

COVID-19 Fortnightly Insights Report

Research & Intelligence
5th February 2021



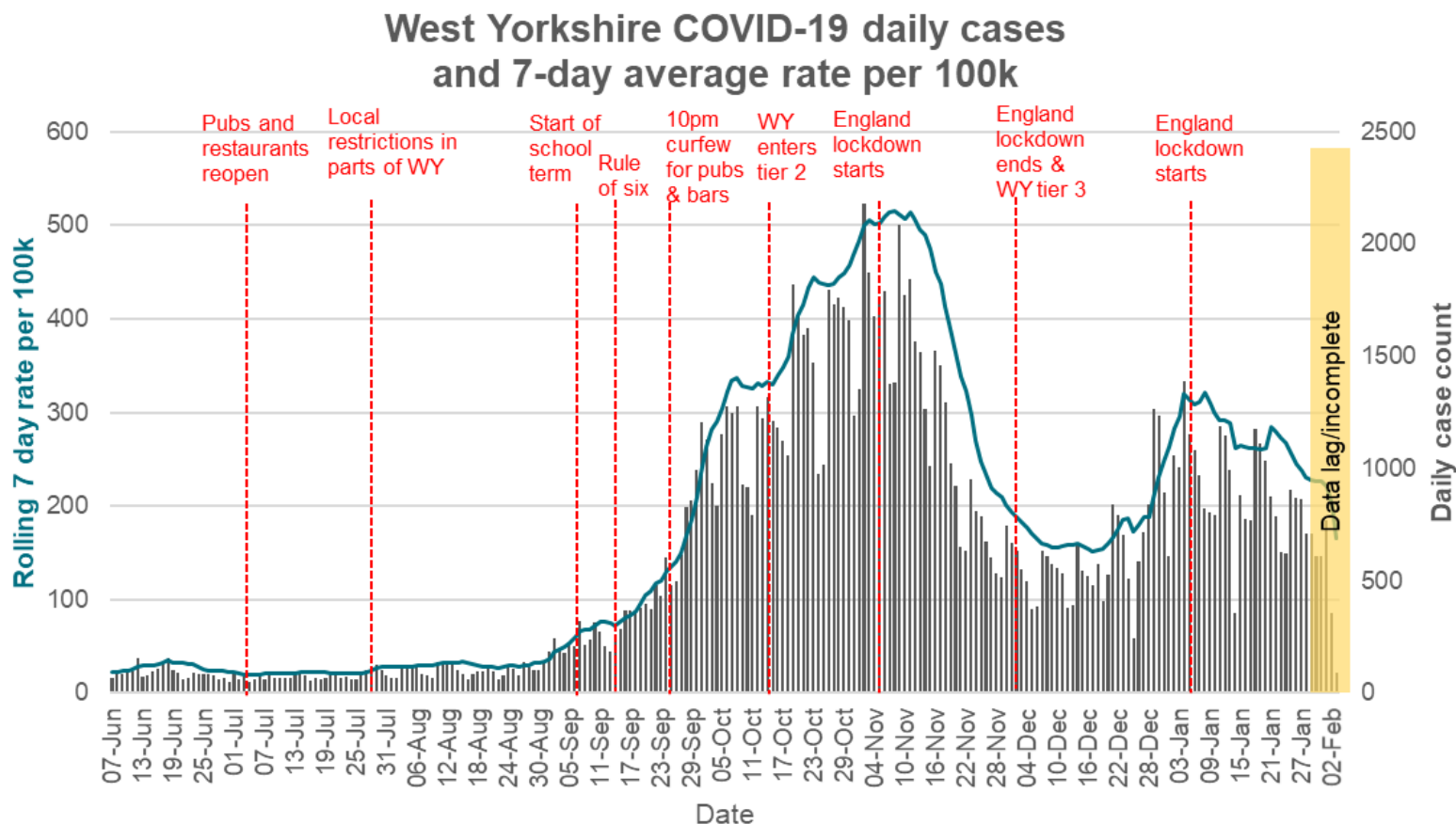
Executive Summary – social and economic

- There were some signs of increased activity in the economy in mid- to late-January, with three of West Yorkshire's five urban centres seeing small increases in activity. Leeds and Wakefield were the exceptions, with activity stable.
- Alongside this, vacancies increased by 13% in the latest four week period, suggesting a more stable picture in this lockdown when compared to March last year.
- Less positively, business liquidations have increased at the start of the new year, with the latest four week moving average showing a 22% increase. Liquidations are higher than in January 2020, and at their highest level since October 2020.
- The proportion of people on furlough in West Yorkshire stood at 11%, equating to 113,000 jobs, in December. This was down slightly from November but higher than in October.
- Both the LEP's interactions with businesses and national survey data highlight issues facing exporters at the outset of the post-transition trading arrangements with the EU. Almost half of exporters nationally experienced some difficulties in the first two weeks of the new arrangements.
- Anecdotal evidence in Leeds City Region supports this. Businesses report delays at ports and increased costs, with some customers unwilling to consider increased prices some businesses are seeking new suppliers as a result. Workforce and recruitment issues are also high on the agenda for many businesses following these changes.

Executive Summary – transport

- Nationally, motor vehicle, bus and rail travel remained consistently higher than the levels seen in the first weeks of the 1st lockdown, but lower than the second lockdown in November - a common theme amongst other mobility/activity data sources. Locally the picture is similar.
- Apple mobility levels for driving and transit in all UK cities are considerably higher during lockdown 3 than lockdown one in all cities where data is available. Locally, Bradford appears to have the greatest driving activity difference between lockdowns 3 & 1.
- Google workplace activity data indicates that levels of activity in West Yorkshire were slightly above the UK average, but not considerably different to other Northern conurbations such as Greater Manchester or Merseyside.
- In the week commencing 25th January 2021 24-hour weekday traffic levels in Leeds were down 31% on the same week in 2019, with little change from the previous week.
- Data from bus ticket machines reveals that bus use by Under 19s, Senior and Disabled cohorts is similar to late June; higher than the lockdown 1, but lower than lockdown 2.
- In terms of bus ticket preference, longer validity tickets were used slightly more & day tickets slightly less in the latest week compared to summer when total use was similar.
- Leeds City Centre footfall – all camera sites reveal footfall is currently lower than during the 2nd lockdown, but higher than the first.

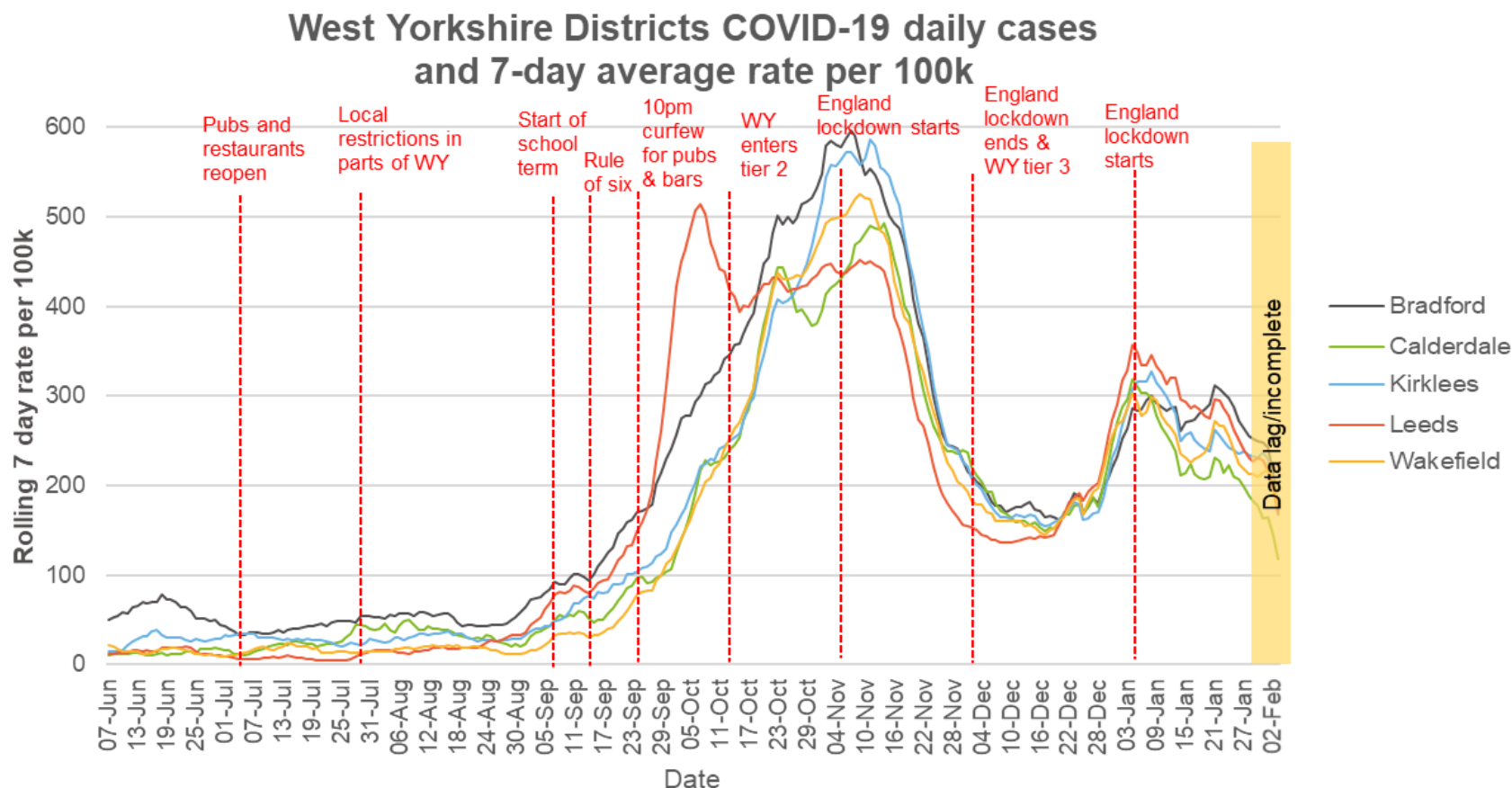
Virus prevalence – West Yorkshire trend



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. As of the 30th January 2021, the 7-day moving average **West Yorkshire COVID-19 rate was 227.2 cases per 100k, down from 273.7 per 100k the week before.** This is above the Yorkshire and the Humber rate (202.8 per 100k), but below the England rate (260.6 per 100k).

Source: Secure COVID-19 PHE data portal. 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 – District overall trend











The chart shows the trends in the 7-day rolling COVID-19 rate per 100k population at district level. Within West Yorkshire, as of the 30th January rates are lowest in Calderdale (177.8 per 100k) and highest in Bradford (249.5 per 100k). The dip and peak around the 15th January likely relates to delays and subsequent backlogs in testing due to heavy snow in some parts of the country.

Source: Secure COVID-19 PHE data portal. 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.

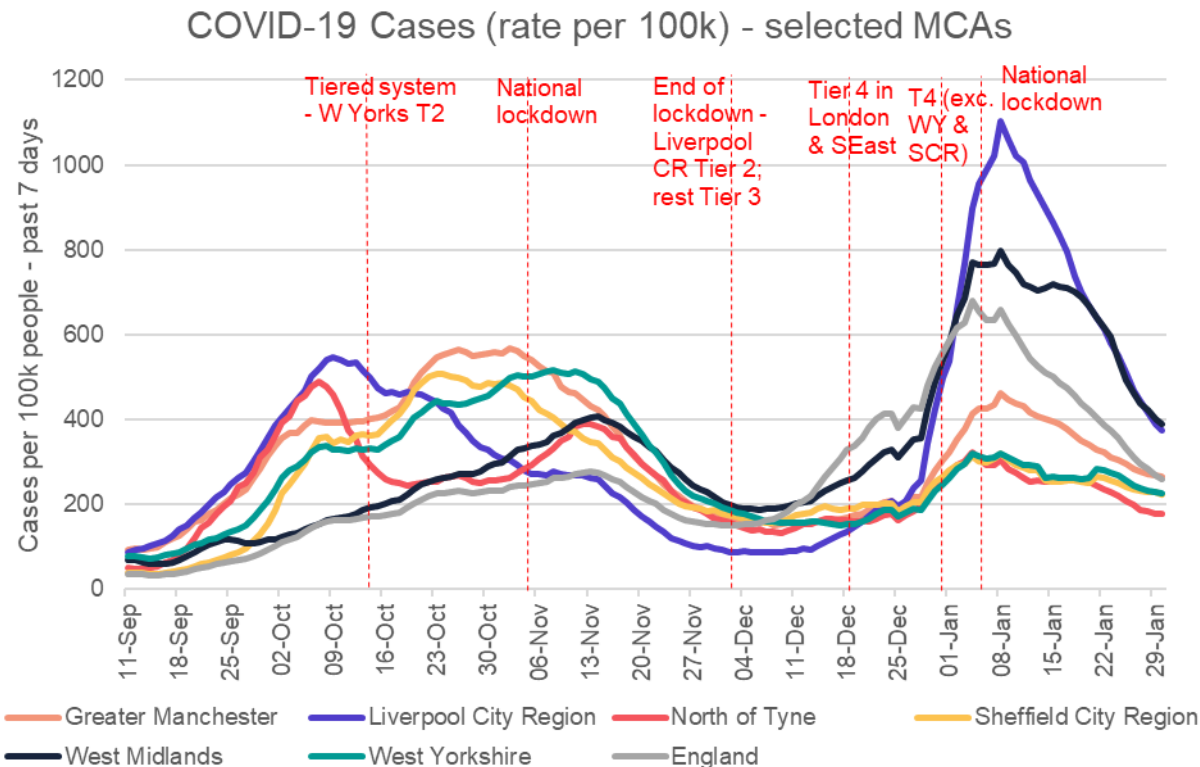
Virus prevalence – West Yorkshire

Table shows the most recent COVID-19 case data from Public Health England's (PHE) secure data portal. Note due to reporting delays for comparison between Local Authorities the most recent 4 days are excluded from the calculations of rates and moving averages.

