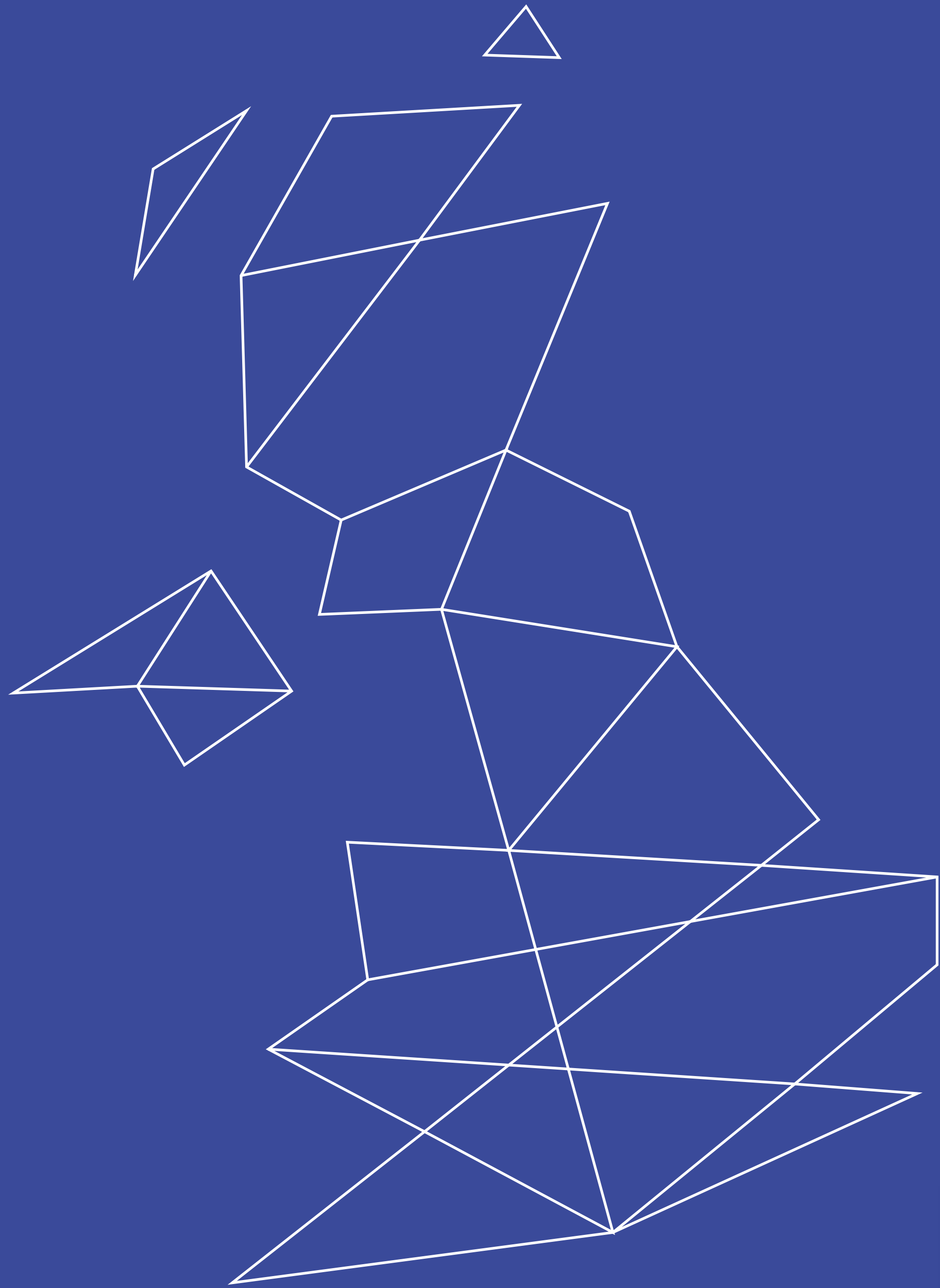
ENTERPRISE BRITAIN

Jobs at scale

Backing Britain's 'super scalers' to create jobs across the country



September 2026

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FOUNDERS FORUM GROUP

Enterprise Britain is a movement of entrepreneurs, business leaders and investors on a mission to build a better future for the UK.

Our community has first-hand experience scaling successful companies, creating jobs, and delivering growth across the country. We want to put that experience to work for Britain.

Contents

Foreword

Stephen Fitzpatrick

Co-Chair, Enterprise Britain; Founder, OVO Energy, Kaluza, and Vertical Aerospace

Fifty years ago, in 1976, Britain ran out of money. That December, Chancellor Denis Healey went to the IMF for a $3.9 billion loan, the largest the Fund had ever made.[1] For years, the state had been pouring money into industries in which Britain had once led the world but could no longer compete: ships, steel, and cars. One of those shipyards was Harland & Wolff, nationalised in 1975.[2] Its towering yellow cranes, Samson and Goliath, were the biggest things in Belfast, visible for miles around. I drove past them every day on my way to school from 1988 to 1995.

They stood over what had once been the world's largest shipyard, which employed 35,000 people in its glory days.[3] On my first day at senior school, fewer than four thousand people worked there. When I sat my last A level, it was fourteen hundred.

In between, the government spent hundreds of millions of pounds keeping those jobs alive.[4] The yard had not made a profit in twenty years. The ships the world wanted were being built in Japan and South Korea. The jobs went anyway, hundreds at a time.

