REGIONAL PULSE

Business Confidence Across Regional Western Australia

September 2026



Chamber of Commerce and Industry WA

Regional Business Confidence Rebounds in the September Quarter

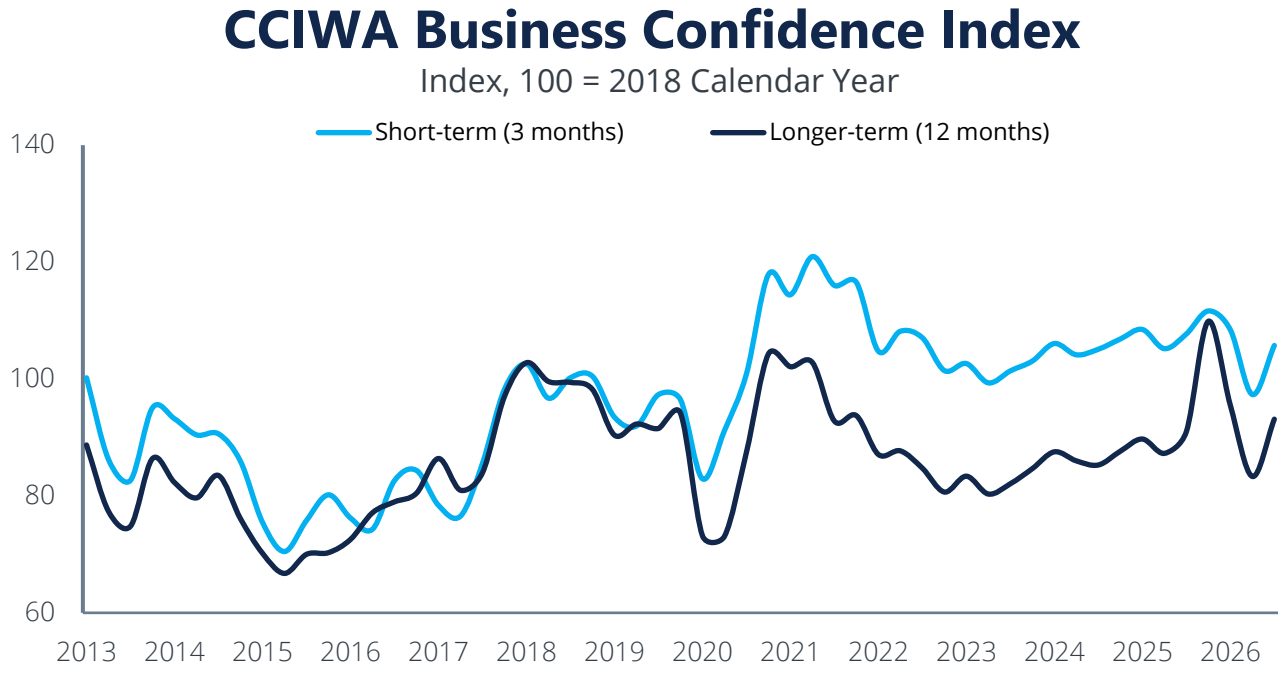
CCIWA Regional Pulse: September 2026

CCIWA's Business Confidence Index improved in the September quarter, with both short- and longer-term confidence recovering. Short-term confidence improved by 9% with long-term confidence also increasing by 12%. Short-term confidence moved above its 2018 benchmark, while longer-term confidence remained below it. With businesses increasingly impacted by workforce constraints and labour costs, we explore how regional WA businesses are adapting their operations to manage these challenges.

Business Confidence Improves Across the Regions

CCIWA's September 2026 *Business Confidence Survey* found that regional businesses had adopted a more positive outlook. Just under half (47%) of regional businesses expect economic conditions to strengthen, while 37% expect no change. The remaining 16% expect weaker conditions over the next three months. The Goldfields-Esperance region recorded the highest short-term confidence, with 67% expecting stronger conditions, while Peel was the least confident, with 44% expecting weaker conditions.

Looking ahead, businesses remain cautiously optimistic. Nearly half (47%) of regional businesses are expecting stronger conditions – 12 ppts higher than the Perth metro area. Around two in five (38%) businesses expect no change and just 28% expect weaker conditions. Once more, the Great Southern region had the highest level of long-term confidence, with 60% of businesses expecting stronger conditions. The Peel region recorded the lowest level of long-term confidence, with 44% of businesses expecting weaker conditions.



Rising Costs and Regulation Lead Barriers to Growth

Rising operating costs remained the leading barrier to growth across regional WA, identified by 80% of businesses. The pressures of rising operating costs were most noted in the Wheatbelt and North West (Kimberley and Pilbara)[1], where every respondent reported them, followed by Goldfields-Esperance and the Mid-West and Gascoyne (both 92%). By comparison, 77% of Perth businesses identified rising operating costs as a barrier.

