

Statistical bulletin

Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators: 17 February 2022

Early experimental data and analysis on economic activity and social change in the UK. These faster indicators are created using rapid response surveys, novel data sources, and experimental methods.

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1 . Main points

- In the period 3 to 13 February 2022, 76% of adults reported their cost of living had increased over the last month; this was up 7 percentage points from 69% in the last period (Opinions and Lifestyle Survey, 3 to 13 February 2022). [Section 3](#).
- Between late December 2021 and late January 2022, the BICS standardised turnover balance estimate increased by 1.1% (initial results from Wave 50 of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS)). [Section 4](#).
- In January 2022, a net 3% of firms reported higher levels of turnover compared with the previous month (HM Revenue and Customs Value Added Tax (VAT) returns). [Section 5](#).
- In the week to 12 February 2022, overall retail footfall in the UK increased by 2% from the previous week and was 86% of the level seen in the equivalent week of 2019; this is the fifth consecutive week of increasing retail footfall and was again driven in part by weekly rises in high street footfall (Springboard).
- The seven-day average estimate of UK seated diners increased by 17 percentage points in the week to 14 February 2022, to 129% of the level in the equivalent week of 2020; this increase coincides with Valentine's Day in 2022, however, users should note that the equivalent week in 2020 does not include Valentine's Day (OpenTable).
- There was an average of 296 daily ship visits in the week to 13 February 2022, a 16% increase from the previous week; meanwhile, the average number of daily cargo and tanker ship visits increased by 8% over the same period, to 94 (exactEarth). See the [accompanying dataset](#).
- The work sectors with the highest estimated percentages of people self-isolating because of coronavirus (COVID-19) were "teaching and education" (3.2%) and "social care" (2.7%) in the week ending 5 February 2022 (Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Survey (CIS)). [Section 6](#).
- In the week to 10 February 2022, transactions at Pret A Manger stores increased in all store locations apart from Yorkshire and regional towns, where they remained broadly unchanged at 125% and 113% of the January 2020 average level respectively (Pret A Manger).
- The total volume of online job adverts on 11 February 2022 was 146% of its February 2020 average level, which was broadly similar to the level in the previous week (Adzuna). See the [accompanying dataset](#).
- In the week to 10 February 2022, the aggregate CHAPS-based indicator of credit and debit card purchases was broadly unchanged from the previous week, at 96% of its February 2020 average; this stability follows the usual cyclical rise in spending around the end of the month (Bank of England CHAPS data). See the [accompanying dataset](#).
- The System Average Price (SAP) of gas decreased by 4% in the week to 13 February 2022 (National Grid). See the [accompanying dataset](#).
- The seven-day average number of UK daily flights increased by 17% from the previous week and was 67% of the level seen in the equivalent week of 2020; the weekly increase coincides with half-term school holidays in some parts of the UK (EUROCONTROL). See the [accompanying dataset](#).
- In the week ending 13 February 2022, the seasonally adjusted average count of traffic camera activity for "cars" in London and the North East decreased by 5% and 3% from the previous week respectively (Transport for London, North East traffic cameras). See the [accompanying dataset](#).
- The volume of motor vehicle traffic on Monday 14 February 2022 was at 94% of its level in the first week of February 2020, which was broadly unchanged from the previous week (Department for Transport).
- There were 16,761 company incorporations in the week to 11 February 2022, which was broadly unchanged from the previous week (16,614) and the equivalent week of 2021 (16,882) (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.
2. *Comparisons in OpenTable data are made with the equivalent week in 2019 until December 2021. From 1 January 2022 comparisons are made to the equivalent week in 2020. This is likely to change in the coming weeks and revert back to 2019 comparisons across the series.
3. Advanced notification of potential redundancies data is available in the [accompanying dataset](#).
4. Users should note that, for the week ending 6 February 2022, there were a large number of Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) lodgements for existing dwellings in Yorkshire and the Humber from a housing association contract. Caution should be taken when interpreting this data.

