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Managing risk, enabling trade

Atradius Payment Practices Barometer

B2B payment practices trends North America 2026

In this report

About the Atradius Payment Practices Barometer

The Atradius Payment Practices Barometer is an annual survey of business-to-business (B2B) payment practices in markets across the world.

Our survey gives you the opportunity to hear directly from businesses trading on credit with B2B customers about how they are coping with evolving trends in customer payment behaviour. Staying informed about these trends is vital because it helps to identify emerging shifts in customer payment habits, allowing businesses to address potential liquidity pressure and maintain smooth operations.

Businesses operating in – or planning to enter – the markets and industries covered by our survey can gain valuable insights from our reports, which also shed light on the challenges and risks companies anticipate in the coming months, as well as their expectations for future growth.

This report presents the survey results for **North America**.
Markets surveyed: Canada, Mexico and the United States.

The survey was conducted between the end of Q2 and mid Q3 2026. The findings should therefore be viewed with this context in mind.

B2B payment practices trends

North American firms balance trade credit growth and cash flow challenges

According to our survey data, businesses in North America conduct, on average, 43% of their business-to-business (B2B) sales on credit terms, while the remainder is paid upfront. This balance reflects a cautious but established use of trade credit across the region, where suppliers aim to support sales while maintaining control over cash flow exposure. Across sectors, SMEs are the most likely to extend credit to business customers, often using it as a competitive lever to attract and retain clients in fragmented markets. At country level, Canada shows the highest reliance on trade credit, with around half of sales on deferred terms, followed by the United States at 45%. Mexico records the lowest reliance, at close to 30%, pointing to a stronger preference for upfront payments and tighter credit practices in B2B trade. Trend data confirm that businesses across North America have increased their use of B2B trade credit in recent months, particularly those operating in the manufacturing and trade sectors, where supplier relationships and volume growth often depend on flexible payment arrangements.

B2B trade in North America largely relies on short credit cycles, with limited use of extended payment terms beyond standard practice. At just below three in five, businesses across the region report offering B2B payment terms within a standard 30-day credit window, which remains the prevailing structure across the region. Around half extend payment terms to between one and two months, while only very few allow payment periods beyond this threshold. Mid-sized and large manufacturing firms are more likely to rely on longer cycles, reflecting more complex supply chains and larger transaction values. This pattern is most visible among Mexican businesses, where some suppliers adopt extended terms to sustain commercial relationships. Trend data highlight that most North American suppliers have kept payment terms largely unchanged in recent months. Where changes have occurred, they have more often resulted in longer rather than shorter payment terms, particularly among trade companies and businesses in Mexico and the United States.

Around half of firms surveyed across the region report no meaningful change in the payment behaviour of business customers in recent months. Where shifts are seen, these tend to be very limited and mainly concentrated among larger firms in trade and construction. Despite this relative stability, delayed payments remain widespread across North American markets surveyed, affecting on average seven in ten firms across the region, particularly mid-sized firms across various sectors and businesses in Canada. These delays impact, on average, 23% of B2B receivables at regional level, placing a measurable strain on working capital cycles. Most suppliers attribute delayed payments primarily to customer liquidity constraints rather than disputes or administrative errors. Operational frictions, including banking delays and internal approval processes, also contribute to slower settlement times, though to a lesser degree.

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B2B payment practices trends

As most overdue B2B receivables are settled within one month of the due date, overall cash conversion cycles among North American suppliers typically extend to around two months from invoicing. This is reflected in data on Days Sales Outstanding (DSO). These settlement times help limit the ageing of receivables and may explain why bad debt is more often linked to customer inactivity or unreachability rather than to prolonged non-payment of large outstanding invoices. Nearly half of North American suppliers report bad debt below 1% of receivables, while fewer than one in four experience levels above 2%. This confirms that bad debt remains broadly contained across the region, although somewhat more pronounced among trade firms and at market level in Mexico.

Survey responses also show that the main impact of B2B customer payment risk on working capital is operational rather than structural. Around one third of suppliers report reduced cash availability, which in turn constrains investment decisions and affects day-to-day liquidity planning. Fewer businesses report higher capital costs or reduced financial flexibility, indicating that most firms absorb payment risk through operational adjustments rather than allowing it to evolve into sustained financial stress. This approach reflects a pragmatic management style, where liquidity preservation remains the priority.

In terms of risk mitigation, North American suppliers focus primarily on preventive and operational measures. Many focus on protecting cash flow at the outset of transactions by requesting advance payments or maintaining a share of sales on cash terms. Early payment incentives also play a key role in encouraging faster settlement. More structured risk transfer tools, such as credit insurance and bad debt reserves, are used by around one fifth of businesses, complementing internal credit management practices. More reactive strategies, including legal action or receivables financing, are used far less frequently. This reinforces the view that suppliers aim to address customer payment risk early in the transaction cycle, preventing it from developing into prolonged receivables ageing or broader financial strain.

Key insights on the next page

Key insights

North America

Payment behaviour of B2B customers (12 months)

Exposure clusters: reported level of B2B invoices paid late by percentage of respondents

0%
B2B invoices paid late
30%
Respondents

1% - 30%
B2B invoices paid late
41%
Respondents

31% - 60%
B2B invoices paid late
26%
Respondents

61% - 100%
B2B invoices paid late
3%
Respondents

Sample: all respondents in the surveyed market

Source: Atradius Payment Practices Barometer North America – 2026

Top 4 reasons B2B customers pay invoices late

% of respondents - multiple response

Customer cash flow issues
49%

Banking delays
36%

Complex payment process
17%

Internal approval delays
16%

Sample: all respondents in the surveyed market

Source: Atradius Payment Practices Barometer North America – 2026

Breakdown of past due payments

% of past due invoices by payment timing

<30 days
71%
Respondents

31-60 days
15%
Respondents

61-90 days
7%
Respondents

> 90 days
7%
Respondents

Sample: all respondents in the surveyed market

Source: Atradius Payment Practices Barometer North America – 2026

Reported bad debts

% of respondents - bad debts levels

<1% bad debts
62%
Respondents

1% - 2% bad debts
14%
Respondents

2% - 5% bad debts
14%
Respondents

> 5% bad debts
10%
Respondents

Sample: all respondents in the surveyed market

Source: Atradius Payment Practices Barometer North America – 2026

Top 4 impacts of customer payment risk on working capital

% of respondents - multiple response

Reduced liquidity headroom
31%

Limited investment
23%

Struggle with cash flow planning
21%

Delay payments to suppliers
17%

Sample: all respondents in the surveyed market

Source: Atradius Payment Practices Barometer North America – 2026

Looking ahead

B2B payment risk expected to become more uneven in the short term

North America’s economic backdrop remains resilient, but increasingly uneven. Slower growth, tighter financial conditions, and ongoing trade uncertainty appear to weigh on business liquidity. The United States still supports regional activity, while Canada and Mexico face more constrained growth amid ongoing inflation and uncertainty around the USMCA review. In this context, pressure on working capital is building.

However, as survey data show, this has not yet translated into widespread expectations of weaker B2B payment behaviour in the short term. Most sectors and company sizes expect B2B payment behaviour to remain unchanged in the months ahead, particularly among smaller service firms. At the same time, two in five companies anticipate faster payments from business customers, especially in the industrial sector. This suggests a gradual easing of liquidity pressures in more cyclical areas of the economy. Relatively fewer businesses expect customer payment behaviour to worsen, notably medium sized trading firms. Rather than a broad shift, payment risk is becoming more concentrated. Pockets of weakness are emerging, particularly among mid-sized firms and in segments where delays are expected to remain higher than average.

Expectations around insolvency risk reinforce this pattern. Most businesses expect risk to remain above normal levels, reflecting ongoing pressure rather than further sharp deterioration. However, more than one in four companies anticipate a rise in insolvencies, indicating that financial strain is still building in parts of the market. A smaller share remains uncertain, highlighting limited visibility. Profit expectations appear to be positive. Nearly half of businesses across North America expect margins to increase over the next months, while a similar share anticipates no change. Only a limited minority foresee a decline. This points to a broadly supportive profitability outlook, although gains are likely to remain uneven across sectors and firms. In the context of stable payment behaviour and elevated insolvency risk, this underlines a more selective operating environment. Businesses are likely to rely on cost control and pricing discipline to protect margins, even as underlying pressures remain.

Looking ahead, businesses clearly identify macroeconomic conditions as the main risk to payment behaviour. Economic slowdown leads by a wide margin, followed by inflation and cost pressures. Interest rates also continue to constrain financing and working capital for many firms. Other risks, including geopolitical instability, fraud, and supply chain disruption, play a secondary but still relevant role.

Overall, the findings point to a stable but fragile equilibrium. B2B payment behaviour remains closely tied to broader economic and financial conditions. While headline trends appear stable, underlying vulnerabilities persist. For businesses, this reinforces the need to monitor macroeconomic signals closely and focus on sector and counterparty specific risks.

Key insights on the next page

Key insights

North America

Top 3 risks businesses expect to shape B2B payments (next 12 months)

% of respondents - multiple response

#1	#2	#3
Economic slowdown	Inflation and cost pressures	Interest rates increases

Sample: all respondents in the surveyed market

Source: Atradius Payment Practices Barometer North America– 2026

Expected insolvency risk outlook (next 12 months)

% of respondents

Stay elevated	Rise further	Not sure
62%	27%	11%

Sample: all respondents in the surveyed market

Source: Atradius Payment Practices Barometer North America – 2026

North America's economy remains resilient, led by the US market, but growth is becoming less even across the region. Businesses continue to face pressure from ongoing inflation, tighter financing conditions, uncertainty around the USMCA review and energy price volatility linked to geopolitical tensions

Survey design

Sample overview – Total interviews = 662

Business sector	% of respondents
Industry	20%
Construction	20%
Trade	19%
Services	41%
TOTAL	**100%**

Business size	% of respondents
Micro <10 employees	32%
SME 10-49 employees	28%
SME 50-249 employees	20%
Large 250 or more employees	20%
TOTAL	**100%**

Survey methodology

We updated our panel to better reflect the market structure across activities and size classes. Additional details on the survey sample design can be found in the statistical appendix. For this edition, comparisons with previous reports are not possible, with annual variation captured only through respondent feedback.

Survey scope

Population: Companies in North Americawere surveyed, with interviews conducted with the appropriate contacts responsible for accounts receivable management.

Sample design: The Strategic Sampling Plan enabled analysis of North Americadata by sector and company size.

Selection process: Companies were contacted via an international internet panel, and respondents were screened for role and quota control at the start of the interview.

Sample: A total of 662 businesses participated, with quotas maintained across four company size categories.

Interview method: Computer-Assisted Web Interviews (CAWI), each lasting approximately 15 minutes.

Timing: The survey was conducted between the end of Q2 and mid Q3 2026. The findings should therefore be viewed with this context in mind.

This report and the regional statistical appendix form part of the 2026 Atradius Payment Practices Barometer series, both available for download in Knowledge and research

Interested in finding out more?

Please visit the Atradius website to access our latest publications. Click here to access our analysis of individual industry performance, detailed focus on country-specific and global economic concerns, insights into credit management issues, and information about protecting your receivables against payment default by customers.

To find out more about B2B receivables collection practices in North America and worldwide, please visit atradiuscollections.com.

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