Government regulation and compliance requirements ranked second, affecting 56% of regional businesses compared with 50% in Perth. Regulatory pressures were most acute in the Wheatbelt (86%), Goldfields-Esperance (67%) and the Mid-West and Gascoyne (62%).

Skilled labour availability ranked third regionally, reported by 48% of businesses. This was below Perth (55%), although the constraint was severe in the North West, where it was reported by all respondents. Housing availability remained a distinctly regional challenge: 34% identified a lack of worker housing as a barrier, almost double the 18% in Perth. The impact was greatest in the North West (64%) and the Mid-West and Gascoyne (54%).

Other regional barriers included international trade tensions (25%), weak demand (23%), supply-chain disruptions (22%) and difficulty accessing new finance (20%). Together, these constraints continue to limit regional business capacity and growth.

How businesses are managing workforce and labour cost pressures

Businesses are combining higher remuneration, workforce development and operational changes to manage labour constraints. Increasing wages or benefits was the most common response, adopted by 57% of WA businesses and 60% of regional businesses. This was followed by training and upskilling (50%) and flexible working arrangements (41%). Around one-third of regional businesses used contractors, financial incentives or career progression initiatives.

Businesses also sought productivity gains by delivering the same output with fewer workers (30%), investing in automation (29%), or redesigning jobs and processes (27%). However, automation was less common regionally (19%). Despite these responses, 17% of businesses statewide and 19% regionally reduced or declined new work, indicating that workforce constraints are limiting capacity and output.

While every measure has been taken to ensure data reliability, care should be exercised when using regional estimates as they are subject to smaller sample sizes than state-wide results. In this edition, some regional findings from the Business Confidence survey have been omitted or combined due to insufficient sample sizes. Numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding.

[1] *Due to the small sample size at a sub-regional level, the Kimberley and Pilbara regions have been aggregated and are collectively referred to as the North West region throughout this report.*

Issues Facing Businesses in Regional WA



Barriers to Business Growth

What are the barriers to growing your business in the year ahead?						
	Availability of skilled labour	Weak demand	Supply chain disruptions	Rising operating costs	Lack of housing for workers	Government regulation and compliance
Peel	56%	33%	11%	78%	0%	44%
South West	50%	32%	27%	77%	27%	55%
Great Southern	40%	10%	30%	80%	30%	60%
Goldfields-Esperance	58%	8%	33%	92%	25%	67%
Wheatbelt	57%	14%	29%	100%	14%	86%
Mid-West & Gascoyne	62%	8%	31%	92%	54%	62%
North West (Kimberley & Pilbara)	100%	9%	36%	100%	64%	36%
WA Regions	48%	23%	22%	80%	34%	56%
Perth Metro	55%	30%	30%	77%	18%	50%

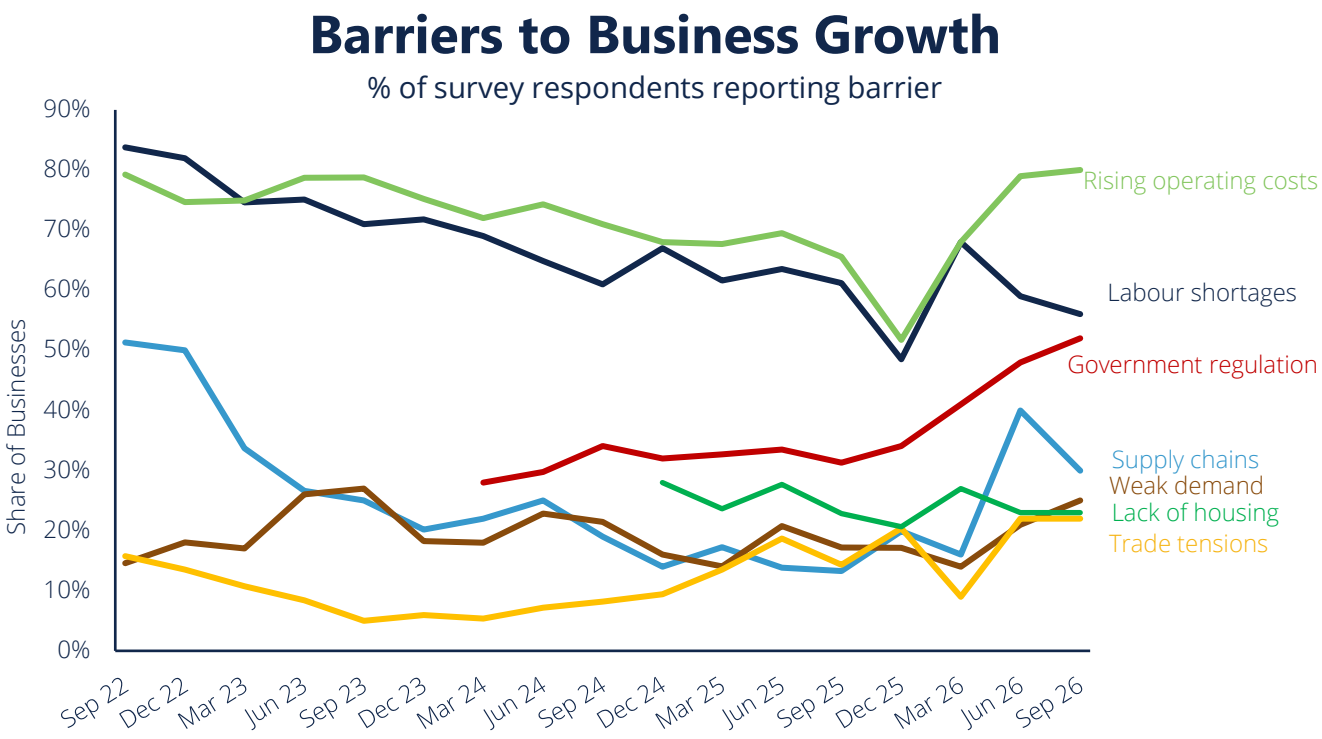
Source: CCIWA | data from CCIWA's Business Confidence September Survey. Some regions have been combined due to sample size.

