

Statistical bulletin

Business insights and impact on the UK economy: 4 November 2021

The impact of challenges facing the economy and other events on UK businesses. Based on responses from the voluntary fortnightly business survey (BICS) to deliver real-time information to help assess issues affecting UK businesses and economy, including financial performance, workforce, trade, and business resilience.

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Table of contents

1. [Main points](#)
2. [Headline figures and industry insights](#)
3. [Extended workforce](#)
4. [Safety measures](#)
5. [Supply chains and stock levels](#)
6. [Prices](#)
7. [Wholesale gas prices](#)
8. [Business Insights and Conditions Survey data](#)
9. [Glossary](#)
10. [Measuring the data](#)
11. [Strengths and limitations](#)
12. [Related links](#)

1 . Main points

- Of businesses not permanently stopped trading, 13% reported having vacancies that were more difficult to fill in the last month (broadly stable compared with September 2021), while 61% reported they had no vacancies to fill (a decrease of 6% from September 2021); however, for October 2021, these figures were 41% and 25% for businesses with 10 employees or more, respectively.
- Across all industries, 14% of businesses not permanently stopped trading reported they had experienced a shortage of workers; the accommodation and food service activities industry was most affected at 38%; this industry also reported the highest percentages for difficulties filling vacancies and staff turnover.
- In late October 2021, following the end of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), it was estimated 87% of furloughed employees returned to work, 3% were made permanently redundant, 3% voluntarily left their role and 8% were classified as "other".
- Nearly two-fifths (37%) of currently trading businesses reported the prices of materials, goods or services bought in the last month had increased by more than normal price fluctuations, while 15% reported prices of materials, goods or services sold had increased; both had increased compared with early September 2021 by 7 and 4 percentage points, respectively.
- In the last month, approximately one in six businesses were either not able to get the materials, goods or services they needed from within the UK, or changed suppliers or found alternative solutions to do so; this has remained broadly stable since early September 2021.
- Of the businesses who had experienced challenges with UK supply chains over the last month, 63% reported to have experienced major or moderate disruption to their businesses because of these challenges.
- Of businesses not permanently stopped trading, 12% reported an impact because of recent increases in wholesale gas prices on production, and or, suppliers; 2% reported production was affected, 6% reported suppliers were affected, while 4% reported both production and suppliers were affected.

2 . Headline figures and industry insights

The data presented in this bulletin are the final results from Wave 42 of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS), which was live for the period 18 October to 31 October 2021.

For questions regarding the last month, businesses were asked for their experience for the reference period 4 October to 31 October 2021, however, businesses may respond from the point of completion of the questionnaire (18 October to 31 October 2021).

These dates should be kept in mind in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance as the estimates could be affected by both the location of the business and the date on which the business responded.

For experimental single-site weighted regional estimates up to Wave 34 (28 June to 11 July 2021), please see [Understanding the business impacts of local and national restrictions, UK: July 2021](#).

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](#).

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

Notes:

1. Final weighted results, Wave 7 to Wave 42 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS).
2. Trading status: for presentational purposes, currently trading categories and paused trading categories have been combined. From Wave 41, the response options "Currently trading and have been for more than the last two weeks" and "Started trading within the last two weeks after a pause in trading" changed to "Currently fully trading" and "Currently partially trading".
3. Prices: for presentational purposes, the data shows an increase to prices bought and sold compared with normal price fluctuations for this time of year.
4. Intra UK procurement: for presentational purposes, the response options "yes, the business has been able to get the materials, goods or services it needed", "yes, but the business had to change suppliers or find alternative solutions" and "no, the business has not been able to get the materials, goods or services needed" have been condensed.
5. Prices and intra UK procurement: from Wave 42, the question was changed from the "last two weeks" to the "last month". Businesses were asked for their experiences for the reference period; however, businesses may respond from the point of completion of the questionnaire.
6. Data are plotted in the middle of the period of each wave.

[Download the data](#)

The percentage of businesses currently trading was 93% in late October 2021. This compares with 92% in early October 2021.

Businesses not permanently stopped trading were asked how the prices of materials, goods or services bought and sold in the last month compared with normal price fluctuations. Of businesses currently trading, 37% of businesses reported an increase in prices bought and 15% reported an increase in prices sold. Both prices bought and sold have seen an increase since May 2021.

Businesses not permanently stopped trading were asked if they were able to get the materials, goods or services they needed from within the UK over the last month. Results had increased compared with late August 2021:

- 43% reported yes, the business has been able to get the materials, goods or services it needed
- 11% reported yes, but the business had to change suppliers or find alternative solutions
- 7% reported no, the business has not been able to get the materials, goods or services needed

For information on prices bought and sold in the last month compared with normal price fluctuations and intra UK procurement in the last month compared with normal expectations, see [section 6](#).

