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Association

CSTA CONTAINER SELF-STORAGE CENSUS 2026

Survey of the UK Container Self-Storage Market

Industry Status at 1 January 2026

Contents

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www.containa.org | info@containa.org

Executive Summary

2026 Census – A Professional, Structured, Service-Oriented Sector

The **CSTA Container Self-Storage Census 2026** has been prepared using data and research undertaken during 2026, drawing on responses from container self-storage operators throughout the UK – both CSTA Members and non-Members – together with supplementary research by phone, email and company websites.

The aim of the Census is to provide an up-to-date overview of the UK container self-storage sector, highlighting key trends in site numbers, container stocks, occupancy, pricing, customer mix, services and operating models. It is intended to give operators and stakeholders valuable benchmarking insight – and to support decisions on site development, investment and strategy.

The UK container self-storage industry has evolved from a niche, opportunistic model 25 years ago into a structured, service-oriented sector. High occupancy, long customer tenures and continued site investment have enabled operators to capitalise on both domestic/private use and commercial/business demand.

CSTA Census 26 data indicates that, at the end of 2025, there were **684 operators of container self-storage facilities** and **1,218 sites**, providing **112,150 self-storage containers** and more than **16.7 million sq ft of storage capacity**.

The findings show continued expansion by both new entrants and established operators. **More than 70 new sites opened during 2025**, while container numbers **increased by 11%** compared with the end of 2024. Demand remains strong, with 63% of respondents reporting **occupancy rates of 90–99%**.

The sector is also becoming increasingly professionalised. Longer customer tenures, growing business use and rising customer expectations are encouraging operators to invest in security, digital access, automation, customer service and site infrastructure.

At the same time, increasing turnover and larger site sizes suggest potential for further consolidation and investment, attracting both existing operators and new market entrants.

Stock availability and price volatility remain important issues. Most containers are manufactured in China and delivered through established shipping routes, but disruption, tariff pressures and geo-political issues with the associated routing risks can affect delivery times and container costs – with implications for operator margins and site expansion.

CSTA will continue to support industry growth by providing benchmarking data, networking opportunities, professional alignment and advocacy for the container self-storage sector.

June 2026

Patrick Hicks
patrick@containa.org
www.containa.org

Data & Methodology

CSTA Census 26 has been prepared using responses from container self-storage operators across the UK – and includes responses from CSTA members and non-members. It excludes operators of self-storage buildings, although some of these operators may also provide additional external container storage.

The figures in this Survey are based on research of the market as at 1 January 2026; they follow up from last year's Survey, which was researched in May 2025 and largely based on projections until the end of 2025.

A Census questionnaire was sent to operators listed on the CSTA database. Supplementary telephone and email research was also undertaken, while company websites and other publicly available sources were used to compile and verify data where required.

Census 26 also makes reference to the previous CSTA Census, together with data collated by the CSTA since that time. The information received was consolidated, reviewed and extrapolated where required, in order to provide a representative overview of the UK container self-storage sector at the end of 2025. CSTA thanks all its members and other container self-storage operators that responded to the Census 26 questionnaire and contributed information to this research.

We trust that Census 26 provides value to operators, suppliers, investors and other industry stakeholders, and assists in the process of promoting, benchmarking and investing in container self-storage.

The Census is intended to assist users in identifying container self-storage industry trends. Users should undertake their own specific research and risk assessment before making any financial, investment or other business decisions.

