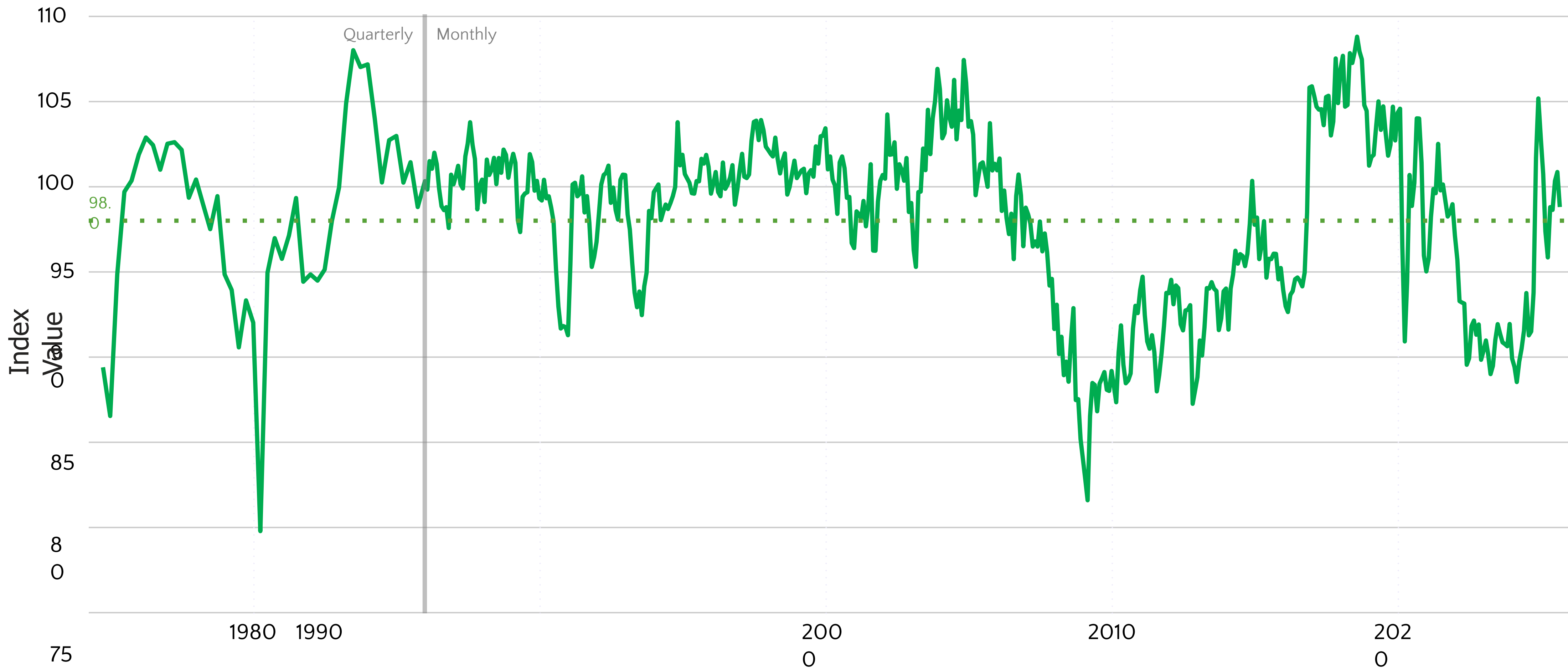
RESEARCH CENTER

October 2025

Small Business Optimism Index (Seasonally Adjusted 1986=100)



Current Reading: 98.8

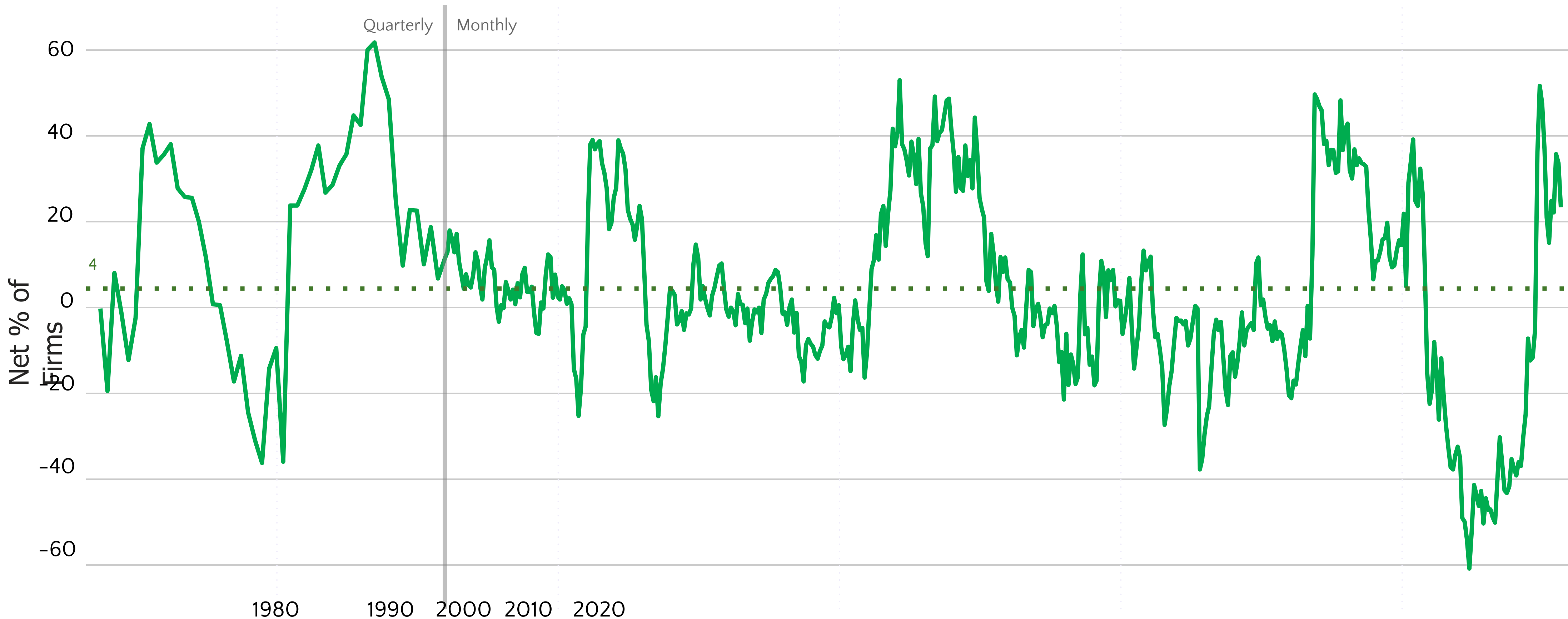
Historical High 108.8 (Aug. 2018), **Historical Low** 79.7 (Apr. 1980)

