STATE OF THE INDUSTRY



DEC 2025 | JAN 2026



INSIGHTS FROM

STATE OF THE INDUSTRY 2025 SURVEY

Boots on the ground, hands in the dirt

Landscape Trades' fifth annual "State of the Industry" report delves into the landscape and horticultural profession across Canada, exploring how experience, demographics and outlook vary across the profession. An online survey, conducted in October 2025 gathered insights from nearly 300 landscapers across various sectors and regions of the country. Participants were asked about their perceived success over the past year, changes in pricing, staffing decisions, equipment purchases and their overall optimism for the future of the green industry. Despite rising inflation, tariffs and trade uncertainty, respondents reported generally positive outlooks.

The survey uncovered key trends in optimism across different career stages and age groups, examined the financial health of businesses and identified the most pressing challenges faced by the industry in 2025 and those anticipated for 2026. The report also examines how professionals acquire new skills and highlights the most valued aspects of their careers, offering a comprehensive look at the current state and future prospects of this vital sector.

Read on for a closer look at these insights and what they reveal about where the industry stands — and where it's headed.

**Some figures have been rounded to the nearest decimal, and totals may not precisely equal 100% due to multiple choice and optional responses.*

Demographic snapshot

WHAT PART OF CANADA DO YOU WORK IN?

To better understand our respondents, we asked some new questions to gather demographics, such as location, age range, years of experience, gender and professional sector. Most respondents are located in Ontario (**80.9%**) and British Columbia (**8.9%**). Very few entries came in from other provinces or territories, so we encourage landscapers from across Canada to participate next year, or better yet, reach out to editor@landscapetrades.com to tell us more about working in your part of the country.

HOW MANY YEARS HAVE YOU WORKED IN THE INDUSTRY?

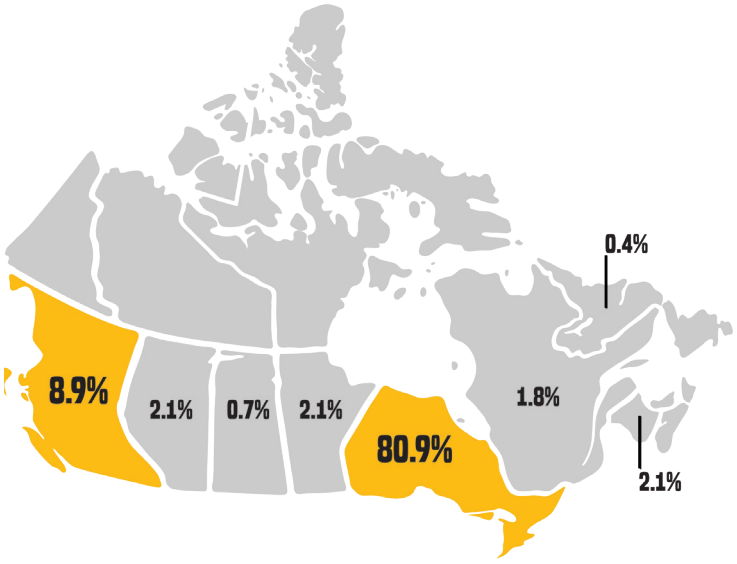
Nearly **75%** of all respondents are business owners, and of those, **24%** identify as a "Woman" or "Prefer not to say." A significant portion of respondents are highly experienced and entrepreneurial, with the majority (**42.6%**) having worked in the industry for over 30 years. And nearly **90%** of respondents are 40 years or older. This suggests the potential for a lasting career within the industry, but also plenty of room for a younger generation to move up the ladder as retirement opens roles.

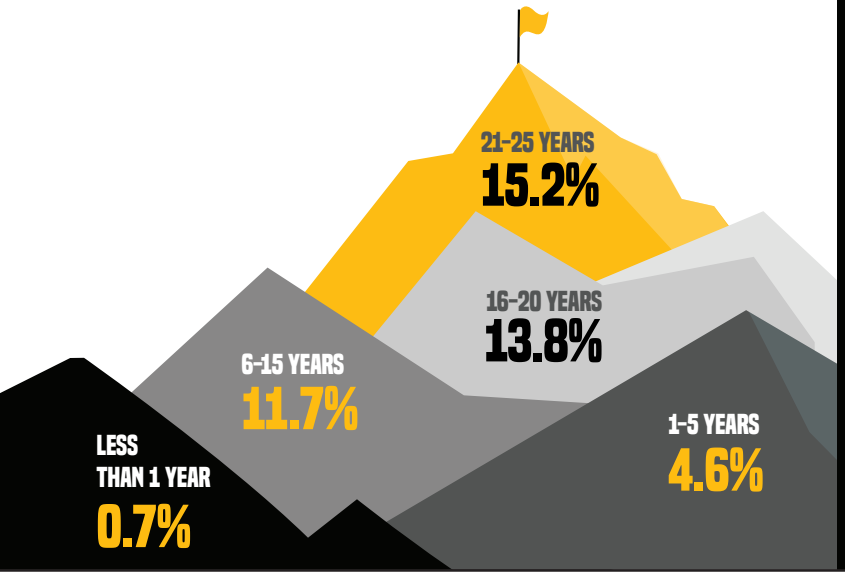
A majority (**57.3%**) of companies with long-term professionals reported experiencing "Not at all" labour shortages in 2025, with **37.5%** experiencing "Somewhat" and only **5.2%** experiencing "A lot." This suggests that experienced businesses tend to have more stable workforces or different labour management strategies.

HOW MANY EMPLOYEES DID YOU EMPLOY DURING PEAK SEASON ?

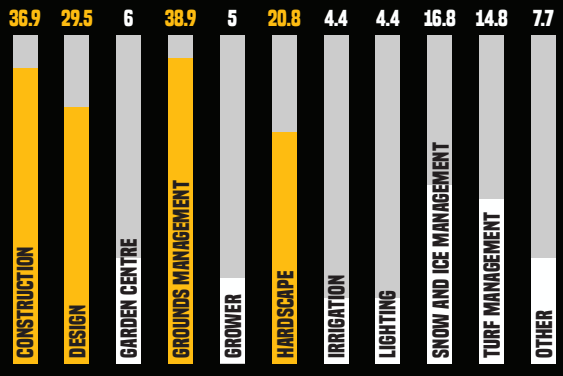
Forty-three per cent of respondents said they employ less than five employees during peak season, including themselves. A quarter of respondents said they employ six to 15 people, and **18%** employ between 16 and 30. The remaining **12%** employ 31 or more staff. When asked if they expected to hire more or fewer people in 2026, **29%** said they plan to increase staff, **11%** plan to decrease, and nearly half of respondents (**48.4%**) expect no change.

