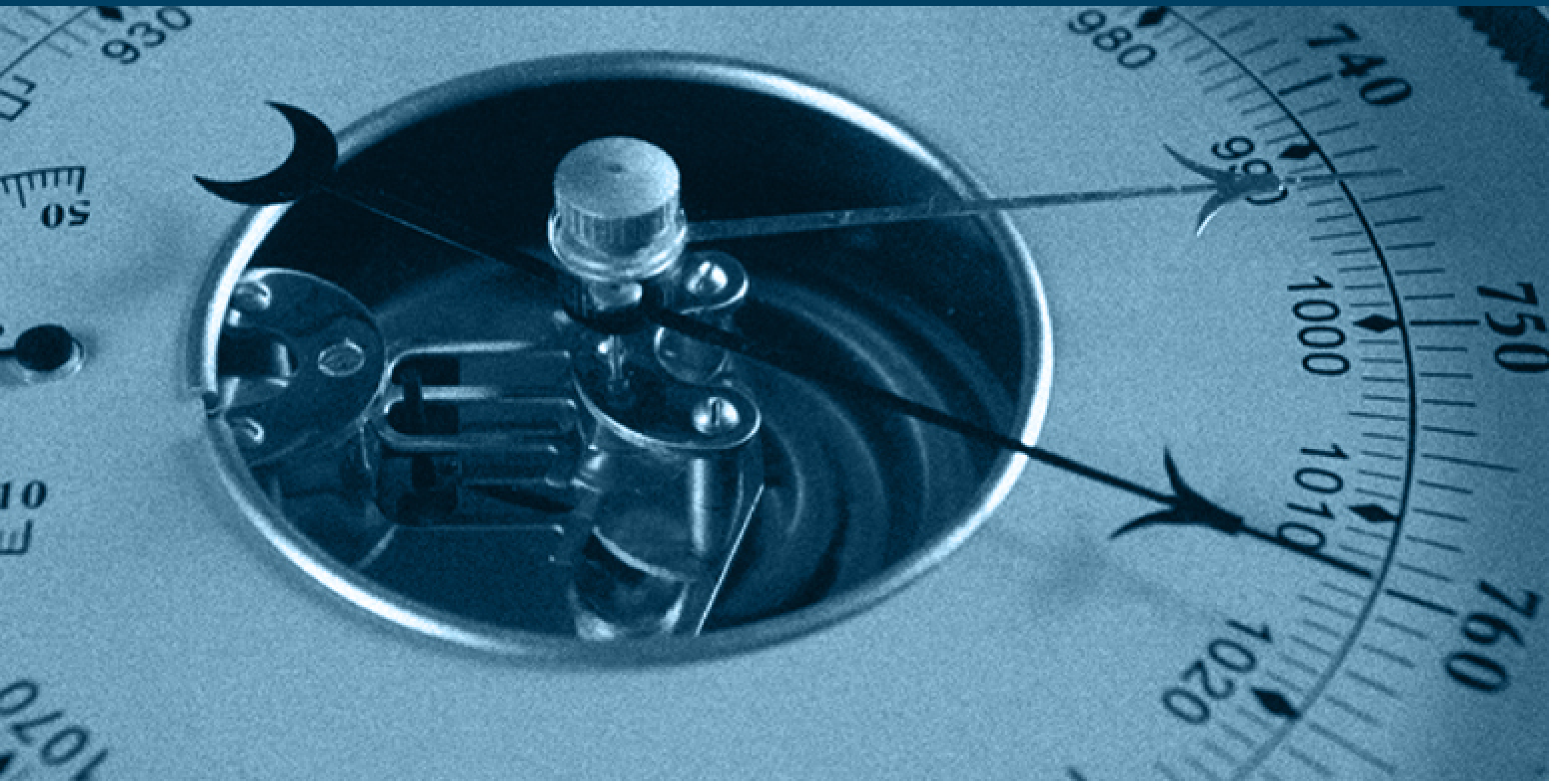
CFIB
In business for your business.

Monthly Business Barometer®

September 2026



12-month Small Business Confidence Index

47.9

Monthly change

-9.8

3-month Small Business Confidence Index

43.3

Monthly change

-9.6

Business Barometer®: Report summary

Small business confidence in Canada

CFIB's Business Barometer® long-term index, which is based on 12-month forward expectations for business performance, dropped sharply by 10 points to 47.9. The short-term optimism index, based on a 3-month outlook, also dropped by 10 points to 43.3.

Provincial overview

Provincial trends—calculated as three-month moving averages—also fell but the indices are delayed in showing the major decline in business confidence. Confidence among the four largest provinces remains muted. Quebec (59.1), Alberta (52.3), Ontario (51.3) and British Columbia (54.2) all posted declines, highlighting growing caution among small businesses in Canada's largest provincial economies.

Sectoral overview

Sectoral confidence—also calculated as three-month moving averages—remains weakest in agriculture, manufacturing and construction. Agriculture continues to lag well behind all other sectors (37.8), while manufacturing (52.1) and construction (52.5) also saw notable declines in confidence this month. In contrast, service-based industries are faring somewhat better, with insurance, real estate and finance (66.2), and professional services (59.7) posting the strongest confidence readings.

Inflation indicators

The average price increase plans jumped to 3.3% in September, a significant increase from earlier this year, while the average wage increase plans remained unchanged at 2.4%.

State of business health

The balance of opinion on the current state of business health declined to 15, after several months of trying to reach the historical average.

