

COVID-19 Fortnightly Insights Report

Research & Intelligence
28th May 2021



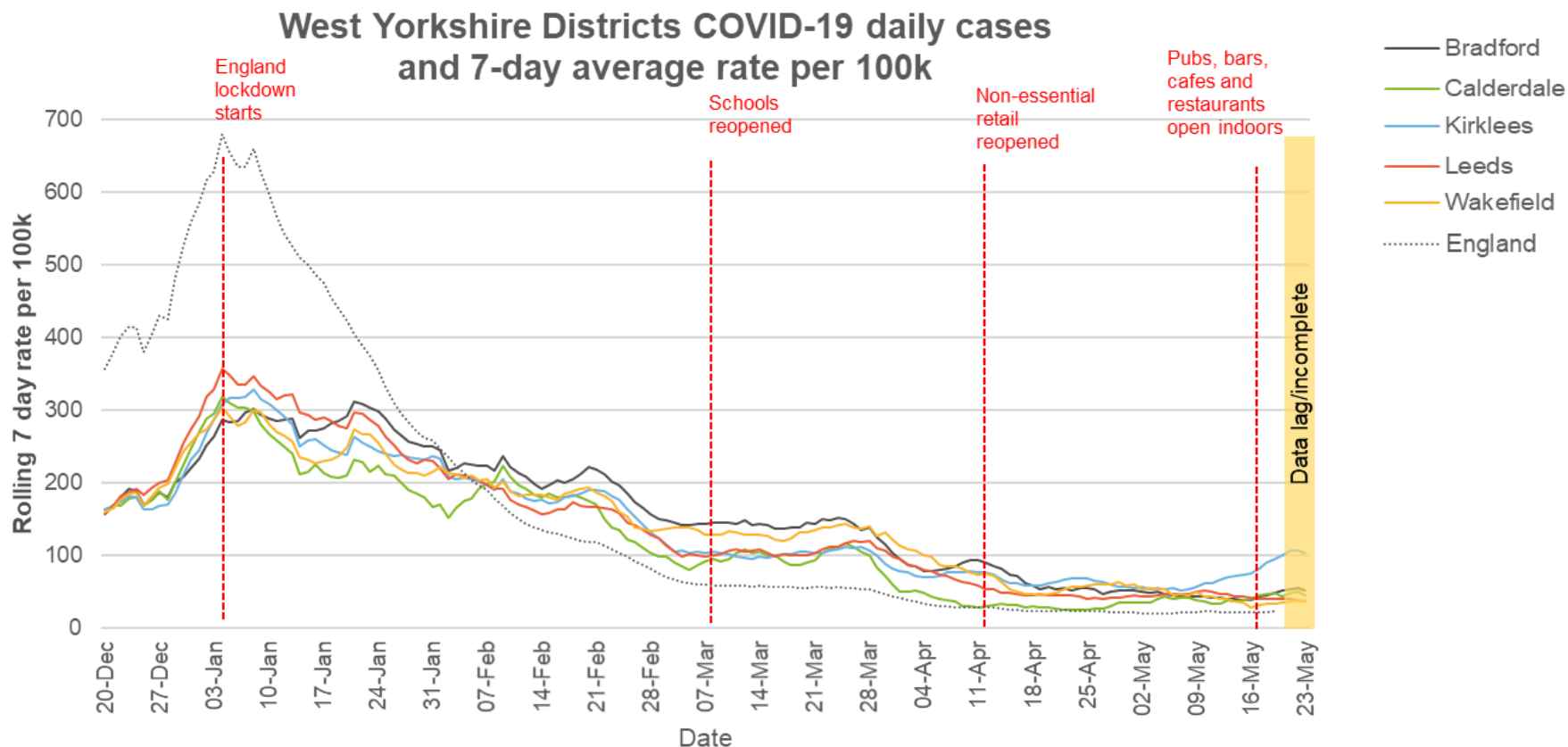
Executive Summary – social and economic

- With data now available up to a period just before the further easing of restrictions on 17th May, it would seem that much of the increase in activity seen following April's easing has been sustained although this plateaued to some degree in early May.
- National survey data from ONS suggested the proportion of businesses actively trading changed little at 83% in the fortnight to May 16th, though there was a gradual increase in people returning to their usual workplace.
- The same suggests almost 1 in 10 jobs were furloughed in early May, its lowest level since November. The sharpest falls were in arts & entertainment and hospitality, though these sectors still have significantly more jobs furloughed than elsewhere.
- The vacancy count dipped slightly in the week to May 22nd, but remains 16% above pre-pandemic levels.
- Looking further ahead, the Leeds City Region Business Survey suggests the vast majority of businesses are unlikely to change premises or location as a result of COVID, though there are notable exceptions with up to 1 in 5 larger businesses considering relocating.
- Looking to the recovery, businesses say issues such as productivity, digital infrastructure, training and innovation have become more important to them post-pandemic.

Executive Summary – transport

- Overall, travel in Great Britain has returned to summer 2020 levels following the lifting of restrictions, with public transport starting to show usage above the 2020 maximum.
- Nationally, motor vehicle use is similar to pre-pandemic levels on weekends but remains about 10% lower on weekdays, whilst bus and rail remain 40% and 60% lower than baseline levels, respectively.
- Locally, bus and rail increased markedly since restrictions eased on the 12th April. Since further easing of restrictions (17th May), proxies for rail use showed a slight uptick exceeding the summer 2020 weekday average, with a strong weekend recovery. Bus remained relatively stable but with strong weekend recovery.
- Apple mobility data (journey requests via Apple maps) supports other data sources and indicates private vehicle use is recovering faster than public transport. Notably, Bradford currently has the highest relative levels of driving compared to other English cities.

Virus prevalence – West Yorkshire trend



As of the 19th May 2021, the 7-day moving average **West Yorkshire COVID-19 rate was 51.9 cases per 100k, a 12% increase compared to the previous week** (46.5 per 100k). This was driven by a further increase in cases in Kirklees (blue line). In the same period, the rate in Yorkshire and the Humber fell by 5% to 35.3 per 100k, and rates overall in England increased slightly (by 3%) to 22 per 100k. For the latest data please see the [West Yorkshire COVID-19 dashboard](#).

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.

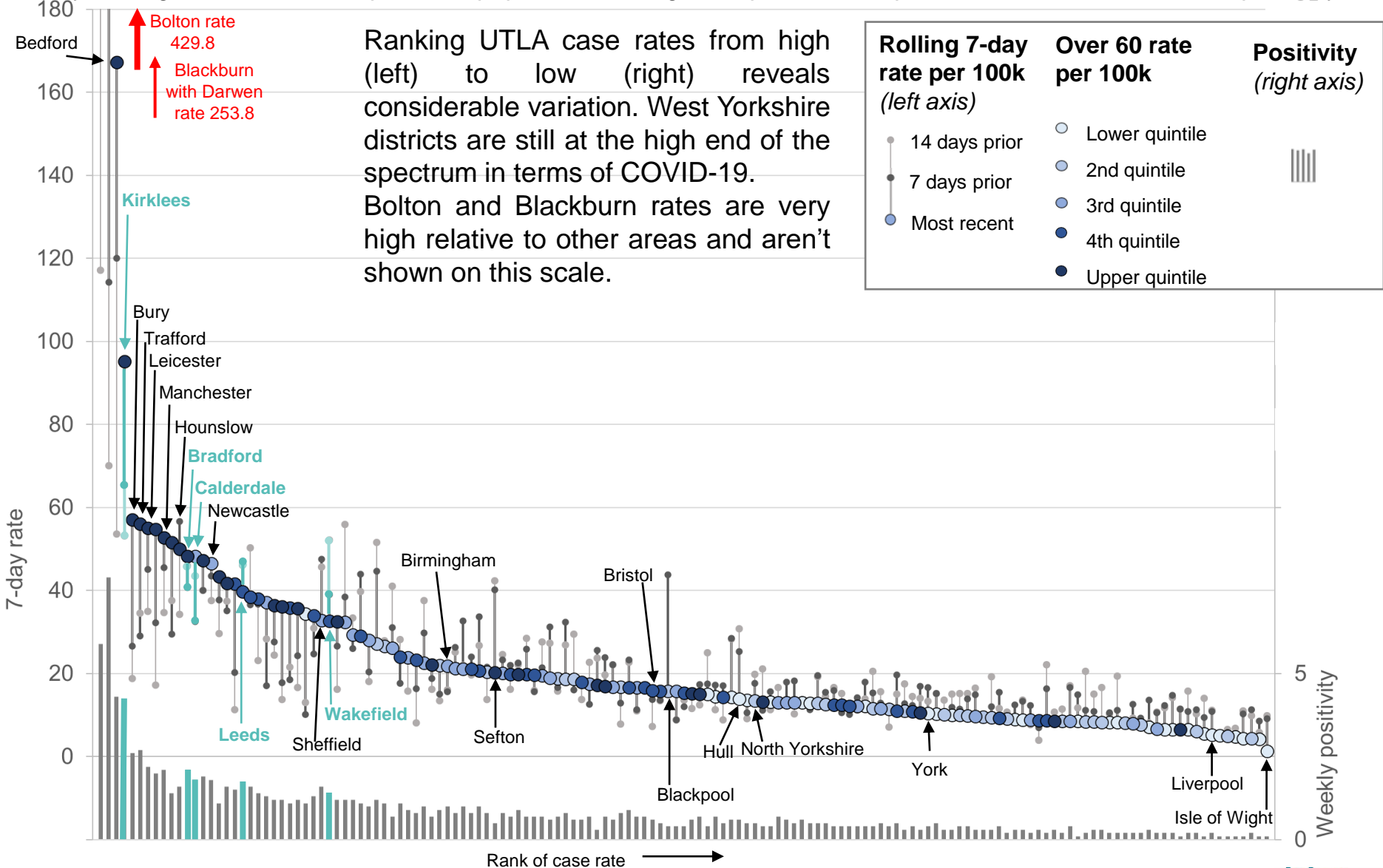
Virus prevalence – West Yorkshire

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 5 days are excluded from the calculations of rates and moving averages.

