



The
Growth
Company

Growth Company Business Survey

Results for the 2nd October 2025 to 2nd January 2025

www.growthco.uk

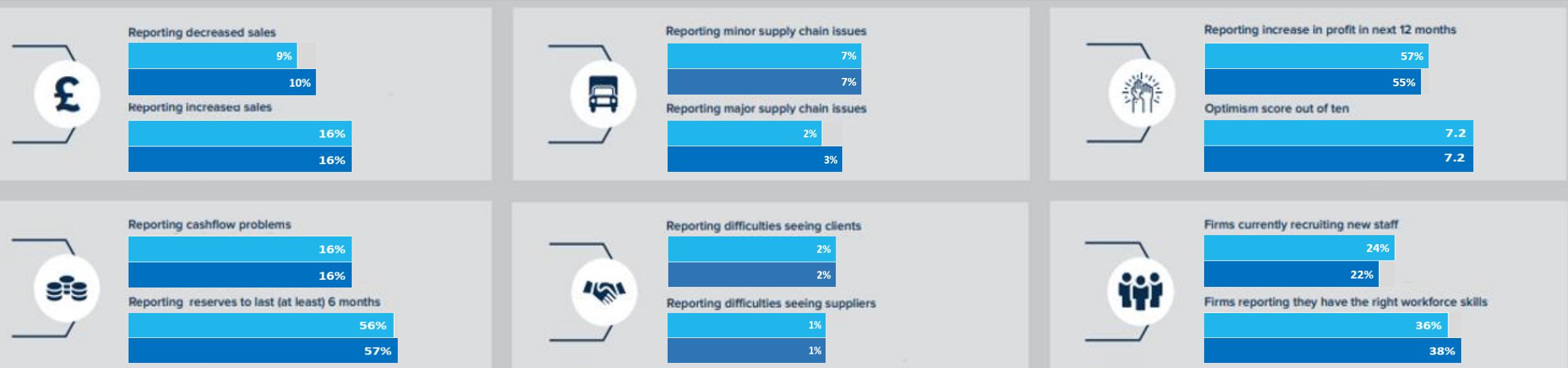
GC Business Survey

The main survey findings reported by businesses on 2nd October 2025 – 2nd January 2026

The Growth Company exists to enable growth, create jobs, and improve lives. To inform how we support businesses and the economy, we continually monitor a range of data and intelligence to understand the impact of Covid-19, and other economic risks and opportunities.

The largest regular monthly business survey of its kind, the following findings are based upon a total of **673 businesses** that participated in our GC Business Survey from **2nd October 2025 and 2nd January 2026**.

The main impacts of the current economic climate on businesses



▶▶ Previous month

▶▶ Current Month

UK Economic Performance

The UK economy is closing out 2025 with **modest and uneven momentum**, as GDP growth slowed to just 0.1% in Q3 and contracted slightly in October amid weakness across services, production and construction. Consumer spending remains cautious, with mixed retail performance reflecting ongoing cost-of-living pressures, while business sentiment has improved only marginally despite firmer PMI readings. Inflation has eased but remains above target, with food prices continuing to rise and wage growth staying relatively firm even as unemployment has climbed to around 5%, signalling a cooling labour market. Construction continues to be a significant drag on growth, with prolonged contraction particularly in residential and civil engineering, although some firms report tentative improvement in outlooks as borrowing cost expectations stabilise. Overall, pockets of resilience in services and manufacturing are being offset by persistent cost pressures, weak investment intentions and fragile confidence, keeping the broader economic outlook subdued.

Survey Summary

Business sentiment across Greater Manchester remains resilient, with the GC Confidence Index holding steady at 7.2. Confidence is strongest in Hospitality, Construction, Manufacturing and Digital/Tech, while Engineering, Green Tech, Healthcare and BFPS report weaker outlooks. Profit expectations have strengthened and around a third of firms plan to increase investment, though rising costs, cashflow pressures and recruitment difficulties remain key concerns. Just over half of businesses hold cash reserves exceeding six months, pointing to some financial resilience, albeit with greater vulnerability among smaller firms.

