



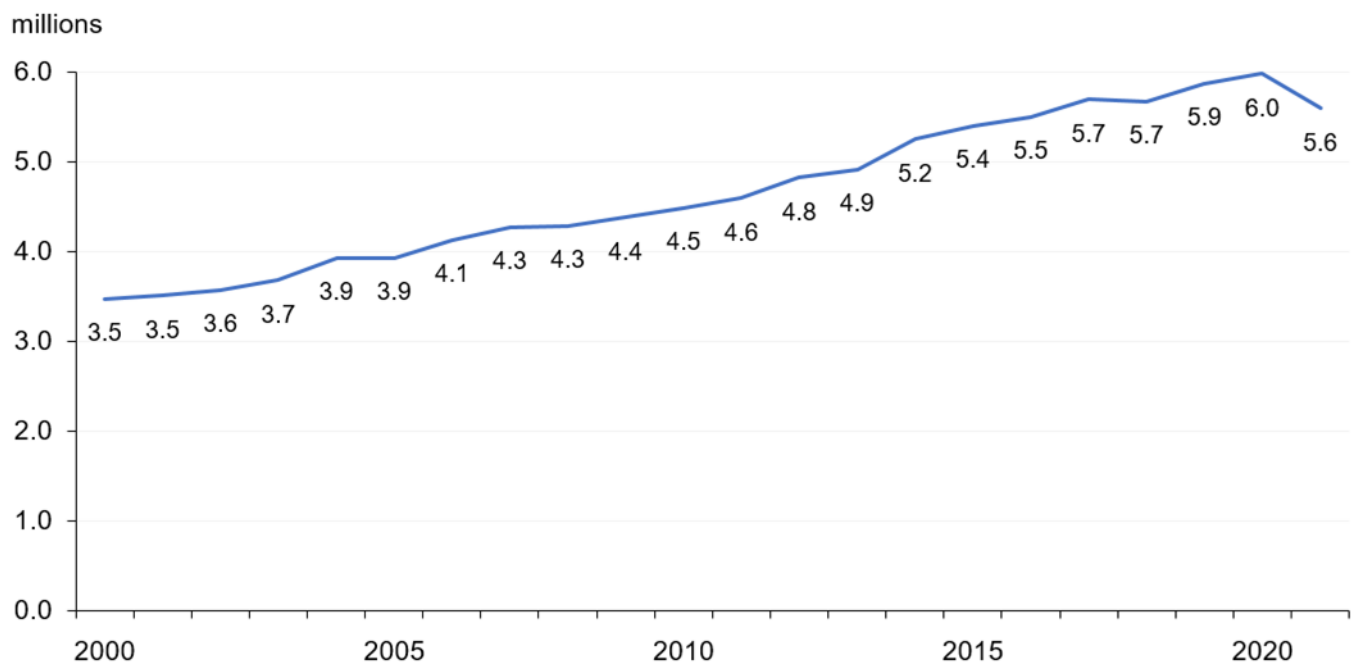
# BUSINESS POPULATION ESTIMATES FOR THE UK AND THE REGIONS 2021

7<sup>th</sup> October 2021

National Statistics

- There were **5.6 million private sector businesses** in the UK at the start of 2021.
- The private sector business population consisted of:
  - 5.5 million small businesses (with 0 to 49 employees).
  - 35,600 medium-sized businesses (with 50 to 249 employees).
  - 7,700 large businesses (with 250 or more employees).
- Compared with 2020, the private sector business population has decreased by 6.5% (389,600 businesses).

**Figure 1:** Number of private sector businesses in the UK, 2000 to 2021



## What you need to know about these statistics:

This publication provides the only official estimate of the total number of private sector businesses in the UK at the start of each year.

These estimates, produced by Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), cover a wider range of businesses than Office for National Statistics (ONS) outputs, which report on VAT traders and PAYE employers. See Related Statistics section for links to ONS publications and [Guide](#) explaining how each publication differs.

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# Introduction

This publication provides information on private sector businesses in the UK at the start of 2021, broken down by number of employees, legal status, industry, and geography. Counts of businesses (and associated employment and turnover) are based on businesses' head office location. A business operating in a particular region/country with a head office located elsewhere is not included in the business count for the English region/country in question.

The publication:

- reports on businesses in the private sector
- excludes the government and not-for-profit sectors; an overview of the number of businesses in the whole economy is provided in Table 2 of the detailed tables
- measures the net change in the number of private sector businesses, but cannot be used to estimate numbers of business start-ups or closures
- estimates numbers of private sector businesses by combining estimated numbers of unregistered businesses with data on registered businesses derived from a comprehensive business register (the ONS Inter Departmental Business Register)
- comprises this statistical release, a set of [detailed tables](#), a [methodology note](#) and [data underlying published charts and tables](#)
- quantifies uncertainty around key estimates of business numbers
- this edition's estimates are as at the start of 2021 and are the first to reflect changes in the business population following the start of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic
- this edition's estimates do not reflect changes in the business population since the end of the transition period (31<sup>st</sup> December 2020) for the UK's withdrawal from the European Union

## Composition of the 2021 business population

The UK private sector consists largely of non-employing businesses and small employers, as shown in Table A. SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) account for 99.9% of the business population (5.6 million businesses). At the start of 2021:

- there were estimated to be 5.6 million UK private sector businesses
- 1.4 million of these had employees and 4.2 million had no employees
- therefore, 75% of businesses did not employ anyone aside from the owner(s)
- there were 5.548 million small businesses (with 0 to 49 employees), 99.2% of the total business population
- there were 35,600 medium-sized businesses (with 50 to 249 employees), 0.6% of the total business population
- a further 7,700 businesses were large businesses (with 250 or more employees), 0.1% of the total business population

**Table A:** Estimated number of businesses in the UK private sector and their associated employment and turnover, by size of business, start of 2021

	Businesses	Employment <i>thousands</i>	Turnover <sup>1</sup> <i>£ millions</i>
All businesses	5,590,900	26,972	4,449,170
SMEs (0-249 employees)	5,583,245	16,333	2,309,836
Small businesses (0-49 employees)	5,547,625	12,859	1,589,296
With no employees <sup>2</sup>	4,174,920	4,539	302,520
All employers	1,415,980	22,433	4,146,651
of which:			
1-9 employees	1,162,155	4,209	636,893
10-49 employees	210,550	4,111	649,883
50-249 employees	35,620	3,474	720,540
250 or more employees	7,655	10,639	2,139,334

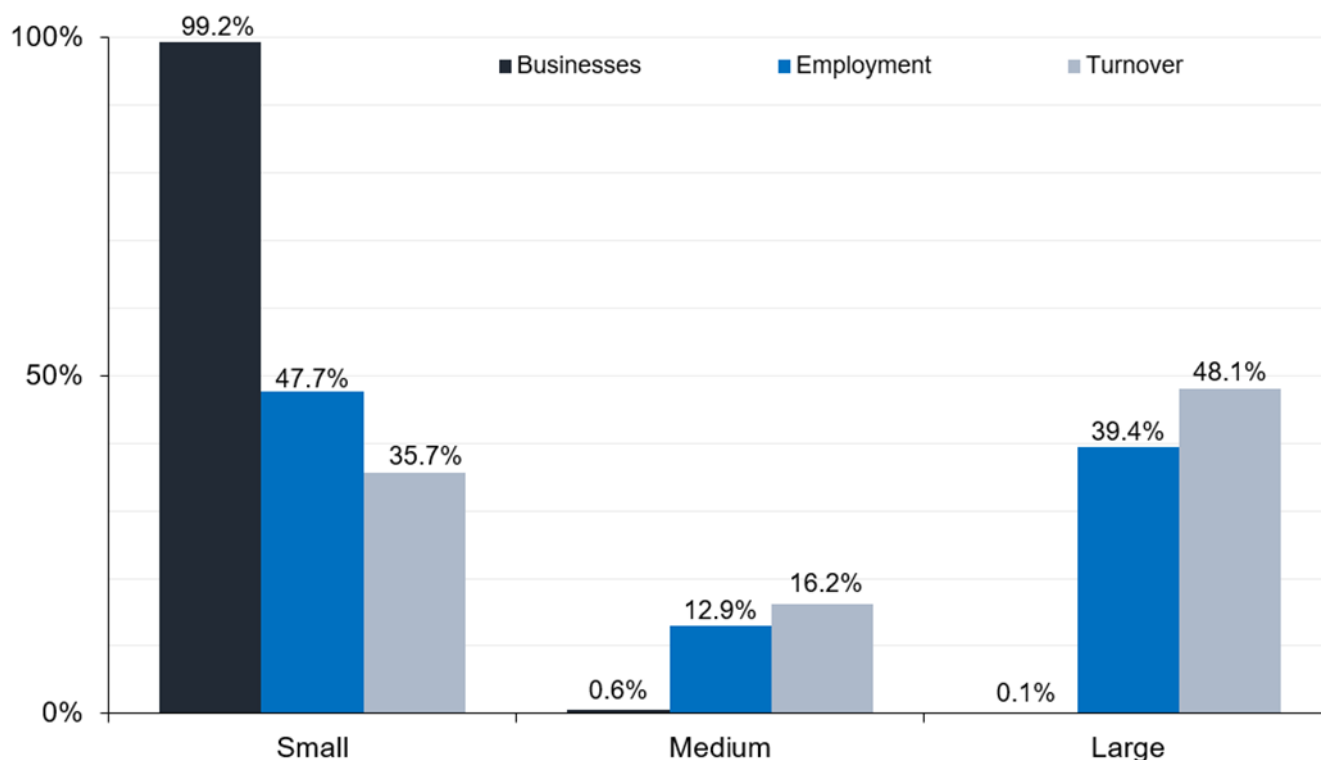
1. Total turnover figures exclude Section K (financial and insurance activities) where turnover is not available on a comparable basis.

