

Statistical bulletin

E-commerce and ICT activity, UK: 2014

Use of information and communication technology (ICT) and the value of e-commerce activity by UK businesses.



Contact:
Cecil Prescott
ecommerce@ons.gsi.gov.uk
+44 (0)1633 456767

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1 . Main points

- In 2014, e-commerce sales by businesses with 10 or more employees in the UK non-financial sector, were £573 billion, representing 20.1% of business turnover. This was up from £561 billion (19.8% of business turnover) in 2013. These estimates are in current prices
- Sales made by Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) of £374 billion contributed 65% of the value of total e-commerce sales in 2014 for businesses with 10 or more employees, with the remaining £199 billion (35%) being website sales
- While 19.5% of businesses with 10 or more employees generated website sales, 6.3% generated EDI sales in 2014
- In 2014, 95.5% of businesses with 10 or more employees had fixed broadband internet access and 80.8% had a website
- New coverage for micro-enterprises (businesses with less than 10 employees) has been introduced for 2014, and these estimates show that e-commerce sales by this business sizeband were £19.5 billion. This represented 4.1% of business turnover of micro-enterprises. Their e-commerce sales consisted of £17.5 billion of website sales and £2.0 billion of EDI sales
- In 2014, 9.6% of micro-enterprises generated website sales, while only 0.9% generated EDI sales

2 . Overview

The [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development \(OECD\)](#) definition of e-commerce is used in this statistical bulletin. An e-commerce transaction is defined as “the sale or purchase of goods or services, conducted over computer networks by methods specifically designed for the purpose of receiving or placing of orders”. It is important to note, under this definition, that “the goods or services are ordered by those methods, but the payment and the ultimate delivery of the goods or services do not have to be conducted online”.

These estimates are sourced primarily from the E-commerce Survey of UK Businesses, and supplemented with information from the [Annual Business Survey \(ABS\)](#). The 2014 E-commerce Survey of UK Businesses selected nearly 11,000 UK businesses, in the manufacturing, production, construction, distribution and parts of the service sectors of the economy. These statistics are presented on a current price basis, which reports prices as they were at the time of measurement and not adjusted for inflation.

This release will mainly focus on businesses with 10 or more employees, broken down by the following sizebands: 10 to 49, 50 to 249, 250 to 999 and 1,000 or more. This release also contains new information on micro-enterprises (businesses with fewer than 10 employees) for the first time since 2004 (Background note 1 has more information).

Unless otherwise stated, data for 2014 in this release and comparisons with previous years are based on businesses with 10 or more employees (Background note 1 has more information).

Furthermore, approximately 40% of the survey questions change each year. This is to enable the survey to cover changes and developments in the use of ICT and e-commerce. Therefore the availability of time series varies according to how long a particular question has been included in the survey.

E-commerce estimates prior to 2008 are not directly comparable to recent years – due to changes to the measurement of e-commerce (Background note 4 has more information). Therefore, the time series for e-commerce estimates in this release start at 2008. The revisions policy for this release is that estimates in the previous two years are subject to revision.

3 . Your views matter

We are constantly aiming to improve this release and its associated commentary. We would welcome any feedback you might have and would be particularly interested in knowing how you make use of these data to inform your work. Please contact us via email: ecommerce@ons.gsi.gov.uk or telephone Cecil Prescott on +44 (0) 1633 456767.

4 . E-commerce sales

Total e-commerce sales comprise of sales received over a website and sales received over EDI. These 2 components are quite different types of activity, but both are considered as e-commerce due to their use of electronic communication for transactions:

- website sales are sales over a website or “app” irrespective of the payment method
- EDI is the computer-to-computer exchange of data and documents in a standard electronic format; EDI is a central part of e-commerce because it enables businesses to exchange information electronically much faster, more cheaply and more accurately than is possible using other methods

In 2014, the value of e-commerce sales by businesses was £573 billion (based on businesses with 10 or more employees). This was an increase, in current prices, of £239 billion since the 2008 estimate of £335 billion (as shown in Figure 1). The total e-commerce sales of £573 billion represented 20.1% of business turnover, compared with 19.8% in 2013 and 13.7% in 2008. This demonstrates the increasing importance of e-commerce in the economy.

The UK’s largest businesses (1,000 or more employees) continued to dominate e-commerce sales. They represent just 0.7% of the number of businesses with 10 or more employees but accounted for 48% of e-commerce sales in 2014.

EDI sales of £374 billion accounted for 65% of the value of total e-commerce sales in 2014, with the remaining £199 billion (35%) being website sales. The proportion of businesses making e-commerce sales was 22.9% in 2014, an increase from 17.1% in 2009 (the earliest year when comparable records are available). In 2014, more businesses made website sales (19.5%) compared with EDI sales (6.3%), although the value of EDI sales is much greater than website sales.

