

THE 2025

AGENT CONFIDENCE INDEX™

Agent
CONFIDENCE Index™

DARRYL DAVIS
SEMINARS

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Agent CONFIDENCE Index™

DARRYL DAVIS
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Report Completed November 15, 2025

When we set out to find out how agents see the future of real estate, we figured we'd get a few charts, a couple of opinions, and call it a day. Instead, we created a small encyclopedia. If you'd have told me this thing would top **60+ pages**, I would've said, *"No way, unless our readers have a minor in nuclear engineering and a major love of spreadsheets."*

So, in the spirit of saving your eyeballs (and your coffee budget), I read the whole report for you and distilled it into a **simple, no-fluff summary**. If you're not in the mood to wade through every graph and cross-tab, the following section gives you the real story with the key findings, what they mean, and exactly what to do next. You get the essence; I handled the heavy lifting. You're welcome!

A stylized signature of Darryl Davis, featuring a microphone icon integrated into the letter 'D'.

Darryl Davis



Agent Confidence Index™ Simple Summary and Action Steps

Market: Slow, but starting to steady. Buyer and seller activity is below normal for this season, but over half of agents surveyed think the next six months will *slightly* improve.

Action: Build spring inventory now

- Make a **"Future Seller List"** of 25–50 homeowners you already know (past clients, sphere, neighbors).
- Do a **15-minute check-in**: confirm their rough move timeline, give a quick **equity estimate**, and ask what would need to happen for them to sell in the next 6–9 months.
- Send a **Pre-Listing Prep Kit**: 1-page "Fix First" checklist, preferred vendor list, and a sample timeline ("90 days out → 60 → 30 → launch").
- For buyers in your pipeline, **prep financing options** now: (a) ask lender for a **rate buydown quote**, (b) check if any target homes have **assumable loans** (buyer takes over the seller's low rate), and (c) line up a **TBD underwriter** (underwriter who provides conditional approval for a mortgage loan even before the borrower has chosen a property) so they're lightning-fast when the right house appears.

Agent Confidence: Agents feel better about themselves than about the market. ~65% feel good about their career outlook; 86% expect to still be in business next year.

Action: Steady your clients with simple, regular touches

- Set a **weekly live-contact goal** (e.g., 10 calls/DMs).
- Post/send **one 60-second education touch** each week: "What prices did last week." "How many new listings are on market" "How a 2-1 buydown works."
- End every touch with a light Call-to-Action: "Want your equity number?" / "Want this week's new-listings shortlist?"

Biggest hurdles: Agents say there are not enough leads and not enough listings. Agents consistently cite these challenges as their top issues.

Action: Run one 'Now' source + one 'Later' source

- **Now source (fast conversations):**
 - Host **two open houses** per month with a sign-in + same-day text recap.
 - Or run **one focused ad** ("Homes with lower monthly payment options") that routes to a short list and a consult.
- **Later source (future listings):**
 - Send **equity reviews** to 50 homeowners/quarter ("Here's how much equity you've built + 3 ways to use it").
 - Build **move-up lists**: show sellers what they could buy *after* selling (side-by-side monthly payment).
- **Host a monthly 'Listing Lab'** on Zoom: 20 minutes on prep, pricing, and payment strategies; invite your *Future Seller List*.

Rules and client communication: Agents say these skills are generally strong. 80%+ feel confident explaining compensation changes; 86%+ feel confident using the right forms and advertising correctly.

Action: Turn compliance into a selling point

- Create a **1-page "Compensation & Representation Choices"** sheet (plain English, no jargon) you hand to every buyer/seller at the first meeting. Use **"professional fee"** language.
- Record a **60-second video** that explains that sheet; include it in your follow-ups and on your site.
- Add a **Client Bill of Rights** (transparency, options, accurate marketing) to your listing/buyer kits.

Professional Membership: Agents have less trust in big institutions than in themselves. MLS satisfaction is decent; most say NAR membership isn't very important to their business.

Action: Be the local source of truth

- Publish a **Weekly Market Snapshot**: new listings, pending count, median days-to-offer, and price-to-list ratio.
- **Share it everywhere**: email, socials, and as a one-pager at open houses.
- **Add a simple headline each week**: "Fewer new listings, faster offers"—so clients feel informed and calm.

Competition: Many agents believe the competition is real, but beatable. Most say competition is manageable to neutral; the edge goes to agents with a clear offer and consistent prospecting.

Action: Make your value obvious

- Print your **5-step listing prep** and **10-point marketing plan** as a one-pager.
- Show proof: **before/after photos**, a short **property-video clip**, and a **timeline** (Week 1 prep → Week 2 launch → Week 3 review).
- **Prospect 45 minutes a day** on one channel (SOI calls, texts, or DMs) so you're consistently top-of-mind.

Tech & AI: Agents think there's lots of upside but not fully used. Early adopters save hours on copy and follow-ups.

Action: Automate five recurring tasks

- **Listing description**: paste facts → get a polished version.
- **Price-change email** to your seller: short, factual, with updated comps.
- **Showing recap** to your buyer: "What we saw, pros/cons, next steps."

- **Weekly market brief** to your sphere (use your snapshot numbers).
- **Expired/FSBO letter**: friendly, helpful, offer a quick consult. Load these as **templates in your CRM** and schedule them so they go out with a few clicks.

2026: Agents predict a slow climb up. Expect small rate relief and a bit more inventory; **new construction** and **relocation** are bright spots.

Action: Build a New-Build & Relocation mini-hub

- Make a **builder list** (top 10 within 30 miles), note incentives and quick-move-ins.
- Create a **Relocation page**: commute maps, taxes, schools, rent-vs-own math.
- **Book six meetings** this quarter: 3 builders + 3 HR/RELO contacts; offer a quarterly "Welcome to ___" briefing for their employees.

STATISTICS

The following are the specific statistics from the survey grouped according to the specific topic.

Demographics & Production

Years Licensed

- 59.35% have 16+ years
- 21.62% have 8 – 15 years
- 12.40% have 4 – 7 years
- 5.41% have 1 – 3 years
- 1.11% have < 1 year

Role

- 70% solo agents
- 6.68% Team Member
- 6.36% Team Leader/Manager
- 15.90% Broker Owner

Market Coverage

- 72.5% serve “multiple nearby cities”

Transactions Last 12 Months

- 3.34% have 0
- 29.73% have 1 – 5
- 24.01% have 6 – 10
- 31.96% have 11 – 25
- 7.31% have 26 – 40
- 3.66% have 41

Sales Confidence & Income Outlook

Confidence in Hitting Sales Goals (Q8)



42.51% Low/Very Low



57.49% High/Very High

Confidence in Making Enough Money (Q13)



33.56% Low/Very Low



66.44% High/Very High

Career Optimism (Q11)



35.46% Low/Very Low



64.54% High/Very High

Confidence Staying in Real Estate (Q14)



13.42% Low/Very Low



86.58% High/Very High

Legal, Regulatory & Skill-Based Confidence

Adapting to New Laws (Q10)



16.52% Low/Very Low



83.47% High/Very High

Explaining Compensation to Sellers (Q26)



19.45% Not Confident/Slightly Confident



80.54% Confident/Very Confident

Buyer Representation Consultations (Q27)



20.18% Not Confident/Slightly Confident



79.82% Confident/Very Confident

Using Correct Forms (Q28)



13.27% Not Confident/Slightly Confident



86.73% Confident/Very Confident

Advertising & Property Representation (Q29)



14% Not Confident/Slightly Confident



86% Confident/Very Confident

Marketing Confidence — Confidence in Marketing Paying Off (Q12)



42.69% Low/Very Low Confidence



57.31% Confident/Very Confident

Market Perception / Market Strength (Q15)



47.94% say Weak/Very Weak



52.06% say Strong/Very Strong

Buyer Activity (Q17)



60.82% Lower/Much Lower



27.73% About the Same



11.44% Higher/Much Higher

Seller Activity (Q18)



50.8% Lower/Much Lower



31.13% About the Same



18.07% Higher/Much higher

Interest Rate Impact on an Agent's Business (Q19)



13.96% Weak/Very Weak



86.05% Strong/Very Strong

Economic/Media Impact on Client Confidence (Q20)



18.42% Weak/Very Weak



81.58% Strong/Very Strong

Competitive Climate & Industry Competition (Q21)



6.80% find it overwhelming



47.05% find it challenging



42.22% find it manageable



3.94% find it very manageable

Broker Support Satisfaction (Q22)



15.67% are dissatisfied/very dissatisfied



84.33% are satisfied/very satisfied

MLS Rules Clarity and Satisfaction (Q23)



31.72% are dissatisfied/very dissatisfied



68.29% are satisfied/very satisfied

NAR Importance (Q24)



71.17% It's not/slightly important



28.83% It's important/very important

Local Association Satisfaction (Q25)



30.45% are dissatisfied/very dissatisfied



69.55% are satisfied/very satisfied

Training Priorities

The vast majority of agents rank the training items in almost the exact same order:

- #1 — Lead Generation
- #2 — Listing Presentations
- #3 — Buyer Representation
- #4 — Marketing/Branding
- #5 — Legal/Regulatory
- #6 — Productivity/Time Management
- #7 — Technology/AI

Business Concerns

- #1 — Lack of Qualified Leads
- #2 — Low Inventory
- #3 — Market/Economic Uncertainty
- #4 — Compensation/Fee Changes
- #5 — Competition
- #6 — Burnout/Work-Life Balance

Top Conclusions

1. Agents feel personally optimistic—even in a weak market.

Despite lower buyer/seller activity, **65%+ feel good about their career** and **86% expect to stay in real estate**, showing strong personal resilience even when confidence in the market is split.

2. Lead generation is the industry's biggest gap, and biggest pain point.

Across every metric, **lack of qualified leads** is the #1 problem AND the #1 training priority. Agents know what they need, but they just don't feel strong in this area.

3. Low inventory and high rates are still suppressing activity.

Buyer and seller traffic is down significantly, and agents overwhelmingly say **rates and economic news heavily influence clients**.

4. Agent skills are strong; client conversations are *not* the issue.

80%+ feel confident with compensation conversations, forms, compliance, and representation. Skill-based confidence is high; **the problem is pipeline, not professionalism**.

5. Agents trust themselves more than institutions.

NAR ranks lowest in perceived importance. Local associations and MLS score *okay*, but not great. Agents increasingly see themselves, not institutions, as the main source of expertise.

6. Competition feels high, but still beatable.

Nearly half find it "challenging," but the majority say it's manageable. The perceived edge goes to agents with a **clear value proposition and consistent prospecting**.

7. Tech & AI adoption is low, but those using it get a major advantage.

Most agents believe AI has upside, but few use it regularly. Early adopters are saving hours and converting faster.

8. Training needs and business threats are perfectly aligned.

Top concerns (leads, listings, uncertainty) match the top training needs (lead gen, listing presentations). The gaps are fixable, and agents know where they need help.

9. The 2026 outlook is cautiously hopeful.

Agents expect a **slow but steady climb** with slightly lower rates, slightly more inventory, and strong opportunities in new construction and relocation.

10. Demographics show a mature industry with experienced talent.

Nearly 60% have 16+ years in the field. This is a seasoned population, and their struggles reflect **market conditions, not lack of competence.**

Agent CONFIDENCE Index™

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The **2025 Agent Confidence Index** arrives at a pivotal moment for the real estate industry. After several years of volatility, marked by soaring mortgage rates, historically low inventory, shifting consumer expectations, and sweeping legal and regulatory changes, agents are being asked to adapt faster and operate with greater skill than ever before.

This report, compiled as of November 15, 2025, brings together nationwide survey data, market analysis, and expert insight to capture how agents are experiencing this environment: where their confidence is strongest, where challenges are most acute, and how they are navigating a market that demands resilience, professionalism, and innovation.

By examining both the quantitative trends and the lived experiences behind them, the report offers a grounded, forward-looking perspective on what it will take for agents, brokers, and industry leaders to thrive as the market transitions into 2026.

Executive Summary

In **2025**, the U.S. housing market tested real estate agents' resilience. Transaction volumes fell to multi-decade lows amid **high interest rates** and **scarce inventory**, yet most agents remained **personally optimistic** about their careers. A nationwide survey of **629 real estate agents** reveals a complex confidence picture. While **86%** are confident they'll still be in business next year and ~65% feel optimistic about their real estate career outlook, agents overwhelmingly cite **inventory shortages** and **lead generation** challenges as top pain points. **Housing market conditions** were broadly viewed as weaker than normal in 2025, but there are **signs of hope**: more than half of agents expect **slightly improved sales activity** in the next six months, and data from National Association of REALTORS® (NAR) Existing-Home Sales Report shows inventory **finally inching up** from record lows.

This report integrates the survey findings with current market data to provide a comprehensive view of agent sentiment and market conditions. It details the **market context** of 2025, from surging mortgage rates to legal upheavals in industry practices, summarizes agents' **key concerns**, including inventory, leads, commissions, and burnout, highlights **bright spots** and **growth opportunities**, and presents a **forward-looking outlook** for 2026. It also analyzes confidence levels by agent demographics and compares trends to previous periods. This report concludes with **actionable recommendations** for agents, brokers, and industry stakeholders, and motivational insights from real estate coach **Darryl Davis** on sustaining success through skill and mindset.

Overall, the **Agent Confidence Index** findings indicate a cautiously optimistic industry: agents are adapting to new realities and seeking solutions to thrive amid the headwinds.

Market Context: Inventory & Rates in 2025

The sentiment captured in our survey does not exist in a vacuum. Agents' optimism, concerns, and expectations were shaped by a housing landscape undergoing significant strain. The next section explores the inventory shortages and rate pressures that formed the backdrop of the 2025 market.

As reported by [Redfin](#), the turnover rate for U.S. home sales hit the lowest level in decades in 2025, with only ~2.8% of homes changing hands in the first nine months. This pace is the slowest since at least the 1990s. High mortgage rates and economic uncertainty kept many buyers and sellers on the sidelines, contributing to the historic drop in housing market activity.

The **macro housing environment** in 2025 was characterized by **exceptionally tight supply and elevated borrowing costs**. Homeowners, largely locked into sub-5% mortgage rates from prior years, were reluctant to sell and give up their low rates. Over 70% of U.S. mortgage holders have rates below 5%, far below current mortgage rates around 6–7%. This “rate lock” effect resulted in **record-low home listing and turnover rates**. Only about 2.8% of the nation's housing stock changed owners in 2025, down from ~4.0% pre-pandemic and roughly **38% fewer homes sold than during the 2021 boom**. Meanwhile, would-be buyers struggled with **affordability** as home prices remained near record highs, and **30-year mortgage rates** hovered in the mid-6% range, occasionally reaching above 7%. This level is a sharp contrast to the ~3% rates of 2021. [Freddie Mac](#) confirmed that, as of November 6, 2025, the 30-year fixed rate averaged **6.22%**, down slightly from ~6.8% a year earlier but still double the historic lows. High inflation through 2022–2023 had forced the Federal Reserve to raise rates aggressively, and only in late 2024 did mortgage rates begin to ease modestly.

Against this backdrop of constrained movement, the inventory picture in 2025 reveals a similarly uneven dynamic. **Housing inventory** showed some improvement in 2025, though from extremely low levels. According to [NAR](#), total **existing-home inventory** in September 2025 stood at 1.55 million units (a 4.6-month supply), which is a five-year high but *still below pre-COVID norms*.

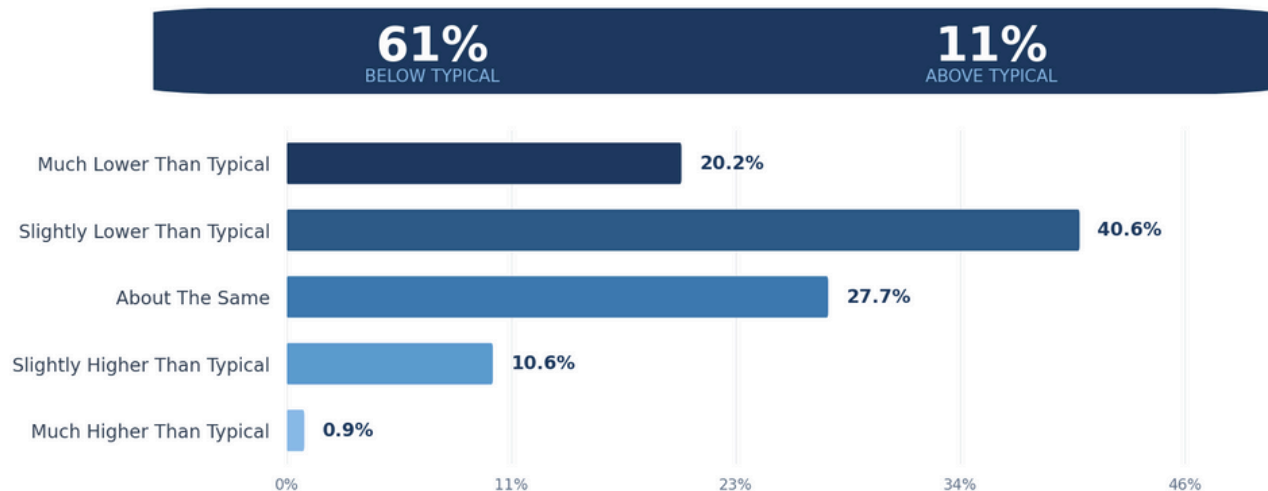
In fact, the inventory build-up is partly a function of slower sales rather than a surge of new listings – data from Redfin indicates the rate of new listings in 2025 remained the *third lowest on record* (just 3.9% of homes were listed in the first 9 months, barely above 2023's all-time low). Many homeowners simply stayed put, resulting in fewer transactions. NAR Economist Lawrence Yun noted that “*many homeowners are financially comfortable, resulting in very few distressed properties and forced sales*”, and that while inventory in late 2025 matched a recent high, it “**remains below pre-COVID levels.**” Home prices nationally even **inched up ~2% year-over-year** by Q3 2025, as limited supply kept upward pressure on values.

On the **demand side**, homebuyer activity generally remained subdued. According to Redfin, high financing costs and economic uncertainty, particularly around inflation and employment, kept many buyers cautious. Our survey found that in fall 2025, **61% of agents** observed lower-than-normal buyer inquiries and showings in their markets over the past 30 days. **51%** likewise said seller activity, such as new listings and engagement, was also running below seasonal norms.