The number one barrier to growth for businesses in the September quarter across regional WA was rising operating costs, reported by just under eight in 10 (77%) regional businesses – an increase of three ppts since the June quarter. Inflation which peaked at 4.9% in January this year and has since declined to 3.8% year on year. While inflation has eased, elevated energy costs and supply disruptions associated with the Middle East conflict remain as risks to business costs. Every surveyed business in the Wheatbelt and North West identified rising operating costs as a barrier, followed by 92% in both Goldfields-Esperance and the Mid-West and Gascoyne.

Government regulation and compliance requirements ranked as the second-largest barrier to regional business growth, reported by 56% of businesses - up 13 ppts from the previous quarter. The issue was most prevalent in the Wheatbelt (86%), Goldfields-Esperance (67%) and the Mid-West and Gascoyne (62%).

The availability of skilled labour was the third-most commonly reported barrier to growth, identified by 48% of regional businesses– a decline of 11 ppts since the June quarter. Businesses most impacted by skilled labour shortages were in the North West (100%), Goldfields-Esperance (58%) and Wheatbelt (57%). The number of businesses reporting labour shortages as a barrier to growth has continued to decline but remains above pre-2018 levels.

Lack of housing for workers as a barrier to growth has continued to decline, reported by around one in three (34%) regional businesses – down two ppts from the previous quarter. This was a prominent issue particularly for businesses in the North West (64%), Mid-West & Gascoyne (54%) and Great Southern (30%).



Source: CCIWA | data from CCIWA's Business Confidence September 2026

Cost Pressures Facing Regional Businesses

With rising operating costs ranked as the leading barrier to growth, businesses were asked to identify the specific costs placing the greatest strain on their operations. According to survey results, wages emerged as the most widespread concern. All surveyed businesses in the Mid-West and Gascoyne identified wages as a pressure, alongside 88% in Peel, 87% in Perth and 80% in the North West. Wage pressures were less prevalent in the Wheatbelt, where they were reported by 29% of respondents.

Taxes, levies and government charges were another prominent pressure, particularly in Peel (63%), the Mid-West (60%) and the North West (50%). Insurance costs were most frequently identified in Goldfields-Esperance (64%), followed by the South West (61%) and Wheatbelt (57%). Supplier costs were also elevated in Goldfields-Esperance (55%) and Peel (50%), indicating that businesses in these regions face pressure across several operating inputs.

Transport costs were substantially more prominent outside Perth. They were reported by 36% of Goldfields-Esperance businesses, 33% in the South West and 30% in the Great Southern, compared with only 8% in metropolitan Perth. Rent was most commonly reported in Peel (25%), Perth (21%) and the North West (20%). Utility costs, land access and loan repayments were generally less widespread. However, the extreme results recorded in some regions, particularly Gascoyne and North West, should be interpreted cautiously because they may reflect very small regional sample sizes.

