Office for National Statistics

Statistical bulletin

Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators: 28 September 2023

Early experimental data 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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1 . Main points

- Revolut debit card spending on "automotive fuel" fell by 3 percentage points in the week to 24 September 2023, the fourth consecutive week-on-week decrease; meanwhile, average fuel prices increased by 2 percentage points in the week to 17 September 2023, the ninth consecutive week-on-week increase (Revolut, Automotive fuel spending). Section 3: Consumer behaviour.

- The total number of online job adverts increased by 3% on 22 September 2023 compared with the previous week, the third consecutive week-on-week increase, and was unchanged compared with level of the equivalent period last year (Adzuna). Section 4: Business and workforce.

- Almost two-thirds (63%) of businesses not permanently stopped trading reported some form of concern for their business for October 2023; this figure has been gradually falling over the last 12 months (initial results from Wave 92 of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey). Section 4: Business and workforce.

- The System Average Price (SAP) of gas increased by 4% in the week to 24 September 2023, increasing for the second week in a row; this price is 61% below the equivalent week of 2022, but 297% above the price seen in the pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) baseline (National Gas Transmission). Section 5: Energy.

- The daily average number of UK flights was 6,059, which was broadly unchanged compared with the previous week but 10% above the number seen in the equivalent week of 2022; traffic camera activity for cars in London was also broadly unchanged compared with the previous week, but 108% of the pre-coronavirus level (EUROCONTROL, Transport for London). Section 6: Transport.

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 they are representative and relevant, which may mean indicators change at short notice.

2 . Latest indicators at a glance

Notes:

1. Revolut adjustments to user count are at an aggregate level and as such age bands may not adjust evenly.

2. Users should note that card spending over time is pushed upwards by the impacts of both inflation on value of transactions and cash-to-card conversion.
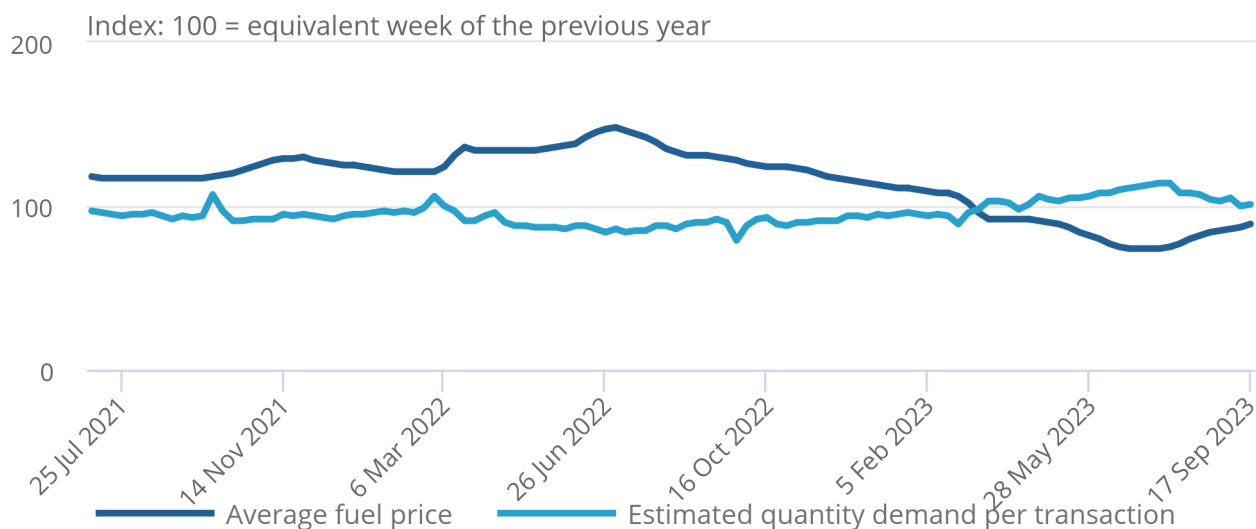
3 . Consumer behaviour

Automotive fuel spending

Figure 1: In the week to 17 September 2023, the average fuel price increased by 2 percentage points; this was the ninth consecutive week-on-week increase

Automotive fuel and experimental demand indicators, UK, 4 July 2021 to 17 September 2023, non-seasonally adjusted

Figure 1: In the week to 17 September 2023, the average fuel price increased by 2 percentage points; this was the ninth consecutive week-on-week increase

Automotive fuel and experimental demand indicators, UK, 4 July 2021 to 17 September 2023, non-seasonally adjusted

Index: 100 = equivalent week of the previous year

Average fuel price — Estimated quantity demand per transaction

Source: Aggregated anonymised card spending data; ONS calculations; Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) – Road fuel price statistics

Average fuel prices increased in the week to 17 September 2023 by 2 percentage points when compared with the previous week, having increased every week since the week to 23 July 2023. Despite this recent increase, the latest value is 40 percentage points lower than the equivalent week in 2022.