Word of mouth and personal connections were the most common strategies used to fill open roles, followed by general job boards. To help crews complete tasks, nearly half of respondents (**45.4%**) said they plan to purchase or lease new equipment in 2026.



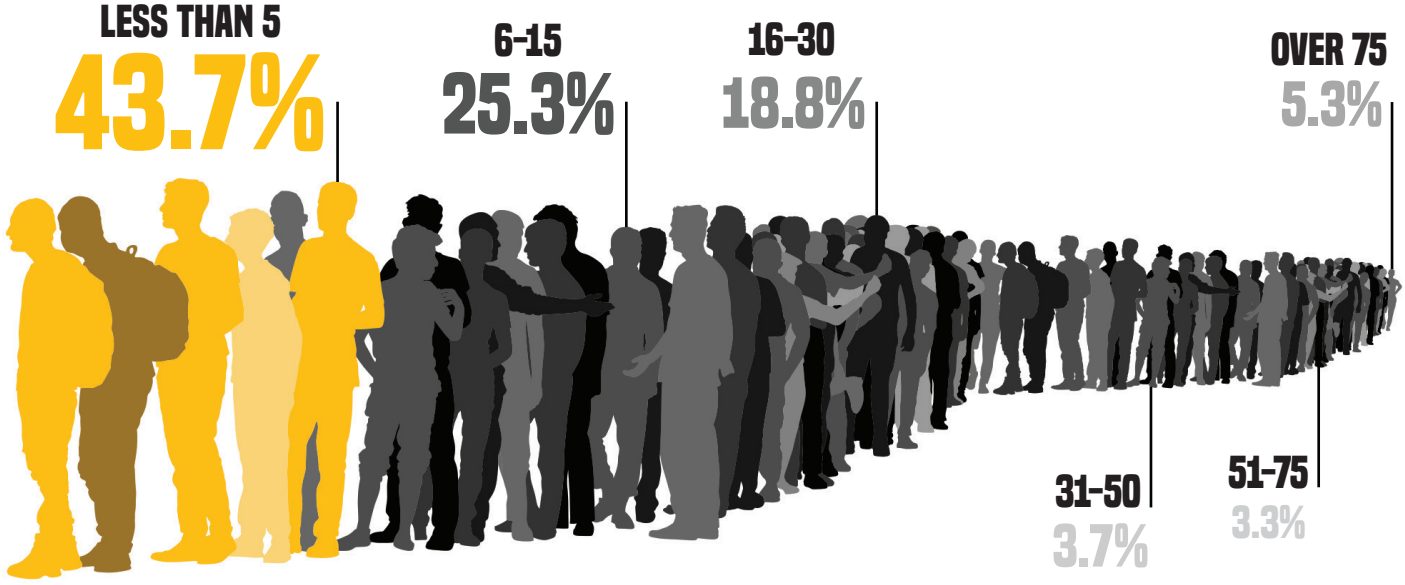






WHAT ARE THE TOP TWO PRIMARY SECTORS YOU WORK IN?

The most common sectors noted are grounds management, construction and design. A few respondents added sectors not included in the choice list, such as materials/equipment suppliers, education, artificial turf installation, and pool construction and service.



Financial Health

HOW DO YOU RATE YOUR COMPANY'S FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE IN 2025?

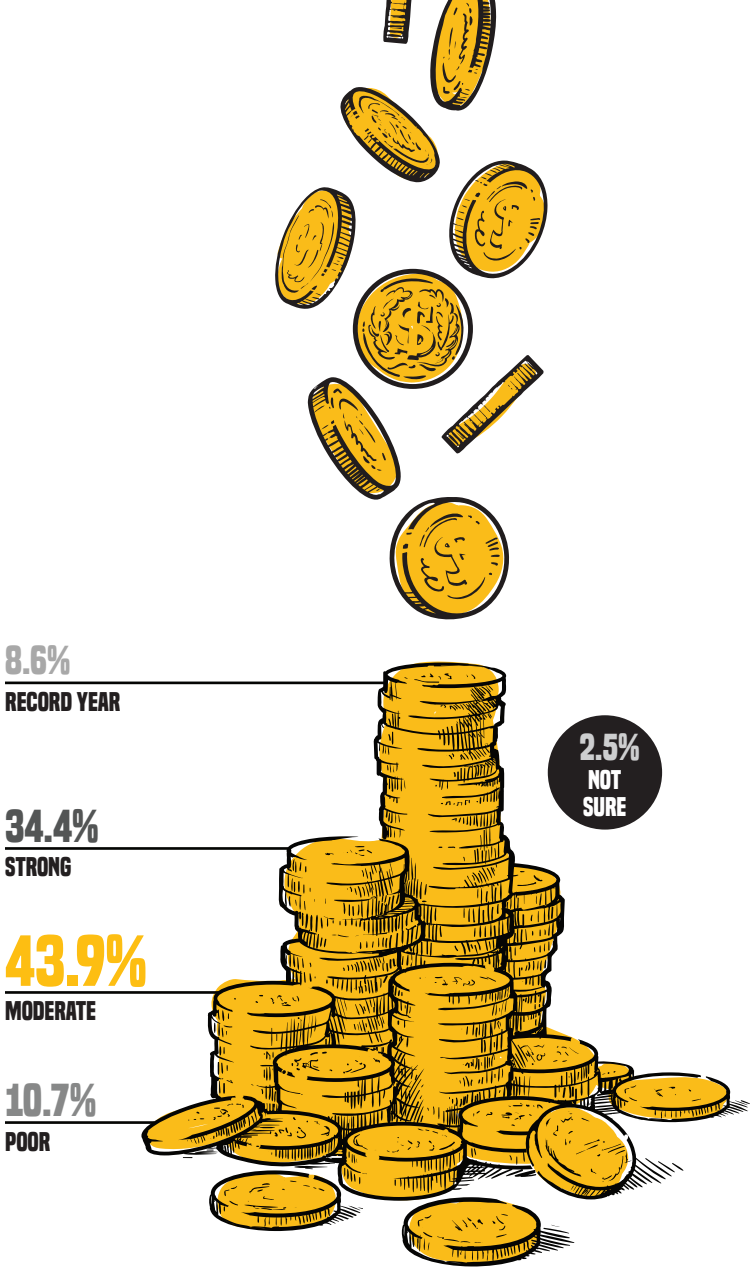
In 2025, close to **87%** of respondents rated their company's financial performance as "Moderate" or better. Noting that a very high percentage of respondents (**67.6%**) said they've been in business for 20 or more years, we dove a little deeper to better understand the financial health of long-lived landscape businesses.

