

EDA State of the Sector Survey Wholesaler Feedback: Q3 2026 (July 2026)





State of the Sector Survey Wholesaler Feedback: Q3 2026

These are the responses from EDA Wholesaler businesses as part of the Q3 2026 EDA State of the Sector Survey.

The results were presented at the EDA's Talking Shop Live Online: Industry Insight in 90 Minutes, Friday 24 July 2026.

This survey attracted 53 responses, a 20% response rate.

As at 24 July 2026, the EDA has 264 wholesaler members, plus the head offices of the 4 buying groups.

There is a separate survey for EDA Manufacturers.

State of the Sector Survey: Q3 2026 (published 24 July 2026)

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[Q26: Have you taken on an apprentice, or more than one, in the last 12 months?](#)

[Q27: As you answered No to the previous question, please tell us the factors which are preventing you from taking on an apprentice. Please tick all that apply.](#)

[Q28: What do you think needs to change to encourage more businesses to benefit from apprenticeships? Please use the space below to add your comments. 1 of 2](#)

[Q28: What do you think needs to change to encourage more businesses to benefit from apprenticeships? Please use the space below to add your comments. 2 of 2](#)

[Q29: Looking back on 2025, did you experience a rise in bad debt compared to 2024?](#)

[Q30: In previous surveys, wholesalers reported customers paying later than expected. Has this continued in 2026?](#)

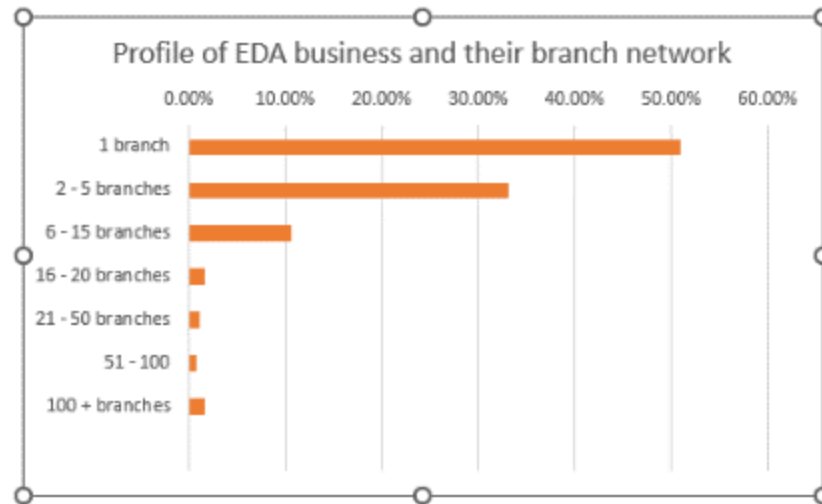
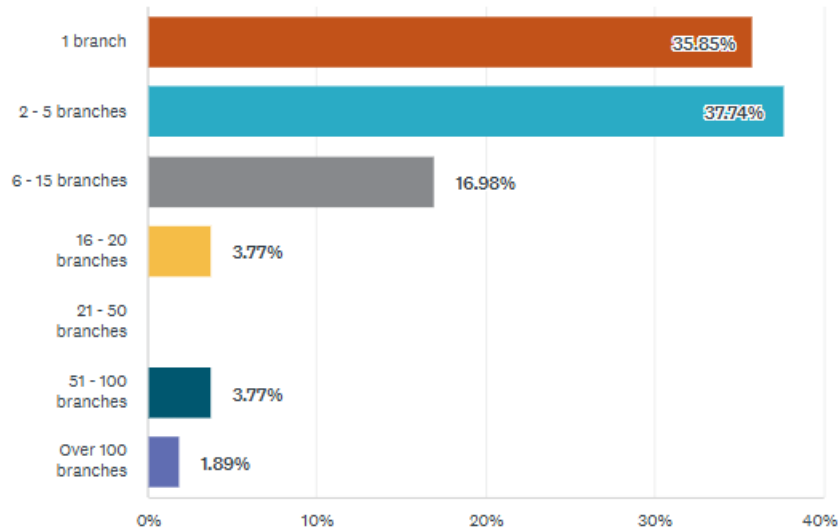
[Q31: So far in 2026, have you experienced a higher number of contractor businesses falling into administration compared to previous years?](#)

[Q32: How do you anticipate sales volumes \(like for like sales\) will change during Q3 2026 and in 2026?](#)

[Q33: In your view will the appointment of Andy Burnham as PM be positive for the industry?](#)



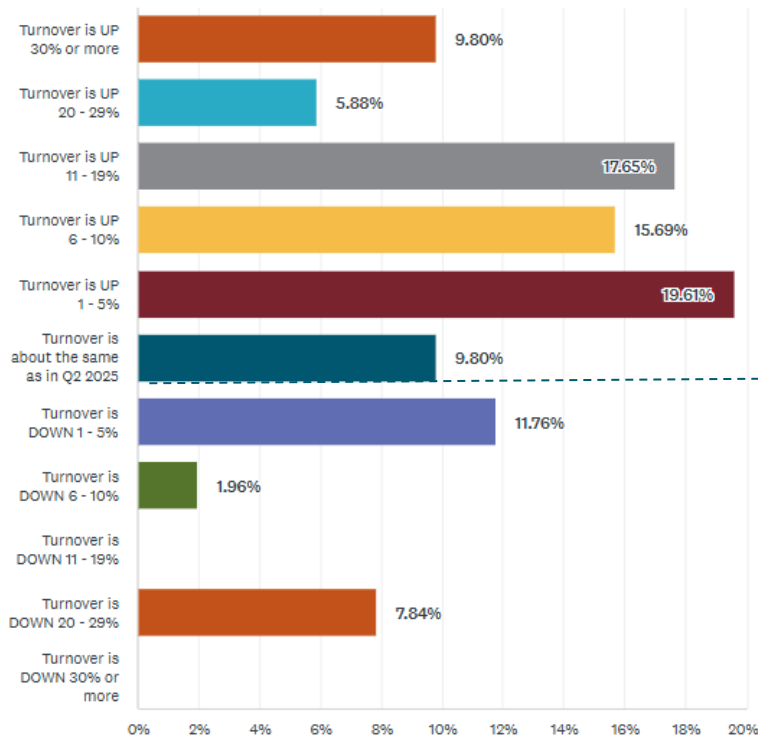
Q1: How many branches do you have?



On 1 April 2026 the EDA has 267 wholesaler members, plus the head offices of the 4 buying groups. Collectively, EDA wholesalers run 1,916 branches across the UK.

State of the Sector Survey: Q3 2026 (published 24 July 2026)

Q2: How does turnover in Q2 2026 compare with Q2 2025?



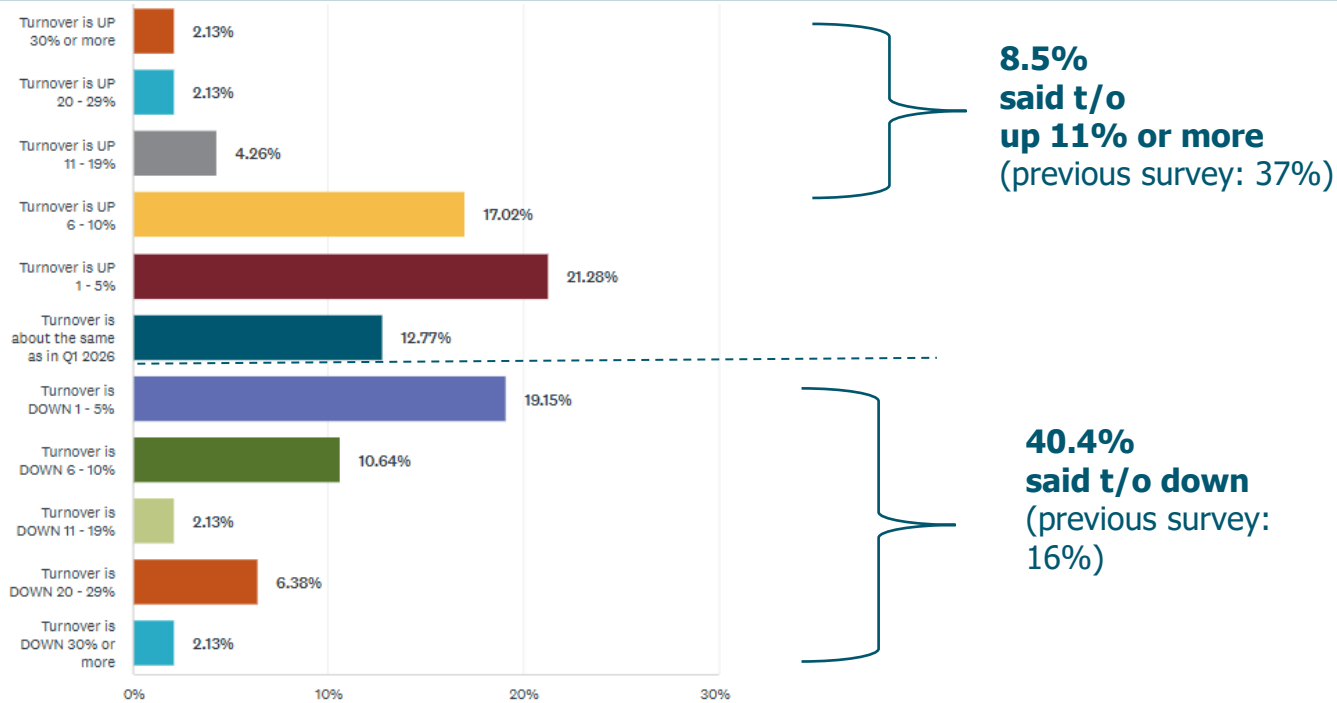
33%
said t/o
up 11% or more
(previous survey: 35%)

"Up 5.7% year on year"

22%
said t/o down
(previous survey: 23%)

