

Statistical bulletin

Business insights and impact on the UK economy: 10 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

- In late February 2022, the percentage of currently trading businesses rose to 94%, its highest level since comparable estimates began in June 2020.
- For businesses not permanently stopped trading, data suggest that fewer employees were working from home (11%), and more have moved to using a hybrid model of working (19%) in early February 2022; these figures have changed from 15% and 16% respectively in early January 2022.
- Approximately one in six (16%) businesses not permanently stopped trading experienced global supply chain disruption in the last month; this is unchanged from January 2022.
- Businesses not permanently stopped trading reported hourly wages were higher than normal for both existing (12%) and new employees (10%) in the last month; among businesses in the accommodation and food service activities industry, 37% and 33% reported hourly wages were higher for existing and new employees in the last month, up by 22 and 9 percentage points respectively, from January 2022.
- Three in five (60%) of businesses not permanently stopped trading reported they have concerns for their business in the next month; the top two concerns were inflation of goods and services prices (21%) and energy prices (15%).
- In late February 2022, 5% of businesses reported that they have low or no confidence of surviving the next three months; this percentage has fallen steadily since early December 2021; meanwhile, 38% of businesses reported to have three months or less of cash reserves, including no reserves.

2 . Headline figures

The data presented in this bulletin are the final results from Wave 51 of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS), which was live for the period 21 February to 6 March 2022.

The final response rate for Wave 51 was 20.6% (7,859 responses), lower than the ongoing average of approximately 23%. The Wave 51 response rate means that the estimates in this release are subject to more uncertainty than usual.

For questions regarding the last month, businesses were asked for their experience for the reference period 7 February to 6 March 2022. For questions regarding the last two weeks, businesses were asked for their experience for the reference period 7 February to 20 February 2022, although some businesses may have responded in relation to the point of completion of the questionnaire (21 February to 6 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, financial performance, business resilience: for presentational purposes, response options have been combined and the option "not sure" has been removed.
2. Financial performance: businesses were asked for their experience for the reference period, however, businesses may respond from the point of completion of the questionnaire.
3. Data are plotted in the middle of the period of each wave.

Download the data

[.xlsx](#)

