

Article

# Business insights and impact on the UK subnational single-site economy: November 2024

Estimates from the voluntary fortnightly business survey (BICS) on financial performance, prices and workforce. These are official statistics in development.

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# 1 . Main points

- In September 2024, 15% of trading UK single-site businesses reported that their turnover was higher than in the previous month; Northern Ireland had the highest proportion, at 15%.
- Also, in September 2024, 23% of single-site businesses reported that their turnover had decreased; the proportion of businesses reporting this was highest for Scotland (24%).
- Between September 2023 and September 2024, each UK region saw a fall in the proportion of single-site businesses that reported that the prices of goods and services bought had increased compared with the previous month; the West Midlands saw the largest fall during this period, from 26% to 18%.
- In September 2024, 8% of UK single-site businesses reported that the prices of goods or services sold increased compared with the previous month; Scotland had the highest proportion of any region (9%) in each of the last three months.
- All UK nations reported a small fall in the proportion of single-site businesses that were experiencing worker shortages between late October 2023 and early October 2024; Scotland had the highest proportion experiencing worker shortages (9%) in early October 2024, and has seen a higher proportion than the other nations since early July 2024.

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

## 2 . Overview

The data presented in this article are weighted single-site estimates from Wave 93 to Wave 118 of the Office for National Statistics' [Business Insights and Conditions Survey \(BICS\)](#). For some questions, businesses were asked for their experiences for the survey live period. However, other questions ask specifically about the most recent calendar month in relation to the time of completion.

The BICS subnational release focuses on a single-business-site approach to be representative of sites spread across various geographies. Single-site businesses represent approximately 98% of all businesses and approximately half of total UK turnover and employment. The BICS does not cover all sectors of the economy and only includes private sector businesses.

The data reported are subject to [uncertainty](#), for example, sampling variability and [non-sampling error](#). This means that the make-up of single-site businesses that responded within a certain region and wave can have an impact on subnational BICS estimates. Further information on quality is available in our [Quality and Methodology Information](#) and we regularly update [confidence intervals](#) associated with the survey questions.

## 3 . Financial performance

Businesses were asked how their turnover compared with the previous calendar month.

**Figure 1: Interactive map showing single-site subnational estimates at ITL 1 using weighted single-site Wave 93 to Wave 118 Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) estimates**

Decrease in turnover compared with the previous calendar month, single-site businesses currently trading, weighted by count, broken down by region, UK, 1 September 2023 to 30 September 2024

Notes:

1. Weighted single-site estimates, Wave 93 to Wave 118 of the Office for National Statistics' Business Insights and Conditions Survey.
2. Data that have been removed for confidentiality reasons. This includes percentages less than 1%, breakdowns with a count of 10 or less, and breakdowns with a micro business count of 10 or less. A micro business has less than 10 employees.
3. For presentational purposes, some data points have been removed.
4. ITL 1 refers to International Territorial Level 1, which is a system we use to subdivide the UK for statistical purposes.

