



architecture career index

2026

Architecture Career Conditions Expand with Cautious Optimism

59.5 ACI Score

50 = neutral | >50 = expansion | <50 = contraction

The Architecture Career Index (ACI) indicates that career conditions across the profession are expanding, driven primarily by firm hiring expectations and forward-looking confidence.

Regional analysis shows the South leading the profession across nearly every category measured, while all regions posted readings above the neutral threshold of 50.



National Snapshot

Career Confidence

59.3

Moderate optimism

Firm Outlook

61.7

Strong expansion

Workload

55.5

Steady growth

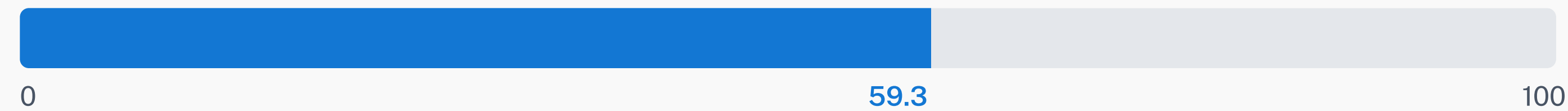
ACI (Composite)

59.5

Expansion

Career Confidence Index

59.3

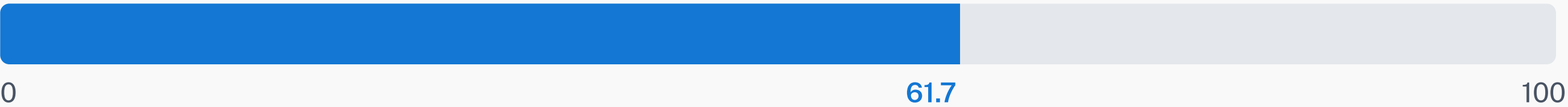


Architects report increasing confidence in their job security over the next 6 months, though sentiment remains measured rather than exuberant.



Firm Outlook Index

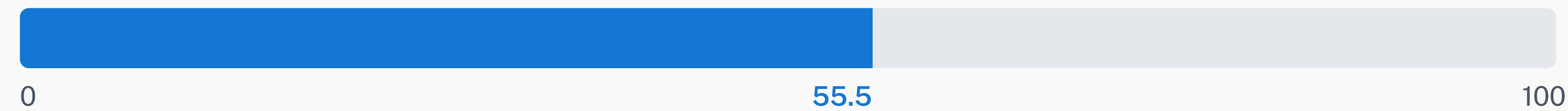
61.7 **STRONGEST SIGNAL**



The strongest signal this quarter. Firms are leaning toward **hiring and growth**, indicating forward-looking expansion across the industry.

Workload Index

55.5



Workload is increasing, but at a slower pace than sentiment — suggesting growth is present but not yet fully realized in day-to-day activity.

Signature Insight: Confidence is Leading Reality

Fragility Gap

-3.7

Workload – Career Confidence

Confidence is currently **outpacing workload**, indicating that optimism is being driven by expectations of future demand rather than present conditions.

Key takeaway:

The profession is optimistic — but that optimism has not fully translated into workload yet.



What This Means

1

Expansion is underway, led by firm expectations

2

Hiring signals are strong, suggesting forward momentum

3

Workload lags sentiment, indicating potential upside — or risk if expectations aren't met

