

Article

Business insights and impact on the UK subnational single-site economy: November 2023

Experimental estimates from the voluntary fortnightly business survey (BICS) on trading status, financial performance, workforce and business resilience.

Contact:
Alastair Cameron
bics@ons.gov.uk
+44 1633 651703

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1 . Main points

- In August 2023, 27% of trading UK single-site businesses reported a decrease in turnover compared with the previous month, broadly stable with August 2022 (26%).
- Scotland was the country that reported the largest rise in the proportion of trading UK single-site businesses experiencing a decrease in monthly turnover between August 2022 and August 2023, up from 24% to 26%, while Wales experienced a fall from 28% to 27%.
- Wales saw the largest fall of all UK nations in the proportion of single-site businesses reporting an increase in the prices of goods or services they bought compared with the previous month between August 2022 and August 2023, down from 53% to 25%, while Scotland reported the largest fall for prices sold, down from 21% to 11%.
- Scotland was the nation that reported the largest proportion of worker shortages in late September 2023 at 16%, while London reported the smallest proportion of any region (7%), with these percentages down from 19% and 16%, respectively, from late September 2022.
- All four UK countries reported a fall in the proportion of single-site businesses affected by industrial action in August 2023, following peaks in December 2022, with England experiencing the largest decrease of 11 percentage points from 17% to 6%.
- There are interactive maps in Sections 3, 4, 5 and 6, which allow users to explore how business impacts differ by geography, based on Business Insights and Conditions Survey Wave 65 to Wave 92 weighted single-site estimates.

2 . Overview

The data presented in this article are weighted single-site estimates, Wave 65 to Wave 92 of the Office for National Statistics' [Business Insights and Conditions Survey \(BICS\)](#).

All current business insights and conditions subnational estimates should be treated as [experimental estimates](#) and caution is advised when interpreting the figures, as 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 BICS subnational release focuses on a single-business-site approach to be reflective 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](#). Further information on quality is available in our [Business insights and conditions Quality and Methodology Information \(QMI\)](#) and we regularly update [confidence intervals](#) associated with the survey questions.

Experimental single-site weighted regional estimates up to Wave 74 (1 June 2022 to 22 January 2023) are available in our [Business insights and impact on the UK subnational single-site economy: February 2023 article](#).

3 . Financial performance

Figure 1: Interactive map showing single-site subnational estimates at ITL 2 using weighted single-site Wave 65 to Wave 91 Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) estimates

Decrease in turnover compared with previous calendar month, single-site businesses currently trading, weighted by count, broken down by region, UK, 1 August 2022 to 31 August 2023

Notes:

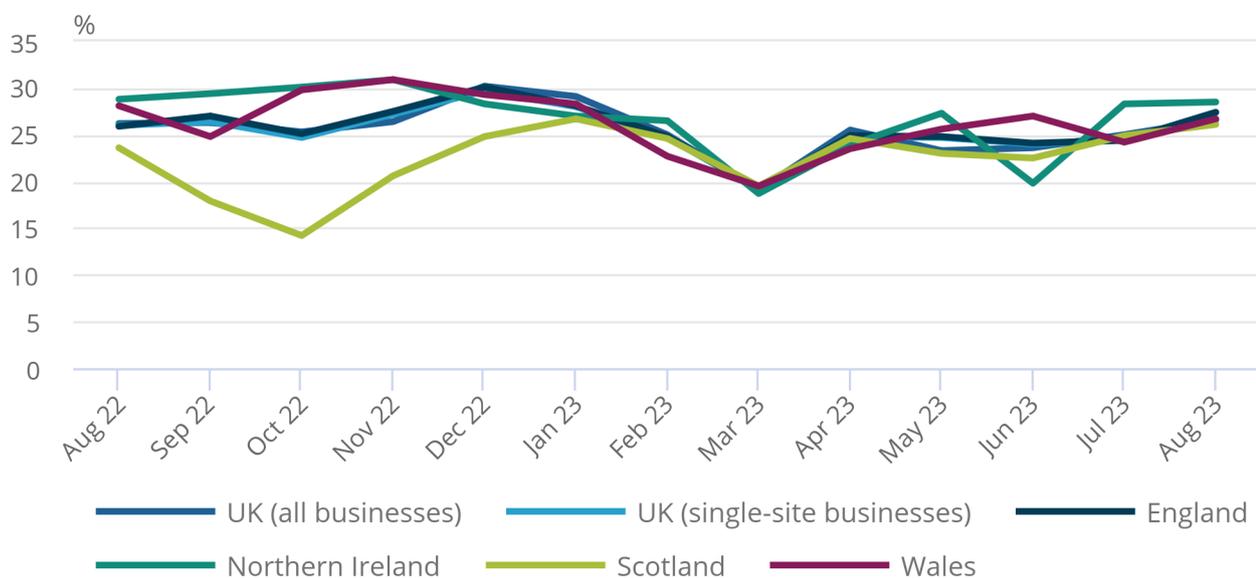
1. Weighted single-site estimates, Wave 65 to Wave 91 of the Office for National Statistics' Business Insights and Conditions Survey.
2. Data that have been removed for confidentiality reasons. This includes percentages less than 1%, breakdowns with a count of 10 or fewer, and breakdowns with a micro business count of 10 or fewer (a micro business has fewer than 10 employees).
3. Data are plotted in the middle of the period of each wave.

Figure 2: Scotland saw a 3-percentage point rise in single-site businesses reporting a decrease in turnover between August 2022 and August 2023

Decrease in turnover compared with the previous month, single-site businesses currently trading, broken down by country, weighted by count, UK, 1 August 2022 to 31 August 2023

Figure 2: Scotland saw a 3-percentage point rise in single-site businesses reporting a decrease in turnover between August 2022 and August 2023

Decrease in turnover compared with the previous month, single-site businesses currently trading, broken down by country, weighted by count, UK, 1 August 2022 to 31 August 2023



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

Notes:

1. Final weighted all UK site results and weighted single-site estimates, Wave 65 to 91 of the Office for National Statistics' Business Insights and Conditions Survey.
2. Response rates vary across countries and between waves. Low response can impact the interpretation of these estimates.
3. Data are plotted in the middle of the period of each wave.

Across UK trading single-site businesses, the following percentages were reported for turnover in August 2023 compared with the previous month:

- 27% reported a decrease in turnover, broadly stable with August 2022
- 52% reported turnover had stayed the same, broadly stable with August 2022
- 15% reported an increase in turnover, broadly stable with August 2022
- 7% were not sure, down 2 percentage points from August 2022

These turnover proportions for UK single-site businesses are similar to the proportions for UK businesses as a whole. This suggests that the single-site estimates are a reliable indicator of data at the subnational level.

Of the UK nations, Northern Ireland reported the highest proportion of single-site businesses experiencing a decrease in turnover compared with the previous calendar month in August 2023 (29%), broadly stable with August 2022.

Conversely, Scotland reported the highest proportion of single-site businesses experiencing an increase in turnover in August 2023 (16%) and was the only UK nation to report a rise in this percentage from August 2022 (14%).

Figure 3: Yorkshire and The Humber reported the highest percentage of single-site businesses that saw a decrease in turnover in August 2023 compared with July 2023

Decrease in turnover compared with previous calendar month, single-site businesses currently trading, broken down by country, region, and sector, weighted by count, UK, 1 August 2023 to 31 August 2023

Notes:

1. For presentational purposes, response options have been combined.
2. For quality purposes, all industries have been collated to construction and production (production including: 2-digit SIC 5 to 39, inclusive), and services (including: 2-digit SIC 45 to 98, inclusive).
3. “*” represents data that have been removed for confidentiality reasons. This includes percentages less than 1%, breakdowns with a count of 10 or fewer, and breakdowns with a micro business count of 10 or fewer. (Micro business has fewer than 10 employees).
4. Data are plotted in the middle of the period of each wave.

