Survey of Business Uncertainty Monthly Report

November 2026

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SBU

Federal Reserve Bank *of* Atlanta

Based on survey responses from 9-20 November 2026

Headline Results

November 2026 Survey of Business Uncertainty

1. Sales revenue growth expectations have risen over recent months. (Slide 4)
2. Firms remain more uncertain about future sales growth than before the pandemic. (Slide 4)
3. Over 72% of firms are using Artificial Intelligence in business functions. More expect to use AI in the next six months. (Slide 7)
4. Firms are most commonly using AI for IT, administration, finance and accounting, and marketing, among many other tasks. (Slides 8-9)

SBU Survey of Business Uncertainty

About the Survey

The Survey of Business Uncertainty (SBU) is fielded each month by the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta.

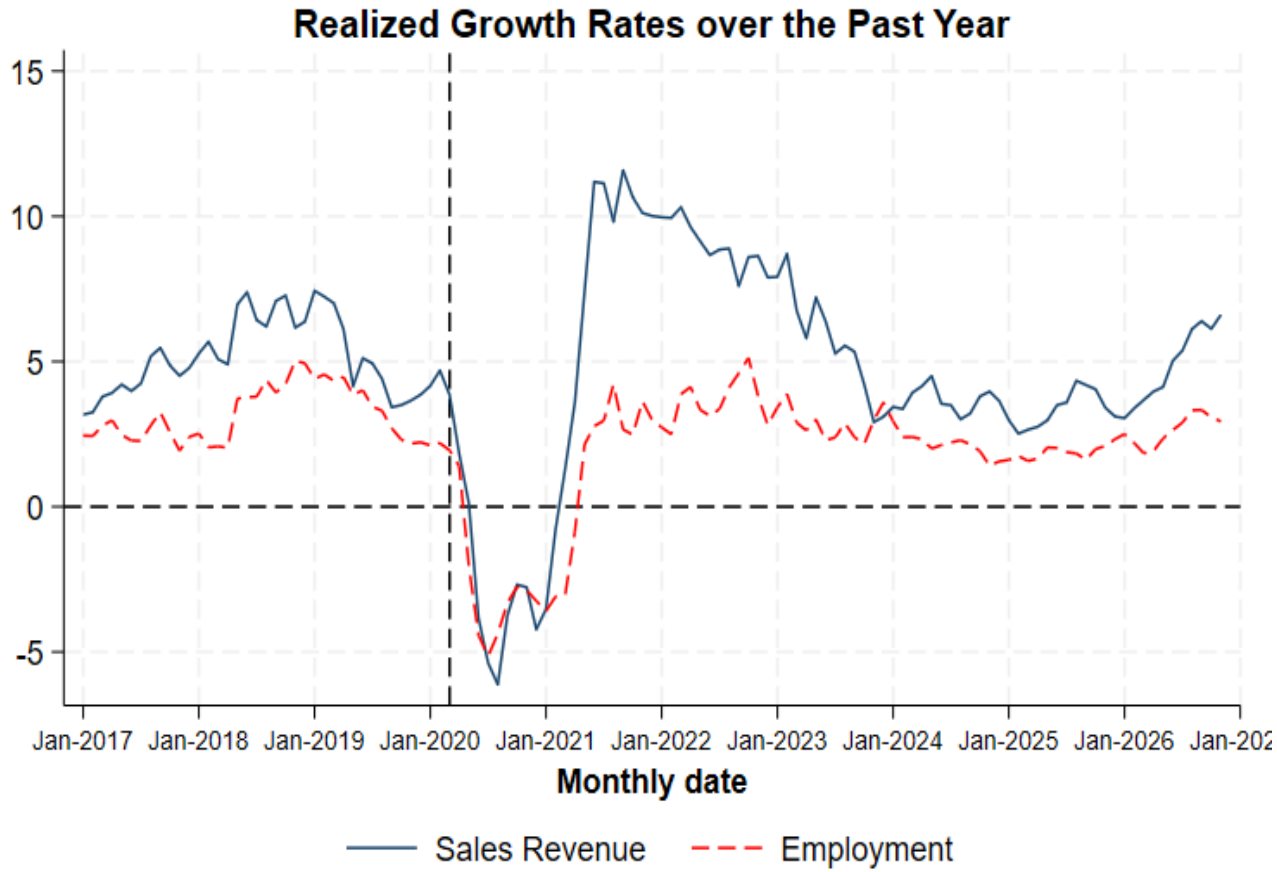
The SBU questionnaire goes to about 1500 panel members, who occupy senior finance and managerial positions at U.S. firms. We contact panel members each month by email, and they respond via a web-based instrument.

Survey questions pertain to current, past, and future outcomes at the respondent's firm. Our primary objective is to elicit the respondent's subjective forecast distributions over own-firm future sales growth rates and employment levels. We also ask special questions on timely topics.

For more information on survey design and methodology, please refer to the resources on the SBU page and "Surveying Business Uncertainty," published in the *Journal of Econometrics* and also available as NBER Working Paper 25956.

Nominal sales growth has risen recently. Recent employment growth is in line with pre-pandemic growth.

January 2017–November 2026



NOTE: Calculated using monthly data through November 2026. Realized growth rate series for sales revenue and employment are activity-weighted averages of firms' reported (look-back) growth rates over the past year (specifically, the previous four quarters for sales revenue and previous 12 months for employment).

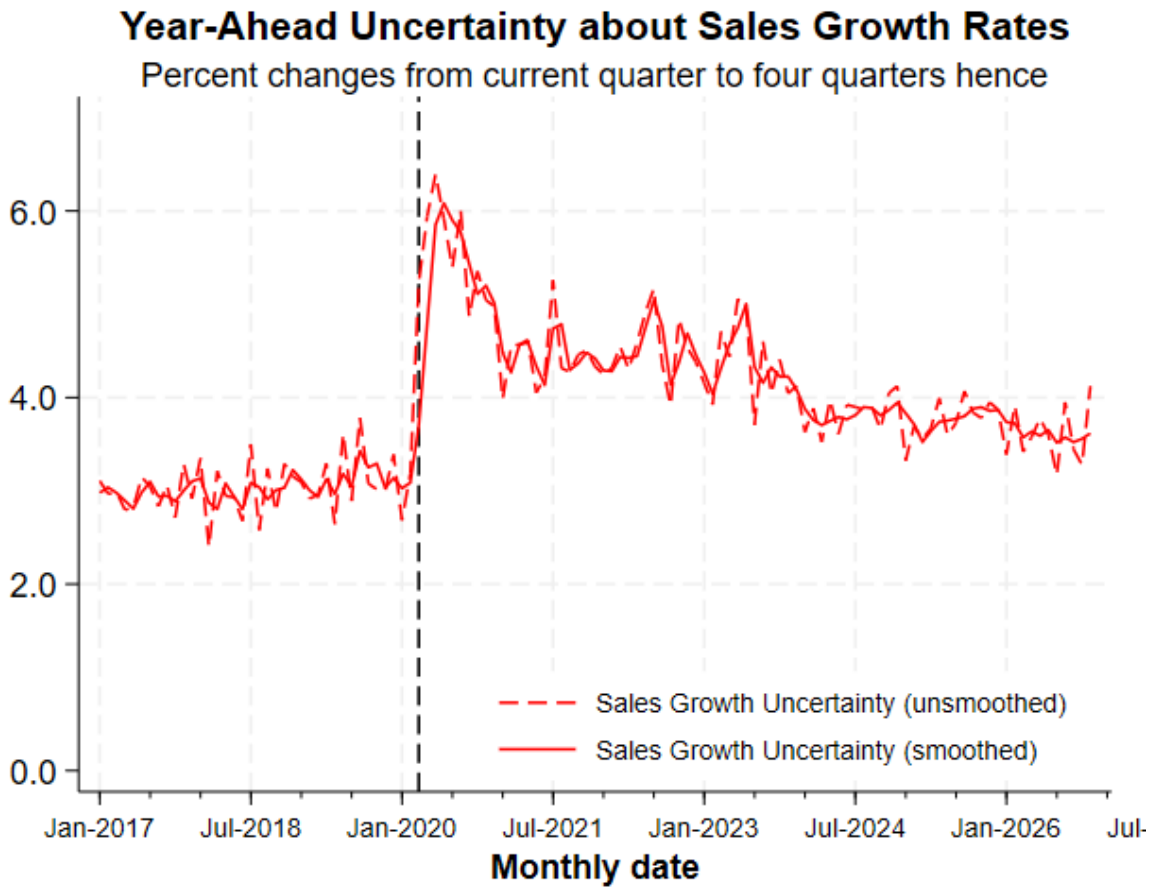
NOTE: The chart shows smoothed series.

