Statistical bulletin

Business insights and impact on the UK economy: 20 August 2026

The impact of challenges facing the economy and other events on UK businesses, including financial performance, workforce, trade and business resilience.

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Release date:
20 August 2026

Next release:
3 September 2026

Notice

20 August 2026

This release is published in a headline-only format and is accompanied by our full dataset.

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1 . Main points

- More than one in seven (15%) trading businesses reported that their turnover had increased in July 2026 when compared with the previous month, broadly stable with June 2026; 22% of trading businesses reported that their turnover had decreased in July when compared with the previous month, also broadly stable over the same period.

- Economic uncertainty (29%) remained the most reported challenge affecting turnover for trading businesses in August 2026, down 3 percentage points from July 2026, but up 4 percentage points from August 2025; for businesses with 10 or more employees, cost of labour (35%) was the most reported challenge, broadly stable with July 2026.

- More than one in seven (15%) trading businesses reported that they expect their turnover to increase in September 2026, broadly stable with expectations for August 2026; 15% reported that they expect their turnover to decrease, down 3 percentage points from expectations for August 2026, but broadly stable with September 2025.

- Over a quarter (27%) of trading businesses reported an increase in prices of goods and services bought in July 2026, down 3 percentage points from June 2026 and broadly stable with July 2025; the movements follow a similar trend to previous years, where the proportion falls in the summer months following a peak in March or April.

- Almost one in seven (14%) trading businesses expect the prices of goods and services that they sell to increase in September 2026, broadly stable with August 2026; 25% of trading businesses reported that they were considering raising their prices because of energy prices, up 8 percentage points compared with September 2025.

- Just over three in five (61%) businesses expressed some degree of concern regarding energy prices in early August 2026, up 4 percentage points from late July 2026; 10% of businesses reported that their main concern for September 2026 was energy prices, up 5 percentage points from August 2026.

These are official statistics in development, and we advise caution when using the data. The Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) questions and topics are regularly reviewed, and questions are often added, removed, or amended to reflect changing circumstances and analytical priorities.

2 . Headline figures

The data presented in this bulletin are the final results from Wave 162 of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS), which was live from 3 to 16 August 2026.

This wave of the survey asked businesses questions about:

- turnover, including expectations for next month and current challenges affecting turnover
- prices of goods and services bought and sold, including expectations for next month
- energy (gas and electricity), and fuel prices
- global supply chain disruption
- worker shortages and recruitment difficulties
- business concerns
- business performance, including expectations for next year

For full details of the survey questions used, see our Business Insights and Conditions Survey questions: 3 to 16 August article.

Data reported within BICS bulletins and datasets are estimates that are subject to uncertainty, for example, sampling variability and non-sampling error. Further information on quality is available in our Business Insights and Conditions Survey Quality and Methodology Information (QMI), and we regularly update confidence intervals associated with the survey questions.

Single-site weighted regional estimates up to Wave 154 are available in our Business insights and impact on the UK subnational single-site economy: May 2026 article.

More about economy, business and jobs

- Explore the latest trends in employment, prices and trade in our economic dashboard.
- View all economic data.

The percentage of businesses that reported they were trading in early August 2026 was 94%, with 84% fully trading, and 10% partially trading (for example, trading with reduced hours or staff numbers). Meanwhile, 4% of businesses reported "temporarily paused trading", and 2% reported "permanently ceased trading" as their business' trading status.

3 . Data on the Business Insights and Conditions Survey

Business insights and impact on the UK economy
Dataset | Released 20 August 2026
Weighted estimates from the voluntary fortnightly Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) about financial performance, workforce, prices, trade, and business resilience. This dataset includes additional information collected as part of the survey not presented in this publication. These are official statistics in development.

Business insights and impact on the UK economy confidence intervals
Dataset | Released 20 August 2026
Confidence intervals for weighted estimates from the voluntary fortnightly Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) about financial performance, workforce, prices, trade, and business resilience. These are official statistics in development.

Access to microdata

You can access the microdata for Waves 1 to 161 of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) through the Secure Research Service (SRS). The BICS microdata for each wave are released on a rolling basis in the week following the publication of each wave. The microdata are made confidential and do not disclose information on any specific business.

