

Statistical bulletin

# Business insights and impact on the UK economy: 20 May 2021

The impact of the coronavirus pandemic and other events on UK businesses and the economy. Based on responses from the voluntary fortnightly business survey (BICS) about financial performance, workforce, prices, trade, and business resilience.

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## Table of contents

1. [Main points](#)
2. [Other pages in this release](#)
3. [Headline figures](#)
4. [Industry insights](#)
5. [Increase in demand for skills](#)
6. [Comparison with monthly GDP estimates across waves](#)
7. [Exporting and importing challenges](#)
8. [Contact tracing](#)
9. [Movement of goods between Great Britain and Northern Ireland](#)
10. [Business Insights and Conditions Survey data](#)
11. [Glossary](#)
12. [Measuring the data](#)
13. [Related links](#)

# 1 . Main points

- The proportion of businesses currently trading has remained stable, at 83% from mid-April to mid May 2021, and a further 5% of businesses intend to restart trading in the next two weeks.
- The proportion of workforce on furlough leave has further declined to its lowest level in 2021, from 20% in January to 10% at the end of April to early May 2021.
- More currently trading business are experiencing a challenge in importing than in exporting.
- Over three-quarters of the currently trading businesses in the other service activities industry are collecting or intending to collect contact details for contact tracing, compared with 21% of all industries.
- 24% of businesses reported an increase in demand for skills in the last 12 months, and the education industry (private sector and higher education businesses only) reported the greatest increase in demand for soft skills and basic digital skills.

## 2 . Other pages in this release

More commentary on the impacts of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on the UK economy and society is available on the following pages:

- [Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators](#)
- [Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain](#)

### More about economy, business and jobs

- All ONS analysis, summarised in our [economy, business and jobs roundup](#).
- Explore the latest trends in employment, prices and trade in our [economic dashboard](#).
- View [all economic data](#).

## 3 . Headline figures

The data presented here are final results from Wave 30 of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS), which was live for the period 4 to 16 May 2021.

For questions regarding the last two weeks, businesses were asked for their experience for the reference period 19 April to 2 May 2021.

For experimental single site weighted regional estimates up to Wave 26 (8 to 21 March 2021), please see [Understanding the business impacts of local and national restrictions, UK: March 2021](#). An updated single sites article, up to Wave 30, will be published on 25 May 2021.

### Figure 1: Headline figures from the Business Insights and Conditions Survey

## Notes:

1. Final weighted results, Wave 7 to Wave 30 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS).
2. Weighted estimates are available from Wave 7 onwards only. The sample redesign in Wave 7 improves our coverage for the small-sized businesses, allowing for weighted results to be truly reflective of all businesses.
3. Data are plotted in the middle of the two-week period of each wave.
4. Trading status: for presentational purposes, currently trading categories and paused trading categories have been combined.
5. Financial performance: for presentational purposes, decreased turnover categories and increased turnover categories have been combined, and the option "Not sure" has been removed.
6. Business resilience: for presentational purposes, cash reserves categories between zero and three months have been combined, and the option "Not sure" has been removed.
7. Workforce: for presentational purposes, the options "On sick leave or not working because of coronavirus (COVID-19), self-isolation or quarantine", "Made permanently redundant" or "Other" have been removed.
8. Financial performance and Workforce: Businesses were asked for their experiences for the reference period. However, for questions regarding the last two weeks, businesses may respond from the point of completion of the questionnaire.

[Download the data](#)

The percentage of businesses currently trading has remained stable, at 83%, from late April to mid-May 2021. This compares with 84% of businesses currently trading in mid-December 2020 (before the introduction of new coronavirus restrictions) and 71% in early January 2021 when the national lockdowns were announced. A further 5% of businesses intend to restart trading in the next two weeks.

Table 1: With coronavirus restrictions continuing to be relaxed across the UK, an increased percentage of businesses intend to start trading in the next two weeks  
 Current trading status, all businesses, weighted by count, UK, 19 April to 16 May 2021

	<b>Wave 29</b>	<b>Wave 30</b>	<b>Change</b>
<b>Currently trading</b>	82.6%	83.4%	0.8pp
<b>Paused trading but intends to restart in the next two weeks</b>	3.7%	5.1%	1.4pp
<b>Paused trading and does not intend to restart in the next two weeks</b>	10.4%	7.6%	-2.8pp
<b>Permanently ceased trading</b>	3.3%	3.9%	0.6pp

Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Insights and Conditions Survey

#### Notes

1. Final weighted results, Wave 29 and 30 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS).
2. Waves may not sum to 100% because of rounding.

The following data are compared with normal expectations for this time of year:

- the percentage of businesses experiencing a decrease in turnover has remained at 34% in late April to early May 2021 – the joint lowest percentage recorded since comparable estimates began in June 2020
- the percentage of businesses experiencing an increase in turnover is at 15% in late April to early May 2021 – the highest percentage recorded since comparable estimates began in June 2020

The proportion of businesses' workforce on furlough leave has fallen from 20% in January 2021 to 10% in late April to early May 2021, as a result of coronavirus restrictions continuing to be relaxed across the UK. This is the lowest proportion of businesses' workforce on furlough leave this year, and since the UK commenced the third nationwide lockdown.

The 10% of businesses' workforce on furlough leave in mid-April 2021 equates to approximately 2.7 million people. This number is based on multiplying the BICS weighted furlough proportions by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) official statistics eligible employments<sup>1</sup> for only those industries covered by the BICS sample.