Source: Survey of Business Uncertainty conducted by the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta. For more information, see "Surveying Business Uncertainty" by David Altig, Jose Maria Barrero, Nick Bloom, Steven J. Davis, Brent Meyer, and Nick Parker, NBER Working Paper No. 25956, February 2020. The vertical dashed line shown in the plot marks the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sales revenue growth expectations have risen over the past year. Firms remain more uncertain about future revenue growth than they were before the pandemic.

January 2017–November 2026



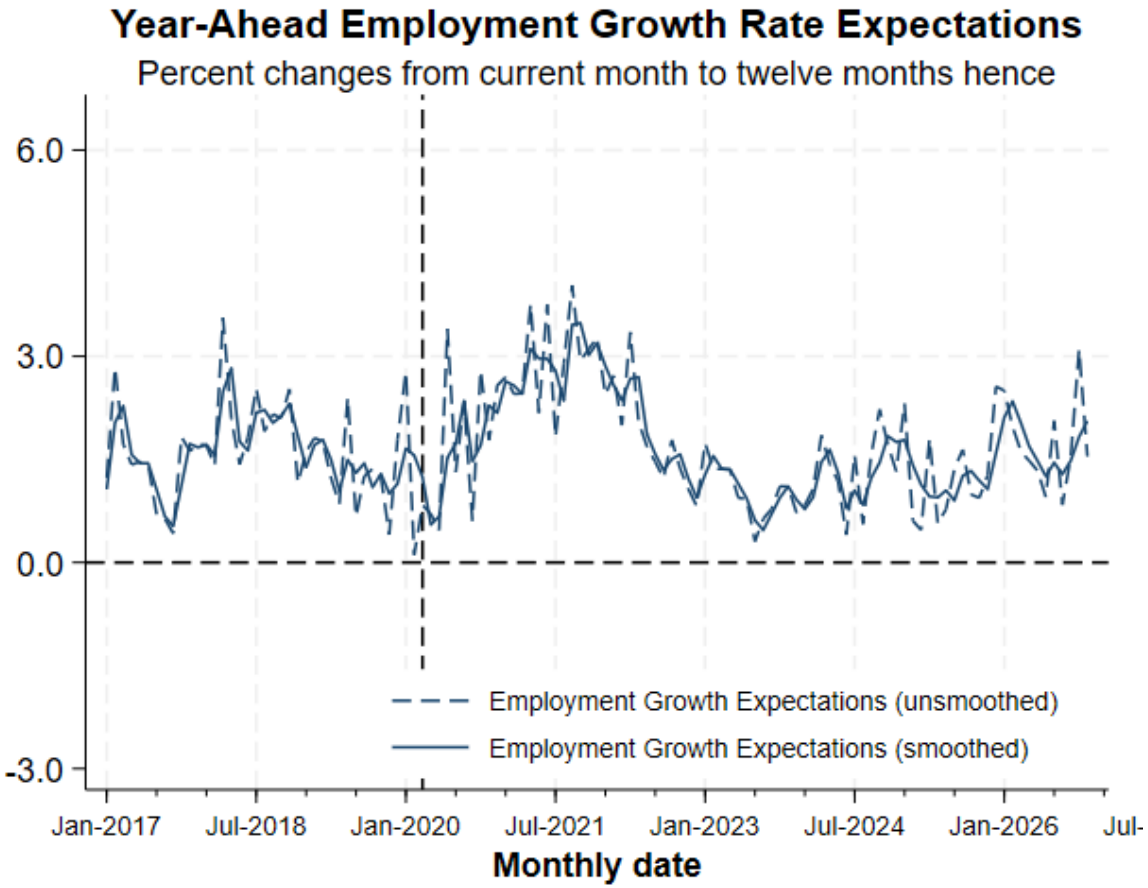


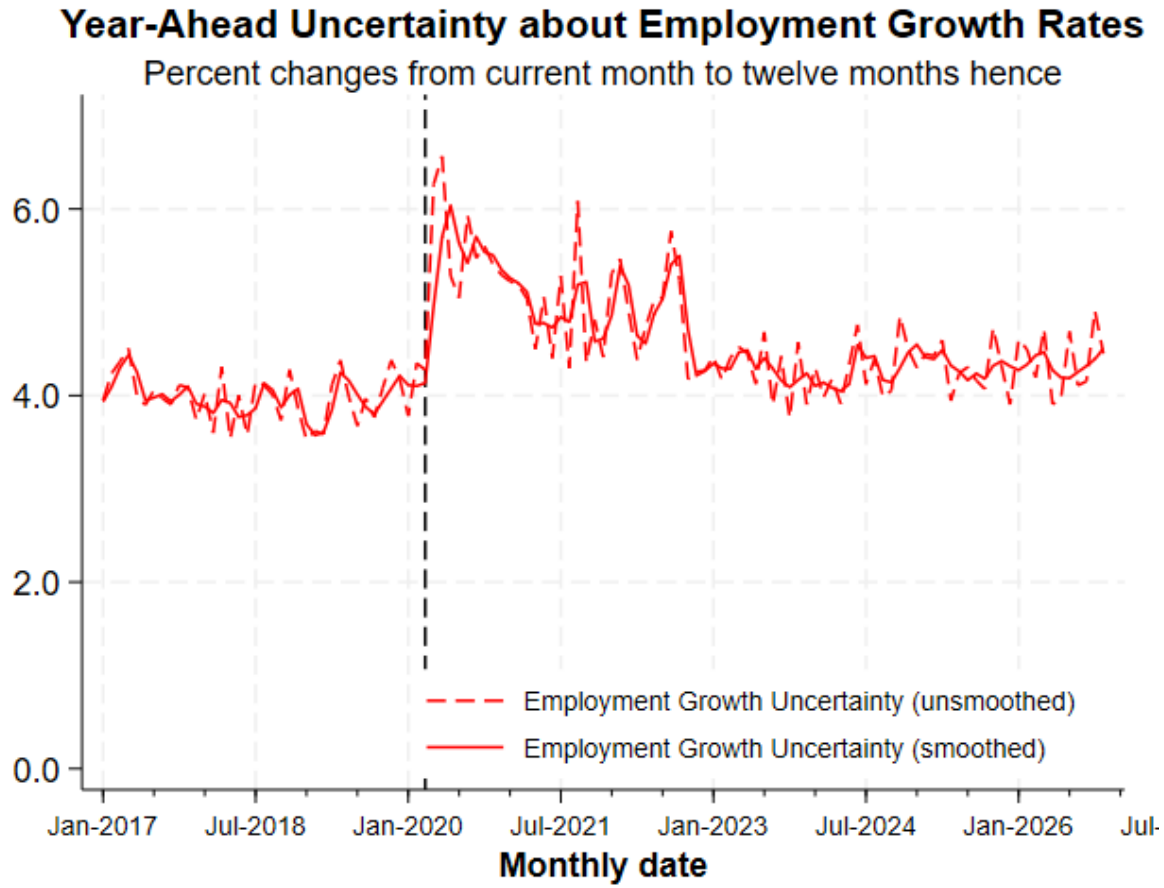
NOTE: The charts show smoothed series.

