Movers Index

How people are moving around the UK and what that means for business

Q2 2024 Edition

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Intro

Latest trends in retail and travel

As we reach the midpoint of the year, we're excited to unveil the latest trends in retail and travel. Our quarterly Movers Index reports offer an in-depth look at these evolving patterns, drawing from connections to O2 mobile masts.

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This anonymised and aggregated data is expertly analysed by our team of data scientists and engineers, delivering valuable insights into how people are shopping, commuting, and travelling across the nation.

In this edition, we delve into O2 Motion data, complemented by polling from 2,000 businesses and 2,000 consumers. These combined sources illuminate the commuting patterns, retail trends and travel choices shaping 2024.

Our focus on the retail sector has been expanded in this edition to show the impact of various events on spending decisions, from major events like the Euros to subsiding inflation. By understanding how people are feeling about costs and prioritising their expenses, businesses can be equipped with the insights needed to support their customers. Whether it's shifting spending habits, the rise of second-hand shopping, or the impact of technology on the in-person shopping experience, this report is designed to help retailers arm themselves with accurate data to help inform decision making.

True to our ethos, the Virgin Media O2 Business Movers Index is readily accessible to everyone, whether you're a business partner or simply curious about the trends shaping the UK.

Dive into our latest report to discover the trends defining 2024 and gain valuable insights.

Commuting

The start of the year was marked by a return to the office which tapered off in Spring, however mobile data shows commuting is back on the rise.

The office bounce back is largely driven by Gen Z's preferences for in-person work and air-conditioned offices during hot weather. All age groups either increased or maintained their commuting trips in June 2024.

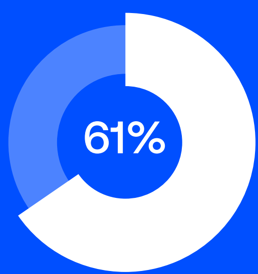
Comparing Q2 2024 to the same period last year, commuting to major UK towns declined, with Sheffield seeing the biggest drop at 12%. However, Preston and Newport bucked this trend with a 2% increase.

A notable 97% of Gen Z workers commute to the office at least once a week, compared to 89% of all workers, highlighting the younger generation's strong inclination towards in-person work environments.

The summer heat boosts this trend, with nearly two-thirds (61%) of office workers citing air conditioning as a major draw to the office, a figure that rises to 75% in London. O2 Motion insights reveal Gen Z in helping drive this as they had the highest growth (12%) among all age groups in commuting trips in June.

Additionally, 54% of Gen Z workers prefer office work over remote work, compared to 34% of all office workers. Businesses are actively encouraging this trend by promoting office attendance while offering flexible work options to balance employee preferences and maintain productivity.

As businesses rebuild office culture and foster collaboration, **they must continue to prioritise flexibility,** recognising that the future of work is likely to remain hybrid.



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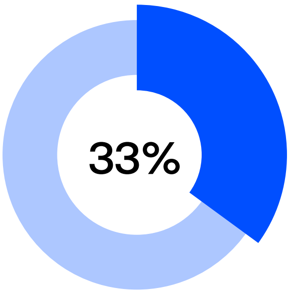
Retail

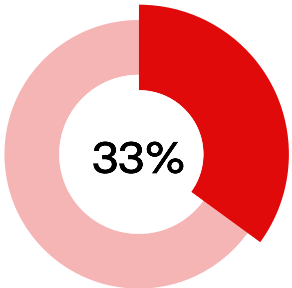
The UK retail landscape is continually evolving in response to the cost-of-living crisis.

30% of Brits plan to cut back spending in the next three months, with Gen Z (44%) and Londoners (39%) leading this trend. Mobile data shows a drop of -3.2% in weekend trips to retail areas among 18-24 year-olds, the largest decline of any age group. While 33% of shoppers are now more budget-conscious, this is down from 45% in Q1 2024. Consequently, 43% of consumers are cutting back on non-essential spending, and 33% opting for cheaper brands.

