



COVID-19 Fortnightly Insights Report

Research & Intelligence
30th October 2020

Executive Summary – social and economic

- The rate of COVID-19 infections is increasing in West Yorkshire, and in most other Mayoral Combined Authority areas.
- Business liquidations increased so far in October compared to September, with 2,400 businesses liquidated this month to date compared to just over 2,000 in September (though restrictions on liquidating businesses were only eased on 10th September so this may to some extent reflect the system catching up).
- Business liquidations are most prevalent in transport & storage, wholesale & retail and professional services. The information & communications sector is also overrepresented.
- 2 in 5 businesses in the accommodation & food sector said they were at a moderate or severe risk of insolvency according to an ONS survey, with 3 in 10 saying they faced this level of risk in arts & entertainment and manufacturing.
- Although around 60% of people are now working from their usual place, the increase in return to normal working conditions has been driven by falling use of furlough, both of which appear to have stalled. Around 9% of people remain on furlough, and just under 30% are still working from home.
- The number of job vacancies fell in 4 of 5 West Yorkshire council areas and overall the number of vacancies declined for most occupations.

Executive Summary – transport

- National transport monitoring data reveals that levels of motor vehicle, bus and rail travel plateaued over the summer months and in recent weeks rail use has declined.
- In West Yorkshire, proxy measures of rail and bus use indicate slight reversals in recovery over recent weeks, with bus recovery remaining stronger. Bus patronage from operators electronic ticket machine data also shows a marginal downward trend in recent weeks.
- After footfall in Leeds City Centre rose to its highest post-lockdown level in September, with total footfall reaching 88% of the 2019 total, October has seen it decrease to 48% of the previous year's total following the introduction of tiered local lockdowns. This decrease is more pronounced at weekdays, where footfall is at 44% of 2019 levels, while weekend footfall is at 59%.
- Cycle counters on canal towpaths across West Yorkshire have recorded reducing numbers of average daily trips across the region as winter sets in and hourly daylight reduces. This decrease is more apparent at weekends indicating that the reduction is principally driven by decreases in leisure cycling rather than cycle commuting.
- Local longitudinal COVID-19 behaviour survey results indicate continued avoidance of public transport and visits to city centres for work or leisure in the next 6 months.

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.

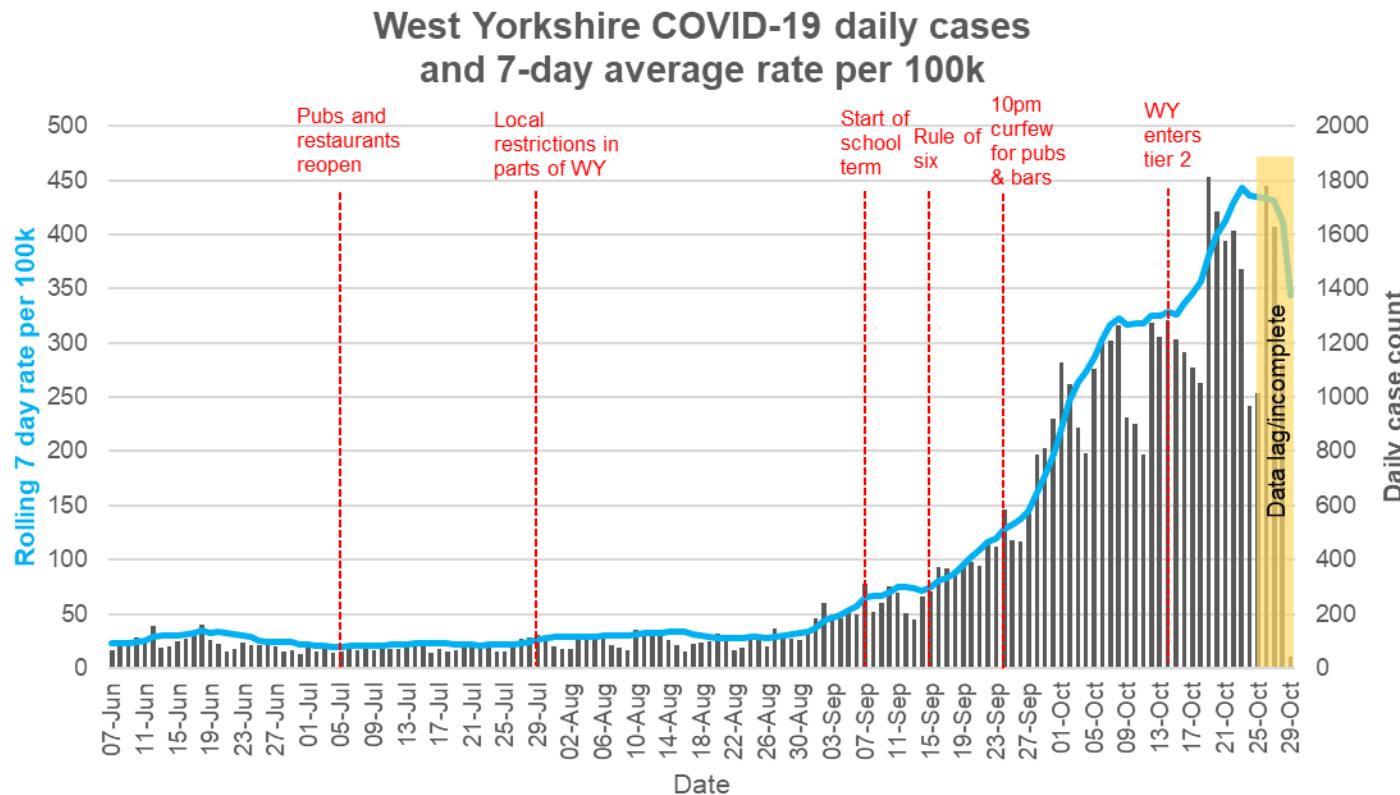
Virus prevalence – West Yorkshire

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 (18 - 24 Oct)	Total cases per 100k people (11 - 17 Oct)	Absolute Difference
	Most recent data week	Previous week	
Bradford	490.2	386.6	103.6 
Calderdale	446	288.5	157.5 
Kirklees	405	292.4	112.6 
Leeds	416.7	383.3	33.4 
Wakefield	428.1	294.9	133.2 
West Yorkshire	433.9	345.4	88.4 

As of the 23rd October, the 7-day moving average **West Yorkshire COVID-19 rate was 433.9 cases per 100k**. The weekly proportion of positive COVID-19 cases is currently between 14-16%, slightly higher than the Yorkshire and the Humber average (13.2%).

