Business

The future of retail and leisure

A practical guide for UK occupiers

November 2021

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Foreword

Commissioning a report giving a detailed overview of the UK retail and leisure market across five years is a significant undertaking at the best of times. But factor in a global pandemic, ongoing Brexit negotiations as well as the enormous change to the retail and leisure landscape and it becomes even more challenging.

I'm not sure what the new normal actually is but by looking at the bigger picture, lessons can be learnt. We've seen real value from sharing experiences and engagement with leading professionals in the market, such as Local Data Company and these findings can help plan and create strategies for the future.

Multiple themes are emerging including our role to promote and support ethics and sustainable practices, a seismic shift to digital, significant supply chain disruption and how operators can protect profitability. Physical retail is also experiencing real turbulence with vacancies rising to record levels throughout 2021. As the rent moratorium ends, the relationship between landlord and tenant becomes even more important and willingness to work together is key to future success.

Despite these challenges, there are positives on the horizon. History has shown us that retail and leisure are cyclical. The sector thrives on providing the very best customer experience, great service and most of all, pivoting and embracing change. This ability to adapt and modify will always create a competitive edge.

We hope that you find the trends and practical insights in this report insightful and we look forward to helping you navigate the ever-changing landscape whilst embracing new opportunities.

David Scott
Head of Retail and Leisure
NatWest

Introduction

As we discover what new activity levels and sustainable trading looks like across the UK retail and leisure market, it's important to take stock of the huge volume of change that has taken place over the past few years.

Occupiers aren't operating within the same social or economic environment of the past few years and, as such, must understand the new playing field in detail if they hope to thrive.

This report has been produced to detail how recent market shocks have impacted high streets up and down the country, to highlight investment opportunities and help occupiers mitigate new risks in the market.

The report is split into three chapters, the first providing a general view of market performance outlining strengths and weaknesses.

The second chapter highlights the areas of opportunity and sectors most under threat.

The final chapter provides an overview on key trends from across the top 60 most resilient locations, providing some insight into common themes that may have supported performance throughout the pandemic.

Occupiers aren't operating within the same social or economic environment of the past few years and, as such, must understand the new playing field in detail if they hope to thrive.

LOCAL DATA COMPANY

Local Data Company is the UK's most accurate retail location insight company. We physically track every retail and leisure business across the country. Our data powers strategy and decision-making for our clients working across retail, leisure, out-of-home media, investment, property and financial services.

Our team of field researchers consistently record the occupancy status of every business, and the frequency of our data collection enables us to track how the market is changing in close to real time. The accuracy of our data is underpinned by our proprietary technology stack, which supports the field research and quality control processes.

This technology enables us to provide our clients with unrivalled insight on more than 680,000 retail and leisure businesses, with access to location insight dashboards, big data and strategic consultancy.

Chapter 1 | Shifting strengths and weaknesses

The first chapter in this report outlines how the British retail and leisure market has adapted to various milestone events over the last five years and the impact this has had on the physical retail and leisure store landscape.

Vacancy rates

Vacancy is a core metric used to measure the health of retail locations across the country. Vacancy data is frequently used to understand the attractiveness of a retail hub and is able to answer questions about demand for space and the success of existing operators in the area.

Across the whole of Great Britain, vacancy has risen 2.7% from 11.8% at the start of 2015 to 14.5% in H1 2021. This, however, is only half the story, as vacancy rates were decreasing until H2 2017 and have been increasing ever since.

Historical vacancy rate, H2 2014 to H1 2021

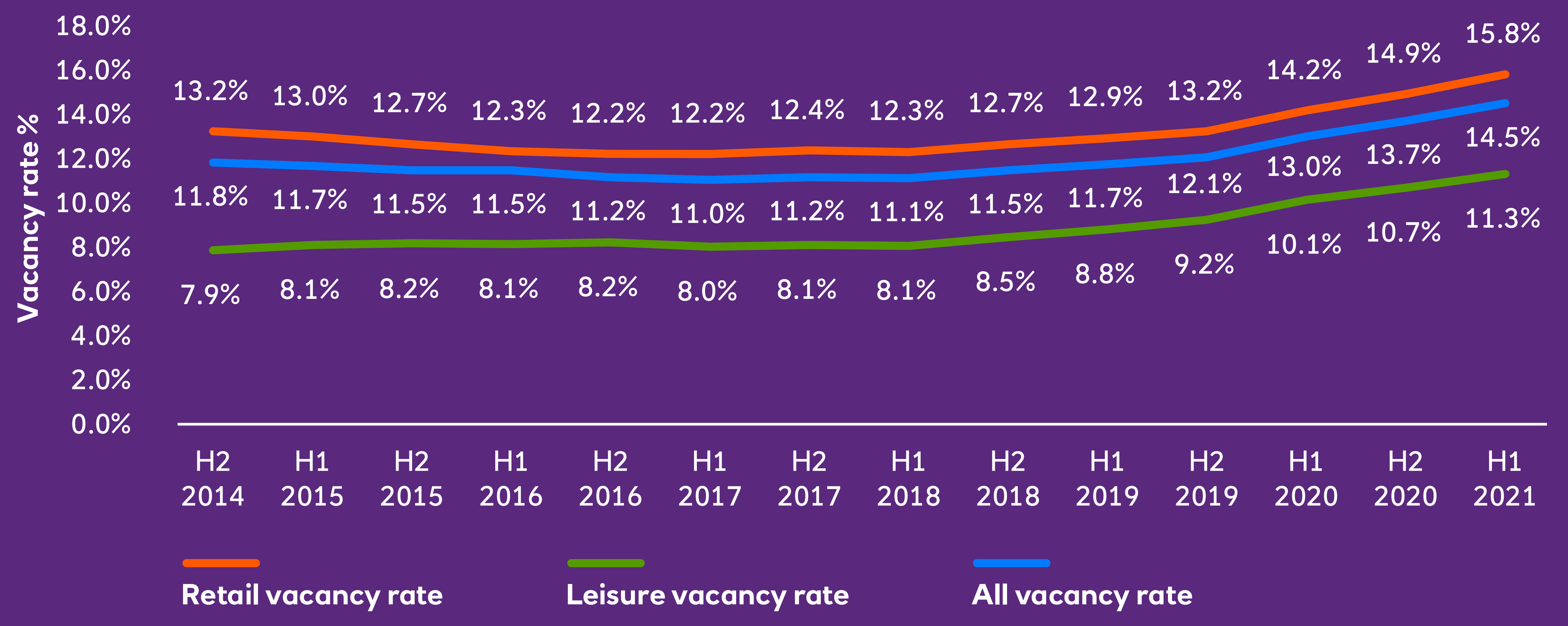

Figure 1: Historical vacancy rate across GB by retail type, H2 2014 to H1 2021.
(Source: Local Data Company)

Across the whole of Great Britain, vacancy has risen 2.7% from 11.8% at the start of 2015 to 14.5% in H1 2021.

Chapter 1 | Shifting strengths and weaknesses

By town profile

The variance in town performance throughout the pandemic has been widely discussed. Towns have been segmented by core function to create a detailed picture of how locations with differing uses perform.

Throughout the pandemic, commuter towns remained resilient as many businesses urged staff to remain at home where possible. This resulted in increased local footfall in areas that would typically have many residents travelling to major cities during the week.

Commuter towns (surrounding London only) have experienced a modest increase in vacancy of 1.5% since H1 2019 due to the increase in commuters working from home during the pandemic, with only villages having less of an increase (+0.8%).

Seaside towns have also remained relatively resilient due to the surging popularity of staycations, as well as the tendency to have a greater proportion of independent retailers and fewer comparison goods operators.

Conversely, vacancy rates across city centres have increased by 3.9% since H1 2019, reaching 17.5% in H1 2021. Most of the damage took place during the course of the Covid-19 pandemic, with 3.3% of the increase taking place since H1 2020.

Vacancy rates are still at risk of rising further in 2022, once the moratorium and rates relief come to an end at the start of April.

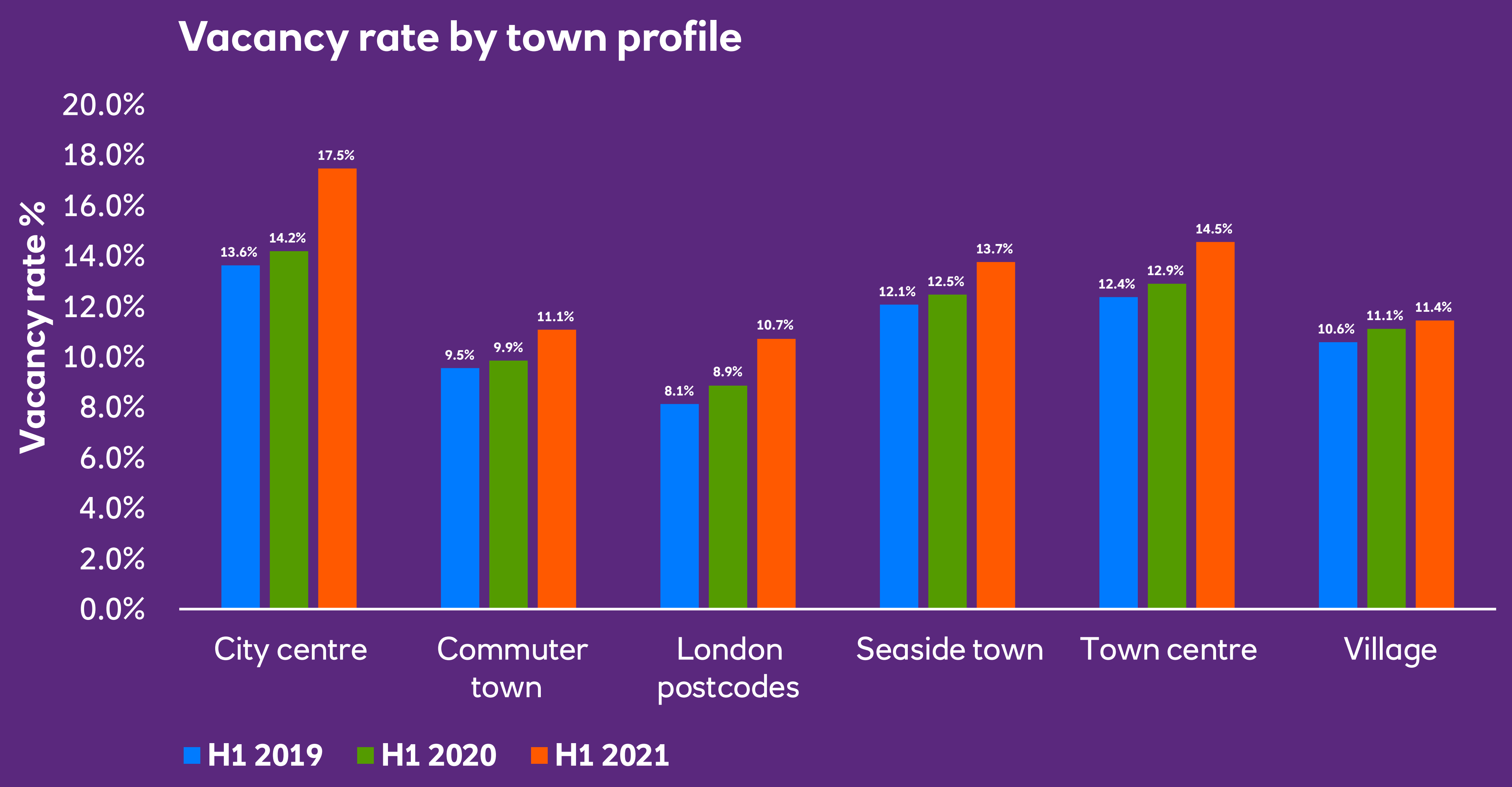

Figure 2: Vacancy rate by town profile across GB, H1 2019-H1 2021. (Source: Local Data Company)

Chapter 1 | Shifting strengths and weaknesses

By location type

Throughout 2021, vacancy has risen to record levels as the full impact of the pandemic filters through and occupiers who were unable to reopen following the third lockdown take the decision to vacate units.

Compared with shopping centres, high streets have remained resilient in recent years as the independent market supports levels of footfall and new openings across these locations.

