



The Association of
**Professional
Landscapers**

Business Barometer Q1 2025 Results

State of trade update (January – March)

Summary

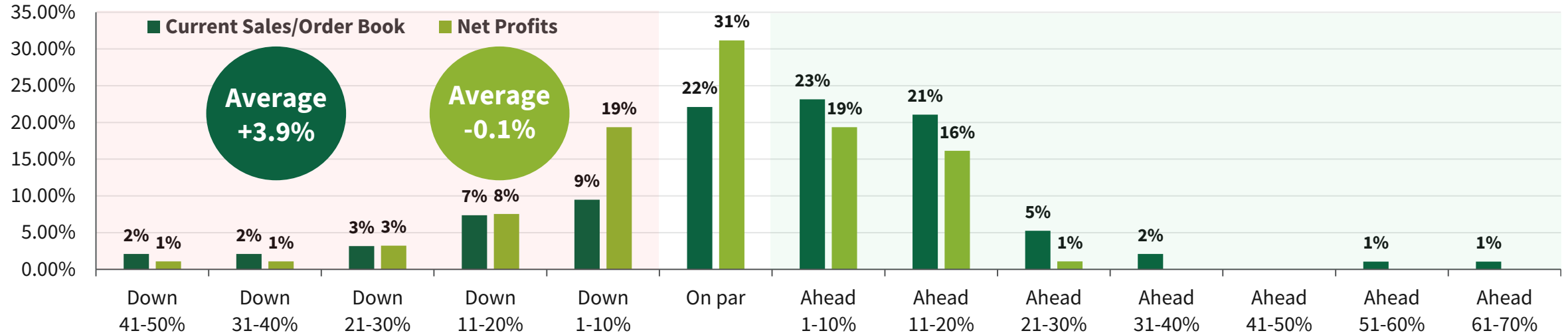
- This report summarises the findings from our Q1 Business Barometer poll, giving a flavour of how the horticulture and landscaping industry is currently faring.
- On average, HTA & APL members said that their sales position was 3.9% ahead of budget for Q1 2025, and most members were achieving their expected profit position for the end of Q1 2025. This reflects the strong sales performance in March for retailers, giving them and the supply chain a notable boost.
- Retailers without catering generally outperformed their net profit and sales budgets compared to retailers with catering, largely owing to the strong gardening sales in March 2025. Although catering continues to perform well on its own, gardening categories simply outpaced catering's growth. Garden centre catering also typically has increased overhead costs, further reflecting the difference in margins.
- APL members were around -3% behind their budgeted sales and net profit positions on average at the end of Q1 2025. Current lead-times for new jobs appears stable, although many members expressed fears that jobs would dry up as consumer spending remains restricted by the cost of living.
- Two-thirds of members said that they were planning on investing in their business, with growers being the most likely group to be making investments (85%).
- Among retailers, growers, manufacturers, and suppliers, short-term business outlooks were much higher in Q1 2025 than in recent quarters, following strong trade. Long-term business outlooks were more reserved, considering the Autumn Budget changes to National Insurance contributions, National Living Wage and Inheritance tax coming into effect and the growing uncertainty surrounding the global economy.
- Among APL members, all business confidence outlooks were lower when compared to the rest of HTA membership, and landscapers' long-term outlooks were the lowest recorded since we started polling in 2015. Page 13 details some of the support currently available to HTA members in light of the current challenges facing businesses.
- **Read on for all the details...**

Q1 2025 Sales and Net Profit Positions

Budgeted v Actual All HTA & APL Members

Members were asked whether they were ahead, behind, or on-par with their expected profit position and expected sales position at the end of Q1 2025. Respondents were most likely to say that sales were 1-10% ahead of expectations and that profit positions were on par with budgets. On average, members said that they were ahead of expected sales by +3.9%. Although members were behind their budgeted profit position by -0.1% on average, 68% were on-par with or ahead of their expected profit position at the end of Q1: the average net profit position was pulled down by a couple of respondents who were substantially behind their budgeted profit position at this point in the year.

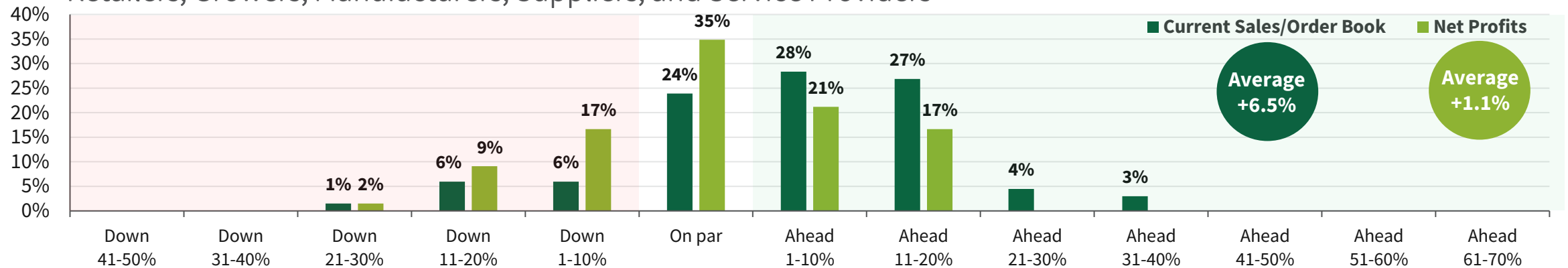
The above-expected sales performance can likely be attributed to the good weather observed in March, leading to a notably strong month for many garden centre retailers. However, with the increased cost of doing business introduced after the Autumn Budget (rises in minimum wage and employer's NI contributions), the strong start to the gardening season may start to be counterbalanced as profits are squeezed against initial budgets.