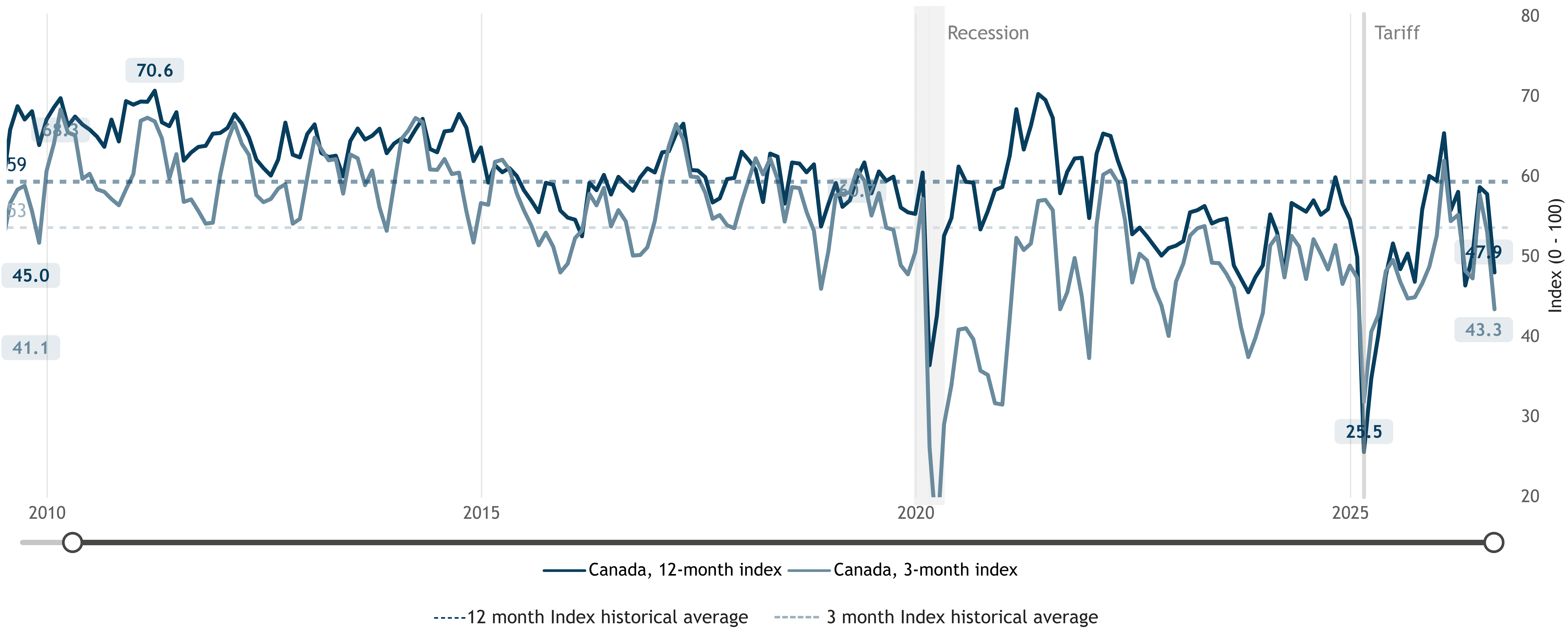
Other indicators

Full-time staffing plans remained weak, with a higher share of employers planning to lay off staff (16%) than to hire (13%).

Insufficient demand remains the top limitation on business and production growth, cited by 49% of SMEs. Distribution constraints and limited cash flow were also on the rise this month.

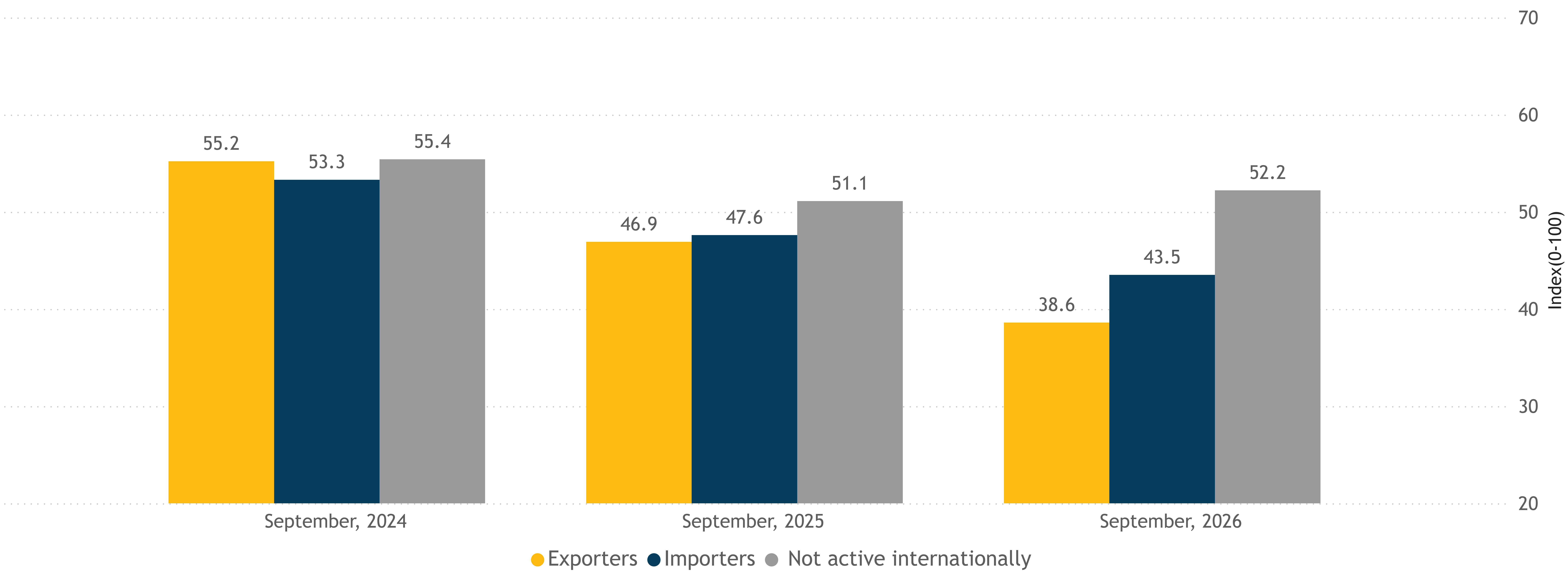
Fuel costs are the top cost constraint (62%). Product input and raw material costs also remained significant constraints, with 42% of SMEs reporting each as a major constraint. Shipping and receiving costs are a problem for about half of small firms.

Business Barometer®: 12-month and 3-month small business confidence index, Canada



Survey questions:
How do you expect your firm to be performing in **12 months** compared to now?
Allowing for normal seasonal influences, what are your business performance expectations for the next **3 or 4 months**?
Sources : CFIB, Your business outlook survey, February 2009 - September 2026. 581 responses received from September 10 -16.
C.D. Howe Institute Business Cycle Council (Recession dates)
Note: Index < 50 = more businesses expecting weaker performance than stronger performance

Business Barometer®: 12-month small business confidence index for exporters and importers, Canada