Meanwhile, the proportion of currently trading businesses' workforce that has returned from furlough, either to homeworking or to the normal workplace, fully or partially was 18% in late April to early May 2021.

#### Notes for: Headline figures

1. An "employment" in the HMRC CJRS Official Statistics is defined as anyone who meets the scheme criteria set out within the published guidance, and data come from the whole population of HMRC CJRS claims (those applied) and Pay As You Earn (PAYE) Real Time Information systems (RTIs). The assessment of whether a person was employed on the qualifying dates is based on the methodology used for the joint HMRC and ONS statistics release, [Earnings and employment from Pay As You Earn Real Time Information](#).

# 4 . Industry insights

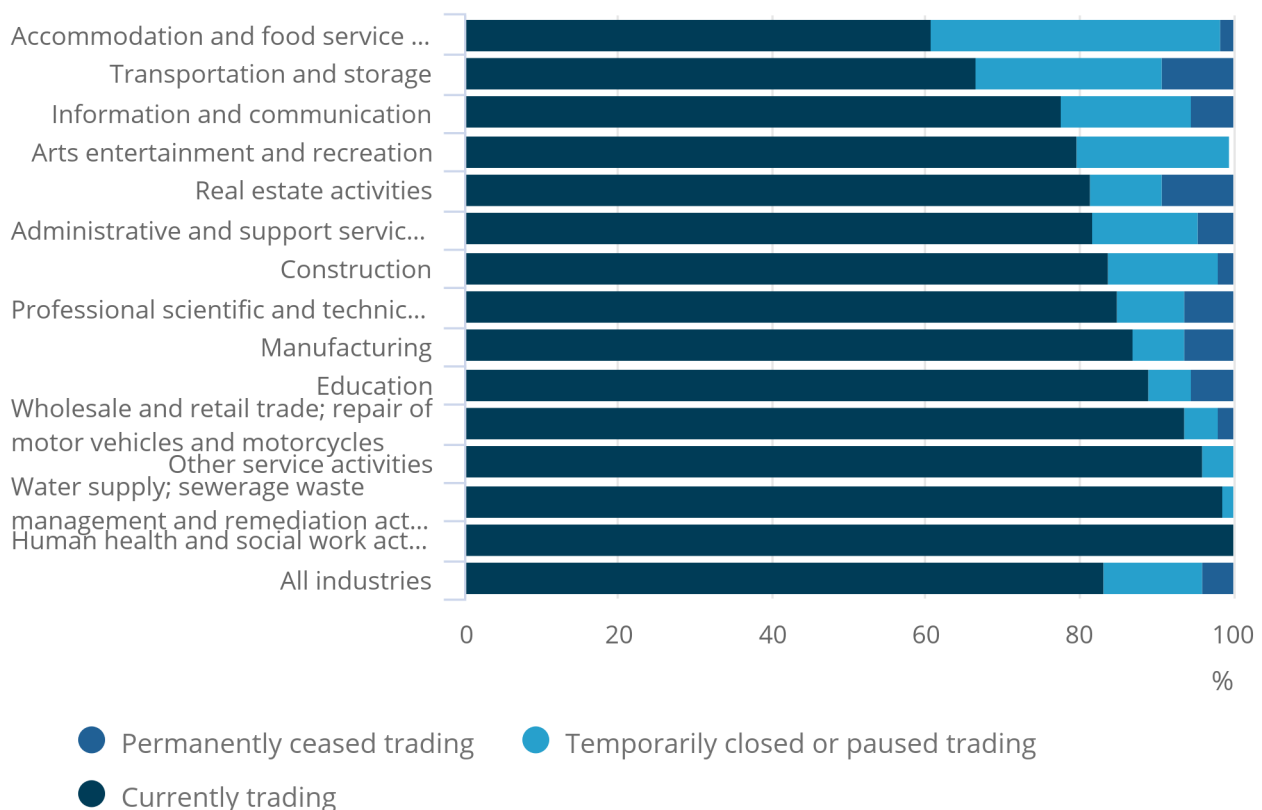
## Trading status

**Figure 2: The accommodation and food service activities industry had the lowest percentage of businesses currently trading, at 61%**

Current trading status, all businesses, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 4 to 16 May 2021

Figure 2: The accommodation and food service activities industry had the lowest percentage of businesses currently trading, at 61%

Current trading status, all businesses, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 4 to 16 May 2021



Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Insights and Conditions Survey

### Notes:

1. Final weighted results, Wave 30 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS).
2. For presentational purposes, currently trading categories and paused trading categories have been combined.
3. Industries may not sum to 100% because of rounding and percentages less than 1% being removed for disclosure purposes.
4. Mining and quarrying has been removed for disclosure purposes, but its total is included in "All industries".

The following data show the largest increases in the percentages of businesses currently trading, from Wave 29 to Wave 30:

- the education industry (private sector and higher education businesses only) has risen from 79% to 89% – because of the re-opening of sports and recreation education and driving school activities
- the other service activities industry (which includes hairdressing and other beauty treatment activities) has risen from 91% to 96%

It should be noted that the definition of currently trading used within the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) refers to the business currently trading in any capacity. It does not cover whether a business has completely reopened to trading at full capacity, experienced before the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic or if the business is operating at a reduced level of capacity but is still trading.