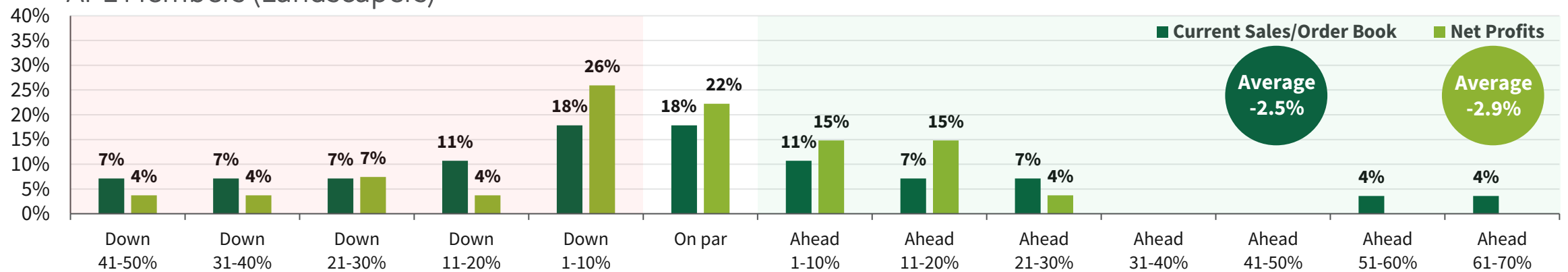
Source: HTA & APL Business Barometer Q1 2025; Base: 95 member businesses;
Note: Averages calculated using midpoints from responses.

Q1 2025 Sales and Net Profit Positions

Retailers, Growers, Manufacturers, Suppliers, and Service Providers



APL Members (Landscapers)



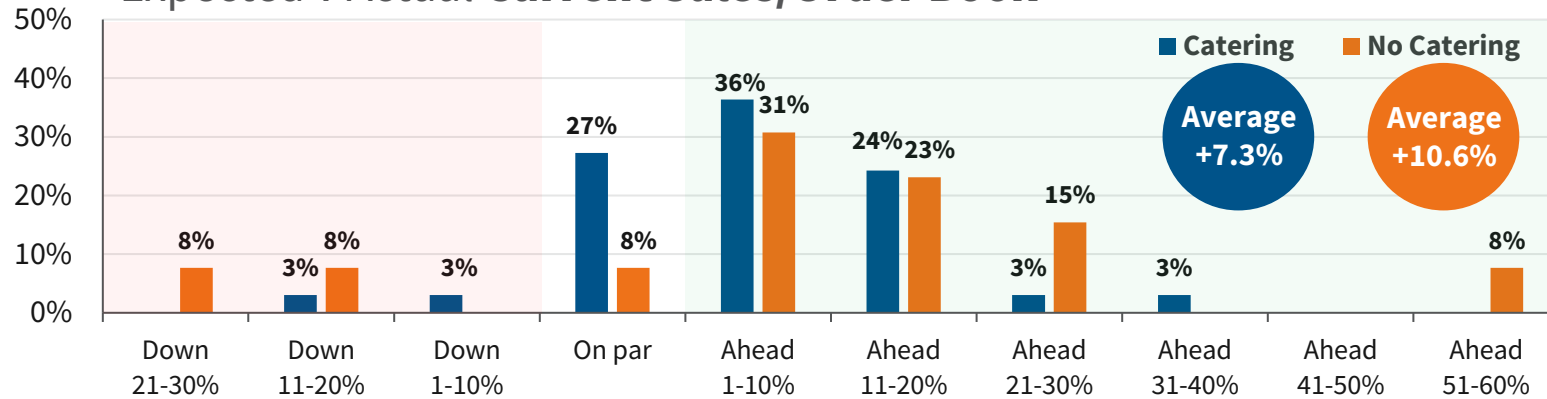
Source: HTA & APL Business Barometer Q1 2025; Base: 95 member businesses

Note: Averages calculated using midpoints from responses.

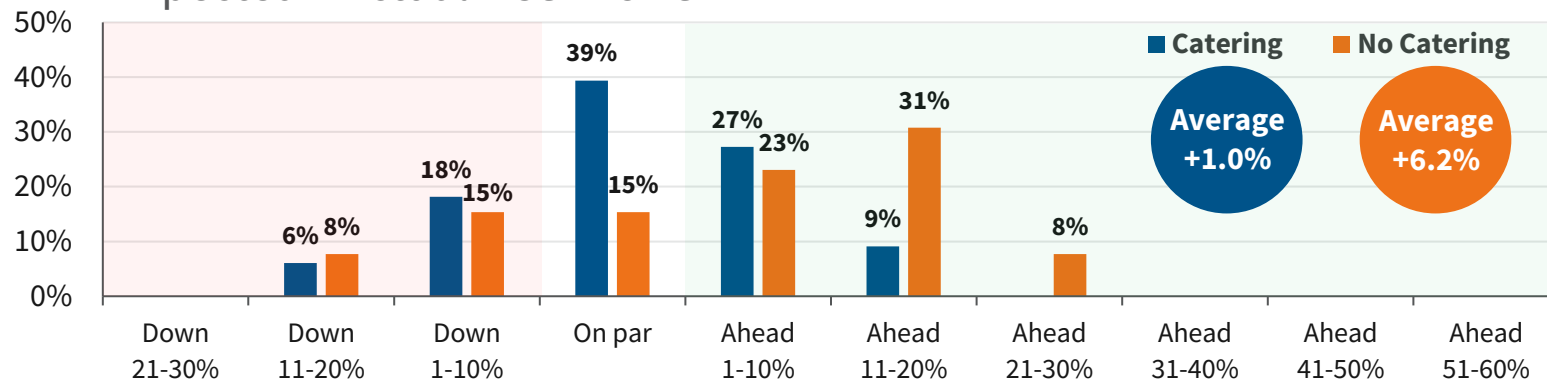
Q1 2025 Sales and Net Profit Positions

Comparing retailers with/without catering

Expected v Actual **Current Sales/Order Book**



Expected v Actual **Net Profit**



Among retailers who responded to the Q1 2025 poll, 77% had a café or restaurant as part of their business.

