

CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTORS NO LONGER SCRAMBLING FOR WORKERS – THEY’RE SCRAMBLING FOR WORK

By Chris Gardner, ICBA President and CEO



Last year, ICBA’s Wage and Benefits Survey painted a picture of an industry that was frustrated with government, but still confident about the pipeline of work ahead. In just twelve months, the story has significantly shifted. Construction contractors are no longer scrambling for workers – they’re scrambling for work.

Only 6% of survey respondents think government is on the right track in dealing with businesses like theirs. That kind of collapse in confidence should set off alarm bells in Victoria and Ottawa. At the same time, expectations for 2026 are softening. While 40% of contractors expect more work, nearly one in five expect less – with an average drop of 25%. This is not what a healthy construction market looks like.

The top challenges for 2026 tell the same story: securing new projects (46%), declining margins (42%), and people shortages (39%). The residential slowdown is especially worrying: a majority believe it will either stay slow (34%) or get worse (28%), with only 12% expecting improvement in 2026.

That uncertainty is hitting people’s jobs. Nearly half of the contractors who responded aren’t sure yet what 2026 will mean for staffing levels, and 23% have made or are planning layoffs – cutting an average of 22.5% of their workforce.

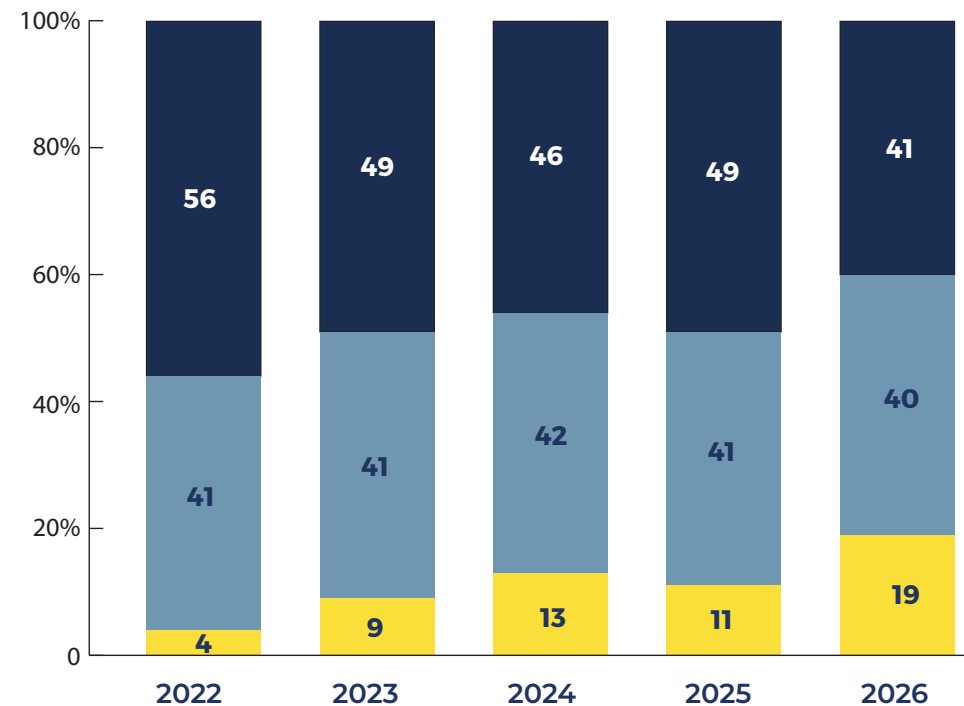
This year’s survey should be a loud wake-up call to governments that continue to trip up builders. These results reflect years of rising costs, mounting red tape, and uncertainty around major projects. When permits drag on and rules keep shifting, viable projects don’t get built and good-paying jobs disappear. Government needs to clear the way with faster decisions, predictable approvals, and a tax and regulatory climate that attracts private investment instead of chasing it away.

Construction is at the centre of our economy and can still drive prosperity – but only if government starts listening to the builders who keep this province working.

