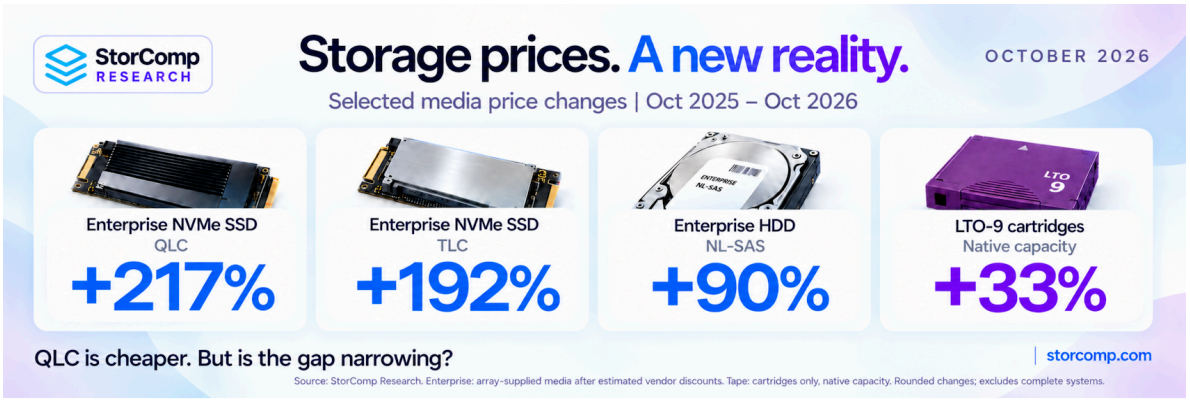
Market October 2026

Storage Media Prices Are Rising in 2026



Selected media price changes, October 2025 – October 2026.

Enterprise TLC is nearly 3× October 2025 levels in our data — and a May quote can already understate the budget. Timing matters more than the headline.

TL;DR

Enterprise TLC SSD pricing is almost three times its October 2025 level in our tracked data. QLC has risen even faster. Enterprise HDDs are up roughly 90%, while LTO-9 cartridges have increased by a third.

- Client SSD pricing reached its current level by May; enterprise flash and HDD kept climbing through October
- QLC remains cheaper than TLC, but its relative discount narrowed from ~31% to ~25%
- A May media-cost assumption can already understate an October budget
- Tape's $8/TB is cartridge media only — not a working archive

What we are comparing

The enterprise figures below represent indicative prices per raw TB for TLC SSDs, QLC SSDs and NL-SAS HDDs supplied for enterprise storage arrays, after estimated vendor discounts. They exclude the rest of the array.

Client SSD figures represent retail market pricing. LTO-9 figures cover cartridges only, using native capacity and excluding tape drives and libraries.

These are different purchasing channels. The comparison shows how pricing has moved within each category; it does not measure the cost of complete, interchangeable storage solutions.

Indicative media prices

Enterprise flash — indicative USD/TB

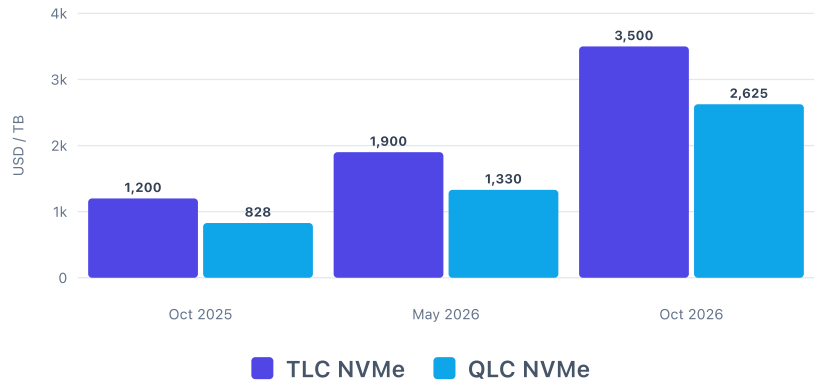


Figure 1. StorComp Research indicative enterprise array-media pricing (USD per raw TB) after estimated vendor discounts.

Category	Oct 2025	May 2026	Oct 2026	Year-on-year
Enterprise NVMe SSD — TLC	**$1,200**	**$1,900**	**$3,500**	**+191.7%**
Enterprise NVMe SSD — QLC	**$828**	**$1,330**	**$2,625**	**+217.0%**
Client NVMe SSD — M.2	$100	$250	$250	+150.0%
Enterprise NL-SAS HDD	$42	$48	$80	+90.5%
LTO-9 cartridge — native	$6	$6	$8	+33.3%

Indicative USD/TB. Sources: StorComp Research; client SSD pricing based on PCPartPicker price trends.

Client SSD, HDD and tape — indicative USD/TB

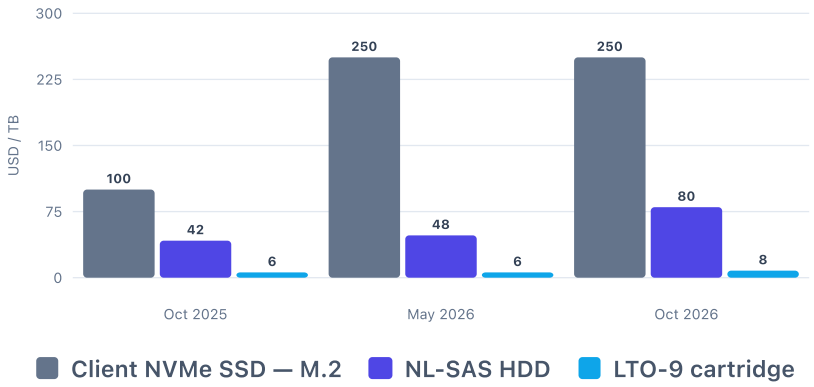


Figure 2. Lower absolute scale (0–300). Client SSD flattened after May; HDD nearly doubled; LTO-9 rose by a third.

1. QLC is cheaper. It has not been protected from price increases.

QLC remains below TLC in our data, but its price rose faster: 217% versus 192% over the year.

Its relative discount to TLC narrowed from 31% in October 2025 to 25% in October 2026. At the same time, the absolute difference widened from $372 to $875 per TB.

- QLC offers a larger dollar saving per TB today
- ...while providing a smaller percentage discount against TLC
- At 100 TB raw media, the October figures imply an $87,500 difference in media cost alone

Choosing QLC should therefore start with workload suitability and an actual quote. The label alone does not settle the economics.

2. A May quote can already be a poor planning baseline.

Between May and October 2026, our indicative prices changed by:

Category	May → Oct change
TLC enterprise SSD	+84.2%
QLC enterprise SSD	+97.4%
Enterprise NL-SAS HDD	+66.7%
LTO-9 cartridges	+33.3%
Client SSD (sampled)	Unchanged

For enterprise QLC, the October figure is nearly double the May figure. This does not mean every customer quote increased by the same percentage. It does mean that carrying an old media-cost assumption into a new proposal can materially understate the budget.

A practical response: refresh pricing before committing a budget, and make quote validity explicit.

3. HDD remains inexpensive relative to enterprise flash.

Enterprise NL-SAS HDD pricing rose from $42 to $80 per TB. At 1 PB of raw media capacity, that is an increase from $42,000 to $80,000 — an additional $38,000 before the rest of the storage system is considered.

The May-to-October increase accounts for $32,000 of that difference. Capacity-heavy projects deserve fresh pricing just as much as performance-heavy projects.

4. Tape's $8/TB is attractive. It is not the price of a working archive.

LTO-9 shows the smallest annual increase in this comparison, at 33.3%. Its October price translates to approximately $144 for an 18 TB native-capacity cartridge.

For an organisation with existing tape infrastructure and available operating capacity, cartridge pricing is highly relevant to the cost of expanding an archive. For a new deployment, the calculation must also include the library, drives, software, support and operations.

Tape's low media cost is a reason to evaluate it for suitable data. It is not, by itself, a complete business case.

5. Consumer SSD pricing is a weak shortcut for an enterprise budget.

The client SSD figure is unchanged between May and October, while both enterprise flash categories rose sharply. In this dataset, those markets did not move together over that period. A retail SSD price check would therefore have missed the change in enterprise media pricing.

These figures also do not isolate vendor margin or manufacturing cost. Enterprise array media and client SSDs differ in product characteristics, qualification and commercial terms.

What this means for your next storage proposal

- Refresh the media assumptions behind the proposal, especially if they date back to May or earlier
- Keep raw capacity separate from usable and effective capacity
- Check whether the proposed workload needs TLC, can use QLC, or belongs on a lower-cost tier
- Ask how much of the proposed flash capacity actually needs to be on flash

As prices rise, placing data on the appropriate storage tier becomes more financially consequential. That decision still needs to account for access requirements, migration effort and operating costs.

At StorComp, we bring indicative pricing together with specifications, workload-based performance and technical strengths and limitations to help teams assess those choices.

Methodology

Three pricing snapshots are shown, rather than a continuous market index. Enterprise prices reflect StorComp Research estimates for array-supplied media after approximate vendor discounts; actual quotes vary by vendor, model, capacity, configuration and commercial terms. Client SSD figures reflect the supplied PCPartPicker-based observations. Tape figures cover LTO-9 cartridges only. Capacity is raw/native, with no assumed compression or deduplication. Percentage changes are calculated from the displayed values. This is a media acquisition-price comparison, not a total cost of ownership study.

> Based on StorComp research from public and market-observed sources. Actual results and pricing may vary by configuration, workload, region, discounts and support terms.

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