



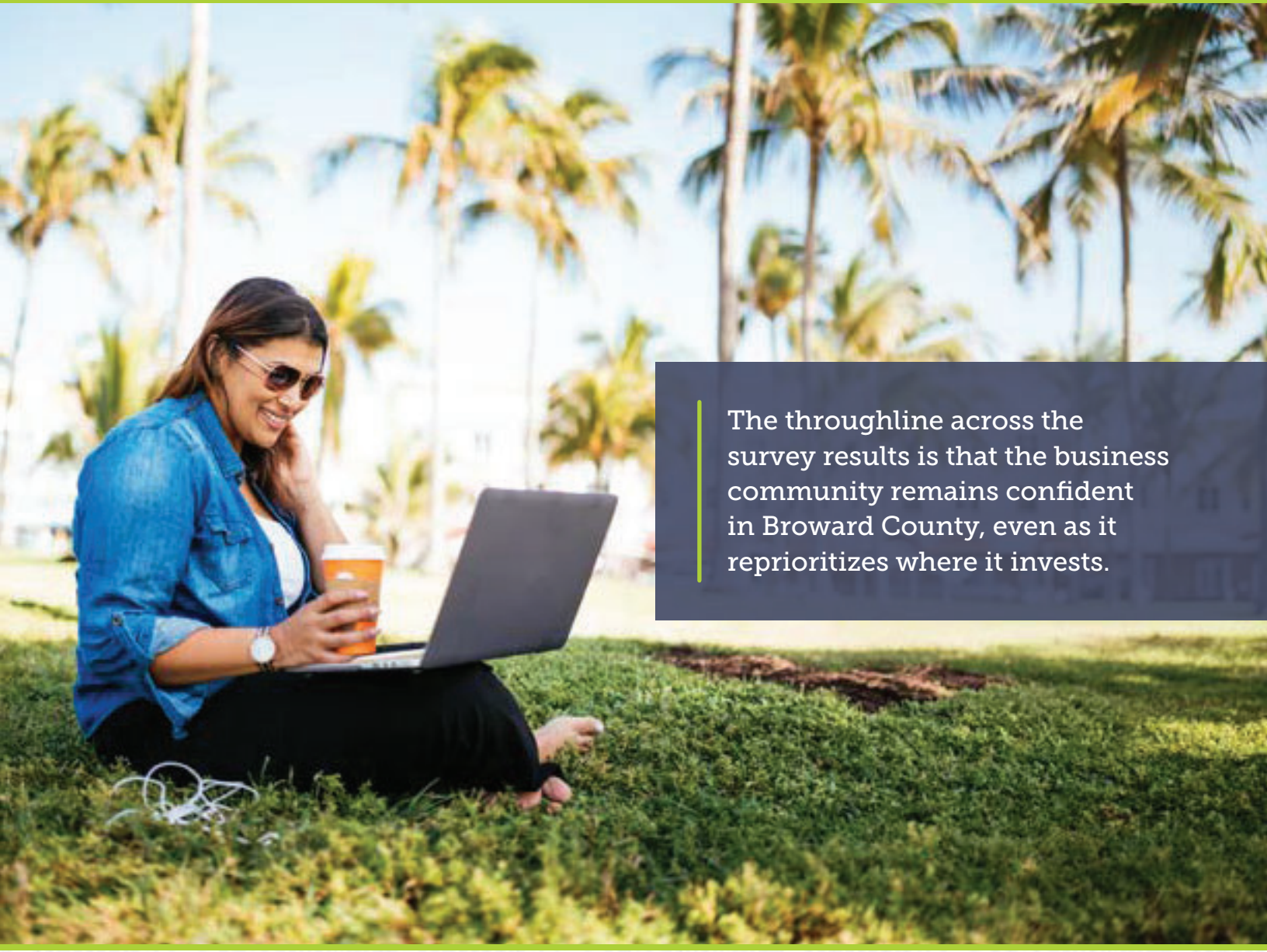
# BROWARD COUNTY

— The Greater Fort Lauderdale Alliance —

2026 LEADERSHIP SURVEY



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A woman with long brown hair, wearing sunglasses and a blue denim shirt, is sitting on a grassy area. She is holding a laptop on her lap and a cup of coffee in her right hand. She is smiling and looking at the laptop. In the background, there are several palm trees under a clear blue sky.

The throughline across the survey results is that the business community remains confident in Broward County, even as it reprioritizes where it invests.

**The Greater Fort Lauderdale Alliance**  
2026 BROWARD COUNTY LEADERSHIP SURVEY

This is the 5th consecutive year Kaufman Rossin and the Greater Fort Lauderdale Alliance have partnered to conduct this survey. This year's results indicate Broward's business leaders feel optimistic about the year ahead, but they are more measured than in past years, and they are making different strategic choices in response to how they read the economy. The headline of this year's report is not a change in sentiment so much as a shift in where leaders are choosing to invest. They still expect growth, but are more focused on technology, and an upskilled workforce rather than hiring.

## Five findings define this year's report:

1

### **Most leaders are optimistic, but less so than in prior years.**

63.4% of leaders expect their business to be better off a year from now. But optimism has cooled gradually for four straight years, from a high of 74% in 2022 to a low of 63.4% this year. This tracks with the national picture—normalization following the rapid economic expansion of 2021 and 2022—rather than anything unique to Broward.

2

### **Most leaders plan to hold staffing steady.**

Only 43.5% of leaders plan to increase staff in 2026, the lowest level in five years. For the first time, a plurality (45.5%) plan to maintain current headcount rather than grow it—a shift from expansion.

3

### **Investment is moving from compensation to capability.**

Technology is now the single most common investment priority at 55.8%—the first time it has topped the list. Training rose by 13 points, the largest jump of any category. Salaries and benefits both fell sharply, suggesting that leaders may be choosing to equip and upskill the teams they already have rather than focusing on compensation adjustments.

4

### **Lack of affordable housing is the most frequently cited long-term risk.**

62.1% of leaders cited the high cost of housing as the single greatest long-term risk to doing business in Broward, a view that remained consistent across industry, job level, and outlook.

5

### **Artificial intelligence is the challenge leaders feel least prepared for.**

27% say AI is the trend they are least prepared to handle. Surprisingly, the leaders most worried about AI are the same ones investing less in technology and training than the survey average.



