



# NFIB SMALL BUSINESS ECONOMIC TRENDS

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Crtln2019

Based on a Survey of Small and Independent Business Owners

## SMALL BUSINESS OPTIMISM INDEX COMPONENTS

Index Component	Seasonally Adjusted Level	Change from Last Month	Contribution to Index Change
Plans to Increase Employment	16%	0	*
Plans to Make Capital Outlays	27%	-2	*
Plans to Increase Inventories	3%	1	*
Expect Economy to Improve	38%	-8	*
Expect Real Sales Higher	20%	2	*
Current Inventory	-3%	2	*
Current Job Openings	33%	3	*
Expected Credit Conditions	-4%	-1	*
Now a Good Time to Expand	24%	2	*
Earnings Trends	-9%	0	*
Total Change		-1	*

(Column 1 is the current reading; column 2 is the change from the prior month; column 3 the percent of the total change accounted for by each component; \* is under 1 percent and not a meaningful calculation)

NFIB **SMALL BUSINESS**

ECONOMIC TRENDS

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*NFIB Research Center has collected Small Business Economic Trends Data with Quarterly surveys since 1973 and monthly surveys since 1986. The sample is drawn from the membership files of the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB). Each was mailed a questionnaire and one reminder. Subscriptions for twelve monthly SBET issues are \$250. Historical and unadjusted data are available, along with a copy of the questionnaire, from the NFIB Research Foundation. You may reproduce Small Business Economic Trends items if you cite the publication name and date and note it is a copyright of the NFIB Research Center. © NFIB Research Center. ISBS #0940791-24-2. Chief Economist William C. Dunkelberg and Director, Research and Policy Analysis Holly Wade are responsible for the report.*

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# SUMMARY

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## OPTIMISM INDEX

The Index of Small Business Optimism fell 0.2 points to 104.5, sustaining the remarkable surge in optimism that started the day after the election. Five of the 10 Index components posted a gain, three declined, and two were unchanged. The Index has posted historically record high readings for six months, a performance eclipsed only in 1983. The modest decline in the Index was accounted for primarily by declining expectations for business conditions, most likely due to the turmoil in Washington, D.C. and plans to make capital expenditures.

## LABOR MARKETS

Small business owners reported a seasonally adjusted average employment change per firm of 0.19 workers per firm, a very strong showing and not consistent with last month's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Payroll Survey number which was a surprise on the low side, but was in agreement with the Household Survey number. Fourteen percent (up 2 points) reported increasing employment an average of 2.2 workers per firm and 10 percent (up 1 point) reported reducing employment an average of 3.5 workers per firm (seasonally adjusted). Fifty-five percent reported hiring or trying to hire (up 4 points), but 48 percent reported few or no qualified applicants for the positions they were trying to fill. Sixteen percent of owners cited the difficulty of finding qualified workers as their Single Most Important Business Problem (unchanged), far more than were concerned with weak sales.

Thirty-three percent of all owners reported job openings they could not fill in the current period, up 3 points, and the highest reading since November 2000, the peak of the last expansion. Ten percent reported using temporary workers, down 3 points. A seasonally adjusted net 16 percent plan to create new jobs, unchanged and a very strong reading.

## CAPITAL SPENDING

Fifty-nine percent reported capital outlays, down 5 points after a surge in February and March. Of those making expenditures, 42 percent reported spending on new equipment (down 4 points), 26 percent acquired vehicles (unchanged), and 14 percent improved or expanded facilities (down 1 point). Six percent acquired new buildings or land for expansion (up 1 point) and 11 percent spent money for new fixtures and furniture (down 5 points). Overall, capital expenditures were solid after displaying some modest exuberance in the prior two months. The percent of owners planning capital outlays in the next 3 to 6 months dropped 2 points to 27 percent, just below the highest reading in the recovery but well below historical levels for periods of growth.

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This survey was conducted in April 2017. A sample of 10,000 small-business owners/members was drawn. One thousand eight hundred and seventy-four (1,618) usable responses were received – a response rate of 16 percent.



# SUMMARY

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## SALES

The net percent of all owners (seasonally adjusted) reporting higher nominal sales in the past three months compared to the prior three months was unchanged at 5 percent, the best reading since May 2015, the last time it registered a positive reading prior to 2017. Until 2017, year this measure has been positive in only six months since 2007 and as low as negative 35 percent. Seasonally adjusted, the net percent of owners expecting higher real sales volumes gained 2 points to a net 20 percent of owners.

## INVENTORIES

The net percent of owners reporting net inventory increases fell 1 point to a net negative 1 percent (seasonally adjusted), confirming an end to the accumulation reported in January which was strong. Shedding the excess stocks accumulated early in the first quarter lowered first quarter GDP estimates. The net percent of owners viewing current inventory stocks as “too low” improved 2 points to a net negative 3 percent, as firms trimmed their excess inventory stocks in the first quarter.

## INFLATION

The net percent of owners raising average selling prices was a net 7 percent (up 2 points), continuing a modest but steady increase in the percent of owners raising average selling prices. Ten percent of owners reported reducing their average selling prices in the past three months (down 2 points), and 20 percent reported price increases (up 1 point). The frequency of reported price hikes has ticked up since November, but not enough to produce a lot of inflation. Seasonally adjusted, a net 18 percent plan price hikes (down 2 points).

## COMPENSATION AND EARNINGS

Reports of increased compensation fell 2 points to a net 26 percent, one of the best readings since February 2007 but below the recovery record level reached in January. Owners complain at recovery record rates of labor quality issues, with 87 percent of those hiring or trying to hire reporting few or no qualified applicants for their open positions. A near-recovery record 16 percent selected “finding qualified labor” as their top business problem, almost as many as cite the cost of regulatory compliance as their top challenge. Actual earnings was unchanged a net negative 9 percent reporting quarter on quarter profit improvements, historically an excellent reading and the best in this expansion.

## CREDIT MARKETS

Only 3 percent of owners reported that all their borrowing needs were not satisfied, down 1 point. Thirty-two percent reported all credit needs met (unchanged), and 50 percent explicitly said they did not want a loan. However, including those who did not answer the question, 65 percent of owners have no interest in borrowing. Only 2 percent reported that financing was their top business problem compared to 21 percent citing taxes, 17 percent citing regulations and red tape, and 16 percent the availability of qualified labor. Weak sales garnered 10 percent of the vote.



# COMMENTARY

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The Affordable Care Act (ACA), Obamacare, was a predictable failed experiment. Sadly, after seven years since it's passage, the ACA "details" are still being "written" by the bureaucrats. Debate in the house marked by serious doubts among republicans and severe opposition by democrats and too little leadership from the White House. The health care vote in the house repairs some of that dynamic but remains to be seen how small business owners will respond to these efforts in next month's survey.

