Startup *Barometer* Q2/2026

Finnish Startup Community
Pääomasijoittajat Finnish Venture Capital Association
FiBAN FINNISH BUSINESS ANGELS NETWORK
STARTUP 100
Startup Foundation

What is Startup Barometer?

Basics:

- Quarterly survey of the startup ecosystem to measure the sentiment of the startup ecosystem
- Three key questions assessing sentiment over the past and next three months.
- Results are presented as balance figures, indicating optimism (+100) or pessimism (-100).
- The quarterly average of all balance figures provides an overall sentiment measure.

Survey questions:

- Financial Situation: Rate (1-5) the financial situation of your company.
- Economic Surroundings: Rate (1-5) the surrounding economic situation.
- Employment Changes: Rate (1-5) changes in the number of employees.
- Barriers to Growth: Insights on barriers to business growth.

Details:

- Balance figures are calculated by mapping 1-5 responses from -1 to +1, then averaging across respondents.

Theme Questions:

- This quarter's theme questions covered foreign expansion plans, tariffs and Finnish taxation's impact on recruiting highly skilled foreign professionals.

Note: In Q1/2026, **FSC** began collaborating with **Finnish Venture Capital Association, Finnish Business Angels Network**, **Startup Finland**, and **Startup Foundation** and expanded the Barometer to cover the entire startup ecosystem. The Barometer covers startup founders, investors, and other ecosystem actors.

Startup Barometer results in brief

Previous Barometer results showed that Finnish startups' assessment of their own financial situation had dropped to a historically low level.

This quarter, company views of their own financial situations improved. Finnish startups still assess their financial situations positively, and both backward- and forward-looking indicators recovered from Q1.

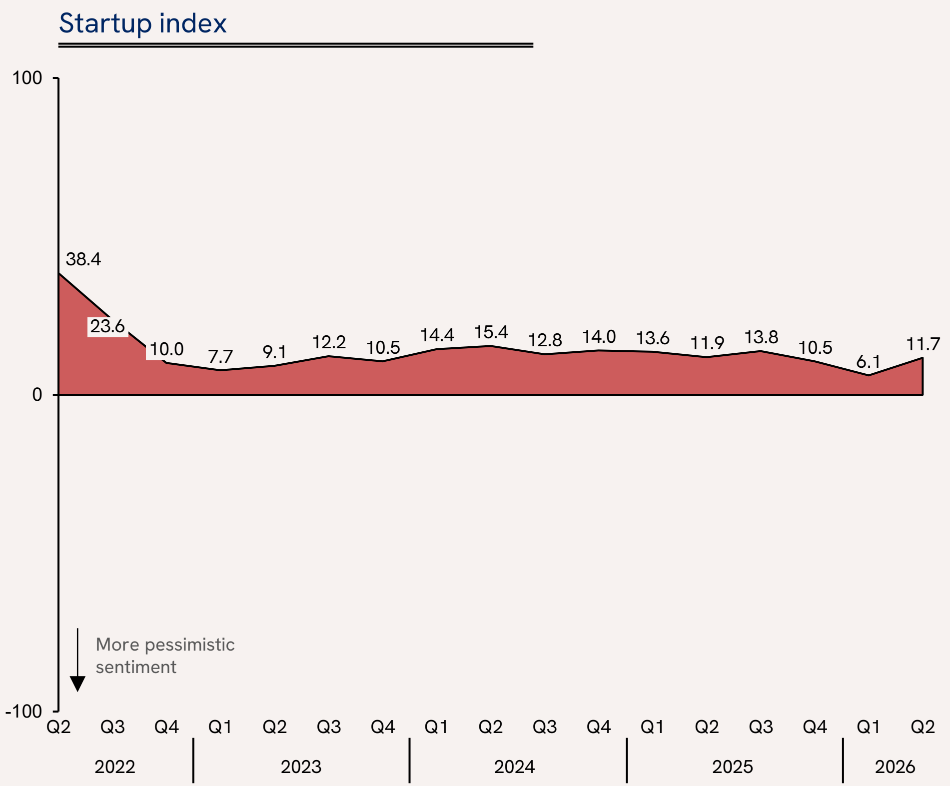
For the surrounding economy, past-quarter assessments remain negative but improved from Q1. For next-quarter expectations, Finnish startups' views turned positive again. Ongoing geopolitical uncertainty may still limit confidence.

Both realized hiring and hiring expectations softened in Q2. The past-quarter indicator fell slightly from 14.9 to 13.9, while the next-quarter indicator fell from 22.3 to 19.0; both remain positive.