But this is not a story of decline. It is one of renewal and hope. Go to the east side of Belfast today, and Harland & Wolff lives on as a shipyard, a testament to the resilient spirit of its employees. But you will also find a science park, a college, a film studio, and more than a hundred companies, from Citi to Microsoft, on 185 acres of the Titanic Quarter. The film studio now stands in the hall where the ships were painted. It is where Game of Thrones was made.

This is the story of every period of great change, and we are living through one now. But this time, the pace of change is like nothing we have ever experienced before. I do not know how to explain to my children what the world will look like as they grow up, what their careers might look like. For parents and politicians alike, the change is uncomfortable, even scary at times.

Some jobs will change beyond recognition, and some will go. We should be honest about that, because giving people hope doesn't come from making promises that can't be kept.

The urge to protect the jobs we have is understandable. They represent people's livelihoods and pride. They support communities. We must not leave those affected behind.

But the lesson of the last fifty years is not that change costs jobs. It is that tomorrow's jobs emerge from new and growing companies, and in the nations that back them. To build a prosperous future, we must embrace new ideas and back the ambition that makes them real. Sometimes, that means letting go of the past and embracing the uncertain future.

So I believe the government's energy should go to two things. First, the people whose jobs are changing: the skills to adapt, the freedom to move, and a stake in the success of what comes next. Second, the companies creating new jobs. This report shows who they are: around 10,000 businesses we call 'super scalers'.

They make up less than 1% of all British companies, yet they created more than 30% of all new jobs between 2020 and 2024. And they are found across the country; two-thirds of their operations are outside London and the South East. In Northern Ireland alone, they employ more than 70,000 people. Across the UK, that rises to more than 5 million.

Under the shadow of the yellow cranes, new jobs sprang forth, created by new companies in industries nobody in 1988 could have named, or from those forced to reinvent themselves.

These are the jobs the Prime Minister means when he talks about "good growth in every postcode and hope in every heart".

So our ask is simple: help make the UK the most attractive place in the world to scale a business. Somewhere in Britain today, a company nobody has heard of is hiring for jobs nobody has imagined. Fifty years from now, that company could lead the world. Someone will drive past it on their way to school.

Let's start building that future today.

"I believe the government's energy should go to two things. First, the people whose jobs are changing: the skills to adapt, the freedom to move, and a stake in the success of what comes next. Second, the companies creating new jobs. This report shows who they are: around 10,000 businesses we call 'super scalers'."

Foreword

Brent Hoberman
Co-Chair, Enterprise Britain; Co-Founder & Executive Chairman, Founders Factory, Founders Forum Group, and firstminute capital

Britain is an innovation superpower. Our universities are leading the charge in life sciences, fintech, AI, quantum, and advanced manufacturing. In the great British tradition, we test the boundaries of knowledge and constantly push them further.

In the past couple of years alone, Cambridge has found possible evidence of life beyond our solar system;[5] Oxford and UCL have started developing a vaccine against lung cancer;[6] Imperial has used AI to spot hidden signs of heart failure in under two seconds.[7]

The research that starts in our incredible academic institutions spawns new companies at the cutting edge of innovation. We have the second-highest number of quantum companies in the world[8] and the largest tech ecosystem in Europe.[9]

But we cannot afford to be complacent. I have worked in tech for three decades; I have never experienced change at the pace we've seen in the past three years.

Technology is moving at super-speed. The iPhone took three and a half years to reach 100 million users. ChatGPT reached 100 million weekly users in two months.[10] In three years, generative AI has moved from experimental technology to an indispensable tool.

This speed is matched by the pace at which companies grow. It took ARM 18 years to go from unicorn to decacorn. It took ElevenLabs two.[11] We now see start-ups raising their first billion within six months.[12]

As our companies grow and our founders flourish, countries around the world want to poach them. All is fair in a hyper-competitive world, but we can't just shrug our shoulders when our top talent and our best businesses are lured to greener pastures around the world. The prize will go to the nations that take risks, move fast, and think bold.

Despite the sense of malaise that has dogged the UK for years, I believe that can be us. We have all the raw ingredients. We have the talent and track record of innovation. But we need a culture that embraces risk and rewards ambition. And we need policies that break down the barriers our most innovative companies face as they grow.

I was happy to hear Prime Minister Andy Burnham talk about making Britain "the world's leading innovation nation". But to turn those words into reality, we need to back the companies already embracing innovation, driving job creation, and delivering growth. This report shows conclusively who they are: super scalers.

From tech scale-ups in Manchester to life sciences companies in Cambridge, they are already creating the high-quality, resilient jobs we desperately need. Not just for graduates or senior hires, but for people of all backgrounds.

And these companies do more than create brilliant jobs. They create ecosystems where talent and great ideas thrive. Innovative British companies have already proven to be founder factories; just 45 UK-founded unicorns have fuelled nearly 400 more startups.[13]

This is a virtuous circle we need spinning faster and harder for our economy. But for that to happen, we need the kind of bold action we outline in this report.

The time to act is now.

"As our companies grow and our founders flourish, countries around the world want to poach them. All is fair in a hyper-competitive world, but we can't just shrug our shoulders when our top talent and our best businesses are lured to greener pastures around the world. The prize will go to the nations that take risks, move fast, and think bold. Despite the sense of malaise that has dogged the UK for years, I believe that can be us."