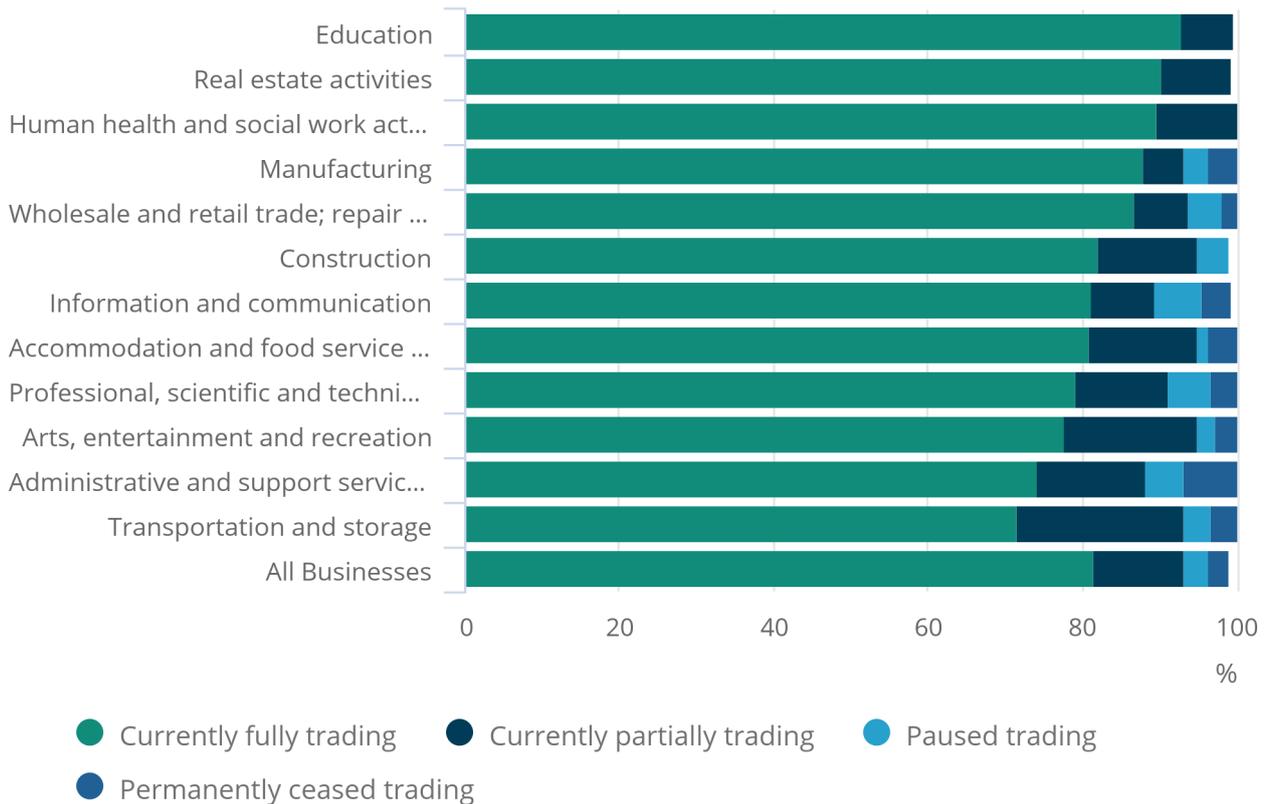
Trading status

Figure 2: The transportation and storage industry reported the lowest percentage of businesses currently fully trading, at 72%

Trading status, all businesses, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 18 October to 31 October 2021

Figure 2: The transportation and storage industry reported the lowest percentage of businesses currently fully trading, at 72%

Trading status, all businesses, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 18 October to 31 October 2021



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

Notes:

1. Final weighted results, Wave 42 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS).
2. Industries may not sum to 100% because of rounding and percentages less than 1% being removed for disclosure purposes.
3. "Mining and quarrying", "water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities" and "other service activities" have been removed for disclosure purposes, but their totals are included in "All industries".
4. The weighted percentage for "permanently ceased trading" can be affected by multiple businesses reporting this option over multiple waves.

The transportation and storage industry reported the lowest percentage currently fully trading at 72%, with 3% temporarily closed or temporarily paused trading.

Overall, across all industries, 93% reported they were currently trading, with 82% of businesses fully trading and 12% partially trading. The human health and social work activities, education (private sector and higher education businesses only) and real estate industries reported the largest percentages of currently trading at 100%.

The definition of "currently trading" used within the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) refers to the business currently trading in any capacity. From October 2021 the currently trading response options cover both whether a business has completely reopened to trading at full capacity, as experienced before the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, and if the business is operating at a reduced level of capacity but is still trading.

