

Statistical bulletin

Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators: 19 March 2026

Data on the UK economy and society. These faster indicators are created using rapid response surveys, novel data sources, and innovative methods. These are official statistics in development.

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Release date:
19 March 2026

Next release:
23 April 2026

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1 . Main points

- Consumer activity slowed as both total retail footfall and the seasonally adjusted total Revolut debit card spending decreased by 4% and 2%, respectively, compared with January 2026 (BT Active Intelligence, Revolut). [Section 3: Consumer behaviour](#).
- The seasonally adjusted Direct Debit failure rate increased by 1% to 2.44%, compared with January 2026 (2.41%), and by 9% when compared with February 2025 (2.25%) (Vocalink and Pay.UK). [Section 3: Consumer behaviour](#).
- Business and workforce indicators were more positive than the previous month; a net 3% of firms reported a month-on-month increase in turnover, up 2 percentage points compared with January 2026, and the number of potential redundancies fell by 2% over the same period (HM Revenue and Customs Value Added Tax returns, Insolvency Service HR1 forms). [Section 4: Business and workforce](#).
- Wholesale gas and electricity prices decreased compared with January 2026, coinciding with milder-than-average weather and an easing in supply constraints (National Gas Transmission, Elexon). [Section 5: Energy](#).
- The seasonally adjusted transport indicators showed mixed activity, compared with the previous month; the number of UK flights increased by 1% whilst the number of ship visits to major UK ports decreased by 2% (exactEarth, EUROCONTROL). [Section 6: Transport](#).
- The seasonally adjusted number of new vehicle registrations increased by 3%, compared with January 2026, and increased by 5% when compared with February 2025 (The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT)). [Section 6: Transport](#).
- The seasonally adjusted number of Energy Performance Building Certificates (EPCs) lodged in England and Wales for new dwellings remained broadly unchanged, compared with January 2026, but increased by 7% when compared with February 2025 (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government). [Section 7: Housing](#).

These are [official statistics in development](#), and we advise caution when using the data. The 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. Read more in [Section 10: Data sources and quality](#).

2 . Latest indicators at a glance

Notes:

1. Card spending over time is pushed upwards by the impacts of both inflation on value of transactions and cash-to-card conversion.
2. Indicators with "SA" in the title have been seasonally adjusted. Indicators with "NSA" in the title have not been seasonally adjusted but do present seasonality. All other indicators do not present seasonality.
3. Existing EPC data can show sudden spikes when housing associations lodge multiple expired EPCs at once.

3 . Consumer behaviour

February 2026 saw a decrease in retail footfall compared with both the previous month, and when compared with the same month of the previous year. Debit card spending also fell month-on-month but was higher than a year ago (unadjusted for inflation). Direct Debit average transaction amounts and failure rates continued to increase month-on-month and when compared with the same month one year ago.

UK retail footfall

UK retail footfall decreased by 4% in February 2026, compared with January 2026, and decreased by 6% when compared with February 2025, as exceptionally wet weather deterred shoppers from making in-store visits.

Footfall decreased in all three site types, compared with January 2026; retail parks decreased by 7%, district and local centres by 5%, and town and city centres decreased by 2%.

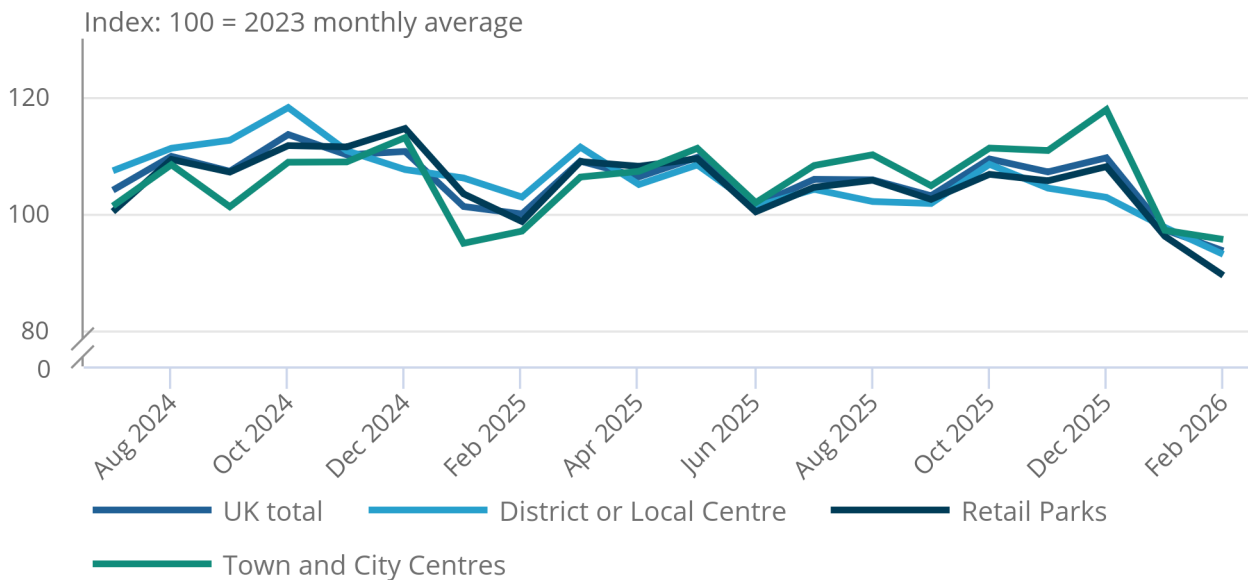
When compared with February 2025, footfall decreased in district and local centres by 10%, retail parks by 9%, and in town and city centres by 1%.

