

Statistical bulletin

Business insights and impact on the UK economy: 5 October 2023

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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1 . Main points

- Nearly three-quarters (72%) of trading businesses with 10 or more employees reported that they were able to get the goods they needed from within the UK in August 2023 without any form of disruption, up 5 percentage points from July 2023.
- In August 2023, 7% of businesses with 10 or more employees experienced global supply chain disruption, broadly stable with July 2023.
- Nearly two-thirds (63%) of businesses reported some form of concern for their business for October 2023; this is down from the 66% reported for September 2023 and the lowest percentage reported since the question was introduced in February 2022.
- Fewer than 1 in 10 (5%) businesses were affected by industrial action in August 2023, the lowest proportion reported since this question was introduced in June 2022.
- More than four in five (84%) businesses are not currently using artificial intelligence (AI) technologies, while 81% of businesses are not planning to adopt AI technologies in the next three months.
- In late September 2023, 1 in 10 (10%) businesses reported they were experiencing worker shortages, with more than half (54%) of those businesses reporting they were unable to meet demands as a consequence.

2 . Headline figures

The data presented in this bulletin are the final results from Wave 92 of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS), which was live from 18 September to 1 October 2023.

The data reported within BICS bulletins and datasets are estimates that are subject to [uncertainty](#), for example, sampling variability and [non-sampling error](#). Further information on quality is available in our [Business Insights and Conditions Survey Quality and Methodology Information \(QMI\)](#), and we regularly update [confidence intervals](#) associated with the survey questions.

Experimental single-site weighted regional estimates up to Wave 74 are available in our [Business insights and impact on the UK subnational single-site economy: February 2023 article](#).

More about economy, business and jobs

- All Office for National Statistics (ONS) analysis is 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. For presentational purposes, some response options have been combined, excluded or both.
2. For presentational purposes, "Prices" data show an increase to prices bought and sold compared with the previous calendar month.
3. Data are plotted in the middle of each wave.

Download the data

[.xlsx](#)

The percentage of businesses that reported they were trading in late September 2023 was 95%, with 86% fully trading and 9% partially trading (for example, trading with reduced hours or staff numbers). Meanwhile, 3% of businesses reported "temporarily paused trading" and 2% reported "permanently ceased trading" as their business's trading status.

