COMBiLiFT
LiFTING INNOVATION

UNLOCK EVERY INCH OF YOUR STORAGE SPACE!

ENHANCE THE SAFETY, STORAGE AND EFFICIENCY OF YOUR LOGISTICS WITH COMBILIFT

For almost 3 decades, Combilift has been revolutionizing the way companies handle and store goods. We help companies of all sizes and from every industry to maximize the capacity, safety and efficiency of their warehouse and storage facilities.

Our pioneering product range of multidirectional, articulated and pedestrian forklifts, straddle carriers and container loaders allows you to manoeuvre long loads safely, reduce aisle widths and increase the amount of space available for storage.

CONTACT US TODAY

To find out how Combilift can help you unlock every inch of your storage space.

combilift.com

SECTION 3

THE RURAL BUILDER: AGRICULTURAL, RESIDENTIAL, AND LIGHT COMMERCIAL CONSTRUCTION DATA

SECTION 3

THE RURAL BUILDER: AGRICULTURAL, RESIDENTIAL, AND LIGHT COMMERCIAL CONSTRUCTION DATA

When we think of rural builders, there's a tendency to think only of the agricultural component of their business. The cold-formed metal buildings, re-roofing work that relies heavily on metal roofs, and other tasks unique to the agricultural environment. But to thrive in an area that has a lower population density and fewer large niches to serve, construction companies need to take on all manner of projects from the equipment shed on a farm to the high-density multifamily building in town.

In this section, we look at how rural builders performed in 2025, what economic climate they expect to face in 2026, and where the opportunities and challenges lie in the coming years.

Chart C1 – Kind of Building Type by Market Segment

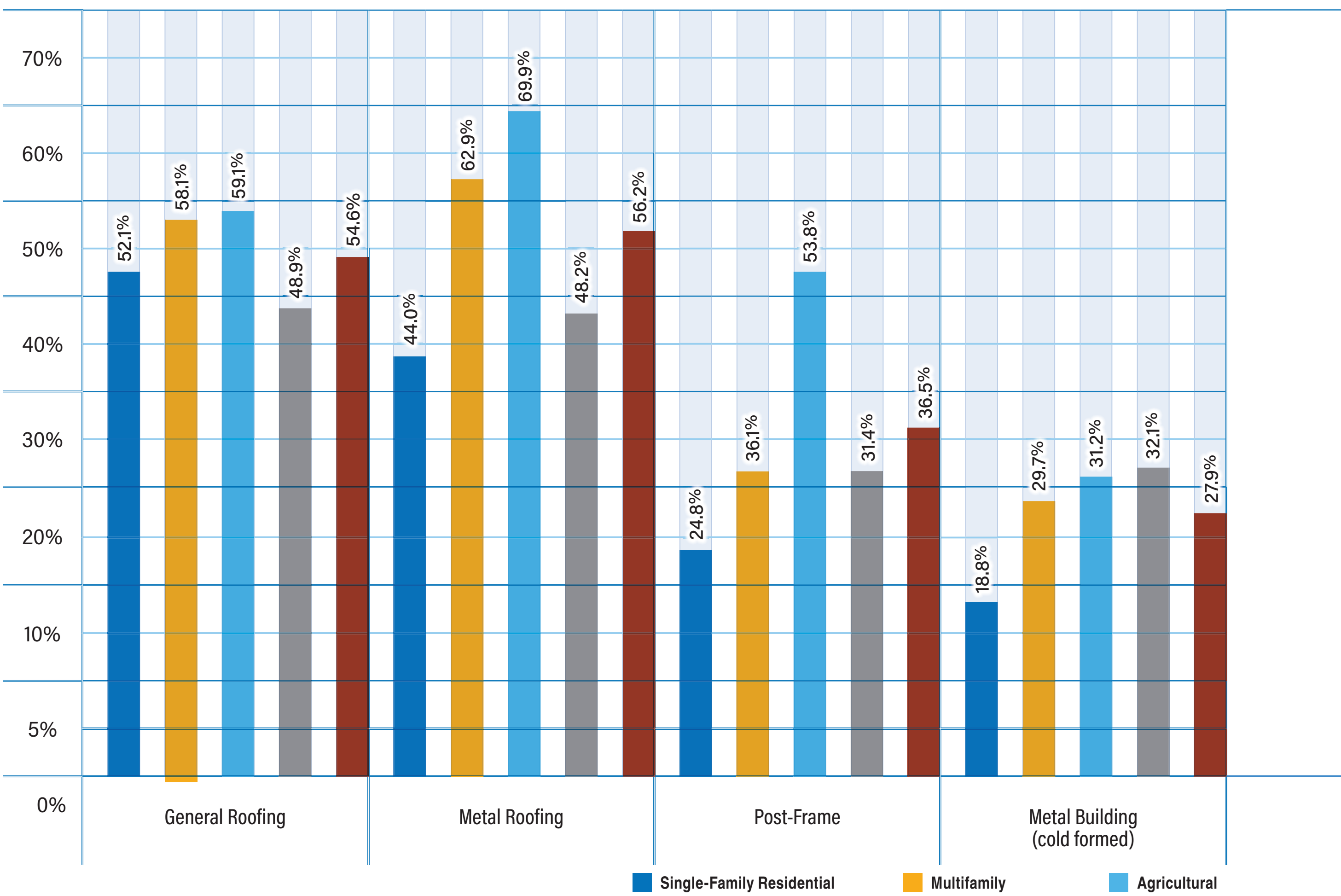
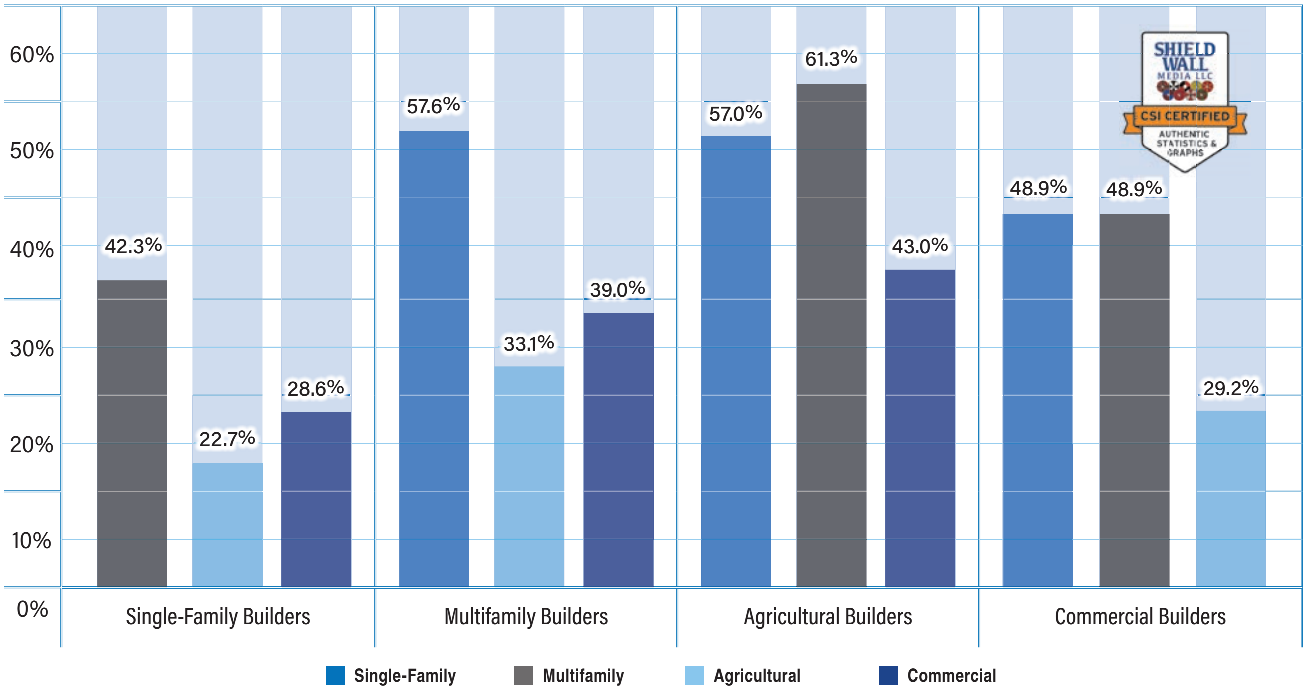
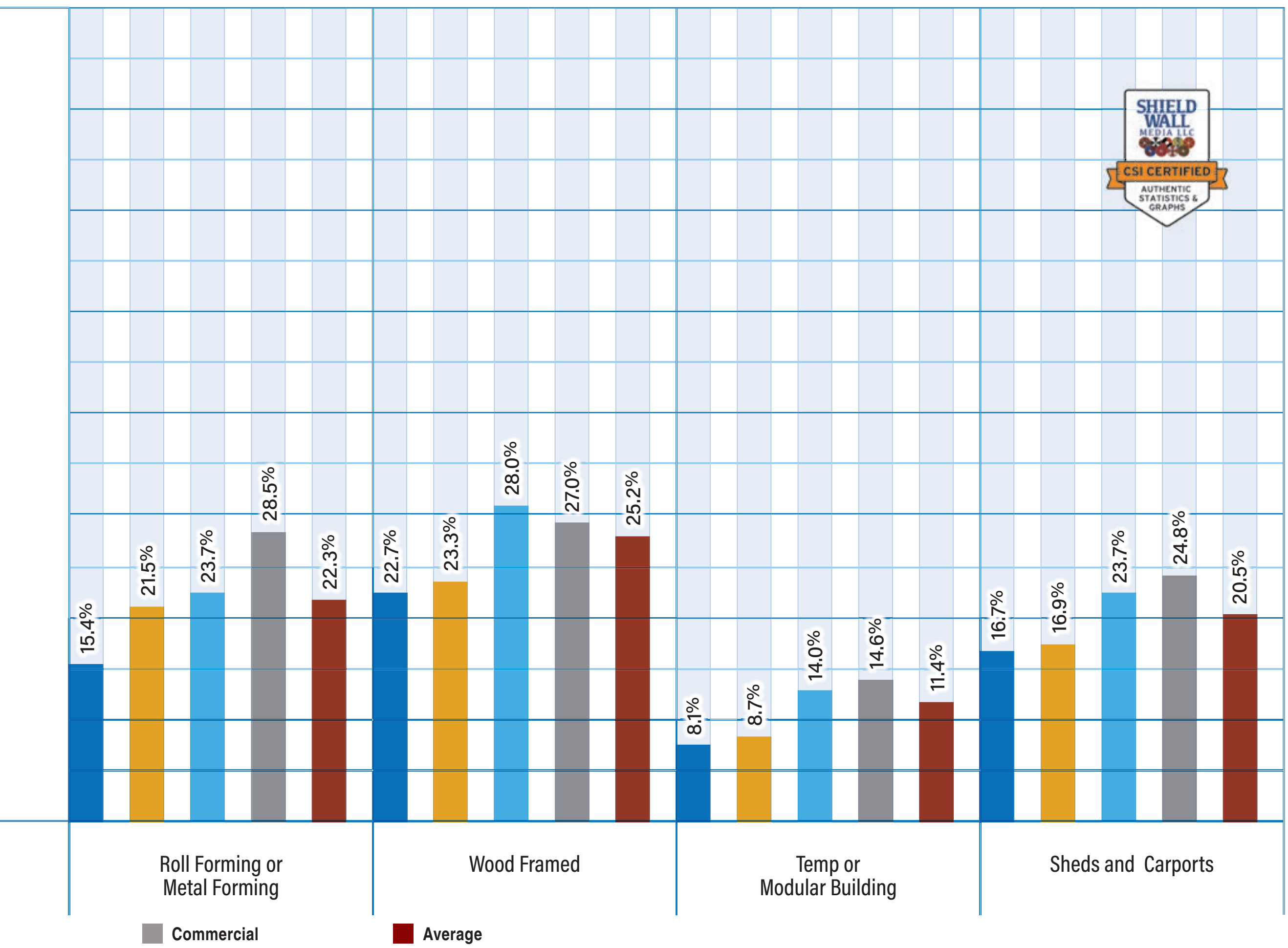


