ENDEAVOR BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE

MANUFACTURING FORWARD

An Industry Pulse on What's Next

Oct 2026

SUMMARY

Manufacturing professionals see opportunity ahead, but significant challenges remain. Workforce recruitment and retention (30%) and rising costs (30%) top current concerns, while automation and advanced technologies lead planned investments (36%).

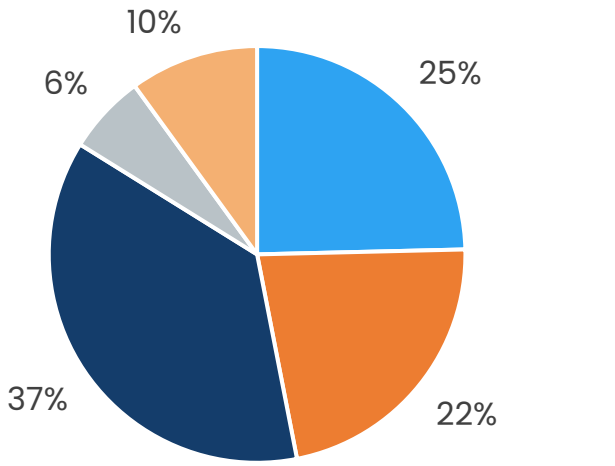
Despite these pressures, 63% of respondents are confident in their sector's growth over the next five years. Still, attracting and retaining the next generation of talent remains a challenge, reinforcing the need for stronger workforce development alongside technology adoption.

TOP 3 TAKEAWAYS

- **Technology is driving investment.** Automation and advanced technologies lead planned investments, cited by 36% of respondents.
- **Workforce challenges persist.** Talent recruitment and retention rank among the industry's biggest concerns, with opportunities to strengthen training and talent pipelines.
- **The outlook is optimistic, but not without pressure.** While 63% are confident in future growth, manufacturers continue to navigate rising costs and operational challenges.

MANUFACTURING TYPE

Which best describes the type of manufacturing organization you work for?



MOST RESPONDENTS WORK ACROSS BOTH DISCRETE AND PROCESS MANUFACTURING

The survey captured a broad mix of manufacturing perspectives. More than one-third of respondents (37%) work in organizations involved in both discrete and process manufacturing, while 25% work exclusively in discrete manufacturing and 22% in process manufacturing.

The remaining respondents represent other roles and organizations connected to the manufacturing industry, including technology providers, consultants, distributors and professional services.

Source: Endeavor Business Intelligence Pulse Survey, Oct 2026

RESPONDENT ROLES

Which area best describes your primary role or area of responsibility?



EXECUTIVES MAKE UP MORE THAN A THIRD OF RESPONDENTS

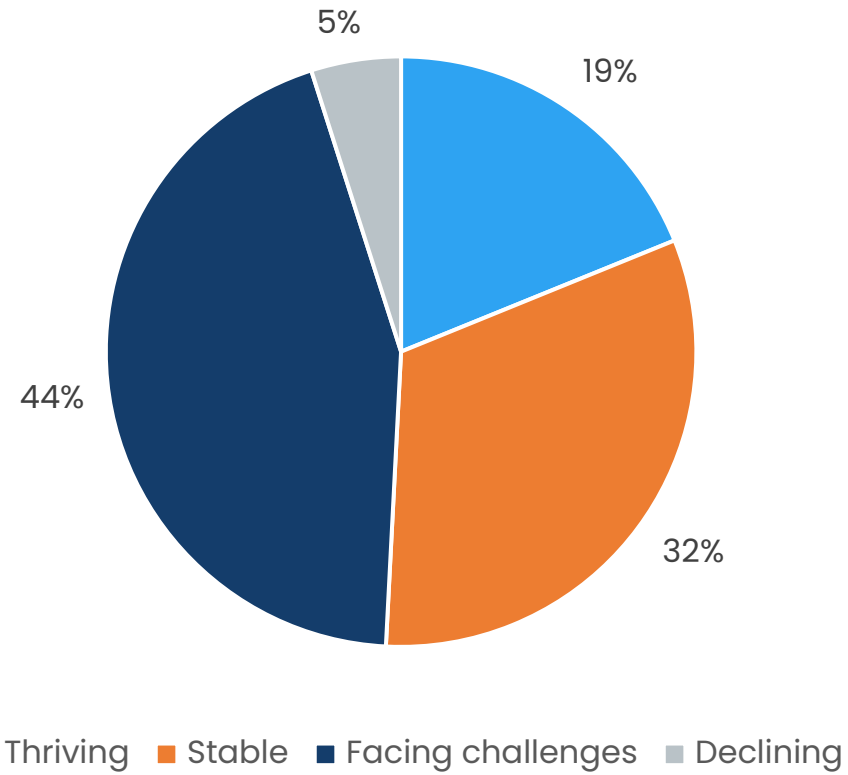
The survey captured perspectives from a range of manufacturing roles, with executive and corporate leaders making up the largest share of respondents at 37%. Manufacturing, production and operations professionals accounted for another 25%, followed by engineering and technology at 17%.

