



Market Report

A Snapshot of your Marketing Sector

Catering

This pack has been designed to provide information on setting up a business in the **Catering** industry in Scotland, as well as helping to inform the market research section of your business plan. You can find more information on how to write a business plan from the Business Gateway website (www.bgateway.com/businessplan), including an interactive template and tips to get you started.

This market report was updated by Business Gateway in **April 2026**.

What do I need to know about the Catering market?

The following summary statistics have been taken from market research reports and reliable resources that the Information Service uses to compile industry information. They should give you an indication of how your industry is faring at present and whether there is demand for your type of business:

- ◆ The **market value for Contract and Event Catering in the UK was estimated to be £18.7 billion in 2025**. Mintel estimates a **growth rate of 11.3%** increasing to 18.7% growth in the longer term to 2030. Rising labour costs increase pressure on catering margins, and for UK contract and event caterers, this is likely to compress margins, particularly where pricing power is constrained. As a result, operators are under greater pressure to improve productivity, optimise staffing structures, and refine menus and service models to sustain profitability. (Mintel, *Contract and Event Catering UK*, May 2026).
- ◆ **Consumer spending on catering and food services in the United Kingdom totalled £142.17 billion in 2024**. (Statista, *Food & Drink Services*, November 2025).
- ◆ 2025 has been a strong year for the sector, with **foodservice operators posting 8% and 9.5% boosts per quarter**. (The Caterer, *Foodservice*, November 2025).
- ◆ The value of **UK catering services**, measured at current (nominal) prices, seasonally adjusted, was **£34,533m in Q4 2025** according to the Office for National Statistics. (ONS, *Consumer Trends UK*, March 2026).
- ◆ In 2025, 71% of wedding ceremonies were held at venues, 22% of which were hotels, 22% were barns and 8% were at a pub or restaurant. An in-house catering model is preferred for all but outdoor venues, with **11% increase on average of the venue and catering spend compared to the equivalent month or day of week in 2024**. Couples have offset the 24% increase in per-head costs by reducing guest numbers, meaning the average spend for a given day or month has risen by just 11% year on year. (Bridebook, *Bridebook Wedding Report 2026*, March 2026).
- ◆ The cost of a wedding in the United Kingdom can vary heavily depending on the chosen venue and whether or not the couple decides to have in-house catering. In 2023, engaged and newlywed couples in the UK spent an average of nearly **£14 thousand on stately homes with in-house catering**, making it the most expensive option. (Statista, *Travel, Tourism & Hospitality*, November 2025).
- ◆ The national organisation for this industry is [British Hospitality Association](#). Other industry bodies include the [Nationwide Caterers Association](#), [the Association for Catering Excellence](#) and [Public Sector Catering Alliance](#) (the umbrella organisation for meal providers working in schools, hospitals, care settings, universities, prisons and the military).

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Where can I find more information on my market?

The Information Service has access to a number of databases which can offer more detail on this industry. Some of these reports are listed below - if you would like to be sent extracts from any of these reports, please contact us on **0300 013 4753** or email info@bgateway.com.

- ◆ **Mintel - Foodservice Delivery and Takeaway UK (April 2026).** The takeaway market is valued at £35.3 billion, a 5.4% year-on-year increase, largely driven by inflation. Due to financial pressures and economic uncertainty, takeaways are now seen as a special treat for many. Growth is expected to moderate through to 2027, as consumers remain value-conscious from costs and wage pressures. Supermarkets may make gains, with ready meals offering a more affordable alternative for some occasions. Future success will depend on the viability of automated delivery, integrated loyalty schemes, and healthy options that stand out from what supermarkets provide.
- ◆ **Mintel – Contract and Event Catering UK (May 2026).** Participation is declining across key catering environments like workplaces and events, reflecting softer demand for OOH dining. At the same time, consumers are accessing food through various formats, including food trucks (23%) and vending (20%), increasing the need for flexible, multi-format offers to capture demand across occasions. Self-service formats and smart technology are likely to become standard, reflecting growing consumer preference for ease and control.

There are also a number of online resources you may find helpful:

- ◆ [Food Standards Agency](#). The FSA produces a wide range of publications for the public and the food industry.
- ◆ News articles from [Hospitality and Catering News](#).
- ◆ [Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, Food Statistics Pocketbook](#), last updated in **February 2026**. This document provides a summary of statistics covering the economic, social and environmental aspects of food in the UK.
- ◆ The **Nationwide Caterers Association (NCASS)** has published the following resources, which are suitable for anyone starting up as a caterer:
Start a Food Business from Home (www.ncass.org.uk/resources/how-to-start-a-catering-business/guides/food-business-from-home).
Starting up a Catering Business from Scratch (www.ncass.org.uk/resources/how-to-start-a-catering-business/guides/starting-up-a-catering-business).
- ◆ [Hitched.co.uk](#) - Catering for events such as weddings and parties is typically charged at a fixed fee per person ('per head'). Many caterers require minimum guest numbers for bookings, for example at least ten guests for a buffet. Also see www.bark.com/en/gb/caterers/catering-price-guide for more information about pricing.