2. "With no employees" comprises sole proprietorships and partnerships with only a self-employed owner-manager(s) and companies with one employee, assumed to be a working proprietor.

The 7,700 large businesses in the UK make a major contribution to employment and turnover. Nevertheless, SMEs account for around three fifths of the employment and around half of turnover in the UK private sector. At the start of 2021:

- total employment in SMEs was 16.3 million (61% of the total), whilst turnover was estimated at £2.3 trillion (52%)
- employment in small businesses was 12.9 million (48%) and turnover £1.6 trillion (36%)
- employment in medium-sized businesses was 3.5 million (13%) and turnover £0.7 trillion (16%)
- employment in large businesses was 10.6 million (39%) and turnover £2.1 trillion (48%)
- further information on composition is shown in Table 1 in the [detailed tables](#) and in Figure 2

**Figure 2:** Contribution of different sized businesses to total population, employment and turnover<sup>1</sup>, start of 2021



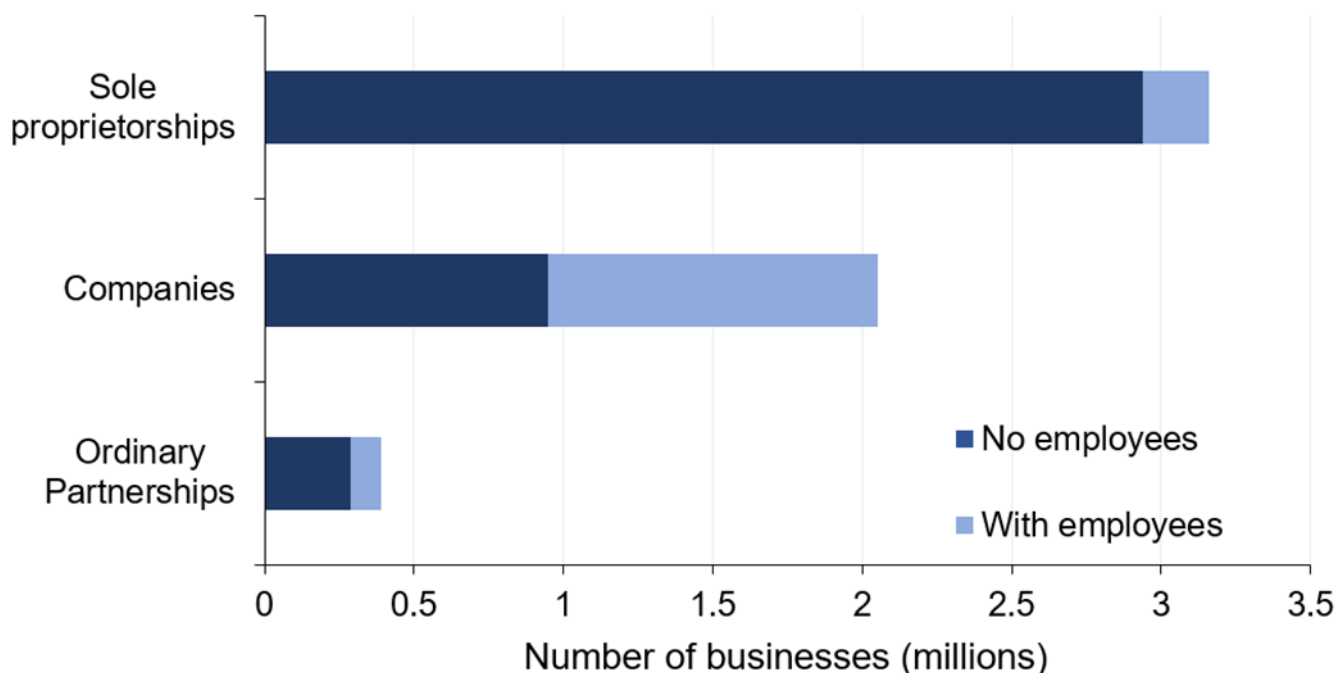
1. Total turnover figures exclude SIC 2007 Section K (financial and insurance activities) where turnover is not available on a comparable basis.

## Legal form

There are three main [legal forms](#) of businesses in the private sector; sole proprietorships, ordinary partnerships, and companies. Sole proprietorships are the most common legal form. At the start of 2021:

- the UK private sector business population comprised 3.2 million sole proprietorships (56% of the total), 2.0 million actively trading companies (37%) and 384,000 ordinary partnerships (7%)
- 1.1 million companies were employers, as were 221,000 sole proprietorships and 98,000 ordinary partnerships
- 2.9 million sole proprietorships, 951,000 companies and 286,000 ordinary partnerships did not employ anyone aside from the owner(s)
- further information on legal form is given in Figure 3 and Table C, and Table 3 of the [detailed tables](#)

**Figure 3:** Number of businesses in the UK private sector with and without employees, by legal status, start of 2021



## Registration for VAT and PAYE

Just under three quarters of UK private sector businesses are non-employers. The majority of these are not registered for either VAT (value added tax) or PAYE (pay as you earn). At the start of 2021:

- the Office for National Statistics recorded 2.7 million private sector businesses as registered for VAT or PAYE, 48% of the estimated total population
- 2.9 million businesses (52%) traded without being registered for VAT or PAYE and are classified here as ‘unregistered’
- 13% of sole proprietorships and 48% of ordinary partnerships were registered for VAT or PAYE

## Trends in the business population

Between 2000 and 2021:

- the business population increased by 2.1 million (61%)
- the highest rate of increase was 6.8% between 2013 and 2014, followed by 6.7% between 2003 and 2004
- in contrast, the decrease of 6.5% between 2020 and 2021 is only the second decrease in the series and is considerably larger than the 0.5% decrease between 2017 and 2018

Between 2020 and 2021:

- the total business population decreased by 390,000 (6.5%)
- there were 3,000 more (0.2%) employing businesses and 393,000 fewer (8.6%) non-employing businesses
- The decrease in non-employing businesses resulted from a decrease of 397,000 (11.9%) unregistered businesses, offset by an increase in non-employing registered businesses of 4,000 (0.4%)
- the net change in the business population is determined by the balance of new business start-ups and de-mergers (inflows) against those businesses that closed, merged, or were taken over by another business (outflows)
- further information on trends is in Table B and C, Figures 4, 5 and 6, and Tables 25 to 28 of the [detailed tables](#)

