



UK BUSINESS CONFIDENCE MONITOR REPORT

Q4 2012

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TECHNICAL INFORMATION

The ICAEW/Grant Thornton UK Business Confidence Monitor (BCM) is conducted by ICAEW with assistance from Centre for Economics and Business Research (Cebr) and Kudos Research.

Reports are based on data drawn from a continuous research programme consisting of approximately 4,000 telephone interviews each year with ICAEW members working in industry and commerce. The interviews typically last 12–15 minutes and gather opinions on past performance and future prospects for members’ businesses and investigate perceived changes in the impact of factors such as availability of skills, government regulation and the tax regime.

Each quarter the latest 1,000 interviews are aggregated to produce the new quarterly dataset which measures the current views of members. The current dataset is based on interviewing conducted during the period 23 July 2012 – 25 October 2012.

Data are weighted to ensure the profile of each quarter’s survey sample accurately represents the UK economy (by value) for company size (no. of employees), regional location and industry sector.

BUSINESS CONFIDENCE INDEX METHODOLOGY

The Business Confidence Index is calculated from the responses to the following:

‘Overall, how would you describe your confidence in the economic prospects facing your business over the next 12 months, compared to the previous 12 months?’

A score was applied to each response as shown to the right, and an average score calculated.

Using this method, a Confidence Index of +100 would indicate that all survey respondents were much more confident about future prospects, while -100 would indicate that all survey respondents were much less confident about future prospects.

Further technical details on the design of the survey are available upon request.

Variable	Score
Much more confident	+100
Slightly more confident	+50
As confident	0
Slightly less confident	-50
Much less confident	-100

WEIGHTING APPROACH

Those interviewed in the survey are categorised by regional location, company size (no. of employees) and industry sector.

Rim weighting has been applied to ensure the profile of each quarter’s sample accurately represents the UK economy. Weighting factors applied to this quarter’s data are detailed below. Target weights for sector and region are derived from Office of National Statistics published data on GVA (Gross Value Added) 2009. Weights for company size are based on turnover data for start 2011 published by the Small Business Analytical Unit of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. (Previous quarters were weighted to most up-to-date sources available at the time which were not materially different.)

	Sample number	Profile unweighted sample	Profile weighted sample
	Number	%	%
REGION	Total ▶ 1,000		
London	163	16	20
South East (excluding London)	144	14	16
South West	77	8	8
East of England	86	9	10
East Midlands	79	8	6
West Midlands	77	8	8
North West	97	10	10
Northern England	74	7	3
Yorks & Humber	74	7	7
England TOTAL	871	87	88
Scotland	59	6	9
Wales	69	7	4
Northern Ireland	1	0	0

CONT'D...

Weighted figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding

	Sample number	Profile unweighted sample	Profile weighted sample
	Number	%	%
SIZE (EMPLOYEES)	Total ▶ 1,000		
Micro (<10)	121	12	12
Small (10-49)	198	20	19
Medium (50-249)	220	22	15
Large (250+)	461	46	55
SECTOR	Total ▶ 1,000		
Agriculture & fisheries	16	2	1
Energy, Water & Mining	68	7	4
Manufacturing & Engineering	140	14	12
Construction	67	7	9
Retail & Wholesale	124	12	13
Transport & Storage	48	5	6
IT & Communications	84	8	8
Banking, Finance & Insurance	132	13	12
Property	78	8	9
Business Services	118	12	15
Consumer Service Activities*	125	13	12

Weighted figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding

* = Hotels & Catering, Health & Education and Other Service Activities

COVERAGE OF REGIONAL ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

Analysis shows the data which forms the basis of the BCM Business Confidence Index covers a significant proportion of UK economic activity both for the UK as a whole, and for the different UK regions. This assures that our data is accurately capturing the mood of UK business.

The table below shows our estimate of the proportion of economic activity which is represented by the businesses interviewed in BCM each quarter. (Further detail on the technical approach taken is available on request.)

