August 2026

NFIB

SMALL BUSINESS ECONOMIC TRENDS

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SMALL BUSINESS OPTIMISM INDEX COMPONENTS

Index Component	Seasonally Adjusted Level	Change from Last Month	Contribution to Index Change
Plans to Increase Employment (net)	17%	-3	*
Plans to Make Capital Outlays	24%	-1	*
Plans to Increase Inventories (net)	1%	0	*
Expect Economy to Improve (net)	10%	-5	*
Expect Real Sales Higher (net)	6%	-1	*
Current Inventory-too low (net)	-1%	1	*
Current Job Openings	35%	-1	*
Expected Credit Conditions (net)	-2%	2	*
Good Time to Expand	12%	0	*
Earnings Trends (net)	-19%	-3	*
Total Change		-11	

Based on a Survey of Small and Independent Business Owners

NFIB
SMALL BUSINESS
ECONOMIC TRENDS

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 Center. *ISBS #0940791-24-2.* *Chief Economist William C. Dunkelberg and Executive Director of the NFIB Research Center Holly Wade are responsible for the report.*

IN THIS ISSUE

SUMMARY

OPTIMISM INDEX

The Small Business Optimism Index for August was 98.7, down 1.1 points from July's highest level since August 2025. The Index remains above its 52-year average of 98.0. Of the 10 Optimism Index components, two increased, six decreased, and two were unchanged. A worsening of expected business conditions contributed the most to the decline in the Index. Both earnings trends and plans to increase employment declined by 3 points.

UNCERTAINTY INDEX

Uncertainty also declined in August. The Uncertainty Index fell 2 points from July to 89, but it remained well above its historical average of 68. The decline was driven solely by fewer owners reporting uncertainty about whether it is a good time to expand their business.

LABOR MARKETS

The Employment Index declined 0.3 points in August, registering 101.8 in August compared to 102.1 in July. The current reading is slightly above the 2025 average of 101.2 and the historical average of 100.0. In August, 35% (seasonally adjusted) of all owners reported job openings they could not fill in the current period, down 1 point from July and 11 points above the historical average. Thirty-one percent have openings for skilled workers (unchanged), and 13% have openings for unskilled labor (down 1 point). Looking ahead, a seasonally adjusted net 17% of owners plan to create new jobs over the next three months, down 3 points from July's highest level since October 2022. Actual hiring activity declined 5 points from July, with 56% of owners reporting hiring or trying to hire in August. Forty-seven percent of owners (82% of those hiring or trying to hire) reported few or no qualified applicants for the positions they were trying to fill (down 4 points). Twenty-nine percent of owners reported few qualified applicants for their open positions (down 3 points), and 18% reported none (down 1 point). In August, 23% of small business owners identified "labor quality or availability" as their single most important problem, down 4 points from July. While reports of labor quality or availability as the single most important problem eased in August, so did reports of labor costs. Seven percent of business owners reported labor costs as their single most important problem, down 1 point from July and the lowest level since March 2021.

COMPENSATION

In August, compensation measures showed little to no change. A seasonally adjusted net 31% reported raising compensation, unchanged from July. A net 18% (seasonally adjusted) plan to raise compensation in the next three months, down 1 point from July. Both actual and planned compensation measures are above their historical averages.

This survey was conducted in August 2026. A sample of 5,000 small-business owners/members was drawn. Four hundred seventy-six (476) usable responses were received — a response rate of 9.5 percent.

CAPITAL SPENDING

Both actual and planned capital expenditures declined slightly from July levels and remained below their averages. Fifty-three percent of small business owners reported making capital outlays in the last six months, down 1 point from July. Of those making expenditures, 36% reported spending on new equipment (down 1 point), 22% acquired vehicles (down 3 points), and 12% improved or expanded facilities (down 2 points). Twelve percent spent money on new fixtures and furniture (unchanged), and 4% acquired new buildings or land for expansion (unchanged). Twenty-four percent (seasonally adjusted) of small business owners plan to make capital outlays in the next six months, down 1 point from July's highest reading since December 2024.

SALES AND INVENTORIES

The sales metrics worsened in August, with declines in both actual sales and sales expectations. A seasonally adjusted net -9% of owners reported higher nominal sales in the past three months, down 5 points from July and the lowest reading since November 2025. The net percent of owners expecting higher real sales volumes over the next quarter fell 1 point from July to a net 6% (seasonally adjusted). The net percent of owners reporting inventory gains fell 2 points to a net -6% (seasonally adjusted). Not seasonally adjusted, 11% reported increases in stocks (down 3 points), and 15% reported reductions (unchanged). A net -1% (seasonally adjusted) of owners viewed current inventory stocks as "too low" in August, up 1 point from July. In August, a net 1% (seasonally adjusted) of small business owners plan inventory investment in the coming months, unchanged from July. In August, reports on supply chain conditions showed little change. Sixty-two percent of small business owners reported that supply chain disruptions affected their business to some extent, down 1 point from July. Six percent reported a significant impact (unchanged), 19% reported a moderate impact (up 1 point), 37% reported a mild impact (down 2 points), and 37% reported no impact (up 1 point).

EARNINGS

The frequency of reports of positive profit trends decreased 3 points from July to a net -19% (seasonally adjusted), sitting just 1 point below the historical average. Among owners reporting lower profits, 28% blamed weaker sales, 16% cited rising material costs, and 10% cited price change for their product(s) or service(s). Nine percent cited the usual seasonal change, 9% cited labor costs, and 7% cited insurance costs. Among owners reporting higher profits, 49% cited sales volume, 26% cited the usual seasonal change, and 9% cited price change for their product(s) or service(s).

CREDIT MARKETS

In August, the net percent of owners expecting easier credit conditions rose 2 points to a net -2% (seasonally adjusted). This marks the highest level since December 2024. A net 3% reported their last loan was harder to get than in previous attempts, down 2 points from July. In August, a net 4% of owners reported paying a higher interest rate on their most recent loan, unchanged from July. The average interest rate paid on short-maturity loans was 7.5% in August, down 0.4 points from July. Twenty-five percent of all owners reported borrowing regularly, down 2 points from July, and remaining below the historical average of 34%.

INFLATION

Though still high, the inflation metrics were flat in August. In August, a seasonally adjusted net 31% of owners reported raising average selling prices, unchanged from July but well above the historical average of net 14%. Unadjusted, 38% reported higher average prices (down 2 points), and 8% reported lower average selling prices (unchanged). Looking forward to the next three months, a net 28% (seasonally adjusted) plan to increase prices, unchanged from July. This is also above its historical average (net 22%), though with a smaller gap than actual prices. Reports of inflation as the single most important problem picked up in August. Sixteen percent of business owners cited inflation as their single most important business problem, up 2 points from July and ranking the second top issue, tied with taxes. August's reading remains elevated, with the historical average at 7%.

OUTLOOK

When asked to evaluate the overall health of their business, 11% rated it as excellent (down 3 points), 57% as good (up 2 points), 28% as fair (up 2 points), and 3% as poor (down 1 point). In August, expectations for better business conditions deteriorated, following two consecutive months of improvement. A net 10% (seasonally adjusted) of owners expect better business conditions in the next six months, down 5 points from July. Despite this decline, expected business conditions remained above the average of net 4%. While expected business conditions worsened in August, the percent of owners reporting it is a good time to expand their business in the next three months remained unchanged. Twelve percent (seasonally adjusted) reported that it is a good time to expand their business, unchanged from July.

SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM

In August, the top reported issue was labor quality or availability, with 23% of small business owners reporting it as their single most important problem. This was a 4-point decline from July, though the current reading is 11 points above average. Seven percent of business owners reported labor costs as their single most important problem, down 1 point from July and the lowest level since March 2021. Reports of inflation as the single most important problem rose 2 points from July to 16%. August's reading remains elevated, with the historical average at 7%. Sixteen percent of small business owners reported taxes as their single most important problem, unchanged from July and the second top issue tied with inflation. The percent of small business owners reporting government regulations and red tape as their single most important problem rose 2 points from July to 9%. The percent of small business owners reporting poor sales as their single most important problem rose 2 points from July to 10%. In August, 8% reported the cost or availability of insurance as their single most important problem, unchanged for the fourth consecutive month. Four percent reported competition from large businesses as their single most important problem, down 3 points from July. Three percent reported that financing and interest rates were their top business problem in August, up 1 point from July.

