

UK Business: Activity, Size and Location - September 2026¹

The UK Business: activity, size and location dataset released in September 2026 provides a snapshot of the Business Demography (from Inter-Departmental Business Register, IDBR) dataset from 13th March 2026 and provides a breakdown by broad sector (please note, detailed sector breakdown will be available later in Autumn 2026) turnover and employment size band. The fuller Business Demography will be released in November each year which provides the total number of active enterprises in each location, alongside side enterprise births, deaths, high growth and survival rates.

The following briefing is based on enterprises as opposed to local units².

Number of Enterprises

- The snapshot from March 2026 shows there were 94,700 enterprises in the WMCA area, an increase of 2.3% (+2,140 enterprises) compared to the March 2025 snapshot, England increased by 2.0% in the same period. When compared to five years ago, the WMCA area increased by 4.0% (+3,625), above the national increase of 0.7%.
- Across the 7 local authorities in the WMCA area, all local authorities saw annual increases. Sandwell had the largest percentage increase of 3.6% (+365) to total 10,505 while Birmingham saw the largest number increase in enterprises of 795 (+2.1%) to total 38,605.

Trends in the number of enterprises (snapshots):

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Annual Percent Change	Annual Number Change	Five Year Percent Change	Five Year Number Change
Birmingham	36,925	37,380	36,990	37,245	37,810	38,605	2.1%	795	4.5%	1,680
Coventry	10,210	10,295	10,335	9,970	9,825	10,110	2.9%	285	-1.0%	-100
Dudley	10,220	10,215	10,035	9,895	10,000	10,100	1.0%	100	-1.2%	-120
Sandwell	9,585	9,875	9,935	9,945	10,140	10,505	3.6%	365	9.6%	920
Solihull	8,215	8,165	8,025	8,355	8,270	8,490	2.7%	220	3.3%	275
Walsall	8,190	8,495	8,160	8,320	8,385	8,625	2.9%	240	5.3%	435
Wolverhampton	7,725	8,995	8,860	8,205	8,130	8,265	1.7%	135	7.0%	540
WMCA	91,075	93,415	92,335	91,940	92,560	94,700	2.3%	2,140	4.0%	3,625
West Midlands Region	219,395	221,510	217,885	216,135	216,145	219,545	1.6%	3,400	0.1%	150
England	2,405,965	2,408,040	2,370,125	2,368,350	2,376,615	2,423,150	2.0%	46,535	0.7%	17,185

- At a regional level, all regions in the UK showed an increase in the number of businesses between 2025 and 2026. This is the first time since 2017 that all regions have increased.

Employment by Size Band

- For the WMCA area, 88.7% (84,000) of enterprises employed between 0-9 employees, below the England average of 89.2% in 2026. In both the 2025 and 2026 snapshot the proportion of total enterprises employing 0-9 employees remained the same in both the WMCA and England. However, the number of WMCA enterprises employing 0-9 employees increased by 2.4% (+1,940), exceeding the increase across England of 2.0%.
- For the WMCA area, the percentage of enterprises that employed 10-49 people was above the England level (9.1% vs 8.7%), with the proportion of total enterprises decreasing by 0.1 percentage point (pp) in the WMCA area while England remained the same. The number of enterprises that employed 10-49 people increased by 1.7% (+145), while England increased by 2.2%.

¹ Office for National Statistics (ONS): [UK Business: activity, size and location: 2026](#) - released September 2026.

² ONS state that an enterprise can be thought as the overall business, made up of all the individual sites or workplaces. It is defined as the smallest combination of legal units that has a certain degree of autonomy within an enterprise group. A local unit is an individual site (for example a factory or shop) associated with an enterprise. It can also be referred to as workplace.

- 1.7% (1,575) of enterprises employed 50 to 249 people in the WMCA area, slightly above the England proportion of 1.6%. The proportion has increased by 0.1pp for the WMCA while England remained the same since the 2025 snapshot. The number of enterprises that employed 50-249 people has increased by 3.3% (+50) in the WMCA area, while England increased by 1.7% since the 2025 snapshot.
- The proportion of enterprises that employed over 250 people in the WMCA area was 0.5% in the 2026 snapshot, above the England-wide proportion of 0.4%. These have remained the same proportions for both the WMCA and UK since the 2025 snapshot. The number of enterprises that employed over 250 people in the WMCA remained unchanged since the previous year compared to a 0.4% increase across England.

The March 2026 snapshot of employment by size band for the WMCA and England-wide:

	WMCA		England	
	Number	Proportion	Number	Proportion
Micro (0 to 9)	84,000	88.7%	2,162,480	89.2%
Small (10 to 49)	8,665	9.1%	211,335	8.7%
Medium-sized (50 to 249)	1,575	1.7%	39,175	1.6%
Large (250+)	460	0.5%	10,160	0.4%
Total	94,700	100%	2,423,150	100%

Turnover Band

- The 2026 snapshot data shows that the WMCA had a higher proportion than England in 3 of the 5 turnover bands, the only turnover band with a lower proportion compared to England was the £0-£249,999 banding (63.0% vs 64.0%). The £50m+ turnover band had equal proportions for the WMCA area and England (0.4%).
- For the WMCA, the number of enterprises in the £50m+ turnover band was the only one to decrease when compared to the 2025 snapshot, this was by 2.5% (-10). While for England, the £0-£249,999 band decreased by 0.1% (-1,310).
- Since 2025, proportion wise, for the £0-£249,999 turnover band the WMCA decreased by 1.4pp and England decreased by 1.3pp. The £250,000-£999,999 turnover band increased by 1.4pp for the WMCA and 1.2pp for England. While the £1m-£4.99m turnover band increased by 0.1pp for both the WMCA-area and England.

