



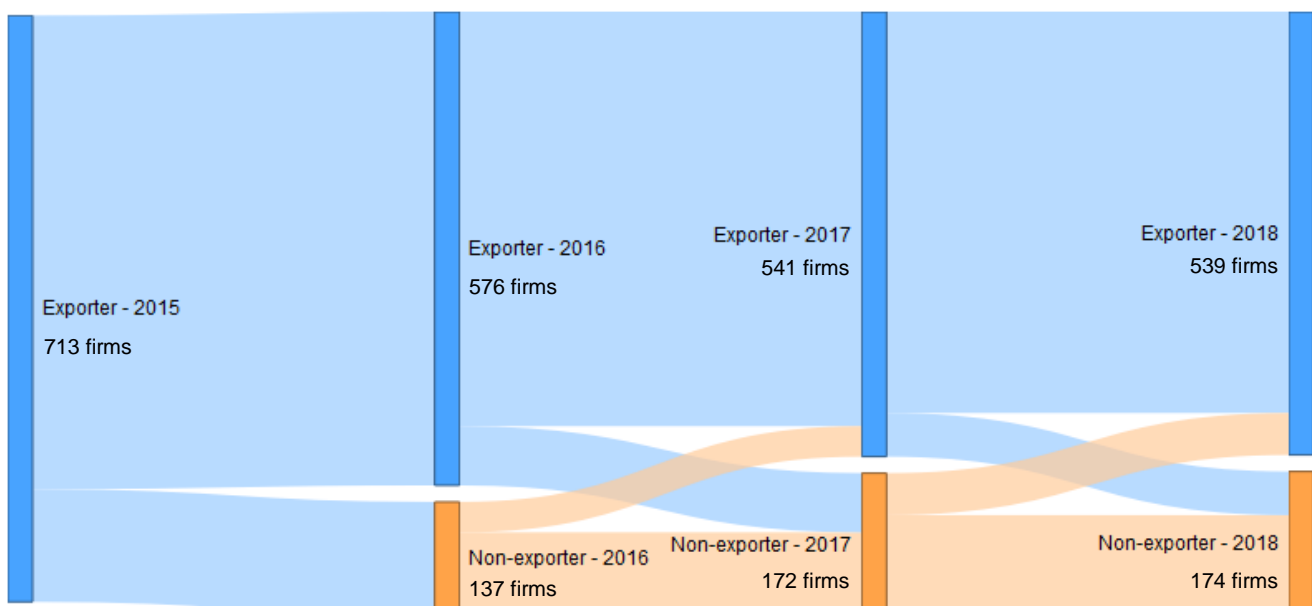
Longitudinal Small Business Survey: panel report – UK, 2015 to 2018

27 June 2019

Official Statistics

- 12% of firms in our longitudinal panel reported growth in employment for each of the four years of the survey. When we asked businesses whether they expected to grow in the next 12 months, 27% of businesses in our panel said they expected to grow in each of the four years.
- Medium-sized businesses in our panel were more likely to report growth in employment during the previous year than smaller businesses. This was the case in each year of the survey except 2016.
- Panellists in 2015 which had innovated products or processes, which had used business support or which had provided training to staff were more likely to be 'high growth firms'.
- The provision of training for staff has been very persistent since the survey began: 67% of businesses in the panel that provided training in 2015 did so in each subsequent year up to 2018. Just 4% did not provide any training after 2015.
- Similarly, there is a high degree of export persistence. Of panellists who were recent exporters in 2015, 65% exported goods or services each year to 2018. The diagram below shows that a relatively small number of panellists switched between being exporters and non-exporters from year to year.

Figure 1: Export persistence from 2015 – panellists who exported goods or services in 2015 and whether they were exporters in 2016, 2017 and 2018



What you need to know about these statistics:

The statistics in this report cover the period from 2015 to 2018 and cover a panel of 2,757 businesses from across the UK. These businesses have taken part in four waves of an annual telephone survey.

The survey covers all industries and the full range of SME sizes, including unregistered businesses often excluded from official surveys. (SME stands for Small and Medium Enterprises – businesses which have fewer than 250 employees, including businesses that have no employees.) Because the survey has been explicitly designed to allow for longitudinal analysis, many questions are repeated across years.

In this report when we refer to business size this is defined entirely in terms of number of employees. Levels of turnover or assets are not part of our definition, though there are definitions of business size which include these.

We have survey weights that can be used in analysis of the panel which make the **weighted** panel representative of the UK SME population in 2015, though this will be representative in terms of business size, country and broad industrial sector only, and not necessarily in terms of behaviours and performance. In this report much of the analysis is based on the **unweighted** data, as the panel should not be thought of as representative of the wider business population anyway, especially when looking at changes in certain variables over time.

The unweighted panel is described as '**balanced**' in this report, to remind you that the distribution of business sizes is fairly even within the panel: there are comparable numbers of panellists in each size category, even though in the actual SME population the smaller that businesses are, the more common they are.

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1. Introducing the LSBS Longitudinal Sample

Introduction

This report provides an overview of data drawn from the first four years of the Longitudinal Small Business Survey (LSBS). In keeping with the overall objective of the LSBS – to explore the causal influences on small business growth and performance – we examine both key trends in the data and the relationships between business growth and some of its antecedents. In particular, we explore whether businesses which expressed significant growth ambition in the initial year of the survey (2015) went on to achieve that ambition. We also briefly consider the causal drivers of sustained and high growth.

For the purposes of the analysis in this report it is important to bear in mind that we are considering the responses of the 2,757 businesses which replied to all four years of the survey which form a balanced panel. LSBS is designed to be representative of the SME¹ population and each cross-sectional survey is weighted to provide representative results. Ensuring representativeness in each year is more difficult when considering the type of longitudinal sample used here, as this would require different weights for each observation in each year. Where results for the *weighted* panel are given in this report, the weights are designed to be representative of the SME population in 2015 with respect to the business sizes, industries and countries. (We use the same weights whether we are looking at estimates for 2015, 2016, 2017 or 2018.) But this weighting does not necessarily correct for the fact that the businesses in the panel differ from non-panellists on key performance indicators such as growth ambition, innovation and so on. So for this report many of the analyses are conducted on the *unweighted* panel. The unweighted panel is much more balanced with respect to business size than the true business population, so larger SMEs are overrepresented in unweighted counts.

Table 1 below presents key performance indicators for the panel sample of businesses. The table compares those that responded consecutively in all four LSBS waves with the non-panel sample, that is, businesses that were interviewed in the first year but did not respond consistently in other years. Panel firms are seen to differ from non-panel firms in several respects. Panellists are significantly more likely to be aiming to grow their firm, to be exporting, innovating and accessing business support and to be accessing external finance. The panel respondents are less likely to be women- or BAME²-led.

Businesses belonging to the LSBS panel are interesting as we can see how their attitudes, behaviours and performance have changed over the four-year period. The group is special, however, both in terms of their survival and their willingness to respond to repeated requests for information. Their survival may mean that our respondent businesses are in some sense ‘stronger’ than the average business. It is more difficult *a priori* to know how any response bias is likely to influence businesses’ responses. In any case, the panel sample offers valuable insights into how businesses respond to changes in a dynamic economic setting, while data from cross sectional surveys can only provide snapshots.

¹ SME stands for Small and Medium Enterprises – in this report this means businesses with fewer than 250 employees, including businesses with no employees at all.

² Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic. In other uses of this survey, the phrase ‘Minority Ethnic Group’ is sometimes used (with acronym ‘MEG’).

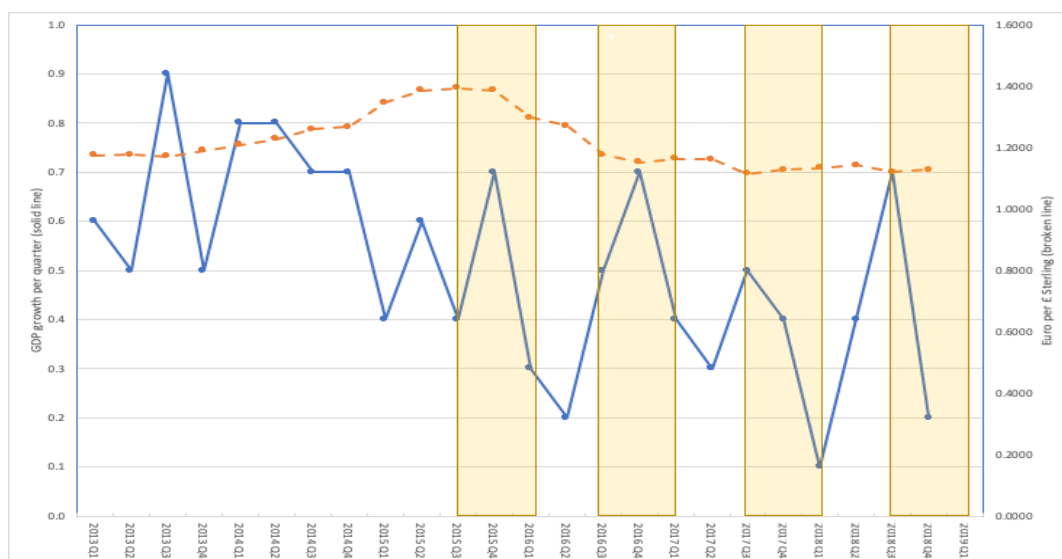
Table 1: key differences between the panel and the overall SME population in 2015

	Non-panel firms	Firms in the longitudinal panel
Percentages	N=12,651	N=2,757
Aiming to grow turnover (3 years)	68%	72%
Women-led firm	17%	13%
BAME-led firm	5%	3%
Exporting firm	21%	26%
Innovating firm	42%	50%
Accessing business support	35%	42%
Accessing external finance	19%	21%
Providing training	74%	77%

Notes: Comparison relates to firms inside and outside the longitudinal panel in 2015. Each of these differences were significant at the 1% level. Observations are unweighted.

One other aspect of the LSBS is also worth noting. The survey is undertaken in the latter half of each year with the majority of responses collected in quarter four. Macro-economic conditions and the political environment at the time of each survey may influence businesses' responses, particularly influencing indicators of ambition or anticipated growth. The 2015 survey followed the re-election of David Cameron and the Conservative government taking over from the coalition in May and significant electoral gains by the Scottish National Party. At the time, Sterling was particularly strong against the Euro, although GDP growth was weaker than the previous year. The 2016 survey followed the EU referendum in June 2016 and the subsequent weakening of the Sterling-Euro exchange rate. The 2017 LSBS survey took place in a period of uncertainty about the period after EU exit and in the context of weakening national growth. The 2018 survey was conducted during a period of even greater EU-related uncertainty (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: timing of the LSBS 2015 to 2018, quarterly GDP growth and the sterling-Euro exchange rate (shaded periods indicate when the surveys took place)



Source: ONS Quarterly GDP growth (IHYQ)

Other firm-specific aspects of the 2018 sample of longitudinal businesses are more stable; particularly those related to the ownership background of the businesses. Overall, 13% of our longitudinal sample of companies are women-led. However, this proportion varies significantly by sector: nearly 26% of businesses in education are women-led, compared to only 6% in the primary sector.