3 . Supply chains

Intra-UK procurement

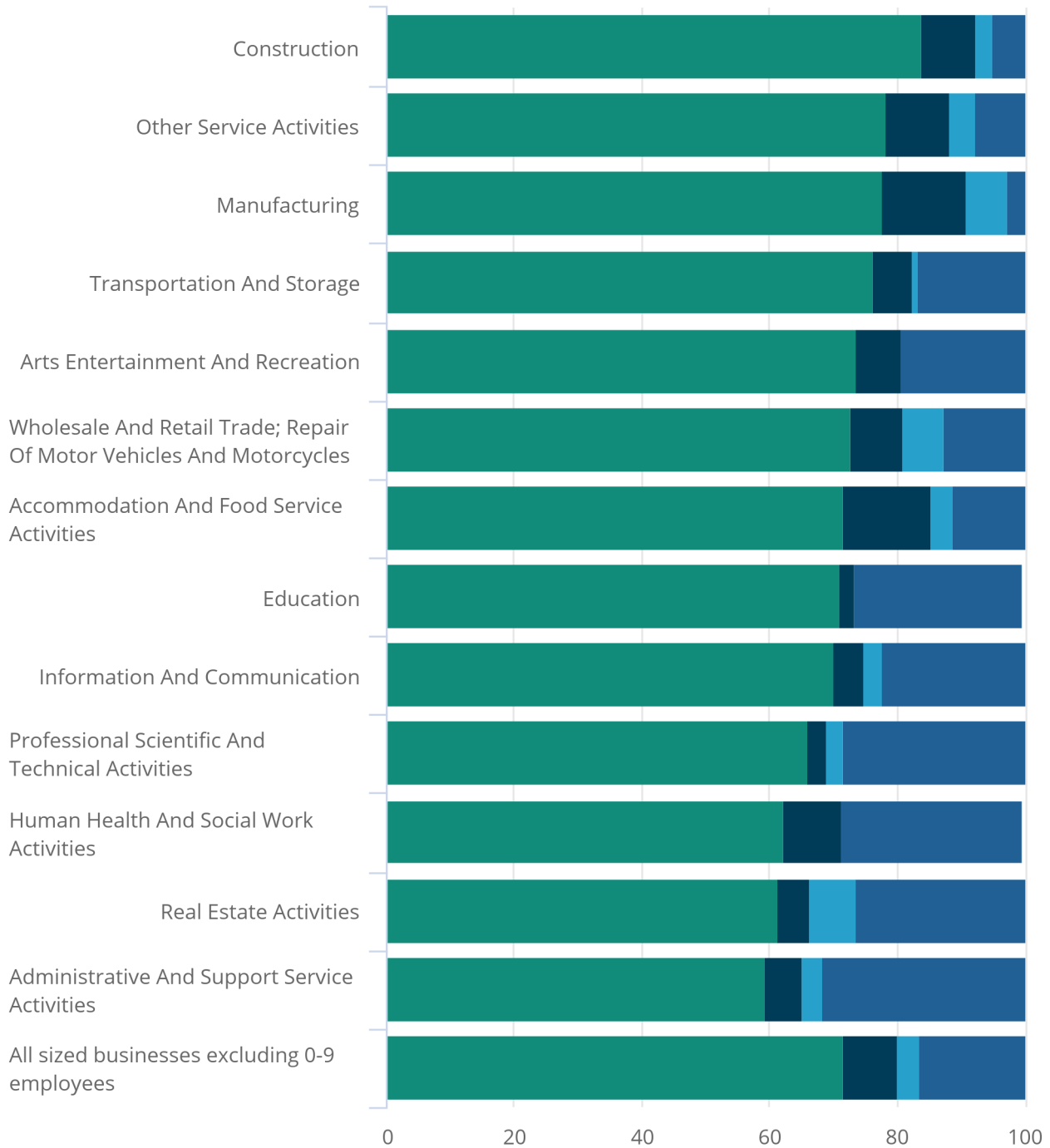
Businesses not permanently stopped trading were asked whether they were able to get the materials, goods or services they needed from within the UK in August 2023.

Figure 2: Four in five (80%) trading businesses with 10 or more employees reported they were able to get the materials, goods or services they needed in August 2023

UK procurement, businesses currently trading with 10 or more employees, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 1 August 2023 to 31 August 2023

Figure 2: Four in five (80%) trading businesses with 10 or more employees reported they were able to get the materials, goods or services they needed in August 2023

UK procurement, businesses currently trading with 10 or more employees, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 1 August 2023 to 31 August 2023



- Yes, the business was 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 was not able to get the materials, goods or services needed
- Not applicable

Notes:

1. "Mining and quarrying" and "Water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities" have been removed for disclosure purposes, but their totals are included in "All-sized businesses excluding 0 to 9".
2. Bars may not sum to 100% because of rounding, percentages less than 1% being removed for disclosure purposes and some response options being excluded.

Four out of five (80%) trading businesses with 10 or more employees reported they were able to get the materials, goods or services they needed from within the UK in August 2023. The majority were able to obtain what they needed without experiencing any issues (72%), with the remainder having to change suppliers or find alternative solutions to do so (9%). These percentages were up from 67% and down from 11%, respectively, compared with July 2023.

The number of businesses with 10 or more employees that reported they were not able to get the materials, goods or services they needed from within the UK dropped from 5% to 4% over the same period, with the remaining proportion of businesses reporting not applicable (16%).

Further details on UK supply chains, including all response options broken down by trading status, industry and size band, are available in our [accompanying dataset](#).