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Expected employment growth is in line with pre-pandemic levels, while uncertainty about employment growth is slightly elevated over pre-pandemic levels.

January 2017–November 2026



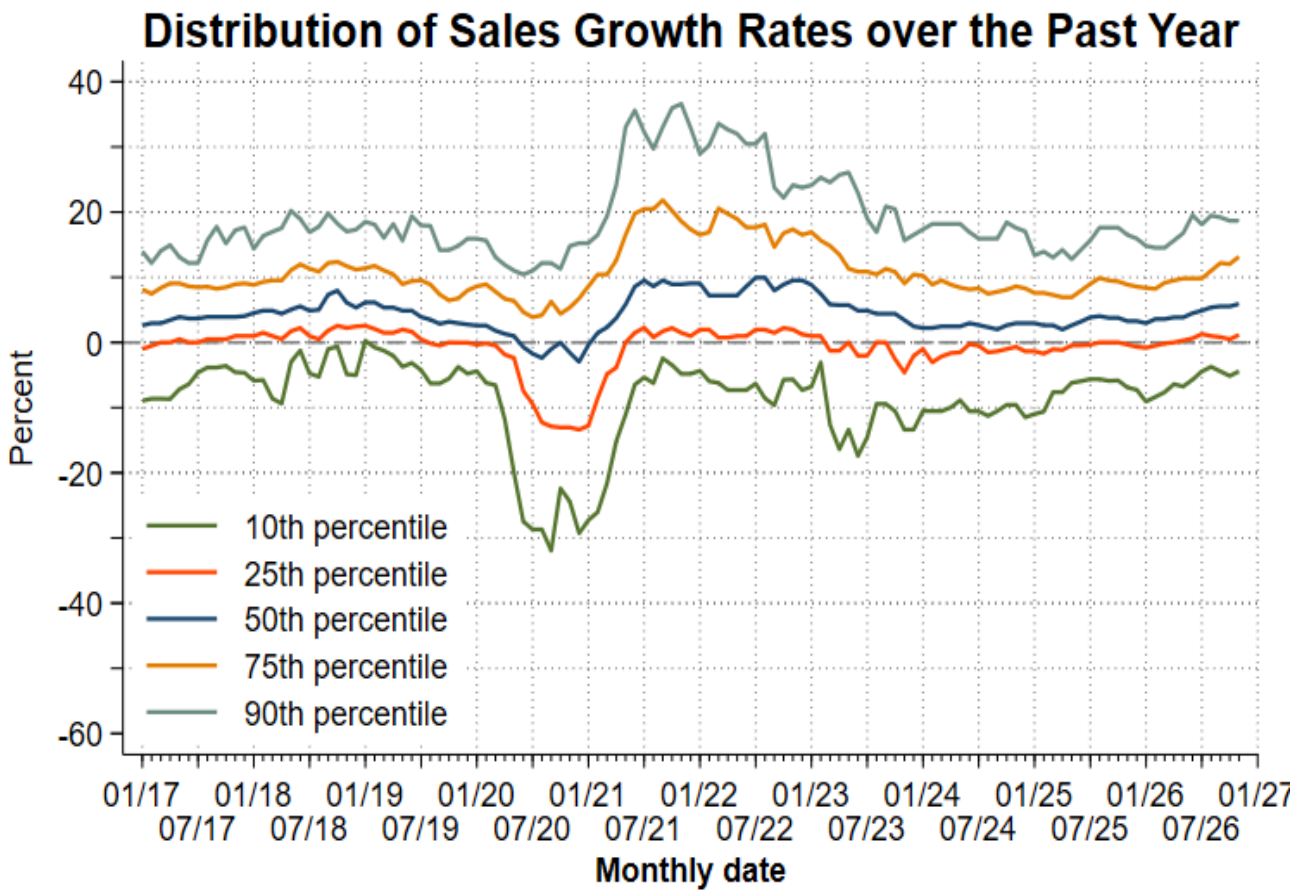


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The distribution of sales growth rates across firms remains wider than before the pandemic.

January 2017–November 2026

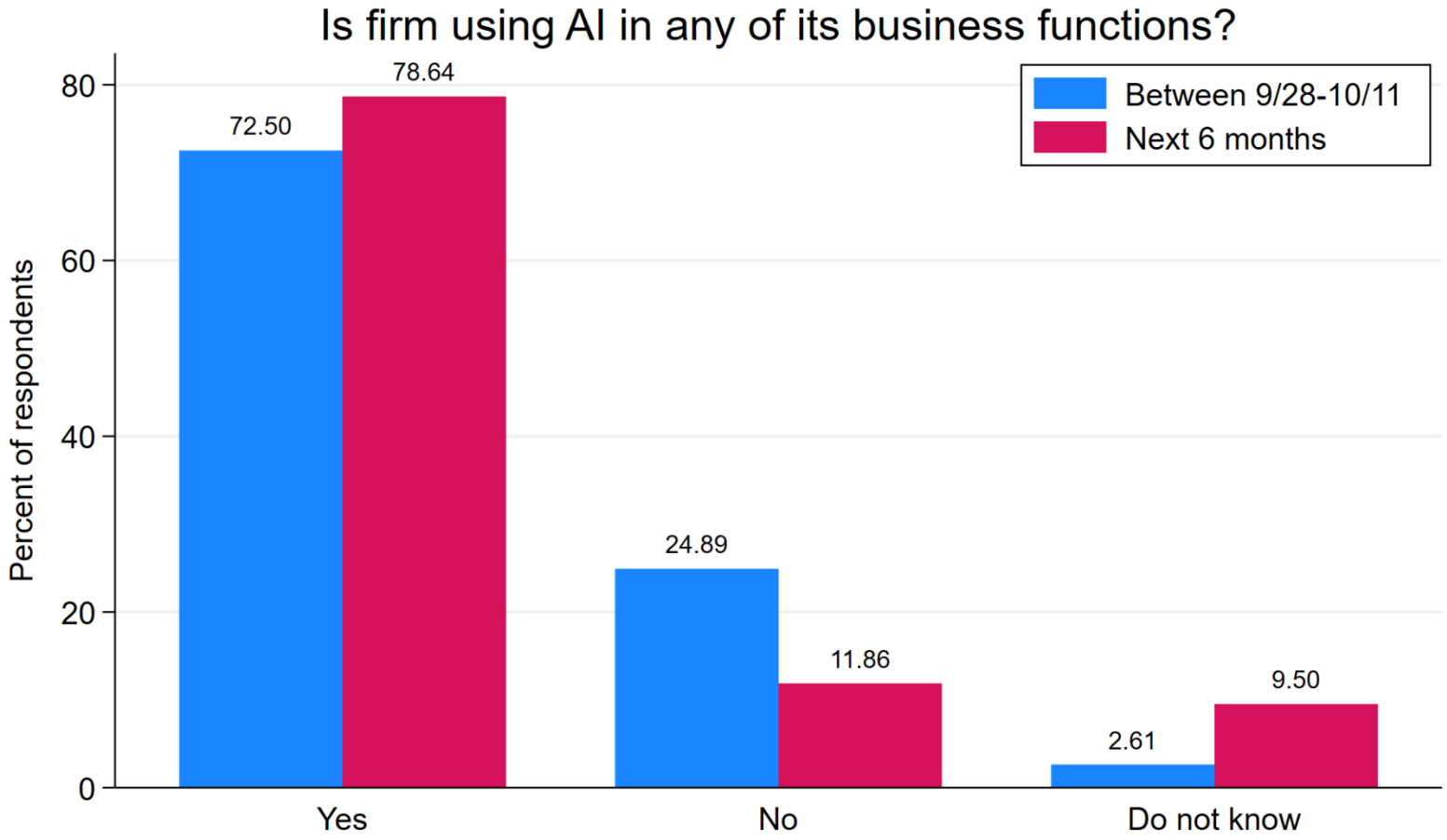


NOTES: Calculated using monthly data through Noivember 2026. The chart shows smoothed series. Lines show percentiles of the activity-weighted distribution of firm-level sales growth rates over the past year.