Contrary to previous state of trade updates, retailers without catering were generally ahead of retailers with catering. Non-catering retailers were up +10.6% on average relative to budgeted sales, and up +6.2% on average relative to budgeted net profit, whereas catering retailers were up +7.3% and 1.0% respectively.

These observations follow a particularly strong March 2025 for gardening sales, as observed in our April edition of Market Update. The growth in gardening sales considerably outpaced catering sales. Combined with the higher operating costs that come with catering, this appears to have left non-catering retailers in a stronger financial position overall.

75% of retailers without catering were ahead of their budgeted sales position at the end of Q1 2025, and 62% were ahead of their budgeted profit position. Comparatively, 66% of retailers with catering were ahead of their budgeted sales position, but only 36% were ahead of their budgeted net profit position.

Source: HTA & APL Business Barometer Q1 2025; Base: 46 member retailers

Note: Averages calculated using midpoints from responses.

Budgets set for 2025

Relative to previous financial year

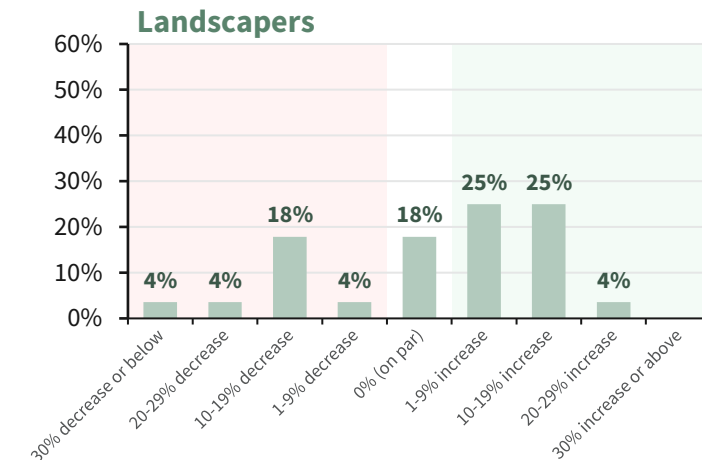
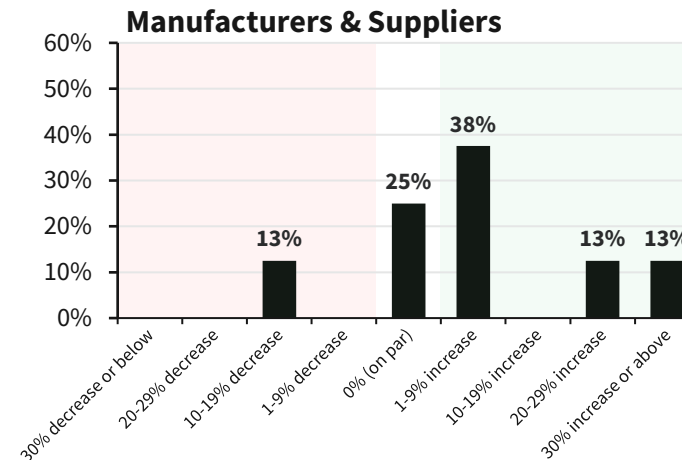
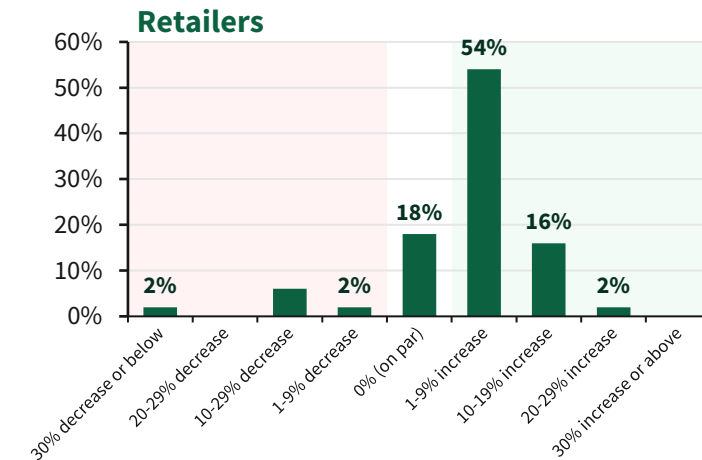
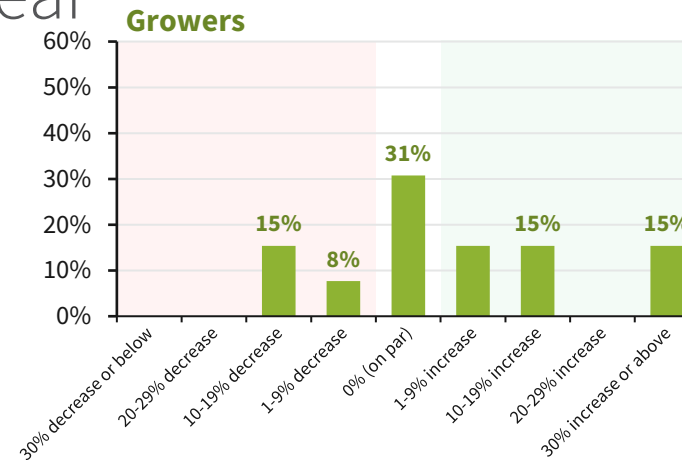
To help contextualise actual sales against budgeted sales, members were also asked what level of sales increase/decrease they had budgeted for relative to the previous financial year.

