

Statistical bulletin

Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators: 12 May 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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Release date:
12 May 2022

Next release:
19 May 2022

Notice

12 May 2022

HR1 notice of advance redundancies: please note that because of data processing issues for HR1 data for the previous two releases, these data contain a lag of one week longer than usual. We hope to resolve this issue soon and apologise for any inconvenience.

VAT diffusion indices: we will no longer be producing the Month 1 and Month 2 VAT-based diffusion indices previously included in this publication. These data have been superseded by the Day 7 flash estimates to be published in next week's bulletin on 19 May 2022. The data for the number of new reporters that were previously included alongside the Month 1 indices will now be included alongside the Day 7 flash estimates.

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1 . Main points

- Consumer behaviour indicators all showed growth in the latest week as aggregate UK credit and debit card purchases rose by 8 percentage points, with increases in all spending categories; UK seated diners increased by 8 percentage points, and visits to "retail and recreation" locations increased by 4% (Bank of England CHAPS data, OpenTable, Google Mobility). [Section 3](#).
- Transport indicators largely showed an increase this week, with daily UK flights, total ship visits, and cargo and tanker visits increasing by 6%, 7%, and 5%, respectively; the volume of all motor vehicle traffic on 9 May 2022 remained broadly similar to a fortnight ago, at 100% of the level seen on the Monday of the first week in February 2020 (EUROCONTROL, exactEarth, Department for Transport). [Section 4](#).
- Total online job advert volumes were broadly unchanged from the previous week; the largest weekly category increase was in "energy/oil and gas" (12%), while "legal" online job adverts showed the largest decrease (8%) (Adzuna). [Section 5](#).
- More than a quarter (26%) of UK businesses cited "inflation of goods and services prices" as the main concern for their business, up 5 percentage points from the end of February 2022 (21%) (Initial results from Wave 56 of the [Business Insights and Conditions Survey](#) (BICS)). [Section 5](#).
- The System Average Price (SAP) of gas decreased by 14% in the week to 8 May 2022, with the level now 26% of that on 10 March 2022, when prices peaked in the rolling seven-day series; the SAP is now 76% higher compared with the same period last year (week ending 9 May 2021) (National Grid).

Results presented in this bulletin are experimental and may be subject to revision. Data sources used to compile these indicators are regularly reviewed to ensure representativity and relevance which may mean indicators change at short notice.

2 . Latest indicators at a glance

Notes:

1. The break in the available shipping data (from 14 to 19 June 2021) is when the data collection system changed.
2. For the road traffic indicator, week-on-two-week (25 April 2022) comparisons are made with Monday 9 May 2022, to avoid comparing against the lower level of motor vehicle traffic seen in the previous week because of the Early May bank holiday.

3 . Consumer behaviour

UK credit and debit card purchases increased by 8 percentage points, with growth seen in all spending categories. The largest growth was in "social" spending, which increased by 9 percentage points in the week to 5 May 2022.

UK seated diners increased by 8 percentage points in the week to 8 May 2022, with seated diners in London and Manchester rising by 10 and 4 percentage points, respectively. Google Mobility data showed that visits to "retail and recreation" had increased by 4% in the week to 6 May 2022 when compared with the previous week but remain 8% below pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) levels.

None of these data are seasonally adjusted and the latest week's increases coincide with the national bank holiday on 2 May 2022.

UK spending on debit and credit cards: Daily CHAPS-based indicator

These data series are experimental faster indicators for estimating UK spending on credit and debit cards. They track the daily 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 via physical and via 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:

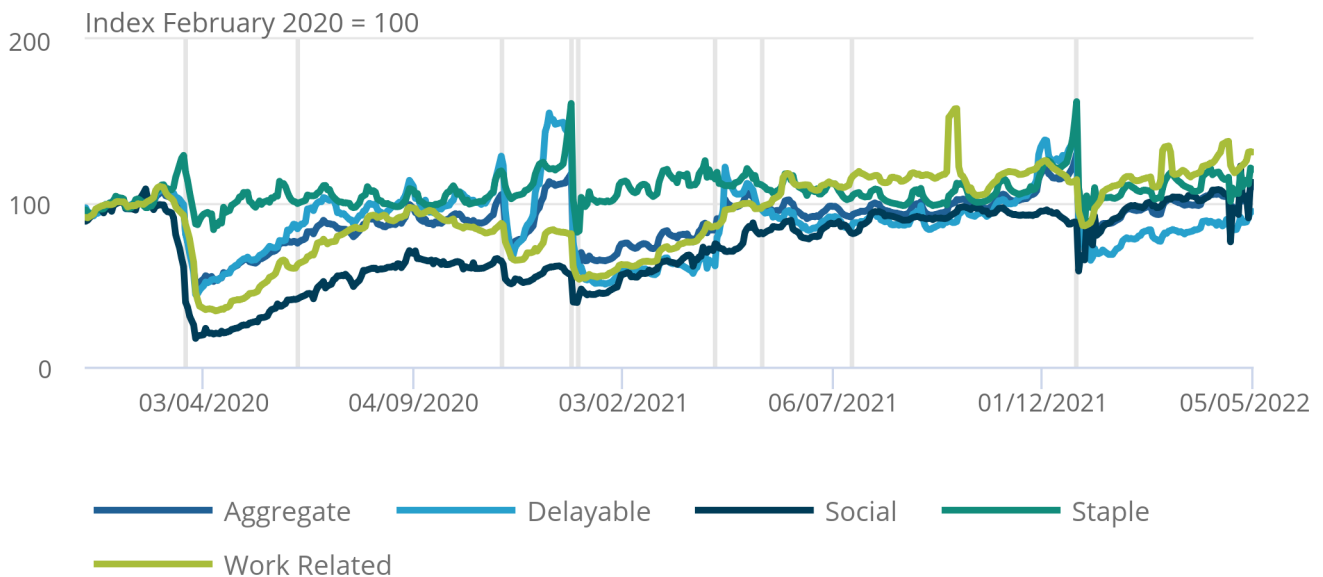
- "staples" refers to companies that sell essential goods that households need to purchase, such as food and utilities
- "work-related" refers to companies providing public transport or selling petrol
- "delayable" refers to companies selling goods whose purchase could be delayed, such as clothing or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

Figure 1: The aggregate CHAPS-based indicator of credit and debit card purchases increased by 8 percentage points in the week to 5 May 2022, to 110% of its February 2020 average

Index February 2020 = 100, a backward looking seven-day rolling average, 13 January 2020 to 5 May 2022, non-seasonally adjusted, nominal prices

Figure 1: The aggregate CHAPS-based indicator of credit and debit card purchases increased by 8 percentage points in the week to 5 May 2022, to 110% of its February 2020 average

Index February 2020 = 100, a backward looking seven-day rolling average, 13 January 2020 to 5 May 2022, non-seasonally adjusted, nominal prices



Source: ONS 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 a slight time lag when compared with real-life events on the chart.
2. The vertical lines indicate notable events and coronavirus restriction changes.
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 5 May 2022, the CHAPS-based indicator of credit and debit card purchases increased by 8 percentage points from the previous week, to 110% of its February 2020 average level.

The spending categories recorded the following changes in the latest week:

- "social" increased by 9 percentage points
- "staple" increased by 8 percentage points
- "delayable" increased by 7 percentage points
- "work-related" increased by 7 percentage points. This sector includes road fuel spending.

"Work-related", "staple" and "social" spending were all above their February 2020 average levels at 131%, 120% and 113%, respectively. "Delayable" spending meanwhile remained below its February 2020 average levels at 95%.

UK spending on debit and credit cards: Monthly CHAPS-based indicator

The monthly CHAPS-based indicator of aggregate credit and debit card spending was at 102% of its February 2020 average level in April 2022. This is 16 percentage points higher than in January 2022 (87%) and 9 percentage points higher than April 2021 (93%).

The monthly data time series is available in the [accompanying CHAPS dataset](#) and includes methodological notes that users should bear in mind. The monthly CHAPS index is calculated by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), rather than being an additional series that is produced and validated by the Bank of England.

4 . Transport

Transport indicators largely showed an increase in the latest week. Daily UK flights increased by 6% from the previous week, and were 85% of the level of the equivalent week of 2019. Total ship visits increased by 7%, and cargo and tanker visits increased by 5%, compared with the previous week.

