

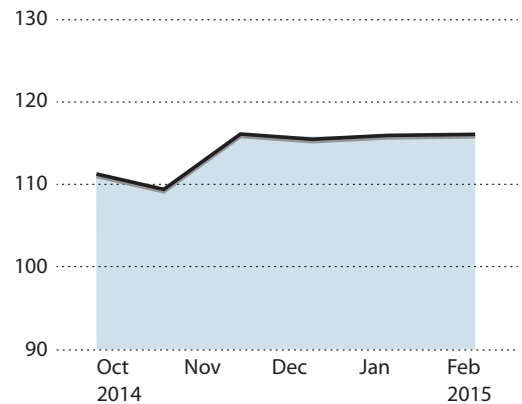
Unflinching small business optimism.

A survey of 713 small business CEOs found that optimism among small firms has remained virtually unchanged for the past four months, and has been at its highest level since the survey began in June 2012. The WSJ/Vistage Small Business CEO Confidence Index was 115.5 in the February 2015 survey. This reading is identical to January's reading and nearly equal to December's 115.0 and November's 115.6. The steadfast optimism indicates that small business CEOs hold a deep sense of confidence about prospects for the U.S. economy.

The small changes in the components of the Confidence Index pale in comparison to the stability of optimism, which remains at record high levels. This renewed sense of confidence has not wavered despite uneven news on the domestic and global economies. Nor has it yielded to weather-induced losses due to the harsh winter as it did last year. Overall, the data indicate that small businesses expect a stronger economy, and as a consequence, a tighter labor market during the year ahead. This will result in continue upward pressures on wages as well as draw more idled workers into the labor force.

—Analysis provided by Dr. Richard Curtin, University of Michigan

WSJ/Vistage Small Business CEO Confidence Index



Visit vistageindex.com to see the interactive tool and view results from previous months.

Question	Answer	Respondents	
1. Compared with a year ago, have overall economic conditions in the United States improved, remained the same, or worsened?	Improved	456	64%
	Remained about the same	225	32%
	Worsened	31	4%
	Don't know/No opinion	1	0%
2. During the next 12 months, do you expect the overall economic conditions in the U.S. will be better, about the same, or worse than now?	Better	332	47%
	About the same	335	47%
	Worse	44	6%
	Don't know/No opinion	2	0%

Question	Answer	Respondents	
		#	%
3. Are your firm's total fixed investment expenditures likely to increase, remain about the same, or decrease during the next 12 months?	Increase	370	52%
	Remain the same	275	39%
	Decrease	60	8%
	Don't know/No opinion	8	1%
4. Do you anticipate that your firm's sales revenues will increase, remain about the same, or decrease during the next 12 months?	Increase	560	79%
	Remain the same	110	15%
	Decrease	42	6%
	Don't know/No opinion	1	0%
5. Do you expect your firm's profitability to improve, remain about the same, or worsen during the next 12 months?	Improve	450	63%
	Remain the same	205	29%
	Worsen	55	8%
	Don't know/No opinion	3	0%
6. Do you expect your firm's total number of employees will increase, remain about the same, or decrease during the next 12 months?	Increase	456	64%
	Remain the same	225	32%
	Decrease	30	4%
	Don't know/No opinion	2	0%
7. How is your firm using savings from lower fuel costs?	Adding jobs	18	2%
	Expanding geographic reach	17	2%
	Offering discounts to customers	13	2%
	Purchasing new equipment	13	2%
	Expanding profit margins	129	17%
	Savings too small to do much	426	56%
	Drop in oil prices has reduced my firm's revenues	33	4%
	Skipped	40	5%
	Other	78	10%

Question	Answer	Respondents	
		#	%
8. Have your firm's shipping costs declined from one year ago?	Not at all	309	43%
	Yes, by less than 5%	77	11%
	Yes, by 5% to 10%	25	4%
	Yes, by more than 10% to 20%	3	0%
	Yes, by more than 20%	2	0%
	Not relevant /no shipping costs	263	37%
	Skipped	18	3%
	Other	17	2%
9. Have you ever been hacked?	Yes	110	15%
	No	597	84%
	Skipped	6	1%
10. If yes, what was taken?	Money	19	3%
	Customer information	11	2%
	Thought leadership	7	1%
	Skipped	606	85%
	Other	70	10%
11. How many people are in your IT department?	0-1	461	65%
	2-3	165	23%
	More than 3	85	12%
	Skipped	3	0%

Question	Answer	Respondents	
		#	%
12. In the wake of recent data breaches, have you done anything to boost your cyber security?	Yes, we installed new security software or a new security solution	222	27%
	Yes, we hired a consultant to help us identify and remedy our biggest risks	129	16%
	Yes, we changed our passwords	143	17%
	No, we haven't changed anything	280	34%
	Skipped	10	1%
	Other	44	5%
	13. During your company's last fiscal year, what was its total employment?	1-9 employees	67
10-19 employees		118	17%
20-49 employees		286	40%
50-99 employees		151	21%
100-499 employees		83	12%
500-999 employees		4	1%
1000-4999 employees		3	0%
5000-9999 employees		1	0%

WSJ | VISTAGE

Small Business CEO Survey

A monthly survey measuring the sentiment of U.S. small business CEOs and owners about the economy.

Visit vistageindex.com to view an interactive tool with full results from previous months.