Statistical bulletin

Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators: 9 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.

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1 . Main points

- Consumer behaviour indicators showed mixed activity in the latest period, with UK spending on debit and credit cards increasing in the latest week by 2%; meanwhile, UK footfall decreased to 96% of the level of the previous week (Bank of England CHAPS, Springboard). Section 3: Consumer Behaviour.

- The total number of online job adverts decreased by 2% when compared with the previous week and were 7% below the level in the equivalent period of 2022 (Adzuna). Section 4: Business and workforce.

- Both the System Price of electricity and System Average Price (SAP) of gas decreased when compared with the previous week by 24% and 9%, respectively; compared with the equivalent week of 2022, the System Price of electricity was 24% lower, whereas the SAP of gas was 8% higher (Elexon, National Gas Transmission). Section 5: Energy.

- The average number of daily ship visits to major UK ports decreased by 7% and the daily average number of UK flights decreased by 11% when compared with the previous week; meanwhile, traffic camera activity for cars in London fell by 2% in the week. (exactEarth, 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. 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. 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.

3. 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 . Consumer behaviour

Monthly Direct Debit average transaction amount and failure rate

The monthly Direct Debit failure rate and average transaction amount are anonymised and aggregated datasets made available to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) by Pay.UK and Vocalink. The data are unadjusted for inflation and therefore reflect economic activity in nominal terms. Further details on what is covered within this indicator can be found in our methodology guidance.

Figure 1: The total Direct Debit failure rate increased by 7% in October when compared with September 2023 and by 20% when compared with October 2022

Direct Debit failure rate, January 2019 to October 2023, non-seasonally adjusted, UK

Figure 1: The total Direct Debit failure rate increased by 7% in October when compared with September 2023 and by 20% when compared with October 2022

Direct Debit failure rate, January 2019 to October 2023, non-seasonally adjusted, UK

Source: Pay.UK and Vocalink

Notes:

1. Data include both individual and business Direct Debit transactions.

2. The total series covers all Direct Debit failure comprising data beyond the five categories published alongside.

3. The underlying failure rates are low, so month-to-month volatility is expected within this series.

The total Direct Debit failure rate in October 2023 increased by 7% when compared with the previous month, which has been driven by increases in the "electricity and gas", "loans" and "fitness facilities" spending categories. This rate also increased by 20% when compared with October 2022.

Figure 2: The value of the total monthly Direct Debit transaction amount in October 2023 has increased by 2% when compared with October 2022

Average transaction amount, January 2019 to October 2023, non-seasonally adjusted, UK

Figure 2: The value of the total monthly Direct Debit transaction amount in October 2023 has increased by 2% when compared with October 2022

Average transaction amount, January 2019 to October 2023, non-seasonally adjusted, UK

Index: February 2020 = 100
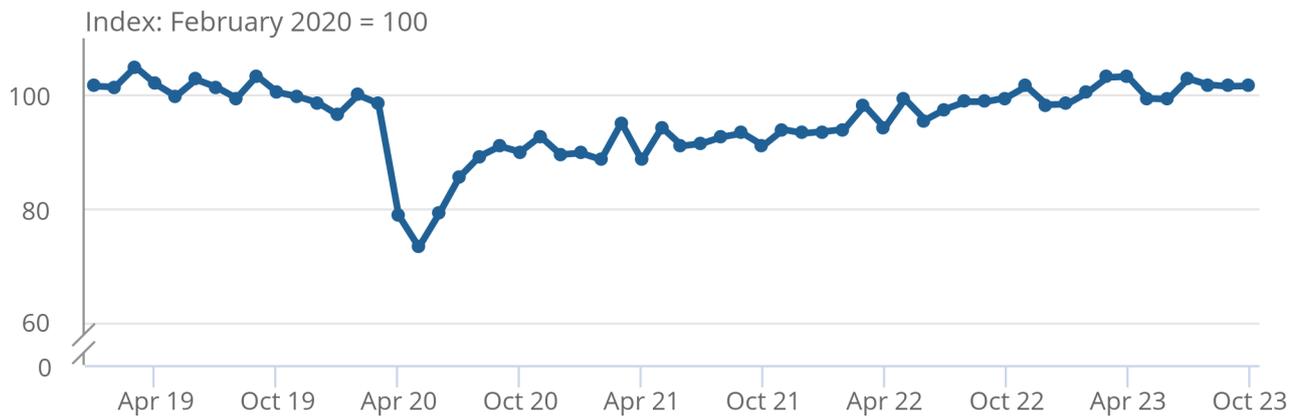
Source: Pay.UK and Vocalink

Notes:

1. Data include both individual and business Direct Debit transactions.

2. The total series covers all Direct Debit transactions and is comprised of data beyond the five categories published alongside.

