

WOMENSWEAR

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MAINSTREAM

Womenswear indies were feeling uncertain about the year ahead, with plenty of recession talk at many of those polled this week. However, it is hoped the onset of new spring product will lift the mood of shoppers. Tailoring sales fell for 36% of retailers, although knit sales were buoyant.

TOP 10

Best-selling brands of the week

1	Condici
2	Marc Cain
3	Gerry Weber
4	Basler
5	Betty Barclay
6	Bandolera
7	Gold by Michael H
8	Gelco
9	Crea Concept
10	Joseph Ribkoff

TOP 5

Best-selling categories of the week

1	Knitwear
2	Trousers
3	Outerwear
4	Tops
5	Jackets

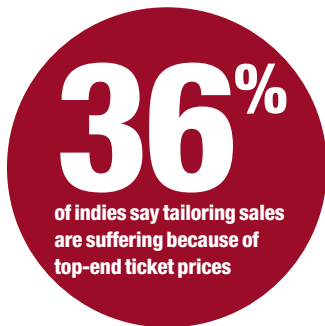
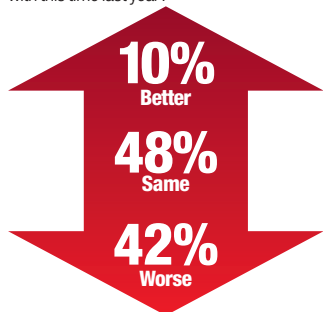
TOP 5

Best-selling outerwear brands of the week

1	Basler
2	Gerry Weber
3	Greenstone
4	Marc Cain
5	Oska

Fashion in figures

How does your week's business compare with this time last year?



“No one is buying suits – they are buying jackets which can be worn with trousers or skirts

Claire Fallon, owner of **Jacquies** in Weybridge, Surrey

“I think there is a feel for softer dressing coming through at the moment

Margaret Dawson, owner of **Lady** at **Village Gate** in Tynemouth, Tyne and Wear

Quickfire questions

Are you still on Sale?

Yes	94%
No	6%

Which brand most exceeded your sales expectations in 2008?

1	Marc Cain
2	Not Your Daughter's Jeans

Which category most exceeded your sales expectations in 2008?

1	Knitwear
2	Tops
3	Trousers

Which category do you hope will fare better in 2009?

1	Trousers
2	Skirts
3	Dresses

Will you be looking to drop any brands for autumn 09?

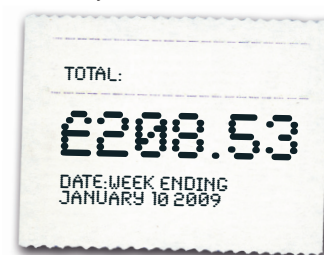
Yes	58%
No	42%

What is the most important factor in your buying for autumn?

Quality	37%
Design	33%
Price	30%

Average spend

What was the average spend per customer in your store this week?



Informer

An unpredictable year lies ahead for the mainstream womenswear market, according to the independents polled by *Drapers*, with many feeling uncertain about what the spring season will hold. Julia Sawford, owner of Davenport's in Grange-over-Sands, Cumbria, said: "It's going to be a tight and unpredictable year. You need to just break even if you can. Easter will hopefully kick-start sales for us because we are in a tourist area, so we get lots of visitors and don't get affected in the same way as the high street."

The price versus quality debate has reared its head as the recession tightens its grip on customer purses. Although design elements are key, some indies said that in tough times value for money can persuade a customer to buy. But for most of those surveyed, unless product is high in quality and has a special something, it will stay on the shelves. "Although price is important, if a design is drop-dead gorgeous, people will find the money to part with their cash," said Annie Brocklebank, owner of Hollyhock in Salisbury, Wiltshire. Jo Edwards, owner of La Belle Femme in Tunbridge Wells, Kent, added: "If the fabric is cut beautifully then it doesn't matter if you ask for that bit more."

Spring-inspired florals and bright candy shades are set to spruce up the dull winter days when new season product hits shop floors. Jo Hawkins, owner of Andi Hanson in Ilkey, West Yorkshire, said: "Florals will be key, and there are some lovely colours coming through including aqua, lime and green at Olsen and wonderful purples." Fruit salad combinations such as coral and pink are also tipped to be winners this season. Deborah Cornall, owner of Harlequin in Longridge, Lancashire, said: "We have bought quite a lot, so I hope florals are big again."



Sweet stuff: Olsen's bright and breezy look

Drapers spoke to 50 independents about their women's mainstream fashion business for the week ending January 10. Brands and styles mentioned in the lists, including the Top 10 and Top 5, are ranked when mentioned by five or more retailers