# METHODOLOGY

The Greater Fort Lauderdale Alliance partnered with Kaufman Rossin to administer and analyze the **2026 Broward County Leadership Survey**.

The survey results provide a snapshot of sentiment across the Broward business community, identifying trends, investment priorities, expectations, and concerns shaping the year ahead.

The survey was distributed in April and May 2026 to business leaders across Broward County. Respondents were Broward business owners, CEOs, and other decision-makers. A total of 253 business leaders responded to our survey.

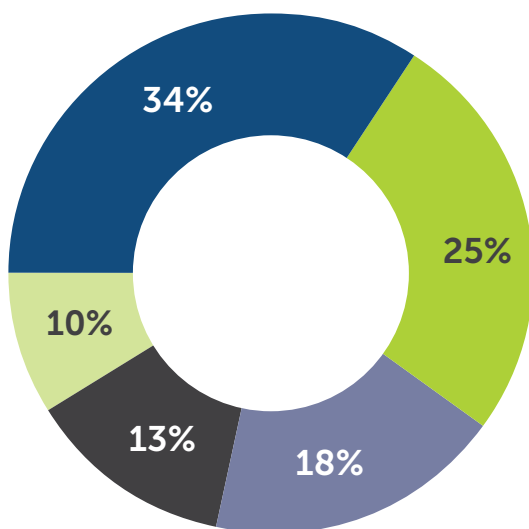
Survey responses were analyzed using a combination of frequency distributions, cross-tabulations, and regression analysis.



# WHO RESPONDED

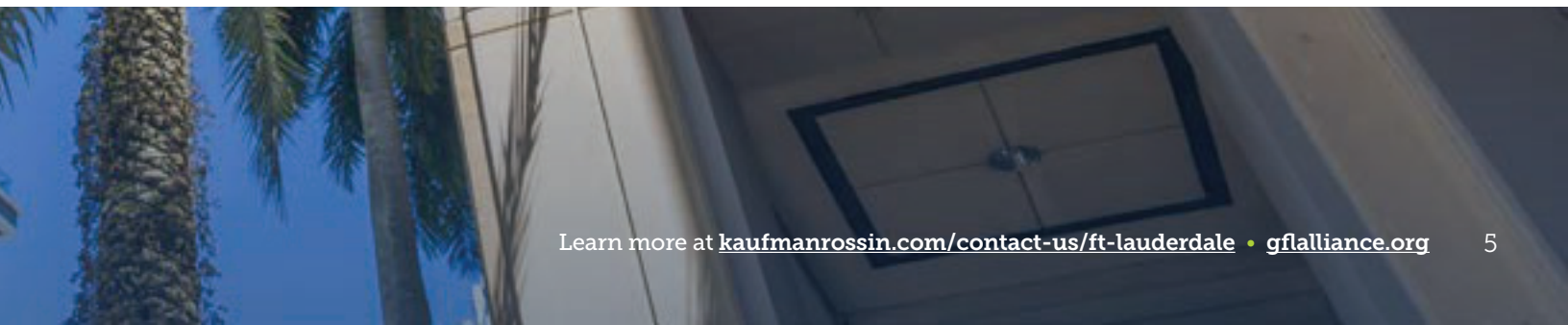
This survey was designed for business owners, C-suite executives, and other senior decision-makers in Broward County, and the responses reflect that audience. Owners make up 34% of respondents, followed by C-level executives (25.4%), vice presidents (18.3%), directors and managing directors (12.7%), and managers and senior managers (10%).

## Respondents by job level



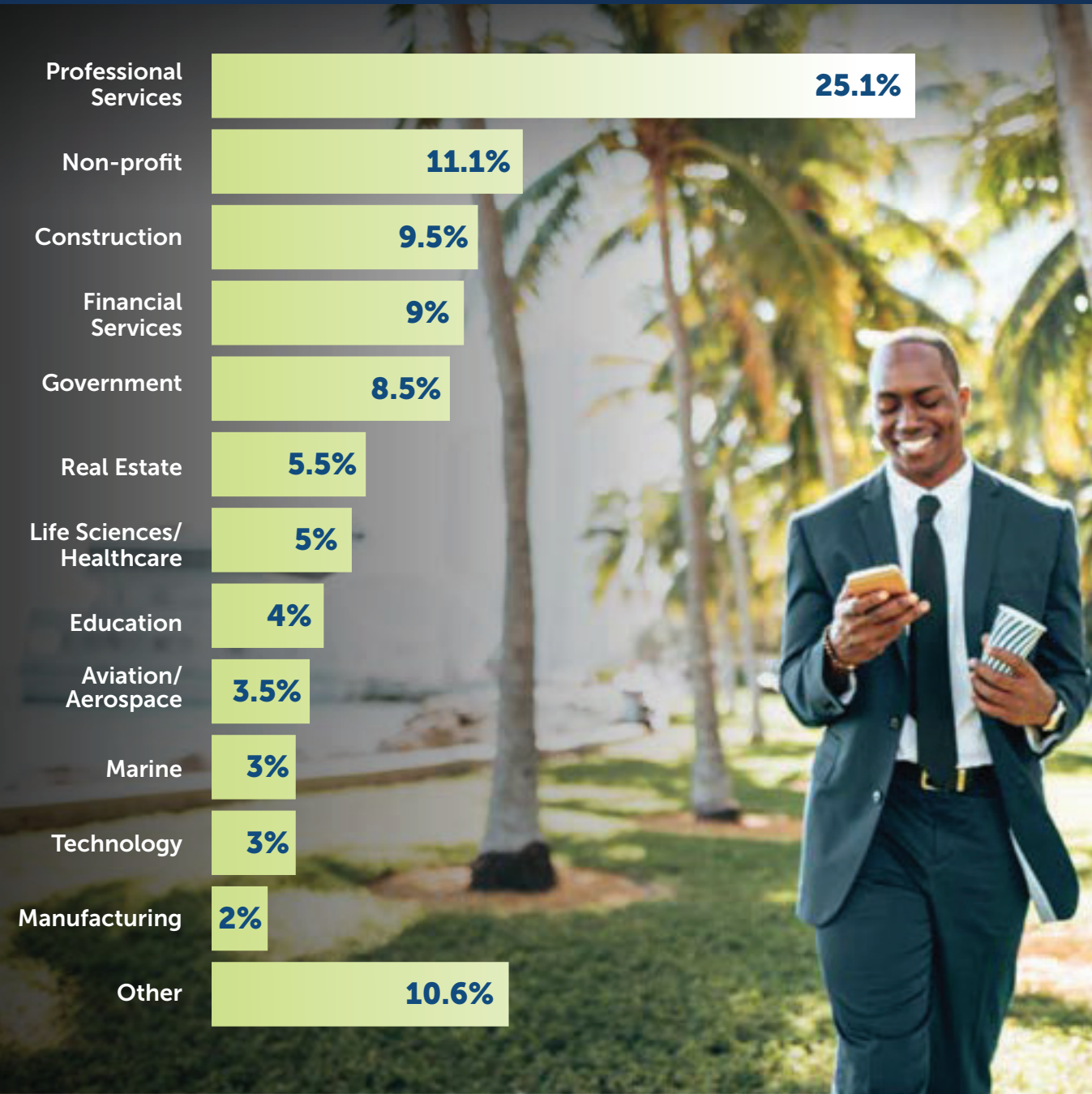
Nearly 77% of respondents are owners, C-suite, or vice presidents.