## Financial performance

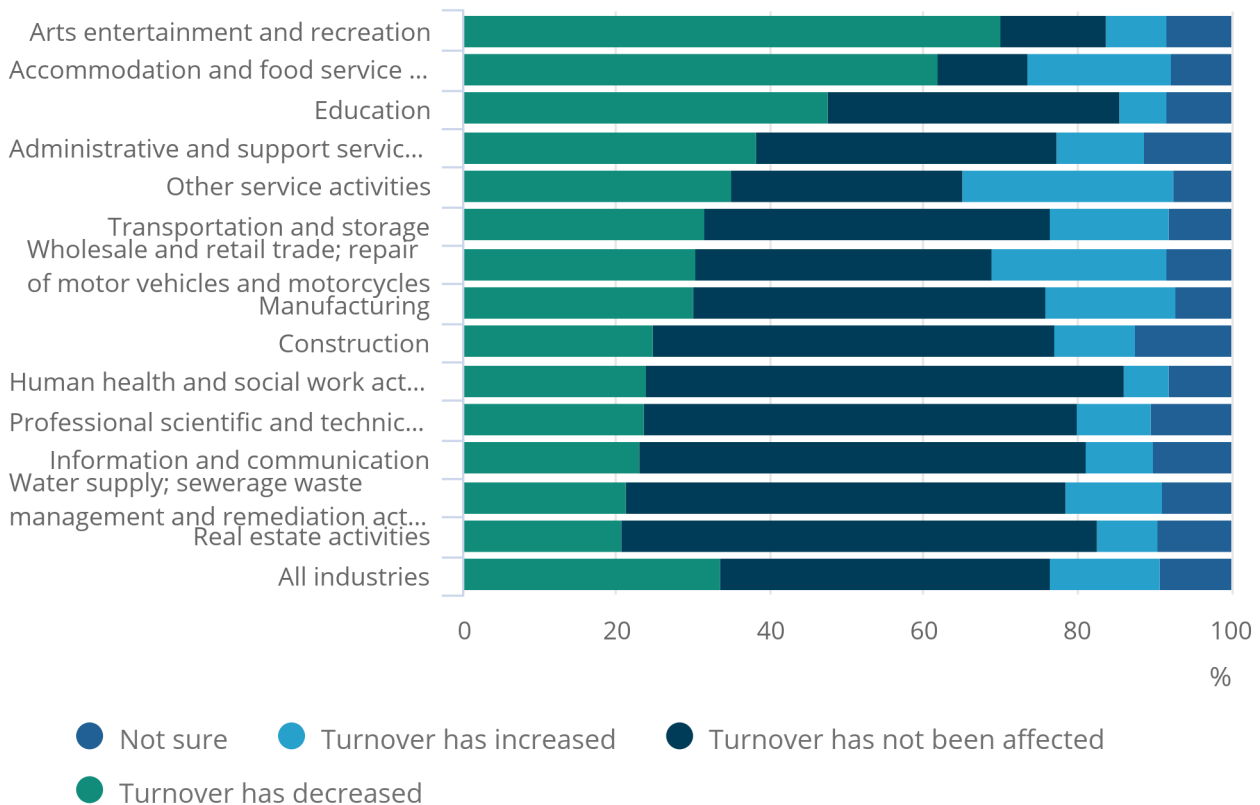


**Figure 3: 70% of businesses in the arts, entertainment and recreation industry reported that their turnover is lower than normal expectations for this time of year**

Impact on turnover, businesses currently trading, broken down by industry, weighted by turnover, UK, 19 April to 2 May 2021

Figure 3: 70% of businesses in the arts, entertainment and recreation industry reported that their turnover is lower than normal expectations for this time of year

Impact on turnover, businesses currently trading, broken down by industry, weighted by turnover, UK, 19 April to 2 May 2021



Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Insights and Conditions Survey

Notes:

1. Final weighted results, Wave 30 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Insights and Conditions Survey.
2. For presentational purposes, decreased turnover categories and increased turnover categories have been combined.
3. Industries may not sum to 100% because of rounding and percentages less than 1% being removed for disclosure purposes.
4. Mining and quarrying has been removed for disclosure purposes, but its total is included in "All industries".
5. Businesses were asked for their experiences for the reference period 19 April to 2 May 2021. However, for questions regarding the last two weeks, businesses may respond from the point of completion of the questionnaire (4 to 16 May 2021).

The following data show the largest movements in the percentages of businesses experiencing a decrease in turnover, compared with normal expectations for this time of year, from Wave 29 to Wave 30:

- the water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities industry has fallen from 28% to 21%
- the arts, entertainment and recreation industry has risen slightly from 67% to 70%
- the education industry has fallen slightly from 50% to 48%

The following data show the largest movements in the percentages of businesses experiencing an increase in turnover, compared with normal expectations for this time of year, from Wave 29 to Wave 30:

- the real estate activities industry has fallen from 13% to 8%
- the human health and social work activities industry has fallen from 11% to 6%
- the transportation and storage industry has risen from 13% to 16%