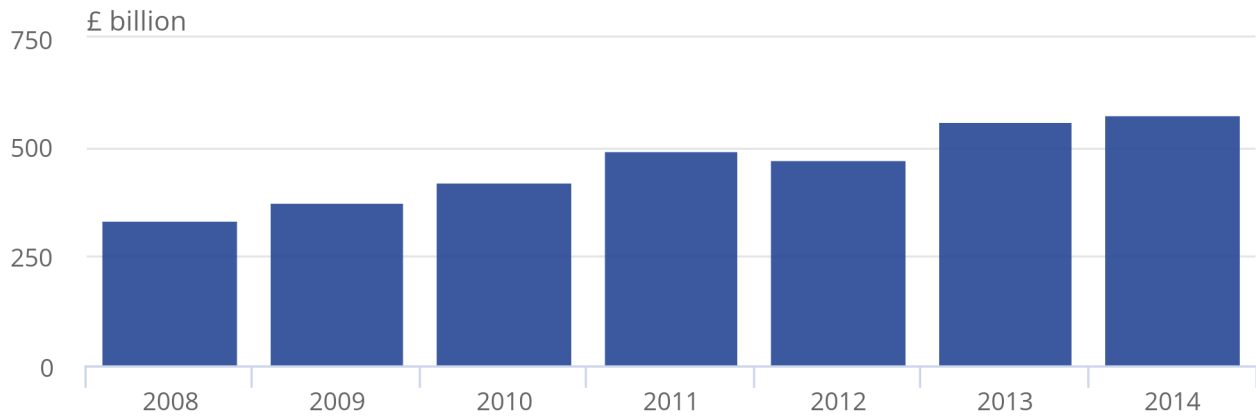
While 22.9% of businesses generated e-commerce sales, 50.6% of businesses made e-commerce purchases in 2014. Businesses have found it difficult to provide information on the value of their e-commerce purchases in the past therefore values of purchases are no longer measured in this release.

Figure 1: UK e-commerce sales

2008 to 2014 (excluding micro-enterprises)

Figure 1: UK e-commerce sales

2008 to 2014 (excluding micro-enterprises)



Source: Office for National Statistics

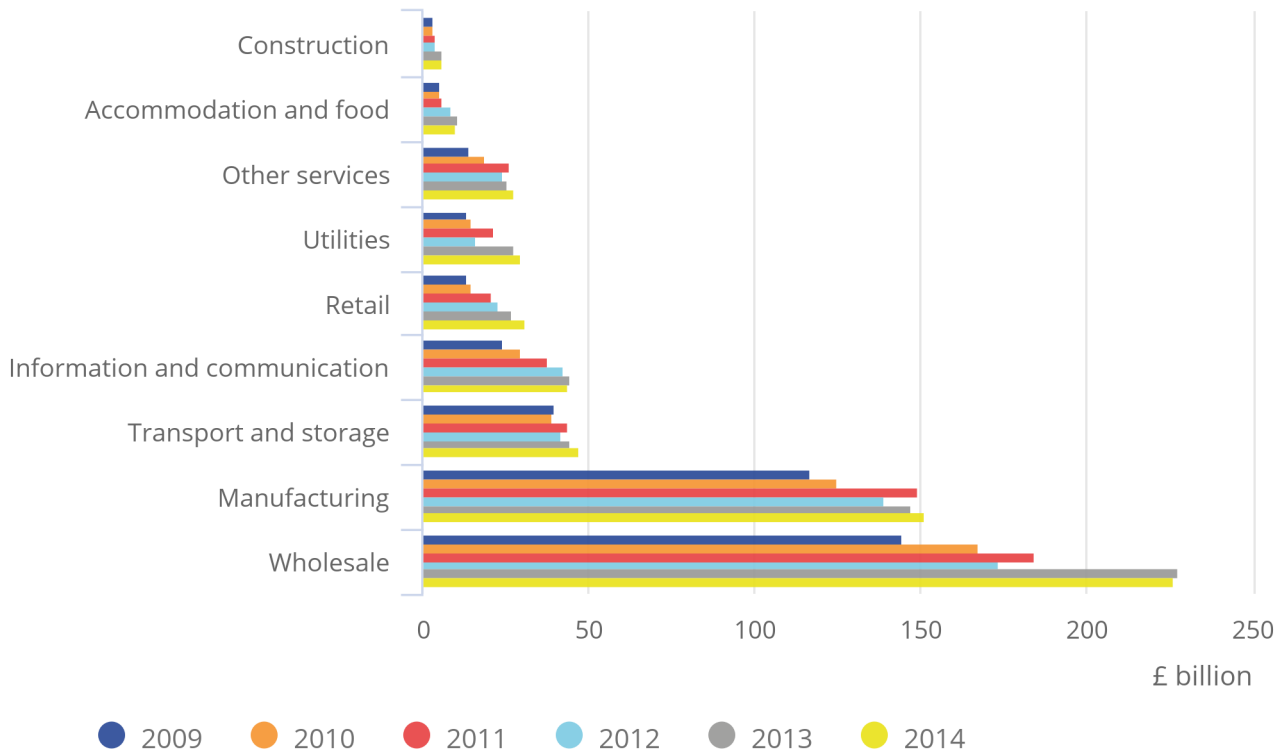
5 . E-commerce sales by industry sector

The wholesale and manufacturing sectors reported the highest values of e-commerce sales in 2014, of £227 billion and £152 billion respectively. These values represented 40% and 26% of e-commerce sales respectively.

The retail sector reported the highest percentage increase in total e-commerce sales of businesses in 2014, an increase of 14% from £27 billion in 2013 to £31 billion in 2014. This sector was still relatively small, making up only 5.4% of the value of e-commerce sales in 2014 (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Value of UK e-commerce sales, by industry sector, 2009 to 2014 (excluding micro-enterprises)

Figure 2: Value of UK e-commerce sales, by industry sector, 2009 to 2014 (excluding micro-enterprises)



