

COVID-19 Fortnightly Insights Report

Research & Intelligence
16th October 2020



Executive Summary – social and economic

- The most recent COVID-19 data (4th– 10th Oct) reveals there are now 317 COVID-19 cases per 100k in West Yorkshire, up from 262 a week earlier.
- UK GDP growth slowed in August, despite the Eat Out to Help Out scheme, which helped accommodation & food account for half of all the 2.1% growth seen that month.
- Out of work benefit claims continued to rise in September, though the 1% increase seen locally is the third consecutive relatively small rise, following on from substantial increases in the spring. Vacancies advertised increased by a further 5% are now back in line with pre-lockdown levels.
- The sharp rise in business liquidations has continued into early October, though this is likely to be at least partially attributable to the pause in such activity until last month.
- Footfall remains low in most major UK cities, including Leeds, according to Centre for Cities' recovery tracker, though some smaller cities and large towns including Huddersfield have seen a stronger increase.
- A survey with Leeds-based start-up Scaled Insights shows most respondents in West Yorkshire have seen their employment and income sustained during the pandemic, with most saying they had more spare cash than before. However, spending is down perhaps reflecting fewer opportunities to spend or an increased desire to save.

Executive Summary – transport

- Currently, bus use (based on the combined level of MCard and concessionary fare use) is around 52% of the baseline level (first week of March 2020).
- Data from bus ticket machines reveals a subdued recovery in the Under 26 / Student cohort as students return to university whilst travel by passengers aged under 19 reached 78% of baseline. Adults ticket use (the largest market share) has plateaued at 56% of the baseline level (March 2020).
- Rail recovery has stagnated and footfall through Leeds Railway Station is currently 31% of baseline (early March).
- Although short of 2019 levels, footfall in Leeds City Centre had been recovering until the end of September when footfall began to decrease following the governments advice about home working.
- NO₂ concentrations continue to increase in and on the approach to urban centres at the traditional AM and PM weekday commuting peaks, indicating increased car commuting.
- The number of monthly passengers using Leeds Bradford Airport over the summer was less than 17% of the volume in summer 2019.

Introduction

- This report presents the latest developments with regards to COVID-19 for West Yorkshire and Leeds City Region. It draws on a number of official and unofficial data sources to present the latest intelligence and is primarily focused on the **economic and transport** impacts.
- It includes analysis of anecdotal evidence from interactions with businesses, and it is recognised that this analysis is based upon subjective views from those businesses which may or may not reflect the views of the wider business community.
- In some cases, data is presented for a single authority or area. In those instances, further data is being sought to enable more comprehensive analysis of other areas. Please send any data to contribute for analysis or any comments on this report to Research@westyorks-ca.gov.uk.

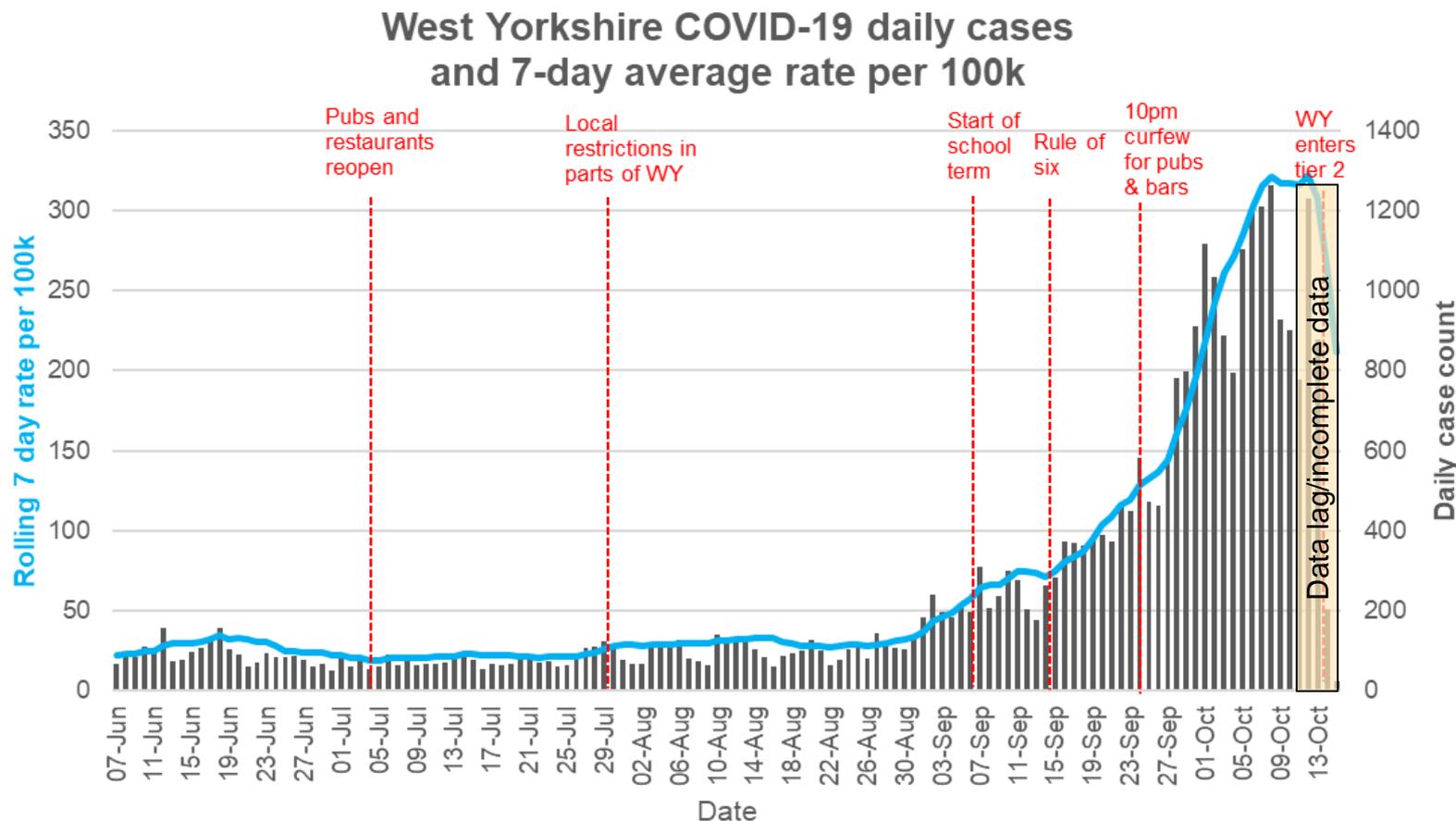
Virus prevalence – West Yorkshire

Area	Total cases per 100k people (4 - 10 Oct) Most recent data week	Total cases per 100k people (27 Sept – 3 Oct) Previous week	Absolute Difference
Bradford	331.2	288.0	43.2 
Calderdale	242.1	161.8	80.3 
Kirklees	244.0	183.5	60.5 
Leeds	404.0	367.6	36.4 
Wakefield	234.3	152.7	81.6 
West Yorkshire	317.2	261.9	55.3 
England	161.8	117.5	44.3 

The most recent week's COVID-19 data (4th – 10th October) reveals a continued increase in the rate of positive COVID-19 cases. There are now 317 COVID-19 cases per 100k in West Yorkshire and 268.9 per 100k in Yorkshire and the Humber, which compares to the England average of 116.8 per 100k. Note, regionally, the highest rates are in the North West (364.9 per 100k) and the North East (298.2 per 100k).

The positivity rate (proportion of positive tests) has increased, suggesting the increase in cases is not related to increased testing. Locally the proportion of positive tests is highest in Leeds (13.7%), followed by Bradford (11.2%), Kirklees (10%), Wakefield (9.4%) and Calderdale (9.2%).

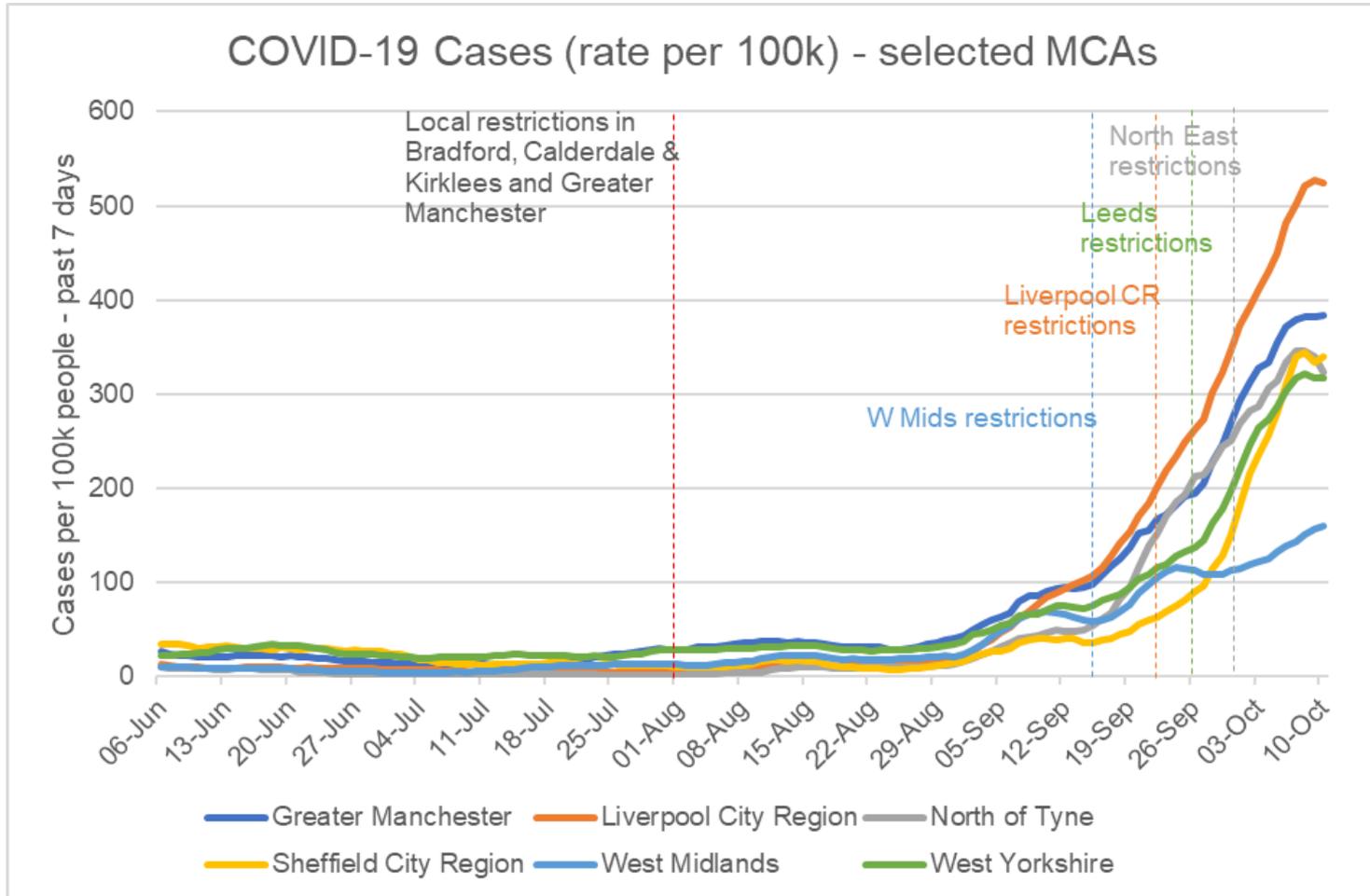
Virus prevalence – West Yorkshire trend



The chart above reveals the trend in the number of daily COVID-19 cases in West Yorkshire and the 7-day rolling rate per 100k population. The chart clearly illustrates the rate of COVID-19 infection rose sharply in the last couple of weeks. Note there is a lag in the very latest data PHE COVID-19 data to account for all test results to be processed and recorded.

