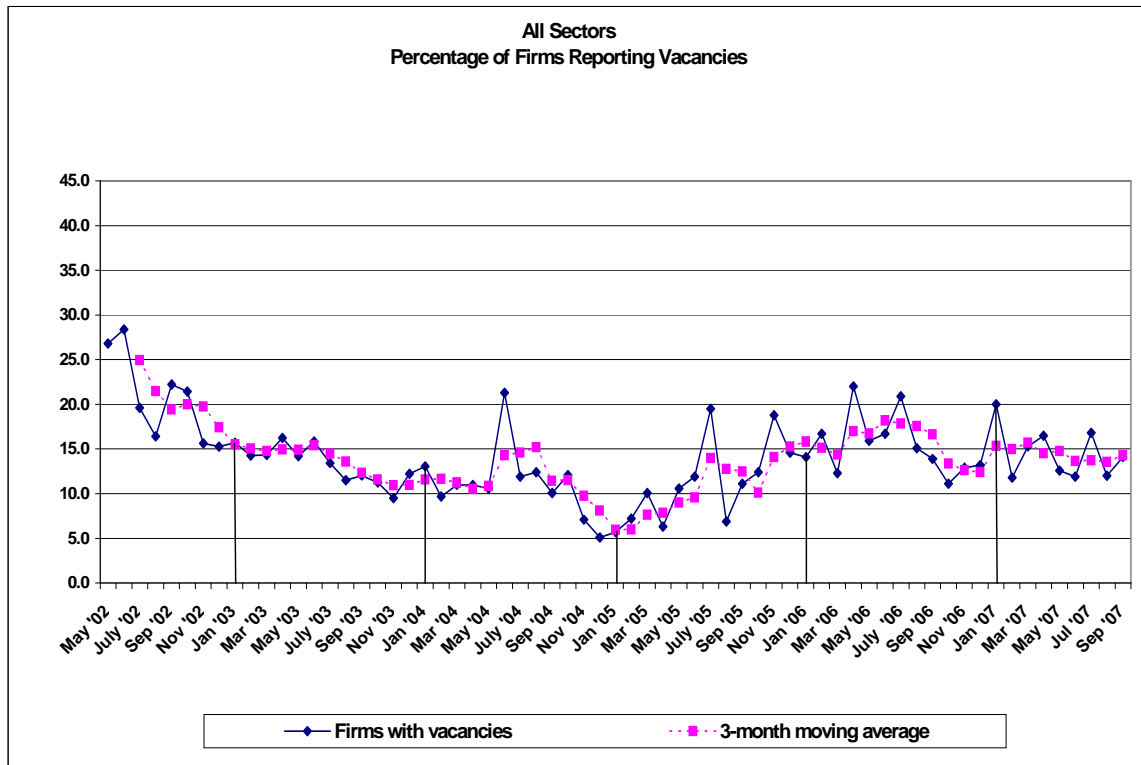


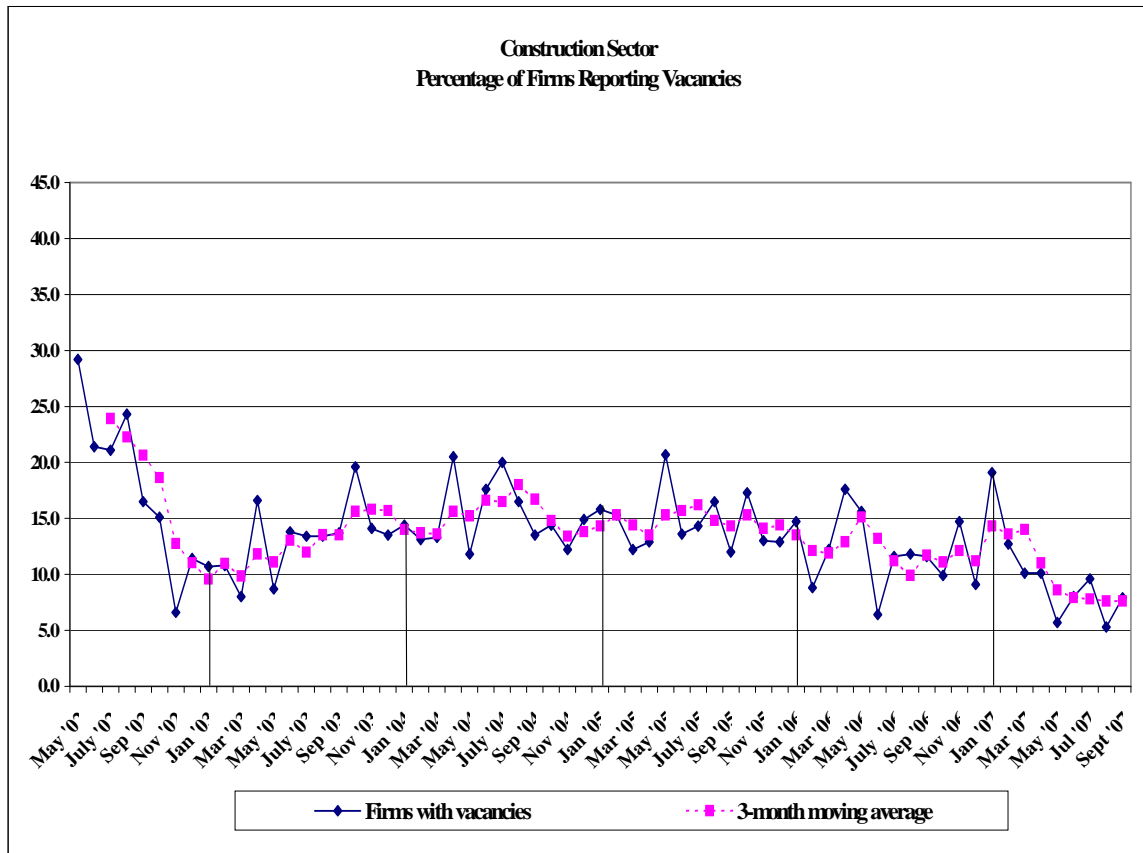
Slight increase in Economy-Wide Vacancies in September

All Sectors



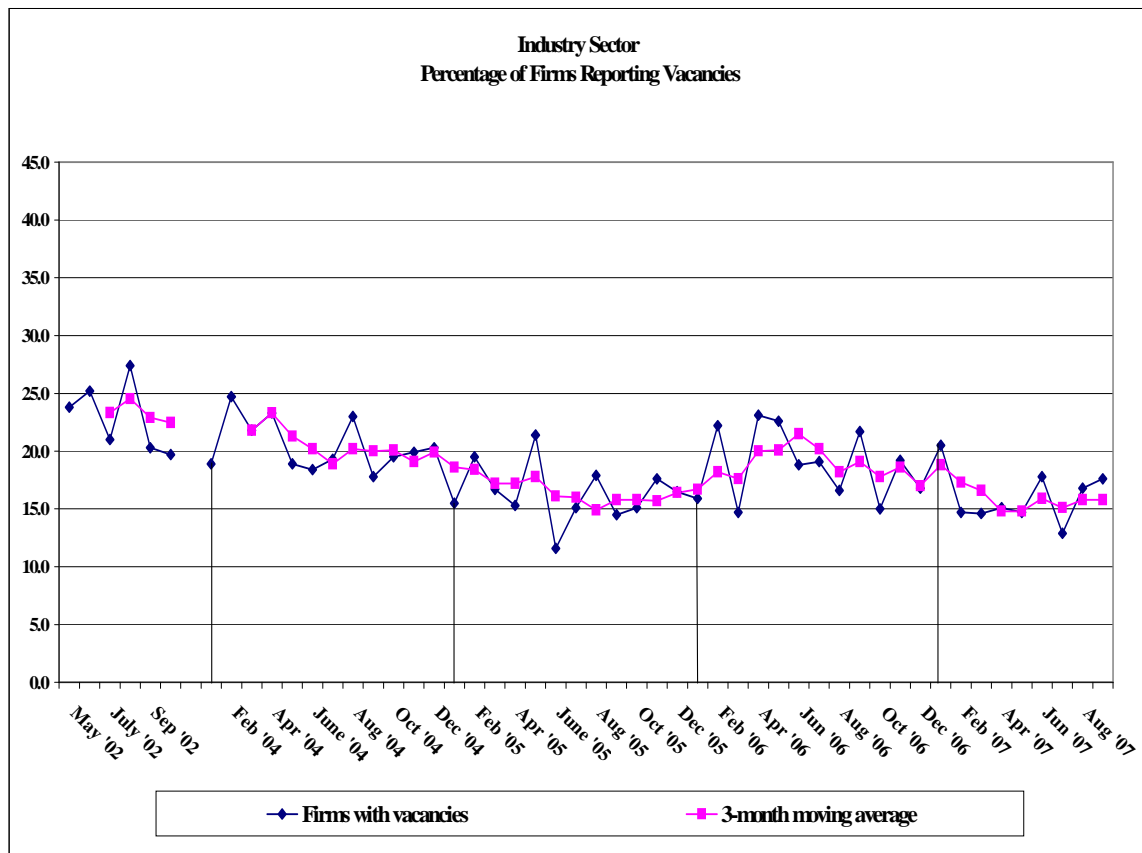
There was a 2 percentage point rise in the percentage of firms reporting vacancies across all sectors in September 2007, increasing to 14% from 12% in August 2007. This slight growth in economy-wide vacancies was driven by an increase in reported vacancies in the construction, industry and services sectors while there was no change in reported vacancies in the retail sector. This time last year the economy-wide vacancy rate also stood at 14%. For the fourth consecutive month the 3-month moving average remained stable at 14% in September 2007, which is 3 percentage points lower than September 2006.