The Optimism Index is based on 10 survey indicators.

* Dashed line is the average

Outlook for General Business Conditions

Net Percent ("Better" minus "Worse") Six Months From Now – Seasonally Adjusted



Current Reading: Net 23%

Historical High Net 62% (Jul. 1983), **Historical Low** Net -61% (Jun. 2022)

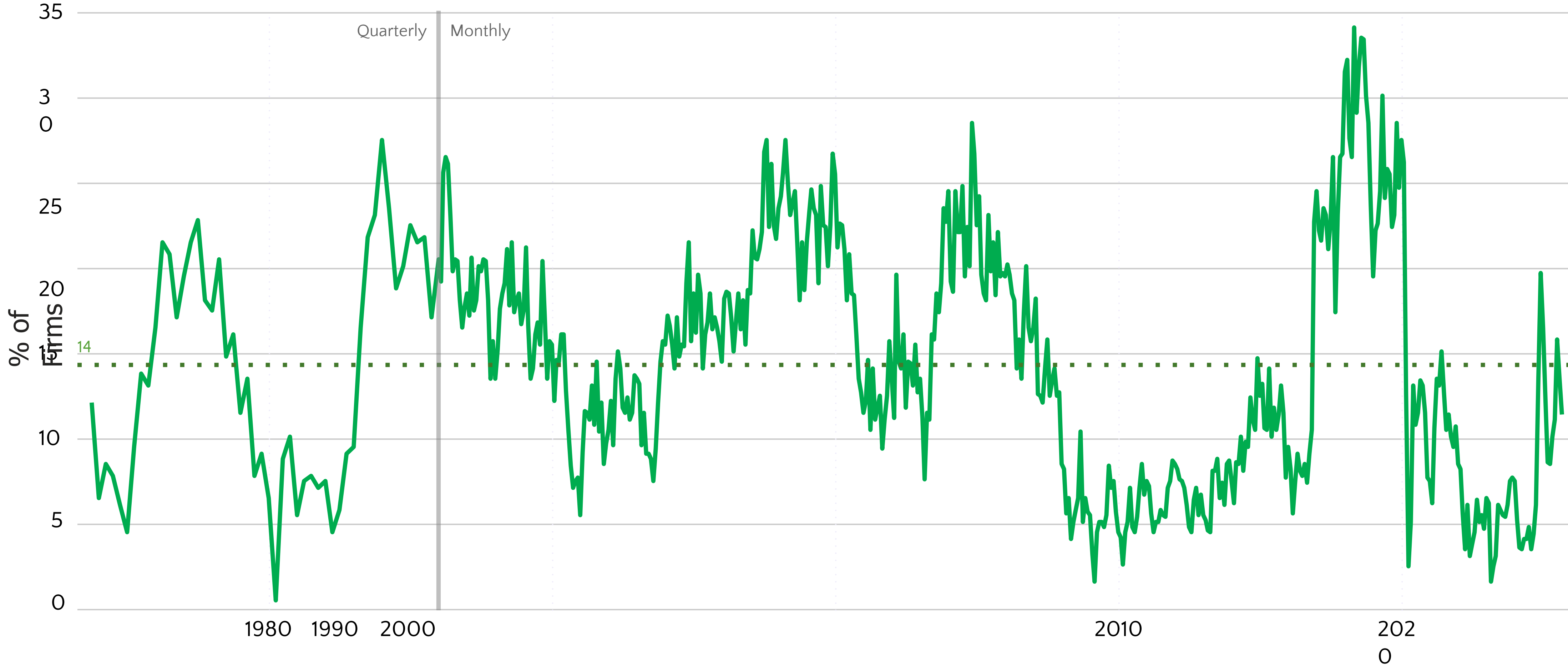
Survey Question: What about the economy in general, do you think that six months from now general business conditions will be better than they are now, about the same, or worse?