Yorkshire and The Humber was the region with the highest percentage of single-site businesses reporting a decrease in turnover compared with the previous month in August 2023, at 29%. London reported the highest proportion of single-site businesses experiencing a decrease in turnover in the services sector (32%), an increase of 9 percentage points from the 23% reported in August 2022. In contrast, the West Midlands reported the lowest proportion for the services sector, at 24%, while seeing the highest proportion in the joint construction and production sectors (50%).

4 . Prices

Figure 4: Interactive map showing single-site subnational estimates at ITL 2 using weighted single-site Wave 65 to Wave 91 Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) estimates

Prices bought and sold increased, single-site businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by region, UK, 1 August 2022 to 31 August 2023

Notes:

1. Weighted single-site estimates, Wave 65 to Wave 91 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.

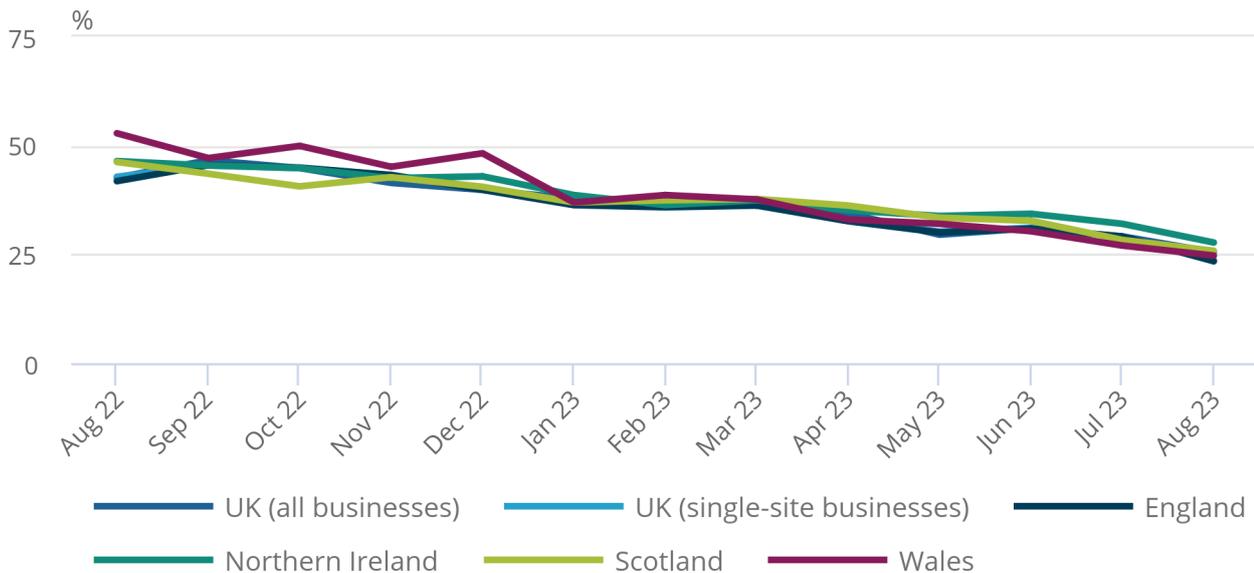
Prices bought

Figure 5: Less than a quarter (24%) of single-site businesses in the UK reported an increase in the prices of goods or services bought in August 2023 compared with July 2023

Prices bought increased, single-site businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by country, weighted by count, UK, 1 August 2022 to 31 August 2023

Figure 5: Less than a quarter (24%) of single-site businesses in the UK reported an increase in the prices of goods or services bought in August 2023 compared with July 2023

Prices bought increased, single-site businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by country, weighted by count, UK, 1 August 2022 to 31 August 2023



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

Notes:

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

There was a fall in the proportion of UK single-site businesses that reported an increase in the prices of goods or services they bought compared with the previous month between August 2022 and August 2023, from 43% to 24%. All UK nations experienced a fall over this period, with Wales experiencing the largest fall, down 28 percentage points from 53% to 25% and England experiencing the smallest fall of 18 percentage points from 42% to 23%.