The first quarter GDP number was weaker than expected, due to changes in inventory investment, slower auto sales and a negative trade gap. The economy is stronger than 0.7 percent growth, capital spending is better and inventory reductions will reverse.

The Federal Reserve may decide that even though the economy is better than "0.7", the optics of raising rates would not be good and therefore they will defer their two remaining rate hikes to later meetings. There is no chance they will do an "inter-meeting hike" as Greenspan was willing to do. The Fed will continue conduct this "monthly monetary policy" process, refusing to establish a longer term program of more predictable policy. Doing this each month produces much uncertainty in financial markets. Traders love this and much money is made in trading by the big banks rather than in traditional lending. In the meantime, hesitancy at the Fed raises uncertainty about the future of economic growth.

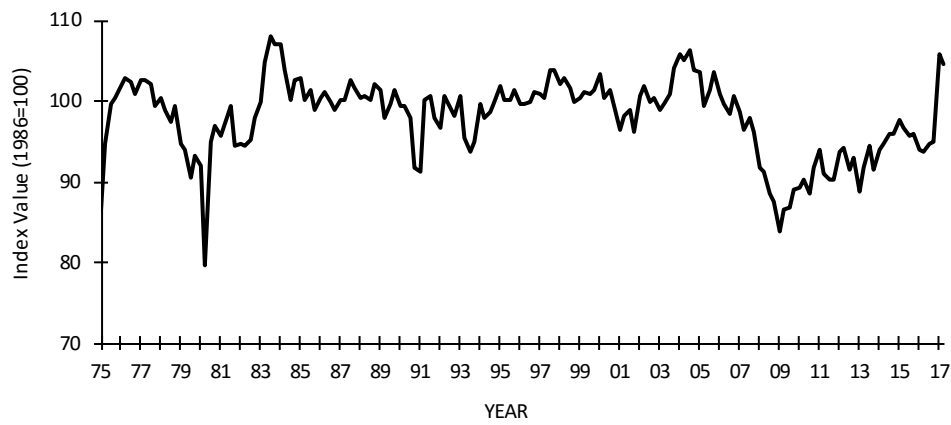
Small business owners have held on to their optimism, and have reported improvements in activities that signal more growth in the real economy, even if modest. If Congress does not disappoint, small firms are ready to bet on a more optimistic future by investing in their businesses and hiring more workers.



OVERVIEW - SMALL BUSINESS OPTIMISM

OPTIMISM INDEX

Based on Ten Survey Indicators  
(Seasonally Adjusted 1986=100)



OPTIMISM INDEX

Based on Ten Survey Indicators  
(Seasonally Adjusted 1986=100)

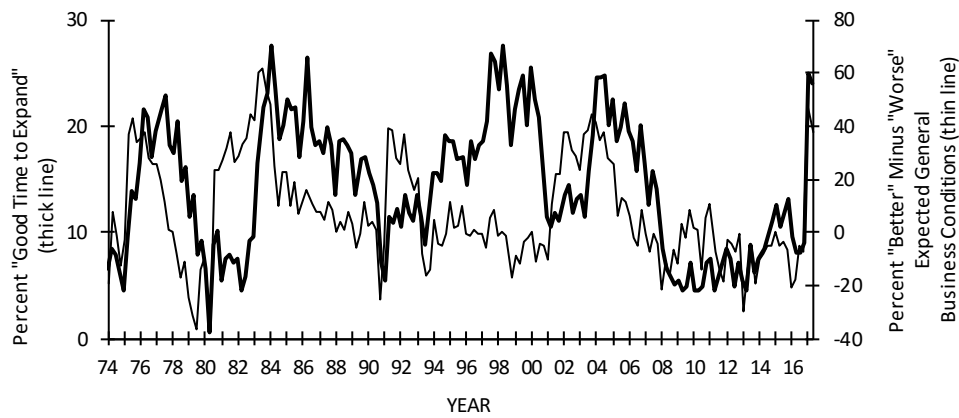
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2012	93.7	94.5	93.1	94.2	94.0	91.9	91.5	92.7	92.7	93.0	87.2	88.0
2013	88.8	90.9	90.0	91.7	94.0	94.0	94.4	94.0	93.8	91.5	92.2	93.8
2014	94.0	91.6	94.0	94.8	96.2	95.4	96.0	95.9	95.3	96.0	97.8	100.3
2015	97.7	98.1	95.7	96.5	97.9	94.6	95.7	95.7	96.0	96.0	94.5	95.2
2016	93.9	93.0	92.6	93.6	93.8	94.5	94.6	94.4	94.1	94.9	98.4	105.8
2017	105.9	105.3	104.7	104.5								



SMALL BUSINESS OUTLOOK

OUTLOOK

Good Time to Expand and Expected General Business Conditions  
January Quarter 1974 to April Quarter 2017  
(Seasonally Adjusted)



## SMALL BUSINESS OUTLOOK (CONTINUED)

### OUTLOOK FOR EXPANSION

Percent Next Three Months “Good Time to Expand”  
(Seasonally Adjusted)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>2012</b>	9	8	8	8	7	6	5	5	6	7	6	7
<b>2013</b>	6	5	5	5	8	8	9	7	7	6	9	9
<b>2014</b>	8	6	9	9	10	8	10	10	12	11	11	15
<b>2015</b>	13	13	11	11	14	10	12	11	11	13	12	8
<b>2016</b>	10	8	6	8	9	8	8	9	7	9	11	23
<b>2017</b>	25	22	22	24								

### MOST IMPORTANT REASON FOR EXPANSION OUTLOOK

Reason Percent by Expansion Outlook  
April 2017

Reason	Good Time	Not Good Time	Uncertain
<b>Economic Conditions</b>	11	10	13
<b>Sales Prospects</b>	4	4	6
<b>Fin. &amp; Interest Rates</b>	1	1	1
<b>Cost of Expansion</b>	0	4	7
<b>Political Climate</b>	8	4	14
<b>Other/Not Available</b>	2	3	5

### OUTLOOK FOR GENERAL BUSINESS CONDITIONS

Net Percent (“Better” Minus “Worse”) Six Months From Now  
(Seasonally Adjusted)

