

Statistical bulletin

Business insights and impact on the UK economy: 24 October 2024

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.

Contact:
Business Insights and Conditions
Survey (BICS) team
bics@ons.gov.uk
+44 1633 651703

Release date:
24 October 2024

Next release:
7 November 2024

Table of contents

1. [Main points](#)
2. [Headline figures](#)
3. [Financial performance](#)
4. [Prices](#)
5. [Workforce](#)
6. [Data from the Business Insights and Conditions Survey](#)
7. [Glossary](#)
8. [Data sources and quality](#)
9. [Related links](#)
10. [Cite this statistical bulletin](#)

1 . Main points

- Approximately one in seven (15%) trading businesses reported that their turnover had increased in September 2024 compared with August 2024, broadly stable with the previous month; in contrast, 24% reported that their turnover had decreased from August 2024, with 22% citing economic uncertainty as a challenge.
- Approximately one in six (16%) trading businesses reported that they expect their turnover to increase in November 2024, down 4 percentage points from expectations for October 2024.
- Nearly one in eight (12%) trading businesses reported that they expect the prices of goods or services they sell to increase in November 2024, broadly stable with expectations for October 2024.
- In early October 2024, 8% of all businesses and 19% of businesses with 10 or more employees reported that they were experiencing worker shortages; both figures are broadly stable with early September 2024.
- Approximately one in seven (15%) trading businesses reported their overall performance increased in September 2024 compared with the same calendar month last year, broadly stable with August 2024; in contrast, 22% reported that their performance decreased over the same period, with this proportion trending upwards since May 2024 (17%).

These are official statistics in development, and we advise caution when using the data. The BICS questions and topics are regularly reviewed, and questions are often added, removed, or amended to reflect changing circumstances and analytical priorities.

2 . Headline figures

The data presented in this bulletin are the final results from Wave 118 of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS), which was live from 7 October to 20 October 2024.

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.

Single-site weighted regional estimates up to Wave 106 are available in our [Business insights and impact on the UK subnational single-site economy: May 2024 article](#).

More about economy, business and jobs

- Explore the latest trends in employment, prices and trade in our [economic dashboard](#).
- View [all economic data](#).

The percentage of businesses that reported they were trading in early October 2024 was 95%, with 86% fully trading, and 9% partially trading (for example, trading with reduced hours or staff numbers). Meanwhile, 4% of businesses reported "temporarily paused trading", and 2% reported "permanently ceased trading" as their business's trading status.

