



Ofcom Business Postal Tracker 2024-25

Annual Technical Report

July 2024 - June 2025



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General survey description

The Postal Services Act 2011 gave Ofcom additional duties in relation to the postal market. To help fulfil these duties Ofcom has been tracking SME usage, opinion and attitudes to postal services since 2012. The tracker allows Ofcom to better understand trends in SME postal usage, including the types of SMEs that are more likely to use postal services and the role that post plays within SMEs. It measures all types of post sent by SMEs, including letters, packets and parcels, across all postal providers in the UK.

Data generated by the tracker must be robust, hold up to scrutiny and be suitable for publication. It is the authoritative source of data on SME postal usage and is used not just by Ofcom, but also by a wide range of stakeholders to make decisions and feed into strategic planning.

Survey objectives

The Business Postal Tracker covers volumes and use of postal services, reported experience with Royal Mail and other providers, overall satisfaction and change in mail as a communication method among SMEs across the UK. Its' specific objectives are:

- To provide time-trend data that enables Ofcom to monitor these measures over time.
- To provide robust data suitable for publication.
- To provide data to inform Ofcom analysis, reports and decisions.
- To provide analysis by population sub-groups.

Change of contracted agency

At the end of 2024, Ofcom transferred project and fieldwork responsibilities to BMG Research. Q3 and Q4 2024 were undertaken by BVA BDRC, whilst Q1 and Q2 2025 were conducted by BMG Research. BMG followed the methodology, quotas and weighting employed by BVA BDRC, and replicated the questionnaire previously used. This was to ensure consistency in data collection and to ensure that results were comparable across the four quarters of the 2024/25 reporting period. Nevertheless, trending should be applied with a degree of caution as Q3 and Q4 may be subtly different to previous waves as the sample frame was reviewed.

Sampling approach and quotas

The tracker uses a mixed-mode online and telephone approach to data collection.

This comprises:

- Sample provided by specialist online panel providers, to deliver c1,680 interviews completed per year (75% of the total sample)
- A stratified random sample of SMEs drawn from a database (Market Location was used) and contacted by email and telephone to deliver c550 telephone and online interviews per year (25% of the total sample)

From July 1st, 2024, to June 30th, 2025, the Business Postal Tracker aimed to achieve 2,200 interviews with a representative profile of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). This sample size generates a robust dataset with margins of error of +/- 2.05%.

Over the 2024/25 reporting period, fieldwork was conducted over four quarters with the sample size for each quarter as follows:

Table 1: Interviewers by quarters

Quarter	Number of interviews			
	%	Total	CATI	Online
Q3/2024	23	515	138	377
Q4/2024	28	636	137	499
Q1/2025	23	516	108	408
Q2/2025	27	617	189	428
Total	100	2284	572	1712

Quotas

The profile of businesses in the UK, as defined by number of employees (business size), is heavily skewed towards businesses without employees and micro businesses – those with less than 10 employees. Approximately three-quarters of SMEs are businesses without employees, and a further fifth are micro businesses. So that a robust analysis of data relating to organisations with 10 or more employees was ensured, quotas were set to achieve a minimum number of interviews with these larger organisations disproportionately higher than would be the case if the sample was designed to be representative of the population and no controls were applied. For reporting, the data is weighted back to be representative of the business population profile.

The population profile by employment size, the quotas worked to and the resulting weights are summarised in the table below.

Table 2: Yearly quota targets: number of employees

Business size	N	%	Natural interview distribution from a sample of 2200	Quotas Set	Implied weight
0	4,278,225	75.59	1663	670	2.48
1-4	880,305	15.55	342	650	0.53
5-9	256,985	4.54	100	220	0.45
10-19	137,420	2.43	53	225	0.24
20-99	95,225	1.68	37	225	0.16
100-249	11,840	0.21	5	210	0.02
Total	5,660,000	100	2200	2200	

Additional sample structure objectives have been set to ensure robust sample sizes annually by nation.

As table 3 indicates, basing the sample design on the natural distribution of the business population within the devolved nations of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland would not provide robust sample sizes within these areas annually, so quotas were set to address this. The ultimate quotas and implied weights are detailed in the same table below.

