

This monitor aims to pull together information across regional partners to understand the impacts of Covid-19 on the economy. Where possible it will utilise all forms of quantitative and qualitative intelligence. However we urge caution in the use of the contents as this is an emerging situation.

Monday this week was International Women's day and it has been found that a year on from the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, women have suffered the impacts more than their male counterparts. The Women's Budget group released their ['Women and employment during Covid-19 report'](#). The report found that:

- Women are the majority of employees in industries with some of the highest Covid-19 job losses, including retail, accommodation and food services.
- Overall, more women than men have been furloughed across the UK, and young women have been particularly impacted. Estimates for the end of January 2021 see a significant rise in furloughing as a result of the third national lockdown, reaching 2.32 million for women, and 2.18 million for men.
- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) women began the pandemic with one of the lowest rates of employment. In 2020 this was still the case, with BAME women's employment rate at 62.5% and the unemployment rate at 8.8% (compared with 4.5% for White people and 8.5% for BAME people overall). Between Q3 2019 and Q3 2020, the number of BAME women workers had fallen by 17%, compared to 1% for White women.
- 46% of mothers who have been made redundant during the pandemic cite lack of adequate childcare provision as the cause. 70% of women with caring responsibilities who requested furlough following school closures in 2021 had their request denied. This has led to almost half (48%) worried about negative treatment from an employer because of childcare responsibilities.
- Employment for disabled people has fallen more rapidly during the crisis than for non-disabled people (1.9% compared with 1.1%) and disabled people are currently 2.5 times more likely to be out of work than non-disabled people.
- During the first national lockdown those in low-paid work were twice as likely to be on furlough, or have their hours reduced, as those in higher income jobs. This hit women particularly hard as there are twice as many women as men in the bottom 10% of earners.
- By the end of 2020, 546,000 women had made SEISS claims (totalling £1.2 billion), compared with 1,376,000 men (totalling £4.2 billion). There was a clear gendered difference in actual take up rate, with only 51% of eligible women claiming, compared to 60% of eligible men.
- ONS highlights whilst more men died from COVID-19, women's well-being was more negatively affected than men's during the first year of the pandemic. Women have also consistently spent more time on unpaid childcare (women spent 99% more time on unpaid childcare than men and unpaid household work throughout the pandemic). While both men and women spent more time working from home throughout the pandemic, women did more unpaid household work than men. Women reported significantly higher anxiety than men at almost every point between 20 March 2020 and 7 February 2021, continuing the pre-pandemic trend.
- The [mental health of teenage girls](#) and young women is now a serious health issue. This group has experienced a bigger fall in their mental health than any other.
- In order to take on the increased burden of childcare, women have [made sacrifices](#) – opting for [furlough](#) or redundancy, reducing paid hours, taking holiday and unpaid leave, and giving up sleep to juggle around the clock.
- Before the pandemic, older women (those aged 70 and above) enjoyed a relatively high level of mental health compared with the population as a whole. But they have experienced one of the biggest falls – far greater than among older men.
- [Women leaders](#) typically reacted sooner than male leaders, locking down earlier, with the effect of reducing deaths. At a UK level out of 67 coronavirus briefings, 66 have been led by men.
- EU research emphasises all these impacts. It also highlights a surge in domestic violence, with rates increasing by 20-30%.

Emerging Opportunities

- In England, the percentage of people testing positive for the coronavirus (COVID-19) has continued to decrease. The Midlands has successfully continued to provide the most doses of the first jab, and has remained the 3rd highest provider of the second dose out of the English regions.
- UK footfall for the week to 27th February 2021 was at 43% of the level seen in the same week of the previous year, this increased by 5 percentage points when compared with the equivalent index in the previous week. Retail footfall performance was stronger in the West Midlands at 48% of the previous year.

- OECD analysis showed that last year the UK was worst hit economically out of the G7 group in 2020. However, the OECD has forecasted that due to the UK's acceleration of the vaccine deployment, it is likely that the UK will see greater growth than most other countries. With the OECD predicting a 5.1% rise in real GDP growth for 2021 in the UK, the 2nd largest growth out of the G7 countries.
- Danish toy giant Lego saw its fastest sales growth in five years, helped by families in lockdown purchasing bigger Lego sets to build as a family. It is expected that in the coming couple of years the Lego Group will be employing hundreds of British computer game and website specialists.
- According to ONS figures a million people had left the country between the end of 2019 and the end of 2020. This would represent by far the largest annual fall in the resident population since the Second World War, with London especially hard hit.
- HSBC UK has launched a new £600million fund for Birmingham SMEs this week. This is part of their broader plan of a lending fund of £15 billion aimed at supporting small businesses across the UK. The fund includes more than £10bn of specific regionally focused allocations. With the money being designed to support economies, employment opportunities and growth.
- A controversial development in Birmingham by Eutopia Homes has won the backing of the Housing Secretary for its scheme of over 4.2 acres of industrial land at 193 Camp Hill in Digbeth.
- Staffordshire County Council has announced a £2m loan fund launched to back small businesses in pandemic recovery. The fund will aim to support Staffordshire businesses which have failed to access financial support from commercial providers.
- This week the [Commonwealth Games committee have announced](#) their tender process to find suppliers for venues across the city, with £5 million worth of catering contracts available for the 2022 Commonwealth Games.
- [The Higher Education Policy Institute](#) has written a paper on which universities currently best support social mobility within England, and how this can be most effectively measured. Aston, Newman, Wolverhampton and Birmingham City Universities are all in the top 15 for social mobility, with others in the region making the top 40.
- The West Midlands Business Activity Index increased from 41.5 in January to 51.1 in February. The growth reported was due to clearing of backlogs, reduced uncertainty and projects in the pipeline. The overall UK Business Activity Index increased from 41.2 in January to 49.6 in February. Out of the twelve UK regions, the West Midlands region was the third highest for the Business Activity Index.
- The West Midlands Future Activity Index registered at 76.1 as there was hope that the vaccination programme will control the spread of infections allowing restrictions to be uplifted and a recovery in demand. Although the overall level of positive sentiment fell slightly since January's four-year high it still remained elevated.

Ongoing impacts

- Multiplying the BICS-weighted furlough proportions by the IDBR total annual employment, preliminary figures show that 19% (approximately 6 million people) of businesses' workforce were on furlough leave in mid-February 2021.
- Nationally, between the 19th and 26th February total online job adverts decreased by 3.4 percentage points. In the West Midlands, the total online jobs adverts decreased by 6.6 percentage points. The East Midlands had the highest decrease over this period by 7.4 percentage points.
- There is emerging evidence that some companies are favouring taking on Kickstarters rather than recruiting apprentices. This has implications for development of the talent pipeline going forward.
- Amongst small businesses key concerns include late payments, indebtedness – which is at significantly higher levels than formerly, and how debt will be treated by banks going forward. The latter is a particular concern for small businesses wishing to change banks.
- There are ongoing challenges with importing and exporting. Some businesses are reporting exporting to the EU being very difficult with delays and extra costs incurred in shipping to the EU. Some businesses are reporting shifting from road to air freight, which could negatively impact on the region's logistics sector.
- Some companies are expressing concerns about the settlement status of both their EU employees and potential new recruits who are EU citizens.
- A [survey](#) on the British attitudes to inequalities shows embedded racism and meritocracy, with nearly a quarter of respondents thinking that if the incomes gap between ethnic minorities and white people grew, this would not be an issue.
- The [Institute for Government](#) analyses funding problems in the current system, including more money given to Welsh and Scottish services and underspending in the West Midlands, and recommends greater transparency and a reassessment of the spending needs of each region.
- The British Business Bank has released research that highlights 4 themes:
 - Businesses have shifted away from most traditional forms of external finance to utilise government-backed finance schemes and support.
 - Smaller businesses have faced a lot of uncertainty in 2020 – with the smallest businesses hardest hit.
 - As businesses continue to recover from the effects of the pandemic, there could be significant further demand for funding in 2021.
 - Due to record cash balances and increasing debt levels, there are both a sizeable number of smaller businesses in a position to borrow further in 2021 and a sizeable number likely to struggle with debt repayments.

Global, National and Regional Outlook

Alice Pugh, WMREDI; Rebecca Riley WMCA/WMREDI

Global

Unlike the Trump presidency one of President Biden's main aims has been to actively tackle the Covid-19 crisis, and this week it was announced that the US Senate had passed a major \$1.9tn relief plan. It is yet to pass through the House of Representatives; however as this is controlled by the Democrats, it is expected that the vote will pass here too. As the [BBC reported](#), the US is facing their worst public health crisis in a century, which has left 523,000 people dead and 29 million infected. The unemployment rate is 6.2%. This package will aim to provide a very necessary economic stimulus boost, with the aim of helping those who have been the most impacted by the pandemic. There are grants included for small businesses as well as more targeted funds with \$25bn for restaurants and bars; \$15bn for airlines and other \$8bn for airports; \$30bn for transit; \$1.5bn for Amtrak rail and \$3 bn for aerospace manufacturing. The US government's jobs reports revealed that, in February 2021, [employment rebounded sharply](#) in the leisure and hospitality sector as state governments eased economic restrictions and consumers engaged in more social interaction as the number of infections declined. There was almost no growth in the rest of the labour market.

The plan named the '[American Rescue plan](#)' will allocate \$350bn to state and local governments, and some \$130bn to schools. It is also expected to provide \$49bn for the expansion of Covid-19 testing and research, with an additional \$14bn to support vaccine distribution. It is expected, however, that those on lower incomes will receive a \$1,400 stimulus check- this is any single person earning under \$75,000 or any couple earning under \$150,000. There will also be an extension of the jobless benefits scheme, which could mark a happy reprieve for millions of long-term unemployed whose eligibility for benefits would have expired in mid-March 2021.

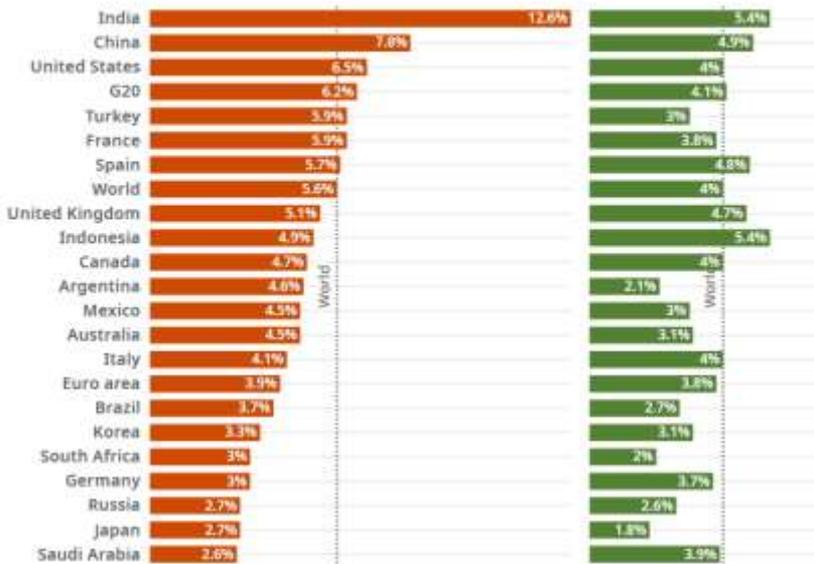
[Deloitte](#) this week highlight that China is facing fiscal issues, with rising local government debt, and declining working age population leading to a growing aging population creating stress on pensions and healthcare and slowing growth. Chinas fiscal stimulus in the pandemic has been very different to the western world, with state owned enterprises borrowing heavily from state run banks, this has stabilised the economy but about a quarter of provinces now use more than half of their revenue to service debt. This could mean a scaling back of the stimulus with likely negative impacts on growth. Beijing [saw revenue fall](#) 3.9% in 2020: the first decline since 1976. In addition, spending increased 2.8%. Wider investment in the western world will have implications on emerging markets who would be facing a double blow to economies and finance and raising the risk of a debt crisis. There are clear indications that the Chinese economy is decelerating and the latest [official purchasing managers' indices](#) (PMIs) for China suggest this and it is at a 10 month low.

National

This week the OECD released it's 'Strengthening the recovery: The need for speed' report with the aim of comparing policy responses by countries in an effort to help speed up recovery following the pandemic. OECD analysis showed that last year the UK was worst hit economically out of the G7 group in 2020. However, the OECD has forecasted that due to the UK's acceleration of vaccine deployment, it is likely that the UK will see greater growth than most other countries. The OECD predicts a 5.1% rise in real GDP growth for 2021 in the UK: the 2nd largest growth out of the G7 countries. The graph below shows their predictions for 2021 and 2022.

Real GDP growth projections for 2021 and 2022

%, year-on-year



However, the report did highlight that if the UK fails to support their rapid vaccine deployment with additional supporting policy, then the impact of the deployment is likely to be lessened.

It has been decided by the government this week that as of this summer a new '[Right to Repair](#)' law will come into effect. Appliances such as fridges, washing machines and TVs will be expected to last longer and be cheaper to run under the new rules. After a number of consumer complaints about the small lifespan that these appliances had, the government decided to enact this law, firstly to ensure that consumers are receiving high quality goods and secondly to reduce the waste generated from such electrical appliances. The government has estimated that the law will lead to a reduction of to reduce the 1.5 million tonnes of electrical waste in the UK each year and to contribute to reducing carbon emissions overall.

Manufacturers will also be legally obliged to make spare parts for products available to consumers for the first time – a new legal right for repairs. The aim of the new rules is to extend the lifespan of products by up to 10 years, and officials estimate that higher energy efficiency standards will save consumers an average of £75 a year on bills over their lifetimes.

