

BUSINESS AND ENERGY

Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS) Weighted Scotland Estimates - Data to Wave 23

19 February 2021

This is the eleventh publication of weighted Scotland estimates using the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS). These are experimental statistics, which means that they are still in development but have been released to enable their use at an early stage. All results are provisional and subject to revision.

Latest main findings for businesses with 10+ employees and a presence in Scotland

- The share of businesses 'currently trading' was estimated at 80.9% in the period 25 January to 7 February 2021 – the lowest rate since June 2020.
- The Accommodation & Food Services and the Arts, Entertainment & Recreation industry sectors continue to have the lowest shares of businesses 'currently trading' - estimated at 32.2% and 54.8% respectively.
- The share of the workforce on furlough leave was estimated at 19.8% in the period 11 January to 7 February 2021 – a slight increase on the previous period, but still considerably lower than the rate of 32.1% in June 2020 (when comparable estimates began).
- The Accommodation & Food Services and the Arts, Entertainment & Recreation industry sectors continue to have the highest shares of the workforce on furlough leave - estimated at 68.6% and 62.6% respectively.
- In the period 11 January to 7 February 2021, of businesses currently trading that had exported in the last 12 months, 38% were exporting less than normal, while a further 5% had not been able to export. For importing, around a third of relevant businesses were importing less than normal, while 4% had not been able to import in the latest period.

Introduction

The Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey (BICS) is a new voluntary fortnightly business survey, which captures businesses' responses on how their turnover, workforce, prices, trade and business resilience have been affected.

Currently, the main [Scottish BICS results published by the Office for National Statistics](#) are unweighted which means that we can only make inferences about the businesses that have responded.¹ Weighting the BICS responses enables us to produce estimates for Scottish businesses more generally, not just those that have responded. The ONS has provided the Scottish Government with the BICS microdata², which we have used to develop the weighted Scotland estimates. More information on the weighting method we have used for these early estimates and our plans for future developments is provided here: [BICS weighted Scotland estimates: data to wave 12](#).

The weighted Scotland estimates, in this publication, are for businesses with 10 or more employees. The weighted Scotland estimates are for businesses that have a presence in Scotland, as opposed to only those businesses headquartered in Scotland. Having a presence in Scotland means that the business has a local unit or site (e.g. shop, office, factory) in Scotland. In terms of the base of the estimates 10,008 businesses responded to the Wave 23 BICS UK-wide – 1,344 of these responding businesses had a presence in Scotland. Excluding the micro businesses (those with less than 10 employees) takes the base for the weighted Scotland estimates down to 1,206 responding businesses in Wave 23. The weighted Scotland estimates are derived from results collected from UK businesses for the UK as a whole, but weighted by business counts or employment in Scotland. Currently no account is being made for regional differences between business sites.

The coverage of the ONS BICS includes most sectors of the Scottish economy; however, the public sector is excluded, as is 'Section A – Agriculture, forestry & fishing', 'Section D – Electricity, gas, steam & air conditioning supply' and 'Section K – Financial & insurance activities'.

¹ Note that on the 1st of February 2021 ONS published '[Understanding the business impacts of local and national restrictions - Office for National Statistics](#) – this provides an analysis of weighted data for areas within the UK (including Scotland). This latest ONS sub-national analysis is based on businesses that are single sites and so multi-site businesses are excluded. This differs to the approach taken for the Scottish Government estimates presented here which include single site and multi-site businesses, but the Scottish Government estimates are constrained to businesses with 10 or more employees.

² The BICS microdata can be accessed, by accredited researchers, via the [Secure Research Service \(SRS\)](#).

