



21-22 November 2024

STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF SARS-CoV-2 (PANDEMIC) ON THE LANDSCAPE SECTOR

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Abstract: *Landscaping is a broad field of landscaping and study that takes place predominantly in outdoor spaces. This field has a wide range of design and contribution in terms of outdoor space, thus helping to form perceptions of the greening of the spaces that surround us. This domain brings nature and green space back to cities and next to our homes and reconnects us to ourselves. This field, like others, has suffered a lot due to the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. This pandemic has distorted and degraded people's perception of nature, it has built even more social barriers on top of the already existing ones. Thus, this paper aims to see what is the level of degradation in this field after the pandemic and to count people's thinking about this field.*

• Introduction

The SARS-COV-2 pandemic period brought about much disorientation, fear of the unknown, fear of other people and enclosed spaces.

Before the pandemic, most of the urban leisure activities happened in enclosed spaces – commercial malls, fitness centers, indoor playgrounds etc. During the pandemic, most of these indoor activities abruptly stopped due to new rules and regulations and also people's fears and anxiety regarding enclosed spaces. Hence, people moved their activities outdoors and returned to nature in their free time.

Nature walks, hiking, bicycling, agrotourism, all increased significantly amongst urbanites.

Gardening in private gardens, balconies or shared outdoor spaces saw an uncommon expansion during the pandemic, as a means to support people's mental health and need for a connection with nature.

Post pandemic, this trend remains – people are much more receptive to everything that green space and its benefits mean, whether it be around their homes, their city or region. It stems from people's desire to be able to go out in a safe green space where they can relax.

• Material and method

Landscaping is a relatively new profession in Romania, although it has been practiced informally for decades. Urban landscaping, taking place within the perimeter of the city, is receiving an increased interest in recent years, especially since the pandemic.

We designed this study to research the impact of the pandemic on people's perceptions regarding the landscaping sector, as well as the evolution of this sector before, during and after the pandemic.

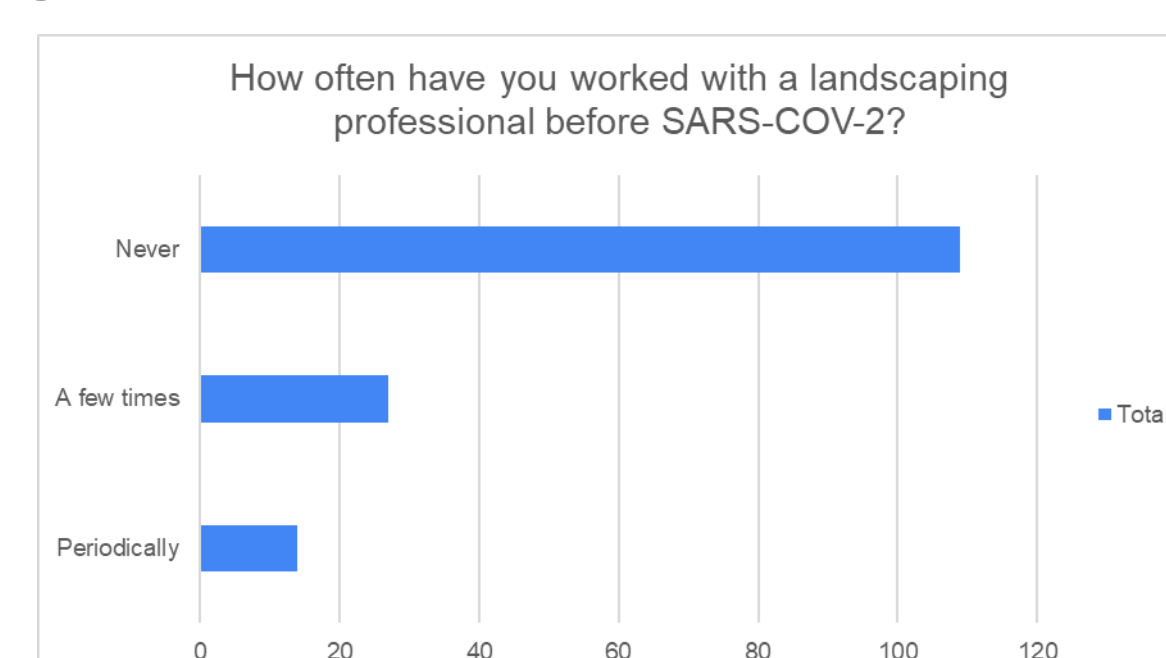
Our method included a questionnaire, in Google Forms, to investigate how well known the landscaping profession was before and how it is perceived now by the general public.

• Results and discussions

The questionnaire was distributed to over 150 people, of different backgrounds and social status. The distribution, by status, was as follows: over 41% students, 33% employees, 9% entrepreneurs and 15% stay-at-home parents.

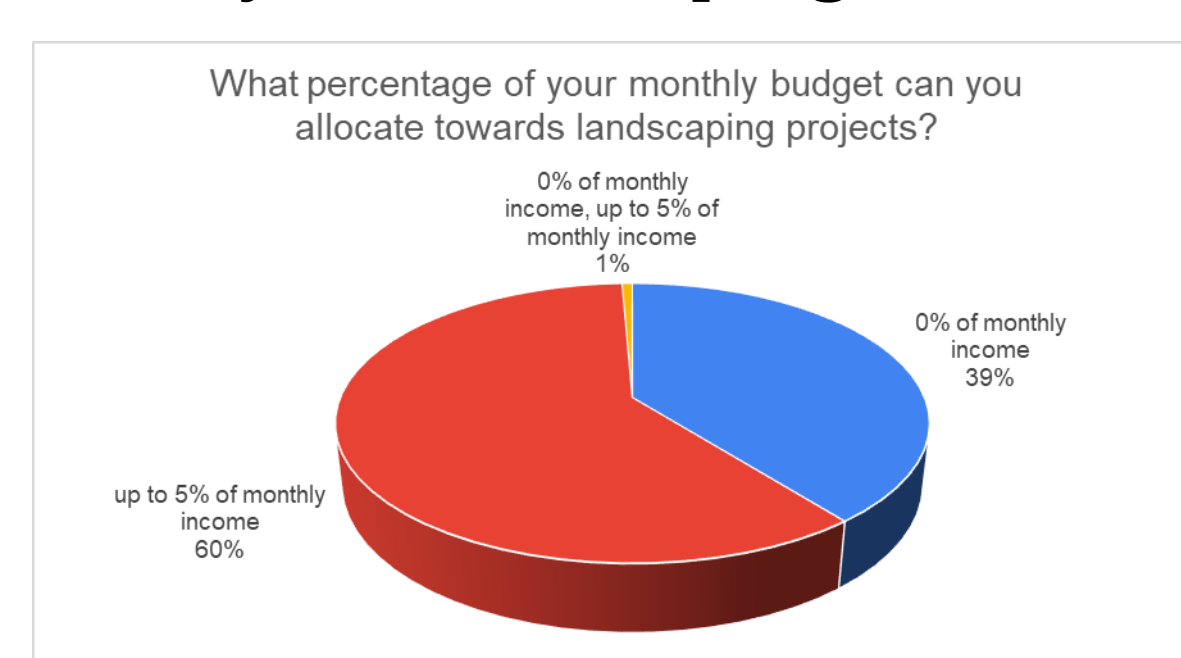
Of the respondents, 76% were familiar with the landscaping field, while 24% did not know what the notion of landscaping referred to and thus what the profession entailed.

Question 5 enquired about how often people turned to a landscaping company for designing and maintaining their green spaces before the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic.



The responses indicate that before the pandemic, 73% of people never collaborated with a landscaping professional, 18% had hired a landscaper a few times, while 9% had an on-going collaboration.

Question 7 referred to post-pandemic inclination to spend money on landscaping services and products.



The majority of respondents, over 60%, can allocate up to 5% of their monthly budget for landscaping services, while 39% are not willing or cannot allocate any money for green space maintenance and design.

• Conclusions

Survey responses analysis showed a wide-spread awareness of the concept of landscaping amongst the respondents, as well as a rather high importance of green spaces design and management in their lives post-pandemic. The results reflect a willingness, for the majority of respondents, to allocate a percentage of monthly income for landscaping expenses post-pandemic, while pre-pandemic, only a small minority of respondents invested in their green spaces.