Over the same time period, all English regions experienced a fall in the proportion of single-site businesses reporting an increase in prices of goods or services bought compared with the previous month. Businesses in London saw the lowest proportion for 9 of the last 12 months, including August 2023 (20%).

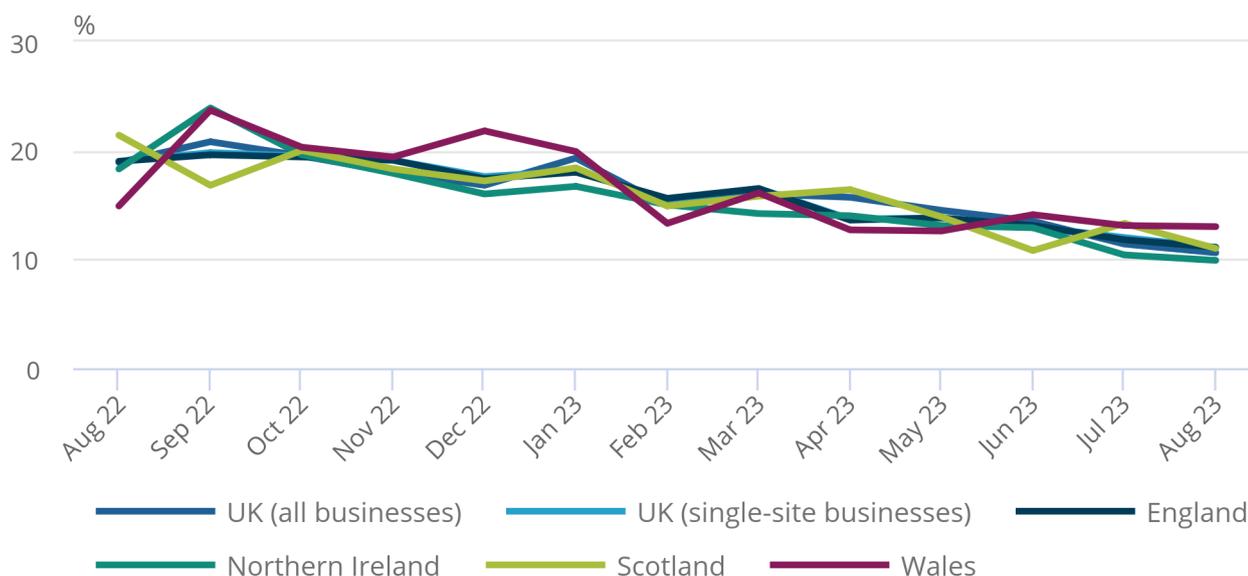
Prices sold

Figure 6: Approximately one in seven (13%) single-site businesses in Wales reported an increase in the prices of goods or services sold in August 2023 compared with July 2023

Prices sold increased, single-site businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by country, weighted by count, UK, 1 August 2022 to 31 August 2023

Figure 6: Approximately one in seven (13%) single-site businesses in Wales reported an increase in the prices of goods or services sold in August 2023 compared with July 2023

Prices sold increased, single-site businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by country, weighted by count, UK, 1 August 2022 to 31 August 2023



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

Notes:

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

All UK nations experienced falls in the proportion of single-site businesses that reported an increase in the prices of goods or services they sold compared with the previous month between August 2022 and August 2023.

At 13%, Wales was the country with the highest proportion of single-site businesses that reported an increase in the prices of goods or services they sold in August 2023. This is down 11 percentage points from a peak of 24% reached in September 2022, in the period since August 2022. Conversely, over the same period, Northern Ireland reported the lowest proportion of single-site businesses that reported an increase in the prices of goods or services they sold in August 2023, at 10%, also down from a peak of 24% in September 2022.

