

Statistical bulletin

Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators: 2 November 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.

Contact:
Tom Williams
realtime.indicators@ons.gov.uk
+44 1633 455932

Release date:
2 November 2023

Next release:
9 November 2023

Table of contents

1. [Main points](#)
2. [Latest indicators at a glance](#)
3. [Transport](#)
4. [Business and workforce](#)
5. [Consumer behaviour](#)
6. [Energy](#)
7. [Data](#)
8. [Glossary](#)
9. [Measuring the data](#)
10. [Strengths and limitations](#)
11. [Related links](#)
12. [Cite this statistical bulletin](#)

1 . Main points

- The average number of daily ship visits to major UK ports increased by 3% compared with the previous week and the daily average number of UK flights decreased by 1%; meanwhile, traffic camera activity for cars in London remained unchanged from the previous week (exactEarth, EUROCONTROL, Transport for London). [Section 3: Transport](#).
- The total number of online job adverts remained unchanged on 27 October 2023 compared with the previous week; this was 5% below the level in the equivalent period of 2022 (Adzuna). [Section 4: Business and workforce](#).
- Nearly two-thirds (63%) of businesses reported some form of concern for their business when looking ahead to November 2023; this is unchanged from October 2023 and remains the lowest percentage reported since the question was introduced in February 2022 (final results from Wave 94 of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey). [Section 4: Business and workforce](#).
- The latest data from small businesses show the number of paid jobs remained unchanged in September 2023 compared with August 2023, and were 1% higher than the same month last year; sales by small businesses decreased by 2% in September 2023 but were 1% higher than last year (Xero). [Section 4: Business and workforce](#).
- Consumer behaviour indicators showed increased activity in the latest period, with Revolut spending on debit cards increasing in all categories, overall retail footfall increasing to 107% of the level in the previous week, and UK spending on debit and credit cards remaining broadly unchanged (Revolut, Springboard, Bank of England CHAPS). [Section 5: Consumer Behaviour](#).
- Both the System Price of electricity and the System Average Price (SAP) of gas continued to rise, increasing by 9% and 6% respectively in the latest week; the System Price of electricity has risen for the third consecutive week while the SAP of gas has more than doubled since the beginning of June. (Elexon, National Gas Transmission). [Section 6: Energy](#).

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. 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.
2. Revolut adjustments to user count are at an aggregate level and as such age bands may not adjust evenly.
3. Users should note that the Aggregate UK spending on debit and credit cards (estimated from CHAPS payments) series has been updated, which is now presenting weekly seasonally adjusted data.
4. Users should note that the shipping data has experienced an overhaul of the data collection and processing systems resulting in a level shift across the entire time series of this indicator from previous releases.

3 . Transport

Weekly shipping indicators

This week we are re-introducing the shipping data. It was last published on 25 May 2023. This release follows a comprehensive overhaul of our data collection and processing systems, resulting in a level shift across the entire time series. While the overarching trends observed in the dataset have largely remained consistent with previous releases, we strongly advise against drawing direct comparisons between data from the 2 November release and that of prior releases, because of these systemic changes. Our primary objective in republishing this shipping data is to provide our users with valuable insights and a clearer understanding of the most recent shipping trends and movements.

Figure 1: The average number of daily ship visits to major UK ports increased by 3% in the week to 29 October 2023

Daily movements in shipping visits, preceding seven-day rolling average, 3 January 2021 to 29 October 2023

Figure 1: The average number of daily ship visits to major UK ports increased by 3% in the week to 29 October 2023

Daily movements in shipping visits, preceding seven-day rolling average, 3 January 2021 to 29 October 2023



Source: exactEarth and Office for National Statistics

Notes:

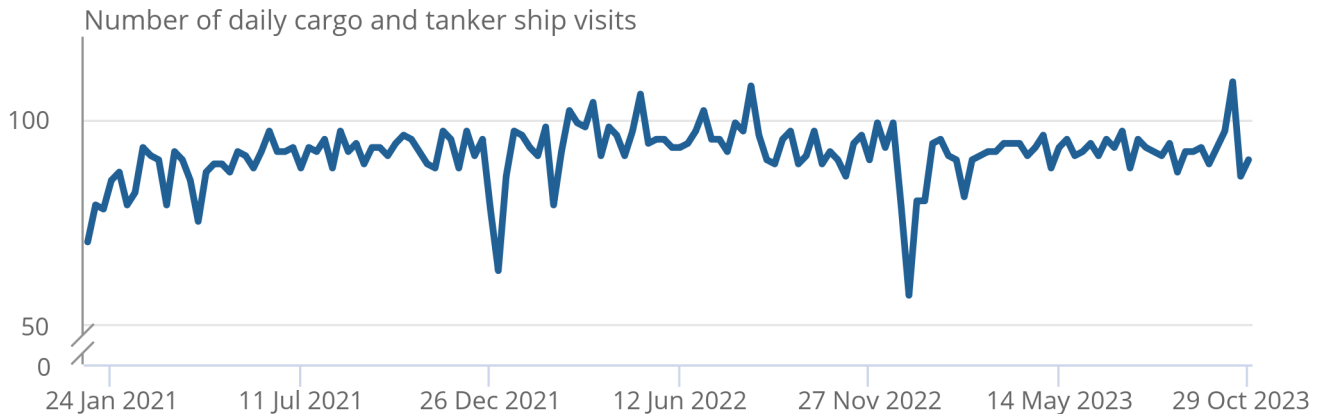
1. See the accompanying [Weekly shipping indicators dataset](#) for notable dates and weather events.
2. This data series has experienced an overhaul of the data collection and processing systems resulting in a level shift across the entire time series of this indicator from previous releases.

Figure 2: The average number of daily cargo and tanker ship visits to major UK ports increased by 4% in the week to 29 October 2023

Daily movements in cargo shipping visits preceding seven-day rolling average, 3 January 2021 to 29 October 2023

Figure 2: The average number of daily cargo and tanker ship visits to major UK ports increased by 4% in the week to 29 October 2023

Daily movements in cargo shipping visits preceding seven-day rolling average, 3 January 2021 to 29 October 2023



Source: exactEarth and Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. See the accompanying [Weekly shipping indicators dataset](#) for notable dates and weather events.
2. This data series has experienced an overhaul of the data collection and processing systems resulting in a level shift across the entire time series of this indicator from previous releases.

The average number of daily ship visits increased by 3%, going from 172 to 177 daily visits during the week ending on 29 October 2023. Specifically, daily visits from cargo and tanker ships increased by 4%, rising from 86 to 90 visits. When compared with the same period in 2022, there was no change in the number of daily ship visits or the daily number of cargo and tanker ship visits; the figures remained at 177 and 90 visits, respectively.

Our accompanying [Weekly shipping indicators dataset](#) is available.

Daily UK flights

In the week to 29 October 2023, the daily average number of UK flights was 5,696, a decrease of 1% when compared with the previous week. This is now the seventh consecutive week-on-week decrease, which is in line with seasonal trends. This number remains 8% higher than the level seen in the equivalent week of 2022, but 6% below the 2019 pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) baseline.

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

Traffic camera activity

Average traffic camera activity for cars in London in the week to 29 October 2023 was unchanged when compared with the level of the previous week and 106% of the pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) level. Pedestrian and cyclist levels in London fell by 5% when compared with the level of the previous week and was at 98% of the pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) level.

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

4 . Business and workforce

Sales and jobs in small businesses

Sales by small businesses decreased by 2% in September 2023 compared with August 2023, but were 1% higher than September 2022, as reported by Xero. Sales in arts and recreation services saw the largest decrease of all the categories, falling by 14% from August 2023 and by 6% compared with September 2022. These figures are not adjusted for inflation or seasonality.

Jobs in small businesses, measured by the number of employees issued a payslip in the month, remained unchanged in September 2023 compared with August 2023 and increased by 1% when compared with September 2022. Jobs in the rental, hiring and real estate services category rose the most month-on-month, increasing by 11% compared with August 2023, in line with regular seasonal expectations, and were unchanged compared with September 2022.

Jobs in art and recreation services increased by 7% in September 2023 compared with August 2023, but fell 7% compared with September last year.

Our accompanying [Sales and jobs in small businesses dataset](#) is available.