Shopping centres have been hit the hardest since the start of the pandemic, with vacancy increasing from 14.2% in H1 2019 to 19.4% in H1 2021.

There were multiple reasons for the challenges faced by shopping centres; mainly the increased exposure to declining categories such as fashion, department stores and casual dining, as well as consumers not feeling as comfortable visiting enclosed spaces between lockdowns.

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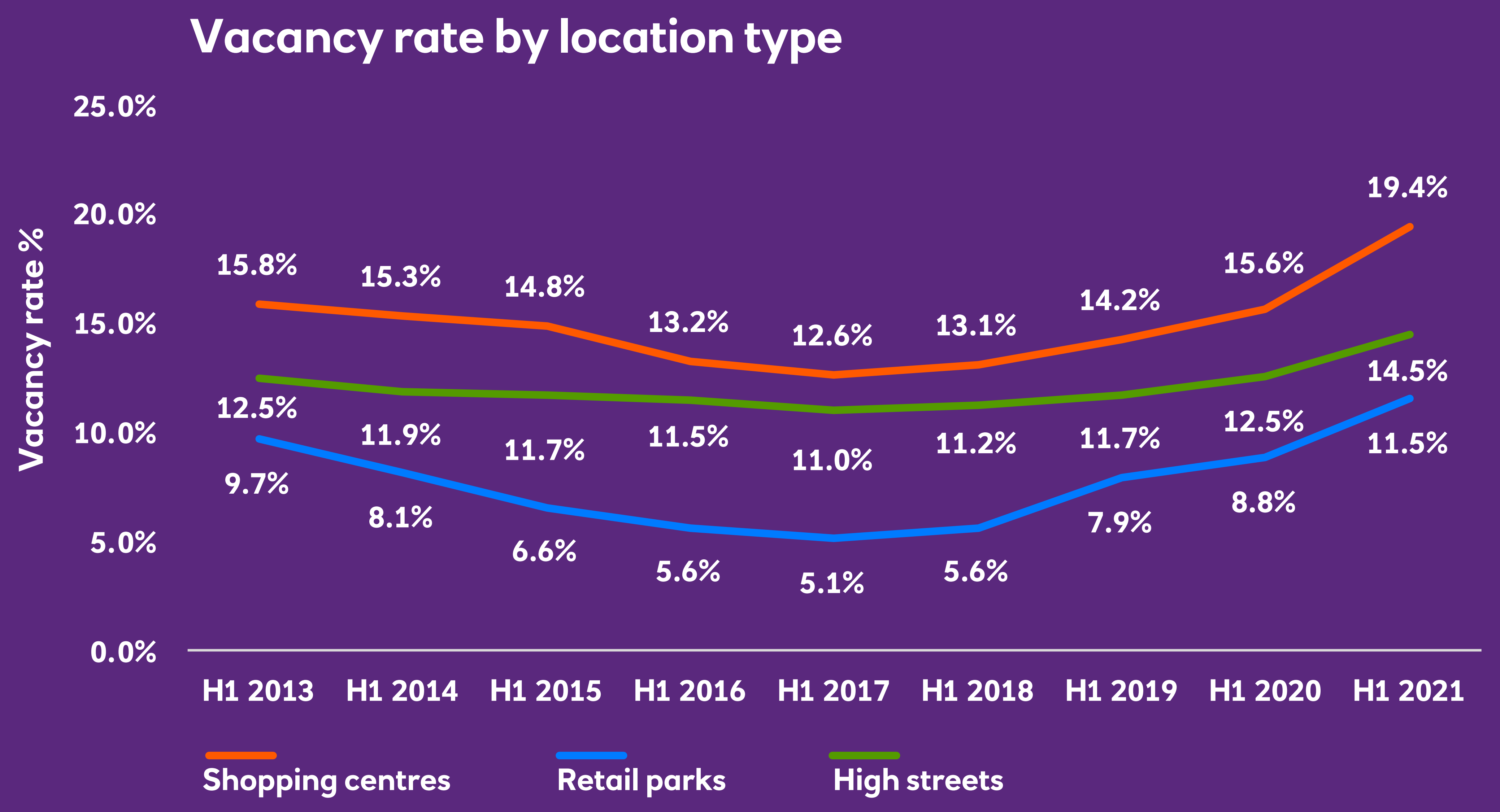

Figure 3: Vacancy rate by location type across GB, H1 2013 to H1 2021. (Source: Local Data Company)

Chapter 1 | Shifting strengths and weaknesses

Ratio of multiple and independent businesses

The latest opening and closures data reveal independents were significantly more resilient than multiples in the first six months of 2021, with a net increase of 804 units nationwide compared with a net decline of 5,251 multiples.

Analysing the change in vacancy for towns that have a high density of multiples shows how these towns have been impacted more, not just by the pandemic but by historical market challenges such as Company Voluntary Arrangement's (CVA's), the migration to online and saturation of categories and brands.

On average, vacancy increased by 4.5% across the 30 towns with the highest percentage of multiples as a percentage of total units, compared with just a 0.9% increase across the 30 towns with the highest density of independent occupiers.

This is reflective of the power that a strong independent line-up can have on a town.

Independents were significantly more resilient than multiples in the first six months of 2021.

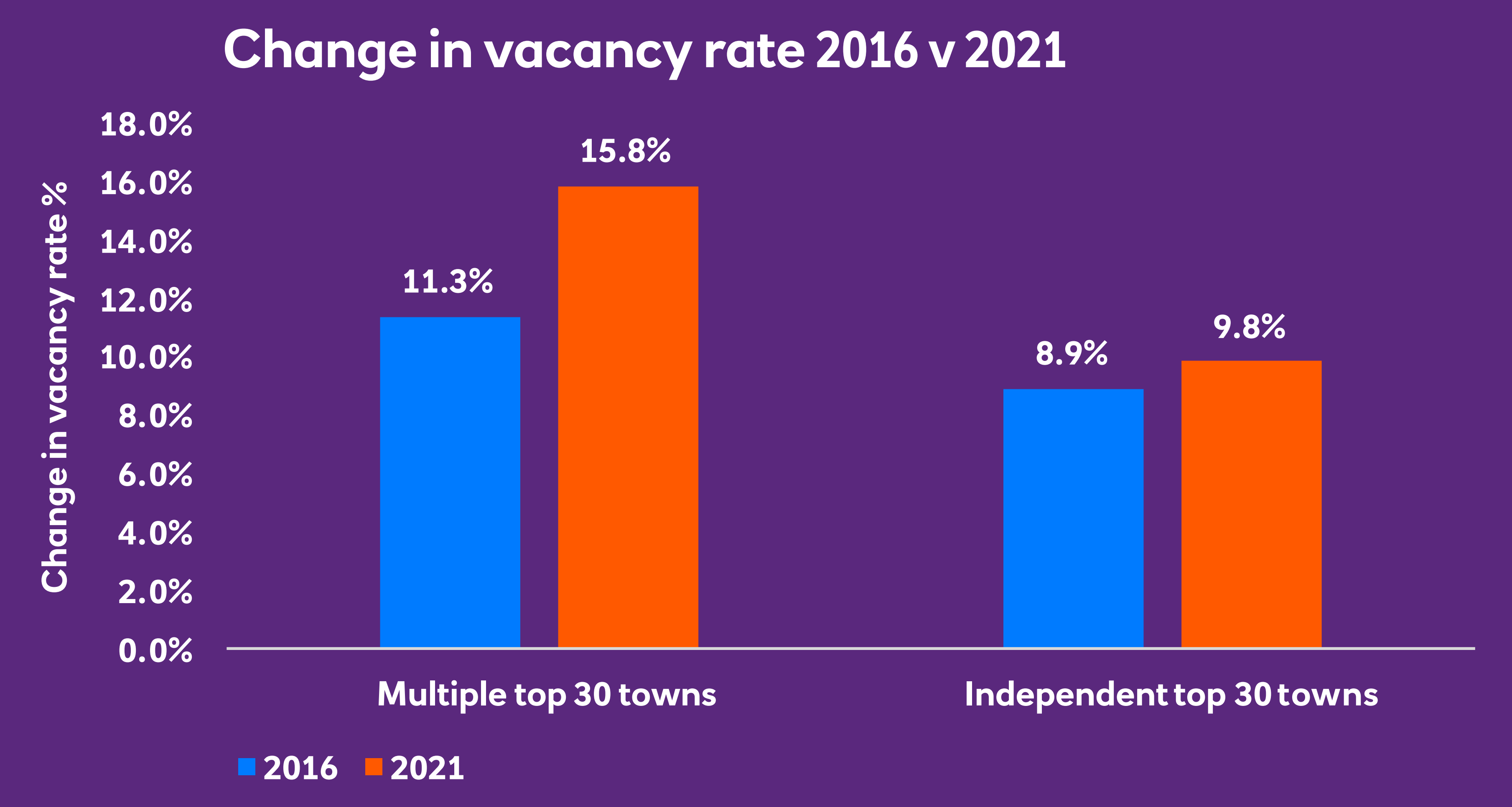

Figure 4: Change in vacancy rate across 30 towns with the highest density of multiples and independents, 2016 versus 2021.
(Source: Local Data Company)

Chapter 1 | Shifting strengths and weaknesses

Changes to retail provision

Growth in leisure was evident across city centre locations, with a 2.3% increase over the five-year period. Commuter towns, especially in the south-east of England, had the second biggest decline in comparison good stores.

These locations have some of the highest adoption rates for online shopping, with consumers utilising services such as click and collect and delivery platforms, reducing the need for physical sites in these locations.

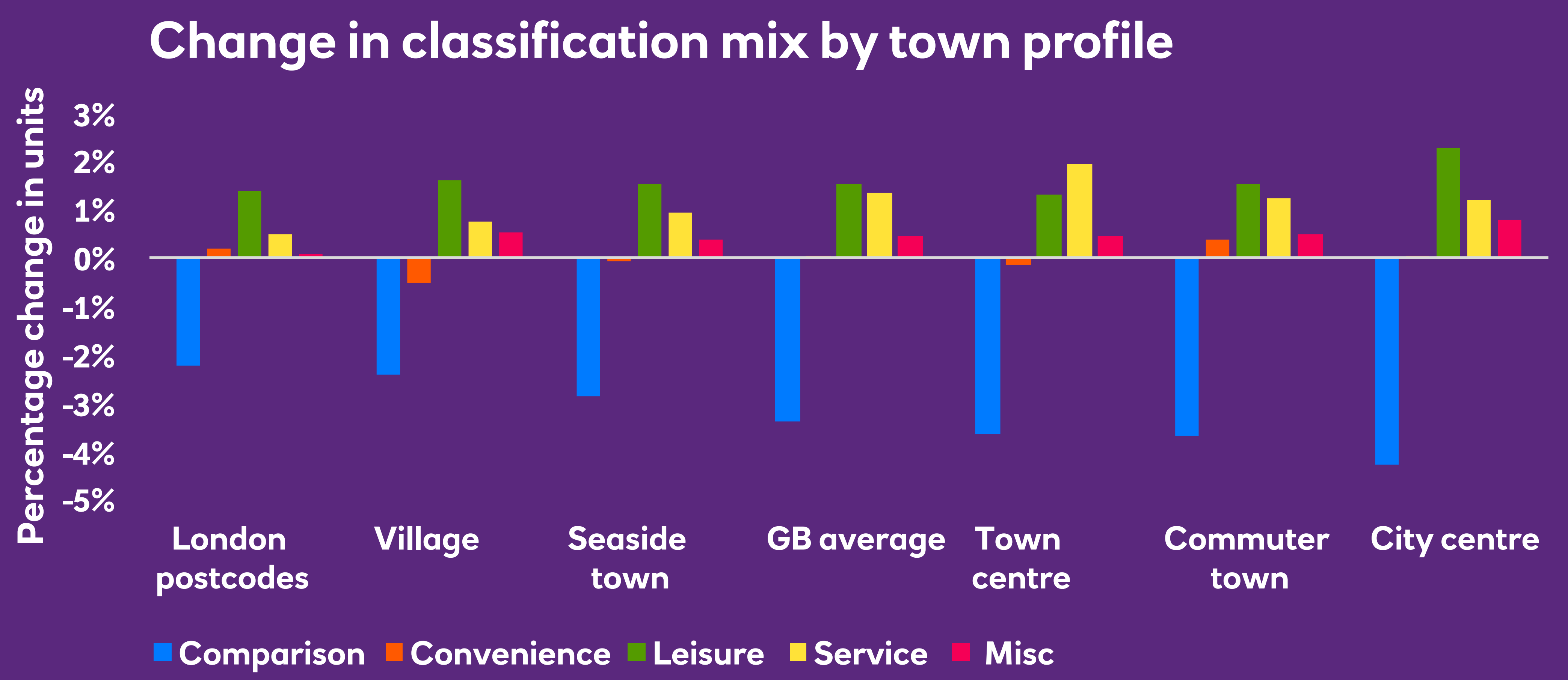

Figure 5: Change in classification mix by town profile across GB, 2016 to 2021. (Source: Local Data Company)

Commuter towns, especially in the south-east of England, had the second biggest decline in comparison good stores.