Figure 1: UK retail footfall decreased by 4% in February 2026 compared with January 2026

Index of monthly retail footfall volumes, UK, July 2024 to February 2026, non-seasonally adjusted

Figure 1: UK retail footfall decreased by 4% in February 2026 compared with January 2026

Index of monthly retail footfall volumes, UK, July 2024 to February 2026, non-seasonally adjusted



Source: BT Active Intelligence

Notes:

1. BT Active Intelligence retail footfall data are an estimate of UK retail footfall. The data exclude those who work and live in retail areas and only count visitors to these locations.
2. The data are available from July 2024 onwards. This back series is not long enough to perform seasonal adjustment of the data, so caution is advised when assessing seasonal impacts.

Retail footfall decreased in 11 of the 12 regions (including UK countries and English regions) in February 2026, compared with January 2026. The largest decrease was in the East of England (5%) while Northern Ireland, where footfall was unchanged, was the only region not to record a fall.

When compared with February 2025, retail footfall decreased in each of the 12 regions. The largest decreases over this period were in Wales (13%), the North West (11%), and the North East (11%).

Figure 2: Retail footfall decreased in each of the 12 UK regions in February 2026 when compared with February 2025

Change in retail footfall by region, UK, February 2026, non-seasonally adjusted

Notes:

1. Details of the methods used to compile these data are available in the [BT Active Intelligence methodology](#).
2. Data are available in further detail, broken down by region and site type, in our accompanying [UK retail footfall dataset](#).

Revolut spending on debit cards

Seasonally adjusted Revolut debit card spending decreased by 2% in February 2026 compared with January 2026. Decreases were seen in seven of the nine spend categories. "Entertainment", "Services", and "Shopping" saw the largest decreases of 5%, 4%, and 4%, respectively. "Utilities" remained broadly unchanged, and "Health" was the only category to increase, climbing by 1%.

When compared with February 2025, seasonally adjusted Revolut debit card spending increased by 10%, increasing in all nine spend categories, with the largest increases seen in "Services", "Utilities", and "Entertainment", rising by 20%, 14%, and 13%, respectively.

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

Monthly Direct Debit average transaction amount and failure rate

The seasonally adjusted total Direct Debit average transaction amount increased by 1% in February 2026, compared with January 2026. The average transaction amounts for "Other" increased by 1%, while "Electricity and gas" decreased by 1%. All other categories were all broadly unchanged.

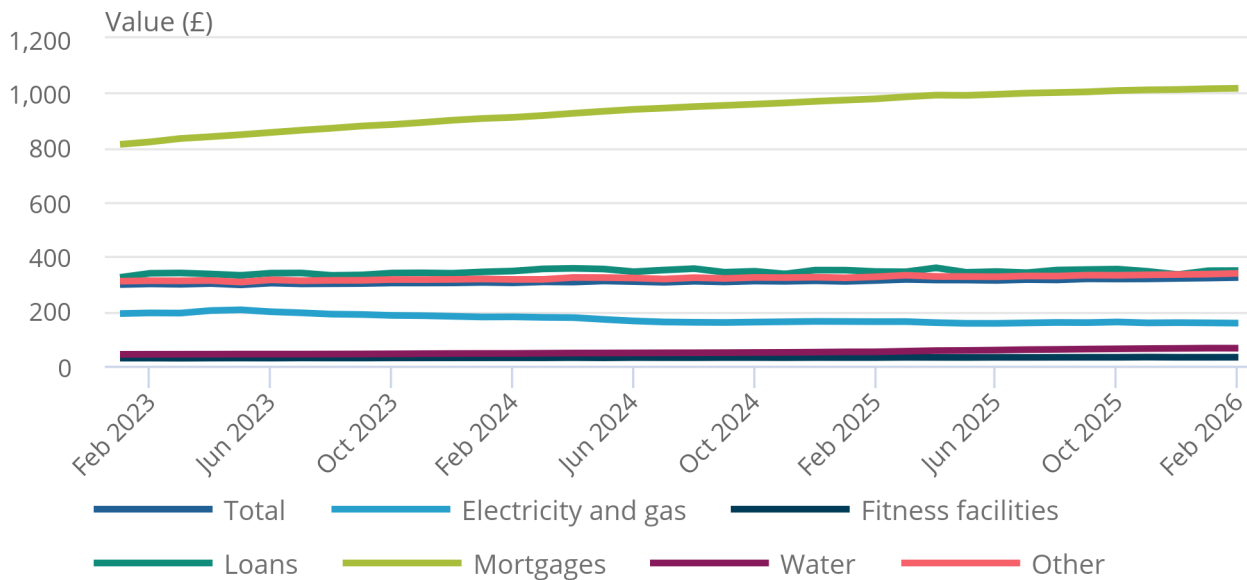
The seasonally adjusted Direct Debit average transaction amount increased by 3% when compared with February 2025. "Water" remained the category with the largest year-on-year increase, rising by 26% from February 2025. "Electricity and gas" was the only category to record a year-on-year fall, decreasing by 3% over the same period.

