

FranchiseInsights.com has reported Business Startup Sentiment Trends data with monthly surveys since January 2020. The Small Business **Startup Sentiment Index™** (SSI) is derived from a monthly survey of individuals who have recently inquired about businesses or franchises for sale on the digital assets of [FranchiseVentures](#). This survey was conducted March February 21-30, 2024.

Norfolk, Virginia – Released April 2, 2024

Small Business Startup Sentiment Index™ (SSI)

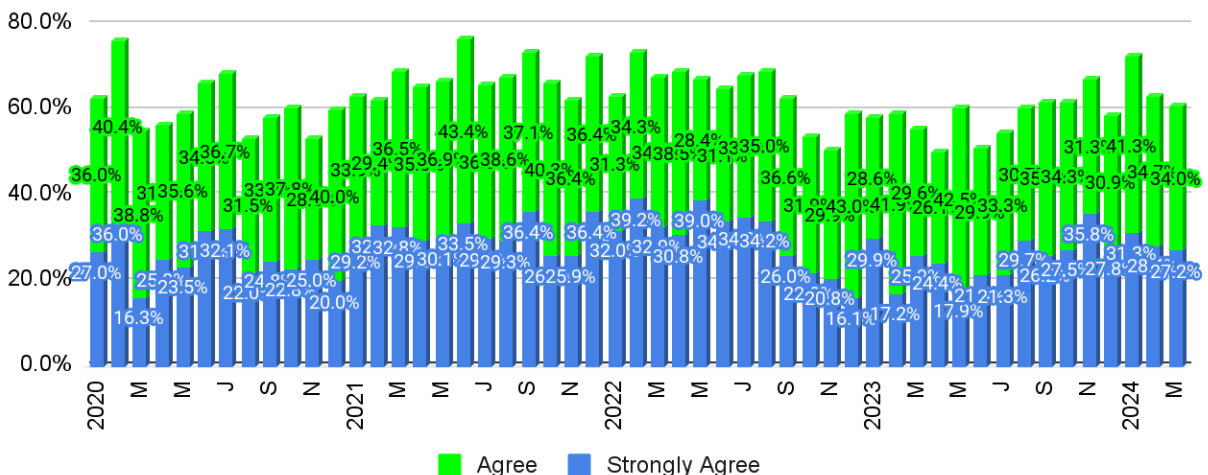
Clearer Skies Ahead: Record Percentage of Aspiring Business Owners Upbeat About Startup Conditions
 89.3% Say Business Conditions the Same or Better in Three Months
 Freelance, Consulting and Part-Timers Rise in Share of Pool

STARTUP SENTIMENT UP OVER LAST TWELVE MONTHS

Over 61% of aspiring business owners either agree or strongly agree that “now is a good time to start a business,” with optimism about conditions ahead. In the March survey, a record 89.3% of respondents see conditions for business and franchise startups “the same or better in three months.” Of this month’s respondents, 47.6% of entrepreneurs planned their startups within the next three months, though down from the record 62.1% last month. Further, over 64% of entrepreneurs surveyed say they are “more or much more likely to launch their startups than three months ago.” [FranchiseInsights.com](#) compiles a monthly **Small Business Startup Sentiment Index™** (SSI) of individuals who have recently inquired about franchises or businesses for sale.

61.2% of Prospects Agree Now a Is Good Time for Startup

Source: FranchiseInsights.com Startup Sentiment Index™, Mar 2024



The survey was conducted March 21-30, 2024. These upbeat views on conditions for business startup are consistent with longer-term trends and recent spikes upward in the [Conference Board’s Survey of Consumer Confidence](#) and The University of Michigan

Consumer Sentiment Surveys as seen on the [St. Louis Federal Reserve's FRED website](#), with both measures on an improving trend since June 2022. This continuing trend in entrepreneurial optimism also parallels the ongoing [surge in new business applications](#) since September 2020 as reported by the US Census Bureau.

