

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.

Following the easing of lockdown key indicators are showing the start of a return to normal. Footfall statistics indicate that people are more comfortable with leaving home, but the majority of people still feel the pandemic is having a worrying effect on their lives. The latest skills data shows a significant improvement; however, this should be treated with cautious optimism until a longer-term pattern emerges. Sectors such as events/conferences are still struggling and have no clear roadmap as to when they will be able to trade again. Some businesses in the hospitality sector are still not open due to costs and capacity and in the last quarter there has been a significant rise in those not receiving pay, and vacancies have gone down, so although unemployment is holding steady there is considerable uncertainty in the labour market.

- Across the board the region has improved on skills indicators, with better improvements in performance than the UK: the number of people with NVQ Level 4+ qualifications has increased by 10.3% since 2020; the number with 'no qualifications', decreased from 290,500 in 2019 to 223,800 in 2020 (23%); the number with NVQ Level 3 qualifications increased by 34,700 or +8.1%; the number of people with trade apprenticeships increased by 3,700 or +6.3%; and the number with NVQ Level 2 qualifications increased by 1.0%.
- At 17th April 2021, retail footfall remains strong at 98% of its level when compared to the equivalent week of 2019. Week-on-week analysis (from 10th April to 17th April 2021) shows that footfall for shopping centres increased by 127%, high streets increased by 93% and retail parks increased by 35%.
- UK's economic growth prospects for 2021 have been significantly upgraded in the [EY ITEM Club's Spring Forecast](#) published on 26th April: growth of 6.8% is expected this year rather than 5%.
- In the US [Visa](#) has reported that in the last month US Nonfarm employment rose by 916,000 in March, while consumer confidence hit its highest mark since the beginning of the pandemic. Measures of real-time consumer spending indicated a sharp acceleration in spending in the final weeks of March, as the stimulus checks enacted by President Biden to support recovery made their way into consumers bank accounts.
- A new survey by [Survation](#) shows that 1 in 12 private renters has been given notice to leave without reason since March 2020. 1 in 3 renters (2.78m) fears that they will lose their home in the year ahead, representing nearly 3 million adults across England. [Shelter](#) reports that over a third of renters fear being evicted for asking for repairs to their homes, leaving many living in very poor conditions.
- The West Midlands is now considered by the government to be a strategically significant hub for levelling up FinTech (Financial Technology) in the UK with its appointment to the FinTech National Network
- Research for [Openreach](#) has found that a comprehensive Full Fibre Network in the region could enable 85,000 new people to enter the region's workforce. A nationwide roll-out would enable more than 29,000 people in the West Midlands to expand their working hours.
- [Openreach](#) also announced it is investing millions of pounds on a Full Fibre rollout to dozens of towns and cities in the region, including many in the hard-to-reach 'final third'. Build is already underway including in the city areas of Birmingham and Coventry, as well as harder to reach places such as Cannock and Burton-upon-Trent in Staffordshire.
- [Wonkhe](#) argues that by enabling universities to more easily commercialise their research will help the government reach their R&D goals.
- [Centre for Cities](#) shows that whilst 70% of people in the West Midlands know we have a metro mayor, only 30% were able to correctly give his name. This picture is similar for other metro mayors.
- [Social Market Foundation](#) polling shows that many people value vocational qualifications, regardless of age or their own background, in direct opposition to policy and media which under-report on vocational options.
- A £1bn investment by [Oval Real Estate](#) in the Digbeth area has been recommended for approval in Birmingham

Covid Impacts

- In England, the percentage of people testing positive for the coronavirus (COVID-19) has continued to decrease in the week ending 16 April 2021, to around 1 in 610 people.
- The Midlands has successfully vaccinated **5.3m** people with the first dose and **1.5m** of these individuals have received the second dose. The Midlands continues to provide the most first doses, and has become the highest provider of the second dose.

- 44% of West Midlands residents felt very comfortable or comfortable leaving home (50% GB). 29% felt uncomfortable or very uncomfortable leaving home due to COVID-19. 58% of adults reported they were very or somewhat worried about the effect COVID-19 was having on their life.
- There were 28.2 million payrolled employees in the UK, a fall of 2.8% compared with last year; 607,000 vacancies in January 2021 to March 2021. This is 178,000 (22.7%) fewer than the estimated 785,000 vacancies a year earlier.
- Alternative claimant count data estimates 217,933 claimants in the WMCA (3 LEP) area in February 2021, an increase of 79.0% (+96,167) when compared to February 2020.
- Approximately 500k employees received no pay while their job was on hold and/or affected by the coronavirus pandemic in April and May 2020. Most of the year this has been flat at 200k but has raised by 300k in last qtr
- Reports of redundancy in the three months prior to interview increased by 3.5 per thousand on the year, but decreased by a record 6.8 per thousand on the quarter.
- The regional employment rate is 74.1%, an increase of 0.3 percentage points from the previous quarter. The unemployment rate (aged 16 years and over) was 5.5%, representing a decrease of 0.5 percentage points on the previous quarter.
- There were 216,390 claimants aged 16 years and over in the WMCA (3 LEP) area in March 2021. This is an increase of 1,320 people when compared to February 2021.
- There were 5,325 voluntary dissolution applications, an increase from 5,059 recorded in the previous week. The number of voluntary dissolution applications was higher than levels seen in the sixteenth week of 2020 (3,631) and the same week in 2019 (4,903).
- 34.0% of trading businesses in the West Midlands reported profits had decreased by at least 20%. However, 39.1% of trading businesses in the West Midlands reported that profits had stayed the same and 12.0% reported their profits had increased by at least 20%.
- Over 200,000 more people are at risk of poor mental health due to unemployment, according to [The Health Foundation](#)
- [Food and Drink Industry Report 2021](#) has found that the pandemic has significantly impacted businesses operating in the food and drinks sector. The UK saw the export of food and drink fall by 9.7% (£21.3bn). Value of exports has fallen by -8% and -12.1% respectively and dependence on imports increasing by 9.2% compared to 2019. The largest fall was in Scotland at 16.2%. West Midlands saw a 4.6% decrease in food and drink.
- [The Institute for New Economic Thinking](#) found that the most important factor to estimate how well a country has managed the pandemic is the presence of pre-pandemic austerity measures.
- [Resolution Foundation](#) examines the impact on COVID on young people's employment, and finds that many more will experience unemployment and wage scarring due to larger numbers of 16-24 year olds being negatively affected, despite higher numbers in full time education. Male graduates are still experiencing high unemployment rates, young women are more likely to be laid off, and young Black and Asian people finding it harder to access any work or education.
- [Campaign for Better Transport](#) has found that many people still want to use private cars for most of their travel after the pandemic according to a recent survey. This damages the chances for a green recovery, but also highlights customer desire for less crowded, cheaper public transport.
- The UK stands 12th in the Global Labour Resilience rankings, but this hides regional inequalities in employment and labour market resilience, according to [Whiteshield Partners](#).

EuExit

- [European Parliament](#) has given its overwhelming backing to the Trade and Co-operation Agreement (TCA) trade and security deal, with 5 MEPs voting against the deal, 660 in favour and 32 abstentions
- Northern Irish trade is also an issue, as under a separate protocol, Northern Ireland remains de facto part of the EU's single market. Therefore, goods arriving to Northern Ireland from the UK now have to undergo EU checks.
- 6.6% of responding West Midlands businesses reported they had made changes to supply chains, nearly 2/3 as a result of a new UK trade agreement. 43.0% of responding West Midlands businesses reported they were using more UK suppliers.
- Many issues raised in earlier monitors continue such as import costs, steel prices, shortage of raw ingredients such as polymers, import duty and demand for support continue to be of concern.

This week we are asking all readers to participate in a survey, the purpose will be to better understand how our readers use the Monitor and this will then inform the development of future Monitors. For instance, we are eager to understand whether the continuation of the weekly Monitor would be beneficial or relevant to your work in the long term. We are also interested in what content would be useful going forward. Please follow the link to the survey here, it should only take 5 minutes. [West Midlands Monitor Survey](#)

Global, National and Regional Outlook

Alice Pugh, WMREDI; Rebecca Riley WMCA/WMREDI

Global

It was announced this week that the [European Parliament](#) has given its overwhelming backing to the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) trade and security deal, with 5 MEPs voting against the deal, 660 in favour and 32 abstentions. With many leaders and politicians across Europe stating that this vote will now restore certainty and begin a new relationship between the EU and UK. However, Brexit tensions still remain, including a French threat of 'reprisals' against the UK over new fishing restrictions. Northern Irish trade is also an issue, as under a separate protocol, Northern Ireland remains de facto part of the EU's single market. Therefore, goods arriving to Northern Ireland from the UK now have to undergo EU checks. With many businesses struggling to understand the new regulations and trade has been significantly disrupted since January.

The TCA covers EU-UK trade in goods, but not services. This is worrying as in 2020 services industries, including the retail, financial services, public, business administration, leisure and cultural activities sectors, accounted for [81%](#) of total UK economic output (GVA). Services also accounted for [82%](#) of employment between October and December 2020. Foreign policy and student exchanges are also not covered by the TCA.

The TCA also resulted in additional paperwork, extra costs and less trade between the two sides, with trade volumes falling sharply in January before rebounding in February. However, the [UK Trade Policy Observatory of Sussex](#) found that UK exports to the EU were still down by 17.2% in February 2021 compared with an average of February 2018 to 2020.

[Visa](#) has reported that in the last month in the US Non-farm employment rose by 916,000 in March, while consumer confidence hit its highest mark since the beginning of the pandemic. Measures of real-time consumer spending indicated a sharp acceleration in spending in the final weeks in March, as the stimulus checks enacted by President Biden to support recovery made their way into consumers' bank accounts. Fiscal support from the most recent stimulus package, in combination with the ongoing vaccination campaign and reopening process, are all helping to lift estimated Q2 gross domestic product (GDP) growth to 9.3% following Visa estimates of 6.6% growth in Q1. The outlook this month includes for the first time the President's \$2 trillion infrastructure package, which is expected to influence government spending and thus overall GDP growth in H2 (second half).

President Biden has also signed an executive order this week [to increase the minimum wage to \\$15 an hour](#) for federal contractors, providing a pay bump to hundreds of thousands of workers. Biden administration officials said that the higher wages would lead to greater worker productivity, offsetting any additional costs to taxpayers. The increase could be dramatic for workers who earn the current minimum of \$10.95 an hour. Those workers would receive a 37% pay rise, though the increase would be rolled out gradually, according to the terms of the order. This should also help boost recovery after the pandemic as thousands of workers will have more disposable income in the long run and with consumer confidence at such a high in the US it is likely that these workers will be more than happy to spend their cash; especially as pandemic restrictions ease over the following months with the roll out of the vaccine programme.

National

According to a new survey by [Survation](#) one in 12 private renters has been given notice to leave without reason since March 2020. The survey, commissioned by [Generation Rent](#), indicates that as many as 694,000 private tenants have been served with a Section 21 notice during the pandemic. This allows landlords to evict without needing a reason. The survey also found that one in three renters fears that they will lose their home in the year ahead, representing nearly 3 million adults across England. Two years ago the government announced plans to abolish Section 21 and introduce open-ended tenancies. However, when Survation asked its sample of private renters in England if their landlord had asked them to leave since March 2020 8% of respondents had received a Section 21 notice from their landlord. This represents 694,000 private renters in England. A further 3% had received a Section 8 notice, which

involves the renter having to provide a reason for residents to leave, whilst 7% had been asked to leave without any formal notice. The survey also found that a third of those surveyed (32%) were concerned about the possibility of their landlord asking them to leave this year. This would represent 2.78m private renters across England.

The UK's economic growth prospects for 2021 have been significantly upgraded in the [EY ITEM Club's Spring Forecast](#) published on 26th April. The EY ITEM Club now expects the economy to grow 6.8% this year rather than the 5% growth expected in January. The upgraded forecast primarily reflects the UK economy's resilient performance in the lockdown-affected fourth quarter of 2020 and first quarter of 2021, providing a better-than-expected platform for growth through the rest of this year.

Whilst the initial Section 21 notice is only the first stage of the legal eviction process, a valid notice cannot be overturned in court. As a result, most tenants who receive one having nothing to gain by challenging the notice and leave before the case reaches court. Additionally, because landlords don't need a reason for eviction, it also means that many tenants live in fear of losing their home and families have little confidence about becoming part of their local community if their landlord may evict them at anytime without a valid reason.

The [Food and Drink Industry Report 2021](#) focusing on exports, conducted by the Food and drink federation in partnership with Santander, has found that the pandemic has significantly impacted businesses operating in the food and drinks sector. The UK saw the export of food and drink fall by 9.7% compared to the previous year, amounting to £21.3bn. There was a decline in the value of exports in both EU and Non-EU markets, falling by -8% and -12.1% respectively. Whilst the trade deficit continued to grow, with the dependence on imports increasing by 9.2% compared to 2019. The report found that all regions across the UK saw a fall in exports in food and drink and the largest fall was in Scotland at 16.2%. Scotland is also the largest exporter with food and drink businesses in Scotland making up 10% of all UK businesses in the sector, but accounting for 25% of all UK exports. The West Midlands saw a 4.6% decrease in food and drink exports and North West saw the smallest change at 0.3%.

Regional

The West Midlands has now been considered by the government to be a strategically significant hub for levelling up FinTech (Financial Technology) in the UK with its appointment to the FinTech National Network – the UK's first network connecting FinTech hubs and supporting nationwide financial innovation. The [West Midlands Growth Company](#) also highlighted that the West Midlands has become a metropolis for Business, Professional and Financial Services activity (BPFS) activity outside the capital, contributing £27.8 billion GVA annually to the UK economy and employing 358,200 people. [FinTech alone is worth £411.7 million per annum to the local economy](#) and boasts a collective workforce of 7,375 people across 122 companies within a wider ecosystem of over 12,500 tech and digital organisations.

The FinTech National Network connects regional clusters up and down the country to encourage collaboration and amplify the collective voice of the UK's FinTech sector. The network facilitates mutually beneficial initiatives across skills, talent, capital and investment as key enablers for growing the UK's FinTech capabilities. Spearheading the West Midlands' presence in the Network is [Supertech](#) – the UK's first professional services technology (ProfTech) supercluster designed to showcase the talent, innovation, and investment potential of the West Midlands' rapidly emerging expertise in FinTech, LegalTech, PropTech and InsurTech.

The region's ability to rebalance and advance the sector is evident, as high-profile institutions from the UK's traditional financial heartland in London, were attracted to the West Midlands to explore the benefits of coworking with industry leaders. March 2021 also saw the City of London Corporation join forces with SuperTech to harness the rising potential of modern services innovation underway in the region. FinTech will be an integral element. The agreement will see the two bodies work closely to promote West Midlands professional, financial and technology firms on a national and global scale, to ensure that the UK remains the FinTech capital of the world. The West Midlands' growing influence is swiftly gaining momentum, turning heads of typically London-centric financial heavyweights. For instance, Goldman Sachs announced this month that it plans to establish a new major tech function in Birmingham. This will be its largest office investment outside of London creating several hundred jobs. This decision was the result of rigorous site selection and process which favoured Birmingham due to its deep-rooted talent pool and strong leadership in technology-related industries. Proximity to London was also considered an advantage.

A report by the Centre for economic and Business Research (Cebr), [commissioned by Openreach](#), has found that a comprehensive Full Fibre Network in the region could enable 85,000 new people to enter the region's workforce. A nationwide roll out would enable more than 29,000 people in the West Midlands to expand their working hours if needed. This may also help carers, parents and over-65s gain access to employment, which could contribute £2.2 billion in GVA to the West Midlands economy.

[Openreach](#) also announced it is investing millions of pounds on a Full Fibre rollout to dozens of towns and cities in the region, including many in the hard-to-reach 'final third'. Build is already underway including the city areas of Birmingham and Coventry, as well as harder to reach places such as Cannock and Burton-upon-Trent in Staffordshire, Hereford, Evesham and Malvern in Worcestershire and Stratford-upon-Avon in Warwickshire. In December last year, Openreach announced it was creating 2,500 new roles and an estimated 2,800 roles with partners to support the UK-wide Full Fibre build, including 160 new roles in the West Midlands.

Top Ten From Around the Web

Keziah Watson WMCA

- [The Institute for New Economic Thinking](#) has found that the most important factor to estimate how well a country has managed the pandemic is the presence of pre-pandemic austerity measures. Whilst there is a correlation between higher levels of spending on support, in countries like the UK and the US where there had been significant underspending, this still does not stop high death rates due to the racial and socio-economic inequalities entrenched by austerity measures.
- A briefing note from [Resolution Foundation](#) examines the impact on COVID on young people's employment. It finds that many more will experience employment and wage scarring due to larger numbers of 16-24 year olds being negatively impacted, despite higher numbers in full time education. However, not every group has fared equally with male graduates still experiencing high unemployment rates, young women more likely to be laid off, and young Black and Asian people finding it harder to access any work or education.
- [Campaign for Better Transport](#) has found that many people still want to use private cars for most of their travel after the pandemic, according to a recent survey. This damages the chances for a green recovery, but also highlights customer desire for less crowded, cheaper public transport with better routes in order to encourage public transport use, as well as flexible or part time season tickets to reflect an increase in home working.
- The UK stands 12th in the Global Labour Resilience rankings, but this hides regional inequalities in employment and labour market resistance, according to [Whiteshield Partners](#). The report analyses proactive and reactive measures, as well as the activities of Local Authorities and Combined Authorities to plug the gaps in national support.
- [The Centre for Policy Studies](#) has published a new look at a planning system that creates a contract with a developer when planning permission is given that they will fully develop the site within a given time frame to enable the UK to meet its housing target. The plans also include aiding SMEs greater opportunity to buy land to develop, and increasing the quality and variety of new housing stock.
- [Wonkhe](#) argues that enabling universities to more easily commercialise their research will help the government reach their R&D goals, and work with new and innovative partners on projects. By reducing the levels of competition, regional and national centres of excellence can be allowed to thrive.
- [Shelter](#) reports that over a third of renters fear being evicted for asking for repairs to their homes, leaving many living in very poor conditions. The charity calls for the end of 'no fault' evictions and the creation of a National Landlord Register to ensure minimum standards for rented properties.
- Over 200,000 more people are at risk of poor mental health due to unemployment, according to [The Health Foundation](#), which recommends that schemes aimed at getting people back into work should also support individual's mental health. Employment programmes must be held accountable for measurable mental health and wellbeing outcomes.
- Survey data from [Centre for Cities](#) shows that whilst 70% of people in the West Midlands know we have a metro mayor, only 30% were able to correctly give his name. This is a similar trend for other metro mayors across the country, with the data also showing that the public are keen to see mayors take more control over public health alongside housing, emergency services, and schools.
- [Social Market Foundation](#) polling shows that many people value vocational qualifications, regardless of age or their own background, in direct opposition to policy and media which under report on vocational options and set academic and vocational pathways against each other. Whilst this is pre-pandemic data and may yet reflect discrimination against vocational training hidden by social norms, it suggests a greater desire and appreciation for vocational training than may have been expected.