One other aspect of the longitudinal sample worth consideration is whether year-on-year differences are due maturational processes in respondent businesses. However, in 2015, 62% of businesses in the longitudinal sample had been established for more than 20 years, whilst only 2% were less than three years old.

Structure of the report

The LSBS contains a wide range of data on SME characteristics and performance. This report provides a selective overview of the movement and interaction of some of the key indicators. Each table is based on the longitudinal sample – the same group of businesses – and therefore provides an indication of changing strategy, business behaviours and performance among those businesses. The report is organised as follows:

- Section 2 focuses on a range of variables previous research studies have linked to business growth and productivity including exporting, innovation and training. It considers how these have changed during the four years of the longitudinal sample.
- Section 3 focuses on growth and expected growth. What proportion of SMEs seek and anticipate growth? Is this ambition realised? How do the factors considered in the previous section influence whether businesses are able to sustain growth from year to year? How do the drivers of growth influence high growth?
- Section 4 focuses on predicting future high growth episodes.
- Section 5 focuses on ambition and future growth plans.
- Section 6 contains detailed tables related to Section 2.
- Following Section 6 further information on the statistical publication is provided.

2. Trends in the drivers of SME growth

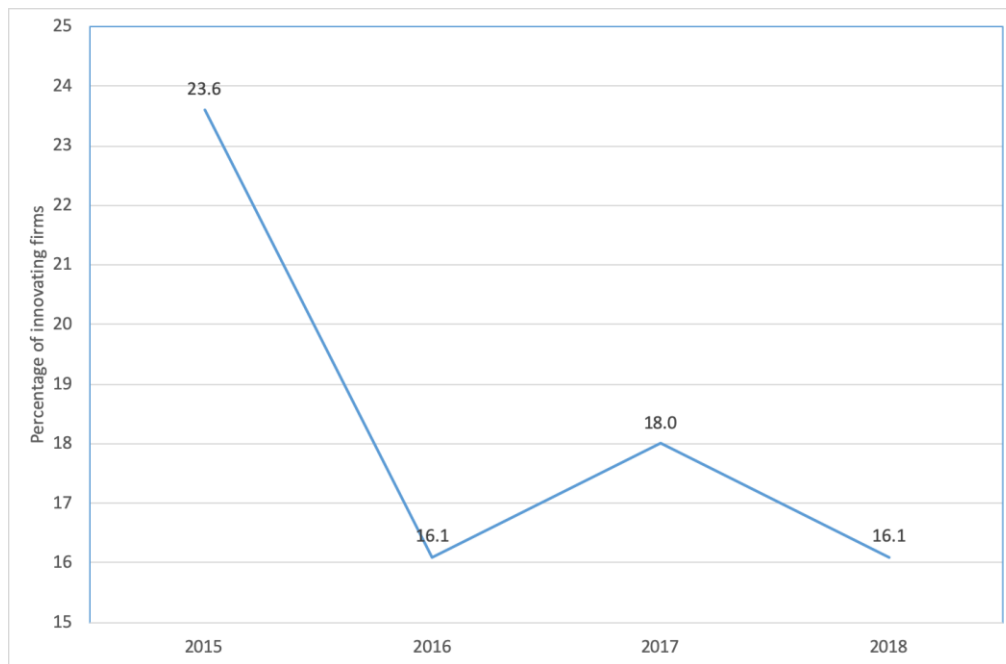
Introduction

In this section we examine an informed set of antecedents of SME growth exploiting the rich information provided by the LSBS. Specifically, we delve into key aspects of SMEs' paths to growth such as exporting and innovation performance, external finance acquisition, business support and employee training. The four-year window available for observing the 2,757 UK SMEs which comprise the LSBS balanced panel offers insights into their behaviour and strategic dynamics.

Innovation

In the LSBS, businesses are asked a series of questions about their process innovation activity. The question is aligned with the UK Innovation Survey³ and the OECD Oslo Manual⁴ and asks about businesses' innovation activity in the three-year period prior to the survey. For all businesses, the proportion of process innovators fell sharply between 2015 (24%) and 2016 (16%) and then remained relatively stable in 2017 and 2018 (see Figure 3). These trends are consistent with the overall trend for all SMEs⁵.

Figure 3: proportion of firms reporting process innovation over the period 2015 - 2018



Source: LSBS 2018

Exporting

In 2015, the weighted panel data shows that 20% of firms in the panel reported exporting either goods or services. This proportion fell marginally to 17% in 2016 and remained relatively stable in 2017 (17%) and 2018 (18%).

Figure 4 below shows year-to-year transitions between exporting and not exporting for SMEs in the retained panel that reported exports in 2015 (713 SMEs). Numbers in the darker boxes represent firms reporting exporting in each period; lighter boxes the number of non-exporting firms. Of the firms which reported exporting in 2015, 81% also reported exports in 2016, with the other 19% of firms dropping out of exporting. It is of note that, of the 19% of firms that ceased exporting activities in 2016 a quarter resumed exporting in 2017.

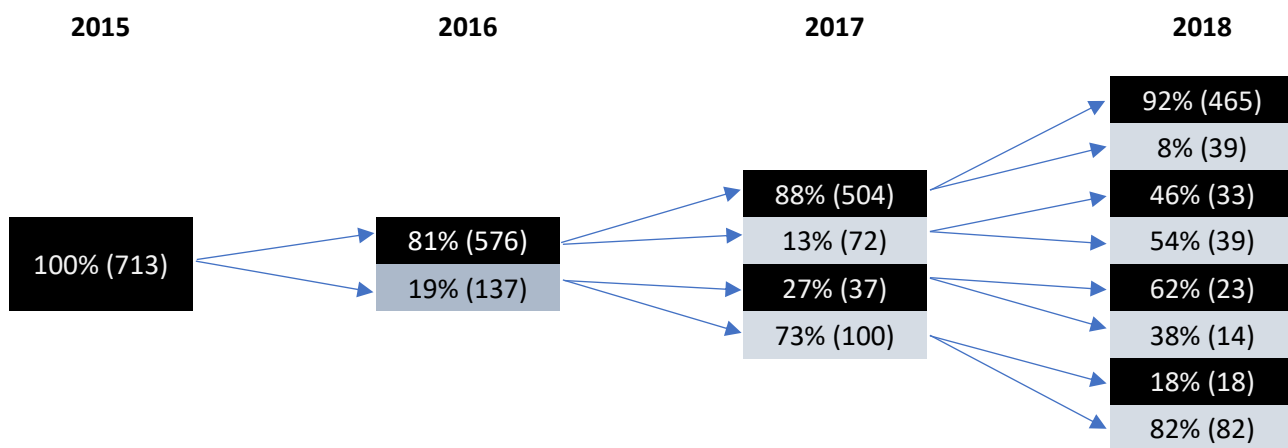
³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/community-innovation-survey>

⁴ <http://www.oecd.org/sti/inno/oslomanualguidelinesforcollectingandinterpretinginnovationdata3rdedition.htm>

⁵ See LSBS Employers Report 2017, p. 12. Available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/small-business-survey-reports#2017>

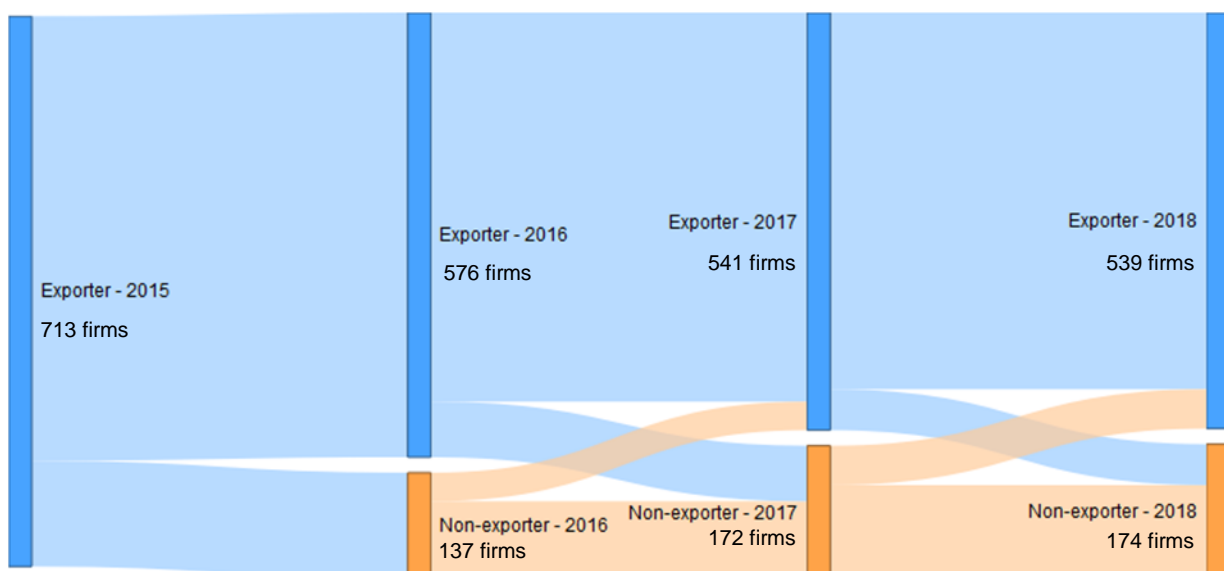
Figure 4: export persistence for the period 2015-2018



Notes: Arrows indicate year-to-year transitions between groups. Totals in 2016 to 2018 may differ marginally due to firms' non-response in a particular year. Unweighted counts.

Figure 5 below is an alternative way of illustrating changes over time between exporters and non-exporters. The chart begins with all 713 panellists who reported being exporters of goods or services during the 12 months before their interview in 2015. We then see that 576 of these panellists reported that they had exported in the 12 months to their interview in 2016, with the others now saying they did not export that year⁶. In 2017, 541 of these original 713 panellists reported that they were recent exporters, but this 541 includes some panellists who were non-exporters in 2016 (though they will have been exporters in 2015). Finally, in 2018, we see a similar number of exporters to that seen in 2017, with a small number of 2018 non-exporters being replaced by 2017 non-exporters who became exporters again.

