

Statistical bulletin

# Business insights and impact on the UK economy: 7 January 2021

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.

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# 1 . Other pages in this release

More commentary on the impacts of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on the UK economy and society is available on the following pages:

- [Coronavirus and the latest indicators for the UK economy and society](#)
- [Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain](#)

## 2 . Main points

- Over three-quarters of businesses in the accommodation and food service activities industry experienced a decrease in turnover and profits compared with normal expectations for this time of year.
- Half of businesses in the accommodation and food service activities industry had less than three months' cash reserves, compared with 30% across all industries.
- Of businesses in the accommodation and food service activities industry, 28% had no or low confidence that they would survive the next three months.
- The proportion of businesses' workforce on furlough leave has decreased from 16% in Wave 19 (16 to 29 November 2020) to 11% in Wave 20 (30 November to 13 December 2020).
- 16% of businesses intend to use increased homeworking as a permanent business model going forward.

## 3 . Current trading status of businesses

The data presented here are final results from Wave 20 of the Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS), which was live for the period 14 to 23 December 2020.

For questions regarding the last two weeks, businesses were asked for their experience for the reference period 30 November to 13 December 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 have an impact on the estimates.

Due to changes in publication dates over the Christmas period, the results of the next wave of the BICS survey, Wave 21, will be released on 14 January 2020.

For experimental weighted regional estimates up to Wave 18 (16 to 29 November 2020), please see [Business insights and impact on the UK and sub-national economy](#).

**Figure 1: The percentage of businesses currently trading has increased from 77% in Wave 18 (16 to 29 November 2020) to 84% in Wave 20 (14 to 23 December 2020)**

Current trading status, all businesses, broken down by wave, weighted by count, UK, 15 June to 23 December 2020

Figure 1: The percentage of businesses currently trading has increased from 77% in Wave 18 (16 to 29 November 2020) to 84% in Wave 20 (14 to 23 December 2020)

Current trading status, all businesses, broken down by wave, weighted by count, UK, 15 June to 23 December 2020



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

Notes:

1. Final weighted results, Wave 7 to Wave 20 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS).
2. For presentational purposes, currently trading categories and paused or temporarily closed categories have been combined.
3. Waves will not sum to 100% because of rounding, percentages less than 1% being removed for disclosure purposes, and the option permanently ceased trading being removed.

Figure 1 shows the trend in weighted trading status estimates between Wave 7 (15 to 28 June 2020) and Wave 20 (14 to 23 December 2020).

The percentage of businesses currently trading has increased to 84% in Wave 20 (14 to 23 December 2020). This is compared with 77% in Wave 18 (16 to 29 November 2020). Since Wave 7 (1 to 14 June 2020), the highest percentage of businesses currently trading was 86% in Wave 14 (21 September to 4 October 2020) and Wave 15 (5 to 18 October 2020) and the lowest percentage was 66% in Wave 7 (15 to 28 June 2020).

The increase in percentage of businesses currently trading may be due to changes to COVID-19 restrictions. The second English national lockdown ended on 2 December 2020 and was replaced by a tiered restriction system.

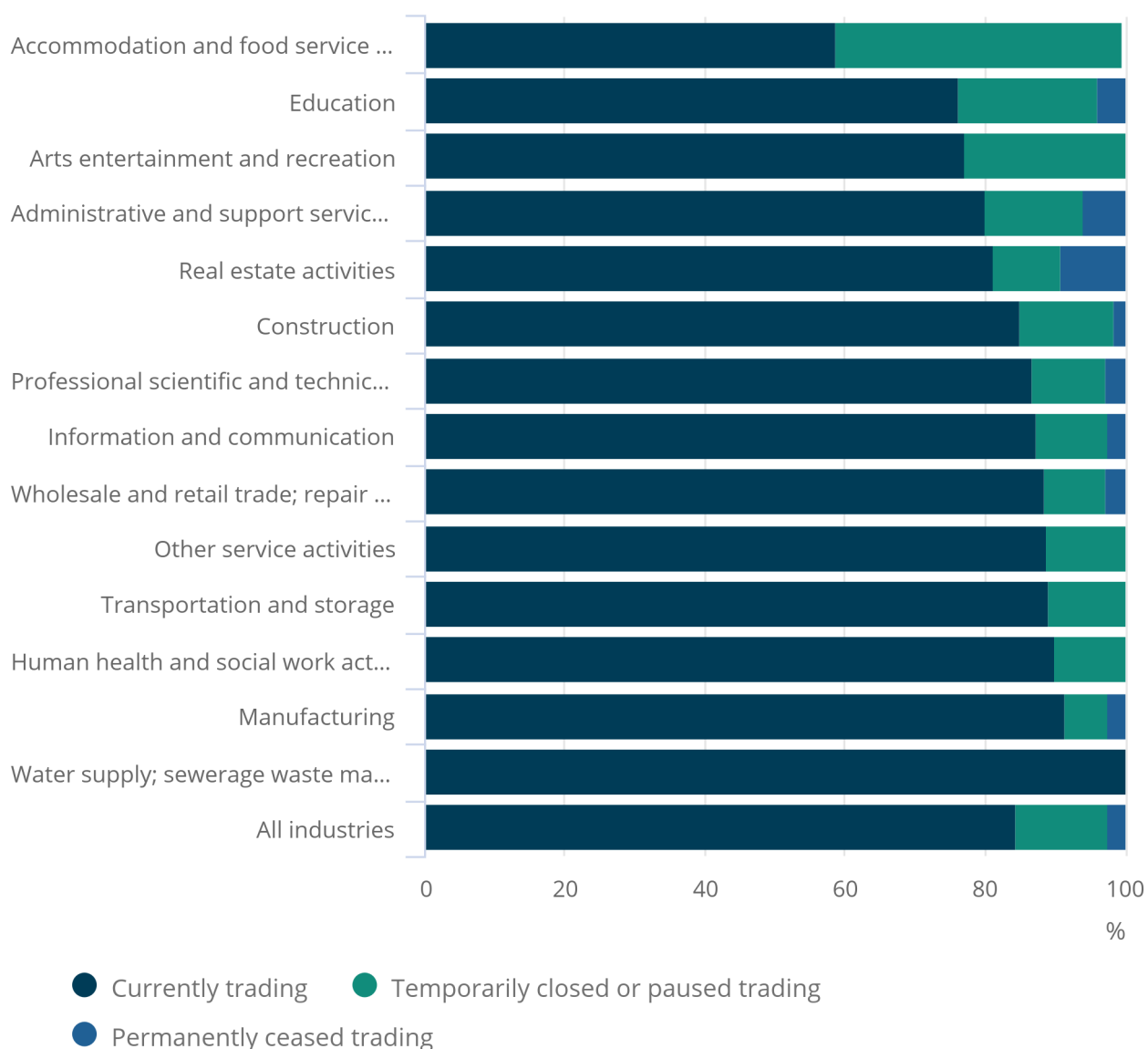
Two industries, the wholesale and retail trade industry and the information and communication industry, were the main contributors to the increase in businesses currently trading between Wave 19 and Wave 20.

**Figure 2: 41% of businesses in the accommodation and food service activities industry were temporarily closed or paused trading, compared with 13% across all industries**

Current trading status, all businesses, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 14 to 23 December 2020

Figure 2: 41% of businesses in the accommodation and food service activities industry were temporarily closed or paused trading, compared with 13% across all industries

Current trading status, all businesses, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 14 to 23 December 2020



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

Notes:

1. Final weighted results, Wave 20 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS).
2. For presentational purposes, currently trading categories and paused or temporarily closed categories have been combined.
3. Industries may not sum to 100% because of rounding and percentages less than 1% being removed for disclosure purposes.
4. Mining and quarrying has been removed for disclosure purposes, but its total is included in all industries.

Across all industries:

- 79% of businesses had been trading for more than the last two weeks
- 6% of businesses had started trading within the last two weeks after a pause in trading
- 2% of businesses had paused trading but intended to restart in the next two weeks
- 11% of businesses had paused trading and did not intend to restart in the next two weeks
- 2% of businesses had permanently ceased trading

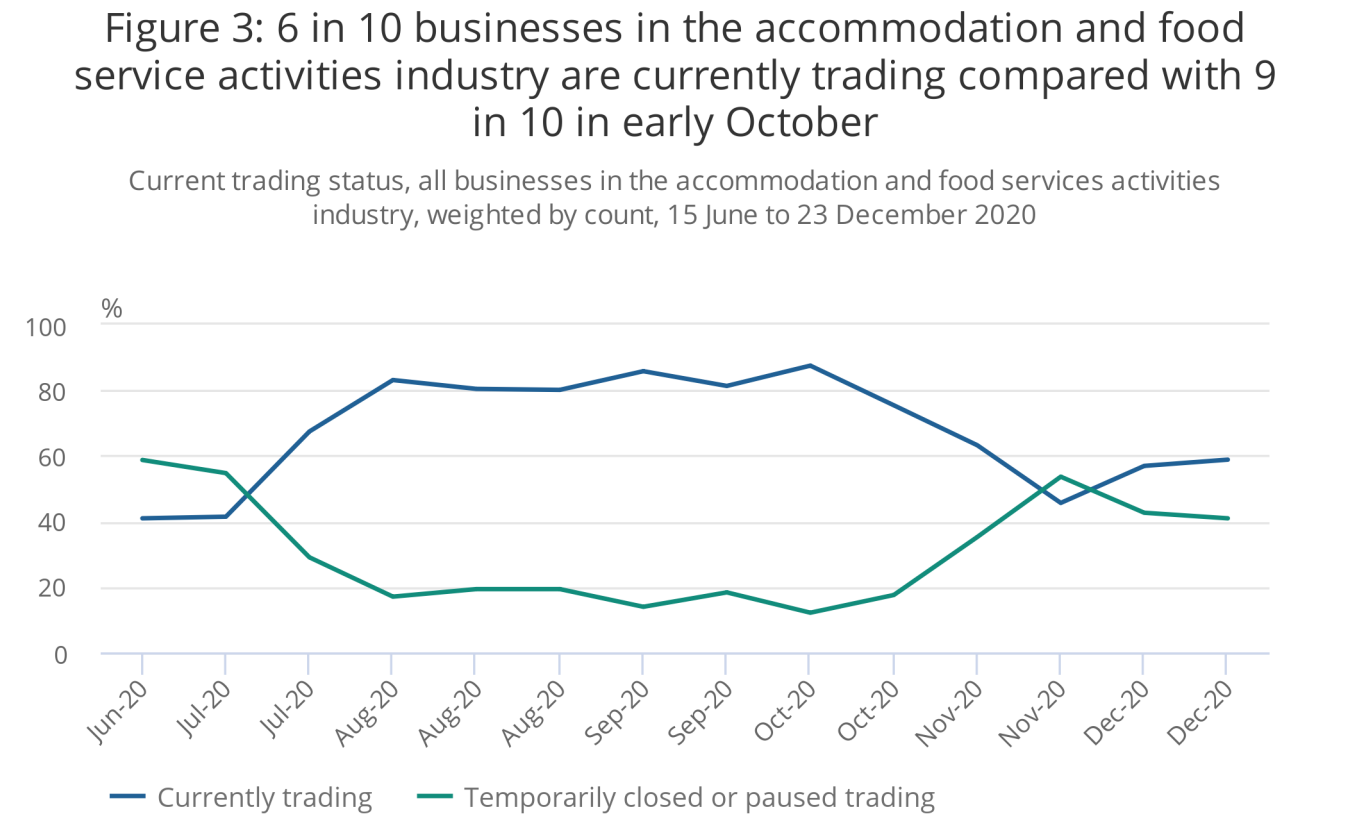
The accommodation and food service activities industry had the highest percentage of businesses temporarily closed or paused trading, at 41%. When splitting the industry into finer detail, the accommodation industry had 28% of its businesses temporarily closed or paused trading, compared with 43% in the food and beverage service activities industry.

