Office for National Statistics

Statistical bulletin

Business insights and impact on the UK economy: 22 May 2025

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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1 . Main points

- Approximately 1 in 7 (14%) trading businesses reported that their turnover had increased in April compared with the previous calendar month, down 4 percentage points from March; in contrast, 24% reported that their turnover had decreased, remaining broadly stable over the same period.
- Around 1 in 7 (14%) trading businesses reported that they expect their turnover to decrease in June 2025; although down 2 percentage points from expectations for May 2025, this proportion is 4 percentage points higher than June 2024, suggesting that businesses are more pessimistic than they were at this time last year.
- Economic uncertainty was the most reported challenge affecting turnover for trading businesses in early May 2025, at 30%, down 3 percentage points from early April 2025; for businesses with 10 or more employees, the most commonly reported challenge was cost of labour at 39%, down 2 percentage points over the same period.
- More than 3 in 10 (32%) trading businesses reported an increase in the prices of goods or services bought in April 2025, when compared with the previous month; this is broadly stable with March 2025, after a steady increase of 13 percentage points from October 2024.
- Around half (46%) of trading businesses with 10 or more employees cited labour costs as a reason for considering raising their prices in June 2025; while this is down 8 percentage points from May 2025, it is 7 percentage points higher than June 2024.
- In early May 2025, 8% of businesses reported that they were currently experiencing worker shortages, which is broadly stable since March 2024; this percentage rose to 18% for businesses with 10 or more employees, which is broadly stable since October 2024.

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 132 of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS), which was live from 6 to 18 May 2025.

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 118 are available in our Business insights and impact on the UK subnational single-site economy: November 2024 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 that they were trading in early May 2025 was 95%, with 87% fully trading, and 9% 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.

