



2026 ServiceLink State of Homebuying Report

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Introduction

Over the past six years, the annual ServiceLink State of Homebuying Report has become an industry staple – surveying more than 7,500 homebuyers and prospective buyers from across the U.S.

This year's report centers on 1,554 U.S. residents (18+) who have purchased a home within the last two years, providing a focused look at what today's borrowers want, need and expect from the market.

To enrich the depth of the 2026 report, we also broadened our analysis by incorporating feedback from 507 loan officers with at least three years' experience. Their perspectives provide valuable context around the challenges borrowers encounter and highlight areas where knowledge gaps persist in an ever-evolving housing landscape.





2026

ServiceLink

State of Homebuying

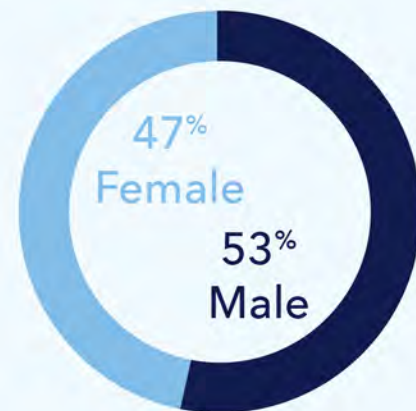
Report

Surveyed

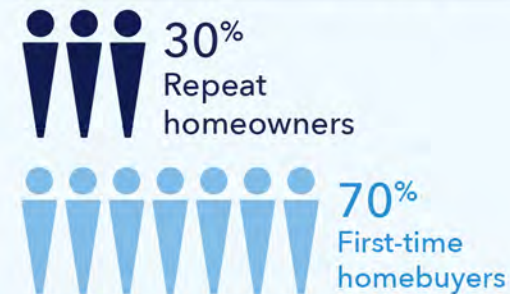
homebuyer

demographics

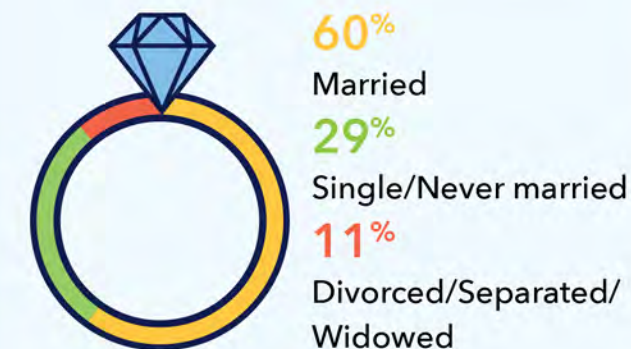
Gender



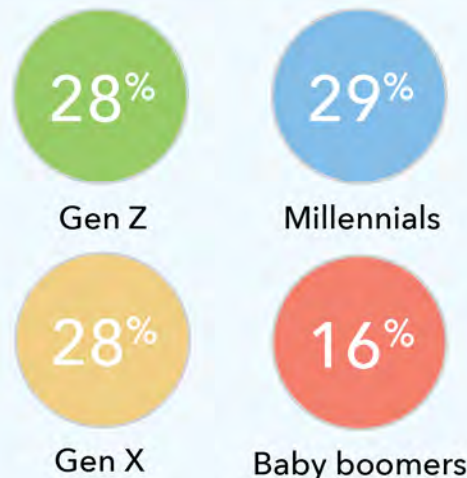
Homebuyer status



Marital status



Age group*



What they were up against



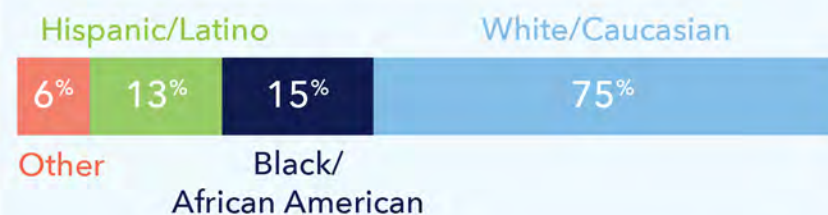
Employment status*



Year of home purchase



Ethnicity**



Purchaser status**



Bought home by themselves:

Gen Z: 46%
Millennials: 46%
Gen X: 44%
Baby boomers: 35%



Bought home with partner/spouse:

Gen Z: 42%
Millennials: 51%
Gen X: 53%
Baby boomers: 60%

*Percentages do not add to 100% due to rounding
**Percentages do not add to 100% due to "select all that apply" option

Price points and priorities

Comfort zone? What comfort zone?