Area	Total cases per 100k people (13 – 19 May) Most recent data week	Total cases per 100k people (6 – 12 May) Previous week	Absolute Difference		% Weekly Change
Bradford	48.4	40.8	7.6	↑	19%
Calderdale	48.2	32.6	15.6	↑	48%
Kirklees	95.3	65.5	29.8	↑	45%
Leeds	39.7	46.9	-7.2	↓	-15%
Wakefield	32.7	39.0	-6.3	↓	-16%
West Yorkshire	51.9	46.5	5.4	↑	12%
Yorkshire & the Humber	35.3	37.1	-1.8	↓	-5%
England	22	21.4	0.6	↑	3%

COVID-19 Rates for Upper Tier Local Authorities (UTLAs)

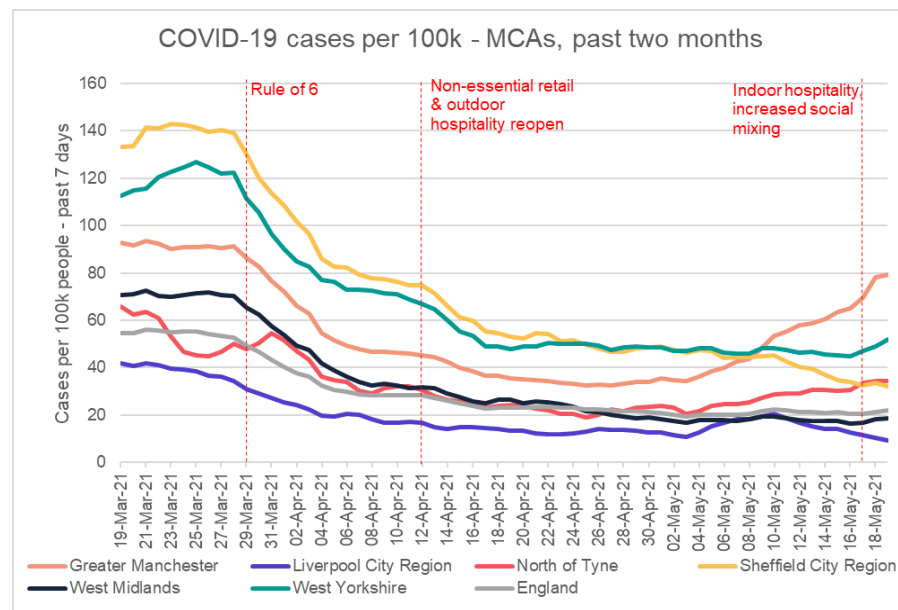
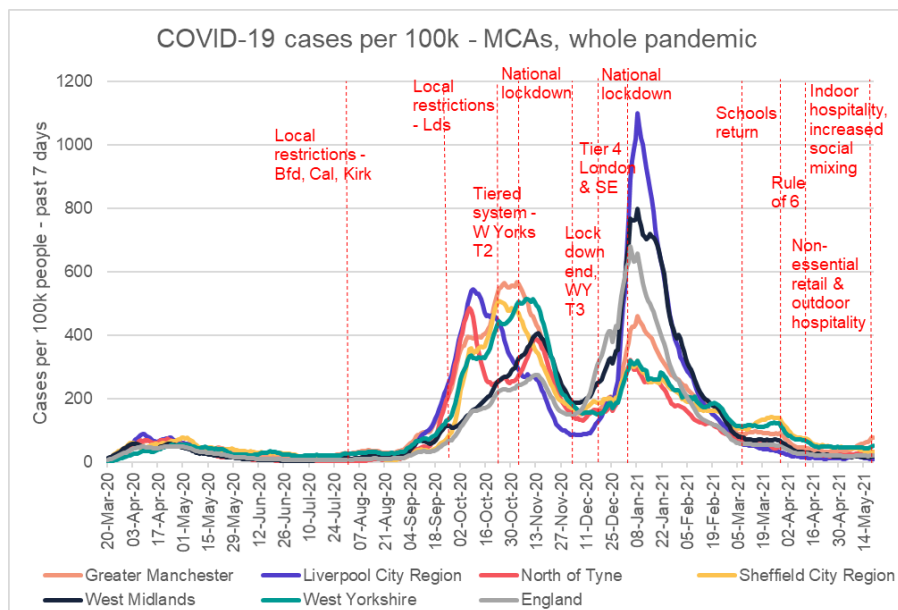
7-day average COVID-19 rate per 100k population, change compared to the previous week, over 60 rate & positivity



Blue points show latest COVID-19 case rate per 100k across UTLAs as of the 19th May (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 19th May (right Y-axis).

Cases increasing notably in three MCAs, though some other areas see falls

Greater Manchester has continued to see the most significant increase in case rates in the seven days to May 19th, with a 36.7% increase compared to 7 days earlier. North of Tyne (+17.6%) and West Yorkshire (+11.6%) have also both seen increases, whilst Liverpool City Region (-44.5%) and Sheffield City Region (-20.1%) have seen marked falls. The rate per 100k is now 79.3 in Greater Manchester, substantially higher than elsewhere though West Yorkshire's rate of 51.9 per 100k is 50% higher than the third MCA tracked here, North of Tyne (34.4 per 100k).