Q17

559 Answered

Buyer Activity vs Typical Seasonal Norms

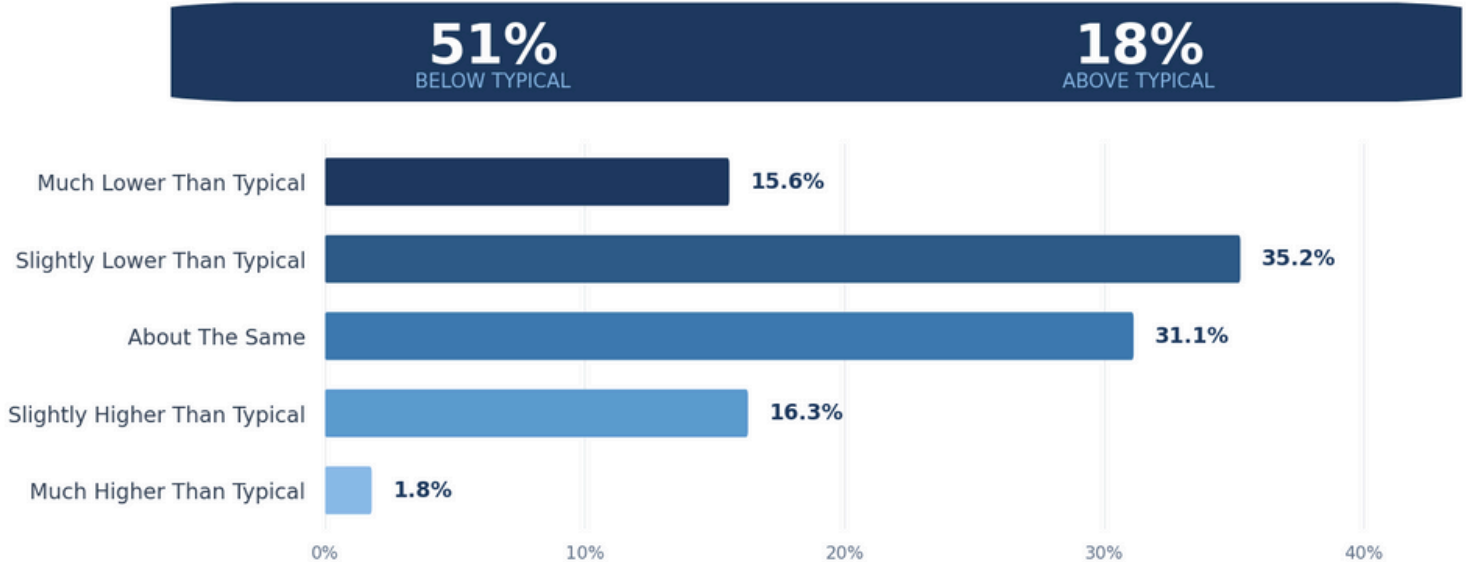


Category	Responses	Percentage
Much Lower Than Typical	113	20.21%
Slightly Lower Than Typical	227	40.61%
About The Same	155	27.73%
Slightly Higher Than Typical	59	10.55%
Much Higher Than Typical	5	0.89%
Total	559	100%

Q18

559 Answered

Seller Activity vs Typical Seasonal Norms



Category	Responses	Percentage
Much Lower Than Typical	87	15.56%
Slightly Lower Than Typical	197	35.24%
About The Same	174	31.13%
Slightly Higher Than Typical	91	16.28%
Much Higher Than Typical	10	1.79%
Total	559	100%

Despite this more muted demand, signs of resilience were evident across segments of the market. NAR reported that **home prices** rose modestly in most regions, and **new construction** emerged as a bright spot. An influx of new homes provided some relief for frustrated buyers and helped stabilize sales. By September 2025, **existing home sales** were up 4.1% year-over-year, which was the first annual gain in many months, as slightly **lower mortgage rates helped lift home sales** from their previous lows. Homebuilders aided this growth by increasing output and helping to ease the inventory shortage, and by late 2025, Business Wire data reported by Finance Yahoo showed that newly built homes made up roughly **27% of single-family market**, which was well above the historical average of 10–15%.

In short, 2025's market context was one of **extraordinary supply constraints** and **higher costs of capital**, which together suppressed transaction volumes. **Buyers** faced affordability challenges and often delayed moving, while **sellers** hesitated to list unless necessary, given the "golden handcuffs" of low-rate loans as noted by Redfin. The result was an ultra-slow market defined by caution. Agents had to navigate these conditions of **low inventory, high rates, and skittish client sentiment**, even as broader economic signals, such as cooling inflation and a steady job market, pointed to potential stabilization.

Looking at **local vs. national trends**, conditions did vary by region. Fast-growing Sun Belt markets, like parts of Florida, Arizona, and Texas, saw **inventory gains** and even slight home price declines in 2025, offering buyers more negotiating power. In contrast, as noted by the Mortgage Bankers Association, Northeast and Midwest markets remained **tight**, with **housing shortages** keeping prices high. Our surveyed agents' experiences reflect these nuances in local market strength (detailed in Section 6). Overall, however, the prevailing narrative in 2025 was a **market slowdown**, requiring agents to adjust their strategies for a low-volume environment.

Industry Shocks and Structural Shifts in 2025

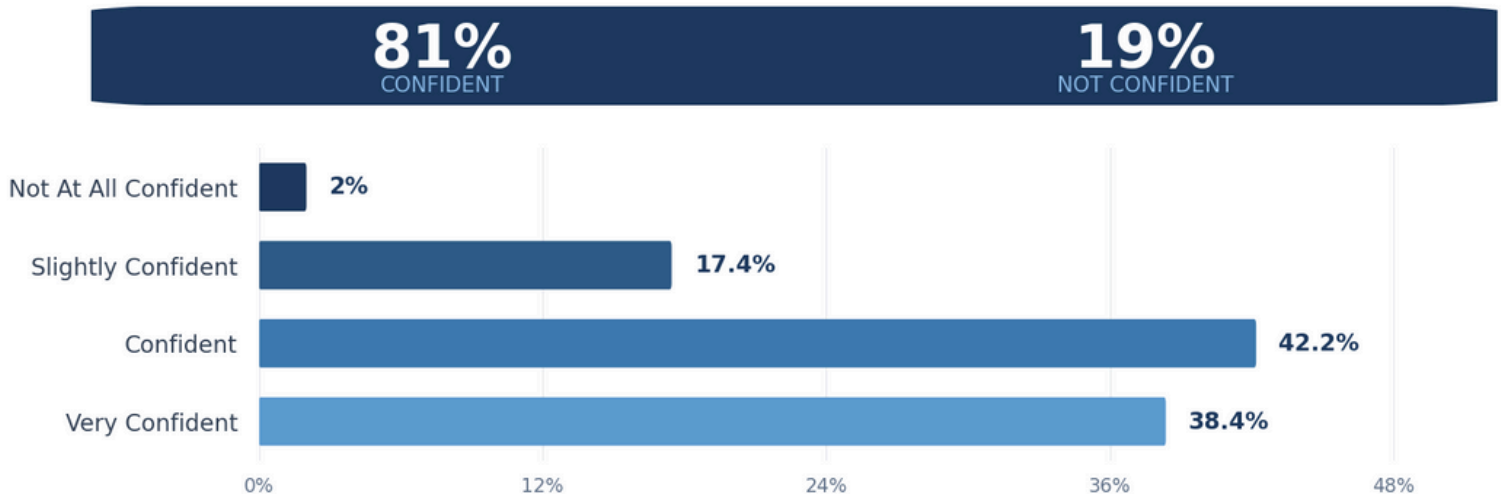
The past year also brought **seismic shifts** to the real estate industry's landscape, forcing agents and brokers to adapt to new rules and realities. Foremost among these were **legal and policy upheavals** stemming from high-profile lawsuits and settlements. In late 2023, a federal jury delivered a landmark verdict in the **Sitzer/Burnett class-action case**, finding that the National Association of REALTORS® (NAR) and several major brokerages had conspired to keep buyer agent commissions artificially inflated. As summarized by Rudolph Friedmann LLP, a Missouri jury awarded \$1.78 billion in damages, with the potential to treble these damages under antitrust law. This verdict, along with related litigation (e.g. **Moehrl v. NAR**), sent shockwaves through the industry. By 2024, brokerages and MLSs began **implementing changes** to avoid further liability. Many MLS systems dropped the requirement to offer a blanket buyer-broker commission, new disclaimers were added, and agents in some areas had to **explicitly negotiate buyer-side fees** for the first time.

Our survey captured agents' response to these changes. For example, when asked about *explaining compensation changes to sellers* (Question 26 of our survey), about **80% felt confident or very confident** in doing so, though ~19% admitted they were only slightly or not at all confident, indicating a need for more training on talking about commissions.

Similarly, in response to survey question 27, agents stated they are now more frequently using **buyer representation agreements**. **79% of respondents** felt confident or very confident handling these buyer consultations, but a notable minority still feel unsure. The commission lawsuits and resulting policy shifts represent a **structural transformation** in how agents earn their fees, and while many veteran agents have adjusted, the industry continues to watch how these legal outcomes will reshape brokerage models going forward.

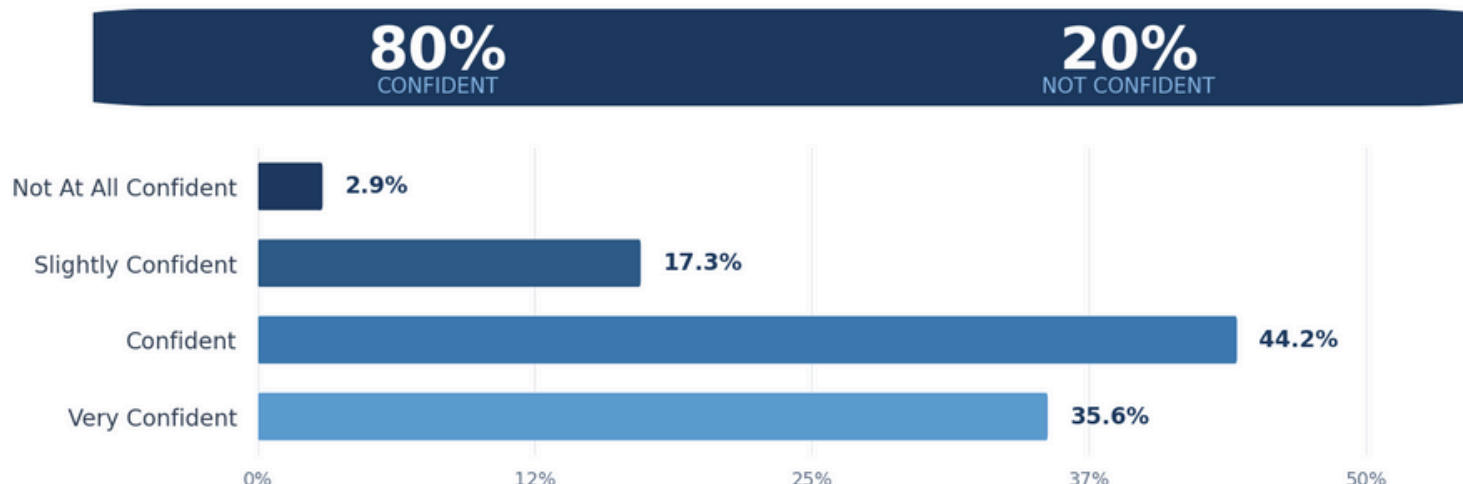
Q26 550 Answered

Explaining Compensation to Sellers



Category	Responses	Percentage
Not At All Confident	11	2.00%
Slightly Confident	96	17.45%
Confident	232	42.18%
Very Confident	211	38.36%
Total	550	100%

Buyer Consultations & Rep Agreements




Category	Responses	Percentage
Not At All Confident	16	2.91%
Slightly Confident	95	17.27%
Confident	243	44.18%
Very Confident	196	35.64%
Total	550	100%

With these legal shifts reshaping everyday practice, the next question is whether agents feel equipped to handle the fundamental tools and forms that underpin their transactions.

A key indicator of agent preparedness is their confidence in navigating core transactional tools such as state or MLS-specific standard forms. Among the 550 agents who answered Survey Question 28 on this issue, confidence levels were notably strong: **45.82% indicated they were “Very Confident,”** and another **40.91% identified as “Confident.”** In total, more than **86%** of respondents expressed solid confidence in this foundational skill set.

Only a small minority expressed doubt: **10.91% were “Slightly Confident”** and just **2.36% were “Not at All Confident.”** The weighted average score was **3.30 out of 4,** indicating overall strong competence across the industry.



This broad level of confidence indicates that most agents have effectively internalized compliance protocols and transactional fundamentals. This is an increasingly important strength given the evolving legal landscape around buyer agency agreements and commission transparency. The smaller subset of agents who continue to struggle with form usage may benefit from targeted compliance training, state-specific legal updates, or additional mentoring.

Just as strong form-handling skills indicate solid grounding in compliance, agents' approach to marketing properties offers another lens on professional readiness. This is especially important because property presentation and marketing are among the most closely scrutinized areas of real estate practice. While confidence remains high, the subtle variations in this area point to potential opportunities for targeted guidance. The responses to survey Question 29 show that agent confidence remains strong in this area, while slightly more varied than in other compliance-related categories. Of the 550 respondents, nearly **86%** expressed either "Confident" (**46.73%**) or "Very Confident" (**39.27%**) sentiments in their ability to advertise properties accurately and in line with compliance standards.

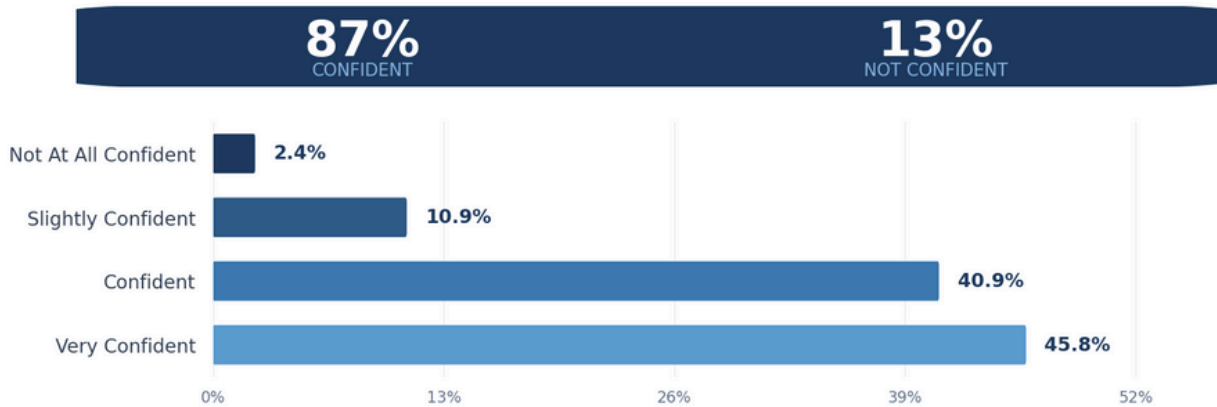
Only **13.45%** described themselves as "Slightly Confident," and a mere **0.55%** selected "Not at All Confident," making this one of the least polarizing topics in the entire survey. The **weighted average score of 3.25 out of 4** reflects a healthy sense of professionalism in managing disclosures, representations, and advertising language. This skill set is critical in protecting consumers and brokerages alike.

This high confidence is encouraging, especially in a regulatory climate that increasingly targets misleading claims, fine-print disclaimers, and social media oversights. Still, the 13% who reported less-than-full confidence point to a clear opportunity for additional training. These agents may benefit from more targeted education on **Fair Housing standards, truth-in-advertising laws, and brokerage-level marketing audits** to ensure clarity and legal protection in all public-facing materials.

Q28

550 Answered

Using Correct Standard Forms

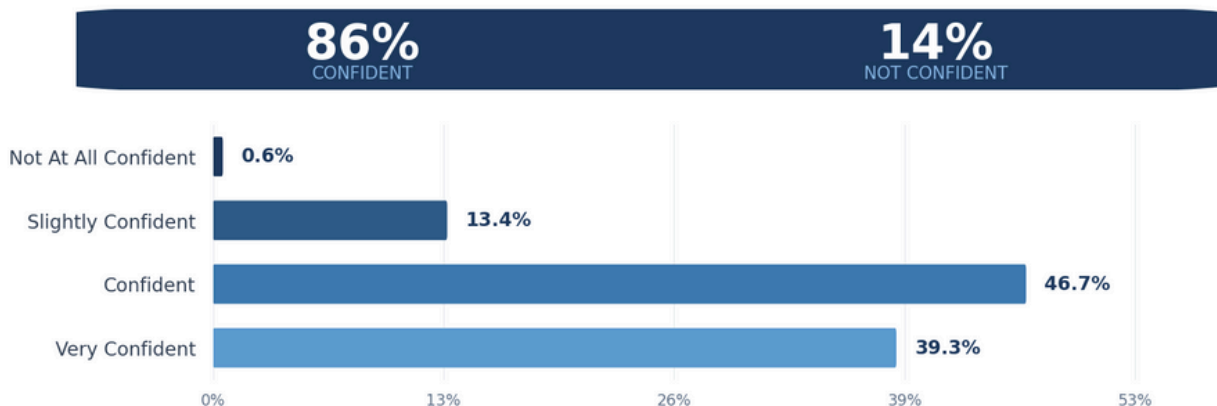


Category	Responses	Percentage
Not At All Confident	13	2.36%
Slightly Confident	60	10.91%
Confident	225	40.91%
Very Confident	252	45.82%
Total	550	100%

Q29

550 Answered

Property Rep & Advertising Compliance



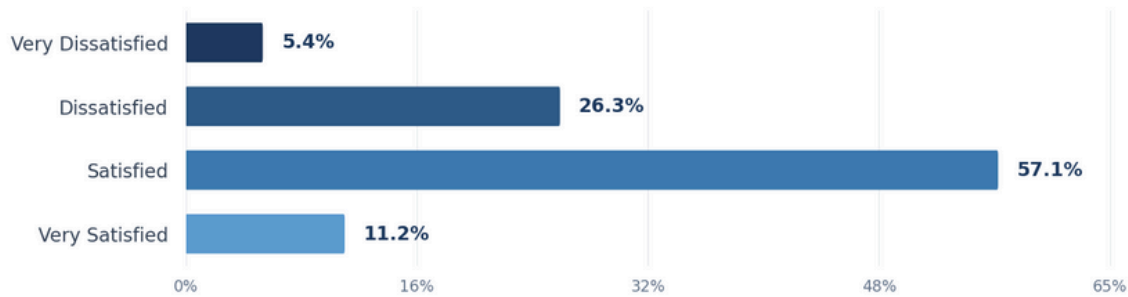
Category	Responses	Percentage
Not At All Confident	3	0.55%
Slightly Confident	74	13.45%
Confident	257	46.73%
Very Confident	216	39.27%
Total	550	100%

Shifting from agent-level competencies to institutional support, the survey also asked respondents to evaluate the clarity and enforcement of MLS rules. Most agents expressed a generally positive level of satisfaction, though opinions reflected some variability. Among the 555 respondents to survey Question 23, a combined **68% reported being either “Satisfied” (57.12%) or “Very Satisfied” (11.17%)**, while roughly **one-quarter (26.31%) indicated they were “Dissatisfied” and a smaller share (5.41%) reported being “Very Dissatisfied.”** Overall, the data suggests that while the majority feel their MLS provides adequate clarity and enforcement, a meaningful minority continue to experience concerns. The fact that these concerns exist signifies that there continues to be a need for greater consistency, transparency, and support from industry institutions.

The same underlying tensions surfaced even more prominently when agents evaluated the role and value of their professional associations. NAR itself faced internal **turmoil and scrutiny** in 2023–2025. The association grappled with leadership scandals, including the resignation of its President in 2023 amid allegations of misconduct, and member discontent over its direction. Notably, our survey (Question 24) indicates that a large share of agents, do not strongly value their national REALTOR® membership: over **71% of respondents said NAR membership is “not important” or only “slightly important”** to their business. This could reflect frustration with recent controversies or a perception that NAR’s advocacy and tools aren’t tangibly helping agents in today’s tough market. In response, NAR has been attempting reforms – for instance, piloting a slimmer governance structure and promising greater transparency – but it’s clear that **trust in the organization has been shaken**. Additionally, local real estate associations and MLS organizations are under pressure to **demonstrate value**. About one-third of agents in our survey were dissatisfied with the support from their local association and the clarity/enforcement of MLS rules. These institutions are now challenged to address members’ pain points (like high fees and MLS complexities) or risk declining participation.