Source: Survey of Business Uncertainty conducted by the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta.

Over 72% of firms used AI in business functions from September to October. More firms 79% expect to use AI in these functions in the next six months.

Question: *Between September 28 – October 11, did this business use Artificial Intelligence (AI) in any of its business functions?*
Question: *During the next six months, do you think this business will be using Artificial Intelligence (AI) in any of its business functions?*
Included in both questions: *Examples of AI include: AI-powered data analysis; generative AI for marketing, product design, or coding; virtual AI agents for customer service; AI-powered forecasting or pricing; AI-driven computer vision for quality control; etc.*



Note: The SBU survey fielded these questions to panelists from 10/12/26 – 10/23/26. The sample covers all U.S. states and major industry sectors. Weighted by employment. N = 219.

Firms are most commonly using AI for IT, administration, finance and accounting, and marketing, among many other tasks.

Question: *In the last six months, did this business use Artificial Intelligence (AI) in any of the following business functions? Select all that apply.*

Business functions for which firm used AI in the last six months
October 2026 SBU (% of firms, employment-weighted)

	Full sample		*Industry class*					*Firm size class*			
	Full sample (Employment-weighted)	Full sample (unweighted)	Constr., Real Estate, Mining, and Util.	Manufacturing	Retail, Wholesale, and Transportation	Business and Professional Services	Other Services	0-50 Employees	50-99 Employees	99-249 Employees	99-249 Employees
Production of goods	**15.0**	11.9	14.4	24.9	17.7	12.4	8.1	11.8	7.5	12.4	16.8
Provision of services, products, or merchandise	**32.3**	26.5	23.8	23.7	26.7	42.2	31.1	22.5	22.0	23.4	36.6
Strategy and business development	**60.7**	51.8	62.1	56.8	48.9	64.3	68.0	45.5	54.4	52.6	64.7
Finance and accounting	**69.3**	54.1	64.7	64.4	68.0	74.6	67.4	44.3	53.0	59.8	75.5
Sales and marketing	**70.6**	60.5	69.9	71.5	62.5	75.5	66.9	56.4	59.4	60.7	75.5
Customer service	**40.0**	32.1	33.7	34.9	33.6	44.7	47.1	27.6	32.5	29.0	44.8
Research and development	**44.2**	41.4	41.8	48.3	34.0	51.4	35.2	40.6	37.0	37.7	47.0
Information technology	**80.4**	62.5	82.0	75.9	72.7	86.7	76.0	50.6	57.4	69.5	88.0
Human resources	**48.4**	34.6	55.8	51.8	31.8	50.7	50.3	30.5	31.0	33.3	55.7
Public relations and communication	**51.0**	44.3	56.2	44.5	39.2	59.9	44.1	40.9	41.8	42.4	55.1
Management and administration	**74.3**	60.7	72.5	72.6	66.3	77.7	78.4	51.3	61.9	67.8	79.1
Sourcing, supply chains, and purchasing	**29.5**	22.5	28.4	35.9	29.4	28.3	26.7	15.1	22.3	24.5	32.7
Quality management and control	**37.5**	29.3	30.6	28.3	25.5	52.9	28.9	23.0	28.5	27.5	42.3
Distribution	**13.0**	9.7	5.9	17.7	17.3	13.3	9.0	6.0	8.9	10.5	14.6
Legal and compliance	**59.2**	48.7	65.1	50.4	50.0	63.8	61.7	44.5	48.6	45.5	65.1
Count	**1109**	1109	207	186	185	396	133	447	186	202	274

Note: The SBU survey fielded these questions to panelists from 10/12/26 – 10/23/26. The sample covers all U.S. states and major industry sectors. We record nonresponses for options as “No” for firms who responded to at least one other option. We also record “Unsure” as “No.”

Business execs expect their firms' use of AI for all listed functions to increase over the next six months.

Question: *During the next six months, do you think this business will be using Artificial Intelligence (AI) in any of the following business functions? Select all that apply.*

Business functions for which firm will use AI in the next six months
October 2026 SBU (% of firms, employment-weighted)

	Full sample		*Industry class*					*Firm size class*			
	Full sample (Employment-weighted)	Full sample (unweighted)	Constr., Real Estate, Mining, and Util.	Manufacturing	Retail, Wholesale, and Transportation	Business and Professional Services	Other Services	0-50 Employees	50-99 Employees	99-249 Employees	99-249 Employees
Production of goods	**25.3**	20.6	26.5	43.4	25.4	20.4	18.5	18.5	16.9	18.9	28.1
Provision of services, products, or merchandise	**46.1**	41.6	43.2	49.9	38.0	51.6	38.3	37.6	37.8	36.3	49.8
Strategy and business development	**78.2**	74.9	82.7	76.6	69.2	78.7	84.4	74.2	74.1	71.9	80.5
Finance and accounting	**87.8**	77.9	88.8	86.8	90.0	85.5	92.0	70.3	78.8	82.2	91.1
Sales and marketing	**83.1**	78.9	84.0	87.2	74.8	83.6	85.8	77.4	76.2	75.4	86.1
Customer service	**61.4**	53.6	48.7	65.0	56.7	63.7	67.9	47.0	55.3	49.7	65.8
Research and development	**57.0**	56.9	55.6	63.6	43.6	60.7	55.6	57.9	55.6	51.7	58.5
Information technology	**90.5**	79.7	91.1	89.7	90.7	90.9	89.6	73.3	76.9	82.4	94.9
Human resources	**69.6**	57.9	79.3	75.2	53.1	70.9	69.3	50.3	62.4	61.1	73.6
Public relations and communication	**66.0**	63.3	67.1	65.6	53.7	69.4	69.2	64.2	62.7	58.0	68.4
Management and administration	**84.3**	77.9	84.9	84.7	79.0	84.2	89.3	73.4	77.0	84.9	85.5
Sourcing, supply chains, and purchasing	**47.9**	40.2	43.3	63.4	52.9	41.1	48.7	30.5	46.6	40.4	50.9
Quality management and control	**59.4**	49.8	58.8	54.1	48.3	70.3	47.7	40.8	47.8	53.2	63.2
Distribution	**27.7**	21.4	19.8	40.5	28.4	26.4	24.1	14.5	19.0	21.2	31.0
Legal and compliance	**76.1**	69.2	85.9	71.4	65.7	77.3	80.2	63.3	72.4	65.1	80.0
Count	**866**	866	159	131	138	331	105	309	146	169	242

Note: The SBU survey fielded these questions to panelists from 10/12/26 – 10/23/26. The sample covers all U.S. states and major industry sectors. We record nonresponses for options as "No" for firms who responded to at least one other option. We also record "Unsure" as "No."