3 . Financial performance

Turnover

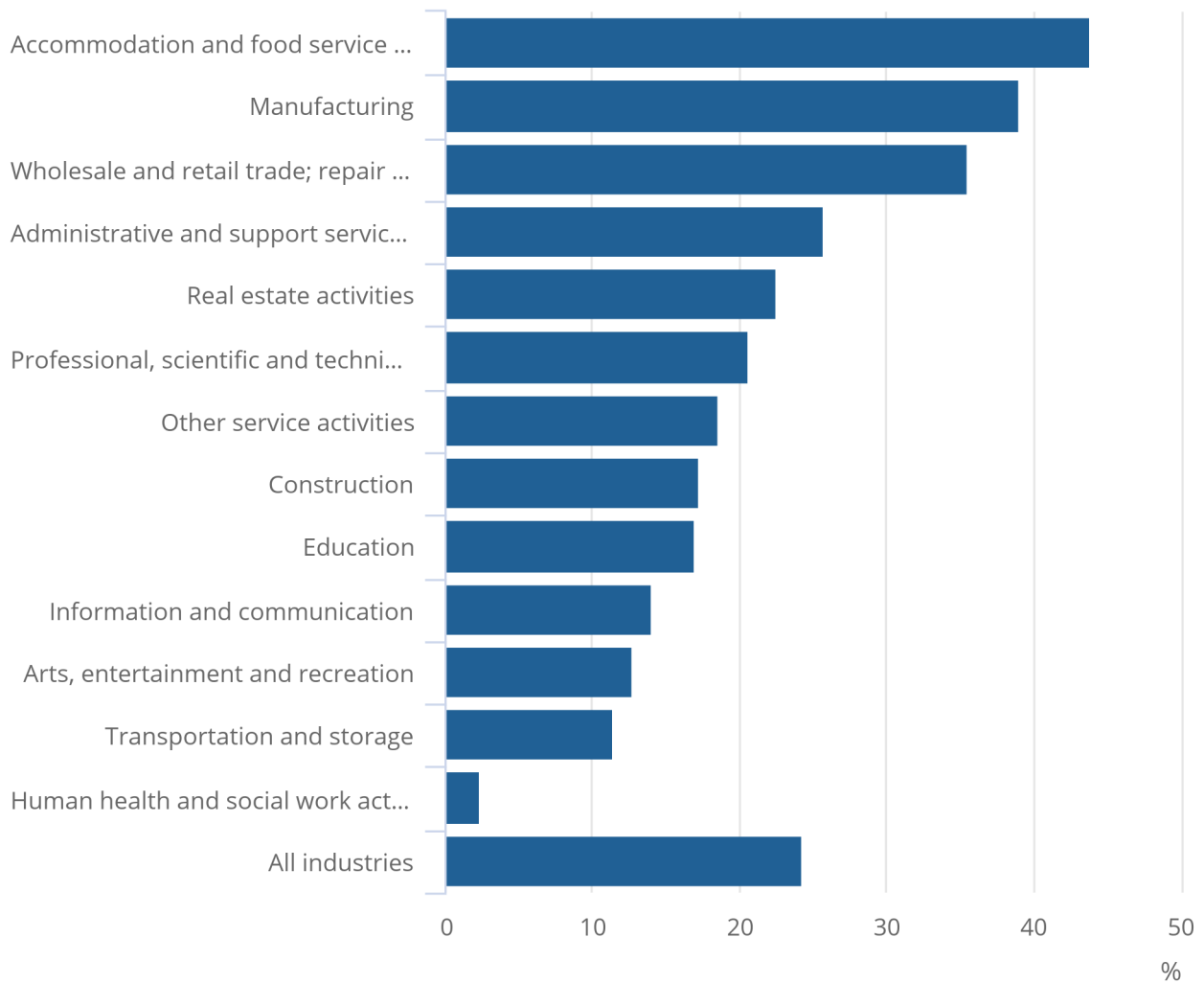
Trading businesses were asked how their turnover in September 2024 compared with August 2024, excluding any seasonal trading.

Figure 1: Approximately 4 in 9 (44%) trading businesses in the accommodation and food service activities industry reported that their turnover had decreased in September 2024 compared with August 2024

Turnover decreased, businesses currently trading, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 1 September 2024 to 30 September 2024

Figure 1: Approximately 4 in 9 (44%) trading businesses in the accommodation and food service activities industry reported that their turnover had decreased in September 2024 compared with August 2024

Turnover decreased, businesses currently trading, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 1 September 2024 to 30 September 2024



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

Notes:

1. For presentational purposes, some response options have been removed.
2. "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".

Nearly a quarter (24%) of trading businesses reported a decrease in turnover in September 2024 compared with August 2024. This was a fall of 2 percentage points from last month, but up 3 percentage points since April 2024 and in line with what businesses reported for September 2023.

Conversely, 15% of businesses reported that their turnover had increased from the previous calendar month, while 53% of businesses reported that their turnover had stayed the same.

The industry with the highest proportion of businesses reporting a decrease in turnover was the accommodation and food service activities industry (44%), which rose 20 percentage points from August 2024. This was the highest proportion reported for this industry since January 2024 (48%). The industry with the next highest proportion was manufacturing at 39%.

Turnover challenges

In early October 2024, 57% of businesses reported that they were experiencing turnover challenges, unchanged from early September 2024.

