



User guide to the
Economic Tendency Survey

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Administrative information

Background and purpose

The Economic Tendency Survey is a survey of Swedish firms and consumers conducted by the National Institute of Economic Research (NIER) to capture trends in various economic variables. The questions look partly at recent trends and the present situation and partly at expectations of the future. The survey is qualitative, which means that it does not ask for absolute numbers (such as amounts of money or numbers of units). Respondents reply solely using qualitative response options, such as increased/unchanged/decreased.

The questionnaires do not include detailed definitions. The questions contain well-known concepts such as “number of employees” without defining what exactly is meant by employees – for example, whether this includes full-time and part-time positions, temporary staff, etc. The idea is that the questions can be answered without a great deal of research. The need for a rapid response is reflected throughout the survey. Speed is important so that the results are as close as possible to the current situation. This enables the results to be published before the corresponding traditional statistics in order to provide an early indication of the possible outcome.

The NIER began conducting quarterly business surveys on a limited scale (the textile industry) back in the 1950s. The entire manufacturing industry has been covered since 1964, and these days almost all sectors of industry are included. The main exceptions are agriculture & forestry and mining & quarrying. Since 1996 there have also been monthly surveys, which were introduced when Sweden joined the EU and are a requirement of the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs (DG ECFIN). The Consumer Tendency Survey began in 1973 on a quarterly basis and has been performed monthly since 1993. The government has made the NIER responsible for the statistics in the Consumer Tendency Survey.

Frequency and reference periods

The Economic Tendency Survey is conducted monthly. Every third month, the business surveys contain additional questions. To distinguish between the different surveys, they are referred to as the quarterly and monthly tendency surveys. The results of the quarterly surveys are published in April (first quarter), July (second quarter), October (third quarter) and January (fourth quarter).

The questions in the Business Tendency Survey mainly relate to the past three months and the next three months. In the consumer survey, the reference periods are the past 12 months and the next 12 months.

EU harmonisation

The Economic Tendency Survey forms part of DG ECFIN’s Joint Harmonised EU Programme of Business and Consumer Surveys. This entails a common framework across the EU for conducting these surveys in terms of the timing of data collection, the industries covered, and the formulation of questions. All EU member states conduct monthly tendency surveys. A complete list of all ques-

tions and industries presented by DG ECFIN can be found in the *Joint Harmonised EU Programme of Business and Consumer Surveys User Guide* (DG ECFIN, 2007).

Each month the NIER submits the results of its monthly survey to DG ECFIN in accordance with the latter's guidelines for questions and industry classification. The results for the EU as a whole are published monthly on DG ECFIN's website. DG ECFIN co-finances the member states' tendency surveys.

Availability

The results are published towards the end of the month; roughly a week after data collection is completed. All of the tendency series are available as time series in the statistical database on the NIER's website, www.konj.se. The entire report is also available in PDF format, and newsletters are sent to users when new results are published.

The Business Tendency Survey

The Business Tendency Survey is a panel survey for which a random sample of around 7 000 firms is selected each year. However, all firms with more than 100 employees are automatically selected. The sample is stratified by size and industry. Information on the population is sourced from Statistics Sweden's Business Register (FDB), a comprehensive database of all firms in the country.

Responses are collected by a web-questionnaire. From the time the questionnaires are sent out, respondents normally have just over a week to reply before a reminder is sent. After a further week, the largest firms are given a telephone reminder. All in all, the responses are collected over a period of almost three weeks. The questionnaire is addressed to the firm's management and designed in such a way that it can be answered quickly and easily.

The significance of a firm's responses is assumed to be related to the firm's size. Responses from a large firm are given more weight than those from a small firm. Once a firm's responses have been received, they are therefore weighted according to the firm's size.

The weighted responses for each size category and industry are added together and then extrapolated to the level they would have been if all firms in the sample had responded to the question.

As firms in different strata are selected with different probabilities, responses need to be extrapolated to the level they would have been if all firms in the population in a particular stratum had been surveyed. A larger weight is given to small sample units, as they represent other small units that were not included in the sample.