Q23 555 Answered

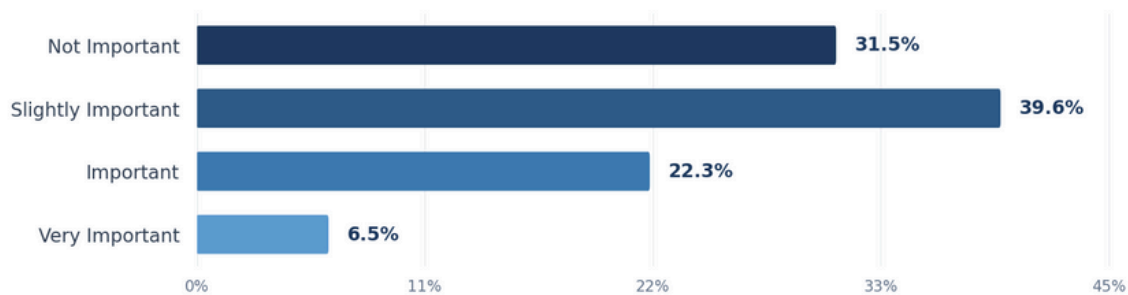
MLS Rules Clarity & Enforcement



Category	Responses	Percentage
Very Dissatisfied	30	5.41%
Dissatisfied	146	26.31%
Satisfied	317	57.12%
Very Satisfied	62	11.17%
Total	555	100%

Q24 555 Answered

NAR Membership Importance



Category	Responses	Percentage
Not Important	175	31.53%
Slightly Important	220	39.64%
Important	124	22.34%
Very Important	36	6.49%
Total	555	100%

At the same time, the industry is confronting another powerful source of change – an evolving **technology landscape** that is reshaping how agents generate leads, market properties, and manage daily workflows. The real estate tech sector saw big moves from both incumbents and newcomers. Notably, **CoStar Group** (a commercial data giant) made aggressive pushes into residential real estate by investing in its **Homes.com** platform, aiming to rival Zillow as a consumer listings portal. This increased competition re-shape lead generation dynamics: some brokers welcome the possibility of reduced dependence on existing portals, while others are wary of yet another dominant gatekeeper.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) emerged as a key theme in 2025 as well. From ChatGPT-powered listing descriptions to AI-driven lead screening and marketing automation, agents are experimenting with new tools to improve efficiency and gain an edge. A [Florida Realtor's](#) report even noted that “*AI becomes a game changer for agents*” in areas such as content creation and market analysis. However, our survey’s training results (Question 30) show that **technology and AI tools ranked as one of the lowest training priorities among agents**, well behind categories like lead generation and listing presentations. This suggests that while tech-forward agents are embracing these innovations, a significant share of the industry may not yet view AI training as essential or may feel uncertain about how to integrate these tools effectively. This tension between rapid innovation and uneven adoption will increasingly shape how agents operate, how brokerages support their teams, and how the industry adapts to the next wave of change.

Q30

533 Answered

Training Areas - Priority Ranking

#1

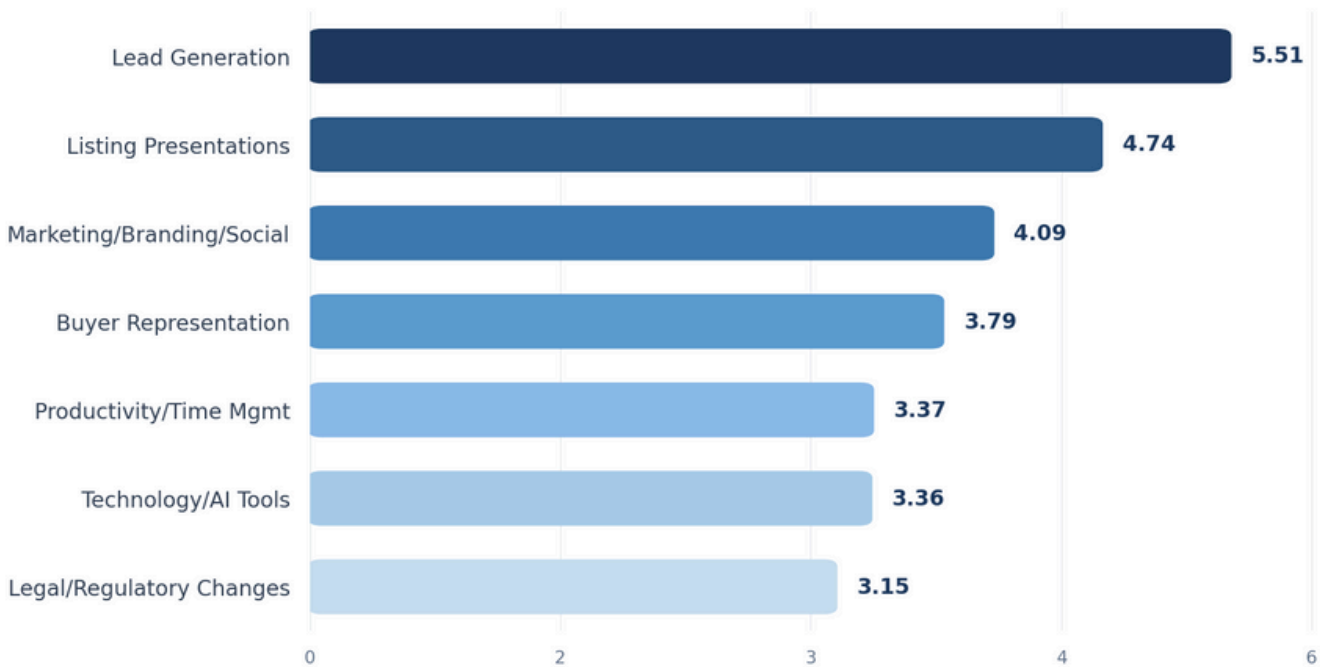
LEAD GEN

#2

LISTINGS

#3

MARKETING



Category	Responses	Percentage
Lead Generation	-	5.51
Listing Presentations	-	4.74
Marketing/Branding/Social	-	4.09
Buyer Representation	-	3.79
Productivity/Time Mgmt	-	3.37
Technology/AI Tools	-	3.36
Legal/Regulatory Changes	-	3.15
Total	533	100%

Beyond legal and tech shifts, the industry also felt aftershocks from **broader economic and policy changes**. Persistently high **interest rates** (as discussed in Market Context) forced many lenders to pivot. According to The Mortgage Reports, companies downsized or merged after refinance volumes collapsed, and those remaining focused on new purchase products and even **adjustable-rate mortgages (ARMs)** to help affordability. On the policy front, there were discussions around **housing supply initiatives**, from zoning reforms to builder incentives, though no major federal legislation passed in 2025.

However, states and cities with housing crises began adopting measures (e.g. California's ADU expansion, rent control debates) that could alter local market dynamics. As reported by the Mortgage Bankers Association, housing market conditions remain highly local. Markets like Florida, Colorado, and Arizona have seen annual home-price declines due to rising inventory, while tight supply and ongoing homebuilding challenges in states such as New York, Connecticut, Illinois, and New Jersey have pushed prices well above the national average.

2025 was a year of **significant structural change** in the real estate industry. Agents had to digest *new commission rules, new technologies, and new organizational challenges* on top of a difficult market. Those shocks have set the stage for an industry in flux. 2026 may see more experimentation in brokerage models (e.g. lower-cost models, fee-for-service, buyer rebates) and a continued push for efficiency and innovation in practice. Agents who stay informed and adaptable amid these shifts – for example, by updating their buyer/seller communication to reflect commission transparency, or by leveraging AI tools – are better positioned to succeed in the new landscape.

Identified Pain Points for Agents

With these structural shifts reshaping the industry, the question becomes: how are agents themselves feeling the impact day to day? The following section highlights the most pressing business concerns agents face in this evolving environment.

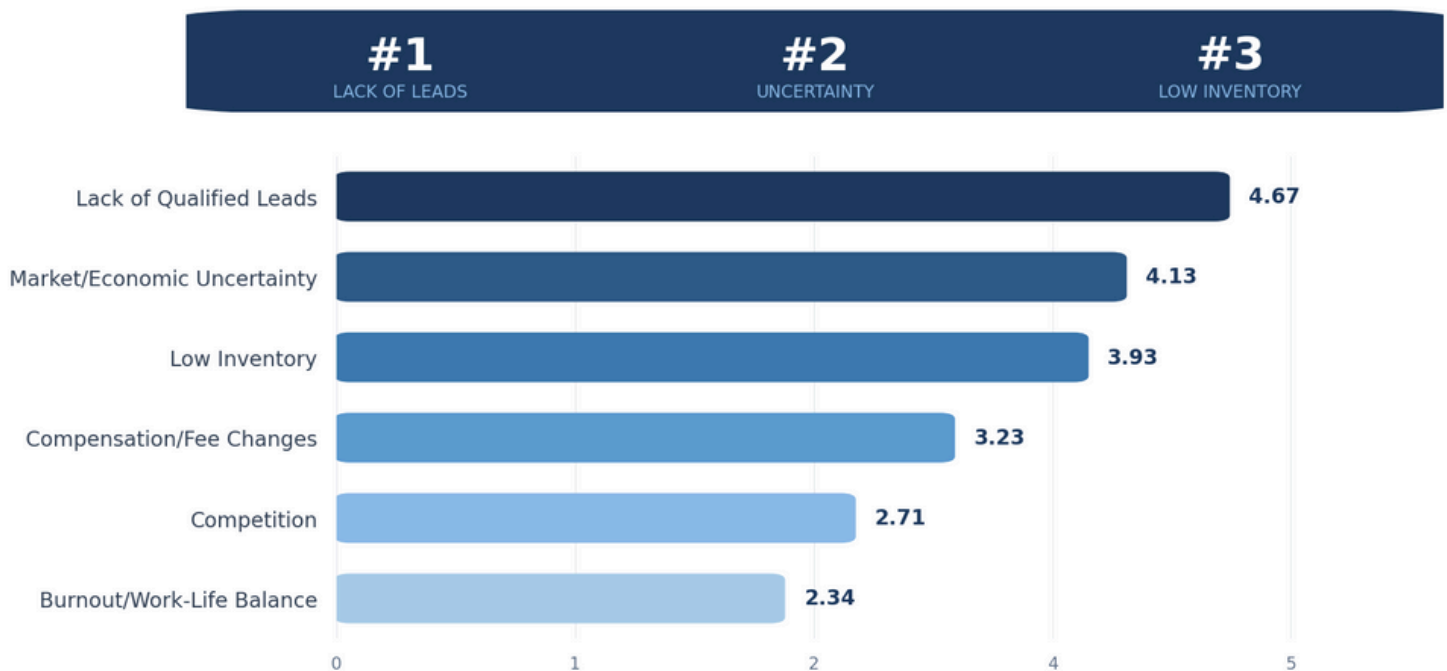
Top Business Concerns of agents in 2025 (percentage of respondents ranking each as their #1 most pressing concern). Low lead volume and low housing inventory clearly dominate as the most common pain points, followed by commission/fee changes and market uncertainty.

Question 31 of our survey asked agents to rank their **current business concerns** from most pressing to least. The results highlight a few acute pain points shared by large portions of the industry.

Q31

533 Answered

Business Concerns - Priority Ranking



Category	Responses	Percentage
Lack of Qualified Leads	-	4.67
Market/Economic Uncertainty	-	4.13
Low Inventory	-	3.93
Compensation/Fee Changes	-	3.23
Competition	-	2.71
Burnout/Work-Life Balance	-	2.34
Total	533	100%

- **Lack of qualified leads** was the #1 concern by a wide margin. Over **37% of agents** ranked “not enough good leads” as their top issue, making it the most frequently cited primary concern. In a slow market, agents are struggling to fill their pipelines with motivated buyers and sellers. Fewer transactions overall mean fierce competition for clients, and more agents chasing scarce leads. This lead shortage is a source of anxiety and is closely tied to the next concern, low inventory.
- **Low inventory** of homes to sell was the second most common top concern, chosen by about **26% of agents** as their #1 issue. Even agents with plenty of buyer clients find themselves hampered by the dearth of listings. Many remarked that there simply aren’t enough homes for sale to meet demand, which not only limits their income opportunities but also frustrates clients. Low inventory and lead generation form a vicious cycle: fewer listings mean fewer sign calls and buyer inquiries, contributing to the lead challenge.
- **Commission/fee changes** came in next, with around **15%** ranking it their top concern. This reflects agents’ worries about the fallout from the legal settlements and new compensation rules discussed in Section 3. Many agents are concerned about downward pressure on commissions – for instance, sellers negotiating lower listing fees or the possibility that buyer agents may have to ask clients to pay them directly. Uncertainty around how the industry’s compensation structure will evolve is clearly weighing on some agents’ minds. Even those who didn’t rank it #1 often ranked it #2 or #3, indicating broad awareness of this issue.
- **Market/economic uncertainty** was the top concern for ~12–13% of respondents. This category encompasses things like unclear market direction, recession fears, inflation, and interest rate volatility. Agents who chose this as their #1 pain point likely feel that unpredictable external economic forces are the biggest threat to their business. Given the ups and downs of interest rates and the mixed economic signals in 2025, it’s not surprising that a segment of agents is essentially saying “the overall market climate is my biggest problem.”

- **Burnout and work-life balance** and **competition** from other agents were ranked as the top concern by only small minorities (roughly 5–10% combined). Specifically, *burnout* was #1 for about 5% of agents and *competition* was #1 for ~3%. While nearly all agents experience these issues to some degree, most did not cite them as the *primary* challenge right now. Burnout may be mitigated somewhat by the slower pace of the market (fewer transactions can also mean more downtime, albeit unwanted). Competition, though present (there are over 1.5 million REALTORS®) is viewed as a manageable issue by most. As we'll see in Section 11, few consider the competition "overwhelming". It appears that *external factors*, like inventory, economy, and leads, are currently more front-of-mind than *internal factors*, like personal fatigue or rival agents, for the majority.

Beyond that ranking question, other survey items underscored similar pain points. When asked an open-ended question about what single support or change would most help their business in the next 90 days, many agents echoed needs for **more listing inventory, better leads, or more affordable marketing**. Some mentioned a desire for **lower costs/fees** (franchise fees, MLS dues) given tight margins. Others craved **better work-life balance or mental health support**, hinting that burnout, while not top-ranked, is indeed a simmering issue.

Overall, the **top pain points of 2025** are:

- **Not enough business to go around**, due to scarce leads and listings.
- **Financial pressure and uncertainty** from changing commission norms and an unsteady market. These challenges are interrelated, as low inventory drives lower lead volume, which then intensifies competition and stress. While individual agents have unique situations, these survey results make clear that *finding clients* and *finding homes to sell* are the dominant struggles across the board this year. Sections 8 and 10 of this report will discuss how these pain points are impacting agent confidence and what strategies might address them.

Indicators of Optimism in the Industry

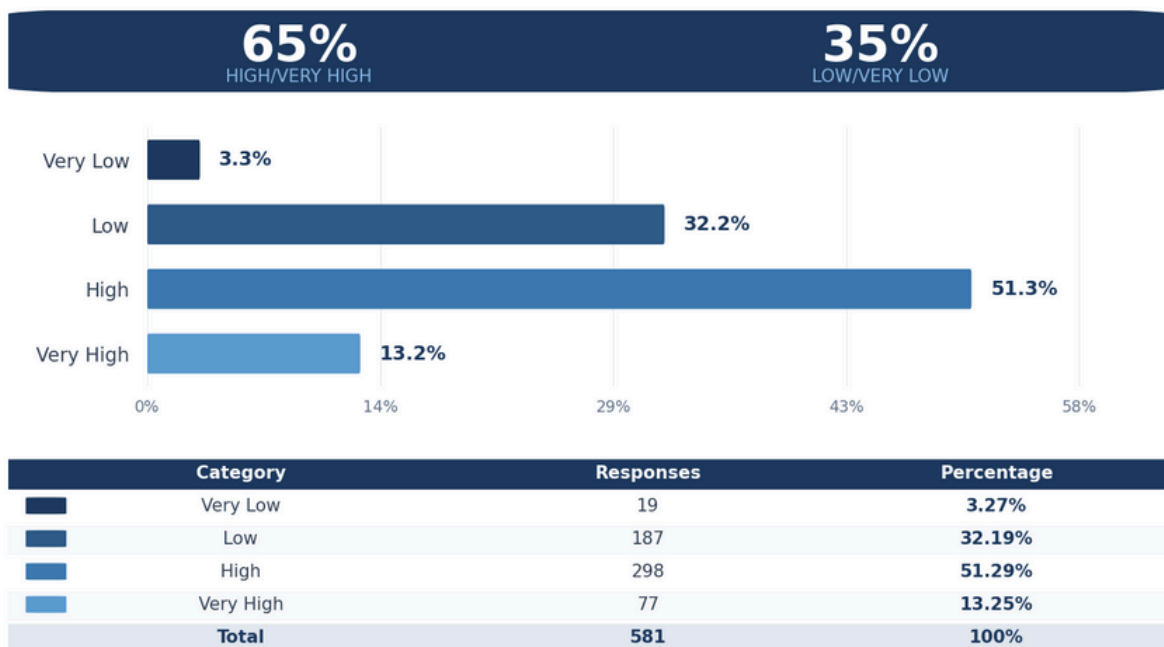
Despite the challenges, our research also revealed a number of **bright spots and reasons for optimism** among agents. It's not all gloom, and many agents are finding opportunities and hope for growth. Key indicators of this optimism include:

- **Personal career optimism is high.** As shown in their responses to question 11 of our survey, when asked about their *overall optimism for their real estate career in the next 12 months*, nearly **65% of agents expressed a “High” or “Very High” level of optimism**, versus about 35% who were pessimistic. In fact, only 3% said their optimism was “Very Low.” This suggests that, while they acknowledge market difficulties, a solid majority still feel good about their own prospects. Many agents appear confident in their ability to adapt and succeed. This optimism may stem from factors like experience (most respondents are seasoned and have seen down cycles before), as well as the knowledge that real estate runs in cycles. A tough year can be followed by a boom. Agents might be thinking: *“If I can get through this lean period, I’ll be well-positioned when the market improves.”*

Q11

581 Answered

Overall Career Optimism (Next 12 Months)

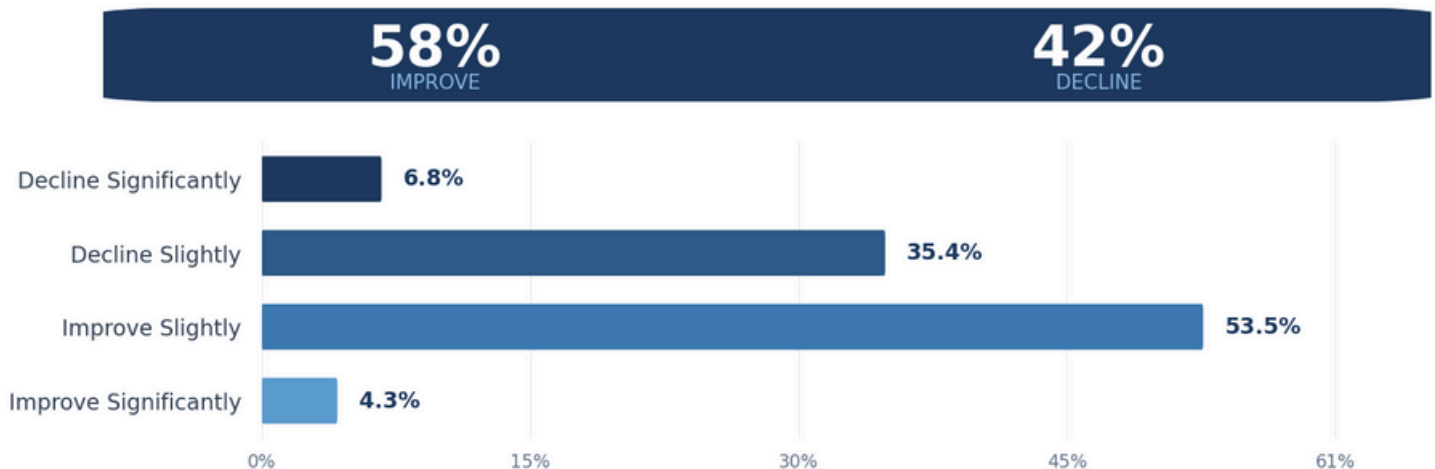


- **Expectation of improving market conditions.** More than half of surveyed agents **anticipate their local market will improve slightly in the next 6 months** (relative to a typical year). In Q16 of the survey, 53% predicted a slight uptick in sales/activity and another 4% predicted a significant improvement, far outweighing the ~42% who expected further declines. This forward-looking optimism likely reflects recent positive trends – e.g., mortgage rates coming down from their peak and a modest increase in inventory by late 2025. Agents might be sensing pent-up buyer demand that could be unleashed if conditions ease. Indeed, some economic forecasts, from sources such as The Mortgage Reports, support this cautious optimism: for example, Fannie Mae's October 2025 outlook projected **30-year mortgage rates dipping to ~6.0% by mid-2026**, which would be a tailwind for sales, and the Mortgage Bankers Association similarly forecast a rise in home sales in 2026 as affordability gradually improves. Many agents seem aware that the worst of the rate shock may be behind us.