Figure 5: export persistence for the period 2015-2018

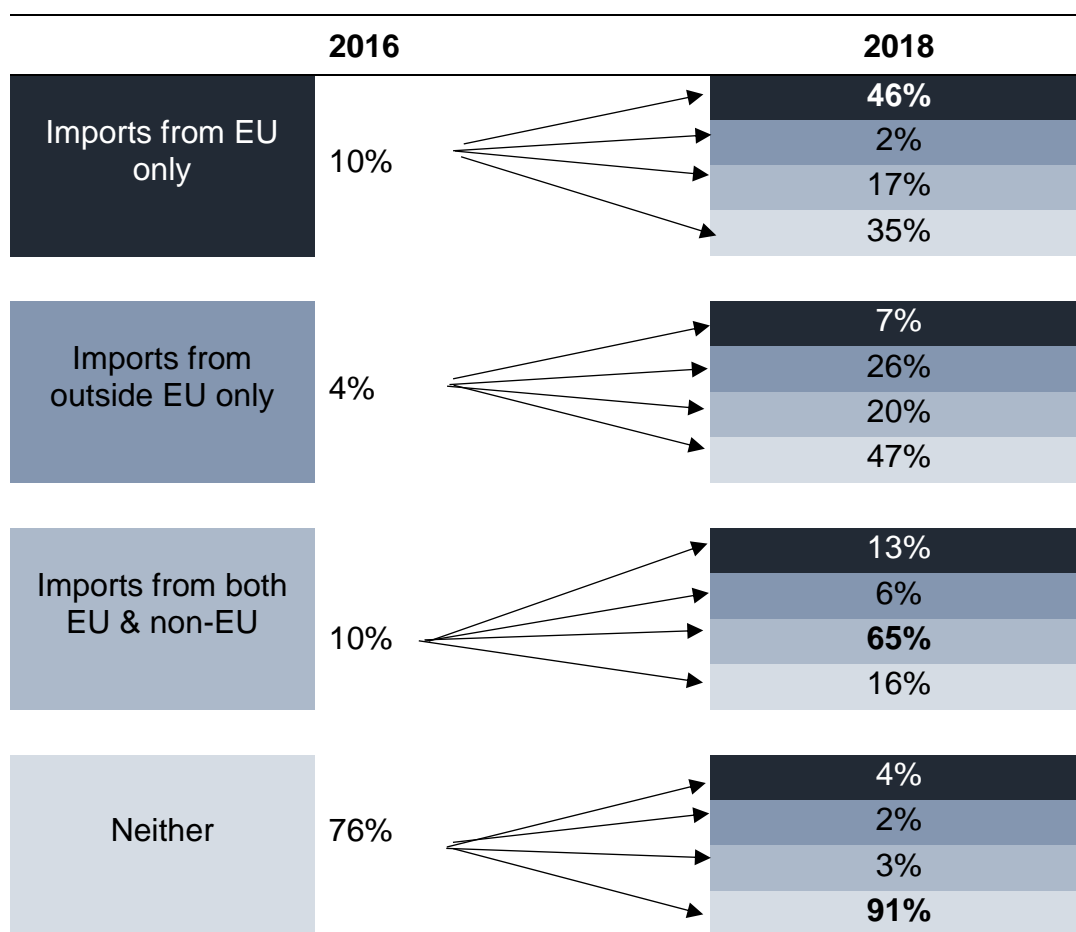


Notes: Year-to-year transitions from 2015 to 2018 for panellists who were exporters in 2015. Unweighted counts.

⁶ Note that panellists are generally interviewed at the same time each year, so there is no overlap between the 12 months to one interview and the 12 months to the interview the following year.

Complementary to exporting activities, imports of UK SMEs present an interesting pattern of change. Weighted data suggests that more than three quarters of UK SMEs (83%) reported no imports in 2016. Unweighted data on the transitions between import categories suggest that nine out of ten of those who reported no imports in 2016 also reported no imports in 2018. Out of the (unweighted) 10% of businesses reporting imports exclusively from EU countries in 2016, less than half continued to import goods and services only from the EU, while 17% of them diversified and sought additional markets outside the EU. Interestingly, a significant proportion of SMEs which were importing in 2016 reported no imports from either the EU or elsewhere in 2018.

Figure 6: import persistence for the period 2016 to 2018



Notes: Arrows indicate year-to-year transitions between groups. Dark blue boxes relate to imports from the EU only; mid-dark to imports from outside the EU only; mid-light to imports from the EU and externally; and light blue no imports. Unweighted.

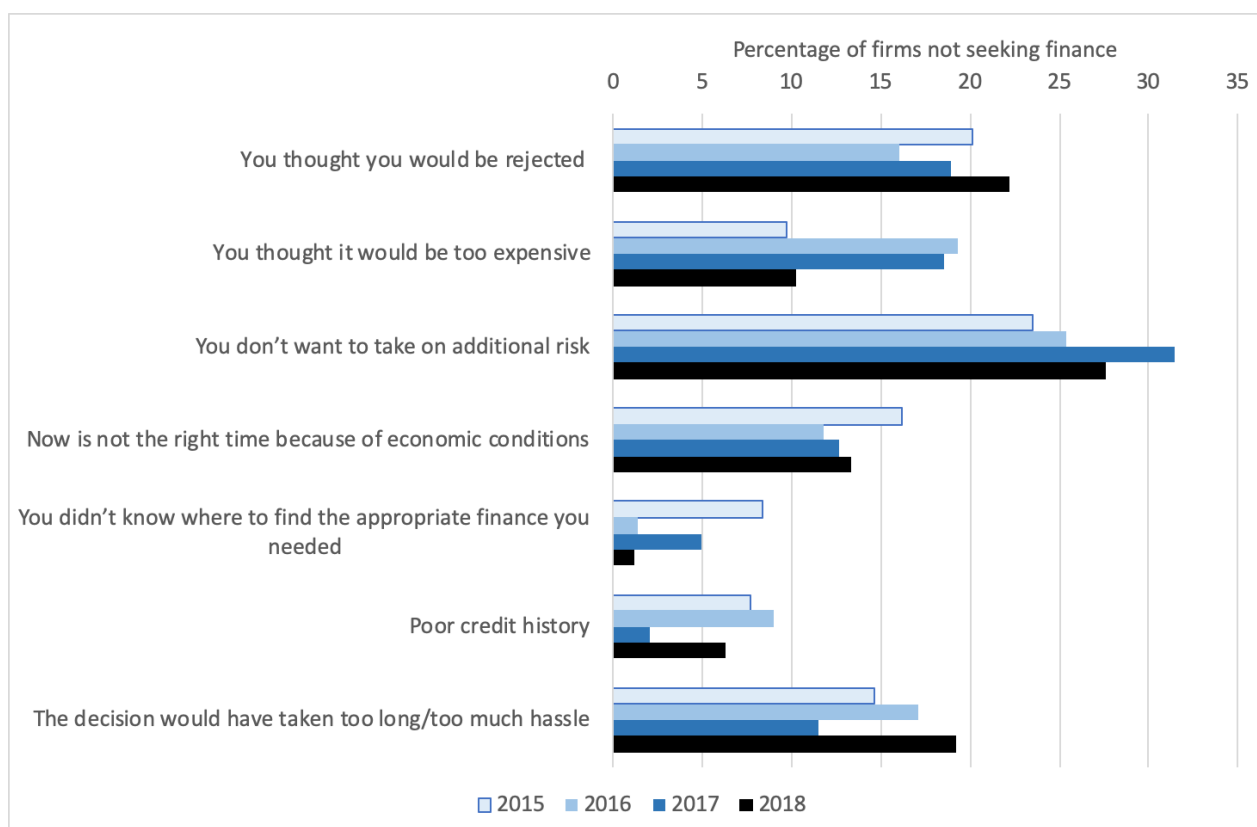
External finance

External finance – whether debt or equity – has often been linked to business growth and performance. In the LSBS respondents are asked whether they have sought external finance in the 12 months prior to the survey. A decreasing trend exists from 2015 to 2017, with stabilisation in the proportion of firms in the panel using external finance in 2018. Specifically,

13% of businesses in the weighted longitudinal panel sought external finance in 2015, falling to 9% in 2017 and 2018. The decline in the proportion of SMEs seeking external finance was consistent across each broad sector and size-band. While this decreasing trend may reflect subdued business expectations regarding their prospective growth, one must also consider other factors such as uncertainty and market volatility, the opportunity cost of internal funding - closely related to business opportunities - and possible quantitative restrictions in the supply of the external capital.

Figure 7 shows reasons panellists gave for not seeking external finance (weighted). The relative significance, or the ranking, of factors remain relatively stable throughout the period 2015 to 2018. Factors related to uncertainty and risk remain the most important in driving businesses' decisions not to seek for external finance. Nonetheless, the fear of rejection, the second most important factor, has become more prevalent while the anticipated cost and the required time and effort involved in the process also seem important.

Figure 7: main reasons for not seeking external finance



Source: LSBS 2018

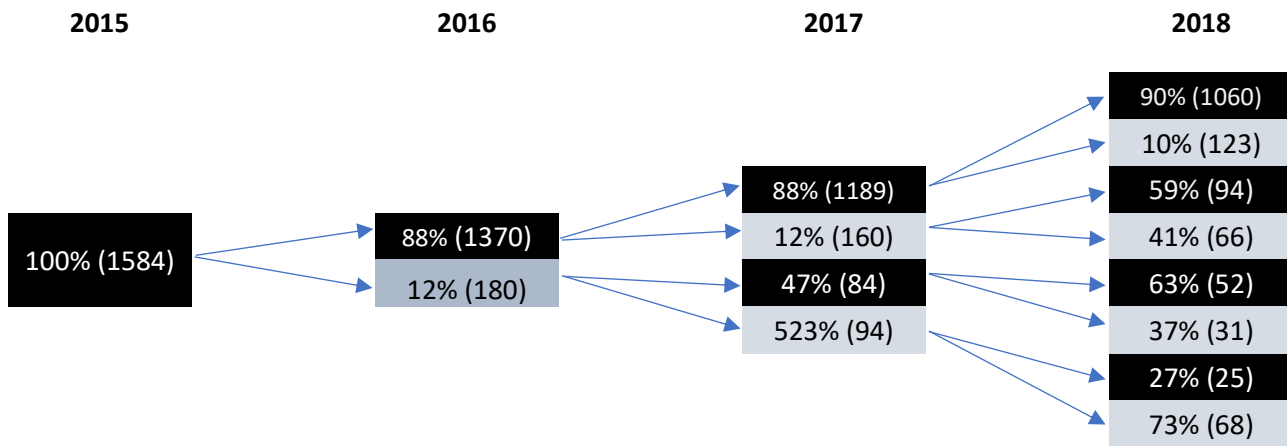
Business support

Another important theme in LSBS is business support. Respondents are asked whether, in the last 12 months, they had sought 'external advice or information on matters affecting your business' involving more than 'casual conversation'. Almost one third of the weighted longitudinal sample sought business support in 2015. By 2018, less than one in four businesses sought such support. The proportion of SMEs seeking external support was consistently highest in Business Services and among larger SMEs.