3. Data are not adjusted for inflation.

4. Data are indexed to aid dissemination. However, we also publish data as absolute values, which can be found in our accompanying dataset.

The total monthly average Direct Debit transaction amount remained broadly unchanged in October 2023 when compared with September 2023. However, this amount increased by 2% when compared with October 2022.

Our accompanying Monthly Direct Debit failure rate and average transaction amount dataset is available.

Automotive fuel spending

In the week to 29 October 2023, the estimated growth in demand for fuel per transaction remained unchanged when compared with the previous week and was 12 percentage points lower than the equivalent period of last year.

Average growth in fuel prices decreased by 1 percentage point in the week to 29 October 2023 when compared with the previous week. This remains 30 percentage points lower than the equivalent week in 2022.

Our accompanying Automotive fuel spending dataset is available.

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

Figure 3: In the latest week, the seasonally adjusted CHAPS aggregate index of credit and debit card spending rose by 2%, with the largest increases seen in the "work-related" and "social" categories

Week ending 6 January 2022 to week ending 2 November 2023, seasonally adjusted, nominal prices

Figure 3: In the latest week, the seasonally adjusted CHAPS aggregate index of credit and debit card spending rose by 2%, with the largest increases seen in the "work-related" and "social" categories

Week ending 6 January 2022 to week ending 2 November 2023, seasonally adjusted, nominal prices
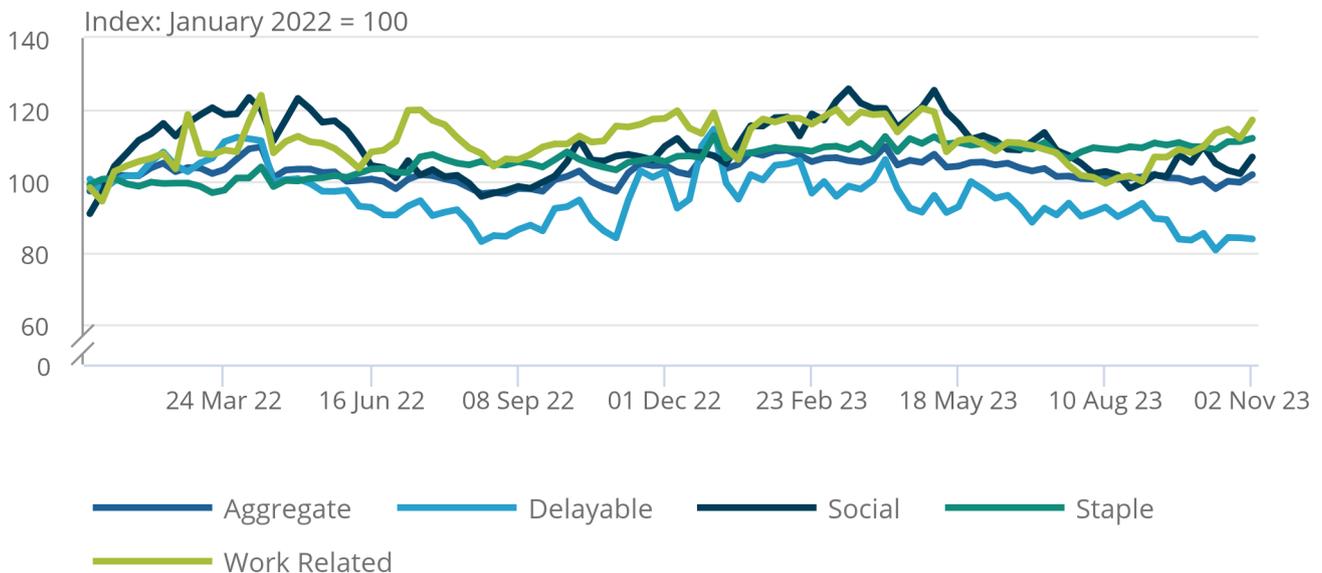
Source: Calculations from the Office for National Statistics and Bank of England

Notes:

1. Users should note the weekly payment data is the sum of card transactions processed up to the previous working day, so there is a time lag when compared with real-life events on the chart.