684
NUMBER OF OPERATORS

OVER 90%
HIGH OCCUPANCY

1,218
NUMBER OF SELF-STORAGE SITES

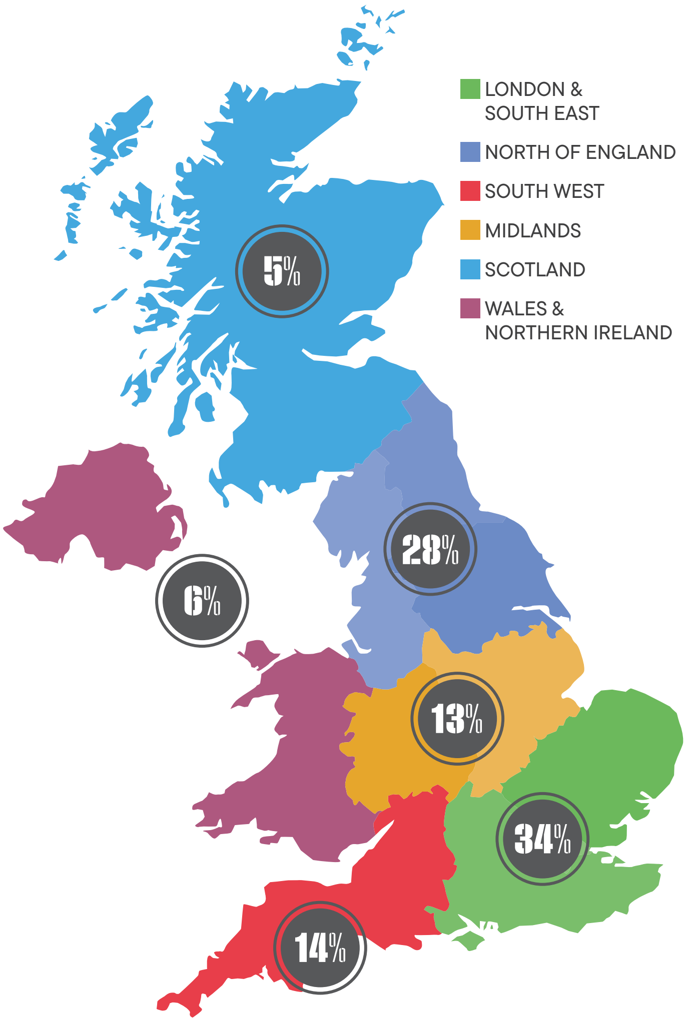
16,700,000 sq ft
STORAGE CAPACITY

Key Findings & Trends

1

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

- The geographic distribution highlights the continued demand in densely populated and logistically active regions.
- With over 70 new sites opening in 2025, the opportunity for growth in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland means an increased percentage, relative to the more densely populated areas of London and the South-East, the Midlands and the North of England.



