TBX

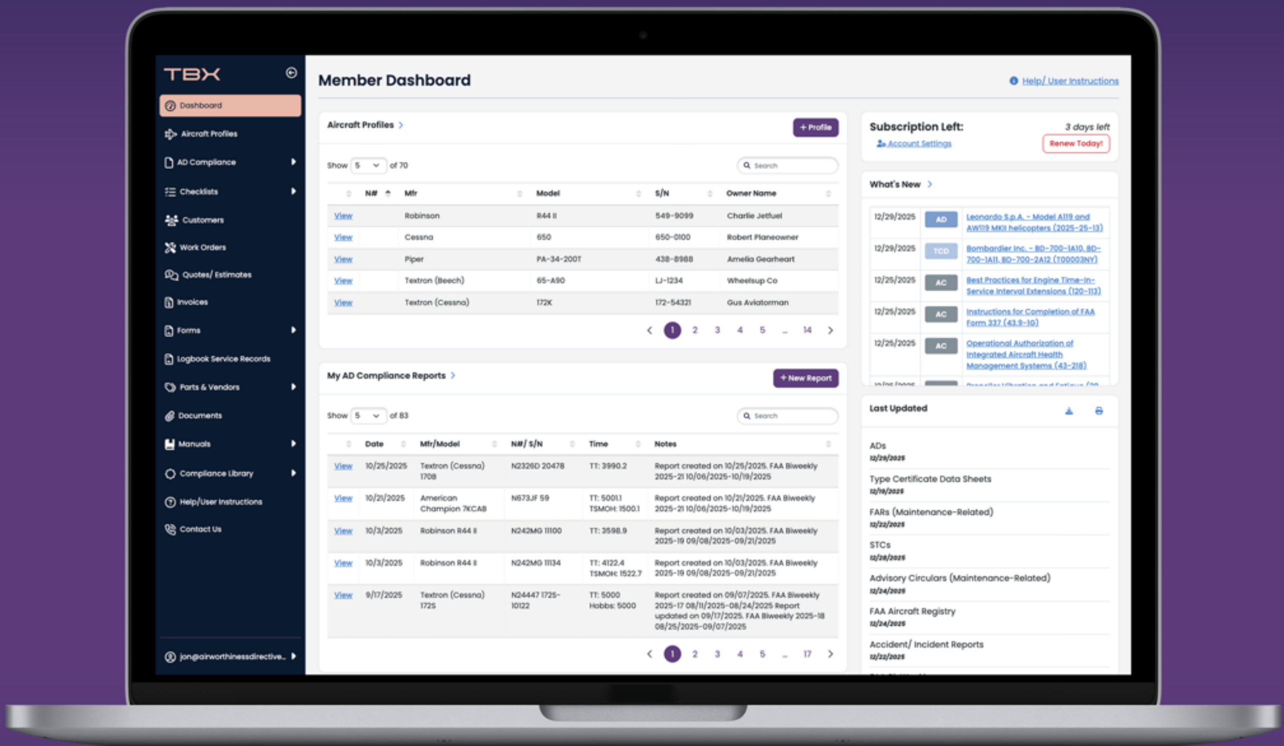
The State of GA Maintenance

ANNUAL SURVEY

2026

www.airworthy.com

TBX is trusted by thousands for aircraft maintenance and compliance



1 Million+ Reports

100,000+ Aircraft

50+ Countries

30+ Years

TBX

Get your 10-day FREE trial of TBX. Visit **airworthy.com** or call **540.217.4471**

Table of Contents

__Disclaimer:__ this report summarizes responses and commentary received from a customer survey conducted by TBX (Airworthy.com). Results are based on responses (self-reported) from participating customers (anonymously) and may not be representative of the broader industry or all market participants. The findings are provided for informational purposes only and should not be interpreted as financial, pricing, operational, or legal advice. Market conditions, business performance, and sentiment may vary over time and by region. All results are presented in aggregate. Certain segments may reflect limited sample sizes and should be interpreted with caution. Any third-party use or citation of this report should include appropriate context regarding methodology

Introduction to our Survey

Last year we had the privilege of visiting hundreds of maintenance shops around the country, learning how to best support A&Ps, IAs, DOMs, shop owners, operators and flight schools, many who care deeply about the future of General Aviation (GA). All too often, GA takes a back seat to the airlines and the business jet world—even though many would argue these wouldn't exist without GA.

This year, we thought we'd flip the script—taking a pulse of the GA maintenance industry by surveying our broad customer base of GA shops and operators that use our tools every day, generating a cross-section of the "Mx Perspective".

This year's inaugural survey received over 600 responses allowing us to piece together a detailed snapshot of the challenges and opportunities the GA maintenance community is facing right now, this very second.

Without the maintenance community, pilots (and OEMs) wouldn't get very far. Over time, we hope to discover new opportunities where we can work together across all stakeholders—OEMs, suppliers, vendors, operators, and trade associations—to help improve the outlook for GA maintenance.

We hope you find this year's survey helpful and informative. If you have any thoughts, feedback, or questions, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Jon McLaughlin

Jon McLaughlin
Chief Executive Officer

Key Takeaways for 2026

1. The future outlook for GA is increasingly negative, driven by shop challenges and lack of support

Less than half of respondents thought the outlook was positive for GA (43%), citing a handful of challenges with no sign of improving.

2. The #1 challenge shops are facing is rising parts and supply chain pressures

An overwhelming majority of respondents cited rising costs and supply chain challenges as a major impediment to their business.

3. Finding and retaining qualified A&Ps remains a major challenge (and opportunity)

Nearly half of respondents cited finding (and retaining) qualified A&Ps as a major challenge and listed it as the #1 item that would improve their business (if solved).

4. Broader access (and integration) of tech pubs is the lowest hanging fruit of all the major challenges

Nearly half of respondents listed access to tech pubs as a major challenge. We see this as a solvable problem by enabling broader integration & access.

5. Most maintenance shops have a positive outlook on the future of their business

Regardless of all the major challenges facing GA maintainers, nearly 2/3rd had a positive outlook on their business.