Q16

559 Answered

Market Performance Expectations (Next 6 Months)

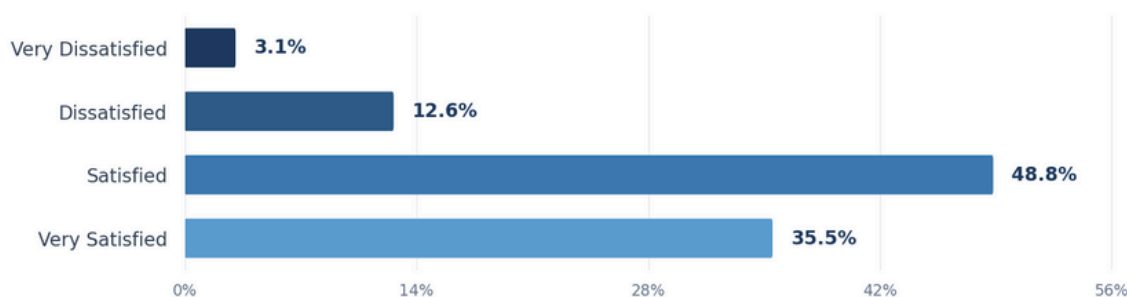


Category	Responses	Percentage
Decline Significantly	38	6.80%
Decline Slightly	198	35.42%
Improve Slightly	299	53.49%
Improve Significantly	24	4.29%
Total	559	100%

- **Resilient niches and new opportunities.** Even in a down market, certain segments thrived in 2025. **Luxury real estate** in some areas remained active (wealthy buyers less affected by rates). **Relocation markets** (areas seeing inbound migration) gave agents in those regions an uptick in business. New construction, as noted, created opportunity. Agents who developed relationships with builders or focused on selling new homes found an inventory pipeline. Additionally, some agents pivoted to specialties like **rentals or property management** to supplement income, effectively turning a slow sales year into an opportunity to diversify. These agents report feeling optimistic because they've carved out alternative revenue streams. One bright spot: **first-time buyers** gained a bit more bargaining power as competition eased, allowing patient agents to help clients who kept getting outbid in 2021-22 finally purchase homes. Several survey respondents noted satisfaction in *"finally helping longtime buyers land a home"* as a positive this year.
- **Training and support are improving.** Many agents feel optimistic because of the support systems around them. In the survey, about **84% are satisfied** or very satisfied with their brokerage's training and support offerings. Over two-thirds are similarly satisfied with their local REALTOR® association's support. This suggests that, even as the market slowed, brokers and organizations stepped up efforts to equip agents with skills (e.g., hosting more training on lead generation in a tough market, or how to handle the new commission landscape). Agents who take advantage of these resources can find new strategies to drum up business, which boosts confidence. For example, if a brokerage rolls out a new CRM or a lead referral program, that can give agents hope for more leads. One respondent mentioned a "back to basics" training series at their office that reignited their prospecting. Such initiatives are bright spots that can counteract pessimism.

Q22 555 Answered

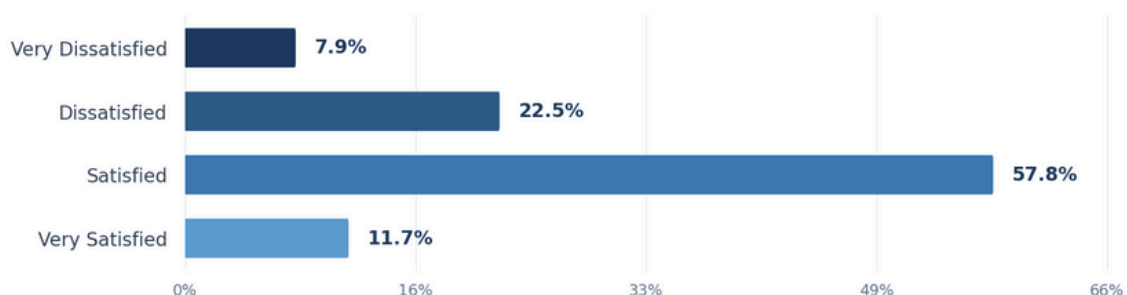
Broker/Company Training Satisfaction



Category	Responses	Percentage
Very Dissatisfied	17	3.06%
Dissatisfied	70	12.61%
Satisfied	271	48.83%
Very Satisfied	197	35.50%
Total	555	100%

Q25 555 Answered

Local Association Support



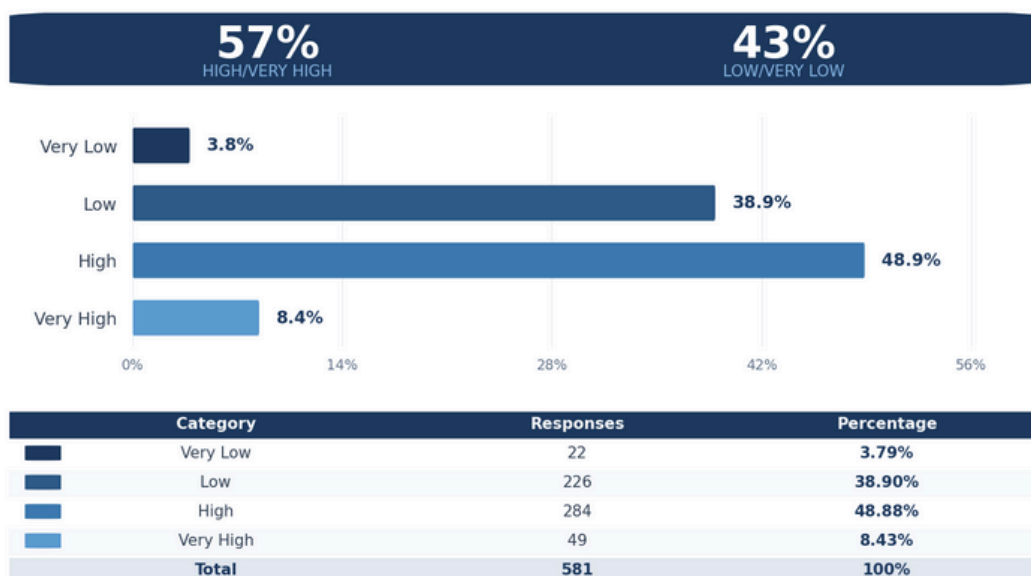
Category	Responses	Percentage
Very Dissatisfied	44	7.93%
Dissatisfied	125	22.52%
Satisfied	321	57.84%
Very Satisfied	65	11.71%
Total	555	100%

- **Market is stabilizing (no crash).** Another reason for guarded optimism is that the feared **housing crash** has not materialized. Home prices have generally held steady or risen slightly, as noted earlier, meaning homeowners and agents haven't seen a collapse in equity that would trigger widespread distress. While low sales volume is a challenge, the fact that **prices and client equity remain strong** is a silver lining. It's easier for agents to counsel sellers when values are not plummeting. Also, the broader U.S. economy remained fairly resilient in 2025 – unemployment stayed low (~4%), and inflation, though above target, began cooling. This stability gives hope that when rates do eventually fall, the housing sector can pick up momentum quickly rather than having to dig out of a crash. In short, agents are grateful that we're dealing with a **slowdown, not a meltdown**.

In conversations, many experienced real estate agents conveyed a message of *"this too shall pass."* They recall previous down cycles (2008, or the early '80s for some veterans) that were far more dire. By comparison, 2025's situation, while frustrating, is survivable. Indeed, current data points to some improvements on the horizon: **the supply of homes is rising**, new sellers are gradually coming off the sidelines, and according to The Mortgage Reports, rate forecasts for 2026 are flat-to-down. These indicators support a sense of cautious optimism. Reflecting this outlook, the majority of agents (**57%**) responding to our survey Question 12 said that they were confident their marketing/branding efforts would pay off over the next 12 months. As one survey respondent put it, *"I'm investing in marketing now to be ready for the spring – I sense it will turn into a better year."*

Q12 581 Answered

Marketing/Branding Confidence (Next 12 Months)



In summary, agents find optimism in **their own resilience** (high personal confidence), in **signs of market stabilization** (rates easing, inventory bottoming out), and in **the opportunities that still exist** (niche markets, new homes, supportive brokerages). The prevailing attitude is one of *hopeful perseverance* – acknowledging the difficulties but spotting the silver linings and positioning for an eventual rebound.

Trend Analysis: 2025 vs. Previous Periods

To put 2025 in perspective, it's useful to compare key trends against prior years. Several metrics illustrate how this year differed from, or continued, recent patterns:

- **Home sales volume** reached generational lows in 2024 and remained depressed in 2025, though with a slight uptick. In 2021, during the pandemic buying frenzy, existing-home sales hit around 6 million (annualized rate). By late 2022, as interest rates shot up, sales plummeted below 4.5 million. Redfin reported that **2023 marked a trough** in the market with existing home sales falling to their lowest level since 1995, roughly in the high-3 millions (SAAR). Currently, sales are still about **30% below** the last pre-pandemic year (2019) and **38% below** the 2021 peak. However, in 2025, sales have actually **stabilized around 4.0 - 4.2 million** annualized. For example, according to NAR, September 2025 saw a 4.06 million sales pace, which was actually *4.1% higher than a year prior*. This is the first year-over-year increase in sales volume in several years, suggesting the downward trend has finally reversed. Compared to the frenzied market of 2020–2021, the current transaction pace is dramatically lower, which is a key difference agents feel in their deal flow. The trend appears to have gone from **free-fall in 2022–23** to **flat/stabilizing in 2025**, with hopes of a modest rebound ahead. Realtor.com reported that the MBA forecasts just over 5 million total home sales in 2026, which would still be below the 2015–2019 norm of ~5.5M, but an improvement.

- **Housing inventory levels** have undergone a whiplash. In the 2018–2019 period, U.S. housing inventory was relatively balanced with about 5–6 months’ supply on average. During 2020–2021, inventory plunged to **record lows** – at one point in early 2022 there was only ~2 months’ supply of homes on the market nationally. 2023 remained extremely tight (2.5–3 months’ supply for much of the year). In 2025, inventory has ticked up. NAR reports a **4.6-month supply** as of Sep 2025, even though inventory is *not* back to pre-pandemic “normal” and remains roughly 10–15% below 2019 levels in absolute terms. Still, the supply levels are the highest since 2018 and up from 4.2 months a year earlier. This rise is partly due to slower sales (as noted, the numerator of months’ supply rose because sales fell), but also because, according to Redfin, new listings in 2025 slightly exceeded the rock-bottom listing rates of 2023. The trend here: **2025 broke the steep inventory downtrend** of the pandemic years, leveling off and even easing conditions marginally. Agents likely found it *slightly* easier to get buyers under contract in 2025 than in the multiple-offer madness of 2021, but inventory was still far from abundant.
- **Mortgage rates** have been on a historic rollercoaster. Looking back, the average 30-year fixed rate fell below 3% in 2020–2021 (an all-time low of ~2.65% in January 2021). Then the Fed’s fight against inflation caused rates to surge, and by late 2022, 30-year rates hit ~7%, the highest in 20+ years. In 2023, rates fluctuated between about 6% and 7.5%, peaking near 8% briefly in late 2023. In 2025, we saw a **moderation** with rates staying mostly in the low-to-mid 6% range, especially by the second half of the year. For example, Freddie Mac reported 6.22% in Nov 2025 vs 6.79% in Nov 2024. The trend can be summarized as going **from record lows (‘20-‘21) to two-decade highs (‘22-‘23) to slight easing (‘25)**. This trajectory has huge implications for agent activity. It essentially dictated the boom, bust, and recent stabilization of buyer demand. Notably, according to the Mortgage Bankers Association, the **spread** between mortgage rates and the 10-year Treasury yield remains elevated compared to historical norms, which some analysts expect to normalize (narrow) in 2026, potentially bringing rates under 6% if economic conditions allow.

- **Buyer and seller behavior** has shifted relative to prior periods. In the red-hot 2021 market, buyers were frantic, as evidenced by waived inspections and bids well over asking, and sellers held all the cards. In 2023–2024, that flipped to a bit to buyers being very cautious and/or sidelined by affordability. Sellers also lost some leverage because homes took longer to sell, so price cuts became more common. Our survey indicates that in 2025, *60% of agents said buyer activity was lower than typical* (only ~11% saw higher activity). For sellers, ~51% of agents said listing activity was lower. Compared to 2022 when activity plummeted suddenly, 2025 was more of a continuation of a sluggish pace, with **seasonality returning** somewhat (e.g. a busier spring then cooling by fall), rather than the frenetic year-round demand of 2021. One positive trend was that the **percentage of contracts falling through** rose compared to the hypercompetitive period. Redfin noted that in 2025 more buyers are walking away from deals or negotiating repairs, which while not great for individual deals, does suggest a healthier balance of power and due diligence compared to the anything-goes deals of the pandemic boom.
- **Agent sentiment trends.** Since this is the first Agent Confidence Index survey of this kind, with 2025 as the inaugural edition, we can't directly compare the survey results to prior years' survey data. However, we can use proxy measures. NAR's REALTOR® Confidence Index, which measures buyer/seller traffic sentiment, etc., and anecdotal evidence from prior years, indicate that **agent confidence was extremely high in 2021**. It then dropped in late 2022 as the market turned. In 2023, many agents felt a sharp decline in business. That year saw a large number of newer agents leave the field as deals dried up. By 2025, our data suggests a *rebound in personal confidence*, likely because those who remained in the industry are experienced and have adjusted expectations. For example, in late 2022 NAR's REALTOR® Confidence survey showed low readings on buyer traffic and sales expectations, whereas our late-2025 survey finds a majority expecting at least slight improvement ahead. This points to a trend of **recovering optimism** among agents compared to the gloomier sentiment a year or two ago. Additionally, the fact that 86% of surveyed agents are confident they'll still be active in real estate next year (2026) speaks to a *renewed commitment*. In 2020–21, many new agents joined for easy money. In 2022–23 some left when it got hard, and in 2025 those who remain are in it for the long haul, prepared to weather the storm.

The trends of the past few years have been extreme, and 2025 sits at an inflection point. **Compared to the previous period** (2020–2022), we have lower activity and higher interest rates but **compared to the immediate past year** (2023–24), we see early signs of stabilization with slightly more inventory, leveling off of sales declines, and a bounce-back of agent morale. The hope is that 2026 will continue this nascent upward trajectory. Industry forecasts indeed predict **moderate improvement**, with [MBA](#) expecting single-family mortgage originations to rise ~8% in 2026, and [Realtor.com](#) reporting total home sales to potentially climb back above 5 million. If those materialize, 2025 will be remembered as the turning point from downturn to gradual recovery.

Demographic Breakdown of Survey Respondents

Understanding **who** participated in the Agent Confidence survey is important for context. The 629 responding agents represent a diverse cross-section of experience levels, geographic regions, and business profiles, though with a tilt toward seasoned professionals. Here's a breakdown:

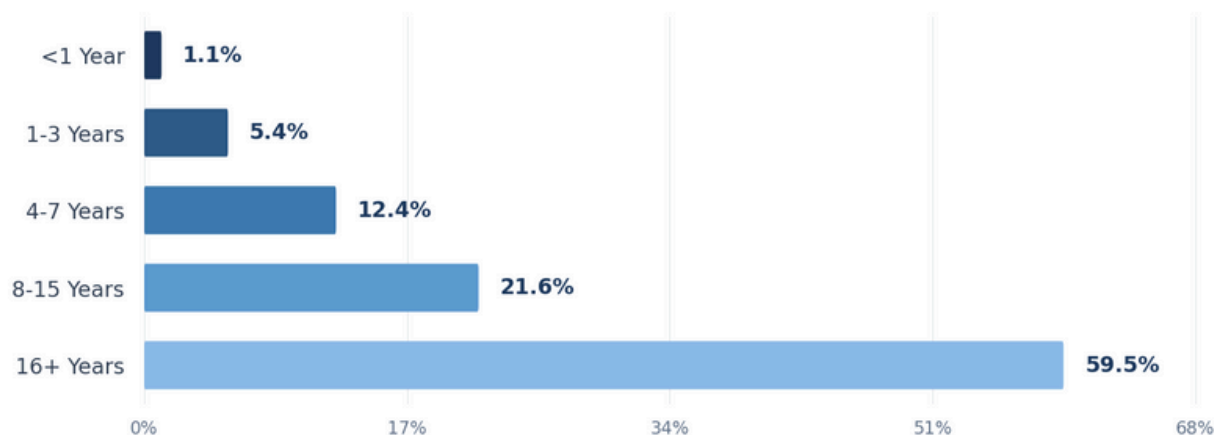
- **Experience:** The vast majority of respondents are **experienced agents**. About **59% have 16+ years in the business**, and an additional ~22% have 8–15 years' experience. Only ~6.5% are relatively new (under 3 years). This means the data heavily reflects the views of long-time real estate agents who have seen multiple market cycles. It's likely that newer agents, those who entered the real estate business during the 2020–21 boom, are under-represented, possibly because many have left the field or are less connected to industry surveys. The high experience level could also explain the generally high confidence in handling changes, as veterans typically have more training and past context to draw from.

