



5G Ahead

How connectivity powers SMEs in 2025

Discover how 2024 shaped UK businesses – and what's in store for this year.



**The Big Network
For Your Business**

Methodology

Research in this report is based on:

Three Business’ ‘Delivering growth’ 2024 report:

Split by industry, role, location, and business size, it uses findings from 2023 Ambition Index research with 1,002 small and medium-sized enterprises (2023) and Medium Outlook research (2024).

Three Business’ ‘Unlocking Growth’:

The UK’s SME Tech Opportunity (2024)’ report. All figures, unless stated otherwise, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size for the report was 2,015 SME senior decision makers, with fieldwork taking place between 2nd – 11th September 2024

Additional resources:

Research, surveys and studies conducted by UK institutions, academics and specialists.

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Boosting outcomes with robust, superfast connectivity

Unlock business success

Uncover real business opportunities in 2025



At a glance: the connectivity outlook for 2025

Technology investments can unlock new potential for small and medium-sized businesses (typically those with 1-49 employees for small and 50-249 employees for medium-sized) – but need to be underpinned by the right network. This report covers the key considerations for investing in 5G connectivity to make 2025 prosperous.

The first is the importance of reliability. Without a strong network that keeps teams connected and core operations running smoothly, reputation can be impacted. But with a trusted partner who offers services tailored to reliability and scalability, businesses will have the support they need to grow.

Sharing high levels of data means businesses also need the right security. Untrained staff and unprotected devices are risks that can cause significant issues. By adopting advanced tools and systems for end-to-end vulnerability testing and threat detection, businesses can stay protected while connected.

With many calling for more stability and tech incentives, there's a lack of adequate support for businesses. These issues may be out of their immediate control, but capitalising on 5G investment isn't. In doing so, businesses can enable faster operations, effective hybrid work models, and drive revenue growth.

Reliability, security, and opportunity will define 2025 for businesses, especially when utilising the power of 5G. With the right connectivity infrastructure, they can make today's digital investments worthwhile in the long-term.



Introduction

Being a business in the UK is hard. Across the country, SMEs are faced with incredible challenges – from increases in national insurance contributions to a stagnating economy – yet there remains a clear determination to succeed. While influencing national policies is beyond businesses' immediate control, UK SMEs are looking for ways to inspire innovation, drive efficiencies, improve productivity, and deliver growth.

Despite the gloom, research shows that **89% of SMEs are confident about growing their business in 2025¹** with **75% of medium-sized businesses (typically those with 50-249 employees) going into the year feeling optimistic**. This optimism extends to plans to expand talent, boost efficiencies, and meet ambitious growth goals for the year ahead².

Many of these businesses view AI and 5G* as key technologies that can unlock new potential for success³. So – how do SMEs build momentum and keep it going?

As a trusted connectivity partner for businesses all across the UK, we've seen first-hand how investment in technology, when supported by a reliable network, can transform businesses. 5G could help unlock the potential of businesses across the country and contribute to a **£79 billion boost to the economy³**. With that in mind, what does this year actually have in store for us?

Specifically – what does 2025 look like for those hoping to continue on a strong growth trajectory? Let's find out.





