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DATE: May 18, 2026
TO: 495/MetroWest Area Stakeholders
FROM: The 495/MetroWest Partnership
RE: **2026 495/MetroWest Employer Survey Results**

Below please find results from the 2026 Employer Survey, conducted by the 495/MetroWest Partnership in collaboration with the MetroWest Economic Research Center (MERC) at Framingham State University. This annual survey captures the perspectives of employers across the region, offering valuable insights into business trends, workforce challenges, and future outlooks.

The survey was conducted online during April and May 2026. 264 total respondents took part, a 27% increase in participation over the 2025 survey. The 2026 survey had the third highest number of respondents since the Employer Survey first began, and the highest since 2015.

The responses for select questions are grouped into two categories: small businesses (1–49 employees) and large businesses (50 or more employees). This breakdown helps reveal both shared concerns and the unique challenges faced by employers of different sizes. The tables below show how each group responded to key survey questions, along with overall results combining all responses—providing a broader view of trends across the entire 495/MetroWest region.

RESULTS

Are you a member of or were you referred to this survey by your area chamber of commerce? If so, select your chamber below (select all that apply):

Response	Total
Assabet Valley Chamber of Commerce	1.1%
Corridor 9/495 Regional Chamber of Commerce	40.5%
Hopkinton Chamber of Commerce	6.1%

Marlborough Regional Chamber of Commerce	6.5%
MetroWest Chamber of Commerce	12.6%
MetroWest Life Sciences Network	0.8%
Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce	3.8%
Tri-County Regional Chamber of Commerce	2.7%
I am not a member of/was not referred by a chamber of commerce	17.2%
Other (Please specify):	8.8%

What is the Industry of Your Business?

Choices	Total
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	0.8%
Utilities	0.4%
Construction	6.3%
Manufacturing	3.9%
Wholesale Trade	1.6%
Retail Trade	5.5%
Transportation and Warehousing	2.4%
Information	1.6%
Finance and Insurance	15.0%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	5.9%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	9.8%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	1.2%
Educational Services	6.3%
Health Care and Social Assistance	7.5%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	5.1%
Accommodation and Food Services	3.1%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	4.3%
Public Administration	1.6%
Life Sciences	0.4%
Other (Please specify)	17.3%

How many people are employed at your organization?

Response	Total
1-9	39.7%
10-19	7.6%
20-49	15.2%
50-99	9.8%
100-249	10.7%
250-499	7.6%

500 or more

9.4%

Of these, how many are employed at your 495/MetroWest Sites?

Response	1 to 49 Employees	50+ Employees	Total
1-9	70.8%	9.0%	47.4%
10-19	10.8%	2.6%	7.7%
20-49	18.5%	12.8%	16.7%
50-99	0.0%	30.8%	11.5%
100-249	0.0%	23.1%	8.6%
250-499	0.0%	12.8%	4.8%
500 or more	0.0%	9.0%	3.3%

Please select the 495/MetroWest community where your organization has a physical presence.

Town	Total
Acton	1.7%
Ashland	2.6%
Bellingham	1.7%
Berlin	1.1%
Bolton	1.3%
Boxborough	0.9%
Devens	0.4%
Foxborough	1.1%
Framingham	8.2%
Franklin	2.2%
Grafton	1.9%
Harvard	0.9%
Holliston	3.9%
Hopedale	0.2%
Hopkinton	5.4%
Hudson	3.5%
Littleton	2.2%
Mansfield	3.9%
Marlborough	7.1%
Maynard	1.1%
Medfield	1.3%
Medway	1.5%
Milford	3.0%
Millis	0.9%

Natick	3.5%
Norfolk	0.4%
Northborough	5.2%
Plainville	0.6%
Sherborn	1.1%
Shrewsbury	4.8%
Southborough	3.7%
Stow	0.6%
Sudbury	1.3%
Upton	1.1%
Wayland	1.9%
Westborough	10.0%
Westford	1.5%
Wrentham	0.4%
Other (Please Specify)	5.8%

Would you say business conditions in the 495/MetroWest region are better or worse than they were a year ago?

Response	1 to 49 Employees	50+ Employees	Overall
Better	17.2%	17.3%	17.1%
About the Same	58.2%	68.0%	61.9%
Worse	24.6%	14.7%	21.0%

In your opinion, over the course of the coming year, how will the economy in the 495/MetroWest region do?

Response	1 to 49 Employees	50+ Employees	Overall
Improve significantly	3.8%	4.1%	3.9%
Improve slightly	28.5%	24.3%	27.3%
Remain the same	34.6%	41.9%	37.1%
Decline slightly	28.5%	25.7%	27.3%
Decline significantly	4.6%	4.1%	4.4%

Looking at the coming year, what are your biggest concerns?