SENTIMENT: RECORD OPTIMISM THREE MONTHS OUT

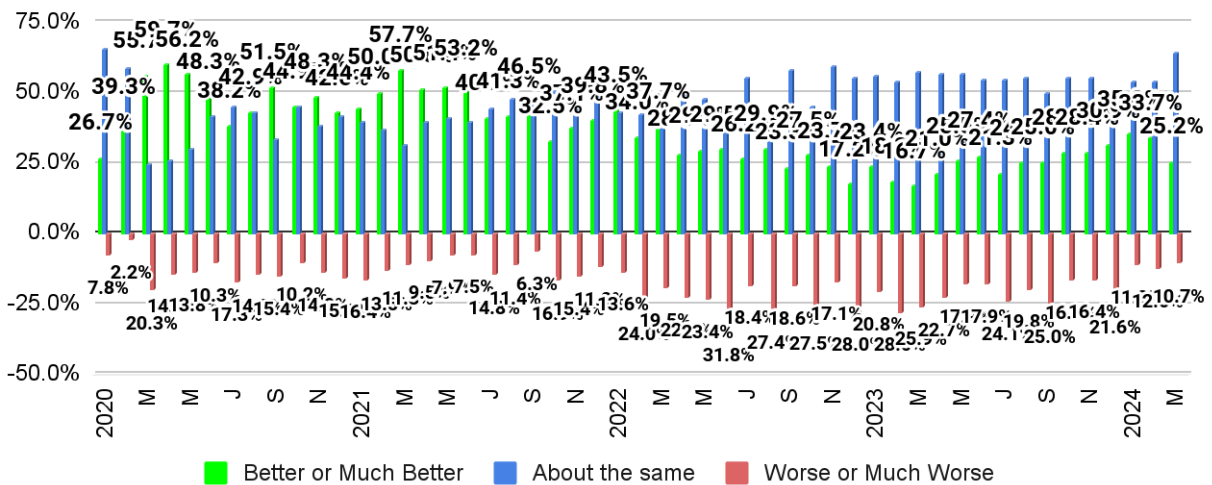
Reversing a multi-year downtrend in sentiment about future business conditions, **89.3% of respondents see conditions no worse – staying the same or getting better in three months**– with 64.1% seeing conditions “about the same”, a jump from last month.

Now 25.2% of respondents think that in three months, conditions will be **“better or much better”** than now, trending up over the last year, and down from the 50-60% readings at the height of the pandemic. This is consistent with the year-long uptrend in measures of consumer confidence, and comfort with near-term business conditions. On the other hand, only 10.7% see conditions **“worse or much worse”** three months ahead.

89.3% See Conditions the Same or Better in Three Months

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Small Business Startup Sentiment Index™ March 2024