Virus prevalence – Selected MCAs time series

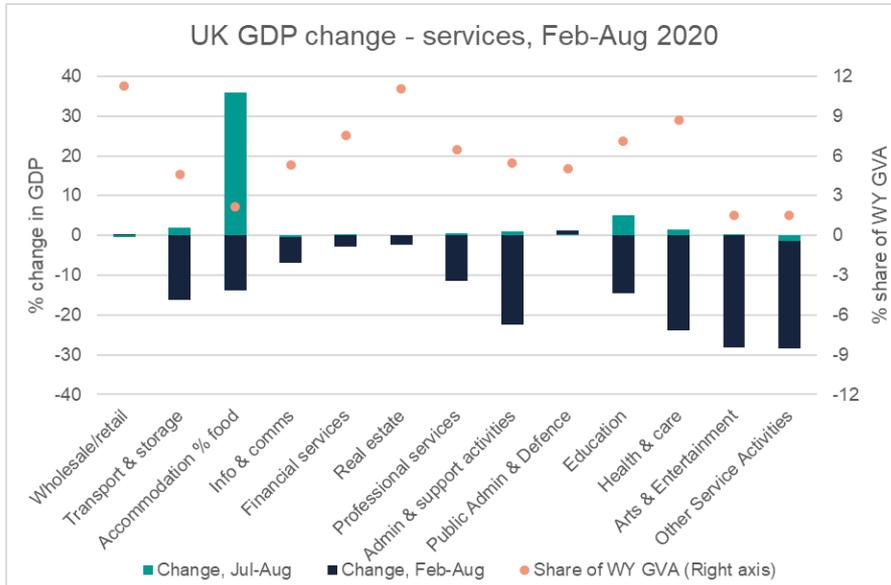
Although local restrictions have been introduced in different places at different times, the below chart shows that MCAs analysed here all saw a sharp rise in infection rates around the start of September.



Economic Insights

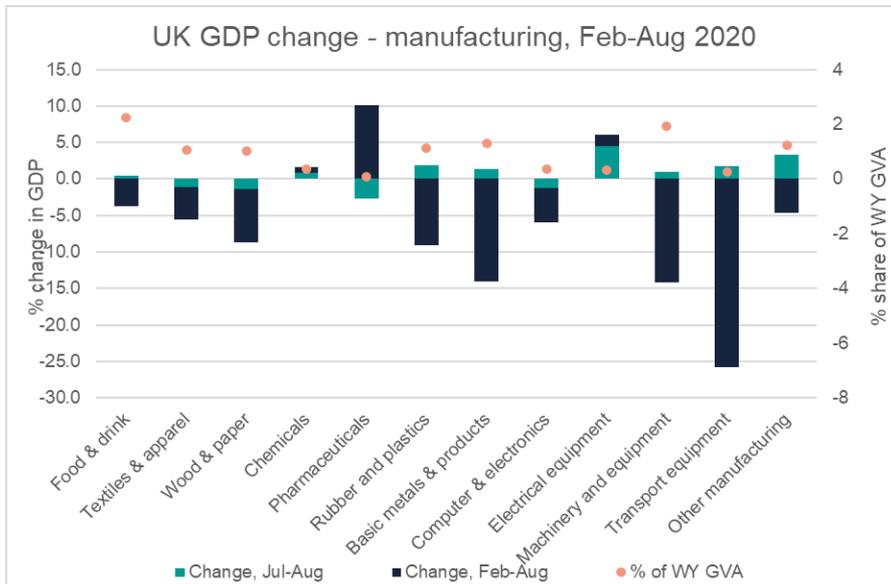


GDP growth slowed in August, but sustained by hospitality



UK GDP growth slowed to 2.1% in August, down from 6.4% in July. The national economy remains 9.6% smaller than in February.

The accommodation & food sector was the main driver of growth, increasing by 36%, propelled by the Eat Out to Help Out Scheme. The sector was responsible for over half of all growth in the UK in August, despite being a relatively small share of overall economic output. The sector accounts for 2.2% of West Yorkshire GVA, though it is a significant employer with 70,000 jobs. Most other areas of the service sector saw little change month on month.

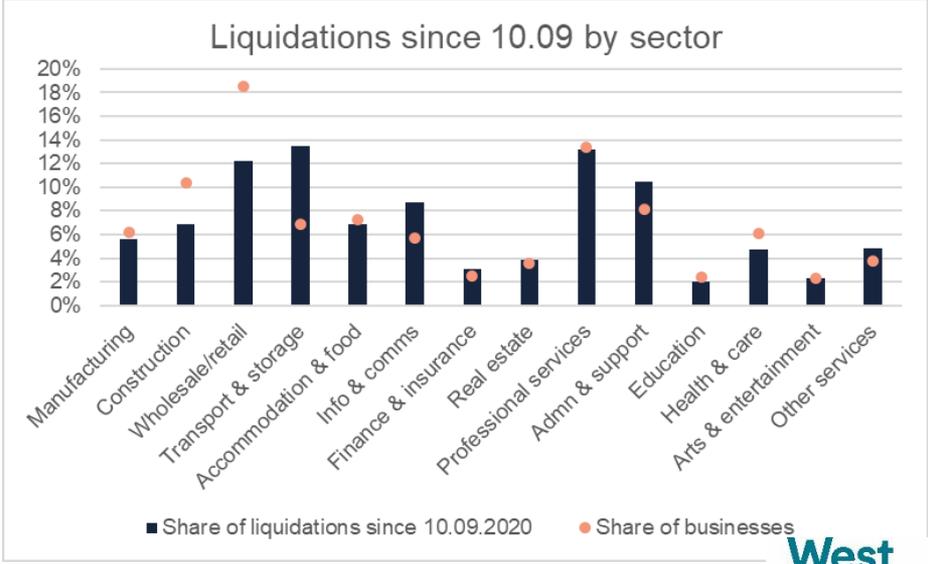
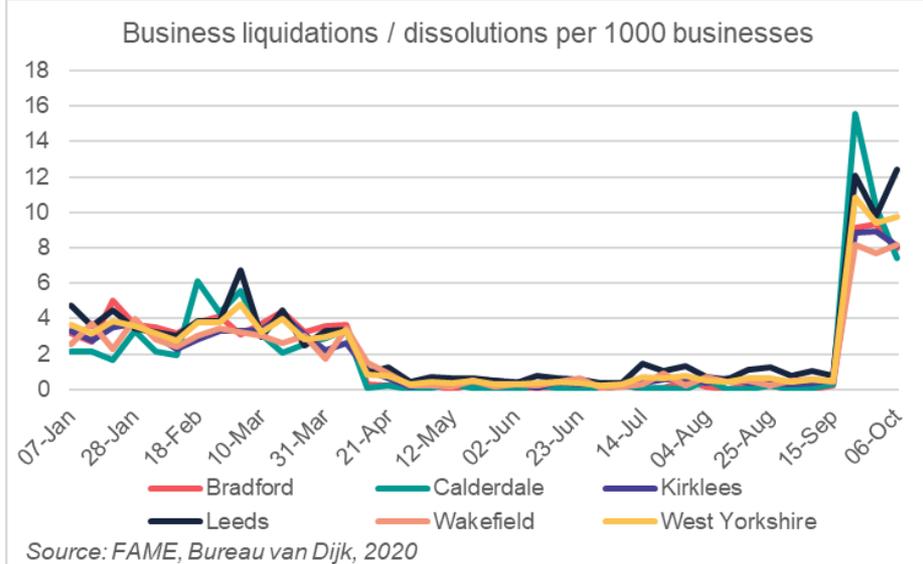


This growth in accommodation & food did not seemingly feed through into food & drink manufacturers, where output was up only 0.4%. This subsector accounts for 2.2% of all West Yorkshire GVA, more than any other area of manufacturing. It is followed by machinery & equipment, which despite some growth in August remains 14.2% below February levels.

Company liquidations remain high after recent protections eased

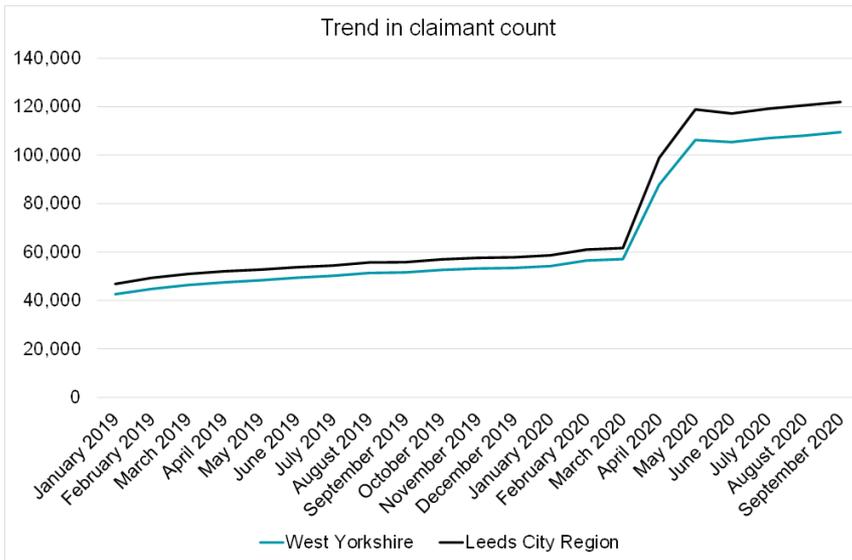
The recent upturn in business liquidations has continued into early October, which may represent a signal of business distress but to some extent is also likely to reflect the removal of protections to prevent liquidations during the pandemic which were eased on September 10th. Data is subject to a lag so may be revised, but as of October 12th, 920 businesses in West Yorkshire had been dissolved / liquidated in the week to 6th October. This is similar to the 890 in the previous week, but is double the highest level seen in the weeks before the pandemic.