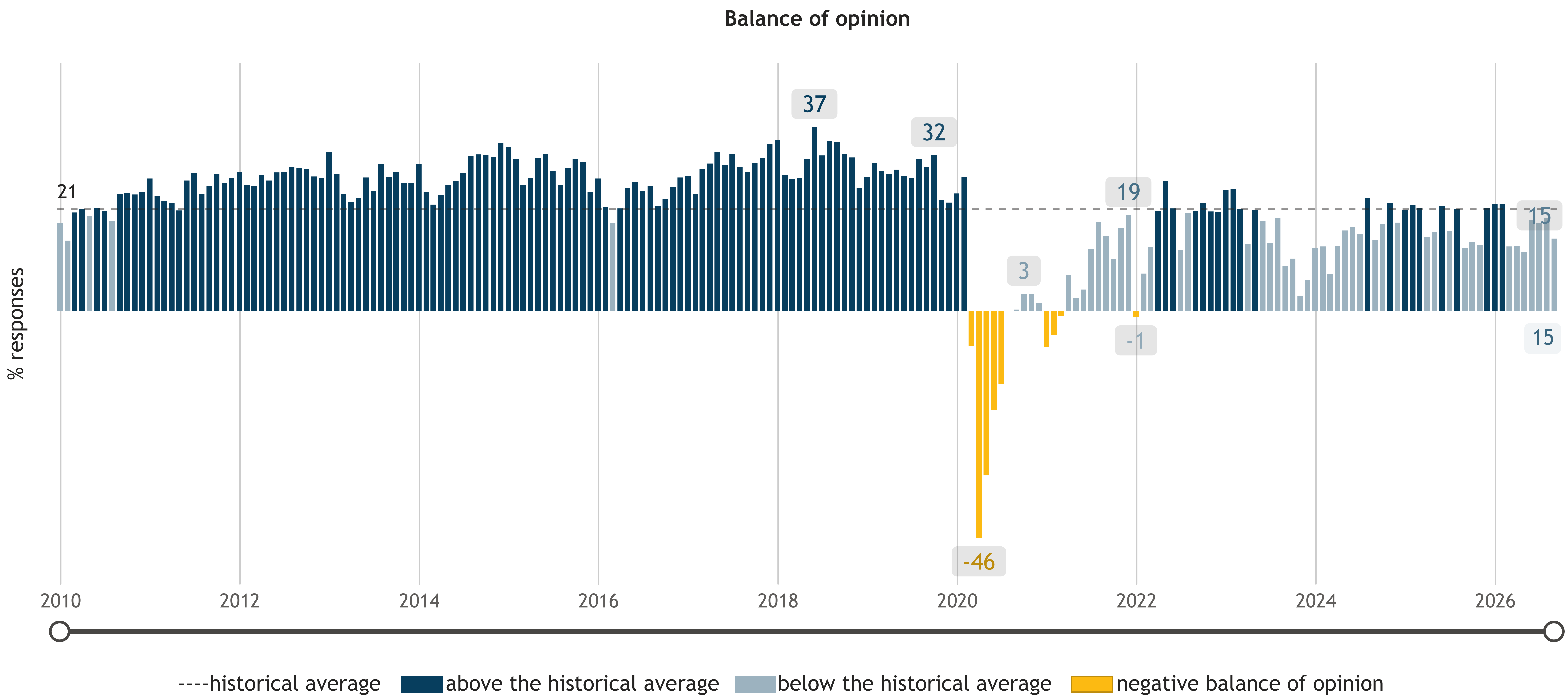


Survey questions: How do you expect your firm to be performing in 12 months compared to now?
International trade (Select one): **Buying from abroad**, **Selling abroad**, **A mix of both**, **Not active internationally**

Source: CFIB, Your business outlook survey, February 2009 - September 2026. 581 responses received from September 10 -16.

Note: Data for exporters and importers includes 'a mix of both' also.

Business Barometer®: General state of business health

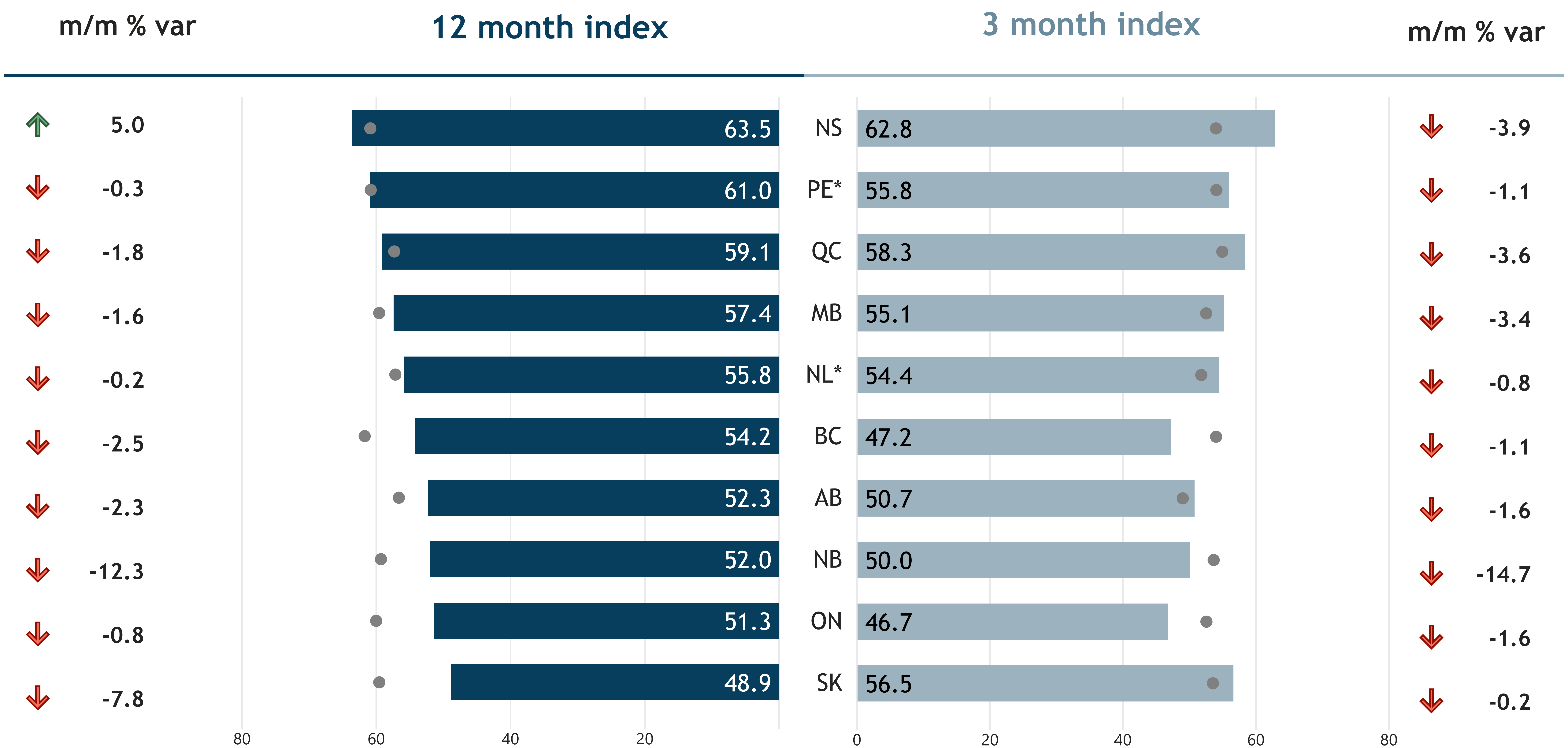


Survey question: Currently, what is the general business situation of your company?