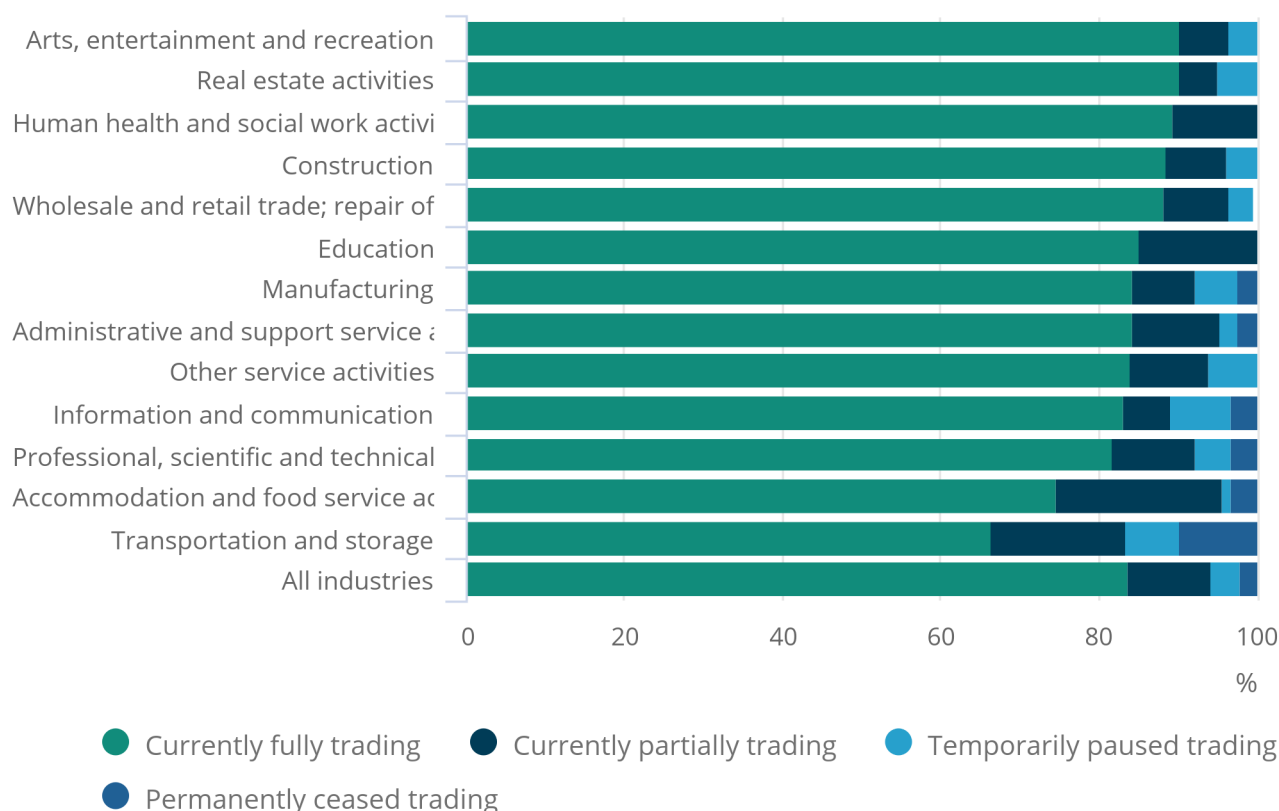
3 . Trading status

Figure 2: The transportation and storage industry reported the lowest percentage of businesses currently fully trading, at 66%

Current trading status, all businesses, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 21 February to 6 March 2022

Figure 2: The transportation and storage industry reported the lowest percentage of businesses currently fully trading, at 66%

Current trading status, all businesses, broken down by industry, weighted by count, 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 and percentages less than 1% being removed for disclosure purposes.
2. "Mining and quarrying" and "water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities" have been removed for disclosure purposes, but their totals are included in "All industries".
3. The weighted percentage for "permanently ceased trading" can be affected by multiple businesses reporting this option over multiple waves.

The percentage of businesses currently trading in late February 2022 was 94%, which is the highest percentage reported since comparable estimates began in June 2020.

The transportation and storage industry reported the lowest proportion of businesses currently trading, either fully or partially, at 83%. This is the lowest percentage reported since early December 2021 (83%), following a rise to 90% in mid-January 2022, however, the figure has remained broadly stable since early February 2022.

The administrative and support service activities industry reported the largest movement of currently trading businesses, up from 91% in early February 2022 to 96% in late February 2022. This is the highest percentage reported within this industry since comparable estimates began.

