

Covid-19 Bulletin

16 March 20201



Imports and exports of cars, vans and fuel impacted by Covid

A [new report](#) from the Office for National Statistics shows how 2020 saw a fall in exports and imports of machinery and transport equipment, which includes cars, vans and office equipment.

Exports were down by 29.4% and imports down by 27.9% in the three months ending July 2020 compared with the same period in 2019.

With fewer people driving and refuelling vehicles, demand on fuel fell and fuel imports reduced by 58.5% in the three months ending July 2020. Although levels increased towards the end of 2020, imports were still down by 26.5% year-on-year in the three months ending January 2021.

Covid impact on the UK tourism industry

The Office for National Statistics' [report on how the pandemic has impacted the UK travel and tourism industry](#) revealed that monthly air passenger arrivals to the UK fell from 6,804,900 in February 2020 to 112,300 in April 2020, a fall of 98.3%.

Restrictions on travel introduced in response to the pandemic significantly affected global tourism, with an [81% drop in international arrivals in July 2020](#), and showing no or little signs of recovery in the subsequent months of last year.

CMA publishes report on protecting consumers

The Competition and Markets Authority has [published a report](#) summarising the key issues that have come to the attention of the CMA during the Covid pandemic to date.

This follows the CMA's programme of work, launched in March 2020, to identify, monitor and respond to competition and consumer problems arising from coronavirus.

The most significant Covid-19-related consumer problem is reported to be unfair practices in relation to cancellations and refunds. Complaints related to tourism, including holiday accommodation, hotels, travel agents, booking sites and package holidays account for well over half of all cancellation complaints.

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GDP fell by almost a fifth across rental and leasing

Latest figures from the Office for National Statistics report that GDP fell by 2.9% in January 2021, 9.0% below its February 2020, pre-pandemic level.

The air and rail transport sectors are two of the top three hardest hit industries, with air transport output down 93.6% in January 2021, compared to February 2020, and rail transport down 79.6%. The category of 'Rental & leasing activities' reports a 18.4% fall in output during the same period.

Transport equipment output fell by 11.1% in January 2021, following eight consecutive months of growth since April 2020. Output was 20.7% weaker than February 2020. Output for motor vehicles was 19.9% below the most recent peak in June 2019 because of export-led weakness during January 2021.

The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT) reported that during January 2021, the total number of cars manufactured was 27.3% weaker than January 2020, mainly because of a 29.1% fall in exports.

Share views on Covid-status certification

The Government is reviewing whether Covid-status certification could play a role in reopening our economy and has launched a two-week consultation to seek views of businesses and individuals.

The consultation, open until Monday 29 March, asks three questions. The review will be concluded ahead of Step Four of the four-stage lockdown easing plan, which will happen no earlier than 21 June.

Share your views with the BVRLA via thomas@bvrla.co.uk

Workplace testing kits

Over 48,000 businesses have registered their interest in the government's free workplace testing programme, using rapid lateral flow tests that can give a result in 30 minutes.

Businesses in England with employees who cannot work from home can register on or before 31 March 2021 to take advantage of the free testing programme.

The Government has also updated its list of approved suppliers of private coronavirus testing kits.

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Working from home statistics

The Office for National Statistics' [weekly report](#) on the social impacts of coronavirus shows that in the period ending 7 March, 48% of working adults had left home for work in the past seven days.

The proportion of working adults reporting travelling to work exclusively decreased slightly to 38% this week compared with 39% last week. Those working from home exclusively increased slightly to 36% this week compared with 32% last week.

1-in-10 (10%) working adults reported both working from home and travelling to work this week.

Transport usage figures

Latest weekly [transport usage figures](#) show that in the past week motor vehicle usage peaked at 77% of pre-pandemic levels, whilst national rail usage peaked at 19% and London Underground usage peaked at 22%.

Latest UK infection rates

Latest [weekly figures](#) show that the UK R-rate is between 0.6 and 0.8 meaning that, on average, every 10 people infected will infect between 6 and 8 other people. The growth rate is between -7% and -4% meaning that the number of new infections is shrinking by between 4% and 7% every day.

The latest Office for National Statistics' [infection survey](#) shows that in the week ending 6 March infection rates had declined in England and Wales, with 1-in-270 and 1-in-365 testing positive. Infections have levelled off in Scotland and Northern Ireland, with 1-in-320, and 1-in-310 testing positive.