All English regions reported a fall in the proportion of single-site businesses reporting increases to the prices of goods or services they sold between August 2022 and August 2023, except the North East, which saw a rise of 3 percentage points. Yorkshire and The Humber saw a 19-percentage point fall from 31% down to 12% across this period, with the South East seeing the second-largest decrease of 13 percentage points from 23% down to 10%.

5 . Worker shortages

Figure 7: Interactive map showing single-site subnational estimates at ITL 2 using weighted single-site Wave 66 to Wave 92 Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) estimates

Experiencing worker shortages, single-site businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by region, UK, 20 September 2022 to 1 October 2023

Notes:

1. Weighted single-site estimates, Wave 66 to Wave 92 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.

In late September 2023, single-site businesses not permanently stopped trading in the UK were asked if they were experiencing a shortage of workers. Of these:

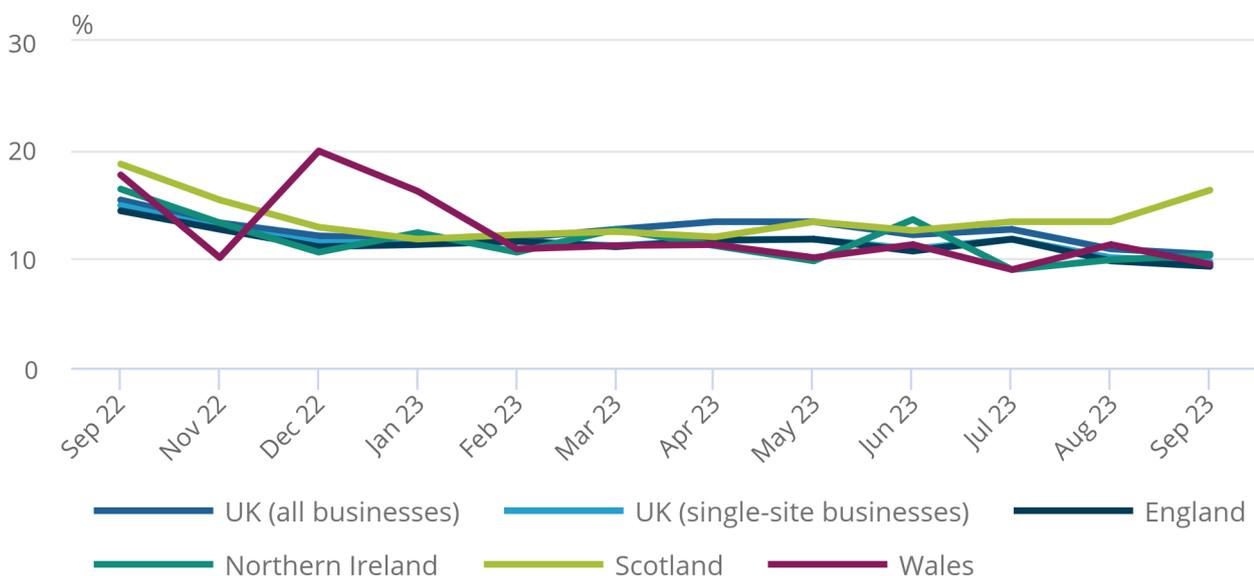
- 10% reported they were experiencing worker shortages
- 69% reported they were not experiencing worker shortages
- 4% reported they were not sure
- 18% reported the question was not applicable to them

Figure 8: In late September 2023, one in six (16%) single-site businesses in Scotland reported experiencing worker shortages

Experiencing worker shortages, percentage of single-site businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by country, weighted by count, UK, 20 September 2022 to 1 October 2023

Figure 8: In late September 2023, one in six (16%) single-site businesses in Scotland reported experiencing worker shortages

Experiencing worker shortages, percentage of single-site businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by country, weighted by count, UK, 20 September 2022 to 1 October 2023



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 impact the interpretation of these estimates.
2. Data are plotted in the middle of the period of each wave.

