

Statistical bulletin

Business demography, quarterly, UK: January to March 2026

Business creations or births and closures or deaths from the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR) with high-level breakdowns by industry and region. Official statistics in development.

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Next release:
To be announced

Correction

1 June 2026 09:57

We have identified an error in the Quarter 4 2024 figure for England in the tab titled "Deaths geography counts" in the Final Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2026 qdem workbook, and have uploaded a corrected version. We apologise for this error.

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1 . Main points

- The number of businesses added (business creations) to the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR) in the UK in Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2026 was 78,650 which is a decrease of 8.0% from Quarter 1 2025.
- There were decreases in business creations in 15 out of 16 main industrial groups in Quarter 1 2026, compared with Quarter 1 2025; the most significant decreases came from the health and social care, and finance and insurance industries.
- The number of businesses removed (business closures) from the IDBR in the UK in Quarter 1 2026 was 83,195; this figure is 1.1% lower than the number of closures in Quarter 1 2025.
- There was a decrease in the number of business closures in 9 out of 16 main industrial groups in Quarter 1 2026, compared with Quarter 1 2025; the most significant decreases came from the transportation and storage, and business administration and support services industries.

2 . Business creations

Business creations are new enterprise entries in the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR). These are referred to as business births in our annual [Business demography, UK bulletins](#) and other data. For more information, see [Section 6: Data sources and quality](#) and [Section 5: Glossary](#).

The number of business creations in the UK in Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2026 was 78,650. This is 8.0% lower than the number of business creations in Quarter 1 2025.

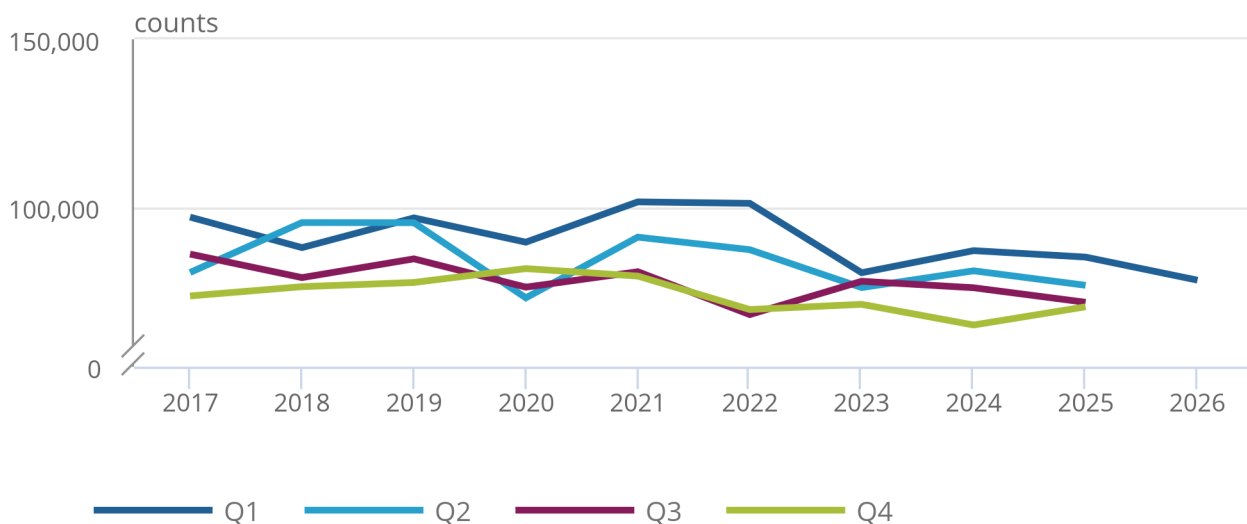
The number of business creations decreased in 15 out of 16 main industrial groups in Quarter 1 2026, compared with Quarter 1 2025. The most significant decreases came in the health and social care industry (down 23.9%), and the finance and insurance industry (down 25.7%).

