

2025 CONSUMER HOUSING TRENDS REPORT

FOR AGENTS

A data-driven look at how buyers and sellers feel about researching, hiring, and working with agents.



SPONSORS:

Mark Edwards, Jill Ellis, Rebecca Merget

DATA & ANALYSES:

Manny Garcia and Edward Berchick, ZG Population Science

CONTRIBUTORS:

Isabel Foley, Graeme Horton, Lauren Lowe, Ian Port, Ariel Smith,
Jordan Teicher, Shelby West, Jackie Youngs, Sanjit Dosanjh

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FOREWORD

The real estate market is always evolving, but over the last year, the changes seemed to be as significant as ever:

Mortgage rates fluctuated, home prices neared all-time highs, and industry policies were rewritten. Against that backdrop, agents still had a job to do as millions of buyers and sellers looked to make a move.

To help you stay ahead of industry changes and economic uncertainty, Zillow created our first Consumer Housing Trends Report for Agents. In 2024, we surveyed more than 5,000 buyers and 6,200 sellers to capture their attitudes, preferences, and

recent activity. How do they find agents? What services do they value most? How do they prefer to communicate? And what do they think about commissions?

You'll find answers to all of these questions and more in our report. Start reading to see what you can do to add value and grow your business.

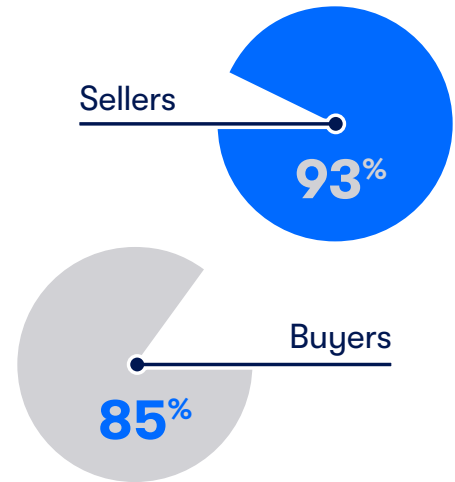


KEY TAKEAWAYS

1

Nearly all buyers and sellers work with agents

Even though DIY paths exist, 93% of sellers and 85% of buyers used an agent at some point during their journey.



47%
Buyers

59%
Sellers

2

Many buyers and sellers hire the first agent they contact

47% of buyers and 59% of sellers ultimately hired the first agent they contacted — a sign that many consumers chose an agent they had worked with previously.

3

Digital tools benefit both agents and clients

78% of sellers said they're more likely to hire an agent who offers hi-res photography, and 71% said they're more likely to hire someone providing virtual tours and/or interactive floor plans. For good reason: Buyer interest in digital tools like 3D and virtual tours has increased since 2019.

78%



71%



4

Buyers want to text agents

53% of buyers who worked with an agent preferred to communicate via text message or messenger app, compared to just 33% who preferred phone calls.

53%

prefer text messages
or a messenger app.

33%

prefer phone calls.



5

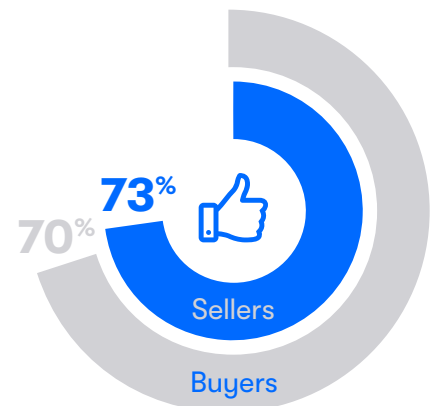
Listing agents have an opportunity to set expectations with sellers

Even though home prices have increased in recent years, many sellers appear to be doing more work to successfully sell. Today's typical seller holds two open houses and has to leave their home twice for private showings. Plus, 50% of sellers say they had an offer fall through.

6

Most clients find agent commissions fair

Despite speculation and uncertainty around how the NAR settlement would affect agent compensation, 73% of sellers and 70% of buyers found their agent's commission fair; 7% of sellers and 9% of buyers even said commissions were too low.



NOTABLE YEAR-OVER-YEAR CHANGES

During a year full of uncertainty in the real estate market, consumers reported some big changes impacting everything from how they find agents to how they approach offers. Here are some important differences to keep an eye on.

Typical increase in a seller's Zillow Home Value Index: +\$21,000

+2 Years

Typical buyer age

+2% Points

Share of sellers who had to sell their home quickly

+3% Points

Share of sellers who discovered their agent from a referral

+4% Points

Share of buyers more likely to view a home if the listing included a floor plan they liked

-6% Points

Share of first-time buyers

-8% Points

Share of sellers who temporarily took their home off the market

-11% Points

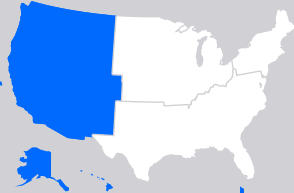
Share of sellers who received an offer that waived the inspection

-16% Points

Share of sellers who also bought a home

REGIONAL INSIGHTS

Every buyer and seller has a unique story, but during the course of our research, some interesting regional trends emerged. Here are a few details to keep in mind depending on where you work.



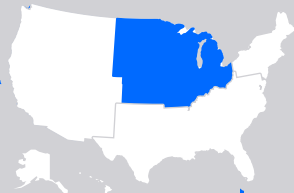
West

- Sellers are most likely to hire an agent who **offers high-resolution photography**
- Buyers are **least likely to prefer having phone calls** with their agent



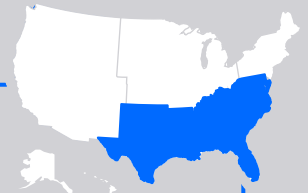
Northeast

- Prospective buyers are most likely to hire an agent who's **active on social media**
- Sellers are **least likely** to discover their agent on a **real estate website or app**



Midwest

- Buyers are most likely to **prefer texting with their agent**
- Sellers are **least likely to negotiate** with their agent for **a lower commission**



South

- Buyers are most likely to **prefer having phone calls** with their agent
- Sellers are most likely to say **a trustworthy first impression** from their agent is **highly important**

BUYER PREFERENCES

02

Texting skills and a strong online presence are crucial for agents. Plus, the importance of paperwork.



HOW MANY AGENTS DO BUYERS CONTACT?

Recent buyers who contacted an agent didn't shop around much before hiring.

Seventy-one percent only approached one or two agents before deciding whom to work with, and 47% hired the first agent they contacted. First-time buyers were slightly more likely to talk to multiple options: 35% reached out to 3 or more agents.

Notably, 52% of repeat buyers — who may already have a go-to agent — hired the first one they spoke with.

But in the next section, let's unpack other key factors that influence how buyers research agents before they're ready to connect with someone.

