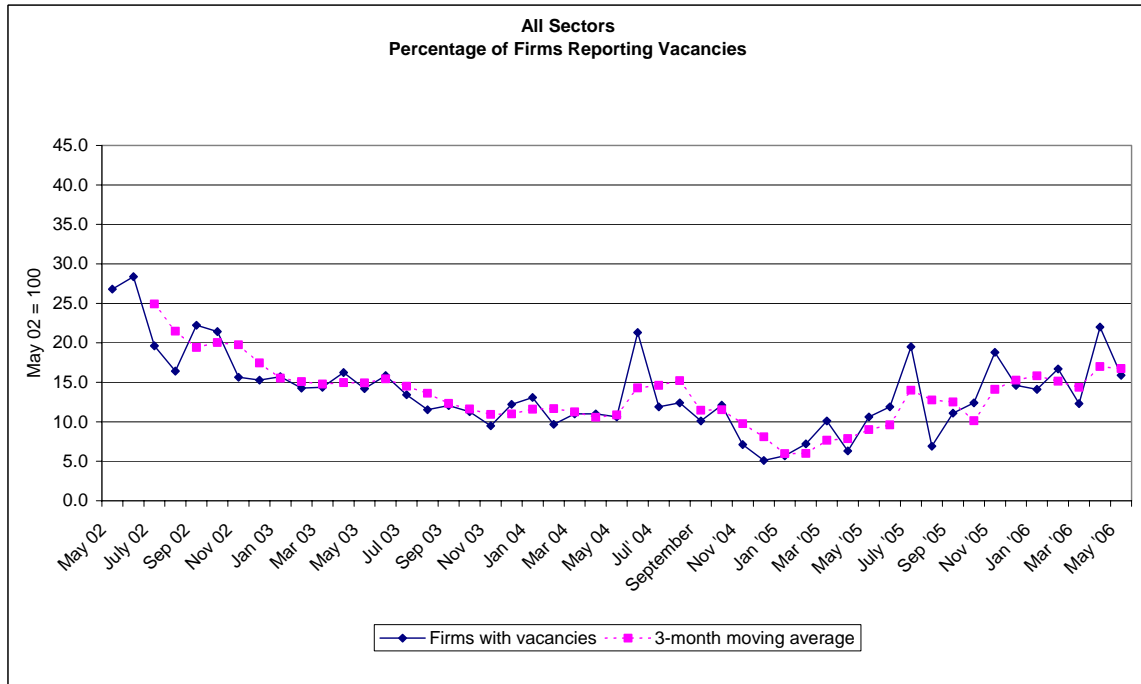




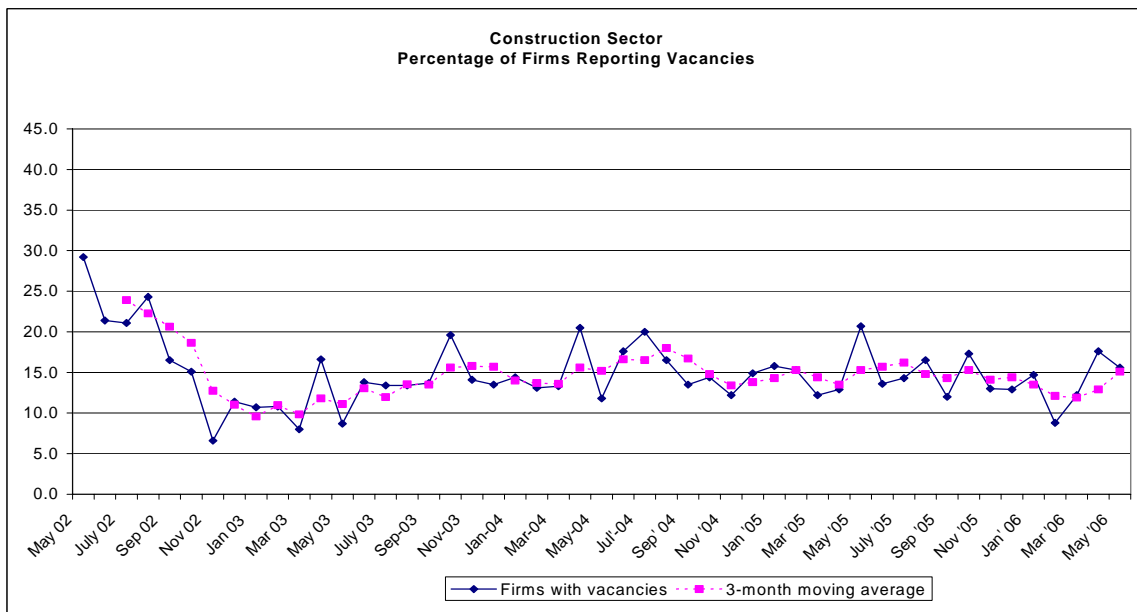
Decline in Economy Wide Vacancies

The percentage of firms reporting vacancies across all sectors fell six percentage points from 22 per cent in April 2006 to 16 per cent in May 2006. The decline in economy wide vacancies reflects decreases in the percentage of firms reporting