Figure 1: Business creations in January to March 2026 were 8.0% lower than in January to March 2025

Number of businesses added to the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR), quarterly, UK, Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2017 to Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2026

Figure 1: Business creations in January to March 2026 were 8.0% lower than in January to March 2025

Number of businesses added to the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR), quarterly, UK, Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2017 to Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2026



Source: Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR) from the Office for National Statistics

3 . Business closures

Business closures are those removed from the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR). A business is removed from the IDBR if its turnover and employment are zero for several periods, or if we are notified that the business has ceased trading through an administrative or survey source.

There were 83,195 business closures in the UK in Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2026.

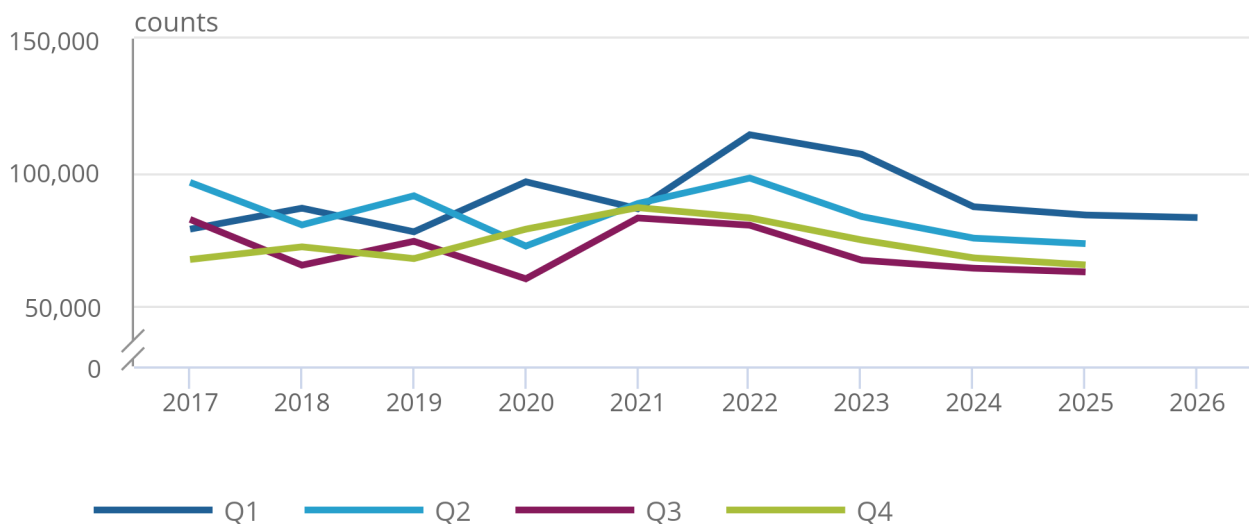
This is 1.1% lower than in Quarter 1 2025, with 9 out of 16 main industrial groups showing a decrease in closures. The most significant decreases came from the transportation and storage industry (down 23.0%), and the business administration and support services industry (down 13.2%).

Figure 2: Business closures were 1.1% lower in January to March 2026 than in January to March 2025

Number of businesses removed from the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR), quarterly, UK, Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2017 to Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2026

Figure 2: Business closures were 1.1% lower in January to March 2026 than in January to March 2025

Number of businesses removed from the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR), quarterly, UK, Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2017 to Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2026



Source: Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR) from the Office for National Statistics

4 . Data on Business demography

[Business demography, quarterly, UK](#)

Dataset | Released 24 April 2026

Business creations or births, and closures or deaths, from the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR), with high-level breakdowns by industry and region. These are official statistics in development.

[Business demography, quarterly, low-level geographic breakdown, UK](#)

Dataset | Released 24 April 2026

Business creations or births, and closures or deaths, from the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR), a low-level geographic breakdown for the UK, quarterly data. These are official statistics in development.

5 . Glossary

Business

For this release, the term "business" is used to represent an enterprise. An enterprise is an organisational unit producing goods or services that has a certain degree of autonomy in decision making.

Business creations

Often referred to as business births, we refer to enterprises added to the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR) as business creations in this release. Enterprises are added to the IDBR when a new business is identified from administrative sources. These are usually the Value Added Tax (VAT) or Pay As You Earn (PAYE) systems.