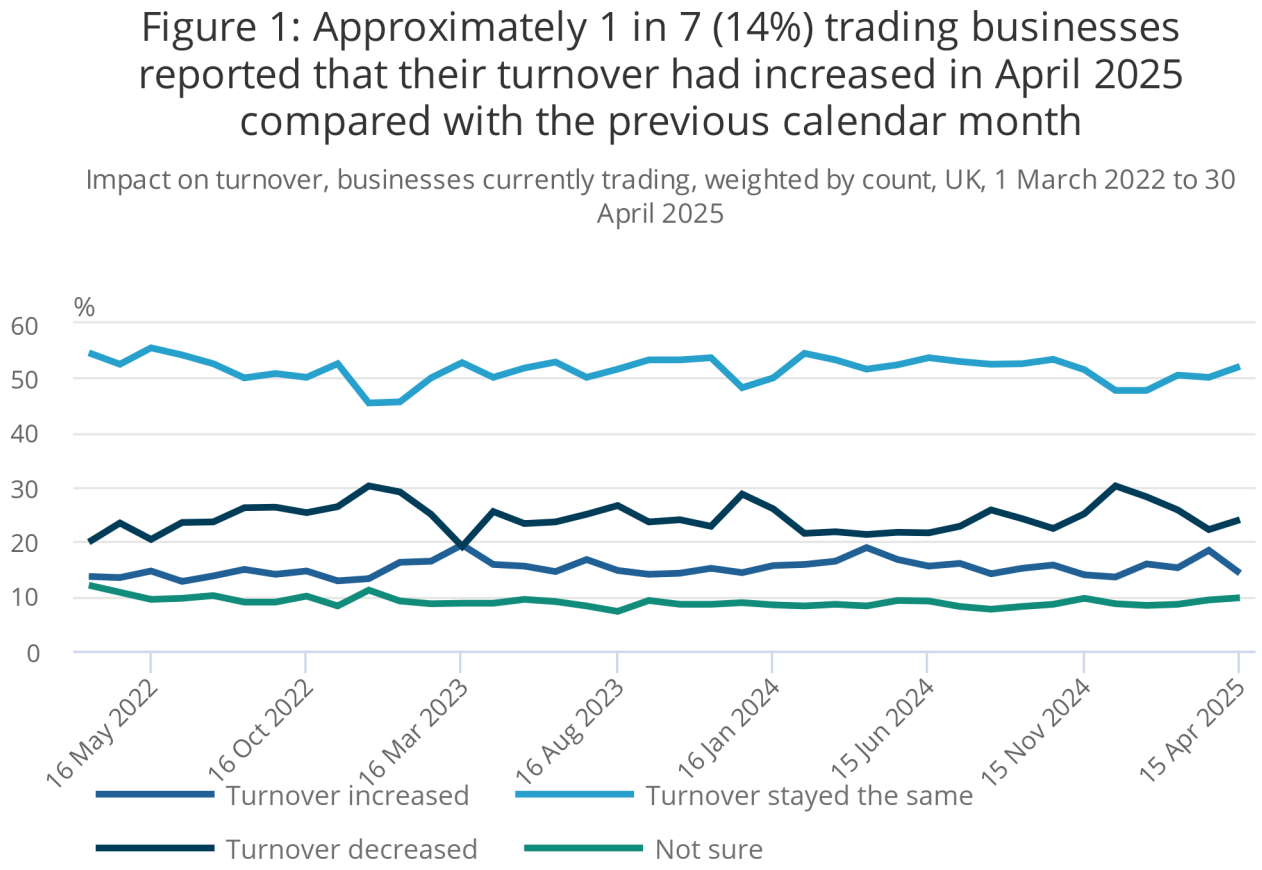
3 . Financial performance

Turnover

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

Figure 1: Approximately 1 in 7 (14%) trading businesses reported that their turnover had increased in April 2025 compared with the previous calendar month

Impact on turnover, businesses currently trading, weighted by count, UK, 1 March 2022 to 30 April 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 1 in 7 (14%) trading businesses reported that their turnover had increased in April 2025, compared with the previous calendar month, down 4 percentage points from March. More than half (52%) of trading businesses reported that their turnover had stayed the same, up 2 percentage points from March 2025. Meanwhile, 24% reported that their turnover had decreased, broadly stable with March 2025, but down 6 percentage points from the peak over the last 12 months in December 2024 (30%).