9.7 businesses per 1,000 were liquidated in the week to October 6th, though this was higher in Leeds (12.4), which may reflect a higher proportion of businesses with head offices in Leeds. In sector terms, dissolutions mostly follow a sector's share of the business base, but were notably higher in transport and storage (13.4% of dissolutions, 6.9% of businesses), and information & comms (8.7% of dissolutions, 5.7% of businesses) and business administration (10.5% of liquidations, 8.7% of businesses).



*Data includes companies whose registered office is in West Yorkshire, but whose physical location may be elsewhere

Third consecutive small monthly increase in claimant count

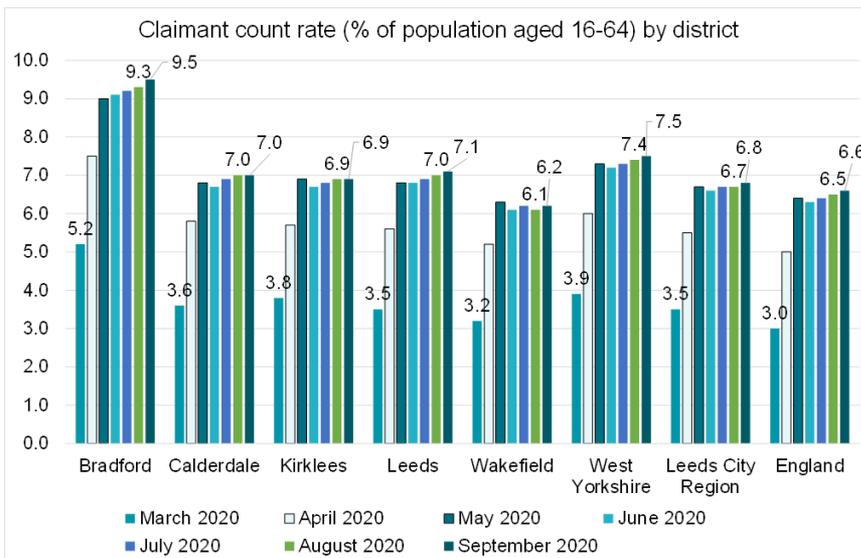


The latest available claimant count data for September (published on 13 October), show a third consecutive small monthly increase both locally and nationally.

Leeds City Region saw a 1,390 (+1.2%) monthly increase in claimants in September, while West Yorkshire's count increased by 1,435 (+1.3%). Nationally, there was growth of 24,600 (1.1%). For districts the increase ranged from 1.9% for Bradford (+585 claimants); 1.4% for Leeds (+490); and 1.2% for both Kirklees (+230) and Wakefield (+165).

Comparing September 2020 with the pre-lockdown period in March 2020 the number of claimants has increased by 60,300 (98%) in Leeds City Region and by 52,400 (92%) across West Yorkshire. The England average increase is 117%. This means there are now 121,900 claimants in Leeds City Region and 109,500 claimants in West Yorkshire, compared with March figures of 61,600 and 57,100 respectively.

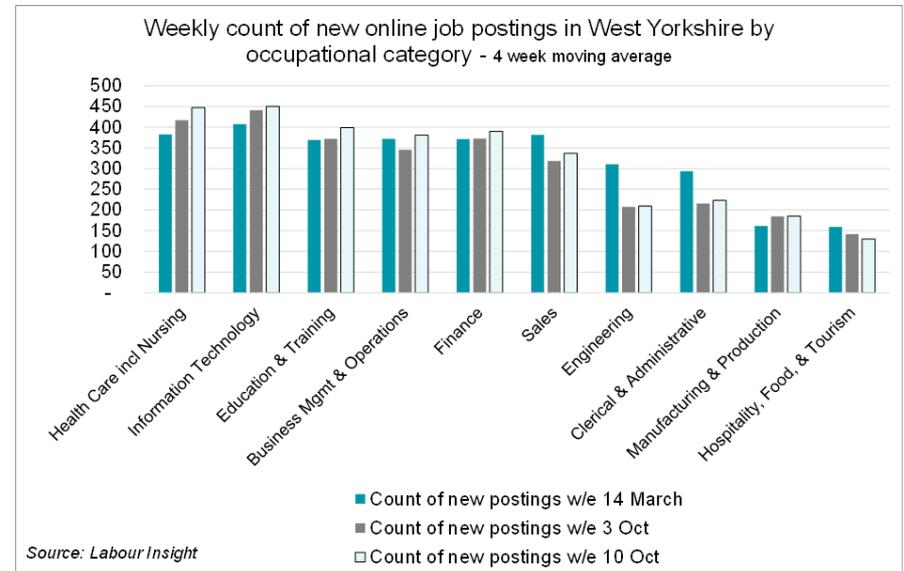
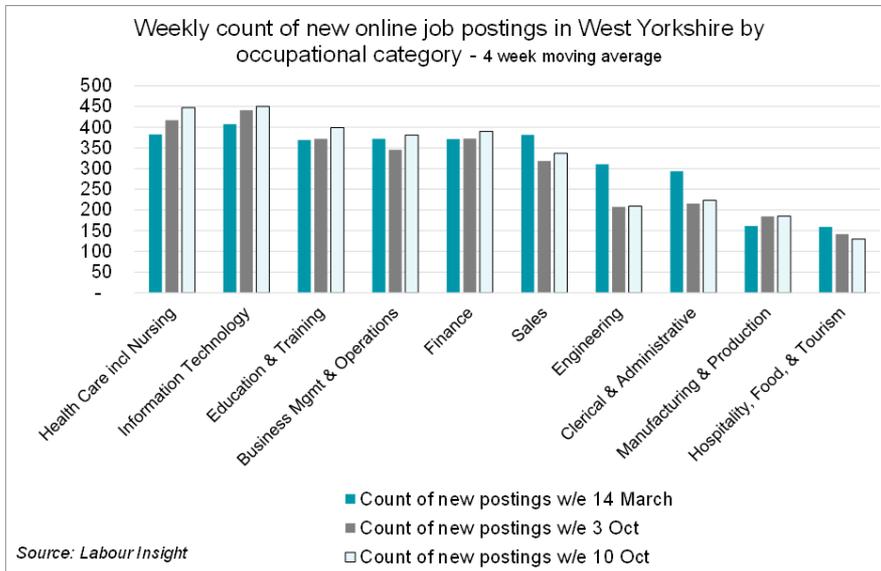
Between March and September the claimant rate (expressed as a proportion of adult residents) rose from 3.5% to 6.8% in the City Region and from 3.9% to 7.5% in West Yorkshire. Both areas' rates remain above the England average claimant rate of 6.6%.



Vacancies reach pre-lockdown levels

The number of vacancies for jobs in West Yorkshire posted online during week ending 10 October was 5% higher than in the previous week using a 4-week moving average; this is similar to the national average increase of 4%. This represents a slowdown on the 15% growth seen in week ending 3 October. All council areas saw some growth except for Calderdale, which remained static. The latest West Yorkshire weekly total is 2% higher than in week ending 14 March (pre-crisis) but Calderdale and Leeds continue to face deficits relative to pre-crisis vacancy levels of 19% and 11% respectively.

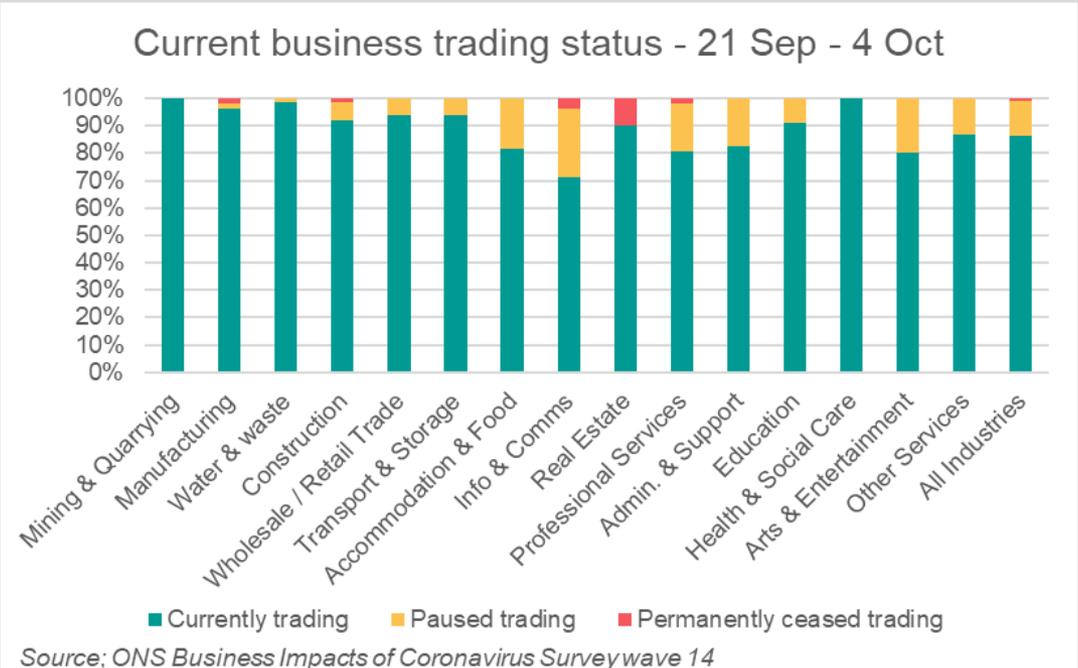
Most occupational categories saw growth in the past week, though hospitality, leisure and tourism saw small week on week declines. Vacancies are most significantly above pre-lockdown levels in health & care, IT and finance occupations.