In 2020, the Danish toy giant Lego saw its fastest sales growth in five years, helped by families in lockdown purchasing bigger Lego sets to build as a family. However, the new Super Mario set, which blends physical brick with online games has been one of it's largest launches ever. Lego plans on continuing to develop its expansion into the digital world, with the aim of successfully blending online and physical play. This will mean Lego employing more computer games and website specialists. As a result Lego is looking to recruit talent in the UK, as Mr Christiansen CEO of the Lego Group, [told the BBC](#): "We go where we find the best talent, is in UK and Denmark.' It is expected that in the coming couple of years the Lego Group will be employing hundreds of British computer game and website specialists.

It was reported in the [Guardian](#) this week that according to ONS figures a million people had left the country between the end of 2019 and the end of 2020. This would represent by far the largest annual fall in the resident population since the Second World War, with London especially hard hit. Whilst collecting and interpreting data during a pandemic is extremely challenging, there is no doubt that this reversal in migration trends has been large, real and abrupt.

This is not unsurprising as the UK was one of the worst hit countries in the world by the pandemic. London, where the UK's migrant population is concentrated, fared worst, seeing both more deaths than any other region and a larger rise in the numbers claiming benefits. Moreover, some of the sectors worst hit by lockdowns – accommodation, food services, retail and hospitality – are also heavily dependent on workers from abroad. And

recent immigrants are far more likely to live in rented accommodation – which makes it easier to leave, and more expensive to stay. If your job is gone or furloughed, then it may be the easier option to return to your native country rather than risk both your physical health and your finances.

Regional

HSBC UK has launched a new £600million fund for Birmingham SMEs this week. This is part of their broader plan of a lending fund of £15 billion aimed at supporting small businesses across the UK. The fund includes more than £10bn of specific regionally focused allocations, with the money being designed to support economies, employment opportunities and growth. It was [reported](#) that Roger Pratt, HSBC UK's regional business banking director for the Central Region, said: "We are committed to supporting businesses in Birmingham and we know they are adapting at pace and looking at what comes next. This fund is all about helping businesses to take new opportunities and grow and we want to reassure them that we're here to support them achieve their goals." He added that with the vaccine rollout being implemented at such speed, it was the perfect time to make a fund available to struggling businesses in the area.

This week it has been [reported](#) controversial plans have been approved for a £130 million mixed-use development in Birmingham, following an appeal to the central government after city planning chiefs threw out the proposal previously. It was initially feared that the scheme would threaten the infrastructure work that was taking place at Digbeth. However, Eutopia Homes has won the backing of Housing Secretary, for its scheme over 4.2 acres of industrial land at 193 Camp Hill, in Digbeth. The project will comprise 180 apartments and 300 houses for both rent and sale, an eight-storey hotel with 167 bedrooms and 16,000 sq ft of commercial space. Five percent of the apartments will be affordable alongside a 50 per cent reduction in market rent for the commercial units aimed at attracting start-up companies.

This week Staffordshire County Council has announced a £2m loan fund launched to back small businesses in pandemic recovery. The fund will aim to support Staffordshire businesses which have failed to access financial support from commercial providers. Business Live [reported that](#) the three-year Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Business Loan Fund will provide loans from £10,000 to £50,000 to companies across a range of sectors. This is the latest support programme delivered by Staffordshire County Council as part of its 'Staffordshire Means Back to Business' long-term strategy.

This week the [Commonwealth Games committee have announced](#) their tender process to find suppliers for venues across the city, with £5 million worth of catering contracts available; for the 2022 commonwealth games. The organising team has launched the tender process for the games next summer to feed and water spectators, athletes, officials, volunteers and staff. There are five separate tender opportunities to supply both competition and non-competition venues including Alexander Stadium, Sandwell Aquatics Centre, Sutton Park and fan zones. Successful suppliers will be expected to demonstrate initiatives that deliver social value to Birmingham 2022, the city and local community. The contracts will be awarded by the end of this summer.

Qualitative Intelligence from local partners

In general, there has been a broad welcome for measures announced in the Budget on 3rd March 2021. The measures announced generally aligned with expectations. In relation to specific measures, the Job Retention Scheme extension was welcomed in particular, as was the [Super-deduction](#) – for expenditure incurred from 1 April 2021 until the end of March 2023 companies can claim 130% capital allowances on qualifying plant and machinery investments.

There is emerging evidence that some companies are favouring taking on Kickstarters rather than recruiting apprentices. This has implications for development of the talent pipeline going forward. It adds impetus for there to be greater emphasis on transitioning young people from the Kickstart scheme into apprenticeships.

Amongst small businesses key concerns include late payments, indebtedness – which is at significantly higher levels than formerly, and how debt will be treated by banks going forward. The latter is a particular concern for small businesses wishing to change banks.

There are ongoing challenges with importing and exporting. Some businesses are reporting exporting to the EU being very difficult with delays and extra costs incurred in shipping to the EU. Some businesses are reporting shifting from road to air freight to obviate some of the difficulties faced. These logistical problems mean that support to businesses is focusing necessarily on dealing with associated tactical issues rather than growing exports.

Some companies are expressing concerns about the settlement status of both their EU employees and potential new recruits who are EU citizens. One key issue is that settled and pre-settled status is digital only (i.e. a screen shot) whereas employers are used to dealing with physical passports.

Top Five From Around the Web

Keziah Watson WMCA

- A survey on the British attitudes to inequalities shows embedded racism and meritocracy, with nearly a quarter of respondents thinking that if the incomes between ethnic minorities and white people grew, this would not be an issue. The report by [Kings College London](#), the survey also finds that about half of respondents thought whether people had lost their job during the pandemic was due to their performance.
- The Barnett formula that sets out the funding for the devolved nations within the UK was initially meant at as a short-term measure but has lasted four decades. The [Institute for Government](#) analyses the problems in the current system, including more money given to Welsh and Scottish services and underspending in the West Midlands, and recommends greater transparency and a reassessment of the spending needs of each region.
- [The Centre for Government](#) has released a paper outlining how Mayoral Candidates might engage with Londoners around planning for house building. This would create early, diverse, and sustained engagement in the planning process.
- [The Higher Education Policy Institute](#) has written a paper on which universities currently best support social mobility within England, and how this can be most effectively measured. Aston, Newman, Wolverhampton and Birmingham City Universities are all in the top 15 for social mobility, with others in the region making the top 40. The table below shows the top 17 English Higher education institutes according to the higher Education Policy institute.

Social Mobility Index
IMD Q2 weighted 0.5x, Access weighted 1.5x, salaries PPP adjusted

Rank 2018 /19	Change in rank from 2017/18	Provider Name	Tariff	Aggregate Score 2018/19	Index variables - Latest year data				PPP Adjusted Avg Earnings 1YAG (£) 2017/18
					Access* (%)		Continuation (%)		
					IMD Q1 2018/19	IMD Q2 2018/19	IMD Q1 2017/18	IMD Q2 2017/18	
1	-	The University of Bradford	Medium	5.067	58.3	20.3	91.5	92.0	19,680
2	-	Aston University	Medium	4.317	39.1	17.8	95.0	95.0	23,351
3	1	Queen Mary University of London	Medium	2.726	18.8	30.5	92.0	94.5	23,176
4	4	Birkbeck College	Low	2.664	21.0	35.0	92.0	89.0	22,550
5	(2)	Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine	High	2.595	8.0	13.2	90.0	94.0	33,117
6	1	London South Bank University	Low	2.453	23.3	35.0	83.0	87.2	23,690
7	5	The City University	Medium	2.420	19.9	33.1	86.0	90.0	23,803
8	(3)	Newman University	Low	2.414	51.0	22.0	89.0	86.0	16,650
9	-	King's College London	High	2.365	13.1	24.3	81.8	93.0	26,385
10	(4)	The University of Wolverhampton	Low	2.359	50.0	20.3	81.8	87.0	18,335
11	3	The University of Bolton	Low	2.196	51.5	18.2	83.0	88.0	16,487
12	8	London School of Economics and Political Science	High	2.161	12.0	19.0	96.0	94.0	26,176
13	-	Birmingham City University	Medium	2.160	42.3	17.8	90.3	89.9	19,447
14	2	The University of Salford	Medium	2.158	39.8	18.8	89.1	90.0	19,769
15	(5)	Teeside University	Low	2.023	38.7	19.7	86.3	88.0	19,716
16	(5)	The University of Huddersfield	Medium	2.001	38.1	20.2	89.7	90.0	18,491
17	1	Brunel University London	Medium	1.990	19.0	31.7	95.0	90.0	21,330

- [Brookings](#) looks at what the pandemic might mean for cities - will staff return to offices, will big, dense cities cease to be our main way of working? Analysts believe that dense areas of work and living space will continue, but with a greater emphasis on equity within urban spaces, particularly for those most adversely affected by the pandemic.

NatWest Purchasing Manager Index (PMI) Survey, February 2021: West Midlands¹

The following seasonally adjusted indices vary between 0 and 100, with a reading above 50 indicating an overall increase compared to the previous month, and below 50 an overall decrease.

In Summary:

- The West Midlands Business Activity Index increased from 41.5 in January 2021 to 51.1 in February 2021. The growth reported was due to clearing of backlogs, reduced uncertainty and projects in the pipeline. The overall UK Business Activity Index increased from 41.2 in January to 49.6 in February.
- Out of the twelve UK regions, the West Midlands region was the third highest for the Business Activity Index.
- The West Midlands Future Activity Index registered at 76.1 as there was hope that the vaccination programme will control the spread of infections allowing restrictions to be uplifted and a recovery in demand. Although the overall level of positive sentiment fell slightly since January's four-year high it still remained elevated.

In Detail:

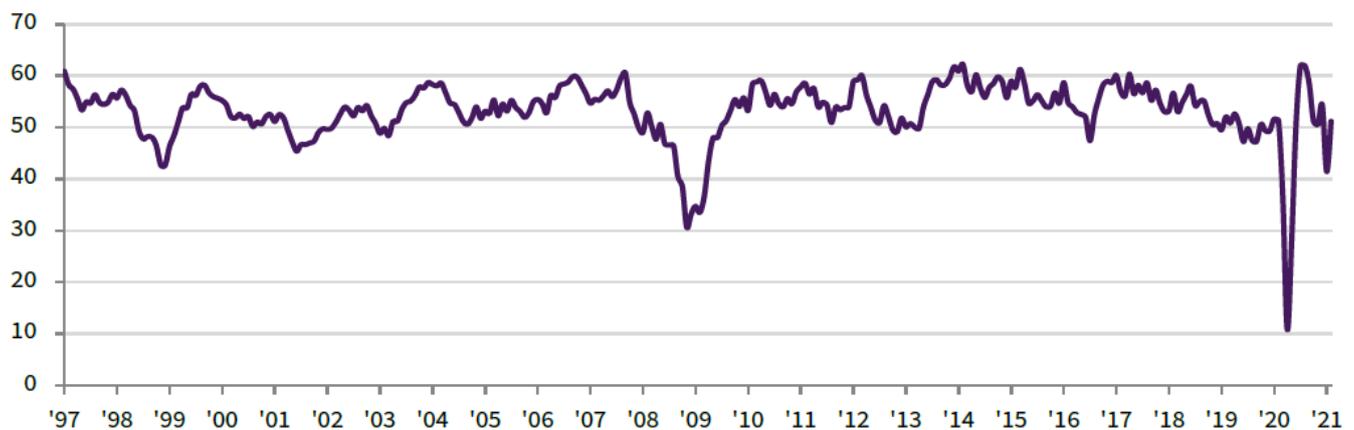
Business Activity Index

The West Midlands Business Activity Index increased from 41.5 in January to 51.1 in February, showing a notable recovery in activity. The growth reported was due to clearing of backlogs, reduced uncertainty and projects in the pipeline.

The following graph show the West Midlands Business Activity Index trends:

West Midlands Business Activity Index

sa, >50 = growth since previous month



Source: IHS Market/NatWest, March 2021

Out of the twelve UK regions, the West Midlands region was the third highest for the Business Activity Index, with London the highest at 52.1 and Northern Ireland the lowest at 40.2 in February 2021.

¹ Source: IHS Markit/NatWest PMI, March 2021

The following chart shows the Business Activity Index across all UK regions in February 2021:



Source: IHS Market/NatWest, March 2021

Demand

The New Business Index remains under the 50-mark threshold; however, it has increased from 45.9 in January to 49.7 in February. Firms reported the lockdown had restricted sales as well as a reduction in uncertainty, online shopping and restocking efforts among client underpinned demand growth.

Exports²

The West Midlands Export Climate Index increased slightly from 52.2 in January to 52.9 in February. This was the strongest improvement in the health of the West Midlands export market in four months.

For the top five destinations for the West Midlands, there were contractions (below 50) to Ireland (42.7) and France (47.0). **The following table shows the top export markets for the West Midlands in February:**

Top export markets, West Midlands

Rank	Market	Weight	Output Index, Feb'21
1	USA	21.2%	59.5
2	Germany	11.1%	51.1
3	China	8.7%	51.7
4	Ireland	6.2%	42.7
5	France	6.1%	47.0

Source: IHS Market/NatWest, March 2021

² The West Midlands Export Climate Index is calculated by weighting together national PMI output data according to their importance to the manufacturing exports of the West Midlands. This produces an indicator for the economic health of the region's export markets.

Business Capacity

The West Midlands Employment Index increased from 45.7 in January to 48.9 in February. The Employment Index has stayed below the 50 mark for the last thirteen months, with job shedding linked to retirements and redundancies. Although, some firm reported to have taken on extra workers to fulfil demand and clear backlogs of work.

The West Midlands Outstanding Business Index has decreased further from 49.6 January to 48.3 in February. Firms in the West Midlands reported increased efforts to clear pending work.

