

# Economic Trends

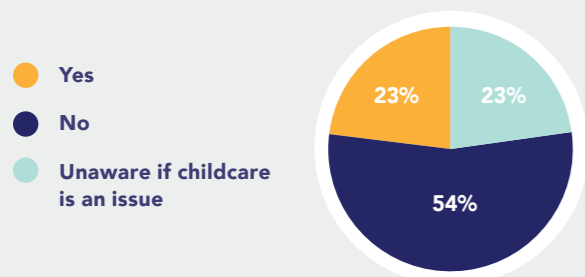
QUARTER 1 2024

In the first Economic Trends survey of 2024, Cork Chamber asked members about their experience of the most recent business quarter, Q1 2024 (January, February, March). This Economic Trends Q1 2024 survey, sponsored by PTSB, captures a snapshot of business experiences and of the overall operating landscape at the start of 2024.

## CHILDCARE PROVISION

This quarter, Cork Chamber members expressed their views on the provision of childcare services in Cork and the impact childcare provision has on their employees.

### IS THE AVAILABILITY AND AFFORDABILITY OF CHILDCARE PROVISION IMPACTING STAFF?

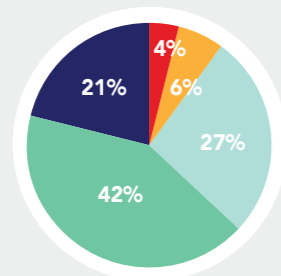


Almost one quarter of respondents (23%) cited that the availability and affordability of childcare provision is impacting staff, with another 23% of respondents acknowledging they are unaware if it is an issue. 54% believe that the availability and affordability of childcare is not impacting staff.

When asked about the workplace factors that childcare provision is impacting on, the top cited were; an increase in remote working requests and an increase in requests to move to part-time work.

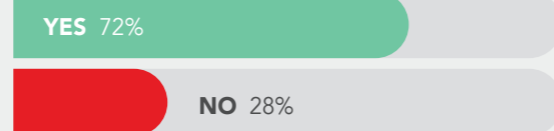
### DOES CHILDCARE DISPROPORTIONATELY IMPACT WOMEN IN THE WORKFORCE?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree



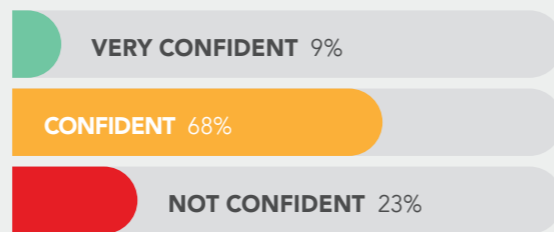
The results of the Economic Trends survey highlight a significant concern regarding the impact of childcare issues on women. A notable 63% of respondents either agree or strongly agree that childcare disproportionately affects women in the workforce.

### NEED FOR FURTHER GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION



The vast majority of respondents (72%) stated that policymakers need to take further measures to address the challenges associated with childcare provision.

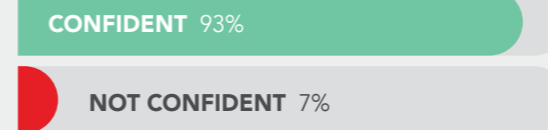
## CONFIDENCE IN THE IRISH ECONOMY



Confidence in the Irish economy has dipped compared to Q1 2023. 77% of business respondents expressed a positive outlook regarding the economic outlook compared to 85% this time last year.

Rising business costs (24%), housing supply (19%) and skills shortages (14%) were cited as the top reasons for lack of confidence in the economy.

## BUSINESS CONFIDENCE



From an overall financial perspective, 93% of respondents reported confidence in their business (95% in Q4 2023).

