

# Littler Workplace Policy Institute<sup>®</sup> Survey Report

MARCH 2026



**Littler<sup>®</sup>**



The first year of Trump 2.0 was something of a roller coaster for employers, as rapid-fire policy shifts created persistent volatility for businesses of all shapes and sizes. From new immigration policies and diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) program crackdowns to booming artificial intelligence (AI) adoption and state legislative changes, businesses are navigating myriad impacts to their workplaces and workers alike.

To assess where employers stand in this dynamic environment, Littler's [Workplace Policy Institute®](#) (WPI) – the firm's government relations and public policy arm – surveyed more than 300 in-house lawyers, human resource (HR) professionals and C-suite executives. Respondents are based across the United States and represent a range of company sizes and industries.

The findings reveal the widespread effects of 2025's regulatory and economic changes on employers, providing crucial benchmarks and insights as business leaders prepare for ongoing changes in the year ahead.

*The survey questions and their resulting findings do not represent any specific political affiliation or preferences of Littler, nor do they convey or constitute legal advice. For a complete breakdown of respondent demographics, see the [methodology and demographics section](#).*

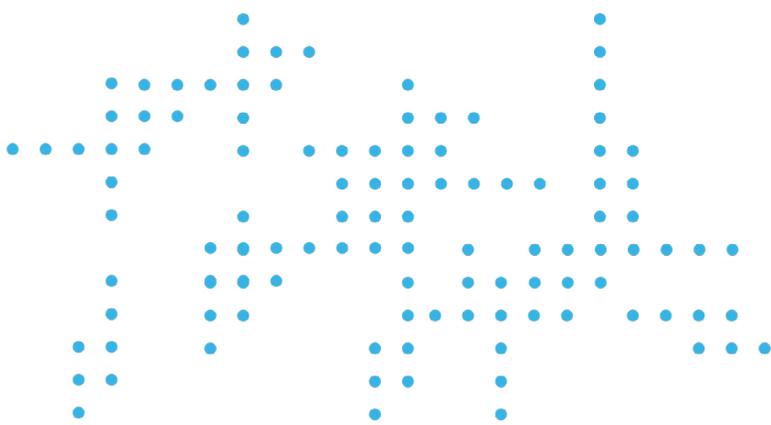
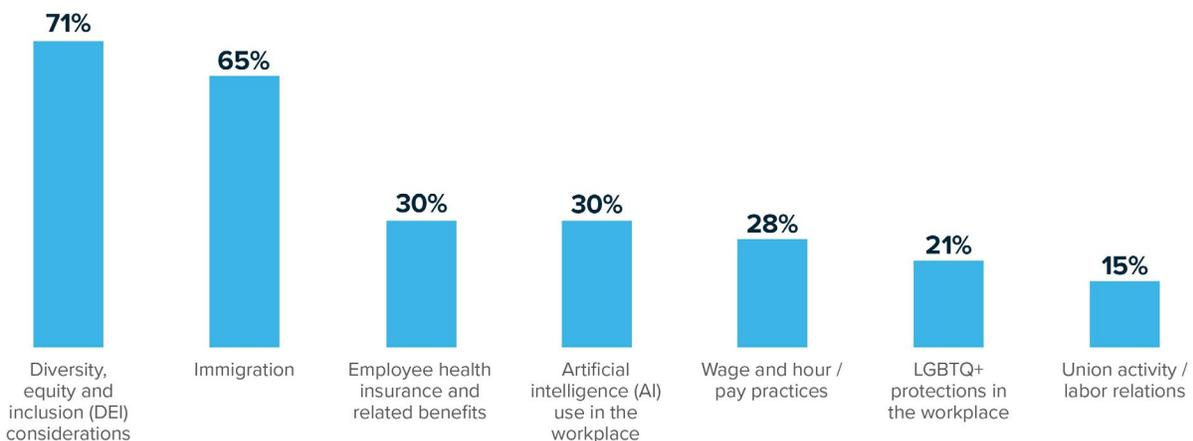


## DEI AND IMMIGRATION POLICIES BRING FAR-REACHING IMPACTS

As the Trump administration's actions on DEI initiatives and immigration continue to make headlines, the majority of employers say DEI (71%) and immigration (65%) policy changes over the past year impacted their businesses – more than twice the share who selected any of the other workplace policy and regulatory areas we asked about. Three in 10 cite changes in employee health insurance and AI use in the workplace (30%), with 28% selecting wage and hour practices.