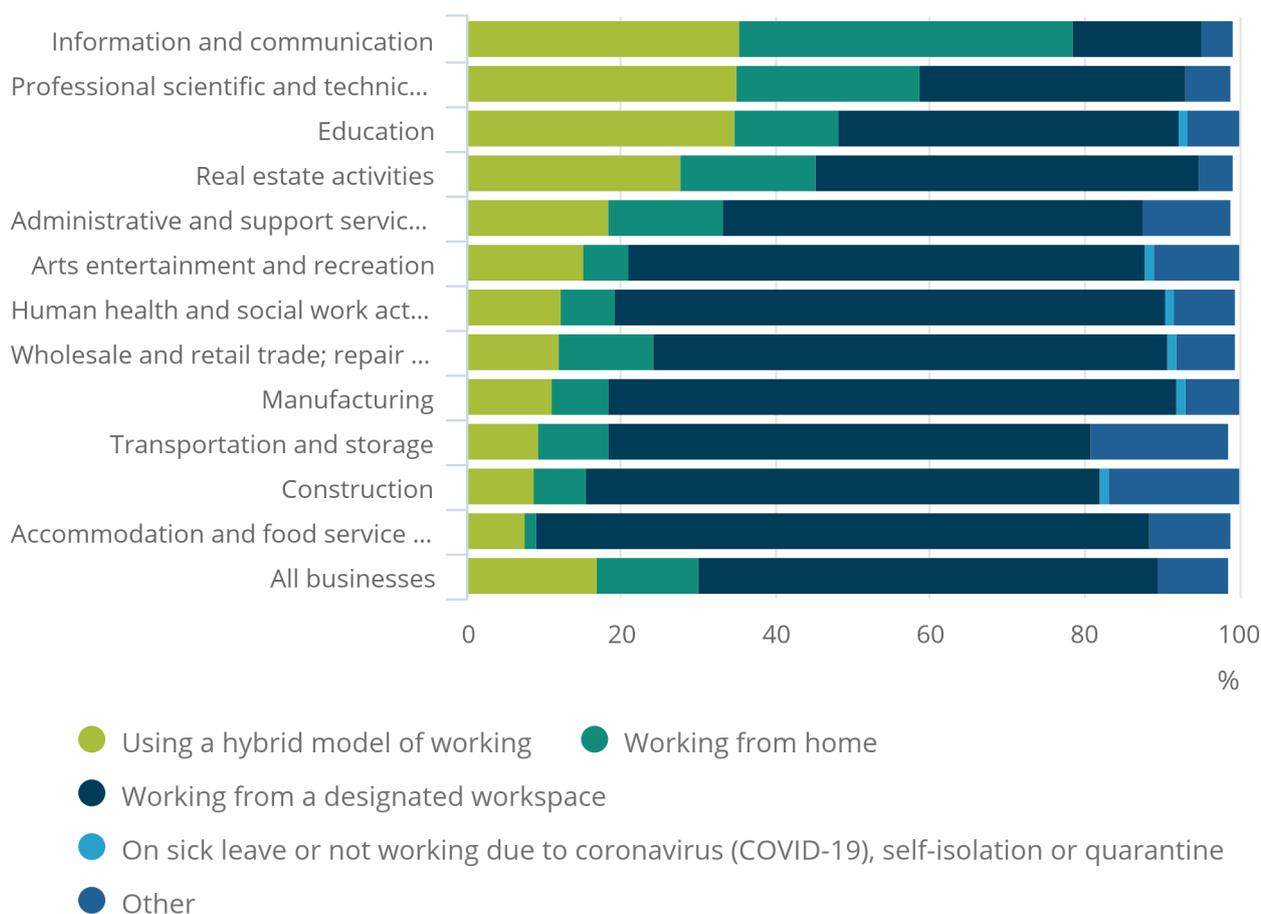
Workforce status

Figure 3: The information and communication industry reported the highest proportion of its employees using a hybrid model of working at 35% in late October 2021

Workforce status, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by industry, weighted by employment, UK, 4 October to 17 October 2021

Figure 3: The information and communication industry reported the highest proportion of its employees using a hybrid model of working at 35% in late October 2021

Workforce status, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by industry, weighted by employment, UK, 4 October to 17 October 2021



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

Notes:

1. Final weighted results, Wave 42 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Insights and Conditions Survey.
2. "Mining and quarrying", "water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities" and "other service activities" have been removed for disclosure purposes, but their totals are included in "All industries".
3. Bars may not sum to 100% because of rounding, and percentages less than 1% and the response option "made permanently redundant" have been removed for disclosure purposes.
4. Businesses were asked for their experiences for the reference period 4 October to 17 October 2021. However, for questions regarding the last two weeks, businesses may respond from the point of completion of the questionnaire (18 October to 31 October 2021).

The proportion of the workforce estimated to be working from a designated workspace in the last two weeks is 60%, while 13% are estimated to be working from home. Approximately one in six employees (17%) are estimated to be using a hybrid model of working, while 9% were classified as "other".

In late October 2021, businesses reported less than 1% of their workforce were on sick leave or not working because of coronavirus, self-isolation or quarantine. This proportion has remained stable since comparable estimates began in June 2020.

3 . Extended workforce

Worker shortages

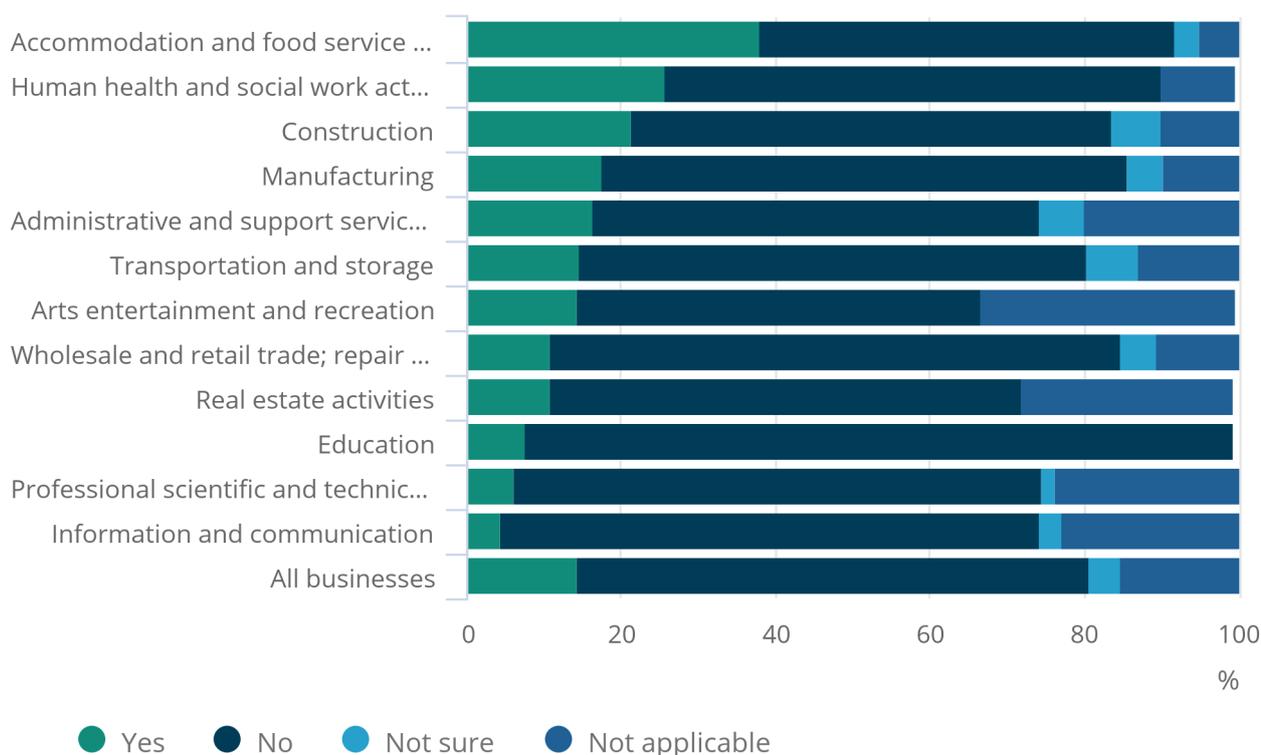
Businesses not permanently stopped trading were asked if they were experiencing a shortage of workers in late October 2021.