PART 1

Executive summary

The challenge: Creating resilient, high-quality jobs

Prime Minister Andy Burnham has set a bold ambition of delivering "good growth in every postcode and hope in every heart."

Today, Britain's difficult job market means many are finding it hard to hope. 1.77 million people of working age are unemployed.[14] Graduates apply for junior job listings against hundreds of others. Nearly a million young people are not in employment, education, or training.[15] This summer, vacancies hit a five-year low.[16] Meanwhile, anxiety about AI and its ramifications grows. Unsurprisingly, only 30% of Brits feel optimistic about their job prospects in the next 12 months.[17]

We can change this — but only with clarity about the kind of jobs we need, and where they will come from. The urge to save existing jobs is understandable. In a time of disorientating change, it can be tempting to think we just need to protect the industries that shaped our past. But the stark truth is that we can't insulate roles from change; we must create the jobs that drive it. If we want ours to be a dynamic, globally competitive economy, the focus must be on high-quality jobs that are resilient to technological change.

In this task, there are clear job-creating champions we must look to: **Britain's 'super scalers'.**

The solution: Backing Britain's super scalers

At a time when many companies are cutting roles or slowing down recruitment, scale-ups across the UK are accelerating hiring.

We conducted in-depth research to discover two things: the impact that scale-ups already have on job creation in the UK; and the practical actions that would enable them to grow and hire even more quickly, helping to address Britain's jobs crisis.

Working with The Data City, we analysed a comprehensive database of all British companies, which draws from a range of trusted sources including Companies House, the Office for National Statistics (ONS), and Creditsafe. From this database, we set out to identify the companies that already have an outsized impact on job creation. We started with the OECD's widely used definition of a scale-up, finding companies that have grown by at least 20% per year over three years, in either headcount or revenue.[18]

From this pool we created a new definition — super scalers — which meet this criteria and have at least 50 employees and a minimum annual revenue of £5 million. This allowed us to home in on the companies with the greatest potential to drive significant job creation across the country.

The data was clear. **Super scalers are creating exactly the kind of jobs we need: high-quality, resilient, innovative — and spread across the UK.**

We found that:

- There are **~10,000 super scalers**[19] in the UK, employing more than **5 million**[20] people.
- They accounted for **more than 30% of all jobs created** from 2020 to 2024, despite making up less than 1% of all companies.
- They **increased their headcount by an average of 46%** during that period.
- They are found across the country, with **67% of their operations outside London and the South East.**

What super scalers need to accelerate hiring

Super scalers' success poses an obvious question: how can we help them grow and hire even more quickly?

To find out, we partnered with Merlin Strategy to survey more than 400 of their senior leaders. The encouraging news is that they want to grow their workforce — fast. 93% already plan to increase their headcount in the next 12 months.

But we also found that as super scalers grow, they meet real resistance. While they're trying to accelerate hiring, it feels like someone else is applying the brakes:

Brake 1: Slow movement of talent

Long notice periods and non-competes are causing major delays in recruitment.

Brake 2: Skills shortages

Access to talent is a huge constraint on UK scale-ups, with shortages in technical skills a particular problem.

Brake 3: Rising cost of hiring

Payroll taxes – such as the recent increase in National Insurance contributions – continue to make companies think twice about taking people on.

Brake 4: Lack of domestic investment

Too many super scalers are forced to look overseas for funds, which often come with pressure to relocate.

Brake 5: Rigid regulation and bureaucracy

As headcount grows, compliance and bureaucracy are a sap on energy — leaving less time and resource for pursuing growth.

If these brakes were removed, super scalers could accelerate their hiring significantly; **three in four would hire at least 10% more people in the next 12 months than they are already planning to.**

The Burnham government's opportunity

The Autumn Budget provides Andy Burnham's government with a golden opportunity: to back Britain's super scalers, accelerate job creation and spread prosperity more widely.

Ahead of the Budget, the business leaders we surveyed said that what they want above all is stability. After a decade of political turmoil and a fast turnover of prime ministers and policy positions, **eight in ten (81%) said political instability is holding back economic growth.**

They are also craving clarity about what is to come. **Only half of super scalers told us they have a clear idea of what the government will do** on taxes and regulation in the next year.

However, they are hopeful. **Seven in ten (71%) said they are optimistic** that the Burnham government understands the challenges they face — and will act on them.

That action must come quickly. These companies want to stay and grow in the UK — but other countries want them, too. Many are being actively courted by foreign investors and governments eager to reap the benefits of their success.

At the end of this document, we share a set of recommendations that would help keep these companies growing, thriving, and creating jobs in Britain.

81%

said political instability is holding back economic growth

71%

said they are optimistic that the Burnham government understands the challenges they face

Source: Merlin Strategy survey, commissioned by Enterprise Britain

PART 2

Super scalers: The UK's job-creation engine

Super scalers create more jobs, more quickly

The UK's job creation engine is not small businesses or large corporates, but scale-ups.

Ask someone about which companies are powering job creation and they will probably point to well-known global firms or Britain's army of small businesses. In fact, it's super scalers that punch above their weight.

We analysed job-creation data for all companies, from small businesses with less than 50 employees up to large corporates with a headcount over 250.

