

# CKGSB BCI

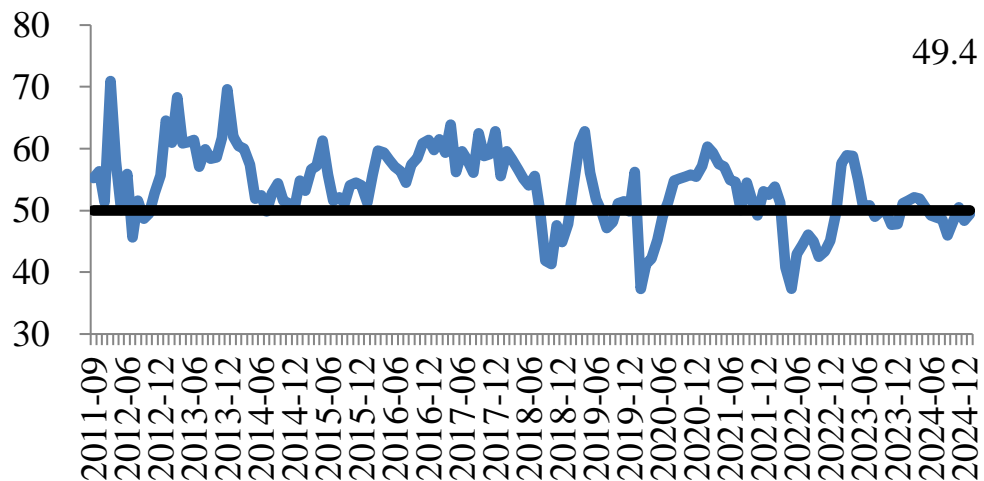
## January 2025

22 January 2025

CKGSB Case Center and Center for Economic Research

In January, the CKGSB Business Conditions Index (BCI) registered 49.4, a slight improvement on December's BCI total of 48.3 (Figure 1). This month's rise in business prospects does not necessarily mean China's current economic woes are behind us. Moreover, with the BCI remaining below the confidence threshold of 50.0, fairly significant levels of instability continue to inhibit China's business sphere.

**Figure 1 Business Conditions Index (BCI)**



Source: CKGSB Case Center and Center for Economic Research

The CKGSB BCI comprises four sub-indices: sales, profit, financing environment, and inventory. Three measure prospects and one, the corporate financing index, measures the current state of affairs. In January 2025, they performed as follows:

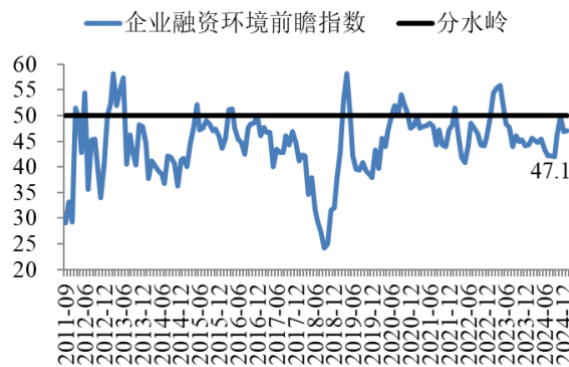
**Figure 2 Corporate Sales Index**


Source: CKGSB Case Center and Center for Economic Research

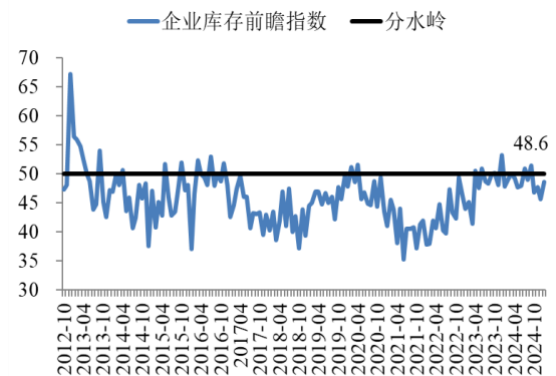
**Figure 3 Corporate Profit Index**


Source: CKGSB Case Center and Center for Economic Research

Three of the four subindices rose in January. The corporate sales index grew from 57.3 to 59.9 (Figure 2) while the corporate profit prospects slid from 43.3 to 42.2 (Figure 3).

