

Statistical bulletin

Business insights and impact on the UK economy: 19 September 2024

The impact of challenges facing the economy and other events on UK businesses. Based on responses from the voluntary fortnightly business survey (BICS) to deliver real-time information to help assess issues affecting UK businesses and economy, including financial performance, workforce, trade, and business resilience.

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1 . Main points

- More than a quarter (26%) of trading businesses reported a decrease in their turnover in August 2024 compared with July 2024, up 3 percentage points from last month and the highest proportion reported since January 2024; in contrast, 14% reported an increase in their turnover, remaining broadly stable from last month.
- Almost 1 in 5 (19%) trading businesses expect an increase in turnover in October 2024, with 53% expecting turnover to stay the same up 2 and down 5 percentage points on expectations for September 2024; in contrast 14% expect a fall in turnover, remaining broadly stable over the same period.
- Approximately 1 in 5 (20%) trading businesses reported an increase in the prices of goods or services bought in August 2024 when compared with July 2024, while less than 1 in 10 (6%) reported an increase in the prices of goods or services sold; these are the lowest proportions reported since these response options were introduced in March 2022.
- More than two-thirds (67%) of trading businesses expect the prices of goods or services they sell to stay the same in October 2024, up 3 percentage points on expectations for September 2024; the proportion of businesses that expect to increase their prices in October 2024 was 11%, remaining broadly stable with September 2024.
- In early September 2024, 8% of all businesses and 20% of businesses with 10 or more employees reported that they were experiencing worker shortages; both figures are broadly stable with early August 2024.

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

2 . Headline figures

The data presented in this bulletin are the final results from Wave 116 of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS), which was live from 2 September to 15 September 2024.

Data reported within BICS bulletins and datasets are estimates that are subject to [uncertainty](#), for example, sampling variability and [non-sampling error](#). Further information on quality is available in our [Business Insights and Conditions Survey Quality and Methodology Information \(QMI\)](#), and we regularly update [confidence intervals](#) associated with the survey questions.

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

More about economy, business and jobs

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

The percentage of businesses that reported they were trading in early September 2024 was 95%, with 85% fully trading, and 10% partially trading - for example, trading with reduced hours or staff numbers. Meanwhile, 4% of businesses reported "temporarily paused trading", and 1% reported "permanently ceased trading" as their business's trading status.

3 . Financial Performance

Turnover

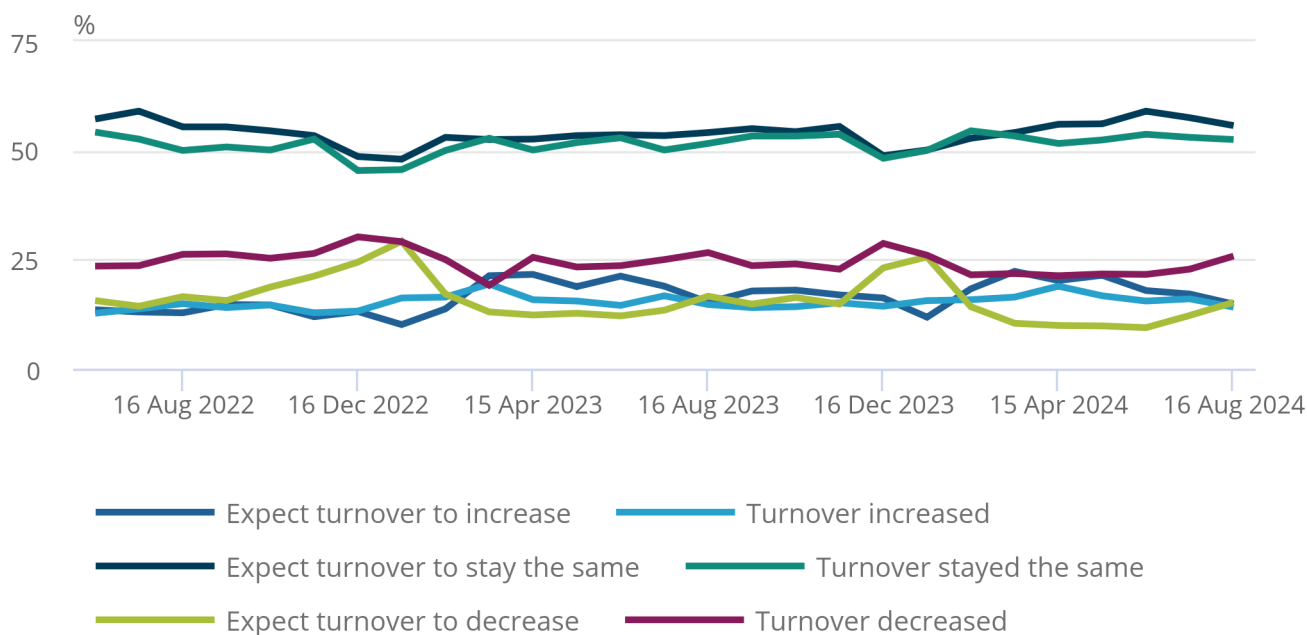
Trading businesses were asked how their turnover in August 2024 compared with July 2024, excluding any seasonal trading.

