

PRIORITIES AND PERSPECTIVES *of American CEOs*

DEC 2025

KEY *Findings*

1

ECONOMIC UNEASE,
BUT MEASURED
CONFIDENCE

2

INFLATION, DEBT,
AND JOBS DOMINATE
CEO AGENDAS

3

POLICY AND POLITICAL
CONCERNS WEIGH ON
CONFIDENCE

4

AI AS A
TRANSFORMATIVE
FORCE



METHODOLOGY



This survey was conducted by Stagwell's **National Research Group (NRG)** and aims to arm leaders with a clear read on CEO sentiment heading into 2026.



Objectives

- Gauge CEO Confidence and Economic Outlook
- Explore Perceived Business Risks
- Understand 2026 Business Priorities
- Assess Attitudes Toward Technology and AI
- Evaluate Fiscal & Administrative Policy Outlook
- Inform Discussion at the WSJ CEO Summit



Audience & Qualifications

Definition

American CEO's

Sample Size

100

Qualifications and Considerations

Lead a company of at least 10,000 employees

A mix of CEO tenure

Cross industry representation

Range of business models (B2B, B2C, Hybrid)

Profile data
can be found
in the
[appendix](#)

DATA COLLECTION

START DATE Oct 21, 2025

END DATE Nov 10, 2025

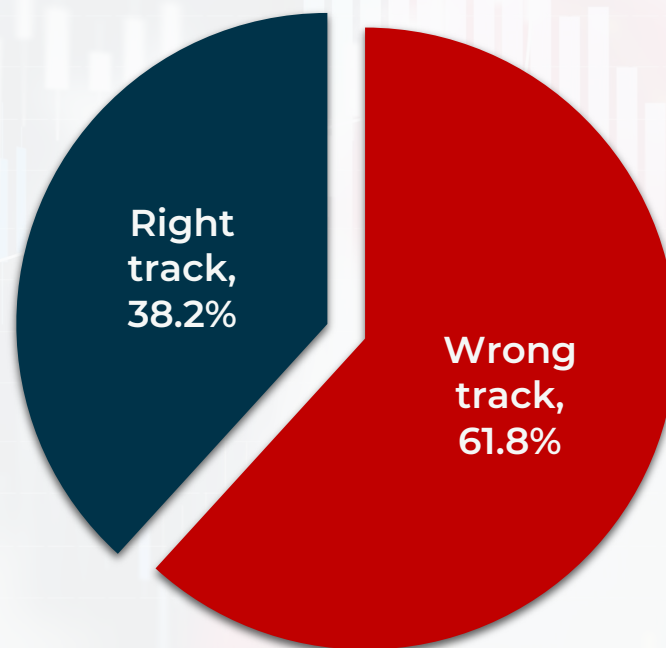
EXECUTION

- **12-Minute Survey**
- **Data Tables**
- **PowerPoint Reporting & Presentation**



MORE THAN HALF OF CEOS BELIEVE *the country is on the wrong track*

Direction Of The Country



CEOs are more likely to think the country is on the right track if they...

are confident in the U.S. economy **49%**

are optimistic about the 2026 business outlook **49%**

believe 2026 economic growth will match 2025 **45%**

44%

of Americans believe the country is on the right track (Source: Harris Poll)

CEOs are more likely to think the country is on the wrong track if they...

are not confident in the U.S. economy **93%**

believe the 2026 economic growth will be weaker than 2025 **89%**

are cautious about the 2026 business outlook **76%**

56%

of Americans believe the country is on the wrong track (Source: Harris Poll)

In general, do you think the country is on the right track or off on the wrong track?

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES *facing the country today?*



RESPONSE

- Economy and jobs
- National debt / federal budget deficits
- Price increases / inflation
- Cybersecurity
- Corruption
- Environment/climate change
- Income inequality
- Political correctness / cancel culture
- Health care
- Terrorism / national security
- Weaponization of the Justice Department / FBI
- Criminal justice (policing, courts, prisons)
- Civil disorder
- Immigration

RESULT

- 20.6%
- 17.6%
- 15.7%
- 6.9%
- 5.9%
- 4.9%
- 4.9%
- 4.9%
- 3.9%
- 2.9%
- 2.9%
- 2.0%
- 2.0%
- 1.0%

RESPONSE

- Crime and drugs
- Women's rights
- Education
- Foreign policy
- Race relations
- Voting rights
- Israeli-Hamas Conflict
- January 6th (investigations, aftermath)
- Policing
- Antisemitism