COMMENTARY

OVERVIEW

One-in-10 small business owners reported weak sales as their #1 business problem, the life blood of their firm. In August, more firms reported lower quarterly sales than reported gains, by a large margin. Consumer sentiment is low and retail sales show their lack of enthusiasm. Winners in the AI stock market surge are spending on stuff high-income people buy, but most consumers are not included in the party. Meanwhile, spending on AI is booming, creating new fixed assets including power generation, data centers, office buildings, new equipment, etc. These investments have powered the stock market and have released substantial purchasing power as investors "cash in" their success.

But back on Main Street, uncertainty remains high among owners. The Iran War lingers on with many promises that the war was about to end, but it didn't and hasn't. This has escalated the cost of energy which raises the price of almost everything. A third (31%) of the owners reported raising their average selling prices and as about as many plan to do so in the coming months. This will not help the Fed get inflation to its goal of 2%. Capital spending weakened, as there's no AI boom on Main Street, yet. Uncertainty suppresses investment activity. Reducing sources of uncertainty will help bring spending back to higher levels.

Job growth is muted on Main Street and more broadly. The resumption of school will add many teachers, and the healthcare industry will continue to produce more employment. But overall, employment growth will remain modest. Construction jobs will benefit from the AI boom but overall, there will not be a surge in employment.

Resolving the Iran conflict will provide a major boost to the economy, reducing uncertainty significantly and possibly reducing government spending. If the stock market realizes it is overvalued, domestic spending will slow but remain solid. Otherwise, the economy will behave much as it has for the past year.

Member Quotes

Labor

“The quality of skilled labor is affecting my growth. I have given up on looking. My business is service-based, and the demand for accountants is increasing. If I could find the personnel, I could easily double, if not triple, my income.” – Professional/business services, VA

“My problem is that no one wants to work. I have advertised in all the areas I know of, and we have had a total of zero applications. In thirty years of business, this has never happened.” – Services, TN

“Since 2023, our business has had a hard time hiring employees – good technician mechanics with experience.” – Services, TX

“It is very difficult to find dental assistants or dental hygienists on a permanent basis.” – Professional/business services, OR

“Labor is the biggest challenge we face. We need H-2B visas to be more readily available, and we need them to be easier to navigate. Reduce the red tape.” – Agriculture, IN

“We need to bring back and step up trade education in all areas.” – Services, VT

“Getting control of the minimum wage is a big problem! I am a small business and hire a lot of first time employees. Because I have to start a first timer at $15/hour, there is not much left to reward my long-term employees. Merit raises become a thing of the past.” – Retail, AZ

“Imports coming into the USA at way below market price and getting employees are a huge problem for agriculture. Many of us would no longer be in business if it was not for the H-2A program.” – Agriculture, MT

“We need to get rid of the Minnesota Paid Leave program for seasonal and temporary employees.” – Agriculture, MN

“I own and operate a childcare business. I am seeing my costs increase dramatically, by more than 15% annually, and I am having an increasingly hard time finding staff. Online job postings receive a lot of interest and applications, but only about a third at best respond to interview requests. [...]” – Professional/business services, OH

Inflation

“Outside of the challenge of getting good productive help, inflation has been the hardest to navigate.” – Manufacturing, IN

“The increase in the costs of aluminum, steel, and other raw materials has raised our inventory costs by more than 40% over our levels at the beginning of 2025.” – Manufacturing, MO

"The Iran war and shipping disruptions are greatly affecting agricultural input costs." - Agriculture, IN

“Labor, chemicals, and taxes are always our biggest expenses, and they all just keep going up with no end in sight. Dauting and scary.” – Agriculture, NY

“Cost pressures continue, with insurance and labor benefits increasing at a higher rate than supplies, etc. I feel many small businesses are in a wait-and-see mode for further business expansion.” – Services, OH

“The costs of energy and goods (especially here in Maryland) have increased dramatically. This has impacted our bottom line, which of course impacts pricing, which impacts our customers’ ability to afford us.” – Services, MD

“The cost of fuel is my number one expense, so this $4.00 and above gas price is really affecting my deliveries. I’ve been absorbing it somewhat by changing my delivery routes, but eventually I’m going to have to increase the cost of things I sell!” – Wholesale, PA

“The price of energy adversely affects sales.” – Services, TX

“Input costs have gone up dramatically, particularly for fuel and fertilizer…The financial squeeze is significant! Farmers can’t control prices or weather.” – Agriculture, OH

Member Quotes

Business & Economic Conditions

“Federal policies are creating unstable economic conditions for small businesses. Customers are uncertain about future economic conditions and thus unwilling to make major investments in future development.” – Construction, OR

"We are experiencing a slowdown and don't plan to hire more employees at this time. The economic outlook is very uncertain and will likely get worse." - Professional/business services, OR

“The opportunities to grow the business are incredible, but the resources [needed] to grow the business are very expensive and very hard to reach for my small business.” – Retail, OH

"The economy has been very poor since early 2025. The volatility in trade and tariff policies has hurt construction in our area... I am currently in a hold pattern for growing our business because the economic conditions are not favorable now." - Construction, OR

“Although our business is steady, we have found that our customers are cash-poor and using credit for their transactions. In the end, this cuts down on our sales as our patrons have less money in the end. [...]” – Retail, PA

"The impact of cost increases due to tariffs and supply chain challenges... is meaningful." - Retail, NH

"Running a repair shop, we generally judge how busy we are by how far out we are scheduled. Over the last month or two, the schedule has definitely gotten better than the beginning of the summer. Our hope is it continues in that direction, as winter is typically slower." - Services, MT

“It is hard to grow. We are mostly trying to maintain what we have.” – Wholesale, PA

“Until the war with Iran started, we were doing great. We had our best month ever in March 2026, and following was a drop of 60%.” – Services, AZ

“I am awaiting the end of the Iran war to make some bigger financial decisions for my business.” – Services, WA

“The business outlook is good as long as the weather is proper for syrup production next spring. [...]” – Agriculture, NY

Sales & Earnings

“We experienced a 40% drop in sales and activity volume when interest rates moved above 5%. Our customers primarily serve the automotive manufacturers.” – Manufacturing, WA

“In my business, imports are killing our sales. Imported cabinets and store-type tops are imported for less than I can purchase the materials to make them.” – Manufacturing, VA

“Farm commodity prices for grains are low, and inputs for energy and fertilizer are high.” – Agriculture, SD

“The cost of goods has increased, but our business volume has remained unchanged.” – Agriculture, OR

“It would be nice if we could get higher prices for our grain and maybe lower-priced fertilizer.” – Agriculture, PA

“Our business is irrigation construction for agriculture. For the last three years crop prices have been so low that farmers are not making a profit and are therefore not buying our products. Low commodity prices have resulted from the interruption of sales overseas because of tariffs. [...]” – Construction, WA

“Profitability has been down over the last six months. Hoping it recovers over the next six months. Usually, we see more recovery after the winter (slower period) in the second quarter, and we didn’t see as much. Too much rain is somewhat of a factor.” – Manufacturing, MO

Member Quotes

Insurance

“One of our largest obstacles is the extremely high cost of insurance, especially medical. […]” – Agriculture, CA

“Healthcare costs are starting to have a much higher impact on our business.” – Professional/business services, NC

“Liability and health insurance rates are becoming unaffordable and nearly nonexistent (liability). […]” – Construction, NV

"Somebody needs to get control of health insurance and business insurance. Every year I get large increases and lower coverage than I had in prior years." - Services, NJ