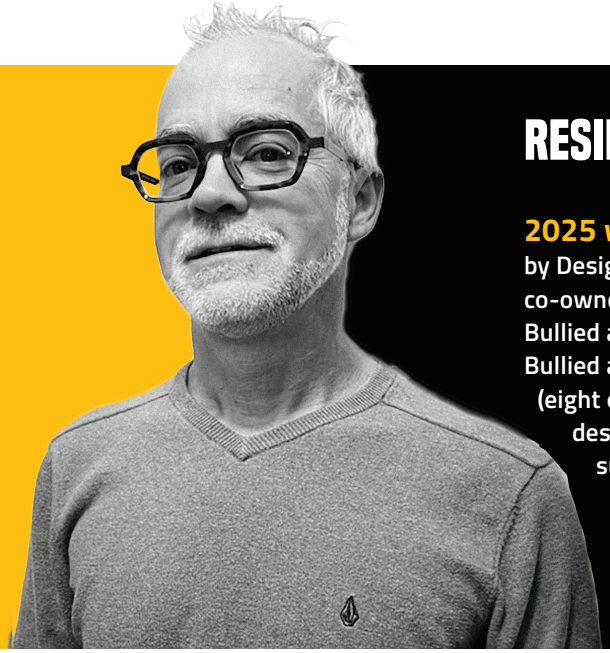
Moderate performance dominates: The largest percentage of companies with "20+ years" in business (**41.2%**) rated their financial performance as "Moderate" in 2025. This suggests a stable, but not necessarily exceptional, financial standing for a substantial portion of long-standing businesses, possibly related to challenges we'll explore in the next section.

Strong performance is common: A considerable **35.8%** of companies in the "20+ years" category reported "Strong" financial performance, indicating that a good number of established businesses are thriving.

Record year for a smaller segment: While "Strong" performance is notable, a smaller percentage (**7.9%**) of these companies achieved a "Record year."

Challenges exist for some: Despite their longevity, a noticeable portion of companies with "20+ years" in business still faced challenges, with **13.3%** reporting "Poor" financial performance. This highlights that even established businesses are not immune to financial difficulties. A small percentage (**1.82%**) were "Not sure" about their financial performance.





RESILIENCE IN SASKATCHEWAN

2025 was a good year for Gardens by Design in Christopher Lake, Sask., co-owned by husband and wife Lane Bullied and Nicole de la Gorgendiere. Bullied attributes his high optimism rating (eight out of 10) mostly to the landscape design and construction company's success with hiring.

"My wife and I have done pretty well," he said. "In a pretty obscure little area of Saskatchewan, we've managed to hire and retain some staff that a couple of them were already educated in horticulture and some of them are interested in horticulture [and] landscaping. In our little small area, if we can manage to do that, it's pretty optimistic."

The company increased its prices between five and 10% this year to accommodate annual wage increases. It's expensive, too, to get materials to the northern prairie town; if their trucking

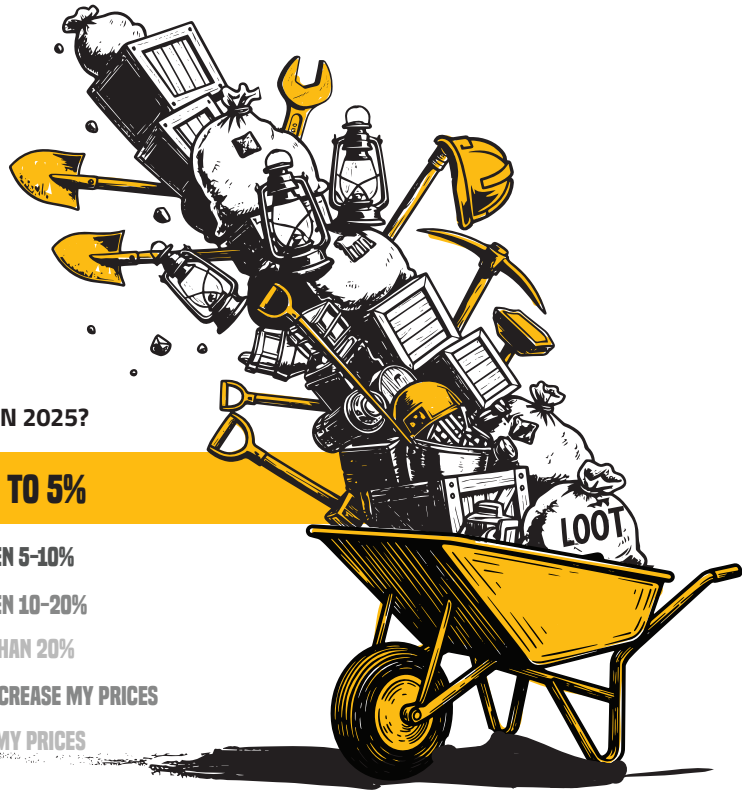
Ups & Downs

Businesses in the green trades are adjusting their pricing strategies in response to persistent inflationary pressures and rising operational costs. While most have increased prices and plan to continue doing so, a considerable portion remains cautious, balancing the need to cover costs with concerns about market resistance and customer retention.

Over **70%** of businesses implemented price increases in 2025. The most frequently cited reasons for these increases related to inflation, indicating a direct response to escalating operational expenses. Conversely, for the **24.9%** of businesses that did not raise prices, a primary concern was that "The market will not bear it" and "My customers can not pay an increase," highlighting worries about customer affordability and market competitiveness.

