

Statistical bulletin

Business insights and impact on the UK economy: 21 March 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

- The proportion of trading businesses that reported a decrease in turnover fell from 26% in January 2024, to 22% in February 2024; in contrast, 55% reported that their turnover stayed the same, which is up 5 percentage points over the same period.
- When asked in early March 2024, one in five (20%) trading businesses expect their turnover to increase in April 2024, which is down 2 percentage points from expectations for March 2024.
- Since March 2022, the proportion of trading businesses reporting an increase in the prices of goods or services bought month on month has dropped by 26 percentage points, to 24%.
- Nearly one in five (18%) trading businesses expect to raise the prices of goods or services that they sell in April 2024, this is up 2 percentage points from expectations for March 2024, but down 6 percentage points on expectations for April 2023.
- Nearly half (47%) of trading businesses reported that they were not considering raising prices in April 2024, which is broadly stable with March 2024.
- Nearly one in five (18%) trading businesses reported that their overall performance had decreased in February 2024 compared with the same calendar month last year, which is down 4 percentage points from January 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 104 of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS), which was live from 4 March to 17 March 2024.

The 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 92 are available in our [Business insights and impact on the UK subnational single-site economy: November 2023 article](#).

More about economy, business and jobs

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

Figure 1: Headline figures from the Business Insights and Conditions Survey

Notes:

1. For presentational purposes, some response options have been combined, excluded, or both.
2. For presentational purposes, "Prices" data show an increase to prices bought and sold compared with the previous calendar month.
3. Data are plotted in the middle of each wave.

The percentage of businesses that reported they were trading in early March 2024 was 94%, with 85% fully trading, and 9% partially trading (for example, trading with reduced hours or staff numbers). Meanwhile, 4% of businesses reported “temporarily paused trading”, and 2% reported “permanently ceased trading” as their business’s trading status.

3 . Financial performance

Turnover

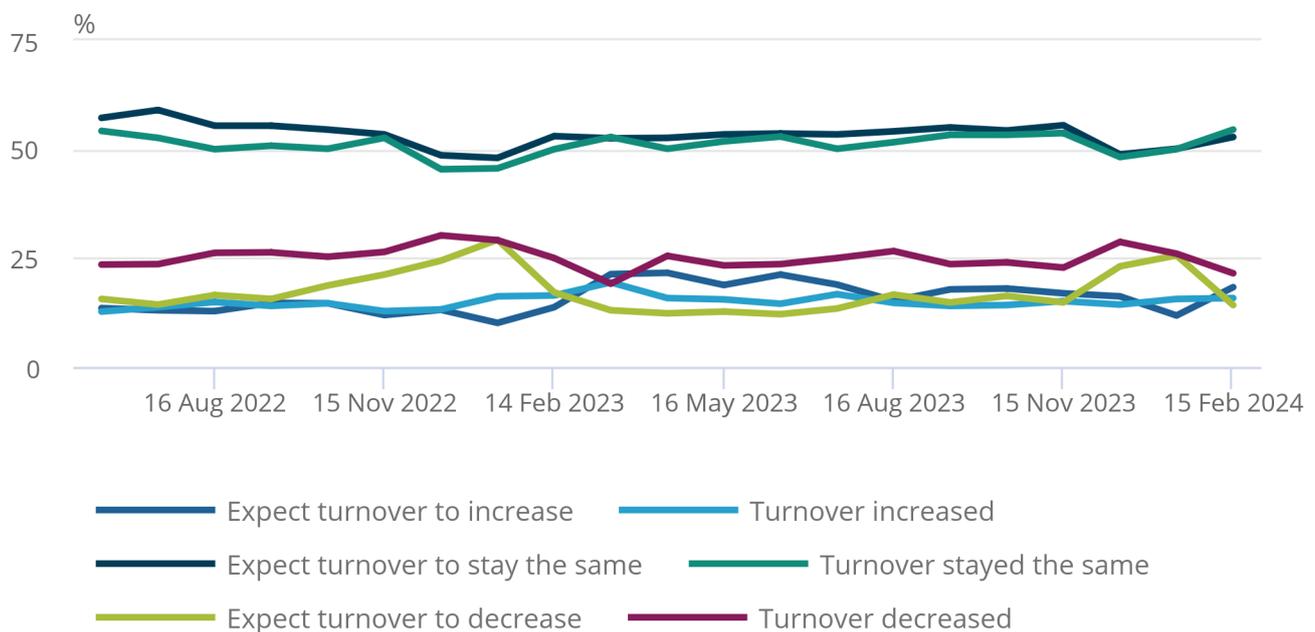
Trading businesses were asked how their turnover in February 2024 compared with January 2024, excluding any seasonal trading.

