# The Information Trust Chain

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

**Year-End 2025 Findings**

# About This Study

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

This report analyzes media and information-source trust using data from Waves 2–5 (August–December 2025) of the Workforce Confidence Index, a multi-wave quantitative tracking study conducted collaboratively by myCLEARopinion Insights Hub (BNP Media) and RONIN International.

Findings reflect responses from more than 2,500 U.S. professionals across construction, manufacturing, engineering, HVACR, food & beverage, logistics, technology, professional services, and related industrial sectors.

The analysis focuses on trust in regulatory systems, perceived fairness and consistency, and whether workers believe government policy enables industry innovation.

# Workforce Confidence Scorecard: Wave 5 — Most Recent Snapshot

| Workforce Stability | Institutional Trust | Information Trust + Risk |
|---|---|---|
| 🔒 **Job Security:** 59% high, 14% low | 🏛️ **Federal Government Confidence:** 27% high, 52% low | 🗞️ **Media Accuracy:** 20% accurate, 59% inaccurate |
| 💵 **Financial Confidence:** 49% high, 17% low | ⚙️ **Transparency of Regulations:** 19% agree, 62% disagree | 📊 **Industry Publication Trust:** 77% |
| 🔄 **Job Change Intent:** 68% not looking, 15% actively/likely to look | 🚨 **Enforcement Consistency:** 23% agree, 62% disagree | 📺 **Local News Trust:** 39% |
| | 💡 **Regulations Support Innovation:** 28% agree, 50% disagree | 📺 **Cable Networks Trust:** 18% |
| | | ⚠️ **Top Threat:** Economic slowdown – 30% |

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

# Executive Summary:

Across Waves 2–5 of tracking (August–December 2025), a clear and durable **Information Trust Chain** emerges within the U.S. workforce. Workers consistently place their strongest trust in **industry-specific publications and professional associations**, moderate trust in **local and business news outlets**, and minimal trust in **national and cable media**. This hierarchy remains stable across every wave, indicating a firmly established and resilient credibility structure.

Industry-aligned media sit decisively at the top of the trust chain. **Roughly three-quarters of workers (77–78%) report fair or great trust in industry-specific publications and trade organizations**, making them the most trusted information sources in the study by a wide margin. Local news outlets and online business news sites occupy a middle tier, while trust in national media remains limited. **Cable news networks rank near the bottom, with fewer than one in five workers (≈18%) expressing trust**, and overall media accuracy ratings remain low.

These patterns suggest workers rely on information sources that are **proximate, specialized, and grounded in domain expertise** — sources that directly reflect their industries, challenges, and day-to-day realities. Broad national media, particularly politically polarized outlets, are perceived as generalized and less relevant, placing them at the bottom of the trust chain.

This paper examines how and why this trust hierarchy has solidified, and what it means for organizations seeking to reach industrial and skilled professionals. The findings underscore the unique role of **trade media and industry-aligned channels** as the most credible bridge between information, insight, and action within today's workforce.

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# 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 2 | Aug 2025 | 788 |
| Wave 3 | Sep 2025 | 594 |
| Wave 4 | Oct 2025 | 760 |
| Wave 5 | Nov-Dec 2025 | 643 |

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# The Information Trust Chain: What the Data Shows

Across Waves 2–5 (August–December 2025), three clear tiers of credibility emerge from 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 — newspapers, broadcast networks, and cable news — consistently rank lowest in trust.

Workers overwhelmingly favor information sources that align closely with their work environment, technical realities, and industry expertise. This pattern remains stable across the study period and represents one of the strongest and most consistent trust hierarchies in the dataset.

| Information Source | Top-2 Trust Range (W2–W5) | Trust Tier |
|---|---|---|
| Industry-specific publications | 77%–79% | Tier 1 — Highest Trust |
| Local news outlets | 38%–44% | Tier 2 — Moderate Trust |
| Major national newspapers | 32%–38% | Tier 3 — Low Trust |
| Broadcast networks (ABC/CBS/NBC) | 29%–37% | Tier 3 — Low Trust |
| Cable news networks (CNN/Fox/MSNBC) | 17%–26% | Tier 3 — Lowest Trust |

# Trust by News Source (Nov–Dec 2025)

In the November–December 2025 wave, the information trust hierarchy remains firmly intact. Industry-specific publications continue to dominate as the most trusted source, with 77% of workers expressing fair or great trust—far exceeding all other media categories.

Local news outlets hold a distant second position at 39%, reflecting moderate credibility rooted in proximity. National media sources trail significantly, with trust falling to 32% for major newspapers, 29% for broadcast networks, and just 18% for cable news.

These results reinforce a consistent pattern: workers place greatest trust in specialized, industry-grounded information, while broad national media—particularly cable networks—remain the least credible sources in the information environment.

Top-2 Trust (%)"



The Information Trust Chain
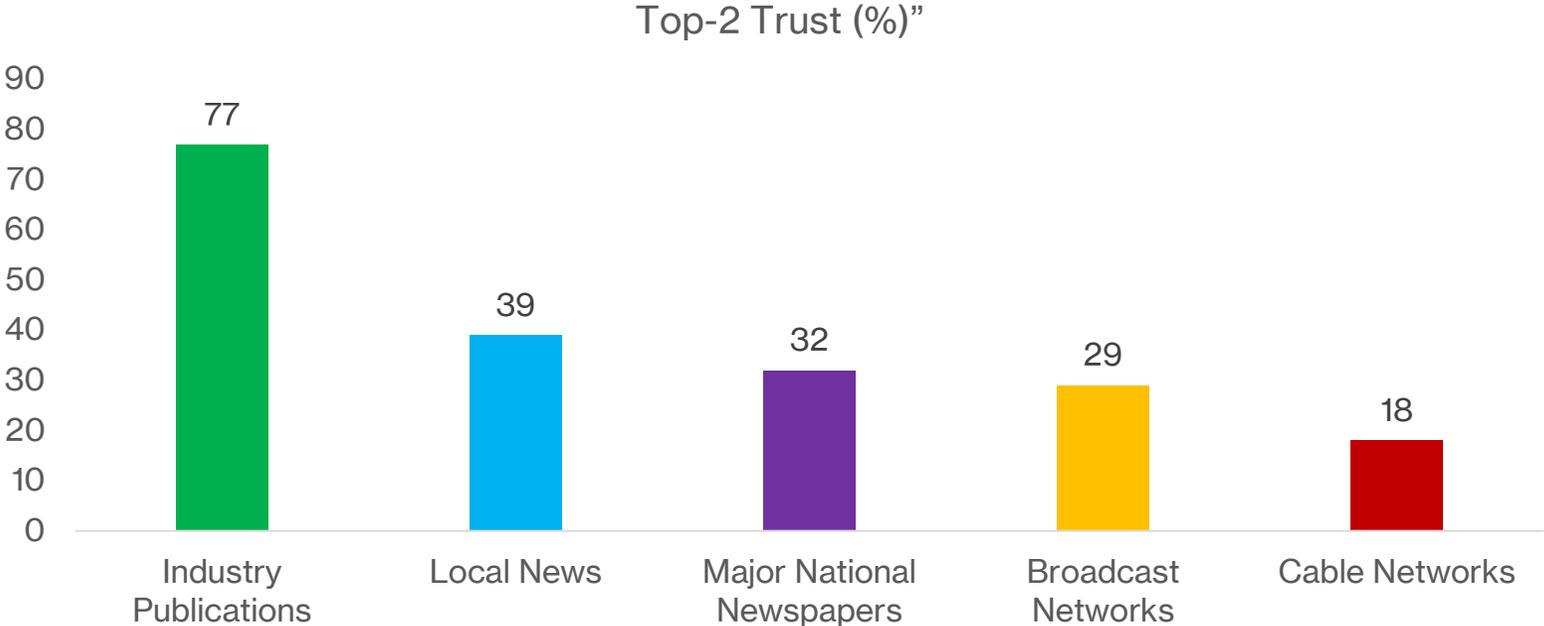
# Why Workers Trust Industry Media Most

Workers are explicit: trust rises with relevance, accuracy, and proximity.

The highest-trust category — **industry-specific publications** — combines three attributes that general media lacks:

## Domain expertise
Coverage reflects the real work being done: technical challenges, compliance updates, equipment, workflow, and labor issues.

## Operational proximity
Content originates from industry voices, practitioners, engineers, and trade organizations embedded in day-to-day operations
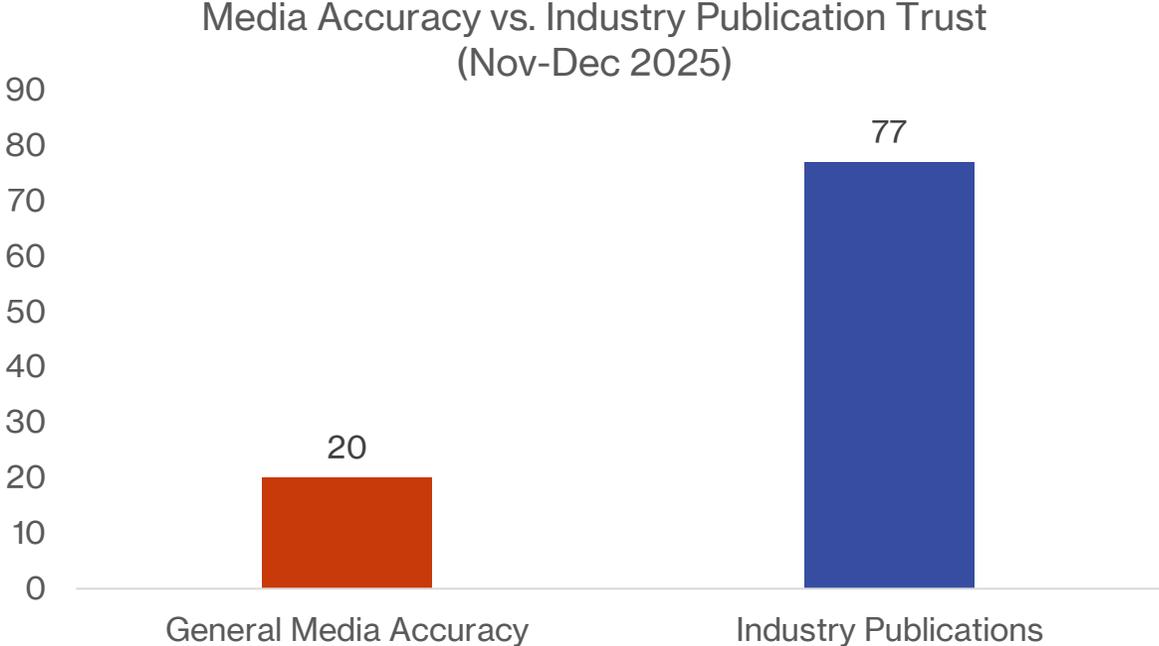
## Perceived neutrality
Trade publications avoid political framing, focusing instead on practical implications and actionable insight.