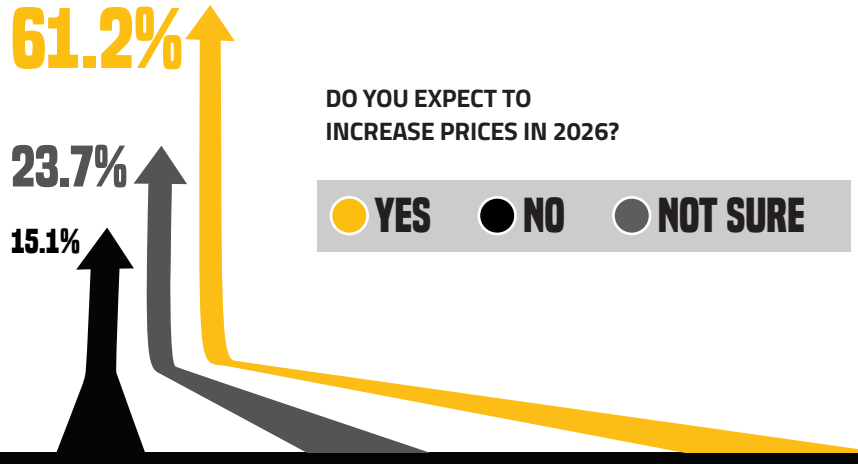
A strong majority (**61.2%**) of businesses expect to increase their prices in 2026. Reasons for expected increases in 2026 echo those from 2025, with mentions of needing to "Keep up with living cost" and "Prices will need to increase to cover anticipated increased input costs."

However, **23.7%** are "Not sure" about their pricing plans for 2026, showing caution and uncertainty regarding future economic conditions. For the **15%** of businesses not planning increases, concerns about a weak market continue, as some already sense they've lost clients due to past price increases.



DID YOUR BUSINESS INCREASE ITS PRICES IN 2025?

35.9%	**YES, BY UP TO 5%**
29%	YES, BY BETWEEN 5-10%
6.9%	YES, BY BETWEEN 10-20%
0.4%	YES, BY MORE THAN 20%
24.9%	NO, I DID NOT INCREASE MY PRICES
2.9%	NO, I LOWERED MY PRICES



DO YOU EXPECT TO INCREASE PRICES IN 2026?

YES NO NOT SURE

company increases their prices, so does Gardens by Design. "It's been working for us," Bullied said. Their market hasn't complained.

Bullied is on the board of the Saskatchewan Nursery Landscape Association (SNLA), so he's generally aware of what's going on in the province. He said across Saskatchewan, the outlook of the green trades is "looking pretty positive."

"I've talked to a few colleagues and their companies are doing pretty well also, but I know this year a couple other people I've talked to in Saskatchewan have had a slower season, and people aren't spending quite as much as usual," he said.

This hasn't necessarily affected Gardens by Design, whose business is about 80% high end. Most of its clients can withstand stressors like tariffs, the uncertain political climate and rising cost of living — all factors Bullied believes may have caused decreased spending this year — without altering their spending habits.

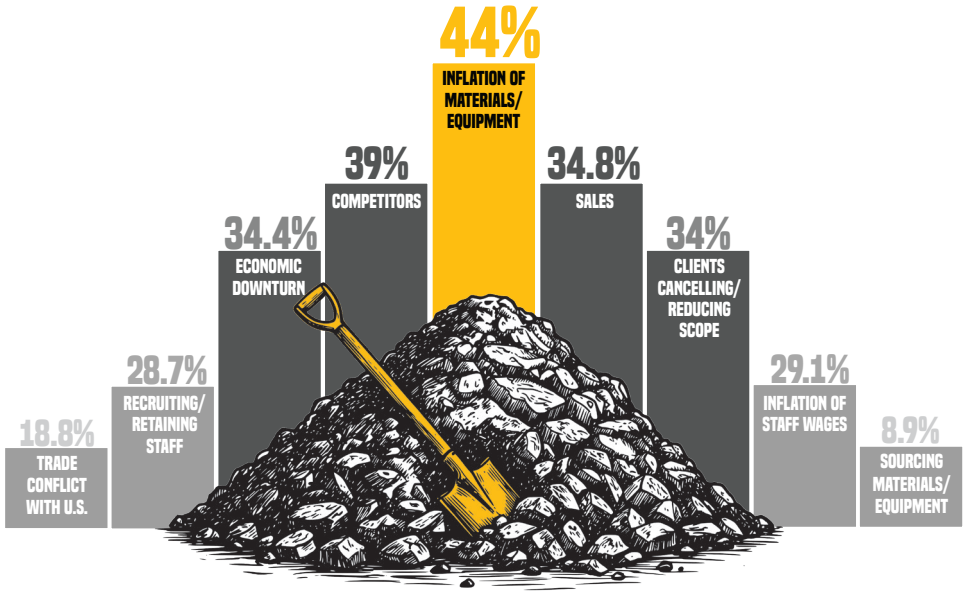
The company did see an increase in cancellations in 2025. Some larger projects fell through due to scheduling reasons, which left Bullied scrambling — though he quickly found replacement jobs. "It worked out, but I haven't had that happen in a while, so it was just something that concerned me. Put a little extra stress on the old plate," he said.

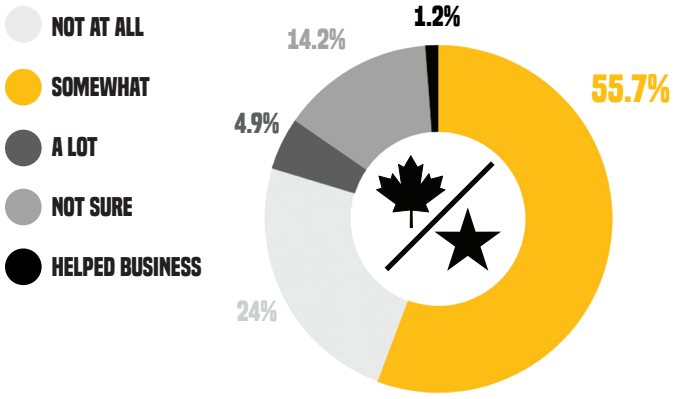
Challenges in 2025

WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES YOUR BUSINESS FACED IN 2025 ?