ⓘ PERCENTAGE OF RESPONSES

2

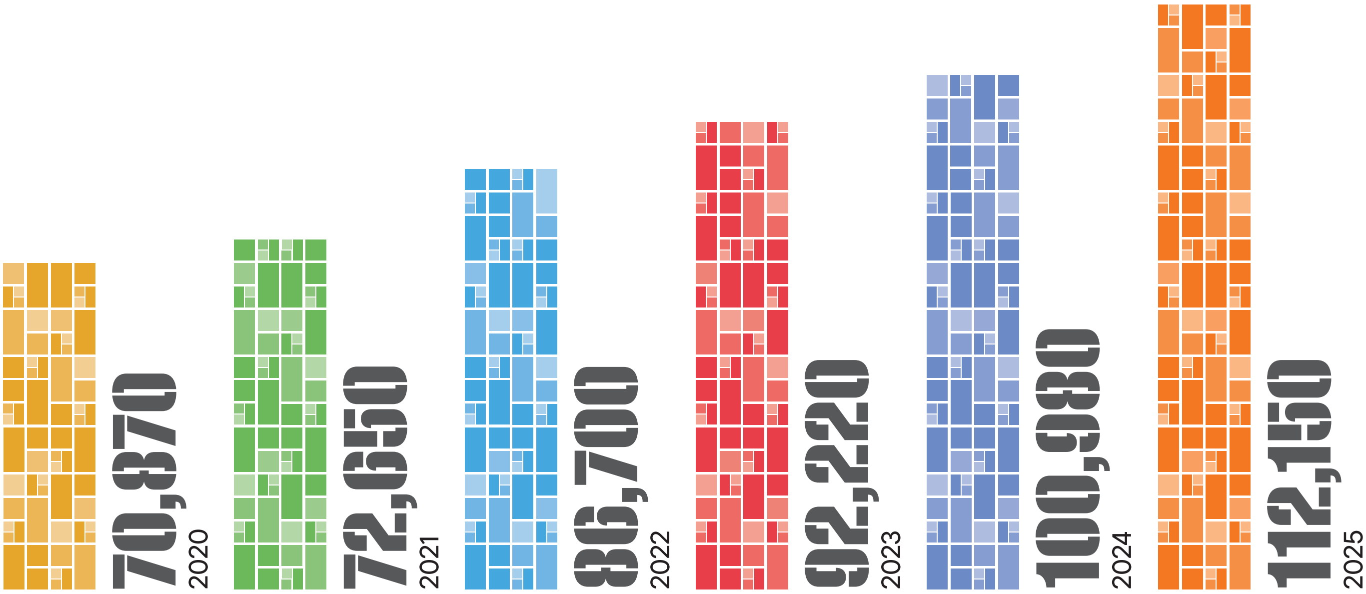
CONTAINER SELF-STORAGE SITES

- Operators and new entrants are adding additional sites year-on-year.
- While the growth in the number of new sites slowed down in 2020-2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the change of lifestyle – and the growth in "Working From Home" – created a surge in self-storage business during those years.
- Since 2022, over 60 new sites have been added each year. While in some locations, the availability (and economic cost) of prime site locations may hold back the level of expansion the market demands, this has generally not halted overall growth.
- The CSTA Census indicates that, at the end of 2025, there were some 1218 container self-storage sites in the UK (calculated on the basis of sites with 20 or more containers).

ⓘ NUMBER OF SITES

3 TOTAL NUMBER OF SELF-STORAGE CONTAINERS

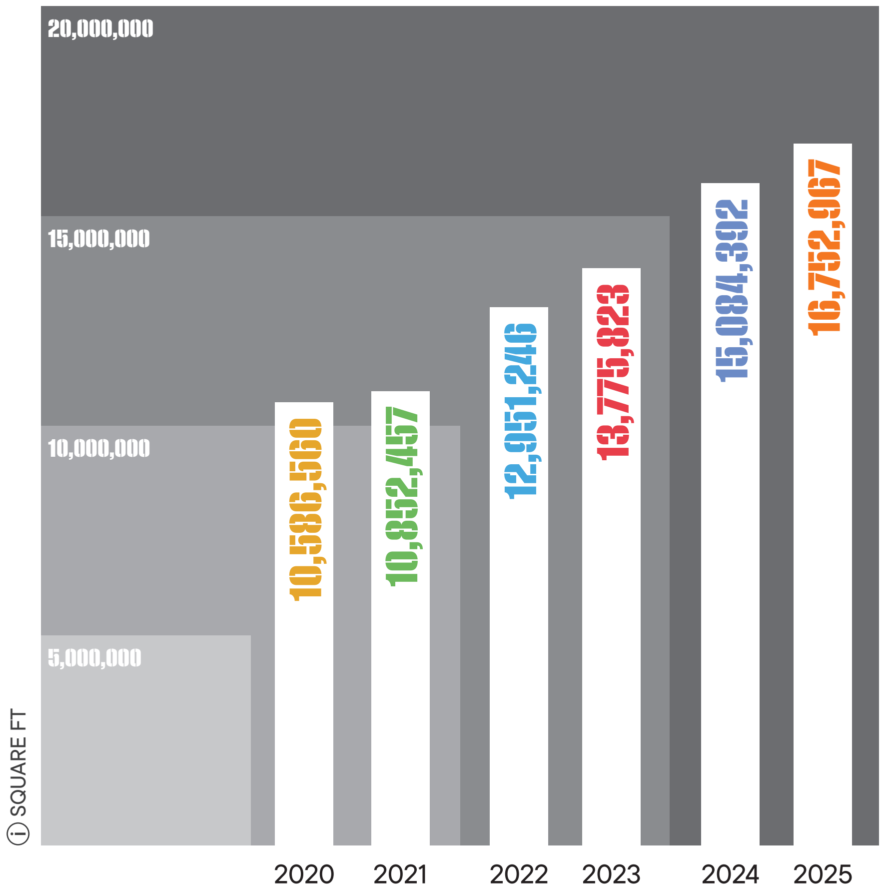
- The number of containers at dedicated container self-storage sites at the end of 2025 rose by 11% over the end-2024 figure, to 112,150 units.
- The previous year's growth (2023-2024) had been 9.49%.
- The additional containers are used both to increase capacity in existing sites, as well as to build new sites.
- The trend may be extrapolated to a requirement for thousands of new containers to enter the market annually, driven by growing demand for flexible and scalable storage and the ease of availability of stocks from established procurement routes of Container Traders.