Construction Sector



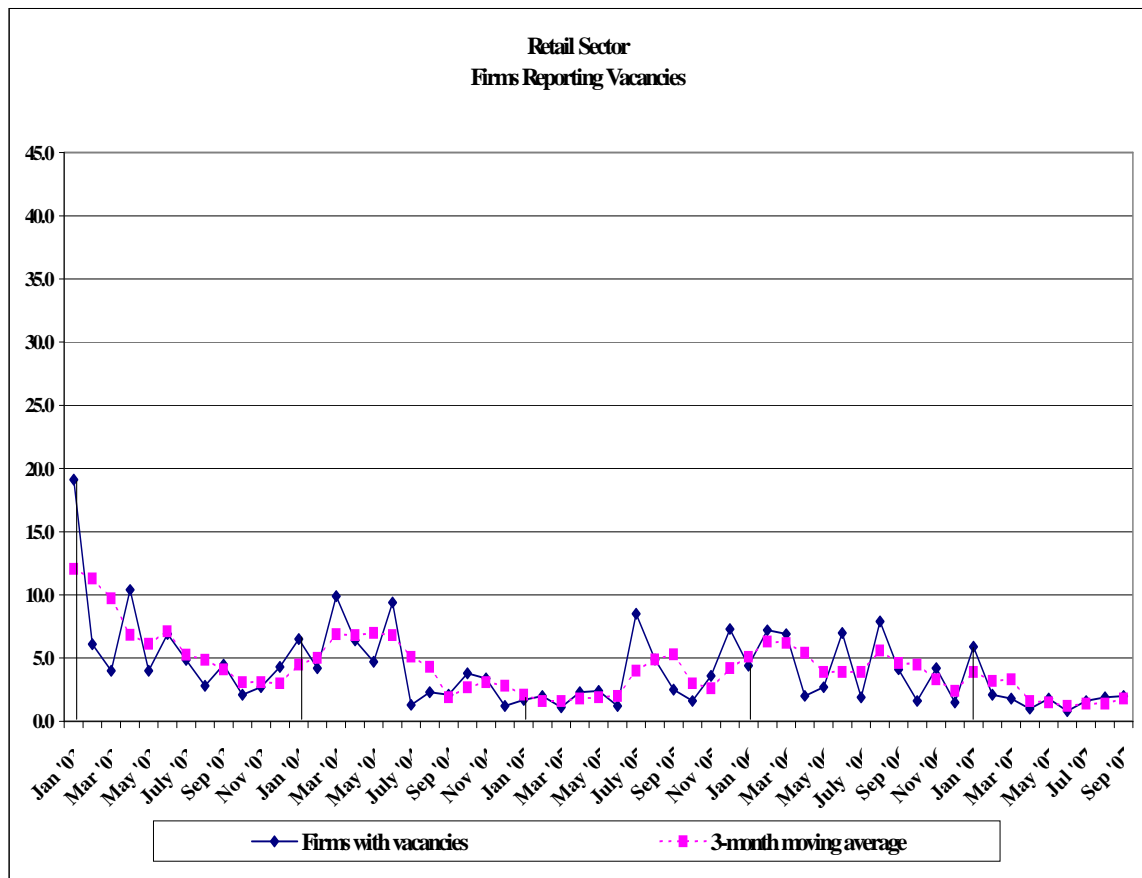
Reported vacancies in the construction sector increased by 3 percentage points to 8% in September 2007. Year-on-year, however, vacancies in the sector have fallen by 4 percentage points. For the fourth month in a row the 3-month moving average remained stable at 8% in September 2007, and this indicator has been trending downwards throughout 2007. The September figure is 4 percentage points less compared to this time last year. Just over four-fifths of construction firms who reported vacancies in September 2007 described their vacancies as ‘difficult-to-fill’.