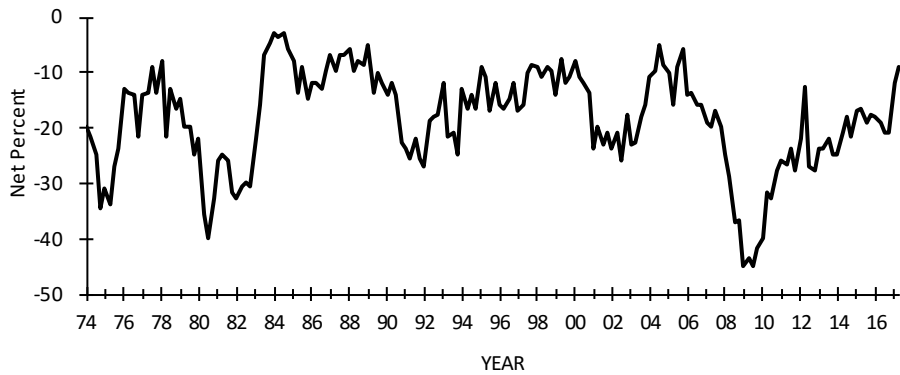
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>2012</b>	-3	-3	-3	-4	-3	-9	-7	-4	0	0	-38	-36
<b>2013</b>	-30	-25	-23	-14	-6	-3	-5	-4	-12	-19	-23	-12
<b>2014</b>	-11	-16	-13	-8	-1	-9	-5	-5	-4	-5	10	12
<b>2015</b>	0	2	-2	-5	-4	-8	-3	-8	-6	-6	-10	-15
<b>2016</b>	-21	-21	-17	-18	-13	-9	-5	-12	0	-7	12	50
<b>2017</b>	48	47	46	38								



# SMALL BUSINESS EARNINGS

## EARNINGS

Actual Last Three Months  
January Quarter 1974 to April Quarter 2017  
(Seasonally Adjusted)



## ACTUAL EARNINGS CHANGES

Net Percent (“Higher” Minus “Lower”) Last Three Months  
Compared to Prior Three Months  
(Seasonally Adjusted)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2012	-22	-18	-22	-13	-17	-22	-27	-29	-27	-28	-32	-28
2013	-24	-25	-22	-24	-24	-23	-22	-22	-23	-25	-24	-21
2014	-25	-26	-23	-21	-19	-18	-18	-18	-19	-22	-17	-14
2015	-17	-18	-21	-17	-9	-17	-19	-16	-13	-18	-19	-17
2016	-18	-21	-22	-19	-20	-20	-21	-23	-20	-21	-20	-14
2017	-12	-13	-9	-9								

## MOST IMPORTANT REASON FOR LOWER EARNINGS

Percent Reason  
April 2017

Reason	Current Month	One Year Ago	Two Years Ago
Sales Volume	11	15	14
Increased Costs*	7	8	10
Cut Selling Prices	3	5	4
Usual Seasonal Change	9	7	8
Other	3	4	3

\* Increased costs include labor, materials, finance, taxes, and regulatory costs.

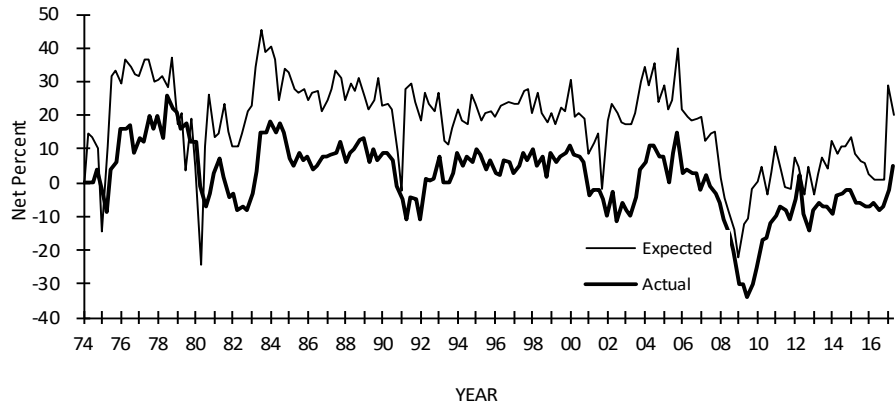




# SMALL BUSINESS SALES

## SALES

Actual (Prior Three Months) and Expected (Subsequent Three Months)  
January 1974 to April 2017 (Seasonally Adjusted)



## ACTUAL SALES CHANGES

Net Percent (“Higher” Minus “Lower”) Last Three Months  
Compared to Prior Three Months  
(Seasonally Adjusted)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2012	-5	-5	1	2	0	-5	-9	-14	-13	-14	-14	-10
2013	-8	-7	-7	-6	-6	-8	-7	-7	-6	-7	-7	-8
2014	-9	-6	-6	-4	-3	-2	-3	-3	-4	-2	-3	2
2015	-2	-4	-3	-6	5	-6	-6	-4	-1	-7	-4	-5
2016	-7	-6	-8	-6	-8	-4	-8	-9	-6	-7	-8	-7
2017	-2	2	5	5								



## SALES EXPECTATIONS

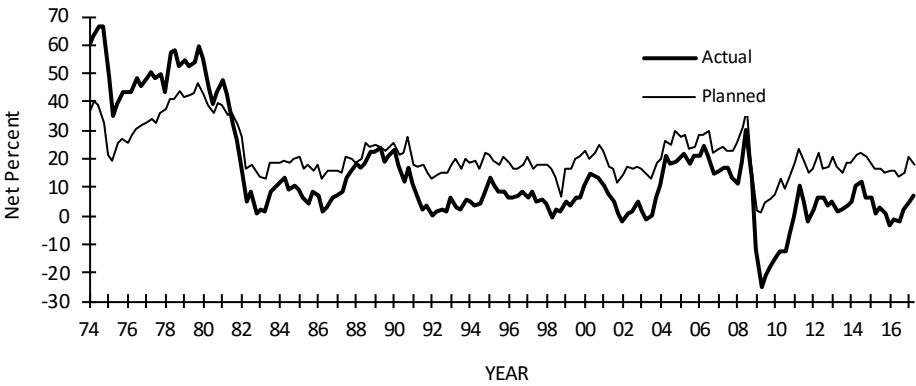
Net Percent (“Higher” Minus “Lower”) During Next Three Months  
(Seasonally Adjusted)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2012	8	11	9	5	2	-2	-4	2	2	5	-5	-3
2013	-3	0	-3	3	8	6	8	6	9	4	3	7
2014	13	2	13	9	15	12	11	7	6	11	14	19
2015	14	14	14	9	7	5	7	8	2	6	-1	7
2016	3	0	1	1	1	2	1	-1	4	1	11	31
2017	29	26	18	20								

# SMALL BUSINESS PRICES

## PRICES

Actual Last Three Months and Planned Next Three Months  
January Quarter 1974 to April Quarter 2017  
(Seasonally Adjusted)