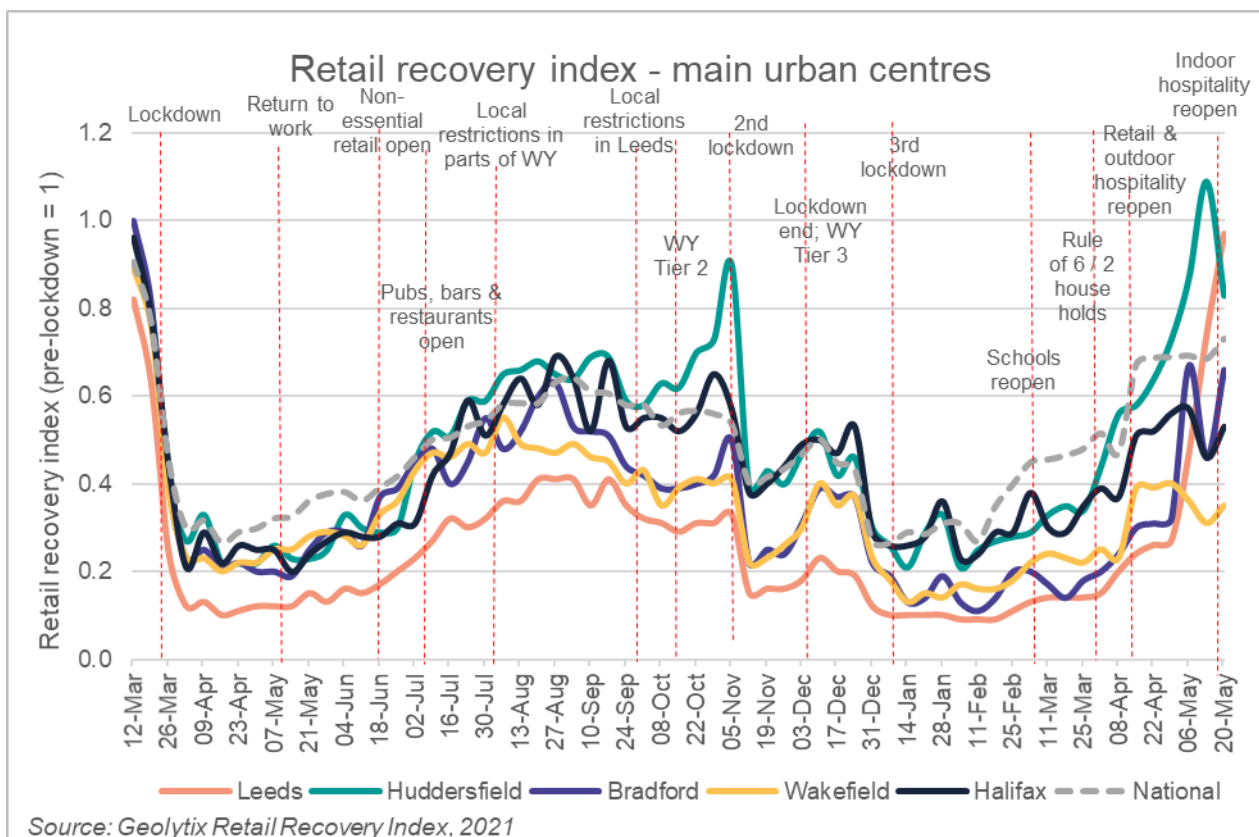


Economic Insights



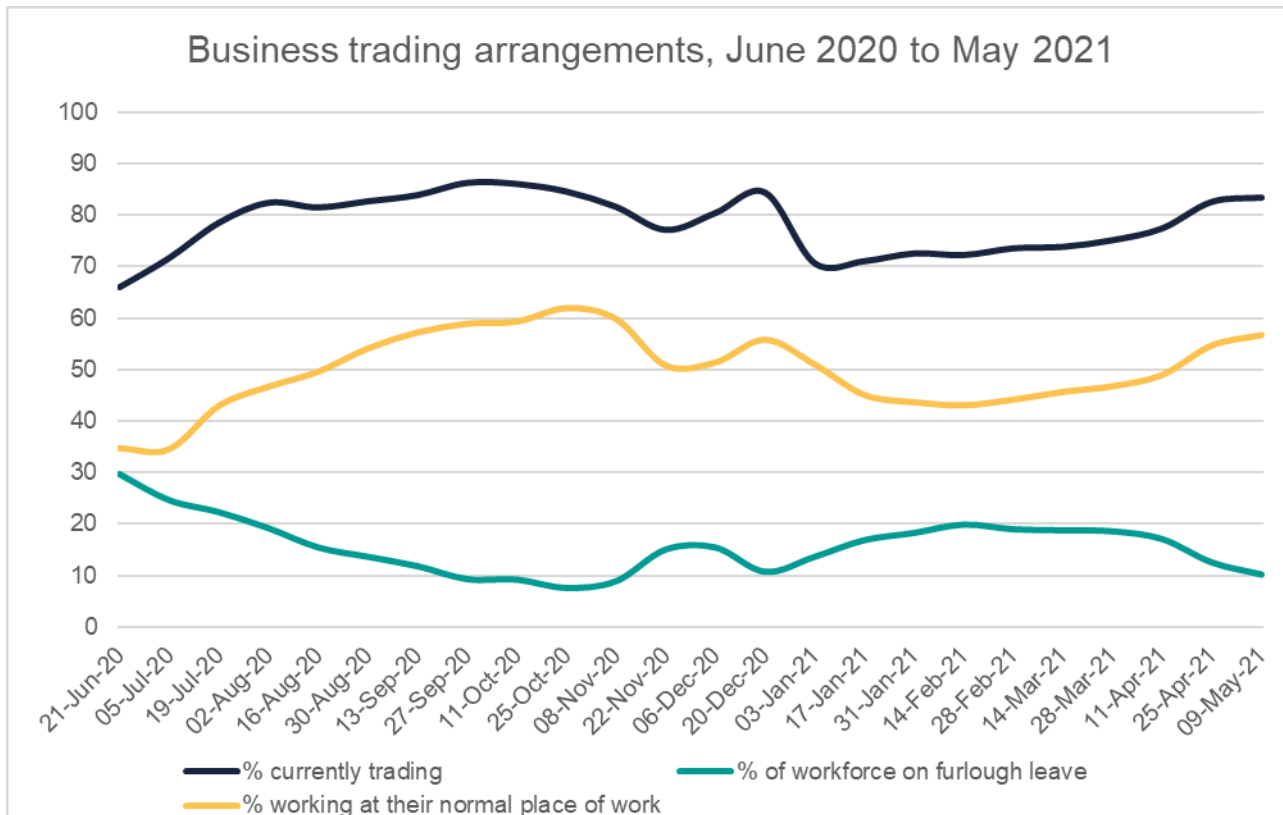
Town and city centre activity increasing as restrictions ease further

Activity has continued to increase in most of West Yorkshire's urban centres in the week to May 20th, according to Geolytix's retail recovery index. Leeds has seen the most notable increase in recent weeks, and activity was at 97% of pre-pandemic levels in the latest data. Huddersfield was the only main centre to see activity fall, but remains second highest overall at 83% of pre-pandemic levels, higher than the 73% averaged nationally.



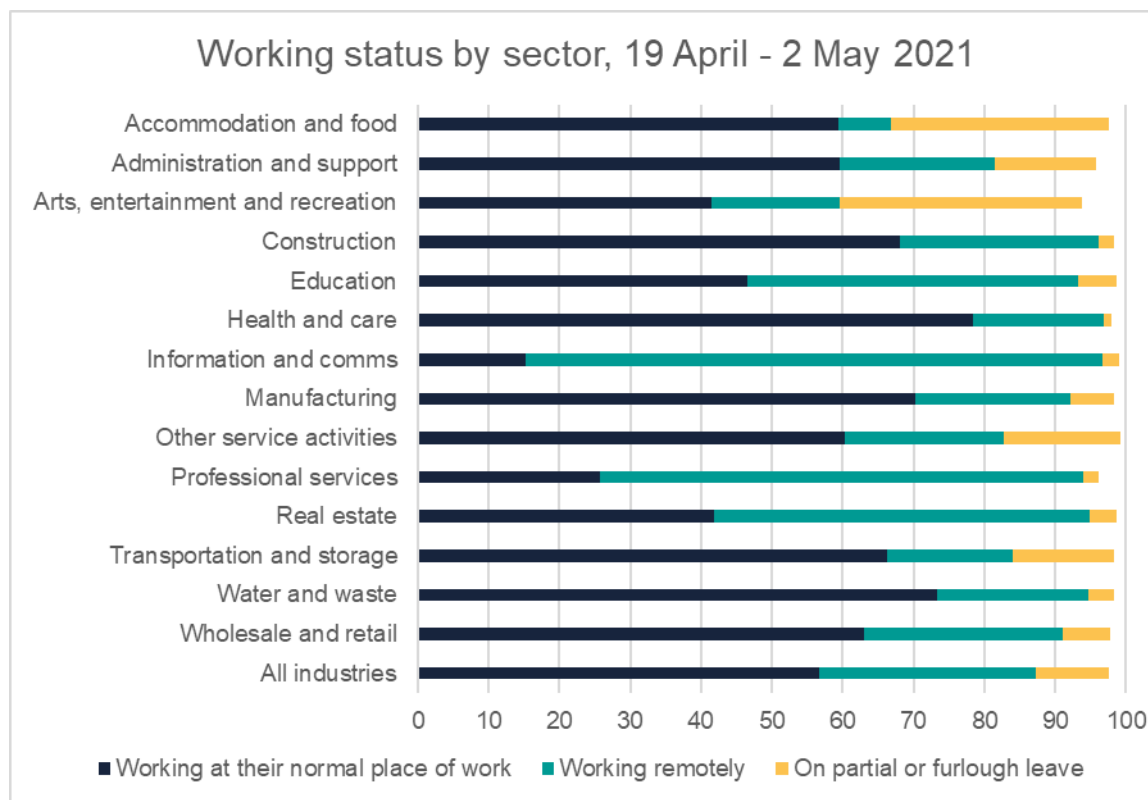
Gradual return to more normal working activity continues

The proportion of businesses currently trading nationally held steady at around 83% in the fortnight to May 16th, according to the latest ONS Business Insights & Conditions Survey (BICS). It was up only marginally on the previous fortnight, though a further 5% were expecting to start trading in the next fortnight. The proportion of workers on furlough fell to 10.3%, from 12.6% a fortnight earlier – now at its lowest level since 8th November. The proportion in their usual workplace increased to 56.7% - again comparable to early November.