Q1 629 Answered

Years Licensed

59%
16+ YEARS

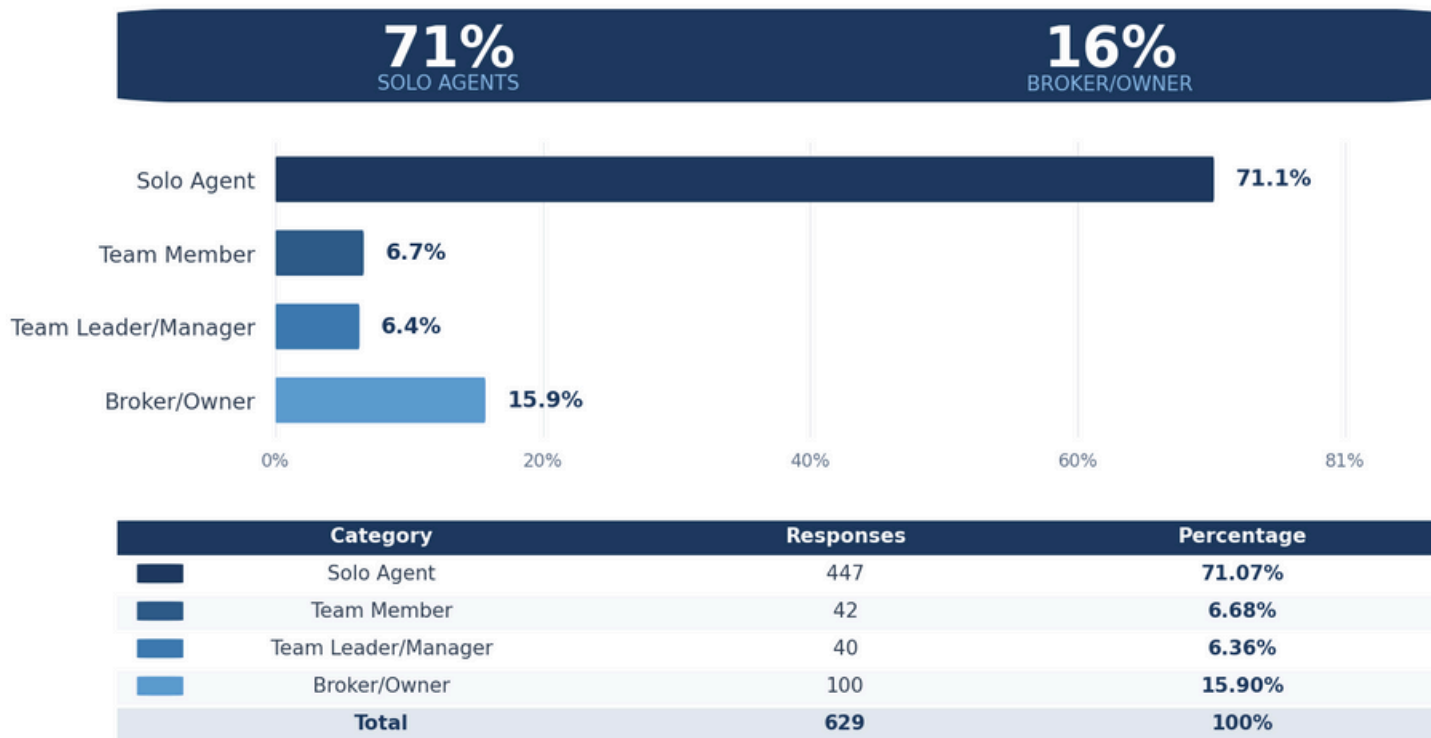
81%
8+ YEARS



	Category	Responses	Percentage
	<1 Year	7	1.11%
	1-3 Years	34	5.41%
	4-7 Years	78	12.40%
	8-15 Years	136	21.62%
	16+ Years	374	59.46%
	Total	629	100%

- **Role:** A large portion are **independent front-line agents**. Specifically, **71% identified as solo agents**, running their own business without a team. About 7% are team members, 6% team leaders, and ~16% are broker/owners of their firm. This suggests the insights skew toward the perspective of individual agents working with clients, as opposed to managers. The broker/owners who responded likely are still actively selling or closely overseeing sales. Solo agents' dominance in the sample is notable because they often feel market shifts the most without a team to buffer lean times.

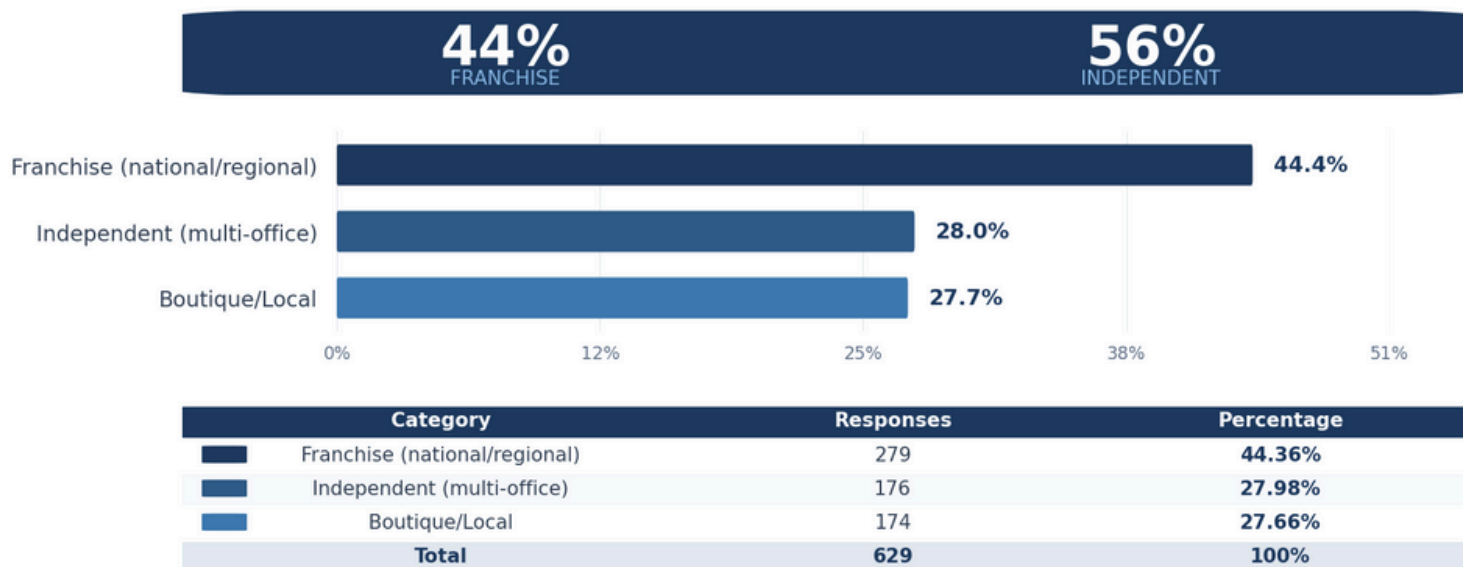
Your Role



- **Brokerage Type:** Respondents came from a mix of brokerage models. **44% work under national/regional franchise brands** like RE/MAX, Keller Williams, and Coldwell Banker. Another ~28% are with independent brokerages that have multiple offices or multi-state presence, and ~28% are with **boutique local brokerages** (non-franchise, single-office firms). This indicates a healthy mix of corporate and independent settings. Franchise agents may have different support systems, such as brand tools and referral networks, compared to boutique agents. Our data didn't find major confidence differences by brokerage type, but it's an area for future exploration.

Q3 629 Answered

Brokerage Type



- Geography:** Agents from **all U.S. regions** participated. The survey categorized regions in the standard NAR groups: Northeast (New England and Mid-Atlantic), Midwest (East and West North Central), South (South Atlantic, East South Central, West South Central), Mountain West, and Pacific. The largest shares of respondents were from the **South Atlantic states and Pacific states**, which aligns with population and REALTOR® membership distribution. For instance, the South Atlantic (which includes Florida, Georgia, the Carolinas, etc.) typically has a big REALTOR® count and indeed we see a significant portion from there. The Pacific region (West Coast and Hawaii) also is well-represented. Roughly speaking, the South (all divisions combined) accounted for around 45–50% of responses, the Northeast ~15%, Midwest ~15–20%, and West (Mountain + Pacific) ~15–20%. This corresponds quite well to the national REALTOR® population distribution, so geographically the sample is broad and representative. Urban vs rural split wasn't directly asked but given coverage areas (next point) we infer many work across suburban markets.

Q6

629 Answered

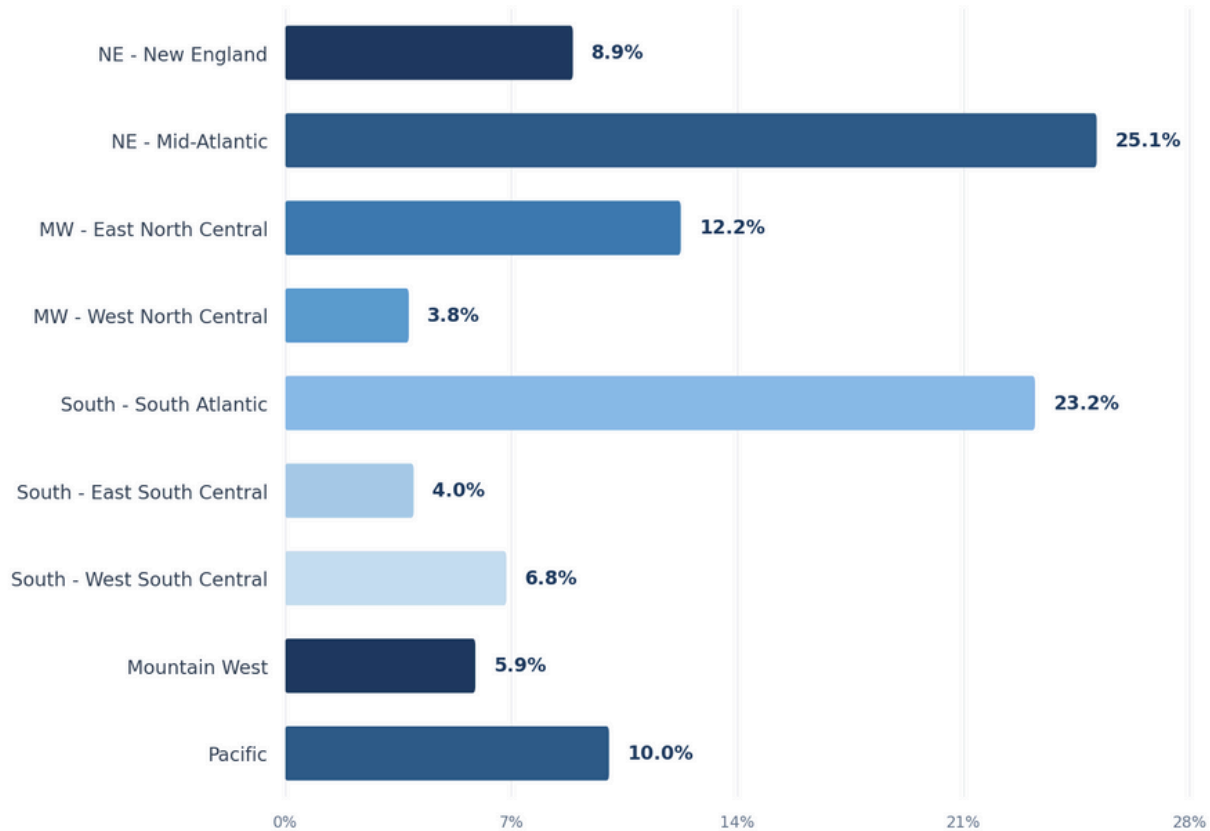
Region

25%

MID-ATLANTIC

23%

SOUTH ATLANTIC

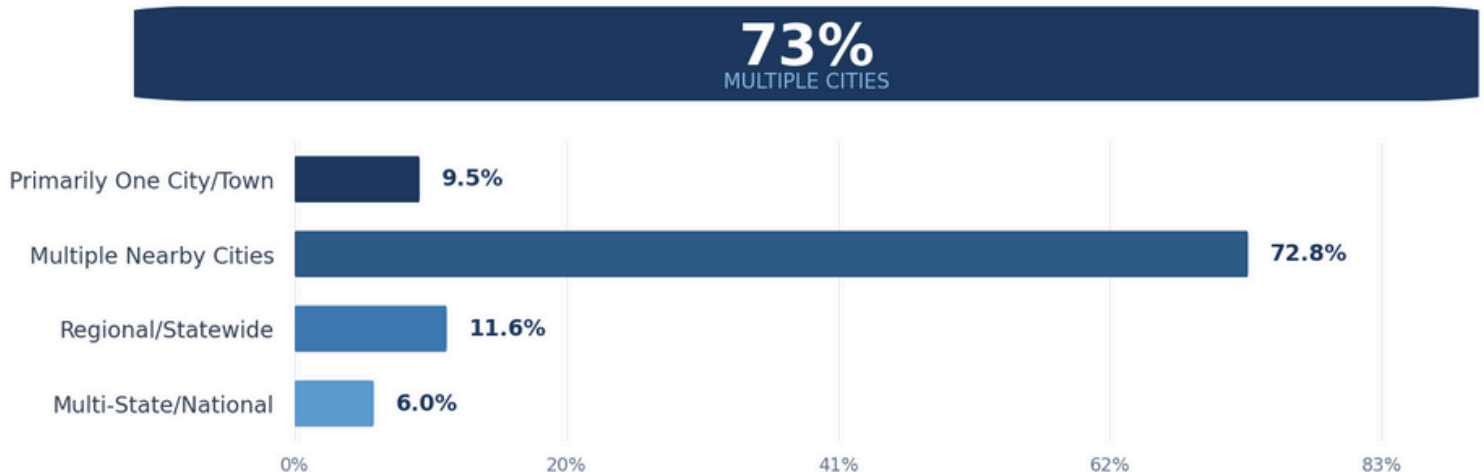


Category	Responses	Percentage
NE - New England	56	8.90%
NE - Mid-Atlantic	158	25.12%
MW - East North Central	77	12.24%
MW - West North Central	24	3.82%
South - South Atlantic	146	23.21%
South - East South Central	25	3.97%
South - West South Central	43	6.84%
Mountain West	37	5.88%
Pacific	63	10.02%
Total	629	100%

- **Market coverage:** Agents were asked about the scope of their market or “farm” area. Only **about 10% focus primarily on a single city or town**. The bulk, **73%, cover multiple nearby cities/towns** as their main service area. Another ~12% operate region-wide or statewide, and ~6% have multi-state or national client bases (e.g., specializing in referrals or relocation across states). This tells us most agents are not strictly hyper-local but rather cover a metro area or several communities. This occurrence is fairly common, as agents often go where the business is. It also implies that when they report on “local market conditions,” that often refers to a broader metro market, not just a single neighborhood.

Q4 629 Answered

Market Coverage



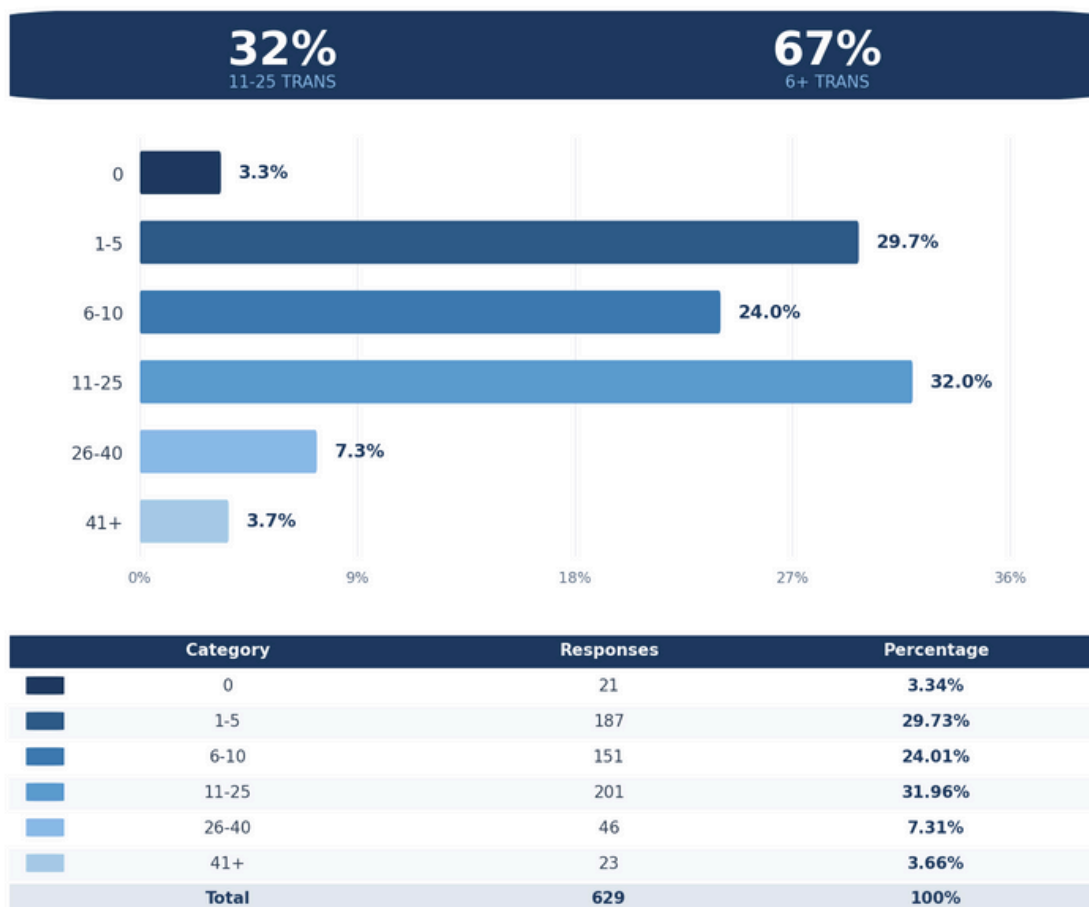
Category	Responses	Percentage
Primarily One City/Town	60	9.54%
Multiple Nearby Cities	458	72.81%
Regional/Statewide	73	11.61%
Multi-State/National	38	6.04%
Total	629	100%

- **Production level:** There was a wide range in the number of transactions closed in the past year. About **25% of respondents did 1–5 transactions** in the last 12 months, which could indicate part-time agents or those hit hard by the slowdown. Roughly another **23% handled 11–25 transactions**, which is a solid mid-tier producer. The data suggests perhaps around 12% closed 6–10 deals, and roughly 11–12% closed over 25 deals (higher-volume producers). Specifically, only a small elite (~4% of respondents) did 40+ deals in the past year. On the other end, a few (perhaps ~4%) reported **0 transactions** in the last 12 months – these could be new agents or those who took a hiatus. In summary, the median agent in our sample likely did around 8–12 deals in the past year, and the average a bit higher (skewed by top producers). This aligns with national stats that many agents do under 10 deals/year. It's worth noting the high experience level but relatively low recent production for many – a sign of how tough 2025 was, that even veteran agents aren't necessarily doing high volume right now.

Q5

629 Answered

Average Annual Transactions (Last 12 Months)

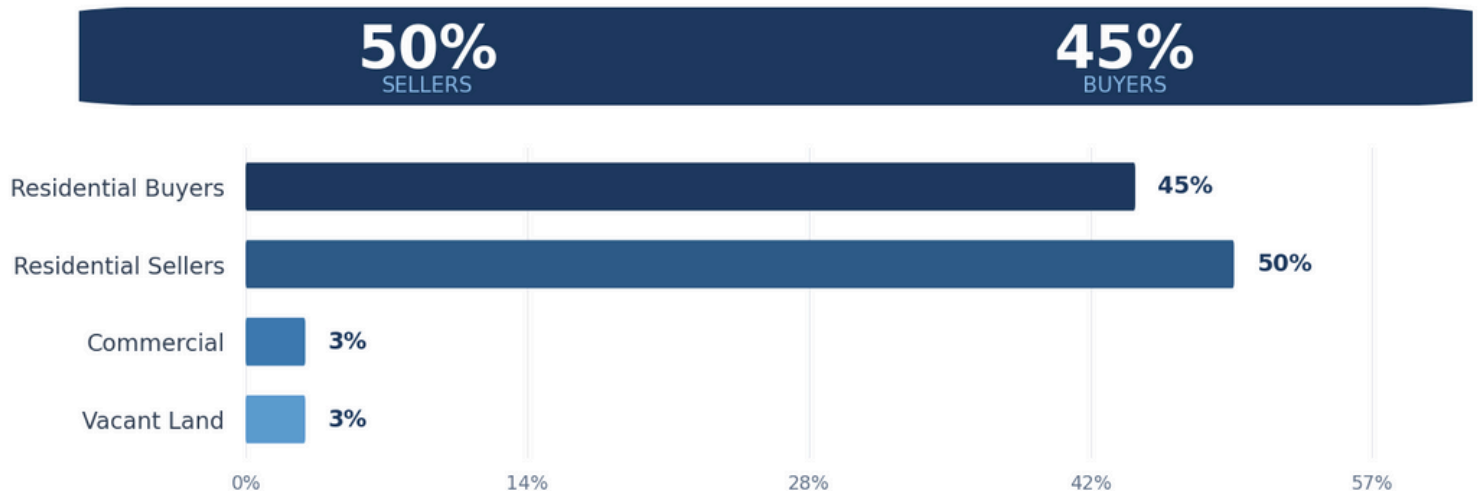


- **Business mix:** Agents were asked where the majority of their closings come from (residential buyers, residential sellers, commercial, or land). Unsurprisingly, **residential transactions dominate**. Most agents are primarily working with a mix of buyers and sellers in the residential space. Very few focus mainly on commercial or land deals. The respondents split roughly **50/50 between buyer-sides and seller-sides** in terms of business focus, which is typical, as many agents work both sides. A minority specialize predominantly as listing agents or buyer's agents, but overall, there's a balance. This indicates that survey sentiments (like confidence, concerns) are grounded in the residential resale market dynamics.