Table 3: Yearly quota targets: region and nation

Region/Nation	N	%	Natural interview distribution from a sample of 2200	Quotas Set	Implied weight
England	5,004,775	88.31	1413	1210	1.17
Wales	198,635	3.50	56	330	0.17
Scotland	331,365	5.85	94	350	0.27
Northern Ireland	132,730	2.34	37	310	0.12

Using the quotas indicated above, quarterly targets are calculated for each quarter. The sample achieved is also monitored to ensure that businesses represent the full range of urban and rural locations in the final sample. Business postcode addresses are classified into urban and rural strata based on the classifications shown in table 4 below. The categories have been devised by the survey sample and statistics provider UK Geographics. Population data from UK Census 2011 were overlaid onto the UK Geographics categories to provide population distribution estimates by postcode. For the purposes of the Business Postal Tracker, urban regions were those in categories A-E, while rural locations were defined by categories F-G.

Table 4: ONS urbanity definitions

Category	Description	Population	Incidence (% 16+)
A	Large City	500,000+	14.71
B	Smaller city or large town	100,000 – 500,000	19.81
C	Medium town	15,000 – 100,000	32.12
D	Small town (within 10 miles of A, B or C)	2,000 – 15,000	17.38
E	Small town (more than 10 miles of A, B or C)	2,000 – 15,000	1.85
F	Rural area (within 10 miles of A, B or C)	500 – 2,000	11.70
G	Rural area (more than 10 miles from A, B or C)	500 – 2,000	2.42

Selection of respondents and fieldwork procedure

As the content of the questionnaire asks respondents to estimate the volume of post mailed and the value of contracts with postal service providers, a screening process is undertaken at the start of interviews to ensure that respondents could provide valid responses.

For CATI interviews, after dialling the telephone number for the business indicated on the sample, interviewers are directed to ask those answering if they were able to answer questions about their organisation's mailing processes, volume of postal items sent from the UK from sites for which the business is responsible and spend on mail services. If the initial contact indicates that they are not able to do this, they are asked to pass the call over to someone who is able to answer the questions.

At the start of both CATI and CAWI interviews all respondents must answer several screening questions to demonstrate their eligibility for interview.

The time taken to complete the telephone interview averaged 24 minutes, while the average time taken to complete the survey online was 18 minutes.

During fieldwork, interviews were carried out in strict accordance with the guidelines given to interviewers and according to the Market Research Society (MRS) codes and guidelines, and fieldwork quality control was equally performed in accordance with MRS guidelines. Monitoring the quality of CATI interviews included the witnessing by a supervisor of at least 10% of each of the interviewers' work.

Profile of achieved sample

At the completion of fieldwork, 2,284 individual interviews were achieved. The sample profile by region and business size is presented in table 5. As outlined earlier, because of quotas applied, the unweighted sample achieved under-represented smaller businesses and over-represented larger businesses, with quotas also set by nation.

Table 5: Achieved unweighted sample by region and business size

Region	N	Region - aggregated	Business size				Total	
			0-9		10+		N	% of total
			N	% of total	N	% of total		
Yorkshire and the Humber	86	North	240	11	114	5	354	16
North East	77							
North West	191							
East of England	161	Midlands	105	5	43	2	148	6
East Midlands	73							
West Midlands	75							
Greater London	180	South	558	24	218	10	776	34
South East	262							
South West	173							
England	1,278	England	903	40	375	16	1,278	56
Scotland	359	Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland	662	29	344	15	1,006	44
Wales	338							
Northern Ireland	309							
Total	2,284	UK	1,565	69	719	31	2,284	100

Industry sector is not a quota variable, but the sample is monitored to ensure that organisations within each of the 1-digit Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) groups are represented. A 'soft' quota of 50 respondents in the mainly public sector SIC code O is required annually.

Interviews were undertaken with individuals within organisations working in senior management/owners and within office administration/management roles. Most interviews (87%) were undertaken at head offices and 98% of those interviewed have an internet connection in the office in which they are based.

Sample efficiency and weighting

Weights were applied to each quarter's data independently in order that final aggregated data is representative of the population of UK businesses, while allowing for quarterly analysis.

It was considered whether any mode adjustments would be appropriate to address differences between methods. Analysis was done at the data processing stage to assess whether this was necessary, and it was determined not to be required, therefore data for the two collection modes has been combined as it fell out naturally.