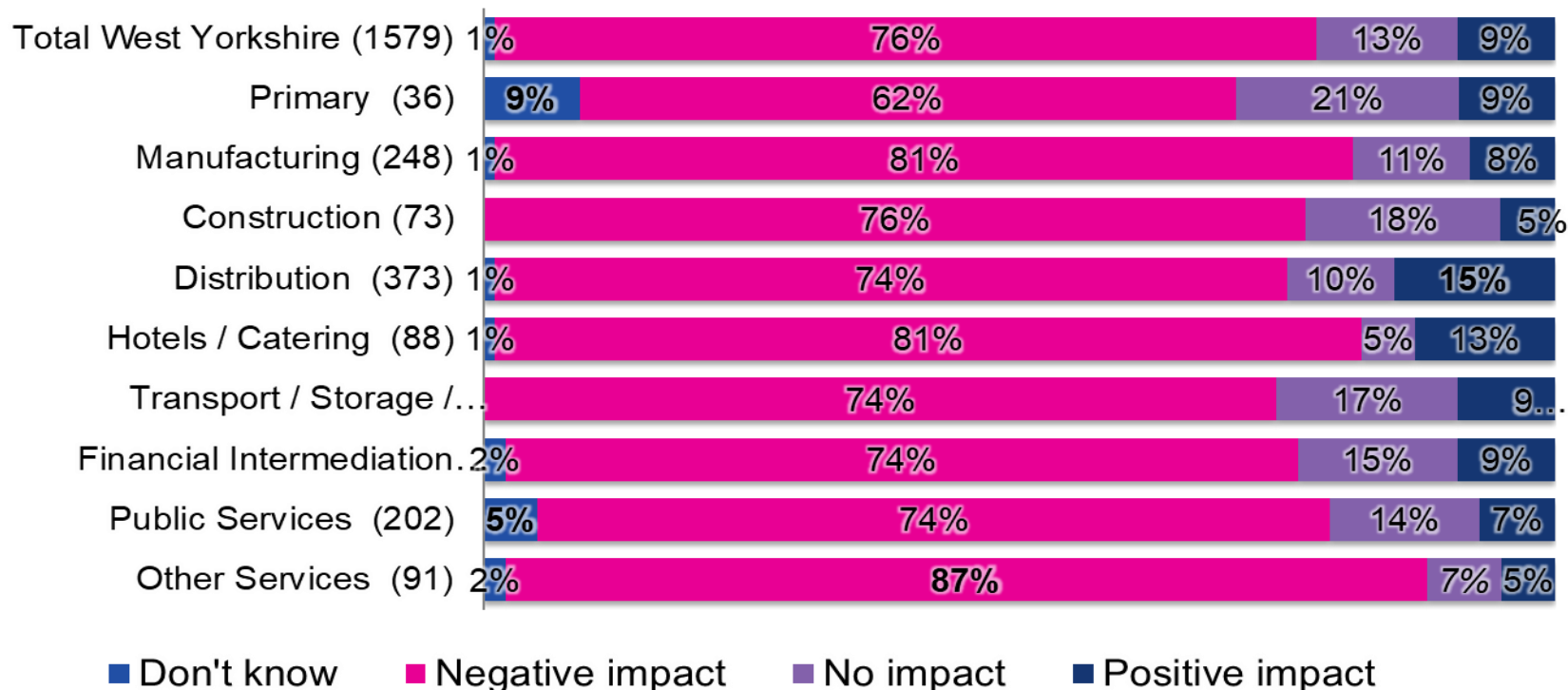
Still significant variation in working arrangements by sector

In the fortnight to May 2nd, furlough use nationally declined most markedly compared to a fortnight earlier in the accommodation & food sector (down from 38% to 31%), followed by arts, entertainment & recreation (40% to 34%) and other services (21.5% to 16.5%). However, the former two sectors still have furlough rates three times higher than in the economy as a whole. The proportion of people working remotely remained unchanged at 30.5% across all sectors.



Three quarters of businesses saw a negative financial impact from Covid-19

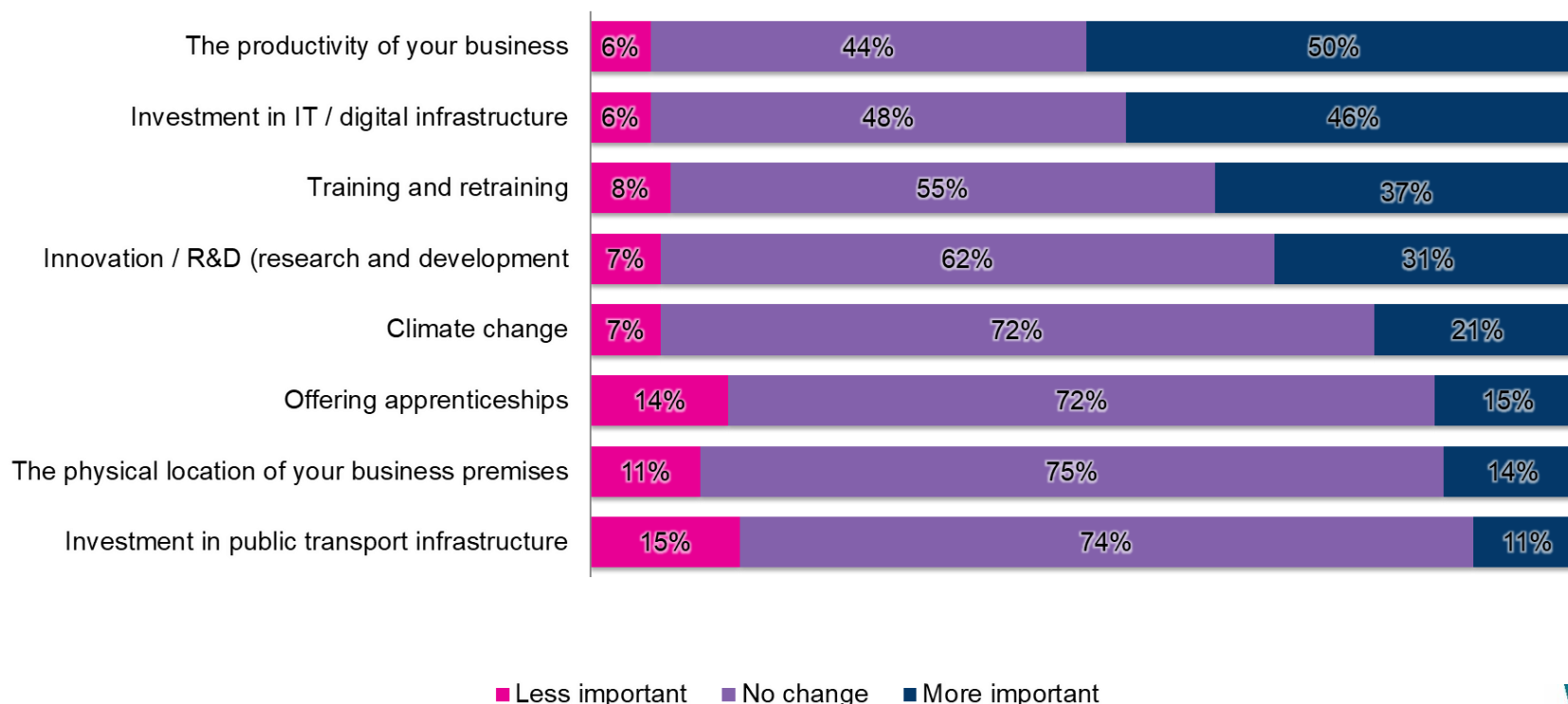
Three quarters of businesses surveyed in the latest Business Survey in West Yorkshire, said they had experienced a negative financial impact as a result of COVID-19. This was statistically significantly higher in Other Services at 87%. The Distribution sector, which covers wholesale and retail was more likely to report a positive financial impact (25%) but this was still far outweighed by the 74% seeing a negative impact. Businesses are more optimistic about the year ahead however, with 45% expecting their overall performance to improve and recruitment plans similar to pre-pandemic.



Source: Leeds City Region Business Survey, sample 1,579 businesses carried out in February and March 2021.

Productivity, digital infrastructure, training and innovation more important post-COVID

Half of all businesses surveyed said that productivity was more important post-COVID, more than any other issue. Digital infrastructure (46%), training (37%) and innovation (31%) were all mentioned as being more important by more than 30% of businesses. Issues more tied to a physical location – business premises and transport infrastructure, were less likely to be prioritised, though this could reflect current disrupted working patterns and may or may not persist as a long-term view.

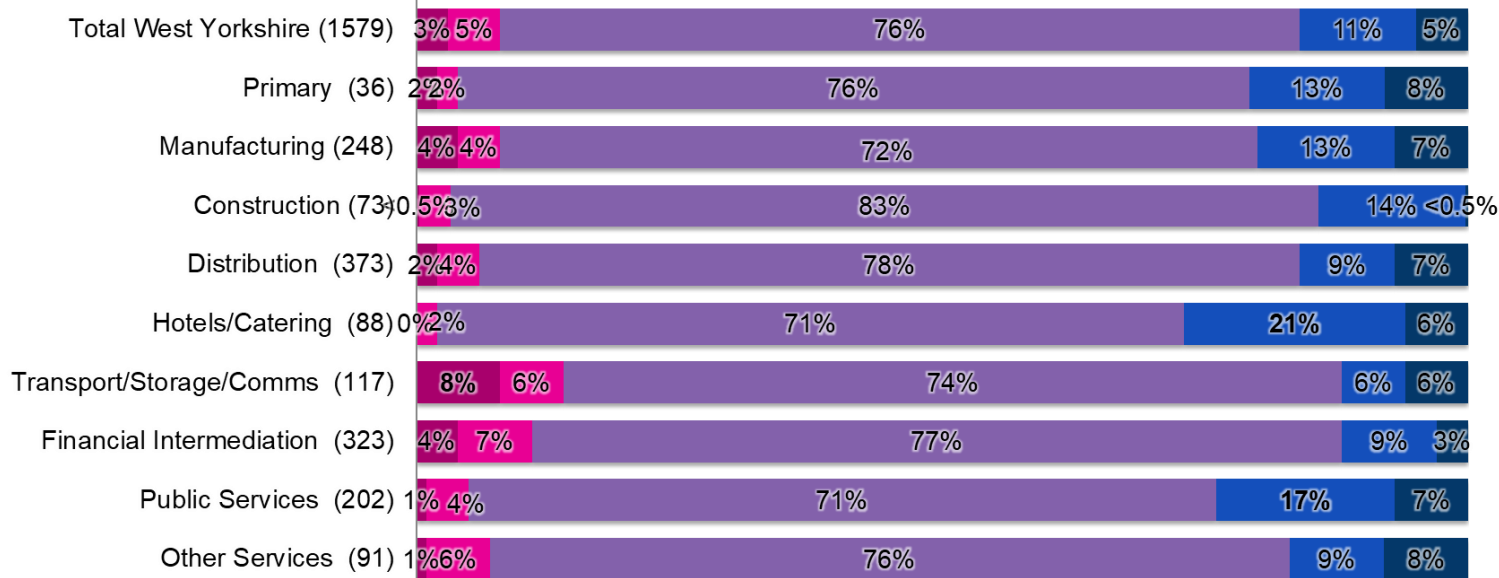


Source: Leeds City Region Business Survey, sample 1,579 businesses carried out in February and March 2021.