Global supply chain distribution

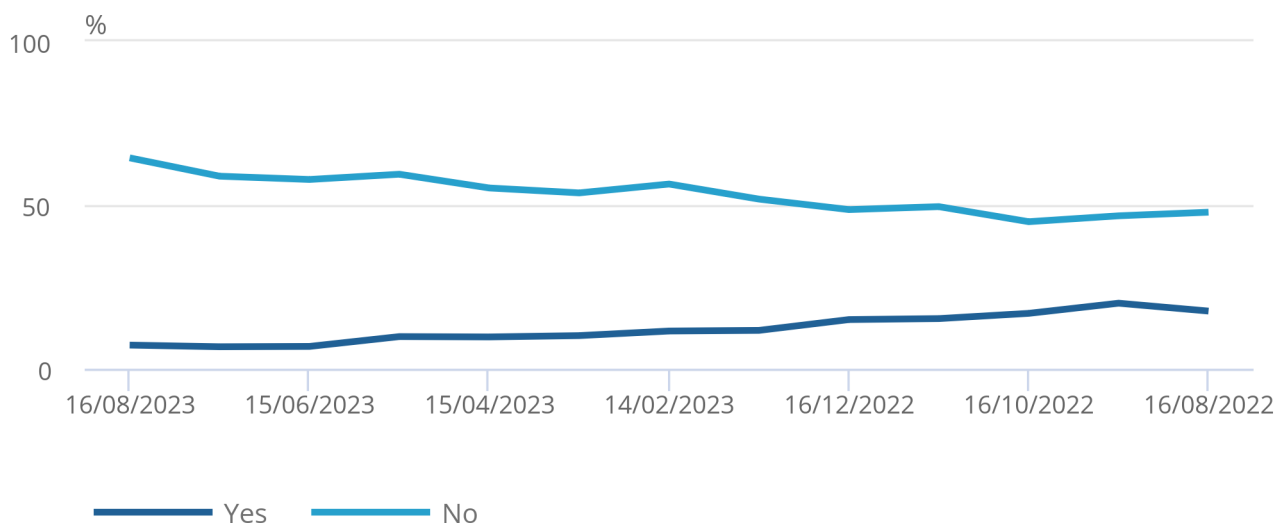
Businesses not permanently stopped trading were asked whether they had experienced any global supply chain disruption in August 2023.

Figure 3: Less than 1 in 10 (7%) businesses with 10 or more employees experienced global supply chain disruption in August 2023

Global supply chain disruption, businesses not permanently stopped trading with 10 or more employees, broken down by response option, weighted by count, UK, 1 August 2022 to 31 August 2023

Figure 3: Less than 1 in 10 (7%) businesses with 10 or more employees experienced global supply chain disruption in August 2023

Global supply chain disruption, businesses not permanently stopped trading with 10 or more employees, broken down by response option, weighted by count, UK, 1 August 2022 to 31 August 2023



Source: Business Insights and Conditions Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. For presentational purposes, some response options have been removed.
2. Data are plotted in the middle of the period of each wave.

In August 2023, fewer than 1 in 10 (7%) businesses with 10 or more employees reported experiencing global supply chain disruption, broadly stable with July 2023. In contrast, 64% of businesses did not experience disruption, up 6 percentage points from July 2023. Of the remaining businesses, 11% reported "not sure", and 17% "not applicable".

Further details on global supply chain disruption, including all response options broken down by industry and size band, are available in our [accompanying dataset](#).

4 . Business concerns

Businesses not permanently stopped trading were asked what their main concern for their business was when looking ahead to October 2023.