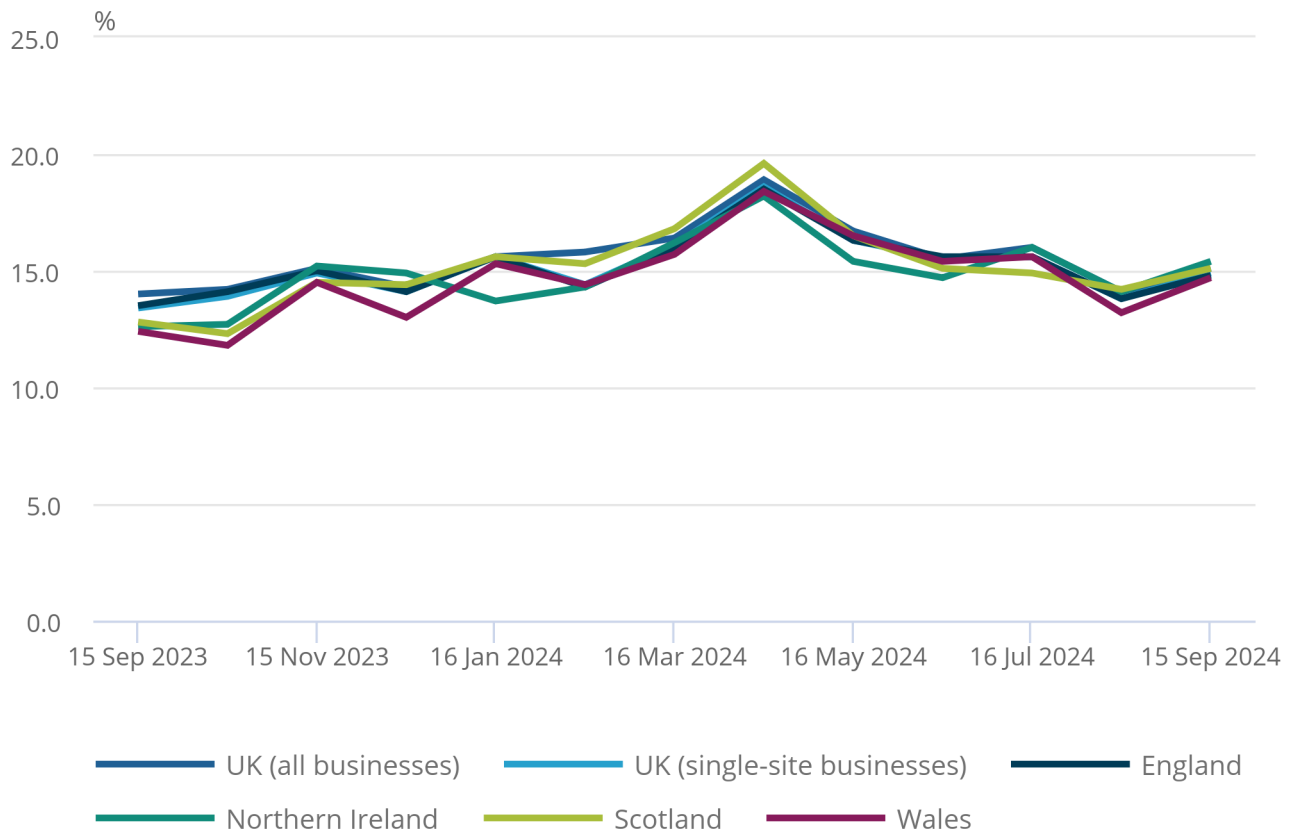
**Download the data**

**Figure 2: Between September 2023 and September 2024, Northern Ireland saw a 3-percentage-point rise in single-site businesses reporting an increase in turnover when comparing with the previous month**

Increase in turnover compared with the previous month, single-site businesses currently trading, broken down by country, weighted by count, UK, 1 September 2023 to 30 September 2024

Figure 2: Between September 2023 and September 2024, Northern Ireland saw a 3-percentage-point rise in single-site businesses reporting an increase in turnover when comparing with the previous month

Increase in turnover compared with the previous month, single-site businesses currently trading, broken down by country, weighted by count, UK, 1 September 2023 to 30 September 2024



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

Notes:

1. Final weighted all UK site results and weighted single-site estimates, Wave 93 and 118 of the Office for National Statistics' Business Insights and Conditions Survey.
2. Response rates vary across countries and between waves. Low response can affect the interpretation of these estimates.

In September 2024, 15% of trading UK single-site businesses reported that their turnover was higher than the previous month, with Northern Ireland (15%) having a marginally higher proportion than the other UK nations. All UK nations reported small rises in this proportion between September 2023 and September 2024, however, each nation is down from a peak of between 18% and 20% that was reached in April 2024.

Scotland was the nation that reported the highest proportion of single-site businesses that experienced a decrease in turnover in September 2024, at 24%. All UK nations remained broadly stable compared with September 2023, however, each nation has fallen between 4 and 5 percentage points since peaking in December 2023 (mirroring the negative UK GDP reported in our [GDP monthly estimate, UK: December 2023 bulletin](#)).