3 . Social impact of coronavirus

This section includes some results from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) covering the period 3 to 13 February 2022. The survey went out to 4,464 adults in Great Britain and had a response rate of 70% (3,126 responses). Further information to help understand the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on people, households and communities in Great Britain is available in [Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain](#).

Cost of living

In the period 3 to 13 February 2022, 76% of adults reported their cost of living had increased over the last month; this was up 7 percentage points from 69% in the last period (19 to 30 January 2022). The most frequently reported reasons continued to be:

- rising food shop prices (90%)
- rising energy bills (77%)
- increases to the price of fuel (69%)

Travelling to work

In the period 3 to 13 February 2022, the proportion of working adults in Great Britain who in the past seven days:

- travelled to work (both exclusively and in combination with working from home) increased by 6 percentage points to 68% (62% in the previous period 19 to 30 January 2022)
- worked exclusively from home decreased slightly to 17% (22% in the previous period)
- neither travelled to work nor worked from home remained similar to the previous period at 15% (16% in the previous period)

Shopping

Of the 96% of adults in Great Britain who reported leaving home in the past seven days (unchanged from the previous period), the proportion that did so to shop for food and medicine was unchanged from the last period at 83%.

The proportion of these adults who shopped for things other than food and medicine in the past seven days remained broadly similar to the previous period at 43%.

Face coverings

Of the 96% of adults in Great Britain who reported leaving home in the past seven days, the proportion that did so and reported wearing a face covering decreased by 7 percentage points from the previous period, to 88%.

Further breakdowns, such as the situation when a face covering was worn (for example, while shopping), and by country, is available in [Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain](#).

4 . Business impact and insights

Initial results from Wave 50 of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) cover the reference period 24 January to 6 February 2022, with a response rate of 17.7% (6,779 responses). The survey was live for the period 7 to 15 February 2022.

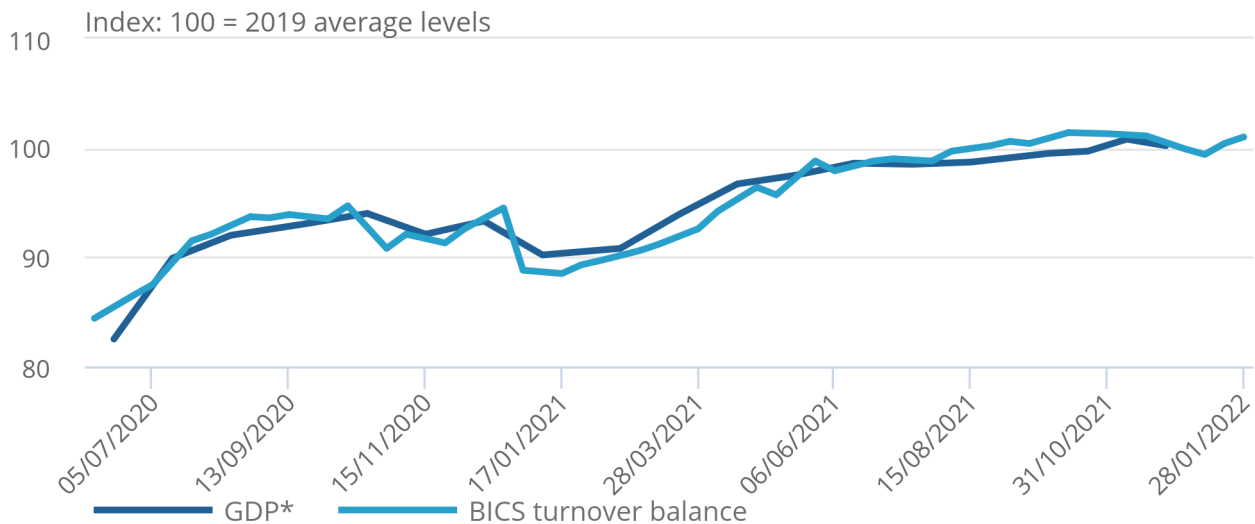
Data from the BICS have shown a similar trend to that of monthly gross domestic product (GDP) as published alongside results [from Wave 32](#). This analysis has been further extended to improve the study of the relationship between the BICS and GDP monthly estimates. To ensure comparability, the GDP estimates used only include the same industries as those covered within the BICS. These estimates are then reweighted and termed as GDP*.