2. Percentage difference is derived from the current and previous index value before rounding.

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

- "aggregate" increased by 2%

- "delayable" was broadly unchanged

- "staple" increased by 1%

- "social" increased by 5%

- "work-related" increased by 5%

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

- "aggregate" increased by 5%

- "delayable" was broadly unchanged

- "staple" increased by 9%

- "social" was broadly unchanged

- "work-related" increased by 1%

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

# UK spending on debit and credit cards: monthly, seasonally adjusted (SA) CHAPS-based indicator

The monthly CHAPS-based aggregate index can provide an indication of the direction of retail sales data, having followed similar trends since the CHAPS index was established in January 2020. The ONS publishes retail sales data around the middle of each month, approximately two weeks after the monthly CHAPS index is published in this bulletin.

Figure 4: In October 2023, the seasonally adjusted monthly CHAPS-based aggregate indicator of credit and debit card spending fell by 1% compared with the previous month

Monthly average, seasonally adjusted, nominal prices and retail sales values, UK, January 2021 to October 2023

Figure 4: In October 2023, the seasonally adjusted monthly CHAPS-based aggregate indicator of credit and debit card spending fell by 1% compared with the previous month

Monthly average, seasonally adjusted, nominal prices and retail sales values, UK, January 2021 to October 2023
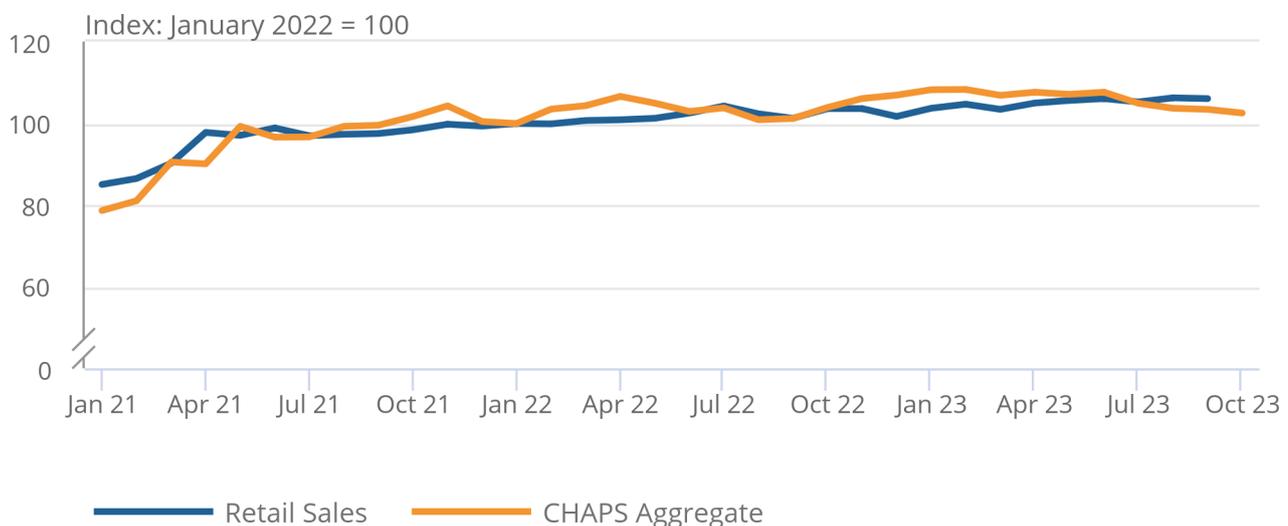
Source: Calculations on Bank of England data, and the Monthly Business Survey Retail Sales Inquiry, from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. CHAPS uses a broader definition of retail than the Retail Sales Index, including expenditure on train fares and social activities such as meals or drinks in pubs and restaurants.

2. 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.

3. OurRetail sales, Great Britain bulletin'smain measure is seasonally adjusted volume, which differs to the seasonally adjusted value series presented in this figure. The published retail sales data is one month (up to August 2023) behind our seasonally adjusted monthly CHAPS index calculations.