WMCA APS Qualifications (NVQ)

WMCA

The Annual Population Survey (APS) datasets from the Office of National Statistics were updated on 20th April 2021 with new figures for the Jan 2020 – Dec 2020 survey period.

Headline Summary

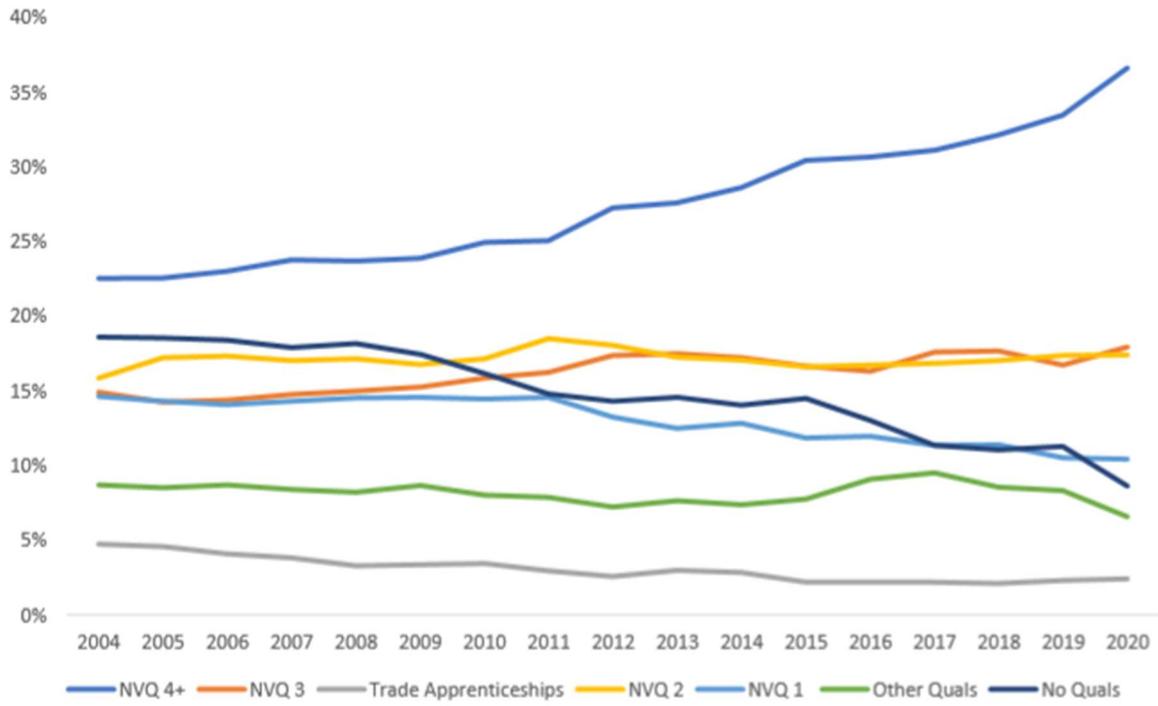
- The number of people with NVQ Level 4+ qualifications has increased by 10.3% over the year to 950,200 (from 816,700) compared to a UK increase of 2.9% in the WMCA (3 LEP) area.
- This now means that 36.6% of the working age population are educated to NVQ level 4 or above against the UK average of 43.0%.
- Despite this improvement, a further 165,435 of the working age WMCA residents would need to obtain NVQ Level 4 qualification to equal the UK average.
- The number of people with 'No Qualifications', decreased from 290,500 in 2019 to 223,800 in 2020. This equates to 66,700 less people without any qualifications or a decrease of 23.0% compared to decrease of 16.4% across the UK.
- This now means that 8.6% of the working age population have no qualifications against the UK average of 6.6%.
- To eradicate the gap with the UK average, 52,563 of the working age WMCA residents are needed to obtain at least one qualification.
- The number of people just qualified at NVQ Level 3 increased by 34,700 or +8.1%, compared to a UK wide increase of 0.7%. This leaves the WMCA area 1 percentage point above the UK average (17.9% compared to 16.9%).
- The number of people with trade apprenticeships increased by 3,700 or +6.3%, compared to a UK wide decrease of 2.2%. In 2020, in the WMCA (3 LEP) area, there were 2.4% of residents with trade apprenticeships. A further 9,846 WMCA residents are needed to obtain trade apprenticeships to meet the UK average (2.8%).
- NVQ Level 2 qualifications increased by 1.0% compared to a -0.8% drop nationally. This leaves the WMCA area 1.9 percentage points above the UK average (17.4% compared to 15.5%).
- Mirroring the UK trends, the number of people with just NVQ Level 1 decreased by 0.2% against a UK drop of 2.6%. The WMCA area remains 0.7 percentage points above the UK average (10.4% compared to 9.7%).
- Also mirroring the UK trends, the number of people with other qualifications decreased by 20.6% against a UK drop of 15.2%. The WMCA area remains 1 percentage point above the UK average (10.4% compared to 9.7%).

WMCA APS Qualifications (NVQ)

	WMCA (3 LEP) 2019		WMCA (3 LEP) 2020		UK 2020	WMCA Change 2019- 2020	UK Change 2019- 2020	Gap to UK
% with NVQ4+ - aged 16-64	861,700	33.5%	950,200	36.6%	43.0%	10.3%	7.2%	165,435
% with NVQ3 only - aged 16-64	430,700	16.7%	465,400	17.9%	16.9%	8.1%	0.7%	Above UK
% with Trade Apprenticeships - aged 16-64	59,100	2.3%	62,800	2.4%	2.8%	6.3%	-2.2%	9,846
% with NVQ2 only - aged 16-64	446,800	17.4%	451,400	17.4%	15.5%	1.0%	-0.8%	Above UK
% with NVQ1 only - aged 16-64	271,000	10.5%	270,500	10.4%	9.7%	-0.2%	-2.6%	Above UK
% with other qualifications (NVQ) - aged 16-64	214,700	8.3%	170,400	6.6%	5.6%	-20.6%	-15.2%	Above UK
% with no qualifications (NVQ) - aged 16-64	290,500	11.3%	223,800	8.6%	6.6%	-23.0%	-16.4%	-52,563

Source: Annual Population Survey 2021

WMCA (3 LEP) Long Term APS Qualification Trends (2004 to 2020)

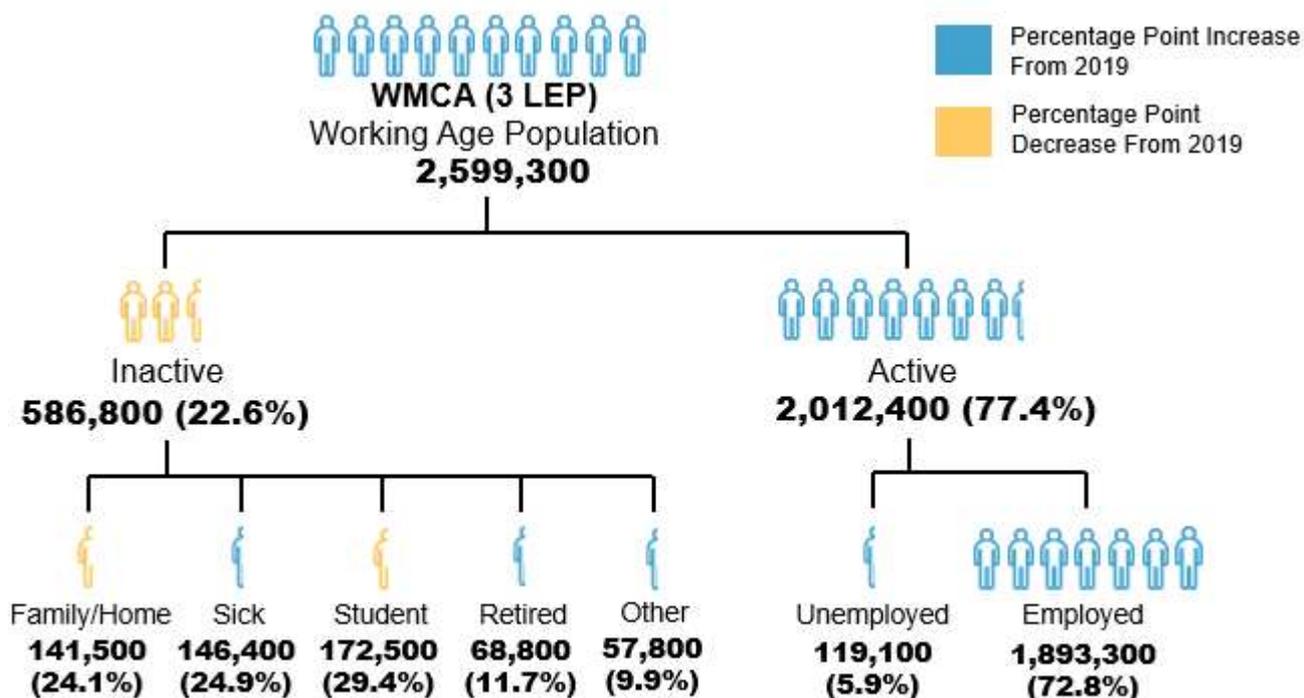


WMCA Annual Population Survey: Employment Activity: 2020

WMCA

Summary

- In 2020, the employment rate in the WMCA (3 LEP) area was 72.8%, compared to 75.3% for the UK overall. This means that for the WMCA (3 LEP) area there were 1,893,300 people employed in 2020, an increase of 23,300 people compared to the previous year, and a 0.4pp increase in the employment rate from 72.4%. The UK employment rate decreased by 0.3pp over the same time period.
- The unemployment rate for the WMCA (3 LEP) in 2020 was 5.9%, compared to 4.6% for the UK overall. For the WMCA (3 LEP), this represents a 0.4pp increase since 2019 compared to 0.6pp for the UK overall.
- The economic activity rate for the WMCA (3 LEP) area was 77.4% compared to 78.9% for the UK in 2020. For the WMCA (3 LEP) area, there has been a 0.8pp increase in the economic activity rate compared to a 0.1pp increase for the UK since 2019.
- For economic inactivity, the WMCA (3 LEP) rate was 22.6% compared to 21.1% in the UK overall for 2020. For the WMCA (3 LEP) area, this has decreased by 0.8pp compared to a 0.1pp decrease for the UK when compared to 2019.



Source: ONS, Annual Population Survey (For 2020) - Released April 2021

Full Briefing

Employment

- In 2020, the employment rate in the WMCA (3 LEP) area was 72.8%, compared to 75.3% for the UK overall. This means that for the WMCA (3 LEP) area there were 1,893,300 people employed in 2020, an increase of 23,300 people compared to the previous year, and a 0.4pp increase in the employment rate from 72.4%. The UK employment rate decreased by 0.3pp over the same time period.
- The employment rate for the WM 7 Met. area increased from 69.1% in 2019 to 69.9% in 2020.
- Within the WMCA (3 LEP) area, the Black Country LEP had the fastest growing employment rate in this period in terms of percentage point increase (+1.5pp to 71.9%). The employment rate increased from 70.4% to 71.9%. Coventry and Warwickshire LEP's employment rate remains higher than the UK average at 76.6%, but has decreased by 0.9pp since 2019. Whilst Greater Birmingham and Solihull experienced an increase of 0.4pp to an employment rate of 71.6%.

WMCA Employment rate for 2019 and 2020:

	Employment Num. 2019	Employment Rate 2019	Employment Num. 2020	Employment Rate 2020	pp Change
Birmingham	476,400	65.2%	487,300	66.1%	0.9pp
Bromsgrove	46,000	80.2%	49,100	79.5%	-0.7pp
Cannock Chase	51,000	82.9%	53,200	83.2%	0.3pp
Coventry	179,300	73.0%	175,800	71.3%	-1.7pp
Dudley	138,600	72.6%	136,900	71.6%	-1.0pp
East Staffordshire	59,400	83.7%	53,900	75.7%	-8.0pp
Lichfield	46,100	76.9%	47,000	76.5%	-0.4pp
North Warwickshire	30,000	80.0%	30,100	77.5%	-2.5pp
Nuneaton and Bedworth	60,000	77.7%	60,900	79.2%	1.5pp
Redditch	41,900	81.5%	42,200	78.6%	-2.9pp
Rugby	55,000	83.3%	52,600	80.4%	-2.9pp
Sandwell	145,400	70.7%	145,900	70.9%	0.2pp
Solihull	97,800	76.5%	98,600	77.6%	1.1pp
Stratford-on-Avon	60,300	84.5%	59,400	81.9%	-2.6pp
Tamworth	38,500	82.2%	38,800	84.4%	2.2pp
Walsall	121,200	70.6%	126,300	72.9%	2.3pp
Warwick	70,500	78.8%	72,200	82.1%	3.3pp
Wolverhampton	110,200	67.2%	117,700	72.5%	5.3pp
Wyre Forest	42,500	74.3%	45,500	80.8%	6.5pp
Black Country LEP	515,400	70.4%	526,800	71.9%	1.5pp
Coventry and Warwickshire LEP	455,000	77.5%	451,000	76.6%	-0.9pp
Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP	899,600	71.2%	915,500	71.6%	0.4pp
WMCA (3 LEP)	1,870,000	72.4%	1,893,300	72.8%	0.4pp
WM 7 Met.	1,268,900	69.1%	1,288,500	69.9%	0.8pp
United Kingdom	31,266,400	75.6%	31,177,800	75.3%	-0.3pp

Please note, there is a negative percentage point change where the numerator has increased due to the denominator increasing at a faster rate.

Unemployment

- The unemployment rate for the WMCA (3 LEP) was 5.9% in 2020 compared to 4.6% for the UK overall. For the WMCA (3 LEP), this was a 0.4pp increase compared to an increase of 0.6pp for the UK since 2019.
- The unemployment rate for the WM 7 Met. area decreased from 6.8% in 2019 to 6.7% in 2020.
- Within the WMCA (3 LEP), the Black Country LEP's unemployment rate decreased by 0.3pp in 2020 to 5.5%. Coventry & Warwickshire LEP has increased by 0.8pp to 4.3% in 2020. Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP increased by 0.6pp to 6.9% in 2020.

Economic Activity

- The economic activity rate for the WMCA (3 LEP) area was 77.4% compared to 78.9% for the UK in 2020. For the WMCA (3 LEP) area, there has been a 0.8pp increase in the economic activity rate compared to a 0.1pp increase for the UK since 2019.
- The economic activity rate in the WM 7 Met. area for 2020 was 74.9%, an increase of 0.8pp from 2019.
- The Black Country LEP area experienced a 1.3pp increase from 2019 to reach 76.1% in 2020 and Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP increased by 0.9pp to 76.9%. While Coventry and Warwickshire LEP decreased by 0.2pp to 80.1%.
- Economic activity varies across the WMCA local authorities from 72.4% in Birmingham to 88.0% in Cannock Chase.

Economic Inactivity

- For economic inactivity, the WMCA's (3 LEP) rate was 22.6% compared to 21.1% in the UK overall for 2020. For the WMCA (3 LEP) area, this has decreased by 0.8pp compared to a 0.1pp decrease for the UK when compared to 2019.
- Economic inactivity in the WM 7 Met. area for 2020 was 25.1%, a decrease of 0.8pp from 2019.

- The following figure provides a breakdown for economically inactive by reason for the WMCA (3 LEP) and the UK for 2020. The WMCA (3 LEP) has on average for 2020 a lower percentage of people that are inactive due to retirement (11.7% vs 13.5%), those classed as other (9.9% vs 13.5%) and sick (24.9% vs 26.0%). Within the WMCA (3 LEP) students account for 29.4% for those economically inactivate, which is above the UK average of 26.8%.

WMCA and UK Economic Inactivity by reason, 2020:

	WMCA Economically Inactive Num. 2020	% of WMCA Total Economically Inactive 2020	UK Economically Inactive Num. 2020	UK Economically Inactive % 2020
% of economically inactive student	172,500	29.4%	2,345,100	26.8%
% of economically inactive looking after family/home	141,500	24.1%	1,758,000	20.1%
% of economically inactive sick	146,400	24.9%	2,273,000	26.0%
% of economically inactive retired	68,800	11.7%	1,180,300	13.5%
% of economically inactive other	57,800	9.9%	1,179,000	13.5%

Employment by Occupation

- The table below shows employment by occupation across the WMCA (3 LEP) and the UK for 2020.
- The WMCA (3 LEP) area has a higher than average percentage of people employed in 3 of the 9 areas, including: elementary occupations (11.8% vs 9.2%), process, plant and machine operatives (7.1% and 5.5%), and administrative and secretarial occupations (10.8% and 10.1%).