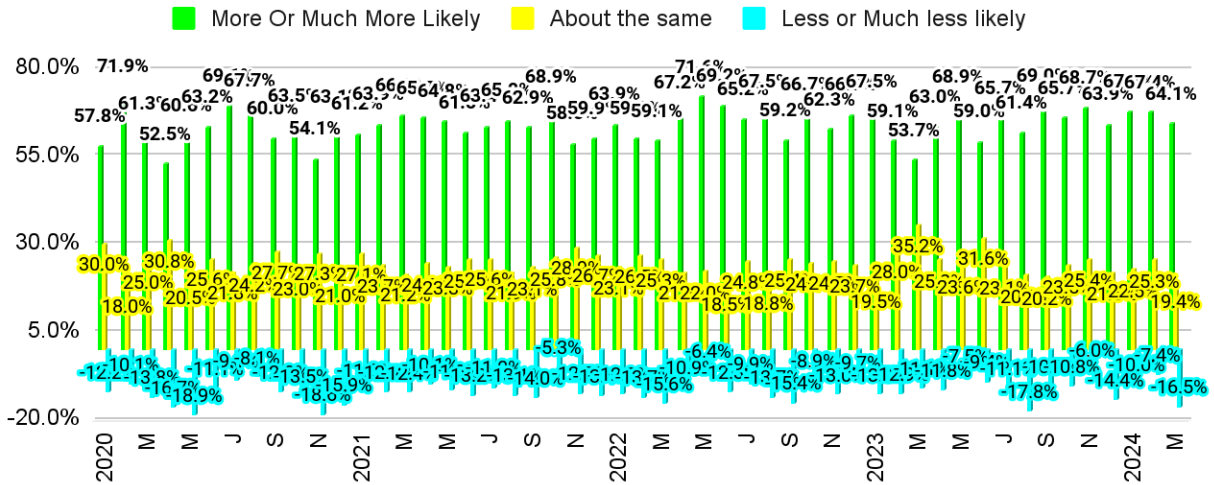
RESPONDENT SENTIMENT BETTER THAN 3 MONTHS AGO

Respondents are more upbeat now about starting or buying their business than they were three months ago. In March 2024, 64.1% of those responding indicated that they were **“more or much more likely to start a business now than three months ago.”** With 19.4% **“about the same,”** that means that 92.6% are as likely or more likely to launch their startups than they were three months ago, the highest since June 2021.

On the other hand, the percentage of survey respondents who were **“less or much less likely to start a business than three months ago”** rose to 16.5%, a jump from the 10.7% average over the prior 12 months.

How likely are you to start a business now compared to 3 months ago?

Source: FranchiseInsights.com Startup Sentiment Index™ Mar 2024

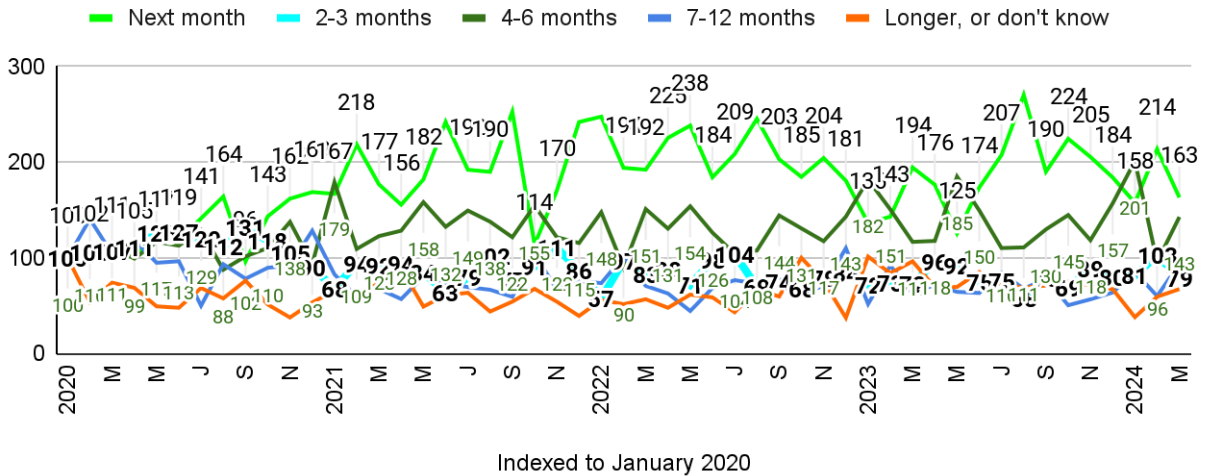


‘NEXT 2-3 MONTHS’ TIME FRAME EDGES OUT ‘NEXT MONTH’ RECORD

In the March survey, 84.5% of respondents expected to start within twelve months, the highest percentage since December 2022. The index of entrepreneurs expressing intent to start or buy **“next month”** dropped to 163% of January 2020 levels, at 23.3% of respondents. On the other hand, the index of aspiring business owners planning startups in the **“next 2-3 months”** was 78.9% of the January 2020 reference point, at 24.3%.