Among buyers who contacted at least 1 agent:

First-time buyer

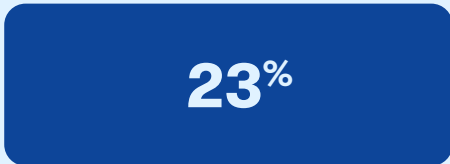
Repeat buyer



3+ agents contacted

2 agents contacted

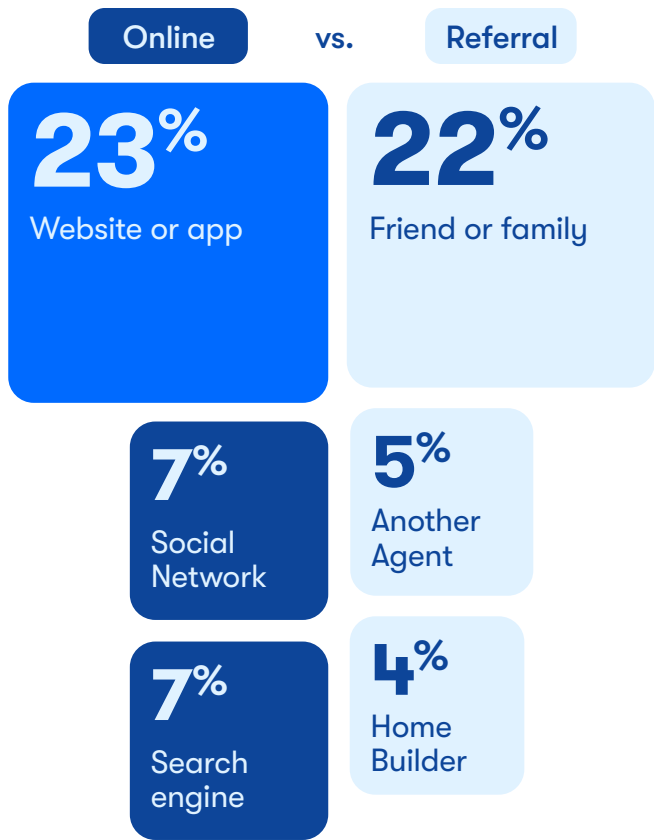
1 agent contacted



HOW DO BUYERS DISCOVER THEIR AGENT?



Buyers typically discover the agent they hire two ways: online or from a referral.



Finding an agent online through a real estate website or app (23%), social network (7%), or search engine (7%) was the most popular resource for buyers, edging out referrals from friends and family (22%), another agent (5%), or a home builder (4%).

The number of buyers relying on digital research emphasizes how important it is for agents to maintain a strong online presence. Even though a majority of buyers only contacted one or two agents before deciding who to hire, this data suggests many are conducting research online prior to reaching out. While referrals may be hard to anticipate, agents can still help themselves by keeping online profiles and social handles up to date, as well as requesting online reviews from existing clients.

HOW BUYERS FIRST FOUND THEIR AGENT



WHY DON'T SOME BUYERS USE AN AGENT?

The overwhelming majority of buyers (85%) we surveyed used an agent.

Among the small share of buyers who completed a transaction without an agent, 42% said they already knew the seller personally and 36% did not want to pay a commission. Another common reason: 11% had a negative experience with an agent in the past.



Among buyers who completed a transaction without an agent:

42%

already knew the seller personally.

36%

did not want to pay a commission.

11%

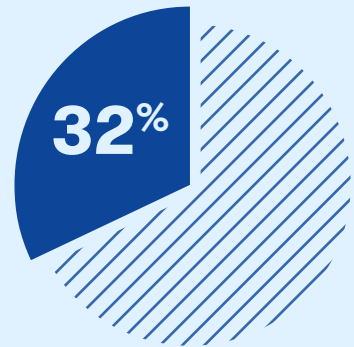
had a negative experience.

Prospective buyers, who hadn't purchased a home yet by the time we surveyed them, offered more insights into roadblocks agents may encounter.

Roughly three out of four (74%) prospective buyers had at least one apprehension about using an agent. Common roadblocks included worrying an agent would be too expensive (32%) and not understanding commissions (16%).

74%

of prospective buyers had **at least one apprehension** about using an agent.



worried an agent would be **too expensive**



did **not understand** commissions

For potential leads who seem undecided, agents may want to disarm concerns over costs by being more upfront about commissions. Perhaps agents can quantify the value they bring throughout the buying process, or explain the time commitment and resources they use to help a buyer find a home, complete the transaction, and ultimately move in. Since many buyers have concerns about commissions, agents who proactively address these roadblocks could gain an edge.

DO AGENTS BENEFIT FROM BEING ACTIVE ON SOCIAL MEDIA?



To TikTok or not to TikTok...

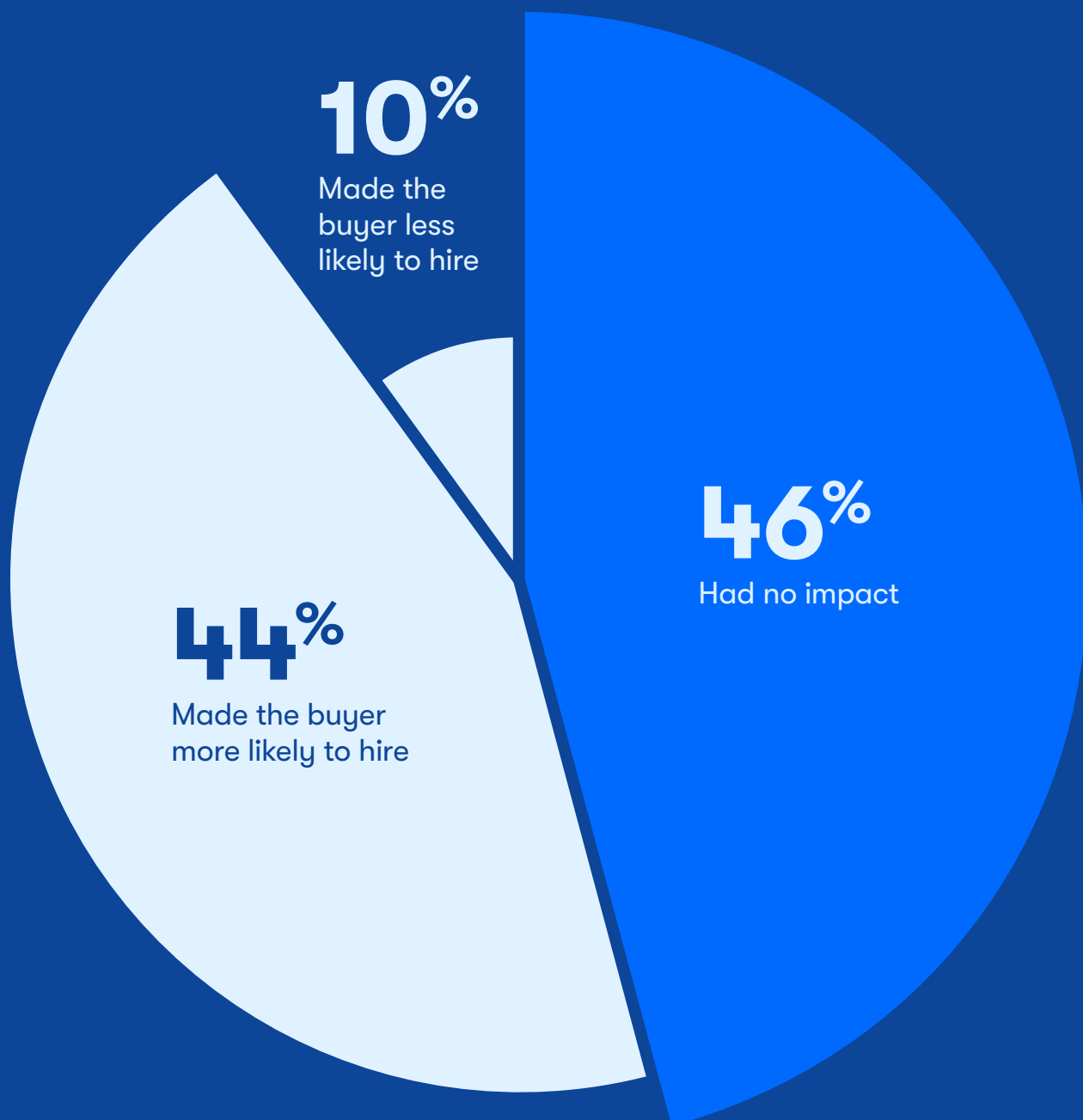
That might seem like a silly question, but we often hear agents ask about the effectiveness of social media. Since 7% of buyers who used an agent first discovered the person they wound up hiring on a social network, it makes sense to consider the broader impact of these platforms.