WMCA and UK employment by occupation, 2020:

	WMCA (3 LEP) Numerator 2020	WMCA (3 LEP) Percentage 2020	UK Numerator 2020	UK Percentage 2020
% all in employment who are - 1: managers, directors and senior officials	198,900	10.2%	3,698,400	11.4%
% all in employment who are - 2: professional occupations	427,400	22.0%	7,387,700	22.8%
% all in employment who are - 3: associate prof & tech occupations	271,900	14.0%	5,084,900	15.7%
% all in employment who are - 4: administrative and secretarial occupations	209,400	10.8%	3,273,300	10.1%
% all in employment who are - 5: skilled trades occupations	175,100	9.0%	2,994,300	9.2%
% all in employment who are - 6: caring, leisure and other service occupations	169,100	8.7%	2,875,900	8.9%
% all in employment who are - 7: sales and customer service occupations	124,600	6.4%	2,255,500	6.9%
% all in employment who are - 8: process, plant and machine operatives	137,700	7.1%	1,796,900	5.5%
% all in employment who are - 9: elementary occupations	229,300	11.8%	2,997,900	9.2%

Source: ONS (Nomis): Annual Population Survey, April 2021

WMCA Claimant Count and Labour Market Statistics: Released April 2021

WMCA

UK Summary¹

- Early estimates for March 2021 indicate that there were 28.2 million payrolled employees in the UK, a fall of 2.8% compared with the same period of the previous year, and a decline of 813,000 people over the 12-month period. Compared with the previous month, the number of payrolled employees decreased by 0.2% in March 2021 - equivalent to 56,000 people.
- There were an estimated 607,000 vacancies in January 2021 to March 2021. This is 178,000 (22.7%) fewer than the estimated 785,000 vacancies a year earlier, immediately prior to the start of coronavirus (COVID-19) social distancing measures. The increase in vacancies over the latest quarter was 17,000, which is a six-month consecutive slowdown in the quarterly figures from the 165,000-increase seen in September 2020.
- Approximately 500,000 employees received no pay while their job was on hold and/or affected by the coronavirus pandemic in April and May 2020. This decreased and had remained largely flat at approximately 200,000 since July 2020; however, it has increased over the last quarter to an average of just over 300,000 in January and February 2021.
- The UK unemployment rate was estimated at 4.9%, 0.9 percentage points higher than a year earlier but 0.1 percentage points lower than the previous quarter.
- Reports of redundancy in the three months prior to interview increased by 3.5 per thousand on the year, but decreased by a record 6.8 per thousand on the quarter (December to February 2021), to 7.3 per thousand.

Regional Labour Market²

- **For the three months ending in February 2021, the West Midlands Region employment rate** (aged 16 – 64 years) was **74.1%** which has increased by 0.3pp from the previous quarter. The UK employment rate was 75.1%, a decrease of 0.1pp from the previous quarter.
- **For the three months ending in February 2021, the West Midlands Region unemployment rate** (aged 16 years and over) was **5.5%**, which has decreased by **0.5pp** since the previous quarter. The UK unemployment rate was 4.9%, a decrease of 0.1pp from the previous quarter.
- **For the three months ending in February 2021, the West Midlands Region economic inactivity rate** (aged 16 – 64 years) was **21.5%** - an increase of **0.3pp** from previous quarter. The UK economic inactivity rate stood at 20.9%, an increase of 0.2pp from the previous quarter.

WMCA (3 LEP) Claimant Summary

- There were **216,390 claimants aged 16 years and over in the WMCA (3 LEP) area** in March 2021, an increase of 1,320 people when compared to February 2021. This was a 0.6% increase compared to an overall UK increase of 0.5%. For the WMCA (3 LEP) area, when compared to March 2020 (117,590) the number of claimants has increased by 98,800 (+84.0% compared to +112.3% UK).
- There were **42,980 youth claimants in the WMCA (3 LEP) area** in March 2021, an increase of 635 people when compared to February 2021. This equates to an increase of 1.5%, while the UK increased by 1.2%. For the WMCA (3 LEP) area, when compared to March 2020 (22,835) the number of claimants has increased by 20,145 (+88.2% compared to +113.4% for the UK).

Claimant count for people aged 16+³:

- There were **216,390 claimants aged 16 years and over in the WMCA (3 LEP) area** in March 2021, this is an increase of 1,320 people when compared to February 2021. This represents a 0.6% increase compared to an overall UK increase of 0.5%. For the WMCA (3 LEP) area, when compared to March 2020 (117,590) the number of claimants has increased by 98,800 (+84.0% compared to +112.3% UK).

¹ Source: ONS, Labour Market Overview; UK: April 2021

² Source: ONS, Labour Market in the Regions of the UK: April 2021

³ ONS/DWP, Claimant count, January 2021. Please note, figures for previous months have been revised.

- The **Black Country LEP had 67,375 claimants** aged 16 years and over in March 2021, an increase of 315 (+0.5%) claimants from the previous month. When compared to March 2020 (38,275) the number of claimants has increased by 29,100 (+76.0%).
- **In Coventry and Warwickshire LEP, there were 34,420 claimants aged 16 years and over in March 2021**, an increase of 260 (+0.8%) claimants since February 2021. For the Coventry and Warwickshire LEP area, when compared to March 2020 (15,825) the number of claimants has increased by 18,595 (+117.5%).
- **In Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP, there were 114,595 claimants aged 16 years and over in March 2021**, an increase of 745 (+0.7%) claimants since February 2021. In the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP area, when compared to March 2020 (63,490) the number of claimants has increased by 51,105 (+80.5%).

The following table shows a breakdown of number of claimants aged 16+ and change by selected months across the WMCA and for the UK:

Area / Region	Mar. 2020	Feb. 2021	Mar. 2021	Mar. 2021 (Claimants as proportion aged 16-64) Rates ⁴	% Change (Feb 21 - Mar 21)	% (Mar 20 - Mar 21)
Birmingham	49,370	83,655	84,435	11.5%	0.9%	71.0%
Bromsgrove	1,165	2,725	2,685	4.6%	-1.5%	130.5%
Cannock Chase	1,655	3,465	3,445	5.4%	-0.6%	108.2%
Coventry	8,000	17,100	17,380	7.0%	1.6%	117.3%
Dudley	8,515	14,540	14,485	7.5%	-0.4%	70.1%
East Staffordshire	1,720	3,855	3,945	5.4%	2.3%	129.4%
Lichfield	1,320	2,750	2,780	4.5%	1.1%	110.6%
North Warwickshire	845	2,045	2,035	5.1%	-0.5%	140.8%
Nuneaton and Bedworth	2,830	5,100	5,125	6.5%	0.5%	81.1%
Redditch	1,535	3,290	3,240	6.2%	-1.5%	111.1%
Rugby	1,535	3,165	3,145	4.8%	-0.6%	104.9%
Sandwell	10,780	19,930	20,025	9.8%	0.5%	85.8%

Area / Region	Mar. 2020	Feb. 2021	Mar. 2021	Mar. 2021 (Claimants as proportion aged 16-64) Rates ⁴	% Change (Feb 21 - Mar 21)	% (Mar 20 - Mar 21)
Solihull	3,650	7,650	7,640	6.0%	-0.1%	109.3%
Stratford-on-Avon	1,050	3,050	3,060	4.1%	0.3%	191.4%
Tamworth	1,490	2,890	2,920	6.2%	1.0%	96.0%
Walsall	8,605	15,320	15,380	8.9%	0.4%	78.7%
Warwick	1,570	3,700	3,675	4.0%	-0.7%	134.1%
Wolverhampton	10,380	17,270	17,485	10.7%	1.2%	68.4%
Wyre Forest	1,580	3,570	3,505	6.0%	-1.8%	121.8%
WM 7 Met.	99,300	175,465	176,825	9.2%	0.8%	78.1%
Black Country LEP	38,275	67,060	67,375	5.7%	0.5%	76.0%
Coventry and Warwickshire LEP	15,825	34,160	34,420	9.0%	0.8%	117.5%
Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP	63,490	113,850	114,595	9.6%	0.7%	80.5%
WMCA (3 LEP)	117,590	215,070	216,390	8.3%	0.6%	84.0%
United Kingdom	1,268,620	2,678,280	2,692,940	6.5%	0.5%	112.3%

- Overall, for the WMCA (3 LEP) area the number of claimants as a proportion of residents aged 16 -64 years old is 8.3% compared to 6.5% for the UK in March 2021⁴.

Youth Claimants (Aged 16-24)

- There were **42,980 youth claimants in the WMCA (3 LEP) area** in March 2021, an increase of 635 people when compared to February 2021. This equates to an increase of 1.5%, while the UK increased by 1.2%. For the WMCA (3 LEP) area, when compared to March 2020 (22,835) the number of youth claimants has increased by 20,145 (+88.2% compared to +113.4% for the UK).

⁴ WMCA SED Board Dashboard reports the number of claimants as a proportion of population aged 16 years and over – WMCA 3 LEP was 6.5% and the UK was 5.0% in March 2021

- Within the WMCA (3 LEP), the **Black Country LEP had 13,765 youth claimants** in March 2021, an increase of 190 (+1.4%) claimants from the previous month. When compared to March 2020 (7,750) the number of claimants has increased by 6,015 (+77.6%).
- **In Coventry and Warwickshire LEP, there were 6,560 youth claimants in March 2021**, an increase of 120 (+1.9%) claimants since February 2021. When compared to March 2020 (2,920) the number of claimants has increased by 3,640 (+124.7%).
- **In Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP, there were 22,655 youth claimants in March 2021**, this is an increase of 325 (+1.5%) claimants since February 2021. In the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP area, when compared to March 2020 (12,165) the number of claimants has increased by 10,490 (+86.2%).

The following table shows a breakdown of number of youth claimants and change by selected months across the WMCA and for the UK:

	Mar. 2020	Feb. 2021	Mar. 2021	Mar. 2021 (Claimants as proportion aged 16-24) Rates	% Change (Feb 21 - Mar 21)	% (Mar 20 - Mar 21)
Birmingham	9,220	16,240	16,545	9.7%	1.9%	79.4%
Bromsgrove	220	520	500	6.1%	-3.8%	127.3%
Cannock Chase	370	735	735	7.8%	0.0%	98.6%
Coventry	1,550	3,320	3,390	5.6%	2.1%	118.7%
Dudley	1,755	3,090	3,090	9.9%	0.0%	76.1%
East Staffordshire	320	725	730	6.5%	0.7%	128.1%
Lichfield	275	510	535	5.8%	4.9%	94.5%
North Warwickshire	165	390	415	7.2%	6.4%	151.5%
Nuneaton and Bedworth	570	985	980	8.0%	-0.5%	71.9%
Redditch	310	615	615	7.9%	0.0%	98.4%
Rugby	245	555	575	5.9%	3.6%	134.7%
Sandwell	2,130	4,000	4,070	11.8%	1.8%	91.1%
Solihull	830	1,705	1,710	8.5%	0.3%	106.0%
Stratford-on-Avon	160	500	500	4.6%	0.0%	212.5%
Tamworth	305	620	635	8.6%	2.4%	108.2%
Walsall	1,940	3,240	3,300	11.1%	1.9%	70.1%
Warwick	230	690	700	3.6%	1.4%	204.3%
Wolverhampton	1,925	3,250	3,300	12.2%	1.5%	71.4%
Wyre Forest	315	660	650	7.6%	-1.5%	106.3%
WM 7 Met.	19,345	34,840	35,405	7.7%	1.6%	83.0%
Black Country LEP	7,750	13,575	13,765	11.2%	1.4%	77.6%
Coventry and Warwickshire LEP	2,920	6,440	6,560	5.5%	1.9%	124.7%
Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP	12,165	22,330	22,655	9.0%	1.5%	86.2%
WMCA (3 LEP)	22,835	42,345	42,980	8.7%	1.5%	88.2%
United Kingdom	241,760	509,610	515,945	7.3%	1.2%	113.4%

- Overall, for the WMCA (3 LEP) area the number of claimants as percentage of residents aged 16 to 24 years old was 8.7% compared to 7.3% for the UK in March 2021.

Claimant Count by Age and Gender (WMCA 3 LEP)

- For those aged 16-24 in the WMCA (3 LEP) area, when comparing March 2021 to February 2021, there was an overall increase of 635 which can be split by an additional 430 males and an additional 210 females.
- For those aged 25-49 in the WMCA (3 LEP) area, when comparing March 2021 to February 2021, there was an overall increase of 655 which can be split by an additional 195 males and an additional 470 females.
- For those aged 50 years and over in the WMCA (3 LEP) area, when comparing March 2021 to February 2021, there was an overall increase of 30 which can be split by an additional 55 males and a decline of 25 females.

The following table shows a breakdown by age brackets and gender for the WMCA (3 LEP) area over selected time periods:

		Mar. 2020	Feb. 2021	Mar. 2021	Num. Change (Mar. 21 – Mar. 20)	Num. Change (Mar. 21– Feb. 21)
Total	Age 16+	117,590	215,070	216,390	98,800	1,320
	Aged 16-24	22,835	42,345	42,980	20,145	635
	Aged 16-17	250	365	375	125	10
	Aged 18-24	22,580	41,980	42,605	20,025	625
	Aged 25-49	67,130	122,450	123,105	55,975	655
	Aged 25-29	15,945	29,070	29,165	13,220	95
	Aged 30-34	15,635	28,715	28,915	13,280	200
	Aged 35-39	13,715	25,120	25,270	11,555	150
	Aged 40-44	11,230	20,820	21,000	9,770	180
	Aged 45-49	10,605	18,720	18,765	8,160	45
	Aged 50+	27,635	50,275	50,305	22,670	30
	Aged 50-54	9,960	18,370	18,340	8,380	-30
	Aged 55-59	8,985	15,980	15,935	6,950	-45
	Aged 60-64	7,675	13,240	13,305	5,630	65
Aged 65+	1,020	2,680	2,710	1,690	30	
Male	Age 16+	69,420	128,065	128,735	59,315	670
	Aged 16-24	14,100	25,910	26,340	12,240	430
	Aged 16-17	115	180	185	70	5
	Aged 18-24	13,980	25,730	26,145	12,165	415
	Aged 25-49	38,965	72,920	73,115	34,150	195
	Aged 25-29	9,610	18,030	18,055	8,445	25
	Aged 30-34	9,095	17,190	17,235	8,140	45
	Aged 35-39	7,730	14,705	14,785	7,055	80
	Aged 40-44	6,440	12,135	12,200	5,760	65
	Aged 45-49	6,080	10,865	10,840	4,760	-25
	Aged 50+	16,355	29,230	29,285	12,930	55
	Aged 50-54	5,820	10,590	10,585	4,765	-5
	Aged 55-59	5,295	9,340	9,330	4,035	-10
	Aged 60-64	4,575	7,665	7,730	3,155	65
Aged 65+	655	1,635	1,640	985	5	
Female	Age 16+	48,175	87,005	87,650	39,475	645
	Aged 16-24	8,730	16,435	16,645	7,915	210
	Aged 16-17	135	185	190	55	5
	Aged 18-24	8,595	16,255	16,450	7,855	195
	Aged 25-49	28,165	49,520	49,990	21,825	470
	Aged 25-29	6,340	11,040	11,110	4,770	70
	Aged 30-34	6,530	11,520	11,680	5,150	160
	Aged 35-39	5,985	10,420	10,485	4,500	65
	Aged 40-44	4,790	8,685	8,795	4,005	110
	Aged 45-49	4,525	7,860	7,925	3,400	65
	Aged 50+	11,280	21,045	21,020	9,740	-25
	Aged 50-54	4,135	7,785	7,760	3,625	-25
	Aged 55-59	3,690	6,640	6,615	2,925	-25
	Aged 60-64	3,100	5,575	5,580	2,480	5
Aged 65+	360	1,040	1,070	710	30	

Alternative Claimant Count⁵

An experimental quarterly alternative claimant count was released that covers the yearly month of February 2016 to February 2021. These statistics measure the number of people claiming unemployment related benefits by modelling what the count would have been if Universal Credit had been fully rolled out since 2013 (when Universal Credit began).

Trends over time for local areas can be considered using the Claimant Count prior to 2013, and the Alternative Claimant Count from 2013. However, the figures cannot be directly compared as they are defined differently.

All Ages

- The alternative claimant count data estimates 217,933 claimants in the WMCA (3 LEP) area in February 2021, an increase of 79.0% (+96,167) when compared to February 2020. Over the same period the UK increased by 102.4%.

⁵ Source: Department for Work and Pensions, Alternative claimant statistics, April 2021

All Ages Alternative Claimant Count, February 2016 – February 2021:

	February 2016	February 2017	February 2018	February 2019	February 2020	February 2021	Num. Change since Feb 20	% Change since Feb 20
WM 7 Met.	96,206	96,971	95,068	98,239	103,459	178,678	75,219	72.7%
Black Country	38,864	39,199	37,872	38,239	39,747	67,960	28,213	71.0%
Coventry & Warwickshire	15,079	14,241	14,265	14,939	16,045	34,000	17,955	111.9%
Greater Birmingham & Solihull	58,621	59,332	59,113	62,318	65,974	115,973	49,999	75.8%
WMCA (3 LEP)	112,564	112,772	111,250	115,496	121,766	217,933	96,167	79.0%
UK	1,354,921	1,297,045	1,267,835	1,292,655	1,330,888	2,694,140	1,363,252	102.4%

Source: Department for Work and Pensions, Alternative Claimant Statistics, April 2021

Alternative Claimant Count - 16 – 24-years old

- The alternative claimant count data estimates that there were 41,213 youth claimants in the WMCA (3 LEP) area in February 2021, an increase of 96.9% (+20,285) when compared to February 2020. Over the same period the UK increased by 124.5%.