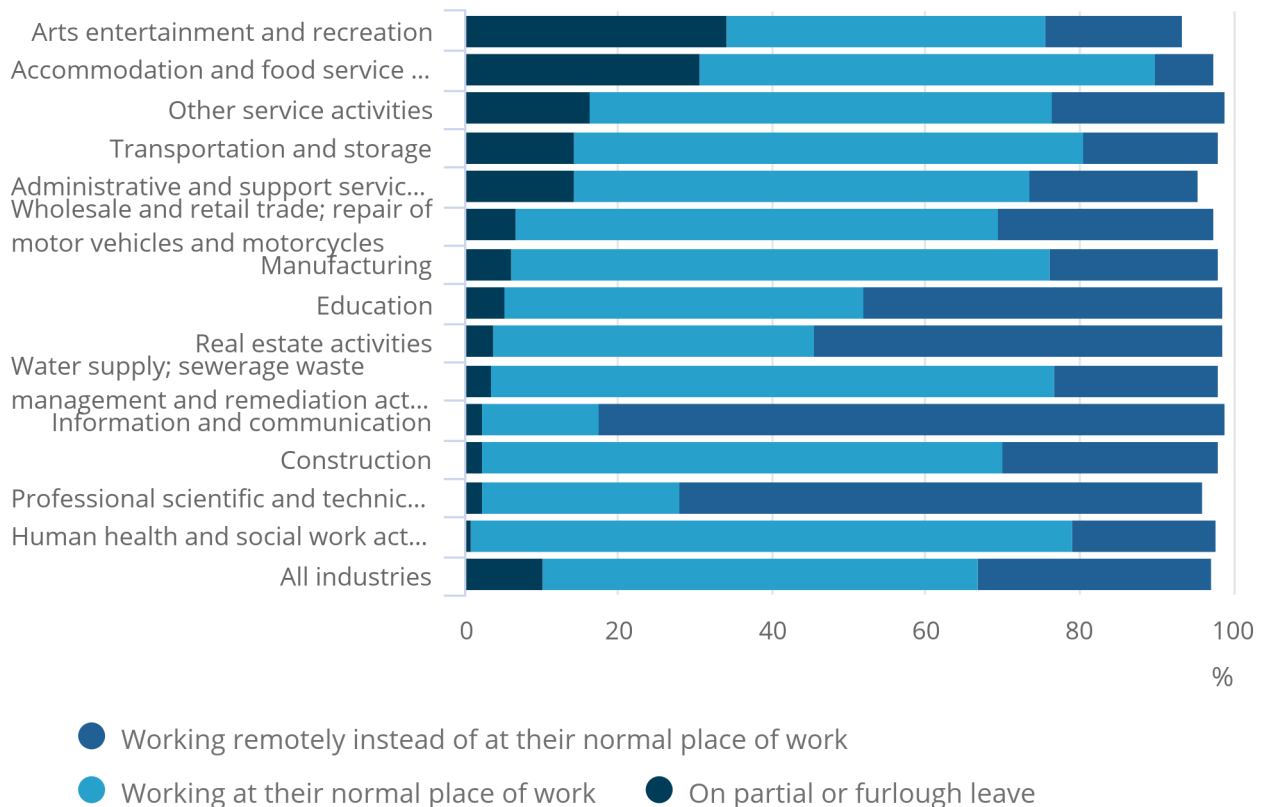
## Workforce

**Figure 4: The arts, entertainment and recreation industry had the highest proportion of its workforce on furlough leave, although this had decreased by 7 percentage points since Wave 29**

Working arrangements, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by industry, weighted by employment, UK, 19 April to 2 May 2021

Figure 4: The arts, entertainment and recreation industry had the highest proportion of its workforce on furlough leave, although this had decreased by 7 percentage points since Wave 29

Working arrangements, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by industry, weighted by employment, UK, 19 April to 2 May 2021



Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Insights and Conditions Survey

**Notes:**

1. Final weighted results, Wave 30 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Insights and Conditions Survey.
2. Industries will not sum to 100% because of rounding, percentages less than 1% being removed for disclosure purposes, and the options "On sick leave or not working because of coronavirus (COVID-19), self-isolation or quarantine", "Made permanently redundant" or "Other" being removed.
3. Mining and quarrying has been removed for disclosure purposes, but its total is included in "All industries".
4. Businesses were asked for their experiences for the reference period 19 April to 2 May 2021. However, for questions regarding the last two weeks, businesses may respond from the point of completion of the questionnaire (4 to 16 May 2021).

The following data show the largest movements in the proportions of businesses' workforce on furlough leave from Wave 29 to Wave 30:

- the accommodation and food service activities industry has fallen from 38% to 31% – mainly because of the re-opening of food and beverage service activities
- the arts, entertainment and recreation industry has fallen from 40% to 34% – mainly because of the re-opening of sports facilities
- the other service activities industry (which includes hairdressing, other beauty treatment activities and funeral activities) has fallen from 22% to 17%
- the wholesale and retail trade industry has fallen from 11% to 7%

In addition to asking where the proportion of businesses' workforce were in the last two weeks, the BICS also asks not permanently ceased trading businesses:

“In the next two weeks, approximately what percentage of your workforce will: move from working to furlough or return to the workplace or from furlough?”

Businesses may interpret this question as a proportion of all their staff or as a proportion of those on furlough leave. The proportions in Table 2 do not therefore directly relate to the proportions of staff on furlough leave, but do allow for comparison between industries.

Table 2: The accommodation and food service activities industry expects the highest proportion of its workforce to return from furlough to the normal workplace in the next two weeks

Expected workforce movements in the next two weeks, businesses not permanently stopped trading, weighted by employment, UK, 4 to 16 May 2021

Industry	Return from furlough to the normal workplace, either fully or partially	Return from furlough to homeworking, either fully or partially	Return to the workplace from homeworking or partially	Move from working to furlough, either fully or partially
<b>Accommodation and food service activities</b>	36.2%	1.7%	2.9%	2.3%
<b>Arts, entertainment and recreation</b>	28.8%	*	4.7%	4.5%
<b>Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles</b>	20.7%	3.4%	4.0%	*
<b>Administrative and support service activities</b>	12.2%	6.6%	6.6%	6.3%
<b>Other service activities</b>	9.5%	*	*	*
<b>All industries</b>	13.1%	2.2%	5.2%	2.3%

Source: Office for National Statistics - Business Insights and Conditions Survey

#### Notes

1. Final weighted results Wave 30 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS).
2. Industries may not sum to 100% because businesses did not have to provide percentages up to 100%.

