

Statistical bulletin

Coronavirus and the economic impacts on the UK: 23 April 2020

The indicators and analysis presented are based on responses from the new voluntary fortnightly business survey, which captures the views of businesses on the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) on turnover, workforce prices, trade and business resilience. These data relate to the period 23 March to 5 April 2020.

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1 . Main points

- Of the 6,171 businesses responding to the Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS), 24% reported they had temporarily closed or paused trading for the period 23 March to 5 April 2020, 0.3% reported permanently ceasing trading, while 75% were continuing to trade.
- Of all those businesses responding within the arts, entertainment and recreation sector, 82% reported a temporary pause to trading.
- Two-thirds (66%) of all businesses that were continuing to trade indicated their financial performance was outside of their “normal” range, with 93% of these saying their turnover was lower than “normal”.
- Of those businesses whose turnover was outside of their “normal” range, the accommodation and food services activities sector had the highest proportion of businesses that responded their turnover was substantially lower than “normal”, at 87%.
- Of those businesses that continued to trade or had paused trading, 94% indicated that they have an interest in at least one of the government schemes on offer to them; the scheme that was declared of interest most often was the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), having been selected by 80% of responding businesses.
- Of all responding businesses continuing to trade, 60% were confident that they had sufficient financial resources available; only 6% did not feel confident they had the resources available.

2 . Current trading status of businesses

Final results from the Wave 2 Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS) show that for the period 23 March to 5 April 2020, 24% of businesses that responded had temporarily closed or paused trading while 0.3% permanently ceased trading. Around 75% reported “continuing to trade” during this period. This was based on 6,171 businesses that responded out of a sample size of 17,786.

In consideration of the relative sizes of businesses in this survey, we are using the latest known number of employees for each responding business and assigning them to one of two groups: those with fewer than 250 employees and those with 250 employees or more.

Focusing on the businesses that are either continuing to trade or temporarily stopped trading, there was little difference in terms of the size of business. Of these, 73% of businesses with fewer than 250 employees reported continuing to trade compared with 79% of businesses with 250 employees or more (Figure 1).

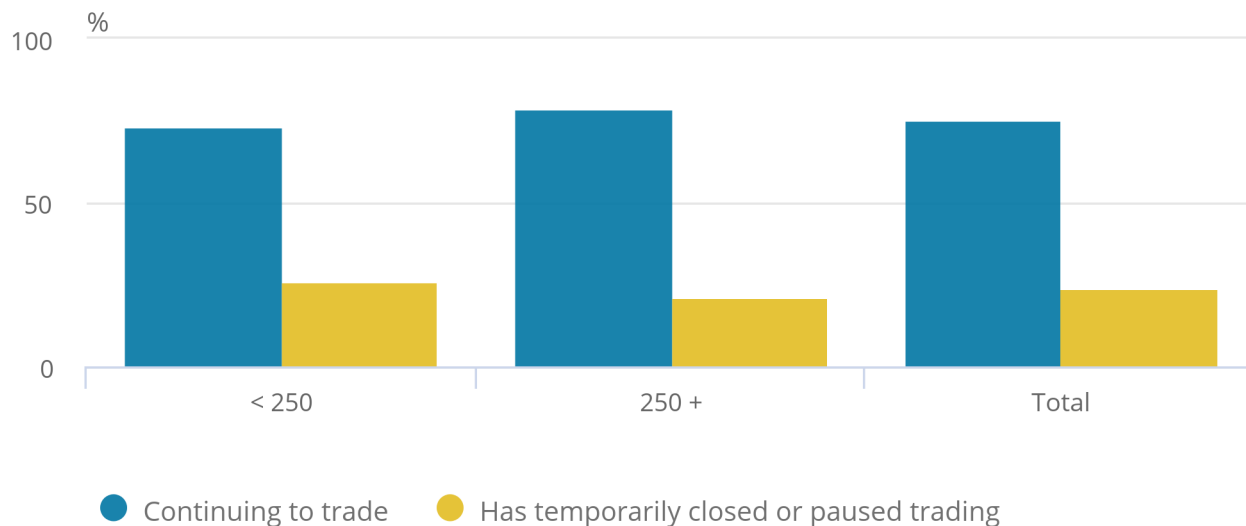
Only 21 businesses of those surveyed reported they have permanently ceased trading during the survey reference period of 23 March to 5 April 2020.

Figure 1: There was little difference in the proportion of those continuing to trade between “small” and “large” businesses

UK, 23 March to 5 April 2020

Figure 1: There was little difference in the proportion of those continuing to trade between “small” and “large” businesses

UK, 23 March to 5 April 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – Coronavirus and the economic impacts on the UK

Notes:

1. Bars will not sum to 100% as those businesses that have permanently ceased trading are not included in the graph.
2. Final results, Wave 2 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS) (n = 6,171).

