

Town Centre Footfall Report

May 2022



SOUTH EAST
LOCAL ENTERPRISE
PARTNERSHIP

Town Centre Footfall

There are now various datasets available, using Big Data methods to track locational and movement information of the population, for those individuals carrying a mobile phone. Different bodies are making use of data providers to understand changing patterns of footfall in town and city centres. The High Street Task Force uses data from Springboard, with the Centre for Cities using data from Locomiser, which are propriety datasets with subscriptions required to access the data.

Since the start of the pandemic some of the large tech companies have also made some footfall data available free of charge, to support public health measures and policy evaluation of impacts of lockdowns. The open data provided by google community mobility reports is widely used, which has good geographic coverage and good breakdowns for different location types. Google classify locations down to a granular level as residential, employment, transit stations, parks and open space, grocery/pharmacy and retail/recreation.

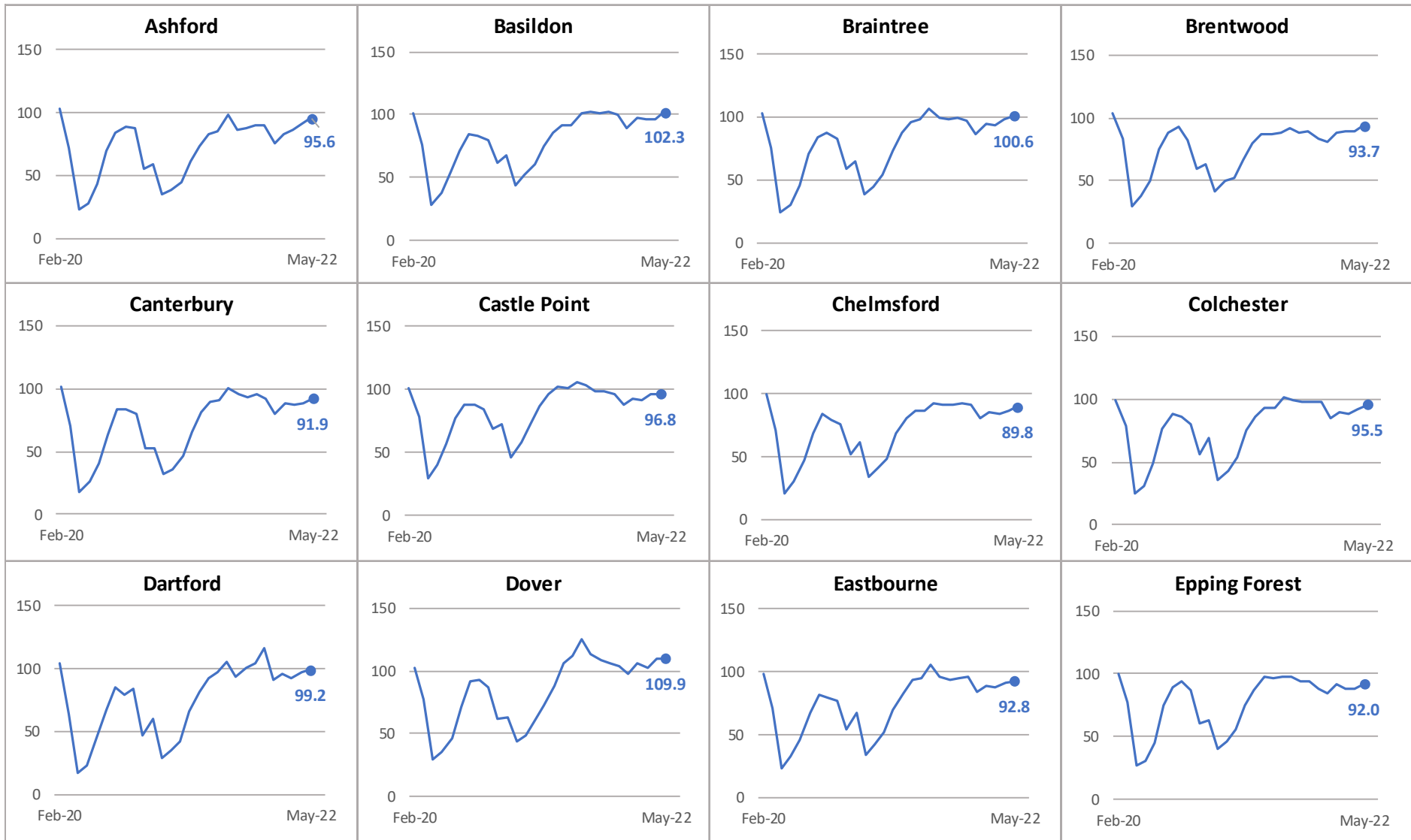
Google data is available at local authority level, rather than at town level, but the retail/recreation location can be seen as a good proxy for town centre and high street locations.

The Appendix below provides graphs showing footfall levels across all 32 local authorities within the SELEP area for Retail and Recreation locations using google community mobility reports. The information is provided as Index numbers, with early February 2020 (pre-pandemic) being the baseline index, where footfall is assigned an Index Value of 100.