Figure 2: More than one in five (22%) trading businesses reported that their turnover was lower in February 2024 compared with January 2024

Expected and actual turnover impact, businesses currently trading, broken down by response option, weighted by count, UK, 1 June 2022 to 29 February 2024

Figure 2: More than one in five (22%) trading businesses reported that their turnover was lower in February 2024 compared with January 2024

Expected and actual turnover impact, businesses currently trading, broken down by response option, weighted by count, UK, 1 June 2022 to 29 February 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.
3. 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.

When reporting on their actual turnover for February 2024, 16% of businesses reported that their turnover had increased from the previous calendar month. This is slightly lower than the 18% of businesses who expected their turnover to increase in February 2024 when asked in early January 2024. This suggests businesses were optimistic for February 2024, but their expectations were not fully met.

However, when looking ahead to April 2024, 20% of businesses expect their turnover to increase, and 10% expect their turnover to decrease. This suggests businesses continue to be optimistic about the months ahead.

In early March 2024, more than a third (35%) of businesses reported that they were not experiencing any challenges that would have an impact on their turnover, which is broadly stable with early February 2024.

Of those businesses that reported a challenge, 24% reported economic uncertainty as the main reason. Other businesses reported that challenges affecting their turnover included:

- cost of materials (18%)
- competition (17%)
- insufficient domestic demand (14%)

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

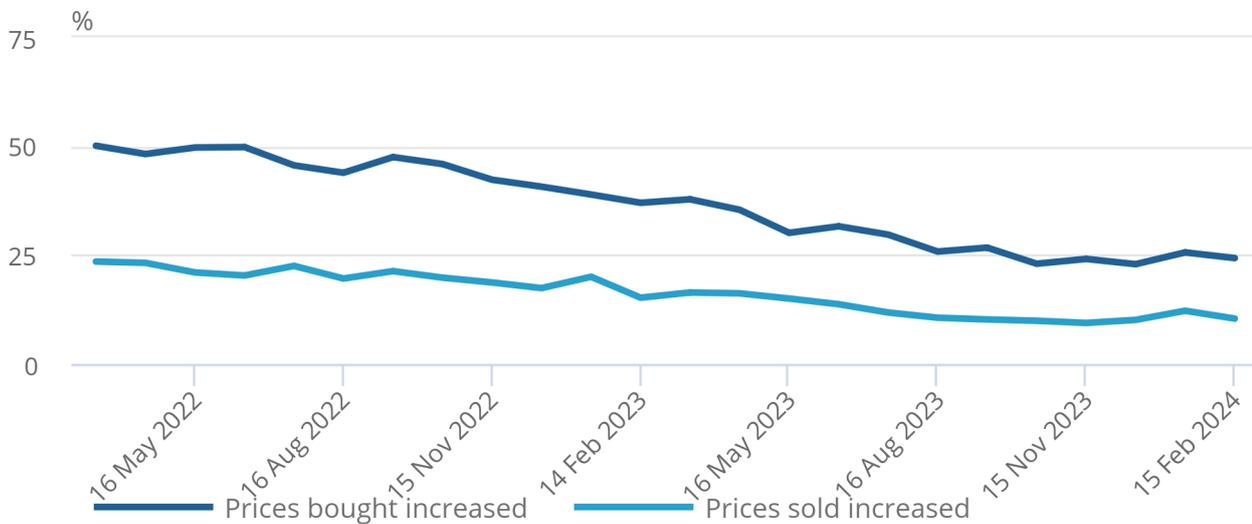
Businesses not permanently stopped trading were asked how the prices of goods or services they bought and sold in February 2024 compared with January 2024.

