

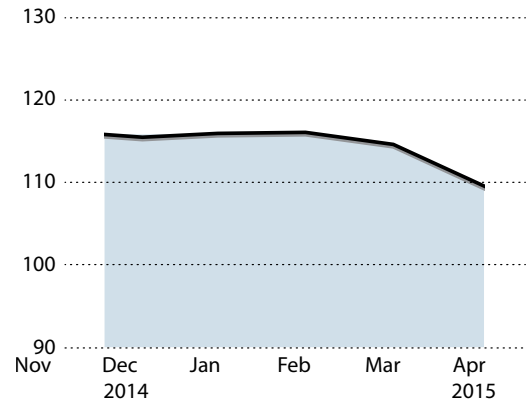
# Optimism eases due to harsh winter.

Optimism among small firms declined slightly in the latest Wall Street Journal/Vistage Small Business CEO Survey, largely due to an economy weakened by unusually harsh winter weather, the LA port shutdown, and weaker exports from a stronger dollar. Despite these headwinds, confidence among small firms remained more favorable than a year ago. The WSJ/Vistage Small Business CEO Confidence Index was 109.2 in the April 2015 survey, down from 114.5 in March, but remained above last April's 108.8.

While the April data reflect the slowdown in economic growth during the first quarter, the data do not provide clear evidence that the slowdown will persist during the balance of the year. Indeed, three-in-four small businesses anticipate growth in their sales revenues and nearly two-thirds expected increased profits. The majority of small firms expected to increase the size of their workforce, and nine-in-ten expected to either increase their fixed investment spending or maintain investment spending at current levels. Although expectations for revenues, profits, employment, and investments were slightly below the recent peaks, the adjustments were primarily due to a weakened first quarter economy. While weaker export growth is expected to continue, a revival in consumer spending is anticipated to drive overall GDP growth in 2015.

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

**WSJ/Vistage Small Business CEO Confidence Index**



Visit [vistageindex.com](http://vistageindex.com) to see the interactive tool and view results from previous months.

Question	Answer	Respondents	
<b>1. Compared with a year ago, have overall economic conditions in the United States improved, remained the same, or worsened?</b>	Improved	373	49%
	Remained about the same	338	45%
	Worsened	46	6%
	Don't know/No opinion	2	0%
<b>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?</b>	Better	277	36%
	About the same	418	55%
	Worse	59	8%
	Don't know/No opinion	5	1%

Question	Answer	Respondents	
		#	%
3. <b>Are your firm's total fixed investment expenditures likely to increase, remain about the same, or decrease during the next 12 months?</b>	Increase	343	45%
	Remain the same	352	46%
	Decrease	62	8%
	Don't know/No opinion	2	0%
4. <b>Do you anticipate that your firm's sales revenues will increase, remain about the same, or decrease during the next 12 months?</b>	Increase	566	75%
	Remain the same	145	19%
	Decrease	47	6%
	Don't know/No opinion	1	0%
5. <b>Do you expect your firm's profitability to improve, remain about the same, or worsen during the next 12 months?</b>	Improve	470	62%
	Remain the same	216	28%
	Worsen	73	10%
6. <b>Do you expect your firm's total number of employees will increase, remain about the same, or decrease during the next 12 months?</b>	Increase	442	58%
	Remain the same	277	36%
	Decrease	39	5%
	Don't know/No opinion	1	0%
7. <b>Has the ongoing California drought lowered, raised or had no significant impact on your outlook for overall sales revenue?</b>	Lowered by 1% to 10%	14	2%
	Lowered by 11% to 25%	3	0%
	Lowered by more than 25%	1	0%
	Raised by any amount	8	1%
	Unchanged	355	47%
	Not applicable	376	50%

Question	Answer	Respondents	
		#	%
<b>8. What steps, if any, have you taken to make up for revenue lost because of the drought?</b>	Cut prices or offered discounts/promotions	3	0%
	Raised prices	6	1%
	Cut spending	11	1%
	Reduced staff	4	1%
	None of the above	64	8%
	Not applicable	628	81%
	Skipped	52	7%
	Other	4	1%
<b>10. Do you offer a 401(k) retirement savings plan to your employees?</b>	Yes	585	77%
	No	163	21%
	Skipped	11	1%
<b>11. If you do offer a 401(k) plan, who is your provider?</b>	Broker	299	39%
	Insurer	64	8%
	Mutual fund company	141	19%
	Online service	18	2%
	I do not offer a 401k plan to my employees	130	17%
	Skipped	36	5%
<b>12. If you offer a 401(k) plan, have you changed record-keepers or other service providers in the last three years?</b>	Yes	171	23%
	No	425	56%
	I do not offer a 401k plan to my employees	134	18%
	Skipped	29	4%

Question	Answer	Respondents	
		#	%
<b>13. Have any of your clients requested extended payment terms and, if so, how long are they?</b>	30 days	72	9%
	90 days	155	20%
	120 days	28	4%
	More than 120 days	10	1%
	None of my clients have requested extended payment terms	318	42%
	Not applicable	109	14%
	Skipped	13	2%
	Other	54	7%
<b>14. How have delayed payment terms affected your business?</b>	Positively	12	2%
	Negatively	217	29%
	Unchanged	222	29%
	Not applicable	298	39%
<b>15. During your company's last fiscal year, what was its total employment?</b>	1-9 employees	66	9%
	10-19 employees	156	21%
	20-49 employees	285	38%
	50-99 employees	163	21%
	100-499 employees	85	11%

# 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](http://vistageindex.com) to view an interactive tool with full results from previous months.