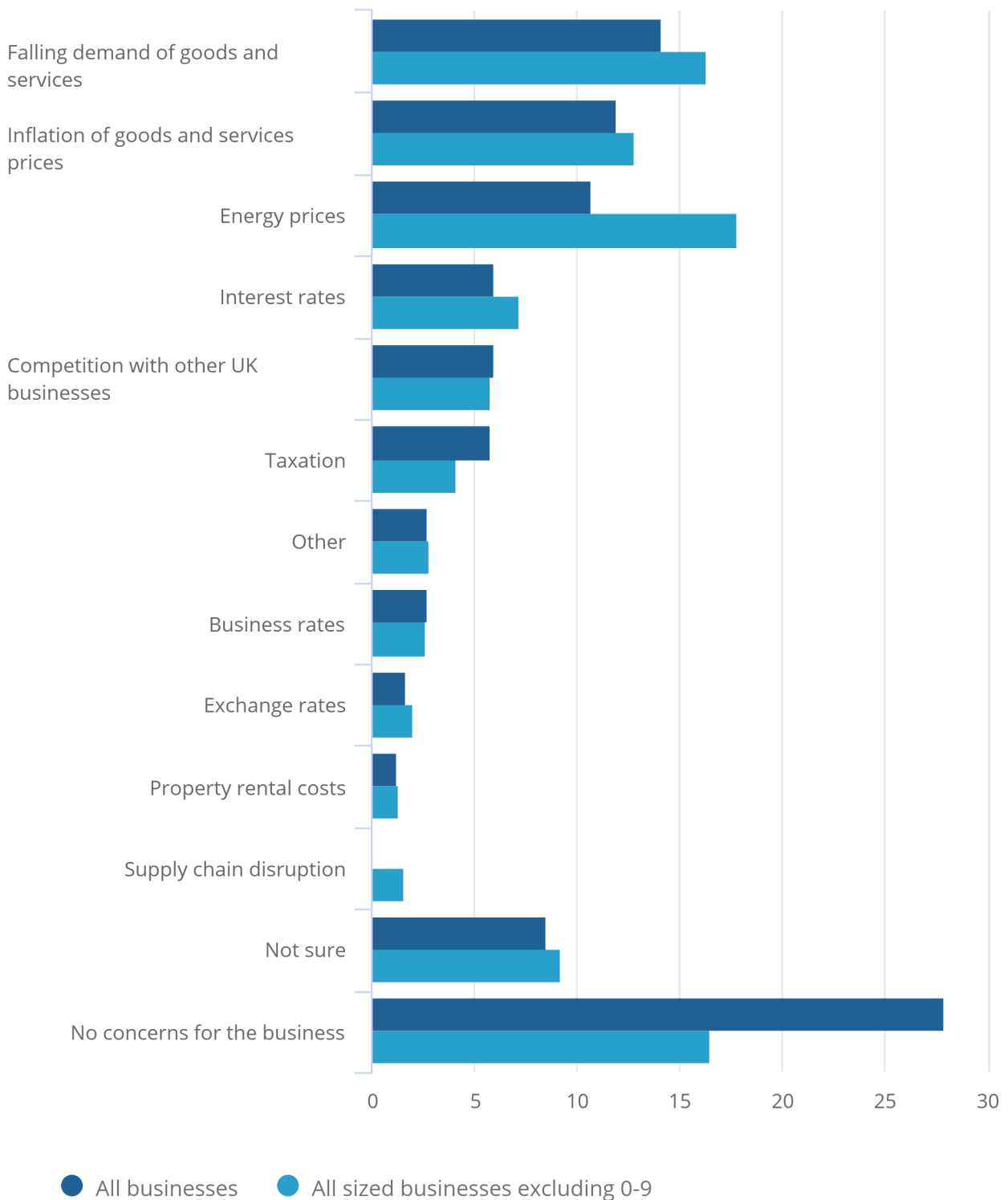
Businesses were asked for their main concern; this does not mean they do not have any other concerns for their business.

Figure 4: Almost two-thirds (63%) of businesses reported some form of concern for their business for October 2023

Business concerns, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by response option, weighted by count, UK, 1 October to 31 October 2023

Figure 4: Almost two-thirds (63%) of businesses reported some form of concern for their business for October 2023

Business concerns, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by response option, weighted by count, UK, 1 October to 31 October 2023



Source: Business Insights and Conditions Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Response options may not sum to 100% because of rounding, and percentages less than 1% being removed for disclosure purposes. 2. Caution should be taken when interpreting expectations questions as the employees responding on behalf of businesses may not have full oversight of all of their business's future expectations.

Looking ahead to October 2023, 63% of businesses have some form of business concern, however, this is the lowest percentage reported since the question was introduced in February 2022.