RESULT

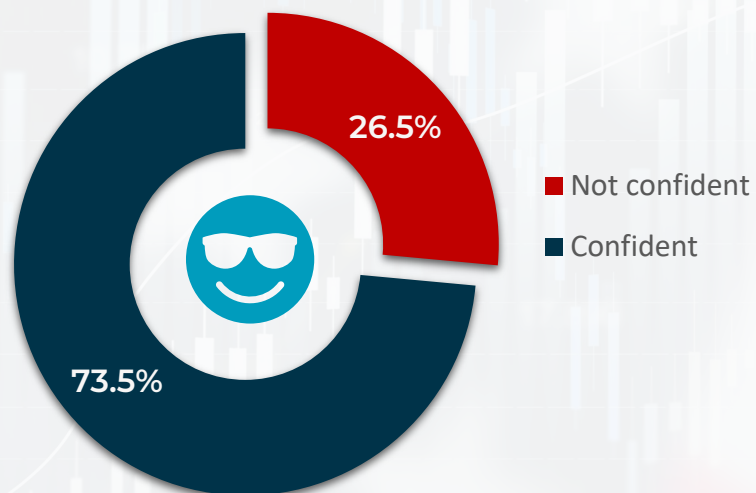
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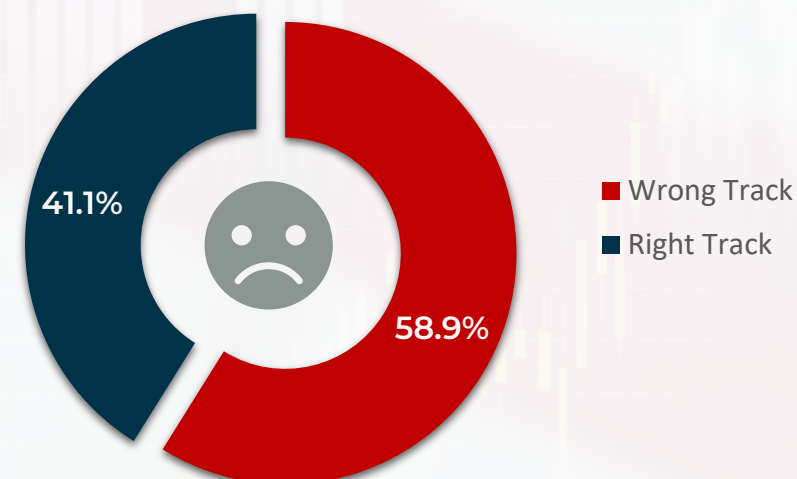
CEOs ARE CONFIDENT IN THE U.S. ECONOMY *far more than U.S. public*

Economic Confidence

AMERICAN CEO CONFIDENCE IN
THE 2026 U.S. ECONOMY



AMERICAN PUBLIC PERCEPTION
OF THE U.S. ECONOMY



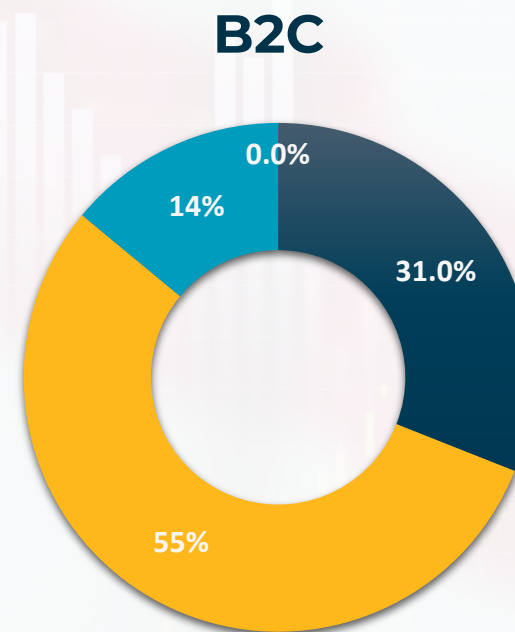
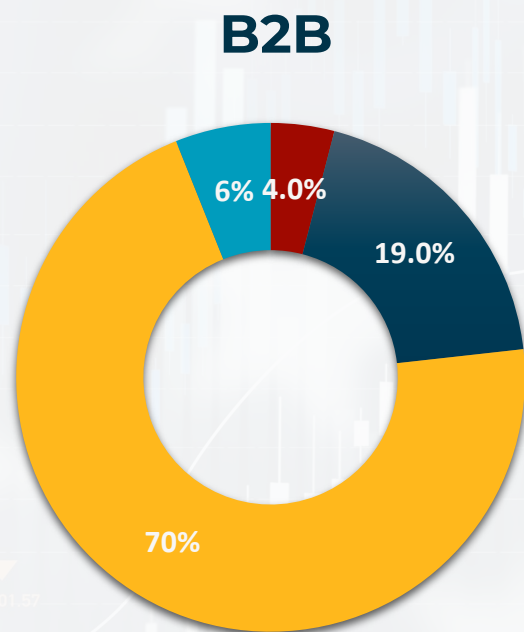
Source: Harris Poll

How confident are you in the resilience of the US economy heading into 2026?



