



**POST-PROCESSING SURVEY  
TRENDS REPORT 2026**

# INTRODUCTION

The 2026 Additive Post-Processing Survey marks the fifth edition of this study examining the often under-reported but increasingly critical post-processing stage of 3D printing or additive manufacturing (AM). As AM adoption continues to mature and shift toward higher-volume, production-oriented use cases, post-processing remains one of the most influential factors affecting scalability, cost, quality, workforce efficiency and environmental, health, and safety (EH&S) performance.

Building on insights gathered since 2019, this year's survey reflects input from AM industry professionals across a broad range of industries, company sizes, and additive manufacturing experience levels. The results both reinforce long-standing challenges and reveal notable shifts in priorities, investment drivers, and perceptions of readiness for scale.

A defining theme that has strengthened year-over-year, and is especially pronounced in the 2026 results, is the growing focus on **safety, sustainability, and regulatory responsibility within post-processing operations**. As organizations scale production, manual and chemically intensive post-processing methods are increasingly viewed not only as productivity bottlenecks, but also as sources of operator risk, waste generation, and environmental exposure. Respondents consistently highlight concerns around solvent use, waste management, and facility cleanliness, particularly among users of resin-based and FDM technologies.

The goal of this report is to provide actionable insight into how post-processing practices are evolving, where bottlenecks persist, and how organizations are planning to address them in the coming years.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to share their knowledge and experience.



# KEY TAKEAWAYS

## Post-Process Challenges

More than two-thirds of the respondents state that their **current post-processing methods are a challenge today or will be in the near future.**

The top two reported challenges are **Length of Time to Finish Parts** and **Consistency of Finished Parts**, this is consistent year-over-year since the survey's inception.

**Health, safety, and sustainability considerations continue to rise in importance,** with a growing percentage of respondents indicating that current post-processing methods pose challenges related to operator exposure, waste handling, and environmental compliance.

**Redirecting labor to higher-value activities** has jumped to the #2 reason to invest in post-processing, showing the largest year-over-year growth since 2022, while **Improving End Part Quality** remains #1.

Greater than 50% of the respondents have over **6 years of experience in AM.**

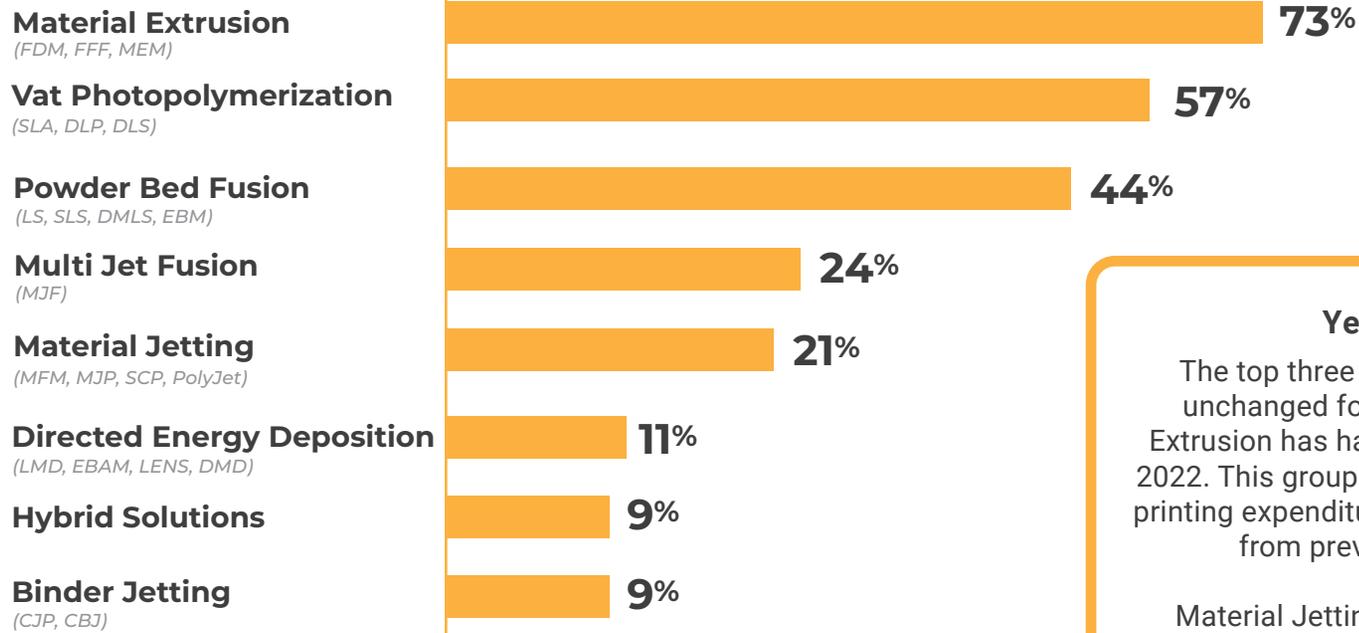


# 3D PRINT TECHNOLOGY TRENDS

In 2026, our respondents continue to report broad adoption of multiple additive manufacturing technologies, reinforcing a trend that has steadily intensified since 2019.