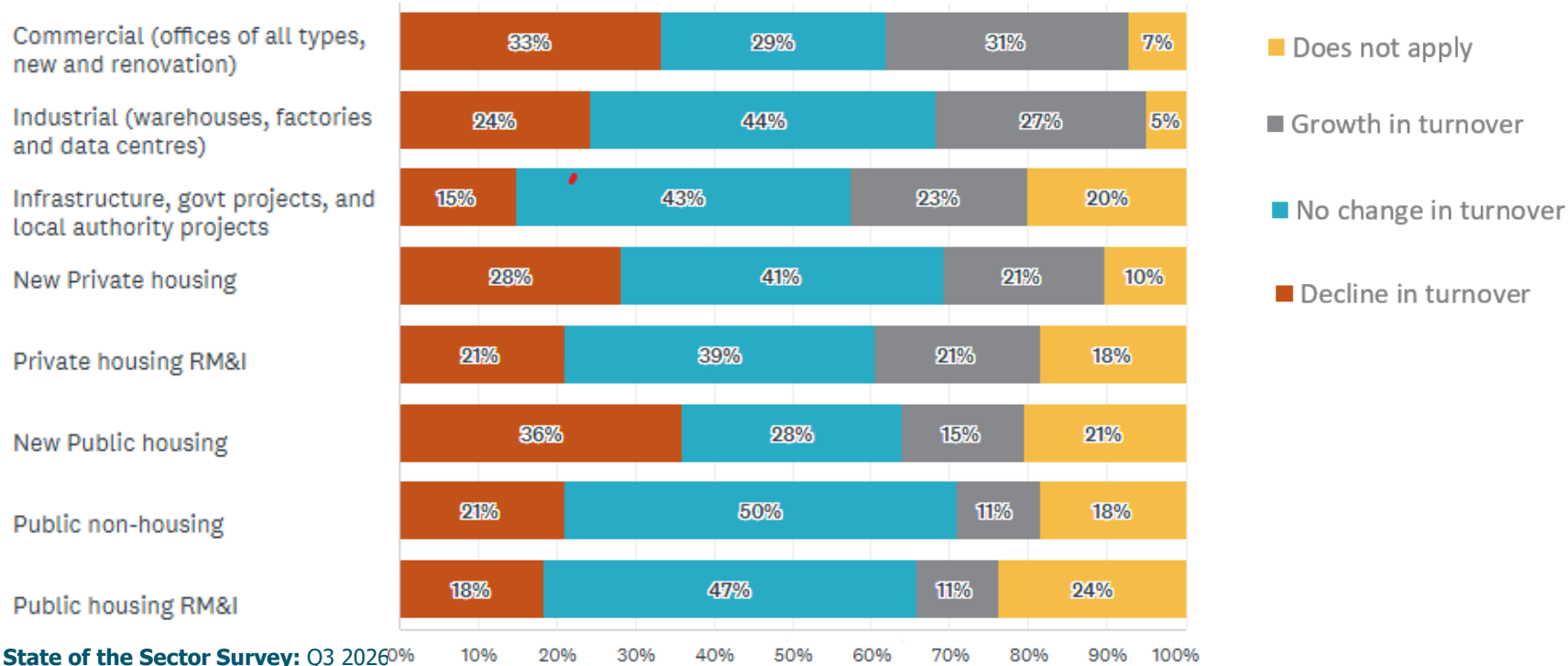


Q3: How does turnover in Q2 2026 compare with Q1 2026?



State of the Sector Survey: Q3 2026 (published 24 July 2026)

Q4. Have you experienced a change in turnover in Q2 2026 compared to Q1 2026 for the following sectors? Ranked by growth (grey band)



Q4. Comments on particular areas of growth



"Data centres, Renewables, Ventilation, Fire Detection. Specialist Cables."

"Air source heat pumps, battery storage, office fit-outs."

"Renewables are leading the growth. Without that we would be -5% down in sales year on year."

"All renewables"

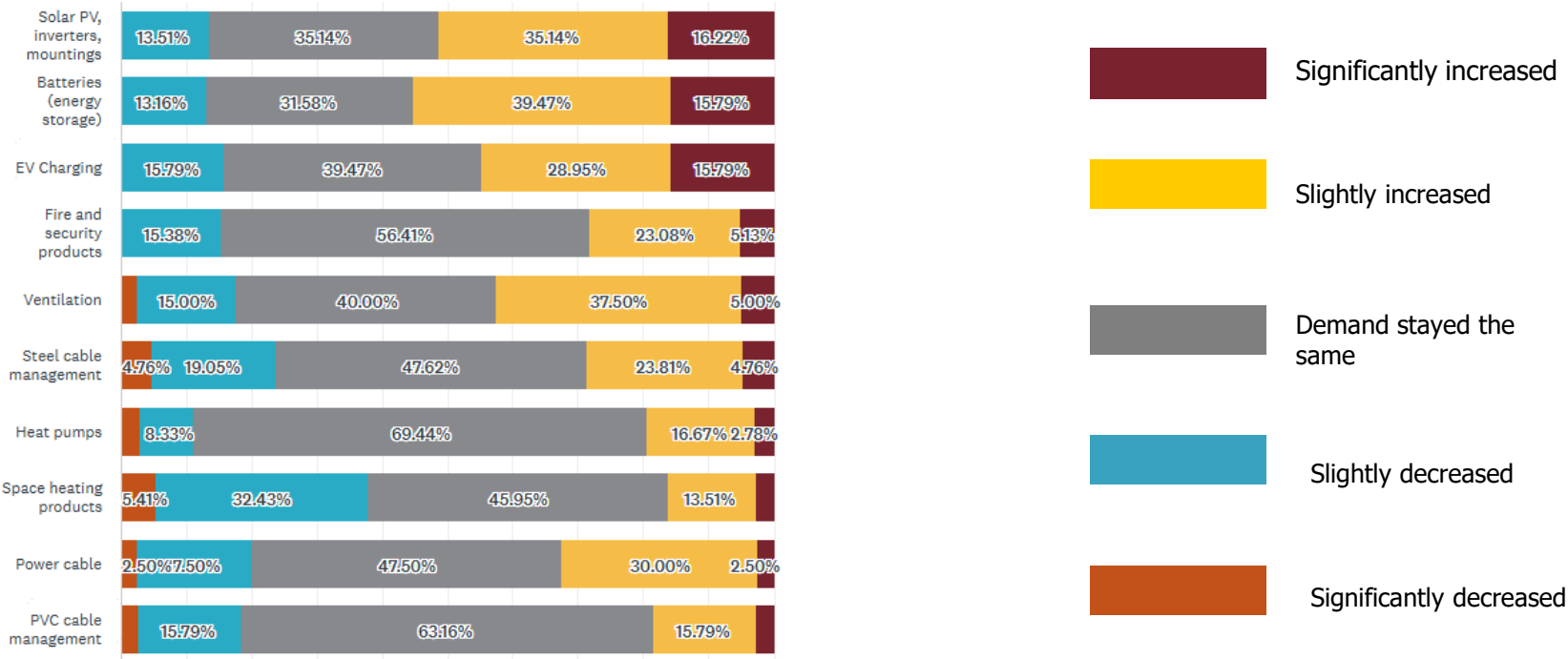
"Hospitality (Hotels & Restaurants)"

"Retail"

"Data Centres, Energy Centres (National Grid), HS2 & Redevelopment of Areas Around HS2 Terminus (Digbeth, Duddeston, Aston, Saltley)"

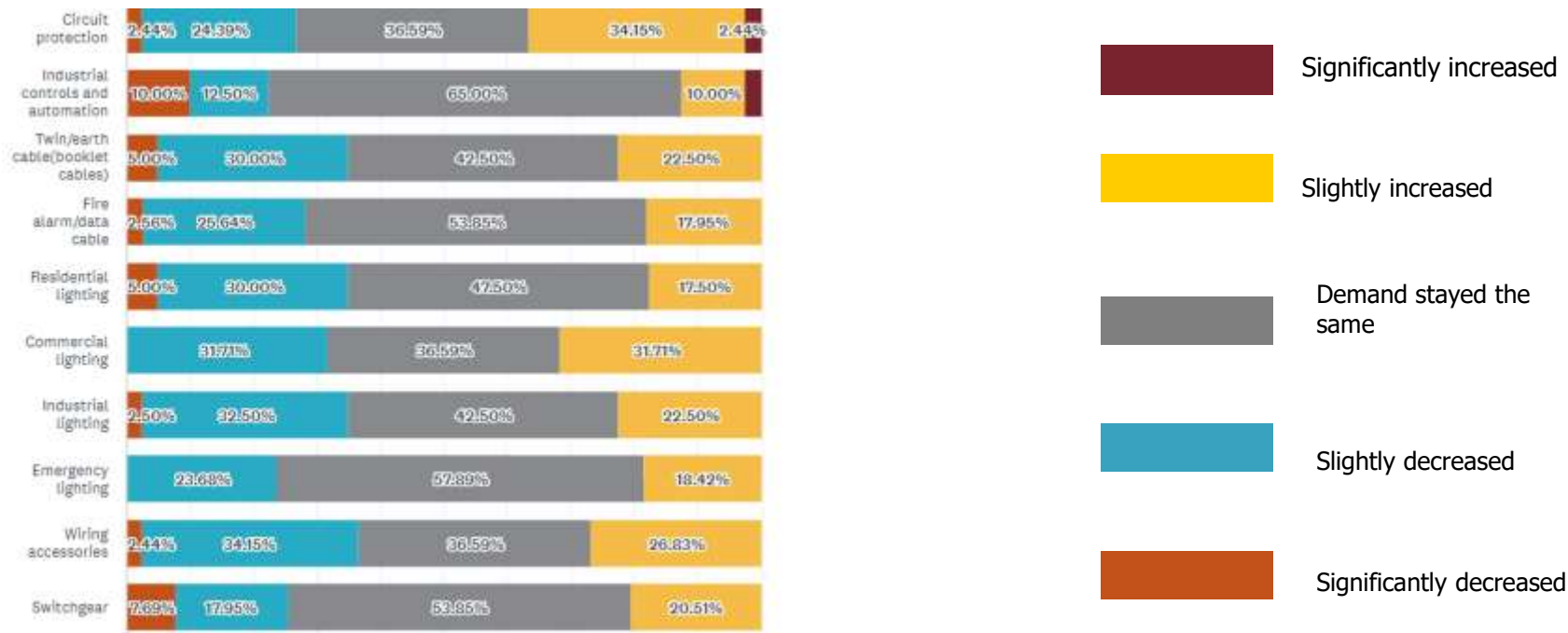
State of the Sector Survey: Q3 2026 (published 24 July 2026)

Q5: Has there been any change in demand for the following products in Q2 2026 compared to Q1 2026? Ranked by 'Significantly Increased'. Page 1 of 4



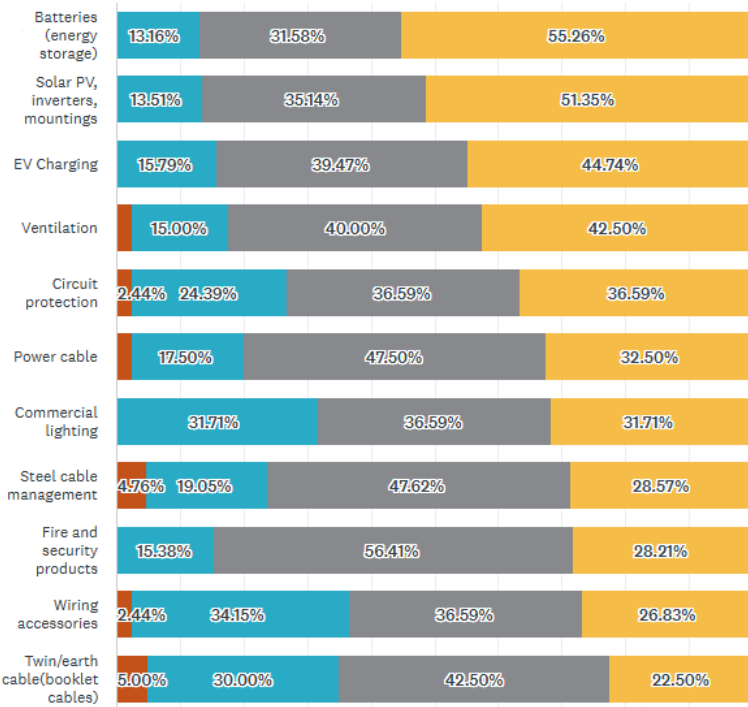
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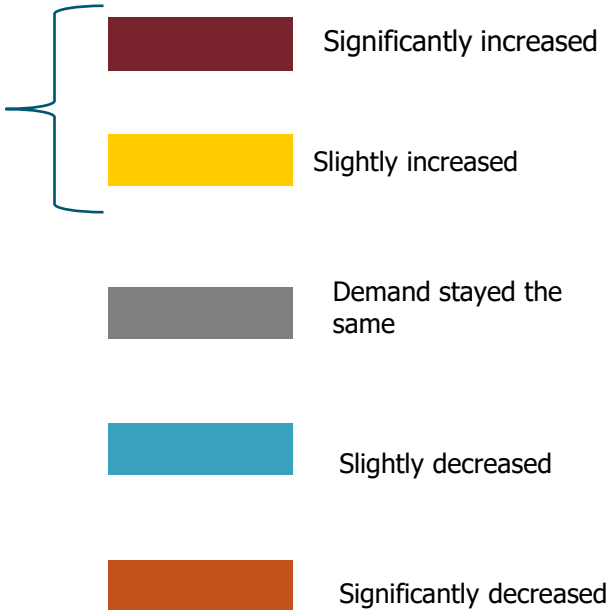


