

Wave 8 Results

March 1 – March 31, 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 HOLDS — BUT SOFTENS AT THE TOP

Overall confidence in the industry outlook remains steady, but fewer workers are expressing the highest levels of certainty. Sentiment is consolidating in the middle, reflecting a more cautious but stable outlook as uncertainty continues into early 2026.

INSIDE THE RESULTS

Workers are recalibrating. Economic pressure remains a factor, but concerns are increasingly tied to job security, organizational change, and the growing impact of technology on roles and expectations.

WORKPLACE SNAPSHOT

Leadership confidence remains strong, particularly among direct managers. At the same time, job security has leveled off at lower levels, with 49% feeling very or completely secure in their current role, down from earlier in the year.

TRUST CHECK

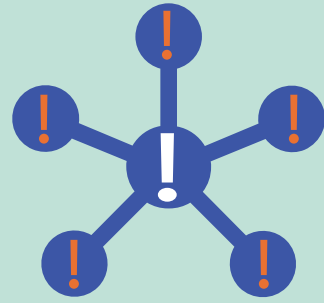
Trust remains concentrated in company leadership and trade associations, which continue to rank well above all other institutions. Confidence in government remains limited, with little change from prior waves.

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 8 includes feedback from **596 U.S. professionals** across 20+ industries. Respondents span leadership, management, and skilled roles across organizations of varying sizes. Fielded **March 2026**



Institutional Trust:

Trust remains strongest in company leadership and trade associations, while confidence in the federal government remains low. Workers continue to rely more heavily on guidance from their own organizations and industry groups.

Workplace Confidence:

Confidence in leadership remains relatively strong, while job security remains unchanged, with 49% reporting they feel very or completely secure in their role, consistent with the previous wave.

Personal Outlook:

Financial confidence has softened to 42% very or extremely confident. 53% are not planning to change jobs, though active job search remains elevated.

Top Threats:

Economic slowdown remains the top concern (23%), while AI and automation now lead overall (26%). Policy uncertainty remains elevated, and job security concerns have increased.

Industry Confidence:

Industry outlook remains stable, though fewer workers express strong confidence, with sentiment shifting toward the middle.

Top Concerns

Economic slowdown remains the leading concern.

AI and automation continue to rise as the most prominent risk.

Policy and regulatory uncertainty remains elevated.

Job security concerns, including layoffs, have increased.

Inflation continues to pressure businesses and workers.

Labor shortages have eased slightly.

Media Trust

Trust in general media remains low. Industry publications and trade associations continue to be the most trusted sources.

Who Took Part?



In **March 2026**, 596 professionals from more than 20 industries across the United States participated in the eighth 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?”, confidence remains broadly stable, with most respondents expressing at least some level of confidence.

At the same time, respondents continue to point to clear headwinds. Economic slowdown remains a leading concern, while technological disruption (AI) has emerged as the most prominent risk, alongside ongoing policy uncertainty, cost pressures, and shifting workforce dynamics.

Confidence in Institutions

Participants were asked which institutions they trust most to act in the best interest of their industry. Rankings in Wave 8 remain consistent with prior waves. Ranked from most to least trusted:

1. **Company leadership (Mean 1.76)**
2. **Industry trade associations (Mean 2.00)**
3. **Business media covering their sector (Mean 3.18)**
4. **State / local government (Mean 3.65)**
5. **Federal government (Mean 4.42)**

Trust continues to be strongest in company leadership and trade associations, while the federal government ranks lowest, reflecting ongoing skepticism toward federal institutions.



Confidence in Federal Policy Support

Confidence in federal policy support remains limited. 23% report a fair amount or great deal of confidence that federal policies support their industry, while 58% express little or no confidence, indicating continued skepticism with little improvement over prior waves.

Views on Regulation

Sentiment toward the regulatory environment remains negative in Wave 8. A majority of respondents continue to disagree that regulations are transparent, consistently applied, or grounded in industry expertise, while fewer than three in ten believe current policies support innovation or enable business growth.

Confidence in Federal Government Policy Support

Confidence in federal policy support remains limited. Just 23% of respondents report a fair amount or great deal of confidence that federal policies support their industry, while 58% express little or no confidence, underscoring continued skepticism toward federal involvement

Views on regulations:

- **56%** disagree that regulations are based on industry expertise (+1)
- **64%** disagree that the regulatory process is transparent (no change)
- **59%** disagree that regulations are applied consistently (-1)
- **27%** agree that regulations support innovation (-2)
- **29%** agree that consumer protection is well balanced with business needs (+3)
- **27%** agree that government policies enable business growth (+1)



Personal Finances

Looking ahead, 42% of participants say they feel very or extremely confident about their personal financial situation over the next six months, reflecting a continued softening from earlier in the year.

A closer look shows 38% are somewhat confident, while 20% express low confidence — including 13% who are not very confident and 7% who are not at all confident. At the high end, 15% 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 5 respondents consistently surfaced a handful of pressure points shaping how they view the months ahead.

AI Disruption & Job Displacement

- *“Losing my job to AI automation”*
- *“Massive disruption/automation caused by AI which guts certain types of knowledge worker roles.”*
- *“AI for sure. As a Marketer most of what we do can and will be automated and AI generated.”*

Economic Slowdown & Reduced Demand

- *“Economic downturn effecting business and jobs.”*
- *“Fewer clients because of a tightening economy. Clients are less willing to spend during a recession and that directly impacts my industry.”*

Tariffs, Policy Volatility & Regulatory Uncertainty

- *“Federal Government unpredictability - tariffs, geopolitics, and regulations change all the time, and then are quickly reversed often.”*
- *“The on-again, off-again tariffs strangle my ability to make strategic decisions regarding new products, new hires, corporate expansion, and the like.”*

Layoffs, Job Security & Workforce Reduction

- *“Potential layoffs in the future for internal early-stage drug discovery research within pharma companies.”*
- *“Lay offs.....no matter how productive you are, your job is very insecure”*

Rising Costs & Financial Pressure

- *“My number one concern is inflation and cost.”*
- *“Inflation and rising cost of materials”*
- *“Costs spiraling.”*

Labor Shortages, Staffing & Workload Strain

- *“Labor shortages.”*
- *“Finding qualified employees in the trades”*
- *“Too much focus on growth - we have more projects than we can handle with the staff we have. I have 3 projects, with 1 in construction and 1 in detailed design & 1 going for cost estimate. Currently I have 3 FTEs when I need 12.”*

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 8 respondents report:

Executive leadership: 56% strong or complete confidence (↑ from 53% in February)

Department or team leadership: 56% strong or complete confidence (flat vs. February)

Direct manager or supervisor: 63% strong or complete confidence (↑ from 55% in February)

Leadership confidence shows modest improvement this wave, particularly at the direct manager level, reinforcing that trust remains strongest closest to day-to-day operations.

Job security, however, remains under pressure. 49% say they feel very or completely secure in their current role (flat vs. February, down from 56% in January), while lower-confidence responses continue to edge upward, reflecting ongoing caution around stability.

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 8, career movement signals remain elevated.

34% of workers are actively job hunting, likely to look soon, or considering a move within the next year (slightly down from 37% in February, but still well above January levels).

53% report no plans to change jobs in the next 12 months (continuing the gradual decline from 59% in January).

While intent to move has leveled slightly this wave, it remains significantly higher than earlier in the year. Combined with stable but softened job security, these results suggest a workforce that is still weighing options rather than fully committing to staying put.