More than **70% of respondents report using two or more print technologies**, an increase compared to 2022 and consistent with the long-term trend toward multi-technology AM environments. Organizations operating multiple technologies consistently report higher post-processing complexity, higher labor dependency, and increased difficulty maintaining consistency and throughput.

**The top print technologies reported in 2026 have remained consistent since 2020.** Material Extrusion (FDM) remains the most widely used technology, with Vat Photopolymerization coming in second, and Powder Bed Fusion continues to rank third. Multi Jet Fusion (MJF) and Material Jetting (MFM, MJP, SCP and PolyJet) remain consistent in the fourth and fifth spot.



### Year-over-year insight:

The top three print technologies have remained unchanged for five consecutive years. Material Extrusion has had the largest increase, up 35% from 2022. This group is also reporting an increase in post-printing expenditures moving to 11-25% of AM budget, from previous years in the 0-9% range.

Material Jetting is the only print technology that showed a slight decrease from 2022, down 3%.



# POST-PROCESSING METHOD TRENDS

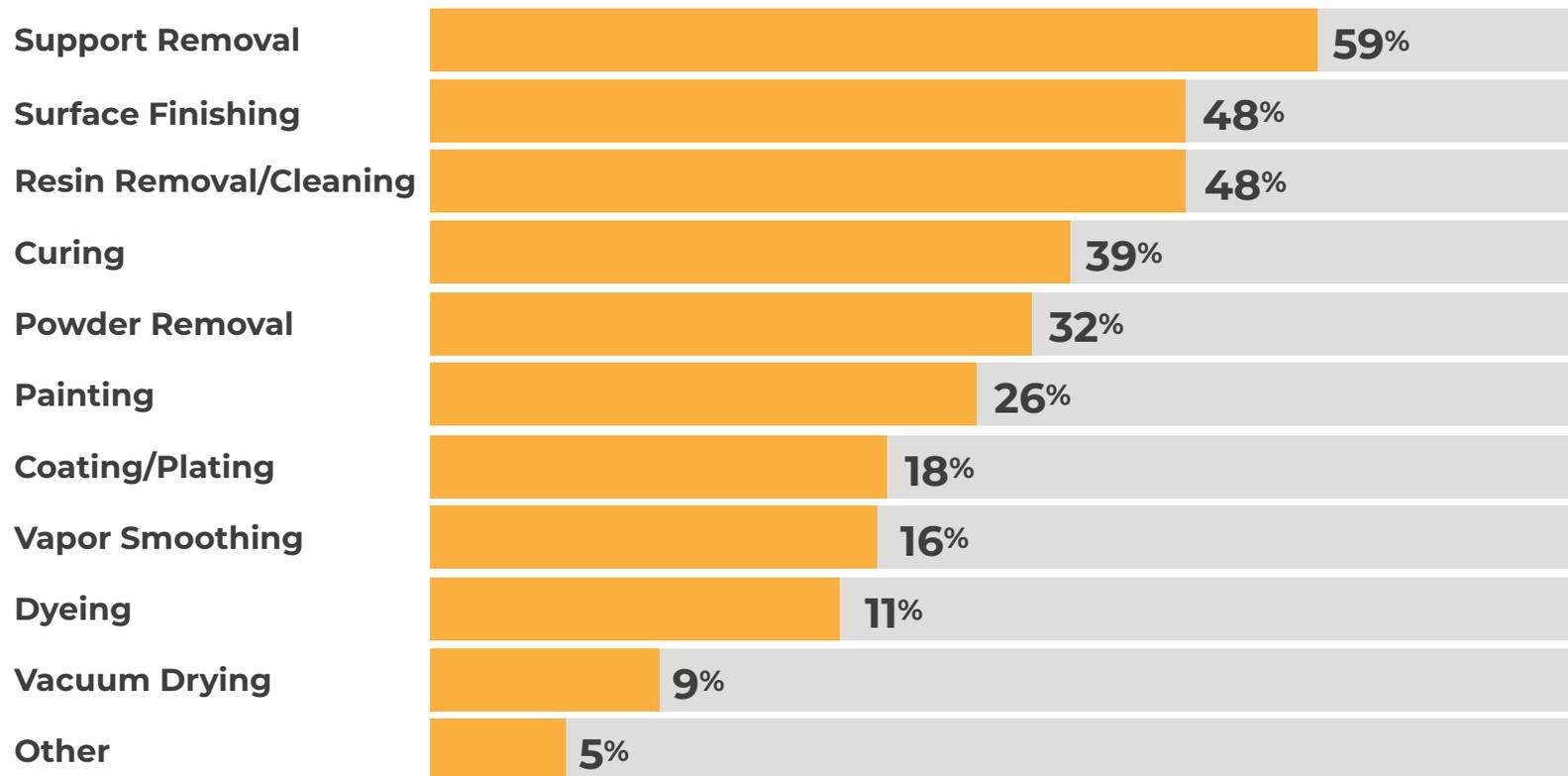
**Support Removal** continues to be the number one post-processing method since we started the survey in 2018.

