Article

Business insights and impact on the UK and sub-national economy

Experimental estimates from the voluntary fortnightly business 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 subnational levels.

Contact:
Freddy Farias Arias and Emily Hopson
bics@ons.gov.uk
+44 (0)1633 456720

Release date:
9 December 2020

Next release:
To be announced

Table of contents

1 . Main points

- The single site approach presented in this article currently provides our best estimates of regional and local authority business insights and impact for the following Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS) variables: trading status, financial performance, cash reserves and workforce status.

- In Wave 18 (16 to 29 November 2020) of the survey, England had the lowest percentage among the UK countries of single site businesses currently trading, at 76%, with the North East of England having the lowest percentage among the English regions, at 66%.

- England had the highest net percentage of single site businesses experiencing a decrease in turnover, at 41%, compared with Scotland and Wales, both at 39% and Northern Ireland, at 30%.

- England had the highest percentage among the UK countries of single site businesses with between zero and three months of cash reserves, at 35%, with the North East of England having the highest percentage among the English regions, at 38%.

- Scotland had the highest proportion of the workforce in single site businesses on full or partial furlough leave, at 15%, compared with 14% in both England and Wales, and 11% in Northern Ireland.

- The results in this release are likely to reflect both structural differences between different countries and regions of the UK, but also differences in the nature and timing of restrictions that have been put in place to reduce the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19).

- The interactive tool in Section 8 of this article allows users to explore how business insights and impact differ by local authority, based on single site weighted Wave 18 BICS results.

2 . Single site methodology

The Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS) provides timely insights into the impact on businesses' financial performance, workforce, prices, trade and business resilience over a fortnightly period. Insights representative of all UK businesses captured by BICS are reported within the fortnightly Business insights and impact on the UK economy, including how impacts differ by industry and by business size.

When we consider the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on the economy, it is important to also understand how this varies by location. Restrictions and lockdown measures often differ between countries within the UK and regions within England. However, currently published regional breakdowns are unweighted, meaning we can only make inferences about the businesses in our sample and that have responded to the survey.

The need for weighted regional estimates representative for all businesses is critical to provide insights into how businesses within different UK countries and regions have been impacted during the coronavirus pandemic. To provide these weighted regional estimates, including at a local authority level, we focus on those businesses that have a single business site.

Businesses can have just one site or many sites, and these sites can be in one particular country or region or have a presence across the UK and beyond. By using a single business site approach, we exclude businesses with multiple sites. This is because a multi-site business' response to a survey question may not necessarily be reflective of all its sites spread across various countries or regions.

For example, a multi-site business might have sites in all four UK countries, but the survey is only sent to the business site in Scotland. This site then provides a single set of responses, which is representative of most of its business sites in all four UK countries, but not necessarily all. This makes it difficult to know the status of all their individual sites without making further assumptions. It is therefore not possible to split (or apportion) the responses provided by multi-site businesses into their different country or region locations.

Therefore, although this article and methodology does provide weighted regional estimates, it is only representative of single site businesses and not all businesses within the UK, as multi-site businesses have been excluded. The single site approach presented in this article currently provides our best estimate of regional and local authority business insights and impact for the following BICS variables: trading status, financial performance, cash reserves and workforce status.

All the results presented in this article are related only to businesses who have identified as having zero or one site on the Inter-Departmental Register (IDBR) - hereby labelled as single site businesses. From Wave 17, the sample size for BICS was nearly doubled and now goes to approximately 39,000 businesses. This sample increase has allowed us to analyse regional data at a more granular level, providing early local authority estimates. A detailed description of the weighting methodology and its differences to unweighted estimates is available in Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS): preliminary weighted results.

3 . Impact of single site methodology

Table 1 shows the impact the single site methodology has on the sample of businesses for Wave 18 Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS) results, published on 3 December 2020. It shows that, of the 38,734 businesses sampled in Wave 18, almost 70% (or 26,831) were single sites.

Of the 11,903 businesses in the Wave 18 sample that were not single sites, the large majority (88%) were larger businesses with 50 or more employees. As a result, in the single site sample for Wave 18, businesses with 49 or fewer employees make up a larger proportion of the single site sample compared with the Wave 18 sample where businesses with multi-sites are included.

Overall, of the 2.31 million businesses registered in the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR), 2.27 million are single site businesses.

Table 1: Sample breakdown of Wave 18 and single site Wave 18 results, broken down by size band, UK

Size band (number of employees)	Wave 18 sample	Single site Wave 18 sample
0 to 9	10,136	9,419
10 to 49	8,495	7,719
50 to 99	8,062	5,516
100 to 249	4,913	2,289
250 and over	7,128	1,888
All size bands	38,734	26,831

Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey

Notes

1. Wave 18 sample for all businesses and single site businesses of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS).

Despite smaller businesses making up an even larger proportion of the single site Wave 18 sample compared with the Wave 18 sample, there is only a small impact on results weighted by count, as weighted by count results are already driven by the experiences of small businesses. Table 2 confirms this, as the headline estimate for single site businesses currently trading is the same compared with previously published all businesses estimates, both at 77%.

Table 2: Comparison of single site estimates on trading status and previously published (all businesses) estimates, weighted by count, UK, 16 to 29 November 2020

Size band (number of employees)	Weighted wave 18 results	Single site weighted wave 18 results
0 to 9	76.3%	76.3%
10 to 49	81.7%	80.7%
50 to 99	88.1%	87.1%
100 to 249	91.0%	90.7%
250 and over	90.1%	89.6%
All size bands (excluding 0-9)	82.9%	81.5%
All size bands	77.1%	76.7%

Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey

Notes

1. Wave 18 sample for all businesses and single site businesses of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS)

2. For presentational purposes "has been trading for more than the last two weeks" and "started trading within the last two weeks after a pause in trading" have been combined to "currently trading".

However, when weighting by turnover, the impact on headline estimates is more noticeable. When weighting by turnover, larger businesses tend to dominate headline results. Because of there being fewer larger businesses in the single site sample and smaller businesses making up a larger proportion of this sample as a result, the experiences of smaller businesses are reflected more strongly in single site weighted by turnover estimates. Table 3 shows how single site weighted Wave 18 results compare with all businesses weighted Wave 18 results across the relevant BICS variables in focus. There is only a small impact when weighting by employment, when using the single site methodology.

A detailed description of the weighting methodology and the impacts of the different types of weighting is available in [Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS): preliminary weighted results](#).

Table 3: Comparison of single site estimates and previously published (all businesses) estimates when weighting by turnover or employment, UK, 16 to 29 November 2020

BICS variable	Weighted by	Weighted wave 18 results	Single site weighted wave 18 results
Proportion that experienced a net decrease in turnover	Turnover	39%	47%
Proportion with zero to three months of cash reserves	Turnover	31%	34%
Proportion on full or partial furlough leave	Employment	15%	14%

Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey

Notes

1. Weighted Wave 18 results for all businesses and single site businesses of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS).
2. Net turnover balances have been calculated by subtracting the weighted by turnover number of businesses who have reported a decrease in turnover from the weighted by turnover number of businesses with an increase in turnover, all divided by the total weighted number of businesses currently trading for that wave.
3. Cash reserve categories between zero and three months have been combined for quality purposes.

In the following sections, caution should be taken when interpreting country by industry or region by industry results as response rates in some cases can be quite low and results can be volatile. Though, we have tried to avoid any loss of quality by compiling industries into sectors where appropriate. Section 10 has an overview of response rates by region and by industry.

