Statistical bulletin

Business insights and impact on the UK economy: 21 August 2025

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

Contact:
Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) team
bics@ons.gov.uk
+44 1633 560479

Release date:
21 August 2025

Next release:
4 September 2025

Table of contents

1. Main points

2. Headline figures

3. Financial performance

4. Prices

5. Worker shortages

6. Business performance expectations

7. Data from the Business Insights and Conditions Survey

8. Glossary

9. Data sources and quality

10. Related links

11. Cite this statistical bulletin

1 . Main points

- 16% of trading businesses reported that their turnover had increased in July 2025 compared with the previous calendar month, and was broadly stable from June; in contrast, 24% reported their turnover had decreased, also broadly stable over the same period.
- Around 1 in 7 (15%) trading businesses reported that they expect their turnover to decrease in September 2025, decreasing by 5 percentage points compared with expectations for August; in comparison, 15% reported that they expect their turnover to increase, broadly stable with expectations for August.
- Economic uncertainty was the most reported challenge affecting turnover for trading businesses in early August 2025 at 25%, down 7 percentage points from early April (32%); for businesses with 10 or more employees, the most commonly reported challenge was cost of labour at 36%, down 6 percentage points over the same period.
- Around a quarter (25%) of trading businesses reported an increase in the prices of goods or services bought in July 2025 when compared with the previous month; this is broadly stable with June but down 7 percentage points from April.
- Around 1 in 8 (12%) trading businesses expect the prices of goods or services they sell to increase in September 2025, down 12 percentage points from April (24%); 22% of all businesses and 37% of businesses with 10 or more employees cited labour costs as a reason for considering price rises.
- 17% of businesses with 10 or more employees reported that they were experiencing worker shortages in early August 2025, which is broadly stable with early July and has steadily declined since early June 2022 (36%).

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 138 of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS), which was live from 4 to 17 August 2025.

Data reported within BICS bulletins and datasets are estimates that are subject touncertainty, for example, sampling variability andnon-sampling error. Further information on quality is available in ourBusiness Insights and Conditions Survey Quality and Methodology Information (QMI), and we regularly updateconfidence intervals associated with the survey questions.

Single-site weighted regional estimates up to Wave 130 are available in ourBusiness insights and impact on the UK subnational single-site economy: May 2025 article.

More about economy, business and jobs

- Explore the latest trends in employment, prices and trade in oureconomic dashboard.
- Viewall economic data.