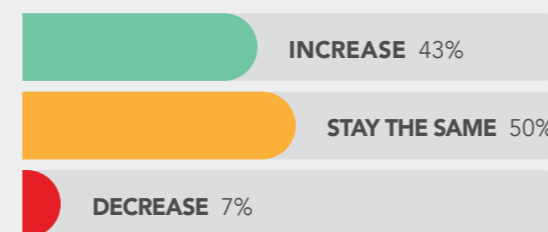
## TOP THREATS TO BUSINESS GROWTH

- Skills availability
- Cost of energy/raw materials
- Availability of housing/rental accommodation for employees

Business respondents continue to report skills availability as the top threat to business growth quarter on quarter. The cost of energy/raw materials has consistently been reported as the second top threat since Q2 2022. The availability of housing was ranked as the third top threat.

## EMPLOYMENT DATA

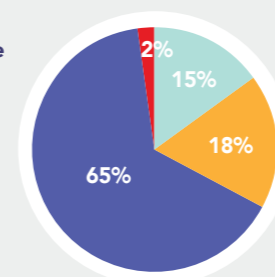
### HOW DO YOU EXPECT EMPLOYEE NUMBERS TO CHANGE OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS?



While 43% of business respondents report plans to increase employee numbers over the next 12 months, there has been slight rise in those planning to decrease employee numbers. (rising from 1% last quarter to 7% in Q1).

## TOP BARRIERS TO FILLING VACANCIES

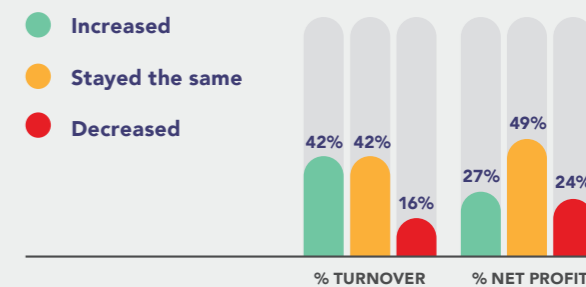
- Specialist skills shortage
- Housing
- Wage demands
- Other



When measuring actual employee numbers, results indicate that the increase in employee numbers over Q1 has slowed, dropping from 41% in Q4 2023 to 24%. Additionally, 15% of respondents reported a decrease in their number of employees this quarter, compared to 9% in Q4.

At the end of Q1, 49% of business respondents had vacancies advertised (41% in Q4). 42% of them were having difficulties in filling them (i.e. remaining unfilled for more than 3 months since initial advertisement) compared to 39% last quarter. Specialist skills shortages (65%) continue to pose the top barrier in filling vacancies.

## TURNOVER AND NET PROFIT Q1 2024

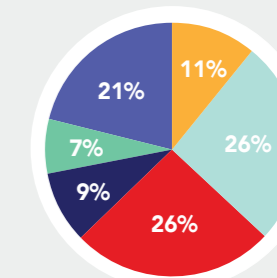


The number of companies reporting a decrease in turnover has risen to 16% compared to 12% in Q4 2023 and 9% in Q3. Despite this change only 10% expect further decreases in Q2 and 57% anticipate an increase in turnover.

Regarding net profits, the percentage of respondents reporting an increase has declined from 38% at the end of Q4 to 27% in Q1. 42% of respondents expect net profits to increase in Q2, while only 13% anticipate a decline.

## RESPONDING BUSINESSES

- Sole Trader
- Micro Enterprise (2-10)
- 11-50
- 51-100
- 101-200
- 201+



The responding businesses represent a broad range of sectors: Life Sciences & Manufacturing (14%), Agriculture, Food & Drinks (3%), ICT & Digital Economy (5%), Tourism, Hospitality, Retail & Leisure (14%), Culture, Arts, Community & Media (5%), Built Environment (13%), Education & Training (2%), Services (including Financial) (33%), Transport, Energy & Maritime (10%), Health (1%).

We thank members for your valued insights and engagement with this survey. Your participation is vital. All previous quarterly economic surveys can be found on [www.corkchamber.ie](http://www.corkchamber.ie).

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