

Wave 14 Results

September 1 – September 30, 2026

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.



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:

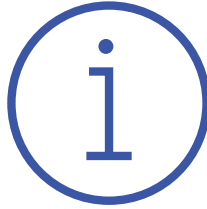
- Where confidence is growing or falling
- How trust in institutions shifts
- Whether career mobility is increasing or slowing
- What new challenges are emerging

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

In Brief: Key Insights

Survey Scope:

Wave 14 reflects input from 468 U.S. professionals across more than 20 industries, including construction, manufacturing, technology, healthcare, and professional services. Respondents skew toward management and leadership roles. Fieldwork was conducted September 1-30, 2026.



Institutional Trust:

Company leadership and trade associations remain the most trusted institutions, while **75% also rank business media covering their sector among their top three trusted sources**. Federal government continues to rank last.

Workplace Confidence:

Leadership confidence remains strongest at the department and manager level. 51% feel very or completely secure in their current role, down from 56% in August.

Personal Outlook:

46% are very or extremely confident in their six-month financial outlook. Career movement increased, with 34% actively looking, planning to look soon, or considering a job change within the next year

Top Threats:

Inflation and rising costs moved into the top spot, followed closely by economic slowdown or recession. Government policy uncertainty and labor shortages also remain notable concerns.

Industry Confidence:

Industry confidence improved in September, with 32% very or extremely confident in their sector's 12-month outlook, up from 28% in August.



Top Concerns

Inflation and rising costs moved into the top spot.

Economic slowdown or recession remains a close second.

Government policy uncertainty continues to weigh on sentiment.

Labor shortages remain a concern, though less prominent than in August.

Technology and AI disruption continue to register across industries.

Media Trust:

Industry-specific publications remain the most trusted news source, with **78% reporting a fair amount or great deal of trust**. Trust is considerably lower across broader media channels

Who Took Part?



Between **September 1-30, 2026**, 468 professionals from more than 20 industries across the United States participated in the fourteenth 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

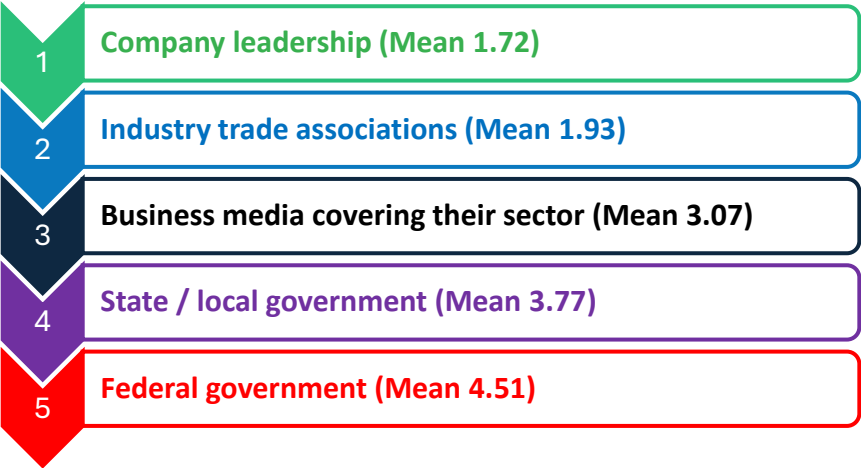
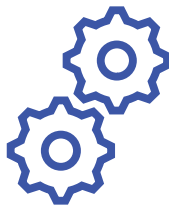
Industry & Economic Outlook

When asked about their industry’s economic outlook for the next 12 months, confidence improved somewhat in September. 32% report being very or extremely confident, up from 28% in August, while another 37% are somewhat confident.

Still, uncertainty remains. 31% report low confidence, and respondents continue to point to inflation and rising costs, economic slowdown or recession, and government policy uncertainty as key industry concerns.

Confidence in Institutions

Participants were asked which institutions they trust most to act in the best interest of their industry. Rankings in Wave 14 remain largely unchanged from prior waves. Ranked from most to least trusted:



Trust remains strongest in company leadership and trade associations, with business media continuing to rank well ahead of government institutions. The federal government remains the least trusted.

