

Business Monitor Survey Q4 2012



Business Confidence

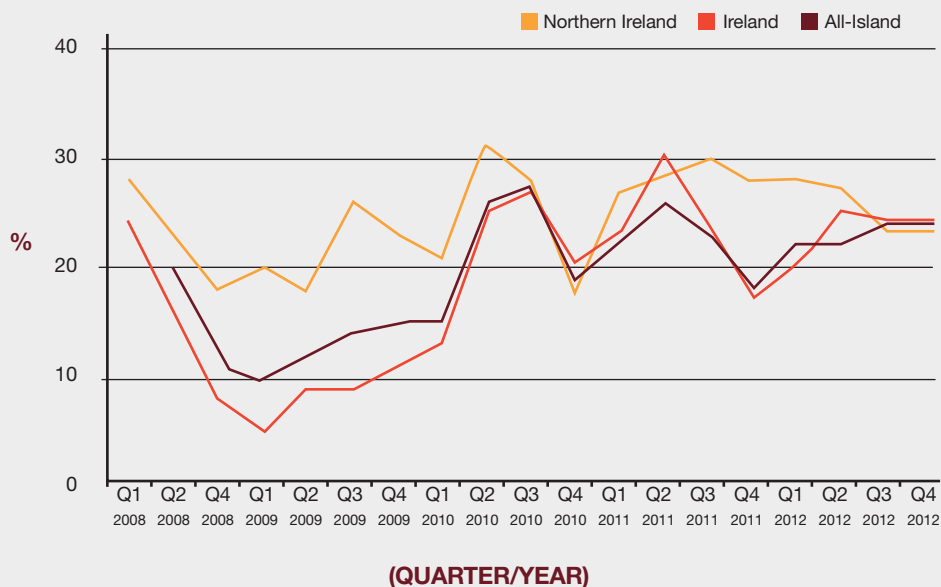
Key Findings Q4 2012

<p>Just less than a quarter (24%) of businesses reported an increase in sales in Q4 2012, with 41% reporting a decrease.</p>	<p>The Manufacturing (34%) and Business Services (30%) sectors are the most buoyant, in terms of the number of businesses experiencing sales increases.</p>
<p>Large year-on-year increases in number of firms reporting sales growth in manufacturing (21% to 34%) and business services (22% to 30%) sectors.</p>	<p>The flow in job losses is being stemmed with only one in ten (10%) businesses now reporting a decrease in employment, the lowest level in five years.</p>
<p>Businesses need to do more to boost their growth with only three in ten (30%) developing new products/ services in last three years and less than three in ten (28%) exporting.</p>	<p>Unfortunately, nearly half (44%) of businesses are still contracting, fighting for survival or winding up.</p>
<p>One in five (22%) businesses applied for finance in the last twelve months and three quarters were successful.</p>	<p>Awareness of financial assistance for businesses is poor with over 90% reporting they either have not heard of schemes or do not know the details.</p>

Sales increases...

Just less than a quarter (24%) of businesses reported an increase in sales in Q4 2012. This figure is very similar to that seen in the previous three quarters. Any small rise in the number of businesses in Ireland reporting an increase in sales (24% in Q4 compared to 17% a year earlier) has been cancelled out by a similar fall in businesses in Northern Ireland (23% compared to 28%) reporting an increase. Large firms (30%), and the Manufacturing (34%) and Business Services (30%) sectors are again the most positive.