Figure 1: More than a quarter (26%) of trading businesses reported a decrease in turnover in August 2024 compared with July 2024

Expected and actual turnover impact, businesses currently trading, broken down by response option, weighted by count, UK, 1 June 2022 to 31 August 2024

Figure 1: More than a quarter (26%) of trading businesses reported a decrease in turnover in August 2024 compared with July 2024

Expected and actual turnover impact, businesses currently trading, broken down by response option, weighted by count, UK, 1 June 2022 to 31 August 2024



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

Notes:

1. For presentational purposes, some response options have been removed.
2. For presentational purposes, business expectations for September and October 2024 have been removed.
3. Data are plotted in the middle of the period of each wave.
4. Caution should be taken when interpreting expectations questions as the employees responding on behalf of businesses may not have full oversight of all of their business's future expectations.

Between June 2022 and August 2024, when comparing businesses' expected turnover ahead of a particular month against their actual turnover for that month, businesses tended to more optimistic ahead of time. Throughout this period, a higher proportion of businesses reported that their turnover had decreased than had expected it to beforehand. Additionally, since March 2023, the proportion of businesses who expected an increase in their turnover was higher than the proportion who reported an increase.

When reporting on their actual turnover for August 2024, 14% of businesses reported an increase in their turnover from the previous calendar month. This is slightly lower than the 15% of businesses who had expected an increase in their turnover.

When looking ahead to October 2024, 19% of businesses expect an increase in their turnover, and 14% expect a decrease in their turnover, which is broadly in line with their expectations for October 2023.

In early September 2024, more than a third (37%) of businesses reported that they were not experiencing any challenges that would have an impact on their turnover, 2 percentage points higher than early August 2024 (34%).

Businesses reported that economic uncertainty (21%) had the most impact when considering challenges to turnover. Other reported challenges included:

- competition (16%)
- cost of materials (16%)
- insufficient domestic demand (15%)

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

4 . Prices

Prices bought and prices sold

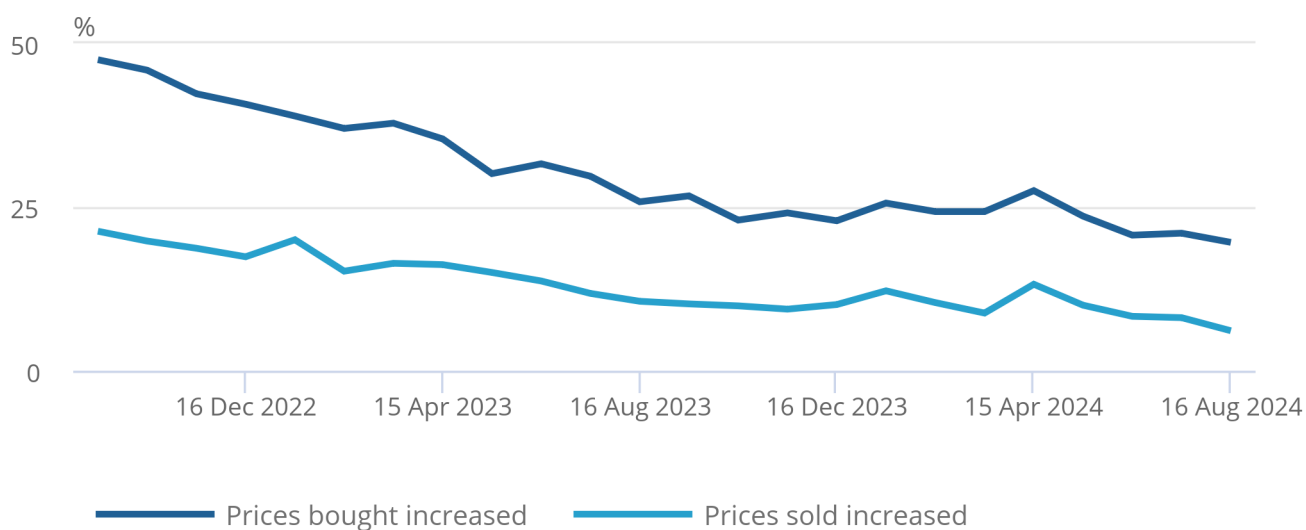
Businesses “not permanently stopped trading” were asked how the prices of goods or services they bought and sold in August 2024 compared with July 2024.