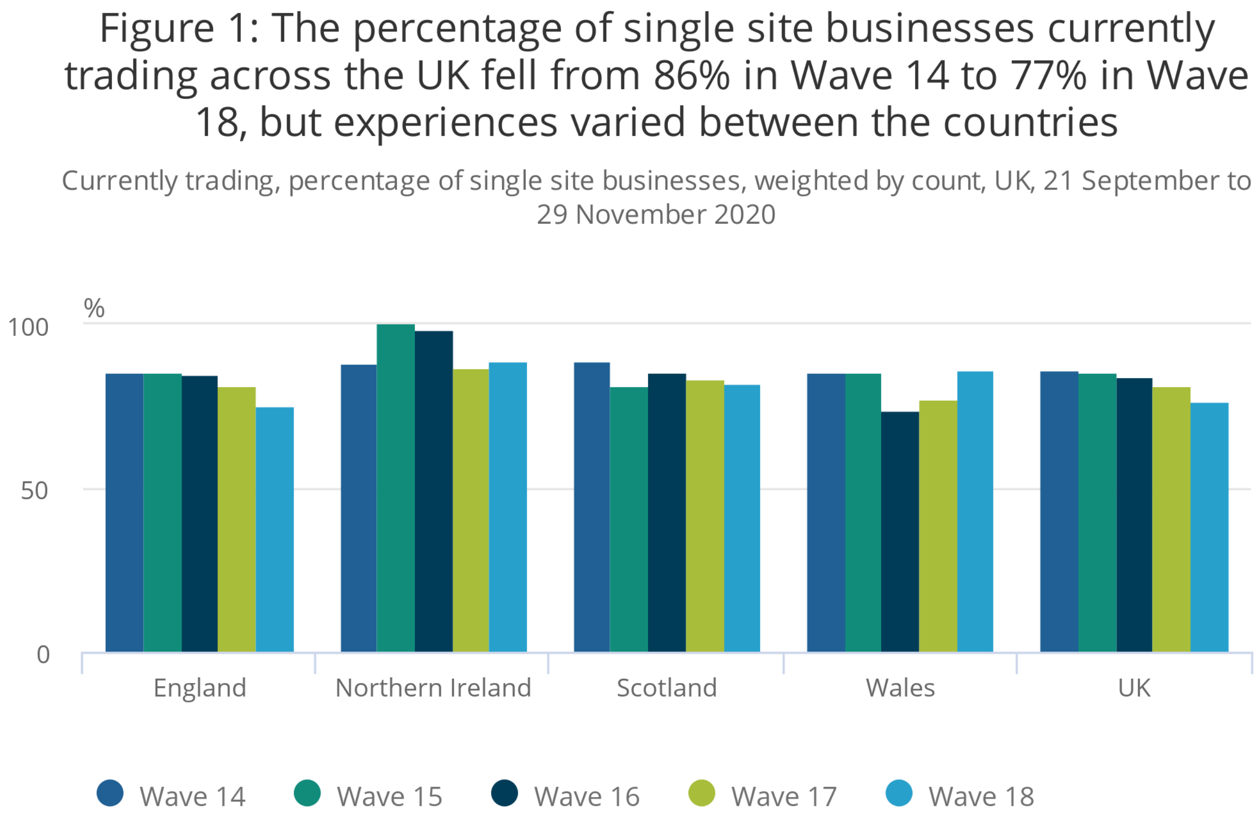
Overall, while the single site approach is not representative of all UK businesses (as it excludes businesses with multiple sites), weighted single site estimates are representative of all UK single site businesses and it allows us to track business insights and impact in different regions over time to see how the impacts of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on their business have evolved.

4 . Trading status

This section provides insights into the proportion of single site businesses currently trading by country and by region. Local authority breakdowns are also available in our interactive map in Section 8.

Figure 1: The percentage of single site businesses currently trading across the UK fell from 86% in Wave 14 to 77% in Wave 18, but experiences varied between the countries

Currently trading, percentage of single site businesses, weighted by count, UK, 21 September to 29 November 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey

Notes:

1. Weighted single site results, Wave 14 to 18 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS).

2. For presentational purposes "has been trading for more than the last two weeks" and "started trading within the last two weeks after a pause in trading" have been combined to "currently trading".

3. Response rates vary across countries and between waves. Low response can impact the interpretation of these estimates.

In Wave 18 (16 to 29 November 2020) of the Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS), across all UK single site businesses, 77% of businesses were currently trading, compared with 86% in Wave 14 (21 September to 4 October 2020).

England saw an overall decrease in the percentage of single site businesses currently trading; falling from 86% in Wave 14 to 76% in Wave 18. Notable decreases can be seen in Wave 17 (2 to 15 November 2020) and Wave 18 (16 to 29 November 2020), reflecting England's four-week lockdown period, which came into effect on 5 November 2020.

Scotland also saw an overall decrease in the percentage of single site businesses currently trading; 89% in Wave 14 and 82% in Wave 18. However, this was not a consistent decrease through time, reflecting the circuit breaker that occurred in Scotland between 10 October to 1 December 2020.

The percentage of single site businesses currently trading in Wales remained consistent between Wave 14 and Wave 18, at 86%. But in Wave 16 (19 October to 1 November 2020) and Wave 17 (2 to 15 November 2020) the percentage fell to 74% and 77% respectively. This is consistent with the "firebreak" that occurred in Wales between 23 October and 9 November 2020.

Northern Ireland has had ongoing tightened lockdown and circuit breaker style restrictions since 16 October 2020, which are due to be relaxed on 11 December 2020. This overlaps with the data from Wave 15 (5 to 18 October 2020) to Wave 18 (16 to 29 November 2020). Northern Ireland estimates need to be treated with caution as they are based on a low response rate.

Figure 2 shows how the percentage of single site businesses currently trading in each country and the UK overall differs by industry in Wave 18 (16 to 29 November 2020). These dates should be kept in mind in relation to local and national lockdowns and, dependent on the location and date when the business responded, this could impact on estimates. Caution is needed when interpreting the Northern Ireland responses as these are based on a low response rate.

Figure 2: The other service activities industry and the accommodation and food service activities industry had the lowest percentages of single site businesses currently trading across the UK, in Wave 18

Currently trading, percentage of single site businesses, weighted by count, UK, 16 to 29 November 2020

Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey

Notes

1. Weighted single site results, Wave 18 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS).
2. For presentational purposes "has been trading for more than the last two weeks" and "started trading within the last two weeks after a pause in trading" have been combined to "currently trading".
3. Response rates vary across countries and between waves. Low response can impact the interpretation of these estimates.
4. Mining and quarrying has been removed for disclosure purposes, but its total is included in "All Industries".
5. "*" = percentages less than 1% or industry and country count less than 10
6. Industry descriptions and country names have been shortened and simplified for presentational purposes.

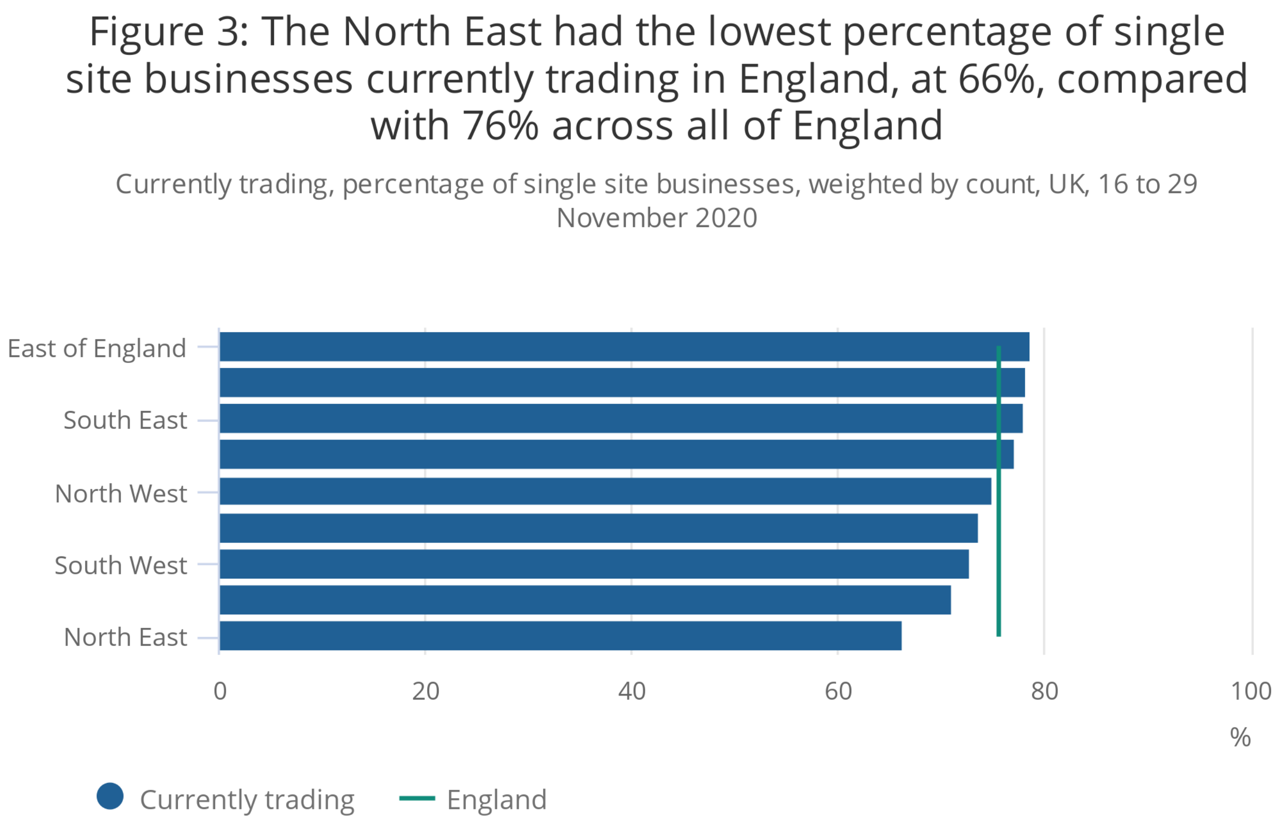
Download the data

At a UK level, the other service activities industry (which includes hairdressing and other beauty treatment activities) and the accommodation and food service activities industry had the lowest percentages of single site businesses currently trading, at 41% and 45%, respectively. These low percentages are largely driven by businesses in England, where 37% and 41% are currently trading in these industries, respectively.

The water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities industry and the human health and social work activities industry (private sector businesses only) had the highest percentages of single site businesses currently trading, at 99% and 96%, respectively.