‘Next 2-3 Months’ Time Frame Rises

Source: FranchiseInsights.com Startup Sentiment Index™ March 2024

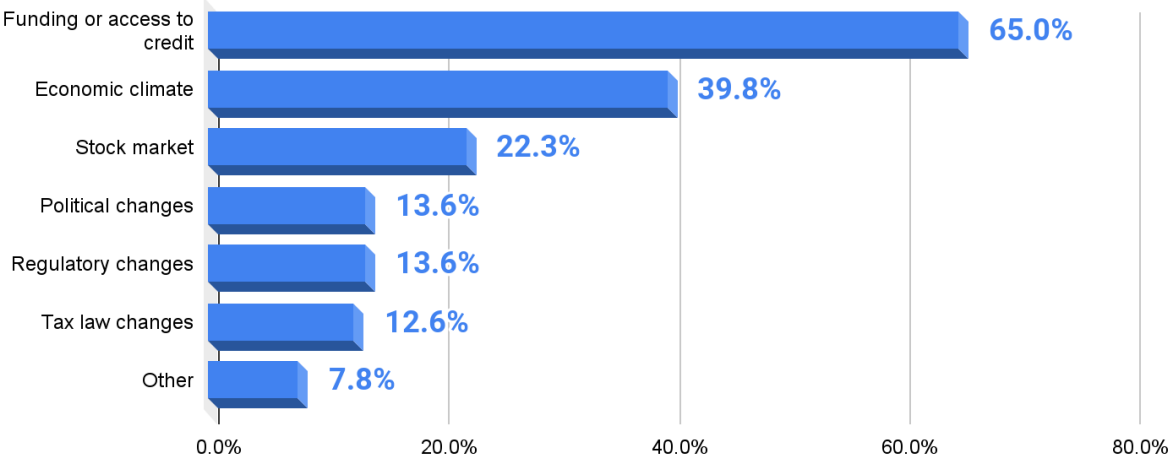


This past month, 47.6% of respondents expressed **intent to start or buy their businesses within** the next three months, up from January’s record low of 41.6% and

Though access to funding remains the primary startup issue, prospective business owners' concerns about availability of startup financing have been reduced in recent months, with only 24.3% seeing it getting **“harder or much harder”** three months from now. Now 58.3% see access to funding in three months being **“about the same”** and only 17.5% see it getting **“easier or much easier”**, consistent with headlines about the Federal Reserve holding rates steady or possibly lowering them in the coming months.

Which of these factors will have the biggest impact in the next six months on your decision to start a business?

Source: Franchise Insights Small Business Startup Sentiment Index™ March 2024



With the other factors receding into the background over the last several months, now 65% of prospective business buyers cited **“funding or access to credit”** as the factor having the biggest impact on their decisions to buy or start a business, though down significantly from the high seen in April 2021 at 87.6%. Beyond the funding concern, **“economic climate”** is next highest at 39.8% of respondents.

With stock market indexes enjoying a sharp increase since the end of October 2023, only 22.3% of entrepreneurs cited the stock market as having a significant impact on their business startup plans, up from 19.4% in February.

PANDEMIC EXPERIENCE ANIMATES 43% OF ASPIRING OWNERS

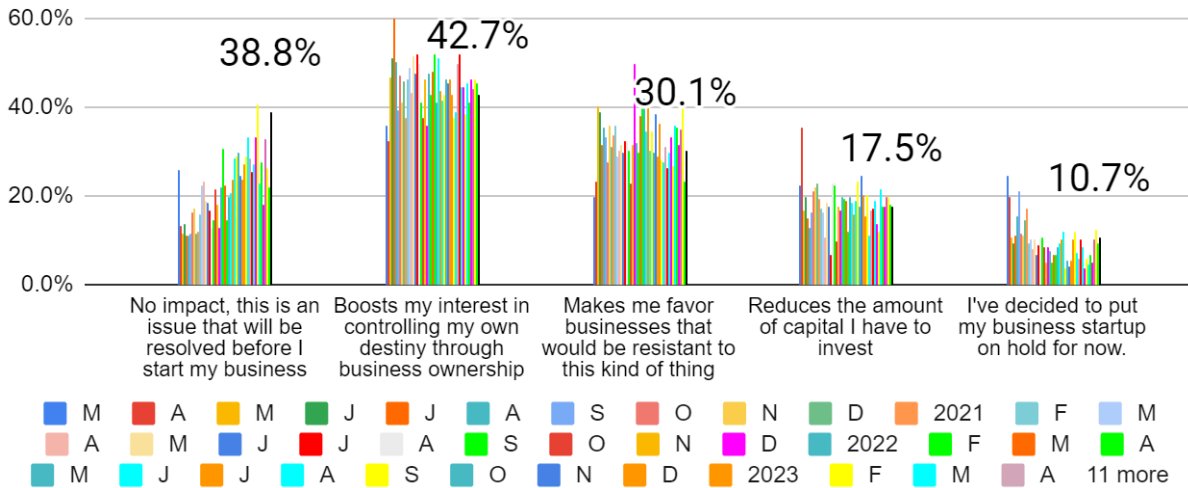
For more than two years, when asked how the pandemic had affected their interest in starting a business or opening a franchise, respondents to the [FranchiseInsights.com](https://www.franchiseinsights.com) Small Business Startup Sentiment Index™ often said that it **“boosts my interest in controlling my own destiny through business ownership.”** That sentiment fell to a record low 26.4% in May 2023, the same month that the US Government declared the Covid public health emergency over. It seems to be rolling over at 42.7% in March 2024.