Prices

The West Midlands Input Prices Index increased from 64.1 in January to 66.7 in February, which is the eighth consecutive month. The rate of inflation was the second-fastest in over two and a half years.

For the ninth consecutive month, West Midlands private sector companies increased their selling prices. The West Midlands Prices Charged Index decreased from 54.8 in January to 54.6 in February.

Outlook

Approximately 66% of companies surveyed in the West Midlands foresee output growth based on hopes that the vaccination programme will control the spread of infections, so allowing restrictions to be uplifted and a recovery in demand. The West Midlands Future Activity Index registered at 76.1 in February.

The following chart shows the Future Activity Index across all UK regions in February 2021:



Source: IHS Market/NatWest, March 2021

Out of the twelve UK regions, the West Midlands came in at seventh place for the Future Business Activity Index.

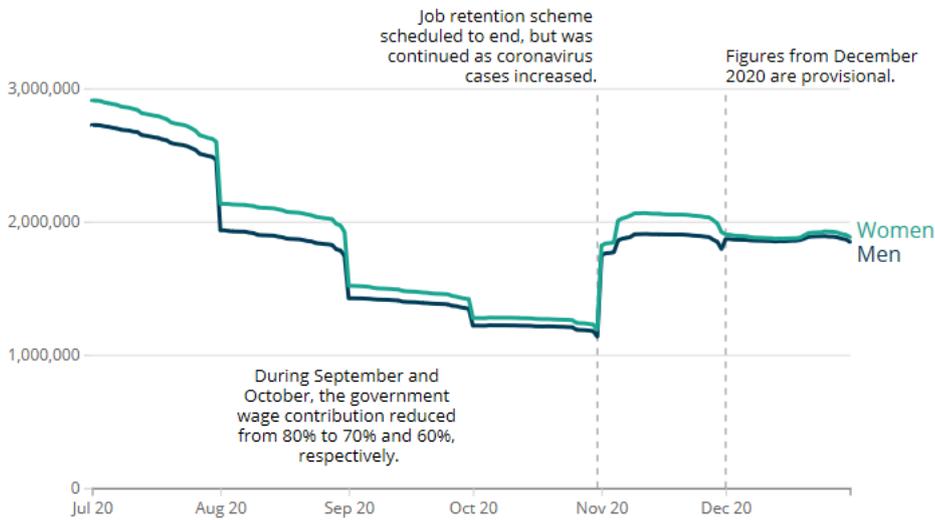
Women and Covid-19

Alice Pugh, WMREDI

Monday 1st March was International Women's day. It has been found that a year on from the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, women have suffered the impacts more than their male counterparts. The Women's Budget Group released their '[Women and employment during Covid-19 report](#)'. The report found that:

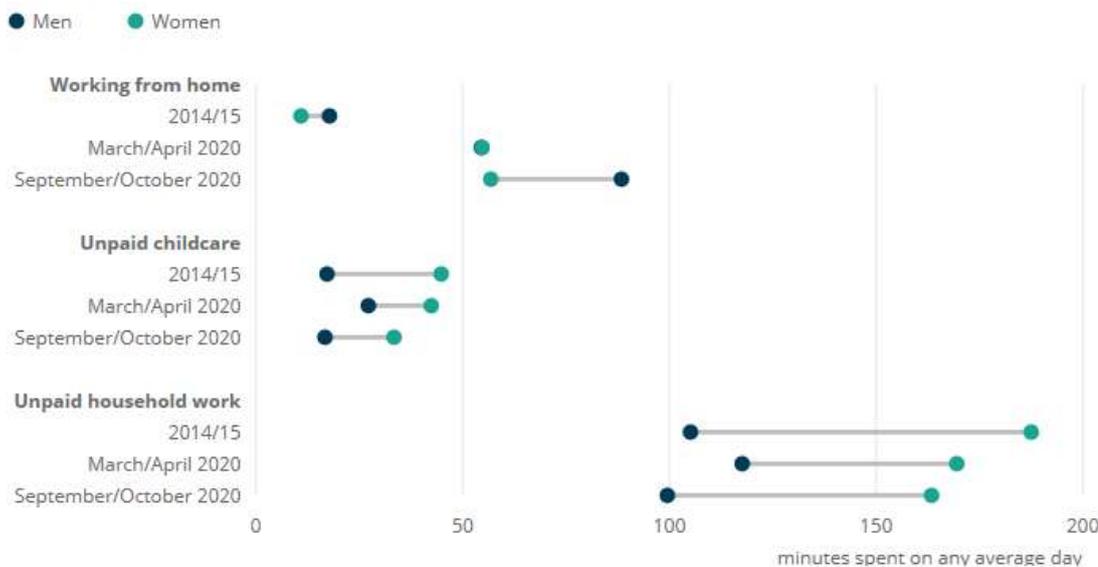
- **Women are the majority of employees in industries with some of the highest Covid-19 job losses**, including retail, accommodation and food services.
- Overall, **more women than men have been furloughed across the UK**, and young women have been particularly impacted. Estimates for the end of January 2021 see a significant rise in furloughing as a result of the third national lockdown, reaching **2.32 million for women, and 2.18 million for men**.
- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) women began the pandemic with one of the lowest rates of employment. In 2020 this was still the case, with **BAME women's employment rate at 62.5% and an unemployment rate at 8.8%** (compared with 4.5% for White people and 8.5% for BAME people overall). Between Q3 2019 and Q3 2020, **the number of BAME women workers had fallen by 17%, compared to 1% for White women**.
- **46% of mothers who have been made redundant during the pandemic cite lack of adequate childcare provision as the cause**. 70% of women with caring responsibilities who requested furlough following school closures in 2021 had their request denied. This has led to almost half (48%) worried about negative treatment from an employer because of childcare responsibilities.
- **Employment for disabled people has fallen more rapidly during the crisis than for non-disabled people** (1.9% compared with 1.1%) and disabled people are currently 2.5 times more likely to be out of work than non-disabled people.
- During the first national lockdown, those in low-paid work were twice as likely to be on furlough, or have their hours reduced than those in higher income jobs. This **hit women in particular, as there are twice as many women as men in the bottom 10% of earners**.
- By the end of 2020, 546,000 women had made SEISS claims (totalling £1.2 billion), compared with 1,376,000 men (totalling £4.2 billion). **There was a clear gendered difference in actual take up rate, with only 51% of eligible women claiming, compared to 60% of eligible men**.

Another report by ONS was released on Wednesday analysing Covid-19 and the different effects on men and women in the UK from March 2020 to February 2021. The report found that whilst more men died from COVID-19, women's well-being was more negatively affected than men's during the first year of the pandemic. In general, men and women's experiences of life in lockdown tended to differ. Between March 2020 and February 2021 there was almost an 18% difference in the total number of COVID-19-related deaths for men (63,700) and women (53,300). Whilst deaths were higher amongst men, women were more likely to be furloughed. Consistently throughout the pandemic women have been more likely to have been furloughed. **The graph below shows the Daily number of men and women furloughed, UK, between 1 July and 31 December 2020:**



Between 31 October and 30 November 2020, the number of women on furlough increased to 1.9 million and 1.8 million for men.

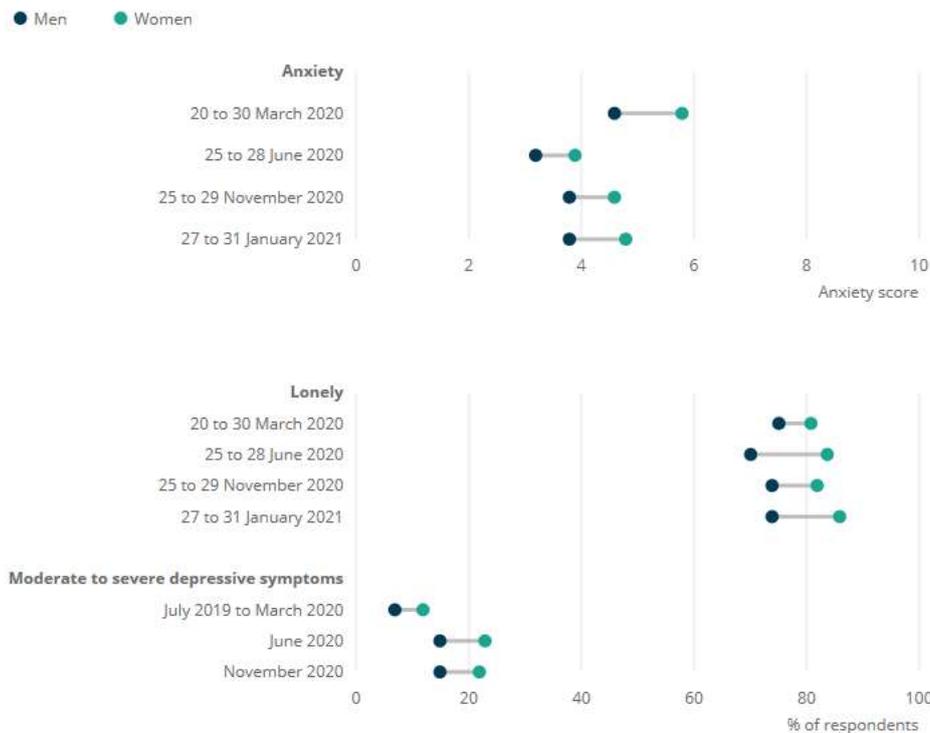
Women have also consistently spent more time on unpaid childcare and unpaid household work throughout the pandemic. **The graph below shows Working from home, unpaid childcare and household work, across Great Britain and the UK, in 2014 to 2015, March to April 2020, and September to October 2020:**



While both men and women spent more time working from home throughout the pandemic. Women did more unpaid household work than men. During September and early October 2020 women spent 64% more time on unpaid household work than men.

At the beginning of the UK's first lockdown in March 2020, women spent 55% more time than men on unpaid childcare. However, this difference is smaller than in September and October 2020, when women spent 99% more time on unpaid childcare than men. Additionally, a significantly greater proportion of women (67%) than men (52%) home-schooled a school-age child in late January and early February 2021 (13 January and 7 February 2021).

Furthermore, in April and early May 2020, around one in three women (34%) reported that their well-being was negatively affected by home-schooling a school age child compared with only one in five men (20%). By late January and early February 2021, it was taking a greater toll on both women (53%) and men (45%). **The graph below shows, Anxiety, lonely at some point, and moderate to severe depressive symptoms, Great Britain, March 2020 to January 2021:**



The well-being impacts of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic have been wide reaching. Office for National Statistics (ONS) research has shown significantly different levels of anxiety, loneliness and worry about the coronavirus, and depressive symptoms, between men and women during the pandemic. At the start of the pandemic, average anxiety scores increased to the highest levels recorded since the ONS began collecting personal well-being data. Women reported significantly higher anxiety than men at almost every point between 20 March 2020 and 7 February 2021, continuing the pre-pandemic trend.

The [Economics Observatory](#) also highlight how the pandemic has hit women harder. Covid-19 has worsened the mental health crisis among young women in the UK. Before the pandemic, young women (aged 16-30) had the worst mental health of any age/gender group in the population. In the last 12 months this same group has experienced a bigger fall in their mental health than any other. The [mental health of teenage girls](#) and young women is now a serious health issue. [Survey evidence](#) suggests that three-quarters of young people (aged 16-25) have found the third lockdown harder still, and nearly half believe that there will be long-term effects.

Women have also been more likely than men to [lose their jobs](#) and many are in demanding roles as key workers. Further, not all women have faced the same challenges – [certain groups](#) - including ethnic minorities, those with disabilities and in poverty, have been more adversely affected. Overall, for women the loss of social interactions and increased exposure to social media pressure have been big factors.

The government was widely criticised for its sexist [‘stay home’ advert](#) depicting women doing home schooling and housework, but this has been the reality of lockdown in most households with young children. The pandemic has revealed stubbornly persistent gender stereotyping in the [division of domestic labour](#), and shown that men and women are not equal when it comes to unpaid childcare and housework.

In order to take on the increased burden of childcare, women have [made sacrifices](#) – opting for [furlough](#) or redundancy, reducing paid hours, taking holiday and unpaid leave, and giving up sleep to juggle around the clock

The [childcare system](#) is more fragile than it was pre-pandemic and many childcare providers face an uncertain future. For mothers, [moving into part-time work](#) is likely to be associated with lower hourly earnings and reduced year-on-year pay increases

There is also evidence that the productivity of women with caring responsibilities has been hit – for example, [women academics](#) have published fewer new research papers than men – and this will affect their future pay and promotion prospects.

Gender pay gap reporting by companies was suspended for a year in 2020 and has been delayed again this year. It is vital that the reporting continues, not least because [the evidence](#) suggests that the first round of reporting had positive effects.

Before the pandemic, older women (those aged 70 and above) enjoyed a relatively high level of mental health compared with the population as a whole. But they have experienced one of the biggest falls – far greater than among older men; this is possibly explained in part by high level of bereavement since older men have the highest risk of death. Another key factor behind the decline in mental health of older women is the effect of social isolation. Women make up two-thirds of those aged 70 and above who live alone.