- Owner
- C-Level
- Vice President
- Managing Director/Director
- Senior Manager/Manager



Respondents reflect the diverse industries that make up Broward’s economy. Professional services lead at 25.1%, followed by non-profits (11.1%), other (10.6%), construction (9.5%), financial services (9%), and government (8.5%). Real estate, life sciences/healthcare, education, aviation/aerospace, marine industries, technology, and manufacturing are also represented, though in smaller numbers.

Respondents by industry

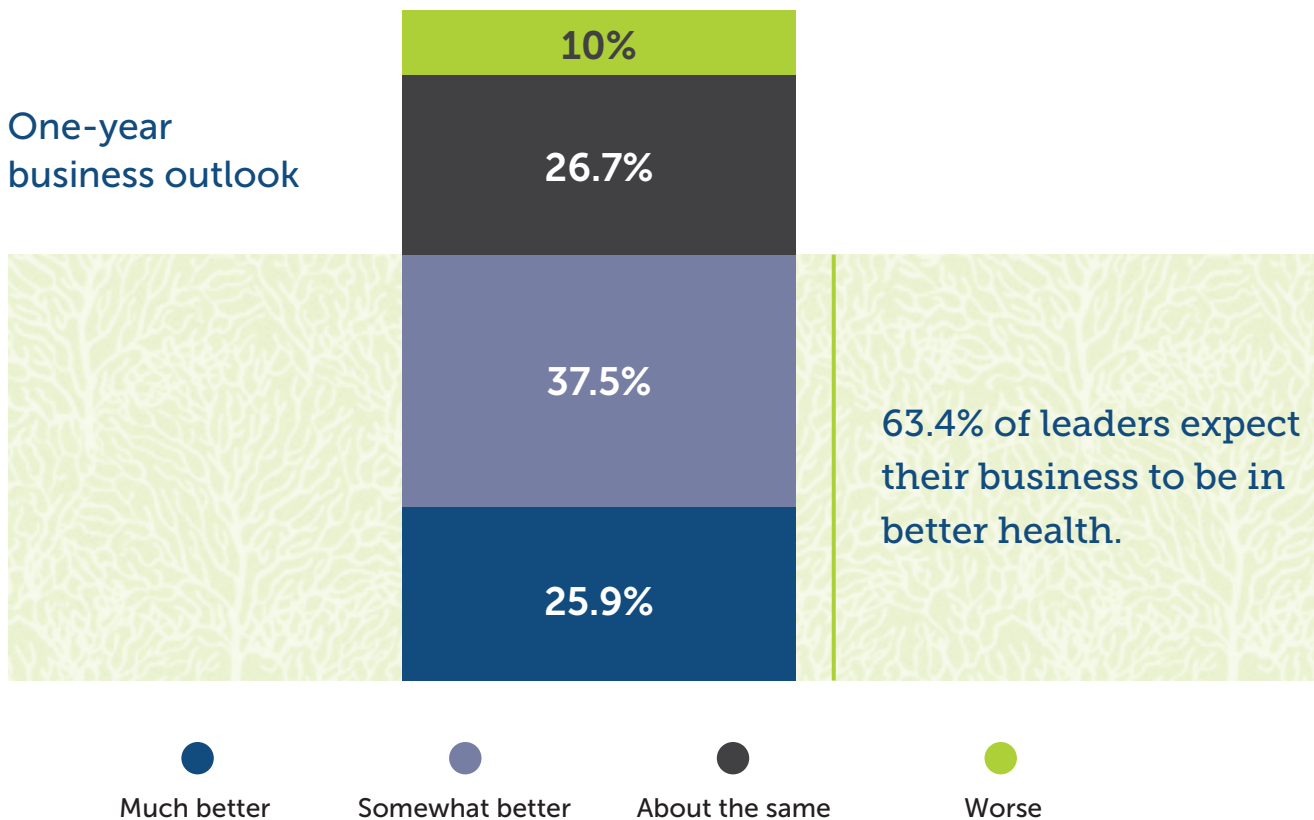


# THE OUTLOOK FOR BROWARD BUSINESSES

## Leaders remain positive about the year ahead.

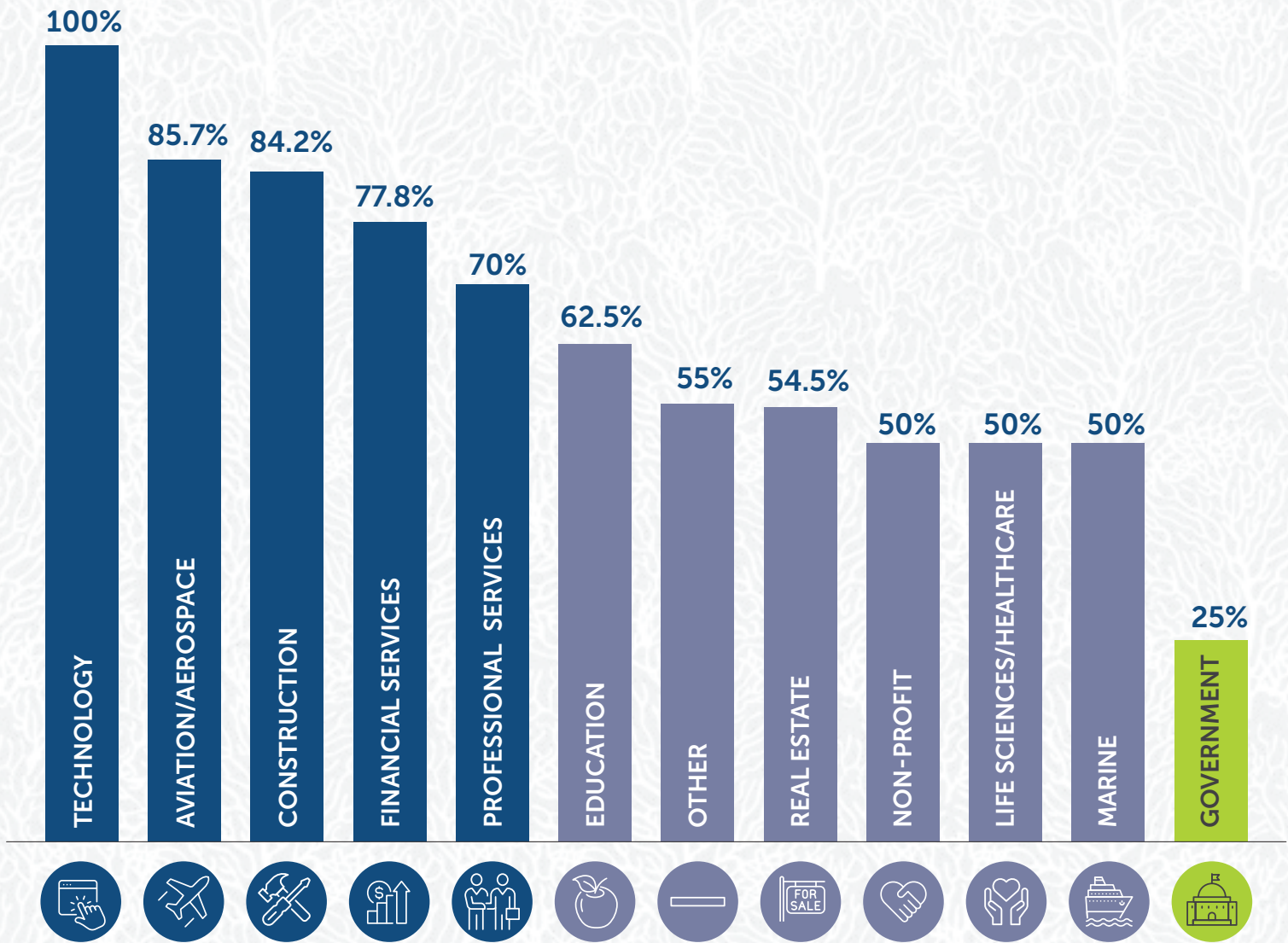
Looking one year out, 63.4% of leaders expect their business to be in better health, with most expecting it to be “somewhat better.” About a quarter (26.7%) expect conditions to hold steady, and 10% expect them to worsen.