Together, these groups represent a strong mix of strategic and operational perspectives on the issues shaping manufacturing today.

Source: Endeavor Business Intelligence Pulse Survey, Oct 2026

STATE OF OPERATIONS

How would you describe the current state of your manufacturing operations?



NEARLY HALF SAY THEIR OPERATIONS ARE FACING CHALLENGES

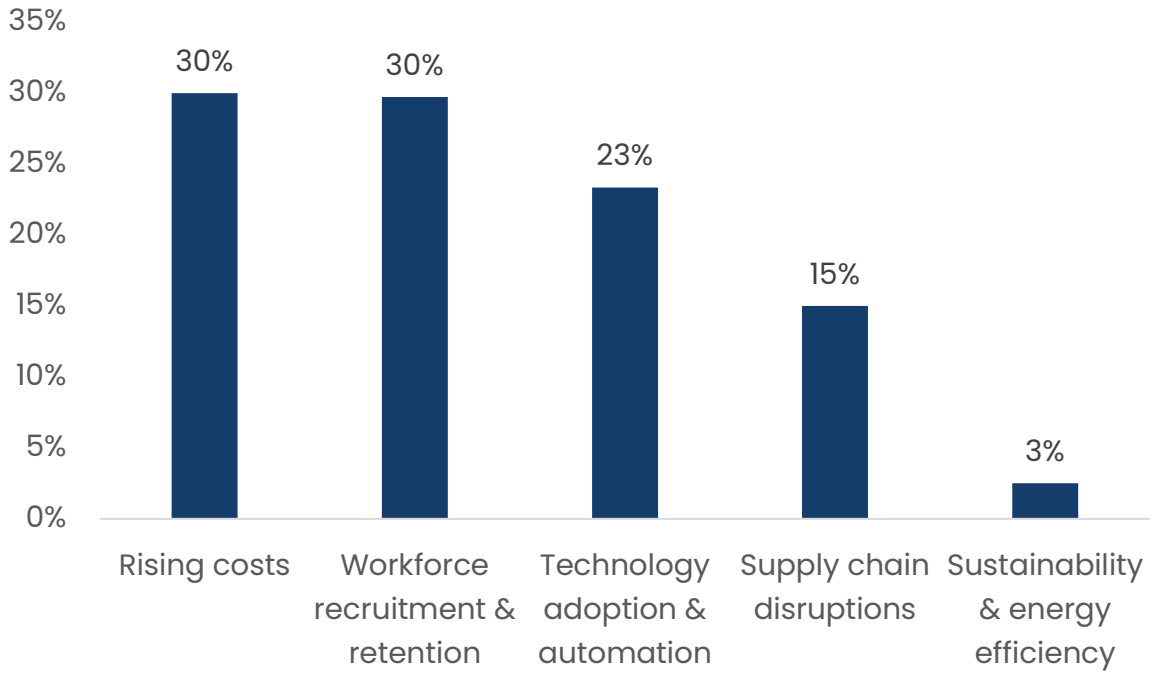
Manufacturing operations are navigating a challenging environment. While 44% of respondents say their operations are facing challenges, 32% describe their current state as stable and 19% say they're thriving. Just 5% report declining operations.