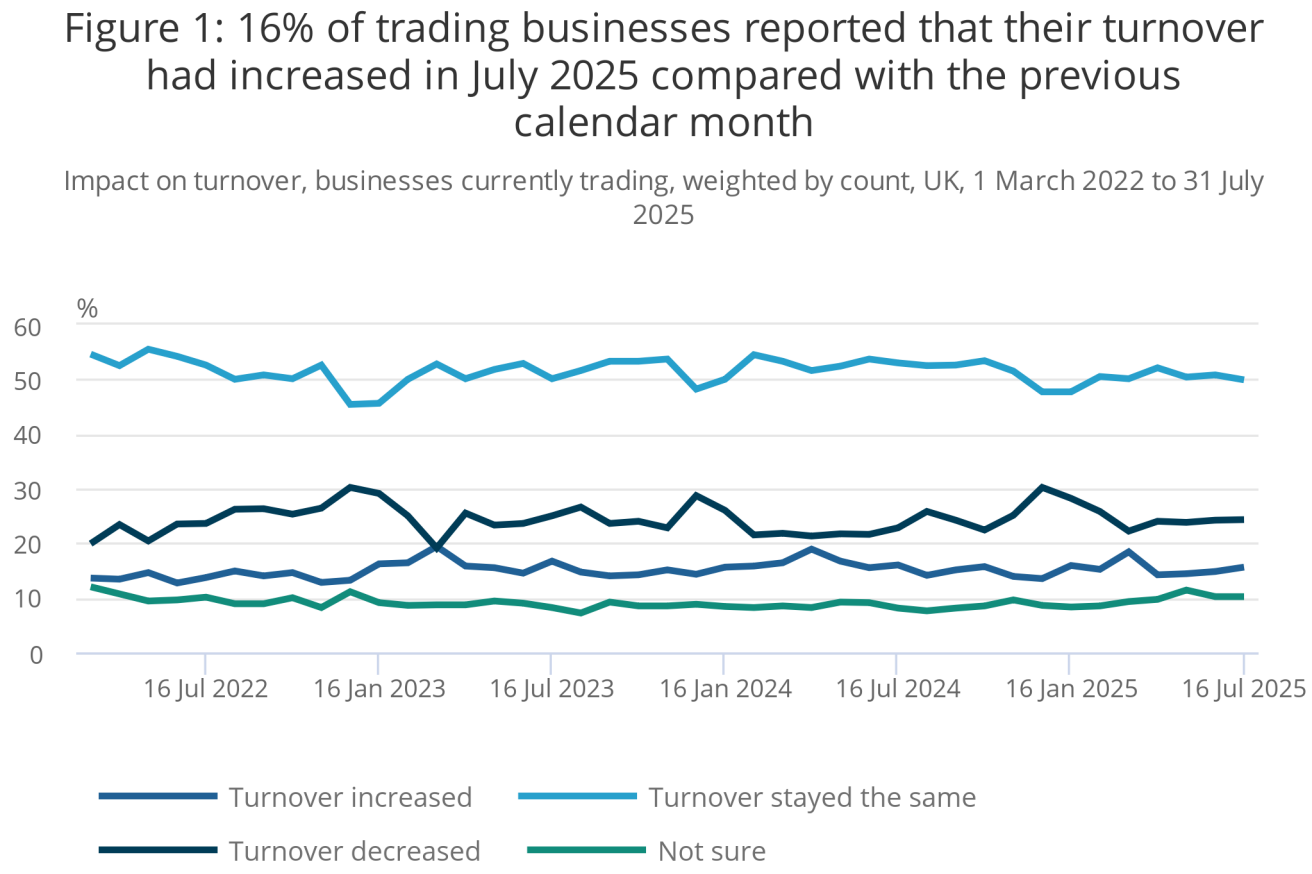
The percentage of businesses that reported they were trading in early August 2025 was 95%, with 84% fully trading, and 11% partially trading (for example, trading with reduced hours or staff numbers). Meanwhile, 3% of businesses reported "temporarily paused trading", and 2% reported "permanently ceased trading" as their business's trading status.

3 . Financial performance

Trading businesses were asked how their turnover in July 2025 compared with June, excluding any seasonal trading.

Figure 1: 16% of trading businesses reported that their turnover had increased in July 2025 compared with the previous calendar month

Impact on turnover, businesses currently trading, weighted by count, UK, 1 March 2022 to 31 July 2025



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

Notes:

1. Data are plotted in the middle of the period of each wave.

Approximately 16% of trading businesses reported that their turnover had increased in July compared with the previous calendar month. This proportion has remained broadly stable since April and is broadly consistent with previous years.

Larger businesses were more likely to report an increase in turnover than small businesses, a pattern visible every month since the question was introduced in March 2022. The proportion ranged from 14% for businesses with 0 to 9 employees, to 36% for businesses with 100 to 249 employees, in July. For businesses with 10 or more employees, the proportion was 27%.

Conversely, 24% of businesses reported that their turnover had decreased, with this proportion remaining broadly stable since March, but down 6 percentage points from the peak over the last 12 months in December 2024 (30%).

