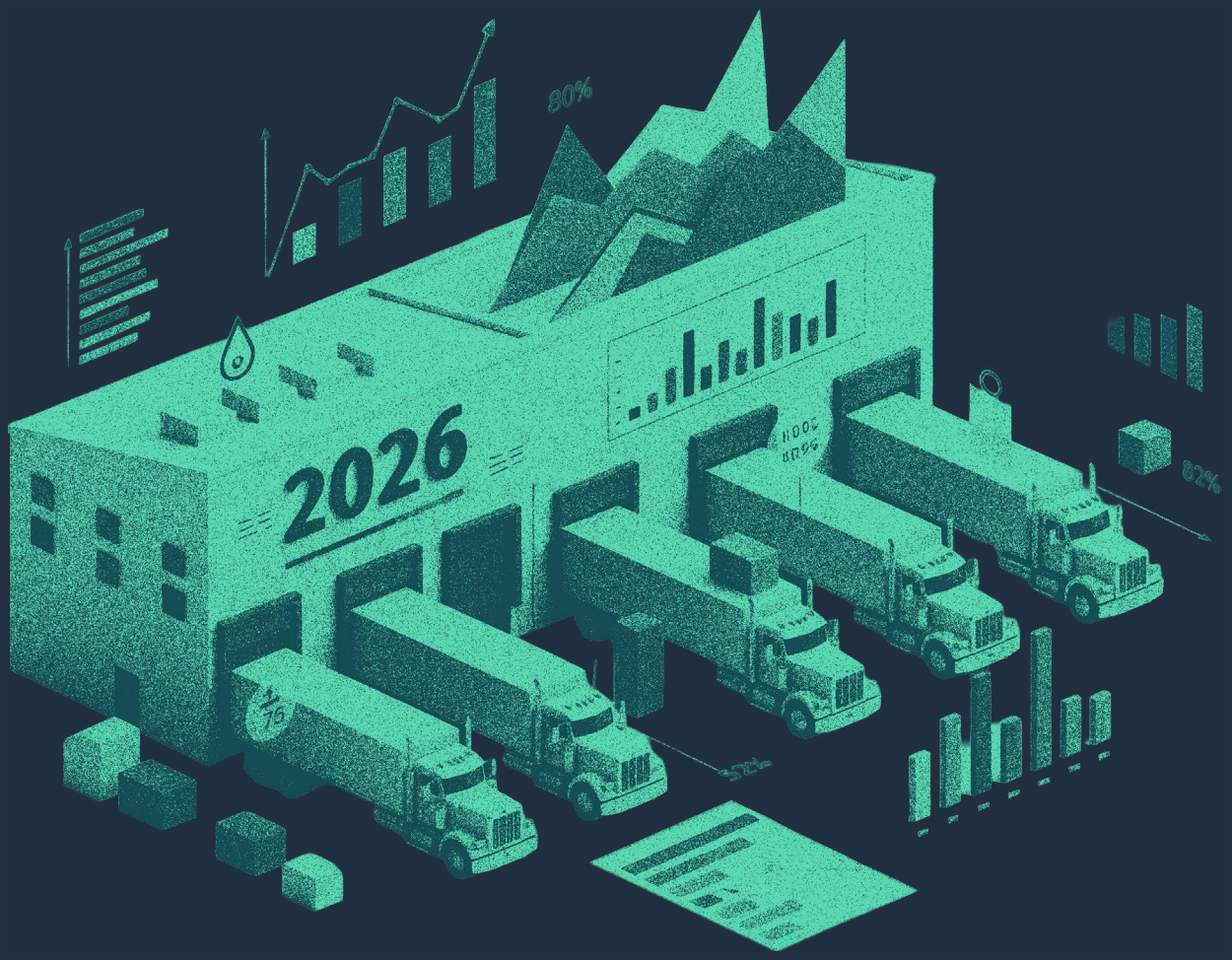
INDUSTRY SURVEY REPORT

The State of Dock & Yard Management 2026



C3 Solutions

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Executive Summary

Dock and yard operations have a problem that spreadsheets and workarounds can no longer hide. In C3 Solutions' second annual State of the Industry survey, 149 supply chain professionals sent a clear signal: manual work is getting worse, systems don't talk to each other, and the old playbook of throwing overtime at the problem isn't sustainable.

Key Findings

- **Inefficient manual processes are rising. Why isn't Technology the first choice?**
  Inefficient manual processes remain the top operational challenge for supply chain leaders, it rose to 40.3% (up from 35.9%). During peak periods, 51.0% of respondents reach for overtime and 50.3% hire temp labor; only 34.2% turn to technology.
- **Real time yard visibility is expected. Connected execution is the prize.**
  Real-time yard visibility holds at #1 position (59.1%), but the real surge is in integration (up to 43.0%) and scalability/customization (nearly doubled to 23.5%). Buyers already know they need visibility, what they're struggling to find is a platform that fits into their existing stack and grows with them.
- **Implementation is where good software succeeds or fails.**
  Implementation effectiveness tops the list at 55.7%, ahead of features, support, or price. How a system is deployed, adopted, and embedded into daily workflows determines whether it delivers value or collects dust.
- **Sustainability and driver experience are set in the buying equation.**
  95.7% of respondents say sustainability matters a lot, up from 91.7% in 2025. Driver experience remains high and steady at 87.1%. Organizations are measuring dock and yard performance through a wider lens: dwell time, detention,and emissions.

72.7% of respondents are actively exploring dock and yard automation, but only 12.9% have a plan. There's an enormous gap between intent and commitment. The organizations that close it first, by reducing manual handoffs, connecting their systems, and choosing vendors who can implement cleanly and with the right depth of expertise will gain a compounding operational advantage that others will struggle to close.

Introduction

Dock and yard operations are where supply chain plans meet real-world variability. A late carrier arrival quickly turns into idle labor, missed loading windows, or delayed service.

That is why dock and yard performance increasingly influences not just warehouse efficiency, but also transportation reliability, labor productivity, and customer outcomes.

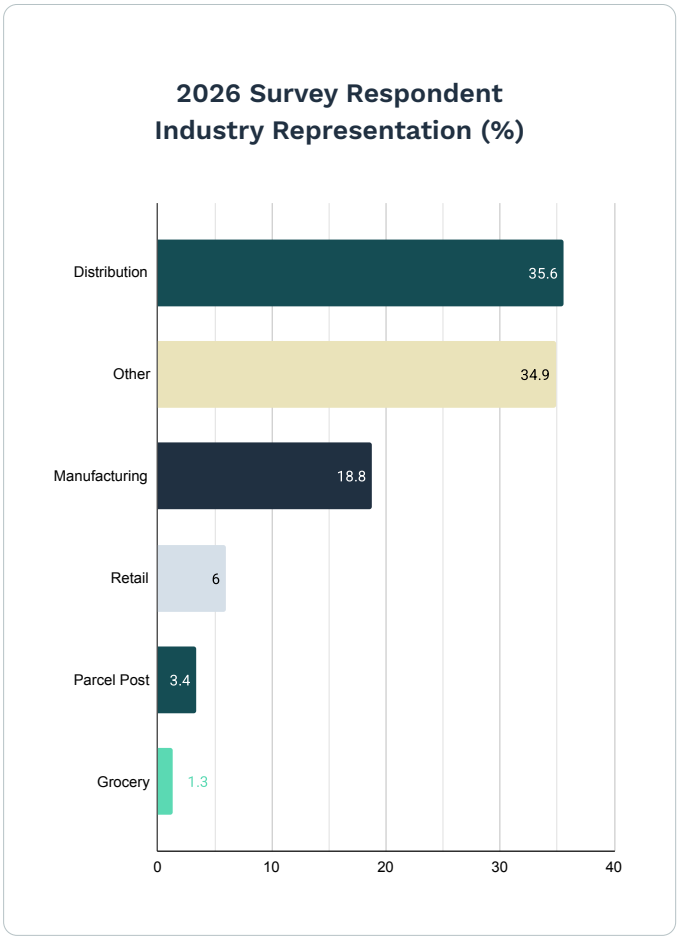
To understand how priorities are changing, C3 Solutions conducted a **2026 survey of 149 professionals** involved in supply chain and logistics operations. The questions spanned operational pain points, current technology usage, software satisfaction, vendor selection priorities, sustainability, and adoption plans.

This year's results are especially useful alongside the 2025 report because they show which issues are persisting, which are easing, and where new expectations are emerging.

The data suggests an industry that wants to modernize, but is still working through the basics. Manual processes remain common, responses to seasonal peaks and late arrivals are still heavily labor-driven, and many software environments remain fragmented.

At the same time, buyers are becoming more specific in what they expect from technology: smoother implementation, cleaner integration, better decision support during disruption, greater flexibility, and clearer sustainability value.

The following sections examine what has changed, what has not, and where operators should focus next.



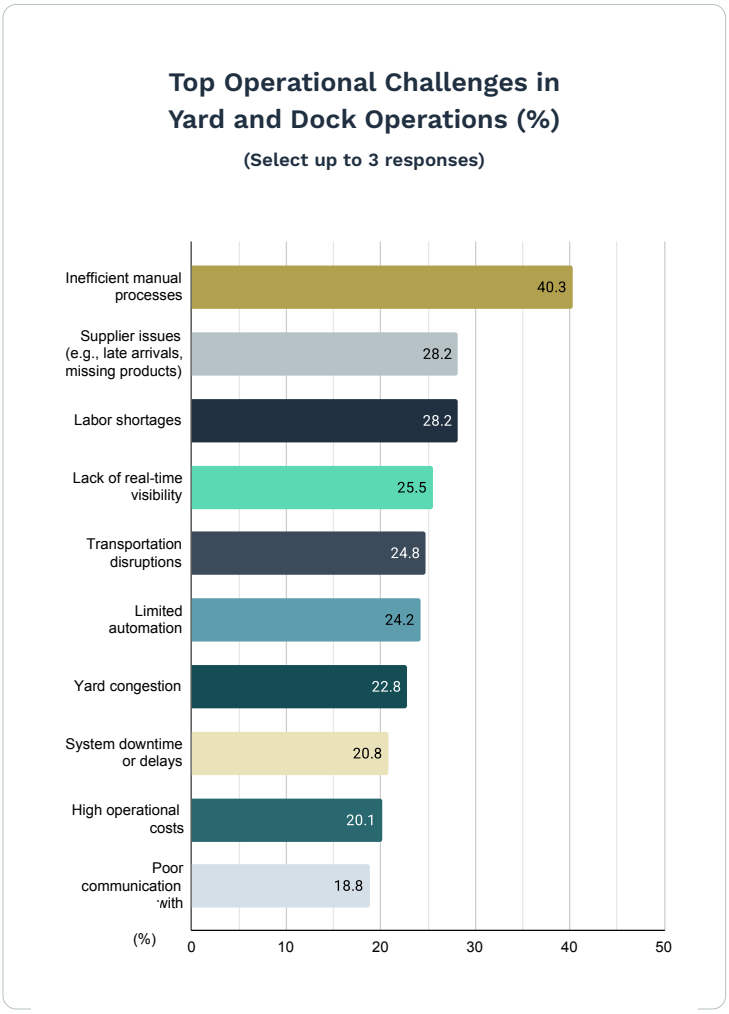
Current Challenges in Dock and Yard Management

Current challenges in dock and yard management are best understood as a mix of structural friction and external variability. Some problems are internal, such as manual work and limited automation. Others arrive from outside the four walls, such as **late suppliers and transportation disruptions**. The survey shows that the most effective operators will need to address both at the same time, because external volatility becomes expensive only when internal workflows cannot absorb it.

Top 3 Challenges

The 2026 results highlight three leading challenges, and each one points to a different part of the operating model that needs attention.

- **Inefficient manual processes (40.3%, up from 35.9% in 2025)**. Manual work remains the clearest barrier to higher performance. Many operations still depend on spreadsheets or human workarounds between systems. The same pattern appears elsewhere in the survey: during peak periods, respondents are more likely to rely on **overtime (51.0%)** or **temporary labor (50.3%)** than technology **(34.2%)**. That combination suggests many companies are still adding people to absorb variability instead of removing touches from the process itself.
- **Labor shortages (28.2%, down from 32.4%).** **Labor pressure** has eased somewhat from last year, but it remains a core constraint rather than a solved problem. A lower percentage does not necessarily mean labor is readily available; it may mean companies have normalized around chronic scarcity by leaning more heavily on overtime, temporary workers, and tighter scheduling discipline. That keeps operations moving, but often at



the cost of fatigue, training inconsistency, and higher unit costs.

- **Supplier issues (28.2%).** Supplier variability is one of the most important new signals in the 2026 data. Late arrivals, missing products, and inbound inconsistency now sit alongside labor as a top-tier challenge. In practice, these issues spill directly into yard and dock performance by disrupting schedules, forcing door changes, and creating uncertainty about labor and equipment needs. Their prominence, combined with **transportation disruptions (24.8%)**, suggests that resilience is becoming just as important as efficiency.

Operational Pain Points

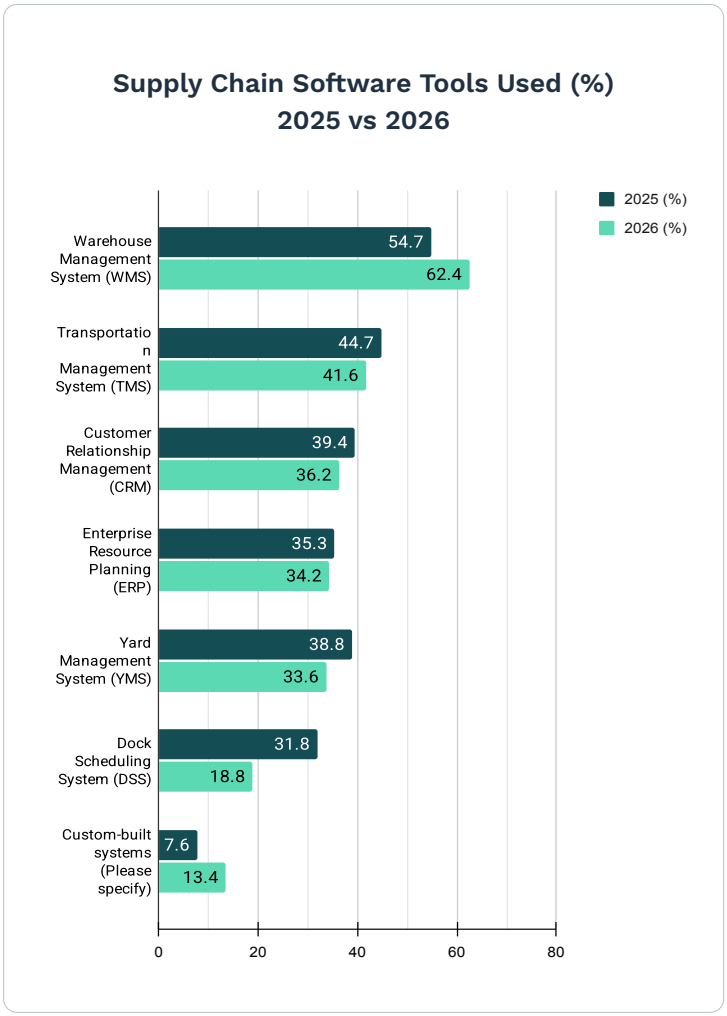
- Beyond the top three, a second tier of problems continues to weigh on performance. **Lack of real-time visibility** was selected by **25.5%** of respondents, **limited automation** by **24.2%**, and **yard congestion** by **22.8%**. Compared with 2025, the drop in congestion from 34.1% to 22.8% is notable.
- Current responses to variability reinforce that reading. For late carrier arrivals, the most common reactions are re-scheduling and **notifying stakeholders (49.0%)**, **contingency planning (37.6%)**, **buffer time (35.6%)**, and **manual adjustments (34.9%)**. These are useful coping mechanisms, but they are still reactive.

Discussion

Taken together, the 2026 challenge picture is broader than last year's. The industry is still fighting familiar problems such as manual work and limited visibility, but the center of gravity has shifted toward **collaboration** across the broader network. That shift matters because the solution is not simply more yard capacity or one more dashboard. It requires workflows that connect the whole network in near real time.

Current Software Usage and Satisfaction

The software environment around the dock and yard is becoming denser, but density does not automatically create control. Most respondents already use some combination of systems (Eg: WMS, TMS or YMS) yet the survey shows that many teams still experience **fragmentation**, **limited automation**, and **weak disruption support**. This section looks at both sides of that story: what tools are in place, and what users believe those tools are still missing.



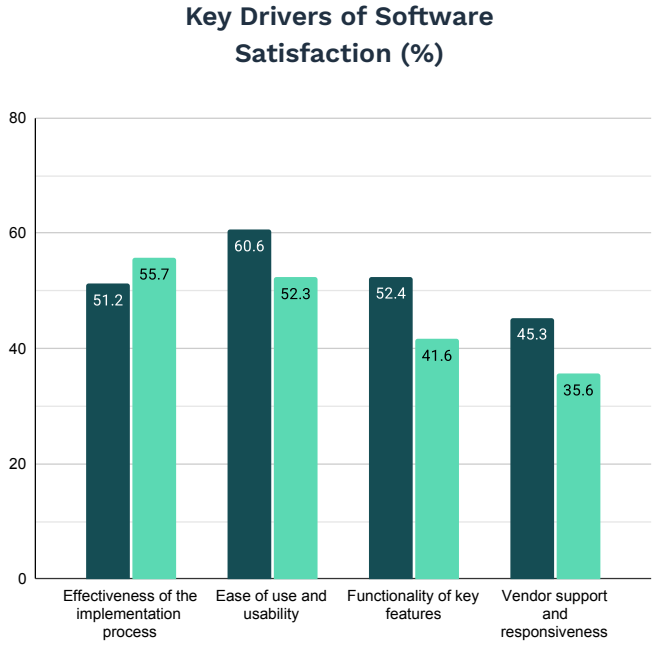
Software Adoption Trends

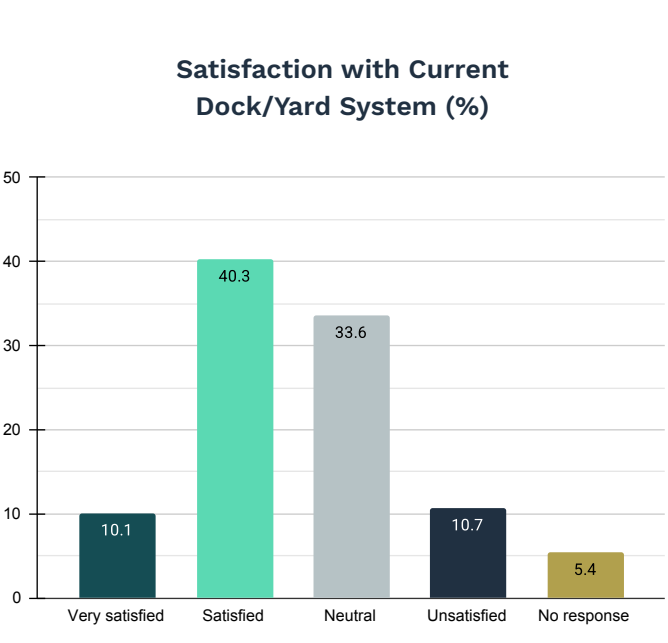
The 2026 results show continued reliance on broad supply chain platforms. **Warehouse Management Systems** are the most common tool in use at **62.4%**, up from 54.7% in 2025. **Transportation Management Systems** are used by 41.6%, while **CRM, ERP,** and **YMS** each sit in the low-to-mid 30% range. **Reservations and scheduling** remain a relative gap, with only 18.8% of respondents using a **Dock Scheduling System** even though 30.9% identify automated dock scheduling as one of the most important features they want in a dock and yard management solution.

Key Drivers of Satisfaction

Overall sentiment toward current systems is mixed rather than negative. A combined **53.2%** of respondents describe themselves as satisfied or very satisfied, while **35.5%** are neutral and 11.3% are unsatisfied. That suggests many teams have acceptable tools, but not necessarily tools that are fully delivering on operational ambition.

- **Effectiveness of the implementation process (55.7%)**. Implementation is the leading satisfaction driver in 2026. That is a meaningful shift because it suggests buyers are paying closer attention to how impactful the implementation is in the real world.
- **Ease of use and usability (52.3%).** Usability remains essential to enterprise systems. For operators, systems only create value when they reduce effort during time-sensitive decisions.
- **Functionality of key features (41.6%)**. Core capability still matters, but feature depth alone does not guarantee satisfaction. Buyers appear to be evaluating whether the right features are present, but also whether they are deployable, connected, and aligned to the real workflow.
- **Vendor support and responsiveness (35.6%).** upport remains important, especially when operations depend on system uptime and fast issue resolution. At the same time, the lower priority compared to other key drivers shows that the implementation and usability are more critical, and may reduce the need for significant post-implementation support.





Priorities and Decision-Making Factors

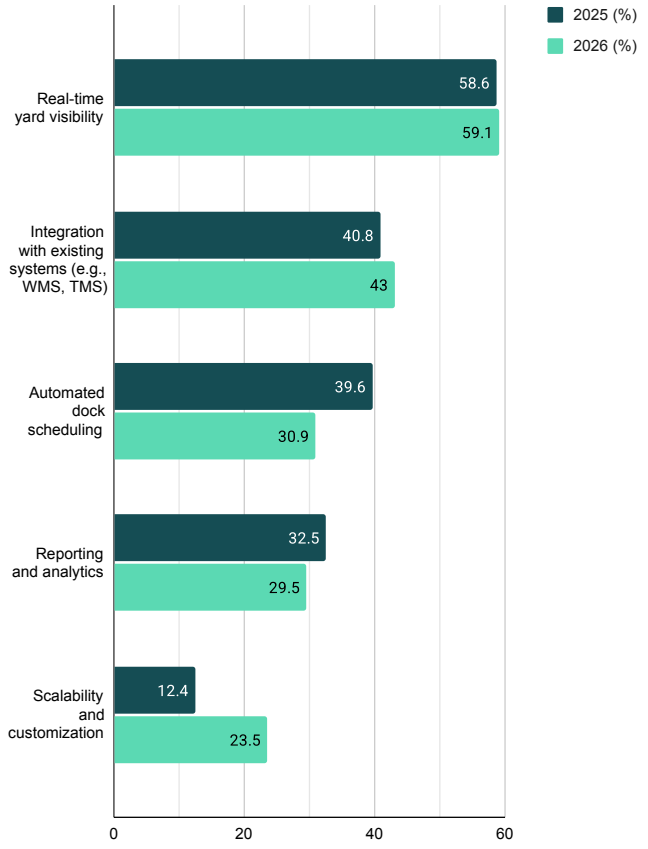
The buying criteria in this year's survey closely mirror the problems respondents are trying to solve. **Visibility, integration and flexibility** all rank highly, which suggests that buyers are no longer looking for a narrow point fix. They want systems that can solve a current bottleneck without becoming tomorrow's integration project.

Feature Preferences

- Real-time yard visibility remains the leading feature priority at **59.1%,** increasing slightly from **58.6%** in 2025. The industry still sees visibility as foundational because without trustworthy information about trailer status, dock activity, appointments, and exceptions, every other improvement becomes harder to sustain.
- After visibility, the priorities become more revealing. Integration with existing systems rose to **43.0%** from **40.8%**, **automated dock scheduling** is still important at **30.9%** and **scalability/customization** climbed sharply to **23.5%** from **12.4%**.

The shift suggests that buyers are thinking beyond isolated automation. They still value automation, but they are increasingly focused on whether the platform can fit into a broader operating model, adapt to different site requirements, and support growth without major rework.

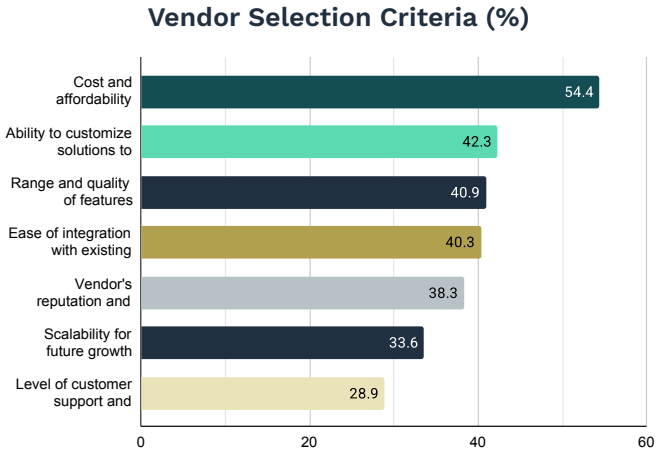
Most Value Dock/Yard Management Features (%) 2025 vs 2026 (Select up to 3)



Vendor Selection Criteria

- **Cost and affordability** remain the leading vendor selection factor at **54.4%** versus **58.0%** in 2025. After cost, the 2026 ranking becomes more balanced: **ability to customize solutions** reaches **42.3%**, range and quality of features **40.9%**, **ease of integration** **40.3%**, and **vendor reputation** **38.3%**.

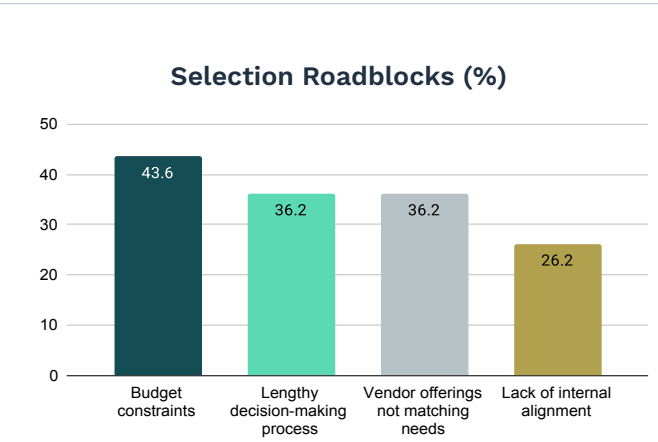
This distribution indicates that price still opens the conversation, but it does not close it. Buyers are trying to avoid solutions that look good in a demo but fail to fit real-site constraints, expand across the network, or connect cleanly to existing systems.



Selection Roadblocks

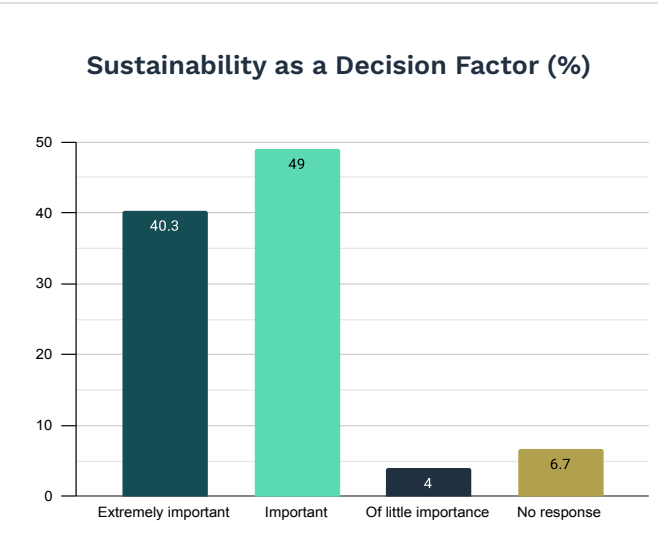
- The barriers to selection are also telling. **Budget constraints** lead at **43.6%**, followed by **lengthy decision-making processes** and **vendor offerings that do not match needs**, both at **36.2%**. **Lack of internal alignment** affects **26.2%** of respondents.

These results suggest that many projects slow down not because the operational problem is unclear, but because organizations struggle to define requirements, build consensus, and compare solutions in a practical way. In other words, there is demand in the market, but the path from recognition to decision is still difficult.



Sustainability Considerations

- **Sustainability** has moved further into the mainstream of vendor evaluation. In 2026, 95.7% of respondents say **sustainability is important or extremely important**, up from **91.7%** in 2025. **Carbon tracking and emissions optimization** also carry real weight: **71.9%** describe them as somewhat or extremely important. At the same time, respondents are looking beyond



emissions alone. **Driver experience** is important or extremely important for **87.1%** of respondents. That matters because driver wait times, communication quality, and yard flow all influence carrier relationships and service reliability. Together, these results show that decision-makers are increasingly evaluating dock and yard software through a **broader performance lens** that includes efficiency, experience, and environmental impact.

Discussion

The 2026 buying picture is more sophisticated than it was a year ago. Visibility still matters, but buyers are paying more attention to fit, scalability and implementation. They want solutions that can survive internal scrutiny, integrate with existing architecture, and support a stronger business case.

Future Directions in Dock and Yard Management

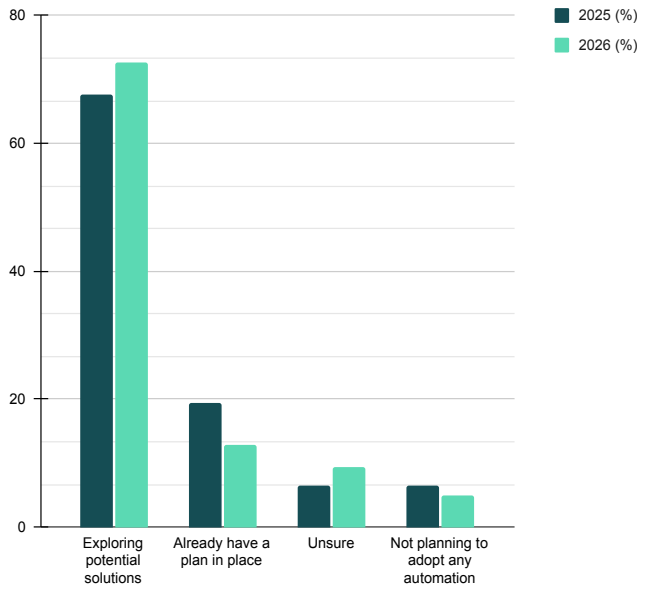
If the earlier sections describe where operations are struggling today, the future-oriented questions show how organizations expect to respond. The headline is: interest in modernization remains high, but **most companies are still in the exploration phase** rather than ready for large-scale deployment.

Adoption Plans

- In the next one to two years, **72.7%** of respondents say **they are exploring potential solutions**, up from **67.7%** in 2025. At the same time, only **12.9%** already have a plan in place, down from **19.4%** last year. Another 9.4% are unsure, and **5.0%** are not planning to adopt automation.

That combination suggests a market with **growing awareness** but slower commitment. More organizations recognize the need to improve dock and yard execution, yet fewer appear to have converted that recognition into a fully defined roadmap. This lines up with the selection roadblocks seen earlier, particularly budget pressure and long decision cycles.

Adoption Plans for Dock Scheduling and Yard Management 2025 vs 2026 (%)



Strategic Recommendations

The 2026 survey suggests that the next competitive edge in dock and yard management will come from reducing collaboration costs.

The industry already understands the value of visibility, but visibility alone does not solve the operational burden of rescheduling, reassigning, updating stakeholders, and reconciling information across systems. The winners will be those that connect visibility to execution, and execution to decision support.

Here's a list of 5 strategic recommendations from C3 Solutions' experts:

- ✔ Create internal alignment before buying technology
- ✔ Treat Integration as a First-Class Priority
- ✔ Make Implementation your Competitive Advantage
- ✔ Simplify vendor selection with operational criteria
- ✔ Elevate Driver Experience to an Operational KPI

For **C3 Solutions**, this is a meaningful strategic opening. Buyers are signaling that they want fewer manual handoffs, smoother implementations, stronger integration, and more practical intelligence.

Conclusion

Dock and yard management remains a critical control point in the supply chain, but the 2026 survey shows that the nature of the challenge is changing. Manual work is still too prevalent, yet the bigger story now includes supplier variability, transportation disruption, implementation quality, and integration discipline. **Compared with 2025**, the conversation has moved beyond simple congestion and toward coordinated resilience.

Organizations are clearly interested in improvement. Most are exploring solutions, most care about sustainability, and most still see visibility and integration as essential. Even so, many remain early in the journey, which means the next phase of the market will be defined by execution, not interest alone.

Operators that sequence modernization carefully, beginning with connected workflows and credible implementation plans, will be in the strongest position to convert intention into measurable results.That is also where solution providers such as **C3 Solutions** can differentiate.

The market is asking for systems that are not only capable, but deployable, connected, and useful in the moment of operational decision. Delivering that combination is likely to define the next stage of dock and yard management.

Survey Respondent Demographics

Industry Representation

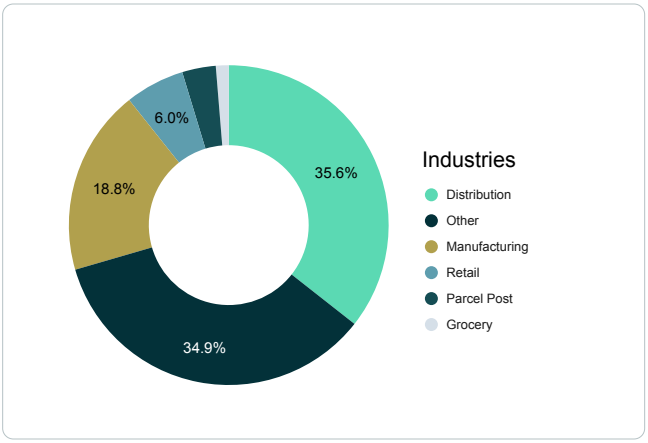
- The survey captured a broad industry mix. **Distribution** is the largest segment at **35.6%,** followed by **Other at 34.9%**, **manufacturing at 18.8**%, and **retail at 6.0%**. Compared with 2025, distribution is essentially flat, while the share of respondents selecting Other **increased from 24.6%**.

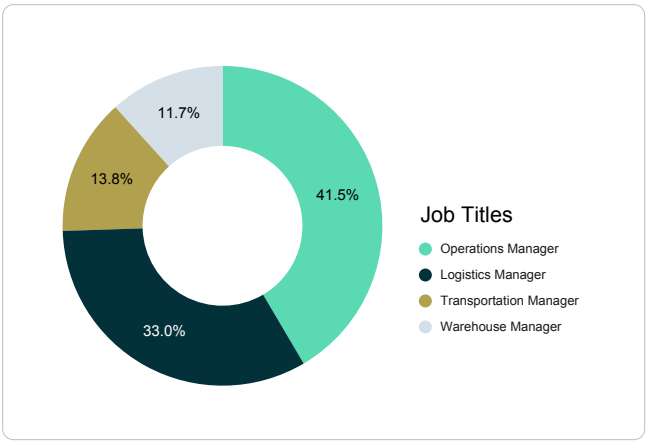
Roles and Seniority

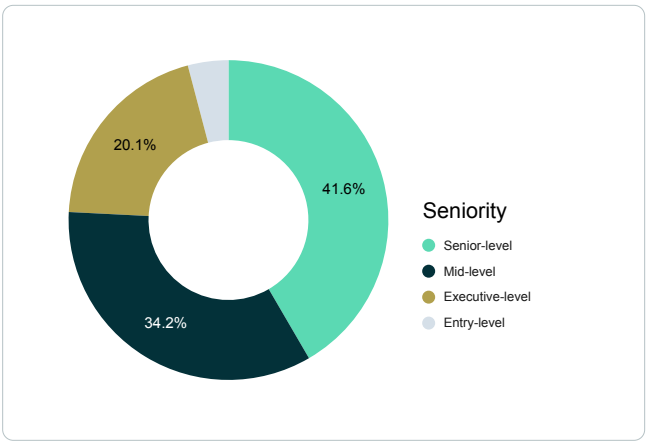
- Respondents represented a wide range of roles. Among the predefined choices, **Operations Managers (26.2%)** and **Logistics Managers (20.8%)** remain the largest groups, but **Other** titles rose to **36.9%** from **25.1%** in 2025. Those open-text role entries frequently included director-level, procurement, inventory, warehouse, and specialized operational responsibilities.
- In terms of seniority, the audience remains experienced: senior-level respondents account for **41.6%**, **mid-leve**l **34.2%**, and **executive-level 20.1%**. This supports the view that the findings reflect both frontline operating realities and management-level decision-making.

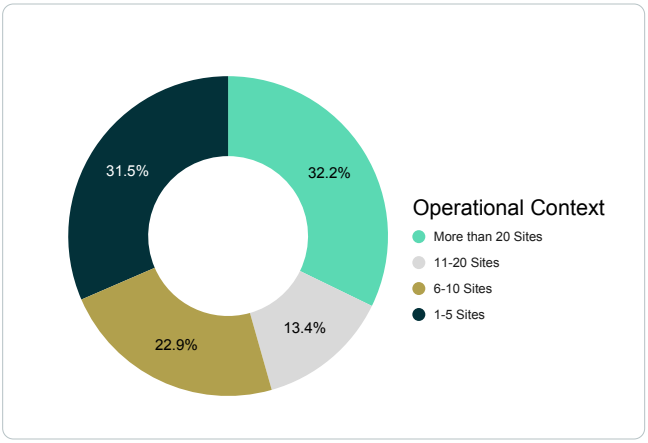
Operational Context

- The respondent base spans both small and large operational networks. **32.2%** manage organizations with more than 20 distribution centers or sites, 31.5% manage 1 to 5 sites, **22.8%** manage 6 to 10, and **13.4%** manage 11 to 20.
- Compared with 2025, the share of respondents from very large networks declined from **42.1% to 32.2%**. That makes the 2026 sample somewhat more balanced across network sizes and may partly explain why flexibility and customization emerged more strongly in this year's buying criteria.









Methodology

This report is based on a 2026 online survey fielded in collaboration with C3 Solutions. The survey was administered through a digital questionnaire and collected responses from 149 professionals involved in supply chain, logistics, warehouse, transportation, and related operational functions. Because some questions were optional or appeared later in the survey flow, response totals vary by question.

Survey Design and Collection

- The questionnaire included a mix of single-select, multi-select, scaled-response, and limited open-text questions. It was designed to capture both current-state conditions and forward-looking priorities across dock and yard operations, software usage, vendor evaluation, sustainability, and automation plans.
- For reporting purposes, single-select questions are presented as the share of respondents selecting one answer choice, while multi-select questions are presented as the share of respondents selecting each option. Because respondents could choose more than one option on multi-select questions, totals in those sections do not sum to 100%.
- Year-over-year comparisons in this report are based on the percentages published in the 2025 State of the Industry report. The 2025 comparison is therefore directional and based on the prior published summary rather than a re-analysis of respondent-level 2025 data.

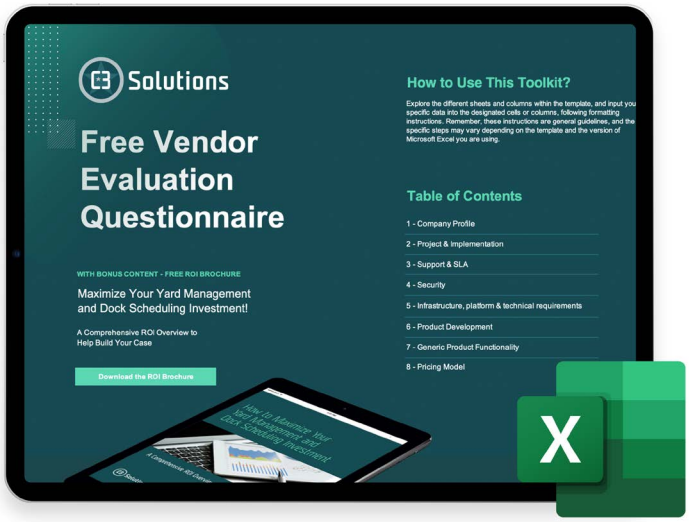
Analytical Notes and Interpretation

The full survey generated 149 total responses, but some later-stage questions were answered by smaller subsets of respondents. Questions on software satisfaction and disruption support typically have a base of 141 respondents, while several buying, sustainability, and future-planning questions have a base of 139 respondents.

The findings should be read as directional market insight rather than audited operational performance data. They reflect the perceptions and priorities of practitioners and decision-makers at a point in time. Where open-text Other responses added useful context, they were used qualitatively to interpret the categories, but they were not reclassified into the quantitative results.

Choosing the right dock and yard management software can be overwhelming.

Our Vendor Evaluation Questionnaire makes it easy.



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Vendor Evaluation Questionnaire for RFPs

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