

**IF FRESH, ASK:**

Can I speak to .....**[FROM FILE]. [RESPONDENT MUST BE MD/OWNER/CEO. FINANCE DIRECTOR/CFO WOULD ALSO BE ABLE TO ANSWER THE QUESTIONS]**

Hi, I'm ..... calling from Ipsos MRBI conducting the European **Retail** Confidence Study, supported by the European Commission and Bank of Ireland and which asks firms in the Retail Sector about the business situation as they see it. It just takes 2 minutes to complete. In keeping with Irish and International research codes of conduct, all your responses will be treated in the strictest confidence.

**IF FRESH, ASK:**

**SQ** Can I just confirm you are the CEO/ Managing Director/ Proprietor or someone with overall responsibility for the business?

Yes **CONTINUE**  
No **ALTERNATIVE CONTACT**

**IF PANELLIST, ASK:**

Can I speak to ... **[FROM FILE].**

Hi, I'm ..... calling from Ipsos MRBI to conduct the next wave of the European **Retail** Confidence Study.  
**[REMIND RESPONDENT THAT THEY HAVE PREVIOUSLY CONDUCTED THE SURVEY IF NECESSARY].**

**ASK ALL:**

**MONTHLY QUESTIONS**

When answering the following questions please exclude any seasonal variations in your sector.

**Q.1** How has your business activity (sales) developed over the **past** 3 months? It has...

- + Improved (Increased)
- = Remained unchanged
- Deteriorated (Decreased)
- Refused/ not applicable (DNRO)

**Q.2** Do you consider the volume of stock you currently hold to be...?

- + Too large (above normal)
- = Adequate (normal for the season)
- Too small (below normal)
- Refused/ not applicable (DNRO)

**Q.3** How do you expect your orders placed with suppliers to change over the **next** 3 months?  
It will...

- + Increase
- = Remain unchanged
- Decrease
- Refused/ not applicable (DNRO)

**Q.4** How do you expect your business activity (sales) to change over the **next** 3 months? It will...

- + Improve (Increase)
- = Remain unchanged
- Deteriorate (Decrease)
- Refused/ not applicable (DNRO)

**Q.5** How do you expect your firm's total employment to change over the **next** 3 months? It will...

- + Increase
- = Remain unchanged
- Decrease
- Refused/ not applicable (DNRO)

**Q.6** How do you expect the prices you charge to change over the **next** 3 months?

- + Increase
- = Remain unchanged
- Decrease
- Refused/ not applicable (DNRO)

**Q.7** How has your firm's total employment developed over the **past** 3 months? It has...

- + Increased
- = Remained unchanged
- Decreased
- Refused/ not applicable (DNRO)

**Q.8** How have your input costs, excluding labour costs (i.e. average price of purchases), developed over the past 3 months? They have...

- + Increased
- = Remained unchanged
- Decreased
- Refused/ not applicable (DNRO)

**Q.9** Will you be requesting or increasing the use of any of the following forms of bank financing in the next 3 months?

***READ OUT. MULTICODE***

- New loan to fund maintenance of premises, equipment etc.
- New loan to fund business expansion/a new business venture
- New loan to purchase property/land
- New loan, credit line or overdraft facility for working capital purposes
- An increase in an existing credit line or overdraft facility
- Increased use of an existing credit line or overdraft facility
- Other (please specify)
- Do not intend to request or use any of the above (Do not read out)

**Q.10** What main factors are currently limiting your business? **READ OUT.. MULTICODE.**

- Insufficient demand
- Shortage of labour force
- Shortage of space and/or equipment
- Financial constraints
- Uncertainty about economic policy in general (e.g. tax, government spending, regulation, central bank policy)
- Uncertainty about economic policies impacting your sector
- Rental costs
- Other factors (please specify)
- None

**Q.11** By what percentage do you expect to change basic pay for your employees over the next 12 months relative to the last 12 months? Would that be....

- Increase by more than 4%
- Increase by between 2% and 4%
- Increase by less than 2%
- More or less remain the same
- Fall by less than 2%
- Fall by between 2% and 4%
- Fall by more than 4%
- Don't know (DNRO)

**Q.12** How has your firm's profitability changed over the **past** 3 months? It has...

- + Improved
- = Remained unchanged
- Deteriorated
- Refused/ not applicable (DNRO)

**Q.13** In comparison to the last 6 months, do you expect your **online** sales to increase, decrease or not change over the **next** 6 months?