GROWTH EXPECTATIONS MODERATING

Do you expect your work volume for the year to...

Decrease Stay the Same Increase

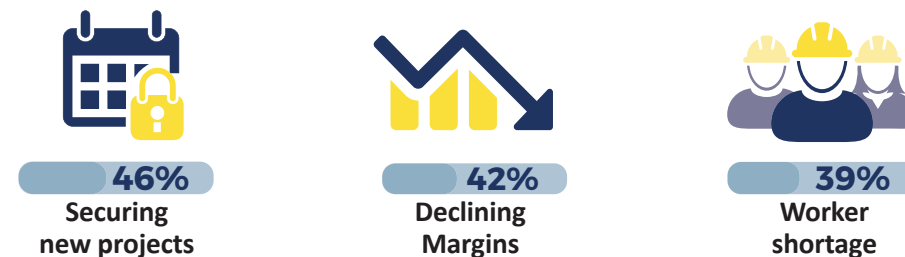


Estimated % decrease in work (average among those expecting decrease in 2026: **25%**)

WAGE RANGES AND EXPECTED INCREASE BY TRADE

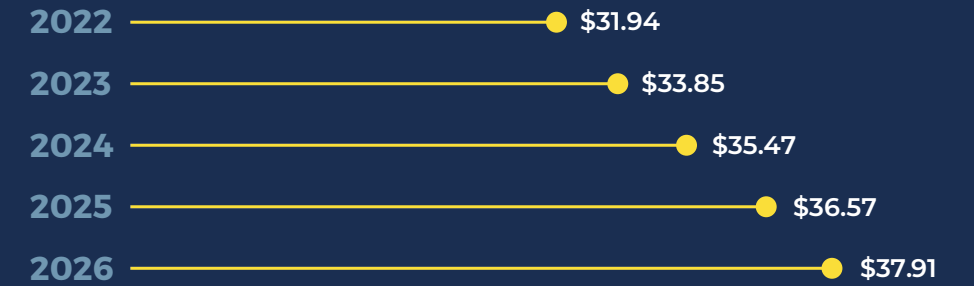
Carpenters 3%↑ \$25.03 – \$42.87	Plumbers 4%↑ \$24.54 – \$52.29
Electricians 3%↑ \$22.74 – \$47.08	Refrigeration & HVAC Mechanics 5%↑ \$25.92 – \$64.19
Framers 3%↑ \$23.65 – \$41.00	Sheet Metal Workers 6%↑ \$24.75 – \$49.62
Painters 4%↑ \$25.20 – \$40.43	Steel Fabricators 2%↑ \$26.86 – \$43.00
Pipefitters 4%↑ \$24.20 – \$53.50	Crane / Equipment Operators 3%↑ \$29.19 – \$43.60

BIGGEST CHALLENGES IN 2026 CITED BY CONTRACTORS



CONSTRUCTION TRADE WAGE RATE

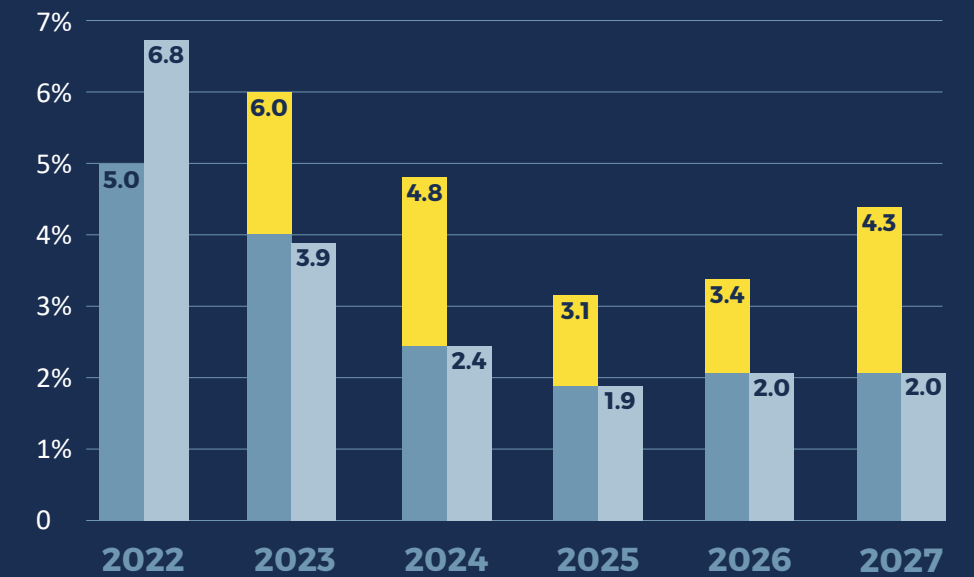
(Average hourly wage, all trades surveyed)