16- 24 years old Alternative Claimant Count, February 2016 – February 2021:

	February 2016	February 2017	February 2018	February 2019	February 2020	February 2021	Num. Change since Feb 20	% Change since Feb 20
WM 7 Met.	15,848	15,305	14,455	15,491	17,868	34,055	16,187	90.6%
Black Country	6,676	6,482	6,110	6,103	7,051	13,115	6,064	86.0%
Coventry & Warwickshire	2,002	1,914	1,840	2,083	2,597	6,189	3,592	138.3%
Greater Birmingham & Solihull	9,681	9,166	8,771	9,814	11,280	21,909	10,629	94.2%
WMCA (3 LEP)	18,359	17,562	16,721	18,000	20,928	41,213	20,285	96.9%
UK	219,766	197,570	187,599	198,455	218,748	490,980	272,232	124.5%

Source: Department for Work and Pensions, Alternative Claimant Statistics, April 2021

Regional Labour Market⁶

- For the three months ending in February 2021, the West Midlands Region employment rate** (aged 16 – 64 years) was **74.1%**. Since the three months ending November 2020, the employment rate has increased by 0.3pp while the UK decreased by 0.1pp. The overall latest UK employment rate is 75.1% with the highest **regional rate** in the South East (78.4%) and the lowest in Northern Ireland (69.0%).
- For the three months ending in February 2021, the West Midlands Region unemployment rate** (aged 16 years and over) was **5.5%**, which has decreased by **0.5pp** since the previous quarter. The UK unemployment rate was 4.9%, a decrease of 0.1pp from the previous quarter. The highest unemployment rate in the UK for the three months ending February 2021 was in London (7.2%), with the lowest unemployment rate in the South East at 3.4%.
- For the three months ending in February 2021, the West Midlands Region economic inactivity rate** (aged 16 – 64 years) was **21.5%** - an increase of **0.3pp** from previous quarter. The UK economic inactivity rate stood at 20.9%, an increase of 0.2pp from the previous quarter. The highest **economic inactivity** rate in the UK was in Northern Ireland (28.3%), with the lowest in the South East (18.8%).

The table below provides a summary of the latest headline estimates for Regions of the UK, seasonally adjusted, December 2020 to February 2021:

⁶ Source: ONS, Labour Market in the Regions of the UK: April 2021

	Employment rate – Dec 20 to Feb 21 (aged 16- 64 years)	Change on Sep to Nov 2020	Unemployment rate- Dec 20 to Feb 21 (16 years +)	Change on Sep to Nov 2020	Inactivity rate – Dec 20 to Feb 21 (aged 16-64 years)	Change on Sep to Nov 2020
UK	75.1%	-0.1pp	4.9%	-0.1pp	20.9%	0.2pp
Great Britain	75.3%	0.0pp	4.9%	-0.1pp	20.7%	0.2pp
England	75.5%	-0.1pp	5.0%	-0.2pp	20.5%	0.3pp
North East	71.9%	0.7pp	5.7%	-0.7pp	23.7%	-0.3pp
North West	73.8%	-0.1pp	5.3%	0.6pp	22.0%	-0.4pp
Yorkshire and The Humber	73.4%	-1.0pp	4.9%	-0.2pp	22.7%	1.2pp
East Midlands	75.9%	0.4pp	5.1%	-0.5pp	19.9%	0.0pp
West Midlands	74.1%	0.3pp	5.5%	-0.5pp	21.5%	0.3pp
East	77.7%	0.8pp	3.8%	-0.9pp	19.2%	0.0pp
London	74.5%	-0.6pp	7.2%	0.3pp	19.6%	0.3pp
South East	78.4%	-0.3pp	3.4%	-0.3pp	18.8%	0.7pp
South West	77.2%	-0.1pp	4.1%	0.0pp	19.4%	0.1pp
Wales	73.2%	0.8pp	4.8%	0.1pp	23.0%	-1.0pp
Scotland	74.6%	0.2pp	4.4%	0.0pp	21.9%	-0.2pp
Northern Ireland	69.0%	-1.6pp	3.7%	0.5pp	28.3%	1.3pp

Source: ONS – Labour Force Survey

UK Labour Market Statistics - Vacancies⁷

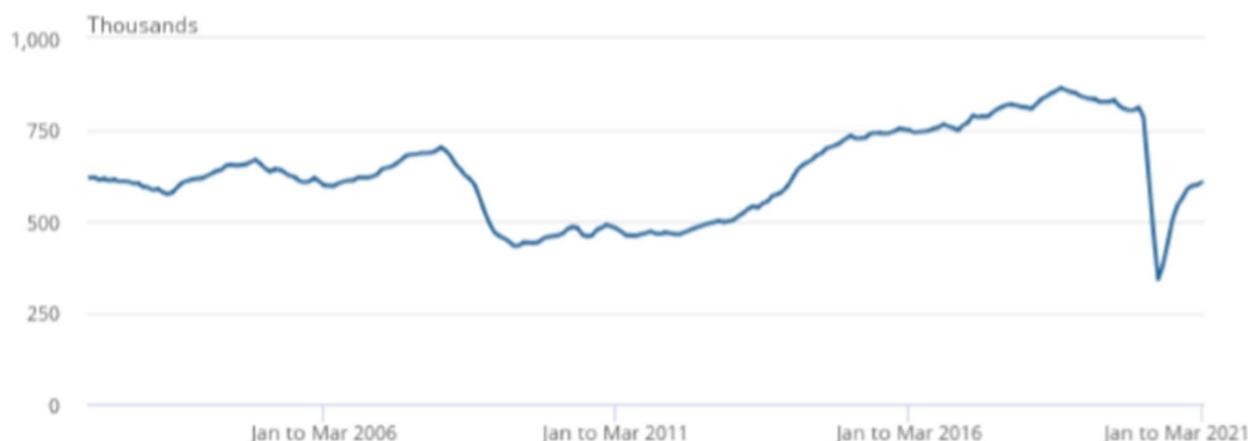
- The number of job vacancies in January 2021 to March 2021 fell by nearly 23% on the year, remaining 178,000 lower than this time last year; arts, entertainment and recreation, and accommodation and food services continue to be the worst affected.
- In January 2021 to March 2021 there were an estimated 607,000 job vacancies in the UK, which is a 22.7% fall compared with a year ago; growth in the number of vacancies has slowed this quarter although experimental single-month statistics indicate a strong increase in March.
- The slowing down in the rate of recovery for job vacancies to March 2021 is more evident among smaller companies; businesses employing one to nine employees had 21.9% fewer vacancies in January 2021 to March 2021 compared with a quarter ago, and is the only size band displaying a fall on the quarter.
- Lockdown restrictions continue to affect jobs and vacancies in two industry sectors more than others, with vacancies in arts, entertainment and recreation down 78.9% (18,000) from a year ago and vacancies in accommodation and food services are down 70.3% (59,000).

The following table shows the total number of vacancies by sector for the UK, November 2020 – January 2021, December 2020 – February 2021 and January – March 2021:

⁷ Source: UK labour market: April 2021

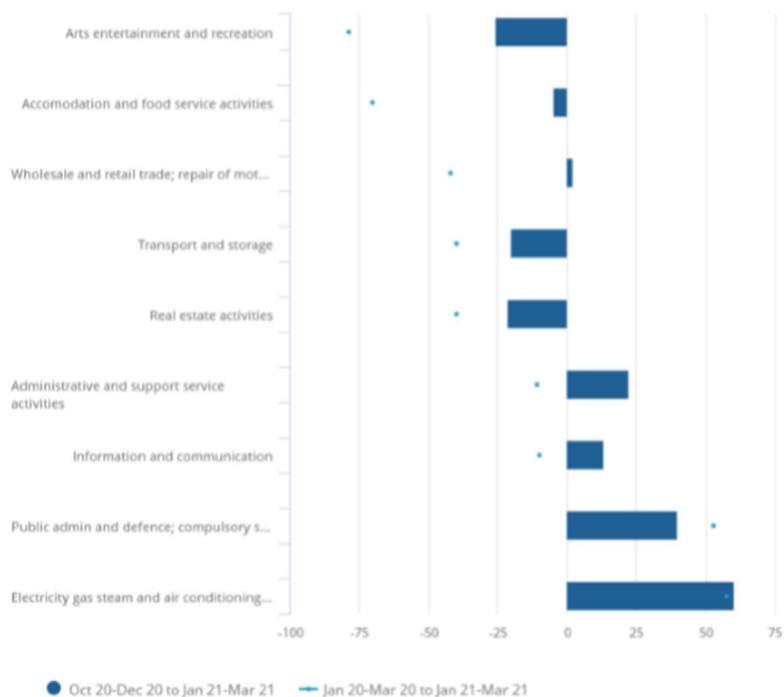
	Total Figures in Thousands		
	Nov-Jan 2021	Dec-Feb 2021	Jan-Mar 2021
All vacancies	597,000	599,000	607,000
Mining & quarrying	1,000	1,000	1,000
Manufacturing	46,000	48,000	49,000
Electricity, gas, steam & air conditioning supply	4,000	4,000	5,000
Water supply, sewerage, waste & remediation activities	3,000	3,000	4,000
Construction	28,000	27,000	28,000
Wholesale & retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motor cycles	75,000	74,000	75,000
Motor Trades	9,000	9,000	9,000
Wholesale	20,000	20,000	21,000
Retail	46,000	45,000	45,000
Transport & storage	24,000	21,000	21,000
Accommodation & food service activities	22,000	19,000	25,000
Information & communication	35,000	38,000	38,000
Financial & insurance activities	22,000	23,000	24,000
Real estate activities	10,000	8,000	8,000
Professional scientific & technical activities	64,000	65,000	62,000
Administrative & support service activities	40,000	43,000	45,000
Public admin & defence; compulsory social security	34,000	35,000	33,000
Education	42,000	42,000	40,000
Human health & social work activities	128,000	130,000	131,000
Arts, entertainment & recreation	9,000	6,000	5,000
Other service activities	11,000	12,000	12,000

Number of Vacancies in the UK, seasonally adjusted between January 2002 to March 2002 and January 2021 to March 2021:



Source: ONS – Vacancy Survey

Three-month average vacancies in the UK, seasonally adjusted, between October 2020 to December 2020 and January 2021 to March 2021 when both indexed to January 2020 to March 2020=100; difference in percentage points compared to January 2020 to March 2020:

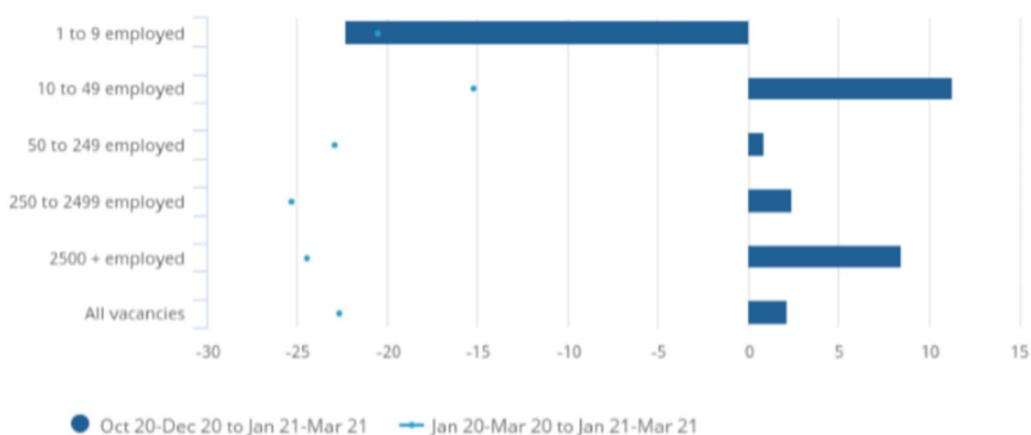


Source: ONS – Vacancy Survey

The pandemic has led to particularly large falls in vacancies in the following industries:

- arts, entertainment and recreation (down 79% from a year ago)
- accommodation and food services (down 70% from a year ago)
- wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (down 42% from a year ago)
- Among industries that saw a growth in vacancies over the quarter, the most notable was electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning. This was driven by the larger size band companies recruiting and preparing for the easing of lockdown restrictions. The other notable industry to display increases both quarterly and annually is public administration and defence and compulsory social security, driven by recruitment for Census 2021.
- The ratio of vacancies to employee jobs is highest (3.8 per 100) in the electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning industry. It is lowest (0.7 per 100) in arts, entertainment and recreation, which had a rate of over 3.0 per 100 prior to the pandemic.

Three-month average vacancies in the UK, seasonally adjusted, between October 2020 to December 2020 and January 2021 to March 2021 when both indexed to January 2020 to March 2020=100; difference in percentage points compared to January 2020 to March 2020:



Source: ONS – Vacancy Survey

- Following an initial fall in vacancies of over 50% in all company size bands during early summer 2020, the smallest companies (employing one to nine employees) started to increase their vacancies much more quickly than other size bands. However, vacancies in these smallest companies fell by 21.9% in January 2021 to March 2021 compared with the previous quarter, while larger companies continued to add vacancies.

EMSI Job Postings WMCA (3 LEP) Geography March 2021⁸

Note: The data below identifies job postings, derived from the EMSI Analyst Tool, and not comparable to the official vacancy data.

- There were 140,713 unique job postings across the WMCA 3 LEP geography in March 2021, 23.8% more than in February. This is the first time in 2021 that monthly job postings have strengthened.
- All 19 LA areas recorded a positive change compared to February, perhaps pointing to increased business optimism due to the relaxing of some covid restrictions.
- North Warwickshire performed best with job postings increasing by 45%; with other notable increases recorded in Stratford-on-Avon, Sandwell and Bromsgrove where job postings all increased by over a third.
- Posting intensity, i.e., the effort towards hiring for particular positions was particularly high in Sandwell, Solihull and Wyre Forest all 8:1 compared to the wider average of 6:1.

Local Authority Name	Mar 2021 Unique Postings	% Change (Feb 2021 - Mar 2021)
Birmingham	55,364	20%
Bromsgrove	1,894	33%
Cannock Chase	2,664	28%
Coventry	12,768	18%
Dudley	6,789	29%
East Staffordshire	4,205	29%
Lichfield	2,767	29%
North Warwickshire	2,164	45%
Nuneaton and Bedworth	2,939	16%
Redditch	2,531	32%
Rugby	3,629	25%
Sandwell	7,437	35%
Solihull	7,007	25%
Stratford-on-Avon	4,010	36%
Tamworth	2,717	27%
Walsall	5,140	30%
Warwick	7,922	25%
Wolverhampton	6,521	22%
Wyre Forest	2,245	28%