State of the Sector Survey: Q3 2026 (published 24 July 2026)

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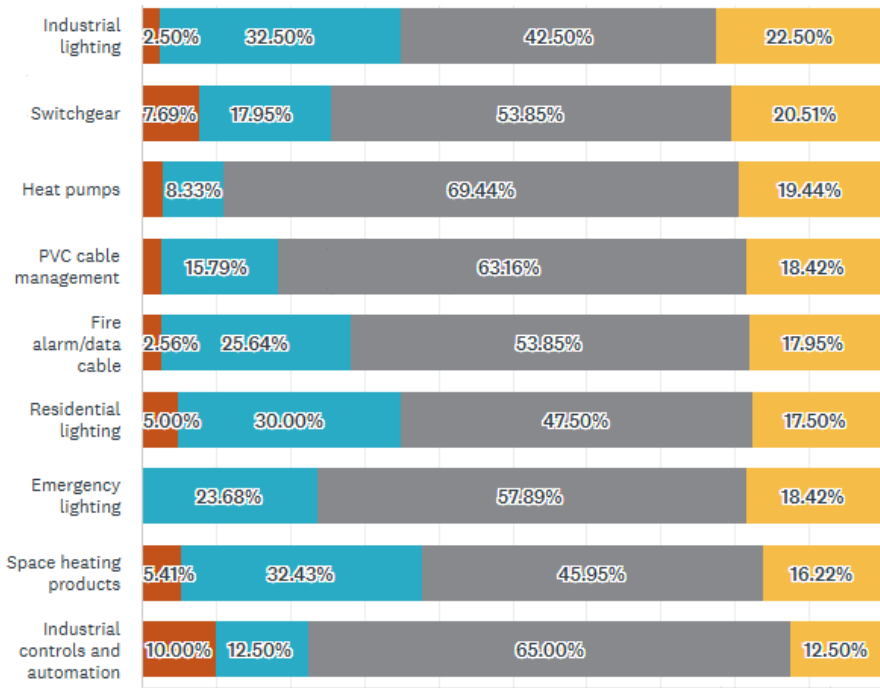


Note: Here we merged 'Slightly increased' and 'Significantly increased' to show a general growth profile.

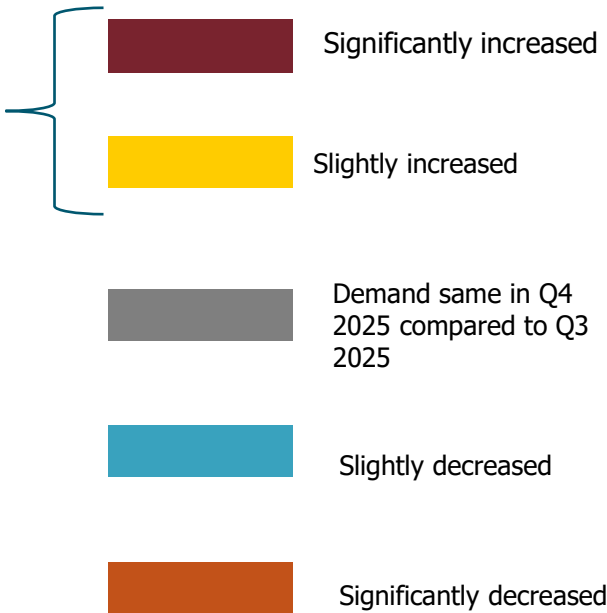


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Note: Here we merged 'Slightly increased' and 'Significantly increased' to show a general growth profile.



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Q6: Your Operational Challenges: please tell us which 5 operational challenges are your most pressing at this time?

	July 2025	October 2025	January 2026	April 2026	July 2026
1	Online prices making margins tight	Increasing business overheads	Increasing business overheads	Increasing business overheads	Increasing business overheads
2	Inflation in business overheads and passing these on to customers	Delays to project starts	Downturn in market demand	Middle East Crisis	Downturn in market demand
3	Upward pressure on all wages driven by the increases in National Living Wage and National Minimum Wage on my overall wage bill	Downturn in market demand	Delays to project starts + A slowdown in my traditional market segments	Downturn in market demand	Delays to project starts
4	A slowdown in the start of projects	Cash flow related issues	Difficulties attracting, recruiting or retaining staff	Difficulties attracting, recruiting or retaining staff	More customers going direct to manufacturers
5	Product price increases and passing these on to customers	Difficulties attracting, recruiting or retaining staff	New competitors entering the market	Delays to project starts	Difficulties attracting, recruiting or retaining staff

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Q6: Comments on Operational Challenges

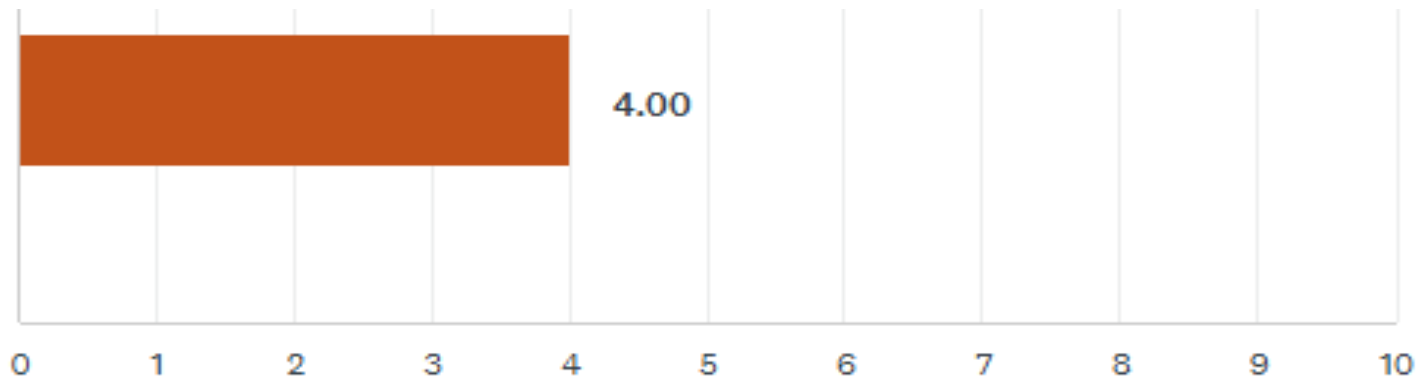
- Labour Government
- Continuing price increases from manufacturers
- Online sellers in race to bottom to sell product. Not able to use traditional supply chain for most of the renewables market. Fragmented market in EV charging. Credit risk with newly formed businesses in the renewables sector.
- Margin Retention. Price Visibility from online traders. Lack of structure from Suppliers to help try and protect margin erosion when investing in stock. Suppliers are now logistics companies delivering faster so does not help people who invest in stock.

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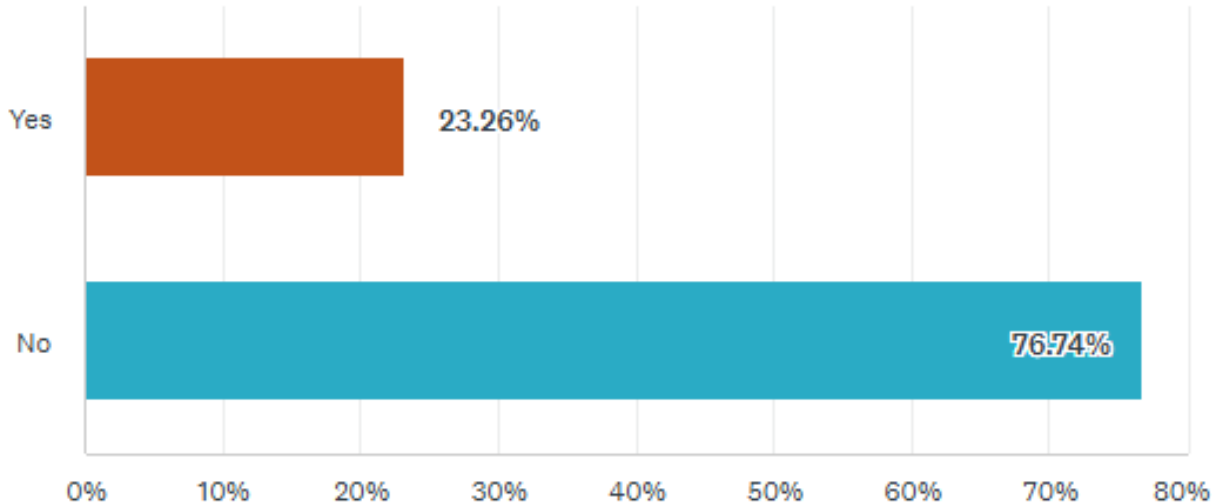




Q7: In June 2026, the US\$ is the best performing major currency, but what is the impact on your business? Please use the slider where 1 is no impact at all and 10 is a significant impact.



Q8: Manufacturers are telling us that increased demand for lighting components by the AI sector and data centre construction is causing longer lead times for other sectors, typically extended from 12 weeks to 16 weeks. Is this your experience?



"I have not had any feedback from my members on lead times being an issue."

"Suppliers with longer lead times have not got longer lead than normal times."