Figure 3: The Direct Debit average transaction amount for February 2026 increased by 1% from January 2026

Average transaction amount, UK, January 2023 to February 2026, seasonally adjusted

Figure 3: The Direct Debit average transaction amount for February 2026 increased by 1% from January 2026

Average transaction amount, UK, January 2023 to February 2026, seasonally adjusted



Source: Pay.UK and Vocalink

Notes:

1. Data include both individual and business Direct Debit transactions.
2. Data are not adjusted for inflation.

The seasonally adjusted Direct Debit failure rate increased by 1% in February 2026, compared with January 2026. "Fitness facilities" and "Loans" saw the largest increases of 5% and 4%, respectively. Failure rates over this period decreased only in "Water", by 1%.

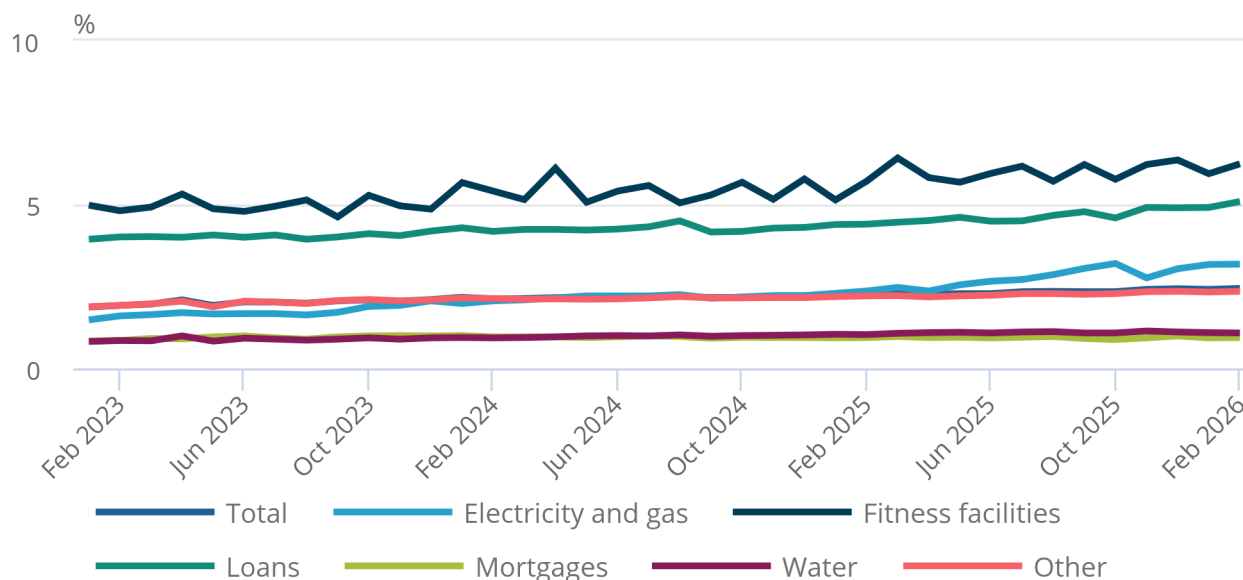
The seasonally adjusted Direct Debit failure rate increased by 9% in February 2026 when compared with February 2025. Year-on-year increases were seen across all major categories: "Electricity and gas" (34%), "Loans" (16%), "Fitness facilities" (9%), "Other" (6%), "Water" (5%), and "Mortgages" (1%).

Figure 4: The Direct Debit failure rate increased by 1% in February 2026 compared with January 2026

Direct Debit failure rate, UK, January 2023 to February 2026, seasonally adjusted

Figure 4: The Direct Debit failure rate increased by 1% in February 2026 compared with January 2026

Direct Debit failure rate, UK, January 2023 to February 2026, seasonally adjusted



Source: Pay.UK and Vocalink

Notes:

1. The underlying failure rates are low, so month-to-month volatility is expected within this series.
2. Weak evidence is found for seasonality within the Fitness Facilities failure rate series, so while the seasonally adjusted data are presented, they should be used with caution, and the raw non-seasonally adjusted series should be used where applicable.

