Wave 5 Results

November 1 – December 31, 2025

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

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.

CONFIDENCE HOLDS — WITH CAUTIOUS STABILITY— Nearly three in four respondents express at least some confidence in their industry's outlook. Confidence is steady overall, though economic and policy uncertainty continue to weigh on expectations.

INSIDE THE RESULTS
Workers are staying alert. Economic pressure, staffing challenges, and broader uncertainty are shaping near-term decisions.

WORKPLACE SNAPSHOT
Leadership confidence remains strong, and a majority (59%) feel very or completely secure in their current role.

TRUST CHECK
Trust remains concentrated in company leaders and trade associations. Confidence in the federal government remains limited.

In Brief: Key Insights

Survey Scope: Wave 5 reflects input from 643 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 November–December 2025.

Institutional Trust: Trust is strongest in company leadership and trade associations. Confidence in the federal government remains limited, reinforcing reliance on employer- and industry-led guidance.

Workplace Confidence:
Leadership confidence remains strong. A clear majority (59%) report feeling very or completely secure in their current role.

Personal Outlook:
Personal outlook remains cautious. About half express strong confidence in their personal financial situation, while most are not actively planning a job change in the near term.

Top threats: Economic slowdown and policy uncertainty represent the most frequently cited threats facing industries today. Cost pressures and labor shortages also remain notable concerns.

Industry Confidence: A majority of respondents express confidence in their industry's 12-month outlook, indicating overall stability amid continued uncertainty.

Top Concerns

Economic slowdown remains the top concern.

Policy and government uncertainty remains elevated.

AI and automation concerns remain widespread.

Labor shortages persist across sectors.

Cost pressure remains a factor.

Media Trust:
Trust in local news outlets and major media sources remained mixed during the Nov/Dec wave.

Who Took Part?

Between **November and December 2025**, 643 professionals from more than 20 industries across the United States participated in the fifth 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?", nearly three in four respondents expressed at least some level of confidence, indicating a generally stable outlook despite ongoing uncertainty.

At the same time, respondents point to clear headwinds. Economic slowdown and policy uncertainty are the most frequently cited concerns, followed by cost pressures and labor shortages, reinforcing a cautious but resilient industry perspective.

Confidence in Institutions

Participants were asked which institutions they trust most to act in the best interest of their industry. Rankings in Wave 5 remain largely unchanged from prior waves. Ranked from most to least trusted:

1. Company leadership (Mean 1.72)
2. Industry trade associations (Mean 1.91)
3. Business media covering their sector (Mean 3.20)
4. State / local government (Mean 3.71)
5. Federal government (Mean 4.47)

Trust is strongest in company leadership and trade associations, while the federal government ranks lowest, reflecting continued skepticism toward federal institutions.

Confidence in Federal Policy Support

Confidence in federal policy support remains limited. Only 27% report a fair amount or great deal of confidence that federal policies support their industry, while 52% express little or no confidence.

Views on Regulation

Sentiment toward the regulatory environment remains negative in Wave 5. A majority of respondents disagree that regulations are transparent, consistently applied, or grounded in industry expertise, while fewer than three in ten believe current policies encourage innovation or support business growth.

Confidence in federal government policy support

Just 27% of respondents report a fair amount or great deal of confidence that federal policies support their industry, underscoring continued skepticism toward federal involvement

Views on regulations:

- **53%** disagree that “regulations are based on industry expertise” (↓ from 55% in Wave 4)
- **62%** disagree that “the regulatory process is transparent” (↓ from 63% in Wave 4)
- **62%** disagree that “regulations are applied consistently” (↓ from 63% in Wave 4)
- **28%** agree that “regulations support innovation” (↑ from 25% in Wave 4)
- **28%** agree that “consumer protection is well balanced with business needs” (↑ from 27% in Wave 4)
- **28%** agree that “government policies enable business growth” (↓ from 30% in Wave 4)

Personal Finances:

Looking ahead, 49% of participants say they feel very or extremely confident about their personal financial situation over the next six months (↑ from Wave 4), signaling a modest rebound after earlier softening. A majority, however, remain cautious.

A closer look shows 34% are somewhat confident, while 17% express low confidence — including 12% who are not very confident and 4% 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…*

Across industries, professionals are focused on maintaining stability amid rising costs, AI-driven change, and ongoing economic uncertainty — while managing labor shortages, regulatory volatility, and shifting customer demand.

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

- *"Being 'replaced' by AI agents."*
- *"AI being seen as a cheaper and more effective way of completing my job — not at my specific company, but overall."*
- *"AI Bubble over-investment without an actual product. This will probably trigger a recession and layoffs."*

Economic Slowdown & Reduced Demand

- *"Volume of work is in decline. We've hit a slow patch. Too much instability in the economy for major building projects."*
- *"Decline in available business."*

Tariffs, Policy Volatility & Regulatory Uncertainty

- *"It is difficult to plan when policy decisions seem to be made on a whim and change daily."*
- *"I'm concerned that the on-again, off-again tariffs are curtailing business across the spectrum and will not only stop growth, but force businesses to cut back, leaving me and others to be let go."*

Labor Shortages & Hiring Challenges

- *"Labor shortage."*
- *"Finding qualified employees*
- *"There are not enough young people going into the trades. Local schools are not offering shop class anymore."*

Rising Costs & Financial Pressure

- *"Cost — bottom line is cost. Everything with raw materials is increasing."*
- *"Being able to keep up with the rising cost of insurance and pay demands by employees."*

Burnout & Workload Strain

- *"Being able to keep up with the tasks that are presented. Currently covering two roles and unable to find a backfill."*
- *"Burnout due to lack of support. As people in my department and position age and retire they are not replaced."*

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 5 respondents reported:

Executive leadership: 59% Strong or Complete confidence (↑ vs. Wave 4)

Department or team leadership: 62% report strong or complete confidence (↑ from Wave 4)

Direct manager or supervisor: 63% report strong or complete confidence (↑ from Wave 4)

Job security also strengthened. **59%** say they feel very or completely secure in their current role (↑ from Wave 4), reversing the softness seen earlier in the fall.

In Wave 5, career plans reflect a pullback in mobility:

22% are actively job hunting, plan to start looking soon, or are considering a move within the next year (↓ from 36% in Wave 4)

68% report no plans to change jobs in the next 12 months (↑ from 49%)

This shift suggests a stronger inclination to stay put, as workers prioritize stability and continuity amid ongoing economic and policy uncertainty.

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.