The two sectors that reported the largest percentages of businesses temporarily closing or pausing trading were the arts, entertainment and recreation sector and the accommodation and food services sector, reporting 82% and 81% respectively during the period 23 March to 5 April 2020.

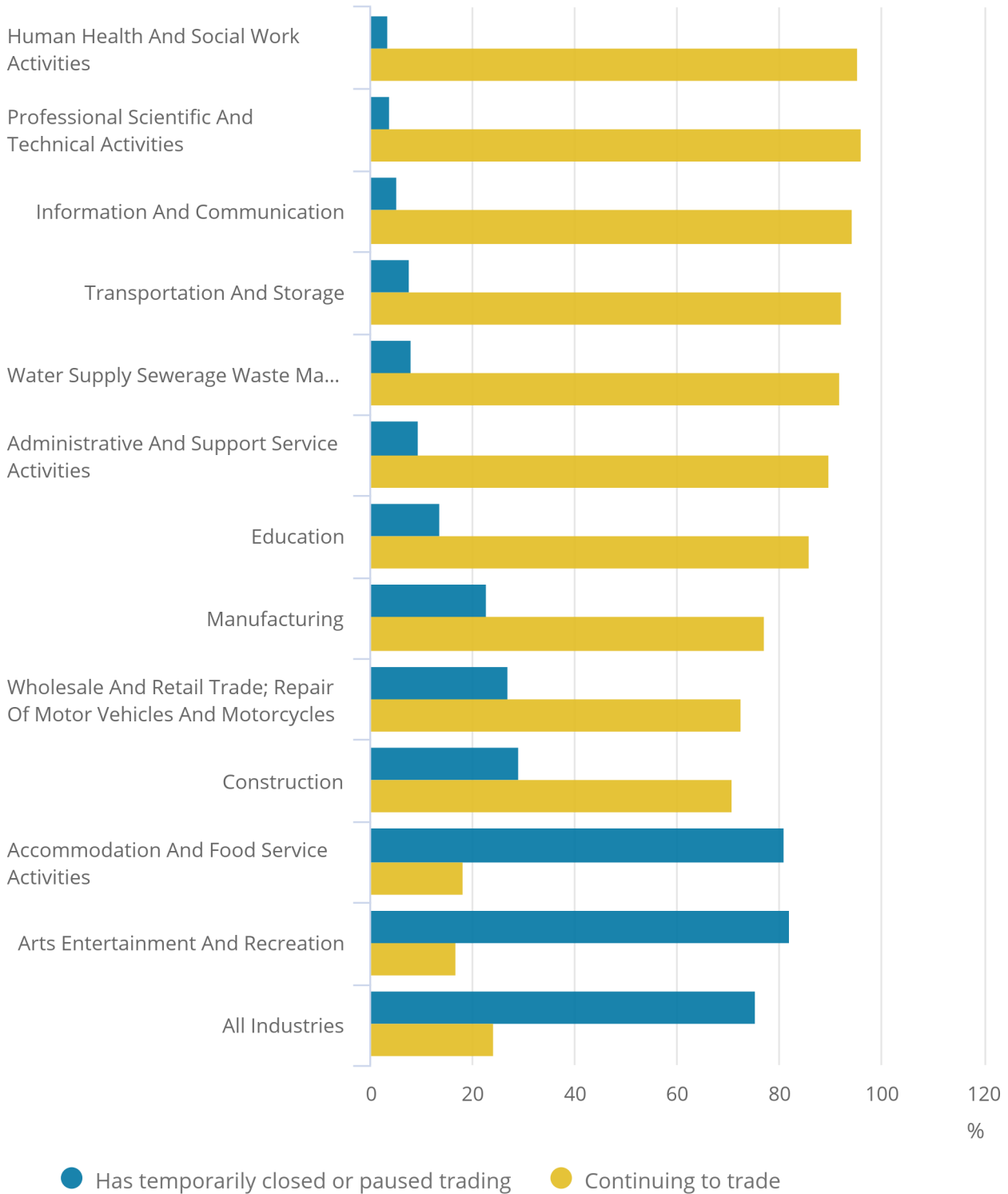
The health, transport, information, and professional, scientific and technical sectors had the largest proportion of businesses responding to state they were continuing to trade at 96%, 92%, 94% and 96% respectively.

Figure 2: The accommodation and food services sector reported the largest percentages of businesses temporarily closing or pausing trading

UK, 23 March to 9 April 2020

Figure 2: The accommodation and food services sector reported the largest percentages of businesses temporarily closing or pausing trading

UK, 23 March to 9 April 2020



Notes:

1. Bars will not sum to 100% as those businesses that have permanently ceased trading are not included in the graph.
2. Real estate services, other services, and the mining and quarrying sector have been removed because of their low response rates, but their totals are included in “all industries”.
3. Final results, Wave 2 of the Office for National Statistics’ (ONS’) Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS) (n = 6,171).

3 . Impact of turnover for businesses’ financial performance

Of the businesses that responded they were continuing to trade (4,650 businesses), two-thirds of these (66%) reported that their financial performance was outside of “normal” expectations. These businesses (3,056) were then asked if their turnover was outside of “normal” expectations, with 93% reporting that their turnover was outside of its “normal” range.

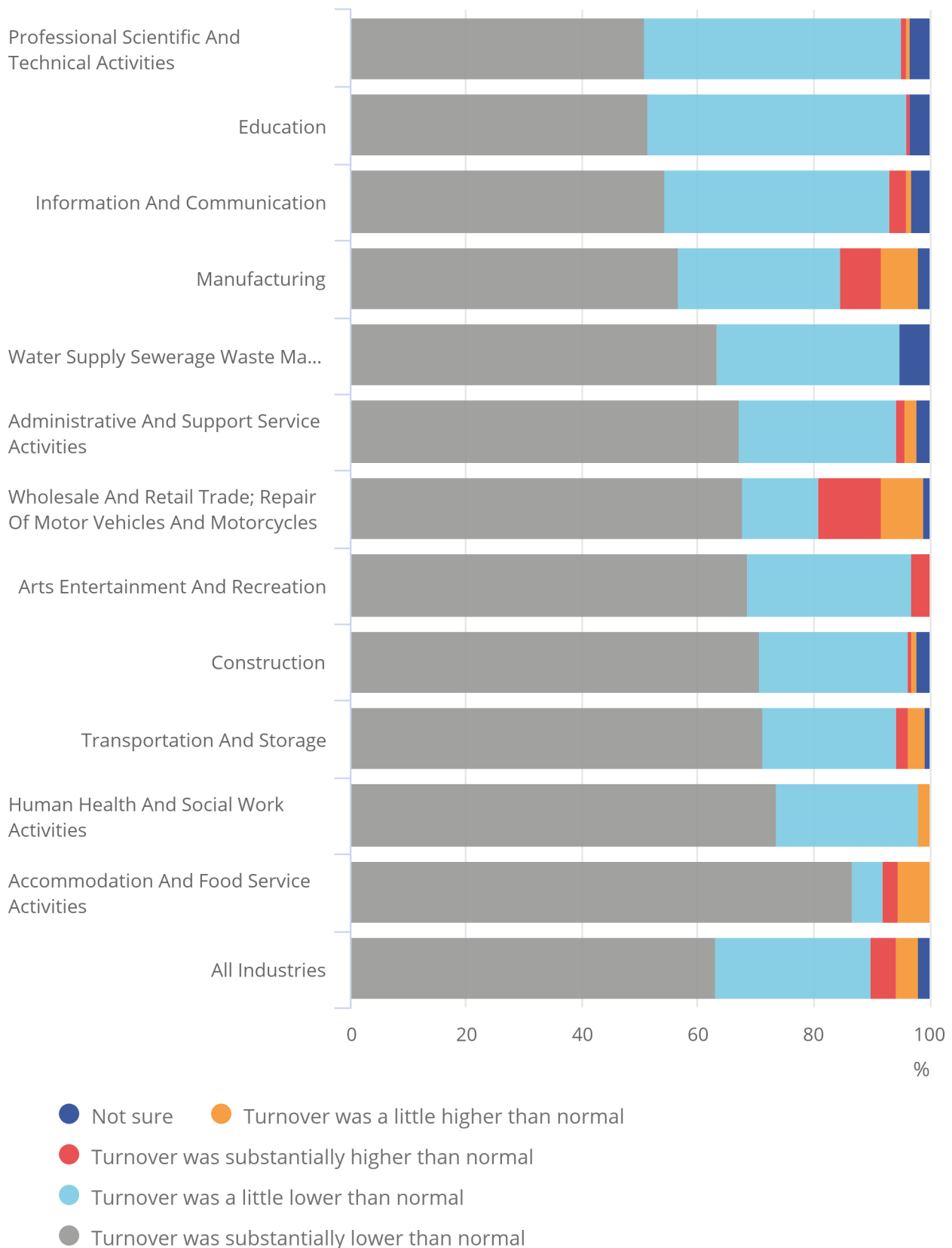
Of those businesses (2,849) that reported that their turnover was outside of its “normal” range, and they were continuing to trade, 63% reported that their turnover was substantially lower than “normal” and 4% reported that their turnover was substantially higher than “normal”.