Source: Office for National Statistics

6 . Website sales

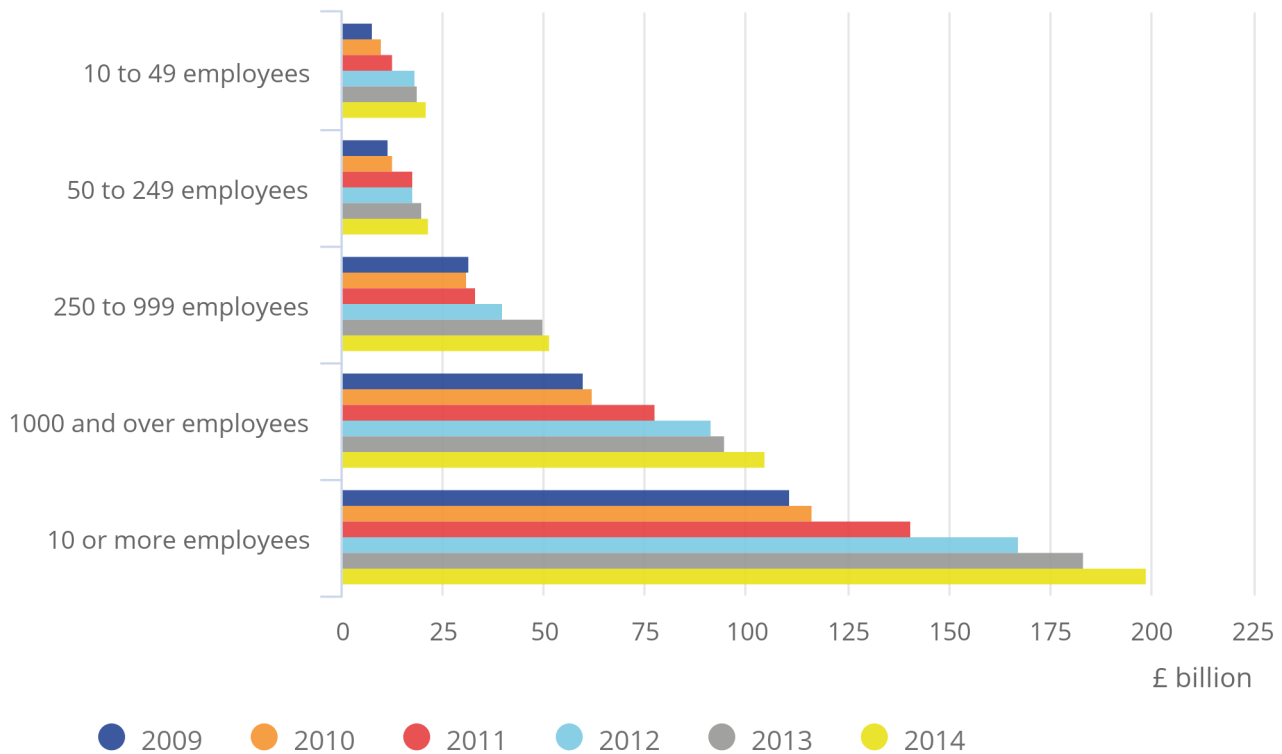
Sales over a website have grown steadily in recent years, both in terms of the proportion of businesses using websites for sales, and the value of website sales. In 2014, 19.5% of businesses sold over a website, up from 14.0% in 2009. In terms of sales value, website sales reached £199 billion in 2014, up from £111 billion in 2009, or an 80% increase over the period (Figure 3).

In 2014, the value of website sales as a proportion of turnover was 7.0%, up from 6.5% in 2013 and 4.9% in 2009.

In 2014, 19.4% of UK businesses received orders over a website from customers in the UK, 8.6% from customers in other EU countries and 6.9% from customers from the rest of the world.

Figure 3: Value of UK e-commerce sales over a website, by size of business, 2009 to 2014 (excluding micro-enterprises)

Figure 3: Value of UK e-commerce sales over a website, by size of business, 2009 to 2014 (excluding micro-enterprises)



Source: Office for National Statistics

The value of sales to private customers in 2014 was £109 billion. The largest businesses (1,000 or more employees) made the highest sales to private customers at £72 billion in 2014. The value of sales to businesses or public authorities was £90 billion. Businesses with 250 to 999 employees made the highest sales to businesses or public authorities of £37 billion.

7 . Website sales by industry sector

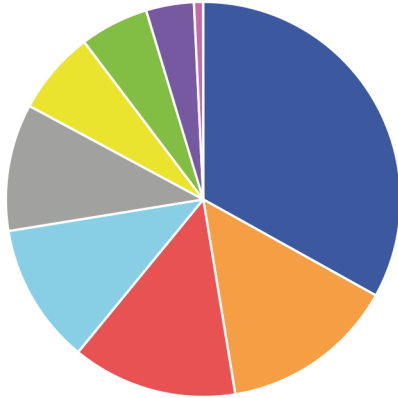
Businesses in the wholesale sector generated the highest value of website sales every year since 2008, rising from £25 billion to £66 billion in 2014. The retail sector had the highest proportion of businesses with website sales (33.6%). The construction sector had the highest average annual growth rate (24%) between 2008 and 2014, with sales increasing from £0.4 billion to £1.5 billion, although this sector was the smallest in terms of the value of website sales in 2014 (Figure 4).