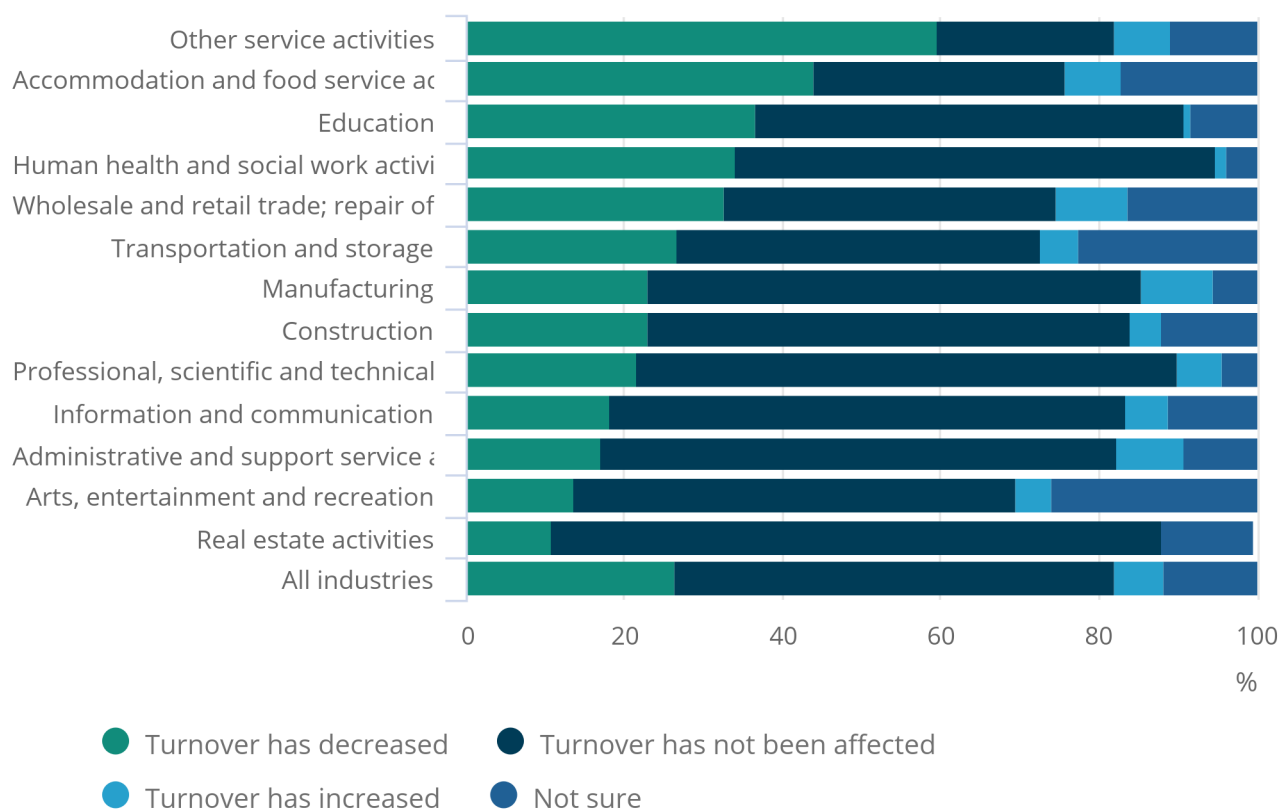
4 . Financial performance

Figure 3: The other service activities industry continued to report the highest percentage of businesses experiencing lower turnover in the last two weeks, at 60%

Impact on turnover, businesses currently trading, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 7 February to 20 February 2022

Figure 3: The other service activities industry continued to report the highest percentage of businesses experiencing lower turnover in the last two weeks, at 60%

Impact on turnover, businesses currently trading, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 7 February to 20 February 2022



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

Notes:

1. For presentational purposes, response options have been combined.
2. Industries may not sum to 100% because of rounding and percentages less than 1% being removed for disclosure purposes.
3. "Mining and quarrying" and "water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities" have been removed for disclosure purposes, but their totals are included in "All industries".
4. Businesses were asked for their experience for the reference period, however, businesses may respond from the point of completion of the questionnaire.

Of currently trading businesses, 56% reported that their turnover was the same in the last two weeks compared with normal expectations for this time of year. This is the highest percentage reported since comparable estimates began in June 2020.

In contrast, 27% reported a decrease in turnover, down from the 28% reported in late January 2022, and the lowest percentage reported since late September 2021 (24%).

Of businesses reporting a change in turnover in the last two weeks, 41% said the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic was the main reason for the change. This was down from 45% in late January 2022. A further 13% reported a combination of the coronavirus pandemic and the end of the EU transition period as the main reason.

Nearly a quarter (23%) of businesses reported “Other” factors as a reason for the change. This was the highest proportion of businesses to report this option since the question was first asked in late January 2021, with comments from businesses suggesting the weather, particularly the arrival of Storm Eunice in the UK, as having a negative impact on turnover.

The manufacturing industry reported the largest movement in the proportion of businesses who experienced a decrease in turnover in the last two weeks, dropping from 34% in late January 2022 to 23% in early February 2022.