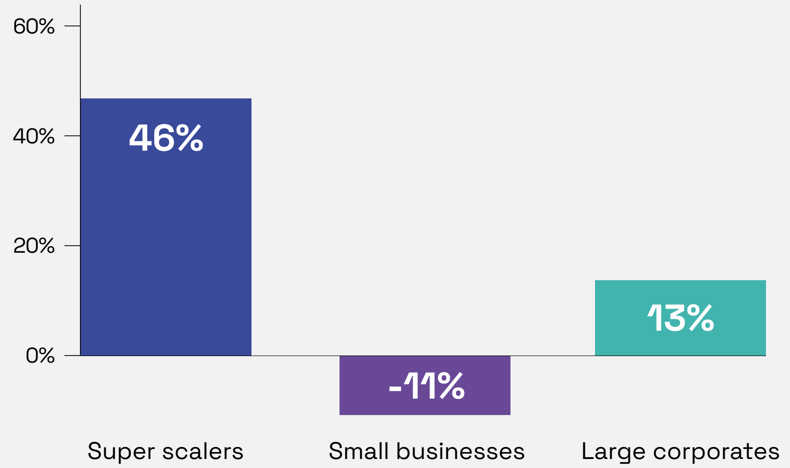
The conclusion was clear: super scalers make an outsized contribution to job creation.

Britain's ~10,000 super scalers:

- Employ **more than 5 million people**
- Accounted for **more than 30% of all jobs created** from 2020 to 2024, despite making up less than 1% of all companies
- **Increased their headcount by 46%** on average during that period

On average, super scalers increased their headcount at more than 3x the rate of large corporates, while small businesses lost employees

Average % change in headcount from 2020 - 2024, by category



Source: The Data City

Super scalers create jobs across the country

The prime minister has set an ambition of delivering "good growth in every postcode". Backing Britain's super scalers is critical to achieving it.

The term 'super scalers' might conjure images of tech firms based in London, but the reality is very different. This is a whole-nation success story. **67% of these firms' operations are based outside London and the South East**. They are major job creators in the **North West**, the **South West**, and the **West Midlands**.

In cities such as **Manchester**, **Leeds**, and **Birmingham**, there are significant clusters of super scalers, providing jobs in change-resilient sectors and driving urban regeneration.

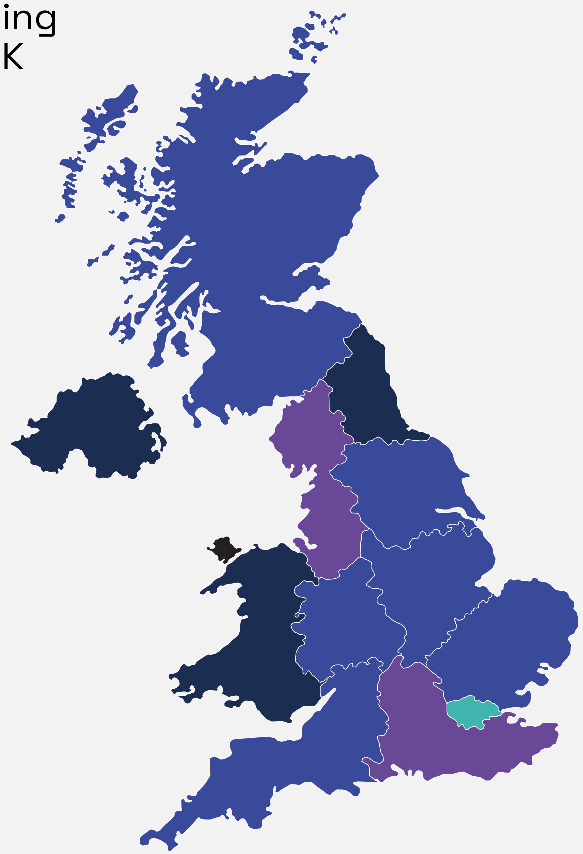
Even in parts of the country with lower overall numbers of super scalers, our research found something interesting: in several of these regions, their share of the fastest-growing companies is higher than their share of all companies. **Yorkshire and the Humber** has 7.8% of the UK's super scalers vs just 6.9% of all companies. **Scotland** has 7.4% of super scalers vs 5.9% of all companies. From North to South, super scalers are having an outsized impact – offering a glimpse of how to drive growth across the country.

Super scalers are creating good jobs across the UK

% of super scalers in each region

<5% 5%> 10%> 15%>

London	20.2%
South East	13.2%
North West	11.7%
South West	8.3%
West Midlands	8.3%
East	7.8%
Yorkshire and The Humber	7.8%
Scotland	7.4%
East Midlands	6.3%
North East	3.6%
Wales	3.4%
Northern Ireland	2.0%



Source: The Data City

Super scalers create jobs that are more resilient to AI

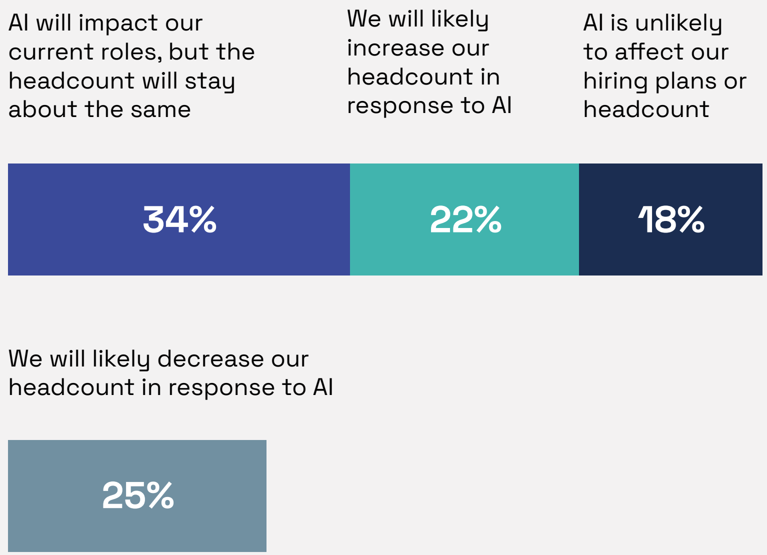
Britain urgently needs to create jobs that are resilient to technological change. Super scalers are a key part of the solution.

