

# Business Monitor Survey Q4 2011



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Business  
Confidence

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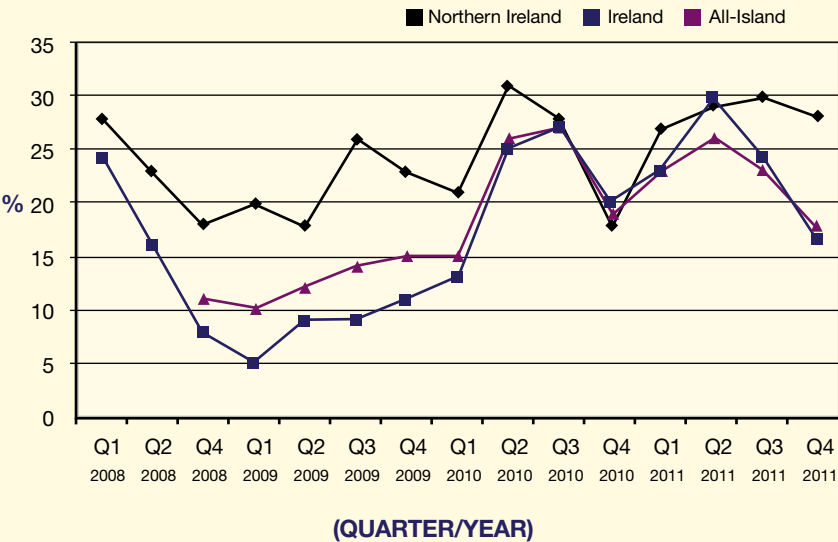
# Key Findings Q4 2011

<p><b>Less than one in five</b> businesses (18%) reported an increase in sales in Q4 2011.</p>	<p>In every sector more businesses reported a <b>decrease in sales</b> rather than an increase.</p>
<p>While exports continue to grow, exporters are expressing concerns regarding a reduction in demand as a large issue for their business. This reduction in demand may be linked to ongoing problems in the Eurozone.</p>	<p>Businesses cited <b>factors outside their control</b> (such as rising energy costs, cash flow, consumer confidence and a reduction in demand) as the key business issues facing them.</p>
<p><b>Only 4% of businesses</b> reported that they had increased the number of employees in the last quarter.</p>	<p><b>Half of all businesses</b> on the island (50%) report that they are currently contracting, fighting for survival or winding up.</p>
<p><b>Almost seven out of ten</b> of businesses (69%) reported a moderate or severe impact from the Eurozone crisis.</p>	<p><b>Only 7% of firms</b> have applied for credit within the past three to six months, half the figure from a year ago.</p>

# Sales increases...

Less than a fifth (18%) of businesses reported an increase in sales in Q4 2011. This marked a second consecutive fall in the second half of 2011 after the first half of the year had seen increasing positive news and increasing sales. Again, less businesses in Ireland (15%) have increased their sales compared to those in Northern Ireland (24%), while larger firms (28% increased sales) performed better than microenterprises (17%). Businesses in the Manufacturing (21%) and Business Services (22%) sectors have reported better than average sales returns.

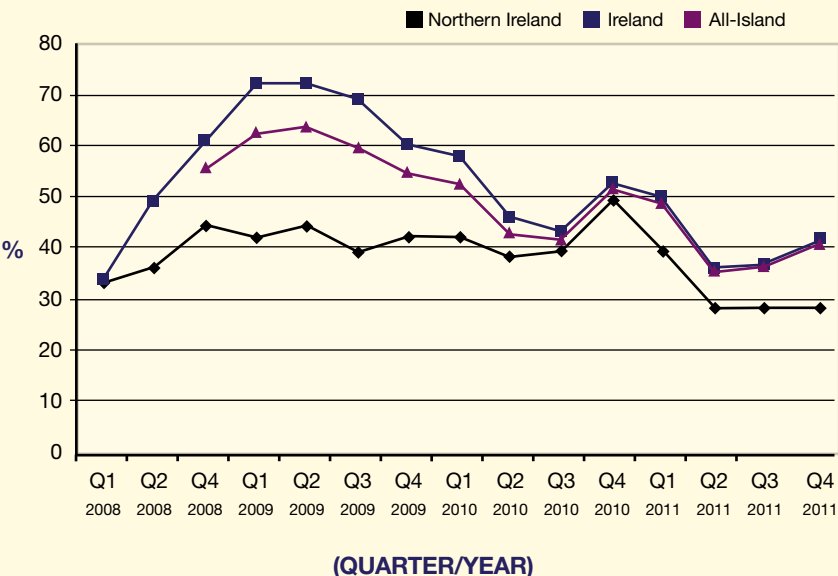
Percentage of companies reporting an increase in sales from Quarter 1 2008 to Quarter 4 2011