Area	Total cases per 100k people (24 Jan – 30 Jan)	Total cases per 100k people (17 Jan – 23 Jan)	Absolute Difference
	Most recent data week	Previous week	
Bradford	249.5	302.9	-53.4 
Calderdale	177.8	214.2	-36.4 
Kirklees	230.8	249.2	-18.4 
Leeds	230.7	286.5	-55.7 
Wakefield	209.9	266.1	-56.3 
West Yorkshire	227.2	273.7	-46.5 
Yorkshire & the Humber	202.8	242.6	-39.8 
England	260.6	373.9	-113.3 

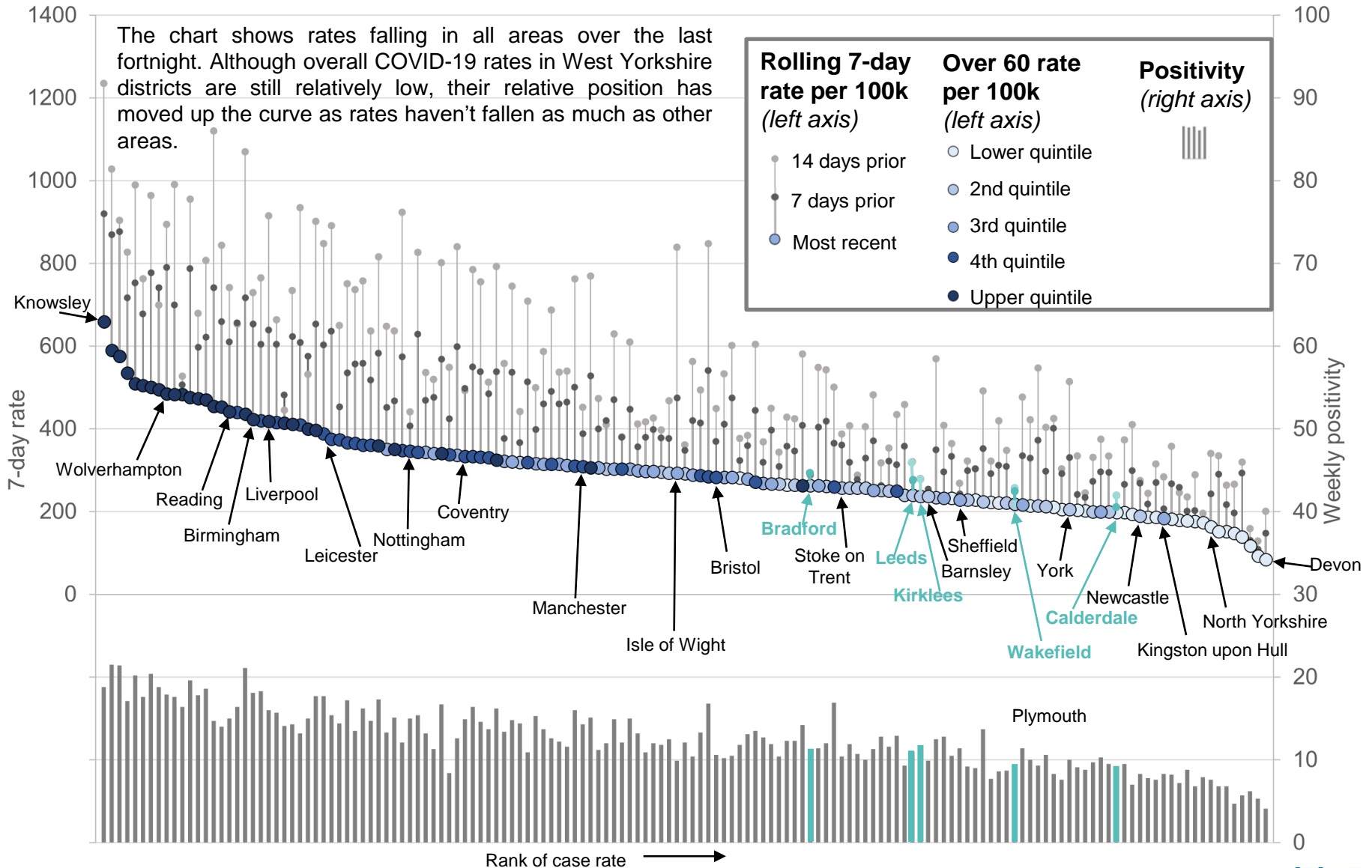
All MCAs seeing cases fall, rates beginning to converge

All MCAs analysed here have seen rates falling following a plateau in some areas in mid-January. The pace of decline continues to be much sharper in the areas where rates remain highest, namely Liverpool City Region and West Midlands. Whilst infection rates remain higher than the average for England in these areas, the England rate of 261 cases per 100k is now in line with Greater Manchester and the gap to the other MCAs is closing. West Yorkshire, North of Tyne and Sheffield City Region have all seen case rates begin to fall again, albeit at a lower pace than nationally.



COVID-19 Rates for Upper Tier Local Authorities

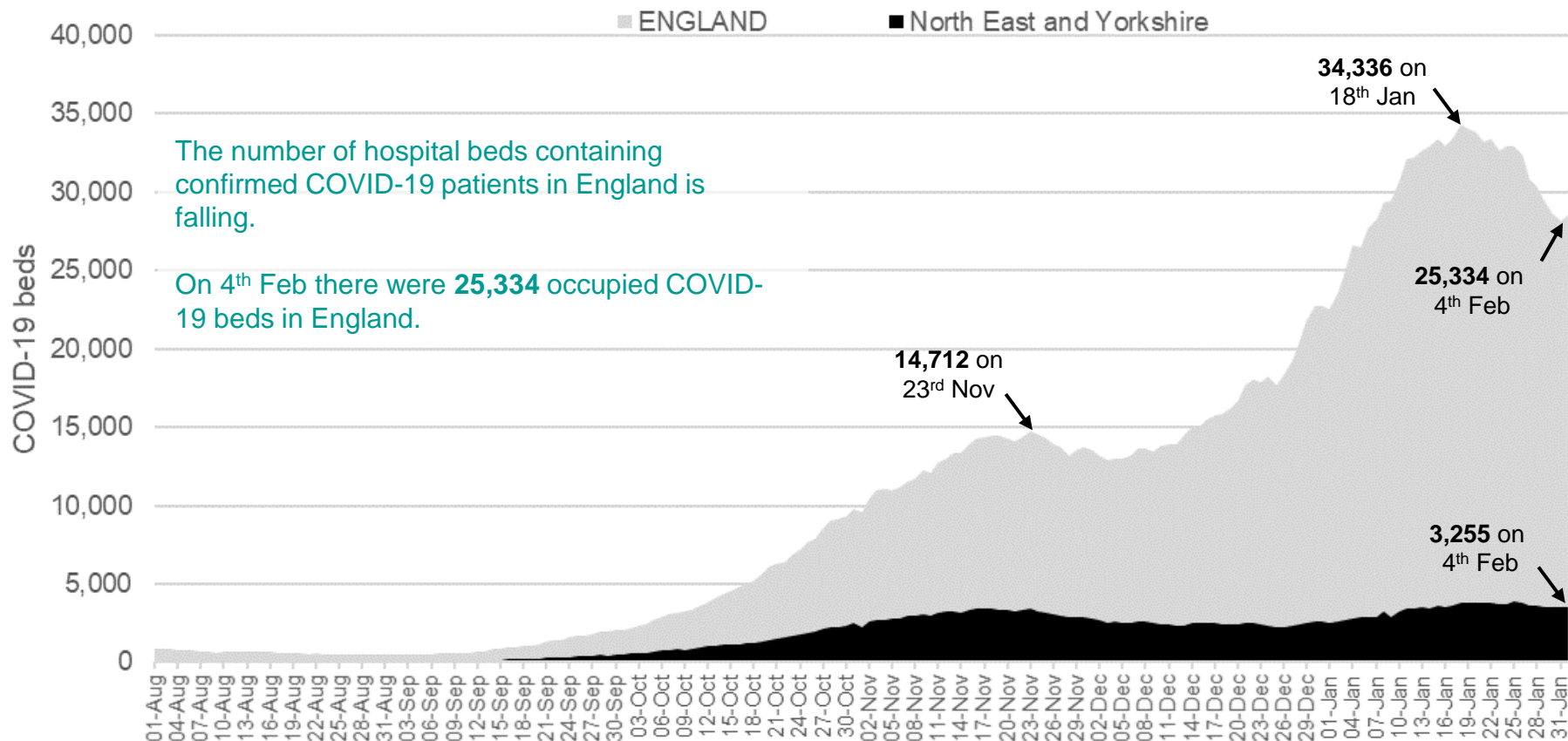
7-day average COVID-19 rate per 100k population, change compared to the previous week, over 60 rate & positivity



Blue points show latest COVID-19 case rate per 100k across UTLAs as of the 27th January (left Y-axis). Vertical bars connected to these points denote rate last week (dark grey) and the week before (light grey). Point colour denotes the COVID-19 rate per 100k in the over 60s. Grey bars at the bottom denote positivity (%) up to the 27th Jan (right Y-axis).

COVID-19 Hospital beds – England

Total hospital beds occupied by COVID-19 patients - England and Yorkshire & NE region



Source: NHS England - The number of hospital beds containing confirmed COVID-19 patients

Economic Insights

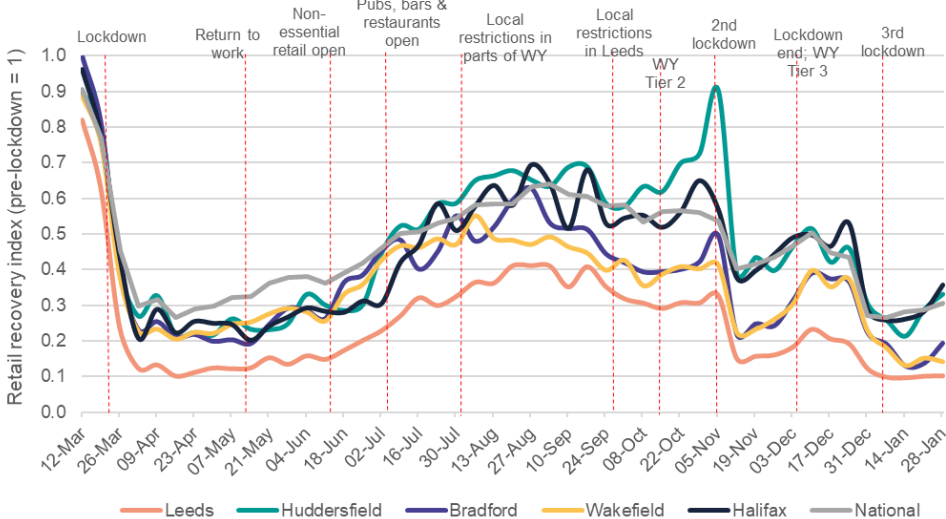


Slight increase in activity in some urban centres

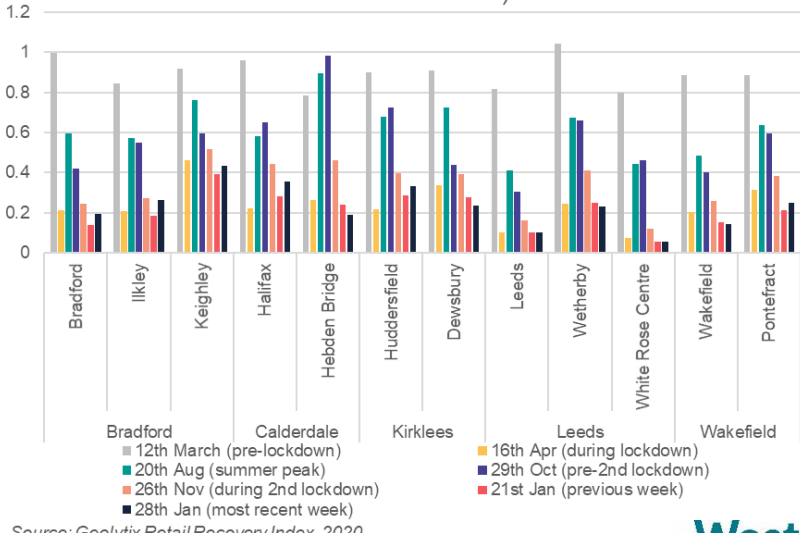
Activity increased in three of West Yorkshire’s main urban centres in the week to January 28th, according to data from Geolytix. Activity increased by between 4 and 7 percentage points in Bradford, Halifax and Huddersfield but was unchanged in Leeds and Wakefield. This data suggests activity is currently slightly higher than lockdown 1 in Halifax and Huddersfield, slightly lower in Wakefield and unchanged in Leeds and Bradford. Although there has been more fluctuation locally than nationally, they have broadly followed similar patterns over the pandemic. The latest topline data is similar to Huddersfield and Halifax at the higher end of the West Yorkshire urban centres.