In our 2024 survey, respondents predicted rising prices for materials, fuel, equipment and wages to be their biggest challenge in 2025. This year's survey participants once again identified inflation as their top challenge, followed by lower priced competitors, lack of customer demand and reduced project scope, likely spurred by the economic downturn and trade uncertainties

About **5%** of respondents said they did not experience any challenges in 2025.





DID THE U.S. TARIFF SITUATION NEGATIVELY IMPACT YOUR BUSINESS IN ANY WAY?

The U.S. trade conflict was newly added to the challenges list this year. The vague and ever-changing details shared by the U.S. administration made it difficult for businesses across all sectors to fully grasp what products would be affected. Three respondents said the tariff situation actually helped business and a quarter (**24%**) said they were not at all affected. However, more than half (**55.7%**) respondents said they were somewhat affected, citing concerns about clients feeling unsure about spending money, jobs getting cancelled and reduced availability of equipment, parts and materials.



AGING WORKFORCE CHALLENGES IN NEW BRUNSWICK

Trevor Jones, plant health specialist at Price Landscaping Services in Moncton, N.B., is moderately hopeful about the overall outlook of the landscape and horticulture profession. He answered five out of 10 in the survey question: "How optimistic do you feel about the overall outlook of the landscape and horticultural profession?"

He's passionate about the work he does and believes it's important, but worries about the aging workforce. "With what we're seeing in the Maritimes, unless something changes drastically in the next few years, the landscape industry is going to be all old men in trucks again. Our average age coming in is about 40," he said.

"The younger generation today — and this is sad — I've had to train people on how to use a shovel properly, so they don't hurt themselves. There's a disconnect

WHAT DO YOU EXPECT TO BE YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGES IN 2026?

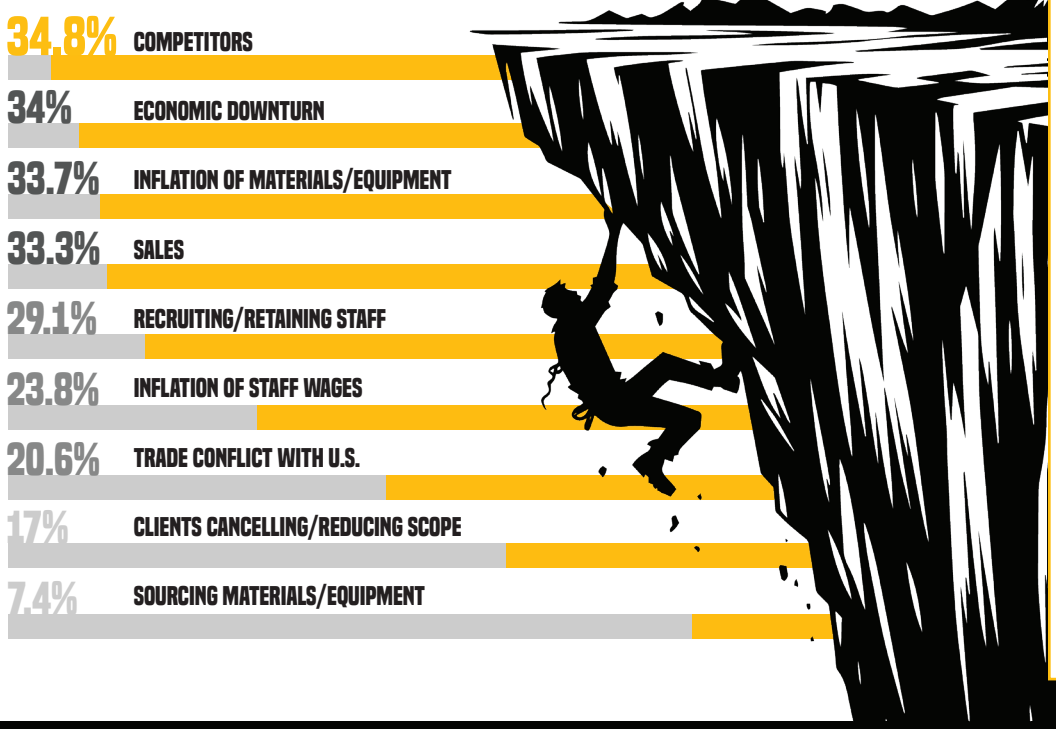
Looking ahead to 2026, respondents anticipate similar trends, though with improved expectations.

Inflation, particularly regarding material, fuel, equipment prices and wages, remains a top concern, though its perceived impact is expected to decrease in 2026 compared to 2025.

"Clients cancelling projects or reducing scope" is projected to see a substantial decrease in impact, indicating a potential stabilization in client demand.

"Lower priced competitors" and "Economic downturn" are expected to remain persistent challenges, with their perceived impact staying relatively stable.

"Recruiting/retaining staff" and "Ongoing trade conflict with U.S." are expected to slightly increase in perceived impact in 2026.



> ***"I had a key employee resign and another got injured at the same time. As the economy slows and companies are feeling uncertain with the future, we need to double down on sales efforts to fill the pipeline."***
>
> **— Hella K.**

> *"All costs are exceeding the rate we can charge, leaving options of making no money or working for free. Neither of which we choose to do."*
>
> **— Chris L.**

> *"The number of employees willing to perform labour-intensive jobs seems to get worse every year."*
>
> **— Lisa F.**

> *"Project-based sales leads are down considerably over previous years. Maintenance sales are pressured by lower priced competitors desperate for work and undercutting."*
>
> **— Ryan J.**

> *"Companies are popping up, doing shoddy work at per sq. ft pricing and eroding the industry."*
>
> **— Adam V.**

somewhere with the generation coming up, [so] that we're going to lose so much knowledge, it's crazy."

Often, young people who do pursue work in the green trades only stay for one to two years; in Jones's words, "it's not a career." He's a Red Seal certified journeyperson, but says the courses today struggle to fill seats. "We just don't have the people coming through the door interested in horticulture at all," he said.