B2B CEOs EXPRESS HIGHER CONFIDENCE IN ECONOMY *than B2C CEOs*

Economic Confidence

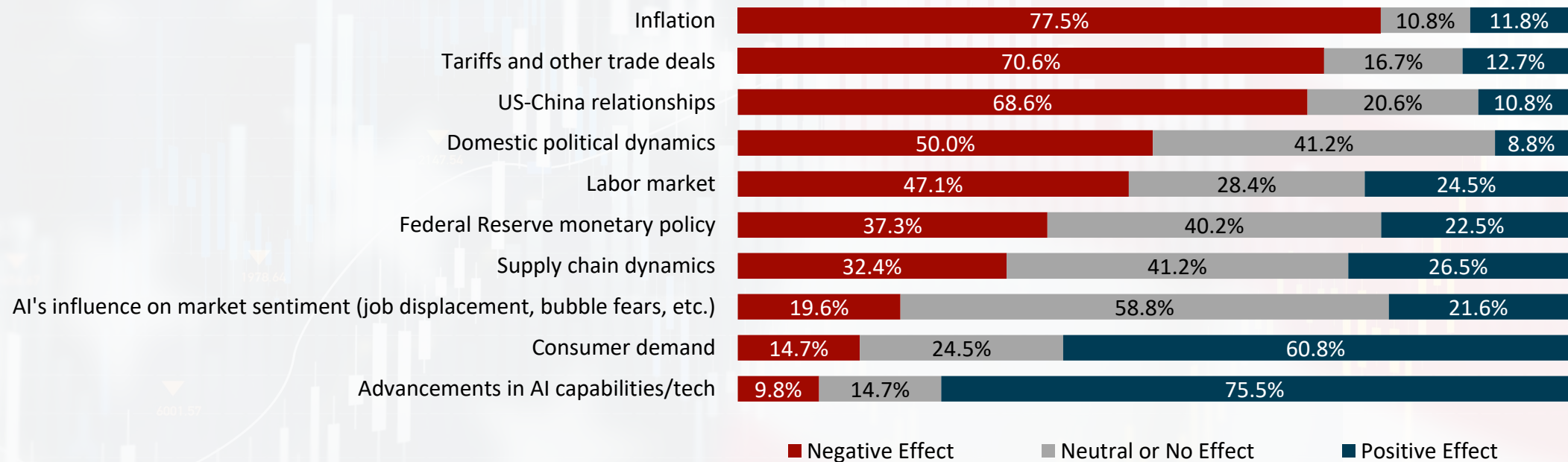


■ Not at all confident ■ Not too confident
■ Somewhat confident ■ Very confident

How confident are you in the resilience of the US economy heading into 2026?

INFLATION REMAINS THE BIGGEST ANTICIPATED CHALLENGE *for business growth in 2026*

Anticipated Impact on Business in 2026



To what extent do you expect each of the following to impact your company's forecast, positively or negatively, in 2026?



MOST CEOS BELIEVE THAT INTEREST RATES *will go down in 2026*

Interest Rate Anticipation

Interest rates are very likely to go down over the course of 2026



65.7%

Interest rates are very likely to go up over the course of 2026



34.3%

CEOs are more likely to believe interest rates will decline in 2026 if they...

think the country is on the right track **72%**

believe U.S. tariffs will be enforced or increased **71%**

CEOs are more likely to believe interest rates will rise in 2026 if they...

believe U.S. tariffs will be rolled back or reduced **41%**

think the country is on the wrong track **38%**

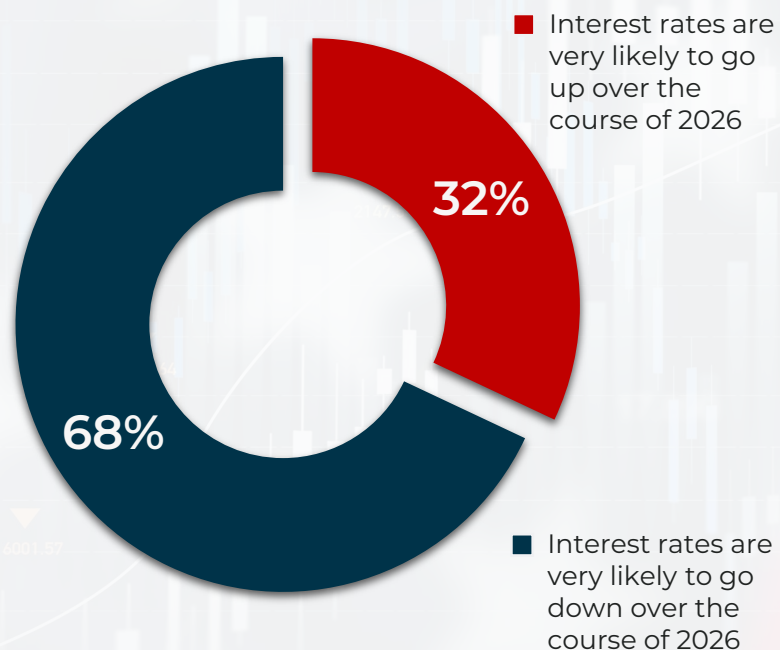
Please read each of the set of statements and indicate whether you agree more with the statement on the left or the right.