The results suggest that while outright decline is uncommon among respondents, operational pressures are affecting a significant share of the industry.

Source: Endeavor Business Intelligence Pulse Survey, Oct 2026

BIGGEST CHALLENGE

What is the single biggest challenge facing your manufacturing operation today?



WORKFORCE AND RISING COSTS TIE AS THE TOP CHALLENGES

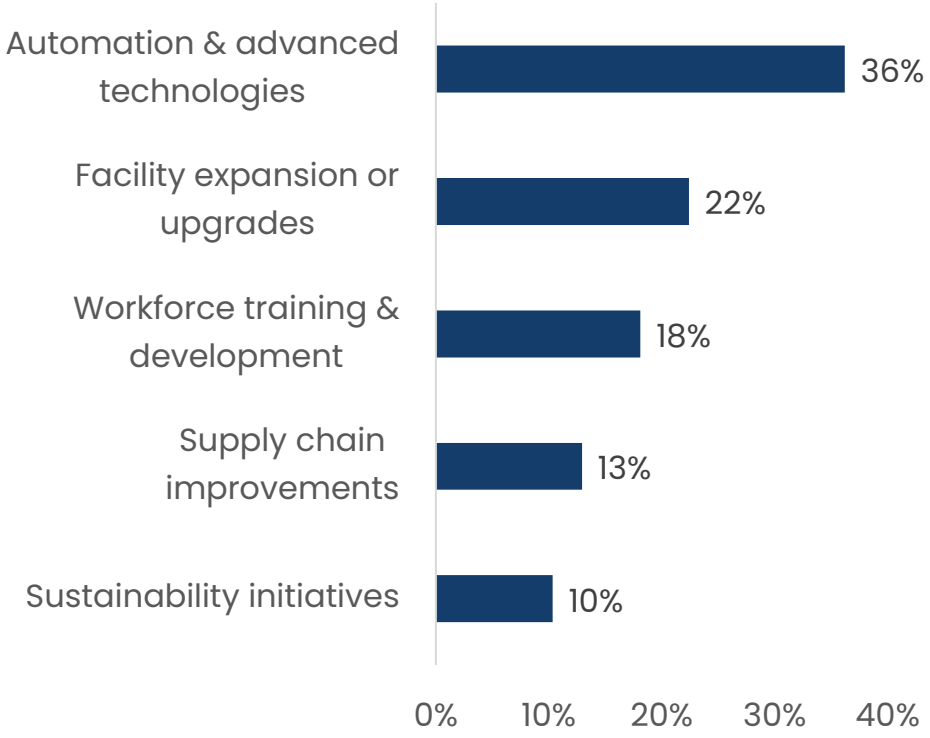
Workforce recruitment and retention (30%) and rising costs (30%) are tied as the biggest challenges facing manufacturing operations. Technology adoption and automation follow closely at 23%, highlighting the pressure to keep pace with evolving technologies. Supply chain disruptions rank fourth at 15%, while sustainability and energy efficiency were cited by just 3% of respondents.

The results point to a mix of financial, workforce and technology-related pressures shaping manufacturing priorities today.

Source: Endeavor Business Intelligence Pulse Survey, Oct 2026

INVESTMENT PRIORITIES

Where is your organization prioritizing investment over the next 12 months?