Chapter 1 | Shifting strengths and weaknesses

Saturation across sectors

With success across certain corners of the market, inevitably there will come a point when market saturation is reached. This analysis reviews categories experiencing growth from 2015 to 2017 but have since had a slowdown, indicating that years of increasing units has brought the sector close to the level of demand.

There has been a significant slowdown in growth of vaping stores between the two periods of assessment, suggesting this market is reaching saturation.

Fast growth markets that have limited longevity and low barriers to entry such as vaping stores have faced increasing competition, not only with new players but also the launch of products in convenience stores and supermarkets.

Coupled with the growth in online, demand for standalone vaping stores has reduced significantly. This was more prevalent in city centres and commuter towns, which had reductions of 51% and 48% in supply from January 2018 to December 2020.

Saturation across the casual dining sector has been evident, especially across cuisines such as Italian and American (mainly burger chains). These two restaurant categories were impacted by a wave of CVA's and administrations in 2018, as an oversupply of restaurants and fierce competition drove down profit margins to a point where restaurants were no longer viable.

Village and seaside towns experienced the biggest reduction in supply, evidence of the overexpansion into markets that weren't large enough to sustain profitable trade.

Since January 2018, the takeaway food market has reduced by 34% across London postcodes.

Oversupply in takeaway food and coffee shops was evident across London, which was the result of a boom in food delivery platform use and coffee culture across the capital.

Since January 2018, the takeaway food market has reduced by 34% across London postcodes and the coffee shop market is down 19% over the same period.

City centres had the largest contraction across the most saturated categories, with nearly a third (32%) of all units across the 10 categories closing shortly after their rapid expansion in this location profile.

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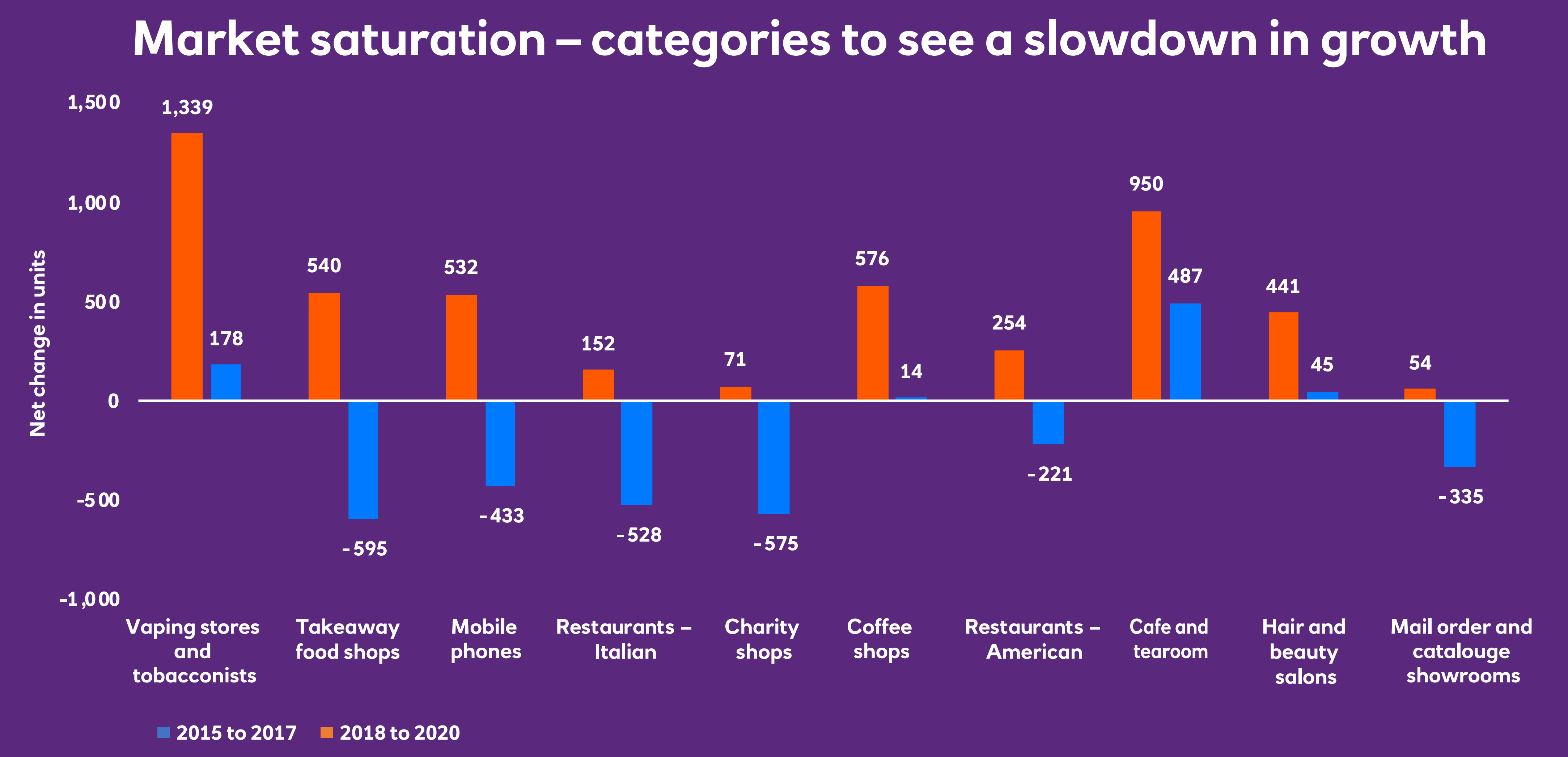

Figure 6: Top 10 subcategories by net difference in growth between 2015 to 2017 versus 2018 to 2020 across town centres.
(Source: Local Data Company)

Hair and beauty salons and coffee chains have seen growth through 2020.

Chapter 1 | Shifting strengths and weaknesses

Top 10 growing and declining categories

The fastest growing category across the UK was barbers, with a net growth of 3,838 units over the five-year period of assessment. Beauty salons were the second fastest growing category, with a net growth of 2,552 units. The health and beauty sector has grown substantially since 2015, with consumers spending more on health, fitness, wellness and appearance. This is evident with four of the top 10 fastest growing categories operating in this space (barbers, beauty salons, nail salons and health clubs).

Another notable trend is the increase in food to go categories, with cafes and tearooms (independent coffee shops and cafes), fast food takeaway and pizza takeaway in the top 10 fastest growing categories across the UK. Growth in this sector has been supported by the popularity of delivery apps such as Deliveroo, Just Eat and UberEats, which have helped to ease the logistical challenge of offering delivery, especially for smaller businesses.

The health and beauty sector has grown substantially since 2015, with consumers spending more on health, fitness, wellness and appearance.

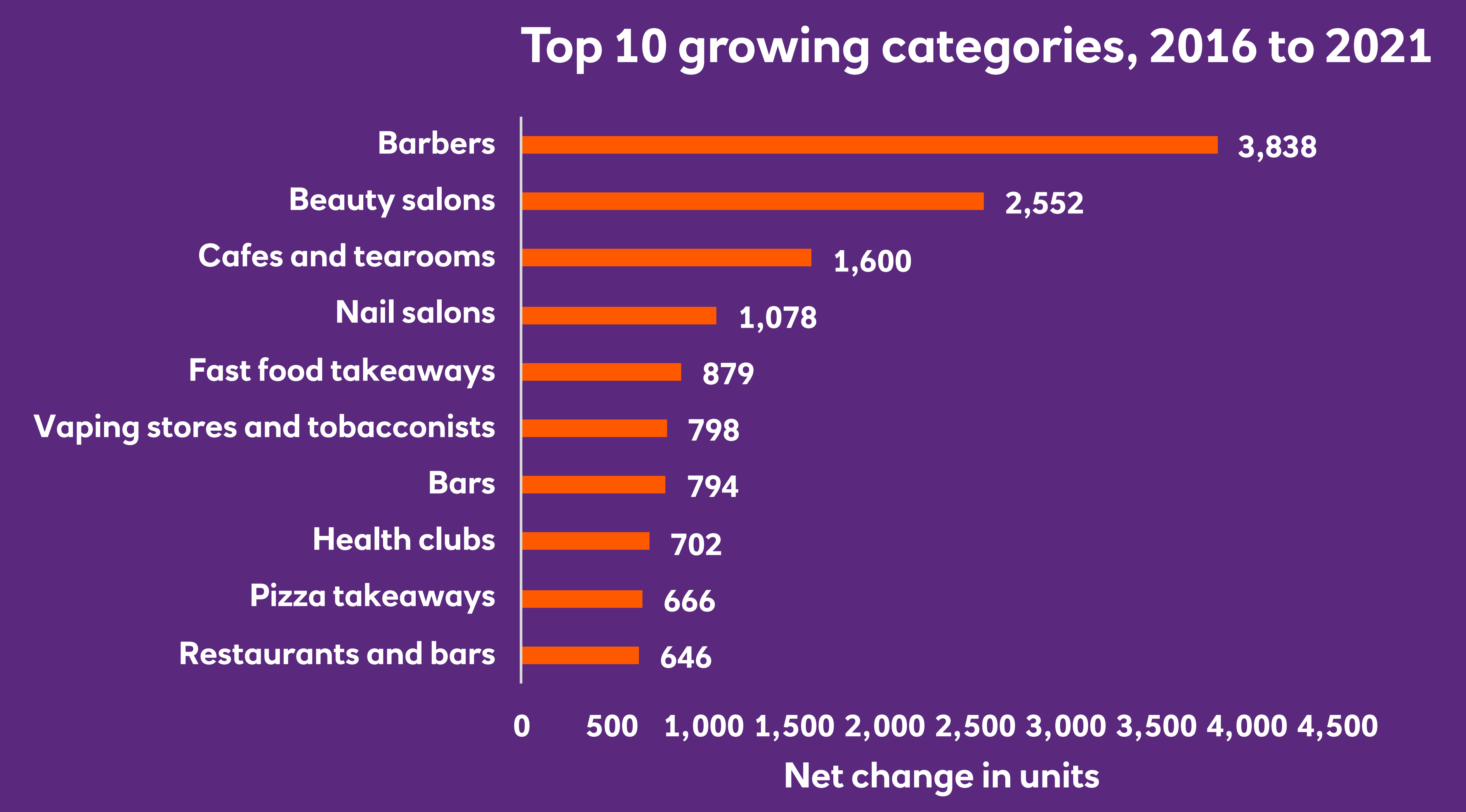

Figure 7: Top 10 growing categories across GB, 2016 to 2021. (Source: Local Data Company)

Chapter 1 | Shifting strengths and weaknesses

The fastest declining categories experienced 40% more activity on average than the fastest growing, which is indicative of the challenges faced by certain corners of the market. One of the major issues retailers are facing is the exponential growth in online, a phenomenon that impacts a range of different retailers and has been exacerbated by the pandemic.

It's critical to understand these trends on a local basis, as locations with a high density of categories in decline will pose a threat to occupiers. Conversely, locations with growth categories identify areas that are able to attract occupiers that are thriving in the current market conditions and are likely to remain resilient, with these closures offering an opportunity for other growth categories to reuse this space. Some of the most common occurrences are banks becoming coffee shops, or former pubs becoming convenience stores.

