

# 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 REBOUNDS IN MAY

Overall confidence in industry outlook improved in May, with more workers expressing strong optimism about the year ahead. While economic and policy uncertainty remain top concerns, sentiment moved noticeably higher after softening in April.

### INSIDE THE RESULTS

Workers continue to cite AI disruption, inflation, economic uncertainty, and policy changes as major concerns. AI emerged as one of the most prominent themes in verbatim responses.

### WORKPLACE SNAPSHOT

Leadership confidence remains strong, while job security and personal financial outlook stayed stable in May.

### TRUST CHECK

Confidence in organizational leadership remains strong across all levels of management. Job security and personal financial confidence held steady, suggesting workers continue to feel relatively secure despite broader market uncertainty.

*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 10** includes feedback from **578 U.S. professionals** across 20+ industries. Respondents span leadership, management, and skilled roles across organizations of varying sizes. Fielded **May 2026**



## Institutional Trust:

Trust remains strongest in company leadership and trade associations. Confidence in government remains limited, though several measures of regulatory and policy confidence improved modestly in May.

## Workplace Confidence:

Leadership confidence remains stable, especially for direct managers. Job security held steady, with roughly half of workers feeling very or completely secure in their current role.

## Personal Outlook:

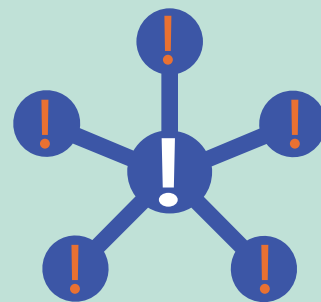
Financial confidence remained stable, with 42% very or extremely confident. Most workers are not planning to change jobs, while active job search remained relatively low.

## Top Threats:

Economic slowdown and inflation remain the leading concerns. AI disruption emerged as a major theme in open-ended responses, alongside policy uncertainty, labor shortages, and geopolitical instability.

## Industry Confidence:

Industry outlook improved in May, with 36% reporting they are very or extremely confident in their sector's economic outlook over the next 12 months. Sentiment rebounded after softening in April.



## Top Concerns

AI and automation emerged as the dominant concern in open-ended responses.

Economic uncertainty, inflation, and rising costs continue to pressure businesses and workers.

Policy uncertainty, tariffs, and regulatory changes remain highly visible across industries.

Job security concerns persist, particularly around layoffs, restructuring, and workforce reductions.

Labor shortages and talent pipeline challenges continue to affect employers nationwide.

## Media Trust

Trust in general media remains low. Industry publications and trade associations continue to be the most trusted sources of information, while social media and government sources remain among the least trusted.

# Who Took Part?



In **May 2026**, 578 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 10 remained highly consistent with prior waves. Ranked from most to least trusted:

1. **Company leadership (Mean 1.75)**
2. **Industry trade associations (Mean 1.96)**
3. **Business media covering their sector (Mean 3.20)**
4. **State / local government (Mean 3.65)**
5. **Federal government (Mean 4.45)**

**Trust continues to be strongest in company leadership and trade associations**, while the federal government remains the least trusted institution measured in the study. Compared with April, confidence in government improved modestly, though overall trust rankings remained unchanged.



## Confidence in Federal Policy Support

Confidence in federal policy support remains limited in Wave 10. One-quarter of respondents (25%) report a fair amount or great deal of confidence that federal policies support their industry, while 56% express little or no confidence. Although skepticism remains widespread, confidence improved modestly compared with April.

## Views on Regulation

Sentiment toward the regulatory environment remains more negative than positive, but several measures improved in May. Perceptions that government policies enable business growth, support innovation, and appropriately balance consumer protection with business needs all increased modestly. Despite these gains, most respondents continue to view regulations as lacking transparency, consistency, and industry expertise.

# Confidence in Federal Government Policy Support

Confidence in federal policy support remains limited. Twenty-five percent of respondents report a fair amount or great deal of confidence that federal policies support their industry, while 56% express little or no confidence. Although skepticism remains widespread, confidence improved modestly compared with April.

## Views on regulations:

- **56%** disagree that regulations are based on industry expertise (-2)
- **64%** disagree that the regulatory process is transparent (-4)
- **62%** disagree that regulations are applied consistently (-6)
- **30%** agree that regulations support innovation (+3)
- **28%** agree that consumer protection is well balanced with business needs (+3)
- **31%** agree that government policies enable business growth (+5)



## Personal Finances

Looking ahead, 42% of participants say they feel very or extremely confident about their personal financial situation over the next six months, remaining largely stable compared with recent waves.

A closer look shows roughly one-third are somewhat confident, while about one in five express low confidence. At the high end, nearly one in five report feeling extremely confident about their financial outlook, suggesting continued resilience despite ongoing 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 10 respondents pointed most frequently to AI-driven disruption, economic uncertainty, government policy instability, and job security concerns. Across industries, workers described growing uncertainty about how technological change, economic conditions, and organizational decisions may affect their future.

## AI, Automation & Workforce Disruption

- *“The threat of AI significantly changing not only my role but my entire department’s role.”*
- *“Being substantially replaced by AI.”*
- *“AI making designers obsolete.”*
- *“Jobs will be cut due to the usage of AI.”*

## Economic Uncertainty, Inflation & Rising Costs

- *“The economy.”*
- *“Economic uncertainty caused by the federal governments decisions and actions.”*
- *“Construction costs force construction sector slow down. The more prices increase, the less contracted work will be assigned.”*
- *“Gas prices, economic instability.”*

## Government Policy, Tariffs & Regulatory Uncertainty

- *“Political uncertainty. Government policies can shift quickly and lead to instability.”*
- *“Federal government erratic policy on trade, war, etc makes it difficult to have a stable business plan.”*
- *“The day-to-day uncertainty surrounding this administration's policies regarding tariffs and geopolitical events.”*

## Job Security, Layoffs & Organizational Change

- *“The company is cutting back on staff to save money and become more profitable.”*
- *“We have started layoffs.”*
- *“Layoffs and workforce reduction due to reduced federal and state funding for higher education.”*
- *“Job security, career path, and the organizational strategic plan are all incredibly vague within the new organization.”*

## Labor Shortages & Skilled Workforce Challenges

- *“Training the next generation of workers. The mindset of this generation has changed to how we were raised and brought up.”*
- *“Lack of new people to fill hands on technical positions.”*
- *“Spending so much on job ads, but not landing people to fill open positions.”*

Across industries, AI disruption is increasingly being discussed alongside layoffs, economic uncertainty, and policy instability. At the same time, many employers continue to face persistent challenges attracting and retaining skilled workers.

# 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 10 respondents report:

**Executive leadership:** 57% strong or complete confidence (flat vs. April)

**Department or team leadership:** 61% strong or complete confidence (↑ from 58% in April)

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

Leadership confidence remains strong overall, with trust continuing to be highest among direct managers and team leaders.

Job security remained relatively stable in May. 52% say they feel very or completely secure in their current role (vs. 53% in April), while 25% report feeling completely secure.

In Wave 10, career movement indicators became somewhat more active.

36% of workers are actively job hunting, likely to start looking within the next three months, or considering a move within the next year (↑ from 31% in April)

53% report no plans to change jobs within the next year (↓ from 57% in April)

Despite stronger industry confidence, workers remain open to new opportunities and continue to closely monitor their career prospects.

## 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.