



Government Satisfaction Report Q4'23

6th February 2024

SME SATISFACTION WITH GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE DECLINES

- **Micro-sized enterprises (1-10 employees) least satisfied with government (-33%).**
- **Small-sized businesses (10-50 employees) most satisfied with government performance (-6%).**
- **Government's handling of banking situation improves.**
- **Manufacturing sector least satisfied with government performance (-100%).**

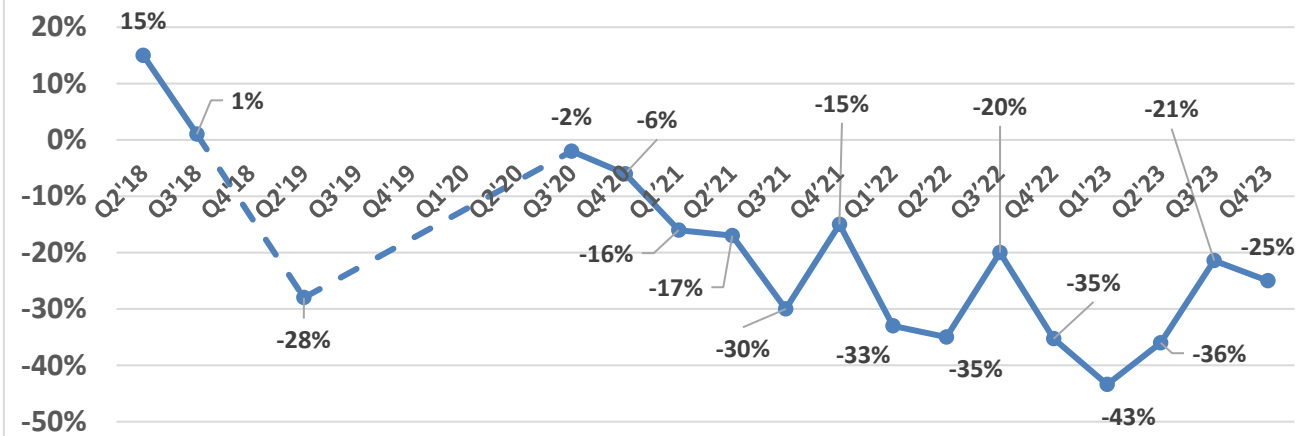
ISME, the Irish SME Association, today (6th February) released its Government Satisfaction Report for Q4'23. ISME emphasises the need for greater action on business costs and access to finance. This report examines government satisfaction in key areas for the SME sector; 'Jobs', 'Banking', 'Economy' and 'Business Costs'.

This report was generated using data from our Q4'23 business trends survey, published in the first week of December 2023. There were 54 SME respondents, 43% of whom employ less than 10; 46% employ between 11 and 49; and the remaining 11% employ between 50 and 250. Geographically, 33% are from Dublin; 52% are spread across the rest of the country; and 15% have multiple sites.

Dealing with the job situation:

The trend of the Government's handling of the job situation declined significantly this quarter, falling from -21% to -25%. SMEs are still running having difficulty with retaining current staff and attracting new employees.

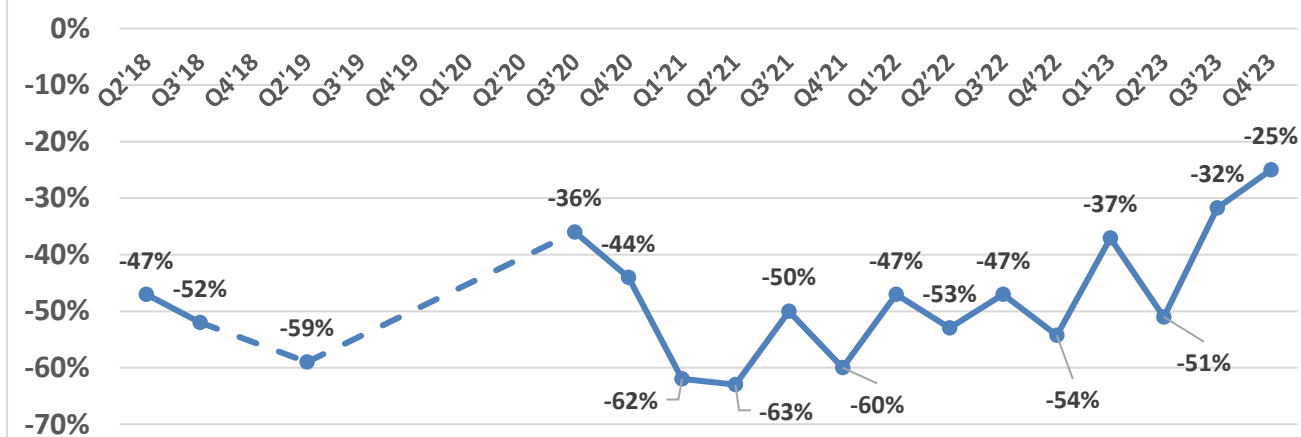
Dealing with the jobs situation



Dealing with the banking situation:

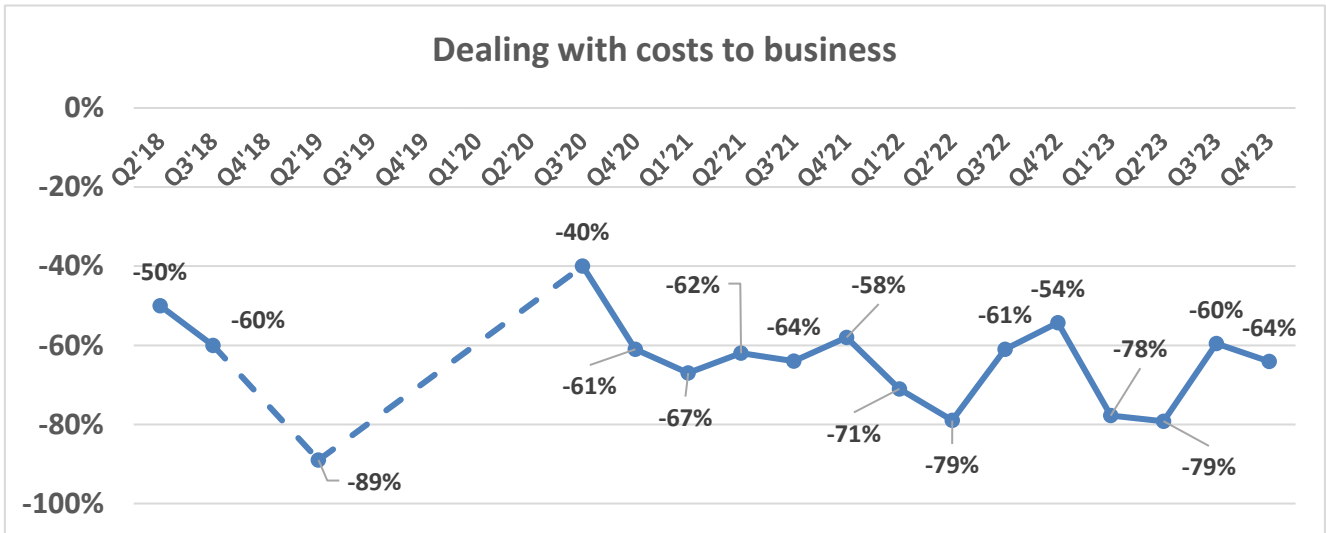
Banking, access to finance and the government’s handling of the banking situation persists as one of the biggest sources of dissatisfaction for many small and medium enterprises. This trend rose by a further 7% this quarter, increasing from -32% in Q3'23 to -25% in Q4'23. It must be reiterated that until a change occurs in the dependence on the three main financial institutions in this country, this persistent trend around banking will likely persist.

Dealing with the banking situation



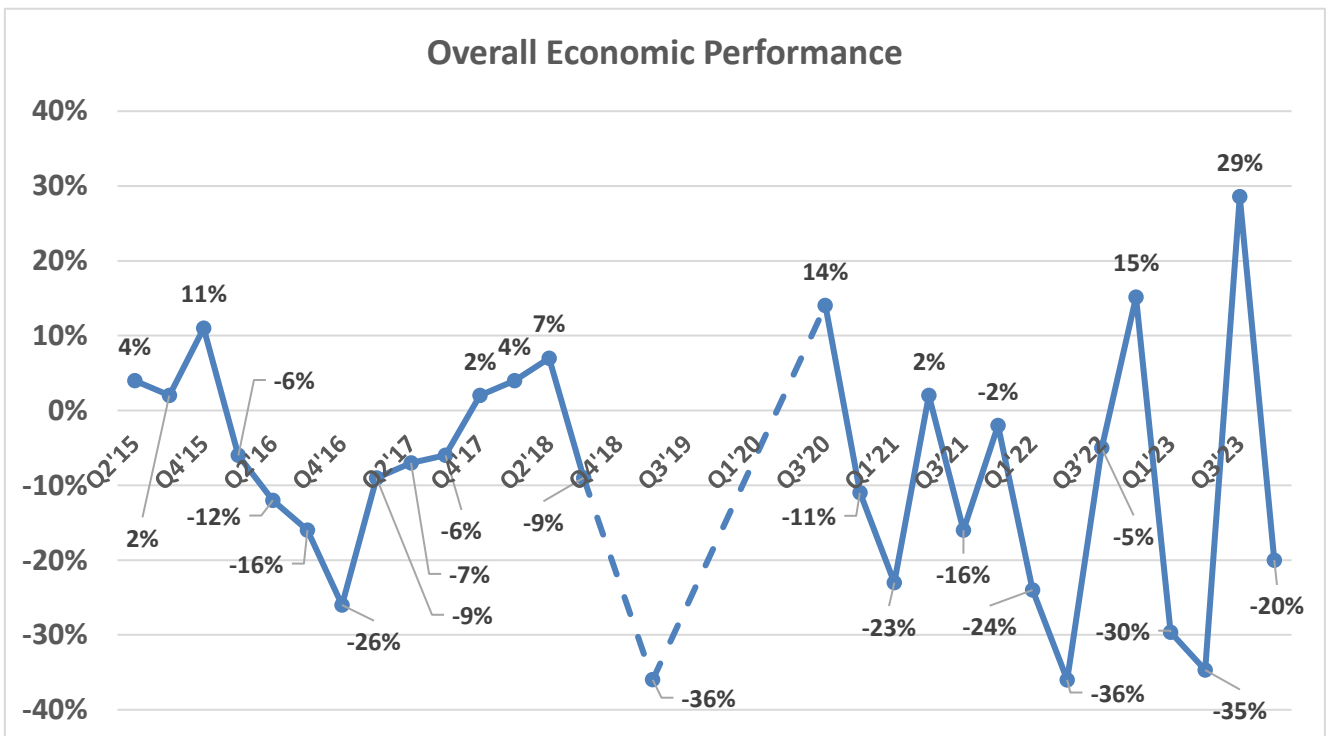
Dealing with the costs to business:

Business cost satisfaction has been a consistent worry for SMEs. A clear upward trend can be seen between Q2'19 and Q3'20, which was undone throughout Q4'20 and Q1'21. As with the other areas covered in this report, this sudden downward trend stems from the COVID-19 pandemic. This trend declined slightly this quarter, going from -60% in Q3'23 to -64% in Q4'23.



Overall Economic Performance:

The overall economic performance of the government, based on the responses of our SMEs, shows a massive decline from Q3'23.



Summary Data:

Q4'23	SME Size		
	Micro (1-10)	Small (10-50)	Medium (50+) *
Jobs	0%	-41%	-60%
Banking	-22%	-41%	20%
Economy	0%	-38%	20%
Costs to business	-56%	-63%	-100%
Overall Economic Performance	-33%	-6%	-20%

Q4'23	Sector		
	Manufacturing	Services	Retail *
Jobs	-60%	43%	-20%
Banking	20%	-43%	-20%
Economy	-20%	14%	-50%
Costs to business	-100%	-43%	-100%
Overall Economic Performance	-100%	-14%	-20%

NOTE:

The satisfaction ratings in this report are made up from five specific responses to a question on the Government's performance in dealing with Jobs, Banking, Business Costs the Economy and Overall performance. The results are based on simple balances of the differences between positive and negative responses, for example the negative balance for Jobs means that a greater percentage of respondents were unsatisfied with the Government's performance on the Jobs issue.

ENDS.

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Note to Editors:

This survey was conducted in the first week of December 2023, covering the fourth quarter of 2023. There were 54 SME owner manager respondents. The results presented in this report are calculated as the aggregate response to a survey question, i.e., the sum of all positive and negative responses. For example, a survey question may ask: "Have you increased or reduced investment in your company in the last 12 months?". The breakdown of responses is as follows: 51% "Increased", 39% "Remain Same" and 13% "Decreased". The aggregate response to this question is calculated as the sum of the positive and negative sentiment expressed in the question: 51% - 13% = 38%. The neutral response, "Remain Same" is not considered.

* Summary data based on a very small sample size.