Source: CFIB, Your business outlook survey, February 2009 - September 2026. 581 responses received from September 10 -16.

Note: Balance of opinion = [Share of respondents answering **Good**]- [Share of respondents answering **Bad**].

Business Barometer®: Small business confidence index, provinces



Survey question: How do you expect your firm to be performing in **12 months** compared to now?
Survey question: Allowing for normal seasonal influences, what are your business performance expectations for the next 3 or 4 months?
Source: CFIB, Your business outlook survey, February 2009 - September 2026. 581 responses received from September 10 -16.
Note: ● Historical averages. Data presented by 3-month moving average. *Data presented by 12-month moving average.
Index > 50 = more businesses expecting stronger performance than weaker performance

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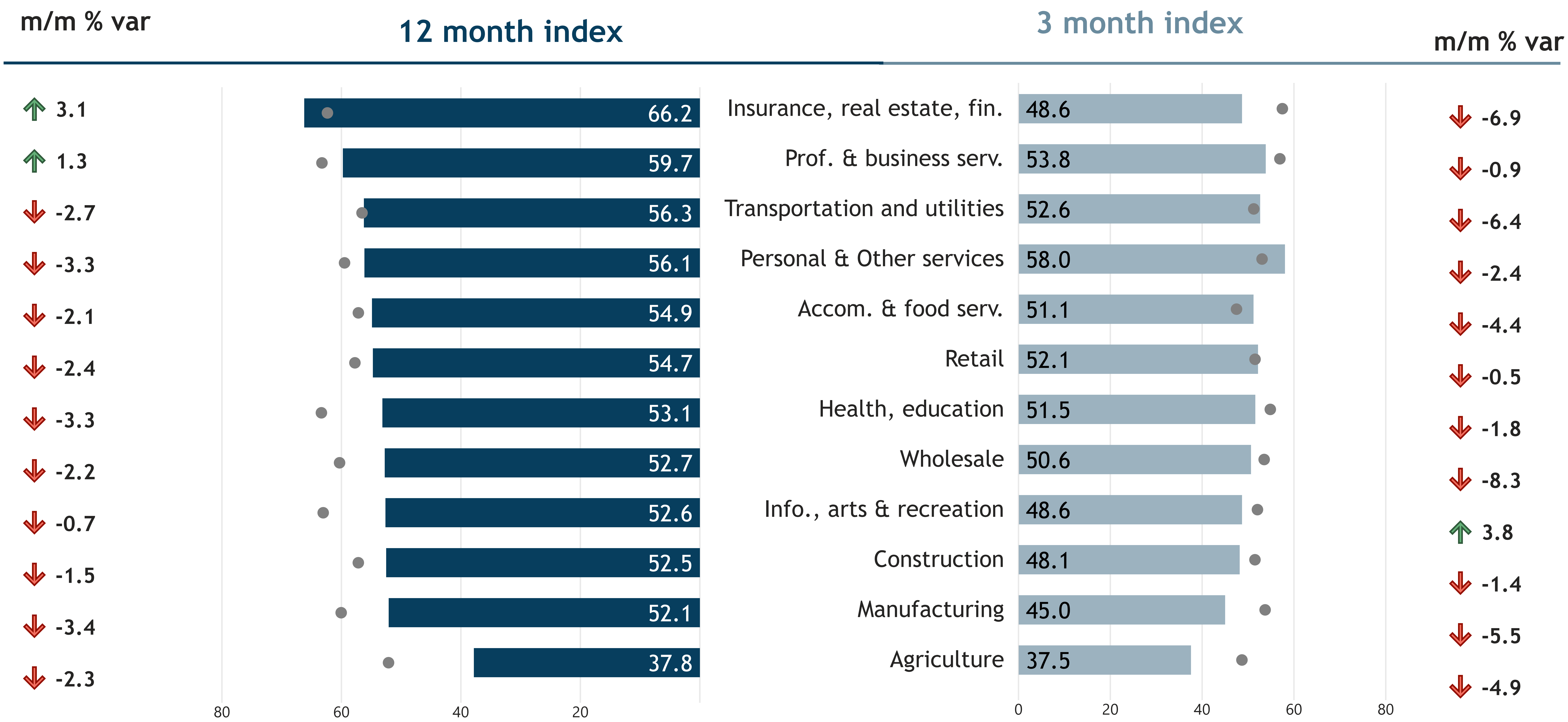
Business Barometer®: Small business confidence index, sectors



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Survey question: Allowing for normal seasonal influences, what are your business performance expectations for the next 3 or 4 months?
Source: CFIB, Your business outlook survey, February 2009 - September 2026. 581 responses received from September 10 -16.
Notes: ● Historical averages. Data is presented as 3-month moving average. Natural resources is not included.
Index > 50 = more businesses expecting stronger performance than weaker performance