As detailed in the sampling approach, larger companies were deliberately over-sampled to allow robust reporting by size, thus the weighting strategy has been designed to correct for this, to ensure the reported sample is representative by business size, industry sector groups and to reflect the geographical spread of UK businesses, across grouped English regions (North, Midlands and South) and across the devolved nations.

Weights were applied based on interlocking grouped industry sector and employment band and these were overlaid with geographic 'rim' weights. The population statistics were sourced from ONS Business Population Estimates 2024 (the latest available at the time of reporting).

The population referenced for the weights was as follows:

Table 6: UK business population (0-249 employees) by grouped sector and size

Grouped sector	Business size (no. of employees)					Total
	0-1 (N)	2-9 (N)	10-49 (N)	50-99 (N)	100-249 (N)	(N)
Agriculture, Manufacturing & Construction (ABCDEF)	996,280	244,920	43,900	5,850	3,130	1,294,080
Retail/Distribution/Communication (GHJ)	864,475	278,215	55,600	6,265	3,000	1,207,555
Hospitality/Financial and non-financial (IKLMNPQRST)	2,335,290	513,910	120,400	13,295	6,210	2,989,105
Total	4,196,045	1,037,045	219,900	25,410	12,340	5,490,740

Table 7: UK business population (0-249 employees) by GOR English region (grouped) and within devolved nations

	(N)
North (North East, North West, Yorkshire and the Humber)	1,048,035
Midlands (East Midlands, West Midlands, East of England)	1,315,755
South (Greater London, South East and South West)	2,419,580
Wales	219,955
Scotland	354,475
Northern Ireland	132,930

The annual sample of 2,284 was divided by four, and each quarter was weighted to the resulting base of 571 to ensure that each quarter contributes equally to the combined results. As a result, because the weighted base is not equal to the unweighted base for each quarter, the mean average weight is generally not 1 for any quarter.

In line with previous waves, a cap was added to the weighting to ensure that maximum weight is not excessive. For 2024/25, the maximum weight is 5.6 (relative to an average weight of 1), which compares with 4.5 in 2022/23 and 2023/24. Across the 2024/2025 reporting year, the lowest weight at respondent case level is 0.000002, the highest weight is 5.6. The overall weight by quarter (Q3 2024, Q4 2024, Q1 2025 and Q2 2025) is 1.1, 0.9, 1.1 and 0.9 respectively. The design effect for these weights is 3.0, 2.7, 3.3 and 3.9 respectively, giving an effective base of between 26% and 37% of the actual base, which provides quarterly results that are accurate to between +/-6% and +/- 8% at a 95% confidence level.

Table 8: Weighting factors

Quarter	Achieved sample	Quarter Weight	Lowest weight	Highest weight	Design effect	Effective base	Results accuracy
Q3/2024	515	1.11	0.0000015	5.55	3.04	169	+/-8%
Q4/2024	636	0.90	0.0034677	4.49	2.72	234	+/-8%
Q1/2025	516	1.11	0.0008709	5.53	3.33	155	+/-8%
Q2/2025	617	0.93	0.0000015	5.56	3.85	160	+/-8%
Total	2284	1	0.0000015	5.56	3.27	699	+/-4%

Means for postal spending and number of items sent

The mean figures for postal spend and number of postal items sent are increased substantially by a very small number of businesses providing very high values. Therefore, in addition to means based on all responses, the tables for these measures include a second mean figure excluding the highest responses. For postal spend (QV1B) the second mean excludes responses greater than £300,000+ per month, and for number of postal items sent (QV2A) responses greater than 500,000+ items per month.

Revisions to the questionnaire

The following changes were made to the questionnaire script after fieldwork began to help improve the flow of questions and reduce the interview length. These were as follows:

Each change is listed with a brief rationale where applicable:

Question	Action
C5	Removed
C8	Removed
QV1c	Removed
QV2d.2	Removed
QV5b.1	Removed
QV6bc	Hybrid mail was removed from the list of types of post asked about in this question
QV6d1	Removed
QV6d.2	Removed
QV6c	Removed
QV7a.1	Removed
QV7b.1	Removed
QV8N	Removed
QV8N.1	Removed
QS5	Removed



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