4. The seasonal adjustment of CHAPS is based on monthly data since January 2020. The quality of the seasonal adjustment will improve each month as new data are added to the model.

In October 2023, the SA CHAPS-based aggregate indicator of credit and debit spending fell by 1% when compared with the previous month and October 2022.

After seasonal adjustment, the "work-related" spending category saw a rise of 6% when compared with the previous month. The "staple" category remained broadly unchanged, while the "delayable" and "social" spending categories fell by 2% and 4%, respectively.

When compared with October 2022, the largest increase was seen in the "staple" category at 4% and the largest fall is seen in the "delayable" category, which fell by 8%.

The monthly and daily CHAPS indices are available in our accompanying UK spending on credit and debit cards dataset, which includes methodological notes that users should take into consideration. The monthly CHAPS index is calculated by the ONS, rather than being an additional series that is produced and validated by the Bank of England.

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 44 of 2023 refers to the period of Monday 30 October to Sunday 5 November 2023. All quoted figures have been rounded to the nearest integer.

Figure 5: Overall retail footfall in the week to 5 November 2023 was 102% of the equivalent week of 2022

Volume of daily retail footfall, percentage compared with the equivalent week of 2022, 1 January 2023 to 5 November 2023, UK

Figure 5: Overall retail footfall in the week to 5 November 2023 was 102% of the equivalent week of 2022

Volume of daily retail footfall, percentage compared with the equivalent week of 2022, 1 January 2023 to 5 November 2023, UK
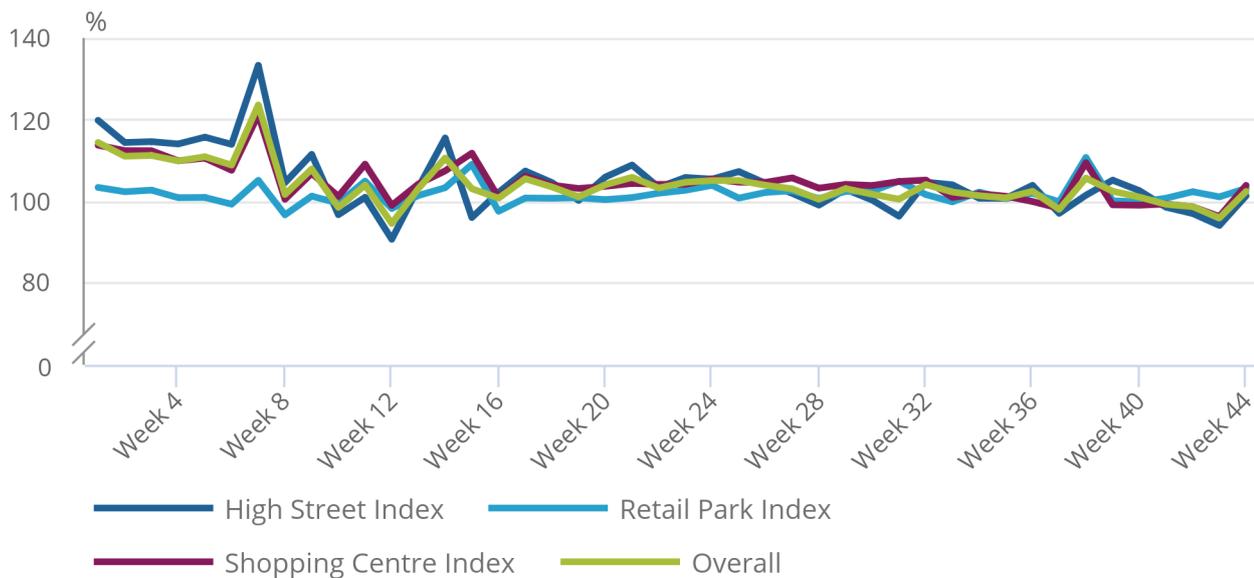
Source: Springboard

Notes:

1. The peak observed in Week 7 of 2023 coincides with school half-term holidays and extreme adverse weather during the equivalent period of 2022.

In the week to 5 November 2023, overall UK retail footfall was 96% of the level of the previous week, coinciding with school half-term break across parts of the UK. The latest week's level was 102% of the level in the equivalent week of 2022 and 91% of the level seen in the equivalent week of 2019.