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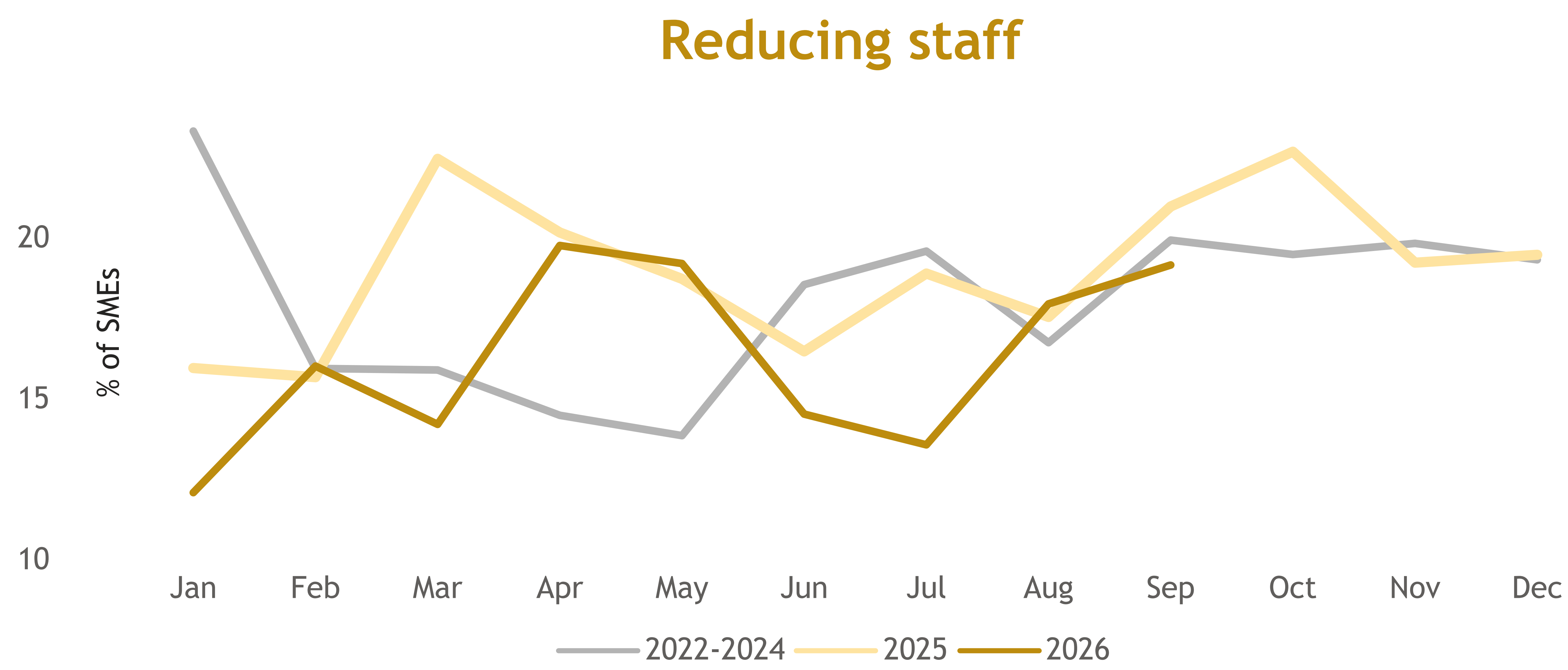
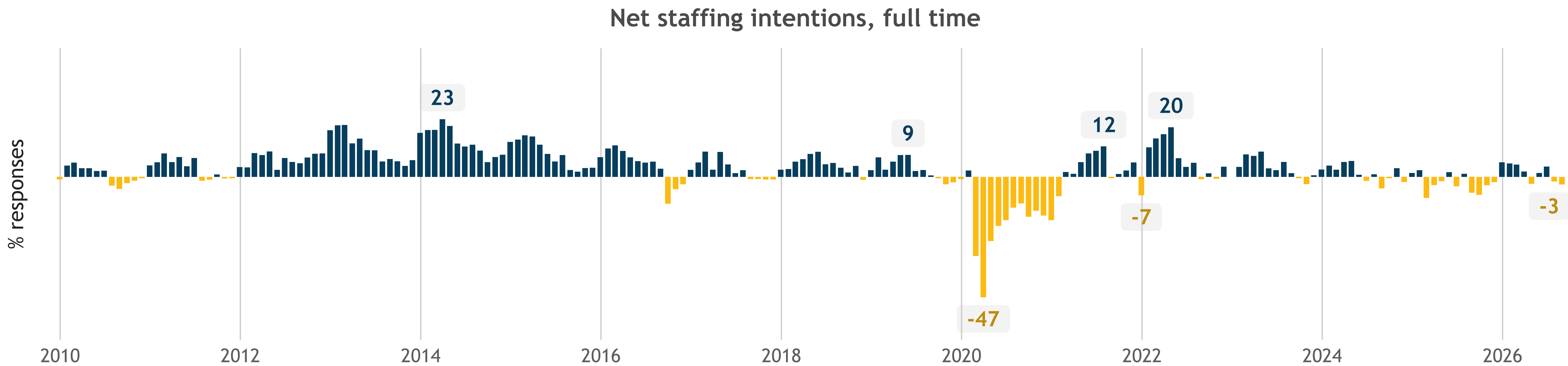
Business Barometer®: Full-time staffing plans, short term





Survey question: How are your expected employment levels to change in the next 3 or 4 months? (Up, Same, Down)

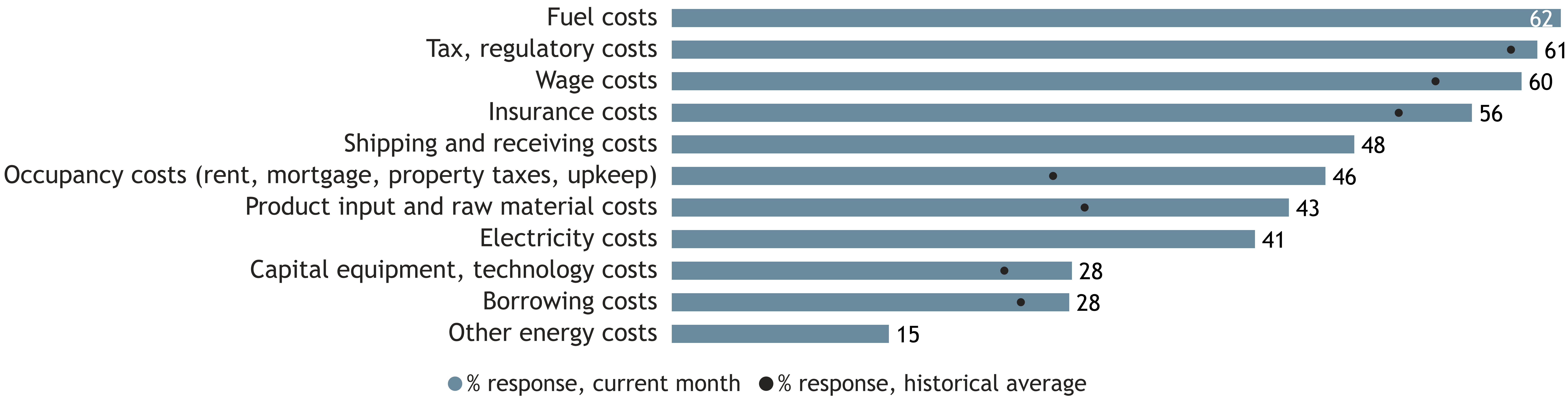
Source: CFIB, Your business outlook survey, February 2009 - September 2026. 581 responses received from September 10 -16.

Note: Net staffing intentions = [Share of respondents answering UP]- [Share of respondents answering Down]

Business Barometer®: Future price and wage increase plans

Survey questions:
In the next year, how much do you expect **average prices** to change?
In the next year, how much do you expect **average wages** to change?
Source: CFIB, Your business outlook survey, February 2009 - September 2026. 581 responses received from September 10 -16.