Business closures

Business closures are removals from the IDBR. These are referred to as business deaths in our annual Business demography, UK bulletins, and other data.

A business is removed from the IDBR if its turnover and employment are zero for several periods, or we are notified that the business has ceased trading.

The Inter-Departmental Business Register

A database of all businesses in the UK registered for Value Added Tax (VAT) and/or the Pay As You Earn (PAYE) Income Tax system. There are approximately 2.7 million businesses on the IDBR. The IDBR is used as a sampling frame for the Office for National Statistics (ONS) business surveys.

6 . Data sources and quality

Official statistics in development

These statistics are labelled as “official statistics in development”. They are based on information from the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR), VAT, PAYE, ONS business surveys, and Companies House. We are developing how we collect the data and produce the statistics to improve their quality.

Once we have completed the developments, we will review the statistics with the Statistics Head of Profession.

If the statistics meet trustworthiness, quality and value standards based on user feedback, we will remove the “official statistics in development” label to publish under the “official statistics” label.

If they do not meet trustworthiness, quality, and value standards, we will further develop them and might stop producing them.

If they were “accredited official statistics” before the start of the developments, we will ask the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) to reassess and re-accredit them.

We will inform users of the outcome of our, and any OSR, review and any changes.

Revisions and quality improvements

Previously, this release was called [Business demography, quarterly experimental statistics, UK](#). Please note that in this bulletin, we have used the term “most significant” to mean changes that have been identified by weighting percentage movements of business creations and closures by the absolute difference in the change, and ordering the industries by size of weighted change.

Since our [Business demography, quarterly experimental statistics, UK: October to December 2022 bulletin](#), businesses that do not have either Value Added Tax (VAT) or Pay As You Earn (PAYE), but do have a live company number, have been removed from the figures. This is because they can misrepresent business creation and closure figures.

We create these enterprises on the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR) to monitor them, usually because they help to give the full picture on the enterprise group. Often, these businesses do not have employment or turnover figures, but have some role in the enterprise group, such as the parent of the enterprise group. Most of our business surveys exclude these cases, and they are now also excluded from both annual and quarterly business demography results.

In our Quarter 3 (July to Sept) 2024 release, we took on revisions to births figures from Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2023 to Quarter 3 2024 to account for VAT group births from the main administrative source, which had been omitted until then. The total number of births added was around 2,400. The births were allocated over the seven quarters from Quarter 1 2023 up to Quarter 3 2024. In the Quarter 4 (Oct to Dec) 2024 release, the industrial classification of those businesses was improved. This led to many businesses being reclassified out of finance and into their correct industrial classification.

Agriculture industry revisions in Quarter 1 2026 release

In Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2024 business deaths in agriculture for England were revised from Quarter 1 2017 to exclude agricultural business that are not registered for either Value Added Tax (VAT) or Pay As You Earn (PAYE). They were removed because they can have a distorting effect on business creation and closure figures. Further investigations into agricultural business closures identified additional unregistered businesses. These have been removed from agriculture business closure counts in the Quarter 1 2026 release, leading to downward revisions for the period Quarter 1 2023 to Quarter 4 (Oct to Dec) 2025 inclusive.

Turnover and employment data

The turnover data on the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR) are mostly derived from VAT or the Office for National Statistics (ONS) business survey records. Employment data on the IDBR are derived from PAYE or ONS business survey records. In some cases, values are imputed from administrative data. The turnover data are updated annually, every September, from available data. Employment data are updated more frequently for some businesses, but at least annually for all businesses.

The turnover and employment data for business closures are the stored values at the last update while the business was active on the IDBR. Often this is the last annual update. These figures are not adjusted for inflation, so the average turnover would be expected to rise slowly over time, in line with inflation.

For business creations, the value for turnover is usually that estimated by the business upon registration with HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) for VAT. The employment value is the number of registered employees on their PAYE scheme if they have one, and it is imputed if they do not. This value is revised on the IDBR when more up to date data are received, but it is not revised in these statistics.