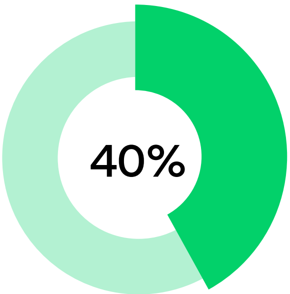
Second-hand shopping is on the rise, with 40% of Brits planning to buy pre-owned items in the next three months, primarily to save money (69%) and for sustainability reasons (38%). **Online resale is also booming, with (34%) of Brits selling items, and Gen Z (49%) and Londoners (41%) earning an average of £270 each**.



of shoppers are more budget-conscious now



Opting for cheaper brands



Brits planning to buy pre-owned items in the next 3 months

Shopping behaviour trends

Fridays are the most popular day for after-work shopping (36%).

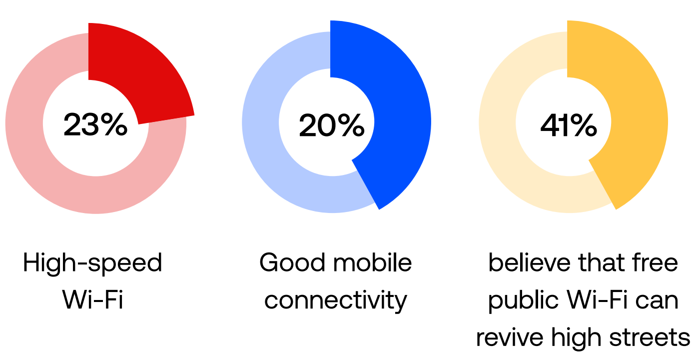
Additionally, 29% of Brits plan to support small or local businesses more, with higher enthusiasm among Gen Z (46%) and Londoners (48%). On average, **Brits are willing to spend £29 more at local stores than at large retailers, though this is down from £33 in Q1 2024.**

Mobile data reveals a larger fall in trips to shopping centres (12%) than to high streets (6%). Shopping centre growth fell by 10% in Q2 2024, but high street trips have remained steady.

This decline in shopping trips could be attributed to the increasing popularity of online shopping. However, high streets may show more resilience due to unique offerings, community appeal and efforts in place to improve customer experience in stores.

Technology is key to enhancing the in-person shopping experience, with 66% of Brits and 81% of Londoners seeing it as essential. High-speed Wi-Fi (23%) and good mobile connectivity (20%) are top tech priorities. Social shopping is trending, with 27% sharing selfies from changing rooms for opinions, especially Gen Z at 49%. Additionally, 41% believe that free public Wi-Fi can revive high streets, blending traditional shopping with modern tech needs.