The three main concerns reported by businesses for October 2023 were:

- falling demand of goods and services (14%), unchanged from September 2023
- inflation of goods and services (12%), down from 14% for September 2023
- energy prices (11%), unchanged from September 2023

The percentage of businesses that reported no concerns increased from 26% for September 2023 to 28% for October 2023.

Further details, including the full list of concerns broken down by industry and size band, are available in our [accompanying dataset](#).

5 . Industrial action

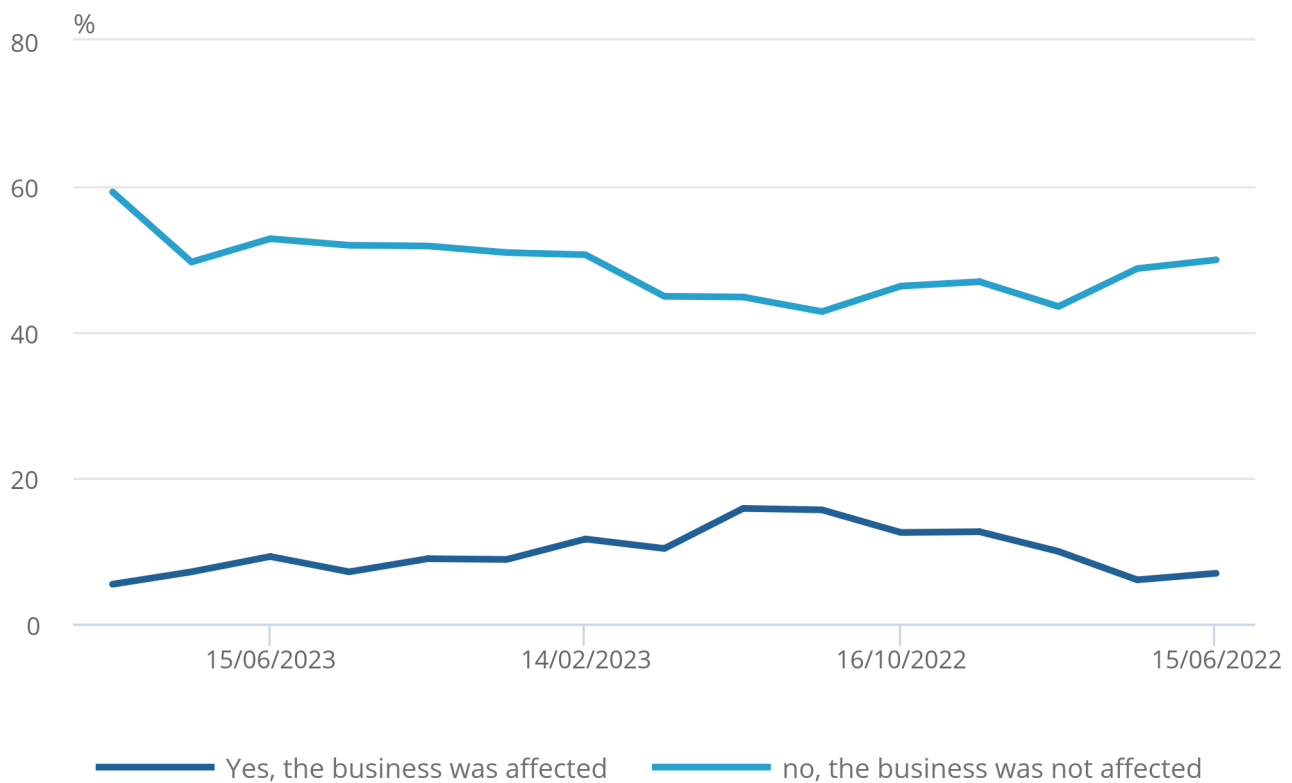
Businesses not permanently stopped trading were asked if they had been affected by industrial action in August 2023.

Figure 5: Fewer than 1 in 10 (5%) businesses were affected by industrial action in August 2023, down from 7% in July 2023

Affected by industrial action, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by response option, weighted by count, UK, 1 June 2022 to 31 August 2023

Figure 5: Fewer than 1 in 10 (5%) businesses were affected by industrial action in August 2023, down from 7% in July 2023

Affected by industrial action, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by response option, weighted by count, UK, 1 June 2022 to 31 August 2023



Source: Business Insights and Conditions Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. For presentational purposes, some response options have been removed.
2. Data are plotted in the middle of the period of each wave.