Training

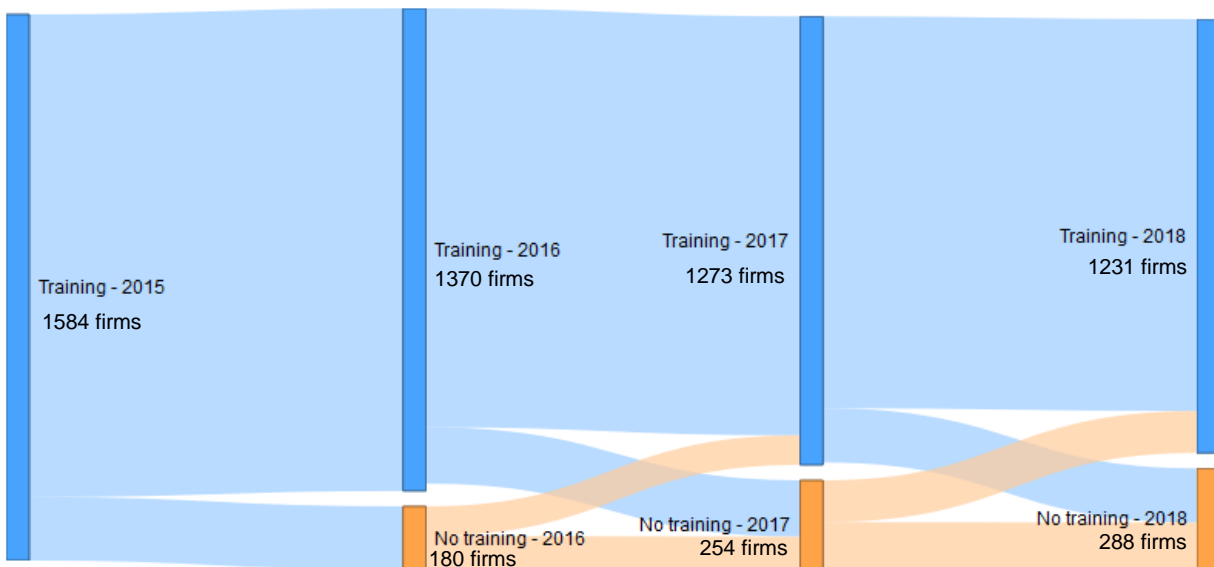
Employee training is considered an important driver of productivity gains and business growth. Despite a continuously decreasing trend, a large proportion of UK SMEs in the sample still participate in either on or off the job training of their employees. In 2015, 1,584 businesses reported providing on or off the job training for their employees. This activity is strongly persistent with 67% of those businesses that originally reported engaging in either on or off the job training continuing to pursue such activities in 2018 (see Figures 8 and 9).

Figure 8: training investment commitment for the period 2015-2018



Notes: Arrows indicate year-to-year transitions between groups. Dark blue boxes indicate businesses continuing to provide training. Light blue indicates a firm not providing training. Totals from 2016 to 2018 may differ marginally due to firms' non-response in a particular year. Unweighted.

Figure 9: training investment commitment for the period 2015-2018



Notes: Year-to-year transitions from 2015 to 2018 for panellists who offered training to employees (either on-the-job or off-the-job) in 2015. Unweighted counts.

3. Growth and expected growth

Introduction

A key theme in the LSBS is business growth, measured by employment and sales. In this section we profile the growth performance of our longitudinal sample of businesses over the period 2015-2018. We then consider how their growth expectations have changed and finally we consider whether their growth expectations were actually achieved.

One of the strengths of the longitudinal data available as part of the LSBS is that they provide a means to compare businesses' aspirations or expectations of growth with subsequent outcomes. Again, however, it is important to acknowledge that this is an analysis based on a highly balanced panel of respondents and may be subject to biases either due to survival and non-survival or patterns of non-response.

Profiling SME growth

The LSBS asks questions about levels of employment and turnover and whether these have changed over the year prior to the survey. We consider each measure in turn. Detailed tables are included in Section 6.

The vast majority of businesses in our longitudinal sample report no change in employment each year – 84% in 2015, falling to 64% and 62% in 2016 and 2017 respectively, but climbing again to almost 87% in 2018. The proportion that increased their number of employees was 5% in 2015, this rose to 28% and 20% in 2016 and 2017 respectively, but subsequently fell to just over 8% in 2018. In 2018, the proportion of businesses reporting a decline in employment levels was just under 5% - the lowest proportion reported over the four years of the survey. (see Table 8).

LSBS asks a similar question relating to businesses' turnover growth over the year prior to the survey and again asks businesses to indicate whether their sales have increased, decreased or remained the same (see Table 9). Overall, the proportion of businesses suggesting that their sales have increased has remained relatively stable over the period 2015 (34%) to 2018 (32%). This stability is also evident across business sectors. Unlike employment we also see no significant increase in the proportion of businesses suggesting a decline in sales. This too remained quite stable throughout the four years: 20% in 2015, 21% in 2018.

It is notable that while a clear majority of businesses reported stable employment throughout the survey period, less than half of respondents reported no change in turnover during each of the four years 2015 to 2018. In a majority of businesses, sales either increased or decreased. This pattern is also evident by size-band. In terms of employment growth over the previous year the proportion of businesses reporting growth increases in each year is higher for larger businesses (see Table 10) although there is a less clear trend between years. We also see an essentially similar pattern for sales growth (see Table 11).

The proportions of businesses reporting employment growth increased in almost all UK regions between 2015 and 2018. However, reported growth in 2018 tended to lower than in 2016 and 2017. Regional disparities in the proportion of growing businesses are substantial with

disparities tending to be higher in 2018 than in 2016 and 2017. There is less regional disparity or change between years in turnover growth (see Table 12).

Expected growth over the next year

The LSBS survey also asks businesses about their expected growth⁷ over the next 12 months. As with actual employment growth over the last year, the vast majority of weighted longitudinal respondents (approximately 80%) anticipated no change in their employment over the next twelve months throughout each year of the survey. We see that 12% of businesses anticipated an increase in job numbers in 2018, a modest drop compared to the three previous years (see Table 13). A larger proportion of respondents anticipated either increases or decreases in sales in the 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018 periods. In 2018, 15% of weighted respondents expected a fall in turnover while about a third (33%) expected increases. These proportions remain broadly similar across the four years (see Table 14).

Disaggregating the group of longitudinal respondents by employment size provides further insight into anticipated growth. In each year, the proportion of businesses anticipating employment growth increases with employment size (see Table 15). There is no clear trend between years. One element of the anticipated growth which is of particular interest is anticipated employment growth by those who are currently self-employed. In 2015, 15% of the self-employed anticipated an increase in employment over the next 12 months. This proportion declined slightly in 2016 to 11% and slightly further to 8% in 2017 and 2018. This marks a slight slowing down in the extent of the anticipated transition from self-employment to employer status.

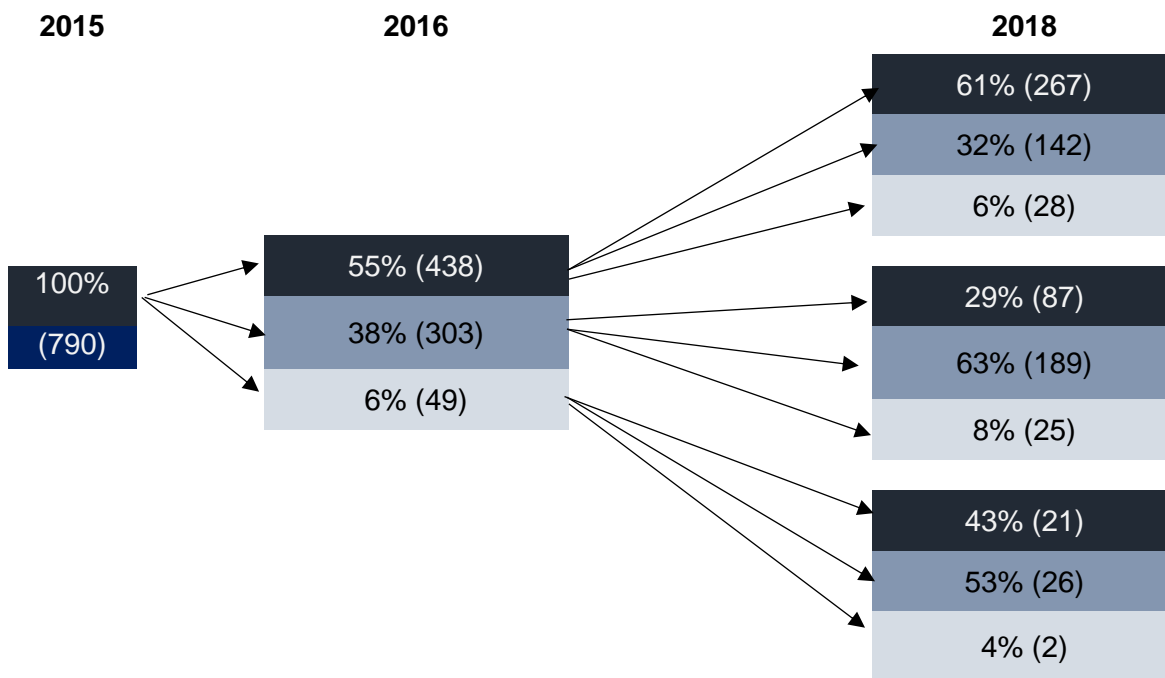
Figures 10 and 11 show the trends in UK businesses' employment growth ambition (unweighted). More specifically, out of 790 businesses which reported an ambition to grow in terms of employment in 2015, only 34% continued to persistently hold this ambition in 2018. In contrast, the levels of UK businesses anticipating a decrease in their levels of employment remain consistently low.

In terms of turnover, there has been a decrease in the weighted proportion of businesses anticipating growth over the 2015 to 2018 period (41% in 2015 and 33% in 2018). Those who are self-employed are less likely to anticipate sales growth than employers and, as with employment, the proportion of businesses anticipating an increase in sales is consistently higher in larger firm size-bands. This pattern is evident in each year of the survey (see Table 16).

By region we also see considerable variation in the weighted proportion of longitudinal respondents anticipating employment or turnover growth (see Table 17). Expectations of increased turnover are clearly more common than expectations of employment growth across all regions. It is notable that there has been a sharp fall in the proportions of businesses anticipating employment growth in a number of regions, particularly those with above average expectations (such as London, Northern Ireland and Scotland). There is a less marked change in the proportion of businesses anticipating growth in turnover. However, for most regions, expectations are somewhat lower in 2018 than they were in 2015.