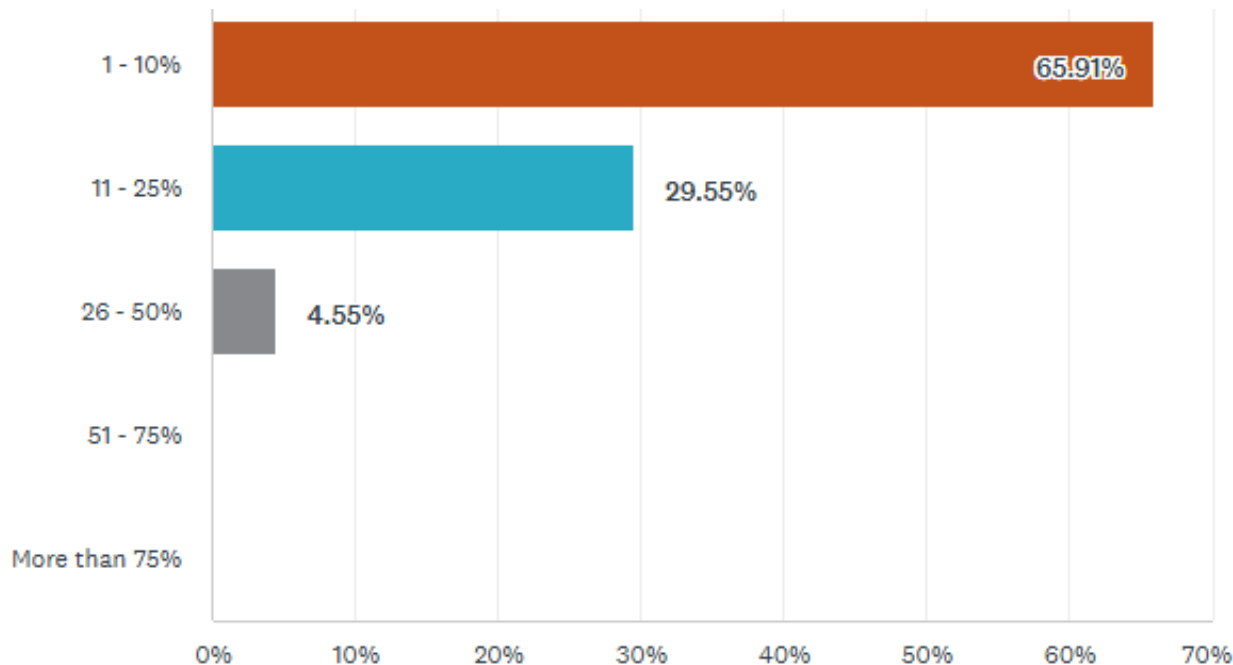
"Nobody from manufacturers has spoken to us about that and we have only experienced stock issues on a few suppliers."

"There are too many lighting suppliers anyway so if one doesn't have it there are a 100 who do."

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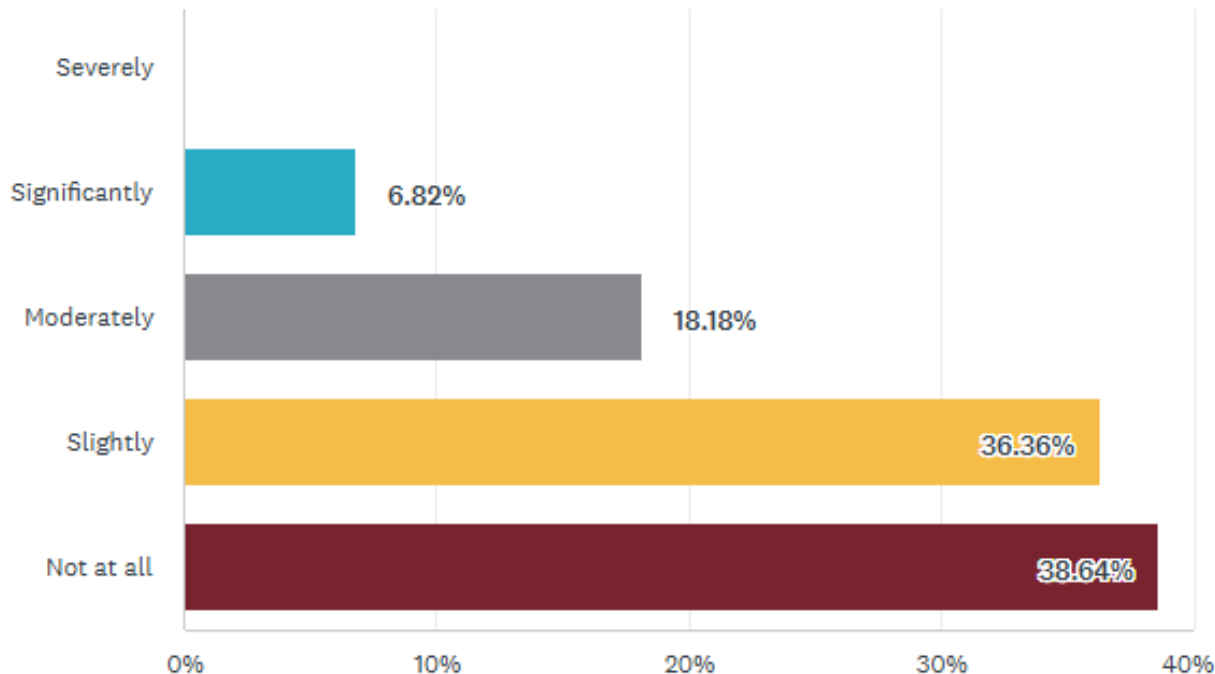
Q9: In 2026, approximately what percentage of your revenue is directly linked to new-build residential projects?



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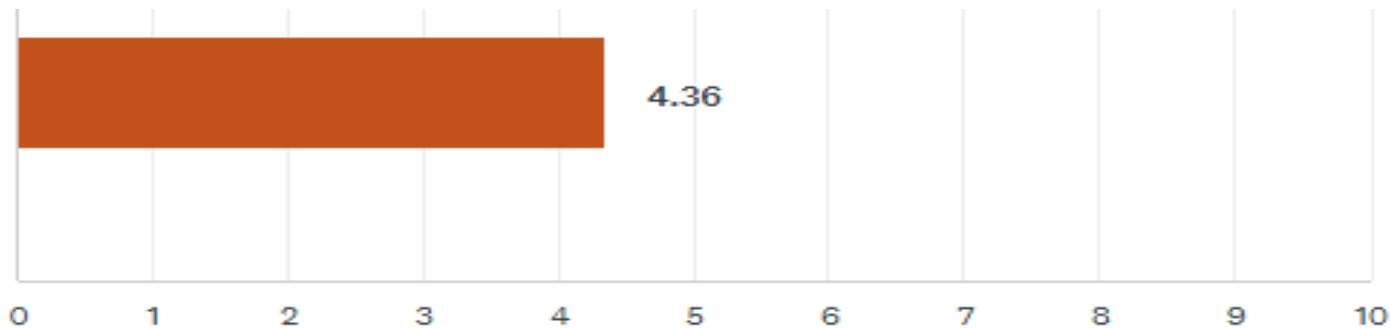
Q10: To what extent has the current slowdown in UK housebuilding affected your overall sales over the past 12 months?



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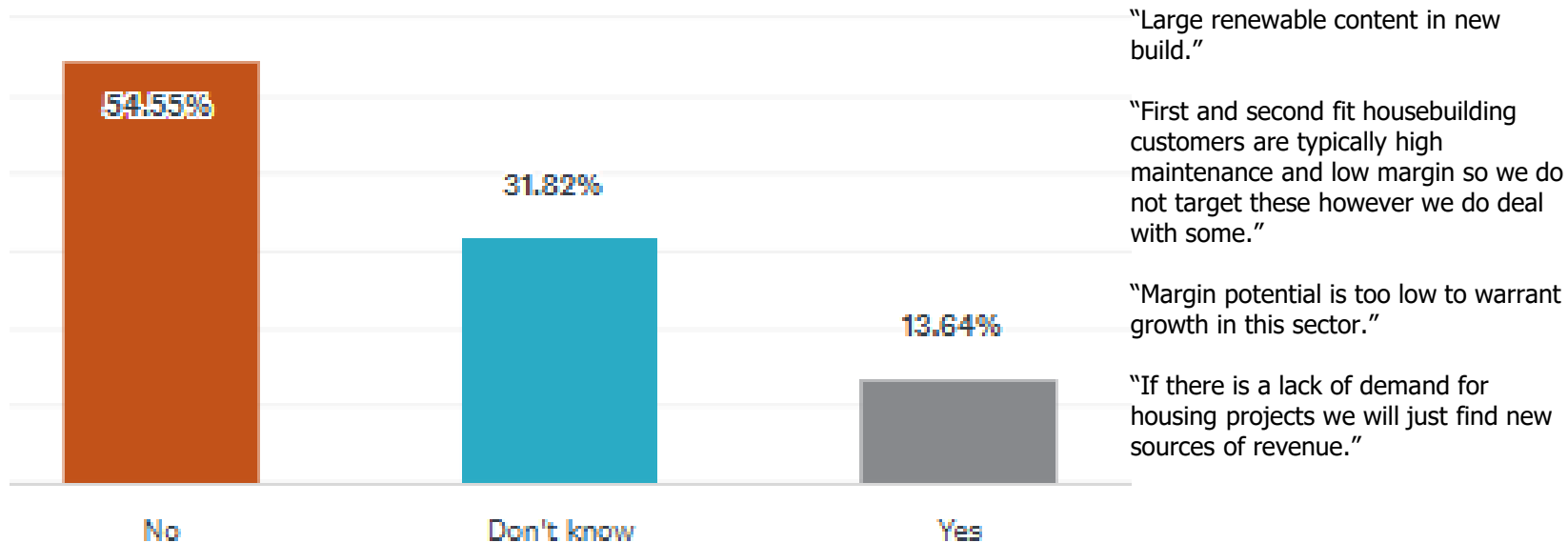


Q11: How important is the housebuilding market to your growth strategy over the next 3 years?
Please use the slider below, where 1 is not important and 10 is extremely important.



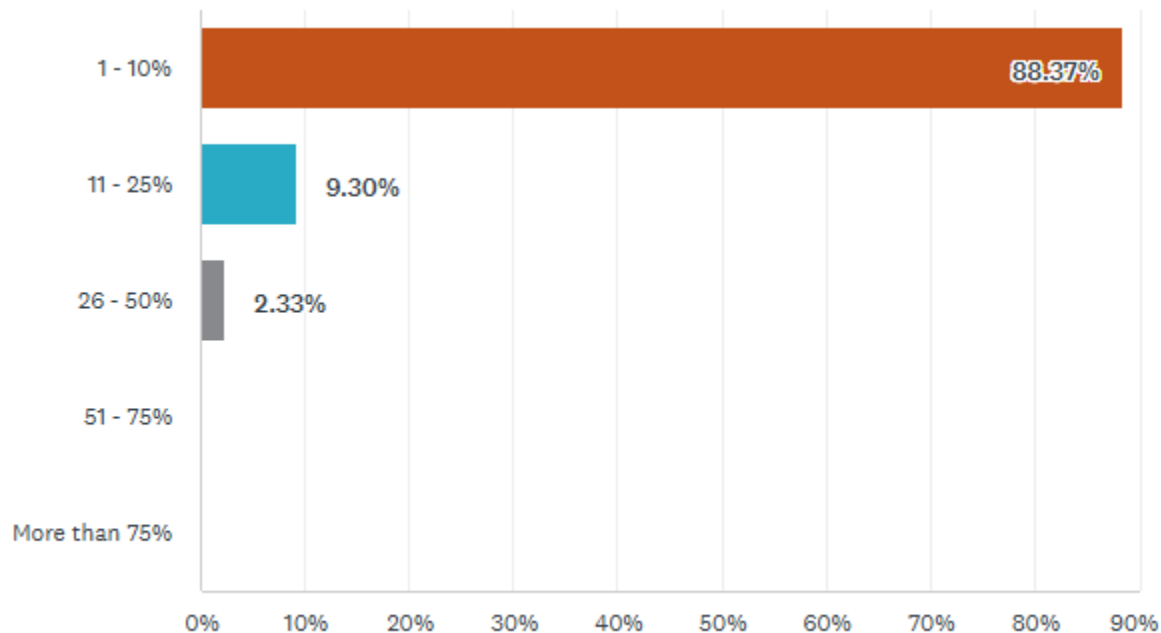


Q12: Do you expect the housing market to recover in the next 12 months?