The weights used to weight answers according to firms' size vary between industries and questions. In the manufacturing industry, the main weight used is value added, but number of employees is used to weight questions on employment. In the other sectors, number of employees is used. The weights are updated annually when the sample is updated.

The Consumer Tendency Survey

For the Consumer Tendency Survey, telephone interviews are conducted with 1 500 Swedish households each month. The questions cover consumers' assessment of their personal finances and the Swedish economy, expectations for interest rates and inflation, and plans for major purchases and savings.

The target population is the Swedish general public aged 16-84. The sample of households is selected randomly each month from the PAR Konsument consumer database. The records are based on information from the country's telecommunications operators and include both landline and mobile telephone numbers.

Telephone interviews are conducted using computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) software, which permits logic checks on responses and manages all call-backs. Data collection is managed using a matrix based on the gender, age and regional distribution of the Swedish population. This ensures that genders, ages and regions are correctly represented. Once a quota is filled, data collection in that group is discontinued. The survey continues until 1 500 responses have been received. It is not therefore possible to perform any analysis of non-response.

The interviews are conducted during the first fortnight of each month and are evenly distributed from day 1 to day 15.

Net balances

Net balances are used to make it easier to present and analyse the results of the tendency survey. The net balance is the difference between the percentages of respondents responding positively and negatively to a question.

Seasonally-adjusted time series

The seasonal adjustment of time series involves eliminating variations and effects in the time series that are due to seasonal factors. All results of the Business Tendency Survey presented in charts are seasonally adjusted (except for the price questions). The Tendency Surveys is seasonally adjusted using X-12-Arima.

Indicators

Confidence indicators

Confidence indicators are used as an aggregate measure of the situation in each industrial sector and the household sector. The confidence indicator is a mean of the net balances (seasonally adjusted and standardised) for selected questions. Finally, this time series is standardised into a new series with a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 10 for the period since 1996.

Questions included in the Confidence indicators

Sector	Questions
Manufacturing	Order books (present situation assessment) – stock of finished goods (present situation assessment) + production volume (expectations)
Construction	Order books (present situation assessment) + number of employed (expectations)
Trade	Selling volume (outcome) – stock of goods (present situation assessment) + selling volume (expectations)
Private service sector	The firm's business situation (outcome) + Demand for the firm's services (outcome) + Demand for the firm's services (expectations)
Consumers	Financial situation of the household now + Financial situation of the household within 12 months + Swedish economy now + Swedish economy within 12 months + good time to buy consumer durables now

Micro and Macro Index

The Micro Index summarises consumers' view of their personal finances and The Macro Index summarises consumers' view of the Swedish economy.

Questions included in the Micro and Macro indexes

Index	Questions
Micro	Financial position of household (assessment of present situation) + financial position of household (expectations) + right time to make major purchases (assessment of present situation) + major purchases by household (expectations)
Macro	Swedish economy (assessment of present situation) + Swedish economy (expectations) - unemployment (expectations)

Economic Tendency Indicator

The Economic Tendency Indicator aims to measure current sentiment in the Swedish economy. The model is the European Commission's Economic Sentiment Indicator (ESI). The EU also publishes an ESI for Sweden, but the Economic Tendency Indicator is not based on exactly the same values as the ESI, mainly for technical reasons. Not only is the Consumer Confidence Indicator defined differently, but the seasonal adjustment method also differs.

The same questions that are included in the individual confidence indicators in the tendency surveys are used in the calculation of The Economic Tendency Indicator. The questions' net balances are seasonally adjusted and then transformed (standardised) to a mean of zero and a standard deviation of 1. In the next step, the standardised series are aggregated using a weighting system where the net balances for the manufacturing industry are weighted at 40 per cent, the service sector at 30 per cent, the retail trade and the construction industry at 5 per cent each, and consumers at 20 per cent. Finally, this time series is standardised into a new series with a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 10.

Interpretation

The interpretation of the results of the indicators is then that values over 100 correspond to stronger economic growth than normal, and values over 110 to much stronger growth than normal. Simi-

larly, values below 100 and 90 will be interpreted, respectively, as weaker and much weaker growth than normal.

