2026 BUSINESS CLIMATE REVIEW

Springfield CHAMBER

Business climate shapes decisions about whether businesses hire, invest, expand, and remain rooted in our community. Each year, the Springfield Area Chamber asks regional employers what helps them succeed, what gets in the way, and where community and policy choices can make a difference. The 2026 Business Climate Review turns those perspectives into shared data for business leaders, elected officials, and community partners—a snapshot of today's business environment and a tool to inform decisions, measure progress, and strengthen conditions for business to thrive.

INSIGHTS RESEARCH LAB

In 2026, the Chamber partnered with the University of Oregon's Insights Research Lab to expand participation, strengthen analysis, and establish more consistent measures for tracking the region's business climate over time.

KEY TAKEAWAYS AND INSIGHTS

1 Businesses remain resilient, even as confidence in Oregon's economy declines.



Just 18% of respondents rated Oregon's economy positively, down from 36% last year. At the same time, 70% remain confident in their own business health and roughly 40% expect to expand in the coming year.

2 Cost, tax, and regulatory pressures are shaping real business decisions.



Inflation remains the most widely reported business challenge, while taxes and regulatory or permitting burdens emerged as the most frequently cited root causes of business climate concern. Businesses are responding through cost-cutting, workforce adjustments, and efforts to improve efficiency.

3 Springfield is a regional strength, but competitiveness pressures remain.



Respondents rated Springfield's business climate more favorably than others, with local government responsiveness cited as a positive distinction. Yet Springfield businesses were more likely than Eugene businesses to identify taxes as a challenge, signaling room for improvement and the need to remain attentive to the cumulative impact of policy decisions on business growth.

4 Housing and workforce pressures are interconnected competitiveness issues.



Finding qualified workers remains a significant challenge, particularly among larger employers and businesses anticipating growth. Housing affordability and availability also emerged repeatedly, with respondents connecting the cost of living to the region's ability to attract and retain talent.

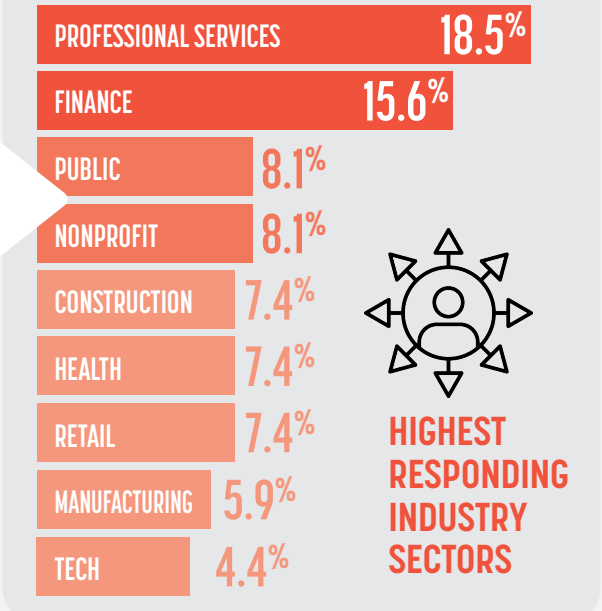
DEMOGRAPHICS

DATA POOL

134 TOTAL RESPONSES

14 SECTORS REPRESENTED

Statistical significance: Findings based on 10 or more responses can generally be interpreted with greater confidence; smaller samples may still reveal meaningful patterns but should be viewed cautiously. Findings in this report reflect statistical testing and/or consistent patterns in the data, with limitations noted where applicable.



HIGHEST RESPONDING INDUSTRY SECTORS

A REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

59 Eugene-based respondents
57 Springfield-based respondents
18 Elsewhere/other

BUSINESS SIZE DISTRIBUTION

1-10 Employees: **55**
11-50 Employees: **36**
51-250 Employees: **19**
250+ Employees: **18**