"We are an independent insurance agency, and the cost of just customers' personal auto and homeowners' insurance is making it almost impossible for clients to buy it. Prices/premiums are out of control by all companies." - Financial, MI

Financing & Interest Rates

“We are in the mortgage business. Housing prices are too high, and interest rates are too high.” – Financial, ID

“Our business depends on our customers’ ability to obtain financing. With no significant rate drop, we are seeing a slug in the purchase of kitchen equipment for commercial businesses.” – Wholesale, TX

“I’m a small independent business, and the cost of everything going up is hurting my business. But the real killer is credit card interest – it is drowning my business.” – Services, MI

Large Business Competition

“Our business has been damaged by cheap imports and big-box competitors on the internet.” – Retail, AR

“I just don’t have the traffic I used to have. It has gone downhill since COVID. People do so much more shopping on the internet; it is hard to compete with their prices. […]” – Retail, MI

Regulations

“Decreased government regulations have been good for us. We are getting hit hard because of fuel costs for shipping goods.” – Retail, AK

“As each year passes, the accumulated laws, rules, and regulations stifle/choke the ability of small business people to want to give all they have just to let government take it away.” – Retail, MI

Tariffs

“The tariffs have affected many people’s buying or purchasing decisions. We’ve seen a slowing approach to decision-making. People are abandoning projects in their homes. Prices are being shopped more than ever – the big box stores are squishing the small businesses in our industry.” – Retail, CA

“The tariff increases when applied to consumer goods, especially niche markets like ours (billiards), are ineffective and harm the working poor more than they incentivize American manufacturers to produce. If the tariffs are not applied with manufacturing incentives, there are only price increases, not new manufacturing. Tariffs should be applied first in big industries and NOT consumer goods.” – Retail, MT

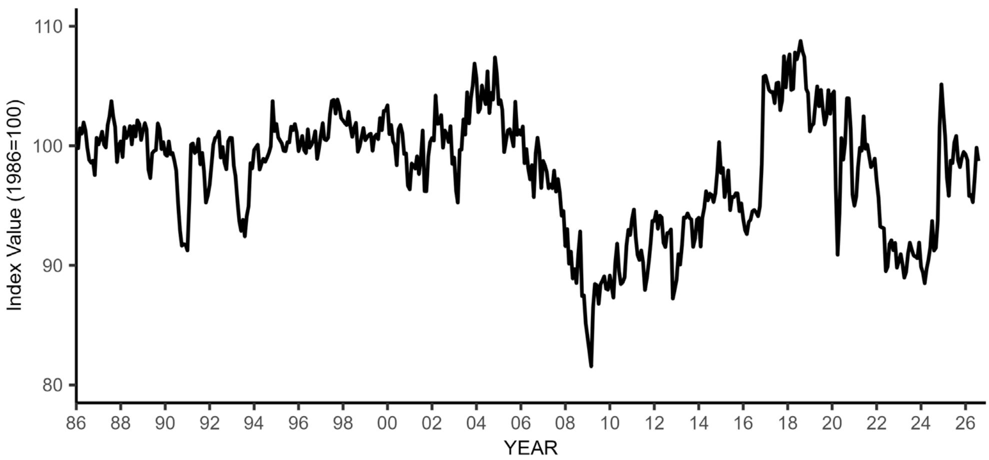
Taxes

“The cost of taxes is hurting us. The personal property tax/real estate taxes and state unemployment/workers’ compensation rates have all gone up significantly. The minimum wage keeps rising. I cannot buy affordable insurance (health) to offer to my employees.” – Retail, CT

OVERVIEW – SMALL BUSINESS OPTIMISM

OPTIMISM INDEX

Based on Ten Survey Indicators
January 1986 to August 2026
(Seasonally Adjusted 1986=100)



[1] Questions included in the Optimism Index (see pages 26-27)

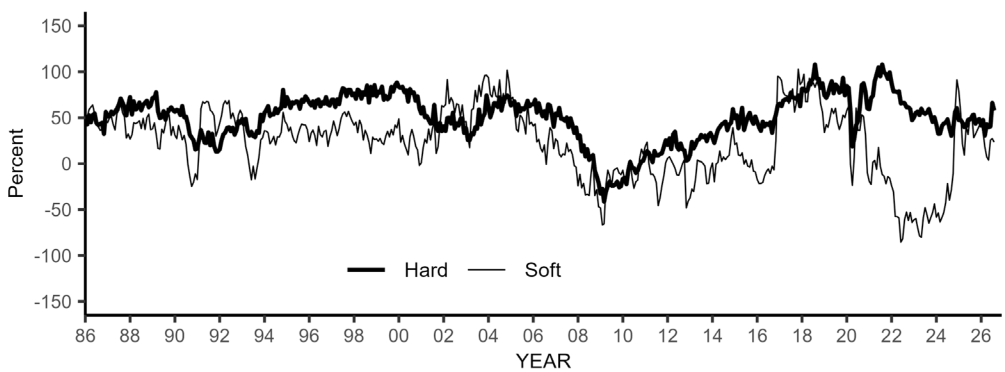
OPTIMISM INDEX

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2021	95.0	95.8	98.2	99.8	99.6	102.5	99.7	100.1	99.1	98.2	98.4	98.9
2022	97.1	95.7	93.2	93.2	93.1	89.5	89.9	91.8	92.1	91.3	91.9	89.8
2023	90.3	90.9	90.1	89.0	89.4	91.0	91.9	91.3	90.8	90.7	90.6	91.9
2024	89.9	89.4	88.5	89.7	90.5	91.5	93.7	91.2	91.5	93.7	101.7	105.1
2025	102.8	100.7	97.4	95.8	98.8	98.6	100.3	100.8	98.8	98.2	99.0	99.5
2026	99.3	98.8	95.8	95.9	95.3	97.4	99.8	98.7				

OPTIMISM INDEX COMPONENTS

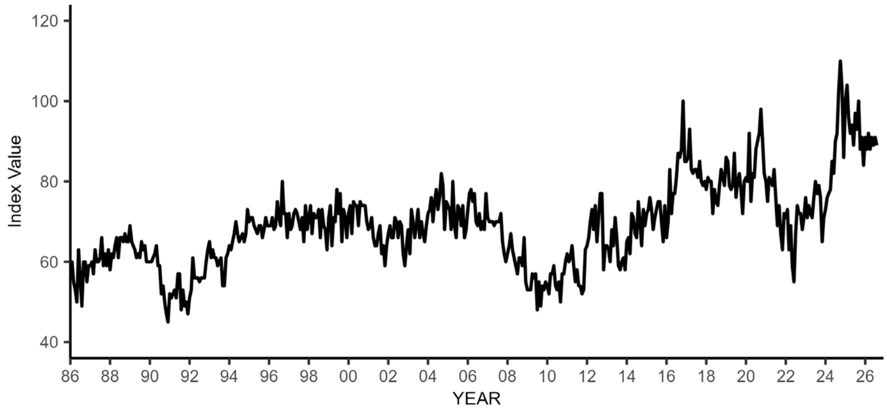
Hard: Job Creation Plans, Job Openings, Inventory Plans, Earnings, Capital Expenditure Plans
Soft: Expected Business Conditions, Outlook for Expansion, Expected Real Sales, Expected Credit Conditions, Inventory Satisfaction



SMALL BUSINESS UNCERTAINTY

UNCERTAINTY INDEX

Sum of "Don't Know" & "Uncertain" Answers on 6 Questions
January 1986 to August 2026



[2] Questions included in the Uncertainty Index (see pages 26-27)

UNCERTAINTY INDEX

Sum of "Don't Know" & "Uncertain" Answers on 6 Questions

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2021	80	75	81	80	79	83	76	69	74	67	63	72
2022	71	73	63	69	59	55	67	74	72	72	68	71
2023	76	71	74	72	71	76	80	77	79	76	65	71
2024	73	76	77	78	85	82	90	92	103	110	103	86
2025	100	104	96	92	94	89	97	93	100	88	91	84
2026	91	88	92	88	91	89	91	89				