The solution, he believes, is education. It's crucial to emphasize the trades in schools again — as he says this issue affects all trades, not just the green ones — and combatting the false narrative that landscape and horticulture professionals are "low, uneducated people," or that anyone can do the job.

"It's not a job just anybody can do. There's a lot to it. But even when I started at 19, I thought that — that anyone could do it, that it's a simple job. 35 years later, I know it's not a simple job," he said.

Jones believes the green trades' responsibility to keep plants healthy and protect the environment is a key opportunity to bring younger people into the trades through social media advocacy and, again, schools.

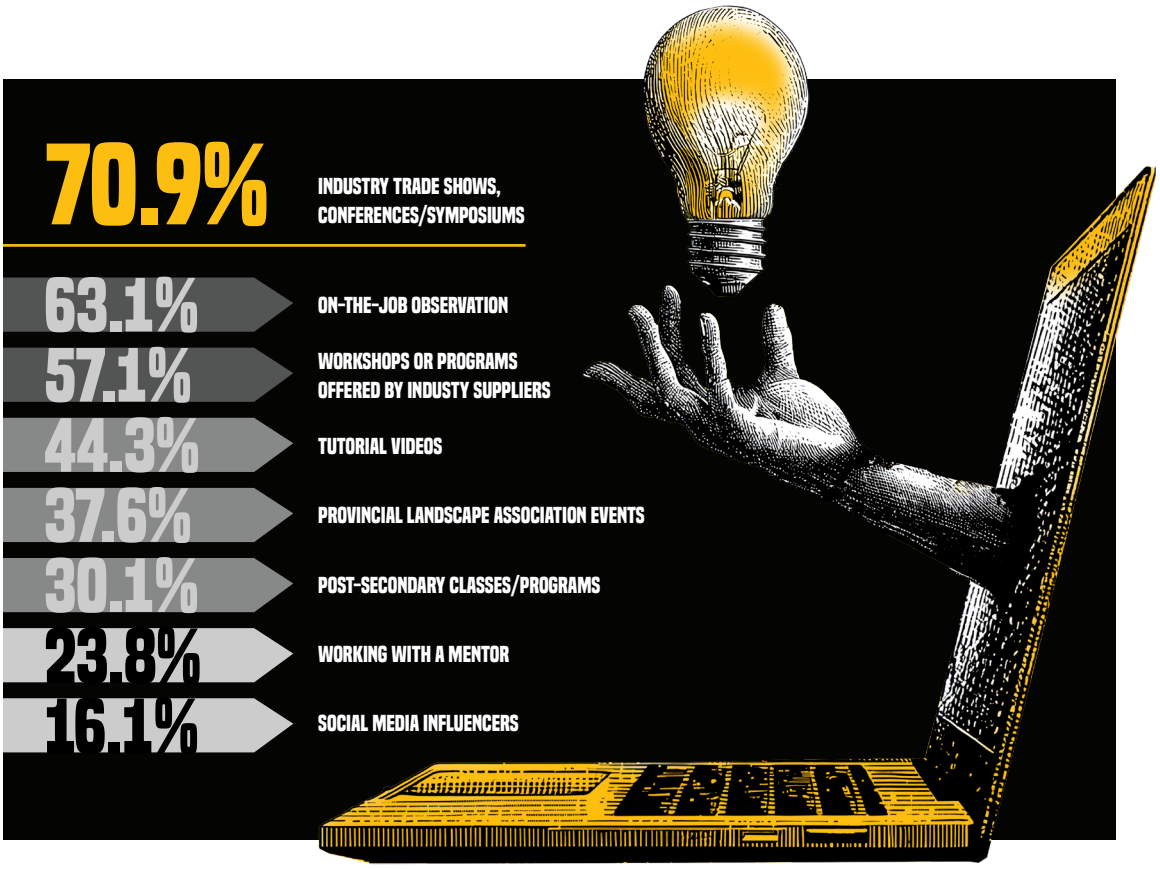
"We are a green industry, but we don't stand out as a green industry. A lot of people are worried about the environment. We have to educate people that if we work together, we can actually help the environment a lot more," he said.

Despite the challenges of a changing economy and aging workforce, Jones is passionate about what the trades can do. "I'm called a nerd by someone at work, or my wife, at least once a week," he said. "I do love what I do."

Continued & Diverse Learning

HOW DO YOU LEARN NEW PROFESSIONAL SKILLS?

Continuing education is crucial for success in the green trades. When asked how they stay current, respondents highlighted a diverse blend of industry events, hands-on observation and supplier-provided training, with digital resources and mentorship also playing significant roles. One respondent took it a step further and added the "school of hard knocks." Overall, the results indicate a perseverant workforce that is keen to keep learning, and is served well by having multiple options to do so. Business owners might develop more highly skilled crews by offering multiple learning opportunities to accommodate diverse learning styles and abilities.



Industry events and practical observation are the most popular learning methods

Conferences, trade shows and symposiums: A significant majority of respondents (**70.9%**) learn new professional skills through these events, highlighting their importance for networking, staying updated on trends and acquiring new knowledge.

On-the-job observation: Over **63%** of respondents observe on the job to learn new skills. This suggests that practical, experiential learning within their work environment is a preferred method.

Supplier-led programs and digital resources play a crucial role

Workshops and supplier programs: More than half of the respondents (**57%**) participate in workshops or programs offered by industry suppliers, suggesting suppliers are a valuable source of specialized knowledge and training for professionals.

Tutorial videos: A substantial portion of respondents (**44.3%**) turn to tutorial videos for learning new skills. The growing influence of digital and on-demand learning resources in the professional landscape continues to be timely.

Formal education and mentorship, while less frequent, still relevant

Post-secondary institutions: Formal education remains a relevant pathway for some professionals to develop new skills, as nearly one-third of respondents (**30%**) learn through this option.

Mentorship: Personalized guidance and knowledge transfer from experienced professionals remains invaluable. About a quarter of respondents (**23.8%**) learn by working directly with a mentor.

Social media influencers are emerging as a source of learning

Social media influencers: Sixteen per cent of respondents learn from social media influencers. Offering informal learning through digital platforms and the growing role of online personalities could be a method for upskilling younger or tech-savvy workers.



