

New APM report reveals sharp fall in project delivery confidence across UK businesses

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Confidence in organisations' ability to successfully deliver projects has fallen sharply at the start of 2026, according to new research from the [Association for Project Management \(APM\)](#), with skills shortages, recruitment difficulties and constrained investment emerging as major concerns.

APM's latest *Business Leader Index Survey 2025/26* found that confidence among UK business leaders dropped from a peak of 72% in October 2025 to just 46% in January 2026, signalling growing pressure across the project landscape after a comparatively optimistic 2025.

The research, conducted in partnership with Censuswide, tracked the views of 500 CEOs and Managing Directors across the UK and Channel Islands over a 12-month period.

Construction confidence falls to just 20%

The data revealed significant differences between sectors, with construction recording the steepest decline.

Confidence levels in the construction sector fell to just 20% in January 2026, making it the lowest-performing industry surveyed.

Telecommunications and legal services also saw notable drops, falling to 35% and 39% respectively.

Only two sectors remained above 50% confidence levels at the start of 2026:

- Technology: 69%
- Transport and logistics: 65%

The findings suggest many organisations are entering 2026 facing increasing uncertainty around project delivery capability, workforce planning and investment confidence.

Skills shortages intensify

The report also points to a growing strain on project talent pipelines.

During much of 2025, more than 70% of business leaders believed they had enough project professionals within their organisations to deliver effectively, with that figure reaching 83% in October.

By January 2026, however, confidence in workforce sufficiency had fallen to 64%.

At the same time, confidence in being able to recruit people with the right project skills dropped to just 38%, its lowest point in the survey period.

According to APM, leaders identified several key drivers behind the decline, including:

- Reduced investment in professional development
- Recruitment challenges
- Budget pressures
- Insufficient project funding
- Ageing workforces retiring faster than replacements can be trained

For project professionals, the findings reinforce concerns that labour and capability shortages are becoming increasingly central delivery risks across both public and private sector programmes.

Data literacy emerges as a critical project skill

One of the more notable findings from the survey was the emergence of data literacy as the most important capability business leaders now expect from project professionals.

As AI tools, automation platforms and digital reporting systems become more embedded within project environments, organisations are placing greater value on professionals who can interpret and manage growing volumes of project data effectively.

The report suggests that technical project delivery skills alone are no longer sufficient in increasingly data-driven delivery environments.

Instead, organisations are seeking professionals capable of combining delivery leadership with analytical capability and digital fluency.

Pressure grows on project investment decisions

The report comes amid wider economic uncertainty and increased pressure on organisational spending.

Many businesses are balancing transformation ambitions against tighter budgets, slower economic growth and continued labour market disruption.

Professor Adam Boddison OBE, Chief Executive of APM, said the results reflected the impact of a more volatile economic and political environment.

“An increasingly volatile political and economic climate has resulted in a sharp decline in key metrics this January,” he said.

“It’s vital business leaders take action now, so they can be confident in their ability to deliver the changes that will drive strategic success and ensure their organisations remain adaptable.”

Boddison added that successful projects remain critical to helping organisations futureproof themselves amid uncertainty.

Investment in people becoming a strategic priority

The report concludes that organisations must prioritise investment in professional development and project capability if they want to improve delivery confidence.

APM is urging businesses to focus recruitment efforts on chartered and certified project professionals while increasing investment in training and workforce development.

For project leaders, the message is increasingly clear: delivery confidence is no longer determined solely by budgets or technology platforms.

Instead, the ability to attract, develop and retain skilled project professionals may become one of the defining competitive advantages for organisations navigating increasingly complex transformation programmes in 2026 and beyond.