ⓘ NUMBER OF CONTAINERS

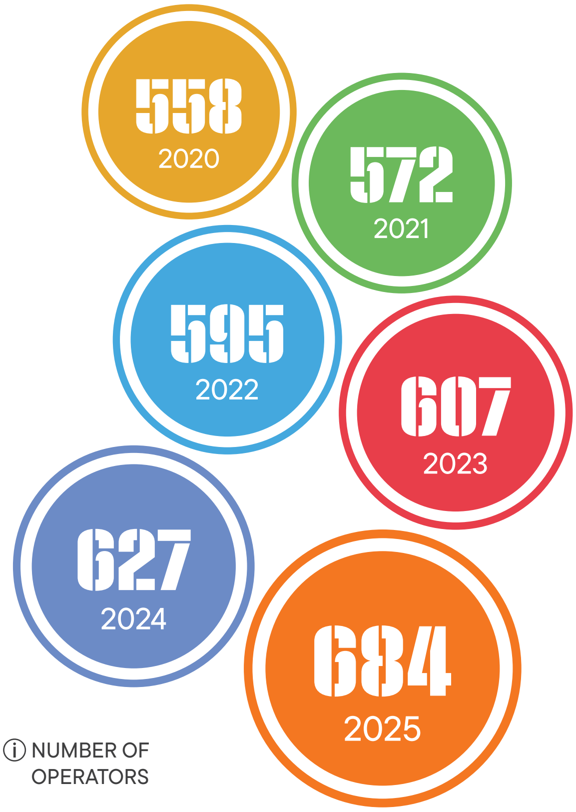
4 STORAGE CAPACITY

- Self-storage containers are primarily 20ft ISO containers, but an operator might also provide some 40ft and 10ft containers. Or they may sub-divide containers with partition walls, according to client demands for a smaller storage space.
- 20ft containers provide a cubic capacity of 33.1m³ (1170 ft³) and a surface area of 13.865 m³ (149.38ft²).
- However, most operators advertise a 20ft container as a "160sq ft unit", which is calculated on the external dimensions (even though they are, in reality, slightly smaller).
- In addition to the 40fts and 10fts, 8ft containers are also offered.



5 CONTAINER SELF-STORAGE OPERATNG BUSINESSES

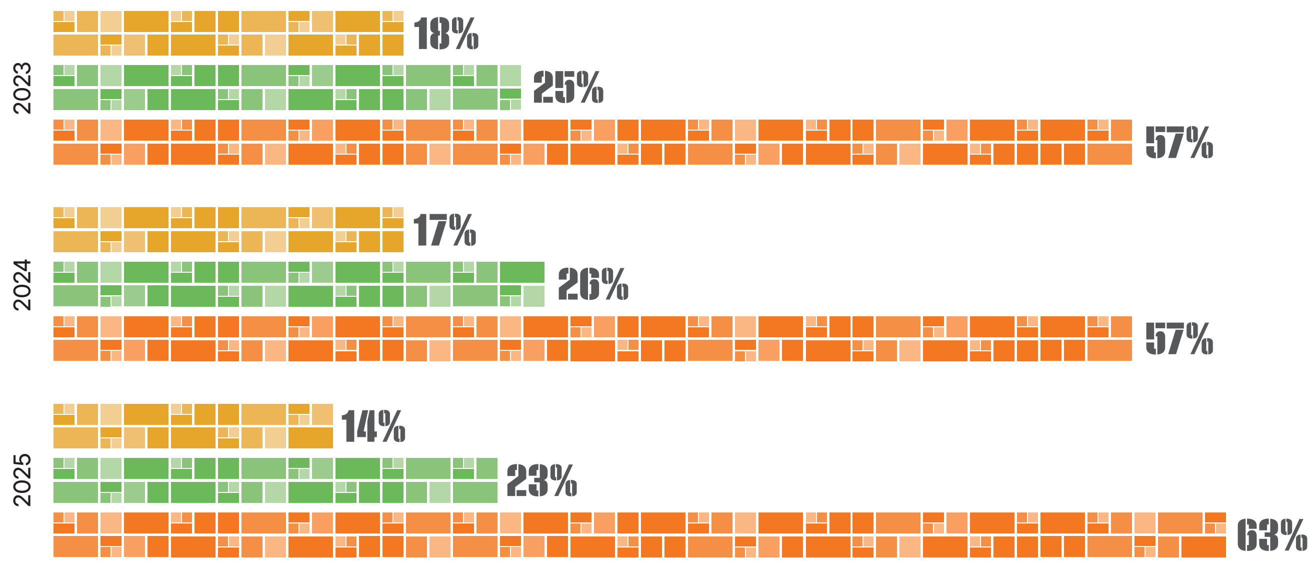
- New entrants continue to enter the container self-storage industry – attracted by growing demand for self-storage by both domestic and business customers, as well as the economic sustainability of the industry.
- The new entrants offer sites ranging from 20 or so containers, up to much larger facilities with 200 units or more.
- The 2021 growth (3.7%) reflected strong site openings as the sector prospered during the later stages of Covid and continued thereafter.
- The 2022 growth (+4%) aligns with the broader UK GDP rebound, supporting new developments.
- The 2023 (+2%) accounts for tightening financial conditions and slower investment.
- 2024 and 2025 reflects the continued interest in the opportunities offered by this sector of the self-storage market new entrants into the market.
- With the trend to unmanned sites, the low labour requirements of self-storage sites attract business entrepreneurs seeking to combat rising labour costs.
- In some locations, the growth is subdued by the challenges of locating available land and securing planning consent.