SMALL BUSINESS EMPLOYMENT INDEX

EMPLOYMENT INDEX

Based on Six Components
April 1986 to August 2026
(Seasonally Adjusted 1987=100)

EMPLOYMENT INDEX

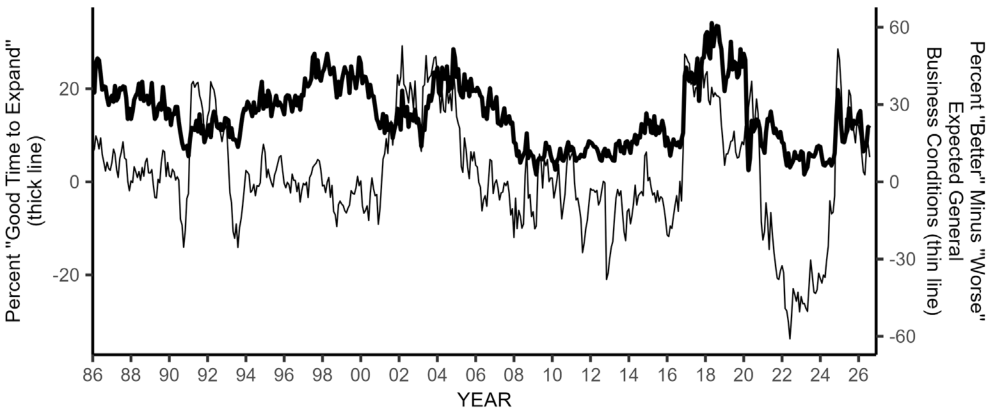
Based on Six Components
(Seasonally Adjusted 1987=100)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2021	99.3	99.5	102.3	103.6	103.2	106.7	104.6	104.9	105.9	106.5	105.6	108.0
2022	106.6	105.6	105.8	105.4	107.1	106.9	106.1	104.4	105.3	106.8	103.6	105.9
2023	105.7	107.8	105.8	104.0	103.9	103.4	103.7	103.6	103.9	103.2	103.4	103.6
2024	103.9	101.5	102.4	103.3	103.3	103.9	102.0	101.7	101.5	102.0	103.8	101.2
2025	102.3	100.7	102.9	101.9	99.6	100.9	100.6	101.0	101.7	100.1	100.6	102.5
2026	102.6	103.5	101.6	100.4	100.3	100.2	102.1	101.8				

SMALL BUSINESS OUTLOOK

OUTLOOK

Good Time to Expand and Expected General Business Conditions
January 1986 to August 2026
(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
2021	8	6	11	14	13	15	13	11	11	10	10	11
2022	9	8	6	4	6	3	4	5	6	5	6	5
2023	7	6	2	3	3	6	6	6	5	6	8	8
2024	8	5	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	6	14	20
2025	17	12	9	9	10	11	16	14	11	13	13	13
2026	15	15	11	7	7	8	12	12				

MOST IMPORTANT REASON FOR EXPANSION OUTLOOK

Reason Percent by Expansion Outlook
August 2026

Reason	Good Time	Not Good Time	Uncertain
Economic Conditions	5	25	15
Sales Prospects	3	4	2
Fin. & Interest Rates	0	3	2
Cost of Expansion	0	8	6
Political Climate	1	6	8
Other / Not Available	0	2	1

OUTLOOK FOR GENERAL BUSINESS CONDITIONS

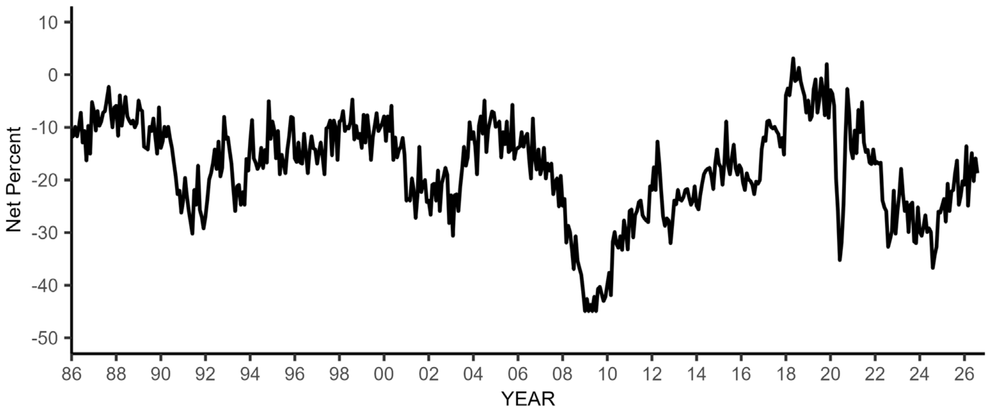
Net Percent ("Better" Minus "Worse") Six Months From Now
(Seasonally Adjusted)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2021	-23	-19	-8	-15	-26	-12	-20	-28	-33	-37	-38	-35
2022	-33	-35	-49	-50	-54	-61	-52	-42	-44	-46	-43	-51
2023	-45	-47	-47	-49	-50	-40	-30	-37	-43	-43	-42	-36
2024	-38	-39	-36	-37	-30	-25	-7	-13	-12	-5	36	52
2025	47	37	21	15	25	22	36	34	23	20	15	24
2026	21	18	11	4	3	13	15	10				

SMALL BUSINESS EARNINGS

EARNINGS

Actual Last Three Months
January 1986 to August 2026
(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
2021	-16	-11	-15	-7	-11	-5	-13	-15	-14	-17	-17	-14
2022	-17	-17	-17	-17	-24	-25	-26	-33	-31	-30	-22	-30
2023	-26	-23	-18	-23	-26	-24	-30	-25	-24	-32	-32	-25
2024	-30	-31	-29	-27	-30	-29	-30	-37	-34	-33	-26	-26
2025	-25	-24	-28	-21	-26	-22	-22	-19	-16	-25	-23	-20
2026	-21	-14	-25	-19	-15	-20	-16	-19				

MOST IMPORTANT REASON FOR LOWER EARNINGS

Percent Reason
August 2026

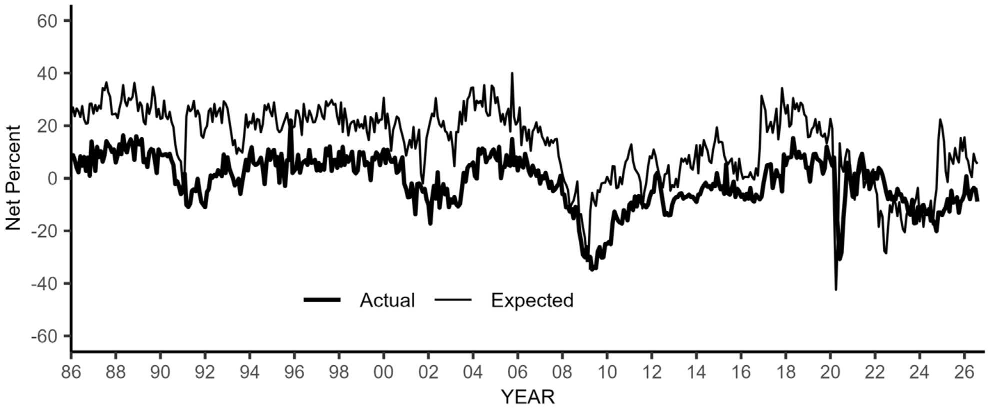
Reason	Current Month	One Year Ago	Two Years Ago
Sales Volume	9	12	13
Increased Costs*	9	11	16
Cut Selling Prices	3	3	5
Usual Seasonal Change	3	2	3
Other	2	1	2