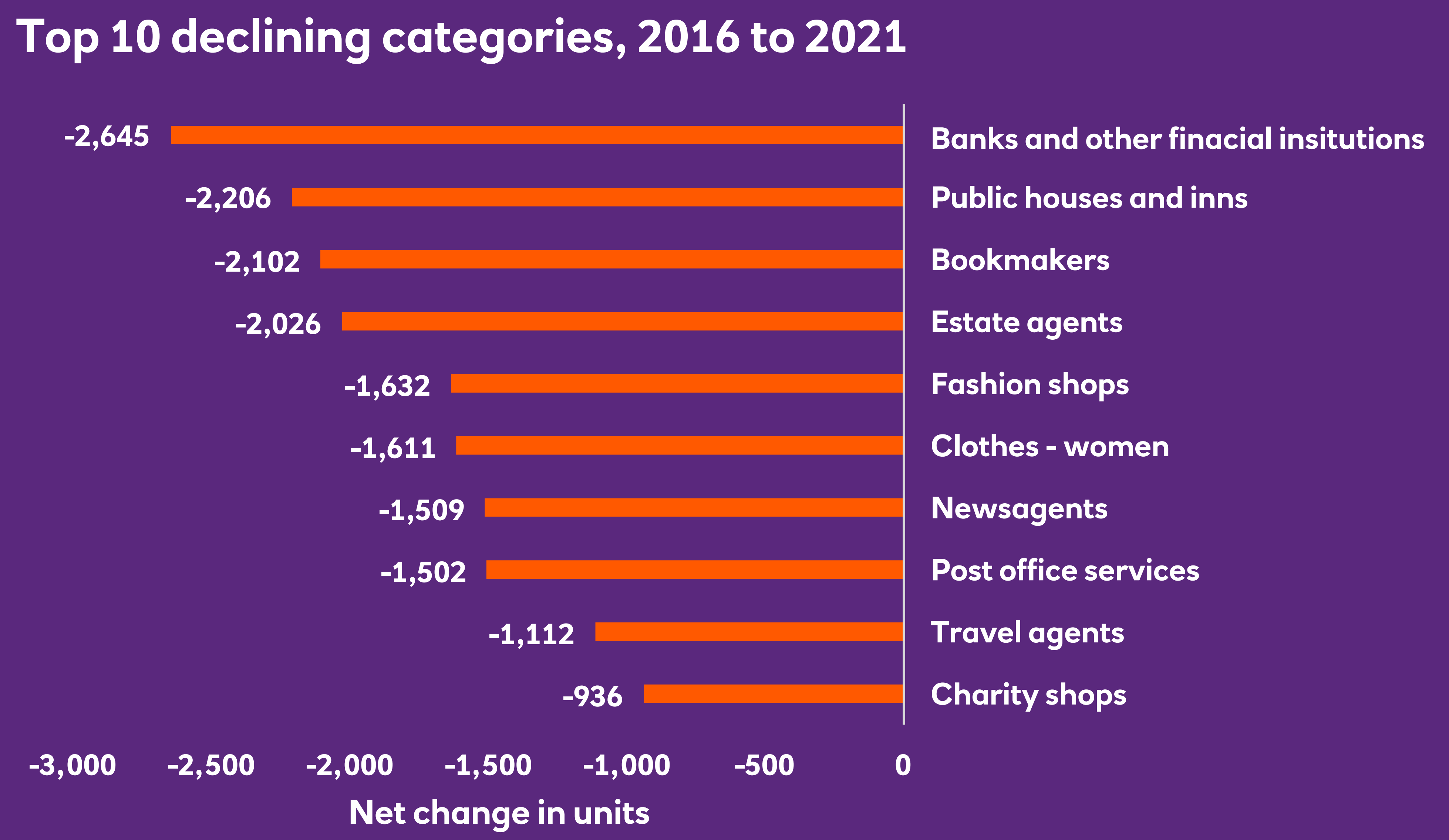

Figure 8: Top 10 declining categories across GB, 2016 to 2021. (Source: Local Data Company)

The fastest declining categories experienced 40% more activity on average than the fastest growing, which is indicative of the challenges faced by certain corners of the market.


Fastest growing categories
3,838 units
Barbers
2,552 units
Beauty salons

Chapter 2 | Where to acquire space

A metric unique to Local Data Company, survival rates measure the percentage of occupiers opening in a set year that make it to their third anniversary of operation.

Survival rates by town profile

This metric is valuable as it provides a mechanism by which to gauge the strength of various locations by understanding how long occupiers are able to survive or remain trading.

For this analysis, survival rates have been calculated by assessing the number of occupiers that were trading three years ago (2018) and are still trading today (2021).

The three-year period used for this analysis includes some of the most challenging years for the sector, with a raft of CVA's in 2018 and 2020 being the year the Covid-19 pandemic hit.

Profit margins were also reduced in this period as costs of occupying space increased with the rates re-evaluation, growth of online shopping and introduction of the national living wage all having an impact.

Despite a turbulent period, 74% of occupiers were able to remain trading for three years, demonstrating the resilience of the market during tough times.

However, there's a wide variance across asset types, high streets, business types and store categories, which paints a rich picture of the winners and losers across the market.

74% of occupiers were able to remain trading for three years, demonstrating the resilience of the market during tough times.

Chapter 2 | Where to acquire space

The impact of size of town centre

Since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, there's been a much-discussed move towards localised shopping, which is evident when assessing survival rates across different sizes of town centre.

To quantify this difference in performance, we've run analysis on a range of town centre sizes to understand whether the smaller, more local centres have indeed been more resilient.

Large town centres are categorised as those with 400 or more units, medium town centres have between 200 and 399 units, while small town centres have 199 or fewer units.

Survival rates were the highest across small town centres at 76%, compared with large town centres at 72%. Large town centres have been impacted by big brands consolidating their store estates in recent years, with many reducing to one store per town instead of several, a strategy that was common before the exponential growth in online shopping.

This is further evidenced when the same analysis is completed on different town profiles, with survival rates across city centres the lowest at 71.6%.

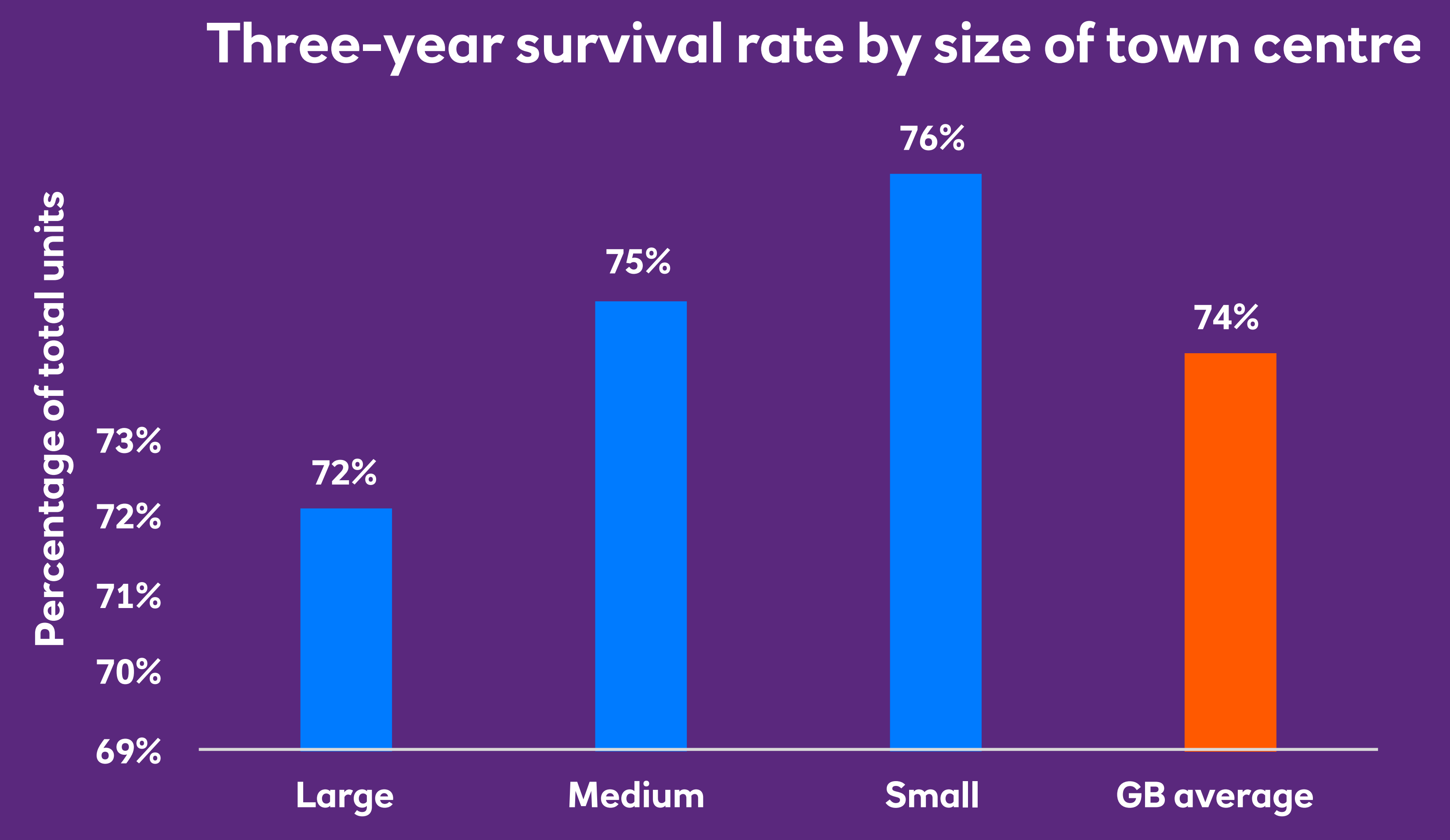

Figure 9: Three-year survival rate across GB town centre by size, 2018 to 2021. (Source: Local Data Company)

Chapter 2 | Where to acquire space

Three-year survival rate by town profile

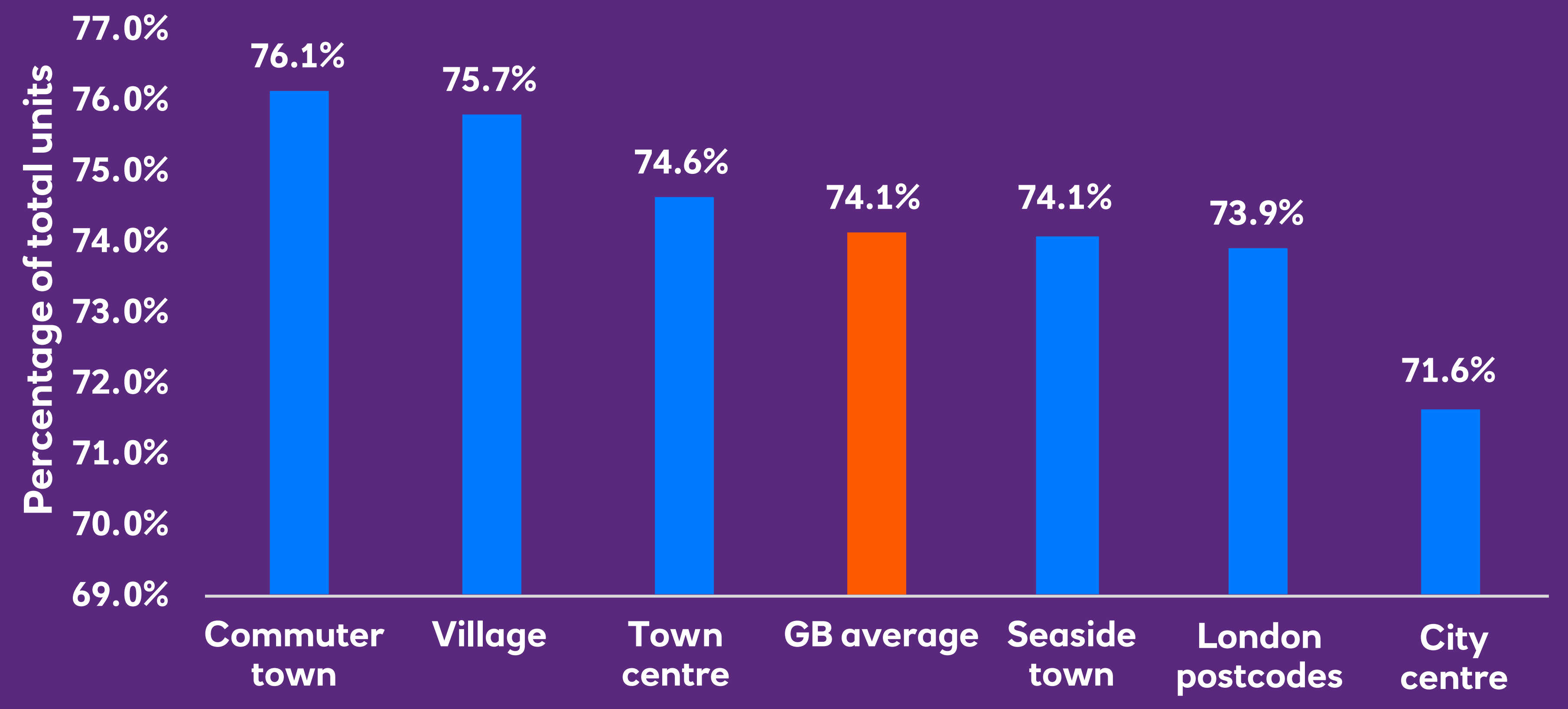

Figure 10: Three-year survival rate across GB town centres by town segment, 2018 to 2021. (Source: Local Data Company)

Survival rates were the highest across small town centres at 76%.