6. Our customers cited compliance, maintenance tracking, and good processes as top items that are working well in their organizations

As we've often articulated in our seminars and webinars across the country, process and technology are enablers for safety, quality, and improved efficiency. If you don't have a process in place, bolstered by technology, you are going to fall behind given the rising complexity (and requirements) of GA maintenance today.

7. Over 84% of TBX customers would recommend TBX to a friend

Over 84% of respondents said they would recommend TBX to a friend, which is encouraging. Our team is dedicated to providing the best support and product enhancements to ensure our customers can keep aircraft legal, safe, and right.

8. Shop rates continue to rise.

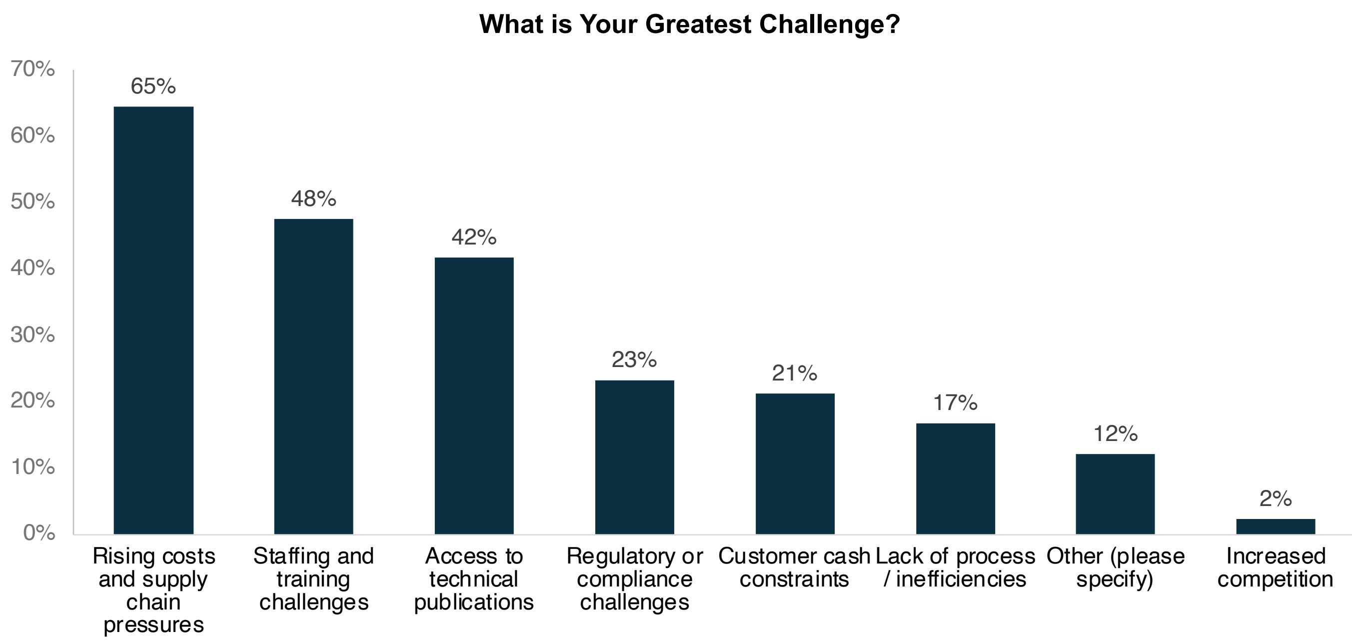
Unsurprisingly, given the rise in the cost of doing business, shop rates have risen across the country. See our analysis.

Top Challenges

What are Your Greatest Maintenance Challenges?

General aviation maintenance shops continue to face an onslaught of pressures. Nearly 2/3 of respondents identified “**rising costs and supply chain pressures**” as the #1 challenge (65%), followed by nearly half of respondents citing “**staffing and training challenges**” (48%), followed by “**access to technical publications**” (42%). Nearly a quarter cited regulatory or compliance challenges and customer cash constraints as further challenges.

FIGURE 1



We agree. The rising price of parts has been driven up by supply chain disruptions, labor shortages, and consolidation among OEM suppliers. Labor shortages continue to plague the industry, although we see “green shoots” with the recent rise in new school openings (and test takers!). Finally, access to technical publications should theoretically be a solvable problem if only OEMs would provide wider access—and distribution—of technical data, service bulletins, and maintenance information to both reduce risk and improve quality of maintenance. **Notably, survey respondents cited access to tech pubs as the #1 feature we should focus on next**.