Together, these factors create a credibility advantage that remains unmatched by any general media source.

# Media Accuracy vs. Industry Publication Trust

The Wave 5 data highlight a stark credibility divide. Just **20%** of workers believe general media report accurately on their industry, while **77%** express fair or great trust in industry-specific publications.

This gap reinforces a clear information hierarchy: workers place confidence in sources that are specialized, relevant, and grounded in industry expertise, while general media fail to meet expectations for accuracy and practical relevance.

### Media Accuracy vs. Industry Publication Trust (Nov-Dec 2025)

| Category | Value |
|---|---|
| General Media Accuracy | 20 |
| Industry Publications | 77 |

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# The Information Trust Chain Model

Across Waves 2–5 (August–December 2025), workers consistently sort information sources into three credibility tiers:

**Industry-specific → Local → National**

This chain is linear and stable in the most recent wave:
✦Industry publications (77%)
✦Local news (39%)
✦Business media (32–34%)
✦Broadcast networks (29%)
✦Cable networks (18%)

Workers trust the voices closest to their day-to-day industry experience and discount those farthest from it.

This hierarchy does not change across Waves 2–5, making it one of the most stable and defining trust patterns in the Workforce Confidence Index.

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# What This Means for Industry Communicators

Workers consistently distrust broad national media to accurately reflect the realities of industrial, construction, engineering, and trade-based work.

**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.*

*Findings reflect Waves 2–5 (August–December 2025) of the Workforce Confidence Index.*

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# Conclusion & Implications for Leaders

The data from August–December 2025 (Waves 2–5) make the hierarchy of information trust unmistakable..

**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 — than those relying on broad, generalized channels.

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# Appendix | Wave 5 Information Trust Snapshot (Nov–Dec 2025)

**Industry Publications:**
Industry-specific media remain the most trusted information source in the study.
In the November–December wave, 77 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 39 percent expressing Top-2 Box trust.
Workers view local outlets as more relevant and less politicized than national channels, placing them clearly above general media but well below industry publications.

**Major National Newspapers:**
Trust in major national newspapers remains limited.
Only 32 percent of respondents report a fair or great deal of 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.
Just 29 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.
Only 18 percent report Top-2 Box trust, while a clear majority fall into the Bottom-2 (low trust) categories — reflecting entrenched skepticism rather than short-term fluctuation.

**Media Accuracy:**
Perceptions of general media accuracy remain weak.
Only 20 percent of respondents believe media reports accurately on their industry, while 59 percent express little or no trust — representing the widest credibility gap observed in the Information Trust dataset.

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# Appendix | Nov-Dec 2025 Scorecard Metrics:

## Workforce Stability Indicators

**Job Security**
- 59% report high job security (Top 2)
- 14% report low job security (Bottom 2)

**Financial Confidence**
- 49% report high financial confidence (Top 2)
- 17% report low financial confidence (Bottom 2)

**Job Change Intent**
- 68% are not planning to look for a new job
- 15% are actively or likely to look

## Institutional Trust Indicators

**Confidence in Federal Government**
- 27% high confidence (Top 2)
- 52% low confidence (Bottom 2)

**Regulation Transparency**
- 19% agree regulations are clear or transparent
- 62% disagree

**Consistency of Enforcement (**
- 23% agree enforcement is consistent
- 62% disagree

**Regulations Support Innovation**
- 28% agree regulations encourage innovation
- 50% disagree

## Information and Media Trust Indicators

**Accuracy of Media Reporting**
- 20% believe national media reporting is accurate
- 59% believe national media reporting is inaccurate

**Trust in Industry Publications**
- 77% Top 2 trust

**Trust in Local News Outlets**
- 39% Top 2 trust

**Trust in Cable News Networks**
- 18% Top 2 trust

## Workplace Risk Perceptions (Threats)

**Top Perceived Threats to Work in 2025**
- Economic slowdown or recession: 30%
- Government regulation / policy uncertainty: 20%
- Inflation and rising costs: : 19%
- Labor shortages: 12%
- Supply chain or materials disruption: 7%
- Geopolitical instability or global conflict: 6%
- Technological disruption / automation: 4%

*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.*

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# 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.