Answer Selections: Much better, Somewhat better, About the same, Somewhat worse, Much worse, Don't know

* Dashed line is the average

Good Time to Expand

Percent Next Three Months "Good to Expand" – Seasonally Adjusted



Current Reading: 11%

Historical High 34% (May 2018), **Historical Low** 1% (Apr. 1980)

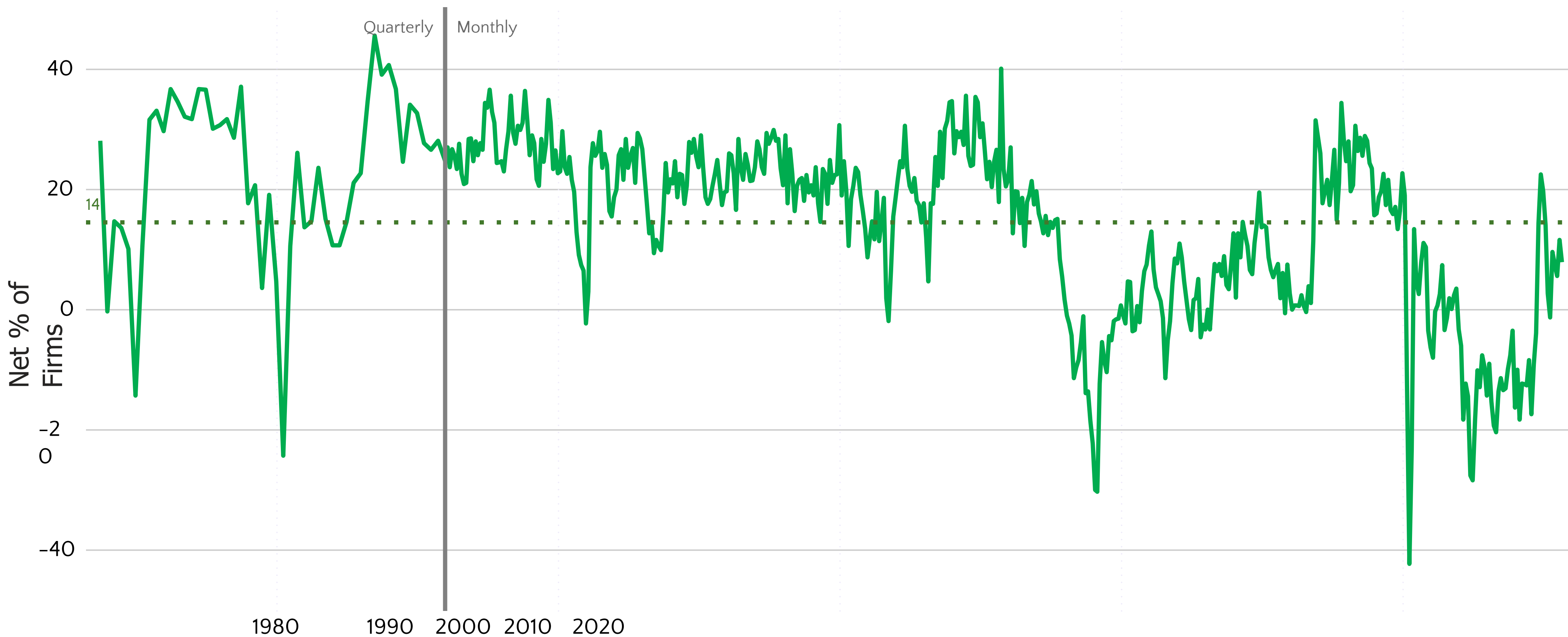
Survey Question: Do you think the next three months will be a good time for small businesses to expand substantially?

Answer Selections: Yes, No, Uncertain

* Dashed line is the average

Real Sales Expectations

Net Percent ("Higher" minus "Lower") in the Next Three Months – Seasonally Adjusted