01

Reliable network, reliable business

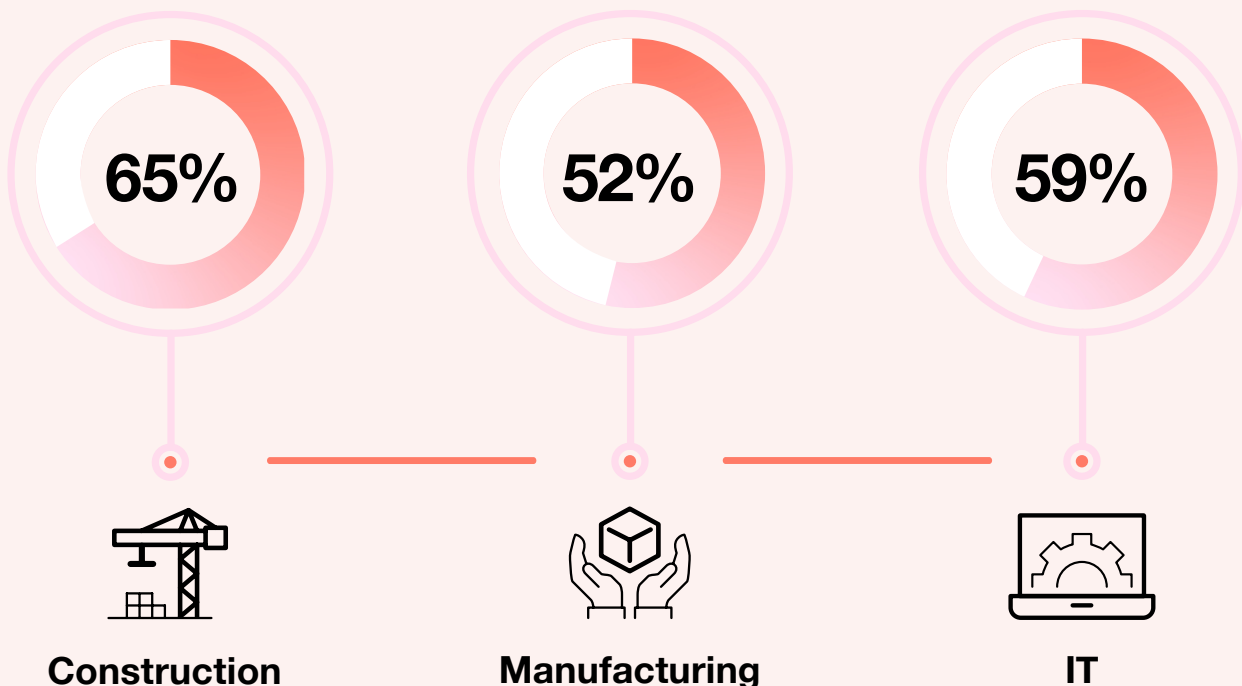
Reliable network, reliable business

Managing remote workforces. Sharing important documents on the go. Implementing innovative tech like AI and IoT. Whatever technology we're using in our day-to-day, we're all much more digital and mobile – meaning we have to be connected at all times. If customer service lines go down or vital file-sharing apps break, this can cause business downtime – hugely impacting reliability and reputation.

Unsurprisingly, **86% of SMEs said poor connectivity negatively impacted operations in the last 12 months**, while a large majority of London businesses (89%) said poor connectivity impacted their ability to conduct business. Our research also found that poor connectivity is a concern for businesses in construction (65%), manufacturing (52%), and IT (59%)³



The industries most concerned about poor connectivity



Our tip for 2025

**A reliable business foundation requires a trusted connectivity partner.
Follow these steps when choosing yours:**



Assess your needs

Identify what drives operations, from remote work capabilities to app reliability and advanced technologies like AI and IoT.



Verify performance

Conduct speed tests, review coverage maps, and explore feedback from other businesses.



Prioritise reliability and scalability

Look for providers offering strong SLAs, scalable solutions, and a reliable network.



Choose for growth

Partner with a provider supporting both current operations and long-term innovation goals.

Case study: Shipping supported by connectivity

For leading global shipping company [LV Logistics](#), strong connectivity is integral to smooth operations. It is used on a daily basis for reliable communication with customers, aiding seamless customer service, as well as for real-time shipment tracking. With access to The UK's Fastest 5G Network** and dedicated support from its Customer Success manager*** at Three Business, LV Logistics was able to focus time and energy on driving business growth.