Overall, 63% of members said that they had increased their expected sales budget relative to the previous financial year.

On average, growers, retailers, and suppliers & manufacturers said that they had budgeted for a 4-6% sales increase in the current financial year relative to the previous. Meanwhile, landscapers had budgeted more conservatively, expecting a 1.5% job book value increase on average for the current financial year.

Retailers were the group most likely to say they had forecasted an increase in sales value for their current financial year (72%).

Overall, all business types were more likely to say they had budgeted increased sales to some degree for the current financial year. As highlighted earlier however, the average member has exceeded their expected sales positions shown in these figures.

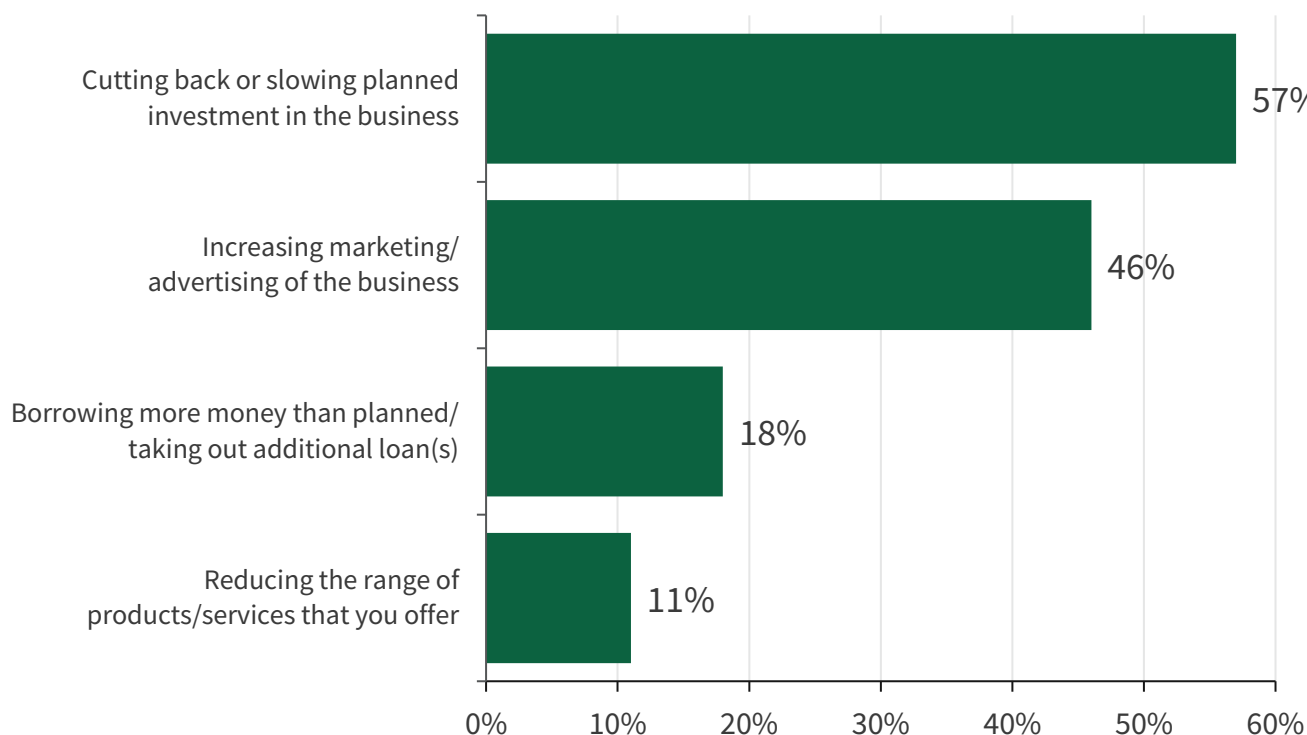


Source: HTA & APL Business Barometer Q1 2025; Base: 99 member businesses

Impacts of profit positions behind budgets

Actions to be taken in the next 12 months

“Is your business likely to be taking any of the following measures as a result of your profit position?”



Members who stated that their profit position was behind budget for Q1 2025 were also asked what measures they would likely take as a result of their profit position.

Most businesses said that they were being forced to cut-back or reduce planned investment into the business (57%).

Furthermore, 18% of behind-budget members said they were borrowing more money or taking out loans to meet their obligations. Only 11% of members said that they would reduce the range of products and services on offer.

However, 46% of those behind their budgeted profit position said that they were intending to increase marketing and advertising of their business.

Source: HTA & APL Business Barometer Q1 2025;
Base: 28 member businesses who stated their profit position was behind budget

Business investment plans

Over the next 12 months

In Q1 2025, 45% of members said that they were looking to invest in skills and staff training. Meanwhile, 36% of members said that they would be investing in targeting different types of customer.