Figure 1: The BICS standardised turnover balance estimate increased by 1.1% between late December 2021 and late January 2022

BICS turnover balance standardised and monthly GDP* estimates, index: 100 = 2019 average levels, UK, 7 June 2020 to 6 February 2022

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

Notes:

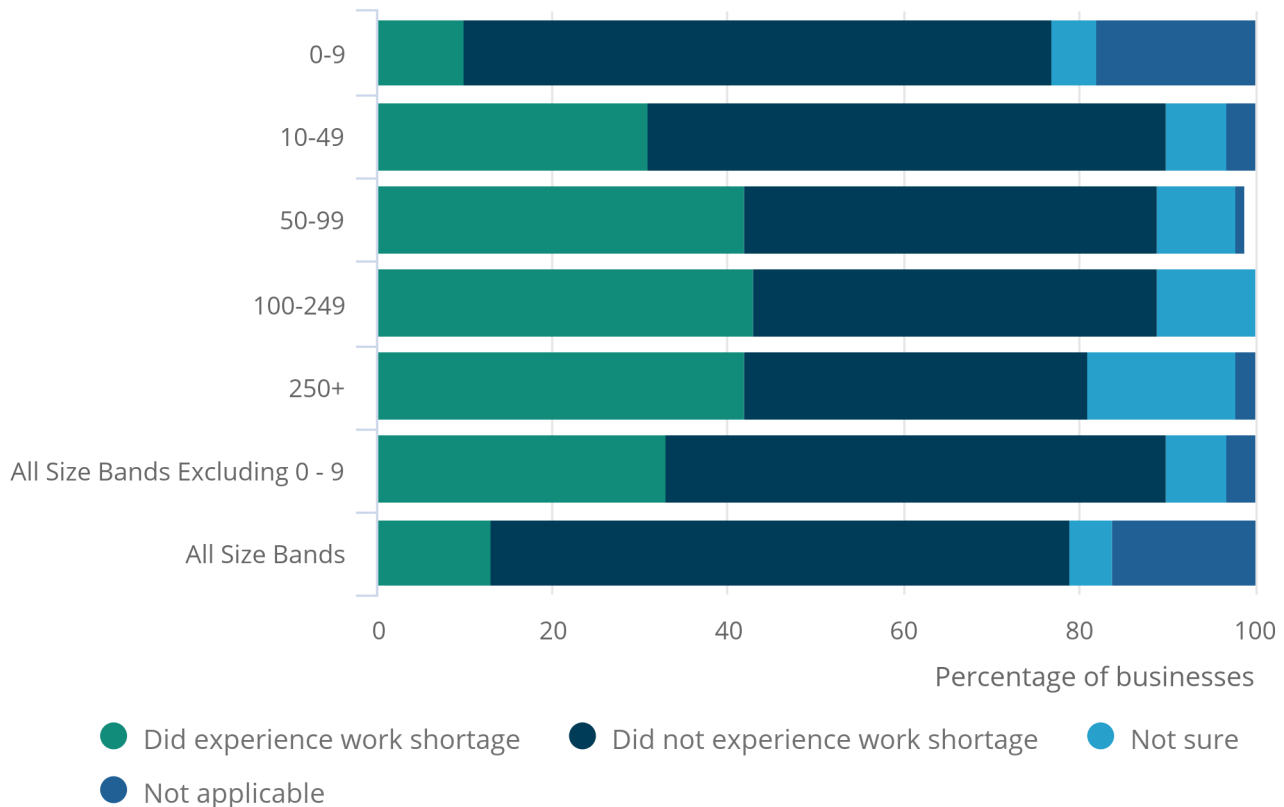
1. Final weighted results, Wave 7 to 49 and initial weighted results, Wave 50 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) and adjusted monthly gross domestic product (GDP) estimates.
2. Turnover balances are calculated by subtracting the percentage of businesses reporting a decrease in turnover, from the percentage of businesses who reported an increase in turnover. BICS turnover balances have been standardised and adjusted for magnitude and trading status.
3. GDP* differs from [published monthly GDP](#) as industries not sampled in BICS are removed and then remaining industries are re-weighted.
4. BICS data are plotted in the middle of the reference period of each wave and GDP* are plotted in the middle of the reference month.