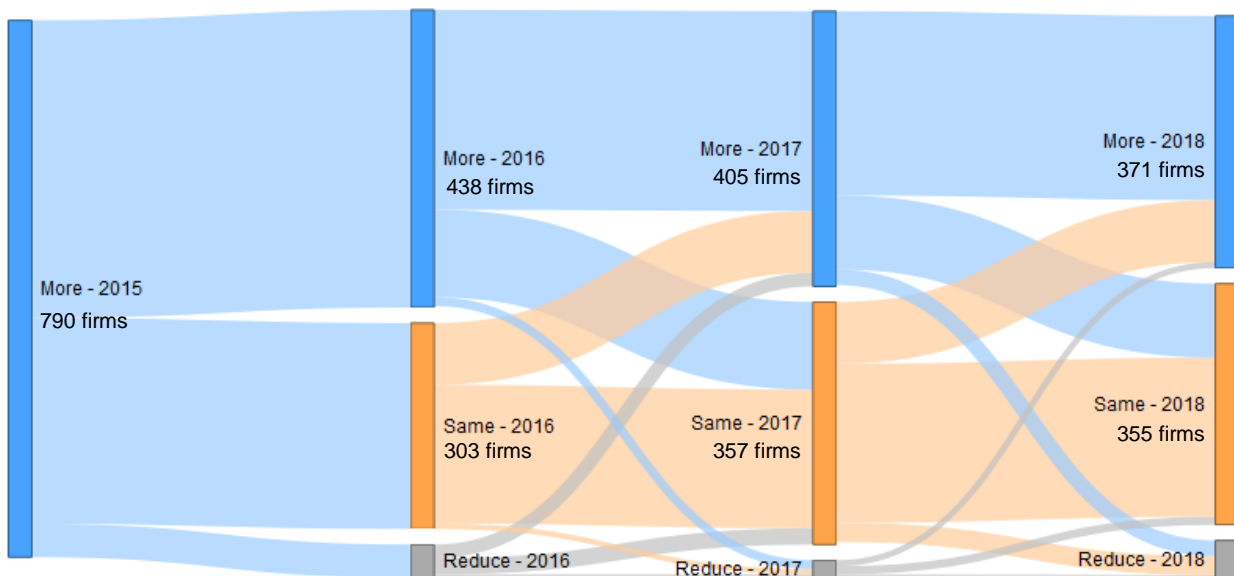
⁷ The response to this question inevitably reflects the respondent's own assessment as well as the broader context within which the firm operates.

Figure 10: one-year growth expectation (employment) for the period 2015-2018



Notes: Arrows indicate year-to-year transitions between groups. Dark blue boxes indicate businesses to have an ambition to grow their employment in each year. Light blue indicates an ambition to reduce employment and mid blue no change in employment. Totals in 2016 to 2018 may differ marginally due to firms' non-response in a particular year. Unweighted.

Figure 11: one-year growth expectation (employment) for the period 2015-2018



Notes: Year-to-year transitions from 2015 to 2018 for panellists who expected to have more employees in the next 12 months in 2015. Unweighted counts.

From expected growth to achieved growth in employment

One of the most significant benefits of having longitudinal data such as that in the LSBS is being able to track firm growth through time. Here, we consider whether businesses in the longitudinal sample which anticipated employment and turnover growth over the next year were able to realise these expectations. This comparison relates to discussions in the research literature on a tendency to over-optimism amongst business owners and entrepreneurs⁸.

One note of caution is relevant in considering these results. Overall, the subset of businesses in the longitudinal sample that anticipated growth over the next 12 months is only around 800 businesses. Breaking this sample down further, such as by region, reduces sample sizes suggesting a degree of caution is necessary in interpreting regional differences.

In 2015, almost 18% of all businesses in the longitudinal sample anticipated employment growth over the next twelve months. Slightly more than half (52%) of these businesses realised this expectation. Conversely, almost one in ten businesses (9%) that anticipated growth in employment actually experienced a fall over the next year. In 2015 the proportion of businesses achieving their anticipated growth was highest in transport, retail and food services and business services. There were more significant regional variations with over 70% of businesses achieving their anticipated growth in Scotland compared to under one third of businesses in the South West (see Table 18).

In 2016, one in seven businesses in the longitudinal sample (15%) were anticipating employment growth. Of these only a third (33%) experienced jobs growth in the next year. Sectoral variations in the proportion of businesses achieving their growth expectations were very similar to those in previous years and again there was substantial regional variation. Almost two fifths of all businesses in the longitudinal sample in the North West (39%) achieved their growth expectations compared to less than one in six (15%) in Northern Ireland (see Table 19).

Of those businesses anticipating employment growth in 2017 (12% of the sample), just over a quarter (26%) achieved growth, almost two thirds (63%) showed no change while more than 12% actually experienced a decline in employment.

Table 2: actual turnover growth in businesses that expected to grow turnover in the next year (percentage of businesses that expected growth in turnover over the next year)

Year	Proportion whose turnover declined	Proportion whose turnover did not change	Proportion whose turnover increased
2015	16%	34%	49%
2016	13%	31%	56%
2017	14%	31%	55%

Notes and Sources: Based on longitudinal respondents' sample expecting turnover growth (N=1,083 in 2015; N=892 in 2016 and N=907 in 2017). Responses are weighted to give representative results. Source: LSBS 2018.

⁸ For example see: Poblete, C., et al. (2019). "How do motivational factors influence entrepreneurs' perception of business opportunities in different stages of entrepreneurship?" *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology* **28**(2): 179-190.

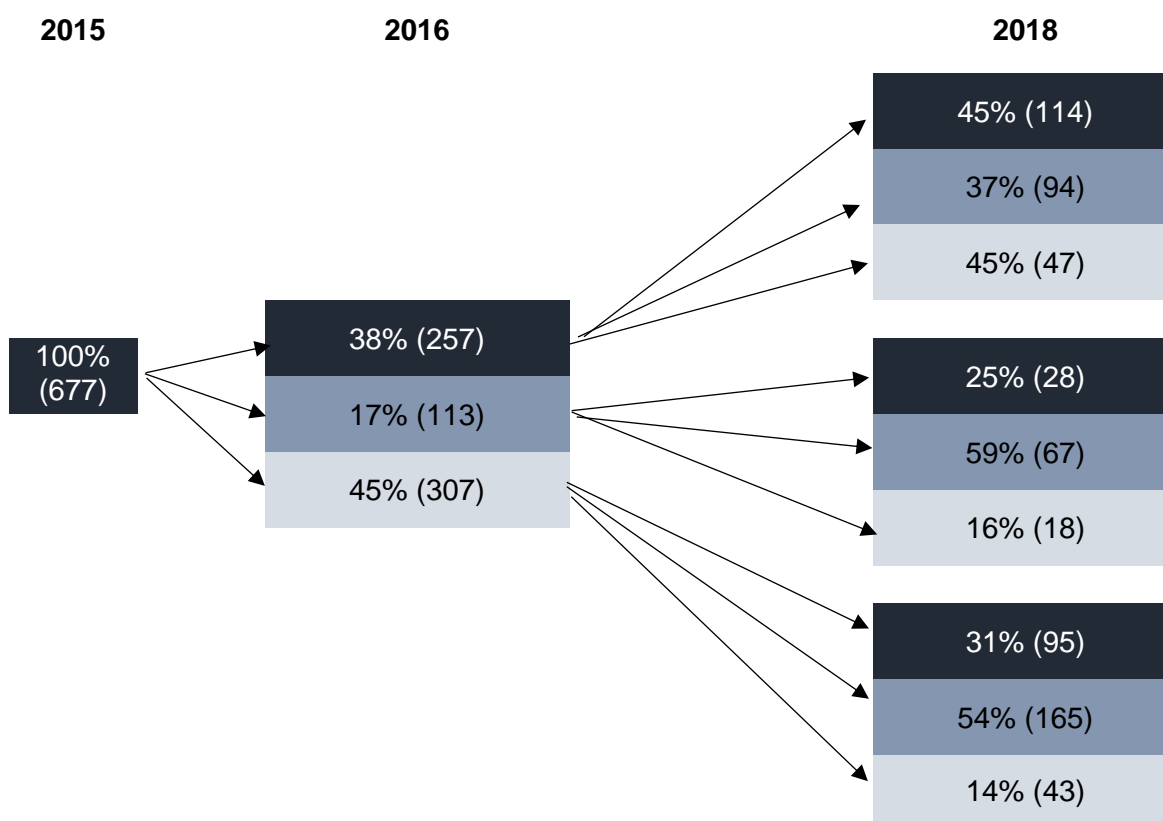
Aggregate results on anticipated and achieved growth for turnover are reported in Table 2. Around a third of businesses anticipated turnover growth over the next 12 months in each year and approximately half of those businesses actually went on to grow their sales over the next 12 months.

Achieving continuous growth

Other longitudinal datasets such as the Business Structure Database provide detailed information on the growth histories of individual businesses. LSBS allows us to consider what proportion of businesses are able to sustain growth in either employment or turnover and also to compare the characteristics of businesses in each group.

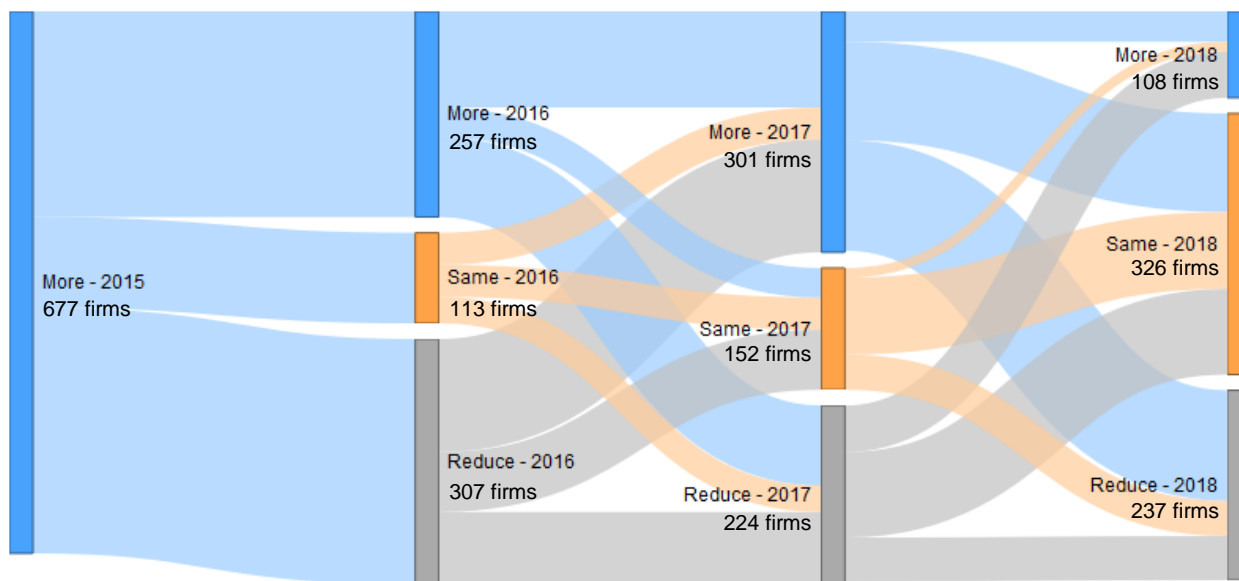
Figures 12 and 13 illustrate the continuity of growth over the four years of the LSBS survey for the 677 businesses in the unweighted retained panel which exhibited growth in the year before the 2015 survey. Of these around 38% also experienced growth in jobs in 2016, and 34% of these firms had sustained growth up to 2018.

