State of the Industry Report 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ALLIANCE INSIGHTS
RESEARCH • ANALYSIS • ECONOMICS

Sponsored by Canon U.S.A., Inc. Canon

Produced by the PRINTING United Alliance for its members.

MAY 2026

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WHO WE ARE

Canon U.S.A., Inc. is a leader in digital imaging and printing solutions with one of the broadest portfolios in the industry, offering solutions such as digital presses, production ink-jet presses, wide-format printers, workflow solutions and professional services. With approximately $28.5 billion in global revenue, its parent company, Canon Inc., as of 2024 has ranked in the top-10 for U.S. patents granted for 41 consecutive years†. Canon U.S.A. is dedicated to its Kyosei philosophy of social and environmental responsibility. To learn more about Canon, visit www.usa.canon.com and connect with us on LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com/company/canonusa.

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The *State of the Industry Report 2026* reflects the insights of 258 participating companies across commercial printing, wide-format graphics, package and label production, and apparel decoration. These firms range from less than $1 million to more than $500 million in annual sales, and two-thirds have diversified beyond their primary printing segment, underscoring the industry's ongoing transformation.

The report analyzes trends in sales, pricing, real (inflation-adjusted) growth, profitability, business conditions, client purchasing behavior, and demand for key print services. It also examines operating cost inflation, long-term interest rates, and capital investment plans, while providing insights into factors affecting print buyers and the expanding range of services offered beyond printing.

In addition, the report includes a special section on AI-powered predictive analytics and outlines practical must-dos for printing companies. Topics include calculating customer health scores, using AI to map the customer journey and improve customer experience, measuring the real impact of AI in customer service, building a talent pipeline for the AI era, and leveraging AI-enabled skills inference.

We sincerely thank all participants for sharing their data, expectations, and perspectives. Their contributions offer a clear and candid understanding of current industry conditions and the factors influencing the path ahead. We also appreciate the generous support of Canon U.S.A., Inc. for sponsoring the PRINTING United Alliance State of the Industry Series and Print Business Outlook Series.

PRINTING United Alliance members may download the full *State of the Industry Report 2026* here.

KEY FINDINGS

As the printing industry moves through the first quarter of 2026, it continues to operate in an environment defined less by extraordinary uncertainty and gradual adjustment.

Sales increased just 0.4% on average in 2025 for participants in the PRINTING United Alliance 2026 State of the Industry Survey (SOI), reflecting a year marked by hesitation and unpredictability. As one participant noted, "chaos and inconsistent policy decisions out of Washington D.C. had a lot of customers sitting on projects they would normally be doing."

Performance varied widely across firms: On average, the top 20% achieved growth of 15.4%, while the middle 60% saw only modest gains of 0.9%, and the bottom 20% experienced a sharp decline of 19.6%. Overall, more companies reported flat or declining sales than report growth, by a margin of 63.4% to 36.6%.

At the same time, operating cost inflation (4.8%) continued to outpace price increases (2.8%), placing additional pressure on margins. Inflation remained both widespread and broad-based, driven by increases in labor, substrates, energy, transportation, ink and toner, and insurance. Despite these rising costs, pricing responses were limited: Only 45.1% of SOI participants raised prices, while 51.8% held prices steady and 3.1% reduced them. Consequently, real (inflation-adjusted) sales declined by 2.4% on average, with 68.2% of companies reporting flat or lower real sales. (**Figure 1**).

Figure 1: **Key Performance Metrics, 2025**

How SOI participants' full-year 2025 key indicators compared with year-earlier sales.

		Compared to Year Earlier		
Indicator	Average Change	Higher	Same	Lower
Sales (all sources)	0.4%	36.6%	25.8%	27.6%
Operating cost inflation	4.8%	68.1%	30.0%	1.9%
Prices	2.8%	45.1%	51.8%	3.1%
Real (inflation-adjusted) sales	-2.4%	31.8%	24.9%	43.3%

Profitability trends closely mirrored real sales. Pre-tax profitability increased for 33.6% of companies surveyed but remained flat or declined for 64.6%.

Figure 2: **Pre-Tax Profitability**

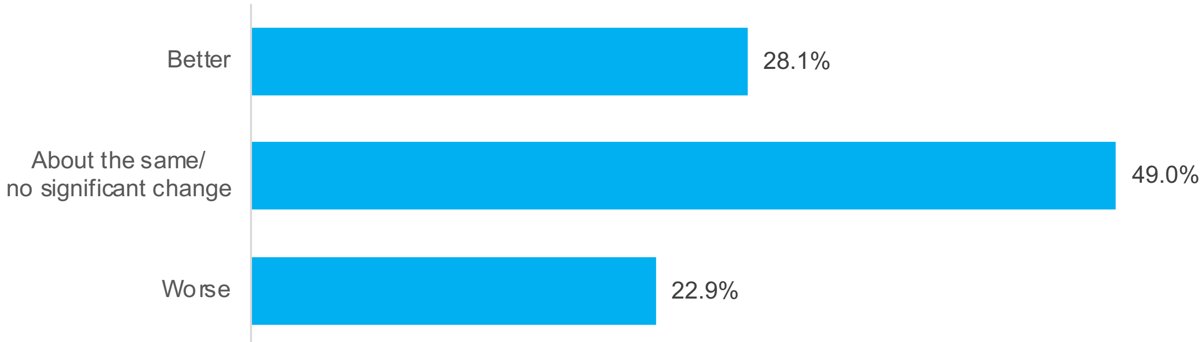
How SOI participants' full-year 2025 pre-tax profitability (pre-tax profits as a percentage of sales) compared with year-earlier levels.

So far, 2026 has shown limited signs of improvement. Only 28.1% of companies surveyed report better business conditions compared to the start of the year, and just 33.3% expect conditions to improve in the next three months. (**Figure 3**).

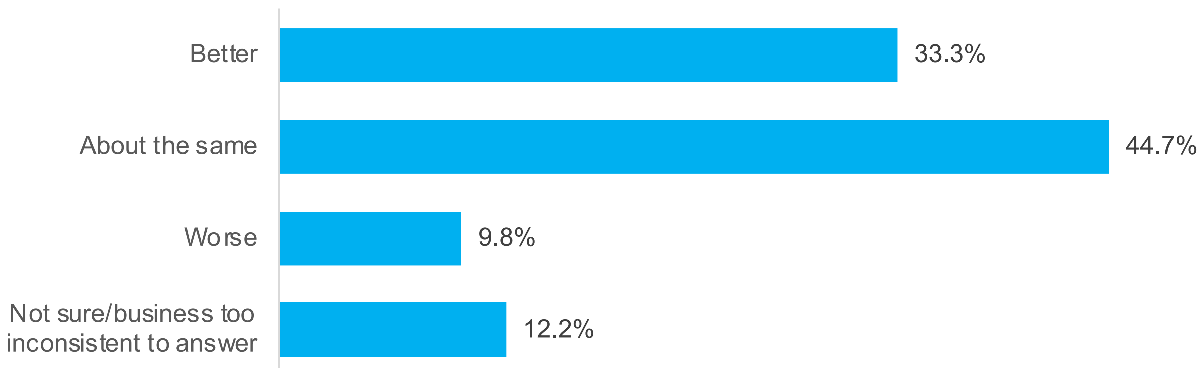
Figure 3: **Current and Expected Business Conditions**

How SOI participants responded to the questions below.

Compared to 2025, how have overall business conditions been so far in 2026?



Apart from seasonal variation, how do you expect business conditions over the next three months to compare with current conditions?

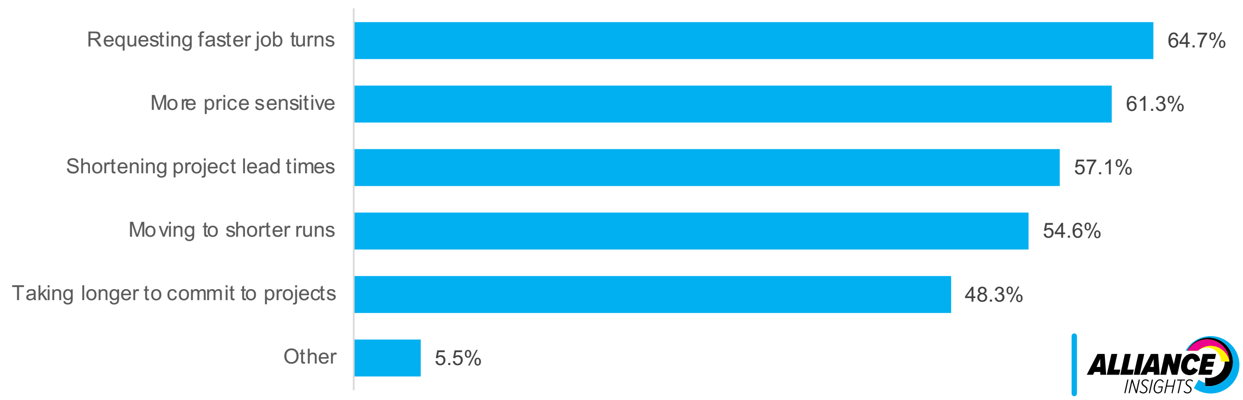


Less Lead Time and Faster Job Turns

How print buyer preferences and behaviors are trending tells us more about the state of our industry. As **Figure 4** shows, majorities or near majorities of SOI participants report clients are shortening lead times and taking longer to commit to projects yet still expect faster job turns — the "Amazon effect," as one calls it — are increasingly price sensitive, and continue to move to shorter press runs, cutting back projects if not cancelling them entirely. The uncertainty engulfing their markets and the economy is the primary reason.

Figure 4: **Key Trends in Client Purchasing Habits**

How SOI participants responded to this question: For your clients in general, which of the following are true?



The rising cost of printing (postal rates, labor, tariffs, etc.) is having two effects, according to our research panel. On the one hand, it is encouraging clients to economize on their use of print: "The move to digital over the last quarter of 2025 and so far this year has been extreme. We actually have customers tell us … they plan on only using print when they have to." On the other hand, it is creating opportunity to help clients maximize the ROI of their print dollars.

Additionally, 49.0% of all companies surveyed agree clients are integrating print and electronic alternatives into multi-media communication/marketing programs, 47.3% agree print is an increasingly important part of clients' communication mix, and 29.2% agree that digital fatigue is encouraging greater use of print (**Figure 5**).

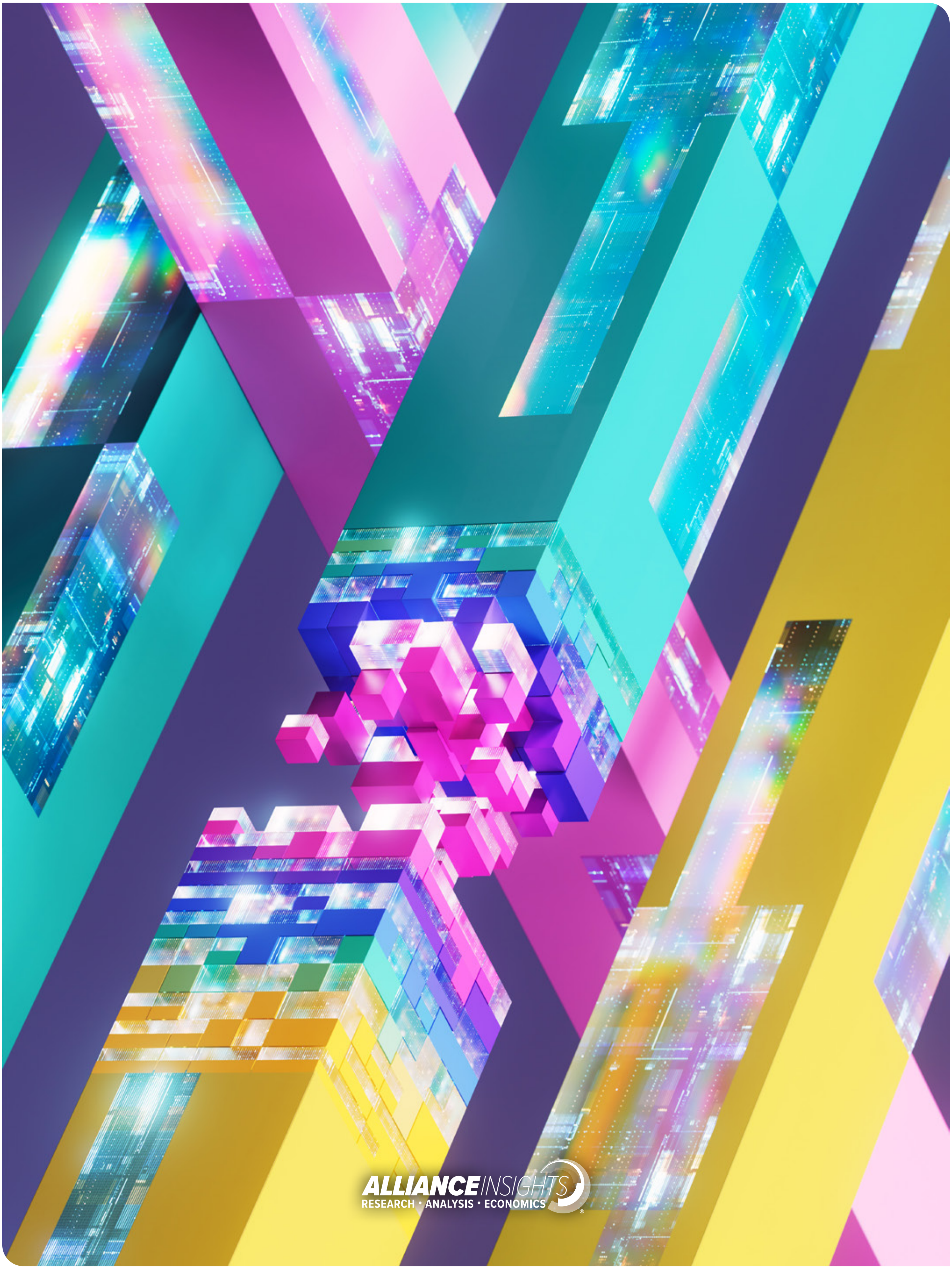
Figure 5: **Factors Affecting Print Buyers**

How SOI participants responded to this question: For your clients in general to what extent do you agree or disagree with the statements below?

Statement	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	No Opinion
Rising costs (postal rates, labor, tariffs, etc.) are encouraging clients to reduce their use of print	58.9%	22.8%	14.9%	3.3%
Rising costs (postal rates, labor, tariffs, etc.) are encouraging clients to work with us to find lower-cost alternatives.	58.6%	27.2%	10.9%	3.3%
Clients are requesting more guidance in planning their print projects	56.3%	29.2%	11.3%	3.3%
Clients are integrating print and electronic alternatives into multi-media communication/marketing programs	49.0%	33.5%	7.1%	10.5%
Print is an increasingly important part of our clients' communication mix	47.3%	35.9%	11.8%	5.1%
Digital fatigue is encouraging clients to increase their use of print.	29.2%	45.8%	18.8%	6.3%

ALLIANCE INSIGHTS

The complete findings of this research are presented in the *State of the Industry Report 2026*, available for download by PRINTING United Alliance members at www.printing.org. The State of the Industry Series and Print Business Outlook Series are made possible through the generous support of Canon U.S.A., Inc.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