The Economics Observatory makes recommendations for a way forward:

- Valuing unpaid care to ensure that women do not lose out in the workplace
- Putting in place proper systems of care for both children and older people who are isolated and alone
- More women to be at the table when key decisions are taken
- [Women leaders](#) typically reacted sooner than male leaders, locking down earlier, with the effect of reducing deaths. Out of 67 coronavirus briefings, 66 have been led by men

The [European Commission](#) published its [2021 report on gender equality in the EU](#). The pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities between women and men in almost all areas of life, both in Europe and beyond, rolling back on the hard-won achievements of past years:

- Member States recorded a surge in domestic violence: For example, the number of reports on domestic violence increased: in France it increased by 32% during the first week of the lockdown, in Lithuania by 20% in the first three weeks. Ireland saw a five-fold increase in domestic violence orders and Spanish authorities reported an 18% rise in calls during the first fortnight of confinement.
- Women were at the frontline tackling the pandemic, constituting 76% of healthcare and social-care workers and 86% of personal care workers in health services. With the pandemic women in these sectors saw an unprecedented rise in workload, health risk and challenges to work-life balance.
- Women in the labour market were hit hard by the pandemic: Women are overrepresented in sectors that are worst affected by the crisis (retail, hospitality, care and domestic work), because these jobs cannot be done remotely. Women also had more difficulties re-entering the labour market during the partial recovery last summer 2020, with employment rates rising by 1.4% for men but only by 0.8% for women between the second and the third quarter 2020.
- Lockdowns have a significant impact on unpaid care and work-life balance: Women spent, on average, 62 hours per week caring for children (compared to 36 hours for men) and 23 hours per week doing housework (15 hours for men).
- There is a striking lack of women in COVID-19 decision-making bodies: A 2020 study found that men greatly outnumber women in the bodies created to respond to the pandemic. Of 115 national dedicated COVID-19 task forces in 87 countries, including 17 EU Member States, 85.2% were made up mainly of men, 11.4% comprised mainly women, and only 3.5% had gender parity. At the political level, only 30% of health ministers in the EU are women. The Commission's task force for the COVID-19 crisis is led by President von der Leyen and includes five other Commissioners, three of whom are women.

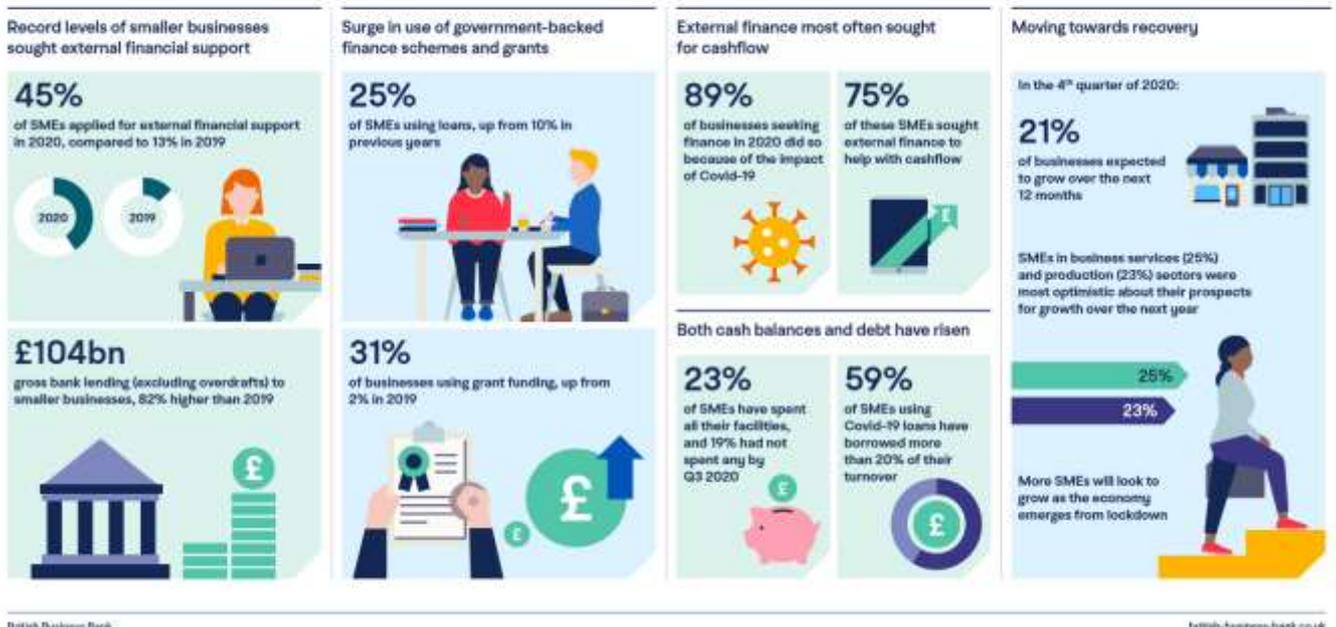
Small Business Finance Markets Report 2021

British Business Bank

The [Small Business Finance Markets 2020/21 report](#) provides a timely and comprehensive review of finance markets for smaller businesses. This year, the report focuses on the impact of Covid-19 on small business finance markets and the implications for 2021, and the use of finance by smaller businesses and market developments in finance products.

- Four themes provide the background to the seventh edition of the Small Business Finance Markets report: First, businesses shifted away from most traditional forms of external finance to utilise government-backed finance schemes and support. The utilisation of bank overdrafts, credit cards and asset finance all fell, while the only increase in the usage of traditional repayable external finance was seen in loans.
- Second, smaller businesses have faced a lot of uncertainty in 2020 – with the smallest businesses hardest hit. A large proportion of businesses have been forced to seek finance due to the impact of Covid-19, most often to help with cashflow.
- Third, as businesses continue to recover from the effects of the pandemic, there could be significant further demand for funding in 2021.
- Fourth, the report finds that, due to record cash balances and increasing debt levels, there are both a sizeable number of smaller businesses in a position to borrow further in 2021 and a sizeable number likely to struggle with debt repayments.

Small Business Finance Markets Report 2020/21



Infection Rates and Vaccine Update

Alice Pugh WMREDI/WMCA

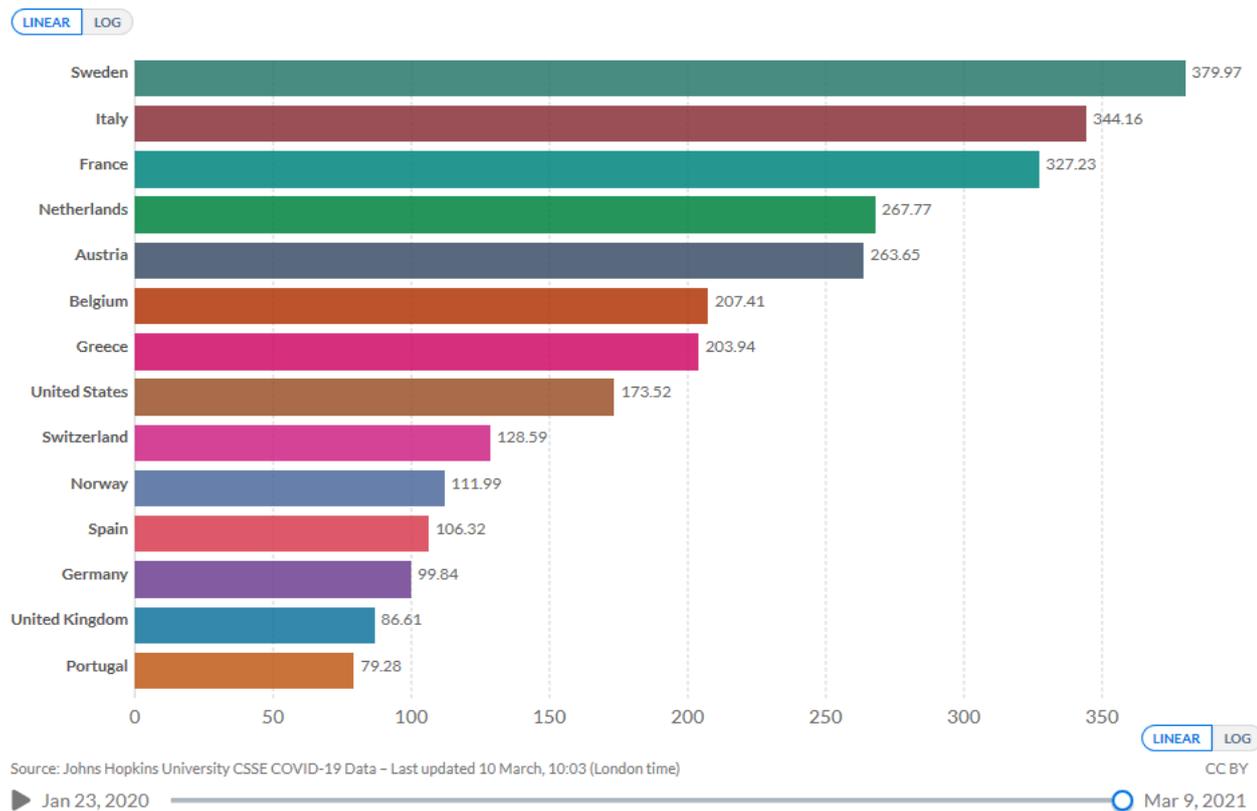
Europe has seen a [resurgence in infection rates](#) which is continuing (see graph below).

Since [31 December 2019](#) and as of week 2021-7, **112 348 223 cases** of COVID-19 (in accordance with the applied case definitions and testing strategies in the affected countries) have been reported, including **2 484 324 deaths**.

Daily new confirmed COVID-19 cases per million people, Mar 9, 2021

Shown is the rolling 7-day average. The number of confirmed cases is lower than the number of actual cases; the main reason for that is limited testing.

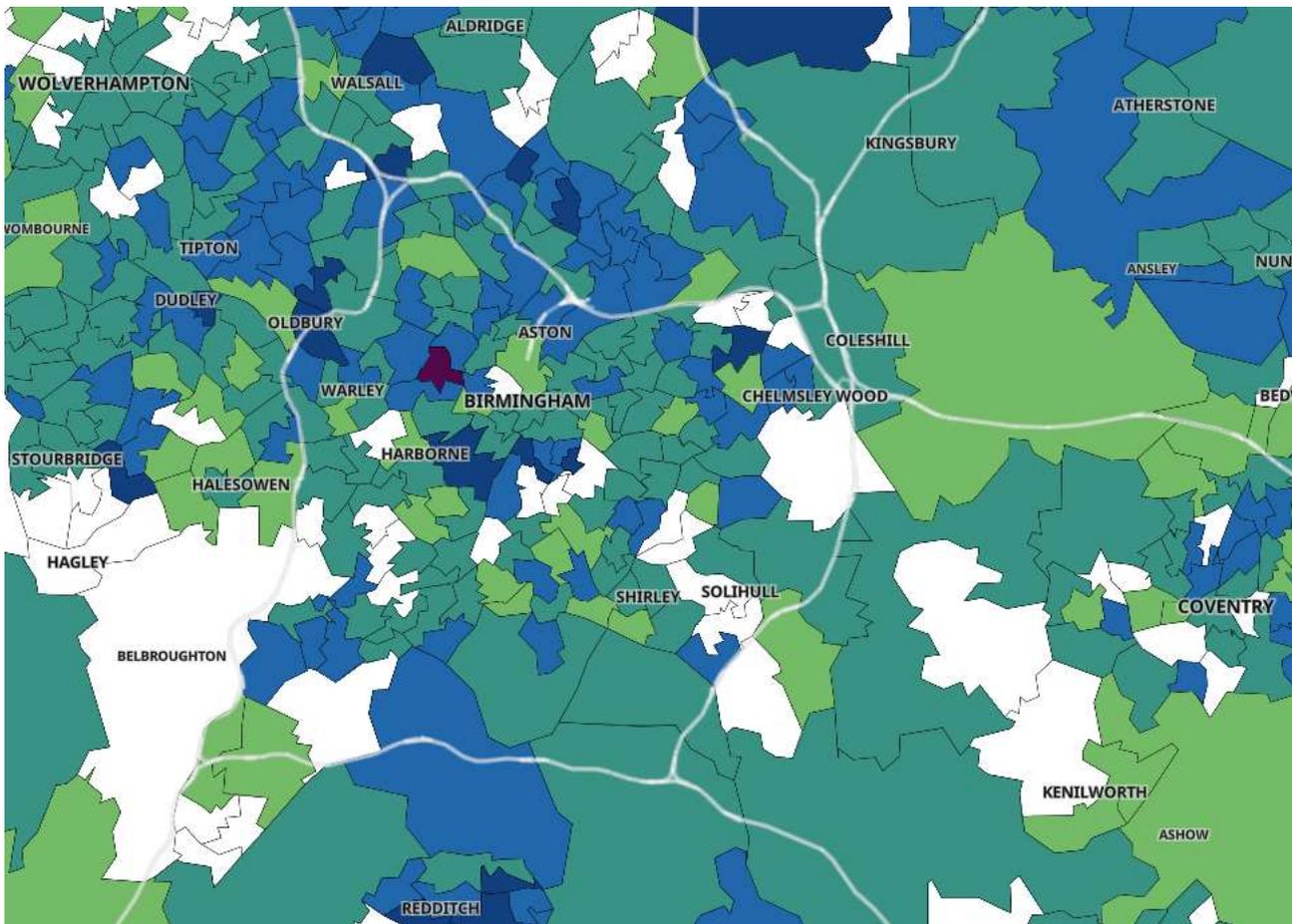
Our World in Data



Latest [ONS infection survey data](#) (5th Mar next release 12th Mar 2021) states:

- In England, the percentage of people testing positive for the coronavirus (COVID-19) has continued to decrease in the week ending 27 February 2021; we estimate that 248,100 people within the community population in England had COVID-19 (95% credible interval: 224,900 to 271,700), equating to around 1 in 220 people.
- In Wales, the percentage of people testing positive has continued to decrease in the week ending 27 February 2021; we estimate that 10,600 people in Wales had COVID-19 (95% credible interval: 7,300 to 14,800), equating to around 1 in 285 people.
- In Northern Ireland, the percentage of people testing positive has continued to decrease in the week ending 26 February 2021; we estimate that 5,700 people in Northern Ireland had COVID-19 (95% credible interval: 3,300 to 8,900), equating to around 1 in 325 people.
- In Scotland, the percentage of people testing positive has continued to decrease in the week ending 27 February 2021; we estimate that 15,600 people in Scotland had COVID-19 (95% credible interval: 11,000 to 21,300) equating to around 1 in 335 people.