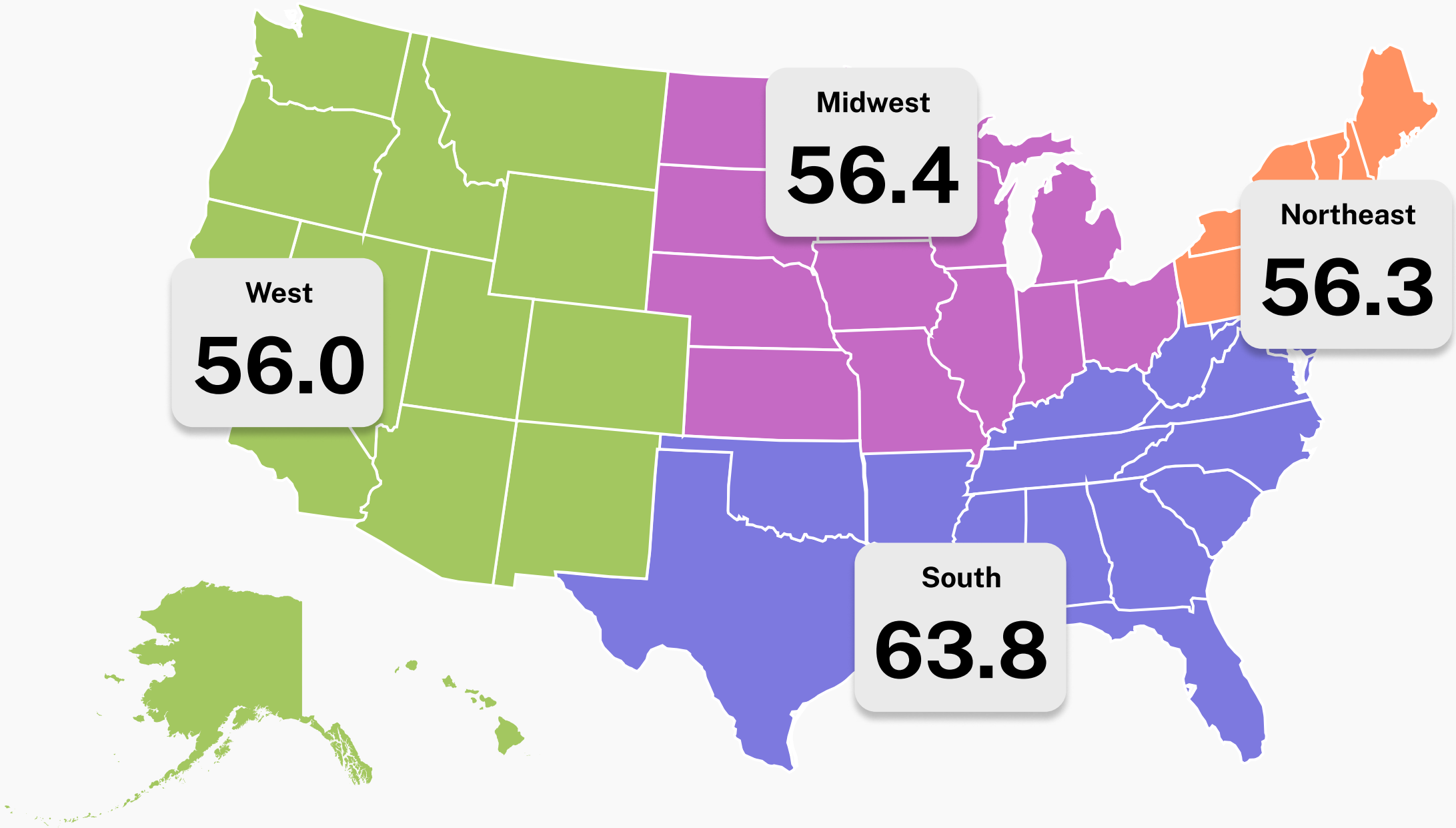
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Forward-looking confidence continues to outpace present-day activity



Regional ACI Performance

Region	Overall Index	Career Confidence	Firm Outlook	Workload
South	63.89	66.03	63.46	62.18
Midwest	56.41	50.00	65.38	53.85
Northeast	56.39	58.33	56.67	54.17
West	56.08	55.56	57.14	55.56