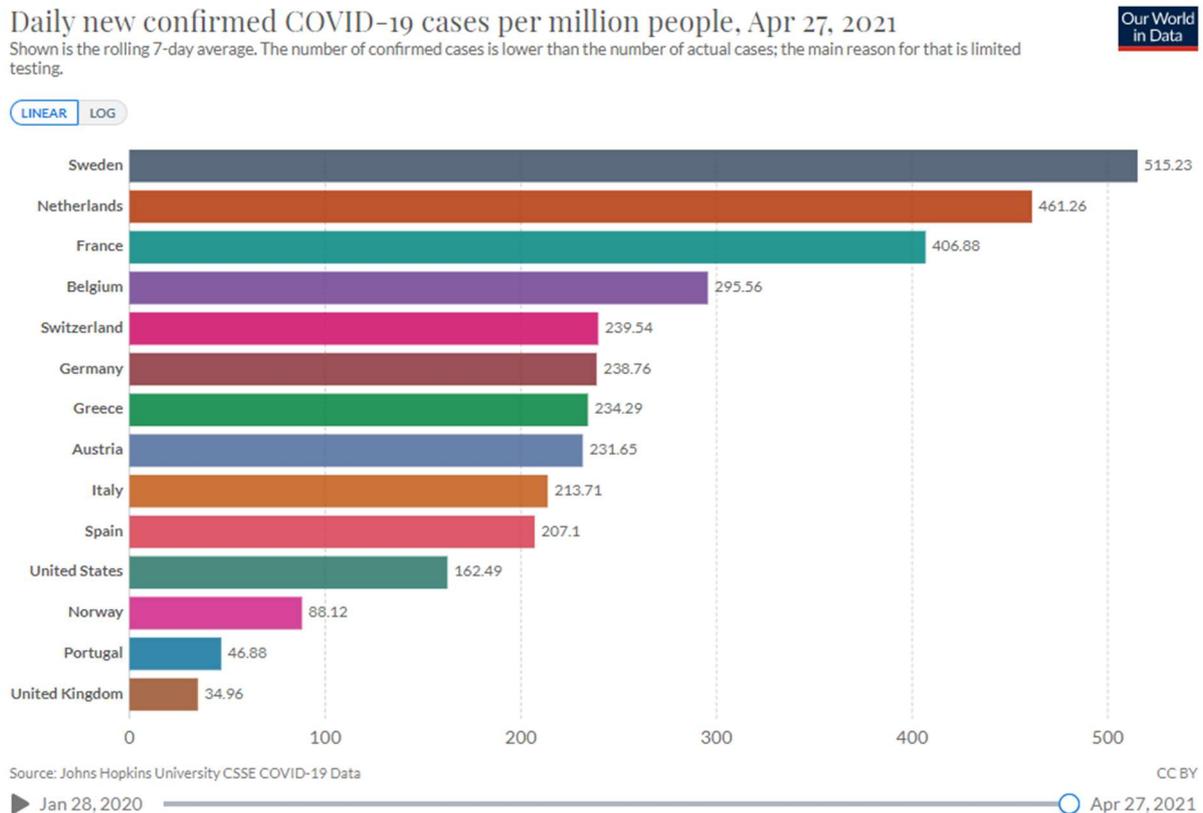
⁸ Source: EMSI, April 2021

Infection Rates and Vaccine Update

Alice Pugh WMREDI/WMCA

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

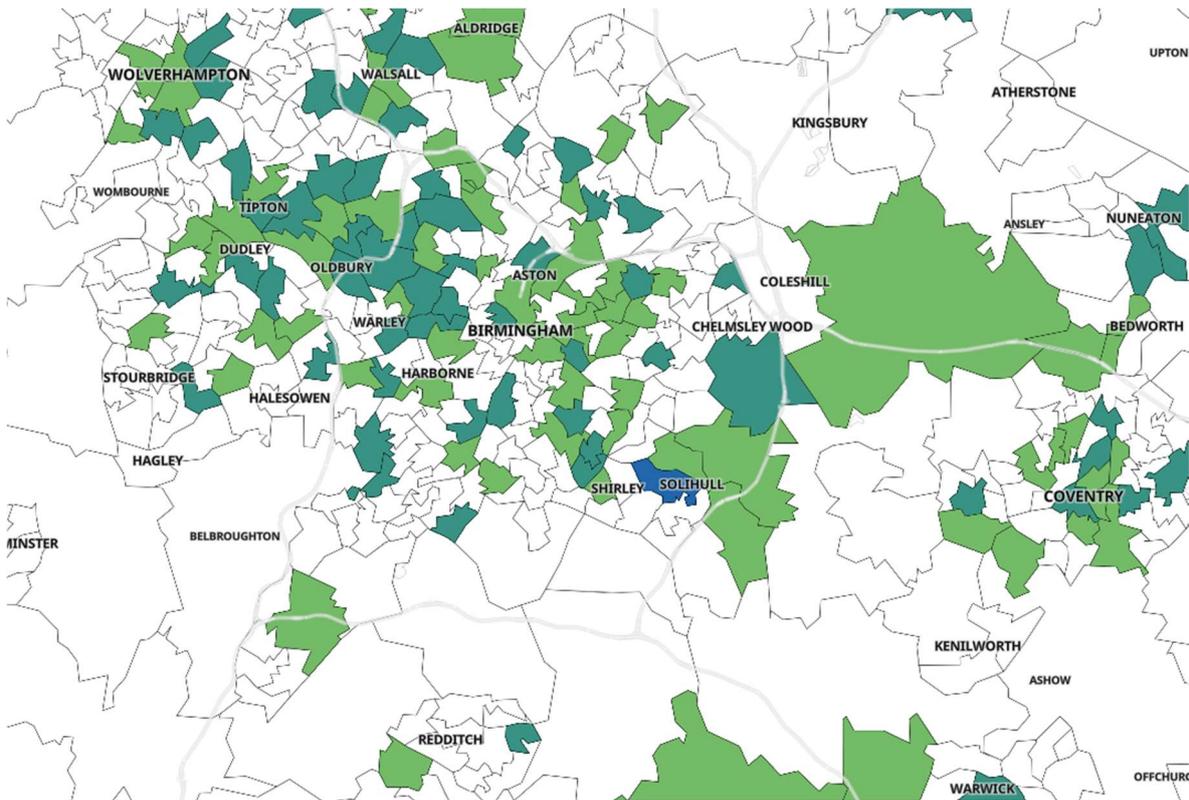
Since [31 December 2019](#) and as of week 15 (22 April 2021) **141 805 956 cases** of COVID-19 (in accordance with the applied case definitions and testing strategies in the affected countries) have been reported, including **3 026 902 deaths**.



Latest [ONS infection survey data](#) (23rd Apr next release 30th Apr 2021) states:

- In England, the percentage of people testing positive for the coronavirus (COVID-19) has continued to decrease in the week ending 16 April 2021; we estimate that 90,000 people within the community population in England had COVID-19 (95% credible interval: 75,900 to 105,700), equating to around 1 in 610 people.
- In Wales, the percentage of people testing positive appears to have been level in the week ending 16 April 2021; we estimate that 3,600 people in Wales had COVID-19 (95% credible interval: 1,700 to 6,400), equating to around 1 in 840 people.
- In Northern Ireland, the percentage of people testing positive decreased in the two weeks up to 16 April 2021; we estimate that 2,800 people in Northern Ireland had COVID-19 (95% credible interval: 1,100 to 5,300), equating to around 1 in 660 people.
- In Scotland, the percentage of people testing positive has continued to decrease in the week ending 16 April 2021; we estimate that 9,300 people in Scotland had COVID-19 (95% credible interval: 5,500 to 14,300) equating to around 1 in 560 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 22nd April 2021.



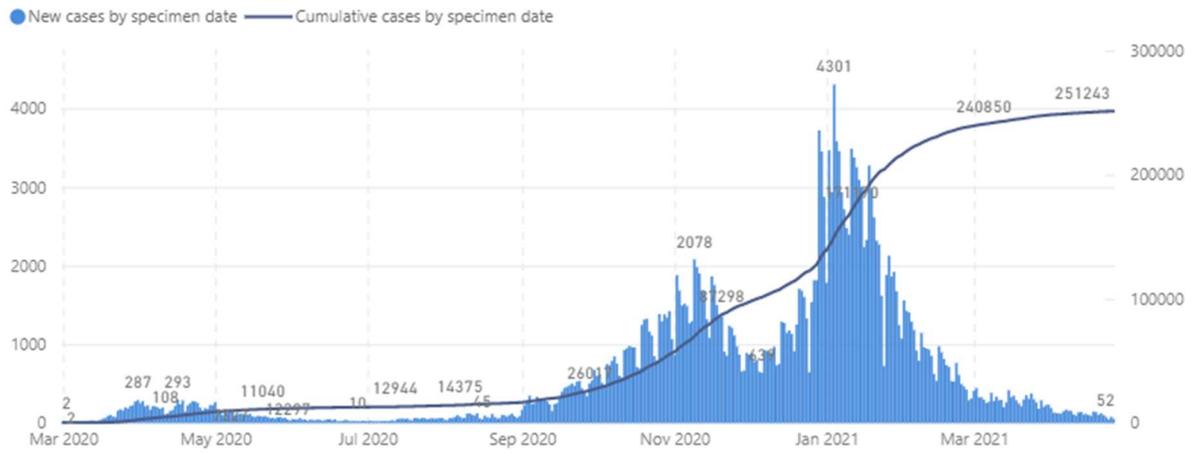
Regional Data

[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
24 April 2021	41	96	251116	2	0.07
23 April 2021	74	107	251075	763	26.05
22 April 2021	97	127	251001	787	26.87
21 April 2021	124	109	250904	801	27.35
20 April 2021	101	123	250780	784	26.77
19 April 2021	135	176	250679	821	28.03
18 April 2021	144	96	250544	818	27.93
17 April 2021	88	99	250400	765	26.12
16 April 2021	98	124	250312	785	26.80
15 April 2021	111	141	250214	838	28.61
14 April 2021	107	100	250103	879	30.01
13 April 2021	138	106	249996	939	32.06

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).

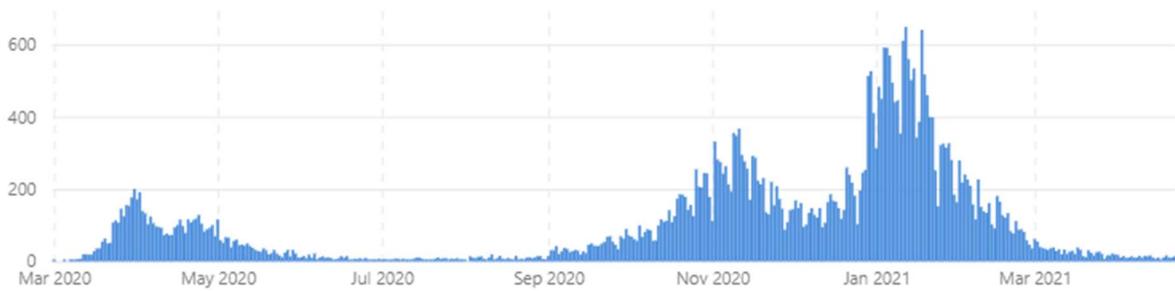
All ages



By age group

60+

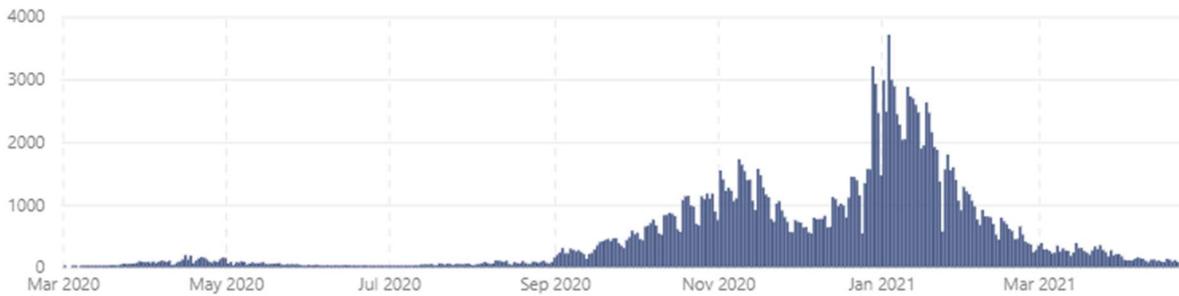
Age ● 60+



By age group

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	15-Apr-21	16-Apr-21	17-Apr-21	18-Apr-21	19-Apr-21	20-Apr-21	21-Apr-21	22-Apr-21	23-Apr-21	24-Apr-21	25-Apr-21
ENGLAND	127	118	135	112	138	98	126	92	124	99	107
East of England	20	23	24	15	15	10	24	7	14	18	17
London	14	14	9	17	18	15	18	14	22	15	17
Midlands	30	31	34	26	29	13	19	26	23	23	26
North East and Yorkshire	25	20	32	20	36	25	18	8	27	21	19
North West	16	17	15	11	16	13	20	17	13	11	13
South East	13	8	12	19	13	18	17	11	17	7	9
South West	9	5	9	4	11	4	10	9	8	4	6

Mechanical Ventilation beds - occupied by confirmed COVID-19 patients

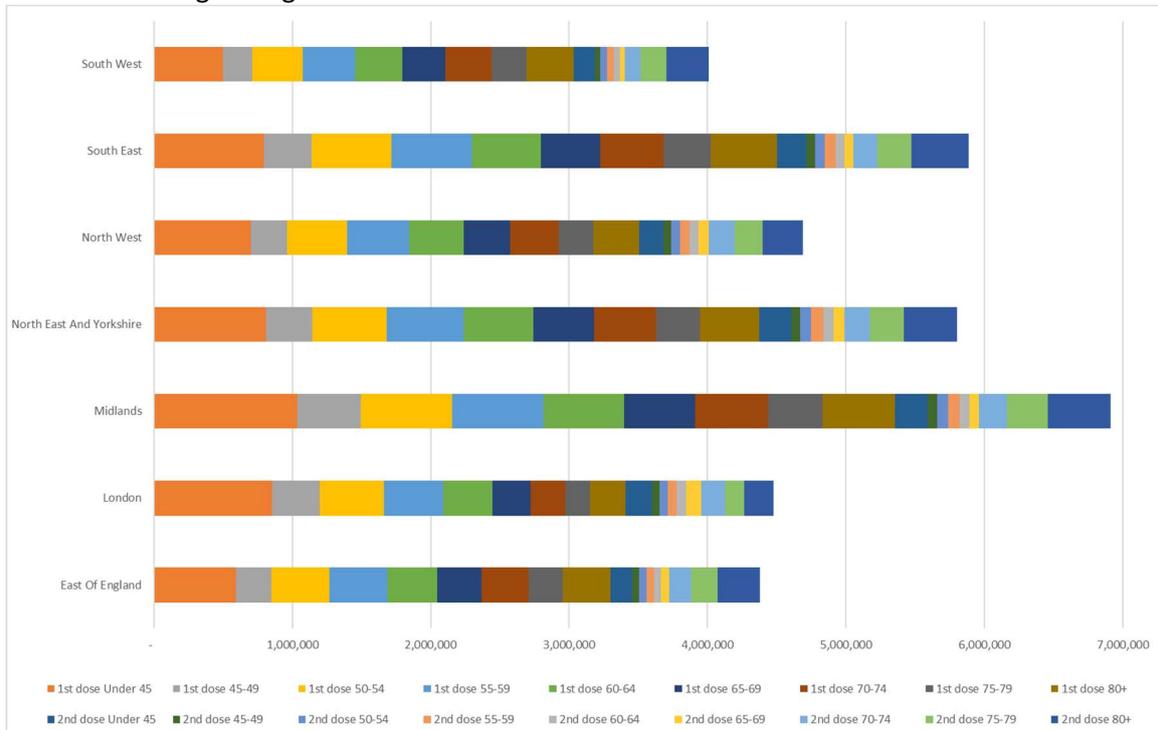
Name	16-Apr-21	17-Apr-21	18-Apr-21	19-Apr-21	20-Apr-21	21-Apr-21	22-Apr-21	23-Apr-21	24-Apr-21	25-Apr-21	26-Apr-21	27-Apr-21
ENGLAND	298	292	283	291	273	249	237	221	220	211	208	196
East of England	18	15	15	16	15	15	16	13	13	14	14	14
London	105	103	104	106	107	96	91	91	93	91	85	80
Midlands	62	68	61	61	50	51	47	43	43	40	42	34
North East and Yorkshire	49	43	42	45	41	34	35	32	31	26	28	27
North West	41	39	38	37	37	31	30	28	27	27	26	27
South East	13	14	17	18	16	15	13	10	9	9	9	11
South West	10	10	6	8	7	7	5	4	4	4	4	3

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

Name	16-Apr-21	17-Apr-21	18-Apr-21	19-Apr-21	20-Apr-21	21-Apr-21	22-Apr-21	23-Apr-21	24-Apr-21	25-Apr-21	26-Apr-21	27-Apr-21
ENGLAND	1,844	1,735	1,691	1,732	1,649	1,609	1,523	1,478	1,401	1,377	1,393	1,310
East of England	182	171	167	176	181	178	170	162	138	141	143	140
London	501	476	467	460	439	453	423	418	403	375	376	368
Midlands	339	332	323	326	300	301	275	259	252	241	252	237
North East and Yorkshire	314	282	273	295	270	253	243	222	208	213	219	194
North West	309	276	275	281	264	247	236	229	216	215	217	202
South East	123	121	116	120	124	109	110	116	115	125	123	120
South West	76	77	70	74	71	68	66	72	69	67	63	49

Vaccine Update

Between the 8th December 2020 and the [18th April 2021](#), the Midlands has successfully vaccinated **5,354,810** people with the first dose and **1,558,002** 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 become the highest provider of the second dose out of the English region.



Region of Residence	1st dose									Cumulative Total 1st Doses to Date	2nd dose									Cumulative Total of all Doses to Date
	Under 45	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	70-74	75-79	80+		Under 45	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	70-74	75-79	80+	
Total	5,310,396	2,203,417	3,468,465	3,479,224	3,037,268	2,632,563	2,700,189	1,983,864	2,700,543	27,515,929	1,375,480	379,989	460,844	493,512	436,885	482,653	1,186,613	1,519,269	2,361,774	36,212,948
East Of England	594,275	252,379	419,795	419,045	362,744	318,609	338,538	249,502	341,973	3,296,860	161,203	45,874	54,135	56,902	49,931	56,348	160,297	192,563	301,686	4,375,799
London	853,819	343,168	463,764	431,490	354,518	277,006	249,018	176,440	256,057	3,405,280	194,693	51,044	59,541	65,812	70,472	108,221	169,352	139,911	211,215	4,475,541
Midlands	1,037,787	454,692	663,722	659,355	579,479	513,011	526,560	398,387	521,817	5,354,810	235,810	66,467	80,746	83,236	68,835	69,698	201,151	297,834	454,225	6,912,812
North East And Yorkshire	810,879	331,737	538,345	557,500	503,305	440,076	447,316	314,876	426,580	4,370,614	234,675	63,482	80,459	87,229	76,012	74,101	184,120	248,087	381,414	5,800,193
North West	703,061	257,406	434,509	447,254	393,994	339,409	347,930	249,493	330,444	3,503,500	181,115	51,044	64,853	71,899	63,867	72,742	185,193	204,112	289,833	4,688,158
South East	792,799	346,516	578,924	579,486	497,830	430,333	454,843	341,684	478,431	4,500,846	212,950	61,147	71,485	76,277	64,244	64,160	172,849	246,905	415,039	5,885,902
South West	499,226	213,530	363,594	379,274	340,615	310,622	332,657	251,200	342,224	3,032,942	150,026	40,112	48,757	51,331	42,872	36,918	112,573	188,479	306,060	4,010,070

Weekly Deaths Registered: 16th April 2021

BCCEIU

The following analysis compares the latest available time period (the week of the 16th April 2021) to the previous week period (the week of the 9th April 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 increased from 10,438 in the week of the 9th April 2021 to 10,438 in the week of 16th April 2021. The number of deaths registered that state Coronavirus on the death certificate experienced a decrease from 379 people to 362 people over the same period.

Regional level analysis shows that the West Midlands' overall registered death figure increased from 888 people in the week of 9th April 2021 to 1,073 in the week of 16th April 2021. The number of registered deaths related to Coronavirus has increased from 45 people to 48 over the same period.

There was a total of 693 deaths registered across the WMCA (3 LEP) area in the week of the 16th April 2021. There were 33 deaths registered that were related to Coronavirus over the same period – accounting for approximately 5% of total deaths. The WMCA (3 LEP) area accounted for 69% of the 48 Coronavirus related deaths registered in the West Midlands Region. In comparison to the week of the 9th April 2021, the overall registered death figures in the WMCA (3 LEP) area increased by 107, with the number of deaths related to Coronavirus decreased by 9 people.

At a local authority level in the week of the 16th April 2021, Birmingham accounted for 33% (11) of deaths related to Coronavirus in the WMCA (3 LEP), this is followed by Coventry at 12% (4 deaths).