The most reported challenges having an impact on turnover were:

- economic uncertainty (22%), broadly stable with early September 2024
- competition (19%), up 2 percentage points from early September 2024
- cost of materials (16%), unchanged from early September 2024

The proportion of businesses experiencing turnover challenges in the accommodation and food service activities industry was significantly higher than other industries at 81%, up 9 percentage points from early September 2024.

For this industry, the three most reported challenges were:

- cost of materials (39%), up 7 percentage points from early September 2024
- cost of labour (36%), up 13 percentage points from early September 2024
- competition (31%), up 11 percentage points from early September 2024

Turnover expectations

When looking ahead to November 2024, 16% of businesses expect their turnover to increase, and 16% expect their turnover to decrease. This is down 4 percentage points and broadly stable, respectively, with previously reported expectations for October 2024. The accommodation and food service activities industry reported the highest proportion of businesses expecting their turnover to decrease, at 27%, although this is a fall from the 33% previously reported for October 2024.

The accommodation and food service activities industry reported historically high proportions of challenges relating to turnover and high expectations of turnover decreasing in the future.

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

4 . Prices

Price expectations

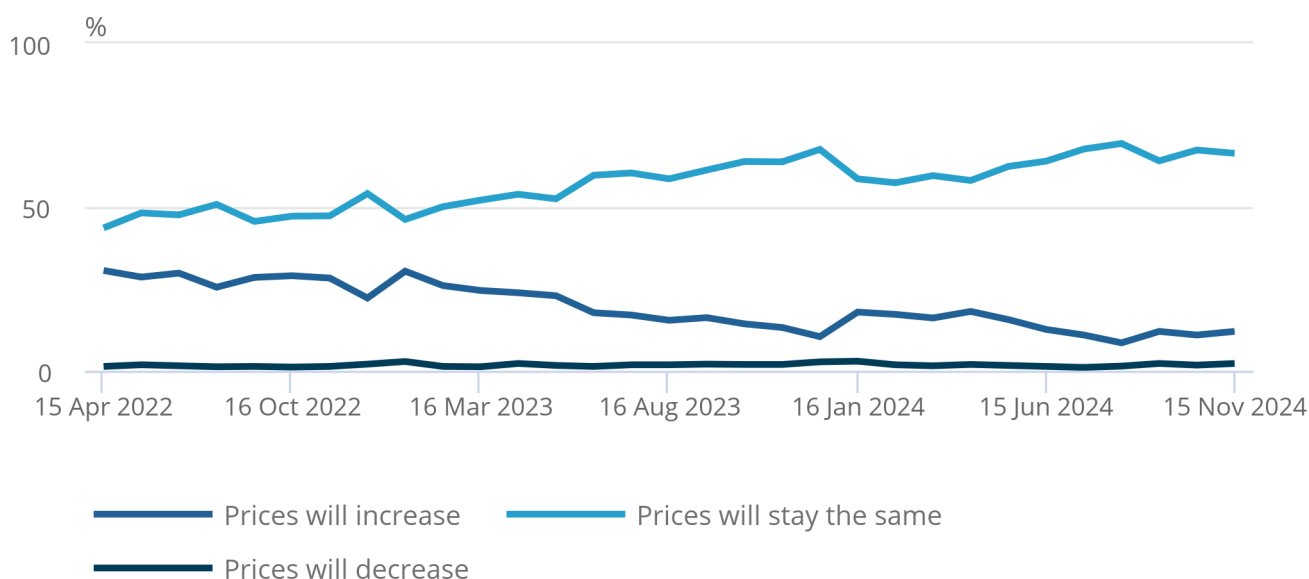
Businesses not permanently stopped trading were asked about their expectations for the prices of goods or services they sell in November 2024.

Figure 2: Nearly 1 in 8 (12%) businesses reported that they expect the prices of goods or services they sell to increase in November 2024

Price expectations, businesses currently trading, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 1 April 2022 to 30 November 2024

Figure 2: Nearly 1 in 8 (12%) businesses reported that they expect the prices of goods or services they sell to increase in November 2024

Price expectations, businesses currently trading, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 1 April 2022 to 30 November 2024



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.
3. 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.