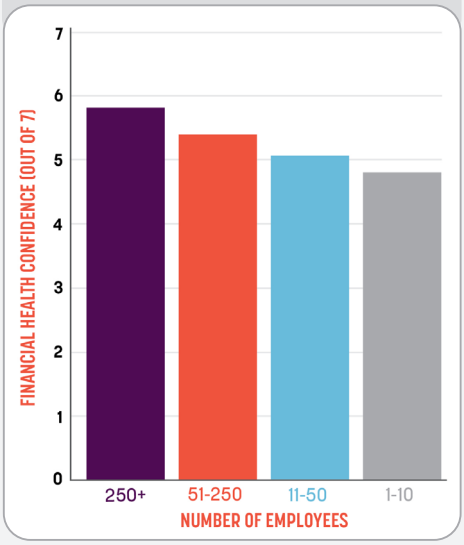
BUSINESS CLIMATE TODAY

Springfield CHAMBER

Even as confidence in Oregon's broader economy has declined, many businesses remain confident in their own financial health, and a substantial share anticipate expansion.

BUSINESS CONFIDENCE

Confidence in financial health increases with business size, with the highest average ratings among organizations with 250+ employees.



70%
Confidence in own business health

U.S. Chamber benchmark: 70% also rate their business health as at least somewhat good, while cautioning that the two surveys use different scales.

18%
Confidence in Oregon's economy

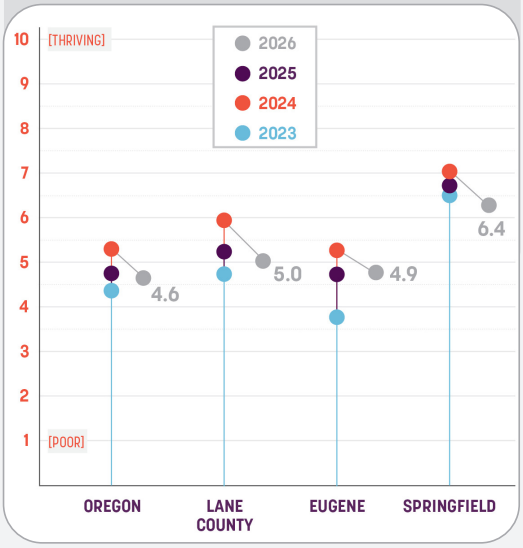
Down from 36% in 2025, a significant drop in confidence.

40%
Expect to expand next year

U.S. Chamber benchmark: 30% will expand staff in the next year.

BUSINESS CLIMATE RATINGS

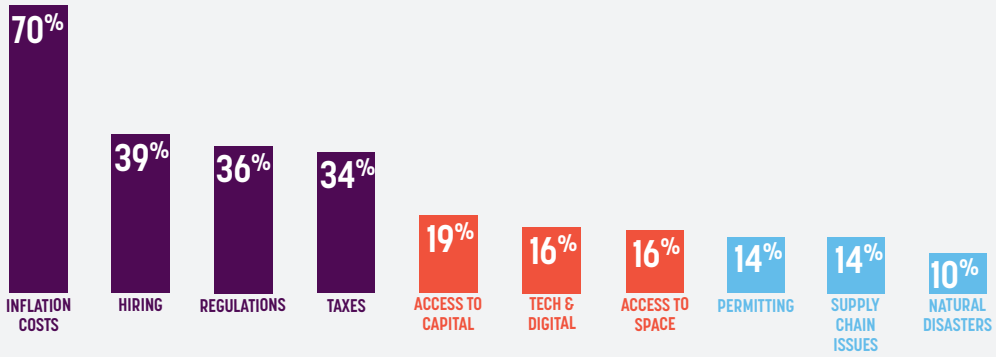
Year-over-year, since 2023.



TOP BUSINESS CHALLENGES

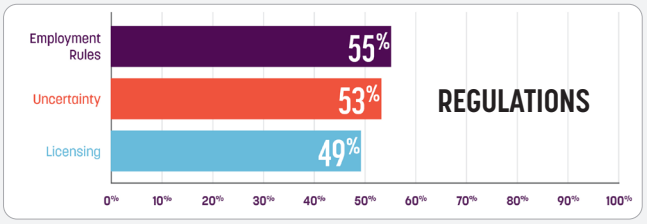
Inflation remains the leading business challenge, selected by 70% of respondents, followed by hiring, regulations, and taxes.