In August 2023, the overall proportion of businesses that reported they were affected by industrial action (5%) dropped 2 percentage points from 7% in July 2023.

The 5% of businesses that reported they had been affected by industrial action were then asked how they were affected. The most common responses were:

- business was unable to operate fully (29%), broadly stable with July 2023
- workforce had to change their working location (24%), up 4 percentage points from July 2023

Further details on industrial action, broken down by industry and size band, are available in our [accompanying dataset](#).

6 . Workforce

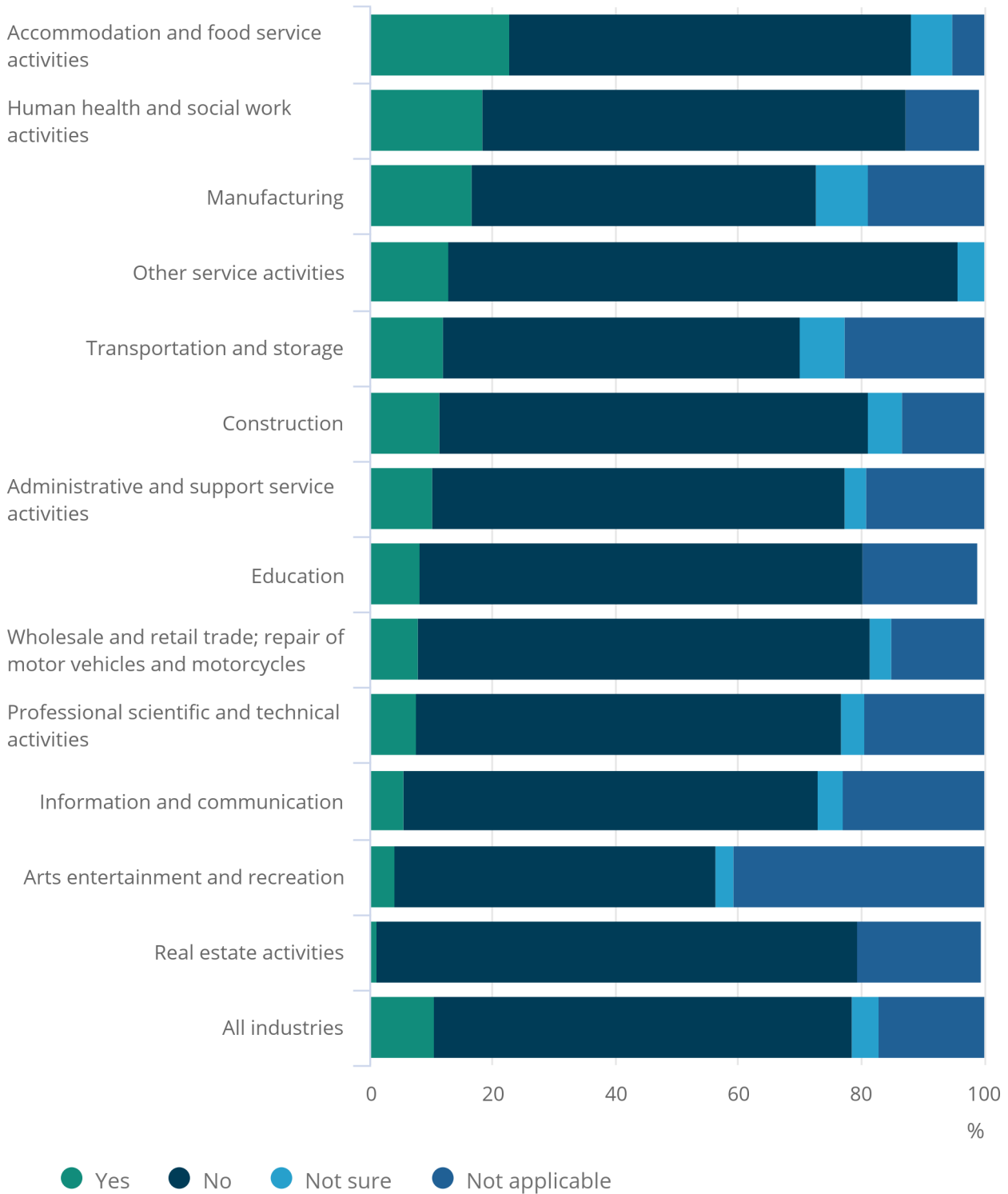
Worker shortages

Figure 6: 10% of businesses were experiencing worker shortages in late September 2023

Worker shortages, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 18 September to 1 October 2023

Figure 6: 10% of businesses were experiencing worker shortages in late September 2023

Worker shortages, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 18 September to 1 October 2023



Notes:

1. "Mining and quarrying" and "Water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities" have been removed for disclosure purposes, but their totals are included in "All industries".
2. Bars may not sum to 100% because of rounding, percentages less than 1% being removed for disclosure purposes and some response options being excluded.