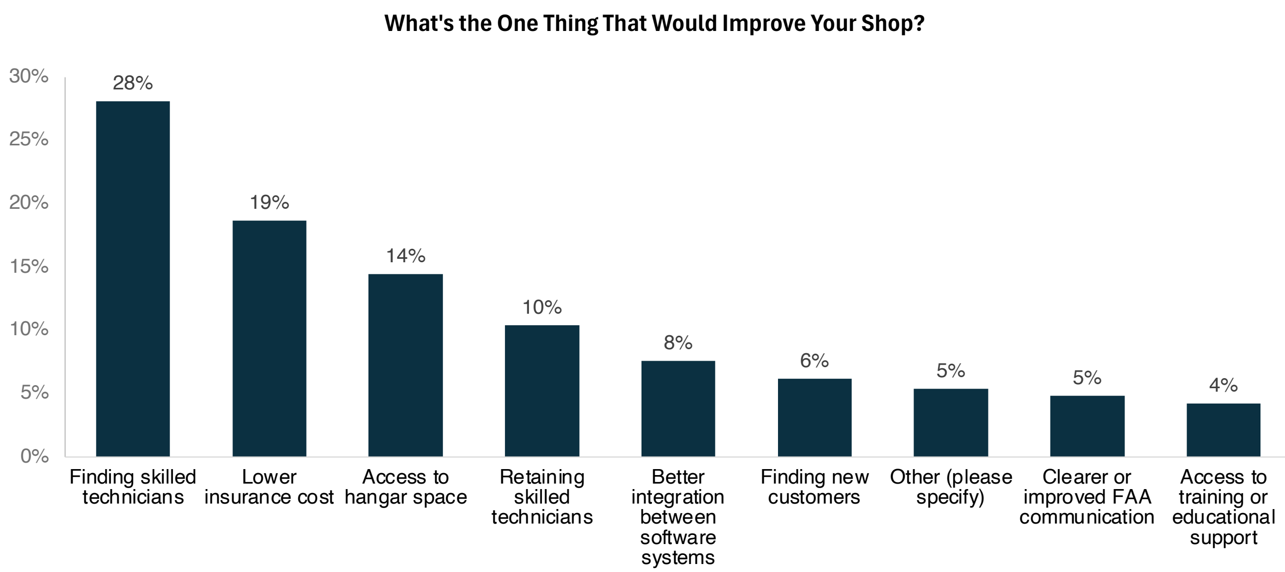
Top Challenges: Key Quotes

- “I work alone and company won't hire me any help. I have been seeing prices on some items that have doubled this year alone.”
- “It’s hard to find anyone who is interested in going into GA”
- “It’s very hard for a small GA shop to afford to pay for all the tech data for all the GA aircraft along with all the other costs of owning a shop. And it’s a huge mystery why no one wants to do GA maintenance. Maybe if it didn’t cost 20K a year operate, more people would get into this profession.”
- “Hard to find quality A&Ps”
- “No quality mechanics out of school and all the good ones are going to airlines. Tech pubs are too expensive, and Garmin holds them to dealers only.”
- “The price of the parts and supplies to run a shop with along with the price for tech publications are getting higher. Chasing customers around to pay bills and some customers not able to pay to their rising costs having to sell their aircraft. Plus, most of the GA aircraft are owned by an older generation and they are hanging up flying due to age and illness. I had to close my shop because of the stress made me very ill trying to keep up with bills chase customers and always worrying to be able to get more work.”
- “There is a shortage of qualified mechanics in GA. Probably due to lower pay than what the airlines can offer. Additionally, Glass Cockpit aircraft pose maintenance challenges that often require expensive 'specialist' service beyond the average GA Shop. Technical data is a necessity to perform maintenance but is often locked behind paywalls under pricey subscription services. And honestly, everything is getting more expensive.”
- “Parts being hard or impossible to get really backs up the shop flow.”
- “Cost, cost, cost…”
- “Costs of maintaining the older aircraft I specialize in continue to climb in direct proportion to the unavailability of parts. Both Textron (Beech) and Continental have significant fees for access to their technical data. The cost of liability insurance continues to climb and passing these costs through if problematic in a small business with a limited customer base.”
- “Post-covid vendor services take 2-3 times longer. Parts can be difficult to locate. The percentage of mark-up has increased. Technical publications are ridiculously expensive. Insurance companies want to take 10% or more of your gross earnings for coverage. All these things leave an average profit that does not support the risk involved.”
- "I have a lot of people interested in upgrades to aircraft, but they end up holding off due to cost of equipment etc.”
- “Repair Stations have backlog of work to do and not enough workers to perform the work.”
- “Aviation industry is over regulated and over expensive, but the wages and the training are very low. It is not in balance.”

What's the <u>One Thing</u> That Would Improve Your Mx Organization?

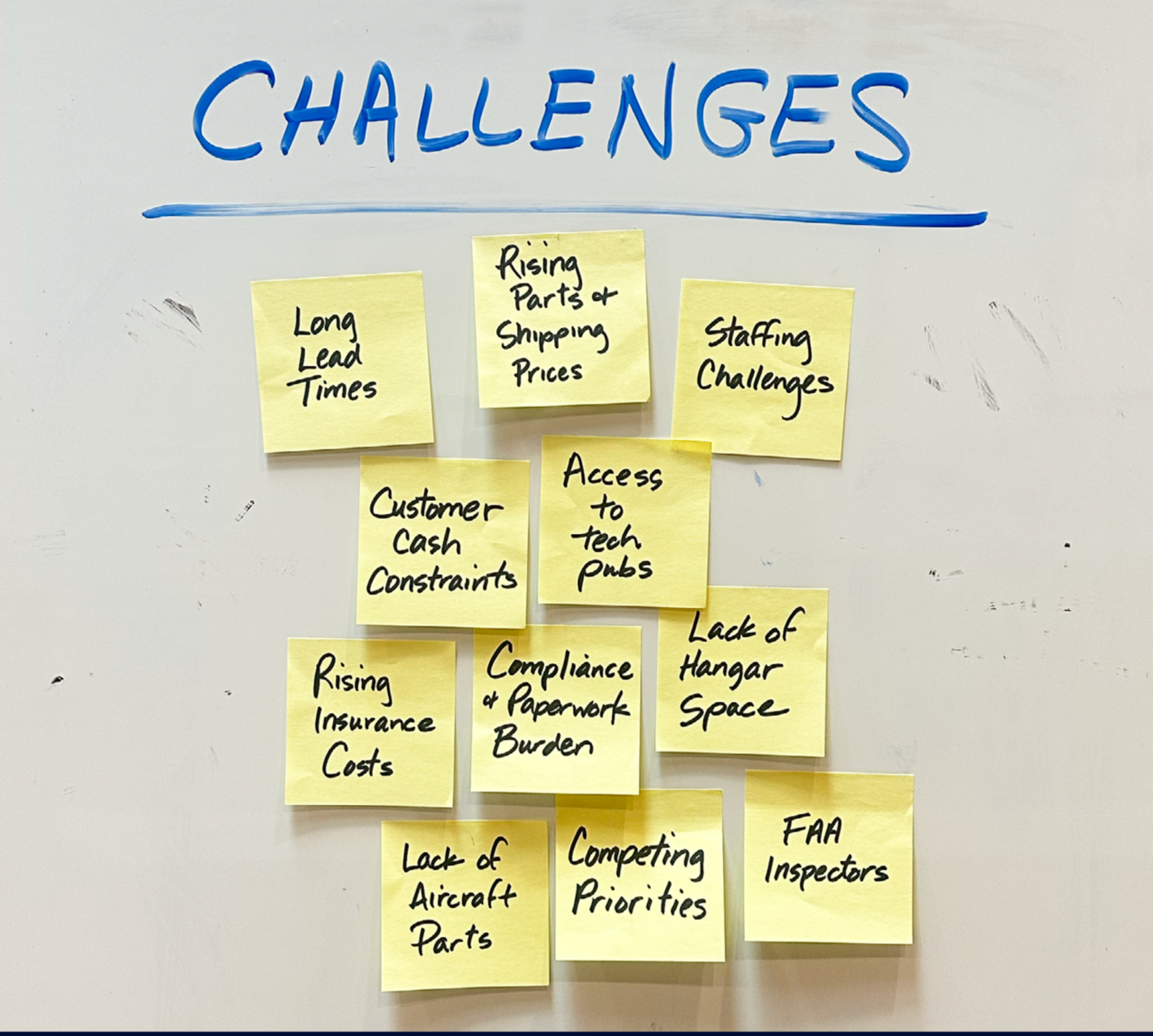
We asked respondents to select the one thing that would <u>most improve</u> your business prospects and have the <u>biggest impact</u> on their overall success. **28% said finding skilled technicians, 19% said lower insurance rates, 14% said access to hangar space, 10% said retaining skilled technicians** (although we received quite a few comments regarding BOTH finding and retaining skilled technicians) and 8% said better integration between software systems.