Figure 4: 38% of businesses in the accommodation and food service activities industry reported experiencing a shortage of workers in late October 2021

Worker shortages, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 18 October to 31 October 2021

Figure 4: 38% of businesses in the accommodation and food service activities industry reported experiencing a shortage of workers in late October 2021

Worker shortages, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 18 October to 31 October 2021



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

Notes:

1. Final weighted results, Wave 42 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Insights and Conditions Survey.
2. "Mining and quarrying", "water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities" and "other service activities" have been removed for disclosure purposes, but their totals are included in "All industries".

Across all industries, 14% of businesses not permanently stopped trading reported experiencing a shortage of workers. However, this figure was 37% for businesses with 10 employees or more.

The accommodation and food service activities industry reported the highest proportion of worker shortages at 38% in late October 2021. The information and communication industry reported the lowest proportion of worker shortages at 4%.

Businesses not permanently stopped trading that experienced a shortage of workers were asked how the shortage of workers affected their business:

- 50% of businesses reported being unable to meet demands
- 45% of businesses reported employees are working increased hours
- 17% of businesses reported having to recruit temporary workers
- 16% of businesses reported having to pause trading for some of the business
- 12% of businesses reported either being not sure or their business had not been affected
- less than 2% of businesses reported having to pause trading entirely