Data on turnover and employment on the IDBR should not be used to measure economic growth, or the growth of the labour market. Other ONS sources should be used for this. Data points are generally current for larger businesses, but less current for smaller businesses.

Additional geographical breakdowns

From our Quarter 4 2021 bulletin, additional geographical breakdowns of business creations and closures have been made available to meet user needs. An unspecified geography category has also been introduced to deal with the distorting effect of multiple registrations at the same site. These apply where there are over 250 creations or closures at the same postcode.

Any creations or closures that happen at one of these postcodes are taken out of their geography and placed into the "unspecified" category. These cases still count towards the UK totals. The figures are provided in our [Business demography, quarterly, low-level geographic breakdown, UK dataset](#), published as part of this statistical release.

Time of recording

Business creations and closures in these data are based on the date on which the action occurs on the IDBR. Data for this release are extracted from the IDBR quarterly.

The date a business is added to the IDBR is generally on the same day, or within a few days, of the legal creation of the business as a company with Companies House. However, this can be several weeks after the effective birth of the business.

For business closures, the registration process can take a little longer because the death of a business may be long and complex. The effective death of a business may occur several months before its actual death from a legal perspective. A business is removed from the IDBR if information from HMRC, ONS business surveys, or Companies House indicates that it is no longer active. We prove deaths by contacting businesses if necessary.

Frequency of data

The IDBR is updated from four main sources:

- VAT
- PAYE
- ONS business surveys
- Companies House

The updates occur in various frequencies, from daily to annual. A shorter time period analysis of business creations and closures would be volatile because the PAYE update is quarterly. As such, this source is best suited to quarterly publications.

Timeliness

In line with international guidance from Eurostat and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), our [annual Business demography, UK bulletins](#) are published a year after the reference period. This is to allow for reactivations before deaths figures are calculated. We have published these quarterly data to provide a timelier indicator of business creations and closures to communicate the effect of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on the UK economy. However, these data will not be entirely consistent with our annual bulletin, and that remains the superior measure of business demography.

Comparison with the deaths figures produced for our [annual Business demography, UK: 2021 bulletin](#) published on 17 November 2022, showed that the quarterly figures were overestimating deaths because of reactivations. Reactivations arise as later information on business turnover or employment is received.

From our [Business demography, quarterly experimental statistics, UK: October to December 2022 bulletin](#), we have introduced a method to take account of reactivations in business deaths. A similar, but smaller, issue occurs with births, when false births are removed by later IDBR processes. Using revised datasets taken a year after the original data were extracted from the IDBR, we have calculated an average reduction percentage to create more accurate early estimates. For this release we have applied a 11.2% reduction to business closures and a 3.2% reduction to business creations for Quarter 2 2025 to Quarter 1 2026.

It is standard practice to revise the births and deaths figures from the same quarter a year ago, recalculate the adjustments for false births and for reactivated deaths, and make revisions from that quarter onwards.

More detail about the IDBR and our annual official statistics on business demography is available in our [Business demography quality and methodology information \(QMI\)](#).

7 . Related links

[Business demography, UK: 2024](#)

Bulletin | Released 20 November 2025

Annual change in the number of UK businesses broken down by sector of the economy.

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

Bulletin | Released 23 April 2026

The impact of challenges facing the economy and other events on UK businesses, including financial performance, workforce, trade, and business resilience.

[Multiple business registrations at a single postcode, UK: 2024](#)

Article | Released 20 November 2025

Business demography explainer covering additional information on the impact of multiple registrations at a single postcode.

[Business dynamism in the UK economy: Quarter 1 \(Jan to Mar\) 1999 to Quarter 4 \(Oct to Dec\) 2019](#)

Bulletin | Released 15 October 2020

Experimental statistics on business dynamism at a firm level using the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR). The analysis includes changes in quarterly job creation and destruction rates by different firm characteristics since 1999 to 2019 for the UK.

8 . Cite this statistical bulletin

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 29 January 2026, ONS website, statistical bulletin, [Business demography, quarterly, UK: January to March 2026](#).