Business impact and insights

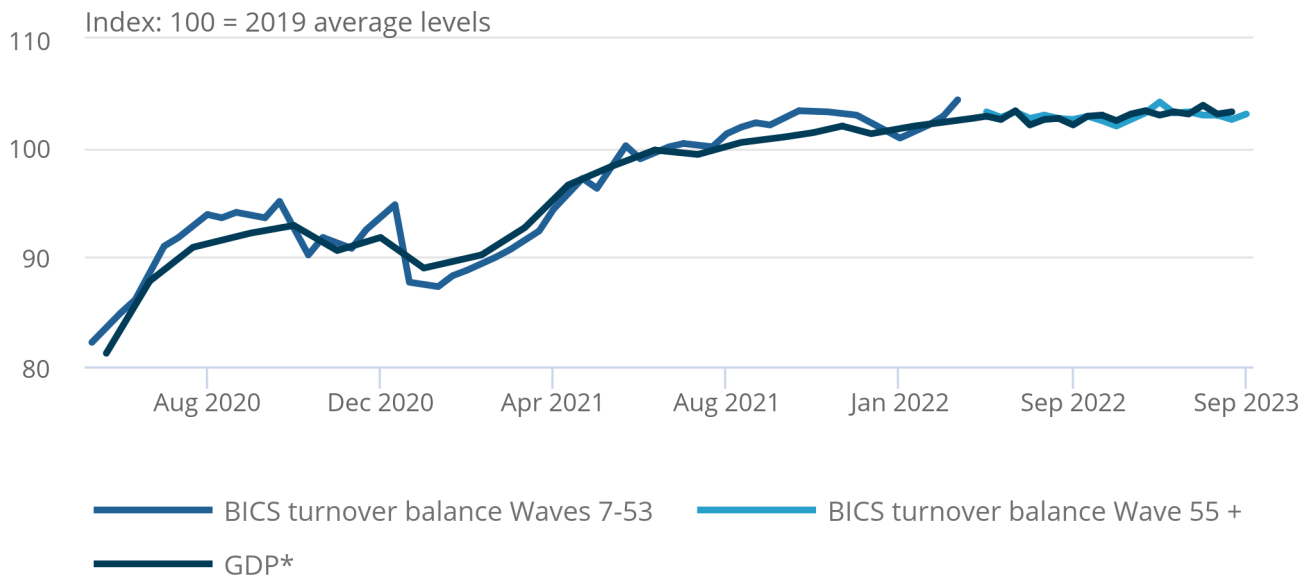
The Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) collects data from selected industries and does not have full coverage of the UK economy. For more information on the industries covered in the BICS sample, see our Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) QMI. To enable comparisons, we have created a reweighted gross domestic product (GDP) estimate, termed as GDP*, which only includes the same industries as those covered within the BICS.

Figure 3: Between August and September 2023 the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) standardised turnover balance estimate has risen by 0.4 percentage points

BICS turnover balance standardised and monthly GDP* estimates, index: 100 = 2019 average levels, UK, 1 June 2020 to 30 September 2023

Figure 3: Between August and September 2023 the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) standardised turnover balance estimate has risen by 0.4 percentage points

BICS turnover balance standardised and monthly GDP* estimates, index: 100 = 2019 average levels, UK, 1 June 2020 to 30 September 2023



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

Notes:

1. Final weighted results, Wave 7 to 94 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) and adjusted monthly gross domestic product (termed as GDP*) estimates.
2. BICS turnover balances have been standardised and adjusted for magnitude and trading status.
3. GDP* is a comparison measure derived to cover the same industries as those covered by BICS, which are then re-weighted. This differs from published monthly GDP.
4. In Wave 53, the BICS question changed from "the last two weeks" to "the last month". From Wave 55, the question changed to ask specifically about the most recent calendar month.
5. The BICS asks businesses to report how their value of turnover compares with the previous month, excluding seasonal changes. GDP* excludes any inflationary impacts and reflects the changes in volume terms.
6. Data are plotted in the middle of the reference period.
7. Please note that percentage point changes were calculated using unrounded figures.

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.

The total number of online job adverts were unchanged on 27 October 2023 compared with the previous week. Of the 28 online job advert categories, 7 increased, 4 remained unchanged and 17 decreased when compared with the previous week. The largest increases were seen in the "marketing, advertising and PR" and the "scientific and QA" categories, increasing by 16% and 13%, respectively. The largest decrease was seen in the "other and general" category of 8%, closely followed by the "charity and voluntary" and the "travel and tourism" categories, which both fell by 7%.

The total number of online job adverts decreased by 5% when compared with the equivalent period in 2022. Of the 28 online job advert categories, 23 decreased, with the largest decreases seen in the "HR and recruitment" category, which fell by 42%.