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

SMALL BUSINESS SALES

SALES

Actual (Prior Three Months) and Expected (Next Three Months)
January 1986 to August 2026
(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
2021	-7	2	-6	3	7	9	5	0	3	-4	-2	1
2022	2	0	4	3	1	-2	-5	-8	-5	-8	-7	-8
2023	-4	-6	-6	-9	-8	-10	-13	-14	-8	-17	-17	-11
2024	-11	-13	-10	-13	-14	-12	-16	-16	-17	-20	-13	-13
2025	-14	-12	-11	-8	-13	-5	-9	-9	-7	-13	-9	-8
2026	-6	1	-5	-8	-5	-4	-4	-9				

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
2021	-6	-8	0	1	3	7	-4	-2	2	0	2	3
2022	-3	-6	-18	-12	-15	-28	-29	-19	-10	-13	-8	-10
2023	-14	-9	-15	-19	-21	-14	-12	-14	-13	-10	-8	-4
2024	-16	-10	-18	-12	-13	-13	-9	-18	-9	-4	14	22
2025	20	14	3	-1	10	7	6	12	8	6	15	10
2026	16	8	7	3	1	9	7	6				

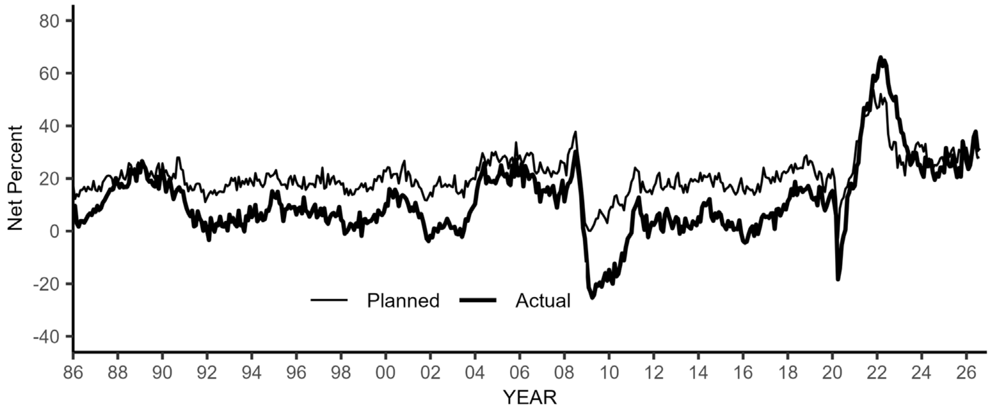
SMALL BUSINESS PRICES

PRICES

Actual Last Three Months and Planned Next Three Months

January 1986 to August 2026

(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
2021	17	25	26	36	40	47	46	49	46	53	59	57
2022	58	64	66	63	65	63	56	53	51	50	51	43
2023	42	38	37	33	32	29	25	27	29	30	25	25
2024	22	21	28	25	25	27	22	20	22	21	24	24
2025	22	32	26	25	25	29	24	21	24	21	34	30
2026	26	24	25	30	36	38	31	31				

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
2021	28	34	34	36	43	44	44	44	46	51	54	49
2022	47	47	52	48	51	49	37	32	31	34	34	24
2023	29	25	26	21	29	31	27	30	30	33	34	32
2024	33	30	33	26	28	26	24	25	25	26	28	28
2025	26	29	30	28	31	32	28	26	31	30	30	28
2026	32	28	24	27	34	32	28	28				

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
2021	0	-3	-2	1	-5	-2	-6	-8	-1	-2	-1	1
2022	-1	1	-2	-2	-4	-2	-4	-8	-4	-2	-3	1
2023	2	4	2	-2	-4	-2	-2	-4	-2	-3	-2	-2
2024	0	-1	-2	0	-2	-5	-3	-6	-4	-3	-1	-3
2025	1	-3	-1	1	-2	-8	-2	-5	-3	-4	-3	-1
2026	1	3	-1	-2	-2	-4	-5	-7				

QUALIFIED APPLICANTS FOR JOB OPENINGS

Percent Few or No Qualified Applicants

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2021	46	51	51	54	57	56	57	60	62	58	56	57
2022	55	57	55	55	61	60	57	57	57	55	54	51
2023	52	54	53	55	55	54	56	54	57	55	50	49
2024	49	51	48	51	51	51	49	56	52	46	48	49
2025	47	48	47	47	48	50	48	43	50	49	50	48
2026	44	46	45	46	46	51	51	47				

EMPLOYMENT

Planned Next Three Months and Current Job Openings
January 1986 to August 2026
(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
2021	33	40	42	44	48	46	49	50	51	49	48	49
2022	47	48	47	47	51	50	49	49	46	46	44	41
2023	45	47	43	45	44	42	42	40	43	43	40	40
2024	39	37	37	40	42	37	38	40	34	35	36	35
2025	35	38	40	34	34	36	33	32	32	32	33	33
2026	31	33	32	34	29	32	36	35				

HIRING PLANS

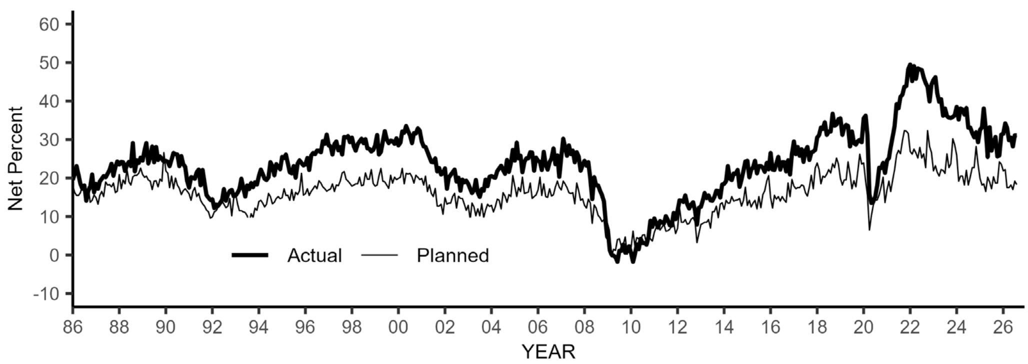
Net Percent ("Increase" Minus "Decrease") in the Next Three Months
(Seasonally Adjusted)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2021	17	18	22	21	27	28	27	32	26	26	25	28
2022	26	19	20	20	26	19	20	21	23	20	18	17
2023	19	17	15	17	19	15	17	17	18	17	18	16
2024	14	12	11	12	15	15	15	13	15	15	18	19
2025	18	15	12	13	12	13	14	15	16	15	19	17
2026	16	12	12	13	9	11	20	17				

SMALL BUSINESS COMPENSATION

COMPENSATION

Actual Last Three Months and Planned Next Three Months
January 1986 to August 2026
(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
2021	25	25	28	31	34	39	38	41	42	44	44	48
2022	50	45	49	46	49	48	48	46	45	44	40	44
2023	46	46	42	40	41	36	38	36	36	36	36	36
2024	39	35	38	38	37	38	33	33	32	31	32	29
2025	33	33	38	33	26	33	27	29	31	26	26	31
2026	32	34	33	30	31	28	31	31				

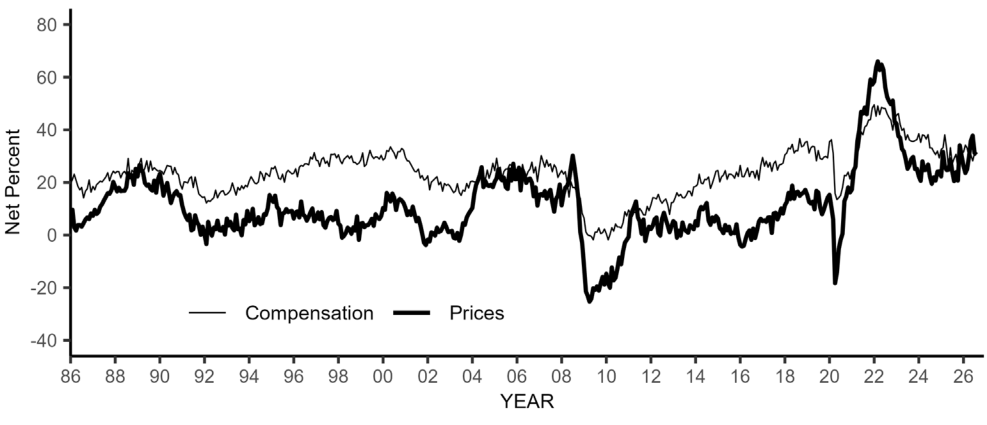
COMPENSATION PLANS

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2021	17	19	17	20	22	26	27	26	30	32	32	32
2022	27	26	28	27	25	28	25	26	23	32	28	27
2023	22	23	22	21	22	22	21	26	23	24	30	29
2024	26	19	21	21	18	22	18	20	23	23	28	24
2025	20	18	19	17	20	19	17	20	19	19	24	24
2026	22	22	18	18	18	17	19	18				

