



PRESS RELEASE

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Supply Chain Experts Say Uncertainty Will Disrupt 4th Quarter

Transportation and economic risks lead Lehigh Business Supply Chain Risk Management Index.

BETHLEHEM, PA, October 9, 2026 | The results of the [Lehigh Business Supply Chain Risk Management Index](#) for the 4th quarter of 2026 show a slight decrease from last quarter's sharp jump in overall risk.

Transportation Disruption Risk remained the highest-rated category, down from its record high in the third quarter but still well above its three-year average.



“Respondents pointed to the unresolved conflict with Iran, continued fuel price volatility, driver shortages tied to tighter federal enforcement and fourth-quarter peak-season capacity constraints and surcharges,” said Zach G. Zacharia, Ph.D., associate professor of supply chain management and director of the Center for Supply Chain Research at Lehigh.

Economic Risk followed closely with respondents citing energy costs, persistent inflation, a high cost of capital and labor shortages. Cybersecurity and Data Risk edged up with respondents citing AI-enabled attacks outpacing defensive measures, state actors, seasonal phishing, and third-party vendor exposure during the holiday period, according to the LRMI.

In the head-to-head comparison, in which respondents rank all ten risks against one another, Government Intervention Risk was the clear top concern. Economic Risk ranked second, Transportation Disruption Risk ranked third and Cybersecurity and Data Risk ranked fourth.

“The gap between the two views is the story of this quarter,” said Zacharia. “Transportation and economic pressures are the risks most likely to worsen in the next three months, but when forced to choose, supply chain professionals see government intervention as the risk that matters most, because tariff and policy uncertainty sits upstream of their sourcing, pricing, and transportation decisions and is the hardest to plan around.”

The LRMI was launched in 2020 by the [Center for Supply Chain Research at Lehigh](#) and the [Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals](#) in order to rank 10 broad categories of supply chain risks. According to Zacharia, the LRMI enables executives and supply chain managers to anticipate and prepare for risks that will become significant in planning for the next quarter. The risk categories are cybersecurity and data, customer, economic, environmental, government intervention, operational, quality, supplier, technological and transportation disruption.

A valuable aspect of the LRMI is that the quarterly reports include a sampling of candid comments from supply chain managers about each risk category, taking you beyond the numbers. Comments from this new 4th quarter report include:



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- Q4 capacity constraints, seasonal freight surcharges, and weather-related delays significantly elevate transit risks.
- Steamship lines are pulling capacity, there is terrorism at the Suez gateway, drought at the Panama Canal and tariff exposure is causing shippers to bunch shipments to game inbound timing.
- Expect increasing energy-related costs. We may have some labor shortages due to the ending of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for several groups.
- I saw a report that my company had over 124 cyber-attack attempts last week. It seems like this is a headache that will never go away.
- Geopolitical trade tensions, ongoing tariff uncertainties and evolving environmental regulations maintain a persistent compliance burden.
- [Read more comments.](#)

LRMI reports are available every quarter in March, June, Sept. and Dec.

To get the latest report for free and to find out how supply chain managers can take the LRMI survey for the next quarter, go to: business.lehigh.edu/LRMI.

About the Center for Supply Chain Research at Lehigh

CSCRL bridges theory and practice to promote a collaborative exchange of ideas on critical issues affecting supply chain management. By leveraging Lehigh's faculty, students, alumni and industry partners, the Center brings the latest developments in research and best practices together to generate new ideas for education and future knowledge in the field of supply chain management. [Learn more.](#)

About the Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals

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