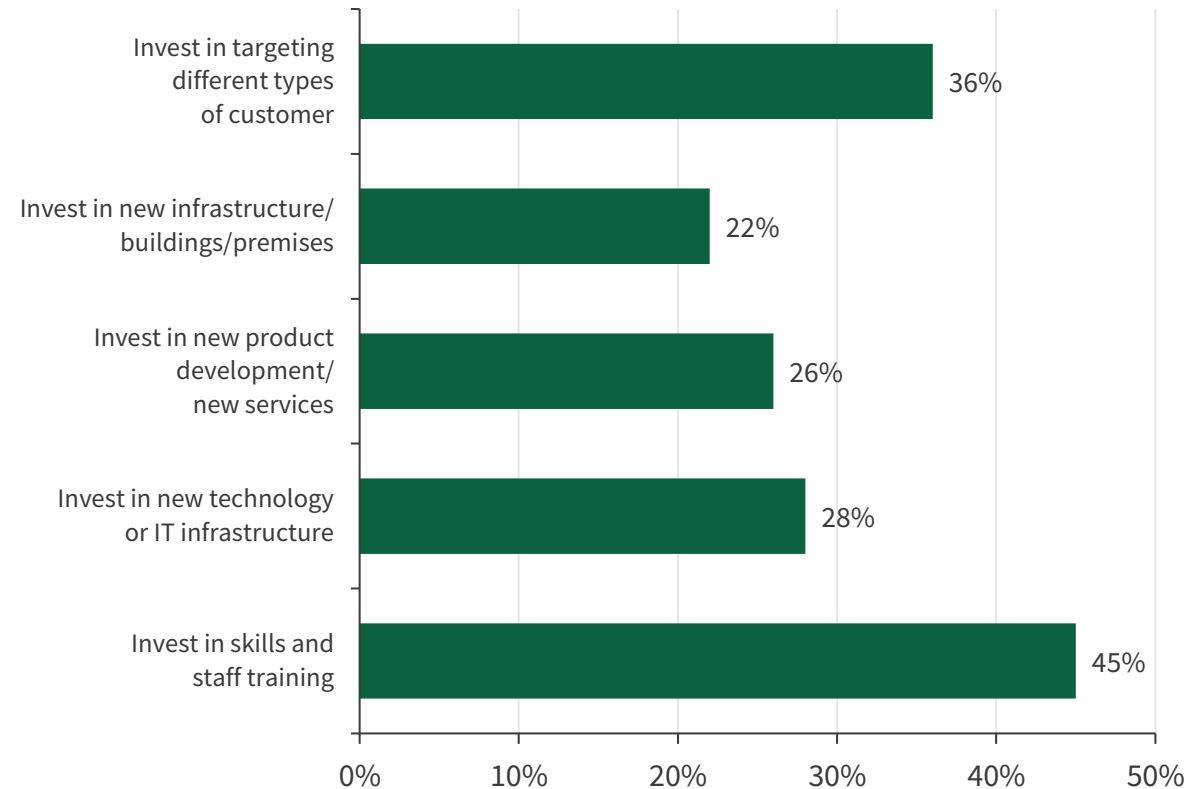
Meanwhile, 22% of members said that they were planning on investing in new infrastructure or premises for their business.

Similar numbers of businesses also said that they were planning to invest in new products and services (26%) and technology and IT infrastructure (28%).

Growers were most likely to say that they were planning investment into their business (85%), whereas landscapers were least likely to say they were investing into their business (57%).

Overall, 66% of respondents said that they were planning at least one form of investment into their business, whereas 46% of respondents said that they were planning more than one form of investment.

“In the next 12 months, how likely do you think it is that your business will do the following?”; % likelihood
(Answered: “yes – definitely”)



Source: HTA & APL Business Barometer Q1 2025; Base: 93 HTA & APL member businesses

Business Outlook

HTA Retailers, Growers, Manufacturers, Suppliers, and Service Providers

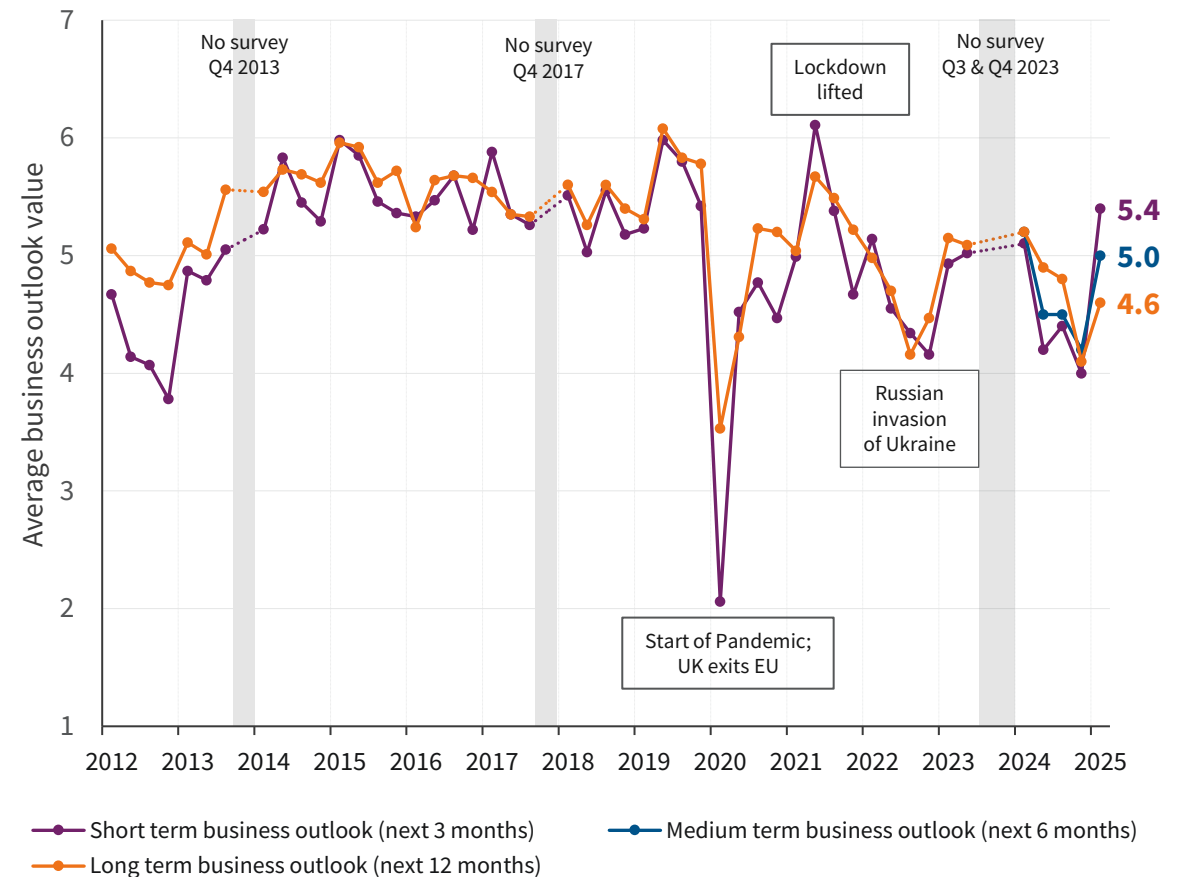
Last quarter (Q4 2024), we recorded the lowest business confidence among members since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, as members faced the prospect of increased business costs ahead of some of the quietest months of trade.

