West Midlands
Weekly Economic Impact Monitor

WM REDI CITY REDI

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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.

The long-awaited Levelling Up White Paper was published on 2 February, setting out 12 missions: living standards, R&D, transport infrastructure, digital connectivity, education, skills, health, well-being, pride in place, housing, crime and local leadership. Domestically, 'partygate' has been dominating the news agenda: on 31 January the Cabinet Office published Sue Gray's Update Report on the 'Investigation into Alleged Gatherings on Government Premises During Covid Restrictions'; the Metropolitan Police are investigating certain events further. Public trust in the Government has declined. Internationally, the US is sending more troops to Europe as fears continue to mount that Russia will invade the Ukraine. China is facing an economic crisis as its real estate boom has ended, but in 2021 for the first time total GDP in China surpassed that for the European Union.

Global issues

- Tensions are ongoing with Russia, as troops continue to be sent to the border of Ukraine. The US is sending 2,000 troops from the US to Poland and Germany, and a further 1,000 already in Germany will go to Romania.
- There are heightened concerns about the future of Russian gas flows to the European nations
- For several months, Russia has been accused of intentionally disrupting gas supplies to leverage its role as a major energy supplier to Europe.
- China is also facing an economic crisis as its real estate boom has ended. However, China's economy has surpassed the whole of the European Union for the first time. Figures released this week by the European Statistical Office showed that GDP of the EU grew by 5.2% in 2021, regaining its pre-Covid size, with GDP for the EU totally $17tn. China's GDP for 2021 expanded by 8.1%, according to figures released last month by the county's National Bureau of Statistics, increasing GDP to $17.7tn. Most economic gains made by China were largely driven by strong industrial outputs and exports, but China's ability to overtake the EU was also influenced in part by the withdrawal of the UK from the EU.

National issues

- The long awaited Sue Gray report released this week identified behaviour at gatherings is "difficult to justify" given the public being asked by government to "accept far-reaching restrictions on their lives" and that some of the events represent a "serious failure to observe" high standards for government and those expected of the public at the time. It identified "failures of leadership and judgment" by different parts of No 10 and the Cabinet Office at different times.
- The Levelling Up White Paper was released this week (see more details below).
- Nationwide Building Society has reported that there has been further increase in house prices rises, with house price growth having the strongest January start since 2005. The building society has said prices rose by 11.2% year-on-year. A deposit now constitutes a record percentage of an average first-time buyers' salary, with a 10% deposit on a typical first-time buyer home equivalent to 56% of total gross annual earnings.

Levelling Up

- The Levelling Up White Paper has highlighted medium-term 'missions' to provide clarity and consistency over levelling up policy objectives. There are 12 missions: living standards, R&D, transport infrastructure, digital connectivity, education, skills, health, well-being, pride in place, housing, crime and local leadership. These 'missions' sit under 4 overarching missions to: (1) Boost productivity, pay, jobs and living standards by growing the private sector, especially in those places where they are lagging; (2) Spread opportunities and improve public services, especially in those places where they are weakest; (3) Restore a sense of community, local pride and belonging, especially in those places where they have been lost; (4) Empower local leaders and communities, especially in those places lacking local agency.
- Each of the 12 'missions' is measurable. Coinciding with the release of the White Paper the ONS has released a Subnational indicators Explorer, which includes indicators which are aligned with some of the metrics selected to measure progress of levelling up within the LUWP.
- The National Audit Office has recommended that the government should outline how it intends to formally evaluate Levelling Up funds to ensure that the public is receiving best value for money from government projects.
- The White Paper includes announcements on funding including that the UK Shared Prosperity Fund will amount to £2.6 billion and will be decentralised to local leaders with investments set to regenerate communities, boost people's skills, and support local businesses.

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West Midlands Combined Authority UKRI Research England

- Alongside the upcoming revaluation in April 2023, the UK Government will explore with the Combined Authorities further flexibilities to enable them to raise their own funding through the business rates system to fund local priorities, whilst also considering the impacts on business.
- In relation to housing, communities and regeneration there is an intention to scrap the '80/20 rule' which leads to 80% of government funding for housing supply being directed mostly at the London and the South East. Wolverhampton to Walsall corridor is one of the two first (of 20) transformational regeneration projects to be undertaken with Homes England. A further £180m will also be available for locally-led brownfield projects.
- The White Paper has also announced three new Innovation Accelerators: major place-based centres of innovation, centred on Greater Manchester, the West Midlands, and Glasgow-City Region. These clusters of innovation will see local businesses and researchers in these areas backed by £100 million of new government funding to turbo-charge local growth, learning from the MIT-Greater Boston and Stanford-Silicon Valley models.
- The Research & Development (R&D) mission will see domestic public R&D investment outside the Greater South East increase by at least 40% by 2030, with these funds leveraging a huge increase in private investment in these areas too.
- The Government will invite the first nine areas to agree new county deals and seek to agree further Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) Deals, extending devolution across England. By 2030, every part of England that wishes to have a 'London-style' devolution deal will have one. The West Midlands will be at the forefront of devolution and a model for other MCAs. The WMCA will get a trailblazer deeper devolution deal: "We will open negotiations on trailblazer deeper devolution deals with the West Midlands and Greater Manchester combined authorities. These deals will act as the blueprint for other mayoral combined authorities (MCAs) to follow, with bids for more powers welcome."
- LEPs are to be integrated with MCAs. LEPs will continue to play their vital role in supporting local businesses and the local economy. Where devolution deals cover part of a LEP, this will be looked at on a case by case basis.
- The White paper announced Education Investment Areas (EIAs) for Coventry, Dudley, Walsall, Sandwell. The West Midlands will also get one new specialist 16-19 maths school. There will be one New Pathfinder, in Walsall, which will bring together local delivery partners from DWP and DfE, including Jobcentre Plus, careers services, local employers, education and training providers, and local government to respond to intelligence about local employers' skills needs, supporting people into work and identifying progression opportunities for people in part-time work.
- The White Paper has had a mixed reception but is generally seen as the first step to success. Issues such as the lack of clarity on budgets and bidding processes, and what is new funding, as well as gaps around rural areas, the environment and some of the challenges such as education attainment being a very stretching challenge in post pandemic climate have all raised concerns in commentators. However, there is a welcome focus on regeneration, housing, R&D and devolved budgets, and the 12 missions with measurable targets.

Levelling Up: International perspectives

- City-REDI research with CIPFA on Investing in Regional Equality- lessons from four cities has analysed the experiences of Fukuoka (Japan), Leipzig (Germany), Cleveland (USA) and Nantes (France) in overcoming significant social and economic inequalities in recent years.
- It points to the importance of shared political will and partnerships, clear strategy and vision, key players leading by example, investing for the long term, drawing on local knowledge and monitoring and evaluation, adapting national frameworks to address local needs, and adequate and responsive funding alongside inculcation of monitoring and evaluation of policies.
- Applying these insights to the Levelling Up White Paper, investing for the long-term is a key theme. There have been numerous different funding pots in England over recent years and there has not been the opportunity to evaluate these seriously. It is clear that more precise interventions and better evaluation of the impact of policies in different places is necessary. The National Audit Office's report published on 2 February was critical of how previous local economic growth policies have been evaluated. It found that the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities "*has a poor understanding of what has worked well in its previous local growth programmes because it has not consistently evaluated them*".
- Better joining up skills, public R&D investment and evaluation will be important in up-skilling people to work in new emerging sectors (such as the digital and creative industries and life sciences), and in improving productivity and reducing inequality.

Regional issues

- The EY latest regional economic forecast has found, that all English regions are expected to have regained their pre-pandemic level of GVA by the end of 2023, with only the West Midlands still below its pre-pandemic size by the end of 2022.
- According to EY's analysis, the West Midlands, North West and London economies were the most affected by the initial impact of the pandemic, with 2021 seeing the West Midlands economy recover to just 94.5% of its 2019 size, the North West's economy reaching 96.1% of its 2019 size, and London recovering to 96.4%.
- Despite this, business confidence in the West Midlands surged during January, according to the latest Business Barometer from Lloyds Bank. Confidence amongst firms in the region rose nine points during the first month of the year to 39%.

- However, businesses have again highlighted their concern regarding drastically increasing cost pressures and lack of governmental action. Many have shared that, during an already difficult trading period, they have seen energy costs rising, wages increasing, business rates change incoming, and National Insurance Contributions increases incoming.
- The BBC has launched a Birmingham hub as part of a push to have 1,000 apprentices by 2026. Two-hundred apprentices started with the BBC earlier this month in a variety of production, journalism, technology and business support roles. They will each get training and on the job experience.
- More the 290,000 more homes and businesses across the Midlands are set to receive a major broadband boost, thanks to a £86m investment by Openreach.
- Coventry is set to become the first all-electric bus city in the UK. A fleet of 130 zero-emission double-decker buses will be introduced next year as part of a £140m project to make Coventry the UK's first all-electric bus city.

Economic and social indicators

- Evidence from the latest Business Insights and Conditions Survey (which was live between 10th January to 23rd January 2022) showed that 26% of responding West Midlands businesses reported that turnover over the last two weeks when compared to normal expectations for the time of year had decreased, while 52% of West Midlands businesses reported turnover had not been affected and approximately 10% reported turnover had increased. Excluding "not sure" responses, 50.3% of responding West Midlands businesses reported that Covid-19 was the main reason for the change in the business turnover and 12.6% reported that the "end of the EU transition period" was the main reason.
- Excluding "not sure" or "not applicable" responses, 36.6% of West Midlands businesses reported the prices of materials, goods or services brought over the last month compared with normal price fluctuations had increased more than usual.
- 39.5% of responding West Midlands businesses reported to currently experiencing a shortage of workers. Due to the shortage of workers, 66% of West Midlands reported employees were then working more hours.
- Evidence from the Social Impacts of the Coronavirus survey showed that 65% of West Midlands adults reported the cost of living had Increased over the last month.

Covid-19 infections

- According to latest ONS infection survey data (29th January 2022), it is estimated 2,633,100 people in England had Covid-19 (95% credible interval: 2,544,100 to 2,725,100), equating to around 1 in 20 people.
- The UK is now one of the countries with the lowest rate of infection, albeit the number of infections remains high. Areas of Europe where there is greater vaccine hesitancy and a slower rate of vaccine uptake appear to be suffering the most from the highest rates of infection.

Other topics

- City-REDI research analysing the literature on STEM assets (i.e. physical facilities dedicated largely to the translation, development and transfer of scientific, technological or engineering innovation, knowledge and expertise which relates to new or improved business processes, products or services) and regional growth highlights that the main theme in the literature is 'Innovation' and the key players are 'Universities', 'Entrepreneurship' and 'Incubators', with activities taking place on the subjects are 'knowledge' and 'technology transfer'.
- Research on homelessness has produced an index that measures the propensity of the inhabitants Parliamentary Constituencies to experience housing difficulties and accumulate rent arrears. Coventry North East, Birmingham Ladywood, Birmingham Yardley, Birmingham Erdington and Birmingham Perry Barr are ranked highest on the index.

Global, National and Regional Outlook

Alice Pugh, WMREDI

Global

Tensions are ongoing with Russia, as troops continue to be sent to the border of Ukraine. This week, after a number of talks between Russia and foreign nations, the situation seems to have escalated further, with the US deploying 3,000 troops to eastern Europe, with President Biden planning to send 2,000 troops to Poland and Germany and move 1,000 troops already within Europe to Romania. However, a further 8,500 troops are on 'heightened alert' to deploy to Europe if needed. This is a major divergence from previous policy which until recently had preferred taking a restrained stance on Ukraine, out of fear of provoking a Russian invasion. However, in recent days Putin has increased his threatening actions towards Ukraine, and the talks between them appear to have failed.

However, war with Russia puts Europe in an extremely precarious place, as the majority of Europe is reliant on Russia for energy. The escalating tensions between Russia and European nations have heightened concerns about the future of Russian gas flows to the European nations that support Ukraine in preventing a Russian invasion. This is leaving countries, economies and energy providers scrambling to prepare contingency plans.

For several months, Russia has been accused of intentionally disrupting gas supplies to leverage its role as a major energy supplier to Europe amid an escalating dispute with Ukraine. Russian gas flows to Europe have been lower than expected for a sustained period, with political analysts suggesting Moscow purposefully withheld supplies in a bid to speed up certification of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline. However, the main reason there has been a delay on the pipeline is due to the increasing concern that this would greatly increase the geo-political power of the Russian state. If these tensions continue Putin may feel demonstrate his power to a greater extent and further reduce energy supplies to Europe. This would be economically devasting to Europe given the already rapidly rising energy rates, reducing energy supply from Russia would only worsen this. This would further increase the cost of living crisis that many across Europe will be experiencing in the coming months.

China is also facing an economic crisis as its real estate boom has ended. It has been found that the industry has been hit by a series of defaults by developers and falling prices for land and apartments. China's real estate boom was based on an 'unsustainable' model that benefited local governments and encourages people to invest the bulk of savings into property. Then Government policies designed to curb the boom made it difficult for indebted 'behemoth' Evergrande to pays its debts. This leaves the developer reeling under more than £300bn of total liabilities, including around £19bn held in offshore bonds held by international asset managers and private banks on behalf of their clients.

Government officials have been sent in to oversee a restructuring of Evergrande, however there is little clarity around what will happen next and some lenders are becoming impatient. Analysts are concerned that the collapse of the business could trigger wider risks for China's property market, hurting homeowners and the broader financial system. Currently, real estate and related industries account for 30% of Chinas GDP.

However, China's economy has surpassed the whole of the European Union for the first time. Figures released this week by the European Statistical Office (Eurostat) said that the gross domestic product (GDP) of the EU grew by 5.2% for 2021, regaining its pre-Covid size with GDP for the EU totally $17tn. However, China's GDP for 2021 expanded by 8.1%, according to figures released last month by the county's National Bureau of Statistics, increasing GDP to $17.7tn.

The World's second largest economy has significantly benefited during the pandemic from its status as the world's factory. Most economic gains made by China were largely driven by strong industrial outputs and exports. China however, has largely followed a zero Covid policy, which has often meant local economies across the country have been forced to lockdown in a bid to prevent spread of the virus. As a result, whilst the country's manufacturing sector continues to power ahead, the growth in services, consumption and investment failed to return to pre-pandemic levels due to localised outbreaks around the country preventing a return to normality.

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The EU has also suffered similar issues to China with successive lockdowns dampening consumer spending and causing supply chain bottlenecks. China's ability to overtake the EU was also influenced in part by the withdrawal of the UK from the EU following Brexit. Alone the UK's GDP is $2.7tn and was the second largest in the EU bloc after Germany.

In a report last month, it was forecasted by the Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR), that China is expected to overtake the US as the world's largest economy by 2030. In 2021, US GDP stood at $23tn, a $2.1tn increase over the 2020 figures. The CEBR report forecasted that the US economy will continue to grow without any of the necessary spurts in growth to maintain its lead. Adding that China's massive pool of highly-skilled engineers would be a significant driver of growth in contrast to the US, which has been unable to churn out the same level of highly skilled labour.

National

The long waited Sue Gray report was release this week. The main findings of the report were:

A national pandemic

- The behaviour at gatherings is "**difficult to justify**" given the public being asked by government to "**accept far-reaching restrictions on their lives**"
- Some of the events represent a "**serious failure to observe**" high standards for government and those expected of the public at the time.
- At times there was "**too little thought**" given the sacrifices that were being made by the public, the health risks the events posed to public health and how the events may appear to the wider public.

Failures of leadership

- There were "**failures of leadership and judgment**" by different parts of No 10 and the Cabinet Office at different times.
- Some of the events "**should not have been allowed to take place**". Other events "**should not have been allowed to develop as they did**".
- There should also be "**easier ways of staff to raise concerns informally**" away from line management chain.

However, the Metropolitan Police has started a criminal investigation into some of the gatherings, so preventing the full-report from being released. Now the phrase being quoted by ministers is 'Wait for the findings of the Police investigation'. PM Boris Johnson has stated that he has no intension to resign, unless found guilty of committing a crime by the Metropolitan Police. However, the PM is beginning to lose public support: in a snap poll following the publication of the Sue Gray report, YouGov found that 63% of Britons, firmly believe that the Prime Minister should resign.

This is an issue because public trust between government and public is eroded. The Edelman Trust Barometer Global report for 2022 has shown that public trust in the government has declined, along with trust in media outlets. Additionally, polling by IPPR when the parties first came to light found that public distrust of the government had risen again, with 63% of people sharing the view that politicians were 'merely out for themselves'. This is a 6% increase from earlier in the year following the Greensill scandal.

IPPR warns that declining political trust is associated with rises in disengagement from the political system, populism and polarisation of society. This lack of political trust will make it harder for leaders to achieve consensus to take bold action using state power to solve problems. Solving long-term problems such as regional inequalities or the climate crisis, where policy may not deliver immediate benefits, requires trust that action will eventually result in a better future for all; potentially strategies such as levelling up could be undermined further down the line.

The Levelling Up White Paper (LUWP) was another long awaiting release this week, with the government taking two years since the strategy was announced in 2019 to detail what levelling-up would actually be. Within the White

Paper the government has highlighted medium-term 'missions' to provide clarity and consistency over levelling up policy objectives. There are 12 missions which sit under 4 overarching missions, the 4 overarching missions are:

- Boost productivity, pay, jobs and living standards by growing the private sector, especially in those places where they are lagging
- Spread opportunities and improve public services, especially in those places where they are weakest
- Restore a sense of community, local pride and belonging, especially in those places where they have been lost
- Empower local leaders and communities, especially in those places lacking local agency

Each of the 12 'missions' are also measurable. Coinciding with the release of the White Paper the ONS has released a Subnational indicators Explorer, which includes indicators which are aligned with some of the metrics selected to measure progress of levelling up within the LUWP. The release of these metric to measure levelling up is timely, given the National Audit office (NAO) found that the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), has limited understanding of what has worked well in previous local growth programmes due to the lack of consistent evaluation or monitoring. The NAO recommends that the government should outline how it intends to formally evaluate Levelling Up funds to ensure that the public is receiving best value for money from government projects. For a more in-depth analysis of the Levelling Up White Paper please see the initial analysis after this section below.