Does not include bonuses, benefits, profit-sharing or overtime

CONSTRUCTION EARNINGS GROWTH STILL OUTPACING INFLATION

Annual Wage Increase Annual Inflation* Increased Buying Power

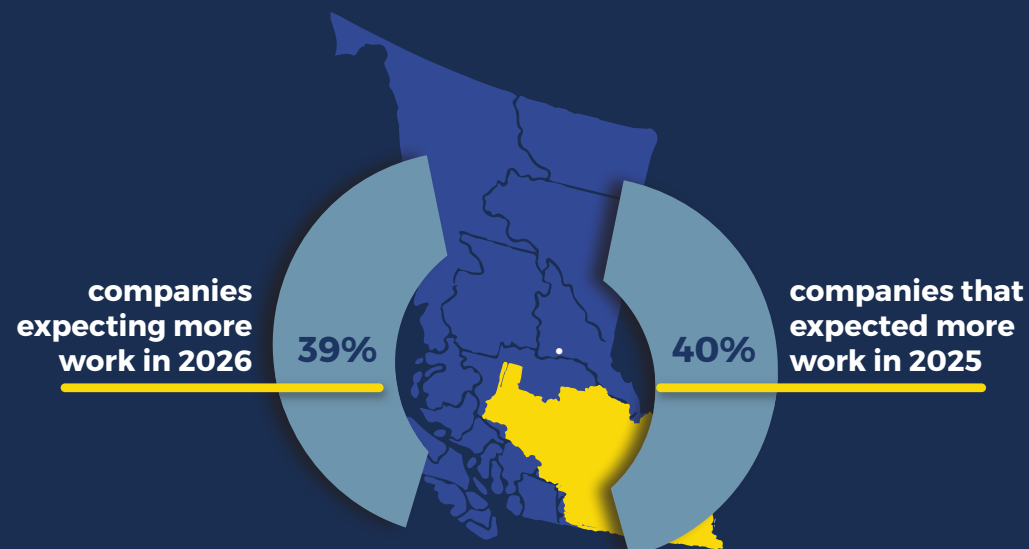


Want to view the comprehensive survey data?

Members get exclusive access to the full details featuring in-depth wage and benefit results for workers and office staff, as well as key pressure points the industry is facing in the coming year. Visit icba.ca to become a member today.

Wage and Benefit Survey 2026

Interior B.C.