Figure 3: The North East had the lowest percentage of single site businesses currently trading in England, at 66%, compared with 76% across all of England

Currently trading, percentage of single site businesses, weighted by count, UK, 16 to 29 November 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey

Notes:

1. Weighted single site results, Wave 18 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS).

2. For presentational purposes "has been trading for more than the last two weeks" and "started trading within the last two weeks after a pause in trading" have been combined to "currently trading".

3. Response rates vary across regions and between waves. Low response can impact the interpretation of these estimates.

In Wave 18 (16 to 29 November 2020), the East of England had the highest percentage of single site businesses currently trading in England, at 79%. This was closely followed by the East Midlands and the South East, both at 78%.

The North East had the lowest percentage of single site businesses currently trading, at 66%. This is compared with 76% across England and 77% across the UK. As Figure 4 shows, this low percentage was mainly driven by their services and construction sectors, where the percentages currently trading were 62% and 67%, respectively.

Table 4 shows how the percentage of single site businesses currently trading in each region in England differs by sector in Wave 18 (16 to 29 November 2020).

Table 4: The services sector had the lowest percentage of businesses currently trading across England, at 74%, falling to 62% in the North East
Currently trading, percentage of single site businesses, weighted by count, UK, 16 to 29 November 2020

	Services	Construction	Production	All industries
North East	61.6%	66.7%	98.8%	66.4%
Yorkshire and The Humber	69.6%	68.4%	99.2%	71.0%
South West	65.5%	100.0%	90.3%	72.8%
London	75.5%	62.9%	69.2%	73.8%
North West	72.6%	86.2%	97.3%	75.1%
West Midlands	74.7%	99.7%	61.4%	77.1%
South East	76.5%	85.2%	83.2%	78.1%
East Midlands	79.0%	72.6%	76.6%	78.3%
East of England	77.5%	78.5%	93.9%	78.7%
England	74.0%	80.5%	84.9%	75.5%

Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey

Notes

1. Weighted single site results, Wave 18 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS).
2. For presentational purposes "has been trading for more than the last two weeks" and "started trading within the last two weeks after a pause in trading" have been combined to "currently trading".
3. For quality purposes industries have been collated to construction, production (including: 2-digit SIC 5 to 39, inclusive), and services (including: 2-digit SIC 45 to 98, inclusive).
4. Response rates vary across regions and between waves. Low response can impact the interpretation of these estimates.
5. "*" = percentages less than 1% or industry and region count less than 10

5 . Financial performance

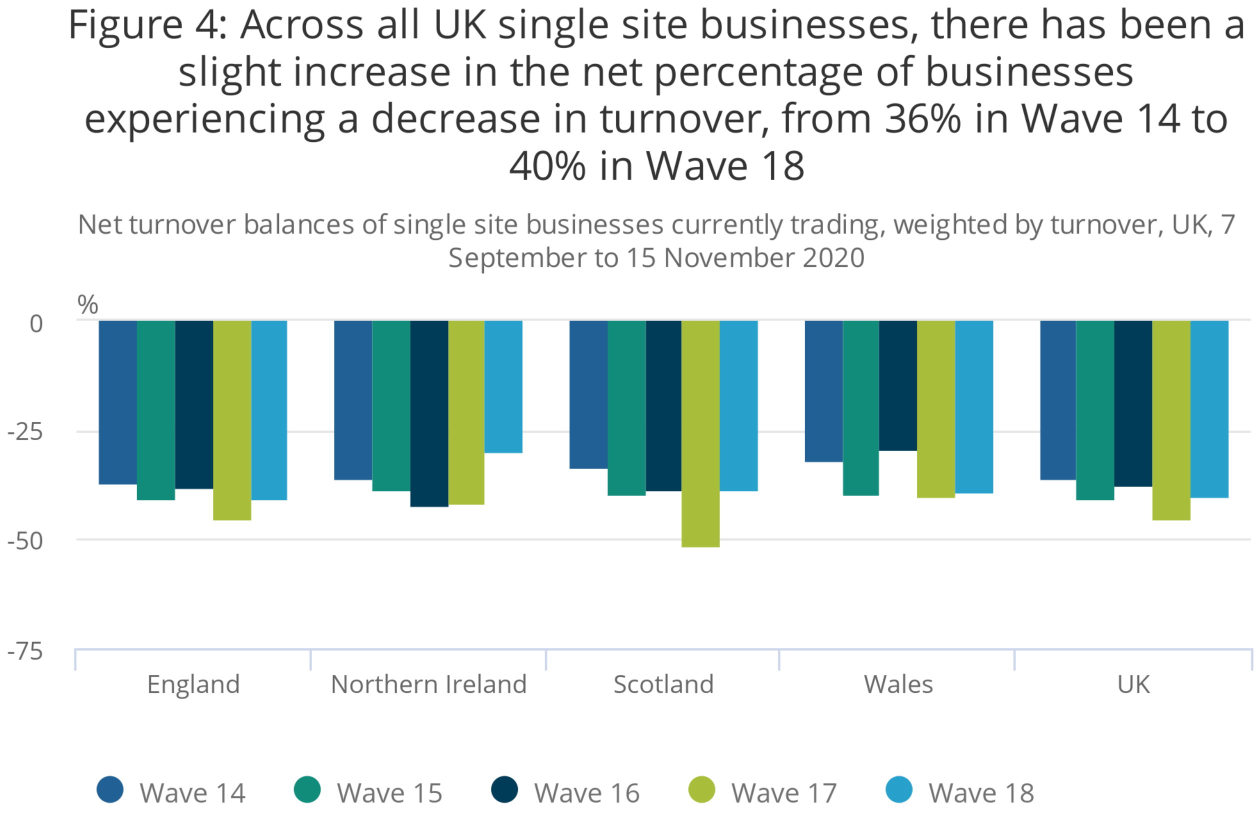
This section provides insights into the net percentage of businesses experiencing a decrease in turnover by country and by region. Local authority breakdowns are also available in our interactive map in Section 8.

In Wave 18 (2 to 15 November) of the Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS), across all UK single site businesses, of businesses currently trading:

- 47% experienced a decrease in turnover compared with normal expectations for this time of year
- 38% experienced no impact on turnover
- 7% experienced an increase in turnover compared with normal expectations for this time of year
- 9% were not sure

Figure 4: Across all UK single site businesses, there has been a slight increase in the net percentage of businesses experiencing a decrease in turnover, from 36% in Wave 14 to 40% in Wave 18

Net turnover balances of single site businesses currently trading, weighted by turnover, UK, 7 September to 15 November 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey

Notes:

1. Weighted single site results, Wave 18 of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS); businesses currently trading.
2. Net turnover balances have been calculated by subtracting the weighted by turnover number of businesses who have reported a decrease in turnover from the weighted by turnover number of businesses with an increase in turnover, all divided by the total weighted number of businesses currently trading for that wave.
3. Response rates vary across countries and between waves. Low response can impact the interpretation of these estimates.
4. Results for this particular question’s wave 17 geographical breakdown should be treated with caution due to lower than usual responses, where a small number of businesses were affected.

Across all UK single site businesses, there has been a slight increase in the net percentage of businesses experiencing a decrease in turnover, from 36% in Wave 14 (7 to 20 September 2020) to 40% in Wave 18 (2 to 15 November 2020).

Wales had on average the lowest net percentage of single site businesses experiencing a decrease in turnover between Wave 14 and Wave 18, consistently 40% or lower.

In Wave 18, England had the highest net percentage of single site businesses experiencing a decrease in turnover, at 41%. It also had the highest of the four countries in Wave 14, when it was 37%.

Scotland also had an increase in the net percentage of single site businesses experiencing a decrease in turnover between Wave 14 and Wave 18, like England and Wales. It was 34% in Wave 14 compared with 39% in Wave 18, peaking at 51% in Wave 17. Results for this particular question, wave and geographical breakdown should be treated with caution because of lower than usual responses, where a small number of businesses were affected.

In Northern Ireland, the net percentage of businesses experiencing a decrease in turnover had gradually been increasing, from 36% in Wave 14 to 42% in Wave 16 (5 to 18 October 2020). The net percentage remained broadly stable in Wave 17 (19 October to 1 November 2020) at 42% before falling significantly to 30% in Wave 18.

Figure 5 shows how the net percentage of businesses experiencing a decrease in turnover in each country and the UK overall differs by industry in Wave 18 (2 to 15 November 2020). Where a value is positive, it means there was a net percentage of businesses that have experienced an increase in turnover.

Figure 5: Across all UK single site businesses, the water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities industry had the highest net percentages of businesses experiencing a decrease in turnover, at 92%

Net turnover balances of single site businesses currently trading, weighted by turnover, UK, 2 to 15 November 2020

Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey

Notes

1. Weighted single site results, Wave 18 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS); businesses currently trading.

2. Net turnover balances have been calculated by subtracting the weighted by turnover number of businesses who have reported a decrease in turnover from the weighted by turnover number of businesses with an increase in turnover, all divided by the total weighted number of businesses currently trading for that wave.