vacancies in the services, construction, and retail sectors. The percentage of industrial firms with vacancies remained stable in May 2006.



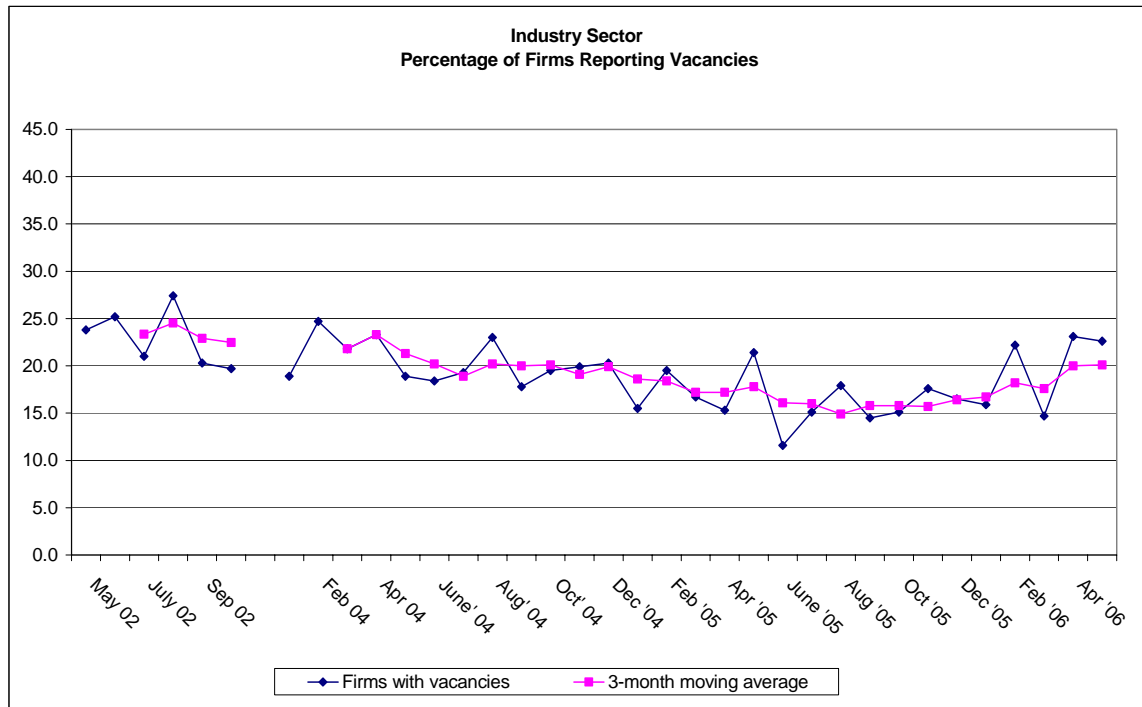
Construction

The percentage of firms reporting vacancies in the construction sector fell two percentage points from 18 per cent in April 2006 to 16 per cent in May 2006.