# Sales decreases...

Over two fifths (41%) of businesses reported that their sales decreased in the previous quarter. This marks a slight rise on the levels reported in Q3 2011 with firms in Ireland (41%) performing worse than those in Northern Ireland (31%). Similarly to last quarter, businesses employing more than 50 people reported smaller decreases (25%) as did exporters (33%) and those in the Agriculture (28%) and Business Services (33%) sectors.

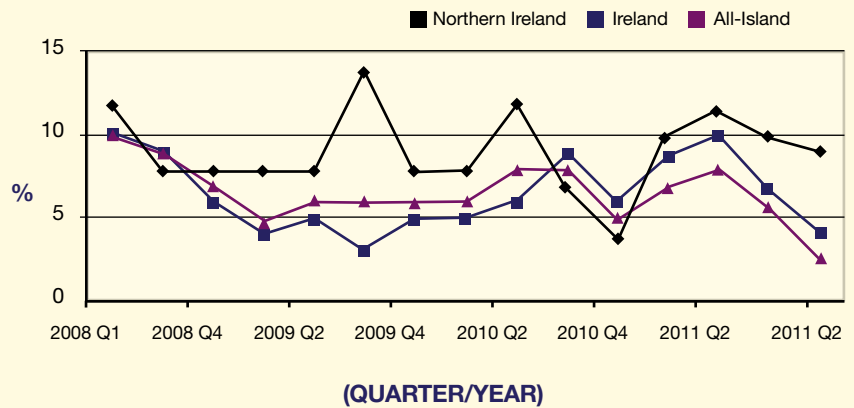
Percentage of companies reporting an increase in sales from Quarter 1 2008 to Quarter 4 2011



# Employment increases...

One in twenty-five (4%) businesses reported that they increased staff numbers in the previous quarter, marking a slight fall from Q3 2011 (6%). Large firms were more likely to increase employment (where 17% reported a rise). A similar picture among exporters (8%), those engaged in cross-border trade (8%) and services companies (7%) which were above average in increasing employment.

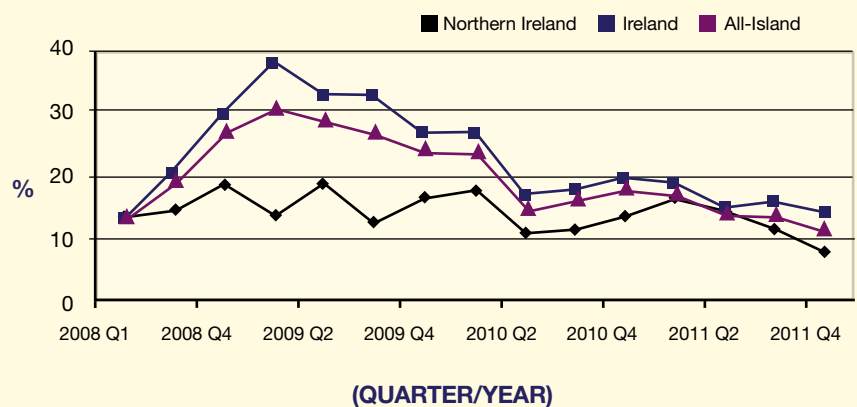
Percentage of businesses reporting an increase in employment



# Employment decreases...

More than one in ten (12%) businesses have reduced numbers in their workforce in the past quarter, down slightly on Q3 2011 (14%). Worryingly manufacturing firms (23%) had the highest percentage of businesses reporting a decrease in employment, while agriculture (6%) and business services (8%) were below average.

Percentage of businesses reporting a decrease in employment



## About us

InterTradeIreland is the only organisation which has been given responsibility by both Governments to boost North/South economic co-operation to the mutual benefit of Northern Ireland and Ireland. By encouraging better use of our collective resources we help to expedite trade and business growth across the island and create an environment where it is easier to do business.

We support SMEs across the island to identify and develop North/South trade and innovation opportunities. We do this through:

- **Business programmes**
- **Research and statistics**
- **Networks and partnerships**

InterTradeIreland will endeavour to facilitate requests for alternative formats of this publication including Irish Language, Ulster Scots, Braille, disk and audio cassette.

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