

## CEO CONFIDENCE PEAKS AS END OF LOCKDOWN LOOMS

### Key findings:

- 3 in 4 business leaders (74 per cent) expect the overall economic conditions in the UK and Ireland to improve in the next 12 months
- 84 per cent of businesses anticipate revenues will improve in the next 12 months
- A significant majority of firms (64 per cent) expect profitability to improve in the next 12 months
- Over 2 in 3 business leaders (70 per cent) believe they will continue to hire new employees over the course of this year
- Almost half (45 per cent) of UK and Irish businesses have the cash reserves to support their businesses for more than a year
- 94 per cent of SMEs believe retaining existing staff as important or very important

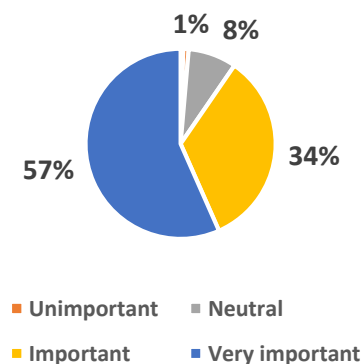
Over 74 per cent of SME leaders expect economic conditions to improve in the next year. The report has also found that a majority (84 per cent) of companies anticipate revenue will continue to improve in the same period of time.

### Talent

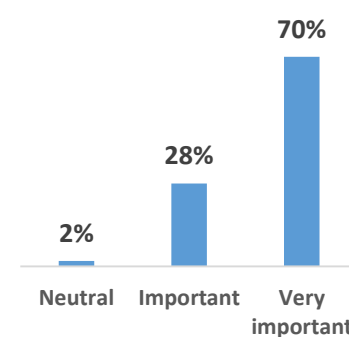
SME leaders have identified talent acquisition and retention as a key business objective in the next few months with 98 per cent of CEOs saying they consider creating a strong organisational culture as important or very important. Furthermore, 91 per cent of businesses believe that attracting qualified talent as important or very important to their business.

Employee engagement is also a key priority for UK and Irish SMEs in the next 12 months. Over 94 per cent of CEOs consider employee engagement to be important or very important. And a similar number of respondents (94 per cent) revealed that training and development is important or very important for their businesses' success moving forward.

### Attracting qualified talent



### Creating a strong culture



Source: Vistage CEO Confidence Index survey



Source: Q1 2021 Vistage CEO Confidence Index, n=220

These findings represent data collected between March 15th – 22nd, 2021 from CEOs and other leaders of SME in the UK & IRL.

### Work-from-home vs. Office

UK and Irish companies are making plans for a hybrid workforce. 75 per cent of companies will continue to offer employees the option to work from home in an effort to accommodate the growing workplace trend as well as to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace. Just over half (52 per cent) of firms also believe that the latest lockdown has had no impact on their business.

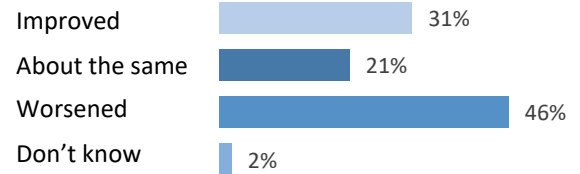
Vistage Managing Director (UK), Geoff Lawrence said: "The rapid rollout of the vaccine across the country has potentially led to business confidence hitting its highest levels.

Our survey results suggests that SMEs in the UK and Ireland are due for a significant rebound as we enter the final stages of the current lockdown. Additionally, government support from furlough to business rates measures have had the intended effect of helping small businesses regain some stability in the current situation.

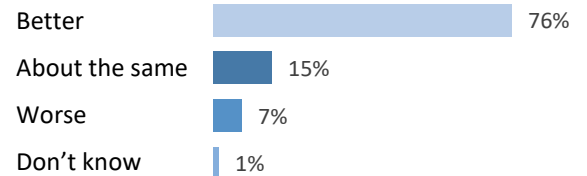
We anticipate that although there is a long way to go before businesses can recover to pre-crisis levels, there is every indication that UK and Irish businesses can come back stronger and better.