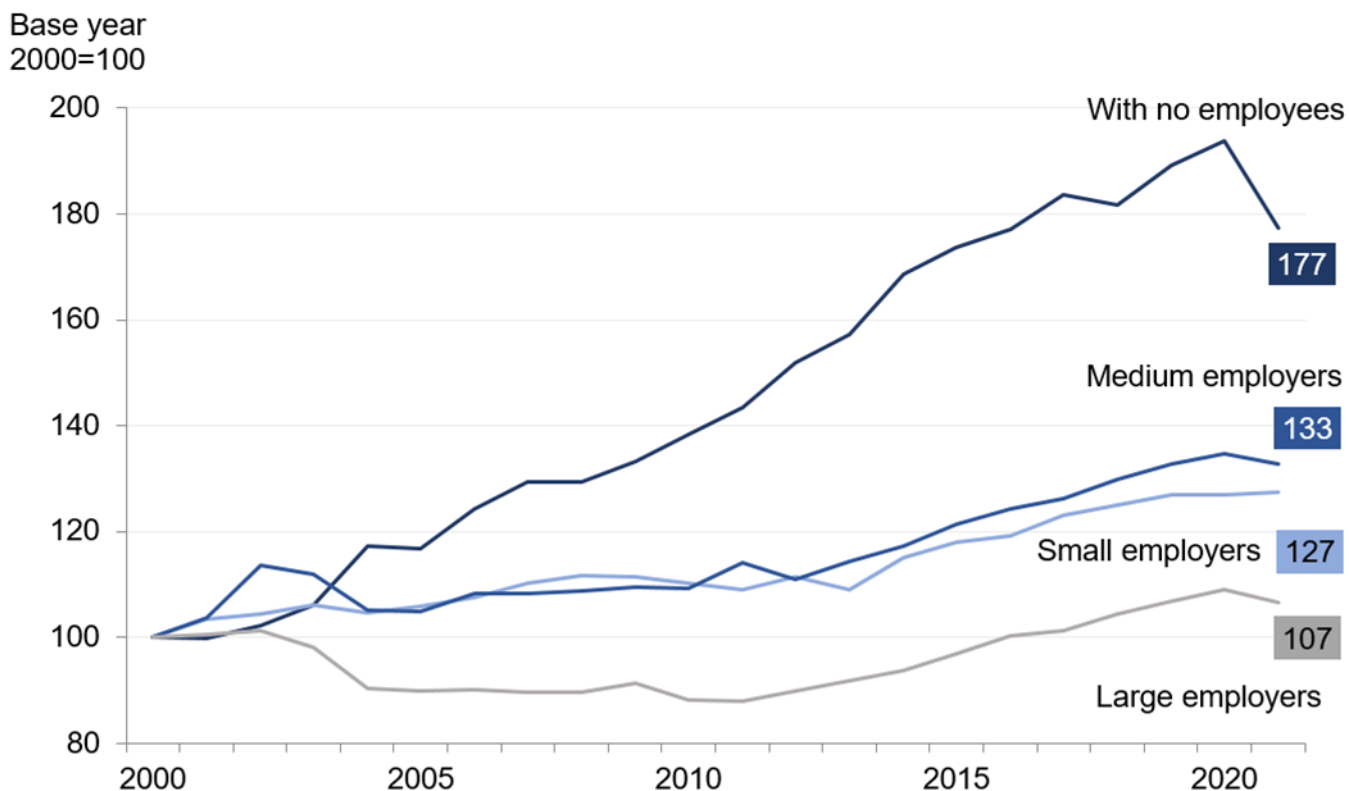
**TABLE B:** Estimated number of businesses in the UK private sector, start of 2000, and 2017 to 2021 (thousands)

Numbers (in thousands)	Start of					
	2000	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
All private sector businesses	3,467	5,695	5,668	5,868	5,981	5,591
All SME (0-249)	3,460	5,687	5,660	5,860	5,973	5,583
All small (0-49)	3,433	5,653	5,625	5,825	5,937	5,548
All employers (1+)	1,111	1,367	1,389	1,410	1,413	1,416
Non-employers	2,356	4,328	4,278	4,458	4,568	4,175
Micro (1-9)	914	1,118	1,137	1,155	1,157	1,162
Small (10-49)	163	208	210	211	212	211
Medium (50-249)	27	34	35	36	36	36
Large (250+)	7	7	8	8	8	8

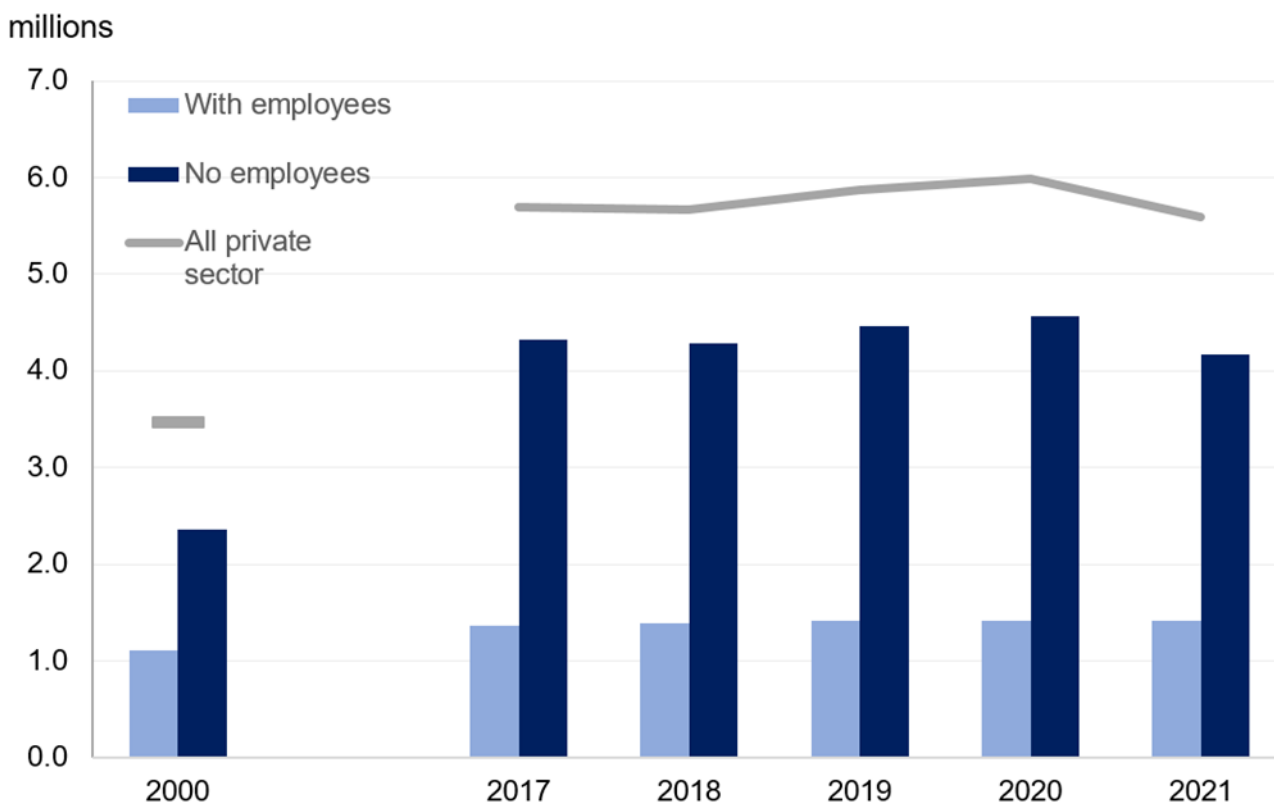
Growth in the UK private sector business population since 2000 has mainly been due to increasing numbers of non-employing businesses, as shown in Figures 4 and 5. Since 2000:

- the number of non-employing businesses has increased by 1.8 million (77%)
- the number of employing businesses has increased by 305,000 (27%)
- non-employing businesses accounted for 86% of total growth over the period

**Figure 4:** Growth in the number of UK private sector businesses by size band, 2000 to 2021 (index: base year = 2000)



**Figure 5:** Non-employed and employing businesses in the UK private sector, 2000 and 2017 to 2021





Overall, the number of SMEs has increased by 2.1 million (61%) since 2000, including 305,000 SME employers (27%). Over this period:

- the number of small employing businesses grew by 27%
- the number of medium-sized employers grew by 33%
- the number of large businesses grew by 7%

In the last year (as shown in Table C and Figure 6), the number of companies increased by 21,000 (1%). Sole proprietorships decreased by 382,000 (11%) and ordinary partnerships decreased by 29,000 (7%).