Top tech priorities

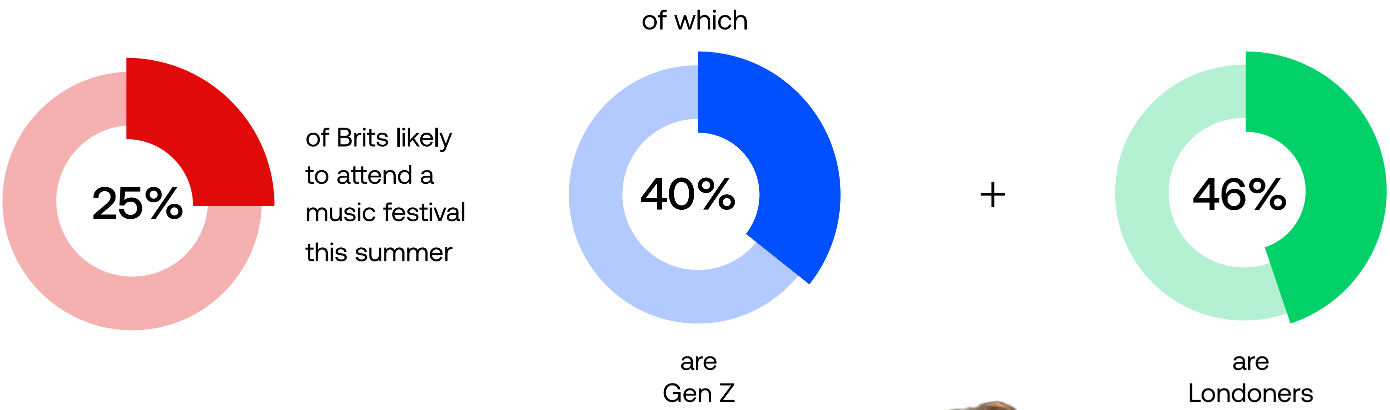


Summer of travel & sports

Brits are set to spend significantly on iconic sporting and cultural summer events this year, with a desire to stay connected online throughout.

Gen Z and Londoners are most interested in attending events, with 25% of Brits likely to attend a music festival this summer, rising to 40% of Gen Z and 46% of Londoners. Additionally, 16% plan to attend the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, and 20% are set to travel to France for the Olympics. Economic impacts of events are also noteworthy, with 24% of Brits identifying the general election as the most significant for boosting the UK economy, followed by summer travel to the UK (21%) and the Euros (17%).

Mobile data reveals that the Euros attracted significant increases of travellers from England (23k more than usual) and Scotland (17k more). T**he Euros saw a seven-fold surge in Scottish visitors travelling to Germany, with 45% of fans being female.** The increase in Scottish fans for the first game is 651%. However, almost all Scottish fans returned by the end of the week of their first match (only 700 more people than the benchmark volume of visitors to Germany).



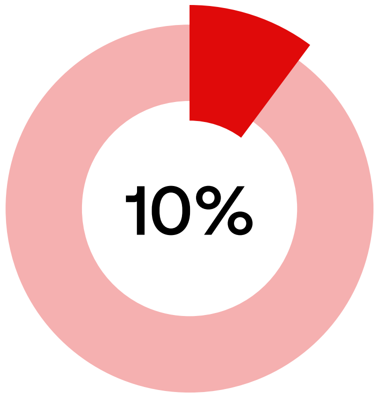
The Euros

England's first match in the Euros on June 16 saw an additional 23K English fans head to Germany, almost 60% more trips than usual.

Yorkshire fans were the most enthusiastic, with 2.3k more visitors than usual, making up 10% of the English contingent.

It was a long road to the final, as almost a third of Scotland and England fans travelled through a combination of France, Belgium, and the Netherlands to get to the games in Gelsenkirchen and Cologne.

Aside from travelling directly to Germany, the week of June 15 saw an increase of 3.5k visitors traveling through France, Belgium and the Netherlands. Meanwhile, 5.3k more travelled just through the Netherlands and 2.4k more via France and Belgium.



of the British contingent were Yorkshire fans

Methodology

O_2 Motion provides aggregated, anonymised data on origin-destination insights into population movement around the UK by trip mode, purpose, time of day, age and gender by week. The data captured by O_2 represents 35% of the UK's population. Through the use of advanced methodologies, O_2 is able to expand that figure to represent the whole of the UK's population movement. This analysis has layered the journey start time, mode and journey purpose onto geographic boundaries and land use data to generate transport, commuting, and retail focused insights. O_2 Motion data does not capture international visitors in the UK or children.

Strand Partners' specialist research team conducted an online survey of 2,000 nationally representative members of the public (by age, gender and NUT1 region) online between 28.06.24 - 02.07.24. All data was then weighted against the latest ONS census. For businesses, 2,000 UK business leaders were surveyed who confirmed that they were currently in senior leadership roles (e.g. CEO, C-suite, director-level) of UK businesses. All data gathered is of a publishable quality and is produced within Market Research Society guidelines. For full data tables and more detail of the methodology, please e-mail: polling@strandpartners.com.

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