Figure 3: 63% of businesses continuing to trade and reporting turnover outside of normal range reported turnover was "substantially lower than normal"

UK, 23 March to 9 April 2020

Figure 3: 63% of businesses continuing to trade and reporting turnover outside of normal range reported turnover was “substantially lower than normal”

UK, 23 March to 9 April 2020



Notes:

1. Real estate services, other services, and the mining and quarrying sector have been removed because of their low response rates, but their totals are included in “all industries”.
2. Final results, Wave 2 of the Office for National Statistics’ (ONS’) Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS) (n = 2,849).

There was little difference in the proportions when splitting by the size of the business, with 65% of businesses with fewer than 250 employees indicating their turnover was significantly lower than “normal” compared with 60% of businesses with 250 employees or more.

Of those businesses that were continuing to trade, and responded that their turnover was outside of its “normal” range (n = 2,849), the main sectors to have reported that their turnover was substantially lower than normal, relative to the sample within each industry, were:

- accommodation and food services activities (87%)
- human health and social work activities (74%)
- transportation and storage (71%)

The main sectors to have reported that their turnover was substantially higher than normal were wholesale and retail trade and manufacturing, at 11% and 7% respectively.

4 . Workforce

Businesses that are still trading or paused trading will have differing impacts on their employees, whether furloughing staff, working as normal or other scenarios. Because of the complexities of this, the data in this release primarily focus on number or proportions of businesses, which will not fully capture the impact on the workforce.

[Further information on furloughing of staff](#) can be found in a separate analytical article from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) released on 23 April 2020.

This section focuses on the measures being taken by those businesses continuing to trade to manage their current workforce as a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19).

Of those businesses that indicated they were continuing to trade, the survey asked businesses what measures were being taken to manage their current workforce.

In terms of the measures taken to manage the workforce as a result of COVID-19, of businesses continuing to trade that have responded so far:

- 40% said they were reducing staff levels in the short term in the period 23 March to 5 April 2020
- 29% reported having to decrease working hours
- 7% reported that they were recruiting staff in the short term

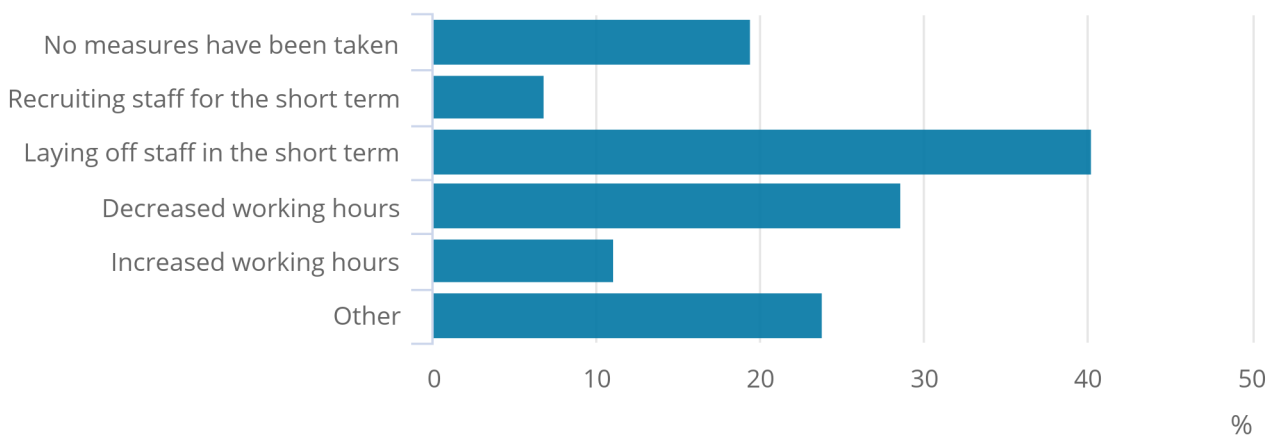
This differs by industry with businesses within human health and social work activities having the highest percentage of businesses indicating they were recruiting in the short term, at 27%. Businesses within the construction industry had one of the highest proportions of reducing staffing levels in the short term, at 64%.

Figure 4: For responding businesses that are continuing to trade, 40% said they were reducing staff levels in the short term

UK, 23 March to 5 April 2020

Figure 4: For responding businesses that are continuing to trade, 40% said they were reducing staff levels in the short term

UK, 23 March to 5 April 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – Coronavirus and the economic impacts on the UK

Notes:

1. "Other" includes all other effects not defined in the question.
2. The percentages in this chart will not sum to 100% as businesses were able to select multiple options.
3. Final results, Wave 2 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS) that are continuing to trade (n = 4,650).

Table 1: Measures taken to manage workforce as a result of COVID-19
 Percentage of businesses continuing trading, industry breakdown, UK, 23 March to 5 April 2020

Industry	Increased working hours	Decreased working hours	Laying off staff in the short term	Recruiting staff for the short term	Other	No measures have been taken
Manufacturing	16.2%	28.7%	32.6%	10.5%	24.9%	18.5%
Water Supply, Sewerage, Waste Management And Remediation Activities	11.6%	31.9%	52.2%	7.2%	14.5%	11.6%
Construction	5.1%	34.4%	63.6%	1.0%	15.9%	12.8%
Wholesale And Retail Trade; Repair Of Motor Vehicles And Motorcycles	12.1%	29.5%	45.0%	10.7%	22.7%	14.6%
Accommodation And Food Service Activities	12.6%	50.5%	42.1%	8.4%	20.0%	9.5%
Transportation And Storage	8.4%	37.3%	54.8%	4.9%	19.8%	10.3%
Information And Communication	4.8%	14.4%	23.4%	1.7%	28.2%	40.7%
Professional, Scientific And Technical Activities	4.0%	20.5%	36.8%	1.2%	28.4%	26.1%
Administrative And Support Service Activities	14.6%	38.9%	54.9%	8.1%	17.7%	12.1%
Education	9.3%	23.7%	20.1%	2.5%	36.9%	28.7%
Human Health And Social Work Activities	33.9%	15.6%	22.0%	26.6%	21.1%	16.5%
Arts, Entertainment And Recreation	4.4%	37.8%	40.0%	2.2%	22.2%	17.8%
All Industries	11.1%	28.6%	40.3%	6.9%	23.8%	19.5%

Source: Office for National Statistics – Coronavirus and the economic impacts on the UK

Notes

1. Real estate services, other services, and the mining and quarrying sector have been removed because of their low response rates, but their totals are included in “all industries”. [Back to table](#)
2. The percentages in this chart will not sum to 100% as businesses were able to select multiple options. [Back to table](#)
3. Final results, Wave 2 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS) that are continuing to trade (n = 4,650). [Back to table](#)

5 . Interest in the government schemes on offer to businesses

Of all businesses that responded to the survey that they were currently trading or have paused trading (6,150 businesses), 94% indicated that they have an interest in at least one of the government schemes on offer to them. The most popular schemes of interest to businesses are the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), with 4 in 5 businesses (81%) having an interest in this, and the Deferral of Value Added Tax (VAT) payments, with 7 in 10 businesses (68%) interested in this scheme. This varied dependent on whether the business had paused trading or continued to trade (Table 2).

Table 2: Government schemes of interest to businesses, overall UK, 23 March to 5 April 2020

Sample	Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme	Business rates holiday	Deferring VAT payments	The HMRC Time To Pay scheme	Small business grant or loan schemes	Accredited finance agreements	Not sure	None of the above
Continuing to trade	75.9%	34.2%	64.7%	32.2%	11.2%	18.3%	10.7%	7.6%
Has temporarily closed or paused trading	95.5%	67.9%	79.4%	53.7%	26.3%	31.2%	6.3%	0.9%
All Business	80.7%	42.4%	68.3%	37.4%	14.9%	21.4%	9.7%	6.0%

Source: Office for National Statistics – Coronavirus and the economic impacts on the UK

Notes

1. The percentages in this chart will not sum to 100% as businesses were able to select multiple options. [Back to table](#)
2. Final results, Wave 2 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS) that are continuing to trade (n = 6,150). [Back to table](#)

Business with fewer than 250 employees and 250 employees or more have a similar pattern in terms of interest in government schemes. Of business with fewer than 250 employees, 95% were interested in at least one of the government schemes on offer compared with 93% of those business with 250 employees or more. However, the proportions of the various schemes on offer differ by the type of industry the business is in (Table 3).

Table 3: Government schemes of interest to businesses, industry breakdown
UK, 23 March to 5 April 2020

Industry	Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme	Business rates holiday	Deferring VAT payments	The HMRC Time To Pay scheme	Small business grant or loan schemes	Accredited finance agreements	Not sure	None of the above
Manufacturing	75.6%	30.1%	55.5%	31.6%	8.8%	19.6%	11.6%	8.5%
Water Supply, Sewerage, Waste Management And Remediation Activities	76.0%	16.0%	72.0%	33.3%	1.3%	20.0%	12.0%	4.0%
Construction	96.0%	30.2%	70.5%	42.2%	10.5%	25.8%	5.8%	0.4%
Wholesale And Retail Trade; Repair Of Motor Vehicles And Motorcycles	82.0%	56.3%	70.5%	36.3%	17.2%	19.1%	10.3%	4.1%
Accommodation And Food Service Activities	96.3%	87.4%	91.8%	62.1%	28.4%	34.2%	5.8%	1.0%
Transportation And Storage	85.6%	37.5%	68.8%	39.3%	10.2%	20.4%	8.1%	6.0%
Information And Communication	55.8%	26.0%	59.0%	27.1%	8.6%	11.3%	18.0%	12.3%
Professional, Scientific And Technical Activities	78.4%	32.6%	75.7%	35.1%	6.4%	21.2%	9.1%	5.8%
Administrative And Support Service Activities	85.1%	36.6%	76.4%	42.2%	26.1%	23.7%	7.1%	4.5%
Education	71.6%	24.7%	42.9%	19.1%	5.6%	14.2%	14.5%	10.8%
Human Health And Social Work Activities	57.5%	28.3%	28.3%	23.9%	12.4%	10.6%	13.3%	23.9%
Arts, Entertainment And Recreation	95.9%	70.4%	80.9%	48.7%	27.7%	31.8%	3.7%	0.7%
All Industries	80.7%	42.4%	68.3%	37.4%	14.9%	21.4%	9.7%	6.0%

Notes

1. Real estate services, other services, and the mining and quarrying sector have been removed because of their low response rates, but their totals are included in “all industries”. [Back to table](#)
2. The percentages in this chart will not sum to 100% as businesses were able to select multiple options. [Back to table](#)
3. Final results, Wave 2 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS) that are continuing to trade (n = 6,150). [Back to table](#)

The construction industry, accommodation and food service activities, and arts, entertainment and recreation sector have the highest proportion of businesses interested in the CJRS, with 96% of all businesses that responded indicating this. This is likely to be expected as these sectors had the largest proportion of businesses indicating they were temporarily ceasing to trade.

However, just over half of businesses within the information and communication (56%) and human health and social work activities (58%) industries indicated they were interested in this scheme.

6 . Business confidence

Excluding the businesses that had permanently ceased trading, the majority of businesses that responded felt confident they had the financial resources available to continue operating throughout the coronavirus (COVID-19) period, with 6 out of 10 businesses indicating this. Only 6% of all businesses responding did not feel confident, with the remainder unsure at the time of their response.

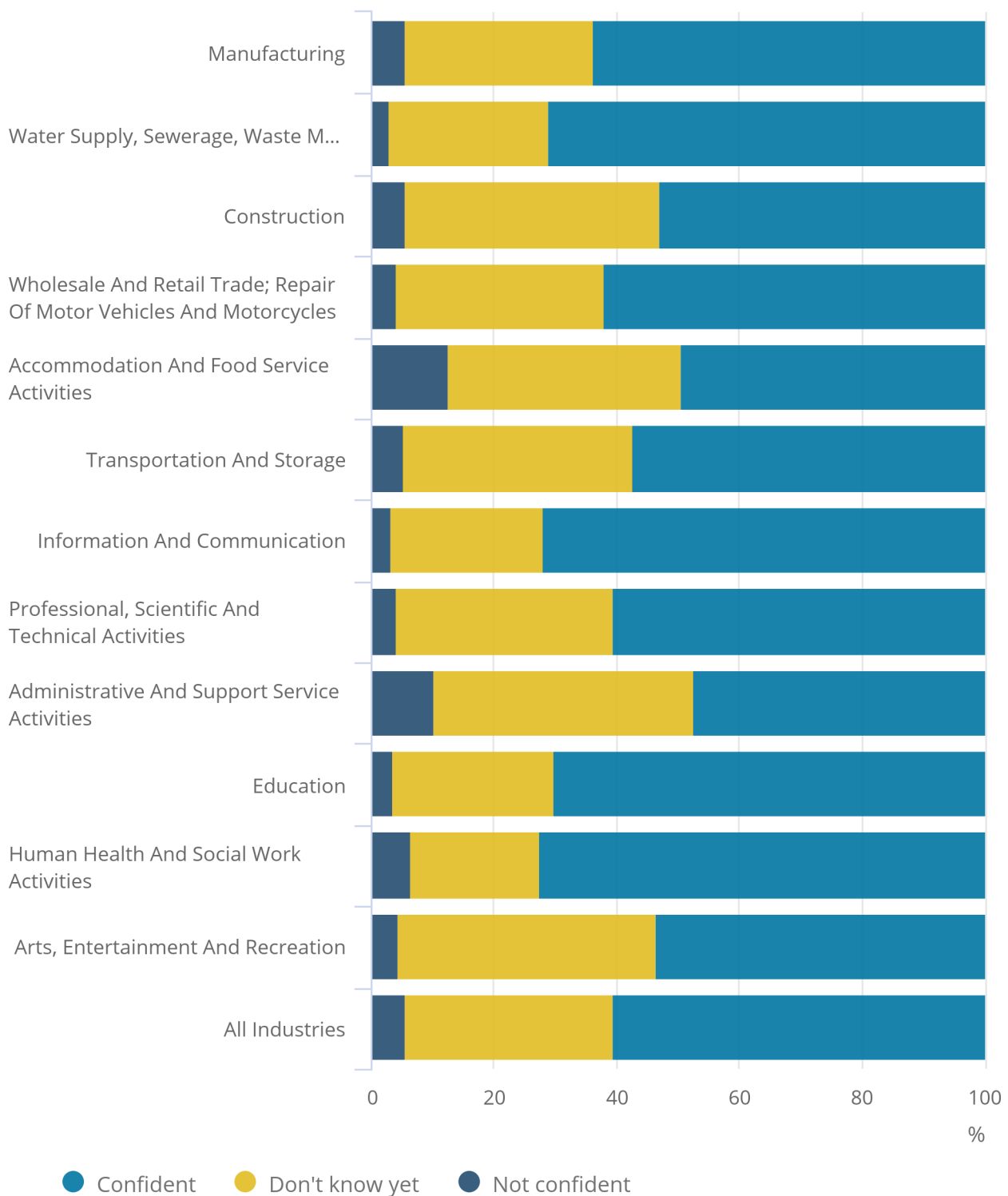
This differed by size of business and the activity of the business. Of businesses with 250 employees or more, 66% responded as being confident, compared with 57% of businesses with fewer than 250 employees.