PRICES AND LABOR COMPENSATION

Net Percent Price Increase and Net Percent Compensation
January 1986 to August 2026
(Seasonally Adjusted)

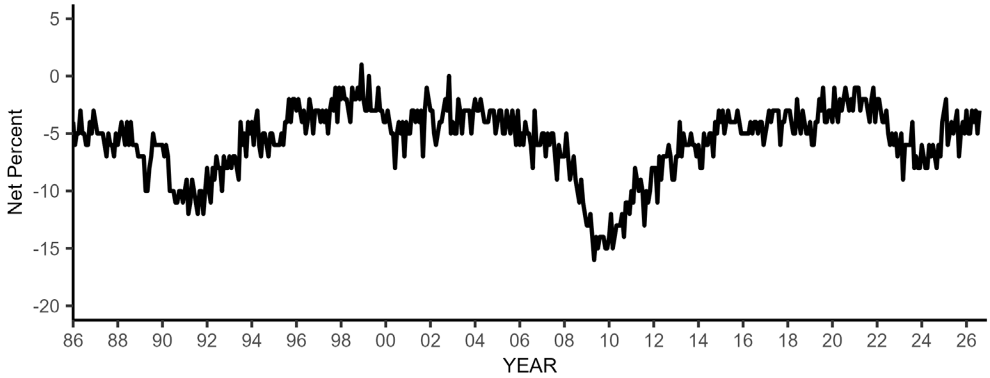


SMALL BUSINESS CREDIT CONDITIONS

CREDIT CONDITIONS

Loan Availability Compared to Three Months Ago*

January 1986 to August 2026



* 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
2021	23	26	23	24	23	21	21	20	20	23	21	23
2022	23	23	25	26	23	25	26	27	26	28	27	28
2023	29	30	30	31	29	28	27	28	31	27	31	29
2024	29	25	28	31	31	28	27	27	26	25	28	25
2025	27	24	28	26	25	26	25	23	26	23	23	25
2026	25	25	24	22	27	22	27	25				

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
2021	-1	-1	-1	-3	-2	-2	-2	-3	-4	-2	-1	-4
2022	-2	-2	-3	-4	-4	-3	-5	-6	-5	-6	-5	-7
2023	-6	-5	-9	-6	-6	-6	-6	-4	-8	-7	-8	-8
2024	-6	-7	-8	-8	-6	-7	-6	-7	-8	-6	-7	-4
2025	-3	-2	-6	-5	-4	-5	-4	-3	-7	-5	-4	-5
2026	-3	-5	-5	-3	-4	-3	-5	-3				

SMALL BUSINESS CREDIT CONDITIONS (CONTINUED)

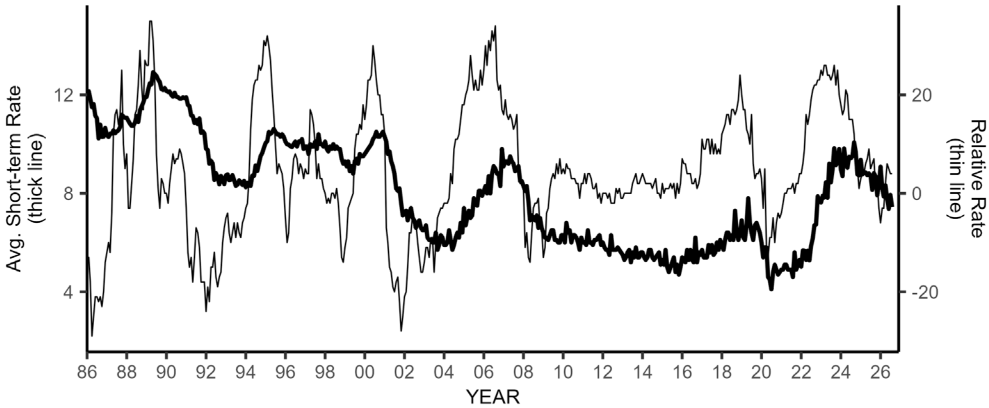
EXPECT EASIER CREDIT CONDITIONS

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2021	-3	-6	-3	-3	-3	-4	-4	-4	-4	-4	-3	-4
2022	-4	-4	-4	-5	-4	-5	-7	-8	-6	-8	-6	-9
2023	-8	-6	-9	-8	-10	-8	-8	-6	-10	-9	-11	-8
2024	-8	-6	-8	-9	-7	-7	-7	-8	-8	-6	-5	-2
2025	-4	-3	-4	-7	-4	-4	-4	-4	-7	-3	-5	-5
2026	-3	-5	-5	-4	-3	-5	-4	-2				

INTEREST RATES

Relative Rates and Actual Rates Last Three Months
January 1986 to August 2026



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
2021	-4	-2	0	0	1	1	1	2	0	2	2	4
2022	4	6	9	16	14	16	19	21	22	22	23	23
2023	25	24	26	26	24	24	23	24	26	22	25	20
2024	18	16	17	21	20	15	15	15	12	5	5	1
2025	3	4	4	6	7	9	5	6	7	1	2	-3
2026	-6	-3	-3	2	6	5	4	4				

Borrowing at Least Once Every Three Months.

SMALL BUSINESS CREDIT CONDITIONS (CONTINUED)

ACTUAL INTEREST RATE PAID ON
SHORT-TERM LOANS BY BORROWERS

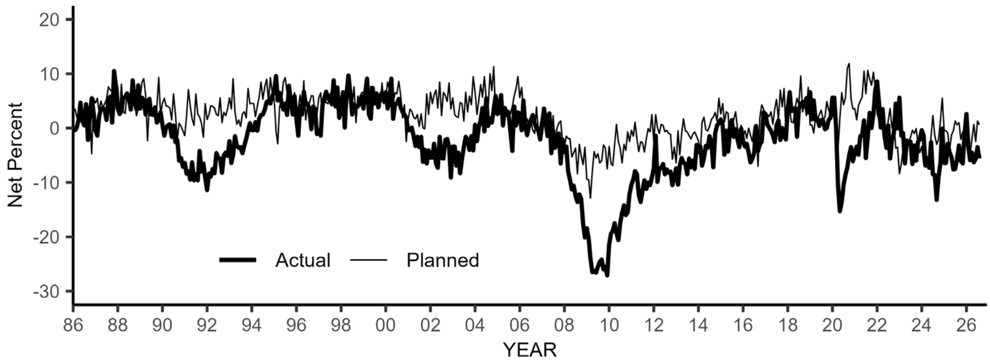
Average Interest Rate Paid

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2021	4.9	4.9	5.1	5.1	4.9	4.9	4.9	4.6	5.6	4.9	5.1	5.3
2022	5.0	5.7	5.7	5.3	5.7	5.3	5.9	6.2	6.7	6.7	7.9	7.7
2023	7.6	7.9	7.8	8.5	7.8	9.2	8.5	9.0	9.8	9.1	9.3	9.8
2024	9.0	8.7	9.8	9.3	9.0	9.5	9.4	9.5	10.1	9.7	8.8	8.7
2025	9.4	8.8	8.9	8.9	8.7	8.8	8.7	8.1	8.8	8.7	7.9	8.4
2026	9.1	8.2	7.9	8.3	7.8	7.4	7.9	7.5				