Figure 2: Approximately 20% of trading businesses reported an increase in the prices of goods or services bought in August 2024 when compared with July 2024

Prices bought and sold increased, businesses currently trading, broken down by response option, weighted by count, UK, 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2024

Figure 2: Approximately 20% of trading businesses reported an increase in the prices of goods or services bought in August 2024 when compared with July 2024

Prices bought and sold increased, businesses currently trading, broken down by response option, weighted by count, UK, 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2024



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

Notes:

1. For presentational purposes, some response options have been removed.
2. Data are plotted in the middle of the period of each wave.

Since September 2022, there has been a steady fall in the proportion of businesses who reported an increase in the prices of goods or services bought and sold, with this falling to a low of 20% and 6%, respectively, in August 2024.

When asked in early September 2024, 11% of trading businesses reported that they expect the prices of goods or services they sell to rise in October 2024. This remains broadly stable with expectations for September 2024. Approximately 67% of businesses expected their prices to stay the same, while 2% expected their prices to decrease.

Businesses were also asked which, if any, factors were causing them to consider raising prices in October 2024. The top reasons reported for doing so were:

- labour costs (18%), down 3 percentage points from September 2024
- energy prices (17%), up 3 percentage points from September 2024; with businesses commenting that current energy prices and planned rises in October are impacting their business
- raw material prices (15%), broadly stable with September 2024

It should be noted that 54% of businesses were not considering raising prices, which is broadly stable with September 2024 but 5 percentage points higher from this time last year.

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

5 . Workforce

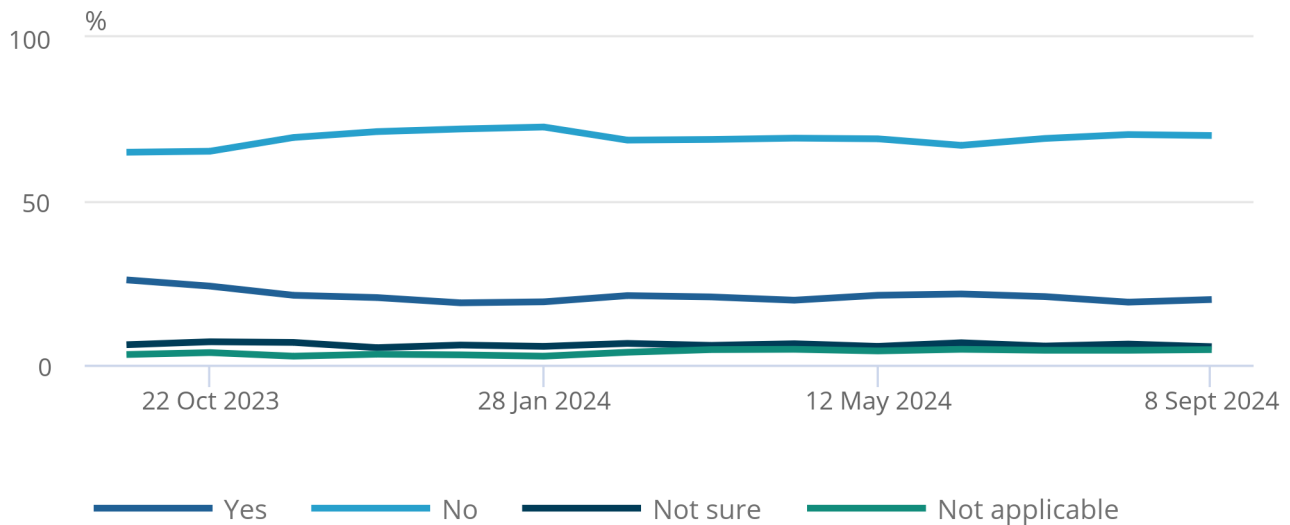
Worker shortages

Figure 3: Approximately 20% of trading businesses with 10 or more employees reported having worker shortages in early September 2024

Worker shortages, businesses not permanently stopped trading with 10 or more employees, broken down by response option, weighted by count, UK, 18 September 2023 to 15 September 2024

Figure 3: Approximately 20% of trading businesses with 10 or more employees reported having worker shortages in early September 2024

Worker shortages, businesses not permanently stopped trading with 10 or more employees, broken down by response option, weighted by count, UK, 18 September 2023 to 15 September 2024



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

Notes:

1. For presentational purposes, some response options have been removed.
2. Data are plotted in the middle of the period of each wave.