**Figure 4 Corporate Financing Index**


Source: CKGSB Case Center and Center for Economic Research

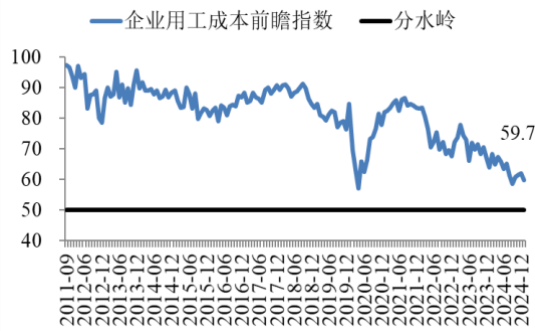
**Figure 5 Inventory Index**


Source: CKGSB Case Center and Center for Economic Research

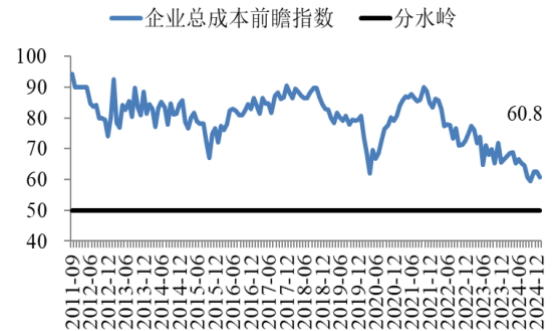
Corporate financing prospects improved somewhat this month, rising from 46.9 to 47.1 (Figure 4), while the index for inventory increased from 45.7 to 48.6 (Figure 5).

While for the other subindices — sales and profit — a positive trajectory indicates growth, for inventory, a positive trajectory indicates falling warehoused stock and a negative index points to overcapacity. The four sub-indices of sales, profit, financing and inventory have different meanings as a result. Put simply, when the first three sub-indices rise, it means that the situation is improving, and when they fall, the situation is deteriorating. For inventory, a rising index suggests falling stock, and a falling index suggests overcapacity.

Aside from the main BCI, we also forecast costs, prices, investing and recruitment conditions over the next six months. We begin with costs:

**Figure 6 Labor Costs Index**


Source: CKGSB Case Center and Center for Economic Research

**Figure 7 Overall Costs Index**


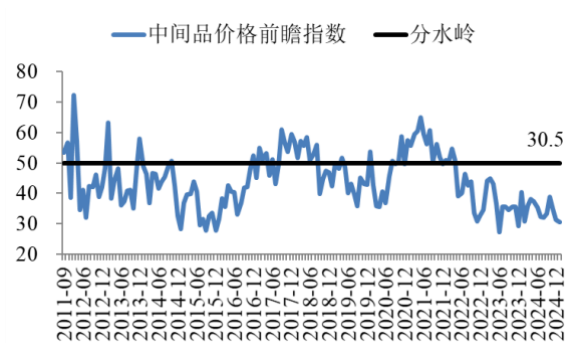
Source: CKGSB Case Center and Center for Economic Research

This month, prospects for labor costs fell slightly, from 62.1 to 59.7. The overall costs index fell from 62.5 to 60.8. High labor cost expectations show that most companies anticipate costs to increase in the next half year, as do overall cost predictions. While costs increase pressure on a company's bottom lines, they do not by default signal worsening business conditions. They could instead be telling us that the economy is heating up, and companies are having to spend more on labor and materials as demand recovers. When only the cost of producing and selling a unit increases, business conditions are probably deteriorating. For specific data, please refer to Figures 6 and 7.

Let's look at price prospects. The consumer price index fell from 43.1 to 39.9 (Figure 8). The producer price index fell slightly again this month, from 31.3 to 30.5 (Figure 9). Factory gate price prospects are hovering at an all-time low, a sign of major price pressure that continues to impact on China's manufacturing sector.

**Figure 8 Consumer Price Index**


Source: CKGSB Case Center and Center for Economic Research

**Figure 9 Producer Price Index**


Source: CKGSB Case Center and Center for Economic Research

We now turn to investment and recruitment. These indices have both been at the more confident end of the scale since the BCI began. Since mid 2024, they entered the doldrums. As the Chinese economy is largely investment-driven, and investment has a strong link with job recruitment, following their trajectory is important. This is because these are two indicators of plans for expansion in China's business world. The index for investment fell from 58.5 to 51.9 (Figure 10); the index for

employment rose slightly, from last month's 50.0 to 50.6 (Figure 11).