The arts, entertainment and recreation industry and the education industry (private sector and higher education businesses only) had the next highest percentages of businesses temporarily closed or paused trading, at 23% and 20% respectively.

The real estate activities industry and the administrative and support service activities industry had the highest percentages of businesses permanently ceased trading, at 9% and 6% respectively.

**Figure 3: 6 in 10 businesses in the accommodation and food service activities industry are currently trading compared with 9 in 10 in early October**

Current trading status, all businesses in the accommodation and food services activities industry, weighted by count, 15 June to 23 December 2020



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

Notes:

1. Final weighted results, Wave 7 to Wave 20 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS).
2. For presentational purposes, currently trading categories and paused or temporarily closed categories have been combined.
3. Waves will not sum to 100% because of rounding, percentages less than 1% being removed for disclosure purposes, and the option permanently ceased trading being removed.

Since Wave 7 (15 to 28 June 2020), the accommodation and food service activities industry has seen the percentages of businesses currently trading changing significantly due to COVID-19 restrictions. In Wave 20 (14 to 23 December 2020), 59% businesses in the accommodation and food service activities industry are trading, compared with a high of 88% businesses in Wave 15 (5 to 18 October 2020), and low of 41% in Wave 7 (15 to 28 June 2020).

Table 1 shows how the trading status of larger businesses compares with micro businesses (businesses with fewer than 10 employees). In Wave 20, 84% of micro businesses were currently trading, compared with 95% of businesses with 250 or more employees. Mid-sized businesses with 50 to 99 employees saw the largest change in percentage of businesses currently trading between Wave 19 (30 November to 13 December) and Wave 20 (14 to 23 December), increasing by 5 percentage points.

Table 1: 84% of micro businesses were currently trading, compared with 95% of businesses with 250 or more employees

Current trading status, all business, broken down by size band, weighted by count, UK, 14 to 23 December 2020

<b>Size Band (number of employees)</b>	<b>Currently trading</b>	<b>Temporarily closed or paused trading</b>
<b>0 to 9</b>	83.7%	13.8%
<b>10 to 49</b>	89.1%	10.2%
<b>50 to 99</b>	94.5%	4.6%
<b>100 to 249</b>	95.6%	4.0%
<b>250 and over</b>	94.8%	4.6%
<b>All Size Bands Excluding 0 to 9</b>	90.1%	9.2%
<b>All Size Bands</b>	84.4%	13.3%

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

#### Notes

1. Final weighted results, Wave 20 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS).
2. For presentational purposes, currently trading categories and paused or temporarily closed categories have been combined.
3. Size bands will not sum to 100% because of rounding, percentages less than 1% being removed for disclosure purposes, and the option permanently ceased trading being removed.

## 4 . Businesses' financial performance

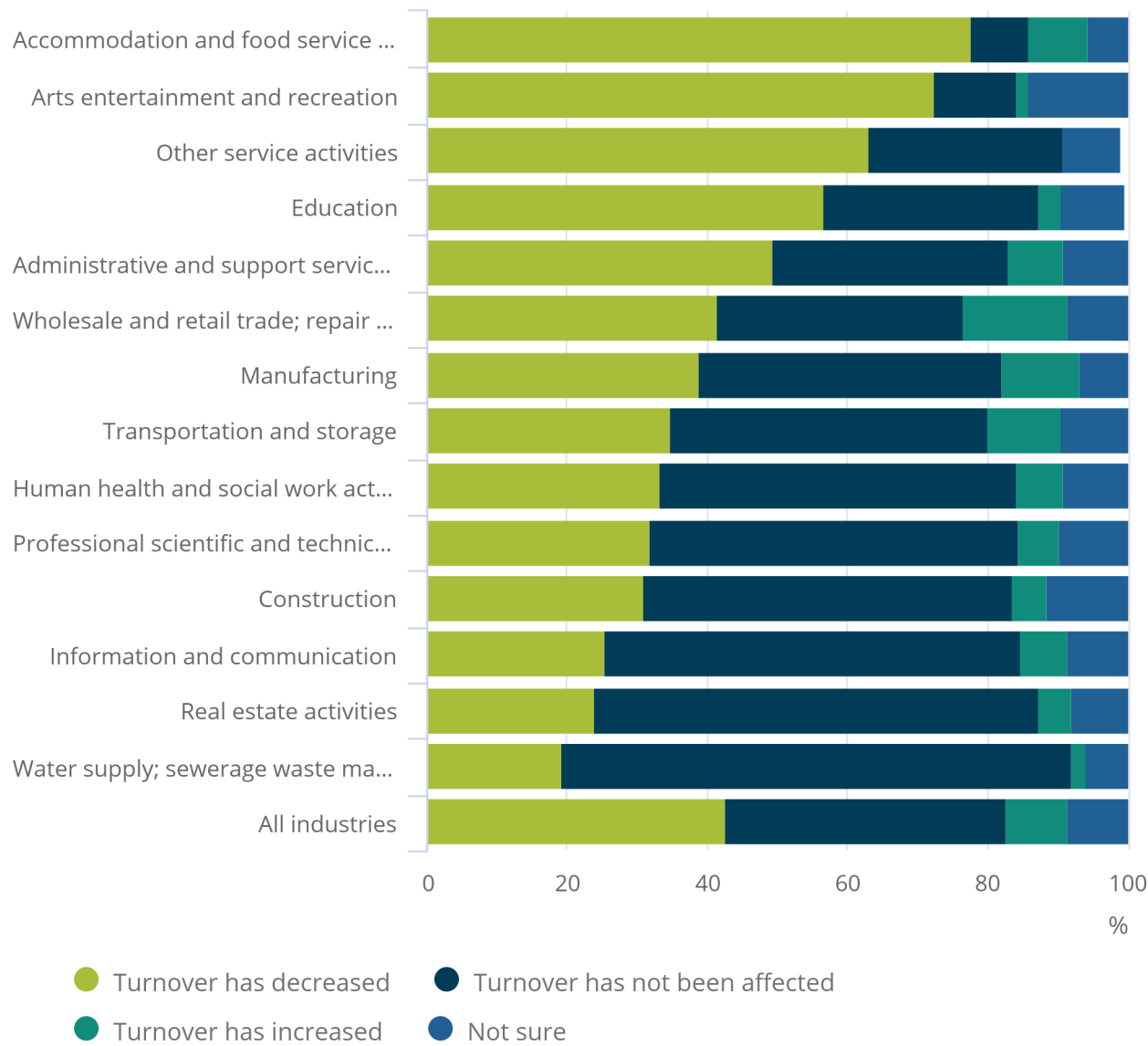
The Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS) asks businesses that are currently trading how the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has affected their turnover and their profits, compared with normal expectations for this time of year.

**Figure 4: Over three-quarters of businesses in the accommodation and food service activities industry experienced a decrease in turnover compared with normal expectations for this time of year**

Impact on turnover, businesses currently trading, broken down by industry, weighted by turnover, UK, 30 November to 13 December 2020

Figure 4: Over three-quarters of businesses in the accommodation and food service activities industry experienced a decrease in turnover compared with normal expectations for this time of year

Impact on turnover, businesses currently trading, broken down by industry, weighted by turnover, UK, 30 November to 13 December 2020



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

Notes:



1. Final weighted results, Wave 20 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey; businesses currently trading.
2. For presentational purposes, decreased turnover categories and increased turnover categories have been combined.
3. Industries may not sum to 100% because of rounding and percentages less than 1% being removed for disclosure purposes.
4. Mining and quarrying has been removed for disclosure purposes, but its total is included in all industries.
5. Businesses were asked for their experiences for the reference period 30 November to 13 December 2020. However, for questions regarding the last two weeks, businesses may respond from the point of completion of the questionnaire (14 to 23 December 2020).

Across all industries, of businesses currently trading:

- 43% experienced a decrease in turnover compared with normal expectations for this time of year
- 40% experienced no impact on turnover
- 9% experienced an increase in turnover compared with normal expectations for this time of year

Four industries had more than 50% of their businesses experiencing a decrease in turnover:

- the accommodation and food service activities industry, at 78%
- the arts, entertainment and recreation industry, at 73%
- the other service activities industry (which includes hairdressing and other beauty treatment activities), at 63%
- the education industry (private sector and higher education businesses only), at 57%

When splitting the accommodation and food service activities industry into finer detail, the accommodation industry had 83% of its businesses experiencing a decrease in turnover compared with normal expectations for this time of year; this is compared with 75% in the food and beverage service activities industry.

Conversely, the wholesale and retail trade industry had the highest percentage of businesses experiencing an increase in turnover, at 15%. Additional information on the retail trade industry is available in [Retail sales, Great Britain](#).

