

FYI: Science Policy News from AIP BULLETIN

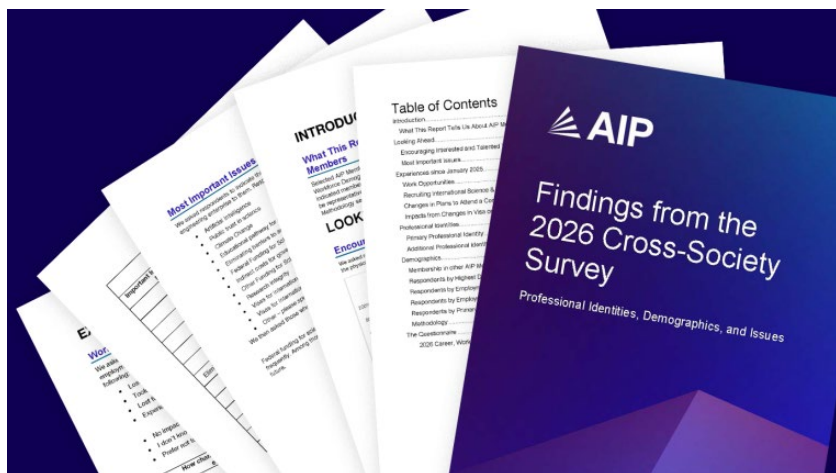


August 31, 2026

Funding Cuts, Public Trust, and AI Dominate Concerns for Physical Scientists, Survey Reveals

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A new AIP survey finds nearly a fifth of physical scientists have lost federal funding since early 2025, with international travel and recruitment also affected.



AIP Statistics published this report on Aug. 31, 2026.AIP

Fading federal research spending overwhelmingly struck physical scientists as their top concern for the future, according to an American Institute of Physics survey, published today. Public trust in science and artificial intelligence followed as leading worries.

The survey also found that recent federal policy changes are disrupting research, international recruitment, and travel. The survey was conducted this summer with over 2,000 respondents from AIP's member organizations.

The findings point to wider scientific alarm over spending cuts and policy shifts in research seen in the second Trump administration. Asked to select up to three of the most important issues affecting the science and engineering enterprise, 74% of respondents selected federal funding for science, making it the most commonly cited concern. Public trust in science followed, at 61%, while 49% selected AI. These concerns topped other issues such as the educational pipeline for sciences, climate change, research integrity, and eliminating barriers to access and opportunity in science. Of the respondents who picked AI as a top concern, most said AI could be both beneficial and detrimental, reflecting nuanced feelings about the technology.

Important Issues Impacting the Science and Engineering Enterprise	Percent All respondents indicating issue as most important		
	Respondents residing in US	Respondents residing abroad	Overall
Federal funding for science	76% [†]	57% [†]	74%
Public trust in science	63% [†]	48% [†]	61%
Artificial intelligence	48%	55%	49%
Educational pipeline for scientists	24% [†]	16% [†]	23%
Climate change	17% [†]	23% [†]	18%
Research integrity	15% [†]	24% [†]	16%
Eliminating barriers to access and opportunities	15%	16%	15%
Visas for international scholars	9% [†]	20% [†]	10%
Visas for international students	10%	12%	10%
Other funding for science	6% [†]	12% [†]	7%
Indirect costs for government grants	6% [†]	2% [†]	6%
Other not listed	5%	7%	5%
Total respondents	1844	262	2106

[†] Indicates differences are statistically significant at $\alpha=0.05$

A table comparing the responses from physical scientists in the US and abroad on the biggest issues impacting the science and engineering enterprise. AIP Statistics

Nearly a fifth of respondents, 19%, reported losing funding for a planned activity, such as a contract or grant, as a result of recent policy changes. A small number of respondents, 4%, said they had reduced work hours and responsibilities, while 2% said they had lost a job or position, and another 2% said they had retired or accepted a buyout earlier than planned.

Most responded that changes in federal policy and funding had not impacted their employment.

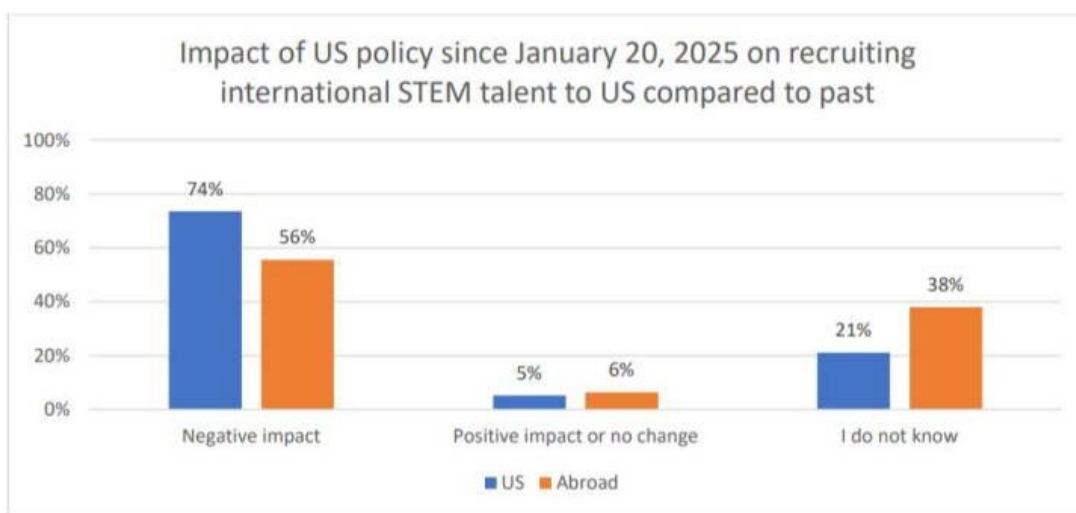
The survey also highlighted the interdisciplinary nature of the physical sciences workforce. About three-quarters of respondents reported at least one professional identity in addition to their primary one. Four in 10 respondents identified as physicists in either a primary or secondary capacity, while nearly one in three identified as educators in some capacity.

