



BRIEFING PAPER

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Coronavirus: Latest economic data

By Daniel Harari

The coronavirus outbreak is causing significant disruption to the economy. Given the speed at which the outbreak has spread and the public health response to it, official economic data reflecting the impact will not be published until late April at the earliest.

Until then, a range of other sources, such as business surveys and anecdotal information, can be used to capture at least some of the impact of coronavirus on the economy. This briefing collates the economic data that is available into a single page that is frequently updated.

The coronavirus outbreak is [affecting the UK economy in a number of different ways](#): from enforced closures of many businesses, to supply chain disruption, and uncertainty over how long it will all last.

The rapid spread of the crisis – and the associated economic impact – means that official data such as retail sales, GDP and unemployment will not reflect the recent disruption until late April and May at the very earliest. Even then, the data will only capture the early stages of the impact of Covid-19, before the more stringent social distancing measures were implemented.

In the meantime, the focus will be on other sources of economic data. This includes business surveys, information from companies and other anecdotal information. Pieced together this can provide a guide to how the economy is performing and the scale of the downturn currently taking place. This page collects this information to provide a frequently updated single source of latest economic data on the impact of coronavirus.

Summary of key data

Business activity fell sharply during the period 12-27 March according to the closely-followed IHS Markit purchasing managers' index (PMI). Other surveys of businesses show a similar picture, particularly in consumer-facing services sectors such as non-food retail and entertainment (retail footfall is down by over 80% compared with a year ago).

A surge in recent claims for the Universal Credit benefit - 1.4 million in the four weeks from 16 March - suggest unemployment is rising. There have also been steep falls in consumer and business confidence. The Bank of England, based on discussions with businesses, report "a sudden, rapid decline in economic activity in recent weeks".

UK economic data

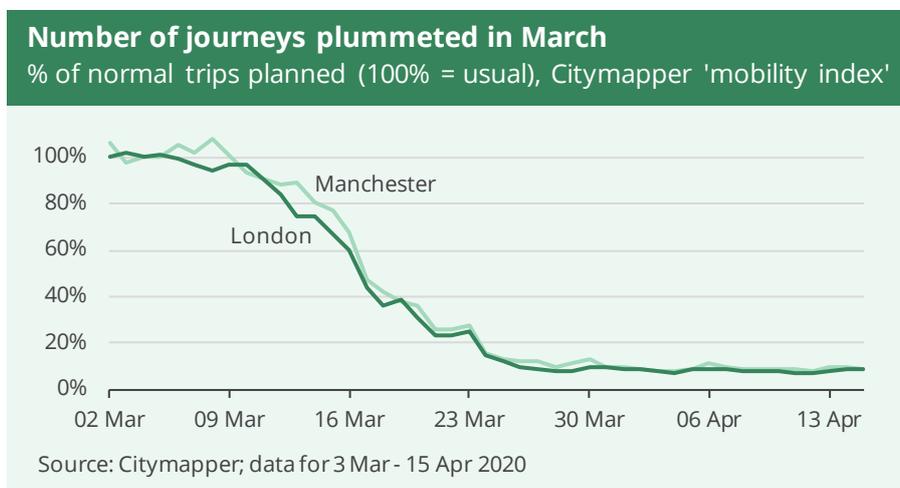
Below are short descriptions of latest economic statistics related to the impact of the coronavirus outbreak on the UK economy. Information is presented with the most recent release dates first. If information is regularly published, e.g. weekly, only the latest release is shown.

LAST UPDATED 16 APRIL 1PM

Daily updates

Retail footfall in the UK was around 80% lower in the first half of April compared with a year ago, according to [data from Springboard](#), a retail research provider.

Citymapper, the journey planning app, has compiled a 'Mobility Index' for [major cities around the world](#) based on the trips planned on its app. In London, [movement was 9% of normal levels](#) on 8 April, in [Manchester it was also 9%](#) and in [Birmingham it was 12%](#).



16 April 2020 (date of release)

A survey of businesses from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), conducted 23 March – 5 April, showed that [25% of businesses that responded had temporarily stopped trading](#). 41% of businesses who were continuing to trade were cutting staff levels in the short term (7% reported they were recruiting staff). 54% of businesses reported lower than normal levels of turnover (5% saw higher turnover), including 38% with substantially lower than normal turnover.

