Wave 13 Results

August 1 – August 31, 2026

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CONFIDENCE IN ACTION: TRACKING THE WORKFORCE PERSPECTIVE

Why your participation matters

You are part of the ongoing **Confidence in Action: Tracking the Workforce Perspective** survey.

This project establishes a continuous measure of worker confidence in the U.S. workforce. With each new wave, we compare results to see:

- Where confidence is growing or falling
- How trust in institutions shifts
- Whether career mobility is increasing or slowing
- What new challenges are emerging

Your insights help create a clearer, data-driven picture of the workforce; insights that can guide businesses, industry leaders, and policymakers.

INDUSTRY CONFIDENCE SOFTENS IN AUGUST

Overall industry confidence declined in August, with 28% very or extremely confident in their sector's 12-month outlook, down from 34% in July. Economic uncertainty, rising costs, policy instability, and technological change continue to shape sentiment.

INSIDE THE RESULTS

Workers continue to cite economic uncertainty, rising costs, AI disruption, government policy changes, and workforce challenges among their top concerns.

WORKPLACE SNAPSHOT

Leadership confidence remained strong in August, while job security and personal financial confidence improved modestly.

TRUST CHECK

Company leadership and trade associations remain the most trusted institutions, while confidence in the federal government and general media remains limited.

If you receive another invitation in the future, we hope you'll take part again. By continuing to share your views, you'll help us monitor these trends over time, and you'll always receive some results so you can see how things are evolving.

In Brief: Key Insights

Survey Scope:
Wave 13 includes feedback from **467 U.S. professionals** representing more than 20 industries. Respondents span leadership, management, and skilled roles across organizations of varying sizes. Fielded **August 2026.**

Institutional Trust:
Trust remained strongest in company leadership and trade associations. Confidence in government remained limited, while perceptions of the regulatory and policy environment continued to skew negative.

Workplace Confidence:
Leadership confidence remained strong across all levels. Job security improved again, with 56% of workers reporting they feel very or completely secure in their current role.

Personal Outlook:
Personal financial confidence improved modestly, with 47% of workers reporting they are very or extremely confident about their financial outlook over the next six months. Most workers are not planning to change jobs, with 60% saying they do not expect to look within the next year.

Top Threats:
Economic slowdown and rising costs were the leading industry threats in August. Workers also cited labor shortages, government policy uncertainty, geopolitical instability, and technological disruption.

Industry Confidence:
Industry confidence softened in August. 28% of respondents reported being very or extremely confident in their sector's 12-month outlook, down from 34% in July, while 43% remained somewhat confident.

Top Concerns

Economic slowdown and recession emerged as the leading industry threat in August, followed closely by inflation and rising costs.

Labor shortages and government policy uncertainty remain significant concerns across industries.

Workers also continue to cite AI and automation, job security, layoffs, and organizational change when describing concerns about their own roles.

Geopolitical instability and supply chain disruption remain additional sources of uncertainty.

Media Trust

Trust remained strongest in industry publications and professional associations, while social media and general media sources continued to rank among the least trusted sources of industry information.

Who Took Part?

In **August 2026**, 467 professionals from more than 20 industries across the United States participated in the thirteenth wave of the Confidence in Action: Tracking the Workforce Perspective survey.

Respondents once again represented a diverse cross-section of the U.S. economy—including architecture, engineering, construction, and mechanical systems; manufacturing and food & beverage processing; healthcare and life sciences; technology and IT services; professional and business services; logistics and transportation; retail and consumer goods; and the public sector. Additional perspectives came from professionals in energy and utilities, safety and security, agriculture, environmental services, and other specialized fields.

As in earlier waves, the majority of participants hold management or leadership roles, ranging from owners and senior executives to department heads and team leads. The survey also captured perspectives from skilled-trade professionals, technical specialists, sales, and administrative staff, providing a well-rounded view of workforce sentiment across roles and industries.

We'll continue to track these perspectives in future waves — watching for shifts in who's taking part and what they have to say. If you're invited to participate, we hope you'll add your voice to the conversation.

Sectors represented

Built environment: architecture, engineering, construction, mechanical systems

Manufacturing: industrial and food & beverage processing

Technology & IT services

Healthcare & life sciences

Professional and business services

Specialized sectors: roofing and building envelope, energy and utilities, safety and security, logistics and transportation, financial services, retail and consumer goods, education, government, agriculture, and environmental services

Roles represented

Leadership & management: owners, executives, department heads, team leads

Technical & skilled trades

Sales, business development, and administrative staff

Industry & Economic Outlook

When asked, "*Considering your specific industry sector, how confident are you in its overall economic outlook for the next 12 months?*", industry confidence softened in August. Twenty-eight percent reported being very or extremely confident, down from 34% in July, while 29% expressed low confidence.

Respondents continue to point to significant headwinds. Economic slowdown or recession and inflation/rising costs emerged as the leading industry threats, followed by labor shortages and government policy uncertainty. Geopolitical instability, supply chain disruption, and technological disruption also remain concerns.