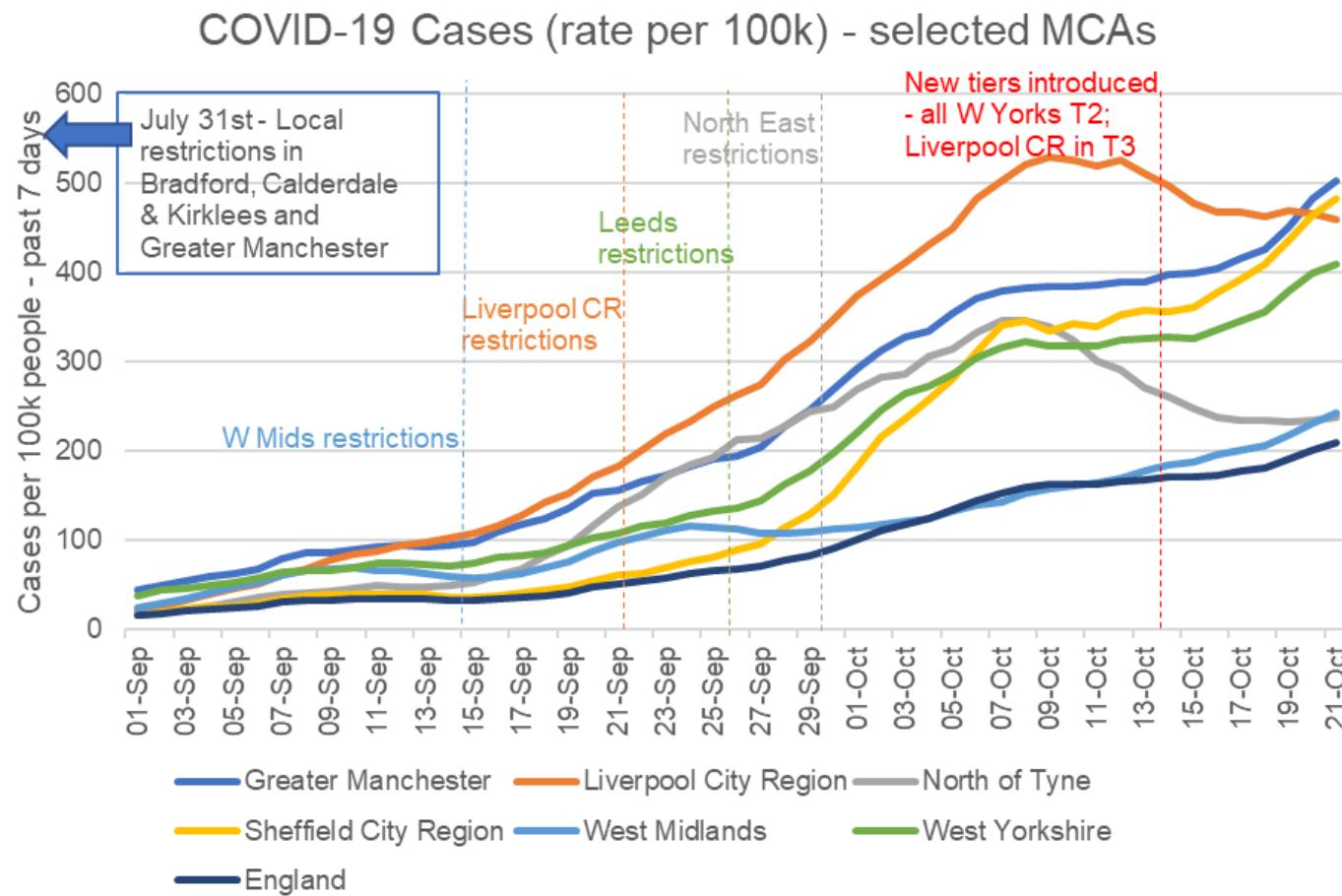
Virus prevalence – West Yorkshire trend



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. Following a short period where rates levelled off, COVID-19 infection rates have risen sharply again. 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.

COVID-19 infection rates still increasing in some MCA areas

COVID-19 infection rates are increasing again in 4 of the 6 Mayoral Combined Authorities analysed here, following a brief levelling off in rates in earlier October. Liverpool City Region and the North of Tyne MCA area have seen steady declines in infections, though this appears to predate the introduction of the new tiers.



Source: HMG / PHE Coronavirus in the UK data

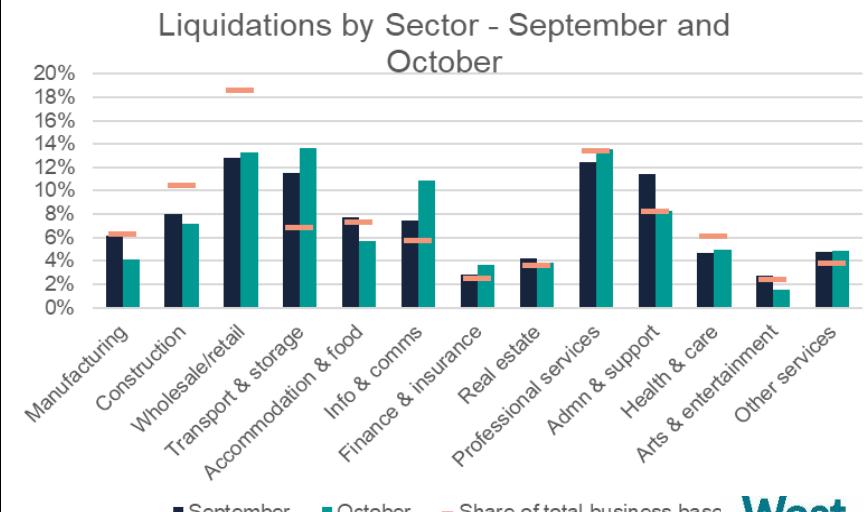
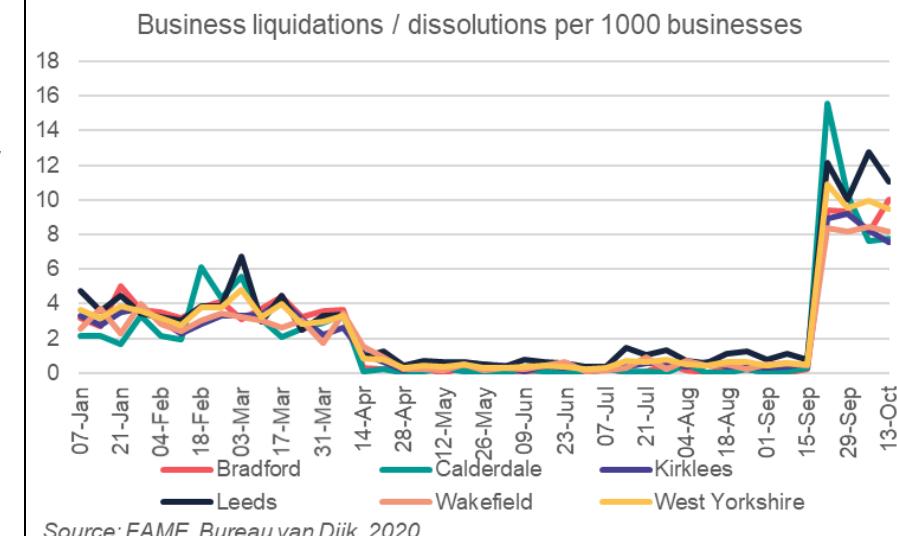


Economic Insights

Business failures increase further in October, but weekly totals stable

There have been 2,400 business dissolutions / liquidations so far in October (as of October 26th, though data is subject to lag so is likely to increase further). This is up from almost 2,100 in September. The latest week for which complete data is available (7-13th October) shows 900 business closures that week, down slightly on the previous week but broadly consistent with recent weeks since the removal of protections to prevent liquidations during the pandemic on September 10th. The recent upturn in business liquidations is likely a mixture of genuine recent business failures and some activity catching up from the easing of those protections.

9.5 businesses per 1,000 were liquidated in the week to October 13th, though this ranges from 7.6 in Kirklees to 11 in Leeds, which may reflect a higher proportion of businesses with head offices in Leeds. In sector terms, transport & storage, wholesale & retail and professional services each accounted for around 13.5% of liquidations in October. This is double the business base share for transport & storage, but wholesale/retail is below its 18% share of the business base. The information & communications sector also has a greater share of business failures than its business base would suggest.

