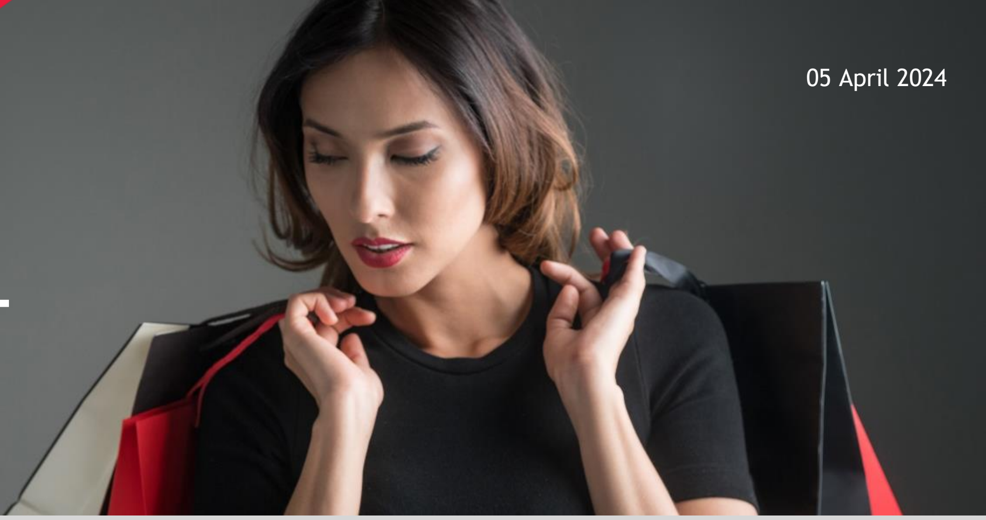
05 April 2024



BDO HIGH STREET TRACKER

March Monthly Review
Five weeks to 31 March 2024

STORE	NON-STORE	TOTAL
-1.8%	-2.3%	-2.2%
March 2023 +6.6%	March 2023 +2.8%	March 2023 +4.1%

Spring Begins With Negative Sales Despite Mother's Day and Easter Bounce

- Total like-for-like (LFL) sales fell by -2.2% this month from a base of +4.1% for the same month last year. Store sales fell by -1.8% from a strong base of +6.6% for the same month in 2023, while non-store sales fell by -2.3% from a positive base of +2.8% for the same month last year.
- In week one LFL sales fell by -6.32% from a base of +11.03% for the same week last year. In the second week of March sales grew by +2.38% from a base of +8.30% for the same week last year. Week two culminated this year in Mothering Sunday, and it is likely that the week's positive LFL result was driven by gift related purchases which propelled store sales to the highest weekly result since the last week of September 2023. In week three LFL sales fell by -8.82% from a base of +10.54% for the same week last year that ended in Mothering Sunday. In March's penultimate week, sales fell by -2.28% from a negative base of -11.67% for the same week last year. In the final week of the month, which this year culminated in the Easter weekend and the start of school holidays across much of the UK, sales grew by +2.29% from a base of +4.96% for the same week in 2023.
- Possibly due to the combination of Mothering Sunday, Easter and the widespread start of school holidays, footfall was, while mixed, generally positive in March. While the first and third weeks were negative, the rest of the month saw positive results. The second week, which coincided with Mothering Sunday, saw the month's strongest result with foot traffic up +9.4%, propelled by strong results across all three destinations.
- March's LFL total represents the sixth consecutive negative monthly result. This is the longest period of negative successive monthly results outside of the COVID-19 lockdown period when bricks and mortar stores were closed, and the High Street Sales Tracker recorded eight successive months of negative total sales between February and September 2020.
- This month's negative result may in part be due to the mixed and unsettled weather which visited the UK throughout March which may have deterred some consumers from visiting bricks-and-mortar stores. Overall, this month's result – together with the recent closure of prominent high street retail chains – is a stark reminder that retailers and the consumers on which they rely remain under pressure.
- On the face of it, recent economic data releases give some reason for optimism. Following a technical recession in the second half of 2023, the UK economy is staging a recovery, with GDP estimated to have grown +0.2% in January. Retailers may also be encouraged by the latest inflation figures, which show prices grew at their slowest rate (+3.8%) since October 2021 and appears on track to fall to the target of +2.0%. More widely, international passenger arrival numbers are now above pre-pandemic levels which may result in increased tourist spending.
- Following the Spring Budget, it remains to be seen whether the changes to the National Minimum Wage and National Insurance bands result in increased consumer spending, however the latest consumer confidence data suggests consumers remain wary about the national economic outlook.

TOTAL LIKE-FOR-LIKE RESULTS FROM 2023-2024

LFL Growth %	Week 1 (w/e 03/03)	Week 2 (w/e 10/03)	Week 3 (w/e 17/03)	Week 4 (w/e 24/03)	Week 5 (w/e 31/03)	Total March
Lifestyle	0.31	9.88	-13.32	-0.54	7.52	0.9
Fashion	-7.60	0.52	-3.88	-2.92	-2.19	-3.2
Homeware	-21.02	-14.12	-11.98	-4.82	-0.32	-10.9
Store	-3.50	7.40	-12.67	-3.34	3.21	-1.8
Non-store	-4.76	-8.03	-1.83	1.57	1.88	-2.3
Total	-6.32	2.38	-8.82	-2.28	2.29	-2.2

As of October 2018, fashion, homewares and lifestyle figures represent combined in-store and non-store totals for that category.

LIFESTYLE

+0.9%

March 2023: +9.7%

- Lifestyle total LFLs grew by +0.9% from a base of +9.7% for the same month last year.
- In-store LFLs grew by +2.1% from a positive base of +11.3% for the same month last year.
- In-store lifestyle sales were in positive in three out of the month's five weeks, but were particularly strong in week two, probably benefitting from Mothering Sunday related sales.

FASHION

-3.2%

March 2023: +0.7%

- Fashion total LFLs fell by -3.2% this month from a flat base of +0.7% for the same month last year.
- In-store LFLs fell by -6.0% from a negative base of -0.4% for the same month last year, while non-store sales grew by +1.5% from a base of +3.6% for March 2023.
- In-store fashion sales were negative in all but the second week, which coincided with Mothering Sunday, while non-store sales were positive in weeks three and four.

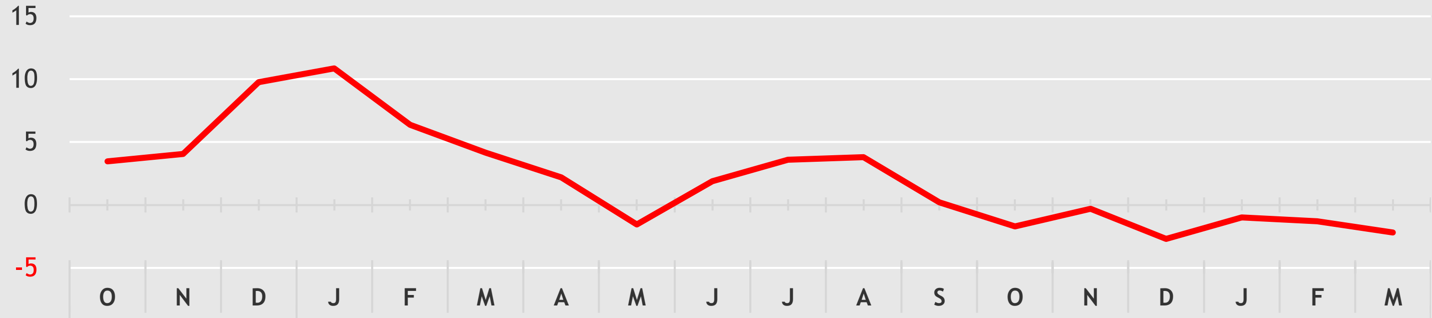
HOMEWARES

-10.9%

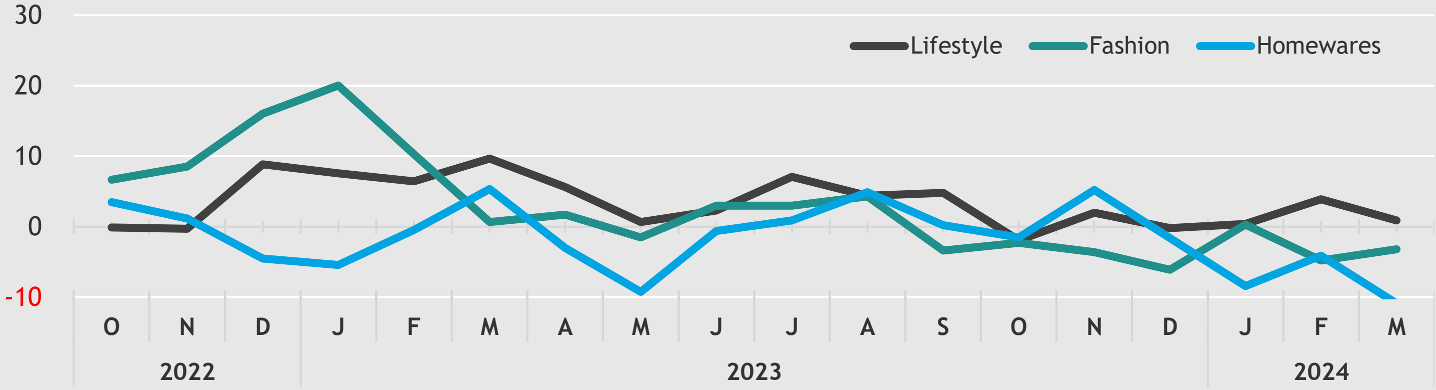
March 2023: +5.4%

- Homewares total LFLs fell by -10.9% from a positive base of +5.4% for March 2023. This month's fall represents the lowest monthly total LFL result for homewares since May 2022 (-14.9%).
- In-store LFLs fell by -2.6% from a positive base of +15.3% for the same month last year, while non-store sales fell by -17.6% from a base of -1.7% for the same month in 2023, pulled down by particularly sharp declines in LFL sales in weeks one and two.

Monthly total like-for-like results 2022-2024



Monthly like-for-like results by sector 2022-2024



For more information please contact:

e: HighStreetSalesTracker@bdo.co.uk

The High Street Sales Tracker outlines weekly like-for-like sales changes of some 80 mid-tier retailers with c10,000 individual stores across **Fashion:** accessories, clothing, footwear. **Lifestyle:** general household goods, gifts, health and beauty, leisure goods. **Homewares:** cookware, furniture and floor coverings, lighting, linen and textiles. **Non-store:** mail order, online and other non-store channels. Total like-for-likes include store and non-store sales. Any footfall figures quoted are provided by Springboard who are a leading provider of automated visitor counting and retail sales analysis.