Industry Sector



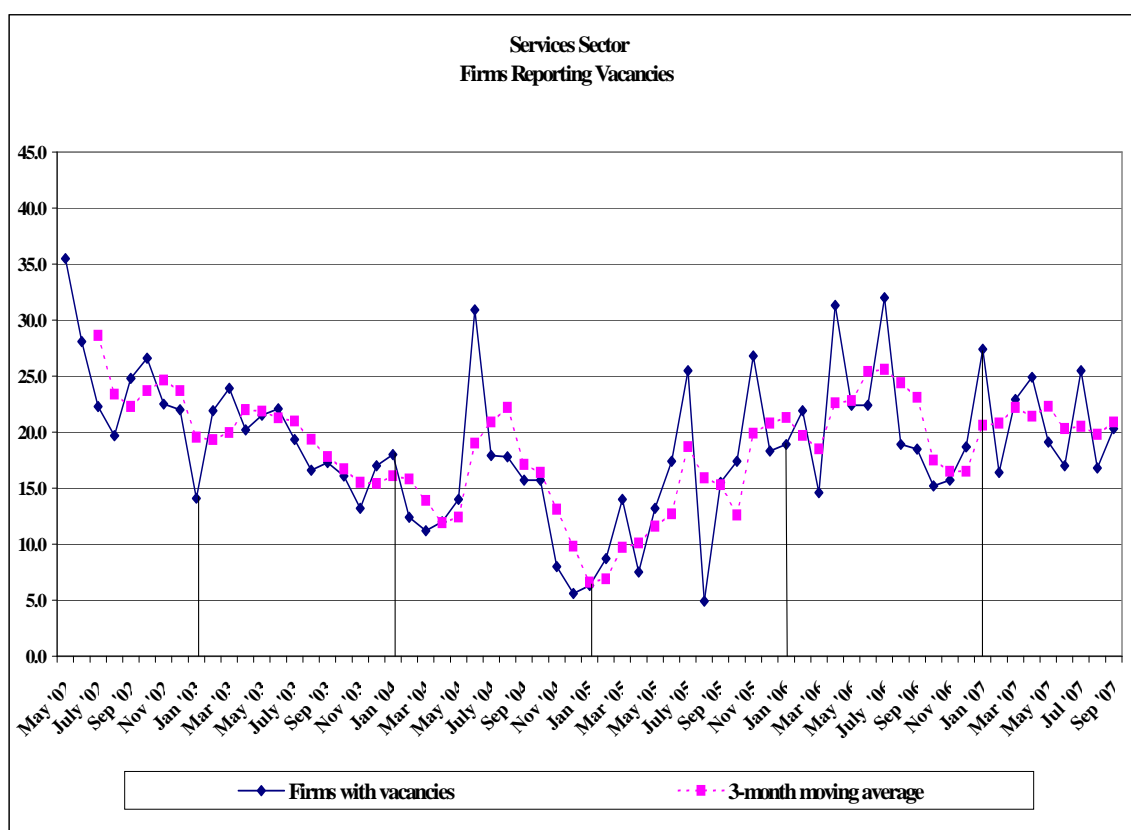
There was a marginal rise of one percentage point in the percentage of firms reporting vacancies in the industry sector in September 2007, increasing to 18% from 17% in August 2007. This vacancy rate is 4 percentage points less compared to this time last year, then the rate stood at 22%. The 3-month moving average was unchanged at 16% in September 2007, 3 percentage points lower compared to September 2006. Fifty-nine per cent of industry firms who reported vacancies in September 2007 indicated that they were experiencing difficulty filling their vacancies.