5 . Cash reserves and survival confidence

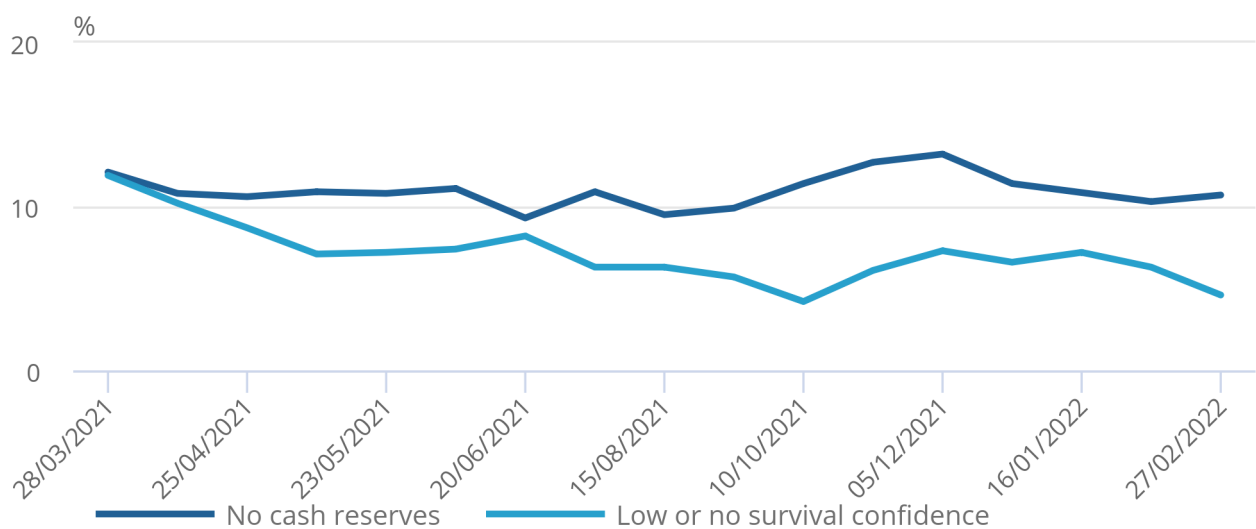
Of businesses not permanently stopped trading, 88% reported they had high or moderate confidence they would survive the next three months, and 43% reported having four months or more of cash reserves. In contrast, the proportion of businesses that reported low or no confidence to survive dropped to 5%, continuing a downward trend, though the proportion reporting less than three months cash reserves remained broadly stable at 38%.

Figure 4: Across all industries, the proportion of businesses reporting low or no confidence to survive the next three months dropped to 5%

No cash reserves versus survival confidence, businesses not permanently stopped trading, weighted by count, UK, 21 February to 6 March 2022

Figure 4: Across all industries, the proportion of businesses reporting low or no confidence to survive the next three months dropped to 5%

No cash reserves versus survival confidence, businesses not permanently stopped trading, weighted by count, UK, 21 February to 6 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. Data are plotted in the middle of the period.

In late February 2022, the transportation and storage industry reported the highest percentage of businesses with low or no confidence of surviving the next three months at 9%, down from 16% in late January 2022. This compared with 33% of businesses within this industry who reported to have three months or less of cash reserves.