Ofgem has announced it will reveal the full scale of the energy price cap hike earlier than expected, as it emerged that the government is likely to introduce a measure to slash £200 from energy bills in order to soften the blow. The energy regulator will announce this week what is expected to be the steepest ever increase in household bills, amid growing speculation the Treasury is considering a multibillion-pound move to protect households from the full brunt of the increase.

The price cap is expected to climb by more than 50% to reach almost £2,000 a year, up from an average of £1,277 this winter, to reflect the record high gas energy market prices caused by the global crisis in supply. The decision comes following the emergence of the government's plan to underwrite loans to energy suppliers in order to protect household bills from sky-rocketing. The current speculation is that the Treasury is considering the 'broad-brush financial support', as well as additional support for vulnerable consumers who will be hit hardest by the price cap increase.

Nationwide has reported that there has been further increase in house prices rises, with house price growth having the strongest January start since 2005. The building society has said prices rose by 11.2% year-on-year and by 0.8% between December and January. Affordability is already a key issue with house prices rising much faster than wages throughout the pandemic. Nationwide said a deposit now constitutes a record percentage of an average first-time buyers' salary, with a 10% deposit on a typical first-time buyer home equivalent to 56% of total gross annual earnings, a record high.

Regional

EY latest regional economic forecast has found, that all English regions are expected to have regained their pre-pandemic level of GVA by the end of 2023, with only the West Midlands still below its pre-pandemic size by the end of 2022. Around 20% of areas in England recovered to their pre-pandemic GVA levels by the end 2021 - the fastest to do so being the strong digital and science-friendly Reading (where it is already 4% above its 2019 level); whereas manufacturing-reliant Solihull has seen the slowest recovery (where GVA is still 9% below the 2019 level).

EY found that relative to their pre-pandemic GVA levels, the East Midlands (up 9.5%), the South West (9%) and London (8.9%) are expected to grow the most by 2025. In contrast, with the West Midlands (up 5.3%), North West (6.8%) and North East (7.9%) are expected to grow at a slower pace. According to EY's analysis, the West Midlands, North West and London economies were the most affected by the initial impact of the pandemic, with 2021 seeing the West Midlands economy recover to just 94.5% of its 2019 size, the North West's economy reaching 96.1% of its

2019 size, and London recovering to 96.4%. Whereas, Yorkshire and the Humber economy has reached 98.8% of its pre-pandemic size by the end of 2021, while the North East was 98.5%.
The West Midlands economy has a large and strong manufacturing sector; however, manufacturing was heavily impacted by the pandemic and is still facing on-going supply chain issues. Whereas, EY highlighted that the East midlands has long been a professional services, science and transport hub and under the pandemic the region's laboratories and vast delivery and fulfilment centres became more important than ever, contributing to their fast recovery.

However, as a result of pandemic-driven changes in the way consumers shop, Lichfield, despite its West Midlands location, is forecasted to be England's best-performing town between 2022 and 2025. From 2023, the town will host a new global fulfilment centre for a new online retailer and is forecasted to see a 3.6% GVA growth per year.

More the 290,000 more homes and businesses across the Midlands are set to receive a major broadband boost, thanks to a £86m investment by Openreach- which is the UK's largest digital network provider, used by the likes of BT, Sky and TalkTalk. This will bring people living and working across the Midlands the ability to upgrade to full-fibre broadband. The pandemic revealed significant inter-regional differences in broadband quality, which greatly impacted peoples transition to virtual life under lockdown conditions as a result of the pandemic. Projects like this will enable communities to have a higher quality broadband, which will be important given the accelerated transition to working from home and the use of online software to help with student learning.

The BBC in partnership with Google, has also opened a new apprenticeship hub within Birmingham, in order to help more people into the creative sector. The apprenticeships will be part-funded by the corporation, whilst Google will play for the training costs when they are placed in local organisations. The BBC is aiming to achieve 1,000 apprenticeship starts by 2026 and recruited 200 in January in roles such as journalism. This provides a much-needed boost to an industry that has greatly suffered as a result of the pandemic.

Coventry is set to become the first all-electric bus city in the UK. A fleet of 130 zero-emission double-decker buses will be introduced next year as part of a £140m project to make Coventry the UK's first all-electric bus city. Last year Transport for West Midlands (TfWM), which is part of the WMCA, secured £50m funding from the Department of Transport to ensure every bus in Coventry is zero-emission. Now under a deal with TfWM, National Express Coventry is making an additional multimillion-pound investment into the All-Electric Bus City project with the purchase of the 130 buses. According to TfWM, similar agreements with other bus companies and those running subsidised services are likely to follow, with the aim of putting 300 electric buses on the streets of Coventry, guaranteeing an all-electric fleet by 2025. Alongside, the new vehicles TfWM is working with Coventry City Council to create the necessary charging infrastructure needed to support the new system.

Levelling Up White Paper: Initial Analysis

Rebecca Riley, Ben Brittain, WMCA, WMREDI

The Secretary of State for Levelling Up has unveiled the government's flagship Levelling Up White Paper, setting out a plan to 'transform the UK by spreading opportunity and prosperity to all parts of it. He committed to "change the economic model of this country".

The government said they recognise the strong local leadership that mayors like Andy Burnham, Ben Houchen and Andy Street have shown and hope to replicate this success across England.

Research provided by WMREDI has been referenced in the report (ref 268 and 247) and regional research from the West Midlands has influenced the development of the report. The report also highlights the revision of the Green Book and importance of Better Business Cases. The national user group is chaired by Rebecca Riley of the West Midlands. WMREDI also recently hosted a roundtable with UUK and the Minister looking at the R&D regional disparities and infrastructure to deliver so we are well placed to continue to influence government.

The paper is underpinned by 12 missions:

Levelling Up Missions	
Focus Area	Mission
Boost productivity, pay, jobs and living standards by growing the private sector, especially in those places where they are lagging	
Living Standards	By 2030, pay, employment and productivity will have risen in every area of the UK, with each region containing a globally competitive city, and the gap between the top performing and other areas closing.
Research & Development (R&D)	By 2030, domestic public investment in R&D outside the Greater South East will increase by at least one third over the Spending Review period and at least 40 percent by 2030, with that additional government funding seeking to leverage at least twice as much private sector investment over the long term to stimulate innovation and productivity growth.
Transport Infrastructure	By 2030, local public transport connectivity across the country will be significantly closer to the standards of London, with improved services, simpler fares and integrated ticketing
Digital Connectivity	By 2030, the UK will have nationwide gigabit-capable broadband and 4G coverage, with 5G coverage for the majority of the population.
Spread opportunities and improve public services, especially in those places where they are weakest	
Education	By 2030, the number of primary school children achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and maths will have significantly increased. In England, this will mean 90% of children will achieve the expected standard, and the percentage of children meeting the expected standard in the worst performing areas will have increased by over a third.
Skills	By 2030, the number of people successfully completing high quality skills training will have significantly increased in every area of the UK. In England, this will lead to 200,000 more people successfully completing high quality skills training annually, driven by 80,000 more people completing courses in the lowest skilled areas.
Health	By 2030, the gap in Healthy Life Expectancy (HLE) between local areas where it is highest and lowest will have narrowed, and by 2035 HLE will rise by 5 years.
Wellbeing	By 2030, measures of wellbeing will have improved in every area of the UK, with the gap between top performing and other areas closing.
Restore a sense of community, local pride and belonging, especially in those places where they have been lost	
Pride in Place	By 2030, pride in place, such as people's satisfaction with their town centre and engagement in local culture and community, will have risen in every

	area of the UK, with the gap between top performing and other areas closing.
Housing	By 2030, renters will have a secure path to ownership with the number of first-time buyers increasing in all areas; and the government's ambition is for the number of non-decent rented homes to have fallen by 50%, with the biggest improvements in the lowest performing areas
Crime	By 2030, homicide, serious violence and neighbourhood crime will have fallen, focused on the worst affected areas.
Empower local leaders and communities, especially in those places lacking local agency	
Local leadership	By 2030, every part of England that wants one will have a devolution deal with powers at or approaching the highest level of devolution with a simplified, long-term funding settlement

This missions have agreed indictors, the majority of which the West Midlands has been monitoring through the State of the Region and the WMREDI monitors, and are available via the WMDatalab. There is a welcome commitment to new indicators around pride in place which has been a gap in the understanding of place.

Funding

There are announcements on funding including that the **UK Shared Prosperity Fund** will amount to **£2.6 billion** and will be decentralised to local leaders with investments set to regenerate communities, boost people's skills, and support local businesses.

New funding sources for Combined Authorities: Alongside the upcoming revaluation in April 2023, the UK Government will explore with the Combined Authorities further flexibilities to enable them to raise their own funding through the business rates system to fund local priorities, whilst also considering the impacts on business.

The Government will **streamline funding** following these principles:

a. reducing the unnecessary proliferation of individual funding pots with varied delivery approaches;
b. streamlining bidding, and supporting greater alignment between revenue and capital sources;
c. ensuring places have robust ongoing monitoring and evaluation plans for the impact and delivery of investments and spending; and
d. tailoring investment and delivery to the local institutional landscape of each nation of the UK.

Housing, Communities and Regeneration

There is an intention to scrap the '80/20 rule' which leads to 80% of government funding for housing supply being directed mostly at the London and the South East. There will be £1.8 billion brownfield funding instead being diverted to transforming brownfield sites in the North and Midlands. Wolverhampton to Walsall corridor is one of the two first (of 20) transformational regeneration projects to be undertaken with Homes England, based on Kings Cross-style delivery partnership. West Midlands is also to get substantial new brownfield funding. A further £180m will also be available for locally-led brownfield projects:

Place	Funding (rounded to nearest £m)
West Midlands	28
Greater Manchester	27
West Yorkshire	22
Liverpool City Region	15
South Yorkshire	13
North of Tyne	8

Tees Valley	6
MCA BHF (subtotal)	**120**
Further locally-led brownfield funding	**180**
Total	**300**

R&D and Innovation

The White Paper has also announced **3 new Innovation Accelerators**, major place-based centres of innovation, centred on Greater Manchester, the West Midlands, and Glasgow-City Region. These clusters of innovation will see local businesses and researchers in these areas backed by £100 million of new government funding to turbo-charge local growth, learning from the MIT-Greater Boston and Stanford-Silicon Valley models. BEIS will invest £100m between 2022-23 and 2024-25 to pilot three innovation Accelerators, one based in the West Midlands.

The Research & Development (R&D) mission which will see **domestic public R&D investment outside the Greater South East increase by at least 40% by 2030**, with these funds leveraging a huge increase in private investment in these areas too.

Smart City Region proposal for Birmingham city-region: The programme will be managed through a special purpose vehicle (SPV) that will bring together the public sector, a range of private sector players – from start-ups to leading institutional investors – and the region's leading research institutions, all under the leadership of the region's metro mayor. The SPV will align public and private investment, including where appropriate any support from the Innovation Accelerator investment announced in this White Paper for local R&D projects, and will also ensure scale-up opportunities generate wider public benefits such as reducing congestion and pollution, cutting energy bills, and improving access to health and care services.

Devolution

Of note is a step-change in devolution. The Government will invite the first nine areas to agree new county deals and seek to agree further MCA deals, extending devolution across England. The first nine areas invited to begin negotiations will be Cornwall, Derbyshire & Derby, Devon, Plymouth and Torbay, Durham, Hull & East Yorkshire, Leicestershire, Norfolk, Nottinghamshire & Nottingham, and Suffolk.

By 2030, every part of England that wishes to have a 'London-style' devolution deal will have one. The local devolution mission is relevant in England only, but the wider policy programme will see decentralisation of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to local areas in Scotland and Wales.

The White Paper also details a new Mayoral Combined Authority deal for York and North Yorkshire and an expanded Mayoral Combined Authority deal for the North East, as well as negotiations for 'trailblazer' devolution deals with the West Midlands and Greater Manchester to extend their powers - with these deals acting as blueprints for other Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) to follow.

The West Midlands will be at the forefront of devolution and a model for other MCAs. The WMCA will get a trailblazer deeper devolution deal: "We will open negotiations on trailblazer deeper devolution deals with the West Midlands and Greater Manchester combined authorities. These deals will act as the blueprint for other mayoral combined authorities (MCAs) to follow, with bids for more powers welcome."

The White Paper states that the devolution framework is a starting point – advanced areas can add items 'off menu', meaning the region can negotiate further devolution on skills etc. The White Paper says that 'there will also be scope to negotiate further powers, on a case-by-case basis, and an opportunity to adopt innovative local proposals to address specific challenges and opportunities – for example, the improvement of health and social care outcomes.'

LEPs are to be integrated with MCAs. LEPs will continue to play their vital role in supporting local businesses and the local economy. Where devolution deals cover part of a LEP, this will be looked at on a case by case basis. Police and Crime Commissioners will also be folded in under MCA where geography permits.

Education:

The White paper announces new **Education Investment Areas (EIAs)** for Coventry, Dudley, Walsall, Sandwell. The West Midlands will also get one new specialist 16-19 maths school. There will be one **New Pathfinder, in Walsall,** which will bring together local delivery partners from DWP and DfE, including Jobcentre Plus, careers services, local employers, education and training providers, and local government to respond to intelligence about local employers' skills needs, supporting people into work and identifying progression opportunities for people in part-time work.

Responses to the Levelling Up White Paper

The paper has had a mixed reception but is generally seen as the first step to success. Issues such as the lack of clarity on budgets and bidding processes, and what is new funding, as well as gaps around rural areas, the environment and some of the challenges such as education attainment being a very stretching challenge in post pandemic climate have all raised concerns in commentators. However, there is a welcome focus on regeneration, housing, R&D and devolved budgets, and the 12 missions with measurable targets.

The RTPI is cautiously optimistic, due to the recognition of the built environment's vital role in addressing economic inequality and shifting power closer to communities. The regeneration of 20 towns and cities is a positive first step for the Levelling Up White Paper. Previous regeneration projects have put strategic planning at their heart and shown how the planning system can set the context for development, creating a more sustainable and healthier built environment. The RTPI hope the model established by these schemes can be adopted across England to help communities restore pride in the places they live, work and interact.

Inside Housing's response reflecting the government's proposals highlights housing clearly plays a key role in the government's plans for how it will better distribute wealth and opportunity more equally across the country. Nigel Wilson of Homes for the North said "Homes for the North warmly welcomes confirmation of the decision to scrap the 80/20 rule, which will remove a serious block on delivering more and better homes in the North. We also welcome the commitment to spend a bigger slice of the £1.8bn brownfield funding in the North and Midlands".

Tony Armstrong or Locality said "This long overdue White Paper could be the start of redressing our country's deep inequalities – but needs community power to drive it forward. For decades the potential which resides in every local community has been broadly overlooked, and power has been centralised. And that is a big part of the reason why there are such huge disparities of wealth, health and wellbeing in different areas of the country. The White Paper sets out a useful long-term framework and several of the measures announced today have the potential to put communities in charge of tackling entrenched divides. Government has listened to many of the ideas put forward by the community sector, on issues like community ownership and neighbourhood governance. To be a long term success, this power of community needs to be front and centre of the government's levelling up strategy".

However, there is a focus on cities, and less for rural areas Ed Potter, Shropshire Council's Deputy Leader Shropshire Council is very disappointed that today's announcements, as part of the Levelling Up White Paper, do not include any specific announcements for investment in the county. "We are one of the lowest funded councils in the country and our rurality is not recognised in our funding. For example, we have the same population as Nottingham, are 42 times bigger, yet they have 10% more spending power than we do. But, once again, Shropshire has been overlooked and has missed out, and at the moment we feel overlooked, unrecognised, taken for granted and completely undervalued".

UCU general secretary Jo Grady said: 'The creation of new 'elite' sixth form colleges looks like it will do the opposite of levelling up, and will instead divide 16-year-olds into winners and losers. Instead of creating shiny new

institutions, the government should be focusing resources on existing colleges so they can attract and retain the best teachers and close the growing pay gap between further education and schools".

Lisa Nandy the Shadow Secretary of State for Levelling Up responded to the statement and asked "After all the delays, all the slogans, all the big promises – is this it?" The Labour MP said many of the plans are old, with some of them dating back to the time Gordon Brown was leader of the Labour party. She noted that ministers have scrapped rail promises to the North of England and halved the funding for buses. She said the 12 targets are admissions of failure and cited education as an example. Ms Nandy said the minister is concerned about the number of pupils leaving primary school without basic skills, but pointed out he was education secretary himself for four years.

Responding to today's white paper publication, The Leader of Birmingham City Council welcomed the paper and Cllr Ward said: "I welcome any commitment to levelling up the UK economy and we will work with the Government, regional mayor Andy Street, businesses and of course our communities to address the deep-rooted challenges that continue to hold far too many people back across Birmingham and the wider region. With 40 per cent of Birmingham children currently growing up in poverty, it's clear that you cannot level up the UK without investing in the people and communities of our city. "Levelling up is the right thing to do, but the plan must come with devolved powers and funding if we are going to genuinely improve the lives and life chances of people who are being left behind."