Viewed over a five-year period, these responses show a gradual cooling rather than a sharp drop. Overall optimism has moved from a high of 74% in 2022 to a low of 63.4% in 2026. This softening is consistent with what businesses are reporting nationally, as the economy settles into a slower, steadier pace after the rapid growth of 2021 and 2022.



Outlook varies by sector. Technology, and aviation/aerospace leaders were the most likely to expect better conditions (85.7%), followed by construction (84.2%), financial services (77.8%), and professional services (70%). The government sector was the least optimistic (25%). Non-profits, life sciences/healthcare, and marine were each at 50%.

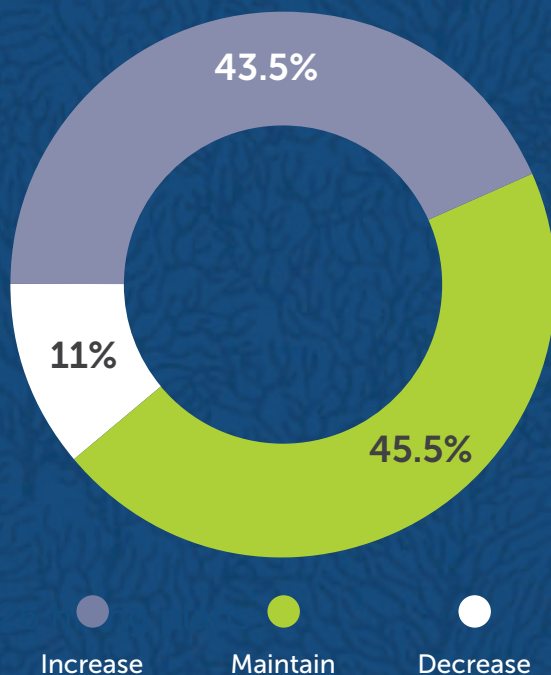
### Outlook by industry



For the first time, "maintain" staffing levels outpaces "increase" staffing levels.