In the week to 17 September 2023, the estimated demand for fuel per transaction increased by 2 percentage points when compared with the previous week and was 12 percentage points higher than the equivalent period last year. However, the estimated demand for fuel per transaction has trended downwards since late July 2023, coinciding with increases in the average fuel price.

Our accompanying Automotive fuel spending dataset is available.

Revolut spending on debit cards

Total Revolut debit card spending rose by 2 percentage points in the week to 24 September 2023. Of the six sector categories, four decreased and two increased. The largest fall continues to be in "automotive fuel spending", which fell by 3 percentage points, this is now the fourth consecutive week-on-week decrease in spending on this category. "Retail" spending rose the most, by 10 percentage points.

Total Revolut debit card spending was 18 percentage points above the level in the equivalent week of 2022. "Food and drink" spending was 27 percentage points above this level, while both "retail" and "automotive fuel" spending were 25 percentage points above.

All sector categories were above the pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) baseline except "entertainment" spending, which is now 12 percentage points below this baseline.

Our accompanying [Revolut spending on debit cards dataset](#) is available.

UK spending on debit and credit cards: daily CHAPS based indicator

These data series are experimental real-time 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 online platforms.More information on the indicator is provided in the accompanying[Guide to the Bank of England's UK spending on credit and debit cards experimental data series](#) . 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 2: In the week to 21 September 2023, the aggregate CHAPS-based indicator of credit and debit card purchases increased by 3 percentage points compared with the same week in 2022

A backward looking seven-day rolling average, 13 January 2020 to 21 September 2023, non-seasonally adjusted, nominal prices

Figure 2: In the week to 21 September 2023, the aggregate CHAPS-based indicator of credit and debit card purchases increased by 3 percentage points compared with the same week in 2022

A backward looking seven-day rolling average, 13 January 2020 to 21 September 2023, non-seasonally adjusted, nominal prices

Index: 100 = February 2020
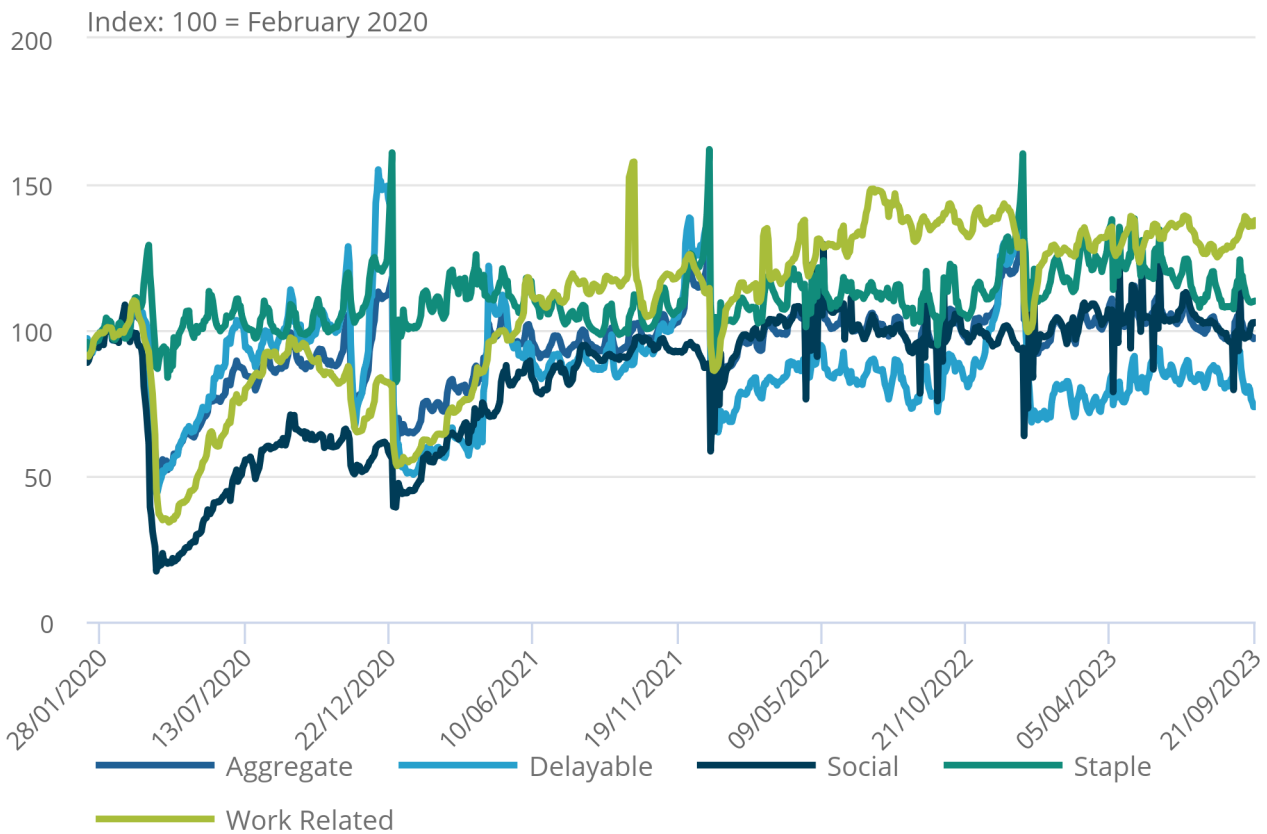
Source: Office for National Statistics and Bank of England calculations

