

# Economic Trends

The Q4 2025 Economic Trends survey of Cork Chamber members gathered insights into their experiences of doing business across October, November and December 2025. Sponsored by PTSB, this edition of the Economic Trends survey also asked members about key priorities as Ireland prepares to take on the Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the second half of 2026.

## IRELAND'S PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

HAS IRELAND'S MEMBERSHIP OF THE EU BROUGHT BENEFITS TO YOU FROM A BUSINESS PERSPECTIVE?

YES 78%

NO 22%

### IF YES, WHAT HAS BEEN THE BIGGEST BENEFIT?

1. The Single Market
2. Infrastructure Investment
3. Access to Skills and Talent

### DO YOU BELIEVE THAT IRISH BUSINESSES WILL CONTINUE TO BENEFIT FROM IRELAND'S MEMBERSHIP OF THE EU IN THE MEDIUM TO LONG TERM?

YES 95%

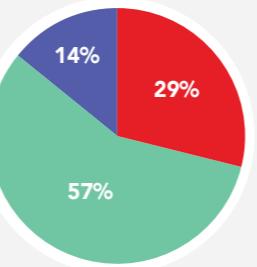
NO 5%

Respondents were largely positive about Ireland's EU membership to date, with the Single Market cited as the biggest benefit of membership, followed by infrastructure investment and access to skills and talent.

QUARTER 4, 2025

## AWARENESS OF THE UPCOMING EU PRESIDENCY

- Fully aware of the upcoming Presidency and activities
- Some awareness of the Presidency but not related activities
- Had not heard about the Presidency until now



## TOP BUSINESS PRIORITIES FOR THE EU PRESIDENCY

1. Economic competitiveness, including the Single Market and trade policy
2. Simplification of regulatory frameworks
3. Talent, skills and innovation / Security and defence

## WHAT ROLE CAN IRELAND'S EU PRESIDENCY PLAY IN SUPPORTING THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY?

1. Showcasing Ireland as an attractive location for talent and investment
2. Promoting Irish business in other EU Member States
3. Delivering tangible regional benefits by hosting events in Cork and other locations outside Dublin, for example

Most responding businesses have some awareness of plans for Ireland's upcoming Presidency of the Council of the EU. Respondents emphasise the importance of prioritising competitiveness and advancing the Single Market as part of Ireland's Presidency. Delivering regional benefits as part of the Presidency programme was cited as another key priority.

## BUSINESS CONFIDENCE

CONFIDENT 100%

NOT CONFIDENT 0%

## CONFIDENCE IN THE IRISH ECONOMY

CONFIDENT 80%

NOT CONFIDENT 20%

80% of respondents expressed confidence in the Irish economy in Q4, an increase on 73% in Q3. Of the 20% who cited a lack of confidence in the Irish economy, housing supply, rising business costs and skills shortages were the top concerns.

## TOP THREATS TO BUSINESS GROWTH

1. Availability of Housing for Employees
2. Cost of Energy and Raw Materials
3. Changing Consumer Spending / Reduced Orders

## EMPLOYMENT

### CHANGE IN EMPLOYEE NUMBERS OVER Q4 2025

INCREASED 31%

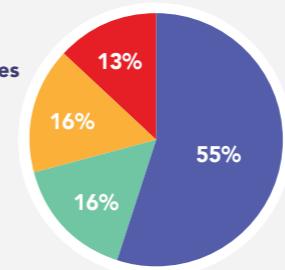
STAYED THE SAME 66%

DECREASED 3%

36% predict an increase in employee numbers over the next 12 months, consistent with recent surveys. 31% report an increase in employee numbers this quarter, a slight increase on 26% in Q3.

## TOP BARRIERS TO FILLING VACANCIES

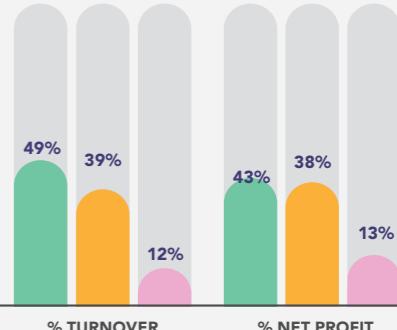
- Specialist skills shortages
- Housing
- Wage demands
- Other



Of the 41% of respondents with vacancies advertised at present, 40% report difficulties with filling these roles, with specialist skills shortages emerging as the top barrier to filling vacancies, consistent with recent surveys.

## TURNOVER AND NET PROFIT Q4 2025

- Increased
- Stayed the same
- Decreased



## EXPECTED TURNOVER CHANGE Q1 2026

INCREASE 49%

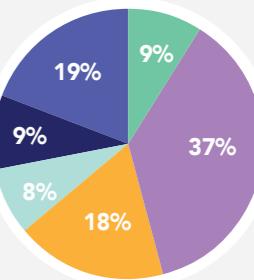
STAY THE SAME 38%

DECREASE 13%

Turnover and net profit reported across Q4 2025 remained consistent with recent survey results. Looking ahead to Q1 2026, nearly 50% of respondents predict an increase in turnover and 40% expect an increase in net profit.

## RESPONDING BUSINESSES

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



Responding businesses are drawn from a broad range of sectors, including Services (including Financial) (36%); Tourism, Hospitality, Retail & Leisure (11%); Life Sciences & Manufacturing (14%); Built Environment (9%); Transport, Energy & Maritime (8%); Agriculture, Food & Drink (4%); Education & Training (8%); ICT & Digital Economy (4%); Culture, Arts, Community & Media (3%) and Not-for-Profit (3%).

We thank members for their 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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