

Statistical bulletin

Business insights and impact on the UK economy: 24 March 2022

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

- Nearly half (47%) of businesses currently trading reported an increase in the prices of materials, goods or services bought in March 2022, up from 39% in February 2022, which is the largest percentage point increase on this measure since comparable estimates began in June 2020; in comparison, the percentage of businesses who reported an increase in the prices of materials, goods or services sold increased from 17% to 18% over the same period.
- In early March 2022, a quarter (25%) of businesses not permanently stopped trading reported that their production and/or suppliers had been affected by recent increases in energy prices; with the accommodation and food service activities industry reporting the highest percentage, at 53%.
- More than half (53%) of businesses not permanently stopped trading reported that they had been affected by general price increases in some way; the top three impacts reported by businesses were having to absorb costs (35%), passing on price increases to customers (24%) and having to change suppliers (9%).
- Approximately 62% of the workforce were estimated to be working from a designated workspace and a further 21% to be using a hybrid model of working in late February 2022; both have been broadly stable since early February 2022.
- Of businesses not permanently stopped trading, 12% reported that vacancies were more difficult to fill in the last month, and 13% reported that they were experiencing a shortage of workers in early March 2022; these percentages were higher for businesses with 10 or more employees at 36% and 31%, respectively.
- Approximately one in seven (14%) businesses currently trading reported that they had difficulty getting the materials, goods or services they needed from within the UK, down 2 percentage points from February 2022; the construction industry reported the largest movement in percentage, with fewer businesses experiencing difficulties, falling to 22% in March 2022 from 33% in February 2022.

2 . Headline figures

The data presented in this bulletin are the final results from Wave 52 of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS), which was live for the period 7 to 20 March 2022.

For questions regarding the last month, businesses were asked for their experience for the reference period 21 February to 20 March 2022. For questions regarding the last two weeks, businesses were asked for their experience for the reference period 21 February to 6 March 2022, although some businesses may have responded in relation to the point of completion of the questionnaire (7 to 20 March 2022). This is consistent with previous waves of the survey.

These dates should be kept in mind in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance as the estimates could be affected by both the location of the business and the date on which the business responded.

For experimental single-site weighted regional estimates up to Wave 49 (24 January to 6 February 2022), please see [Understanding the business impacts of local and national restrictions, UK: February 2022](#).

More about economy, business and jobs

- All ONS analysis, summarised in our [economy, business and jobs roundup](#).
- 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. Trading status and intra UK procurement: for presentational purposes, response options have been combined and/or removed.
2. Prices and intra UK procurement: businesses were asked for their experience for the reference period. However, businesses may respond from the point of completion of the questionnaire.
3. Prices: for presentational purposes, the data shows an increase to prices bought and sold compared with normal price fluctuations.
4. Data are plotted in the middle of the period of each wave.

Download this chart

[.xlsx](#)

In early March 2022, 94% of businesses were trading, with 84% fully trading and 10% partially trading. Meanwhile, 5% of businesses were temporarily paused trading and 2% were permanently ceased trading.