Notes:

1. Users should note the daily payment data are 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. Percentage point difference is derived from current week and previous week index before rounding.

Figure 2 shows changes in the value of CHAPS payments received by large UK corporates from their credit and debit card processors, "merchant acquirers".

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

- "social" increased by 5 points

- "work-related" increased by 2 points

- "staple" was unchanged

- "delayable" decreased by 7 points

When compared with the same week in 2022, the spending categories recorded the following changes:

- "staple" increased by 7 points

- "social" increased by 7 points

- "work-related" was unchanged

- "delayable" decreased by 3 points

The full data time series available for data on UK spending on debit and credit cards can be found in the accompanying dataset.

National retail footfall

In the week to 24 September 2023, overall retail footfall remained broadly unchanged compared with the previous week. This level was 105% of the level seen in the equivalent week of 2022, but 89% of the level seen in the equivalent week of 2019.

Footfall remained broadly unchanged in retail parks and shopping centres compared with the previous week, while high street footfall fell to 98% of the level of activity seen in the previous week. However, retail park and shopping centre footfall were both above the level seen in the equivalent week of 2022, at 111% and 109%, respectively, whereas high street footfall remained broadly unchanged.

Transactions at Pret A Manger

In the week to 21 September 2023, the number of in-store transactions at Pret A Manger stores increased in half of the location categories compared with the previous week. The largest increase was in regional stations, which rose by 9 percentage points, followed by London stations rising by 5 percentage points. London suburban and London West End remained unchanged. Scotland fell the most when compared with the previous week, falling by 3 percentage points.

Compared with the equivalent period of 2022, transactions at Pret A Manger stores increased in eight location categories and decreased in two. Regional towns and London airports were 35 and 23 percentage points higher, respectively. London stations and Yorkshire decreased by 3 and 5 percentage points, respectively.

Our accompanying Transactions at Pret A Manger dataset is available.