Looking back to when the pandemic emerged, more respondents began indicating a preference for **“businesses that would be resistant”** to shocks like Covid-19. That sentiment has declined to 30.1%, significantly below the prominent spikes above 45% in December 2021 and January 2022 during the Omicron surges.

The percentage putting their plans **“on hold”** at 10.7% is up from the record low of 3.7% in July 2023. Those indicating **“no impact – this is an issue that will be resolved before starting”** their businesses have risen to almost 39%.

How did the pandemic affect your interest in business ownership?

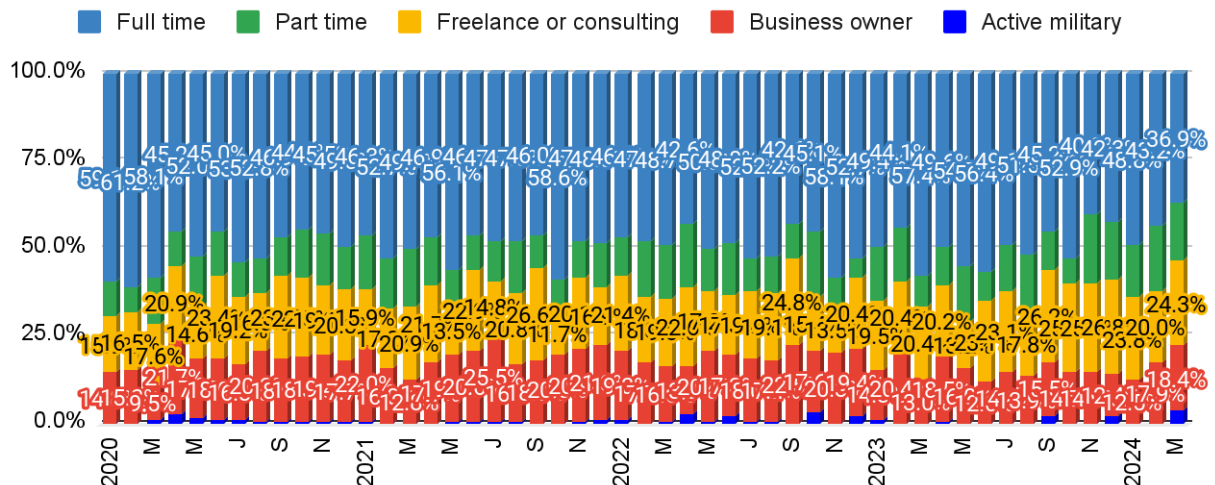
Source: FranchiseInsights.com Startup Sentiment Index™ March 2024



FULL-TIME WORKERS AND GEN-X DOMINATE, GEN-Z RISES

36.9% of Aspiring Owners Leaving a Full Time Job; 18.4% are Biz Owners

Source: FranchiseInsights.com Startup Sentiment Index™ March 2024



Of the survey respondents, 36.9% are currently employed full-time, significantly down from the high of 58.6% seen in October 2021. Current business owners made up 18.4% of respondents, who may be pursuing a desire to upgrade or complement their existing businesses. Combined, full-time workers and current business owners stood at 55.3%.