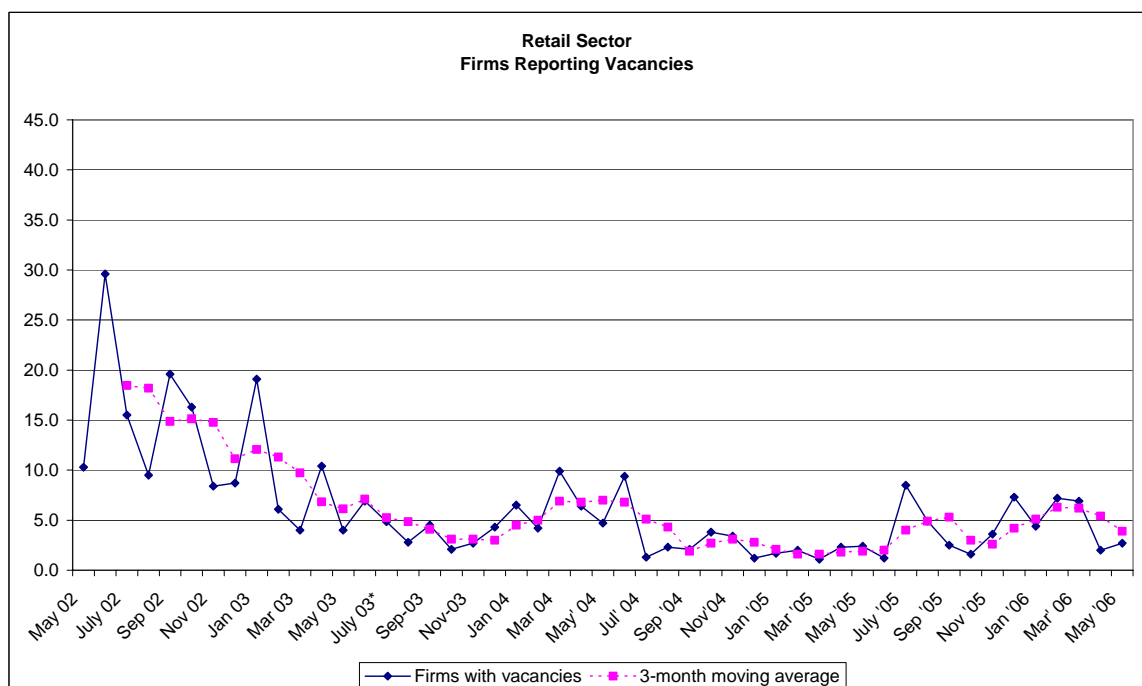
Industrial

The percentage of industrial firms with vacancies was stable in May 2006 remaining at 23 per cent. The industrial sector has the highest proportion of firms reporting vacancies than any other sector considered.



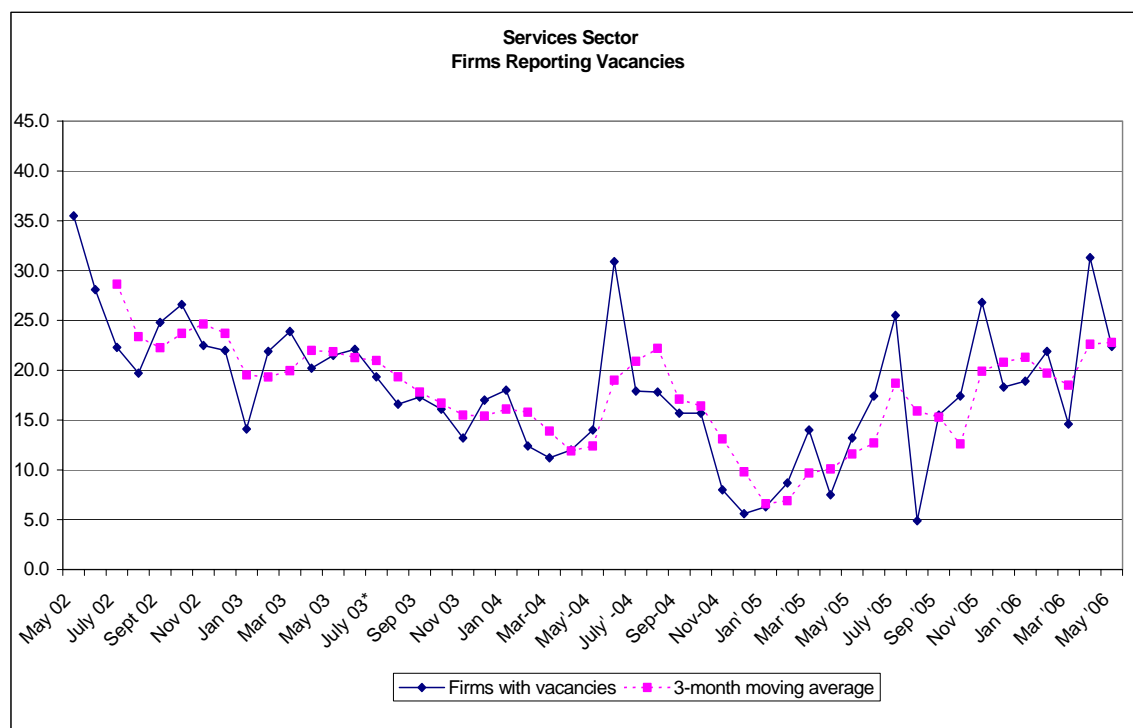
Retail

The retail sector experienced a slight increase of one percentage point in the percentage of firms with vacancies. The percentage rose from 2 per cent in April 2006 to 3 per cent in May 2006. From the beginning of 2003 to date, the retail sector has consistently had the lowest proportion of firms reporting vacancies than the other sectors considered.