Removal processes, which include support removal, resin removal, and powder removal, remain the backbone of post-processing workflows and where most bottlenecks in the process are reported.

**Surface Finishing** remains the most common secondary operation and is frequently required after removal processes are completed.

Material Jetting (includes MFM, MJP, SCP, PolyJet) users report spending an average of 71% of their time on **Support Removal**, this is an increase of over 5% from previous results.

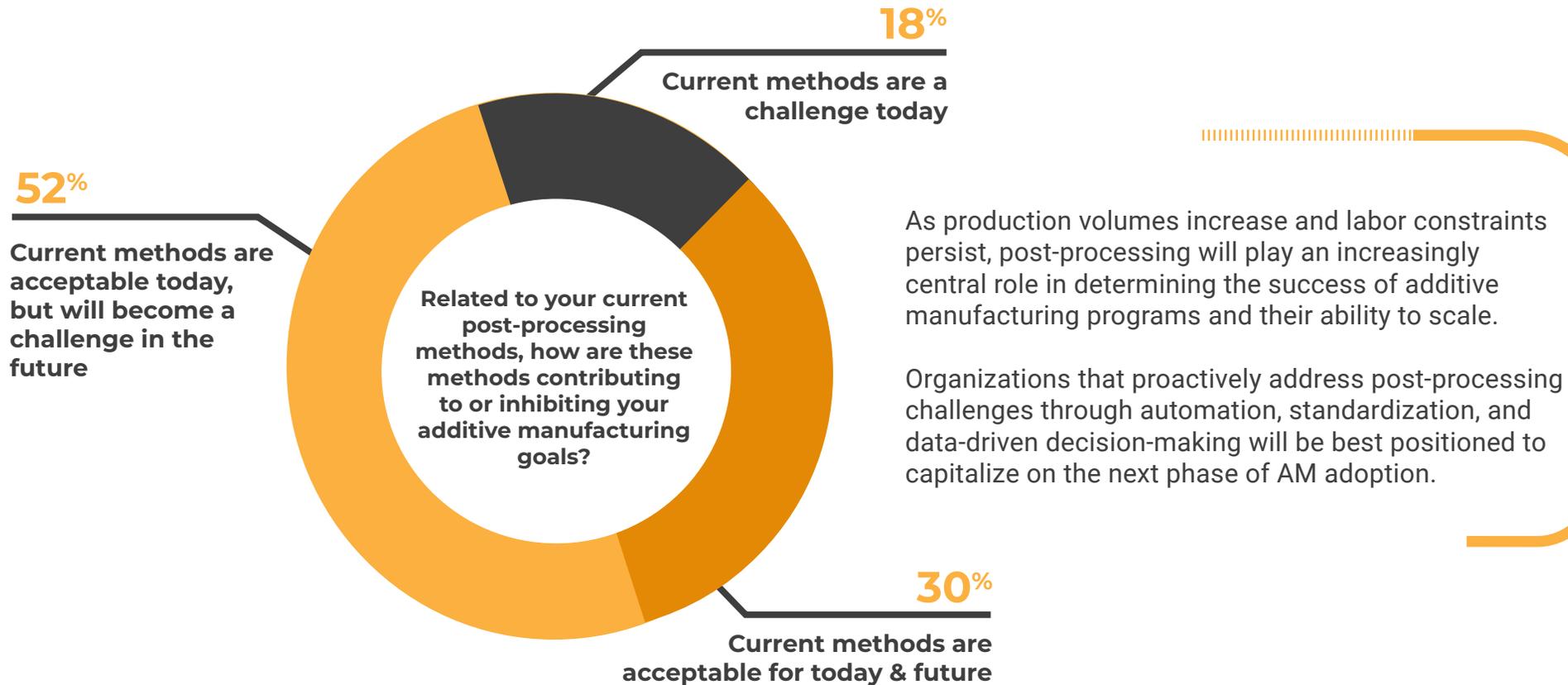
Vat Photopolymerization users' main focus remains on **Resin Removal/Cleaning**, this has grown from 33% in 2022 to 51% today, with growing concerns for health and safety considerations of using isopropyl alcohol for this process.