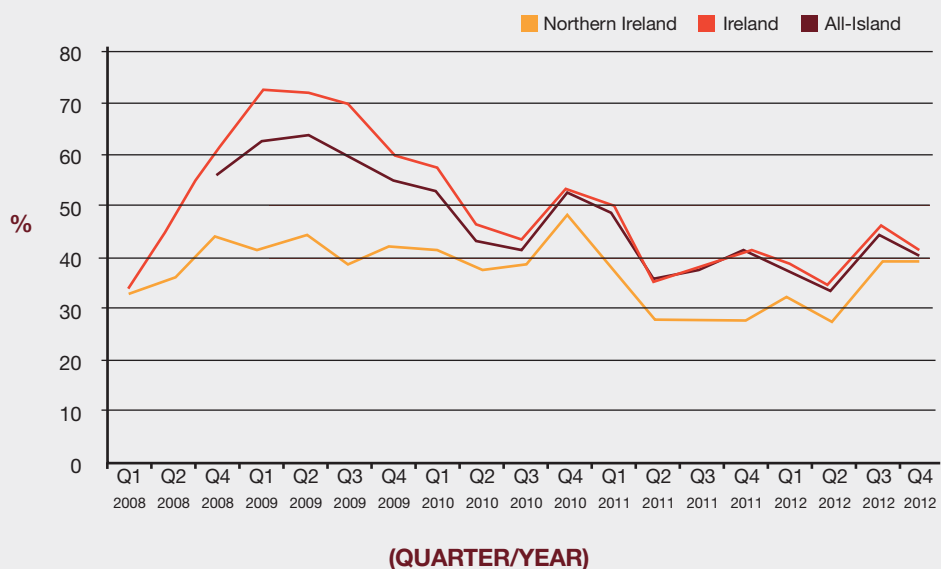
Percentage of businesses reporting an increase in sales from Quarter 1 2008 to Quarter 4 2012



Sales decreases...

There was a small fall in the number of businesses (41%) reporting a decrease in sales. However, as above, this number has remained steady over the past four quarters and the last significant fall came in mid-2011. There has been an improvement in the performance of firms in Ireland (down 4%). And firms with over 50 employees (20%), manufacturers (26%), and exporters (27%) have significantly lower than average decreases in sales.

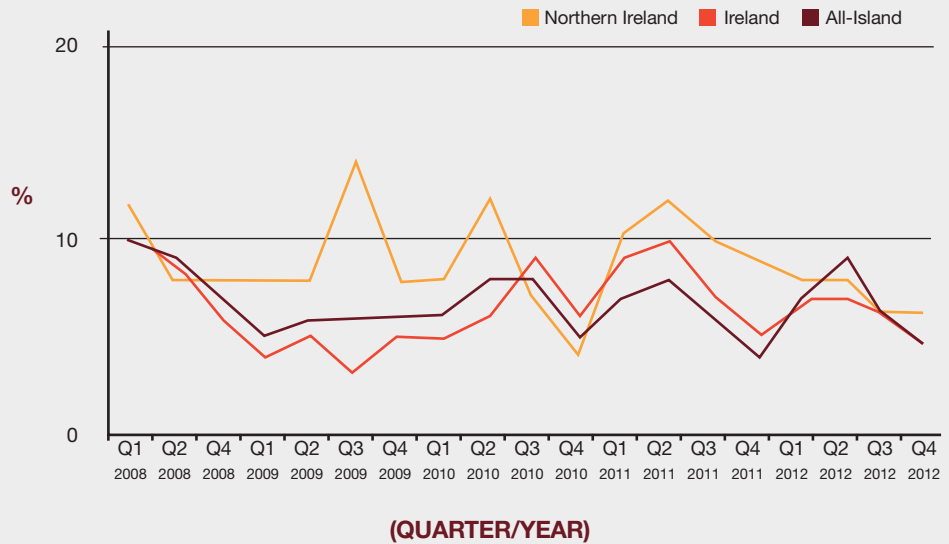
Percentage of businesses reporting a decrease in sales from Quarter 1 2008 to Quarter 4 2012



Employment increases...

The numbers of businesses reporting an increase in staff numbers remains low at 5%, a tiny fall on the previous quarter. Micro-enterprises remain less likely to increase employment (only 4% reported a rise) while exporters (11%) and those engaged in cross-border trade (9%), larger firms (23%) and the seasonal effect on retailers (8%) ensured they were all above average in increasing employment.

Percentage of businesses reporting an increase in employment from Quarter 1 2008 to Quarter 4 2012



Employment decreases...

One in ten (10%) firms reported that they had decreased the size of their workforces in the previous quarter, the lowest figure it has been in several years. Again, mid-sized businesses (18%) have been more active in decreasing their workforces. There is little difference between businesses in Ireland or Northern Ireland or across sectors with the exception of construction (18%) which remains the key one in shedding employment.

Percentage of businesses reporting a decrease in employment from Quarter 1 2008 to Quarter 4 2012