Anita Balls from GBSLEP said: "Today's White Paper has revealed LEPs will continue to play a critical role in developing regional economies – bringing businesses into the conversation about the future growth of places. It outlines that where LEPs are located within the geography of Mayoral Combined Authorities, they are being encouraged to integrate. Where devolution deals with an MCA cover part of a LEP (like GBSLEP), the paper says this will be looked at on a case by case basis. Of course, this relates to us as we are one of 3 LEPs within the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) geography. The Government has said they will provide further detail. Meanwhile, we have already been working with the WMCA to develop a Plan for Growth for the region and will continue our collaborative approach to ensure the best outcomes for our communities."

Kevin Ellis, chairman and senior partner at PwC UK, said "Levelling up is a vast agenda, from regenerating towns and building infrastructure, to creating economic clusters and developing skills. Today's paper was never going to be the panacea for regional inequality but it does show a commitment to build on approaches that are working, such as further interventions in existing Opportunity Areas like Bradford. Businesses have a vital role to play, but they're only part of the picture. Success requires businesses, educators, planners, local government and NGOs all working in sync."

The IFS have welcomed the paper as laying out the government's targets and detail on levelling up. "The 12 missions look sensible, if a little reminiscent of previous attempts to narrow geographic disparities, and in places perhaps overly ambitious. It is right to identify that "System change is not about a string of shiny, but ultimately short-lived, new policy initiatives. It is about root and branch reform of government and governance of the UK." That is a measure of the scale of the ambition. There is a welcome focus on education, skills, health and transport connectivity. The White Paper also includes a range of metrics by which we can judge progress and success. The main challenge is that the funding and plan for how to actually deliver this progress is in relatively short supply. Indeed, many of the policy levers that lie directly within government control – tax policy, funding for councils, schools and public health – barely seem to get a look-in. The hope is clearly that new institutions and 'system change' can deliver over the longer term. The key question is whether the government can commit the funding, policy focus and reforms needed to deliver on its 'national missions'. Otherwise, there is a risk that the government has chosen its destination with no sense of how it plans to get there".

Levelling Up: Lessons From Four Global City-Regions

Dr Abigail Taylor, WMREDI

Dr Abigail Taylor discusses a new report led by City-REDI that identifies lessons for levelling up from the experiences of four international city-regions trying to address regional inequalities.

New Research

1st February aw the launch of new research conducted by City-REDI with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). The research finds policies designed to address regional inequalities are most effective when they are tailored to local communities' needs, as opposed to a national and centralised approach.

Based on analysis of approaches used to reduce inequalities in four city-regions from across the globe, the report examines how Fukuoka (Japan), Leipzig (Germany), Cleveland (USA) and Nantes (France) have all achieved success in overcoming significant social and economic inequalities in recent years.

Key reasons for success identified across the case studies are:

1. **Shared political will and partnerships:** each were vital in overcoming political differences and uniting public and private institutions around a common vision.
2. **Clear strategy and vision:** each city set out what they should look and feel like as places to live and work.
3. **Investing for the long term:** a commitment to scale and longevity in funding is an imperative.
4. **Local knowledge:** an in-depth understanding of the strengths and weaknesses that drive local economies, and an ability to build on those strengths.
5. **Monitoring and evaluation:** a system that allows for policies and programmes to be regularly sense-checked and updated in a timely way that benefits total performance.
6. **Adapting national frameworks to address local needs**
7. **Diversification:** the ability to design policies that enable growth strategies to take root and thrive relies on the strength of a local narrative.
8. **Key players:** individuals and private organisations can serve as enablers of growth, leading by example.
9. **Adequate and responsive funding:** identifying where and when finance is made available can be as important as the policies themselves.

The report offers selected international insights as the UK government launches its Levelling Up White Paper. What is particularly interesting is how each of the city-regions has adopted different routes for addressing regional economic inequalities. Nantes is a good example of innovation in public procurement and ensuring sufficient resources are available to manage contracts appropriately. Cleveland provides insights into how community wealth building and alternative progressive approaches to local economic development can mobilise partners to work towards common goals. Leipzig and Fukuoka have created specialist economic clusters based on previous strengths.

All the case study places have benefited from strong local institutions, often working in partnership with regional and national governments to lead change. These ranged from a combined metropolitan authority in Nantes to the Cleveland Foundation, an independent philanthropic institution. Fukuoka and Nantes each benefited from a charismatic mayor with a vision for the city.

The report indicates that if governments want to reduce inequalities between regions, diverse investment focused on a blend of economic, cultural, business and spatial development is important. The city-regions profiled have been empowered to deliver their own levelling-up policies, with economic development in all four backed by significant levels of sustained funding.

Commenting on the report:

Professor Anne Green, Chair of Regional Economic Development at City-REDI and report co-author, said:

"Tackling regional inequalities and improving people's lives requires a coherent, integrated and long-term approach to regional and sub-regional economic development across policy domains."

"This means we need governance structures that facilitate effective joint working between place-based policies addressing local challenges and exploiting local and regional opportunities on the one hand, and place-sensitive national policies on the other."

"Sub-national institutions need to have appropriate statutory powers, responsibilities and resources to develop and implement a strategic approach to local and regional economic development over the long-term, with capacity for monitoring and evaluating the success and failures of policies."

Jeffrey Matsu, CIPFA Chief Economist and report co-author, said:

"*We should recognise that there will always be inequities in society. The role of government policies should therefore be to support opportunities that place less reliance on where you live or who you know."*

"While there is no one-size-fits-all approach to reducing inequality, the research shows that access to a quality education, timely workforce development programmes and stable and well-paying jobs are the keys to a better quality of life that can benefit entire communities."

Rob Whiteman, CIPFA CEO, said:

"*This report shows there is no quick fix to addressing inequality. The answers are complex, but what is clear is that a long-term approach is needed coupled with sustained levels of funding. A clearly defined strategy and vision, specific to local issues, are also essential in helping level up communities."*

"The international examples in this report serve as an excellent blueprint for producing innovative, targeted and effective policies – which the UK government can and should apply to its levelling up agenda."

Download the report: Investing in Regional Equality – lessons from four cities

Members of the CIPFA and City-REDI teams that produced the report, along with regional collaborators, will discuss the findings in an online event on March 3rd. Book your place here.

There is an accompanying metrics report which can be viewed here (scroll down on the page). This report explains how the measurement and monitoring of policies and outcomes are vital in addressing regional inequalities.

The White Paper is here – challenges and key points to welcome

Dr Abigail Taylor, Professor Anne Green and Professor Simon Collinson, WMREDI

The Levelling Up White Paper indicates how the government intends to level up the country through enabling regional economies to grow faster - to improve productivity and capacity to create wealth – and also prioritising reducing inequalities within and between regions. But what does City-REDI's work suggest for the likely success of these policies?

Clearly there is not a lot of money available at the moment. Indeed, some of the money that has been announced today had already been announced previously; for example, the brownfield funding and the Homebuilding Fund. Ideally, more new funding is needed across the 12 Levelling Up missions. However, this is likely to be challenging in the current fiscal context and so we need to make sure that we use the money that is available wisely.

We need to think about the **duration of the funding** designed to support levelling up. Looking at some of City-REDI's international work, the importance of **investing for the long-term** is clear if countries and city-regions want to reduce inter- and intra-regional inequalities. For example, a report published on 1st February with CIPFA, the Chartered Institute for Public Finance and Accountancy, drawing on research and interviews that we carried out in Cleveland in US, Fukuoka in Japan, Nantes in France and Leipzig in Germany, found that a commitment to scale and longevity in funding was imperative in how all of these places have overcome significant social and economic inequalities in recent years. In Leipzig, continuity is supported through a minimum funding commitment of 15 years, while in Cleveland the city's flagship project is based on a 20-to-30-year horizon. Our research suggests that to achieve the missions set out in the White Paper, there needs to be a focus on sustained longer-term funding.

Another challenge in England is that there are numerous **different funding pots** and there has **not been the opportunity to evaluate these seriously** over recent years. It is clear that more precise interventions and better evaluation of the impact of policies in different places is necessary. The National Audit Office published a report on 2nd February which was critical of how previous local economic growth policies have been evaluated. It found that the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities "*has a poor understanding of what has worked well in its previous local growth programmes because it has not consistently evaluated them*". The government has outlined measures to achieve certain improvements by 2030. It is positive that it has committed in the White Paper to producing an annual report on progress in relation to the missions and to setting up a new Levelling Up Advisory Council. This suggests that the right accountability mechanisms are being put in place.

At the same time as being one of the most regionally unequal countries in the developed world, the UK is one of the most centralised in terms of fund-raising (taxation) and spending powers. The White Paper sets out steps for **enabling greater devolution of powers**. Importantly, it sets out to **build on structures and institutions that already exist** rather than starting again entirely. Nine areas will be invited to agree new county deals and seek to agree further Mayoral Combined Authority deals, extending devolution across England. The LIPSIT project which examined organisational arrangements of local and regional governance in the UK, argued that "*there is insufficient time to create a perfect system of local and regional governance*" to support levelling up and that focus should instead be placed on reforms that can make a big difference and be implemented relatively quickly. The staged approach announced in the White Paper fits with the finding of research conducted by the Industrial Strategy Council and City-REDI that there is "*no one optimal scale at which to implement devolution in the UK*".

Given the scarcity of funding, it is vital that Levelling Up policies are **knitted together and that stakeholders work together coherently** rather than unnecessarily duplicating efforts or cutting across each other. UK policy has tended to operate in silos. Examples include separating infrastructure investment like HS2 and housing developments, from skills programmes, or business support schemes or investment in university R&D and innovation. **Better joining up skills, public R&D investment and evaluation will be important** in up-skilling people to work in new sectors (such as the digital and creative industries and life sciences), and in improving productivity and reducing inequality. WMREDI work offers insights into these policy domains and how they can be brought together:

1. Recent research on skills has examined graduate attraction and retention rates at the regional scale identifying substantial regional differences in graduate pathways. It suggests more equitable distribution of

R&D expenditure nationally could offer opportunities for the further development of specific sectors and high-level skills (such as STEM-related capabilities) across the UK.

2. WMREDI have conducted detailed analysis of investment in R&D in the West Midlands and the role of R&D funding in and with universities in achieving sustainable and inclusive growth.
3. The WMREDI Evaluation Lab is supporting the development of evaluation capacity and methodological innovation to enhance evidence-based practice and policymaking in the region and nationally. The lab brings together researchers with knowledge of many of the Levelling Up missions including employment support, R&D and devolution.

Having a **clear strategy and vision** were also important in the international case study places that we looked at. For example, Fukuoka, set out an ambition to become the start-up capital of Japan and an international destination for entrepreneurs and they have made great progress in relation to this. Facilitating collaboration between central and local government through formal and informal partnerships is vital. Therefore, the announcement of a new approach to places through the establishment of **Levelling Up regional directors** to act as a single point of contact for local leaders and a first port of call for new and innovative local policy proposals could be very valuable. City-REDI research with the Industrial Strategy Council showed **informal partnerships**, can also be important. For example, in Lille, France, informal networks have been important in strengthening relationships between local actors and generating ideas for flagship projects. Developing strong informal local and regional networks that involve the regional directors could be valuable.

Overall, the White Paper appears to set out some important accountability measures vital to achieving levelling up but the value of funding available is less than ideal. Given the lack of money currently, continuity of funding and policy direction as well as a joined-up approach to policy and partnerships across government departments, central and local government and other sub-regional players is likely to be fundamental to whether the levelling up agenda succeeds.

STEM Assets and Regional Growth – What We Know, and What We Don't

Dr Carolin Ioramashvili and Dr Pei-Yu Yuan, WM REDI

Dr Carolin Ioramashvili and Dr Pei-Yu Yuan discuss their WMREDI project looking at STEM Assets in the West Midlands, starting with a literature review in the area.

Basic research and development, often undertaken by universities is a vital ingredient in the innovation process. Businesses and other organisations rely on scientific insights to develop and improve new products, services and production processes. However, the path from scientific discovery to market is often a bumpy one, not least because universities and businesses can operate in vastly different environments, speak different languages, and have few points for interaction. This gulf is sometimes called the "valley of death" for innovation.

As part of WMREDI's theme 3 on regional innovation ecosystems, we are investigating what we call "STEM assets" – organisations that help bridge this metaphorical valley and bring scientists and industry closer together. We define STEM assets as physical facilities dedicated largely to the translation, development and transfer of scientific, technological or engineering innovation, knowledge and expertise which relates to new or improved business processes, products or services. This could include, for example, research labs, science parks, or business incubators. The goal of the project is to understand how STEM assets create impact and to dive into the underlying mechanisms.

View the project page – Universities' STEM Assets: Commercial & Non-Commercial Pathways & Aggregate Impacts

As a starting point, we surveyed the existing literature to understand what is already known in this field. We conducted a systematic review, whereby the list of articles to be included was reduced through successive rounds of screening. Eventually, 30 articles were included for detailed review.

Method – co-word analysis

This systematic review, coupled with keyword analysis, intended to present quantitative and qualitative knowledge on the emerging subject of STEM assets. This study followed a rigorous systematic process to select 109 articles published in peer-reviewed journals from 2010 to July 2021. Keyword analysis was subsequently performed with the Bibexcel software to explore the most prevalent themes in the current literature of STEM assets.

We adopted keyword analysis because many prior studies have employed this technique to explore the development of knowledge in a scientific field, to map it, and to trace its intellectual structure. The keywords were selected by the authors to represent the themes of research articles. A research article usually contains several keywords and these keywords listed in a paper signify the gaps or linkages among subjects in a research field. The co-occurrence patterns of keywords specify the relationship between ideas within the subject areas presented in such texts. Co-occurrence keyword analysis (also known as co-word analysis) is one of the general techniques in information science for showing the evolution of socio-cognitive structures from a set of documents.

Results – 109 papers

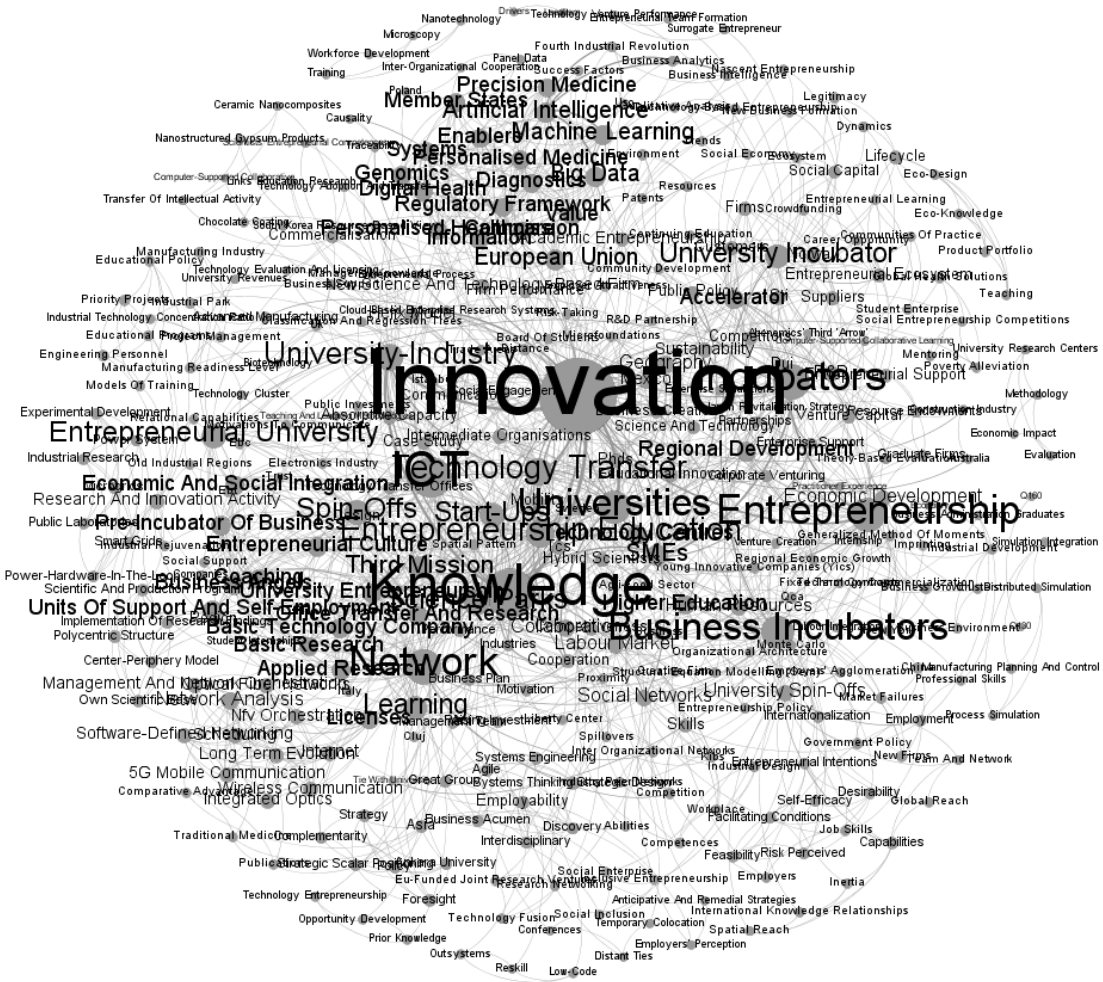
A total of 345 keywords were identified in 109 research articles. The following table shows the top ten keywords in extant STEM-related research from 2010 to July 2021. Among the top ten keywords, the dominant themes are innovation and subject areas that are closely related to innovation such as knowledge, incubators, and University-Industry.