Of the 12 UK countries and English regions, 9 saw an increase in the number of online job adverts on 27 October 2023 when compared with the previous week. The largest increases were seen in London and the East of England, both increasing by 3%. The North East saw the largest decrease in online job adverts, falling by 6%.

When compared with the equivalent period of 2022, 11 out of the 12 UK countries and English regions saw a decrease, while the number of online job adverts in Wales remain unchanged. The largest decreases were seen in Yorkshire and the Humber, the East of England and the East Midlands, falling by 14% in all 3 regions.

For further details, see our accompanying [Online job advert estimates dataset](#).

Advanced notification of potential redundancies

Calculated as a rolling four-week average, the number of potential redundancies in the week to 22 October 2023 was 42% higher than the level in the equivalent week of 2022. The number of employers proposing redundancies was 19% higher than the level in the equivalent week of 2022.

Comparisons with the equivalent period a year ago help account for any seasonal impacts. For more information, see our [Advanced notification of potential redundancies dataset](#).

5 . Consumer behaviour

UK spending on debit and credit cards: weekly, seasonally adjusted 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:

- "staple" 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

The spending categories, when seasonally adjusted, recorded the following changes in the latest week:

- "aggregate" was broadly unchanged
- "delayable" was broadly unchanged
- "staple" was broadly unchanged
- "social" decreased by 1%
- "work-related" decreased by 2%

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

- "aggregate" increased by 1%
- "staple" increased by 6%
- "work-related" increased by 1%
- "delayable" decreased by 2%
- "social" decreased by 3%

The full data time series, including both seasonally adjusted and non-seasonally adjusted data, for UK spending on debit and credit cards can be found in our [accompanying dataset](#).

Revolut spending on debit cards

Total Revolut debit card spending increased by 6% in the week to 29 October 2023, with all six sector categories increasing for the first time since the week to 1 October 2023. The largest increase was in "retail" spending, which grew by 9%, followed by "entertainment" which grew by 5%, likely because of the school half term period across parts of the UK.

Total Revolut debit card spending is 9% above the level in the equivalent week of 2022 with "food and drink" and "retail" spending showing the largest growth at 18% and 12% respectively.

All sector categories were above the pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) baseline except "entertainment" spending, which is now 5% below this baseline.

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

National retail footfall

National retail footfall figures are supplied by Springboard, a provider of data on customer activity. The breakdowns in this indicator are as follows:

- overall footfall, which is the sum of the average footfall in each destination type weighted by their respective footfall volume
- shopping centre, which is a space that does not form part of the public highway, and is owned and managed by a single landlord
- high street, which is the central part of the main business and commercial area of a town
- retail parks and shopping parks, which comprise retail warehouse units, wholly owned and managed by a single landlord

Springboard's weekly data are defined over a seven-day period running from Monday to Sunday. Week 43 of 2023 refers to the period of Monday 23 October to Sunday 29 October 2023. All quoted figures have been rounded to the nearest integer.

Overall retail footfall in the week to 29 October 2023 increased to 107% of the level in the previous week, likely because of the school half term period across parts of the UK. The latest weeks level was 96% of the level seen in the equivalent week of 2022 and 89% of the level seen in the equivalent week of 2019.

Footfall increased in all three location categories when compared with the previous week, with shopping centre footfall increasing the most to 110%. High street and retail park footfall also increased in the latest week, to 108% and 102% of the level in the previous week.

When compared with the equivalent week of 2022, footfall remained broadly unchanged in retail parks, while footfall in shopping centres and high streets decreased to 96% and 94%, respectively, of the level in the equivalent week of 2022.

Of the 12 UK countries and English regions, overall retail footfall increased in 11 in the latest week, likely because of the school half term period across parts of the UK. The largest increase was seen in the East Midlands at 112%, followed by the South West of England at 111% of the level last week.

When comparing the overall UK retail footfall of the 12 UK countries and English regions to the same period of 2022, 11 of the 12 decreased, with only the "North West" of England remaining the same. The largest decreases were in Scotland and Wales, at 88% and 94% of the previous year's level respectively.

Transactions at Pret A Manger

In the week to the 26 October 2023, the number of in-store transactions at Pret A Manger stores decreased in 8 and increased in 2 of the 10 location categories when compared with the previous week. The largest decreases were seen in London city worker locations, followed by London stations which decreased by 8% and 7% respectively. The largest increase was seen in regional towns at 6%, followed by Scotland which increased by 5%.