02

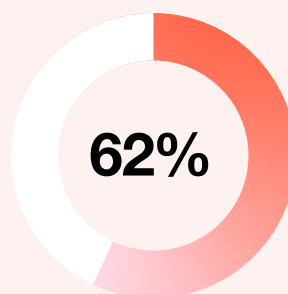
Secure connectivity, confident business

Secure connectivity, confident business

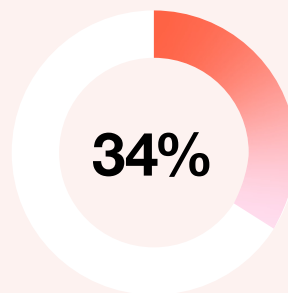
Businesses are heading toward significant digital transformation. But with every technological investment, or process update through digitalisation, they face increasing cybersecurity risks. Not only do businesses need secure, high-capacity networks to strengthen investments, but the right security support as well.

Despite technology improving business processes, digital skill deficits among the workforce were high in 2024. According to the Open University, 62% of organisations are currently facing skills shortages⁴, while 81% of manufacturers agree that digital skills are harder to acquire because of competition from other sectors⁵. While many SMEs agreed that new technologies could enable faster operations and increase productivity, untrained staff pose a significant security risk. Without proper awareness training, 34% of business users are likely to compromise security through human error⁶.

Securing every device on the network is a priority. Although 5G offers significant business benefits, its exceptionally high bandwidth⁷ enables more devices to be connected on a single network, meaning more data will be shared. Businesses should therefore adopt advanced tools and systems for end-to-end vulnerability testing and threat detection.



**of organisations
are currently facing
skills shortages⁴**



**of business users are likely
to compromise security
through human error⁶**





Our tip for 2025

It's critical to lay a secure, reliable connectivity foundation to capitalise on returns in technology investments². Ensure your connectivity partner doesn't just provide greater network speed and capacity, but the right security features that can protect your business data and mitigate risks. Solutions like Three Mobile Protect[†] offer comprehensive protection for safeguarding devices, with on-device protection and content controls, while Three Device Management^{††} provides a cloud-based, single point of control for data security.

Case study: Security support at every level

For leading data centre commissioning services company Global Commissioning, Three Business is aiding robust and secure operations, helping the business stay focused on growth and innovation. Three Mobile Protect safeguards sensitive data with device security, safe browsing, and remote management – ensuring peace of mind for both the team and customers. At the same time, Three's 5G network empowers teams to collaborate remotely without public Wi-Fi risks, through secure mobile hotspots.





03

5G: Driving growth in 2025

5G: Driving growth in 2025

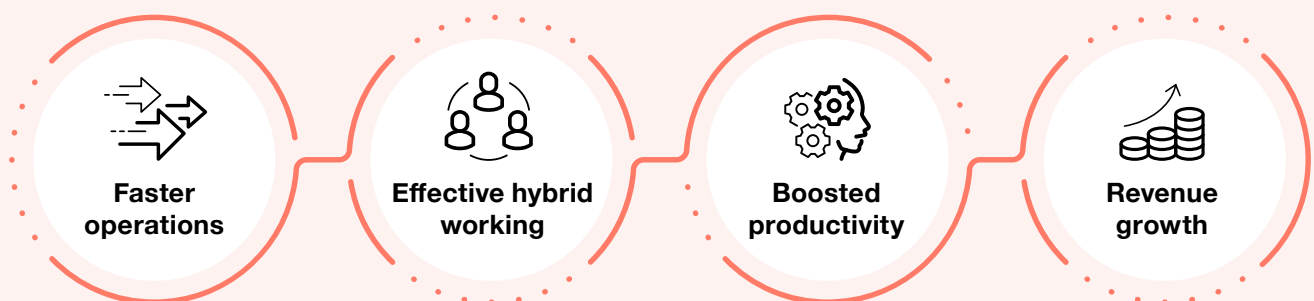
Revenue growth through smarter processes.
Increased employee flexibility through hybrid work.
Faster services through the support of digital tools.
These are all significant, positive recent business outcomes – but while individual wins like these are good for building robust business blocks, many still don't feel adequately supported.