Confidence in Federal Policy Support

Confidence in federal policy support remains weak. Just 20% report a fair amount or great deal of confidence that federal policies support their industry, while 62% express little or no confidence.

Views on Regulation

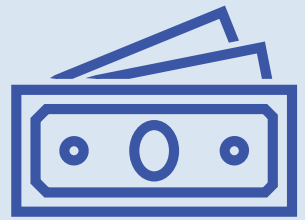
Views of the regulatory environment remain largely negative. Majorities continue to disagree that regulations are transparent, consistently applied, or based on industry expertise, while relatively few believe current policies support innovation, balance business needs, or enable growth.

Confidence in Federal Government Policy Support

Just 20% of respondents report a fair amount or great deal of confidence that federal policies support their industry, while 61% express little or no confidence.

Views on regulations:

- **52%** disagree that “regulations are based on industry expertise” ↓ from 56% in August
- **64%** disagree that “the regulatory process is transparent” ↓ from 66% in August
- **61%** disagree that “regulations are applied consistently” ↓ from 62% in August
- **28%** agree that “regulations support innovation” ↑ from 24% in August
- **28%** agree that “consumer protection is well balanced with business needs” ↑ from 27% in August
- **27%** agree that “government policies enable business growth” ↑ from 23% in August



Personal Finances

Looking ahead, 46% of participants say they feel very or extremely confident about their personal financial situation over the next six months, essentially unchanged from the prior wave.

Another 35% are somewhat confident, while 19% express low confidence, including 14% who are not very confident and 6% who are not at all confident. At the high end, 17% report feeling extremely confident about their financial outlook.

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 14 respondents surfaced several recurring themes, including AI and automation, economic pressure, policy uncertainty, staffing and workload challenges, and organizational instability.

AI, Automation & Job Displacement

- *“AI use and replacing human need.”*
- *“AI making my job obsolete.”*
- *“Leadership thinks they can save money by having AI perform my job, which would technically be possible but a really bad idea.”*

Economic Slowdown, Inflation & Rising Costs

- *“My concern is always the economic environment; a slowdown or recession has a great negative impact on my profession.”*
- *“Inflation and cost of doing business.”*
- *“Increases to the costs of doing business are outpacing revenue growth.”*

Government Policy, Tariffs & Regulatory Uncertainty

- *“Inability to make strategic decisions due to a capricious administration. For example, tariffs changing overnight.”*
- *“The inconsistency in how governmental regulations and tariffs are being applied to our industry is very concerning. You are unable to adequately plan for future transformation.”*

Staffing, Workload & Burnout

- *“Burnout. Working 24/6 in a stressful industry to keep the doors open.”*
- *“We are short staffed, so everyone has to do more than they should”*
- *“I am wearing too many hats, so I am spread thin across projects.”*
- *“We have less people doing this job, less competent people and my workload gets to be more and more. Stressful.”*

Job Security, Restructuring & Leadership

- *“Constant restructuring and executive leadership changing direction of company priorities based on following the lead of competing companies.”*
- *“Not enough work volume to secure the need for a full staff. After 1 round of layoffs and coming cuts to hourly production, things look bleak.”*
- *“Lay offs can happen anytime. There is no job security.”*

Across industries, respondents describe a workplace shaped by rapid technological change, persistent cost pressure, policy uncertainty, staffing strain, and concern about organizational stability. AI is especially prominent, appearing both as a direct job-security concern and as a broader source of uncertainty about how roles and teams may change.

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 14 respondents reported:

Executive leadership: **55%** strong or complete confidence (↓ from 60% in August)

Department or team leadership: **61%** strong or complete confidence (↑ from 59% in August)

Direct manager or supervisor: **62%** strong or complete confidence (↔ from 62% in August)

Job security softened in September. **51%** say they feel very or completely secure in their current role, down from 56% in August.

In Wave 14, career movement increased:

34% are actively job hunting, plan to start looking soon, or are considering a move within the next year ↑ from 26% in August

54% report no plans to change jobs in the next 12 months ↓ from 60%

This suggests somewhat greater openness to job change in September, alongside softer job-security perceptions.



**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.**