Business Barometer®: Major input cost constraints - current levels and trend

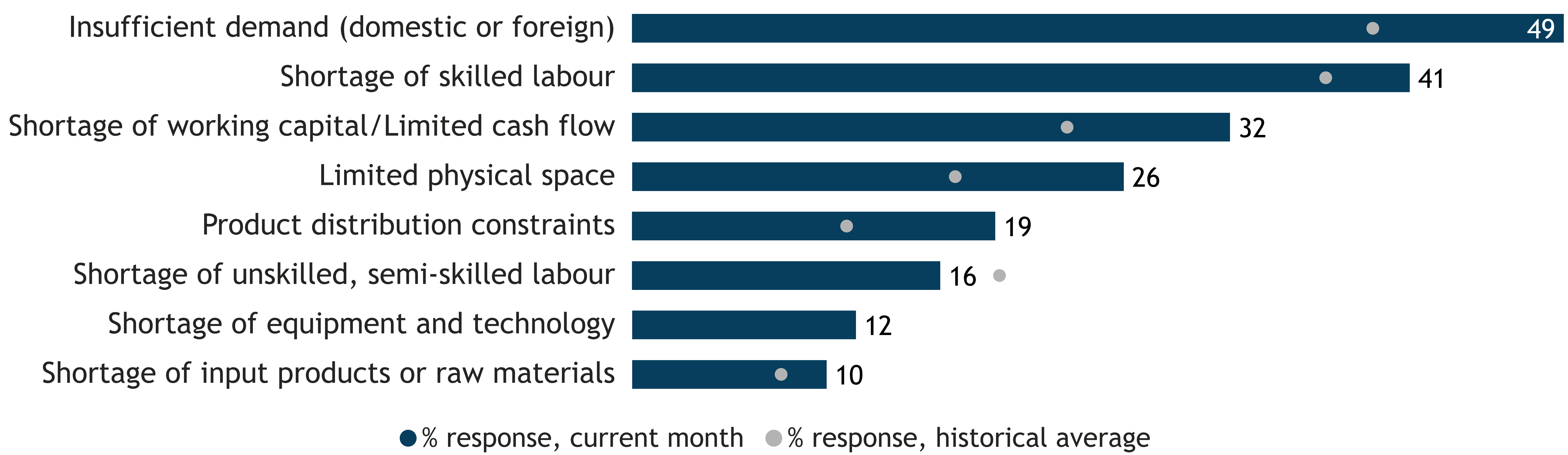


Survey question: What types of input costs are currently causing difficulties for your business?

Source: CFIB, Your business outlook survey, February 2009 - September 2026. 581 responses received from September 10 -16.

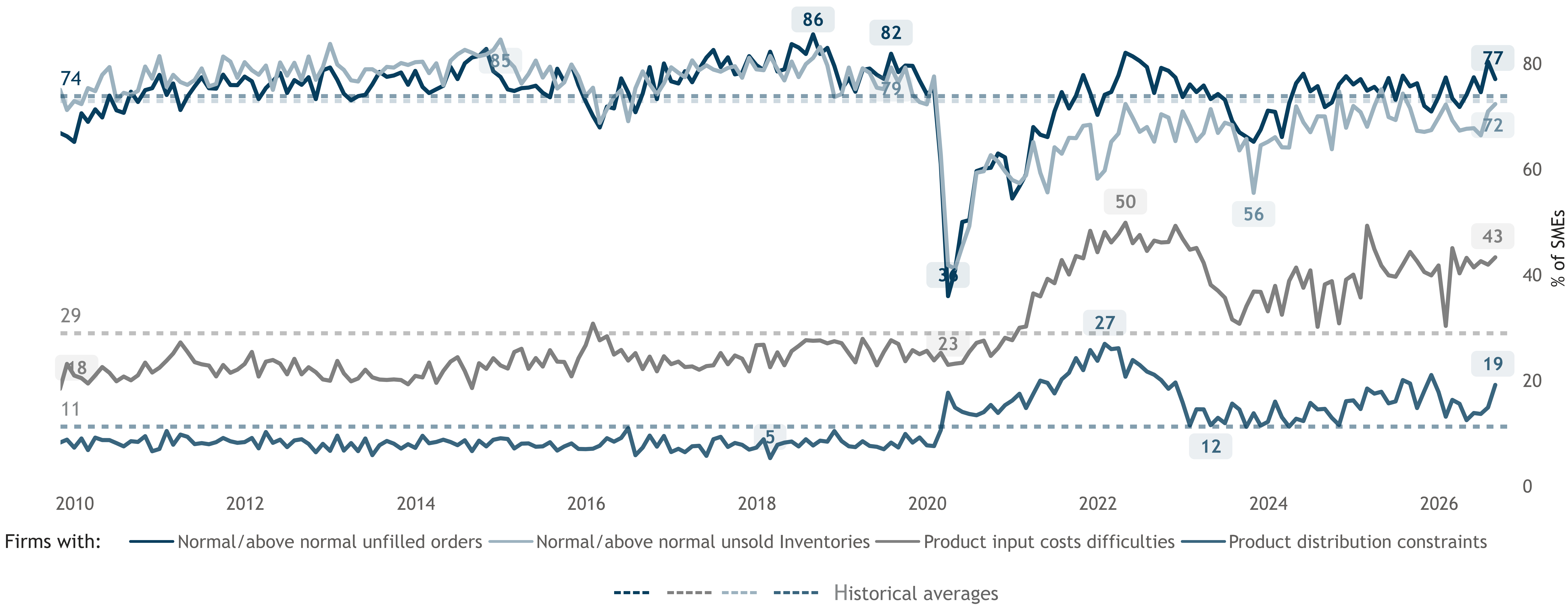
Note: Since February 2026, the question includes a new data point on shipping and receiving costs.

Business Barometer®: Factors limiting sales or production growth - current levels and trend



Survey question: What factors are limiting your ability to increase sales or production?
Source: CFIB, Your business outlook survey, February 2009 - September 2026. 581 responses received from September 10 -16.
Note: Since February 2026, the question includes a new data point on shortages of equipment and technology.

Business Barometer®: Supply chain indicators



Survey questions:

Allowing for normal seasonal influences, what are **current unfilled orders** and **unsold inventories** compared to normal?