In fact, a large number are calling for more stable environments, tax relief for SMEs and incentives to encourage further investment in tech³. The 2024 budget only adds further pressure, with employers needing to pay higher national insurance contributions at the same time as the national living wage rises.

Ultimately, influencing policy change is often out of a business' immediate control. But technology investments are not. In fact, while a large percentage of businesses fear failing to capitalise on investments in technology like AI and 5G (58% in finance and 64% in IT)³, this is a variable that is controllable. 5G connectivity can enable faster operations, effective hybrid work models, and drive revenue growth – potentially boosting productivity and increasing our economic contribution.



The potential of 5G Connectivity





Our tip for 2025

To get the most out of transformative technologies, start by identifying the specific challenges or growth opportunities they can address for your business. That could mean using 5G's real-time data sharing capabilities to enhance operational efficiency and streamline decision making, or leveraging cloud solutions and secure connectivity to support hybrid working models. By aligning your investments with clear objectives, you can unlock measurable returns and stay ahead of the competition.

Case study: Efficient plant supply

Double H Nurseries is the largest potted plant grower in the UK, with over 100 employees and various greenhouses dotted across the country. They have an urgency of time with every product purchase and delivery. It relies completely on having resilient, high-speed 5G connectivity for essential business operations – from tracking deliveries to effectively managing goods.

Case study: 5G in action

Facilities management company 3RiO depends on 5G to quickly upload security footage, boosting efficiency across its sites. Partnering with Three Business, 3RiO are building a connected infrastructure that supports digitisation.



Unlock business success

Is your business ready to leverage the true power of 5G in 2025? Reliability, security, and opportunity will define 2025 for UK SMEs, especially when utilising the power of 5G connectivity. As the ongoing wave of digital investment continues to climb, the right connectivity infrastructure, including wide deployment of 5G, will be needed to make any of today's investments sustainable long-term.



5G could add £79 billion to the UK economy²



Why Three Business?

Three Business is trusted by over 900,000 business customers across the UK. Importantly, we are proud to be an ongoing partner for SME businesses. Our plans are tailored to be flexible, adhering to the specific needs and unique challenges businesses like yours face day in, day out.

Whether it's a dedicated Customer Success Manager^{***}, simple and seamless portability, affordable unlimited business SIM plans, integrated analytics through our self-serve portal, or access to The UK's Fastest 5G Network^{**} – there's a reason why businesses like yours choose us as their partner in connectivity.

Contact us today to explore tailored solutions for your business.

Get in touch with your UK-based business experts to explore mobile connectivity plans tailored to your business, helping you succeed in 2025 and beyond.

Find out how Three Business can help.

three.co.uk/Small-Business

*5G available in selected areas, compatible device required. ****Fastest 5G:** Fastest 5G based on Ookla® Speedtest Intelligence® data Q3-Q4 2023. Verify at <https://www.speedtest.net/awards/fastest-5g/>. *****Customer Success Manager:** Is incorporated into specific Three's Business Plans or available as a standalone Add-on. See three.co.uk/business for more information. **†Three Mobile Protect:** Powered by Corrata. Find out more about Three Mobile Protect at <https://www.three.co.uk/business/three-mobile-protect> and <https://www.three.co.uk/business/terms-conditions/business-product-terms>. Minimum Term applies for Three Mobile Protect Enterprise. **††Three Device Management:** Find out more about Three Device Manager at <https://www.three.co.uk/business/mobile-device-management> for terms, see <https://www.three.co.uk/business/terms-conditions/business-product-terms>. Minimum Term applies.

1 UK Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Survey 2024, Aviva. **2** 'Delivering growth: How connectivity is crucial for business success', Three Business. **3** 'Unlocking Growth: The UK's SME Tech Opportunity', Three Business. **4** 'Business Barometer', June 2024, Open University. **5** 'Now hiring', 2024, Barclay Corporate Banking. **6** '2024 Phishing By Industry Benchmarking Report', KnowBe4. **7** 'Realising the benefits of 5G', Cambridge Econometrics.



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