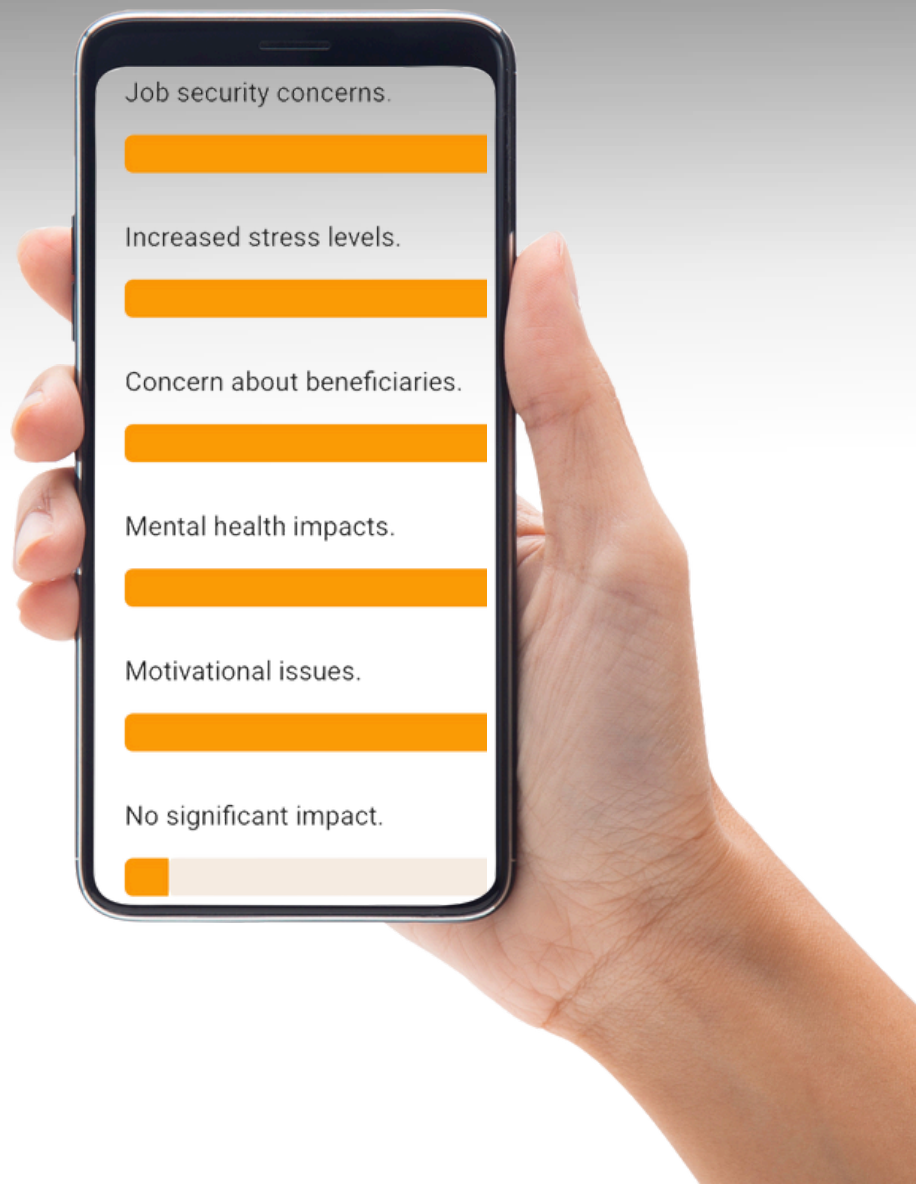


Breaking Point:

First Major Survey of USAID Workers & Partners Reveals Devastating Impacts of US Funding Freeze



First major survey of USAID workforce captures crisis in real-time

2,270 responses with insights drawn from 390 USAID staffers & 1155 staff at companies & nonprofits that worked with USAID.

Conducted February 8-21, 2025 following Trump administration aid funding freeze.

Represents timely insights into impacts across the development sector during this time of unprecedented funding cuts.

Key findings

among former/current USAID employees/contractors:

77% say the funding freeze severely weakens U.S. national security

87% believe actions strengthen China and Russia's position

92% anticipate mass layoffs across the sector

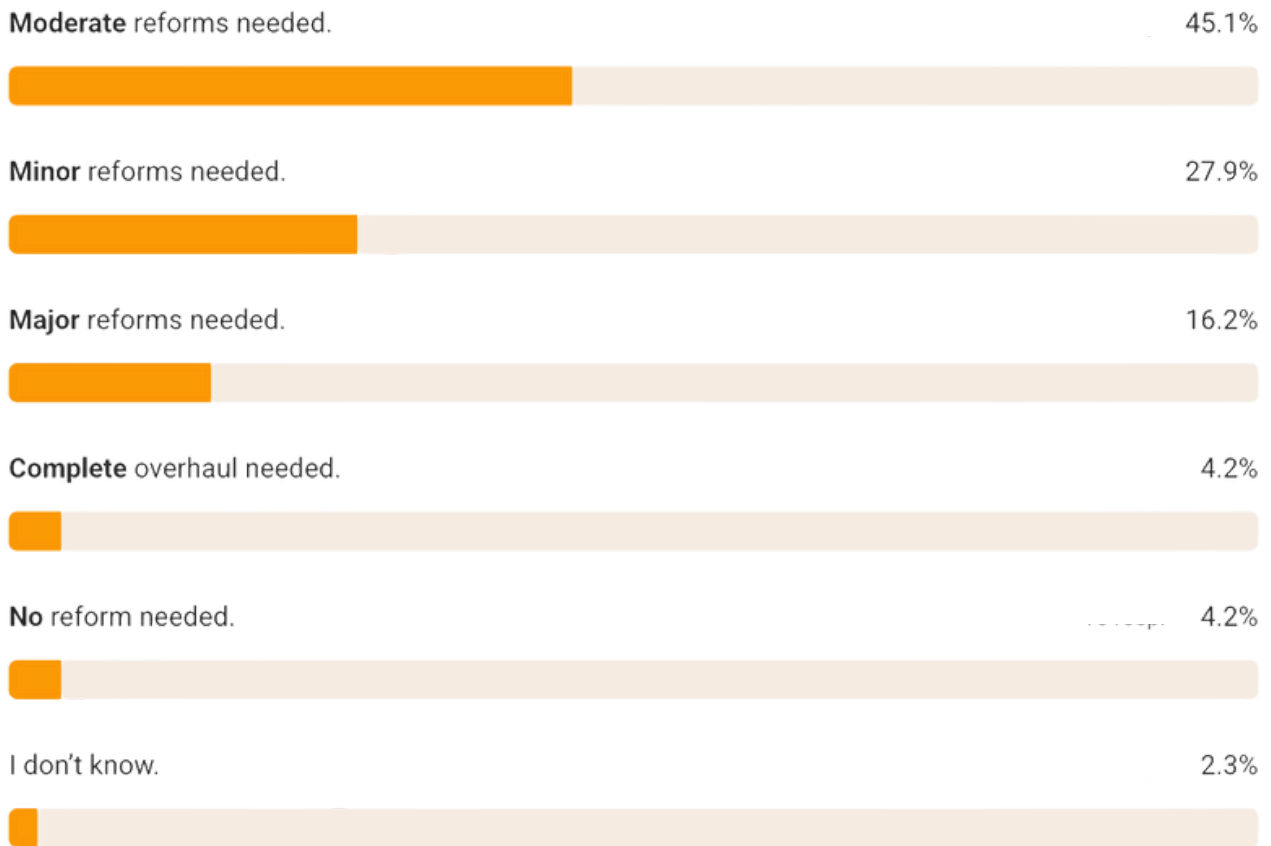
26% of professionals considering leaving the sector

among former/current organizations (i.e. implementing partners) that worked with USAID:

73% report staff layoffs or furloughs already occurring

94% expect decreased program effectiveness

USAID workers want reform...



...but these cuts severely undermine reform

81% say funding freeze weakens reform efforts

Within this, **72%** say funding freeze "severely hinders" reform efforts

Only **12%** see cuts as helpful to improvement process

USAID workers warn funding cuts undermine national security...

77% say cuts “severely weaken” US national security

Only **4%** believe it “strongly strengthens” national security

...and hand geopolitical advantage to China & Russia

87% believe actions strengthen China and Russia's position globally

Only **6%** see any weakening of rival power influence

Lives at risk: Workers report immediate humanitarian consequences

86% of professionals certain or very certain lives will be lost due to funding cuts

- **Food security and agriculture** identified as most vulnerable to cuts
- **Democracy, governance & conflict prevention** programs ranked second, and **humanitarian assistance** third most affected
- **Country-specific programs** and **education** round out top 5 threatened areas
- **Health programs also in jeopardy**, particularly HIV/AIDS, malaria and TB initiatives

Mass layoffs already underway, with worse to come

92% of USAID staffers **anticipate mass layoffs** across the sector

73% of implementing partners report staff layoffs or furloughs **already occurring**

48% of implementing partners expect **over half** of their organization's staff to be terminated

Eyes wide shut: Most say administration is blind to long-term consequences*

78% believe the current administration is not aware of long-term consequences

15% think the administration is fully aware of consequences of the aid freeze

Development professionals overwhelmingly doubt strategic planning behind cuts.

**Findings from current/former USAID employees/contractors*



The administration sees foreign aid as charity we can't afford, not as strategic investment in America's security and economic interests. This short-sightedness will cost us for decades.