## Optimism doesn't translate into hiring.

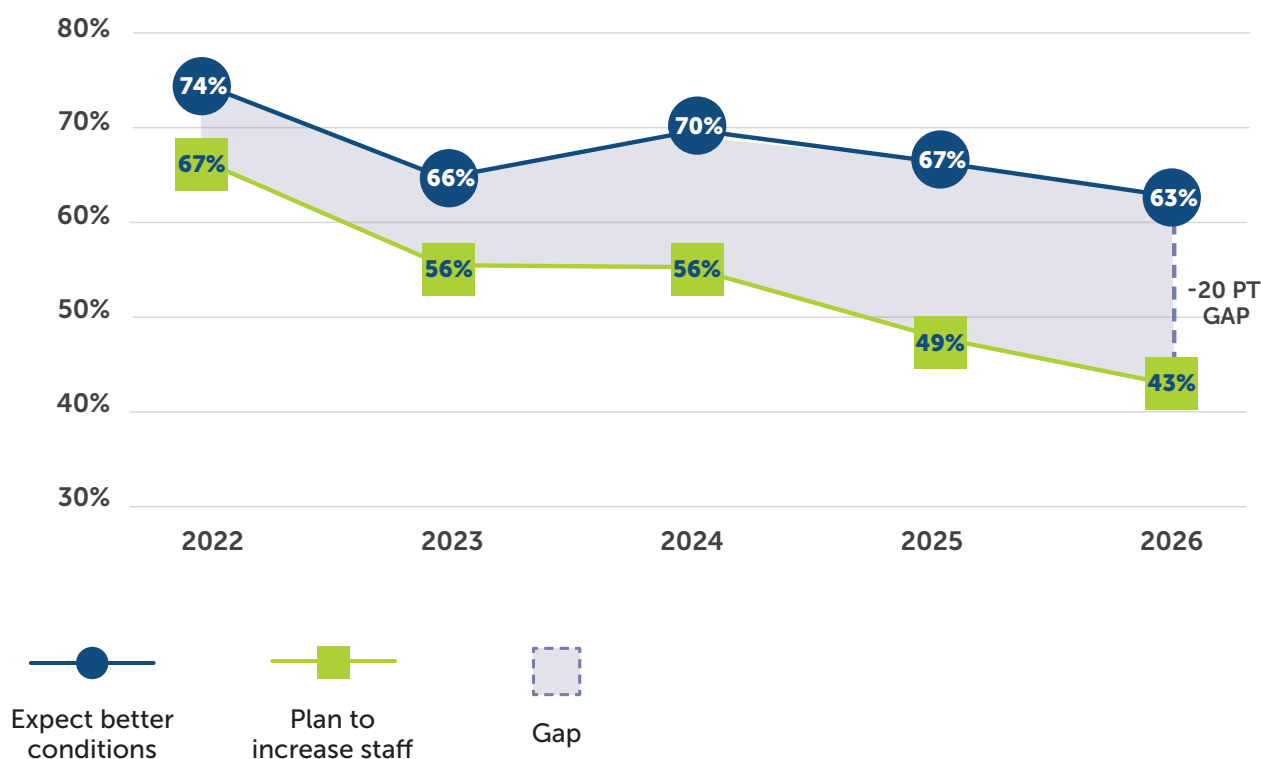
When asked about their staffing plans for 2026, 43.5% of leaders said they plan to increase staff, 45.5% plan to maintain their current level, and 11% plan to decrease staff. This is the first time in the survey's history that "maintain" has outpaced "increase." Hiring plans have declined every year, falling from 67% in 2022 to 43.5% in 2026.





The gap between outlook and hiring is the defining tension of this year's survey. While 63.4% of leaders feel good about where their business is headed, only 43.5% plan to add people to get there. Taken together, the planned slowdown in hiring, combined with a planned increase in training and technology investment, could indicate a desire to grow through productivity gains achieved by a more capable workforce rather than through added headcount. Business leaders are not pulling back—they are simply growing differently.

### Five-year optimism vs. hiring



Hiring intent is closely tied to optimism about the year ahead. Among leaders who expect conditions to be much better next year, 72.6% plan to hire. Among those expecting “somewhat better” conditions, only 45.7% do—a fairly steep drop for a group that is, by definition, still optimistic. Among leaders who expect worse conditions, none plan to hire; they are either holding steady or cutting.

### Hiring intent by business outlook



A respondent’s job title is closely tied to their hiring plans. Owners report the lowest hiring intent of any senior group: just 35.8% plan to increase hiring, compared with 51% of C-level executives and 52.8% of vice presidents. Owners also report the highest “maintain” rate (61.2%) and, by far, the lowest intent to decrease staff (3%). They appear to favor holding steady over either expansion or retrenchment—a disciplined stance that holds even amid their measured optimism.

**35.8%** of owners plan to hire—vs. 51% of C-suite and 53% of VPs, despite comparable optimism across all three groups.

Construction leads all major industries in planned hiring—its leaders are nearly three times more likely than those in other industries to say they will increase headcount—while real estate shows the most pronounced hiring pullback of any sector.



# WHERE LEADERS ARE INVESTING

For the first time, technology is the leading investment priority.

When asked to select their top three investment priorities for the year, leaders cited technology most often (55.8%), up 11 points from 2025, followed by marketing (51.3%), salaries and bonuses (39.8%), and training (36.7%). For the first time in the survey's history, technology surpassed salaries and bonuses as the most frequently cited investment priority.

| Investment Area                    | 2024 | 2025 | 2026  | Change (25–26) |
|------------------------------------|------|------|-------|----------------|
| Technology<br>(hardware/software)  | 47%  | 45%  | 55.8% | ↑ 11 pts       |
| Marketing                          | 42%  | 48%  | 51.3% | ↑ 13 pts       |
| Salaries / Bonuses                 | 58%  | 56%  | 39.8% | ↓ 16 pts       |
| Training                           | 28%  | 24%  | 36.7% | ↑ 13 pts       |
| Employee Benefits /<br>Health Ins. | 37%  | 34%  | 15%   | ↓ 19 pts       |

Prior-year figures are drawn from 2024 and 2025 published reports.



## Technology ranks #1 for the first time.

At 55.8%, technology leads all investment categories—the first time it has outpaced salaries and bonuses.

Taken together, the responses indicate a shift in focus from compensation to capability. The compensation categories—salaries and benefits —fell the most, by 16 and 19 points respectively, while the capability categories—technology and training—rose the most, by 11 and 13 points.

Each industry is pursuing technology on its own terms. Financial services is the most digitally focused industry in the survey: 72% of its leaders are investing in technology, well above the 55.8% average and consistent with the sector's broad focus on digitally optimized operations. Construction looks markedly different. Its leaders are focused on investing in training and salaries (roughly 63% each) and office space and warehouses (roughly 53%), with technology investments ranking lower at 42%.

Among leaders citing technology as the sector most likely to drive growth in Broward County, they consistently said technology (65.7%) and marketing (64.2%) were their leading investments, a sign that strong believers in technology are hedging their bets across multiple growth drivers.

