

Survey Toplines

Voice of Main Street: Rising gas prices and expenses squeeze small businesses

Released: June 16, 2026

Download the full report from our website: <https://smallbusinessmajority.org/our-research/voice-of-main-street>

Methodology

The sixth Voice of Main Street survey is a poll of 237 small business owners in Small Business Majority’s national network. It was conducted between May 15 and June 8, 2026. The margin of error is +/- 6% at a 95% confidence level.

1. Are you the owner of a small business?

Yes, owner.....100%

2. How many people does your company employ, including yourself? Please include full-time and part-time employees, but do not include independent contractors

Self-employed27%

Small business, 2-10 employees56%

Small business, 10-24 employees11%

Small business, 25-49 employees3%

Small business, 50-74 employees1%

Small business, 75-100 employees2%

More than 100 employees.....0%

3. Changes to tariffs policy have affected many small businesses. Which of the following impacts, if any, has your business experienced?

Closed my business2%

Suppliers have increased the prices my business pays50%

Delayed importing materials or goods.....22%

Increased the price of certain materials or products47%

Sought suppliers in other countries where there is less tariff impact.....6%

Sought suppliers within the United States to reduce tariff impact7%

Changed my business model and/or product offerings11%

Laid off workers and/or reduced their hours9%

Delayed hiring new employees24%

Delayed business growth expansion plans32%

No impact on my business19%

I don’t know7%

4. Have you had to pay tariffs on imports for your business?

Yes.....	26%
No	59%
I don't know.....	15%

5. U.S. Customs and Border Protection recently launched the Consolidated Administration and Processing of Entries (CAPE) portal, which allows eligible importers to apply for a refund for tariffs paid under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) over the past year. Have you applied for a refund through the CAPE portal? (asked of those who had to pay tariffs, N=59)

Yes, awaiting a refund.....	3%
Yes, received a refund	0%
Yes, but denied a refund	7%
No	64%
Other, please share your experience.....	25%

6. Would you support or oppose a national paid family leave program that would guarantee employees partial wage replacement for up to 12 weeks? The family leave could be for welcoming a new child (born or adopted) or a serious health condition or injury for the employee or a family member. Employers would not be responsible for paying employees' wages while using the leave. (N=221)

Strongly support	57%
Somewhat support.....	16%
Somewhat oppose.....	6%
Strongly oppose	10%
Not sure	11%

7. Do you and/or any of your employees struggle to access affordable childcare? (N=221)

Yes, I do	9%
Yes, my employees do.....	24%
Yes, both myself and my employees do	8%
No	48%
Not sure	12%

8. Do you agree or disagree that policymakers should take action to reduce the cost of childcare by increasing federal investments in the childcare industry? (N=221)

Strongly agree	67%
Somewhat agree.....	13%
Somewhat disagree	5%
Strongly disagree	6%
Not sure	10%

9. In the past 6 months, have you applied for business financing from a financial institution? This can include any type of financial institution, such as a bank, CDFI, the SBA, online lenders, etc. (N=207)

- Yes, and I received loan 11%
- Yes, but application is still pending4%
- Yes, but I was denied a loan..... 14%
- No, I did not apply for a loan 72%
- Please share the amount or any other details of the loan

10. How optimistic or pessimistic are you about your business prospects over the next six months? (N=207)

- Very optimistic..... 14%
- Somewhat optimistic29%
- Neither optimistic or pessimistic..... 19%
- Somewhat pessimistic.....25%
- Very pessimistic 14%

11. Not accounting for seasonality, in the past three months, has your business revenue increased, decreased or stayed the same? (N=207)

- Increased 14%
- Decreased50%
- Stayed the same36%

12. Not accounting for seasonality, in the past three months, have your business expenses increased, decreased or stayed the same? (N=207)

- Increased 67%
- Decreased9%
- Stayed the same24%

13. In the past three months, has the number of people your business employs increased, decreased or stayed the same? (N=207)

- Increased8%
- Decreased27%
- Stayed the same65%

14. For each of the following financial challenges businesses face, indicate whether it's a major challenge, minor challenge, not really a challenge, or not a challenge at all for your business. (N=207)