The map below displays weekly data, which are updated every day [here](#). Seven-day rolling rate of new cases by specimen date ending on 4th March 2021.



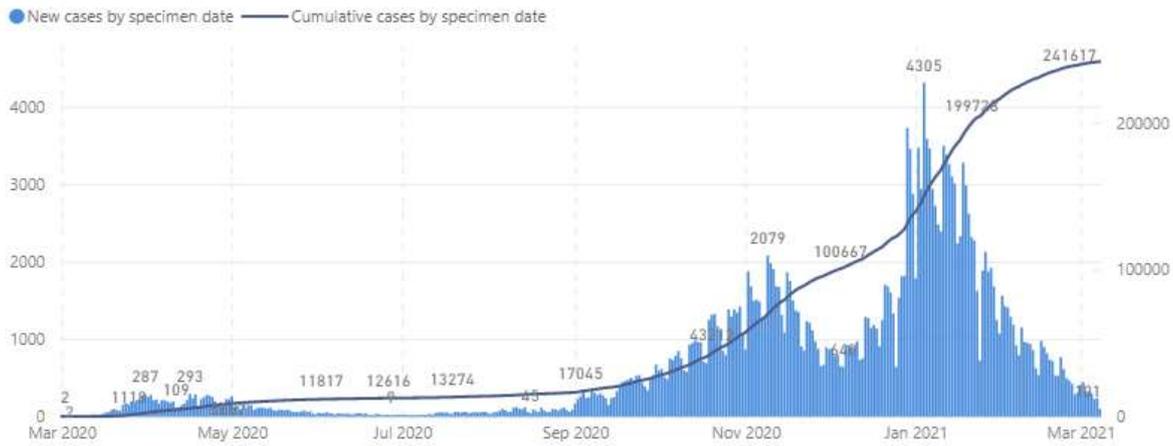
Regional Data

[The Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Epidemiology and Intelligence Cell](#) have created a dashboard which looks at covid data on a regional level. Data below:

Date	New cases by specimen date	New cases by publish date	Cumulative cases by specimen date	Cases in the last 7 days	Rate per 100,000 in the last 7 days
06 March 2021	226	351	241282	2	0.07
05 March 2021	300	335	241056	2392	81.68
04 March 2021	326	420	240756	2515	85.88
03 March 2021	322	381	240430	2654	90.62
02 March 2021	440	411	240108	2826	96.50
01 March 2021	409	338	239668	2997	102.34
28 February 2021	309	398	239259	3353	114.49
27 February 2021	286	483	238950	3572	121.97
26 February 2021	423	529	238664	3815	130.27
25 February 2021	465	624	238241	4109	140.31
24 February 2021	494	722	237776	4378	149.49
23 February 2021	611	500	237282	4700	160.49

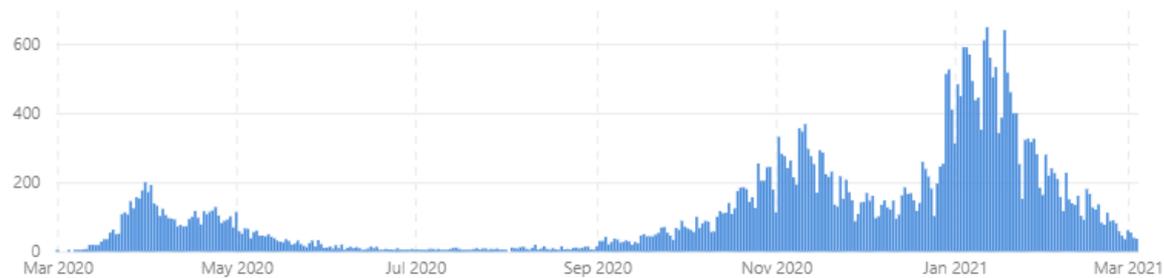
As can be seen from the charts below in the first lockdown infections were higher in the older age groups, whereas now younger people are being infected (nb there will be some effect from higher testing but symptomatic cases presenting for testing are also more prevalent now).

All ages



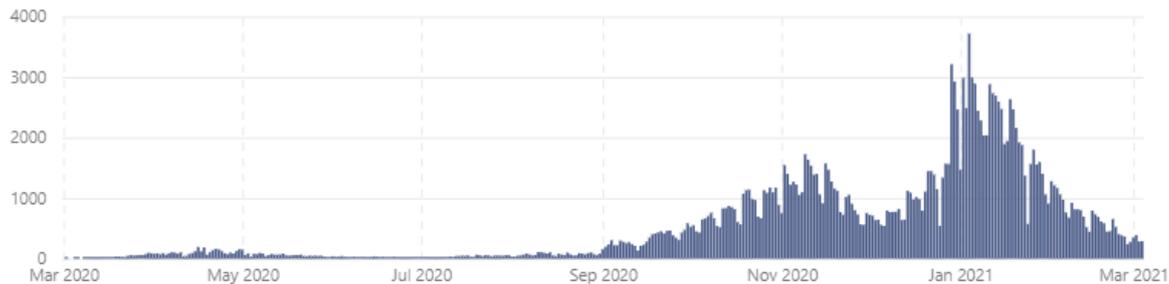
60+

Age ● 60+



0 to 59

Age ● 0 to 59



Covid 19 Hospital Activity

A number of [data collections](#) have been implemented to support incident management. The collections were activated at short notice and the content of the collections has evolved as the incident has developed. The data collected is classified as management information. It has been collected on a daily basis with a tight turn round time. No revisions have been made to the dataset. Any analysis of the data should be undertaken with this in mind.

Total reported admissions to hospital and diagnoses in hospital

The table below shows the latest daily rates:

Name	24-Feb-21	25-Feb-21	26-Feb-21	27-Feb-21	28-Feb-21	01-Mar-21	02-Mar-21	03-Mar-21	04-Mar-21	05-Mar-21	06-Mar-21	07-Mar-21
ENGLAND	874	832	718	624	662	704	683	607	596	487	528	461
East of England	104	68	81	58	68	77	100	47	57	44	67	44
London	105	110	72	64	97	89	95	67	88	62	49	58
Midlands	219	210	172	147	126	163	150	168	129	104	107	96
North East and Yorkshire	145	172	159	152	132	130	121	140	121	96	108	93
North West	108	120	103	96	121	110	97	79	80	79	92	74
South East	137	110	94	75	82	99	89	76	77	69	71	65
South West	56	42	37	32	36	36	31	30	44	33	34	31

Mechanical Ventilation beds - occupied by confirmed COVID-19 patients

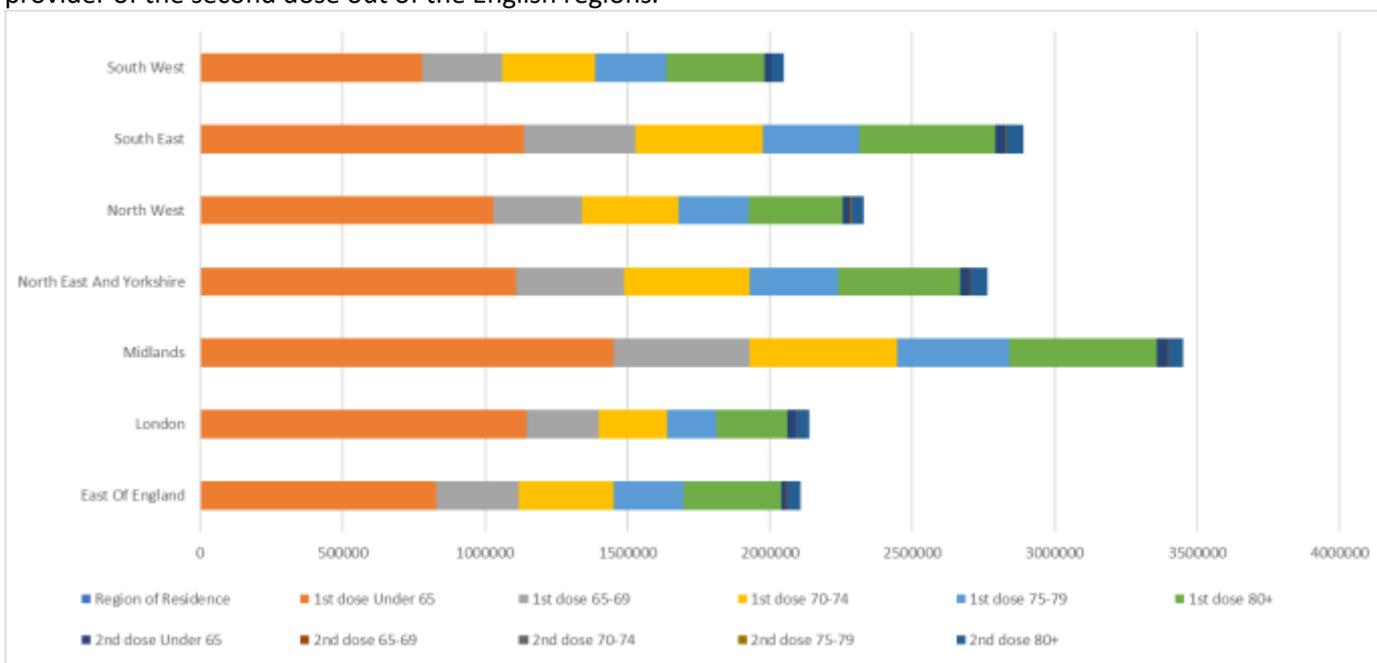
Name	26-Feb-21	27-Feb-21	28-Feb-21	01-Mar-21	02-Mar-21	03-Mar-21	04-Mar-21	05-Mar-21	06-Mar-21	07-Mar-21	08-Mar-21	09-Mar-21
ENGLAND	1,808	1,747	1,630	1,658	1,556	1,507	1,454	1,417	1,326	1,273	1,236	1,187
East of England	149	147	141	136	134	128	129	131	123	107	108	107
London	556	540	455	511	485	479	458	448	417	393	379	358
Midlands	362	356	358	349	328	312	295	291	282	277	266	257
North East and Yorkshire	231	225	219	217	200	199	202	202	182	176	169	165
North West	225	223	203	196	182	174	165	158	152	149	145	141
South East	219	196	190	191	174	160	152	142	131	129	127	118
South West	66	60	64	58	53	55	53	45	39	42	42	41

Total beds - occupied by confirmed COVID-19 patients (as at 08:00)

Name	26-Feb-21	27-Feb-21	28-Feb-21	01-Mar-21	02-Mar-21	03-Mar-21	04-Mar-21	05-Mar-21	06-Mar-21	07-Mar-21	08-Mar-21	09-Mar-21
ENGLAND	11,781	11,090	10,663	10,765	10,121	9,594	9,092	8,594	8,021	7,812	7,847	7,451
East of England	1,239	1,163	1,113	1,100	1,032	964	927	864	786	756	781	709
London	2,253	2,102	1,828	2,018	1,932	1,861	1,821	1,723	1,618	1,562	1,551	1,481
Midlands	2,648	2,518	2,483	2,458	2,304	2,181	2,043	1,928	1,803	1,766	1,736	1,653
North East and Yorkshire	1,800	1,736	1,747	1,742	1,629	1,552	1,444	1,380	1,288	1,248	1,265	1,221
North West	1,724	1,628	1,602	1,622	1,540	1,447	1,363	1,311	1,222	1,211	1,218	1,167
South East	1,548	1,451	1,413	1,354	1,248	1,184	1,116	1,063	1,000	972	963	937
South West	569	492	477	471	436	405	378	325	304	297	313	283

Vaccine Update

Between the 8th December 2020 and the [28th February 2021](#), the Midlands has successfully vaccinated **3,358,909** people with the first dose and a **95,203** of these individuals have received the second dose as well. Meaning the Midlands has successfully continued to provide the most doses of the first jab, and has remained the 3rd highest provider of the second dose out of the English regions.



Region of Residence	1st dose					Cumulative Total 1st Doses to Date	2nd dose					Cumulative Total of all Doses to Date
	Under 65	65-69	70-74	75-79	80+		Under 65	65-69	70-74	75-79	80+	
Total	7,486,908	2,387,908	2,650,929	1,958,972	2,691,063	17,175,780	207,775	11,920	8,111	10,933	359,584	17,774,103
East Of England	828,185	290,242	312,926	246,711	341,170	2,039,234	18,448	1,154	746	944	52,951	2,114,477
London	1,146,648	252,761	240,364	171,520	251,266	2,062,279	28,859	1,954	1,764	2,385	45,346	2,142,589
Midlands	1,450,736	477,506	517,877	293,188	519,242	3,758,909	36,824	1,976	1,299	2,857	52,547	3,454,112
North East And Yorkshire	1,108,113	381,873	439,802	312,015	427,219	2,668,222	34,936	2,060	1,218	1,360	59,371	2,767,187
North West	1,027,940	310,847	341,337	246,200	328,754	2,255,078	26,442	1,657	1,259	1,578	44,645	2,330,659
South East	1,136,047	391,621	447,976	338,087	477,926	2,791,257	36,387	1,923	1,182	1,467	59,508	2,891,684
South West	777,716	281,377	328,516	249,283	343,142	1,980,034	24,410	1,183	660	637	44,991	2,051,895

Weekly Deaths Registered 26th February 2021

BCCEIU

The following analysis compares the latest available time period (the week of the 26th February 2021) to the previous week period (the week of the 19th February 2021) for the number of deaths registered and the number of deaths related to the Coronavirus.