Figure 5: For responding businesses that are continuing to trade, an average of 60% felt confident they had the financial resources available to continue operating throughout COVID-19

UK, 23 March to 5 April 2020

Figure 5: For responding businesses that are continuing to trade, an average of 60% felt confident they had the financial resources available to continue operating throughout COVID-19

UK, 23 March to 5 April 2020



Notes:

1. Final results, Wave 2 of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS) that are continuing to trade (n = 4,650).
2. Real estate services, other services, and the mining and quarrying sector have been removed because of their low response rates, but their totals are included in "all industries".

In terms of how confident businesses are of having the financial resources to continue operating throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, of businesses continuing to trade that have responded:

- 60% said they were confident they would have the financial resources to continue operating throughout the COVID-19 pandemic
- 6% reported they were not confident
- information and communication had the highest proportion of businesses responding they were confident, at 72%

7 . Coronavirus and the economic impacts on the UK data

[Business Impact of Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Survey \(BICS\)](#)

Dataset | Released 23 April 2020

Initial results from the new BICS. This qualitative fortnightly survey covers business turnover, workforce, prices and trade. These data are not [official statistics](#) but have been developed to deliver timely indicators to help understand the impact of COVID-19 in a timely way.

This dataset includes additional information collected as part of the survey including details on prices and imports and exports, which are not included within the bulletin.

8 . Measuring the data

The Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS) is voluntary and may only reflect the characteristics of those that responded; the results are [experimental](#).

Table 4: Response rate of the Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey for each wave

	9 April 2020 Publication	23 April 2020 Publication
Wave	Wave 1	Wave 2
Sample	17786	17786
Return	4598	6171
Rate	25.90%	34.70%

Source: Office for National Statistics – Coronavirus and the economic impacts on the UK

The business indicators are based on responses from the voluntary fortnightly BICS, which captures the views of businesses on impact on turnover, workforce prices, trade and business resilience. Wave 2 data relate to the period 23 March to 5 April 2020. The survey questions are available in [Business Impact of Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Survey questions: 23 March 2020 to 5 April 2020](#).

The different experiences of businesses during COVID-19

Of 17,786 businesses surveyed in Wave 2, 6,171 (35%) responded. The Wave 2 survey was live for the period 6 April to 19 April 2020, and businesses were asked about their experience for the two-week survey reference period 23 March to 5 April 2020. Dependent on responses to certain questions, businesses are asked different questions. The various response populations included within this release are indicated in Table 5.

Table 5: Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey sample sizes, broken down by main trading and turnover status

Sample	All Industries
Total	6,171
Continuing to trade	4,650
Continuing to trade and financial performance outside of normal expectations	3,056
Continuing to Trade and turnover outside normal range	2,849

Source: Office for National Statistics – Coronavirus and the economic impacts on the UK

Sample size and weighting

Estimates from BICS are currently unweighted and should be treated with caution when used to evaluate the impact of COVID-19 across the UK economy. Each business was assigned the same weight regardless of turnover, size or industry, and the data in the latest period are preliminary.