Of deaths involving Coronavirus registered in the week of the 16th April 2021, 64% (21) were in registered in a hospital, 24% (8) were in a care home. 6% (2 deaths each) were registered at home or classed as elsewhere

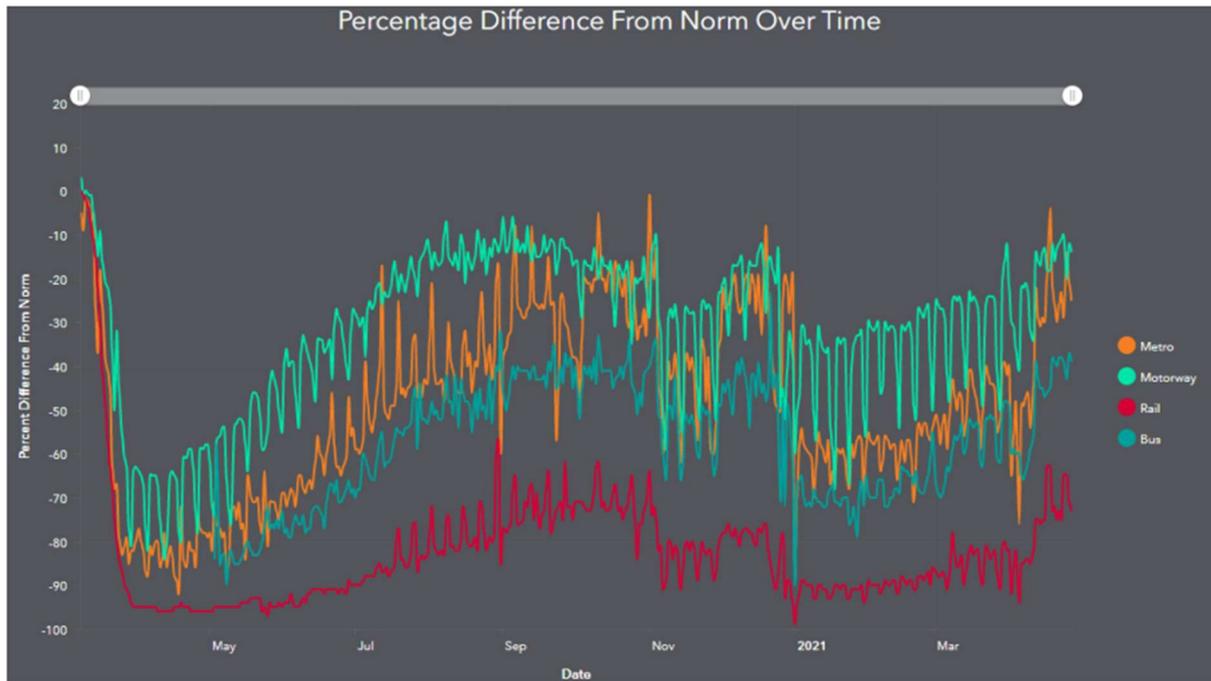
Place and number of deaths registered that are related to Coronavirus in the week of 16th April 2021:

	Care home	Elsewhere	Home	Hospice	Hospital	Other communal establishment	Total
Cannock Chase	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
East Staffordshire	1	0	0	0	2	0	3
Lichfield	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tamworth	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
North Warwickshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nuneaton and Bedworth	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Rugby	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Stratford-on-Avon	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Warwick	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
Bromsgrove	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Redditch	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wyre Forest	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Birmingham	1	2	0	0	8	0	11
Coventry	1	0	0	0	3	0	4
Dudley	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Sandwell	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Solihull	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Walsall	0	0	1	0	2	0	3
Wolverhampton	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
WM 7 Met.	2	2	1	0	18	0	23
Black Country LEP	0	0	1	0	6	0	7
Coventry & Warwickshire LEP	4	0	1	0	4	0	9
Greater Birmingham & Solihull LEP	4	2	0	0	11	0	17
WMCA (3 LEP)	8	2	2	0	21	0	33

Source: ONS, Death registrations and occurrences by local authority and health board, 27th April 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 27th April.

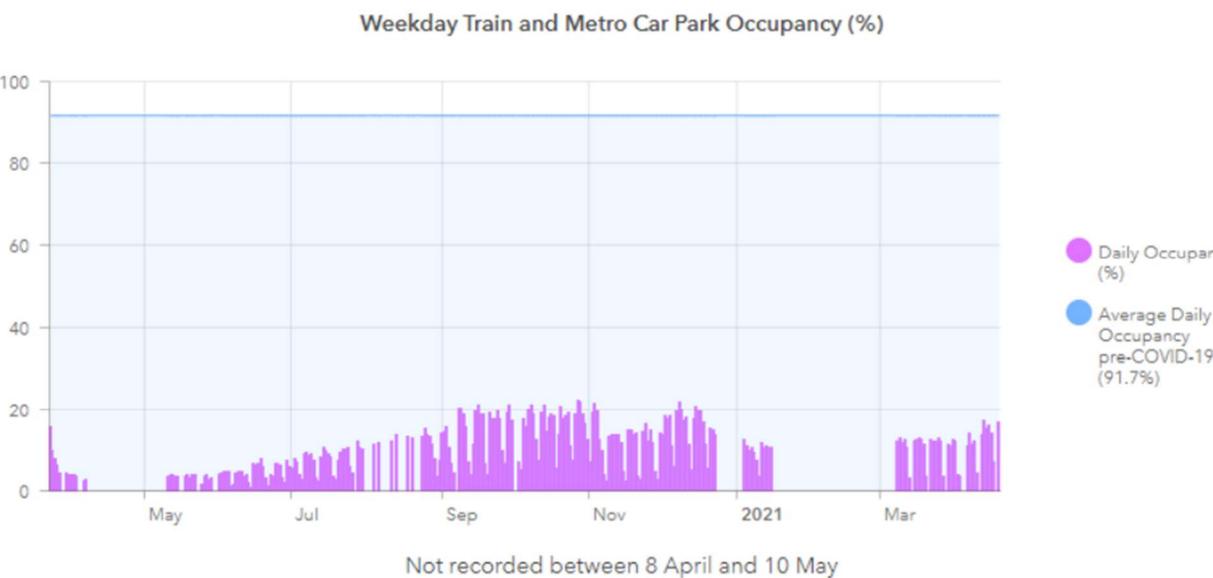
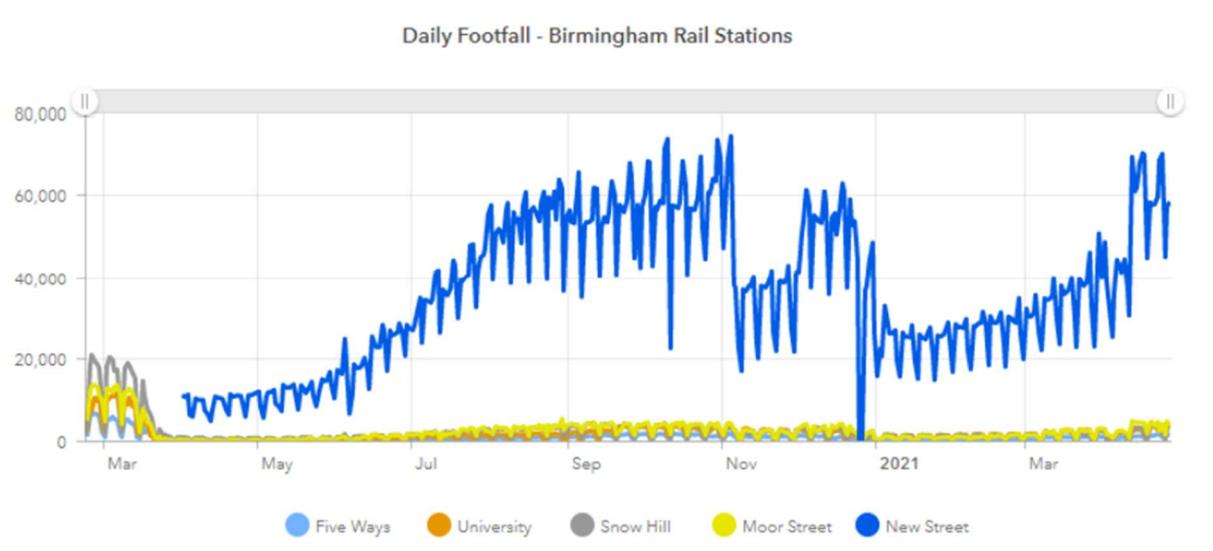
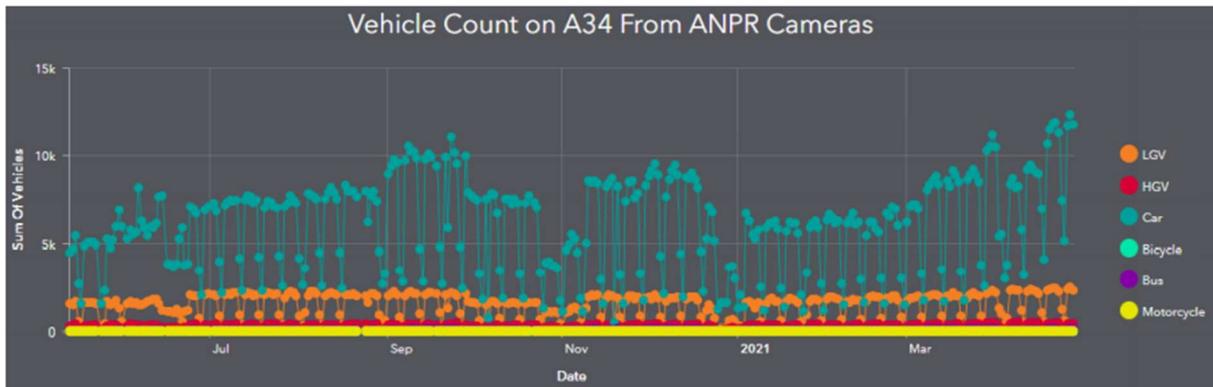
	% levels pre-Covid	% change from day before	% change from week before
Bus	61	-2	+2
Train	27	-2	-1
Tram	75	-4	+1
Roads (HE SRN)	86	-2	+2

* 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.



ONS Weekly Release Indicators

BCCEIU

On the 22nd April 2021 ONS released the weekly publication containing data about the condition of the society and economy from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The statistics are experimental and have been devised to provide timely information. The following information contains footfall data, online job adverts, final results from Wave 28 of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS), national company incorporations and voluntary dissolutions and results from Wave 54 of the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

Footfall

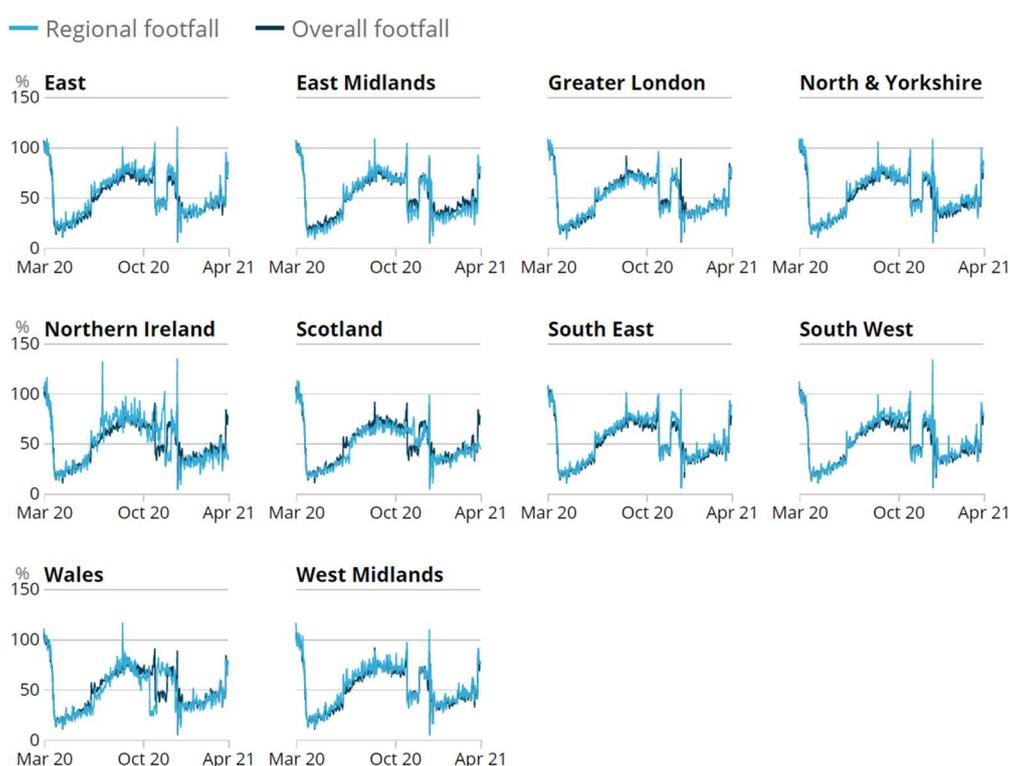
Data from Springboard shows in the week to 17th April 2021 (when compared to the previous week) that UK footfall increased by 31 percentage points - meaning overall footfall was at 75% when compared to the equivalent week in 2019.

For the week to 17th April 2021, retail footfall remains the strongest at 98% of its level when compared to the equivalent week of 2019. Footfall for shopping centres was at 72% and high streets was at 65% of the levels in the equivalent week of 2019.

Week-on-week analysis (from 10th April to 17th April 2021) shows that footfall for shopping centres increased by 127%, high streets increased by 93% and retail parks increased by 35%. (Please note for retail locations that the week-on-week changes in footfall are presented as percentages rather than percentage points because the figures represent differences in the level of footfall between periods, rather than movements in an index).

In the week to 17th April 2021, retail footfall was strongest in the South East of England at 85% down to Northern Ireland at 40% of the levels seen in the equivalent week of 2019. All regions of the UK saw increases in retail footfall between the weeks ending 10th April 2021 and 17th April 2021 with the East Midlands seeing the largest increase by 114% with Scotland the smallest week-on-week increase of 14%.

Volume of overall daily retail footfall, percentage of the level recorded on the same day of the equivalent week of 2019, UK regions, 1st March 2020 to 17th April 2021:



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

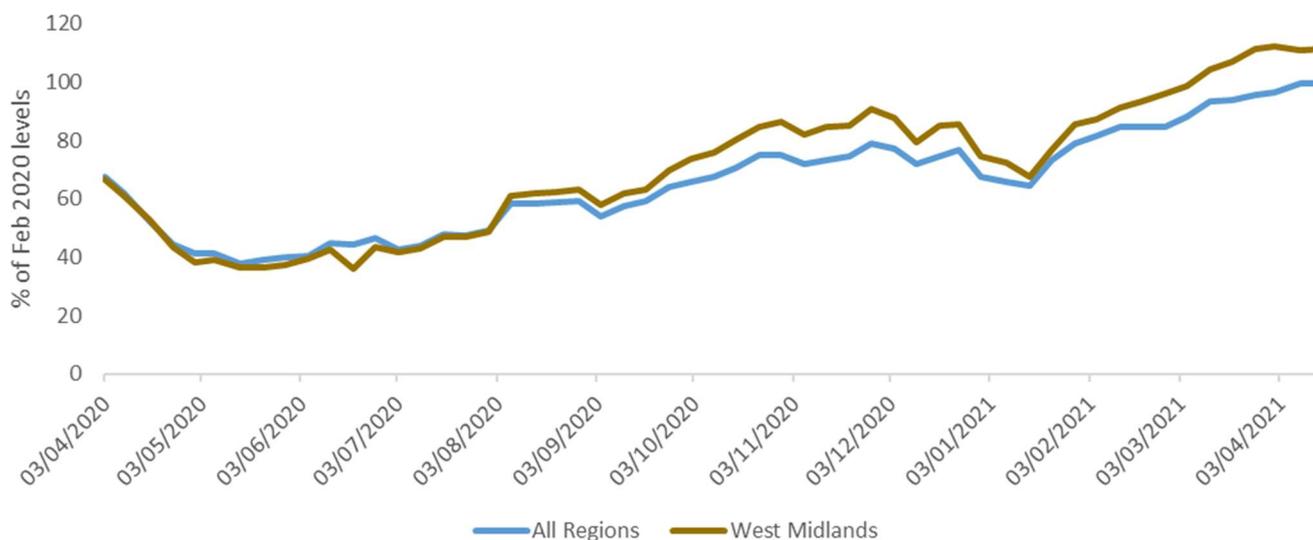
Online Job Adverts

These estimates are experimental figures are taken from jobs adverts provided by Adzuna. The Adzuna categories do not correspond to SIC categories and therefore not comparable with the ONS Vacancy Survey. Please note, from the 18th March 2021, an improved process has been put in place to generate more accurate estimates by region, these changes have been backdated. Index of job adverts on Adzuna by category, 100 = average job adverts in February 2020.

Nationally, between the 9th and 16th April 2021 total online job adverts slightly decreased by 0.1 percentage points. On the 16th April, total online job adverts were at 93.4% of their average level in February 2020. Out of the 28 categories (excluding unknown) 21 increased from the previous week, with the highest increase by 13.9 percentage points in transport/logistics/warehouse (to 204.3%). The largest decrease from the previous week was in the domestic help category by 26.0 percentage points to 108.9%.

Between the 9th and 16th April 2021, for the West Midlands, the total online jobs adverts increased by 0.7 percentage points to 111.5%. North East decreased over this period by 2.0 percentage points (to 126.5% of February 2020 levels) with the highest increase by 1.9 percentage points in London (to 86.0% of February 2020 levels).

The following chart shows the index of job adverts on Adzuna by category, 100 = average job adverts in February 2020, Overall all regions and the West Midlands Region, 3rd April 2020 to 16th April 2021:



Source: Adzuna

National Company Incorporations and Voluntary Dissolution

Companies House data shows for the UK, there were 15,771 incorporations in the week to 16th April 2021. This is down from 17,881 recorded in the previous week - although it was higher when compared to the same week in 2020 (9,372) but lower than 2019 (11,558).

Also, for the week ending 16th April 2021, there were 5,325 voluntary dissolution applications, an increase from 5,059 recorded in the previous week. The number of voluntary dissolution applications was higher than levels seen in the sixteenth week of 2020 (3,631) and the same week in 2019 (4,903).