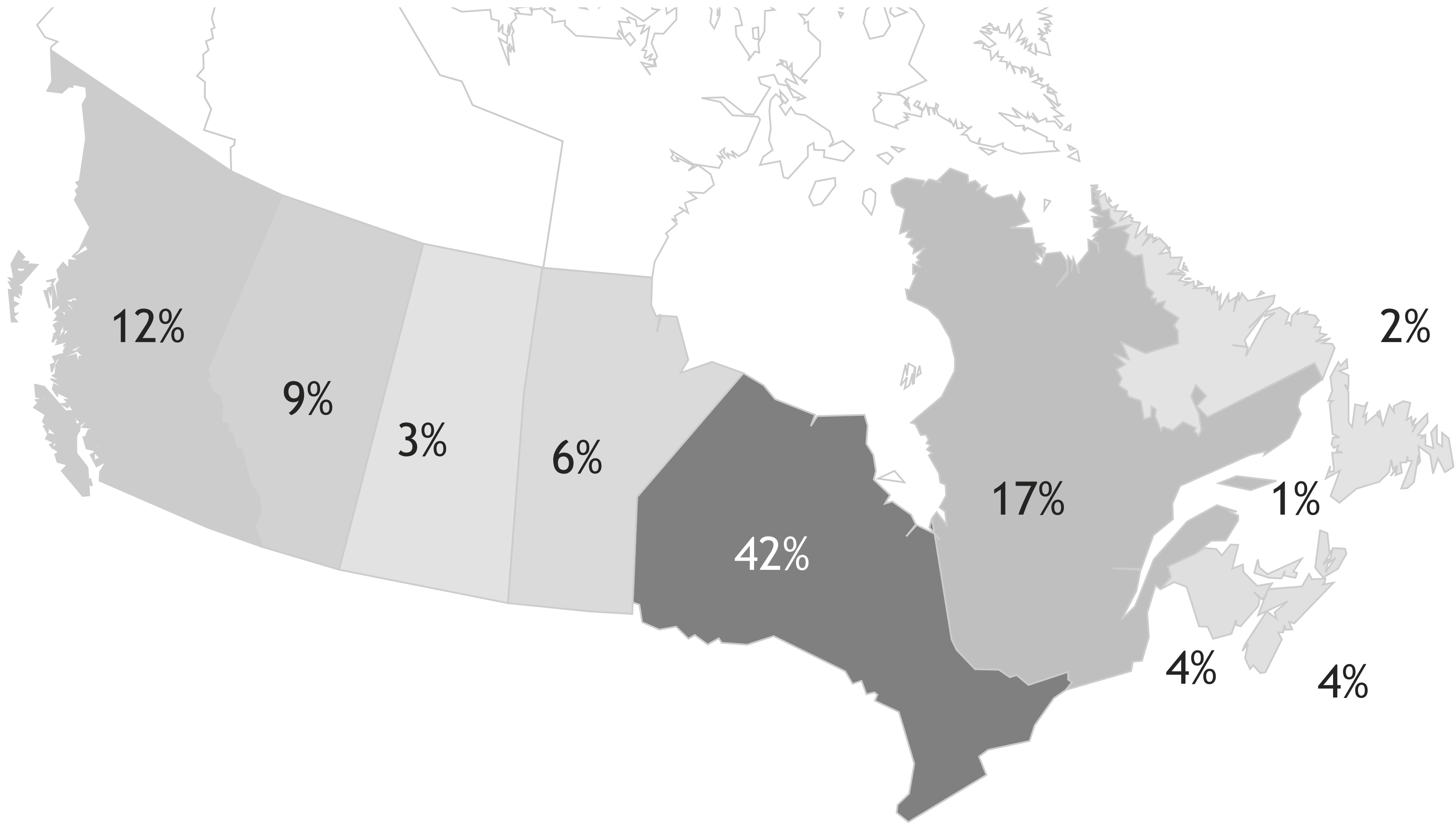
What types of input costs are currently causing difficulties for your business? [Respondents selecting "**Product input costs**"]

What factors are limiting your ability to increase sales or production? [Respondents selecting "**Product distribution constraints**"]

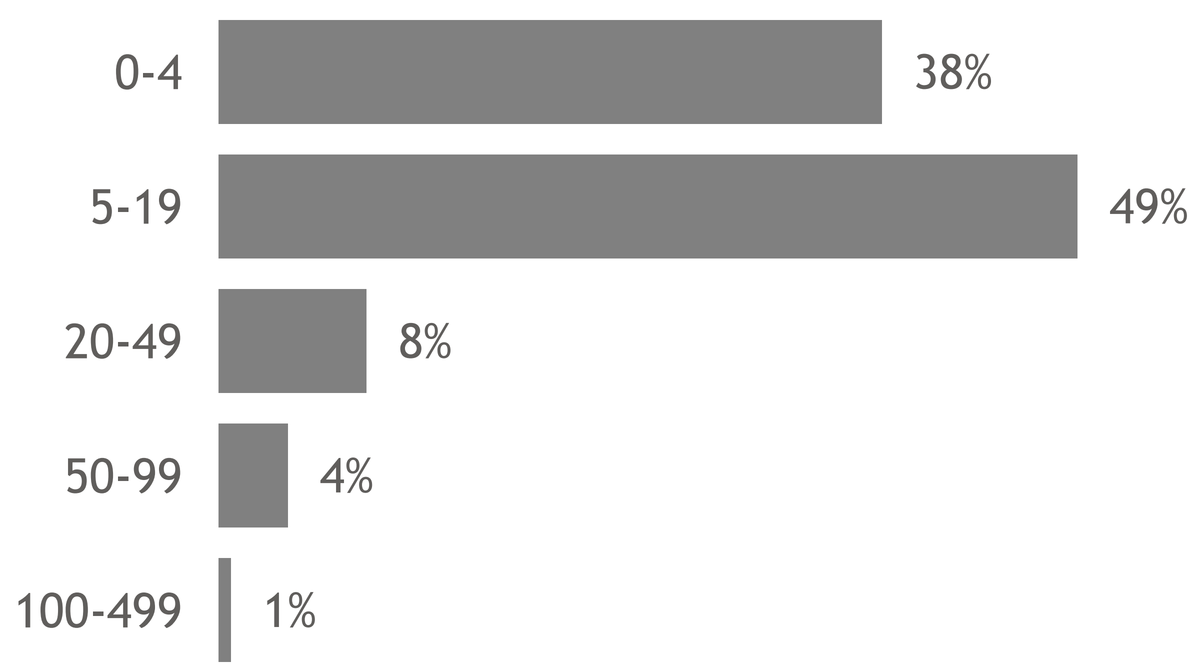
Source: CFIB, Your business outlook survey, February 2009 - September 2026. 581 responses received from September 10 -16.

