

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

Pret A Manger index

The index shows total weekly till transactions at Pret A Manger stores as a proportion of the companies' average weekly level in the first four weeks of 2020 (between 3 January 2020 and 30 January 2020).

These data are delivered weekly from Friday to Thursday in a week-ending format.

The index is broken down by region:

- Yorkshire

- London: suburban (stores within Greater London but outside zones 1 & 2)

- London: city (Key Office Areas)

- London: West End (Key Retail Areas)

- London: airports (4 Major Airports in London)

- London: stations (3 Large Train Stations in London)

- Manchester

- Scotland

- regional towns (stores in towns not included in this index)

- regional stations (stores in stations in towns not included in this index)

These regions have been selected because in some areas of the UK there are limited numbers of Pret A Manger stores. For example, at the time of index creation, there were two stores open in Leeds and two in York, leading to these being grouped together as "Yorkshire".

Wales is omitted from the index as it has only two stores, and regional towns includes shops in towns other than those listed.

8 . 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.

9 . 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
Bulletin | Released 22 October 2021
Latest indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey.

Deaths registered weekly in England and Wales, provisional
Bulletin | Released 26 October 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
Bulletin | Released 22 October 2021
Initial data from the COVID-19 Infection Survey (delivered in partnership with IQVIA, the University of Oxford and Lighthouse laboratories).