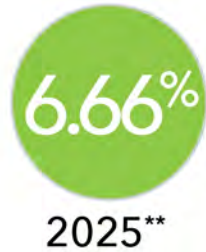
To distill recent homebuyers' experiences into just a few words, it's safe to say they were pushed **beyond their financial comfort zones**. ServiceLink State of Homebuying Report respondents say sacrifices were inevitable in order to purchase a home in a market that presented unique challenges and demanded compromises.

Affordability snapshot



National median single-family home price tag grew to **\$414,900** in late 2025*

Average 30-year fixed mortgage rates:



Top two challenges respondents faced when purchasing a home in the past two years:



High home prices



High interest rates

“Mortgage rates were at 7% when we bought. I have bought six houses, but I never paid 7%.”

- Male, baby boomer

*National Association of REALTORS Metropolitan Median Area Prices and Affordability Report, 4Q 2025

**Bankrate: Mortgage rate history: 1970s to 2025

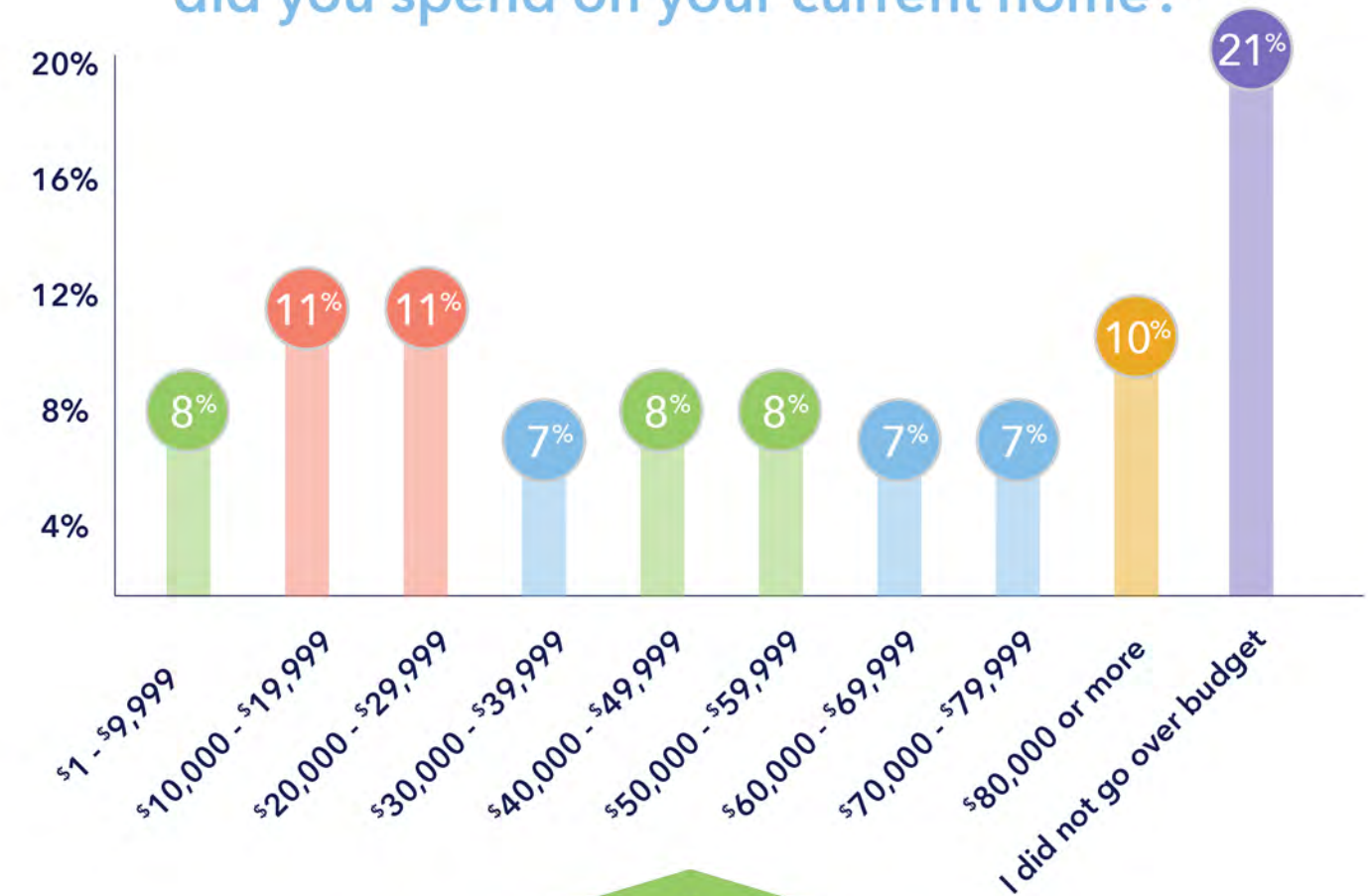


The cost of homeownership keeps outpacing budgets

Loan officer respondents are calling this overextension **a major red flag**. In fact, borrowers taking on more of a mortgage than they can realistically afford (69%) is the number one concern of loan officers in this current market. Homebuyer respondents weren't immune to price pressures, either: 77% reported going over their original budget on their current home purchase, to varying degrees. Another 21%, however, said they did not go over budget.