Trading Status

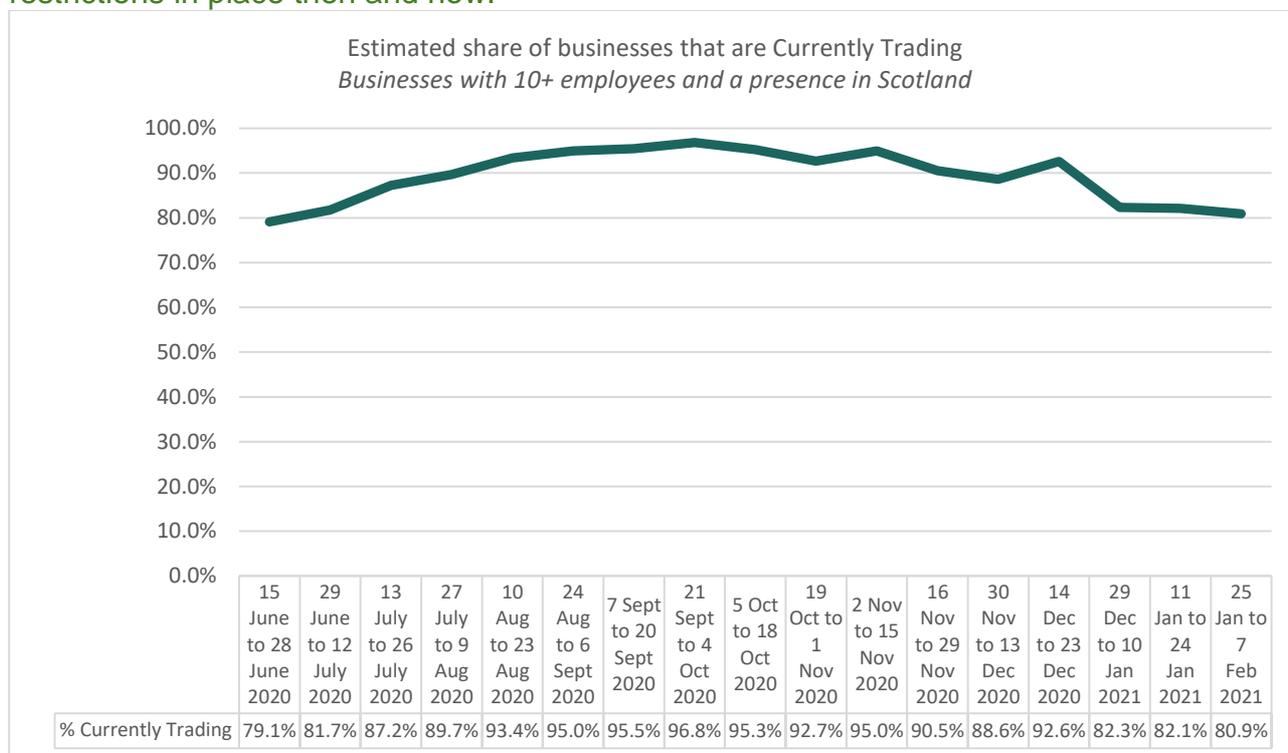
The BICS asks businesses about their trading status: the specific question³ asked is shown below. Businesses were asked for their current trading status at the time of completion of the survey questionnaire (25 January to 7 February 2021 in Wave 23).

Trading Status Question: Which of the following statements best describes your business's trading status?

- Currently trading and has been for more than the last two weeks
- Started Trading within the last two weeks after a pause in 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
- Has permanently ceased trading

For presentational purposes, 'Currently trading and has been for more than the last two weeks', and 'Started trading within the last two weeks after a pause in trading' have been combined to 'Currently Trading'. 'Paused trading but intends to restart in the next two weeks', and 'Paused trading and does not intend to restart in the next two weeks' have been combined to 'Paused Trading'. The breakdowns of these categories are available in the detailed data tables.

Figure 1: The share of businesses 'currently trading' was estimated at 80.9% in the period 25 January to 7 February 2021 – the lowest rate since June 2020, reflecting the lockdown restrictions in place then and now.