Looking at more local centres, Pontefract and Ilkley saw slight increases in the past week, with Dewsbury and Hebden Bridge seeing slight falls.

Retail recovery index - main urban centres



Retail recovery index - West Yorkshire (selected towns and dates)



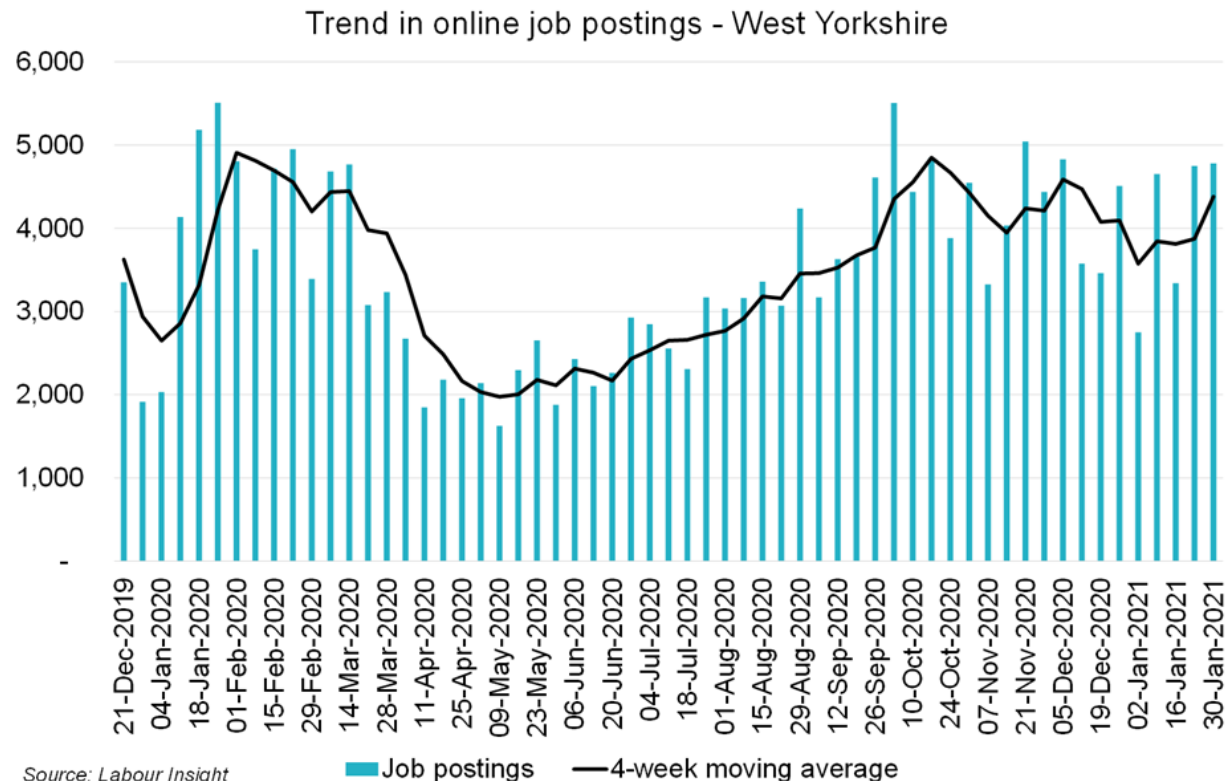
Source: Geolytix Retail Recovery Index, 2020

Source: Geolytix Retail Recovery Index



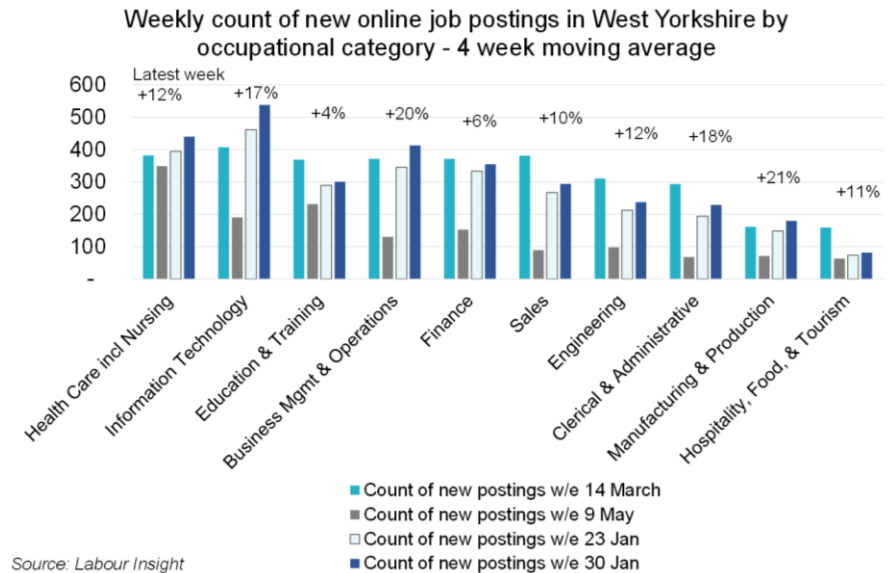
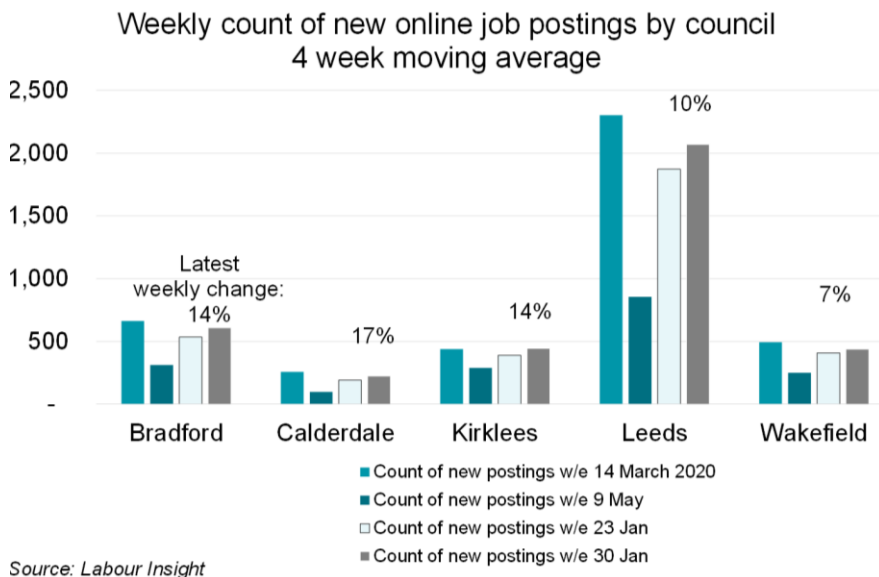
Vacancy postings stabilising; higher than first lockdown

The number of vacancies for jobs in West Yorkshire posted online during week ending 30 January grew by 13% compared with the previous week (based on a 4-week moving average). Nationally, the number of vacancies also grew by 13%. The weekly vacancy count for West Yorkshire is around 10% below its recent peak in mid-October, which was achieved prior to the imposition of the second lockdown in November, and is 2% below its pre-crisis level (week ending March 14). However, the latest count is more than twice the level seen in the depths of the first lockdown in early May. There are some signs that the vacancy count has stabilised during recent weeks despite the third lockdown.



Increase in vacancies for all local authorities and occupational categories

All local authority areas also saw increases in postings in the latest week. Kirklees has now recovered to its pre-crisis position but all others still have ground to make up. However, the latest vacancy counts for all local authorities are well above the levels of early May (the lowest point of the first lockdown) and all have seen a relatively stable trend over recent weeks.

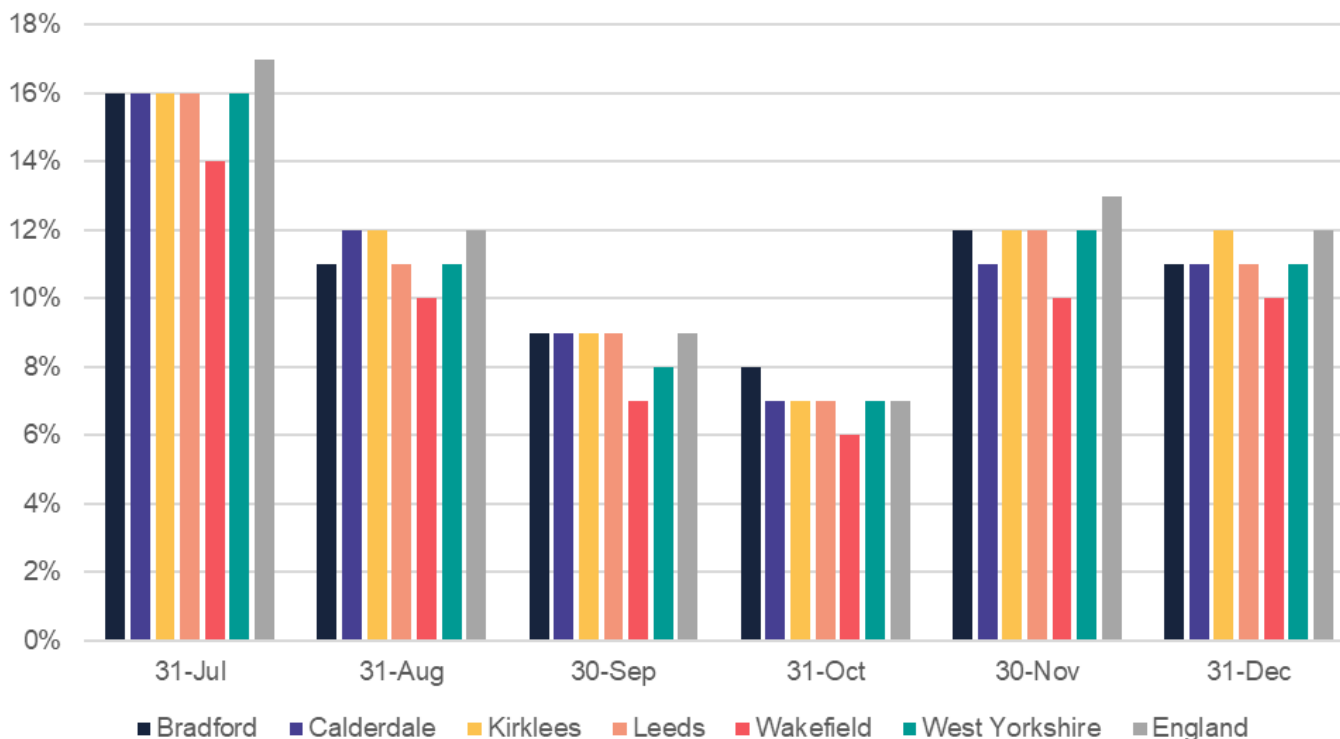


All occupational categories saw an increase in postings for the most recent week, based on a 4-week moving average. A number of categories have now surpassed their pre-crisis vacancy levels (week ending 14 March) including IT, Health, Business management and Manufacturing. Hospitality, food and tourism, Sales and Clerical and administrative have the most ground to make up in terms of their pre-crisis positions.

More than 1 in 10 jobs still furloughed in December according to HMRC

Data from HMRC shows that 112,800 people in West Yorkshire were on furlough at the end of December – 11% of eligible jobs. This is down slightly from 12% in November, and is slightly below the 12% for England in December. Furlough take up has been similar across West Yorkshire districts though has been generally lower 1 or 2 percentage points lower in Wakefield. Although furlough take up is below the 16% recorded in July, it remains significantly higher than the 7% seen in October. Although local restrictions have been in place in some or all of West Yorkshire since July, this data would suggest that this hasn't led to increased use of the furlough scheme compared to England as a whole.