Key Trends in Optimism

HOW OPTIMISTIC DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE OVERALL OUTLOOK OF THE LANDSCAPE AND HORTICULTURE PROFESSION?

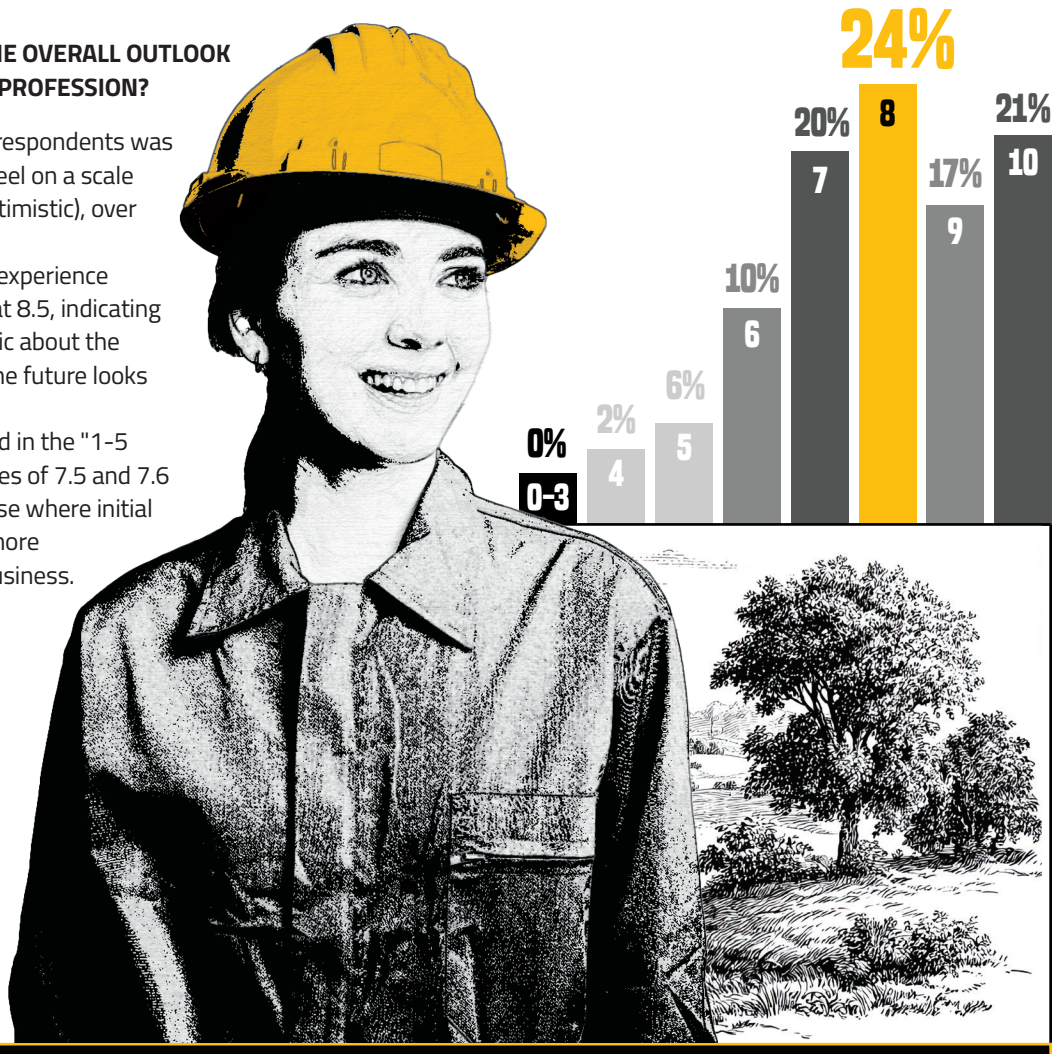
Despite challenges, the overall mood of respondents was positive. When asked how optimistic they feel on a scale from zero to 10 (with 10 being the most optimistic), over **80%** answered seven or above.

Respondents with "Less than 1 year" of experience show the highest average optimism score at 8.5, indicating that newcomers are particularly enthusiastic about the profession's future. See page 32 to read "The future looks bright."

The lowest average optimism is observed in the "1-5 years" and "16-20 years" groups, with scores of 7.5 and 7.6 respectively. This pattern may reflect a phase where initial enthusiasm dips as individuals encounter more complex jobs or face obstacles building a business.

Respondents with "Over 30 years" of experience remained optimistic — scoring an average optimism score of 7.8 — possibly reflecting greater confidence and commitment to resilience to face industry ebbs and flows.

The "21-25 years" and "26-30 years" groups also show strong optimism, with average scores of 7.9 and 8 respectively. This indicates that professionals in the mid-to-late stages of their careers remain positive about the industry's future.



"Being outside, creative outlet, healthy physical work, time off, meeting other like minded individuals."

— **Jeff P.**

"Freedom to select lucrative projects that express our creativity and keep our crews busy throughout the season."

— **Grant C.**

"The influence I have to make eco-conscious decisions. Also helping out clients find a love they didn't know they had for the outdoor world."

— **Crystal H.**

"Increasing biodiversity, reducing effects of climate change, educating the public, increasing food sovereignty and security, creating great jobs for the next generation of growers."

— **Arlene G.**

"I enjoy working for myself, the creative and artistic aspect of it and helping clients solve a problem or providing them with a space they can love and enjoy."

— **Dustin W.**

"Beauty in a finished project. Collaborate with like-minded people. Playing in dirt."

— **Julia S.**

"Building dream backyards for clients and seeing their smiles. Working outdoors."

— **James S.**

"Delivering on people's dreams. Being able to teach the younger generations the skills to be great landscapers."

— **Darlene B.**

"Despite the processes of installation largely being universal; every project and job is different which makes each day new and exciting and avoids stagnation."