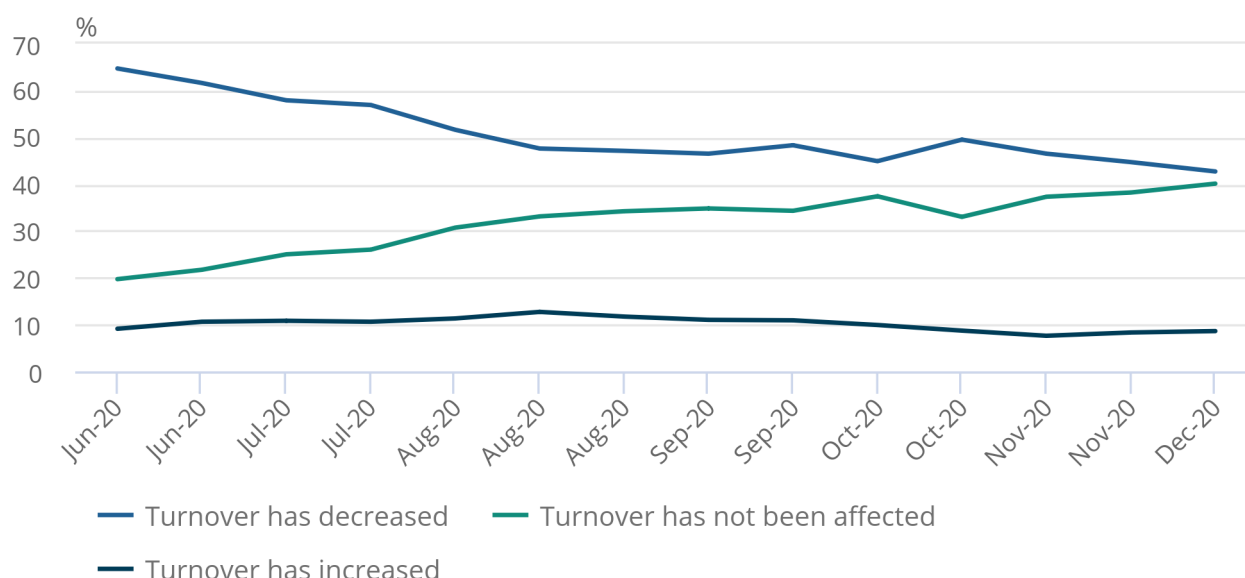
Figure 5 shows the trend in weighted turnover estimates between Wave 7 (1 to 14 June 2020) and Wave 20 (30 November to 13 December 2020).

**Figure 5: The percentage of businesses experiencing a decrease in turnover has fallen from 50% in Wave 17 (19 October to 1 November 2020) to 43% in Wave 20 (30 November to 13 December 2020)**

Impact on turnover, businesses currently trading, broken down by wave, weighted by turnover, UK, 1 June to 13 December 2020

Figure 5: The percentage of businesses experiencing a decrease in turnover has fallen from 50% in Wave 17 (19 October to 1 November 2020) to 43% in Wave 20 (30 November to 13 December 2020)

Impact on turnover, businesses currently trading, broken down by wave, weighted by turnover, UK, 1 June to 13 December 2020



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

**Notes:**

1. Final weighted results, Wave 7 to Wave 20 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Businesses Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS); businesses currently trading.
2. For presentational purposes, decreased turnover categories and increased turnover categories have been combined.
3. Waves will not sum to 100% because of rounding, percentages less than 1% being removed for disclosure purposes and the option not sure being removed.
4. 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.

The percentage of businesses experiencing a decrease in turnover compared with normal expectations for this time of year decreased to 43% in Wave 20 (30 November to 13 December 2020), after a sharp increase to 50% in Wave 17 (19 October to 1 November 2020). As a result, the percentage of businesses experiencing a decrease in turnover is now the lowest percentage seen since Wave 7 (1 to 14 June 2020). The highest percentage of businesses experiencing a decrease in turnover was 65% in Wave 7.

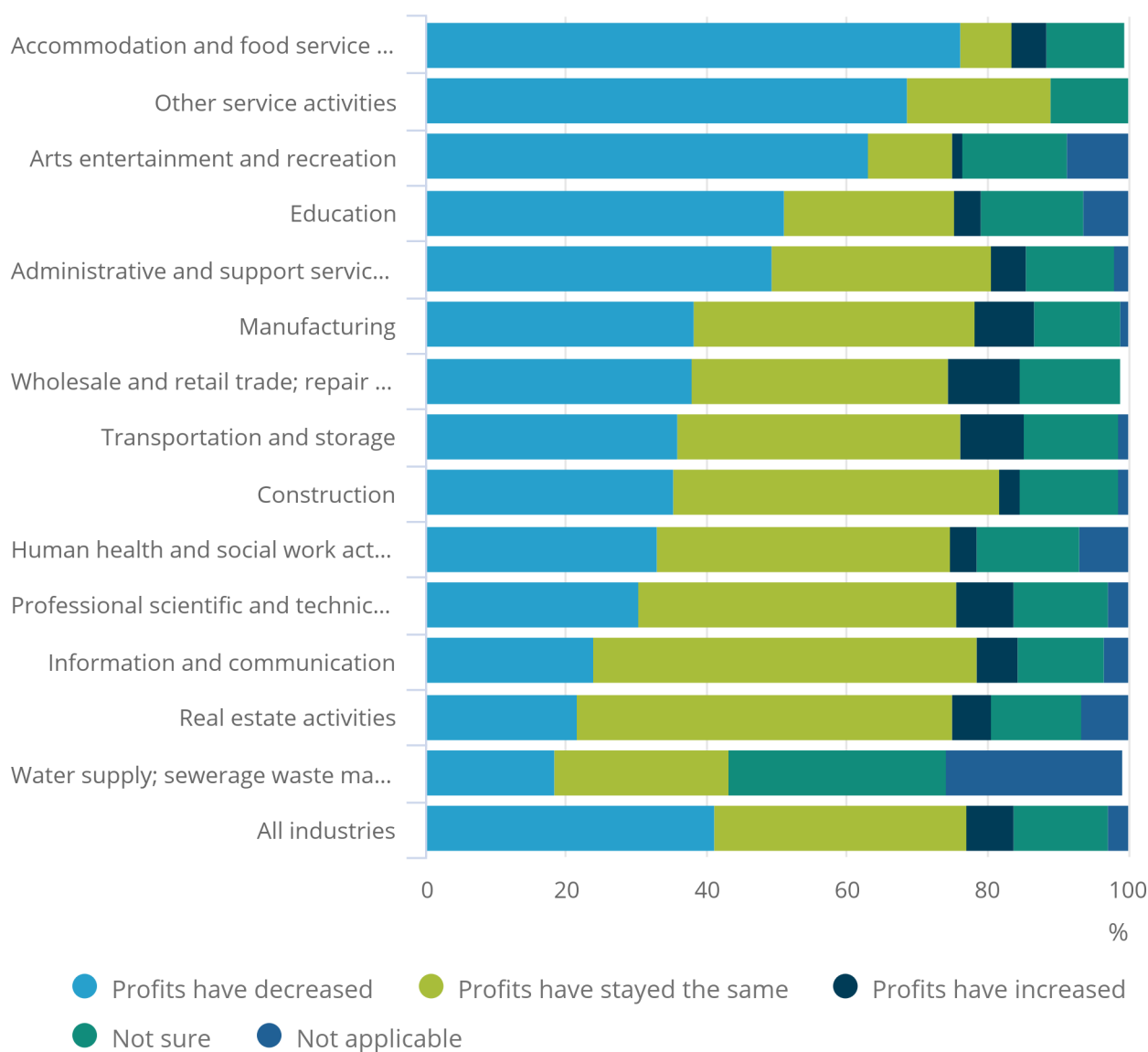
The slight fall in the percentage of businesses experiencing a decrease in turnover could be down to various reasons, including the easing of restrictions (the second English national lockdown ended on 2 December 2020) and more businesses currently trading (see earlier sections). Also, seasonal effects, such as Christmas-related demand, may have played a part in the trend. This is partly evidenced by the wholesale and retail trade industry being the main driver in the decrease in the percentage of businesses experiencing a decrease in turnover between Wave 19 and Wave 20.

**Figure 6: Five industries had 50% or more of their businesses experiencing a decrease in profit compared with normal expectations for this time of year**

Impact on profit, businesses currently trading, broken down by industry, weighted by turnover, UK, 30 November to 13 December 2020

Figure 6: Five industries had 50% or more of their businesses experiencing a decrease in profit compared with normal expectations for this time of year

Impact on profit, businesses currently trading, broken down by industry, weighted by turnover, UK, 30 November to 13 December 2020



Notes:

1. Final weighted results, Wave 20 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Businesses Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS); businesses currently trading.
2. For presentational purposes, decreased profit categories and increased profit categories have been combined.
3. Industries may not sum to 100% because of rounding and percentages less than 1% being removed for disclosure purposes.
4. Mining and quarrying has been removed for disclosure purposes, but its total is included in all industries.
5. Businesses were asked for their experiences for the reference period 30 November to 13 December 2020. However, for questions regarding the last two weeks, businesses may respond from the point of completion of the questionnaire (14 to 23 December 2020).

Across all industries, of businesses currently trading:

- 41% experienced a decrease in profits compared with normal expectations for this time of year
- 36% experienced no impact on profits
- 7% experienced an increase in profits compared with normal expectations for this time of year

Four industries had more than 50% of their businesses experiencing a decrease in profits:

- the accommodation and food service activities industry, at 76%
- the other service activities industry (which includes hairdressing and other beauty treatment activities), at 69%
- the arts, entertainment and recreation industry, at 63%
- the education industry (private sector and higher education businesses only), at 51%

When splitting the accommodation and food service activities industry into finer detail, the accommodation industry had 82% of its businesses experiencing a decrease in profits compared with normal expectations for this time of year; this is compared with 73% in the food and beverage service activities industry.

Conversely, the wholesale and retail trade industry and the transportation and storage industry had the highest percentages of businesses experiencing an increase in profits, at 10% and 9% respectively.

## 5 . Comparison with monthly GDP estimates across waves

Figure 7 shows how the fortnightly turnover estimates from the Businesses Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS) compare with the published UK monthly gross domestic product (GDP) estimates.