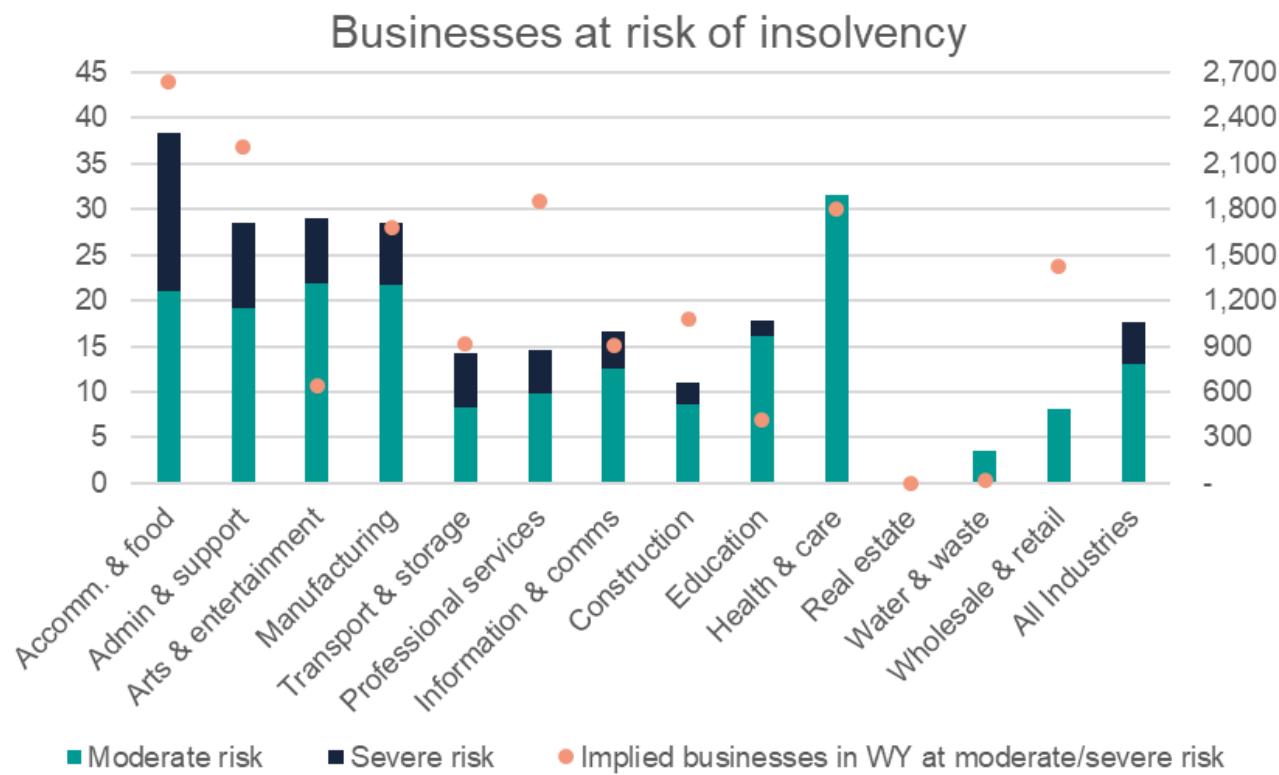


*Data includes companies whose registered office is in West Yorkshire, but whose physical location may be elsewhere

Source: FAME, Bureau van Dijk, 2020

Almost 2 in 5 businesses at risk of insolvency in some sectors

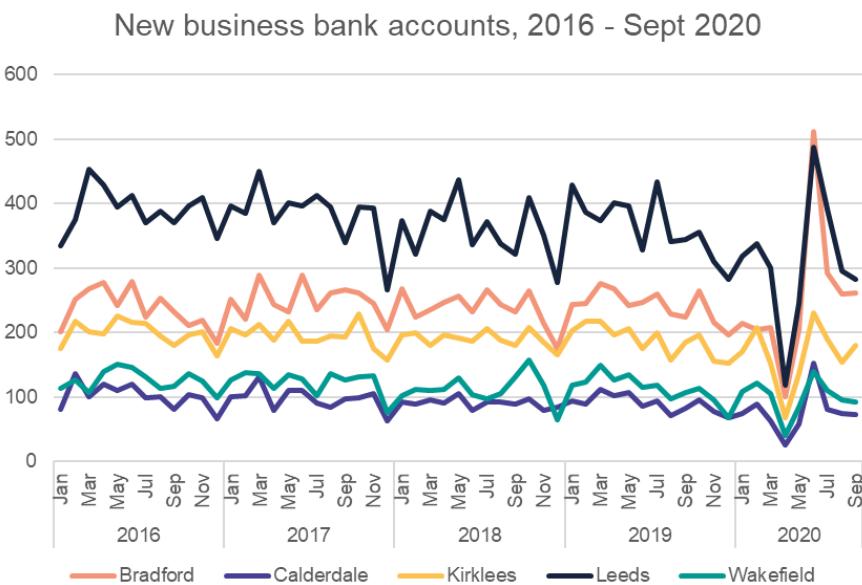
17% of businesses in the accommodation & food sector are at severe risk of insolvency, with a further 21% at moderate risk, according to the latest ONS Business Impacts of Coronavirus Survey (21 Sept – 4 Oct). If replicated in West Yorkshire, this would mean 2,600 businesses in the sector at severe risk of insolvency – almost 2 in 5 businesses in the sector. 29% of businesses in business administration, manufacturing and arts & entertainment said they were at severe or moderate risk, translating to 2,200, 1,700 and 640 businesses at risk locally respectively. Although the proportion considering themselves at risk was lower in the professional services sector at 15%, this would still translate to 1,800 businesses in West Yorkshire given the sector's scale.



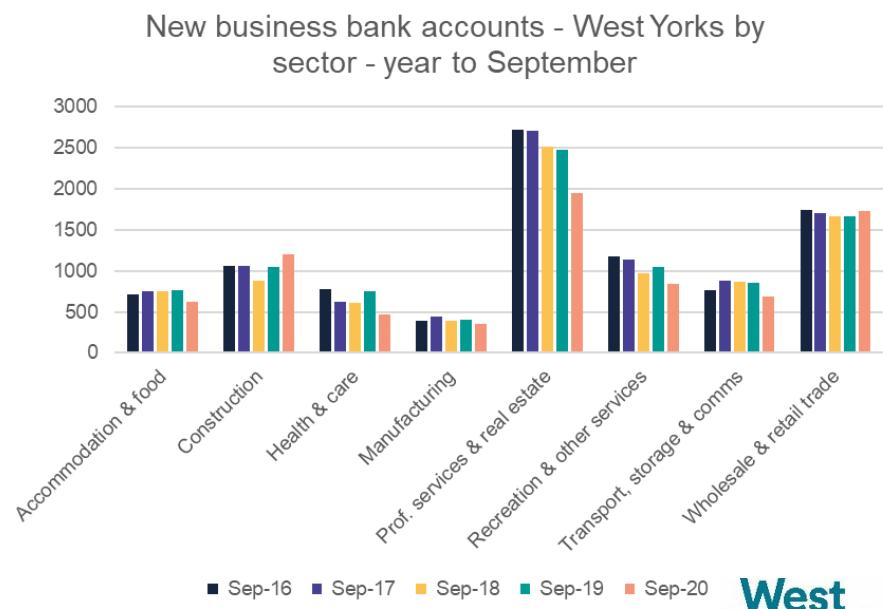
New business bank accounts stabilise, but sharper declines in at risk sectors

1,125 new business bank accounts were opened in West Yorkshire in September, up 0.9% on August. This is lower than the 13.8% increase seen nationally, and the 2.2% across the wider City Region. This is a proxy measure for business start up activity. Compared to September 2019, the number of new accounts opened was 6% lower in West Yorkshire, but 6% higher in England.

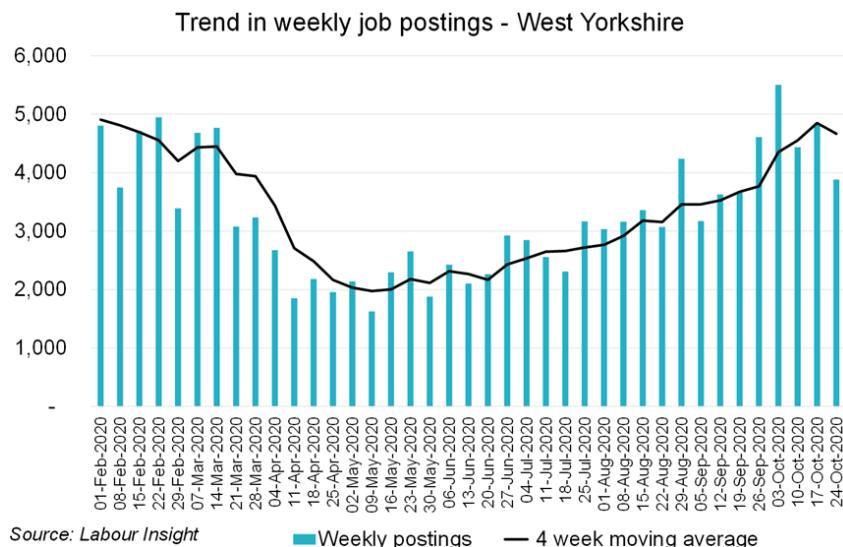
Kirklees saw a 16% increase between August and September, though other West Yorkshire districts saw little change or small declines. Looking at the year to date, the number of new accounts is down 1,240 (13%) compared to 2019. However, declines are around 20% in accommodation & food, professional services & real estate, transport & communications and recreational & other services. Construction and wholesale & retail have seen small increases compared to 2019.