# POST-PROCESSING OPERATIONS & SCALABILITY

The 2026 survey results show that **52% of the users remain concerned about the long-term viability of their current post-processing workflows**. This is up from 44% in 2022.

A total of 70% of all respondents have concerns about their post-processing methods either today or in the future. These results reinforce a clear and consistent message: while additive manufacturing capabilities continue to advance, post-processing remains a limiting factor for scale.



# PRODUCTION vs. PROTOTYPING TRENDS

While prototyping remains a significant application for additive manufacturing, the trend toward production use continues. The chart below provides a snapshot of current additive manufacturing use, showing the distribution between prototyping and production today. Every print technology is anticipating increased production volumes over the next three years, with Material Extrusion expecting the largest move, going from 30% to 37%.

## Material Jetting (MFM, MJP, SCP, PolyJet)

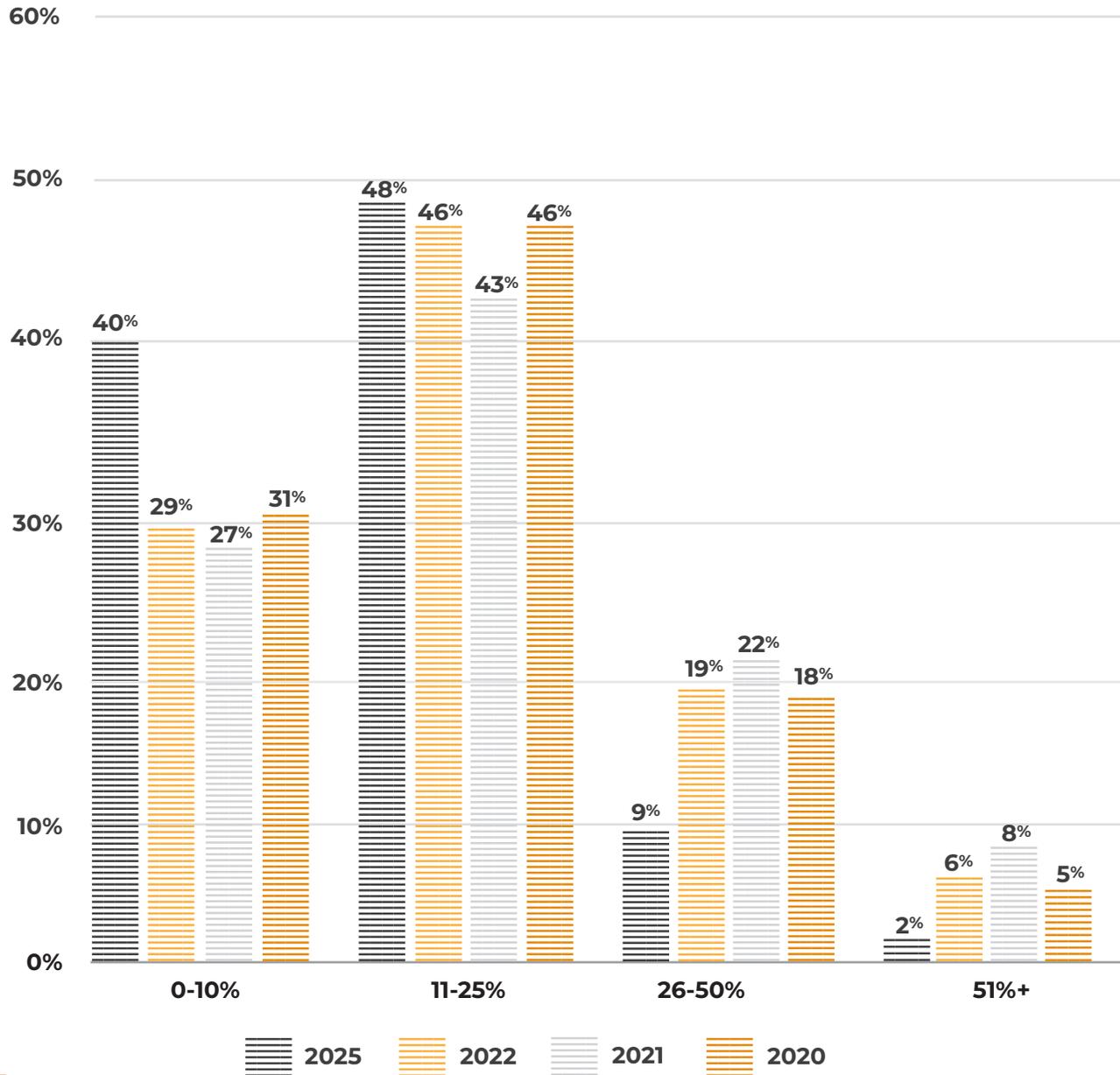
reported the highest percentage for prototyping, with the expectation it will stay that way for the next three years, moving Material Extrusion out of the top spot from 2022.