REGION	Coverage of economic activity (Gross Value Add)
	%
London	1.0
South East (excluding London)	1.3
South West	1.3
East of England	1.3
East Midlands	1.6
West Midlands	1.4
North West	1.3
Northern England	3.0
Yorks & Humber	1.4
Scotland	0.9
Wales	2.5
UK	1.1

DETAILED RESULTS

TABLE 1 SUMMARY OF BUSINESS CONFIDENCE INDEX BY SECTOR

Base: All respondents

	Q4 2011	Q1 2012	Q2 2012	Q3 2012	Q4 2012	Q4 2012	
						Change from last quarter	Difference from UK average
UK AVERAGE	-9.7	-9.3	12.0	1.1	4.2	3.1	
All Production Industries	-4.9	-3.6	12.5	6.3	-0.5	-6.8	-4.7
Energy, Water & Mining	2.3	4.0	5.5	7.1	1.9	-5.2	-2.3
Manufacturing & Engineering	-6.1	-6.2	14.9	6.0	-1.4	-7.4	-5.6
Construction	-6.8	-7.6	5.5	-8.1	-3.9	4.2	-8.1
All Service Industries	-10.8	-10.8	12.6	1.1	6.2	5.1	2.0
Retail & Wholesale	-12.5	-10.5	10.6	-6.4	3.7	10.1	-0.5
Transport & Storage	-6.1	-16.6	11.3	8.9	4.1	-4.8	-0.1
IT & Communications	2.7	4.7	26.5	6.3	13.5	7.2	9.3
Banking, Finance & Insurance	-14.6	-8.3	10.2	-2.0	4.7	6.7	0.5
Property	-18.7	-19.6	4.5	-2.5	-0.2	2.3	-4.4
Business Services	-3.4	-2.4	14.8	7.7	9.4	1.7	5.2

Q. Overall, how would you describe your confidence in the economic prospects facing your organisation over the next 12 months, compared to the previous 12 months?

See 'Technical Information' for details of how the BCM Confidence Index is calculated

TABLE 2 SUMMARY OF BUSINESS CONFIDENCE INDEX BY REGION

Base: All respondents

	Q4 2011	Q1 2012	Q2 2012	Q3 2012	Q4 2012	Q4 2012	
						Change from last quarter	Difference from UK average
UK AVERAGE	-9.7	-9.3	12.0	1.1	4.2	3.1	
England	-9.2	-9.3	13.3	0.1	4.3	4.2	0.1
London	-10.3	-13.2	13.3	-2.1	2.0	4.1	-2.2
South East (excl London)	-13.5	-7.4	12.0	-5.5	-0.2	5.3	-4.4
South West	-9.4	-18.4	16.6	-7.3	7.6	14.9	3.4
East of England	-7.2	-8.2	7.0	3.6	6.7	3.1	2.5
East Midlands	-9.7	-17.4	7.6	8.7	5.3	-3.4	1.1
West Midlands	-4.6	1.1	13.1	5.7	4.3	-1.4	0.1
North West	-10.5	-11.0	13.8	3.1	5.1	2.0	0.9
Northern England	-7.7	4.1	28.4	7.5	9.0	1.5	4.8
Yorks & Humber	-3.4	-0.9	19.2	1.5	10.3	8.8	6.1
Scotland	-14.1	-5.2	0.6	10.8	1.7	-9.1	-2.5
Wales	-9.2	-18.6	5.7	2.4	5.7	3.3	1.5

TABLE 3 SUMMARY OF BUSINESS CONFIDENCE INDEX BY COMPANY TYPE

Base: All respondents

UK AVERAGE	-9.7	-9.3	12.0	1.1	4.2	3.1	
All UK Listed	-12.0	-12.6	7.2	-2.0	-1.8	0.2	-6.0
FTSE 350	-13.7	-19.0	4.4	-4.8	-4.2	0.6	-8.4
All Private Companies	-7.7	-7.2	15.4	2.7	7.6	4.9	3.4
Private Companies – Large	-12.5	-10.0	13.5	-0.1	6.5	6.6	2.3
Private Companies – SME	-5.1	-5.6	16.5	4.6	8.3	3.7	4.1

Q. Overall, how would you describe your confidence in the economic prospects facing your organisation over the next 12 months, compared to the previous 12 months?