Startup index rebounded in Q2 2026 after the Q1 dip

Startup Index: Quarterly average of the balance figures for each basic question in the survey.

- The index rose to 11.7 in Q2 2026 from 6.1 in Q1, a 5.6-point quarterly increase.
- The rebound reverses the previous quarter's decline and lifts sentiment above Q4 2025 (10.5).
- Despite the improvement, the index remains below the recent high of 15.4 in Q2 2024 and far below 38.4 in Q2 2022.
- Since 2023, readings have generally stayed positive but subdued, indicating cautious sentiment among startups.
- The latest result signals a clear quarterly rebound, but not yet a sustained upward trend.



Startup financial situation

Red: Past 3 months (backward-looking)

- The balance figure for the past three months increased to 13.9, up from 9.9 in Q1/2026.
- The indicator recovered from its historical low and remains in optimistic territory.

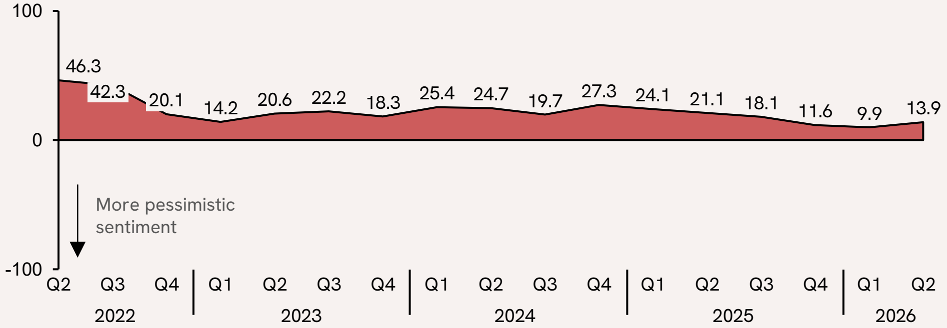
Blue: Next 3 months (forward-looking)

- The forward-looking indicator increased to 23.4, up from 17.8 in Q1/2026.

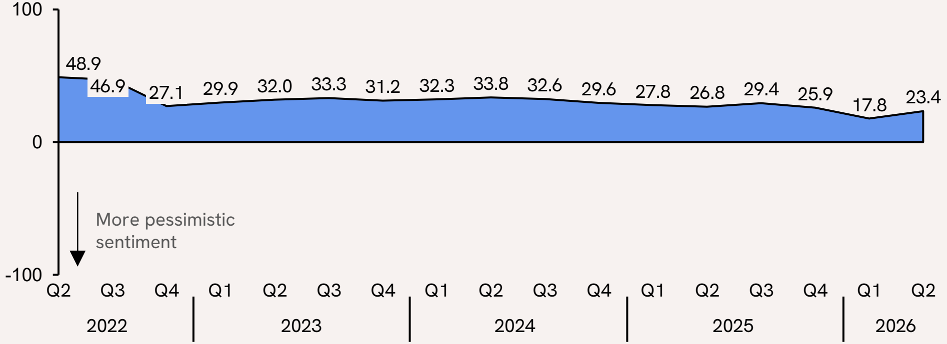
Key Takeaways:

Both backward- and forward-looking indicators improved from Q1 and remain in optimistic territory.

Startups financial situation, past quarter experiences



Startups financial situation, next quarter expectations



Surrounding economic situation

Red: Past 3 months (backward-looking)

- The backward-looking indicator improved to -8.2, up from -16.8 in Q1/2026.
- Views of the surrounding economic situation remain pessimistic, but sentiment improved materially from Q1.

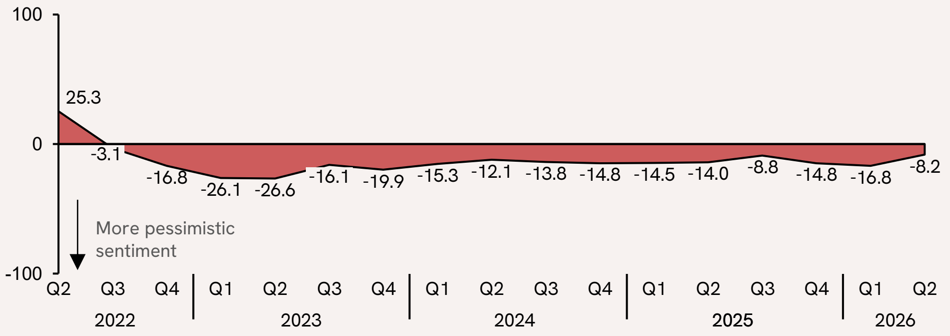
Blue: Next 3 months (forward-looking)

- The forward-looking indicator returned to positive territory, rising to 8.2 from -11.4 in Q1/2026.
- This quarter's increase lifted expectations back above zero.

