

FALL 2025 GREATER MADISON EMPLOYER SURVEY – TOPLINE RESULTS

This fall, the Chamber and members of the Next Normal (N²) Workgroup conducted their second annual regional employer survey to better understand the future of work and workplaces in the region.

All employers in Greater Madison were invited to participate, and responses were collected from 241 organizations from Sept. 4–29, 2025. While participants represented a diverse group of industries and locations, most responses came from small, locally owned businesses.

Key findings include:

- **Business outlook signals cautious optimism.** Despite a majority of employers (51%) citing increased economic uncertainty, performance remained the same or better than last year in both workforce and revenue. 90% of employers said their workforce either did not change, expanded, or they wanted to expand but couldn't due to talent shortages. This is up from 85% who said the same last year. 84% said their revenue either increased or was unchanged from last year. This is up from 71% last year. 97% rate the business climate as average or above compared to 92% last year.
- **Employee availability is improving, though access to talent remains the top barrier.** The past year saw improvements in availability of talent, a decline in access to talent as a barrier, and less difficulty hiring for certain positions. That said, access to talent remained the most common barrier to business, cited by 41% of respondents (down from 49% last year).
- **Concerns about tariffs and trade rising.** After access to talent, top barriers to business include inflation (40%), tariffs and trade (36%), consumer confidence (33%), and government regulations (28%). More than seven times as many respondents cited tariffs and trade as a barrier this year compared with last year.
- **More businesses adopt artificial intelligence.** Nearly 80% of respondents reported using AI in some capacity, up from 49% usage in 2024. The most common business uses for AI were content creation and design (66% of those using AI), administrative support (64%), marketing and advertising (51%), business analytics (47%), automation (31%), and research and development (30%).

The N² Workgroup includes the Capital Area Regional Planning Commission, City of Madison, Destination Madison, Downtown Madison, Inc., Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce, Hmong Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce, Madison Area Builders Association, Madison Black Chamber of Commerce, Madison Gas and Electric Company, StartingBlock, University Research Park, Urban Land Interests, Wisconsin Latino Chamber of Commerce and Workforce Development Board of South Central Wisconsin.