## 5 . Increase in demand for skills

Businesses were also asked which, if any, skills they have experienced an increase in demand for in the last 12 months.

Of all businesses, 24% reported an increase in demand for skills in the last 12 months.

Of not permanently ceased trading businesses:

- 11% reported an increased demand for soft skills
- 11% reported an increased demand for basic digital skills
- 10% reported an increased demand for management or leadership skills
- 8% reported an increased demand for advanced digital skills

The education industry (private sector and higher education businesses only) reported the greatest increase in demand for soft skills and basic digital skills, at 34% and 25%, respectively. The water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities industry, and information and communication industry reported the greatest demand for advanced digital skills, both at 22%.

## 6 . Comparison with monthly GDP estimates across waves

Figure 5 shows how the fortnightly turnover estimates from the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) compare with the published UK monthly gross domestic product (GDP) estimates.

There are conceptual and scope differences between these two estimates. The BICS calculation is based on a net balance approach, using the final unweighted BICS results for Waves 1 to 6 and final weighted BICS estimates for Wave 7 onwards, using the turnover variable.

### Figure 5: Comparing the fortnightly net turnover balance estimates from BICS with the UK monthly GDP estimates

Net balances of businesses currently trading against monthly GDP estimates, UK, 1 February 2020 to 2 May 2021

#### Notes:

1. Final unweighted results, Wave 1 to Wave 6, and final weighted results, Wave 7 to Wave 30, of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS); businesses currently trading.
2. Weighted net balances have been calculated from Wave 7 onwards only. The sample redesign in Wave 7 improves our coverage for the small-sized businesses, allowing for weighted results to be truly reflective of all businesses.
3. Net turnover balance is given by subtracting the percentage of businesses reporting a decrease in turnover, from the percentage of businesses who reported an increase in turnover, then scaled up using a scaling factor for visual purposes. GDP and BICS estimates use different scales (one is an index, the other percentage points). Hence, to align them onto the same graph, we apply a scaling factor to BICS net balances so users can easily compare these two related trends.
4. [Monthly gross domestic product \(GDP\) bulletins are available.](#)
5. BICS data are plotted in the middle of the two-week period of each wave and GDP data are plotted in the middle of the reference month.

[Download the data](#)

## 7 . Exporting and importing challenges

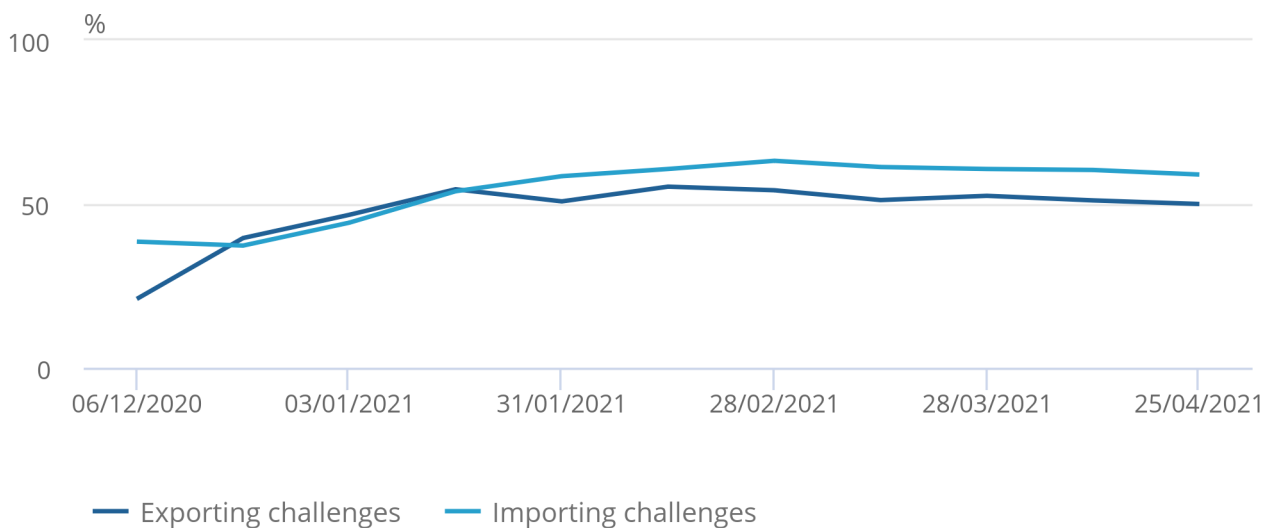
Of currently trading businesses, 10% had exported and 12% had imported in the last 12 months and reported how their exporting or importing compared with normal expectations for this time of year. These businesses were then asked about the challenges they had experienced with exporting or importing in the last two weeks.

### Figure 6: More currently trading business are experiencing a challenge in importing than in exporting

Proportion of businesses currently trading that are experiencing a challenge in importing or exporting, who had exported or imported in the last 12 months and who reported how exports or imports compared with normal expectations, weighted by count, UK, 19 April to 2 May 2021

#### Figure 6: More currently trading business are experiencing a challenge in importing than in exporting

Proportion of businesses currently trading that are experiencing a challenge in importing or exporting, who had exported or imported in the last 12 months and who reported how exports or imports compared with normal expectations, weighted by count, UK, 19 April to 2 May 2021



Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Insights and Conditions Survey

#### Notes:

1. Final weighted results, Waves 20 to 30 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS).
2. Caution should be taken when interpreting these results based on the specific routing of this question meaning that only a small number of businesses responded.
3. Businesses were asked for their experiences for the reference period for each wave, however, for questions regarding the last two weeks, businesses may respond from the point of completion of the questionnaire.
4. Data are plotted in the middle of the two week reference period.