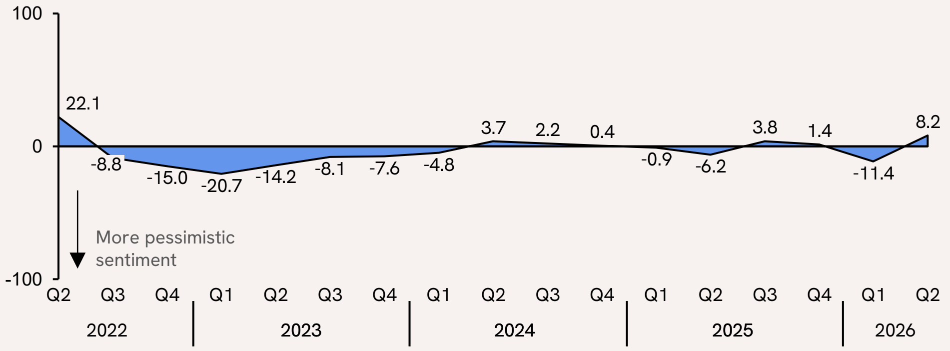
Key Takeaways:

Past-quarter sentiment improved but remains negative. For the next three months, startups are cautiously positive.

Surrounding economy, past quarter experiences



Surrounding economy, next quarter expectations



Number of employees

Red: Past 3 months (backward-looking)

- The backward-looking indicator decreased slightly to 13.9, down from 14.9 in Q1/2026.
- This suggests that startups continued to add employees, but at a slightly slower pace than in Q1.

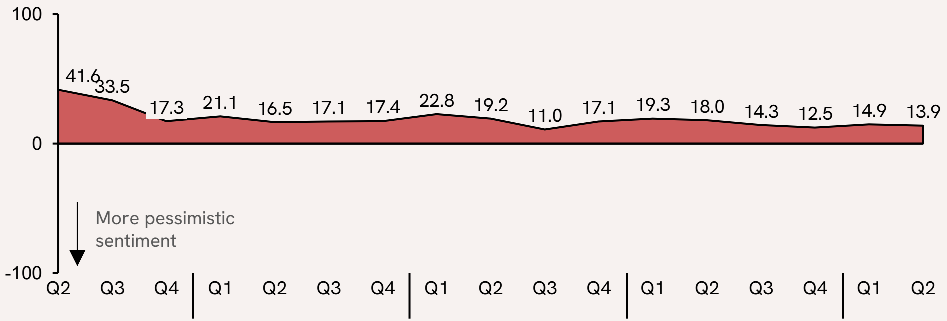
Blue: Next 3 months (forward-looking)

- The forward-looking hiring indicator decreased to 19.0, down from 22.3 in Q1/2026.
- The gap between expected and realized hiring remains.

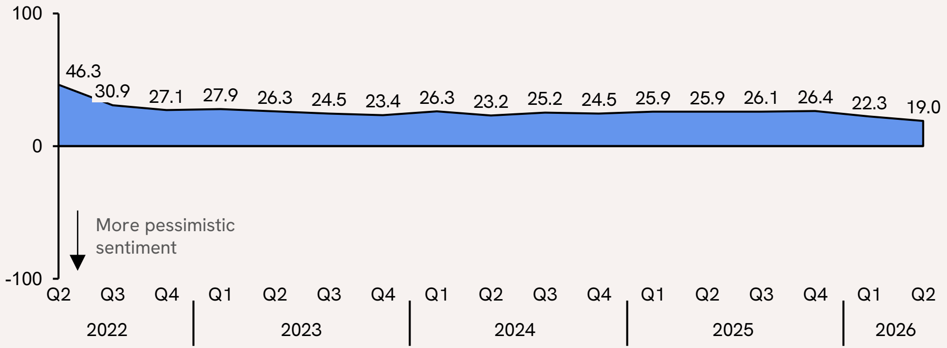
Key Takeaways:

Both realized and expected hiring softened from Q1 but remain positive; expected hiring continues to exceed realized hiring.

