



## **The Information Trust Chain**

*A joint publication by RONIN International and myCLEARopinion Insights Hub*

Insights from Waves 5–7 of the Workforce Confidence Index (Nov 2025–Feb 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 **November 2025 and February 2026** from roughly 2,000 professionals across key sectors including industrial, construction, manufacturing, engineering, food and beverage, technology, energy, healthcare, and professional services.

# Workforce Confidence Scorecard: Wave 7 – Most Recent Snapshot

## Workforce Stability



### Job Security:

49% high, 22% low



### Financial Confidence:

46% high, 18% low



### Job Change Intent:

54% not looking,  
25% actively/likely to look

## Institutional Trust



### Federal Government Confidence:

24% high, 57% low



### Transparency of Regulations:

18% agree, 64% disagree



### Enforcement Consistency:

21% agree, 60% disagree



### Regulations Support Innovation:

29% agree, 50% disagree

## Information Trust + Risk



### Media Accuracy:

19% accurate, 58% inaccurate



### Industry Publication Trust: 80%



### Local News Trust: 36%



### Cable Networks Trust: 17%



### Top Threat:

Economic slowdown – 25%

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

# Executive Summary:

Across Waves 5–7 of the Workforce Confidence Index (November 2025–February 2026), a **clear and durable Information Trust Chain** remains consistent within the U.S. workforce. Workers continue to place their **highest trust in industry-specific publications**, moderate trust in local and business news sources, and limited trust in national and cable media. This hierarchy shows little variation across recent waves, indicating a **firmly established and resilient credibility structure**.

Industry-aligned media remain decisively at the top of the trust chain. Roughly four in five workers report fair or great trust in industry-specific publications, far exceeding all other information sources. Local news outlets occupy a distant middle tier, while trust in national media remains constrained. Cable networks continue to rank at the bottom, with fewer than one in five workers expressing trust, and overall perceptions of media accuracy remain low.

These patterns reflect a workforce that prioritizes **relevance, expertise, and proximity** in the information it consumes. Workers consistently favor sources that are grounded in their industries and aligned with their day-to-day realities, while broad national media are perceived as less applicable and less reliable.

Taken together, the findings point to **one of the most stable patterns observed across the Workforce Confidence Index**. The Information Trust Chain is not emerging or shifting, but **holding steady**. For organizations seeking to communicate with industrial and professional audiences, credibility depends on engaging through channels 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 5	Nov-Dec 2025	643
Wave 6	Jan 2026	677
Wave 7	Feb 2026	632

# The Information Trust Chain: What the Data Shows

Across Waves 5–7 (November 2025–February 2026), three clear tiers of credibility remain consistent within the data. Industry-specific media stand far above all other sources as the most trusted category. Local news outlets occupy a moderate middle tier, while national media networks, including newspapers, broadcast networks, and cable news, consistently rank lowest in trust.

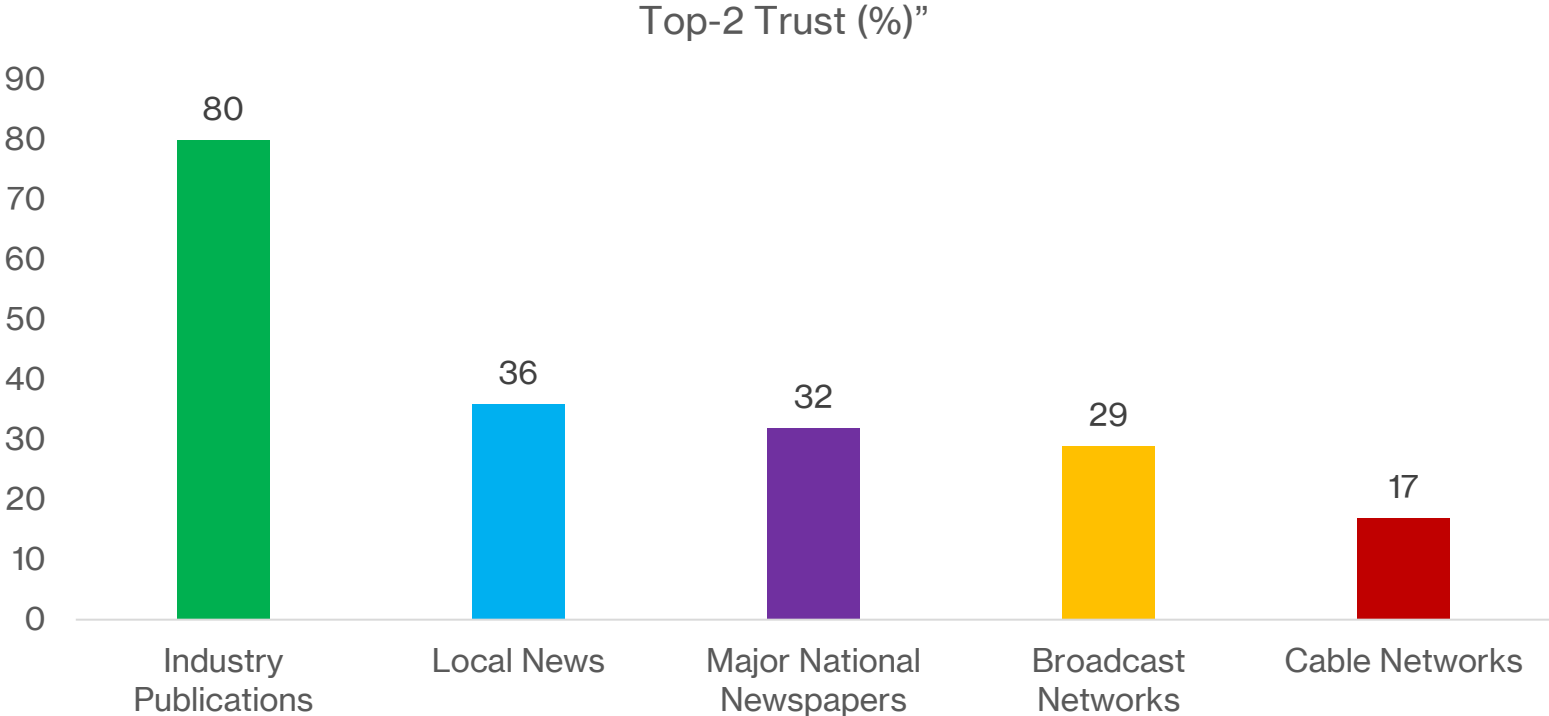
Workers consistently favor information sources that align closely with their work environment, technical realities, and industry expertise. This pattern shows little variation across recent waves and represents one of the most stable and clearly defined trust hierarchies in the dataset.

Information Source	Top-2 Trust Range (W5–W7)	Trust Tier
Industry-specific publications	78%–80%	Tier 1 – Highest Trust
Local news outlets	36%–40%	Tier 2 – Moderate Trust
Major national newspapers	30%–34%	Tier 3 – Low Trust
Broadcast networks (ABC/CBS/NBC)	28%–31%	Tier 3 – Low Trust
Cable news networks (CNN/Fox/MSNBC)	16%–20%	Tier 3 – Lowest Trust

# Trust by News Source (February 2026)

The most recent wave reinforces a consistent trust hierarchy across information sources. Industry-specific publications remain the most trusted by a wide margin, while local news occupies a moderate middle tier. National media sources continue to trail significantly, with cable networks ranking lowest in trust.

This pattern shows little variation across Waves 5–7, reinforcing a stable and well-defined credibility structure.



# Why Workers Trust Industry Media Most

Across Waves 5–7, a clear credibility gap persists between general media and industry-specific publications. Only about one in five workers believe general media accurately reflect their industry, while roughly four in five express trust in industry-specific sources.

This gap reflects how workers evaluate information. Trust is 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.

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.

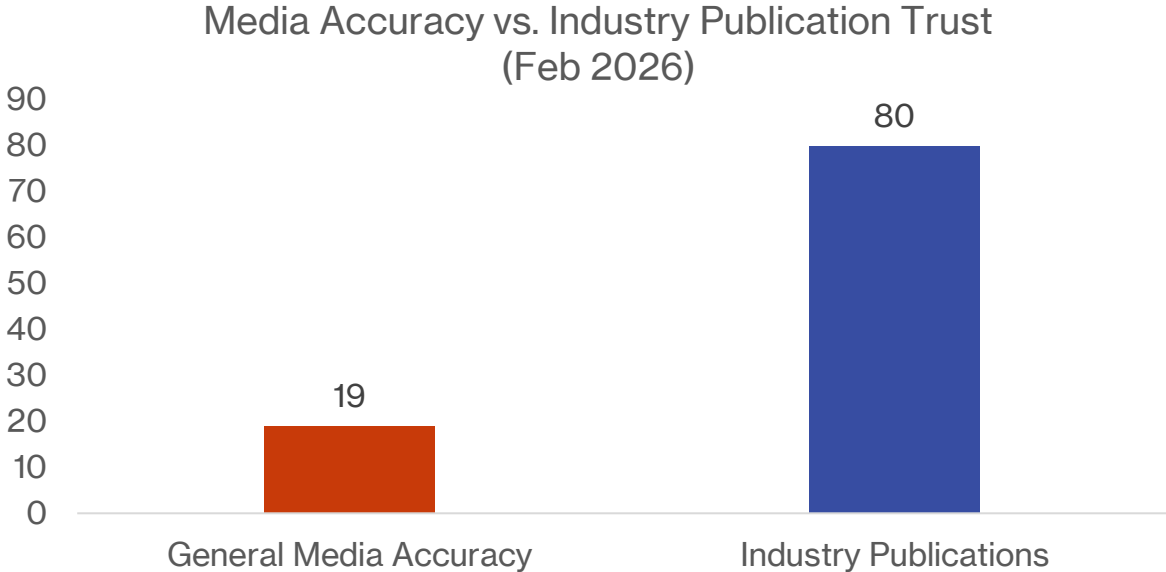
Together, these factors create a sustained credibility advantage that remains consistent across recent waves.