3. Response rates vary across countries and between waves. Low response can impact the interpretation of these estimates.

4. Mining and quarrying has been removed for disclosure purposes, but its total is included in "All Industries".

5. "*" = percentages less than 1% or industry and country count less than 10

6. Industry descriptions and country names have been shortened and simplified for presentational purposes.

7. The dark vertical lines represent a value of zero. Values below zero mean that more businesses have experienced a decrease in turnover, while a value above zero reflect that more businesses have experienced an increase in turnover.

Download the data

At a UK level, the water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities industry and the accommodation and food service activities industry had the highest net percentages of businesses experiencing a decrease in turnover, at 92% and 82%, respectively.

In England, the industries with the highest net percentages of businesses experiencing a decrease in turnover were the water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities industry and the accommodation and food service activities industry, at 94% and 84%, respectively. While the industry in England with the lowest net percentage of decrease in turnover was the information and communication industry, at 24%.

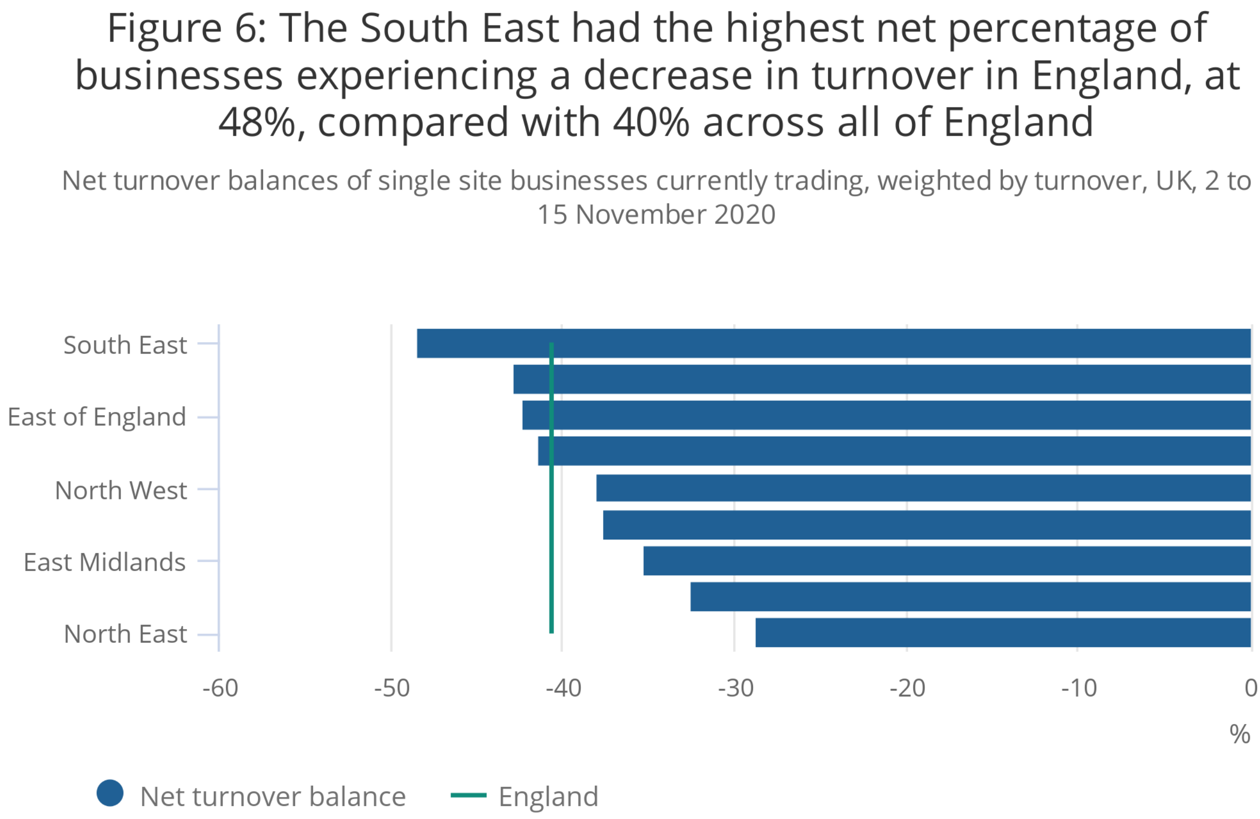
In Scotland, the industries with the highest net percentages of businesses experiencing a decrease in turnover were the accommodation and food service activities industry and the arts, entertainment and recreation industry, at 70% and 59%, respectively. The industries with the lowest net percentages of decrease in turnover were the professional, scientific and technical activities industry and the information and communication industry, both at 22%.

In Northern Ireland, the industry with the highest net percentage of businesses experiencing a decrease in turnover was the accommodation and food service activities industry, at 100%. The industry with the lowest net percentage of decrease in turnover was the wholesale and retail trade industry, at 9%.

Wales was the only country where an industry had a positive net turnover balance (meaning there was a net percentage of businesses that have experienced an increase in turnover); the human health and social work activities industry (private sector businesses only), at 8%. The industry with the highest net percentage of businesses experiencing a decrease in turnover was the accommodation and food service activities industry, at 78%.

Figure 6: The South East had the highest net percentage of businesses experiencing a decrease in turnover in England, at 48%, compared with 40% across all of England

Net turnover balances of single site businesses currently trading, weighted by turnover, UK, 2 to 15 November 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey

Notes:

1. Weighted single site results, Wave 18 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS); businesses currently trading.

2. Net balances have been calculated by subtracting the weighted by turnover number of businesses who have reported a decrease in turnover from the weighted by turnover number of businesses with an increase in turnover, all divided by the total weighted number of businesses currently trading for that wave.

3. Response rates vary across regions and between waves. Low response can impact the interpretation of these estimates.

In Wave 18 (2 to 15 November 2020), the South East had the highest net percentage of businesses experiencing a decrease in turnover, at 48%.

In contrast, the North East had the lowest net percentage of businesses experiencing a decrease in turnover, at 29%, compared with 40% in both England and the UK.

Table 5 shows how the net percentage of businesses experiencing a decrease in turnover in each region in England differs by sector in Wave 18 (2 to 15 November 2020).

Table 5: The production sector was the sector with the highest net percentage of businesses experiencing a decrease in turnover in the South East, at 70% in Wave 18
Net turnover balances of single site businesses currently trading, weighted by turnover, UK, 2 to 15 November 2020

	Construction	Services	Production	All industries
South East	-31.7%	-40.1%	-70.4%	-48.4%
South West	-41.7%	-44.5%	-38.7%	-42.8%
East of England	-40.9%	-41.8%	-45.4%	-42.3%
London	-42.8%	-41.4%	-41.1%	-41.5%
North West	-30.3%	-42.7%	-26.0%	-37.8%
West Midlands	-29.4%	-41.2%	-33.0%	-37.6%
East Midlands	-27.2%	-38.3%	-30.7%	-35.2%
Yorkshire and The Humber	-30.4%	-36.7%	-23.4%	-32.5%
North East	-29.6%	-28.3%	-29.3%	-28.7%
England	-35.0%	-40.7%	-42.8%	-40.8%

Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey

Notes

1. Weighted single site results, Wave 18 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS); businesses currently trading.

2. Net balances have been calculated by subtracting the weighted by turnover number of businesses who have reported a decrease in turnover from the weighted by turnover number of businesses with an increase in turnover, all divided by the total weighted number of businesses currently trading for that wave.

3. For quality purposes industries have been collated to construction, production (including: 2-digit SIC 5 to 39, inclusive), and services (including: 2-digit SIC 45 to 98, inclusive).

4. Response rates vary across regions and between waves. Low response can impact the interpretation of these estimates.

5. * represents less than 1% or industry and region count less than 10.

The production sector was the sector with the highest net percentage of businesses experiencing a decrease in turnover in the South East, at 70% in Wave 18.

Across all regions in England, the production sector was the sector in Wave 18 with the highest net percentage of businesses experiencing a decrease in turnover, at 43%, compared with 41% in the services sector and 35% in the construction sector.

6 . Cash reserves

This section provides insights into the proportion of businesses with between zero and three months of cash reserves by country and by region. Local authority breakdowns are also available in our interactive map in Section 8.