Top keywords of STEM literature based on the occurrence.

Keyword	Frequency
Innovation	40
Knowledge	21

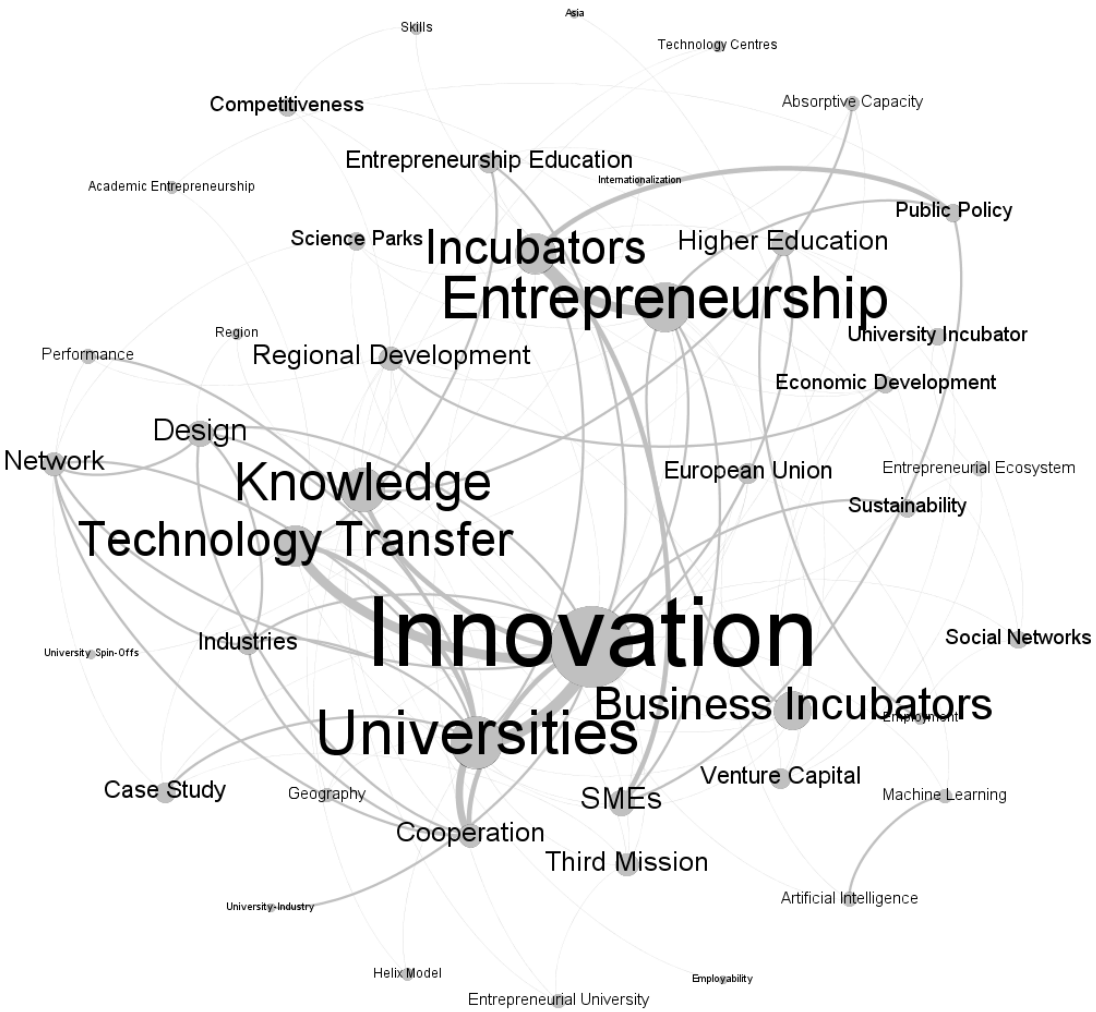
Incubators	14
University-Industry	14
Entrepreneurship	13
Universities	13
Business Incubators	11
Network	9
SMEs	9
Technology Transfer	9

The following figure shows the network of all the 345 keywords (The network was generated using Gephi). The graph visualisation helps us to explore the relationship between keywords and identify the most popular topics in the current literature. A larger bubble (also the font size) indicates that the word was mentioned in several studies. At first glance, innovation is the most popular research topic in STEM asset studies and innovation is often mentioned together with knowledge, universities, entrepreneurship and incubators.



Network of keyword co-occurrence. Note: this figure shows all keywords on STEM literature using Gephi without setting a threshold.

To make the generated network more readable, we then confine the network to only show the keywords with at least two occurrences. Similar to the above figure, a larger bubble size indicates that the word was used more frequently. The thicker the line between two words, the higher co-occurrence of the two words, which implies the two words were more connected.



Network of keyword co-occurrence. Note: This figure shows all keywords on STEM literature using Gephi with a threshold of a minimum of two occurrences.

The following table shows the top 10 pairs of keywords with the highest co-occurrence.

Top pairs of keywords of STEM literature based on the co-occurrence

Word 1	Word 2	Co-occurrence
Innovation	Universities	6
Entrepreneurship	Incubators	5
Innovation	Technology Transfer	5
Cooperation	Universities	4
Cooperation	Innovation	3
Incubators	Public Policy	3
Incubators	SMEs	3
Innovation	Knowledge	3
Technology Transfer	Universities	3
Absorptive Capacity	Knowledge	2

The WM Weekly monitor is funded by the West Midlands Combined Authority, Research England/UKRI

It is clear that the main theme is ‘Innovation’ in the STEM literature and the key players are ‘Universities’, ‘Entrepreneurship’, and ‘Incubators’, and the activities taking place on the subjects are ‘knowledge’ and ‘technology transfer’. From the above table, we can see that the most frequent co-occurrence keywords are ‘Innovation-Universities’ (6), ‘Innovation-Technology transfer’ (5), ‘Entrepreneurship-Incubators’ (5) and ‘Universities-Cooperation (4). ‘Innovation’ is most often studied together with ‘Universities’, as well as ‘Technology Transfer’ and ‘Cooperation’, while ‘Entrepreneurship’ is most often linked together with ‘Incubators’. Moreover, there are only a few direct links between ‘Innovation – Entrepreneurship’ or between ‘Innovation – Incubators’.

In the network, there are three clusters. The first cluster has studies on ‘Innovation’, ‘Universities’ and ‘Business incubators’, the second cluster focusses more on ‘Entrepreneurship’ and ‘Incubators’, and in between there is a cluster about ‘Knowledge’ and ‘Technology Transfer’. It seems that incubators could be the intermediary bridging the knowledge gap between university and industry.

Results – Accept papers

In the next section, we performed a similar network analysis on the 30 articles that have been accepted for detailed review. 25 of them can be found in the Web of Science core collection and a total of 88 keywords were identified. As shown below the structure is similar to what we observed above. The primary theme is still innovation, but the key players of interest slightly shift to various kinds of incubators. The elimination of papers less relevant to the review has resulted in a denser cluster of core themes at the heart of the study.

Network of keyword co-occurrence. Note: this figure shows all keywords on STEM literature using Gephi without setting a threshold. The larger the bubble size indicates, the more often the word has been used.

Which Parliamentary Constituencies Will Most Likely Face a Homelessness Rise?

Dr Maryna Ramcharan, WMCA

Dr Maryna Ramcharan examines which constituencies will most likely face a homelessness rise in the West Midlands.

This is part of WMREDI's research into Income Inequality, Policies, and Inclusive Growth.

Effects of Covid-19

A Covid-19 related ban on bailiff-enforced evictions in England ended in May 2021 and has been tapering off since.

As a potential rise in homelessness will add more pressure to already over-stretched housing services, we attempt to foresee how the surge in homelessness will affect all constituencies in the Midlands.

Ongoing pandemic and enforced restrictions significantly changed our normality in 2020. In terms of forecasting, it implies that the main assumption of extrapolating statistical techniques – that existing patterns will continue in the future – has been severely violated and therefore we cannot use historical data alone and must look for a different approach to employ.

We chose to base our predictions heavily on what was known about the likelihood of people to experience housing problems before the pandemic onset and intertwine this knowledge with recent data on how many people were stricken by the crisis and its ripple effects.

The likelihood of a person experiencing housing difficulties may be affected by various factors such as income, household composition, if there are dependent children in the household, tenure type, and others. Regression analysis performed by ONS in 2018 'Past experiences of housing difficulties in the UK: 2018' released on 22 October 2020 allows us to assess the existence and strength of associations between an outcome – in this case having experienced housing difficulties – and an individual's characteristics and circumstances. The results from this analysis show the differences within sub-groups of the population while controlling for the other factors.

Sources for the analysis

European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) was another source to feed into scoping of our analysis. The main topics covered by the EU-SILC microdata are income, poverty, material deprivation, housing, labour, education, and health, with indicators at UK national level including housing deprivation, overcrowding and housing cost overburden, among others. Many of these indicators are broken down by age, sex, tenure type, and other useful characteristics which increase our understanding of which groups of the population have more chances to experience housing difficulties.

Given the outcomes of the above-mentioned analysis by ONS and EU-SILC and assuming that it is the income of the household that is influential in kick-starting the accumulation of rent arrears we chose seven contributors which we think will increase chances of homelessness for a person:

1. Was the person's income affected by the pandemic? If so, then such a person will likely have difficulties with paying rent and experience housing cost overburden. This is measured by the number of furlough jobs in each Parliamentary constituency (PC) as a proxy.
2. How many members of the household are employed and can therefore contribute to rent expenses? This is measured by the number of mixed households in the area where 'Mixed household' is defined as one with at least one person aged 16 and over is in employment and at least one other is either unemployed or inactive.
3. Is it a one-person household? Singles are more vulnerable compared to those who cohabitate and share housing expenses.
4. Are there dependent children in the household?
5. Mixed households with dependent children

6. Mixed households without dependent children
7. Is a tenant renting privately or is she/he a council tenant? We expect that those renting privately will be more vulnerable to eviction
8. What is the median income in the area? We consider low income to be associated with higher chances of a person experiencing housing difficulties. According to the above-mentioned ONS analysis, all factors related to deprivation are significant and those people who are deprived, severely deprived, those with low work intensity and unable to make ends meet, or unable to afford an unexpected cost of £800 and find the total cost of housing a heavy / somewhat heavy burden have 2-3 times more chances to experience housing difficulties.

With contributors decided, we then assembled relevant data about parliamentary constituencies (PCs) in the West Midlands and calculated an overall metric to rank PCs according to their chances of facing a surge of homelessness after the eviction ban will start tapering off. The overall score was derived as an index that measures the propensity of the inhabitants of an area to experience housing difficulties and accumulate rent arrears.

The overall metric was calculated by the formula of a weighted mean:

The overall metric was calculated by the formula of a weighted mean: $$Overall\ score = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{N} r_i \cdot w_i}{\sum_{i=1}^{N} w_i}$$

where w_i is weight of each contributor, and

r_i is rank of a PC in this contributor.

The weights are assigned to contributors based on the findings of EU-SILC (European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions) and analysis of past experiences of housing difficulties in the UK from ONS in 2018:

Contributor	*Weight (w_i)*
1. Cumulative number of furloughed jobs by 14 April 2021	*0.2*
2. Mixed households with a lone parent	*0.2*
3. Households rented privately	*0.2*
4. One person households	*0.1*
5. Mixed households with dependent children	*0.1*
6. Median income in this Parliamentary Constituency	*0.15*
7. Mixed households without dependent children	*0.05*

Outcomes

Based on the derived overall score across PCs in the West Midlands, we foresee the greatest rise in homelessness in:

1. Coventry North East
2. Birmingham Ladywood
3. Birmingham Yardley
4. Birmingham Erdington
5. Birmingham Perry Bar.

Feedback

Following feedback on the evictions toolkit, and trying to breakdown to lower geography levels, struggling people may be masked by the overall constituency containing some wealthier areas, we supplemented the analysis with DWP statistics on people on Universal Credit at postcode district level and accompanied it by geodemographic

Mosaic data to describe family types. This analysis suggests that expenses should be considered as well as incomes, as in the case of large families with a median income above £25K per annum it is higher expenses that cause them to struggle.

The dashboards and analysis are available here.

The Effect of Furlough and Mortgage Holidays on Household Finances in the West Midlands During the Covid-19 Crisis

Dr Christoph Görtz and Professor Danny McGowen, University of Birmingham

Dr Christoph Görtz and Professor Danny McGowen look at the impact of financial support schemes in helping households during Covid-19.

This blog post was produced for inclusion in the Birmingham Economic Review for 2021.

The annual Birmingham Economic Review is produced by City-REDI, University of Birmingham and the Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce. It is an in-depth exploration of the economy of England's second city and a high-quality resource for informing research, policy and investment decisions.

This post is featured in Chapter 3 of the Birmingham Economic Review for 2021, on the city's labour market and current and future challenges.

Click here to read the Review.

Shielding families from negative economic effects

The Covid-19 pandemic has had widespread effects on households' health, social interaction, working patterns and financial wellbeing. Key government schemes to shield households from the negative economic effects of the crisis are the Mortgage Holiday Scheme and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (Furlough).

As part of an unprecedented package of support, mortgage holidays were announced in March 2020 with the objective of allowing borrowers to stabilise their finances at a time of high uncertainty about future income. The scheme allowed mortgagees to defer payments for three months, with subsequent revisions extending the duration to six months. Moreover, under the Furlough Scheme, the UK government pays up to 80% of furloughed employees' wages, allowing them to remain on payroll rather than being dismissed as organisations shut down to mitigate the spread of the disease. Both schemes are important safety nets for households amid economic turmoil.

Mortgage Holiday Scheme

In the West Midlands, 14% of households participate in the Mortgage Holiday Scheme, versus 11% for the rest of the UK. Mortgage payments are often a household's largest single expense item, accounting for one-third of scheme participants' monthly income. Before taking a mortgage holiday, subsequent participants tend to have less financial headroom compared to non-participants: they spend 12 percentage points more of household income on mortgage payments and their monthly savings rate is 5 percentage points lower. Covering any shortfall in income is a substantial problem for many households as 37% of Mortgage Holiday Scheme participants did not make any savings during 2019.

Despite their limited financial headroom, mortgage holiday participants were typically not in severe financial difficulties prior to the pandemic: they do not have a history of late payments on mortgages or other household bills at any point over between 2017 and February 2020. Binding financial constraints and loss of income during the pandemic tend to be the main motivation for taking a mortgage holiday. The characteristics of individuals from the West Midlands who participate in the Mortgage Holiday Scheme are similar to participants from the rest of the UK.

Before the pandemic

Before taking a mortgage holiday, 62% of individuals across the UK are late on mortgage and bill payments. The scheme enables most participants to stabilise their finances. In contrast, only 13% of participants are behind on payments after their mortgage holiday. However, the scheme's beneficial effects are less pronounced in the West Midlands where 31% of participants continue to experience difficulties paying their mortgage and other bills following the end of their mortgage holiday. Both for the UK and West Midlands, there is no evidence that people

from Minority Ethnic backgrounds are more likely than White individuals to be late on payments after a mortgage holiday, conditional on their income, education and job type.

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme has a large effect on the decision to take a mortgage holiday: income loss from being furloughed requires households with little financial headroom to reorganise their spending behaviour. The probability of taking a mortgage holiday increases in the West Midlands from 11% for those who have never been furloughed, to 23% for furloughed individuals. Unemployment is a negligible reason for Mortgage Holiday Scheme uptake: only 0.4% of scheme participants lost their job prior to taking a mortgage holiday.

In the West Midlands, 33% of eligible workers were furloughed at some point during the pandemic, compared to 30% nationally. A person is, on average, furloughed for 5 months and experiences a 17% reduction in their net monthly income, equivalent to £327 while ethnicity has, on average, no significant influence on whether an individual is furloughed.

