

Retail footfall shows signs of stabilising as early Easter break provides a modest rise from February

1 year ago



[MRI Software](#) has released latest data on retail footfall in March 2024.

March witnessed a modest rise in retail footfall across the UK, with an increase of +1.7% compared to February, signalling the lowest month on month rise for this period in the last decade. This suggests that footfall trends are starting to stabilise in all retail destinations.

Retail parks led the charge witnessing an overall rise of +4.3% month on month compared with marginal rises in high streets (+1.2%) and shopping centres (+0.2%).

Much of the uplift was driven by activity in retail parks largely boosted by the final week of the month; the week leading up to Easter which also coincided with payday and the start of the Easter school holidays. However, turbulent weather conditions throughout the month, alongside shifts in key holiday dates including Mothers Day and Easter led to footfall remaining steady. A mid-month slump saw footfall decline by -8.3% from the week before when it had risen by +6.6% almost wiping out any gains made hinting consumer caution ahead of the great Easter shop.

The final two weeks of the month saw a healthy boost in activity delivered to all UK retail destinations particularly in retail parks and shopping centres where footfall rose week on week by +10.3% in the week leading up to Easter compared with a much more modest rise of +1.9% in high streets. This is encouraging despite stormy weather conditions and many people choosing to make the most of the Easter holidays with vacations abroad; three major UK airports reported this would be their busiest Easter ever,

again another sign of normality returning following a volatile period since the pandemic.

Footfall rose from 2023 levels by +2.7% which is indicative of the shifts in key holidays moving forward. This was mainly driven by high street activity where footfall in towns and cities rose by +3.4% compared with more modest rises in retail parks (+3%) and shopping centres (+0.9%). Weekday footfall also remained +3.2% higher when compared against last year suggesting not only a strong return to the office, but also a renewed mindset in consumer confidence. This aligns with consumer confidence remaining unchanged in March from February (according to GFK) however there was an improvement in how people feel about their personal finances over the next 12 months suggesting an element of control being regained. This also aligns with the recent news from the British Retail Consortium (BRC) which highlighted that shop price inflation eased to its lowest level since December 2021 providing good news for consumers.

Looking ahead to April, a fresh set of rail strikes set to take place from 5th-8th April, coinciding with the Easter school holidays may dampen footfall, especially in towns and cities. However, the impact is expected to be less severe than on previous strike days due to it being bolstered by footfall on Good Friday when it rose by +12.5%. Retail parks and shopping centres are likely to experience a decline in activity however much of this will be as a result of the surge in activity leading up to Good Friday in the week prior. This new wave of strike action will no doubt impact businesses reliant on footfall during the school holidays such as leisure and hospitality particularly in market and historic towns, as well as regional cities including London. However, there may well be optimism for coastal towns, visitor attractions, and retail destinations where families can travel by car.

In an already challenging retail landscape, having visibility of store and portfolios performance remains crucial for businesses. Only by sourcing the right data can retailers make informed business-critical decisions, including forecasting their staffing needs, investing resources where it adds the most value, and optimising their energy and facilities management to drive efficiencies.