Proportion of jobs furloughed



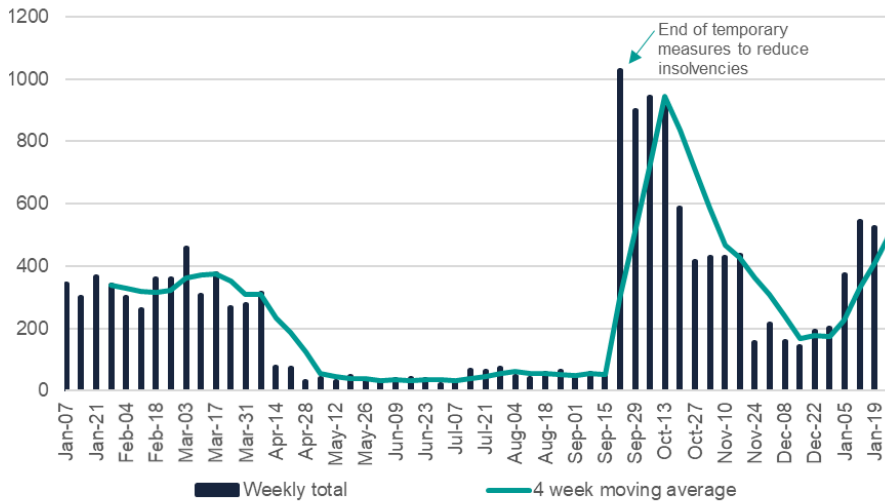
*Source: ONS Business Impacts of Coronavirus Survey

Business liquidations / dissolutions increase throughout January

There were 559 business liquidations / dissolutions in the week to January 26th, according to data from Bureau van Dijk's Fame database. Based on a four week moving average, this is up 22% on the previous week across West Yorkshire, and up 23% nationally. At local authority level, increases were lowest in Calderdale (15%) and Kirklees (17%) and highest in Bradford (28%) and Leeds (23%). In the week to January 26th, liquidations / dissolutions per 1,000 businesses remained slightly below the average for England (3.9 compared to 4.8).

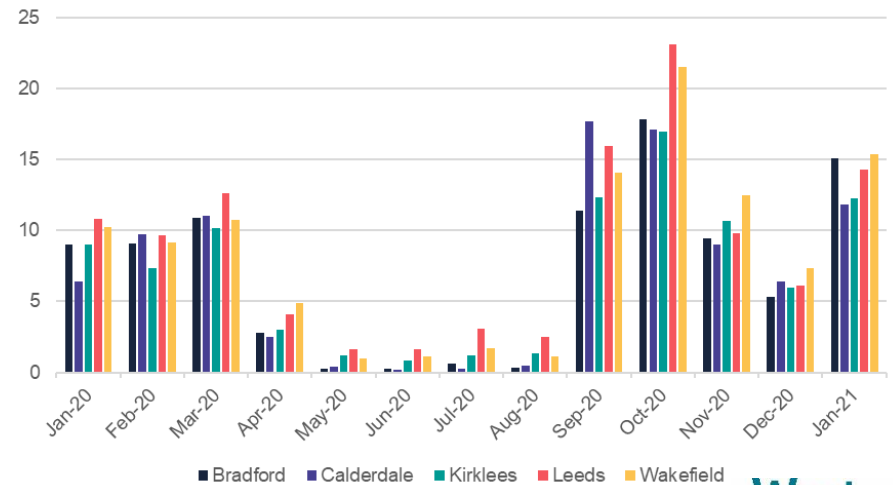
So far, 13.9 businesses per 1,000 have been dissolved / liquidated in January 2021 in West Yorkshire, up from 9.6 in 2020. This is highest in Wakefield (15.4) and Bradford (15.1). All districts have seen higher failure rates than in January 2020.

Business liquidations / dissolutions - West Yorkshire



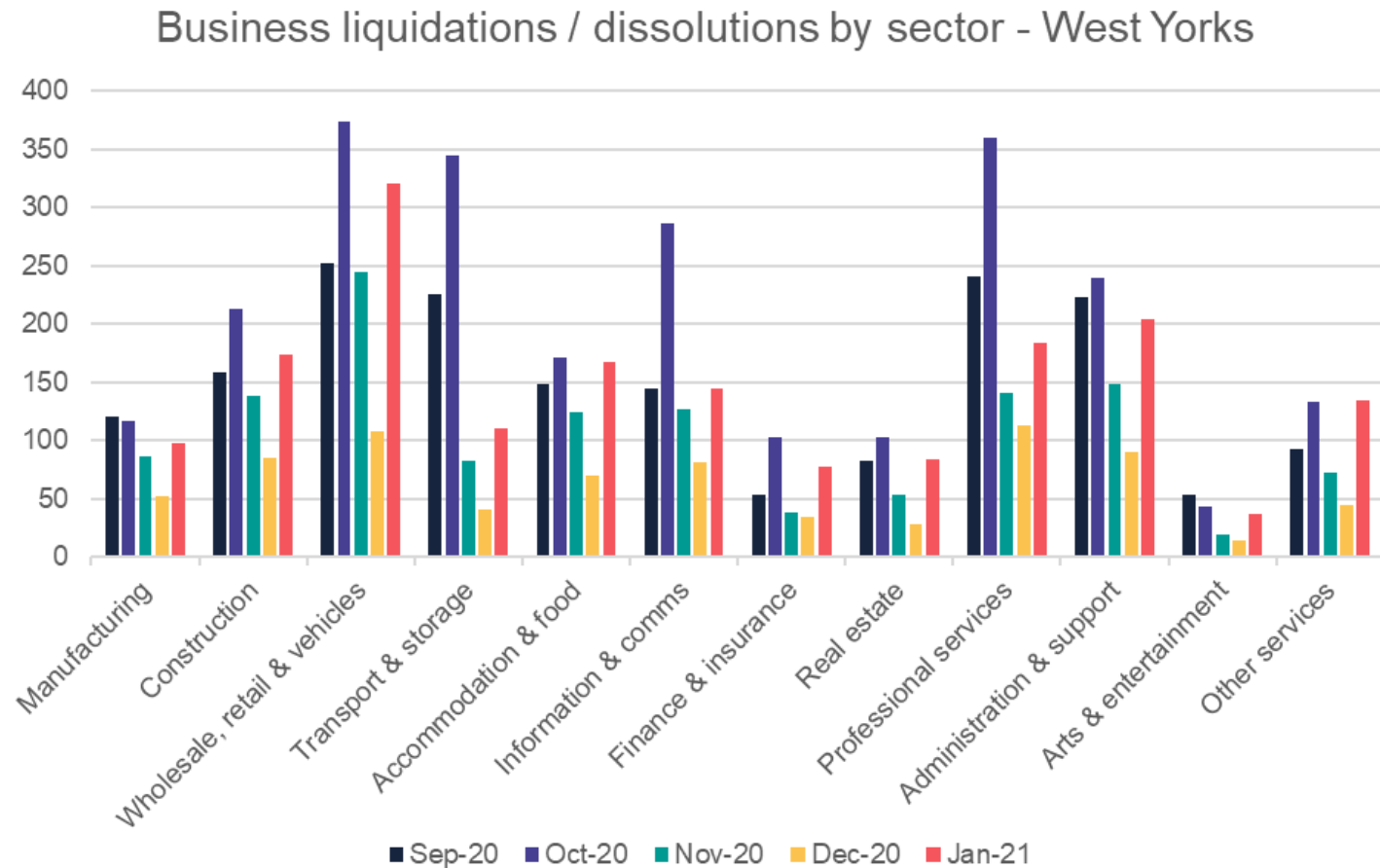
Source: FAME, Bureau van Dijk, 2021

Business liquidations per 1,000 businesses - WY districts



Increases in business liquidations across industries, but highest in consumer sectors

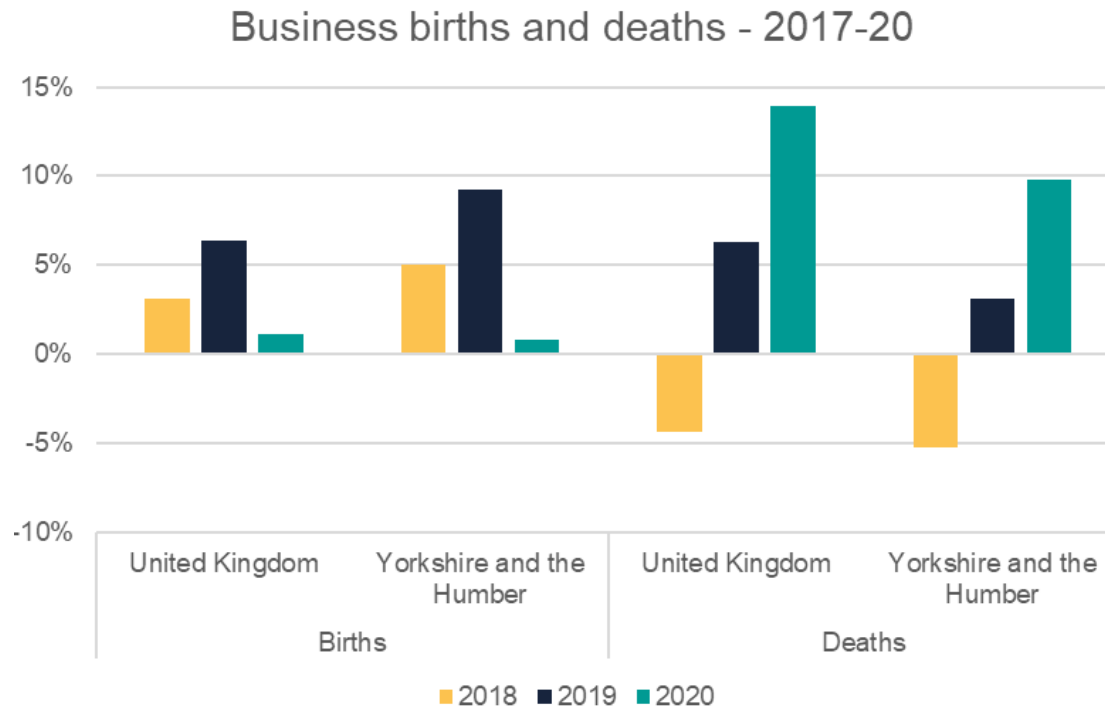
The wholesale and retail sector has seen the highest number of liquidations / dissolutions in January, at 320, up 196% on December, All sectors saw increases in dissolutions / liquidations in January compared to December. Business administration saw the next highest total (200 liquidations) up 127%. Other sectors to see significant increases from December include other services (198%), transport & storage (171%), arts & entertainment (164%) and accommodation & food (139%).



ONS data suggests increased business deaths and starts in 2020

ONS have published new quarterly, regional data on the number of new business “births” and “deaths” through to the end of 2020. This shows 24,670 business deaths and 25,270 births in Yorkshire & Humber in 2020, suggesting a small net increase in business stock in 2020. The number of business starts was largely unchanged from 2019, up 0.8%, though the number of deaths increased by 9.8% compared to 2019. The trends were similar in the country as a whole, but the business death figure was higher at 13.9% at UK level.

It should be noted that these trends vary from the Fame data, which draws on Companies House. The source data is similar, though the ONS data only covers businesses registered for VAT or PAYE, so is a smaller overall sample and the criteria for, and timing of removing businesses is also different with more lag in the ONS data.



Issues around Workforce & People was the most reported so far this year

This week we have started to see a small number of business making a small number of redundancies due to COVID-19 restriction impacting demand. Another company has seen growth and are looking to hire new staff, EU exit transition has made the process more difficult due to the increase in duty charges which customers do not want to accept.

This week we also have an increase in companies providing feedback specific to issues they are facing around the EU Exit transition. Most of the issue's companies are having are around the increase cost and delays around importing and exporting. For many businesses, their customers are refusing to pay for these increases so the business themselves are having to absorb as operating costs. Which is hurting their cash reserves and viability as a business.

Many of the delays in the supply chain has come about due the time it takes for paperwork to be processed or for seemingly correct paperwork being rejected without proper explanations. This has all led to much higher admin overheads and an issue around just in time delivery of goods. Due to these delays some companies have had to switch suppliers in order to keep the supply chain moving, which has increased operating costs again.

Out of over 200 business responses the most reported issue was Workforce & People. There were two main themes in the feedback of businesses that have reported this issue. First is companies looking to hire but are having difficulty accessing the labour market. The other issue is mentioned was some companies are having difficulties facilitating homeworking or social distancing in the workplace. Issues around Importing & Export, with delays at the border due to EU exit transition having an impact on operating costs for many businesses.