Figure 4: UK e-commerce sales via a website, by industry sector

2014 (excluding micro-enterprises)

Figure 4: UK e-commerce sales via a website, by industry sector

2014 (excluding micro-enterprises)



Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

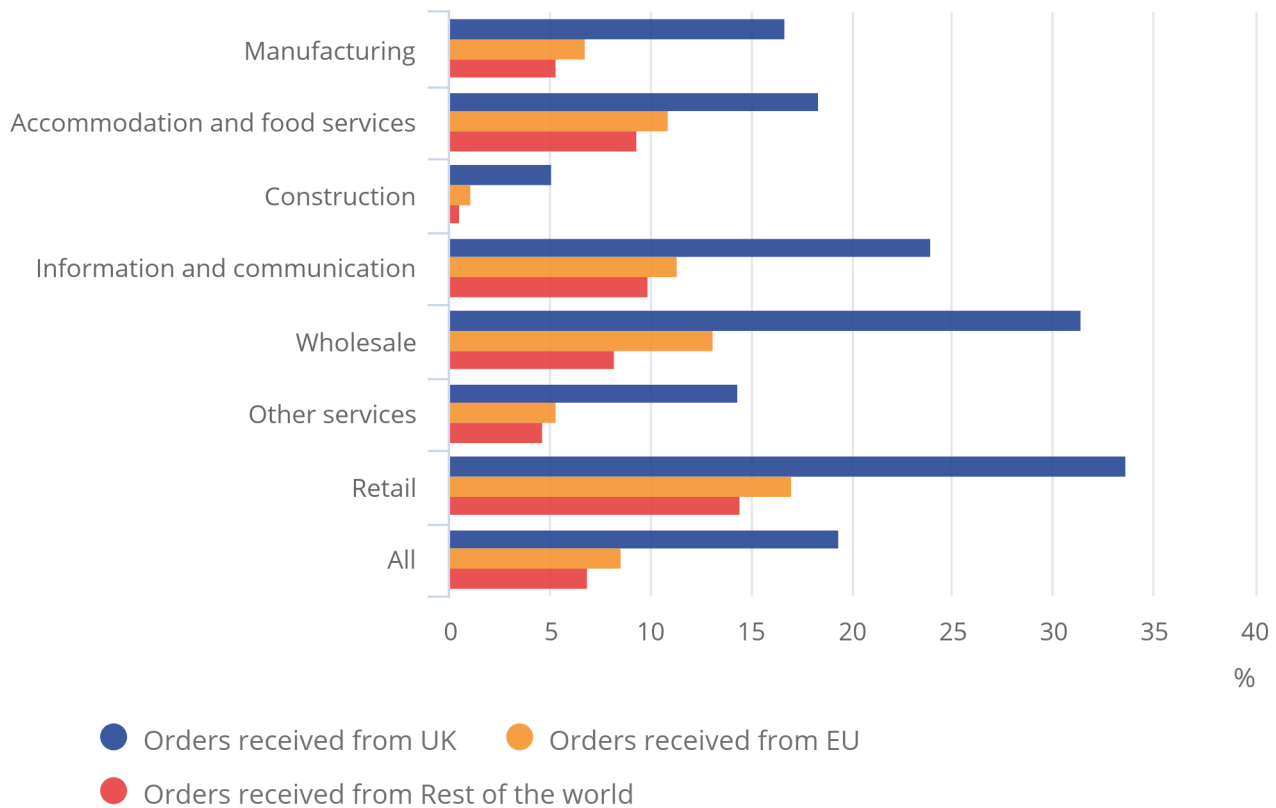
1. Total = £199.0 billion

8 . E-commerce sales by geographical area

In 2014, 19.4% of businesses received orders over a website from customers in the UK, 8.6% from customers in other EU countries and 6.9% from customers from the rest of the world. The retail sector had the highest proportion of e-commerce orders from customers in the UK at 33.6%, while the construction sector had the lowest at 5.1% (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Proportion of UK businesses making website sales by geographical area and industry sector 2014 (excluding micro-enterprises)

Figure 5: Proportion of UK businesses making website sales by geographical area and industry sector 2014 (excluding micro-enterprises)



Source: Office for National Statistics

9 . Sales over EDI

Sales over EDI are made to businesses, whereas website sales are made to businesses or public authorities and households. The value of EDI sales was £374 billion in 2014. This is a decrease of £3.3 billion (1%) since 2013, but an increase of £110 billion (42%) since the 2009 estimate of £264 billion. EDI sales represented 13.2% of business turnover in 2014.

In 2014, only 6.3% of businesses made sales over EDI, a slight increase on the 2013 estimate of 5.7%. There were 3 times as many businesses that sold over websites (19.5%) compared with those that sold over EDI, however, the value of EDI sales was almost double that of website sales at £374 billion and £199 billion respectively.

10 . Sales over EDI by industry sector

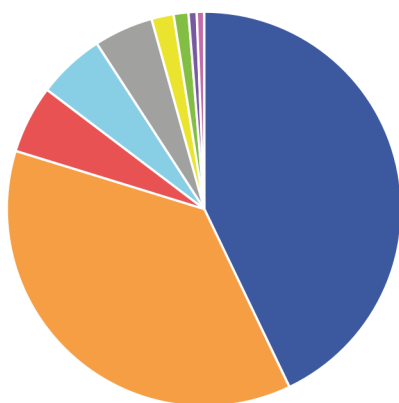
The wholesale sector had the largest EDI sales in 2014 (£161 billion). This was followed by the manufacturing sector (£138 billion). The wholesale sector had the highest proportion of businesses making EDI sales (13.3%). The accommodation and food sector had the highest average annual growth rate (29%) in the value of EDI sales since 2008, with sales increasing from £0.5 billion to £2.3 billion in 2014, although this sector was the smallest in terms of EDI sales in 2014 (as shown in Figure 6).

Figure 6: UK e-commerce sales via EDI, by industry sector

2014 (excluding micro-enterprises)

Figure 6: UK e-commerce sales via EDI, by industry sector

2014 (excluding micro-enterprises)



Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Total = £374.4 billion

11 . Internet access

In 2014, the vast majority of businesses had internet access (95.8%), with little change since the 2010 estimate of 95.0%. All sizebands of businesses with 50 or more employees had levels of internet access above 99%.