More than 1 in 5 businesses still not trading in some sectors

86% of businesses nationally were trading in the fortnight to October 4th, according to the ONS Business Impacts of Coronavirus Survey. However, some sectors lag behind this considerably. A quarter of businesses in information & communications remain temporarily closed – this would equate to 1,400 businesses in West Yorkshire if replicated locally. Almost a fifth of businesses are temporarily closed in accommodation & food and administration & support, which would represent a further 1,300 and 1,400 respectively in West Yorkshire. Professional services (2,200) and arts & culture (430) both have around 17% of businesses closed.

The survey suggests around 1.2% of businesses have stopped trading permanently. This is highest in the real estate sector, where it stands at 10% (though the sample size is relatively small), followed by information & comms (3.6%) and manufacturing (2.1%).



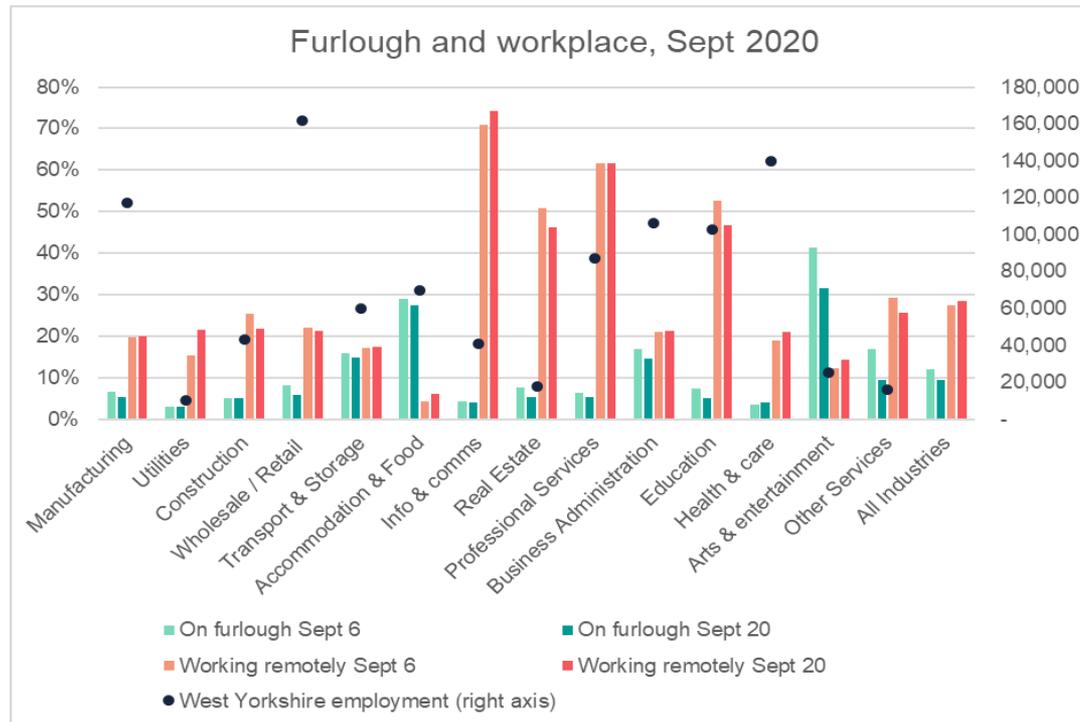
Source: ONS Business Impacts of Coronavirus Survey wave 14

Source: Office for National Statistics, 2020

The return from homeworking appears to have stalled

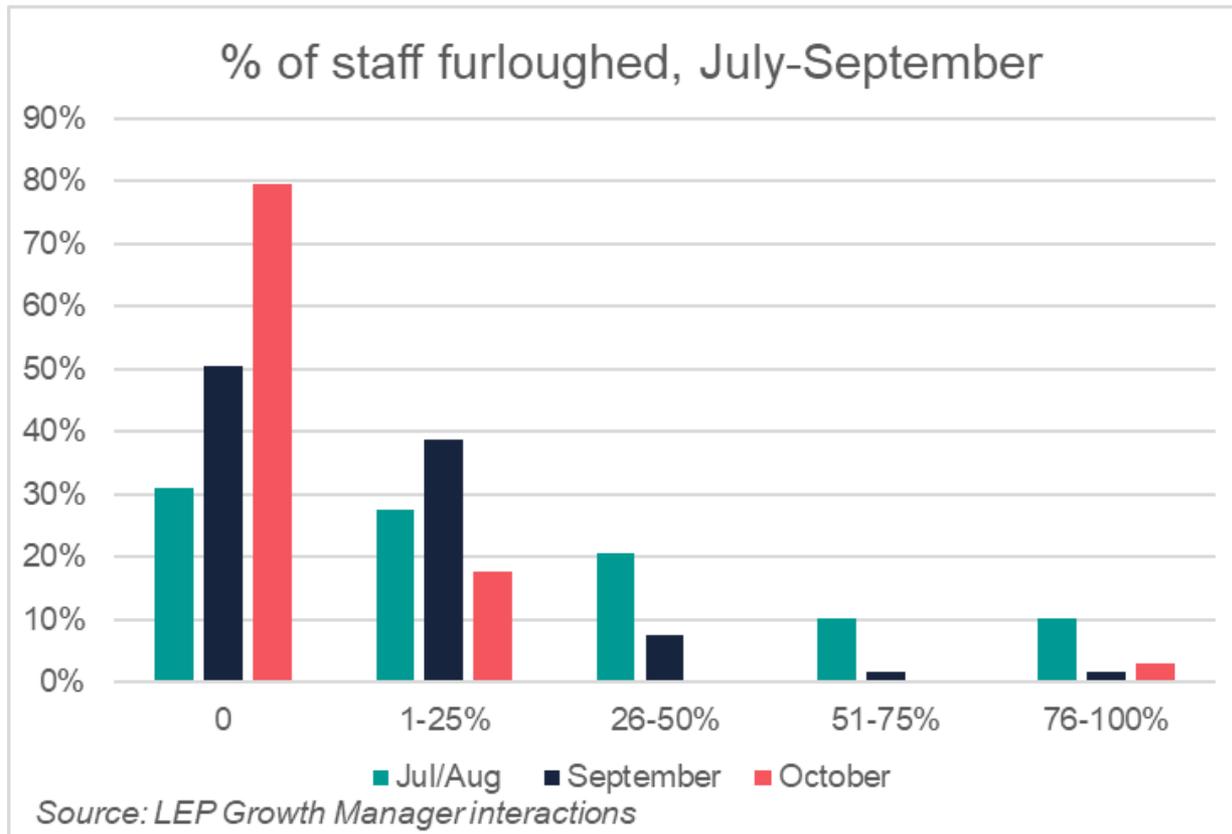
Data from the ONS Business Impacts of Coronavirus Survey shows a further reduction in use of the furlough scheme nationally in the fortnight to September 20, compared to the preceding fortnight. 9.4% of jobs were fully or partially furloughed, down from 11.9% in the fortnight to September 6th. Most notably was a drop from 41.4% to 31.6% of jobs furloughed in the arts & entertainment sector, which employs 25,000 people in West Yorkshire.

However, the return to normal workplaces seems to have stalled, with the proportion working remotely increasing slightly from 27% to 28%. A fall in education workers working remotely, likely following the reopening of schools, was offset by more remote working in info & comms and utilities.



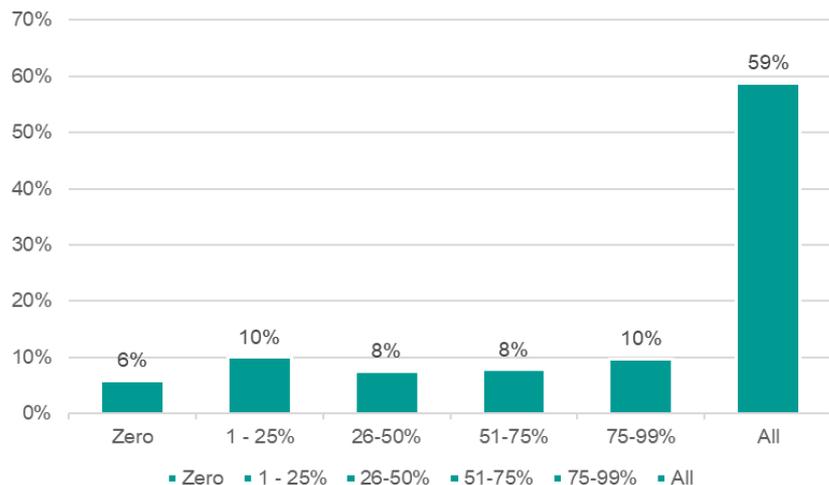
Growth manager interactions suggest furlough use decline, but sector challenges

In a similar vein to previous weeks, companies who are not directly in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors but whose client base is in those sectors report challenging conditions, and some are concerned that further local restrictions on those sectors will exacerbate the problems. Some businesses are seeing positive impacts however – particularly those focused on home improvements, with some construction companies also reporting a positive outlook. Although the number of interactions to report on so far in October is limited, it suggests a continued reduction in jobs furloughed, with only one business to date reporting more than 25% of staff on furlough.



Most City Region businesses do not expect to need less commercial space post-COVID

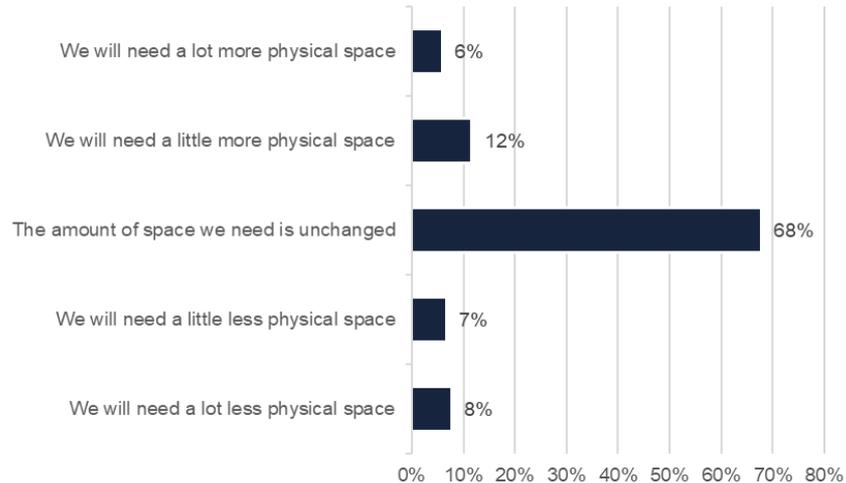
Workspace currently being used



The Quarterly Economic Survey with the Chambers of Commerce in Leeds City Region (carried out in late August / early September) asked businesses how they were currently using their space and whether they expected that to change over the next year.