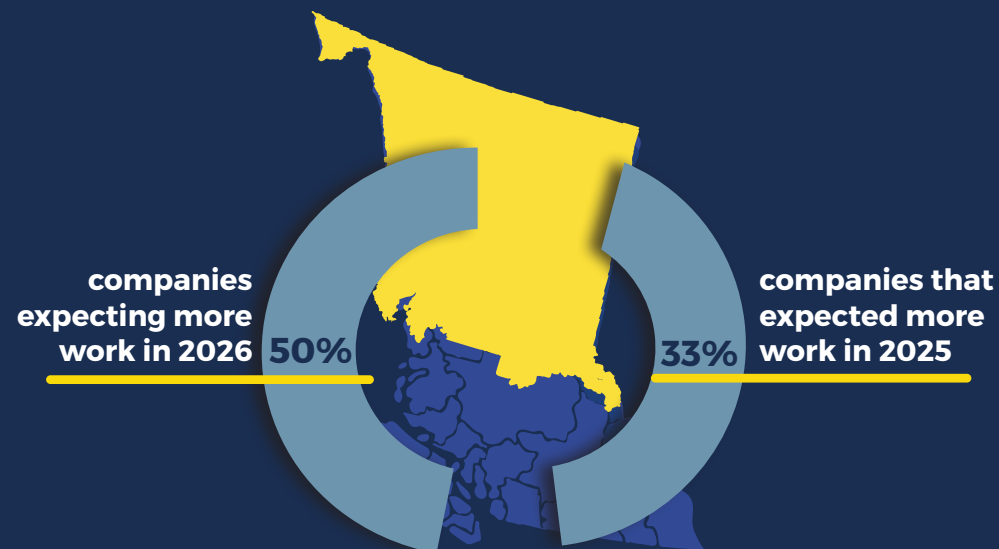


Companies identifying workers shortage as their 'Biggest Challenge'

52% 2026

46% 2025

Northern B.C.

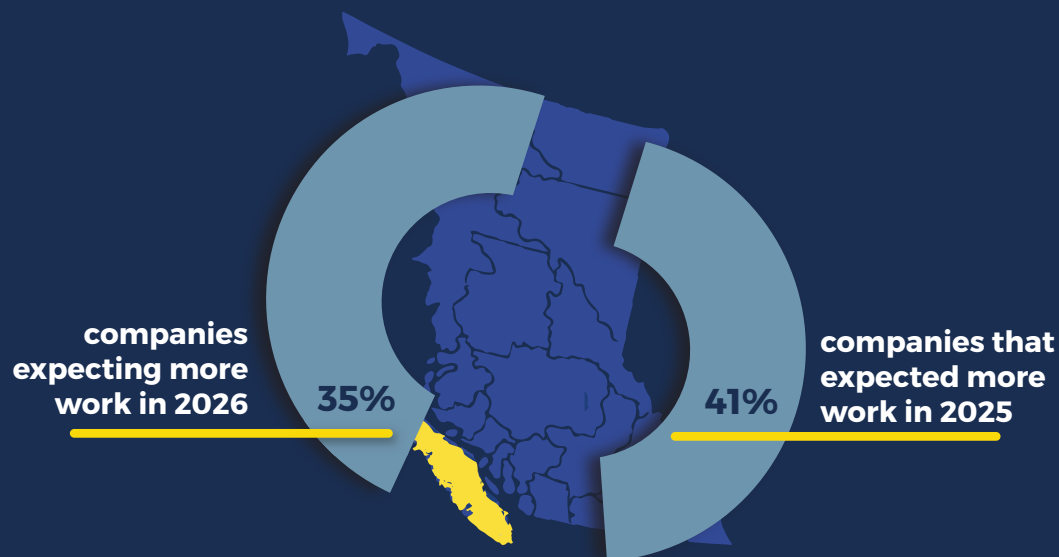


Companies identifying workers shortage as their 'Biggest Challenge'