4 . Business and workforce
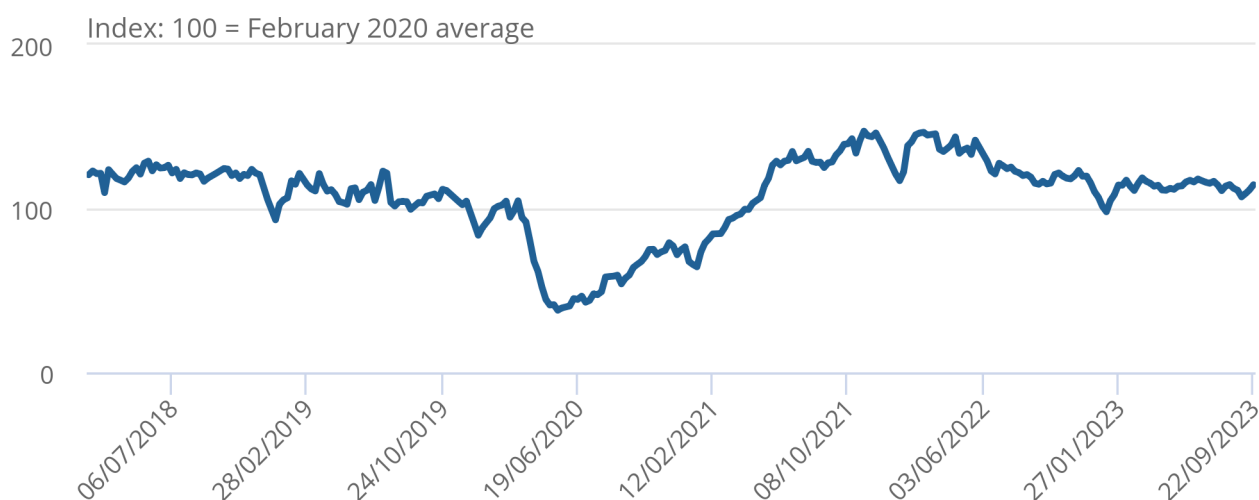
Online job adverts

These figures are experimental estimates of online job adverts by category, UK country, and English region, provided by Adzuna, an online job search engine. 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 our Vacancy Survey.

Figure 3: The total number of online job adverts on 22 September 2023 increased by 3% compared with the previous week

Volume of online job adverts, 7 February 2018 to 22 September 2023, non-seasonally adjusted, UK

Figure 3: The total number of online job adverts on 22 September 2023 increased by 3% compared with the previous week

Volume of online job adverts, 7 February 2018 to 22 September 2023, non-seasonally adjusted, UK

Index: 100 = February 2020 average

Source: Adzuna

Notes:

1. Further category breakdowns are included in our Online job advert estimates dataset, and more details on the methodology can be found in our Using Adzuna data to derive an indicator of weekly vacancies: Experimental Statistics methodology.

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 chart and our Online job advert estimates dataset.

The total number of online job adverts on 22 September 2023 increased by 3% compared with the previous week, the third consecutive week-on-week increase. Of the 28 online job categories, 16 increased, nine decreased, and three remained unchanged in the latest week. The largest increase was in the "Travel and Tourism" category, which rose by 125%, followed by a 14% increase in "Catering and Hospitality". Because of an inconsistent data supply in the latest week, the "Travel and Tourism" category should be used with caution when comparing with other periods in the year.

The total number of online job adverts was unchanged compared with the equivalent period of 2022. 19 of the 28 online job categories were below their level of a year ago. The "Human Resources (HR) and Recruitment" and "Domestic Help" categories continue to see the largest decreases, both at 37% below.

The number of online job adverts increased in 8 of the 12 UK countries and English regions, decreased in one (Scotland) and remained unchanged in three compared with the previous week. London saw the largest increase, at 7%.

Compared with the equivalent period of 2022, 9 of the 12 UK countries and English regions were below their level of a year ago. The largest decreases were in the East Midlands and the East of England, which fell by 14% and 13% respectively, while the North East saw the largest increase at 11%.

For further details, see our accompanying Online job advert estimates dataset.

Business impact and insights

Initial results from Wave 92 of our statistical bulletin Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) were collected from 18 September to 26 September 2023, with a response rate of 25.3% (9,839 responses).

Figure 4: Of trading businesses, 63% reported some form of concern for their business for October 2023, this figure has been gradually falling over the last 12 months

Business concern, businesses not permanently stopped trading, weighted by count, UK, 1 November 2022 to 31 October 2023

Figure 4: Of trading businesses, 63% reported some form of concern for their business for October 2023, this figure has been gradually falling over the last 12 months