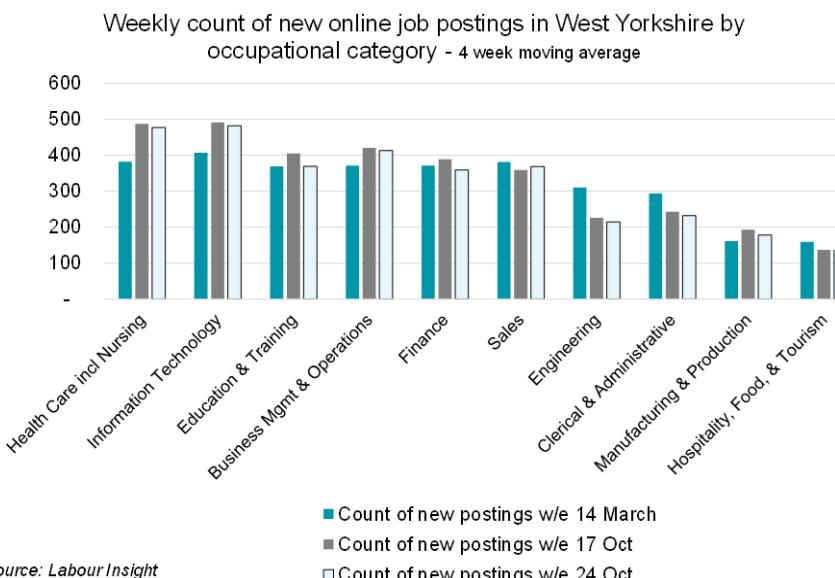
Source: Banksearch, 2020



Job vacancies fell in 4 of 5 WY council areas & the number of vacancies declined for most occupations



The number of vacancies for jobs in West Yorkshire posted online during week ending 24 October was 4% lower than in the previous week (based on a 4-week moving average). Nationally, the number of vacancies posted fell by 3%. Looking at unadjusted figures the number of West Yorkshire postings fell by 20%, which may reflect recruiters' concerns about the area moving into Tier-3 restrictions, although the weekly figures are highly volatile.

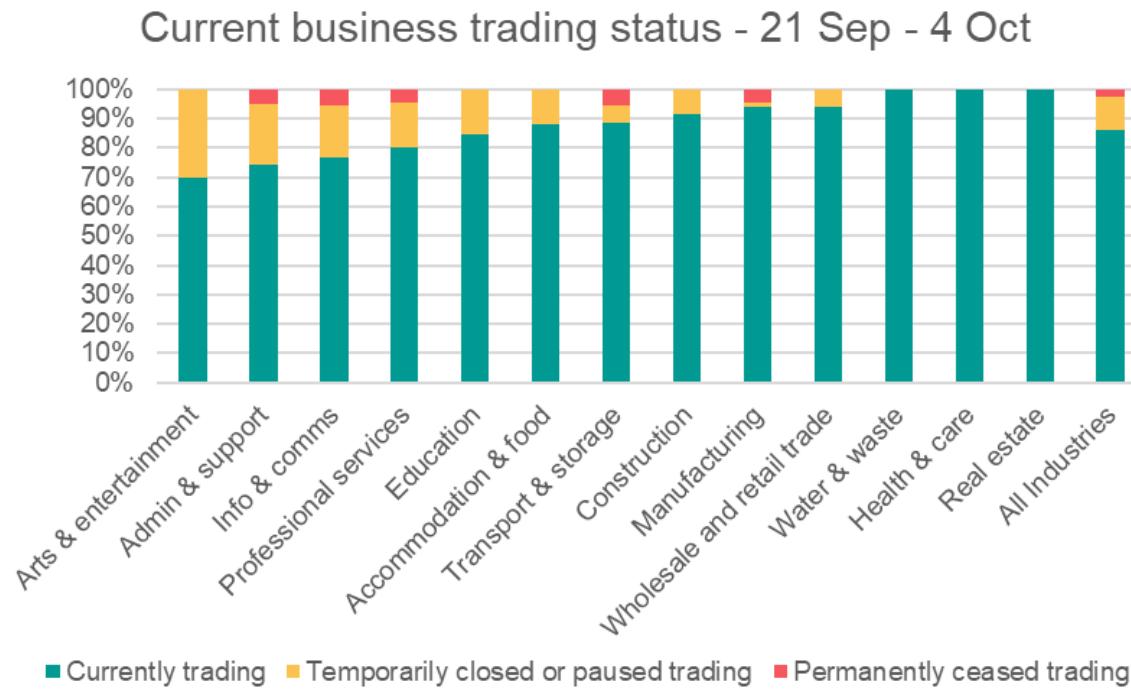


All occupational categories saw a decline in the number of vacancies notified in week ending 24 October, except Sales which saw a slight increase. Engineering, Clerical & administrative and Hospitality, food and tourism have the greatest ground to make up on pre-crisis vacancy levels.

ONS analysis suggests 30% of businesses 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, this falls to 70% in arts & entertainment, 74% in business administration & support, and 77% in information & communications.

The survey suggests around 2.6% of businesses have stopped trading permanently. This is highest in information and comms (5.8%) and transport & storage (5.6%). However, these numbers are subject to sampling error and can vary across waves of this survey.

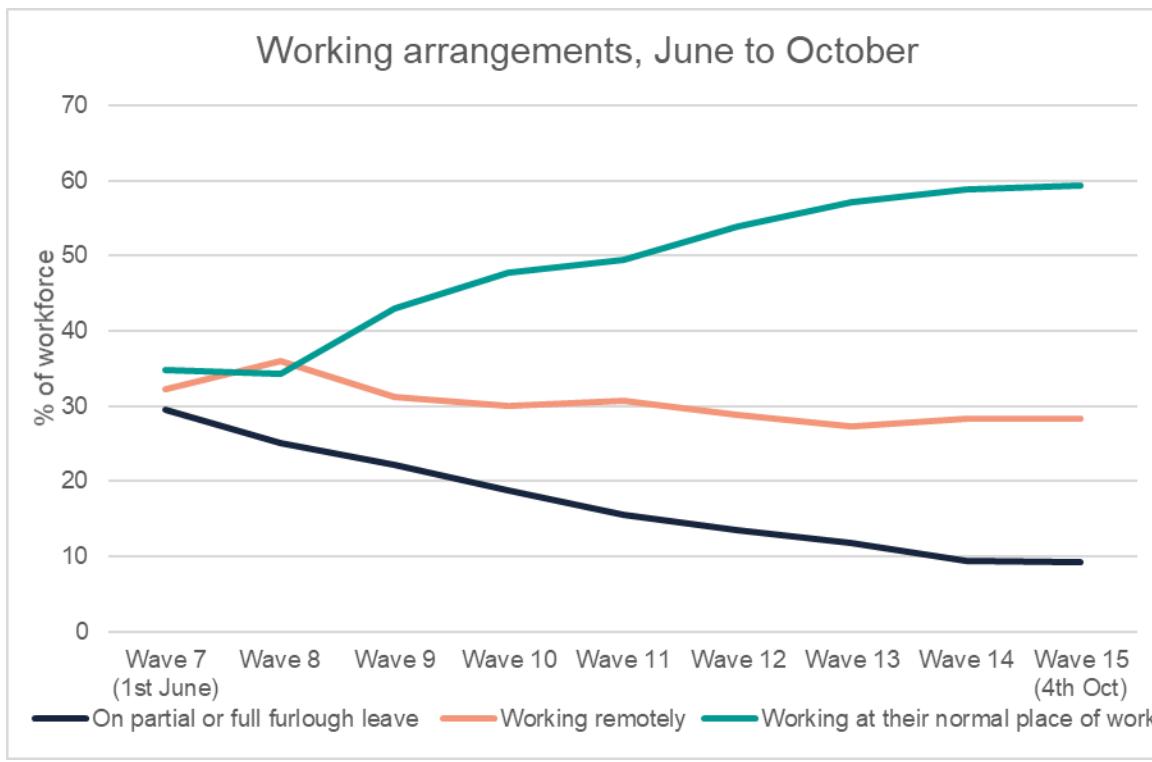


Source: ONS Business Impacts of Coronavirus Survey wave 15

Source: Office for National Statistics, 2020

Little change in working patterns, despite return to school and changing advice

The proportion of people on furlough was unchanged at just over 9% in the fortnight to October 4th, compared with the preceding fortnight, according to the ONS Business Impacts of Coronavirus Survey. Although in recent months the proportion of people working in their normal place has increased from 50% to 60%, this too has tailed off and is closely aligned with the return of people from furlough. Around 28% of people continue to work from home. Some sectors have seen some change recently, with a significant return to normal working in the education sector in September and early October. However, use of the furlough scheme remains extensive in the arts & entertainment and accommodation & food sectors, where 28% and 24% of jobs remain furloughed respectively.