The proportion of businesses with 10 or more employees reporting worker shortages remained broadly stable in early September 2024, at 20%. This is broadly in line with the rest of 2024, but down 6 percentage points from late September 2023.

When asked in early September 2024, the industries with the highest proportion of businesses with 10 or more employees experiencing worker shortages were:

- the human health and social work activities industry (37%)
- the transportation and storage industry (31%)
- the other service activities industry (30%)

Recruitment

Businesses were also asked whether they had experienced any difficulties recruiting employees in August 2024, with 19% of businesses with 10 or more employees reporting that they had. This was broadly stable with July 2024, but down 6 percentage points from August 2023.

The industries with the highest proportion of businesses with 10 or more employees that experienced recruitment difficulties during August 2024 were:

- the transportation and storage industry (32%)
- the other service activities industry (32%)
- the human health and social work activities industry (27%)

This indicates that for August 2024, businesses with 10 or more employees in these specific industries were experiencing both the highest level of worker shortages, and the greatest difficulty in recruiting for these roles.

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

6 . Business Insights and Conditions Survey data

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

Dataset | Released 19 September 2024

Weighted estimates from the voluntary fortnightly Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) about financial performance, workforce, prices, trade, and business resilience. This dataset includes additional information collected as part of the survey not presented in this publication. These are official statistics in development.

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

Dataset | Released 19 September 2024

Confidence intervals for weighted estimates from the voluntary fortnightly Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) about financial performance, workforce, prices, trade, and business resilience. These are official statistics in development.

Access to microdata

You can access the microdata for Waves 1 to 115 of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) through the Secure Research Service (SRS). The BICS microdata for each wave are released on a rolling basis in the week following the publication of each wave. The microdata are made confidential and do not disclose information on any specific business.

Only researchers accredited under the [Digital Economy Act, as explained on the UK Statistics Authority website](#) are able to access data in the SRS. You can apply for accreditation through the [Research Accreditation Service \(RAS\)](#). You need to have relevant academic or work experience and must successfully attend and complete the assessed Safe Researcher Training.

To conduct analysis with microdata from the SRS, a project application must be submitted to the [Research Accreditation Panel \(RAP\), as explained on the UK Statistics Authority website](#). To access the SRS, you must also work for an organisation with an Assured Organisational Connectivity agreement in place.

7 . Glossary

Reporting unit

The reporting unit is the business unit to which questionnaires are sent. The response from the reporting unit can cover the enterprise as a whole, or parts of the enterprise identified by lists of local units.

8 . Data sources and quality

More quality and methodology information (QMI) on strengths, limitations, appropriate uses, and how the data were created is available in our [Business Insights and Conditions Survey \(BICS\) QMI](#), which was updated on 24 January 2022.

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

Table 1: Sample and response rates for Wave 114, 115 and 116 of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey

Wave	22 August 2024 Publication Wave 114	5 September 2024 Publication Wave 115	19 September 2024 Publication Wave 116
Sample	38,941	38,899	38,861
Response	10,381	10,301	10,165
Rate	26.7%	26.5%	26.2%

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

Notes

1. Response rates for all waves can be found in the accompanying dataset.

The results are based on responses from the voluntary fortnightly BICS, which captures businesses' views on financial performance, workforce, prices, trade and business resilience. The Wave 116 survey was live for the period 2 September to 15 September 2024. For full details of the survey questions used, see our [Business Insights and Conditions Survey questions: 2 September to 15 September article](#).

Coverage

The BICS sampling frame is based on the same industries as our Monthly Business Survey (MBS). The MBS covers the UK for production industries only, and Great Britain for construction, retail and services industries. The MBS is an important input to the output measure of gross domestic product (GDP), which includes monthly GDP.

For detailed information on the industries covered by the MBS and BICS, see our [GDP\(o\) data sources catalogue](#). The following are some industries that are excluded from MBS and BICS:

- agriculture
- oil and gas extraction
- energy generation and supply
- public administration and defence
- public provision of education and health
- finance and insurance

For more information on the methodology of producing the BICS, such as [weighting](#), please see our [Business Insights and Conditions Survey \(BICS\) QMI report](#).

Strengths and limitations

More quality and methodology information (QMI) on strengths, limitations, appropriate uses, and how the data were created is available in our [Business Insights and Conditions Survey \(BICS\) QMI](#).

9 . Related links

[Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators: 19 September 2024](#)

Bulletin | Updated frequently

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

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

Article | Released 16 May 2024

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

10 . Cite this statistical bulletin

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