In early May 2025, 30% of trading businesses reported that economic uncertainty was having an impact on their turnover. Although this proportion is down 3% from early April 2025, it has consistently been the most reported challenge since October 2022.

The accommodation and food service activities industry reported the highest proportion of businesses indicating at least one challenge impacting turnover at 82%, the second highest was the wholesale and retail trade industry at 72%.

For businesses with 10 or more employees, the cost of labour was reported as the main challenge (39%). While down 2 percentage points from early April 2025, it has consistently 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, at 66%.

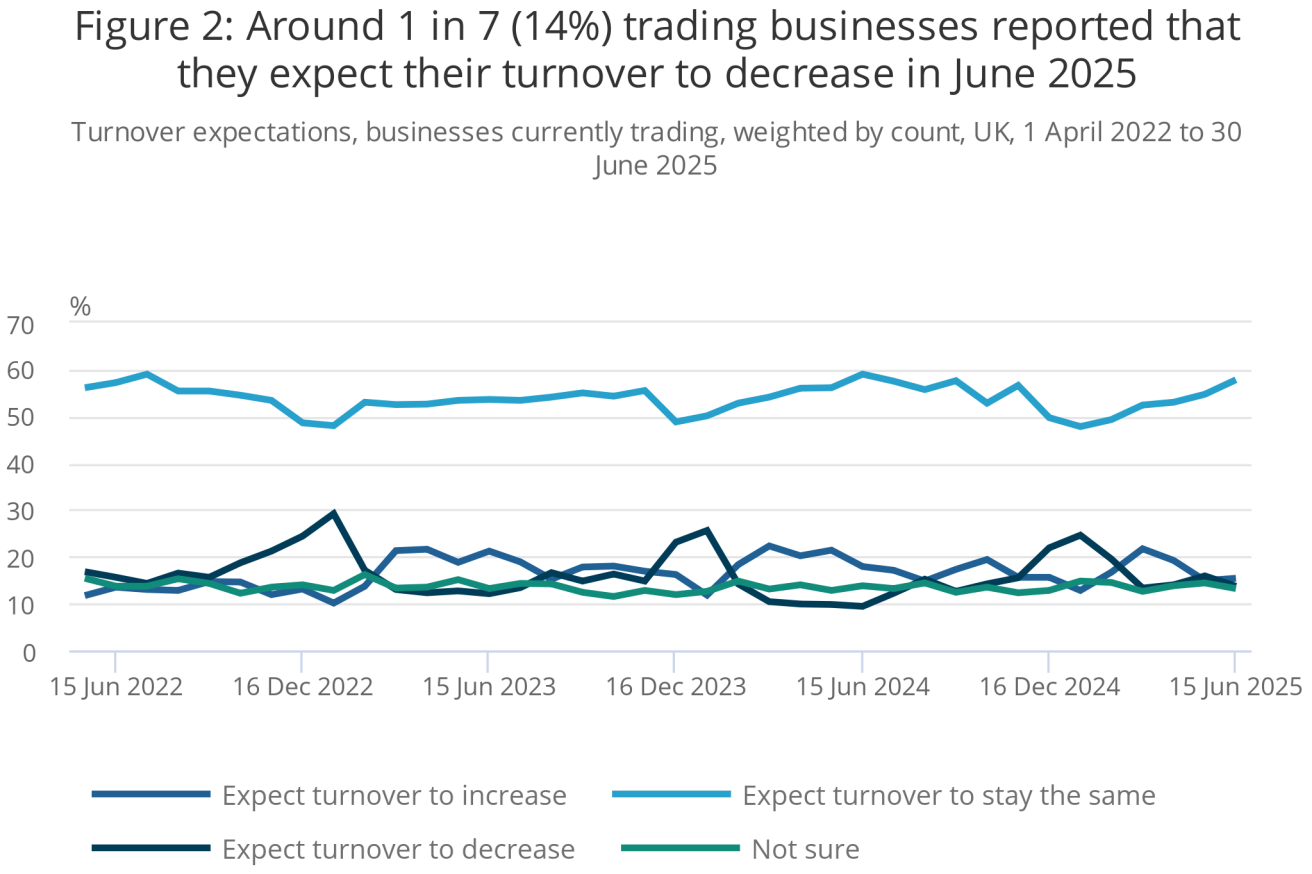
Despite this, 30% of all trading businesses and 19% of trading businesses with 10 or more employees indicated that they were not currently experiencing any turnover challenges, both broadly stable with early April 2025.

Turnover expectations

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

Figure 2: Around 1 in 7 (14%) trading businesses reported that they expect their turnover to decrease in June 2025

Turnover expectations, businesses currently trading, weighted by count, UK, 1 April 2022 to 30 June 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.

For all trading businesses, 15% reported that they expect their turnover to increase in June 2025, broadly stable with expectations for May 2025. In comparison, 14% reported that they expect their turnover to decrease. This is down 2 percentage points with expectations for May 2025, but 4 percentage points higher when compared with June 2024 (9%). This suggests that businesses are less optimistic than they were at this time last year.

Around 3 in 5 (58%) trading business reported that they expect their turnover to stay the same in June 2025. This is up 3 percentage points from expectations for May 2025, and the highest proportion reported since June 2024.

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

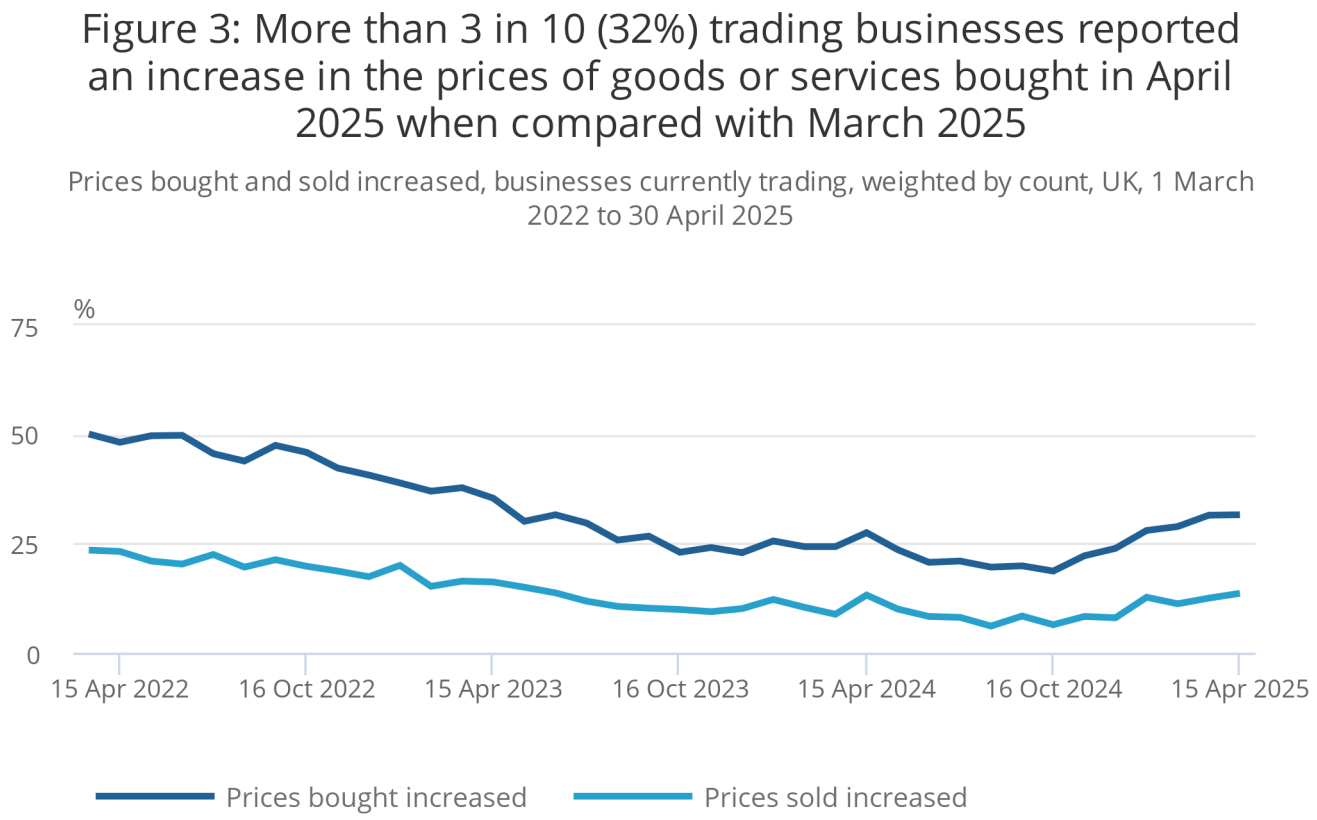
4 . Prices

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 April 2025 compared with March 2025.

Figure 3: More than 3 in 10 (32%) trading businesses reported an increase in the prices of goods or services bought in April 2025 when compared with March 2025

Prices bought and sold increased, businesses currently trading, weighted by count, UK, 1 March 2022 to 30 April 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.

When asked in early May 2025, 32% of trading businesses reported an increase in the prices of goods or services bought in April 2025, compared with the previous month. This is broadly stable with March 2025, after a steady increase of 13 percentage points since October 2024. The accommodation and food industry had the highest proportion of businesses reporting that the prices of goods or services bought increased, at 60%.

Approximately 1 in 7 (14%) trading businesses reported an increase in the prices of goods or services sold in April 2025. This is also broadly stable with March. The accommodation and food industry also had the highest proportion of businesses reporting that the prices of goods or services sold increased, at 40%.

Price expectations

Around 1 in 6 (16%) trading businesses expect to raise the prices of goods or services they sell in June 2025. This is down 8 percentage points from expectations for May 2025, and the lowest proportion since December 2024.

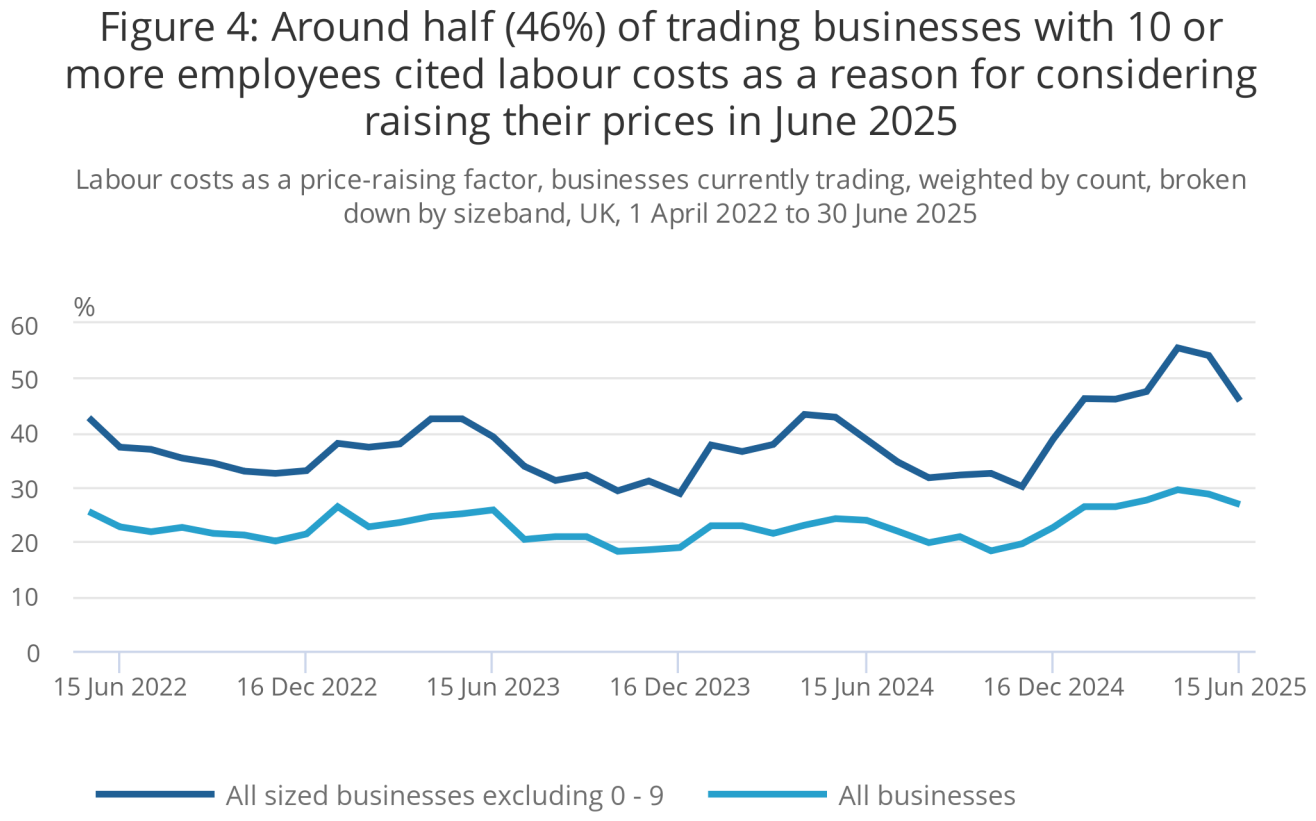
There are 60% of trading businesses that expect to keep the prices of goods or services they sell in June 2025 the same. This is up 10 percentage points from expectations for May 2025, and the largest proportion recorded since December 2024.

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 June 2025.

Figure 4: Around half (46%) of trading businesses with 10 or more employees cited labour costs as a reason for considering raising their prices in June 2025

Labour costs as a price-raising factor, businesses currently trading, weighted by count, broken down by sizeband, UK, 1 April 2022 to 30 June 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 May 2025, 46% of trading businesses with 10 or more employees reported labour costs as a reason for considering raising their prices in June 2025. While this is 8 percentage points down from May 2025, it remains the most reported reason, and is 7 percentage points higher than June 2024.

The other most reported reasons for businesses with 10 or more employees were:

- energy prices (23%), down 5 percentage points from May 2025
- raw material prices (20%), down 6 percentage points from May 2025
- finance costs (14%), down 3 percentage points from May 2025

The percentage of trading businesses with 10 or more employees not considering raising prices was 35%, up 10 percentage points from May 2025. This follows a period where the proportion fell steadily from 47% in November 2024 to 25% in May 2025.

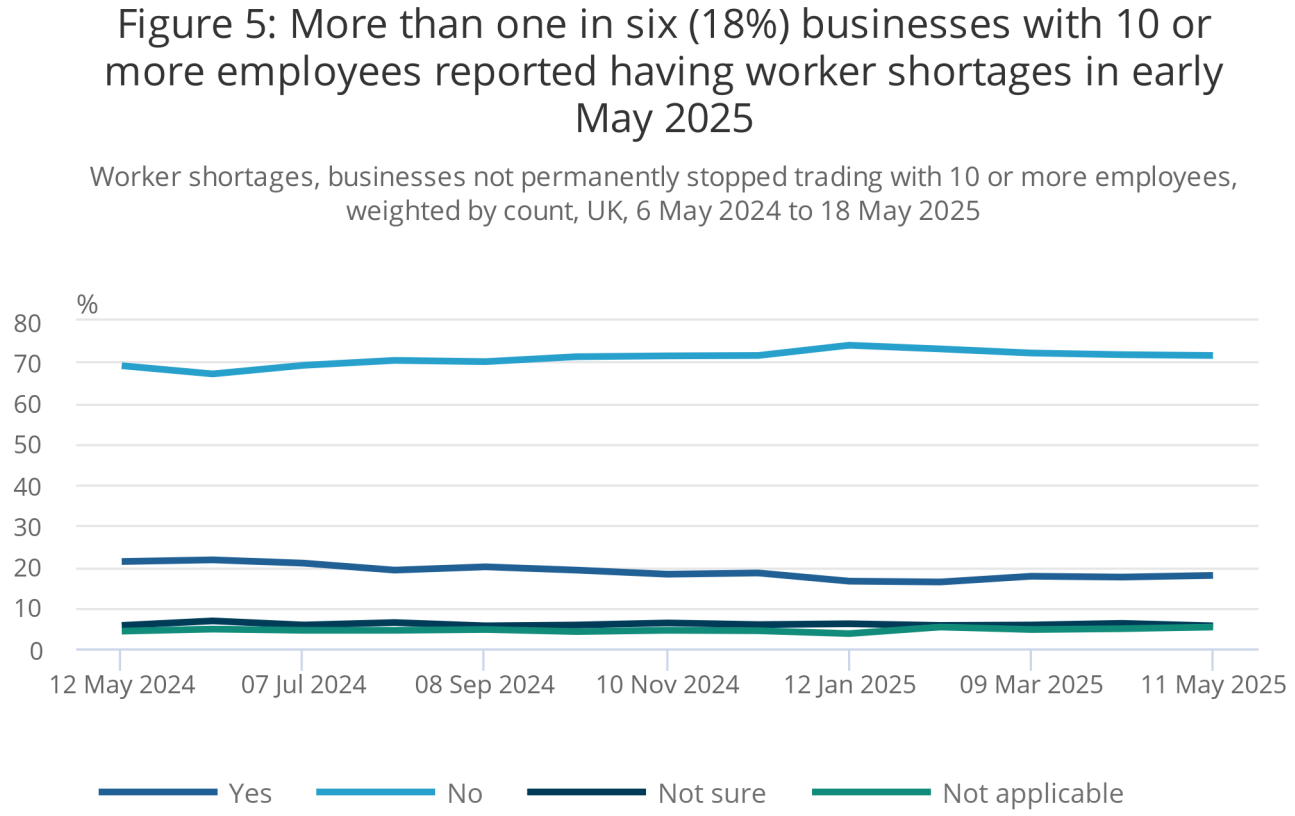
Further details on prices, including all response options broken down by industry and size band, are available in our accompanying dataset.

5 . Worker Shortages

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

Figure 5: More than one in six (18%) businesses with 10 or more employees reported having worker shortages in early May 2025

Worker shortages, businesses not permanently stopped trading with 10 or more employees, weighted by count, UK, 6 May 2024 to 18 May 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.

Of the businesses with 10 or more employees, 18% reported worker shortages in early May. This has remained broadly stable since October 2024.

The industries with the highest proportion of businesses with 10 or more employees experiencing worker shortages were:

- the transportation and storage industry (27%)
- the human health and social work activities industry (27%)
- the accommodation and food service activities industry (22%)

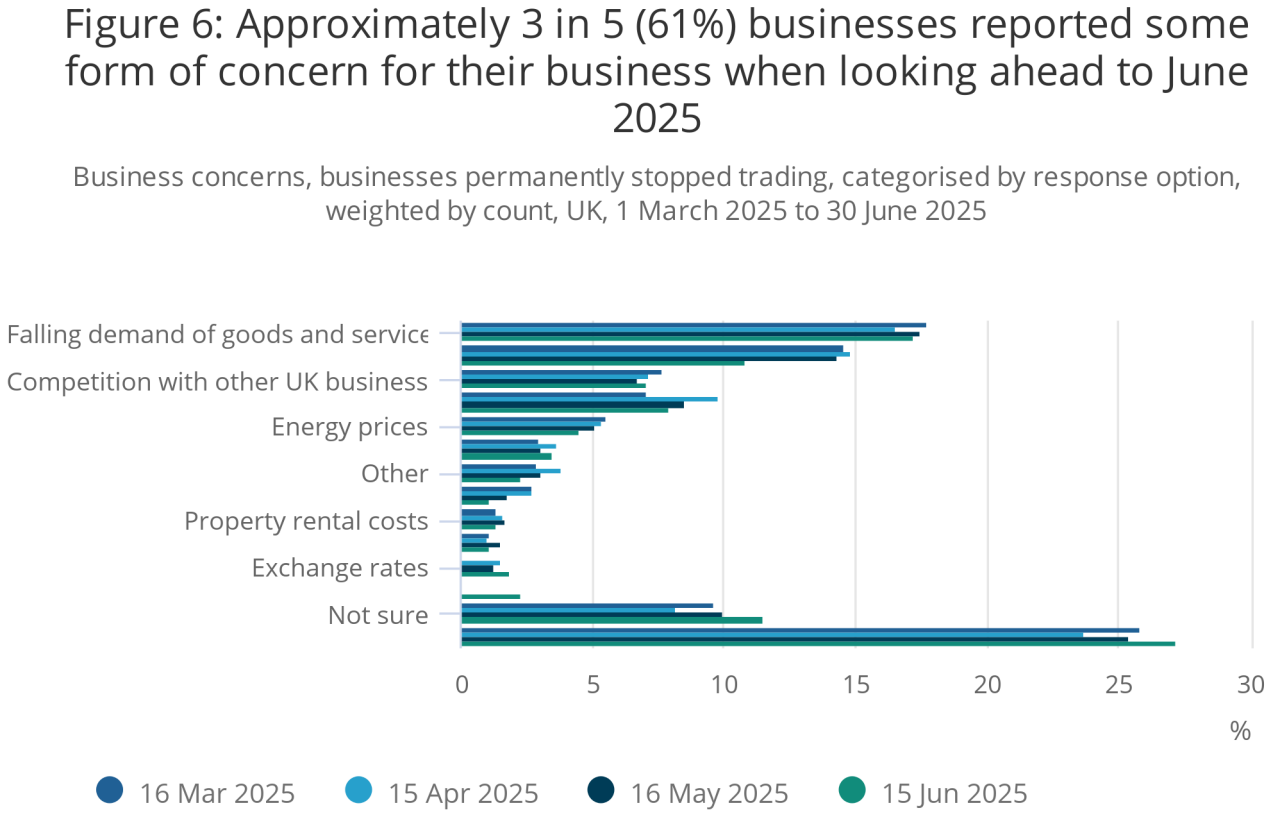
Further details on worker shortages, including all response options broken down by industry and size band, are available in our accompanying dataset.

6 . Business concerns

Businesses that had not permanently stopped trading were asked what the main concern for their business was when looking ahead to June 2025.

Figure 6: Approximately 3 in 5 (61%) businesses reported some form of concern for their business when looking ahead to June 2025

Business concerns, businesses permanently stopped trading, categorised by response option, weighted by count, UK, 1 March 2025 to 30 June 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. Businesses were asked for their main concern; this does not mean they do not have any other concerns for their business.
3. [c] represents data that have been removed for confidentiality reasons, such as percentages less than 1%, breakdowns with a count of 10 or less, and breakdowns with a micro business count between 1 or 10 (a micro business has less than 10 employees).
4. [x] represents unavailable data because of a response option not being included in this wave of the survey.

When looking ahead to June 2025, 61% of businesses reported having some form of concern for their business. This is down 3 percentage points from May 2025, and is the lowest proportion reported since November 2024.

The three main concerns reported by businesses for June 2025 were:

- falling demand of goods and services (17%), with the manufacturing industry reporting the highest proportion (28%)
- taxation (11%), with the human health and social work activities industry reporting the highest proportion (17%)
- inflation of goods and services prices (8%), with the construction industry reporting the highest proportion (16%)

Falling demand of goods and services, and inflation of goods and services, were both broadly stable with proportions reported for May 2025. Meanwhile. taxation saw a fall of 4 percentage points over the same period, and is now the lowest proportion reported since November 2024.

The percentage of businesses that reported no concerns was 27%. While broadly stable with May 2025, this is the largest proportion since December 2024.