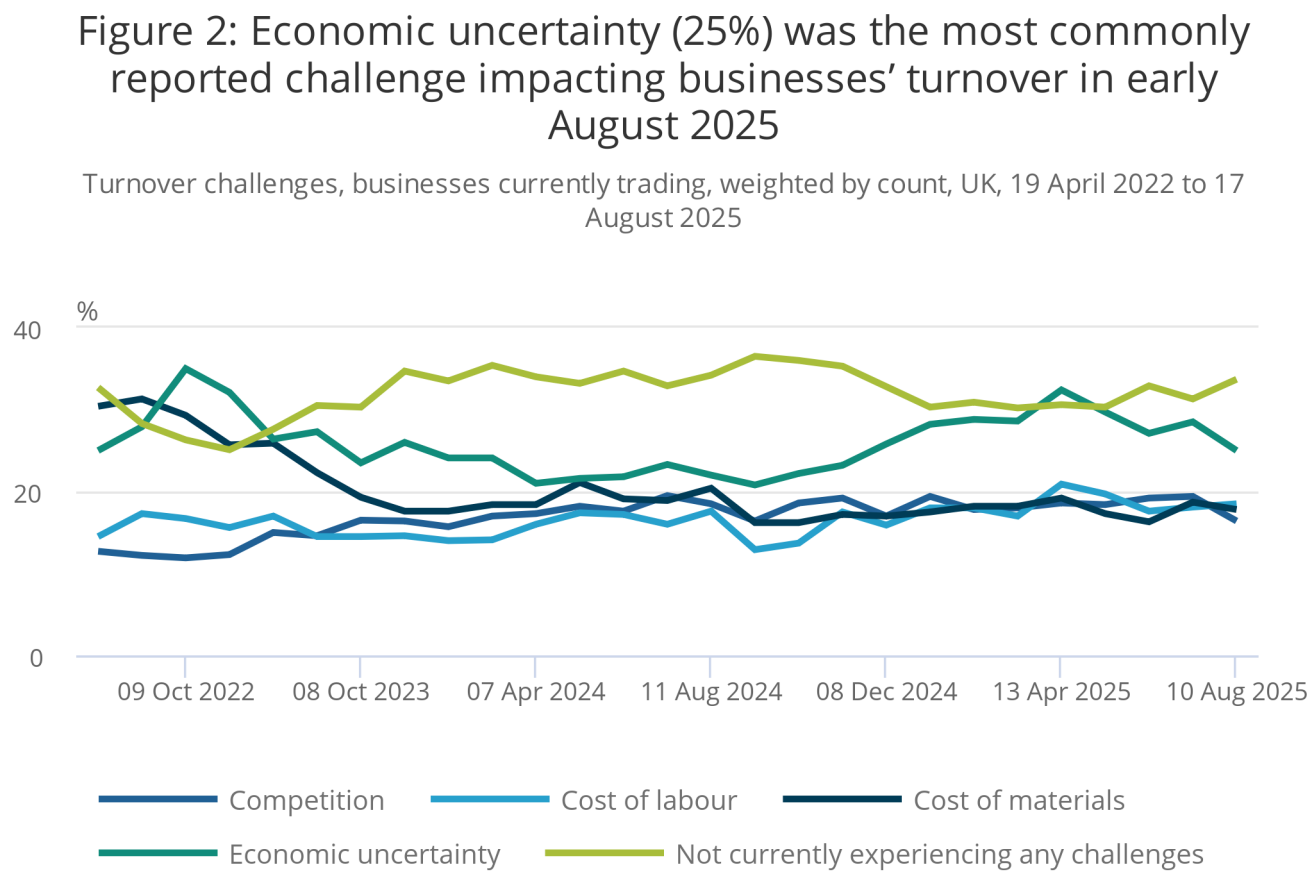
The education industry had the highest proportion of businesses reporting that their turnover had decreased, at 38%. This is likely because of seasonal patterns of activity for businesses within this industry.

Turnover challenges

Trading businesses were asked what challenges, if any, were impacting their turnover in early August 2025.

Figure 2: Economic uncertainty (25%) was the most commonly reported challenge impacting businesses' turnover in early August 2025

Turnover challenges, businesses currently trading, weighted by count, UK, 19 April 2022 to 17 August 2025



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

Notes:

1. Data are plotted in the middle of the period of each wave.

2. For presentational purposes, some response options have been removed.

Approximately 25% of trading businesses reported that economic uncertainty was having an impact on their turnover in early August. It has consistently been the most reported challenge since October 2022, despite falling 4 percentage points from early July, and 7 percentage points from the recent peak reached in early April.

The accommodation and food service activities industry had the highest proportion of businesses reporting at least one challenge impacting turnover at 73%.

For businesses with 10 or more employees, the cost of labour was reported as the main challenge (36%), broadly consistent with early July 2025. While down 6 percentage points from early April, it has been the most reported challenge since November 2024. The accommodation and food service activities industry had the highest proportion of businesses reporting this as a challenge (61%).

Despite this, 34% of all trading businesses and 22% of trading businesses with 10 or more employees indicated that they were not currently experiencing any turnover challenges in early August, rising 2 and 3 percentage points, respectively from early July.

Turnover expectations

Trading businesses were asked what their expectations were for their turnover in September 2025.