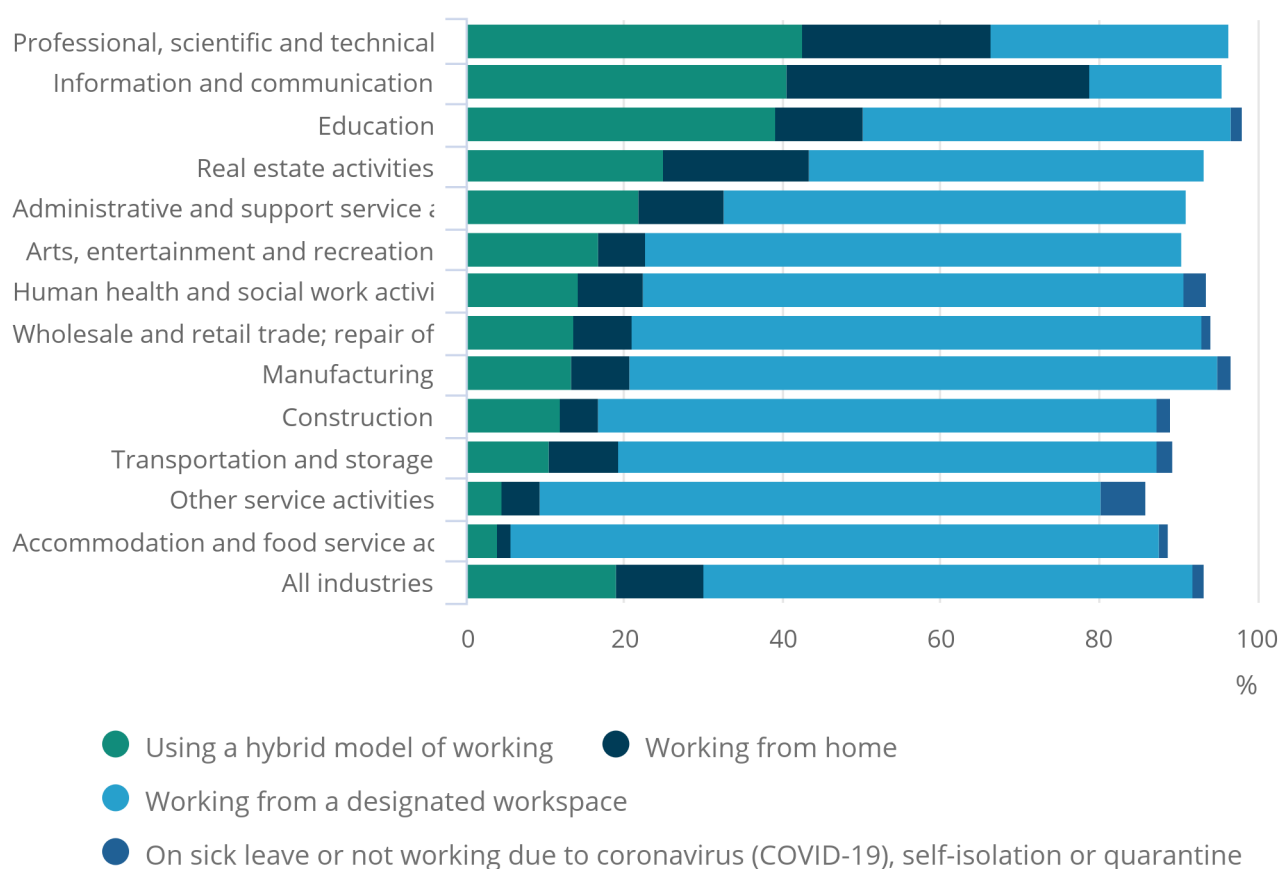
6 . Workforce status

Figure 5: In early February 2022, the proportion of the workforce using a hybrid model of working or working from home was estimated to have remained at 30%

Working arrangements, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by industry, weighted by employment, UK, 7 February to 20 February 2022

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Working arrangements, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by industry, weighted by employment, UK, 7 February to 20 February 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” and “water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities” 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.

Estimates in early February 2022 of the proportion of employees working from home or using a hybrid model of working were similar to those in early January 2022. However, there is some evidence of a movement from working from home to a hybrid approach (Table 1).

Industries such as the professional, scientific, and technical activities industry, the information and communication industry, and the education industry (private sector and higher education businesses only), showed the largest percentage point change in this movement.

Table 1: Multiple industries have reported a change in working patterns, with a fall in the proportion of the workforce working from home and more using hybrid working
Changes in working arrangements, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by industry, weighted by employment, UK, 10 January to 20 February 2022

Industry	Hybrid working		Working from home	
	Wave 49	Wave 51	Wave 49	Wave 51
Professional, scientific and technical activities	31.7%	42.5%	35.2%	23.9%
Information and communication	29.6%	40.5%	52.5%	38.6%
Education	32.0%	39.3%	18.9%	11.1%
All industries	15.8%	19.1%	15.0%	10.9%

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% as response options have been removed.
3. Not all BICS industries have been included, but their totals are included in “All industries”.

The majority of the workforce (62%) were estimated to be working from a designated workspace, that is, not from home, in early February 2022. This was unchanged from late January 2022 but up from 57% reported in late December 2021.

