Statistical bulletin

Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators: 6 January 2022

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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Notice

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Estimates for transactions at Pret A Manger stores were unavailable at the time of publication. Estimates for compulsory dissolutions were also unavailable, however, incorporations and voluntary dissolution applications from Companies House are in the accompanying dataset. Data for road traffic in Great Britain are available on the Department for Transport website. Data for the shipping indicator only cover the week ending 26 December 2021. The data up to 9 January 2022 will be available on 13 January 2022.

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1 . Main points

- The estimate of UK seated diners on 2 January 2022 was 134% of the level seen on the equivalent day of 2020 (5 January 2020); for London and Manchester the equivalent figure was 91% and 138%, respectively (OpenTable).

- The system average price (SAP) of gas decreased by 48% in the week to 2 January 2022, to levels broadly similar to the week ending 14 November 2021; this large fall was in part driven by lower demand over the Christmas period because of reduced business activity and unseasonably mild weather (National Grid). See the accompanying dataset.

- One in five working adults (21%) have reported working from home exclusively in the past seven days, this rose by 7 percentage points from 14% the previous period (Opinions and Lifestyle Survey, 15 December 2021 to 3 January 2022).

- In the week to 2 January 2022, overall retail footfall in the UK was 75% of the level seen in the equivalent week of 2019; this is lower than the previous week where overall retail footfall was at 86% of the equivalent week of 2019 (Springboard).

- In the week to 30 December 2021, the aggregate CHAPS-based indicator of credit and debit card purchases decreased by 40 percentage points from the previous week, to 86% of its February 2020 average level; this fall appears broadly consistent with a seasonal effect (Bank of England CHAPS data). See the accompanying dataset.

- The seven-day average number of UK daily flights was 3,211 in the week ending 2 January 2022; this is 67% of the level seen in the equivalent week of 2019 (week ending 29 December 2019), and 227% of the equivalent week of 2020 (week ending 27 December 2020) (EUROCONTROL). See the accompanying dataset.

- The total volume of online job adverts on 31 December 2021 was at 121% of its February 2020 average level, a 4% decrease from the previous week; the highest level of job adverts relative to February 2020 continued to be in the "transport, logistics and warehouse" category, at 260%, however this has decreased by 13% since 17 December 2021 (Adzuna). See the accompanying dataset.

- In late December 2021, 15% of businesses reported a shortage of workers, which has remained broadly stable since late October 2021 (this rose to 35% for businesses with 10 or more employees); the percentage was highest in the accommodation and food service activities industry at 37%, and 65% of these businesses reported employees were working increased hours because of these worker shortages, compared with 38% and 55%, respectively, in late October 2021.

- Of all businesses not permanently stopped trading, 16% reported they had experienced an increase in cancellations from customers over the last month, with the highest percentage (50%) in the other service activities industry (which includes hairdressers and other beauty treatments); this was followed by the accommodation and food service activities industry, at 45% (final results from Wave 46 of Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS).

- There was an average of 213 daily ship visits in the week to 26 December 2021, a 27% decrease from the previous week, while the average number of daily cargo and tanker ship visits decreased by 22% to 72 in the same period; this seasonal decrease is broadly in line with previous years (exactEarth). See the accompanying dataset.

- In the week ending 2 January 2022, the seasonally adjusted average count of traffic camera activity for "cars", "buses" and "pedestrians and cyclists" in London all decreased slightly from the previous week to 95%, 78% and 84% of the average level seen in the week before the first UK-wide lockdown, respectively (Transport for London). See the accompanying dataset.

- Small UK business sales have shown steady upward growth since the end of the first UK-wide lockdown (July 2020), over the same period small business jobs have remained relatively stable; when compared with November 2019, sales were 20% higher in November 2021 while jobs were 5% lower (Xero Small Business Insights). See the accompanying dataset.

- There were 6,542 company incorporations in the week to 31 December 2021, 44% higher than the final week of 2019 (4,555) (Companies House). See the accompanying dataset.

2 . Latest indicators at a glance

Notes:

1. Users should note that the large week-on-week decreases follow expected seasonal patterns of reduced activity between Christmas and New Year.

2. Footfall data from Springboard for the following days have been omitted because of data distortions created by the date offset between 2021 and previous years: 22 to 23 December 2021, 25 to 26 December 2021, 29 December 2021 and 1 January 2022.

3. OpenTable estimates of UK seated diners are not available in this dashboard because of data distortions created by the date offset between 2021 and previous years.

4. Shipping data are not included in the dashboard but are available in the accompanying dataset up to 26 December 2021.

3 . Data

Traffic camera activity
Dataset | Released 6 January 2022
Experimental dataset for busyness indices covering the UK as part of the real-time indicators release to help better understand economic activity and social change in the UK.

System Average Price (SAP) of gas
Dataset | Released 6 January 2022
Daily and rolling average System Average Price (SAP) of gas traded in the UK.

UK spending on credit and debit cards
Dataset | Released 6 January 2022
Experimental indicator for monitoring UK retail purchases derived from the Bank of England's CHAPS data.

Online job advert estimates
Dataset | Released 6 January 2022
Experimental job advert indices covering the UK online job market.

Sales and jobs in small businesses
Dataset | Released 6 January 2022
Monthly dataset showing the year-on-two-year change in sales and jobs recorded by Xero, an online accounting software platform.

Company incorporations, voluntary dissolutions and compulsory dissolutions
Dataset | Released 6 January 2022
Weekly dataset showing the number of Companies House incorporations and voluntary dissolutions accepted, and companies placed into compulsory dissolution.

Users should note that this section lists a selection of the data available with this publication. For the full list of available datasets please see the accompanying dataset page.

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 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.

5 . 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.

6 . Strengths and limitations

Information on the strengths and limitations of the indicators in this bulletin is Message available in the Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators 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
Bulletin | Released 17 December 2021
Latest indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey.

Deaths registered weekly in England and Wales, provisional
Bulletin | Released 5 January 2022
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 5 January 2022
Initial data from the COVID-19 Infection Survey (delivered in partnership with IQVIA, the University of Oxford and Lighthouse laboratories).