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 reflect economic activity in nominal terms.

For further details on what is covered within this indicator, see our [Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators methodology](#).

Our accompanying [Monthly Direct Debit failure rate and average transaction amount dataset](#) is available.

Automotive Fuel Spending

The annual growth rate for the average price of automotive fuel decreased by 3 percentage points in February 2026, when compared with both the previous month, and the equivalent month of 2025. This reflects the relatively low global oil prices before the start of events in Iran on 28 February 2026.

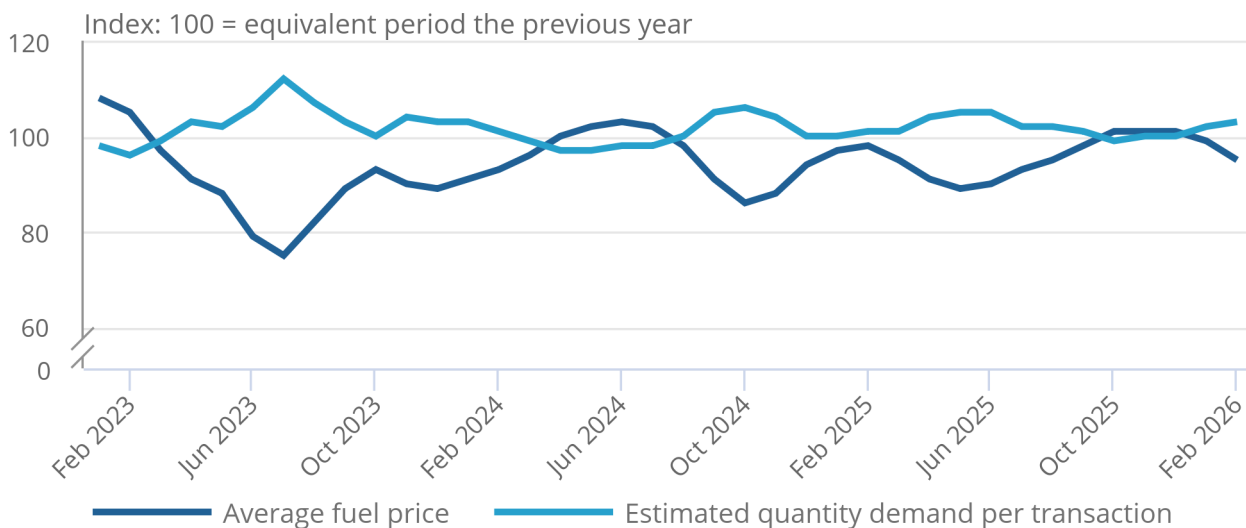
The growth rate for the average fuel demand per transaction increased by 1 percentage point in February 2026 when compared with the previous month and increased by 2 percentage points when compared with the same month of 2025.

Figure 5: The annual growth rate for average automotive fuel demand per transaction increased by 1 percentage point in February 2026 compared with the previous month

Index of year-on-year change in fuel price and estimated quantity demand, UK, January 2023 to February 2026, non-seasonally adjusted

Figure 5: The annual growth rate for average automotive fuel demand per transaction increased by 1 percentage point in February 2026 compared with the previous month

Index of year-on-year change in fuel price and estimated quantity demand, UK, January 2023 to February 2026, non-seasonally adjusted



Source: Aggregated anonymised card spending data from Office for National Statistics; Road fuel price, road fuel sales and stock levels from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero

4 . Business and workforce

Business and workforce indicators were generally more positive than the previous month. More firms reported a month-on-month increase in turnover and the number of potential redundancies fell.

Value Added Tax flash estimates

Turnover diffusion indices are an aggregate measure used to track whether most firms are reporting an increase or decrease in turnover in their Value Added Tax (VAT) returns. They are calculated as the percentage of firms with increasing turnover, minus the percentage of firms with decreasing turnover.

VAT returns are forms submitted by businesses to HMRC that detail how much VAT they have charged (turnover VAT), and how much they have paid to other businesses (expenditure VAT). This dataset only uses VAT returns received within the first seven days after each reporting month to allow for early (flash) estimates. This accounted for approximately 11,540 businesses in February 2026. Quarterly or annual reporting businesses are not included, as they do not file returns every month and are not part of the flash estimate pipeline.