7 . Hourly wages

Businesses not permanently stopped trading were asked how existing and new employees' hourly wages over the last month compared with normal expectations for this time of year.

Figure 6: Approximately one in nine businesses (12%) reported existing employees' hourly wages were higher in February 2022 compared with normal

Hourly wages for existing employees, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 7 February to 6 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" and "water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities" have been removed for disclosure purposes, but their totals are included in "All industries".

The percentage of businesses who reported that hourly wages for their existing employees were higher in the last month compared with normal, increased to 12% in February 2022, up from 9% in January 2022. When excluding businesses with fewer than 10 employees, 27% reported hourly wages were higher than normal for existing employees in February 2022, up from 24% in January 2022.

Businesses were also asked how new employees' hourly wages over the last month compared with normal expectations for this time of year. Across the responding businesses:

- 10% reported wages were higher
- 24% reported wages were not affected
- 2% reported wages were lower
- 64% reported they were either not sure, or that the question was not applicable

The accommodation and food service activities industry reported the highest percentage of businesses reporting hourly wages were higher for both existing and new employees in the last month, at 37% and 33% respectively. This industry also saw the largest movement, wave on wave, in hourly wages being higher for existing employees, increasing by 22 percentage points from the 15% reported in January 2022.

8 . Exporting and importing challenges

Of currently trading businesses with 10 employees or more, 17% had exported and 21% imported in the last 12 months and reported how their exporting or importing compared with normal expectations for this time of year. These businesses were asked about the challenges they had experienced with exporting or importing in the last month.

Figure 7: Exporting and importing figures from the Business Insights and Conditions Survey

Notes:

1. Exporting or importing compared with normal expectations: percentage of businesses currently trading with 10 or more employees and had reported they had exported or imported in the last year. For presentational purposes, response options have been combined.
2. Exporting or importing challenges: percentage of businesses currently trading with 10 or more employees reported they had exported or imported in the last year, and reported how their exports or imports were affected. Businesses may report that exporting or importing has not been affected but are still able to report challenges.
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.
4. Businesses were asked for their experience for the reference period however, businesses may respond from the point of completion of the questionnaire.
5. Data are plotted in the middle of the period of each wave.
6. From Wave 49, all data presented within these graphs have been updated to reflect results reported by currently trading businesses with 10 or more employees, therefore caution should be taken when comparing to previous publications. This is to reduce the volatility that microbusinesses (businesses with zero to nine employees) can create between waves and to focus on the long-term trends.

Download the data

[.xlsx](#)

Of businesses currently trading with 10 or more employees that had exported in the last 12 months, 26% reported that they were unable to export or exported less in February 2022 compared with normal expectations. This is lower than the 29% reported by businesses with fewer than 10 employees; the percentage for these smaller businesses decreased 3 percentage points from the 32% reported in January 2022.

In contrast, of businesses currently trading with 10 or more employees, that had imported in the last 12 months, 18% reported that they were unable to import or imported less in the last month. This proportion is unchanged from January 2022. This figure was 30% for businesses with fewer than 10 employees, an increase of 2 percentage points from previously.

Further industry, size band and breakdowns of trade questions by type of export or import (goods, services or both) are available in the [accompanying dataset](#). This includes an unweighted data time series produced by linking samples from the Annual Business Survey (2018) and the Annual Survey of International Trade in Services (2019) to the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) microdata. We have published a [detailed description of the methodology](#).