FIGURE 2



Notably, labor pressures continue to be at the forefront here, as shops grapple with the current shortage of qualified mechanics (or challenges in recruiting them). What this also communicates is that **there is no "silver bullet"—**depending on your operation, location, and area of focus, you may be under one or more of the usual challenges and finding a one-size solution doesn't exist. **A dialed-in operation begins with the right people, the right process, the right vendors, and the right technology foundation all working in unison to produce above-average results.**

As much as some folks like to complain about the FAA, "clearer or improved FAA communication" was low on the list, as was "access to training and educational support". What this tells us is that **the maintenance community understands what it needs to do to be compliant and do a good job but is constantly being met with resistance**.

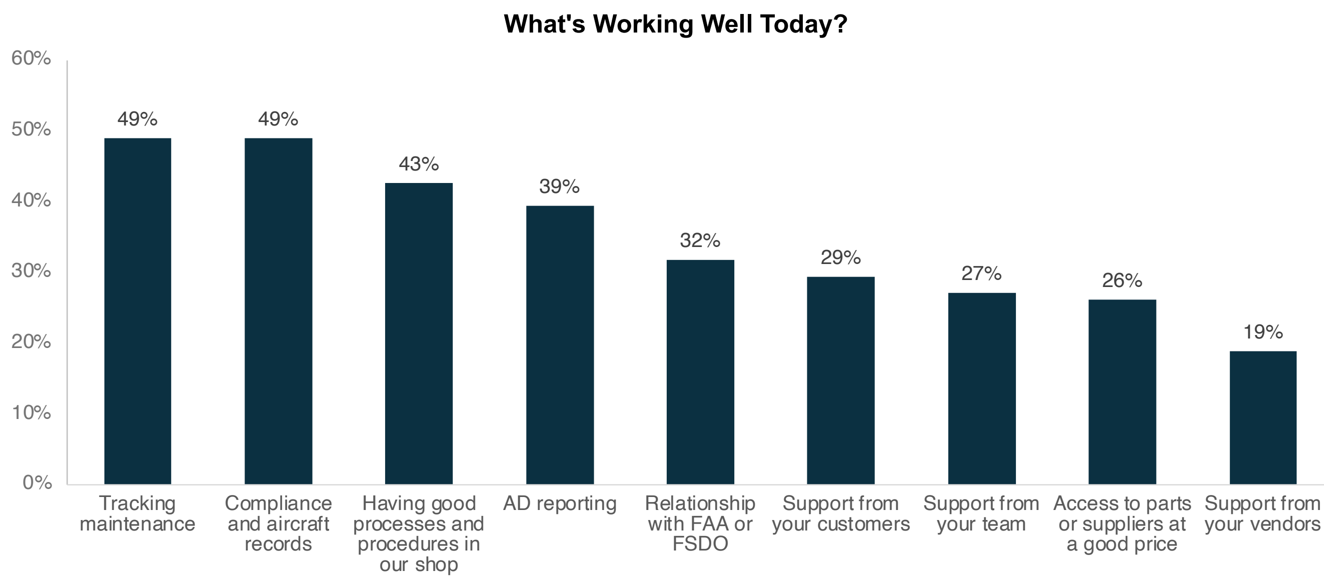

CHALLENGES
Long Lead Times
Rising Parts & Shipping Prices
Staffing Challenges
Customer Cash Constraints
Access to tech pubs
Rising Insurance Costs
Compliance & Paperwork Burden
Lack of Hangar Space
Lack of Aircraft Parts
Competing Priorities
FAA Inspectors

What’s Working

What’s Working Well for Your Maintenance Shop Today?

We asked respondents to select (up to three) items that were working well for them. **Nearly half of respondents selected “tracking maintenance” and “compliance and records” as working well,** with 43% selecting “good processes and procedures”, 39% selecting “AD reporting”, and nearly a third (32%) selecting having a good relationship with their FSDO.

FIGURE 3



Lower responses were “support from customers” (29%), “support from your team” (275), and “support from vendors” (19%). The lower responses on these items suggest that **maintenance shops are NOT getting the support they need from internal and external stakeholders**. Similarly, only 26% of respondents cited “Access to parts (or suppliers) at a good price” as something that was working for them, **reiterating the ongoing challenge of rising prices**.