In Q1 2025, the business outlook of retailers, growers, and manufacturers was much more positive in the short-term, although more reserved in the long term. Short-term outlooks were at 5.4 out of 7 on average – the highest recorded since summer 2021.

This followed a particularly strong March for retailers as reported in our April edition of Market Update. These strong sales gave retailers a great short-term boost, which fed through somewhat to growers and suppliers.

Longer-term outlooks were more muted, coming in at 4.6 out of 7 on average. This was a rise of +0.5 compared to Q4 2024. Businesses remain particularly cautious regarding the long-term impacts of rising business costs, particularly inheritance tax changes which bring significant financial and operational consequences to family-run businesses. Rising uncertainty surrounding the state of the global economy was also a significant contributing factor.

HTA member average business outlook
(1 = very negative, 7 = very positive)



Source: HTA & APL Business Barometer Q1 2025; Base: 70 HTA members

Business outlook

APL Members

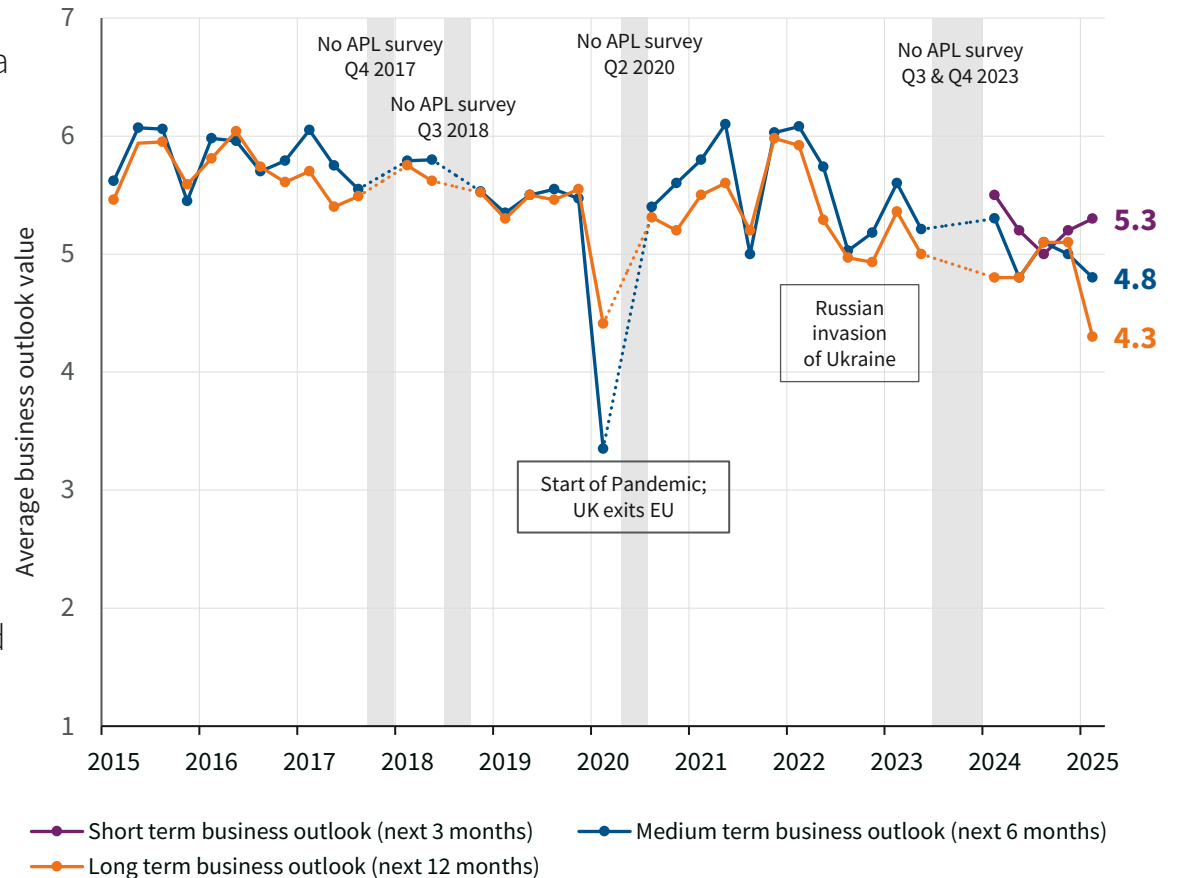
Compared to the wider HTA membership, APL members generally have a similar business outlook in Q1 2025, with more favourable views of the short-term but similar concerns for long-term business prospects.

