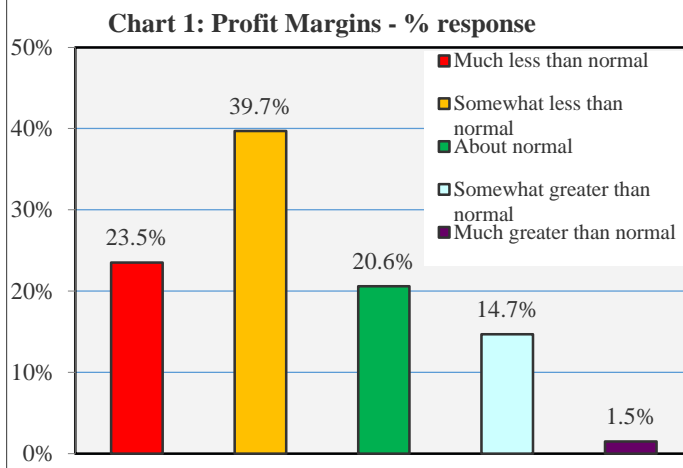


Business Inflation Expectations Survey (BIES)¹ – May 2017

Profit Margins

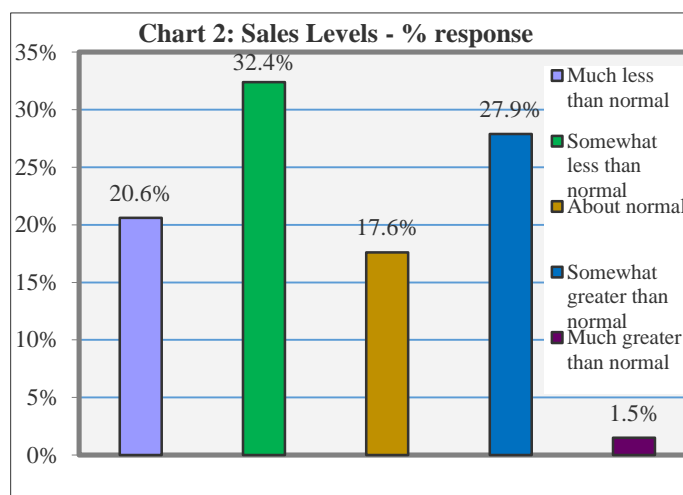
- Responses of nearly 1/4th (23.5%) in the sample indicate much less than normal[#] profit margin of the firms (Chart 1).
- Around 64% of the firms reported squeezing of profit margins.
- Business as usual or better than normal times is reported by roughly 36% of the firms. Higher profit margins in the current economic condition are not supported by the data.

[#] "normal" means as compared to the average level obtained in the preceding 3 years.



Sales Levels

- About 1/5th of the firms in the sample reported that sales are much less than normal (Chart 2).
- Over half of the firms have indicated that sales levels are much or somewhat less than normal.
- This would imply, other factors remaining constant, subdued demand conditions.
- In the face of stagnant or declining sales, businesses will be reluctant to increase prices in the near term. This would ease price-related inflationary pressures.



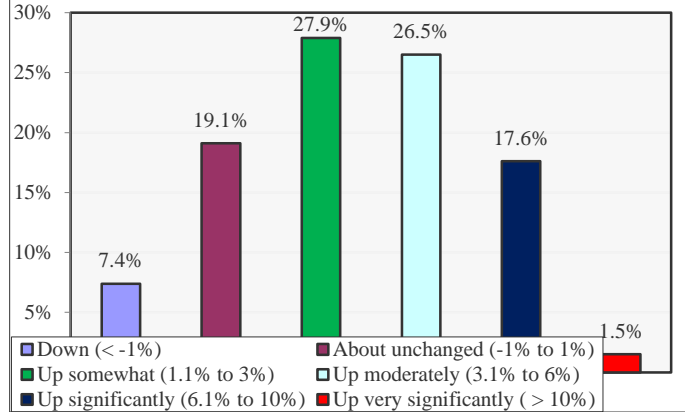
¹ The Business Inflation Expectations Survey (BIES) provides ways to examine the amount of slack in the economy by polling a panel of business leaders about their inflation expectations in the short and medium term. The survey asks questions about year-ahead cost expectations and factors influencing price changes, such as profit, sales levels, etc. The survey is unique in that it goes straight to businesses, the price setters, rather than to consumers or households, to understand their expectations of the price level changes. One major advantage of BIES is that one can get a probabilistic assessment of inflation expectations and thus a measure of uncertainty. It also provides an indirect assessment of overall demand condition of the economy. Results of this will thus be useful in understanding the inflation expectation of business and complement other macro data required for policy making.