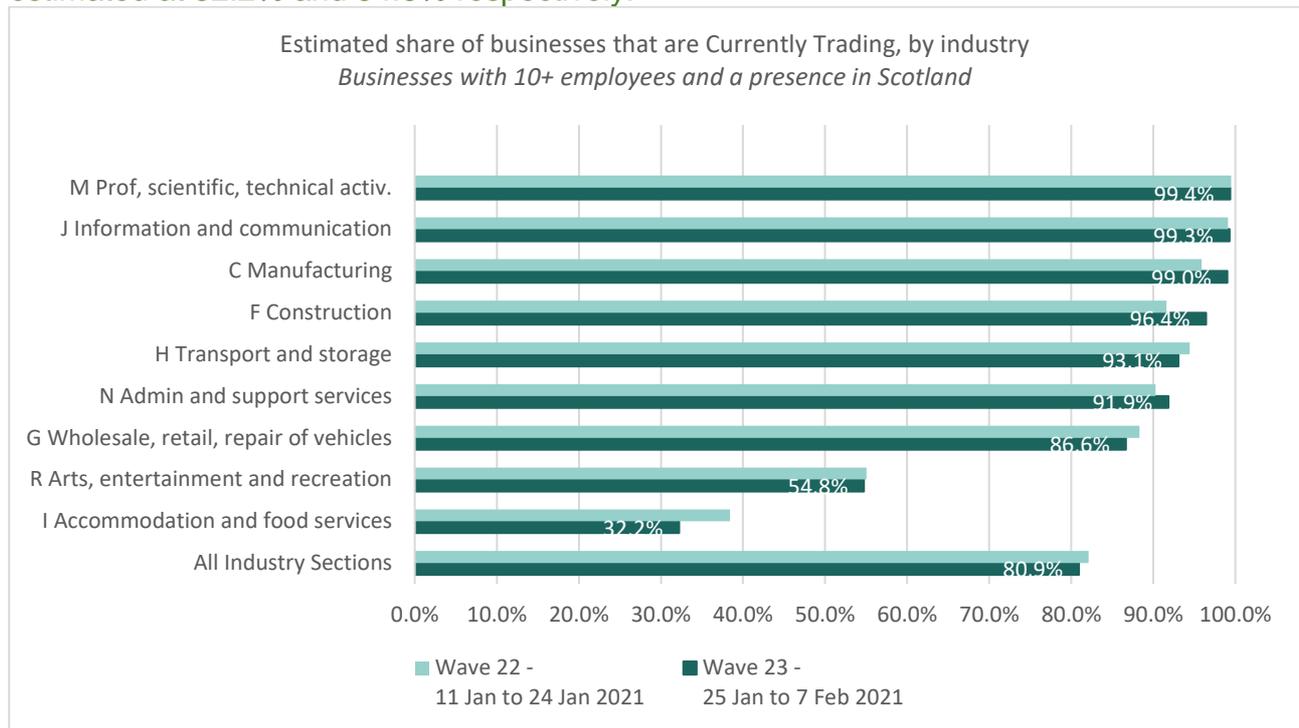


Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey – Weighted Scotland Estimates – Wave 7 to Wave 23

³ The ONS publishes all the questions for each wave at:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/articles/businessimpactofcovid19surveyquestions/previousReleases>

Figure 2: The Accommodation & Food Services and the Arts, Entertainment & Recreation industry sectors continue to have the lowest shares of businesses 'currently trading' - estimated at 32.2% and 54.8% respectively.



Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey – Weighted Scotland Estimates – Wave 22 and Wave 23

It should be noted that those businesses not currently trading may be less likely to respond to requests to complete the survey and, therefore, that these numbers may be an overestimate.

Workforce Status

The BICS asks businesses that have not permanently stopped trading (i.e. 'Currently Trading' or 'Paused Trading'), about the status of their workforce - the specific question asked is shown below. Note that businesses were asked about the status of their workforce in the last two weeks and so responses will be from the time of completion of the survey questionnaire (25 January to 7 February 2021 for Wave 23) with the full question reference period (looking back at the last two weeks) covering 11 January to 7 February 2021 for Wave 23.

Workforce Status Question: In the last two weeks, approximately what percentage of your business's workforce were:

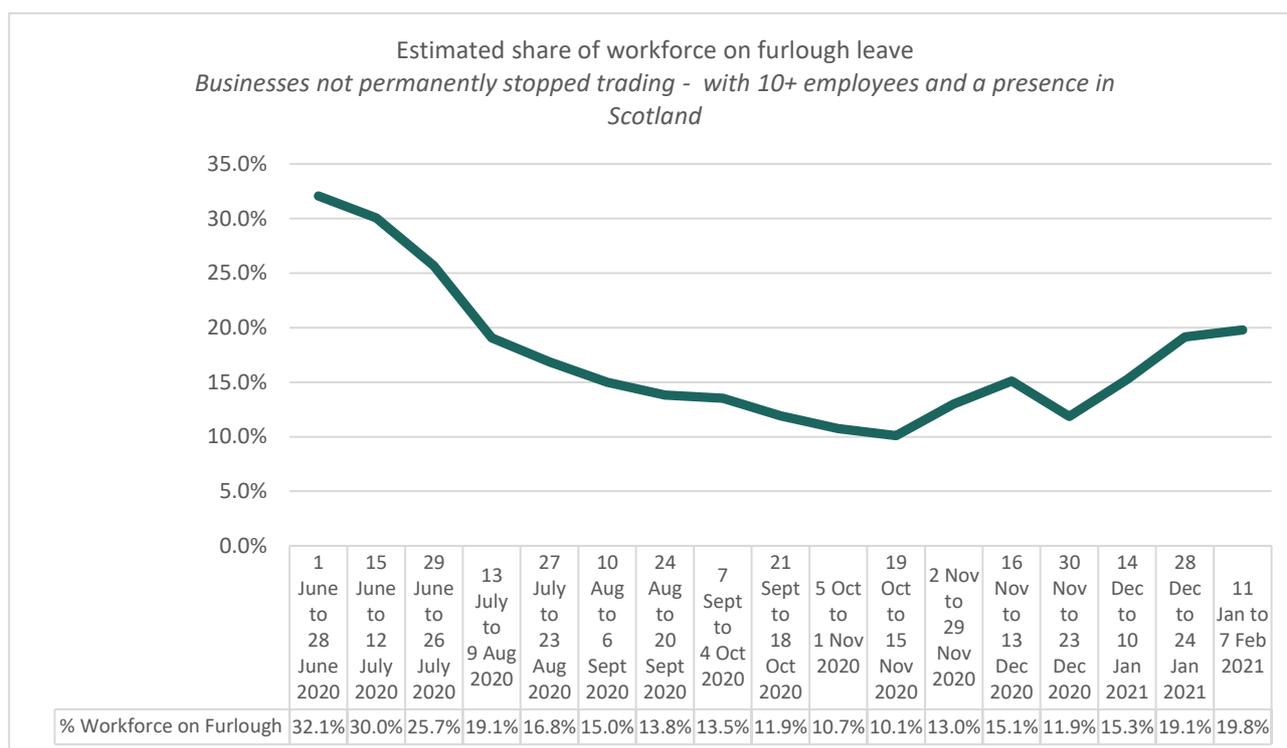
- On furlough leave
- Working at their normal place of work
- Working remotely instead of at their normal place of work
- Off sick or not working due to Covid-19, self-isolation or quarantine
- Made permanently redundant
- Other

