

# Wave 9 Results

April 1 – April 30, 2026



## 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.

### CONFIDENCE CONTINUES TO COOL

Overall confidence in industry outlook remains relatively stable, but fewer workers are expressing strong optimism. Sentiment continues to shift toward the middle as economic and policy uncertainty persists into spring 2026.

### INSIDE THE RESULTS

Workers remain concerned about inflation, economic pressure, and policy uncertainty, while geopolitical instability continues gaining attention across industries.

### WORKPLACE SNAPSHOT

Confidence within organizations remains strong, particularly among direct managers and leadership teams. Job security also improved modestly in April.

### TRUST CHECK

Trust remains strongest in industry publications and trade associations, while confidence in government and regulatory transparency continues to lag.

*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 9** includes feedback from **614 U.S. professionals** across 20+ industries. Respondents span leadership, management, and skilled roles across organizations of varying sizes. Fielded **April 2026**



## Institutional Trust:

Trust remains strongest in company leadership and trade associations. Confidence in government remains limited, while skepticism toward regulatory transparency and consistency increased in April.

## Workplace Confidence:

Leadership confidence remains stable, especially for direct managers. Job security improved modestly, with 53% feeling very or completely secure in their current role.

## Personal Outlook:

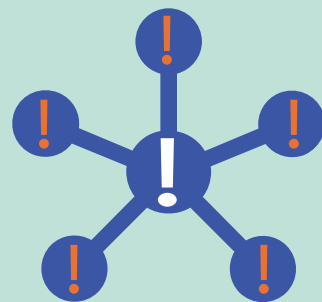
Financial confidence recovered slightly, with 45% very or extremely confident. Most workers are not planning to change jobs, while active job search declined to 15%.

## Top Threats:

Economic slowdown remains the top structured concern at 22%, followed by inflation and rising costs at 20%. Labor shortages rebounded, while geopolitical instability remains elevated.

## Industry Confidence:

Industry outlook continues to soften at the top, with 28% very or extremely confident. Sentiment remains concentrated in the middle.



## Top Concerns

AI and automation emerged as a major open-ended concern.

Economic slowdown and inflation continue to pressure businesses and workers.

Policy, tariffs, and regulatory uncertainty remain highly visible.

Job security concerns persist, especially around layoffs, restructuring, and replacement.

Labor shortages returned as a more prominent concern in April.

Geopolitical instability continues to shape business uncertainty.

## Media Trust

Trust in general media remains low. Industry publications and trade associations continue to be the most trusted sources, far outpacing national media, social media, and government.

# Who Took Part?



In **April 2026**, 614 professionals from more than 20 industries across the United States participated in the ninth 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?”, overall confidence remained relatively stable in April, though top-level optimism continued to soften.

Respondents continue to point to significant headwinds. Economic slowdown and inflation remain major concerns, while geopolitical instability, tariffs, and policy uncertainty gained visibility in this wave. Open-ended responses also showed growing concern around AI, automation, and long-term workforce disruption.

## Confidence in Institutions

Participants were asked which institutions they trust most to act in the best interest of their industry. Rankings in Wave 9 remained highly consistent with prior waves. Ranked from most to least trusted:

1. **Company leadership (Mean 1.73)**
2. **Industry trade associations (Mean 1.95)**
3. **Business media covering their sector (Mean 3.03)**
4. **State / local government (Mean 3.75)**
5. **Federal government (Mean 4.55)**

**Trust continues to be strongest in company leadership and trade associations**, while the federal government remains the least trusted institution measured in the study.



## Confidence in Federal Policy Support

Confidence in federal policy support remains limited in Wave 9. Just 22% report a fair amount or great deal of confidence that federal policies support their industry, while 60% express little or no confidence, continuing the broader trend of skepticism toward federal institutions and policy direction.

## Views on Regulation

Sentiment toward the regulatory environment remained negative in April (Wave 9). Large majorities continue to disagree that regulations are transparent, consistently applied, or based on industry expertise. Skepticism increased in several measures this wave, particularly around regulatory consistency and transparency.

# Confidence in Federal Government Policy Support

Confidence in federal policy support remains limited. Just 22% of respondents report a fair amount or great deal of confidence that federal policies support their industry, while 60% express little or no confidence, continuing the broader trend of skepticism toward federal involvement.

## Views on regulations:

- **58%** disagree that regulations are based on industry expertise (+2)
- **68%** disagree that the regulatory process is transparent (+4)
- **68%** disagree that regulations are applied consistently (+9)
- **27%** agree that regulations support innovation (no change)
- **25%** agree that consumer protection is well balanced with business needs (-4)
- **26%** agree that government policies enable business growth (-1)



## Personal Finances

Looking ahead, 45% of participants say they feel very or extremely confident about their personal financial situation over the next six months, reflecting a modest improvement from March.

A closer look shows 36% are somewhat confident, while 20% express low confidence — including 12% who are not very confident and 7% who are not at all confident. At the high end, 19% 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 9 respondents described growing anxiety around AI-driven workforce change, economic instability, political uncertainty, and organizational instability.

## AI, Automation & Workforce Restructuring

- *“AI taking my job”*
- *“Cost cutting due to AI- lots of unemployed people and v few roles.”*
- *“We are using AI and automation a lot more than we used to, and the use of these tools is now mandatory. I worry about how that will affect the need for actual people.”*

## Economic Pressure, Inflation & Demand Slowdown

- *“Inflation and rising costs.”*
- *“Economic slowdown stalling projects.”*
- *“Prices outpacing what we can produce -- costs have skyrocketed.”*

## Tariffs, Government Policy & Market Instability

- *“Governmental uncertainty and the rapid changing of the political environment with things like tariffs, and regulations.”*
- *“Tariffs have greatly affected local infrastructure projects.”*
- *“Continued day to day uncertainty of U.S. policy.”*

## Job Security, Leadership & Organizational Instability

- *“Mass company lay off regardless of skill..”*
- *“Poor internal leadership, poor change management, poor decision-making being done in isolation and zero transparency.”*
- *“The people we have in charge now - they are not leadership, just management.”*

## Labor Shortages & Skilled Workforce Gaps

- *“Lack of qualified employees in the trades.”*
- *“Finding quality people to do the work”*
- *“Getting skilled labor. Not enough people to fill the positions.”*

Across industries, concerns are becoming more immediate and role-specific. AI-driven disruption, layoffs, and policy uncertainty are showing up more directly, while economic pressure, rising costs, and staffing challenges continue to shape day-to-day decisions.

# 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 9 respondents report:

Executive leadership: 57% strong or complete confidence (↑ from 56% in March)

Department or team leadership: 58% strong or complete confidence (↑ from 57% in March)

Direct manager or supervisor: 62% strong or complete confidence (flat vs. March)

Leadership confidence remains stable overall, with trust continuing to be strongest closest to day-to-day operations.

Job security improved modestly in April. 53% say they feel very or completely secure in their current role (↑ from 49% in March), including 29% who report feeling completely secure — the highest level seen in recent waves.

## 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.

In Wave 9, career movement indicators softened slightly.

31% of workers are actively job hunting, likely to look soon, or considering a move within the next year (down from 34% in March)

57% report no plans to change jobs in the next 12 months (↑ from 53% in March)

While workers remain cautious about the broader economy, the April results suggest slightly greater stability in how respondents view their current roles and employment outlook.