Two in five (41%) businesses said they were currently using less space than they were in March, as many businesses continued to face reduced operations and/or increased homeworking. 6% were using no workspace at all, with the remainder fairly evenly split in how much space they are using.

Future work space needs



Looking ahead, more than four in five (86%) businesses expect to need at least as much space as they had pre-lockdown. Two thirds (68%) expect the amount of space needed to be unchanged, and 18% expect to need more physical space – more than the 15% who expect to need less space.

Whilst anticipating future needs at the moment is highly uncertain, this does suggest that many businesses are not anticipating any potential changes in working patterns to significantly reduce their need for commercial space.

Centre for Cities High street recovery tracker

Footfall Top 10

Basildon	132
Chatham	129
Birkenhead	123
Blackpool	116
Burnley	112
Doncaster	108
Telford	107
Southend	105
Wigan	103
Bournemouth	102

Bottom 10

London	35
Manchester	51
Cardiff	51
Birmingham	55
Oxford	55
Liverpool	59
Edinburgh	60
Leeds	61
Glasgow	62
Newcastle	65

Spend Top 10

Blackpool	116
Huddersfield	110
Burnley	109
Birkenhead	105
Barnsley	104
Northampton	103
Hull	102
Bournemouth	101
Basildon	102
Plymouth	101

Bottom 10

Aldershot	57
London	59
Coventry	65
Southampton	66
Newcastle	66
Oxford	67
Manchester	67
Cardiff	68
Sunderland	69
Edinburgh	70

Centre for Cities is a think tank dedicated to improving the economy of the largest towns and cities in the UK.

Over the period of lockdown they have created an index tracking the average footfall (using mobile phone data) and spending (using credit card data) that is occurring across the UK towns and cities, with 100 being pre-March 2020 lockdown measures.

With this index they have created ranking of the cities that have recovered the most and least. The latest index, published 9th October, covers the period up to 29th September.

A pattern emerges when looking at the type of cities/towns that are present in the top 10 and bottom 10 for both footfall and spending. Smaller towns and cities such as Blackpool, Huddersfield and Hull have seen a much stronger recovery than larger cities, even going above the pre-lockdown baseline.

While larger cities, like London, Manchester and Leeds have been struggling to recover to pre-lockdown figures, with footfall still at around half of those levels in Manchester, Cardiff and Birmingham and even lower in London.

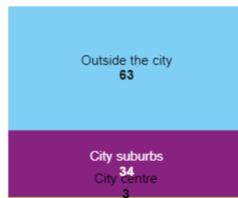
Centre for Cities High street recovery tracker

Origin footfall and spending in Leeds

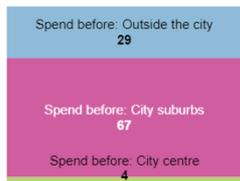
Where were people coming from before lockdown?



Where are people coming from now? (Last full week of Sept)



Where was spend coming from?



Where is spend coming from now? (Penultimate week of Sept)



The origin of the footfall coming into the different city and towns can shed some light as to why the smaller cities and towns have seen faster recovery, with Huddersfield having recovered to 88% of pre lockdown footfall and spending has gone to 110% of pre lockdown level.

Footfall in Huddersfield is split evenly between people coming from outside the city and the city suburbs. While for Leeds the majority of footfall originates from outside the city. Across the cities and towns across West Yorkshire there has been a slight increase of footfall originating from outside the city/town suburbs.

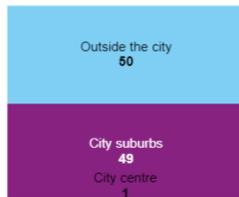
The recovery these smaller cities and towns are seeing potentially originates from people being more comfortable or electing to travel smaller distances to high street closer to them.

Origin footfall and spending in Huddersfield

Where were people coming from before lockdown?



Where are people coming from now? (Last full week of Sept)



Where was spend coming from?

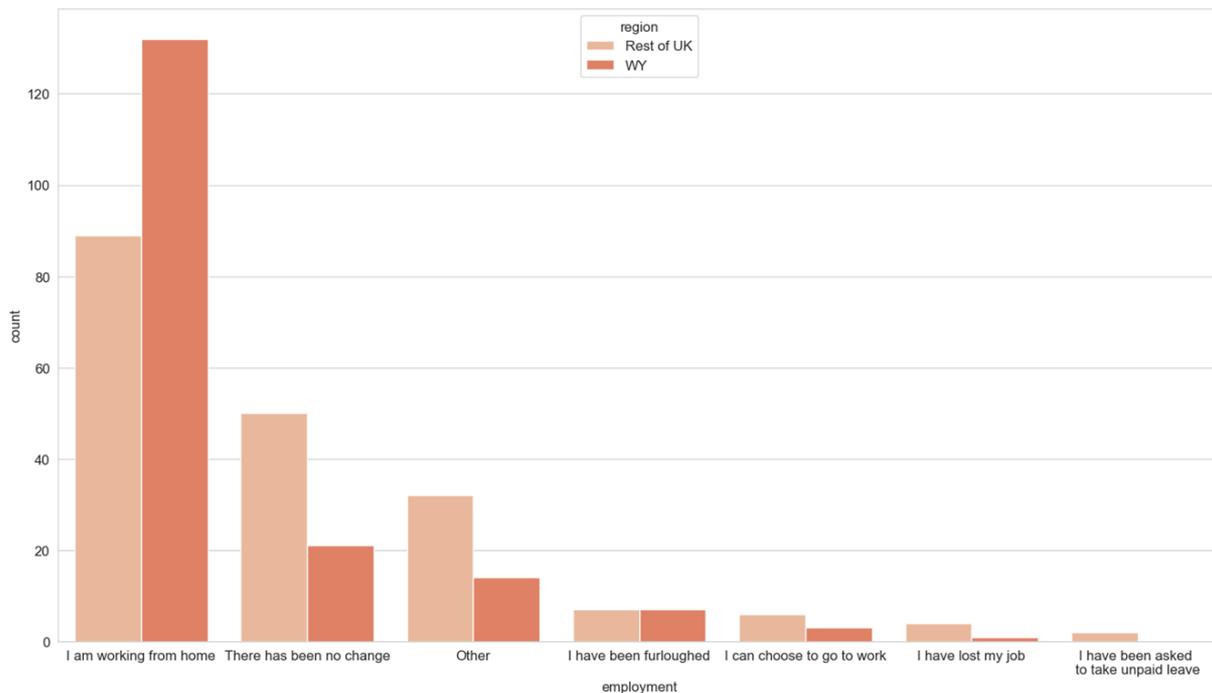


Where is spend coming from now? (Penultimate week of Sept)



Employment and income unchanged for most, but more homeworking

Scaled Insights, a Behavioural AI start-up based in Nexus, Leeds, has been conducting a longitudinal survey on Adults' Thoughts and Behaviours Relating to COVID-19. The first survey ran in April and May. Over 1000 people in UK responded. The 3-month follow-up online survey was conducted in August and September. People who had consented and provided a valid email address in the first survey were contacted to participate. 403 people in the UK responded to the follow up survey with almost half (194) in West Yorkshire. The survey included questions on peoples' employment situation, finances and how the pandemic had affected their outlook and intentions.



As the chart to the left shows, very few people reported losing their job as a result of COVID-19 though the majority did report that they are now working from home – this was more prevalent in West Yorkshire than in the rest of the country.

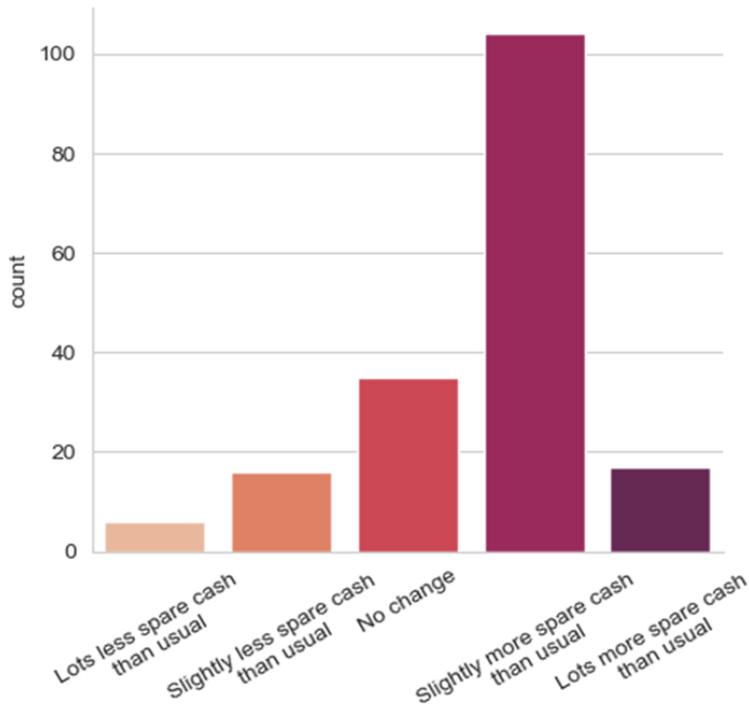
With respondents' employment status largely unchanged, a majority reported no significant impact on their income, though respondents in West Yorkshire were slightly less likely to report a fall in income.

Household finances are stronger, but spending is down

With incomes relatively stable, most respondents reported having slightly more spare cash than usual though around 1 in 10 reported having less spare cash. Despite having more spare cash than usual, most people said they were cutting back spending due to COVID-19. This could reflect fewer opportunities to spend on consumer and leisure activities, or it could reflect a desire to increase saving in an uncertain economic environment.