Business Barometer®: Sample distribution

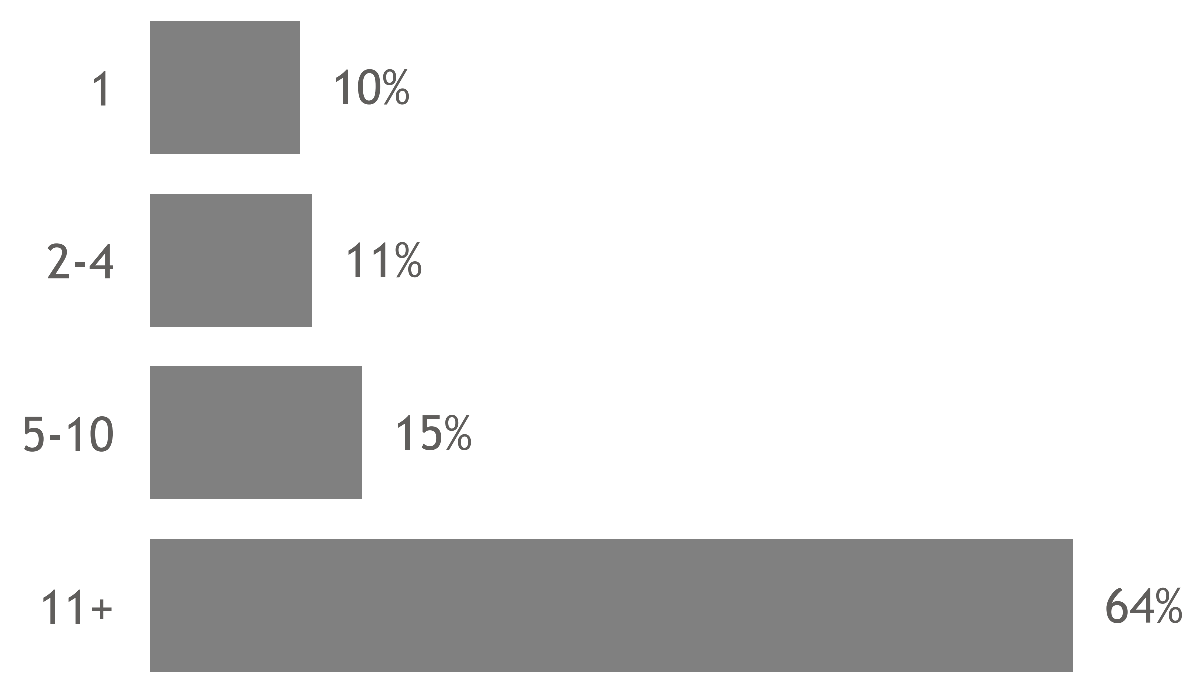
By location of the business



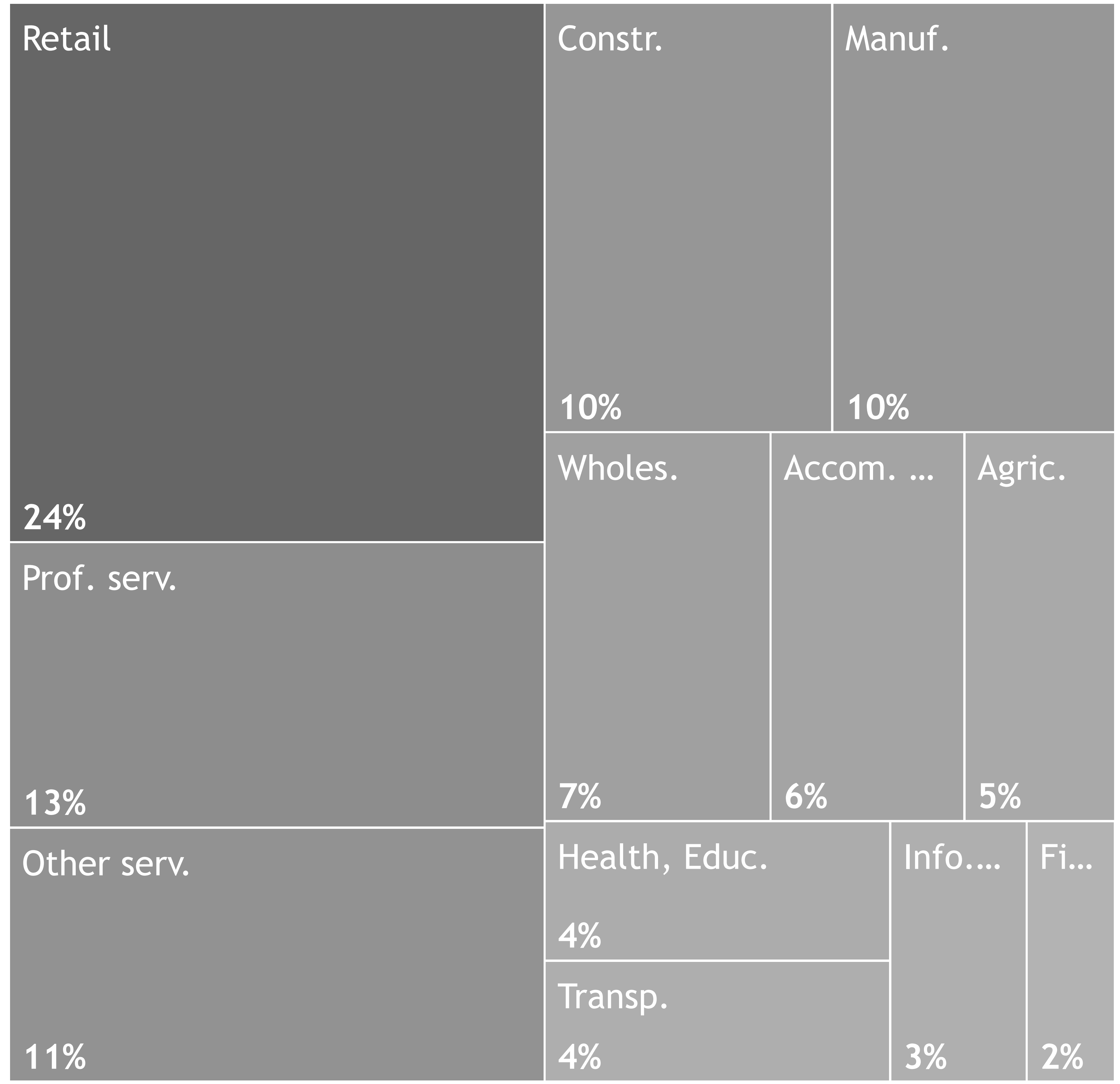
By number of employees



By years in business



By industry



Methodology

- CFIB, Your business outlook survey, September 2026
- Stratified random sample of CFIB members to a controlled-access web survey: 581 responses
- Responses were received from: September 10-16.
- The survey is considered accurate to within +/- 4.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.
- Every new month, all indicators are recalculated for the previous month to include all survey responses received in that previous month. Accordingly, August's results were recalculated to include 18 additional responses beyond the 278 originally used.
- Measured on a scale between 0 and 100, an index below 50 means owners expecting their business's performance to be weaker over the next three or 12 months outnumber those expecting stronger performance.

Questions or data requests

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