AUTOMATION AND ADVANCED TECHNOLOGIES LEAD

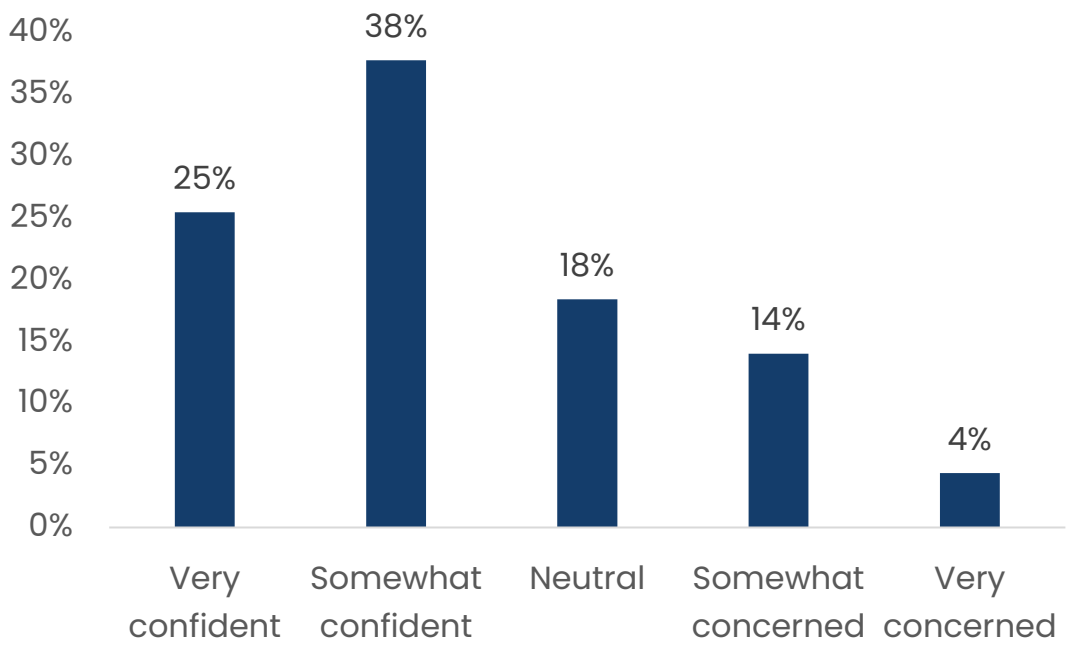
Manufacturers are putting technology at the top of their investment agendas. More than one-third of respondents (36%) say automation and advanced technologies are their organization's top investment priority over the next 12 months. Facility expansion or upgrades follow at 22%, while workforce training and development account for 18%. Supply chain improvements (13%) and sustainability initiatives (10%) rank lower.

The results suggest that manufacturers are balancing technology adoption with investments in facilities and workforce capabilities as they plan for the year ahead.

Source: Endeavor Business Intelligence Pulse Survey, Oct 2026

FIVE-YEAR GROWTH CONFIDENCE

How confident are you in the growth of your manufacturing sector over the next 5 years?



NEARLY TWO-THIRDS ARE CONFIDENT

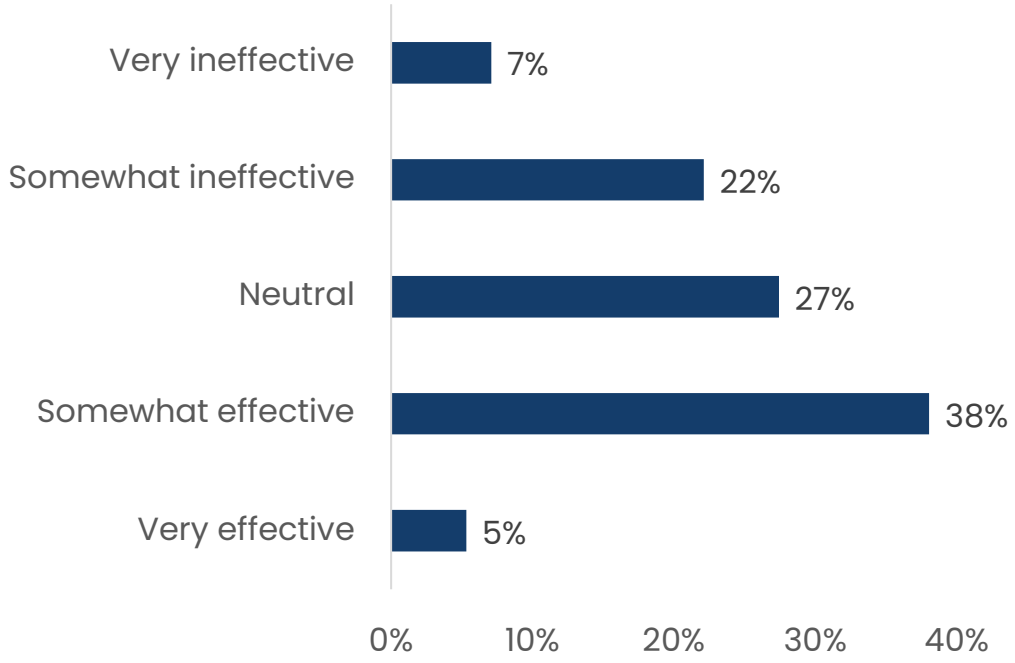
Despite current operational challenges, respondents are generally optimistic about the future of manufacturing. A combined 63% say they are very or somewhat confident in their sector's growth over the next five years, compared with 18% who are neutral. Meanwhile, 18% express some level of concern about future growth.