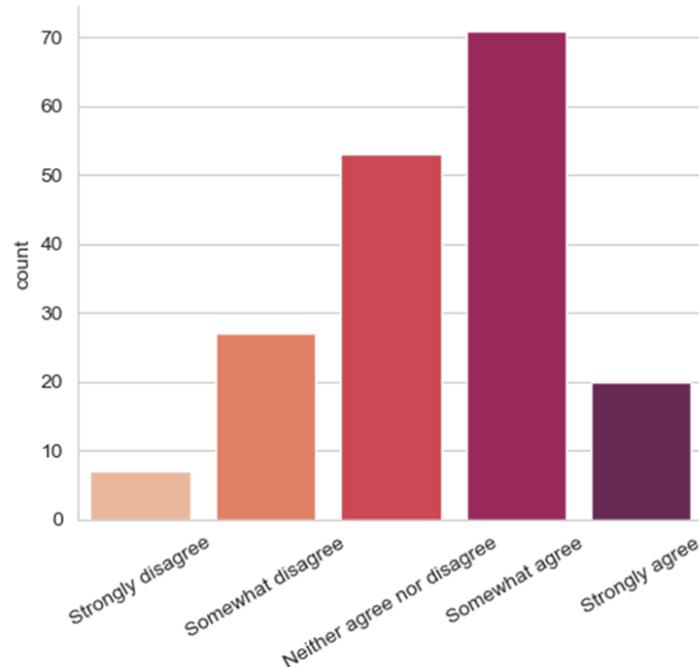
Financial situation since lockdown

WY mean=0.62



I am cutting back spending due to COVID-19

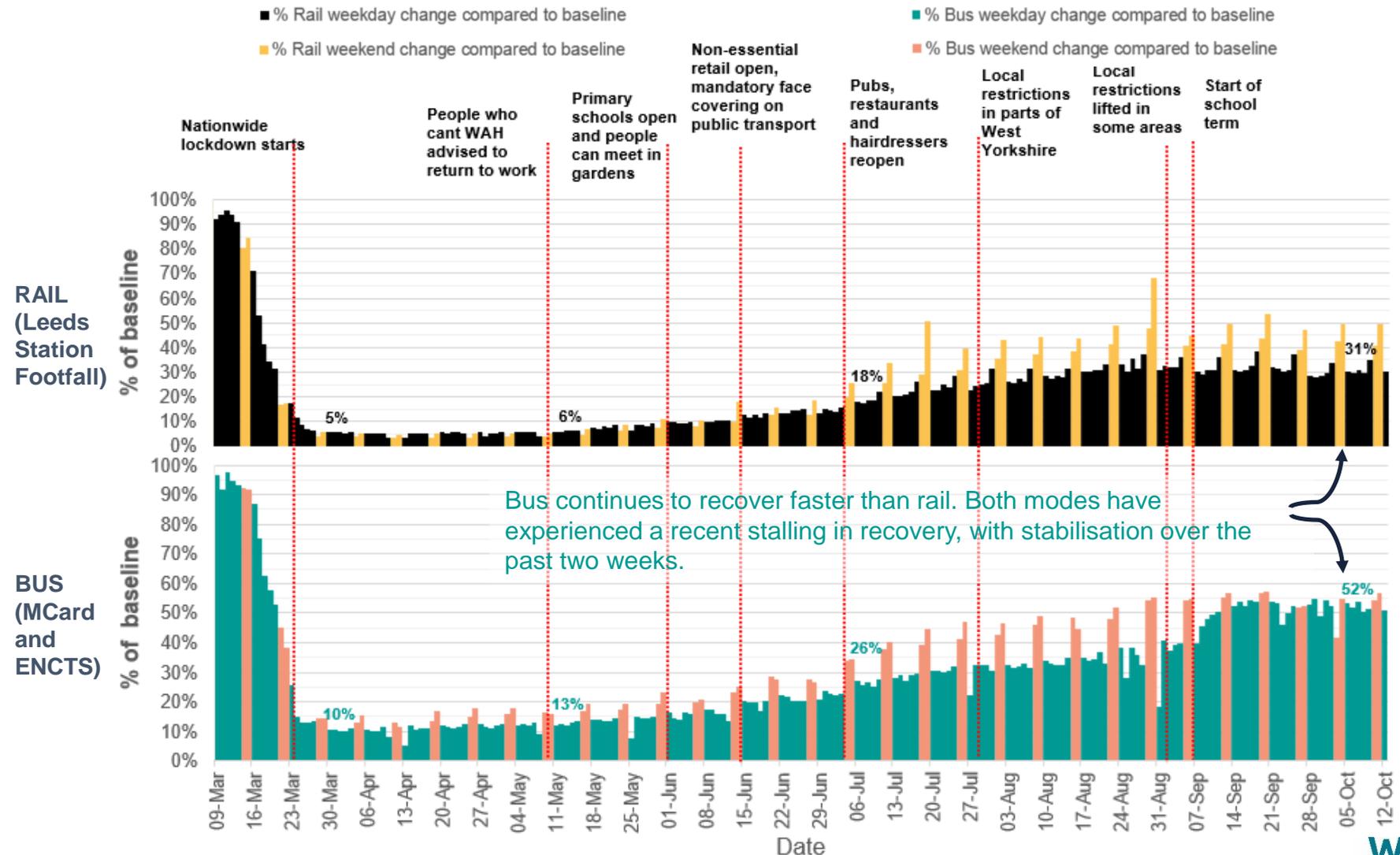
WY mean=0.39



Transport Insights



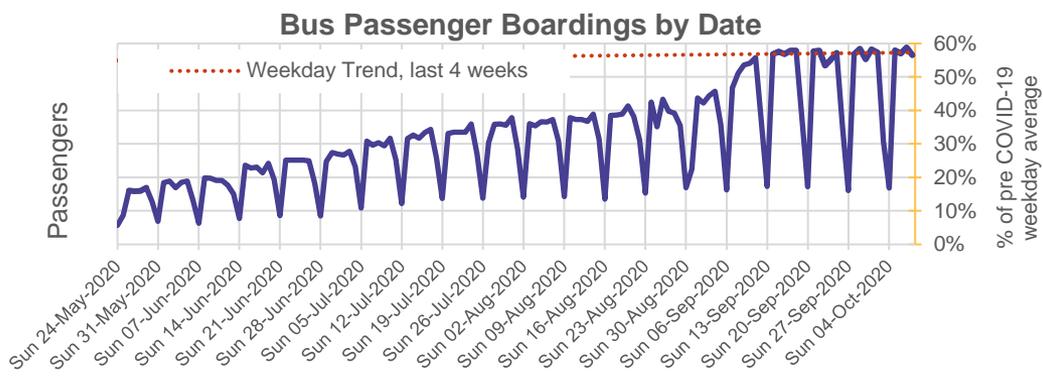
Level of bus and rail use have stabilised over the last two weeks but remain at 52% and 31% of baseline (early March) levels respectively



Baseline period is Monday 2nd - Friday 6th March 2020 (weekdays) and 29th Feb -1st March and 6th-7th March (weekends)

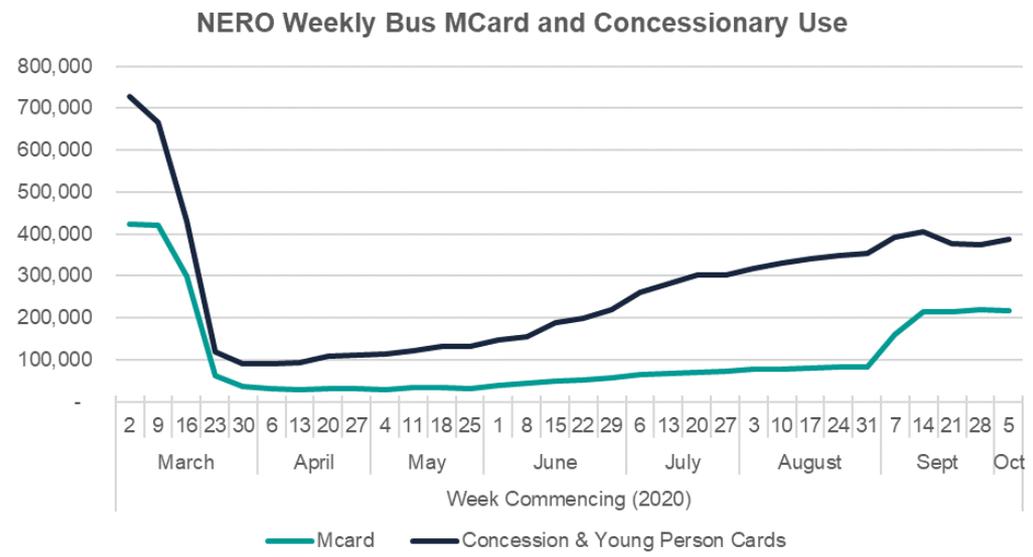
Source: Leeds Rail Station Footfall -Network Rail and MCard and English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS)

Bus patronage increased rapidly at the start of school term but has only recovered marginally in the last few weeks



Source: Ticket machine data from First, Arriva, Yorkshire Tiger, Transdev
Coverage: Over 90% of scheduled bus miles in West Yorkshire

Bus patronage including operators' own tickets shows only a marginal upward trend in recent weeks. The data available is up to 9th October. Further charts reveal differences within the overall trends. The whole week total is 56% of pre-COVID-19 (or a reduction of 44%) which appears stronger than the NERO figures in the chart below.



For the week beginning Monday 5th October 2020, the combined level of MCard and concessionary fare use shows a reduction of 48% against the week beginning 2nd March 2020, an increase of 2% against the previous week. This indicates a stabilisation of patronage following the modest September decline.