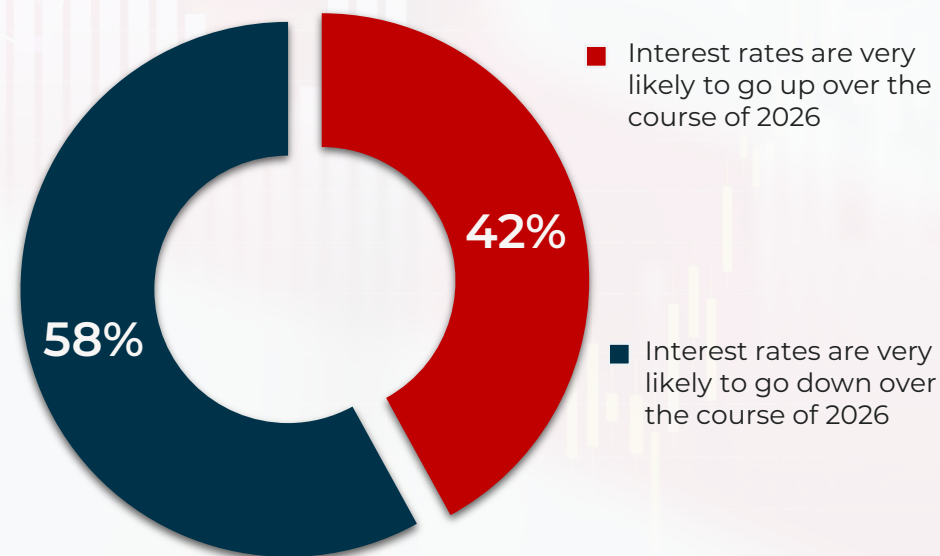
B2B CEOs ARE MORE LIKELY THAN B2C CEOs *To believe that interest rates will go down*

Belief about interest rates going up or down

B2B CEOs



B2C CEOs

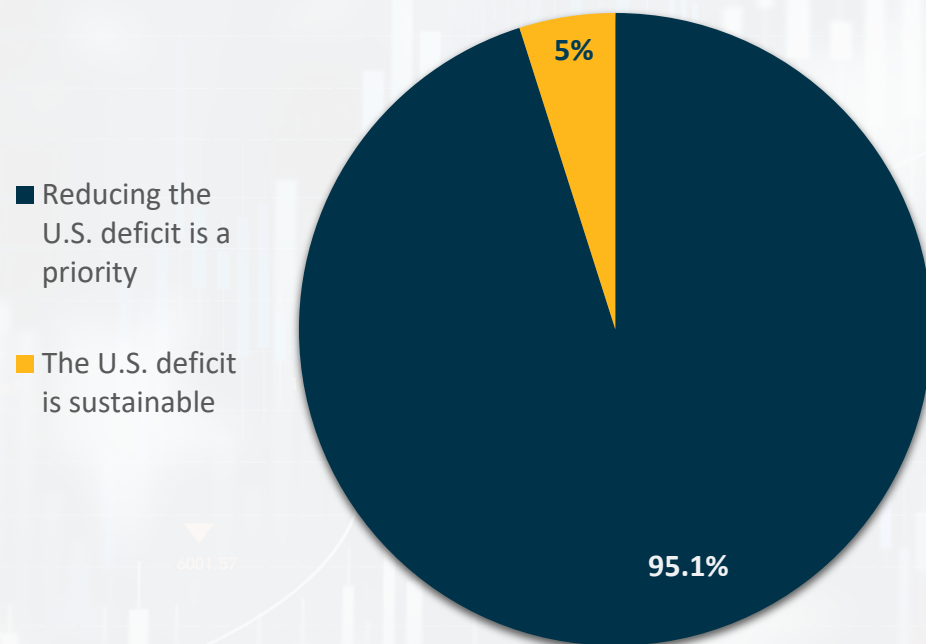


Which of the following statements comes closest to your view?

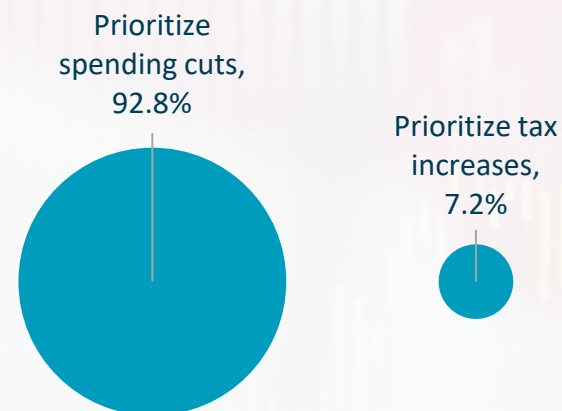
CEOS BELIEVE THE U.S. DEFICIT MUST BE REDUCED, *primarily through spending cuts*



Fiscal Outlook



AMONG CEO'S THAT BELIEVE THAT REDUCING THE U.S. DEFICIT IS A PRIORITY



Do you believe the U.S. deficit is sustainable or that priority should be given to reducing the deficit?
Would you prioritize spending cuts or tax increases as a means of deficit reduction?