The results reveal a largely positive outlook, even as manufacturers continue to navigate workforce, cost and technology pressures.

Source: Endeavor Business Intelligence Pulse Survey, Oct 2026

NEXT-GENERATION TALENT

How effective is your organization at attracting and retaining the next generation of manufacturing talent?



ROOM TO IMPROVE NEXT-GEN TALENT RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Attracting and retaining the next generation of manufacturing talent remains a challenge for many organizations. While 43% of respondents say their organizations are very or somewhat effective at recruiting and retaining younger talent, only 5% consider their efforts very effective. Another 29% describe their organizations as somewhat or very ineffective, while 27% remain neutral.

The results suggest that although some manufacturers are making progress, building a stronger talent pipeline remains an opportunity for improvement across the industry.

Source: Endeavor Business Intelligence Pulse Survey, Oct 2026

MOST DESIRED CHANGES

What is one change (policy, technology, or workforce-related) that would most improve manufacturing outcomes for your business? (write-in)

We found the following themes in respondents' open-ended answers.

1. Workforce development and skilled labor

Respondents frequently emphasized the need for skilled workers, better training, apprenticeships, improved compensation and stronger pipelines to attract and retain manufacturing talent.

"Develop Apprentice programs that benefit Machine shops/Manufacturing. Teach more manual machining, then CNC. This is my 50Th year as a Journeymen Toolmaker. Now as The GM of a Machine shop."

2. Technology, Automation and AI

Technology adoption was a recurring theme, with respondents pointing to automation, AI, equipment upgrades and better technology integration as ways to improve productivity and competitiveness.

"We have 9 strategic fronts that we have identified as crucial to continuing our competitiveness and achieving ongoing success. However, automation and technologies such as AI may be the front we need to focus resources on most heavily for the next few years."

3. Economic and Regulatory Stability

Economic uncertainty, tariffs, inflation, interest rates and changing regulations surfaced as concerns. Respondents want more predictable business conditions to make long-term investments and plan for growth.

"A stable growing economy" and *"elimination of uncertainty surrounding tariffs"*

Source: Endeavor Business Intelligence Pulse Survey, Oct 2026

MOST DESIRED CHANGES

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4. Operational Efficiency and Visibility

Some respondents focused on improving how manufacturing operations work together. Better visibility into production constraints, connected systems, improved planning and equipment utilization were identified as ways to increase efficiency without simply adding costs or capacity.

"Better visibility into the true constraint in the operation. Too often manufacturers invest in technology, automation, or additional capacity before identifying what is actually limiting throughput."

5. Investment, Infrastructure and Business Growth

Respondents also called for more capital investment, facility upgrades, infrastructure improvements and stronger supply chain conditions to support manufacturing capacity and business growth.

"A bigger facility to maintain the current workflow."

Source: Endeavor Business Intelligence Pulse Survey, Oct 2026

METHODOLOGY

This survey was conducted online between September 8 and September 30, 2026. A total of 113 respondents participated.

The survey was fielded among manufacturing professionals reached through *IndustryWeek, New Equipment Digest* and *SmartIndustry*, representing a range of roles and perspectives across the manufacturing industry.

Respondents included executive and corporate leaders, manufacturing and operations professionals, engineering and technology specialists, and others working in or supporting discrete, process and hybrid manufacturing organizations.

The survey explored the current state of manufacturing operations, key industry challenges, investment priorities, growth outlook, workforce effectiveness and the changes respondents believe would most improve manufacturing outcomes. All responses were collected anonymously and are reported in aggregate.