For all trading businesses, 15% reported that they expect their turnover to decrease in September, 5 percentage points down from August, but broadly stable compared with the three months prior. The accommodation and food services industry reported the highest proportion, with 23% expecting a decrease in turnover.

Approximately 1 in 7 (15%) of trading businesses reported that they expect their turnover to increase, with this proportion remaining broadly stable since April.

Larger businesses were more likely to say they expected turnover to increase, with 14% of businesses with 0 to 9 employees reporting increased turnover expectations compared with 30% of businesses with 250 or more employees. For all businesses with 10 or more employees, the proportion was 21%, which was broadly stable from August, but down 9 percentage points from the recent peak in March (31%).

Further details on financial performance, including all response options broken down by industry and size band, are available in our[accompanying dataset](#).

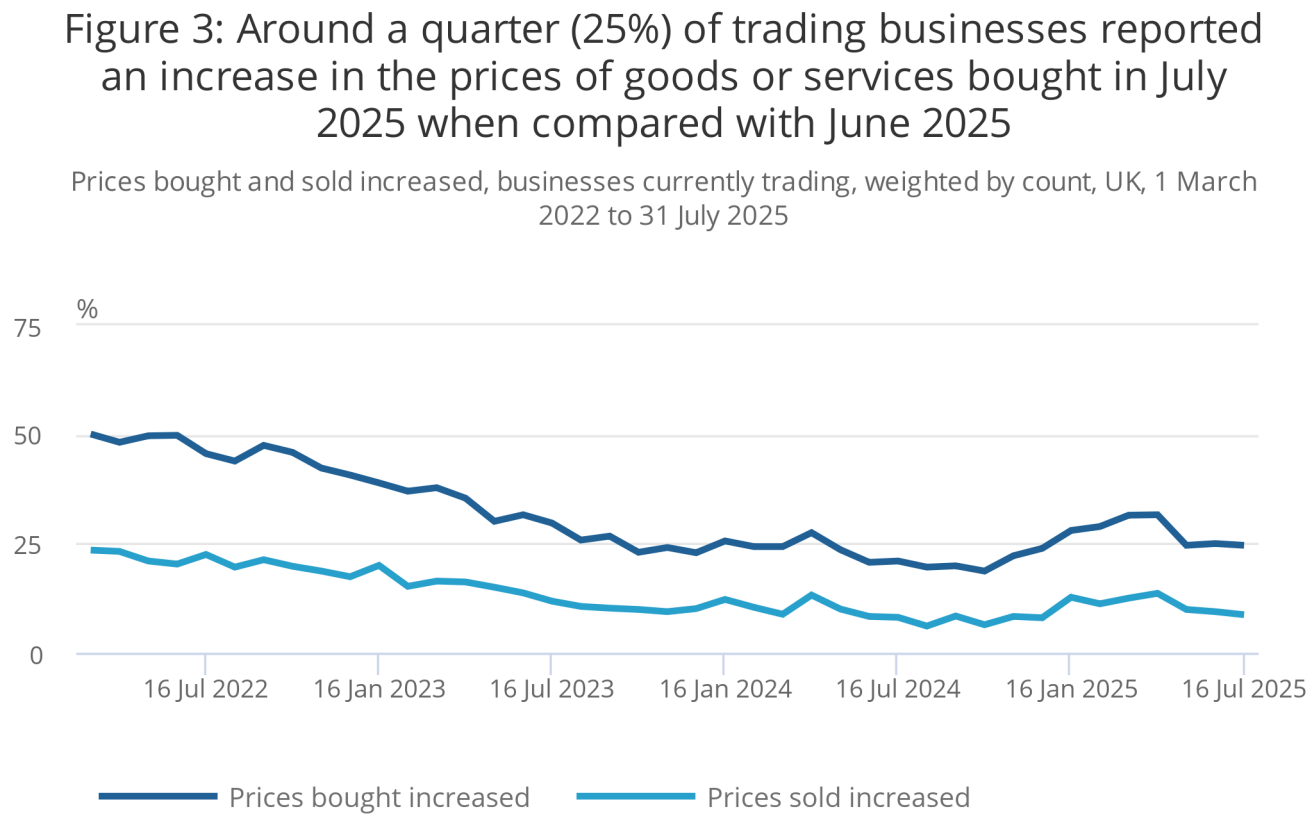
4 . Prices

Prices bought and prices sold

Businesses that had not permanently stopped trading were asked how the prices of goods or services they bought and sold in July 2025 compared with June.