The British Retail Consortium (BRC) reported [retail sales declined by 4.3% in March](#) compared with a year ago, the largest monthly decline since the series began in 1995. Sales in the two weeks after the national lockdown was announced on 23 March declined by 27%. This followed an increase of 12% in the first three weeks of March.

Based on data from its debit and credit cards, Barclaycard reported [consumer spending had fallen by 6% in the month to 27 March](#) compared with a year ago.

15 April

The Department for Work and Pensions reported there were [1.4 million new claims \(applications\) for Universal Credit in the four weeks from 16 March](#). Weekly claims were approximately 270,000 in the first week from 16 March, 540,000 in the second, then 380,000 and 220,000 in the week beginning 6 April. This compares with an average of 55,000 per week over the course of 2019.

A survey conducted 8-10 April by the British Chambers of Commerce reported that [17% of businesses had less than a month's worth of cash in reserve](#). A further 36% had 1-3 months' worth and 6% had already run out of reserves. Meanwhile, 66% of businesses surveyed said they had furloughed some staff, with 31% saying they had furloughed at least three-quarters of their workforce.

A business survey from the BDO, an accountancy and business advisory firm, showed [large falls in output, confidence and employment in March](#).

Based on data from its debit and credit cards, [VISA reported a 12% decline in its UK consumer spending index in March](#) compared with a year ago.

14 April

The Office for Budget Responsibility, the independent fiscal watchdog of government, published a [report looking at the impact of a three-month lockdown on the economy and public finances](#). In this 'reference scenario' GDP would be around one-third lower during the period of lockdown and government borrowing would rise sharply.

8 April

A survey by the Recruitment and Employment Confederation and KPMG, the consultancy, showed [demand for permanent and temporary staff in March fell](#) by the steepest rates since 2009. The survey was conducted between 12-25 March.

7 April

The property website Zoopla said that there has been a [70% decline in new property sales agreed](#) since the coronavirus restrictions were put in place.

6 April

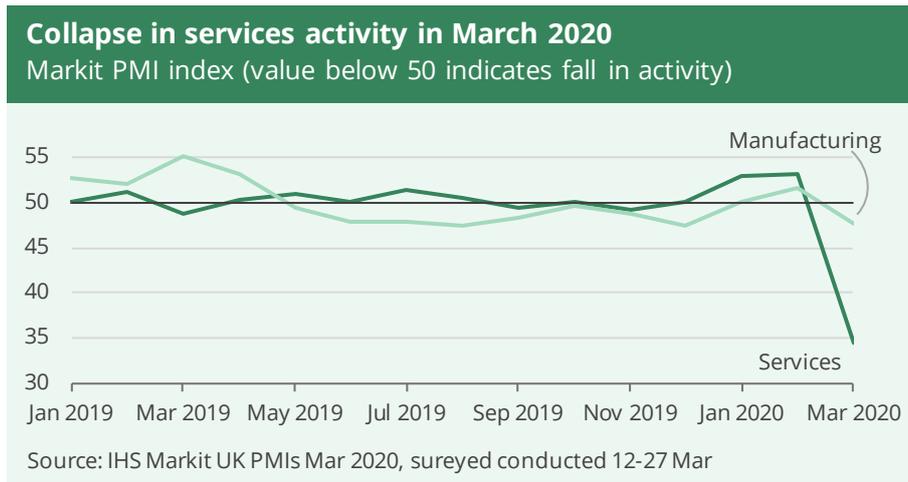
A GfK consumer confidence survey, conducted 16-27 March, showed its overall [consumer confidence index declining by 25 points to -34](#), the largest fall since the survey began in 1974.

[New car registrations \(sales\) fell by 44% in March](#) compared with a year ago the SMMT, the trade association for the automotive manufacturing sector, reported. They also now expect new car registrations to be 25% lower in 2020 than in 2019.

Analysis by the Centre for Economic and Business Research suggested that during the current lockdown there is a [reduction in UK economic output of 31% compared to normal](#) levels of activity – roughly £2.4bn per day. This varies considerably by sector.