When asked in early October 2024, 12% of trading businesses reported that they expect the prices of goods or services they sell to rise in November 2024. The proportion of businesses that expect their prices to stay the same was 66%, while the proportion that expected prices to decrease was 2%, all broadly stable with expectations for October 2024.

Trading businesses were also asked which, if any, factors were causing them to consider raising prices in November 2024. The most reported reasons for doing so were:

- labour costs (20%), broadly stable with October 2024
- energy prices (18%), broadly stable with October 2024
- raw material prices (16%), broadly stable with October 2024

It should be noted, however, that 53% of businesses were not considering raising prices, which is broadly stable with October 2024.

Further response options broken down by industry and size bands can be found in our [accompanying dataset](#).

5 . Workforce

Businesses not permanently stopped trading were asked whether they were experiencing worker shortages and recruitment difficulties in early October 2024 and September 2024, respectively.

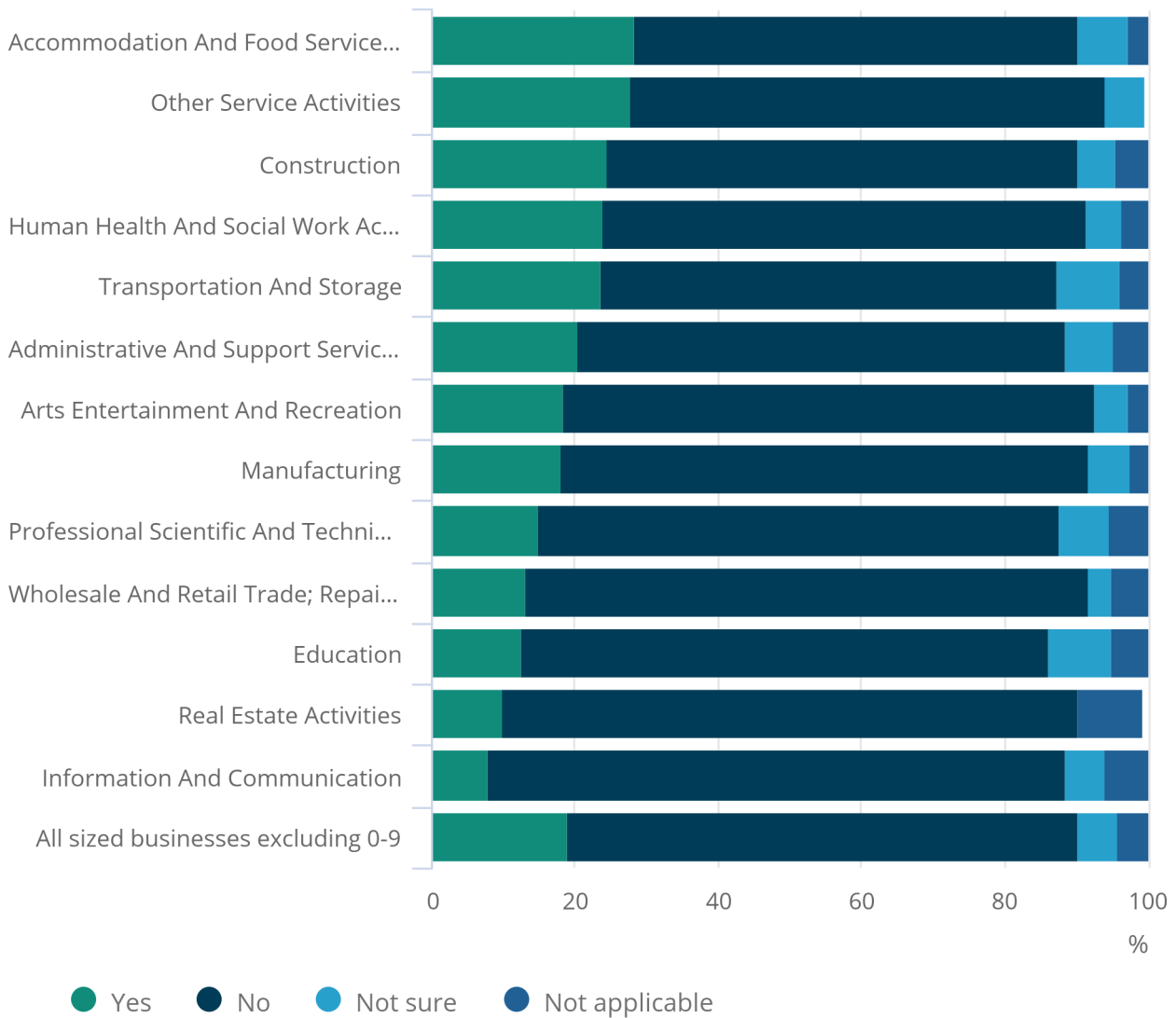
Worker shortages

Figure 3: Approximately 19% of trading businesses with 10 or more employees reported having worker shortages in early October 2024

Worker shortages, businesses not permanently stopped trading with 10 or more employees, broken down by response option, weighted by count, UK, 18 September 2023 to 20 October 2024

Figure 3: Approximately 19% of trading businesses with 10 or more employees reported having worker shortages in early October 2024

Worker shortages, businesses not permanently stopped trading with 10 or more employees, broken down by response option, weighted by count, UK, 18 September 2023 to 20 October 2024



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

Notes:

1. Bars may not sum to 100% because of rounding and percentages less than 1% being removed for disclosure purposes.
2. "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".

Less than a fifth (19%) of businesses with 10 or more employees reported experiencing worker shortages in early October 2024, while 20% reported in September 2024 that they were experiencing difficulties around recruiting employees. Both percentages were broadly stable compared with the previous reporting periods, but decreased 5 and 6 percentage points, respectively, compared with a year ago.

The two industries with the highest proportion of businesses experiencing worker shortages were accommodation and food service activities, and other service activities (which includes hairdressing and repair of goods and equipment) at 20% and 28%, respectively. These were also the two industries that had the greatest proportion of businesses that were experiencing recruitment difficulties, with 31% of businesses in accommodation and food service activities and 33% in other service activities.