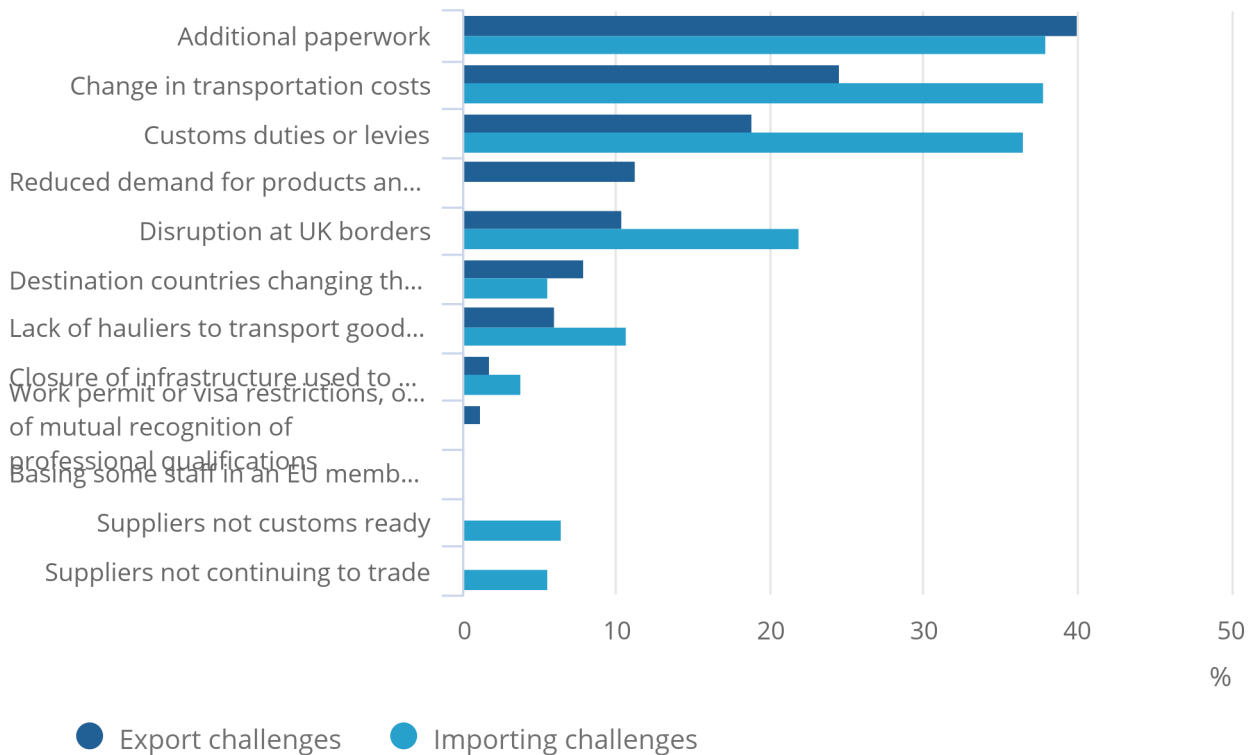
The proportion of currently trading businesses experiencing a challenge in importing or exporting increased from December 2020 until January 2021, to be over 50%, and have then remained broadly stable until May 2021. A greater proportion of businesses are experiencing an importing challenge than an exporting challenge.

**Figure 7: The main challenge reported by currently trading businesses for exporting and importing was additional paperwork**

Exporting and importing challenges, businesses currently trading, who had exported or imported in the last 12 months and who reported how exports or imports compared with normal expectations, weighted by count, UK, 19 April to 2 May 2021

Figure 7: The main challenge reported by currently trading businesses for exporting and importing was additional paperwork

Exporting and importing challenges, businesses currently trading, who had exported or imported in the last 12 months and who reported how exports or imports compared with normal expectations, weighted by count, UK, 19 April to 2 May 2021



Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Insights and Conditions Survey

Notes:

1. Final weighted results, Wave 30 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS).
2. Rows will not sum to 100% because businesses could select multiple options.
3. Caution should be taken when interpreting these results based on the specific routing of this question meaning that only a small number of businesses responded.
4. Businesses were asked for their experiences for the reference period 19 April to 2 May 2021. However, for questions regarding the last two weeks, businesses may respond from the point of completion of the questionnaire (4 to 16 May 2021).

The proportion of currently trading businesses' experiencing the top three challenges in importing and exporting has remained broadly stable between Wave 29 and Wave 30.

Further industry and size band breakdowns of trade questions are available in the [dataset](#).

## 8 . Contact tracing

As coronavirus restrictions are easing across the UK, businesses were asked if they were collecting, or are intending to collect, contact details for the purpose of contact tracing purposes, and how they were planning on doing this.