Looking at the period between 2010 and 2021:

- the number of sole proprietorships grew by 401,000 (15%) and the number of companies increased by 778,000 (61%)
- in contrast, the number of ordinary partnerships fell by 71,000 (16%)

**Table C:** Changes in the number of businesses<sup>1</sup>, by legal status, between the start of 2020 and the start of 2021

	<b>Sole proprietorships</b>	<b>Ordinary Partnerships</b>	<b>Companies</b>	<b>Total</b>
Unregistered businesses <sup>2</sup>	-377,600	-19,600	N/A <sup>3</sup>	-397,200
Registered businesses <sup>4</sup>	-4,200	-9,600	21,400	7,600
<i>Of which</i>				
<i>with employees</i>	-8,000	-4,600	15,800	3,200
<i>without employees</i>	3,700	-5,000	5,600	4,400
All private sector businesses	-381,900	-29,100	21,400	-389,600

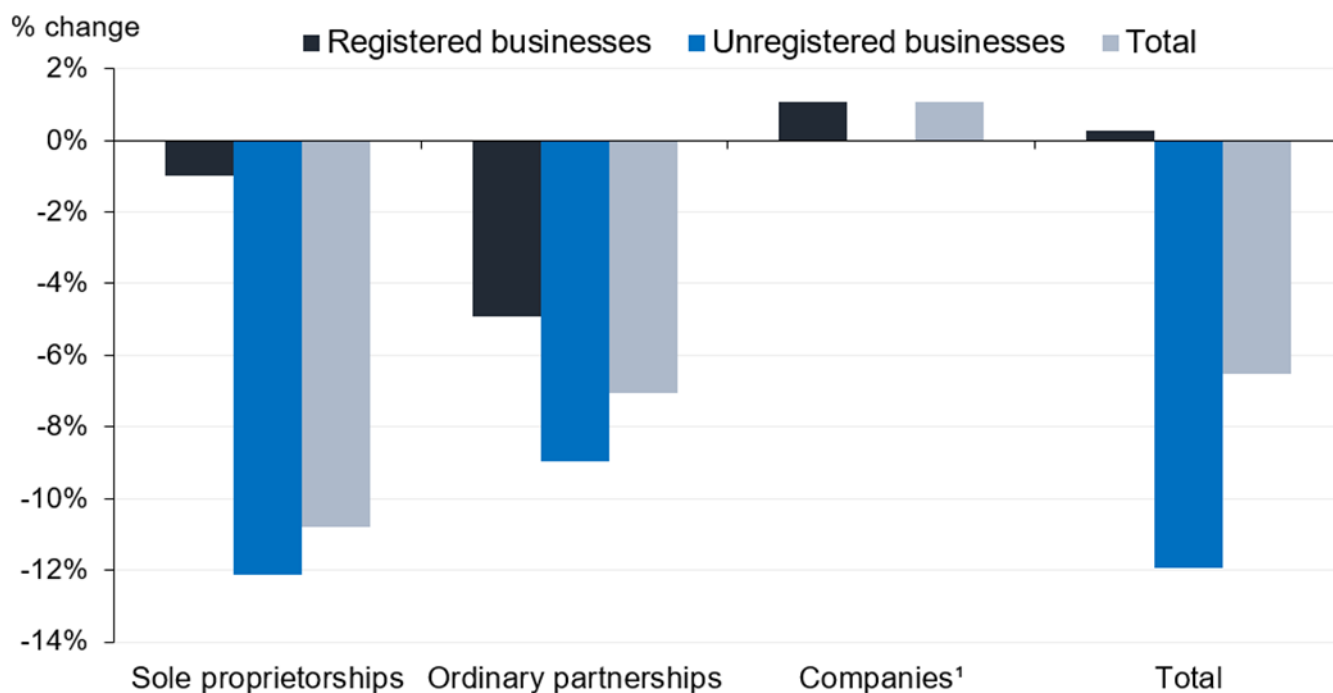
1. Numbers of businesses are rounded, in order to avoid disclosure. Consequently, totals may not exactly match the sum of their parts.

2. Unregistered businesses comprise self-employed people working alone or in partnership.

3. Not applicable - the BPE methodology assumes all companies are registered.

4. 'Registered' businesses are those businesses registered for VAT and/or PAYE.

**Figure 6:** Percentage change in the number of VAT/PAYE registered and unregistered businesses by legal form, between the start of 2020 and the start of 2021



1. The BPE methodology assumes all companies are registered. See paragraph 29 of the Methodology note.

In terms of employment trends:

- total employment across all private sector businesses decreased from 27.7 million at the start of 2020 to 27.0 million at the start of 2021, a decrease of 3%
- the SME share of total employment was 61% in 2021
- total employment in SMEs decreased from 16.8 million at the start of 2020 to 16.3 million at the start of 2021, a decrease of 3%
- further information on employment trends is in Table 28 of the [detailed tables](#)

## UK countries and the regions

Counts of businesses (and associated employment and turnover) are based on businesses' head office location. A business operating in a particular region/country with a head office located elsewhere is not included in the business count for the region/country in question.

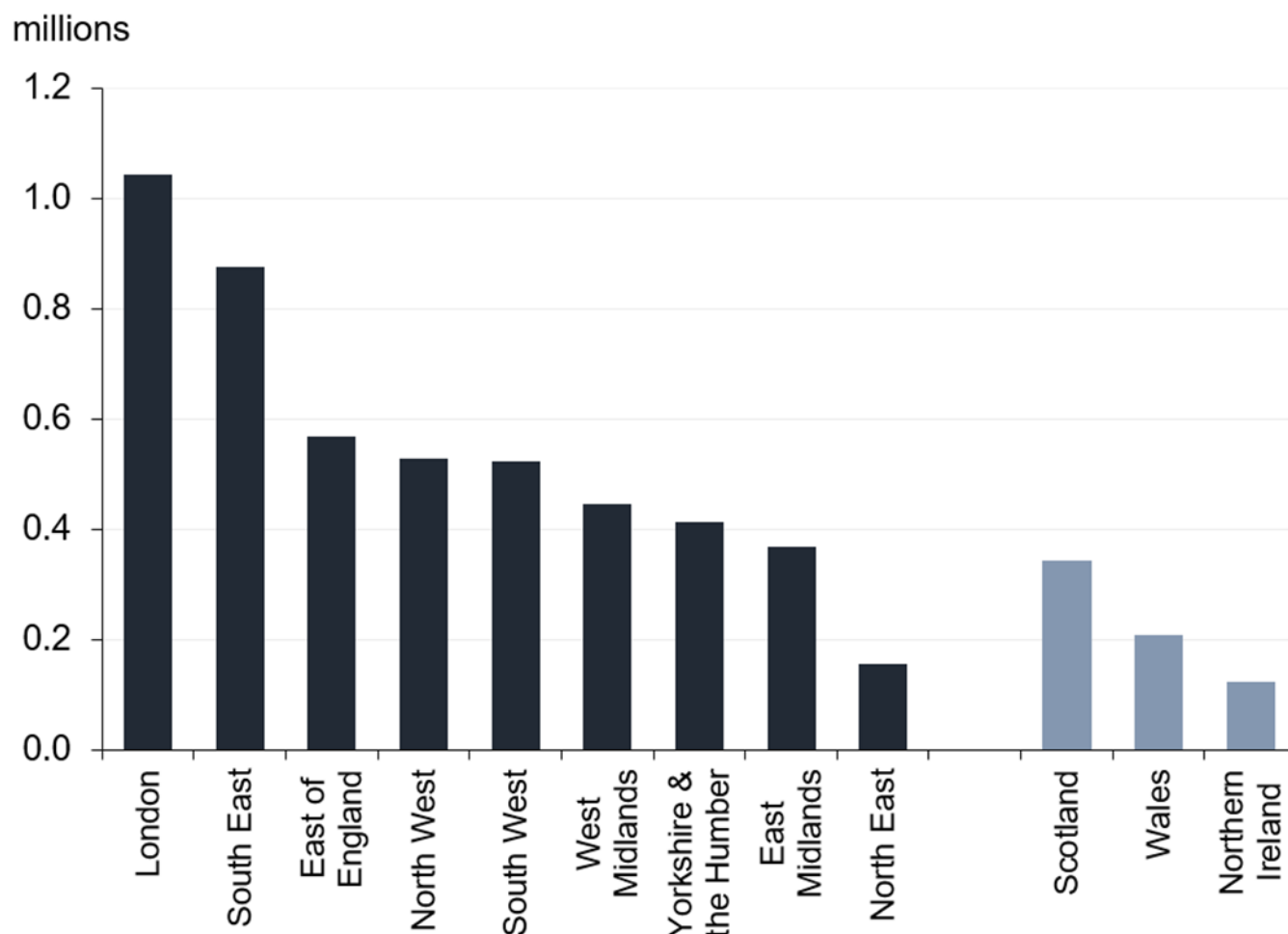
Private sector businesses are not evenly distributed across the UK. London and the South East of England have considerably more businesses than any other UK country or region of England, as shown in Figure 7. At the start of 2021:

- there were 4.9 million private sector businesses in England, 342,000 in Scotland, 207,000 in Wales, and 123,000 in Northern Ireland
- London (1.0 million) and the South East of England (875,000) had the most private sector businesses, together accounting for 34% of the UK business population
- the North East had the fewest private sector businesses amongst the English

regions (154,000)

- further information on location is in Table 9 of the [detailed tables](#)

**Figure 7:** Number of private sector businesses by English region and UK country, start of 2021



For countries and English regions below UK level, caution is required in assessment of changes over time due to the level of uncertainty in the estimates (see section “Uncertainty in the business population estimates”).