Compared with the equivalent period in 2022, the number of in-store transactions at Pret A Manger increased in five and decreased in three and remained broadly unchanged in two of the location categories. The largest increase was seen in regional towns, which saw a 34% increase, followed by London airports with a 12% increase. Yorkshire saw the largest decrease at 12%, followed by London stations and Scotland, both of which decreased by 3%.

Our accompanying [Transactions at Pret A Manger dataset](#) is available.

6 . Energy

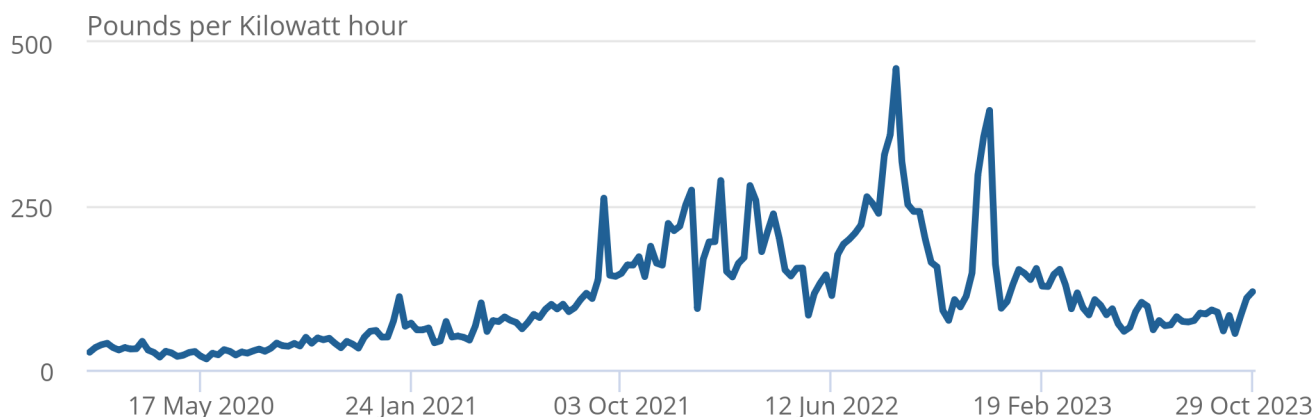
System Price of electricity

Figure 4: The System Price of electricity increased by 9% in the week to 29 October 2023, increasing for the third consecutive week

System Price of electricity, pounds per Kilowatt hour, preceding seven-day rolling average, 5 January 2020 to 29 October 2023, non-seasonally adjusted

Figure 4: The System Price of electricity increased by 9% in the week to 29 October 2023, increasing for the third consecutive week

System Price of electricity, pounds per Kilowatt hour, preceding seven-day rolling average, 5 January 2020 to 29 October 2023, non-seasonally adjusted



Source: Calculations on Balancing Mechanism Reporting Service (BMRS) data from the Office for National Statistics and © Elexon Limited copyright and database right 2023

In the week to the 29 October 2023, the System Price of electricity continued to rise, increasing by 9% when compared with the previous week, reaching the highest value seen since mid-March 2023.

The System Price of electricity is 58% higher than the equivalent period in 2022 and is 266% higher than the pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) baseline.

For further details, see our accompanying [System Price of electricity dataset](#).

System Average Price (SAP) of gas

In the week to 29 October 2023, the System Average Price (SAP) of gas increased by 6% when compared with the previous week. The SAP of gas has gradually been trending upwards since early June 2023, where the price was at its lowest this year, and has more than doubled since then.

This latest price was 149% above the level seen in the equivalent week of 2022 and is 402% above the level seen in the pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) baseline.

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

7 . Data

[Online job advert estimates](#)

Dataset | Released 2 November 2023

Experimental job advert indices covering the UK job market.

[Revolut spending on debit cards](#)

Dataset | Released 2 November 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.

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

Dataset | Released 2 November 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.

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

Dataset | Released 2 November 2023

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

[Company incorporations, voluntary dissolutions and compulsory dissolutions](#)

Dataset | Released 2 November 2023

The number of Companies House incorporations and voluntary dissolutions accepted, and companies placed into compulsory dissolution: weekly dataset.

[Daily UK flights](#)

Dataset | Released 2 November 2023

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

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

Office for National Statistics (ONS), published 2 November 2023, ONS website, statistical bulletin, [Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators: 2 November 2023](#)