Figure 2: 13% of UK businesses reported that they were experiencing a shortage of workers in early February 2022, this has remained broadly unchanged since mid-January 2022

Worker shortage, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by size band, weighted by count, UK, 7 to 15 February 2022

Figure 2: 13% of UK businesses reported that they were experiencing a shortage of workers in early February 2022, this has remained broadly unchanged since mid-January 2022

Worker shortage, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by size band, weighted by count, UK, 7 to 15 February 2022



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

Notes:

1. Initial weighted results, Wave 50 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS).
2. Bars may not sum to 100% because of rounding and percentages less than 1% being removed for disclosure purposes.
3. Size bands refer to the number of employees in a business.

5 . Value-added tax (VAT) flash estimates

The Value Added Tax (VAT) flash estimate diffusion indices complement the existing [VAT diffusion indices](#), but only use monthly VAT returns received up to the seventh day (day 7) after the end of the reporting month, which are typically returns submitted in the first five working days after the reporting month. For example, estimates for January 2022 use data for that period received up to 7 February 2022 from our VAT administrative data source, which account for around 10% to 15% of all monthly VAT returns.

In comparison, the [full coverage month 2 \(M2\)](#) VAT diffusion indices use all monthly VAT returns received up to one calendar month after the reporting period. For example, estimates for December 2021 use data received up to 31 January 2022.

Flash estimates are published three weeks earlier and are therefore the fastest indicator of economic output that the Office for National Statistics (ONS) produces. Comparisons of the flash estimates against the previously published month 2 estimates can be found in the [20 January 2022 Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators, Strengths and limitations section](#).

Turnover diffusion indices are an aggregate measure used to track whether most firms are reporting an increase or decrease in turnover in their VAT returns. They are calculated as the percentage of firms with increasing turnover minus the percentage with decreasing turnover. More information on the compilation and methodology of these estimates can be found in the [Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators methodology](#).

Table 1: A net 3% of firms reported increasing turnover in January 2022, compared with the previous month Value Added Tax turnover diffusion indices, day 7 estimates, comparison with previous month, UK, seasonally adjusted

	Agriculture, Total forestry and fishing		Production	Construction	Services
Aug-21	0.01	0.01	0.06	-0.06	0.03
Sep-21	0.01	-0.01	0.03	0.01	0.02
Oct-21	-0.01	-0.04	0.09	-0.01	0.03
Nov-21	0.03	0	0.04	0.02	0.06
Dec-21	-0.06	-0.04	0.01	-0.03	-0.06
Jan-22	0.03	0.01	0.09	0.02	0.05

Source: HM Revenue and Customs – Value Added Tax returns

Notes

1. The contributions of these industries to monthly GDP are: agriculture 0.7% production 13.7%, construction 6.4% and services 79.2%.

Data for all available industries, including seasonally adjusted month-on-month estimates and non-seasonally adjusted month-on-month and month-on-year estimates, for turnover and expenditure, are available in the [accompanying dataset](#).

6 . Self-isolation rates in the workforce by sector and for working age population by country

Data from the [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Infection Survey \(CIS\)](#) were used to provide modelled estimates of the proportion of the workforce self-isolating because of coronavirus by work sector, and the proportion of the working age population self-isolating because of coronavirus by country.