Across England and Wales, the overall registered death figures decreased from 13,809 in the week of the 19th February to 12,614 in the week of 26th February. The number of deaths registered that state Coronavirus on the death certificate experienced a decrease from 4,079 people to 2,914 people over the same period.

Regional level analysis shows that the West Midlands' overall registered death figure decreased from 1,592 people in the week 19th February to 1,401 in the week of 26th February. The number of registered deaths related to Coronavirus has decreased from 530 people to 391 over the same period.

There was a total of 988 deaths registered across the WMCA (3 LEP) area in the week of the 26th February. There were 300 deaths registered that were related to Coronavirus over the same period – accounting for 30% of total deaths. The WMCA (3 LEP) area accounted for 77% of the 391 Coronavirus related deaths registered in the West Midlands Region. In comparison to the week of the 19th February, the overall registered death figures in the WMCA (3 LEP) area decreased by 147, while the number of deaths related to Coronavirus decreased by 109 people.

At a local authority level, Birmingham accounted for 24% (71) of deaths related to Coronavirus in the WMCA (3 LEP), this is followed by Sandwell at 14% (42 deaths).

Of deaths involving Coronavirus registered in the week of the 26th February, 72.0% (216) were in registered in a hospital, 15.3% (46) were in a care home, 9.7% (29) were registered as at home. 2.3% (7) of deaths were registered in a hospice. 0.3% (1) of deaths were registered at other communal establishment and also 0.3% (1) of deaths were registered were classed as elsewhere.

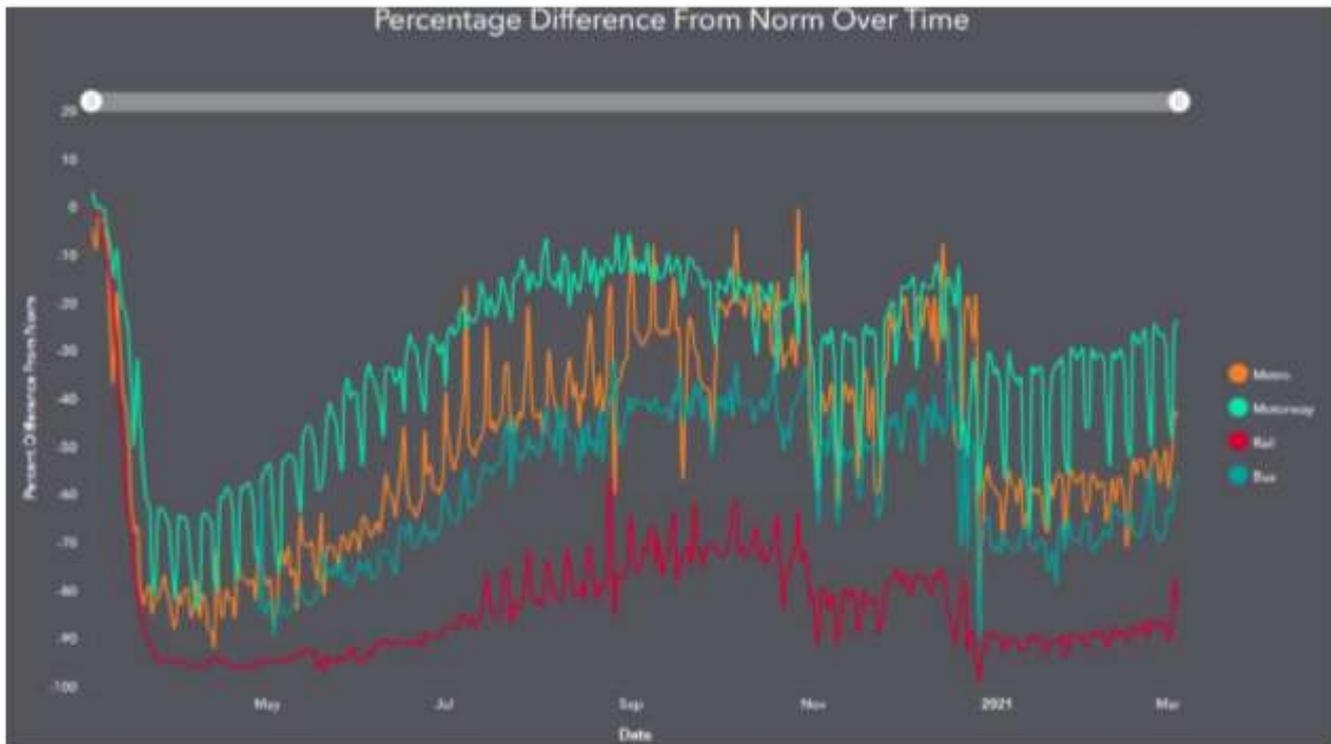
Place and number of deaths registered that are related to Coronavirus in the week of 26th February 2021:

Area name	Care home	Elsewhere	Home	Hospice	Hospital	Other communal establishment	Total
Cannock Chase	0	0	2	0	5	0	7
East Staffordshire	3	0	0	0	7	0	10
Lichfield	1	0	1	0	8	0	10
Tamworth	0	0	1	0	6	0	7
North Warwickshire	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
Nuneaton and Bedworth	0	0	0	0	5	0	5
Rugby	1	0	0	0	2	0	3
Stratford-on-Avon	0	0	0	0	4	0	4
Warwick	1	0	1	0	6	0	8
Bromsgrove	2	0	0	0	2	0	4
Redditch	1	0	0	0	4	0	5
Wyre Forest	1	0	0	0	5	0	6
Birmingham	5	1	9	3	52	1	71
Coventry	5	0	0	0	15	0	20
Dudley	9	0	1	1	11	0	22
Sandwell	9	0	5	0	28	0	42
Solihull	2	0	1	0	13	0	16
Walsall	3	0	4	1	24	0	32
Wolverhampton	3	0	4	2	17	0	26
WM 7 Met.	36	1	24	7	160	1	229
Black Country LEP	24	0	14	4	80	0	122
Coventry & Warwickshire LEP	7	0	1	0	34	0	42
Greater Birmingham & Solihull LEP	15	1	14	3	102	1	136
WMCA (3 LEP)	46	1	29	7	216	1	300

Source: ONS, Death registrations and occurrences by local authority and health board, 9th March 2021

Transport Data

Anne Shaw TFWM



The table provides intel in terms of the levels of services and the use of the network per mode compared to this time last year, the day before and the week before for the 2nd march.

	% levels pre covid	% change from day before	% change from Week before
Bus	44	+3	+13
Train	17	-5	+5
Tram	56	-1	+9
Roads (HE SRN)	76	+1	+2

* Data is only currently available up to 4th January, this is pre national lockdown and it is anticipated patronage levels will drop further when the data is available.

** As last week was the festive period network usage figures will have been different when compared to the pre festive period. Next week's figures should show a truer reflection of network usage.

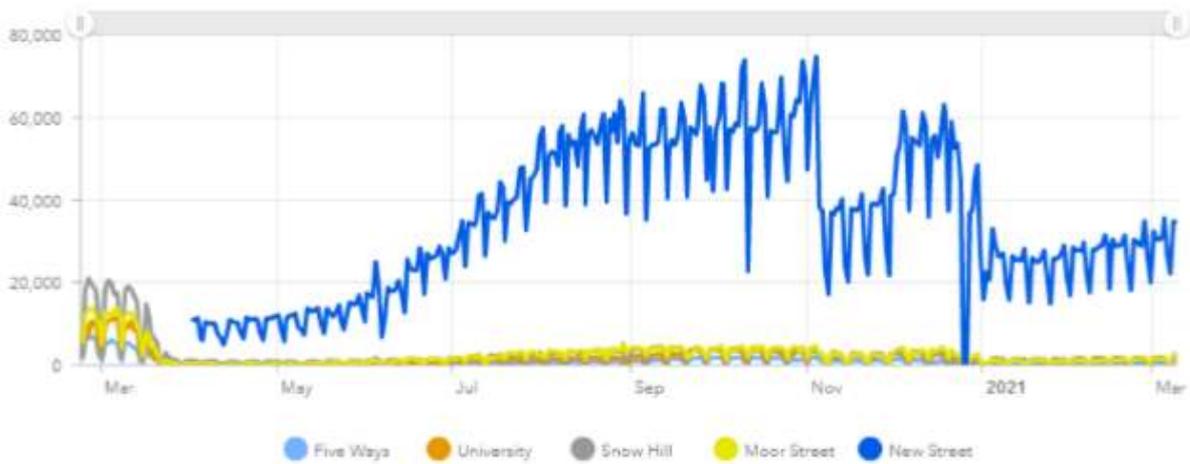
Following the introduction of further Covid measures, transport services remain at their current levels with social distancing measures in place.

We continue to monitor the network and carry out relevant actions to assist with managing capacity to ensure compliance with social distancing. In addition, we are also continuing to encourage and enforce on the network the wearing of face coverings.

Vehicle Count on A34 From ANPR Cameras



Daily Footfall - Birmingham Rail Stations



Weekday Train and Metro Car Park Occupancy (%)



ONS Weekly Release Indicators

BCCEIU

On the 4th March 2021 the ONS released the weekly publication containing data about the condition of the UK society and economy from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The statistics are experimental and have been devised to provide timely information. The following summary contains footfall data, initial results from Wave 25 of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS), national company incorporations and voluntary dissolution applications, experimental online job advert indices and results from Wave 47 of the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

Footfall

Overall UK footfall for the week to 27th February 2021 was at 43% of the level seen in the same week of the previous year, this increased by 5 percentage points when compared with the equivalent index in the previous week.

For the week to 27th February, footfall at retail parks were 69% of the level seen for the same week in 2020. Footfall for high streets and shopping centres were at 37% and 31% of levels seen for the same period in 2020. When compared to the previous week, retail parks increased by 6%, high streets increased by 11% and shopping centres increased by 6%.

Daily retail footfall in all regions of the UK remains substantially below its level in the equivalent period of 2020. However, retail footfall was stronger in the West Midlands (48%), South East and South West, while the East Midlands (33%), Scotland Wales and Northern Ireland continue to have particularly weaker footfall.

Volume of overall daily retail footfall, percentage of the level recorded on the same day of the equivalent week of the previous year, UK regions, 1st March 2020 to 27th February 2021:



Source: Springboard and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

National Company Incorporations and Voluntary Dissolution

Companies House data shows there were 17,096 company incorporations in the week to 26th February 2021, above the incorporations recorded for the previous week which was 15,846. This was also higher when compared to the ninth week in 2020 (14,034) and for 2019 (13,965).

Also, for the week to 26th February, there were 6,629 voluntary dissolution applications, an increase from the previous week (6,087). This was also higher than voluntary dissolution applications in the ninth week of 2020 (6,239) and in 2019 (4,898).

Business Insights and Conditions Survey

The initial results from Wave 25 of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) cover the period of 8th – 21st February, with a response rate of 21.7%. The survey was live from the 22nd February – 2nd March. National statistics are based on weighted estimates.

Multiplying the BICS-weighted furlough proportions by the IDBR total annual employment, preliminary figures show that 19% (approximately 6 million people) of businesses workforce were on furlough leave in mid-February. Please note these proportions do not include public sector, financial sector and parts of agriculture and will not be consistent with other sources, however does provide an indication.

Trading Status

Weighted by count of UK businesses, 72% of responding businesses across the UK had been trading for more than the last 2 weeks. 1% of responding businesses who had temporarily paused trading reported to have started trading in the last 2 weeks. 3% of businesses that have temporarily paused trading but intend to restart trading in the next two weeks. While 21% of businesses that have temporarily paused trading that do not intend to restart trading in the next two weeks and 3% of businesses have permanently ceased trading.

Financial Performance

Weighted by turnover, across the UK approximately 8% of businesses that have continued trading reported turnover had increased by at least 20%. While 39% reported that turnover had not been affected. However, 45% of businesses reported turnover had decreased by at least 20% and 9% of businesses were not sure.