## 4 . Prices

### Prices bought

#### **Figure 3: Interactive map showing single-site subnational estimates at ITL 1 using weighted single-site Wave 93 to Wave 118 Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) estimates**

Prices bought increased, single-site businesses not permanently stopped trading, weighted by count, broken down by region, UK, 1 September 2023 to 30 September 2024

#### Notes:

1. Weighted single-site estimates, Wave 93 to 118 of the Office for National Statistics' Business Insights and Conditions Survey.
2. Data have been removed for confidentiality reasons. This includes percentages less than 1%, breakdowns with a count of 10 or less, and breakdowns with a micro business count of 10 or less (a micro business has less than 10 employees).
3. For presentational purposes, some data points have been removed.
4. ITL 1 refers to International Territorial Level 1, which is a system we use to subdivide the UK for statistical purposes.

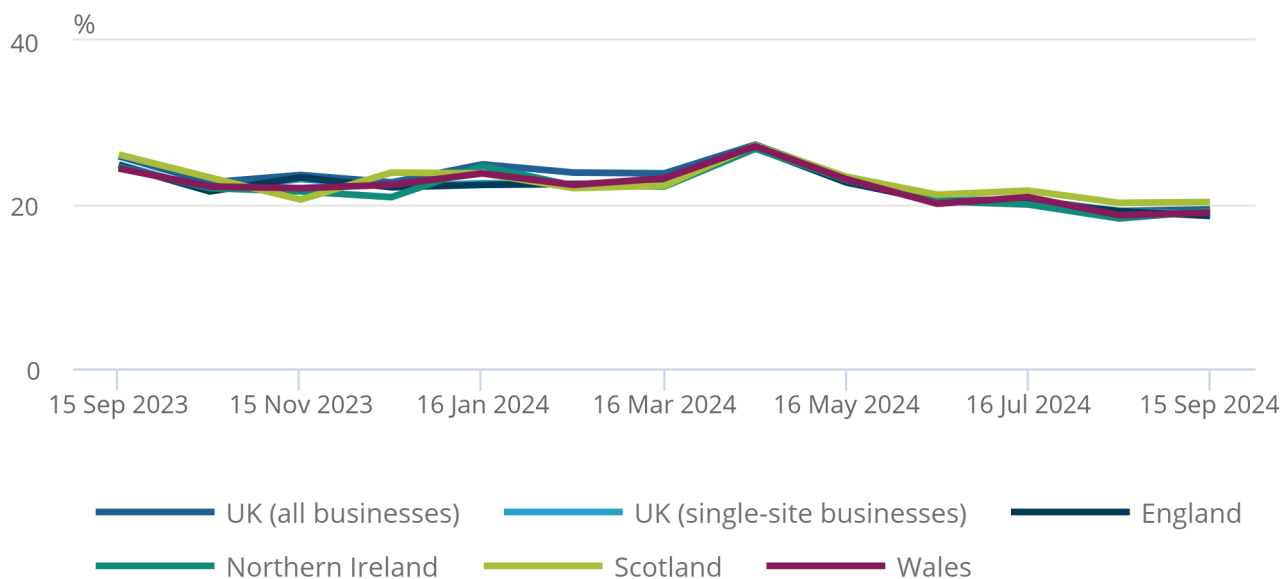
#### Download the data

**Figure 4: Approximately 1 in 5 (19%) single-site businesses in the UK reported an increase in the prices of goods or services bought in September 2024 compared with August 2024**

Prices bought increased, single-site businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by country, weighted by count, UK, 1 September 2023 to 30 September 2024

Figure 4: Approximately 1 in 5 (19%) single-site businesses in the UK reported an increase in the prices of goods or services bought in September 2024 compared with August 2024

Prices bought increased, single-site businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by country, weighted by count, UK, 1 September 2023 to 30 September 2024



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

Notes:

1. Response rates vary across countries and between waves. Low response can affect the interpretation of these estimates.
2. Data are plotted in the middle of the period of each wave.