Chart C2 – Industrial Role by Market Segment





Characteristics of Rural Builders

Companies serving the rural market rely on a wide mix of building types shaped by agricultural and light commercial needs as well as residential opportunities. CSI survey data shows that agricultural builders engage in roofing and construction of post-frame buildings at significantly higher rates than other market segments, reflecting the demand for efficient, durable, and cost-effective structures. C1

Post-frame construction is a defining characteristic of the rural builder. More than half of companies working in the agricultural market (53.8%) report using post-frame systems—more than double the rate of those doing single-family residential construction(24.8%). General roofing—and the more specific metal roofing—are also important projects among agricultural builders with nearly 60% doing general roofing and 70% doing metal roofing. However, those engagement percentages are roughly equal to companies doing multifamily projects. Not surprisingly, companies doing single-family construction are less likely (only 44%) to do metal roofing and post-frame buildings (only 24.8%).

Rural builders tend to operate across multiple market segments, reflecting the flexibility required to remain competitive in those less densely populated areas. Companies engaged in agricultural construction are far more likely than other segments to work across single-family residential, multifamily, and commercial projects. C2

Nearly half of agricultural builders report participating in single-family residential construction (57.0%), with similarly strong crossover into multi-family construction (61.3%) and commercial work (43.0%). These rates of engagement rank comparatively higher than any other cohort. This contrasts sharply with single-family residential builders, who are the least diversified. Only 42.3% of single-family companies report doing multifamily work, and just 22.7% participate in agricultural construction.

Commercial builders show a crossover pattern closer to agricultural firms, with 48.9% engaged in single-family residential work and 48.9% participating in multifamily projects. Even so, agricultural construction remains the least penetrated segment by companies whose primary focus lies elsewhere.

Overall, the data reinforces the defining trait of the rural builder: adaptability. Unlike more specialized urban or suburban firms, rural builders routinely balance multiple market segments, allowing

Chart C3 – Percent of New Construction vs. Remodel

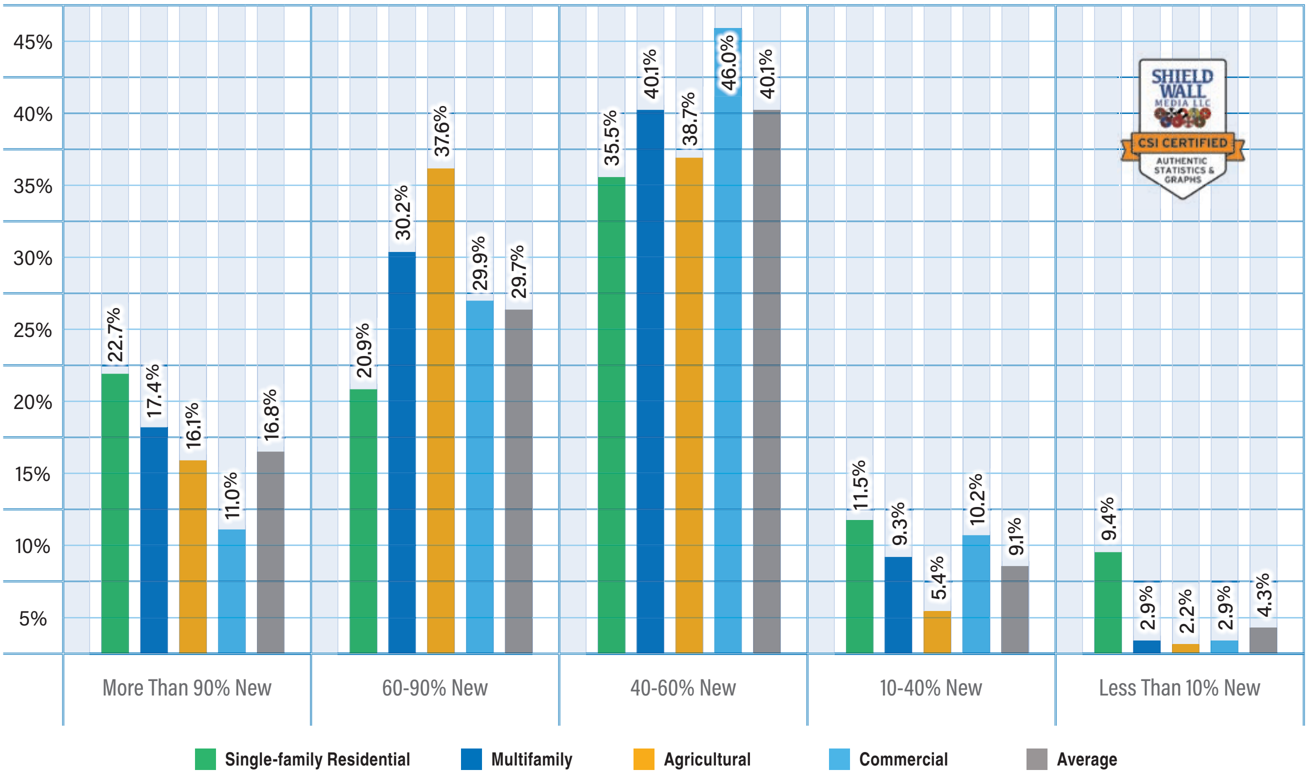


Chart C4 – Projected 2026 Construction Industry Growth for Companies Engaged in Residential, Agricultural, or Commercial Work

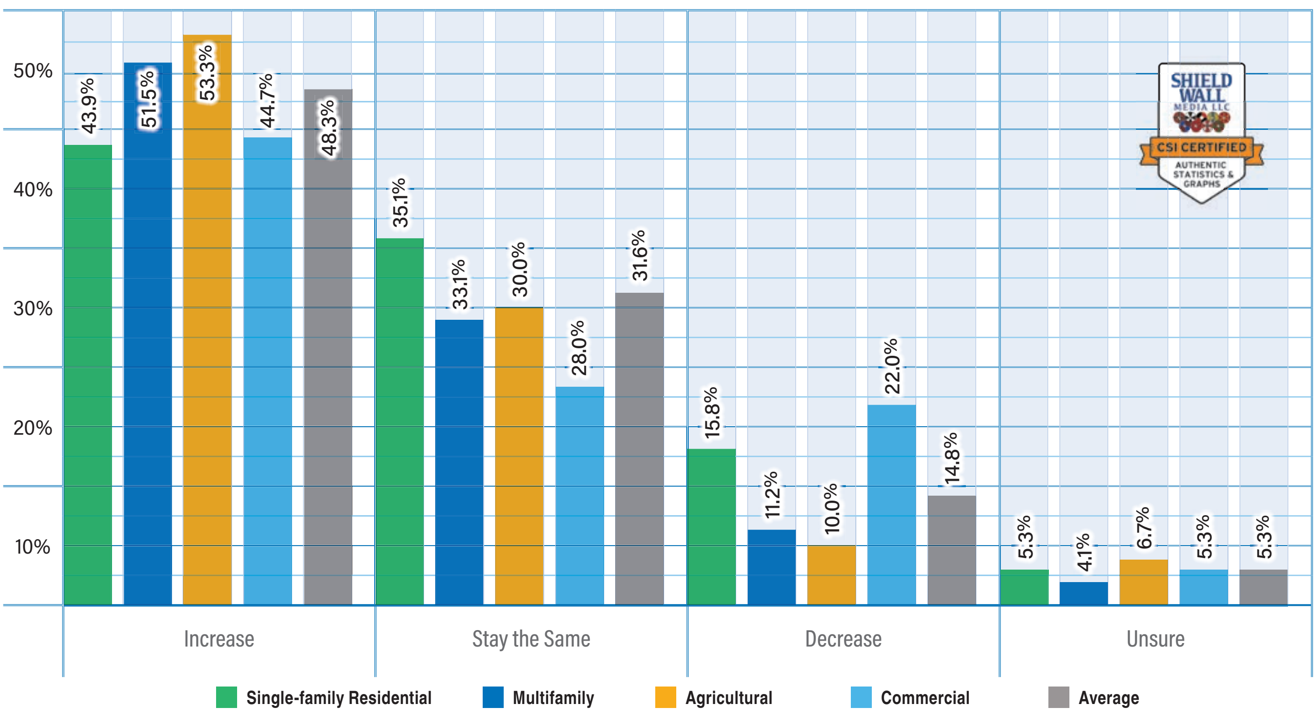
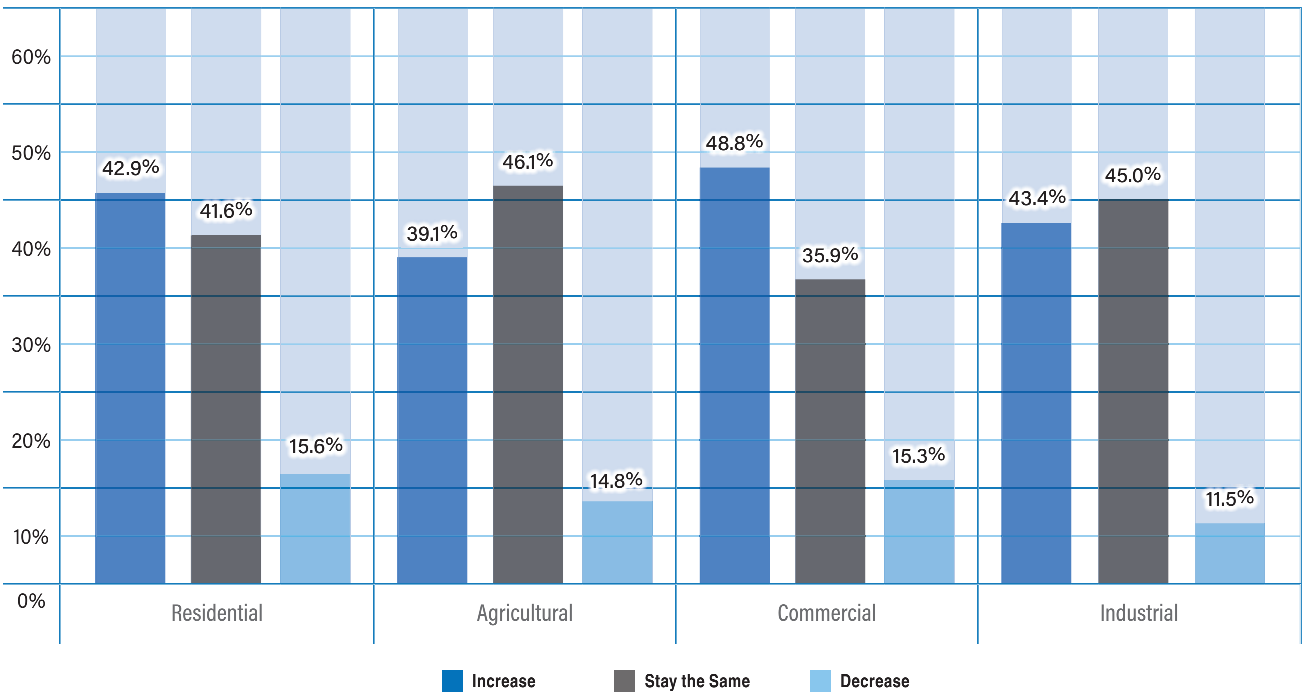


Chart C5 – 2026 Growth Expectation by Market Segment



them to respond to shifting demand and maintain steadier workloads across economic cycles. C3

Rural builders remain far more focused on new construction than on remodeling with more than 80% of their work coming from new construction. This is a pattern that is especially pronounced among companies engaged in agricultural construction who do more than 90% of their work in new construction While the broader construction industry continues to shift gradually toward work on existing structures, CSI survey data shows that rural and agricultural builders are still heavily weighted toward building new.

Across all market segments, relatively few respondents report doing very little new construction. However, companies engaged in agricultural construction stand out for their strong reliance on new builds. Nearly 60% of agricultural builders report that more than 60% of their work is new construction, reflecting the ongoing need for new agricultural facilities, storage buildings, and rural infrastructure. Only 7.6% of agricultural firms report doing less than 40% of their work in new construction.

By comparison, remodeling work on existing structures plays a more meaningful role in single-family residential markets, where the housing stock is older and renovation demand is more consistent. That may also reflect a bias in the data because a huge part of the residential roofing marketing, according to many sources, is more than 80% re-roofing.

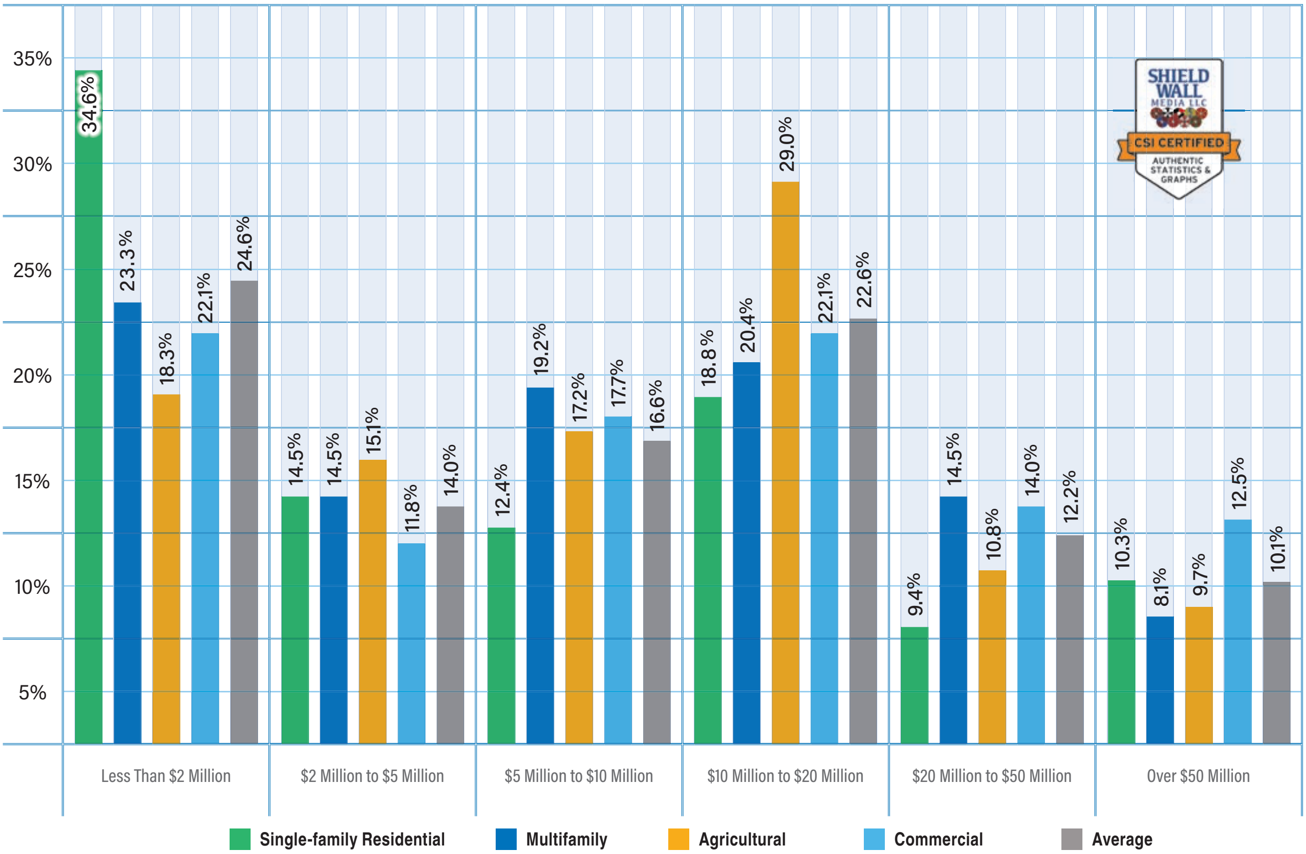
Multifamily, agricultural builders, and commercial builders are the least likely to focus on remodeling, with fewer than 5% reporting that new construction accounts for less than 10% of their workload.

Overall, the data suggests that rural builders continue to depend on new construction to drive revenue, with remodeling serving as a supplemental—not primary—source of work.

Projected Industry Growth

The industry growth sentiment among rural build-

Chart C6 – 2025 Gross Sales



ers closely mirrors broader industry expectations, with relatively little variation across market segments. The data shows that, on average, 48.3% of companies engaged in single-family, multifamily, agricultural, and commercial construction expect the overall construction business climate to improve in 2026. Agricultural builders are less pessimistic than other segments, with only 10% anticipating a decline, compared with 22% of commercial builders.

Generally contractors tend to be optimistic about the future, but it is surprising to see the uniformity of opinion about the overall construction industry regardless of the market segment in which the company works. Still, companies working in commercial construction were notably more pessimistic about the overall industry growth than other segments. C4

When we asked survey takers what they expected within their specific market segments—residential, agricultural, commercial, and industrial—we found similar uniformity with about 85% respondents saying each of the segments would increase or stay the same. The two outliers here are that more respondents (48.8%) expected the commercial market to grow compared to the other segments. And respondents were slightly less pessimistic about the industrial market. The data here revealed that 11.5% of respondents expected a decline in this sector where in the other sectors about 15% anticipated a slowdown. C5

When looking at the growth prospects in the agricultural market, 39.1% of survey takers thought it would increase, compared to between 43% and 48% for the other segments. Given how dependent on interest rates the residential construction market is, it is a little surprising our respondents rated its growth as positively as they did. At the time of this survey, the Fed had made little progress in decreasing interest rates, which remained stubbornly high.

Company Size and Growth Projections

The 2025 gross sales chart highlights the size distribution of rural builders across market segments. Most respondents' companies remain relatively small, with 24.6% reporting annual gross sales below $2 million. About half of respondent's said they had annual gross revenue in 2025 below $10 million. C6

The construction industry remains remarkably fragmented, but no more so than in the residential market, especially among companies engaged in single-family construction. More than 60% of them had revenue below $10 million and 34.6% had rev-

Chart C7 – 2025 Gross Sales Compared to 2024

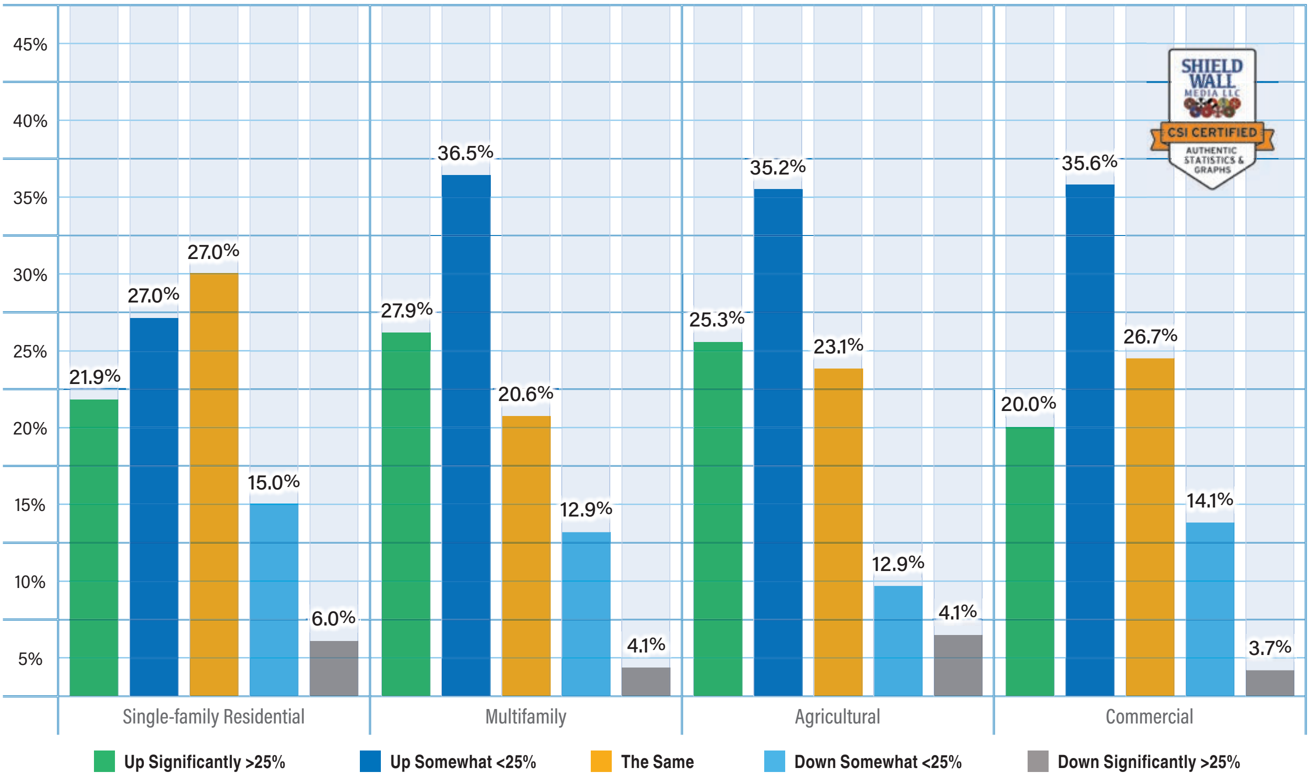
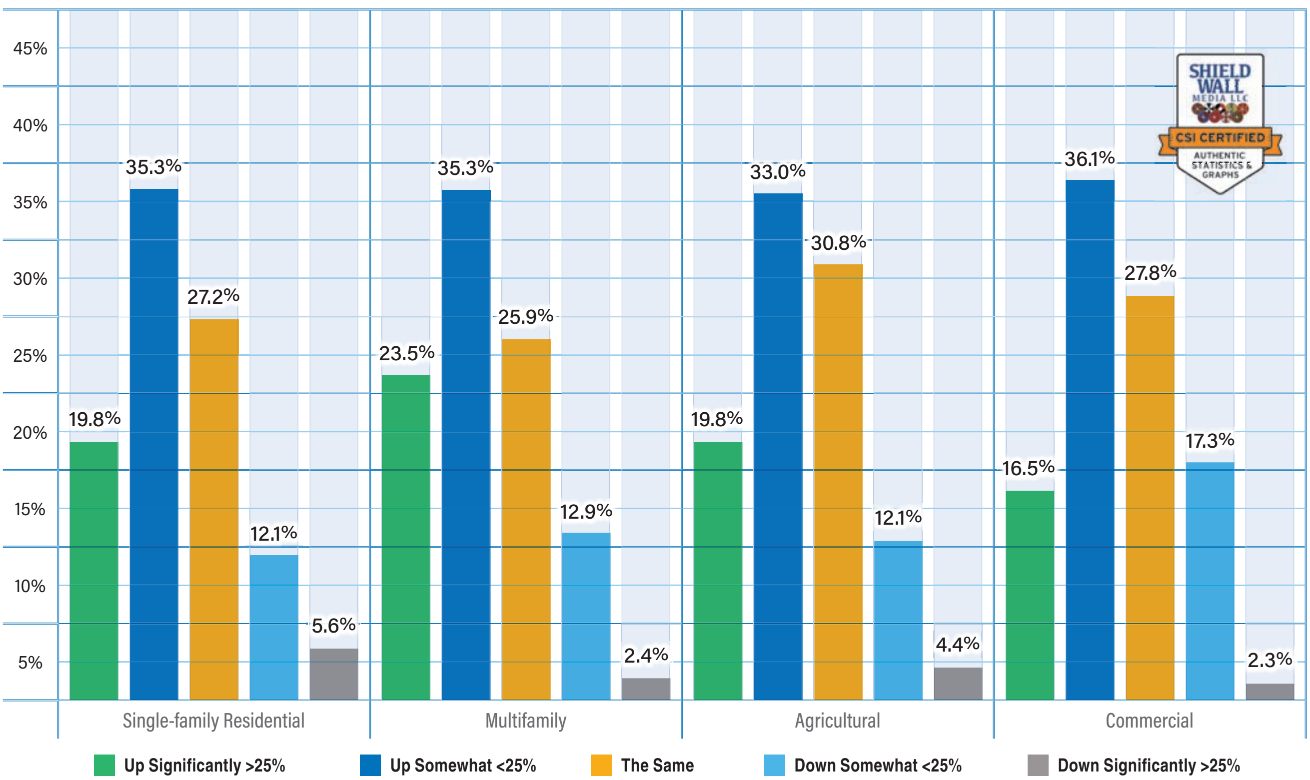


Chart C8 – Projected Sales Growth 2026 Compared to 2025



enue below $2 million. That cohort is more likely to include businesses that do a substantial portion of their work on existing structures. In fact, 20.9% of respondents doing single-family work do less than 40% of their work in new construction.

At the upper end of the scale, companies reporting gross sales above $20 million are more commonly found in the commercial segments. In the commercial market in particular, manufacturers included in the survey appear to contribute to higher reported revenue levels.

Sales growth from 2024 to 2025 among rural builders reveals a relatively consistent performance across market segments with the exception of the single-family residential market. Overall, slightly more than half of respondents report year-over-year sales increases, while slightly less than one-fifth indicate a decline. About a quarter report sales were flat. C7

Single-family residential companies report the lowest share of growth, with 48.9% indicating sales were either up significantly or slightly. Companies engaged in multifamily construction were slightly more likely than average to report increased sales with nearly 65% saying 2025 gross sales were larger than 2024.

On the down side, 2025 was not as good a year for companies engaged in single-family residential construction with 21.0% saying their gross sales decreased, and 6.0% of them report the decrease was significant or greater than 25%. Only the companies engaged in the agricultural market were as likely to experience a significant decline.

All the cohorts were as likely to report a significant increase, although the companies engaged in commercial construction (20.0%) were less likely to say 2025 gross sales were more than 25% larger than 2024 gross sales than the respondents working in the other segments.

Survey respondents project continued sales growth from 2025 to 2026 across all rural construction market segments, reinforcing the generally optimistic outlook seen elsewhere in the CSI data. Companies serving the residential market—both single-family and multifamily—are the most bullish, with 55.2% and 58.8% anticipating increased gross sales in 2026. The multifamily companies, in particular, are optimistic. More than 23% of them expect sales to jump significantly. This segment continues to show the greatest confidence in near-term market opportunities. C8

Commercial and agricultural companies also expect growth, though their outlook is more tempered with about 52% of each planning for sales increases in 2026. For commercial companies, that contrasts noticeably with the number who anticipate a slight decline, with 17.3% looking for slower sales, but only 2.3% thinking that slowdown will be significant.

Future Opportunities and Challenges

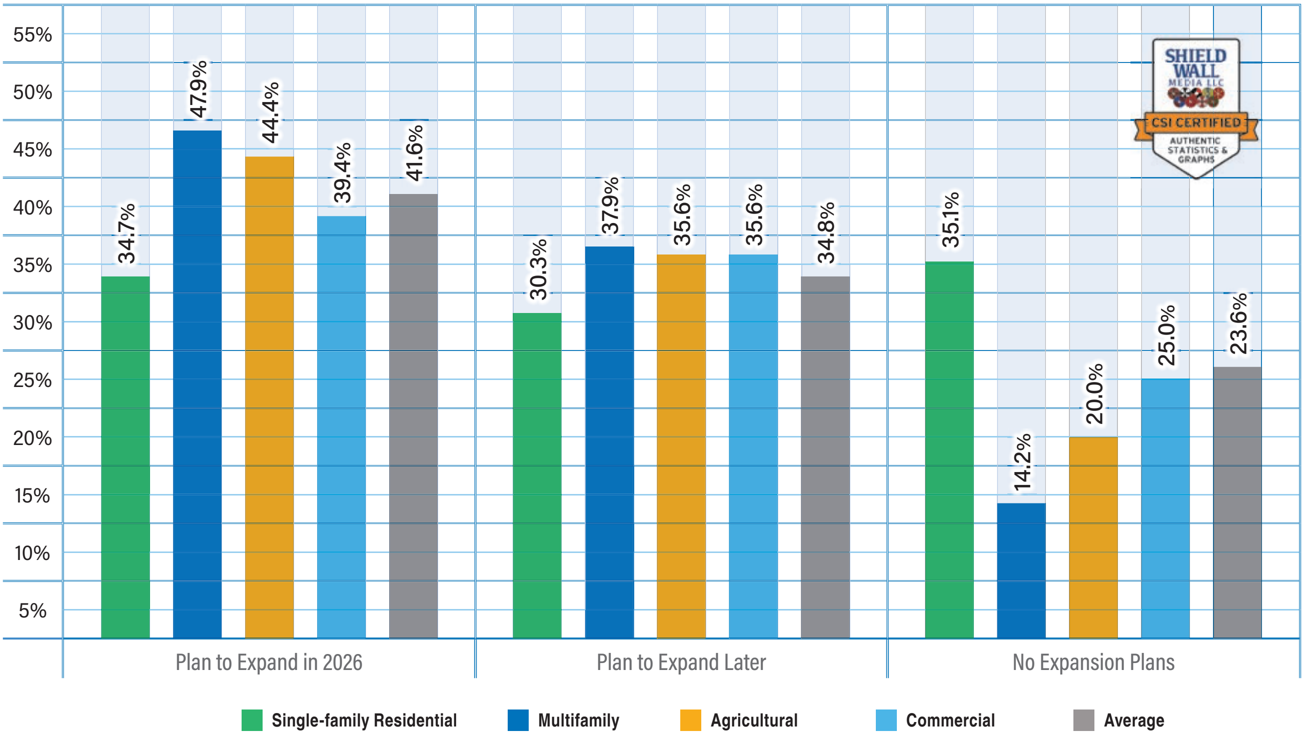
Survey respondents serving rural markets show a strong inclination toward expansion, even if most plans are not immediate. More than 70% of companies across rural construction market segments expect to expand their operations at some point. On average, 41.6% of survey takers intend to expand in 2026 and another 34.8% will expand later. In last year's survey, only 22.8% of respondents had expansion plans for the next year. Companies engaged in multifamily construction were the most expansion minded, with 85.8% indicating plans to grow, and single-family residential companies were least expansion minded with 35.1% saying they had no plans to expand.

Overall, the data points to measured optimism, with rural builders actively thinking about expansion both in the short term and long term. C9

Survey respondents in the rural building environment planning expansion in 2026 are primarily focused on adding people rather than equipment or facilities, reflecting ongoing labor constraints across rural construction markets and the construction industry as a whole. The most frequently cited resources to add are construction employees (53.8%) and support employees (48.1%), with nearly half of respondents identifying each as a priority. This reinforces the persistent challenge of staffing both jobsite and administrative roles as companies look to scale operations. C10

Commercial construction firms are the least likely to add support staff (35.6%) and single-family resi-

Chart C9 – Expansion Plans



dential companies are least likely to add construction employees (44.3%), which is not surprising since most single-family residential contractors—especially in the new construction arena—rely primarily on trade contractors for on-site labor. This is in spite of the labor-intensive project demands of residential construction.

After the addition of human resources, the likelihood of rural builders to add other resources drops significantly. The next selection, new products or

Chart C10 – Top Five New Resources Planned to Add in 2025

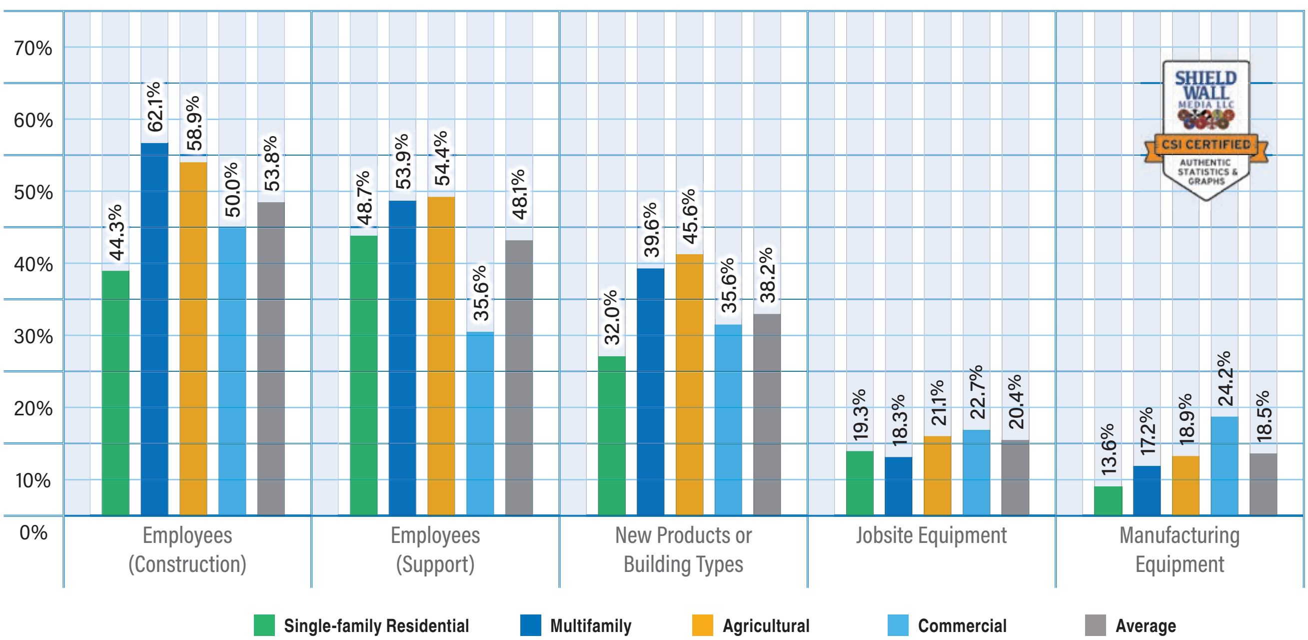
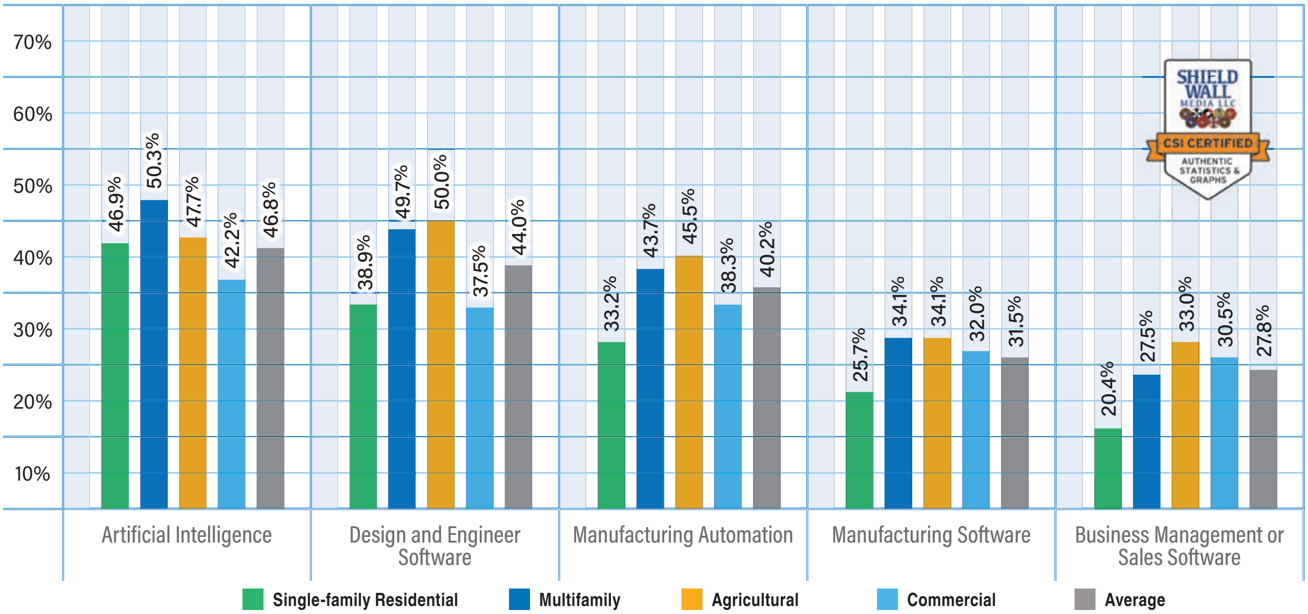


Chart C11 – Top Five New Products or Technology Impact



building types, was selected by 25% fewer respondents on average than selected support employees. However, far more companies engaged in agricultural construction (45.6%) were likely to plan to add products or building types than other cohorts.

Multifamily firms stand apart in this area, with nearly 30% planning to add jobsite equipment, well above the average. Across all segments, investments in technology and facilities trail far behind workforce additions. Overall, the data indicates that rural builders view labor availability—not tools or technology—as the primary constraint on growth, and expansion plans for 2026 are largely centered on building organizational capacity rather than physical infrastructure.

Our chart only reflects the top five resources respondents plan to add. There is one very notable selection not shown and that was among single-family residential builders. More than 20% of them had no expansion or addition plans.

What a difference a year makes. In the 2025 survey of rural builders, the percentage, on average, of respondents who said artificial intelligence (AI) would have a great impact on their businesses was 24.6%. It was the third highest selection after "Design and Engineering Software" and "Manufacturing Automation." In this year's survey, the average selecting AI was 46.8%, about double last year, and it was the leading selection among all products and new technology. C11

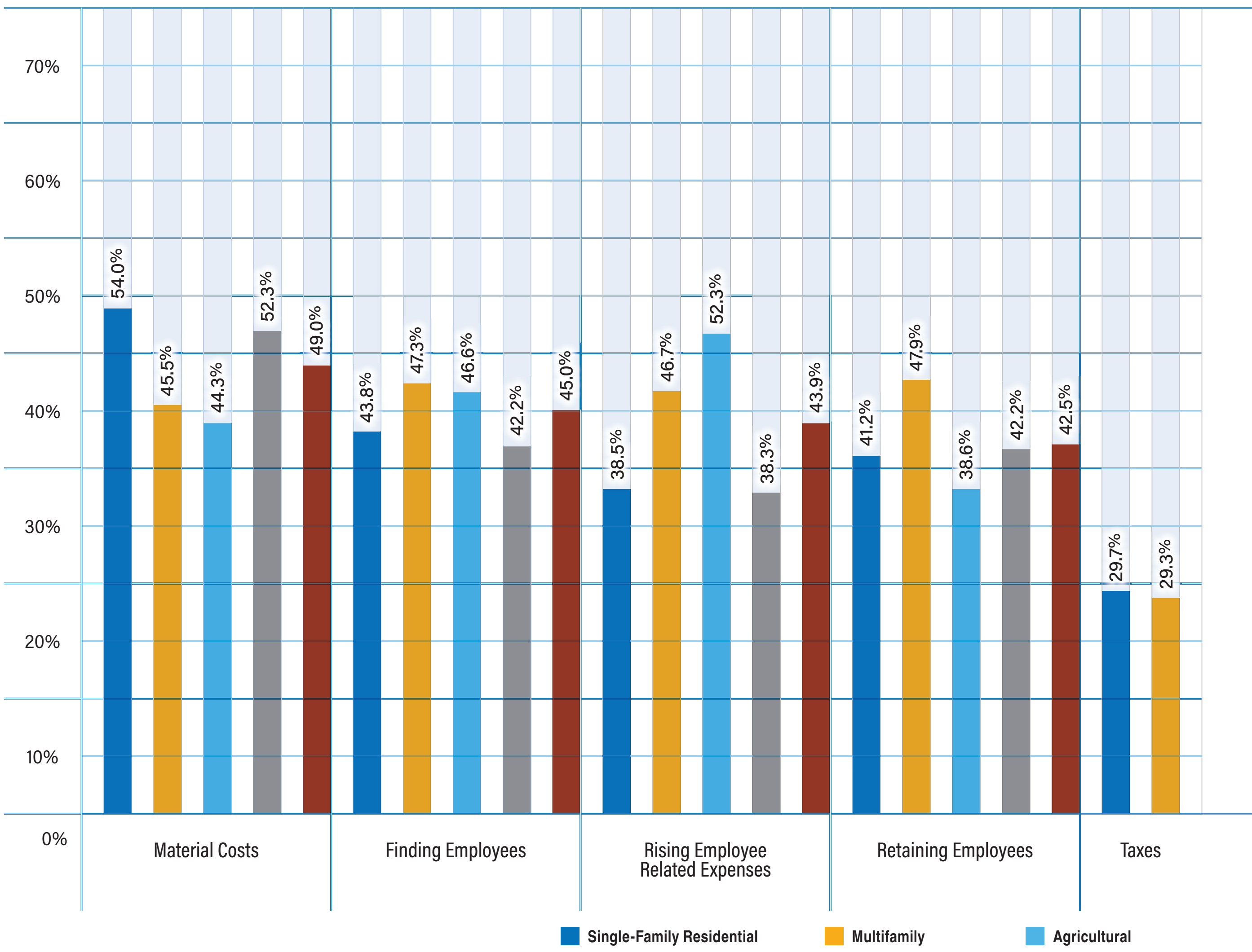
The impact on a business does not necessarily mean its value to the business. Royden Wagler, director of sales and marketing for Smartbuild Systems says, "AI has not proved to be as valuable yet as many had expected it to be." Our survey asked respondents what they anticipate will be impactful, so clearly respondents are still thinking it will prove valuable.

Across the board, each market segment selected AI as having the largest impact on their businesses with the exception of the agricultural segment. Those respondents identified design and engineering software (50.0%) as a the top selection with AI a close second. When you figure AI is now integrated into design and engineering, manufacturing automation, manufacturing software, and business management or sales software, the impact of AI will probably be even more prominent.

Survey respondents anticipate a challenging operating environment in 2026, with cost pressures emerging as the dominant concern across rural construction market segments. About half of respondents identify material costs as the single greatest challenge they expect to face. This concern outweighs others by a slim margin, underscoring ongoing uncertainty around pricing, availability, and the potential impact of inflationary pressures and supply disruptions. C12

While material costs top the list overall, agricultural builders diverge slightly from the broader trend. Companies engaged in agricultural construction are less likely than other segments to cite material costs as their primary challenge and are more likely to point

Chart C12 – Top Challenges in 2025



to rising employee costs (52.3%) as their top concern. This reflects the difficulty of retaining skilled workers in rural markets.

Finding employees has been a perennial problem in the construction industry and for the last three years has been near the top of the CSI annual survey. This year, it ranks second on average among rural builders, just ahead of rising employee-related expenses and retaining employees. Clearly, respondents are concerned about the availability and retention of human resources.

Taken together, the data suggests that rural builders enter 2026 focused less on demand risk and more on managing costs, protecting margins, and maintaining operational efficiency in an uncertain pricing environment.