Experimental Single Site Weighted Regional Estimates

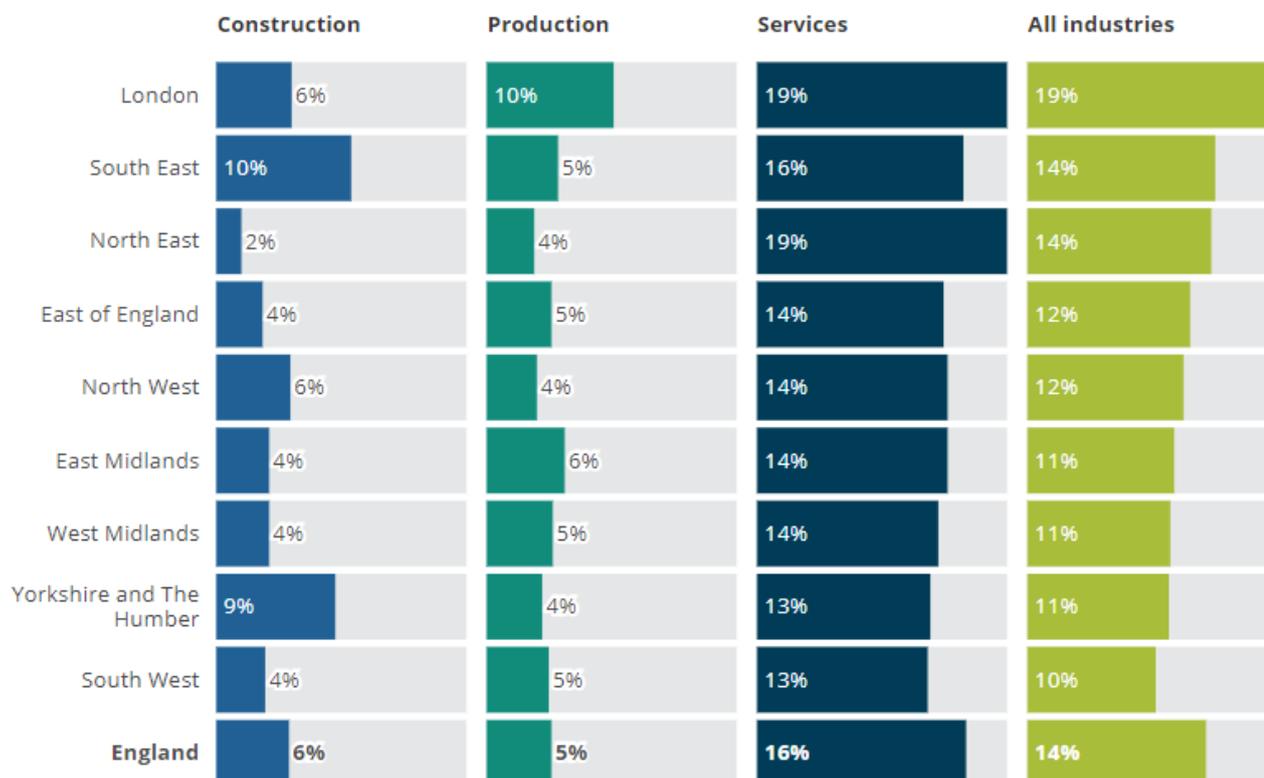
Experimental single site weighted regional estimates have been updated up to Wave 21 (29th December – 10th January), figures now show following the tougher restrictions in December the West Midlands (-18pp) and London (-16pp) experienced the largest falls in single site businesses trading (as seen in the following chart).



Source: ONS – Business Impact of Coronavirus Survey

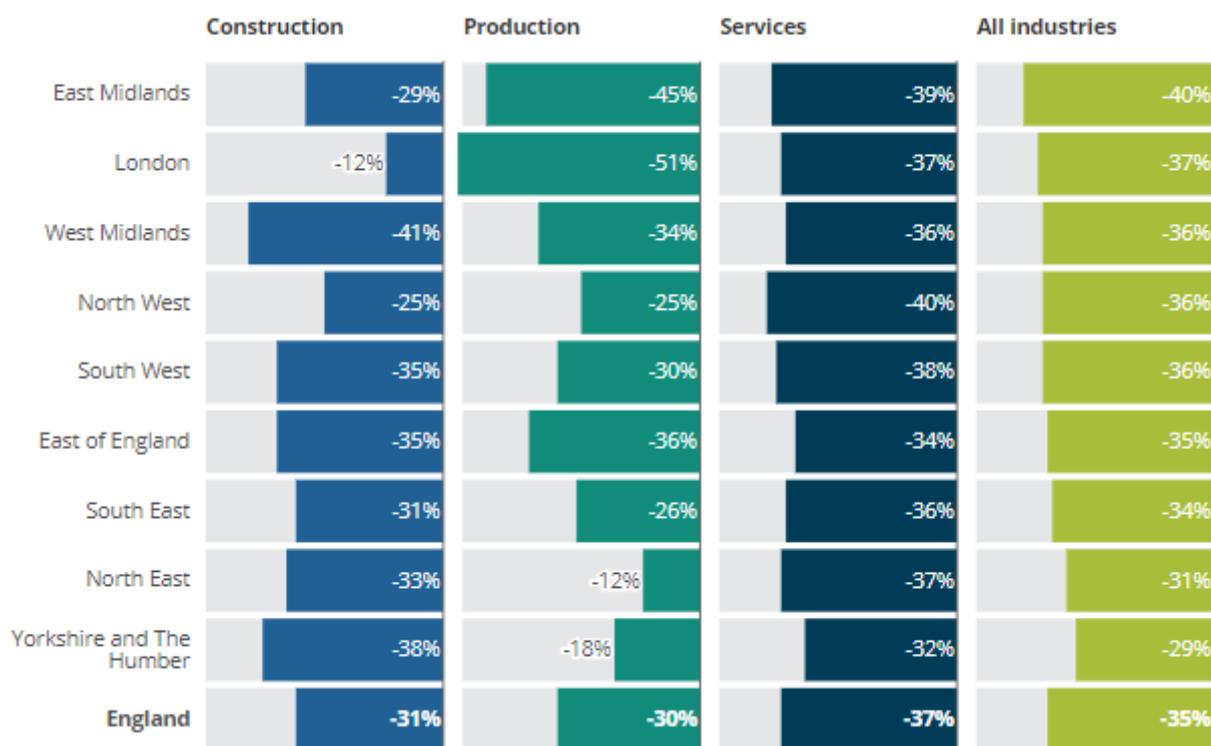
Following the national trend, the services sector had the highest proportion of the workforce on furlough leave at 14% in the West Midlands.

The following chart shows the proportion of the workforce furloughed, of single site businesses not permanently stopped trading, weighted by employment, England, 14th – 27th December:



Source: ONS – Business Impact of Coronavirus Survey

In the West Midlands, the sector with the highest net percentage of single site businesses experiencing a decrease in turnover in mid-December 2020 was the Construction sector. **The following chart shows the net turnover balances of businesses currently trading, weighted by turnover, UK 14th to 27th December:**



Source: ONS – Business Impact of Coronavirus Survey

Online Jobs Adverts

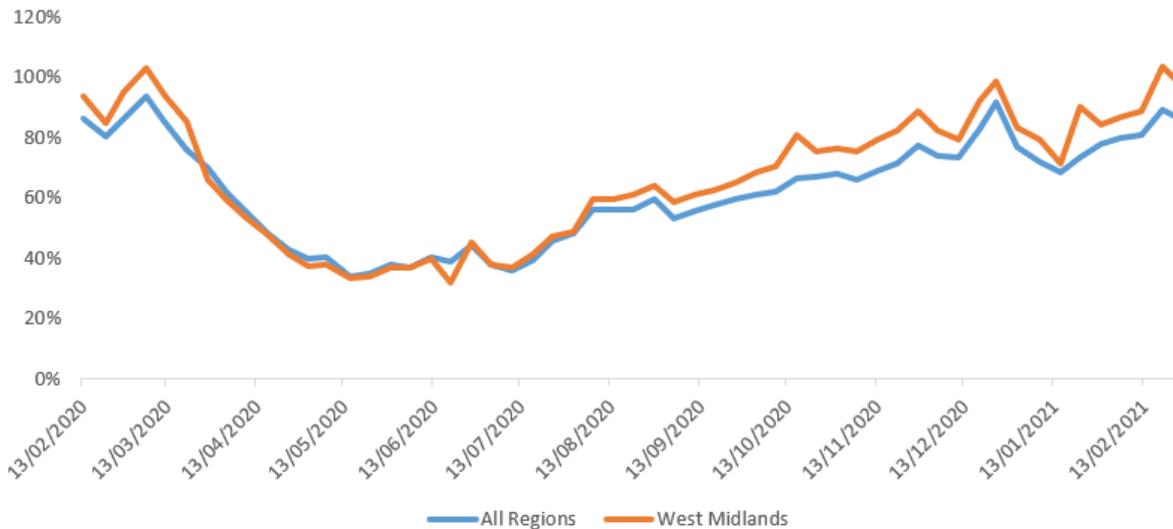
These estimates are experimental figures. They are taken from jobs adverts provided by Adzuna. Previously the analysis compared the latest period with the whole of the previous year average. This has now changed to show the percentage change from the same week in the previous year for each category. This will remove some of the seasonality that previous comparisons may have contained. The Adzuna categories do not correspond to SIC categories and therefore not comparable with the ONS Vacancy Survey.

Nationally, between the 19th and 26th February 2021 total online job adverts decreased by 3.4 percentage points. On the 26th February, total online job adverts were at 85.9% of the levels seen in the same week as the previous year. Out of the 28 categories (excluding unknown) 23 decreased from the previous week (19th February), with the highest decrease by 25.8 percentage points in manufacturing (to 149.0%). The highest increase from the previous week was transport/logistics/warehouse category by 5.0 percentage points. Transport/logistics/ warehouse online adverts were at 150.5% of the level seen in the same week of the previous year.

Between the 19th and 26th February, for the West Midlands, the total online jobs adverts decreased by 6.6 percentage points. The East Midlands had the highest decrease over this period by 7.4 percentage points with the highest increase by 1.5 percentage points in Northern Ireland.

On the 26th February, total online job adverts for the West Midlands were at 97.1% of the levels seen in the same week as the previous year. Northern Ireland was at 125.3% of levels seen in the same week as the previous year. South East was the lowest region at 80.6% of the level seen in 2020.

The following chart shows the total weekly job adverts on Adzuna, for all regions and the West Midlands, 13th February 2020 to 26th February 2021: percentage change from the same week in the previous year:



Source: Adzuna

Social Impacts of the Coronavirus

The following section shows results from Wave 47 of the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) which covers the period of 24th to 28th February.

Avoiding Contact and Self-Isolating

In the past seven days, when a West Midlands resident has met up with people outside their household, support or childcare bubble, 84% reported to always or often maintaining social distancing (86% GB). 7% of responding West Midlands residents reported not very often or never maintaining social distancing (8% GB).

90% of responding West Midlands adults who have left their home in the past 7 days have avoided physical contact with others (92% GB).

83% of responding West Midlands adults have avoided contact with older or other vulnerable people in the past 7 days (81% GB).

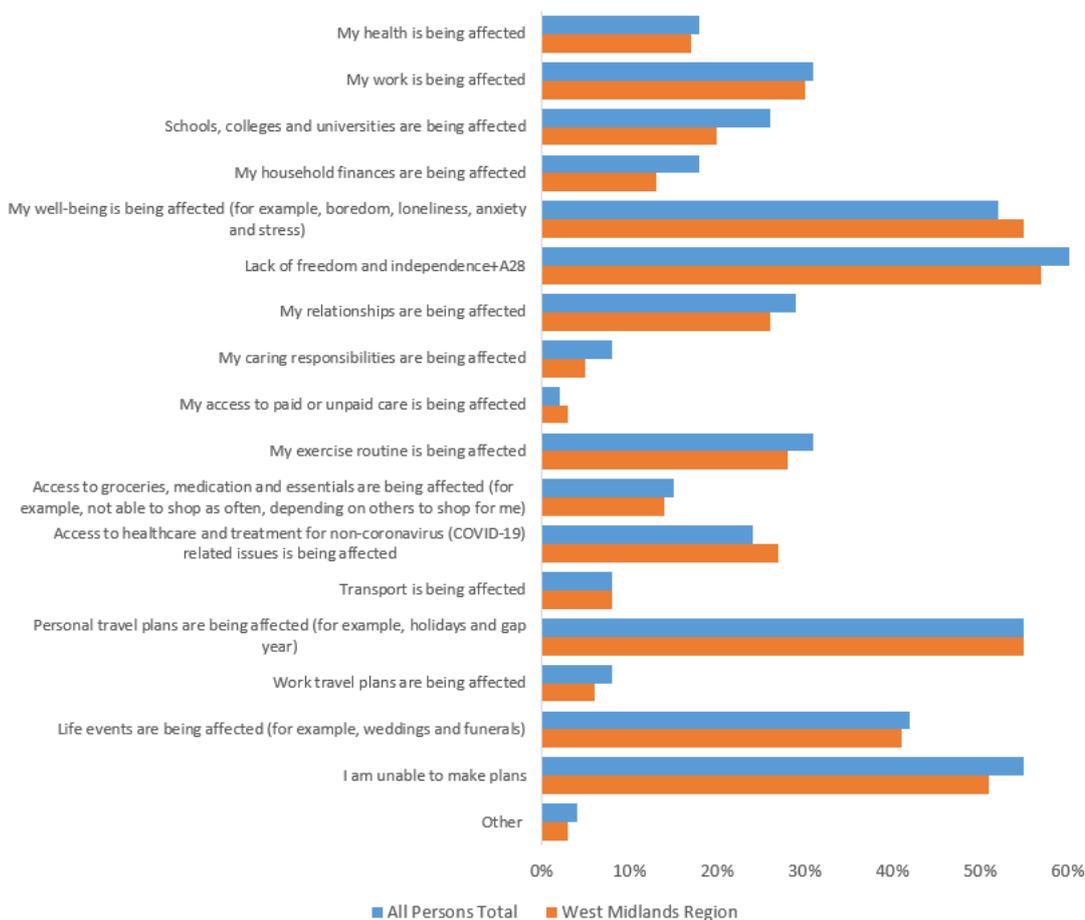
6% of responding West Midlands adults have self-isolated in the past 7 days due to COVID-19 (7% GB).

Impact on People’s Life Overall

In the West Midlands 61% of adults reported they were very or somewhat worried about the effect COVID-19 was having on their life (66% GB). 13% of responding West Midlands adults reported that they were somewhat unworried or not at all worried (matching GB average).

57% of adults in the West Midlands reported the main impact COVID-19 was having on their lives was the lack of freedom and independence (62% GB).

The following chart shows how COVID-19 is affecting West Midlands adults and also the overall all persons total between 24th to 28th February:



45% of working adults reported work had been affected from the COVID-19 pandemic (44% GB).

Well-Being, Loneliness and Perceptions of the Future

Average personal well-being scores for life satisfaction was 6.5 in the West Midlands (6.6 GB), worthwhile was 7 in the West Midlands (7.1 GB), happiness was 6.5 for West Midlands adults (6.7 GB) and feeling anxious was recorded at 4.2 for West Midlands adults (4 GB).