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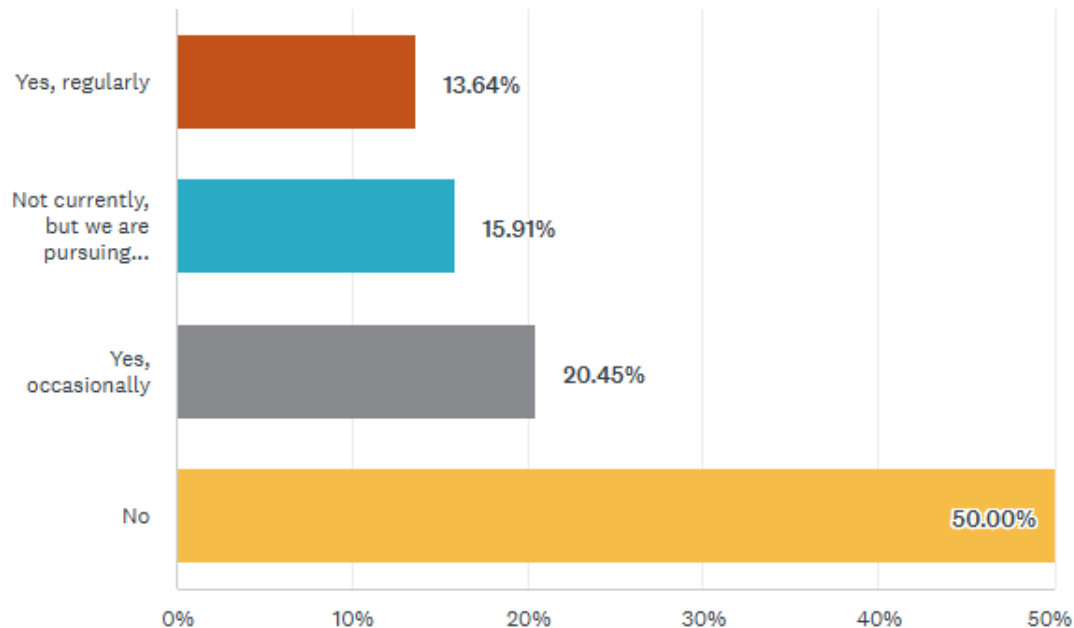
Q13: In 2026, approximately what percentage of your revenue is directly linked to data centre projects?



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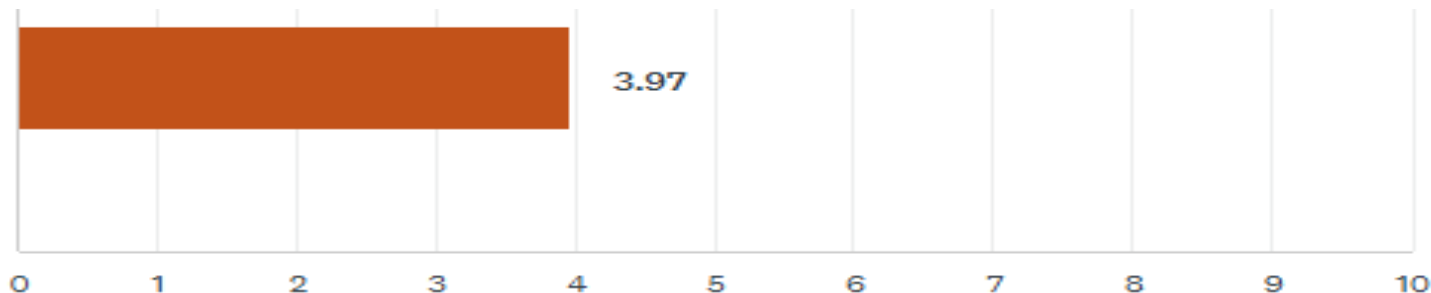
Q14: Is your business currently supplying products for data centre construction or refurbishment?



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Q15: How important is the data centre sector to your growth strategy over the next 3 years? Please use the slider below, where 1 is not important and 10 is extremely important.



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Q16: What is the biggest opportunity and biggest challenge the growth of UK data centres presents for your business?

Opportunities

- Cable management
- Increased volume of containment
- Data centre projects is not a segment our members typically work in
- Containment, Cabling, PSU's.
- MORE BUSINESS
- Established relationships with key suppliers and contractors
- renewables
- Indirectly through switchgear businesses
- Cable and containment is seeing the biggest growth linked to data centre customers
- Facilities management
- Cable Mgt STEEL, Data Cables,

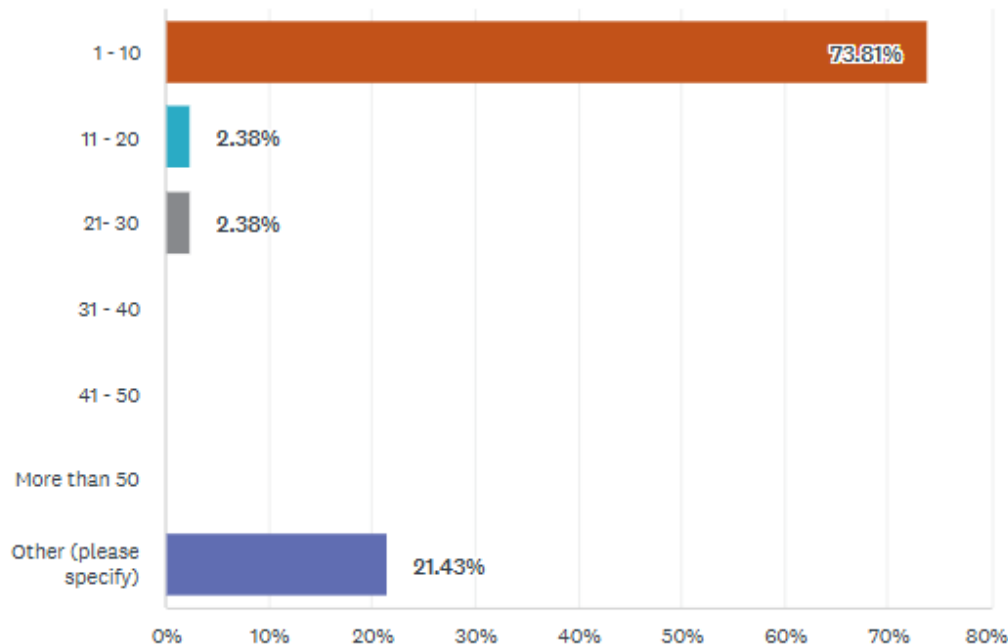
Challenges

- Competitiveness, price wise.
- As an independent it is difficult to get a seat at the table of national contractors
- That generally these are done at a higher level with market leaders that tend to favour national wholesalers
- SUPPLIERS
- Getting more and more competitive
- We have been waiting over 12 months for data centre jobs to land despite having quoted so having to re-issue quotes constantly on cable and containment and not having many jobs land is tough. However, when they do land which we have been promised one of our branches will be at full tilt to service that.
- Much of the volume business in this sector is tightly controlled by manufacturers and wholesalers with specialist teams. There is little day-to-day opportunity due to pricing restrictions i.e. supported deals.
- Customers
- Making contact
- A lot of the deals have been signed up for with certain suppliers years ago and hard to break in. Tend to use the same people on repeat jobs.

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Q17: In the 12 months 1 July 2025 - 30 June 2026, how many thefts from a branch or branches has your business experienced?



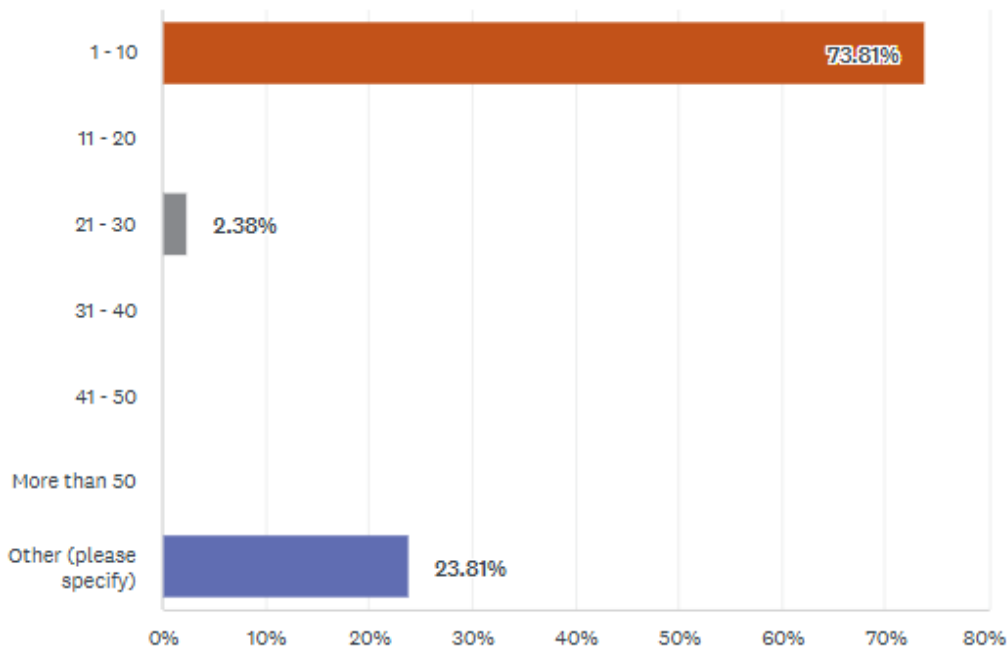
"In the year 24-25 we had **1 incident**, and not a lot was taken. In the year 25-26 **we had 7 robberies, and more was taken each time.**"

"Nothing like what others have experienced such as Burglary but we have a large tools counter and do experience general shoplifting."

"Recently been victim of gangs stealing stock from branches during normal working hours."

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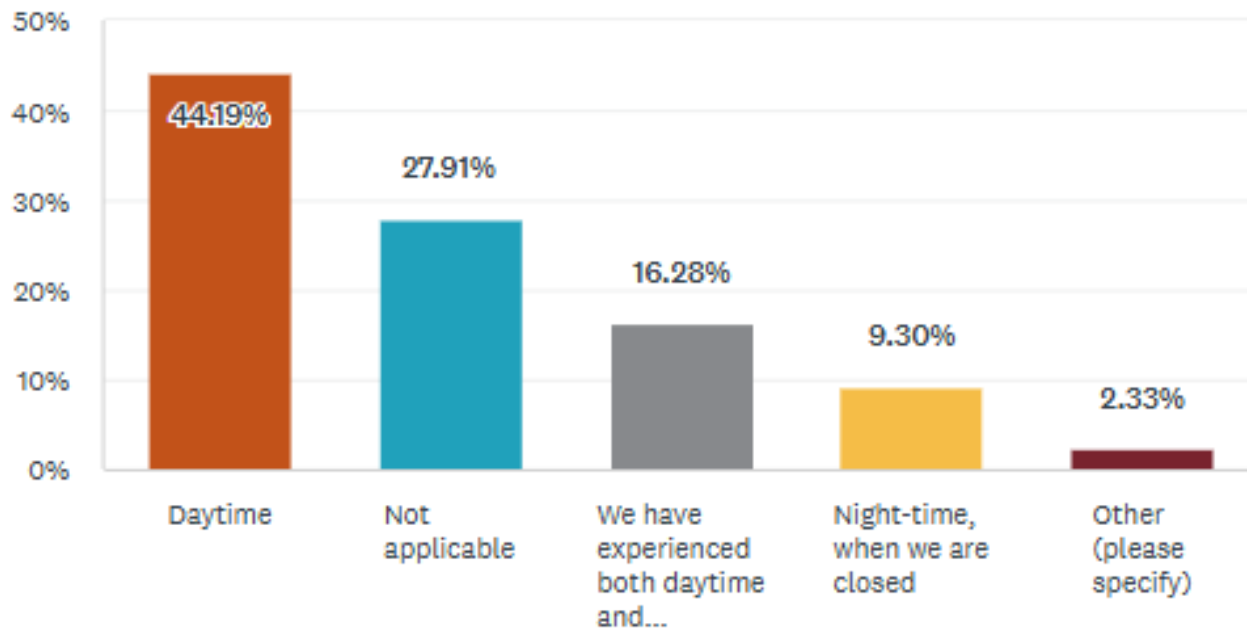
Q18: For comparison, in the 12 months 1 July 2024 – 30 June 2025 how many thefts from a branch or branches did your business experience?