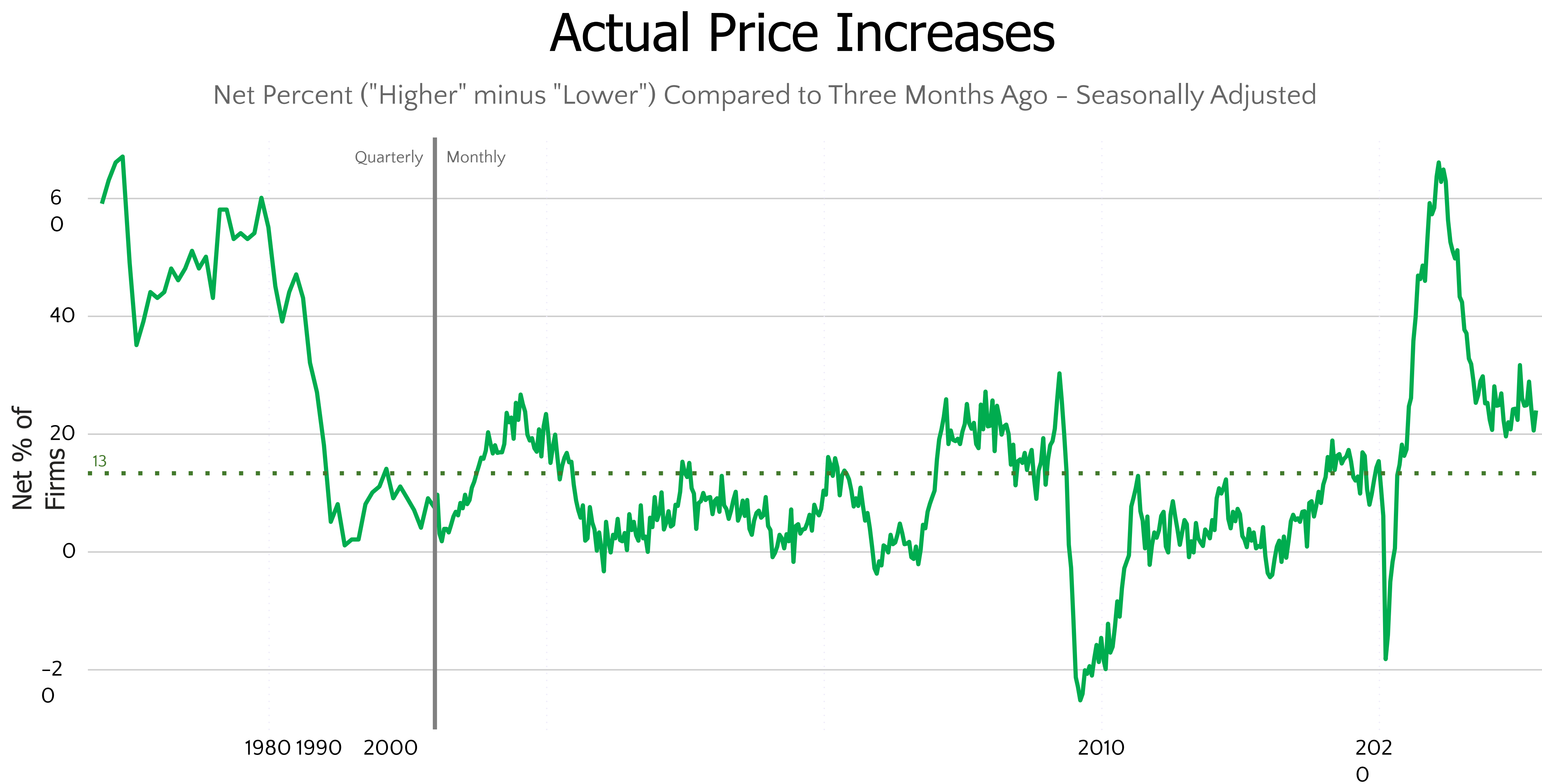
Current Reading: Net 8%

Historical High Net 46% (Jul. 1983), **Historical Low** Net -42% (Apr. 2020)

Survey Question: Overall, what do you expect to happen to the volume of goods and/or services (number of customers, units, hours billed, etc.) that you will sell during the next three months?

Answer Selections: Go up a lot, Go up a little, Stay the same, Go down a little, Go down a lot, Don't know

* Dashed line is the average



Current Reading: Net 24%

Historical High Net 67% (Oct. 1974), **Historical Low** Net -25% (Apr. 2009)

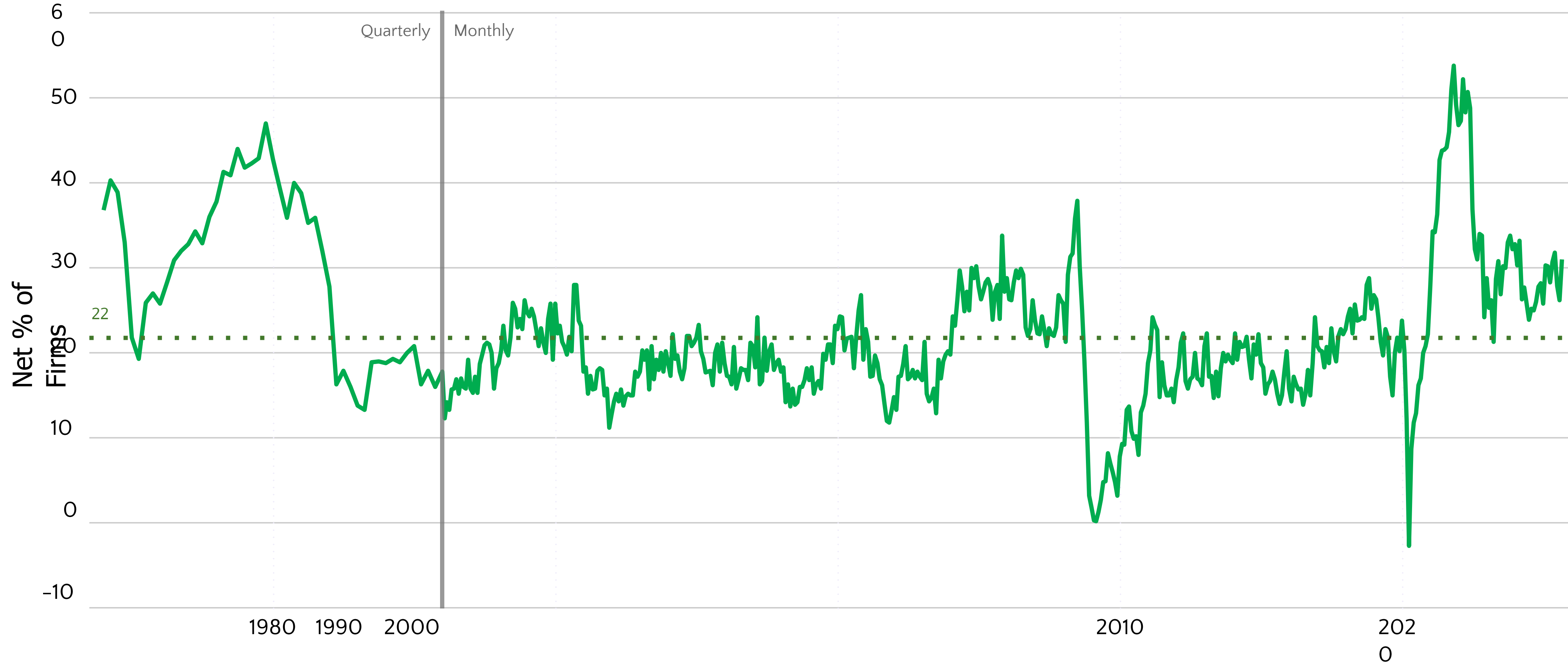
Survey Question: How are your average selling prices now compared to three months ago?