As with household internet access, as reported in the [Internet Access Households and Individuals 2015 statistical bulletin](#), the majority of businesses have a fixed internet connection, with 95.5% continuing to use fixed broadband (DSL or other fixed connection) in 2014. This was up from 94.9% in 2013 and 84.6% in 2008.

12 . Internet connection speeds

The E-commerce and ICT Survey measures the maximum contracted download speed of businesses, in the following bands: less than 2Mbps (Megabits per second), 2Mbps or more but less than 10Mbps, 10Mbps or more but less than 30Mbps, 30Mbps or more but less than 100Mbps and 100Mbps or more.

As high speed fibre optic broadband is rolled out across the UK by providers, there has been an increase in the proportion of businesses using the fastest connection speeds of 30 Mbps or more. The proportion of businesses subscribing to broadband with a connection speed between 30 and 100 Mbps, increased from 5.0% in 2010 to 16.7% in 2014. The proportion of businesses using superfast broadband, above 100 Mbps, increased from 4.6% in 2010 to 8.2% in 2014. Only 6.5% of businesses had speeds less than 2 Mbps in 2014 compared with 10.8% in 2010.

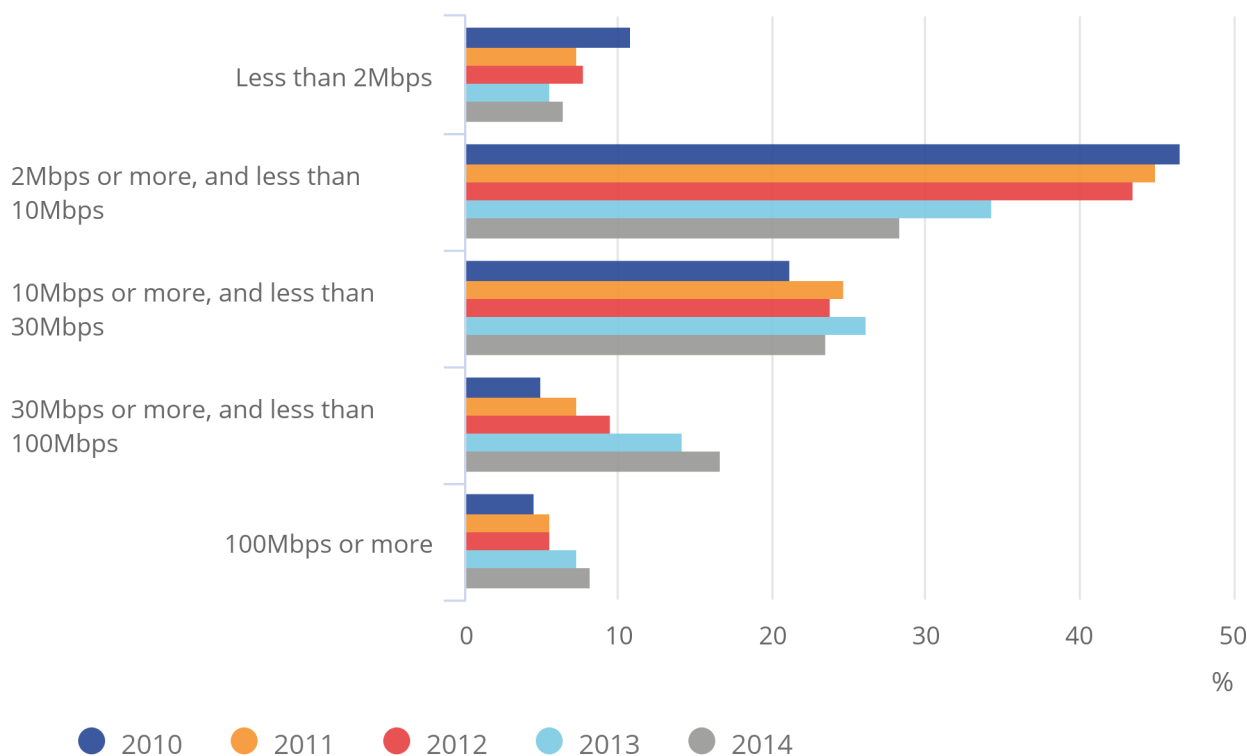
In 2014, although the most common connection speed remained between 2 and 10 Mbps, with 28.4% of businesses having this speed, this was a decrease from 46.7% in 2010.

There is a relationship between the size of a business and its internet connection speed. While 29.8% of businesses with 10 to 49 employees had a connection speed between 2 and 10 Mbps, only 6.4% of businesses with 1,000 or more employees had this connection speed. In contrast, while 48.9% of the largest businesses used superfast broadband, only 6.0% of those with 10 to 49 employees had this connection speed (as shown in Figure 7).

The proportion of businesses with 30 Mbps or more but less than 100 Mbps has more than trebled from 5% in 2010 to 16.7% in 2014.

Figure 7: Proportion of UK businesses by maximum contracted internet connection speed, 2010 to 2014 (excluding micro-enterprises)

Figure 7: Proportion of UK businesses by maximum contracted internet connection speed, 2010 to 2014 (excluding micro-enterprises)



Source: Office for National Statistics

13 . Business’ use of websites

In 2014, 80.8% of businesses had a website. Nearly all of the largest businesses (with 1,000 or more employees) had a website (97.5%), while only 77.8% of businesses with 10 to 49 employees had a website. Since 2008, the proportion of the largest businesses with a website remained almost unchanged at 97.5%. Over the same period the proportion of the businesses with 10 to 49 employees with a website increased from 70.6% to 77.8%.