How much over your original budget did you spend on your current home?*



"Housing prices and inflation are a big issue for buyers in the economic climate we are living in at the moment."

- Loan officer, credit union, Oregon

*Percentages do not add to 100% due to rounding



INSIGHT • A deeper dive

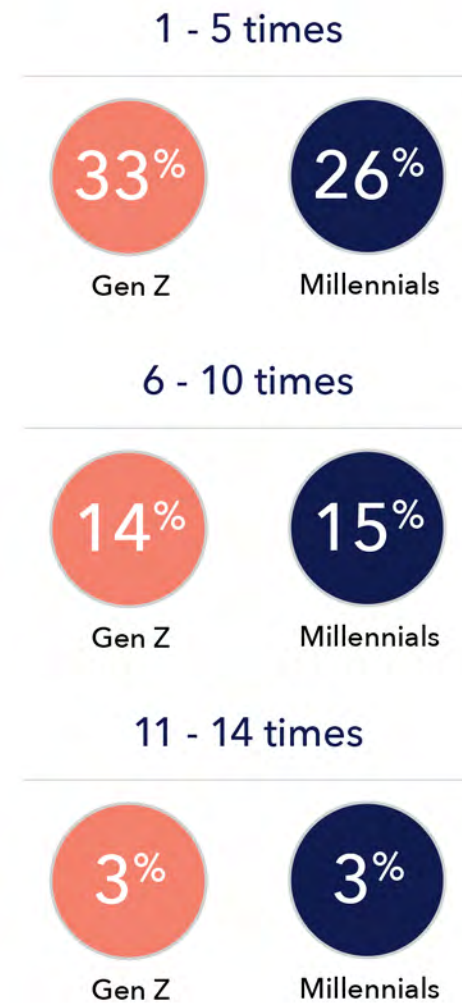
Baby boomers were the least likely to overspend, as **53%** said they did not go over budget. Millennials and Gen X were at the other end of the spectrum, as they ranked highest among the generations in terms of those who stretched **\$80,000** or more over budget.

Behind on bills

Younger homeowners feel the squeeze

With the burden of higher purchase prices, some younger borrowers are finding it tough to make ends meet for their monthly mortgage payment, which according to NAR averages around **\$2,057/month**.* Half of Gen Z (50%) and 44% of millennial respondents said they have been at risk of missing at least one mortgage payment over the last two years.

How many times over the past two years were you at risk of missing a mortgage payment?



INSIGHT • A deeper dive

For those who had trouble paying, the majority prioritized paying their mortgage over other bills (**42%**), **36%** asked for financial help from family and friends, and **34%** cut back on discretionary spending.



*National Association of REALTORS Metropolitan Median Area Prices and Affordability Report, 4Q 2025

Crunching numbers, making compromises

Due to home prices and market conditions, more buyers found themselves having to make financial compromises during their most recent home purchase.

Top areas of compromise

29%



Put down more of a down payment than I wanted

29%



Took on a higher interest rate than I wanted
Millennials were most likely to take on a higher interest rate than they wanted.

28%



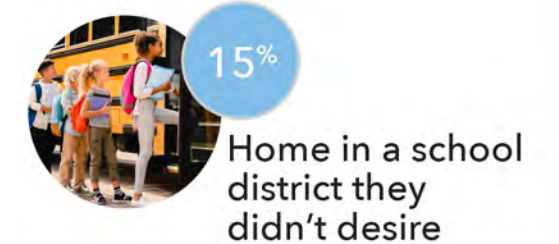
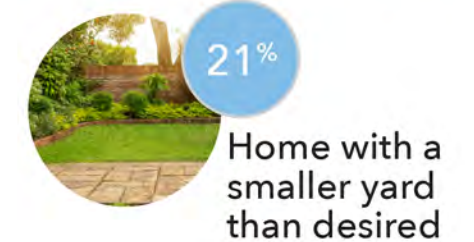
Took on more of a mortgage than I wanted

Top home-related compromises

What buyers wanted...



What buyers settled for...



Loan officer perspective

Despite borrowers needing to make some compromises to get into a home, many still enter the housing market with unrealistic expectations. According to loan officers, the top three include expecting to find the perfect house below market value (63%), underestimating the total cost of homeownership (61%) and expecting a lowball offer to be accepted (54%).