Chapter 2 | Where to acquire space

Proximity to secure occupiers – retail brands

Of all retail brands, Tesco has the highest three-year survival rate at an impressive 99%.

Supermarkets dominate the list as they make up five of the top 15 brands for survival (Tesco, ASDA, Sainsbury's, Morrisons and Iceland). Supermarkets were one of the winners of the pandemic, as they were one of the few categories that were able to remain open during all three lockdowns, due to their status as essential.

Other categories that performed well include homewares and DIY brands such as Toolstation, Screwfix and B&Q, which benefited from consumers inbuilt desire to consume goods and the limited market focused them into essential retailing.

The only fashion retailer in the top 15 was TK Maxx. At 98%, TK Maxx has the highest survival rate of all fashion brands by a considerable margin, due to this sector experiencing some of the highest churn due to rising online spend and increased competition from retailers like ASOS and Boohoo. Several fashion brands have consolidated their estates as a result.

These top 15 brands are likely to attract footfall and have long-term resilience so should be considered as proxy brands for occupiers looking to expand across GB.

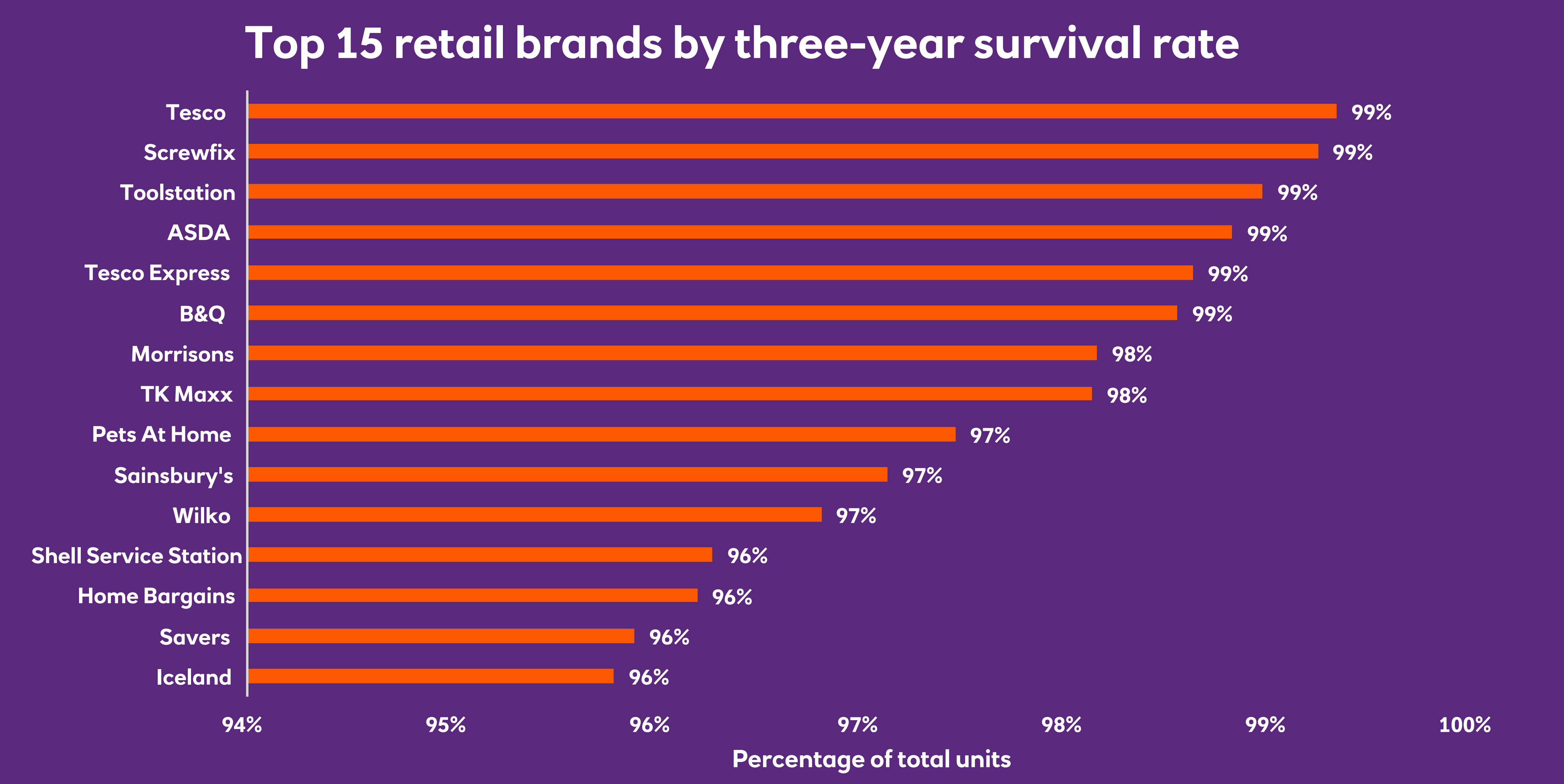

Figure 11: Top 15 resilient retail brands by three-year survival rate, 2018 to 2021. (Source: Local Data Company)

Chapter 2 | Where to acquire space

Proximity to secure occupiers – leisure brands

Of all leisure brands operating across GB, Nando's is the most resilient, with 98% of units remaining operational during the three-year period from 2018.

Several pub brands feature in the top 15, despite this category being one of the most impacted by the pandemic. This is most likely due to the brands in this list being able to secure capital to support the business during periods of closure or limited trading, unlike many independent businesses in this space.

Other leisure brands in the top 15 include pizza takeaway brands (Domino's and Papa John's), hotel chains (Premier Inn and Travelodge) and coffee chains (Costa and Caffe Nero), all of which have a three-year survival rate of 90% or higher.

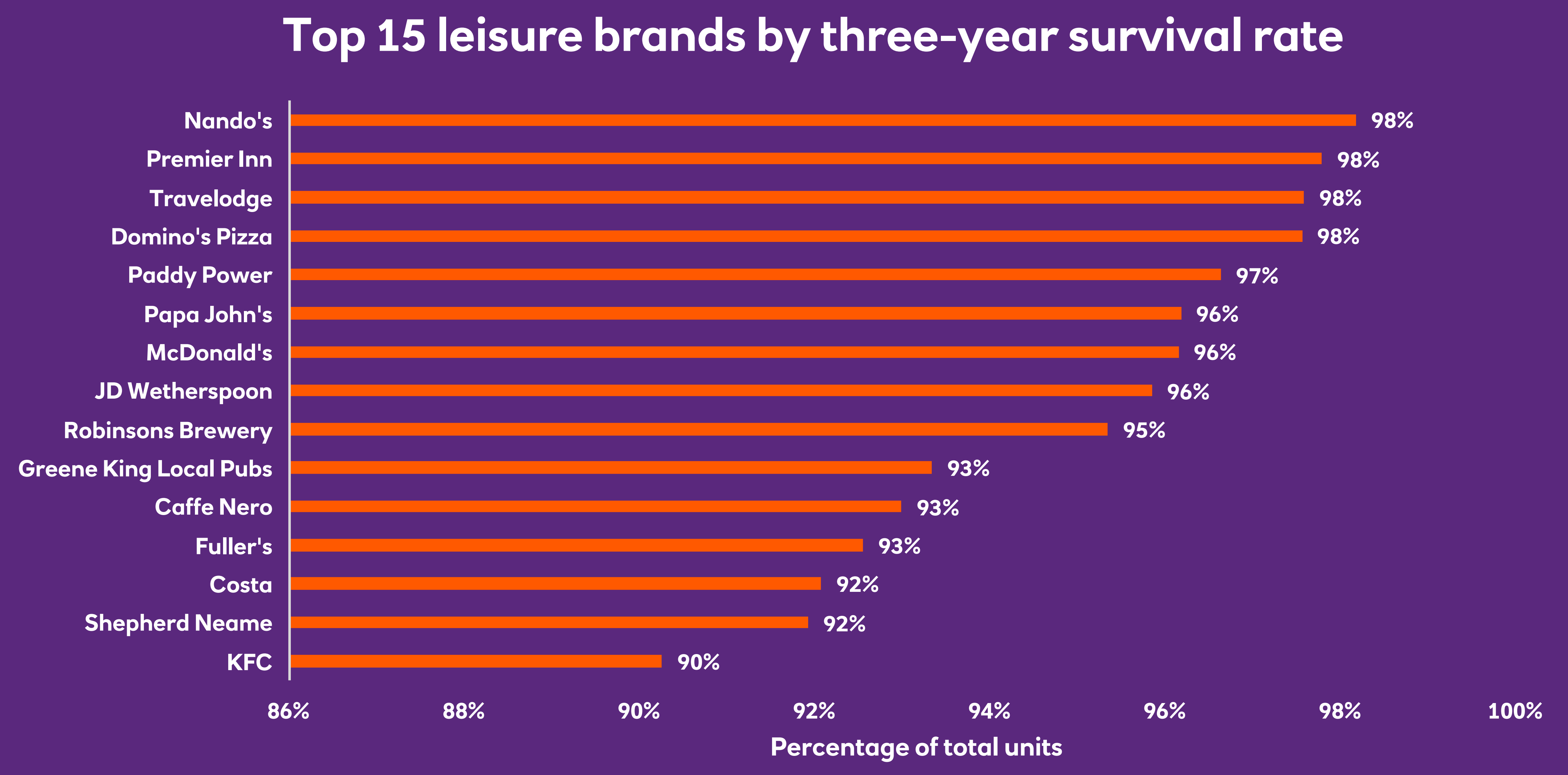

Figure 12: Top 15 resilient leisure brands by three-year survival rate, 2018 to 2021. (Source: Local Data Company)

Chapter 2 | Where to acquire space

Survival rate by location type

Some 83% of occupiers across retail parks were able to survive to their third year of operation, the highest across all asset types.

This was driven by strong performance across parks anchored by sports goods/ hobbies stores (88.9%), food retail (85.6%) and homewares and garden (84%). Retail parks anchored by fashion brands were negatively impacted, having an average survival rate of 78.6%.

Shopping centres performed the worst, with a survival rate of 70%.

The challenges faced by shopping centres shouldn't be underestimated: they have been impacted by exposure to brands consolidating their estates and to the highest-risk retail categories such as fashion and department stores, which have faced increased challenges since the pandemic began.

Shopping centres connected to transport hubs had the lowest survival rates across all shopping centre types (68.3%), while community shopping centres performed slightly better than other categories of shopping centre, with a survival rate of 71%.

The challenges faced by shopping centres shouldn't be underestimated.

Figure 13: Three-year survival rate by location type, 2018 to 2021. (Source: Local Data Company)

Strongest retail performance

89.9%
Sports goods/hobbies stores

85.6%
Food retail

84%
Homewares and garden

Chapter 3 | Learning from resilient locations

This analysis reviews the most resilient locations, defined by their ability to retain occupiers and temper rising rates of vacancy since the onset of the pandemic in March 2020.