Towards this objective, IIMA is introducing BIES from May 2017. The questionnaire of BIES is finalized based on the detailed feedback received from the industry, academicians and policy makers. A copy of the questionnaire is enclosed for information. Companies, mostly in the manufacturing sector, are selected based on certain sampling criteria from the list of companies as available with the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA). Minimum sample size targeted is 1000. BIES - May 2017 is a pilot survey, where the results are based on more than 200 companies' responses.

Costs

- About cost perceptions, over 50% of the firms reported that costs increase has remained less than 3% during last one year (Chart 3).
- As the overall cost escalation has remained moderate, it is unlikely that firms will increase their product prices significantly in the near future. Hence corporate pricing power is expected to remain subdued.

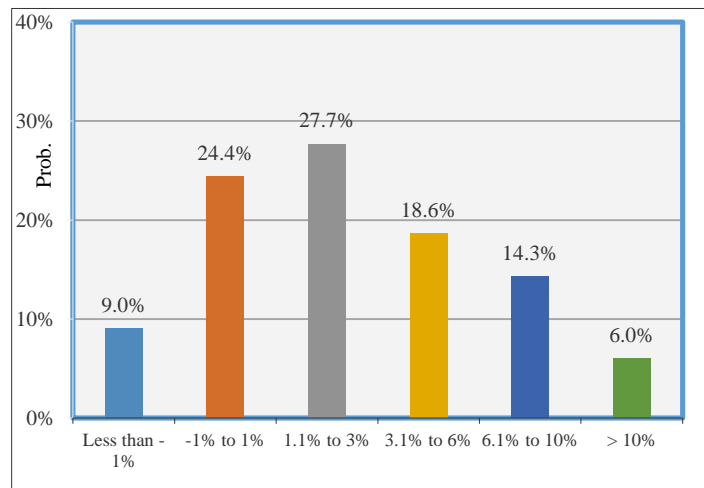
Chart 3: How do current costs per unit compare with this time last year?



Inflation expectation

- Business inflation expectation in May 2017, as estimated from the mean probability distribution of unit cost increase, works out to be 3.03%.
- Uncertainty of business inflation expectation, as captured by the standard deviation of the mean probability distribution, is estimated to be 3.4%.

Chart 4: Unit costs increase - mean probability (%) distribution





Business Inflation Expectation Survey (BIES) - Questionnaire

A. Current Business Conditions

Q1. How do your current **PROFIT MARGINS**[®] compare with "normal"^{*} times?

- Much less than normal
- Somewhat less than normal
- About normal
- Somewhat greater than normal
- Much greater than normal

Q2. How do your current sales levels compare with **SALES LEVELS**[®] during what you consider to be "normal"^{*} times?

- Much less than normal
- Somewhat less than normal
- About normal
- somewhat greater than normal
- Much greater than normal

**"normal" means the average level obtained during the corresponding time point of preceding 3 years.*

® of the main or most important product in terms of sales.

B. Current Costs Per Unit[^]

Q3. Looking back, how do your current **COSTS PER UNIT**[^] compare with this time last year?

- Down (< -1%)
- About unchanged (-1% to 1%)
- Up somewhat (1.1% to 3%)
- Up moderately (3.1% to 6%)
- Up significantly (6.1% to 10%)
- Up very significantly (> 10%)

^ of the main or most important product in terms of sales.

C. Forward Looking Costs Per Unit^{\$}

Q4. Projecting ahead, to the best of your ability, please assign a percent likelihood (probability) to the following changes to costs per unit^{\$} over the next 12 months.

- Unit costs down (less than -1%)
- Unit costs about unchanged (-1% to 1%)
- Unit costs up somewhat (1.1% to 3%)
- Unit costs up moderately (3.1% to 6%)
- Unit costs up significantly (6.1% to 10%)
- Unit costs up very significantly (>10%)

	%
	%
	%
	%
	%
	%

\$ of the main or most important product in terms of sales.

Values should add up to 100%.