In this report we focus on the furlough leave, but all the breakdowns are available in the detailed data tables.

There are different ways that we can analyse the furlough leave response. One way to look at it is to estimate the share of businesses that have any of their workforce on furlough leave – an estimated 57.7% of businesses that were currently trading had some share of their workforce on furlough leave in the period 11 January to 7 February 2021. This share increases to 64.6% when we widen the base out to all businesses that have not permanently stopped trading (i.e. those ‘Currently Trading’ or ‘Paused Trading’).

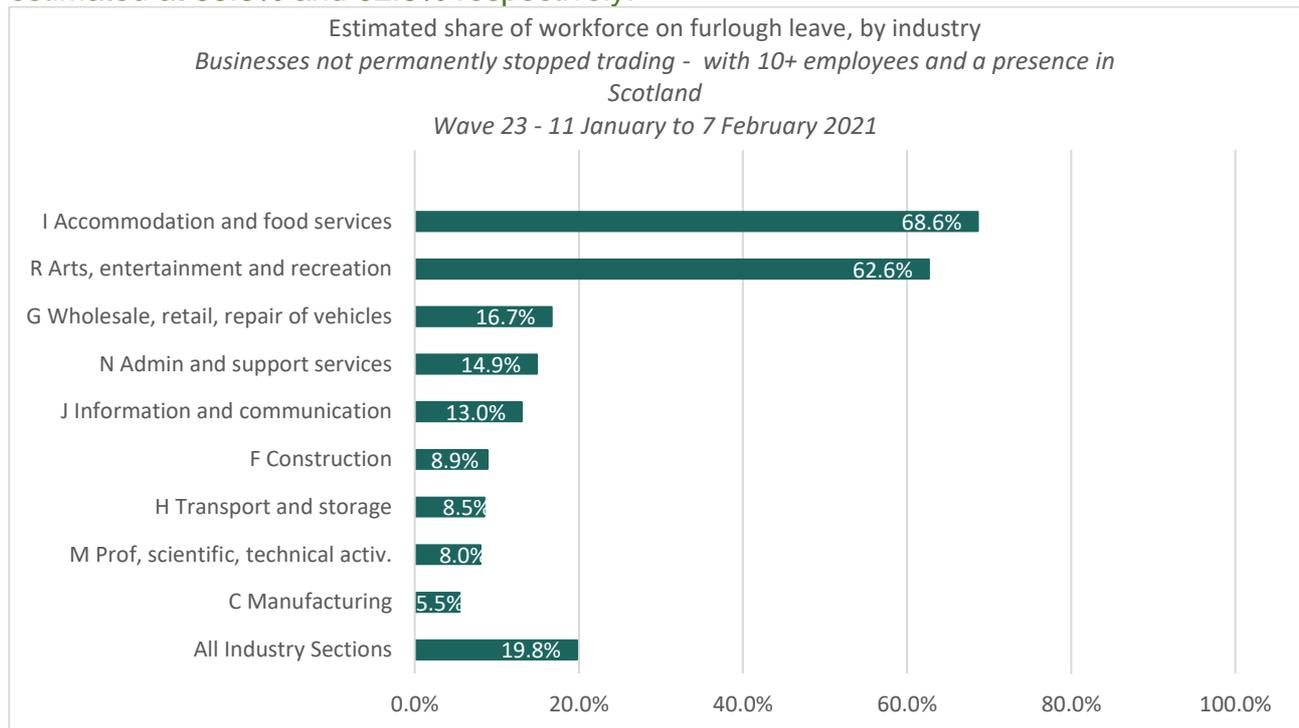
Another way to consider the workforce status question is to look at the share of the workforce that is furloughed. The workforce proportions are based on the responses provided by businesses. These are then applied to employment (in Scottish units) recorded for each reporting unit on the [Inter-Departmental Business Register \(IDBR\)](#). Then the data are weighted to ensure representativeness of the Scottish workforce in businesses with 10+ employees.