## ACTUAL PRICE CHANGES

Net Percent (“Higher” Minus “Lower”)  
Compared to Three Months Ago  
(Seasonally Adjusted)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2012	2	4	6	7	1	0	6	9	6	4	1	3
2013	5	5	-1	2	0	5	2	2	1	4	3	2
2014	5	4	9	11	10	11	12	6	4	7	5	7
2015	6	3	2	1	4	2	3	1	1	1	4	-1
2016	-4	-4	-4	-1	1	2	-2	3	-1	2	5	6
2017	5	6	5	7								



## PRICE PLANS

Net Percent (“Higher” Minus “Lower”) in the Next Three Months  
(Seasonally Adjusted)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2012	17	18	21	22	17	16	17	17	20	17	17	16
2013	21	22	17	17	15	18	15	18	20	19	20	19
2014	19	22	19	21	21	21	22	19	17	21	20	22
2015	19	18	15	16	17	18	17	15	14	15	18	20
2016	16	14	17	16	16	16	14	15	18	15	19	24
2017	21	20	20	18								

# SMALL BUSINESS EMPLOYMENT

## ACTUAL EMPLOYMENT CHANGES

Net Percent (“Increase” Minus “Decrease”) in the Last Three Months  
(Seasonally Adjusted)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2012	0	-3	0	0	-3	-1	-1	2	-3	-1	-2	-4
2013	2	-3	1	2	-1	1	-3	0	0	1	1	2
2014	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	0	3	1	1	7
2015	5	4	2	2	4	0	0	6	5	0	0	-1
2016	1	-3	0	-1	-1	-2	-2	-3	3	0	-2	4
2017	3	4	3	4								

## QUALIFIED APPLICANTS FOR JOB OPENINGS

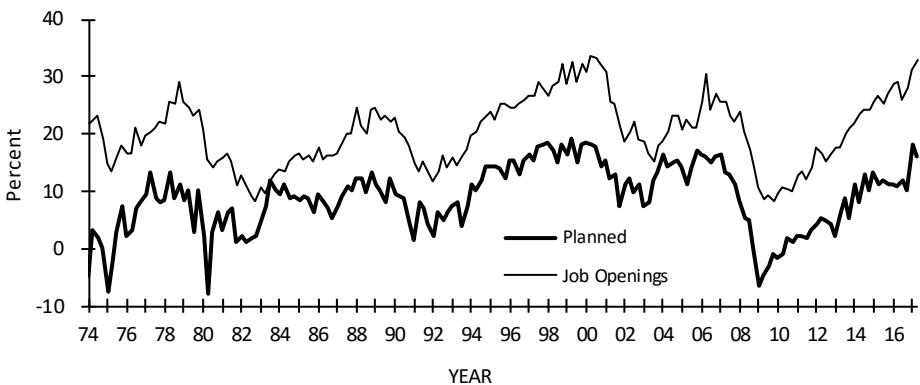
Percent Few or No Qualified Applicants

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2012	31	31	32	34	37	33	38	37	41	38	36	33
2013	34	34	36	38	38	41	40	42	41	40	44	38
2014	38	40	41	41	46	43	42	46	42	45	45	43
2015	42	47	42	44	47	44	48	48	45	48	47	48
2016	45	42	41	46	48	48	46	48	48	48	51	44
2017	47	44	45	48								



## EMPLOYMENT

Planned Next Three Months and Current Job Openings  
January Quarter 1974 to April Quarter 2017  
(Seasonally Adjusted)



SMALL BUSINESS EMPLOYMENT (CONTINUED)

JOB OPENINGS

Percent With Positions Not Able to Fill Right Now  
(Seasonally Adjusted)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2012	18	17	15	17	20	15	15	17	17	16	18	16
2013	18	21	18	18	19	19	20	18	20	21	24	23
2014	22	22	22	24	24	26	24	25	21	24	25	25
2015	26	29	24	27	29	24	25	28	27	27	28	28
2016	29	28	25	29	27	29	26	30	24	28	31	29
2017	31	32	30	33								

HIRING PLANS

Net Percent (“Increase” Minus “Decrease”) in the Next Three Months  
(Seasonally Adjusted)

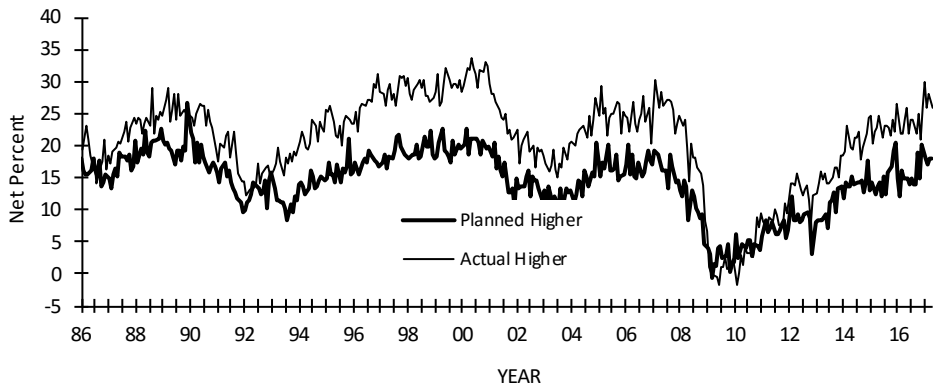
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2012	4	4	2	5	7	3	5	8	4	4	5	1
2013	2	4	2	6	6	7	9	8	9	5	9	8
2014	11	7	7	8	11	12	13	8	9	10	11	15
2015	13	12	12	11	13	9	12	11	12	11	11	15
2016	11	10	9	11	12	11	12	9	10	10	15	16
2017	18	15	16	16								



SMALL BUSINESS COMPENSATION

COMPENSATION

Actual Last Three Months and Planned Next Three Months  
January 1986 to April 2017 (Seasonally Adjusted)



## SMALL BUSINESS COMPENSATION (CONTINUED)

### ACTUAL COMPENSATION CHANGES

Net Percent (“Increase” Minus “Decrease”) During Last Three Months  
(Seasonally Adjusted)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2012	12	14	14	14	16	13	12	13	14	12	8	12
2013	13	14	16	15	16	14	14	15	17	17	15	18
2014	19	19	23	20	20	21	21	22	18	20	22	24
2015	25	20	22	23	25	21	23	23	23	22	24	22
2016	27	22	22	24	26	22	24	24	22	25	21	26
2017	30	26	28	26								