38% 2026

61% 2025

Vancouver Island

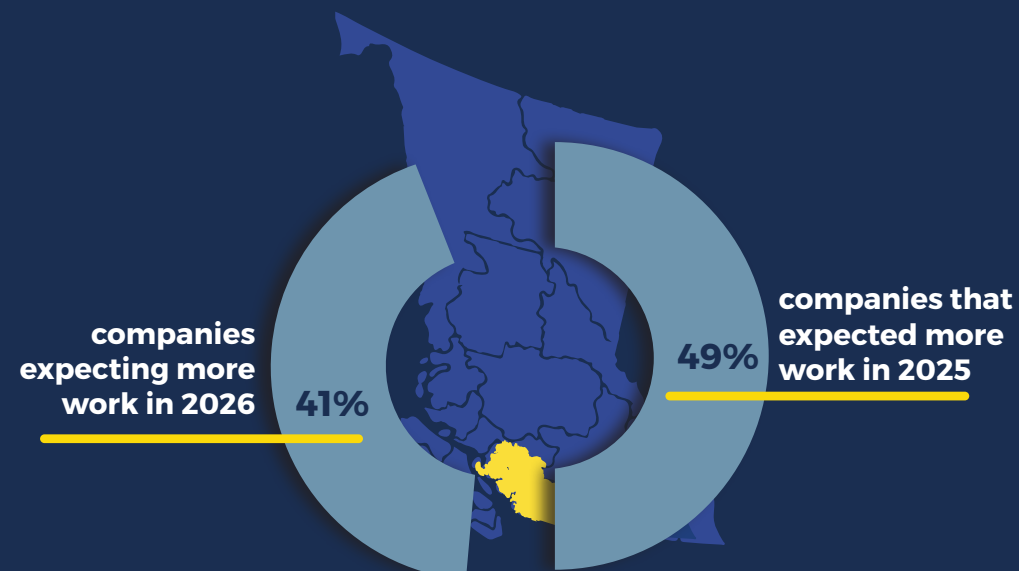


Companies identifying workers shortage as their 'Biggest Challenge'

35% 2026

68% 2025

Southwest B.C.



Companies identifying workers shortage as their 'Biggest Challenge'

39% 2026

62% 2025

WHAT DO YOU EXPECT WILL OCCUR IN 2026 WITH THE RESIDENTIAL SLOWDOWN?



Stay slow
34%

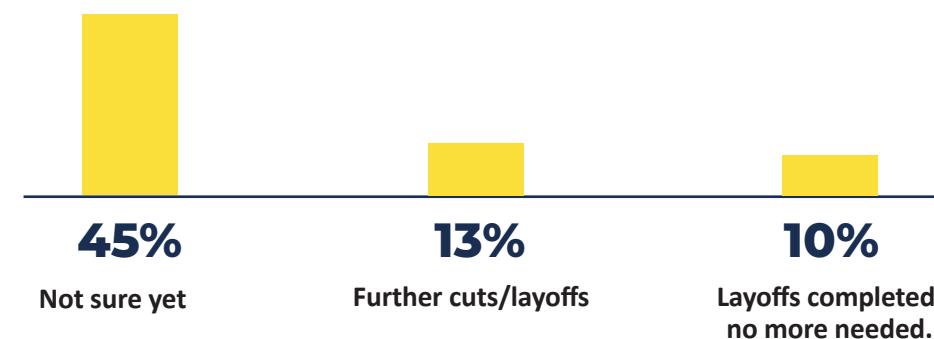


Get worse
28%



Improve
12%

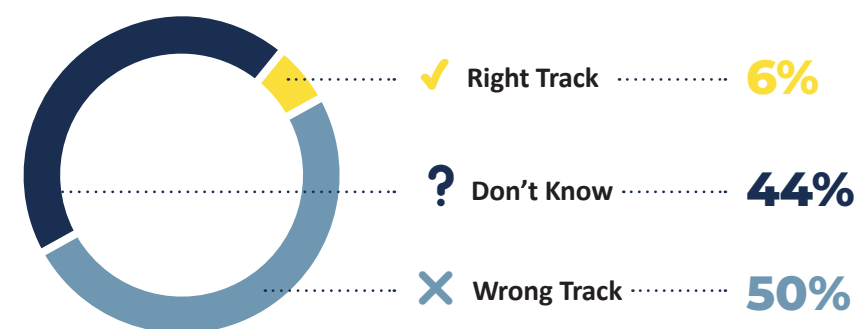
HOW WILL THIS EFFECT YOUR STAFFING LEVELS?



FOR THOSE WHO HAVE/WILL MAKE CUTS TO WORKFORCE, WHAT PERCENTAGE WILL BE LAID OFF?



IS THE GOVERNMENT ON THE RIGHT TRACK OR THE WRONG TRACK IN HOW IT DEALS WITH A BUSINESS LIKE YOURS?



Only 6% say government is on the right track.