Figure 12: employment growth trajectories of businesses in the longitudinal LSBS sample 2015 to 2018



Notes: Arrows indicate year-to-year transitions between groups. Dark blue boxes indicate businesses expecting to grow employment in each year. Light blue indicates employment declines and mid blue no change in employment. Totals in 2016 to 2018 may differ marginally due to firms' non-response in a particular year. Unweighted.

Figure 13: employment growth trajectories of businesses in the longitudinal LSBS sample 2015 to 2018



Notes: Year-to-year transitions in annual employment growth from 2015 to 2018 for panellists who reported having more employees in 2015. 'More – 2016' are the firms who grew in employment in 2016 compared to 2015, 'Same – 2016' are the firms with the same number of employees between 2015 and 2016 and 'Reduce – 2016' are the firms with fewer employees in 2016 compared to 2015. Some panellists did not answer this question in 2018. Unweighted counts.

4. Predicting future high growth episodes

Sustained growth

One area of obvious interest is whether there are firm characteristics or strategies which mark out the group which achieved consistent growth. We can examine this using a series of simple statistical models⁹ (see Table 3).

We consider two alternative comparator groups. First, those businesses which achieved growth in 2015. Second, a wider comparator group of all businesses (with 10 employees or more) which did not achieve consistent growth. This second comparator group is broader and includes businesses which did not grow their employment in 2015. (We restrict our attention to businesses with at least 10 employees to be in line with the OECD definition of high growth discussed later in this report.) In each case we include as potential explanatory variables reported in 2015 the range of factors discussed earlier in this report – such as exporting and innovation – which previous studies have linked to business performance. We estimate two variants of each model including weighted and unweighted estimates. The models also include sectoral and regional controls (not reported).

⁹ Probit models with the dependent variable of whether or not the business achieved continuous growth.

Table 3: predicting the probability of sustained growth (2015 to 2018)

Baseline group:	Businesses increasing employment in 2015	All businesses other than those growing consistently	Businesses increasing employment in 2015	All businesses other than those growing consistently
	Unweighted	Unweighted	Weighted	Weighted
Employment 2015 ¹⁰	0.005** (0.002)	0.004** (0.002)	0.006*** (0.002)	0.005*** (0.002)
Exporting firm 2015	0.032 (0.203)	0.223 (0.173)	0.301 (0.216)	0.228 (0.185)
Innovator 2015	0.088 (0.192)	0.138 (0.160)	0.304 (0.203)	0.349** (0.167)
Women-owned business	0.367 (0.227)	0.226 (0.189)	0.220 (0.248)	0.141 (0.213)
BAME owners or directors	0.053 (0.350)	0.156 (0.313)	0.051 (0.423)	0.157 (0.383)
Business support use 2015	0.082 (0.187)	0.163 (0.158)	0.107 (0.195)	0.212 (0.164)
External finance use 2015	0.161 (0.191)	0.172 (0.164)	-0.025 (0.207)	0.007 (0.177)
Provided staff training	0.795* (0.475)	0.678* (0.411)	0.524 (0.410)	0.433 (0.360)
Constant term	-2.833*** (0.718)	-2.447*** (0.558)	-2.394*** (0.658)	-2.122*** (0.727)
No of observations	386	833	386	833
Chi ²	41***	51***	62***	111***
R ²	0.136	0.136	0.150	0.171
BIC	388.	475	361	396

Notes: Based on longitudinal respondents' sample with more than 10 employees. Standard errors in brackets. *, ** and *** denote significance at 10%, 5% and 1% level respectively. Models include sectoral and regional controls. **Source:** LSBS 2018.

The models are uniformly weak with few significant variables, suggesting a weak link between these potential predictors of growth and sustainable growth outcomes. This reflects the difficulty of the 'picking the winners' problem noted elsewhere.

Understanding high growth – the OECD definition

The OECD definition of a high growth firm requires that a firm is more than three years old, has initial employment of ten or more employees and that it achieves average growth of either employment or turnover of 20% per annum for three consecutive years. About 6% of businesses in the longitudinal sample of the LSBS would be classified as high-growth on the employment definition and about 9% on the turnover definition. However, the correlation

¹⁰ Number of employees in 2015

between the two measures is relatively weak: only around a third of firms that are high growth using the turnover definition are also high growth firms using the employment definition.

As with the analysis of sustained growth considered earlier it is also interesting to consider what firm characteristics in 2015 are associated with subsequent high growth. Table 4 summarises the characteristics of high-growth and other firms in the longitudinal sample. Table 5 reports some simple probit models to link these factors to subsequent high growth. In terms of the employment definition, high growth firms are active across a range of activities (exporting, innovating, training and using business support). Similar contrasts are evident in terms of the turnover definition. A number of these factors – innovation, use of business support and staff training - are also predictive of subsequent high growth. Innovating businesses are 13% to 23% more likely to achieve subsequent high growth on the employment definition. Firms providing staff training are 55% to 59% more likely to subsequently achieve high growth on the employment definition. We find no significant effect of either female or BAME leadership on the probability of achieving high growth.

Table 4: characteristics of high-growth and non-high-growth firms

	Employment definition		Turnover definition	
	Non-high growth N=1142	High-growth N=108	Non-high growth N=1088	High-growth N=157
Employment 2015	45%***	35%	45%***	37%
Exporting firm 2015	30%**	35%	31%	30%
Innovator 2015	52%***	61%	52%***	59%
Women-owned	19%	22%	19%	23%
BAME owners or	5%	6%	5%	6%
Business support use	50%***	55%	49%***	58%
External finance use	28%**	29%	28%***	29%
Provided staff training	90%***	91%	91%***	87%

Notes: Based on longitudinal respondents' sample with at least 10 employees. Observations are unweighted. *** denotes significant difference at the 1% level and ** at the 5% level. **Source:** LSBS 2018.

Table 5: predicting the probability of high growth (OECD definition)

	Employment definition	Turnover definition	Employment definition	Turnover definition
	Unweighted	Unweighted	Weighted	Weighted
Employment 2015	0.001	0.003**	0.010***	0.013***
	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Exporting firm 2015	0.078	0.117	0.173	0.148
	(0.127)	(0.115)	(0.124)	(0.112)
Innovator 2015	0.138	0.018	0.225**	0.1
	(0.119)	(0.105)	(0.112)	(0.098)
Women-owned business	0.163	0.184	0.113	0.138
	(0.144)	(0.127)	(0.149)	(0.123)
BAME owners or directors	-0.136	-0.217	-0.071	-0.196
	(0.303)	(0.269)	(0.314)	(0.301)
Business support use 2015	0.099	0.228**	0.118	0.195*
	(0.116)	(0.103)	(0.112)	(0.103)
External finance use 2015	0.033	0.138	-0.035	0.128
	(0.132)	(0.115)	(0.131)	(0.115)
Provided staff training	0.546***	0.083	0.593***	0.156
	(0.176)	(0.131)	(0.156)	(0.111)
Constant term	-2.277***	-2.233***	-2.871***	-2.204***
	(0.389)	(0.453)	(0.329)	(0.302)
No of observations	1471	1515	1471	1515
Chi ²	41	50	143	206
R ²	0.068	0.063	0.131	0.113
BIC	729	912	399	456

Notes: Based on longitudinal respondents' sample with at least 10 employees. Standard errors in brackets. *, ** and *** denote significance at 10%, 5% and 1% level respectively. Models include sectoral and regional controls. **Source:** LSBS 2018.

Smaller high growth firms

The OECD definition omits a range of businesses from the calculation by focusing only on those with ten or more employees. The minimum growth necessary in terms of employment to count as a high growth enterprise is eight employees; just greater than the effect of compound growth of 20% per year over three years. Smaller firms may also grow by this amount of course when businesses have fewer than ten employees but have increased their employment by this amount or more over three years.

Table 6 examines those variables which might help to predict high growth among micro-businesses. Few factors prove significant, again emphasising the difficulty of picking winners from this group.

Table 6: predicting high growth among micro-businesses: employment definition

	Unweighted	Weighted
Employment 2015	0.067	0.048
	(0.054)	(0.064)
Exporting firm 2015	-0.1	-0.268
	(0.350)	(0.215)
Innovator 2015	0.272	0.433
	(0.291)	(0.287)
Women-owned business	0.103	-0.051
	(0.383)	(0.314)
BAME owners or directors	-0.876**	-0.647*
	(0.402)	(0.361)
Business support use 2015	-0.369	-0.49
	(0.441)	(0.436)
External finance use 2015	-0.02	0.027
	(0.293)	(0.320)
Provided staff training	-2.031***	-1.354**
	(0.611)	(0.540)
Constant term	0.067	0.048
	(0.054)	(0.064)
No of observations	510	510
Chi ²	12	55
R ²	0.113	0.149
BIC	200	208

Notes: Based on longitudinal respondents' sample with fewer than 10 employees. Standard errors in brackets. *, ** and *** denote significance at 10%, 5% and 1% level respectively. Models include sectoral and regional controls. **Source:** LSBS 2018.

5. Ambition and future growth plans

Introduction

Alongside the retrospective questions included in the LSBS the survey also includes forward looking indicators relating to businesses' growth ambition and strategic intentions over the next three years. These indicators – discussed in this section – provide an indication of levels of optimism about future growth among the balanced panel of respondents. Note here that the time horizon over which ambitions and businesses' strategic intent is measured is three years rather than the single year asked of anticipated growth discussed earlier in this report.

Sales growth ambition

LSBS asks a question as to whether businesses 'aim to grow the sales of the business over the next three years'. Overall, levels of growth ambition have remained broadly stable in the panel of businesses over four years with 58% of businesses aiming to grow in 2015 compared to 59% in 2018.

When respondents to the LSBS survey indicate they are aiming to grow their sales over the next three years they are then asked by how much. The results are summarised in Table 7. The profile of growth ambition is rather similar through time. However, fewer businesses aimed to achieve high levels of growth in 2018 than previously and a greater proportion were aiming for lower levels of growth.