Creature comforts

Pets become the real decision-makers in homebuying

Homeowners want to give their pets room to zoom



54%

Bought a home with a fenced-in yard



38%

Bought a home in a walkable community



37%

Bought a bigger house



35%

Bought a home with specific flooring (hardwood vs. carpet)



21%

Bought a home close to a dog park

About
9 out of 10

homeowners considered their pets' needs when buying a house

Psychology of the homebuyer

Buying a home today is as much an emotional journey as it is a financial one. The modern homebuyer navigates a landscape shaped by stress, limited time, economic uncertainty and an ever-growing reliance on digital tools. Their decisions are driven by a mix of practical needs and powerful psychological triggers – from the desire for financial stability, to the comfort of feeling in control during a high-stakes process. Understanding these motivations isn't just insightful – it's essential for anyone hoping to meet buyers where they are.

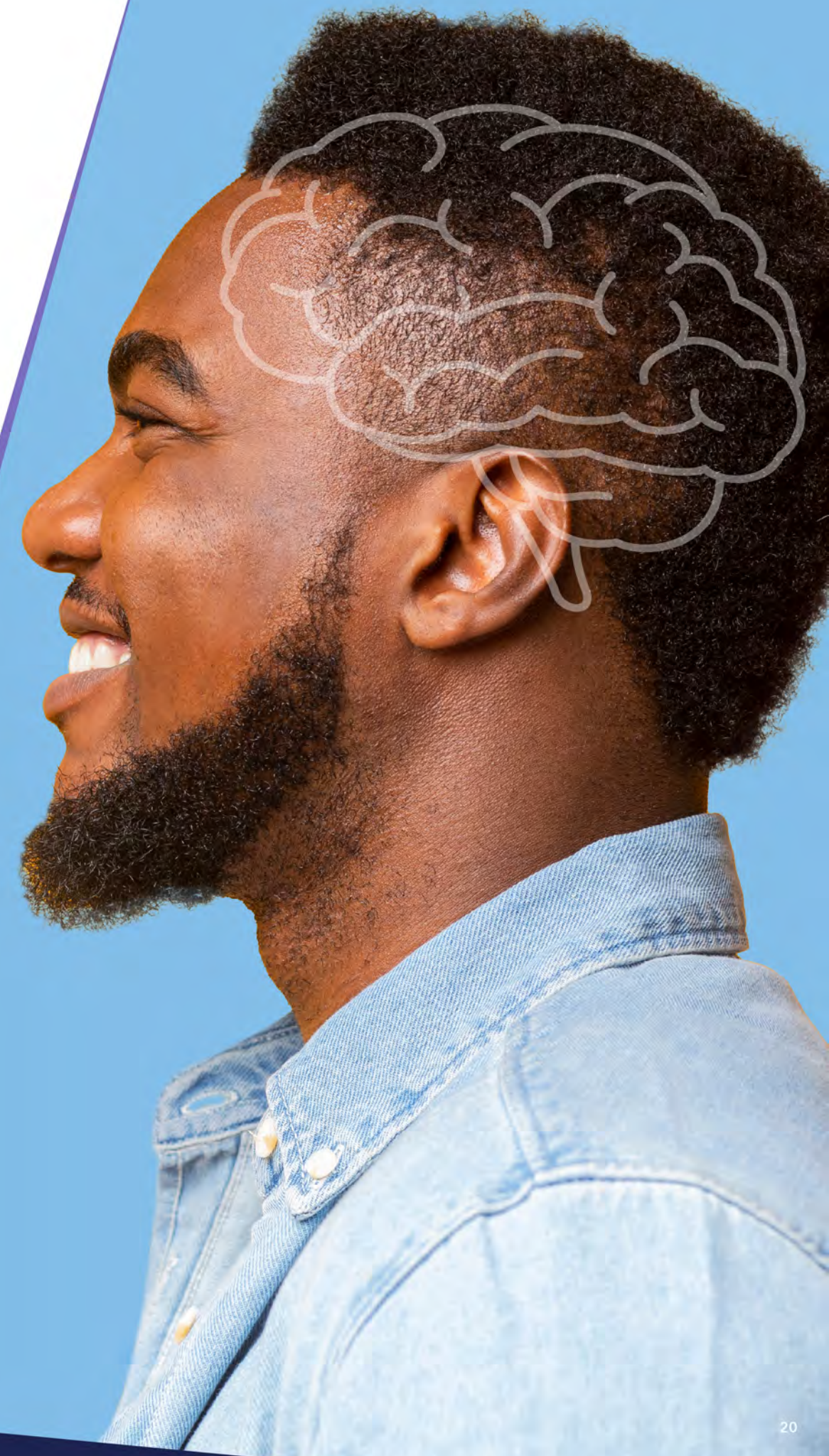
4 CHARACTERISTICS of modern homebuyers

1 STRESSED

2 TIME-STRAPPED

3 Inventive

4 DIGITALLY FLUENT





What part of the homebuying process causes the most stress?