CEOS ARE MOSTLY SPLIT ON HOW TARIFFS WILL BE ENACTED, *with a majority concerned that tariffs threaten businesses*

Tariff Outlook



US-imposed tariffs
are likely to be
reduced or rolled
back, 43.1%

US-imposed tariffs
are likely to be
enforced or
increased, 56.9%

64%

of American CEO's
operating business to
business companies agree

Tariffs will
benefit
American
businesses,
14.7%

Tariffs will hurt
American
businesses, 85.3%

Please read each of the set of statements and indicate whether you agree more with the statement on the left or the right.

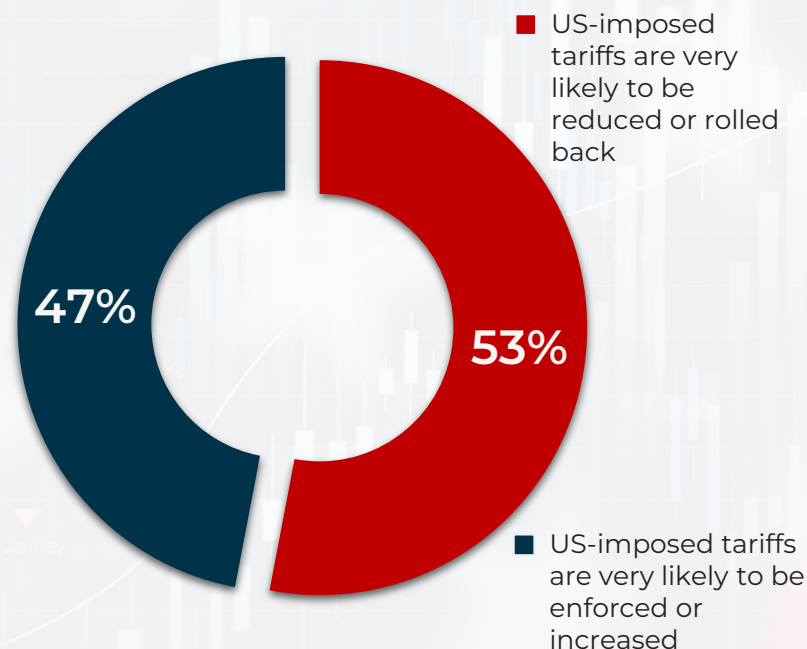


B2B CEOs ARE MORE LIKELY THAN B2C CEOs

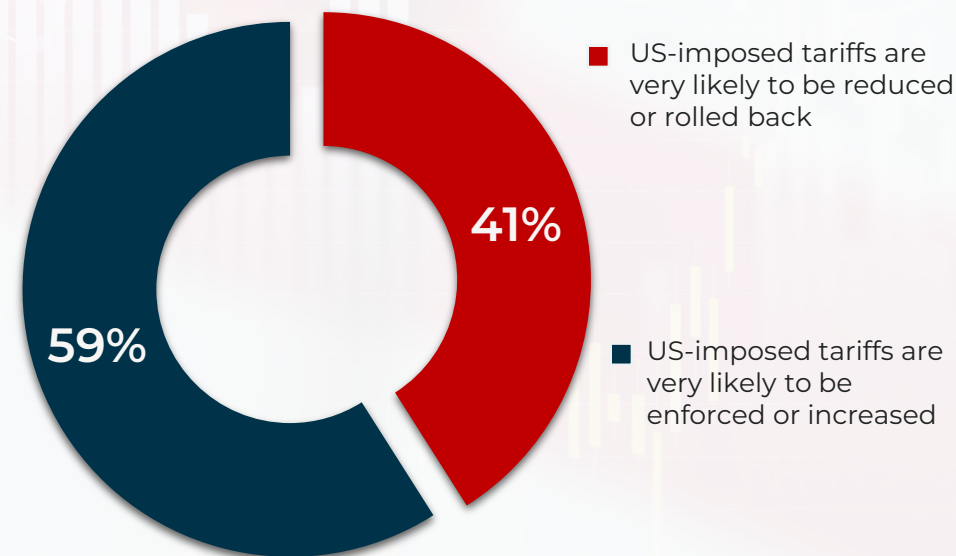
To believe that tariffs will be reduced or rolled back

Belief about tariffs being reduced or rolled back versus enforced or increased

B2B CEOs



B2C CEOs



Which of the following statements comes closest to your view?