## Figure 7: Comparing the fortnightly net turnover balance estimates from BICS to the UK monthly GDP estimates

Net turnover balances of businesses currently trading against monthly GDP estimates, UK, 1 February to 13 December 2020

### Notes:

1. Final unweighted results, Wave 1 to Wave 6, and final weighted results, Wave 7 to Wave 20, of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS); businesses currently trading.
2. Weighted net balances have been calculated from Wave 7 onwards only. The sample redesign in Wave 7 improves our coverage for the small-sized businesses, allowing for weighted results to be truly reflective of all businesses.
3. 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, then scaled up using a scaling factor.
4. [Monthly gross domestic product \(GDP\) bulletins are available.](#)

### Download the data

[.xlsx](#)

## 6 . Business resilience

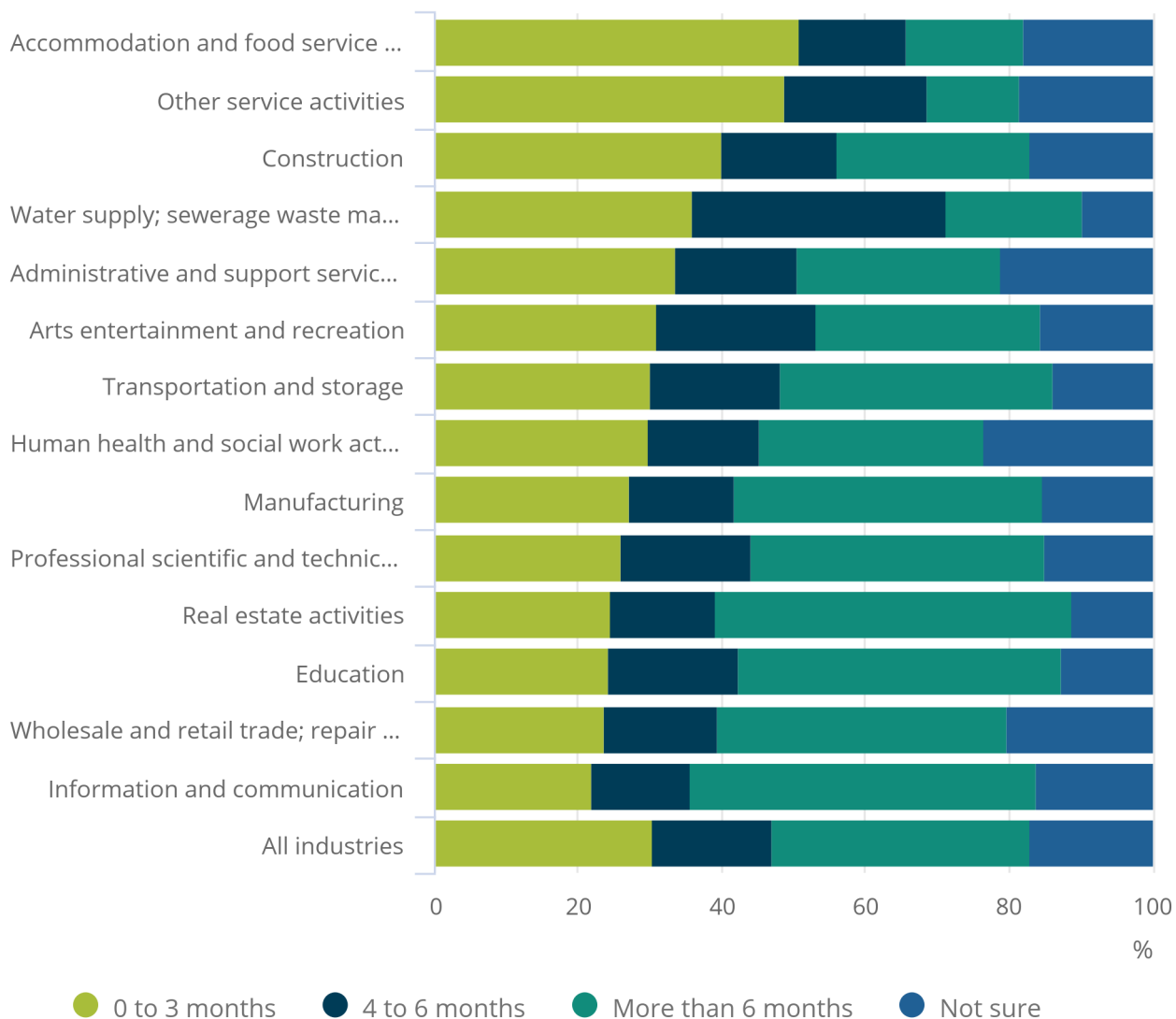
The Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS) asks businesses that have not permanently stopped trading about their business resilience, in terms of how long they think their cash reserves will last and how confident they are that their business will survive the next three months.

**Figure 8: Half of businesses in the accommodation and food service activities industry had less than three months' cash reserves, compared with 30% across all industries**

Cash reserves, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by industry, weighted by turnover, UK, 14 to 23 December 2020

Figure 8: Half of businesses in the accommodation and food service activities industry had less than three months' cash reserves, compared with 30% across all industries

Cash reserves, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by industry, weighted by turnover, UK, 14 to 23 December 2020



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

Notes:

1. Final weighted results, Wave 20 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey; businesses not permanently stopped trading.
2. For presentational purposes, cash reserve categories between zero and three months have been combined.
3. Industries may not sum to 100% because of rounding and percentages less than 1% being removed for disclosure purposes.
4. Mining and quarrying has been removed for disclosure purposes, but its total is included in all industries.

Across all industries, of businesses not permanently stopped trading:

- 30% had between zero and three months' cash reserves
- 17% had between four and six months' cash reserves
- 36% had more than six months' cash reserves

The accommodation and food service activities industry and the other service activities industry (which includes hairdressing and other beauty treatment activities) had the highest percentages of businesses with between zero and three months' cash reserves, at 51% and 49% respectively.

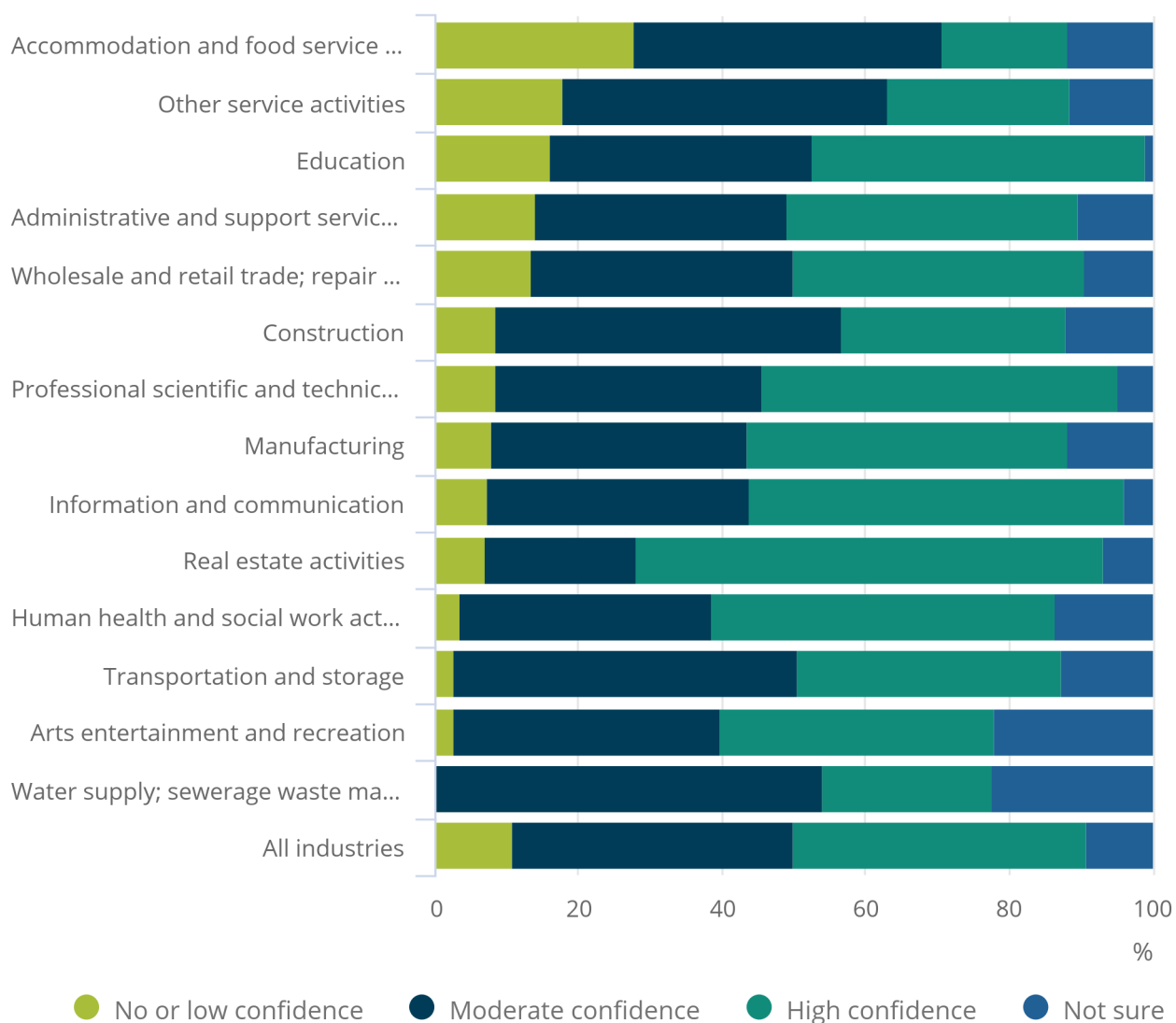
Conversely, the real estate activities industry and the education industry (private sector and higher education businesses only) had the highest percentages of businesses that had cash reserves that would last more than six months, at 50% and 45% respectively.

**Figure 9: Almost a third of businesses in the accommodation and food service activities industry had no or low confidence that they would survive the next three months**

Survival confidence, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 14 to 23 December 2020

Figure 9: Almost a third of businesses in the accommodation and food service activities industry had no or low confidence that they would survive the next three months

Survival confidence, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 14 to 23 December 2020



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

Notes:



1. Final weighted results, Wave 20 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey; businesses not permanently stopped trading.
2. For presentational purposes, no confidence and low confidence categories have been combined.
3. Industries may not sum to 100% because of rounding and percentages less than 1% being removed for disclosure purposes.
4. Mining and quarrying has been removed for disclosure purposes, but its total is included in all industries.

Across all industries, of businesses not permanently stopped trading:

- 11% had no or low confidence that their business would survive the next three months
- 39% had moderate confidence that their business would survive the next three months
- 41% had high confidence that their business would survive the next three months

The accommodation and food service activities industry had the highest percentage of businesses that had no or low confidence that their business would survive the next three months, at 28%. When splitting the industry into finer detail, the accommodation industry had 25% of its businesses with no or low confidence that they would survive the next three months, compared with 28% in the food and beverage service activities industry.

The other service activities industry (which includes hairdressing and other beauty treatment activities) and the education industry (private sector and higher education businesses only) had the next highest percentages of businesses with no or low confidence, at 18% and 16% respectively.