Figure 3: The share of the workforce on furlough leave was estimated at 19.8% in the period 11 January to 7 February 2021 – a slight increase on the previous period, but still considerably lower than the rate of 32.1% in June 2020 (when comparable estimates began).



Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey – Weighted Scotland Estimates – Wave 7 to Wave 23

Figure 4: The Accommodation & Food Services and the Arts, Entertainment & Recreation industry sectors continue to have the highest shares of the workforce on furlough leave – estimated at 68.6% and 62.6% respectively.



Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey – Weighted Scotland Estimates – Wave 23

Financial Performance

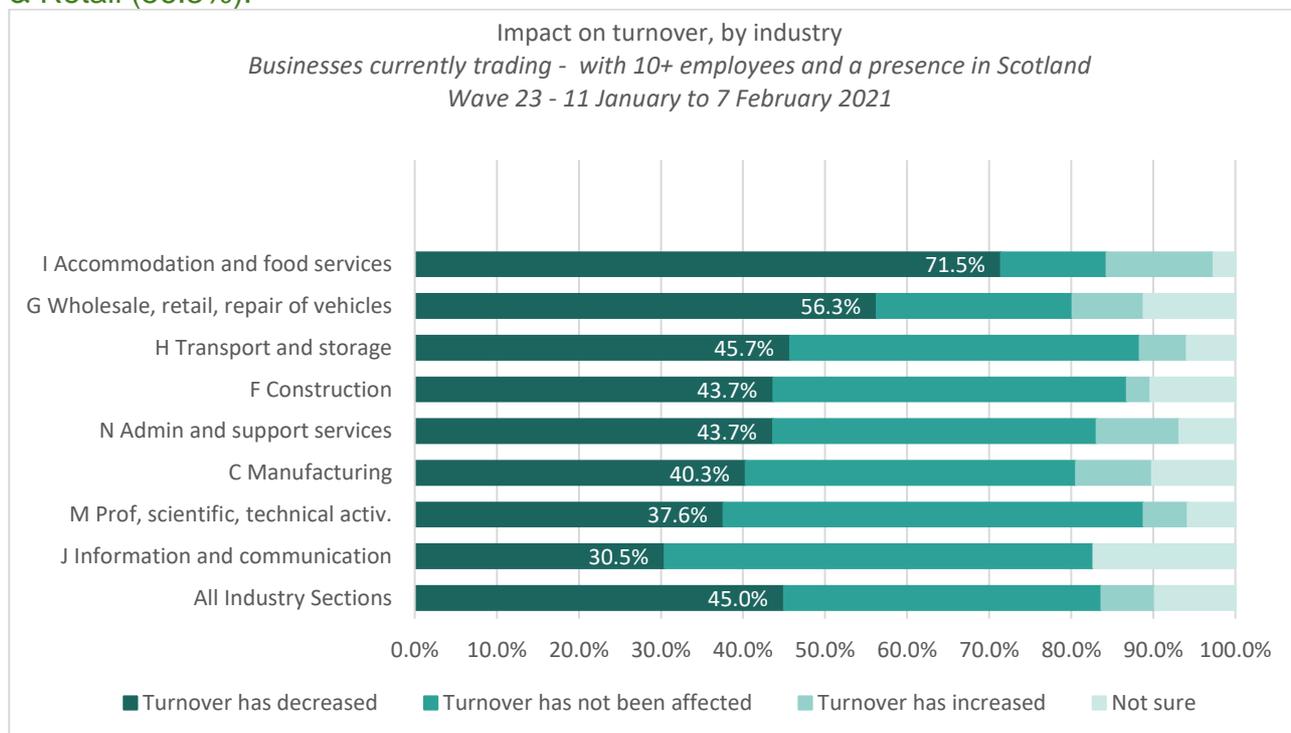
The BICS asks businesses, that are currently trading, about how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the business turnover compared to business as usual - the specific question asked is shown below. Note that businesses were asked about the status of their turnover in the last two weeks and so responses will be from the time of completion of the survey questionnaire (25 January to 7 February 2021 for Wave 23) with the full question reference period (looking back at the last two weeks) covering 11 January to 7 February 2021 for Wave 23.