Appendix: Technical Information

Computing Moments of the Firm-Level Subjective Forecast Distributions

We calculate first and second moments of the subjective growth rate distributions of employment and sales revenue over the next 12 months or four quarters, as appropriate. Following standard practice in the literature on business-level dynamics, we calculate the growth rate of *x* from *t–1* to *t* as $g_t = 2(x_t - x_{t-1})/(x_t + x_{t-1})$.*

Employment

$CEmp$ = firm's current employment level, as reported by the respondent

$FEmp_i$ = employment 12 months hence in scenario i, for $i = 1,2,3,4,5$

p_i = *the associated probabilities*, $i = 1,2,3,4,5$

Scenario-Specific Growth Rates

$$EGr_i = 2(FEmp_i - CEmp)/(FEmp_i + CEmp),\ i = 1,2,3,4,5$$

First and Second Moments of the Subjective Growth Rate Forecast Distribution

$$Mean(EGr) = \sum_{i=1}^{5} p_i\, EGr_i$$

$$Var(EGr) = \sum_{i=1}^{5} p_i (EmpGr_i - Mean(EGr))^2$$

$$SD(EGr) = \sqrt{Var(EGr)}$$

Sales Revenue

$CSale$ = firm's sales revenue in the current quarter, as reported by the respondent

$FSaleGr_i$ = respondent's scenario–specific sales growth rate from now to four quarters hence, $i = 1,2,3,4,5$

p_i = *the associated probabilities*, $i = 1,2,3,4,5$

Implied Future Sales Level

$$FSale_i = \left(1 + \frac{FSaleGr_i}{100}\right) CSale,\ i = 1,2,3,4,5$$

Scenario–Specific Growth Rates (re–expressing respondent growth rates to our growth rate measure)

$$SaleGr_i = 2(FSale_i - CSales)/(FSale_i + CSale) = 2FSaleGr_i/(FSaleGr_i + 2),\ i = 1,2,3,4,5$$

First and Second Moments of the Subjective Growth Rate Forecast Distribution

$$Mean(SaleGr) = \sum_{i=1}^{5} p_i\, SaleGr_i$$

$$Var(SaleGr) = \sum_{i=1}^{5} p_i (SaleGr_i - Mean(SaleGr)_i)^2$$

$$SD(SaleGr) = \sqrt{Var(SaleGr)}$$

Subjective Expectations and Uncertainty Indices

We construct a monthly activity-weighted expectations (first-moment) index for employment growth and sales growth looking one year ahead. We also construct a monthly activity-weighted uncertainty (second-moment) index for the employment growth and sales growth looking one year ahead.

- In month *t,* the index for employment (sales) takes a value equal to the activity-weighted average of subjective mean employment (sales) growth rates looking one year hence ($Mean(Gr)$), averaging across all firms responding that month. We compute these subjective mean growth rates as described on slide 3, and winsorize them at the first and 99th percentiles before using them to construct the index.
- The month-*t* index of year-ahead subjective uncertainty for employment (sales) growth is the activity-weighted mean of ($SD\ (Gr)$) values across firms responding in month *t*. We compute these subjective standard deviations over growth rates as described on slide 3, and winsorize them at the first and 99th percentiles before inputting them into the index construction formula.
- When constructing first- and second-moment employment growth indexes, we weight firm *i*'s subjective mean growth rate expectation and uncertainty by the average of its month-*t* employment ($CEmp_{it}$) and its expected employment level ($EEmp_{it}$). We top-code these weights at 500 to diminish the influence of outliers among very large firms.
- When constructing first- and second-moment sales revenue growth indexes, we weight firms *i*'s subjective mean growth rate expectation and uncertainty by the average of its month-*t* sales revenue ($CSale_{it}$) and its expected sales level ($ESale_{it}$). We winsorize these activity-weights at the 1st and 80th percentile.
- Finally, we smooth our topic-specific indices by taking a moving average. We set the window for the moving average to 2 or 3 months, to match the panel structure of our survey.

Topic-specific Expected Excess Reallocation Indices

We construct forward-looking indices of excess job and sales revenue reallocation. These series measure the volume of cross-firm reallocation in economic activity above the reallocation required to support aggregate growth. For ease of exposition, we often refer to these as simply "reallocation rates":

- First, in each month *t,* we compute the activity-weighted average of own-firm expected gross job creation and destruction rates, which boils down to the activity-weighted average of the absolute value of subjective mean growth rates $|Mean(EGr)\ |$.
- Then , in each month *t,* we compute the absolute value of the activity weighted average of own-firm expected employment growth $Mean(EGr)$. This is effectively the absolute value of the employment growth expectations index in month *t*.
- We then obtain the expected job reallocation rate index value for month *t* by subtracting the outcome of the second bullet from the first. Letting w_{it} be firm i's activity weight in month t,

$$Expected\ Job\ Reallocation\ Rate_t = \sum_i w_t \cdot |Mean(EGr)\ | - \left| \sum_i w_t \cdot Mean(EGr) \right|$$

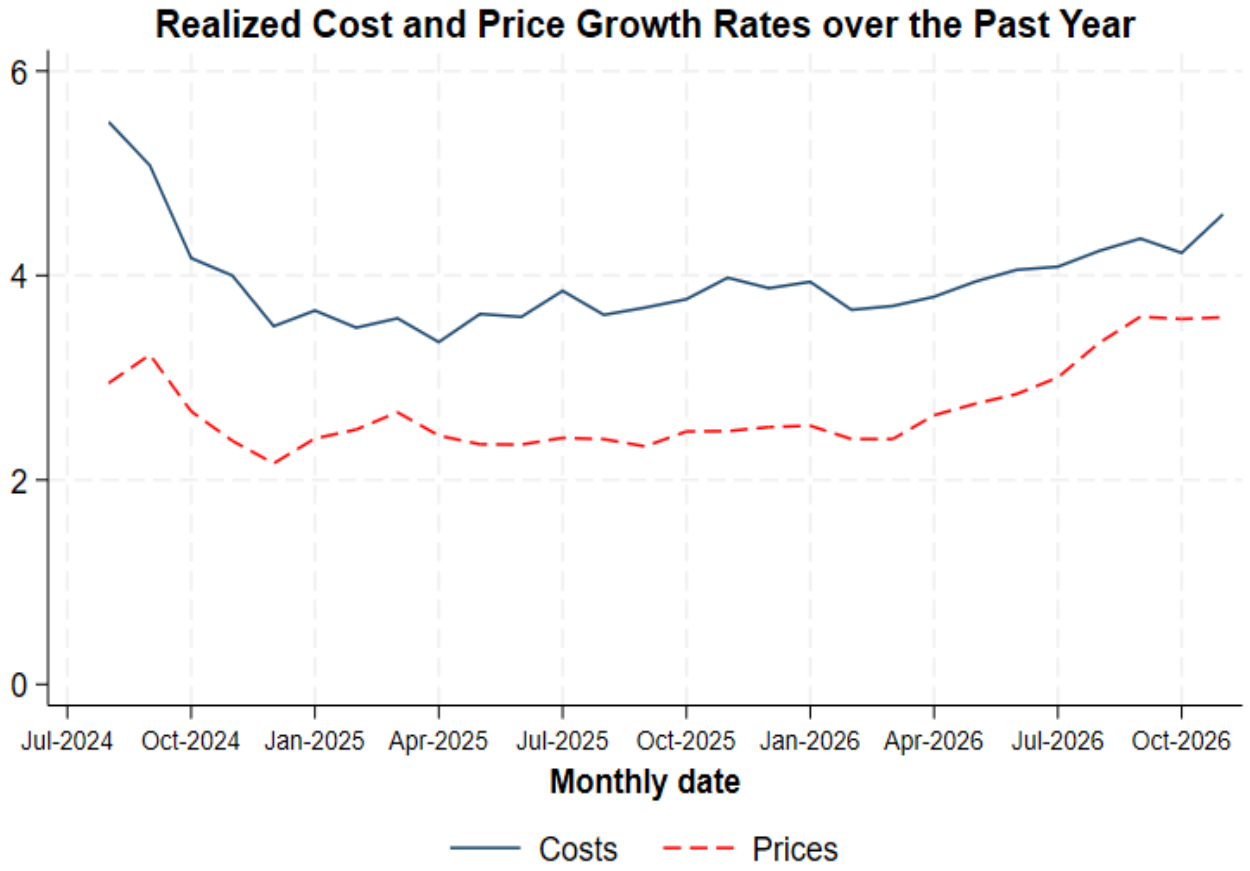
- Analogously, the expected sales revenue reallocation rate index in month *t* is the difference between the activity-weighted average of absolute expected sales growth rates, minus the absolute value of the average activity-weighted growth rate:

$$Expected\ Reallocation\ Rate\ For\ Sales\ Revenue_t = \sum_i w_t \cdot |Mean(SaleGr)\ | - \left| \sum_i w_t \cdot Mean(SaleGr) \right|$$