Answer Selections: Lower now, No difference, Higher now

* Dashed line is the average

Price Plans

Net Percent ("Higher" minus "Lower") in the Next Three Months – Seasonally Adjusted



Current Reading: Net 31%

Historical High Net 54% (Nov. 2021), **Historical Low** Net -3% (Apr. 2020)

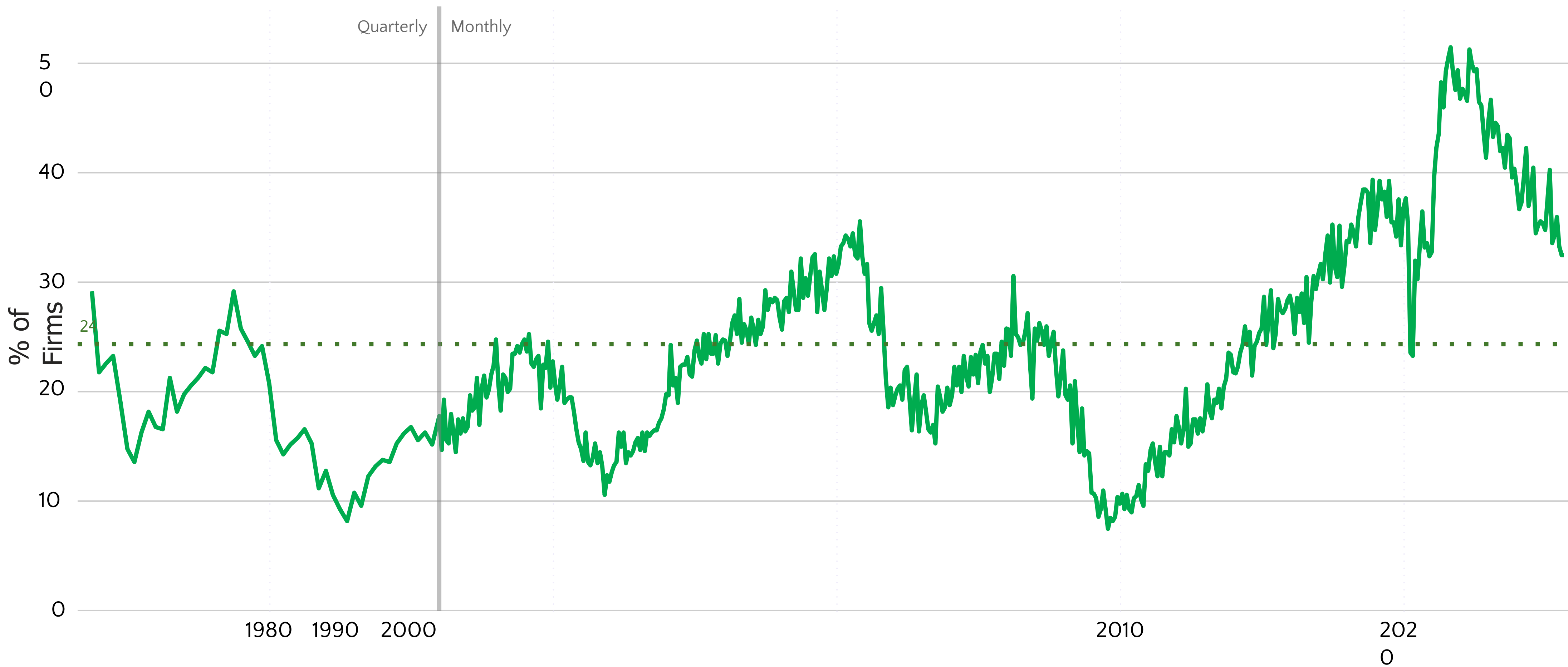
Survey Question: In the next three months, do you plan to change the price of your goods and/or services?

Answer Selections: Yes raise the prices, Yes lower the prices, No change, Don't know

* Dashed line is the average

Unfilled Job Openings

Percent with at Least One Unfilled Opening – Seasonally Adjusted



Current Reading: 32%

Historical High 51% (Sep. 2021, May 2022), **Historical Low** 7% (Aug. 2009)

Survey Question: Do you have any job openings that you are not able to fill right now?

Answer Selections: Yes for skilled labor, Yes for unskilled labor, Yes for both skilled and unskilled labor, No

* Dashed line is the average

Current Reading: Net 16%

Historical High Net 32% (Aug. 2021), **Historical Low** Net -8% (Jan. 1975, Apr. 1980, Mar. 2009)

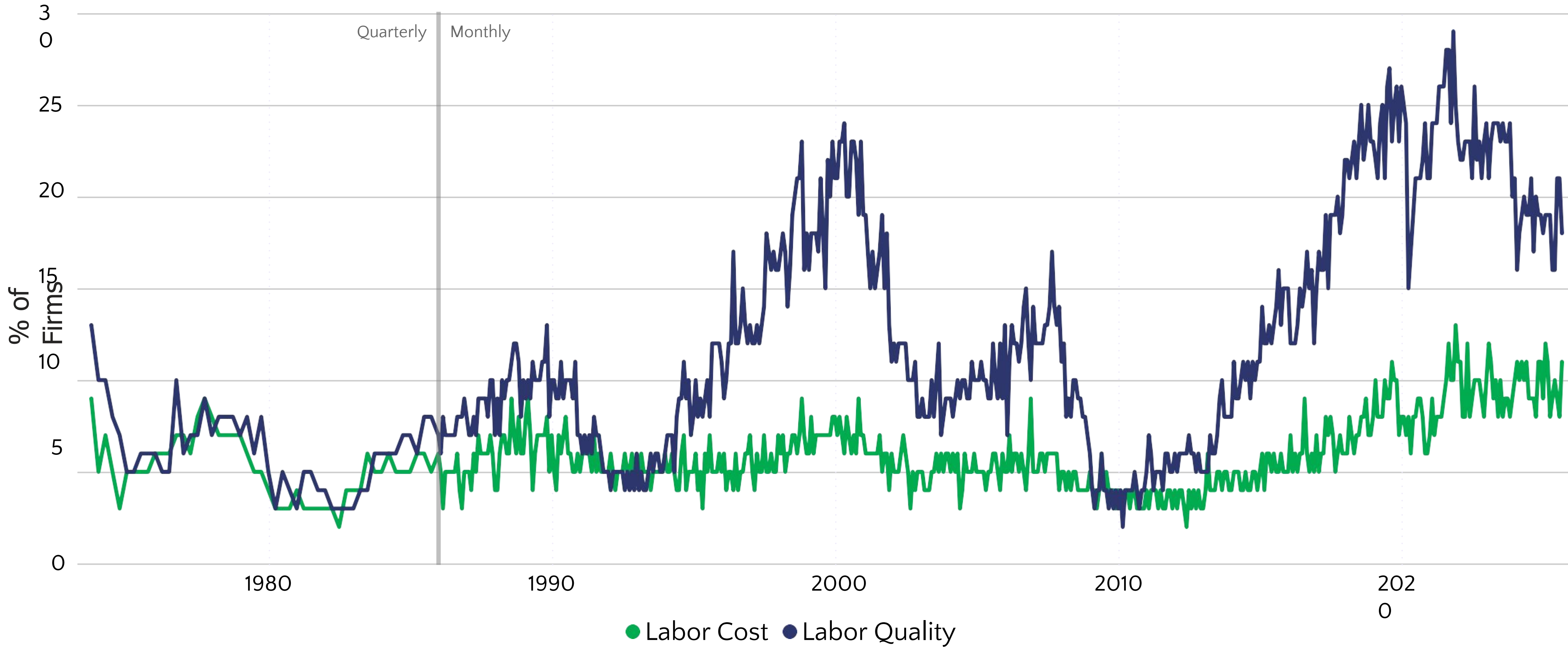
Survey Question: In the next three months, do you expect to increase or decrease the total number of people working for you?