AI is changing our economy at an incredible pace. Over half of UK firms have reported creating new AI-related roles.[21] Specialist AI job postings have surged by 61% in the past year.[22]

But the conversation around AI is also infused with anxiety. This is hardly surprising when graduate job vacancies have dropped by almost 50% in a year.[23] The understandable response to news like this is that jobs must be 'saved'. But the smart response is that new, AI-resilient jobs must be created. In this task, super scalers — with their outsized commitment to innovation — have a critical role to play.

Our survey found that **most super scalers are adapting roles to AI rather than replacing them with AI**. For example, a clear majority (70%) said their use of AI has either led to a change in the skills they hire for in junior roles or had no impact at all. Looking at hiring plans at all levels, **three in four (74%) said their headcount would likely stay the same — or even increase — in response to AI.**

Three in four super scalers will either keep their headcount the same or increase hiring due to AI



Source: Merlin Strategy survey, commissioned by Enterprise Britain

Super scalers give their employees a stake in their success

Super scalers are not just giving people a job, they're giving people a stake — with employee share schemes far more common in these firms.

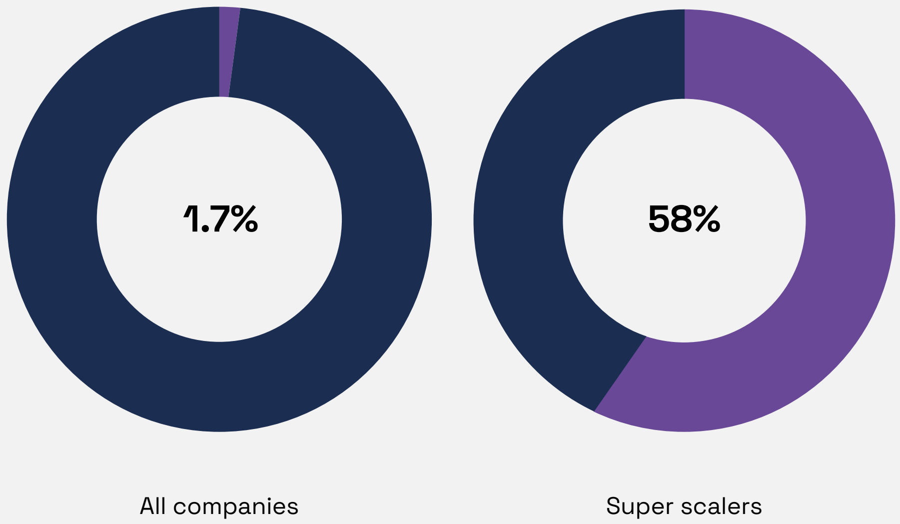
Great things happen when employees become shareholders. They feel more secure. They create more wealth and financial security for themselves.[24] They're more invested in the long-term growth of the company — and more likely to stick around.[25]

This is a win not only for the employee and the company but also for the nation. Countries across the world are vying for Britain's best and brightest, rolling out the red carpet with high salaries, tax incentives, and lifestyle offers.

By giving more employees a stake and encouraging them to stay in the UK, **super scalers are helping us to retain our greatest asset: talent.**

Super scalers are much more likely to have an employee share scheme

% of companies with an employee share scheme



Source: Data on all companies from HMRC; Data on super scalers from Merlin Strategy survey, commissioned by Enterprise Britain

Spotlight: The top 1,000 super scalers

The top 1,000 super scalers have an outsized impact on job creation. Despite making up only 10% of super scalers, they account for:

2.9M
total employees

57%
of all people employed at super scalers

64%
of new jobs created by super scalers from 2020 - 2024

They also stand out from their peers in terms of their headcount and revenue:

~700
minimum headcount

~£50m
minimum revenue

These British success stories have the potential to become global champions. Helping them grow and succeed should be a top priority for the government.

Source: The Data City. Minimum headcount: 699; Minimum revenue: £49,900,000; Exact number of companies that meet the criteria: 1,037.

PART 3

The five ‘brakes’ on super scalers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Five 'brakes' are holding super scalers back from accelerating job creation

Brake 1: Slow movement of talent

Long notice periods and non-competes are causing major delays in recruitment.

Brake 2: Skills shortages

Access to talent is a huge constraint on UK scale-ups, with shortages in technical skills a particular problem.

Brake 3: Rising cost of hiring

Payroll taxes – such as the recent increase in National Insurance contributions – continue to make companies think twice about taking people on.

Brake 4: Lack of domestic investment

Too many super scalers are forced to look overseas for funds, which often come with pressure to relocate.

Brake 5: Rigid regulation and bureaucracy

As headcount grows, compliance and bureaucracy are a sap on energy — leaving less time and resource for pursuing growth.

Brake 1: Slow movement of talent

Super scalers want to hire — quickly — but non-competes and long notice periods are slowing them down.