Figure 3: Around a quarter (25%) of trading businesses reported an increase in the prices of goods or services bought in July 2025 when compared with June 2025

Prices bought and sold increased, businesses currently trading, weighted by count, UK, 1 March 2022 to 31 July 2025



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

Notes:

1. Data are plotted in the middle of the period of each wave.

2. For presentational purposes, some response options have been removed.

When asked in early August, 25% of trading businesses reported an increase in the prices of goods or services bought in July compared with the previous month. Although broadly stable with June, the proportion has fallen 7 percentage points since its peak in April.

The accommodation and food industry had the highest proportion of businesses reporting prices of goods or services bought increased at 38%, although this has fallen 22 percentage points since April and, except for June, is the lowest proportion reported since October 2024.

Less than 1 in 10 (9%) trading businesses reported an increase in the prices of goods or services sold in July. Although broadly in line with June, the proportion has fallen 5 percentage points since April, following a similar pattern to prices bought.

Price expectations

Around 1 in 8 (12%) trading businesses expect to raise the prices of goods or services they sell in September. Although broadly consistent with expectations in August, this is down 12 percentage points from expectations for April.

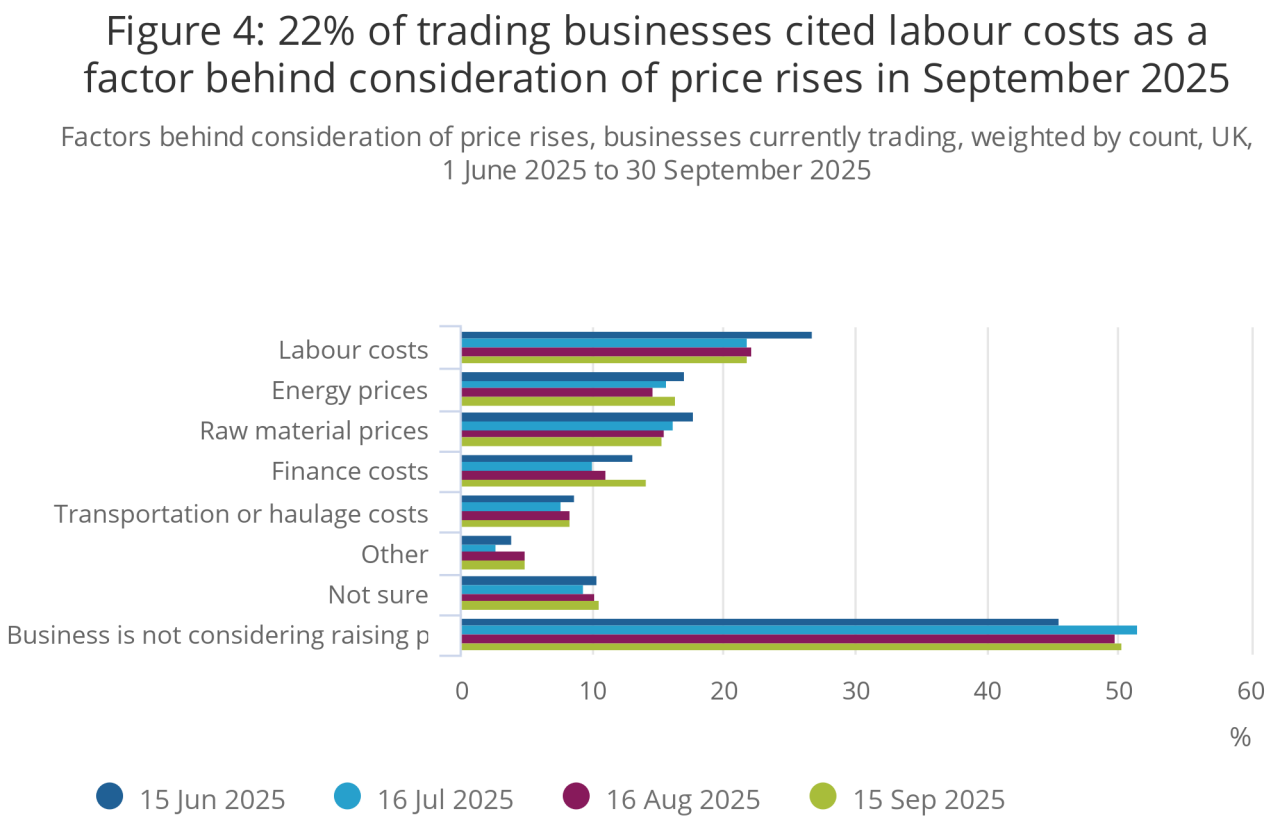
The wholesale and retail trade industry reported the largest proportion expecting to raise prices, at 17%.