Figure 6: The number of firms reporting an increased turnover was 3% higher than those reporting a decreased turnover, up 2 percentage points from January 2026

Weighted Value Added Tax (VAT) month-on-month turnover diffusion indices, UK, January 2023 to February 2026, seasonally adjusted

Notes:

1. These data are current price so may reflect elements of inflation.
2. The shaded areas represent the 95% confidence limits.
3. The confidence limits are 1.96 standard deviations of the seasonally adjusted series, centred around zero. If a data point is outside of these limits, it is a statistically significant difference.

A net 3% of firms reported a month-on-month increase in turnover in February 2026, a 2 percentage point increase when compared with January 2026 and within normal month-on-month variation.

The services sector, the largest contributing sector to gross domestic product (GDP), had a net 3% of firms reporting an increase in turnover in February 2026, compared with the previous month. This was an increase of 3 percentage points from January 2026 and within normal month-on-month variation.

In the construction sector, the net number of firms reporting an increase in turnover was broadly equal to the number of firms reporting a decrease. This remained broadly unchanged from January 2026.

For both the production and the agriculture sectors, the net proportion of firms reporting a month-on-month increase in turnover fell. In the production sector, a net 1% of firms reported an increase in turnover in February 2026, a 3 percentage point decrease compared with January 2026, and within normal month-on-month variation.

In the agriculture sector, a net 6% of firms reported decreased turnover, down 4 percentage points compared with January 2026, and just outside the limit of normal month-on-month variation.

These estimates have been weighted according to each industry's contribution to the economy. As services have the greatest contribution, they have a greater contribution to the total index. The data are seasonally adjusted. More information on the compilation and methodology of these estimates can be found in our [Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators methodology](#).

Our accompanying [Value Added Tax \(VAT\) flash estimates dataset](#) is available.

Advanced notification of potential redundancies

The number of potential redundancies decreased by 2% in February 2026 compared with January 2026. Over the same period, the number of employers proposing redundancies increased by 8%.

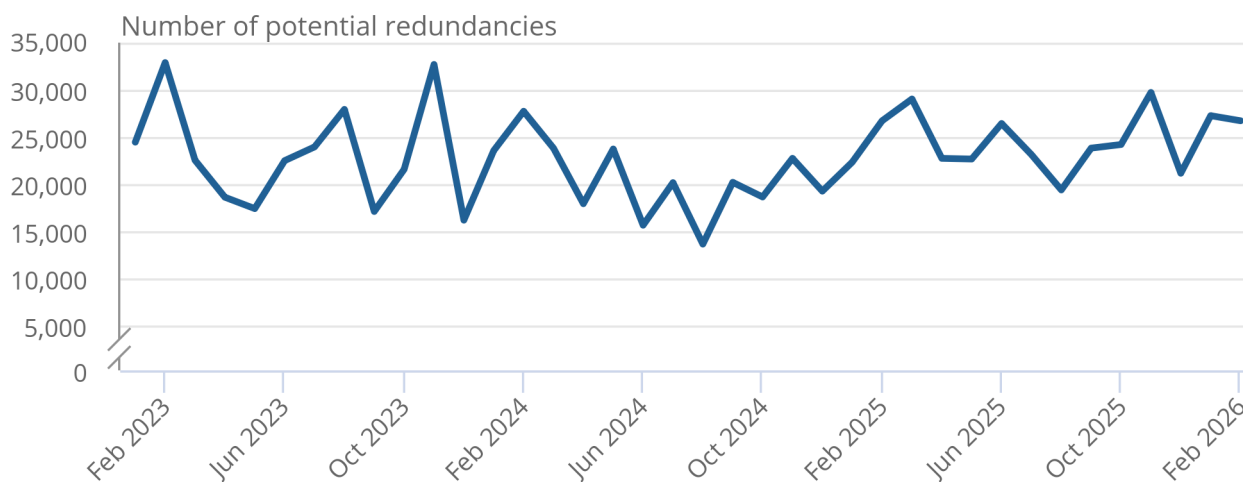
When compared with February 2025, the number of potential redundancies remained broadly unchanged, while the number of employers proposing redundancies increased by 9%.

Figure 7: The number of potential redundancies decreased by 2% in February 2026 compared with January 2026, and was broadly unchanged when compared with February 2025

Monthly potential redundancies, UK, January 2023 to February 2026, non-seasonally adjusted

Figure 7: The number of potential redundancies decreased by 2% in February 2026 compared with January 2026, and was broadly unchanged when compared with February 2025

Monthly potential redundancies, UK, January 2023 to February 2026, non-seasonally adjusted



Source: Insolvency Service HR1 forms

For more information, our accompanying [Advanced notification of potential redundancies weekly dataset](#) is available. Industry and regional breakdowns by month are available in our [monthly potential redundancies dataset](#).

5 . Energy

Wholesale gas and electricity prices fell in February 2026 as exceptionally mild temperatures reduced heating demand, while robust Liquefied Natural Gas deliveries into Europe and strong electricity generation from renewables kept the UK energy system well supplied.