Ask British founders about the high-growth stage of their business and they'll tell you it's exciting — but frustrating. To grow fast, they need the right talent. But too often there are lengthy delays before new hires can join the team. More than a third of UK businesses set notice periods for directors at six months.[26] Many then have non-competes tacked on the end, which can add another six months' delay.

At a time when businesses can go from start-up to unicorn in less than a year, this is disastrously slow. **75% of super scalers we surveyed said that the slow movement of talent is holding back economic growth in the UK.**

The government has signalled it recognises the problem by launching a consultation on non-competes. They should act quickly. **The vast majority (87%) of super scalers see non-competes as a hurdle when hiring. A similar number (79%) say the same about long notice periods.**

This isn't just harming these companies. **It's making potential employees miss out on roles.** 42% of companies said they have decided not to hire a specific candidate because of a non-compete or notice period.

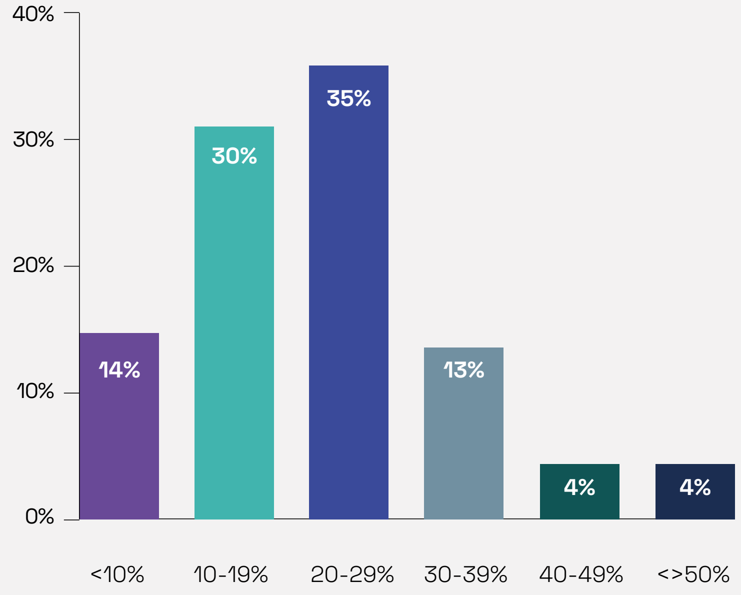
It's also harming productivity. The majority (55%) of leaders we surveyed said they expect their employees' productivity to drop by at least 20% after they hand in their notice. This is a waste of time and energy we cannot afford.

The government should:

- Finally act to ban **non-competes**.
- Give employees the power to shorten their **notice period** to one month.

Most super scalers expect their employees' productivity to drop by at least 20% after they hand in their notice

Q: For employees who have handed in their notice in your team or company, by how much - on average - do you expect their productivity to drop?



Source: Merlin Strategy survey, commissioned by Enterprise Britain

Brake 2: Skills shortages

While super scalers want to surge forward, talent gaps are holding them back.

Britain faces persistent skills shortages — particularly when it comes to the technical skills super scalers need. So it's no surprise that the leaders we surveyed **cited an inability to find skilled talent as one of their biggest barriers to hiring**.

A growing part of the problem is the AI skills gap. We carried out a separate survey with YouGov to understand workers' views — and found that **only 37% feel confident using AI in the workplace**. The vast majority **(85%) have had very little AI training, or none at all**.

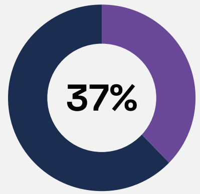
Building AI skills is critical for all talent — not just those in technical roles. With many super scalers integrating AI into their operating models and workflows from day one, there is an urgent need to upskill British workers.

The private sector is much better equipped to carry out AI training than the government; the government's role should be to encourage and recognise it.

At the same time, it must create the conditions needed to keep our top talent in the UK. In 2025, 246,000 British nationals left the UK to live abroad.[27] Without action, Britain may lose many of its skilled workers overseas, while others at home struggle to find work.

Very few workers feel confident using AI in the workplace

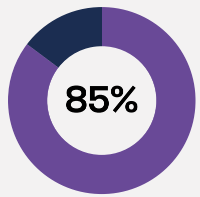
Q: How confident, if at all, do you feel using artificial intelligence (AI) in the workplace?



Percentage of workers who feel "very confident" or "fairly confident"

The vast majority of workers have had very little AI training — or none at all

Q: How much training, if any, have you done in terms of using artificial intelligence (AI) for your job?



Percentage of workers who have had "not very much" training or "none at all"

Source: YouGov survey, commissioned by Enterprise Britain

The government should:

- Create a **scale-up tier for the Employee Management Incentives (EMI) scheme**, helping to keep more top talent in the UK and ensure they share the benefits of their employers' success.
- Create a government programme to **recognise and celebrate British employers** who are going above and beyond to treat their workers well, train them, and give them a stake in their success.

Brake 3: Rising cost of hiring

The rising cost of hiring is a major hurdle to job creation. Super scalers cite it as the top barrier to hiring more employees in the UK.

In the 2024 Budget, the previous government announced an increase in employers' National Insurance contributions — and the impact has been profound.

This summer — just over a year since the change came into effect — the Work and Pensions Committee said it had heard "overwhelming evidence" that rising employment costs, including from the increased NI contributions, were reducing job vacancies, particularly for young people.[28]

This was reinforced by our survey of super scalers. Even though these companies are growing rapidly, they still have to make careful cost-benefit calculations when hiring. When asked about the biggest barrier to hiring more employees in the UK, the top response was payroll taxes such as the National Insurance increase.