Labour market conditions are mixed. Recruitment activity has edged up, particularly in BFPS, Construction, Education, Manufacturing and Retail, but skills shortages persist. Only a minority of firms report that workforce skills fully meet business needs, with gaps most evident in specialist technical, advanced IT and sales skills. AI adoption continues to expand, with many firms using it to support analytics, marketing, administration and automation.

Innovation remains an important focus. Recent activity has centred on new or improved services, R&D and new business practices, while future plans prioritise workforce development, continued R&D investment and digital transformation to support longer-term productivity and resilience.

Key Findings

GC Business Confidence Index (GC-BCI): Business confidence stood at 7.2 (unchanged); confidence higher in Hospitality, Construction, Manufacturing and Digital/Tech, while Engineering, Green Tech, Healthcare and BFPS report weaker outlooks.

Investment: 31% (vs 32%) of firms expect to increase capital expenditure in the year ahead; 35% (vs 31%) of firms plan to increase workforce development investment. Sectors more likely to report an increase in WFD are BFPS, Construction, Education, Retail, Manufacturing, Retail and Hospitality.

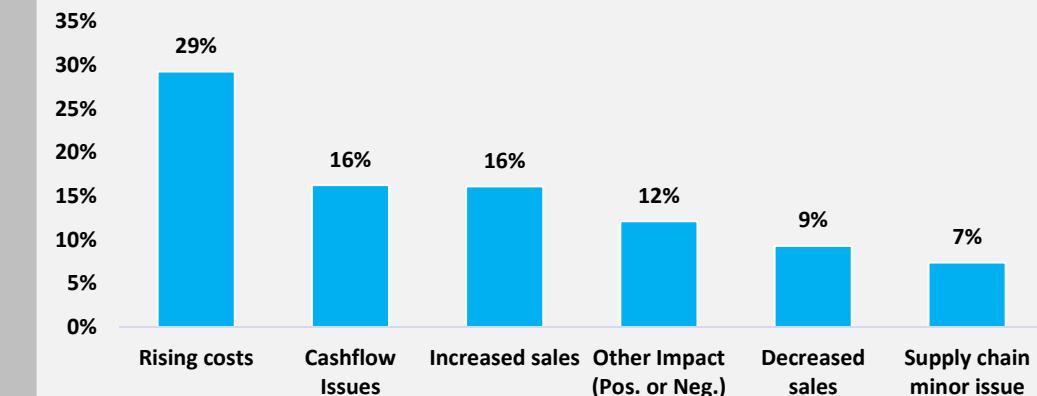
Cashflow Issues: 16% (unchanged) of firms reported cashflow problems and higher risk reported in DCTs, Green Tech and Service activities.

Trade: 25% of firms (vs 24%) export goods/services, with 17% (unchanged) expanding into new markets.

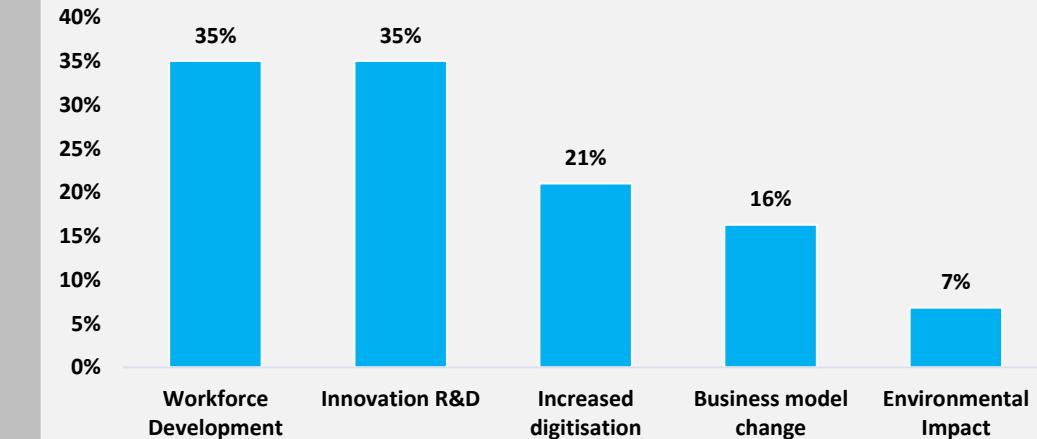
Future Support Needs: sales & marketing 33% (vs 31%), workforce skills 32% (vs 30%), business planning 31% (vs 30%), innovation 31% (unchanged), and financial advice 24% (unchanged).