Figure 3: Nearly a quarter (24%) of trading businesses reported an increase in the prices of goods or services bought in February 2024 compared with January 2024

Prices bought and sold increased, businesses currently trading, broken down by response option, weighted by count, UK, 1 March 2022 to 29 February 2024

Figure 3: Nearly a quarter (24%) of trading businesses reported an increase in the prices of goods or services bought in February 2024 compared with January 2024

Prices bought and sold increased, businesses currently trading, broken down by response option, weighted by count, UK, 1 March 2022 to 29 February 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.

A lower proportion of trading businesses reported an increase in the prices of goods or services bought and sold in February 2024 when compared with January 2024. There were small falls to 24% and 10%, respectively, following the rises in January 2024.

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

Prices expectations

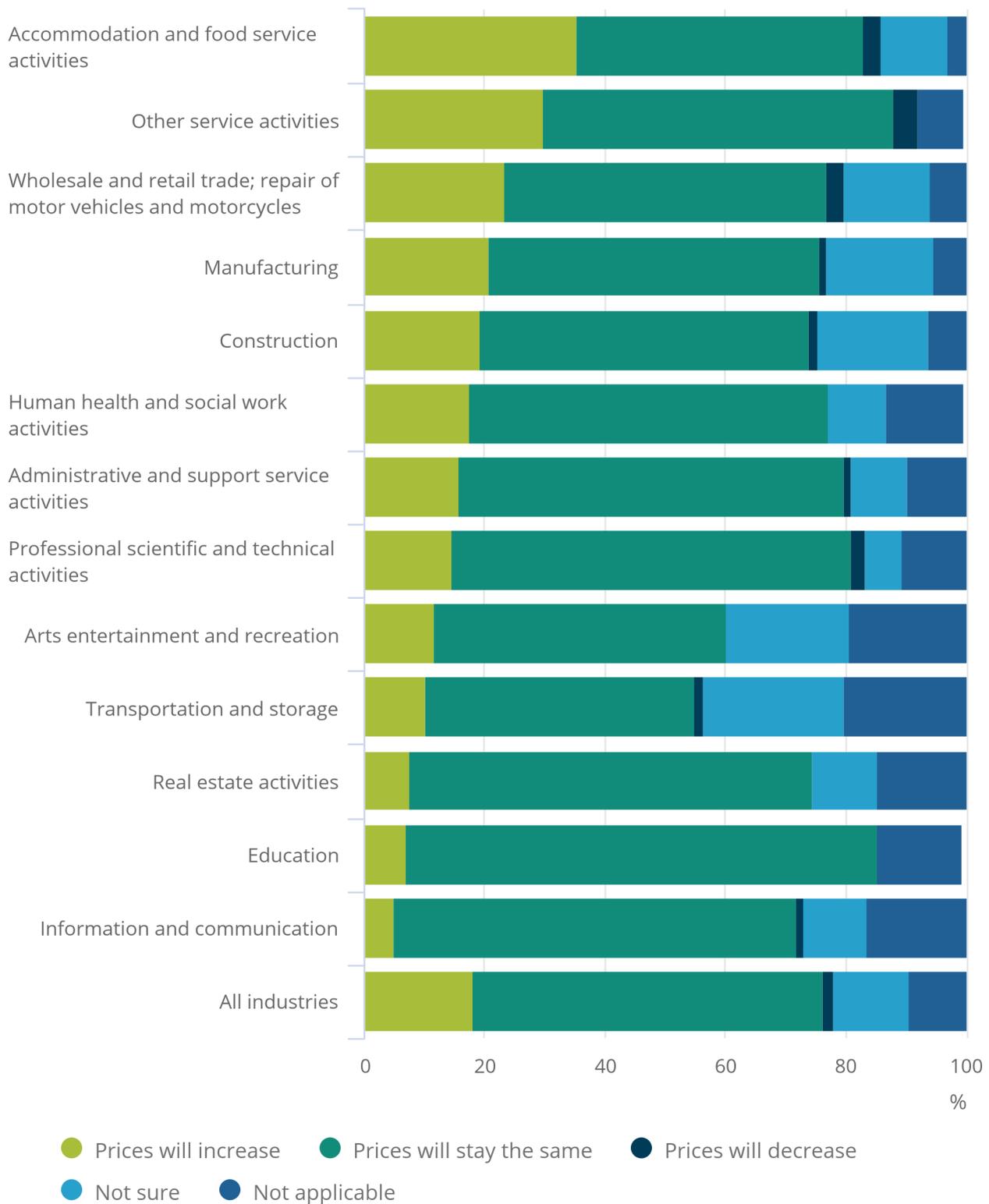
Businesses not permanently stopped trading were asked what their expectations were for the prices of goods or services they sell in April 2024.