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Q19: If applicable, do these thefts take place during the day when the branch is open or at night-time when your premises are closed?



"From what I see this is organised crime by certain groups focussed on certain products they can sell back into wholesalers on the black market. Aico, Wago, Wiska, RCBOs."

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Q20: What type of individuals or groups do you think are undertaking the thefts? Please tick all that apply.

Organised criminal group (coordinated, professional or repeat offending)

Individual opportunist (one-off or apparently spontaneous theft)

Unknown / unable to determine

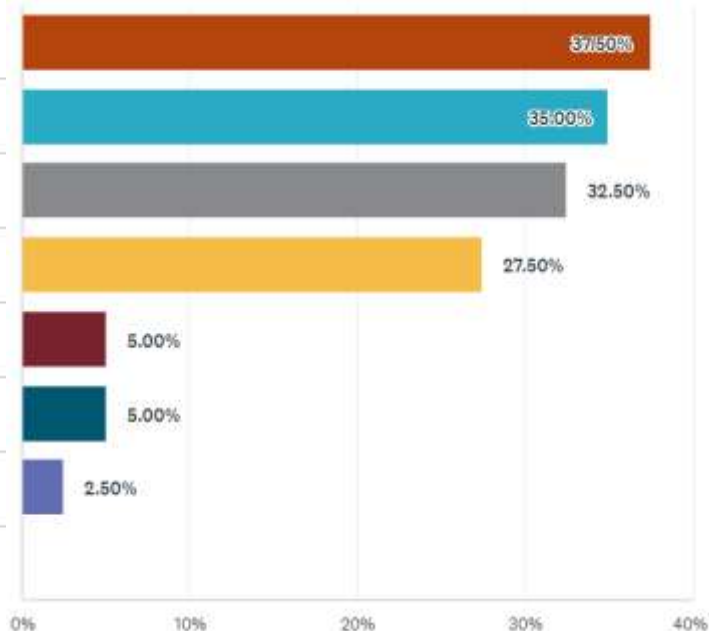
Small group (2-5 people acting together, not believed to be organised)

Current employee (internal theft)

Other (please specify)

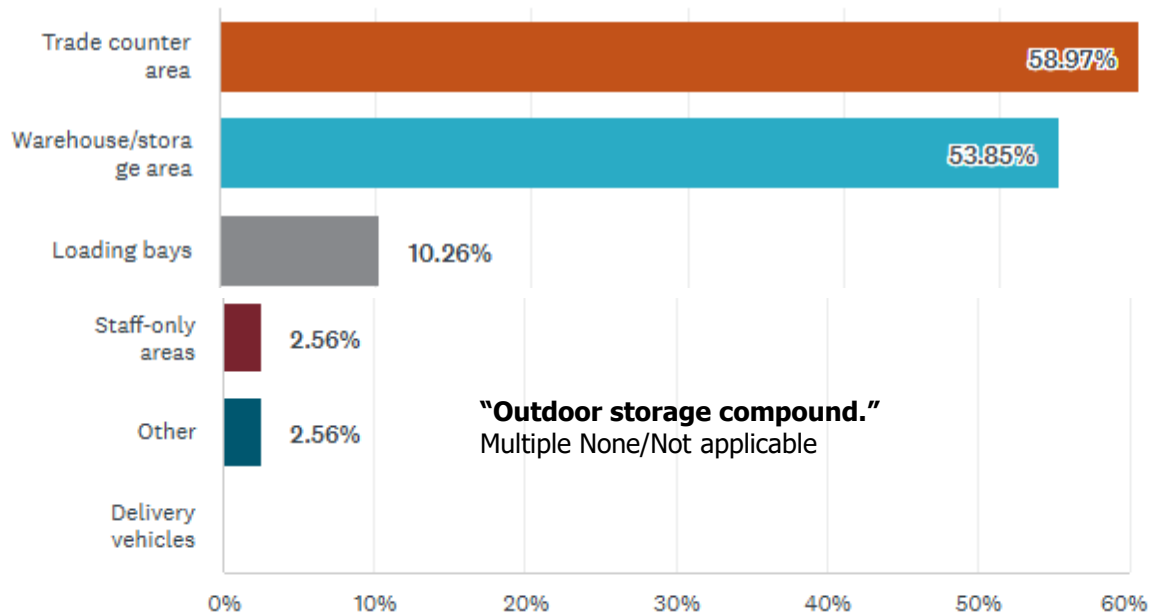
Repeat individual offender (known or suspected repeat visitor acting alone)

Former employee



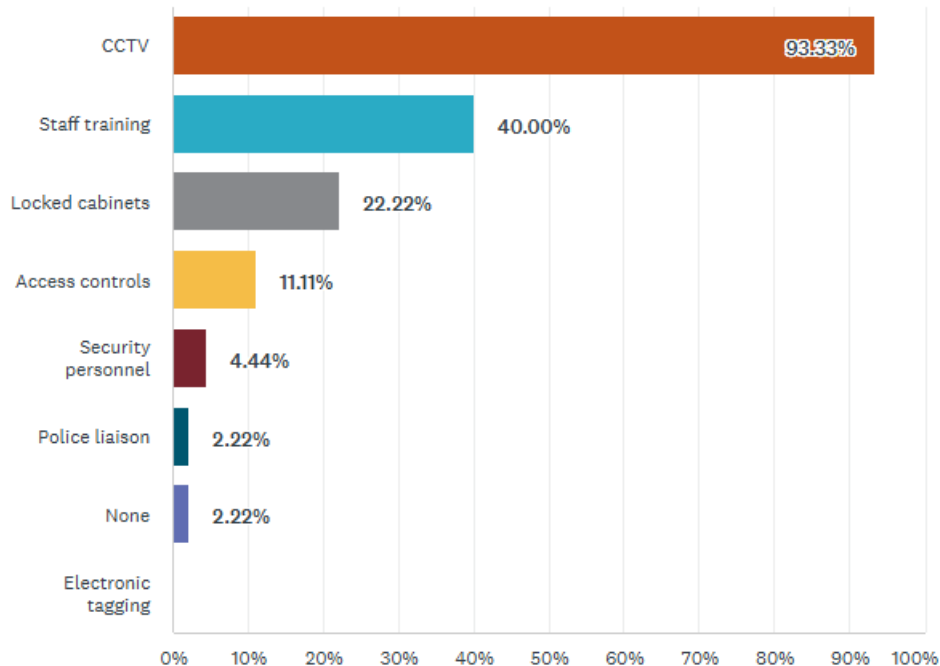
State of the Sector Survey: Q3 2026 (published 24 July 2026)

Q21: If applicable, where do theft incidents most commonly occur within your business?
Please tick all that apply.



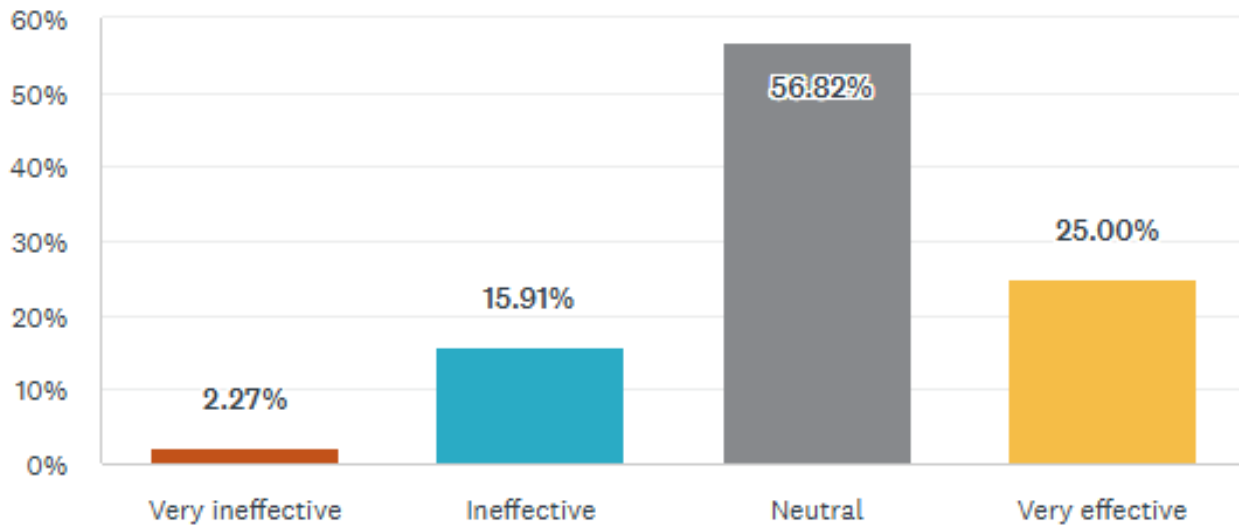
State of the Sector Survey: Q3 2026 (published 24 July 2026)

Q22: What security measures does your business currently use? Please tick all that apply.



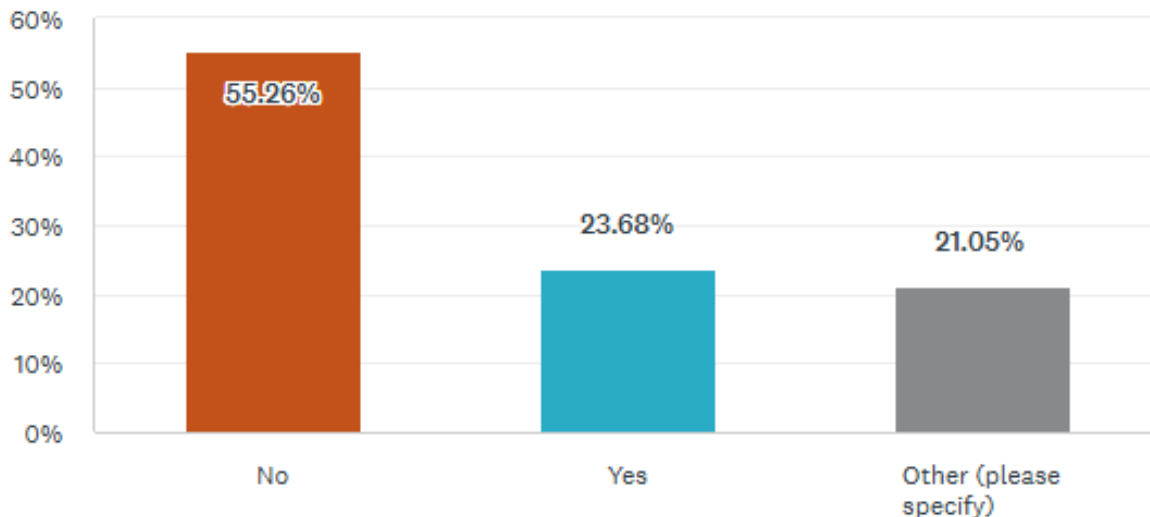
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Q23: How effective do you believe your current anti-theft measures are?