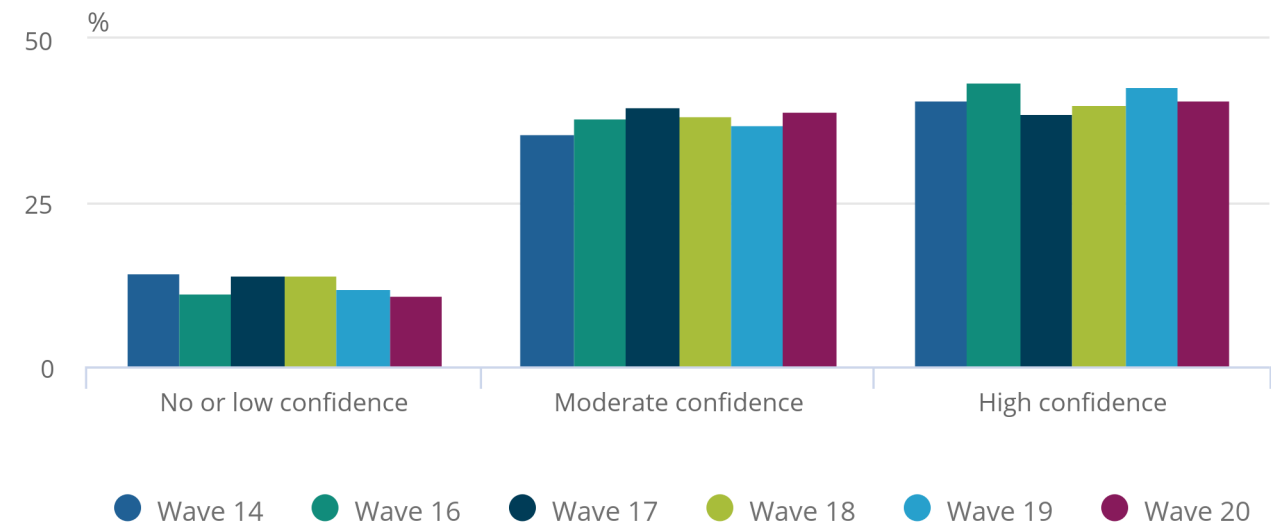
Conversely, the real estate activities industry had the highest percentage of businesses that had high confidence that their business would survive the next three months, at 65%.

**Figure 10: Business survival confidence over time has remained consistent from Wave 14 (21 September to 4 October 2020) to Wave 20 (14 to 23 December 2020)**

Survival confidence, businesses not permanently stopped trading, weighted by count, UK, 21 September to 23 December 2020

Figure 10: Business survival confidence over time has remained consistent from Wave 14 (21 September to 4 October 2020) to Wave 20 (14 to 23 December 2020)

Survival confidence, businesses not permanently stopped trading, weighted by count, UK, 21 September to 23 December 2020



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

Notes:

1. Final weighted results, Wave 14 to Wave 20 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey; businesses not permanently stopped trading.
2. For presentational purposes, no confidence and low confidence categories have been combined.
3. Questions on survival confidence were not included in Wave 15 of the BICS survey, so the data is not presented.
4. Waves will not sum to 100% because of rounding, percentages less than 1% being removed for disclosure purposes and the option not sure being removed.

When compared over time, how confident a business is that it will survive the next three months has remained consistent from Wave 14 (21 September to 4 October 2020) to Wave 20 (14 to 23 December 2020), despite wide variations in COVID-19 restrictions during this time period.

## 7 . Workforce

Surveyed businesses that have not permanently stopped trading will have differing approaches to the management of employees, whether furloughing staff, working as normal, or other scenarios. Because of the complex nature of this, the data in this section primarily focus on proportions of the workforce as opposed to percentages of businesses as is the case for other sections.

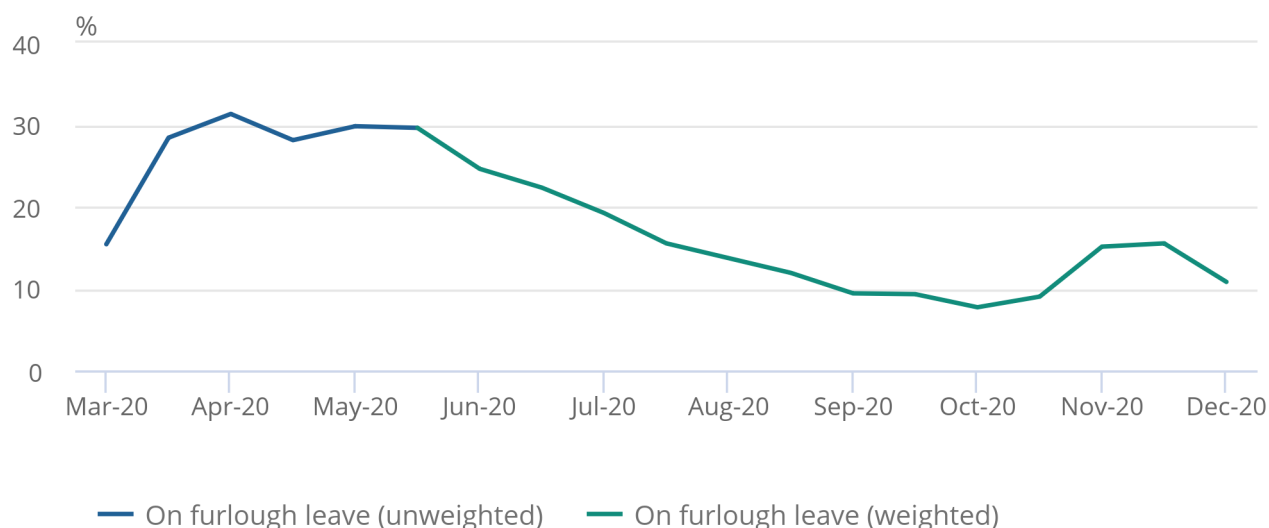
Figure 9 shows the trend in unweighted furlough estimates between Wave 2 (23 March to 5 April 2020) and Wave 6 (18 to 31 May 2020) and weighted furlough estimates between Wave 7 (1 to 14 June 2020) and Wave 20 (30 November to 13 December 2020).

**Figure 11: The proportion of businesses' workforce on furlough leave has decreased from 16% in Wave 19 (16 to 29 November 2020) to 11% in Wave 20 (30 November to 13 December 2020)**

Furlough estimates, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by wave, UK, 23 March to 13 December 2020

Figure 11: The proportion of businesses' workforce on furlough leave has decreased from 16% in Wave 19 (16 to 29 November 2020) to 11% in Wave 20 (30 November to 13 December 2020)

Furlough estimates, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by wave, UK, 23 March to 13 December 2020



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

#### Notes:

1. Final unweighted results, Wave 2 to Wave 6, and final weighted results, Wave 7 to Wave 20, of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS); businesses not permanently stopped trading.
2. Weighted estimates are available from Wave 7 onwards only. The sample redesign in Wave 7 improves our coverage for the small-sized businesses, allowing for weighted results to be truly reflective of all businesses.
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 20 (30 November to 13 December 2020), 11% of the workforce were on furlough leave. This has decreased from 16% in Wave 19 (16 to 29 November 2020). The highest proportion of the workforce on furlough leave was 30% in Wave 7 (1 to 14 June 2020) and the lowest proportion was 8% in Wave 16 (5 to 18 October 2020).

The decrease in percentage of the workforce on furlough may be due to changes to COVID-19 restrictions. The second English national lockdown ended on 2 December 2020 and was replaced by a tiered restriction system. Although, the decrease may also be partly down to seasonal effects such as Christmas related demand, as the wholesale and retail trade industry was responsible for about half of the decrease in the proportion of the workforce on furlough, between Wave 19 and Wave 20.

The percentage of the workforce on furlough decreased by 5% between Wave 19 (16 to 29 November 2020) and Wave 20 (30 November to 13 December 2020), and the percentage of the workforce working at their normal place of work, correspondingly increased by 4%.

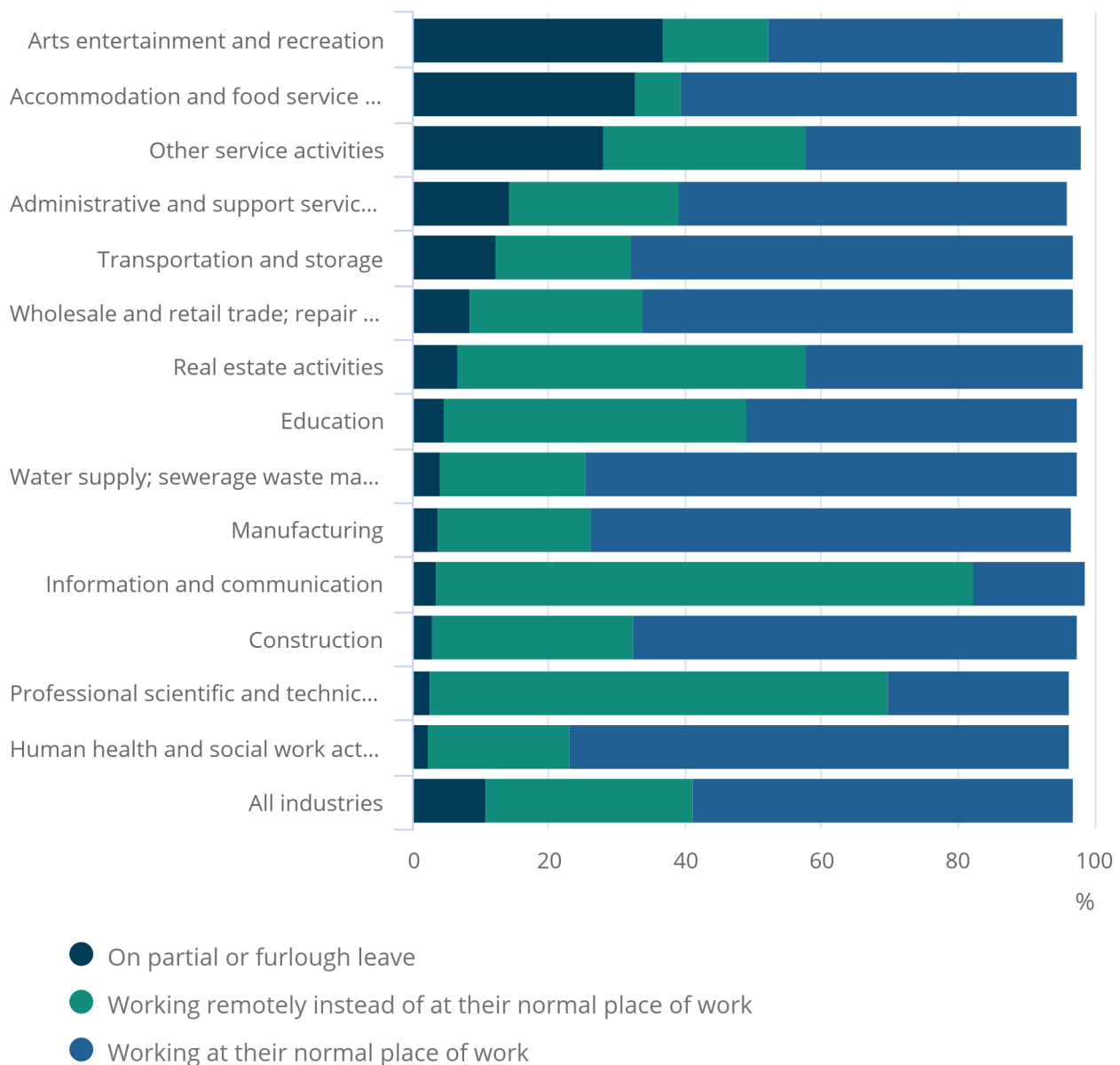
For an overview of the similarities and differences between the fortnightly Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS) furlough estimates and HM Revenue and Customs' (HMRC's) Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) data, over the period 1 May to 31 July 2020, please see [Comparison of furloughed jobs data: May to July 2020](#).

**Figure 12: 37% of the workforce in the arts, entertainment and recreation industry were on furlough leave in Wave 20 (30 November to 13 December 2020)**

Working arrangements, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by industry, weighted by employment, UK, 30 November to 13 December 2020

**Figure 12: 37% of the workforce in the arts, entertainment and recreation industry were on furlough leave in Wave 20 (30 November to 13 December 2020)**

Working arrangements, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by industry, weighted by employment, UK, 30 November to 13 December 2020



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

Notes:

1. Final weighted results, Wave 20 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey; businesses not permanently stopped trading.
2. Industries will not sum to 100% because of rounding, percentages less than 1% being removed for disclosure purposes, and the options off sick or in self-isolation because of the coronavirus (COVID-19), permanently made redundant or other being removed.
3. Mining and quarrying has been removed for disclosure purposes, but its total is included in all industries.
4. Businesses were asked for their experiences for the reference period 30 November to 13 December 2020. However, for questions regarding the last two weeks, businesses may respond from the point of completion of the questionnaire (14 to 23 December 2020).

Across all industries, of businesses not permanently stopped trading:

- 11% of the workforce were on partial or full furlough leave
- 31% of the workforce were working remotely instead of at their normal place of work
- 56% of the workforce were working at their normal place of work

The arts, entertainment and recreation industry had the highest proportion of their workforce on partial or full furlough leave under the terms of the UK government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), at 37%. This was followed by the accommodation and food service activities industry and the other service activities industry (which includes hairdressing and other beauty treatment activities), at 33% and 28% respectively.

When splitting the accommodation and food service activities industry into finer detail, the accommodation industry had 57% of its workforce on partial or full furlough leave; this is compared with 26% in the food and beverage service activities industry.

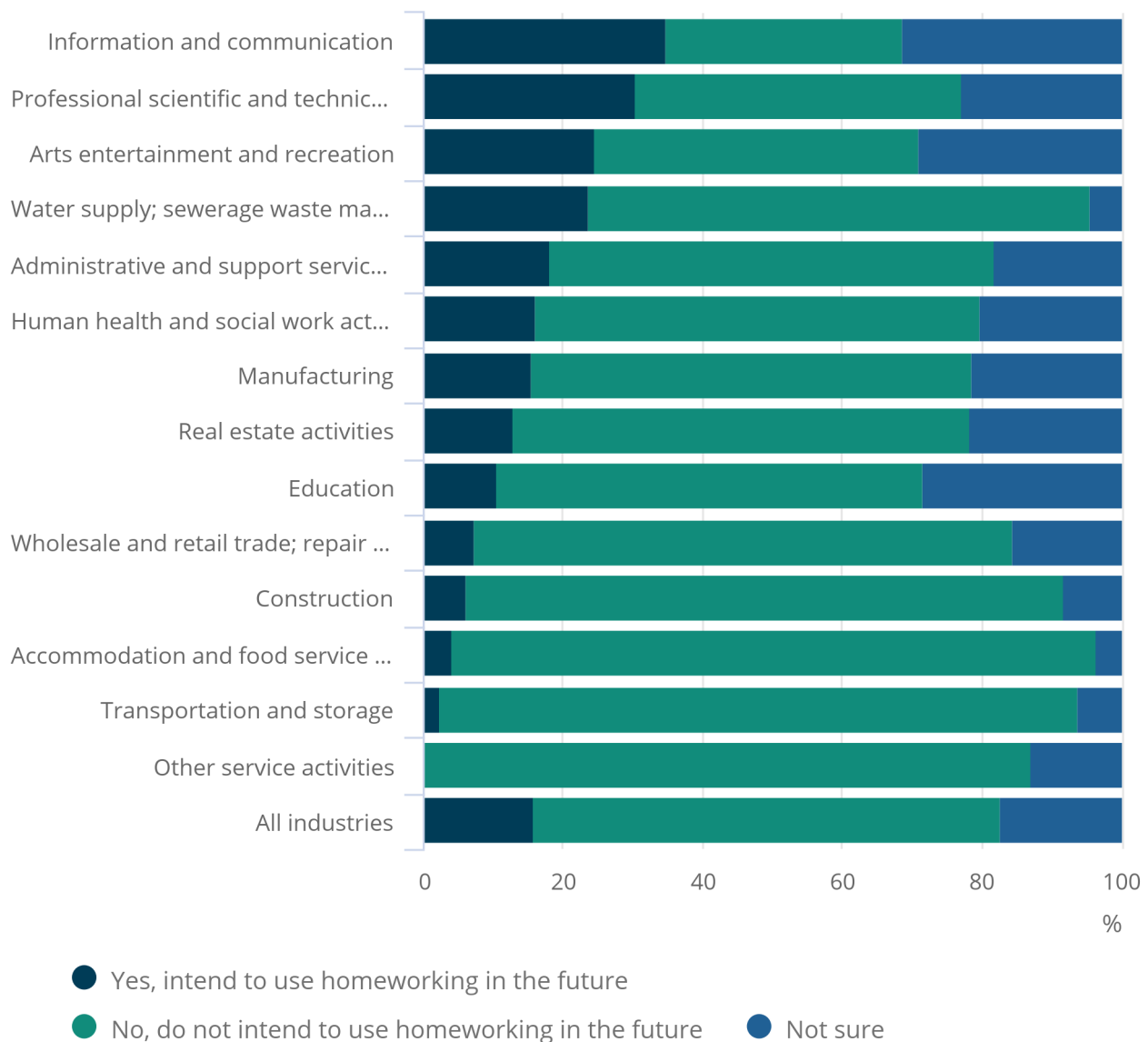
The information and communication industry and the professional, scientific and technical activities industry had the highest proportions of their workforce working remotely instead of at their normal place of work, at 79% and 67% respectively.

**Figure 13: Of businesses not permanently stopped trading, 16% intend to use increased homeworking as a permanent business model going forward**

Intentions for staff working from home, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 14 to 23 December 2020

Figure 13: Of businesses not permanently stopped trading, 16% intend to use increased homeworking as a permanent business model going forward

Intentions for staff working from home, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 14 to 23 December 2020



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

Notes:



1. Final weighted results, Wave 20 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey; businesses not permanently stopped trading.
2. Industries may not sum to 100% because of rounding and percentages less than 1% being removed for disclosure purposes.
3. Mining and quarrying has been removed for disclosure purposes, but its total is included in all industries.

Across all industries, of businesses not permanently stopped trading:

- 16% intend to use increased homeworking as a permanent business model in the future
- 67% do not intend to use increased homeworking as a permanent business model in the future
- 17% are not sure if they intend to use increased homeworking as a permanent business model in the future

The information and communication industry and the professional, scientific and technical activities industry had the highest percentages of businesses intending to use homeworking as a permanent business model in the future, at 35% and 30% respectively.

Conversely, the accommodation and food service activities industry and the transportation and storage industry had the highest percentages of businesses not intending to use homeworking as a permanent business model in the future, both at 92%.

Additional data on homeworking are available in the [accompanying dataset](#).

The Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS) also asks businesses that have not permanently stopped trading questions on which government schemes they are applying for and/or receiving. These data can be found in the [accompanying dataset](#).

## 8 . Site closures

The Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS) asked businesses that have not permanently stopped trading if they expect to temporarily or permanently close any business sites in the next two weeks.

The data collected here are for the period 14 to 23 December 2020. This 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 have an impact on the estimates.

Of businesses not permanently stopped trading, 11% expect to temporarily or permanently close a business site in the next two weeks.

The accommodation and food service activities industry had the highest percentage of businesses expecting to temporarily or permanently close a business site in the next two weeks, at 22%. When splitting the industry into finer detail, the accommodation industry had 32% of its businesses expecting to temporarily or permanently close a business site in the next two weeks, compared with 20% in the food and beverage service activities industry. A full industry breakdown is available in the [accompanying dataset](#).

Table 2: Of businesses expecting to temporarily or permanently close a business site in the next two weeks, 17% expect to close a business site in Greater London

Locations of expected site closures, businesses not permanently stopped trading and who expect to temporarily or permanently close a business site in the next two weeks, weighted by count, UK, 14 to 23 December 2020

<b>Region</b>	<b>% of businesses that expect to temporarily or permanently close a business site in the next two weeks</b>
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	6.3%
<b>Scotland</b>	8.1%
<b>Wales</b>	9.5%
<b>East of England</b>	10.0%
<b>East Midlands</b>	5.4%
<b>Greater London</b>	16.8%
<b>North East of England</b>	2.7%
<b>North West of England</b>	9.5%
<b>South East of England</b>	12.5%
<b>South West of England</b>	9.8%
<b>West Midlands</b>	4.8%
<b>Yorkshire and The Humber</b>	6.7%

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

#### Notes

1. Final weighted results, Wave 20 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS); businesses not permanently stopped trading and who expect to temporarily or permanently close a business site in the next two weeks.
2. Table will not sum to 100% because of rounding, percentages less than 1% being removed for disclosure purposes, the option not sure being removed, and businesses could select multiple options.
3. Caution should be taken when interpreting these results based on the specific routing of this question meaning that only a small number of businesses responded.

For experimental weighted regional estimates up to Wave 18 (16 to 29 November 2020), please see [Business insights and impact on the UK and sub-national economy](#).

Data on permanent site closures in the next three months is available in the [accompanying dataset](#).

## 9 . Preparedness for the end of the EU transition period

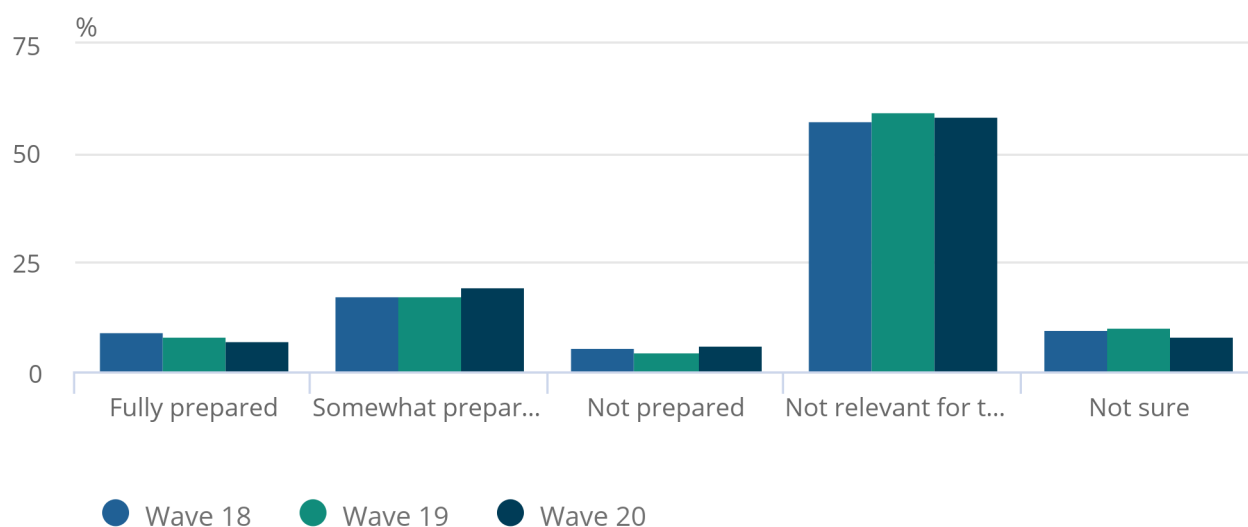
The Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS) asked businesses that are currently trading questions on their preparedness for the end of the EU transition period (31 December 2020).

**Figure 14: The percentage of businesses not at all prepared for the end of the EU transition period remained low at 6%**

Preparedness for end of EU transition period, businesses currently trading, broken down by wave, weighted by count, UK, 16 November to 23 December 2020

**Figure 14: The percentage of businesses not at all prepared for the end of the EU transition period remained low at 6%**

Preparedness for end of EU transition period, businesses currently trading, broken down by wave, weighted by count, UK, 16 November to 23 December 2020



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

**Notes:**

1. Final weighted results, Wave 18 to Wave 20 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS); businesses currently trading.
2. Waves may not sum to 100% because of rounding and percentages less than 1% being removed for disclosure purposes.

In Wave 20 (14 to 23 December 2020), across all industries, of businesses currently trading:

- 7% were fully prepared for the end of the EU transition period
- 20% were somewhat prepared for the end of the EU transition period
- 6% were not prepared for the end of the EU transition period

The majority of businesses responded that preparation for the end of the EU transition period was not relevant for their businesses, at 59%, with an additional 8% not sure how prepared they were for the end of the EU transition period.

Of businesses where preparedness for the end of the EU transition period was relevant, 18% of businesses were fully prepared, compared with 48% that were somewhat prepared and 15% that were not at all prepared. An additional 19% were not sure if they were prepared for the end of the EU transition period.

Data on the reasons businesses were not at all prepared or somewhat prepared for the end of the EU transition period are available in the [accompanying dataset](#).

Businesses that are currently trading were also asked if they were intending to make any changes to supply chains in preparation for the end of the EU transition period (31 December 2020).

Table 3 shows how the responses to the question on intending to change supply chains differs based on the businesses's response to whether they are stockpiling goods or materials from the UK, EU or non-EU suppliers.

Table 3: 17% of businesses that are stockpiling goods or materials from EU suppliers intend to make changes to their supply chains in preparation for the end of the EU transition period, compared with 3% across all currently trading businesses

Intention to change supply chains, businesses currently trading and who are stockpiling goods or materials, weighted by count, UK, 14 to 23 December 2020

Business currently trading and stockpiling from:	Intention to make changes to supply chains in preparation for the end of the EU transition period			
	Yes	No	Not sure	Not applicable
<b>UK suppliers</b>	11.2	56.5	16.0	16.4
<b>EU suppliers</b>	17.1	46.6	23.9	12.4
<b>Non-EU suppliers</b>	5.3	81.7	12.3	*
<b>All businesses currently trading</b>	2.6	43.6	11.2	42.7

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

#### Notes

1. Final weighted results, Wave 20 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS); businesses currently trading and who are stockpiling goods or materials.
2. Rows may not sum to 100% because of rounding and percentages less than 1% being removed for disclosure purposes.
3. Businesses could select multiple options to the stockpiling question so there could be a possible overlap of businesses between rows.
4. Response options not sure and not stockpiling are not included, but their totals are included in all businesses currently trading.

Across all businesses currently trading and who are stockpiling goods or materials, the percentage of businesses who intended to make changes to their supply chains in preparation for the end of the EU transition period stayed the same in Wave 20 (14 to 23 December 2020), at 3%. Similarly, the percentage of businesses that were stockpiling from EU suppliers and who intended to make changes to their supply chains has stayed almost the same, at 17% (decreased from 18%).

Additional data on the businesses's supply chains and the end of the EU transition period are available in the [accompanying dataset](#).

## **10 . EU and non-EU workers**

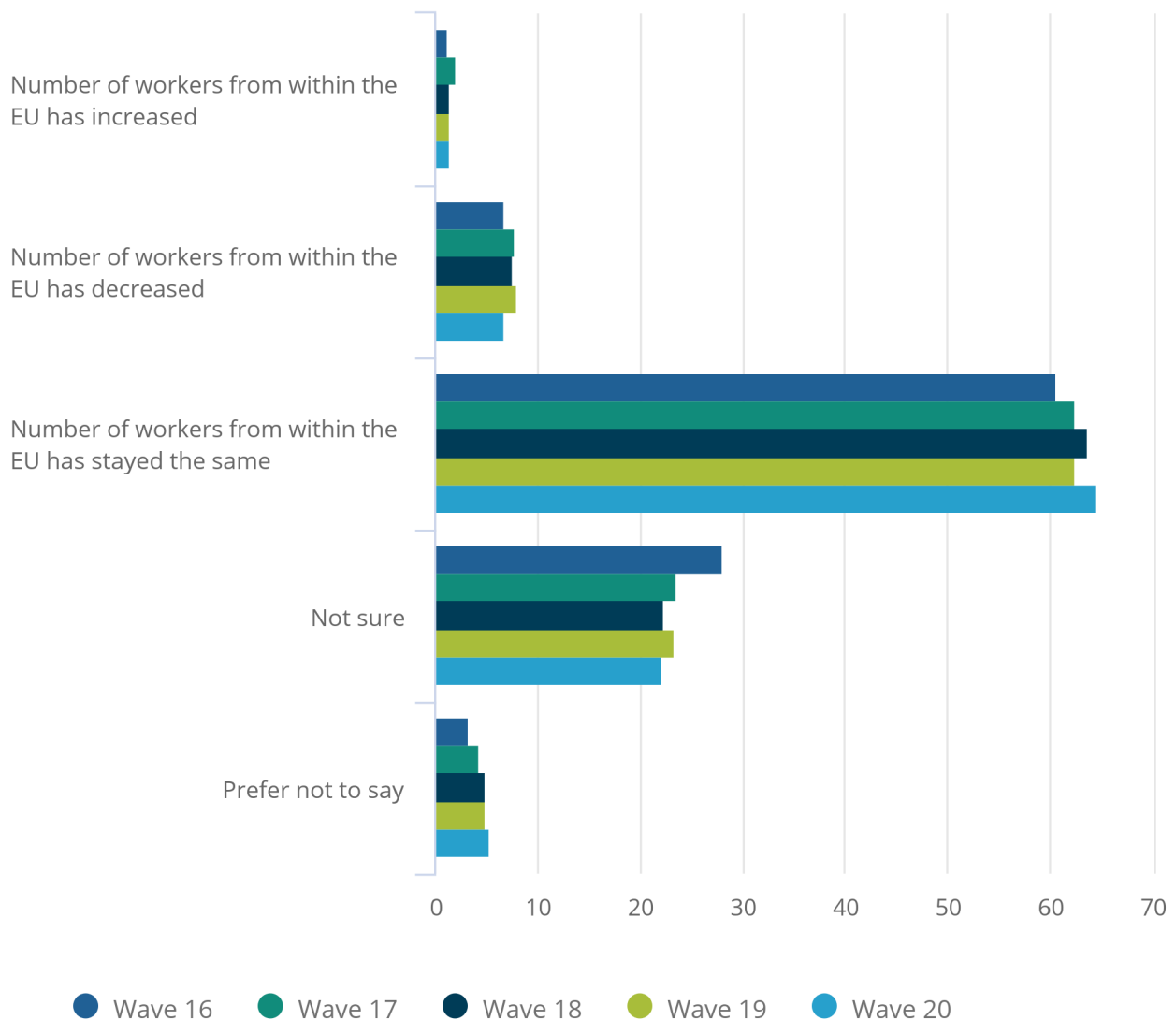
The Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS) asks businesses that have not permanently stopped trading how the number of workers from within and outside the EU at their business has changed since the start of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

**Figure 15: The increase or decrease of workers from within the EU has remained consistent, in UK businesses**

Workers from within the EU, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by industry, weighted by employment, UK, 19 October to 23 December 2020

**Figure 15: The increase or decrease of workers from within the EU has remained consistent, in UK businesses**

Workers from within the EU, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by industry, weighted by employment, UK, 19 October to 23 December 2020



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

Notes:

1. Final weighted results, Wave 16 to Wave 20 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS); businesses not permanently stopped trading.
2. Waves may not sum to 100% because of rounding and percentages less than 1% being removed for disclosure purposes.
3. Please note the Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey only collects data from private sector businesses

In Wave 20, across all industries, of businesses not permanently stopped trading:

- 2% had an increased number of workers from within the EU
- 7% had a decreased number of workers from within the EU

The majority of businesses –64% – had the same number of workers from within the EU, with an additional 22% not sure how the number of workers from within the EU at their business had changed, and 5% preferring not to say.