**Multi Jet Fusion (MJF)** has emerged as the current leader for Production applications surging to 49%, which is up from 37% in 2022. While respondents expect this growth to accelerate, 60% remain concerned about the consistency of finished parts.

**Material Extrusion** and **Vat Photopolymerization** continue to show the highest percentage use in the prototyping category at 59% and 53% respectively. For these users, the primary pain point is the length of time required to reach a finished part, signaling a demand for faster, more automated post-printing workflows.



# POST-PROCESSING EXPENDITURES



Post-processing continues to represent a meaningful portion of total additive manufacturing operational costs, including equipment, labor, consumables, etc.

While many organizations allocate 25% or less of their AM budget to post-processing, we noted the users that are spending over 26% on their post-printing expenditures are focused mainly on **Support Removal** and **Surface Finishing**. Their noted primary reason to invest would be to **Improve End Part Quality** and **Reduce Cycle Time**.

Notably, a persistent percentage of respondents indicate they do not currently track post-processing costs in detail, representing an ongoing opportunity for improved cost visibility and optimization.

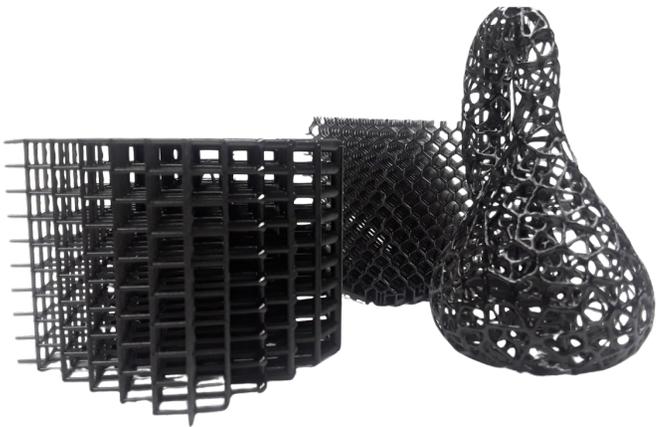


# POST-PROCESSING PAIN POINTS

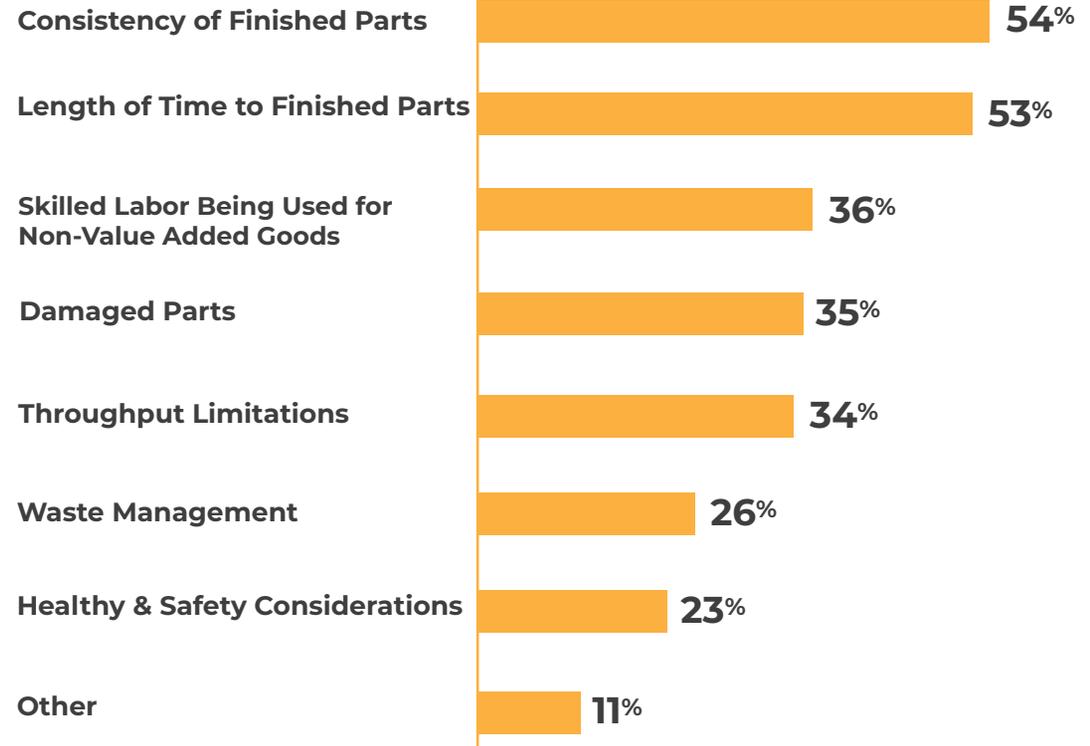
The **Consistency of Finished Parts** has emerged as the primary pain point, beating out **Length of Time to Finished Parts**, which has been the leader since 2019.

**Skilled Labor Being Used for Non-Value Added Goods** has consistently increased year-over-year and is reported as the third largest pain-point by users, this is up from the fourth spot in 2021. This is also the second primary consideration for companies to invest in automated post-processing.

**Damaged Parts** has shown the most dramatic increase, moving from the lowest concern in previous years up to the fourth place.



## PAIN POINTS BASED ON PRIMARY PRINT TECHNOLOGY



Additional concerns around health, safety, and waste management are growing in importance specifically in the medical and dental sectors. Users are reporting concerns around employee safety regarding exposure to hazardous materials and fine powder.



# KEY TAKEAWAYS: TOP 3 PRINT TECHNOLOGIES

While the number one reported post-printing pain point is **Length of Time to Finished Parts**, the analysis for each of the top three print technologies individually reveals unique opportunities to help relieve post-processing bottlenecks.

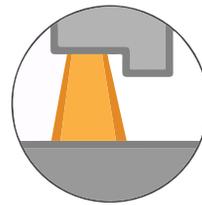


## MATERIAL EXTRUSION

FDM users consistently report their top three pain points are:

- > **Length of Time to Finished Parts**
- > **Consistency**
- > **Damaged Parts**

This technology is used across all industries from aerospace/defense to medical and automotive. Support removal is the post-process method that consumes the most time.

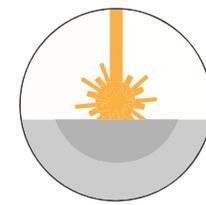


## VAT PHOTOPOLYMERIZATION

Resin-based print users report their top pain points, year-over-year, are consistently changing:

- > **Length of Time to Finished Parts**
- > **Consistency**
- > **Throughput Limitations**

71% of users are looking to improve their EH&S impact. This technology is used predominantly for prototyping, design, and development.



## POWDER BED FUSION

Powder Bed Fusion users are reporting their top pain points are consistent year-over-year, slightly changing in order of significance:

- > **Skilled Labor**
- > **Length of Time to Finished Parts**
- > **Consistency & Throughput Limitations** *\*Both tied for third*

These users also reported the primary consideration for investing in post-processing was to redirect labor to higher value activities.



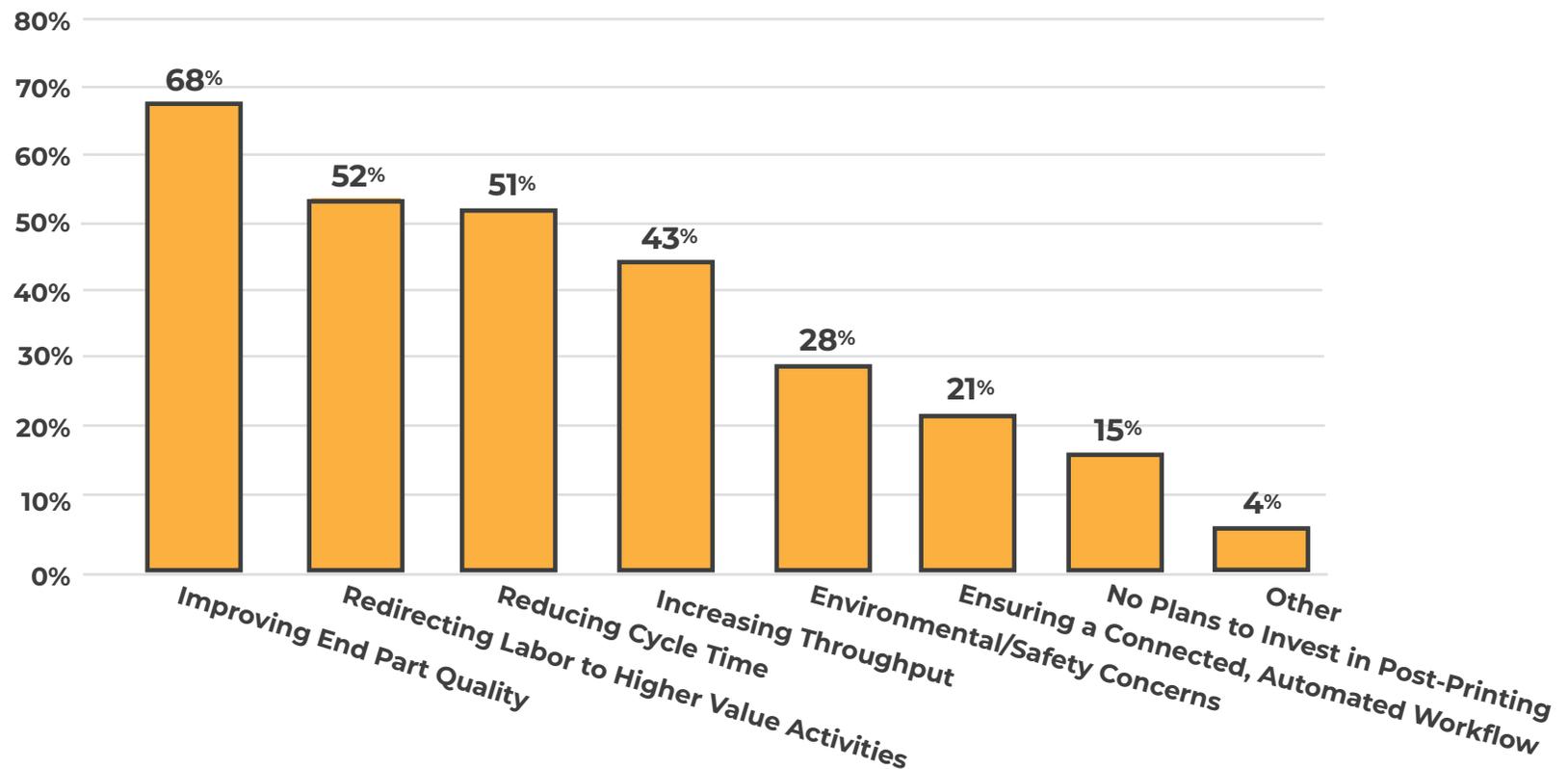
# POST-PROCESSING INVESTMENTS

The #1 investment consideration year-over-year has been **Improving End Part Quality**.

Surprisingly, the new second consideration this year is **Redirecting Labor to Higher Value Activities** at 52%, moving **Reducing Cycle Time** down to the third spot.

Skilled labor usage and labor availability concerns underscore the persistent gap between current manual processes and the need for automated and scalable AM workflows.

## INVESTMENT CONSIDERATIONS



# ENVIRONMENT, HEALTH & SAFETY CONCERNS

59% of respondents said they are looking to improve the health, safety, and environmental impact of their post-processing operations, showing an overall increase from the responses in 2022.

The most frequently cited concern involves the **direct exposure of operators to harmful substances** during post-processing activities. As post-processing scales, manual and open-air methods are increasingly viewed as unsustainable from a workforce health and safety perspective.

The second major category focuses on **waste generation, handling and disposal**, with users expressing concern over both volume and complexity. Showing that post-processing waste is both an environmental liability and a cost driver, particularly as production volumes increase.

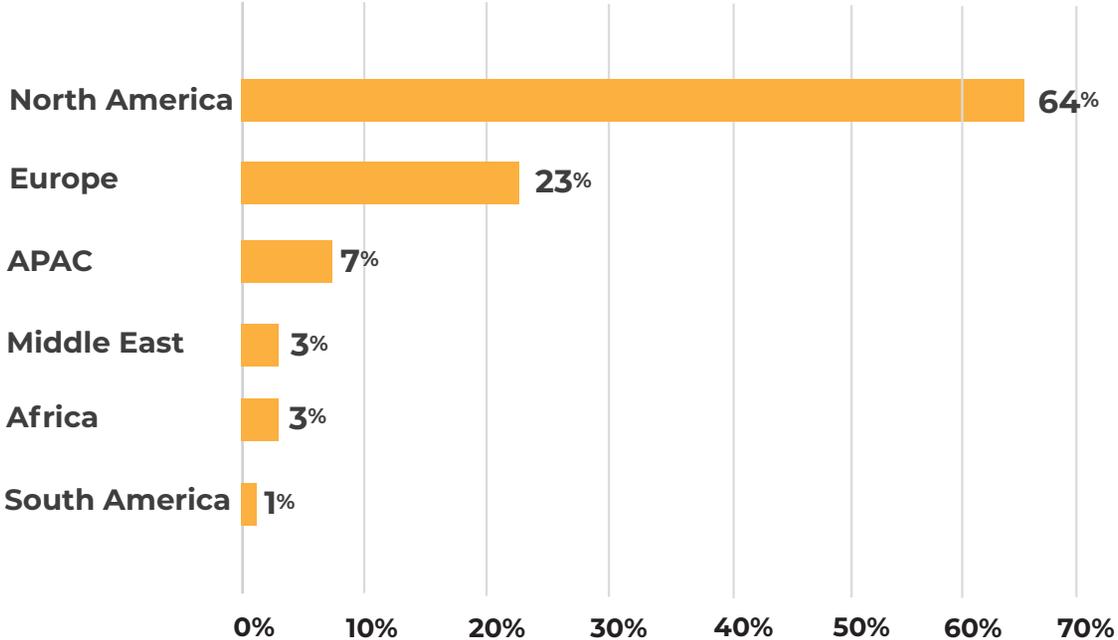




**APPENDIX:  
MEET OUR RESPONDENTS**



# DEMOGRAPHICS: COMPANIES



**32%** » Using for More Than 10 Years

**20%** » Using for 6-10 Years

**21%** » Using for 3-5 Years

**9%** » Using for 1-2 Years

**2%** » Using for Less Than 1 Year

**15%** » Investigating for Use

*\*These respondents were removed from the survey.*

### TOP 5 INDUSTRIES OF OUR RESPONDENTS:



Automotive



Medical



Manufacturing



Machinery

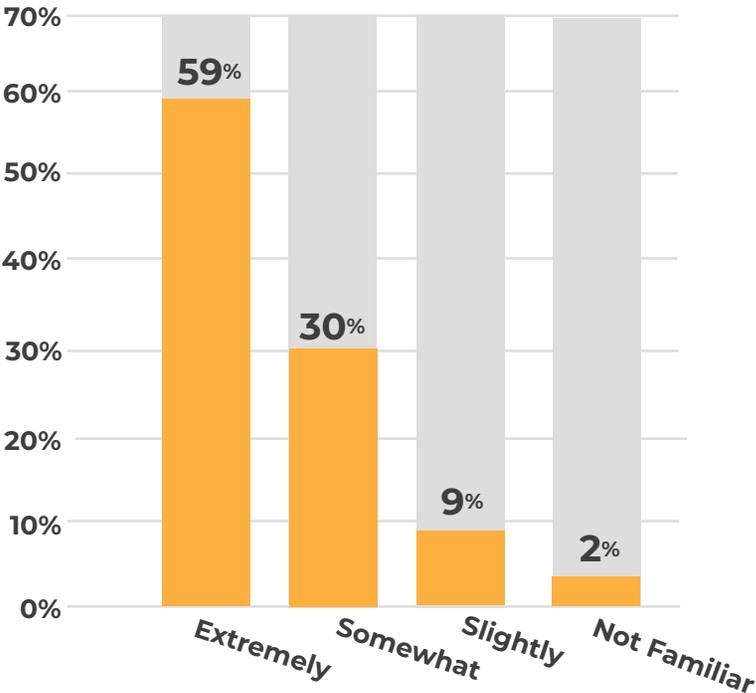


Aerospace/Defense

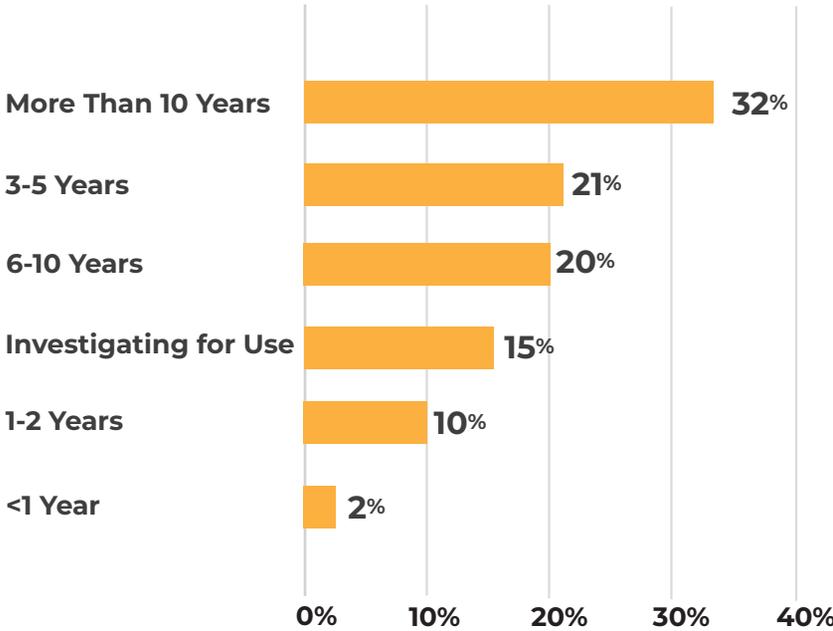


# DEMOGRAPHICS: INDIVIDUALS

How familiar are you with your company's additive manufacturing post-processing methods?



Approximately how many years have you been working with additive manufacturing?





# POSTPROCESS

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