Caution should be used when evaluating the impact of measures introduced on 20 March 2020 as the current survey asks businesses for responses for the entire two-week time period.

Coverage

The approach for the sample design has been to use three standard Office for National Statistics (ONS) surveys: the Monthly Business Survey (MBS), Retail Sales Index (RSI) and construction as a sampling frame. Each of these survey samples are drawn from the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR), which covers businesses in all parts of the economy, except for those that are not registered for Value Added Tax (VAT) or Pay As You Earn (PAYE), which includes very small businesses, the self-employed, those without employees and those with low turnover. Some non-profit-making organisations are also not registered on the IDBR.

The MBS covers UK for production and only Great Britain for services. RSI and construction are Great Britain focused. Therefore, BICS will cover the UK for production-based industries but Great Britain 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 sectors excluded from the survey are:

- agriculture
- public administration and defence
- public provision of education and health
- finance and insurance

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. Other than for a minority of larger business or businesses that have a more complex structure, the reporting unit is the same as the enterprise.

Where more than one type of economic activity is carried out by a local unit or enterprise, its principal activity is the activity in which most of the people are employed, and it does not necessarily account for 50% or more of the total employment of the unit. There are detailed rules for determining Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) for multiple-activity economic units.

Sample

All businesses that employ more than 250 people and are included within the three monthly surveys (the MBS, RSI and construction) are included in the BICS sample, with a random sample of 1% for those that employ fewer than 250 people.

This gives a total of 17,786 businesses, with a split of 7,222 business with more than 250 employees and other size bands amounting to 10,514.

As the sample is selected fortnightly, the same businesses will be selected for at least two waves depending on how many COVID-19 survey selections there are between the selection of these feeder surveys. Because of the randomly selected element, there will be differences in this part of the sample once the feeder surveys have been redrawn.

Further information on the sample size by industry and by size of business can be found in the [associated dataset release](#).

9 . Strengths and limitations

Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey

The Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS) is voluntary and responses are qualitative, which should be treated with caution as results reflect the characteristics of those who responded and not necessarily the wider business population.

These data should not be used in place of [official statistics](#). The survey was designed to give an indication of the impact of COVID-19 on businesses and a timelier estimate than other surveys.

The data from Wave 2 of the new fortnightly BICS cover the period 23 March to 5 April 2020, across all business sectors covered by the Monthly Business Survey (MBS) (including the Retail Sales Index (RSI) and construction).

We do not recommend comparing the latest data from BICS and the last period of Wave 1 (9 March to 22 March 2020); this is because of changes in the questionnaire and additional questions. Further analysis is being undertaken to allow this for future publications.

Publication of COVID-19-related data

We will be publishing this bulletin on a fortnightly basis during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is to ensure we are meeting user needs for more timely data. We will be adding new data and [experimental](#) indicators as and when data become available each week.

High-level provisional estimates will be included as part of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') [faster indicators release](#) in the alternative weeks.

10 . Related links

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) latest data and analysis](#)

Web page | Updated as and when data become available

Latest data and analysis on COVID-19 in the UK and its effect on the economy and society.

[Business Impact of Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Survey \(BICS\) questions: 23 March 2020 to 5 April 2020](#)

Article | Released 16 April 2020

Questions from the BICS for the period 23 March to 5 April 2020 relating to the Coronavirus, the UK economy and society, faster indicators weekly bulletin.

[Coronavirus, the UK economy and society, faster indicators: 23 April 2020](#)

Bulletin | Released 23 April 2020

New data and experimental indicators on the UK economy and society, including information related to COVID-19. Indicators are constructed from rapid response surveys, novel data sources and experimental methods.

[Furloughing of workers across UK businesses: 23 March 2020 to 5 April 2020](#)

Article | Released on 23 April 2020

Analysis of Wave 2 of the Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS) to establish the extent to which workers were furloughed across industries. This complements the analysis of BICS in the UK.

[Rapid Review of Coronavirus, the UK economy and society, faster indicators](#)

Webpage | Released 9 April 2020

Letter from Ed Humpherson, the Director General for Regulation at the UK Statistics Authority, endorsing the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') new experimental faster indicators.

[Deaths registered weekly in England and Wales, provisional: week ending 10 April 2020](#)

Bulletin | Released 21 April 2020

Provisional counts of the number of deaths registered in England and Wales, including deaths involving COVID-19, by age, sex and region, in the latest weeks for which data are available.