In Wave 20, across all industries, of businesses not permanently stopped trading:

- less than 1% had an increased number of workers from outside the EU
- 4% had a decreased number of workers from outside the EU

The majority of businesses –67% – had the same number of workers from outside the EU, with an additional 24% not sure how the number of workers from outside the EU at their business had changed, and 5% preferring not to say.

Across all industries, a greater net percentage of businesses reported a decrease in the number of workers from within the EU (5%) compared with the number of workers from outside the EU (3%).

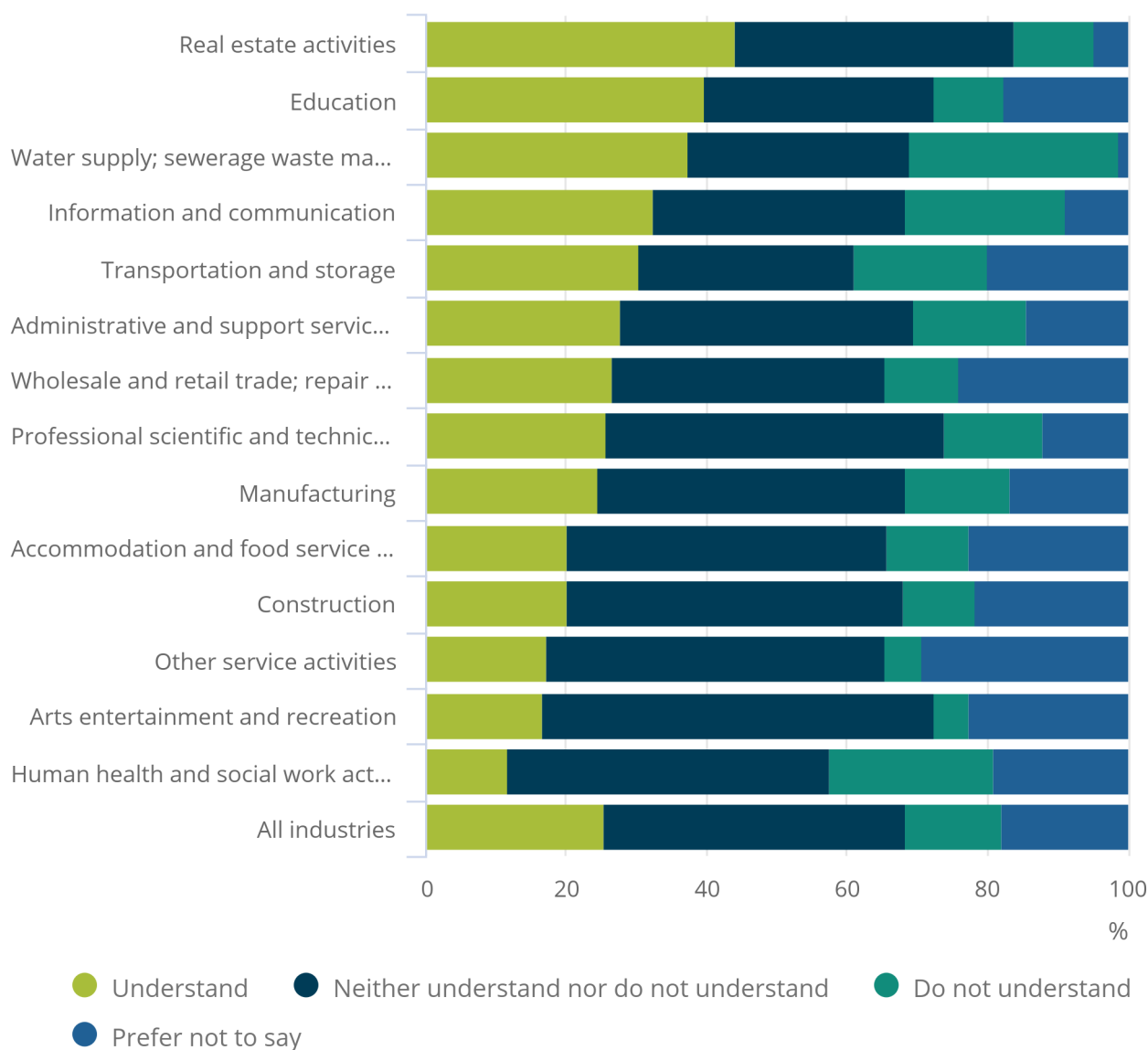
Businesses that have not permanently stopped trading were also asked about their understanding of the changes to the immigration system on 1 January 2021.

**Figure 16: Of businesses not permanently stopped trading, 25% understand how the new immigration system on 1 January 2021 affects their business**

Understanding of new immigration system, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 14 to 23 December 2020

Figure 16: Of businesses not permanently stopped trading, 25% understand how the new immigration system on 1 January 2021 affects their business

Understanding of new immigration system, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 14 to 23 December 2020



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

Notes:



1. Final weighted results, Wave 20 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS); businesses not permanently stopped trading.
2. For presentational purposes, understand categories and do not understand categories have been combined.
3. Industries may not sum to 100% because of rounding and percentages less than 1% being removed for disclosure purposes.
4. Mining and quarrying has been removed for disclosure purposes, but its total is included in all industries.

Across all industries, of businesses not permanently stopped trading:

- 25% understand how the new immigration system will affect their business
- 43% neither understand nor do not understand
- 14% do not understand how the new immigration system will affect their businesses
- 18% would prefer not to say

## 11 . Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey data

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

Dataset | Released 7 January 2021

Weighted estimates from the voluntary fortnightly business 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 data are not [official statistics](#) but have been developed to deliver timely indicators to help understand the impact of the coronavirus pandemic and the end of the EU transition period in a timely way.

## Access to microdata

The BICS microdata for Waves 1 to 19 can now be accessed via the [Secure Research Service \(SRS\)](#). The BICS microdata for each wave is released on a rolling basis in the week following the publication of each wave.

The microdata are confidentialised and do not disclose 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.

## 12 . 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.

### EU transition period

The Brexit transition is the period agreed in the UK-EU Withdrawal Agreement in which the UK is no longer a member of the EU but continues to be subject to EU rules and remains a member of the single market and customs union. When the UK left the EU on 31 January 2020, it entered the transition period. The transition period came to an end on 31 December 2020.

### 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.

## 13 . Measuring the data

The Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS) is voluntary and the results are [experimental](#).

Table 4: Sample and response rates for Waves 18, 19 and 20 of Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey

Wave	3 December 2020 Publication Wave 18	17 December 2020 Publication Wave 19	7 January 2021 Publication Wave 20
Sample	38,734	38,760	39,268
Response	10,688	10,065	9,389
Rate	27.6%	26.0%	23.9%

Source: Office for National Statistics - Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) 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 20 survey was live for the period 14 to 23 December 2020. For questions regarding the last two weeks, businesses were asked for their experience for the reference period 30 November to 13 December 2020. The [survey questions](#) are available.

## 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](#).

We currently provide unweighted estimates with a country and regional split for selected variables in the [accompanying dataset](#). These should be treated with caution as only those that have responded to the survey are represented, and as such these are not fully representative of the UK as a whole. When unweighted, each business is assigned the same weight regardless of turnover, size or industry, and businesses that have not responded to the survey or that are not sampled are not taken into account.

Recently, experimental weighted regional estimates have been produced and published in [Business insights and impact on the UK and sub-national economy](#).

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

## Unweighted regional estimates

Unweighted 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 a site or several sites (also known as local units) within a country, using information from the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR), then this business is defined to have presence there.

The business is then allocated once within each region (regardless of the number of sites) and the information provided by the reporting unit as a whole is copied and used within each country.

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.

## Sample

The sampling frame used in BICS was designed to achieve adequate coverage of the listed industries from the Monthly Business Survey (MBS). Coverage and response rate of the medium to largest businesses in terms of total employment are satisfactory to produce estimates on this basis.

All businesses with an employment of greater than 250 employees and that are included within the three monthly surveys (MBS, Retail Sales Index (RSI) and Construction) are included in the BICS sample with a random sample of 1% for those with an employment between 0 and 249.

As the sample is selected fortnightly, the same businesses will be selected for at least two waves depending on how many coronavirus survey selections there are between the selection of these feeder surveys. Because of the randomly selected element, there will be differences in this part of the sample once the feeder surveys have been redrawn. As this is a voluntary survey, businesses may or may not choose to respond to the different waves. Response rates can be mixed between the different waves.

While we have the ability to align the reporting unit to lower-level detail, and also increased detail on the SIC, it is not advisable given the sparseness of response in certain industries and size bands.

## Coverage

The MBS covers the UK for production and only Great Britain for services. The RSI and Construction are Great Britain-focused. Therefore, BICS will be UK for production-based industries but Great Britain 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

## 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. Other than for a minority of larger business or businesses that have a more complex structure, the reporting unit is the same as the enterprise.

Where more than one type of economic activity is carried out by a local unit or enterprise, its principal activity is the activity in which most of the people are employed, and it does not necessarily account for 50% or more of the total employment of the unit. There are detailed rules for determining [Standard Industrial Classification \(SIC\)](#) for multiple-activity economic units.

## End of the EU transition period

As the shape of the UK's future statistical relationship with the EU becomes clearer over the coming period, we are making preparations to assume responsibilities that as part of our membership of the EU, and during the transition period, were delegated to the statistical office of the EU, Eurostat. This includes responsibilities relating to international comparability of economic statistics, deciding what international statistical guidance to apply in the UK context and to provide further scrutiny of our statistics and sector classification decisions.

# 14 . Strengths and limitations

## Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey

The Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS) is voluntary. Unweighted estimates should be treated with caution, as results reflect the characteristics of those that responded and not necessarily the wider business population.

The survey was designed to give an indication of the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and the end of the EU transition period on businesses and a timelier estimate than other surveys.

## Comparison of waves

A detailed description of the weighting methodology and its differences to unweighted estimates across waves can be found in [Business Impact of Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Survey: preliminary weighted results](#).

The production of weighted BICS estimates will allow for comparisons between waves, as any imbalances caused by non-responding and non-sampled businesses are corrected. This means that weighted estimates in every wave represent the experiences of all businesses rather than just those that have responded.

Comparison of unweighted estimates between waves should be treated with caution because of the voluntary nature of the survey, the differences in response rates, and dependency on those businesses that only responded in particular waves.

[Insights of BICS: 23 March to 5 April \(Wave 2\) to 1 to 14 June \(Wave 7\) 2020](#) provides a time series analysis on how the unweighted estimates changed between Wave 2 (23 March to 5 April 2020) and Wave 7 (1 to 14 June 2020).

## 15 . Related links

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

Article | Released 9 December 2020

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.

### [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).

### [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.

### [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.

### [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.

### [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.