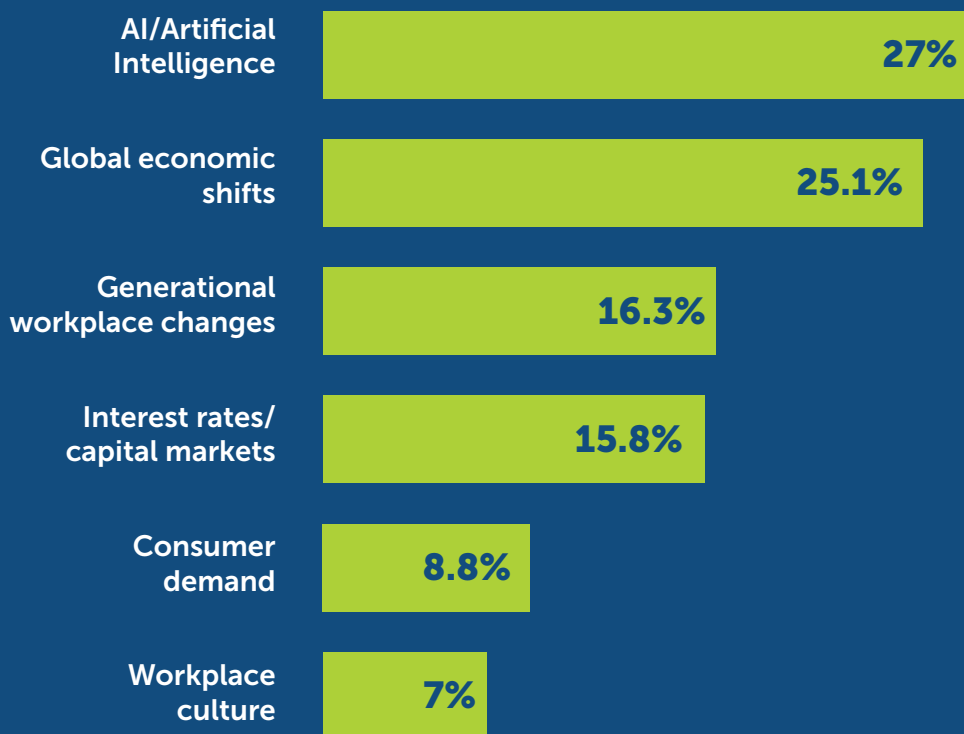


# THE AI READINESS GAP

## Broward leaders feel least prepared for AI.

Twenty-seven percent of leaders named AI as the trend they are least prepared to handle. Global economic shifts followed closely at 25.1%.

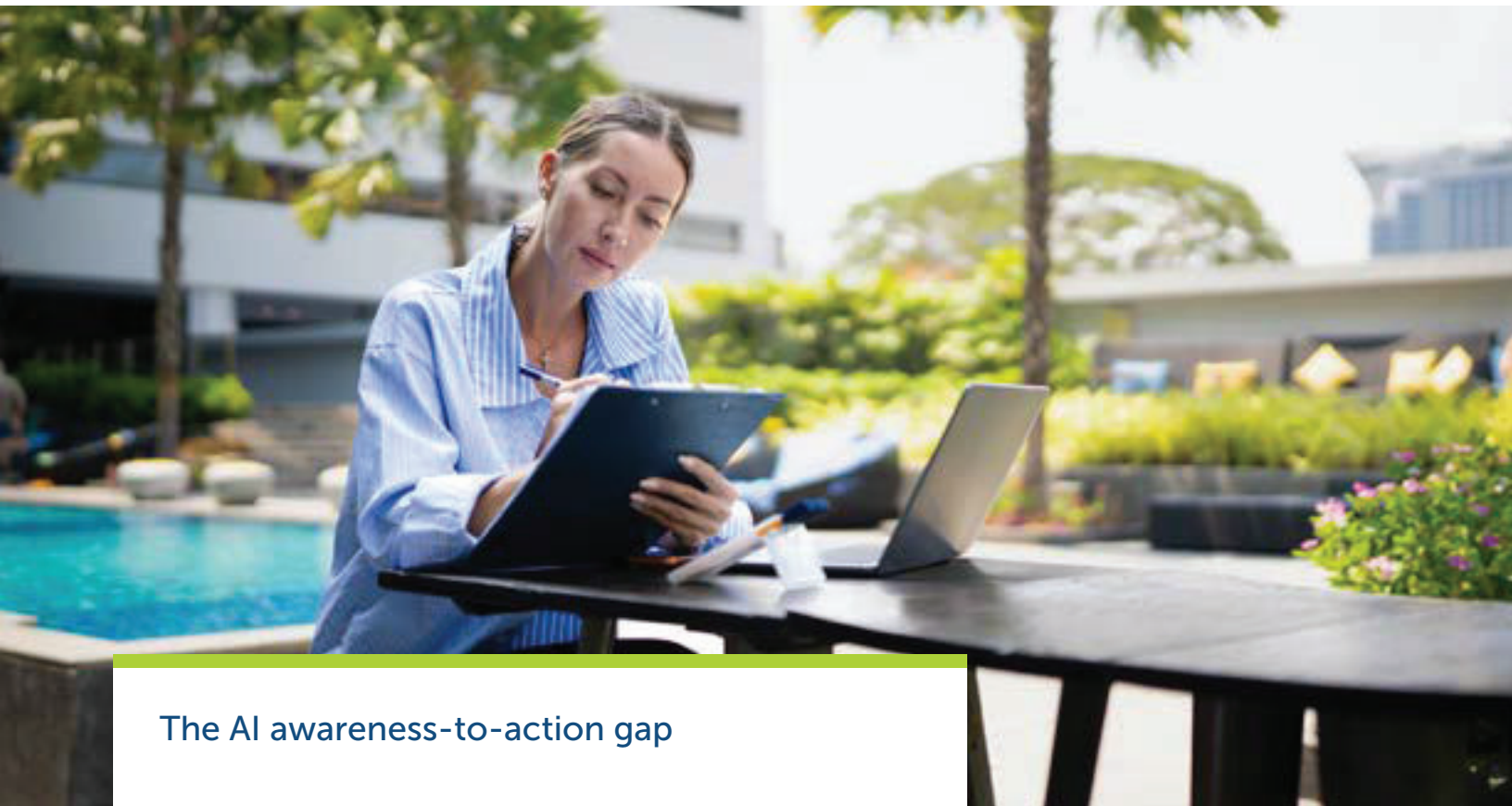
Trends leaders  
feel least equipped  
to address



Leaders who said they were least prepared for AI were also less likely than the average respondent to name technology as a key investment area (50% versus 55.8%), and less likely to name training (32% versus 37%). In other words, the businesses that are least prepared for AI, on average, plan to invest less in the very capabilities that would close the gap.