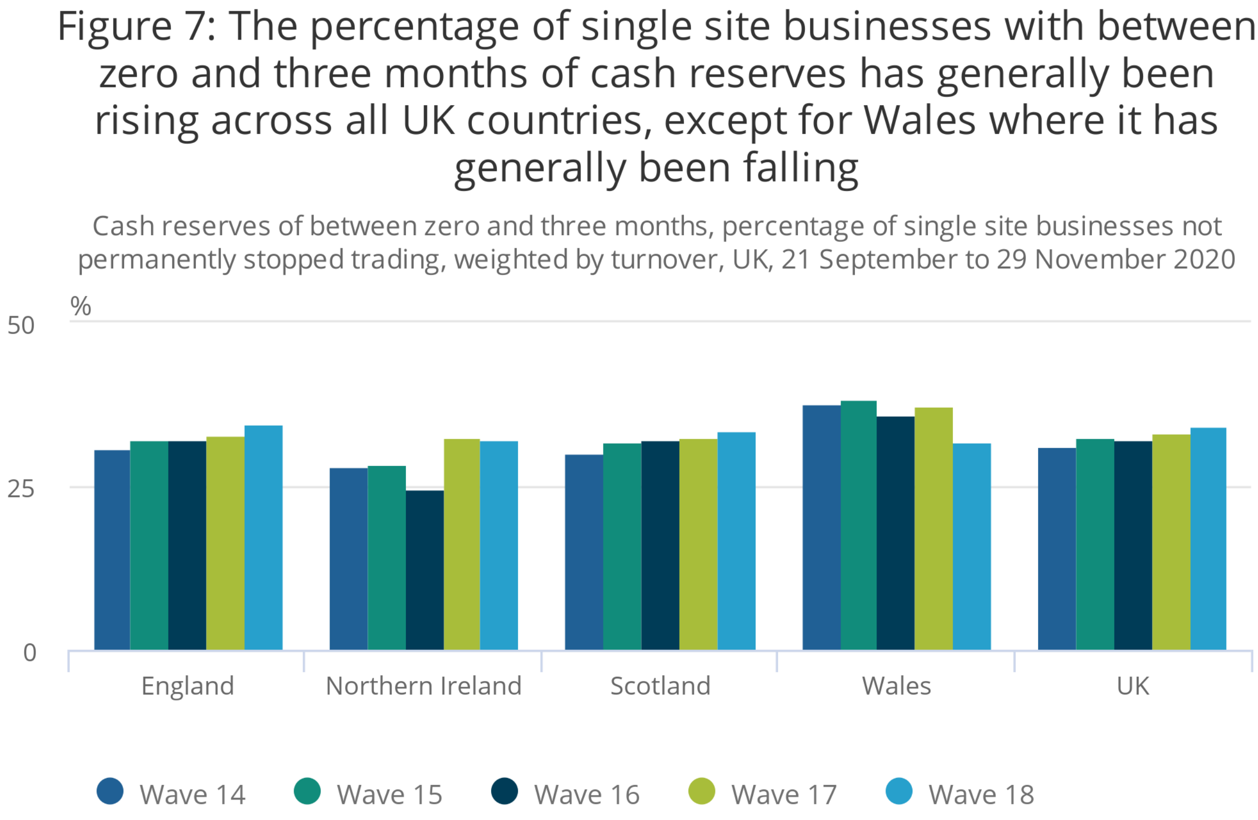
In Wave 18 (2 November to 15 November 2020) of the Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS), across all UK single site businesses:

- 6% had no cash reserves
- 5% had less than one month of cash reserves
- 24% had between one and three months of cash reserves
- 48% had four or more months of cash reserves
- 17% were not sure

Cash reserve categories between zero and three months have been combined for country and region breakdowns for quality purposes (that is, to avoid results being based on a low number of responses).

Figure 7: The percentage of single site businesses with between zero and three months of cash reserves has generally been rising across all UK countries, except for Wales where it has generally been falling

Cash reserves of between zero and three months, percentage of single site businesses not permanently stopped trading, weighted by turnover, UK, 21 September to 29 November 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey

Notes:

1. Weighted single site results, Wave 14 to 18 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS); businesses not permanently stopped trading.

2. Cash reserve categories between zero and three months have been combined for quality purposes.

3. Response rates vary across countries and between waves. Low response can impact the interpretation of these estimates.

The percentage of single site businesses with between zero and three months of cash reserves has gradually increased from 31% in Wave 14 (21 September to 4 October 2020) to 34% in Wave 18.

This generally increasing trend is broadly in line with single site businesses across the four countries, except for Wales, where it has fallen from 38% in Wave 14 to 32% in Wave 18. This is partly because of the proportion of businesses in Wales with four or more months of cash reserves rising over that period, from 45% in Wave 14 to 50% in Wave 18.

In Wave 18, England had the highest percentage of single site businesses with zero to three months of cash reserves, at 35%, compared with Wales, where the percentage was the lowest of the countries, at 32%.

Figure 8 shows how the percentage of businesses with no or less than three months of cash reserves in each UK country differs by industry in Wave 18 (16 November to 29 November 2020).

Figure 8: In Wave 18, 78% of single site businesses in the accommodation and food and services activities industry in Northern Ireland had no or less than three months of cash reserves, compared with 53% across the UK

Cash reserves of between zero and three months, percentage of single site businesses not permanently stopped trading, weighted by turnover, UK, 16 November to 29 November 2020

Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey

Notes

1. Weighted single site results, Wave 18 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS); businesses not permanently stopped trading.
2. Cash reserve categories between zero and three months have been combined for quality purposes.
3. Response rates vary across countries and between waves. Low response can impact the interpretation of these estimates.
4. Mining and quarrying has been removed for disclosure purposes, but its total is included in "All Industries".
5. "*" = percentages less than 1% or industry and country count less than 10
6. Industry descriptions and country names have been shortened and simplified for presentational purposes.

[Download the data]

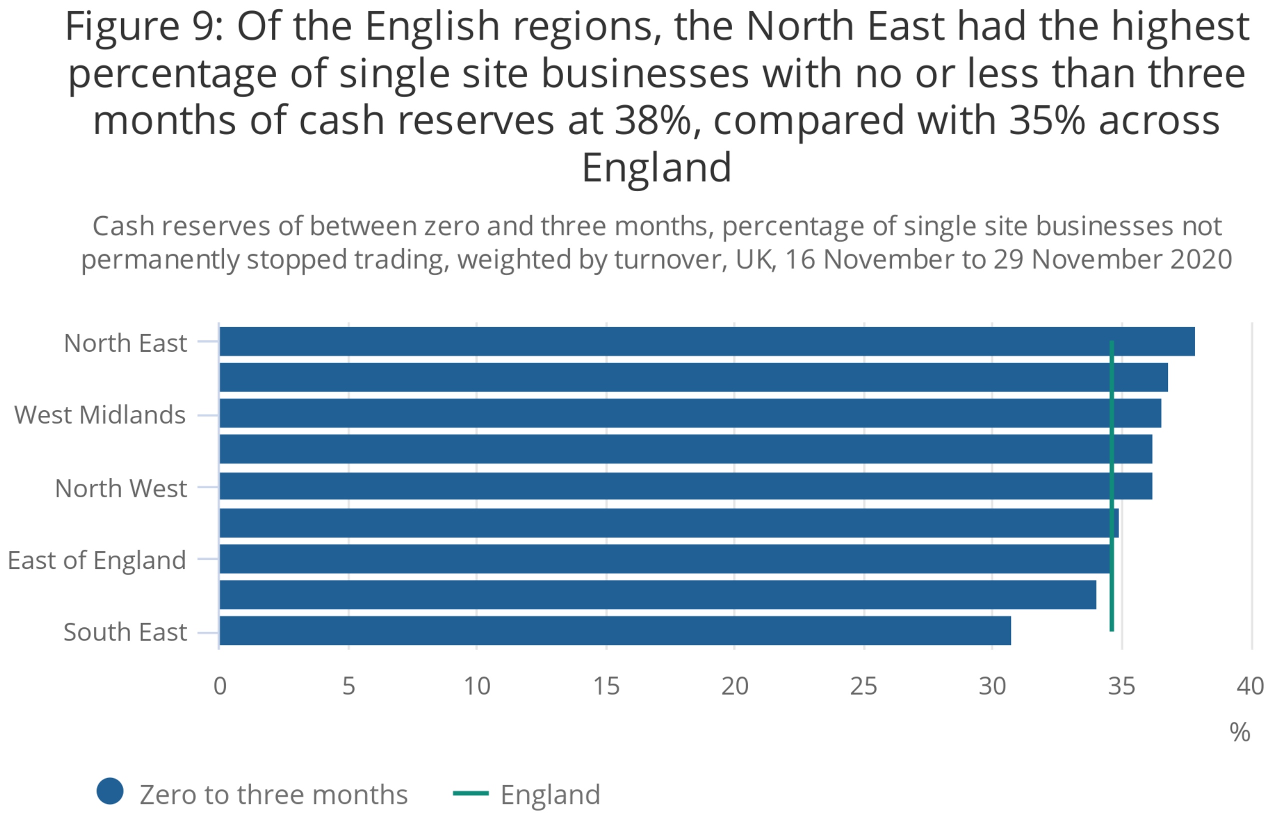
The other services industry was the industry with the largest percentage of single site businesses with no or less than three months of cash reserves, at 60%, with results mainly driven by single site businesses in England.

The accommodation and food service activities industry was the industry with the second-largest percentage of single site businesses with no or less than three months of cash reserves, at 53%. In Northern Ireland, this percentage rises to 78%.

The professional, scientific and technical activities industry in Wales is the only other instance where more than half of businesses (51%) have no or less than three months of cash reserves.