Footfall decreased week-on-week in all three location categories. High street footfall saw the biggest change, decreasing to 94% of the previous week. Shopping centre footfall decreased to 97%, while retail park footfall decreased slightly to 99%.

When compared with the same period of 2022, all location categories increased. The largest change was in shopping centres, which increased to 104% of last year's level. Retail parks increased to 103% and high street footfall to 101%.

Of the 12 UK countries and English regions, overall retail footfall decreased in seven in the latest week, while four increased and one remained unchanged. This is possibly because of the staggered school half-term period across parts of the UK. The largest increase occurred in Northern Ireland, where footfall rose to 111% of the level seen in the previous week, with the largest decrease in the South West, decreasing to 90%.

When comparing the overall UK retail footfall of the 12 UK countries and English regions to the same period of 2022, the largest changes were in Wales, which decreased to 96% of the previous year's level, and the North West, which increased to 106% of the previous year's level.

# 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 6: The total number of online job adverts on 3 November 2023 decreased by 7% when compared with the level seen in the equivalent period of 2022

Volume of online job adverts, 7 February 2018 to 3 November 2023, non-seasonally adjusted, UK

Figure 6: The total number of online job adverts on 3 November 2023 decreased by 7% when compared with the level seen in the equivalent period of 2022

Volume of online job adverts, 7 February 2018 to 3 November 2023, non-seasonally adjusted, UK
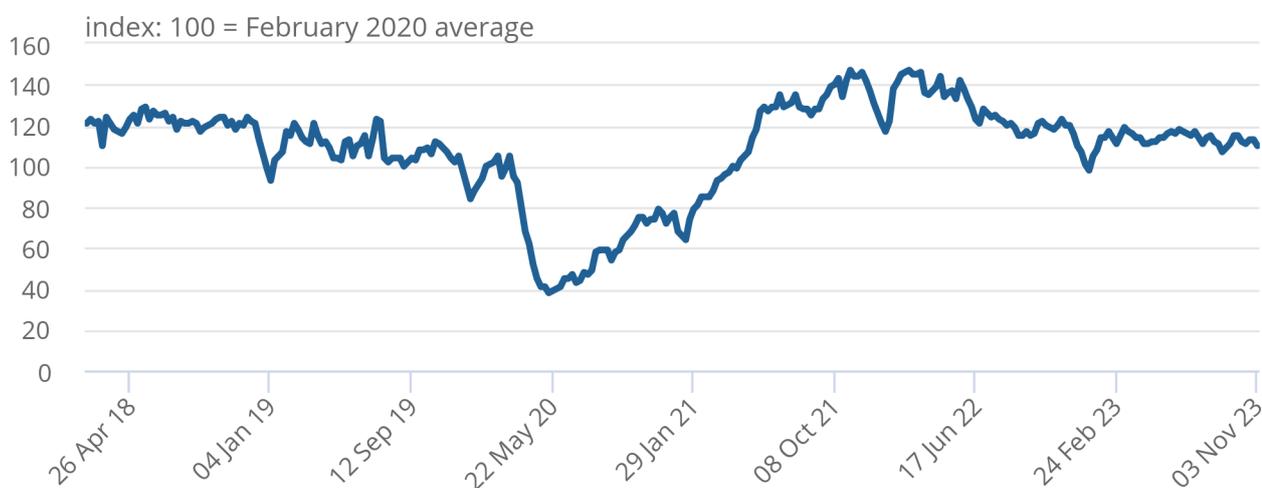
Source: Adzuna

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 decreased by 2% on 3 November 2023 when compared with the previous week. Of the 28 online job categories, 25 decreased, 1 category increased, and 2 remained unchanged. The largest decreases were found in the "catering and hospitality", "manufacturing" and "legal" categories, all decreasing by 6%. The only increase was in the "creative, design, arts and media" category, which rose by 1%.

The total number of online job adverts decreased by 7% compared with the equivalent period of 2022. Of the 28 online job categories, 22 were below their equivalent levels in the previous year. The largest decreases were in "domestic help" and "transport, logistics and warehouse" at 33%, closely followed by "IT, computing and software" at 31%.

