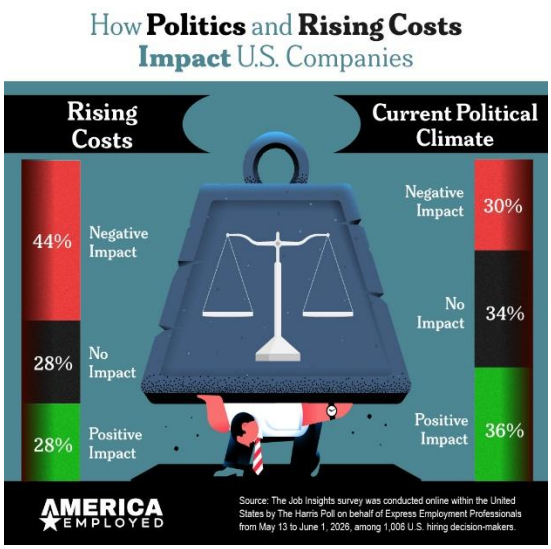
Political Uncertainty Puts Some U.S. Companies' Hiring Plans on Hold

Rising costs affect 72% of companies' ability to operate or grow, while more than 1 in 3 question how long they can absorb continued increases.

OKLAHOMA CITY, Oct. 14, 2026 — Politics is reaching beyond the ballot box and into the workplace, with two-thirds of U.S. hiring managers (66%) saying the current political climate affects their company, according to a recent Express Employment Professionals-Harris Poll survey.



The impact is nearly divided: 36% say it has positively affected their company, while 30% report a negative impact. But as employers look ahead, the bigger question for some is whether to hire now or wait for greater clarity.

Some Companies Are Waiting for Answers Before Hiring

Nearly a third of hiring managers (32%) say planning labor needs amid concerns about a recession or economic downturn and changes in government policies will be among their company's biggest hiring challenges for the remainder of the year.

Among companies planning to reduce or maintain headcount during the second half of the year:

- 28% are waiting to hire until they see the outcomes of changes in government.
- 28% point to concerns about a recession or economic downturn.
- 23% are waiting for the economy to return to normal before hiring.

Job seekers are feeling the effects, too. More than 1 in 4 (28%) say politics has negatively affected their ability to find a new job.

Rising Costs Raise the Stakes

Nearly three-quarters of hiring managers (72%) say rising costs have affected their company's ability to operate or grow, including 44% who report a negative impact and 28% who report a positive one.

The pressure is also reaching workforce budgets, with wages and compensation (41%), hiring budgets (40%) and benefits and insurance (39%) among the areas most impacted by recent cost increases. For some employers, however, the concern extends well beyond the next hire.

More than a third of hiring managers (35%) say their company won't be able to survive much longer if wages or costs continue to increase so quickly. That figure is down significantly from 47% in the spring of 2022, but more than 1 in 3 hiring managers still express concern about how long their company can withstand continued increases.

Job seekers aren't escaping the financial strain, either. Nearly 9 in 10 (89%) say rising costs have affected them, with 63% describing the impact as moderate or substantial.

"Political instability creates an uncertain hiring environment and an unpredictable economy," said Bob Funk Jr., CEO, president and chairman of Express Employment International. "While businesses can't control these external pressures, thoughtful planning gives leaders the flexibility to make difficult decisions today while protecting the people and investments that drive future growth."

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Survey Methodology

The Job Seeker Report was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals from May 19 to June 8, 2026, among 1,000 adults ages 18 and older who are employed but looking for a new job or not employed and looking for work.

The Job Insights survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals from May 13 to June 1, 2026, among 1,006 U.S. hiring decision-makers.

For full survey methodologies, please contact Sheena.Hollander@ExpressPros.com, Director of Corporate Communications & PR.

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If you would like to arrange for an interview to discuss this topic, please contact Sheena.Hollander@ExpressPros.com, Director of Corporate Communications & PR.

About Robert (Bob) Funk Jr.
Robert (Bob) Funk Jr. is the Chief Executive Officer, President and Chairman of Express Employment International, a global staffing franchisor founded and headquartered in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. He leads a portfolio of workforce solution brands, including the flagship Express Employment Professionals franchise, along with several affiliated brands serving specialized markets. The Express franchise brand is an industry-leading, international staffing company with franchise locations across the U.S., Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.

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