14 . Use of social media

Social media can be defined as websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or participate in social networking. In 2014, 54.0% of businesses used social media, up from 44.5% in 2013.

Social networking has enabled businesses to change the way they interact with customers and provide new facilities for marketing their business and recruiting staff. In 2014, 51.5% of businesses used social networks such as Facebook or LinkedIn. The likelihood of a business to interact on social networks is linked to its size; 82.7% of the largest businesses (1,000 or more employees) used these networks compared with 48.8% of businesses with 10 to 49 employees. The information and communication sector reported the highest rate of use of social networks (79.2%), the construction sector the lowest (26.9%).

In 2014, 33.5% of businesses used a blog or a microblog, for example Twitter. While 72.0% of businesses with 1,000 or more employees used a blog or a microblog, only 29.8% of those with 10 to 49 employees did so.

15 . Other ICT adoption and use

This release focuses on the most significant aspects of e-commerce and ICT activity. There are additional data tables on other aspects of ICT use by businesses in the [tables associated with this release \(537.5 Kb Excel sheet\)](#).

16 . International comparisons

A comparable survey is run in all countries of the European Union (EU) and also in some non-EU countries. Eurostat plays an important role in this and each year leads a process whereby the data requirements for the survey are reviewed and updated. Comparative data for EU countries can be found on the [Eurostat website](#). On 5 October 2015 we published [E-commerce in the UK and the European Union](#). This article summarised how e-commerce in the UK compares with other EU countries.

17 . Micro-enterprises (businesses with less than 10 employees)

Coverage of micro-enterprises has been introduced for the 2014 survey. This is the first survey period since 2004 that estimates for this group of businesses have been collected. Whereas the previous sections of this bulletin have been focussing on businesses with 10 or more employees, to enable comparisons with the results in previous years, the following results and commentary will provide an insight into the businesses with 0 to 9 employees and their impact on the overall results for all businesses covered by the survey.

18 . E-commerce sales (including micro-enterprises)

In 2014 micro-enterprises made total e-commerce sales of £19.5 billion. These consisted of £17.5 billion website sales and £2.0 billion EDI sales. Adding the e-commerce sales made by micro business to those made by businesses with 10 or more employees gives an overall value of e-commerce sales of £593 billion in 2014.

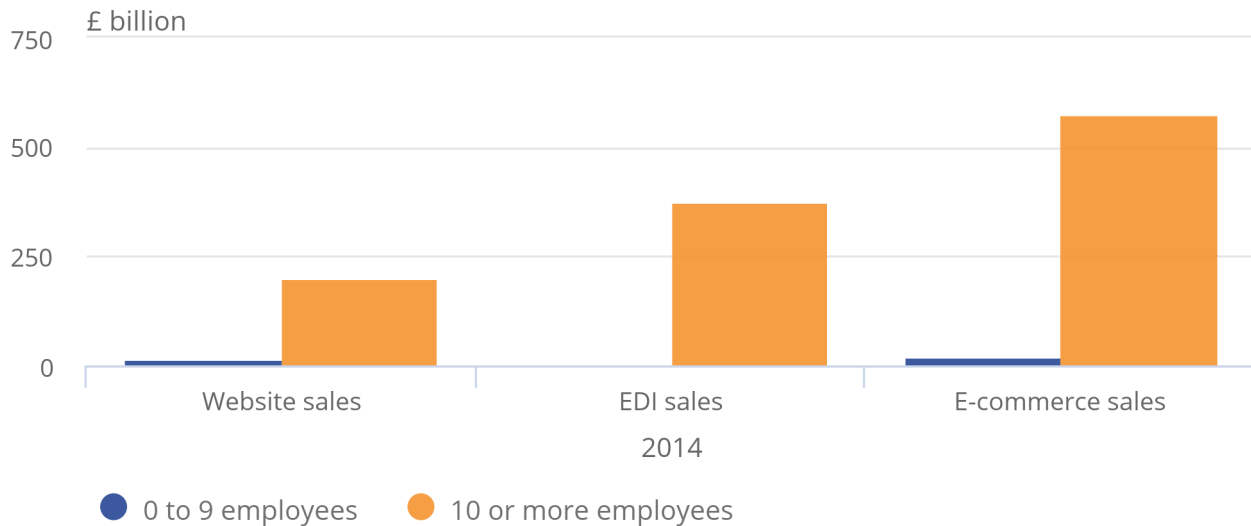
Including micro-enterprises' sales with those made by businesses with 10 or more employees increases total website sales to £217 billion and EDI sales to £376 billion. Website sales of £17.5 billion made by micro-enterprises represented 8% of the value of website sales for all businesses. EDI sales of £2.0 billion made by micro-enterprises represented just 0.5% of the value of all EDI sales (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Total UK e-commerce sales, by size of business

2014

Figure 8: Total UK e-commerce sales, by size of business

2014



Source: Office for National Statistics

In 2014 website sales to private customers by all businesses were £121 billion. Businesses with 10 or more employees accounted for £109 billion of these sales, while micro-enterprises accounted for £12 billion. This value was higher than sales to private customers made by businesses with 10 to 49 employees and businesses with 50 to 249 employees, both at £11 billion. Website sales to businesses or public authorities were £95 billion in 2014 and micro-enterprises made just £5.6 billion of these sales.