Among prospective buyers, **44% said they're more likely to hire an agent active on social media.** (Meanwhile, 46% claimed it doesn't impact their hiring choice.) The data diverges along generational lines: **51% of millennials**

said they're more likely to hire someone active on social media compared to just 18% of Baby Boomer and Silent Generation buyers.

Agents don't have to be viral sensations to benefit from social media, given that almost half of buyers said it had no impact on who they would hire. For most generations, it seems that social networks give agents a chance to show off their personality. And on networks like TikTok and Instagram, video content can entice people to click through to agent profiles and websites for more information.

HOW AN AGENT'S SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITY IMPACTED THE CHANCES A PROSPECTIVE BUYER WOULD HIRE THEM



WHAT SERVICES DO BUYERS WANT FROM THEIR AGENT?

If agents want to master any aspects of their job, offer strategies and paperwork are good places to start.

Buyers who used an agent were most likely to say that help with offer details (58%) and organizing and submitting paperwork (56%) were among the three most valuable services their agent provided.

Promoting these services to potential clients may be tricky — paperwork isn't the most glamorous part of real estate. But the data shows that buyers care about a lot more than just finding homes to tour. This could help guide how agents market themselves to potential clients — impacting everything from high-level conversations about the value an agent brings, all the way down to smaller decisions about what messages to highlight on a website or in marketing materials.

58%

value help with offer details.

56%

value help organizing and submitting paperwork.



RANKED AMONG TOP 3 MOST VALUABLE AGENT SERVICES

58%

Helped me decide the details of my offer(s)

56%

Organized and submitted paperwork

46%

Identified homes to consider

44%

Led contract negotiations

42%

Took me on private home tours

27%

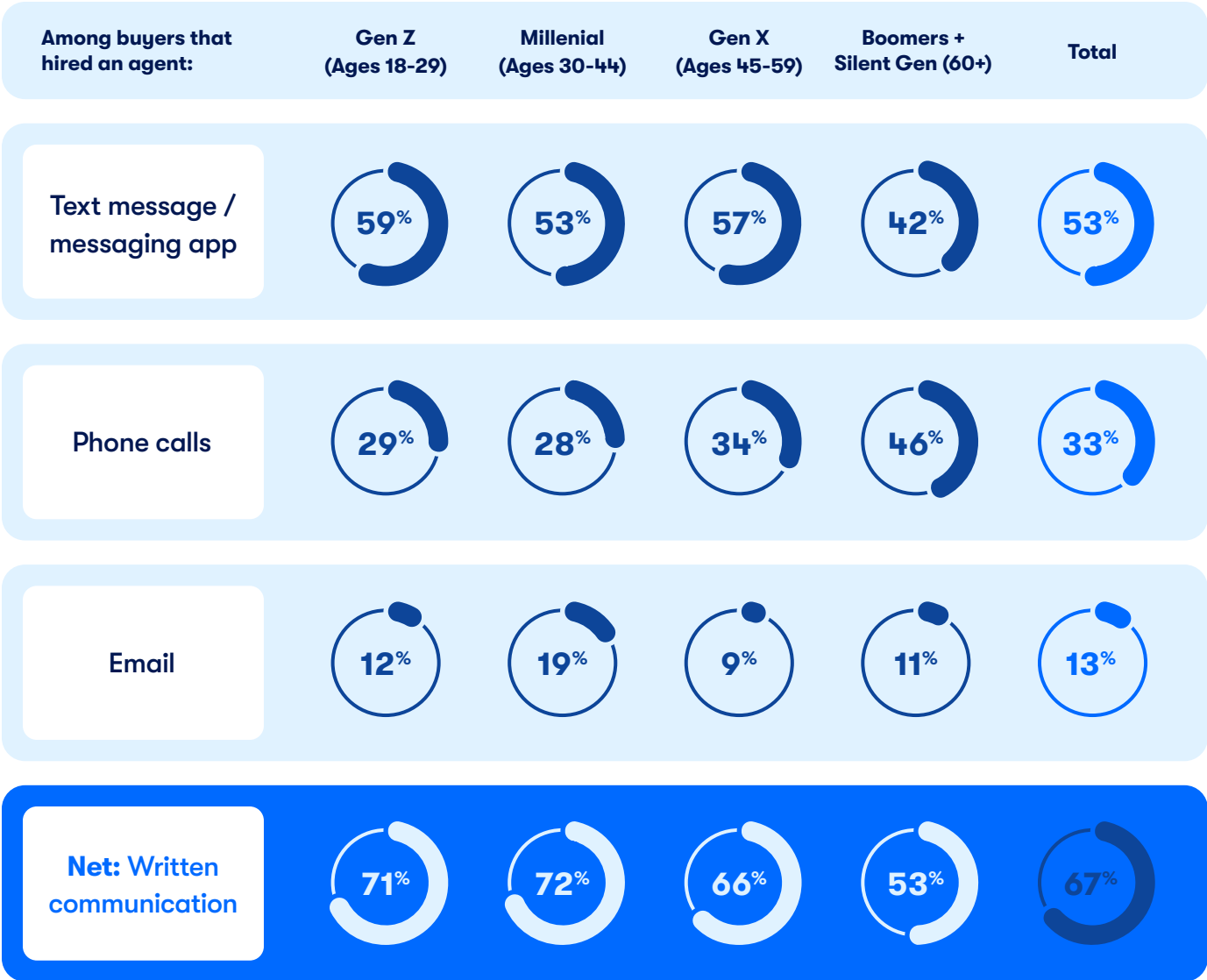
Referred me to a lender

27%

Referred me to an inspector

HOW DO BUYERS PREFER TO COMMUNICATE?

