

NORTH WEST

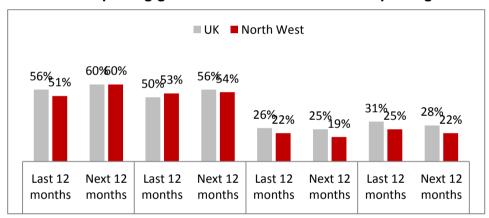
Background

1,010 members in UK businesses were interviewed by phone for the *ICAEW UK Enterprise Survey 2011* between June and Sept 2011 by Kudos Research; 100 of them in the North West region. The survey forms our 15th annual UK Enterprise Report which, along with our Global Enterprise report, can be seen at icaew.com/SMEResearch. The 2011 survey was sponsored by SAP.

Summary

North West stands out somewhat from the UK average in that late payment continues to be a widespread pressure on businesses, and paying down debt is the highest ranked key objective.

Growth - % reporting growth in last 12 months and expecting in next 12 months



Growth expectations for turnover and profits in the North West match the UK average. About six in ten businesses expect growth next year.

22% expect to increase their headcount; that is slightly below the UK average.

Challenges and opportunities

- The greatest anticipated business opportunity for North West businesses is finding new customers / markets.
- Competitive pressure and customer demand are expected by about four in ten to become more of a challenge in the coming 12 months. North West businesses are more likely than those in other regions to see late payments as an increasing challenge (29%).
- Unlike other regions, paying down debt ranks above improving profitability as the single key objective for businesses here.
- North West businesses are fairly equally divided in opinion over whether the UK tax and regulatory environment is business-friendly (51%) or not (48%).

Globalisation

- Increasing globalisation is expected to have a positive impact for about a third of businesses – noticeably lower than the UK average - while 53% believe it does not affect them, compared with 40% in the UK overall.
- 59% of the region's businesses have international activities 39% in North West export (average 44%).
- Those interested in exporting would benefit from country and sector intelligence, and information on commercial and product regulations.