B2C CEOS FAR MORE CONCERNED ABOUT TARIFFS AND TRADE DEALS *than B2B CEOs*

The impact of tariffs on CEOs' own company forecasts

B2B CEOs



B2C CEOs



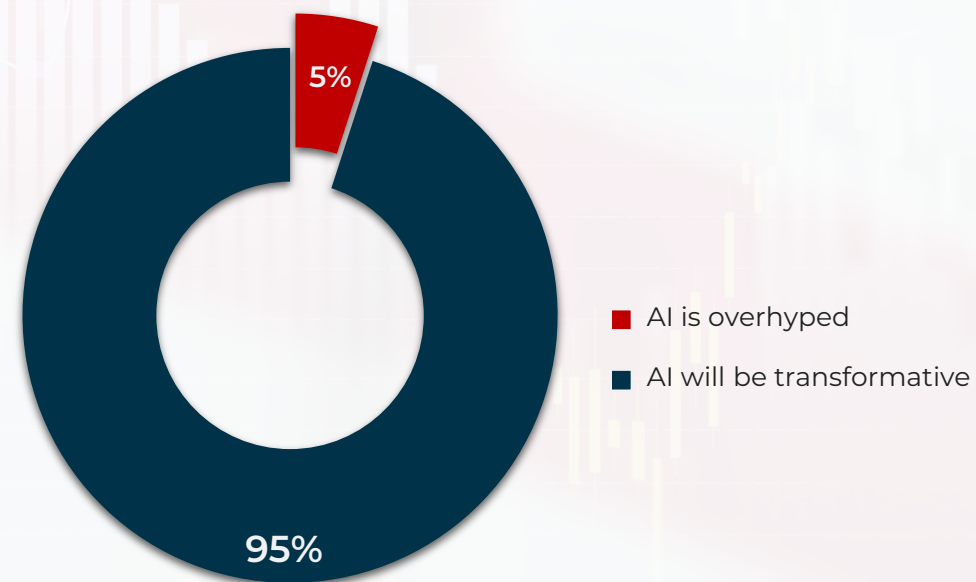
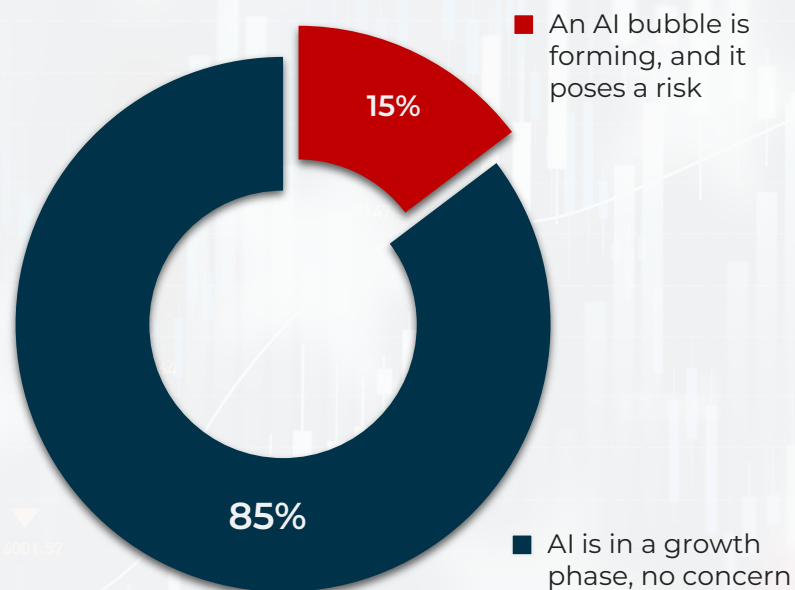
■ Strong Positive Effect ■ Moderate Positive Effect ■ Neutral or No Effect ■ Moderate Negative Effect ■ Strong Negative Effect

To what extent do you expect tariffs and trade deals to impact your company's forecast, positively or negatively, in 2026?



A MAJORITY OF CEOS REJECT AI BUBBLE, *And believe it will be transformative*

Current and Future Outlook Artificial Intelligence



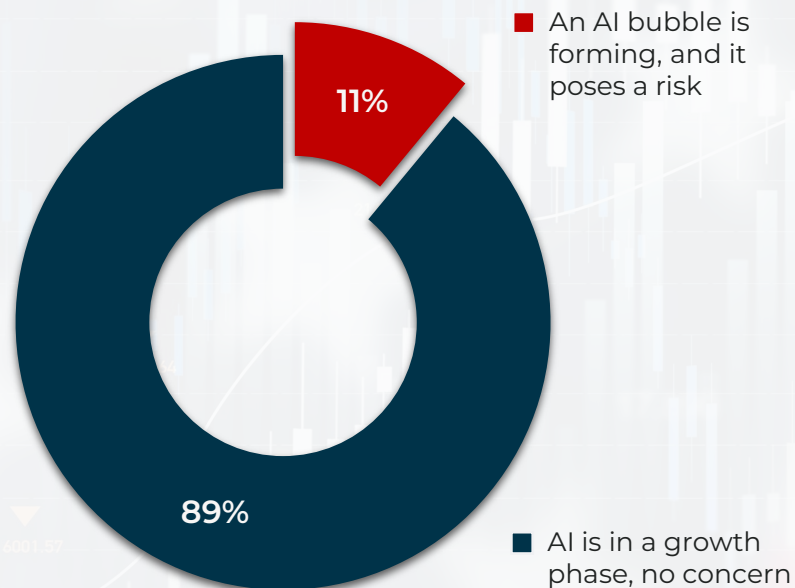
Which of the following statements comes closest to your view?