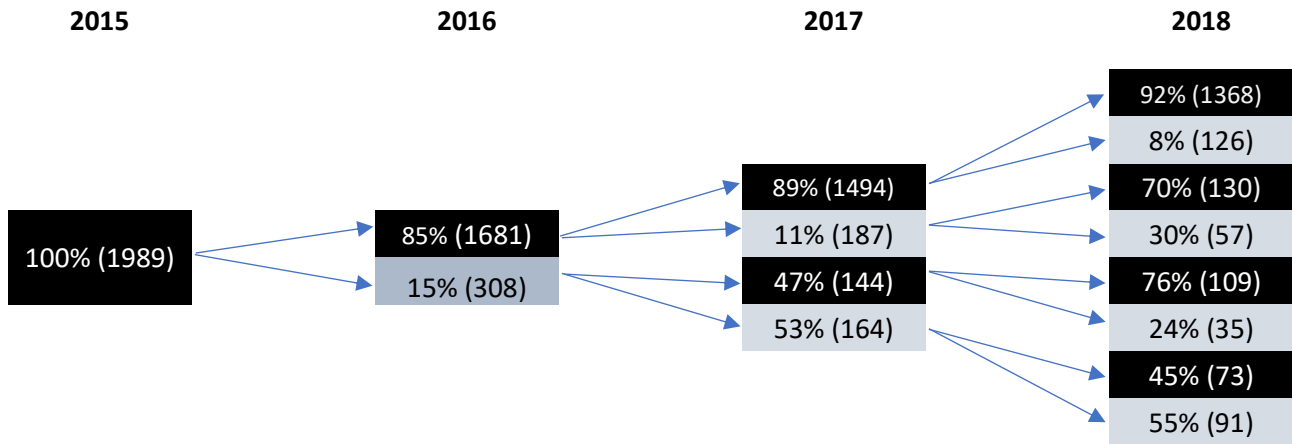
Table 7: sales growth objective over the next three years (percentage of businesses with a growth objective)

growth in sales	2015	2016	2017	2018
1% – 9%	15%	19%	16%	25%
10% – 24%	36%	41%	41%	43%
25% – 49%	19%	20%	17%	16%
50% – 74%	13%	9%	12%	7%
75% – 99%	2%	1%	1%	1%
100% or more	15%	11%	13%	8%

Notes and Sources: Based on longitudinal respondents' sample who indicated an aim to grow sales over the next three years (N=1,271 to 1,399). Responses are weighted to give representative results. Source: LSBS 2018.

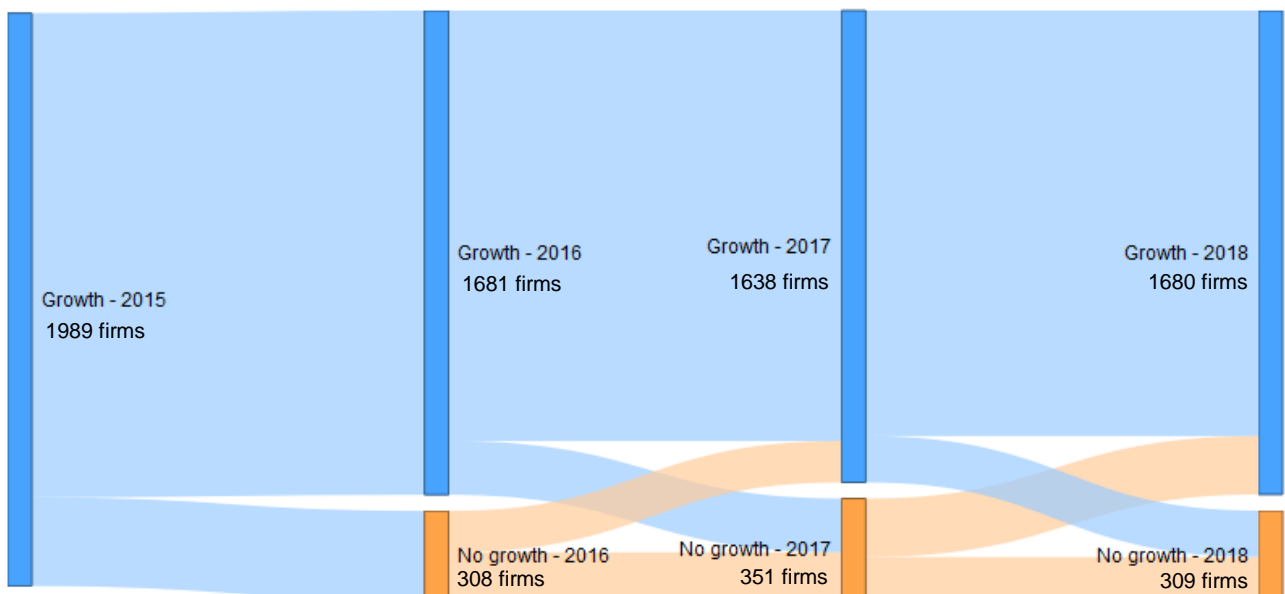
Figures 14 and 15 present the evolution of UK SMEs growth ambition for the period 2015 to 2018. More specifically, at the beginning of the observation period, 1,989 firms in the unweighted retained panel businesses reported that they aimed to grow their sales within three years' time. Over the period 2016 to 2018 this percentage remained very high with more than 68% of businesses remaining continually ambitious in terms of their future turnover growth. This is perhaps an indication that UK SMEs have remained confident that the UK economy will continue to offer opportunities and favourable conditions for businesses to grow.

Figure 14: evolution of medium-term growth ambition (turnover) for the period 2015-2018



Notes: Arrows indicate year-to-year transitions between groups. Dark blue boxes indicate businesses continuing to have an ambition to grow the firm’s turnover over the next three years. Light blue indicates no growth ambition. Totals in 2016 to 2018 may differ marginally due to firms’ non-response in a particular year. Unweighted.

Figure 15: evolution of medium-term growth ambition (turnover) for the period 2015-2018



Notes: Year-to-year transitions from 2015 to 2018 for panellists who, in 2015, expected to see growth in turnover over the next three years. ‘Growth – 2016’ are the firms which, in 2016, expected to see growth in turnover over the next three years. ‘No growth – 2016’ are the firms not expecting growth (either zero growth or negative growth). Unweighted counts.

6. Detailed tables

Table 8: employment growth over the previous year, by sector

	Decreased %	Stayed the same %	Increased %
	2015		
Production and construction (ABCDEF)	11	85	4
Transport, retail and food service (GHI)	14	78	8
Business services (JKLMN)	7	86	6
Other services (PQRS)	10	88	2
All businesses	10	85	5
	2016		
Production and construction (ABCDEF)	7	66	27
Transport, retail and food service (GHI)	12	58	30
Business services (JKLMN)	8	60	31
Other services (PQRS)	4	73	23
All businesses	8	64	28
	2017		
Production and construction (ABCDEF)	19	62	19
Transport, retail and food service (GHI)	20	54	25
Business services (JKLMN)	22	58	20
Other services (PQRS)	9	72	19
All businesses	18	62	20
	2018		
Production and construction (ABCDEF)	6	87	8
Transport, retail and food service (GHI)	8	79	12
Business services (JKLMN)	4	89	7
Other services (PQRS)	2	90	7
All businesses	5	87	8

Notes and Sources: Based on longitudinal respondents' sample (N=2,757). Responses are weighted to give representative results. Source: LSBS 2018.

Table 9: turnover growth over the previous year, by sector

	Decreased %	Stayed the same %	Increased %
	2015		
Production and construction (ABCDEF)	26	43	31
Transport, retail and food service (GHI)	22	44	34
Business services (JKLMN)	17	46	38
Other services (PQRS)	15	53	32
All businesses	20	47	34
	2016		
Production and construction (ABCDEF)	23	50	27
Transport, retail and food service (GHI)	21	42	37
Business services (JKLMN)	21	41	38
Other services (PQRS)	19	54	27
All businesses	21	47	32
	2017		
Production and construction (ABCDEF)	17	50	33
Transport, retail and food service (GHI)	16	47	37
Business services (JKLMN)	22	44	34
Other services (PQRS)	21	51	28
All businesses	19	48	33
	2018		
Production and construction (ABCDEF)	23	50	28
Transport, retail and food service (GHI)	23	42	35
Business services (JKLMN)	23	42	34
Other services (PQRS)	15	54	31
All businesses	21	47	32

Notes and Sources: Based on longitudinal respondents' sample (N=2,757). Responses are weighted to give representative results. Source: LSBS 2018.

Table 10: employment growth over the previous year, by size-band

	Decreased %	Stayed the same %	Increased %
	2015		
No employees	9	91	0
Micro (1 – 9)	13	70	17
Small (10 – 49)	14	51	35
Medium (50 – 249)	10	31	59
All businesses	10	85	5
	2016		
No employees	0	75	25
Micro (1 – 9)	30	34	36
Small (10 – 49)	35	21	44
Medium (50 – 249)	47	16	37
All businesses	8	64	28
	2017		
No employees	13	70	17
Micro (1 – 9)	31	39	31
Small (10 – 49)	38	23	39
Medium (50 – 249)	37	16	47
All businesses	18	62	20
	2018		
No employees	3	92	6
Micro (1 – 9)	10	76	14
Small (10 – 49)	19	56	25
Medium (50 – 249)	20	47	32
All businesses	5	87	8

Notes and Sources: Based on longitudinal respondents' sample (N=2,757). Responses are weighted to give representative results. Source: LSBS 2018.

Table 11: turnover growth over the previous year, by size-band

	Decreased %	Stayed the same %	Increased %
	2015		
No employees	21	47	32
Micro (1 – 9)	18	46	37
Small (10 – 49)	15	42	44
Medium (50 – 249)	12	33	55
All businesses	20	47	34
	2016		
No employees	21	48	31
Micro (1 – 9)	21	44	35
Small (10 – 49)	20	43	38
Medium (50 – 249)	17	35	48
All businesses	21	47	32
	2017		
No employees	20	49	32
Micro (1 – 9)	19	45	36
Small (10 – 49)	15	44	42
Medium (50 – 249)	14	34	52
All businesses	19	48	33
	2018		
No employees	22	48	30
Micro (1 – 9)	19	44	37
Small (10 – 49)	17	40	43
Medium (50 – 249)	18	34	48
All businesses	21	47	32

Notes and Sources: Based on longitudinal respondents' sample (N=2,757). Responses are weighted to give representative results. Source: LSBS 2018.