Business Insights and Conditions Survey

The final results from Wave 28 of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) based off the 5,103 businesses surveyed across the West Midlands that businesses have a presence in with a response rate of 25.6% (1,309) and to 2,972 businesses that are head quartered in the West Midlands, with a response rate of 24.7% (733). Please note, unless otherwise stated, the survey reference period was 22nd March to 4th April 2021, the survey live date was 6th April 2021 and the close date was 18th April 2021. Also, the majority of the data used is unweighted for regions and

response levels can be low so the following results should be treated with caution when evaluating the impact of COVID-19. Due to weighted data being available for the UK a comparison has not been included.

Trading and Financial Performance

91.9% of responding West Midlands businesses were trading between 22nd March 2021 to 4th April 2021 with a further 8.5% of businesses temporarily closed or temporarily paused trading and less than 1% of businesses had permanently ceased trading.

In the West Midlands, 90.0% of responding businesses reported they were trading between the 22nd March to the 4th April and had been for more than the last two weeks with a further 1.1% of West Midlands businesses had started trading within the last two weeks after a pause in trading. 4.9% of West Midlands businesses had paused trading but intending to restart in the next two weeks. 3.6% of West Midlands businesses had paused trading and do not intend to restart in the next two weeks.

Excluding “not sure” responses, 35.1% of trading businesses in the West Midlands reported their turnover had decreased by at least 20%. However, 40.1% of trading businesses in the West Midlands reported that their turnover was unaffected and 14.7% reported their turnover had increased by at least 20%.

Excluding “other” and “not sure” responses, 68.2% of responding West Midlands businesses reported the main reason for the change in the business turnover in the last two weeks was due to COVID-19 and 8.8% reported that it was due to COVID-19 and the end of the EU transition period.

Profits

Businesses were asked for their experiences for the reference period 22nd March to 4th April 2021. However, for questions regarding the last two weeks, businesses may respond from the point of completion of the questionnaire (6th to 18th April 2021).

Businesses were asked in the last two weeks how profits compared with normal expectations for the time of year. Excluding “not sure” and “not applicable” responses, 34.0% of trading businesses in the West Midlands reported profits had decreased by at least 20%. However, 39.1% of trading businesses in the West Midlands reported that profits had stayed the same and 12.0% reported their profits had increased by at least 20%.

Stock Levels and Stockpiling

Businesses were asked for their experiences for the reference period 22nd March to 4th April 2021. However, for questions regarding the last two weeks, businesses may respond from the point of completion of the questionnaire (6th to 18th April 2021).

Businesses were asked how stock levels in the last two weeks compared to normal expectations for the time of the year. Excluding “not sure” or “not applicable” responses, 11.0% of West Midlands businesses reported that stock levels were higher than normal. 38.8% reported stock levels had not changed and 15.4% reported that stock levels were lower than normal.

Excluding “not sure” or “other” responses, 55.5% of West Midlands businesses reported that the main reason for the difference in stock levels were due to COVID-19. 19.2% of West Midlands businesses reported the main reason to be COVID-19 and the end of the EU transition period. 11.0% of West Midlands businesses reported just the end of the EU transition period as the main reason.

7.2% of responding West Midlands businesses reported they were stockpiling goods or materials. 58.5% of responding West Midlands businesses reported they were stockpiling goods or material from UK suppliers, 62.8% were stockpiling from EU Suppliers and 38.3% were stockpiling from non-EU suppliers.

Of the West Midlands businesses that reported they had stockpiled goods or materials, the highest percentage was for manufacturing parts at 30.9% followed by metals and materials at 28.7%.

Grants Applied, Received, Finance Agreements and Further Schemes

15.2% of West Midlands businesses had applied for Local Restrictions Support Grant – England (90.9% have received). 1.9% of West Midlands businesses had applied for a grant from the Lockdown Business Fund – Wales (11.1% have received). 1.9% of West Midlands businesses have applied for a grant from the Strategic Framework Business Fund Scotland (1.1% have received) and 3.0% had received a grant from Local Restrictions Support - Northern Ireland. While 75.4% of West Midlands businesses have not applied for any of these grants.

6.6% of responding West Midlands businesses have received small business grant, 7.4% have received a sector-specific grant and 3.8% have received an additional Restriction Grant.

26.8% of West Midlands businesses have received government-backed loans or finance agreements during COVID-19.

7.2% of West Midlands businesses are using or intend to use Kickstart Job Scheme for young people. 64.9% are using or intend to use the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. 2.1% of responding West Midlands businesses are using or intend to use Recovery Loan Scheme. While 26.6% of West Midlands businesses are not using or intend to use any of these schemes.

International Trading

Businesses were asked for their experiences for the reference period 22nd March to 4th April 2021. However, for questions regarding the last two weeks, businesses may respond from the point of completion of the questionnaire (6th to 18th April 2021).

Businesses were asked in the last two weeks, had their businesses exporting or importing of goods or services been affected when compared to normal expectations for the time of year. Excluding “not sure” responses, 33.0% of exporting businesses in the West Midlands reported their businesses were still exporting but less than normal. Of those businesses who continued to trade and import, 24.7% in the West Midlands were importing less than normal.

48.9% of West Midlands businesses who were exporting reported that they had not been affected and 55.9% reported that importing had not been affected.

2.4% of businesses in the West Midlands are exporting more than normal and 4.4% are importing more than normal.

2.8% of businesses in the West Midlands have not been able to export in the last two weeks and 2.3% of West Midlands businesses have not been able to import in the last two weeks.

Great Britain to Northern Ireland

Businesses were asked if they had sent or intended to send goods from Great Britain to Northern Ireland in the last two weeks – 59.2% of West Midlands businesses responded ‘yes’.

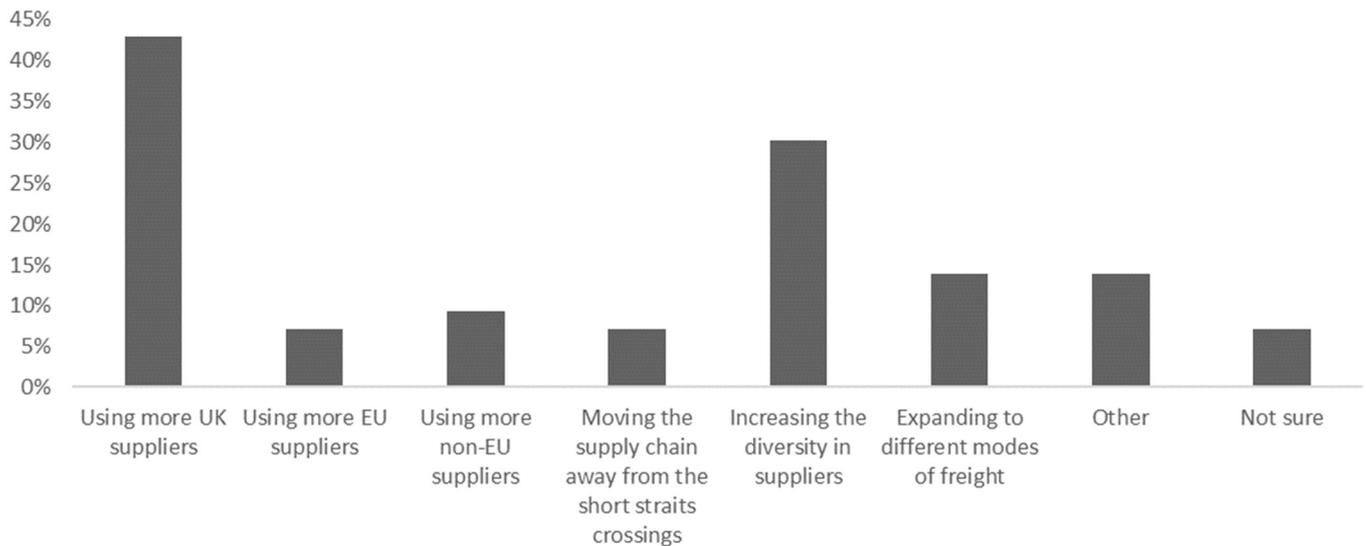
Excluding “not sure” and not applicable” responses, 60.6% of West Midlands businesses reported the volume of goods sent from Great Britain to Northern Ireland had stayed the same, with a further 3.9% reported the volume had increased.

Excluding “other”, “not sure” and none of the above”, 43.6% of West Midlands businesses reported the change in volume sent was due to decreased demand for goods and also increased costs, this was followed by 35.9% from increased delays.

Supply Chains

Businesses were asked if they had made changes to supply chains due to the end of the EU transition period. 6.6% of responding West Midlands businesses reported they had. 59.3% of West Midlands businesses reported the changes to supply chains were a result of a new UK trade agreement. Where businesses stated they had made changes to supply chains due to the end of the EU transition period, 43.0% of responding West Midlands businesses reported they were using more UK suppliers.

The following chart shows where West Midlands businesses had reported they had made changes to supply chains, what the change was:



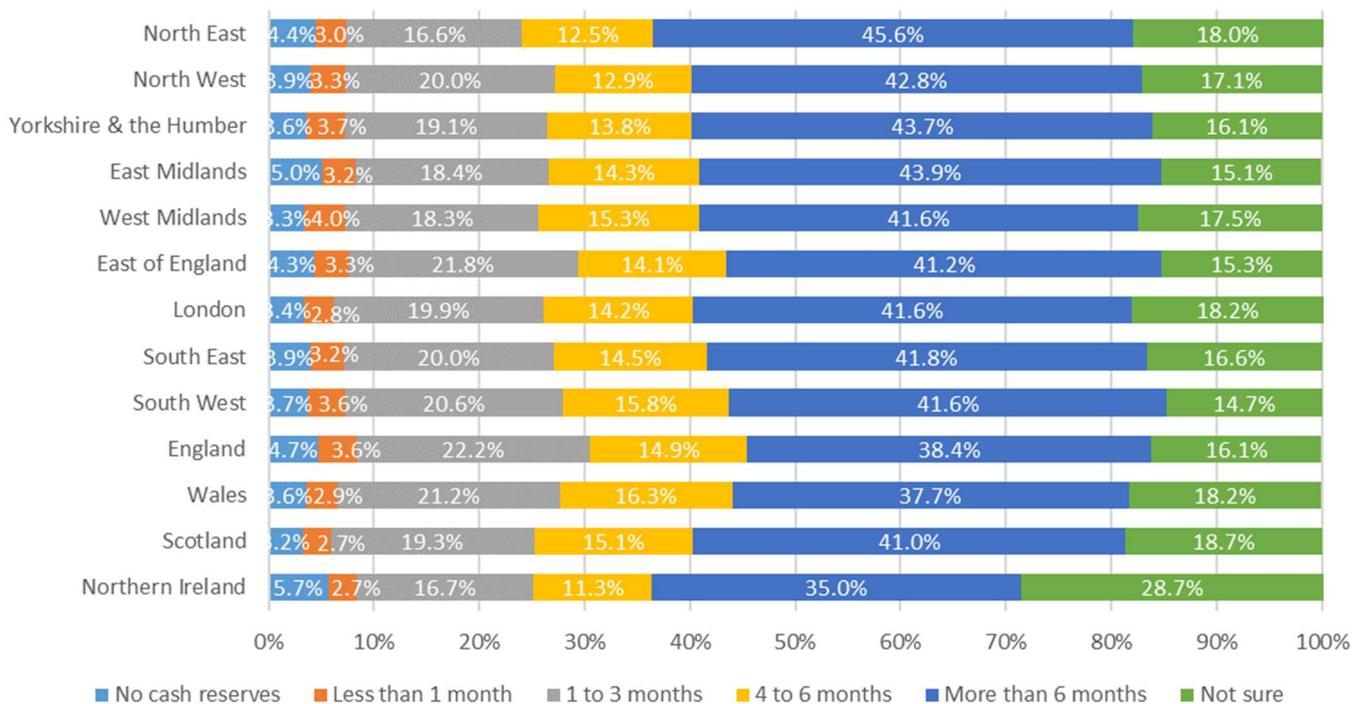
23.4% of responding West Midlands businesses reported extra costs due to increased red tape after the end of the EU transition period. Although 39.3% reported no extra costs.

2.2% of responding West Midlands business reported they had not been able to get the materials, goods or services from the EU in the last two weeks.

Cash Flow

3.3% of responding West Midlands businesses that have not permanently stopped trading have no cash reserves.

The following graph shows across the UK regions how long cash reserves will last:



Business Confidence and Insolvency

In the West Midlands, 67.2% of responding businesses had high confidence in surviving over the next three months. 24.3% had moderate confidence of survival, 2.8% had low confidence. The remaining 5.4% were not sure.

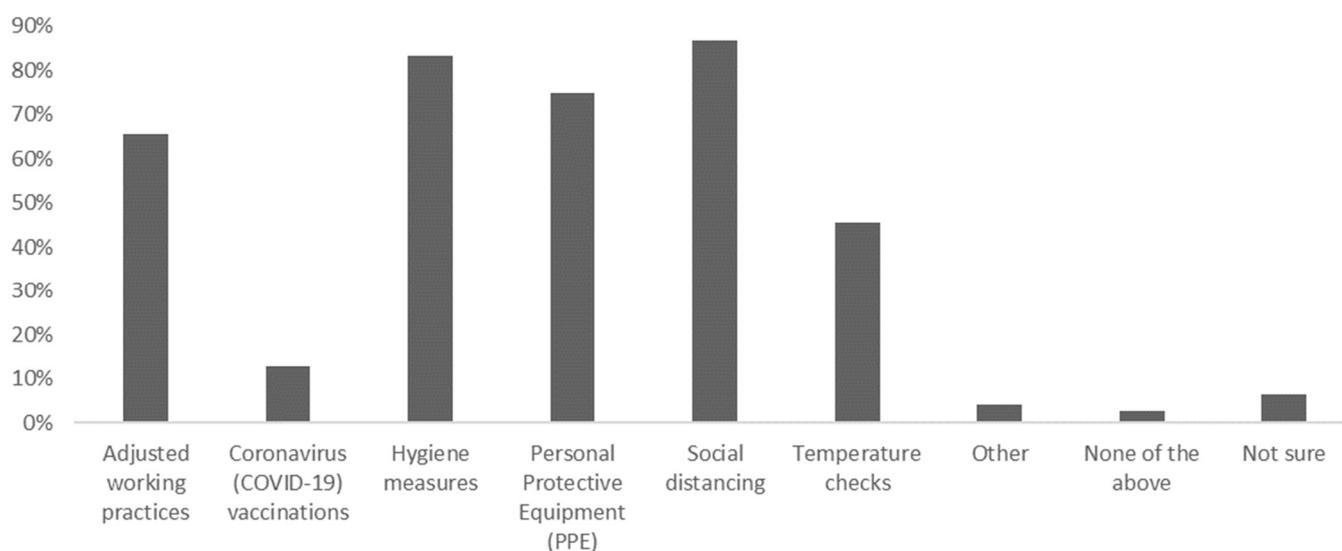
Excluding “not sure” responses, 1% of responding West Midlands businesses reported they were at severe risk from insolvency and 11.4% of West Midlands businesses reported they were at moderate risk. 49.3% of West Midlands businesses reported a low risk of insolvency and 27.1% reported no risk.

Excluding “not sure” responses” 3.7% of responding West Midlands businesses reported the risk of insolvency had increased in the last two weeks, 87.7% reported the risk had stayed the same and 4.4% reported the risk from insolvency had decreased in the last two weeks.

Safety Measures and COVID-19 Testing

86.9% of responding West Midlands businesses reported they were using, or intending to use social distancing as a safety measure in the workplace.

The following graph shows for the West Midlands area what businesses are using or intending to use for safety measures in the workplace:



65.0% of responding West Midlands businesses reported they were not providing regular COVID-19 testing for the workforce.

Site Closures

2.8% of responding West Midlands businesses intend to permanently close business sites in the next three months. 66.7% of responding West Midlands businesses expect by closing these sites there will be permanent redundancies, followed by 33.3% that will relocate the workforce.

Expected Redundancies

7.5% of responding West Midlands businesses expected redundancies to happen within the next three months. With 9.2% of West Midlands businesses expected redundancies to occur within the next two weeks. 19.4% of responding West Midlands businesses expect redundancies between two weeks and one month and 68.4% expected redundancies between one and three months. 7.1% of West Midlands businesses were unsure when redundancies would occur.

40.8% of responding West Midlands businesses reported the business was making these redundancies to reduce staff costs, 37.8% reported due to certain job roles were no longer required and 28.6% reported due to site closures.

Net Zero

41.4% of responding West Midlands businesses have switched to LED bulbs to reduce their emissions. With a further 18.0% reported they plan to switch to LED bulbs in the next 12 months to reduce emissions – 19.1% do not plan to take any actions.

The following table shows for West Midlands businesses what actions they have taken to reduce emissions and also plans for next 12 months to reduce emissions:

	WM Businesses- Actions taken to reduce business emissions	WM Businesses- Actions intend to take in the next 12 months to reduce business emissions
Adjusting heating and cooling systems	29.3%	16.0%
Electrifying your vehicle fleet	14.8%	13.2%
Installing a smart meter	13.5%	6.9%
Installing charging points	17.3%	10.5%
Installing your own renewable electricity or heating	6.6%	4.2%
Insulating your buildings	8.6%	5.6%
Introducing a cycle to work scheme	20.0%	4.9%
Switching to LED bulbs	41.4%	18.0%
Other	2.4%	2.8%
No actions have been taken/ not intending to reduce emissions	20.8%	42.1%

Social Impacts of the Coronavirus

The following refers to the period of 14th to 18th April 2021 unless stated otherwise.

Avoiding Contact and Self-Isolating

In the past seven days, when a West Midlands resident has met up with people outside their household or support or childcare bubble inside or outside, 86% reported to always or often maintaining social distancing (85% GB).