Of the 10% of businesses that reported experiencing worker shortages in late September 2023, more than half (54%) reported employees were unable to meet demands.

Other issues reported by businesses with staff shortages were:

- employees working increased hours (34%)
- had to recruit temporary workers (14%)
- had to pause trading some of the business (12%)

In comparison, 8% of businesses reported not being affected by worker shortages.

Further details on worker shortages, including its effects broken down by industry and size band, are available in our [accompanying dataset](#).

7 . Artificial intelligence

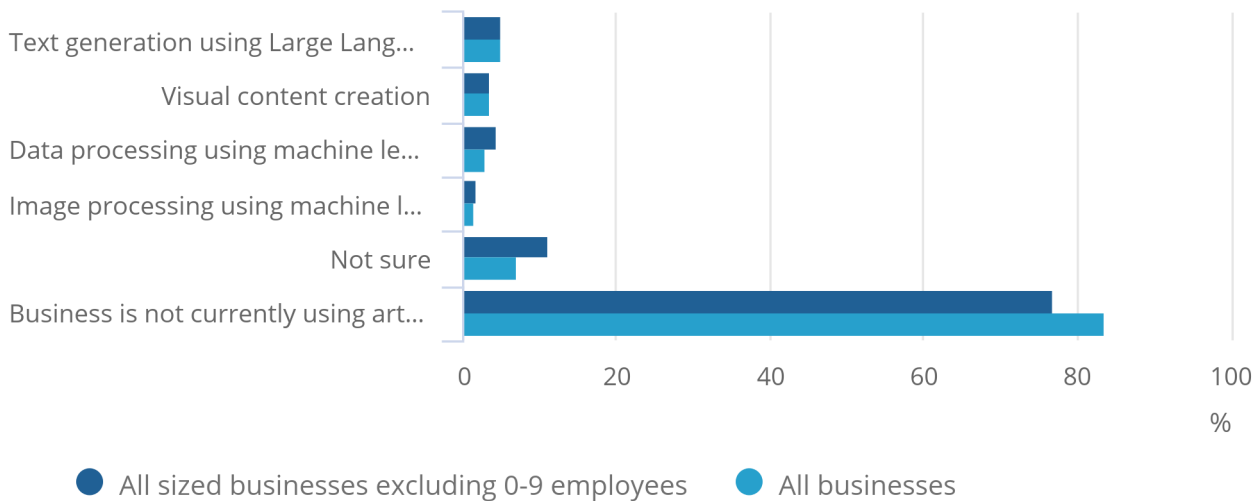
In late September 2023, businesses not permanently stopped trading were asked about their current use of artificial intelligence (AI), planned use of AI, or any factors that were preventing or delaying their adoption of AI.

Figure 7: More than four in five (84%) businesses are not currently using artificial intelligence technologies

Artificial intelligence, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 18 September to 1 October 2023

Figure 7: More than four in five (84%) businesses are not currently using artificial intelligence technologies

Artificial intelligence, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 18 September to 1 October 2023



Source: Business Insights and Conditions Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. For presentational purposes, some response options have been removed.
2. Bars may not sum to 100% because businesses can select multiple response options.