Business concern, businesses not permanently stopped trading, weighted by count, UK, 1 November 2022 to 31 October 2023
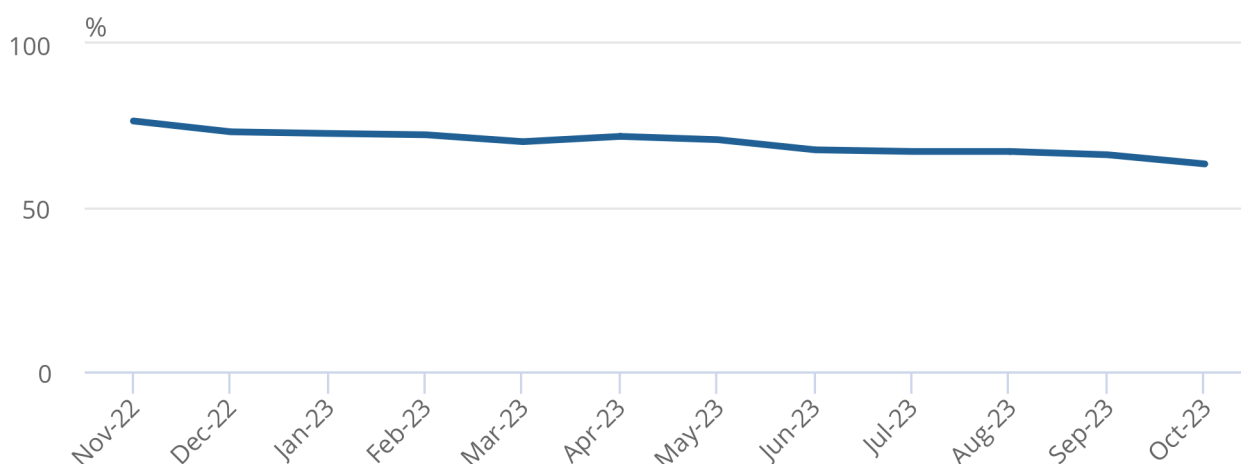
Source: Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Initial weighted results, Wave 92 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS).

2. For presentational purposes, some response options have been combined or excluded.

5 . Energy

System Average Price (SAP) of gas

The SAP of gas increased by 4% in the week to 24 September 2023, increasing for the second week in a row. This price is 61% below the equivalent week of 2022.

Our accompanying [System Average Price of gas dataset](#) is available.

6 . Transport

Daily UK flights

In the week to 24 September 2023, the daily average number of UK flights was 6,059, which is broadly unchanged compared with the previous week for the second consecutive week. This number is 10% higher than the number of flights seen in the equivalent week of 2022, but still 9% below the 2019 pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) baseline.

Our accompanying [Daily UK flights dataset](#) is available.

Traffic camera activity

Average daily traffic camera activity for cars in London in the week to 24 September 2023 was broadly unchanged compared with the previous week and 108% of the pre-coronavirus level. Pedestrian and cyclist levels in London were also unchanged in the latest week.

Our accompanying [Traffic camera activity dataset](#) is available.

7 . Data

Company incorporations, voluntary dissolutions and compulsory dissolutions
Dataset | Released 28 September 2023
The number of Companies House incorporations and voluntary dissolutions accepted, and companies placed into compulsory dissolution: weekly dataset.

Daily UK flights
Dataset | Released 28 September 2023
Experimental daily UK flight numbers and rolling seven-day average, including flights to, from, and within the UK.

Online job advert estimates
Dataset | Released 28 September 2023
Experimental job advert indices covering the UK job market.

Revolut spending on debit cards
Dataset | Released 28 September 2023
Experimental indices of Revolut debit card transaction data, UK. Includes sectoral, age and online versus in-store breakdowns. Daily seven-day averages updated weekly plus monthly averages.

System Average Price (SAP) of gas
Dataset | Released 28 September 2023
Daily and rolling average System Average Price (SAP) of gas traded in Great Britain over the On-the-Day Commodity Market (OCM).

UK spending on credit and debit cards
Dataset | Released 28 September 2023
These data series are experimental real-time indicators for monitoring UK spending using debit and credit cards. They track the daily CHAPS payments made by credit and debit card payment processors to around 100 major UK retail corporates, based on data supplied by the Bank of England.

This section lists a selection of the data available in this publication. For the full list of available datasets, please see our accompanying dataset page.

8 . 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.

9 . Measuring the data

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

10 . 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

Coronavirus 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.

11 . Related links

Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain
Bulletin | Released fortnightly
Social insights on daily life and events, including the cost of living, well-being and shortages of goods from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

Business insights and impact on the UK economy
Bulletin | Released fortnightly
The impact of challenges facing the economy and other events on UK businesses. Based on responses from the voluntary fortnightly business survey (BICS) to deliver real-time information to help assess issues affecting UK businesses and economy, including financial performance, workforce, trade, and business resilience.

Cost of living latest insights
Interactive tool | Released weekly
The latest data and trends about the cost of living. Explore changes in the cost of everyday items and how this is affecting people.

12 . Cite this statistical bulletin

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