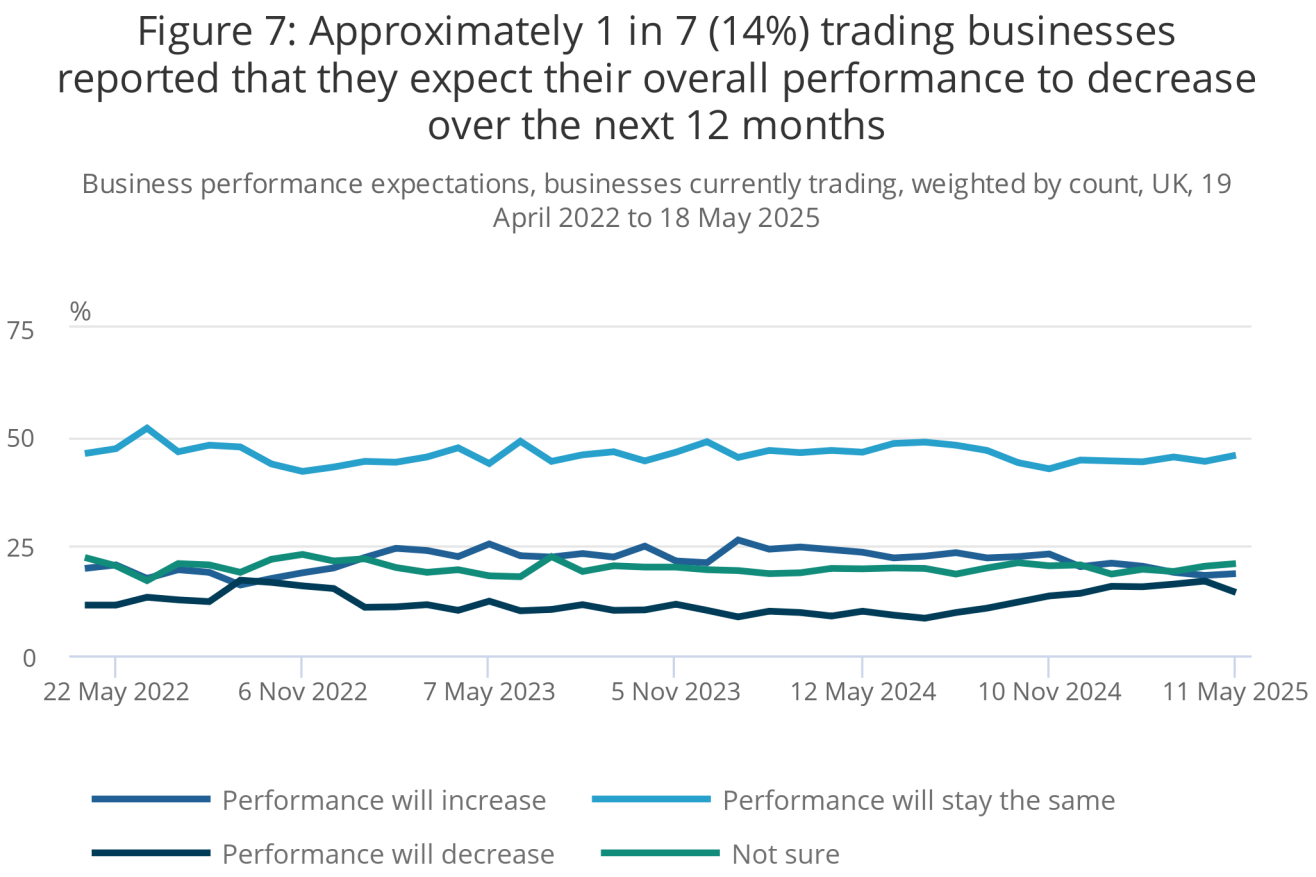
Further details on business concerns, including all response options broken down by industry and size band, are available in our accompanying dataset.

7 . 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 7: Approximately 1 in 7 (14%) trading businesses reported that 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 18 May 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 5 (19%) trading businesses reported that they expect their overall performance to increase over the next 12 months. This is broadly stable with expectations from early April 2025, but the proportion has fallen steadily by 5 percentage points since early November 2024.

The proportion expecting their performance to decrease was 14%. This is down 3 percentage points from expectations stated in early April 2025, after a steady increase of 9 percentage points between early July 2024 and early April 2025. Those expecting their performance to stay the same was 46%, which was broadly stable compared with early April 2025.

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

8 . Business Insights and Conditions Survey data

Business insights and impact on the UK economy
Dataset | Released 22 May 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 22 May 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 131 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. Previously, applications for accreditation were made to the Research Accreditation Service (RAS). This is now closed, and you should apply for accreditation using the People and Projects Service (PPS). For more information, please see our guidance on replacing RAS.

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

9 . 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.

10 . Measuring the data

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 130, 131 and 132 of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey

Wave	24 April 2025 Publication Wave 130	8 May 2025 Publication Wave 131	22 May 2025 Publication Wave 132
Sample	38,997	38,995	39,058
Response	10,266	10,330	10,243
Rate	26.3%	26.5%	26.2%

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 132 survey was live for the period 6 to 18 May 2025. For full details of the survey questions used, see our Business Insights and Conditions Survey questions: 6 to 18 May 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.

11 . Related links

Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators: 22 May 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: November 2024
Article | Released 5 November 2024
Estimates from the voluntary fortnightly business survey (BICS) on prices, financial performance, workforce and business resilience.

12 . Cite this statistical bulletin

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