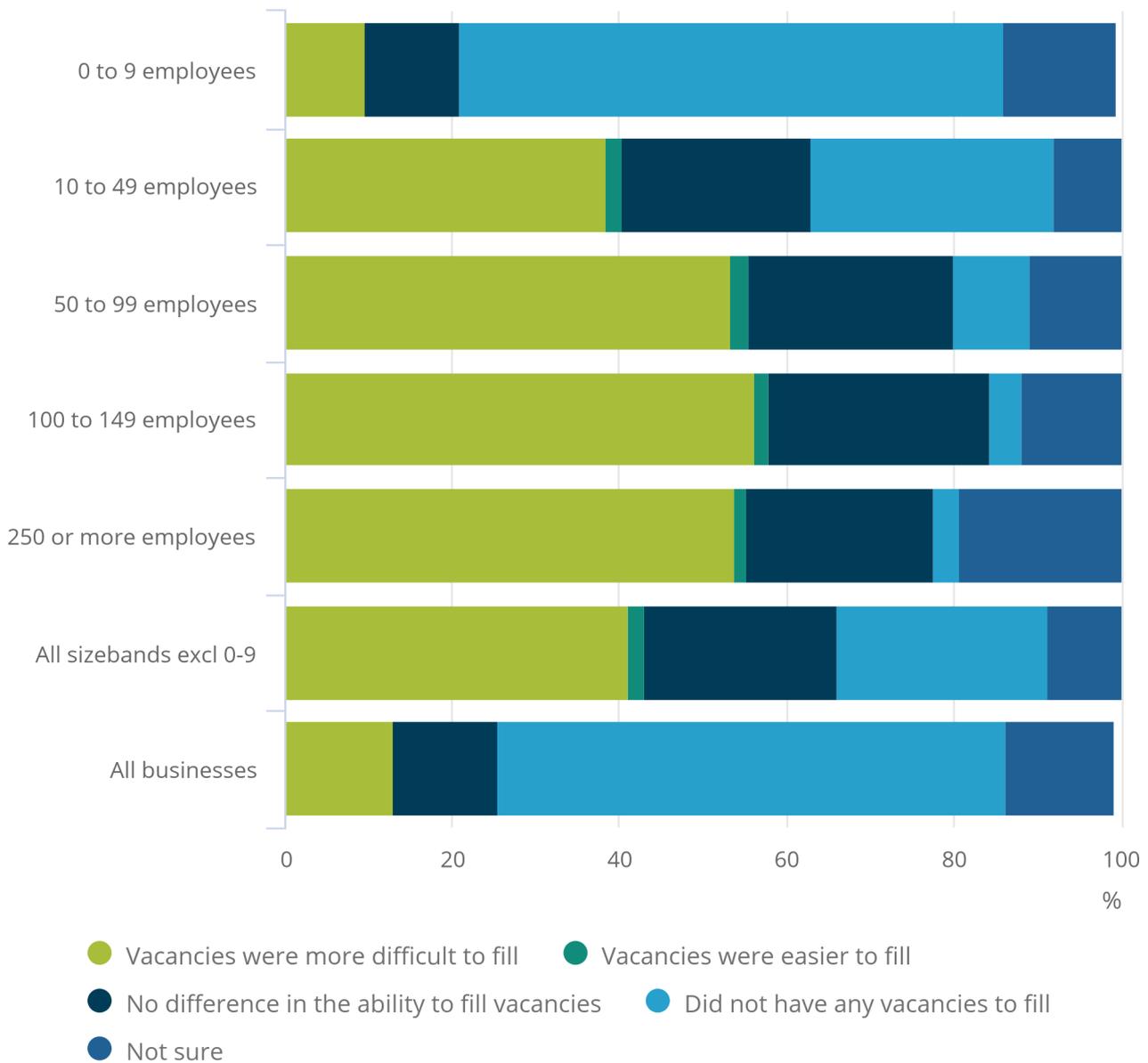
Workforce vacancies

Figure 5: 41% of all businesses with more than 10 employees reported vacancies were more difficult to fill compared with normal expectations for this time of year

Vacancy difficulties, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by size band, weighted by count, UK, 4 October to 31 October 2021

Figure 5: 41% of all businesses with more than 10 employees reported vacancies were more difficult to fill compared with normal expectations for this time of year

Vacancy difficulties, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by size band, weighted by count, UK, 4 October to 31 October 2021



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

Notes:

1. Final weighted results, Wave 42 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS).
2. Industries may not sum to 100% because of rounding and percentages less than 1% being removed for disclosure purposes.
3. Businesses were asked about their ability to fill vacancies in the last month compared with normal expectations for this time of year.

Of businesses not permanently stopped trading, 13% reported having vacancies that were more difficult to fill in the last month than normal expectations for this time of year. However, there was a large difference depending on the size of business, as these figures were 41% for all size bands with 10 employees or more and 10% for 0 to 9 employees respectively. While 61% of all businesses reported they had no vacancies to fill.

Across all size bands, multiple industries had a higher proportion of businesses reporting vacancies were more difficult to fill than normal for this time of year:

- the accommodation and food service activities industry, at 38%; this is up from 27% in September 2021
- the transportation and storage industry, at 15%; this is up from 4% in September 2021
- the manufacturing industry, at 18%; this is up from 16% in September 2021

Businesses that reported difficulties filling vacancies in the last month compared with normal expectations were asked for the reasons for the difficulty.

Across all businesses (that reported difficulties filling vacancies), the top difficulties experienced in October 2021 were:

- lack of qualified applicants for the roles on offer (51%), the professional, scientific and technical activities industry reported the highest proportion (75%)
- low number of applicants (45%), the water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities industry reported the highest proportion (81%)
- business cannot offer an attractive pay package to applicants (22%), the construction industry reported the highest proportion (37%)
- reduced number of EU applicants (17%), the water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities industry and the professional, scientific and technical activities industry both reported the highest proportion (28%)
- increased number of vacancies for other reasons (9%), the administrative and support service activities reported the highest proportion (14%)
- reduced number of applicants aged 16 to 24 years (8%), the water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities industry reported the highest proportion (40%)
- increased number of vacancies because of furloughed workers leaving (4%), the wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles industry reported the highest proportion (11%)

While 3% reported being "not sure" what the difficulties were. This is down from 5% reported in September 2021.

Staff turnover

Businesses not permanently stopped trading were asked how their staff turnover for the last month compared with normal expectations for this time of year. Across all businesses:

- 5% reported staff turnover had increased, 18% for businesses with more than 10 employees; for late September 2021, these figures were 4% and 16% respectively
- 5% reported staff turnover had decreased, 5% for businesses with more than 10 employees; for late September 2021, these figures were 3% and 5% respectively
- 47% reported staff turnover had not been affected, 62% for businesses with more than 10 employees; for late September 2021, these figures were 49% and 63% respectively
- 44% reported not sure or not applicable, 16% for businesses with more than 10 employees; these figures are broadly stable since early October 2021

Industries with the highest proportion of businesses that reported an increase in staff turnover were accommodation and food service activities (14%), transportation and storage (8%), and arts, entertainment, and recreation (7%).

The accommodation and food service activities industry has reported the highest percentages for worker shortages, difficulty filling vacancies and staff turnover.

End of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) ended on 30 September 2021.

In late October 2021, 16% of businesses not permanently stopped trading reported to have had employees on furlough at the end of the CJRS.

Following the end of the CJRS, those 16% of businesses were asked, approximately what proportion of those furloughed employees had:

- been made permanently redundant - 3%
- returned to work on increased hours - 6%
- returned to work on the same number of hours - 65%
- returned to work on reduced hours - 16%
- voluntarily left their role - 3%
- other - 8%

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

Redundancies

In response to being asked "does your business expect to make any of your workforce redundant over the next 3 months?", 2% of businesses not permanently stopped trading responded "yes". This has remained stable since April 2021. A further 85% responded "no" and 14% responded "not sure" in late October 2021.