Figure 9: Of the English regions, the North East had the highest percentage of single site businesses with no or less than three months of cash reserves at 38%, compared with 35% across England

Cash reserves of between zero and three months, percentage of single site businesses not permanently stopped trading, weighted by turnover, UK, 16 November to 29 November 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey

Notes:

1. Weighted single site results, Wave 18 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS); businesses not permanently stopped trading.

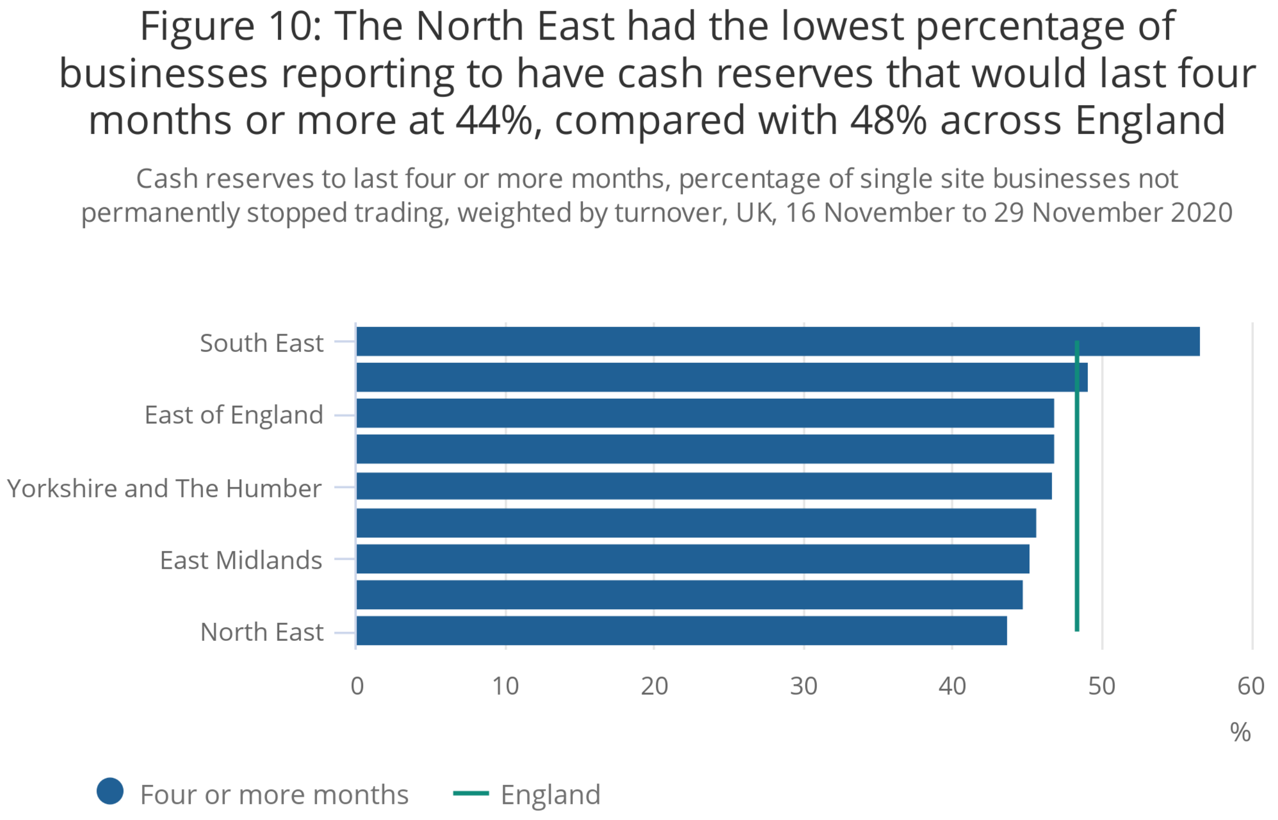
2. Cash reserve categories between zero and three months have been combined for quality purposes.

3. Response rates vary across regions and between waves. Low response can impact the interpretation of these estimates.

Of the nine English regions, six had a higher percentage of single site businesses with no or less than three months of cash reserves than the England percentage, 35%. The England region with the highest proportion of single site businesses with no or less than three months of cash reserves was the North East, at 38%, while the South East had the lowest, at 31%.

Figure 10: The North East had the lowest percentage of businesses reporting to have cash reserves that would last four months or more at 44%, compared with 48% across England

Cash reserves to last four or more months, percentage of single site businesses not permanently stopped trading, weighted by turnover, UK, 16 November to 29 November 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey

Notes:

1. Weighted single site results, Wave 18 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS); businesses not permanently stopped trading.

2. Cash reserve categories between four months or higher have been combined for presentational purposes.

3. Response rates vary across regions and between waves. Low response can impact the interpretation of these estimates.

In contrast, only two of the nine English regions had higher percentages of single site businesses with four months or more of cash reserves, compared with the England percentage of 48%: South East (57%) and South West (49%).

The North East had the lowest proportion of single site businesses reporting to have cash reserves that would last four months or more, at 44%.

Table 6 shows how the percentage of businesses with no or less than three months of cash reserves in each England region differs by sector.

Table 6: The construction sector had the highest percentage of single site businesses with no or less than three months of cash reserves, at 42%
Cash reserves of between zero and three months, percentage of single site businesses not permanently stopped trading, weighted by turnover, UK, 16 November to 29 November 2020

	Construction	Services	Production	All industries
North East	41.7%	40.6%	27.6%	37.9%
Yorkshire and The Humber	39.5%	37.9%	33.1%	36.9%
West Midlands	45.8%	39.3%	27.3%	36.6%
East Midlands	34.2%	38.0%	32.7%	36.3%
North West	50.0%	36.2%	32.8%	36.3%
South West	46.7%	34.6%	30.3%	35.0%
East of England	40.1%	33.1%	38.4%	34.6%
London	53.1%	32.6%	46.5%	34.1%
South East	38.1%	37.8%	11.2%	30.8%
UK	42.1%	35.3%	27.1%	34.3%

Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey

Notes

1. Weighted single site results, Wave 18 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS); businesses not permanently stopped trading.
2. Cash reserve categories between zero and three months have been combined for quality purposes.
3. For quality purposes industries have been collated to construction, production (including: 2-digit SIC 5 to 39, inclusive), and services (including: 2-digit SIC 45 to 98, inclusive).
4. Response rates vary across regions and between waves. Low response can impact the interpretation of these estimates.

The construction sector had the highest percentage of single site businesses with no or less than three months of cash reserves, at 42%, rising to 50% or higher in both London and the North West.

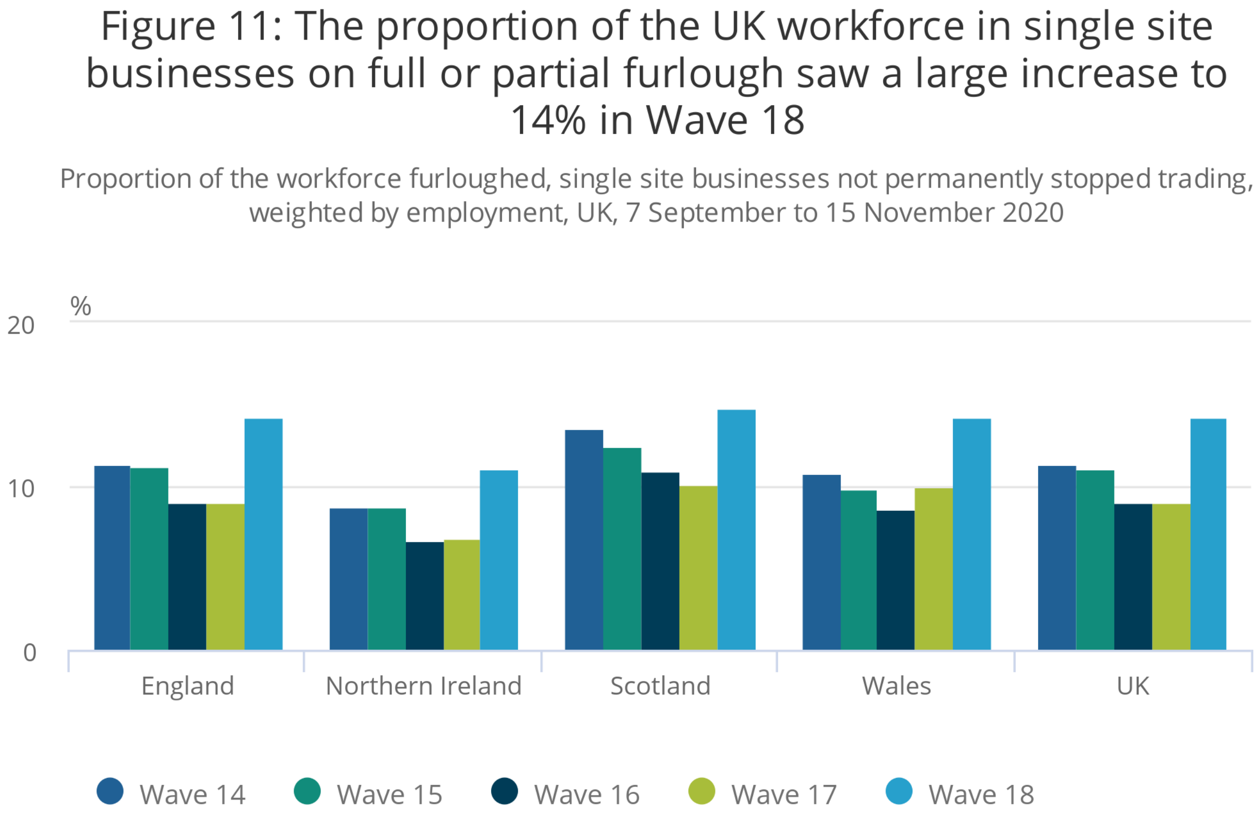
The production sector had the lowest percentage of single site businesses with no or less than three months of cash reserves, at 27%, rising to 47% in London and falling to 11% in the South East.