Financial Performance Question: In the last two weeks, how has the COVID-19 pandemic affected your business’s turnover, compared to what is normally expected for this time of year?:

- Turnover has increased by more than 50%
- Turnover has increased between 20% and 50%
- Turnover has increased by up to 20%
- Turnover has not been affected
- Turnover has decreased by up to 20%
- Turnover has decreased between 20% and 50%
- Turnover has decreased by more than 50%
- Not sure

For presentational purposes, increased turnover categories and decreased turnover categories have been combined. The breakdowns of these categories are available in the detailed data tables.

Figure 5: In the period 11 January to 7 February 2021, there were two industries where more than half of trading businesses experienced a decrease in turnover compared with what is normally expected. These were Accommodation & Food Services (71.5%) and Wholesale & Retail (56.3%).



Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey – Weighted Scotland Estimates – Wave 23

Business Resilience

The BICS asks businesses, that had not permanently stopped trading (i.e. ‘Currently Trading’ or ‘Paused Trading’), about their cash flow - the specific question asked is shown below. Note that businesses were asked about cash flow from the time of completion of the survey questionnaire (25 January to 7 February 2021 for Wave 23).

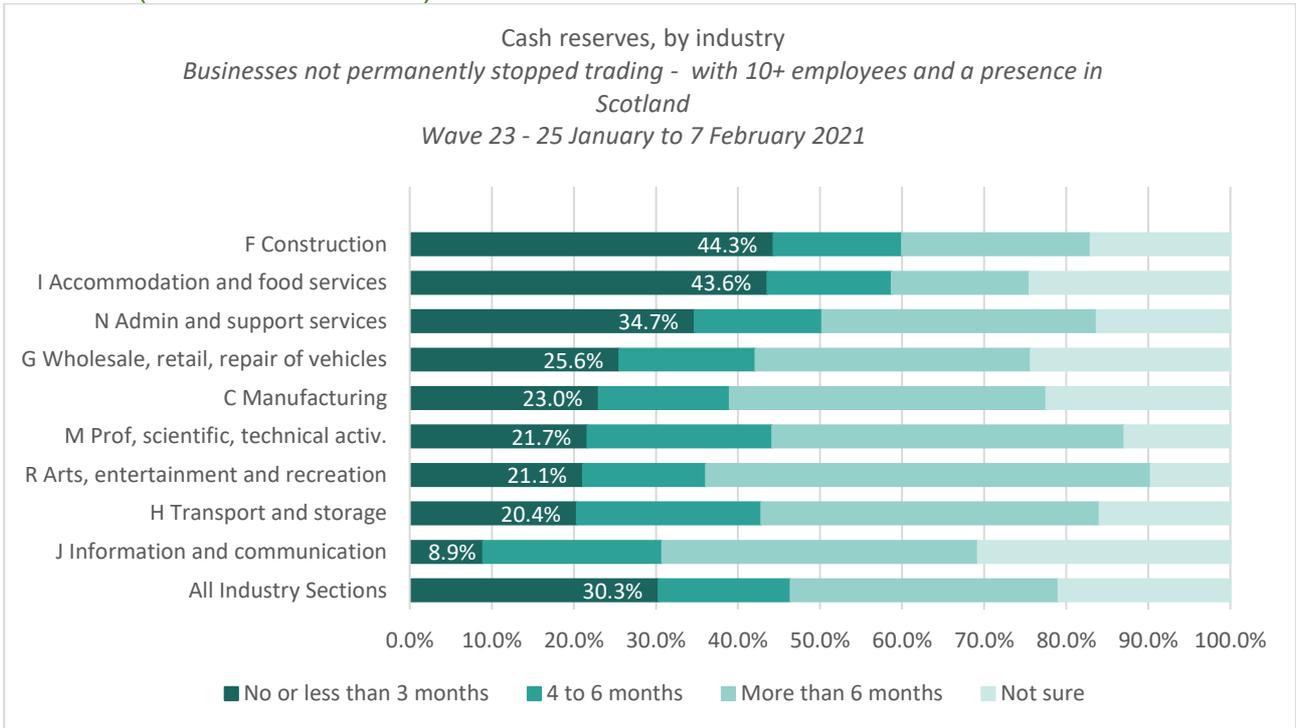
Question: How long do you think your business’s cash reserves will last?:

- No cash reserves
- Less than 1 month
- 1 to 3 months
- 4 to 6 months
- More than 6 months
- Not sure

For presentational purposes, cash reserve categories less than three months have been combined. The breakdowns of these categories are available in the detailed data tables.

