

Article

Business Insights and Conditions Survey questions: 17 August 2026 to 30 August 2026

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Release date:
7 September 2026

Next release:
To be announced

Table of contents

1. [Survey information](#)
2. [Trading status of your business](#)
3. [Workforce trends](#)
4. [Workforce management](#)
5. [Energy prices](#)
6. [Supply chain risk](#)
7. [Export/Import](#)
8. [International trade](#)
9. [Comments](#)

1 . Survey information

These questions are for Wave 163 of the fortnightly Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) dispatched on 17 August 2026.

2 . Trading status of your business

Which of the following statements best describes your business's trading status?

- Currently fully trading
- Currently partially trading
- Paused trading but intends to restart in the next two weeks
- Paused trading and does not intend to restart in the next two weeks
- Permanently ceased trading

3 . Workforce trends

Is your business using, or intending to use, increased homeworking as a permanent business model going forward?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
- Not applicable

Why is your business using, or intending to use, increased homeworking as a permanent business model going forward?

- Ability to better match jobs to skills
- Ability to recruit from a wider geographical pool in the UK
- Ability to recruit from a wider geographical pool internationally
- Improved staff wellbeing
- Increased productivity
- Reduced carbon emissions
- Reduced overhead costs
- Reduced sickness absence
- Reduced wage bill
- Other (Please describe)
- Not sure

Why is your business not intending to use increased homeworking as a permanent business model going forward?

- Concerns with integrating new starters into the workplace
- Costs of employee equipment
- Difficulties managing staff remotely
- Negative impact on working culture
- Not suitable for our business
- Reduced communication
- Reduced productivity
- Reduced reliability and retention of staff
- Security concerns
- Other (Please describe)
- Not sure

Which of the following skills, if any, has your business had a high demand for in the last 12 months?

- Advanced digital skills
- Basic digital skills
- Customer service skills
- Management or leadership skills
- Manual skills
- Transferable skills
- Other (Please describe)
- None of the above

Which of the following skills, if any, do you expect your business to have a high demand for over the next 12 months?

- Advanced digital skills
- Basic digital skills
- Customer service skills
- Management or leadership skills
- Manual skills
- Transferable skills
- Other (Please describe)
- Not sure
- Business does not expect a high demand of skills over the next 12 months

Which of the following skills, if any, does your workforce require extra support or training in?

- Advanced digital skills
- Basic digital skills
- Customer service skills
- Management or leadership skills
- Manual skills
- Transferable skills
- Other (Please describe)
- None of the above

What impact is not meeting skills demand likely to have on your business's growth over the next 12 months?

- Delays to expanding into new markets or locations
- Delays to expanding into new products or services
- Reduced ability to adopt new technologies, processes or innovate
- Not sure
- Other (Please describe)
- No impact on the growth of the business

Which types of training, if any, does your business provide to employees?

- Customer service or sales training
- Digital or IT skills training
- Job specific training
- Management or leadership training
- Training to support the introduction of new technologies, equipment or processes
- Transferable skills training
- Other (Please describe)
- Not sure
- Business does not provide training beyond mandatory requirements

Which of the following, if any, are barriers to your business providing more training to employees?

- Cost
- Difficulty finding suitable training or training providers
- Lack of information about training opportunities
- Lack of staff time
- Staff are already fully proficient
- Unclear return on investment
- Other (Please describe)
- Business has no barriers to providing more training to employees

On average, how did employees' hourly wages in July 2026 compare with employees' hourly wages in the previous calendar month?

- Wages increased
- Wages stayed the same
- Wages decreased
- Not sure

How have your business's staffing costs changed over the last three months?

- Costs have increased
- Costs have stayed the same
- Costs have decreased
- Not sure
- Not applicable

How does your business expect staffing costs to change over the next three months?

- Costs will increase
- Costs will stay the same
- Costs will decrease
- Not sure
- Not applicable

How does your business plan to adapt to any future increases in employment costs?

- Absorb within profit margins
- Increase prices
- Limit overtime hours
- Reduce employee benefits
- Reduce number of employees
- Reduce spending on investment
- Reduce spending on training
- Reduce wage increases for other employees
- Other (Please describe)
- Not sure
- Not applicable

Is your business currently experiencing a shortage of workers?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
- Not applicable

Which of the following challenges, if any, has your business experienced due to a shortage of workers?

- Business had to pause trading entirely
- Business had to recruit temporary workers
- Employees increased working hours
- Had to pause trading of some of the business
- Unable to meet demands
- Other (Please describe)
- Not sure
- Business has not experienced any challenges due to a shortage of workers

Did your business experience any difficulties recruiting employees in July 2026?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
- Not applicable

Which of the following employees has your business had difficulties recruiting in July 2026?