- We compute the subjective mean growth rates $Mean(EGr)$ and $Mean(SaleGr)$ as described on slides 18-21, and winsorize them at the 1st and 99th percentiles before using them to construct the index.
- Firm *i*'s activity weight w_{it} is the average of its month–*t* employment or sales level ($Cemp_{it}$ *or* $CSale_{it}$) and its expected employment or sales level twelve months hence ($FEmp_{it}$ *or* $FSale_{it}$). We top–code these weights at 500 for employment and at the 80th percentile for sales to diminish the influence of outliers among very large firms.

Nominal cost and price growth have risen slightly in the recent months.

July 2024–November 2026



NOTE: Calculated using monthly data through November 2026. Realized growth rate series for costs and prices are activity-weighted averages of firms' reported (look-back) growth rates over the past year (specifically, the previous four quarters for sales revenue and previous 12 months for employment).

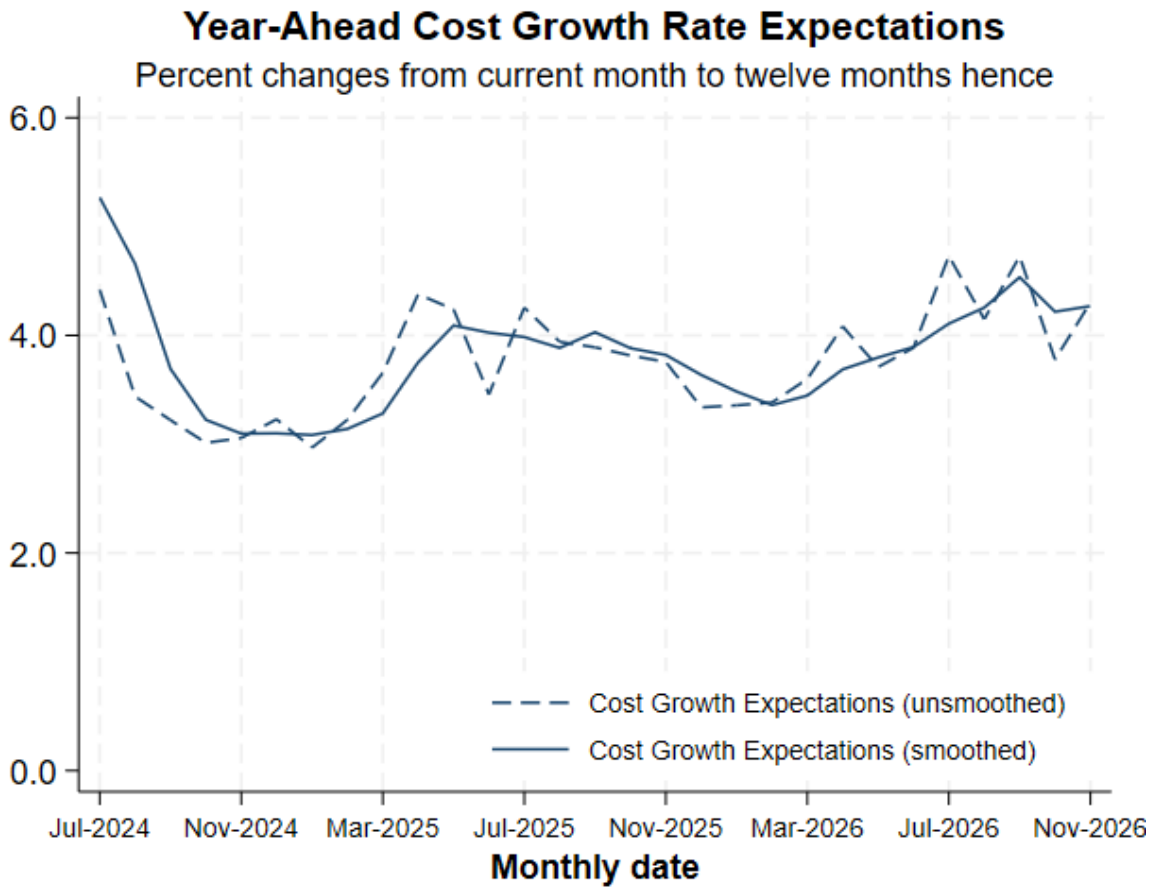
We measure the percentage change in the average price that a firm charges on all products and services and the percentage change in the average unit costs that a firm faces.

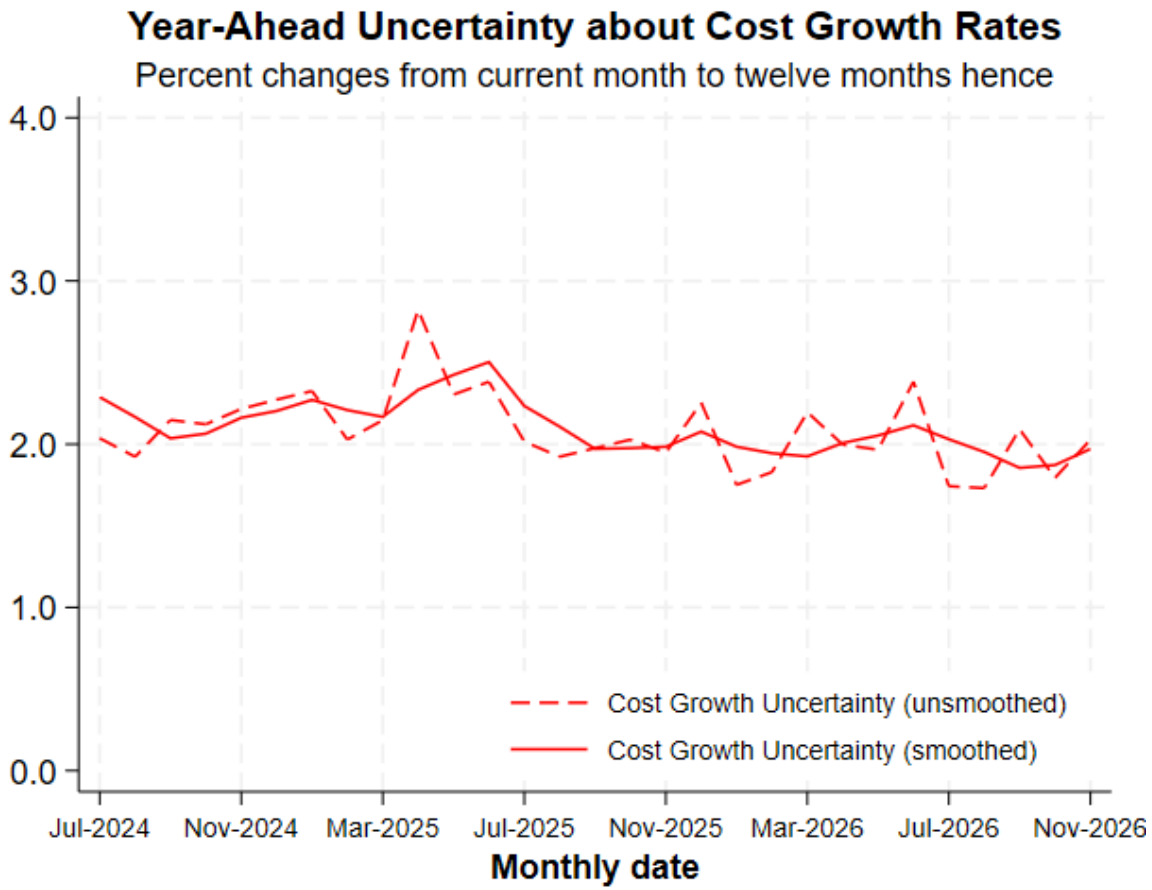
NOTE: The chart shows smoothed series.