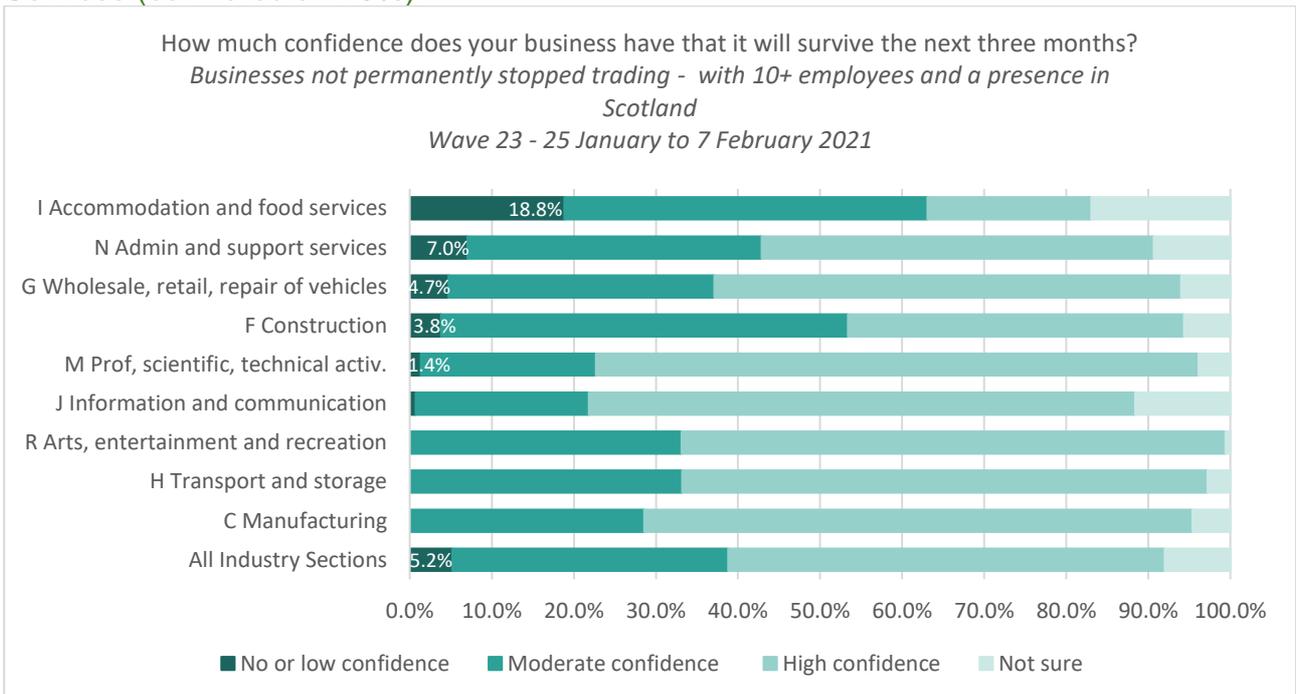
In Wave 23, businesses that had not permanently stopped trading were also asked how much confidence they had that they would survive the next three months.

Figure 6: In the latest period, 30.3% of businesses reported they had no or less than three months cash reserves, with higher rates for Construction (estimated at 44.3%), Accommodation & Food Services (estimated at 43.6%) and Administrative & Support Services (estimated at 34.7%).



Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey – Weighted Scotland Estimates – Wave 23

Figure 7: In the latest period, 5.2% of businesses reported that they had no or low confidence that their business would survive the next three months, with higher rates for Accommodation & Food Services (estimated at 18.8%) and Administrative & Support Services (estimated at 7.0%).



Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey – Weighted Scotland Estimates – Wave 23

Impact on businesses' exporting and importing

The BICS asks businesses that are currently trading about how current conditions, including the end of the EU transition period, have impacted on their exporting and importing – the specific questions asked are shown below.

Question: How does your business's exporting / importing in the last two weeks compare with normal expectations for this time of year?

- Exporting / importing more than normal
- Exporting / importing as normal
- Exporting / importing, but less than normal
- Not been able to export / import in the last two weeks
- Not sure

Figure 8: In the latest period, of businesses currently trading that had exported in the last 12 months, 38% were exporting less than normal, while a further 5% had not been able to export. For importing, around a third of relevant businesses were importing less than normal, while 4% had not been able to import in the latest period.