Among APL members, short-term confidence remained relatively stable at 5.3, up slightly from Q4 2024's measure of 5.2 on the 7-point scale.

Long-term, APL members were generally more pessimistic, with a measure of 4.3 out of 7 for long-term outlooks. This marked the lowest long-term business outlook of APL members since we started running the poll (Q1 2015). Similar themes to the rest of HTA membership were provided for this low score, with members attributing rising business costs, changes to employment law, and global economic uncertainty to their concerns. As many domestic landscaping clients tend to be high-net-worth with large investments, these clients are more vulnerable to stock market shocks with the potential to dent their confidence to spend on major items or projects.

In previous quarters, business confidence has typically been higher among APL members when compared to the rest of HTA membership. However, Q1 2025 was the first time since Q2 2021 where APL members had a lower business outlook across all future time periods compared to the wider HTA membership.

APL member business outlook
(1 = very negative, 7 = very positive)



Source: HTA & APL Business Barometer Q1 2025; Base: 28 APL member businesses

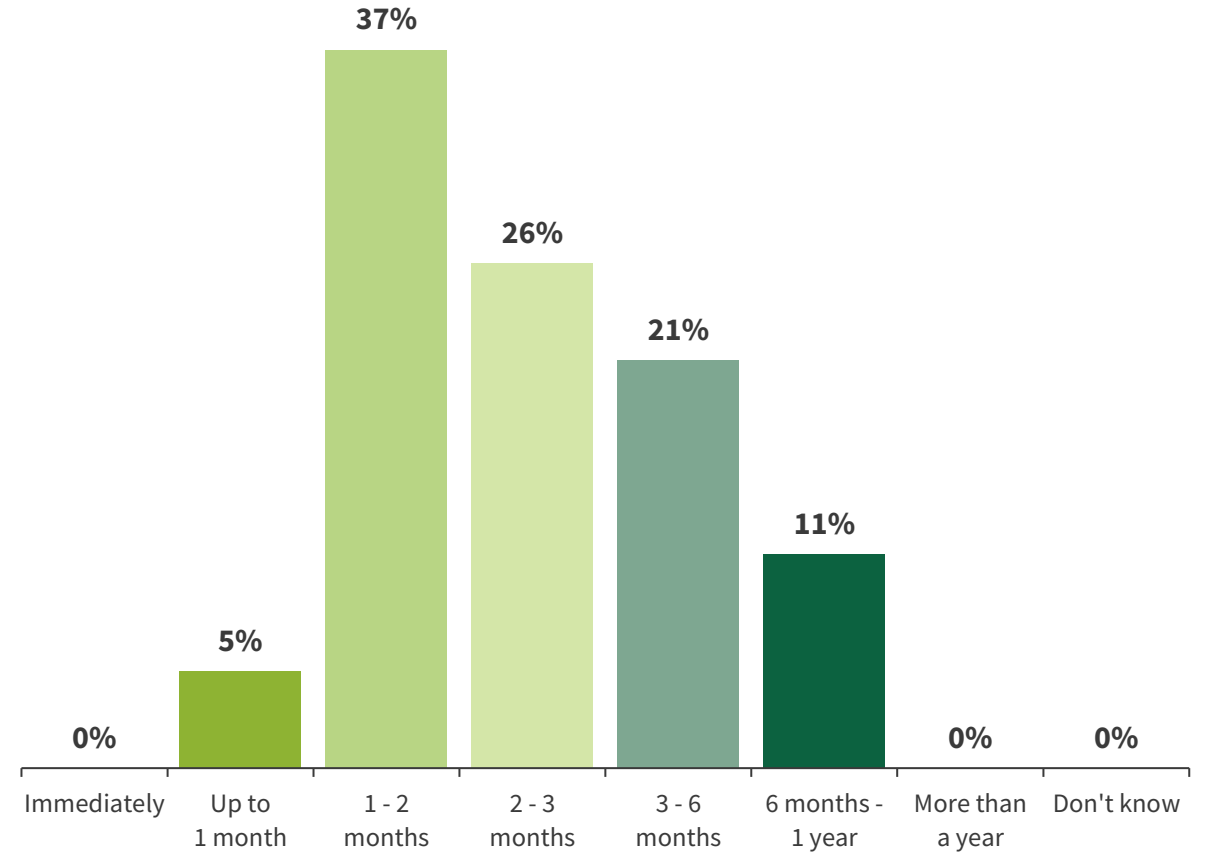
Landscapers' Lead-time for New Jobs

APL Members

APL members were most likely to say that they would be able to take on new jobs in 1-2 months' time, with only 5% of respondents stating that they would be able to take on new jobs within the next month. No respondents said that they were not currently working on a job.

11% of respondents said that they were booked for the next 6 months at least, and a further 21% said that they were not able to take on new jobs for the next 3 months. This marks a rise in the average length of lead-times from Q4 2024, although the ongoing market instability does bring uncertainty regarding members' ability to acquire new clients as consumer spending constricts.

Although most landscapers are booked up for the near future, responses were mixed about the potential for confirming new jobs, with some landscapers voicing fears that jobs were drying up when consumers have less spending power. This was reflected in landscapers' long-term business outlooks being at the lowest levels since we began polling.