The Furlough Scheme

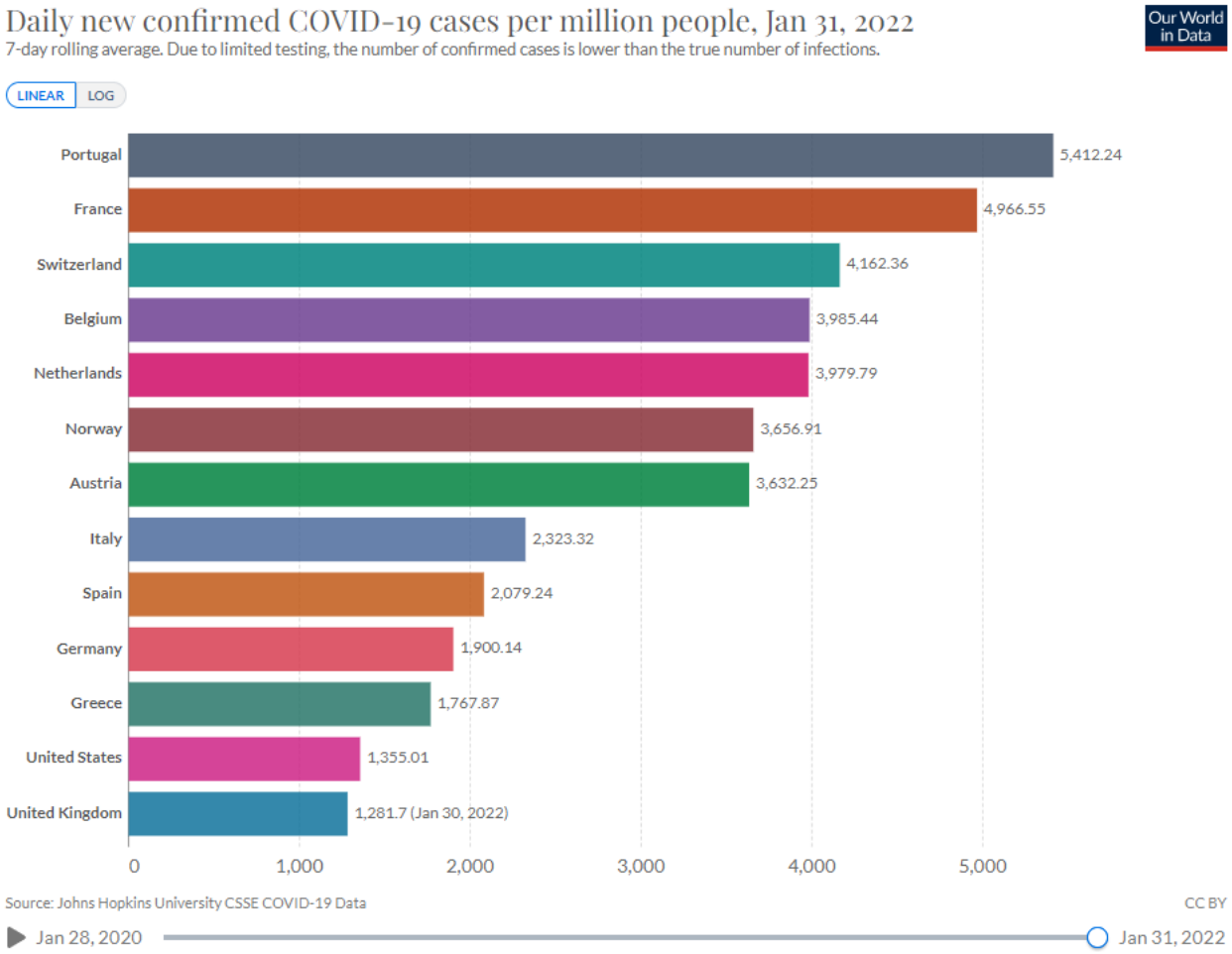
The Furlough Scheme is effective in preventing large scale financial distress. Our estimates show 37% of furloughed individuals in the West Midlands would have found it very difficult to cover a shortfall in income from being unemployed, since they do not have any monthly savings prior to the pandemic. Among furloughed individuals, 72% are not in severe financial difficulties (measured through late housing or bill payments) despite the reduction in income.

Infection Rates and Vaccine Update

Alice Pugh WMREDI/WMCA

Across Europe there has been a resurgence in infection rates, as in the graph below. This is largely because the Omicron variant is still causing increased infection comparative to other the previous variants. The UK is now one of the countries with the lowest rate of infection, however the number of people getting infection is still high. Other areas of Europe where there is greater vaccine hesitancy and a slower rate of vaccine uptake appear to be the countries that are suffering the most from the highest rates of infection.

Since 31 December 2019 and as of week 2022-3, **350 814 084 cases** of COVID-19 (in accordance with the applied case definitions and testing strategies in the affected countries) have been reported, including **5 603 757 deaths.**

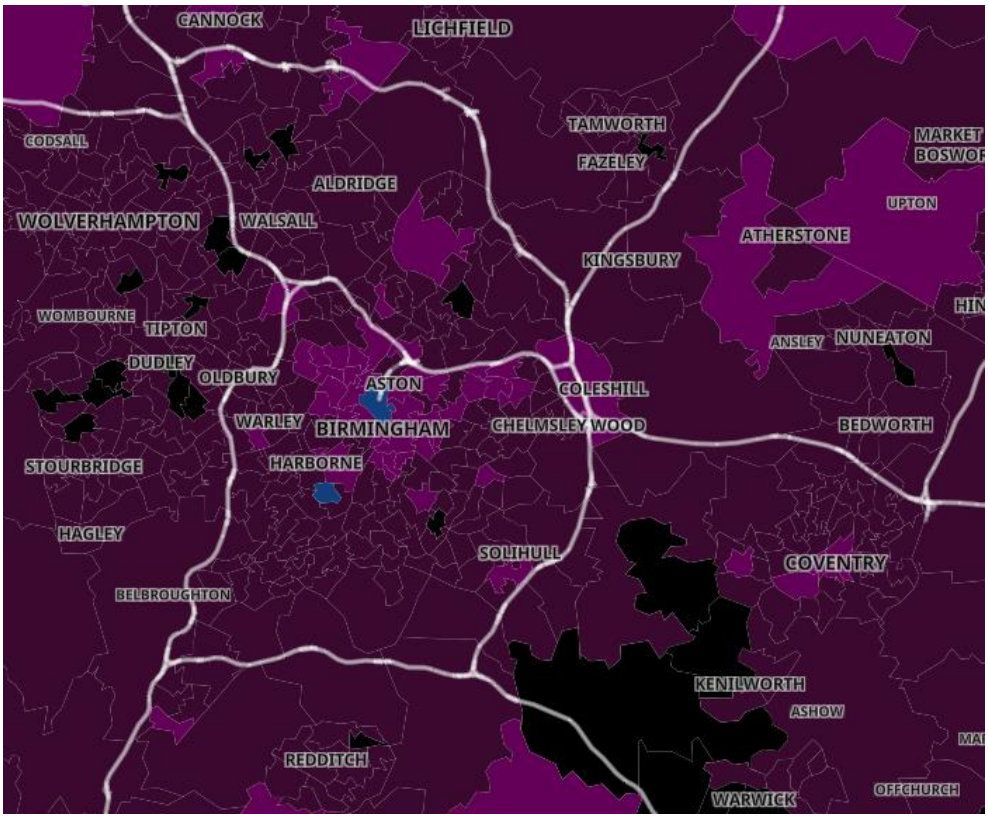


Latest ONS infection survey data (2nd February 2022 next release to be 4th February 2022) states:

- In England, the percentage of people testing positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) remained high in the week ending 29 January 2022; we estimate that 2,633,100 people in England had COVID-19 (95% credible interval: 2,544,100 to 2,725,100), equating to around 1 in 20 people.
- In Wales, the percentage of people testing positive for COVID-19 increased in the week ending 29 January 2022; we estimate that 139,000 people in Wales had COVID-19 (95% credible interval: 119,800 to 159,300), equating to around 1 in 20 people.
- In Northern Ireland, the percentage of people testing positive for COVID-19 increased in the week ending 29 January 2022; we estimate that 136,300 people in Northern Ireland had COVID-19 (95% credible interval: 118,200 to 155,200), equating to around 1 in 15 people.
- In Scotland, the percentage of people testing positive for COVID-19 decreased in the two weeks up to 29 January 2022, but the trend was uncertain in the most recent week; we estimate that 185,100 people in Scotland had COVID-19 (95% credible interval: 162,100 to 210,800), equating to around 1 in 30 people.

- In England, the percentage of people testing positive for COVID-19 varied substantially across age groups, with the highest for those aged 2 to school Year 6 at 13.09% (95% confidence interval: 12.13% to 14.07%) and lowest for those aged 70 and over at 1.97% (95% confidence interval: 1.78% to 2.17%), in the week ending 29 January 2022.
- The percentage of people testing positive for COVID-19 remained high across all regions of England in the week ending 29 January 2022.

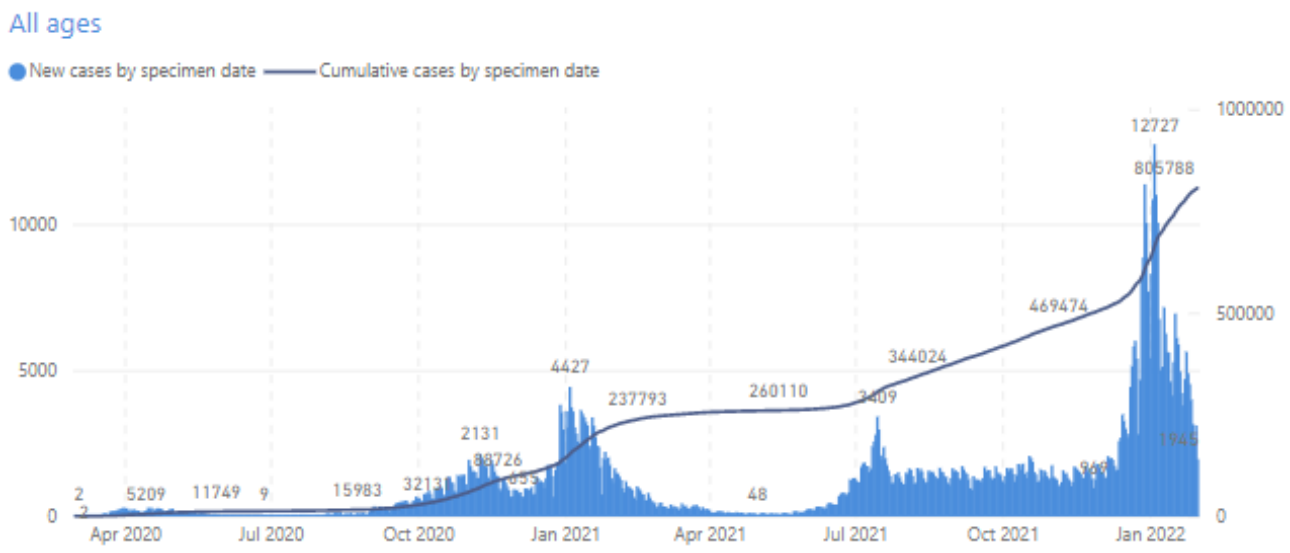
The map below displays weekly data, which are updated every day here. Seven–day rolling rate of new cases by specimen date ending on 27th January 2022.



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
30 January 2022	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	2	[illegible]
29 January 2022	2585	3661	800745	2	0.07
28 January 2022	3147	3453	798160	30619	1045.52
27 January 2022	3969	4116	795013	31680	1081.75
26 January 2022	4515	4333	791044	32659	1115.18
25 January 2022	4883	4004	786529	34021	1161.68
24 January 2022	5629	4037	781646	35235	1203.14
23 January 2022	4693	3606	776017	36539	1247.66
22 January 2022	3783	3868	771324	37116	1267.37
21 January 2022	4208	4916	767541	37459	1279.08
20 January 2022	4948	5406	763333	37859	1292.74
19 January 2022	5877	5480	758385	38506	1314.83
18 January 2022	6097	4961	752508	38247	1305.99
17 January 2022	6933	4487	746411	38398	1311.14



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-Jan-22	16-Jan-22	17-Jan-22	18-Jan-22	19-Jan-22	20-Jan-22	21-Jan-22	22-Jan-22	23-Jan-22	24-Jan-22	25-Jan-22	26-Jan-22	27-Jan-22	28-Jan-22	29-Jan-22	30-Jan-22
ENGLAND	**1,604**	**1,768**	**1,808**	**1,794**	**1,778**	**1,698**	**1,453**	**1,277**	**1,535**	**1,593**	**1,681**	**1,689**	**1,503**	**1,342**	**1,325**	**1,285**
East of England	127	146	170	146	171	146	137	127	154	152	167	161	149	134	150	132
London	253	304	235	301	285	224	210	183	230	231	213	226	188	185	176	175
Midlands	314	389	407	304	333	355	280	268	309	283	348	328	319	269	247	264
North East and Yorkshire	335	346	373	402	340	332	282	267	302	302	319	356	296	259	247	255
North West	291	295	310	285	309	286	243	187	218	252	244	237	195	170	188	179
South East	180	173	181	213	208	214	175	151	203	204	245	240	229	211	214	171
South West	104	115	132	143	132	141	126	94	119	169	145	141	127	114	103	109

Mechanical Ventilation beds - occupied by confirmed COVID-19 patients

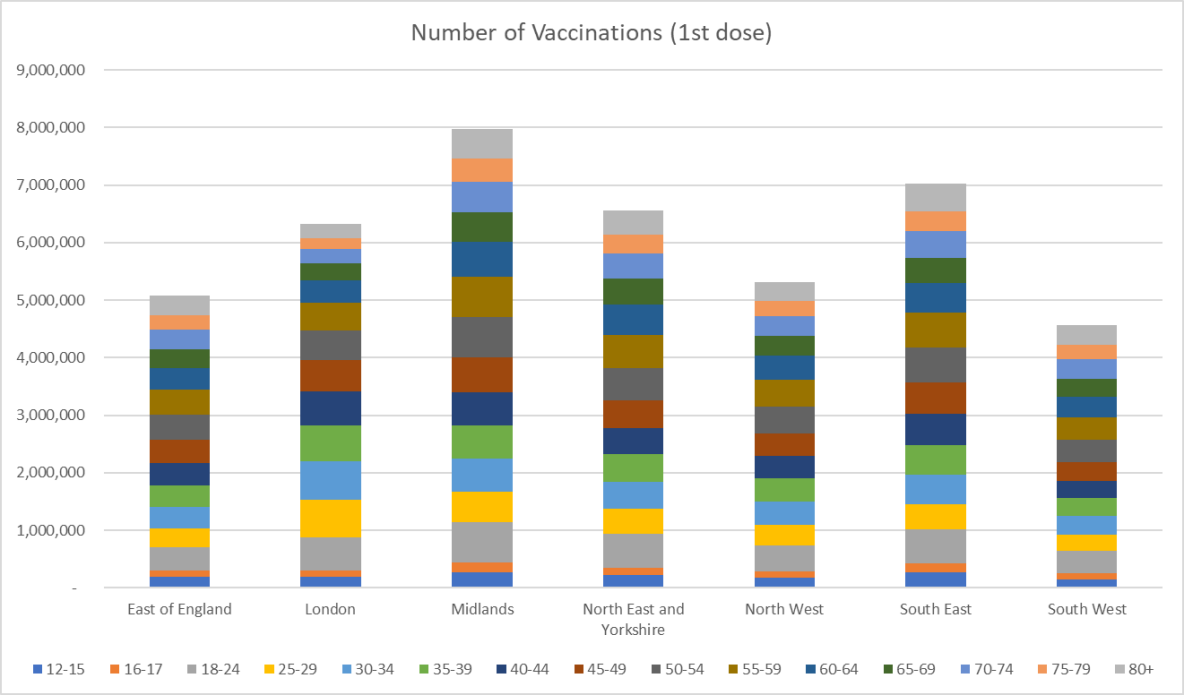
Name	18-Jan-22	19-Jan-22	20-Jan-22	21-Jan-22	22-Jan-22	23-Jan-22	24-Jan-22	25-Jan-22	26-Jan-22	27-Jan-22	28-Jan-22	29-Jan-22	30-Jan-22	31-Jan-22	01-Feb-22
ENGLAND	**614**	**586**	**573**	**552**	**545**	**524**	**521**	**501**	**493**	**481**	**467**	**458**	**457**	**449**	**449**
East of England	58	56	50	45	44	44	50	46	48	51	54	50	47	48	47
London	214	197	191	189	184	183	185	180	176	166	164	168	176	158	159
Midlands	107	100	103	96	98	98	94	91	90	88	81	78	75	78	78
North East and Yorkshire	86	94	88	85	87	77	75	70	63	60	58	62	63	63	60
North West	69	67	72	71	66	66	64	63	63	62	60	47	48	52	52
South East	62	57	55	53	48	39	37	37	37	40	35	36	31	32	34
South West	18	15	14	13	18	17	16	14	16	14	15	17	17	18	19

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

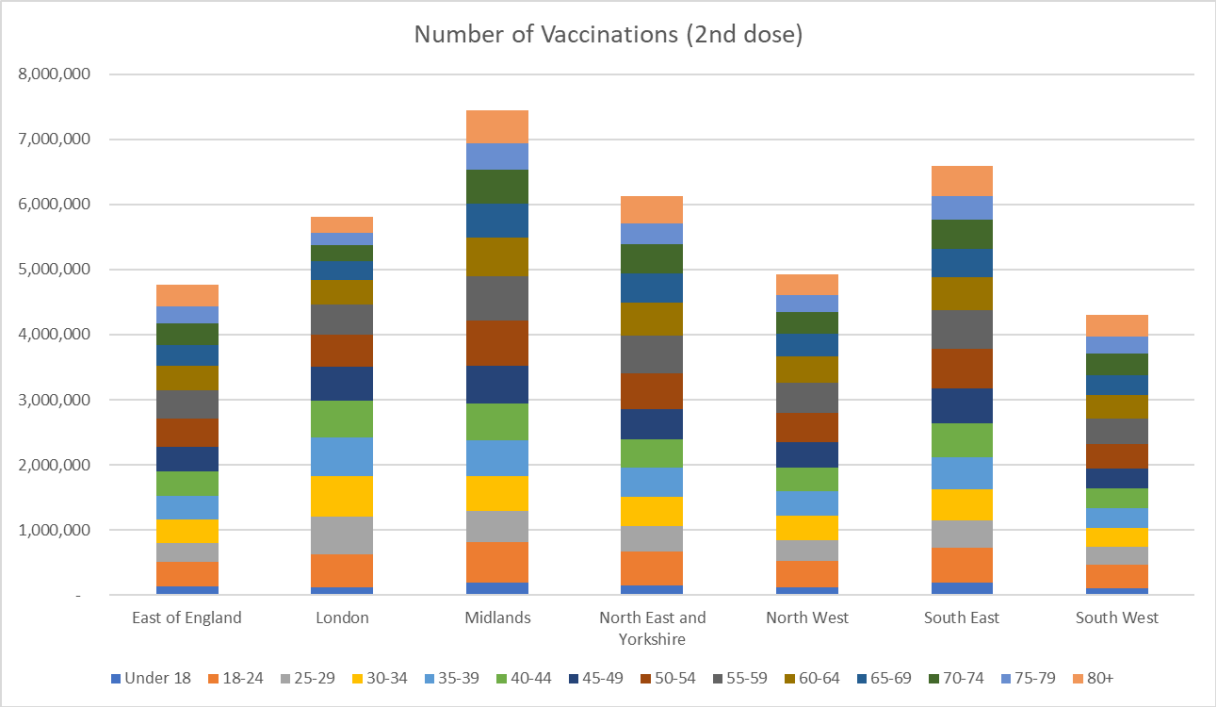
Name	18-Jan-22	19-Jan-22	20-Jan-22	21-Jan-22	22-Jan-22	23-Jan-22	24-Jan-22	25-Jan-22	26-Jan-22	27-Jan-22	28-Jan-22	29-Jan-22	30-Jan-22	31-Jan-22	01-Feb-22
ENGLAND	**16,218**	**15,742**	**15,302**	**14,865**	**14,320**	**14,334**	**14,563**	**14,088**	**13,948**	**13,651**	**13,462**	**12,672**	**12,992**	**13,331**	**12,896**
East of England	1,347	1,363	1,323	1,286	1,259	1,275	1,296	1,272	1,242	1,239	1,216	1,122	1,184	1,248	1,215
London	3,385	3,179	3,059	2,918	2,677	2,743	2,792	2,762	2,685	2,602	2,537	2,466	2,448	2,492	2,468
Midlands	3,101	3,051	2,907	2,832	2,771	2,708	2,753	2,670	2,609	2,613	2,582	2,476	2,477	2,526	2,514
North East and Y	2,938	2,799	2,796	2,709	2,608	2,565	2,640	2,571	2,514	2,430	2,385	2,341	2,348	2,370	2,238
North West	2,968	2,949	2,856	2,773	2,708	2,684	2,681	2,475	2,546	2,476	2,430	2,045	2,198	2,241	2,060
South East	1,566	1,519	1,475	1,500	1,459	1,488	1,503	1,456	1,441	1,456	1,482	1,424	1,506	1,585	1,534
South West	913	882	886	847	838	871	898	882	911	835	830	798	831	869	867

Vaccine Update

Between the 8th December 2020 and the 27th January 2022 the Midlands has successfully vaccinated **8,035,439** people with the first dose and **7,448,010** of these individuals have received the second dose as well. A further **5,740,981** have received their booster. Meaning the Midlands has successfully provided the most jabs out of any region including London.