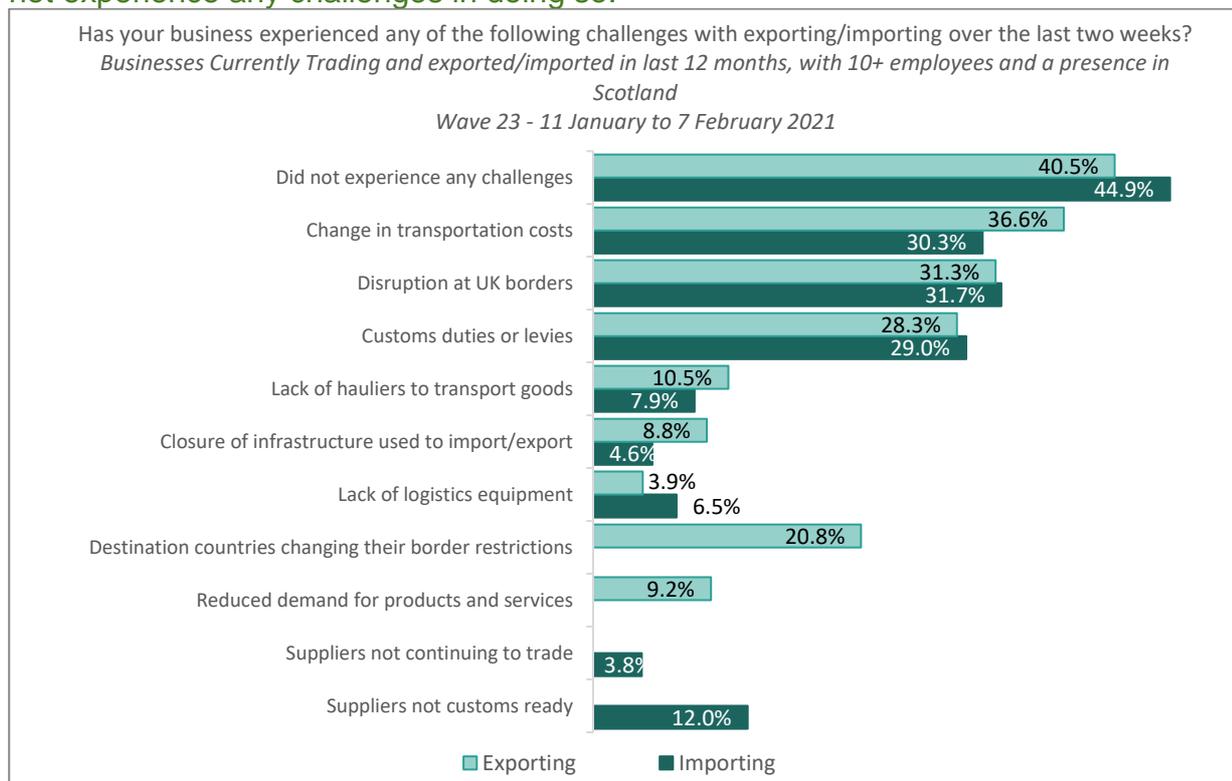


Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey – Weighted Scotland Estimates – Wave 23

This means a higher proportion of businesses reported exporting less than normal than in the previous wave (27.3% in Wave 22). Similarly, a higher proportion of businesses reported importing less than normal than in the previous wave (19.8% in Wave 22).

Currently trading businesses that had imported or exported in the last 12 months, and who reported on their exporting or importing in the last two weeks, were asked about the challenges they had experienced in doing so.

Figure 9: The most commonly reported challenges continue to be a change in transportation costs and disruption at UK borders. However 40% of exporters and 45% of importers did not experience any challenges in doing so.



Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Survey – Weighted Scotland Estimates – Wave 23

The percentage of relevant businesses reporting that they did not experience any challenges in exporting and importing has decreased since Wave 22, which saw 53.6% of businesses reporting no exporting challenges and 58.3% reporting no importing challenges.

Businesses were also asked if they had changed where they sourced their imports of goods or services from in the last two weeks and the majority (85.4%) of relevant importing businesses reported making no changes. Around 3% reported changing from EU to non-EU suppliers, while the rest were unsure.

An Experimental Statistics Publication for Scotland

Experimental statistics are a subset of newly developed or innovative statistics undergoing evaluation. They are published to involve users and stakeholders in the assessment of their suitability and quality at an early stage.

The Office for Statistics Regulation publishes guidance on experimental statistics [here](#). The Scottish Government is developing these estimates on an ongoing basis, and is grateful to the ONS which has shared the BICS data.

We welcome any feedback on the development of these statistics, using the contact details below.

Correspondence and enquiries

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