1 STRESSED

Today's buyers are...

stressed
adj. 1. a physical, mental or emotional reaction to external or internal pressures, challenges and changes.



“[The home price offer and negotiation] was the most stressful because as first-time buyers, we were constantly worried about overpaying in a competitive market while trying to keep our offer attractive.”

- Male, millennial



In their own words...

 The home price offer and negotiation

"There was **pressure** to make the right decision quickly and I was worried about having to overpay." - Male, millennial

 Understanding all the paperwork

"I was a first-time buyer, and the amount of paperwork was a little **stressful** to understand." - Female, Gen X

 The closing process

"The closing process was **stressful** because there were so many documents to review and sign and constant last-minute requests from the lender." - Male, millennial


 Securing a good mortgage rate

"Rates were fluctuating and locking in a good one felt urgent and **stressful**." - Male, Gen X

 Finding the right lender or real estate agent

"Finding someone you can trust is so **stressful**." - Female, Gen X



 **Red flag alert**
Some respondents revealed fears about being scammed during their home purchase, which is a legitimate concern as 1 in 4 consumers are targeted by fraud during a real estate transaction and 1 in 20* become victims of fraud.

 **Loan officer perspective**
Mounting cybersecurity risks and growing cases of mortgage fraud worry loan officers, too, with 52% of these respondents citing it as a concern.

*CertifiD 2024 State of Wire Fraud Study



2

TIME-STRAPPED



Urgency has become a defining force of modern buyer behavior. With mortgage rates shifting daily, many feel the intense pressure to act fast before borrowing costs climb again, or before the next offer is submitted on the home they really want.

FAST FACTS

In late 2025, homes sat on the market for an average of **39 days** and received an average of **2.2 offers**.*

*January 2026 REALTORS® Confidence Index Survey

Borrower perspective

"It felt high-stakes, fast-moving and uncertain, with pressure to make the right choice."

- Male, Gen Z

Loan officer perspective

"Customers want more time to make decisions. With high bids and quick transaction times, customers complain about how they wish they could take their time on purchases."

- Male, Pennsylvania

Today's buyers are...



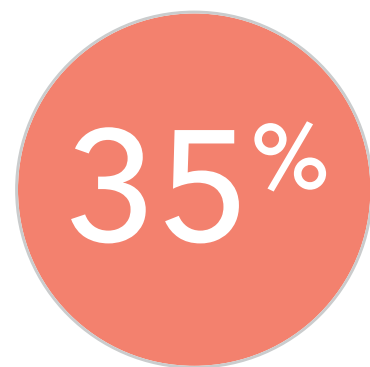
time-strapped
adj. 1. a person who has very limited time available. It implies being pressed for time, often to the point where completing tasks feels rushed or difficult.

2 TIME-STRAPPED

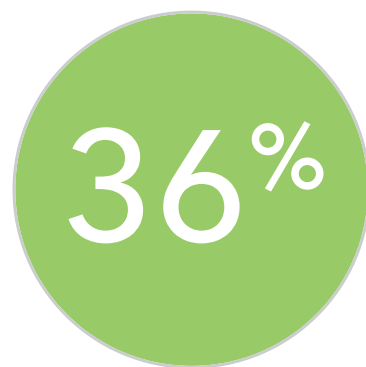
Buyers feel the pressure to decide fast - because they want the keys even faster

More than one in three respondents think it should take two weeks or less to close on a home

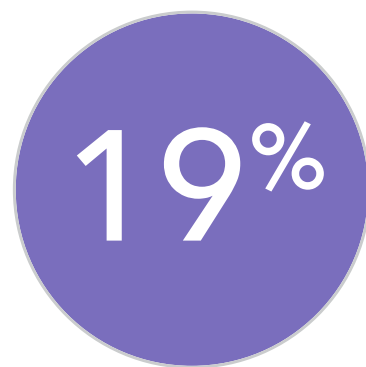
If you were purchasing a new home, how long do you think it should take to close?



2 weeks or less



3 - 4 weeks



1 - 2 months



Loan officer perspective

Loan officers also cited borrowers' need for speed on the path to close. When asked how quickly their borrowers expected to close on a purchase transaction, based on their experiences, **43%** said within two weeks or less, not far off from respondents' expectations (**35%**). While the industry average is around 30-40 days at the time of writing this report, the youngest respondents - Gen Z and millennials - are more likely to expect 1-2 week closings than older generations, who lean more toward 3-4 week expectations.





Eliminate the wait

Respondents cited faster approvals, faster processing and faster response times as areas where lenders can make the mortgage process better for borrowers.

Loan officers know there's room for improvement, too. Instances of slow processing and approvals were mentioned by **40%** of loan officers in open-ended responses.

- 
- ✓ Approvals
 - ✓ Processing
 - ✓ Response times

Loan officer perspective



"Borrowers most often complain about *slow or unclear communication*, feeling overwhelmed by repeated document requests and *the process taking longer than they expected*. They also get frustrated by unexpected costs, *appraisal delays* and having to coordinate between multiple parties like the lender, agent and title company."

- Female, credit union, Texas

"Faster response times would help – a few hours of silence can leave me stuck and unsure what the next step is."

- Male, Gen Z

3 Inventive

Today's buyers are...

in·ven·tive / adj. 1. a person who is skilled at coming up with clever or resourceful solutions to solve problems.



In a market that demands increased flexibility, younger borrowers are meeting high home prices and elevated interest rates with a blend of resourcefulness and calculated risk. Many are turning to creative strategies to manage expenses such as down payments and closing costs, fully aware that these solutions may carry long-term trade-offs. For now, however, the potential benefits of securing a home appear to outweigh the risks.



Where did the money for your down payment come from?

	Total	Gen Z	Millennials	Gen X	Baby boomers
Cash or savings	77%	77%	81%	75%	70%
Funds from my 401(k)	27%	23%	37%	30%	12%
Funds from an inheritance or gift	19%	20%	23%	18%	9%
Borrowed from family and friends	14%	18%	16%	13%	5%
Pooled money with family to buy the home together	13%	17%	16%	11%	4%
Pooled money with friends to buy the home together	8%	12%	9%	4%	2%

"I wasn't sure if I'd be able to afford the home I was looking for."
- Male, millennial



INSIGHT • A deeper dive

Among respondents, **men (33%)** were more likely to use money from their 401(k) for a down payment than **women (21%)**.

Friends and family:

The modern golden ticket to homeownership?

The younger generations are not letting a lack of personal finances keep them from homeownership. They are increasingly adapting their strategies and turning to other sources, like friends and family, to turn their dreams of homeownership into their reality.



INSIGHT • *A deeper dive*

Co-buying has grown in popularity over the past several years and accounted for roughly 30% of home sales in 2025. Over 61 million Americans* co-own homes with someone other than a spouse. A combined 14% of Gen Z respondents purchased their current home with friends or other family members.

Borrowed from or pooled money with friends and family for a down payment

47%

Gen Z

41%

Millennials

28%

Gen X

11%

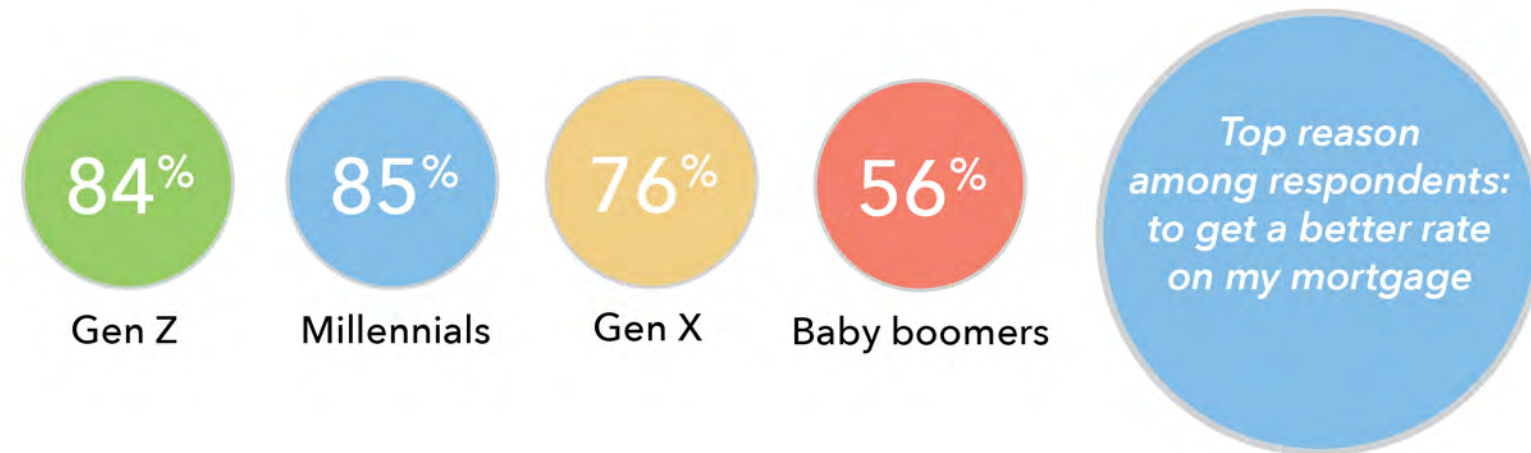
Baby boomers

*CoBuy 2025 Report: Co-buying & Co-owning a Home

Future-focused and finding savings anywhere they can

Even after closing, many borrowers are optimistic about securing additional savings in the future – especially when it comes to mortgage rates.

Provided conditions were favorable, more respondents who purchased a home within the last two years (79%, on average) would be very likely/somewhat likely to refinance in 2026, with millennials and Gen Z leading the pack:



Loan officer perspective

Whether homeowners' likelihood to refinance in 2026 translates into action is yet to be seen. Even though upwards of 79% of respondents expressed a likelihood to refinance under favorable conditions, loan officers expect the actual percentage to be much smaller based on market conditions and current lending pipelines.



Taking a less traditional path...

53% of all respondents would be willing to purchase a home at auction, with millennials (**67%**) and Gen Z (**60%**) being the most willing, outpacing older generations.

Top motivating factor among respondents: potential cost savings



4

DIGITALLY FLUENT

Accustomed to managing life through apps, automation and instant access to information, borrowers today expect a level of digital ease when purchasing a home. The mortgage industry has made strides in financial technology, delivering digital tools that handle much of the administrative load - but there is still work to be done to bring the mortgage process to a fully end-to-end, digital experience.

Today's buyers are...



digitally fluent

adj. 1. an individual who efficiently uses digital tools and technologies, demonstrating the ability to adapt to new systems, evaluate digital information and apply technology effectively to achieve desired outcomes.

Top six identified benefits of technology in the mortgage process



57%
Time savings



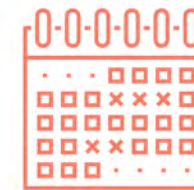
41%
Staying informed throughout the process



52%
Convenience/ease of use



33%
Cost savings



43%
Flexibility to make progress on my own schedule



32%
Transparency into the process

How can lenders better meet the needs of today's tech-savvy buyers?



"By leveraging technology for a digital and streamlined experience. Enhancing communication and providing better borrower education and support."

- Female, millennial

4 DIGITALLY FLUENT

Digital expectations rise as buyers demand tech-forward lending experiences

The top technologies that would influence respondents' decision to work with a specific lender



- 1** The opportunity to eSign some or all closing documents
Most popular among millennials (92%) and Gen X (91%) **88%**
- 2** An option to use my phone/tablet to self-schedule an appraisal or closing appointment for the exact date and time that I desire
Most popular among millennials (91%) and Gen X (91%) **87%**
- 3** The opportunity to hold the closing virtually
Most popular among millennials (87%) **82%**
- 4** A range of AI tools and technology that move the process forward and create fewer steps while reducing the timeline to close
Most popular among millennials (88%) **78%**
- 5** The opportunity to conduct the entire process digitally with no in-person appointments
Most popular among millennials (84%) **78%**



INSIGHT • A deeper dive

62% of baby boomer respondents say they used eSigning technology on some or all of their closing documents, more than the other generations.