In the last year:

- the number of private sector businesses has declined across all countries and English regions, driven largely by decreases in unregistered business numbers which are estimated using survey data and therefore subject to uncertainty
- numbers of private sector businesses decreased by 336,000 in England, compared to 28,000 in Scotland, 25,000 in Northern Ireland and 1,000 in Wales
- in percentage terms numbers of private sector businesses decreased by 17% in Northern Ireland, 8% in Scotland, 6% in England and by less than 1% in Wales
- London was the English region with the largest numeric decrease (90,000), followed by the South East (57,000)
- the English regions with the largest decrease, in percentage terms, were London and the West Midlands (both 8%); the smallest decrease was in Yorkshire and the Humber

(2%)

- further information on regional trends is in Table 26 of the [detailed tables](#)

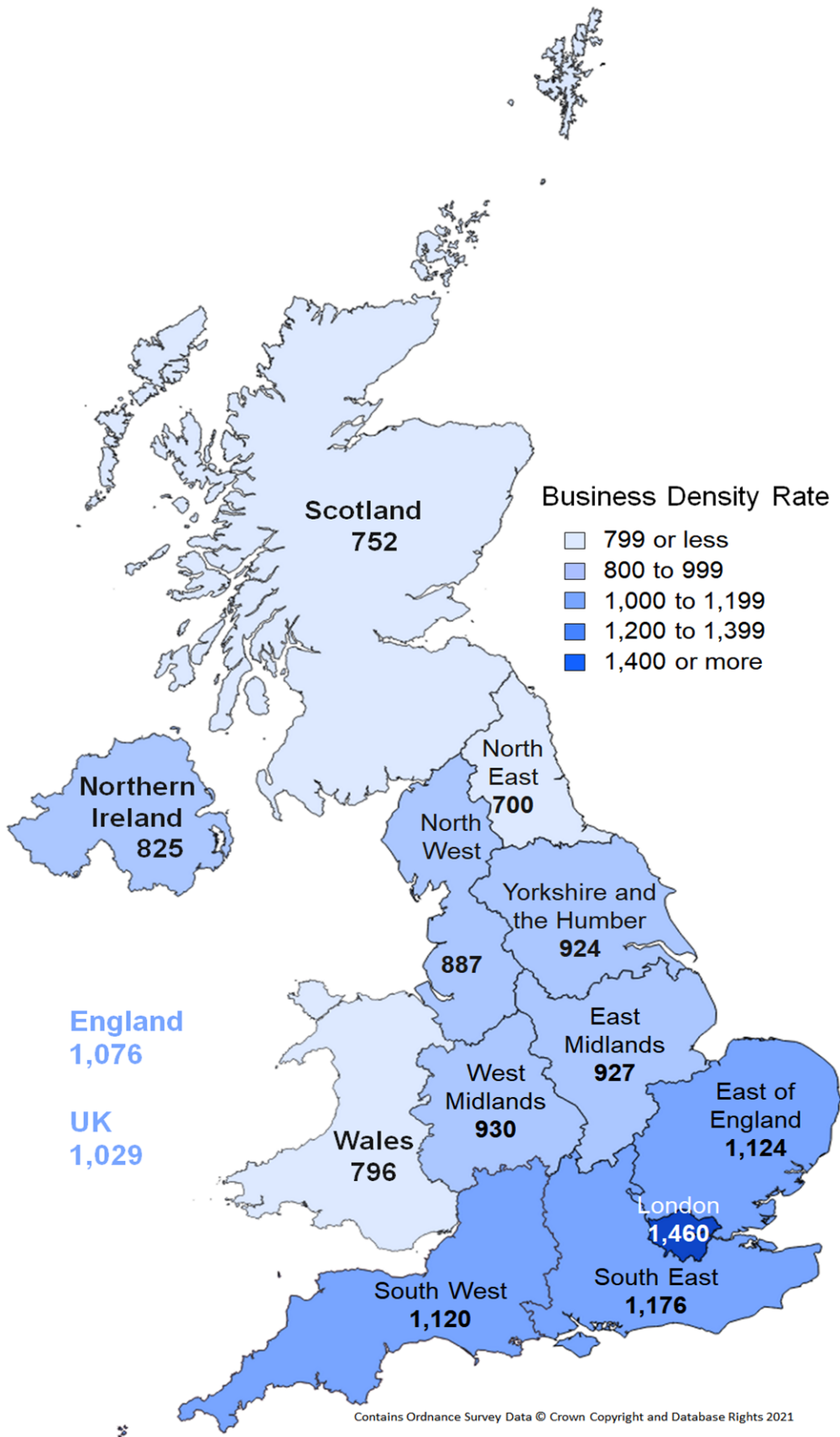
Since 2010:

- the number of businesses has increased in all the UK countries and regions
- the largest increase, in percentage terms, was in London (45%)
- the smallest percentage increase was in Northern Ireland (4%).
- further information on regional trends is in Table 26 of the [detailed tables](#)

Along with London, the South East, East of England and the South West of England also had the highest business density rates in the UK, based on the size of the resident adult population, as shown in Figure 8. At the start of 2021:

- London (1,460) had the highest number of businesses per 10,000 adults. There were also relatively high rates in the South East of England (1,176), the East of England (1,124) and the South West of England (1,120)
- the North East of England had the lowest business density rate (700) of any English region or UK country
- Scotland (752), Wales (796) and Northern Ireland (825) had relatively low business density rates compared to the UK average
- further information on business density is in Table 8 in the [detailed tables](#)

**Figure 8:** Number of businesses in the UK private sector per 10,000 adults, UK region and country, start of 2021

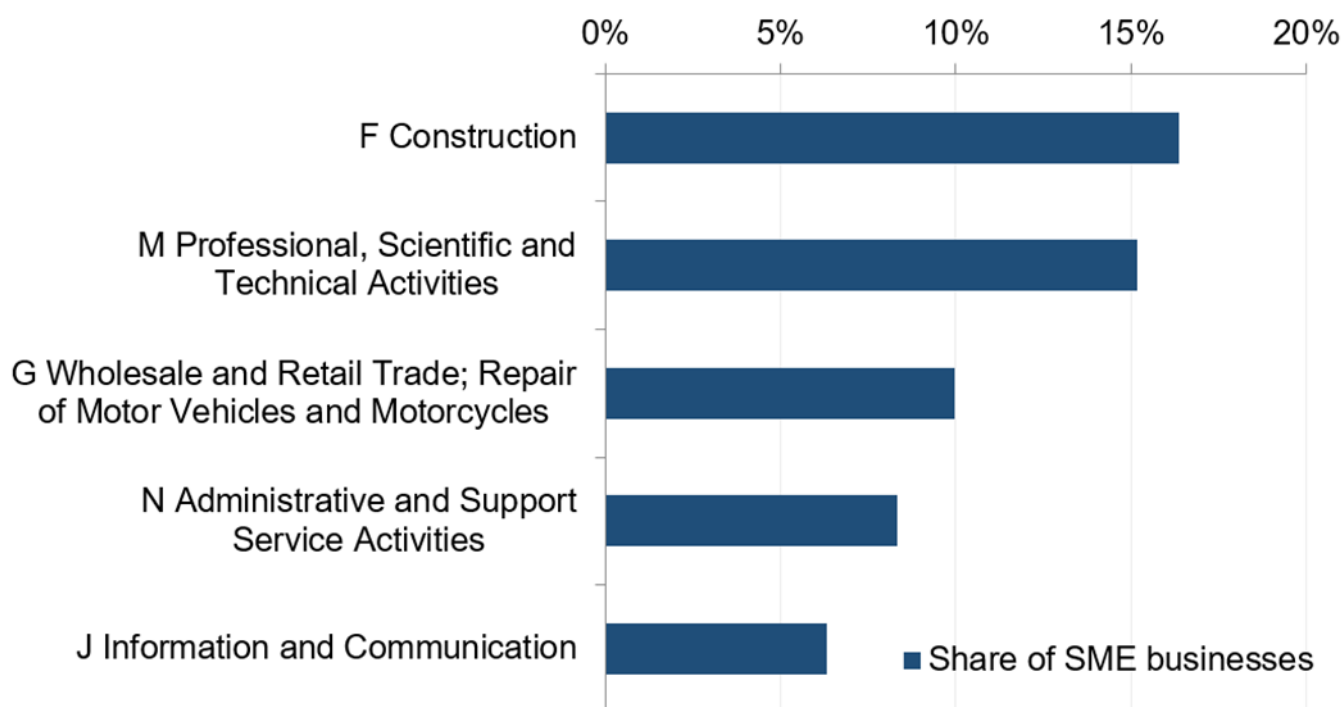


# Industries

SMEs account for at least 99% of the overall population in each of the main industry sectors and therefore determine the distribution of the overall business population. At the start of 2021:

- the largest number of SMEs (913,000 or 16%) were operating in Construction, as shown in Figure 9, compared with less than 1% in the Mining, Quarrying and Utilities sector (29,000)
- there were also a considerable number of SMEs operating in the Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities (848,000 or 15%), and Wholesale and Retail Trade and Repair sectors (556,000 or 10%)

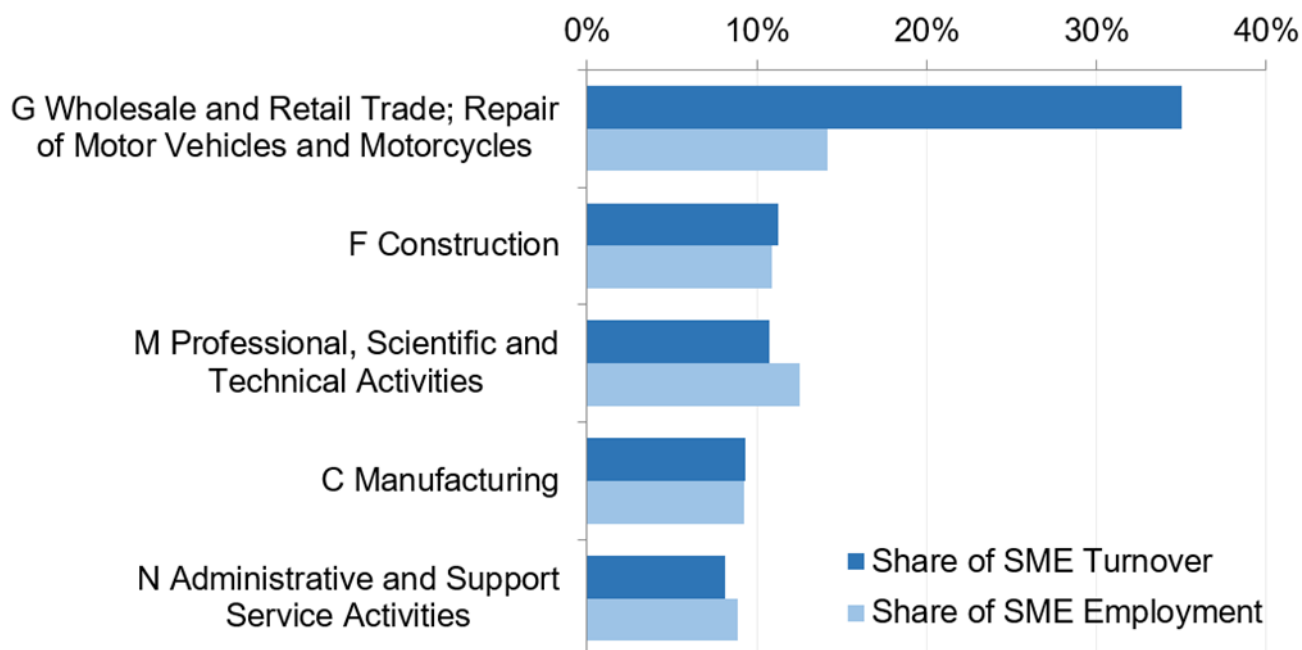
**Figure 9:** Industrial sectors with most SMEs, as percentage of total SME numbers, start of 2021



SMEs accounted for 61% of employment and 52% of turnover at the start of 2021. Wholesale and Retail Trade is the industrial sector which has the highest share of both SME employment and turnover, see Figure 10. At the start of 2021:

- Wholesale and Retail Trade and Repair accounted for 14% of all SME employment and 35% of SME turnover in the UK private sector
- almost a third of SME turnover was spread across three more sectors: Construction (11%), Professional, Scientific, and Technical (11%) and Manufacturing (9%)
- further information for industries is in Table 5 in the [detailed tables](#)

**Figure 10:** Industrial sectors with highest SME turnover and employment, as percentage of total SME employment and turnover<sup>1</sup>, start of 2021



1. Total turnover figures exclude SIC 2007 Section K (financial and insurance activities) where turnover is not available on a comparable basis.

Large businesses accounted for 39% of employment and 48% of turnover. At the start of 2021:

- Wholesale and Retail Trade and Repair accounted for 25% of all large business employment and 35% of large business turnover in the UK private sector
- the second largest sector in terms of large business employment was Administrative and Support Service Activities, which accounted for 14% of the total
- the second largest sector in terms of large business turnover was Manufacturing, which accounted for 20% of the total

A time series by industrial sector has been published for the first time in this year’s edition (Table 29 in the [detailed tables](#)). For estimates by industrial sector, caution is required in assessment of changes over time due to the levels of uncertainty. The publication includes a section quantifying uncertainty around estimates of business numbers by industrial sector (see section “Uncertainty in the business population estimates”).

In the last year:

- there were decreases in the number of businesses in the majority of industrial sectors, primarily due to a reduction in the unregistered business population. The greatest numeric decrease was in Construction (79,000) The greatest percentage decrease was in the combined sector ‘Mining and Quarrying; Electricity, Gas and Air Conditioning Supply; Water Supply; Sewerage, Waste Management and Remediation Activities’ (26%)
- Real Estate Activities had the largest numeric increase (7,000). The percentage increase was greatest in Financial and Insurance Activities (7%)

- the registered business population (which is not subject to the same uncertainty) increased by 8,000 (0.3%). Amongst registered businesses, the sectors 'Wholesale and Retail Trade; Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motorcycles' and 'Transportation and Storage' had the largest numerical increases (14,000). The percentage increase was greatest in Transportation and Storage (12%). The sector 'Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities' had the largest numeric decrease (15,000). The percentage decrease was greatest in the Information and Communication sector (6%)

Since 2010:

- the business population increased in all industrial sectors
- Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities had the largest numeric increase (247,000). The greatest percentage increase was in Real Estate Activities (71%)
- the combined sector 'Mining and Quarrying; Electricity, Gas and Air Conditioning Supply; Water Supply; Sewerage, Waste Management and Remediation Activities' had the smallest numeric increase (6,000)
- Construction, consistently the sector with the largest number of businesses (914,000 in 2021), has had the smallest percentage increase (2%)

## Uncertainty in the business population estimates

Numbers of unregistered businesses reported in this publication are estimated, based on Labour Force Survey data, and therefore uncertain. This leads to uncertainty in the count of all businesses in the private sector, which comprises the sum of estimated unregistered business numbers and registered business numbers. Registered businesses are not estimated, being derived from an administrative data source, the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR), and so not subject to sampling error. IDBR data will, however, contain other sources of error, which are likely to be small for counts of businesses. These are difficult to quantify and not captured in the measurements of uncertainty used in this publication, 95% confidence intervals (CIs) and coefficients of variation (CVs).

CIs indicate a range of values around an estimate within which the 'true' value of the estimate is likely to lie, with 95% probability. CIs are the same for both estimates of unregistered business numbers and estimates of all private sector businesses numbers.