Q7

629 Answered

Where Do Closings Come From?



Category	Responses	Percentage
Residential Buyers	629	45%
Residential Sellers	629	50%
Commercial	629	3%
Vacant Land	536	3%
Total	2423	100%

The **demographic profile** of the Agent Confidence Index respondents skewed toward **experienced, solo residential agents**, covering multiple communities, and doing a moderate volume of business (many of them in that 5–15 deals/year range, with some high achievers and some struggling newbies in the mix). This context is helpful when interpreting results. For example, the generally high confidence in handling legal changes (Section 3) makes sense given most respondents are industry veterans. Likewise, the pain points (Section 4), like lead generation, are perennial issues but are felt even by seasoned agents when volume is down.

One might wonder if newer agents or those who left the business would have answered differently (perhaps more pessimistically), but our data essentially captures the perspective of **the backbone of the industry**: long-term agents who are committed to weathering the storm. These demographics also imply that the **recommendations** we outline (Section 10) should especially resonate with this cohort, focusing on supporting the solo, experienced agent in the field.

Confidence Drivers: What's Fueling or Hurting Agent Confidence?

Agent confidence in 2025 is being shaped by competing forces. Some trends are reinforcing optimism and providing a sense of stability, while others are weighing on agents and creating uncertainty. Understanding these dynamics helps clarify why sentiment is split between confidence and concern. Based on our survey and broader industry conditions, the main drivers of agent confidence include:

Factors Driving Confidence Up:

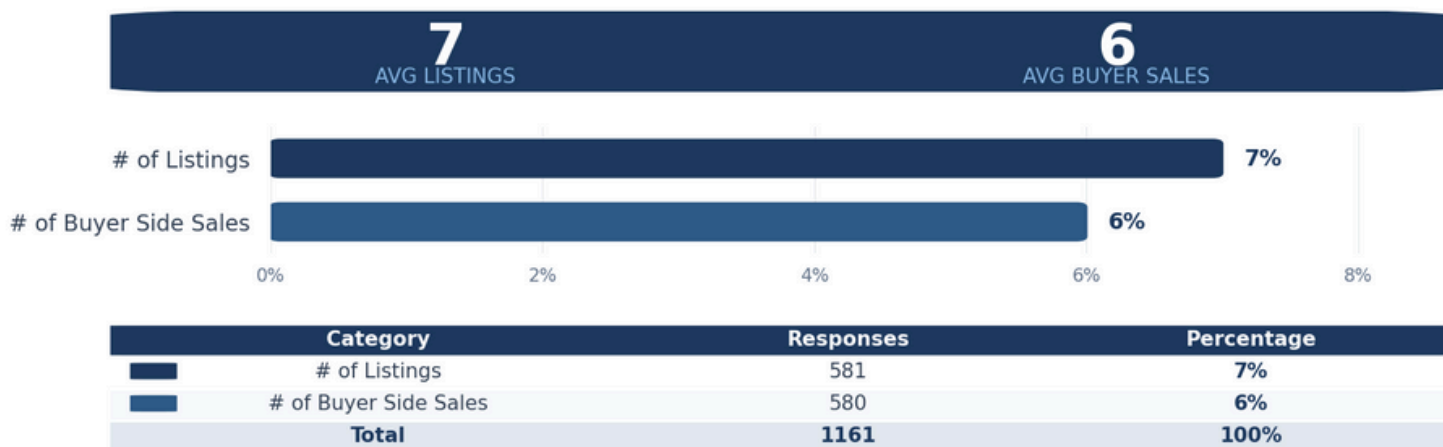
- **Experience and Past Success:** As noted, most respondents are seasoned professionals. Having lived through prior market cycles, like the 2008 downturn or the early-90s slump, instills a sense of *"I can handle this."* Many know that downturns eventually give way to recoveries. In the survey, agents' confidence in *staying in real estate* was extremely high. **86% are highly confident they'll still be active a year from now.** This suggests a durable commitment. Experience also breeds skill: veteran agents have deep client bases and referral networks to lean on, which boosts their confidence that they can drum up business even in slow times.

- **Strong Personal Pipelines:** Some agents reported that they still have solid pipelines, even if the overall market is down. For instance, when asked how many deals they expect from their current leads in the next 90 days (Q9), many agents were able to project a few upcoming transactions. Those who have **nurtured pipelines**, either through consistent follow-ups or specializing in an active niche, feel confident because they see business on the horizon. Anecdotally, an agent commented that *"I have three listings coming up in spring thanks to long-time prospects – that keeps me confident."* Maintaining even a modest flow of clients can significantly buoy an agent's outlook.

Q9

581 Answered

Personal Pipeline - Next 90 Days



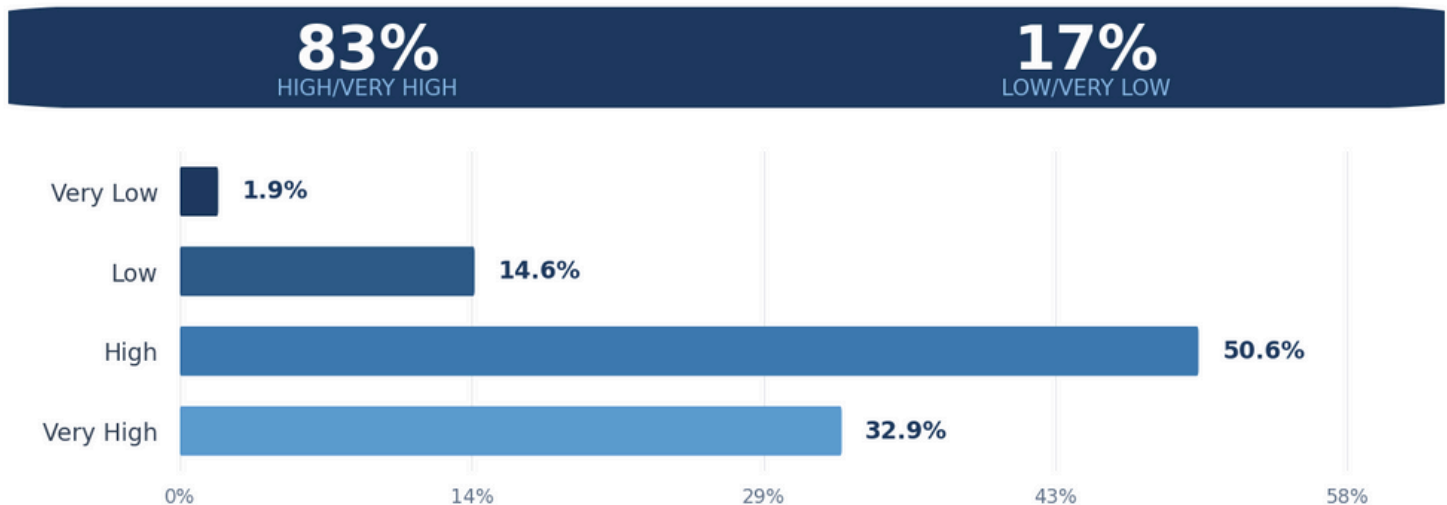
- **Brokerage and Team Support:** A supportive brokerage or team environment can prop up individual confidence. As mentioned in Section 5, a large majority of agents are satisfied with their brokerage's training and support. Many brokerages in 2025 responded to the market cooldown by *doubling down on coaching, mentorship, and lead assistance*. This includes things like one-on-one business planning sessions, providing agents with company-generated leads or advertising, and offering new tech tools, such as CRMs and marketing platforms, that make agents feel more equipped. Agents who feel their company "has their back" reported higher confidence in hitting their goals. The survey's weighted average for *confidence in hitting sales goals* was around 2.6 out of 4 (where 3=High confidence) – not sky high, but not low either and it's likely higher among those plugged into strong support systems.

- **Adaptability and Skill Development:** Some agents have taken the challenging market as a cue to *improve their skills*, and as they build competency, their confidence grows. For example, agents who invested time in learning new lead generation tactics, like mastering social media ads or hosting first-time buyer seminars, now feel more control over their business. The survey shows notable confidence in certain professional skills: **83% feel confident in adjusting their business to comply with new laws/rules**, such as the commission policy changes. Gaining clarity on those changes through education has removed fear of the unknown. Similarly, **~80% feel confident in their ability to use the correct contracts/forms**. This skill is a basic but crucial one, and it shows agents trust their own knowledge. Competence provides a baseline of confidence; agents are not doubting their *ability* to do the job, only whether the market will give them the opportunity.

Q10

581 Answered

Confidence in New RE Laws Compliance



Category	Responses	Percentage
Very Low	11	1.89%
Low	85	14.63%
High	294	50.60%
Very High	191	32.87%
Total	581	100%

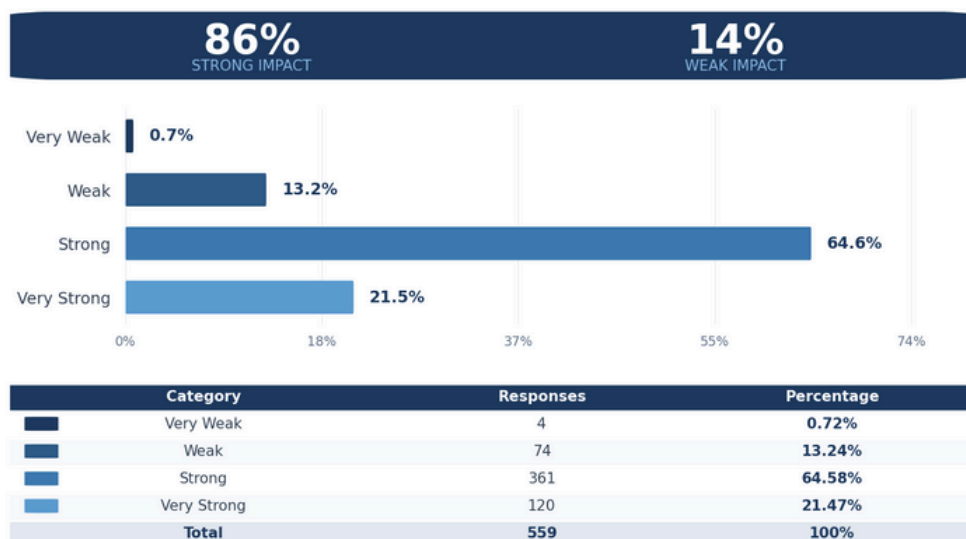
- **Client Relationships and Reputation:** Agents who have built a **strong reputation and trust** in their community are finding that clients continue to seek them out, which is a huge confidence booster. Repeat clients and referrals are especially valuable in slow times. One agent mentioned that *“past clients are still calling me for advice and listings, which makes me confident that I’ll have business no matter the market.”* Knowing that one has a loyal client base or is seen as a local market expert feeds an agent’s self-assurance. In the survey, when asked about what would make the biggest difference to their business, some agents wrote in responses like “more referrals” or “client testimonials to share.” These types of responses indicating they value and recognize the power of their network.

Factors Driving Confidence Down:

- **High Interest Rates and Affordability Woes:** The **interest rate environment** is a major drag on confidence. **86% of agents said interest rates have a strong or very strong impact on their business.** When rates are high, many buyers step back and sellers hesitate, resulting in fewer transactions and more challenging deals that often involve closing-cost requests or prolonged negotiations. Agents feel this slowdown directly in their income. Several qualitative survey comments echoed the sentiment that “if rates would just come down a bit, things would loosen up.” Until that happens, many agents worry that even strong effort may not translate into closed deals, which can be demotivating.

Q19 559 Answered

Interest Rate Impact on Business

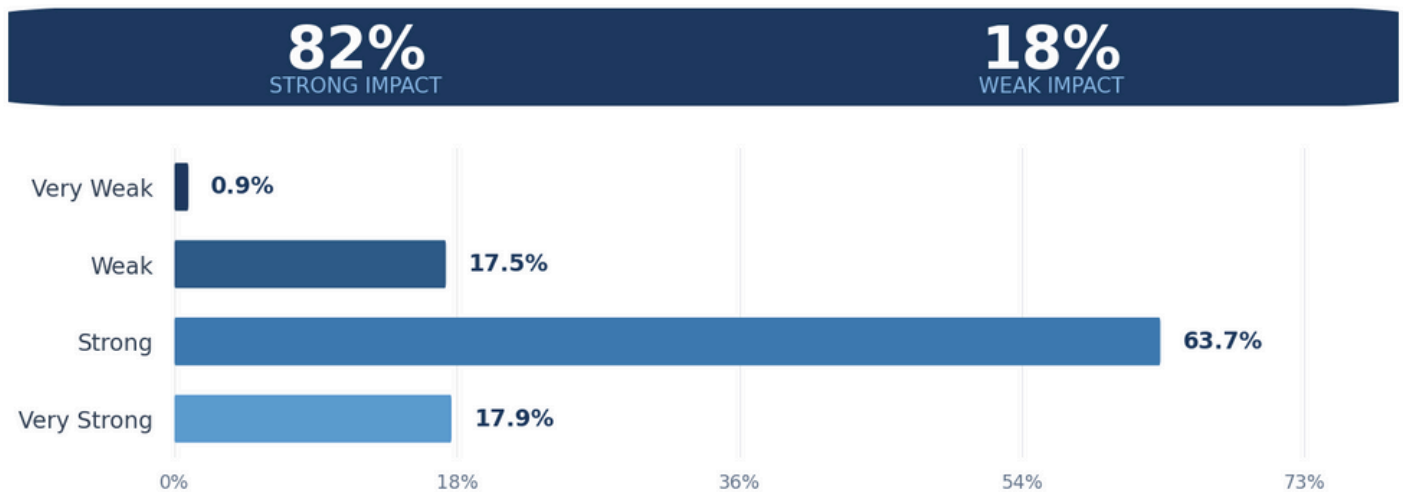


- **Negative Media and Economic News:** The constant drumbeat of negative headlines, including coverage of housing recessions, rising consumer costs, and global conflicts, also weighs on agent psyche. About **81% of agents said current media/economic headlines are affecting their clients' confidence and behavior**, with nearly 18% saying very strong impact. When clients are skittish due to what they read or hear, transactions become harder. Agents then internalize some of that pessimism. Consumer sentiment dipping can lead agents to question whether it's worth ramping up marketing and other efforts if buyers are sitting on the fence. However, a confident agent might flip this driver by controlling the narrative for their clients and educating them beyond the headlines.

Q20

559 Answered

Media & Economic Headlines Impact



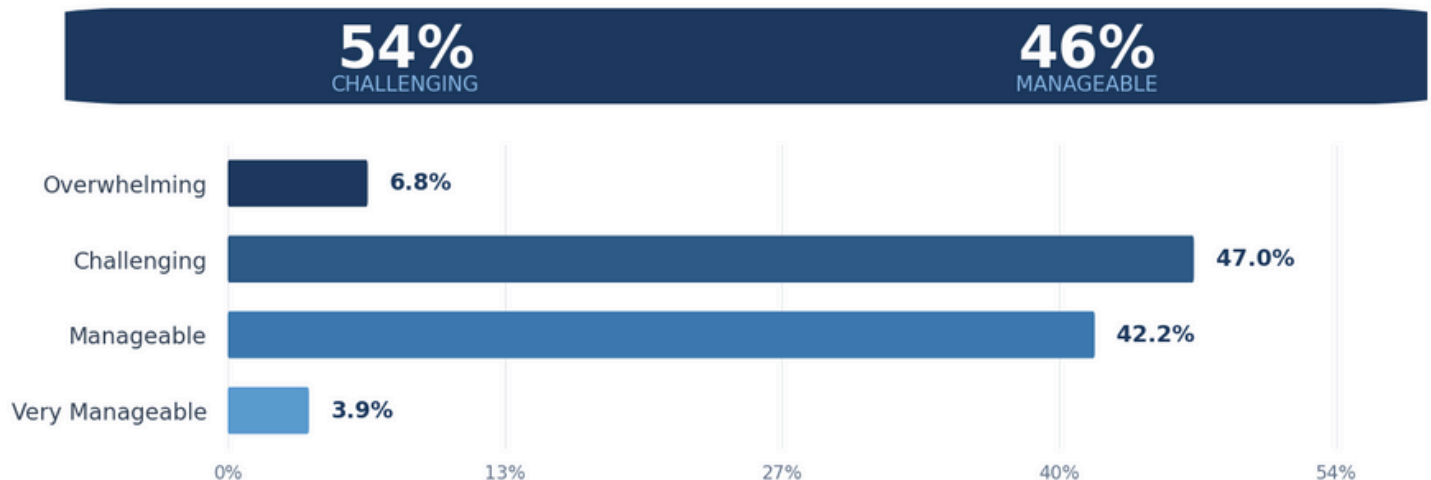
	Category	Responses	Percentage
	Very Weak	5	0.89%
	Weak	98	17.53%
	Strong	356	63.69%
	Very Strong	100	17.89%
	Total	559	100%

- **Lack of Inventory & Resulting Competition:** As identified in Pain Points, the **inventory shortage** makes each potential deal hard-fought. This can chip away at confidence, especially for buyer's agents who keep encountering obstacles, such as a lack of suitable inventory to show clients. It's tough to stay confident about hitting your sales targets when there simply aren't enough homes to sell. Additionally, low inventory intensifies **agent-to-agent competition** for listings; winning listings is a huge confidence factor. If an agent repeatedly loses listings to competitors, perhaps because sellers are uber-selective in this market, it can cause doubt. Fortunately, our survey shows most agents consider competition "challenging but not crushing." Only ~7% said competition among agents is overwhelming in their market, while ~42% call it manageable. Still, the current climate does mean more agents fighting over fewer deals, which is inherently tough on morale.

Q21

559 Answered

Competition Level Among Agents



Category	Responses	Percentage
Overwhelming	38	6.80%
Challenging	263	47.05%
Manageable	236	42.22%
Very Manageable	22	3.94%
Total	559	100%

- **Financial Strain and Uncertainty:** For many, fewer closings directly equate to **financial stress**. Agents don't have a fixed salary, so a slow quarter means bills still pile up but income doesn't. In Q13 of the survey, about **33% of agents had low confidence** that they will make the money they need in the next 12 months to cover personal expenses. Two-thirds were confident, but that one-third is significant. These agents are worried about paying the mortgage, health insurance, and other financial necessities. Financial strain is a confidence killer. Moreover, even agents who feel financially stable expressed concern about broader uncertainties, such as not knowing when the market will turn or whether a recession could further weaken real estate activity. Approximately 12% of respondents identified market uncertainty as their top concern. Until there is a clearer sense of recovery, this uncertainty continues to weigh on overall confidence.
- **Burnout and Emotional Fatigue:** While not the top-ranked concern, **burnout** is indeed affecting some agents' confidence. After the frantic years of 2020-2021, followed by two punishing slow years, a number of agents are simply *tired*. The emotional whiplash has drained some of the energy and optimism that typically support confidence. Some respondents mentioned difficulty staying motivated or "feeling stuck in a rut" as their biggest challenge. Burnout can manifest as procrastination on prospecting or a negative mindset, which then reinforces lack of results. It's a quieter driver of low confidence but an important one to address, as we will in recommendations.