19 . Internet access and internet connection speed (including micro-enterprises)

In 2014, 81.4% of micro-enterprises had internet access compared with 95.8% of businesses with 10 or more employees. The most common connection speed for micro-enterprises was 2 Mbps or more but less than 10 Mbps at 24.4%. The least common connection speed was 100 Mbps or more, used by just 4.7% of micro-enterprises.

20 . Use of websites (including micro-enterprises)

There appears to be a clear difference in the use of websites by micro-enterprises, compared with larger businesses. In 2014, 43.5% of micro-enterprises had a website, compared with 80.8% of businesses with 10 or more employees. All business sizebands above 10 employees had much higher rates of having a website than micro-enterprises.

21. Background notes

1. Important issues specific to this bulletin

This is our latest annual release about e-commerce and the adoption and use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) by UK businesses. The results in this release are for 2014. The source of the information is the E-commerce and ICT Survey of UK businesses.

The Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR) was used as the sampling frame for the survey. The survey was sent to 10,916 of all UK businesses in the Manufacturing, Production, Construction, Distribution and Service sectors.

This statistical bulletin reports e-commerce activity by UK businesses, regardless of where the respondent's customer or supplier is located, or whether the trading activity is with households or businesses.

The Annual Business Survey (ABS), formerly the Annual Business Inquiry part 2 (ABI/2), produced by us, is an important input for estimating the level of e-commerce in the UK. All sectors covered by the E-commerce Survey are also covered by the ABS.

The ABS samples approximately 62,000 businesses in Great Britain from a population of over 1.8 million businesses in the sample frame on the IDBR. The responding businesses provide information such as their turnover, purchases, employment costs, capital expenditure and stocks. Data for approximately 11,000 businesses in Northern Ireland are collected by the Department of Finance and Personnel Northern Ireland and contribute to the UK estimates.

On 12 November 2015, we published provisional results from the 2014 ABS. The release covered:

- non-financial services
- distribution
- production
- construction
- parts of agriculture

Together these industries represent the UK Non-Financial Business Economy and account for around two-thirds of the whole economy of the UK in terms of Gross Value Added.

In recent years there has been user interest in resuming coverage of businesses with less than 10 employees in the E-commerce and ICT Survey of Business. Therefore the coverage of this survey was extended in 2014 to include these businesses.

Estimates in the data tables have been prepared using 2 bases:

- businesses with 10 or more employees to enable comparison with previous years
- all businesses including results for micro-enterprises that are only available for 2014

2. Consultation on measuring the digital economy

In 2014 we conducted a public consultation on the future publication of statistics that measure the digital economy. We published the response to the consultation on 22 December 2014.

3. National Statistics

The UK Statistics Authority has reviewed this publication in their report: [Assessment of compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics: Statistics on E-commerce and Information and Communication Activity](#), published on 27 July 2010. This review recommended that the E-commerce and ICT Activity release be designated as National Statistics, subject to certain requirements. We carried out the necessary work to comply with the requirements in this report and as a result, the UK Statistics Authority confirmed that this release has National Statistics status.

4. Classification changes

The 2014 survey was based on the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) 2007. The estimates published for 2009 were the first to be published based on SIC 2007, which replaced the SIC 2003 classification system. Results for the 2008 survey were originally compiled and published based on SIC 2003, and have been re-estimated based on the new SIC 2007, to enable comparisons to be made with future years.

There were changes to the e-commerce questions asked in the 2008 survey, which impacted on the published results. The internet/non-internet split of e-commerce transactions that had been included since the survey began were discontinued after the 2008 survey. This split was replaced with a breakdown of website and non-website transactions. The historical e-commerce estimates, broken down by internet and non-internet sales, are still available on our website in the [2008 E-commerce and ICT Statistical Bulletin](#). As a result of the changes to the measurement of e-commerce, this release provides estimates of the values of e-commerce from 2008 onwards.

Until the 2007 survey, the definition of e-commerce sales and purchases included transactions over manually typed email. From the 2008 survey onwards this changed and email transactions have been excluded. This means that e-commerce sales published in this release are not directly comparable with estimates published for 2007 and previous years.

5. Quality improvement to the estimation of e-commerce sales values

A quality improvement to the estimates of the values of e-commerce sales was made for the 2011 release that was published in November 2012. Prior to the 2011 survey, estimates of the values of e-commerce sales had been calculated using ABS total business turnover data from the previous year. This method had been used since the e-commerce survey commenced in 2000. Since the 2011 survey it has been possible to use ABS data from the relevant survey year to derive estimates of e-commerce sales, which resulted in more accurate estimates. The [information note on quality improvements to the e-commerce survey](#) (29.7 Kb Pdf), published on our website has further details.

6. Common pitfalls in interpreting the series

This report should not be confused with the [Internet Access Household and Individuals statistical bulletin](#). This is a separate release that contains estimates on internet access and use of the internet by households and individuals, not by businesses.

7. Uses of the data

This bulletin provides information on the estimates of e-commerce sales, and the use by businesses of various types of ICT. In some cases, growth over time can be seen where ICT use has been measured on a comparable basis in previous years. Examples of this include the measurement of ICT activities such as internet access, broadband and websites. Results are presented by business employee sizeband. This allows comparisons of the levels of e-commerce trading and ICT activity to be made between different sized businesses.

Eurostat is the principal user of the statistics. The UK provides statistics to Eurostat which measure business use of ICT and e-commerce activity, in accordance with Regulation of the European Parliament and Council 808/2004. These estimates are used to provide information that is consistent with other European Union (EU) member states, as part of progress towards measuring EU benchmarking indicators. These EU indicators compare the development and use of ICT in the EU member states, and help to provide a better understanding of the adoption of ICT and the internet by businesses at an EU level.