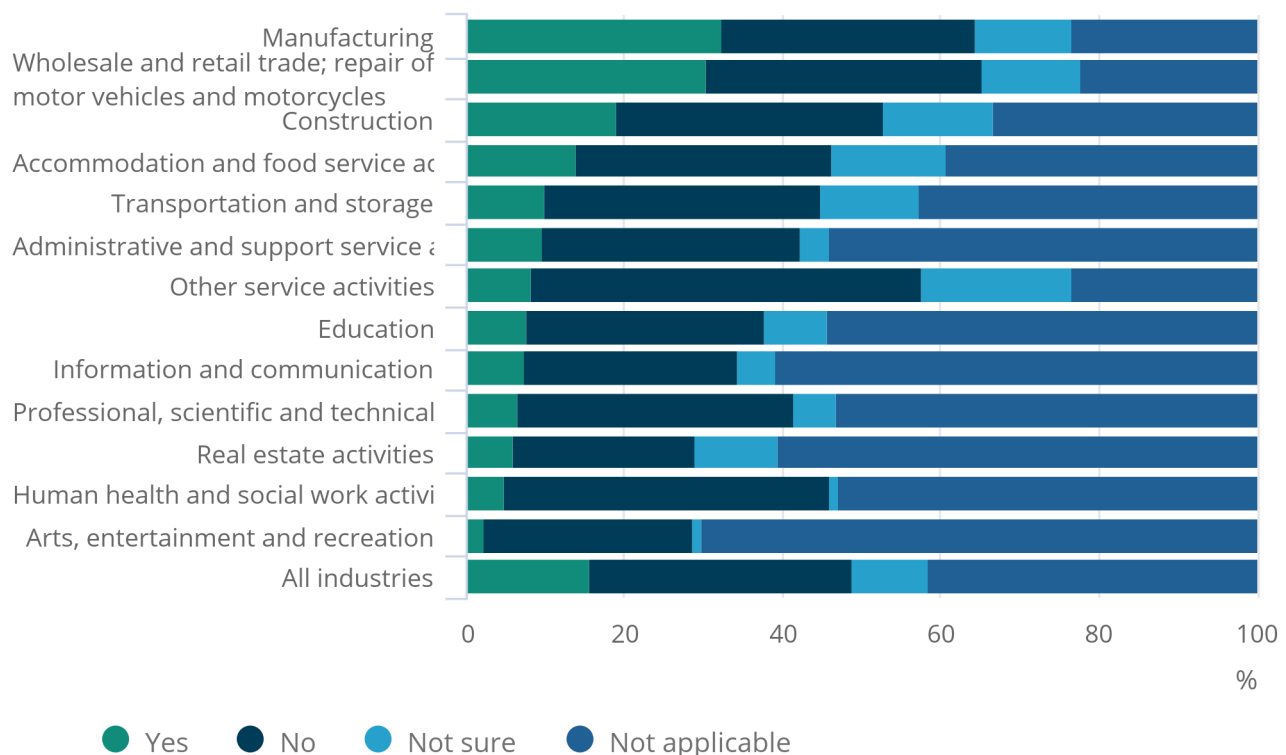
9 . Global supply chain disruption

Figure 8: The manufacturing industry reported the highest percentage of businesses experiencing global supply chain disruption, at 32%

Impact on global supply chains, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 7 February to 6 March 2022

Figure 8: The manufacturing industry reported the highest percentage of businesses experiencing global supply chain disruption, at 32%

Impact on global supply chains, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 7 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. Businesses were asked for their experience for the reference period, however, businesses may respond from the point of completion of the questionnaire.
3. "Mining and quarrying" and "water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities" have been removed for disclosure purposes, but their totals are included in "All industries".

The percentage of businesses not permanently stopped trading who reported experiencing global supply chain disruption in the last month, was unchanged from January 2022 at 16%. For businesses with 10 or more employees, this figure was also unchanged at 26%.

The other service activities industry reported the largest increase in the proportion of businesses experiencing global supply chain issues, up from 1% in January 2022 to 8% in February 2022. In contrast, the accommodation and food service activities industry reported the largest decrease, from 20% to 14%, over the same period.