Source: HTA & APL Business Barometer Q1 2025; Base: 19 APL member businesses

Sample Overview

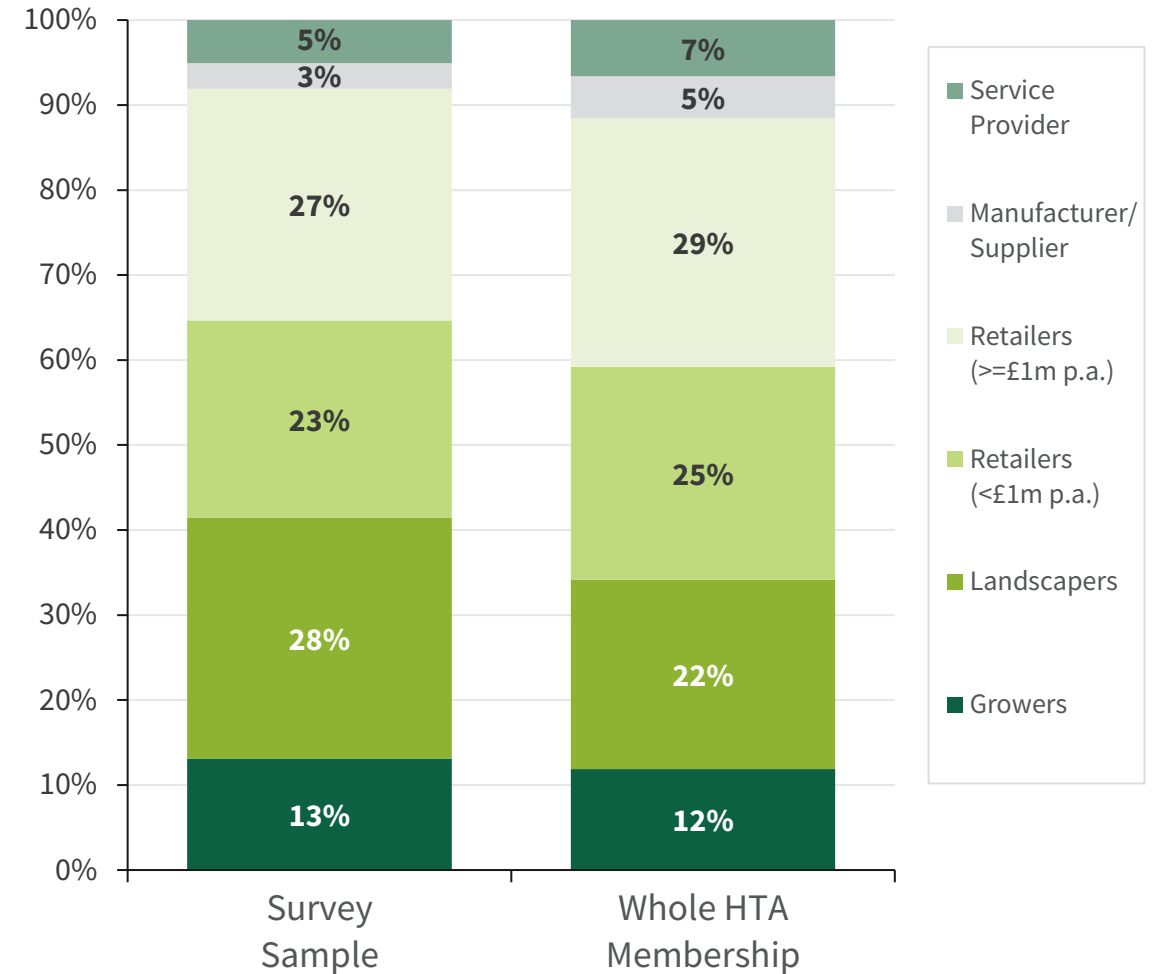
Who participated?

The HTA & APL Business Barometer poll received 100 responses from members, representing a response rate of approximately 8%. Therefore, report findings are generally indicative and may not be statistically robust.

The proportion of respondents to the business barometer poll were broadly representative of the overall HTA membership.

Landscapers and growers were slightly overrepresented, whereas retailers, service providers, and manufacturers were slightly underrepresented in responses.

To mitigate any consequences of over- and under-representation, insights were split by business type where it was possible and appropriate. This helps ensure findings are accurate and representative of the HTA's different membership segments.



Source: HTA & APL Business Barometer Q1 2025, collected between 8th-23rd April 2025

HTA Support and Actions

What resources are available to members?

HTA understands the current state of the market is very challenging for members. The below information covers just a few examples of the support available to members:

January 2025 saw HTA launch the [Plant Retail Success initiative](#), bringing together new and existing materials to help support retailers improve commercial performance in the plant area. Resources include e-learning, consumer insights, and practical guidance, and the HTA continues to encourage retailers, growers, and manufacturers to maintain active dialogues with one another to work to boost sales for all involved.

The HTA's policy team continue to speak to government over the current cost of doing business, hosting MP visits to member business and running the [Plants in Parliament](#), bringing the HTA to the forefront of policymakers' attention. This work has helped deliver important legislation for the industry, such as the extension of the [easement to Plant Passports](#) until 31 January 2027. The policy team's ongoing [Town Halls and surgeries](#) also continue to provide direct support to members, covering topics such as [retail crime](#), budget impacts, and overseas trade.

For APL members, the regular [cluster meetings](#) and member [WhatsApp groups](#) remain key avenues for members looking to access support as HTA members. The HTA is currently working with the APL committee to develop a new promotional strategy for APL, aiming to ensure clients are aware of the professional qualities that set apart APL landscapers from the rest of the field. APL is also looking to offer a business development course to members towards the end of 2025. More details on this will be provided in the coming months.

Finally, we are approaching the second round of 2025's [Regional Member Events](#), following last year's successful launch and strong reception to the winter events held at the start of the year. HTA's Regional Events are free to attend and enable businesses the opportunity to collaborate and share ideas, whilst hearing from industry experts across a wide range of topics.



Closing Comments

Get in touch

We hope you enjoyed our State of Trade update covering Q1 2025.

If you have any questions, or would like to see something else included, please get in touch via:



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