Answer Selections: Increase, Keep the same, Decrease.

* Dashed line is the average

Single Most Important Problem

Labor Cost and Labor Quality



Current Reading: Labor Cost (11%), Labor Quality (18%)

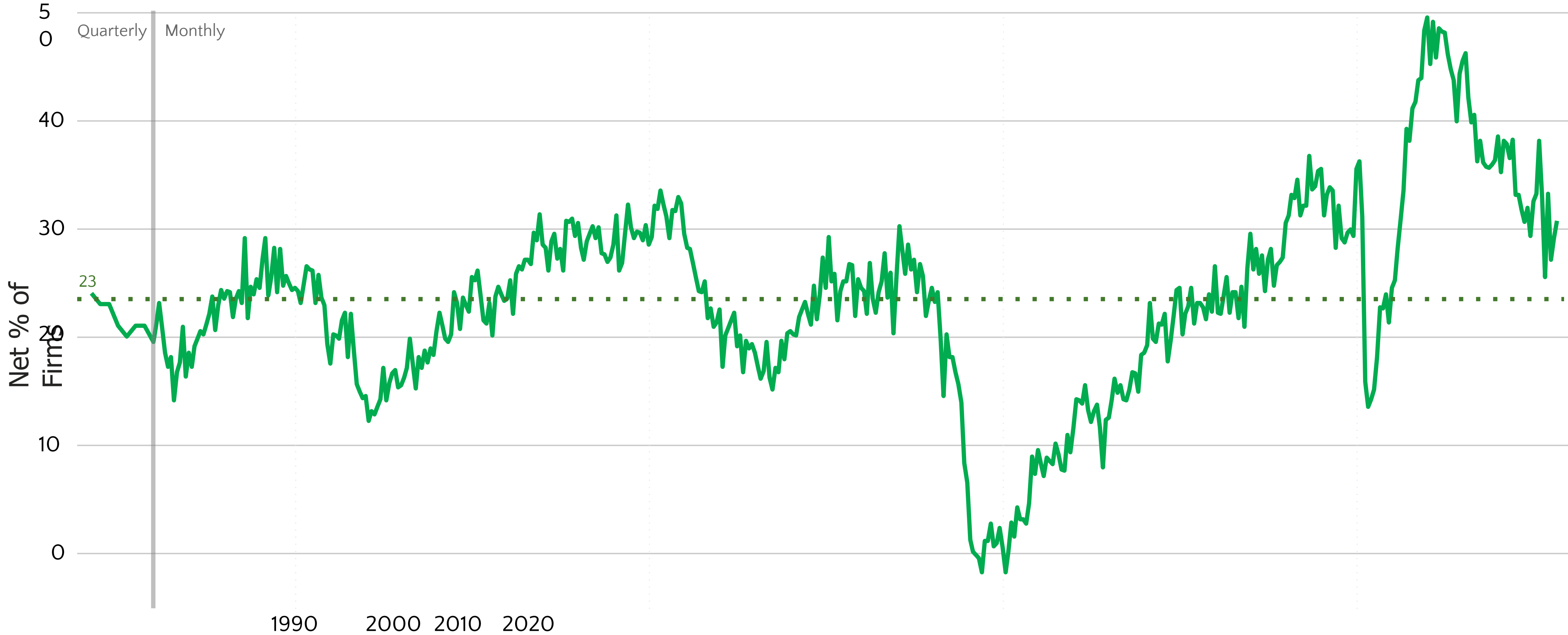
Historical High Labor Cost (13%, Dec. 2021), Labor Quality (29%, Nov. 2021), **Historical Low** Labor Cost (2%, Jul. 1982, Jun. 2012), Labor Quality (2%, Mar. 2010)

Survey Question: What is the single most important problem facing your business today?

