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# Business Insights and Conditions Survey questions: 16 February 2026 to 1 March 2026

Contact:  
Business Insights and Conditions  
Survey team (BICS)  
bics@ons.gov.uk  
+44 1633 455592

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# 1 . Survey information

These questions are for Wave 151 of the fortnightly Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) dispatched on 16 February 2026.

## 2 . Trading status of your business

Which of the following statements best describes your business's trading status?

- Currently fully trading
- Currently partially trading
- Paused trading but intends to restart in the next two weeks
- Paused trading and does not intend to restart in the next two weeks
- Permanently ceased trading

## 3 . Workforce trends

Is your business using, or intending to use, increased homeworking as a permanent business model going forward?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
- Not applicable

Why is your business using, or intending to use, increased homeworking as a permanent business model going forward?

- Ability to better match jobs to skills
- Ability to recruit from a wider geographical pool in the UK
- Ability to recruit from a wider geographical pool internationally
- Improved staff wellbeing
- Increased productivity
- Reduced carbon emissions
- Reduced overhead costs
- Reduced sickness absence
- Reduced wage bill
- Other (Please describe)
- Not sure

Why is your business not intending to use increased homeworking as a permanent business model going forward?

- Concerns with integrating new starters into the workplace
- Costs of employee equipment
- Difficulties managing staff remotely
- Negative impact on working culture
- Not suitable for our business
- Reduced communication
- Reduced productivity
- Reduced reliability and retention of staff
- Security concerns
- Other (Please describe)
- Not sure

Which, if any, of the following skills has your business had a high demand for in the last 12 months?

- Advanced digital skills
- Basic digital skills
- Customer service skills
- Management or leadership skills
- Manual skills
- Transferable skills
- Other (Please describe)
- None of the above

Which, if any, of the following skills does your workforce require extra support or training in?

- Advanced digital skills
- Basic digital skills
- Customer service skills
- Management or leadership skills
- Manual skills
- Transferable skills
- Other (Please describe)
- None of the above

On average, how did employees' hourly wages in January 2026 compare with employees' hourly wages in the previous calendar month?

- Wages increased
- Wages stayed the same
- Wages decreased
- Not sure

How have your business's staffing costs changed over the last three months?

- Costs have increased
- Costs have stayed the same
- Costs have decreased
- Not sure
- Not applicable

How does your business expect staffing costs to change over the next three months?

- Costs will increase
- Costs will stay the same
- Costs will decrease
- Not sure
- Not applicable

How does your business plan to adapt to any future increases in employment costs?

- Absorb within profit margins
- Increase prices
- Limit overtime hours
- Reduce employee benefits
- Reduce number of employees
- Reduce spending on investment
- Reduce spending on training
- Reduce wage increases for other employees
- Other (Please describe)
- Not sure
- Not applicable

Is your business currently experiencing a shortage of workers?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
- Not applicable

Which of the following challenges, if any, has your business experienced due to a shortage of workers?

- Business had to pause trading entirely
- Business had to recruit temporary workers
- Employees increased working hours
- Had to pause trading of some of the business
- Unable to meet demands
- Other (Please describe)
- Not sure
- Business has not experienced any challenges due to a shortage of workers

Did your business experience any difficulties recruiting employees in January 2026?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
- Not applicable

Which, if any, of the following employees has your business had difficulties recruiting in January 2026?

- Clerical employees
- Professional or managerial employees
- Semi-skilled or unskilled employees
- Skilled, manual or technical employees
- Other (Please describe)
- Not sure
- Business did not experience any difficulties in recruiting employees

Why did your business experience difficulties recruiting employees in January 2026?

- Business cannot offer an attractive pay package to applicants
- Increased number of vacancies
- Lack of qualified applicants for the roles on offer
- Low number of applications for the roles on offer
- Reduced number of applicants aged 16 to 24 years
- Reduced number of applicants aged over 50 years
- Reduced number of EU applicants
- Other (Please describe)
- Not sure

## 4 . Workforce management

Does your business have a probation policy in place for new employees?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

How long is a typical probationary period for new employees at your business?

- More than 12 months
- 10 to 12 months
- 7 to 9 months
- 4 to 6 months
- 3 months or less
- Not sure

Does your business currently employ anyone on any of the following contracts?

- Agency contract
- Casual contract
- Fixed term contract
- Minimum hours contract
- Seasonal contract
- Variable hours contract
- Zero hours contract
- None of the above

Approximately, what percentage of your business's workforce is employed under a variable hours contract?

- More than 75%
- Between 50% and 75%
- Between 25% and 49%
- Less than 25%
- Not sure

Has your business gone through a collective redundancy consultation in the last 12 months?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
- Not applicable

Approximately, how many redundancies did your business make following this collective redundancy consultation process?

- More than 120
- Between 100 and 119
- Between 60 and 99
- Between 20 and 59
- Between 1 and 19
- Not sure

Approximately, how many redundancies was your business considering before the collective redundancy consultation process?

- More than 120
- Between 100 and 119
- Between 60 and 99
- Between 20 and 59
- Between 1 and 19
- Not sure

Has your business gone through the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) process in the last five years?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Approximately, how often has your business gone through the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) process in the last five years?

- Every three to five years
- Every two years
- Once per year
- It was a one time occasion
- Other (Please describe)
- Not sure

Approximately, what percentage of your employees were transferred by Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) the last time your business went through the process?

- More than 75%
- Between 50% and 75%
- Between 25% and 49%
- Less than 25%
- Not sure

In the last 12 months, has your business had substitution clauses in its contracts?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
- Not applicable

In the last 12 months, approximately what percentage of contractors have used substitution clauses to complete their work?

- More than 75%
- Between 50% and 75%
- Between 25% and 49%
- Between 1% and 24%
- None
- Not sure

Approximately, what percentage of your business's workforce is currently opted out of the Working Time Regulation?

- More than 75%
- Between 50% and 75%
- Between 25% and 49%
- Between 1% and 24%
- None
- Not sure

Has your business made permanent changes to any employees' employment contracts in the last 12 months?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

How did your business change employees' employment contracts in the last 12 months?

- Through consultation, negotiation and voluntary agreement with employees
- Through consultation, negotiation and agreement with trade unions
- Through contract variation clauses
- Through dismissing employees and rehiring them on new employment contract terms
- Through dismissing employees and hiring new employees on new employment contract terms
- Other (Please describe)
- Not sure
- Prefer not to say

## 5 . Export/Import

Has your business exported goods or services in the last 12 months?

- Exported goods only
- Exported services only
- Exported both goods and services
- Business has not exported goods or services in the last 12 months
- Not sure

Has your business imported goods or services in the last 12 months?

- Imported goods only
- Imported services only
- Imported both goods and services
- Business has not imported goods or services in the last 12 months
- Not sure

## 6 . International trade

What impact, if any, did the United States tariffs have on your business in the last month?

- Business experienced additional costs
- Business explored new export markets
- Business passed additional costs to customers
- Business stopped or paused exports to the United States
- Increased competition
- Increased demand
- Reduced demand
- Supply chain disruption
- Other (please describe)
- Not sure
- No impact on the business

What impact, if any, do you expect the United States tariffs to have on your business in the next month?

- Business will absorb additional costs
- Business will explore new export markets
- Business will pass additional costs to customers
- Business will stop or pause exports to the United States
- Increased competition
- Increased demand
- Reduced demand
- Supply chain disruption
- Other (please describe)
- Not sure
- No impact expected for the business

## 7 . Comments

Please tell us anything else about your business's current situation relating to topics covered in this survey

- Comments