Retail Sector



Reported vacancies in the retail sector remained at 2% for the third successive month in September 2007. This compares with a vacancy rate of 4% in September 2006. The 3-month moving average increased by one percentage point to 2% in September 2007, 3 percentage points less compared to September 2006. Just over half of those retail firms who reported vacancies in September 2007 indicated that they were finding it difficult to fill their vacancies.

Services Sector



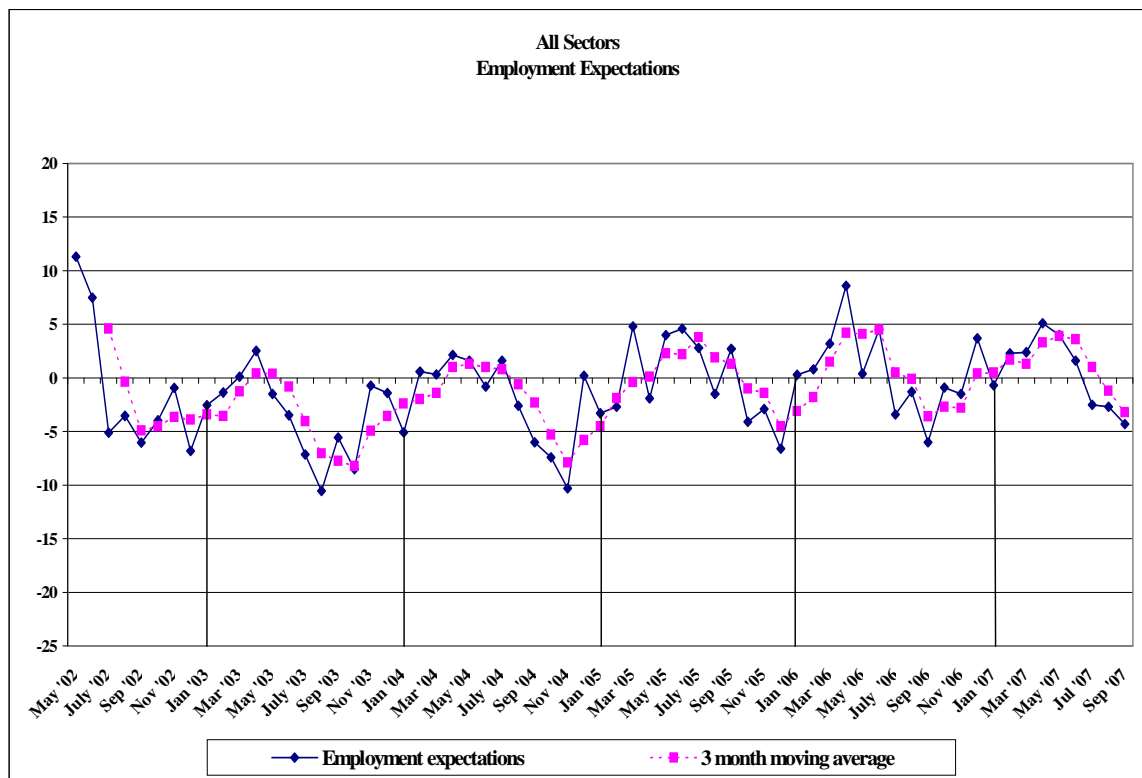
The percentage of firms reporting vacancies in the services sector in September 2007 increased by 3 percentage points to 20%. The corresponding figure for September 2006 was 18%. The 3-month moving average increased by one percentage point to 21% in September 2007, 2 percentage points less compared to September 2006. Eighty-eight per cent of services sector firms who reported vacancies in September 2007 described their vacancies as “difficult-to-fill”.