Retail mix

A sample of the top 60 locations has been analysed to identify trends and support understanding of why these locations were able to perform well during one of the most turbulent periods for the retail and leisure market in recent years.

When comparing the retail mix of the top 60 most resilient towns to the GB average, there's very little difference across the top retail classifications: comparison goods, leisure, service and convenience.

This reveals that, rather than the types of stores, the cause of the difference in performance is more likely to be the quality of stores, brand line-up and presence of independent retailers, which we'll explore further.

The only notable difference was the larger presence of service retail occupiers in the resilient towns, with this classification making up 31% of total occupiers compared with the GB average of 28%.

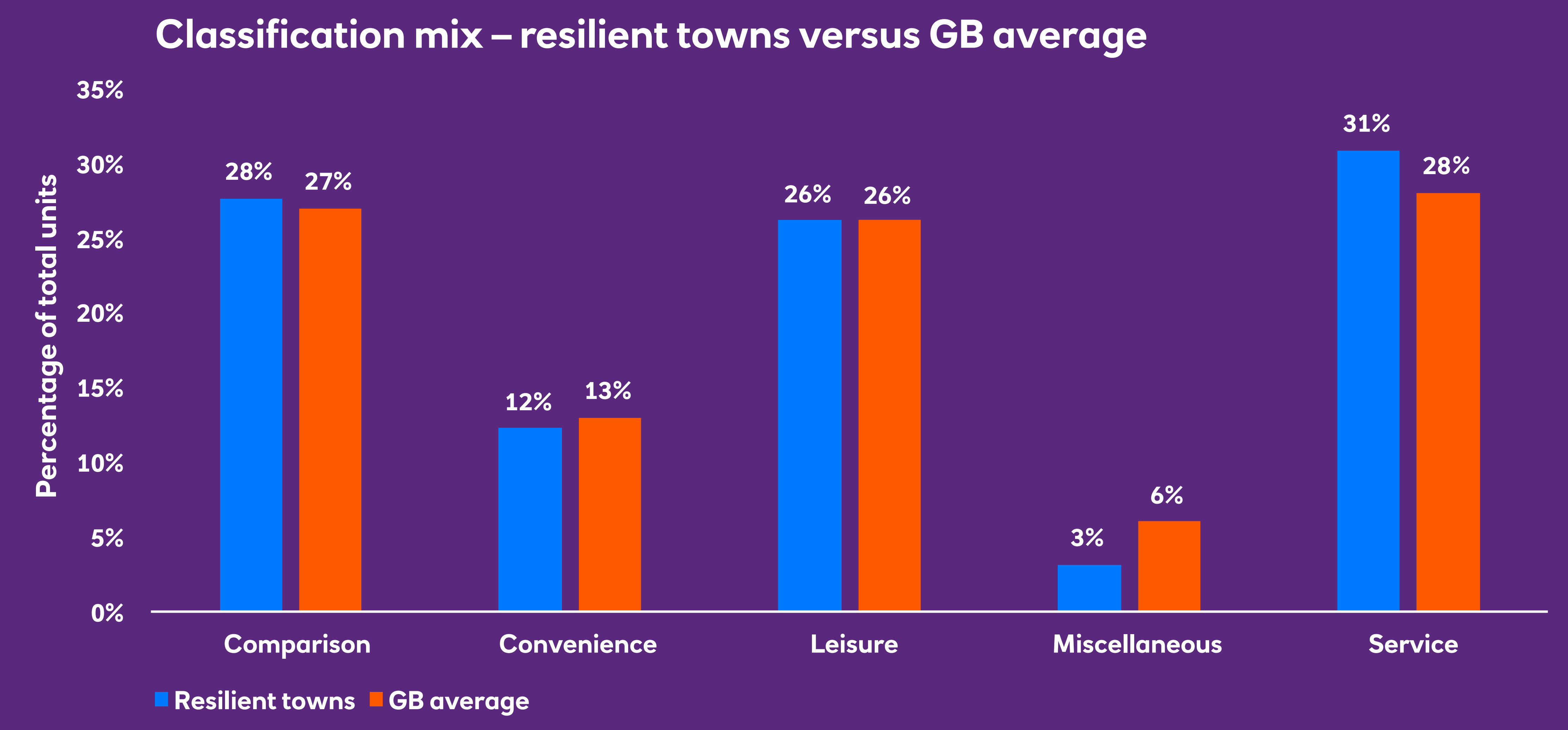

Figure 14: Classification mix across the top 60 resilient towns compared with the GB average. (Source: Local Data Company)

Chapter 3 | Learning from resilient locations

Independent versus multiple mix

The resilient towns had, on average, a larger percentage of independent occupiers at 72.6% when compared with the GB average of 65.6%.

This mirrors the national picture, as there was a net growth of 804 units in the independent market in H1 2021, compared with a net loss for the multiple market of 5,251.

However, this isn't a silver bullet to resilience, as the government support schemes that independents have relied upon during the pandemic will end in 2022.

This could create new pressures for independent businesses that have not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels of trade.

Resilient towns had, on average, a larger percentage of independent occupiers at 72.6% when compared with the GB average of 65.6%.

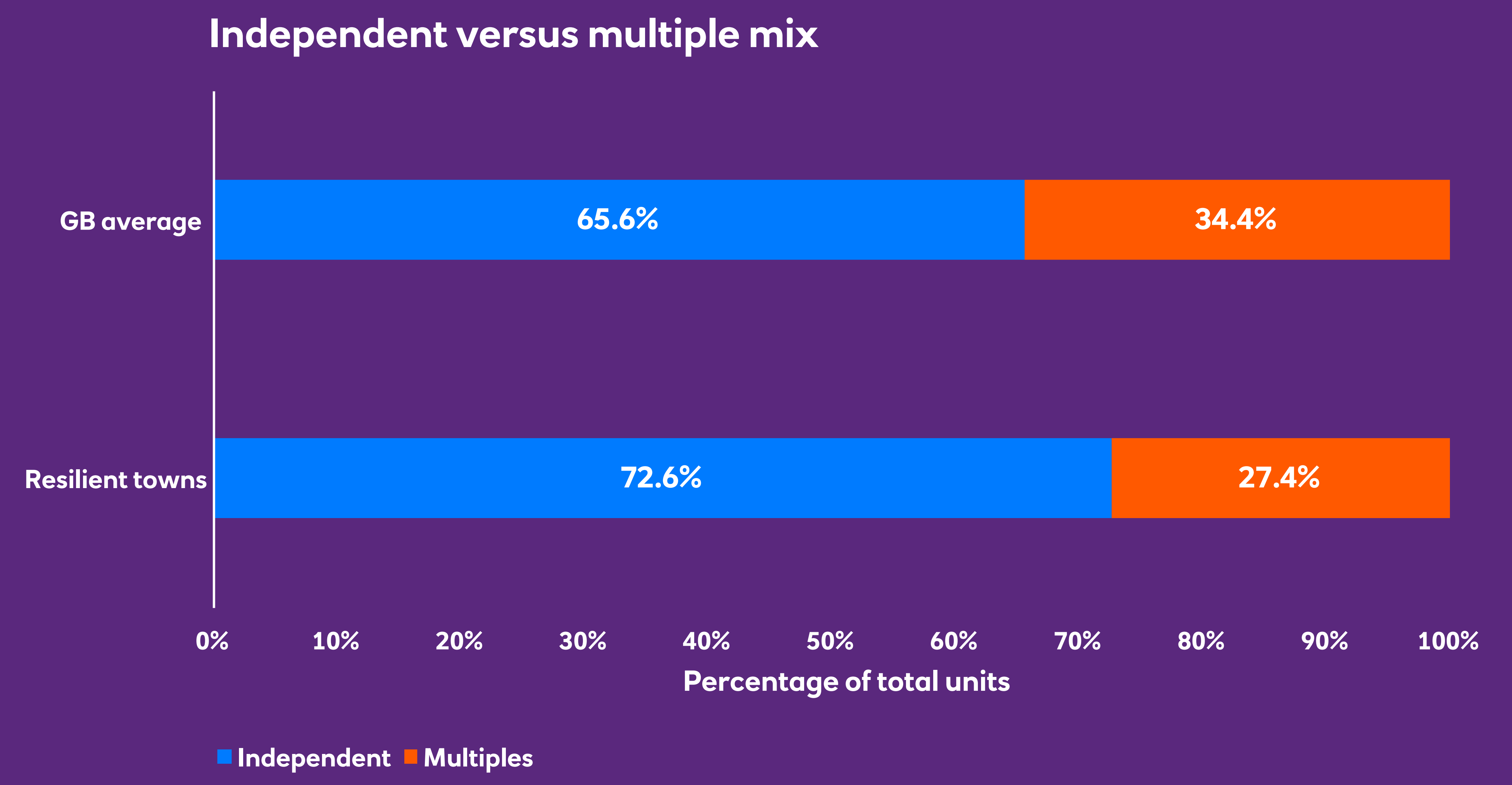

Figure 15: Independent versus multiple mix across the top 60 resilient towns compared with the GB average, 2021.
(Source: Local Data Company)

Chapter 3 | Learning from resilient locations

Exposure to shopping centres

The challenges faced by shopping centres throughout the past few years have resulted in vacancy rates across these asset types being the highest since Local Data Company records began, sitting at 19.4% in H1 2021.

Shopping centres have experienced a mass exodus of units from major anchor brands such as Debenhams, House of Fraser and Topshop in recent years.

The top 60 resilient towns were significantly less exposed to this asset type, with just 3.1% of their total units housed within a shopping centre, compared with 9.4% across the rest of GB.

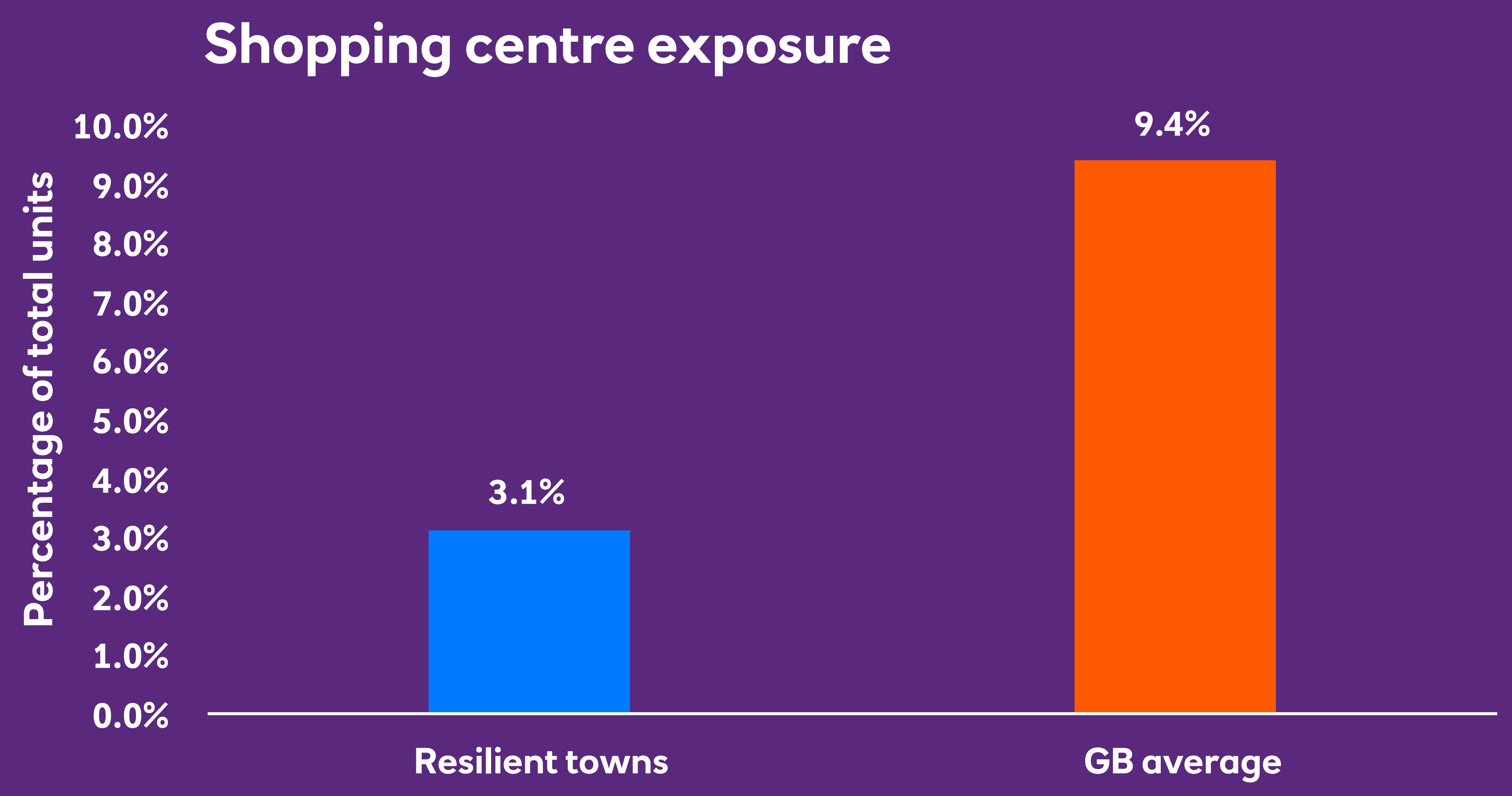

Figure 16: Percentage of total units within shopping centres across the top 60 resilient towns compared with the GB average.
(Source: Local Data Company)

Shopping centres have experienced a mass exodus of units from major anchor brands.