- Increase
- Decrease
- No change
- Don't know
- We don't sell over the internet

**IF INCREASE AT Q.13, ASK:**

**Q.13a** By how many percent do you expect online sales to increase in the next 6 months?  
**PLEASE GIVE AN ESTIMATE. RECORD UP TO ONE DECIMAL PLACE**

Box %

**IF DECREASE AT Q.13, ASK:**

**Q.13b** By how many percent do you expect online sales to decrease in the next 6 months?  
**PLEASE GIVE AN ESTIMATE. RECORD UP TO ONE DECIMAL PLACE**

Box %

**ASK ALL**

**Q.14** In comparison to the last 6 months, how do you expect your **face-to-face** sales i.e. instore, over the phone etc. to change over the next 6 months? They will...

- Increase
- Decrease
- No change
- Don't know
- Only sell online

**IF INCREASE AT Q.14 ASK:**

**Q.14a** By how many percent do you expect face-to-face sales to increase in the next 6 months?  
***PLEASE GIVE AN ESTIMATE. RECORD UP TO ONE DECIMAL PLACE***

Box %

**IF DECREASE AT Q.14, ASK:**

**Q.14b** By how many percent do you expect face-to-face sales to decrease in the next 6 months?  
***PLEASE GIVE AN ESTIMATE. RECORD UP TO ONE DECIMAL PLACE***

Box %

**IF Q.9 NOT CODES 1-7:**

**Q.15** Why will you not be requesting or increasing the use of bank finance in the **next** 3 months?  
***DO NOT READ OUT. PROBE TO PRECODES. MULTICODE.***

- Don't need finance currently
- Finance already in place
- Concerned I will be turned down
- It is too expensive to borrow
- It is too risky to borrow given general economic conditions
- It is too risky to borrow given trading conditions in this sector
- Given the firm's financial condition, our priority remains to reduce borrowings
- We remain risk averse in relation to borrowing following several difficult years for our firm/sector
- Other (please specify)
- No reason/Couldn't say

**ASK ALL**

**Q.16** Thinking about the next one to three years, which of the following best describes your business ambitions?

- ++ Feeling confident and will actively pursue opportunities to grow the business
- + Plan to grow but remain cautious
- = Prefer to stay the same size
- Intend to scale down
- Refused/ not applicable (DNRO)

We are now going to ask some questions about your investment plans for this year and next year. These investment questions are only asked twice per year.

**ASK IN MARCH ONLY**

**Q.17a** Do you expect your investment this year to increase or decrease relative to last year?

- Increase
- Decrease
- No Change
- Don't know (DNRO)

**ASK IF INCREASE OR DECREASE AT Q17a**

**Q.17b** By how many percent do you expect to change investment this year relative to last year?  
\_\_\_\_%

**ASK IN NOVEMBER ONLY**

**Q.18a** By how many percent are you changing investment this year relative to last year?  
\_\_\_\_%

**Q.18b** by how much do you expect to change investment next year relative to this year?  
\_\_\_\_%

**ASK IN MARCH AND NOVEMBER**

**Q.19a** Which of the following categories of investment activity are you carrying out this year?

- Replacement and maintenance of worn-out premises, equipment or vehicles
- Investment in new premises, equipment or vehicles
- Investment in ICT (information and communications technology)
- Other investment objectives (pollution control, safety, R&D, staff training etc.)

**ASK IN NOVEMBER ONLY**

**Q.19b** Which of the following categories of investment activity do you plan to do next year?

- Replacement and maintenance of worn-out premises, equipment or vehicles
- Investment in new premises, equipment or vehicles
- Investment in ICT (information and communications technology)
- Other investment objectives (pollution control, safety, R&D, staff training etc.)

**Q.20** We are now going to ask a question about some factors that generally influence investment decisions. For each of these, can you tell me to what extent they are aiding or hindering your firm's investment this year and next year.

**A.** The first factor is "Demand" and this refers to demand for your products (i.e. sales). Please indicate the degree to which demand is influencing your firm's investment:

This year:

- ++ Strongly aiding
- + Aiding
- = No influence
- Hindering
- - Strongly hindering
- Refused/ not applicable (DNRO)

Next year:

- ++ Strongly aiding
  - + Aiding
  - = No influence
  - Hindering
  - - Strongly hindering
- Refused/ not applicable (DNRO)

**B.** The second factor is "Financial Resources or Expected Profits" and this refers to your firm's profitability, the ease and cost of accessing finance, and the return on investment.

This year:

- ++ Strongly aiding
  - + Aiding
  - = No influence
  - Hindering
  - - Strongly hindering
- Refused/ not applicable (DNRO)

Next year:

- ++ Strongly aiding
  - + Aiding
  - = No influence
  - Hindering
  - - Strongly hindering
- Refused/ not applicable (DNRO)

**C.** The third factor is "Technical Factors", which includes the impact of technological changes (e.g. the need to upgrade equipment) and the availability of skilled labour.

