



Black Country
Chamber of
Commerce

BLACK COUNTRY

QUARTERLY ECONOMIC SURVEY

RESULTS SNAPSHOT

Q1 2026



BUSINESS IS DONE BETTER TOGETHER

KEY STATISTICS

Sales Trends (Domestic & Export)



19% of firms reported an increase in domestic sales, while 53% reported no change and 19% reported a decrease.

9% of firms reported an increase in overseas sales, while 19% reported no change and 10% reported a decrease.



18% of businesses saw an increase in domestic orders this quarter while 9% of businesses reported an increase in overseas orders.

Recruitment



53% of Black Country firms attempted to recruit over the past quarter, which has increased from 47% in Q4.

55%

of firms across the Black Country experienced recruitment difficulties in Q1 compared to 48% in Q4.

Majority of firms in the region have found it difficult to recruit Professional and Managerial staff.



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KEY STATISTICS

Business Resilience



Rising labour costs and the rise of utility prices are the pressure points for businesses this quarter.



Taxation and business rates are amongst the highest concern for firms across all sectors in the region at 40% and 34% respectively.

Cashflow has increased for 18% of firms while investment plans for training increased for 21% of Black Country businesses.



Overall, firms expect prices to remain constant over the next 3 months.

Business Confidence

52% of Black Country businesses believe turnover will improve over the next 12 months compared to 47% in Q4.

42% of Black Country businesses believe profitability will improve over the next 12 months, unchanged from 42% in Q4.



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ABOUT QES

The Black Country Quarterly Economic Survey Snapshot gives an up-to-date picture of the performance of the Black Country business community.

The figures in this report have been informed from quarterly economic surveys conducted by the Black Country Chamber of Commerce.

National QES results can be found on British Chambers of Commerce website [here](#).

As the most authoritative national business confidence survey, and the first to be published in each quarter, the results of this survey are closely watched by both HM Treasury and the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee and help to inform decisions that impact upon interest rates and business policy.

The survey itself has reliably anticipated the onset of the two recessions since the early 1990s before they began and continues to act as a reliable indicator of national and regional economic performance. The Black Country Chamber of Commerce uses the results of the survey to inform upon detailed economic performance and trends throughout the local region and beyond.



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