ⓘ NUMBER OF OPERATORS

6 OCCUPANCY & UTILISATION

- Majority of respondents report 90–99% occupancy rates.
- 2025 shows a notable consistency with high occupancy maintained across the board.
- High utilisation reflects strong customer demand and operational efficiency but also hints at capacity pressures.
- Full occupancy is not regarded as optimal: maintaining a small number of available containers enables prospective customers to view units and helps avoid a reputation for being permanently full. Operators above 90% occupancy should review pricing opportunities.

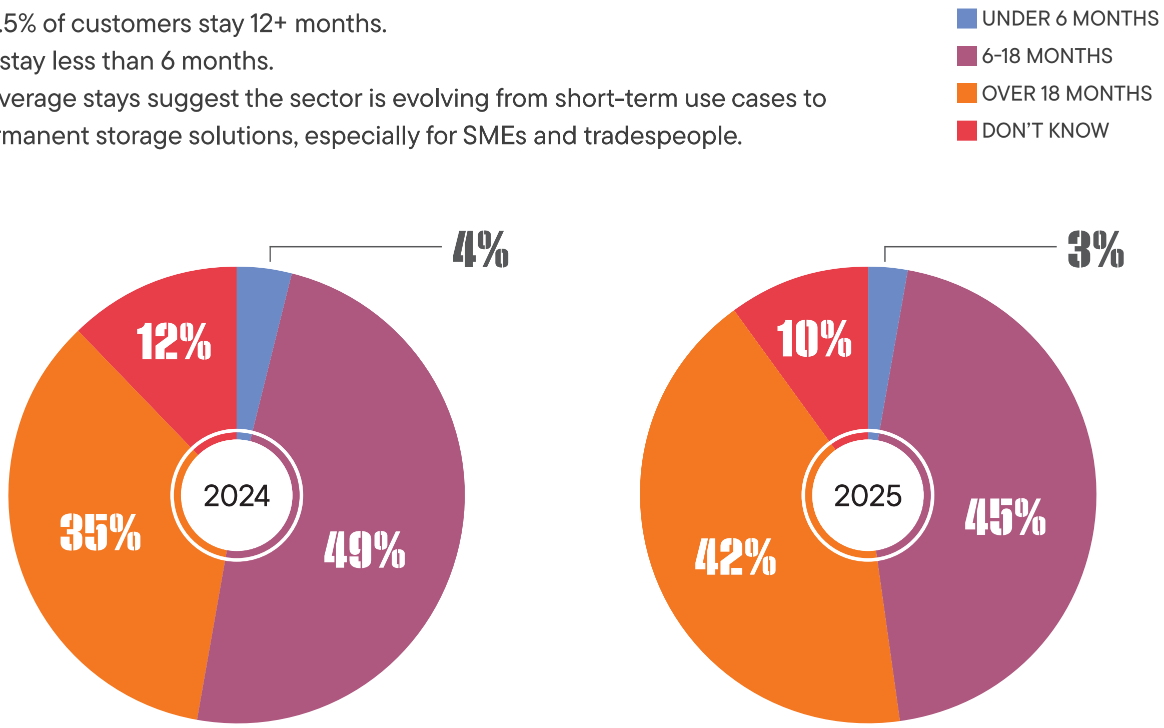


ⓘ PERCENTAGE OF OCCUPANCY & UTILISATION

LESS THAN 70% 71-89% 90-99%

7 CUSTOMER RETENTION

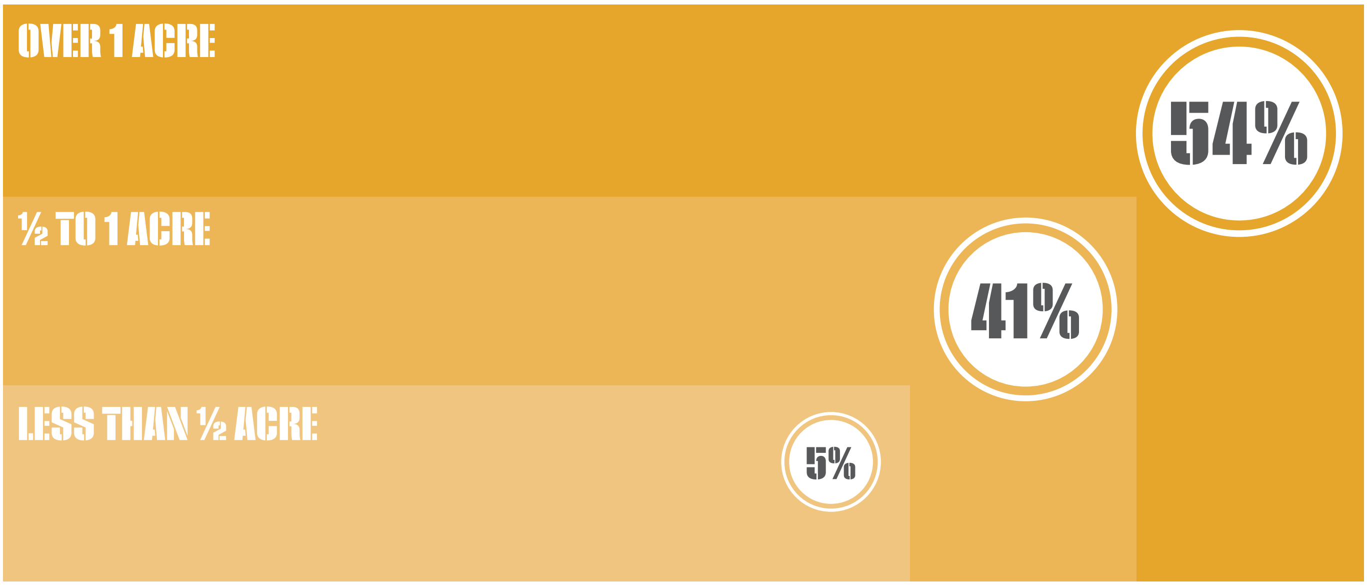
- 2025: 55.5% of customers stay 12+ months.
- Only 11% stay less than 6 months.
- Longer average stays suggest the sector is evolving from short-term use cases to more permanent storage solutions, especially for SMEs and tradespeople.



ⓘ PERCENTAGE OF CUSTOMER RETENTION

8 SITE FOOTPRINT

