

Press release**For immediate release**

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Businesses optimistic about COP31 - but idealism and ambition must not outpace delivery, says APM

88% of business leaders expect UN climate conference to produce changes they will have to implement



Humayon Pramanik, Director of Influence and Advocacy, APM

UK business leaders are optimistic about the approaching UN climate change conference COP31 (taking place 9 to 20 November in Antalya, Turkey) with 88% confident that November's conference will lead to meaningful global action, but the same proportion (88%) also anticipate the conference will require their business to implement changes.

Association for Project Management (APM), which carried out a survey - with Censuswide - of 307 CEOs and senior directors, says that unless disconnects between ideas, policy and delivery are bridged, ideas will remain well-intentioned but unrealised; either because they're not practical, are unrealistic, or lack political will. Businesses must therefore invest in their ability to deliver the projects that will effect change, to turn optimism into real-world outcomes.

Among leaders who anticipate COP31-related changes, 90% expected the impact on their business to be positive and just 2% negative. The most commonly anticipated changes are new or tighter environmental regulation (cited by 30% of leaders who anticipate change), investment in climate adaptation or resilience (29%), changes to energy use or sourcing (29%), and recruitment or training for sustainability and climate-adaptation roles (29%).

Business leader optimism is rooted in commercial opportunity, as well as climate action. Among the survey respondents who expect a positive impact, growth opportunities were the most frequently cited (cited by 22% of leaders who anticipate positive impacts for their business from COP31), followed by innovation (21%) and stronger resilience and risk management (21%).

Humayon Pramanik, Director of Influence and Advocacy at APM, said: "COP has often polarised opinion, so the optimism we are seeing among business leaders is significant. But confidence that COP31 will deliver meaningful global action must be matched by a clear, credible message about how its ambitions will be achieved. Otherwise, there is a real risk that idealism and ambition will outpace delivery."

"Climate change and sustainability are moving up the business agenda, with leaders expecting COP31 to drive changes they will need to implement. Policy signals and corporate commitments alone, however, will not create lasting impact. Every climate commitment ultimately becomes a portfolio of projects that must be prioritised, funded, governed and delivered. Businesses that fail to invest in professional project management risk finding themselves unable to turn optimism into practical action and measurable outcomes. Leaders must recognise the essential role project professionals play in converting commitments into lasting change that will benefit businesses and their customers."

Responses from business leaders across the energy, engineering, financial services, legal, and transport and logistics sectors, also suggests that COP is regarded as a source of practical business change. Some 84% said previous COP events had delivered at least some meaningful outcomes, while only 14% characterised them as heavy on commitments or largely symbolic.

In addition, sectoral differences point to where the operational pressure may be felt most sharply. Energy and legal businesses were the most likely to expect COP31 to trigger organisational change (94% of leaders in each sector expressed this view), followed by engineering (90%), financial services (89%) and transport and logistics (88%). Financial services leaders were the most positive about the anticipated impact (98% of leaders in this sector expressed this view), followed by transport and logistics and legal businesses (94% each), and energy companies (92%).

Ends

Notes to editors

- COP31 is the United Nations Climate Change Conference taking place in Antalya, Turkey from 9 to 20 November 2026.
- The research was conducted for APM by Censuswide among 307 business leaders - business owners, managing directors and chief executives - in the construction, energy, engineering, financial services, legal, and transport and logistics industries. Fieldwork took place from 22 September to 2 October 2026.

About APM

The Association for Project Management (APM) is a professional membership organisation that sets the standards for the project profession and raises its profile.

APM is the only chartered organisation representing the project profession in the world. As a registered charity, APM delivers learning and networking opportunities, qualifications, research, resources, events, and best practice guidance for the project community, helping the profession deliver better.

APM currently has over 40,000 members and more than 470 corporate partners based in over 128 countries across the world.