The top three industries expecting redundancies over the next three months were:

- the professional, scientific and technical activities industry at 2%, down from 3% reported in early October 2021
- the accommodation and food service activities industry at 2%, up from 1% reported in early October 2021
- the administrative and support service activities industry at 1%, down from 3% reported in early October 2021

4 . Safety measures

Across all industries not permanently stopped trading, businesses were asked if they were using or intending to use safety measures in the workplace. The top three safety measures reported were:

- hygiene measures (48%), the accommodation and food service activities industry reported the highest proportion (75%)
- social distancing (42%), the education (private sector and higher education businesses only) industry reported the highest proportion (70%)
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) (37%), the education (private sector and higher education businesses only) industry reported the highest proportion (64%)

In October 2021, some nations introduced customer coronavirus (COVID-19) checks. In Scotland, COVID-19 vaccination certificates were introduced and in Wales, NHS COVID Passes were introduced. Of businesses not permanently stopped trading, 7% reported to be using or intending to use these safety measures, the education (private sector and higher education businesses only) industry reported the highest percentage, at 24%.

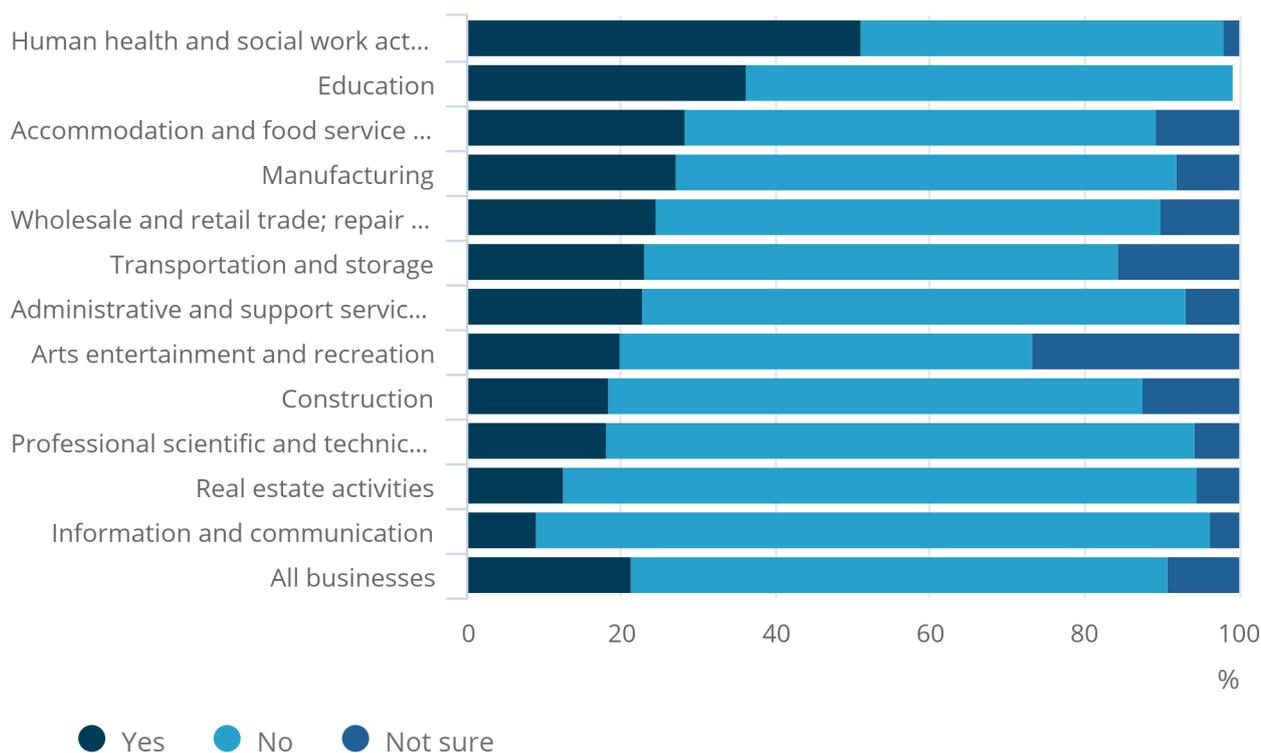
Businesses not permanently stopped trading were asked if they were providing regular coronavirus (COVID-19) testing for their workforce and approximately what percentage of that workforce are receiving the tests. More than one in five (21%) of businesses reported providing regular COVID-19 testing for their workforce, with approximately 14% of those workforces receiving these tests.

Figure 6: One in five businesses (21%) are providing regular coronavirus (COVID-19) testing for its workforce

Regular coronavirus (COVID-19) testing, businesses not permanently stopped trading, weighted by count, UK, 18 October to 31 October 2021

Figure 6: One in five businesses (21%) are providing regular coronavirus (COVID-19) testing for its workforce

Regular coronavirus (COVID-19) testing, businesses not permanently stopped trading, weighted by count, UK, 18 October to 31 October 2021



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

Notes:

1. Final weighted results Wave 42 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS).
2. Industries may not sum to 100% because percentages less than 1% have been removed for disclosure purposes.
3. "Mining and quarrying", "water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities" and "other service activities" have been removed for disclosure purposes, but its total is included in "All industries".

5 . Supply chains and stock levels

Businesses not permanently stopped trading were asked if they were able to get the materials, goods or services they needed from within the UK in the last two weeks.