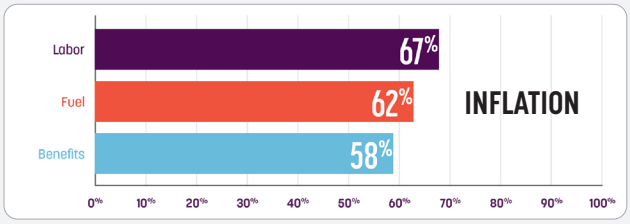
Inflation and benefits are greater concerns locally than in the national U.S. Chamber benchmark.

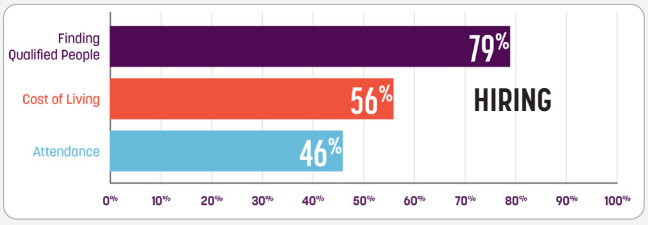


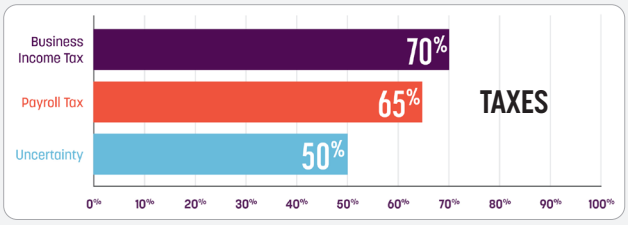
DIGGING DEEPER

What's driving the top challenges? Among businesses identifying each issue as a challenge:





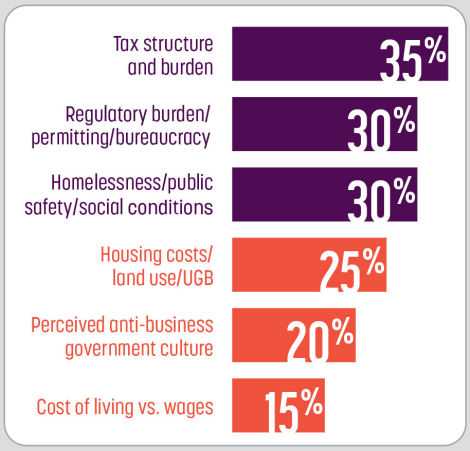




WHAT'S SHAPING THE BUSINESS CLIMATE

NOTE: Percentages come from thematic coding of open ended responses.

ROOT CAUSES OF BUSINESS CLIMATE CONCERN



MITIGATION STRATEGIES

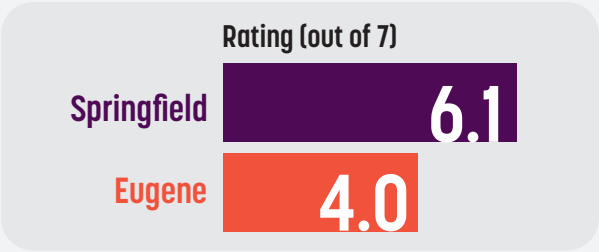


A REGIONAL VIEW

With nearly equal numbers of respondents from Eugene and Springfield, the survey revealed some notable differences in how businesses experience the two communities. Springfield received stronger ratings for its overall business climate and entrepreneurial ecosystem, while Eugene respondents reported greater pressure around hiring, available space, housing, permitting, and quality-of-life issues.

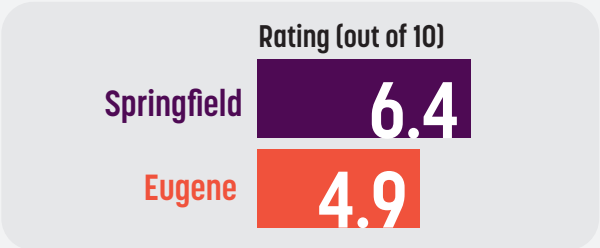
ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM

Springfield businesses gave the entrepreneurial ecosystem significantly stronger marks than Eugene businesses.



