

# Association for Project Management

## 2026 Business Leader Survey Briefing

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### Background

The APM Business Leader Index Survey is an annual report that offers a comprehensive view of business leader perspectives on project delivery.

The findings from this survey provide detailed insights of project deliverability confidence, delivery capability, most-needed skills and perceptions of project delivery in government.

The need to do more, quickly and with less resource is pushing some businesses to experiment with new structures, processes and more frequent updates to their strategies. Against a volatile geopolitical backdrop, confidence levels are being affected.

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### Confidence in Deliverability

Business leader confidence levels in ability to deliver projects successfully remained remarkably consistent throughout 2025. But the start of 2026 saw a significant fall. The decline was not consistent across all sectors, however, with some industries seeing a dramatic drop while others had only marginal reductions.

- **The engineering sector** saw the steepest decline in confidence, falling from 69% in 2024-25 to 51% in 2025-26.
- **The construction sector** also dropped by 12% throughout the same period, from 51% in 2024-25 to 49% in 2025-26.
- **The transport and logistics sector** dropped from 75% in 2024-25 to 70% in 2025-26.
- **The technology sector** was still the most confident sector in 2025-26 at 75%, it still saw a decrease from 83% in 2024-25.
- **The telecoms sector** was the only industry sector to see an increase in confidence, rising from 61% to 70%.

This data suggest that this confidence loss isn't just a dip, but a reaction to a widening skills gap, with businesses not investing enough in the ongoing training/professional development of the people delivering the transformations necessary for strategic success. This increasing lack of internal development and skills has been exacerbated by resource constraints and inadequate funding for projects, which has resulted in businesses being "more deliberate" in how they approach projects and programmes.

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### Perceptions of Government

Against a volatile political backdrop, business leaders' trust in the Government's ability to deliver projects reduced sharply after climbing for most of 2025. Net trust peaked at 79% in October 2025, but declined significantly in January 2026, falling to 52%.

- When it comes to project delivery, business leaders say that the UK Government is best at budgeting, setting clear goals and objectives, and environmental and sustainability considerations.

- However, business leaders say that the UK Government needs to improve on public communication and transparency, supply chain management, and identifying and applying post-project learnings.
- Public communication and transparency were seen by business leaders as the main area for improvement for the Government in 2026, which suggests high-profile U-turns and a perceived lack of clarity from the UK government on certain issues are affecting business confidence.
- Communication and transparency were also the primary area for improvement in 2025, which points to this being a recurring issue for the Government that undermines their credibility and creates uncertainty for business leaders. The economy also remained stubbornly stagnant throughout late 2025/early 2026, which is an additional reason why some business leaders have lost confidence in the Government's ability to achieve its goals.

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## Skills Capacity in the Project Profession

There has been a notable decline in the number of business leaders who feel they have enough project professionals for effective project delivery over the next five years.

- Only 64% of business leaders agreed that there are currently enough project professionals in their organisation to ensure the effective delivery of projects over the next five years. This is a decrease from 83% in Q4 2025.

The decline may suggest that emerging pressures are beginning to impact the workforce for project delivery. These include technological upheaval, specifically the rise and integration of AI into the workforce. Furthermore, the retiring workforce is having a knock-on effect to this issue, as senior expertise is lost and creating a knowledge gap which cannot be immediately filled by junior professionals. These factors are widening the existing skills gap.

- Only 38% of business leaders say that it is easy to find or recruit project professionals with the right skills. This is down from 62% in Q4 2025.

Recruiting project professionals with the right skills is vital for project success, which in turn enables strategic success. This data offers a potential wider picture of recruitment in the industry, and shows that the operating environment has become so volatile and unpredictable that many business leaders are finding it difficult to know what skills are needed for success.

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## About APM

The Association for Project Management (APM) is the leading voice for the project profession. As the only Chartered membership organisation for the project profession in the world, APM represents over 45,000 members who are at the forefront of delivering complex change.

Every sector in the UK uses the project profession to deliver their programmes, which in turn creates economic growth and benefits across the whole of society.

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