This pattern echoes what Kaufman Rossin observed in its 2026 report [\*The State of Artificial Intelligence in the Mid-Market\*](#), which found that 83% of mid-market companies are already testing or deploying AI, yet only 2% are ready to scale it. For Broward's leaders, AI readiness is a clear opportunity, but not all have made it a high priority.

The businesses least prepared for AI are investing less in the capabilities that would close the gap.



### The AI awareness-to-action gap

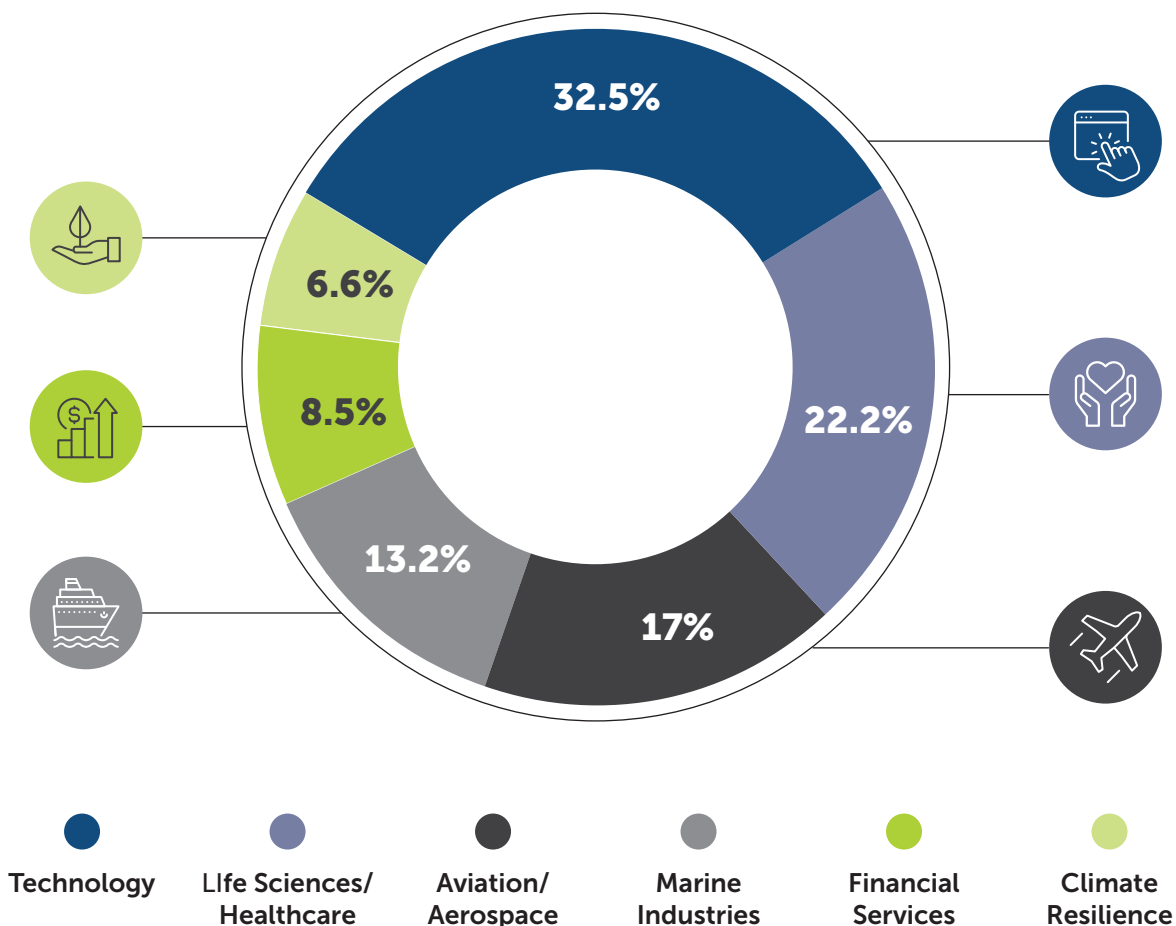


# INDUSTRIES EXPECTED TO DRIVE FUTURE GROWTH

Leaders see the technology industry as being a growth driver in Broward.

Technology is the sector more leaders expect to drive growth in Broward County in the coming year, cited by 32.5% of respondents. Life sciences/healthcare followed at 22.2%, with aviation/aerospace at 17%. Marine industries (13.2%), financial services (8.5%) and climate resilience (6.6%) were the least cited as growth engines for the county.