	Major challenge	Minor challenge	Not really a challenge	Not a challenge at all
Increased costs of supplies/inventory	62%	23%	9%	6%
Difficulty accessing capital or financing	50%	22%	16%	12%
Difficulty making payroll and/or paying businesses expenses	47%	29%	14%	9%
Reduced consumer spending.....	64%	23%	7%	6%

15. For each of the following operating challenges businesses face, indicate whether it's a major challenge, minor challenge, not really a challenge, or not a challenge at all for your business. (N=207)

	Major challenge	Minor challenge	Not really a challenge	Not a challenge at all
Attracting new customers or clients	55%	34%	8%	4%
Attracting potential business partners and/or suppliers	29%	36%	20%	14%
Seasonal fluctuations in customer demand	25%	46%	19%	10%
Finding the right marketing channels to use	43%	31%	19%	7%
Attracting and hiring qualified workers	43%	23%	19%	16%

16. For each of the following business expenses, please indicate if they have increased, decreased or stayed the same this year.*

	Increased	Stayed the same	Decreased	N=
Healthcare premiums	89%	11%	<1%	191
Utilities (electricity, natural gas)	88%	11%	<1%	150
Raw goods and materials	88%	10%	3%	160
Wages.....	57%	33%	10%	178
Commercial rent	72%	26%	1%	144

* Percentages reflect only respondents for whom each expense was applicable; those who responded N/A were excluded from the base.

17. How have changes in business expenses and other economic conditions impacted your business this calendar year? Select all that apply. (N=206)

Increased prices of my goods or services	65%
Froze hiring	34%
Laid off employees	11%
Delayed business investments	43%
Decreased profit margins.....	63%
Slowed customer growth	57%
No change in my costs or business conditions	5%
I don't know	3%

18. Has your business been impacted by recent increases in fuel or transportation costs? (N=206)

Yes.....	74%
No	16%
I don't know	10%

19. Please share any stories about how rising costs are impacting your business.

Open ended

20. Which of the following categories best describes your business? (N=206)

Agriculture & Mining.....	0%
Consulting & Business Services	23%
Education & Youth Services.....	6%
Energy & Utilities.....	0%
Engineering	1%
Food & Beverage.....	7%
Health, Beauty, Fitness.....	2%
Healthcare, Pharmaceuticals & Biotech	4%
Insurance & Financial Services.....	2%
Manufacturing.....	5%
Media & Entertainment.....	2%
Non-profit.....	0%
Real Estate & Construction.....	5%
Retail.....	14%
Service & Consumer Services.....	10%
Software & Internet	1%
Technology, Computers & Electronics.....	3%
Telecommunications	0%
Transportation & Storage	2%
Travel, Recreation & Leisure	3%
Wholesale & Distributors.....	2%
Other.....	6%

21. What is your business’ annual revenue? (N=206)

Less than \$25,000	16%
\$25,000 to \$49,999.....	8%
\$50,000 to \$99,999.....	16%
\$100,000 to \$249,999.....	13%
\$250,000 to \$499,999.....	14%
\$500,000 to \$999,999	8%
Over \$1 million	17%
Prefer not to answer.....	8%

22. Which of the following racial / ethnic groups do you identify with? (N=206)

Asian, Asian American, East Asian, South Asian, and/or Southeast Asian	5%
Black, African or African American	19%
Hispanic, Latino/a or Spanish Origin.....	14%
Middle Eastern or North African	0%
Native American or Alaskan Native.....	1%

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0%
White or Caucasian.....	50%
Prefer not to answer.....	6%
Other.....	4%

23. What is your gender? (N=206)

Male	34%
Female	62%
Prefer to self-identify.....	0%
Prefer not to answer.....	4%

24. What is your political affiliation? (N=206)

Republican	10%
Independent- lean Republican	6%
Independent- No affiliation.....	17%
Independent- lean Democrat.....	10%
Democrat	31%
Third-party affiliation.....	1%
Decline to say.....	26%