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Q24: Have you been satisfied with the response of the police?



"Police turned up at branch 4 days after this event which was obviously far too late."

"What police, what response. Until there are punishments that deter people this will carry on."

"Complete waste of time reporting thefts. Even with high quality CCTV footage of offenders, car reg, tattoos etc, the police do nothing."

"The police do not regard this type of crime as serious, thefts from businesses are considered victimless."

"We have 24hr on site security provided by the landlord."

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Q25: Please describe any notable trends or challenges your business has seen regarding theft. 1 of 2



"There is little or no follow up investigation to find stolen goods, providing a crime number appears to be the extent of the police responsibility."

"Much more brazen now. no fear, and no shame. Sadly particular groups carrying out this type of theft."

"As the copper price increases, the rewards are higher. The break-ins are repeated as they know the police response is poor."

"Staff thefts."

"More brazen theft and pointless criminal damage caused by unsuccessful thieves ramming shutter doors etc."

"The current method of gangs simply helping themselves and intimidating staff seems to be widespread - also, there are targeted products i.e. power tools, hand tools, test instruments and Aico."

"AICO Theft."

"Credit card fraud has definitely become more common and more sophisticated."

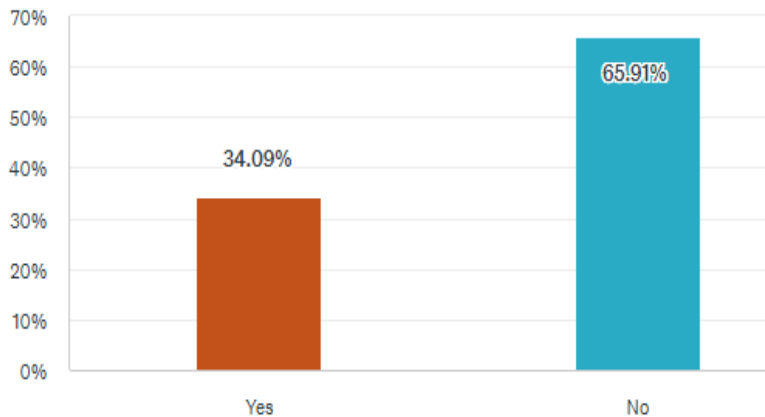
State of the Sector Survey: Q3 2026 (published 24 July 2026)

Q25: Please describe any notable trends or challenges your business has seen regarding theft. 2 of 2

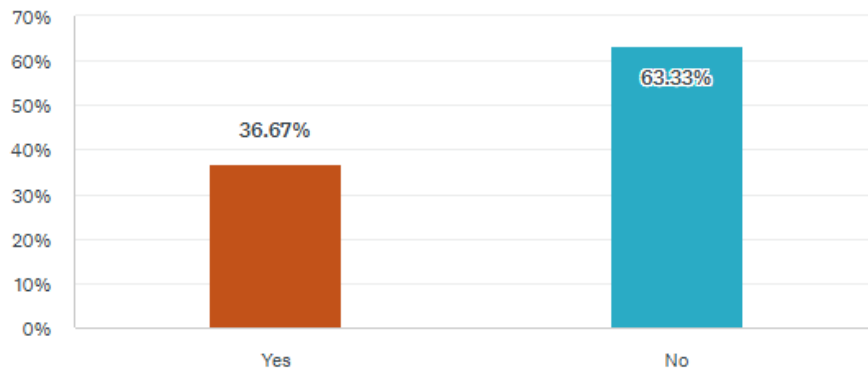
- Always looking for high value, specific items - Aico, powertools, wago etc. Normally working in a team of 3-5, distracting, causing a nuisance and generally being intimidating.
- Tools, Wago connectors & Aico smoke alarms
- These people are untouchable this is why the situation is getting totally out of hand. I know our company is building cases against serial offenders, but they still come back after being arrested!
- More calls from criminals trying to commit fraud my posing as customers
- Staff are cautious and scared
- We had an instance where 2 men came into trade counter, went straight to Makita stand, cut the security wire and when we pulled them up threatened staff with violence
- It's constant and in varying degree, we know of wholesalers across the Bristol area who have had constant issues the big one at the moment is Aico product.
- Complete disregarding for the thieves, they don't try and hide what they are doing and know that we can't stop them
- We are unable to stop these people from coming behind the counter and taking what they like.
- Absolutely Blatant. Total disregard for CCTV

State of the Sector Survey: Q3 2026 (published 24 July 2026)

Q26: Have you taken on an apprentice, or more than one, in the last 12 months?

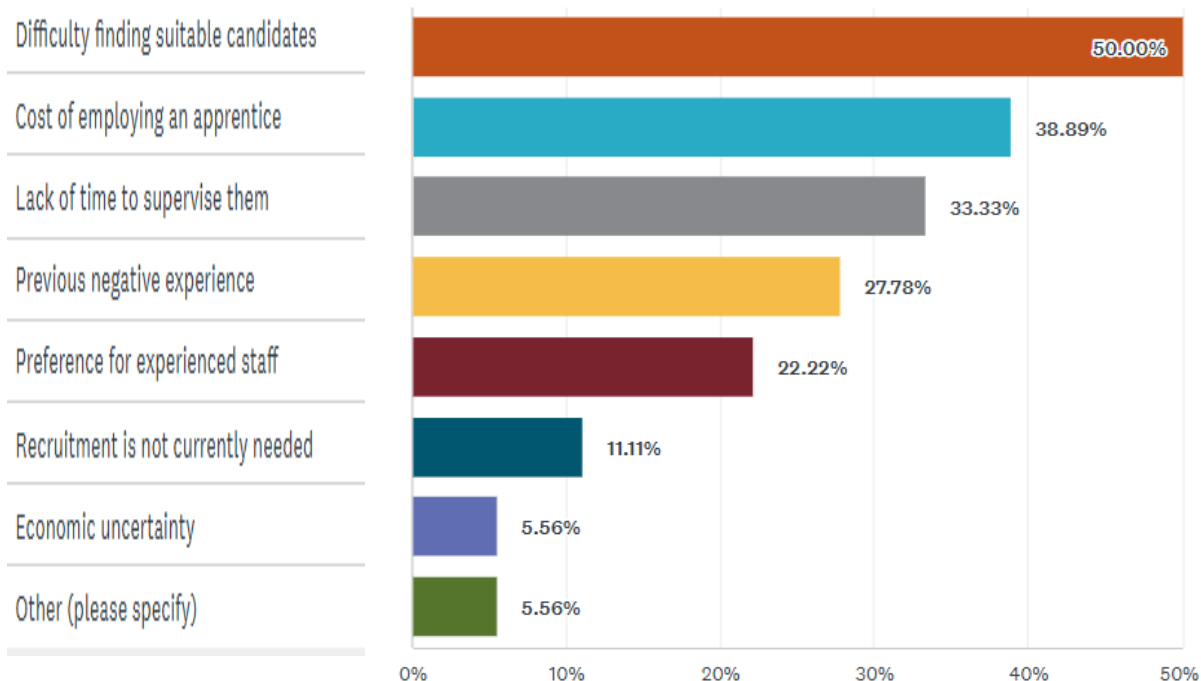


To those answering No, we asked: Are you planning to take on an apprentice, or more than one, in the next 12 months?



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Q27: As you answered No to the previous question, please tell us the factors which are preventing you from taking on an apprentice. Please tick all that apply.



State of the Sector Survey: Q3 2026 (published 24 July 2026)

Q28: What do you think needs to change to encourage more businesses to benefit from apprenticeships? Please use the space below to add your comments. 1 of 2

- Remove NI contribution, more funding towards training time. *(This is not correct: Employer NI is not paid for an apprentice under age 25)*
- Cost *(Apprenticeship training costs are free for apprentices under 24 years of age or paid out of an organisations levy)*
- Government funding *(Training and NI is government funded)*
- Government support of which there is none. *(See above)*
- Continued government support with funding the wages of the apprentices early (first 2 years) of their apprenticeships. Also the EDA modules really help we have structured additional learning on top of apprenticeships to increase product awareness
- The industry is not seen as an attractive career. Young people do not like the hours, or understand that investment in themselves at this stage can carry great reward.
- The quality of candidate *(If you pay above the min wage you get better candidates)*
- Better engagement from schools with local businesses
- Cost of apprentices compared to their knowledge
- Better tax incentives
- Schools to prepare children better for vocational jobs.
- lower cost for zero experience

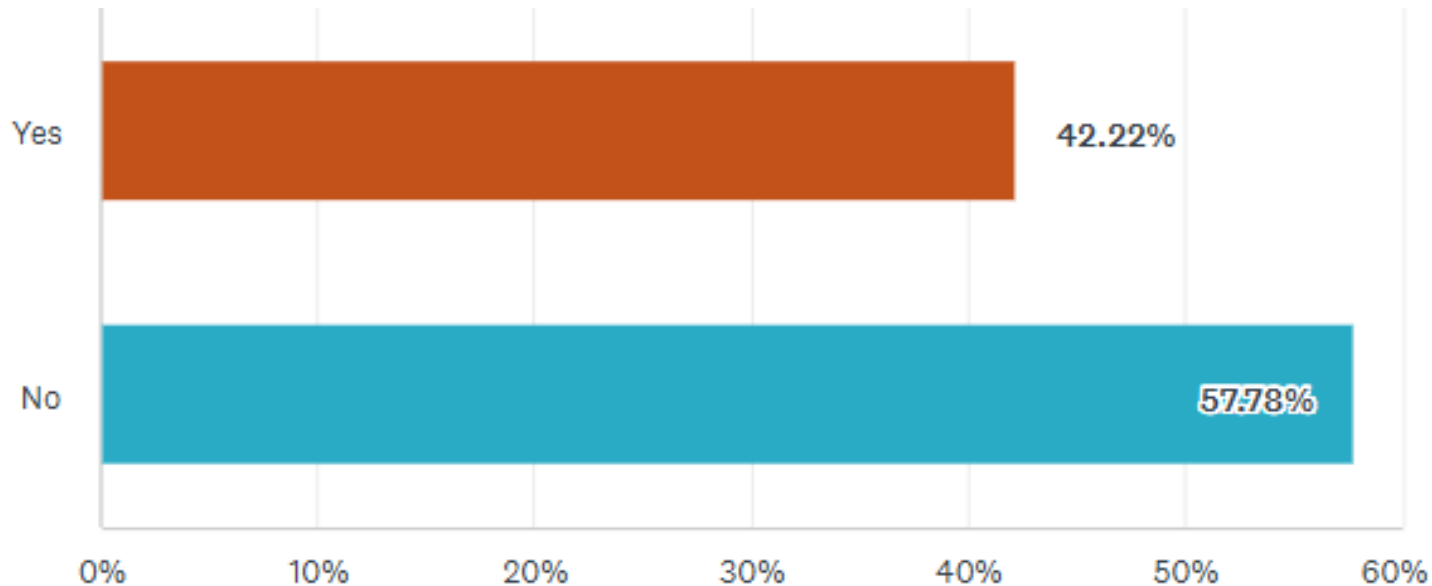
State of the Sector Survey: Q3 2026 (published 24 July 2026)