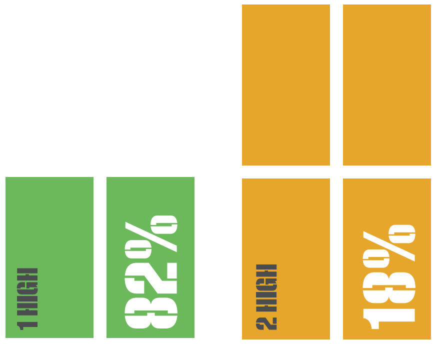
- 54% of operators now manage sites larger than 1 acre.
- Only 5% operate below ½ acre.
- Generally, there is a trend towards people using smaller sites to enter the market. These plots may be more readily available and cheaper, and with the software/automation now available people can have a small plot and run it remotely, as an unmanned site, and still make a profit.
- Larger, established, operators with sufficient resources may tend to opt for the bigger plots. On this basis, it is the mid-sized plots which are the ones which are not "trending".



ⓘ ACRES

9 CONTAINER STACKING & ACCESS

- Ground-level access remains standard due to the "drive-up to the door" convenience, though vertical stacking offers potential for capacity optimization in land-limited areas and can be economical solution for some customers' needs.
- 82% of sites stack containers only one high.
- Among those stacking two or more high, access is primarily via a platform/gantry or via mobile/fixed stairs.

