



**DEEPDIVE**  
**OUTDOOR TECHNOLOGY**  
**SPECIAL REPORT:**  
EXCLUSIVE RESEARCH

**CEPro**





## **IMPROVED PRODUCT DURABILITY TOPS OUTDOOR TECHNOLOGY NEEDS**

**The fourth annual CE Pro Outdoor Technology Deep Dive Study reveals integrators' specific product feature desires, with durability in finishes and connections topping demands. The median number of outdoor projects in 2019 is 10 at a \$6,734 price point. by Jason Knott**

Nothing is more important to integrators in terms of selecting their outdoor products than long-lasting durability. Weatherproofing, improved seals at junction points, higher quality stakes for in-ground loudspeakers as well as longer stakes, and protection against saltwater corrosion are just some of the concerns from integrators related to the endurance of outdoor speakers, surveillance cameras, displays, landscape lights and even networking equipment.

Durability of products was the most common desire expressed by integrators who responded to the fourth annual CE Pro Outdoor Technology Study. The study, which was conducted in February 2020, had 188 respondents and covered a broad range of outdoor technology topics. The survey once again showed that the outdoor market is strong for integrators.

The median number of outdoor projects in 2019 was 10, down slightly from 12 in 2018. But the median price point for an outdoor installation rose a healthy 21% to \$6,734, up from \$5,575 the previous year.

In 2020, dealers remain bullish on the outdoor market, with 65% of integrators expecting their outdoor business to grow this year.

### ‘Missing’ Features for Outdoor Products

CE pros are never shy about giving their opinions on anything, and the growing outdoor technology market is now on their radar, especially as the spring season rolls around and homeowners begin their landscaping projects. Dealers’ interest is especially great these days because the outdoor technology space has become more competitive than ever, both in terms of installation and product offerings.

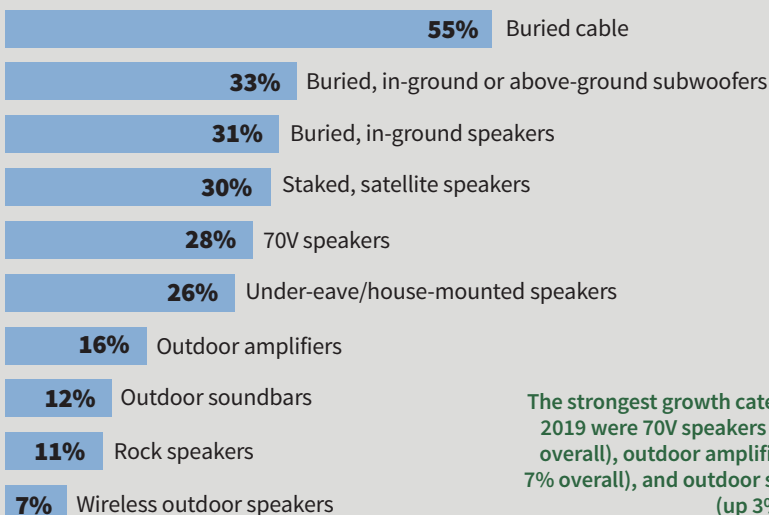
In the past several years, numerous companies have moved into outdoor sector, which was previously a niche market with a handful of key players. It means more product options from which to research and choose.

Even still, there are several “missing” features that are top of mind among integrators for outdoor equipment, in addition to the greater durability. From verbatim comments from survey respondents, here are some of the features (some realistic and some that are very wishful thinking) that CE pros are hankering for:

- › Outdoor speakers that can be placed in the soffit vent under the eave of a home, totally hidden from view
- › Improved wireless connectivity for outdoor audio and video
- › Quality outdoor demo kit that includes an amplifier to demonstrate outdoor audio systems for clients
- › Quality surge protection for outdoor systems

### MOST COMMON OUTDOOR AUDIO COMPONENTS

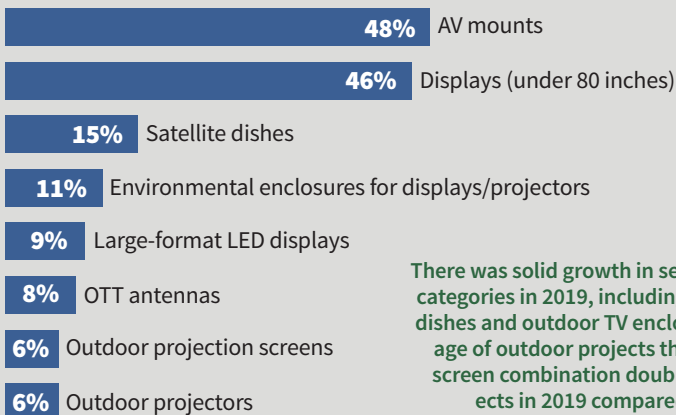
*Percentage of Outdoor Projects that Include:*



The strongest growth categories for 2019 were 70V speakers (up by 5% overall), outdoor amplifiers (up by 7% overall), and outdoor soundbars (up 3% overall).

### MOST COMMON OUTDOOR VIDEO COMPONENTS

*Percentage of Outdoor Projects that Include:*



There was solid growth in several outdoor video categories in 2019, including upticks in satellite dishes and outdoor TV enclosures. The percentage of outdoor projects that used a projector/screen combination doubled to 6% of all projects in 2019 compared to just 3% in 2018.

**10**

Average number of outdoor installations per integrator in 2019

- › Better variety of colors for outdoor speakers so they can blend in the landscape as well as the side of a home less conspicuously
- › Stronger bass for outdoor audio, especially for 70V solutions
- › Compact bass and mid-bass loudspeaker options
- › More 70V amp options with lower power requirements and lower price points
- › Combination loudspeaker/landscape lights
- › Better trim adjustment for volume output for outdoor systems
- › More realistic-looking rock speakers
- › Longer-lasting outdoor speakers and TVs
- › Lifetime warranties for outdoor products
- › Better user interfaces for outdoor systems in general that are not part of an integrated indoor control system
- › Active outdoor soundbar
- › 5.1-channel outdoor soundbar
- › Two-zone audio streamer that is less than \$400
- › Better built-in microphones in outdoor video surveillance systems
- › Low-voltage TVs

### Breaking Down the Market

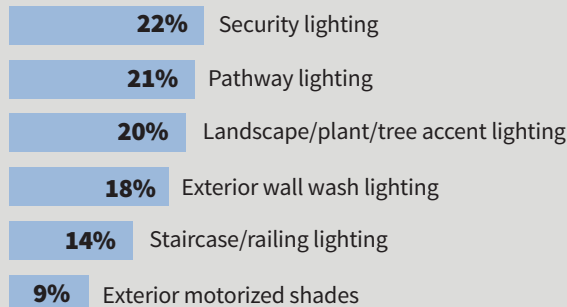
As noted, the median price for an outdoor installation rose substantially in 2019. And integrators are positive that the prices they command for outdoor systems, including audio, video, landscape lighting, video surveillance and networking, will remain steady or slightly climb.

For this year, 44% of CE pros expect to earn higher prices for their outdoor installations, while 55% anticipate their prices will remain the same in 2020. Only 1% of custom integration companies expect their average outdoor installation price will fall this year.

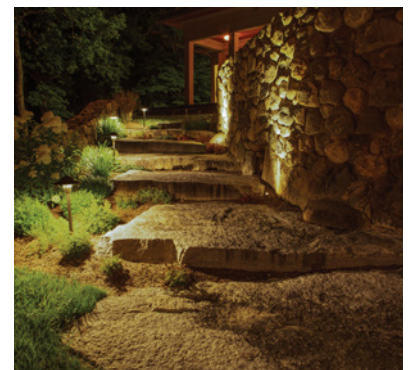
Just under two out of every three outdoor projects (63%) are part of an interior installation. That means 37% of outdoor projects are standalone projects where the homeowner has specifically reached out to the integrator to have an outdoor system designed. That is an increase of 7% versus last year, when only 30% of outdoor projects were standalone. Integrators might look to take advantage of this trend and specifically tout on their websites and other marketing outreach their ability to design and install outdoor technology.

### MOST COMMON OUTDOOR LIGHTING COMPONENTS

*Percentage of Outdoor Projects that Include:*



The biggest growth category in outdoor lighting was exterior motorized shades, up from 6% in 2018 to 9% in 2019.



More than one third of outdoor projects (37%) in 2019 was a standalone outdoor installation, not an extension of an interior zone.



In terms of subsystems, audio is still the king of outdoor installations. Dealers report that 73% of their outdoor projects last year included speakers. Networking was the next-most-common subsystem, with 51.4% of projects including an outdoor access point. Video surveillance was next (50.8%), following by video (45%) and landscape lighting (28%).

Breaking down the audio components, obviously running cable is going to be the most common task, with 55% of outdoor projects requiring dealers to bury cable underground. On the speaker side, buried in-ground models are the most common product used with 33% of projects including them. Staked satellite speakers are a close second, with 30% of projects including them.

Meanwhile, 70V products continue to gain favor. They are used in 28% of projects, which represents solid growth from last year, when dealers said they used 70V products in 23% of their outdoor jobs. The use of outdoor amps is also on the rise, with 16% of projects now including one, up from 9% last year. The use of outdoor soundbars and rock speakers also rose in 2019.

On the video side, it's no surprise that flat-panel TVs are prevalent, used in 46% of outdoor video projects. Dealers still report that they are installing indoor TVs from manufacturers like Sony, Samsung and LG Electronics outdoors, but more are using environmental enclosures. The percentage of projects with an outdoor weatherproof enclosure rose to 11%, up from 9% last year.

Meanwhile, outdoor projectors and screens were used 6% of the time. That is still a small number but it represents a significant jump from the year prior when just 3% of outdoor video projects used a projector/screen combination.

On the lighting side, security lighting is the No. 1 most-used type of lighting installed (22%) of projects, while pathway lighting is also common (21% of projects). More decorative lighting, such as wall washes and accent lights for plants and trees are also high on the list of installed exterior lighting systems.

## MOST INSTALLED OUTDOOR BRANDS

### AUDIO

1. Sonance/James Loudspeaker
2. Episode/SnapAV/Triad
3. Origin Acoustics
4. Paradigm
5. JBL
6. Stealth Acoustics
7. Klipsch
8. Coastal Source
9. Sonos
10. NEAR

### VIDEO

1. SunBriteTV/SnapAV
2. Séura
3. Peerless-AV
4. Sony
5. Samsung
6. LG
7. Epson
8. Dish
9. SkyVue
10. Apollo Enclosures

### LIGHTING

1. Coastal Source
2. Lutron
3. Control4/SnapAV
4. Holm
5. FX Luminaire
6. Kichler
7. WAC
8. Bolt
9. Cast
10. Rainier

### NETWORKING

1. Araknis/SnapAV
2. Ruckus
3. Access Networks
4. Ubiquiti
5. Luxul
6. Packedge/Control4
7. Savant
8. Belkin
9. Cisco
10. Aruba

### SECURITY

1. Luma/SnapAV
2. Ring
3. Axis Communications
4. Hikvision
5. Sony
6. Elan/Nortek Security & Control
7. IC Realtime
8. Digital Watchdog
9. Uniview Technology
10. Lorex

Big-screen outdoor video has grown in popularity; Stealth Acoustics' Stealth Patio Theater employs LED for daylight viewing.



**\$6,734**

Average price per outdoor project in 2019

The biggest growth category for lighting is exterior motorized shades. In 2018, integrators reported installing exterior shades on 6% of outdoor projects. In 2019, that number grew by 50% to 9%.

From a networking standpoint, outdoor access points are installed frequently. Cellphone signal boosters, weather stations, pool and spa controls and waterproof remotes are all niche solutions. In terms of security, outdoor video surveillance cameras are by far the most common products installed.

### Challenges and Service Agreements

One new question for this year's survey related to service agreements. Integrators are seeing opportunity to cover outdoor systems with service agreements, primarily due to the need to replace equipment that can be damaged by the weather, or more commonly by landscapers. Accent lighting on plants is another common installation that is well suited for a service agreement because as the plant or tree grows, the accent lights will need to be adjusted. However, service agreements specifically for outdoor technology are still rare. Dealers report that just 5% of their outdoor installations are covered by a service agreement.

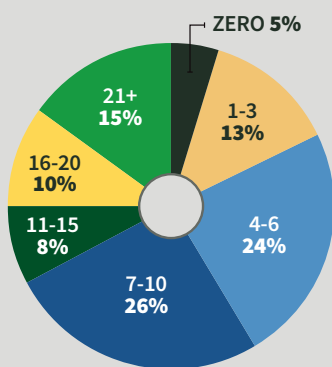
The biggest challenge faced by CE pros in the outdoor environment is one that is not dissimilar to a big hurdle on a project inside the home: working with the designer or architect. Dealing with the landscape architect is the No. 1 challenge dealers face, according to the survey. Weather-related concerns also remain a problem for many dealers.

### MOST COMMON OUTDOOR NETWORKING/SECURITY COMPONENTS

1. Surveillance cameras
2. Outdoor access points
3. Cellphone signal boosters
4. Pool/spa controls
5. Waterproof remotes
6. Irrigation control systems
7. Weather stations

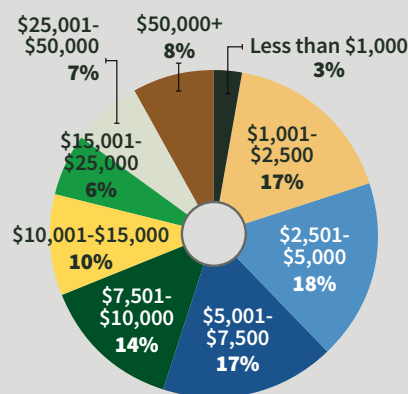
Surveillance cameras have become almost ubiquitous, often the only outside component on a job. Dealers report that 96% of their outdoor security projects include a surveillance camera.

### NUMBER OF OUTDOOR PROJECTS IN 2019



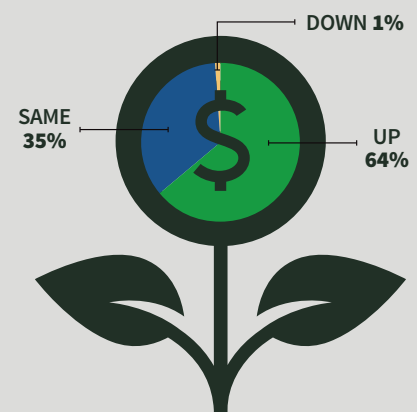
The typical CE pro performed 10 outdoor installations in 2019, down from 12 projects in 2018.

### END-USER COST FOR OUTDOOR PROJECTS



The average price charged to an end user by a CE pro for an outdoor technology project last year was \$6,734. At the ultra high end of the market, 1% of outdoor projects are over \$75,000.

### 2020 OUTDOOR BUSINESS OUTLOOK



Nearly two out of every three integrators believe their outdoor AV, security and networking business will be up this year.