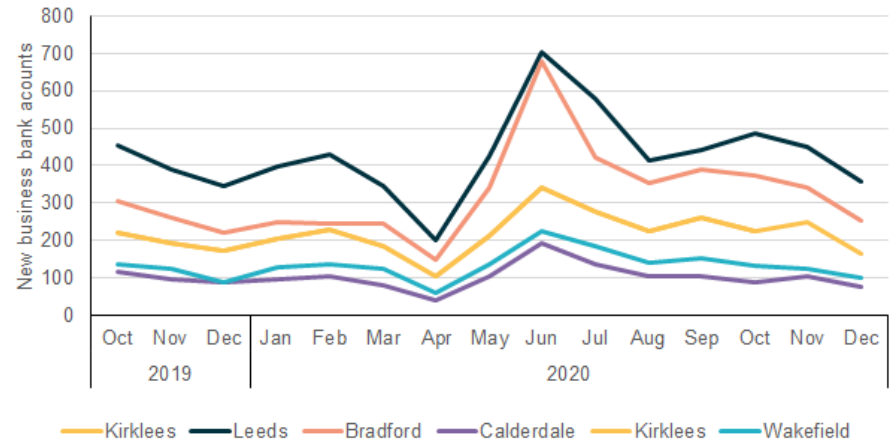
Small increase in new business bank accounts in the Leeds City Region

In December there were 1,182 new business bank accounts opened. This represents a seasonally expected decline from November where 1,589 new bank accounts were opened. When comparing to December 2019, the number of new bank accounts opened grew by 3.1% from 1147 to 1182.

Leeds has the highest number of new bank accounts with 356. A growth rate of 3% from last year. While Bradford is not too far behind with 254 accounts being opened. Which is a growth of 14% when compared to the December of 2019.

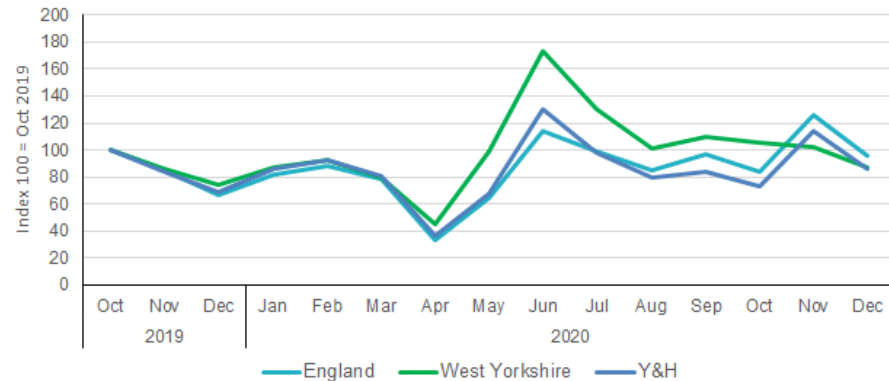
In Q4 2020 there were 4,396 new accounts being opened which is a growth rate of 6% when compared to 2019 Q4. Bradford in Q4 2020 has grown the most out of the districts in LCR at 23%, from 785 to 969. While Harrogate has fallen by 21% from 254 to 201.

New business bank accounts 2019 - 2020



Source: Banksearch, 2020

Index of new business bank accounts - Y&H, WY and England, 2019 - 2020



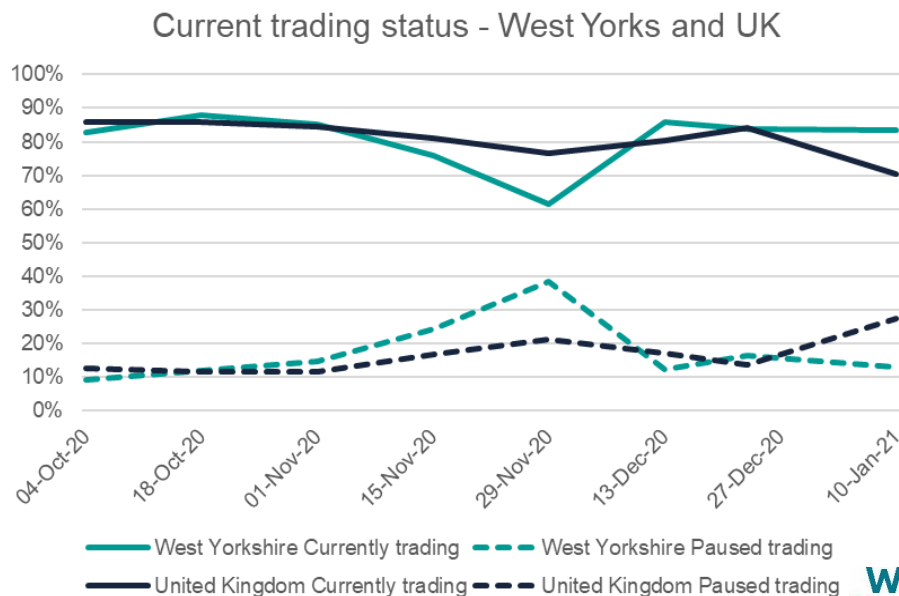
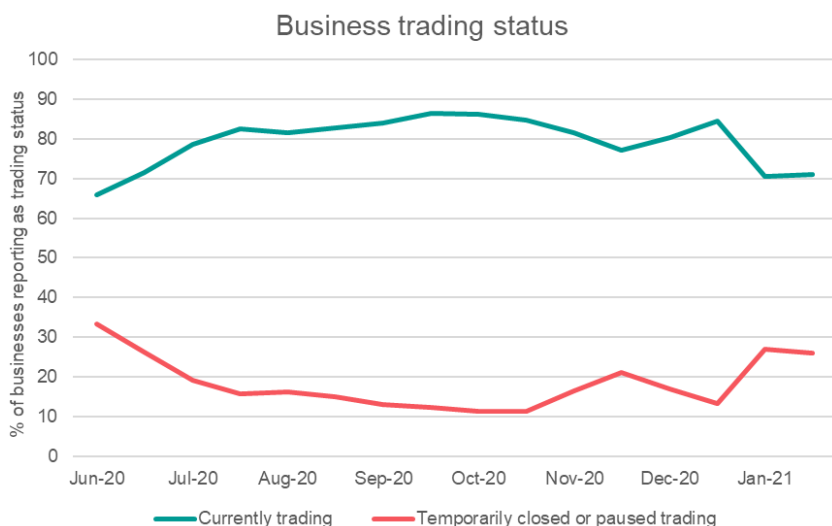
Source: Banksearch, 2020

A quarter of businesses closed temporarily

– picture stabilised

The proportion of businesses currently trading nationally stabilised at around 71% in the fortnight to January 24th, whilst 26% were closed temporarily according to the ONS Business Impacts of Coronavirus Survey (BICS). Whilst this is relatively unchanged on the previous fortnight, it represents the highest proportion of temporary closures since June/July. There was also little significant change by sector, though the proportion currently trading in the other services sector fell from 43% to 21%. This sector includes hair & beauty and other personal services.

ONS have also published local results from the BICS for the first time, up to wave 21 (to 10th January). This shows patterns in West Yorkshire have largely followed a similar trend, though the data suggests that more businesses were closed in West Yorkshire during November's lockdown. This could however just be a fluctuation in the data.



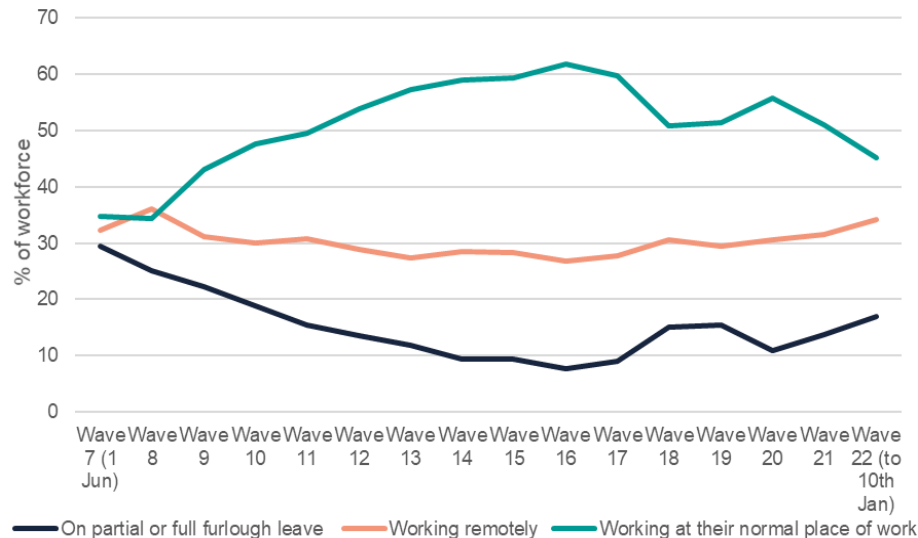
*Source: ONS Business Impacts of Coronavirus Survey

ONS survey suggests changes in working patterns in January lockdown

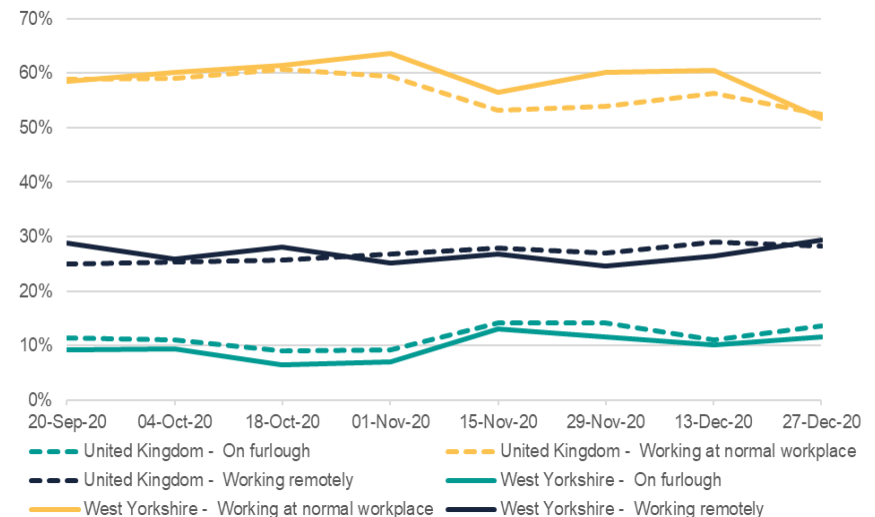
Data from ONS's BICS survey broadly supports the trajectory and take up of furlough data published by HMRC. More recent data is also available in the BICS, and suggests that there has been an increase in furlough use through January's national lockdown. The proportion of jobs furloughed nationally increased from 11% in mid-December to 17% in the fortnight to January 10th. The proportion working at their usual place of work also fell over that period, from 56% to 45%, whilst remote working increased from 30% to 34%.

ONS have also published local data on working patterns for the first time. Again this shows a very similar pattern to the UK, though slightly lower use of furlough locally and slightly higher proportions working in their usual place (until mid-December). If these patterns held, it would suggest furlough use in West Yorkshire increasing to in the region of 16% of eligible jobs in January – around 160,000 jobs.