See 'Technical Information' for details of how the BCM Confidence Index is calculated

TABLE 4 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Base: All respondents

Base: All respondents						TRACTION *	
Average % Change	Q4 2011	Q1 2012	Q2 2012	Q3 2012	Q4 2012	Q3 2012	Q4 2012
Turnover							
Versus last 12 months	3.6	3.3	4.1	3.2	2.6		
Expected next 12 months	3.7	3.8	4.6	3.6	3.7	0.4	1.1
Gross profits							
Versus last 12 months	2.2	2.1	4.1	2.3	2.0		
Expected next 12 months	3.1	3.5	4.3	3.4	3.3	1.1	1.3
Sales (Volumes)							
Versus last 12 months	3.2	2.7	3.9	3.0	2.6		
Expected next 12 months	3.4	3.6	4.4	3.4	3.6	0.4	1.0
Prices							
Versus last 12 months	1.3	1.0	1.1	0.7	0.4		
Expected next 12 months	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.9	0.9	0.2	0.5
Input Prices							
Versus last 12 months	3.1	2.9	2.7	2.5	1.7		
Expected next 12 months	2.2	1.9	1.6	1.6	1.4	-0.9	-0.3
Average Basic Salary							
Versus last 12 months	1.6	1.6	1.7	1.7	1.6		
Expected next 12 months	1.8	1.6	1.7	1.5	1.6	-0.2	0.0
Average Total Salary							
Versus last 12 months	1.2	0.9	1.0	0.9	0.9		
Expected next 12 months	1.3	1.1	1.6	1.1	1.2	0.2	0.3
Exports							
Versus last 12 months	3.5	3.3	4.1	3.7	3.0		
Expected next 12 months	3.9	3.9	4.5	3.6	3.6	-0.1	0.6
Inputs from Abroad							
Versus last 12 months	2.1	2.2	2.4	2.2	1.5		
Expected next 12 months	1.8	2.0	2.3	1.9	1.8	-0.3	0.3

KEY:

HIGH



LOW

TABLE 4 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (CONT'D)

Base: All respondents

Base: All respondents

						TRACTION *	
Average % Change	Q4 2011	Q1 2012	Q2 2012	Q3 2012	Q4 2012	Q3 2012	Q4 2012
Capital Investments							
Versus last 12 months	2.2	1.9	2.1	2.0	1.8		
Expected next 12 months	1.1	0.9	1.4	1.0	1.0	-1.0	-0.8
Number of Employees							
Versus last 12 months	1.1	0.8	0.8	0.9	0.5		
Expected next 12 months	0.9	0.9	1.4	1.2	0.9	0.3	0.4
Staff Development Budget							
Versus last 12 months	0.8	0.5	0.9	0.7	0.8		
Expected next 12 months	1.0	0.9	1.2	1.0	0.9	0.3	0.1
Research and Development Budget							
Versus last 12 months	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	2.3		
Expected next 12 months	1.3	1.1	1.4	1.0	1.2	-0.9	-1.1
Domestic Sales							
Versus last 12 months	2.9	2.3	2.9	2.5	2.3		
Expected next 12 months	3.1	3.0	4.0	3.0	3.1	0.5	0.8

Q. Thinking about the last 12 months, how have each of the following changed for your organisation:

Q. Thinking about the coming 12 months, what will be the probable change for your organisation for each of the following:

* Traction = expected change next 12 months less reported change last 12 months. Positive score indicates expected positive change in growth. Negative score indicates expected negative change in growth.

KEY:



HIGH



LOW

TABLE 5 FACTORS AFFECTING BUSINESS PERFORMANCE

Base: All respondents

	Q4 2011	Q1 2012	Q2 2012	Q3 2012	Q4 2012
% Greater Challenge	%	%	%	%	%
Customer demand	43	49	45	43	47
Competition in the marketplace	38	41	43	43	43
Regulatory requirements	39	35	39	39	40
Late payment from customers	26	28	24	24	27
Your access to capital	18	19	23	18	20
Your ability to expand into new areas	11	14	16	16	17
Tax burden	22	18	16	16	15
Bank charges	17	13	16	14	15
Transport problems	18	10	14	16	13
Staff turnover	11	11	12	14	13
Availability of nonmanagement skills	8	8	9	11	11
Availability of management skills	8	9	10	11	9
Government support for business	8	8	10	8	8
Non-transport infrastructure problems*	4	3	4	11	7

* e.g. postal services, communication services, etc

Q Has the impact of _____ - [FACTOR] on your organisation's performance changed, compared to 12 months ago?

Q Has _____ [FACTOR] become a greater or lesser challenge to your organisation's performance?

KEY:



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Chartered Accountants' Hall
Moorgate Place London
EC2R 6EA UK

T +44 (0)20 7920 3505
E bcm@icaew.com
icaew.com/bcm



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