Figure 4: Nearly one in five (18%) trading businesses expect to raise the prices of goods or services they sell in April 2024

Price expectations, businesses currently trading, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 1 to 30 April 2024

Figure 4: Nearly one in five (18%) trading businesses expect to raise the prices of goods or services they sell in April 2024

Price expectations, businesses currently trading, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 1 to 30 April 2024



Notes:

1. Bars may not sum to 100% because of rounding, and because percentages less than 1% have been removed for disclosure purposes.
2. "Mining and quarrying" and "Water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities" have been removed for disclosure purposes, but their totals are included in "All industries".
3. 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.

When asked in early March 2024, the proportion of businesses that expect the prices of goods or services they sell to rise was 18%. The proportion of businesses that expect the prices to stay the same was 58%, while those who expect the prices to decrease was 2%. These figures remained broadly stable with expectations reported for March 2024.

Businesses were also asked which, if any, factors were causing them to consider raising prices in April 2024. While 48% were not considering raising prices, the top reasons reported for doing so were:

- labour costs (23%), broadly stable with March 2024
- energy prices (21%), up 2 percentage points from March 2024
- raw material prices (18%), broadly stable with March 2024

5 . Supply chains

Global supply chain distribution

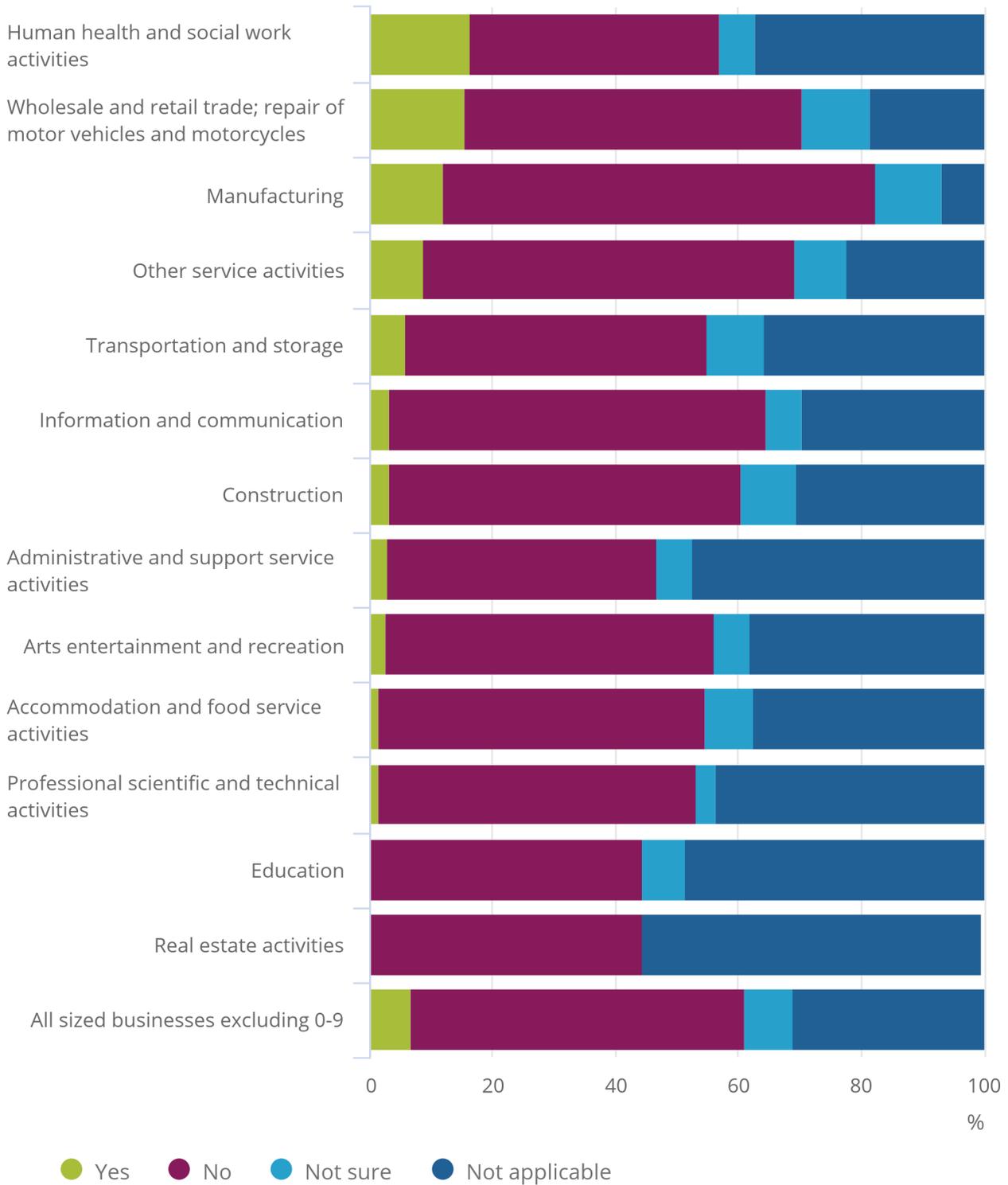
Businesses not permanently stopped trading were asked whether they had experienced any global supply chain disruption in February 2024.

Figure 5: In February 2024, 7% of businesses with 10 or more employees experienced global supply chain disruption

Global supply chain disruption, businesses not permanently stopped trading with 10 or more employees, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 1 to 29 February 2024

Figure 5: In February 2024, 7% of businesses with 10 or more employees experienced global supply chain disruption

Global supply chain disruption, businesses not permanently stopped trading with 10 or more employees, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 1 to 29 February 2024