Services

The percentage of service sector firms with vacancies fell by a significant nine percentage points from 31 per cent in April 2006 to 22 per cent in May 2006. The decline in May follows a significant increase of sixteen percentage points in April 2006. The increase that occurred in April brought the percentage of service sector firms with vacancies to its highest level for the period considered. The subsequent decline in May indicates that this increase was a monthly fluctuation.



Difficult-to-Fill Vacancies

Firms are asked what particular vacancies they experience difficulty in filling. This provides an indication of the job vacancies which may cause bottlenecks within a particular sector.

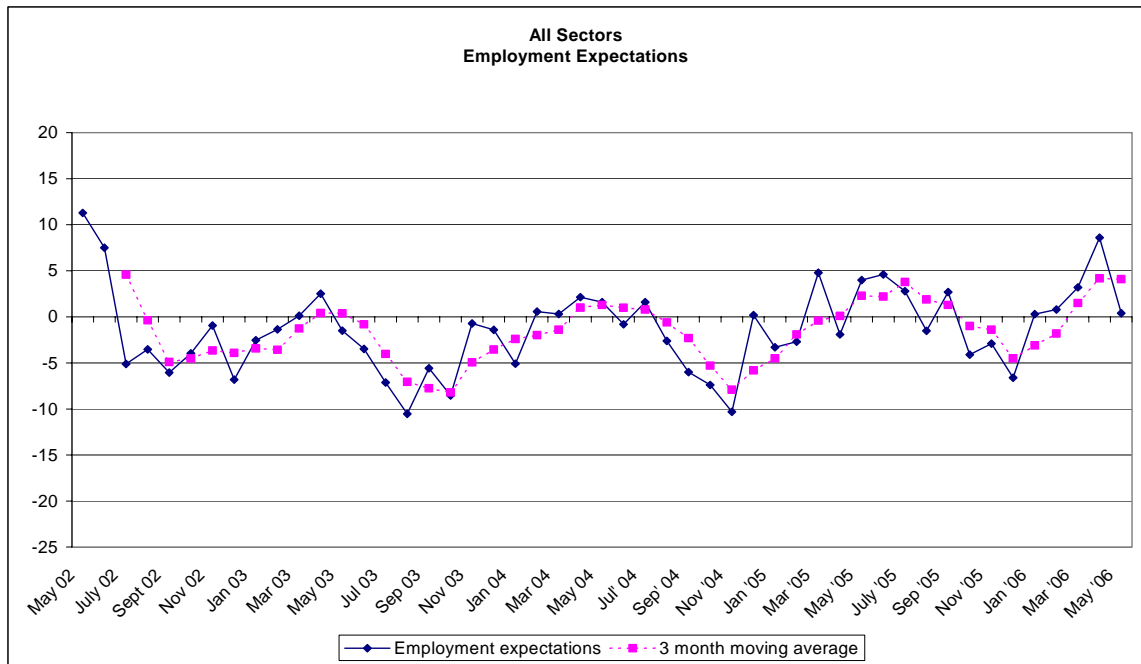
The most frequently mentioned difficult-to-fill vacancies in May 2006 for the various sectors were:

- quantity surveyors and site managers in the construction sector
- engineers, sales staff and managers in the industrial sector
- sales staff in the retail sector
- chefs and engineers in the services sector.