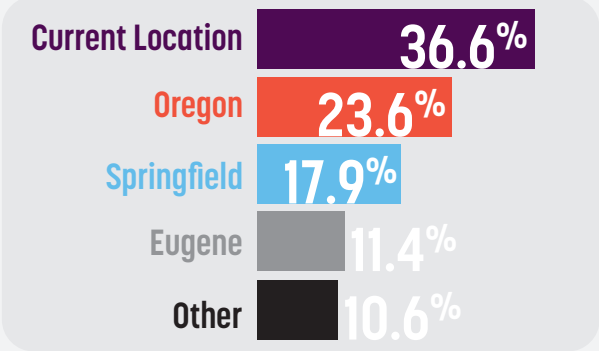
BUSINESS CLIMATE FAVORABILITY

Respondents rated Springfield's business climate more favorably than Eugene's. Open-ended feedback highlighted Springfield's local government responsiveness as a positive distinction.



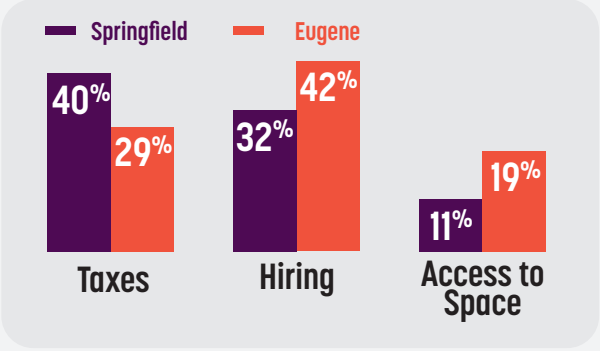
EXPANSION DESTINATIONS

When asked where they would expand if the opportunity arose, respondents most often selected their current location.



BUSINESS CHALLENGES BY LOCATION

Businesses in Springfield and Eugene reported different levels of concern about key challenges.



WHAT WE HEARD ACROSS THE SURVEY

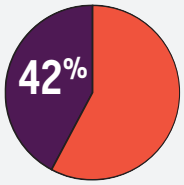
Springfield CHAMBER

THREE ISSUES THAT APPEARED REPEATEDLY

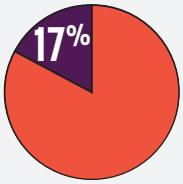
TAXES

Payroll and income taxes were the most commonly cited tax concerns. Taxes were disproportionately identified as a challenge by smaller businesses.

Identified taxes as a significant challenge



Respondents with 1–10 employees



Respondents with 250+ employees

HOUSING

Housing affordability and availability emerged repeatedly as business climate concerns, with respondents connecting the cost of living to workforce attraction, retention, and the region's competitiveness.

20% of substantive responses

Cited housing cost and availability as undermining the region's advantages.

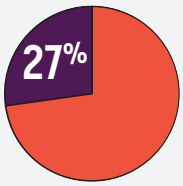
25% of root-cause responses

Identified housing costs, land use, or the urban growth boundary.

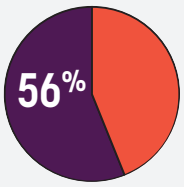
TALENT

Hiring challenges increased with business size, while difficulty finding qualified workers was associated with anticipated expansion. Workforce availability remains an important factor in businesses' ability to grow.

Identified hiring as a significant challenge



Respondents with 1–10 employees



Respondents with 250+ employees

INSIGHTS THE NUMBERS ALONE DON'T SHOW

Resilience has its limits

While many businesses are adapting, some described having few options to address the challenges they face.

Government relations matter

Beyond specific decisions, the culture and responsiveness of government is seen as part of business climate.

Public safety is a key concern

Some respondents linked public safety and homelessness to business vitality.

COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES TO BUILD ON

Respondents evaluated how well the region leverages the following competitive advantages: lifestyle and livability, proximity to higher education, and our entrepreneurial ecosystem.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Respondents identified higher education as a regional asset but questioned how effectively that translates into local economic opportunities.

LIFESTYLE & LIVABILITY

Outdoor recreation and access to natural amenities emerged as recurring strengths, but housing affordability was noted as a limiting factor for talent retention.

ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM

Responses highlighted opportunities to connect entrepreneurs with existing resources and reduce barriers to business development.