Answer Selections: Taxes, Inflation, Poor sales, Financing & Interest rates, Cost of labor, Government regulation(s) & red tape, Competition from large business, Quality of labor, Cost or availability of insurance, other

Actual Compensation Changes

Net Percent ("Increase" minus "Decrease") During the Last Three Months – Seasonally Adjusted



Current Reading: Net 31%

Historical High Net 50% (Jan. 2022), **Historical Low** Net -2% (Jun. 2009, Feb. 2010)

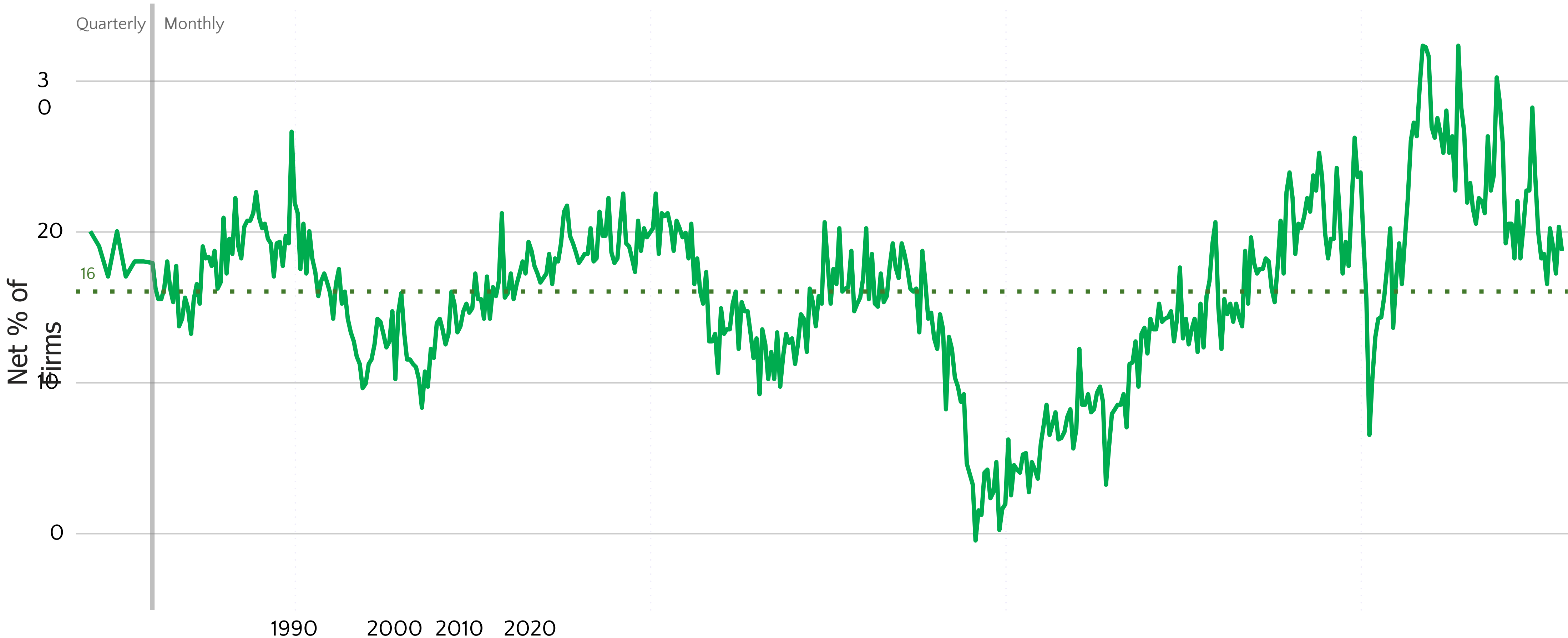
Survey Question: Over the past three months, did you change average employee compensation (wages and benefits but not Social Security, U.C taxes, etc.)?

Answer Selections: Increased a lot, Increase, About the same, Decreased, Decreased a lot

* Dashed line is the average

Compensation Plans

Net Percent ("Increase" minus "Decrease") in the Next Three Months – Seasonally Adjusted



Current Reading: Net 19%

Historical High Net 32% (Oct., Nov., Dec., 2021, Oct. 2022), **Historical Low** Net -1% (Mar. 2009)

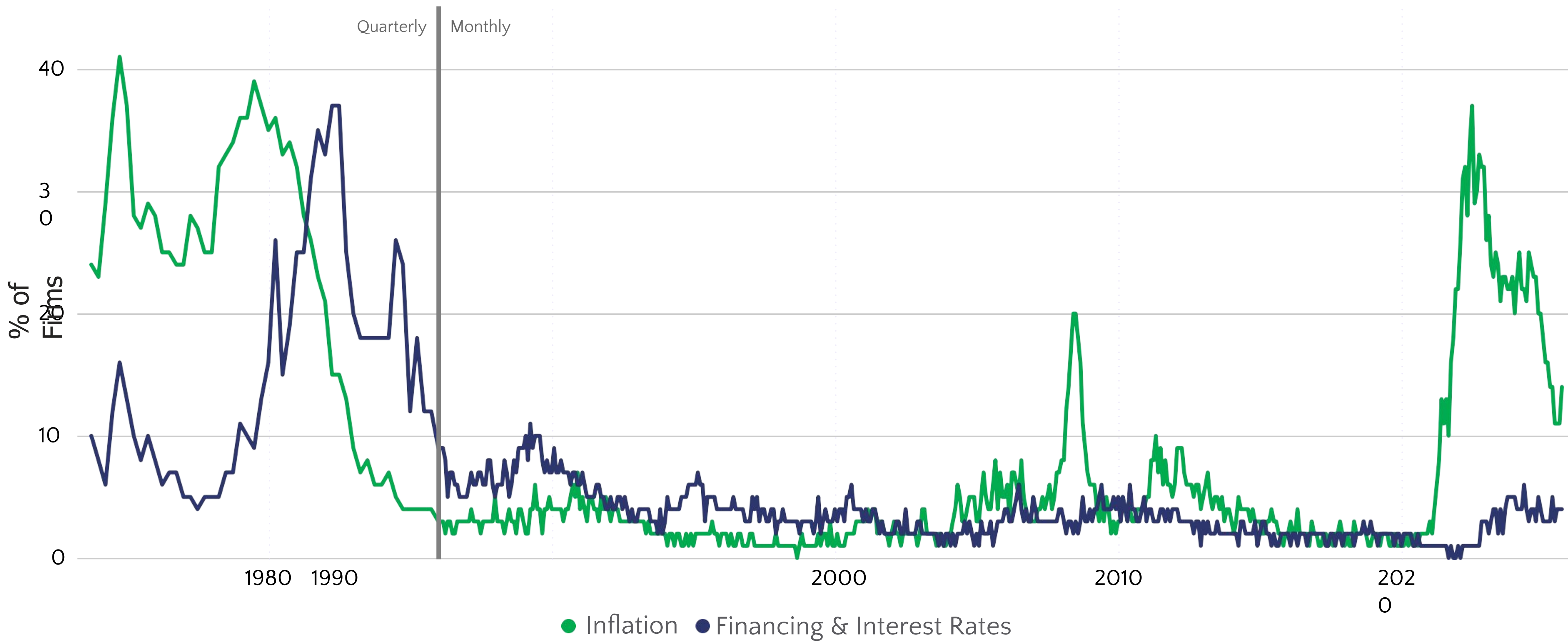
Survey Question: Do you plan to change average employee compensation (wages and benefits but not Social Security, U.C. taxes, etc.) during the next three months?