7 . Workforce

This section provides insights into the proportion of workforce in single site businesses that are on full or partial furlough leave, by country and by region. Local authority breakdowns are also available in our interactive map in Section 8.

Figure 11: The proportion of the UK workforce in single site businesses on full or partial furlough saw a large increase to 14% in Wave 18

Proportion of the workforce furloughed, single site businesses not permanently stopped trading, weighted by employment, UK, 7 September to 15 November 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey

Notes:

1. Weighted single site results, Wave 14 to 18 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS); businesses not permanently stopped trading.

2. Response rates vary across country and between waves. Low response can impact the interpretation of these estimates.

3. Businesses were asked for their experiences for the reference period. However, for questions regarding the last two weeks, businesses may respond from the point of completion of the questionnaire.

In Wave 18 (2 November to 15 November 2020) of the Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS), 14% of the workforce of single site businesses in the UK were on full or partial furlough leave, compared with 9% in Wave 17 (19 October to 1 November 2020). All four countries saw a large increase (of about 4 to 5 percentage points) in Wave 18 compared with the previous wave. This is likely to be as a result of new restrictions introduced over the survey period, in combination with the furlough scheme being extended until March 2021 because of ongoing coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions.

Of the four countries, Scotland had the highest proportion of their workforce on partial or full furlough leave, at 15% in Wave 18, compared with Northern Ireland, which had the lowest, at 11%.

Figure 12 shows how the proportion of the UK workforce in single site businesses on full or partial furlough leave in each UK country differs by industry.

Figure 12: The proportion of the workforce on full or partial furlough in the accommodation and food service activities was 63% across the UK, rising to 81% in Northern Ireland and 74% in Wales

Proportion of the workforce furloughed, of single site businesses not permanently stopped trading, weighted by employment, UK, 2 November to 15 November 2020

Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey

Notes

1. Weighted single site results, Wave 18 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS); businesses not permanently stopped trading.
2. Response rates vary across countries and between waves. Low response can impact the interpretation of these estimates.
3. Businesses were asked for their experiences for the reference period (2 to 15 November 2020). However, for questions regarding the last two weeks, businesses may respond from the point of completion of the questionnaire (16 to 29 November 2020).
4. "*" = percentages less than 1% or industry and country count less than 10.
5. Industry descriptions and country names have been shortened and simplified for presentational purposes.

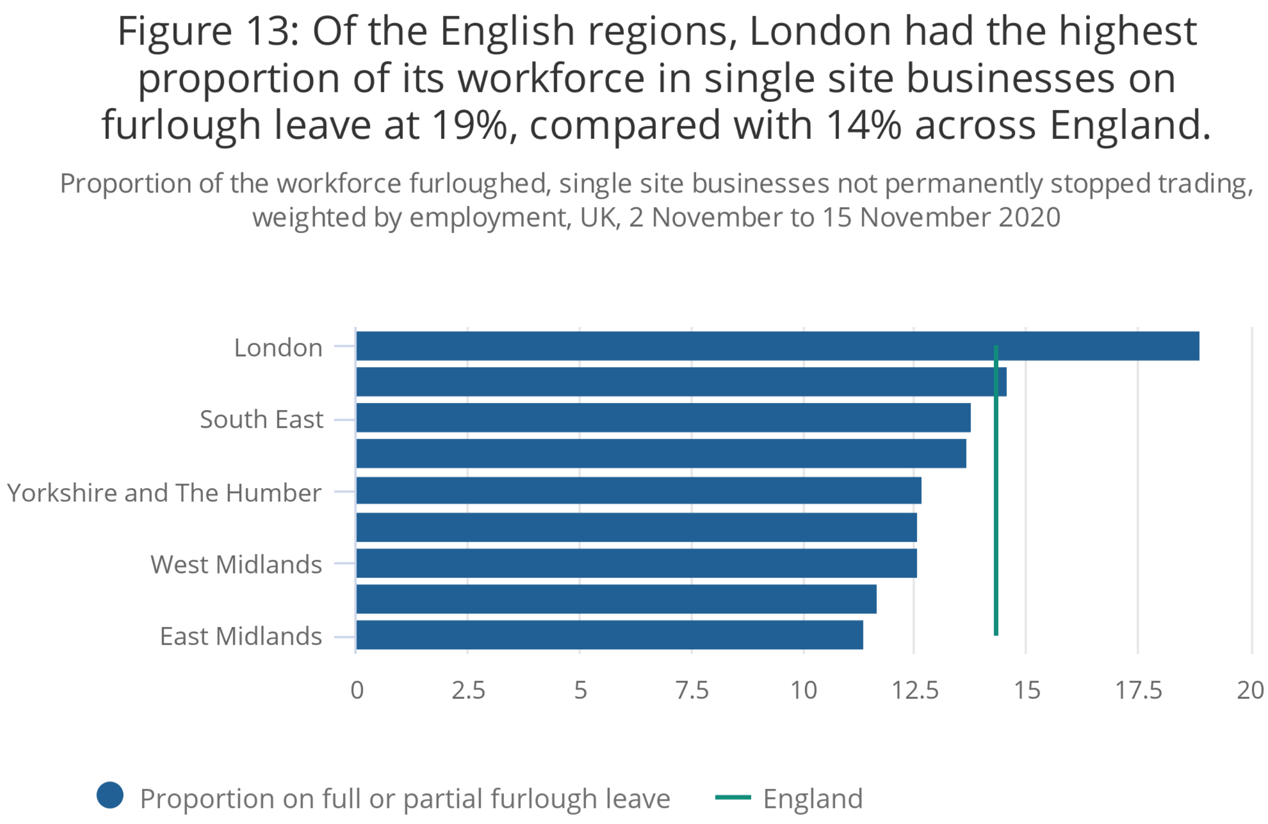
[Download the data]

The proportion of the workforce on full or partial furlough in the accommodation and food service activities was 63% across the UK in Wave 18, rising to 81% in Northern Ireland and 74% in Wales.

In the arts, entertainment and recreation industry, 46% were on full or partial furlough across the UK, rising to 47% in England and falling to 33% in Scotland. As single site businesses in England make up most of the businesses in the UK, England and UK estimates tend to be similar.

Figure 13: Of the English regions, London had the highest proportion of its workforce in single site businesses on furlough leave at 19%, compared with 14% across England.

Proportion of the workforce furloughed, single site businesses not permanently stopped trading, weighted by employment, UK, 2 November to 15 November 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey

Notes:

1. Weighted single site results, Wave 18 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS); businesses not permanently stopped trading.

2. Response rates vary across regions and between waves. Low response can impact the interpretation of these estimates.

3. Businesses were asked for their experiences for the reference period (2 to 15 November 2020). However, for questions regarding the last two weeks, businesses may respond from the point of completion of the questionnaire (16 to 29 November 2020).

Of the nine English regions, only two had a higher proportion of their workforce in single site businesses on full or partial furlough leave than that across England; London (19%) and the North East (15%), compared with 14% across England.

In contrast, the East Midlands (11%) and the North West (12%) had the lowest proportions on full or partial furlough leave.

Table 7 shows how the proportion of the workforce in single site businesses on full or partial furlough leave in each England region differs by sector.

Table 7: The services sector had the highest proportion of the workforce on furlough leave at 17% across the UK, rising to 20% in the North East and 19% in London
Proportion of the workforce furloughed, single site businesses not permanently stopped trading, weighted by employment, UK, 2 November to 15 November 2020

	Services	Production	Construction	All industries
London	19.4%	8.8%	5.1%	18.9%
North East	20.2%	2.4%	3.3%	14.6%
South East	15.2%	6.3%	6.3%	13.8%
East of England	15.7%	5.8%	5.7%	13.7%
Yorkshire and The Humber	15.5%	5.7%	7.2%	12.7%
South West	18.4%	4.5%	3.6%	12.6%
West Midlands	15.3%	7.4%	4.2%	12.6%
North West	14.2%	4.1%	4.8%	11.7%
East Midlands	16.3%	3.7%	5.5%	11.4%
England	17.0%	5.3%	5.2%	14.3%

Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey

Notes

1. Weighted single site results, Wave 18 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS); businesses not permanently stopped trading.

2. For quality purposes industries have been collated to construction, production (including: 2-digit SIC 5 to 39, inclusive), and services (including: 2-digit SIC 45 to 98, inclusive).