Start stretching out those fingers. When it comes to communicating, **53% of buyers who worked with an agent preferred to text or use a messenger app**, while only 33% wanted to speak on the phone. When you add in buyers who liked sending email (13%), two-thirds preferred written communication with their agent over a traditional phone call.

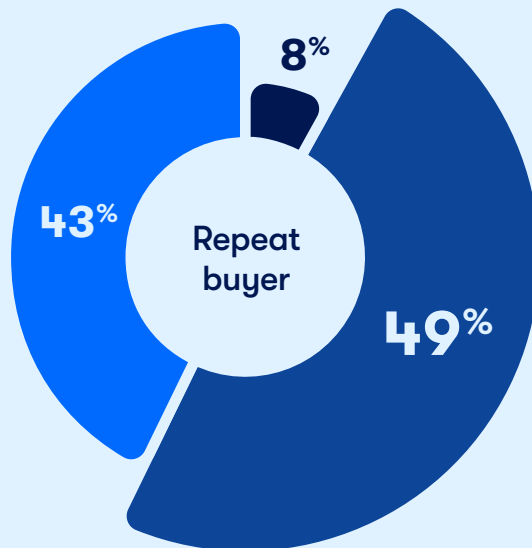
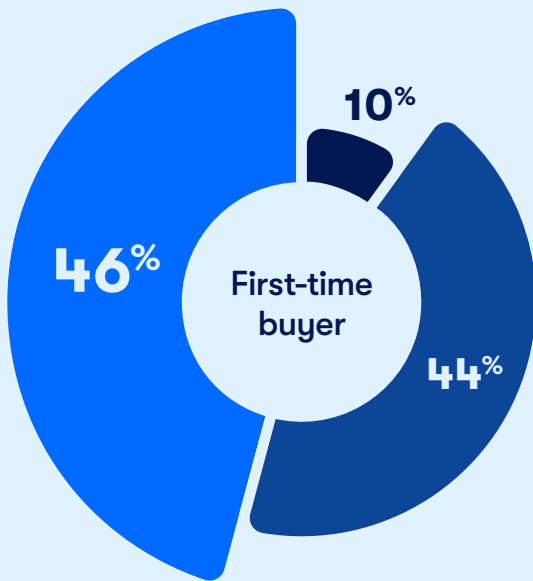




Given that agents spend a lot of time traveling outside of an office, this preference could be a positive trend that helps them manage clients throughout the day without needing to interrupt showings to pick up the phone. However, responsiveness still matters to many buyers: 44% said they were in contact with their agent daily, while 47% communicated weekly.

Buyers who hired an agent reported communicating with them:

- Daily
- Weekly
- Every couple of weeks or less



DO BUYERS FIND AGENT COMMISSIONS FAIR?

With the National Association of Realtors® (“NAR”) lawsuit settlement and policy changes generating headlines, agent compensation has been a key topic throughout the industry. In our survey, 70% of buyers believed their agent’s commission was fair, and 9% even said it was too low.

This was the first year we asked buyers about the fairness of agent commissions. As consumers and agents get used to navigating the new policies, we plan to revisit this topic in future reports to see if attitudes change over time.

For the service provided, buyers said their agent’s commission was:

70%

Fair

21%

Too high

9%

Too low

HOW OFTEN DO BUYERS GET A COMMISSION REBATE?

Following NAR settlement changes, new buyers may be more aware they're able to negotiate an agent's commission moving forward. But prior to the policy changes taking effect in August, our survey showed that only 21% of buyers claimed to have received a rebate on their agent's commission. Millennials were most likely to get a rebate (28%), while Baby Boomers and Silent Generation buyers were least likely (14%).

Among the small share of buyers who successfully negotiated this way, most rebates were less than a quarter of a buyer agent's commission. For a 3% rate, that

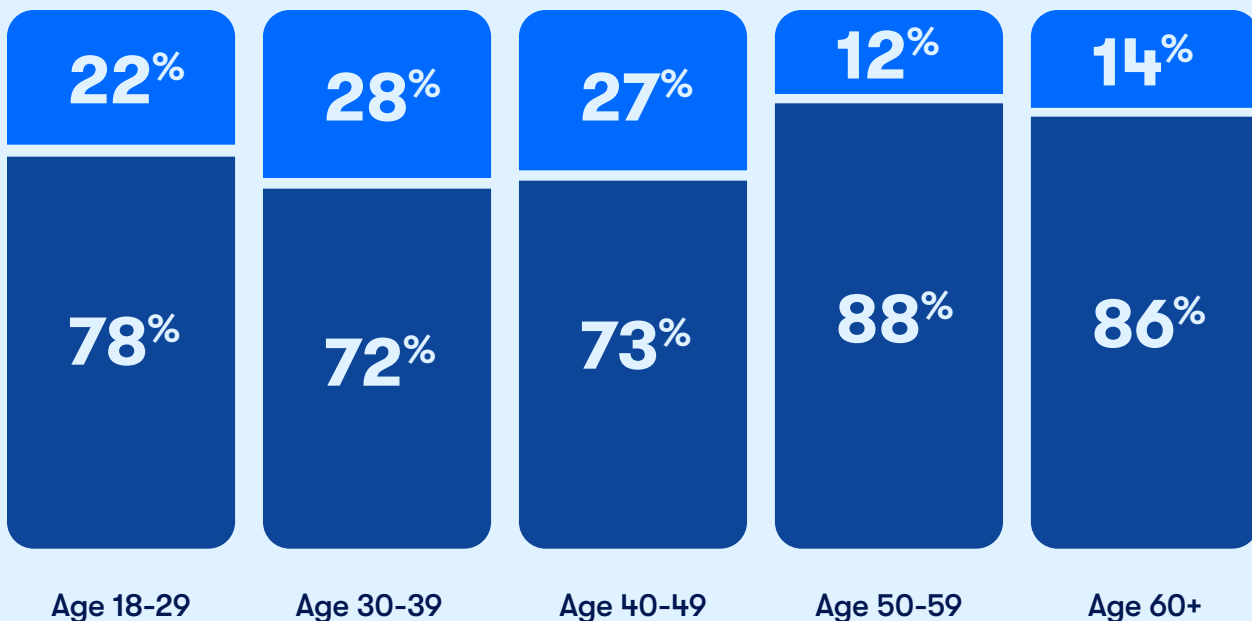
amounts to about \$2,000 for the typically priced home.

While agents may not love the idea of rebates, there is a silver lining: Buyers who received a commission rebate typically bought more expensive homes than buyers who didn't.