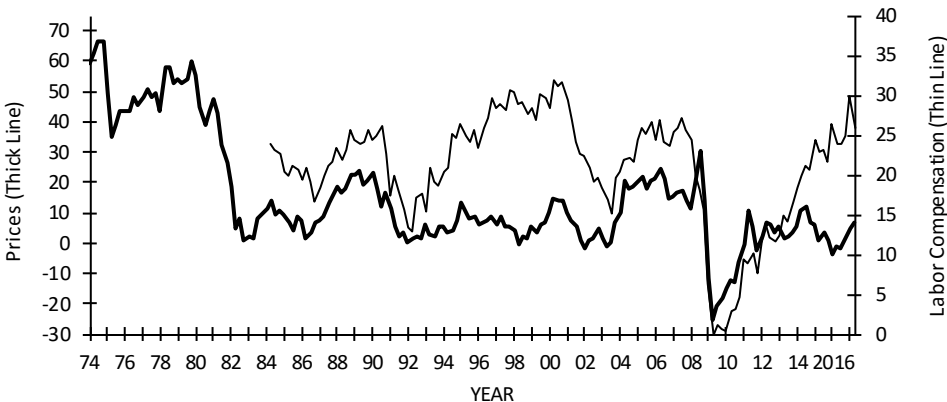
### COMPENSATION PLANS

Net Percent (“Increase” Minus “Decrease”) in the Next Three Months  
(Seasonally Adjusted)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2012	7	12	9	9	9	8	8	9	10	9	3	6
2013	8	8	9	9	9	7	11	11	13	10	13	14
2014	12	14	14	14	15	14	14	14	15	13	14	18
2015	13	14	13	14	14	12	15	12	16	17	19	21
2016	15	12	16	15	15	14	15	14	14	19	15	20
2017	18	17	18	18								

### PRICES AND LABOR COMPENSATION

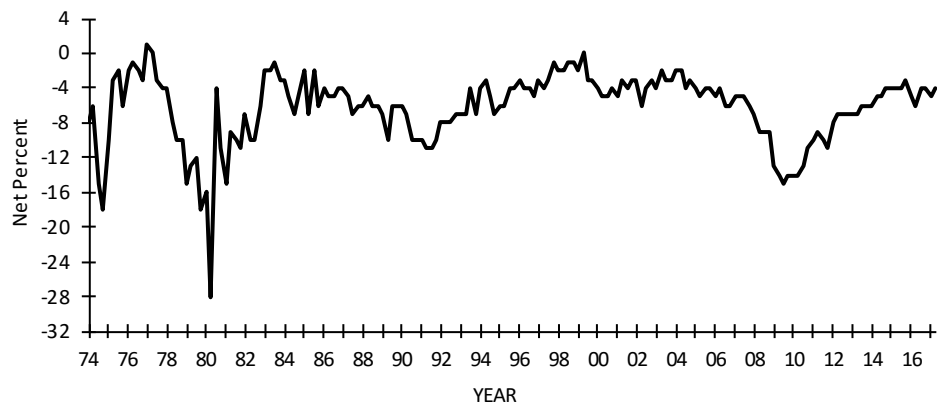
Net Percent Price Increase and Net Percent Compensation Increase  
(Seasonally Adjusted)



SMALL BUSINESS CREDIT CONDITIONS

CREDIT CONDITIONS

Loan Availability Compared to Three Months Ago\*  
January Quarter 1974 to April Quarter 2017



\* For the population borrowing at least once every three months.

REGULAR BORROWERS

Percent Borrowing at Least Once Every Three Months

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2012	32	32	31	32	32	29	31	30	31	30	30	29
2013	31	29	30	31	29	29	31	28	30	28	29	30
2014	31	30	31	30	31	28	30	29	31	28	33	31
2015	33	30	32	30	29	31	30	33	29	28	27	31
2016	33	31	32	29	29	29	28	29	32	28	31	30
2017	30	31	30	31								



AVAILABILITY OF LOANS

Net Percent (“Easier” Minus “Harder”)  
Compared to Three Months Ago  
(Regular Borrowers)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2012	-8	-8	-11	-7	-9	-7	-7	-7	-6	-7	-9	-9
2013	-7	-7	-4	-7	-5	-6	-6	-6	-5	-6	-6	-7
2014	-6	-8	-8	-5	-6	-6	-5	-5	-7	-4	-5	-3
2015	-4	-3	-5	-4	-3	-4	-4	-4	-4	-3	-4	-5
2016	-5	-5	-5	-5	-4	-5	-4	-4	-5	-4	-4	-6
2017	-5	-4	-3	-4								

SMALL BUSINESS CREDIT CONDITIONS (CONTINUED)

BORROWING NEEDS SATISFIED

Percent of All Businesses Last Three Months Satisfied/  
Percent of All Businesses Last Three Months Not Satisfied  
(All Borrowers)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2012	30/7	31/7	27/8	31/8	29/9	29/7	30/7	31/7	32/8	28/8	28/6	29/6
2013	31/6	29/7	29/7	31/6	28/5	29/5	30/5	31/5	28/6	28/6	32/4	32/4
2014	31/5	29/5	30/5	30/5	30/5	27/6	30/6	28/4	28/6	29/4	29/4	32/4
2015	32/4	33/3	35/5	31/4	30/4	32/5	32/4	33/3	30/2	30/3	32/3	32/4
2016	35/3	31/4	31/5	31/4	31/4	32/5	30/3	29/4	32/6	29/4	30/4	29/4
2017	31/4	30/3	32/4	32/3								

EXPECTED CREDIT CONDITIONS

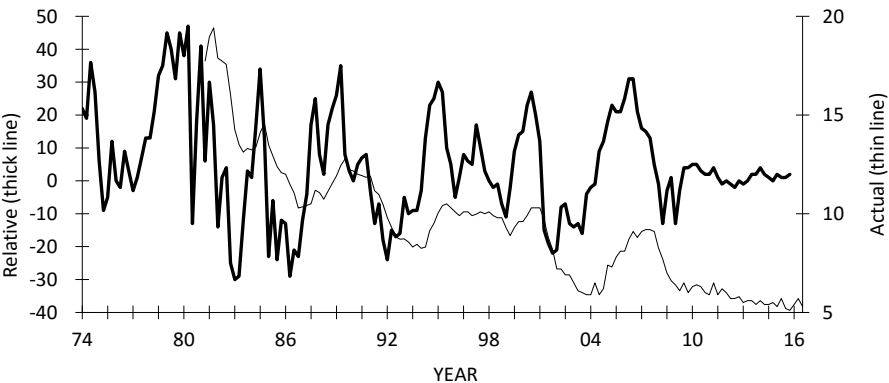
Net Percent (“Easier” Minus “Harder”) During Next Three Months  
(Regular Borrowers)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2012	-9	-10	-11	-8	-10	-8	-7	-9	-7	-8	-10	-11
2013	-9	-8	-6	-8	-6	-7	-8	-8	-7	-8	-7	-7
2014	-7	-7	-7	-6	-7	-7	-5	-5	-7	-5	-6	-5
2015	-5	-4	-6	-4	-4	-4	-5	-7	-6	-5	-4	-6
2016	-7	-7	-6	-6	-6	-6	-5	-5	-7	-6	-5	-6
2017	-3	-3	-3	-4								