Immigration policy shifts had more significant implications for respondents from technology and retail/hospitality organizations, with 81% of each group saying it affected their businesses. Large organizations (those with more than 10,000 employees) appear harder-hit than their peers on these fronts, with 86% citing impacts from DEI changes and 79% for immigration.

**In which of the following areas have workplace policy and regulatory changes during the first year of the second Trump administration impacted your business? (Select all that apply)**



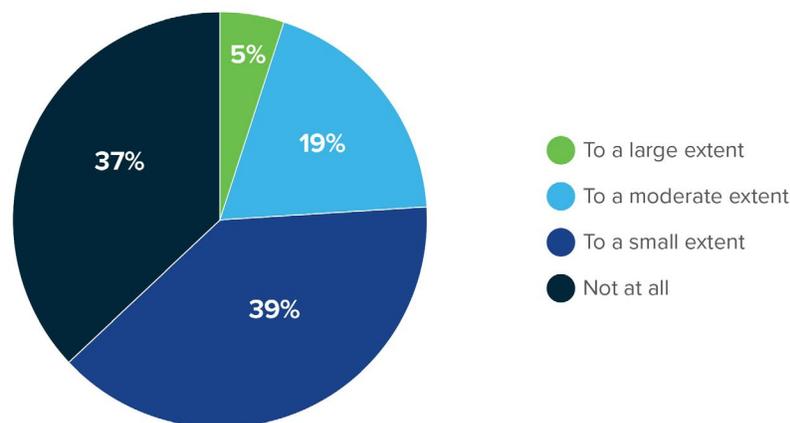
## DEI Policy Impacts

The focus on DEI is understandable. When President Trump returned to office, he quickly signed executive orders ending DEI programs in the federal government, reversing long-standing affirmative action requirements for federal contractors, and instructing federal agencies to identify private sector targets for DEI investigations.

As a result, 55% of respondents we polled in February and March of 2025 for [The Littler® Annual Employer Survey Report](#) said they were considering new or further rollbacks of their DEI programs to some extent – and 60% of large employers expressed concern about DEI-related litigation. Though the executive orders continue to face challenges in court, in February a federal appeals court [overturned](#) an injunction that would have blocked implementation of some of the Trump administration’s policies.

## Immigration Policy Impacts

**To what extent has your organization experienced workforce staffing challenges as a result of the second Trump administration’s immigration policies?**



Sixty-three percent of employers responding to this year’s WPI survey – and 75% of large employers – say their organizations have experienced workforce staffing challenges as a result of Trump 2.0’s immigration policies. This surpasses the unease expressed about workforce staffing in our 2025 Employer Survey, when 58% said their organization was concerned that such hurdles could arise due to the Trump administration’s immigration policies.

Several respondents to this year’s survey also touched on specific immigration roadblocks when asked about what actions they have taken in response to general regulatory and economic uncertainty. One employer said their organization had “hire[d] differently given immigration status”; another had “reduced immigration sponsorship”; still another said their organization was “no longer sponsoring H-1B visas.”