### Economy

Compared with a year ago, have overall economic conditions in the UK & IRL improved, remained the same, or worsened?

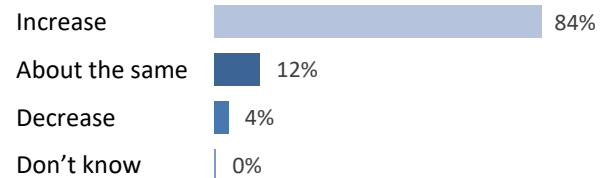


During the next 12 months, do you expect the overall economic conditions in the UK & IRL will be better, about the same, or worse than now?

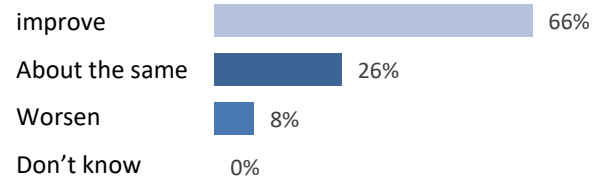


### Prospects

Do you anticipate that your firm's sales revenues will increase, remain about the same, or decrease during the next 12 months?

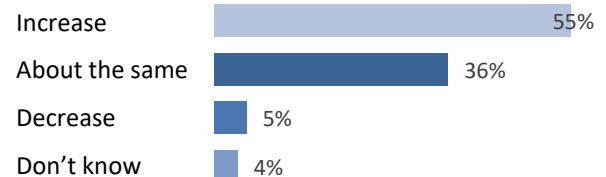


Do you expect your firm's profitability to improve, remain about the same, or worsen during the next 12 months?

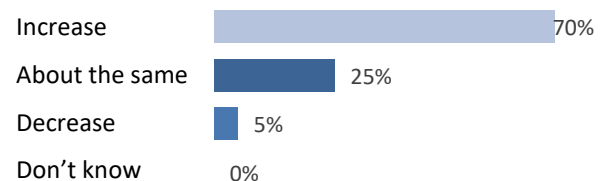


### Expansion

Are your firm's total fixed investment expenditures likely to increase, remain about the same, or decrease during the next 12 months?

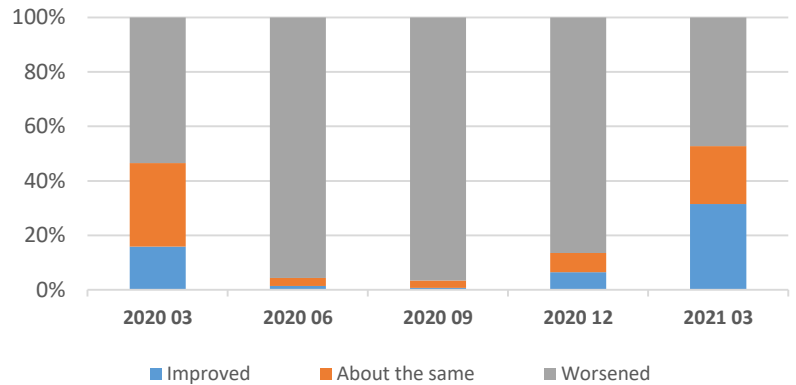


Do you expect your firm's total number of employees will increase, remain about the same, or decrease during the next 12 months?