Figure 10 Investment Index



Source: CKGSB Case Center and Center for Economic Research

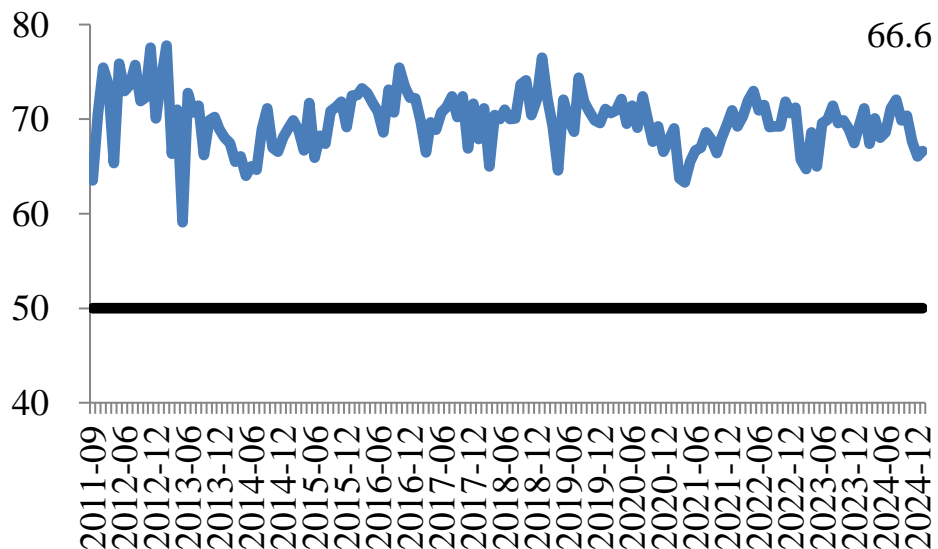
Figure 11 Recruitment Index



Source: CKGSB Case Center and Center for Economic Research

We conclude with an index recording our sample's collective strength in the market. Figure 12 shows self-reported competitiveness compared with industry peers. As our sample is comprised mainly of excellent private firms run by CKGSB alumni, their level of competitiveness is higher than average (50 points) for their respective sectors. Chinese industry is therefore, on the whole, having a harder time than our BCI sample.

Figure 12 Company Competitiveness



Source: CKGSB Case Center and Center for Economic Research

### CKGSB BCI Introduction

In June 2011, the CKGSB Case Center and the Center for Economic Research initiated a project to gauge the business sentiment of executives regarding the macroeconomic environment in China – calling it a business conditions index.

Under the direction of Professor Li Wei, the two research centers designed and tested the BCI survey in July 2011. In September 2011, the first survey was carried out. 158 surveys have now been completed between May 2012 and January 2025 and 153 reports published (Three months at the beginning resulted in no report).

### **Explanation of the Index**

The CKGSB Business Conditions Index (CKBCI) is a set of forward-looking diffusion indicators. The index takes 50 as its threshold, so a value above 50 means that the variable that the index measures is expected to increase, while a value below 50 means that the variable is expected to fall. The CKGSB BCI uses the same methodology as the PMI index.

The survey asks senior executives of companies whether their main products are for consumers or non-consumers, and then asks how they think product prices will change in the next six months. Based on survey responses, we have been able to report expectant changes in consumer and producer prices.

We ask companies for information pertaining to their relative competitive positions in their respective industries. Based on survey responses, we compute a competitiveness index for our sample. The higher the competitiveness index, the more competitive our sample firms are in their respective industries.

### **Method of Calculation**

During each survey, respondents are asked to indicate whether certain aspects of their business (e.g., sales) are expected to increase, remain unchanged, or decrease over the forthcoming six months as compared to the same time period last year. The diffusion index is calculated by summing the percentage of “increase” responses and half of the “remain unchanged” responses.

Of all the indices measured for the CKGSB BCI, the overall business conditions index is an aggregate index, which has been calculated, since December 2012, by averaging its four constituent indices of sales, profit, financing environment and inventory. The aggregate BCI index before December 2012 used a different composition of constituent indices, and is therefore not directly comparable to the current BCI index.

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#### *Education for a New Era of Global Business*

Established in Beijing in November 2002 with generous support from the Li Ka Shing Foundation, CKGSB is China’s leading non-profit, independent educational institution. The school offers innovative English MBA, Chinese MBA, Executive MBA and Executive Education programs. In addition to its campus in the center of Beijing, it has teaching sites in Shanghai and Shenzhen and representative offices in Hong Kong, London and New York.

#### *Thought Leaders on Business in China*

CKGSB faculty, through their on-the-ground research and close relationships with leading domestic executives, provide global thought leadership on both the theory and the practical reality of real-life business in China. They consistently generate important insights into areas that are poorly understood outside of China, such as the globalization strategies of Chinese companies and competition and collaboration among state-owned enterprises, private businesses and multinationals.

#### *World-Class Faculty with a Global Perspective*

CKGSB is the only business school in China with the reputation and resources to attract faculty from top business schools such as Wharton, Stanford, NYU and INSEAD. The majority of CKGSB faculty members were born and raised in China before leaving to study and teach abroad. Their bicultural backgrounds have endowed them with a valuable capacity to interpret global business in the context of both China and the West.

#### **The Research Team**

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