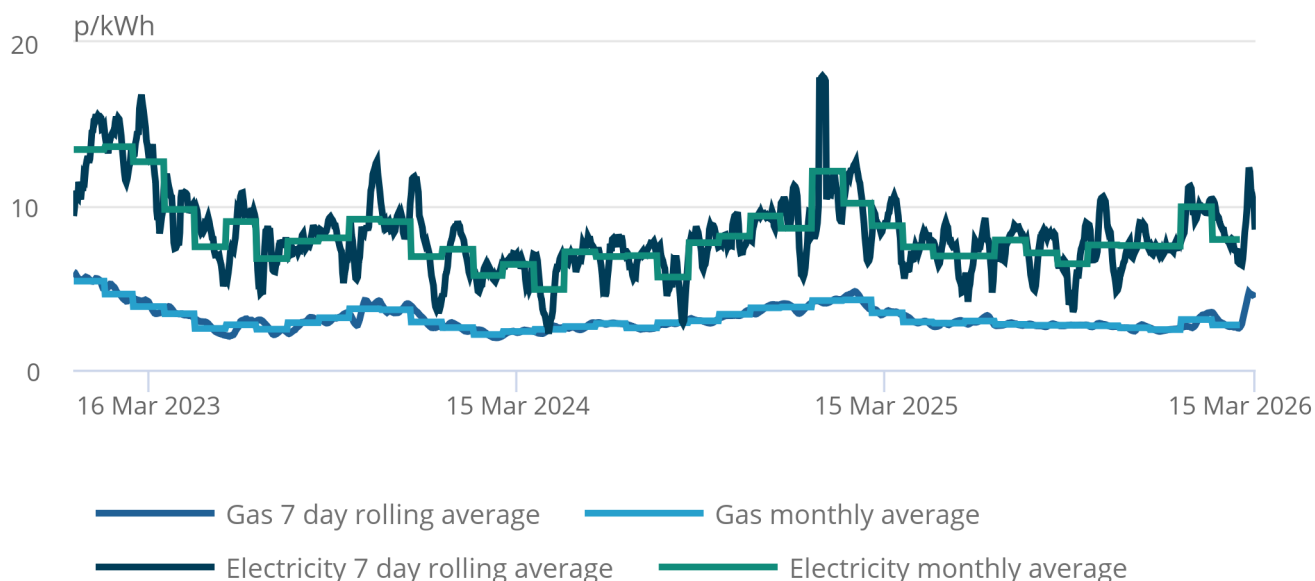
System Average Price of gas and System Price of electricity

Figure 8: The System Average Price of gas decreased by 11% in February 2026, while the System Price of electricity decreased by 20%, compared with January 2026

System Average Price (SAP) of gas and System Price of electricity, monthly average and seven-day rolling average, UK, 1 January 2023 to 15 March 2026, non-seasonally adjusted

Figure 8: The System Average Price of gas decreased by 11% in February 2026, while the System Price of electricity decreased by 20%, compared with January 2026

System Average Price (SAP) of gas and System Price of electricity, monthly average and seven-day rolling average, UK, 1 January 2023 to 15 March 2026, non-seasonally adjusted



Source: Elexon, National Gas Transmission

The System Average Price (SAP) of gas decreased by 11% in February 2026, compared with January 2026, from 3.064 pence per kilowatt hour (p/kWh) to 2.733p/kWh. The price decreased by 36% when compared with February 2025, which had a monthly SAP of 4.265p/kWh.

The System Price of electricity decreased by 20% in February 2026, compared with January 2026, from an average price of 9.952p/kWh to 7.953p/kWh. The price decreased by 22% when compared with February 2025, which had a monthly price of 10.172p/kWh.

The decrease in wholesale gas and electricity prices in February 2026 coincided with milder-than-average weather reducing heating demand. This was combined with healthy Liquefied Natural Gas deliveries into Europe and above-average wind generation, reducing the reliance on gas-fired power stations for electricity generation. More information is available in [Weather and Climate summaries - Met Office](#).

Changes in the System Average Price (SAP) of gas and the System Price of electricity are considered by the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (Ofgem) when setting the energy price caps for the next three months. Large changes in these prices can indicate that the future price cap set by Ofgem will change.

Our accompanying [System Average Price of gas dataset](#) and [System Price of electricity dataset](#) are available.

6 . Transport

New vehicle registrations

The seasonally adjusted number of new vehicle registrations increased by 3% in February 2026 compared with January 2026, and increased by 5% when compared with February 2025.

The largest month-on-month increase in new registrations was in light commercial vehicles (LCVs), which increased by 6%, reflecting a reversal of the decrease in the previous month. Registrations of business cars, in contrast, decreased by 20% in February 2026 compared with January 2026. Registrations of private cars increased by 4% over this period and fleet cars increased by 2%.

