Business Climate Survey
the Netherlands

Business Climate Survey for Swedish companies in the Netherlands 2026

A report from Team Sweden in the Netherlands

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Key contributors to this report

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52 respondents
(total +2,250 respondents for 41 markets)

Current business climate

Positive view on the current business climate in the Netherlands

Industry turnover

73%

of Swedish companies expect their industry turnover to increase

Future investments

35%

of Swedish companies plan to increase their investments slightly or significantly in the next 12 months

Valued success factors

1. Partnerships/local relationships
2. Cost efficiency
3. Sales competence

Brand Sweden

71%

of Swedish companies in the Netherlands consider Brand Sweden beneficial for business

Conditions in the Netherlands with high satisfaction

1. Personal safety
2. Physical infrastructure
3. Suppliers

Conditions in the Netherlands with least satisfaction

1. Specialists & key personnel
2. Labour market regulation
3. Corporate taxation

Environmental considerations

71%

of respondents believe the environment is a factor in their customers' purchasing decisions

Corruption

Corruption exposure remains very low among surveyed companies

Human rights violation and labour rights abuse

No respondents report having perceived violations in human and labour rights

Foreword

The Netherlands remains one of Sweden's closest and most longstanding trading partners in Europe. With strong economic ties, shared international outlooks, and a long tradition of cooperation, the Dutch market continues to play an important role for Swedish companies operating internationally, both as a domestic market and as a gateway to Europe. Today, around 300 Swedish companies are active in the Netherlands across a wide range of industries, contributing to innovation, employment, and sustainable business development. Following the November 2025 parliamentary elections, the Netherlands is currently governed by a minority coalition government.

The findings of this year's Business Climate Survey show that Swedish companies continue to view the Netherlands as a stable and attractive market, despite growing global uncertainty. At the same time, the survey highlights a business landscape that is becoming more complex to navigate, shaped by labour shortages, regulatory pressures, infrastructure constraints, and geopolitical uncertainty. Nevertheless, Swedish companies continue to demonstrate resilience, adaptability, and long-term commitment to the Dutch market.

This year's report also points to several encouraging developments. Companies continue to report solid financial performance and positive turnover expectations, while innovation and partnerships are becoming increasingly important drivers of competitiveness. The survey further highlights the continued strength of the Swedish brand, associated in the Netherlands with values such as quality, reliability, and sustainability.

We hope this report provides valuable insights into the experiences, perspectives, and priorities of Swedish companies operating in the Netherlands. We would like to extend our sincere appreciation to all participating companies for sharing their time and insights. Your contributions are essential in helping us better understand the evolving business climate and strengthen the dialogue between Sweden and the Netherlands.

H.E. Mr. Julius Liljeström
Ambassador of Sweden to the Netherlands

Tomas Korseman
Trade & Invest Commissioner Benelux, Business Sweden

Jan Sundelin
Chair of the Swedish Chamber of Commerce, Partner at Partinc

Executive summary

> **Being a Swedish company adds value in our industry.**
>
> **Managing Director**
> Industrial company

The Netherlands continues to provide a stable and competitive environment for Swedish companies, despite a year marked by geopolitical uncertainty and increasing pressure on global trade. The Dutch economy performed stronger than expected in 2025, supported by strong household spending, rising wages, and increased government expenditure. While growth is expected to moderate in the coming years, forecasts remain positive, reinforcing the Netherlands' position as a comparatively stable market within Europe.

Against this backdrop, Swedish companies report continued solid financial performance. Nearly four in five respondents indicate they were profitable in the past year, while a clear majority expect increased turnover in the coming 12 months. At the same time, companies appear to be adopting a more cautious approach to investments, suggesting a shift towards prioritisation and consolidation rather than rapid expansion.

Swedish companies continue to view the Dutch business climate positively, supported by strong infrastructure, digital maturity, international openness, and access to global markets. However, structural challenges such as labour shortages, housing constraints, grid congestion, and growing regulatory complexity are becoming more visible and are influencing how companies plan future operations and investments.

The survey also points to a growing emphasis on collaboration and innovation. Partnerships and relationships are viewed as key to maintaining competitiveness, while the share of companies conducting research and development activities in the Netherlands has risen significantly compared to previous years. This reflects continued confidence in the Netherlands as a market for knowledge-intensive and innovation-driven operations.

The Swedish brand remains an asset in the Dutch market and continues to be associated with values such as quality, reliability, safety, and sustainability. Sustainability remains firmly embedded as a long-term priority for Swedish companies, even as customers in the short term appear to place greater emphasis on cost and operational considerations amid broader economic and geopolitical uncertainty.

Part of the survey data was collected prior to the escalation of the conflict in Iran in March 2026. However, no significant impact on business sentiment or outlook was observed, and subsequent interviews broadly confirmed the overall findings.

About the survey

Six years of insights into the Dutch market

The Business Climate Survey was first launched in 2020 as a joint global initiative by Team Sweden, a collaboration between Business Sweden, the Swedish Embassies and the Swedish Chambers of Commerce abroad. The survey aims to capture insights into the challenges and opportunities Swedish companies encounter in local business environments. Since its inception, it has become an important tool for understanding how Swedish companies navigate a complex and competitive global landscape.

In 2026, the survey was conducted across 41 markets worldwide. The findings presented in this report provide perspectives on the conditions shaping the business climate for Swedish enterprises operating in the Netherlands.

In the Netherlands, 2026 marks the sixth consecutive year of conducting the survey. This edition has been developed through a collaborative effort between Business Sweden, the Embassy of Sweden in the Netherlands, and the Swedish Chamber of Commerce for the Netherlands. The report explores the economic outlook and market conditions based on the responses gathered from participating companies, as well as key factors influencing their performance and investment decisions.

This year, the survey was distributed to a selected sample of 101 Swedish companies operating in the Netherlands. Data collection took place between 4 February and 9 March 2026, resulting in 52 completed responses. This reflects continued engagement by Swedish companies in mapping the Dutch business climate.

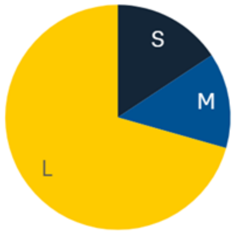
Most participating companies are mature, well-established enterprises, with many having operated in the Dutch market since before 2003. In terms of company size, the majority of respondents are large companies, accounting for approximately 71 per cent, followed by small (16 per cent) and medium-sized companies (14 per cent).

Companies were grouped into three overarching sectors: professional services, industrial, and consumer. The largest share of respondents operate within professional services, followed by industrial companies and consumer-oriented businesses. Within these categories, companies are active across a wide range of industries, including IT, construction, automotive, retail, and healthcare.

It is important to note that the analysis presented in this report is based primarily on the responses of participating companies. As such, the report does not claim to be fully representative of the entire Dutch market or all Swedish enterprises operating in the Netherlands. Rather, it provides a structured snapshot of how Swedish companies perceive current market conditions and future prospects.

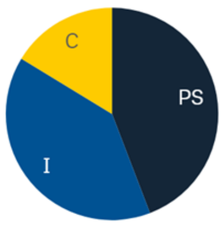
It should also be noted that some of the survey data was collected before the escalation of the conflict in Iran in March 2026. However, the findings do not indicate any significant shift in sentiment or business outlook linked to these developments. Interviews conducted after the onset of the conflict largely reinforced the broader survey results and did not suggest any material divergence in perspectives. For the purpose of this report, the overall findings are therefore considered representative of the business climate during the period examined.

Size of companies



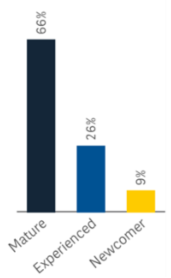
NOTE: Global employees
Large >1,000
Medium 250-1,000
Small 0-249

Main industry



NOTE: Industrial 40%
Professional services 44%
Consumer 16%

Age of companies



NOTE: Mature (-2004)
Experienced (2003-2020)
Newcomer (2021-)

Economic outlook

Resilient fundamentals drive performance

As one of Europe's most trade-oriented economies and a gateway to Europe, the Netherlands offers companies access to global markets, a highly skilled workforce, and a business culture shaped by pragmatism and efficiency. These characteristics position the country as an attractive base for international operations, including Swedish firms pursuing regional or broader European expansion.

However, this openness also increases exposure to external developments. Given its strong dependence on global trade flows, the Dutch economy remains inherently sensitive to geopolitical uncertainty and shifts in international demand. The past year has been no exception. Rather than disrupting business activity, these external pressures appear to have reinforced a more cautious yet stable operating environment. This is reflected in the survey results, where companies continue to report strong profitability and positive turnover expectations, while simultaneously adopting a more restrained investment approach.

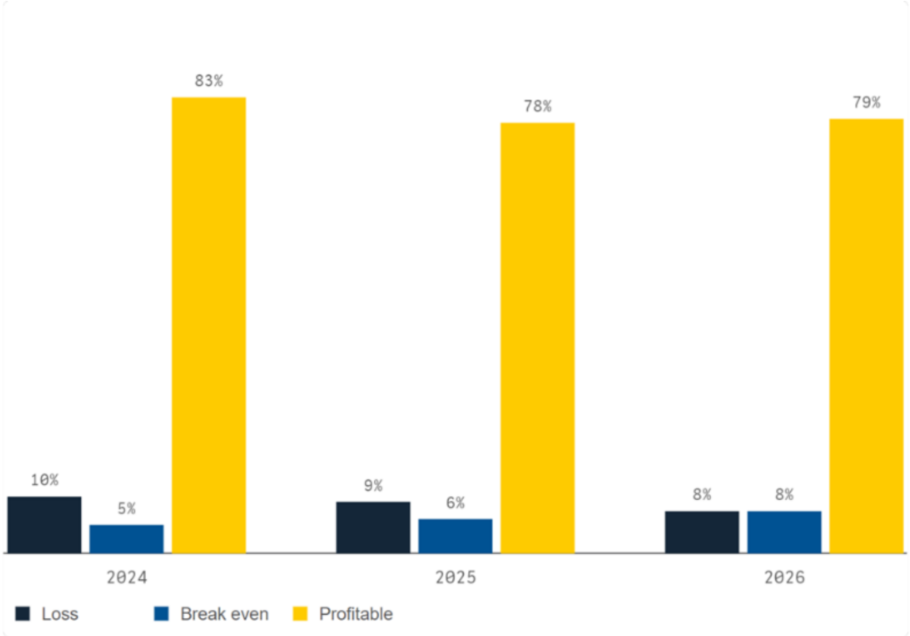
Swedish companies report largely stable financial outcomes. Close to four in five respondents indicate that they were profitable over the past year, reflecting a continued solid performance. Insights from interviews suggest that this resilience is partly driven by companies adapting their operations to a more constrained environment. Rather than pursuing aggressive expansion, companies describe a greater focus on prioritisation, efficiency, and long-term planning. Compared with previous years, the results point to a gradual improvement, with fewer companies reporting losses and a slightly larger share achieving break-even results.

Companies new to the Dutch market report slightly higher losses, reflecting the upfront investments and establishment costs typically associated with market entry. In this context, loss-making outcomes appear less indicative of deteriorating market conditions and more reflective of companies' positions and their growth trajectories.

Sector-level results further underscore the market's resilience. All industrial companies report profitability, while the vast majority of consumer-oriented companies also indicate positive financial results. Notably, neither sector reports losses nor break-even outcomes, suggesting that underlying demand conditions remain supportive.

While the shifts remain modest, the direction is consistent. In a year characterised by geopolitical uncertainty and pressure on global trade, the Dutch business environment appears to offer a degree of stability that allows companies not only to withstand external pressures, but also to maintain solid financial performance. This resilience is likely supported by the country's strong institutional framework, international orientation, and pragmatic business culture, which together create conditions that allow companies to adapt relatively effectively to changing external circumstances.

How would you describe your company's financial performance in the Netherlands in the past year?



NOTE: The number of respondents for this question was 52. "Don't know/Not applicable" responses are included but not shown in figure.
SOURCE: Business Climate Survey for Swedish Companies in the Netherlands 2026

Growth holds firm as outlook adjusts to global shifts

The Dutch economy entered 2025 with cautious expectations but delivered a stronger outcome than anticipated. GDP growth reached approximately 1.9 per cent, surpassing earlier projections and pointing to an economy that proved more resilient than forecast, driven by strong household spending, rising wages, and increased government expenditure.

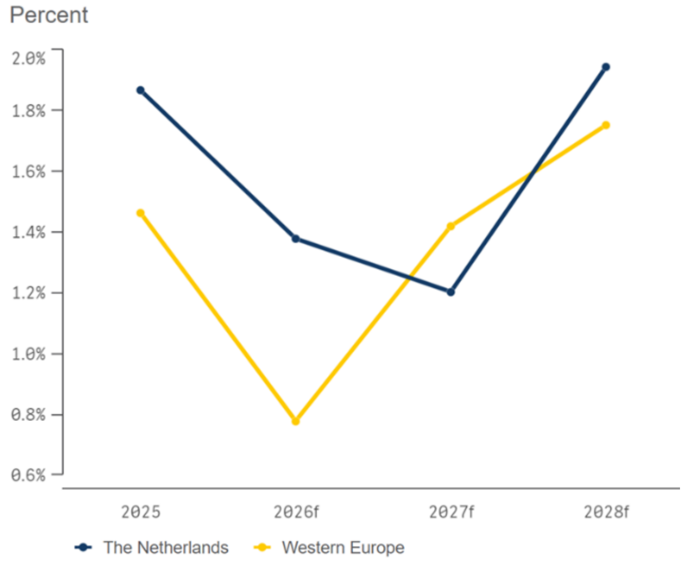
Looking ahead, growth is expected to moderate over the coming years, with a gradual slowdown projected for 2026 and 2027 before recovering in 2028. Despite this softening, the outlook remains firmly positive, with growth forecast to remain above approximately 1.2 per cent throughout the period.

In a European comparison, the picture is more nuanced. According to Oxford Economics, the Netherlands is projected to outperform both the European and Western European averages in 2026, before temporarily trailing the regional average slightly in 2027. By 2028, growth is expected to exceed the European benchmark once again.

These projections should also be viewed in light of the broader geopolitical context. The data, compiled in March 2026, reflects expectations formed amid escalating global trade tensions, new tariff measures, and the escalation of the conflict involving Iran, all of which have contributed to increased uncertainty in global markets. The fact that growth expectations remain stable despite these developments points to underlying economic resilience.

Taken together, the outlook points to an economy that is adjusting rather than weakening materially. While growth is expected to ease in the short term, the trajectory remains stable, reinforcing the Netherlands' position as a comparatively predictable and resilient market within Europe.

Projected GDP growth in the Netherlands



NOTE: Constant prices
SOURCE: Oxford Economics 20 March 2026

Sustained confidence in turnover expectations

Swedish companies in the Netherlands continue to express strong confidence in their future business prospects. A clear majority, 73 per cent, expect industry turnover to increase over the coming 12 months, remaining broadly in line with the positive expectations observed in previous years. In parallel, the share of companies anticipating declining turnover has returned to levels seen in 2024, while the proportion expecting unchanged turnover has decreased slightly. Taken together, the results point to a stable outlook underpinned by consistently positive expectations.

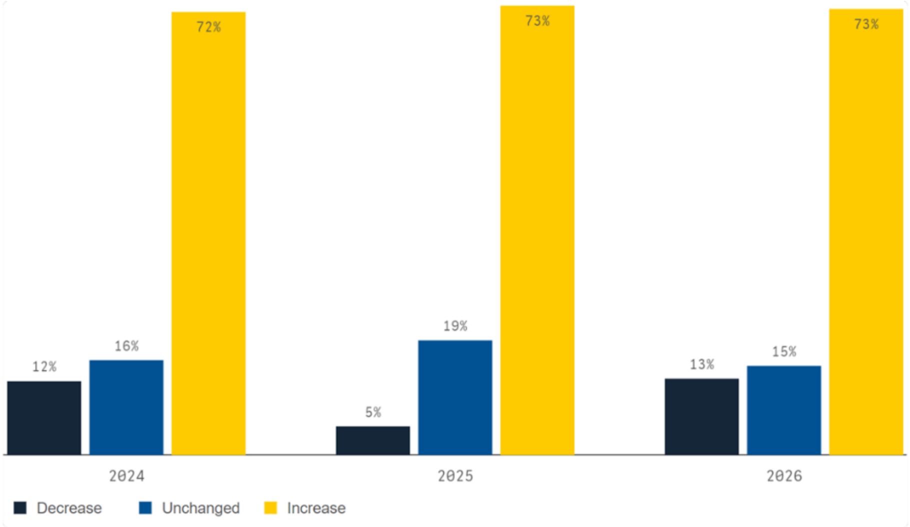
A closer look at company size reveals a more differentiated picture. All medium-sized companies expect turnover to increase, highlighting strong momentum among firms that have established a market presence while continuing to scale. In contrast, expectations among small and large companies are more evenly distributed between growth, decline, and stability, indicating a somewhat more cautious outlook among companies at both ends of the size spectrum.

Sectoral differences add further nuance. Companies in the consumer goods segment stand out, with all respondents expecting increased turnover. This likely reflects steady consumer demand, favourable conditions in selected market segments, and a gradual normalisation following a more challenging period in recent years. Meanwhile, expectations of declining turnover are concentrated among companies in the industrial and professional services sectors, pointing to a more mixed outlook in sectors more closely linked to broader economic developments.

Company maturity further illustrates how expectations vary by market position. Newcomer companies are uniformly optimistic, with all respondents expecting increased turnover, consistent with the strong growth trajectories typically associated with recent market entry. Experienced companies also demonstrate high levels of confidence, while mature companies account for the majority of respondents anticipating declining turnover. The results suggest that while newer entrants and scaling firms continue to identify significant growth opportunities, more established companies may be operating in a comparatively mature and competitive environment.

Overall, the findings suggest that Swedish companies maintain a positive and resilient view of the Dutch market. While expectations are not as optimistic as in previous years, the consistency of the outlook, particularly amid continued geopolitical and economic uncertainty, reinforces confidence in the market's long-term potential.

Compared to the development in the past 12 months, what are your expectations for the coming 12 months for your industry in the Netherlands regarding turnover?



NOTE: The number of respondents for this question was 52. "Don't know/Not applicable" responses are included but not shown in figure.
SOURCE: Business Climate Survey for Swedish Companies in the Netherlands 2026

Investment caution rises as companies consolidate

While turnover expectations remain positive, investment plans indicate a more measured approach to capital allocation in the near term. Compared with previous years, a larger share of companies plan to maintain investment levels, and the share intending to reduce investments has increased by approximately 13 percentage points. These reductions are primarily moderate, with most respondents indicating slight rather than substantial cutbacks.

This more cautious stance is also reflected in company interviews. Several respondents highlight that long-term investment decisions increasingly depend on policy stability and predictability. Frequent regulatory adjustments and unclear policy direction are seen as factors that can delay, reshape, or reduce investment commitments, even within an otherwise attractive market environment.

This shift should not necessarily be interpreted as weakening confidence, but rather as a period of strategic consolidation. Following several years of investment activity, companies may instead be reassessing priorities.

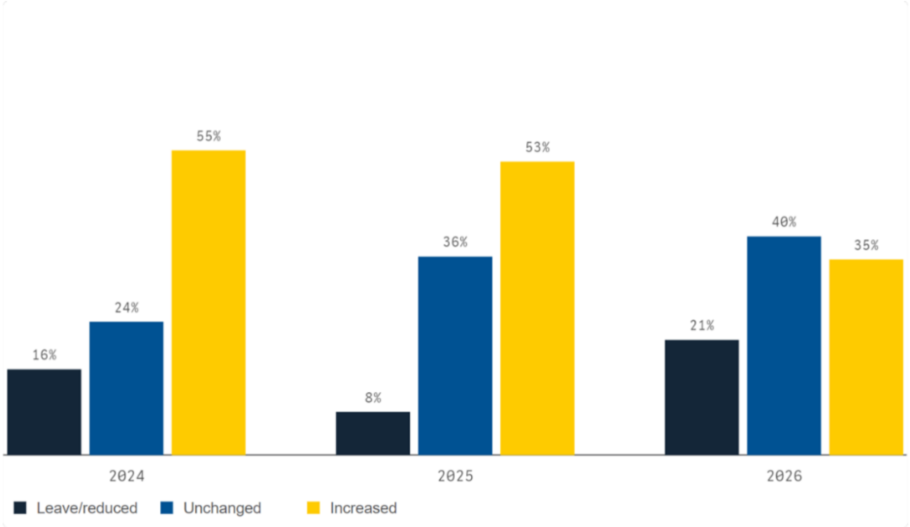
Company size once again provides important context. Excluding the largest companies, the outlook becomes notably more expansionary. Around 67 per cent of both small and medium-sized companies report plans to increase investments, indicating that growth ambitions remain strong among firms continuing to expand their market presence, even as larger corporations adopt a more disciplined investment approach.

Across sectors, responses remain relatively balanced, with one notable exception. Companies in the professional services sector are more willing to expand investments and are less likely to report planned reductions than companies in other sectors. This may reflect sector-specific dynamics, including continued demand for advisory, digital, and specialised services.

Differences also emerge when examining company maturity. Half of newcomer companies plan to increase investments, reinforcing the picture of continued market entry and expansion. In contrast, reduced investment plans are more commonly observed among mature companies. This pattern may reflect longer investment cycles, where established firms that have already undertaken significant capital commitments are now entering a phase focused on consolidation and optimisation.

Taken together, the findings suggest a business environment in which Swedish companies in the Netherlands are balancing continued growth ambitions with a more selective, disciplined capital allocation. Rather than signalling declining confidence, the shift in investment behaviour points to a more strategic and risk-conscious approach in an uncertain global environment.

What are your company's investment plans for the coming 12 months in the Netherlands, compared to the past 12 months?



NOTE: The number of respondents for this question was 48. "Don't know/Not applicable" responses are included but not shown in figure.
SOURCE: Business Climate Survey for Swedish Companies in the Netherlands 2026

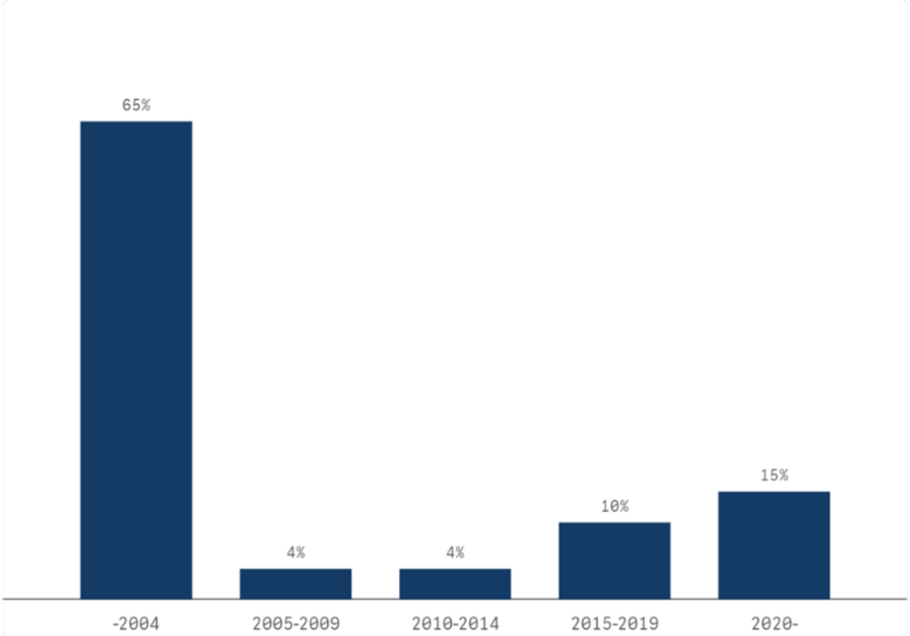
The market

A mature market still attracting new entrants

The Netherlands has long been a well-established market for Swedish companies, as this year's survey results clearly reflect. Most respondents have operated in the country for many years, with a significant share having established their presence before the early 2000s. This underlines the Netherlands' position as a stable and familiar market for Swedish companies with long-term international operations.

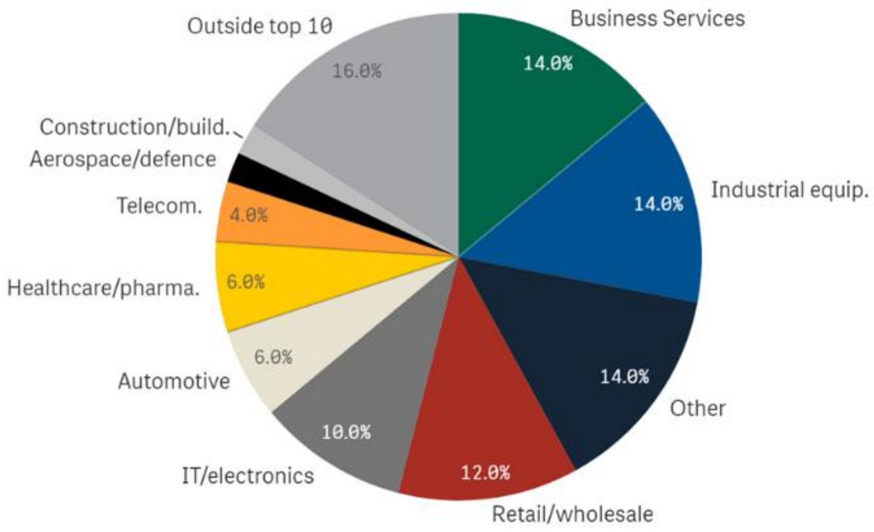
The market also continues to attract new Swedish companies. Around 15 per cent of respondents have established operations in the Netherlands after 2020, suggesting that the country remains a relevant and appealing destination for expansion. This combination of long-standing presence and continued inflow of new entrants suggests a market that is not only stable but also retains its attractiveness in a changing European landscape.

In what year did your company establish operations in the Netherlands?



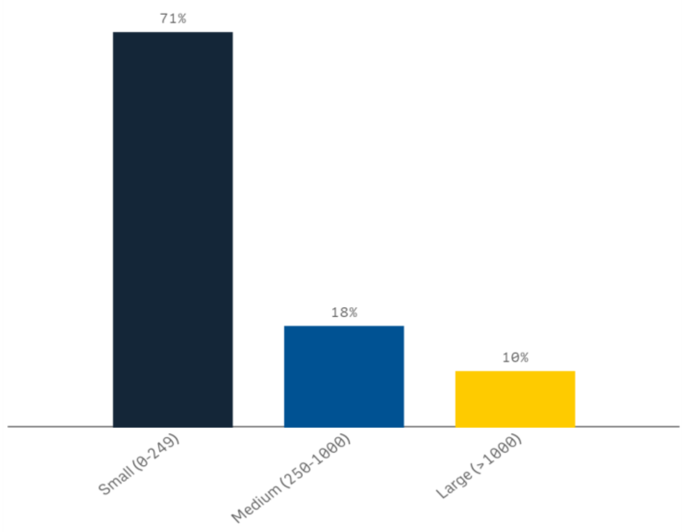
NOTE: The number of respondents for this question was 48. "Don't know/Not applicable" responses are included but not shown in figure.
SOURCE: Business Climate Survey for Swedish Companies in the Netherlands 2026

What is your company's main industry in the Netherlands?



NOTE: The number of respondents for this question was 50. "Don't know/Not applicable" responses are included but not shown in figure.
SOURCE: Business Climate Survey for Swedish Companies in the Netherlands 2026

Swedish firms' local number of employees in the Netherlands in 2026?



NOTE: The number of respondents for this question was 49. "Don't know/Not applicable" responses are included but not shown in figure.
SOURCE: Business Climate Survey for Swedish Companies in the Netherlands 2026

A positive but more cautious business outlook

Swedish companies continue to view the Dutch business climate as favourable, although perceptions have become more cautious over time. While most still assess the business climate as positive, the share of companies describing it as good or very good has declined compared to previous years. This gradual shift towards a more neutral assessment may partly be explained by increasing complexity in the operating environment, combined with the more uncertain political and economic climate that has characterised the Netherlands in recent years. Interviews point to regulatory processes, infrastructure constraints, and uncertainty about long-term policy direction as factors contributing to a more cautious market perception. At the same time, fewer companies report negative perceptions, and a growing share adopts a more neutral stance.

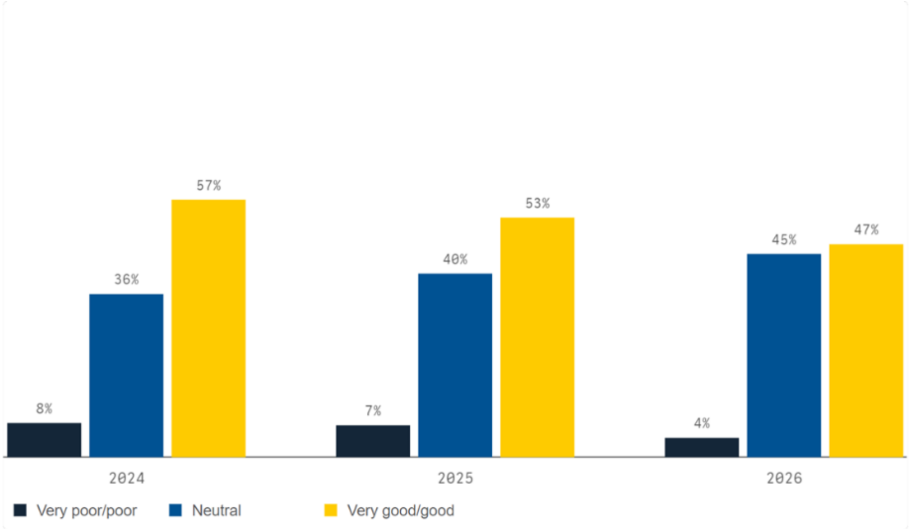
This development suggests a gradual shift away from strong optimism toward a more balanced, pragmatic view of the market. Rather than indicating deterioration, the trend points to a business environment where companies remain positive, but increasingly aware of operational and economic complexities. This more cautious sentiment is reinforced in company interviews, where respondents continue to describe the Netherlands as fundamentally attractive, but demanding to navigate. Administrative complexity and regulatory processes are frequently cited as factors that increase operational friction and consume internal resources.

Differences across sectors are also notable. Companies within professional services report the highest levels of satisfaction, with a particularly large share assessing the business climate positively. This likely reflects continued demand for specialised services and the Netherlands' position as a highly knowledge-intensive economy.

Newcomer companies also stand out as a notably positive group. A clear majority of recently established firms report favourable perceptions of the business climate, indicating that the Netherlands continues to meet expectations as an accessible and well-functioning entry point for international expansion.

However, underlying concerns remain. Regulatory complexity and local administrative requirements continue to represent recurring challenges for many companies. Combined with a political environment characterised by a minority government and ongoing policy negotiations, this contributes to continued uncertainty regarding the pace and direction of future reforms.

How do you perceive the current business climate in the Netherlands?



NOTE: The number of respondents for this question was 47. "Don't know/Not applicable" responses are included but not shown in figure.
SOURCE: Business Climate Survey for Swedish Companies in the Netherlands 2026

Strong fundamentals continue to meet business needs

When assessing local conditions, Swedish companies continue to express high levels of satisfaction with the core factors enabling day-to-day business operations. Areas such as personal safety, physical infrastructure, financial systems, and access to suppliers and distributors are consistently rated as well aligned with company needs.

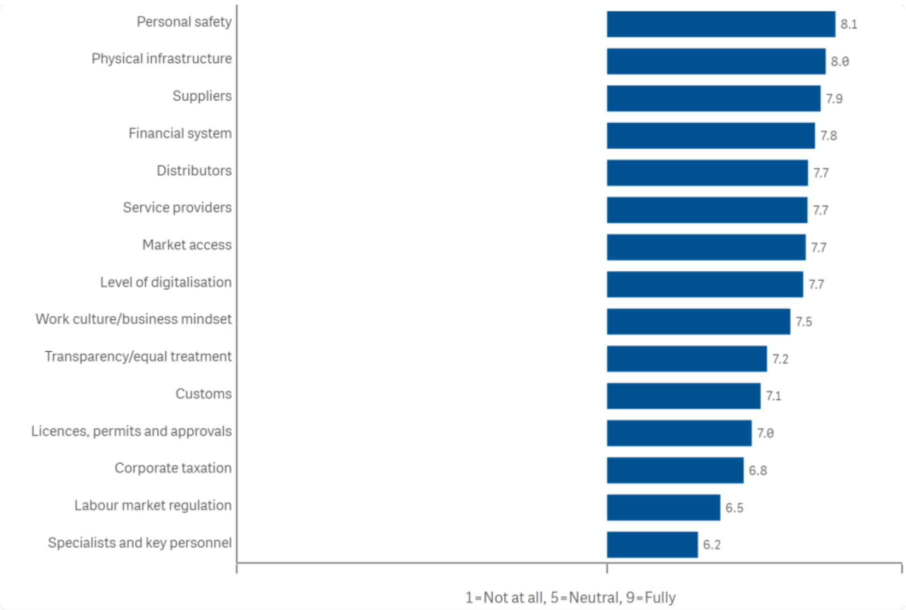
These results reflect the Netherlands' longstanding strengths as a highly developed, internationally connected, and trade-oriented economy. The country's efficient logistics infrastructure, advanced digital capabilities, and strong institutional framework create an environment in which companies can operate within a highly efficient and predictable business framework.

For Swedish companies, similarities between the Dutch and Swedish markets further strengthen this ease of doing business. Cultural proximity, widespread English proficiency, and a transparent and familiar regulatory environment lower barriers to market entry and expansion. As a result, the Netherlands is often regarded as a natural platform for international growth and regional expansion.

Certain challenges persist. As in previous years, companies continue to identify labour market conditions as an area where needs are not fully met. Access to specialists and key personnel remains a recurring concern, while satisfaction with labour market regulation has declined slightly. These findings point to structural labour market constraints that may limit companies' ability to scale operations efficiently.

Insights from company interviews reinforce the systemic nature of these challenges. While the Netherlands has a highly educated workforce, companies consistently report difficulties recruiting experienced technical talent. This challenge is further compounded by external constraints, such as housing shortages, which reduce the market's attractiveness to international employees and complicate talent acquisition.

How well do the following conditions meet the needs of your company in the Netherlands?



NOTE: The number of respondents for this question was 52.
SOURCE: Business Climate Survey for Swedish Companies in the Netherlands 2026

Trade barriers remain limited, but local requirements gain attention

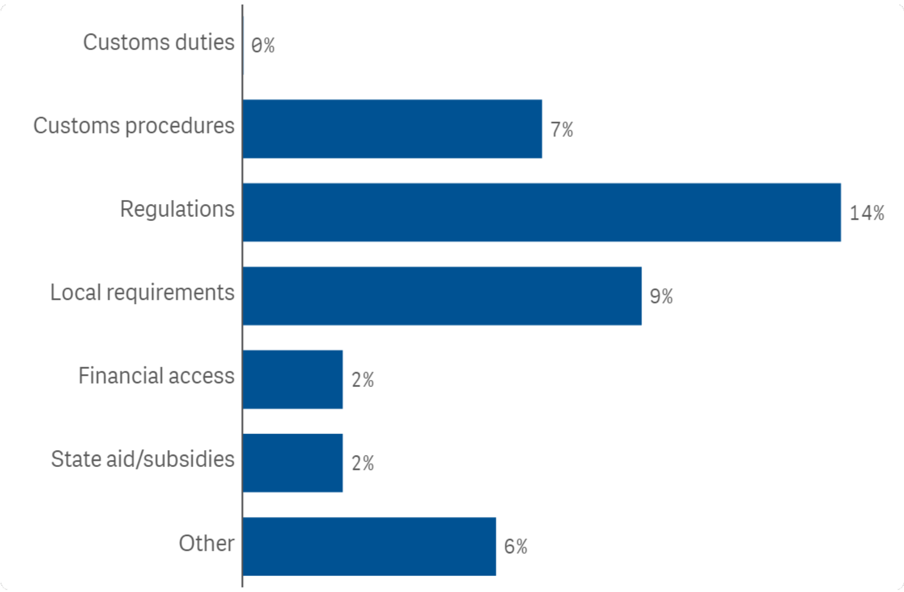
The Netherlands continues to benefit from its position within the European Union and the single market, providing Swedish companies with largely frictionless access to regional trade and cross-border operations. Strong bilateral ties, a long tradition of commercial exchange, and the presence of approximately 300 Swedish companies in the country contribute to a well-established, closely integrated business relationship between Sweden and the Netherlands.

Trade barriers remain relatively limited in scope. As in previous years, companies report few significant obstacles to conducting business across borders, reflecting the advantages associated with operating within a harmonised European regulatory framework.

Nevertheless, certain challenges persist. In line with broader perceptions of the business climate, companies continue to point to regulatory requirements and administrative processes as areas of friction. This year, there is also a noticeable increase in companies highlighting local requirements as a barrier to trade. Interviews reinforce this picture, with several companies describing permitting procedures, licensing requirements, and fragmented regulatory processes as particularly time-consuming and resource-intensive, especially in sectors dependent on infrastructure development or public approvals.

While these challenges do not fundamentally alter the market's attractiveness, they suggest that navigating the regulatory landscape may require greater attention. In a market that is otherwise characterised by openness and accessibility, such frictions stand out more clearly and may influence how companies plan their future operations.

Has your company in the past year encountered trade barriers in the Netherlands with a noticeably negative impact on operations, in any of the following areas?



NOTE: The number of respondents for this question was 52.
SOURCE: Business Climate Survey for Swedish Companies in the Netherlands 2026

How Swedish companies succeed in the Netherlands

Expanding roles reflect renewed focus on innovation

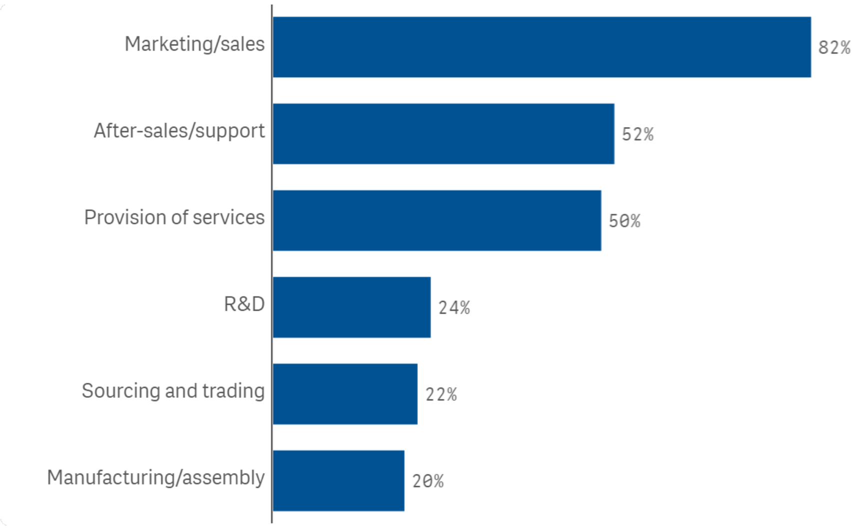
Swedish companies in the Netherlands continue to operate across a broad range of functions, reflecting the market's role as both a commercial centre and a strategic platform for regional coordination. Sales and marketing activities remain central, often complemented by service provision and distribution, underscoring the Netherlands' importance as a gateway to the broader European market.

Meanwhile, this year's findings point to a shift in how companies utilise their Dutch operations. The share of companies engaged in research and development has increased significantly compared with previous years, indicating a clear recovery from earlier levels. This suggests that companies are once again placing greater emphasis on innovation-driven and higher-value activities in the Netherlands.

This development aligns with the country's strong foundations in education, research, and knowledge-intensive industries. With access to a highly skilled workforce and a mature innovation ecosystem, the Netherlands offers favourable conditions for companies seeking to strengthen development capabilities and innovation capacity. The renewed focus on R&D therefore reflects not only improved confidence, but also a broader strategic shift towards more knowledge-intensive operations.

The shift towards innovation-led activities is further reinforced by company interviews, in which respondents consistently describe the Netherlands as an attractive environment for innovation, testing, and product development. Access to skilled talent, combined with a mature customer base and proximity to key markets, creates favourable conditions for developing and scaling new solutions.

Operations of Swedish firms in the market



NOTE: The number of respondents for this question was 52. "Don't know/Not applicable" responses are included but not shown in figure.
SOURCE: Business Climate Survey for Swedish Companies in the Netherlands 2026

Partnerships and innovation gain ground in a changing competitive landscape

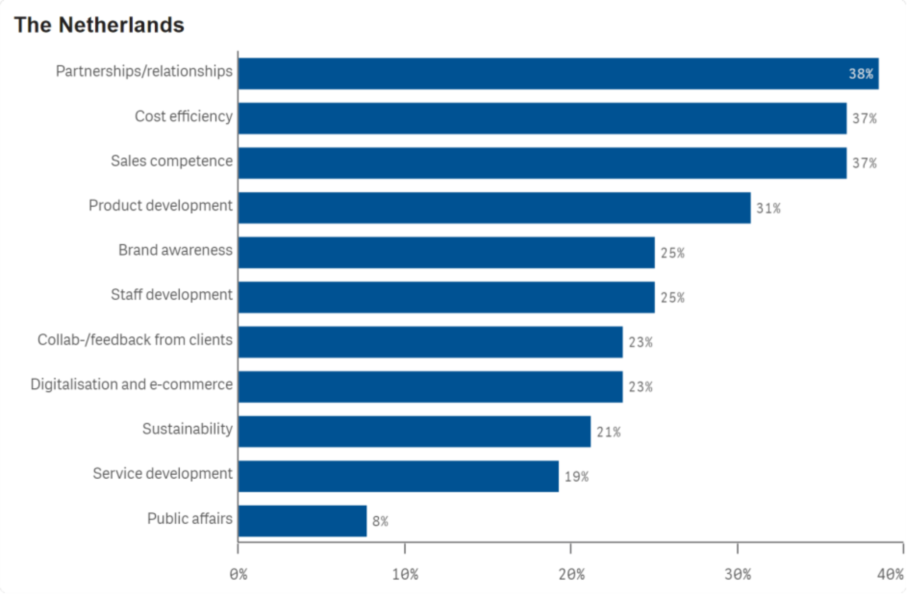
When asked how they maintain competitiveness in the Dutch market, Swedish companies point to a gradual shift in strategic priorities compared to previous years. While sustainability continues to play an important role, its prominence has declined, with fewer companies identifying it as a primary driver of competitiveness.

Instead, partnerships and business relationships have moved to the forefront. A growing share of companies emphasise the importance of strong collaboration with clients, partners, and other stakeholders. In a market characterised by transparency and low levels of corruption, this focus on relationships reflects a business environment where trust, openness, and long-term cooperation are central to commercial success.

Insights from company interviews further illustrate how this collaborative approach is applied in practice. In response to structural challenges, including energy constraints and capacity limitations, companies describe working more closely with both partners and competitors to optimise resource use and improve operational efficiency. For example, Janko van der Baan, Managing Director of Scania Nederland, explains that companies are adopting creative solutions to manage limited grid capacity, including local energy-sharing arrangements and coordinated energy use. Such initiatives illustrate a pragmatic and solution-oriented business culture, where collaboration itself becomes a competitive advantage.

In parallel, product development has become an important factor in competitiveness. This development aligns with the growing share of companies engaged in R&D activities and points to a broader transition towards innovation-driven growth strategies. Taken together, these findings indicate that companies are adapting to a more complex operating environment by combining collaboration, innovation, and continuous development of their offerings.

To date, which of the following areas have been important in maintaining competitiveness in the Netherlands?



NOTE: The number of respondents for this question was 52. "Don't know/Not applicable" responses are included but not shown in figure.
SOURCE: Business Climate Survey for Swedish Companies in the Netherlands 2026

The Swedish brand remains relevant, but less decisive

This year's results present a somewhat more nuanced picture of the value of the Swedish brand in the Netherlands. Compared to previous years, a larger share of companies report that the Swedish brand contributes little or not at all to their business. However, the overall perception remains clearly positive. Nearly half of respondents state that the Swedish brand significantly contributes to their business, while only a small minority report that it does not contribute at all.

Interviews with companies reinforce this picture. Across sectors, Sweden continues to be associated with values such as reliability, quality, safety, innovation, and sustainability. Several companies describe these associations as particularly valuable in industries where long-term trust, technical competence, and responsible business practices are important differentiators.

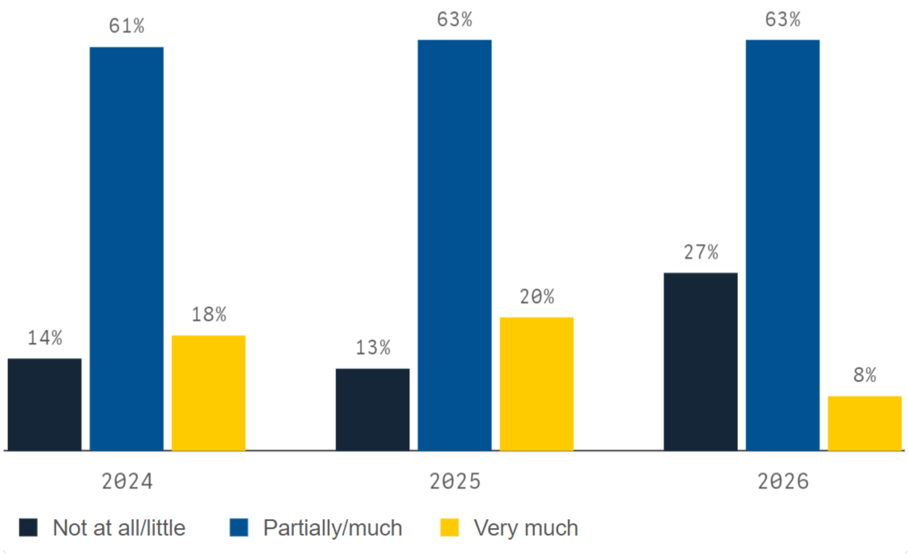
As Xander van Bree, Managing Director, Frico Netherlands, explains:

> **"If you say Sweden, people think quality, safety, and well-designed products.**

The value of the Swedish brand also appears to extend beyond customer perception. Interviewees highlight that Swedish companies are often associated with progressive, people-oriented values, which can enhance employer attractiveness and recruitment efforts. This is particularly relevant in a labour market where competition for talent remains intense. As Maartje Meijer, Head of Communications at Sweco Netherlands, notes, the Swedish brand is associated with positive values, "especially in the labour market."

Taken together, the results suggest that while the Swedish brand may not always function as a direct commercial advantage, it continues to provide an important foundation of trust and credibility in the Dutch market.

To what extent would you estimate that the "Swedish brand" contributes to your business in the Netherlands?



NOTE: The number of respondents for this question was 48. "Don't know/Not applicable" responses are included but not shown in figure.
SOURCE: Business Climate Survey for Swedish Companies in the Netherlands 2026

Acting sustainably

Sustainability remains relevant, as priorities shift

Sustainability continues to influence purchasing decisions in the Dutch market, although this year's findings point to a shift in the extent to which environmental considerations shape customer behaviour. A larger share of companies report that environmental aspects are of limited importance to customers, marking a noticeable increase compared with the previous year.

This development may reflect a broader reprioritisation in an uncertain global environment. With geopolitical tensions, inflationary pressures, and economic uncertainty shaping market conditions, both companies and customers may be placing greater emphasis on cost efficiency, security, and operational continuity in the short term. In this context, sustainability does not necessarily lose importance but may temporarily take a secondary role to more immediate operational and commercial priorities.

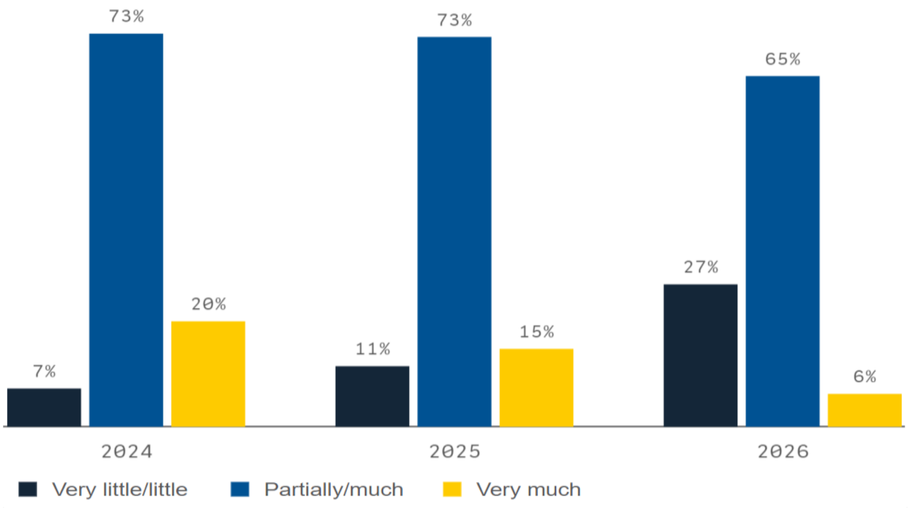
Still, the broader picture remains relatively balanced. A clear majority of companies still report that environmental considerations influence purchasing decisions to some extent. This indicates that sustainability remains structurally integrated into customer expectations and market practices, even if its relative importance fluctuates over time.

Differences between company groups provide additional insight. Mature companies are significantly more likely to report that customers consider sustainability to a meaningful extent, whereas newcomer companies are more likely to perceive environmental considerations as having limited influence. This gap may reflect differences in customer segments, business models, and the degree to which sustainability has been integrated into established operations and value propositions.

Insights from company interviews further reinforce the long-term importance of sustainability. Many companies describe sustainability as an integral component of brand identity and future competitiveness, even where the immediate commercial impact remains less visible. Several respondents also point to the growing importance of regulation, noting that Dutch legislation increasingly requires both companies and customers to adopt more sustainable practices. Companies further note that the importance placed on environmental aspects often varies depending on customer size, with larger organisations generally placing greater emphasis on sustainability, while smaller businesses may prioritise cost considerations more heavily.

Overall, the results suggest that while sustainability may be becoming relatively less prominent in short-term decision-making, it remains firmly established as a long-term strategic priority within the Dutch market.

To what extent do customers in the Netherlands consider environmental aspects of a product or service in their purchasing decision?



NOTE: The number of respondents for this question was 49. “Don’t know/Not applicable” responses are included but not shown in figure.
SOURCE: Business Climate Survey for Swedish Companies in the Netherlands 2026

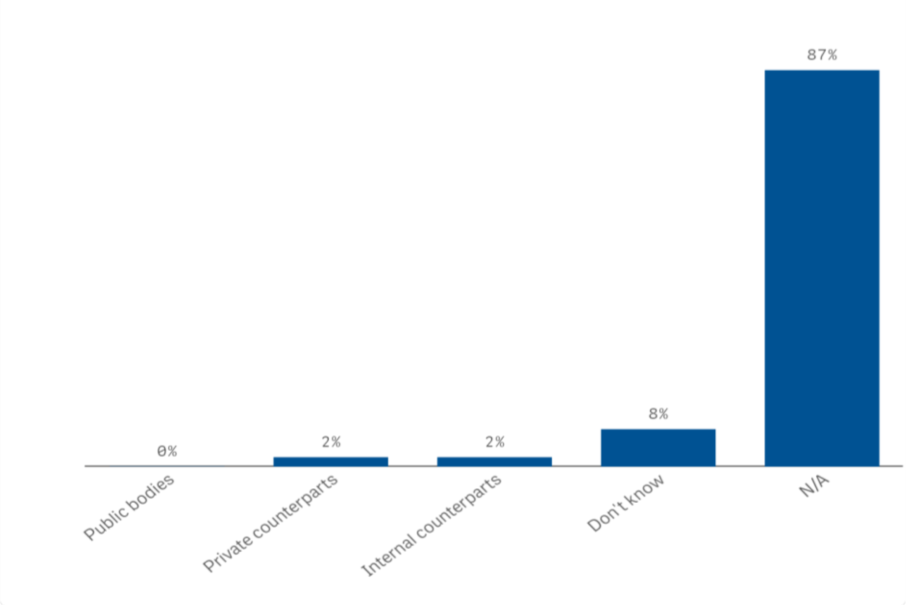
A transparent market with limited corruption exposure

The Netherlands continues to be characterised by high levels of transparency and limited exposure to corruption. Swedish companies operating in the market report very limited encounters with corrupt practices, reflecting a business environment in which both formal regulations and informal norms support fair competition and transparent business conduct.

This is consistent with international rankings, which show the Netherlands continues to perform strongly on perceived corruption levels. For companies, this translates into a predictable and rules-based operating environment, where business decisions are largely insulated from irregular practices and opaque processes.

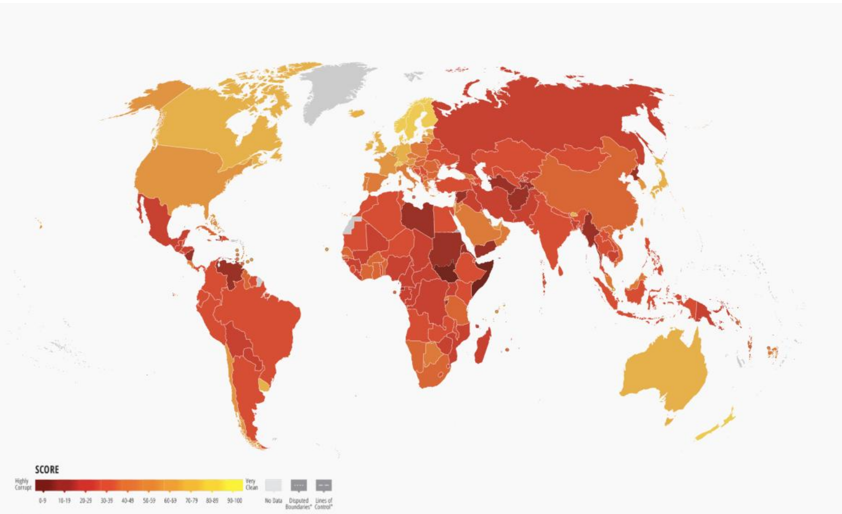
The limited incidence of corruption also reinforces the importance of other competitiveness factors, including relationships, quality, and innovation. In a market where corruption is not a differentiating factor, companies instead compete based on their ability to deliver value, maintain trust, and operate effectively within a transparent business framework.

Has your company in the Netherlands been exposed to corruption such as, but not limited to, attempts of bribery or fraud in contacts with any of the following areas?



NOTE: The number of respondents for this question was 52. "Don't know/Not applicable" responses are included but not shown in figure.
SOURCE: Business Climate Survey for Swedish Companies in the Netherlands 2026

Corruption perception index 2025



NOTE: With a CPI score of 78/100, the Netherlands ranked 8th out of 180 in 2025, a change of +1 compared with 2024
SOURCE: Transparency International

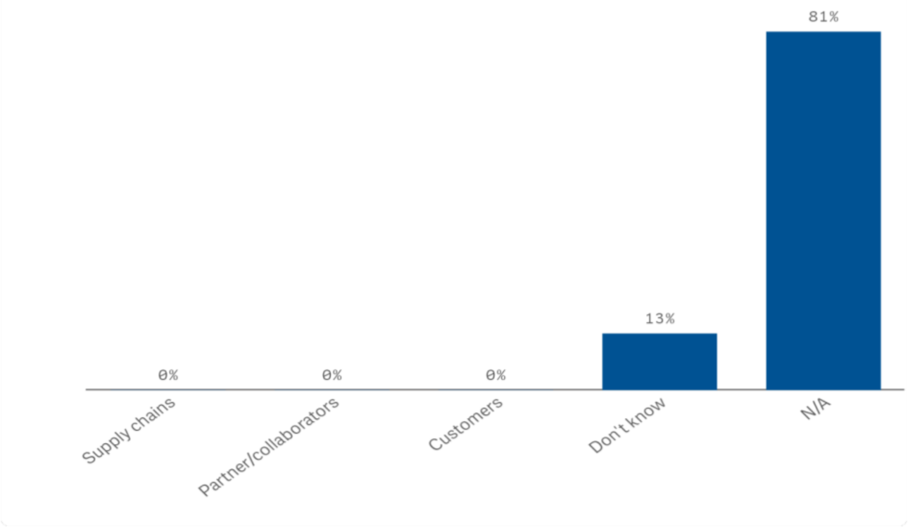
Continued confidence for human and labour rights

Swedish companies report no perceived cases of human rights violations or labour rights abuses in their operations in the Netherlands. This reflects the strength of the Dutch regulatory and institutional framework, which continues to uphold internationally recognised labour and human rights standards.

The absence of reported violations contributes to a stable, predictable, and ethically robust business environment, where companies operate with confidence in the market's legal and institutional foundations. It also aligns with the expectations of Swedish companies, many of which place strong emphasis on responsible business conduct and sustainability commitments.

While continued vigilance remains important, the findings indicate that the Netherlands continues to provide conditions in which human and labour rights are respected, supporting responsible business conduct and long-term sustainability commitments among Swedish companies.

Has your company in the Netherlands encountered any form of human rights violations and/or labour rights abuse in contacts with any of the following areas?



NOTE: The number of respondents for this question was 52. "Don't know/Not applicable" responses are included but not shown in figure.
SOURCE: Business Climate Survey for Swedish Companies in the Netherlands 2026

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