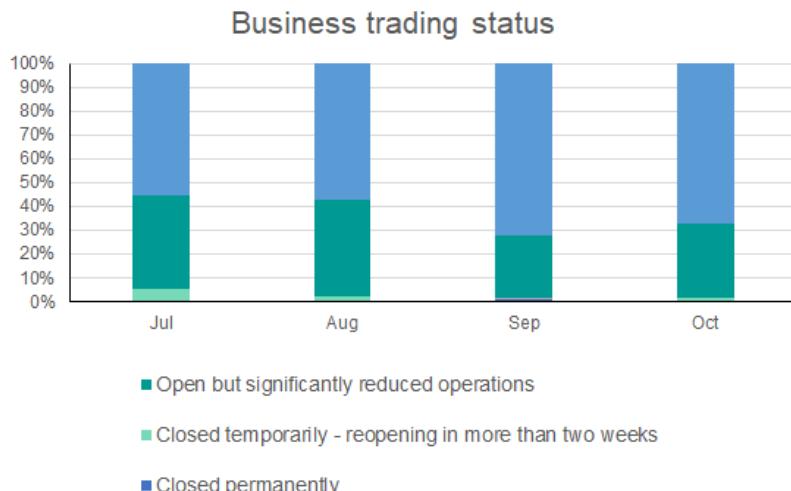


Growth manager interactions

This week several businesses have provided feedback stating that they are going to make redundancies. Leeds Bradford airport is making the largest number of redundancies. Due to COVID-19 they are looking to lose around 107 jobs.

Other businesses reporting smaller numbers of redundancies are in manufacturing, but the redundancies are caused by a sharp drop demand from the hospitality, food, and leisure sectors. Other companies that rely on demand from the hospitality, food and leisure sectors have continued to report that they are worried over the future even if they have not started considering making redundancies.

A few businesses have reported that they are seeing strong growth and are planning to invest in expanding their company. These companies are mostly in the IT sector. These companies have been able to shift to a remote/home working style very easily and have continued to recruit throughout the lockdown. Which has allowed them to keep up with the demand that has been generated through other businesses seeking digital tools and services.

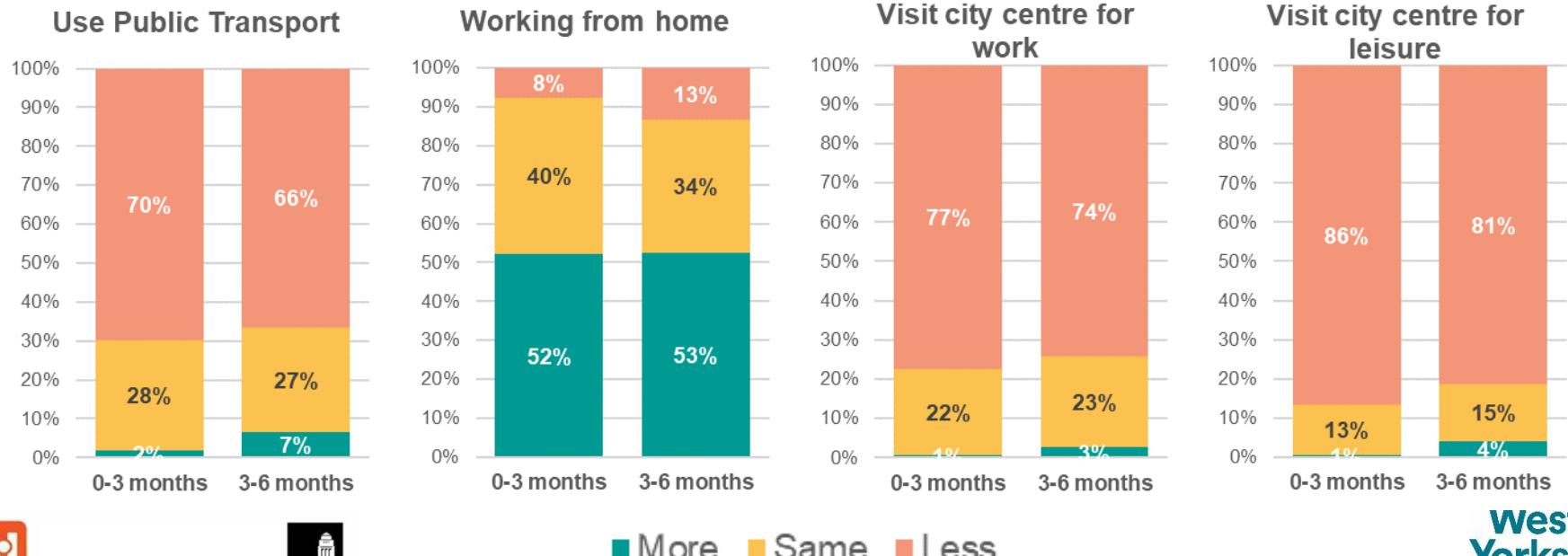


Over the 3 weeks of October 31% of businesses that provided feedback stated that they were open but have significantly reduced operations. This is 5% up from September figures but down considerably from August/July

COVID-19 behavioural survey – short term vs long term intentions (I)

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.

Q. Compared to before the coronavirus lockdown, do you expect to change the amount of the following in the future?



COVID-19 behavioural survey – short term vs long term intentions (II)

The survey results reveal that, compared to pre-COVID-19, over the next 3 and 3-6 months, respondents intend to:

- Use public transport less and continue to work from home, with a slight shift in intentions in 3-6 months
- Visit city centres less for work or leisure
- Continue to spend more money with smaller businesses
- Continue to shop online more than pre-COVID-19
- Generally shop less on the local high street less in the short term
- Visit out of town supermarkets the same or less in the short term