That includes 30% of buyers who spent \$500,000 or more for their home and secured a rebate. Buyers who received one were also more likely to say their agent's commission was fair.

Among buyers who hired an agent:

- Received a rebate
- Did not receive a rebate



SELLER PREFERENCES

03

Sellers want to find trustworthy, responsive agents. There's also big demand for digital tools.



WHY DO SELLERS LIST THEIR HOME?

Every seller has a story.

An essential part of an agent's job is to learn that story quickly so they can hone in on a seller's goals. Are they moving quickly? Downsizing? Dealing with a tricky family situation?

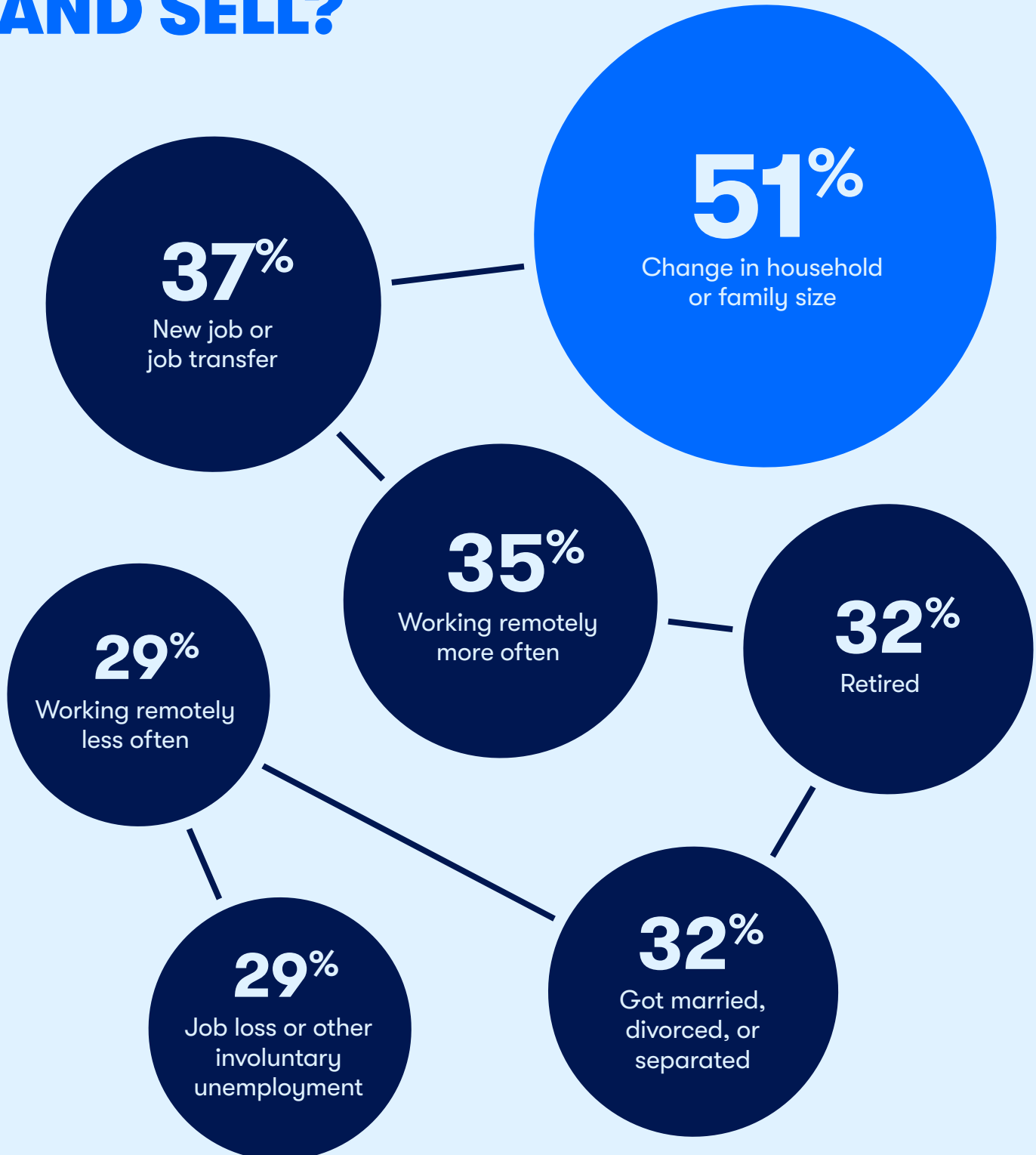
In total, 78% of sellers were influenced to sell by at least one major life event. The most common factor, impacting 51% of sellers, was a change in household or family size. Work changes like getting a new job or job transfer (37%), working remotely more (35%), or losing a job (29%) were also key influences for many sellers.

78%

of sellers were influenced to sell by at least one **major life event.**



WHAT INFLUENCED THE DECISION TO MOVE AND SELL?



HOW MANY AGENTS DO SELLERS CONTACT?

Nearly all sellers (93%) work with an agent at some point during their journey.

Sellers who worked with an agent were more likely to hire the first person they contacted (59%) compared to buyers (47%). The difference is even more drastic among first-time sellers (64%) compared to first-time buyers (40%). Urgency could play

a big role here, especially among sellers influenced by disruptive life events like a job transfer.

Another factor could be first impressions. While buyer’s agents may have a harder time differentiating themselves early on, listing agents may be able to seal the deal during the first appointment with a convincing pricing strategy and compelling marketing strategy.



HOW DO SELLERS DISCOVER THEIR AGENT?

The most popular way sellers first came across the agent they hired was through a real estate website or app.

That slightly edged out referrals from a friend, relative, neighbor, or colleague. Since 2018, the first year we tracked this question, the share of sellers who found their agent online has jumped from 15% to

36%. Meanwhile, the share of sellers who discovered their agent through any type of referral dipped slightly from 31% to 28%.

Sellers found their agent online or through a referral at near-identical rates to buyers. However, listing agents have an extra incentive to keep their digital profiles current and referral networks strong: 73% of sellers who also bought a home worked with the same agent for both transactions.