Most businesses remain happy with their location, though there is variation

Nearly 1 in 10 (9%) businesses said their current premises didn't meet their needs, little changed from the 8% reported immediately prior to the pandemic. The majority of businesses (75%) do not anticipate any need for more or less physical space over the next year, but if they do it is more likely to be about more than less space (16%, compared with 8%). Just 8% of businesses are planning to move premises as a response to Covid-19. However, this increases to 19% of medium/large businesses.

Of the 46% of businesses who have enabled home working, two thirds (64%) say staff are already back in the office or will be within 6 months of the survey's date (Feb/March), but 1 in 5 (21%) say staff will work from home for either 12 more months or permanently.

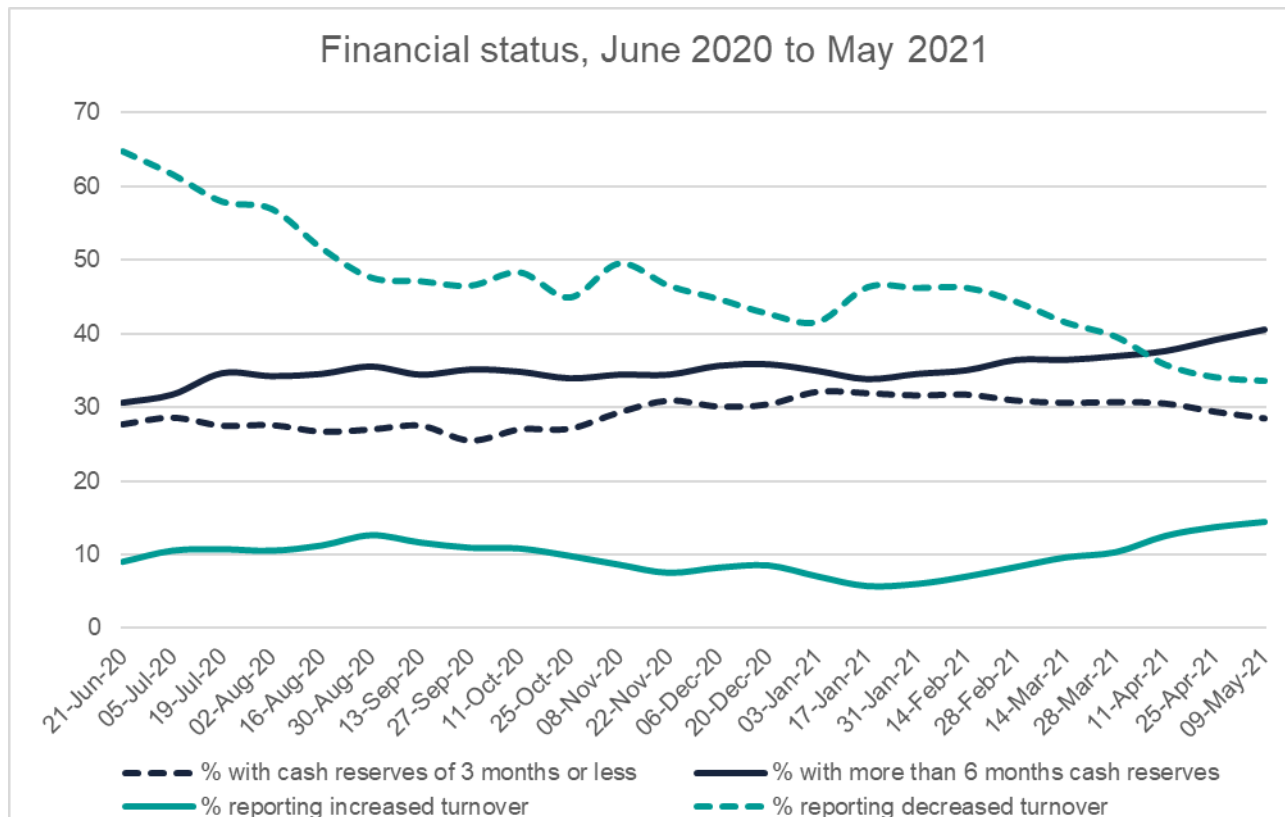


■ Need a lot less ■ Need a little less ■ Unchanged ■ Need a little more space ■ Need a lot more space

Source: Leeds City Region Business Survey, sample 1,579 businesses carried out in February and March 2021.

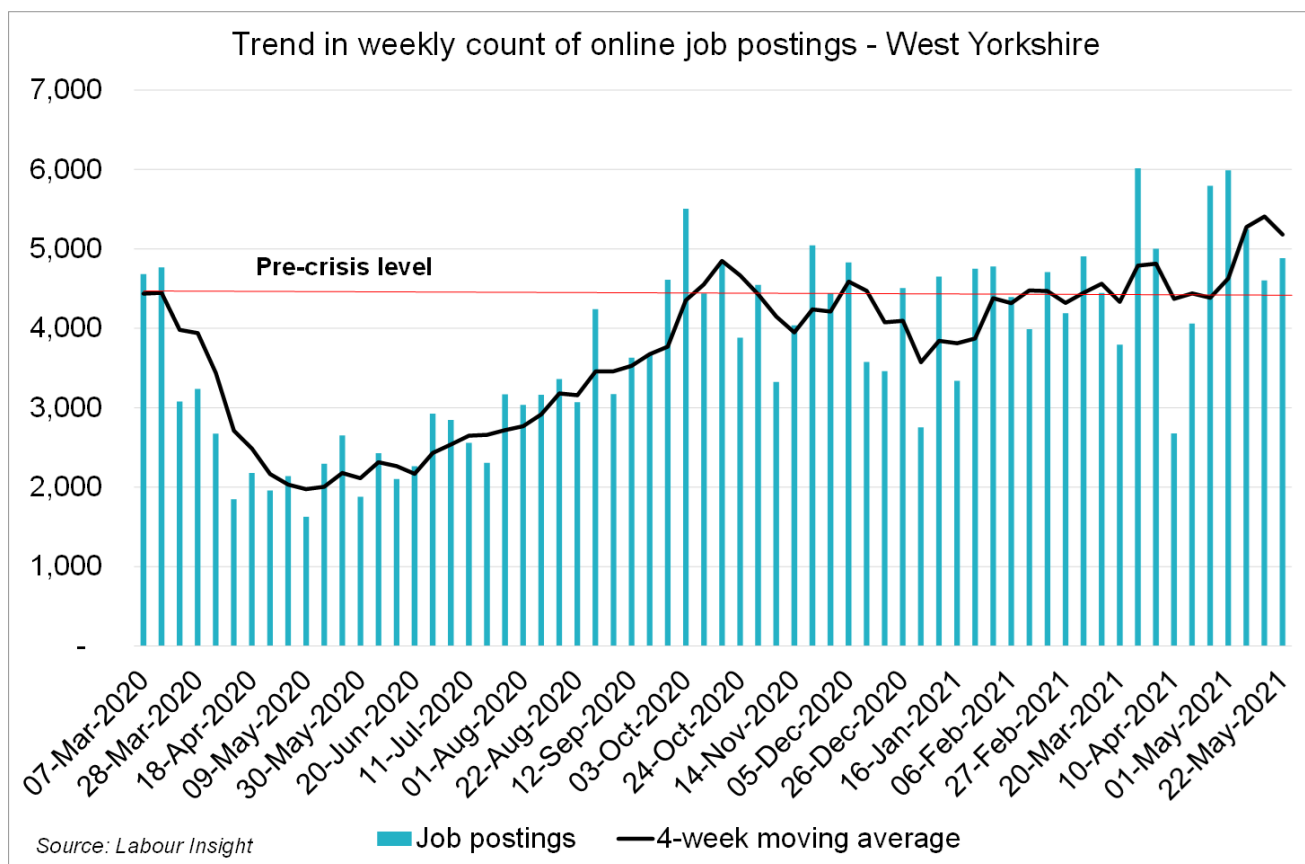
Gradual improvement in businesses' financial position

Businesses' financial position nationally continues to gradually improve as activity increases, according to the latest ONS BICS survey. Just over 40% of businesses now say they have more than 6 months cash in reserve, the highest level for which comparable data is available since June last year. 14.5% of businesses reported increased turnover in mid-May, again higher than at any previous point on this survey but still well below the 33.5% reporting decreasing turnover.