3. Response rates vary across regions and between waves. Low response can impact the interpretation of these estimates.

4. "*" = percentages less than 1% or industry and country count less than 10.

5. Businesses were asked for their experiences for the reference period (2 to 15 November 2020). However, for questions regarding the last two weeks, businesses may respond from the point of completion of the questionnaire (16 to 29 November 2020).

The services sector had the highest proportion of the workforce on furlough leave at 17% across the UK, rising to 20% in the North East and 19% in London.

The production sector had 5% of the workforce on furlough leave across the UK, rising to 8% in London and 7% in the West Midlands.

While the construction sector also had 5% of the workforce on furlough leave across the UK, rising to 7% in Yorkshire and The Humber.

8 . Local authority analysis

From Wave 17, the sample size for the Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS) was nearly doubled and now goes to approximately 39,000 businesses. This sample increase allows for analysis of regional data at a more granular level, providing early local authority estimates.

The interactive map shows experimental weighted Wave 18 single site local authority estimates of businesses currently trading, proportion of the workforce furloughed, businesses reporting a decrease in turnover, and businesses reporting between zero and three months cash reserves.

The sample of each local authority is smaller than other breakdowns previously published so should be taken into consideration when interpreting the results. Local authorities with 10 or less responses have been supressed for disclosure purposes.

Figure 14: Interactive map highlighting the impact of pandemic in Wave 18 at the local authority level

Percentage of single site businesses, weighted, UK, 2 November to 29 November 2020

Notes:

1. Weighted single site results, Wave 18 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS).
2. For presentational purposes: a. "has been trading for more than the last two weeks" and "started trading within the last two weeks after a pause in trading" have been combined to "currently trading". b. decreased turnover categories and increased turnover categories have been combined. c. cash reserve categories between zero and three months have been combined.
3. Business that have not permanently stopped trading responded to the cash reserves and proportion furloughed questions, however, only businesses currently trading responded to the decrease in turnover questions.
4. For the proportion furloughed and turnover estimates, businesses were asked for their experiences for the reference period 2 to 15 November 2020. However, for questions regarding the last two weeks, businesses may respond from the point of completion of the questionnaire (16 to 29 November 2020).
5. Local authorities with ten or less responses have been supressed for disclosure purposes.

Download the data

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.

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 . Data sources and quality

The Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS) is voluntary and may only reflect the characteristics of those that responded; the results are experimental.

The BICS survey provides timely insights into the impact on businesses' financial performance, workforce, prices, trade and business resilience over a fortnightly period, and the survey questions are available.

Table 8: Dates of the reference and survey period of each wave of the Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey

Wave	Reference period	Survey period
Wave 14	7 to 20 September	21 September to 4 October
Wave 15	21 September to 4 October	5 to 18 October
Wave 16	5 to 18 October	19 October to 1 November
Wave 17	19 October to 1 November	2 to 15 November
Wave 18	2 to 15 November	16 to 29 November

Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey

Notes

1. Wave 14 to 18 dates of the Office for National Statistics’ (ONS’) Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS)

Regional estimates

Regional BICS estimates are produced by taking the survey return from each reporting unit and then applying this to the reporting unit's local sites. If a business has several sites (also known as local units) within a country, using information from the IDBR, then this business is defined to have presence there. We have removed businesses with multiple sites from the sample and results in this analysis of single site businesses only. Sections 2 and 3 of this article outlines in detail the methodology behind our single site regional estimates and its impact compared with previously published results encompassing all businesses.

Aggregates of Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS1) 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 top-line figures.

Weighting

Weighted estimates for the BICS have now been developed for all variables that are collected at a UK level. A detailed description of the weighting methodology and its differences to unweighted estimates is available in Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS): preliminary weighted results.

Weighted estimates for Scotland for businesses with greater than nine employees are available from the Scottish Government.

Single site weighting

All the results presented in this article are weighted by only businesses who have identified as having zero or one site on the IDBR - labelled as single site businesses. The estimates have been created by using the results collected in the fortnightly business survey. Only using results from business with single sites allows the results to be weighted regionally as these businesses will not have sites across different regions, therefore capturing the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) on businesses in a certain region.

Overall, 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 it allows us to track business impacts in different regions over time to see how the impacts of the coronavirus on their business have evolved. Tables 4 and 5 show the breakdowns by country and region, and industry for all businesses and single site businesses in Wave 18.

Table 9: Wave 18 all businesses and single site sample size and response rate, broken down by region, UK

Region	Wave 18 sample	Wave 18 response rate	Wave 18 single sites sample size	Wave 18 single sites response rate
Northern Ireland	1,795	14.4%	1,181	18.0%
Scotland	5,258	28.2%	2,308	29.9%
Wales	3,248	27.4%	1,382	28.4%
England	32,474	28.3%	21,960	30.9%
South West	5,043	31.5%	2,004	34.5%
South East	7,780	29.8%	3,624	32.3%
London	8,889	25.5%	4,877	28.0%
East of England	5,571	30.4%	2,448	33.0%
West Midlands	5,149	28.7%	2,025	30.4%
East Midlands	4,382	28.4%	1,750	30.5%
Yorkshire & the Humber	4,992	29.4%	1,939	32.3%
North West	6,297	28.2%	2,577	30.3%
North East	2,499	26.9%	716	26.7%
UK	38,734	27.6%	26,831	30.1%

Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey

Notes

1. Weighted Wave 18 sample for single site businesses of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS).

Table 10: Wave 18 all businesses and single site sample size, broken down by industry, UK

Industry	Wave 18 sample	Wave 18 response rate	Single Site Wave 18 sample	Single Site Wave 18 response rate
Manufacturing	5,388	32.6%	3,493	41.1%
Water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	304	32.6%	159	29.6%
Construction	3,559	24.8%	2,869	24.5%
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	6,758	26.9%	4,067	25.7%
Transportation and storage	1,797	26.9%	1,201	27.6%
Accommodation and food service activities	3,955	24.4%	2,826	25.1%
Information and communication	2,671	26.3%	2,026	27.8%
Real estate activities	527	26.4%	331	24.2%
Professional, scientific and technical activities	5,137	28.8%	3,783	29.9%
Administrative and support service activities	4,414	28.1%	3,343	36.2%
Education	1,013	31.5%	531	45.8%
Human health and social work activities	1,283	23.8%	806	22.5%
Arts, entertainment and recreation	1,328	28.6%	955	33.3%
All industries	38,734	27.6%	26,831	30.1%

Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey

Notes

1. Weighted Wave 18 sample for all businesses and single site businesses of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS).

2. Mining and quarrying has been removed for disclosure purposes, but its total is included in "All Industries".

After the transition period ends on 31 December 2020, the UK statistical system will continue to collect and produce our wide range of economic and social statistics. We are committed to continued alignment with international statistical standards, enabling comparability both over time and internationally and we will work with users of statistics to make sure they have the data they need to support the decisions they have to make.

11 . Future developments

Results presented in this article cover Waves 14 to 18 only. In the future we hope to develop weighted regional estimates to cover Wave 7 onwards, to enable analysis into how the pandemic has affected different regions from June to date.

With the sample redesign from Wave 17 onwards, estimates for more questions should be possible, allowing for insights at both a regional and local authority level.

The authors Freddy Farias Farias and Emily Hopson would like to give special thanks to Gareth Allmand, Jess Burchell, Jon Gough and Clare Wilkinson for their crucial input into this research.

12 . Related links

Coronavirus (COVID-19) latest data and analysis
Web page | Updated as and when data become available
Latest data and analysis on the coronavirus (COVID-19) in the UK and its effect on the economy and society.

Business insights and impact on the UK economy
Bulletin | Latest
The impact of the coronavirus pandemic and EU transition period on UK businesses and the economy. Based on responses from the voluntary fortnightly business survey (BICS) about financial performance, workforce, prices, trade, and business resilience.

Insights of the Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey: 23 March to 5 April (Wave 2) to 1 to 14 June (Wave 7) 2020
Article | Released 8 July 2020
Impact of the coronavirus pandemic on businesses' turnover, cash flow and workforce: analysis on responses to our new voluntary fortnightly business survey and how these have been affected in each two-week reference period. Covers the period 23 March to 14 June 2020.

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 business' 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).

Coronavirus and the experiences of UK businesses, textual analysis: March 2020 to July 2020
Article | Released 6 August 2020
Analysis of qualitative responses from selected questions from the fortnightly Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS), which provides further insights on individual business experiences over the course of the pandemic so far.

Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey, expectation responses over time, UK: 1 June to 23 August 2020 (Waves 6 to 11)
Article | Released 8 September 2020
Turnover expectations of the same businesses over time, using the final results of Waves 6 to 11 of the voluntary fortnightly BICS, covering the period 1 June to 23 August.

Comparison of furloughed jobs data: May to July 2020
Article | Released 25 September 2020
An overview of the similarities and differences between the fortnightly BICS furlough estimates and HM Revenue and Customs' (HMRC's) Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) data, over the period 1 May to 31 July 2020.