## Sectors expected to drive growth in Broward County





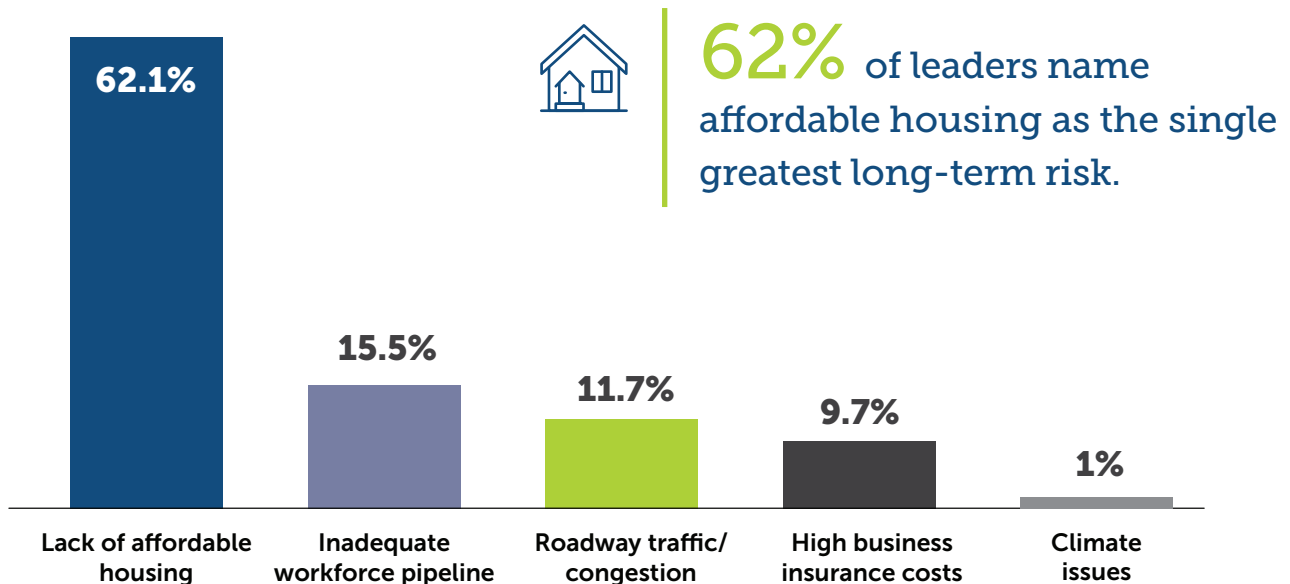
# THE LONG-TERM RISK: HOUSING

Lack of affordable housing is the most frequently cited risk.

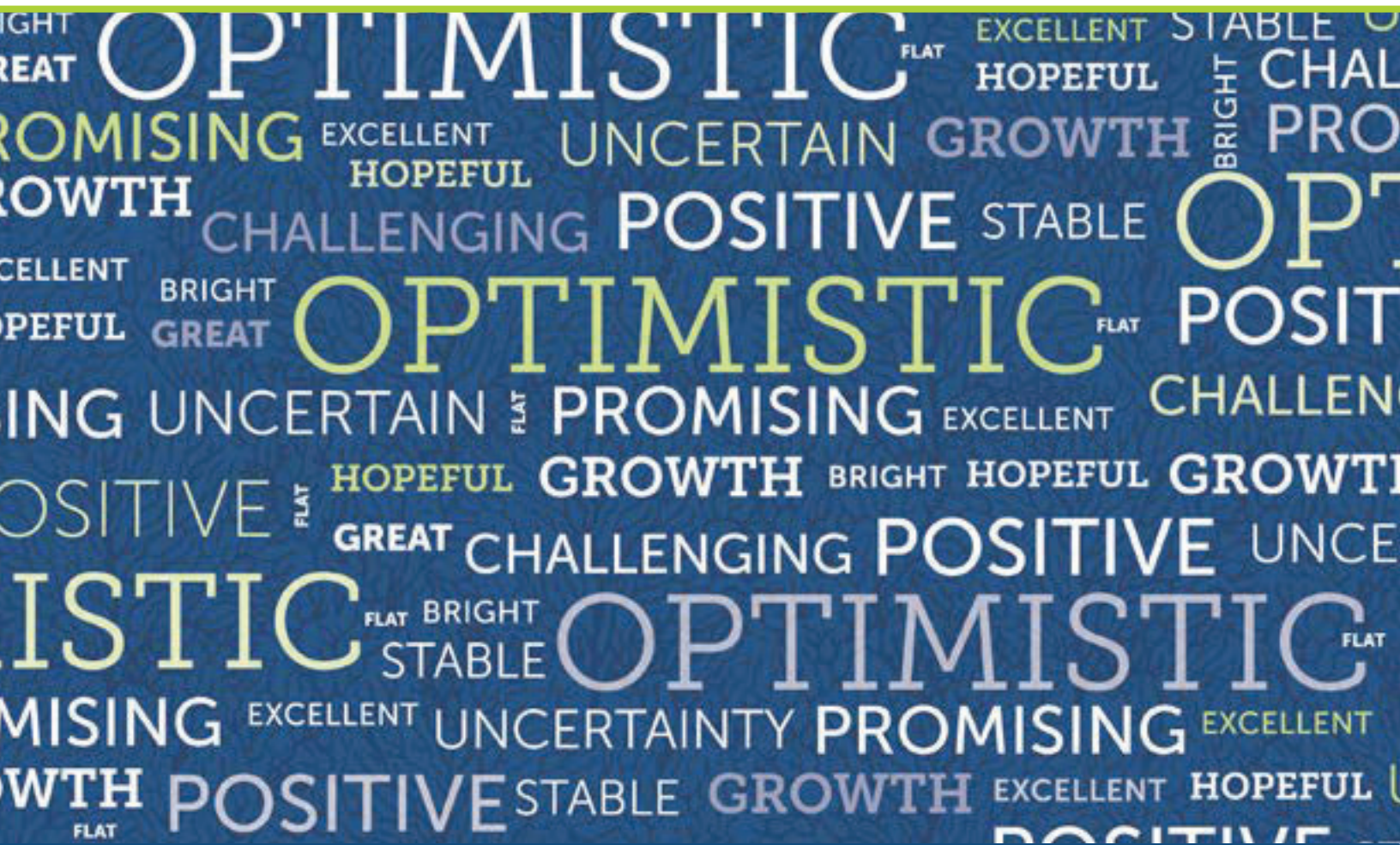
62.1% of leaders cite the lack of affordable housing as the single greatest long-term risk to doing business in the county. Nothing else comes close: inadequate workforce pipeline is a distant second at 15.5%, followed by roadway traffic and congestion (11.7%) and high business insurance costs (9.7%).

Lack of affordable housing and inadequate workforce pipeline are closely related: when workers can't afford to live in Broward, the talent pipeline naturally narrows. Together, these two risks account for nearly 78% of all responses.

## Greatest long-term risk



## IN THEIR OWN WORDS:



**2/3**

of leaders described  
their outlook in  
optimistic terms.

When Broward's leaders were asked to describe their business outlook in a single word, their answers were largely upbeat: Optimistic (22), Positive (13), Promising (11), Growing (9), Hopeful (6), Great (6), Excellent (5), and Bright (5). Neutral words included Uncertain (10) and Stable (8).

**Overall, the best way to describe sentiment in the county is:  
tempered confidence.**

# LOOKING FORWARD

Broward's business leaders remain optimistic, even as their investment priorities shift. Technology is the clear focus for the first time, and investment in training is also set to rise. Hiring plans are softer than in prior years, but the confidence and resilience that have long defined the Broward business climate remain intact. What this year's data adds is a clearer picture of how leaders' agendas are shifting and the actions they plan to take.



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