Sellers found their agent:

36%

Online

28%

Referral

WHERE SELLERS SAID THEY FIRST FOUND THEIR AGENT



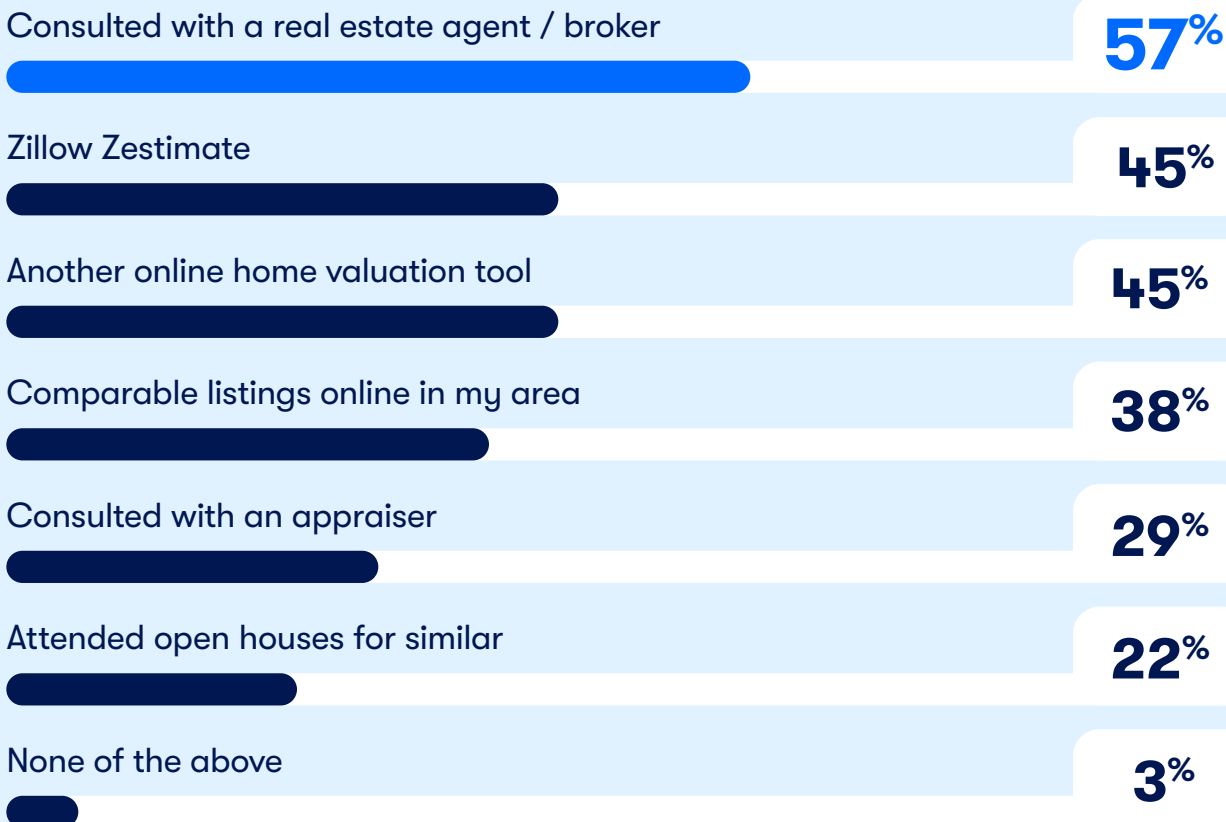
HOW DO SELLERS DETERMINE THEIR LISTING PRICE?

Most sellers (69%) hired an agent to help promote their home and find buyers, while 21% found buyers on their own but hired an agent to finalize the sale.

When it came to deciding the listing price, sellers explored many different options on their own, but historically the most common resource was consulting with an agent or broker. In recent years, more sellers have turned to online home value estimators for help setting their listing price.

These tools can be useful as a starting point, but this sets up a delicate dance for agents to help clients feel comfortable about the price of their home if it differs with figures they've seen online. Emphasizing more recent sales of comparable properties in a listing presentation can be a helpful way to ground the conversation in specific data and align with the seller.

Sellers used to help determine listing price:



WHAT QUALITIES DO SELLERS VALUE MOST IN AGENTS?



Local market knowledge is crucial. A strong sales history is key. And a positive reputation in the community helps a lot.

But what sellers want most from their agent is someone trustworthy and responsive. Since most sellers hired the first person they contacted, many agents seem to be conveying these traits to their clients.

Fifty-five percent of sellers who worked with an agent said finding someone who charged a lower commission or offered a rebate was highly important. That ranked last among all the agent characteristics in our survey.

75%

of sellers said finding an agent with a positive reputation in the community was highly important.

Highly important agent characteristics, among sellers who used an agent

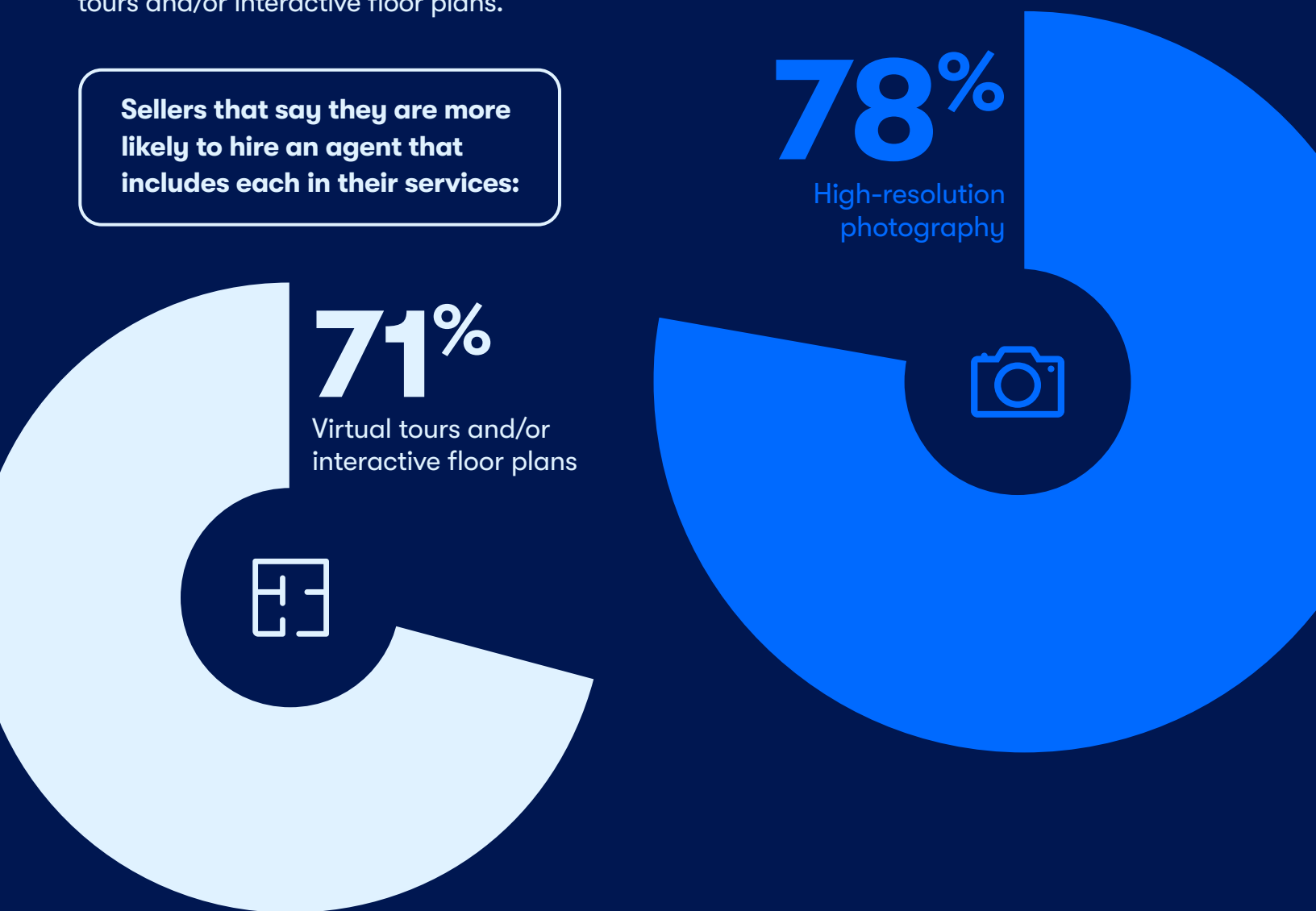


HOW IMPORTANT ARE DIGITAL TOOLS?