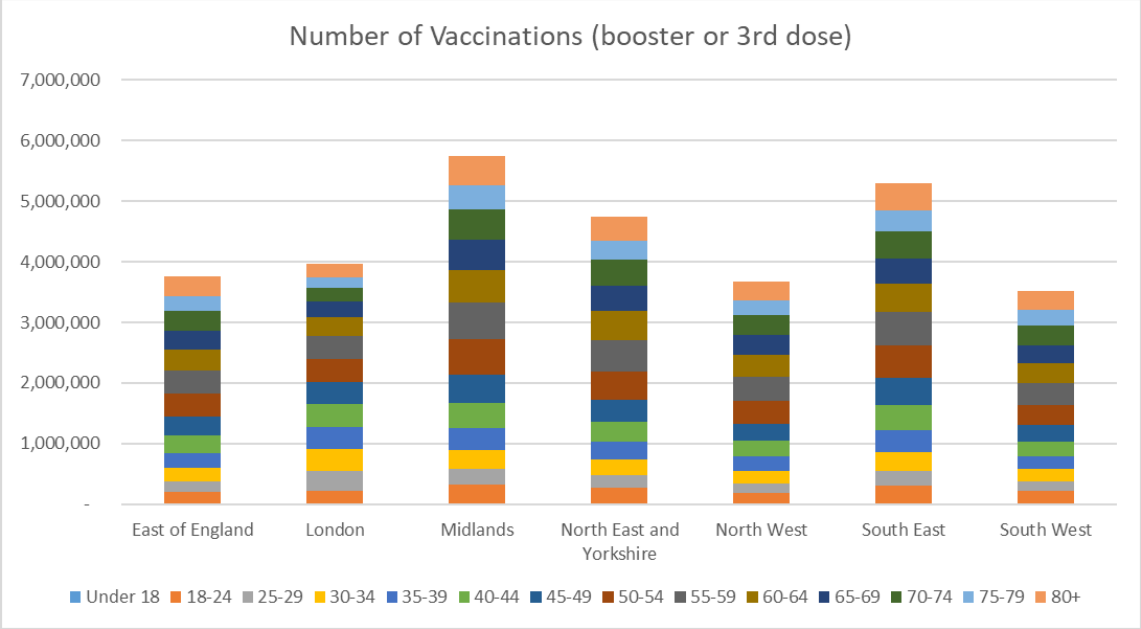


NHS Region code	NHS Region of residence name	% of cohort who have had at least 1 dose (using ONS denominators)														
		12-15	16-17	18-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	70-74	75-79	80+
Total		57%	73%	81%	82%	88%	90%	94%	91%	95%	98%	100%	97%	96%	100%*	93%
E40000007	East of England	61%	78%	85%	86%	89%	90%	95%	92%	96%	98%	100%	97%	96%	100%*	93%
E40000003	London	45%	59%	81%	85%	83%	81%	87%	90%	92%	94%	95%	93%	91%	95%	84%
E40000008	Midlands	56%	73%	75%	73%	85%	89%	94%	90%	96%	97%	100%*	97%	97%	100%*	94%
E40000009	North East and Yorkshire	57%	73%	77%	76%	86%	90%	94%	89%	95%	97%	99%	98%	97%	100%*	93%
E40000010	North West	53%	71%	76%	75%	84%	90%	95%	90%	95%	98%	100%*	98%	97%	100%*	93%
E40000005	South East	65%	80%	83%	86%	95%	94%	96%	92%	96%	98%	100%*	98%	95%	100%*	93%
E40000006	South West	63%	82%	86%	88%	94%	95%	98%	92%	96%	99%	100%*	97%	97%	100%*	96%



The WM Weekly monitor is funded by the West Midlands Combined Authority, Research England/UKRI

NHS Region code	NHS Region of residence name	% of cohort who have had at least 2 doses (using ONS denominators)												
		18-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	70-74	75-79	80+
Total		71%	74%	82%	85%	90%	88%	93%	96%	98%	96%	95%	100%*	92%
E40000007	East of England	76%	79%	83%	86%	91%	89%	94%	97%	99%	96%	95%	100%*	93%
E40000003	London	68%	77%	76%	76%	83%	86%	88%	91%	92%	90%	89%	93%	83%
E40000008	Midlands	67%	67%	78%	84%	90%	87%	94%	96%	99%	96%	96%	100%*	94%
E40000009	North East and Yorkshire	68%	69%	79%	85%	90%	87%	94%	96%	98%	97%	97%	100%*	93%
E40000010	North West	67%	68%	77%	84%	90%	87%	93%	96%	99%	97%	96%	100%*	93%
E40000005	South East	75%	79%	89%	90%	93%	90%	94%	97%	99%	97%	95%	100%*	93%
E40000006	South West	79%	81%	89%	91%	95%	89%	94%	98%	99%	96%	96%	100%*	95%



NHS Region code	NHS Region of residence name	% of cohort (not just those eligible) who have had a booster or 3rd dose (using ONS denominators)												
		18-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	70-74	75-79	80+
Total		36%	41%	49%	56%	66%	70%	79%	85%	90%	90%	91%	98%	88%
E40000007	East of England	40%	45%	52%	59%	69%	73%	82%	87%	91%	91%	92%	100%*	89%
E40000003	London	30%	41%	45%	47%	55%	61%	68%	73%	78%	80%	82%	86%	76%
E40000008	Midlands	33%	35%	46%	55%	66%	69%	80%	85%	90%	91%	92%	98%	90%
E40000009	North East and Yorksh	34%	36%	47%	56%	66%	69%	80%	86%	90%	92%	93%	98%	89%
E40000010	North West	30%	33%	42%	52%	62%	66%	77%	83%	89%	91%	92%	97%	88%
E40000005	South East	42%	47%	59%	65%	73%	75%	83%	88%	92%	92%	92%	100%*	89%
E40000006	South West	45%	49%	59%	67%	75%	76%	84%	89%	93%	92%	93%	100%*	92%

The WM Weekly monitor is funded by the West Midlands Combined Authority, Research England/UKRI

Weekly Deaths Registered: 21st January 2022

Black Country Consortium Economic Intelligence Unit

The following analysis compares the latest available time period (the week of the 21st January 2022) to the previous week period (the week of the 14th January 2022) for the number of deaths registered and the number of deaths registered related to the Coronavirus[1].

Across England and Wales, the overall registered death figures decreased from 13,311 in the week of the 14th January 2022 to 12,776 in the week of 21st January 2022. The number of deaths registered that state Coronavirus on the death certificate increased from 1,382 to 1,484 people over the same period.

Regional level analysis shows that the West Midlands' overall registered death figures decreased from 1,403 people in the week of 14th January 2022 to 1,370 in the week of 21st January 2022. The number of registered deaths related to Coronavirus increased from 144 people to 166 people over the same period.

There was a total of 946 deaths registered across the WMCA (3 LEP) area in the week of the 21st January 2022. There were 119 deaths registered that were related to Coronavirus over the same period. In comparison to the week of the 14th January 2022, the overall registered death figures in the WMCA (3 LEP) area decreased by 39, with the number of registered deaths related to Coronavirus increasing by 11 people.

At local authority level in the week of the 21st January 2022, only Lichfield in the WMCA (3 LEP) area had no registered deaths related to the Coronavirus. Of the 119 registered Coronavirus related deaths; Birmingham accounted for 38 deaths, Dudley and Wolverhampton both accounted for 11 deaths and Coventry accounted for 10 deaths.

Of the 119 registered Coronavirus deaths in the WMCA (3 LEP) involving Coronavirus in the week of the 21st January 2022, 87 were registered in a hospital, 14 deaths were registered at care home, 10 were registered at a care home, 4 deaths were registered at another communal establishment, 3 deaths were registered at a hospice and 1 death was registered elsewhere.

Place and number of deaths registered that are related to Coronavirus in the week of 21st January 2022:

Area name	Care home	Elsewhere	Home	Hospice	Hospital	Other communal establishment	Total
Cannock Chase	1	0	0	0	3	0	4
East Staffordshire	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Lichfield	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tamworth	0	0	0	0	3	0	3
North Warwickshire	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
Nuneaton and Bedworth	2	0	2	0	3	0	7
Rugby	3	0	1	0	1	0	5
Stratford-on-Avon	0	0	1	0	2	0	3
Warwick	1	0	0	0	1	0	2
Bromsgrove	0	0	1	0	1	1	3
Redditch	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Wyre Forest	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
Birmingham	2	1	2	2	30	1	38
Coventry	2	0	1	0	6	1	10
Dudley	3	0	0	0	8	0	11
Sandwell	0	0	1	0	6	1	8
Solihull	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Walsall	0	0	0	0	7	0	7
Wolverhampton	0	0	1	1	9	0	11
WM 7 Met.	**7**	**1**	**5**	**3**	**67**	**3**	**86**
Black Country LEP	3	0	2	1	30	1	37
Coventry & Warwickshire LEP	8	0	5	0	15	1	29
Greater Birmingham & Solihull LEP	3	1	3	2	42	2	53
WMCA (3 LEP)	**14**	**1**	**10**	**3**	**87**	**4**	**119**

[1] Please note that up-to-date counts of the total numbers of deaths involving COVID-19 are published by Public Health England (PHE) -ONS figures differ from the PHE counts as the latter include deaths which have not yet been registered. Source: ONS, Death registrations and occurrences by local authority and health board, 1st February 2022.

The WM Weekly monitor is funded by the West Midlands Combined Authority, Research England/UKRI

ONS Weekly Release Indicators

Black Country Consortium Economic Intelligence Unit

On the 27th January 2022, Office for National Statistics (ONS) released 'economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators'. These statistics are experimental and have been devised to provide timely information. The following information covers: footfall data, national company incorporations and voluntary dissolutions, final results from Wave 48 of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS), and results from Wave 82 of the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

Footfall

According to Springboard, overall retail footfall in the UK in the week to 22nd January 2022 was at 80% of the level seen in the equivalent week of 2019; this was a 2% increase when compared to the previous week. In the week to 22nd January 2022, footfall in high streets increased by 4% from the previous week and was 76% of the level seen in the equivalent week of 2019. Over the same period, footfall in retail parks decreased by 1% and was 95% of the level seen in the equivalent week of 2019 and shopping centres increased by 1% and was 74% of the level seen in the equivalent week of 2019.

In the week to 22nd January 2022 the South West (85%) and South East of England (83%) had the highest levels of retail footfall compared with the equivalent week of 2019. In the week to 22nd January 2022, retail footfall saw week-on-week increases in 9 out of the 10 English regions and UK countries, with the South East remaining unchanged compared with the previous week. The largest weekly increase was in Scotland, which rose by 5%; this was in part driven by an 8% increase in high street footfall.

National Company Incorporations and Voluntary Dissolutions

Companies House data shows for the UK, there were 15,468 company incorporations in the week to 21st January 2022, down from 15,798 recorded in the previous week. This is also down from 15,905 recorded in the same week in 2021 but higher when compared to the same week in 2020 (13,934) and the same week in 2019 (13,378).

Also, for the week to 21st January 2022, there were 6,192 voluntary dissolution applications, down from 6,255 recorded in the previous week. This is up from 4,828 recorded in the same week in 2021 but lower than levels seen in the same week of 2020 (6,391) and the same week in 2019 (7,276).

Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS)

The final results from Wave 48 of the BICS based off the 5,088 businesses surveyed across the West Midlands that businesses have a presence in with a response rate of 24.1% (1,224) and 3,030 businesses that are head quartered in the West Midlands, with a response rate of 22.5% (681). Please note, the survey was live for the reference period 27th December 2021 to 23rd January 2022 with a survey live period of 10th January to 23rd January 2022. Also, 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 Status and Financial Performance

99.3% of responding West Midlands businesses were trading over the reference period.

Excluding "not sure" responses, 26% of responding West Midlands businesses reported that turnover over the last two weeks when compared to normal expectations for the time of year had decreased. While 52.1% of West Midlands businesses reported turnover had not been affected and approximately 10.1% reported turnover had increased.

Excluding "not sure" responses, 50.3% of responding West Midlands businesses reported that Covid-19 was the main reason for the change in the business turnover, 12.6% reported that the "end of the EU transition period" was the

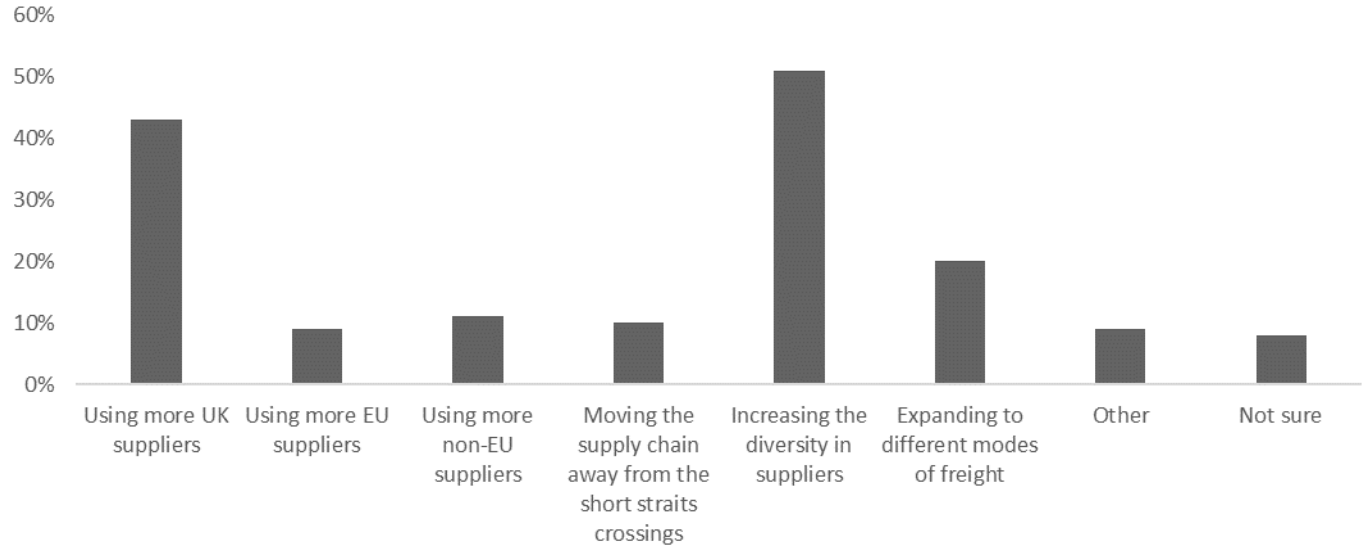
main reason. While 12.8% reported "other" as the main reason and 2.2% of West Midlands businesses reported "Covid-19 and the end of the EU transition period".

Supply Chains

8.2% of responding West Midlands businesses reported changes to the supply chains had occurred due to the end of the EU transition period. With 41% reporting that these changes to the supply chain were made as a results of a new UK trade agreement.