Employers anticipating no change in employment levels

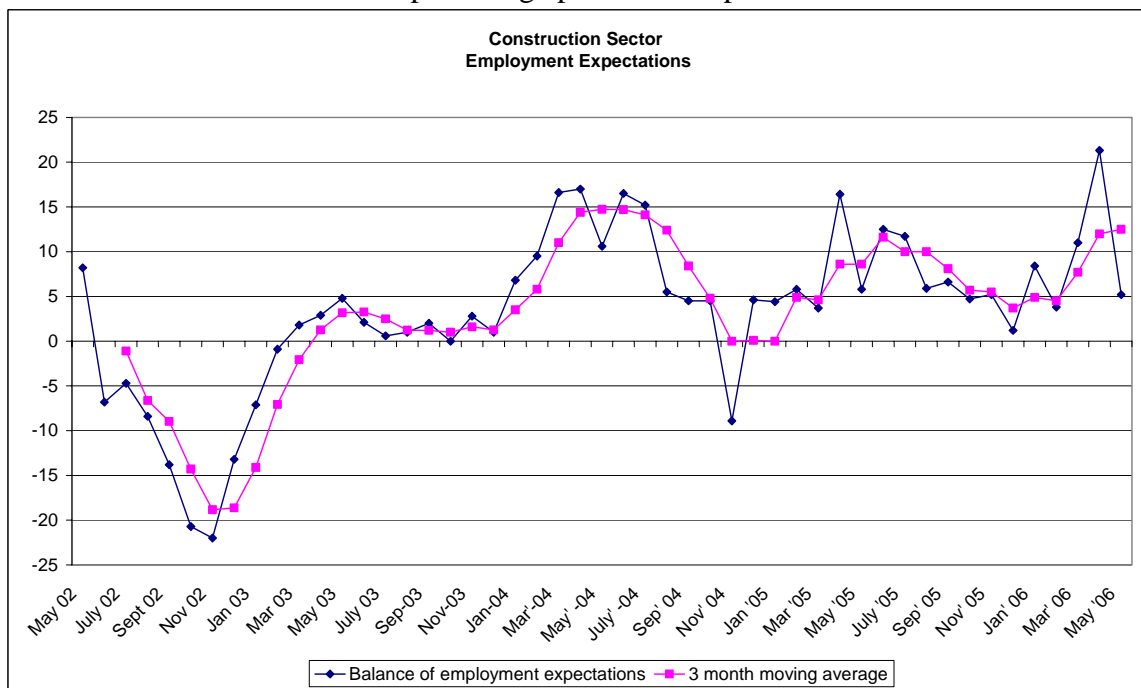
Employer sentiment regarding future employment levels in their firms deteriorated in May 2006 as the Net Employment Expectations indicator for all sectors fell nine percentage points relative to the previous month. Latest data indicates that employers are anticipating no change in employment levels in their firms over the coming months. The deterioration in employer sentiment across all sectors was driven by significant declines in the Net Employment Expectations indicators for the

construction and services sectors and a more moderate decrease in the Net Employment Expectations indicator for the industrial sector. The retail sector experienced no change in employer sentiment in May 2006.