Working arrangements, June to December



Working locations - West Yorkshire and UK

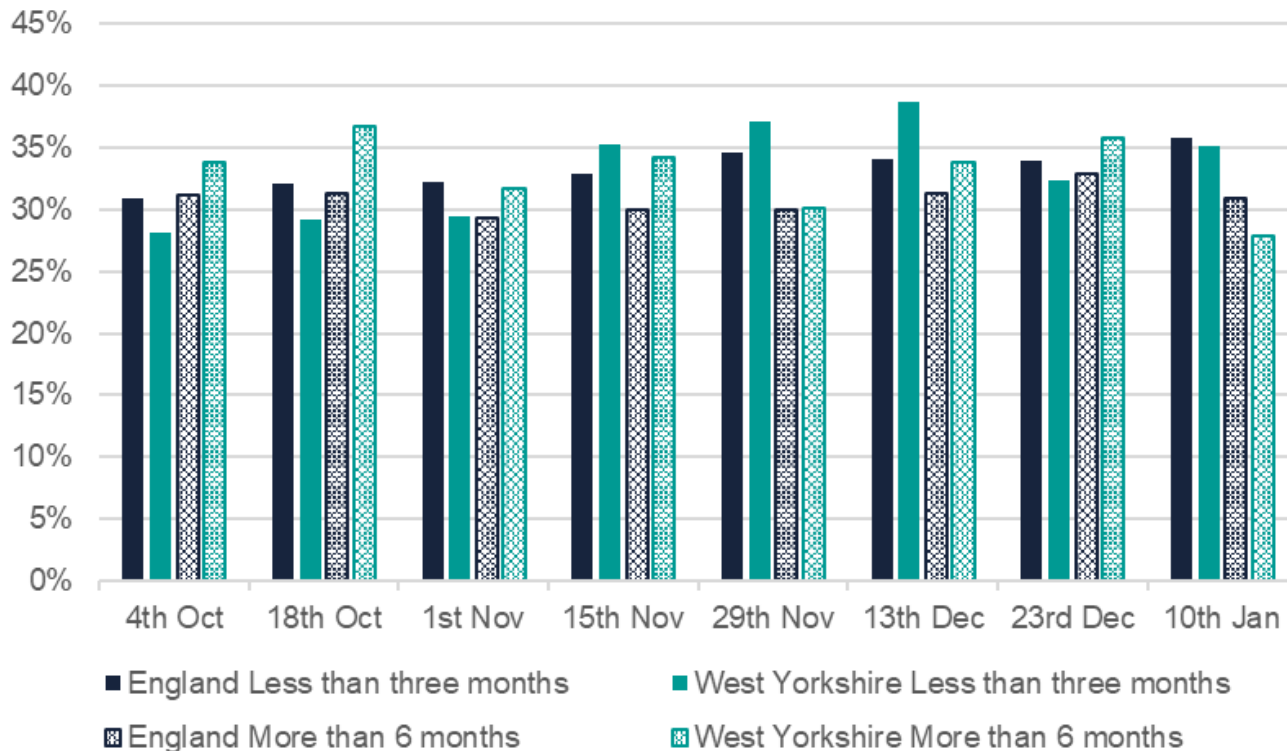


*Source: ONS Business Impacts of Coronavirus Survey

35% of West Yorkshire businesses have less than three months cash in reserve

35% of businesses in West Yorkshire had less than three months cash reserves in the fortnight to January 10th according to the BICS. This is similar to England as a whole, and although there has been some fluctuation this number has been relatively consistent since mid-November. It is however an increase from 28% in early October. The England figure has increased from 31% over that period, suggesting the two lockdowns since then may be having some impact on businesses' cash position.

Cash reserves - West Yorkshire and UK

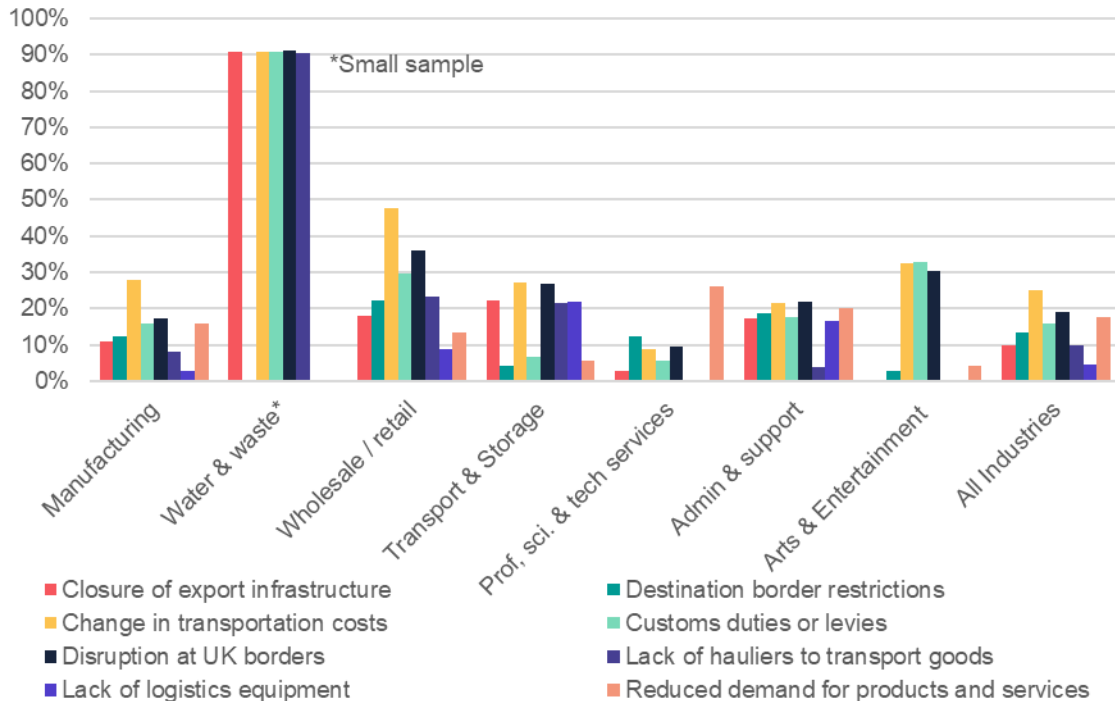


*Source: ONS Business Impacts of Coronavirus Survey

Almost half of importers and exporters experience challenges post-transition

Amongst businesses who export, almost half experienced some challenges whilst exporting (47%) and/or importing (44.3%) in the fortnight to January 10th, covering the period immediately before and after the end of the transition arrangements with the EU. Compared to two weeks earlier this is up from 39.5% for exporters and 37.3% for importers. Of those who experienced these challenges, 38% said they were the result of the end of the transition period, 24% said they were driven by the pandemic, and 32% said both issues were a factor. Among manufacturers, two thirds said EU exit issues were the main factor.

Challenges experience by exporters



Changes in transportation costs were the most frequently mentioned challenge overall, mentioned by 25% of businesses followed by disruption at UK borders (19%) and reduced demand (17.5%). As would be expected, borders and transportation were bigger issues for those who move physical goods, including 47% of wholesale/retail exporters, but reduced demand was a bigger issue for service sectors (26% of professional services firms).

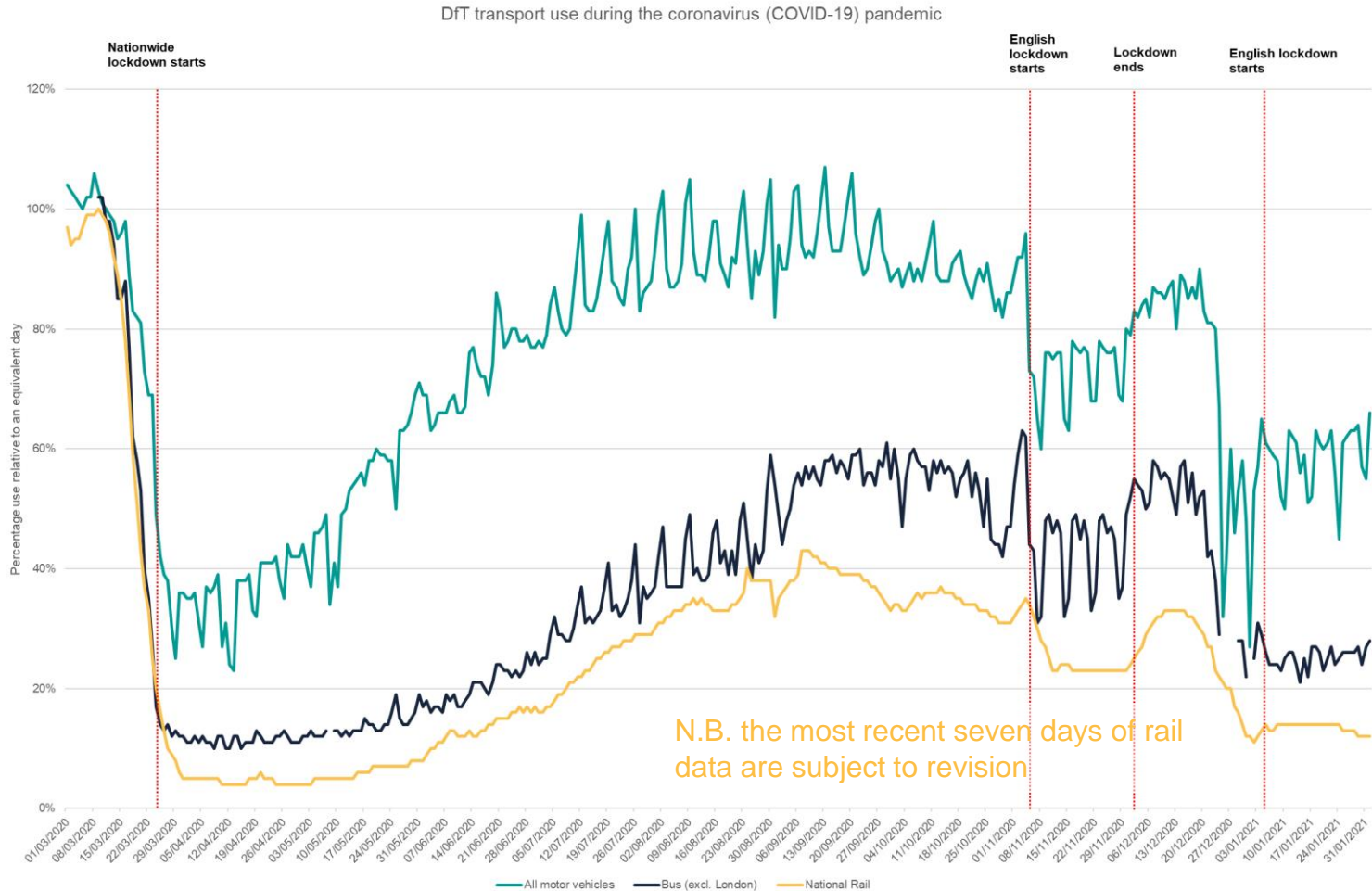
*Source: ONS Business Impacts of Coronavirus Survey

Transport Insights



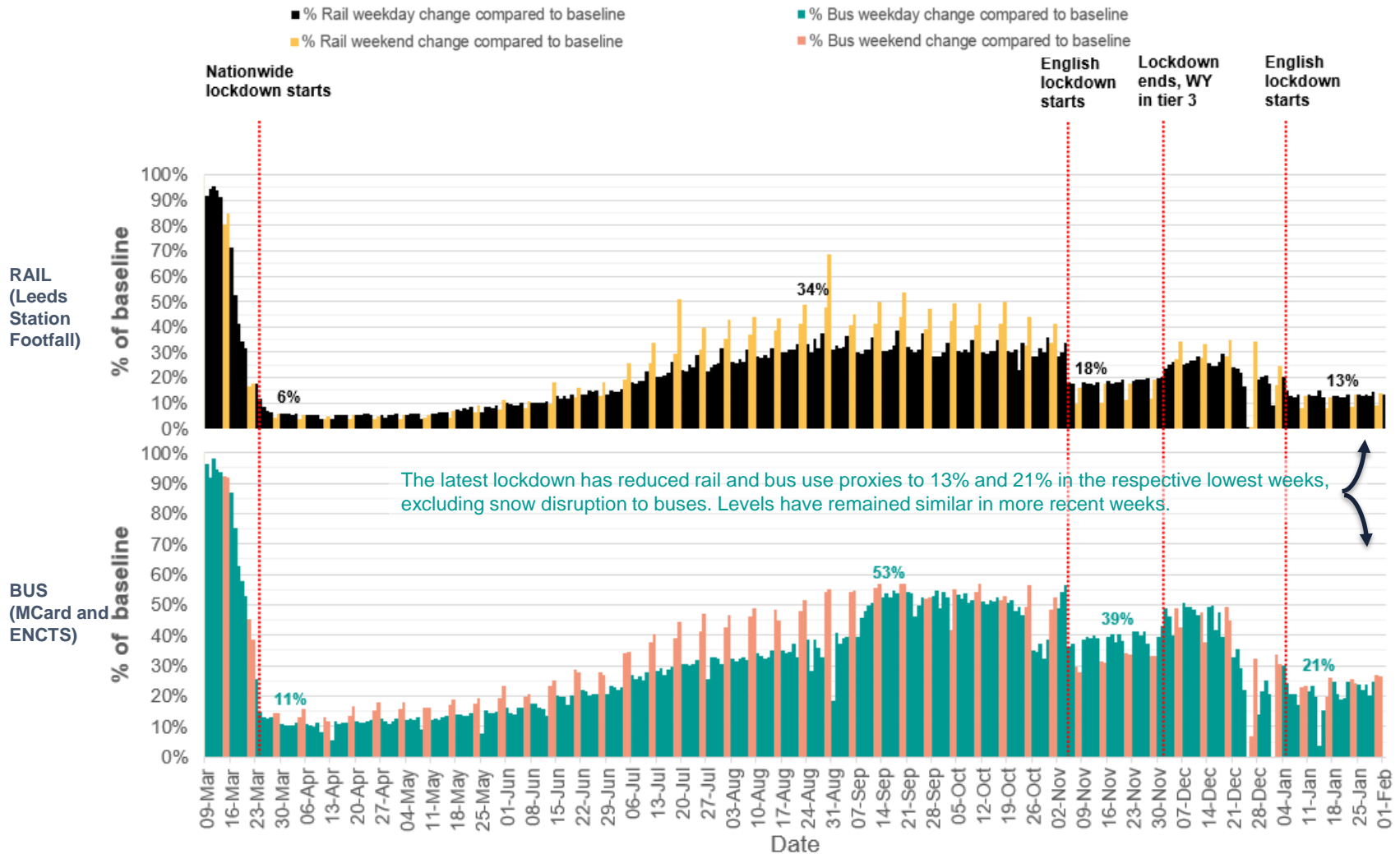
National travel levels remain consistently higher than in the March 2020 lockdown

Data for Great Britain shows that, over the first weeks of the latest lockdown, motor vehicle, bus and rail travel remained consistently higher than the levels seen in the first weeks of the March 2020 lockdown, but lower than the second lockdown in November. Similar trends occur locally.



Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/transport-use-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic>

Local rail and bus proxies remain at consistently higher levels than March 2020



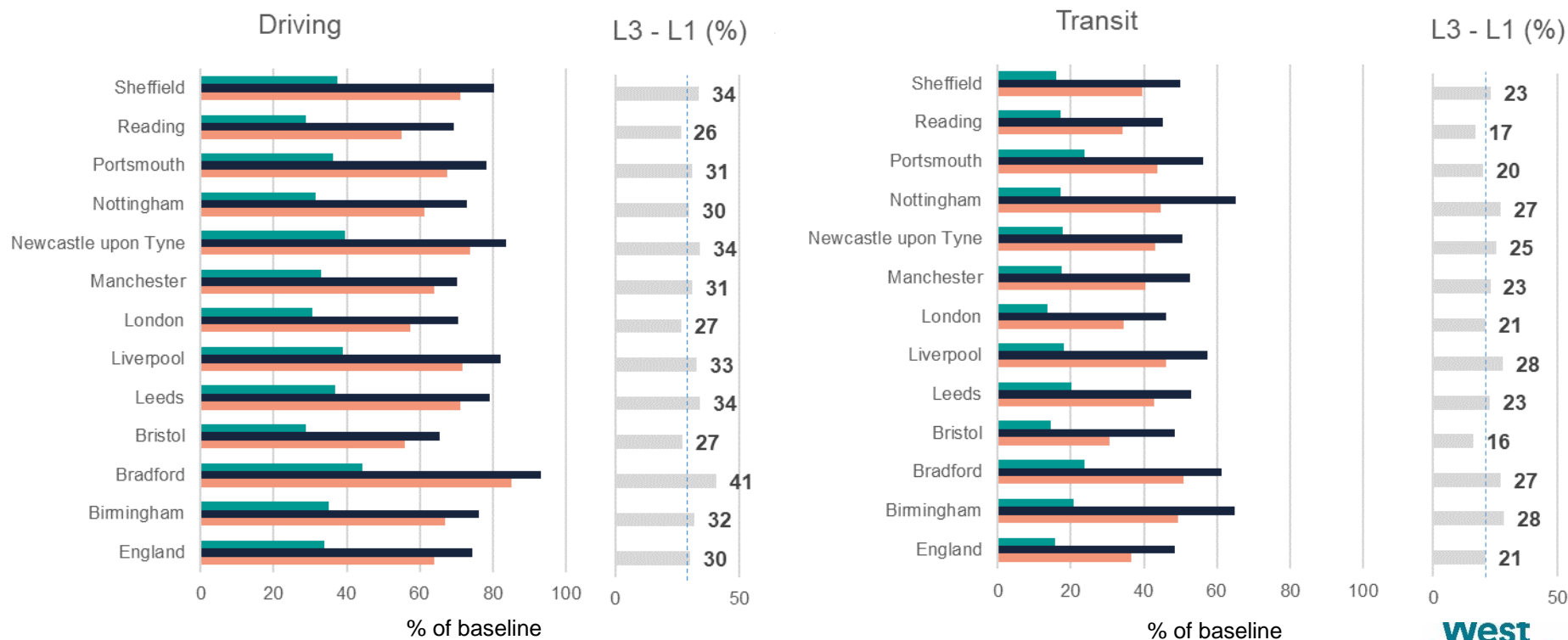
Baseline period is Monday 2nd - Friday 6th March 2020 (weekdays) and 29th Feb -1st March and 6th-7th March (weekends)

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

Apple Mobility Trends – Lockdown Comparison (first month)

Charts below reveal Apple mobility data (requests for directions in Apple Maps for driving and public transport) during the first month of each lockdown in a variety of English cities (and England average). Grey bars (and corresponding number) to the right of each chart indicates the difference between current lockdown and the first lockdown. Notably, both activity levels for driving and transit are considerably higher during lockdown 3 than lockdown one in all cities where data is available. Locally, Bradford appears to have the greatest driving activity difference between lockdowns 3 & 1, but Leeds is in a similar range to other cities.

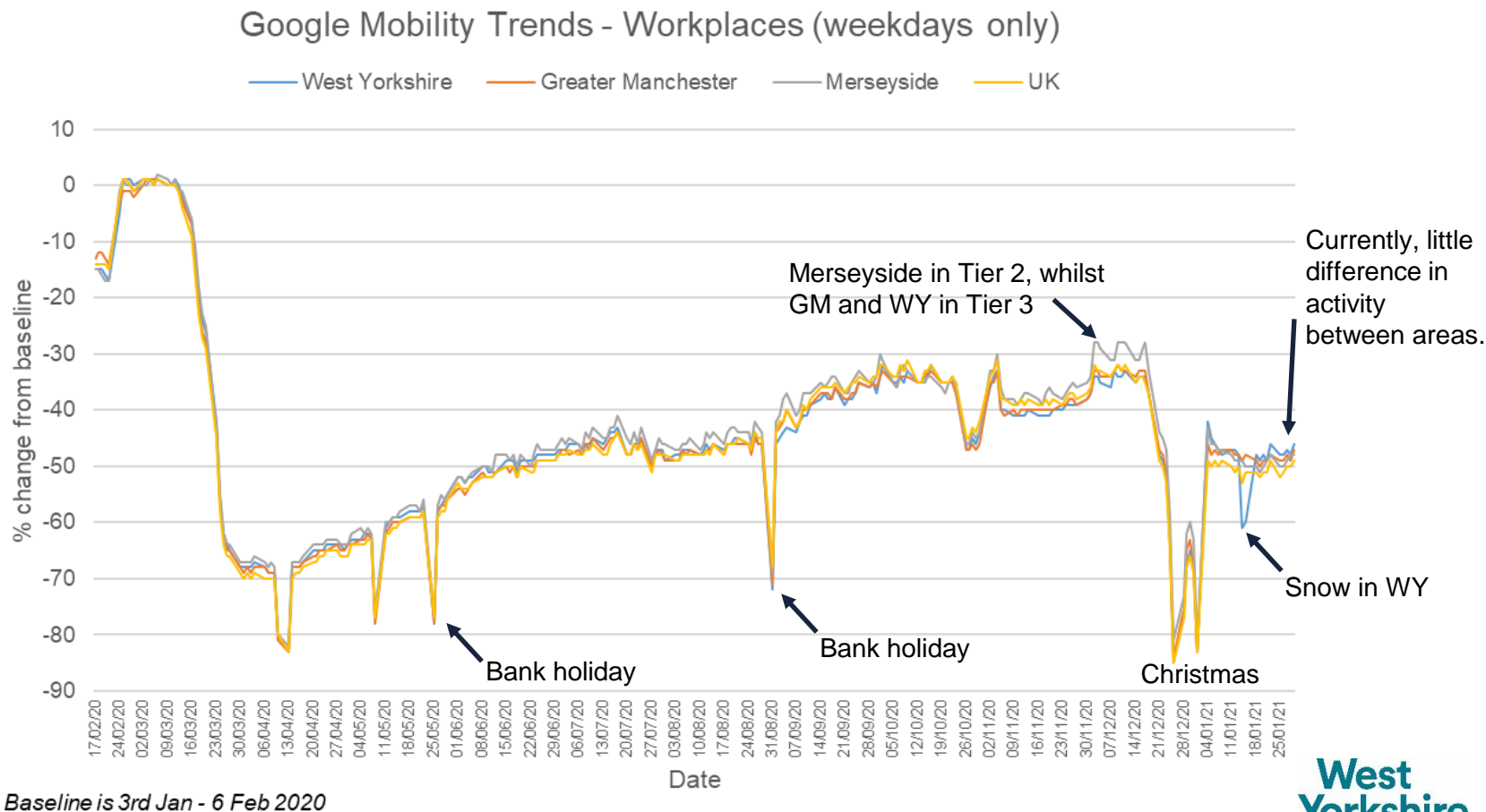
■ Lockdown 1 ■ Lockdown 2 ■ Lockdown 3



Source: Apple mobility data. The data shows relative volume of directions requests per country/region or city compared to a baseline volume on January 13th, 2020. Note that data that is sent from users' devices to the Maps service is associated with random, rotating identifiers so Apple doesn't have a profile of individual's movements and searches.

Google Mobility Trends – West Yorkshire follows a similar pattern to other areas

The chart below reveals the trend workplace activity (from Google mobility data) in West Yorkshire (blue) compared to other areas and the UK average. Note activity is expressed as a percentage variation from a baseline period (the 5-week period between 3 Jan and 6 Feb 2020). Currently workplace activity in West Yorkshire is slightly above the UK average, but not considerably different to Greater Manchester or Merseyside.



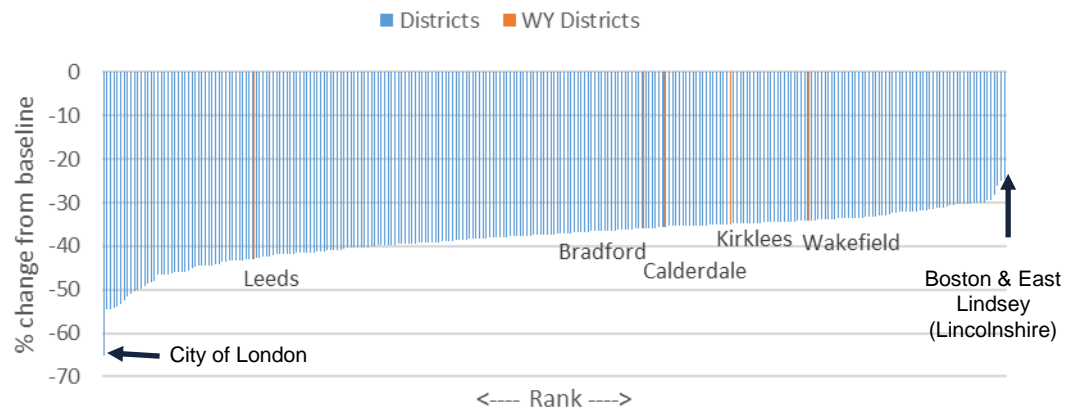
Source: Google mobility data.

Google Mobility Trends – district level variation in January 2021 (relative to Jan 2020 baseline)

The charts to the right use Google mobility data to illustrate the relative average changes in activity (from baseline) for all districts throughout January 2021 (1st-29th Jan), ranked from areas of high change (left) to low change (right). West Yorkshire districts are highlighted in red. Top chart shows activity at workplace locations and bottom shows activity at residential locations.

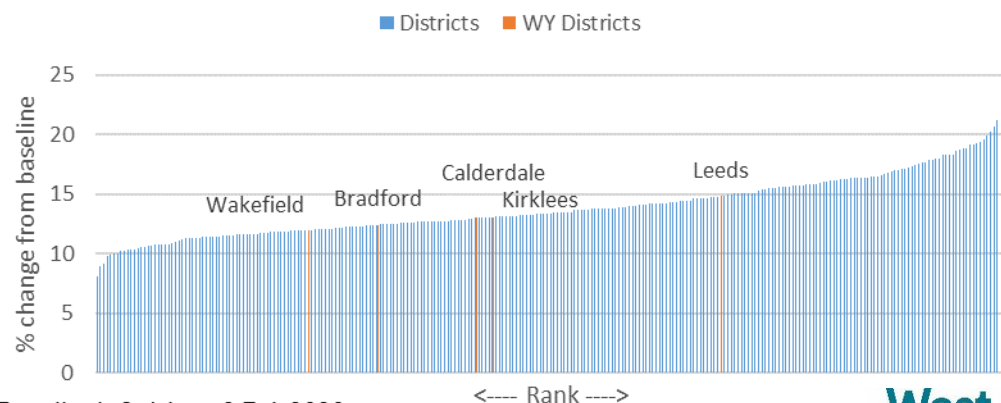
The data indicates that generally speaking activity levels in districts within West Yorkshire aren't considerably different to the England average (mid-point). Leeds still has very low (relative) activity in workplace locations and high (relative) activity in residential locations and notably its set apart from other areas in West Yorkshire, and likely reflects the economic /workforce differences of Leeds compared to other West Yorkshire districts (i.e. more office based jobs which are being done remotely from home).