Agent confidence is a balance of **internal** and **external** factors. **Internal strengths**, such as experience, skills, support systems, and relationships, are keeping confidence afloat or even high for many. **External** challenges, including interest rates, the economy, and housing inventory, apply pressure that tests that confidence. The survey data tends to show internal confidence, about one's own career or skills, is higher than external confidence, confidence in the market or in clients' readiness. For instance, 64% are optimistic about their own career (internal) but only ~48% described their current market as strong (external). That gap suggests agents largely believe *"I can do it, if the market gives me a chance"*. Thus, drivers like interest rates and media narratives are the swing factors that can either validate or undermine an agent's self-belief. The next section (Predictions/Outlook) will consider how those might change heading into 2026.

Predictions and Forward-Looking Outlook for 2026

Both the surveyed agents and industry forecasters provide insights into what **2026** might hold. The general expectation is for a *gradual improvement* in housing market conditions, though not a return to the frenzy of early 2021. Here are the key predictions and outlook themes:

- **Sales volume and market activity:** Agents are largely expecting a **mild uptick in activity** in 2026. As noted, ~57% of survey respondents predicted their market will improve, at least slightly, in the next 6 months. They anticipate more buyers will re-engage as conditions stabilize. This aligns with projections from major housing economists. The Mortgage Bankers Association (MBA) projects total **existing-home sales to increase in 2026**, citing improved affordability and growing inventory. MBA's chief economist forecasts that as mortgage rates ease a bit and home prices flatten, more buyers will be able to transact, leading to a rise in home sales. According to Realtor.com, MBA expects ~5.0 million existing sales in 2026, up from an estimated ~4.2 million in 2025. Similarly, Fannie Mae's October 2025 forecast called for a modest sales rebound in 2026. Therefore, agents can expect **more transaction opportunities**, with perhaps a 5–10% increase in deals nationally, which should relieve some pressure. That said, sales will likely remain below long-term normals, so 2026 may feel more like a step on the road to recovery rather than a boom.
- **Mortgage rates and financing environment:** The interest rate outlook is a crucial factor. The consensus among forecasters is that **rates may inch down but stay in mid-range**. The Mortgage Reports noted that Fannie Mae's economists see 30-year fixed rates ending 2025 around 6.3% and dipping to about **5.9% by Q4 2026**. The Mortgage Bankers Association is a bit less optimistic on rate drops, essentially predicting rates hold around **6.4% throughout 2026**. Furthermore, the Fed cut short-term rates modestly in 2025 to support the economy, but long-term mortgage rates could remain elevated if inflation expectations and federal deficits keep the 10-year Treasury above 4%. In plain terms, agents should plan for **mortgage rates in the 5.5%–6.5% range** in 2026, which is clearly better than the peak 7–8%, but not a return to the ultra-low era. However, even a half-point drop in rates can bring some buyers back into qualification range. We might also see **innovative financing** options, such as ARMs, seller buydowns, and assumable mortgages, gain popularity and help sales. Overall, financing should be *slightly more favorable* for buyers in 2026 than it was in 2025, aiding confidence.

- **Inventory and home prices:** On the supply side, conditions are expected to **gradually loosen**. MBA noted that **housing supply has increased in recent months** and predicts this will continue, which should put “*downward pressure on home prices*” into 2026. In fact, MBA expects **national home prices to decline slightly for a few quarters**, perhaps on the order of a few percent. This doesn’t imply a crash, but rather a gentle correction in overheated markets and flat prices elsewhere. As existing-home owners adjust to the new normal, more are expected to list their properties, especially those whose life circumstances require a move despite higher rates. Combined with continued new-home construction, this should give buyers a bit more choice.
- Agents predict that **sellers who were holding out will increasingly decide to list in 2026**, accepting that a 6% mortgage on their next home might be the reality. The survey reflects some optimism here: agents expect a somewhat stronger spring market in 2026 as more inventory hits. We saw over 48% calling current local markets strong by late 2025, which could rise further if inventory improves. In short, anticipate **listing inventory to tick up** and price growth to be flat to slightly negative in 2026, making it easier for buyers to find homes and negotiate, which in turn could spur more transactions.
- **Buyer and seller behavior changes:** Agents believe buyers who postponed purchases in 2022–2025 will slowly return, especially **first-time buyers** who have now saved more and are motivated by slightly lower rates and more options. Many agents in the survey commented that their first-time buyer pipelines are building. They expect 2026 to bring those folks “off the fence.” For sellers, the outlook is that **motivation will increase**. Some homeowners who didn’t want to sell at 3% may decide to sell at 6% because they need to upsize/downsize or move for jobs. Also, if home prices stagnate or dip, it may jolt some into selling sooner than later in order to cash out equity. So, the prediction is for *gradually rising mobility*. Redfin’s stat about record-low mobility in 2025 will hopefully start reversing in 2026 as people accept new conditions. Agents also predict **more realistic expectations** from both parties: sellers might not expect crazy bidding wars, and buyers might realize 5–6% rates are the “new normal” and adjust their budgets accordingly. This normalization could make transactions smoother.

- **Industry adjustments and business models:** On the industry side, 2026 will likely be a year where the **commission rule changes** play out more fully. Agents predict more buyers will enter into formal rep agreements and possibly agree to pay their agents directly if needed, especially with seller concessions or price adjustments to offset. The survey showed agents growing confident in explaining these changes, so by 2026 this might be standard practice. We also may see **brokerages offering new value propositions**. Some might lower commission splits or fees to retain agents in the wake of the lawsuits or enhance lead gen offerings. Agents expect the big franchise brands and NAR to roll out efforts to demonstrate value, given the membership discontent. Another prediction: **agent count** may decrease slightly before stabilizing, as 2025 likely saw some attrition of part-time agents. By mid-2026, those who remain will enjoy a bit less competition, with fewer active agents. The decrease in competition could mean more leads per agent. This is hard to quantify, but historically agent population follows market cycles, peaking in boom times and contracting in busts.
- **External economic conditions:** Most forecasts assume no major recession in 2026 but rather a soft landing or mild slowdown. The Freddie Mac outlook mentioned an expectation of **moderating growth and slightly higher unemployment (~4.7% by mid-2026)**. This could actually help housing by easing inflation and rates without a big spike in joblessness. However, there are wildcards: if inflation resurges or geopolitical events occur, all bets are off. Agents in the survey remain wary but generally are not bracing for a recession-driven housing dip. Consumer sentiment might improve as inflation subsides. One Florida Realtors' report noted a slight dip in sentiment in late 2025, but that could reverse if people feel finances improving in 2026.

The **2026 outlook** among agents is **guardedly optimistic**: *"better than 2025, but not a boom."* Key metrics like sales and listings should improve, supporting agent income, and the industry will adapt to new norms in commissions and technology, hopefully making transactions more efficient. Agents are preparing by sharpening skills. Many in the survey indicated plans for increased prospecting and marketing for the new year and staying informed on market trends. The expectation is that **confidence will gradually rise** if the market follows this improving trajectory. In fact, one could imagine that if we run the Agent Confidence Index survey in late 2026, we might record higher optimism scores and fewer citing inventory or rates as critical problems. Of course, agents also know that real estate can defy predictions. As one respondent wisely said, *"Plan for the worst, hope for the best."* The recommendations in the next section are made in the spirit of empowering agents, brokers, and stakeholders to take action such that, regardless of exact outcomes, they'll be positioned to thrive in 2026 and beyond.

Recommended Action Steps

Based on the survey findings and market analysis, here are **targeted recommendations** for various stakeholders in the real estate industry to navigate the coming year. These action steps are aimed at addressing the pain points identified, leveraging the optimism indicators, and ultimately boosting confidence and success in 2026.

For Agents:

- **Double Down on Lead Generation:** Given “lack of qualified leads” was the #1 agent concern, individual agents should **reinvest time and effort into proactive lead gen**. This means diversifying your strategies: ramp up your sphere-of-influence outreach (calls, personal notes), leverage social media marketing, attend community events, and consider old-school techniques, such as open houses and door knocking in target neighborhoods. The key is consistency. Set a weekly prospecting goal, by either hours or contacts, and stick to it. Agents who systematically work lead generation will be first to capture business when pent-up demand releases. *Tip:* Track and celebrate small wins (new contacts made, appointments set) to maintain momentum.
- **Improve Skills & Market Knowledge:** Make 2026 the year of sharpening your saw. Our survey showed many agents want training in areas like **listing presentations, marketing, and technology**. Take advantage of any coaching programs, webinars, or courses your brokerage/association offers. In particular, focus on **mastering pricing strategies, objection handling, and buyer counseling**. These skills are critical in a market where clients are nervous. Also, become a local **market stats expert**. Know your area’s inventory, price trends, and absorption rates inside-out. This expertise will impress clients and give you confidence in advising them. Skilled, knowledgeable agents will win clients over those who rely purely on past hot-market luck.

- **Embrace Technology and Automation:** Free up time and expand your reach by using the latest tools. A CRM is a must to manage your pipeline. If you don't have one, get one set up and nurture those contacts. Experiment with **AI tools** like ChatGPT to help write listing descriptions or social media posts faster. Use automated email drips or text follow-ups for leads so you stay top-of-mind. The goal is to work smarter. For instance, using an AI-driven CMA tool can quickly give you pricing insights to share with sellers. While our survey showed agents didn't place the highest importance on tech training, as AI tools become more readily available and more frequently used by the public at large, they will become an even more critical resource. Agents need to dive in and get fluent, as tech-savvy agents will capture more business, especially from the younger, tech-enabled clientele.
- **Focus on Your Unique Value Proposition:** With increased competition for business, it's vital to articulate *why* a client should choose you. Spend time refining your **listing presentation and buyer consultation scripts**. Highlight what makes you different, whether it's hyper-local expertise, a robust marketing plan (drone videos, 3D tours), strong negotiation skills, or a concierge-level service network. Also, be ready to discuss the new commission environment confidently. Practice explaining your value in the transaction so clients understand why you're worth the fee. Being able to clearly communicate your value will help convert prospects and also give you self-confidence.
- **Manage Finances and Well-being:** On a practical level, prepare for continued fluctuations by **budgeting conservatively**. Build or maintain a cash reserve to weather any slow months. Avoid unnecessary big expenses until your market definitively picks up. This financial cushion will reduce stress and desperation, and clients can sense desperation. Simultaneously, guard against burnout. Set work-life boundaries, schedule personal time off, and engage in activities that recharge you. A healthy, energized agent will perform far better. Consider forming a small mastermind group with fellow agents to share challenges and keep each other motivated. Peer support can do wonders for confidence.

For Brokers/Team Leaders:

- **Invest in Training & Coaching:** The survey results indicate agents deeply value training and support – and those who are satisfied in this area have higher confidence. Brokerages should **provide regular skill-building sessions**, whether in-house workshops, bringing in guest trainers, or subsidizing online courses. Focus training on the gaps highlighted: lead generation tactics in a low-inventory market, how to use new tech tools (CRM, social media ads, AI), and navigating legal changes (commission conversations, buyer agency agreements). Emphasize mindset and resilience training to help agents handle rejection and volatility. Consider establishing a **mentorship program** pairing newer agents with veterans. Establishing mentorships helps boost new agent production and gives seasoned agents a sense of purpose.
- **Offer Lead Generation Support:** To directly tackle agents' top pain point, brokers and team leaders should find ways to **feed more leads to their agents**. This could include increasing the office's marketing spending on running targeted Facebook or Google ads for the brokerage and distributing the resulting leads. Brokerages can also invest in lead-referral services like OpCity or HomeLight when appropriate. Other options are organizing lead-generating events, including first-time buyer seminars or home-valuation webinars, and providing agents with stronger tools, such as an upgraded website with IDX search to capture leads or subscriptions to high-quality lead databases. The goal is to supplement what agents do on their own and show you are a partner in filling their pipeline. Brokers who help agents get even a few extra deals will earn loyalty and see higher retention.
- **Foster a Culture of Collaboration and Positivity:** In tough markets, culture is king. Create an office environment where agents feel supported, not alone. Encourage **knowledge sharing**. Consider hosting a weekly roundtable where agents discuss what's working for prospecting or share other success stories. Celebrate small wins publicly, whether its new listings taken or successfully managing difficult closings. Also, keep agents informed with factual optimism: share market data that highlights opportunities such as "Inventory is up 10% year-over-year, more chances to get buyers under contract!" Many agents in the survey were older-school solo operators. Inviting them into a collaborative culture can re-energize them. Team leaders should also be accessible. An open-door policy for agents to seek advice on deals or just moral support.

- **Adapt Business Models Post-Lawsuit:** Broker-owners need to proactively adjust to the new legal landscape. This might involve **revising commission structures** in listing agreements to be transparent about buyer-agent compensation, training agents thoroughly on the changes, and updating company policies (e.g., encouraging buyer representation agreements). Consider offering resources to help agents navigate these shifts: for instance, provide a script packet or one-sheet that agents can give clients explaining how commissions work now, so everyone's on the same page. Also, re-examine your **value proposition to agents**: if commission compression is a threat, how will you retain agents? Perhaps you introduce a sliding commission split or cap to let them keep more or beef up the services you provide, such as marketing support and administrative help, so agents feel it's worth any split. Being ahead of the curve on these structural shifts will stabilize your team and prevent panic if/when these changes hit the mainstream.
- **Prioritize Agent Wellness and Retention:** Retaining good agents is crucial, as recruiting new ones in a down market is hard. Show genuine concern for your agents' well-being. This could be small gestures like hosting a stress-management workshop, arranging occasional fun team-building outings, or simply checking in one-on-one more often. Pay attention to signs of burnout. If an agent's production is slipping, have a constructive conversation early and offer help, which may include lightening their load by assigning an assistant or redistributing leads. Recognize that many agents' incomes fell in 2023–25, so you may want to consider temporary adjustments, like **lower desk fees or flexible payment plans**, for those struggling. This goodwill can pay back in loyalty when things improve. A stable roster of confident agents will position the brokerage strongly for the market rebound.

For Industry Stakeholders (Associations, MLSs, and Others):

- **Advocate for Inventory-Boosting Policies:** At the industry leadership level, tackling the inventory crisis should be a top priority. This means **advocating for policies that increase housing supply**. Associations at the local, state, and national levels can also advocate for policies that expand housing supply. This might include lobbying for zoning reforms, such as allowing higher-density projects or permitting ADUs in single-family zones, as well as pushing for incentives like tax credits for building starter homes. They can also support funding programs that help renovate vacant or underused properties. Any measures that bring more units to market will directly alleviate agents' top pain point. NAR and others should continue pushing lawmakers on housing supply issues. Agent voices are influential in demonstrating how lack of inventory harms communities and not just agents. Progress here would improve market fluidity and benefit everyone.

- **Increase Transparency and Communication:** In light of the legal settlements and agent sentiment, **real estate associations and MLSs need to better communicate their value and updates.** For example, if NAR is making changes to ethics or training in response to lawsuits, clearly explain these to members, rather than allowing confusion to fester. Many agents in the survey felt NAR membership wasn't important. Changing that perception requires showing tangible value. This could include more frequent **market data releases and analysis** that agents can use with clients. Many associations do great infographics, which could be expanded so agents have ammunition to educate buyers/sellers. MLSs should ensure rules, like Clear Cooperation or new compensation rules, are messaged in plain language and that agents know how to comply without hassle. Essentially, proactive and clear communication can turn the narrative from "What has NAR done for me lately?" to "Oh, NAR is actively helping me navigate these changes."
- **Enhance Training and Resources at Scale:** Industry bodies should supplement what brokerages do by providing high-quality training resources on pressing topics. For instance, state associations could host a series on "Thriving in a High-Rate Market" available to all members, featuring top producers sharing tips or trainers giving motivational advice. MLSs might offer training on **using MLS data for prospecting** to help agents identify areas with more listings or likely sellers. Also, consider producing consumer-facing content that agents can brand and use, such as short videos explaining the commission changes or the homebuying process in 2026's context. By equipping agents with knowledge and tools, associations reinforce agent confidence. Our data showed agents care about changes to rules, with over 30% dissatisfaction on MLS rule clarity, so respond by educating and simplifying.
- **Address Affordability and Buyer Assistance:** Stakeholders like associations, MLSs, and large brokerage networks can collaborate to tackle the affordability side which is hampering buyers. One step is to **promote and expand buyer assistance programs**, such as down payment assistance awareness, lobbying for first-time buyer tax credits or lower FHA premiums. If more buyers can enter the market, it benefits agents and communities. NAR has the ear of policymakers, so pushing for a new first-time buyer incentive in 2026 could stimulate demand. Additionally, work with lenders to publicize creative financing, like assumable mortgages on FHA/VA loans, so agents can use those as selling points. Industry leadership should also consider public campaigns to improve consumer sentiment. Messaging around this type of campaign needs to be done carefully to be credible and could include concepts like "owning a home is still one of the best ways to build wealth long-term, and there are options even with higher rates".

- **Uphold Professional Standards and Ethics:** With increased legal scrutiny, it's crucial for the industry to **double-down on ethics and professionalism**. Associations and commissions should enforce rules fairly and visibly so the public regains trust post-lawsuit. MLSs must continue to strictly police any remaining anti-competitive practices, and associations should update their Codes of Ethics training to place stronger emphasis on transparency, including how commissions are communicated. By reinforcing high professional standards, the industry can protect its reputation and help agents feel proud and confident to be real estate professionals. While agents may not always cite this directly as a factor affecting their confidence, knowing that unethical behavior is being addressed can lift morale. No one wants to see their profession criticized because of the actions of a few.

These recommended actions form a multi-level approach to strengthening the real estate sector as we head into 2026. **Agents** should refine their craft and resilience. **Brokers** should empower their agents with training and leads. **Industry leaders** should shape a more favorable landscape, to provide more inventory and better tools, and guide the narrative. If each group takes these steps, the collective result will be a more confident, prepared agent workforce and a smoother-functioning market. The challenges of 2025 can be a learning catalyst. By acting on those lessons, 2026 can be a year of regained momentum.

Emotional Confidence Index: Personal vs. Market Sentiment

One of the striking findings from the Agent Confidence survey is the **difference between agents' personal confidence and their confidence in the market**. We observed a gap: agents generally feel **more confident about their own business and abilities** than they do about broader market conditions. This section explores that dichotomy – essentially, the “Emotional Confidence Index” as it relates to *personal* sentiment versus *market* sentiment.

Agent optimism about their own real estate career in the next 12 months was largely positive – in our survey, over half of agents reported “High” optimism and an additional ~13% “Very High”, compared to about one-third feeling low optimism. This personal confidence persists even as many agents acknowledge a challenging market.

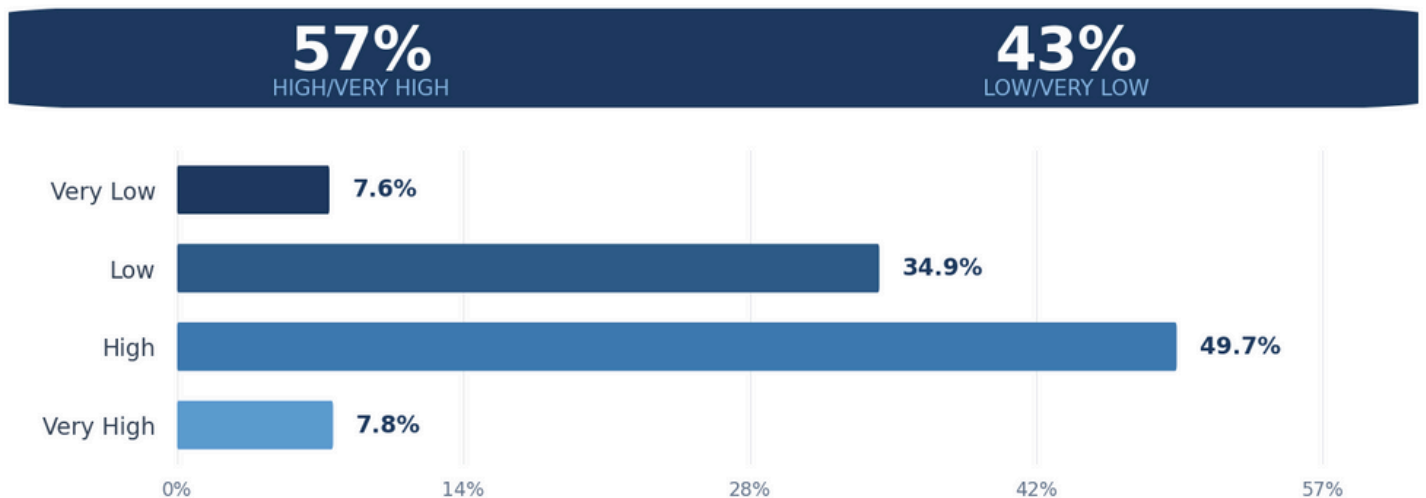
Personal Confidence: Agents exhibit strong belief in themselves and their career longevity. As shown in the chart above, **64.5% of agents are optimistic about their personal real estate career outlook for the next year**, with only a small minority (~3%) being very pessimistic. Similarly, in other measures of personal confidence:

- **Goal Attainment:** When asked about confidence in hitting their sales goals for the next 12 months, about **57.5% were confident (high/very high)** versus ~42.5% low. The weighted average on this was 2.58 out of 4, leaning positive.