What’s Working: Key Quotes

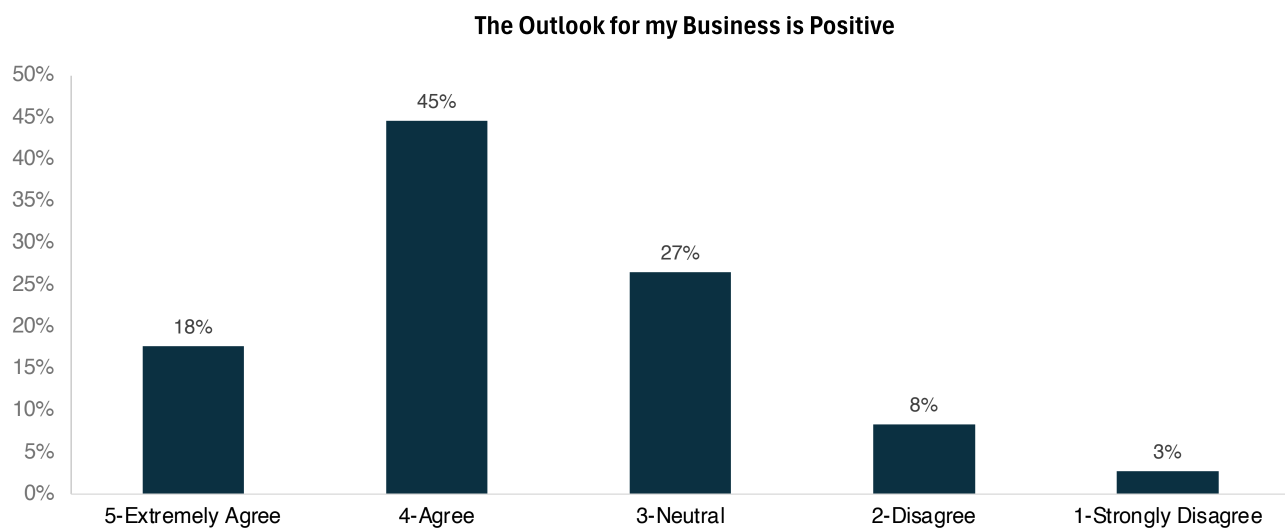
- “The FAA is almost always friendly and eager to help. Up front with customers keeps them happy most of the time. Aircraft that have good tracking always make life easier. Team support is a must in all areas.”
- “Building relationships with companies and other businesses that consistently provide services on time and at a fair price.”
- “AD compliance is great with the Airworthy software. The work orders have helped organization immensely…”
- “Have a Cessna 172 fleet type. Textron has very good support of their products.   Communication is timely with tech support and if we are AOG. They will pull a part off the line to meet our demands.”
- “TBX has made my life simpler pulling together AD, work order detail and compliance reporting.”
- “Your company’s software has made a huge difference in our efficiency with record keeping…”
- “My customers are interactive with me and are very supportive. Especially when it comes to the length of time that items take due to parts not available.”
- “Maintenance and tracking software have been a game changer for our team. Forecasting has given us the ability to plan ahead and purchase parts and tools in a much timelier fashion, reducing downtime.”
- “I’m having a lot of success training the younger generations. They are cheap labor and willing to work.”
- Safety is #1. Honesty and transparency with the customer is #2. Customer communication is #3. GA owners hate having their plane in the shop for an unknown amount of time and hearing no communication from the shop.”
- “Good customers are crucial to help work out solutions when parts availability are dried up. Same can be said about vendors or specialty shops that can produce parts and products that aren't available through larger suppliers.”
- “Loyal customers that are happy with your work are always the backbone of a good business.”
- “Our shop is built on relationships which greatly helps us when we need anything done.”
- “TBX is definitely helping my operation run more smoothly…”
- “Record keeping is much easier with TBX. Record keeping has never been easier.”
- We are establishing good practices that augment our ability to provide services to customers. Competitive pricing allows us to compete with other providers.
- TBX kicks ass. Customers who share the same frustrations as the mechanics also help mitigate the stresses brought on by the burdensome county regulations. FAA and FSDO are both easily reached and pleasant to work with.

Business & GA Outlook

Business Outlook

We asked respondents about the outlook of their business—**nearly two thirds (63%) agreed the outlook for their business was POSITIVE** (18% extremely agreed, with 45% agreeing). 27% remained neutral and 11% disagreed.

FIGURE 4



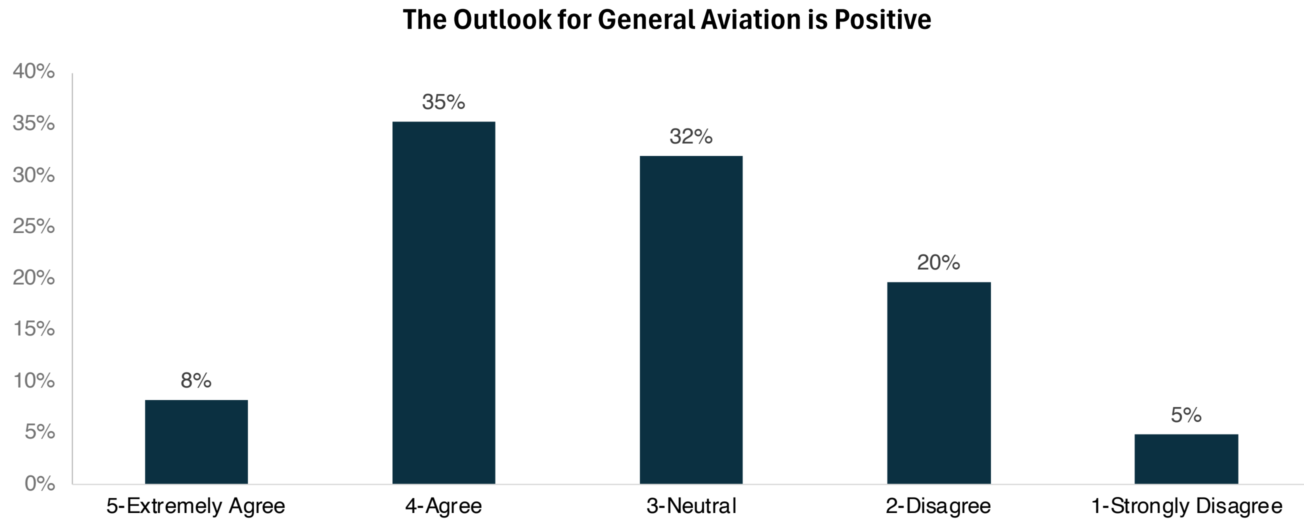
This is encouraging, suggesting maintenance organizations are mostly optimistic about the future of their business even in the face of the ongoing challenges; however, the fact that a little over a third of respondents were neutral or disagreed should be something to keep an eye on. Notably, in the "Top Challenge" question above, respondents noted that **increased competition was NOT a concern,** as only 2% of respondents cited this as their greatest challenge.