Source: Survey of Business Uncertainty conducted by the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta. For more information, see "Surveying Business Uncertainty" by David Altig, Jose Maria Barrero, Nick Bloom, Steven J. Davis, Brent Meyer, and Nick Parker, NBER Working Paper No. 25956, February 2020. The vertical dashed line shown in the plot marks the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cost growth expectations remain slightly elevated. Cost growth uncertainty has fallen slightly over the past few months.

July 2024–November 2026



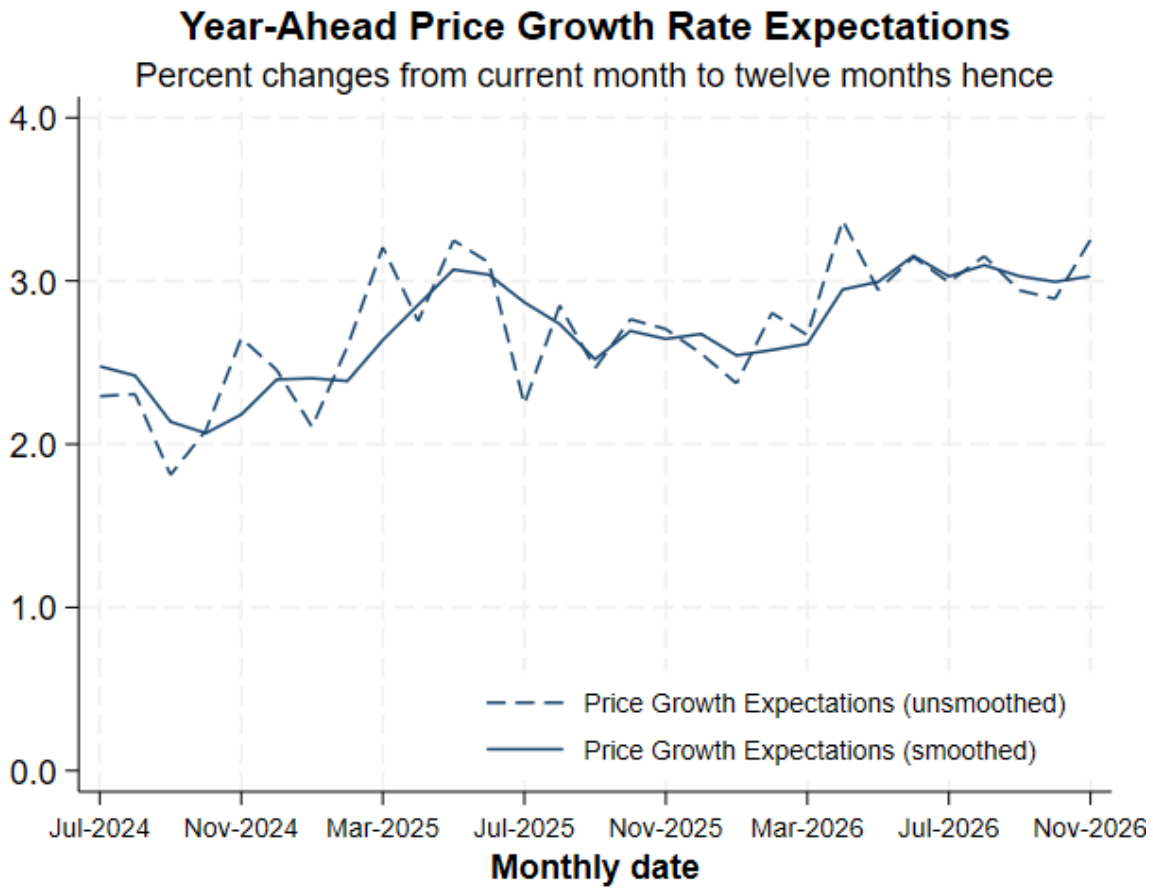


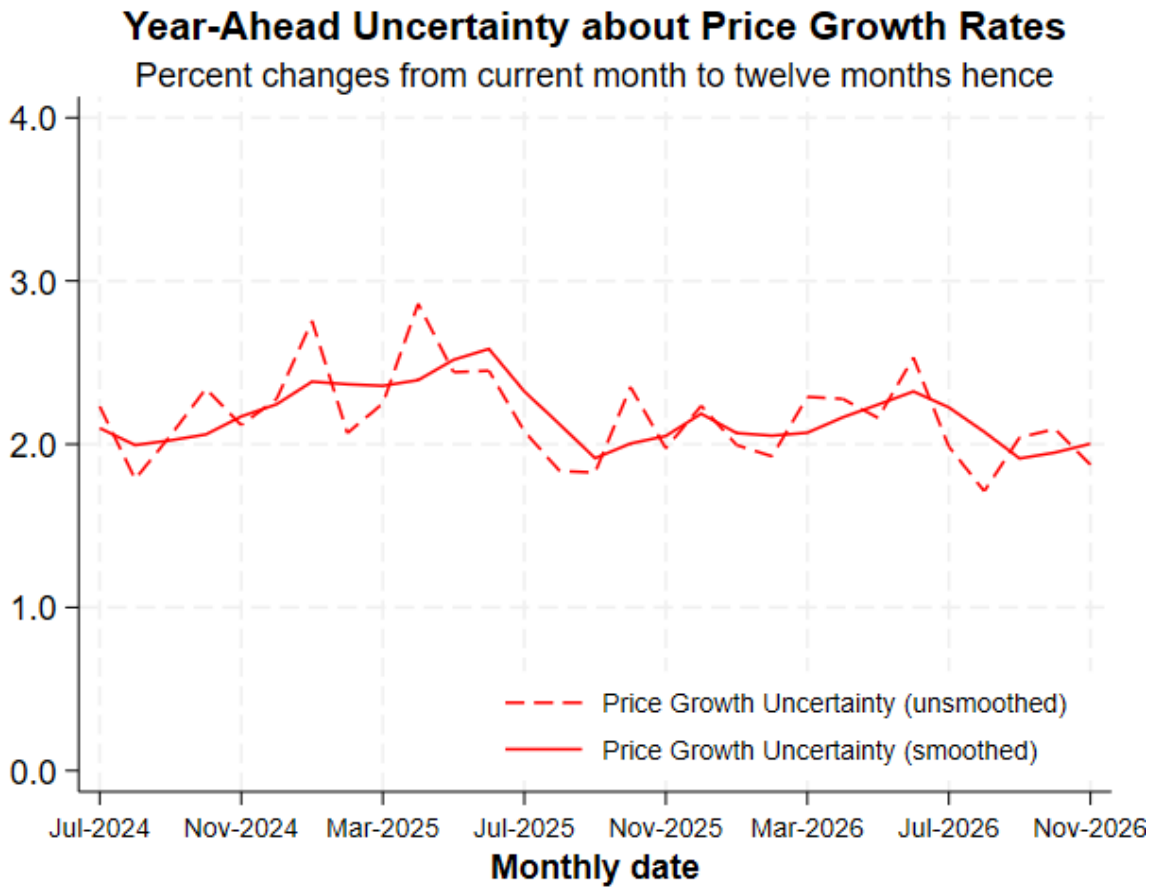
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Price growth expectations have risen since this time last year. Price growth uncertainty has fallen slightly over the past few months.