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

Notes:

1. Bars may not sum to 100% because of rounding, and because percentages less than 1% have been removed for disclosure purposes.

2. "Mining and quarrying" and "Water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities" have been removed for disclosure purposes, but their totals are included in "All industries".

The percentage of businesses with 10 or more employees who reported experiencing global supply chain disruption in February 2024 was 7%, broadly stable with January 2024.

Of those businesses with 10 or more employees that reported issues, 50% reported the conflict in the Middle East as the main reason for their disruption. The other most reported reasons included:

- a shortage of materials (12%)
- the UK exiting the EU (9%)

Further details, including the full list of response options broken down by industry and size band, are available in our [accompanying dataset](#).

6 . Business Insights and Conditions Survey data

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

Dataset | Released 21 March 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 21 March 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 103 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 . Measuring the data

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 102, 103 and 104 of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey

Wave	22 February 2024 Publication Wave 102	7 March 2024 Publication Wave 103	21 March 2024 Publication Wave 104
Sample	39,197	39,126	39,078
Response	10,471	10,576	10,565
Rate	26.7%	27.0%	27.0%

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 104 survey was live for the period 4 March to 17 March 2024. For full details of the survey questions used, see our [Business Insights and Conditions Survey questions: 4 March to 17 March 2024 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 [BICS QMI report](#).

9 . 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](#).

10 . Related links

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

Bulletin | Updated frequently

Early data and analysis on economic activity and social change in the UK. These real-time 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: November 2023](#)

Article | Released 9 November 2023

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

11 . Cite this statistical bulletin

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