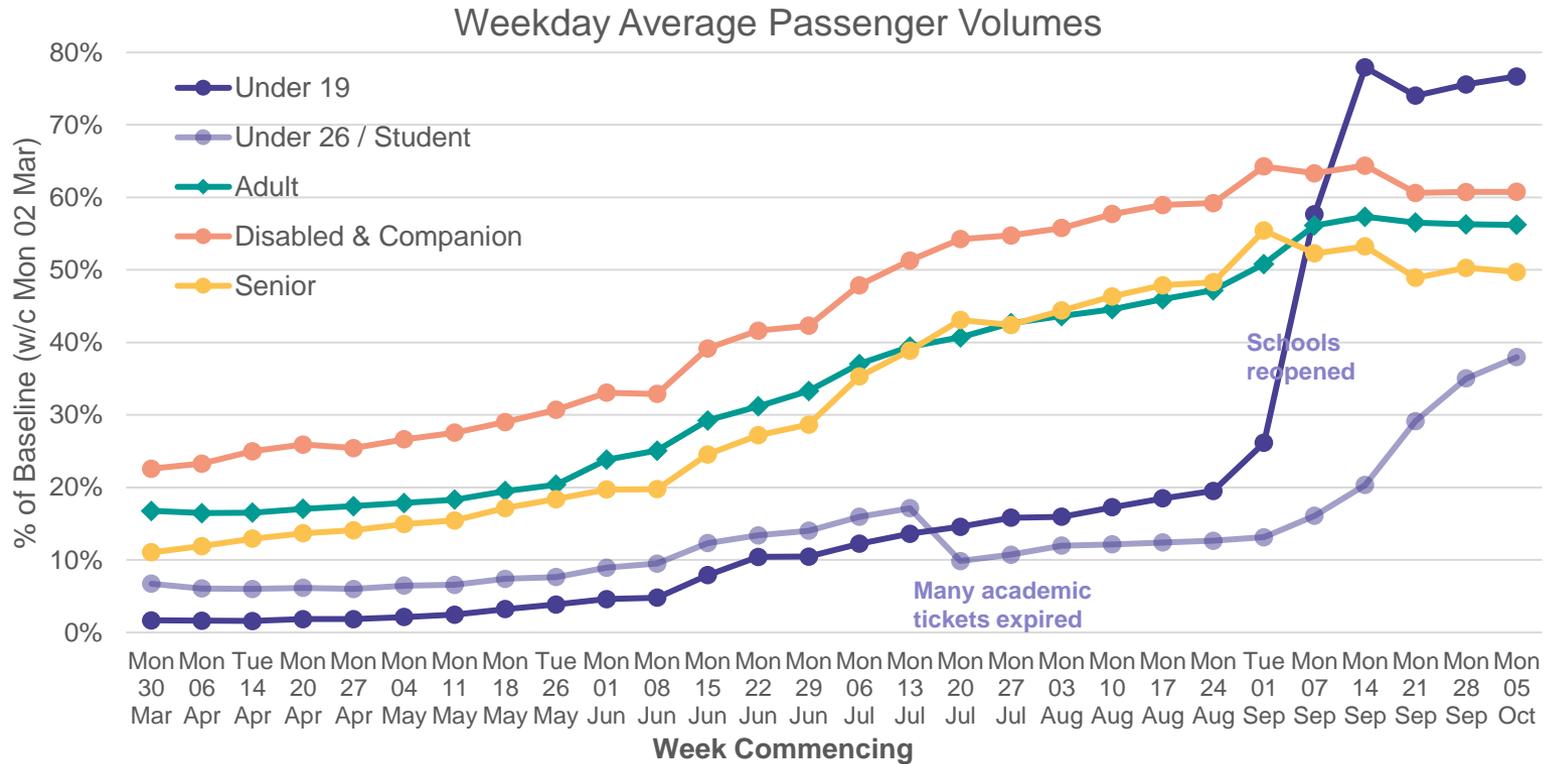
Source: WYCA NERO reports

Bus use: the return to university so far has been more constrained than the return to school

Data from bus ticket machines reveals a recovery in the Under 26 / Student cohort as students return to university. Travel by passengers aged under 19 reached 78% of baseline after the phased start of the school year then dropped to 74% before showing some recovery. Adults are the largest cohort and show a slight downward trend. Senior, disabled & companion numbers decreased but appear stable. Data in the chart below is for weekdays excluding bank holidays, with ticket types assigned to broad cohorts.

Thousand passengers per weekday before COVID
Adult 221,000
Under 19 101,000
Senior 74,000
Under 26 / Student 34,000
Disabled & Companion 29,000
Miscellaneous 9,000

Data from First, Arriva, Yorkshire Tiger and Transdev



Baseline period is w/c Mon 02 Mar. Source: Bus operators electronic ticket machine data, passenger boarding locations in West Yorkshire. First, Arriva, Yorkshire Tiger and Transdev account for over 90% of bus services in West Yorkshire. Graph shows First and Transdev.

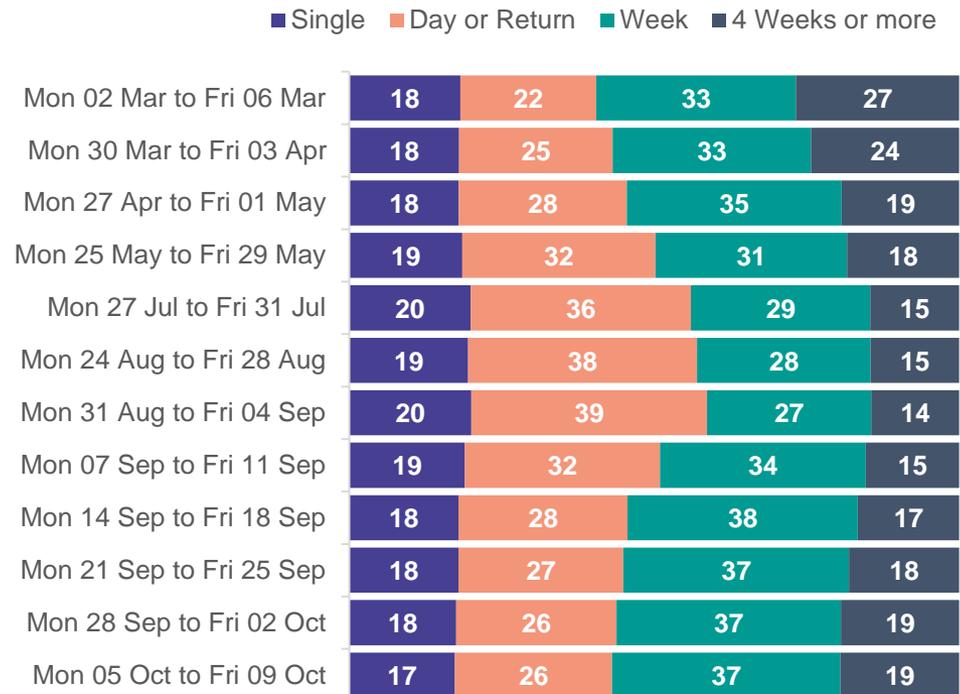
Bus use: ticket preference has evolved since lockdown likely reflecting confidence in continued bus use

Between the start of lockdown and the end of August there was a gradual increase in the share of bus journeys on single, return, and day tickets while the proportion using tickets valid for 1 week or for 4 weeks or more decreased.

Following the August Bank Holiday there has been an increase in weekly tickets which are now a larger proportion of the total than before COVID. There has been a lesser recovery in the use of tickets valid for 4 weeks or more. Day or return tickets account for a smaller share of journeys than they did through May to August but are still stronger than before COVID.

The choice of fare paying passengers likely provides an indication of the commitment and confidence in continued bus use, however it may also be influenced by other factors such as passenger's cash flow.

Ticket Commitment (% of Bus Journeys)



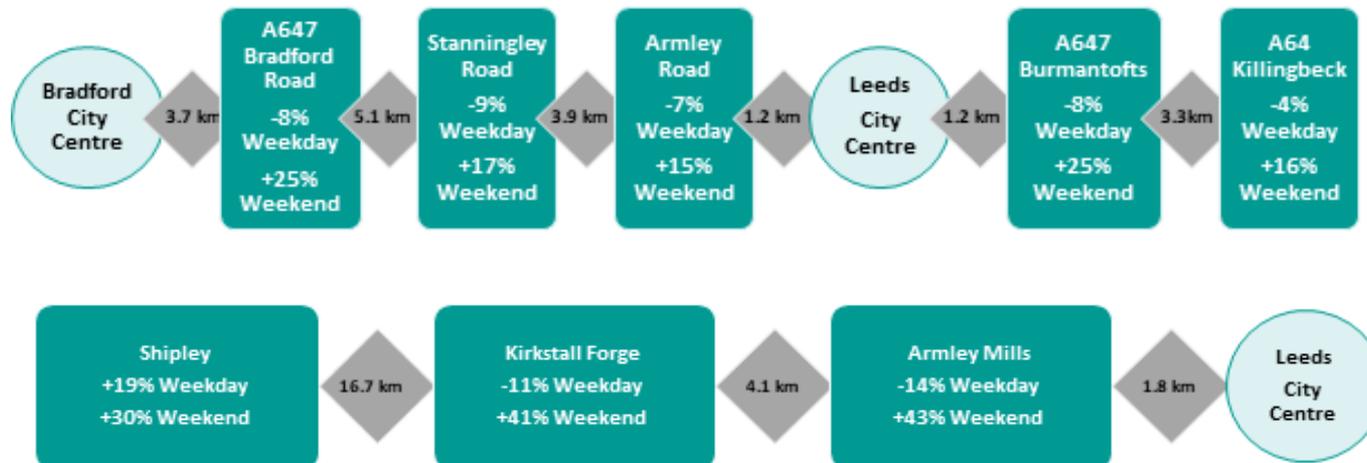
Source: Ticket machine data from First, Arriva, Yorkshire Tiger, Transdev
Coverage: Over 90% of scheduled bus miles in West Yorkshire

Cycling: Cycle commuters are returning to city centers

Since April cycle counters have been recording an increase in cycling at weekends and a decrease on weekdays, a result of both sunny weather and changing working patterns.