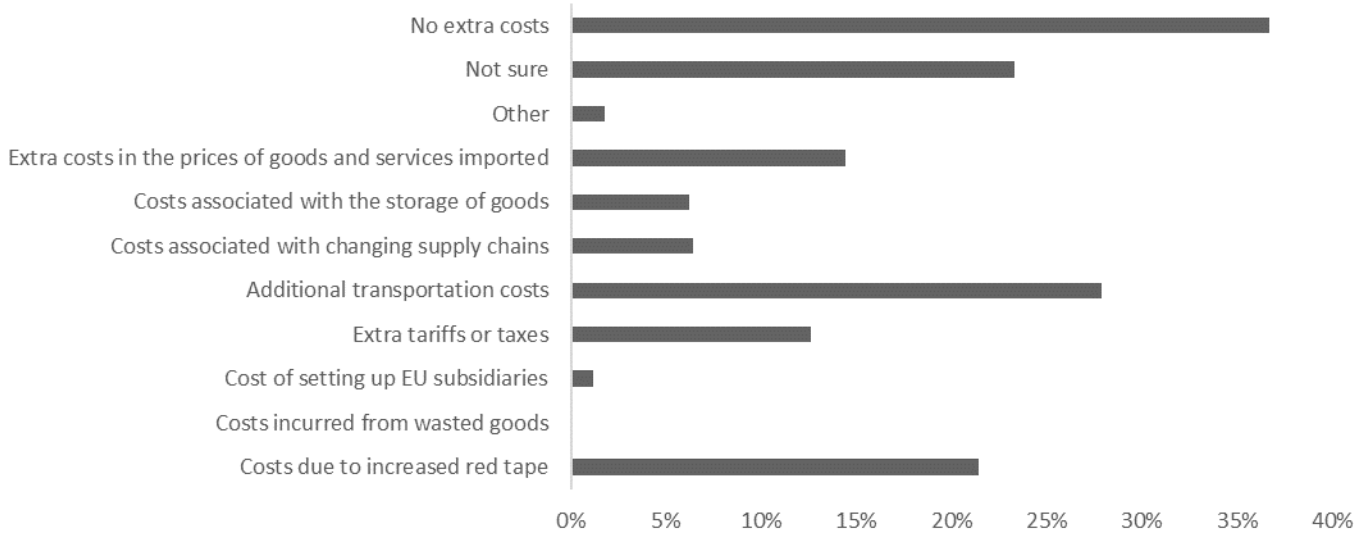
51% of West Midlands businesses reported they had increased the diversity of suppliers.

The following chart shows the ways West Midlands businesses changed supply chains due to the end of the EU transition period:



36.7% of West Midlands businesses reported no extra costs due to the end of the EU transition period. While 27.9% reported additional transportation costs.

The following chart shows if the West Midlands businesses had any extra costs due to the end of the EU transition period:



6.4% of responding West Midlands businesses reported they were only able to get the materials, goods or services it needed over the last month from the EU by changing suppliers or finding alternative solutions.

Changes to Activities

4.3% of West Midlands businesses reported experiencing unexpected changes to financial or operational activities in the last two weeks.

19.2% of West Midlands businesses were expecting financial or operational activities to be affected by the Covid-19 pandemic in the next two weeks.

Stock Levels and Stockpiling

14.4% of responding West Midlands businesses reported stock levels over the last month when compared to normal expectations for the time of year were higher, 9.4% reported a lower level and 41.6% reported stock levels had not changed.

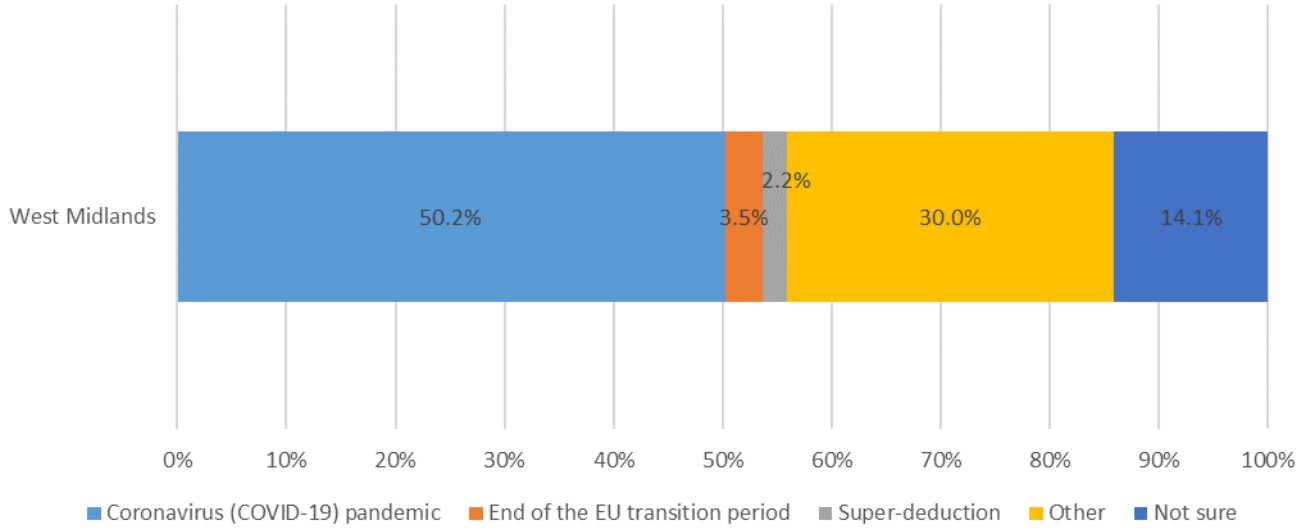
10% of West Midlands businesses reported stockpiling goods or materials.

Capital Expenditure

Excluding "not sure" or "not applicable" responses, 4.8% of West Midlands businesses reported capital expenditure was higher than normal over the last two weeks compared to normal expectations for the time of year. While 9.4% reported capital expenditure was lower than normal and 58.3% reported it had not been affected.

50.2% of West Midlands businesses reported that Covid-19 was the main reason for change in capital expenditure.

The following chart shows the main reason for the change in West Midlands businesses capital expenditure:



Scrapped Capital Assets

1.4% of West Midlands businesses in the last month had scrapped capital assets earlier than intended.

Prices

Excluding "not sure" or "not applicable" responses, 36.6% of West Midlands businesses reported the prices of materials, goods or services brought over the last month compared with normal price fluctuations had increased more than usual and less than 1% reported prices decreased more than usual. 6.8% reported that some prices had increased and some decreased and 36.1% reported prices did not change any more than normal.

Excluding "not sure" or "not applicable" responses, 18% of West Midlands businesses reported the prices of materials, goods or services sold over the last month compared with normal price fluctuations had increased more than usual and less than 1% reported prices decreased more than usual. 5.3% reported that some prices had increased and some decreased and 58.9% reported prices did not change any more than normal.

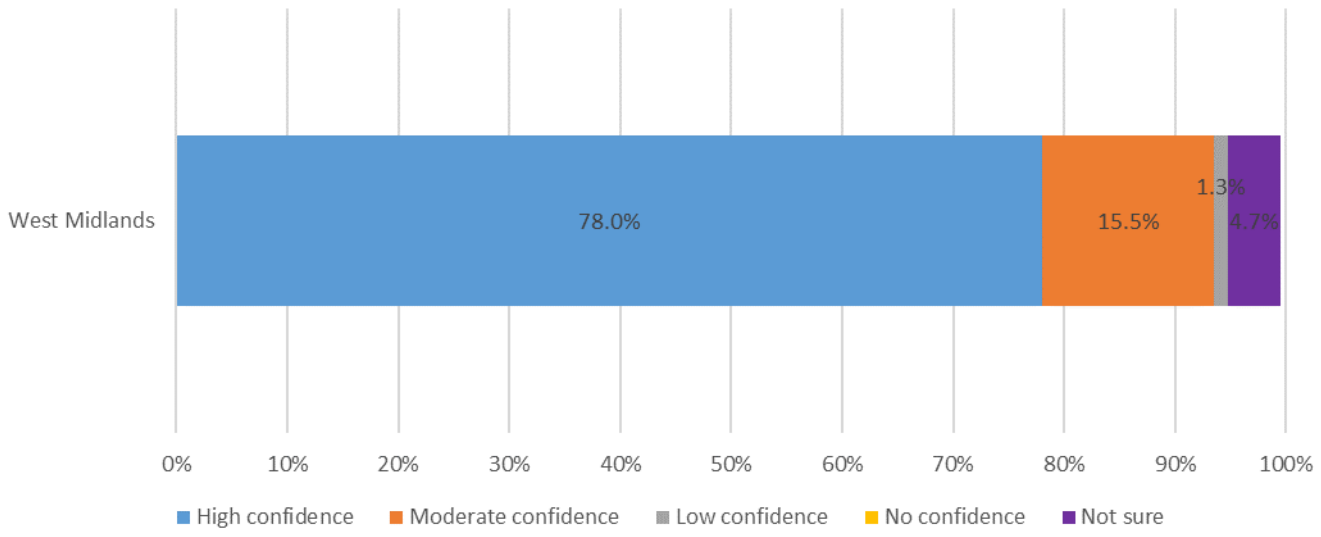
Increase in Demand

16.8% of responding West Midlands businesses reported an increase in demand for goods or services sold over the last month.

Business Confidence

78% of West Midlands businesses reported they had high confidence that the business will survive the next three months.

The following chart shows for the West Midlands businesses how confident to survive the next three months:



Expected Redundancies

3.4% of West Midlands businesses expect to make redundancies over the next three months. Excluding "not sure" responses, 4.9% of West Midlands businesses reported redundancies to happen within two weeks, 19.5% for between two weeks and one month and 68.3% for between one and three months.

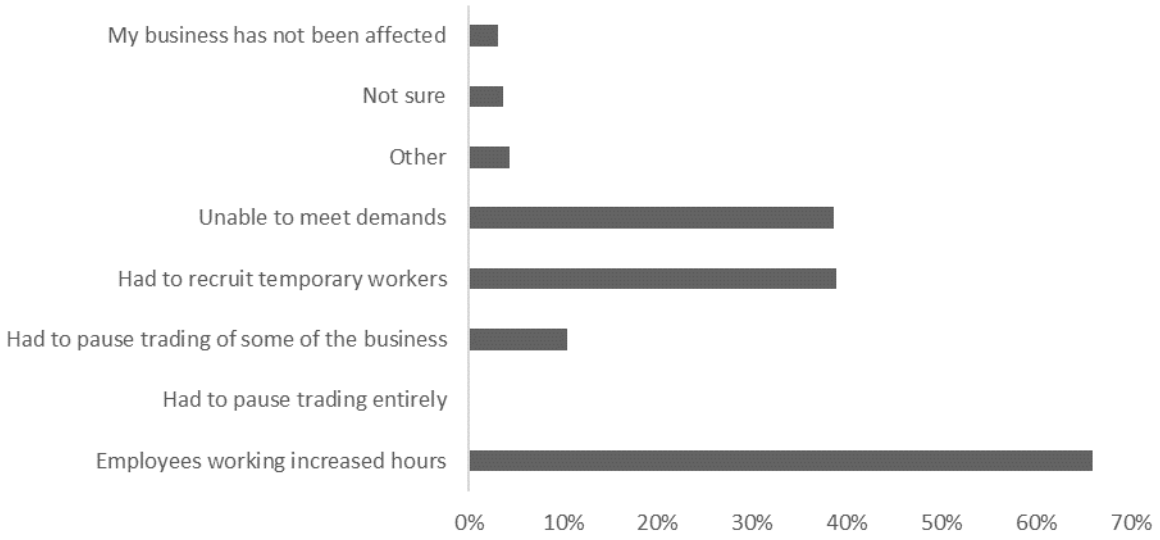
Staff Turnover

55.1% of West Midlands businesses reported that staff turnover for the last month when compared to normal expectations for the time of year had not been affected, while 18.6% reported an increase and 2.7% reported a decrease.

Worker Shortages

39.5% of responding West Midland businesses reported to currently experiencing a shortage of workers. Due to the shortage of workers, 66% of West Midlands reported employees were then working more hours.

The following chart shows how the shortage of workers affected West Midlands businesses:

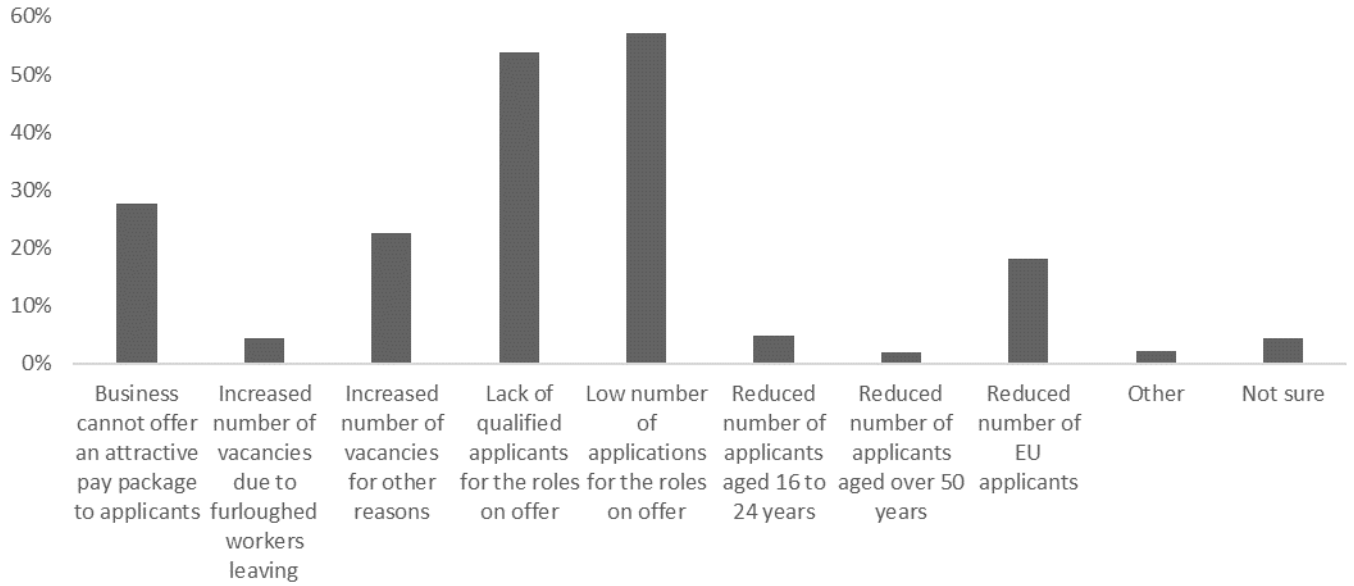


Vacancies

Excluding "not sure" and "did not have any vacancies to fill" responses, 23.5% of West Midlands businesses reported there was no difference in the ability to fill vacancies. 1.9% of West Midlands businesses reported vacancies were easier to fill while 45.9% reported vacancies were harder to fill.

Of the West Midlands businesses that reported vacancies were harder to fill over the last month compared to normal expectations for the year, 57.1% stated the reason was due to "low number of applications for the roles on offer".

The following chart shows why West Midlands businesses found filling vacancies more difficult over the last month when compared to normal expectations for the time of year:



EU Workers and Non-EU Workers

Excluding "not sure", "prefer not to say" and "not relevant" responses, 20% of West Midlands businesses reported the number of workers from within the EU had stayed the same. Less than 1% reported that the number of workers from within the EU had increased and 15.8% of West Midlands businesses reported that the number of workers from within the EU had decreased.

Excluding "not sure", "prefer not to say" and "not relevant" responses, 16.8% of West Midlands businesses reported the number of workers from outside the EU had stayed the same. 1.6% reported that the number of workers from outside the EU had increased and 3.7% of West Midlands businesses reported that the number of workers from outside the EU had decreased.

Social Impacts of the Coronavirus

The following section refers to the period of 6th to 16th January 2022. Please note, only a selection of indicators at a regional level are included in this section.

Likelihood to Attend Events

24% of West Midlands adults reported they were fairly or very likely to go to an organised event if they had to stay socially distanced from others (44% GB), while 28% were fairly or very unlikely to go (matching GB).
47% of West Midlands adults reported they were fairly or very likely to go to an organised event if they had to wear a face covering (54% GB), while 26% were fairly or very unlikely to go (22% GB).

Cost of Living

Over the last month, 65% of West Midlands adults reported the cost of living had Increased (66% GB). 34% of West Midlands adults reported the cost of living had stayed the same (matching GB).

OF those who reported an increase in living costs, 87% of West Midlands adults reported the price of the food shop had increased (matching GB). 79% reported gas or electricity bill had increased (matching GB) and 77% reported the price of fuel had increased (71% GB).

Financial Situation and Borrowing

60% of West Midlands adults reported that the household could afford to pay an unexpected but necessary expense of £850 (matching GB).

12% of West Midlands adults reported that they have had to borrow more money or use more credit than usual in the last month compared to a year ago (16% GB).

49% of West Midlands adults reported that in view of the general economic situation, that they will be able to save money in the next 12 months (44% GB).

Well-Being, Loneliness and Perceptions of the Future

Mean personal well-being scores for life satisfaction was 6.9 in the West Midlands (6.8 GB), worthwhile was 7.3 in the West Midlands (7.2 GB), happiness was 7.1 for West Midlands adults (6.8 GB) and anxious was recorded at 3.8 for West Midlands adults (4.1 GB)[2].

9% of adults in the West Midlands reported low levels of life satisfaction (11% GB). 8% of West Midlands adults reported low level of feeling worthwhile (10% GB). 7% of responding West Midlands adults reported low level of happiness (13% GB) and 31% reported high levels of anxiety (35% GB)[3].

20% of adults in the West Midlands reported to often/always or some of the time to feeling lonely (26% GB). While 58% reported hardly ever or never feeling lonely in the West Midlands (48% GB).