Google mobility relative change Jan 2021 average - Workplace locations



Baseline is 3rd Jan - 6 Feb 2020

Google mobility relative change Jan 2021 average - Residential locations



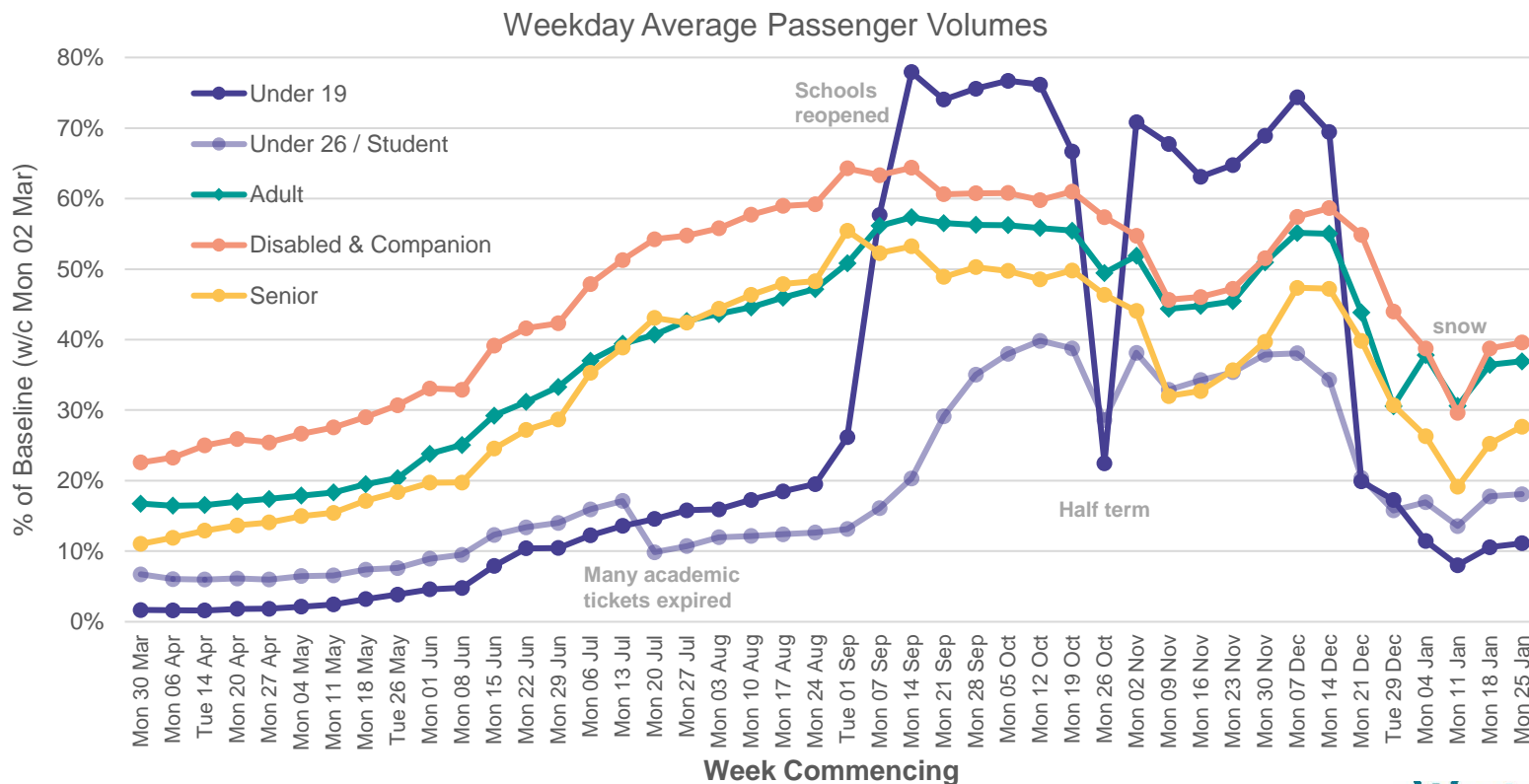
Baseline is 3rd Jan - 6 Feb 2020

Bus use in the third lockdown is more similar to levels seen in June / July than to the start of the first lockdown

Data from bus ticket machines reveals that bus by Under 19s, Senior and Disabled cohorts is similar to late June and use by Under 26 / Students and Adults is more like early July. This is higher than the start of the first lockdown. Even the week commencing 11th January with snow disruption had higher average weekday patronage than the start of first lockdown. Data 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

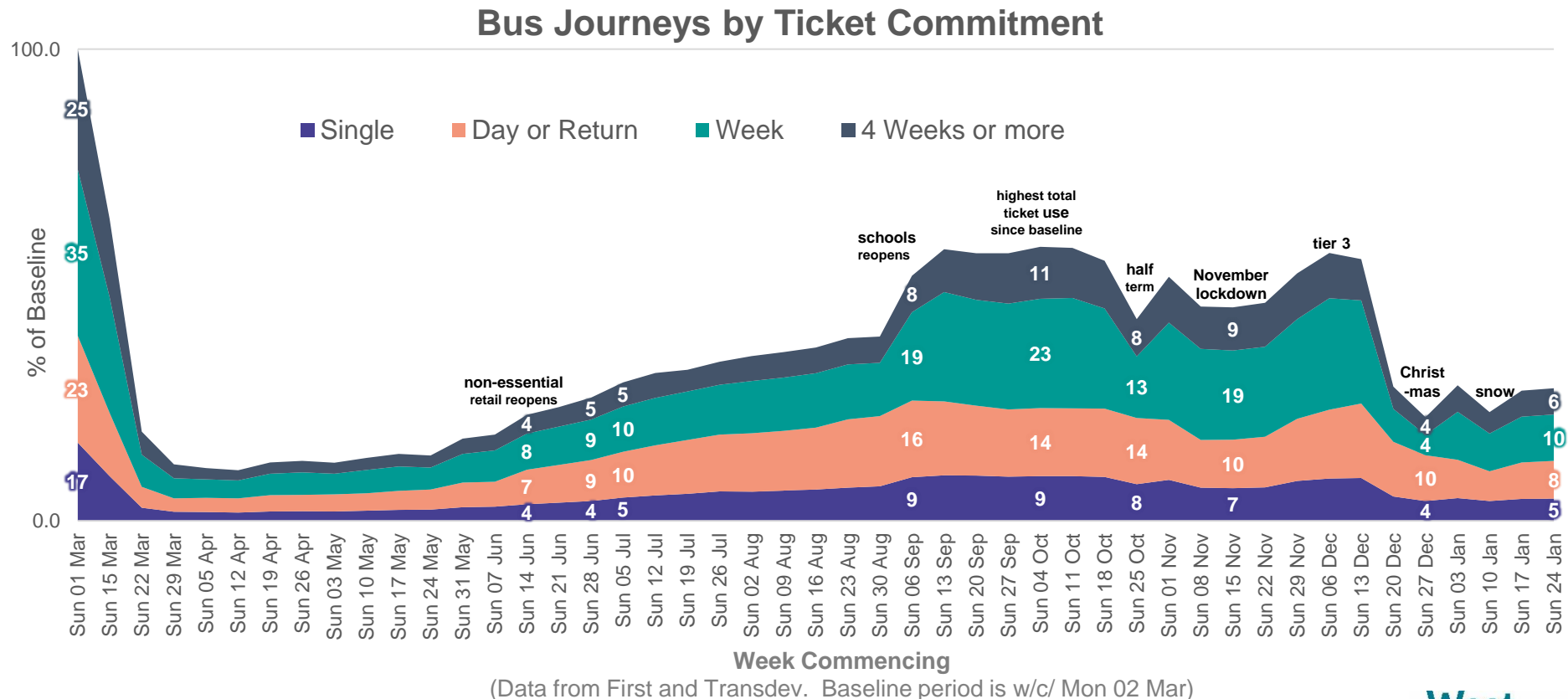
Data from First, Arriva, Yorkshire Tiger and Transdev



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.

Longer validity tickets were used slightly more & day tickets slightly less in the latest week compared to summer when total use was similar

The total level of fare paying passengers in the latest data is similar that seen at the end of June / beginning of July. The use of tickets valid for a week or more was higher in the latest data while the use of day or return tickets was lower.

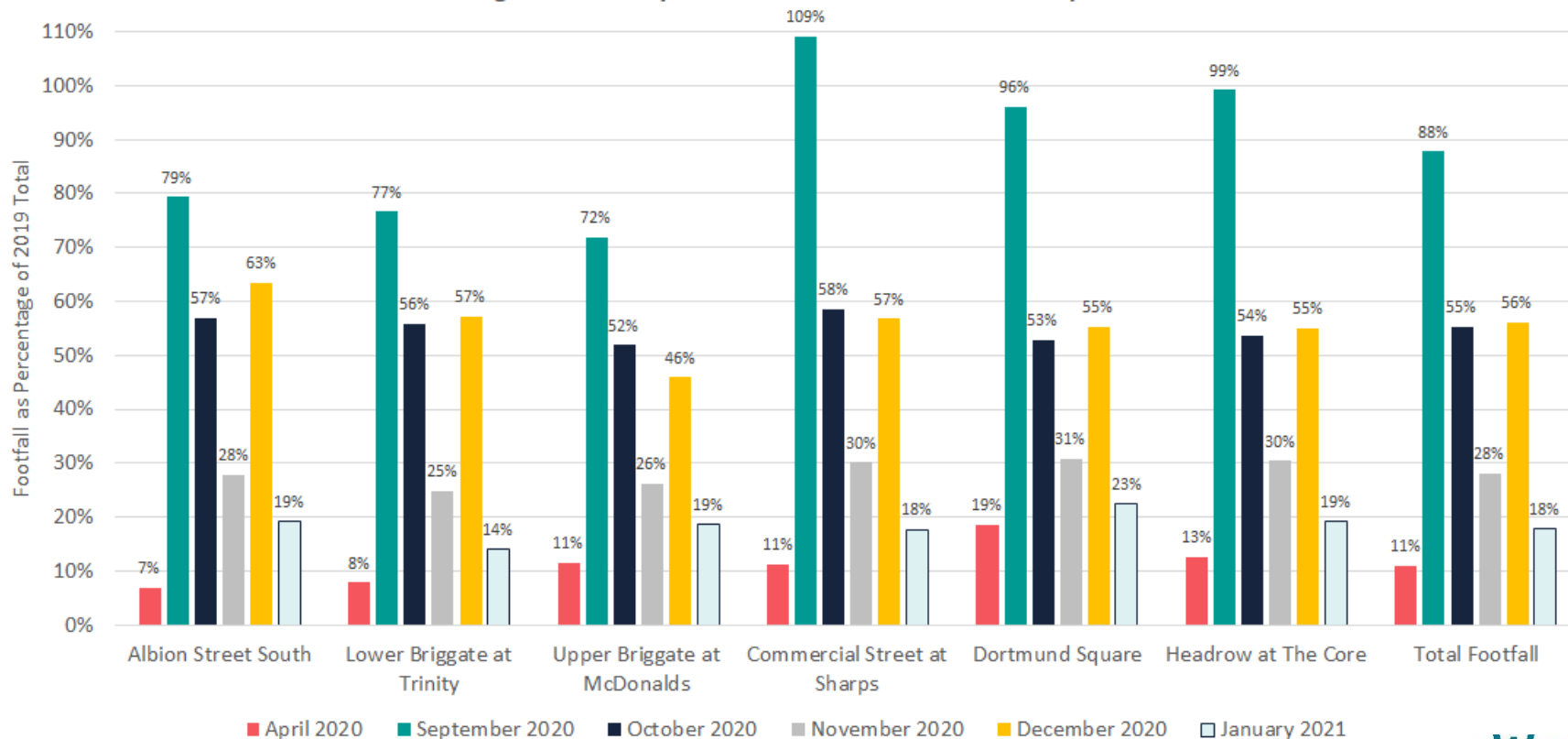


Baseline period is w/c Mon 02 Mar. Source: Bus operators electronic ticket machine data, passenger boarding locations in West Yorkshire. Graph shows First and Transdev.

Leeds City Centre footfall – all camera sites show footfall is lower during the 2nd lockdown, but higher than the first

The chart below illustrates footfall data from 6 fixed cameras sites in Leeds City Centre expressed as a percentage difference from the same period in 2019. The data reveals that during lockdown 3 (to-date), footfall at every site is above levels seen during lockdown 1, but is lower than in lockdown 2 (November 2020).

Change in Leeds City Centre Total Footfall 2019 to 2020 / 2021



Source: Leeds City Council Footfall data (6 fixed camera sites).