



# SMALL BUSINESS SENTIMENT SURVEY

Innovation  
Branding  
Solution  
Marketing  
Analysis  
Team  
Success  
Management

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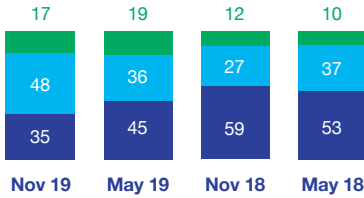
WINTER 2019

## **The Small Firms Association's Business Sentiment Survey tracks key trends in the small business sector.**

It is based on responses provided by SFA member companies (less than 50 employees) across all sectors and in all parts of the country.

Over the course of the last twelve months small business sentiment has soured from 59% in November 2018 to 35% in November 2019. Despite this falling sentiment small business owners are optimistic about 2020. Many respondents reported plans to invest in their business, take on additional staff and increase wage rates in the next twelve months. Small business owners described their businesses as growing at present reflecting the continued strong performance of the Irish economy. However, as we face into a new decade, there is little doubt that embedded Brexit uncertainty weighs heavily on Ireland's small business owners.

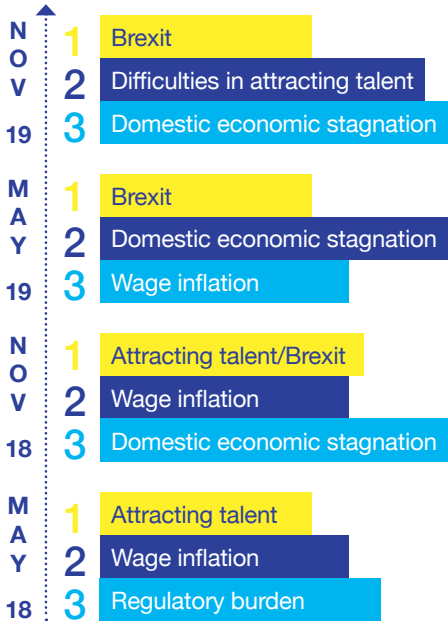
## BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT



● Improving ● Staying the same ● Declining

2019 saw a marked decrease in small business owners' confidence. In November, 35% of small business owners believed that the business environment is improving compared to 45% in May of 2019.

## BIGGEST RISKS



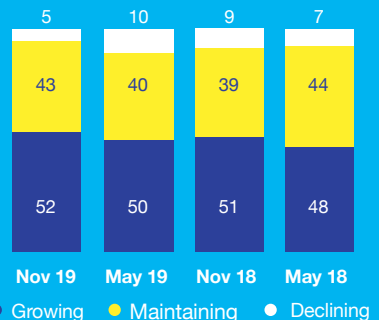
Brexit continues to be the number one threat to small businesses. Attracting skilled and unskilled workers will continue to pose a risk to small businesses in 2020.

## BIGGEST OPPORTUNITIES



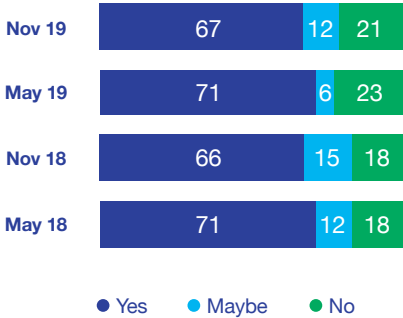
Domestic economic growth continues to be the primary driver of business opportunities. Our healthy economy is allowing small companies focus on product diversification.

## CURRENT BUSINESS PERFORMANCE



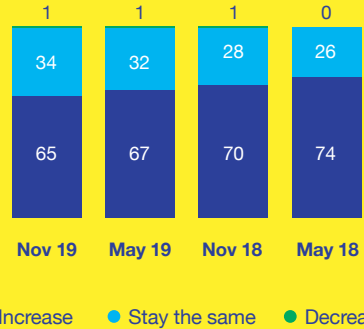
Half of respondents said their businesses are growing. Less businesses are telling us that their business performance is declining.

## INTENTION TO INVEST



Investment intentions by small businesses fell from 71% in May 2019 to 67% in November 2019. Brexit and global economic uncertainty are making small firms more cautious as we begin this new decade.

## INTENTION RE SALARY / WAGES



Where the performance of the business and the individual allows, survey respondents intend to award pay rises over the coming year.



## INTENTION TO RECRUIT

Small firms will continue to recruit in 2020. Nevertheless, the tight labour market will make it difficult for small firms to fill vacancies and recruit for new roles.



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**SFA – being in business for yourself doesn't mean being in business by yourself**