ICT is considered as critical for improving the competitiveness of European industry and more generally, to meet the demands of society and the economy. Broadband is considered to be important when measuring access to, and use of, the internet. Broadband offers users the possibility to rapidly transfer large volumes of data and keep access lines open. The take-up of broadband is a key ICT policy-making indicator.

Widespread access to the internet, via broadband, is regarded as essential for the development of advanced services on the internet, such as e-business, e-government or e-learning.

Do you make use of our estimates of e-commerce and ICT activity? If yes, we would like to hear from you (ecommerce@ons.gsi.gov.uk) and understand how you make use of these statistics. This may enable us, in the future, to better meet your needs as a user.

8. International context

A comparable survey is run in all EU countries and also in some non-EU countries. The measurement of e-commerce and ICT activity by businesses is under continuing review and development. Eurostat plays a leading role in this and each year leads a process whereby the data requirements for the survey are reviewed and updated. Comparative data for EU countries can be found on the [Eurostat website](#). Approximately 40% of the survey questions change each year to enable the survey to cover new and developing aspects of ICT use. This means that the available time series for ICT adoption and use varies and not all time series are updated each year.

9. Estimation

The estimates of the proportions of businesses use number raised estimation. Results weighted by number of businesses give an equal weight to businesses irrespective of size. This method reflects the greater number of small businesses than large ones. Therefore, estimates of proportions of businesses in “all sizebands” are likely to be closer to the estimates for the 0 to 9 employment sizeband, than for the 1,000 or more employment sizeband. Estimates of the monetary values of e-commerce use the employment of the business with the estimated percentage of total turnover derived from e-commerce. This means that businesses with larger employment have a greater weight in the estimation of the monetary values of e-commerce. Full details of the estimation methods used are available in the [E-commerce and ICT Quality and Management Information \(99.7 Kb Pdf\)](#) report.

10. Coverage

The provision of the results to Eurostat is a requirement set out in [EU Regulation 808/2004](#). The survey collects the data necessary to meet this requirement. The estimates in this release relate to those sectors of the economy where coverage is required by Eurostat under the terms of the Regulation. It should therefore be noted that the survey is not intended to provide full coverage of all UK ICT and e-commerce business activity.

The survey covers businesses within the following economic sectors, according to the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) 2007.

Manufacturing: Divisions 10-33 Utilities: Divisions 35-39 Construction: Divisions 41-43 Wholesale: Divisions 45-46 Retail: Division 47 Transport and storage: Divisions 49-53 Accommodation and food services: Divisions 55-56 Information and communication: Divisions 58-63 Other services: Divisions 68-74, 77-82, 95.1

The sectors of the SIC 2007 not covered by the survey are as follows:

Section A Agriculture, forestry and fishing Section B Mining and quarrying Section K Finance and insurance activities Division 75 Veterinary activities Section O Public administration and defence, social security Section P Education Section Q Health and social work Section R Arts, entertainment and recreation Section S Other service activities except SIC 95.1, repair of computers

Until the 2004 survey, businesses with less than 10 employees were included in the survey, due to a specific user interest from the then Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). When this user interest ended the coverage of these businesses was discontinued, leaving the coverage from 2005 onwards as being just what was required by Eurostat under [EU Regulation 808/2004](#). In recent years there has been user interest in resuming coverage of the businesses with less than 10 employees therefore coverage resumed for the 2014 survey.

11. Revisions to earlier years

As in previous years, estimates are subject to revision. The usual revisions policy for this release is that estimates in the previous two years are subject to revision.

12. Sampling variability and confidence intervals

The estimates in this release are subject to sampling variability, as are those from all sample surveys. The [confidence interval tables \(111.5 Kb Excel sheet\)](#) contained 95% confidence intervals for selected estimates relating to e-commerce and ICT activity.

All of the published estimates come from survey data and so have a degree of statistical error associated with them. Confidence intervals are an indication of the reliability of the estimate: the smaller the interval, the more reliable the estimate is likely to be. With regards to “95% confidence intervals”, we mean that if we repeated our survey 100 times, 95% of the time (95 times out of 100), the true population value would fall within the range of these confidence intervals.

13. Imputation

No imputations were made for contributor or item non-response, as all data items on a business' completed questionnaire have to pass validation checks before being included in the survey results. The only exceptions to this are where, under certain conditions, a missing value data item was estimated based on other contributors in the same employment size band and SIC. For this to take place, the business had to have returned all non-value data items and all these items had to have passed the validation checks.

14. ONS business statistics

There is a [Business and Trade Statistics community](#) on the [StatsUserNet website](#). StatsUserNet is the Royal Statistical Society's new interactive site for users of official statistics. The community objectives are to promote dialogue and share information between users and producers of official business and trade statistics about the structure, content and performance of businesses within the UK. Anyone can join the discussions by registering via either of the links above.

15. Social media

Follow us on [Twitter](#) and receive up to date information about our statistics.

Like us on [Facebook](#) to receive our updates in your newsfeed and to post comments on our page.

16. Special events

We have recently published commentary, analysis and policy on “special events” which may affect statistical outputs. For full details go to the [Special Events](#) page on our website.

17. Publication policy

Details of the policy governing the release of new estimates are available from the ONS press office.

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Government Buildings
Cardiff Road
Newport
NP10 8XG

Media contact: Tel: Media Relations Office 0845 6041858 Emergency on-call: 07867 906553 E-mail: media.relations@ons.gov.uk

Website: www.ons.gov.uk

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