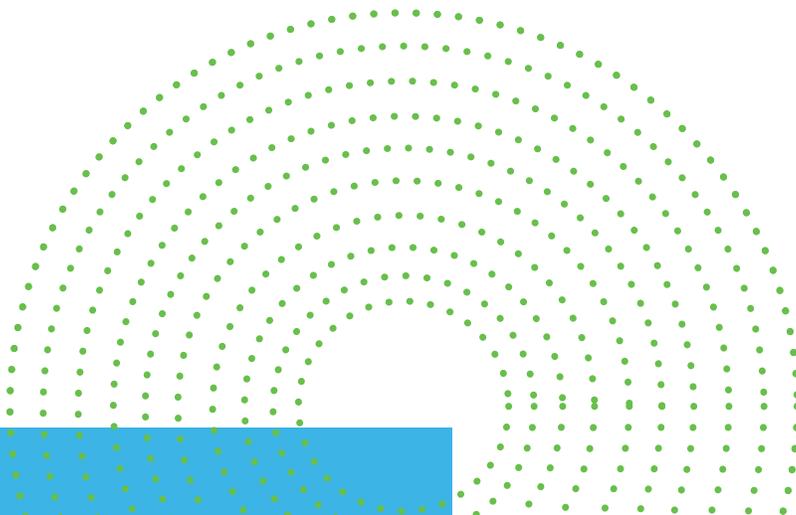
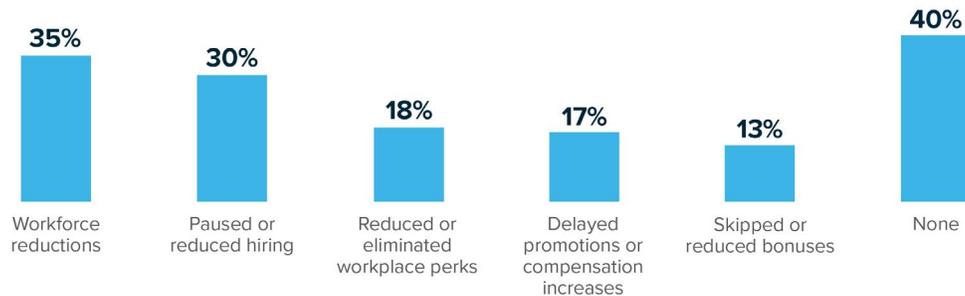
## BROADER UNCERTAINTY CREATES RIPPLE EFFECTS

The fast-evolving regulatory landscape, coupled with ongoing economic volatility, has impacted broader workplace decisions and dynamics as well.

Thirty-five percent of respondents (and 42% of those from large employers) say their organizations have made workforce reductions as a result of regulatory and economic uncertainty, and 30% paused or reduced hiring. This was especially true of manufacturing respondents: more than 4 in 10 say their organizations made workforce reductions (41%) or paused or reduced hiring (43%).

These results come amid increasing reports of layoffs and headcount reductions, including one [study](#) citing economic uncertainty, trade policy and AI adoption as key reasons for reductions in hiring. And yet not all workforces are affected equally. While there have been reports of large corporations and technology companies letting go of staff, other industries, such as [healthcare](#), are seeing stronger hiring rates or even struggling to find the talent they need to fill jobs.

**Which of the following actions, if any, has your organization taken over the past year as a result of regulatory and economic uncertainty? (Select all that apply)**



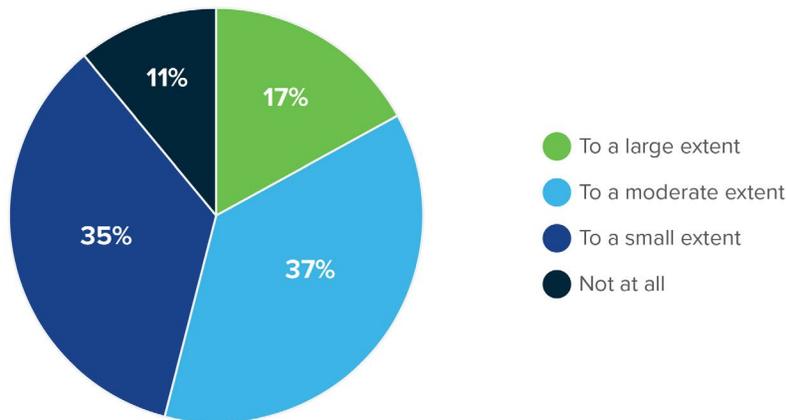
## OUTSIZED IMPACT OF STATE LEGISLATURES

With the federal government pulling back on workplace regulation, many state and local legislatures have looked to fill the gap, leading to a growing patchwork of laws for employers to navigate.

The survey finds nearly 9 in 10 employers indicating that their organizations have been impacted by legislative changes and new workplace regulations at the state and local levels over the past year. More than half experienced impacts to a large (17%) or moderate (37%) extent.