In the week ending 5 February 2022, there were signs that the percentage of people self-isolating because of coronavirus (COVID-19) had decreased in all work sectors, but these are early indications and the trend is still uncertain. This follows an increase in self-isolation in "teaching and education", "social care" and "health-care" in the two weeks ending 29 January 2022.

Figure 3: The percentage of the working-age population self-isolating because of coronavirus decreased in England, Scotland and Wales in the week ending 5 February 2022

Estimated percentage of the working-age population (aged 17 to 69 years) self-isolating because of coronavirus from 19 December 2021 to 5 February 2022, UK countries

Notes:

1. All results are provisional and subject to revision.
2. These statistics refer to self-reported self-isolation occurring in working-age adults (aged 17 to 69 years), regardless of employment status, living in private households.
3. During the period shown, self-isolation requirements were frequently updated with different changes taking place at different times across the UK countries.

Download the data

[.xlsx](#)

Figure 4: The sectors with the highest percentage of the workforce in self-isolation on 5 February were "teaching and education" and "social care", at 3.2% and 2.7%, respectively

Estimated percentage of the workforce self-isolating because of coronavirus, by work sector, 12 December 2021 to 5 February 2022, UK

Notes:

1. All results are provisional and subject to revision.
2. These statistics refer to self-reported self-isolation in working adults (aged 16 years and over) living in private households.
3. In the "teaching and education" work sector, there is a 95% confidence interval from 2.4% to 4.3%.
4. In the "social care" work sector, there is a 95% confidence interval from 1.9% to 3.9%.

Download the data

[.xlsx](#)

More information on how these estimates were calculated is available in [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Infection Survey estimates of the UK workforce in self-isolation by sector](#), published on 14 February 2022.

A breakdown of the CIS data is available in the [accompanying dataset](#).

7 . Data

[Value Added Tax flash estimates](#)

Dataset | Released 17 February 2022

Early estimates of turnover and expenditure diffusion indices from HMRC VAT data.

[Advance potential redundancies](#)

Dataset | Released 17 February 2022

Weekly dataset showing the number of potential redundancies and employers proposing redundancies, submitted to Insolvency Service via HR1 forms.

[Daily UK flights](#)

Dataset | Released 17 February 2022

Experimental daily UK flight numbers and rolling seven-day average, including flights to, from, and within the UK.

[Weekly shipping indicators](#)

Dataset | Released 17 February 2022

Experimental weekly and daily ship visits dataset covering UK ports.

[Traffic camera activity](#)

Dataset | Released 17 February 2022

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

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

Dataset | Released 17 February 2022

Experimental indicator for monitoring UK retail purchases derived from the Bank of England's CHAPS data.

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](#).

8 . 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.

Diffusion index

The diffusion index tracks the growth in turnover and expenditure of firms. It is constructed to lie between negative 1 and 1. For example, if 65% of firms have increasing turnover, 30% have decreasing turnover and 5% turnover remains unchanged, then the diffusion index is 0.35.

New reporter

A new reporter is defined as a firm with a Value Added Tax (VAT) reference (that is, firm identification number), which has not previously reported its VAT returns. New reporters are published within one month of the end of the reporting period. The new reporting behaviour measure is classified by the month the data were received by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC), known as the receipt date; this is not necessarily the same as the reference period (the period for which the VAT return is made).

9 . Measuring the data

UK coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions

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

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

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

10 . Strengths and limitations

Information on the strengths and limitations of the indicators in this bulletin is available in [the Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators methodology](#).

The methodology for the advanced notifications of potential redundancies dataset can be found in the in the [3 February 2022 Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators publication](#). In the coming weeks there will be a full methodology paper published, which will be linked in this bulletin.

11 . Related links

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

Webpage | Updated as and when data become available

Latest data on the coronavirus in the UK and its effect on the economy and society.

[Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain](#)

Bulletin | Released 4 February 2022

Latest indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey.

[Deaths registered weekly in England and Wales, provisional](#)

Bulletin | Released 15 February 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 16 February 2022

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