Q. Compared to before the coronavirus lockdown, do you expect to change the amount of the following in the future?



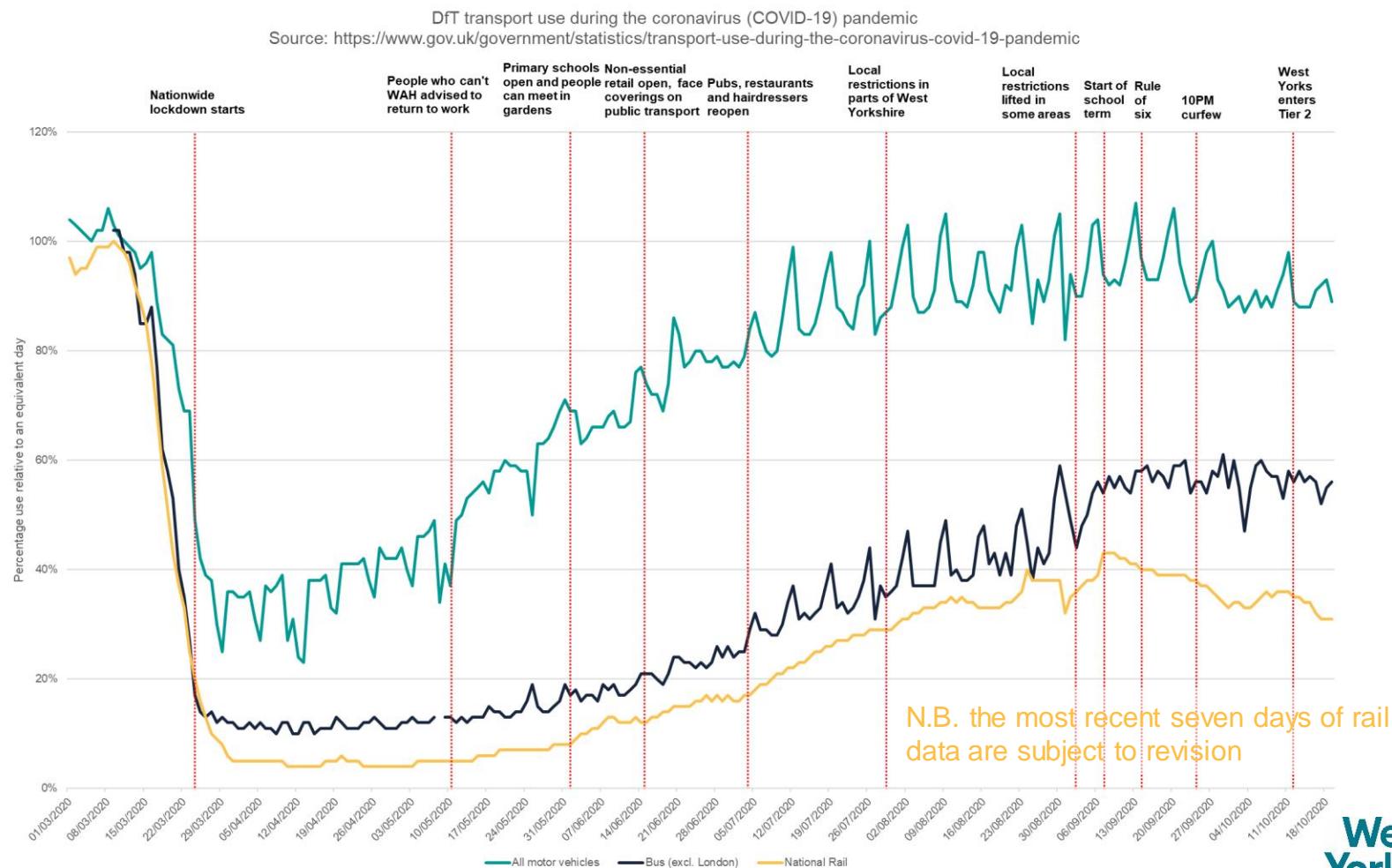
■ More ■ Same ■ Less



Transport Insights

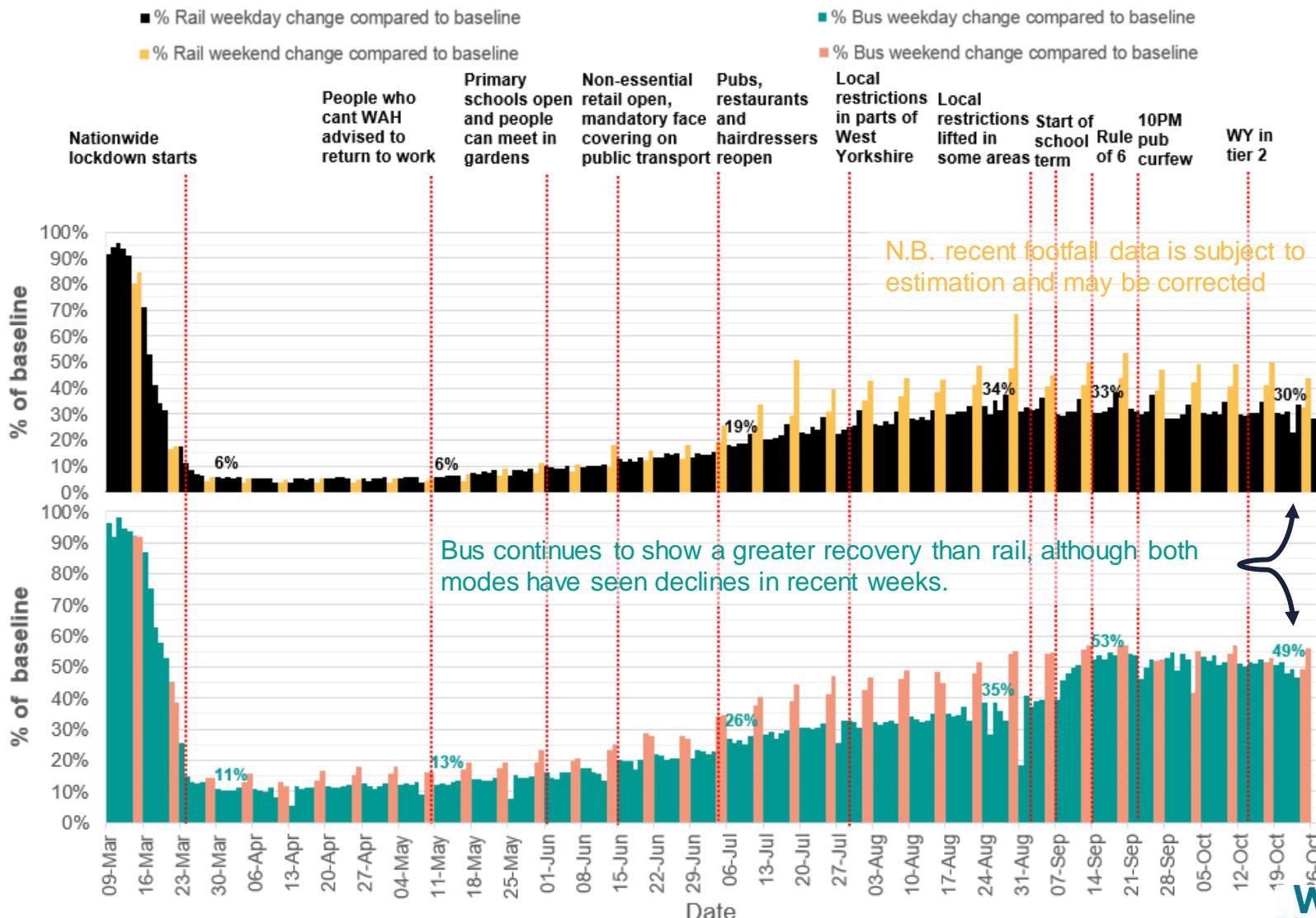
National DfT data shows rail use declining in recent weeks

Data for Great Britain shows that motor vehicle, bus and rail travel plateaued over the summer months. Motor vehicles touched 100% of a March baseline, bus reached near 60% while rail briefly exceeded 40%. By October, all modes saw slight falls with rail being the most impacted – tracking a consistent deficit against bus until diverging notably in September. Large differences between weekend and weekday activity levels over the summer appear to be reducing. Similar trends are reflected in West Yorkshire's transport data.



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

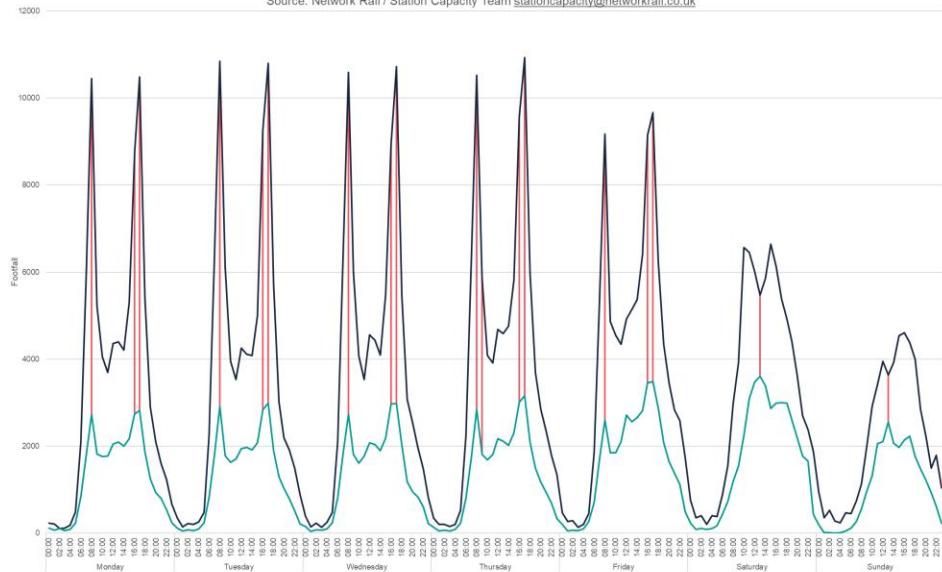
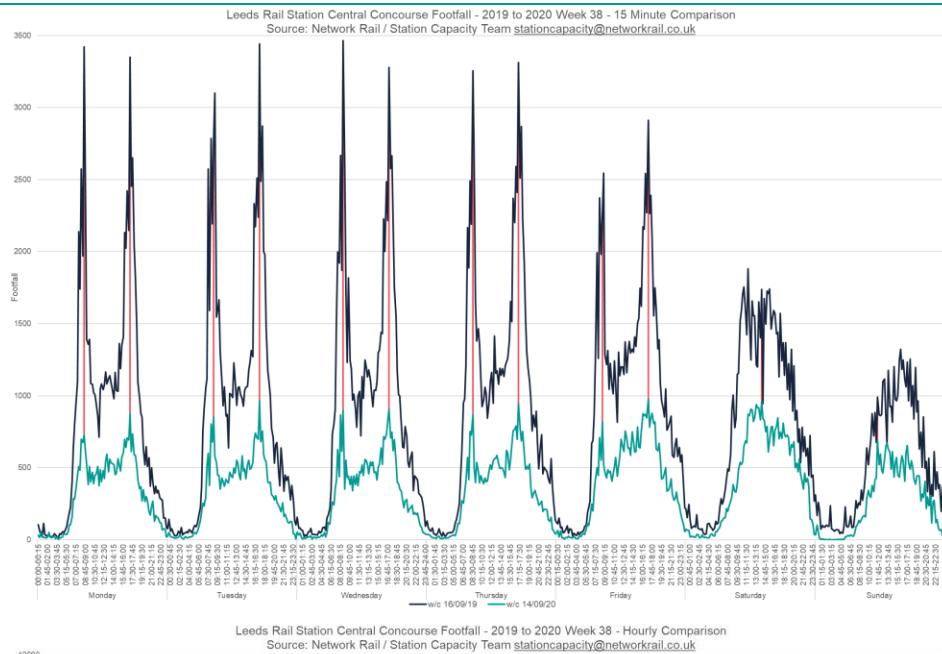
Rail and bus proxies show slight reversals in recovery over recent weeks, with bus recovery remaining stronger