10 . Business concerns

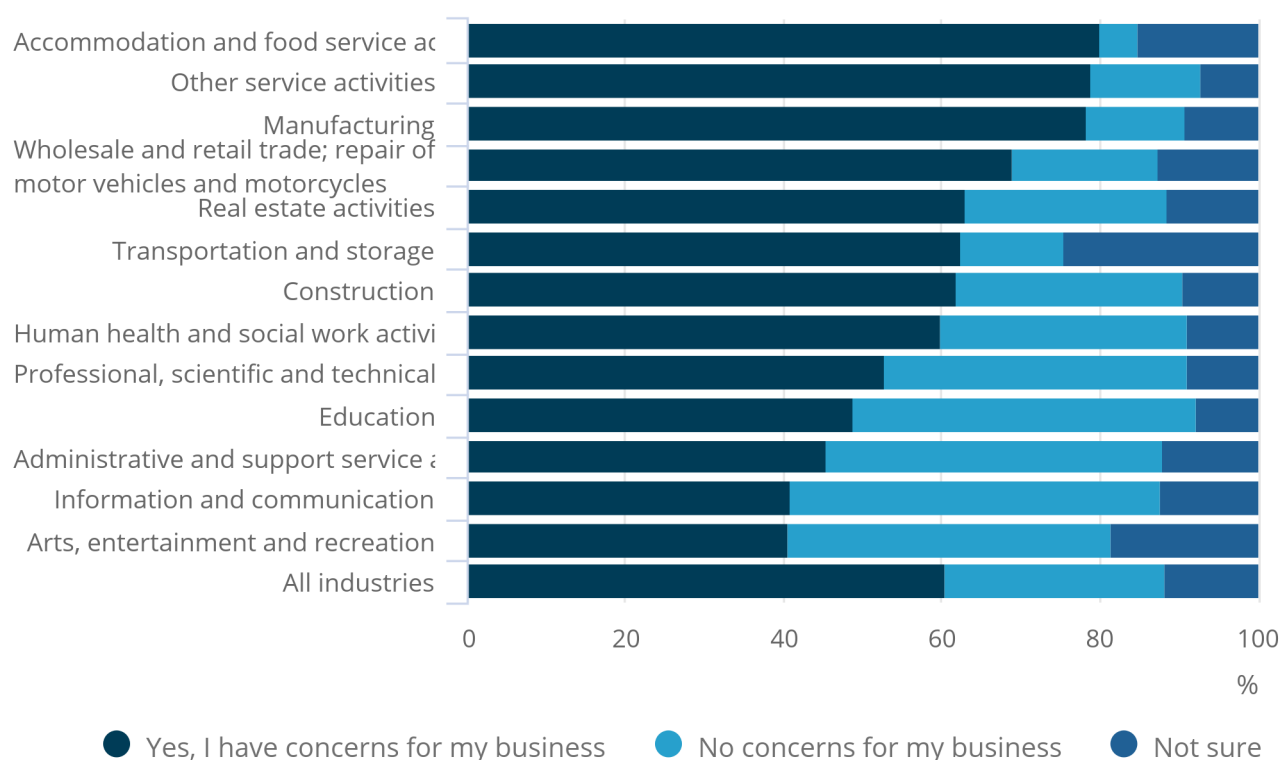
Businesses not permanently stopped trading were asked what main concerns they had for their business over the next month.

Figure 9: Approximately four-fifths of businesses (80%) in the accommodation and food service activities industry have some form of concern for their business in the next month

Business concerns, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 21 February to 6 March 2022

Figure 9: Approximately four-fifths of businesses (80%) in the accommodation and food service activities industry have some form of concern for their business in the next month

Business concerns, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK, 21 February to 6 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" and "water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities" 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.

The main concerns reported by businesses were:

- inflation of goods and services prices (21%), with the construction industry reporting the highest proportion (36%)
- energy prices (15%), with the other service activities industry reporting the highest proportion (48%)
- supply chain disruption (6%), with the wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles industry reporting the highest proportion (11%)
- taxation (5%), with the professional, scientific and technical activities industry reporting the highest proportion (11%)

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

11 . Business Insights and Conditions Survey data

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

Dataset | Released 10 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 in a timely way.

Access to microdata

You can now access the BICS microdata for Waves 1 to 50 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.

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.

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

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, updated on 24 January 2022.

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

Table 2: Sample and response rates for Waves 49, 50 and 51 of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey

Wave	10 February 2022 Publication Wave 49	24 February 2022 Publication Wave 50	10 March 2022 Publication Wave 51
Sample	38,413	38,265	38,226
Response	8,614	8,407	7,859
Rate	22.4%	22.0%	20.6%

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

14 . 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](#).

15 . 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 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).