— **Glen B.**

The Joys of Landscaping



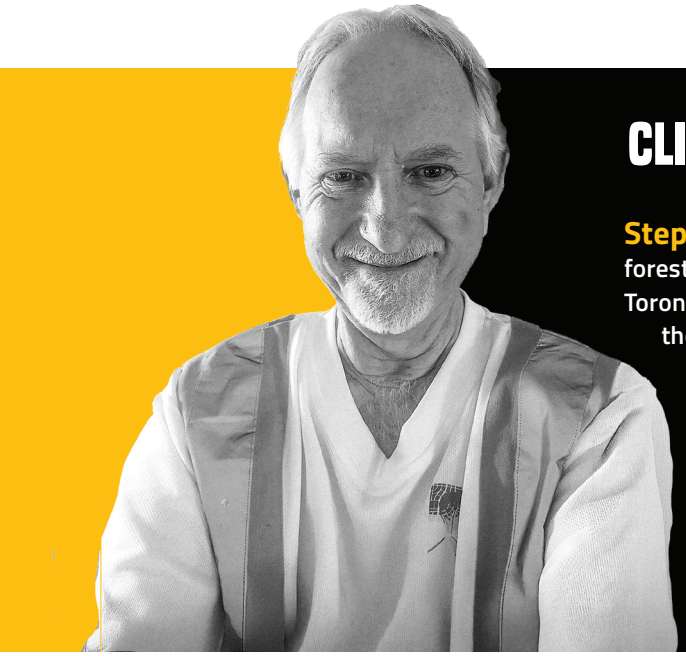
We asked respondents to share what they think is the best part about having a career in the green trades. The data indicates that landscapers value the same things, no matter their sector, age or location.

Working outdoors for the win
The most significant trend is the enjoyment of "working outside." This highlights a strong preference for a work environment that is not confined indoors, allowing for fresh air and direct engagement with nature.

People pleasing
"Working with People/Clients" was cited by nearly **16%** of respondents, indicating that the human element and building relationships are important aspects of their job satisfaction. Respondents also indicated they find purpose and pride in contributing to the quality of life or the beauty of landscapes.

Creativity, problem-solving and variety
These key terms came up often. Comments shared such as "helping clients solve problems," "something different every day" and "creative freedom" suggest green trades professionals enjoy finding innovative solutions while tackling diverse and dynamic projects.

Opportunities for improvement
Professional growth and continuous learning are also commonly cited perks among respondents, as are sustainability and ecological impact, indicating that landscapers are motivated to advance the health and wellness of the environment as well as their own knowledge and skills.



CLIMATE AND CLIENT CONCERNS IN ONTARIO

Stephen Smith, owner of urban forestry firm Urban Forest Associates in Toronto, Ont., feels very optimistic about the general outlook of the landscape and horticulture profession. He answered eight out of 10 in the survey question: "How optimistic do you feel about the overall outlook of the landscape and horticultural profession?"

"There's more and more work all the time for all of us," Smith said. "Landscaping is needed everywhere; it always will be. So I don't see any reason to think of a decline. There's always lots of changes, but there's a lot of work out there."

Despite his optimism, Smith is concerned with an increasingly drier climate. He believes decompaction — loosening compacted soil — is crucial, as well as ensuring sites retain as much

On Trend

We asked what trends you have observed over the past year that may influence how you design, install or maintain landscapes in the future. Respondents shared lots of ideas, with some key overlapping ideas.

Sustainability and environmental consciousness
There is a strong emphasis on naturalization and sustainability in landscape practices. Water conservation and efficient irrigation are frequently mentioned, as well as a rising desire to convert lawns to gardens or sponge solutions. Respondents also shared that clients are asking for food gardens.

Technological advancements
The adoption of battery-powered tools is a significant trend, aiming for quieter and more environmentally friendly operations. Respondents also mentioned being curious about tools such as 3D scanning and artificial intelligence (AI) that might help improve sales and marketing.

Decisions driven by economic factors and client expectations
Budgets and tight financial constraints are recurring themes. The need for cost-effective solutions is evident, reflecting client sensitivity to pricing, but resulting in big projects being broken into smaller stages (and quotes). Both residential and commercial projects are being influenced by these trends.

Climate adaptability
Climate and drought are mentioned, highlighting the need for resilient landscape designs and maintenance strategies that can withstand changing environmental conditions. The focus on xeriscape and low maintenance further supports the adaptation to water scarcity and reduced upkeep requirements.

High-impact, low-maintenance design and functionality
Large format pavers, ponds, fire pits, sports courts and automation are a few of the repeated features respondents said clients are asking for. This suggests a continued desire to impress but with spaces that allow relaxation and recreation without a lot of work.

DIY clients with overwhelm
Several respondents mentioned clients want to be more involved in their gardens, especially in ongoing maintenance. They also look to landscapers for education and knowledge about plant care. Whether offering simple curb appeal or transforming a blank slate, landscapers can expect to work more closely with hands-on property owners who don't know where to begin.

> *"Being bold… with plant material. Doing the unexpected with great results."*
>
> — *Lindsay N.*
>
> *"Water is more expensive so a greater focus on efficient systems."*
>
> — *Ben M.*
>
> *"Less interest in lawns and the need to support diversity."*
>
> — *David M.*
>
> *"Everything is getting more expensive. People want low maintenance."*
>
> — *Jon A.*
>
> *"Electrification of equipment, naturalization of landscape and continued tight maintenance budgets."*
>
> — *Dean G.*
>
> *"Complete backyard spas with sauna, hot tub, pool, cold plunge, and firepit for health and healing purposes."*
>
> — *Fran M.*

water as possible. Planting plants in hard soil limits growth because they can't dig their roots deep enough.

He's encouraged by more and more companies employing sponge cities ideas. "You want to do whatever's necessary to decompact the soil so that the water goes into the soil rather than running off," he said. "Don't grade your site such that it drains really quickly. You want to retain the water on the site. You can subsoil sites, which means dig down about 60 or 90 centimetres, and loosen them all up and plow it like a farm field."

In terms of other challenges, Smith pointed to clients' unrealistic expectations on timelines. He gets calls in October about projects people want done by Christmas, which "ain't gonna happen," he said. Some clients go ahead without required permits and approvals, which causes stress. This isn't a completely new phenomenon, nor is it unique to his company, but Stephen does think it's worsened in recent years.

"The whole of society is very nervous right now," he said. "It does seem that people are stressed out enough now that they would rather go with somebody who does poorer quality [work] because they're fast, rather than wait a bit longer for you to be available. And that can be frustrating. We try to do quality work as quickly as is reasonable."

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