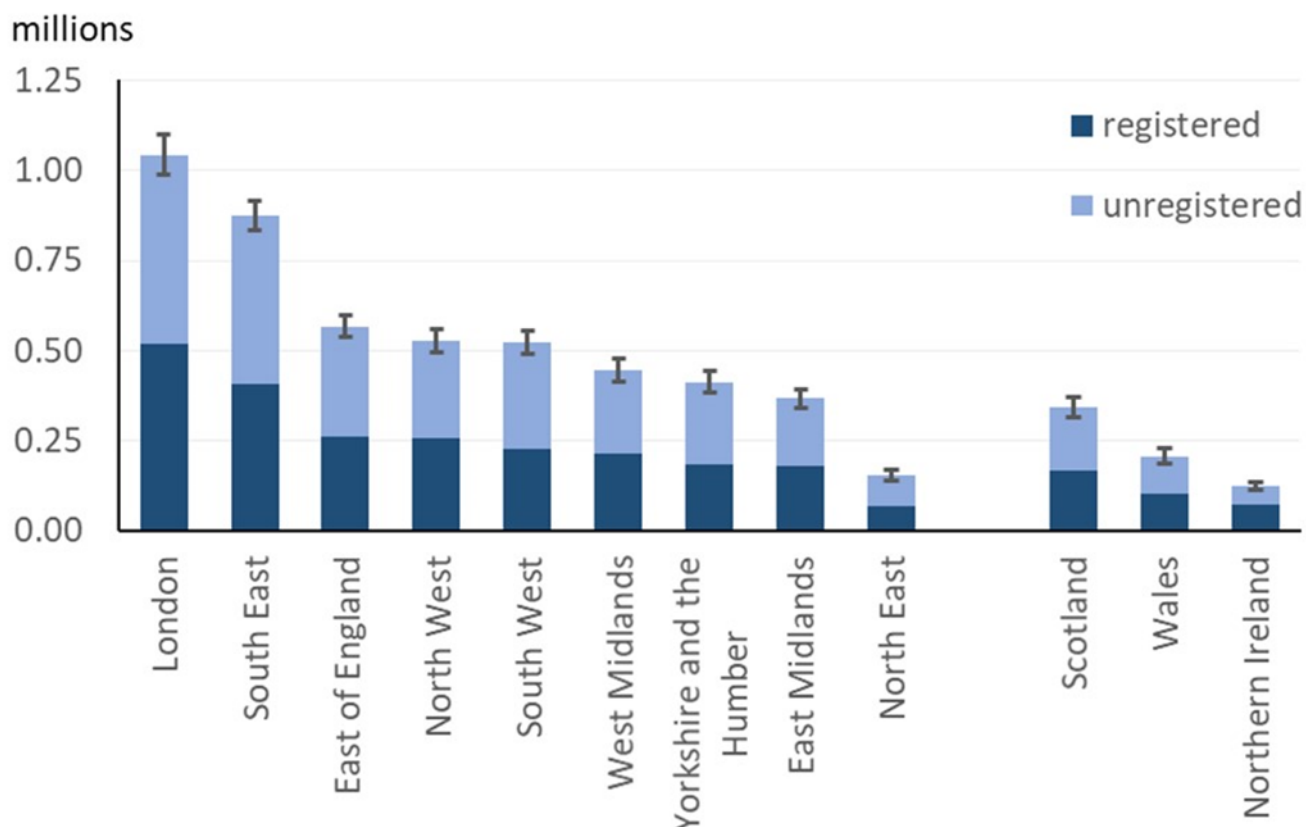
CVs, the ratio of an estimate's standard error to the estimate itself expressed as a percentage, indicate the quality of estimates. The smaller the CV, the more precise the estimate. Values less than 5% indicate an estimate is precise for most practical purposes, those over 20% indicate that an estimate is unreliable. CVs differ for estimates of unregistered business numbers and estimates of all private sector businesses numbers, being smaller for the combined total than for the unregistered component.

At the start of 2021, the 95% CI around the total number of private sector businesses, estimated at 5,590,900, was  $\pm 110,000$ . On this basis, at the start of 2021:



- there was a 95% probability that the total number of businesses in the private sector was between 5,480,000 and 5,700,000
- the CV was 1%, indicating the estimate was precise

**Figure 11:** Estimated private sector businesses numbers in each English region, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, with 95% CIs, start of 2021



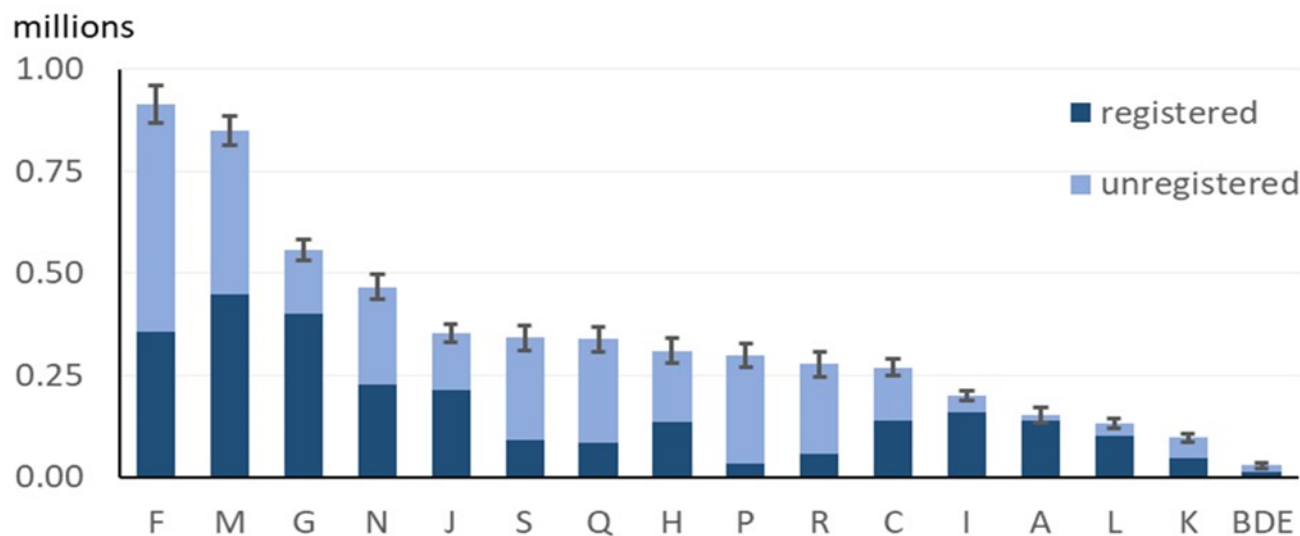
For data shown in Figure 11:

- the smallest CV for the countries and English regions shown in Figure 11 was 2% for the South East, indicating the estimate was precise
- the North East had the largest CV (6%), indicating the estimate was reasonably precise. Wales and Northern Ireland had the next highest CVs (both 5%)

For private sector businesses numbers in England (which are not shown in Figure 11), estimated at 4,918,000, the 95% CI was  $\pm 104,000$  and the CV was 1%.

Table 30 in the [detailed tables](#) provides further details of CIs and CVs for all business numbers and unregistered business numbers, by country and English region.

**Figure 12:** Estimated private sector businesses numbers by industrial sector, with 95% CIs, start of 2021



Key: sector descriptions

A	Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	K	Financial and Insurance Activities
B,D,E	Conditioning Supply; Water Supply; Sewerage, Waste Management and Remediation Activities	L	Real Estate Activities
C	Manufacturing	M	Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities
F	Construction	N	Administrative and Support Service Activities
G	Wholesale and Retail Trade; Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motorcycles	P	Education
H	Transportation and Storage	Q	Human Health and Social Work Activities
I	Accommodation and Food Service Activities	R	Arts, Entertainment and Recreation
J	Information and Communication	S	Other Service Activities

For data shown in Figure 12:

- CVs for Sectors G (Wholesale and Retail Trade; Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motorcycles) and M (Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities) were smallest (both 2%) indicating estimates were precise
- the combined sector B, D and E (Mining and Quarrying; Electricity, Gas and Air Conditioning Supply; Water Supply: Sewerage, Waste Management and Remediation Activities) had the largest CV (11%), indicating the estimate was acceptable, followed by sector A (Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing) with a CV of 6%, indicating a reasonably precise estimate

Table 30 in the [detailed tables](#) provides further details of CIs and CVs for all business numbers and unregistered business numbers, by industry sector.

Further information on uncertainty in estimates of business numbers at the region by sector level is provided in Tables 11 to 23 in the [detailed tables](#).

The processes used to quantify uncertainty in this publication is described in the section “Accuracy” in the [Methodology and Quality Note](#).

# Accompanying tables

The following tables are available in [Excel and ODS format](#).