Price-raising factors

Businesses that had not permanently ceased trading were asked which factors, if any, were causing their business to consider raising prices in September.

Figure 4: 22% of trading businesses cited labour costs as a factor behind consideration of price rises in September 2025

Factors behind consideration of price rises, businesses currently trading, weighted by count, UK, 1 June 2025 to 30 September 2025



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

Notes:

1. For presentational purposes, some response options have been removed.

2. Data are plotted in the middle of the period of each wave.

In early August, 22% of trading businesses reported labour costs as a reason for considering raising their prices in September. While broadly stable with August, this is down 8 percentage points from April (30%). For businesses with 10 or more employees, the proportion was 38%, which is the lowest proportion reported since November 2024 (30%).

The most reported factors for all businesses were:

- energy prices (16%), broadly stable with August
- raw material prices (15%), broadly stable with August
- finance costs (14%), up 3 percentage points from August

The accommodation and food services industry reported the highest proportion for both energy prices (34%) and labour costs (35%).

However, 50% of trading businesses reported they were not considering raising prices in September. This is broadly stable when compared with August.

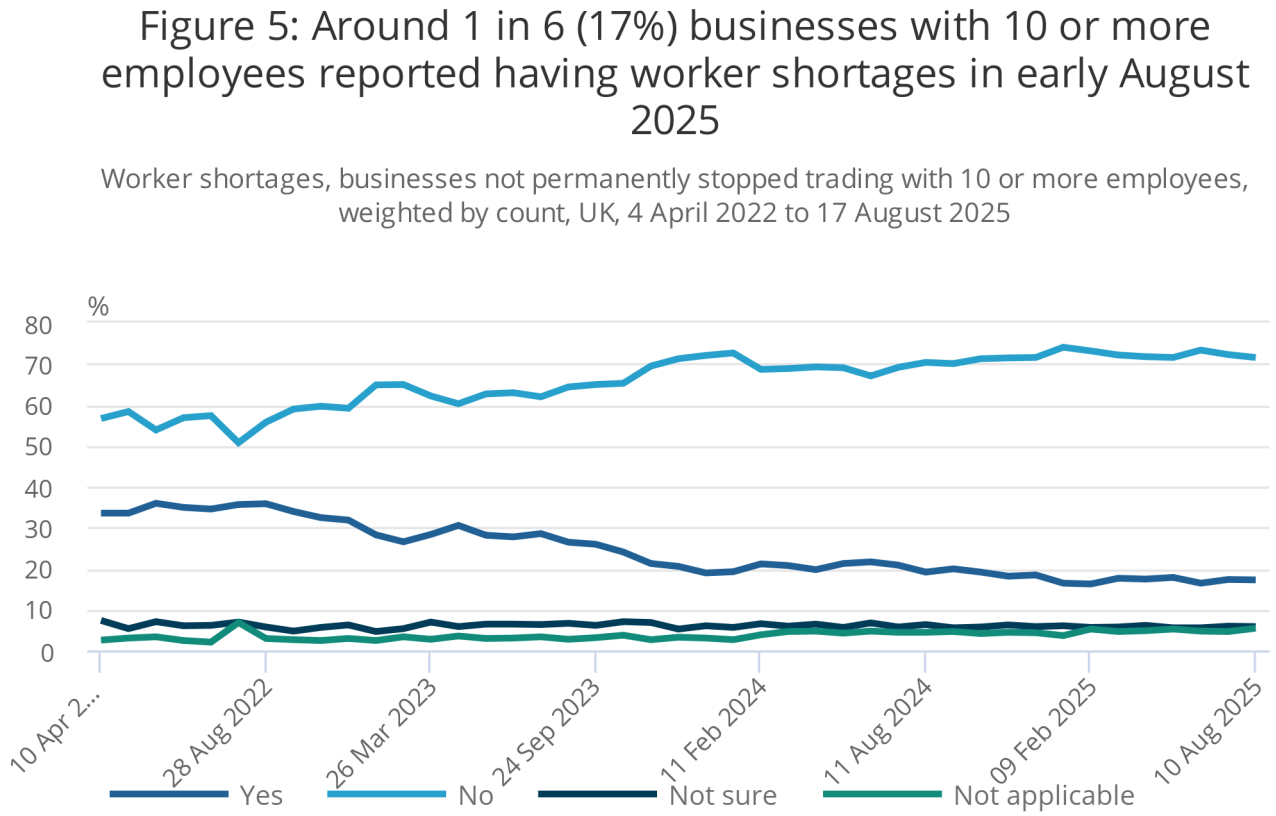
Further details on prices, including all response options broken down by industry and size band, are available in our accompanying dataset.