All 12 of the UK countries and English regions decreased in the number of online job adverts on 3 November 2023 when compared with the previous week. The largest decreases were seen in London and Yorkshire and The Humber, both decreasing by 4%.

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 Northern Ireland remain unchanged. The largest decreases were again seen in London and Yorkshire and The Humber, decreasing by 17% and 16%, respectively.

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 29 October 2023 was 49% above the level in the equivalent week of 2022. The number of employers proposing redundancies was 24% above 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.

Business impact and insights

Initial results from Wave 95 of our [Business insights and impact on the UK economy: 2 November 2023 bulletin](#) were collected from 30 October to 7 November 2023, with a response rate of 22.2% (8,617 responses).

Table 1: Of trading businesses, 14% experienced an increase in turnover compared with the previous month in October 2023, remaining broadly unchanged compared with September 2023
Business turnover, businesses currently trading, weighted by count, 1 October 2022 to 31 October 2023

Date	Turnover increased	Turnover stayed the same	Turnover decreased	Not sure	Net balance
November 2022	12.8%	52.6%	26.4%	8.2%	-13.6%
December 2022	13.2%	45.4%	30.2%	11.1%	-17.0%
January 2023	16.2%	45.6%	29.1%	9.1%	-12.9%
February 2023	16.4%	50.0%	25.0%	8.6%	-8.6%
March 2023	19.4%	52.8%	19.1%	8.7%	0.3%
April 2023	15.8%	50.1%	25.5%	8.7%	-9.7%
May 2023	15.5%	51.8%	23.3%	9.4%	-7.8%
June 2023	14.5%	52.9%	23.6%	9.0%	-9.1%
July 2023	16.7%	50.1%	25.0%	8.2%	-8.3%
August 2023	14.7%	51.6%	26.6%	7.2%	-11.9%
September 2023	14.0%	53.3%	23.6%	9.2%	-9.6%
October 2023	14.2%	53.5%	23.9%	8.4%	-9.7%

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

Notes

1. Final weighted results Wave 93 and initial weighted results Wave 95 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS).

2. Rows may not sum to 100% because of rounding.

5 . Energy

System Price of electricity

Figure 7: The System Price of electricity decreased by 24% in the week to 5 November 2023, decreasing for the first time since early October 2023

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

Figure 7: The System Price of electricity decreased by 24% in the week to 5 November 2023, decreasing for the first time since early October 2023

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

pound per megawatt hour

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

In the week to 5 November 2023, the System Price of electricity decreased for the first time since mid-October by 24% compared with the previous week. This price is 16% lower than the equivalent period of 2022, but still 177% higher than the pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic baseline.

For further details, see our accompanying System Price of electricity dataset.

System Average Price (SAP) of gas

In the week to the 5 November 2023, the System Average Price (SAP) of gas decreased by 9% when compared with the previous week, following a similar trend seen in the first week of October 2023. This latest price is 8% above the level seen in the equivalent week of 2022 and 357% above the pre-pandemic baseline.

Our accompanying System Average Price of gas dataset is available.

6 . Transport

Weekly shipping indicators

The average number of daily ship visits decreased by 7%, going from 178 to 164 daily visits during the week ending on 5 November 2023. Specifically, the average number of daily visits from cargo and tanker ships decreased by 5%, falling from 91 to 86 visits. When compared with the same period in 2022, the daily number of ship visits fell by 1%, while cargo and tanker ship visits increased by 1%.

The number of ship visits decreased during Storm Ciarán (1 November and 2 November), particularly in the south of England.

Our accompanying Weekly shipping indicators dataset is available.

Daily UK flights

In the week to 5 November 2023, the daily average number of UK flights was 5,050, a decrease of 11% when compared with the previous week. This follows usual seasonal patterns. This number is 11% higher than the number of flights seen in the equivalent week of 2022, but still 9% below the 2019 pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic baseline.

Our accompanying Daily UK flights dataset is available.

Traffic camera activity

Average traffic camera activity for cars in London in the week to 5 November 2023 fell by 2% when compared with the level of the previous week and was 104% of the pre-pandemic level. Pedestrian and cyclist levels in London fell by 7% when compared with the level of the previous week, although it was only 91% of the pre pandemic level.

Our accompanying Traffic camera activity dataset is available.

7 . Data

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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