Table 1: In the last month, approximately one in six businesses were either not able to get the materials, goods or services they needed from within the UK, or changed suppliers or found alternative solutions to do so
Intra UK procurement, businesses not permanently stopped trading, weighted by count, UK, 4 October to 31 October 2021

Industries	Yes, the business has been able to get the materials, goods or services it needed	Yes, but the business had to change suppliers or find alternative solutions	No, the business has not been able to get the materials, goods or services needed	Not applicable
Construction	43.4%	25.4%	10.0%	21.2%
Accommodation and food service activities	35.6%	20.0%	18.6%	25.9%
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	53.7%	13.5%	10.2%	22.6%
Manufacturing	65.3%	11.6%	10.3%	12.8%
Arts, entertainment and recreation	31.1%	9.5%	10.6%	48.8%
All businesses	43.0%	10.8%	6.9%	39.2%

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

Notes:

1. Final weighted results Wave 42 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS).
2. Industries may not sum to 100% because of rounding.
3. Businesses were asked for their experiences for the reference period over the last month. However, businesses may respond from the point of completion of the questionnaire (18 October to 31 October 2021).
4. All industries includes those industries which are sampled in BICS, not the total of industries in the table.

Across all industries, 11% of businesses reported they were able to get the materials, goods or services they needed from within the UK, but had to change suppliers or find alternative solutions to do so; the construction industry reported the largest percentage at 25%. This was followed by the accommodation and food service activities industry and the wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles industry at 20% and 14%, respectively.

Across all industries, 7% of businesses reported they were not able to get the materials, goods or services needed. The accommodation and food service activities industry reported the largest percentage at 19%, followed by the arts, entertainment and recreation industry, at 11%.

Overall, 18% of all businesses were either not able to get the materials, goods or services they needed from within the UK, or had to change suppliers or find alternative solutions to do so. This is unchanged from early September 2021, but up from 15% in early July 2021.

The accommodation and food service activities industry was the top industry that experienced a change or disruption with supply chains, 39% of businesses not permanently stopped trading reported they were either not able to get the materials, goods or services they needed from within the UK, or had to change suppliers or find alternative solutions to do so.

In contrast, across all industries, 43% of businesses reported they were able to get the materials, goods or services they needed in October 2021 without having to change supplier.

The remaining businesses reported that supply chains were not applicable. Industries such as the professional, scientific and technical activities industry, and the information and communication industry, which have a higher proportion of businesses that reported not applicable, are included in the headline figures. Also, businesses who have paused trading and respond to this question are more likely to select not applicable.

Businesses that reported they either were not able to get the materials, goods or services they needed from within the UK, or had to change suppliers or find alternative solutions to do so, were asked how much disruption these challenges caused. Of businesses who had experienced challenges with UK supply chains over the last month, 63% reported to have experienced major or moderate disruption to their businesses because of these challenges:

- 12% reported major disruption
- 51% reported moderate disruption
- 31% reported minor disruption
- 3% reported no disruption
- 3% reported they were not sure

Businesses not permanently stopped trading were also asked how their stock levels for the last month compared with normal expectations for this time of year.

Of businesses not permanently stopped trading, 4% reported that stock levels were higher than normal, while 10% reported that stock levels were lower than normal. More than one in four businesses (27%) reported that stock levels had not changed while the remainder either reported not sure or not applicable.

The accommodation and food service activities industry reported the largest percentage of businesses that indicated stock levels were lower than normal at 31%, followed by the wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles industry at 24%.

For full industry breakdowns and further data surrounding the continuation of supply chains and stock levels, see the [accompanying dataset](#).

6 . Prices

Figure 7: Nearly two-fifths (37%) of currently trading businesses reported the prices of materials, goods or services bought in the last month had increased by more than normal price fluctuations

Impact on prices, businesses currently trading who experienced an increase of prices of materials, goods or services bought and sold, weighted by count, UK, 2 November 2020 to 31 October 2021

Figure 7: Nearly two-fifths (37%) of currently trading businesses reported the prices of materials, goods or services bought in the last month had increased by more than normal price fluctuations



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

Notes:

1. Final weighted results, Wave 18 to 42 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS).
2. Businesses were asked for their experiences for the reference period of each Wave. However, businesses may respond from the point of completion of the questionnaire.
3. Data are plotted in the middle of the period of each wave.

Nearly two-fifths (37%) of businesses currently trading reported that the prices of materials, goods or services bought in the last month had increased more than their normal price fluctuations, in October 2021. This has increased from 21% in late May 2021, and from 15% in late December 2020.

Industries with the highest proportion of businesses that reported an increase in prices of materials, goods and services bought over the last month were construction (67%) and manufacturing (66%). The construction and manufacturing industries have shown steady increases in prices of materials, goods and services bought since May 2021, with both industries up 12 and 14 percentage points respectively from early September 2021.

By contrast, 15% of businesses currently trading reported that they had increased the price of goods or services that they sold in October 2021. This is up from 11% in early September 2021, and 4% in late December 2020.

The highest proportion of businesses that reported an increase in prices of materials, goods and services that they sold over the last month were in the wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles industry at 29%, followed by the manufacturing industry and the construction industry, at 28% and 24%, respectively.