Meanwhile, the volume of all motor vehicle traffic on 9 May 2022 remained broadly similar to a fortnight ago, at 100% of the level seen on the Monday of the first week in February 2020. Car, light commercial vehicle and heavy goods vehicle traffic volumes remained broadly similar to two weeks ago, at 95%, 114% and 109% of the level seen on the Monday of the first week in February 2020, respectively. Vehicle traffic volumes are compared with two weeks ago because of last week's bank holiday, which caused atypical traffic volumes.

UK flight data

These data are daily flight figures from the [European Organisation for the Safety of Air Navigation \(EUROCONTROL\)](#). Daily flight numbers for the UK alongside other countries are available in [EUROCONTROL's dashboard](#). EUROCONTROL is a pan-European, civil-military organisation dedicated to supporting European aviation. Its Aviation Intelligence and Performance Review Unit provides independent collection and validation of air navigation services' performance-related data and intelligence gathering.

The flights data include international arrivals and departures to and from the UK (including Crown dependencies) and domestic UK flights but exclude overflights (flights that pass over UK territory). They capture all flight movements that operate under Instrument Flight Rules (IFR), where the pilot uses instruments in the flight deck to control, guide and adjust the plane. This includes commercial flights carrying passengers and cargo as well as non-commercial flights such as private and military flights.

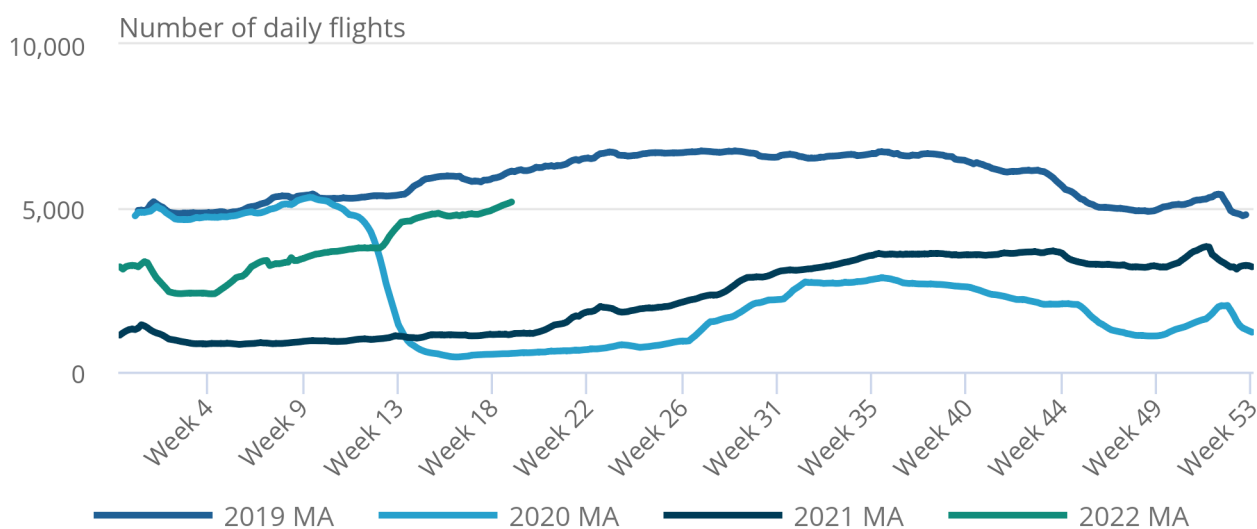
Data from EUROCONTROL do not include information on the volume of passengers or cargo carried on UK flights. Especially in the context of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, flights might not be operating at full capacity and therefore trends in passengers and cargo will differ from trends in flights presented here.

Figure 2: The seven-day average number of UK daily flights was 5,184 in the week to 8 May 2022, an 828% increase compared with the equivalent week of 2020

Number of daily flights, non-seasonally adjusted, seven-day moving average, 2 January 2019 to 8 May 2022, UK

Figure 2: The seven-day average number of UK daily flights was 5,184 in the week to 8 May 2022, an 828% increase compared with the equivalent week of 2020

Number of daily flights, non-seasonally adjusted, seven-day moving average, 2 January 2019 to 8 May 2022, UK



Source: European Organisation for the Safety of Air Navigation (EUROCONTROL)

The seven-day average number of UK daily flights increased by 6% from the previous week (4,910). This was 85% of the level seen in the equivalent week of 2019, and 454% of the equivalent week of 2021.