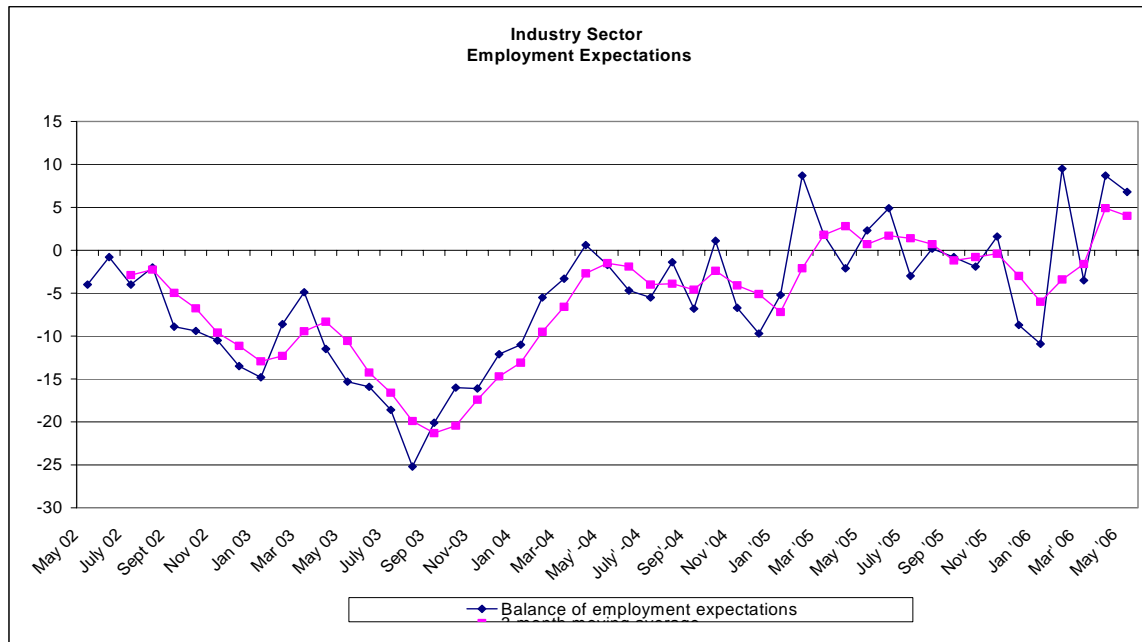
Construction

The construction sector experienced a considerable deterioration in employer sentiment as its Net Employment Expectations indicator fell sixteen percentage points from 21 per cent in April 2006 to 5 per cent in May 2006. Nonetheless employers remain optimistic about future employment levels in their firms. The decrease in May 2006 follows an increase of ten percentage points in the previous month.



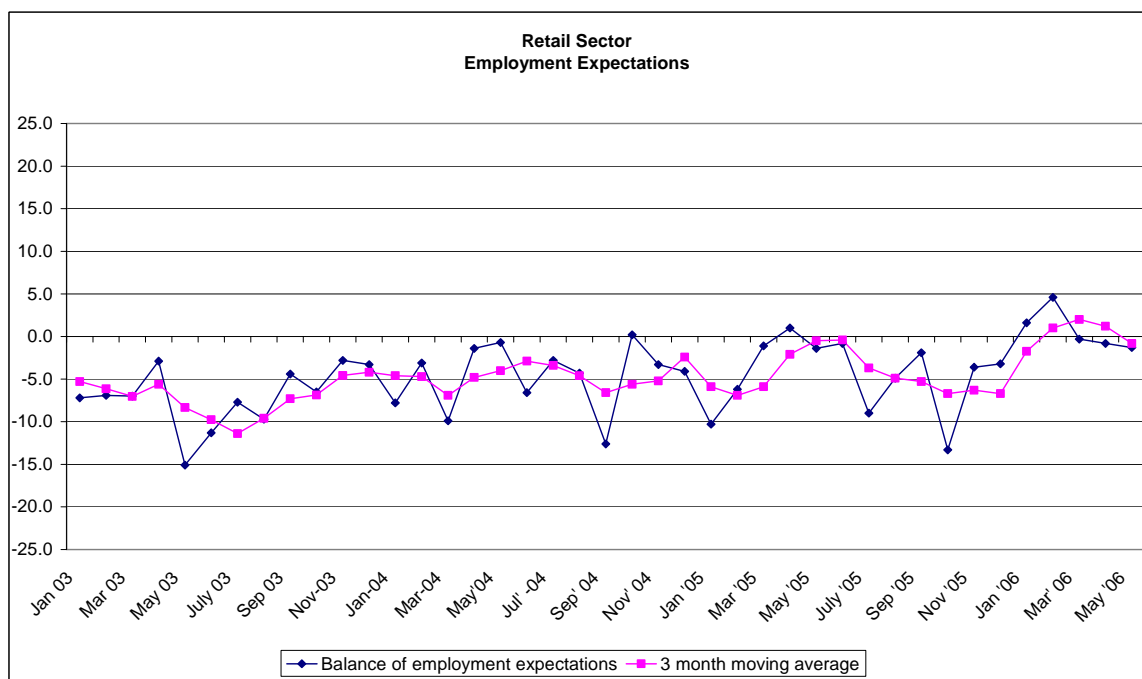
Industry

The Net Employment Expectations indicator for the industrial sector fell slightly from 9 per cent in April 2006 to 7 per cent in May 2006. Employers in the sector remain optimistic about future employment levels. 7 per cent more employers feel that employment levels in their firms will rise rather than fall over the coming months.



Retail

The expectations of employers in the retail sector remained stable and pessimistic in May 2006. The Net Employment Expectations indicator for the sector remained at minus 1 per cent. This indicates that 1 per cent more employers feel employment levels in their firms will decrease rather than increase in the near future.



Services

The expectations of employers regarding future employment levels in the services sector deteriorated significantly in May 2006. The Net Employment Expectations indicator for the sector fell eleven percentage points in May 2006 relative to the previous month. The data for May 2006 indicates that service sector employers are anticipating no change in employment levels in their firms in the near future.