7 . Wholesale gas prices

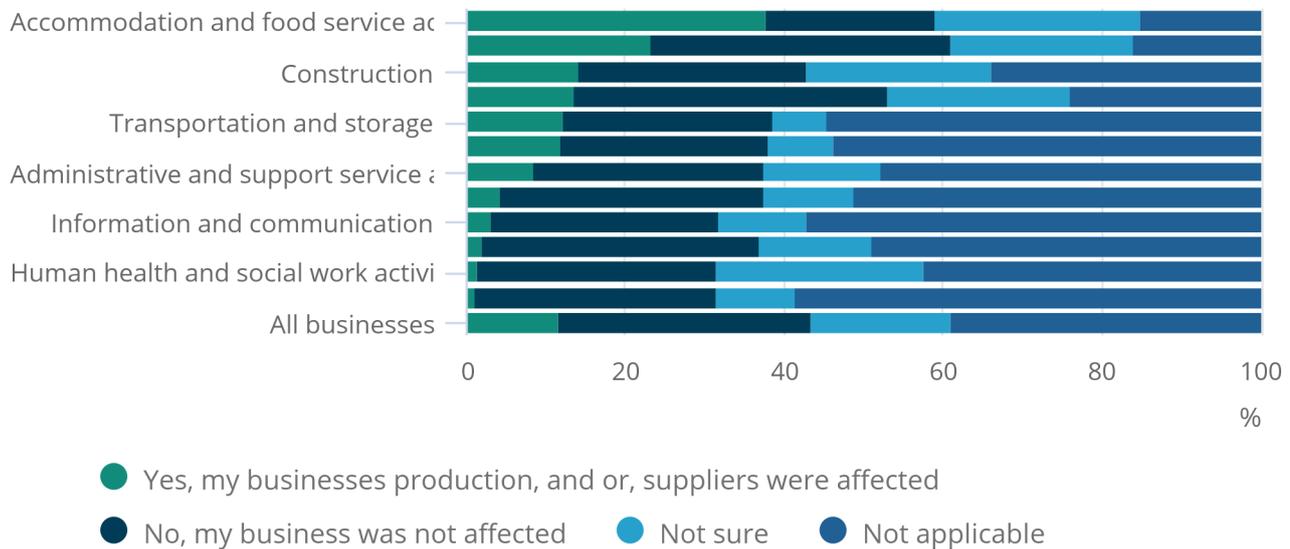
Businesses not permanently stopped trading were asked if their business had been affected by recent increases in wholesale gas prices.

Figure 8: 12% of businesses reported their production, and or, suppliers were affected by recent increases in gas prices

Wholesale gas prices, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 18 October to 31 October 2021

Figure 8: 12% of businesses reported their production, and or, suppliers were affected by recent increases in gas prices

Wholesale gas prices, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 18 October to 31 October 2021



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

Notes:

1. Final weighted results, Wave 42 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS).
2. Industries may not sum to 100% because of rounding and percentages less than 1% being removed for disclosure purposes.
3. "Mining and quarrying", "water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities" and "other service activities" have been removed for disclosure purposes, but their totals are included in "All industries".

Businesses not permanently stopped trading were asked if they had been affected by recent increases in wholesale gas prices. More than 1 in 10 businesses reported that their production, and or, suppliers were affected:

- production was affected - 2%
- suppliers were affected - 6%
- production and suppliers were affected - 4%

The accommodation and food service activities industry reported the highest percentage of businesses affected by the increase in wholesale gas prices, at 38%; this was followed by the manufacturing industry at 23%.

In contrast, 32% of businesses not permanently stopped trading reported their business was not affected by the increase in wholesale gas prices, the remainder reported they were not sure or not applicable.

8 . Business Insights and Conditions Survey data

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

Dataset | Released 4 November 2021

Weighted estimates from the voluntary fortnightly Business Insights and Conditions 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.

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 41 can now be accessed through 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 made confidential and do not disclose information on 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.

9 . 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.

10 . Measuring the data

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

The BICS is voluntary, and the results are [experimental](#).

Table 2: Sample and response rates for Waves 40, 41 and 42 of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey

Wave	07 October 2021 Publication Wave 40	21 October 2021 Publication Wave 41	04 November 2021 Publication Wave 42
Sample	38,286	38,284	38,226
Response	8,723	8,930	8,616
Rate	22.8%	23.3%	22.5%

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

Notes

1. Response rates for all waves can be found in the accompanying dataset.

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 42 survey was live for the period 18 October to 31 October 2021. For questions regarding the last two weeks, businesses were asked for their experience for the reference period 4 October to 31 October 2021. The [survey questions](#) are available.

Coverage

The Monthly Business Survey (MBS) covers the UK for production and only Great Britain for services. The Retail Sales Index (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 [BICS QMI](#).

11 . Strengths and limitations

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

12 . Related links

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

Article | Released 2 September 2021

An overview of the similarities and differences between the fortnightly Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) furlough estimates and HMRC's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme statistics, over the period 23 March 2020 to 30 June 2021.

[The Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) harmonisation guidance](#)

Web page | Updated frequently

This page provides harmonisation guidance on how best to collect data about the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Users can also find a bank of questions from multiple Office for National Statistics (ONS) surveys related to coronavirus (COVID-19) to be used in other surveys to further support harmonisation and questionnaire development. This bank also provides users with an understanding of what data the ONS has in relation to the coronavirus pandemic.

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

Article | Released 20 July 2021

Experimental estimates from the voluntary fortnightly Business Insights and Conditions 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 and individual attitudes towards the future of homeworking, UK: April to May 2021](#)

Article | Released 14 June 2021

Analysis of the effects of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on office working and of business and individual attitudes to future working practices.

[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).