Given the rising demand for maintenance work—see our piece, "Not Dead Yet", on rising flight hours over the last 5 years—we can conclude that the supply of maintenance is constrained by labor and parts availability. **In other words, if we had the people, the access to parts, and the support from our vendors, we could accomplish more maintenance.**

Outlook for General Aviation

On the outlook for the GA industry, respondents had a different view—**less than half (43%) agreed the outlook was POSITIVE** (only 8% extremely agreed, and 35% agreed); nearly a third (32%) were neutral **and a little over a quarter (27%) disagreed.**

FIGURE 5



This negative response to the future of GA is troublesome, suggesting that the challenges facing the maintenance community (lack of qualified A&Ps, lack of support from vendors/suppliers, rising parts and insurance) are only going to continue to squeeze both operators and maintainers.

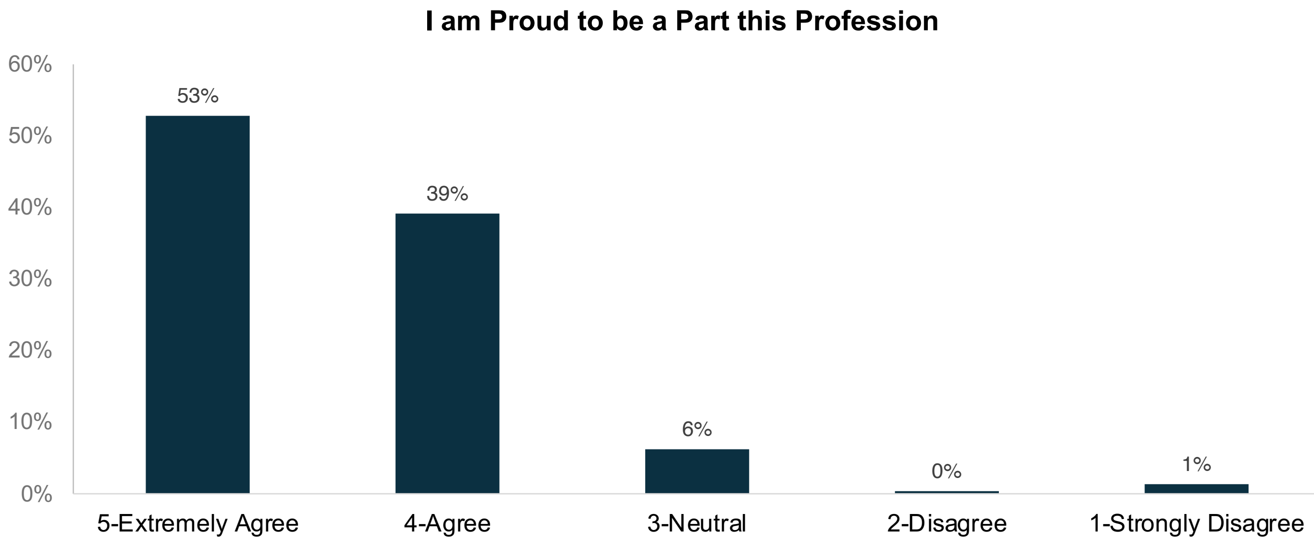
For all stakeholders—OEMs, suppliers, airports, regulators, MROs, airlines, and operators, this should be a wake-up call to ensure the GA Mx industry finds firm footing both now and over the long-term. Large scale investments in airport infrastructure and future development require a robust future to make the return on investment worthwhile.

Should the industry outlook continue to slide, **we risk falling into a negative feedback cycle where a negative outlook on the future reduces investment today, robbing GA of much needed investment and attention.**

Proud of my Profession

Over 92% of respondents said they were proud to be a part of this profession (53% extremely agreed, with 39% agreeing). Only 7% were either neutral (6%) or disagreed (1%).

FIGURE 6



As the best mechanics, inspectors, and operators often say— "It takes a village". This is a strong community of people willing to put in the hours to achieve technical mastery. This strong pride in the profession is a strength, driving increased quality work, a culture of excellence, and the ability to withstand the never-ending challenges facing the maintenance community (as listed here in this report).

For us at TBX, we are proud to support this community, and as always look forward to your comments, feedback and suggestions to keep improving our offering and provide our customers with best-in-class support.