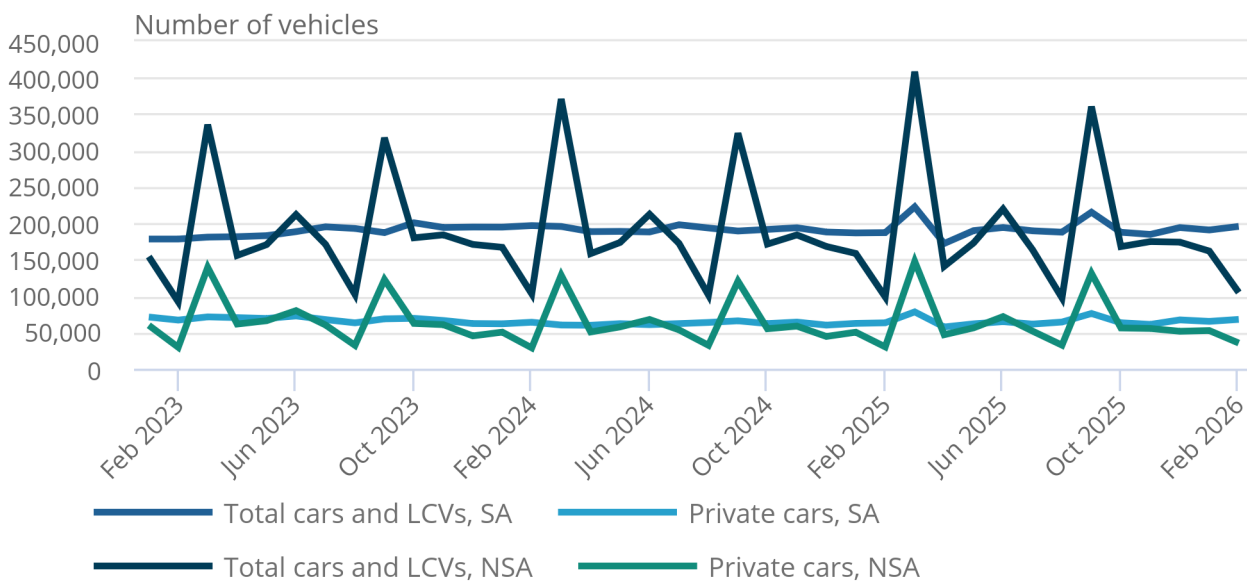
Fleet cars made up the largest proportion of new vehicle registrations at just over a half (51%) in February 2026, while business cars made up the smallest proportion (2%).

Figure 9: The seasonally adjusted number of new vehicle registrations increased by 3% in February 2026 compared with January 2026

Number of new car and Light Commercial Vehicle (LCV) registrations, UK, January 2023 to February 2026, seasonally adjusted and non-seasonally adjusted

Figure 9: The seasonally adjusted number of new vehicle registrations increased by 3% in February 2026 compared with January 2026

Number of new car and Light Commercial Vehicle (LCV) registrations, UK, January 2023 to February 2026, seasonally adjusted and non-seasonally adjusted



Source: The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT), seasonally adjusted by the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. New registrations include all cars and LCVs up to 3.5 tonnes that were newly registered with the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Association (DVLA). Heavy Goods Vehicles, buses, and coaches are not included.
2. The number of vehicle registrations falls each February and August, ahead of the registration plate change each March and September. Seasonally adjusting the data removes this repeated variation from the time series so that users can see the underlying trend and any irregular movements.
3. Further information on definitions and compilation methods is available in our [Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators methodology article](#).

The seasonally adjusted number of new registrations for petrol cars saw the largest increase in February 2026, rising by 3% from January 2026. New registrations of battery electric vehicles and plug-in hybrid electric cars increased by 1%, over the same period, while registrations of conventional hybrids and diesel cars remained broadly unchanged.

When comparing with the previous year, however, the largest increase was in registrations of plug-in hybrid electric vehicles, which increased by 32% in February 2026 when compared with February 2025. Registration of diesel cars, in contrast, fell by 6% over the same period.

Our accompanying [SMMT vehicle production and registrations dataset](#) is available.

UK flights

The seasonally adjusted number of UK flights increased by 1% in February 2026 compared with January 2026 and was broadly unchanged when compared with February 2025. Our accompanying [Daily UK flights dataset](#) is available.

Shipping

The seasonally adjusted total number of ship visits to selected UK ports decreased by 2% in February 2026, compared with the previous month. Over this period, the number of cargo ship and tanker visits increased by 1% whilst other ship visits decreased by 5%.

When compared with February 2025, the seasonally adjusted total number of ship visits decreased by 8%, with cargo ship and tanker visits decreasing by 12%, and other ship visits decreasing by 5%.

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

7 . Housing

Energy Performance Building Certificates

The seasonally adjusted number of Energy Performance Building Certificates (EPCs) lodged in England and Wales for new dwellings remained broadly unchanged in February 2026, compared with January 2026. When compared with February 2025, they increased by 7%.

