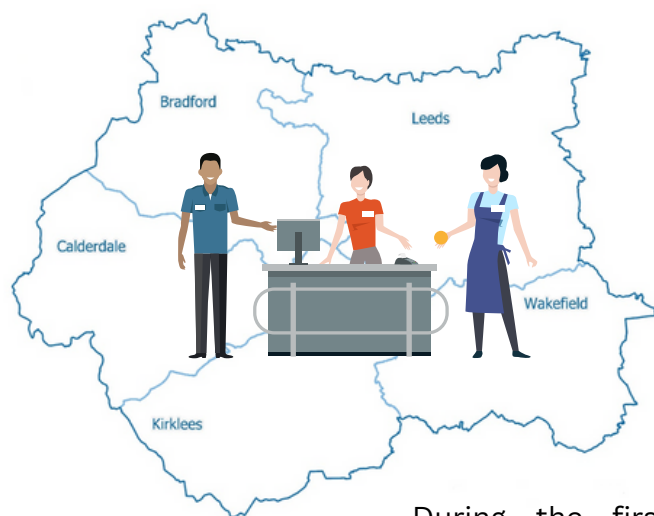
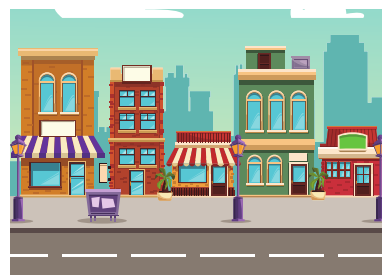


Covid-19 and the spatial distribution of business closures: Evidence from West Yorkshire

Retail, hospitality, entertainment, and leisure (RHEL) businesses are the lifeblood of every town and city. The Covid-19 pandemic has had a massive effect on the RHEL sector.

This research examines the impact of Covid-19 on the spatial distribution of RHEL business closures in West Yorkshire.



RHEL is a significant component in the West Yorkshire economy. Averaged across the five metropolitan districts, RHEL accounts for about

18%

of total employment by industry in the region.



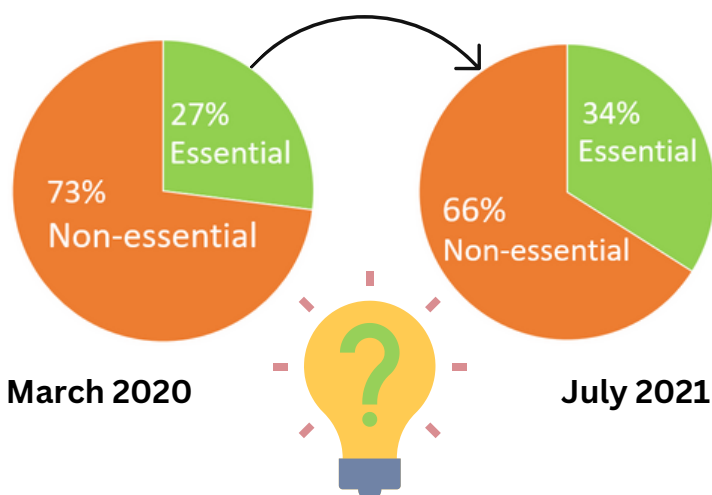
During the first lockdown (March 2020) shops were categorised as:

Essential = supermarkets, food shops, medical (including veterinary) services and pharmacies, hardware and repair shops, petrol stations, and other activities vital to health, well-being, and a minimally functioning society.

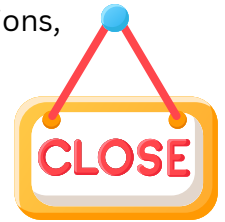
Or **non-essential** = residual category of everything else.

When the first lockdown began, 73% of the vast majority of West Yorkshire RHEL was categorised as **'non-essential'**, a category that required them to close immediately and without clarity on when they would be able to reopen.

However, when looking at data in July 2021, some businesses had had a creative response to the lockdown rules and found inventive ways to stay open in some kind of capacity, meaning only **66% ended up having to close completely during lockdown.**

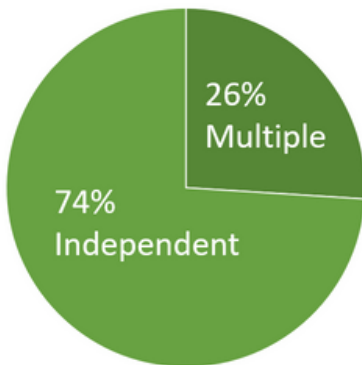


Of those RHEL businesses that did **have to close** due to the lockdown restrictions, 21% did not survive.

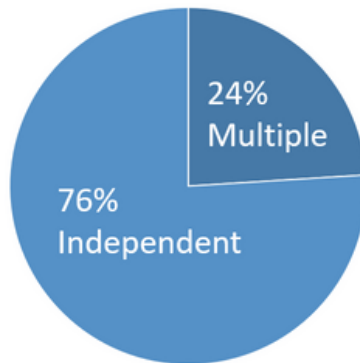


Store ownership

Stores that survived (79%)

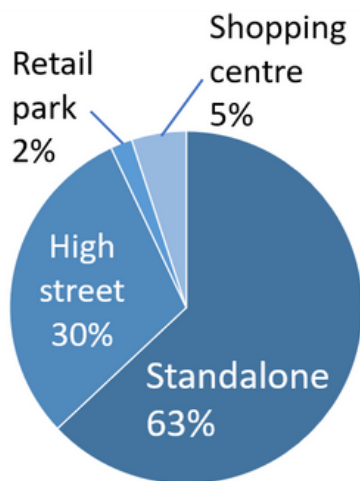
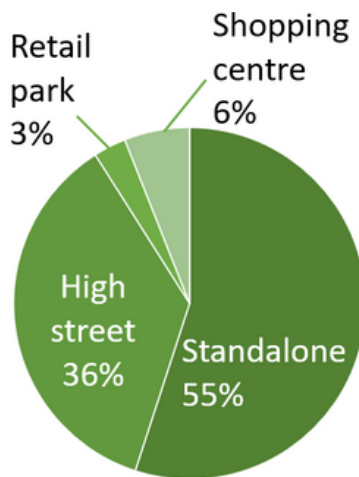


Stores that didn't survive (21%)



The fact that independents are the majority in both instances reflects the prevalence of micro-businesses. The UK has far more small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) than it does larger enterprises, and SMEs are dominated by 'micro-businesses'.

Store location



The greater part of both 'essential' and 'non-essential' RHEL in West Yorkshire were not located on the high street, in retail parks or shopping centres. Instead, they were in 'standalone' locations).

In all five districts, the percentage of standalones that did not survive is higher than its level for those that did survive, which suggests that standalone RHEL were less resilient than their counterparts in other locations.



There has been a lot of talk about the 'death of the high street' since the Portas Review of 2011 but it is important not to be too literal regarding "the high street". The high proportion of standalone locations shows that the focus should be wider than this.

Our spatial analysis suggests that there are many businesses outside the boundaries of the high street, and that these are likely important to the local economy and community servicing or provisioning.

Data on business location can only tell us so much. RHEL is diverse and it is important to have a sense of how different sectors fared and also what else is happening within the communities.

Find out more



For further information, including a breakdown of RHEL business by district, read the report: [Covid-19 and the Spatial Distribution of Business Closures: Evidence from West Yorkshire](#). Dr Gissell Huaccha, Leeds University Business School, and Professor Jamie Morgan, Leeds Beckett University. There is also a summary [blog post](#).