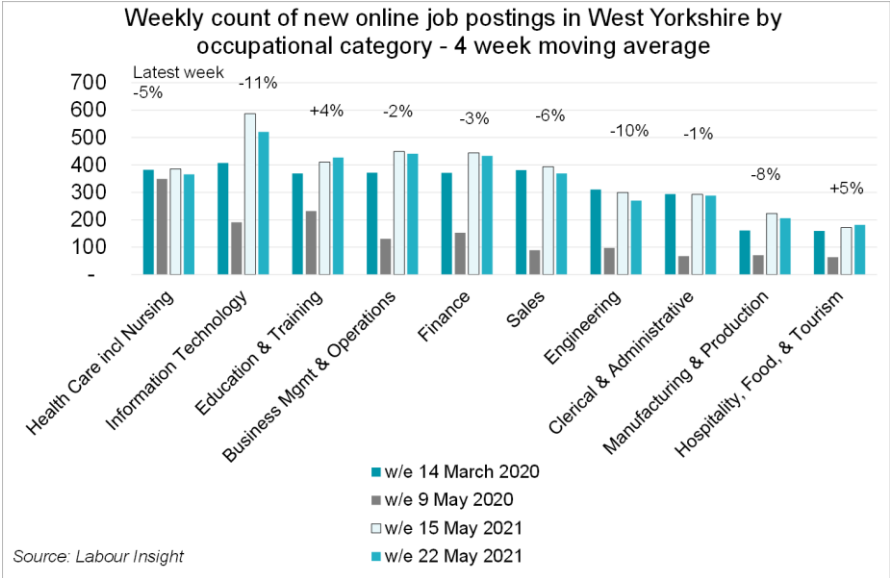
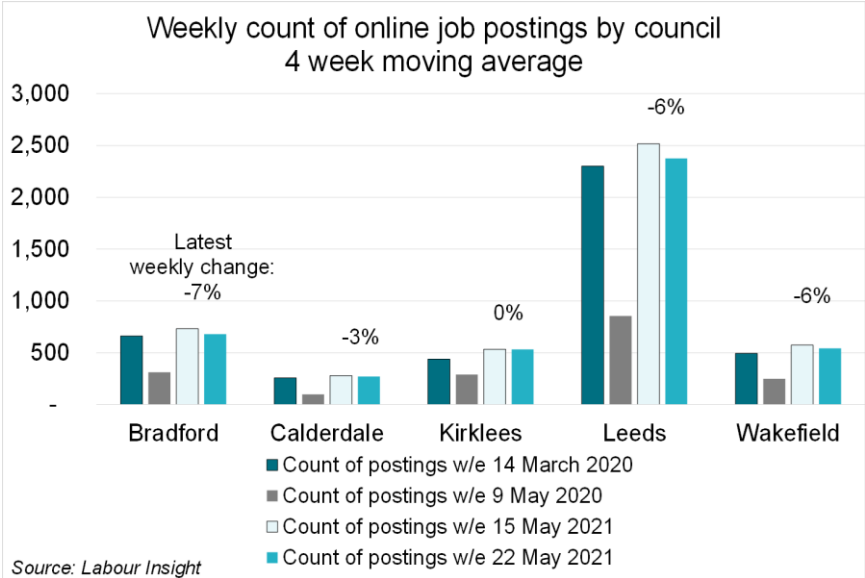
Vacancy count falls slightly, remains strong

The number of vacancies for jobs in West Yorkshire posted online during week ending 22 May fell by 4% compared with the previous week, based on a 4-week moving average (national average decline: also 4%). The weekly vacancy count for West Yorkshire is currently 16% above its pre-crisis level (i.e. compared with week ending March 14 2020).



Decline in weekly count for most local authorities but all remain above pre-crisis level

All local authority areas saw small decreases in postings in the latest week, based on the moving average, except Kirklees where there was no change. All local authorities continue to exceed their pre-crisis level of postings.



All occupations, except Education and training and Hospitality, food and tourism recorded a decrease in postings for the latest week, based on a 4-week moving average. All occupations are back to or close to pre-crisis levels except Engineering.

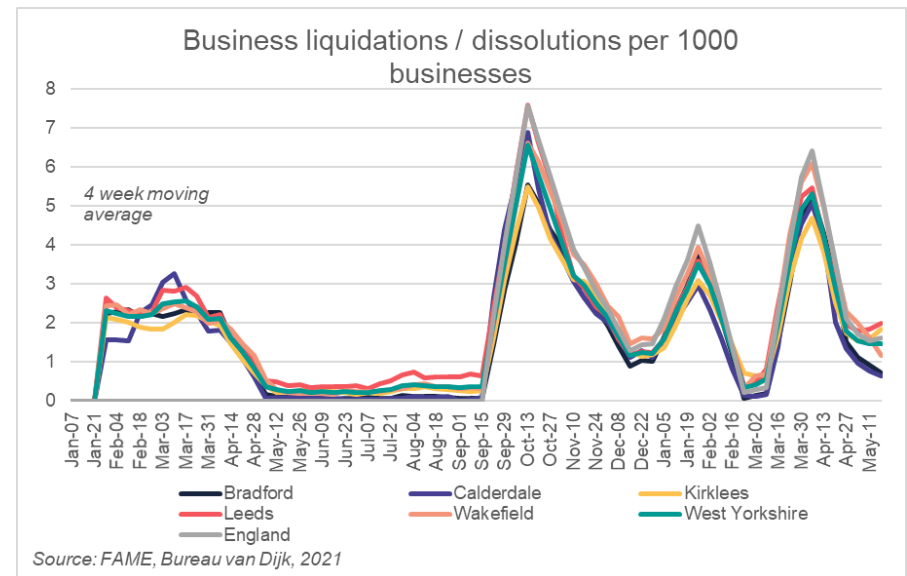
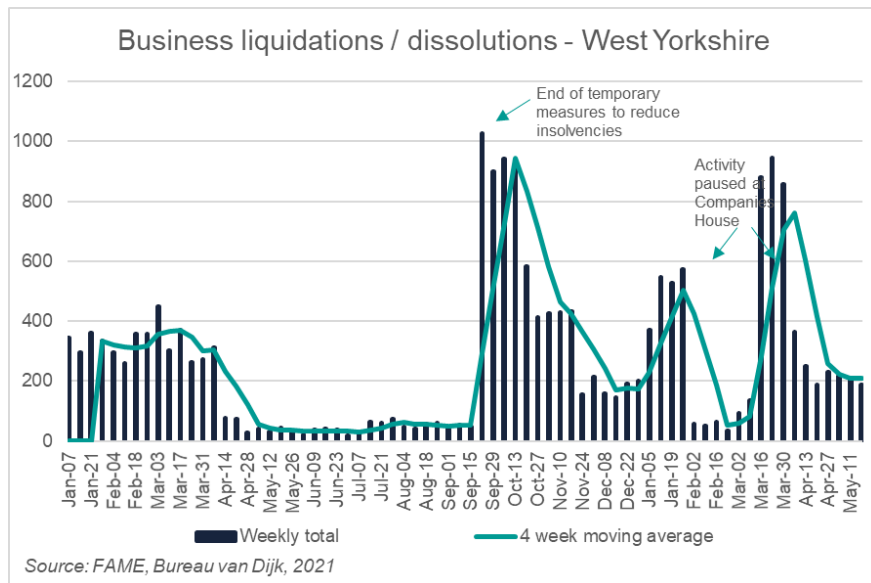
Source: Labour Insight



Business liquidations fall slightly, with some local variation

190 businesses were dissolved / liquidated in West Yorkshire in the week to May 18th, according to data from Bureau van Dijk's FAME business database. This is a 13% fall on the previous week, and is significantly below the 328 liquidations per week averaged prior to the pandemic in Q1 2020. There was an 18% increase in dissolutions/liquidations nationally in the week to May 18th.

There were 1.3 liquidations per 1,000 businesses in the week to May 18th, below the 1.7 seen nationally. Rates are at or slightly above 2 liquidations per 1,000 businesses in Kirklees and Leeds, both of which have seen increases recently.