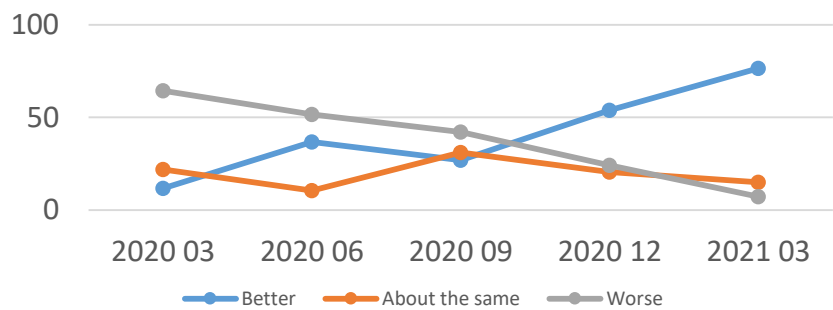


### Economy

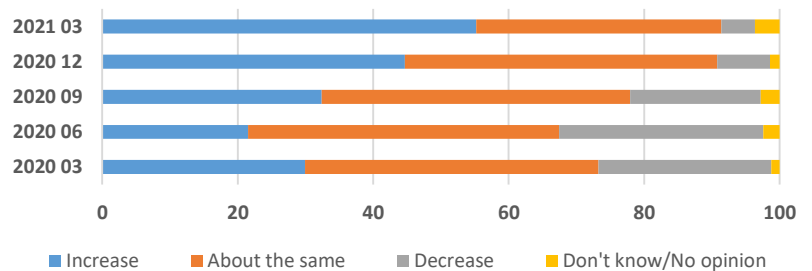
Compared with a year ago, have overall economic conditions in the UK improved, remained the same, or worsened?



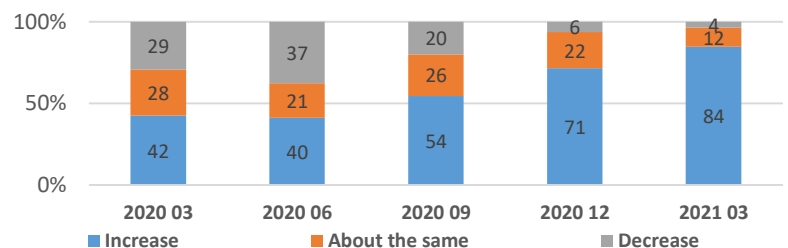
During the next 12 months, 76% of SME CEOs expect the economic conditions to improve



Planned investment climbs significantly above levels of 12 months earlier among SMEs

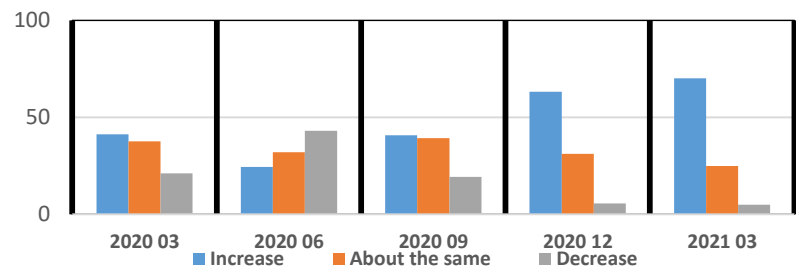


Revenue growth expectations for the next 12 months are double that of 12 months ago



### Expansion

70% of CEOs plan to increase their workforce in the year ahead



# About the Vistage CEO Confidence Index

Each quarter the Vistage CEO Confidence Index gathers data from top-performing CEOs and other key executives of small and medium sized organisations on their sentiment regarding the economy, prospects for their business and expansion plans.

## **About Vistage**

Vistage is an organisation designed exclusively for high-integrity CEOs and executive leaders who are looking to drive better decisions and better results for their companies. Our members — 24,000 strong in more than 20 countries — gather in trusted, confidential peer advisory groups where they tackle their toughest challenges and biggest opportunities. CEOs who joined Vistage in the past five years grew their companies 2.2 times faster than average small and medium sized companies, according to a 2017 analysis of Dun & Bradstreet data.

**Learn more at [vistage.co.uk](http://vistage.co.uk)**

## **About our research**

Statistics based on 220 UK and Irish respondents, all leaders of SME organisations. Vistage Research curates subject matter from the Vistage community and collaborates with top thought leaders to create unique content. Vistage Research provides the data and expert perspectives to help SME business leaders make better decisions.

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