3 . Extended workforce

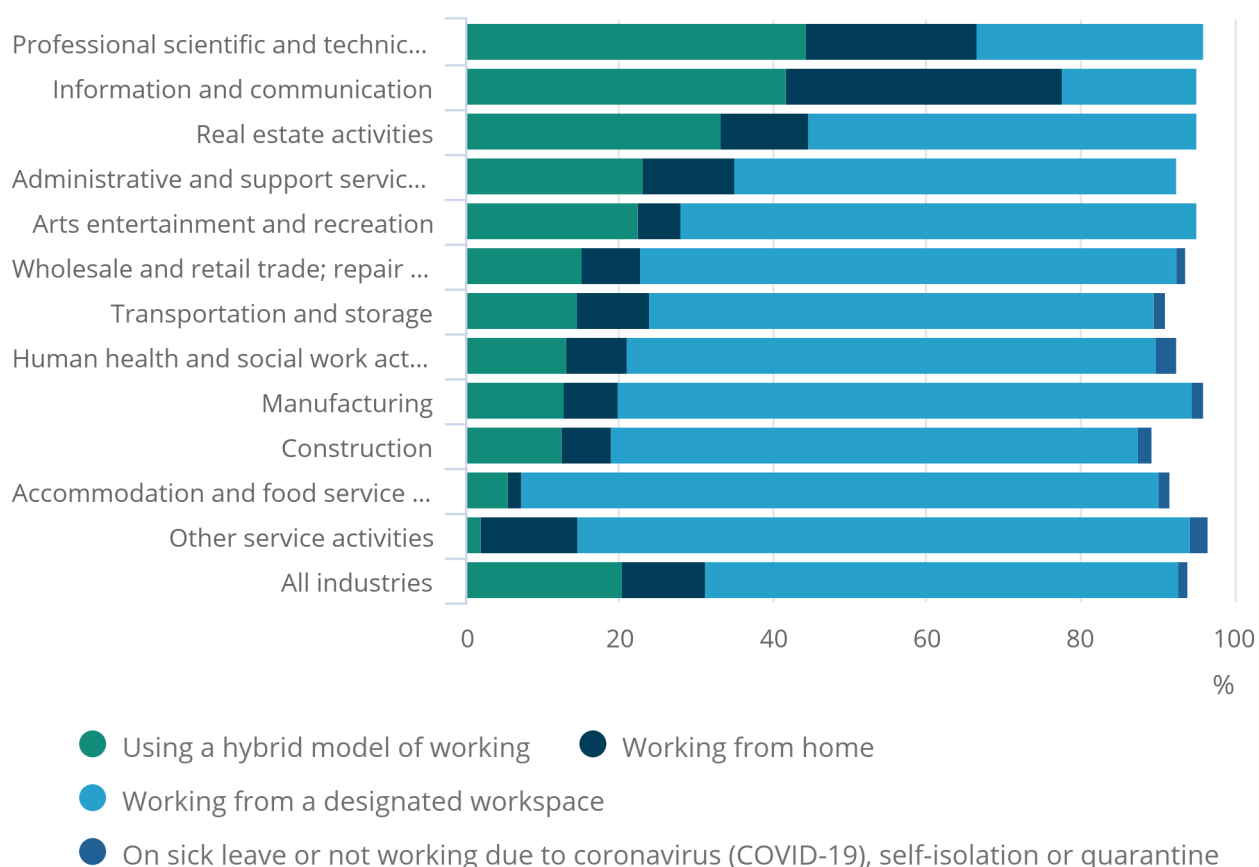
Workforce status

Figure 2: In late February 2022, approximately 82% of the workforce were estimated to be using a hybrid model of working or working from a designated workspace

Working arrangements, businesses not permanently stopped trading, weighted by employment, UK, 21 February to 6 March 2022

Figure 2: In late February 2022, approximately 82% of the workforce were estimated to be using a hybrid model of working or working from a designated workspace

Working arrangements, businesses not permanently stopped trading, weighted by employment, UK, 21 February to 6 March 2022



Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Insights and Conditions Survey

Notes:

1. Industries may not sum to 100% because of rounding, percentages less than 1% being removed for disclosure purposes, and response options being removed.
2. “Mining and quarrying”, “water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities” and “education (private sector and higher education businesses only)” have been removed for disclosure purposes, but their totals are included in “all industries”.
3. Businesses were asked for their experience for the reference period. However, businesses may respond from the point of completion of the questionnaire.

In late February 2022, the proportion of the workforce estimated to be working from a designated workspace, that is, not from home, or using a hybrid model of working was 82%, having increased steadily from 72% in early December 2021.

Worker shortages

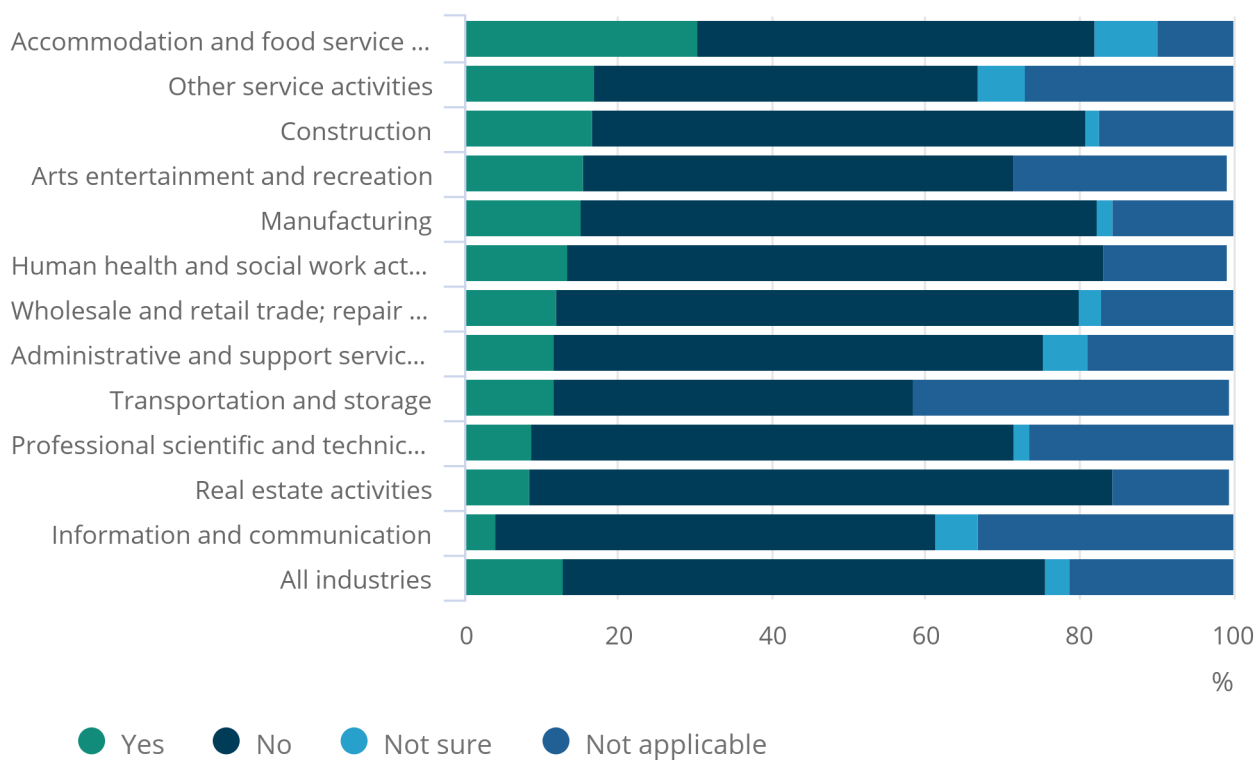
Of businesses not permanently stopped trading, more than one in eight (13%) reported they were experiencing worker shortages in early March 2022. This has remained broadly stable since the question was introduced in late October 2021. The percentage of businesses with 10 or more employees who reported worker shortages was higher, at 31%. However, this has fallen steadily from 37% in early November 2021.

Figure 3: Nearly a third of businesses (30%) in the accommodation and food service activities industry reported they were experiencing worker shortages

Worker shortages, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 7 to 20 March 2022

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Worker shortages, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 7 to 20 March 2022



Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Insights and Conditions Survey

Notes:

1. Industries may not sum to 100% because of rounding, percentages less than 1% being removed for disclosure purposes, and response options being removed.
2. "Mining and quarrying", "water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities" and "education (private sector and higher education businesses only)" have been removed for disclosure purposes, but their totals are included in "all industries".

The accommodation and food service activities industry continued to report the highest percentage of businesses experiencing a shortage of workers in early March 2022 (30%), up 2 percentage points from late February 2022. These shortages were partially driven by the food and beverage service sub-industry.

Of the 13% of businesses that reported a shortage of workers, the biggest effects of these shortages were:

- employees working increased hours (47%)
- businesses being unable to meet demands (47%)
- pausing trading of some of the business (13%)
- recruiting temporary workers (12%)

For businesses with 10 or more employees, the percentage of affected businesses that reported their employees were working increased hours was 61%.

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

Vacancies

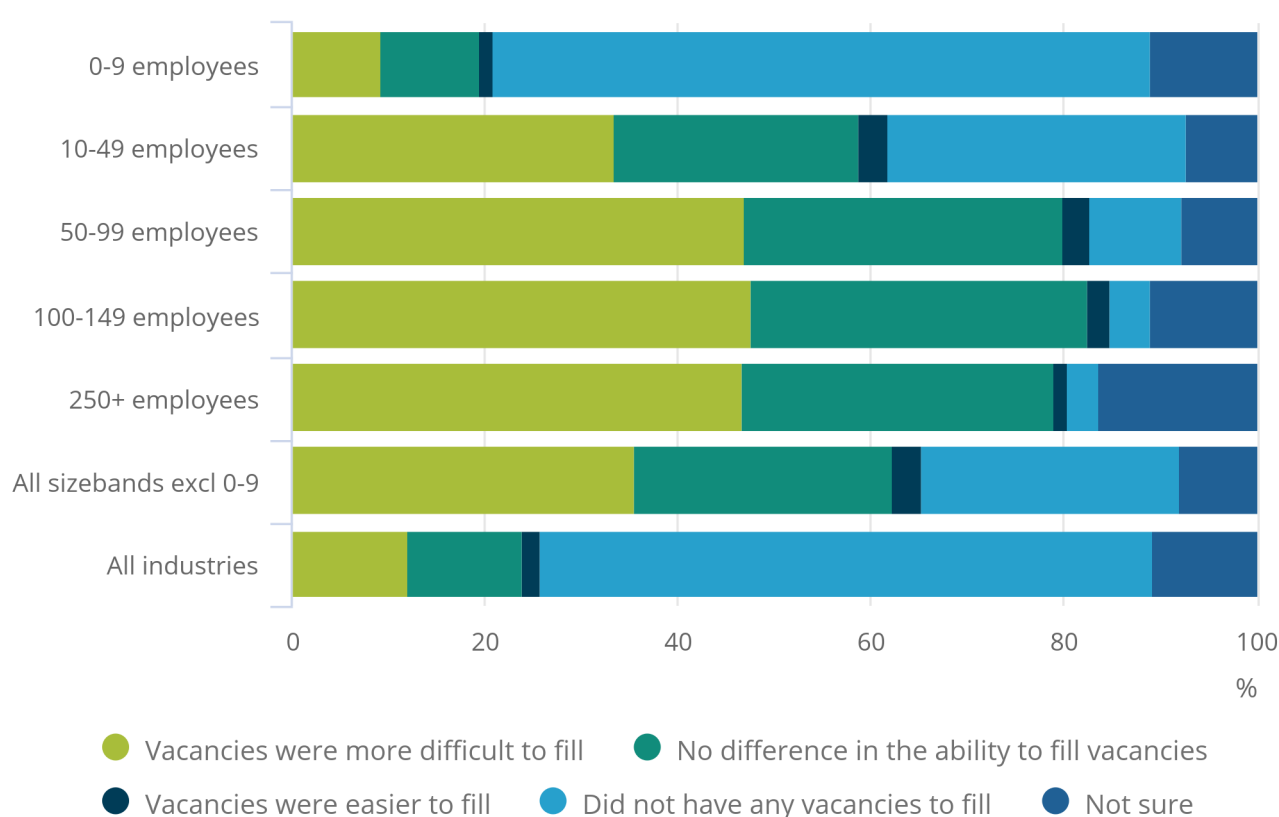
Businesses not permanently stopped trading were asked about their ability to fill vacancies in the last month compared with normal expectations for this time of year; 12% reported that vacancies were more difficult to fill.

Figure 4: 36% of businesses with 10 or more employees reported vacancies were more difficult to fill compared with normal expectations for this time of year

Ability to fill vacancies, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by size band, weighted by count, UK, 21 February to 20 March 2022

Figure 4: 36% of businesses with 10 or more employees reported vacancies were more difficult to fill compared with normal expectations for this time of year

Ability to fill vacancies, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by size band, weighted by count, UK, 21 February to 20 March 2022



Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Insights and Conditions Survey

Notes:

1. Businesses were asked for their experiences for the reference period. However, businesses may respond from the point of completion of the questionnaire.
2. Size bands may not sum to 100% because of rounding and percentages less than 1% being removed for disclosure purposes.

In March 2022, the proportion of businesses with 10 or more employees that reported their vacancies were more difficult to fill was 36%. This was the same as in February 2022, but the percentage has fallen from 41% reported in November 2021.

Businesses that reported difficulties filling vacancies in the last month compared with normal expectations were asked for the reasons for these difficulties. Across businesses with 10 or more employees, the main reasons for the difficulties experienced were:

- low number of applications for the roles on offer (60%)
- lack of qualified applicants for the roles on offer (55%)
- business cannot offer an attractive pay package to applicants (30%)

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

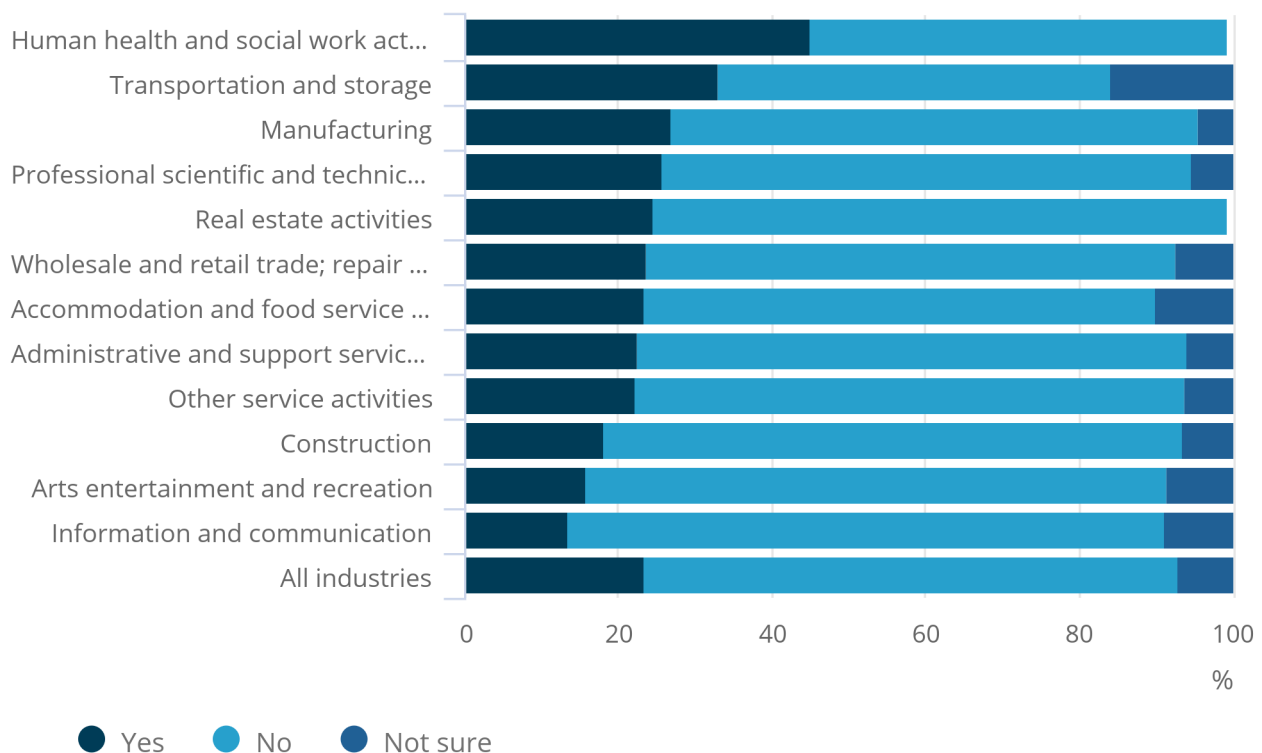
4 . Coronavirus (COVID-19) testing

Figure 5: Of businesses not permanently stopped trading, 24% reported they were providing regular COVID-19 testing to their workforce in early March 2022

COVID-19 testing, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 7 to 20 March 2022

Figure 5: Of businesses not permanently stopped trading, 24% reported they were providing regular COVID-19 testing to their workforce in early March 2022

COVID-19 testing, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 7 to 20 March 2022



Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Insights and Conditions Survey

Notes:

1. Industries may not sum to 100% because of rounding and percentages less than 1% being removed for disclosure purposes.
2. “Mining and quarrying”, “water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities” and “education (private sector and higher education businesses only)” have been removed for disclosure purposes, but their totals are included in “all industries”.

In February 2022, all nations within the United Kingdom scaled back or ended some coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions, while England removed the legal requirement to self-isolate.

Of businesses not permanently stopped trading, 24% reported that they were providing regular COVID-19 testing, that is, testing their workforce on a routine basis, at least once a week. Approximately 22% of the workforce in these businesses received testing. These percentages have decreased from 33% and 26% respectively in early January 2022, and are the lowest percentages reported since late October 2021. Approximately one in nine (11%) businesses reported they were either collecting or intending to collect contact details for the purpose of contact tracing at their sites.

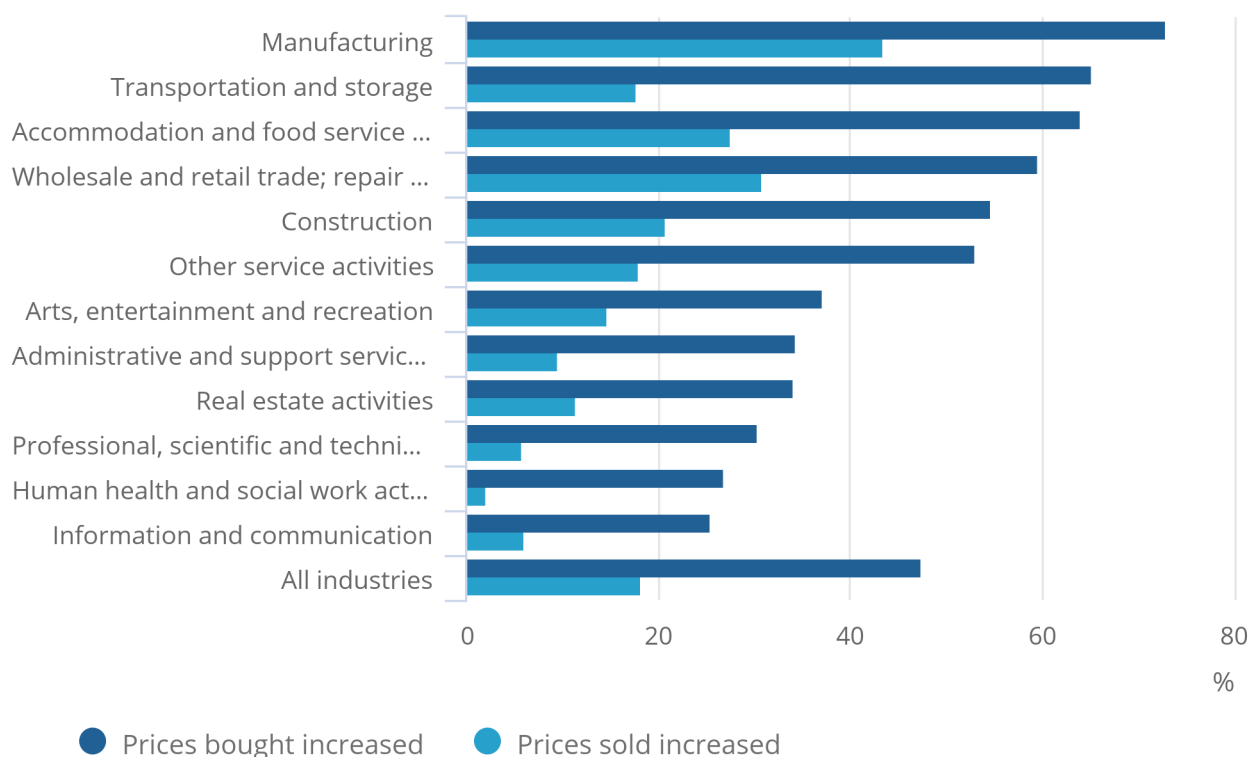
5 . Prices bought and sold

Figure 6: The manufacturing industry continued to report the largest percentage of currently trading businesses reporting an increase in prices bought, at 73%

Prices bought and sold have increased, businesses currently trading, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 21 February to 20 March 2022

Figure 6: The manufacturing industry continued to report the largest percentage of currently trading businesses reporting an increase in prices bought, at 73%

Prices bought and sold have increased, businesses currently trading, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 21 February to 20 March 2022



Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Insights and Conditions Survey

Notes:

1. For presentational purposes, response options have been removed.
2. “Mining and quarrying”, “water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities” and “education (private sector and higher education businesses only)” have been removed for disclosure purposes, but their totals are included in “all industries”.
3. Businesses were asked for their experiences for the reference period. However, businesses may respond from the point of completion of the questionnaire.

The percentage of businesses currently trading who reported that the prices of materials, goods or services bought in the last month had increased compared with normal fluctuations was 47% in March 2022. This was up from 39% in February 2022. This was the largest percentage point increase reported wave on wave since comparable estimates began in June 2020.

The number of businesses that reported the prices of materials, goods or services sold had increased compared with normal expectations continued to remain broadly stable, at 18%. However, there was some change by industry on this measure.

The manufacturing industry reported the largest percentage point increase in the last month in the proportion of businesses reporting that the prices of materials, goods or services sold had increased more than normal, from 28% in February 2022 to 43% in March 2022. This was closely followed by the transportation and storage industry that reported a 13 percentage point increase, from 5% to 18% over the same period.

Of businesses currently trading and who reported prices sold were applicable to their business, 16% reported an increase in demand for the goods or services they sold over the last month, up from 14% reported in February 2022. This compared with 71% of businesses that reported no increase in demand in March 2022, unchanged from February 2022.

Further breakdowns by industry and size band can be found in the [accompanying dataset](#).

6 . Energy prices

Figure 7: In early March 2022, 25% of businesses reported their production and/or suppliers had been affected by recent increases in energy prices

Effect of energy prices, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 7 to 20 March 2022

Figure 7: In early March 2022, 25% of businesses reported their production and/or suppliers had been affected by recent increases in energy prices

Effect of energy prices, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 7 to 20 March 2022



Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Insights and Conditions Survey

Notes:

1. For presentational purposes, response options have been combined.
2. “Mining and quarrying”, “water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities” and “education (private sector and higher education businesses only)” have been removed for disclosure purposes, but their totals are included in “all industries”.
3. Industries may not sum to 100% because of rounding and percentages less than 1% being removed for disclosure purposes.

Approximately a quarter (25%) of businesses reported that their production and/or suppliers were affected by recent increases in energy prices, while 32% reported their business had not been affected. However, when excluding businesses with fewer than 10 employees, these percentages increase to 38% and 34%, respectively.

The accommodation and food service activities industry reported the highest percentage of businesses where their production and/or suppliers were affected by recent increases in energy prices, at 53%. This was partially driven by the food and beverage service sub-industry.

7 . Impact of prices

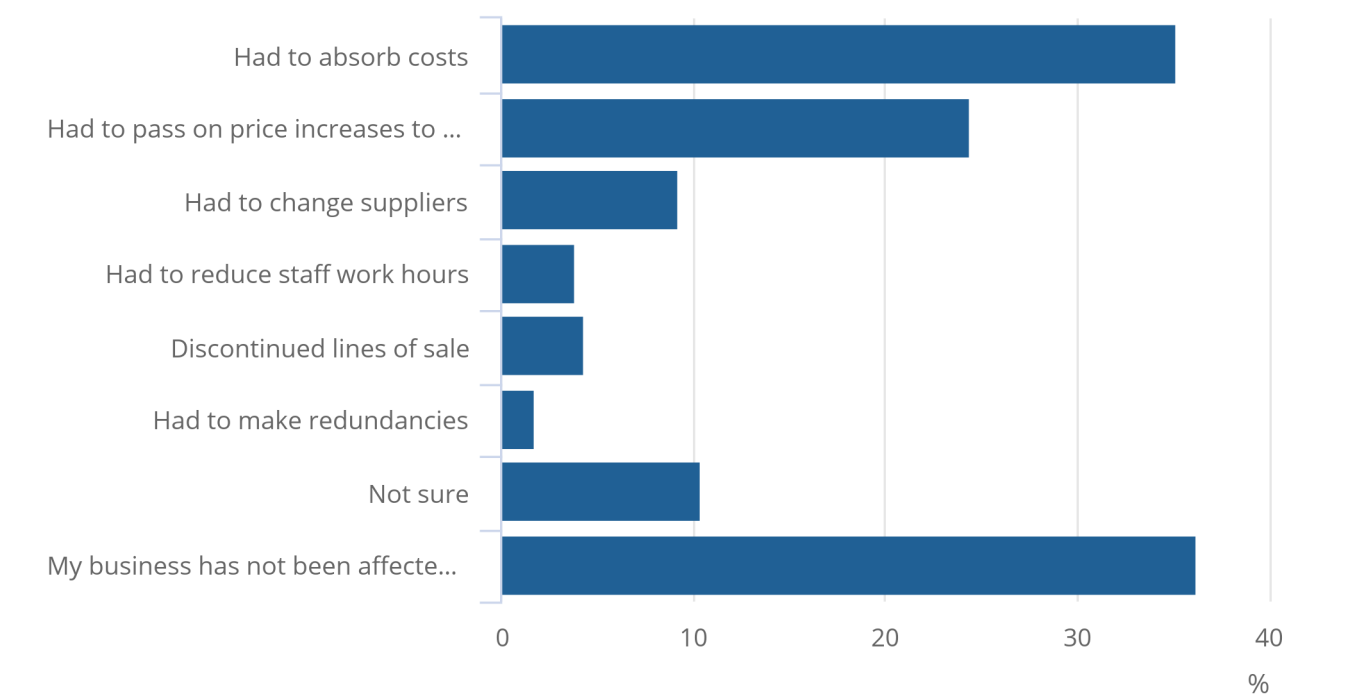
In early March 2022, businesses not permanently stopped trading were asked in which ways their business had been affected by any price rises they had experienced.

Figure 8: Over a third (35%) of businesses reported they had to absorb costs because of the effect of price rises on their business

Impact of price rises, businesses not permanently stopped trading, weighted by count, UK, 7 to 20 March 2022

Figure 8: Over a third (35%) of businesses reported they had to absorb costs because of the effect of price rises on their business

Impact of price rises, businesses not permanently stopped trading, weighted by count, UK, 7 to 20 March 2022



Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Insights and Conditions Survey

Notes:

1. Businesses were asked in which way, if any, has their business been affected by price rises.
 2. Response options will not sum to 100% as businesses were able to select multiple options.
- More than half (53%) of businesses reported they were affected by the increase in prices in one or more ways.
- The following industries reported the greatest percentage for the top three impact options selected:

- 49% of businesses within the transportation and storage industry and the manufacturing industry reported they had to absorb costs
- 44% of businesses within the manufacturing industry reported they had to pass on price increases to customers
- 19% of businesses within the manufacturing industry and the transportation and storage industry reported they had to change suppliers

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

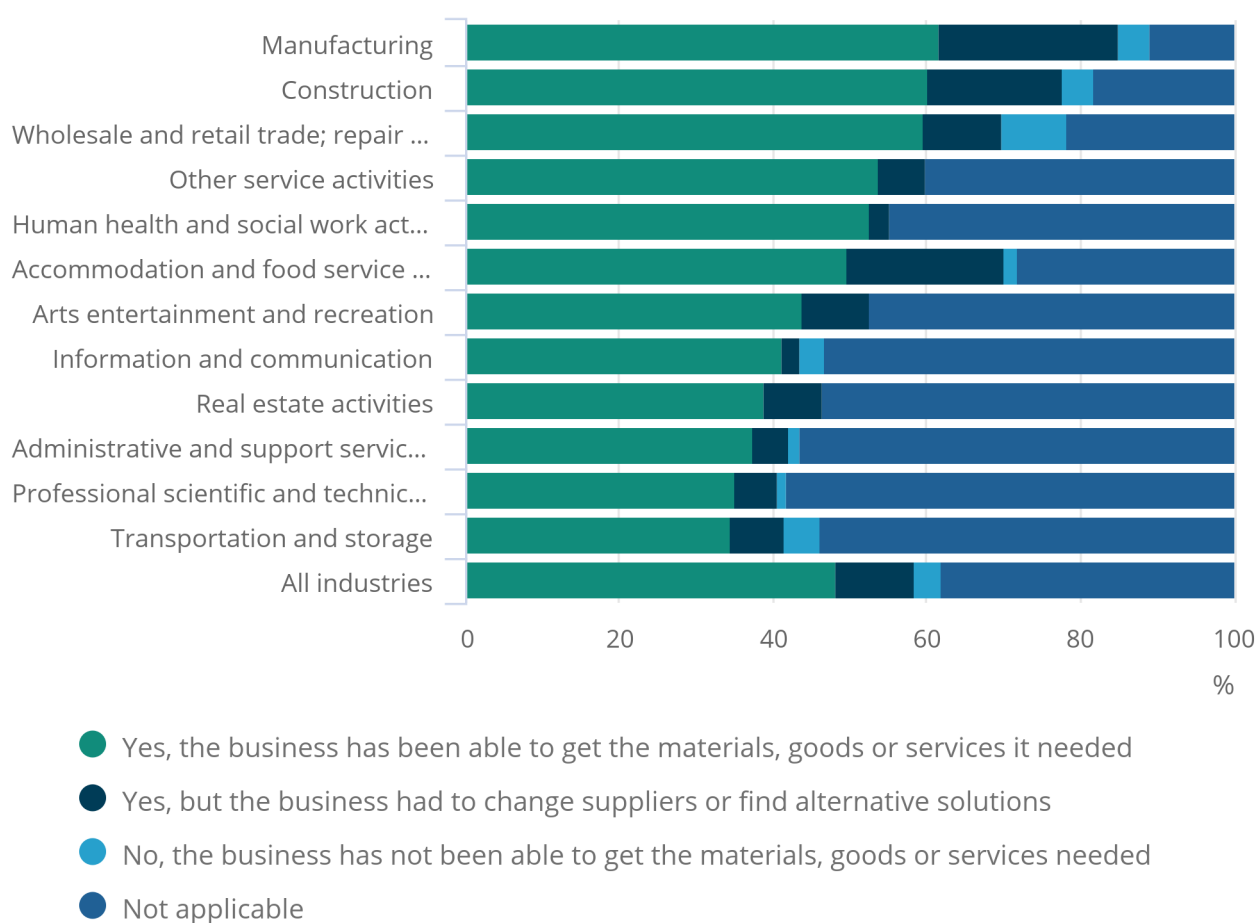
8 . Procurement within the UK

Figure 9: More than half (59%) of businesses currently trading reported they were able to procure the materials, goods or services they needed from within the UK in the last month

Intra UK procurement, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 21 February to 20 March 2022

Figure 9: More than half (59%) of businesses currently trading reported they were able to procure the materials, goods or services they needed from within the UK in the last month

Intra UK procurement, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 21 February to 20 March 2022



Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Insights and Conditions Survey

Notes:

1. Businesses were asked for their experience for the reference period. However, businesses may respond from the point of completion of the questionnaire.
2. Industries may not sum to 100% because of rounding and percentages less than 1% being removed for disclosure purposes.
3. “Mining and quarrying”, “water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities” and “education (private sector and higher education businesses only)” have been removed for disclosure purposes, but their totals are included in “all industries”.

Approximately one in seven (14%) businesses reported that they were either not able to get the materials, goods or services they needed from within the UK, or had to make changes to their supply chains to do so. This is down 2 percentage points from February 2022.

The manufacturing industry continued to report the largest percentage of businesses that were experiencing difficulty procuring from within the UK in the last month at 28%. This was an increase from 16% in January 2022, and up from 25% in February 2022.

The accommodation and food service activities industry and the construction industry reported the second highest percentage of businesses experiencing difficulties, at 22% in March 2022. However, this was down from 27% and 33%, respectively, in February 2022.

9 . Business Insights and Conditions Survey data

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

Dataset | Released 24 March 2022

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.

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

Dataset | Released 27 January 2022

Confidence intervals for weighted estimates from the voluntary fortnightly business survey (BICS) about financial performance, workforce, prices, trade, and business resilience. These data are not official statistics but have been developed to deliver timely indicators to help understand the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and other events.

Access to microdata

You can now access the BICS microdata for Waves 1 to 51 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](#) 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 \(RAP\)](#). To access the SRS, you must also work for an organisation with an Assured Organisational Connectivity agreement in place.

10 . 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.

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.

11 . Measuring the data

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

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

Table 1: Sample and response rates for Waves 50, 51 and 52 of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey

Wave	24 February 2022 Publication Wave 50	10 March 2022 Publication Wave 51	24 March 2022 Publication Wave 52
Sample	38,265	38,226	38,187
Response	8,407	7,859	9,638
Rate	22.0%	20.6%	25.2%

Source: Office for National Statistics - Business Insights and Conditions Survey

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 52 survey was live for the period 7 to 20 March 2022. For questions regarding the last two weeks, businesses were asked for their experience for the reference period 21 February to 6 March 2022. For questions regarding the last month, businesses were asked for their experience for the reference period 21 February to 20 March 2022. However, businesses may respond from the point of completion of the questionnaire (7 to 20 March 2022). The [survey questions](#) are available.

Coverage

The Monthly Business Survey (MBS) covers the UK for production and only Great Britain for services. The Retail Sales Index (RSI) and Construction are Great Britain-focused. Therefore, the BICS will be UK-focused for production-based industries but Great Britain-focused for the other elements of the economy covered. The industries covered are:

- non-financial services (includes professional, scientific, communication, administrative, transport, accommodation and food, private health and education, and entertainment services)
- distribution (includes retail, wholesale, and motor trades)
- production (includes manufacturing, oil and gas extraction, energy generation and supply, and water and waste management)
- construction (includes civil engineering, housebuilding, property development and specialised construction trades such as plumbers, electricians, and plasterers)

The following industries are excluded from the survey:

- agriculture
- 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 the [BICS QMI](#).

12 . Strengths and limitations

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](#).

13 . Related links

[Comparison of furloughed jobs data, UK: March 2020 to June 2021](#)

Article | Released 2 September 2021

An overview of the similarities and differences between the fortnightly Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) furlough estimates and HMRC's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme statistics, over the period 23 March 2020 to 30 June 2021.

[COVID-19 question bank](#)

Webpage | Updated frequently

This webpage provides a bank of questions from multiple Office for National Statistics (ONS) surveys related to coronavirus (COVID-19) to be used in other surveys to further support harmonisation and questionnaire development. This bank also provides users with an understanding of what data the ONS have in relation to the coronavirus pandemic.

[Understanding the business impacts of local and national restrictions, UK: February 2022](#)

Article | Released 17 February 2022

Experimental estimates from the voluntary fortnightly Business Insights and Conditions 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 local authority levels.

[Business and individual attitudes towards the future of homeworking, UK: April to May 2021](#)

Article | Released 14 June 2021

Analysis of the effects of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on office working and of business and individual attitudes to future working practices.

[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 businesses' 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).