The Voice Of The Car Care Industry

Auto Laundry News

RESULTS FROM THE AUTO LAUNDRY NEWS

2026 DETAILING SURVEY

CarWashMag.com

SURVEY

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2026 DETAIL SURVEY

The 2026 *Auto Laundry News* Detailing Survey was conducted through a random mailing of questionnaires to subscribers who provide detailing services. The information contained in this report results from an analysis of data provided by respondents from across the United States.

RESPONDENT POOL PROFILE

For comparative purposes, respondents are occasionally separated into three main categories: freestanding detailing shops (Freestanding), detail shops operated in conjunction with a car wash (Car Wash Combo), and mobile detail services (Mobile Services). This year's respondent pool returned to its traditional composition, with just over half (56 percent) of survey takers operating a freestanding shop, down from an overwhelming majority (80 percent) last year. A three-year perspective of the category breakdown appears below:

Detailer Type	2026	2025	2024
Freestanding	56%	80%	39%
Car Wash Combo	28%	8%	39%
Mobile Services	16%	12%	22%

ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE

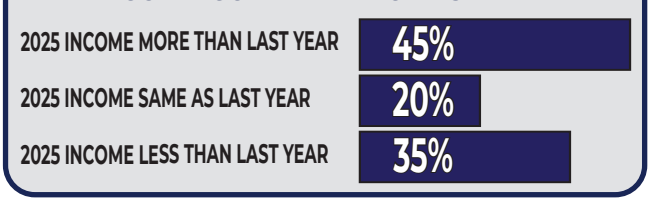
Nearly half (45 percent) of respondents report a year-over-year increase in income, a major improvement over the 26 percent that reported an income bump last year. In addition to the rise in detailers reporting higher income, fewer reported a dip in revenue (35 percent) than last year (39 percent). The improved top-line performance is likely due to two main factors: rising rates driven by ongoing inflationary pressures and an increase in the number of cars detailed per year. The latter of which is cause for celebration. In last year's survey, freestanding operators serviced 925 vehicles per year on average, which increased to 993 this year: a welcome trend.

OPERATORS SPEAK

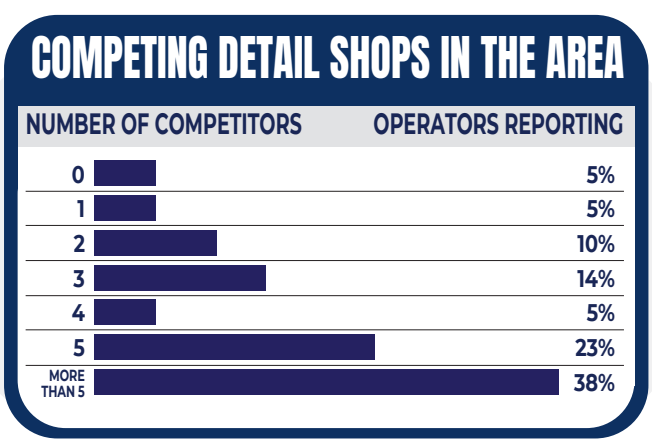
We asked detailers for one word that best describes the current state of the detail industry, and more than half (58 percent) responded positively, using words such as good, growing, booming, and steady. The most popular response was a simple four-letter response: busy.

In addition, respondents were polled on their views of the industry's future, and the results were overwhelmingly uplifting. An eye-opening 90 percent of operators responded positively to the question. The most popular responses — hopeful, growing, and bright — point to a potentially rosy future.

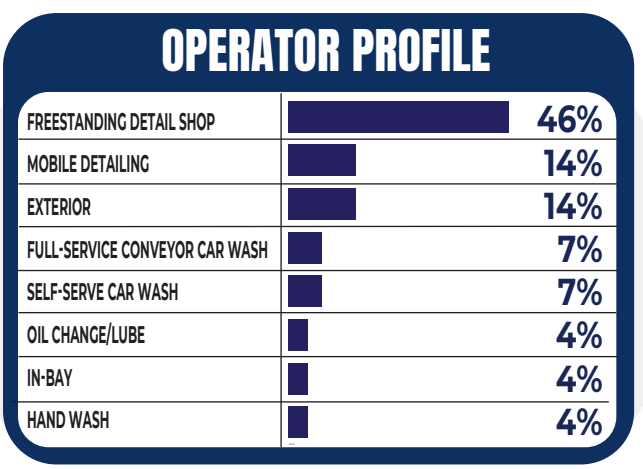
INCOME COMPARED TO LAST YEAR



COMPETING DETAIL SHOPS IN THE AREA



OPERATOR PROFILE



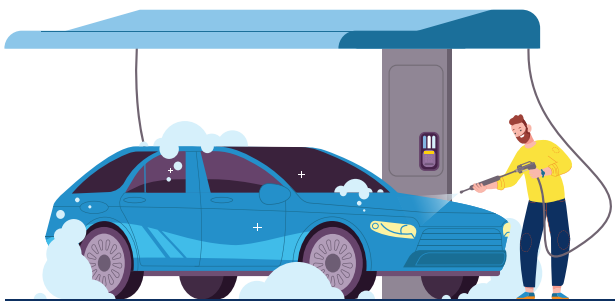
AVERAGE TIME REQUIRED TO COMPLETE STANDARD DETAIL PACKAGE

DETAIL SERVICE PRICES

CHARGE FROM A FIXED-PRICE MENU **42%**

CHARGE ACCORDING TO PER-CAR ESTIMATE **58%**

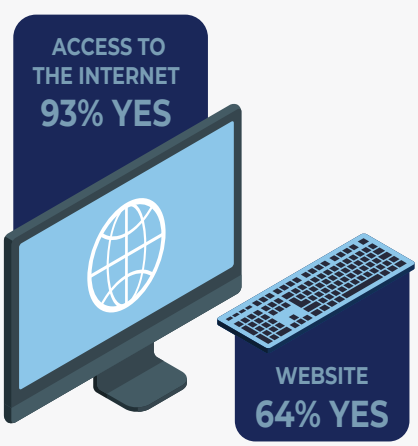
AVERAGE NUMBER OF CARS DETAILED ANNUALLY



FREESTANDING **993**

OPEN SATURDAY **58%**

OPEN SUNDAY **15%**



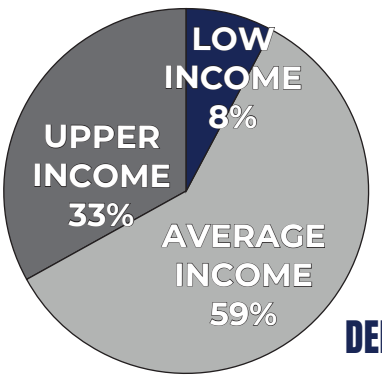
ADVERTISING & PROMOTION

SOCIAL MEDIA	88%
INTERNET	75%
DIRECT MAIL	38%
RADIO	13%
TELEVISION	6%
OTHER	6%

DETAILERS THAT ADVERTISE ON SOCIAL USE

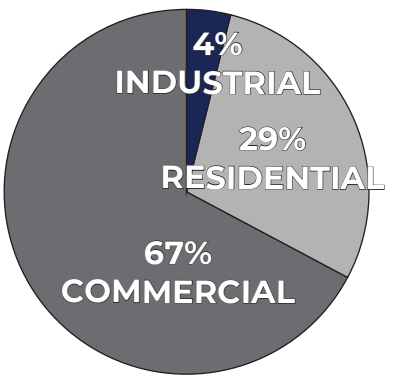
FACEBOOK	100%
INSTAGRAM	76%
LINKEDIN	35%
TIKTOK	18%
TWITTER	12%

HOW FAR DO CUSTOMERS COME?



MARKET DEMOGRAPHICS

SHOP LOCATION



CUSTOMER PROFILE

85% - RETAIL
13% - AUTO DEALERS
2% - TAXI/LIMO
2% OTHER

RETAIL VEHICLE PROFILE

21% - (UNDER 1 YEAR OLD)
28% - 1-2 YEARS OLD
29% - 3-5 YEARS OLD
22% 5+ YEARS OLD

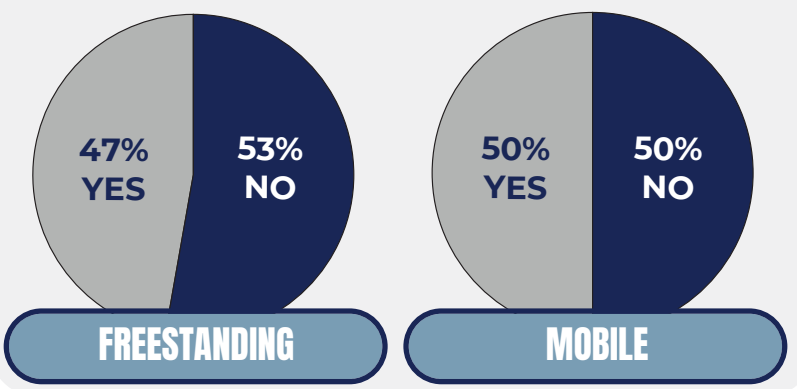
OPERATING COSTS (AS A PERCENTAGE OF REVENUES)

RENT	15.9%
EQUIPMENT/SUPPLIES/MAINTENANCE	7.0%
CHEMICALS (INCL. SOAP, WAX, COMPOUND, ETC.)	10.4%
LABOR	31.9%
UTILITIES (INCL. WATER/SEWER)	7.3%
ADVERTISING & PROMOTION	3.8%
INSURANCE	5.9%
CUSTOMER CLAIMS	1.1%

STANDARD EQUIPMENT

	PERCENTAGE UTILIZING
HI-SPEED BUFFER	96%
ORBITAL WAXER	68%
PAINT THICKNESS GAUGE	44%
VACUUMS	92%
WET/DRY VACS	88%
CARPET/UPHOLSTERY EXTRACTOR	60%
STEAM-CLEANING MACHINE	52%
PRESSURE WASHER	88%
CARPET SHAMPOOER	52%
OZONE MACHINE	72%
MICROFIBER CLOTH	100%
DETAILER'S CLAY	92%
SURFACE PREP TOWEL/PAD	76%

OFFER EXPRESS SERVICES

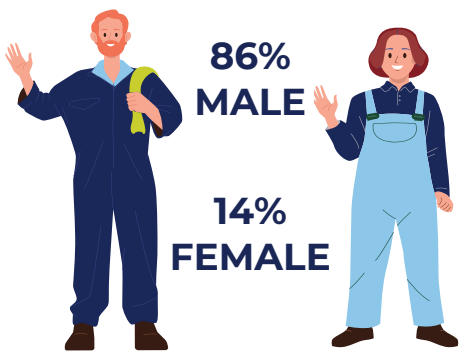


LABOR COSTS

AVERAGE WAGES PER HOUR PER EMPLOYEE

- 5% **PAID MINIMUM WAGE** to $15.00 per hour
- 20% **PAID** $15.00 to $18.00 per hour
- 30% **PAID** $18.00 to $20.00 per hour
- 45% **PAID OVER** $20.00 per hour

DETAILER GENDER



EMPLOY CERTIFIED DETAILERS

45% YES

55% NO

EMPLOYEE UNIFORMS

FULL	26%
PARTIAL	57%
NONE	17%

AVERAGE PACKAGE PRICES

RETAIL

	FREE-STANDING	MOBILE	CAR WASH COMBO
COMPLETE INTERIOR/EXTERIOR DETAIL	$349.80	$243.34	$313.83
INTERIOR DETAIL ONLY	$226.40	$165.00	$199.67
EXTERIOR DETAIL ONLY	$212.11	$143.33	$179.50

WHOLESALE

	FREE-STANDING	MOBILE	MOBILE
COMPLETE INTERIOR/EXTERIOR DETAIL	$234.00	$225.00	$252.00
INTERIOR DETAIL ONLY	$160.94	$143.33	$177.00
EXTERIOR DETAIL ONLY	$158.44	$151.67	$154.50

RETAIL CONSUMER PROFILE

PERCENTAGE OF WASH BUSINESS DONE BY DAY OF WEEK

	FREE-STANDING	MOBILE	CAR WASH COMBO
MONDAY	20%	10%	13%
TUESDAY	20%	10%	12%
WEDNESDAY	20%	10%	12%
THURSDAY	20%	15%	20%
FRIDAY	17%	35%	20%
SATURDAY	2%	17%	16%
SUNDAY	1%	3%	7%

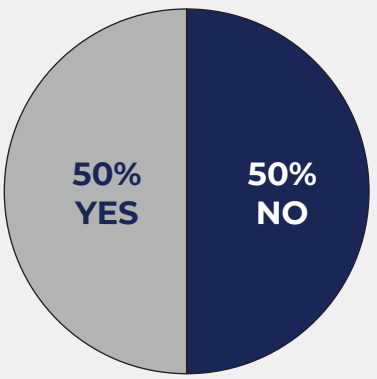
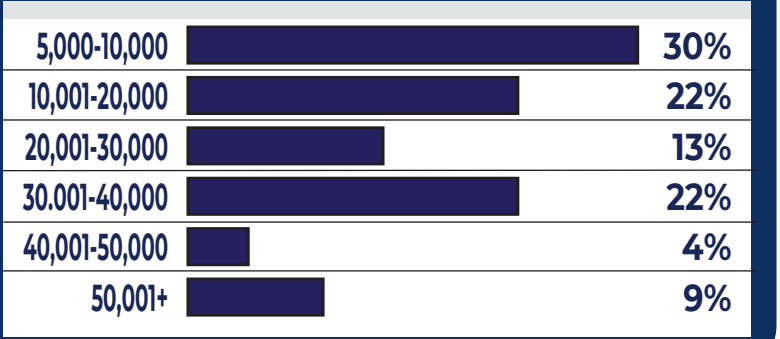
PERCENTAGE OF DETAIL BUSINESS DONE BY SEASON

	WINTER	SPRING	SUMMER	FALL
FREE-STANDING	14	33	30	23
CAR WASH COMBO	20	29	26	25
MOBILE	5	33	21	41

A LA CARTE SERVICES AT FREESTANDING SHOPS

SERVICE	PERCENT OFFERING OVERALL	AVG. PRICE
HAND WAX	59%	$147.99
MACHINE WAX/BUFF	59%	$249.67
CARPET SHAMPOO	65%	$103.20
UPHOLSTERY CLEANING	65%	$103.90
LEATHER/VINYL (INT.) DRESSING	29%	$41.25
VINYL/RUBBER (EXT.) DRESSING	29%	$33.75
DEODORIZING	47%	$90.57
PAINT TOUCH-UP	59%	$92.50
PAINTLESS DENT REMOVAL	24%	$200.00
WINDSHIELD REPAIR	12%	$350.00
EXTENDED UPHOLSTERY PROT.	41%	$177.50
EXTENDED PROT. PAINT SEALANT	29%	$274.99
HEADLIGHT RESTORATION	93%	$94.09
ENGINE CLEANING	65%	$91.36
WINDOW TINTING	18%	$293.33
INTERIOR SANITIZING	29%	$269.75
CERAMIC COATING	65%	1,249.99
PINSTRIPING	17%	$187.50

OFFER PICK UP AND DELIVERY SERVICE



DAILY TRAFFIC COUNT