



The Information Trust Chain: How Workers Decide What to Trust

A joint publication by RONIN International and myCLEARopinion Insights Hub

Insights from Waves 8–10 of the Workforce Confidence Index (Mar–May 2026)

About This Study

The *Workforce Confidence Index* is a multi-wave quantitative tracking study conducted collaboratively by [RONIN International](#) and [myCLEARopinion Insights Hub](#).

It measures U.S. workforce sentiment toward job security, financial confidence, institutional trust, and economic outlook.


This edition draws on data collected between **March-May 2026** from roughly 1,800 professionals across key sectors including industrial, construction, manufacturing, engineering, food and beverage, technology, energy, healthcare, and professional services.

Workforce Confidence Scorecard: Wave 10 – Most Recent Snapshot

Workforce Stability


 **Job Security:**
52% high, 19% low


 **Financial Confidence:**
45% high, 19% low


 **Job Change Intent:**
53% not looking,
25% actively/likely to look

Institutional Trust


 **Federal Government Confidence:**
25% high, 55% low

 **Transparency of Regulations:**
21% agree, 63% disagree

 **Enforcement Consistency:**
23% agree, 63% disagree

 **Regulations Support Innovation:**
28% agree, 49% disagree

Information Trust + Risk

 **Media Accuracy:**
18% accurate, 63% inaccurate

 **Industry Publication Trust: 78%**

 **Local News Trust: 35%**

 **Cable Networks Trust: 16%**

 **Top Threat:**
Economic slowdown – 25%

This scorecard summarizes the most recent readings across workforce stability, institutional trust, and information trust.

Executive Summary:

Across Waves 8–10 of the Workforce Confidence Index (March–May 2026), a clear and durable **Information Trust Chain** continues to define how workers evaluate information credibility. Workers consistently place their highest trust in industry-specific publications, professional associations, and company communications, while trust remains more limited for national media, cable news, and social media sources. While some month-to-month movement is visible, the overall hierarchy remains remarkably stable across waves.

Industry-aligned information sources remain decisively at the top of the trust chain. Approximately four in five workers report fair or great trust in industry-specific publications and professional associations, far exceeding all other sources measured. Company communications also continue to command strong trust, while local news and business-focused media occupy a middle tier. Trust in national media remains constrained, and cable news continues to rank among the least trusted information sources.

These patterns reflect a workforce that prioritizes relevance, expertise, and proximity in the information it consumes. Workers consistently favor sources grounded in industry realities and operational experience, while broader national media are viewed as less aligned with the day-to-day realities of work and industry conditions. At the same time, perceptions of overall media accuracy remain weak, with only 18% expressing trust that media report accurately on their industry.

Taken together, the findings reinforce one of the most consistent patterns observed across the Workforce Confidence Index. The Information Trust Chain remains firmly intact, with trust continuing to concentrate in sources that demonstrate domain expertise, operational relevance, and practical value.

Methodology:

Respondents were screened for U.S. employment across a diverse mix of sectors, including construction, engineering, HVACR and mechanical systems, manufacturing, food and beverage, energy, logistics, technology, healthcare, and professional services.

Wave	Field Dates	Sample (n)
Wave 8	Mar 2026	596
Wave 9	Apr 2026	614
Wave 10	May 2026	578

The Information Trust Chain: What the Data Shows

The most recent wave continues to reinforce a highly stable trust hierarchy across information sources. Industry-specific publications remain the most trusted source by a substantial margin, while local news outlets continue to occupy a moderate middle tier. National media sources remain significantly lower in trust, with cable networks continuing to rank at the bottom.

While some month-to-month movement is visible, the broader structure of the Information Trust Chain remains remarkably consistent. Workers continue to place the greatest confidence in sources that are closest to their industries, operational realities, and professional expertise.

Information Source	Top-2 Trust Range (W6–W8)	Trust Tier
Industry-specific publications	78%–79%	Tier 1 – Highest Trust
Local news outlets	35%–37%	Tier 2 – Moderate Trust
Major national newspapers	31%–35%	Tier 3 – Low Trust
Broadcast networks (ABC/CBS/NBC)	25%–28%	Tier 3 – Low Trust
Cable news networks (CNN/Fox/MS NOW)	16%–18%	Tier 3 – Lowest Trust

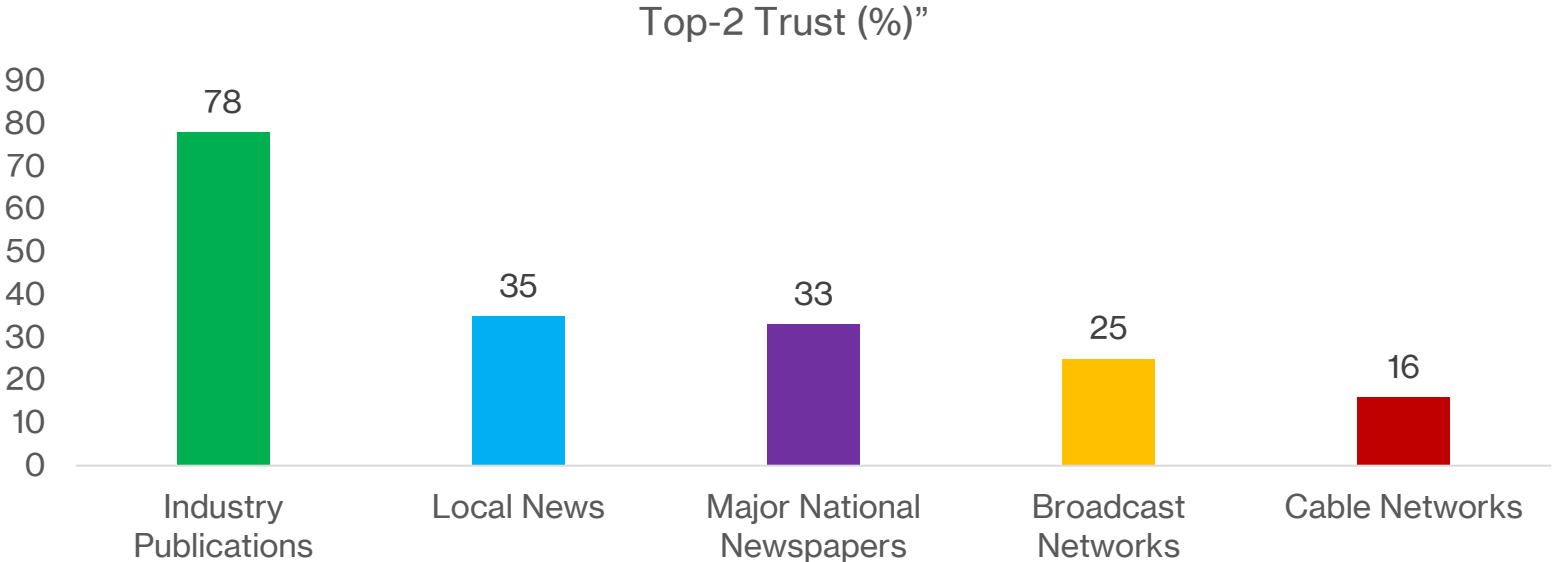
Trust by News Source (May 2026)

Across Waves 8–10, a clear credibility gap continues to persist between general media and industry-specific publications. Fewer than one in five workers trust the media to report accurately on their industry, while nearly four in five express trust in industry-specific sources.

This gap reflects how workers evaluate information. Trust remains highest for sources that are specialized, relevant, and grounded in industry expertise, while general media are perceived as less aligned with the realities of day-to-day work and operational decision-making.

Industry publications continue to maintain a substantial trust advantage over all other news sources measured. Although trust levels softened modestly in May across several categories, the relative ordering of information sources remained unchanged.

Together, these findings reinforce the durability of the Information Trust Chain. Workers continue to place the greatest confidence in sources that are closest to their industries, operational realities, and professional expertise.



Why Workers Trust Industry Media Most

Across Waves 8–10, a clear credibility gap continues to persist between general media and industry-specific publications. Fewer than one in five workers trust the media to report accurately on their industry, while approximately four in five express trust in industry-specific sources.

This gap reflects how workers evaluate information. Trust remains highest for sources that are specialized, relevant, and grounded in industry expertise, while general media are perceived as less aligned with the realities of day-to-day work and operational decision-making.

Industry publications consistently demonstrate three attributes that drive trust:

Domain expertise

Coverage reflects the technical, operational, and regulatory realities of the work being done.

Operational proximity

Content is informed by practitioners, engineers, and industry professionals embedded in day-to-day environments.

Perceived neutrality

Trade publications focus on practical implications and actionable insight rather than political framing.

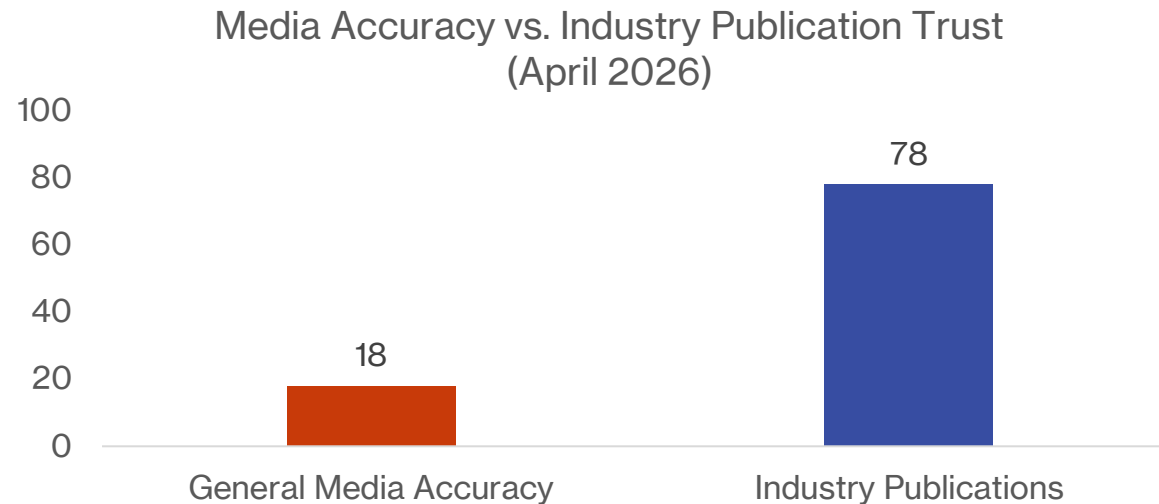
Together, these factors create a sustained credibility advantage. While trust levels softened modestly in May across several news sources, the underlying structure of the Information Trust Chain remains firmly intact.

Media Accuracy vs. Industry Publication Trust

A clear credibility gap continues to exist between general media and industry-specific sources. Only 18% of workers trust the media to report accurately on their industry, while 78% express trust in industry publications.

This contrast highlights how trust is formed within the workforce. Workers place confidence in sources that reflect their operational realities, technical expertise, and day-to-day industry experience.

Trust is not absent. It remains highly concentrated in sources that demonstrate specialization, relevance, and domain knowledge. While trust levels softened modestly in May, the credibility advantage held by industry-specific publications remains substantial.



The Information Trust Chain Model

Across Waves 8–10 (March–May 2026), workers continue to sort information sources into three clear credibility tiers:

Industry-specific → Local → National

This hierarchy remains highly stable across recent waves:

- ✦ Industry publications (78-79%)
- ✦ Local news (35-37%)
- ✦ Major national newspapers (31–35%)
- ✦ Broadcast networks (25-28%)
- ✦ Cable networks (16-18%)

Workers continue to place the greatest trust in voices closest to their day-to-day industry experience and operational realities, while confidence declines as information sources become more generalized and nationally focused.

While modest month-to-month variation exists across some categories, the overall hierarchy remains remarkably intact, reinforcing one of the most durable and consistent patterns observed throughout the Workforce Confidence Index.

What This Means for Industry Communicators

Workers remain skeptical of broad national media when it comes to reporting accurately on their industries.

They trust:

- ▶ Industry experts
- ▶ Trade associations
- ▶ Industry journalists
- ▶ Technical writers
- ▶ Sector-specific analysis

They distrust:

- ▶ National cable news
- ▶ Political commentary
- ▶ Generalized economic reporting
- ▶ High-level policy narratives

Communication implication:

Credibility depends on proximity and expertise. Industry messages must be delivered through sector-specific channels that demonstrate technical fluency, operational relevance, and domain knowledge. Organizations that align communication with these trusted sources will reach their audiences more effectively and with greater credibility.

Findings reflect Waves 8-10 (March-May 2026) of the Workforce Confidence Index.

Conclusion & Implications for Leaders

Across Waves 8–10 (March–May 2026), the hierarchy of information trust remains clear and consistent.

Workers rely on:

- ✦ Industry-centered sources
- ✦ Localized, practical information
- ✦ Experts who understand the work

And they are skeptical of:

- ✦ National media
- ✦ Political networks
- ✦ Generalized reporting

For employers, industry associations, marketers, and policy communicators, the implication remains clear: **trust is built through specialization, precision, relevance, and operational proximity.**

Organizations that communicate through the trusted links in the Information Trust Chain will reach their audiences more effectively and with greater credibility.

Appendix | Wave 9-10 Information Trust Snapshot (Mar–May ‘26)

Industry Publications:

Industry-specific media remain the most trusted information source in the study. Across Waves 8–10, approximately 78 to 79 percent of respondents report Top-2 Box trust, far exceeding all other media categories and reinforcing trade publications as the primary credibility anchor for industry professionals. Trust levels remained highly stable across recent waves, with the leadership position unchanged.

Local News Outlets:

Local news retains moderate trust, with approximately 35 to 37 percent expressing Top-2 Box trust. Workers continue to view local outlets as more relevant and less politicized than broader national sources, placing them above general media but well below industry publications.

Major National Newspapers:

Trust in major national newspapers remains limited. Approximately 31 to 35 percent of respondents report Top-2 Box trust, positioning newspapers within a consistently lower-trust tier relative to industry and local sources.

Broadcast Networks:

Confidence in major television networks remains comparatively weak. Approximately 25 to 28 percent of workers express Top-2 Box trust, reinforcing continued skepticism toward generalized national reporting.

Cable News Networks:

Cable networks remain the least trusted media source measured. Approximately 16 to 18 percent report Top-2 Box trust, while a majority continue to fall into low-trust categories, reflecting deeply entrenched skepticism rather than temporary fluctuation.

Media Accuracy:

Perceptions of general media accuracy remain weak overall. Approximately 17 to 19 percent of respondents trust the media to report accurately on their industry, while a majority continue to express low trust, reinforcing one of the widest credibility gaps observed in the dataset.

Appendix | May 2026 Scorecard Metrics:

Workforce Stability Indicators

Job Security

- ▶ 52% report high job security (Top 2)
- ▶ 19% report low job security (Bottom 2)

Financial Confidence

- ▶ 45% report high financial confidence (Top 2)
- ▶ 19% report low financial confidence (Bottom 2)

Job Change Intent

- ▶ 53% are not planning to look for a new job
- ▶ 25% are actively or likely to look

Institutional Trust Indicators

Confidence in Federal Government

- ▶ 25% high confidence (Top 2)
- ▶ 55% low confidence (Bottom 2)

Regulation Transparency

- ▶ 29% agree regulations are clear or transparent
- ▶ 49% disagree

Consistency of Enforcement

- ▶ 25% agree enforcement is consistent
- ▶ 53% disagree

Regulations Support Innovation

- ▶ 29% agree regulations encourage innovation
- ▶ 51% disagree

Information and Media Trust Indicators

Accuracy of Media Reporting

- ▶ 18% believe national media reporting is accurate
- ▶ 63% believe national media reporting is inaccurate

Trust in Industry Publications

- ▶ 78% Top 2 trust

Trust in Local News Outlets

- ▶ 35% Top 2 trust

Trust in Cable News Networks

- ▶ 16% Top 2 trust

Workplace Risk Perceptions (Threats)

Top Perceived Threats to Work in 2026

- ▶ Economic slowdown or recession: 22%
- ▶ Inflation and rising costs: 22%
- ▶ Government regulation / policy uncertainty: 14%
- ▶ Labor shortages: 11%
- ▶ Geopolitical instability or global conflict: 9%
- ▶ Technological disruption / automation : 9%
- ▶ Supply chain or materials disruption: 8%

Note. Only the top threat appears on the one-page Scorecard. Full detail appears here in the appendix.

Notes on Scoring

Workforce indicators use Top 2 Box and Bottom 2 Box scoring.

Media trust indicators use Top 2 Box trust.

Institutional indicators use Agree or Disagree scoring.

Threats reflect select-all-that-apply frequency.

About the partners:

[RONIN International](#)

RONIN International is an independent global research agency specializing in high-quality data collection, market research consultancy, and strategic intelligence. With deep expertise in hard-to-reach B2B audiences and custom fieldwork solutions, RONIN guarantees transparent, reliable measurement of sentiment and behavior across industries and geographies. Its advanced research operations and rigorous quality controls ensure that insights are trusted, consistent, comparable, and decision-ready.

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