Table 12: percentage of businesses reporting employment and turnover increases, by region

	Percentage of businesses reporting employment growth				Percentage of businesses reporting turnover growth			
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2015	2016	2017	2018
East Midlands	6	25	18	12	25	29	34	35
East of England	6	27	19	6	45	31	31	33
London	5	37	23	6	33	33	35	33
North East	3	32	23	12	26	49	29	29
North West	5	28	20	6	34	26	24	29
South East	4	31	19	7	34	28	36	29
South West	5	25	18	5	37	41	38	36
West Midlands	4	23	30	10	37	31	35	32
Yorkshire & the Humber	6	18	22	4	33	32	28	31
Scotland	5	30	19	19	29	34	32	25
Wales	11	29	23	17	14	22	27	30
Northern Ireland	5	38	12	14	33	44	34	42
All businesses	5	28	20	8	34	32	33	32

Notes and Sources: Based on longitudinal respondents' sample (N=2,757). Responses are weighted to give representative results. Source: LSBS 2018.

Table 13: percentage of businesses expecting employment increases or decreases, by sector

	Decreased %	Stayed the same %	Increased %
	2015		
Production and construction (ABCDEF)	2	81	17
Transport, retail and food service (GHI)	4	74	23
Business services (JKLMN)	2	81	17
Other services (PQRS)	0	82	17
All businesses	2	80	18
	2016		
Production and construction (ABCDEF)	7	78	15
Transport, retail and food service (GHI)	6	76	18
Business services (JKLMN)	5	80	16
Other services (PQRS)	3	86	10
All businesses	5	80	15
	2017		
Production and construction (ABCDEF)	5	82	13
Transport, retail and food service (GHI)	6	81	13
Business services (JKLMN)	4	81	14
Other services (PQRS)	7	85	8
All businesses	5	82	12
	2018		
Production and construction (ABCDEF)	3	84	13
Transport, retail and food service (GHI)	6	81	12
Business services (JKLMN)	3	82	15
Other services (PQRS)	2	90	8
All businesses	3	84	12

Notes and Sources: Based on longitudinal respondents' sample (N=2,757). Responses are weighted to give representative results. Source: LSBS 2018.

Table 14: percentage of businesses expecting turnover increases or decreases, by sector

	Decreased %	Stayed the same %	Increased %
	2015		
Production and construction (ABCDEF)	14	47	39
Transport, retail and food service (GHI)	7	44	49
Business services (JKLMN)	11	46	43
Other services (PQRS)	8	57	35
All businesses	10	49	41
	2016		
Production and construction (ABCDEF)	10	56	34
Transport, retail and food service (GHI)	11	46	43
Business services (JKLMN)	15	51	33
Other services (PQRS)	15	60	25
All businesses	13	54	33
	2017		
Production and construction (ABCDEF)	10	57	33
Transport, retail and food service (GHI)	12	51	37
Business services (JKLMN)	14	47	39
Other services (PQRS)	12	62	26
All businesses	12	54	34
	2018		
Production and construction (ABCDEF)	13	52	35
Transport, retail and food service (GHI)	17	51	32
Business services (JKLMN)	19	45	35
Other services (PQRS)	9	65	27
All businesses	15	53	33

Notes and Sources: Based on longitudinal respondents' sample (N=2,757). Responses are weighted to give representative results. Source: LSBS 2018.

Table 15: percentage of businesses expecting employment increases or decreases, by size-band

	Decreased %	Stayed the same %	Increased %
2015			
No employees	0	85	15
Micro (1 – 9)	8	68	23
Small (10 – 49)	8	56	36
Medium (50 – 249)	6	46	48
All businesses	2	80	18
2016			
No employees	4	85	11
Micro (1 – 9)	7	67	26
Small (10 – 49)	8	59	34
Medium (50 – 249)	7	51	41
All businesses	5	80	15
2017			
No employees	5	87	8
Micro (1 – 9)	6	71	23
Small (10 – 49)	5	60	34
Medium (50 – 249)	7	53	40
All businesses	5	82	12
2018			
No employees	2	89	8
Micro (1 – 9)	6	72	23
Small (10 – 49)	8	58	34
Medium (50 – 249)	12	50	38
All businesses	3	84	12

Notes and Sources: Based on longitudinal respondents' sample (N=2,757). Responses are weighted to give representative results. Source: LSBS 2018.

Table 16: percentage of businesses expecting turnover increases, by size-band

	Decreased %	Stayed the same %	Increased %
2015			
No employees	11	49	40
Micro (1 – 9)	8	47	45
Small (10 – 49)	8	44	48
Medium (50 – 249)	7	33	59
All businesses	10	49	41
2016			
No employees	14	55	30
Micro (1 – 9)	9	50	42
Small (10 – 49)	10	42	48
Medium (50 – 249)	9	42	49
All businesses	13	54	33
2017			
No employees	13	56	32
Micro (1 – 9)	11	49	40
Small (10 – 49)	8	49	43
Medium (50 – 249)	7	37	56
All businesses	12	54	34
2018			
No employees	16	54	30
Micro (1 – 9)	13	49	38
Small (10 – 49)	9	46	45
Medium (50 – 249)	9	34	57
All businesses	15	53	33

Notes and Sources: Based on longitudinal respondents' sample (N=2,757). Responses are weighted to give representative results. Source: LSBS 2018.

Table 17: percentage of businesses anticipating employment and turnover increases, by region

	Percentage of businesses anticipating growth in employment				Percentage of businesses anticipating growth in turnover			
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2015	2016	2017	2018
East Midlands	18	13	15	16	37	33	34	31
East of England	22	17	14	15	46	35	36	32
London	23	21	13	13	43	35	44	34
North East	16	17	16	14	24	31	25	46
North West	16	20	16	18	44	24	27	37
South East	14	13	13	9	40	33	28	29
South West	16	12	12	12	41	35	35	34
West Midlands	18	12	11	13	39	24	30	29
Yorkshire & the Humber	16	12	9	9	50	40	40	23
Scotland	22	15	9	13	38	36	33	41
Wales	17	10	7	10	33	38	42	30
Northern Ireland	28	18	14	9	41	55	50	46
All businesses	18	15	12	12	41	33	34	33

Notes and Sources: Based on longitudinal respondents' sample (N=2,757). Responses are weighted to give representative results. Source: LSBS 2018.

Table 18: from anticipated employment growth to outcomes: 2015 to 2016

		Growth outcomes among firms anticipating growth		
		Expected Growth 2015	Employment Declined	Employment Stable
Production and construction (ABCDEF)	17	10	31	59
Transport, retail and food service (GHI)	23	9	42	49
Business services (JKLMN)	17	14	35	51
Other services (PQRS)	17	3	50	47
All businesses	18	9	39	52
East Midlands	18	11	49	40
East of England	22	6	27	67
London	23	9	34	58
North East	16	4	53	43
North West	16	5	31	64
South East	14	14	44	41
South West	16	7	62	31
West Midlands	18	13	37	50
Yorkshire & the Humber	16	14	39	47
Scotland	22	8	21	71
Wales	17	4	35	61
Northern Ireland	28	13	38	49
All businesses	18	9	39	52
No employees	15	0	48	52
Micro (1 – 9)	23	25	26	49
Small (10 – 49)	36	29	14	57
Medium (50 – 249)	48	43	14	43
All businesses	18	9	39	52

Notes and Sources: Based on longitudinal respondents' sample (N=2,757). Responses are weighted to give representative results. Source: LSBS 2018.

Table 19: from anticipated employment growth to outcomes: 2016 to 2017

		Growth outcomes among firms anticipating growth		
		Expected Growth 2016	Employment Declined	Employment Stable
Production & construction (ABCDEF)	15	30	35	34
Transport, retail & food service (GHI)	18	21	44	34
Business services (JKLMN)	16	14	51	35
Other services (PQRS)	10	21	52	27
All businesses	15	21	45	33
East Midlands	13	25	49	26
East of England	17	29	33	38
London	21	26	33	42
North East	17	20	69	11
North West	20	6	55	39
South East	13	27	50	23
South West	12	25	30	45
West Midlands	12	16	50	34
Yorkshire & the Humber	12	13	48	39
Scotland	15	11	70	18
Wales	10	12	56	31
Northern Ireland	18	29	55	15
All businesses	15	21	45	33
No employees	11	18	58	24
Micro (1 – 9)	26	25	33	42
Small (10 – 49)	34	27	18	55
Medium (50 – 249)	41	25	16	59
All businesses	15	21	45	33

Notes and Sources: Based on longitudinal respondents' sample (N=2,757). Responses are weighted to give representative results. Source: LSBS 2018.

Table 20: from anticipated employment growth to outcomes: 2017 to 2018

	Expected Growth 2017	Growth outcomes among firms anticipating growth		
		Employment Declined	Employment Stable	Employment Increased
Production and construction (ABCDEF)	13	16	68	17
Transport, retail and food service (GHI)	13	9	60	31
Business services (JKLMN)	14	12	59	29
Other services (PQRS)	8	7	67	26
All businesses	12	11	63	26
East Midlands	15	7	59	34
East of England	14	28	49	23
London	13	11	65	24
North East	16	2	33	66
North West	16	3	74	22
South East	13	12	68	20
South West	12	4	73	23
West Midlands	11	7	58	35
Yorkshire & the Humber	9	7	73	21
Scotland	9	9	60	31
Wales	7	40	30	30
Northern Ireland	14	38	53	8
All businesses	12	11	63	26
No employees	8	8	74	18
Micro (1 – 9)	23	13	56	30
Small (10 – 49)	34	20	41	39
Medium (50 – 249)	40	16	34	50
All businesses	12	11	63	26

Notes and Sources: Based on longitudinal respondents' sample (N=2,757). Responses are weighted to give representative results. Source: LSBS 2018.

Technical information

We have published a separate technical report outlining the sampling and weighting methodology for the survey, with detailed information on sample sizes and response rates, and a copy of the questionnaire used. The report is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/small-business-survey-reports#2018>

Further information

Future updates to these statistics

Fieldwork for the 2019 survey begins in July 2019, and we expect to publish the panel report in June 2020 (with cross-sectional reports for the SME employers and non-employers in May 2020).

Related statistics

BEIS published two cross-sectional reports on the 2018 LSBS on 24 May 2019. One report covered SME employers and the other covered non-employers. Both reports are available from <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/small-business-survey-reports#2018>.

Users may be interested in the Business Population Estimates. These are National Statistics published by BEIS, and are used to inform the sampling and weighting in LSBS. The latest releases are available from <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/business-population-estimates>.

Revisions policy

The [BEIS statistical revisions policy](#) sets out the revisions policy for these statistics, which has been developed in accordance with the UK Statistics Authority [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

User engagement

Users are encouraged to provide comments and feedback on how these statistics are used and how well they meet user needs. Comments on any issues relating to this statistical release are welcomed and should be sent to: business.statistics@beis.gov.uk.

The BEIS statement on [statistical public engagement and data standards](#) sets out the department's commitments on public engagement and data standards as outlined by the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

Pre-release access to statistics

Some ministers and officials receive access to these statistics up to 24 hours before release. Details of the arrangements for doing this and a list of the ministers and officials that receive pre-release access to these statistics can be found in the [BEIS statement of compliance](#) with the Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics Order 2008.

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