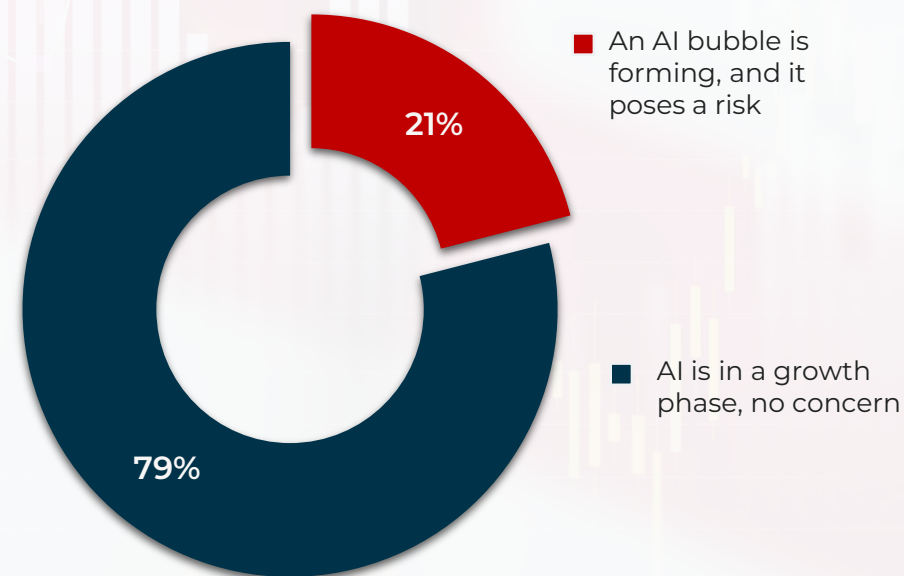
B2B CEOs MORE OPTIMISTIC THAN B2C CEOs *About AI*