The full data time series available for UK flights can be found in [our accompanying UK daily flights dataset](#), which contains daily flight numbers and the rolling seven-day averages.

5 . Business and workforce

The volume of total online job adverts was broadly unchanged from the previous week, with 13 of the 28 categories showing growth, eight decreasing and seven being unchanged. Online job adverts increased or remained unchanged in all English regions and UK countries when compared with the previous week.

Company incorporations fell by 17% and voluntary dissolution applications fell by 19% from the previous week. Compared with the equivalent week of 2019, incorporations and voluntary dissolution applications are 16% and 17% higher, respectively.

Online job adverts by category

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

Figure 3: The total volume of online job adverts on 6 May 2022 increased by 1% from the previous week, and was 137% of its February 2020 pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) average level

Volume of online job adverts by category, index: 100 = February 2020 average, 4 January 2019 to 6 May 2022, non-seasonally adjusted

Notes:

1. 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](#).
2. Users should note that week-on-week changes in online job advert volumes are outlined as percentages, rather than as percentage point changes. Percentage change figures quoted in the commentary will therefore not necessarily match the percentage point changes observed in the charts and [accompanying dataset](#).

Download the data

[.xlsx](#)

Of the 28 categories, 13 saw an increase in the number of online job adverts on Friday 29 April 2022. The largest increase was in "energy/oil and gas" (12%), followed by "graduate" (6%), and "accounting/finance" (4%). The number of online job adverts remained unchanged in seven categories and decreased in eight categories. The largest decrease was in the "legal" category, which fell by 8%.

The category with the highest level of online job adverts when compared with its February 2020 pre-coronavirus pandemic average levels was "transport, logistics and warehouse" at 243%, followed by "HR and recruitment" at 224%.

Job adverts by region

Figure 4: The largest increase in the volume of online job adverts was in Northern Ireland, which increased by 3% when compared with the previous week

Volume of online job adverts by UK countries and English regions index: 100 = February 2020 average, 4 January 2019 to 6 May 2022, non-seasonally adjusted

Download the data

[.xlsx](#)

The volume of online job adverts increased or remained unchanged in all English regions and UK countries on 6 May 2022 when compared with the previous week.

Business impact and insights

Initial results from Wave 56 of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) cover the reference period 1 April to 31 May 2022, with a response rate of 20.1% (7,662 responses). The survey was live for the period 3 to 10 May 2022.

Table 1: More than a quarter (26%) of UK businesses cited “inflation of goods and services prices” as the main concern for their businesses, up 5 percentage points from the end of February 2022 (21%)
Business concern, businesses not permanently stopped trading, weighted by count, UK, 1 May to 31 May 2022

	All Industries
Inflation of goods and services prices	26%
No concerns	21%
Energy prices	19%
Not sure	10%
Competition	5%
Taxation	5%
Supply chain disruption	5%
Other	3%
Business rates	3%
Exchange rates	2%
Interest rates	2%

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

Notes

1. Initial weighted results, Wave 56 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS).
2. Table may not sum to 100% because of rounding and percentages less than 1% being removed for disclosure purposes.
3. From Wave 54, the question changed to ask about a specific calendar month rather than “the next month” in relation to the time of completion, therefore data are not comparable to previous waves.