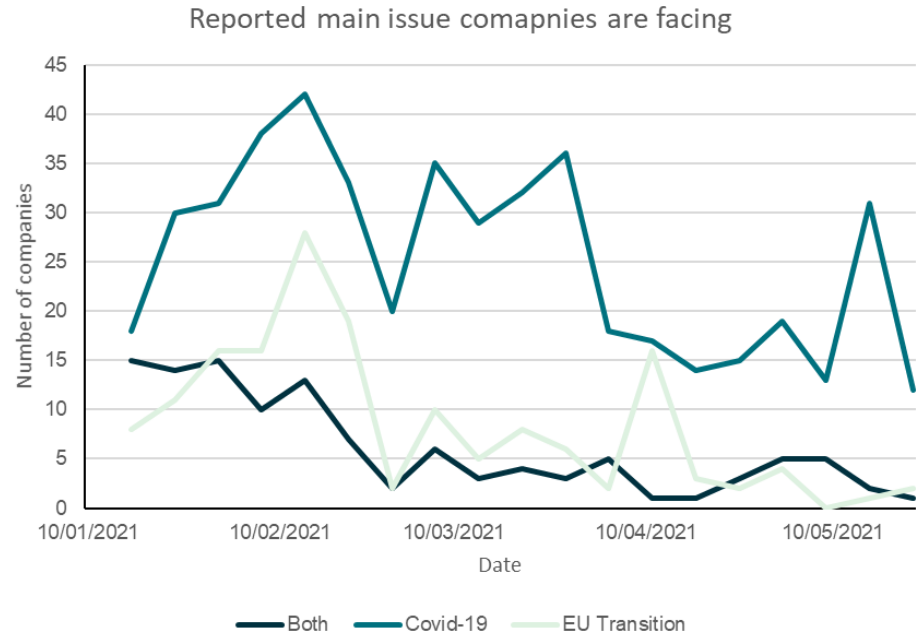


*Source: FAME, Bureau van Dijk, 2021. Analysis based on company registration address, location of activity may differ in some cases

EU Exit still posing challenges to international trade

In terms of the EU Exit companies are still finding it complicated and need additional support with knowing how to conduct trade with EU. This has led to delays and increased overheads that prohibit continued trading with EU. These issues can come from both the UK side and also the EU side who sometimes have different interpretation of the rules than UK counterparts. These issues are often compounded by other worldwide trade issues such as increased shipment costs from China, or in the case of this week's feedback, USA buying large quantities of timber from Russia/Scandinavia.

In regard to COVID-19 companies that have made use of furlough have started to bring back the staff to the workplace. Even though they have used furlough these companies often still had to make redundancies due to drop in demand. Companies this week have also said that they have used this time either making permanent adjustments to their business model i.e., staff working from home, new digital shop front or new products. Or they are planning to make adjustments in the future i.e., full supply chain diagnostics.



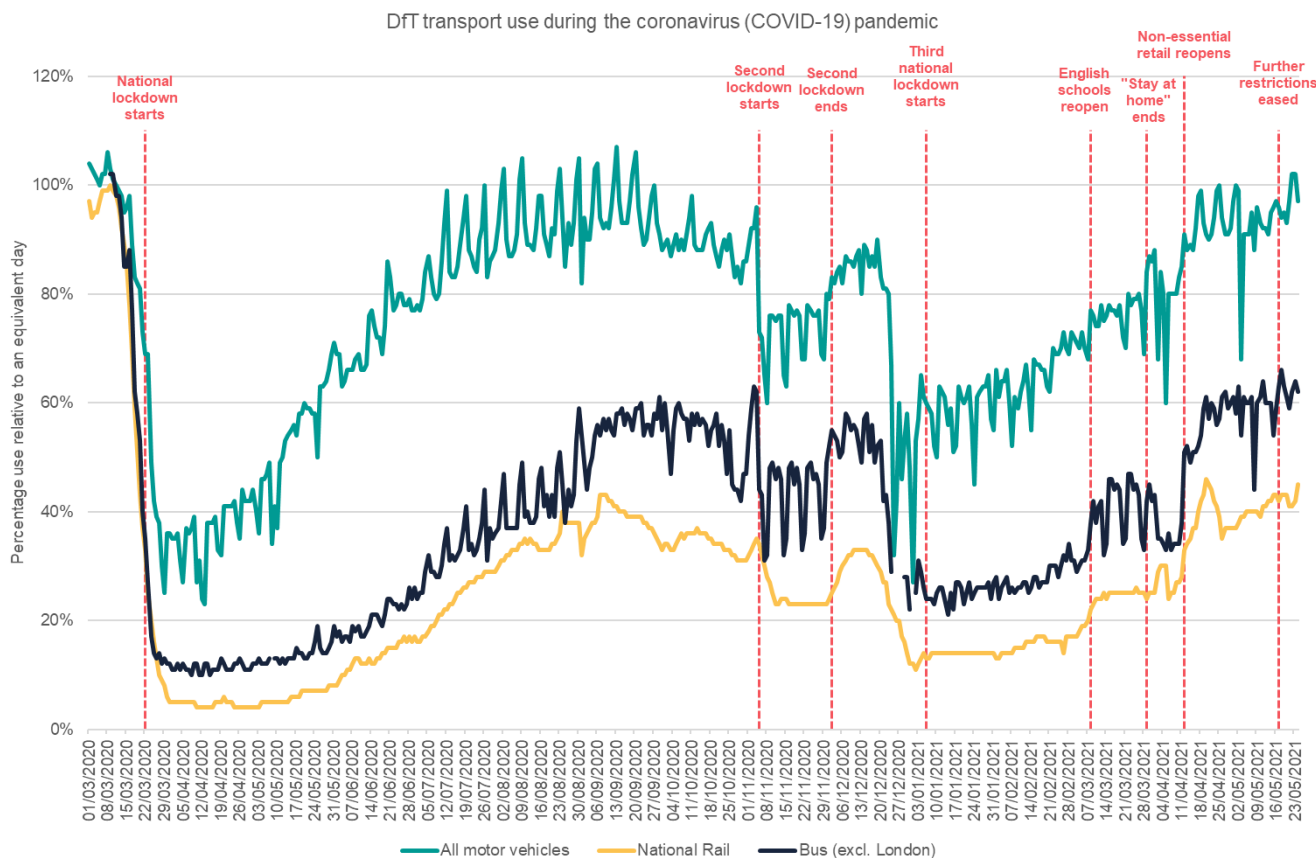
Over the course of the year the biggest issue reported by companies has been Covid however this has started to decline slowly in recent months. Issues around EU transition has also seen similar decline over recent weeks but has seen slight increases in recent weeks.

Transport Insights



Public transport usage is starting to grow over summer 2020 levels

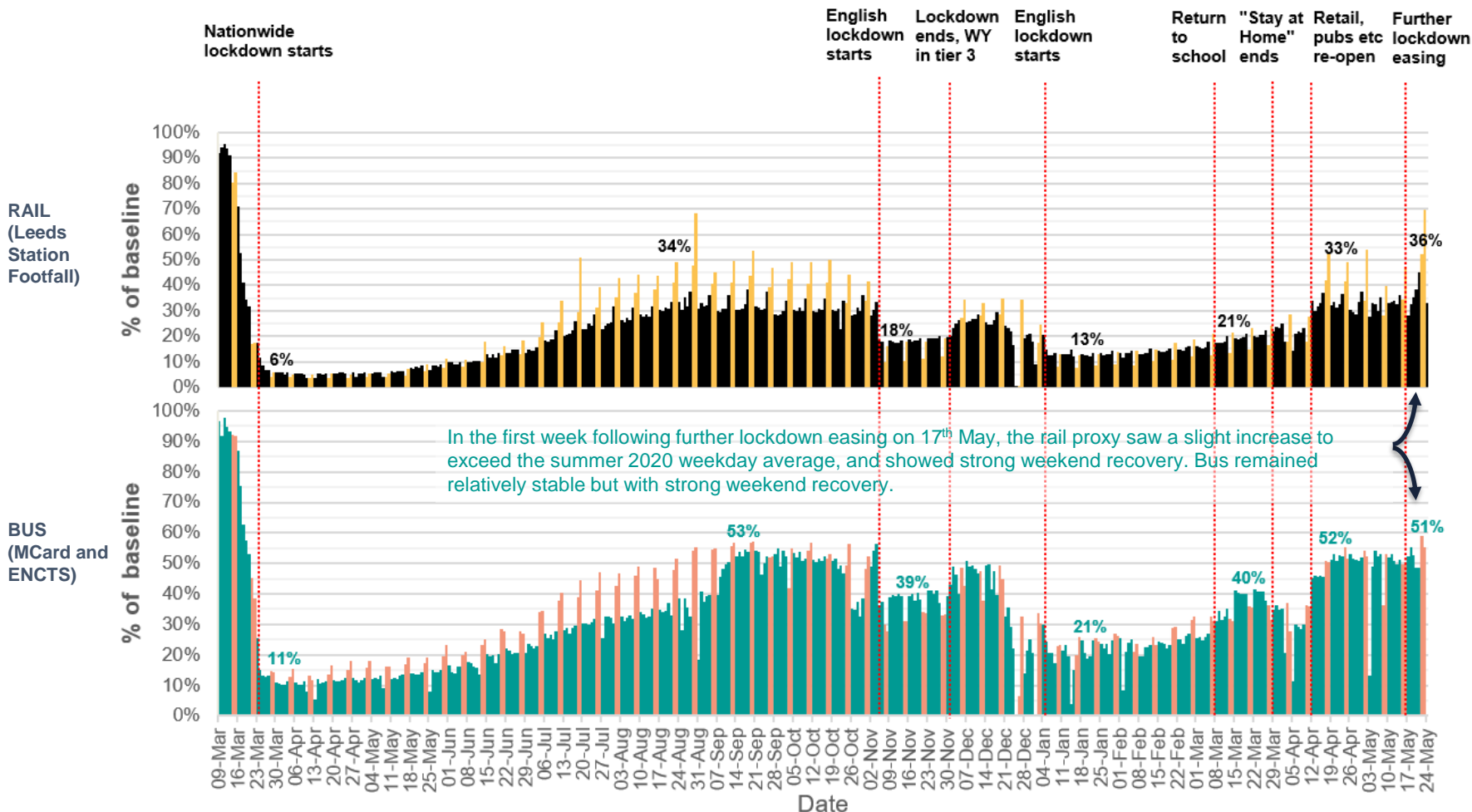
Travel in Great Britain has returned to summer 2020 levels following the lifting of restrictions in April. Bus has made the strongest recovery relative to summer 2020, but usage remains around 40% below baseline. Motor vehicle use is around baseline on weekends but remains about 10% lower on weekdays. Rail travel is still around 60% lower than baseline. Local data suggests lower travel activity than nationally, but this may be due to incompatibility and the use of proxy data.