Current and Future Outlook Artificial Intelligence

B2B CEOs



B2C CEOs

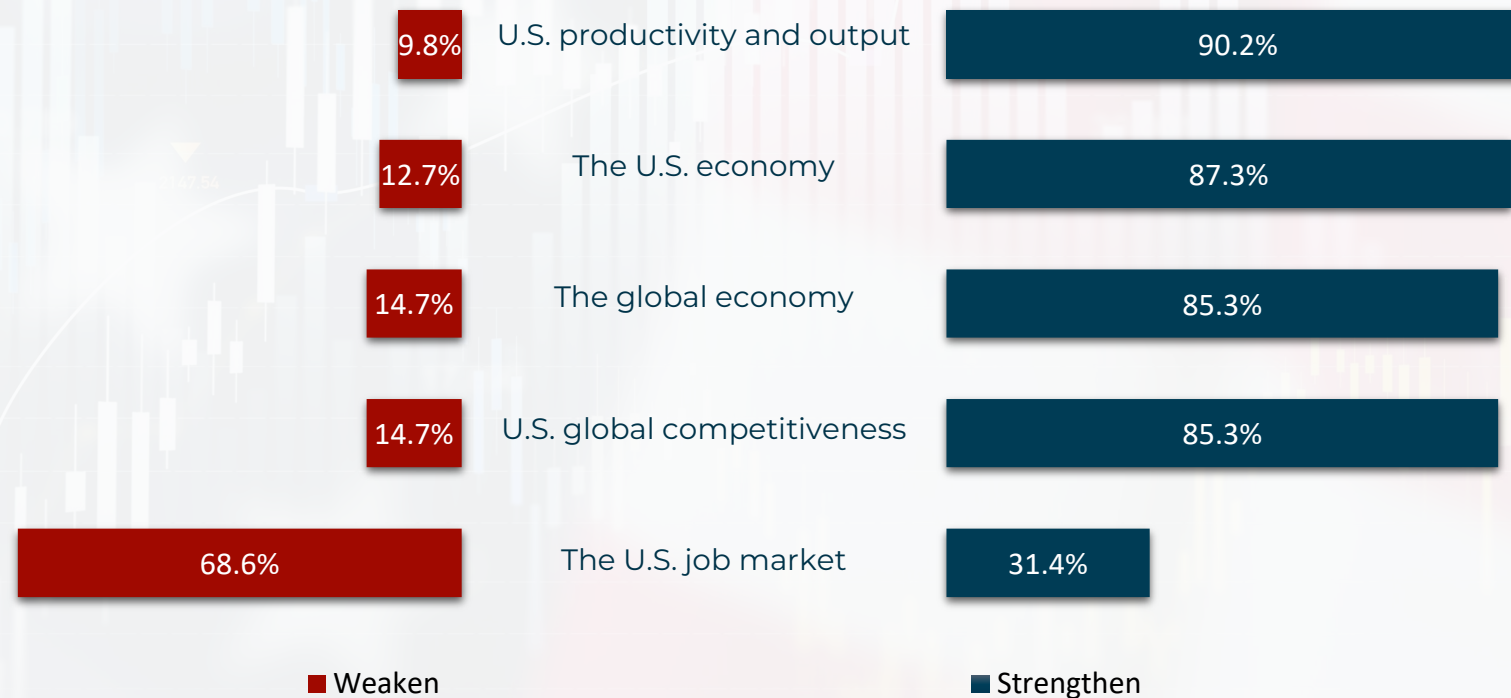


Which of the following statements comes closest to your view?



CEOS BELIEVE THAT AI WILL STRENGTHEN THE U.S. ECONOMY, *but weaken the job market*

Economic Impact of Artificial Intelligence

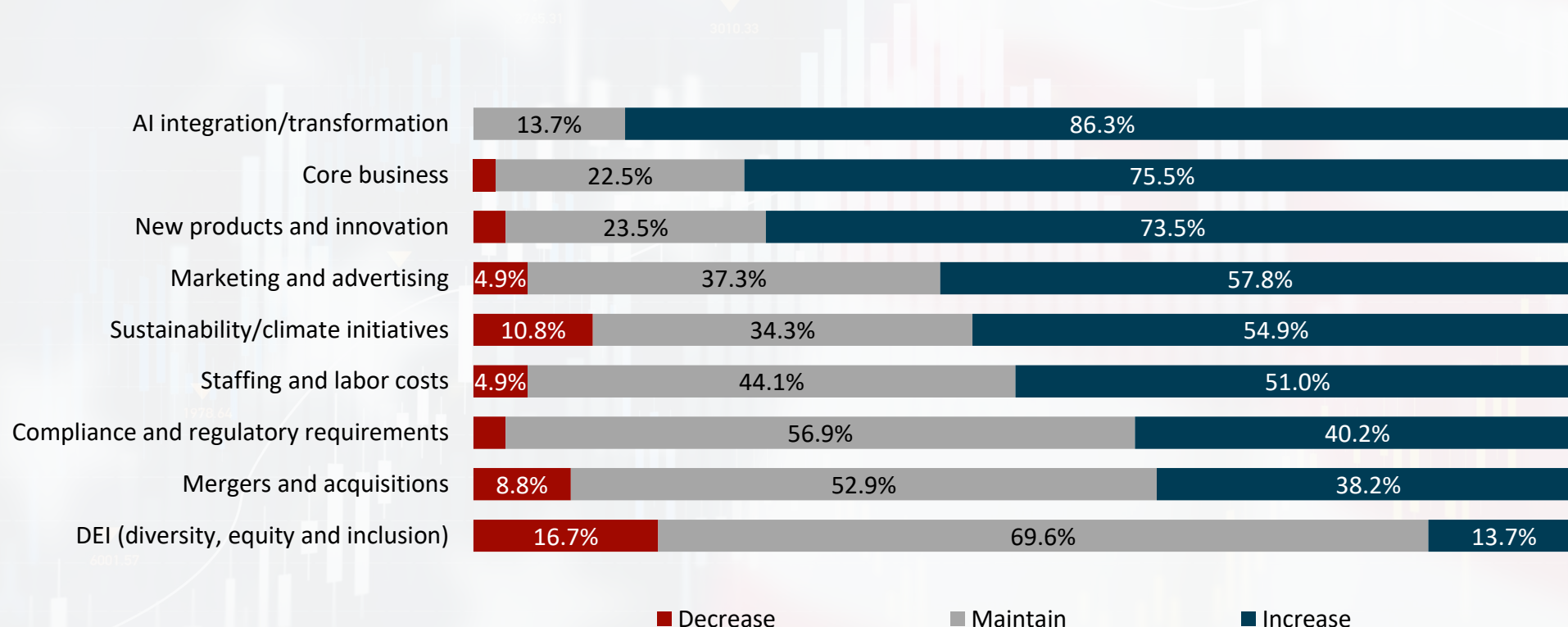


Which of the following statements comes closest to your view?



CEOS ARE COMMITTED TO INCREASING INVESTMENTS IN AI INTEGRATION, *less so for DEI, sustainability, as well as mergers and acquisitions*

Planned Business Investments



For each of the following, do you expect to increase investment, decrease investment or maintain 2025 levels of investment:



CEOS ARE DIVIDED ON THE PERCEPTION THAT YOUNG PEOPLE *are well prepared for the needs of a modern business today*

Perceptions of Young Workforce



48%

of American CEO's think
young people lack the
skill needed for modern
business today

Some people believe that because young people have grown up with technology and AI, they are well-prepared for the needs of modern businesses.
Others believe that young people still lack the skills and training required to succeed in today's workplace. Which view is closer to your own?



Thank You