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How can I find out about my competitors?

Business Gateway's online guide to [Competitor Analysis](#) explains how to find your competitors, how to research what they're doing and how to act on what you learn about them.

Immediate competition will be from other businesses in your local area. There are several online directories which can be used to find company information and generate lists easily and at no expense. Many Local Authorities also publish local business directories on the web. Below are some key web resources:

- ◆ General business directories such as [Yell](#) ,[Thomson Local](#) or [Google Maps](#)
- ◆ Trade specialists like [EuroPages](#) (European directory), [The Wholesaler](#) or [Free Index](#)
- ◆ Business to business (B2B) specialists such as [Kompass](#)

Likewise, your local Chamber of Commerce may publish a members' directory; find your local Chamber on the [Scottish Chambers](#) website.

Once you've identified who your competitors are, the next step is to gather information on the way they do business. Which services do they provide? How do they market themselves? How much do they charge?

To learn about your competitors:

- ◆ Look for articles or adverts in local newspapers, trade press and directories.
- ◆ Try to read their marketing material; if the company has an online presence, visit the company's website as a first port of call. Not only does it give you a better understanding of the company's activities, it can also offer a wealth of information such as a company history or staff biographies, as well as the company's partners or suppliers
- ◆ Search for information on limited UK companies via the [Companies House](#) website
- ◆ Gain an insight into your competitor's performance using credit checks and the accounts that limited companies are required to submit to Companies House each year.

We can provide credit checks free of charge; if you are interested in using this resource, or looking for us to help you find relevant publications, please contact us by emailing info@bgateway.com or by calling **0300 013 4753**



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What about suppliers?

[Choosing and Managing Suppliers](#) can help you decide what you need from a supplier, how to identify one and how to choose one to deal with.

Trade associations or industry specific organisations may also be able to recommend suppliers or contacts. You can also use the aforementioned resources for finding competitors to find suppliers.

Once you have decided on a supplier, we can run a credit check on the company to help assess their financial stability. We provide credit checks free of charge; if you are interested in using the resource please contact us on info@bgateway.com or by calling **0300 013 4753**.

Who are my customers?

Your business plan should include information about the customers you would expect. Business Gateway's guides on [Market and customer research](#) will help you to identify new trends, opportunities, customers and competitors.

It can be useful to group your customers by geographical location, age or lifestyle. The websites listed below are freely available and can provide most of this information. If you can't find what you're looking for from these websites, please contact us and one of the team will be happy to help:

- ◆ Access the latest population estimates from the [National Records of Scotland \(NRS\)](#). NRS also offers demographic factsheets for each council area in Scotland, which can provide summary statistics for the area you will be based in.
- ◆ Information from the most recent census in 2011 is released via the official website. See in particular the [Census Area Profiles](#). Clicking on your area of interest will give the latest population figures, including estimates by age.
- ◆ [Understanding Scottish Places](#) has interactive profiles of towns and cities across Scotland. It can be useful for understanding the interrelationships and flows between towns, and also gives comparisons between two or more places.
- ◆ [Scottish Government Statistics](#) provide accurate and up-to-date statistics on Scotland, covering population, health, education and housing.
- ◆ [The Scottish Household Survey](#) provides information on the structure, characteristics, attitudes and behaviour of Scottish households, both at a national and local level.
- ◆ [Office for National Statistics \(ONS\)](#) is the recognised national statistical body for the UK. ONS covers a wide range of demographic, economic and social issues at a UK level.



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How can you help me with other aspects of starting my business?

The Business Gateway website has guides, videos, online tutorials and tips on all aspects of starting up a business in Scotland. Follow the links below to explore each resource:

Accountancy

Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland's (ICAS) "[Find a Chartered Accountant](#)" tool

Funding

[Practical information](#) on finance and funding for starting and growing your business

Insurance

[Business insurance guide](#)

Legal Help

Gov.uk "[Licence Finder](#)" tool

Law Society of Scotland's "[Find a Solicitor](#)" tool

Pricing

Business Companion [Pricing & payment guide](#).

Please note: the most effective way to research pricing is to conduct your own research – visit wholesalers or suppliers to obtain price lists, find quotes from similar companies and work out what other businesses in your area are charging

Promotion

[BG guides to Marketing](#)

Training

[Skills Development Scotland's My World of Work](#)

[Funding for training](#)

[Small Business Bonus Scheme \(Scotland\)](#)

Your local Business Gateway can offer events, workshops and 1:2:1 support on all aspects of starting and developing your business. Call the helpline on **0300 013 4753** to find out what is available in your area.

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You must not rely on the information in the report as an alternative to advice from an appropriately qualified professional. If you have any specific questions speak to your Business Gateway Advisor or consult an appropriately qualified professional.

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