5 . Worker shortages

Businesses that had not permanently stopped trading were asked whether they were currently experiencing worker shortages.

Figure 5: Around 1 in 6 (17%) businesses with 10 or more employees reported having worker shortages in early August 2025

Worker shortages, businesses not permanently stopped trading with 10 or more employees, weighted by count, UK, 4 April 2022 to 17 August 2025



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

Notes:

1. Data are plotted in the middle of the period of each wave.

Around 1 in 6 (17%) businesses with 10 or more employees reported that they were experiencing worker shortages in early August 2025, while 17% reported that they had experienced difficulties around recruiting employees in July. Both percentages were broadly stable compared with the previous reporting periods but have gradually fallen since June 2022. This is a similar trend as that found by the ONS Vacancies Survey.

When asked in early August, the industries with the highest proportion of businesses experiencing worker shortages and those experiencing recruitment difficulties were the same three industries:

- the accommodation and food services industry (both 18%)
- the other services activities industry (18% and 17%, respectively)
- the education industry (both 14%)

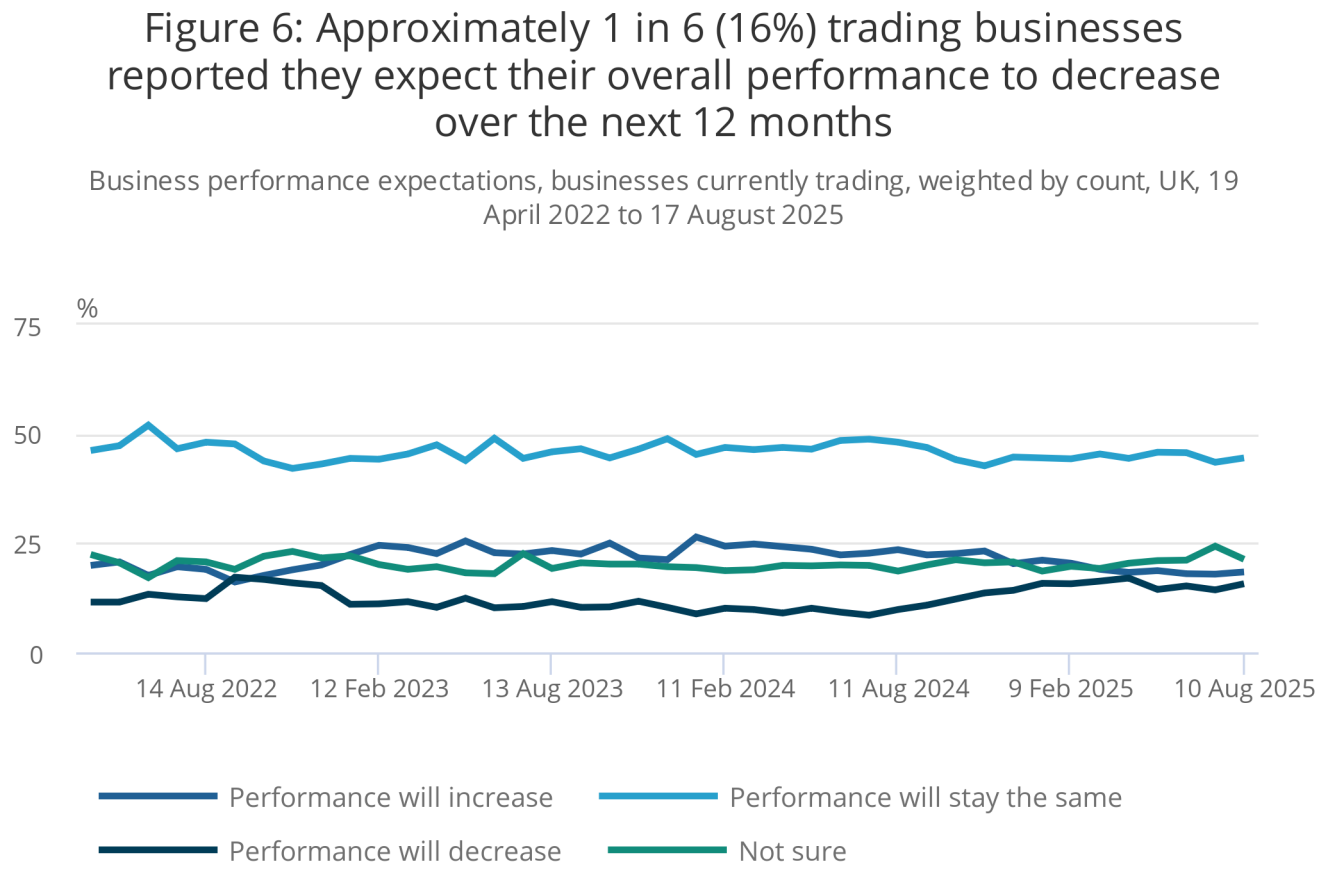
Further details on worker shortages and recruitment, including all response options broken down by industry and size band, are available in ouraccompanying dataset.