Scotland, at 16%, was the country that reported the largest proportion of single-site businesses experiencing worker shortages in late September 2023, 7 percentage points higher than the UK total. Scotland consistently reported a higher proportion than the UK total between late September 2022 and late September 2023 though the proportion for Scotland has still fallen 2 percentage points over this period. Wales experienced a peak of 20% in December 2022, although volatility because of a lower response count for this country over the Christmas period could be a reason for this.

All 12 UK regions reported a fall in the percentage of single-site businesses experiencing worker shortages in late September 2023, compared with late September 2022. London reported the smallest proportion of UK single-site businesses experiencing worker shortages in late September 2023 (7%), down 9 percentage points from the 16% reported in late September 2022.

6 . Industrial action

Businesses not permanently stopped trading were asked how they had been affected by industrial action (the Business Insights and Conditions Survey does not cover all sectors of the economy and only includes private businesses).

Figure 9: Interactive map showing single-site subnational estimates at ITL 2 using weighted single-site Wave 65 to Wave 92 Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) estimates

Affected by industrial action, private sector single-site businesses currently trading, broken down by country, region, and sector, weighted by count, UK, 1 August 2022 to 31 August 2023

Notes:

1. For presentational purposes, response options have been combined.
2. For quality purposes, all industries have been collated to construction and production (production including: 2-digit SIC 5 to 39, inclusive), and services (including: 2-digit SIC 45 to 98, inclusive).
3. “*” represents data that have been removed for confidentiality reasons. This includes percentages under 1%, breakdowns with a count of 10 or fewer, and breakdowns with a micro business count of 10 or fewer. (Micro business has fewer than 10 employees).
4. The Business Insights and Conditions Survey does not cover all sectors of the economy and only includes private businesses.
5. Because of an overlap in reference periods, Wave 73 has been removed.
6. Data are plotted in the middle of the period of each wave.

In August 2023, across UK private sector single-site businesses:

- 6% reported that their business was affected by industrial action
- 59% reported that their business was not affected by industrial action
- 7% reported they were not sure
- 28% reported not applicable
- 1% preferred not to say

All four UK nations have seen a decrease in the proportion of single-site businesses affected by industrial action in August 2023 since each country saw a peak in December 2022.

England reported a fall of 11 percentage points from 17% to 6% between December 2022 and August 2023, and, with the exception of January 2023, was the country that consistently reported the largest proportion of single-site businesses affected by industrial action every month during this period.

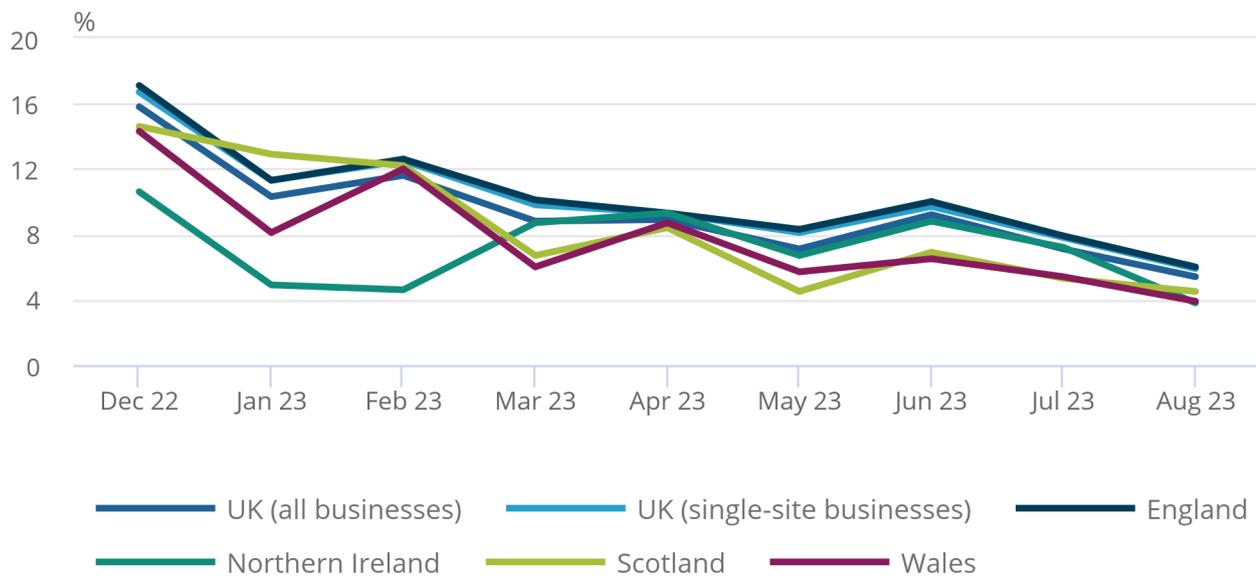
At 4%, Northern Ireland reported the lowest proportion of single-site businesses affected by industrial action in August 2023, and, with the exception of April 2023, has consistently seen a lower proportion of businesses reporting being affected than the UK total. In the latest [Business Register and Employment Survey, employees in the UK, provisional results 2022](#), Northern Ireland had the largest share of public sector workers at 25% in 2022, compared with the UK (17%), followed by Wales (23%) and Scotland (23%), which may contribute to the lower proportion of businesses reporting they were affected by industrial action.