84% of responding West Midlands adults who have left their home in the past 7 days have avoided physical contact with others (86% GB).

75% of responding West Midlands adults have avoided contact with older or other vulnerable people in the past 7 days (70% GB).

3% of responding West Midlands adults have self-isolated in the past 7 days due to COVID-19 (4% GB).

Leaving Home

44% of West Midlands residents felt very comfortable or comfortable leaving home (50% GB). 29% of West Midlands residents felt uncomfortable or very uncomfortable leaving home due to COVID-19.

31% of West Midlands adults have either stayed at home or only left for work, exercise, essential shopping or medical needs in the past 7 days (29% GB).

Impact on People's Life Overall

In the West Midlands 58% of adults reported they were very or somewhat worried about the effect COVID-19 was having on their life (55% GB). 17% of responding West Midlands adults reported that they were somewhat unworried

or not at all worried (20% GB). 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 (58% GB).

46% of working adults in the West Midlands reported their work had been affected due to COVID-19 (38% GB).

Well-Being, Loneliness and Perceptions of the Future

Average personal well-being scores for life satisfaction was 6.8 in the West Midlands (6.9 GB), worthwhile was 7.3 in the West Midlands (matching GB average), happiness was 7.1 for West Midlands adults (matching GB average) and anxious was recorded at 3.8 for West Midlands adults (matching GB average).

9% of adults in the West Midlands reported low levels of life satisfaction (10% GB). 7% of West Midlands adults reported low level of feeling worthwhile (8% GB). 12% of responding West Midlands adults reported low level of happiness (11% GB) and 33% reported high levels of anxiety (32% GB).

24% of adults in the West Midlands reported to often/always or some of the time to feeling lonely (25% GB). While 49% reported hardly ever or never feeling lonely in the West Midlands (matching GB average).

25% of West Midlands adults believe it will take 6 months or less before life returns to normal (21% GB). While 21% of West Midlands adults believed it will take 7 to 12 months (matching GB average). 29% of West Midlands adults think it could more than a year to return back to normal (matching GB average) and 7% for the West Midlands adults thought it would never go back to normal (6% GB).

Government Guidelines

73% of adults in the West Midlands felt they had enough information about government plans to manage COVID-19 (69% GB). 83% of adults in the West Midlands strongly or tend to support the current lockdown measures for where they live (84% GB). Only 4% of West Midlands adults strongly or tend to oppose the lockdown measures (6% GB).

76% of adults in the West Midlands region reported it was very easy or easy to understand the current lockdown measures (72% GB). 8% of West Midlands adults found them difficult or very difficult to understand the measures (10% GB).

78% of adults in the West Midlands region reported it was very easy or easy to follow the current lockdown measures (76% GB). 6% of West Midlands adults found them difficult or very difficult to follow the measures (7% GB).

Mass Testing and Vaccines

If mass surge testing was offered, 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 (14% GB).

59% of responding adults in the West Midlands region have received at least one dose of the vaccine (64% GB)⁹.

⁹ Please note, these estimates are based on respondents who took part in the survey and will therefore differ to the actual number of people who have received the vaccine.

LEP Level Intelligence

WMCA

WMCA Growth Hub Intel for WM Weekly Economic Monitor– 27th April 2021

HEADLINES

SECTOR	KEY CONCERNS
<p>Cross Sector</p>	<p>Outlook</p> <p>The easing of lockdown has provided a much-needed boost to many businesses and local economies. West Midlands Growth Hubs have reported a general feeling of entrepreneurial spirit with businesses returning to more “normal” activity. Business advisors are dealing with pre-COVID type day to day requests for support rather than the fire-fighting witnessed in the middle of the pandemic.</p> <p>There have been positive reports of high street activity from across the region, for example in the Black Country and Staffordshire and in Stratford-upon-Avon. Shops and hospitality are thrilled to have welcomed back customers.</p> <p>The short-term buoyancy is reflected in local and national outlooks for the year. The UK’s economic growth prospects for 2021 have been significantly upgraded in the EY ITEM Club’s Spring Forecast, published on 26th April: The EY ITEM Club now expects the economy to grow 6.8% this year rather than the 5% growth expected in January. The upgraded forecast primarily reflects the UK economy’s resilient performance in the lockdown-affected fourth quarter of 2020 and first quarter of 2021, providing a better-than-expected platform for growth through the rest of this year.</p> <p>Similarly positive, businesses in Coventry and Warwickshire emerged from the first three months of the year feeling more confident than at any point over the past 12 months, according to a new Chamber of Commerce survey.</p> <p>However, businesses in the region have expressed concern of potential job losses once the Governments furlough scheme finally comes to an end in September. And it is important to remember that many businesses can still not operate or open as normal – for example in the conference and events sector or indoor hospitality.</p> <p>So it is important to be cautiously optimistic while remembering the struggle many local businesses are still in. Analysis by insolvency and restructuring business advisory firm Begbies Traynor bring the impact of Covid to life: the firm's latest Red Flag Alert data shows that more than 17,000 businesses in the West Midlands found themselves in ‘significant’ financial distress during the first three months of 2021, an increase of 51 per cent since the first quarter of 2020. While all had significant year-on-year increases, Birmingham and Wolverhampton fared worst, with both reporting 52 per cent growth over the past 12 months. Birmingham’s increase saw the number of ailing firms reach more than 11,000, while Wolverhampton's rose above 2,000 for the first time.</p> <p>COVID-19</p> <p>Many businesses are still suffering financially due to lockdown restrictions in place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sectors such as events/conference are really struggling and have no clear roadmap as to when they will be able to trade again. There is also a very common theme of business struggling to import/export goods in a timely and cost-effective manner. • Some businesses struggling with the short term cashflow issues whilst bringing back staff and preparing to restart. Some of these are delaying the reopening of business, particularly restaurants. Businesses looking to explore the options for Co-Working. Businesses continue to look for advice and guidance around restructuring.

SECTOR	KEY CONCERNS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many SMEs still awaiting outcomes from underwriting from late applications to the CBILS loans scheme. Not a clear picture yet from loan providers on the new Recovery Loan scheme that has replaced CBILS and BBL's. BBB yet to launch their offering. • Dramatic increases in rents whilst surviving on grants. • Uncertainty about the way out of lockdown and the short timescales that is driving this approach – causing hesitancy to make investment decisions. <p>Additional Covid-19 issues and feedback raised recently include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supply Chain Disruption Delays – reflected by JLR factory closures. • Lack of clarity around COVID testing protocols/lack of space to carry out testing on site. • There is feedback that things are starting to improve on the high street. More enquiries regarding Town Centre businesses and the use of streets outside premises to trade leading to planning enquiries. • The government needs to run a public confidence campaign to support the cultural sector by encouraging people to return to cultural venues once they open • Frustratingly there seems to be a high proportion of businesses who have not subscribed to any financial support throughout the pandemic, anecdotally businesses initially thought the pandemic would be short lived, and they would not need a 'hand out' , and by the time they realised the impact on their business they had often missed closing date deadlines. <p>New sector-specific support for the hardest-hit industries and reforming the business rates system to free up cash for businesses are among a number of recommendations to government in a new report published by Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce. Keep Business Moving II sets out areas of Covid-19 business support which require urgent action. The report identifies a number of gaps in existing support packages and sets out a series of recommendations in order to alleviate those issues.</p> <p>Recommendations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sector specific interventions to support those industries such as live events and aviation that have received relatively little financial support • Ease the crippling cash burdens that businesses across the country are facing right now in order to free up much needed cash by exploring the possibility of reforming the business rates system and also making it much easier for businesses to invest in their people and products • Widen support mechanisms for those currently excluded from existing measures such as Limited Company Directors and those significantly impacted supply chain companies • Bring forward enhanced grant support for the most impacted 'closed' businesses with high overhead. • Offer full clarity on how they will assess their four tests for reopening the economy and provide regular updates on progress in between steps to help business plan ahead <p>EU Exit</p> <p>While there appears to be a gradual decline in the level and severity of EU Exit / trade related issues reported to Growth Hubs, problems still remain. Recently these have included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rising import costs have meant renegotiating contracts with customers. • Organisations are still finding the increase in steel prices are now affecting the automotive, Rail and construction supply chain • Worldwide shortage of polymers, with lead times for deliveries going from 5/ 7 days to 18 weeks. This makes forecasting and managing sales extremely challenging. Also due to urgency of situation planes are flying supplies, and this is extremely bad for carbon footprint. Looking for alternatives with materials.

SECTOR	KEY CONCERNS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delayed steel orders causing delays. • Delays in other imported goods arriving. • Duty for imports having a negative impact on cash flow. • Costs of imported items increased, as has the administrative burden. • Delays in exporting goods with international freight companies seemingly unprepared. It has anecdotally been suggested that, more positively, more European companies are now bringing their manufacturing to the UK. <p>Labour Market</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Businesses are looking for machine operators in particular, citing this as a key skills shortage. • Greater apprenticeship flexibility will benefit businesses across a range of sectors and could lead to more opportunities for apprentices. <p>Enquiries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Government's £5 billion restart scheme, which launched on April 1, sees non-essential retail business in England able to access up to £6,000, while businesses in the hospitality, accommodation, leisure, personal care and gym sectors will be eligible for grants of up to £18,000. • With the launch of the restart grant, Self-employed / sole traders continue to enquire when the government will launch the fifth instalment of the Self-employment income support scheme. • There is continued and increasing appetite for normal (pre-Covid) business support grants. Businesses across all sectors looking to obtain grant funding for machinery, equipment and property renovations. Carbon-efficient machinery featuring in an effort to reduce energy bills. Machinery sought to bring manufacturing in house which will result in jobs.. • With the deadline approaching for Local Businesses to apply for financial support of up to £10,000 to enable staff to undertake regular rapid Covid-19 testing, Local authorities are encouraging business to apply before the 30th of April deadline. <p>Returning to Work</p> <p>Depending on the size and nature of the company everyone will be approaching the return to work differently.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some are providing Employee Assistance Programmes and mental health and wellbeing awareness training for managers. • Many are looking to keep blended working practices (where practical), providing greater flexibility and remote working than before. • A company returning staff from furlough that now needs individuals to be on the premises to do their role are starting by inviting them in for a socially distanced coffee with their manager first, helping them get comfortable in the environment after so long away. • Another is creating a “headspace garden”, a space put aside and designed to give a place for privacy for anyone who needs to step away during the working day.
<p>Financial Services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The West Midlands has been appointed to the FinTech National Network, which aims to connect FinTech hubs and support nationwide financial innovation. The FinTech National Network brings together regional clusters to encourage collaboration and amplify the collective voice of the UK’s FinTech sector. • The network facilitates initiatives across skills, talent, capital and investment. Spearheading the West Midlands’ presence on the network is SuperTech, a professional services technology supercluster designed to showcase the talent, innovation, and investment potential of the West Midlands.

SECTOR	KEY CONCERNS
Arts & Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Arts and Cultural Sector is thankful for the vital support as part of the Cultural Recovery Fund, but as one of the first sectors to close and last to open and with long lead in times for organisation, programming and planning the financial risk associated with cancelled events could put parts our sector at serious risk of failure without a Government backed insurance scheme. It would also like to see regional and local public confidence campaigns focussed on culture to support the return of audiences and participants.
Manufacturing	<p>Outlook</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Optimism among UK manufacturing firms has improved at its fastest rate for 48 years as the easing of coronavirus restrictions sparked further hopes about the country's economic recovery, according to new figures. The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) said its latest quarterly Industrial Trends Survey for the three months to April showed a rebound in investment and hiring plans despite the continued impact of the pandemic. <p>EU Exit / Covid</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some companies are only receiving half of their steel orders at time of delivery - one company received 200 tonnes vs 400 tonnes ordered and expected, this has obvious impact on their ability to deliver goods on time. Due to significant investment in making premises COVID compliant, businesses are now experiencing poor cash flow until business picks up.
Food & Drink	<p>EU Exit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inconsistent and increasingly burdensome post-Brexit bureaucracy is blighting food and drink sales to the EU, the sector warned as it published analysis showing exports to the bloc were down 40 per cent in February compared with a year earlier. The Food and Drink Federation (FDF), which represents more than 800 companies, said the statistics showed that food and drink exports to the EU in February were worth £578.7m, down from £1bn in February 2020. This was only marginally offset by an 8.7 per cent increase, worth £55.6m, in sales to non-EU countries in February compared with the same period last year.
Digital / Tech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of new tech companies being set up in the West Midlands rose by 40% in 2020 according to latest figures. Audit, tax and consulting firm RSM said that in total there were 821 tech businesses incorporated in 2020 according to data held by Companies House, a 40% increase compared with 585 in 2019.
Aviation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Birmingham Airport has urged further details on international travel as holiday plans remain in limbo. Birmingham Airport has said further detail on the return of international travel is "urgently" needed, amid continuing uncertainty about proposals. After the toughest 12 months in its 82-year history, the Solihull-based site is awaiting news about how and when aviation may start to open. Among those which operate out of Birmingham is Swissport; the ground handling outfit has 275 staff on-site - three quarters of whom are currently on full furlough. Aside from the airport itself, a number of companies depend heavily on or exclusively on-air travel.

NEW ECONOMIC SHOCKS

COMPANY	LOCATION	SECTOR	SOURCE/DETAIL
Debenhams	Walsall	Retail	Debenhams is closing its Walsall branch for good on May 2 nd . It is among 27 of its stores in England and Wales that will shut for the final time on May 2 and May 4.
JLR	National	Automotive, Engineering, Manufacturing	Car production is to be halted at two Jaguar Land Rover plants from next week due to a shortage of electrical components. The luxury car maker said work will be

COMPANY	LOCATION	SECTOR	SOURCE/DETAIL
			suspended at its factories in Halewood, Merseyside, and Castle Bromwich, near Birmingham, from Monday, April 26. Its Solihull plant in the West Midlands will continue production. The car giant said its period of non-production would be for a “limited period” and blamed the shortfall of parts on the coronavirus pandemic.

NEW INVESTMENT, DEALS AND OPPORTUNITIES

COMPANY	LOCATION	SECTOR	DETAIL & SOURCE
Pizza Express	Nationwide	Hospitality	Pizza Express is to hire 1,000 new employees as it prepares to welcome customers into its restaurants from next month.
Victoria Carpets	Kidderminster	Retail	Kidderminster-based carpets and flooring firm Victoria has bought two Italian firms in a deal worth just over £30 million. It has added ceramic tile distributors Ceramica Colli and Vallelunga and the shares of ceramic tile manufacturer Ceramiche Santa Maria.
Ikea	Wednesbury	Retail	More than 40 new jobs could be created at the IKEA Wednesbury store as the furniture giant looks to expand to meet online demand. The firm has submitted proposals to Walsall Council to provide temporary lockers for its click and collect (C&C) service as more people turn to internet shopping as a result of Covid.
Richardsons	Region-wide	All	The Richardson family has announced plans to invest in ambitious West Midlands businesses with the launch of the Richardson Enterprise Fund, providing a boost to the region’s post-covid economic recovery.
Ibstock	Walsall	Construction	Clay bricks and concrete products group Ibstock is making a £60 million investment in production at its two sites in Aldridge as demand for building products soars with the UK recovery from the coronavirus pandemic stepping up.
Primark	Tamworth	Retail	Primark has announced it will open its new store in Tamworth later this week, creating more than 170 jobs. The store, launching in late April, will span more than 36,400 sq ft of retail selling space over two floors and will bring the company’s total number of stores in the UK to 191.
PERIOS	Birmingham	Hospitality	Jobs created by launch of Brindley Place restaurant. Up to 20 jobs will be created when a new Tex-Mex restaurant opens in Brindley Place in the Westside district of Birmingham city centre.
HBD	Birmingham	Construction	Developer reveals plans for £100m Jewellery Quarter mixed-use scheme. HBD, the development arm of Henry Boot, has revealed plans for £100m mixed-use scheme in Birmingham.

COMPANY	LOCATION	SECTOR	DETAIL & SOURCE
Tandem Group	Birmingham	Distribution	Birmingham based Tandem Group, a designer, developer and distributor of sports, leisure, and mobility products, has purchased over three acres of land to increase its distribution capabilities with the support of a seven-figure commercial mortgage from HSBC UK.
Oval Real Estate	Digbeth, Birmingham	Construction Retail Property	Plans for a £1bn transformation of the area around the iconic Custard Factory in Birmingham's Digbeth area have been recommended for approval
Bonds Lifestyle	Stratford-upon-Avon	Retail	A lifestyle store and brasserie near Stratford-upon-Avon has been re-launched following a six-figure investment. Bonds Lifestyle on Evesham Road has been transformed while it was closed during the pandemic.
Nelson's Distillery & School	Stratford-upon-Avon	Hospitality, Food & Drink	Stafford-based gin distillery is eyeing international expansion after beating its £300,000 crowdfunding target. Nelson's Distillery & School has raised £302,915 from 326 investors on Crowdcube. The campaign has now closed. In 2019, Nelson's Distillery & School was formed through the acquisition of a 290ltr still and the construction of a 28-seat gin school.
Headpoint Advisors / Higgs & Sons	Warwickshire / Brierley Hill	Legal / Advisory	A number of Midlands advisers have worked on the merger of two retail software suppliers to form a new group. The new group, backed by Inflexion Private Equity, involves the combination of Autofutura, a data-driven business intelligence provider, with GForces, an automotive e-commerce and omnichannel supplier. The newly merged group was advised by the Midlands team of GCA Altium, Warwickshire-headquartered Headpoint Advisors and Brierley Hill's Higgs & Sons.
Factory Direct Flooring (FDF)	Nuneaton	Flooring Manufacturing	Flooring manufacturer and retail firm Factory Direct Flooring (FDF) has invested in a new, purpose-built warehouse in Nuneaton and is increasing its workforce by 25 per cent. The move to the new 20,000 sq ft warehouse, which is nearly 40 per cent bigger than its former main unit in Hinckley, will facilitate a 50 per cent increase in stock holding.

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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