6 . Business performance expectations

Businesses that had not permanently stopped trading were asked how they expect their overall performance to change over the next 12 months.

Figure 6: Approximately 1 in 6 (16%) trading businesses reported they expect their overall performance to decrease over the next 12 months

Business performance expectations, businesses currently trading, weighted by count, UK, 19 April 2022 to 17 August 2025



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

Notes:

1. Caution should be taken when interpreting expectations questions as the employees responding on behalf of businesses may not have full oversight of all their business's future expectations.

2. Data are plotted in the middle of the period of each wave.

Approximately 1 in 6 (16%) trading businesses reported in early August 2025 that they expect their overall performance to decrease over the next 12 months. This is broadly stable with expectations from early July.

Larger businesses were less likely to say they expected overall performance to decrease, with 16% of businesses with 0 to 9 employees reporting performance decrease expectations compared with only 7% for businesses with 250 or more employees. The industries reporting the highest proportions of expectations of performance decreasing were:

- education, at 31% (8 percentage point increase compared with July)
- the accommodation and food service activities industry, at 21% (2 percentage point increase compared with July)
- the wholesale and retail trade industry, at 20% (broadly stable compared with July)

The proportion of trading businesses expecting their performance to increase was 18%. Although broadly stable compared with early July, the proportion has steadily fallen from the peak of 26% in January 2024.

Further details on business performance, including all response options broken down by industry and size band, are available in ouraccompanying dataset.

7 . Data from the Business Insights and Conditions Survey

Business insights and impact on the UK economy
Dataset | Released 21 August 2025
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 21 August 2025
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 137 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 theDigital 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).

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

8 . Glossary

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.

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 for more information.

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 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”.

9 . Data sources and quality

More quality and methodology information (QMI) on strengths, limitations, appropriate uses, and how the data were created is available in ourBusiness 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 136, 137 and 138 of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey

Wave	24 July 2025 Publication Wave 136	7 August 2025 Publication Wave 137	21 August 2025 Publication Wave 138
Sample	38,970	38,909	38,881
Response	10,721	10,667	10,464
Rate	27.5%	27.4%	26.9%

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

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 138 survey was live for the period 4 to 17 August 2025. For full details of the survey questions used, see ourBusiness Insights and Conditions Survey questions: 4 to 17 August 2025 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 ourGDP(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 ourBusiness Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) QMI report.

10 . Related links

Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators: 21 August 2025
Bulletin | Updated frequently
Early 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 2025
Article | Released 30 May 2025
Estimates from the voluntary fortnightly business survey (BICS) on prices, financial performance, workforce and business resilience.

11 . Cite this statistical bulletin

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 21 August 2025, ONS website, statistical bulletin,Business insights and impact on the UK economy: 21 August 2025