Chapter 3 | Learning from resilient locations

Exposure to at-risk retailers

Another factor in a location's resilience is exposure to occupiers that have launched CVA's or announced extensive store closures in the last five years.

This analysis supports occupiers in understanding the level of risk associated with different locations in terms of the loss of occupied units in the surrounding area.

Across GB, 1.8% of units within town centres are occupied by at-risk brands. Any clustering of units impacted by these businesses can pose a threat to the town.

Across the resilient locations, just 0.8% of units are occupied by at-risk occupiers, indicating that future risk is also lower.

Across the resilient locations, just 0.8% of units are occupied by at-risk occupiers.

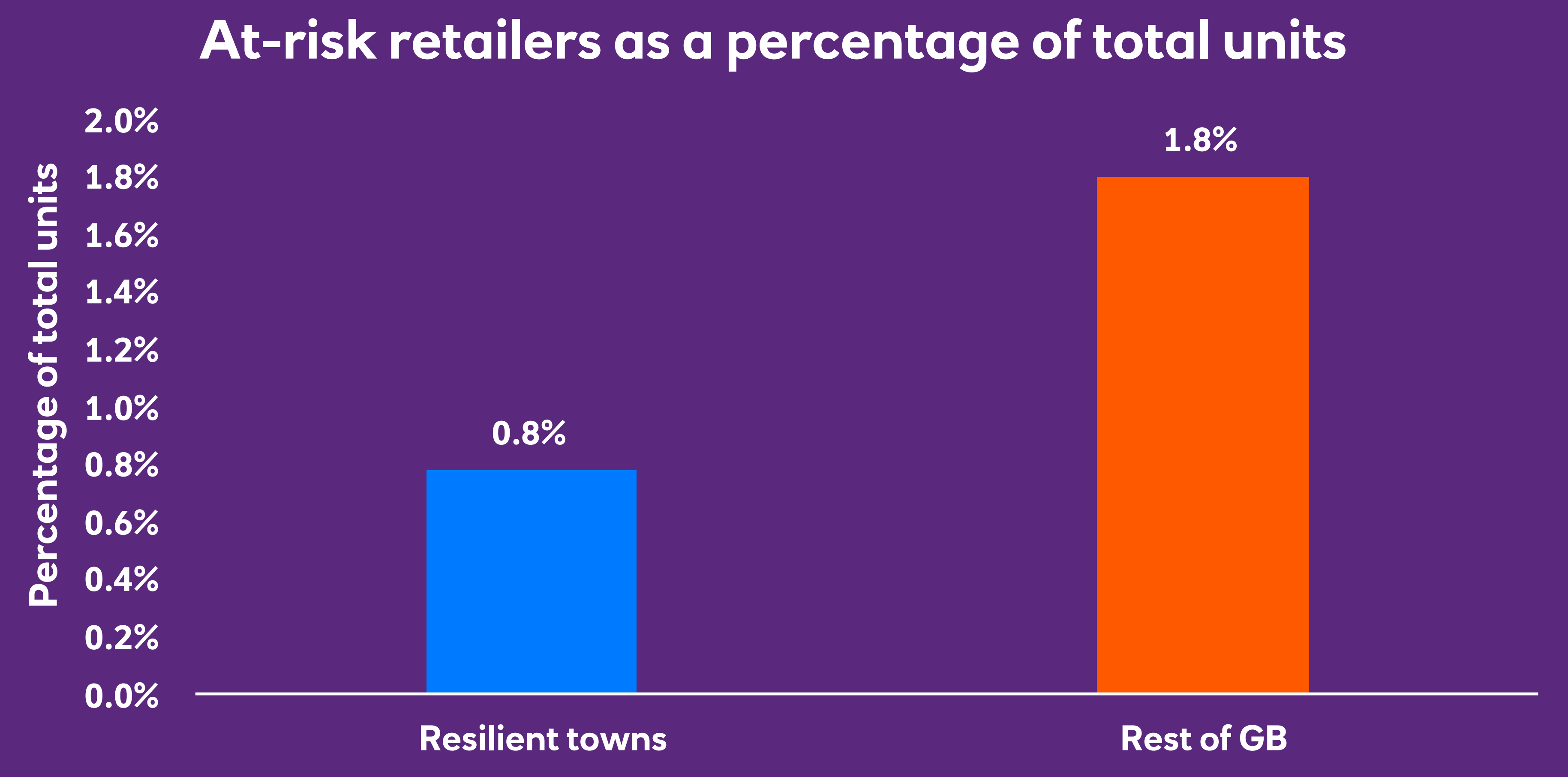

Figure 17: Percentage of total units occupied by at-risk retailers across the top 60 resilient towns compared with the GB average. (Source: Local Data Company).

Chapter 3 | Learning from resilient locations

Retail mix - quality of offer

Assessing the quality of offer in a town centre by value, mass or premium can provide insight on the profile of the town and what the shopper mission might be. These groupings are used only for comparison goods stores.

Across the top 60 resilient towns, a greater proportion of units are classified as value retailers.

With economic uncertainty and the pandemic leaving many without jobs or on reduced incomes, value retailers were able to cater for a price-conscious consumer.

The resilient towns had fewer mass retailers – this segment was impacted the most by CVA's and administration activity due to the sheer number of brands competing within this market.

However, there were resilient towns with a premium offer, such as Twickenham, which we explore further on in this report as a case study.

Across the top 60 resilient towns, a greater proportion of units are classified as value retailers.

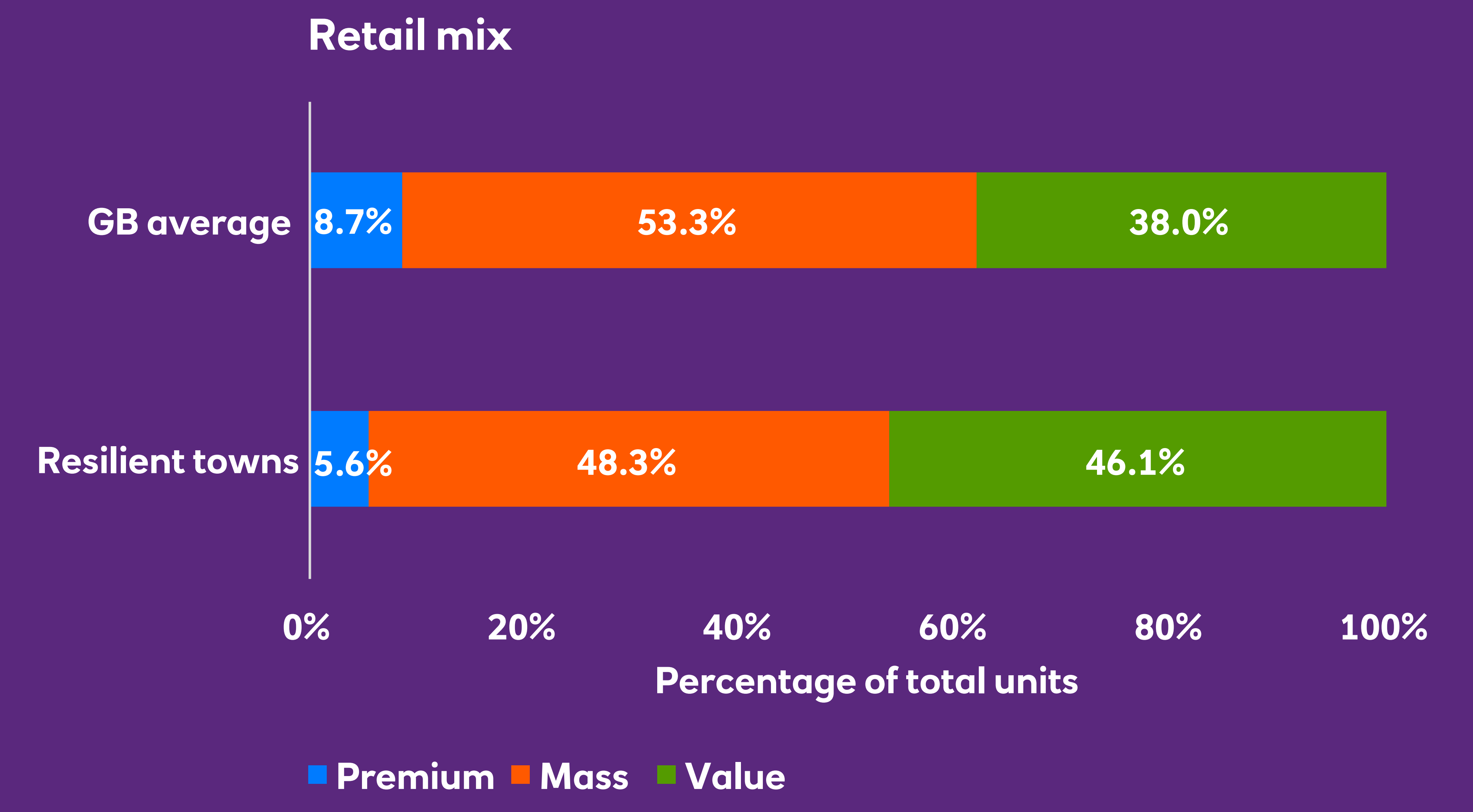

Figure 18: Retail mix across the top 60 resilient towns compared with the GB average. (Source: Local Data Company)

Chapter 3 | Learning from resilient locations

An increased desire to shop locally has helped to boost convenience categories, with larger chains focusing their efforts on building out online fulfilment capabilities.

Growing/declining categories across resilient towns

Analysis of the fastest growing and declining categories across resilient towns paints a clear picture of the activity supporting these towns to remain relevant to changing consumer needs.

For this research, we've used data on openings and closures since the start of the pandemic in March 2020 to determine net change across different categories.

The fastest-growing category across the resilient towns was cafe and fast food, with a net increase of 64 units across the 60 resilient locations, 214 openings in total at an average of over three new openings per town. Of the 64 additions, 42 were independent operators, while just 22 were multiples.

Chains to open the most sites across the resilient towns were Costa (six), Papa John's (five) and Cake Box (four).

The hairdressing, health and beauty category was the second fastest growing across the resilient towns, with 210 openings and 150 closures leading to a net gain of 60 units.

This sector has a high rate of churn, with 96% of market activity (openings and closures) by independent businesses.

Chains in this category have been unable to compete, which is unexpected given their size and the capital available to support the lengthy periods of enforced closure during the pandemic. After years of growth, this market is at risk of becoming saturated, which will eventually result in closures of underperforming sites.

An increased desire to shop locally has helped to boost convenience categories, with larger chains focusing their efforts on building out online fulfilment capabilities.

Local convenience shops seized the opportunity during the period when customers were facing issues securing online delivery slots from some of the larger supermarkets.

Success is also evident in the low levels of churn in convenience categories compared with the other top five.

Banks were the fastest-declining category across the resilient towns as they continued to shut underperforming sites.

Fashion and general clothing stores also declined across the resilient towns, mirroring the national trend with a net loss of -1,527 units lost across all GB town centres.

Chapter 3 | Learning from resilient locations

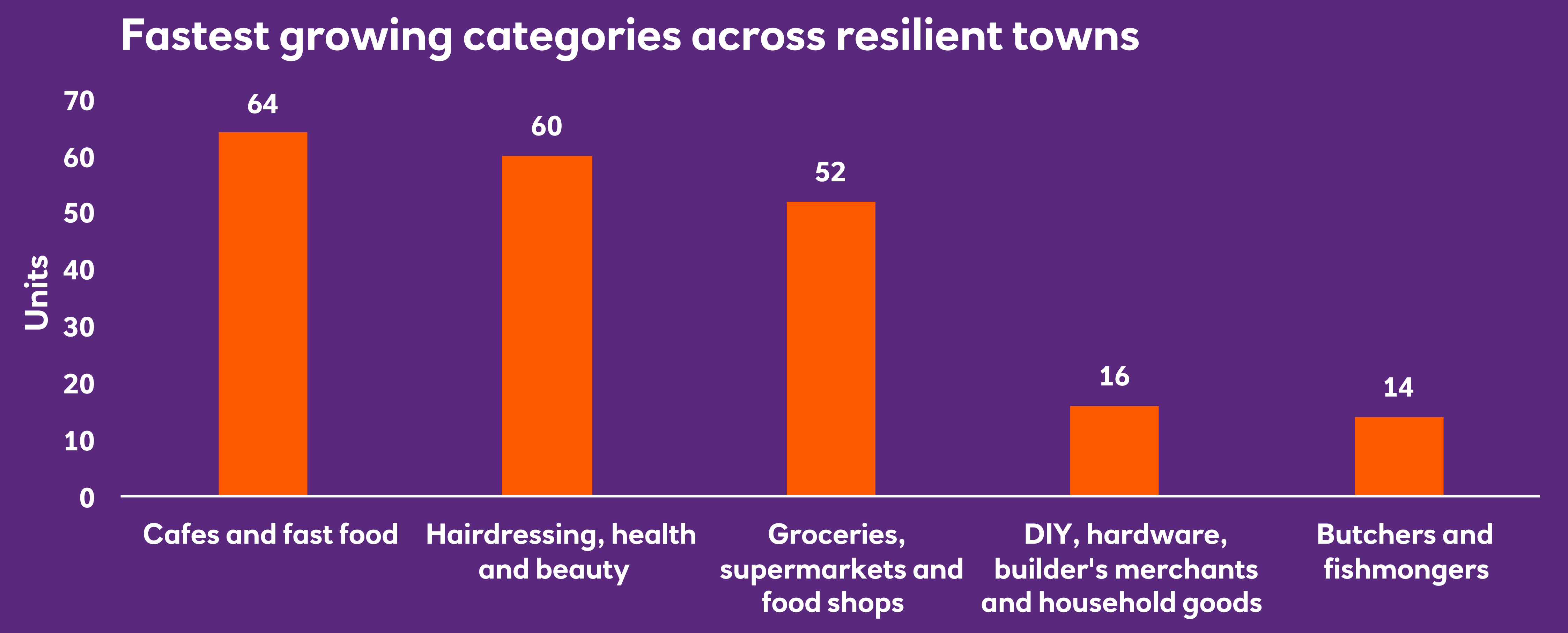

Figure 19: Fastest growing categories across the top 60 resilient towns by net change in units.
(Source: Local Data Company)

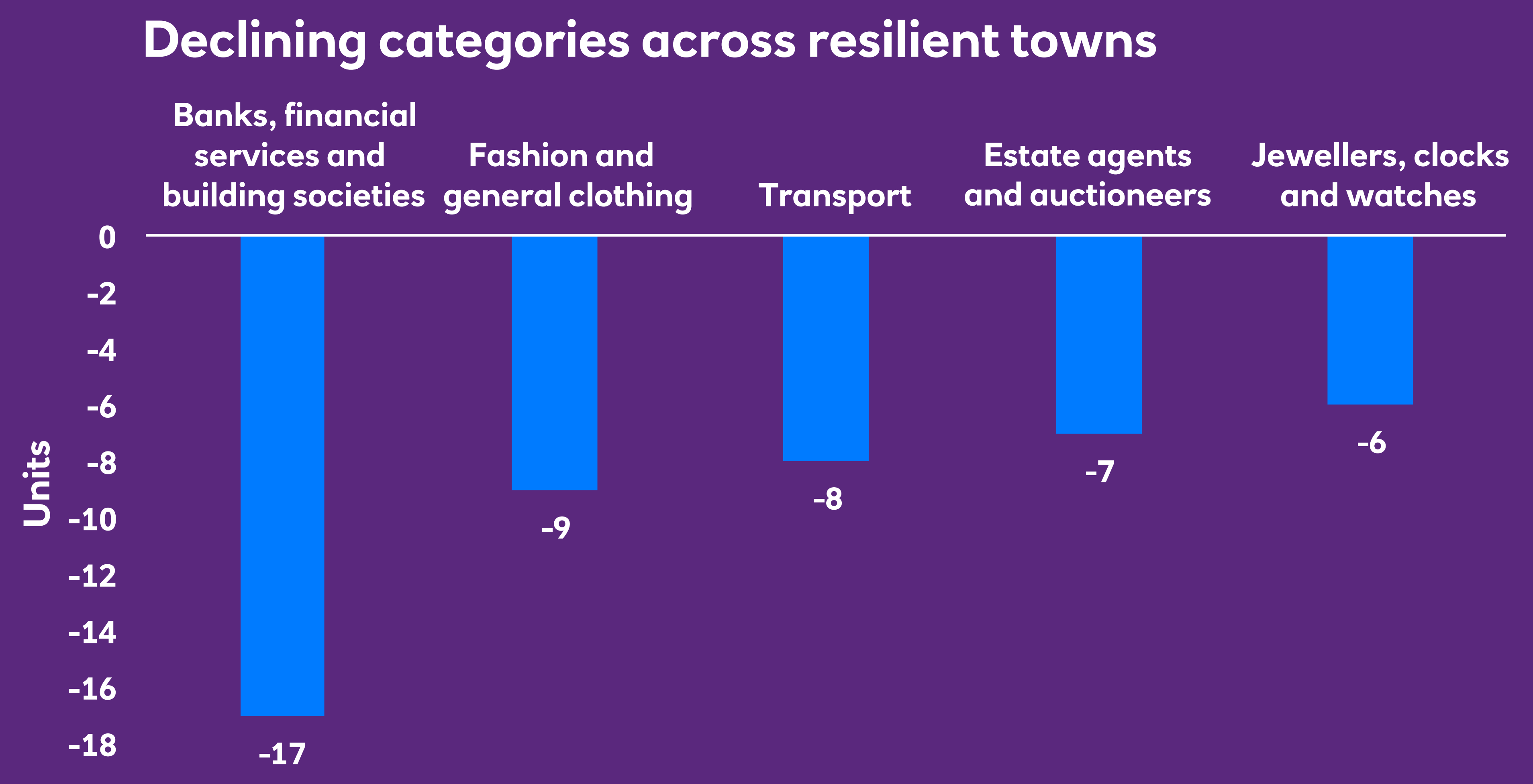

Figure 20: Declining categories across the top 60 resilient towns by net change in units.
(Source: Local Data Company)

Chapter 3 | Learning from resilient locations

Case study towns

Twickenham

Twickenham has been one of the most resilient locations since the start of the pandemic, defying the huge challenges faced by the market and attracting a host of new brands.

A new M&S food-to-go store was planned pre-pandemic at the train station.

Pure Gym opened a new site in the Strawberry Hill area, replacing a unit that had been vacant since 2018.

Sainsbury's Local opened a new site near the train station, opening at the bottom of a residential block.

German Doner Kebab, one of the fastest growing food takeaway brands across GB, also opened in Twickenham, with it looking to take advantage of the boom in takeaway and delivery.

It opened a large unit, taking up a former Benson for Beds site that closed after the brand fell into administration in June 2020.

This quick take-up of vacated space has been key in keeping Twickenham's vacancy rate low at 7.1%, less than half of the GB average of 14.5%.

Twickenham is less exposed to comparison goods units, specifically chain fashion shops, with nearby Richmond the main fashion destination for the catchment.

This insulated the town centre from major retail casualties during the pandemic.

Longsight, Manchester

Vacancy in Longsight has decreased during the pandemic, falling from 11.8% in July 2019 to 3.6% in May 2021.

This remarkable turnaround has been driven almost solely by the independent market in the area, with 78% of total units independently run.

A mix of categories have opened, with two new fast food takeaway shops including Kebabish Original, the only chain opening.

Other openings are geared towards providing for the local Asian-Pakistani catchment. This was evident in the opening of Asian restaurants, fabric shops and ethnic convenience stores.

The area also experienced an increase in estate agents, as Manchester city-based residents moved out of the centre, facilitated by the move to working from home.

Nearby Withington had a similar boost as independent businesses opened in the hope of attracting local commuters.

Conclusion

This report provides occupiers with a detailed overview of the GB retail and leisure market, providing a critical appraisal of the last five years, during which the market has been through seismic change.

Several shocks have created a greater need for granular and accurate data to support location strategy and planning.

This report provides occupiers with a guide to navigating this journey, looking at the success factors that have made some locations more resilient.

It presents examples of regeneration and investments that have helped to rebuild our high streets, shopping centres and retail parks, showcasing the importance of physical retail in our future cities and towns.

Methodology

- The Local Data Company visited more than 3,300 towns and cities (retail centres and government defined retail core), retail parks and shopping centres across England, Scotland and Wales. Each premises was visited and its occupancy status recorded as occupied, vacant or demolished.
- Retail type refers to convenience retail, comparison goods and service retail, while leisure refers to leisure destinations, namely entertainment venues, restaurants, bars, pubs and clubs, coffee shops and fast food outlets.
- Each centre has been physically walked and each premises recorded as vacant, occupied or demolished as recorded on the day of survey. Vacant units are units which did not have a trading business at that premise on the day of survey.
- Towns are updated on a six-month to 12-month cycle depending on size and churn, with both a field survey and office research team tracking changes in the local market.
- Independent retailers are business with less than five stores nationwide, and no international presence.
- The GB vacancy rate analyses the top 650 town centres.

Glossary of terms

CLG boundary is the retail core boundary, as defined by Department of Communities and Local Government. This is used by Local Data Company to carry out like for like comparisons between locations.

Bespoke boundary is a boundary that's defined by an end user. In this report, a bespoke boundary has been used for Manchester city centre and its districts.

Stock is the total number of premises available (occupied or vacant). Retail stock is the total number of comparison, convenience and service retail (occupied or vacant).

Leisure stock means all leisure premises.

Retail vacancy is a vacancy rate based on retail stock only.

Leisure vacancy is a vacancy rate based on leisure stock only. All vacancy is the overall vacancy rate for Retail and Leisure stock. Comparison retail is a classification covering all retailers offering non-perishable items. Categories that lie within comparison goods shops are fashion and general clothing; charity and discount stores; electrical goods and home entertainment; furniture shops; department stores; books and stationery; car and motorbike; chemists, toiletries and healthcare; florists and garden; footwear; china and gift shops; jewellers; pet shops, and sporting goods shops.

Convenience retail covers all perishable goods retail. Categories that lie within convenience retail are bakers; butchers and fishmongers; confectionary, tobacco and newsagents; groceries, supermarkets and food shops; off-licences, and petrol filling stations.

Leisure retail classification includes accommodation; bars, pubs and clubs; cafes and fast food; entertainment, and restaurants.

Service retail classification includes auto and accessories; banks, financial services and building societies; employment and post offices; estate agents and auctioneers; hairdressing, health and beauty; household and home; launderettes, dry cleaners and other; locksmiths, clothing alterations and shoe repairs; pawnbroking and cheque cashing, and travel agents and tour operators.

Independent retailer is a fascia with fewer than five units nationally. Multiple retailer is a fascia with five or more units nationally or internationally.

Net change is the number of businesses opening and closing. This is the overall change (openings minus closures).

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