Table 3: Over three-quarters of the other service activities industry are collecting or intending to collect contact details

Collecting or intending to collect contact details for contact tracing, businesses currently trading, weighted by count, UK, 4 to 16 May 2021

Industry	Yes	No	Not sure	Not applicable
<b>Other service activities</b>	79%	6%	6%	9%
<b>Accommodation and food service activities</b>	70%	8%	6%	16%
<b>Education</b>	45%	13%	18%	24%
<b>Human health and social work activities</b>	34%	21%	6%	39%
<b>Arts, entertainment and recreation</b>	34%	20%	3%	44%
<b>Manufacturing</b>	27%	38%	11%	24%
<b>Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles</b>	21%	43%	12%	24%
<b>Administrative and support service activities</b>	14%	32%	15%	39%
<b>Construction</b>	12%	32%	18%	39%
<b>Professional, scientific and technical activities</b>	12%	37%	10%	42%
<b>Transportation and storage</b>	11%	40%	13%	36%
<b>Real estate activities</b>	9%	22%	13%	56%
<b>Water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities</b>	7%	55%	8%	30%
<b>Information and communication</b>	6%	35%	6%	53%
<b>All industries</b>	21%	33%	11%	35%

Source: Office for National Statistics - Business Insights and Conditions Survey

### Notes

1. Final weighted results, Wave 30 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS).
2. Mining and quarrying has been removed for disclosure purposes, but its total is included in "All Industries".

Of currently trading businesses:

- 21% are collecting or intending to collect contact details for contact tracing
- 33% are not collecting or intending to collect contact details for contact tracing
- 11% are not sure if they are collecting or intending to collect contact details for contact tracing
- 35% are not collecting or intending to collect contact details for contact tracing as it is not applicable to their business

Table 4: 77% of currently trading businesses that are collecting details for contact tracing in the accommodation and food service activities industry are using the official NHS QR code posters

How businesses are collecting or intending to collect contact details for contact tracing, businesses currently trading and collecting or intending to collect information, weighted by count, UK, 4 to 16 May 2021

Industry description	Advanced booking systems	Commercial QR codes	Digital records	Paper records	Official NHS QR code posters	Not sure
<b>Accommodation and food service activities</b>	30%	21%	10%	62%	77%	4%
<b>Arts, entertainment and recreation</b>	56%	24%	26%	71%	64%	*
<b>Other service activities</b>	35%	25%	18%	58%	61%	0%
<b>All industries</b>	25%	16%	18%	52%	44%	4%

Source: Office for National Statistics - Business Insights and Conditions Survey

#### Notes

1. Final weighted results, Wave 30 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS).
2. Rows will not sum to 100% as businesses could select multiple options.

Of currently trading businesses who are collecting or intending to collect contact details for contact tracing:

- 52% are using paper records
- 44% are using the official NHS QR code posters
- 25% are using advanced booking systems

## 9 . Movement of goods between Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Businesses that are currently trading were asked whether they had sent goods between Great Britain (GB) and Northern Ireland (NI) in the last 12 months.

Across all industries, 5% of currently trading businesses had sent goods from GB to NI, and 2% from NI to GB in the last 12 months.

These businesses were asked a series of questions about their experience sending these goods over a two-week reference period (19 April to 2 May 2021).

Of businesses currently trading and who had sent goods from GB to NI in the last 12 months, 86% reported that the main route they used for sending these goods was from GB directly to NI. Of the businesses currently trading and that had sent goods in the last 12 months and last two weeks, the majority of businesses had not made any changes to their main route for sending these goods, at 92%.

Table 5 shows how the volume of goods being sent from GB to NI and NI to GB has changed in the last two weeks, reported by businesses that had sent, or intended to send, goods in the last two weeks.

Table 5: A greater proportion of businesses have reported a decrease in the volume of goods being sent from Great Britain to Northern Ireland, compared with Northern Ireland to Great Britain  
Change in volume of sending goods between Great Britain and Northern Ireland, businesses currently trading and have sent goods in the last 12 months and two weeks, UK, 19 April to 2 May 2021

Route	Volume has increased	Volume has stayed the same	Volume has decreased	Have stopped sending goods	Not sure
<b>GB to NI</b>	1.1%	58.2%	27.2%	*	3.2%
<b>NI to GB</b>	11.6%	46.5%	11.1%	*	3.0%

Source: Office for National Statistics - Business Insights and Conditions Survey

### Notes

1. Final weighted results, Wave 30 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS).
2. Rows may not sum to 100% because of rounding, and the option "not applicable" being removed.
3. Caution should be taken when interpreting these results based on the specific routing of this question meaning that only a small number of businesses responded.
4. Businesses were asked for their experiences for the reference period 19 April to 2 May 2021. However, for questions regarding the last two weeks, businesses may respond from the point of completion of the questionnaire (4 to 16 May 2021).

Of the businesses that are currently trading and have sent goods in the last 12 months and last two weeks from GB to NI, and changed volume, the reasons given are:

- the coronavirus pandemic, at 64%
- increased costs, at 34%
- decreased demand for goods, at 28%
- increased delays, at 14%

Additional data on these questions and businesses' experiences sending goods between Great Britain and Northern Ireland, including full industry breakdowns, are available in the [accompanying dataset](#).

## 10 . Business Insights and Conditions Survey data

### [Business insights and impact on the UK economy](#)

Dataset | Released 20 May 2021

Weighted estimates from the voluntary fortnightly business survey (BICS) about financial performance, workforce, prices, trade, and business resilience.

This dataset includes additional information collected as part of the survey not presented in this publication. This includes breakdowns by industry (weighted data), sizeband (weighted data) and region (unweighted data), as well as the survey dates and log of new questions added.

These data are not [official statistics](#) but have been developed to deliver timely indicators to help understand the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and other events in a timely way.