This year:

- ++ Strongly aiding
  - + Aiding
  - = No influence
  - Hindering
  - - Strongly hindering
- Refused/ not applicable (DNRO)

Next year:

- ++ Strongly aiding
  - + Aiding
  - = No influence
  - Hindering
  - - Strongly hindering
- Refused/ not applicable (DNRO)

*Note: covers technological developments, the availability of required labour/skills.*

**D.** The fourth factor is "Other factors". This includes public policy (e.g. tax, government spending, regulation), uncertainty about economic policy, and other factors relevant to your firm or sector.

This year:

- ++ Strongly aiding
  - + Aiding
  - = No influence
  - Hindering
  - - Strongly hindering
- Refused/ not applicable (DNRO)

- Next year:
- ++ Strongly aiding
  - + Aiding
  - = No influence
  - Hindering
  - - Strongly hindering
  - Refused/ not applicable (DNRO)

**ASK IN MARCH**

**Q.24a** Thinking specifically about the UK's decision to leave the EU, which of the following best describes the impact of this development on your investment decisions this year?

- No impact
- Plans on hold for now, adopting a "wait and see" approach
- Have cancelled some planned investment
- Have cancelled a significant amount or all planned investment
- Will increase investment as seeing/expect new opportunities
- Not relevant for my business
- Don't know (DNRO)

**ASK IN MARCH ONLY**

**Q.21** How do you expect to **change** your budget for staff training this year relative to last year? It will...

- + Increase
- = Remained unchanged
- Decrease
- Refused/ not applicable (DNRO)

**ASK IN NOVEMBER ONLY**

**Q.21b** How do you expect to change your budget for staff training next year relative to this year? It will...

- + Increase
- = Remain unchanged
- Decrease
- Refused/ not applicable (DNRO)

**ASK ALL**

**Q.22** How would you intend to finance any future investment? **READ OUT. MULTICODE**

- Internal funds (retained earnings, proprietors funds)
- Bank loan
- External investor
- Market based financing (e.g. issuance of shares/bonds)
- Leasing
- Other (please specify)
- No future investment plans

**ASK IN NOVEMBER ONLY**

**Q.23** How do you expect Christmas turnover to compare to last year? Would that be.....

- ++ Much higher
- + Somewhat higher
- = About the same
- Somewhat less
- A lot less
- Refused/ not applicable (DNRO)



**IF FRESH**

**Q.ROK1** Can I please confirm your details? **CHECK DETAILS SUCH AS NACE CODE AND COUNTY ARE CORRECT AND UPDATE IF NEEDED**

**IF PANELLIST**

**Q.ROK2** UPDATE RESPONDENT DETAILS IF THE RESPONDENT PROMPTS THERE HAS BEEN CHANGES TO THE FOLLOWING.

**ASK ALL**

**Q.W** Can I ask the age of the business?

- Less than 2 years
- 2 to 5 years
- 6 to 10 years
- 11 to 15 years
- More than 15 years

**Q.X** Can I confirm that there are (FROM SAMPLE) employees in your company?

**OPTION TO CHANGE NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES**

**IF PANELLIST**

Thank you for taking part, your help in this European-wide study is greatly appreciated.

**IF PANELLIST – DO NOT READ OUT**

**Q. (i)** Does the respondent want to be taken off the panel/ not contacted again?

- Yes - remove
- No

**INTERVIEW ENDS FOR PANELLIST**



**IF FRESH**

**Q.Y** Does your business engage in international trade, by this we mean does it export or import goods or services?

Yes

No

**Q.Z** Is your company.....

Irish owned

Foreign owned

**Q.A** Thank you for taking part. The Study is conducted monthly and those taking part will be sent a note on the key findings every month for the Retail Sector by Bank of Ireland who are supporting the survey in Ireland. Would you be available to take part in future confidence studies?

Agree ACTIVE.....	
Refuse DECLINE .....	

**Q.B** Businesses who take part in our monthly study will be emailed a note on the key findings once a month. Would you like to receive this?

Yes

Prefer not to receive

**IF EMAIL, COLLECT EMAIL ADDRESS CAREFULLY:**

**Q.C** Can I take down your Email address? **(PLUS CONFIRMATION OF EMAIL)**

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**FOR THOSE WHO ANSWERED “AGREE” AT QA.**

Thank you for taking part, your help in this European-wide study is greatly appreciated.