Recruitment and Skills: 24% of firms recruiting; higher among SMEs; most active in BFPS, Construction, Education, Manufacturing and Retail.

Main Impacts

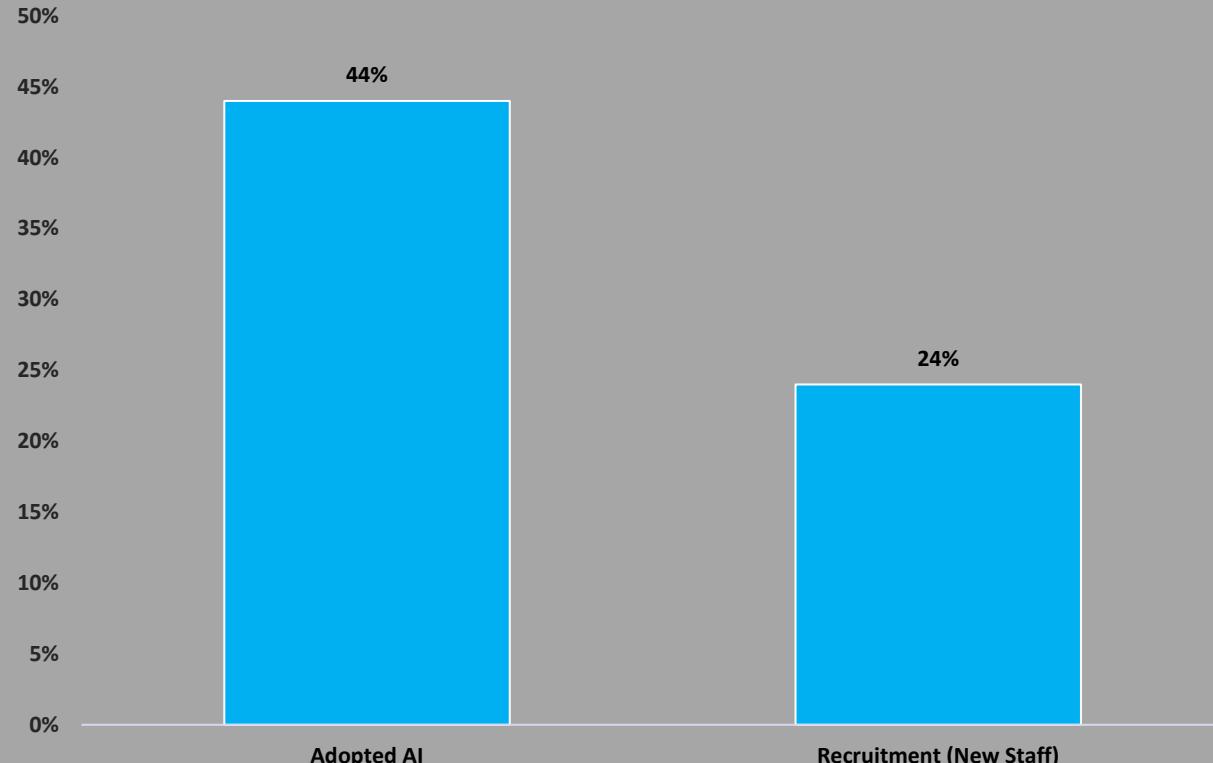


Areas to increase investment

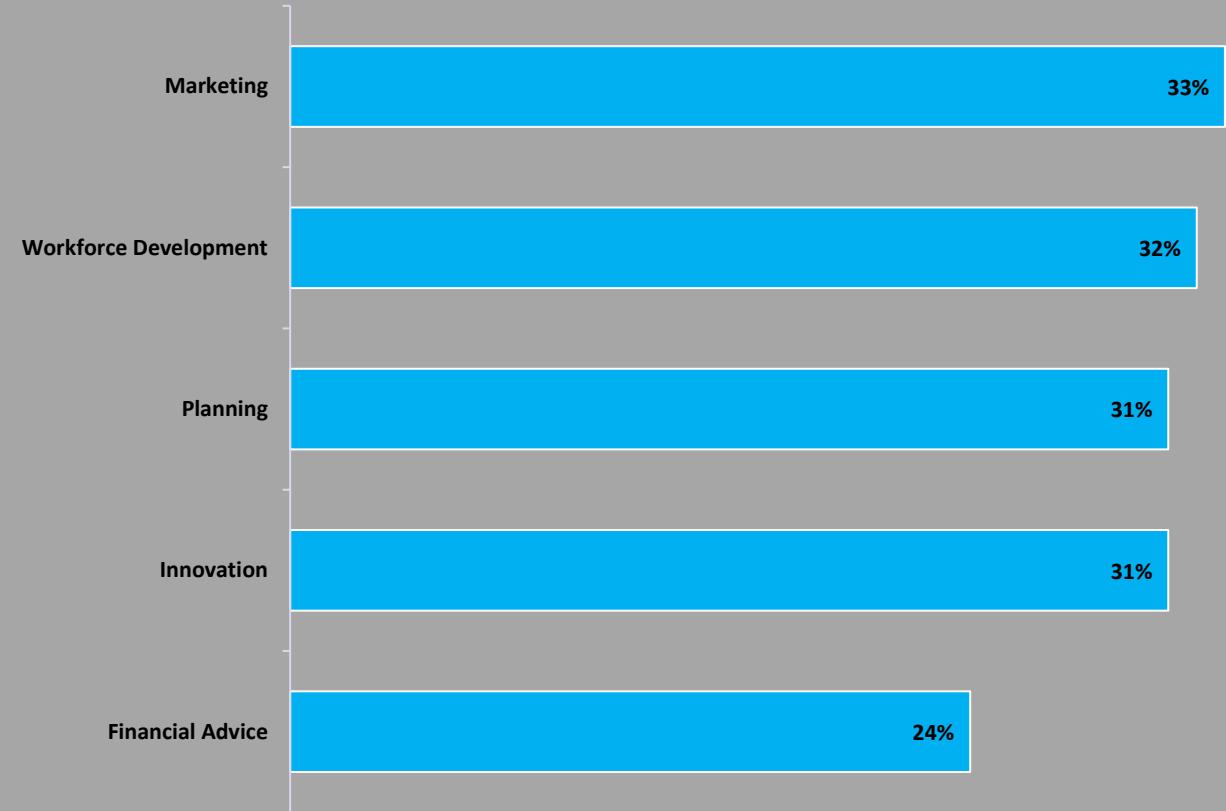


Interest in business support

Percentage of respondents interested in the following initiatives



Top 5 areas for business support in the future



Access support from the Growth Company

As a market leader in business and economy surveys, the Growth Company has engaged with firms throughout the pandemic and remains uniquely placed to provide invaluable intelligence on the challenges faced by business.

Our survey intelligence reports provide regular weekly input to central Government, as well as supporting a variety of local stakeholders in planning their response.

For more information on the results presented here, or to take part in future surveys, please contact: Jake.spires@growthco.uk

Here are some of the ways we can support you:

- Guidance and practical business support
<https://www.businessgrowthhub.com/support/services>
- Help for training staff and finding new talent:
<https://www.businessgrowthhub.com/support/services/people>
- Advice to reduce carbon, boost your competitiveness, and save money
<https://www.businessgrowthhub.com/support/services/sustainability>