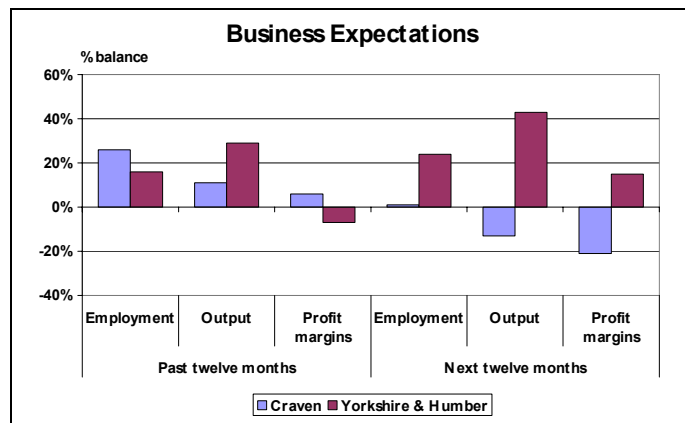


CRAVEN

- Craven is the most pessimistic LAD of the Yorkshire and Humber region expecting, on balance, 3 per cent deterioration in business situation over the next six months. This is a considerable decline from the expectations six months previous when a balance of 24 per cent expected an improvement in business.
- Employment increases in Craven have been above the region as a whole over the past twelve months (balance of 26 per cent). For the next twelve months however, employment increases are set to be slightly subdued with only a 1 per cent increase in employment expected in Craven, considerably falling behind the regional average of 24 per cent.
- Volume of output has also been growing over the last year (balance of 11 per cent) but at a slower pace than the region as a whole (balance of 29 per cent). Over the next twelve months the outlook is gloomy for output growth in Craven with a balance of –13 per cent expected by firms.
- Profit margins over the past year have been upbeat at with increases in Craven (balance of 6 per cent) exceeding the Yorkshire & Humber average (where declines have occurred). Expectations for the next year are bleak, as firms in Craven expect profit margins to drop (balance of –21 per cent).



- Over half the employees in Craven consider high level of workforce skills contribute heavily to the competitiveness of their businesses (56 per cent). Firms also highlight high level of management skills as a key contributor to an organisation's competitiveness (27 per cent) and are more pertinent in Craven than in the region in general.
- Growth in the region is inhibited by finance shortages according to 27 per cent of the businesses in Craven. Other major factors inhibiting growth in Craven include planning restrictions (26 per cent).
- Both management and team working skills are perceived by firms in Craven as being most in need of improvement (38 and 30 per cent respectively). 29 per cent of firms also felt that customer care skills were in need of development.
- 7 per cent of firms have R&D links with universities. 37 per cent of firms keep up to date with developing technologies through membership of special industrial networks, slightly above the proportion at regional level (33 per cent).