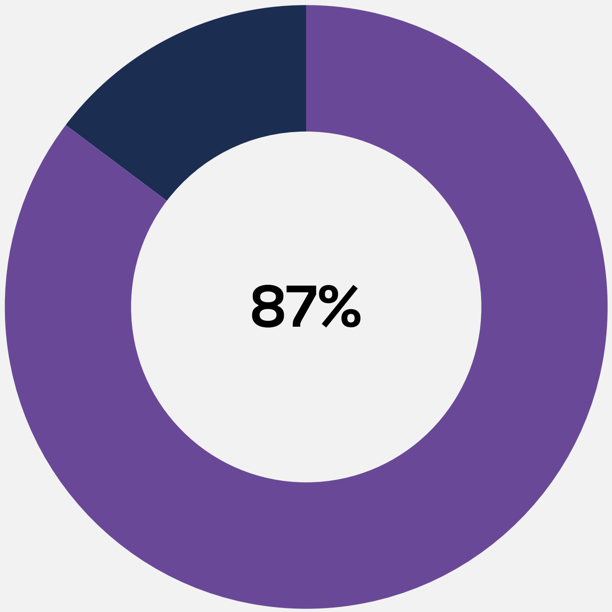
And crucially, the vast majority **(87%) said they are likely to hire more people if this tax increase is reversed**.

The government should:

- Reverse the increase in employer **National Insurance** contributions, which has made hiring more expensive.

The vast majority of super scalers will hire more people if the National Insurance increase is reversed

Q: If the recent National Insurance increase is reversed, how likely is it that you would hire more people?



Source: Merlin Strategy survey, commissioned by Enterprise Britain

Brake 4: Lack of domestic investment

The UK has huge capital reserves — and a massive missed opportunity.

The UK has no shortage of capital, but it does have a problem getting those funds into brilliant British businesses. Looking at the news headlines, you might assume that every super scaler is raising huge amounts of money from investors in the UK and around the world. But our data illustrates what many founders already know: the companies dominating the headlines are outliers. In fact, **only 11% of super scalers have received an investment round**.

If more super scalers could access capital at a scale that matches their ambition, they could grow and create jobs even more quickly.

Where that capital comes from is important. While it's easy to think it doesn't matter if an investor is based in the UK or the US, the reality is that money from foreign sources often comes with pressure to move all or part of a company's operations overseas. That's a problem, and super scalers know it.

Of those we surveyed, **81% said that a lack of domestic investment is holding back economic growth in the UK.** We know that improving access to finance is one of the government's top priorities — and there are clear steps they could take to encourage more home-grown investment. For example, if CGT relief was available to entrepreneurs who took funds from an exit and reinvested them in a British business, 70% of the leaders we surveyed would be more likely to do so.

81%

of super scalers say a lack of domestic investment is holding back economic growth in the UK

Source: Merlin Strategy survey, commissioned by Enterprise Britain

Only 11%

of super scalers have received an investment round

Source: The Data City

The government should:

- Encourage entrepreneurs to invest in new British companies through **Repeat Entrepreneur Relief** (a reduction in capital gains tax if money from an exit is reinvested in a qualifying company or fund).
- Create a new **Growth Visa** to attract international investors, and require that they invest directly in a British company or a qualifying VC fund in order to be eligible.
- **Boost domestic investment from pension funds** with concrete incentives, such as tying pension tax relief to UK investment, reducing CGT for venture investments, and creating a default UK-weighted pension allocation.

Brake 5: Rigid regulation & bureaucracy

Rigid regulation and unnecessary bureaucracy are holding super scalers back — and hurting growth.

Businesses of all sizes have long called for action on red tape, and it seems the government has heard them. The previous chancellor pushed regulators to prioritise growth, while the current chancellor has pledged to scrap heavy-handed bureaucracy wherever possible.

For super scalers, a more considered approach to regulation would be very welcome. **Government regulations were cited as one of the top three challenges facing their sector**, with the burdens of compliance becoming considerably more onerous as companies grow.

Many founders share the same experience. As start-ups they experienced relative freedom; but as scale-ups, compliance and reporting requirements ratchet up rapidly. Time and resources that could have been spent on growth are spent on following rules. Many regulations serve a useful purpose. But taken together, the burden on scale-ups is now too great. These firms are not seeking a 'bonfire of red tape'; they simply want the breathing space to innovate, grow, and hire.

The government should:

- Increase the thresholds at which more onerous **reporting and compliance burdens** come into place, including by changing the maximum headcount for a medium-sized company from 250 employees to 500 employees.
- Fully implement the **Scale-up Concierge** service, helping our fastest-growing companies navigate government departments and overcome bureaucratic hurdles.

Super scalers say:

Government regulations are one of the

top 3 challenges

facing their sector.

Cutting unnecessary regulation and bureaucracy should be one of the

top 5 priorities

in the Autumn Budget.

Source: Merlin Strategy survey, commissioned by Enterprise Britain

Without these brakes, super scalers would accelerate hiring

A jobs renaissance is within our grasp.

Our research has provided compelling evidence that super scalers have an outsized impact on job creation — and clear insight on the barriers that must be removed if they are to accelerate further.