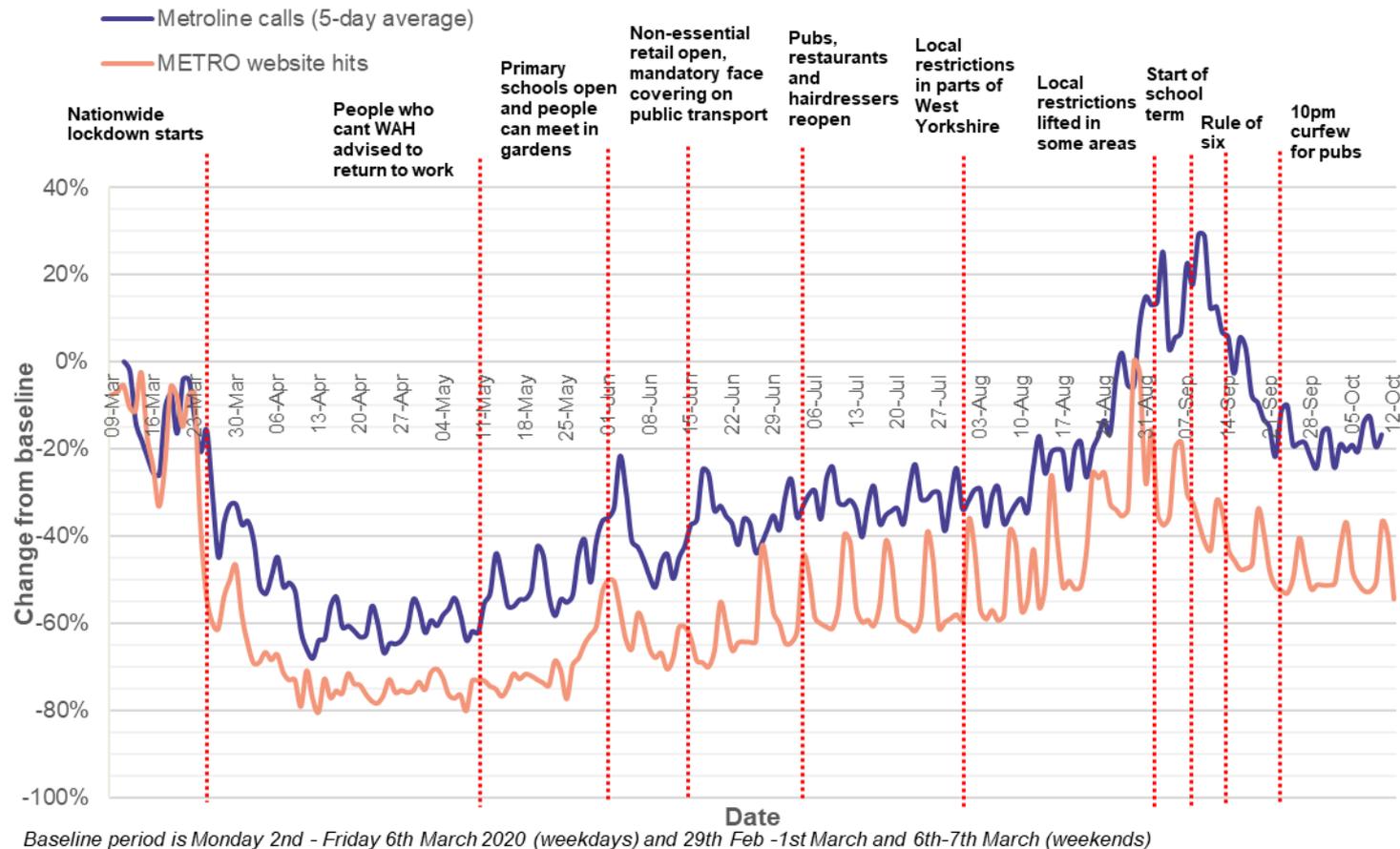
In August weekday cycling on CityConnect 1, a segregated cycle lane along the A647 connecting Leeds and Bradford city centres, has decreased 7% compared to the August 2017-19 average. Weekday cycle counts on the Leeds & Liverpool Canal however have increased 14%, potentially a result of both increased cycle commuting and leisure trips.

Previous analysis has showed cycling decreasing at sites closest to Leeds City Centre, with June weekday counts decreasing 30% at Armley Road and 17% at A647 Burmantofts while other sites saw either slight decreases or increases. This variation between counters has decreased as cycle commuters return to the city centre. This is supported by counters in the city centre also reporting August weekday counts increasing 10% and 6% at St. Peter's Street and March Lane respectively compared to August 2019.



Demand for travel information

Demand for travel information (calls to Metroline and METRO website hits) increased dramatically at the start of the academic year, but has since subsided. The most recent data shows demand for travel information has subsided; call volumes and METRO website hits are 20% and 47% lower than baseline (early March 2020) respectively.

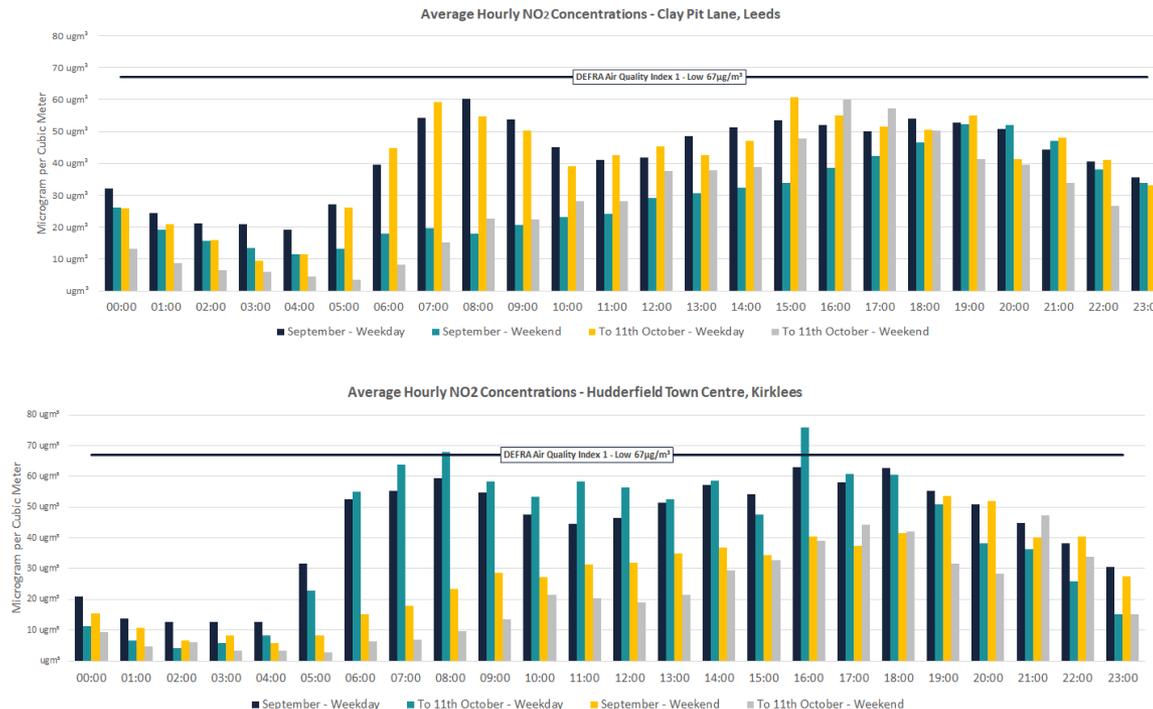


Source: Google Analytics Metro Website page views and West Yorkshire Metroline team

Air Quality

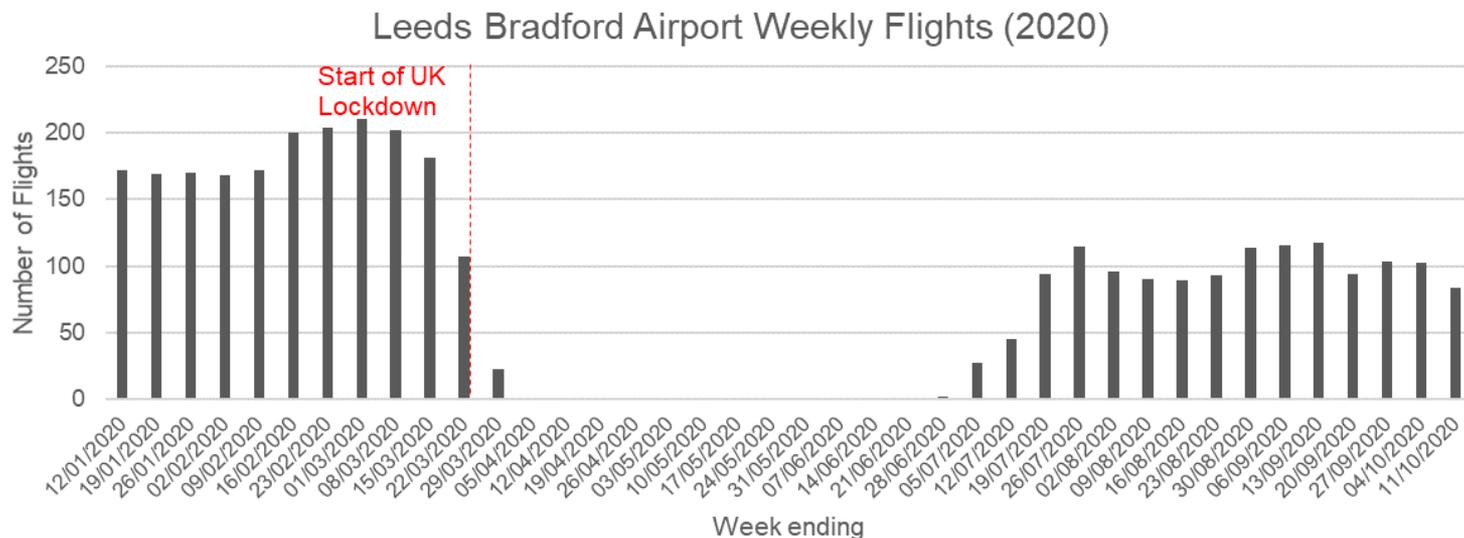
Data collected from Air Quality Monitoring sites reveals NO₂ concentrations continue to increase. Hourly data from Clay Pit Lane and Huddersfield Town Centre shows peaks in NO₂ concentrations increasingly align with traditional morning and evening peaks and are starting to exceed the lowest band of the DEFRA Air Quality Index.

Weekday NO₂ concentrations in Huddersfield Town Centre now exceed the first point on the DEFRA Air Quality Index both in the AM and PM peak. This indicates a significant amount of traffic congestion at monitoring site, located at the junction of John William Street and Kirkgate, during the traditional commuter peaks.



Source: EarthSense 2020

Number of passengers using Leeds Bradford Airport over the summer less than 17% of 2019 level



The top chart illustrates the impact of COVID-19 on the number of flights departing from Leeds Bradford Airport (LBA). Although the number of flights departing LBA has increased following re-opening, the number of terminal passengers (bottom chart) in July and August was 11-17% of 2019 levels.

Source: Data collated by ODI Leeds using data from Leeds Bradford Airport FlightAware API (top), and data from the Civil Aviation Authority (bottom).

Exploration of other data sources to supplement insight into COVID-19 impact

Footfall/expenditure

- Exploring options of procuring footfall and expenditure data. After consulting with some suppliers, mobile phone data may be the most flexible option to assess relative COVID-19 impact on footfall at a range of different geographies, with fixed footfall cameras likely providing more robust data but limited geographical scope.

Additional survey work

- An online business survey has been launched to gain more quantitative data on the impact of COVID-19 on businesses. Responses so far have been relatively limited but analysis will be presented in the next iteration of this report.
- The Combined Authority is working with Leeds-based Scaled Insights to look at how public perceptions and impacts have changed since SI carried out an initial survey shortly after lockdown. A follow up survey is being conducted and will explore attitudes to COVID as well as impacts on issues such as employment and financial status.

Vehicle use

- Awaiting more up-to-date data from WebTris (Strategic Road Network sites) which has a considerable lag.
- Fixed Automatic Traffic Counter (ATC) sites data is available for some city centres from distract partners, but there is potential to explore/share other data assets which may act as proxies for vehicle use e.g. council managed car park volumes.
- Exploring historic bus Real Time Information (RTI) which has the potential to be used as a proxy for traffic flows (e.g. average delay as stops)