SMALL BUSINESS INVENTORIES

INVENTORIES

Actual (Last Three Months) and Planned (Next Three Months)
January 1986 to August 2026
(Seasonally Adjusted)



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
2021	-4	-3	-5	-2	-1	1	-6	-2	3	0	3	7
2022	9	5	0	4	-1	-4	1	-6	-2	-1	5	0
2023	6	-1	-1	-7	-2	-3	-3	-7	-3	-6	-3	-2
2024	0	-1	-7	-6	-7	-3	-9	-9	-13	-9	-7	0
2025	-6	-6	-3	-5	-5	-8	-8	-6	-3	-6	-7	-1
2026	3	-3	-6	-5	-6	-6	-4	-6				

SMALL BUSINESS INVENTORIES (CONTINUED)

CURRENT INVENTORY (TOO LOW)

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2021	5	5	3	7	8	11	12	11	10	9	15	9
2022	7	7	9	6	8	5	2	3	1	0	-2	1
2023	-1	-4	1	-5	-3	-4	-4	-5	-4	-3	0	-5
2024	-4	-4	-5	-4	-8	-2	-4	-5	-4	-2	-2	-1
2025	-1	-5	-7	-6	1	-5	-3	0	-7	-4	-1	-1
2026	-3	-2	-5	-2	-4	0	-2	-1				

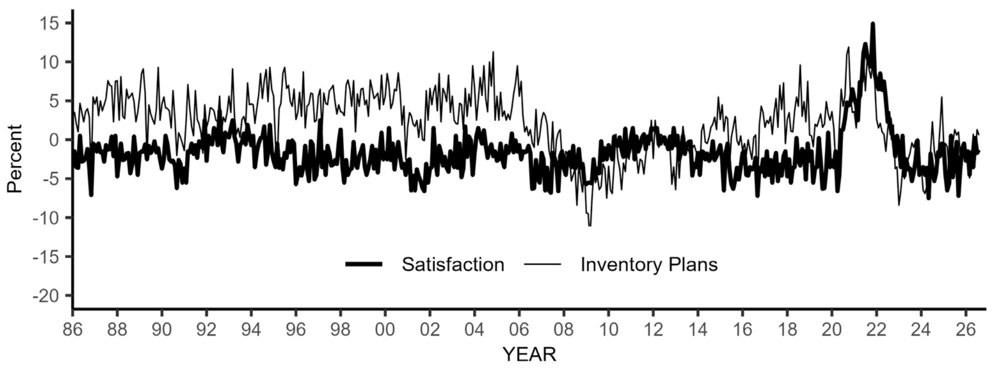
INVENTORY PLANS

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
2021	4	2	4	5	6	11	6	11	9	8	10	8
2022	3	2	2	1	1	-2	1	4	0	2	-4	-4
2023	-8	-7	-4	-5	-2	-3	-2	0	-1	0	-3	-5
2024	-3	-7	-7	-6	-6	-2	2	-1	-3	-2	1	6
2025	0	-1	-1	-4	-1	-1	1	1	1	-2	-1	-1
2026	-2	-2	-5	-2	1	-3	1	1				

INVENTORY SATISFACTION AND INVENTORY PLANS

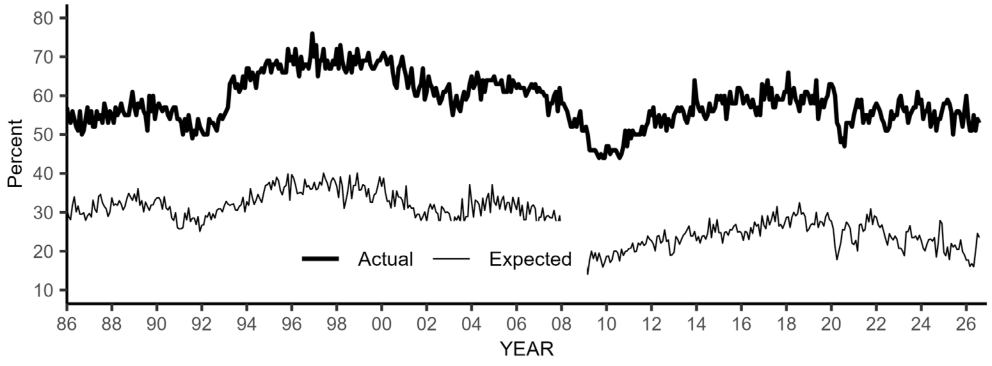
Net Percent (“Too Low” Minus “Too Large”) at Present Time
Net Percent Planning to Add Inventories in the Next Three to Six Months
January 1986 to August 2026
(Seasonally Adjusted)



SMALL BUSINESS CAPITAL OUTLAYS

CAPITAL EXPENDITURES

Actual Last Six Months and Planned Next Three Months
January 1986 to August 2026
(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
2021	55	57	59	57	59	53	55	55	53	56	55	57
2022	58	57	56	54	53	51	51	52	56	54	55	55
2023	59	60	57	56	57	53	55	56	57	57	61	58
2024	59	54	56	56	58	52	54	56	51	54	54	56
2025	58	58	59	58	56	50	55	56	56	55	52	56
2026	60	54	51	51	55	51	54	53				

TYPE OF CAPITAL EXPENDITURES MADE

Percent Purchasing or Leasing During Last Six Months
August 2026

Type	Current Month	One Year Ago	Two Years Ago
Vehicles	22	22	21
Equipment	36	37	40
Furniture or Fixtures	12	13	11
Add. Bldgs. or Land	4	5	5
Improved Bldgs. or Land	12	17	18

SMALL BUSINESS CAPITAL OUTLAYS (CONTINUED)

AMOUNT OF CAPITAL EXPENDITURES MADE

Percent Distribution of Per Firm Expenditures During the Last Six Months
August 2026

Amount	Current Month	One Year Ago	Two Years Ago
$1 to $999	2	1	2
$1,000 to $4,999	6	6	8
$5,000 to $9,999	5	6	6
$10,000 to $49,999	13	19	17
$50,000 to $99,999	9	10	11
$100,000 +	17	14	12
No Answer	2	0	1

CAPITAL EXPENDITURE PLANS

Percent Planning a Capital Expenditure During Next Three to Six Months
(Seasonally Adjusted)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2021	22	23	20	27	27	25	26	30	28	31	27	29
2022	29	27	26	27	25	23	22	25	24	23	24	23
2023	21	21	20	19	25	25	27	24	24	24	23	24
2024	23	21	20	22	23	23	23	24	19	22	28	27
2025	20	19	21	18	22	21	22	21	21	23	20	19
2026	18	18	16	17	16	20	25	24				

SMALL BUSINESS HEALTH

OVERALL HEALTH OF BUSINESS

August 2026

Rating	Current Month	One Month Ago	Two Months Ago
Excellent	11	14	10
Good	57	55	57
Fair	28	26	28
Poor	3	4	5

SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM

SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM

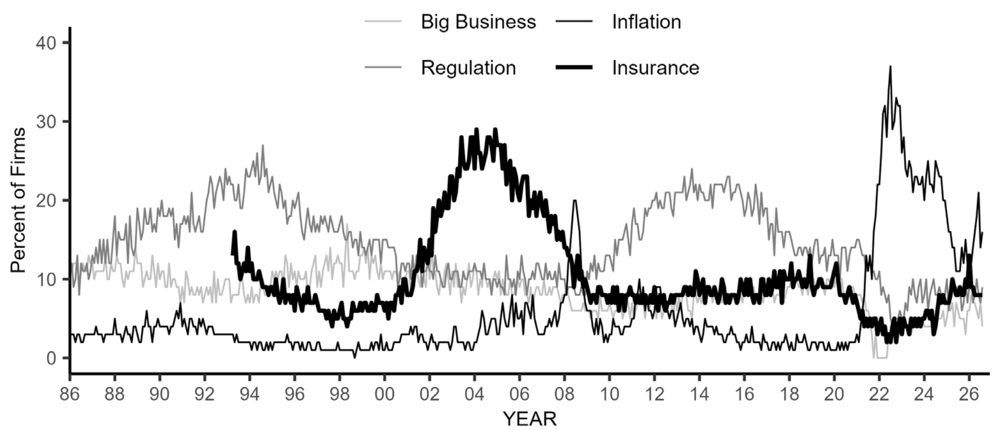
August 2026

Problem	Current	One Year Ago	Survey High	Survey Low
Taxes	16	17	32	8
Inflation	16	11	41	0
Poor Sales	10	10	34	2
Fin. & Interest Rates	3	4	37	0
Cost of Labor	7	8	14	2
Government Regulation	9	9	27	4
Comp. from Large Bus.	4	5	17	0
Quality/Avail. of Labor	23	21	29	2
Cost/Avail. of Insurance	8	9	29	2
Other	1	3	31	0

SELECTED SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM

Inflation, Big Business, Insurance, and Regulation

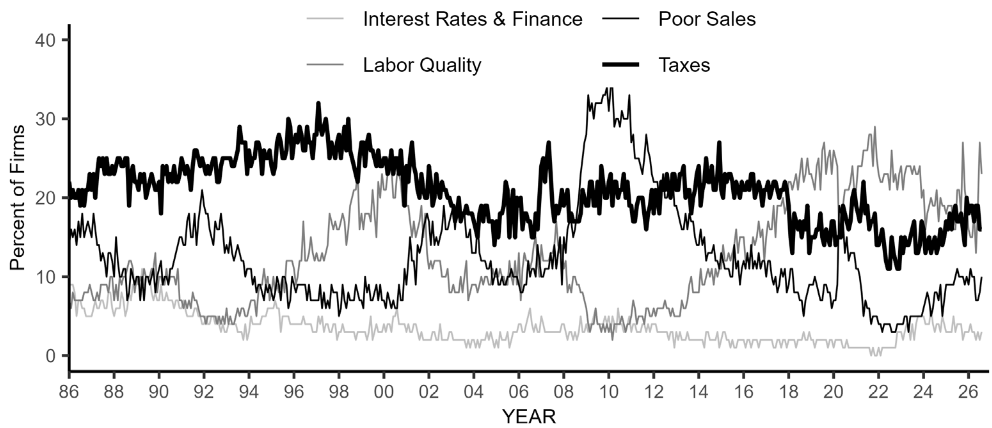
January 1986 to August 2026



SELECTED SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM

Taxes, Interest Rates & Finance, Poor Sales, and Labor Quality

January 1986 to August 2026



SURVEY PROFILE

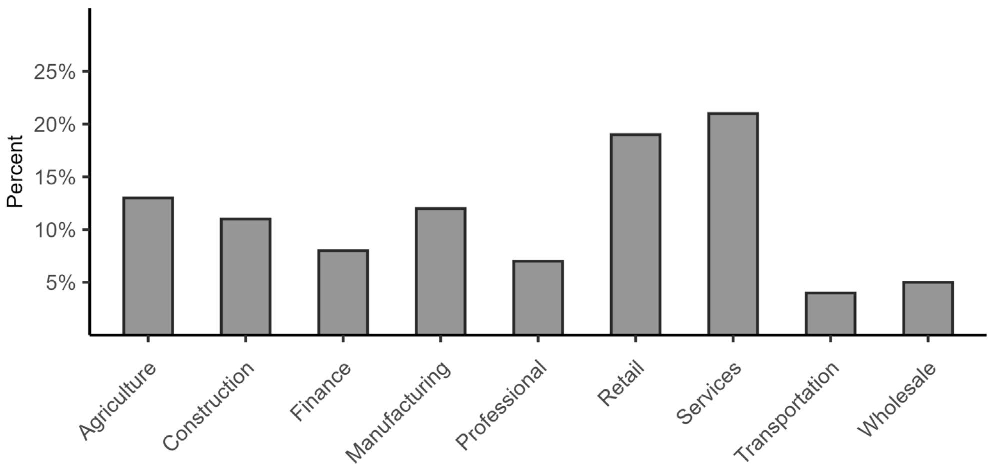
OWNER/MEMBERS PARTICIPATING IN
ECONOMIC SURVEY NFIB

Actual Number of Firms

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2021	1109	678	514	1516	659	592	1440	595	537	1431	613	639
2022	1504	665	560	1457	581	505	1351	622	557	1342	572	514
2023	1466	626	573	1365	632	496	1313	611	582	1382	573	518
2024	1287	604	506	1215	578	514	1309	590	559	1197	532	513
2025	1205	509	508	1078	485	382	953	472	403	984	505	429
2026	959	428	432	953	504	405	887	476				

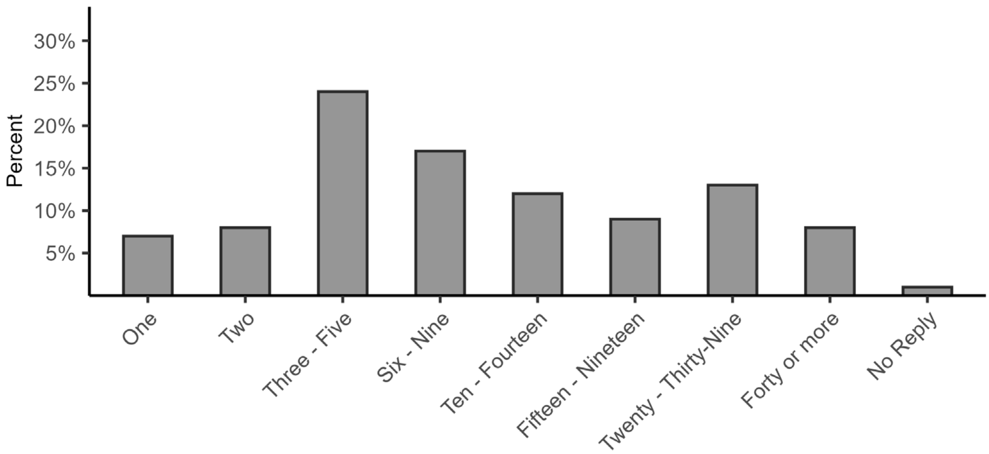
NFIB OWNER/MEMBERS PARTICIPATING
IN ECONOMIC SURVEY

Industry of Small Business
August 2026



NFIB OWNER/MEMBERS PARTICIPATING
IN ECONOMIC SURVEY

Number of Full and Part-Time Employees
August 2026



NFIB Research Center Small Business Economic Trends Survey

NFIB RESEARCH CENTER SMALL BUSINESS ECONOMIC TRENDS SURVEY

SMALL BUSINESS SURVEY QUESTIONS	PAGE IN REPORT
Are...loans easier or harder to get than they were three months ago?	18
Do you expect to find it easier or harder to obtain your required financing during the next three months? [1, 2]	19
If you borrow money regularly (at least once every three months) as a part of your business activity, how does the rate of interest payable on your most recent loan compare with that paid three months ago?	19
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?	20
During the last three months, did you increase or decrease your inventories?	20
At the present time, do you feel your inventories are too large, about right, or too low? [1]	21
Looking ahead to the next three months to six months, do you expect, on balance, to increase your inventories, keep them about the same, or decrease them? [1]	21
During the last six months, has your firm made any of the following capital expenditures? (Check all that apply)	22
If yes [your firm made any capital expenditures], what was the total cost of these expenditures?	23
Looking ahead, do you expect to make any capital expenditures in the next three to six months? [1, 2]	23
How would you rate the overall health of your business today?	23
What is the single most important problem facing your business today?	24
Please classify your major business activity, using one of the categories of examples below.	25
How many employees do you have full and part-time, including yourself?	25