INTEREST RATES

Relative Rates and Actual Rates Last Three Months  
January Quarter 1974 to April Quarter 2017



SMALL BUSINESS CREDIT CONDITIONS (CONTINUED)

RELATIVE INTEREST RATE PAID BY  
REGULAR BORROWERS\*

Net Percent (“Higher” Minus “Lower”) Compared to Three Months Ago

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2012	0	0	0	-1	0	-2	-2	-2	1	0	1	-1
2013	-1	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	4	2	2	3
2014	4	3	2	2	2	2	1	2	3	0	0	-1
2015	2	0	1	1	1	2	1	2	-1	2	0	2
2016	7	6	6	4	4	4	2	2	3	1	2	4
2017	11	9	9	11								

\*Borrowing at Least Once Every Three Months.

ACTUAL INTEREST RATE PAID ON  
SHORT-TERM LOANS BY BORROWERS

Average Interest Rate Paid

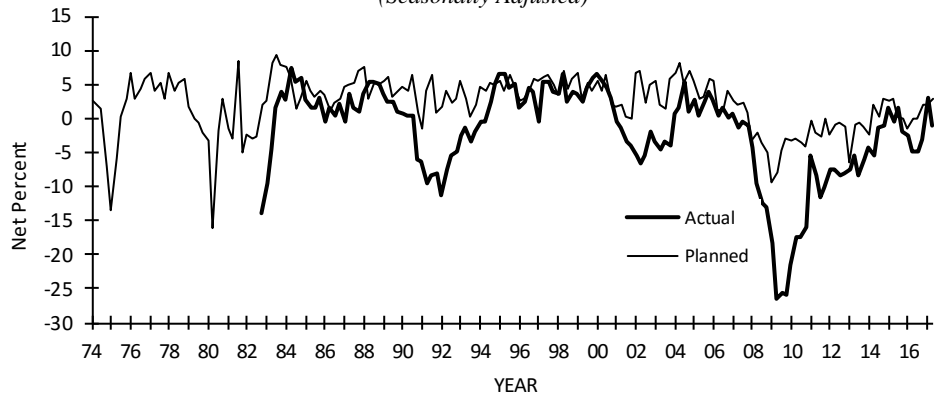
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2012	6.0	5.8	5.7	5.7	5.5	6.3	5.7	5.7	5.7	5.8	5.7	5.6
2013	5.5	5.3	5.4	5.6	5.7	5.2	5.6	5.4	5.8	5.4	5.4	5.6
2014	5.6	5.4	5.3	5.4	5.7	5.7	5.4	5.3	5.4	5.5	5.6	5.1
2015	5.3	5.1	5.7	5.0	4.8	5.0	5.2	5.4	4.8	5.1	4.7	5.0
2016	5.4	5.3	5.2	5.7	5.3	5.7	5.3	5.2	6.2	5.2	5.6	5.5
2017	5.7	5.4	5.4	5.4								



SMALL BUSINESS INVENTORIES

INVENTORIES

Actual (Last Three Months) and Planned (Next Three Months)  
January Quarter 1974 to April Quarter 2017  
(Seasonally Adjusted)





SMALL BUSINESS INVENTORIES (CONTINUED)

ACTUAL INVENTORY CHANGES

Net Percent (“Increase” Minus “Decrease”) During Last Three Months  
(Seasonally Adjusted)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2012	-7	-1	-10	-8	-7	-7	-9	-8	-8	-8	-11	-9
2013	-7	-10	-7	-6	-6	-7	-9	-6	-7	-6	-8	-3
2014	-4	-3	-7	-6	-3	-4	-2	-3	-7	-1	1	1
2015	2	1	-5	-1	-4	0	2	-2	0	-2	-4	0
2016	-2	-3	-3	-5	-6	-6	-5	0	-4	-3	-3	3
2017	3	1	0	-1								

INVENTORY SATISFACTION

Net Percent (“Too Low” Minus “Too Large”) at Present Time  
(Seasonally Adjusted)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2012	1	2	2	-1	-1	0	0	0	-1	0	-1	2
2013	-1	1	-3	-2	1	-2	-1	0	0	-5	-3	-4
2014	-2	-5	-2	-2	-3	-2	-3	-2	0	-3	-2	-2
2015	-1	-3	-7	-2	-1	-4	-6	-6	-5	-4	-5	-4
2016	-2	-2	-5	-5	-4	-4	-4	-2	-7	-4	-4	-3
2017	-5	-2	-5	-3								

INVENTORY PLANS

Net Percent (“Increase” Minus “Decrease”) in the Next Three to Six Months  
(Seasonally Adjusted)

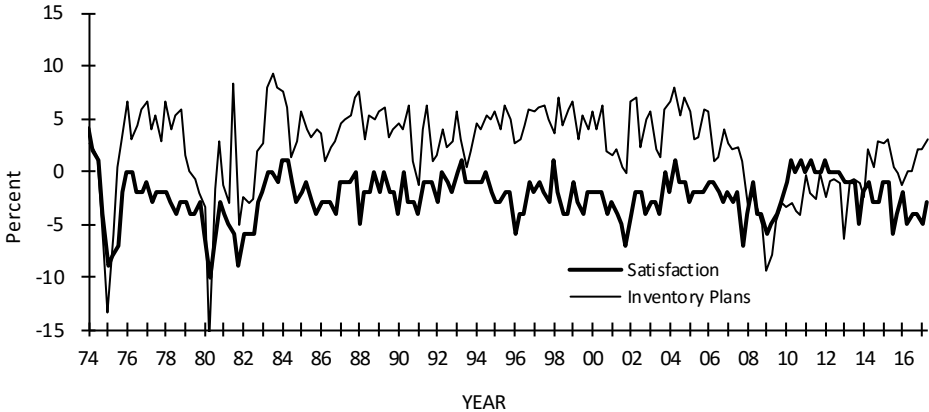
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2012	-2	3	0	-1	1	1	-1	0	-1	-1	-6	-4
2013	-6	-1	-5	-1	2	-1	-1	-1	-2	-1	-1	-2
2014	-2	-5	1	2	0	-1	0	2	2	3	1	6
2015	3	5	1	3	3	-4	0	2	3	0	-1	1
2016	-1	-1	-2	0	-1	-3	0	1	-7	2	4	4
2017	2	3	2	3								



