

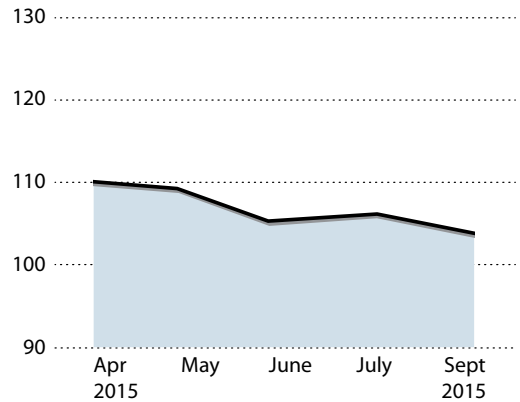
Slow decline in optimism continues into September.

The economic confidence expressed by small firms has slowly declined since the start of the year, according to the September 14-23, 2015, survey of 812 small business CEOs. The WSJ/Vistage Small Business CEO Confidence Index was 103.7 in September, down from August's 105.1 and the peak of 115.5 at the start of 2015. The single factor most responsible for the loss in confidence has been the growing consensus that the pace of growth in the overall economy has slowed and will continue to slow in the year ahead. In contrast, very minor declines have been recorded in how small firms viewed prospects for their own revenues and planned increases in payrolls and investment expenditures.

This disconnect can be explained by two factors. First, small firms know considerably more with greater certainty about their firm's prospects than for the economy as a whole. Indeed, most of these concerns now involve uncertain prospects for the global economy, commodity prices, and the value of the dollar as well as how the Fed will react to these international concerns. It is only reasonable that firms adopt a cautious view on the overall economic outlook. Second, surviving firms have successfully adapted in recent years to a slower overall pace of economic growth.

Analysis 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 U.S. improved, remained the same, or worsened?	Improved	336	41%
	About the same	362	45%
	Worsened	113	14%
	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	226	28%
	About the same	466	57%
	Worse	112	14%
	Don't know/No opinion	8	1%

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	374	46%
	About the same	336	41%
	Decrease	95	12%
	Don't know/No opinion	7	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	587	72%
	About the same	176	22%
	Decrease	48	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	446	55%
	About the same	286	35%
	Worsen	79	10%
	Don't know/No opinion	1	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	471	58%
	About the same	289	36%
	Decrease	49	6%
	Don't know/No opinion	3	0%
7. Do you plan to retire from your business in the next five years?	Yes	220	27%
	No	590	73%
	Skipped	2	0%

Question	Answer	Respondents	
		#	%
8. If you answered yes, do you plan to:	Sell the business	154	19%
	Pass the business on to family members	30	4%
	Liquidate the business	4	0%
	None of the above	18	2%
	Not applicable	157	19%
	Skipped	430	53%
	Other	19	2%
	9. What is your age?	Under 30	7
30 to 39		69	8%
40 to 49		240	30%
50 to 59		328	40%
60 to 69		163	20%
70 or older		5	1%
10. During your company's last fiscal year, what was its total employment?	1-9	54	7%
	10-19	163	20%
	20-49	336	41%
	50-99	170	21%
	100-499	87	11%
	1000-4999	2	0%
11. During your company's last fiscal year, what were its total revenues?	1-4 Million	277	34%
	5-9 Million	261	32%
	10-20 Million	274	34%

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.