### Access to microdata

The BICS microdata for Waves 1 to 29 can now be accessed via the [Secure Research Service \(SRS\)](#). The BICS microdata for each wave are released on a rolling basis in the week following the publication of each wave.

The microdata are confidentialised and do not disclose any specific business.

Only researchers accredited under the [Digital Economy Act](#) are able to access data in the SRS. You can apply for accreditation through the [Research Accreditation Service \(RAS\)](#). You need to have relevant academic or work experience and must successfully attend and complete the assessed Safe Researcher Training.

To conduct analysis with microdata from the SRS, a project application must be submitted to the [Research Accreditation Panel \(RAP\)](#). To access the SRS, you must also work for an organisation with an Assured Organisational Connectivity agreement in place.

## 11 . Glossary

### Coronavirus

Coronaviruses are a family of viruses that cause disease in people and animals. They can cause the common cold or more severe diseases, such as COVID-19.

## COVID-19

COVID-19 is the name used to refer to the disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which is a type of coronavirus. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) takes COVID-19 to mean presence of SARS-CoV-2 with or without symptoms.

## EU exit transition period

The EU exit transition is the period agreed in the UK-EU Withdrawal Agreement in which the UK is no longer a member of the EU but continues to be subject to EU rules and remains a member of the single market and customs union. When the UK left the EU on 31 January 2020, it entered the transition period. The transition period came to an end on 31 December 2020.

## Furlough

Furlough is a temporary absence from work allowing workers to keep their job while the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continues.

## Reporting unit

The business unit to which questionnaires are sent is called the reporting unit. The response from the reporting unit can cover the enterprise as a whole or parts of the enterprise identified by lists of local units.

## 12 . Measuring the data

More quality and methodology information on strengths, limitations, appropriate uses, and how the data were created is available in the [BICS QMI](#), published 20 May 2021.

The Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) is voluntary and the results are [experimental](#).

Table 6: Sample and response rates for Waves 28, 29 and 30 of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey

Wave	22 April 2021 Publication Wave 28	6 May 2021 Publication Wave 29	20 May 2021 Publication Wave 30
<b>Sample</b>	39,002	38,919	38,834
<b>Response</b>	9,857	9,744	9,547
<b>Rate</b>	25.3%	25.0%	24.6%

Source: Office for National Statistics - Business Insights and Conditions Survey

### Notes

1. Final weighted results, Wave 30 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS).

The results are based on responses from the voluntary fortnightly BICS, which captures businesses' views on financial performance, workforce, prices, trade, and business resilience. The Wave 30 survey was live for the period 4 to 16 May 2021. For questions regarding the last two weeks, businesses were asked for their experience for the reference period 19 April to 2 May 2021. The [survey questions](#) are available.

## Coverage

The Monthly Business Survey (MBS) covers the UK for production and only Great Britain for services. The RSI and Construction are Great Britain-focused. Therefore, the BICS will be UK for production-based industries but Great Britain for the other elements of the economy covered.

The industries covered are:

- non-financial services (includes professional, scientific, communication, administrative, transport, accommodation and food, private health and education, and entertainment services)
- distribution (includes retail, wholesale and motor trades)
- production (includes manufacturing, oil and gas extraction, energy generation and supply, and water and waste management)
- construction (includes civil engineering, housebuilding, property development and specialised construction trades such as plumbers, electricians and plasterers)

The following industries are excluded from the survey:

- agriculture
- public administration and defence
- public provision of education and health
- finance and insurance

For more information on the methodology of producing the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (such as [weighting](#)), please see the [previous bulletin](#).



## 13 . Related links

### [Understanding the business impacts of local and national restrictions, UK: March 2021](#)

Article | Released 30 March 2021

Experimental estimates from the voluntary fortnightly business survey (BICS), for single site businesses only, on topics such as trading status, financial performance, workforce and business resilience. Geographical breakdowns include country, regional and local authority levels.

### [Business Impact of Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Survey: preliminary weighted results](#)

Article | Released 14 September 2020

Early estimates of weighted responses from the voluntary fortnightly business survey, focusing on businesses' responses on how turnover, workforce and trading status have been affected in two-week reference periods, from Wave 7 (1 to 14 June 2020) to Wave 12 (10 to 23 August 2020).

### [Business Insights and Conditions Survey, analysis over time, UK: 24 August 2020 to 4 April 2021](#)

Article | Released 6 May 2021

These indicators and analysis are based on selected responses over time from the new voluntary fortnightly business survey (BICS), which captures businesses' responses on how their turnover, trade and business resilience have been affected in the two-week reference period. The data relate to the period 24 August 2020 to 4 April 2021 (Wave 13 to Wave 27).

### [Business Impact of Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Survey, expectation responses over time, UK: 1 June to 23 August 2020 \(Waves 6 to 11\)](#)

Article | Released 8 September 2020

Turnover expectations of the same businesses over time, using the final results of Waves 6 to 11 of the voluntary fortnightly BICS, covering the period 1 June to 23 August.

### [Coronavirus and the experiences of UK businesses, textual analysis: March 2020 to July 2020](#)

Article | Released 6 August 2020

Analysis of qualitative responses from selected questions from the fortnightly Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS), which provides further insights on individual business experiences over the course of the pandemic so far.

### [Comparison of furloughed jobs data, UK: March 2020 to January 2021](#)

Article | Released 5 March 2021

An overview of the similarities and differences between the fortnightly Business Insights and Conditions Survey furlough estimates and HMRC's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme statistics, over the period 23 March 2020 to 7 February 2021.