Difficult-to-Fill Vacancies

Firms are asked if they are experiencing difficulty filling the vacancies they have and if so what jobs are emerging as being the most difficult to fill. In the sectors surveyed, a much larger percentage of construction employers have consistently reported difficult-to-fill vacancies. This month, however, a slightly higher proportion of services sector firms have positions that they are finding difficult to fill, 88 per cent compared to 83 per cent of construction firms. This in turn compares with 59% of industry employers and 51% of retail firms. For the various sectors surveyed the most frequently cited difficult-to-fill vacancies in September 2007 were:

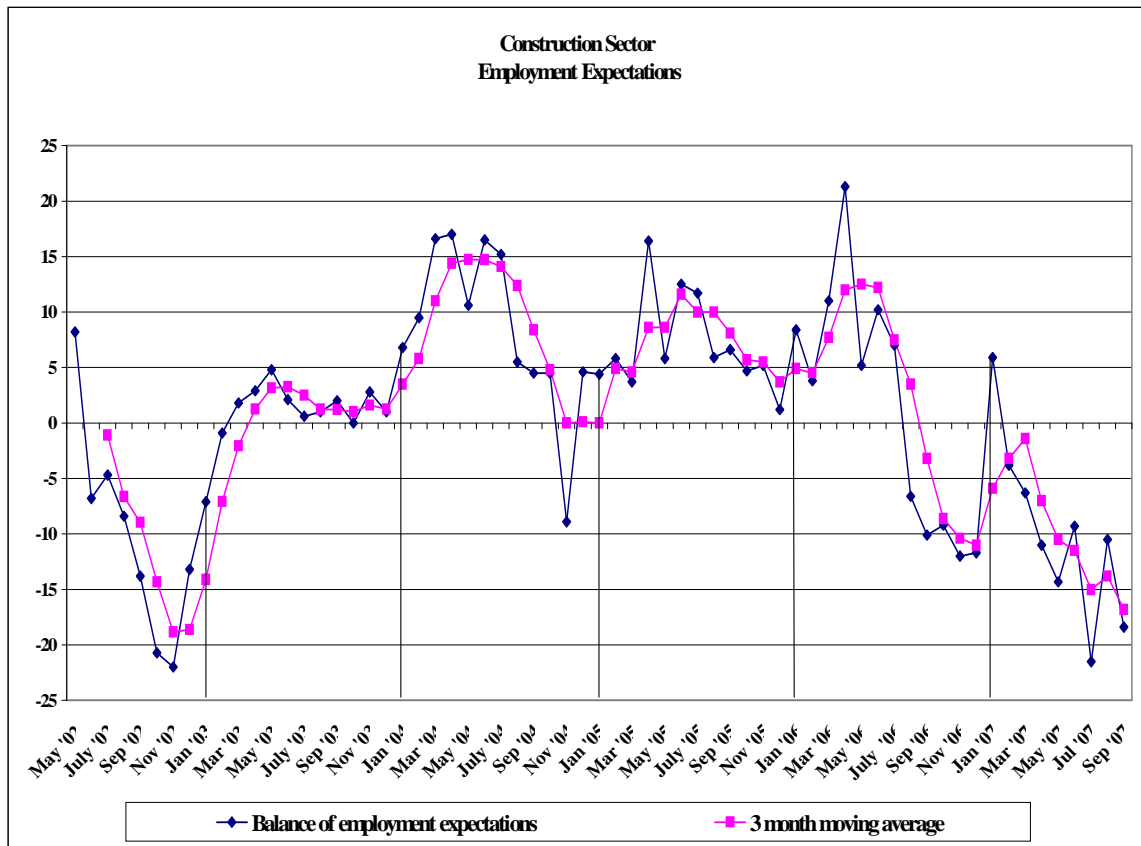
- Quantity surveyors and managers in the construction sector
- Engineers, sales personnel and managers in the industry sector
- Sales staff and mechanics in the retail sector
- Managers, accountants and tax personnel in the services sector