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

Local bus and rail proxies remain at similar weekday levels with weekend increases

■ % Rail weekday change compared to baseline
■ % Rail weekend change compared to baseline
■ % Bus weekday change compared to baseline
■ % Bus weekend change compared to baseline



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 shows driving requests recovering faster than public transport

Apple release mobility data (requests for directions in Apple Maps for driving and public transport) for a variety of English cities. The charts below highlight the difference in relative mobility between the 1 month period before and after the easing of lockdown restrictions on the 12th April (reopening on non-essential retail) for driving (left) and public transit (right). Since the 12th April, all English cities have seen an increase in mobility levels, with private vehicle use recovering stronger than public transport use. Notably, Bradford currently has the highest relative levels of driving compared to other English cities. In terms of public transport mobility, Leeds and Bradford are similar to the England average, below baseline levels (index = 100).

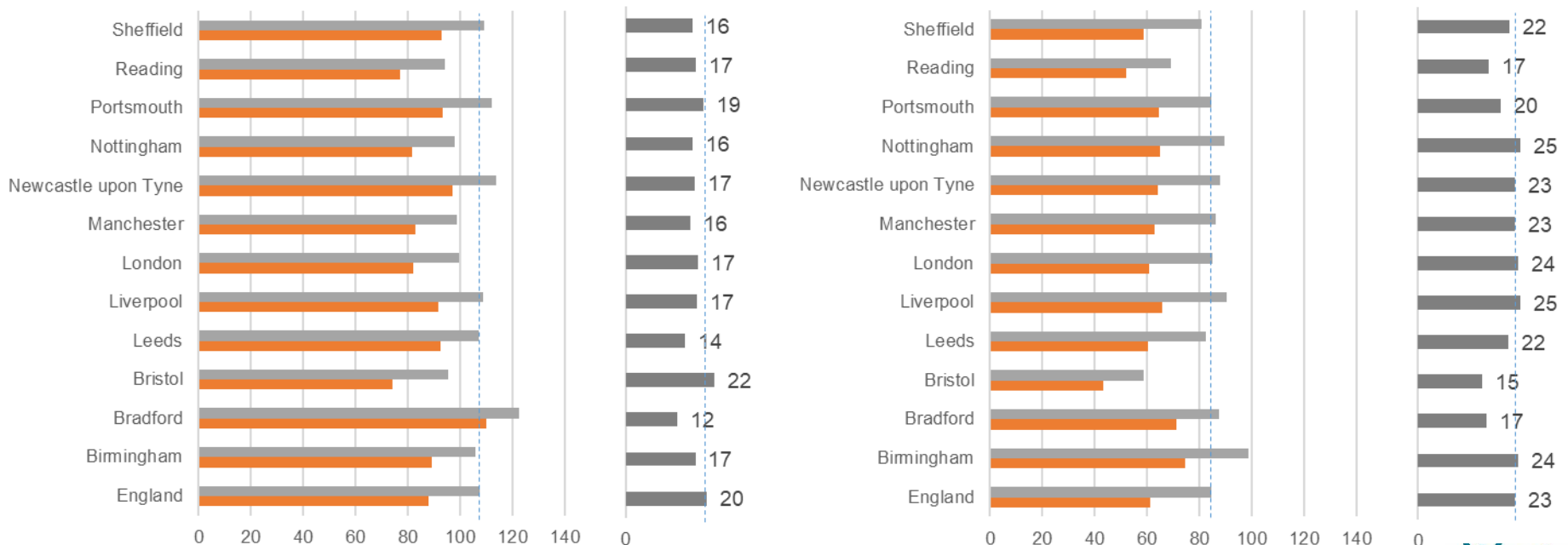
■ 12th April - 16th May ■ 11th March - 12th April

Driving

Difference (%)

Transit

Difference (%)



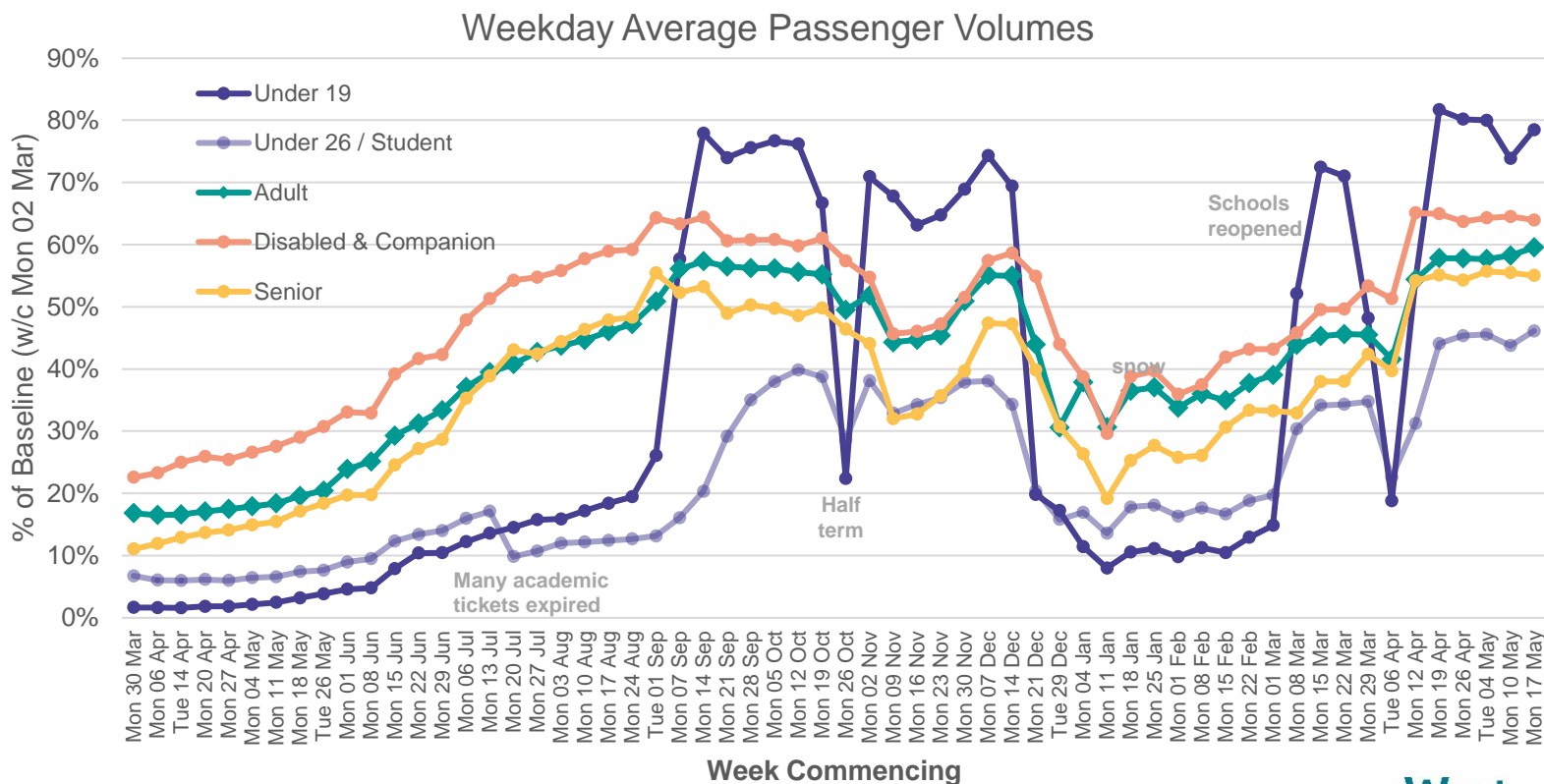
Source: Apple mobility data. This is generated by counting the number of requests made to Apple Maps for directions in select countries/regions, sub-regions and cities. An index of 100 is taken as the baseline on the 13th January 2020.

Bus use fairly stable, 17th May relaxations made less difference than 12th April

Use by under 19s dipped in the week commencing 10th May has reduced slightly, with particularly lower use on the Thursday and Friday of that week, the reason is unclear. Use by adults increased from around 46% of baseline before Easter to 54% with 12th April relaxations and 58% the week after that. With the 17th May relaxations it has only increased slightly to just below 60% of baseline.

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 data. Data is for weekdays excluding bank holidays, with ticket types assigned to broad cohorts.