Confidence in Institutions

Participants were asked which institutions they trust most to act in the best interest of their industry. Rankings in Wave 13 remained largely consistent with prior waves. Ranked from most to least trusted:

1. **Company leadership (Mean 1.66)**
2. **Industry trade associations (Mean 1.91)**
3. **Business media covering their sector (Mean 3.14)**
4. **State / local government (Mean 3.72)**
5. **Federal government (Mean 4.57)**

Trust rankings remained remarkably stable in August. Company leadership and industry trade associations continue to lead, while business media remains a clear third, well ahead of government institutions.

Confidence in Federal Policy Support

Confidence in federal policy support remained limited in Wave 13. 21% of respondents reported a fair amount or great deal of confidence that federal policies support their industry, while 61% expressed little or no confidence. This reflects a more negative shift from July, when 55% reported little or no confidence.

Views on Regulation

Sentiment toward the regulatory environment remained more negative than positive in Wave 13. Majorities continued to disagree that regulations are based on industry expertise (56%), are applied consistently (62%), or that the regulatory process is transparent (66%). Confidence that regulations support innovation and enable business growth also remained limited, at 24% and 23% agreement, respectively.

Confidence in Federal Government Policy Support

Confidence in federal policy support remains limited. 21% of respondents report a fair amount or great deal of confidence that federal policies support their industry, while 61% express little or no confidence. Sentiment shifted somewhat more negative from July, when 55% expressed little or no confidence.

Views on regulations:

- **56%** disagree that regulations are based on industry expertise
- **66%** disagree that the regulatory process is transparent
- **62%** disagree that regulations are applied consistently
- **24%** agree that regulations support innovation
- **27%** agree that consumer protection is well balanced with business needs
- **23%** agree that government policies enable business growth

Personal Finances

Looking ahead, 47% of participants say they feel very or extremely confident about their personal financial situation over the next six months, up modestly from 44% in July.

Just over one-third (36%) remain somewhat confident, while 17% express low confidence. 18% report feeling extremely confident, suggesting personal financial sentiment improved slightly in August despite continued economic uncertainty.

What's Worrying Professionals in Their Roles — Here's What They Said…

When asked, "**What's your number-one concern in your current role?**", Wave 13 respondents most frequently pointed to economic pressure, AI disruption, workforce shortages, job security, and government uncertainty.

Economic Pressure & Business Conditions

- *"Unpredictable tariff situation."*
- *"The continued slowdown in US manufacturing, which affects how much equipment we can sell."*

AI, Automation & Job Displacement

- *"Ai taking over majority of the day to day tasks of an architect. in the next 3-5 years, we may be obsolete."*
- *"I do not believe that AI technologies (particularly AI agents) will be able to effectively replace me or people like me in the foreseeable future. However, I am concerned that executive leadership at my company may believe that they are able to do so and may make staffing decisions based on that belief."*
- *"ai has disrupted a lot of higher paying once secure not at risk jobs. Particularly my role.."*

Workforce Capacity & Talent

- *"Lack of personnel driving increase load on current employees which is creating burnout on these employees."*
- *"Not enough workforce labor to get the job completed. Too much work for the limited number of employees. Management neither understanding nor listening to the issue."*

Job Security & Organizational Change

- *"A work slowdown might make my role less necessary."*
- *"A reorganization could cause positions and functions to be combined. For instance, revenue and marketing."*
- *"Limited work volume is likely to lead to layoffs. Unsure if I will be part of the reduction or not."*

Government Policy & Uncertainty

- *"Complexity of regulations & ongoing tariff increases are directly impacting our business."*
- *"Federal government being unpredictable acting in a chaotic manner makes it hard to plan business going forward. Threatening tariffs and wars is a problem. No plan to reduce inflation."*

Across industries, economic pressure, AI disruption, staffing challenges, job security, and government uncertainty continue to shape how workers view their roles and their future.

Workplace Leadership, Job Security & Career Movement

When asked how confident they are in their organization's leadership to make sound decisions in the current economic climate, Wave 13 respondents report:

Executive leadership: 60% strong or complete confidence

Department or team leadership: 59% strong or complete confidence

Direct manager or supervisor: 62% strong or complete confidence

Leadership confidence remained strong across all levels, with roughly six in ten workers expressing strong or complete confidence in organizational leadership.

Job security improved modestly in August. 56% say they feel very or completely secure in their current role, up from 55% in July, while 32% report feeling completely secure.

In Wave 13, career movement indicators declined from July.

26% of workers are actively job hunting, likely to start looking within the next three months, or considering a move within the next year, down from 34% in July.

60% report no plans to change jobs within the next year, up from 56% in July.

While most workers remain inclined to stay in their current roles, interest in career movement eased notably in August after increasing in July.

THANK YOU!

Thank you for taking the time to share your perspective.

Your participation helps us track how worker confidence, trust, and career outlooks shift over time and gives you insight into how your views compare with others across industries.

We hope you'll take part in future waves so we can continue building this picture together.