Figure 10: Fewer than 1 in 10 (6%) private sector single-site businesses in England had been affected as a result of industrial action in August 2023

Single-site private sector businesses affected by industrial action, percentage of single-site businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by country, weighted by count, UK, 1 December 2022 to 31 August 2023

Figure 10: Fewer than 1 in 10 (6%) private sector single-site businesses in England had been affected as a result of industrial action in August 2023

Single-site private sector businesses affected by industrial action, percentage of single-site businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by country, weighted by count, UK, 1 December 2022 to 31 August 2023



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 impact the interpretation of these estimates.
2. Data are plotted in the middle of the period of each wave.
3. The Business Insights and Conditions Survey does not cover all sectors of the economy and only includes private businesses.
4. Because of an overlap in reference periods, Wave 73 has been removed.

Among UK regions, the South East and London reported the highest proportion of single-site businesses affected by industrial action in August 2023, both 7%.

In each month since December 2022, with the exception of August 2023 when the South East was marginally higher, London has seen the highest proportion of businesses affected by industrial action.

Variations in this data continue to be impacted by industrial action at a local level. More details of this can be found in the [UK strike action calendar](#).

7 . Business insights and impact on the UK subnational single-site economy data

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

Dataset | Released 9 November 2023

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.

8 . 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.

9 . 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 predominately focuses on Wave 65 to 92 of BICS (1 August 2022 to 1 October 2023) covering the period since the last edition of this article.

The Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) is voluntary, and the results are [experimental](#).

Table 1: Sample and response rates for all businesses, single-site businesses and multi-site businesses for Waves 90, 91, 92 of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey

Wave	Wave 90	Wave 91	Wave 92
All businesses sample	38,850	38,842	38,889
All businesses rate	27.2%	27.8%	28.0%
Single-site businesses sample	27,934	27,927	27,986
Single-site businesses rate	23.8%	24.4%	24.8%
Multi-site businesses sample	10,916	10,915	10,903
Multi-site businesses rate	35.8%	36.2%	36.4%

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.

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 behind these estimates is presented in our [accompanying dataset](#).

All current BICS subnational estimates should be treated as experimental estimates and caution is advised when interpreting the figures, as 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 BICS 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 [Business Impact of Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Survey \(BICS\): preliminary weighted results](#).

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

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 datasets](#) show how the composition by region and industry when using the single-sites approach holds up, 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 the [Business Insights and Conditions Survey \(BICS\) QMI](#), updated on 24 January 2022.

10 . Related links

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

Webpage | Updated frequently

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

[Business and innovation statistics](#)

Webpage | Updated frequently

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

11 . Cite this article

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 9 November 2023, ONS website, article, [Business insights and impact on the UK subnational single-site economy: November 2023](#)