If only there was something similar to the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee weekend happening very month. It would be a much needed boost as UK footfall is set to remain below 2019 for the "foreseeable future" as the cost of living crisis deepens and working from home becomes a permanent fixture, Springboard said Thursday, posting its footfall numbers for June.

Retail footfall last month (for the five weeks across 29 May- 2 July) strengthened to 12.3% below 2019 levels from -13.7% in May. That was wholly down to the rise in retail activity linked to the celebrations in the first week of the month, narrowing the gap from 2019 to just -4.9% in those seven days.

Across the retail landscape for the whole of last month, high street activity compared to 2019 came in at -14.9%, while it was down 16.5% in shopping centres and at -2.1% in retail parks.

The gap from 2019 averaged -14% over the subsequent four weeks in June, reaching -16% across all retail destinations and -19.5% in high streets in the final week.

While robust store sales in June mitigated the overall impact on the retail sector, "sales were erratic from week to week, the first sign of consumers pulling back on spending and we expect spending to slow", said Springboard.

It added: "June’s result reinforces our view that the cost of living crisis is starting to impact consumer behaviour and constrain shopper activity".

And the now-standard hybrid working continued to impact footfall in larger towns and cities, it was 21% below 2019 in Central London vs -9.9% in Outer London, and -15.8% in large city centres around the UK vs -15.2% in market towns.

With around half of all consumers working at home for at least part of the week (according to Springboard’s Retail Consumer Survey), and combined with the squeeze on household budgets, it also anticipates that footfall will remain at least 10-15% below 2019 in the second half of 2022.
Diane Wehrle, Marketing & Insights Director for Springboard added: “Whilst store sales are undoubtedly buoyed by spending from those middle income families who had saved during Covid, we fully expect to see this spending slowing as people gear up for the increase in energy bills in October and for Christmas.”

By Nigel Taylor