- Clerical employees
- Professional or managerial employees
- Semi-skilled or unskilled employees
- Skilled, manual or technical employees
- Other (Please describe)
- Not sure

Why did your business experience difficulties recruiting employees in July 2026?

- Business cannot offer an attractive pay package to applicants
- Increased number of vacancies
- Lack of qualified applicants for the roles on offer
- Low number of applications for the roles on offer
- Reduced number of applicants aged 16 to 24 years
- Reduced number of applicants aged over 50 years
- Reduced number of EU applicants
- Other (Please describe)
- Not sure

4 . Workforce management

Which of the following contract arrangements, if any, does your business currently use for workers?

- Contracts with more than 24 hours guaranteed per week
- Contracts greater than 16 and up to 24 hours guaranteed per week
- Contracts greater than 8 and up to 16 hours guaranteed per week
- Contracts with 1 to 8 hours guaranteed per week
- Workers on agency contracts
- Zero hours contract
- Other (Please describe)
- Not sure
- Business does not have any contracted workers

In the last 12 months, has your business had substitution clauses in its contracts?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
- Not applicable

In the last 12 months, approximately what percentage of contractors have used substitution clauses to complete their work?

- More than 75%
- Between 50% and 75%
- Between 25% and 49%
- Between 1% and 24%
- None
- Not sure

Does your business offer additional support to employees who are unpaid carers, beyond the statutory week of unpaid carer's leave?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

What additional support does your business offer to employees who are unpaid carers?

- Access to advisory services
- Employee peer support group
- Extended unpaid carer's leave
- Flexible working arrangements
- Line manager training on how to support unpaid carers
- Paid carer's leave
- Other (Please describe)
- Not sure

Approximately, how many days of paid carer's leave does your business offer employees in a 12 month period?

- 1 day
- 2 days
- 3 days
- 4 days
- 5 days
- 6 to 10 days
- 11 to 20 days
- More than 21 days
- Not sure

5 . Energy prices

How concerned is your business about energy prices?

- Very concerned
- Somewhat concerned
- Not concerned
- Not sure

How concerned is your business about increases in fuel prices?

- Very concerned
- Somewhat concerned
- Not concerned
- Not sure

6 . Supply chain risk

Which of the following factors, if any, is your business concerned about impacting supply chains over the next 12 months?

- Artificial Intelligence
- Climate change
- Cyber attacks
- Increased barriers to trade
- International conflict
- Market distorting practices
- Nature and biodiversity risks
- Sanctions
- Shipping disruption
- Other (Please describe)
- Not sure
- Business is not concerned about factors impacting supply chains over the next 12 months

How does your business expect these factors to impact supply chains?

- Increased costs of sourcing materials
- Increased labour costs
- Increased transportation costs
- Shortage of inputs
- Other (Please describe)
- Not sure
- Business does not expect these factors to impact supply chains

Which of the following actions, if any, did your business take to increase supply chain resilience in the last 12 months?

- Demand management
- Diversification of suppliers across a broader range of countries
- Improved relationships with key suppliers
- Increased awareness of supply chains
- Onshoring
- Relocated existing sourcing to another country
- Stockpiling and surge capacity
- Other (Please describe)
- Not sure
- Not applicable

Which of the following actions, if any, does your business plan to take to increase supply chain resilience over the next 12 months?

- Demand management
- Diversification of suppliers across a broader range of countries
- Improve relationships with key suppliers
- Increase awareness of supply chains
- Onshoring
- Relocate existing sourcing to another country
- Stockpiling and surge capacity
- Other (Please describe)
- Not sure
- Not applicable

7 . Export/Import

Has your business exported goods or services in the last 12 months?

- Exported goods only
- Exported services only
- Exported both goods and services
- Business has not exported goods or services in the last 12 months
- Not sure

Has your business imported goods or services in the last 12 months?

- Imported goods only
- Imported services only
- Imported both goods and services
- Business has not imported goods or services in the last 12 months
- Not sure

8 . International trade

What impact, if any, did the United States tariffs have on your business in the last month?

- Business experienced additional costs
- Business explored new export markets
- Business passed additional costs to customers
- Business stopped or paused exports to the United States
- Increased competition
- Increased demand
- Reduced demand
- Supply chain disruption
- Other (Please describe)
- Not sure
- No impact on the business

What impact, if any, do you expect the United States tariffs to have on your business in the next month?

- Business will absorb additional costs
- Business will explore new export markets
- Business will pass additional costs to customers
- Business will stop or pause exports to the United States
- Increased competition
- Increased demand
- Reduced demand
- Supply chain disruption
- Other (Please describe)
- Not sure
- No impact expected for the business

9 . Comments

Please tell us anything else about your business's current situation relating to topics covered in this survey

- Comments