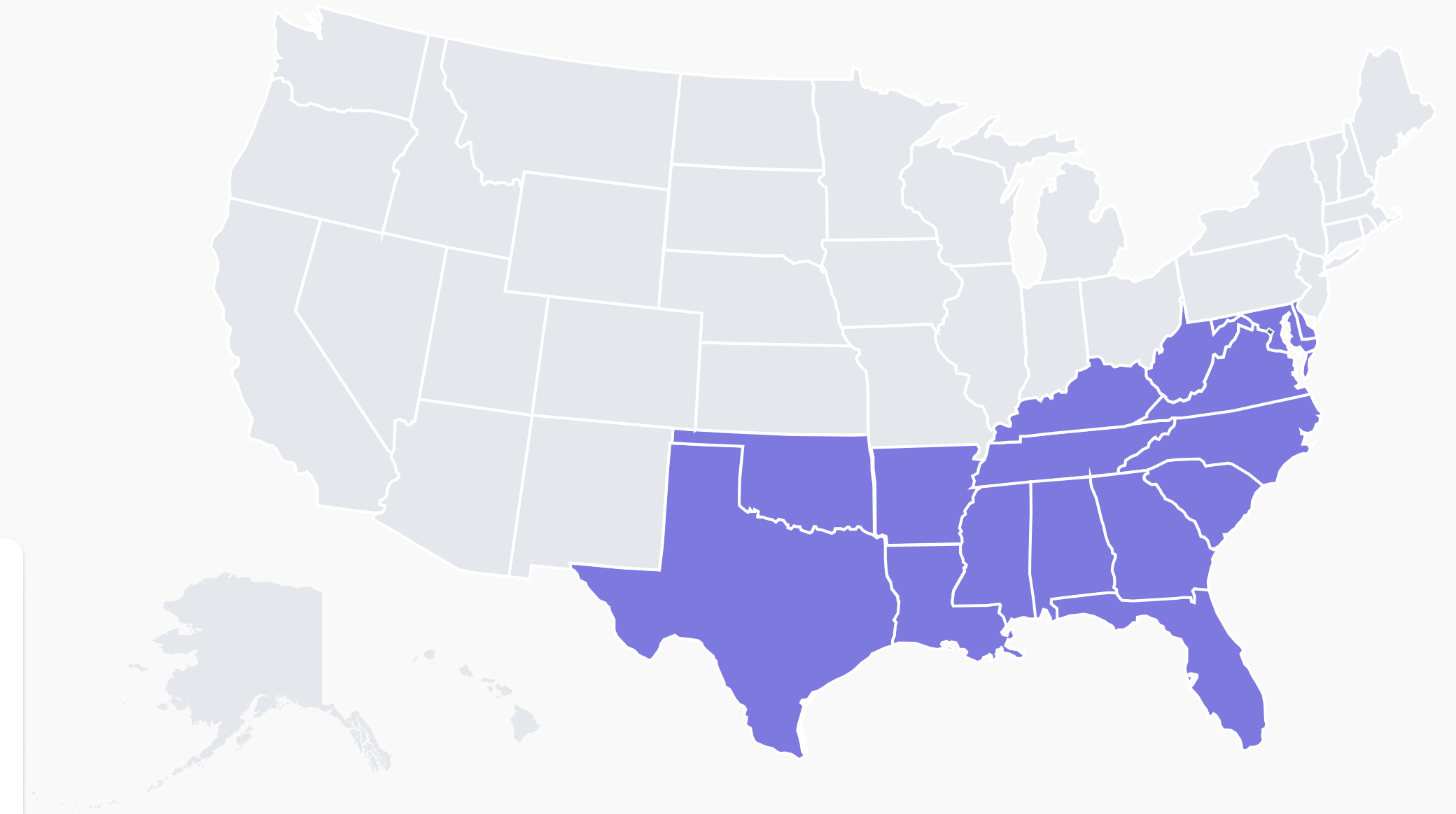
South Leads Nationally

The South outperformed every other region in career confidence, workload, and overall career conditions.

63.89 Overall ACI Reading

The region showed the strongest combination of:

- Hiring optimism
- Workload growth
- Career stability expectations

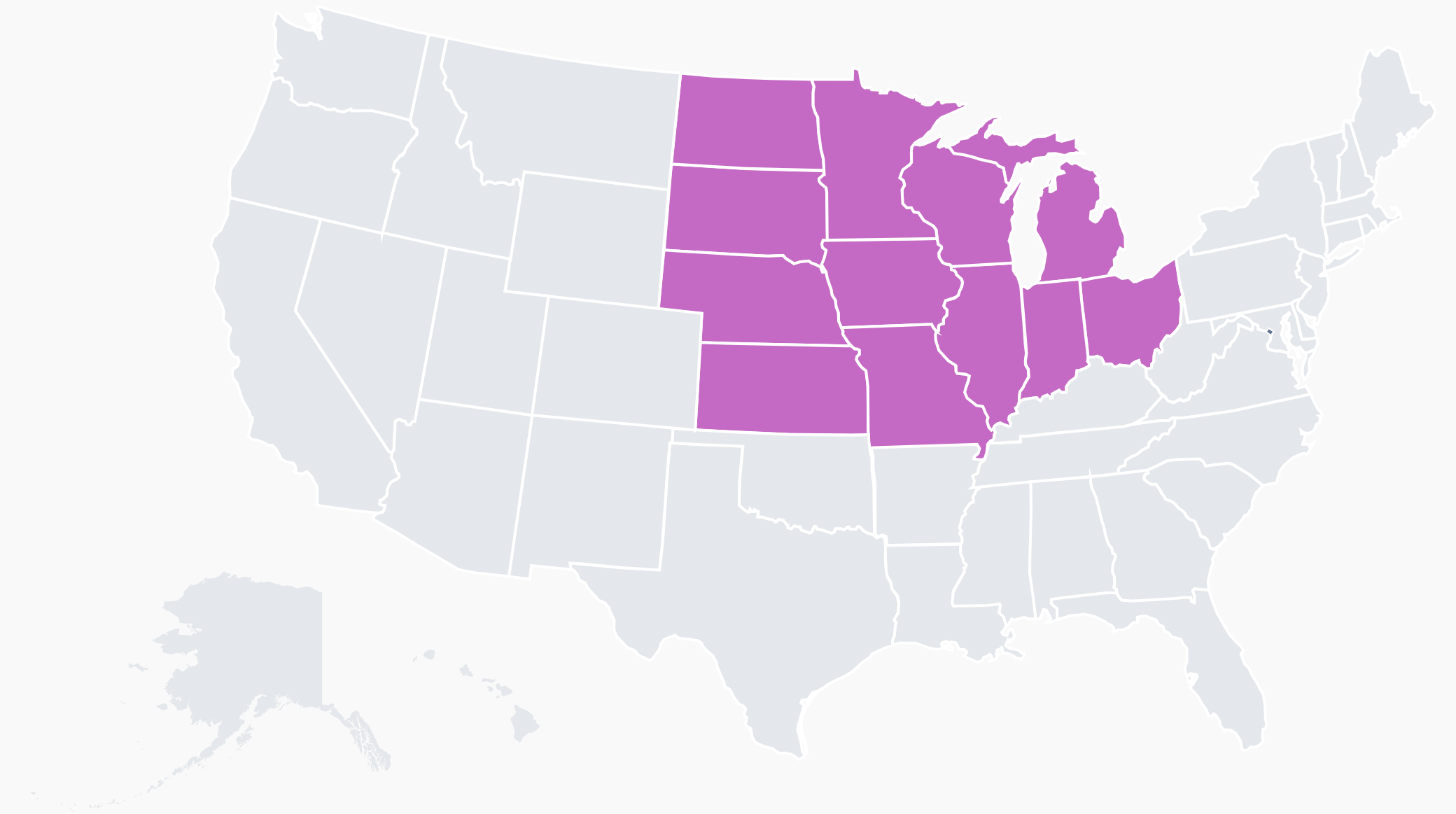


The data suggests architecture firms in the South are experiencing the **broadest-based momentum nationally.**



Midwest Shows Strong Hiring Expectations

While overall conditions in the Midwest remained moderate, the region posted one of the strongest hiring outlook readings nationally.



Overall Index

56.41

Firm Outlook

65.38

This suggests firms may be **positioning for future growth** even as current confidence levels remain more restrained.



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Northeast and West Remain Stable

Both the East and West posted readings above 56 overall, indicating stable-to-improving career conditions.