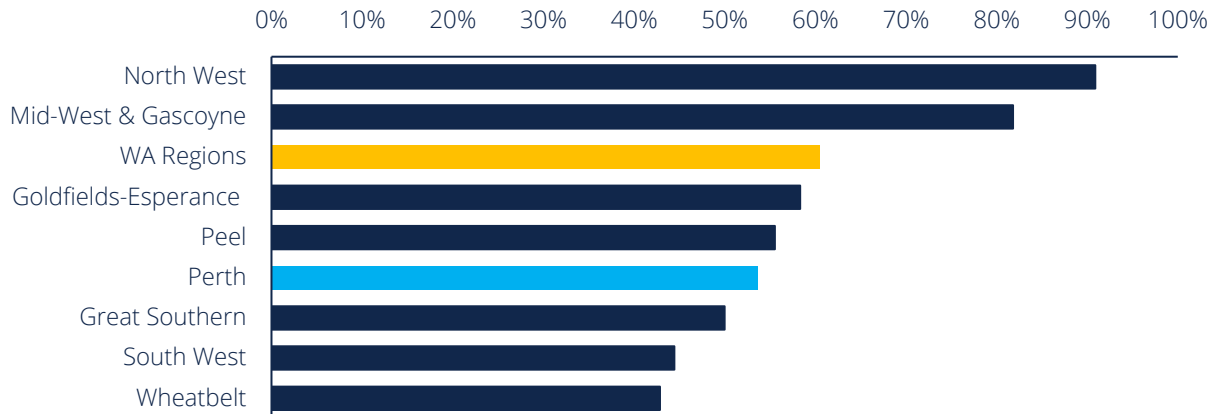
Worker Shortages in Regional WA

WA's historically tight labour market is continuing to show signs of easing as labour demand cools. The unemployment rate for the State which started the year at 3.4% in January 2026 has since risen to 4.5% (as at August 2026). WA unemployment currently sits below the national average of 4.6%. In this edition of *Regional Pulse,* we explore developments in labour shortages across WA and the occupations most in demand.

The number of regional businesses struggling to hire for a particular skill set has declined in the September quarter, aligning with the increase in unemployment. When asked if businesses had struggled to hire for a particular skill set, just over six in 10 (61%) regional WA businesses reported difficulties - a decline of 7 ppts from the previous quarter. By comparison, just under six in 10 (54%) Perth metro businesses experienced similar hiring challenges during the September quarter.

Hiring challenges were most pronounced across the North West (91%), Mid-West & Gascoyne (82%), and Goldfields-Esperance (58%) regions. The region least impacted was the Wheatbelt, with around two in five (43%) reporting difficulty finding workers with the required skill set.

Is your business struggling to hire for a particular skill set?



Source: CCIWA | data from CCIWA's Business Confidence September 2026

Top three occupations in demand by WA region			
	1	**2**	**3**
Peel	Plumbing & gas fitting	Boilermakers/welders	Hospitality workers
South West	Mechanical trades	Electrical trades	Machinists
Great Southern	Construction trades	Mechanical & automotive	Farm workers
Wheatbelt	GPs/allied-health workers	Automotive & electrical trades	Boilermakers
Mid-West/Gascoyne	Mechanical trades	Electrical & telecommunications technicians	Chefs
Goldfields-Esperance	Truck drivers	Technical service roles	Painters
North West	Engineering & technical professionals	Plant & mining operations	Surveyors

Managing workforce and labour cost pressures

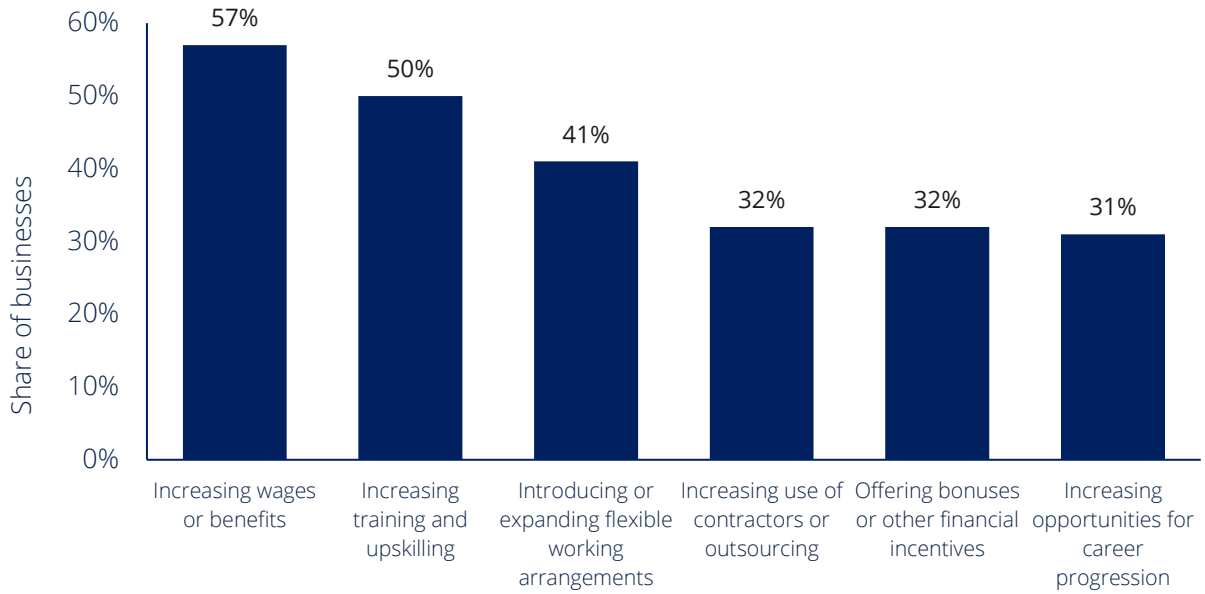
Businesses are using a combination of higher remuneration, workforce development and operational changes to respond to labour constraints. Increasing wages or benefits was the most common strategy, adopted by 57% of WA businesses and 60% of regional businesses. This was followed statewide by increased training and upskilling (50%) and the introduction or expansion of flexible working arrangements (41%). Flexible work was slightly more prevalent in regional WA, reported by 45% of businesses.