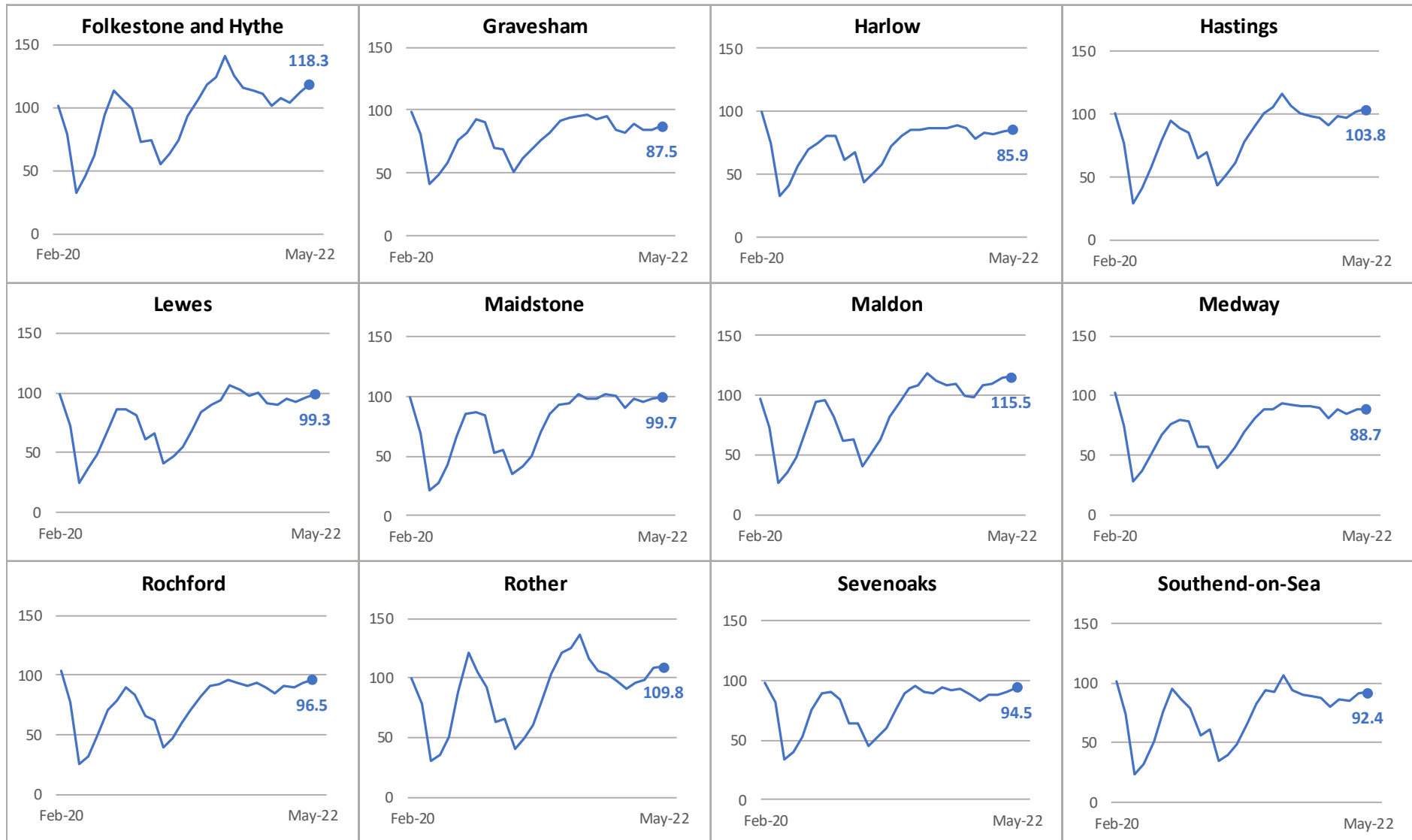
The graphs reveal the following trends:

- There were significant drops in footfall during lockdown periods and also with the arrival of the Omicron variant
- Footfall fell fairly sharply across nearly all local authorities in the December to January 2022 period, when Omicron variant appeared, but footfall has been steadily increasing since
- For many local authorities, footfall up to the end of May 2022 had not fully recovered to the same level as in February 2020, such that the Index Value remained below 100
- Many coastal local authorities had high footfall levels in Summer 2021, well above the February 2020 level, although with the available information it is not possible to determine to what extent this was a normal seasonal pattern and to what degree this was a result of increased “stayaction” activity
- Footfall in May 2022 was above the baseline for these same coastal towns, which are Folkestone and Hythe, Maldon, Rother and Tendring
- However, for some coastal areas, while seeing footfall above February 2020 levels at some point in 2021, this was not particularly high and in some cases short lived (e.g. Eastbourne, Hastings, Lewes and Southend)
- Footfall remains lowest, compared to the baseline with the following local authorities: Canterbury, Chelmsford, Epping Forest, Gravesham, Harlow, Medway, Thurrock, Tonbridge and Malling and Tunbridge Wells

Retail and Recreation Footfall by Local Authority – February 2020 (=100) to May 2022



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