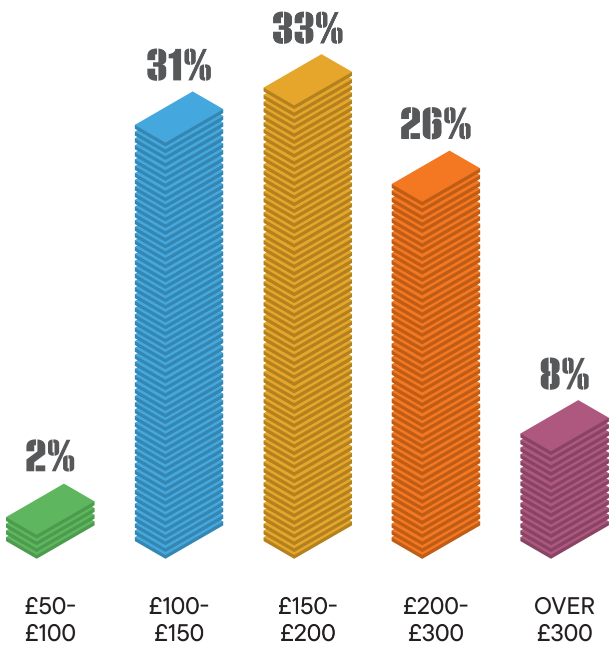


2-High Access

- Of the sites offering 2-high stacking, some 53% offer fixed steps access and 46% offer mobile steps movable.
- One site reports lift access.

10 RENTAL PRICING

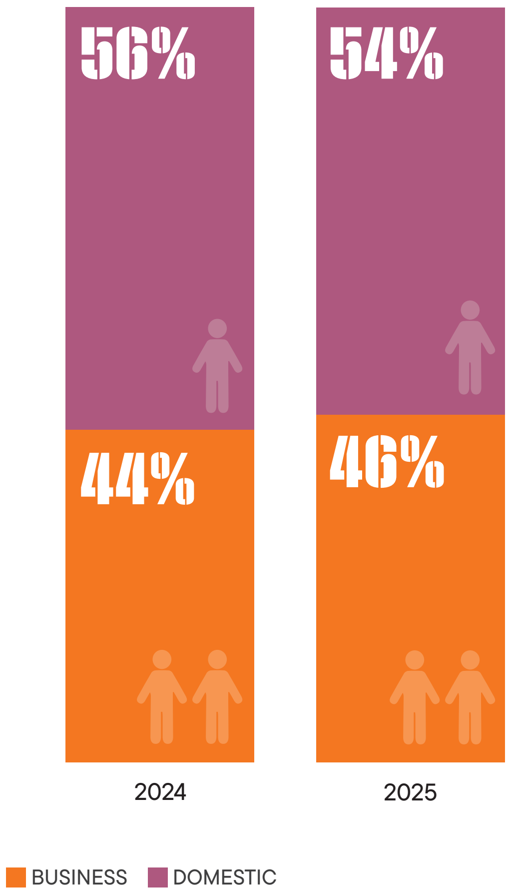
- The figures give the average monthly rental price per 20ft equivalent (inc VAT).
- In 2025, the average monthly rent per 20ft unit was between **£150 and £200**.
- Modest price increases reflect inflationary pressures and greater service value offered (eg. security, site upgrades).
- Other factors include the location of a self-storage facility, the services offered – and the level of nearby competition.
- Operators achieving monthly container rental rates of £200+ are concentrated in London and the Home Counties, with London and the South East commanding the strongest pricing.



ⓘ MONTHLY RENTAL BY YEAR

11 CUSTOMER BASE

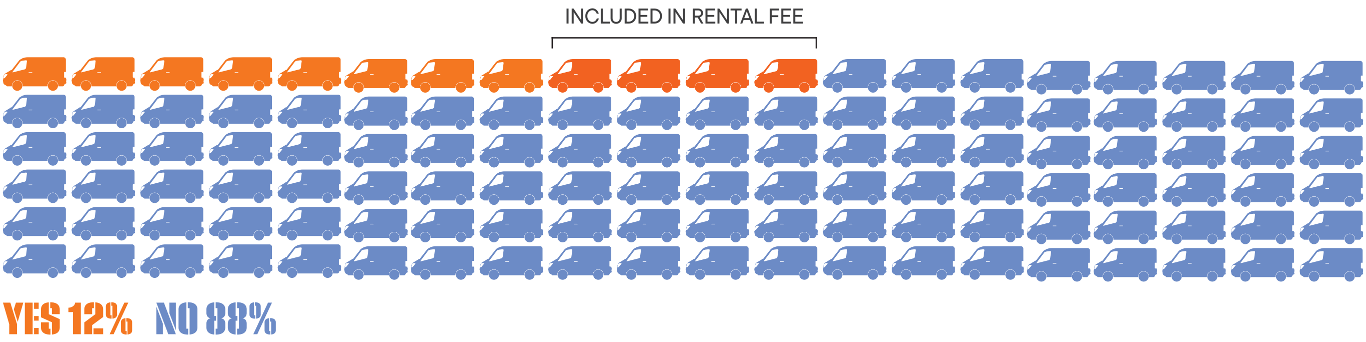
- The chart shows an increase in business users which signals strong B2B.
- Business use is wide ranging and includes document storage and local tradespersons.