Answer Selections: Increase a lot, Increase, About the same, Decrease, Decrease a lot, Don't know

* Dashed line is the average

Single Most Important Problem

Inflation and Financing



Current Reading: Inflation (14%), Financing & Interest rates (4%)

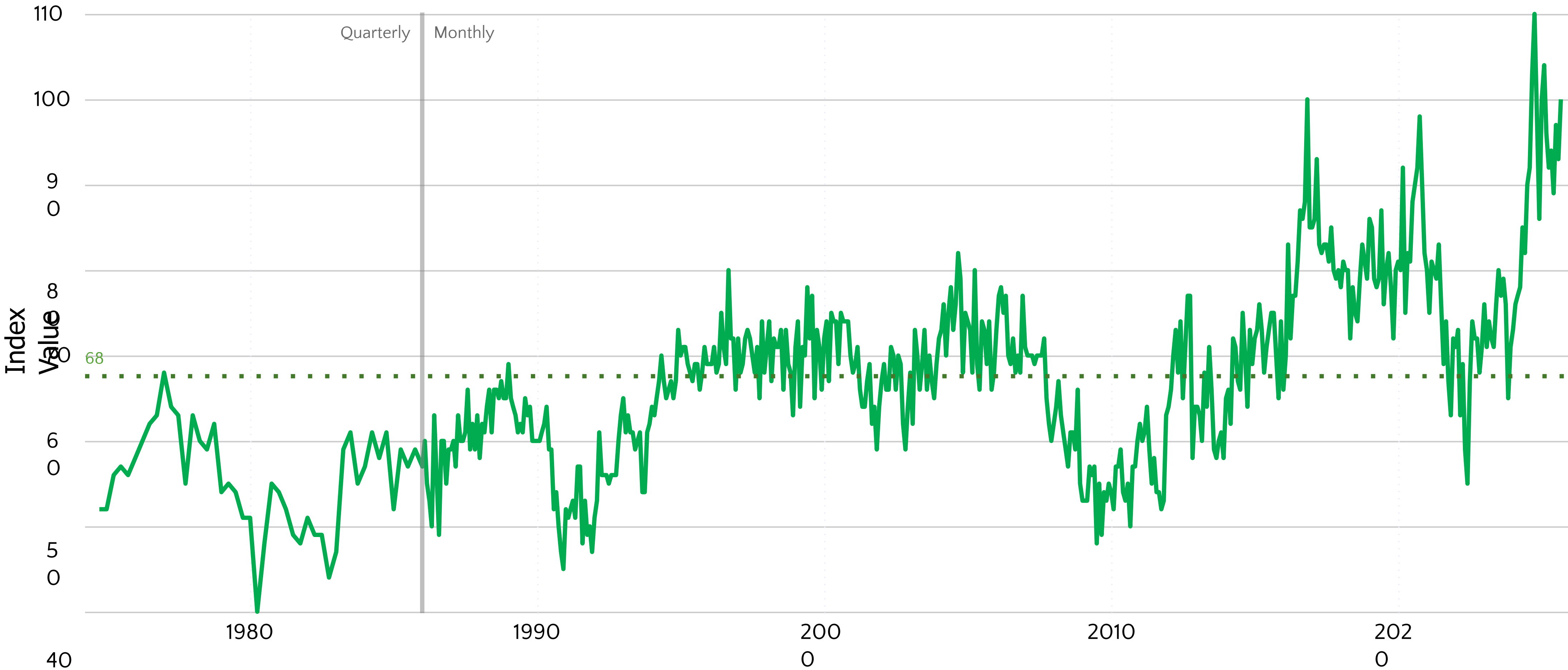
Historical High Inflation (41%, Oct. 1974), Financing & Interest rates (37%, Apr., Jul. 1982), **Historical Low** Inflation (0%, Sep. 1998), Financing & Interest rates (0%, Sep., Nov., Dec. 2021, Feb. 2022)

Survey Question: What is your single most important problem facing your business today?

Answer Selections: Taxes, Inflation, Poor sales, Financing & Interest Rates, Cost of labor, Government regulation(s) & red tape, Competition from large businesses, Quality of labor, Cost or availability of insurance, Other.

Uncertainty Index

Sum of "Don't Know" & "Uncertain" Answers on 6 Questions



Current Reading: 100

Historical High 110 (Oct. 2024), **Historical Low** 40 (Apr.1980)

* Dashed line is the average

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