Other responses focused on supplementing existing workforces and strengthening employee retention. Almost one-third of WA businesses increased their use of contractors or outsourcing (32%), offered bonuses or other financial incentives (32%), or expanded opportunities for career progression (31%). The corresponding regional shares were 31%, 29% and 26%, respectively. Around one-quarter of regional businesses also offered work experience, internships or student placements, compared with 22% statewide.

Some businesses responded by changing how work was undertaken. Across WA, 30% sought to deliver the same output with fewer workers, 29% automated tasks or invested in technology, and 27% redesigned jobs or work processes. Automation was less common among regional businesses, at 19%.

Recruitment from a broader geographic area was used by 22% of WA businesses and 23% regionally. However, 17% of businesses statewide and 19% regionally reduced or declined new work because of workforce constraints, demonstrating that labour shortages are directly limiting business capacity and potential output.

Strategies to manage workforce constraints, rising labour costs, and attract/retain workers



Business Confidence Across the Regions



Regional Economic Outlook

	Short-Term Conditions (3-Months)			Longer-Term Conditions (12-Months)		
	Weaker	About the Same	Stronger	Weaker	About the Same	Stronger
Peel	44%	33%	22%	44%	22%	33%
South West	32%	41%	27%	18%	45%	36%
Great Southern	10%	30%	60%	0%	40%	60%
Goldfields-Esperance	0%	33%	67%	25%	25%	50%
Wheatbelt	14%	57%	29%	14%	57%	29%
Mid-West/Gascoyne	14%	29%	57%	14%	29%	57%
North West	0%	36%	64%	0%	45%	55%
WA Regions	16%	37%	47%	17%	38%	46%
Perth	26%	40%	34%	28%	38%	34%

Source: CCIWA | data from CCIWA's Business Confidence September Survey. Some regions have been combined due to sample size.

The Middle East crisis contributed significantly to the decline in consumer and business confidence. Both CCIWA's Business Confidence and Consumer Confidence indices have since begun to recover, recording gains in the September quarter. Short- and longer-term business confidence increased by 9% and 12%, respectively, while consumer confidence improved by 4% across both measures. CCIWA's Business Confidence Survey also examined economic expectations across regional WA.

The recovery in confidence was reflected in the short-term outlook across regional WA. Just under half of regional businesses (47%) expect economic conditions to strengthen over the next three months, up 25 ppts from the previous quarter. A further 37% expect conditions to remain unchanged, while 16% anticipate weaker conditions - 23 ppts lower than in the June quarter. Goldfields-Esperance recorded the strongest short-term outlook, with 67% expecting conditions to improve. Peel recorded the weakest sentiment, with 44% expecting conditions to weaken and only 22% anticipating an improvement.

Optimism broadly extends over the next 12 months. Almost half of regional businesses (46%) expect economic conditions to strengthen, up 25 ppts from the previous quarter. A further 38% anticipate no change, while 17% expect conditions to weaken. The Great Southern recorded the strongest longer-term outlook, with 60% expecting conditions to improve and none anticipating a deterioration. Peel remained the most cautious region, with 44% expecting weaker conditions.

Regional businesses were also more optimistic than their Perth counterparts. The share expecting stronger conditions was 13 ppts higher over the short term and 12 ppts higher over the longer term.

Peel

44% of businesses expect weaker economic conditions over the short term

22% of businesses expect stronger economic conditions over the short term

44% of businesses expect weaker economic conditions over the long term

33% of businesses expect stronger economic conditions over the long term

The Peel region recorded the highest proportion of businesses expecting economic conditions to weaken over the short term. Around two in five businesses (44%) anticipate weaker conditions, compared with 22% expecting conditions to strengthen. Over the next 12 months, 44% of businesses expect conditions to weaken, 33% expect them to strengthen and 22% anticipate no change.

	Current Quarter			Next Quarter		
	Decrease	Increase	No Change	Decrease	Increase	No Change
Production	56%	11%	33%	33%	11%	56%
Labour Costs	0%	89%	11%	0%	78%	22%
Profit Margins	56%	11%	33%	33%	33%	33%
Credit or Debt	0%	11%	89%	0%	44%	56%
Capex	0%	33%	67%	0%	44%	56%
Employment	22%	56%	22%	22%	22%	56%

Source: CCIWA | data from CCIWA's Business Confidence September 2026 Survey

Rising operating costs remain the region's most commonly reported barrier to growth, cited by 78% of businesses. However, this represents a decline of 15 ppts from the previous quarter. The availability of skilled labour replaced government regulation and compliance as the second-largest barrier, with the proportion of businesses identifying this constraint rising 20 ppts to 56%. Government regulation and compliance requirements ranked third, cited by 44% of businesses, down from 50%. Other barriers included weak demand (33%), supply chain disruptions (11%) and difficulty accessing finance (11%).