ⓘ PERCENTAGE OF CONTAINERS

12 VAN COLLECTION SERVICES

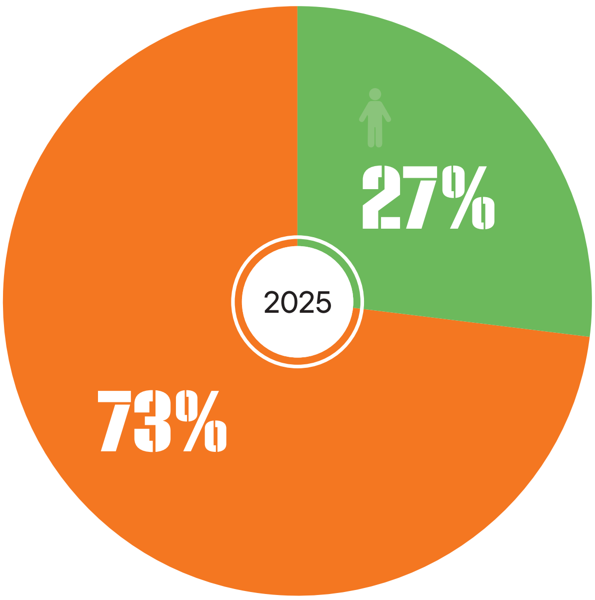
- Van collection (of items to be stored) is offered by only 12% of operators, of which a small percentage include it in the rental fee.
- Some operators consider potential for this value-added service, possibly via a contract arrangement with a local transporter.



ⓘ PERCENTAGE OF VAN COLLECTION SERVICES

13 OPERATIONAL MODELS

- Unmanned and sometimes manned sites dominate, 73% in 2025.
- The trend is towards automation and low-overhead site management models.

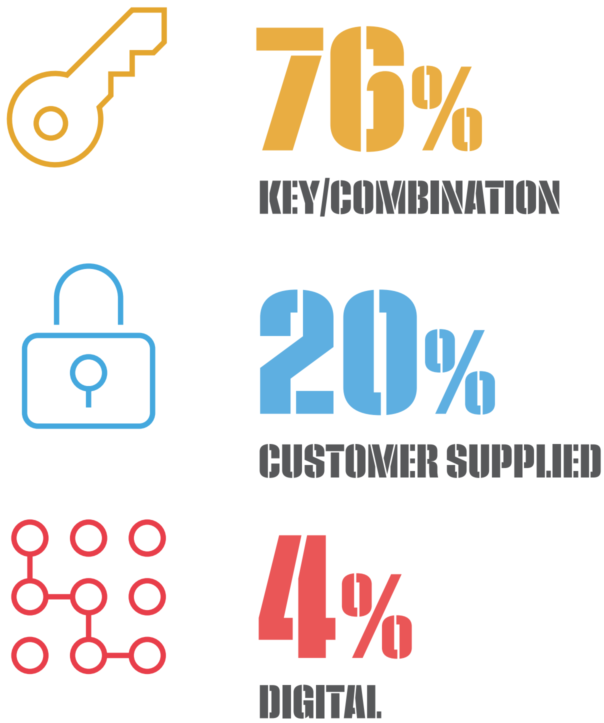


MANNED (ON-SITE STAFF DURING OPENING HOURS)
UNMANNED / SOMETIMES MANNED

ⓘ PERCENTAGE OF SITES

14 TYPE OF LOCKS

- Digital locks are being introduced to some sites.



ⓘ PERCENTAGE OF TYPE OF LOCK

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