Hiring pace, past quarter experiences



Hiring pace, next quarter expectations

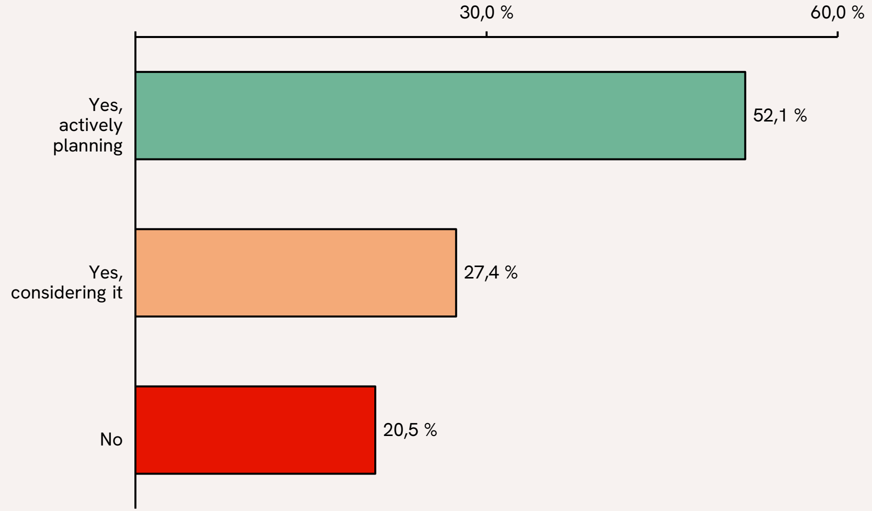


Startups’ international expansion intentions are extremely strong

By definition, international expansion is generally central to a startup’s core business. Around 80% of respondents plan to expand, or are considering expanding, more strongly into international markets.

It is important to note that a “No” response does not mean the company is not already operating in international markets.

International expansion intentions over the next year

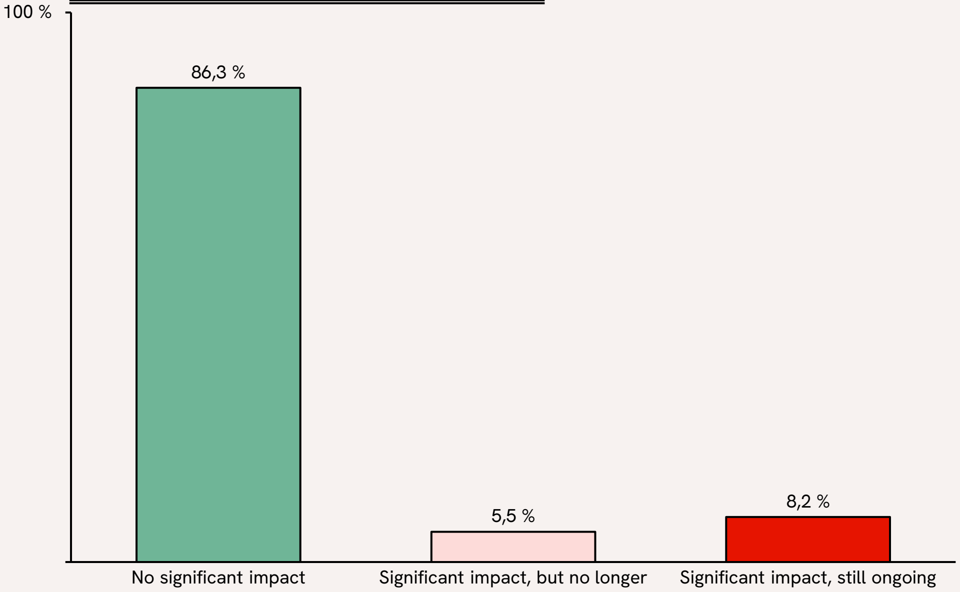


Finnish startups are experiencing significantly less impact from aggressive U.S. trade policy.

Respondents were also asked about the impact of tariffs on their international trade and value chains. Most reported that tariffs had not had a significant impact.

In the second quarter of 2025, U.S. trade policy and tariffs appeared in some companies' open-ended responses as sources of uncertainty for growth. At the same time, startups' expectations for the broader economy weakened for the fourth consecutive quarter.

Impact of tariffs



Finnish taxation does not appear to be a bottleneck for startups' international recruitment

Respondents were asked how Finnish taxation has affected their company's ability to recruit highly skilled international talent to Finland.

- 44% of respondents believe Finnish taxation has no impact on recruiting international talent.
- 23% say taxation makes recruitment at least somewhat more difficult, but only 4.1% consider the impact significant.
- The question was not relevant for 33%. Excluding these respondents, 35% report a negative impact from taxation.

Impact of taxation on recruiting highly skilled talent