11% of adults in the West Midlands reported low levels of life satisfaction (13% GB). 11% of West Midlands adults reported low level of feeling worthwhile (10% GB). 16% of West Midlands adults reported low levels of happiness (15% GB) and 36% of West Midlands adults reported high levels of anxiety (34% GB).

29% of adults in the West Midlands reported to often/always or some of the time to feeling lonely (26% GB). While 42% reported hardly ever or never feeling lonely in the West Midlands (47% GB).

27% of West Midlands adults believe it will take 6 months or less before life returns to normal (32% GB). While 26% of West Midlands adults believed it will take 7 to 12 months (28% GB). 26% of West Midlands adults think it could more than a year to return back to normal (20% GB) and 7% for the West Midlands adults thought it would never go back to normal (5% GB).

Government Guidelines

72% of adults in the West Midlands felt they had enough information about government plans to manage COVID-19 (74% GB). 87% of adults in the West Midlands strongly or tend to support the current lockdown measures for where they live (85% GB). With 4% of West Midlands adults strongly or tend to oppose the lockdown measures (7% GB).

71% of adults in the West Midlands region reported it was very easy or easy to understand the current lockdown measures (75% GB). 6% of West Midlands adults found them difficult or very difficult to understand the measures (9% GB).

73% of adults in the West Midlands region reported it was very easy or easy to follow the current lockdown measures (75% GB). With 6% of West Midlands adults found them difficult or very difficult to follow the measures (9% GB).

Mass Testing and Vaccines

In the West Midlands, 81% of adults strongly or tend to support mass testing (matching GB average). With 2% strongly or tend to oppose mass testing (3% GB).

72% of adults in the West Midlands were very or fairly likely to get a test for COVID-19 even if they did not have any symptoms (73% GB). While 12% were very or fairly unlikely to get a test without symptoms (13% GB).

42% of responding adults In the West Midlands region have received a vaccine (39% GB) a further 5% have been offered a vaccine and waiting to be vaccinated (matching GB average). 52% have not received or been offered the vaccine (55% GB).

LEP Level Intelligence

HEADLINES

SECTOR	KEY CONCERNS
<p>Cross Sector</p>	<p>Budget 2021 The Budget was generally welcomed by local business & business groups in the immediate term. Particularly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extension of furlough to September • Additional financial support through grants and loans & SEISS extension • 100% business rates holiday continues to end of June for hospitality, leisure and retail, and discounted for the rest of the year. <p>There are also some interesting new programmes / policies that businesses will be able to access and benefit from, and locally we look forward to seeing more detail about them and their support for businesses including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help to Grow: Management • Help to Grow: Digital • Super-deduction <p>COVID-19 Companies are looking to understand how the current, and latest, support measures may help them, while continuing to navigate the range of existing measures of support and easing of lockdowns. Specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lockdown Grants are not being deemed as fair across the scope of businesses, especially those in the B2C arena who are trying to get support digitally and are not eligible in most cases • Businesses are still facing financial difficult times and long delays with grant funding and support financially is taking longer than anticipated. • Other businesses applying for LRSG and ARG are desperate to know if they have been successful. Some businesses receiving anonymous payments from local authorities, not knowing where payments came from and that they were successful. <p>Low levels of public trust is a challenge for central government but creates opportunities for charities, local government and businesses to build on trust earned through the COVID-19 response</p> <p>EU Exit The continuing difficulties businesses are facing include increased administration, costs, delays, and confusion about what rules to follow. Specific issues reported to Growth Hubs are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of communication from specific EU countries that have longer delays on products and shipping than others which is damaging the UK businesses • Brexit price increases for customers in the UK are problematic and causing transport companies to come to a halt • UK companies finding VAT a real issue • Support firms in adapting to the new trading arrangements with the EU through the introduction of a temporary SME 'Brexit' tax credit until 2022/23 • Dealings with companies in Northern Ireland experiencing high increases costs. • More businesses seeking general advice regarding importing and exporting. • Issues arising around unexpected tax bills and subsequent delays on the arrival of goods. <p>Enquires</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a continued strong level of Growth Hub enquiries asking for support with new start-up ventures; some start-ups looking for premises and are seeking advice on this.

SECTOR	KEY CONCERNS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital Investment Projects – further examples of businesses looking to push forward with growth projects and seeking mainstream business support grants for machinery, digital equipment and renovation works. • Pivoting – Businesses that have recently benefitted from partner support continuing on their growth trajectory and seeking to expand in to new and/or larger premises. <p>Programmes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DWP has added new work coaches to help Universal Credit Claimants get jobs, and 300 new work coaches are in Birmingham and Solihull. “They will form the backbone of our bold and ambitious plan for jobs, with their expertise and guidance crucial in supporting jobseekers in Birmingham and Solihull in retraining, upskilling or re-entering the workplace, as we build back better from the pandemic” • High volumes of interest in the Kickstart programme as business see the value in the scheme. Some concern over the length of the application process, 2 months plus.
Digital and Tech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital taxes should expand to cover a wider range of online sales, according to a poll of over 1,000 business leaders by accountancy and advisory firm BDO LLP. A significant majority (93 per cent) of respondents in the poll said that while many online businesses have flourished, many traditional businesses have struggled during the health crisis, and the government should raise much-needed revenue by expanding tax on online sales.
Manufacturing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A blueprint setting out the compelling opportunities for the Midlands to position itself as a world leader in advanced ceramics has been launched. Businesses and academics from across the region have collaborated on the Advanced Ceramics Sector Profile, commissioned by the Midlands Industrial Ceramics Group (MICG) in partnership with the Midlands Engine Observatory. Highlighting the global opportunities presented in the rapidly growing industry, the report sets out the fundamental importance of advanced ceramics to the performance of high-tech sectors worldwide. • UK engine manufacturing declined by 29.3 per cent in January, according to new figures. The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT) has said that just 168,291 units were built in the first month of 2021, the 13th consecutive month of decline. Additionally, production for domestic and overseas markets fell by 27.2 per cent and 30.8 per cent respectively. • In the latest Business Impact of Coronavirus Survey (BICS), businesses were asked if they had made changes to supply chains due to the end of the EU transition period. 6.0% of responding West Midlands businesses reported they had. Where businesses stated they had made changes, 49.3% of responding West Midlands businesses reported they were using more UK suppliers. This may reflect the reshoring opportunities of EU Exit.
Hospitality	<p>Covid-19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hospitality bosses across the region have cautiously welcomed “crucial” VAT and business rates support from the government Budget announcement but have warned there is still a long road of recovery for the sector • The sector is still facing a difficult time with limited financial support available.
Aviation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Aviation industry is facing the loss of a number of highly skilled pilots; some now face a large debt from the cost of training. There is a concern that some of these individuals may never return to the profession.
Entertainment / Visitor Economy	<p>EU Exit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Businesses involved in the Entertainment industry, particularly live music tours, unable to operate effectively post EU Exit, and are setting up satellite hubs in Holland to avoid travel disruption and VISA issues.

NEW ECONOMIC SHOCKS

COMPANY	LOCATION	SECTOR	SOURCE/DETAIL
Sainsburys	Nationwide	Retail	Around 1,150 Sainsbury's employees are at risk of losing their jobs as part of a company restructuring.
Woodside Conference Centre	Kenilworth	Tourism, Hospitality & Leisure	Two hotel, weddings and conference venues have closed after administrators were called in. Grant Thornton has been appointed to look after the day-to-day running of Sundial Group and Woodside Conference Centre on February 22, leaving Highgate House Hotel in Creaton, Northamptonshire, and Woodside Conference Centre in Kenilworth closed – and unlikely to reopen. A statement from Grant Thornton said: "Office holders from Grant Thornton UK LLP were appointed joint administrators to the Sundial Group Limited and Woodside Conference Centre Limited on February 22.
Meggitt	Rugby/Coventry	Engineering, Aerospace, Manufacturing	Meggitt, the engineering company which makes parts for the aerospace, defence and energy markets, has seen revenues plunge and profits disappear in its full-year 2020 results. The Coventry firm said this morning (March 4) that revenues dipped by 26% last year to £1.68bn, while statutory operating profits were wiped out as the firm posted a loss of £297m against a profit of £325m in 2019. This was attributed to non-cash impairment of intangible assets and other write downs.
Sims Group UK	Stratford-upon-Avon	Recycling	The Covid-19 pandemic and changes in legislation have hit the results of a US scrap metal, electronics and recycling company's UK arm during its latest financial year. Warwickshire-headquartered Sims Group UK has reported a turnover of £448.8m for the 12 months to 30 June 2020, down from £662.2m in 2019. The business also slipped to a pre-tax loss of £34.9m, falling from a profit of £7.6m.

NEW INVESTMENT, DEALS AND OPPORTUNITIES

COMPANY	LOCATION	SECTOR	DETAIL & SOURCE
HS2 Interchange Station	Solihull	Rail	£50million has been awarded in the Budget to build new car park next to the HS2 interchange station in Solihull. A major infrastructure project as part of the new HS2 Interchange station in Solihull was handed a £50 million boost in the Chancellor's Budget. The capital, which will be matched by a further £45 million from regional partners, will be used to develop a multi-storey car park next to the new station 1.2 miles east of Birmingham Airport.

COMPANY	LOCATION	SECTOR	DETAIL & SOURCE
			<p>The project will enable transport chiefs to build a multi-storey car park rather than the surface level scheme which had been included in the original plans for the site next to the M42.</p> <p>It would have seen 7,400 parking spaces built over 22 acres of greenbelt land.</p>
Birmingham Tech- ScaleUp Accelerator	West Midlands	Tech	<p>A new business accelerator programme has been launched to boost West Midlands tech start-ups.</p> <p>Called 'ScaleUp Accelerator', it will allow ten tech start-ups to get support and mentoring with the aim of helping them grow.</p> <p>The scheme is being run by not-for-profit body Birmingham Tech, in partnership with West Midlands Combined Authority and consultancy Purpose Led Performance and is targeted at local businesses with high-growth potential.</p> <p>The free, six-month scheme will start in April and support the ten successful applicants by offering workshops and events alongside advice and mentoring from experts who have previously built-up tech and digital companies.</p> <p>Two of the companies will be chosen to work with the combined authority and experts on tech solutions to tackle the climate change emergency.</p>
WMCA	Black country and wider regions	Public	Multi-million-pound funds to kickstart the regeneration of derelict urban land across the West Midlands have created more than 3,700 new jobs.
Kings Barbers Club	Wolverhampton	Hair and Beauty	Sainsbury's flagship superstore in Wolverhampton city centre has been given the go-ahead to open a new barbershop, Kings Barbers, outside its premises.
B&M / Tim Hortons	Dudley	Retail	A new B&M store and a Tim Hortons drive-thru are to be built on the site of a former Toys R Us branch in the Black Country.
Sandwell Council	Sandwell	Public	Sandwell's bids to the Government's Towns Fund have been granted in the Budget, with the borough on course to secure £67.5 million investment.
Geeka Media	Coventry	Digital & Creative	A media business in Coventry, run by a teenage entrepreneur, has expanded into bigger offices after taking on three new team members and diversifying into new markets. Geeka Media was set up as a YouTube channel. The company started to carve out a niche in creating online tech videos and social media content for clients such as Intel, Samsung and ASUS and last year took office space at the Business Innovation Centre in Binley. They have since hired two video editors and turnover has increased up to 300%.

COMPANY	LOCATION	SECTOR	DETAIL & SOURCE
Coventry Building Society	Coventry	Professional Services	The chief executive of Coventry Building Society has described the group's financial performance as robust despite profits falling as a result of Covid-19. The society has posted pre-tax profits of £124m for the year to 31 December 2020, down from £147m in 2019. However, total income increased to £407.7m, up from £379.6m. Mortgage balances also increased from £1.2bn to £43.5bn, while savings balances rose from £1.9bn to £38.2bn.
Manufacturing Technology Centre	Rugby/Coventry	Engineering, Manufacturing	A robot that can teach itself how to pick up unknown objects has been developed by automation experts at the Coventry-based Manufacturing Technology Centre. The state-of-the-art development allows single objects to be picked out of a random tray or bin, without the need for high-cost sensors or lengthy programming. The process could bring major benefits to the manufacturing, agri-food, logistics and waste management sectors. The solution comes on the heels of a successful MTC project to develop a robot with decision-making capabilities for assembly operations.
MPL Fabrications	Coventry	Manufacturing	A Coventry manufacturing business has its sights set on growth after facing an uncertain future. The company, which employs 15 staff, is run by Director Kevin Duffy who has kept the business going as a legacy to his father-in-law – Roy Hill – who started the business 35 years ago but passed away 8 years ago. His successor died last year, leaving Kevin, who had taken early retirement from Jaguar Land Rover, to manage the company.
Ricoh Arena	Coventry	Tourism, Hospitality & Leisure	A sports bar is set to open its doors at Ricoh Arena later this year as part of wider improvements ahead of the venue hosting the Commonwealth Games. The bar – located by the front door to the complex – will cater for up to 160 covers at a time. It will be open to the general public seven days a week and will create around 25 jobs.
Ricoh	Coventry	Tourism, Hospitality & Leisure	Pre-tax profit has risen at the UK arm of international technology group Ricoh during its latest financial year, new accounts have revealed. Documents for Ricoh UK, which is headquartered in Northampton, show the business' pre-tax profit increased from £4.6m to £6.7m in the year to 31 March 2020. That was despite its turnover dipping to £484.4m, down from £496.4m in 2019.

Disclaimer: The contents of this document are based on the latest data available and the contribution of regional partners in a fast paced environment, therefore we urge caution in its use and application

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