Final Thoughts – Key Quotes

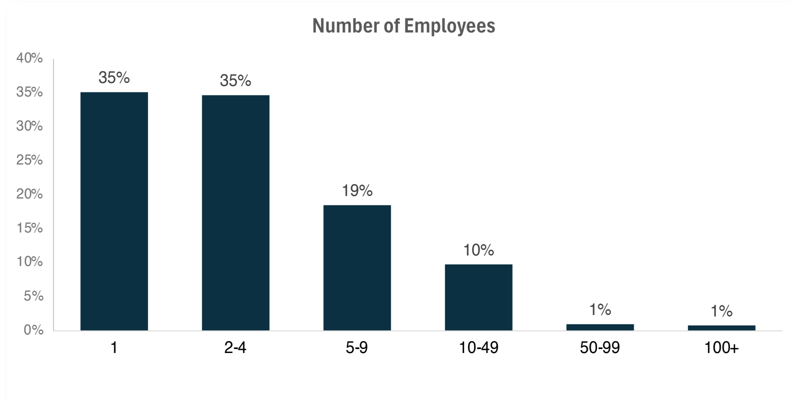
- “General aviation is a tough industry to work in. The pay isn’t great, especially in the piston-engine segment of general aviation. Really, the love of aviation and the airplanes is what keeps people working in this field. Support for both technical data and parts for the aging fleet is a significant challenge. Over the last 40 years, the cost to maintain the fleet has risen, not only the cost of parts and technical support, but also insurance and overall parts availability. So yes, the passion for general aviation is the key factor that keeps technicians working in the piston-powered segment.”
- “There is a significant shortage of mechanics either qualified or willing to learn. There is also a shortage of box hangars for shops as well as individual T hangars for private owners.”
- “The industry needs to recover from the COVID shutdown and get back to pre-pandemic levels, or GA is doomed. If recovery isn't swift and strong, there won't be any reason to have a regulatory library, as there won't be parts available to inspect or repair GA aircraft.”
- “I am an individual IA working with owners who like working on their aircraft, Owner Assisted Annuals/Mx. They learn more about their airplane, know the costs and delays of finding and getting parts and become better pilots and trouble shooters.”
- “At the rate the older technicians are leaving the shops and the dearth of young, qualified people coming to support GA, we are in a very obvious downhill spiral. Of the 5 local A&P shops in our area, over the last 5 years only one remains and the average age of their techs is 68 years old.”
- “I long for a return to GA being affordable to the average wage-earner, not just the wealthy. We have priced ourselves out of the market.”
- “It's a crucial industry with no margin for error, and in the GA business, there's no backups to catch errors. Put your heart into it or find a different career.”
- “Most of the GA planes I was seeing working for independent shops was antique garbage that should be scrapped. How the actual hell does someone think a 50-year-old machine with original equipment cables, pulleys and wiring is ‘airworthy’?”
- “The big constraints I face are space availability and cost, new quality customers, increasing costs across the board. All of these things push shops to work on bigger better paying jobs that don't service the smaller personally owned aircraft.”
- “This is my third career, and I entered it with the hope I'd find an industry dominated by those who want to do things right, efficiently, and with integrity. There is some of that, but the A&P's I work with have little integrity and prefer to play with their phones, or talk and laugh, or listen to music much of the day. They don't actively continue to learn, and don't take criticism well. The FAA, seems intent on dragging improvements out as they don't want to take a calculated risk on some new improvements, (i.e. Look how long it's taken them to approve some electronic ignition systems that have been reliably used in automotive applications for decades.) The cost of the business has risen tremendously, and some of the reasons are FAA certification/compliance costs (I hear that from every manufacturer I speak with at EAA without exception)”


55474
UM
102
CAPT. JESSE FREY
Ain't Misbehavin'
G4
M
415267
MARINES
026
TRIG
TX

Shop Profiles

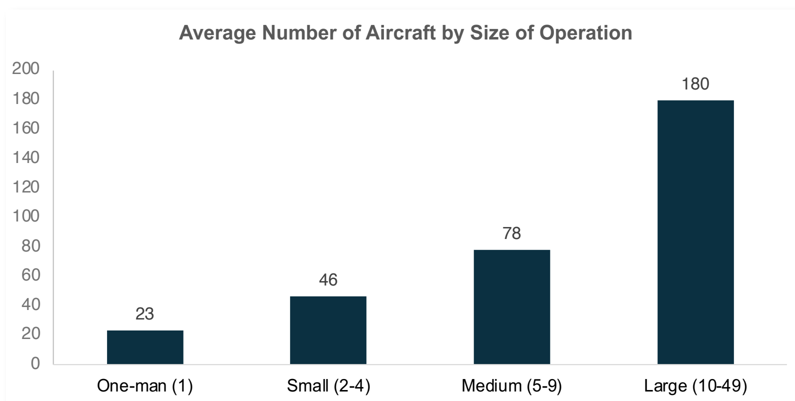
Size

Most respondents either fit the "one-man shop" profile, the small shop profile (2-4 employees), or the medium shop profile (5-9 employees). Large shops (10-49 employees) or Mega Companies (50+ employees) filled out the remaining 12% of respondents.



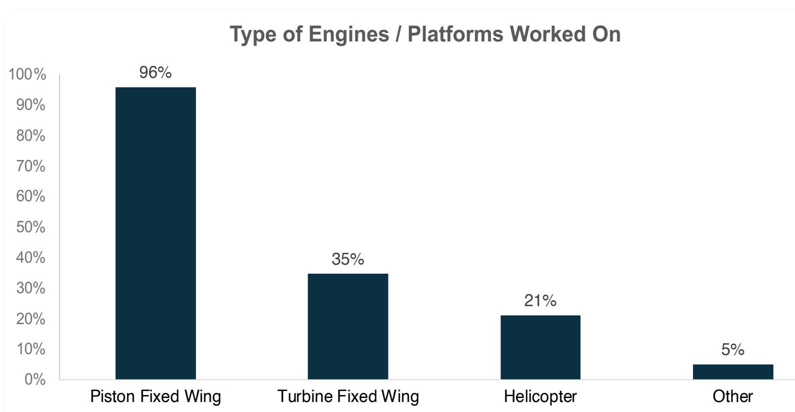
Volume

Respondents gave estimates to how many aircraft they work on (per year) vs. employee size (x axis). The larger the shop, the more aircraft (on average) they were able to work on—although some small shops did outperform.



Engine Types

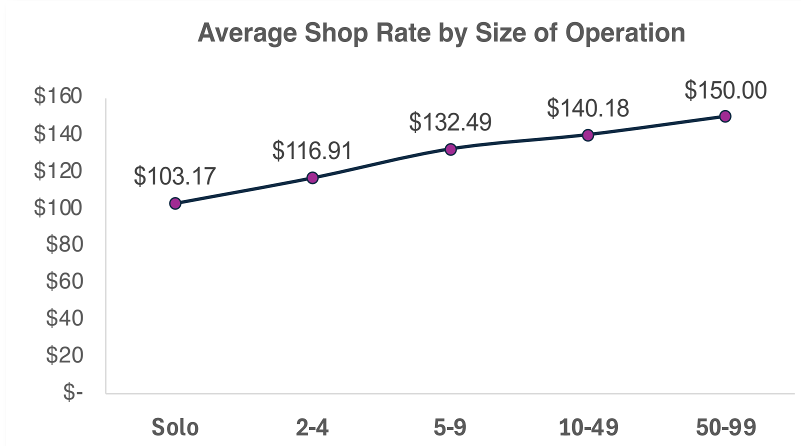
Almost all respondents (95%) worked on piston engines, with 35% working on fixed-wing turbine, 21% working on rotary wing turbine, and 5% selecting "Other".



Shop Rates

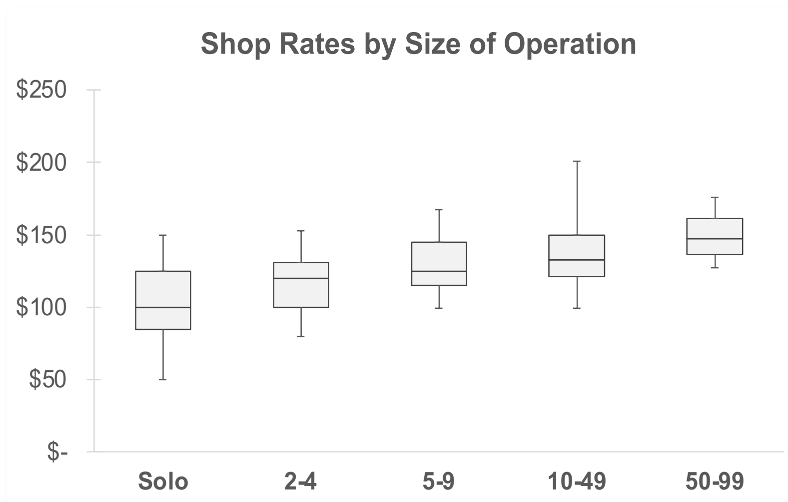
Average Hourly Shop Rates

Nearly all survey respondents shared shop rates, which tended to increase with the size of the operation (by # of A&Ps) and varied by region. The average rate for a solo shop was $103 / hour, increasing to $150 / hour for larger shop operations with larger overhead.



Shop Rate Variability

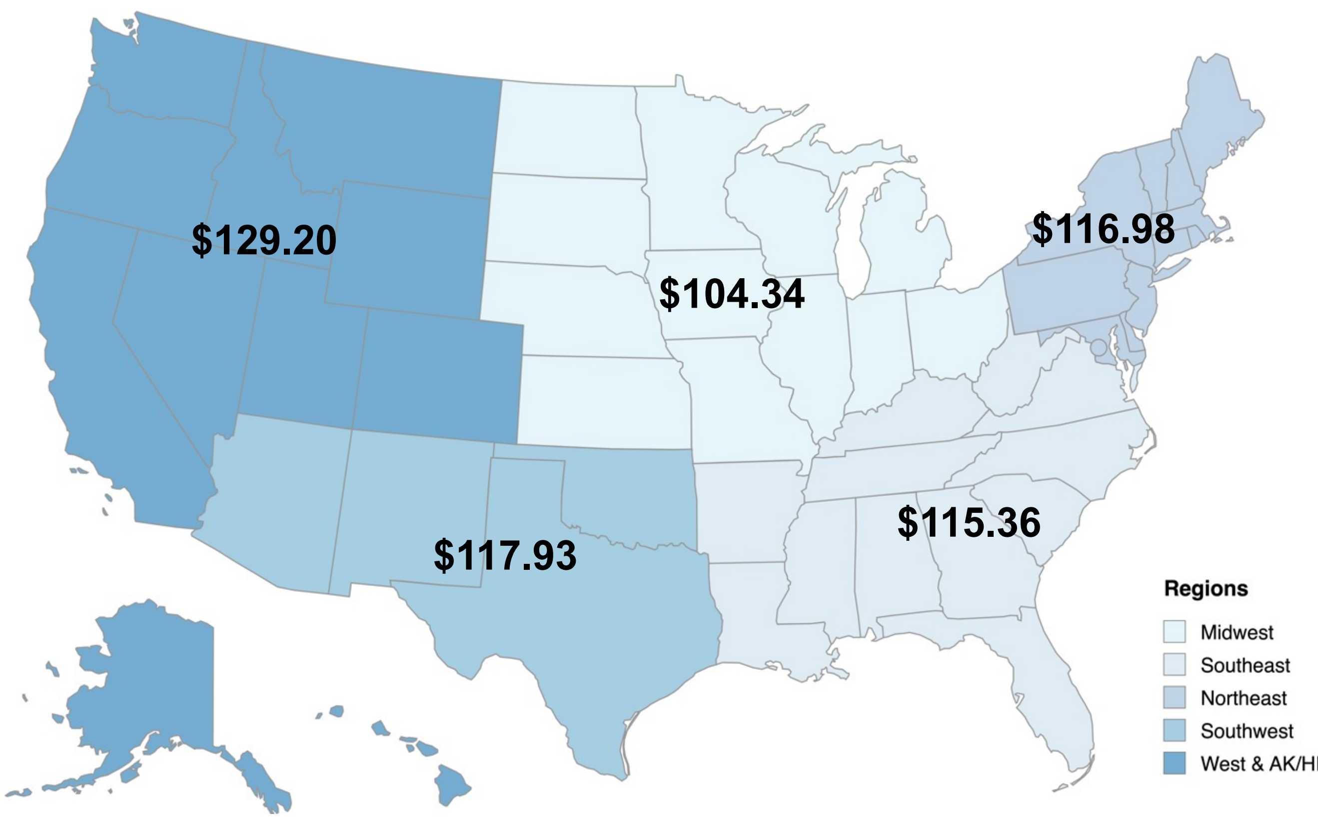
These "Box & Whiskers" plots measure variability across %-tiles, with each horizontal line (the box) measuring 25th %-tile, 50th %-tile, and 75th %-tiles, and the vertical lines showing 5th / 95th %-tiles. Shop rates tended to vary based on size, location, and nature of work (among other variables). Shop rates tended to trend upwards as size increased.



Shop Rates by Region

Average Shop Rate by Region

Beyond size, region was another key factor in determining shop rate, **although not the deciding factor**. Although average rates tended to increase in certain regions, we were able to find higher and lower rates pretty much everywhere. In any case, the regional distribution of average rates is shown here in the map below:



For those interested in how this translates into the cost of an annual, see our piece, "Brace for Wallet Turbulence—the Price of 172 Annual", where we break down the factors and variability involved in the pricing of a basic (inspection only) 172 annual. The variability in inspection detail—as measured by either hours or dollars—is staggering.


January 2026
www.airworthy.com