July 2024–November 2026



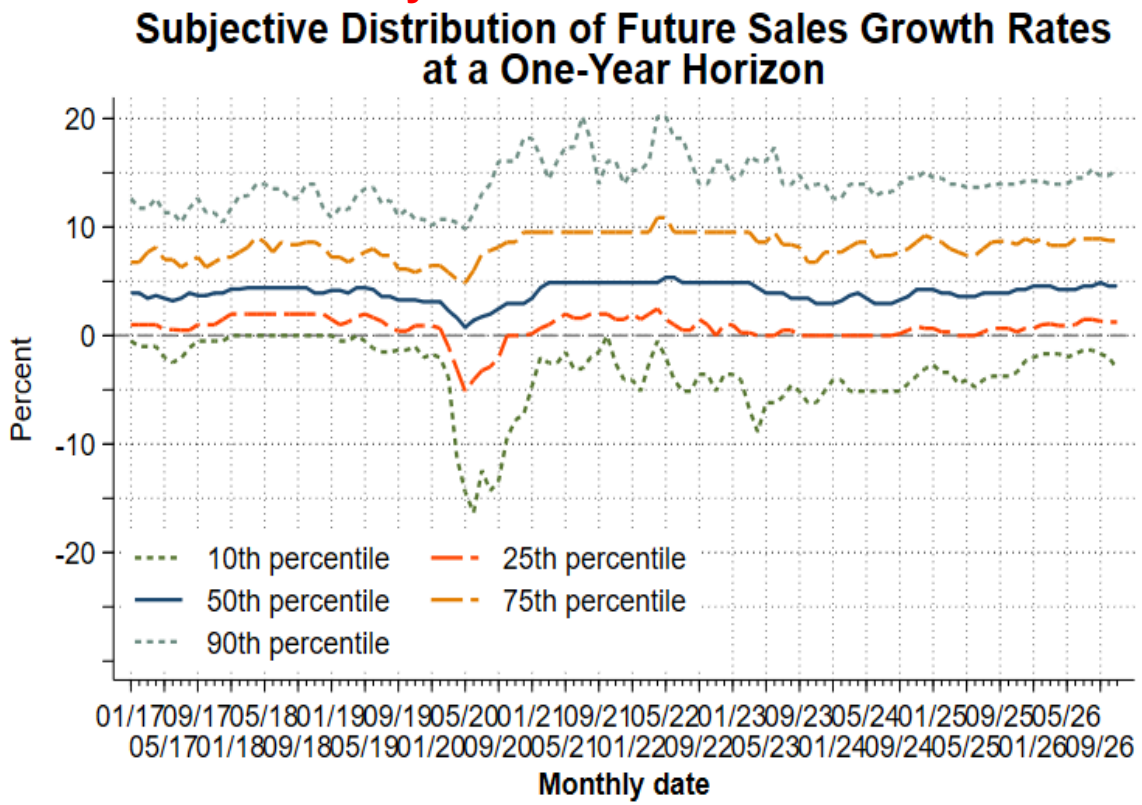


NOTE: The charts show smoothed series.

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Appendix: Subjective Forecast Distribution of Future Sales Growth Rates at a One-Year Horizon

January 2017–November 2026

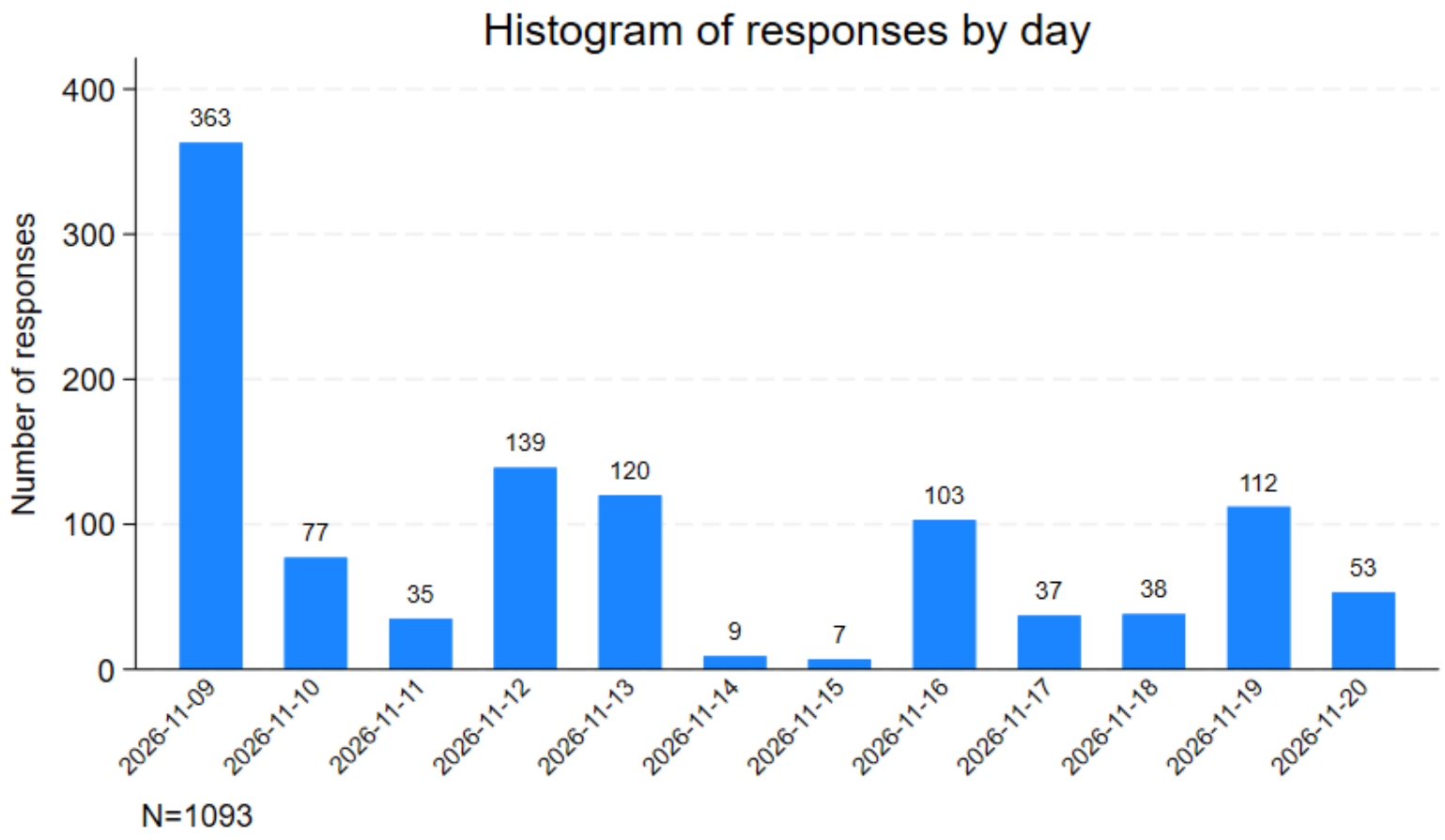


NOTES: Calculated using monthly data through November 2026. The charts show smoothed series. This is a plot of the subjective distribution for the representative firm's future sales growth rates over a 4-quarter look-ahead horizon. To calculate this distribution, we pool over all firm-level subjective forecast distributions in the indicated month and weight each firm by its activity level. Then we use the probabilities assigned to each possible future sales growth rate to obtain activity-weighted quantiles of the future sales growth rate distribution.

Source: Survey of Business Uncertainty conducted by the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta.

Appendix: Histogram of survey response frequency for the October 2026 survey wave

November 2026



Source: Survey of Business Uncertainty conducted by the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta.