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Titre : UK shoppers to spend 27% less than last year in Boxing Day sales

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Covid pandemic has accelerated shift to home shopping, says Centre for Retail Research

Shoppers are expected to spend 27% less than last year in the Boxing Day sales as many high streets around the country remain closed.

5 A total of £3.2bn is still expected to be rung up by retailers in the UK, but more than half of that will go online, according to a report by the Centre for Retail Research (CRR) compiled for VoucherCodes.

The number of shoppers out and about is expected to be almost half that of last year, according to the analysis firm Springboard, as the pandemic accelerates a trend over the last four years of fewer Britons heading to stores on Boxing Day.

10 "Where stores can open there will be some demand. That will be about an opportunity to get out of the house but I think people will be cautious and stay local," said Diane Wehrle, the head of insight at Springboard, who said she was expecting "the quietest Boxing Day ever".

15 Several parts of England including Sussex, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire will join London and other parts of the south and east of England, including Kent, Essex and Berkshire, in tier 4 restrictions on Boxing Day, meaning "non-essential" retailers selling clothing, toys, furniture and electrical goods will be closed.

High streets in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will also be shut, and Marks & Spencer is joining John Lewis in deciding to remain closed nationwide on Boxing Day this year.

20 Joshua Bamfield, the director of the CRR, said the latest restrictions had "devastated the retail prospects for non-essential retailers in those areas".
He said: "The total spending figure would be even lower except for the fact that shoppers will increasingly turn to online sellers, especially those in tier 4 areas. Online sales are predicted to increase 56% from 2019 to 2020, which is positive in light of everything else."

25 Jace Tyrrell, the chief executive of the New West End Company trade body, which represents retailers in central London, said closures in the capital would wipe £2bn off takings for its members in November and December.

Non-essential stores will be open in major English cities including Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Newcastle and Bristol, but even there retail bosses expect shopper numbers to be down as families are concerned about catching a new virulent strain of the Covid virus.

Boxing Day = holiday after Christmas Day