Q28: What do you think needs to change to encourage more businesses to benefit from apprenticeships? Please use the space below to add your comments. 2 of 2

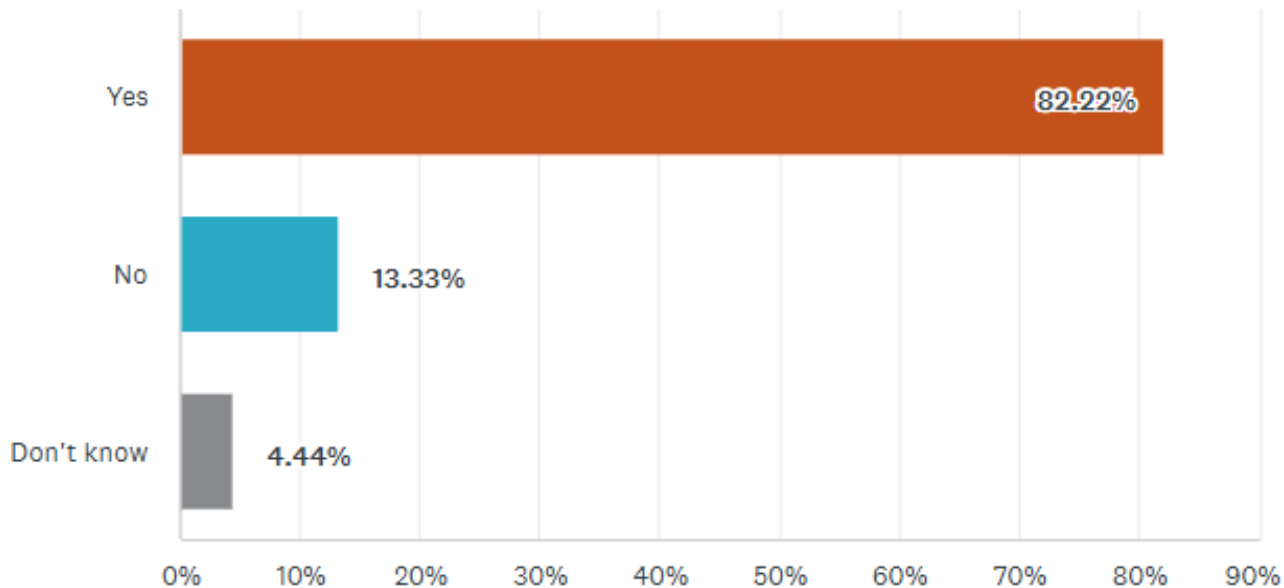
- Support for employers and employees, proper support though not just going through the motions *(If you used hosted service you have support from training provider and FJAA)*
- Easier to admin *(EDA Apprenticeship Service does all the admin for you.)*
- Day release style training or much better focused training.
- Needs to be a better financial incentive (in terms of salary cost) to compensate for the time and work needed to get someone up to speed.
- The issue is having the time to train the apprentice, many people are consumed by their roles as businesses try to operate as efficiently as possible. Bringing in an apprentice needs to benefit the apprentice so that they can gain responsibilities and then have accountability to grow. Time is the constraint, but the seasonality of the business could assist on this.
- Interestingly we see more wanting to come into a trade now as they realise AI and Digital is going to reduce the numbers needed. So a Trades Person is the way to go.

Q29: Looking back on 2025, did you experience a rise in bad debt compared to 2024?



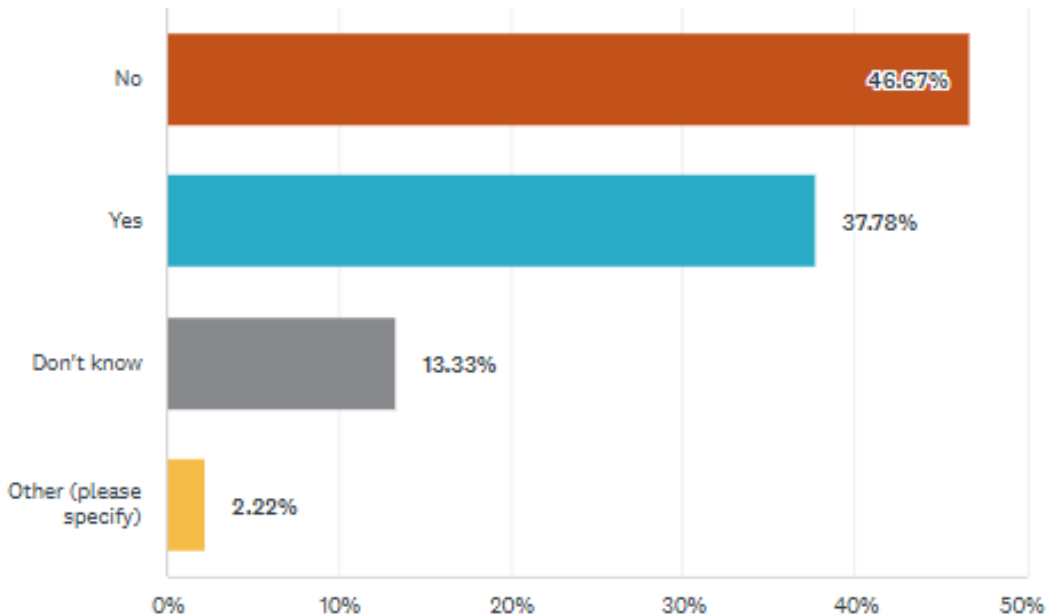
State of the Sector Survey: Q3 2026 (published 24 July 2026)

Q30: In previous surveys, wholesalers reported customers paying later than expected. Has this continued in 2026?



State of the Sector Survey: Q3 2026 (published 24 July 2026)

Q31: So far in 2026, have you experienced a higher number of contractor businesses falling into administration compared to previous years?



"We are now very tight on who/how much credit we give. We prefer to turn down projects with low margin that carry credit risk. This is a detriment to growth but protects what we have in the bank."

"We have a new management group and we have been stricter in our credit control."

"Continual issue. Competitive nature of current, subdued market not helping."

"We have increased bad debt provision from .15 to .45%"

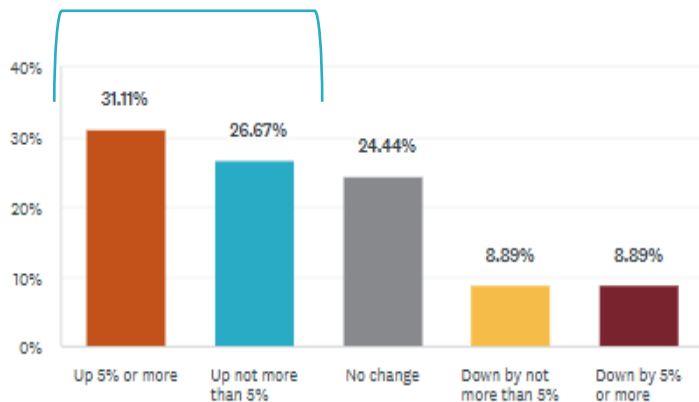
"Costs are UP. Margins are Down, people pay late = more problems."

State of the Sector Survey: Q3 2026 (published 24 July 2026)

Q32: How do you anticipate sales volumes (like for like sales) will change during Q3 2026 and in 2026?

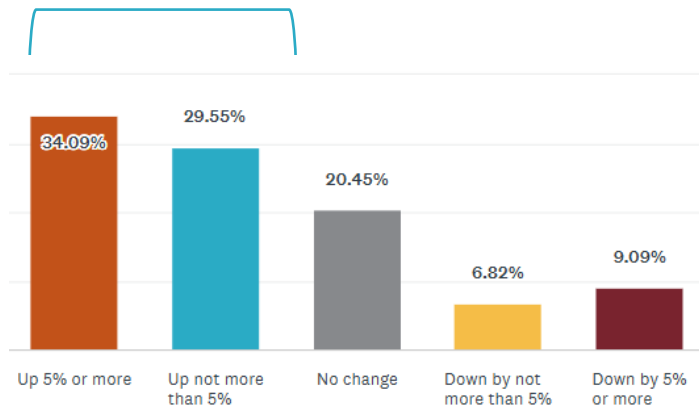
During Q3 2026

58% predict sales volume will increase



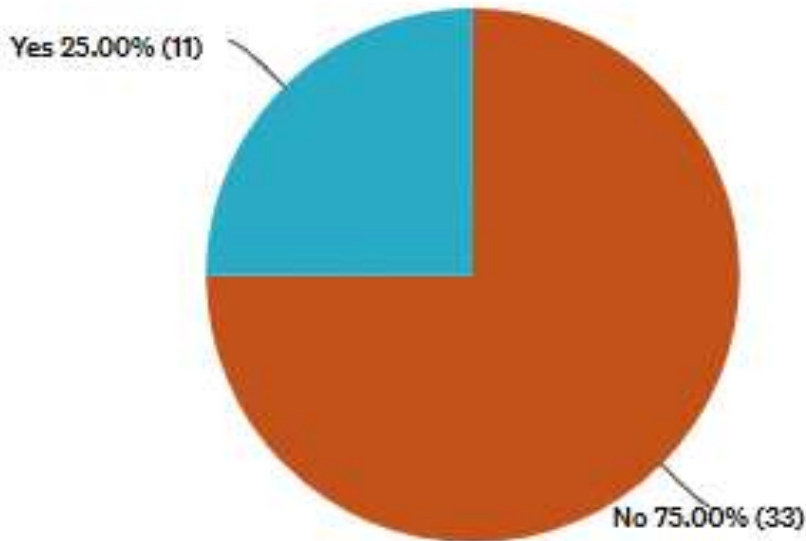
During 2026

64% predict sales volume will increase



State of the Sector Survey: Q3 2026 (published 24 July 2026)

Q33: In your view will the appointment of Andy Burnham as PM be positive for the industry?



- Hard to say, but may more proactively push ahead with house building
- Any labour led government is only interested in taxing more to pay for the welfare state. They are not interested in business growth.
- Emperor's new clothes
- Don't know his policies yet when it comes to business
- Do not expect any reduction in recent increases in tax. Will be very surprised if can implement a strategy to meet housebuilding targets set in the Labour manifesto.
- Although Andy Burnham will probably bring a feel-good factor for a while, the economic challenges are too great to be resolved in the short term
- The country is lost and needs radical change. It will be the same as before but getting worst each time we change leaders until we get someone with some guts to solve the problems the every day person in the street can see. Too many on benefits, too many people coming in bringing no added value (take more from system than put in), crime not being sorted, lack of basic respect and responsibility for people now. Answer = go to Poland

State of the Sector Survey: Q3 2026 (published 24 July 2026)