3% of West Midlands adults believe it will take 6 months or less before life returns to normal (7% GB). 9% of West Midlands adults believed it will take 7 to 12 months (10% GB). 34% of West Midlands adults think it could more than a year to return back to normal (35% GB) and 14% of the West Midlands adults thought it would never go back to normal (12% GB).

Impact on People's Life Overall

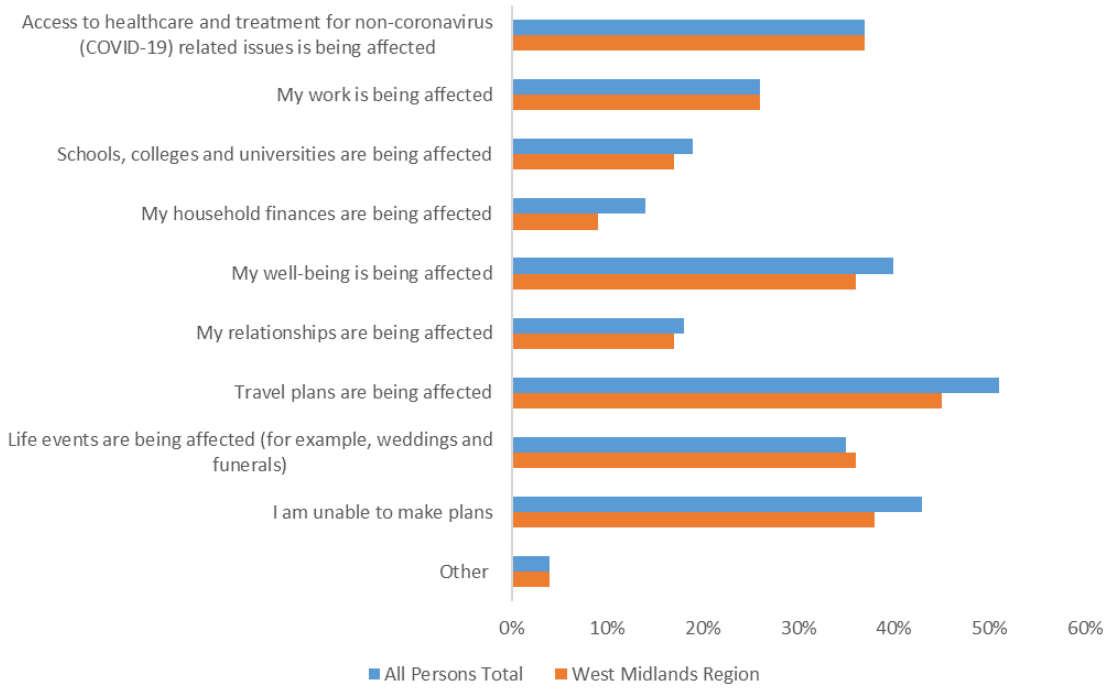
In the West Midlands, 57% of adults reported they were very or somewhat worried about the effect Covid-19 was having on their life (61% GB). 13% of responding West Midlands adults reported that they were somewhat unworried or not at all worried (14% GB).

45% of West Midlands adults reported that Covid-19 was affecting their travel plans (51% GB)

The following chart shows for the West Midlands region and for all person total the ways COVID-19 is affecting life:

[2] Each of these questions are answered on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is "not at all" and 10 is "completely".

[3] Low levels of life satisfaction, feeling worthwhile and happiness are defined as a score of 4 or below for their respective questions. High anxiety is defined as a score of 6-10 for the question "How anxious did you feel yesterday?".


Access to healthcare and treatment for non-coronavirus (COVID-19) related issues is being affected
My work is being affected
Schools, colleges and universities are being affected
My household finances are being affected
My well-being is being affected
My relationships are being affected
Travel plans are being affected
Life events are being affected (for example, weddings and funerals)
I am unable to make plans
Other
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
All Persons Total
West Midlands Region

LEP Level Intelligence

WMCA

WMCA Growth Hub Intel for WM Weekly Economic Monitor– 2nd February 2022

HEADLINES

SECTOR	KEY INSIGHTS
Cross Sector	**Covid-19 Outlook** The reality of Covid restrictions being lifted in England has **been welcomed by West Midlands businesses and representative groups**; it is hoped that this will support small firms in particular and will help spur economic recovery. However, **concerns have been raised regarding the Government's ongoing Covid-19 policy**, with many informing Growth Hubs that the ongoing lack of clarity and last-minute changes to restrictions are making it difficult for them to plan for the future. Business leaders in the West Midlands are stressing that the **easing of Covid-19 restrictions must be accompanied by a comprehensive package of support** for businesses. In particular for those that have seen their overheads and debt levels rocket as a result of the pandemic. Specific support measures called for include: • **Reintroduction of free testing kits for businesses** • Implementation of **enhanced financial support for businesses impacted by Covid**-19 • **Maintaining the VAT reduction beyond March 2022** to help hospitality and non-essential retail. In addition, Government are being urged to **look at policies that will empower small businesses and start-ups to get the economy performing at its peak again**. With inflation surging, and the labour market exceptionally tight, **small businesses need pro-business policies.** A more long-term strategy from the Government will mean businesses will be more able to return to a position where they can trade and grow in order to support the UK's return to prosperity. The need for this is brought into close focus by the findings of EY's latest Regional Economic Forecast. This suggests that the **West Midlands is expected to be one of the slowest regional economies to recover from the pandemic** due to the impact of Covid-19 on the automotive and manufacturing sectors. The region's gross value added (GVA) is **forecast to be only 5.3 per cent larger in 2025 than it was in 2019**. By comparison, the UK's GVA is forecast to increase by 8.3 per cent. Despite this, **business confidence in the West Midlands surged during January**, according to the latest Business Barometer from Lloyds Bank. Confidence amongst firms in the region rose nine points during the first month of the year to 39 per cent. A net balance of 20 per cent of businesses expect to create jobs over the next year, down 16 points on last month. Furthermore, the **number of profit warnings issued by listed companies based in the West Midlands dropped by almost 80 per cent during 2021**. EY-Parthenon's latest Profit Warnings report said that West Midlands listed businesses issued eight profit warnings in 2021, compared to 38 in 2020. **Labour Market**

SECTOR	KEY INSIGHTS
	The **West Midlands job market is continuing its gradual recovery** – with unemployment falling by 0.2 per cent and employment rising by 0.3 per cent. However, the Labour Market Statistics for September to November 2021 also **reveal a record high in job vacancies,** with businesses still struggling to access the right talent. Growth Hubs have had multiple conversations with businesses recently focused on skills and labour shortages. Specifically: • As we finally emerge from the restrictions of Covid, it appears it's crunch time for **employers looking to fill vacancies as the high number of vacancies versus the relatively low number of suitable candidates** supports their desire for more flexible working arrangements. • **Staff Retention** – As businesses continue to struggle to not only attract new staff, but to retain existing team members, reports of **increased salary packages continue** with one business bringing forward a scheduled annual wage increase forward by three months to try and mitigate the risk. • Businesses are **struggling to find and recruit apprentices** and are still **disappointed that the Kickstart scheme didn't work as well as anticipated**. • **Omicron Impact** – Productivity and attendance issues continue to affect the recovery of businesses as **staff absences limit their effective operation as well as limiting the number of potential customers.** Service industries, including salons, tattoo artists, cafes and childcare notably affected this week, as well as reports from various retail and office businesses. • **Candidates Seeking Flexibility** –Working from home has proved immensely popular for a large number of employees and those looking for new opportunities are seeking the opportunity to work where, and often when, they want. **Some employees not able to agree new working arrangements with current employers even quitting roles to pursue self-employment.** The draw of working from home has been reported more widely in research and through Grant Thornton UK's latest Business Outlook Tracker. **Trading Conditions** Businesses have again highlighted their concern regarding **drastically increasing cost pressures and lack of governmental action.** Many have shared that, during an already difficult trading period, they have seen: • energy costs rising • wages increasing • business rates change incoming, and • National Insurance Contributions increases incoming. With regard to energy costs – a key issue raised by businesses over the past several months – **one small business noted that their energy bills had now quadrupled from £3,000 to £12,000** and that, given the drop in trade as a result of Omicron, they are unsure about how they will overcome their cashflow issues. The rise in energy prices has also hit larger businesses **already paying high prices to keep their premises running and they will now have to pay more than triple** their pre-pandemic bill. Additionally, even further cost pressures are present or on the horizon for some West Midlands businesses: • Many businesses have now **started to repay Coronavirus Business Interruption Loans and Bounce Back Loans** and inevitably some will struggle as they try to repay. • Seven in 10 (68 per cent) small or medium enterprises (SMEs) across the Midlands are **currently waiting on late payments from customers**, according to new research from **Barclays**.

SECTOR	KEY INSIGHTS
	• With new Import Rules due to Brexit changes, businesses reporting reduced margins due to **increased import and shipping costs**, despite mitigating this with increased pricing on most of these products. **Enquiries** Commonly reported business enquiries to the region's Growth Hubs in recent weeks include: • **Grants** – in general, are much in high demand as usual, with businesses continuing to look at capital purchases and the adoption of solar and premises upgrades. Worth noting is that as the appetite to adopt low carbon strategies increases, problems are arising with power supply issues particularly for larger businesses looking to move to EV fleets and employee charging points. This is a wider issue which is being raised which may impact governments 2030 targets. • **B2B Referrals** – a good number of B2B referrals to meet the demands of immediate projects and a desire to source locally. A number of these opportunities focus on green strategies and the requirement for air and ground source heat pumps and solar. • **Marketing -** Companies seeking marketing support in order to support growth plans continues to be primary, as well as those requiring funding for Digital implementation, of which there is minimal. Many companies are being advised locally to register their interest in the Help to Grow programme to support the demand evidence. • **Digital Marketing Support & Grants** – Increasing demand for Digital Marketing support as businesses look to futureproof by investing in permanent eCommerce equivalents of traditional retail. Partly in preparation of another possible pandemic in the future as well as many businesses recognising the need to progress with new technologies and buying habits. • **Changing Banks** – A number of mixed reports from regional businesses that have stated that looking to change banks, post pandemic. However, whilst some are seeking a new bank with a more modern and less risk averse approach, other businesses preferring the traditional face to face and established banks looking to revert to one of the big four.
Logistics	• The worst of the driver shortage crisis could be over, according to the chief executive of one of the fastest-growing UK pallet networks. Wolverhampton-based Pallet-Track's Caroline Green said she had seen the "**noise decrease" over the chronic lack of HGV drivers which plagued the industry in 2021**, an issue which was amplified by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and the effects of Brexit. • However, she sounded a cautionary note about the **underlying causes of the shortages as fundamental issues such as the Certificate of Professional Competence test and poor facilities for drivers have not changed**.
Low Carbon	• The narrative amongst the broad West Midlands business community is now **shifting from 'setting net zero targets' to 'how can we deliver net zero'**. There has been **unprecedented interest in the grants available for businesses to decarbonise their operations or improve the energy performance of their buildings**. • Concepts such as the **circular economy are proving very popular for businesses to explore.** Manufacturers that use wood and biomaterials in particular are interested in exploring how they can repurpose and reuse waste materials. Discussions around the **creation of internal and regional supply chains around materials, and heat, are beginning between potential partners.**
Real Estate	• **Birmingham's office market showed "strong resilience" during 2021**, according to new data from Avison Young. Avison Young's latest Big Nine office market update

SECTOR	KEY INSIGHTS
	said that city and out-of-town office transactions reached 925,000 sq ft in 2021 and are expected to return to the five-year average by the end of 2022. • **Birmingham has also been ranked among the most attractive European cities for property investors.** The city ranked 22nd in Europe in the PWC and Urban Land Institute Annual Report for overall real estate prospects, up from 25th in 2021.
Hospitality	• Those in the hospitality sector have again voiced their concerns regarding the **incoming changes to the existing VAT reduction.** • Alongside mounting cost pressures – as highlighted above – and high levels of cancellations, a **number of restaurants and bars have shared that the VAT reduction has been key to helping them through this difficult period.** • Several flagged that, due to restrictions in place over the past two years, they have been unable to **maximise the benefits of this economic policy and would like to see it maintained beyond the end of the financial year.**
Manufacturing	• The **manufacturing sector continues to report mixed results.** The IHS Markit/CIPS UK Manufacturing PMI **fell to 57.3 in January 2022 from 57.9 in December 2021** pointing to the slowest growth in factory activity since February 2021. Figures came well below market forecasts of 57.9. • Some manufacturers reporting 2021 as a **very good year with three quarters of good revenue and margin, and others reporting a very flat year**. We are beginning to see the **impact of poor cashflow and lack of appetite from the financial sector to extend lending opportunities** with some companies in distress. • The **implementation of the new plastic tax** in April 2022 will present an additional administration burden and reporting requirement. • The number of cars built in the UK last year fell to the lowest total since 1956 as the industry suffered a "dismal" 12 months, new figures have revealed. Production was down by 6.7% over the year to 859,575, and down by a third compared with the pre-pandemic 2019 figure. SMMT said issues such as the shortage of semi- conductors, the closure of Honda's Swindon factory, Covid-related issues like staff shortages and border controls following Brexit had all affected carmakers.

NEW ECONOMIC SHOCKS

COMPANY	LOCATION	SECTOR	SOURCE/DETAIL
Primark	UK Wide	Retail	Up to 400 management jobs could be lost at Primark as they set out to undertake a management overhaul.
Jaguar Land Rover	Multiple Sites	Automotive	Jaguar Land Rover's sales continued to fall during the third quarter of its financial year because of the ongoing shortage of computer chips.

NEW INVESTMENT, DEALS AND OPPORTUNITIES

COMPANY	LOCATION	SECTOR	DETAIL & SOURCE
University of Wolverhampton Racing Team	Wolverhampton	Motor Racing	The University of Wolverhampton Racing Team (UWR) has secured a sponsorship boost of £200,000 from a commercial investment firm. After a year of racing in 2021 that involved UWR being crowned Formula 3 Cup Class champions, the team will now be competing in the 2022 Praga Cup following an investment in a new Praga car and branded infrastructure from Highclear Investments.

COMPANY	LOCATION	SECTOR	DETAIL & SOURCE
MET Recruitment	Brierley Hill	Recruitment	A significant rise in demand for permanent staff has seen a Black Country recruitment specialist press the button on a second office at the Waterfront in Brierley Hill. MET Recruitment, which is on course to hit £9 million turnover by the end of the financial year, has invested more than £300,000 into launching its dedicated hub that will help companies tackle the severe recruitment shortage they are currently facing.
LLP Properties	Walsall	Property	Plans have been lodged to create 3 new large industrial units with an investment of £3mil in Walsall. If approved the build could create many new jobs.
BT	Birmingham	Telecoms	BT has announced plans to recruit nearly 41 graduates and 28 apprentices and apprentices in Birmingham for its September 2022 intake.
Pets at Home	Stafford	Retail	Pets at Home is building a 670,000sq ft storage and distribution centre at Stafford North Business Park, off the A34. The development will create up to 800 jobs
XPD Print	Leamington	Digital Print	A growing Warwickshire business is aiming to become a one-stop-shop for printing after successfully applying for a grant to invest in three new machines. XPD Print, which is based at Manor Farm in Hunningham Road, Offchurch, Leamington, specialises in digital printing, packaging, personalised photo gifts and party products, personalised foiling, bespoke finishing and treatments, and general print. The business, which will celebrate its tenth anniversary this year, contacted the Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership (CWLEP) Growth Hub for advice with its expansion plans.
SafetyFlex Barriers	Coventry	Manufacturing	Barriers and bollards manufacturer Safetyflex has completed a major anti-terrorism project on Australia's Gold Coast. The Coventry business has installed hundreds of Truckstopper bollards and crash-rated street furniture at the Surfers Paradise seaside resort in Queensland, which attracts more than 10 million visitors a year.
Persimmon Homes Central	Region-Wide	Housebuilding	A trio of developments are set to deliver more than 750 homes and represents an investment in the region of more than £105m by housebuilder Persimmon. Persimmon Homes Central will deliver 758 homes – including 159 affordable properties – at new developments opening in Birmingham, Coventry and Rugby during the first half of 2022.
Bornmore Metals	Dudley	Metals	A metals specialist based in Dudley has been acquired by a £40m turnover firm. Bornmore Metals has purchased P&P Non-Ferrous, a stockholder, processor, and distributor of non-ferrous metals.
Marlowe / Optima	Redditch	Healthcare	Marlowe's £135m acquisition of an occupational health and wellbeing company which employs about 1,000 staff has completed. Headquartered in Redditch with operational hubs in Glasgow, Sheffield, London and Taunton, Optima provides technology-enabled occupational health services across the UK. Of its 1,000-strong workforce, about 600 are clinical professionals.

COMPANY	LOCATION	SECTOR	DETAIL & SOURCE
Ola Electric	Coventry	Automotive	Indian EV manufacturer Ola Electric has outlined plans for a £100m investment in a global centre for advanced engineering and vehicle design in Coventry. Ola Futurefoundry will work in partnership with the design and engineering teams based at Ola Campus in Bangalore, India. The company will invest £100m over the next five years into the centre and staff it with more than 200 designers and automotive engineers.
BBC	Birmingham	Digital Media	The BBC has launched a Birmingham hub as part of a push to have 1,000 apprentices by 2026. The plans are backed by The Apprentice star Lord Alan Sugar. Two-hundred apprentices started with the BBC earlier this month in a variety of production, journalism, technology and business support roles. They will each get training and on the job experience.

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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