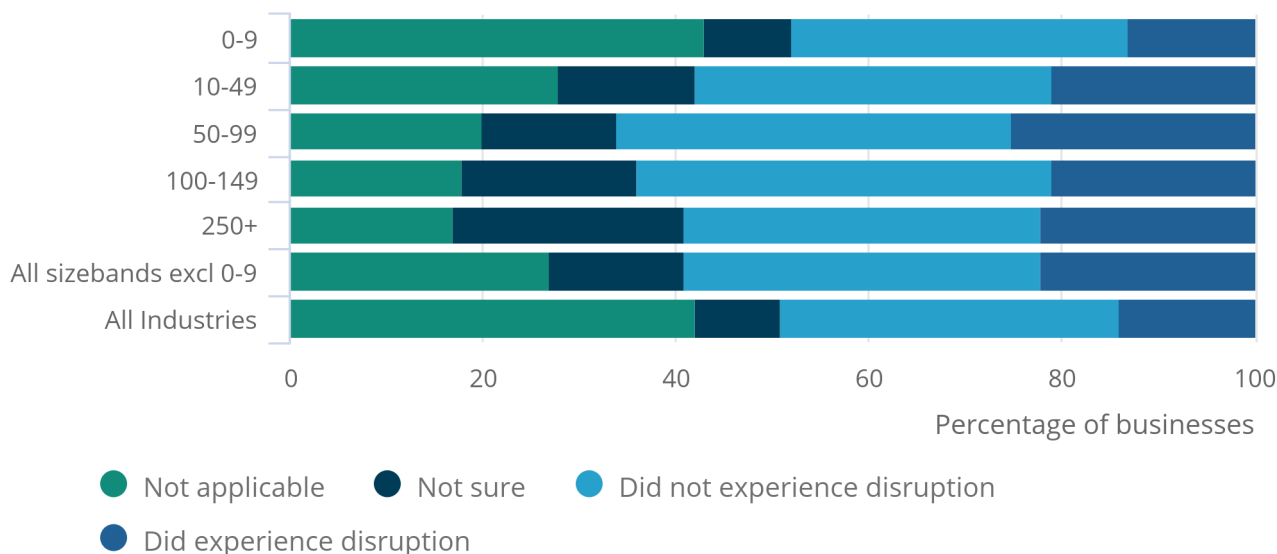
The most cited businesses concern was “inflation of goods and services” with more than a quarter (26%) of businesses naming this as their main concern for May 2022. Almost one in five (19%) businesses cited “energy prices” as their main business concern, this is up 5 percentage points from the end of February 2022 (15%).

Figure 5: More than one third (35%) of businesses reported that they did not experience any global supply chain disruption in April 2022, up 3% from December 2022 (33%)

Global supply chain disruption, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by size band, weighted by count, UK, 1 April to 30 April 2022

Figure 5: More than one third (35%) of businesses reported that they did not experience any global supply chain disruption in April 2022, up 3% from December 2022 (33%)

Global supply chain disruption, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by size band, weighted by count, UK, 1 April to 30 April 2022



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

Notes:

1. Initial weighted results, Wave 56 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. From Wave 54, the question changed to ask about a specific calendar month rather than “the last month” in relation to the time of completion, therefore data is not comparable to previous waves.
4. Size bands refer to the number of employees in a business.

6 . Data

[Advance potential redundancies](#)

Dataset | Released 12 May 2022

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

[Traffic camera activity](#)

Dataset | Released 12 May 2022

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

[System Average Price \(SAP\) of gas](#)

Dataset | Released 12 May 2022

Daily and rolling average System Average Price (SAP) of gas traded in the UK.

[Weekly shipping indicators](#)

Dataset | Released 12 May 2022

Experimental weekly and daily ship visits dataset covering UK ports.

[Transactions at Pret A Manger](#)

Dataset | Released 12 May 2022

Weekly transactional data from approximately 400 Pret A Manger stores around the UK.

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

Dataset | Released 12 May 2022

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

From the 29 April 2022, the latest estimates from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN), which provides insights into daily life and events including people's experiences regarding cost of living, goods shortages and working from home are available fortnightly within [Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain](#).

For the full list of available datasets please see the [accompanying dataset page](#).

7 . Glossary

Real-time indicator

A real-time 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.

8 . Measuring the data

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

9 . Strengths and limitations

These statistics have been produced to provide timely indicators of the effect of developing world events on the UK economy and society, using close-to-real-time big data, administrative data sources, rapid response surveys or Experimental Statistics.

The data presented in this bulletin are reviewed and refreshed on a regular basis. Indicators are swapped in and out of the publication based on their suitability and availability.

UK coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions

A full overview of coronavirus restrictions for each of the four UK constituent countries is available.

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

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

Seasonality

Seasonal fluctuations are likely to be present in many of these indicators so caution must be applied when interpreting changes in series that are not seasonally adjusted.

10 . 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.

[Public Opinions and Social trends, Great Britain](#)

Bulletin | Released 29 April 2022

Latest indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey.

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

Bulletin | Released 10 May 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 6 May 2022

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