Between September 2023 and September 2024, there was a fall in the percentage of UK single-site businesses that reported an increase in the prices of goods or services bought compared with the previous month, from 25% to 19%, reflecting the results reported for all UK businesses in our [BICS wave 118 dataset](#). All UK regions experienced a fall during this period, with the West Midlands seeing the largest fall, from 26% to 18%.

Scotland (20%) was the region with the highest proportion of single-site businesses that reported an increase in the prices of goods or services they bought in September 2024 and has had the highest proportion for three of the last four months.

At 17%, London had the lowest proportion of businesses reporting that the prices of goods or services they bought had increased in September 2024. Over the last year, London reported either the lowest or the second lowest proportion of any region in 9 of the last 12 months.

## Prices sold

### Figure 5: Interactive map showing single-site subnational estimates at ITL 1 using weighted single-site Wave 93 to Wave 118 Business Insights and Conditions Survey estimates

Prices sold increased, single-site businesses not permanently stopped trading, weighted by count, broken down by region, UK, 1 September 2023 to 30 September 2024

#### Notes:

1. Weighted single-site estimates, Wave 93 to Wave 118 of the Office for National Statistics' Business Insights and Conditions Survey.
2. Data have been removed for confidentiality reasons. This includes percentages less than 1%, breakdowns with a count of 10 or less, and breakdowns with a micro business count of 10 or less. A micro business has less than 10 employees.
3. Data are plotted in the middle of the period of each wave.

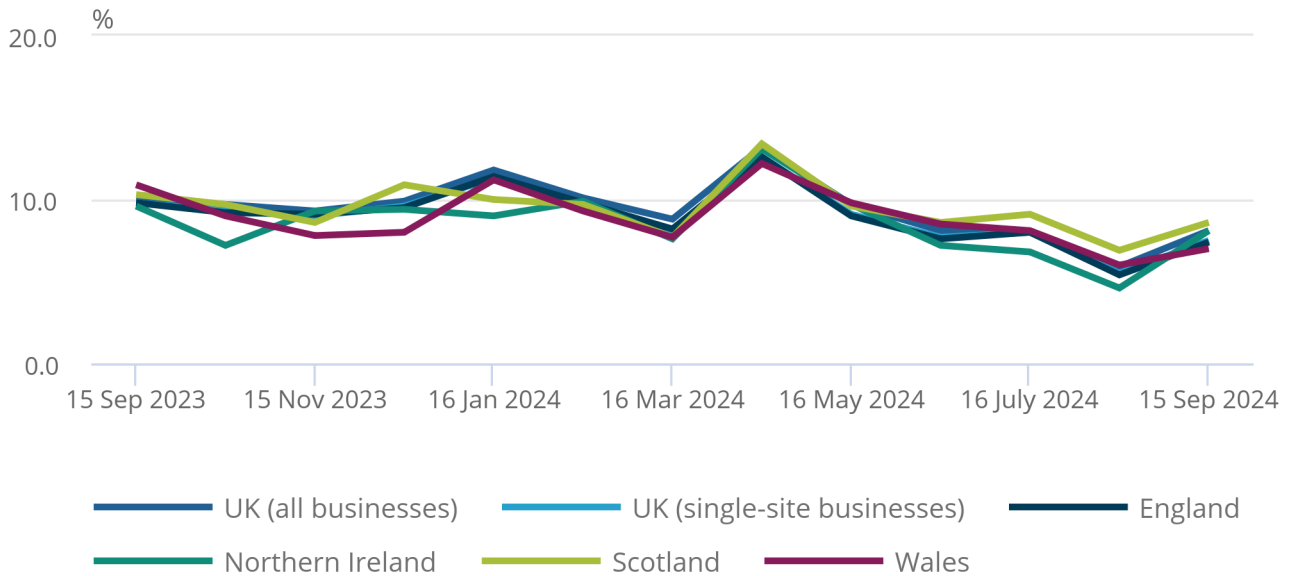
#### Download the data

**Figure 6: Of single-site businesses in Scotland, 9% reported an increase in the prices of goods or services sold in September 2024 compared with August 2024**