# Media Accuracy vs. Industry Publication Trust

A clear credibility gap exists between general media and industry-specific sources. Fewer than one in five workers believe general media accurately reflect their industry, while roughly four in five express trust in industry publications.

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

**Trust is not absent. It is concentrated.**



# The Information Trust Chain Model

Across Waves 5–7 (November 2025–February 2026), workers consistently sort information sources into three credibility tiers:

**Industry-specific → Local → National**

This hierarchy remains linear and stable across recent waves:

- ✦ Industry publications (78-80%)
- ✦ Local news (36-40%)
- ✦ Business media (30–34%)
- ✦ Broadcast networks (28-31%)
- ✦ Cable networks (16-20%)

Workers trust the voices closest to their day-to-day industry experience and place less confidence in sources that are more distant from those realities.

This hierarchy shows little variation across recent waves, making it one of the most stable and defining trust patterns in the Workforce Confidence Index.

# What This Means for Industry Communicators

Workers consistently show skepticism toward broad national media when it comes to accurately reflecting the realities of 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:

To be credible, industry messages must be delivered through sector-specific channels that demonstrate technical fluency, operational relevance, and domain expertise. Organizations that align communication with these trusted sources will reach their audiences more effectively and with greater credibility.

*Findings reflect Waves 5-7 (November 2025-February 2026) of the Workforce Confidence Index.*

# Conclusion & Implications for Leaders

Across Waves 5–7 (November 2025–February 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 is clear. **Trust is built through specialization, precision, and 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 5-7 Information Trust Snapshot (Nov '25–Feb '26)

## Industry Publications:

Industry-specific media remain the most trusted information source in the study.

Across Waves 5–7, approximately 78 to 80 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.

## Local News Outlets:

Local news retains moderate trust, with approximately 36 to 40 percent expressing Top-2 Box trust.

Workers view local outlets as more relevant and less politicized than national sources, placing them clearly above general media but well below industry publications.

## Major National Newspapers:

Trust in major national newspapers remains limited.

Approximately 30 to 34 percent of respondents report Top-2 Box trust, positioning newspapers in a consistently low-trust tier relative to industry and local sources.

## Broadcast Networks:

Confidence in major television networks continues to lag.

Approximately 28 to 31 percent of workers express Top-2 Box trust, underscoring skepticism toward generalized national reporting.

## Cable News Networks:

Cable networks remain the least trusted media source measured.

Approximately 16 to 20 percent report Top-2 Box trust, while a clear majority fall into low-trust categories, reflecting entrenched skepticism rather than short-term fluctuation.

## Media Accuracy:

Perceptions of general media accuracy remain weak.

Approximately one in five respondents believe media report accurately on their industry, while a majority fall into low-trust categories, representing one of the widest credibility gaps observed in the dataset.

# Appendix | February 2026 Scorecard Metrics:

## Workforce Stability Indicators

### Job Security

- ▶ 49% report high job security (Top 2)
- ▶ 22% report low job security (Bottom 2)

### Financial Confidence

- ▶ 46% report high financial confidence (Top 2)
- ▶ 18% report low financial confidence (Bottom 2)

### Job Change Intent

- ▶ 54% are not planning to look for a new job
- ▶ 25% are actively or likely to look

## Institutional Trust Indicators

### Confidence in Federal Government

- ▶ 24% high confidence (Top 2)
- ▶ 57% low confidence (Bottom 2)

### Regulation Transparency

- ▶ 18% agree regulations are clear or transparent
- ▶ 64% disagree

### Consistency of Enforcement (

- ▶ 21% agree enforcement is consistent
- ▶ 60% disagree

### Regulations Support Innovation

- ▶ 29% agree regulations encourage innovation
- ▶ 50% disagree

## Information and Media Trust Indicators

### Accuracy of Media Reporting

- ▶ 19% believe national media reporting is accurate
- ▶ 58% believe national media reporting is inaccurate

### Trust in Industry Publications

- ▶ 80% Top 2 trust

### Trust in Local News Outlets

- ▶ 36% Top 2 trust

### Trust in Cable News Networks

- ▶ 17% Top 2 trust

## Workplace Risk Perceptions (Threats)

### Top Perceived Threats to Work in 2025

- ▶ Economic slowdown or recession: 25%
- ▶ Inflation and rising costs: 18%
- ▶ Government regulation / policy uncertainty: 18%
- ▶ Labor shortages: 13%
- ▶ Technological disruption / automation: 11%
- ▶ Geopolitical instability or global conflict: 6%
- ▶ Supply chain or materials disruption: 6%

*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.

## [myCLEARopinion Insights Hub](#)

myCLEARopinion is the B2B research division of BNP Media, providing both full-service custom research and direct access to verified trade-industry respondents. Built on BNP Media's audited subscriber base and industry-specific events, myCLEARopinion offers highly targeted access to skilled professionals across construction, manufacturing, engineering, HVACR, food & beverage, and related industrial sectors.

Organizations rely on myCLEARopinion for high-quality respondent access as well as end-to-end research support, including survey design, fieldwork, analysis, and reporting – delivering accurate, industry-grounded insights for strategic decision-making.