Despite these headwinds, businesses expect relative stability across several key indicators. More than half (56%) anticipate no change in credit or debt levels, capital expenditure or employment. Expectations for profit margins were evenly divided, with one-third of businesses anticipating an increase, one-third expecting a decrease and one-third expecting no change. Labour costs were the indicator most widely expected to increase, identified by 78% of businesses.

Peel's diverse economic base including agriculture, manufacturing, tourism and retail will continue to face pressure from elevated operating costs and persistent difficulties accessing skilled labour.

South West

32% of businesses expect **weaker economic conditions** over the **short term**

27% of businesses expect **stronger economic conditions** over the **short term**

18% of businesses expect **weaker economic conditions** over the **long term**

36% of businesses expect **stronger economic conditions** over the **long term**

The South West remains an important contributor to WA's economy, supported by a diverse industrial base spanning agriculture, tourism, mining and advanced manufacturing. While businesses remain cautious about near-term conditions, confidence improves over the longer-term horizon.

	Current Quarter			Next Quarter		
	Decrease	Increase	No Change	Decrease	Increase	No Change
Production	36%	27%	36%	41%	32%	27%
Labour Costs	0%	77%	23%	0%	77%	23%
Profit Margins	55%	14%	32%	45%	23%	32%
Credit or Debt	5%	36%	59%	9%	14%	77%
Capex	5%	27%	68%	14%	18%	68%
Employment	41%	23%	36%	23%	27%	50%

Source: CCIWA | data from CCIWA's Business Confidence September 2026 Survey

In the short term, 32% of South West businesses expect economic conditions to weaken, compared with 27% anticipating an improvement. A further 41% expect conditions to remain unchanged. The outlook is more positive over the next 12 months, with 36% of businesses expecting conditions to strengthen and 41% anticipating no change.

Rising operating costs remain the region's most commonly reported barrier to growth, cited by more than three-quarters (77%) of businesses. However, this proportion declined by 12 ppts over the quarter. Government regulation and compliance requirements became the second-largest barrier, reported by 55% of businesses - an increase of 8 ppts. Skilled labour shortages ranked third (50%), followed by weak demand (32%), supply chain disruptions (27%) and a lack of housing for workers (27%).

Despite the more positive 12-month outlook, businesses are preparing for a challenging quarter ahead. Around two in five expect production (41%) and profit margins (45%) to decline. Labour costs are widely expected to rise, with 77% of businesses anticipating an increase. Most businesses expect debt levels (77%), capital expenditure (68%) and employment (50%) to remain unchanged.

Great Southern

10% of businesses expect **weaker economic conditions** over the **short term**

60% of businesses expect **stronger economic conditions** over the **short term**

0% of businesses expect **weaker economic conditions** over the **long term**

60% of businesses expect **stronger economic conditions** over the **long term**

Businesses in the Great Southern reported some of the most optimistic short- and long-term expectations across WA's regions. Over the next quarter, 60% of local businesses expect economic conditions to strengthen, while 30% anticipate no change and 10% expect conditions to weaken. Over the next 12 months, 60% of businesses expect conditions to strengthen and 40% expect no change, with none anticipating weaker conditions.

	Current Quarter			Next Quarter		
	Decrease	Increase	No Change	Decrease	Increase	No Change
Production	20%	50%	30%	10%	70%	20%
Labour Costs	10%	70%	20%	20%	60%	20%
Profit Margins	30%	30%	40%	10%	60%	30%
Credit or Debt	20%	30%	50%	0%	30%	70%
Capex	10%	70%	20%	0%	40%	60%
Employment	30%	30%	40%	10%	40%	50%

Source: CCIWA | data from CCIWA's Business Confidence September 2026 Survey

Rising operating costs and government regulation and compliance requirements were the region's most commonly reported barriers to growth. Eight in 10 businesses (80%) identified rising operating costs as a barrier, while 60% cited government regulation and compliance requirements. Skilled labour shortages ranked third, reported by 40% of businesses - 40 ppts lower than in the previous quarter. Supply chain disruptions, a lack of housing for workers and international trade tensions were each cited by 30% of businesses.

Expectations for the December quarter point to stronger business activity. Seven in 10 (70%) firms anticipate increased production, up from 50% in the current quarter, while the proportion expecting higher profit margins has doubled from 30% to 60%. Investment and hiring intentions remain measured, with 40% expecting to increase capital expenditure and employment. Cost pressures are expected to persist, with 60% anticipating higher labour costs, although this is down from 70% in the current quarter. Credit or debt levels are expected to remain stable, with 70% anticipating no change and the remaining 30% expecting an increase.