Prices sold increased, single-site businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by country, weighted by count, UK, 1 September 2023 to 30 September 2024

Figure 6: Of single-site businesses in Scotland, 9% reported an increase in the prices of goods or services sold in September 2024 compared with August 2024

Prices sold increased, single-site businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by country, weighted by count, UK, 1 September 2023 to 30 September 2024



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

Notes:

1. Response rates vary across countries and between waves. Low response can affect the interpretation of these estimates.
2. Data are plotted in the middle of the period of each wave.

Between September 2023 and September 2024, across all UK regions, there was a fall in the proportion of UK single-site businesses that reported an increase in the prices of goods or services they sold compared with the previous month, from 10% to 8%.

Wales was the region that reported the largest fall during this period, down 4 percentage points from 11% to 7%, however, the East Midlands had the lowest proportion overall in September 2024 at 6%.

Scotland (9%) had the highest proportion of single-site businesses of any UK region that reported that the prices of goods or services they sold had increased in September 2024 and has been the region with the highest proportion in each of the last 3 months.



## 5 . Worker shortages

Businesses not permanently stopped trading in the UK were asked if they were experiencing a shortage of workers.

### **Figure 7: Interactive map showing single-site subnational estimates at ITL 1 using weighted single-site Wave 94 to Wave 118 Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) estimates**

**Experiencing worker shortages, single-site businesses not permanently stopped trading, weighted by count, broken down by region, UK, 16 October 2023 to 20 October 2024**

#### **Notes:**

1. Weighted single-site estimates, Wave 94 to 118 of the Office for National Statistics' Business Insights and Conditions Survey.
2. Data have been removed for confidentiality reasons. This includes percentages less than 1%, breakdowns with a count of 10 or less, and breakdowns with a micro business count of 10 or less (a micro business has less than 10 employees).
3. For presentational purposes, some data points have been removed.
4. ITL 1 refers to International Territorial Level 1, which is a system we use to subdivide the UK for statistical purposes.