Employers' Employment Expectations Continue to Decline in September



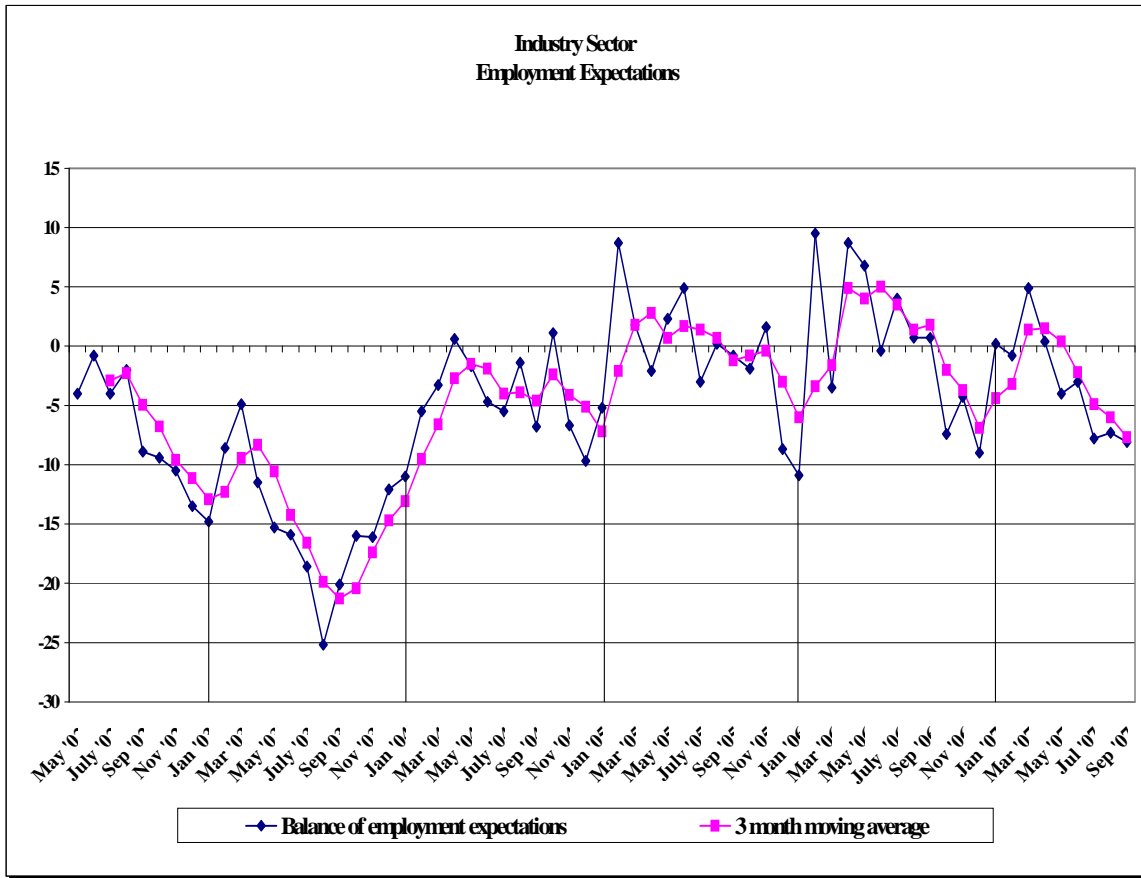
The most recent survey results for September 2007 reveals a further slight decline in employers' employment expectations, maintaining the downward trend that began in May 2007. The Net Employment Expectations indicator for all sectors fell by 1 percentage point to -4%. This indicates that the percentage of employers anticipating a fall in employment levels in their firms over the coming months is 4 percentage points higher than that expecting an increase. In September 2006, however, the Net Employment Expectations indicator for all sectors was -6%. Thus, compared to this time last year, a slightly lower proportion of employers are expecting employment levels to fall rather than rise over the coming months. The 3-month moving average fell by 2 percentage points to -3% in September 2007, which is one percentage point lower compared to September 2006.