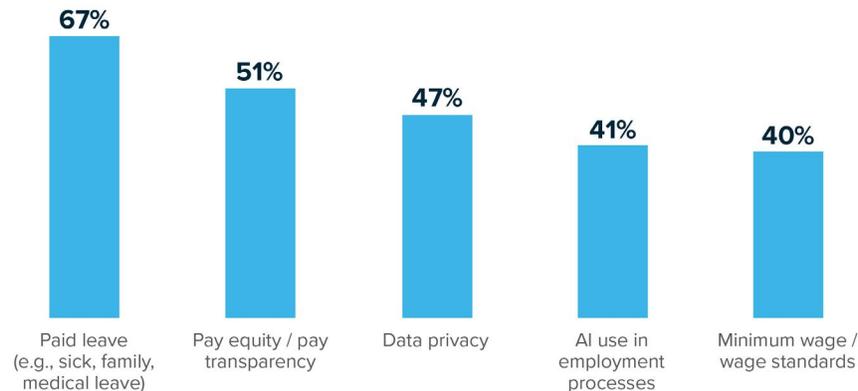
Of those whose organizations experienced impacts, 67% cited paid leave as the area most impacted by such changes, followed by pay equity/transparency (51%), data privacy (47%), and AI use in employment process (41%, with 57% of large organizations).

### To what extent has your organization been impacted by legislative changes and new workplace regulations at the state and local levels over the past year?



### In which of the following areas have legislative changes and new workplace regulations at the state and local levels impacted your business? (Select all that apply)

*This question was only asked to those who indicated their organizations have been impacted to some extent.*

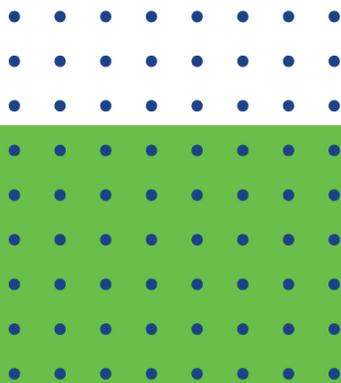


## FEDERAL AGENCY CHANGES TO WATCH IN 2026

While employers experienced ample workforce impacts across several key areas during the first year of the second Trump administration, there was less impact from the activity of prominent federal agencies, including those operating without a quorum.

Looking ahead to the administration's second year, areas to watch include:

- *Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)*: Now that the EEOC has a [quorum](#), employers can expect more activity in 2026 – whether in connection with its move to consolidate litigation authority, a fresh look at the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, or renewed attention to LGBTQ+ rights and the rights of religious employees. Earlier this year, for instance, the EEOC [rescinded](#) its Enforcement Guidance on Harassment in the Workplace.
- *National Labor Relations Board (NLRB)*: While few quick changes are [anticipated](#) with the NLRB now having a quorum, employers can be on the lookout for additional nominations and changes to the Board's lineup. The Board may also restart its rulemaking agenda – potentially exploring new regulations on topics like worker classification, representation procedures, and campaign speech.
- *Department of Labor (DOL)*: In its regulatory agenda, the DOL listed rulemaking covering worker classification, joint employment and minimum wages for federal contractors, the latter of which has already begun to be [addressed](#). Employers should keep an eye out for these and other prospective changes.



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# Littler® | Workplace Policy Institute

Government Relations and Public Policy

Littler's Workplace Policy Institute® (WPI®) advocates for the interests of employers on a global scale. As the government relations and public policy arm of Littler – the world's largest employment and labor law practice representing management and one of the most influential firms in its space – WPI focuses on defining and shaping workplace policy at the international, national and local levels.

Drawing on deep relationships with government officials and industry associations, WPI serves as a strong voice for employers and their workplaces to navigate real-time changes in employment and labor law, while influencing the legislation of tomorrow. By harnessing Littler's global depth of knowledge and expansive resources for tracking emerging issues that affect the workplace, WPI brings employers' interests to the forefront of today's rapidly evolving regulatory landscape.

# Methodology and Demographic Profile of Respondents

From January 20 through February 6, 306 professionals from a variety of industries completed Littler’s survey via an online survey tool.

Respondents were based across the U.S. and included:

- Chief Legal Officer / General Counsel / Deputy General Counsel (19%)
- In-House Lawyers (34%)
- Chief Human Resources Officer / Chief People Officer (19%)
- HR Professionals (21%)
- Other C-suite title (7%)

Companies represented were of a variety of sizes:

- More than 10,000 employees (34%)
- 5,001 to 10,000 employees (10%)
- 1,001 to 5,000 employees (23%)
- 501 to 1,000 employees (10%)
- 101 to 500 employees (17%)
- 1 to 100 employees (6%)

*Responses to some questions in the survey do not add up to 100% due to rounding, and some exceed 100% because respondents were invited to select more than one answer.*