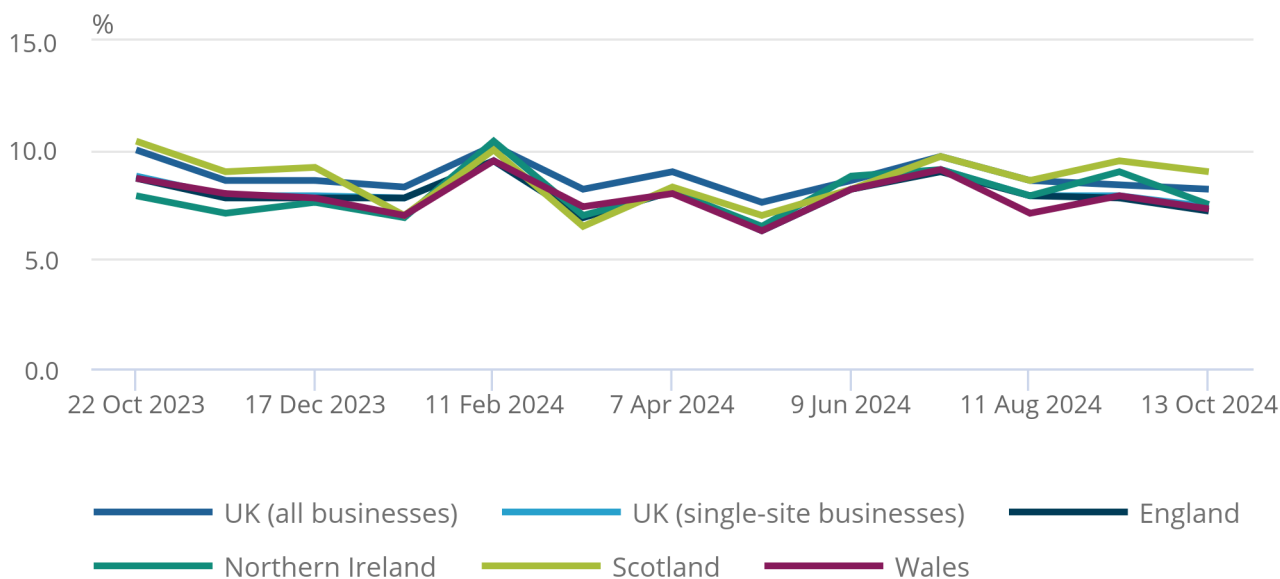
**Download the data**

**Figure 8: In early October 2024, Scotland reported the largest proportion of single-site businesses experiencing worker shortages (9%)**

Experiencing worker shortages, percentage of single-site businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by country, weighted by count, UK, 16 October 2023 to 20 October 2024

Figure 8: In early October 2024, Scotland reported the largest proportion of single-site businesses experiencing worker shortages (9%)

Experiencing worker shortages, percentage of single-site businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by country, weighted by count, UK, 16 October 2023 to 20 October 2024



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

Notes:

1. Response rates vary across countries and between waves. Low response can affect the interpretation of these estimates.
2. Data are plotted in the middle of the period of each wave.

In late October 2024, Scotland was the country that reported the largest proportion of single-site businesses experiencing worker shortages, at 9%, 2 percentage points higher than the UK total. From early April 2024 to late October 2024, Scotland has consistently reported a higher proportion than the UK total.

All English regions reported a fall in this proportion in late October 2024, compared with mid-October 2023, except for the East Midlands, which remained broadly stable, at 7%. The South East reported the largest fall during this period, down from 10% to 6%, and had a lower proportion in late October 2024 than any other region.

London (7%) reported the second lowest proportion of single-site businesses experiencing worker shortages in late October 2024 but has reported the lowest proportion six times during the last year.

## 6 . Data on business insights and impact on the UK subnational single-site economy data

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

Dataset | Released 5 November 2024

Experimental subnational estimates from the voluntary fortnightly Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) on topics such as trading status, financial performance, workforce, and business resilience.

Geographical breakdowns include country and regional levels.

## 7 . Glossary

### 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.

## 8 . Data sources and quality

This article uses microdata from the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) to help understand business impacts on the subnational UK economy. It predominantly focuses on wave 93 to wave 118 of the BICS (2 October 2023 to 20 October 2024) covering the period since the last edition of this article.

The Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) is voluntary, and the results are classed as [official statistics in development](#).

Table 1: Sample and response rates for all businesses, single-site businesses and multi-site businesses for Waves 114, 116 and 118 of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey

<b>Wave</b>	<b>Wave 114</b>	<b>Wave 116</b>	<b>Wave 118</b>
<b>All businesses sample</b>	38,941	38,861	38,909
<b>All businesses rate</b>	26.7%	26.2%	26.9%
<b>Single-site businesses sample</b>	28,185	28,126	28,197
<b>Single-site businesses rate</b>	23.5%	23.3%	23.8%
<b>Multi-site businesses sample</b>	10,756	10,735	10,712
<b>Multi-site businesses rate</b>	35.0%	33.7%	35.0%

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

### Notes

1. Additional datasets including response rates proportional breakdowns of single-site businesses compared with multi-sites businesses and the distribution of single-site businesses across industries can be found in the accompanying datasets.

Table 2: Response rates for single-site businesses broken down by country for Wave 118 of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey

Wave	Wave 118
<b>Northern Ireland single-site businesses sample</b>	802
<b>Northern Ireland single-site businesses rate</b>	18.5%
<b>Scotland single-site businesses sample</b>	1,806
<b>Scotland single-site businesses rate</b>	23.5%
<b>England single-site businesses sample</b>	24,606
<b>England single-site businesses rate</b>	24.1%
<b>Wales single-site businesses sample</b>	983
<b>Wales single-site businesses rate</b>	21.1%

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

## Notes

1. Additional datasets including response rates proportional breakdowns of single-site businesses compared with multi-sites businesses and the distribution of single-site businesses across industries can be found in the accompanying datasets.
2. The Business Insights and Conditions Survey samples a random sample of businesses across the UK, not by country.