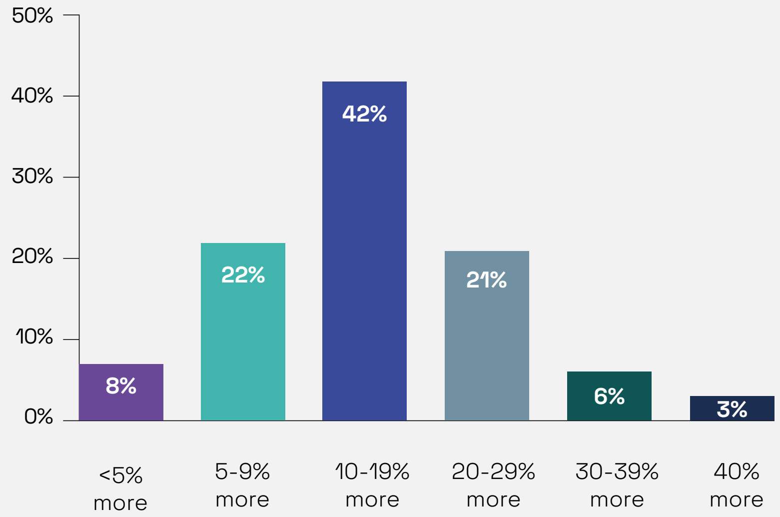
If Andy Burnham wants to deliver on his ambition for "good growth in every postcode and hope in every heart", creating more high-quality, resilient jobs is essential. And to do that, acting on super scalers' needs should be a top priority.

The series of practical actions we suggest in this report have been shaped by senior leaders of the UK's most successful and dynamic businesses; those who drive our economy and have the power to create many more decent, sustainable jobs.

For the sake of all those impacted by Britain's jobs crisis, we hope the government listens — and acts on these recommendations.

If these brakes were removed, three in four super scalers would hire at least 10% more employees in the next year

Q: If these barriers didn't exist, how many additional roles do you think you would be hiring for in the next 12 months?



Source: Merlin Strategy survey, commissioned by Enterprise Britain

PART 4

The Autumn Budget: A critical opportunity to accelerate job creation

In the Autumn Budget, the government has an opportunity to accelerate job creation and economic growth by creating the conditions super scalers need to thrive.

Here are some measures that would make a big difference.

Brake 1: Slow movement of talent

- Finally act to ban **non-competes**.
- Give employees the power to shorten their **notice period** to one month.

Brake 2: Skills shortages

- Create a **scale-up tier for the Employee Management Incentives (EMI) scheme**, helping to keep more top talent in the UK and ensure they share the benefits of their employers' success.
- Create a government programme to **recognise and celebrate British employers** who are going above and beyond to treat their workers well, train them, and give them a stake in their success.

Brake 3: Rising cost of hiring

- Reverse the increase in employer **National Insurance** contributions, which has made hiring more expensive.

Brake 4: Lack of domestic investment

- Encourage entrepreneurs to invest in new British companies through **Repeat Entrepreneur Relief** (a reduction in capital gains tax if money from an exit is reinvested in a qualifying company or fund).
- Create a new **Growth Visa** to attract international investors, and require that they invest directly in a British company or a qualifying VC fund in order to be eligible.
- **Boost domestic investment from pension funds** with concrete incentives, such as tying pension tax relief to UK investment, reducing CGT for venture investments, and creating a default UK-weighted pension allocation.

Brake 5: Rigid regulation & bureaucracy

- Increase the thresholds at which more onerous **reporting and compliance burdens** come into place, including by changing the maximum headcount for a medium-sized company from 250 employees to 500 employees.
- Fully implement the **Scale-up Concierge** service, helping our fastest-growing companies navigate government departments and overcome bureaucratic hurdles.

PART 5

Appendix

Methodology

Scale-ups survey

All figures highlighting insights from super scalers are based on a survey conducted by Merlin Strategy of 423 leaders of some of the UK's fastest-growing businesses. The sample was drawn from a list of companies that meet the OECD definition of a scale-up: a company that has grown by at least 20% per year over three years, in either headcount or revenue, with at least 10 employees at the start of the period. We further filtered the list to include only companies with at least 50 employees and a minimum annual revenue of £5 million. The fieldwork was carried out from 30 July to 8 August 2026.

YouGov survey

All figures highlighting insights from British workers, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. The sample of workers in these questions was 1,255 within a broader UK sample of 2,101 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 17 to 18 August 2026. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults (aged 18+).

Data City dataset

Data on super scalers comes from The Data City, which collects data on all UK companies from a range of trusted sources including Companies House, the Office for National Statistics (ONS), and Creditsafe. The Data City applied the OECD definition of scale-ups to the data to identify companies with at least 10 employees that have grown by an annualised 20% per year for the last three years in employment, turnover, or both. To define super scalers, it narrowed this group further to companies with 50 or more employees and turnover of at least £5 million. All data is based on companies still in business today.

Endnotes

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14. Labour Market Overview, Office of National Statistics, August 2026.
15. 981,000 16-24 year-olds were not in employment, education or training in April-June 2026 (Labour Force Survey, Office of National Statistics).
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17. YouGov survey; see Methodology.
18. The OECD also specifies that scale-ups have at least 10 employees at the start of the three-year period. We have set a higher threshold of 50 employees for our definition of 'super scalers'.
19. The number of companies that meet this criteria is 10,021.
20. The number of people employed by super scalers is 5,074,983.
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