International travel and recruitment also affected

Survey respondents also expressed concern about the effects of US policy on international scientific engagement. Nearly three-quarters of respondents living in the US said policy changes since Jan. 20, 2025, when President Trump took office for a second time, had negatively affected the country's ability to recruit international science and engineering talent.

Recruiting International Science & Engineering Talent

We asked respondents what impact, if any, US policies since January 20, 2025 impacted recruiting international science and engineering talent to the US. Response options included negative, no change, positive, and "I do not know."



Differences between the responses from US residents and non-residents are statistically significant, $\alpha = 0.05$.

A bar chart showing the impact of recent US visa and immigration policy on recruiting international STEM talent to the US in the physical sciences. AIP Statistics

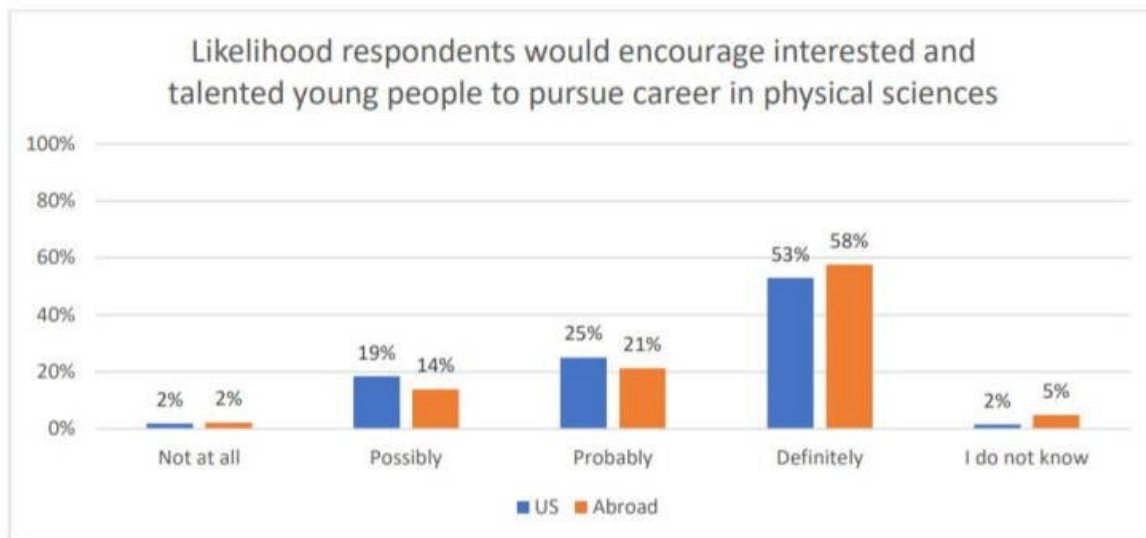
Conference participation was also affected. Among respondents living outside the US who had planned to attend a scientific meeting in the country, 59% said they had changed or canceled those plans because of US visa and immigration policy changes.

A positive outlook despite policy concerns

Despite concerns about federal funding and recent policy changes, respondents remained broadly positive about careers in the physical sciences, with 54% saying they would definitely encourage an interested and talented young person to pursue a career in the field.

Encouraging Interested and Talented Young People

We asked respondents whether they would encourage interested and talented young people to pursue a career in the physical sciences.



Differences between the responses from US residents and non-residents are statistically significant, $\alpha = 0.05$.

A bar chart from the AIP statistics report showing how many respondents would encourage others to go into physical sciences careers. AIP Statistics

Kei Koizumi, a research professor at George Washington University's Institute for International Science and Technology Policy, said it is positive that respondents still want to encourage young people to go into physical sciences careers, despite the challenges they are facing now. "I think that is encouraging; it suggests they see the current situation as a short-term one that we will get through," Koizumi said.

However, Koizumi added that the results also highlight the impact of funding cuts across federal agencies. "Unfortunately, a lot of grants have been cut at DOE, NASA and NSF and that is what we are seeing in these responses. It's not all at NIH," he said. On international travel restrictions, Koizumi said it is clear that physical scientists are "seeing the impact on

science of the administration's immigration and visa policies," adding, "they recognize the harm to recruiting international talent happening in labs everywhere."

Daniel Vergano contributed to reporting for this article.