Adjustment of indicators

The indicators are revised slightly when a new observation is added. This is because a new seasonal adjustment of the time series is performed each month. Previous observations are almost always then subject to a small upward or downward adjustment. The mean and standard deviation for the period since 1996 are also updated. This affects the standardisation of the time series such that it still has a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 10 even when the most recently added monthly observation is included.

Appendix 1. Questions in the Business Tendency Survey

Manufacturing

Question	Responses			Question number		Question number	
				NIER	M	ECFin	M
Outcome and present situation				Q	M	Q	M
Production volume in the last 3 month	increased	unchanged	decreased	101	101	Q1	Q1
Production capacity in the last 3 month	increased	unchanged	decreased	102			
Current production capacity	more than sufficient	sufficient	not sufficient	103		Q9	
Current capacity utilization in percent				104		Q13	
Selling prices on the domestic market in the last 3 month	increased	unchanged	decreased	105			
Selling prices on the export market in the last 3 month	increased	unchanged	decreased	106			
Orders received on the domestic market in the last 3 month	increased	unchanged	decreased	107	102	Q11 ¹	
Orders received on the export market in the last 3 month	increased	unchanged	decreased	108	103	Q11 ¹	
Total orderbooks at present	relatively large	just enough	too small	109	104	Q2	Q2
Export orderbooks at present	relatively large	just enough	too small	110	105	Q3	Q3
Number of production weeks covered by current orderbooks				111		Q10 ²	
How has the firms competitive situation changed over the last 3 months:							
on the domestic market	improved	unchanged	worsened	112		Q14	
on the EU-market	improved	unchanged	worsened	113		Q15	
outside the EU	improved	unchanged	worsened	114		Q16	
Current profitability	good	satisfactory	poor	115			
Number of employees in the last 3 months	increased	unchanged	decreased	116	107		
Shortage of (at present):							
skilled workers	yes	no		117			
technical employees	yes	no		118			
other employees	yes	no		119			
Stocks of raw materials at present	too large	just enough	too small	120			
Stocks of finished goods in the last 3 month	increased	unchanged	decreased	121			
Stocks of finished goods at present	too large	just enough	too small	122	106	Q4	Q4
Factor currently limiting the firms production (one alternative):						Q8	
none				123			
insufficient demand				124			
shortage of capacity or materials				125			
shortage of labour				126			
financial constraints				127			
other factors				128			

The table continues on the next page.

Manufacturing continuing

Question	Responses			Question number		Question number	
				NIER	NIER	ECFin	ECFin
Expectations and plans				Q	M	Q	M
Production volume within the next 3 months	increase	unchanged	decrease	201	201	Q5	Q5
Production capacity within the next 3 months	increase	unchanged	decrease	202			
Selling prices on the domestic market within the next 3 months	increase	unchanged	decrease	203	202	Q6 ¹	Q6 ¹
Selling prices on the export market within the next 3 months	increase	unchanged	decrease	204	203	Q6 ¹	Q6 ¹
Orders received on the domestic market within the next 3 months	increase	unchanged	decrease	205			
Orders received on the export market within the next 3 months	increase	unchanged	decrease	206		Q12	
Number of employees within the next 3 months	increase	unchanged	decrease	207	204	Q7	Q7
How much in percent do you think that prices will go up/down in the next 12 month				302			
Financing the firm's operations is currently (compared to normal):	Much harder	Harder	More or less normal		Slightly easier	Much easier	
If harder/easier, this is due mainly to:							
Higher/lower borrowing costs for bank loans							
Reduced/better availability of bank loans							
Reduced/better availability of equity financing							
Higher/lower costs for financing through corporate bonds etc.							
Other factors							

¹ The results for the questions about the domestic and export markets are weighted together to a total score when reported to the EU.

² The result is converted into months when reported to the EU.

Construction

Question	Response			Question-number		Question-number	
				NIER		EcFin	
				Q	M	Q	M
Building activity in the last 3 months	increased	unchanged	decreased	101	101	Q1	Q1
Tender prices in the last 3 months	increased	unchanged	decreased	102	102		
Order books in the last 3 months	increased	unchanged	decreased	103	103		
Order books at present	relatively large	just right	too small	104	104	Q3	Q3
Duration of assured order books weeks			105		Q6	
Number of employees in the last 3 months	increased	unchanged	decreased	106	106		
Factor currently limiting the firms production (one alternative):						Q2	Q2
none				1071	1071		
insufficient demand				1072	1072		
shortage of machinery capacity and/or materials							
shortage of labour				1074	1074		
weather conditions				1075	1075		
financial constraints				1076	1076		
other factors				1077	1077		
Building activity within the next 3 months	increase	unchanged	decrease	201	201		
Tender prices within the next 3 months	increase	unchanged	decrease	202	202	Q5	Q5
Order books within the next 3 months	increase	unchanged	decrease	203	203		
Number of employees within the next 3 months	increase	unchanged	decrease	204	204	Q4	Q4
Outlook for the construction market a year ahead	improve	unchanged	get worse	205			
How much in percent do you think that prices will go up/down in the next 12 month				302			
Financing the firm's operations is currently (compared to normal):		Much harder	Harder	More or less normal	Slightly easier	Much easier	
If harder/easier, this is due mainly to:							
Higher/lower borrowing costs for bank loans							
Reduced/better availability of bank loans							
Reduced/better availability of equity financing							
Higher/lower costs for financing through corporate bonds etc.							
Other factors							

Trade

Question	Response			Question- Number NIER		Question- Number EcFin	
				Q	M	Q	M
Selling volume in the last 3 months	increased	unchanged	decreased	101	101	Q1	Q1
Present sales situation	good	satisfactory	bad	102	102		
Goods purchases in the last 3 months	increased	unchanged	Decreased	103			
Goods in stock at present	too large	large enough	too small	104	103	Q2	Q2
Number of employees in the last 3 months	increased	unchanged	decreased	105	104		
Shortage of labour at present	yes	no		106			
Selling prices in the last 3 months	increased	unchanged	decreased	107	107		
If increased/decreased: What was the most important reason why sales prices were last modified				152			
changed prices among competitors							
change in demand							
changed domestic prices							
changed world market prices or exchange rates							
other reason							
Current profitability	good	satisfactory	poor	108			
Selling volume within the next 3 months	increase	unchanged	decrease	201	201	Q4	Q4
Goods purchases within the next 3 months	increase	unchanged	decrease	202	203	Q3	Q3
Goods purchase prices within the next 3 months	increase	unchanged	decrease	250	250		
Number of employees within the next 3 months	increase	unchanged	decrease	203	204	Q5	Q5
Selling prices within the next 3 months	increase	unchanged	decrease	204	202	Q6	Q6
Sales situation within the next 6 months	get better	unchanged	get worse	205	205		
How much in percent do you think that prices will go up/down in the next 12 month				302			
Financing the firm's operations is currently (compared to normal):		Much harder	Harder	More or less normal	Slightly easier	Much easier	
If harder/easier, this is due mainly to:							
Higher/lower borrowing costs for bank loans							
Reduced/better availability of bank loans							
Reduced/better availability of equity financing							
Higher/lower costs for financing through corporate bonds etc.							
Other factors							

Service sector

Question	Response			Question number	
				Q	M
Development of the firms business situation the last 3 months	improved	unchanged	worsened	101	101
Total costs for the firm the last 3 months	increased	unchanged	decreased	150	150
Demand for the firms services in the last 3 months	increased	unchanged	decreased	102	102
Volume of assignments on hand\orders at present	relatively large	large enough	too small	103	103
Selling prices in the last 3 months	increased	unchanged	decreased	104	104
If increased/decreased: What was the most important reason why sales prices were last modified					
changed prices among competitors					
change in demand					
changed domestic prices					
changed world market prices or exchange rates					
other reason					
Current profitability	good	satisfactory	poor	105	
Number of employees in the last 3 months	increased	unchanged	decreased	106	105
Shortage of labour at present	yes	no		107	
If demand increases, is it possible to increase production with present resources?	yes	no		108	
If yes, how muchpercent			109	
Main factor currently limiting the firms activity (one alternative):					
none					
insufficient demand					
shortage of labour					
shortage of space and/or equipment					
financial restrictions					
other factors					
Demand for the firms services within the next 3 months	increase	unchanged	decrease	201	201
Selling prices within the next 3 months	increase	unchanged	decrease	202	202
Number of employees within the next 3 months	increase	unchanged	decrease	203	203
Demand for the firms services within the next 6 months	increase	unchanged	decrease	204	
How much in percent do you think that prices will go up/down in the next 12 month				302	
Financing the firm's operations is currently (compared to normal):	Much harder	Harder	More or less normal	Slightly easier	Much easier
If harder/easier, this is due mainly to:					
Higher/lower borrowing costs for bank loans					
Reduced/better availability of bank loans					
Reduced/better availability of equity financing					
Higher/lower costs for financing through corporate bonds etc.					
Other factors					

Appendix 2. Questions in the Consumer Tendency Survey

1. How does the financial situation of your household now compare with what it was 12 months ago? Has it...?

- Got a lot better
- Got a little better
- Stayed the same
- Got a little worse
- Got a lot worse
- Don't know

2. How do you think the financial position of your household will change over the next 12 months? Will it...?

- Get a lot better
- Get a little better
- Stay the same
- Get a little worse
- Get a lot worse
- Don't know

3. How do you think the general economic situation in this country has changed over the last 12 months? Has it...?

- Got a lot better
- Got a little better
- Stayed the same
- Got a little worse
- Got a lot worse
- Don't know

4. How do you think the general economic situation in this country will develop over the next 12 months? Will it...?

- Get a lot better
- Get a little better
- Stay the same
- Get a little worse
- Get a lot worse
- Don't know

5. Compared with 12 months ago, do you find that prices in general are ...?

- Very much higher
- Quit a bit higher
- A little higher
- About the same
- Lower
- Don't know

5a-b. Compared with 12 months ago, how much higher in percent do you think that prices are now? (Average)

Including extreme values

Excluding extreme values

6. Compared to the situation today, do you think that at in the next 12 months prices in general will ...?

Increase faster

Increase at the same rate

Increase at a slower rate

Stay about the same

Fall slightly

Don't know

6a-b. Compared with today, how much in percent do you think that prices will go up (i.e. the rate of inflation 12 months from now)?

Including extreme values

Excluding extreme values

7. How do you think the level of unemployment in the country will change over the next 12 months? Will it...?

Increase sharply

Increase slightly

Remain the same

Fall slightly

Fall sharply

Don't know

8. Do you think there is an advantage for people to make major purchases (furniture, washing machines, TV sets etc.) at the present time?

Yes, now is the right time

It is neither the right time or the wrong time

No, it is the wrong time, purchase should be postponed

Don't know

9. Over the next 12 months, how do you think the amount of money you will spend on major purchases will compare with what you spent over the last 12 months? Will it be...?

Much more

A little more

About the same

A little less

Much less

Don't know

10. In the view of the general economic situation, do you think this is:...?

A very good time to save

Quite a good time to save

Neither a good, nor an unfavourable time to save

Rather an unfavourable time to save

A very unfavourable time to save

Don't know

11. Over the next 12 months, how likely are you to be able to save any money?

Very likely

Fairly likely

Fairly unlikely
Very unlikely
Don't know

12. Which of these statements best describe the present financial situation of your household?

We are saving a lot
We are saving a little
We are just managing to make ends meet on our income
We have to draw on our savings
We are running into debt
Don't know

13. How likely are you to buy a car within the next 12 months?

Very likely
Fairly likely
Fairly unlikely
Very unlikely
Don't know

14. Are you planning to purchase or build a home within the next 12 months (to live in yourself, for a member of your family, as a holiday home, to let etc.)?

Yes, definitely
Possibly
Probably not
Definitely not
Don't know

15. Over the next 12 months, how likely are you to spend any large sums of money on home improvements such as central heating, sanitary ware etc.?

Very likely
Fairly likely
Fairly unlikely
Very unlikely
Don't know

16. Compared with 12 months ago, is the risk that You will become unemployed...?

A lot greater
A little greater
About the same
A little less
A lot less
No opinion

18a-c. The variable rate for mortgages is currently X per cent. How high do you expect it to be in one year/two years/five years?

Including extreme values
Excluding extreme values