Only researchers accredited under the Digital Economy Act, as explained on the UK Statistics Authority website are able to access data in the SRS. You can apply for researcher accreditation using the People and Projects Service (PPS). For more information, please see our guidance on how to become an accredited researcher.

To conduct analysis with microdata from the SRS, a project application must be submitted to the Research Accreditation Panel (RAP), as explained on the UK Statistics Authority website. Project accreditation applications should be submitted using the Project Accreditation Service for SRS (PASS). For more information, please see our guidance on applying for an accredited research project.

To use the SRS, you must access it through the appropriate safe setting. For more information on the full range of safe setting options, please see our guidance on accessing data securely.

Making our published spreadsheets accessible

Following the Government Statistical Service (GSS) guidance on releasing statistics in spreadsheets, we will be amending our published tables over the next couple of publications to improve the usability, accessibility and machine readability of our published statistics. If you have any questions or comments, please email us at bics@ons.gov.uk.

4 . Glossary

Private sector businesses

The Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) is a survey of private sector businesses, meaning that the public sector is not sampled. Some businesses are also excluded; please see the Coverage section of this bulletin's Section 5: Data sources and quality for more information.

Reporting unit

The reporting unit is the business unit to which questionnaires are sent. The response from the reporting unit can cover the enterprise as a whole, or parts of the enterprise identified by lists of local units.

Trading businesses

Trading businesses refers to businesses that responded that their trading status was "currently fully trading" or "currently partially trading" only.

If trading businesses is not specifically specified, the statistics presented refer to businesses that have "Not permanently stopped trading". This includes trading businesses and those that said their trading status was "paused trading and intends to restart in the next two weeks" or "paused trading and does not intend to restart within the next two weeks".

5 . Data sources and quality

More quality and methodology information (QMI) on strengths, limitations, appropriate uses, and how the data were created is available in our Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) QMI, which was updated on 10 October 2024.

The BICS is voluntary, and the results are official statistics in development. More information is available in our Guide to official statistics in development.

Table 1: Sample and response rates for Wave 160, 161 and 162 of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey

Wave	23 July 2026 Publication Wave 160	6 August 2026 Publication Wave 161	20 August 2026 Publication Wave 162
Sample	38,651	38,618	38,606
Response	10,073	10,034	9,826
Rate	26.1%	26.0%	25.5%

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

Notes

1. Response rates for all waves can be found in our 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 162 survey was live for the period 3 to 16 August 2026. For full details of the survey questions used, see our Business Insights and Conditions Survey questions: 3 to 16 August 2026 article.

Coverage

The BICS sampling frame is based on the same industries as our Monthly Business Survey (MBS). The MBS covers the UK for production industries only, and Great Britain for construction, retail and services industries. The MBS is an important input to the output measure of gross domestic product (GDP), which includes monthly GDP.

For detailed information on the industries covered by the MBS and BICS, see our GDP(o) data sources catalogue. The following are some industries that are excluded from MBS and BICS:

- agriculture
- oil and gas extraction
- energy generation and supply
- public administration and defence
- public provision of education and health
- finance and insurance

For more information on the methodology of producing the BICS, such as weighting, please see our BICS QMI.

Strengths and limitations

More quality and methodology information on strengths, limitations, appropriate uses, and how the data were created is available in our BICS QMI.

6 . Related links

Economic activity and social change real-time indicators, UK, dashboard
Dashboard | Updated frequently
An overview of the UK economy and society, based on rapid response surveys, novel data sources, and innovative methods

Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators
Bulletin | Released monthly
Data on the UK economy and society. These faster indicators are created using rapid response surveys, novel data sources and innovative methods. These are official statistics in development.

Business insights and impact on the UK subnational single-site economy: May 2026
Article | Released 15 May 2026
Estimates from the voluntary fortnightly business survey (BICS) on prices, financial performance, workforce and business resilience.

7 . Cite this statistical bulletin

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 20 August 2026, ONS website, statistical bulletin, Business insights and impact on the UK economy: 20 August 2026