Wave 15 Results

October 1 – October 31, 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.

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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, providing insights that can guide businesses, industry leaders, and policymakers.

In Brief: Key Insights

Survey Scope:
Wave 15 reflects input from 622 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 October 1-31, 2026.

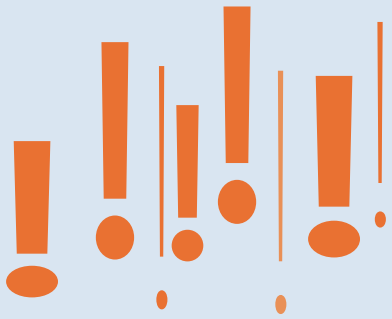
Institutional Trust:
Company leadership and trade associations remain most trusted, while 74% rank business media among their top three. Federal government remains last.

Workplace Confidence:
Leadership confidence improved, while job security rose to 55%, up from 51% in September.

Personal Outlook:
45% are confident in their six-month financial outlook. Career movement declined to 25%, down from 34% in September.

Top Threats:
Inflation and economic slowdown remain the leading concerns (24% each), followed by government policy uncertainty (13%) and labor shortages (11%).

Industry Confidence:
32% are very or extremely confident in their industry's outlook, unchanged from September, while 40% are somewhat confident.



Top Concerns

Inflation and rising costs remain the leading concern (24%).

Economic slowdown or recession follows closely (24%).

Government policy uncertainty remains a significant concern (13%).

Labor shortages increased from 9% in September to 11% in October.

Technology and automation disruption remain steady at 8%.

Media Trust:
Industry-specific publications remain highly trusted, with 79% reporting a fair amount or great deal of trust, up from 78% in September. Trust remains considerably lower across broader media channels.

Who Took Part?

Between **October 1-31, 2026**, 622 professionals from more than 20 industries across the United States participated in the fifteenth 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

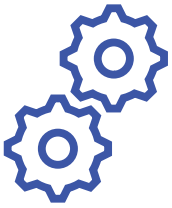
Industry & Economic Outlook

When asked about their industry's economic outlook for the next 12 months, confidence held steady in October. 32% report being very or extremely confident, unchanged from September, while another 40% are somewhat confident, up from 37%.

Still, uncertainty remains. 28% report low confidence, down from 31% in September. Inflation and rising costs, economic slowdown or recession, and government policy uncertainty continue to be the leading 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 15 remain largely unchanged from prior waves. Ranked from most to least trusted:



1. Company leadership (Mean 1.74)
2. Industry trade associations (Mean 1.98)
3. Business media covering their sector (Mean 3.08)
4. State / local government (Mean 3.75)
5. Federal government (Mean 4.45)

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, although slightly improved. Just 23% report a fair amount or great deal of confidence that federal policies support their industry, up from 20% in September, while 57% express little or no confidence, down from 61%.

Views on Regulation

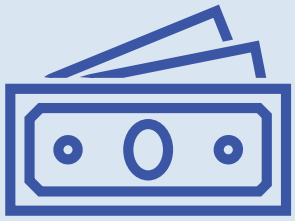
Views of the regulatory environment remain largely negative, although some measures improved. Majorities continue to disagree that regulations are transparent or consistently applied, while approximately three in ten agree that regulations support innovation, consumer protection is balanced with business needs, or government policies enable business growth.

Confidence in Federal Government Policy Support

Just 23% of respondents report a fair amount or great deal of confidence that federal policies support their industry, up from 20% in September, while 57% express little or no confidence, down from 61%.

Views on regulations:

- **50%** disagree that "regulations are based on industry expertise" ↓ from 52% in September
- **61%** disagree that "the regulatory process is transparent" ↓ from 64%
- **59%** disagree that "regulations are applied consistently" ↓ from 61%
- **29%** agree that "regulations support innovation" ↑ from 28%
- **30%** agree that "consumer protection is well balanced with business needs" ↑ from 28%
- **29%** agree that "government policies enable business growth" ↑ from 27%



Personal Finances

Looking ahead, 45% of participants say they feel very or extremely confident about their personal financial situation over the next six months, down slightly from 46% in September.

Another 37% are somewhat confident, while 18% express low confidence, including 12% who are not very confident and 5% 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 about their number-one concern, Wave 15 respondents highlighted economic uncertainty, AI-driven job displacement, government policies, staffing pressures, and job security.

Economic Uncertainty, Rising Costs & Customer Spending

- *"The economic slowdown will directly affect the number of projects we receive. People are uncertain about the future and the U.S.'s position in the world, so they tend to postpone projects that were scheduled to start around this time."*
- *"Customers are not spending due to high fuel cost and inflation. they are doing the bare minimum."*

AI, Automation & Job Displacement

- *"company believes AI can easily replace people; actively working to downsize based on AI."*
- *"AI is taking over jobs making us professionals who put decades into their craft obsolete and insignificant."*

Government Policy, Tariffs & Business Uncertainty

- *"US Tariff situation affects our costs for raw materials and finished goods."*
- *"Erratic shifts in governmental policies (i.e. tariffs) are making the business climate uncertain, and so companies put off investing in the future, resulting in the sluggish business climate today."*

Staffing Shortages, Workload & Resources

- *"Inability to hire qualified individuals that do what I do so they can take on new projects and help alleviate the burden on the existing staff that does what I do."*
- *"Limited time for upskilling amid heavy day-to-day operational workload."*

Job Security, Layoffs & Leadership

- *"Lack of transparency within leadership. Paint a rosy picture but then mass layoffs."*
- *"Corporate failure to meet budgets leading to either a wage freeze or a position elimination."*

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 15 respondents reported:

Executive leadership: **58%** strong or complete confidence (↑ from 55% in September)

Department or team leadership: **62%** strong or complete confidence (↑ from 61%)

Direct manager or supervisor: **65%** strong or complete confidence (↑ from 62%)

Job security improved in October. **55%** say they feel very or completely secure in their current role, up from 51% in September.

In Wave 15, career movement declined:

25% are actively job hunting, plan to start looking soon, or are considering a move within the next year ↓ from 34% in September

64% report no plans to change jobs in the next 12 months ↑ from 54%

While confidence in workplace leadership and job security improved in October, fewer respondents are considering a job change. Whether this reflects greater satisfaction in their current roles or concerns about opportunities in the broader job market remains unclear.



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.