SURVEY RESPONDENT



Organizations predict catastrophic impacts on program effectiveness

94% of implementing partners and organizations expect decreased program effectiveness

85% say actions “severely decrease effectiveness”

Organizations facing operational collapse

99% report the USAID stop-work order as disruptive to operations

Top 5 areas of **current disruption**:

- Program suspensions (84%)
- Staff layoff or furloughs (73%)
- Disruption to beneficiary services (66%)
- Contract terminations (65%)
- Budget reductions (63%)

48% estimate losing **over half** of their organization’s staff

20% predict losing **26-50%** of their staff

Top 5 **anticipated areas** of disruption:

- Permanent loss of staff (78%)
- Reduced capacity to implement future programs (76%)
- Lost momentum on development goals (75%)
- Damaged relationships with local partner (69%)
- Withdrawal from certain geographic areas (56%)

Funding cuts taking heavy toll on worker well-being

Top concerns for **current/former USAID employees or contractors**:

82% concerned about their own job security

82% report increased stress levels

78% are concerned about beneficiaries

70% report mental health impacts

Given the uncertainties, **26%** of workers considering **leaving the sector entirely**

Top concerns for **current/former implementing partners**:

86% experiencing increased stress levels

80% concerned about their own job security

77% worried about beneficiaries

64% report mental health impacts

Key Takeaways

This first-ever comprehensive survey reveals **deep concerns** among USAID workers, contractors and implementing partners **about the aid ecosystem**.

Development professionals **support thoughtful reform** but see current actions as **counterproductive**.

Current approach perceived as a **threat to both U.S. national security and global humanitarian operations**.

Workforce upheaval risks **permanent loss of expertise and implementation capacity**.

Due to unprecedented uncertainties, over a quarter of development professionals are **ready to leave the sector**.

Most believe a **significant number of lives will be lost** due to the administration's actions.



Appendix

The full picture: Survey captures diverse perspectives across USAID ecosystem

Current role in U.S. foreign assistance:

- Currently works for an implementing partner/organization that receives funding from USAID/State Department/other government agency: 42.4%
- No working relationship with USAID/State Department/other government agency or its partners: 26.8%
- Recently furloughed/terminated from a position with a USAID/State Department/ other agency implementing partner or organization: 9.8%
- Former contractor with USAID/State Department/other agency until being recently put on administrative leave, furloughed, or terminated: 6.4%
- Currently employed by USAID/State Department/other agency as a government employee: 5.6%
- Currently contracted by USAID/State Department/other government agency as a government contractor: 3.9%
- Don't know: 3.3%
- Former USAID/State Department/other government agency employee until being recently placed on administrative leave, furloughed, or terminated: 1.7%

Experience at every level: Senior voices dominate response pool

From all respondents:

- Senior level: 43.8%
- Mid-level: 36.5%
- Executive level: 13.8%
- Entry level: 5.9%

From current/former USAID employees or contractors:

- >10 years experience: 34.5%
- 6-10 years experience: 25.8%
- 2-5 years experience: 23.2%
- <2 years experience: 16.6%

Implementation landscape: NGOs lead response from the field*

- Large international NGO: 33.6%
- Local/National NGO: 13.9%
- Small international NGO: 13.6%
- Large private contractor: 12.9%
- Small private contractor: 10.9%
- Academic/Research institution: 6.7%
- Other: 8.4%

**Other responses included: USAID and organizations/projects linked to it, multilateral agencies such as the UN, government bodies.*

Funding dependencies: Many organizations heavily reliant on USAID

- >75% USAID funded: 38.2%
- <25% USAID funded: 21.7%
- 25-50% USAID funded: 21.2%
- 51-75% USAID funded: 18.9%

Voices from the frontlines: The human stories behind the statistics

HUMANITARIAN IMPACTS

"In Syria, 900,000 people no longer have access to healthcare, drinking water, latrines, or shelter materials. In Sudan, 38 healthcare centers serving almost 550,000 people have closed."

"Vaccines will arrive in countries, but if we are not allowed to receive funding for other project costs they will be wasted and never make it into arms."

OPERATIONAL IMPACTS

"More than \$560,000 worth of antibiotics, antimalarials, rape-treatment kits are stuck at port because there is no money to distribute it."

Human and animal diagnostic labs are running out of reagents. No confirmation of diseases.

JOBS/ECONOMIC IMPACTS

"I am the primary breadwinner in my household and a parent to four young children. In seven days, I will lose my income to a furlough."

"Senior leadership has gone down to part-time to try to keep all staff employed... Partners on contracts have gone out of business."

TRUST/LONG-TERM IMPACTS

"Partners will no longer trust us. Starting up projects again will be a nightmare. General hostility toward US."

"Critical programs across 50 countries have been stopped and thousands of staff - entire teams involved in implementing these programs are suddenly sidelined."

About Devex

This report was published by Devex, the leading media platform providing independent news coverage on global development. Our team of journalists from around the world deliver timely, in-depth analysis of international aid, humanitarian efforts, and development policy to over 1 million development professionals.

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