Construction Sector



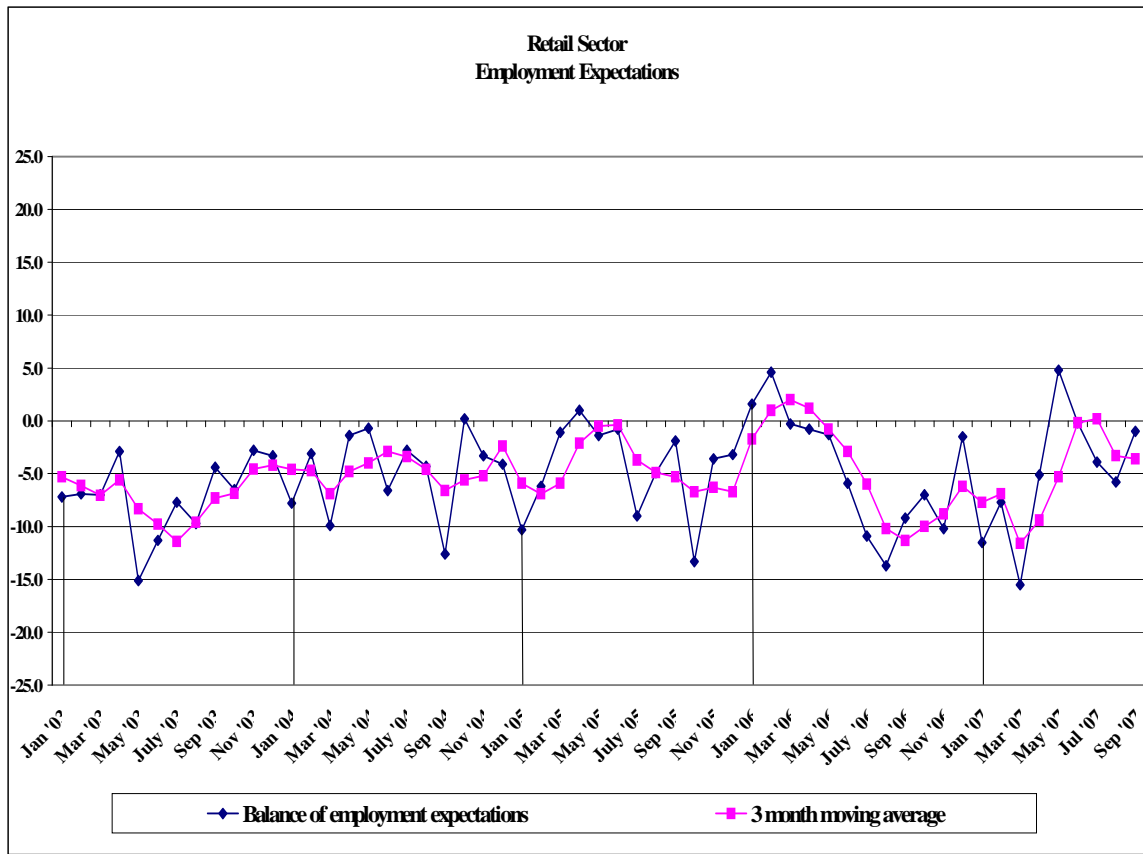
The Net Employment Expectations indicator for the construction sector fell by 8 percentage points to -18% in September. This means that the percentage of employers anticipating a decline in employment levels in their firms over the coming months is 18 percentage points higher than that expecting a rise. However, this follows a significant improvement in expectations in August, suggesting substantial fluctuations in this indicator from month to month. The corresponding indicator for September 2006 was -10%. The September 2007 Net Employment Expectations indicator figure is the second lowest the indicator figure has been for the sector since the start of this year. The 3-month moving average has been trending downward throughout 2007. It fell by 3 percentage points to -17% in September 2007, the lowest this measure has been since December 2002, and 13 percentage points less than September 2006.

Industry Sector



The Net Employment Expectations indicator for the industry sector decreased slightly, by 1 percentage point, to -8% in September 2007. This indicates that the percentage of firms expecting a decrease in employment levels over the coming months is 8 percentage points higher than those who are expecting an increase. The corresponding Net Employment Expectations indicator for September 2006 was 1%. The 3-month moving average fell by 2 percentage points to -8% in September 2007. This compares with a figure of 2% in September 2006.

Retail Sector



After trending downwards for the past three months, the retail sector employers' employment outlook improved in September 2007. At the same time, however, they continued to be negative about future employment levels in the sector. The Net Employment Expectations indicator for the sector increased by 5 percentage points to -1%, which means that the proportion of employers expecting a fall in employment levels in the sector over the coming months is 1 percentage point higher than those who are anticipating a rise. Retail employers' employment outlook, however, is not as negative as it was this time last year; then the sector's Net Employment Expectations indicator stood at -9%. The 3-month moving average fell by 1 percentage point to -4% in September 2007, 7 percentage points higher than in September 2006.