3 April

A closely-watched survey of businesses – IHS Markit's purchasing managers' index (PMI) – showed [steep falls in business activity](#) (the biggest since the survey began in 1996), especially in the services sector. The survey was conducted between 12-27 March.



A high street sales tracker from BDO, an accountancy and business advisory firm, [showed a 18% decline in sales in March](#). In store sales were down 34%. Non-store sales were up 14%.

[Consumer confidence fell to -18%, down from -9% previously](#), according to a survey conducted 20-24 March by Deloitte, a consultancy. This was the lowest recorded level since the survey began in 2011. Confidence in job security saw a big decline.

1 April

The Corporate Finance Network of accountants reported that [18% of small- and medium-sized firms may not survive](#) until the end of April.

A survey of the UK workforce by academics showed that 49% expect to have difficult paying bills in coming weeks, with [57% of workers saying their earnings were lower than usual](#) in the previous week. 8% said they had lost their job in the past month. Workers on lower incomes were hit harder. The survey was conducted on 25 March.

31 March

An Opinium survey commissioned by Be the Business, an organisation that supports businesses raise productivity, reported that [7% of small businesses had stopped trading permanently](#), while a further 12% said they would likely close within a month. 8% have made redundancies, with a 15% planning to in the next month. The survey was conducted 20-24 March.

A survey, conducted 20-26 March, of 'business leaders' by the Institute of Directors, reported [39% thought coronavirus posed a severe threat](#) to their organisation. 40% had contacted their bank about an emergency loan.

[Grocery sales rose by 43% in the week ending 21 March](#) compared with a year before, market research firm Nielsen reported.

27 March

SMMT, the trade association for the automotive manufacturing sector, said that disruption to car production – all major UK car plants are shut due to the coronavirus outbreak – [could result in an 18% decline in UK car production in 2020](#), based on an "initial assessment".

26 March

Bank of England agents reported on business conditions in the first few weeks of March. Overall, agents reported [sharp falls in consumer demand](#) especially in the travel, leisure

and hospitality sectors. Car sales were also down significantly. Some businesses had put investment projects on hold to preserve cash. In summary:

"The Covid-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic has caused a sudden, rapid decline in economic activity in recent weeks. The situation has been described by many Agency contacts as being worse than the financial crisis in 2008."

The Chancellor announced a package of [financial support for many self-employed individuals](#). Further detail is available in the [Library briefing on support for businesses](#).

25 March

A [survey of retailers by the Confederation of British Industry \(CBI\)](#) reported retail sales broadly unchanged during the survey period of 26 February to 13 March. Food retailers reported strong growth while retailers selling non-essential items such as clothing reported falls in sales.

24 March

Expectations of output in the next three months among manufacturers fell to its lowest level since the financial crisis, according to a [survey of businesses in the sector by the Confederation of British Industry \(CBI\)](#). The industrial trends survey was conducted between 25 February and 13 March.

23 March

In a national TV address, [the Prime Minister announces more stringent measures](#) to enforce social distancing and stop the spread of coronavirus.

20 March

The Chancellor announced [additional support measures](#), including a policy intended to support businesses pay the wages of staff who are on unpaid leave but are still employed. Further detail is available in the [Library briefing on support for businesses](#).

19 March

The Bank of England [cut interest rates to 0.1% and announced a £200bn expansion](#) of its bond-buying programme (also known as quantitative easing), in order to support the economy and the functioning of the bond market. This was in addition to previous rate cuts and new schemes to provide cheap loans to banks, in order to improve their capacity to lend to the real economy.

17 March

The Chancellor announced measures to [financially support businesses hit by the coronavirus outbreak](#). These built on a smaller package of support [originally announced in the Budget on 11 March](#).

Further information

Library Insight, [Economic update: Coronavirus brings recession](#), 2 April

Library briefing paper, [Coronavirus: Effect on the economy and public finances](#), 27 March 2020

Library, [The UK economy: a dashboard](#)

Library briefing paper, [Support for businesses during the Coronavirus \(Covid-19\) outbreak](#), 3 April 2020

Resolution Foundation, [The economic effects of coronavirus in the UK](#), 10 April 2020

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