Agents who offer virtual tours, interactive floor plans, and high-resolution photography in their services have a competitive advantage. Seventy-eight percent of sellers said they're more likely to hire an agent who offers hi-res photography, and 71% said they're more likely to hire someone providing virtual tours and/or interactive floor plans.

For good reason, too, because most buyers want them. Buyer interest in many digital tools like 3D and virtual tours has increased since 2019. And in 2024, 86% of buyers said they were more likely to view a home if the listing included a floor plan they liked.

Sellers that say they are more likely to hire an agent that includes each in their services:



HOW MANY OFFERS DOES THE TYPICAL SELLER GET?

In an ideal world, sellers could list their home, immediately get an offer, and sell above the asking price with minimal disruption. **The good news is that the typical seller reported selling their home for \$300,000 in 2024, a 35% increase over the last five years.**

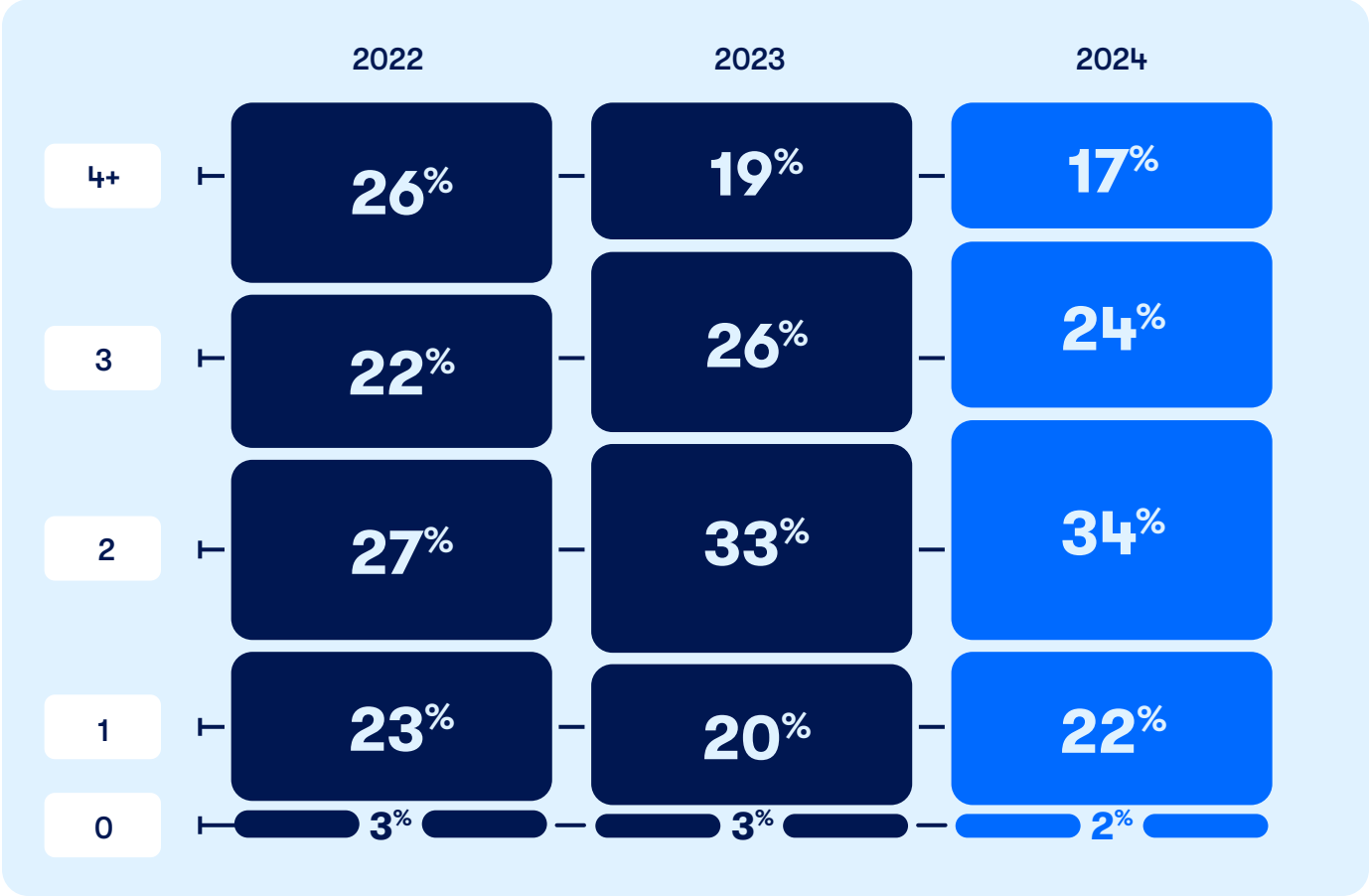
However, the process of selling has become more complicated in some cases. This year, the typical seller reported holding two open houses and leaving their home twice for

showings. Half said an offer fell through, which is the second-highest share we've seen since 2018.

This data highlights the importance of coaching sellers throughout the process. Agents seem to be making strong first impressions, but there's also a clear need to protect the seller's schedule and help them manage stress before the sale is complete.

Number of offers:

Median: 2



HOW OFTEN DO SELLERS NEGOTIATE COMMISSIONS?

Just over half (51%) of sellers working with an agent negotiated a lower commission, more than double the 21% of buyers who received a commission rebate from their agent.

The typical seller who negotiated was younger and had a higher income than the typical seller who didn't negotiate. However, sellers who negotiated typically sold their home for \$25,000 more and were 14 percentage points more likely to use the same agent if they were also buying a home — trade-offs that could balance out lower commission rates.

Among sellers who didn't negotiate, 64% said it was because they found their agent's commission fair. Another 26% said they didn't know they could negotiate. But that could evolve in the future after NAR's policy changes brought more attention to commission negotiations. We plan to continue monitoring these trends to see how sellers adjust to the new status quo.