East

Overall Index

56.39

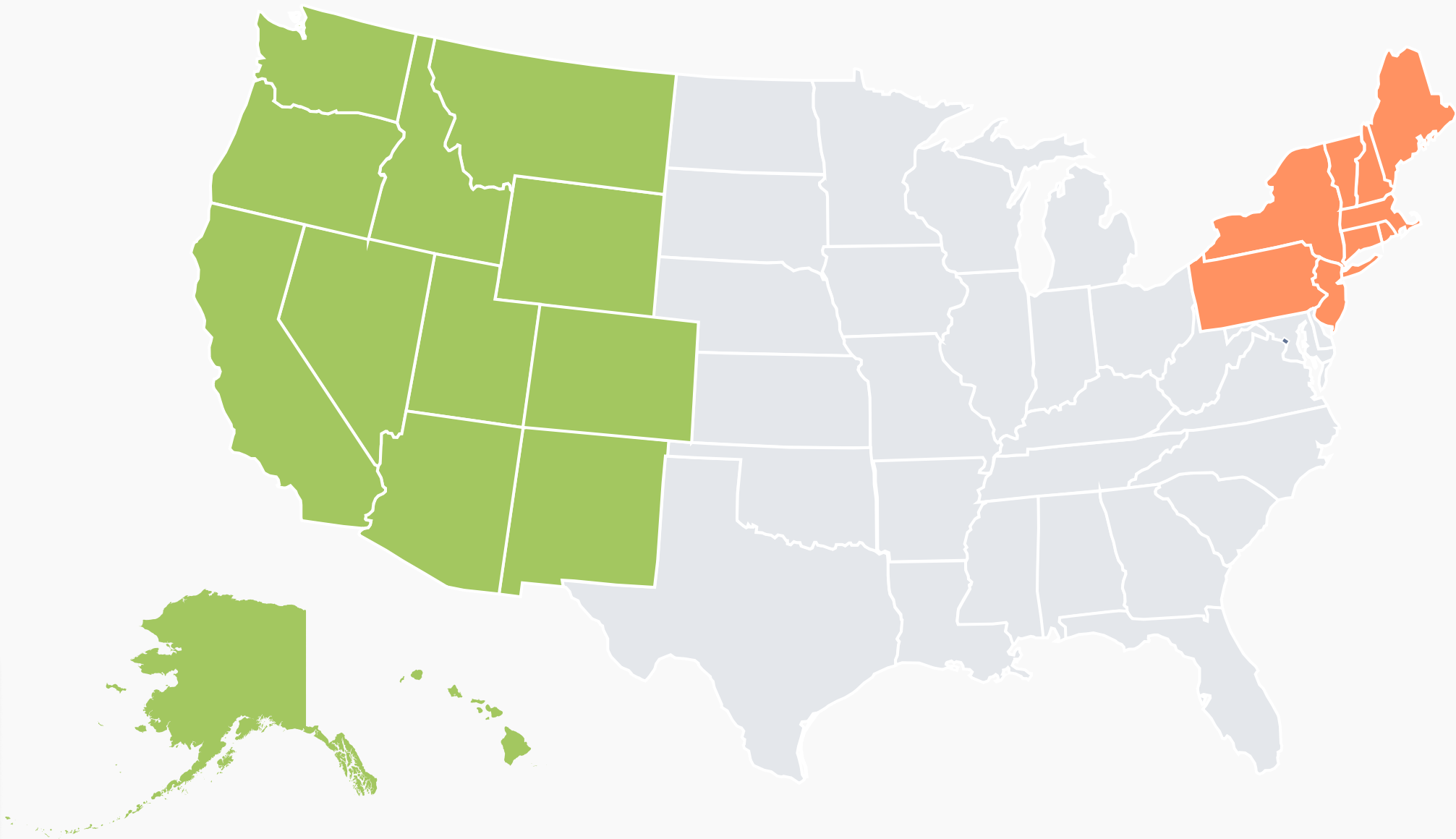
Career	Firm	Work
58.33	56.67	54.17

West

Overall Index

56.08

Career	Firm	Work
55.56	57.14	55.56



While neither region matched the South's momentum, both demonstrated balanced readings across confidence, hiring outlook, and workload.



Key Regional Takeaways

- 1** All regions posted readings **above 50**, indicating stable-to-improving career conditions nationally
- 2** The South materially outperformed every other region in career confidence, workload, and overall conditions
- 3** Hiring expectations remain healthy nationally, with all regions posting hiring outlooks **above 56**
- 4** Workload conditions continue to act as a **leading signal** for broader career sentiment across architecture firms



Methodology

The ACI uses a diffusion index methodology to measure changes in career conditions across the profession.

Responses were collected from more than 700 licensed architects and emerging professionals nationwide, representing firms of all sizes.

Index Formula

$$\text{Index} = (\% \text{ Positive} \times 100) + (\% \text{ Neutral} \times 50)$$

- Positive responses = 100
- Neutral responses = 50
- Negative responses = 0

Composite ACI Weighting

Career Confidence: **40%**

Firm Outlook: **40%**

Workload: **20%**

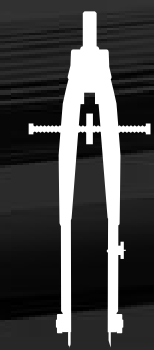
About ACI

The Architecture Career Index (ACI) is a measure of career health across the architecture profession, with this inaugural release establishing the baseline for future quarterly tracking:

- Career confidence
- Firm hiring outlook
- Current workload conditions

Modeled after leading economic indicators like the ISM Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), Consumer Confidence Index (CCI), and Conference Board Leading Economic Index (LEI), ACI provides a simple, forward-looking signal of where the profession stands — and where it's headed."





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Helping Architects & Designers Thrive in Their Careers