SMALL BUSINESS CAPITAL OUTLAYS

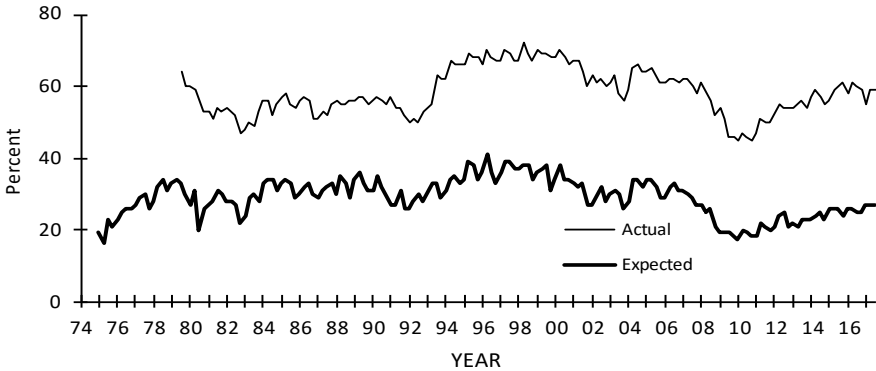
INVENTORY SATISFACTION AND INVENTORY PLANS

Net Percent (“Too Low” Minus “Too Large”) at Present Time  
Net Percent Planning to Add Inventories in the Next Three to Six Months  
(Seasonally Adjusted)



CAPITAL EXPENDITURES

Actual Last Six Months and Planned Next Three Months  
January Quarter 1974 to April Quarter 2017  
(Seasonally Adjusted)



ACTUAL CAPITAL EXPENDITURES

Percent Making a Capital Expenditure During the Last Six Months

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2012	55	57	52	54	55	52	54	55	51	54	53	52
2013	55	56	57	56	57	56	54	53	55	57	55	64
2014	59	57	56	57	55	54	55	58	56	56	57	60
2015	59	60	58	60	54	58	61	58	58	58	62	62
2016	61	58	59	60	58	57	59	57	55	57	55	63
2017	59	62	64	59								

# SMALL BUSINESS CAPITAL OUTLAYS (CONTINUED)

## TYPE OF CAPITAL EXPENDITURES MADE

Percent Purchasing or Leasing During Last Six Months

Type	Current	One Year Ago	Two Years Ago
Vehicles	26	25	25
Equipment	42	41	44
Furniture or Fixtures	11	13	12
Add. Bldgs. or Land	6	5	5
Improved Bldgs. or Land	14	15	13

## AMOUNT OF CAPITAL EXPENDITURES MADE

Percent Distribution of Per Firm Expenditures  
During the Last Six Months

Amount	Current	One Year Ago	Two Years Ago
\$1 to \$999	2	3	4
\$1,000 to \$4,999	6	7	8
\$5,000 to \$9,999	6	6	5
\$10,000 to \$49,999	19	19	19
\$50,000 to \$99,999	12	10	10
\$100,000 +	12	13	13
No Answer	2	2	1

## CAPITAL EXPENDITURE PLANS

Percent Planning a Capital Expenditure During Next Three to Six Months

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2012	23	22	20	24	24	22	23	26	23	23	19	19
2013	20	24	23	22	23	24	25	26	27	24	24	25
2014	23	24	22	24	24	23	25	29	24	27	25	28
2015	25	25	22	25	25	24	26	26	27	27	25	25
2016	25	23	25	25	23	26	25	28	27	27	24	29
2017	27	26	29	27								



SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM

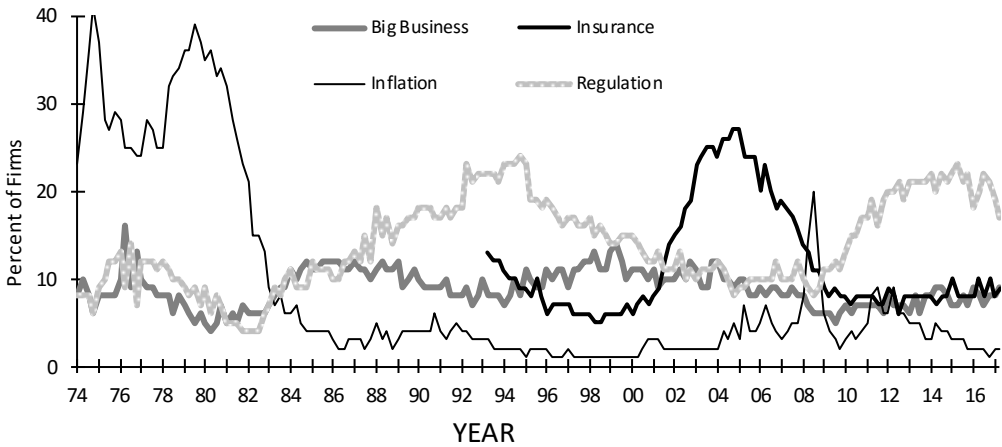
SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM

April 2017

Problem	Current	One Year Ago	Survey High	Survey Low
Taxes	21	21	32	8
Inflation	2	2	41	0
Poor Sales	10	11	33	2
Fin. & Interest Rates	2	2	37	2
Cost of Labor	6	6	9	2
Govt. Reqs. & Red Tape	17	20	27	4
Comp. From Large Bus.	9	8	14	4
Quality of Labor	16	12	23	3
Cost/Avail. of Insurance	9	10	29	4
Other	8	8	31	2

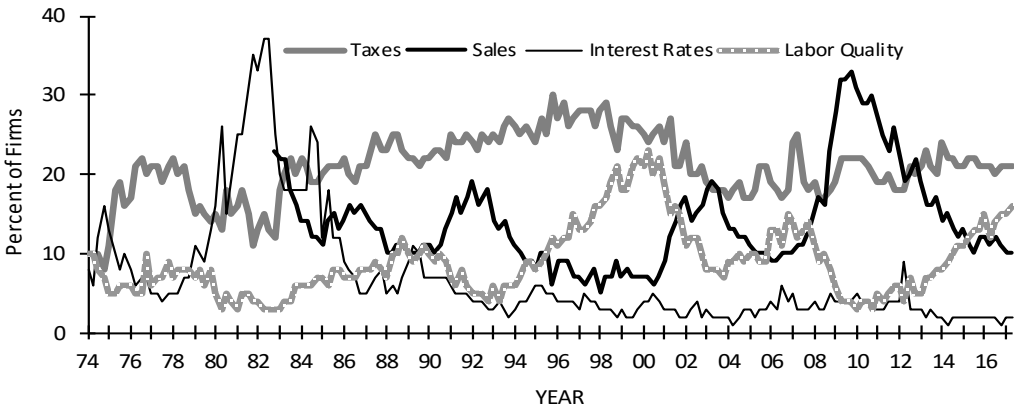
SELECTED SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM

Insurance, Big Business Competition, Inflation, and Regulation  
*January Quarter 1974 to April Quarter 2017*



SELECTED SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM

Sales, Fin. & Interest Rates, Labor Cost, Labor Quality, and Taxes  
*January Quarter 1974 to April Quarter 2017*



SURVEY PROFILE

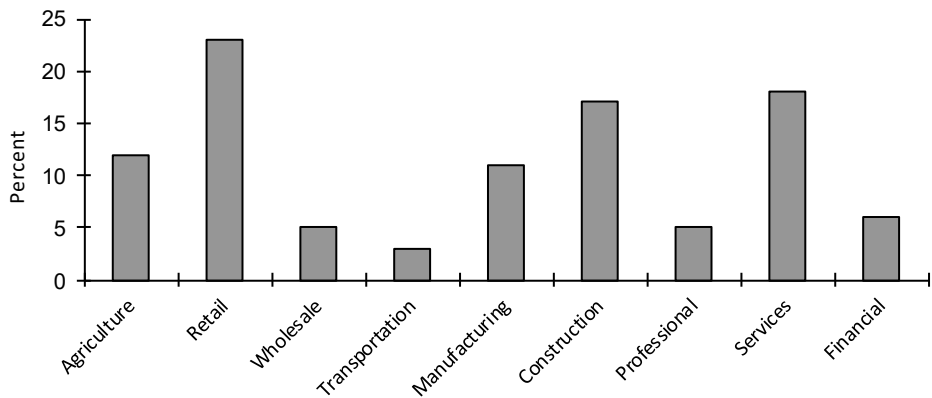
OWNER/MEMBERS PARTICIPATING IN  
ECONOMIC SURVEY NFIB

Actual Number of Firms

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2012	2155	819	757	1817	681	740	1803	736	691	2029	733	648
2013	2033	870	759	1873	715	662	1615	782	773	1940	762	635
2014	1864	792	685	1699	678	672	1645	598	608	1502	615	568
2015	1663	716	575	1500	616	620	1495	656	556	1411	601	509
2016	1438	756	727	1644	700	735	1703	730	723	1702	724	619
2017	1873	764	704	1618								

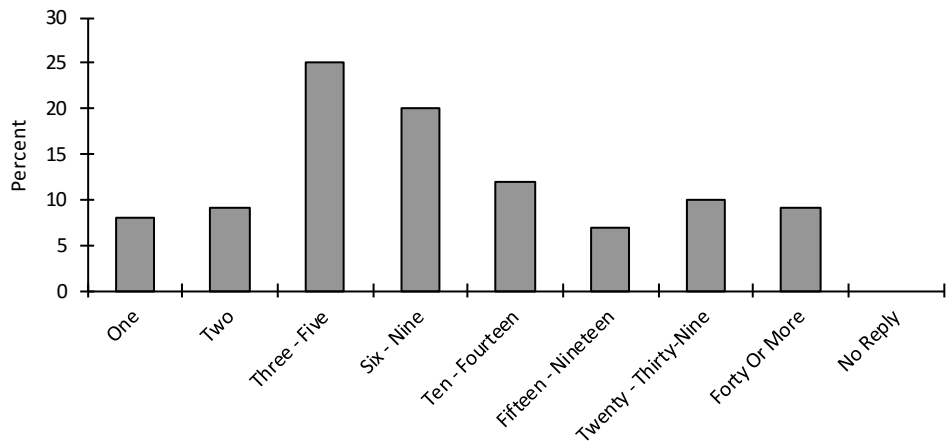
NFIB OWNER/MEMBERS PARTICIPATING  
IN ECONOMIC SURVEY

Industry of Small Business



NFIB OWNER/MEMBERS PARTICIPATING  
IN ECONOMIC SURVEY

Number of Full and Part-Time Employees



# NFIB RESEARCH CENTER SMALL BUSINESS ECONOMIC SURVEY

SMALL BUSINESS SURVEY QUESTIONS	PAGE IN REPORT
Do you think the next three months will be a good time for small business to expand substantially? Why? . . . . .	4
About the economy in general, do you think that six months from now general business conditions will be better than they are now, about the same, or worse? . . . . .	5
Were your net earnings or “income” (after taxes) from your business during the last calendar quarter higher, lower, or about the same as they were for the quarter before?. . . . .	6
If higher or lower, what is the most important reason?. . . . .	6
During the last calendar quarter, was your dollar sales volume higher, lower, or about the same as it was for the quarter before?. . . . .	7
Overall, what do you expect to happen to real volume (number of units) of goods and/or services that you will sell during the next three months?. . . . .	7
How are your average selling prices compared to three months ago?. . . . .	8
In the next three months, do you plan to change the average selling prices of your goods and/or services? . . . . .	8
During the last three months, did the total number of employees in your firm increase, decrease, or stay about the same?. . . . .	9
If you have filled or attempted to fill any job openings in the past three months, how many qualified applicants were there for the position(s)?. . . . .	9
Do you have any job openings that you are not able to fill right now?. . . . .	10
In the next three months, do you expect to increase or decrease the total number of people working for you? . . . . .	10
Over the past three months, did you change the average employee compensation?. . . . .	11
Do you plan to change average employee compensation during the next three months?. . . . .	11



SMALL BUSINESS SURVEY QUESTIONS	PAGE IN REPORT
Are...loans easier or harder to get than they were three months ago? .....	12
During the last three months, was your firm able to satisfy its borrowing needs? .....	13
Do you expect to find it easier or harder to obtain your required financing during the next three months? .....	13
If you borrow money regularly (at least once every three months) as part of your business activity, how does the rate of interest payable on your most recent loan compare with that paid three months ago? .....	14
If you borrowed within the last three months for business purposes, and the loan maturity (pay back period) was 1 year or less, what interest rate did you pay? .....	14
During the last three months, did you increase or decrease your inventories? .....	15
At the present time, do you feel your inventories are too large, about right, or inadequate? .....	15
Looking ahead to the next three months to six months, do you expect, on balance, to add to your inventories, keep them about the same, or decrease them? .....	15
During the last six months, has your firm made any capital expenditures to improve or purchase equipment, buildings, or land? .....	16
If [your firm made any capital expenditures], what was the total cost of all these projects? .....	17
Looking ahead to the next three to six months, do you expect to make any capital expenditures for plant and/or physical equipment? .....	17
What is the single most important problem facing your business today? .....	18
Please classify your major business activity, using one of the categories of example below .....	19
How many employees do you have full and part-time, including yourself? .....	19