- 1: *Size breakdown of the UK private sector*
- 2: *Size breakdown of the UK whole economy by type of business / other organisation*
- 3: *Size breakdown of the UK private sector by legal status*
- 4: *Number of businesses, employment, and turnover by industry*
- 5: *Size and 1 digit SIC breakdowns for the UK*
- 6: *Size and 2 digit SIC breakdowns for the UK*
- 7: *Size and 3 digit SIC breakdowns for the UK (Employers only)*
- 8: *Number of businesses per 10,000 resident adults by region*
- 9: *Number of businesses, employment, and turnover by region*
- 10: *Summary of regional industry breakdowns*
- 11: *Size and 1 digit SIC breakdowns for the North East*
- 12: *Size and 1 digit SIC breakdowns for the North West*
- 13: *Size and 1 digit SIC breakdowns for Yorkshire and the Humber*
- 14: *Size and 1 digit SIC breakdowns for the East Midlands*
- 15: *Size and 1 digit SIC breakdowns for the West Midlands*
- 16: *Size and 1 digit SIC breakdowns for the East of England*
- 17: *Size and 1 digit SIC breakdowns for London*
- 18: *Size and 1 digit SIC breakdowns for the South East*
- 19: *Size and 1 digit SIC breakdowns for the South West*
- 20: *Size and 1 digit SIC breakdowns for England*
- 21: *Size and 1 digit SIC breakdowns for Wales*
- 22: *Size and 1 digit SIC breakdowns for Scotland*
- 23: *Size and 1 digit SIC breakdowns for Northern Ireland*
- 24: *Size breakdown of UK private sector businesses, by broad size band*

## **Section 2: Time-series**

- 25: *Size breakdown for UK private sector businesses (2000 to 2021)*
- 26: *Size breakdown for Regional private sector businesses (2010 to 2021)*
- 27: *Size breakdown for UK private sector businesses by legal status (2010 to 2021)*
- 28: *Size breakdown for UK private sector employment (2010 to 2021)*
- 29: *Sector breakdown for UK private sector businesses (2010 to 2021)*

## **Section 3: Uncertainty in 2021 estimates**

- 30: *Measures of uncertainty for private sector business numbers by region and 1 digit SIC*

## **Section 4: Additional information**

- 31: *List of industry sections, divisions, and groups (1, 2 & 3 digit SIC)*

# Technical information

- This publication is the latest in a series providing estimates of the total number of private sector businesses in the UK. This publication estimates the total number of UK private sector businesses at a point in time, including those that are registered for VAT or PAYE and those that are unregistered. Related ONS publications report only on VAT/PAYE registered businesses.
- A [Guide](#) explaining how this publication relates to other National Statistics on business population and demography has been published to help users understand the differences and choose the most appropriate source.
- There is no single database containing all private sector businesses in the UK. The main source for this publication is the *Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR)*, managed by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), which is used to provide the number of VAT/PAYE registered businesses in the UK. This publication also includes estimates of smaller non-employing (unregistered) businesses which are calculated using a combination of information from the ONS Labour Force Survey and HMRC self-assessment tax return data. Up-to-date self-assessment data was not available for this edition of the publication, so the last available data (from 2017/2018) was used. This is unlikely to have had a large effect on the estimates, as previous self-assessment data used in the publication has been relatively stable over time. More detail of the estimation process is provided in the [Methodology and Quality Note](#)
- Companies can take a range of legal forms, including Public Limited Companies, Private Limited Companies, Limited Liability Partnerships, and others. The IDBR only counts actively trading companies, rather than all those recorded on the Companies House register.
- This edition uses the same methodology as that used since the 2011 edition of this publication. The methodology differs from that used for BPE 2010 and the older [SME Statistics](#) series (1994-2009).
- To enable robust comparison over time, a time series is calculated using the latest methodology and data. This shows annual estimates of numbers of private sector businesses in the UK between 2000 and 2021. Estimates for UK countries/English regions and for different legal forms are provided for years since 2010 (the first year for which consistent estimates can be produced).
- Information on the employment and turnover in these businesses is also provided. The function of the employment and turnover data provided is primarily to (i) classify businesses by employee size band and (ii) calculate shares of employment and turnover across industrial sectors, regions, and legal statuses. This release includes an employment time-series in Table 28 of the [detailed tables](#). However, users should note that these employment estimates are indicative and that ONS publishes other sources of employment data more suitable for monitoring total jobs and people in employment. See the Workforce Jobs series, the Business Registers Employment Survey (BRES), and the wider Labour Market Statistics (refer to the [Methodology and Quality Note](#) for more information).
- All statistics relating to 2021 released in this publication are new. No data from earlier years have been revised.
- The definition of the private sector used in this publication excludes the non-profit sector but includes public corporations and nationalised bodies.
- Turnover data throughout this release excludes SIC2007 Section K (Financial and

insurance activities) as turnover is not available on a comparable basis.

- Businesses that have sites (and employees) in more than one region or country are counted here only in the region or country where they are registered. These estimates may therefore differ from actual employment in a region, since some people in one region will work for businesses that are registered in another region.
- All figures and percentages in this document are rounded. Therefore, totals may not exactly match the sum of their parts. Suppression and controlled rounding have been used to protect the data in this publication from disclosure. For further information, refer to the [Methodology and Quality Note](#).

## Definitions and Terminology

Company	<i>Companies can take a range of legal forms, including Public Limited Companies, Private Limited Companies, Limited Liability Partnerships, and others such as public corporations and nationalised bodies in which the working directors are classed as employees</i>
Employers	<i>a company with a single employee director is treated as having no employees</i>
Large business	<i>a business with 250 or more employees</i>
Medium-sized business	<i>a business with 50-249 employees</i>
Ordinary partnership	<i>a business run by two or more self-employed people</i>
Small business	<i>a business with 0-49 employees</i>
Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)	<i>businesses with 0-249 employees</i>
Sole proprietorship	<i>a business run by one self-employed person</i>

## Further information

### Future updates to these statistics

The next publication in this series is scheduled for Autumn 2022.

## Related statistics

[UK business: activity, size and location](#), published annually by the ONS, gives information about registered UK businesses broken down by legal status, industry, region, employment and turnover size bands.

[Business Demography](#), published annually by the ONS, provides information on births, deaths and survivals of registered businesses in the UK, by geographical areas and standard industrial classification groups.

[Businesses in Scotland](#), published annually by the Scottish government, provides information on numbers of registered enterprises (businesses) operating in Scotland, broken down by industry, business size, local authority area, urban/rural area, and country of ownership.

[Business Structure](#), published annually by the Welsh Government, contains data on the estimated number of registered businesses active in Wales.

[Northern Ireland business: activity, size and location](#), published annually by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, provides an overview of Northern Ireland's registered business population.

[Business Insights and Impact on the UK economy](#), published fortnightly by the ONS, provides information on the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and other events on UK businesses and the economy.

## 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](#).

## Uses of these statistics

This publication is used extensively by government, the public, public bodies, and businesses to analyze the scale, structure and significance of the total business population in the UK and to monitor change over time. For example, they are used by:

- government in understanding the likely impact of policy changes and monitoring the impact of recessions on different sections of the business population
- businesses in understanding market share and planning marketing strategies
- banks in developing an understanding of their customer base
- foreign firms in making UK location decisions
- academics to inform research into businesses at a local and national level
- a range of public bodies in decision making and in evaluating the success of regeneration and business-related policies
- public and private business support providers in targeting business support

## 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](mailto:business.statistics@beis.gov.uk).

[The Business Population and Demographics Statistics \(BPDS\) user group](#) provides a forum for discussion of statistics and statistical research on the business population and demographics and is open to users based in central and local government, academia, and the private sector.

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](#).

## National Statistics designation

National Statistics status means that our statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality, and public value, and it is our responsibility to maintain compliance with these standards.

The designation of these statistics as National Statistics was confirmed in October 2012 following an [assessment](#).

Since the latest review, we have continued to comply with the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#), and have made the following improvements:

- alterations to processing of ONS Labour Force Survey (2013 and 2016) and HMRC self-assessment tax returns (2016) data have improved data quality
- reduction in numbers of people with pre-release access to the publication
- changes have been made to format and layout of the statistical release in 2019 to make it more accessible and consistent with format of similar publications
- since 2019 detailed tables are published in OpenDocument spreadsheet format as well as excel format – for accessibility purposes.
- in 2020, uncertainty around key estimates of business numbers was quantified, with further information detailing uncertainty at the sector by region level added in the 2021 publication
- in 2021 a new time series table was added to the detailed tables detailing changes in numbers of businesses by industrial sector

## 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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