The March 2026 snapshot of employment by turnover band for the WMCA and England-wide:

	WMCA		England	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
£0 - £249,999	59,630	63.0%	1,549,775	64.0%
£250,000 - £999,999	23,790	25.1%	591,320	24.4%
£1m - £4.99m	8,350	8.8%	209,075	8.6%
£5m - £49.99m	2,535	2.7%	62,840	2.6%
£50m+	395	0.4%	10,140	0.4%
Total	94,700	100%	2,423,150	100%

Enterprises by Broad Industry Group

- Snapshot 2026 data shows out of 17 broad industry groups, the WMCA has 9 industries above the England proportion (shown in green in the table below).
- The industry group with the most enterprises in the WMCA area was construction accounting for 12.7% (11,995) of total enterprises - below the England proportion of 14.1%. This was followed by professional, scientific & technical with 11,405 enterprises accounting for 12.0% of WMCA enterprises compared to 15.9% nationally.

- The industry group with the highest relative strength in the WMCA area in was transport & storage, accounting for 3.5pp more of total enterprises in the WMCA area than nationally (7.9% compared to 4.3% nationally).

WMCA and England enterprises by broad industry group:

	WMCA		England	
	2026	% of total	2026	% of total
01-03: Agriculture, forestry & fishing	295	0.3%	90,545	3.7%
05-39: Production	6,220	6.6%	123,350	5.1%
41-43: Construction	11,995	12.7%	342,660	14.1%
45: Motor trades	3,825	4.0%	72,410	3.0%
46: Wholesale	4,605	4.9%	89,270	3.7%
47: Retail	10,370	11.0%	187,740	7.7%
49-53: Transport & Storage (inc postal)	7,445	7.9%	104,940	4.3%
55-56: Accommodation & food services	6,240	6.6%	150,985	6.2%
58-63: Information & communication	4,630	4.9%	176,220	7.3%
64-66: Finance & insurance	1,535	1.6%	53,505	2.2%
68: Property	4,800	5.1%	116,715	4.8%
69-75: Professional, scientific & technical	11,405	12.0%	384,700	15.9%
77-82: Business administration & support services	7,355	7.8%	195,480	8.1%
84: Public administration & defence	45	0.05%	7,440	0.3%
85: Education	1,920	2.0%	47,000	1.9%
86-88: Health	5,985	6.3%	106,970	4.4%
90-99: Arts, entertainment, recreation & other services	6,030	6.4%	173,220	7.1%
Total	94,700	100%	2,423,150	100%

Trends in Enterprises by Broad Industry Group

- Snapshot 2026 data shows that compared to the previous year, 13 of the 17 broad industry groups increased in the number of enterprises in the WMCA area. The industry with the largest percentage increase was public administration & defence increasing by 12.5% (+5) to 45 enterprises in 2026 – this sector increased by 2.4% across England in the latest annual period. The largest number increase was in transport & storage, by 410 (an increase of 5.8%, England increased by 4.2%). The largest annual percentage decrease in enterprises was in business administration & support services, decreasing by 8.9% (-720) to 7,355 enterprises in 2026, England decreased by 1.6%.
- Compared to the 2021 snapshot, 10 of the 17 broad industry groups increased in the number of enterprises in the WMCA area and a further 1 remained at the same level. The industry with the largest percentage increase was property increasing by 38.1% (+1,325) to 4,800 enterprises in 2026 – this sector increased by 24.2% across England in the last 5 years. The largest 5-year percentage decrease in enterprises was in information & communication decreasing by 15.0% (-815) to 4,630 enterprises in 2026 – this exceeded the national decrease of 10.5%.

WMCA and England changes in enterprises by broad industry group:

	Annual Change			5-year Change		
	WMCA		England	WMCA		England
01-03: Agriculture, forestry & fishing	-10	-3.3%	-0.7%	0	0%	-1.5%
05-39: Production	-195	-3.0%	-1.4%	-650	-9.5%	-6.8%
41-43: Construction	285	2.4%	2.0%	1,310	12.3%	9.1%
45: Motor trades	170	4.7%	2.3%	515	15.6%	7.0%
46: Wholesale	60	1.3%	0.2%	70	1.5%	-6.1%
47: Retail	355	3.5%	1.6%	880	9.3%	-2.7%
49-53: Transport & Storage (inc postal)	410	5.8%	4.2%	-240	-3.1%	-14.5%
55-56: Accommodation & food services	275	4.6%	2.3%	600	10.6%	8.5%
58-63: Information & communication	-5	-0.1%	1.5%	-815	-15.0%	-10.5%
64-66: Finance & insurance	95	6.6%	4.6%	-45	-2.8%	-2.9%
68: Property	360	8.1%	6.5%	1,325	38.1%	24.2%
69-75: Professional, scientific & technical	305	2.7%	2.0%	-695	-5.7%	-5.3%
77-82: Business administration & support services	-720	-8.9%	-1.6%	-1,025	-12.2%	-5.1%
84: Public administration & defence	5	12.5%	2.4%	10	28.6%	5.5%
85: Education	150	8.5%	5.4%	325	20.4%	13.5%
86-88: Health	265	4.6%	4.2%	1,180	24.6%	17.7%
90-99: Arts, entertainment, recreation & other services	335	5.9%	4.0%	885	17.2%	13.7%
Total	2,140	2.3%	2.0%	3,630	4.0%	0.7%