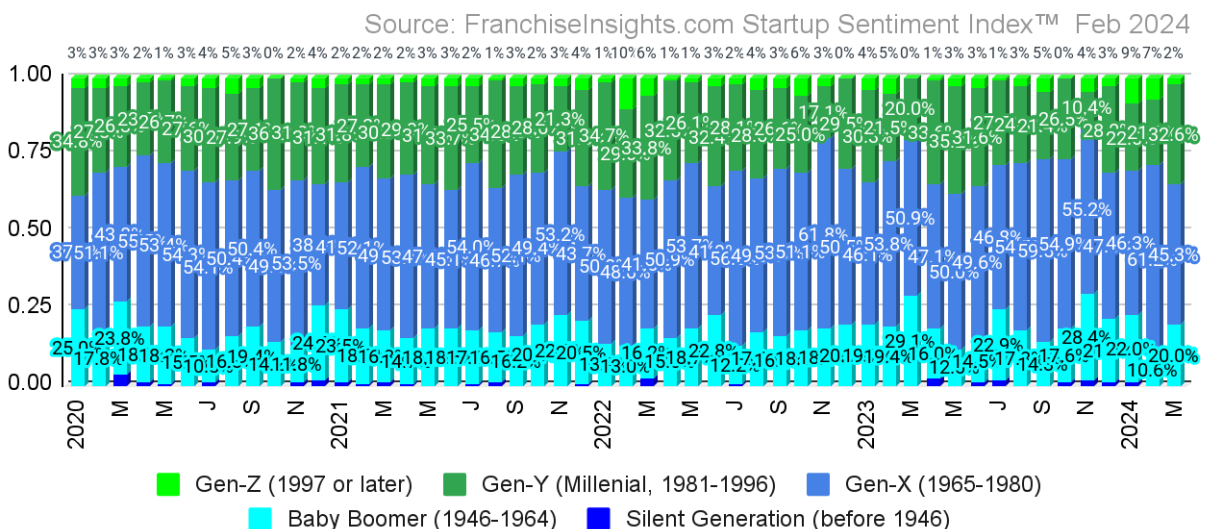
About 24.5% of respondents were working as freelancers or consultants, a significant increase from 20% in February.

Part-time workers made up 16.5% of respondents, way up from 6.9% in October. This month 13.9% of the aspiring entrepreneurs in the survey were on active military duty.

Gen-X dominated with 45.3% of respondents, and the Millennial age cohort represented 32.6% of respondents. Baby Boomers were 20%, and Gen-Z were 2.1% of respondents. For the next several years, [millennials and Gen-X will drive business startups as they reach peak business startup ages](#) and Boomers age out of the workplace.

In earlier demographic studies of aspiring franchise and business owners, we learned that the [age distribution of franchise seekers](#) varies little over time. The late forties and early fifties are the peak ages when budding entrepreneurs take interest in business ownership. Gen-X, in the 43-58 age bracket, is the most active franchise-seeking cohort.

Gen-X Dominates at 45.3%, Followed by Millennials at 32.6%



See also a complete profile of the [generational demographics of aspiring business buyers](#) from a large demographic sample spanning 2018-2021. Further, analysis of [gender demographics of business buyers shows women making up an increasing percentage](#) of aspiring business owners, particularly in the post-Boomer age cohorts.

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[FranchiseVentures](#) is the leading demand- and lead-generation platform for potential franchisees to thousands of growing franchise systems in the United States and Canada. Its franchise directory brands include [Franchise.com](#), [Franchise Solutions](#),

[Franchise Gator](#), [Franchise Opportunities](#), [Franchise For Sale](#), [SmallBusinessStartup.com](#) and [BusinessBroker.net](#), and together they provide the largest aggregation of prospective franchise buyers in the U.S.

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