

Article

Business Insights and Conditions Survey questions: 18 August 2025 to 31 August 2025

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1 . Survey information

These questions are for Wave 139 of the fortnightly Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) dispatched on 18 August 2025

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, if any, of the following skills 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, if any, of the following skills 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

On average, how did employees' hourly wages in July 2025 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

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

Which, if any, of the following employees has your business had difficulties recruiting in July 2025?

- Clerical employees
- Professional or managerial employees
- Semi-skilled or unskilled employees
- Skilled, manual or technical employees
- Other (Please describe)
- Not sure
- Business did not experience any difficulties in recruiting employees

Why did your business experience difficulties recruiting employees in July 2025?

- 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

Does your business have a probation policy in place for new employees?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

How long is a typical probationary period for new employees at your business?

- More than 12 months
- 10 to 12 months
- 7 to 9 months
- 4 to 6 months
- 3 months or less
- Not sure

Does your business currently have any employees on any of the following contracts?

- Agency contract
- Casual contract
- Fixed term contract
- Minimum hours contract
- Seasonal contract
- Variable hours contract
- Zero hours contract
- None of the above

Approximately, what percentage of your business's workforce is employed under a variable hours contract?

- More than 75%
- Between 50% and 74%
- Between 25% and 49%
- Less than 25%
- Not sure

5 . Business operations

In the last 12 months, approximately what percentage of your business's total annual expenses were fixed costs?

- More than 75%
- Between 50% and 74%
- Between 25% and 49%
- Less than 25%
- Not sure

In the last 12 months, has your business experienced any change in the volume of goods produced, or services provided?

- Substantial increase
- Moderate increase
- No change
- Moderate decrease
- Substantial decrease
- Not sure

What effect, if any, has this change had on your business's average cost per unit?

- A decrease in cost per unit
- An increase in cost per unit
- No effect on cost per unit
- Not sure

At what geographical level does your business primarily operate?

- Local
- Regional
- National
- International

How many locations does your business currently operate from?

- Single location
- Multiple locations
- Not sure

In the last 12 months, how were prices for your business's goods or services set?

- At individual locations
- Only at headquarters
- Both at individual locations and at headquarters
- Other (Please specify)
- Not sure

How do your business's prices vary across different locations?

- Prices differ in each business location
- Prices are mostly the same in the UK, but different abroad
- Prices are mostly the same irrespective of the business locations
- Not sure
- Not applicable

Does your business conduct any online sales?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Has your business developed any new or significantly improved goods or services in the last 12 months?

- Yes, more than once
- Yes, once
- No
- Not sure

Has your business implemented any new or significantly improved production techniques in the last 12 months?

- Yes, more than once
- Yes, once
- No
- Not sure

6 . Market positioning

In the last 12 months, how intense has competition been in your business's market?

- Low
- Moderate
- Strong
- Very strong
- Not sure

Approximately, how many other businesses currently offer similar goods or services to your business?

- None
- 1 to 2
- 3 to 10
- More than 10
- Not sure

For your business's main good or service, how many suppliers could provide the key input?

- One potential supplier
- Two to five potential suppliers
- More than five potential suppliers
- Not sure
- Not applicable

In the last 12 months, how important has maintaining low prices been to your business's ability to remain competitive?

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not very important
- Not at all important
- Not sure

Which of the following factors, if any, would make it difficult for startups to succeed in your industry?

- Challenging competitive environment
- High upfront financial investments
- Lack of access to technology or expertise
- Limited access to materials or distribution channels
- Regulatory requirements
- Other (Please specify)
- Not sure
- None of the above

To what extent can your business's goods or services be customised to meet individual needs?

- No customisation at all
- Small customisation
- Strong customisation
- Not sure

Which of the following best describes the overall market positioning of your business's goods or services?

- Mainly budget or low-cost
- Mainly mid-range
- Mainly premium
- Not applicable
- Not sure

7 . Technology

Which of the following types of data analysis, if any, does your business use to support its operations?

- Descriptive qualitative data analysis
- Descriptive quantitative data analysis
- Diagnostic data analysis
- Traditional predictive data analysis
- AI predictive data analysis
- Other (Please specify)
- Not sure
- No data analysis

8 . 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

9 . International trade

Was your business able to get the materials, goods or services it needed from the US in July 2025?

- Yes, the business was able to get the materials, goods or services it needed
- Yes, but the business had to change suppliers or find alternative solutions
- No, the business was not able to get the materials, goods or services needed
- Not applicable

Does your business intend to open any new branches or subsidiaries in the US in the next 12 months?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

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

10 . Comments

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

- Comments