Q8

581 Answered

Confidence in Hitting Sales Goals (Next 12 Months)



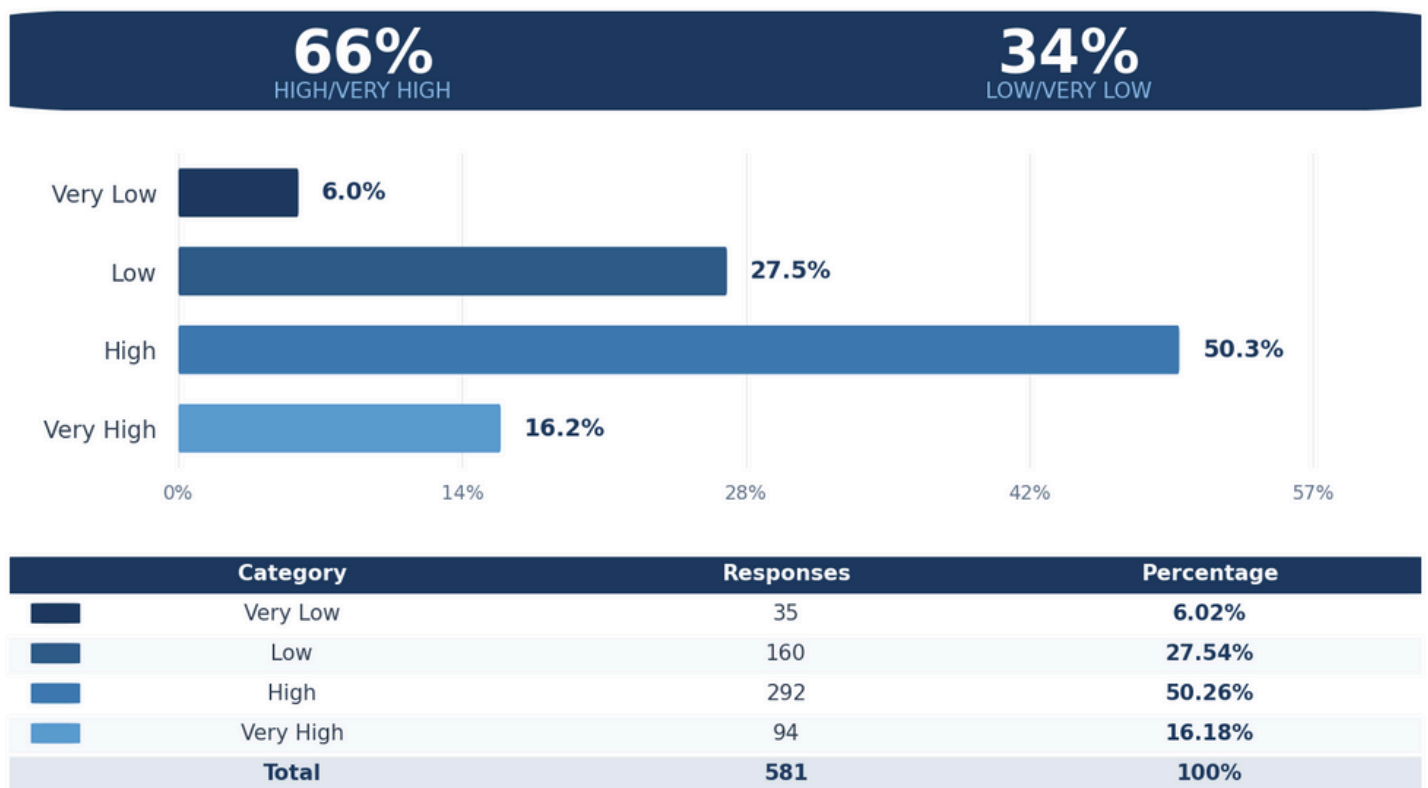
	Category	Responses	Percentage
	Very Low	44	7.57%
	Low	203	34.94%
	High	289	49.74%
	Very High	45	7.75%
	Total	581	100%

- **Income Security:** Roughly **66% are confident** they will earn enough to cover personal bills in the next year, while ~34% are not confident. So two-thirds trust in their ability to make ends meet via real estate.

Q13

581 Answered

Confidence in Making Needed Income



- **Staying Power:** As noted before, a whopping **86% are confident they will still be active in real estate 12 months from now**. This indicates very few are thinking of quitting; most see themselves pushing through.

Q14

581 Answered

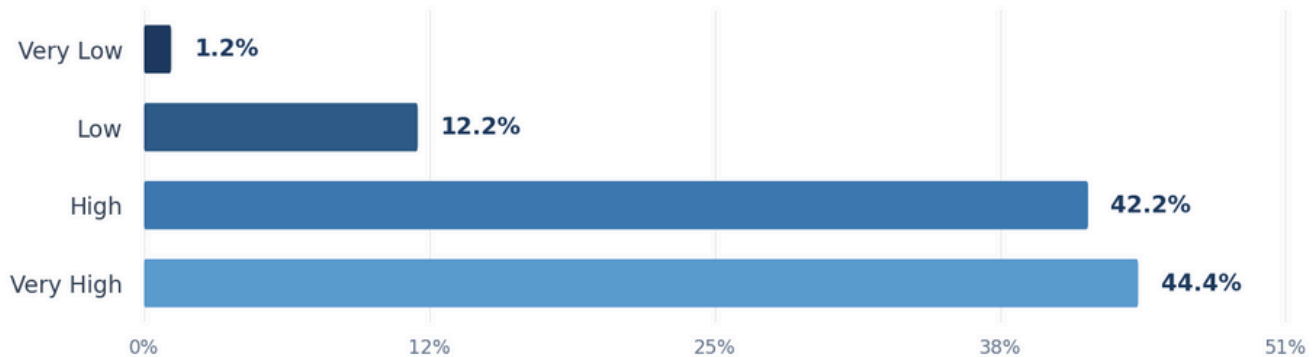
Confidence Will Stay Active in RE

87%

HIGH/VERY HIGH

13%

LOW/VERY LOW



	Category	Responses	Percentage
	Very Low	7	1.20%
	Low	71	12.22%
	High	245	42.17%
	Very High	258	44.41%
	Total	581	100%

This personal confidence likely stems from internal factors – experience, preparedness, and mindset. Agents know they can control their effort and skills, and many have survived past downturns, giving them faith in their own adaptability. The survey also hints at a bit of *self-selection bias*: those still responding, and still in the business, by late 2025 are the survivors who inherently have more confidence. Less confident agents may have already exited.

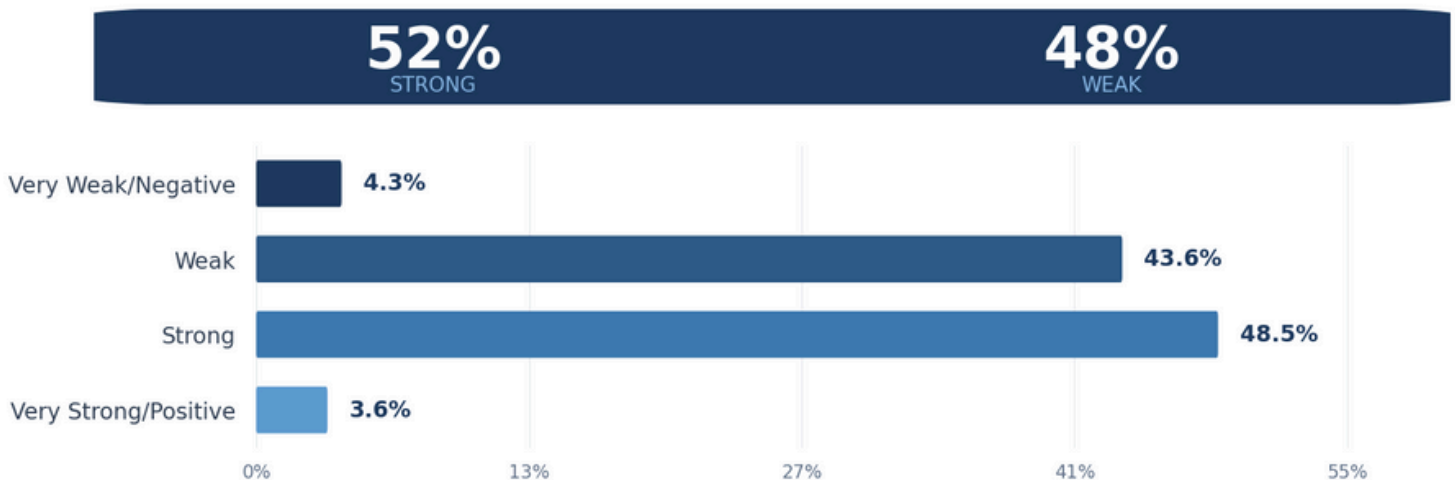
Market Confidence: In contrast, when agents talk about the **market's strength and client demand**, their sentiment is more subdued. For example:

- In Q15, only about **52% of agents described their local market as “Strong” or “Very Strong” for this time of year**, whereas 48% called it “Weak” or worse. Very few (just ~3.6%) said “Very Strong/Positive” market, and similarly ~4% said “Very Weak/Negative” – the majority are in the moderate camps but leaning negative overall (weighted average 2.51 which is just above neutral).

Q15

559 Answered

Local Market Strength



Category	Responses	Percentage
Very Weak/Negative	24	4.29%
Weak	244	43.65%
Strong	271	48.48%
Very Strong/Positive	20	3.58%
Total	559	100%

- In Q17 and Q18, as previously discussed, a majority saw buyer and seller activity below normal recently. These responses further emphasize that agents view the current market momentum negatively.
- Agents also expressed that external factors are hampering things: 81% said media/economic news is strongly affecting clients, and 86% said interest rates are a strong drag. These show agents attribute a lot of weight to tough conditions out of their control.

Additionally, when asked to rank concerns (Q31), the top items, such as leads and inventory, are all essentially market-driven issues, not personal capability issues. Hardly anyone said “my own sales skills” or “lack of knowledge” was the problem. Instead, the market environment was cited repeatedly as the overriding issue.

Comparing the Two: This comparison reveals a telling insight: agents largely feel *“I am doing what I can, I have what it takes”*, but also *“the market is not giving me much to work with right now.”* They distinguish the **personal realm, which they control**, from the **market realm, which they don’t fully control**. Thus, the Emotional Confidence Index might be high for personal confidence and lower for market confidence.

We can quantify this loosely: If we assign an index value where 100 is neutral, personal confidence might be, for illustration, around 110 (somewhat optimistic) while market confidence might be around 90 (somewhat pessimistic). The exact number isn’t measured, but qualitatively that’s the gap.

Implications of this Gap: On the positive side, high personal confidence is crucial. It means agents are still motivated to try new strategies and put in effort, believing it can pay off. They haven’t thrown up their hands. It also means they convey confidence to clients, which is important for client trust. As Darryl Davis often notes, *clients “smell” your lack of confidence*. Fortunately, many agents still project calm authority by virtue of their self-confidence, even if inside they know the market is shaky.

However, the lower market confidence can create frustration and stress. It’s mentally challenging to do your best but feel external conditions are holding you back. This is likely why we see some cognitive dissonance: 51% optimistic for career but only 4% expect a “significantly” better market soon. Agents are essentially saying *“I’ll be okay, but the market’s going to make me work very hard for it.”*

There’s also a risk if the market confidence stays low for too long it can eventually erode personal confidence. If an agent continues to hustle but sees minimal results due to the environment, even a veteran could start doubting their approach or burnout. Bridging this gap, by improving market conditions or by helping agents find success despite market, is key.

Competition and Confidence: One interesting aspect is competition. Earlier we saw that 47% find the level of competition among agents “Challenging” and 42% “Manageable,” with few at extremes. This suggests agents feel personally capable of competing, since only ~7% said it’s overwhelming. They’re not lacking confidence against peers; they’re more concerned about the pie being small than their ability to get a slice. Emphasizing again that it’s a market-size issue versus personal ability issue.

Emotional Resilience: The high personal confidence indicates emotional resilience. Many agents have adopted a mindset of controlling what they can and not dwelling on what they can’t. For instance, an agent might think, “I can’t lower the interest rates, but I *can* call my past clients and offer a market update.” This kind of locus of control on internal factors is psychologically healthy and likely why they remain optimistic about their own career. They trust that by controlling their actions, when the market eventually improves, they’ll reap the benefits.

As we’ve seen, the **Emotional Confidence Index** for agents in 2025 is a tale of two halves:

- **Personal Sentiment:** Generally confident, determined, and steadfast.
- **Market Sentiment:** Cautiously pessimistic or at best neutral, recognizing significant headwinds.

The goal for 2026 will be to maintain that personal confidence while hopefully lifting the market confidence. If interest rates drop a bit and transactions pick up, which we expect moderately, agents will start to feel the market is finally aligning with their efforts. If personal confidence is the engine and market conditions are the track, we have a powerful engine that’s been stuck on a rough track, but smoother tracks may be ahead.

Expert Commentary – Darryl Davis’s Insights

To round out the report, we turn to **expert commentary from Darryl Davis**, a renowned real estate coach and motivational speaker, for perspective on maintaining confidence and succeeding in this market. He has been guiding agents for over 30 years and his philosophy centers on building skills, mindset, and a “Next Level” approach to business. Here are some key insights and advice from Darryl that resonate with the 2025 Agent Confidence findings:

1. “Year of the Skilled Agent” – Mastery is Your Competitive Edge: *2025 (and beyond) is the Year of the Skilled Agent.* In a challenging market, it’s not brute force or luck that will carry an agent, but **skill mastery and professionalism**. *“The days of quick deals and effortless closings have been replaced by a landscape that rewards only the most skilled.”* Agents should take this as a mandate to **sharpen every facet** of their craft – from understanding mortgage options to fine-tuning negotiation techniques. By elevating your expertise and truly becoming an adviser (not just a door-opener), you differentiate yourself. Clients in 2025 are more discerning; they *“don’t just want an agent – they want an advocate.”* That means bringing solutions, not just enthusiasm. Commit to being that highly skilled problem-solver. For example, spend time each week to role-play objections, study market trends, and practice your pricing strategy presentation. Skills give you confidence; confidence wins clients.

2. Confidence Through Daily Wins: Confidence isn’t something you either have or don’t – it’s built through a series of small wins and habits. One of the best antidotes to a tough market is focusing on *daily accomplishments*, no matter how small, and celebrating them. *“Building confidence begins with recognizing and celebrating small, consistent wins.”* Did you make 5 prospecting calls today? Great, that’s a win. Scheduled a coffee with a past client? That’s another win. These micro-successes “replace doubt with calm authority” over time. Keep a **“success journal,”** and jot down each day’s positive steps (new lead, good conversation, completed a training module). When you hit a rough patch, review that journal to remind yourself of progress. This practice fights the creeping self-doubt that can come when deals aren’t immediately materializing. Confidence grows “one achievement at a time and remains a cornerstone of professional success in real estate.”

3. Mindset: Stop the Negative Self-Talk: In line with building confidence is managing one's **inner dialogue**. Agents need to *"silence the self-sabotage"* and avoid filling their heads with doom and gloom. *"If your head is full of self-doubt, how can you possibly project the calm, capable authority buyers and sellers crave right now?"* Be intentional about monitoring your self-talk. When you notice thoughts like "Nobody's buying right now" or "I'm never going to hit my numbers," pause and redirect them. Replace discouraging assumptions with affirmations or at least constructive, solution-oriented questions such as, "What can I do today to move the needle?" Create affirmations or power statements such as, *"I provide value to every client I meet, regardless of market conditions."* Repeat them daily to set a positive tone. By controlling your mindset, you maintain the confidence that clients find contagious. Remember, confidence (or lack thereof) is felt by others; *clients can "smell" it*, so nurture a mindset that exudes positivity and solutions.

4. Back to Basics & Relationships: In a slow market, agents should get "back to basics" and focus on fundamental relationship-building activities. The fancy tech and big advertising budgets can't substitute for the core work of talking to people. **Increase personal touches** with your database: call past clients just to check in (not always to sell), write handwritten notes, deliver CMAs to homeowners as a service. This human-to-human approach not only can drum up business, it also boosts the agent's confidence because they're actively engaging rather than passively worrying. *Effective communication*, especially empathetic listening and truly understanding client needs, is a skill that separates good agents from great ones. By practicing active listening and having more real conversations, agents build stronger relationships and trust, which in turn leads to more referrals and business. *"Real estate thrives on relationships, and relationships thrive on communication."* In essence, nurture your network now and it will pay dividends when the market improves (and even before).

5. Keep Adapting – Use Tools and Innovate: While focusing on basics, don't ignore new **tools and trends** that can give you an edge. Be **tech-fluent**, not for tech's sake, but to save time and enhance client service. For example, learn that new CRM feature, or try that video messaging app to send market updates to clients. Be willing to experiment with technology and marketing, whether it's virtual tours, social media videos, or AI-driven lead follow-up, because it might unlock opportunities and also give you confidence that you're staying ahead of the curve. A great example is the agent who secured multiple listings by using a QR-code lead capture system at open houses. The industry shocks, like commission changes, are challenges, but also chances to differentiate. Agents must *"adapt, innovate, and overcome."* Agents who adapt quickly and communicate those adaptations to clients ("Here's how I can sell your home even in this new commission environment...") will project confidence and win trust.

6. Purpose and Positivity: Agents should remind themselves *why* they do what they do – the purpose of helping families achieve homeownership and the community impact of that. Reconnecting with that sense of purpose can fuel one's passion even when immediate results are sparse. It's also critical to remain optimistic. *"America's housing market is defined right now by caution,"* says Redfin's economist, yet it is often in these conditions that true professionals rise and find creative ways to keep business moving. *"There's always opportunity, even in adversity."* For instance, if big teams are pulling back marketing, a solo agent could stand out by doubling their presence. Or if some agents are quitting, use that as motivation that **you** are going to gain that market share. *Stay focused on helping people, keep your energy high, and remember – a confident, skilled agent will not just survive a tough market, but set themselves up to thrive when the tides turn.*

Darryl Davis's expert insight reinforces much of what our data shows: **confidence is a skill to be cultivated**. By honing skills, taking daily actions, controlling mindset, and staying purpose-driven, agents can maintain and even boost their confidence regardless of external conditions. While markets ebb and flow, an agent's commitment to growth and service should remain constant. As we head into 2026, Darryl's strategic and motivational guidance can be the catalyst for agents to turn the corner from a challenging 2025 to a successful year ahead.

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