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)

Leeds station footfall peak times are similar to 2019



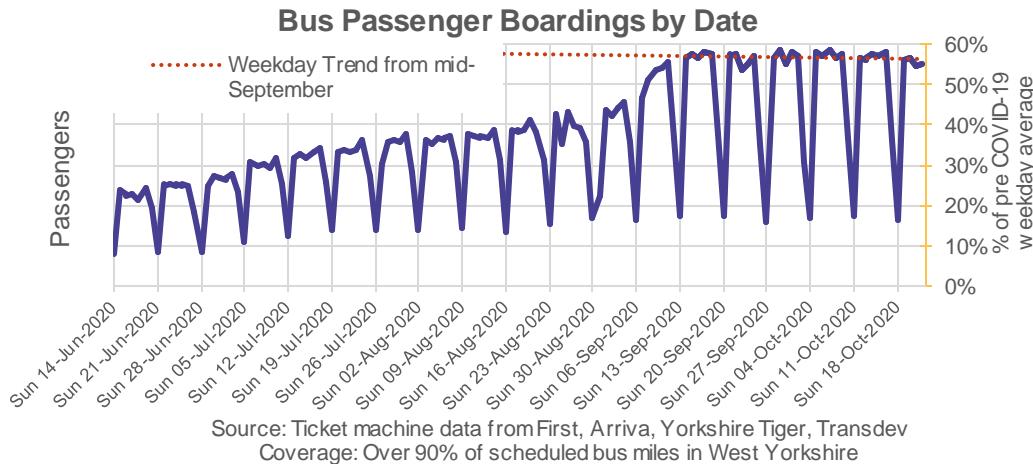
A comparison of 15 minute time slices of week 38 in 2019 and 2020 reveals that the busiest 15 minutes in weekday AM and PM peak periods occur at the same times in both years.

The pattern on weekends is less clear.

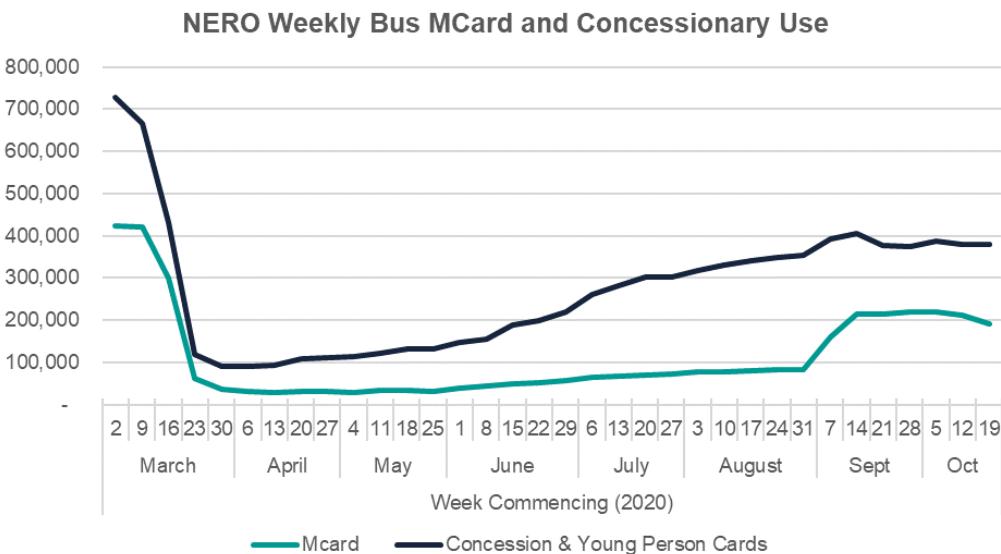
The lower level of activity in 2020 is contained within a shorter time frame - the shoulder peaks start later and end sooner. This is most apparent in weekday evenings and Saturday morning.

When aggregated to hourly time slices, the weekday AM peaks show a similar trend, while the PM peak becomes less defined and appears to be spread more evenly in the 16:00 hour.

Bus patronage showing a recent downward trend



Bus patronage including operators' own tickets shows a marginal downward trend in recent weeks. The data available is up to 23rd October. Further charts reveal differences within the overall trends. The whole week total is 55% of pre-COVID-19 (or a reduction of 45%) which appears stronger than the NERO figures in the chart below.



Source: WYCA NERO reports

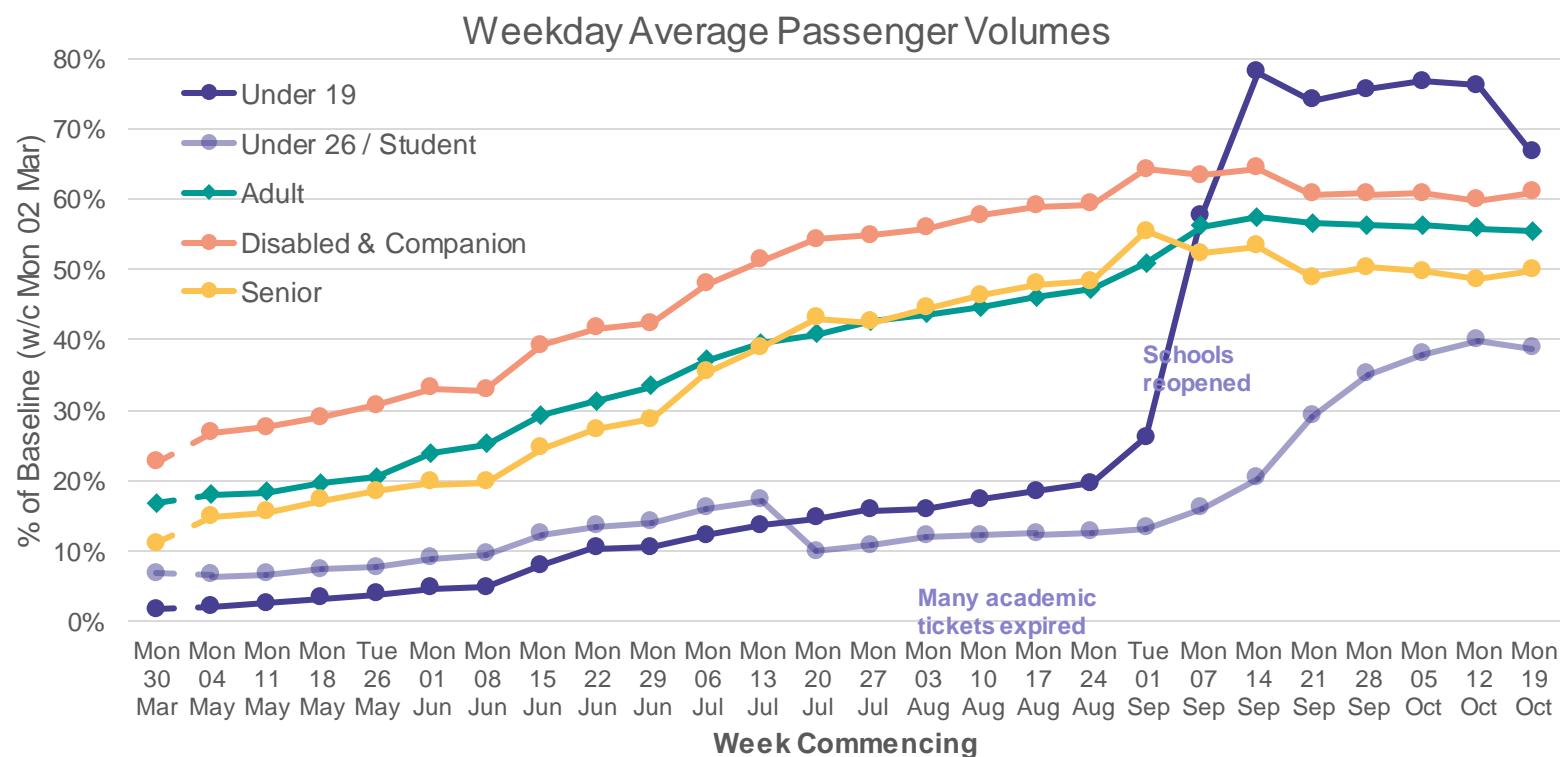
For the week beginning Monday 19th October 2020, the combined level of MCard and concessionary fare use shows a reduction of 51% against the week beginning 2nd March 2020, a decrease of 4% against the previous week. This is driven by a decline in MCard usage which began in the previous week.