21%

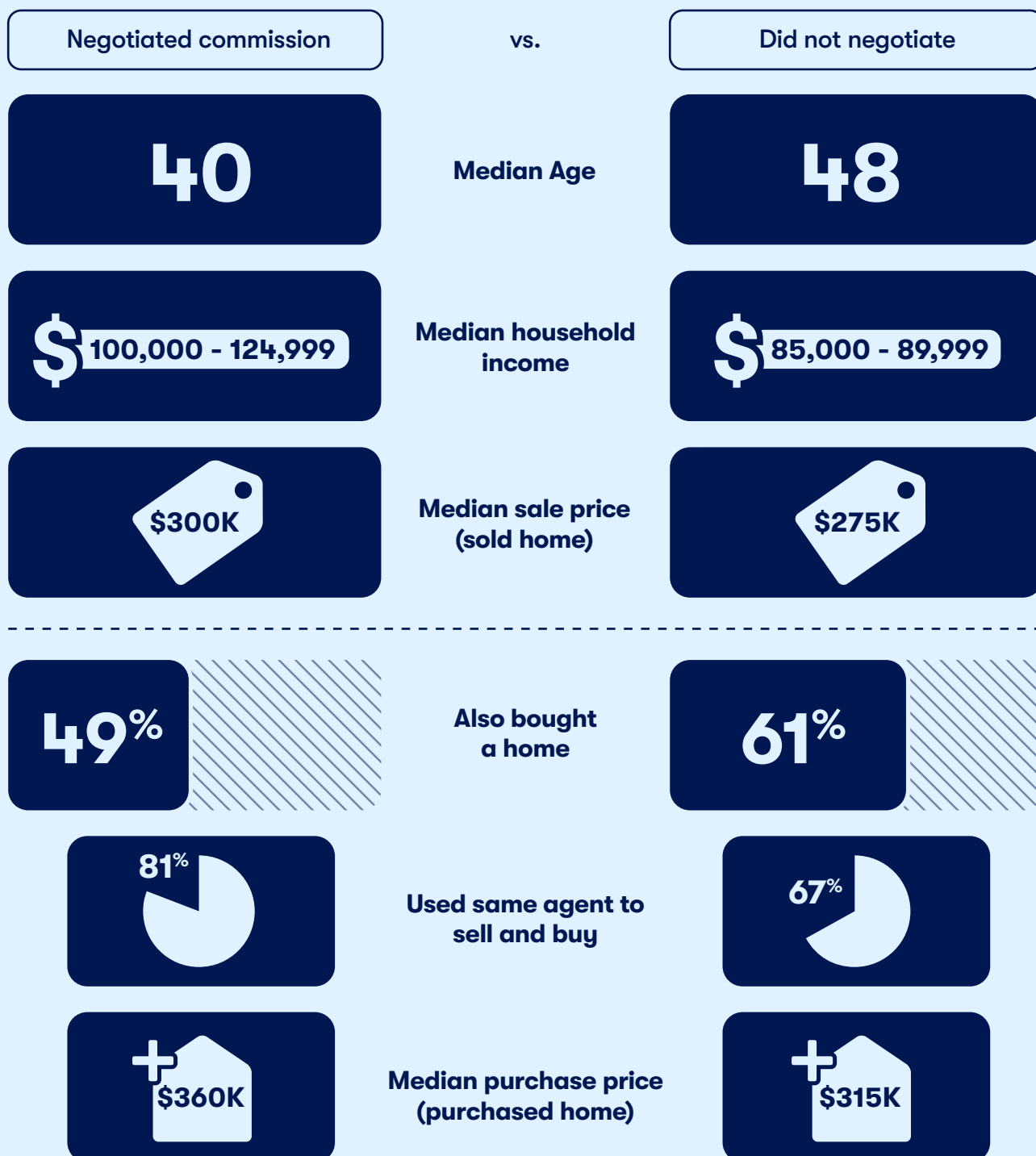
of buyers received
commission rebate

51%

of sellers
negotiated a
lower commission



WHAT SEPARATES SELLERS WHO NEGOTIATE FROM THOSE WHO DON'T?



SURVEY METHODOLOGY

04



Research Approach

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the U.S. buyer-agent relationship, Zillow Group Population Science conducted a nationally representative survey – sampling over 5,000 unique respondents. The survey contains information from over 2,200 successful buyers and 2,800 prospective buyers. The study was fielded between March and July 2024.

For sellers, Zillow Group Population Science conducted four nationally representative surveys of approximately 9,500 responses from more than 6,200 unique sellers between April and July 2024.

Wherever possible, survey questions from previous years were asked in the same manner this year to allow for the measurement of year-to-year trends in key areas of business interest.

For the purpose of this study, “buyers” refers to household decision-makers 18 years of age or older who moved to a new primary residence that they purchased in the past two years. A majority of buyers in this sample (58% unweighted; 54% weighted) purchased within the past year.

“Sellers” are household decision-makers 18 years of age or older who, within the past year, moved and sold a home that was their previous primary residence.

Sampling & Weighting

Results from this survey are nationally representative of recent buyers and sellers. U.S. adult decision-makers who recently bought or sold a home were identified from online nonprobability samples. To achieve representativeness, we used a combination of quota sampling and statistical raking using benchmarks estimated from the 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) and the 2023 Current Population Survey Annual and Economic Supplement (CPS ASEC).

To ensure that this weighting procedure did not drive observed results, we created several alternative sets of weights for key estimates of interest. These alternative weights included several versions with additional population characteristics— especially those that could be correlated with estimates

of interest— from external sources, as well as propensity matching to better capture a given respondent’s underlying probability of participating in the survey. None of the alternative sets of weights substantively shifted the estimates examined.

Quality Control

To reduce response bias, survey respondents did not know that Zillow Group was conducting the survey. Several additional quality control measures were also taken to ensure data accuracy:

- We identified and terminated any professional respondents, robots or those taking the survey on multiple devices.
- Completion times were recorded to ensure that surveys submitted by the fastest respondents, who may have rushed through the survey, did not provide poor quality data. If necessary, these respondents were removed from the sample.
- In-survey quality control checks identified illogical or unrealistic responses.

Additional Data Sources

Unless otherwise specified, estimates in this report come from the Zillow Group Population Science team’s Consumer Housing Trends Report (CHTR) 2024. Year-over-year comparisons use data from previous CHTRs for both buyers and sellers dating back to 2018.

To provide a fuller picture of the state of buyer and seller characteristics, preferences, and behaviors, we also analyzed data from other sources:

- U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey - The most recently available dataset from the U.S. Census Bureau’s survey of the U.S. population. The ACS is the nation’s largest survey and is based on a probability sample; as such, it is considered one of the leading sources of information on U.S. population and housing.

- U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Housing Survey - The most recently available dataset from the U.S. Census Bureau's housing survey. The AHS includes housing details absent from the ACS, such as whether movers owned their previous home, their reasons for moving, and other detailed housing characteristics.
- U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement - The CPS ASEC offers the most recent social, demographic, and economic estimates on the U.S. population.
- Zillow.com website metrics - To provide additional context for survey results, ZG Population Science also examined internal Zillow data on listing information.



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