Goldfields-Esperance

0% of businesses expect **weaker economic conditions** over the **short term**

67% of businesses expect **stronger economic conditions** over the **short term**

25% of businesses expect **weaker economic conditions** over the **long term**

50% of businesses expect **stronger economic conditions** over the **long term**

Goldfields-Esperance businesses maintained a positive short- and long-term economic outlook. Over the next quarter, 67% of local firms expect economic conditions to strengthen, while the remaining 33% anticipate no change. Optimism moderates over the next 12 months, although businesses remain broadly positive: 50% expect conditions to strengthen, 25% anticipate no change and 25% expect conditions to weaken.

	Current Quarter			Next Quarter		
	Decrease	Increase	No Change	Decrease	Increase	No Change
Production	42%	17%	42%	25%	33%	42%
Labour Costs	0%	67%	33%	8%	75%	17%
Profit Margins	50%	0%	50%	25%	8%	67%
Credit or Debt	17%	8%	75%	17%	17%	67%
Capex	17%	17%	67%	25%	0%	75%
Employment	25%	17%	58%	25%	17%	58%

Source: CCIWA | data from CCIWA's Business Confidence September 2026 Survey

Rising operating costs and government regulation and compliance requirements were the region's two most commonly reported barriers to growth. More than nine in 10 businesses (92%) identified rising operating costs, while 67% cited regulation and compliance requirements. Skilled labour shortages ranked third, reported by 58% of businesses. This was followed by supply chain disruptions (33%), a lack of housing for workers (25%) and international trade tensions (25%).

Goldfields-Esperance businesses expect activity to remain broadly stable next quarter. Production expectations are mixed: 42% anticipate no change, 33% expect an increase and 25% foresee a decline. Most businesses expect profit margins (67%), credit or debt levels (67%) and capital expenditure (75%) to remain unchanged. However, cost pressures are likely to intensify, with three in four businesses (75%) anticipating higher labour costs, up from 67% in the current quarter. Employment intentions remain subdued: 58% expect staffing levels to remain unchanged, 25% anticipate a decrease and only 17% plan an increase.

The results suggest that firms expect limited expansion, with persistent cost pressures constraining hiring and investment despite the region's positive broader economic outlook.

Wheatbelt



14% of businesses expect **weaker economic conditions** over the **short term**



29% of businesses expect **stronger economic conditions** over the **short term**



14% of businesses expect **weaker economic conditions** over the **long term**



29% of businesses expect **stronger economic conditions** over the **long term**

Wheatbelt businesses reported a cautious but slightly positive economic outlook across both the short and longer terms. In the short term, 57% of local firms expect economic conditions to remain unchanged, while 29% anticipate an improvement and 14% expect conditions to weaken. Businesses reported the same distribution of expectations for the next 12 months, indicating a broadly stable outlook.

	Current Quarter			Next Quarter		
	Decrease	Increase	No Change	Decrease	Increase	No Change
Production	14%	43%	43%	0%	57%	43%
Labour Costs	0%	71%	29%	0%	71%	29%
Profit Margins	57%	0%	43%	43%	29%	29%
Credit or Debt	14%	29%	57%	29%	14%	57%
Capex	14%	57%	29%	0%	57%	43%
Employment	0%	29%	71%	0%	43%	57%

Source: CCIWA | data from CCIWA's Business Confidence September 2026 Survey

Rising operating costs and regulatory requirements were the region's most commonly reported barriers to growth. All surveyed Wheatbelt businesses (100%) identified rising operating costs as a barrier, while 86% cited government regulation and compliance requirements - the highest proportion of any region surveyed. Skilled labour shortages ranked third, reported by 57% of businesses. Supply chain disruptions, difficulty accessing finance and international trade tensions were each identified by 29% of respondents.

Wheatbelt businesses are preparing for stronger activity next quarter despite persistent cost pressures. More than half expect production (57%) and capital expenditure (57%) to increase, while no businesses anticipate a decline in either indicator. Employment intentions have also strengthened, with 43% planning to increase staffing levels and 57% expecting no change. However, 71% of businesses anticipate higher labour costs, while 43% expect profit margins to decline. Credit or debt levels are expected to remain relatively stable, with 57% anticipating no change, 29% expecting a decrease and 14% forecasting an increase. Overall, the results point to expansion in activity and investment, although rising costs may continue to constrain profitability.

Mid West & Gascoyne

14% of businesses expect **weaker economic conditions** over the **short term**

57% of businesses expect **stronger economic conditions** over the **short term**

14% of businesses expect **weaker economic conditions** over the **long term**

57% of businesses expect **stronger economic conditions** over the **long term**

Businesses in the Mid West and Gascoyne reported a positive short- and long-term economic outlook. In the short term, 57% of local firms expect economic conditions to strengthen, while 29% anticipate no change and 14% expect conditions to weaken. This optimism extends over the next 12 months, with businesses reporting the same distribution of expectations.