Bus use: Reduction in bus journeys by under 19s in the last week

Data from bus ticket machines reveals a recent large reduction in the under 19 cohort and small reduction in the under 26 /student cohort. Adults are the largest cohort and show a slight but consistent downward trend since the week commencing 14 September. Senior, disabled & companion numbers appear stable with fluctuations. 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

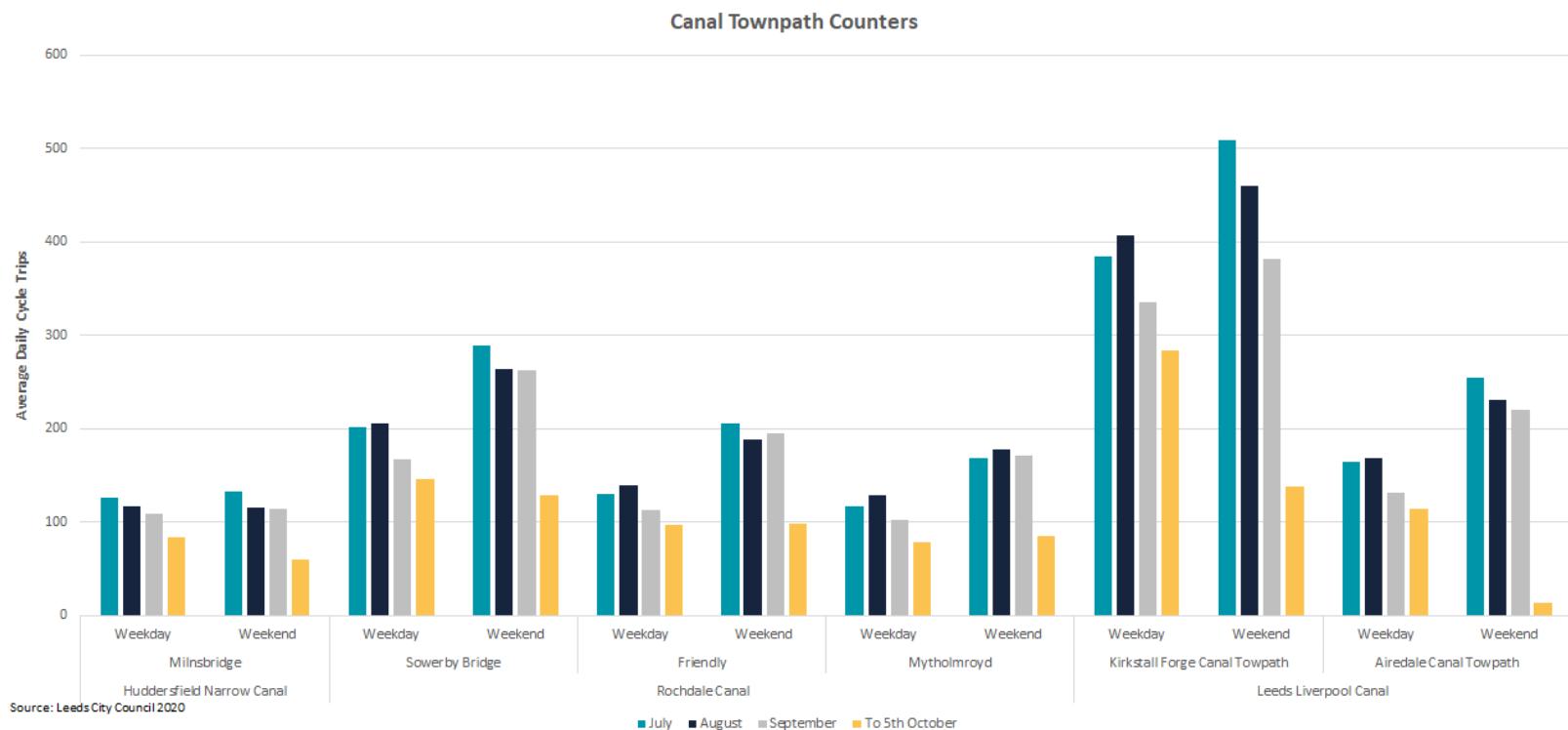
Data from First, Arriva, Yorkshire Tiger and Transdev



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.

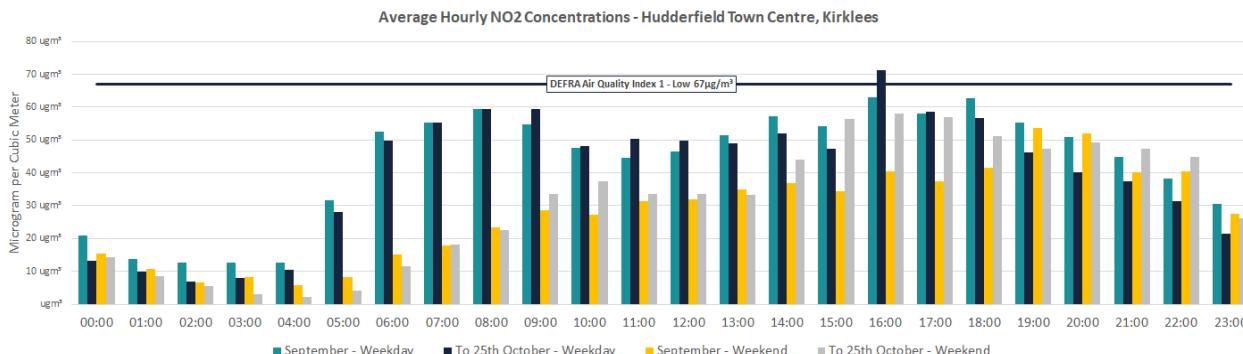
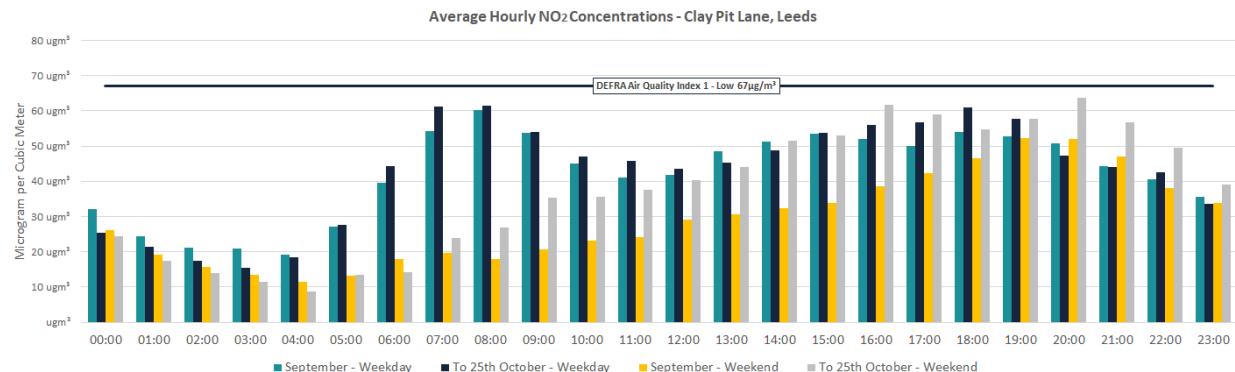
Cycling: Seasonal Reduction in Daily Trips

Cycle counters on canal towpaths across West Yorkshire show reducing volume of average daily trips across the region as winter sets in and hourly daylight reduces. This is more apparent at weekends, with October weekend counts being 48-74% lower than in September while weekday counts reduced 14-33%. This suggests that recreation cycling has reduced more than cycle commuting.



Air Quality – NO₂ Concentrations Rising in Line with Traditional AM & PM Peaks

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 PM peak. This indicates a significant amount of traffic congestion at monitoring site, located at the junction of John William Street and Kirkgate.



Source: EarthSense 2020

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 at stops)