In late September 2023, more than a third (36%) of businesses that reported at least one form of AI or responded "not sure", reported they were using AI to improve business operations.

The next most commonly reported reasons were "provide, or personalise, products or services to customers" (22%), and "develop a new product or service, or explore a new market" (15%).

Businesses were also asked which, if any, AI technologies they plan to adopt within the next 3 months, 81% reported their business does not plan to adopt AI technologies. However, of those that do plan to adopt AI technologies, 34% reported this was to improve business operations.

Further details on artificial intelligence, broken down by industry and size band, are available in our [accompanying dataset](#).

8 . Business Insights and Conditions Survey data

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

Dataset | Released 5 October 2023

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.

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

Dataset | Released 5 October 2023

Confidence intervals for weighted estimates from the voluntary fortnightly Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) about financial performance, workforce, prices, trade and business resilience. These data are not official statistics but have been developed to deliver timely indicators to help understand the issues impacting UK businesses and the economy.

Access to microdata

You can access the microdata for Waves 1 to 91 of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) 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, as explained on the UK Statistics Authority website](#) 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 \(RAP\), as explained on the UK Statistics Authority website](#). To access the SRS, you must also work for an organisation with an Assured Organisational Connectivity agreement in place.

9 . Glossary

Reporting unit

The reporting unit is the business unit to which questionnaires are sent. 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 (QMI) on strengths, limitations, appropriate uses, and how the data were created is available in our [Business Insights and Conditions Survey \(BICS\) QMI](#), updated on 24 January 2022.

The BICS is voluntary, and the results are experimental. More information is available in our [Guide to experimental statistics](#).

Table 1: Sample and response rates for Waves 90, 91 and 92 of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey

Wave	7 September 2023 Publication Wave 90	21 September 2023 Publication Wave 91	5 October 2023 Publication Wave 92
Sample	38,850	38,842	38,889
Response	10,559	10,781	10,899
Rate	27.2%	27.8%	28.0%

Source: Business Insights and Conditions Survey from the Office for National Statistics

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 92 survey was live for the period 18 September to 1 October 2023. For full details of the survey questions used, see our [Business Insights and Conditions Survey questions: 18 September 2023 to 1 October 2023 article](#).

Coverage

The BICS sampling frame is based on the same industries as our Monthly Business Survey (MBS). The MBS covers the UK for production industries only, and Great Britain for construction, retail and services industries. The MBS is an important input to the output measure of gross domestic product (GDP), which includes monthly GDP.

For detailed information on the industries covered by the MBS and BICS, see our [GDP\(o\) data sources catalogue](#). The following are some industries that are excluded from MBS and BICS:

- agriculture
- oil and gas extraction
- energy generation and supply
- public administration and defence
- public provision of education and health
- finance and insurance

For more information on the methodology of producing the BICS, such as [weighting](#), please see our [BICS QMI report](#).

11 . Strengths and limitations

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

12 . Related links

[Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators](#)

Bulletin | Updated frequently

Early experimental data and analysis on economic activity and social change in the UK. These real-time indicators are created using rapid response surveys, novel data sources and experimental methods.

[Cost of living latest insights](#)

Web page | Updated frequently

The latest data and trends about the cost of living. Explore changes in the cost of everyday items and how this is affecting people.

[COVID-19 question bank](#)

Web page | Updated frequently

This web page provides 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.

[Business insights and impact on the UK subnational single-site economy: February 2023](#)

Article | Released 16 February 2023

Experimental estimates from the voluntary fortnightly business survey (BICS) on topics such as prices, worker shortages and workforce status. Geographical breakdowns include country, regional and local authority levels.

[Characteristics of homeworkers, Great Britain: September 2022 to January 2023](#)

Article | Released 13 February 2023

Analysis of homeworkers, including prevalence of hybrid working, and breakdowns by personal characteristics. Data from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

13 . Cite this statistical bulletin

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