Further response options broken down by industry and size bands can be found in our [accompanying dataset](#).

6 . Data from the Business Insights and Conditions Survey

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

Dataset | Released 24 October 2024

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 are official statistics in development.

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

Dataset | Released 24 October 2024

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 are official statistics in development.

Access to microdata

You can access the microdata for Waves 1 to 117 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.

7 . 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.

8 . Data sources and quality

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](#), which was updated on 10 October 2024.

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

Table 1: Sample and response rates for Wave 116, 117 and 118 of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey

Wave	19 September 2024 Publication Wave 116	3 October 2024 Publication Wave 117	24 October 2024 Publication Wave 118
Sample	38,861	38,942	38,909
Response	10,165	10,444	10,465
Rate	26.2%	26.8%	26.9%

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 118 survey was live from 7 October to 20 October 2024. For full details of the survey questions used, see our [Business Insights and Conditions Survey questions: 7 October to 20 October 2024](#).

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 defense
- 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 [Business Insights and Conditions Survey \(BICS\) Quality and Methodology](#) Information.

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 \(BICS\) Quality and Methodology Information](#).

9 . Related links

[Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators: 24 October 2024](#)

Bulletin | Updated frequently

Early data on the UK economy and society. These faster indicators are created using rapid response surveys, novel data sources and innovative methods. These are official statistics in development.

[Business insights and impact on the UK subnational single-site economy: May 2024](#)

Article | Released 16 May 2024

Estimates from the voluntary fortnightly business survey (BICS) on prices, financial performance, workforce and business resilience.

10 . Cite this statistical bulletin

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 24 October 2024, ONS website, statistical bulletin, [Business insights and impact on the UK economy: 24 October 2024](#)