Choices	1 to 49 Employees	50+ Employees	Total
AI disruption	7.1%	6.8%	7.1%
Federal funding	6.9%	9.0%	7.6%
Workforce/Hiring	13.5%	14.5%	13.8%

Inflation	19.5%	20.5%	19.8%
Housing	7.1%	9.0%	7.6%
Transportation Issues	4.8%	3.0%	4.1%
Tariffs	9.9%	6.8%	8.7%
Supply chain disruptions	7.4%	6.8%	7.1%
Government regulations	9.1%	10.3%	9.7%
Labor availability	10.2%	11.1%	10.6%
Other (Please specify)	4.6%	2.1%	3.7%

Compared to the previous year, what are your expectations for your organization's revenue performance this year?

Response	1 to 49 Employees	50+ Employees	Total
Improve significantly	15.4%	8.3%	12.8%
Improve slightly	49.2%	43.1%	46.8%
Remain the same	19.2%	33.3%	24.6%
Decline slightly	13.8%	13.9%	13.8%
Decline significantly	2.3%	1.4%	2.0%

Does your company intend to, or is your company considering, replacing staff positions with AI or automated processes?

Response	1 to 49 Employees	50+ Employees	Total
Yes	6.9%	2.9%	6.0%
No	86.9%	84.3%	85.6%
Not sure	6.2%	12.9%	8.5%

Have inflationary pressures impacted the profitability of your business?

Response	1 to 49 Employees	50+ Employees	Total
Negative (significantly)	15.4%	8.8%	13.1%
Negatively (slightly)	50.0%	57.4%	52.8%
Not affected	21.5%	17.6%	20.1%
Positive (slightly)	6.2%	7.4%	6.5%
Positive (significantly)	0.8%	0.0%	0.5%
Not sure	6.2%	8.8%	7.0%

Have tariffs affected the profitability of your business?

Response	1 to 49 Employees	50+ Employees	Total
Negative (significantly)	10.5%	5.9%	8.8%
Negatively (slightly)	29.0%	44.1%	34.2%
Not affected	46.8%	36.8%	43.0%
Positive (slightly)	1.6%	0.0%	1.6%
Positive (significantly)	1.6%	0.0%	1.0%
Not sure	10.5%	13.2%	11.4%

Over the course of the coming year, do you expect to grow your workforce in the 495/MetroWest region?

Response	Total
Yes, definitely	15.8%
Yes, most likely	26.5%
Not sure	25.5%
No, we don't plan to either grow or reduce our staff	29.6%
No, we likely will reduce our staff	2.0%
No, we definitely will reduce our staff	0.5%

How large do you foresee this reduction being over the course of the coming year in the 495/MetroWest region?

Response	Total
A reduction of 1-5%	20.0%
A reduction of 6-10%	60.0%
A reduction of more than 10%	20.0%

What level of additional hiring do you expect over the coming year in the 495/MetroWest region?

Response	Total
Less than 1% of current staff	12.0%
1% - 5%	49.4%
6% - 10%	21.7%
More than 10%	15.7%
Not sure	1.2%

What type of additional workers do you expect to hire over the coming year in the 495/MetroWest region?

Response	Total
Primarily full-time employees	54.2%
Primarily part-time employees	9.6%
A mix of full-time and part-time employees	24.1%
Primarily temporary workers	1.2%
Primarily contractors	3.6%
A mix of temporary workers and contractors	4.8%
Other (Please specify)	2.4%

Have you encountered any difficulties in hiring qualified staff this year?

Response	1 to 49 Employees	50+ Employees	Total
No	68.5%	44.1%	60.1%
Yes	31.5%	55.9%	39.9%

What workforce (hiring) need concerns you the most?

Response	1 to 49 Employees	50+ Employees	Total
Skills gap of current employees	4.9%	4.5%	4.7%
Skills gap of applicants	27.6%	23.9%	26.2%
Need to replace aging workforce	9.8%	20.9%	14.1%
Workforce transportation	2.4%	3.0%	2.6%
Workforce housing	4.9%	0.0%	3.1%
Lack of applicants	17.9%	31.3%	22.5%
Other (Please specify):	8.9%	7.5%	8.4%
None	23.6%	9.0%	18.3%

Which of the following would be most helpful in hiring new staff?

Response	1 to 49 Employees	50+ Employees	Total
Training programs tailored to my business or industry	23.3%	28.1%	25.0%
Assistance identifying prospective candidates	21.4%	26.3%	23.1%
Financial incentives to train or retrain workers	16.5%	15.8%	16.3%
More candidates with a particular degree or credential	20.4%	26.3%	22.5%
Other (Please specify):	18.4%	3.5%	13.1%

What is the single most important challenge in the 495/MetroWest region facing your organization today?

Response	1 to 49 Employees	50+ Employees	Total
Energy costs	6.4%	6.6%	6.5%
Government regulations	8.3%	3.3%	6.5%
Health care costs	6.4%	3.3%	5.3%
Housing costs	12.8%	16.4%	14.1%
Insurance costs	3.7%	4.9%	4.1%
Labor costs	12.8%	9.8%	11.8%
Labor quality (skilled workforce)	12.8%	26.2%	17.6%
Labor availability	10.1%	6.6%	8.8%
Public transportation	0.9%	3.3%	1.8%
Taxes	10.1%	1.6%	7.1%
Traffic	3.7%	1.6%	2.9%
Other (Please specify):	11.9%	16.4%	13.5%