The seasonally adjusted number of Energy Performance Building Certificates (EPCs) lodged in England and Wales for existing dwellings decreased by 3% in February 2026, compared with the previous month, and decreased by 8% when compared with February 2025.

Our accompanying [Energy Performance Building Certificates \(EPC\) dataset](#) and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's [Weekly EPCs for domestic properties dataset](#) are available.

8 . Data

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

Dataset | Released 19 March 2026

Daily data showing System Average Price (SAP) of gas, and rolling seven-day average, traded in Great Britain over the On-the-Day Commodity Market (OCM). These are official statistics in development. Source: National Gas Transmission.

[System Price of electricity](#)

Dataset | Released 19 March 2026

Daily data showing the System Price of electricity, and rolling seven-day average, in Great Britain. These are official statistics in development. Source: Elexon

[Daily UK flights](#)

Dataset | Released 19 March 2026

Daily data showing UK flight numbers and rolling seven-day average, including flights to, from, and within the UK. These are official statistics in development. Source: EUROCONTROL.

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

9 . 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 estimates, which represent useful economic and social concepts.

Seasonal adjustment

Seasonal adjustment is the identification and removal of consistent and systematic variation in time series associated with the time of year. For more information on seasonal variation, and how we implement seasonal adjustment, see Section 2 of our [Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators methodology article](#).

10 . Data sources and quality

Official statistics in development

These statistics are labelled as [official statistics in development](#). Until September 2023, these were called "experimental statistics". Read more about the change in our [Guide to official statistics in development](#).

We are developing how we collect and produce the data to improve the quality of these statistics. Find out more in our [Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators methodology article](#).

Once the developments are complete, we will review the statistics with the Statistics Head of Profession. We will decide if the statistics are of sufficient quality and value to be published as official statistics, or if further development is needed. Production may be stopped if they are not of sufficient quality or value. Users will be informed of the outcome and any changes.

We value your feedback on these statistics. If you would like to get in touch, please email realtime.indicators@ons.gov.uk.

Dataset release dates and intended release frequency

Latest release dates and intended release frequency of our associated datasets are available in this section. Please note that there may be some change to the intended release frequency for a variety of reasons, such as data availability. If you would like further information about any of these datasets, or previous release dates, please email realtime.indicators@ons.gov.uk.

Weekly data release

- [Revolut spending on debit cards dataset](#); updated 19 March 2026.
- [Automotive fuel spending dataset](#); updated 19 March 2026.
- [UK retail footfall dataset](#); updated 19 March 2026.
- [Advanced notification of potential redundancies dataset](#); updated 19 March 2026.
- [System Average Price of gas dataset](#); updated 19 March 2026.
- [System Price of electricity dataset](#); updated 19 March 2026.
- [Energy Performance Building Certificates \(EPC\) dataset](#); updated 12 March 2026.
- [Weekly shipping indicators dataset](#); updated 19 March 2026.
- [Daily UK flights dataset](#); updated 19 March 2026.

Monthly data release

- [Monthly Direct Debit failure rate and average transaction amount dataset](#); updated 12 March 2026.
- [Textkernel new online job adverts dataset](#); updated 19 March 2026.
- [Value Added Tax \(VAT\) flash estimates dataset](#); updated 19 March 2026.
- [Renter affordability for new tenancies dataset](#); updated 15 January 2026.
- [SMMT vehicle registration and production dataset](#); updated 12 March 2026.

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. We use close-to-real-time big data, administrative data sources, rapid response surveys, or official statistics in development.

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.

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

[Economic activity and social change real-time indicators, UK, dashboard](#)

Dashboard | Released weekly

An overview of the UK economy and society, based on rapid response surveys, novel data sources, and innovative methods

[Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators methodology](#)

Methodology | Last revised 6 November 2025

Methodology for the data collection, aggregation, analysis, and presentation for the real-time indicators bulletin.

[Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators: seasonal adjustment](#)

Article | Released 25 June 2025

Methodology for the seasonal adjustment of real-time indicators.

[GDP monthly estimate, UK](#)

Bulletin | Released monthly

Gross domestic product (GDP) measures the value of goods and services produced in the UK. It estimates the size of and growth in the economy.

[Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain](#)

Bulletin | Released monthly

Social insights on daily life and events, including important issues, cost of living, and artificial intelligence 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, including financial performance, workforce, trade, and business resilience.

[Labour demand volumes by Standard Occupation Classification \(SOC 2020\), UK](#)

Dataset | Released quarterly

These tables contain the number of online job adverts, split by local authority and occupation (SOC 2020).

12 . Cite this statistical bulletin

Office for National Statistics (ONS), published 19 March 2026, ONS website, statistical bulletin, [Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators: 19 March 2026](#)