	Current Quarter			Next Quarter		
	Decrease	Increase	No Change	Decrease	Increase	No Change
Production	25%	33%	42%	33%	25%	42%
Labour Costs	0%	92%	8%	0%	83%	17%
Profit Margins	58%	17%	25%	33%	25%	42%
Credit or Debt	0%	25%	75%	8%	17%	75%
Capex	8%	58%	33%	0%	75%	25%
Employment	17%	33%	50%	17%	33%	50%

Source: CCIWA | data from CCIWA's Business Confidence September 2026 Survey

Rising operating costs were the most commonly reported barrier to growth in the Mid West and Gascoyne, identified by 92% of businesses. The availability of skilled labour and government regulation and compliance requirements were tied as the second-most common barriers, each cited by 62%. More than half of businesses (54%) also identified a lack of housing for workers. Supply chain disruptions and difficulty accessing finance were each reported by 31%, followed by international trade tensions (23%) and weak demand (8%).

Business expectations for the next quarter are mixed. While 42% expect production to remain unchanged, 33% anticipate a decline and 25% expect an increase. Cost pressures are likely to persist, with 83% anticipating higher labour costs. However, expectations for profit margins have improved: 33% expect margins to decline, down from 58% in the current quarter, while 42% anticipate no change. Investment intentions remain strong, with 75% planning to increase capital expenditure and no businesses expecting a reduction. Half expect employment to remain unchanged, while 33% anticipate an increase and 17% expect a decrease. Credit or debt levels are expected to remain unchanged for 75% of businesses.

The North West

0% of businesses expect **weaker economic conditions** over the **short term**

64% of businesses expect **stronger economic conditions** over the **short term**

0% of businesses expect **weaker economic conditions** over the **long term**

55% of businesses expect **stronger economic conditions** over the **long term**

The North West (Kimberley and Pilbara)[1] recorded the second-strongest short-term outlook and the third-strongest longer-term outlook across regional WA. Almost two-thirds of respondents (64%) expect economic conditions to strengthen over the next quarter, up 9 ppts from the June quarter. Confidence over the next 12 months also remains positive, with 55% expecting stronger conditions - unchanged from the previous quarter. These results indicate sustained optimism, although expectations for costs and profit margins point to continued operating pressures.

	Current Quarter			Next Quarter		
	Decrease	Increase	No Change	Decrease	Increase	No Change
Production	27%	36%	37%	27%	45%	28%
Labour Costs	0%	100%	0%	0%	100%	0%
Profit Margins	64%	9%	27%	45%	27%	28%
Credit or Debt	9%	27%	64%	0%	36%	64%
Capex	9%	55%	36%	18%	45%	37%
Employment	27%	64%	9%	36%	64%	0%

Source: CCIWA | data from CCIWA's Business Confidence September 2026 Survey

Business expectations for the next quarter point to measured expansion on balance, although results vary. Almost half (45%) expect production to increase, compared with 27% anticipating a decrease and 28% expecting no change. Capital expenditure expectations are similarly positive: 45% plan to increase spending, 18% expect a reduction and 37% anticipate no change. Employment intentions are stronger, with 64% expecting to add workers, although 36% plan to reduce staffing. Cost pressures remain pronounced, with all respondents expecting labour costs to rise and 45% anticipating lower profit margins.

Rising operating costs and skilled labour shortages were the North West's most commonly reported barriers to growth, each identified by every surveyed business. A lack of housing for workers ranked next, cited by 64% of respondents, the highest share across the regions shown. Supply chain disruptions and government regulation and compliance requirements were each reported by 36% of businesses, while weak demand and international trade tensions were identified by only 9%.



Chamber of Commerce and Industry WA

We stand for business

Stay Informed:

cciwa.com

Whilst every effort has been made to ensure that the information contained in this Report is free from error and/or omissions, no responsibility can be accepted by CCIWA, its employees or any other person involved in the preparation of this information for any claim (including without limitation, any liability arising from fault, negligence or negligent misstatement) for any direct or indirect loss or damage arising from any use or reliance on this information, or otherwise in connection with it.

Due to the small sample size at a sub-regional level, the findings presented in this report may not be representative of the broader population and should be interpreted with caution. *This Regional Pulse report contains general information only, and none of CCIWA or its related entities, employees or agents by means of this Regional Pulse report, is rendering professional advice or services. Before making any decision or taking any action that may affect your finances or your business, you should consult a qualified professional adviser.*

No representations, warranties or undertakings (express or implied) are given as to the accuracy, completeness or reliability of any information contained in the Regional Pulse report, that the Regional Pulse report is free from error or omissions, or that it is suitable for your intended use. Each user of the Regional Pulse report waives and releases the CCIWA to the fullest extent permitted by law from any and all claims relating to the usage of material or information contained in the Regional Pulse report. In no event shall CCIWA, its employees or any other person involved in the preparation of the Regional Pulse report be liable for any loss or damage whatsoever, including incidental or consequential loss or damage, arising directly or indirectly in connection with, any use of or reliance on the material and/or information contained in the Regional Pulse report.