

# Number of Christmas Eve shoppers jumps to 'unusual' level amid rail strikes

The number of in-person shoppers has jumped to an "unusual" level on Christmas Eve amid rail strikes.


Footfall across all UK retail destinations up to 12 noon on Saturday was 9.2% higher than last week, and 1% up on December 23, when shoppers faced no travel restrictions, data from industry analyst Springboard shows.

It comes amid a walkout by thousands of members of the Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT) with trains to stop running early, while some routes have no services all day.

The data showed consumers were instead shopping locally rather than travelling into cities, experts said.

Diane Wehrle, insights director at Springboard, said: "Over the period up to 12pm on Christmas Eve footfall across UK retail destinations was remarkably resilient given the challenges with travel facing shoppers due to the rail strikes.

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“Footfall across all UK retail destinations was 1% higher than on December 23 and 9.2% higher than on the previous Saturday when there were rail strikes also.

“This pattern of footfall is unusual for Christmas Eve, as typically footfall peaks on December 23 and is then lower on Christmas Eve as people travel to their Christmas destinations.

“The uplift from last Saturday is a result of consumers not being able to reach their chosen shopping destination due to the rail strikes on December 17, and many people would have opted to travel yesterday to avoid the possibility of not being able to reach their chosen destination.

“By far the greatest leap in footfall from last Saturday of 26.4% occurred in retail parks, which is clearly a result of customer demand for food and grocery shopping. In shopping centres footfall was also higher than last Saturday (7.4%) and 2.1% higher in high streets.

“However, central [London](#) and other city centres around the UK are still feeling the loss of shoppers due to the rail strike, with footfall 14.9% lower than last Saturday in central London and 13.2% lower in other city centres.

“In contrast in outer London high streets footfall was 11.7% higher than last Saturday and 9.8% higher in market towns, demonstrating that many shoppers are choosing to shop locally and therefore avoid the need to travel long distances.”

Across all UK retail destinations, footfall is up 5.7% compared to Christmas Eve last year, but 17.1% lower than 2019.