In addition to single-site subnational estimates, we also provide multi-site subnational estimates. The multi-site methodology can be found in our [Understanding the business impacts of local and national restrictions, UK: July 2021 article](#) and further detail relating to these estimates is presented in our [accompanying dataset](#).

All current BICS subnational estimates should be treated as official statistics in development and caution is advised when interpreting the figures, as the BICS results are weighted by industry and by size band but not by region. Multi-site regional results are produced by apportionment by region rather than weighting by region.

The make-up of single-site businesses that responded within a certain region and wave can have an impact on subnational BICS estimates. This should be considered when interpreting results. Details of the make-up of single-site businesses can be found in our [accompanying dataset](#).

## Subnational BICS estimates

Subnational BICS estimates have been created by using the results collected in the fortnightly survey. Each survey return from each reporting unit is then applied to the reporting unit's one local site. We have removed businesses with multiple sites from the sample, and results in this analysis are based on single-site businesses only (as identified on the [Inter-Departmental Business Register \(IDBR\)](#)). Sections 2 and 3 of our [Business insights and impact on the UK and sub-national economy: 9 December 2022 article](#) outline in detail the methodology behind our single-site subnational estimates, and its impact compared with previously published results encompassing all businesses.

Aggregates of International Territorial Level (ITL1) regions such as the UK or England may have higher or lower response proportions than any of their constituent regions because of differences in the sample composition in terms of company workforce.

Because the larger aggregate regions (such as the UK or England) generally have a larger proportion of smaller companies, if there is a substantial difference between the response proportions of larger and smaller companies, this will be reflected in the headline figures.

## Weighting

Single-site estimates in this release are weighted, ensuring estimates are representative of all single-site businesses. A detailed description of the weighting methodology and its differences to unweighted estimates is available in our [Business Impact of Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Survey \(BICS\): preliminary weighted results](#).

The [weighted estimates for Scotland for businesses with 10 or more employees](#) are available from the Scottish Government website.

## Single-site sample

While the single-site approach is not representative of all UK businesses (as it excludes businesses with multiple sites), weighted single-site estimates are representative of all UK single-site businesses and approximately 98% of all businesses (and half of total UK turnover and employment). The [accompanying dataset](#) shows how reliable the composition by region and industry is (when using the single-sites approach), when compared with the all-businesses sample.

## Measuring the data

The BICS survey is voluntary and may only reflect the characteristics of those that responded. More quality and methodology information on strengths, limitations, appropriate uses, and how the data were created is available in our [Business Insights and Conditions Survey \(BICS\) QMI](#).

## Official statistics in development

These statistics are labelled as "official statistics in development". Until September 2023, these were called "experimental statistics". Read more about the change in our [guide to official statistics in development](#).

These statistics are based on information from the Business Insights and Conditions Survey. We are developing how we collect and produce the data to improve the quality of these statistics. Read more in our [Business Insights and Conditions Survey \(BICS\) QMI](#).

Once the developments are complete, we will review the statistics with the Statistics Head of Profession. We will decide whether the statistics are of sufficient quality and value to be published as official statistics, or whether further development is needed. Production may be stopped if they are not of sufficient quality or value. Users will be informed of the outcome and any changes.

We value your feedback on these statistics. Contact us at [bics@ons.gov.uk](mailto:bics@ons.gov.uk).

## 9 . Related links

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

Bulletin | Released 24 October 2024

This webpage provides the latest updates from the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS).

### [Business and innovation statistics](#)

Web page | Updated frequently

This webpage is a directory of statistical publications relating to business and innovation in Scotland, organised by subject.

## 10 . Cite this article

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 5 November 2024, ONS website, article, [Business insights and impact on the UK subnational single-site economy: November 2024](#)