4 DRIVERS of homebuying decisions

1

Simplicity

2

Affordability

3

Communication

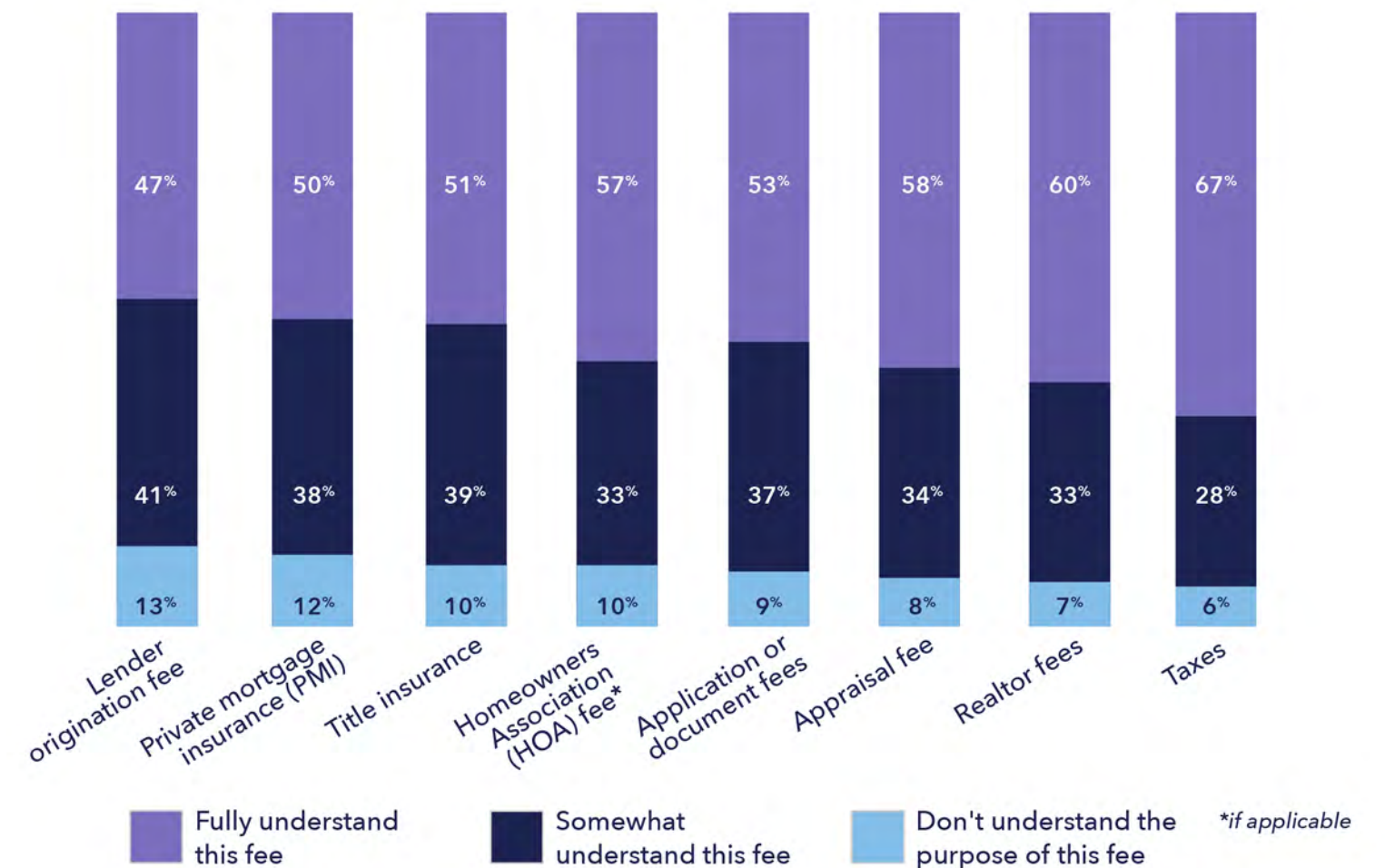
4

STABILITY



Beyond the mortgage: Understanding the long list of fees

While most respondents have some awareness of the fees involved in the homebuying process, meaningful knowledge gaps remain – highlighting the need for clearer, simpler explanations and more accessible education.



1 Simplicity

Today's buyers value...

simplicity
noun. 1. the state of being simple, uncomplicated or uncompounded, a lack of subtlety, directness of expression.



In a process defined by stress and urgency, today's buyers are craving simplicity. Piles of paperwork written in terms they barely comprehend, coupled with a long list of fees they don't fully understand, often leave them feeling overwhelmed.



INSIGHT • A deeper dive

Borrowers value simplicity and they see the paperwork required throughout the process as anything but simple. In fact, respondents ranked **understanding all of the paperwork (15%)** as the second most stressful aspect of the homebuying process.

Buyers crave clarity and educational support to better grasp fees and simplify their experience

"Each document has its own set of vocabulary. I kept opening new tabs in the browser to look up those terms that seemed like ones from law school exams." - Male, Gen Z

"I would provide a tutorial prior to paying for your first mortgage payment." - Male, Gen Z



Loan officer perspective

Loan officers feel that the knowledge gap is greater than today's homebuyers are letting on. From their perspective, homebuyers don't know as much as they think they do about each fee.

How well they understand the fees

Taxes



Today's buyers fully understand

Loan officers' perception of what their borrowers fully understand

Realtor fees



Today's buyers fully understand

Loan officers' perception of what their borrowers fully understand

Appraisal fees



Today's buyers fully understand

Loan officers' perception of what their borrowers fully understand

1 Simplicity

Simplify the close:

Let borrowers pick the place

In another effort to simplify the process, many respondents said they would prefer the option to close on a future home purchase in the comfort of their own home or at another location of their choosing, with a notary traveling to them.

Preferred closing location



39%

At home or another location of my choosing



29%

At my bank branch with a banker



22%

A fully virtual closing

What suggestions would you give lenders to make the mortgage process better for borrowers?

"Streamline paperwork with clearer, plain-language summaries of key terms and risk."

- Male, millennial

"Simplify paperwork, improve communication, offer digital tools, faster approvals and provide clear, transparent guidance throughout."

- Male, Gen X

"Simplify, clarify, communicate, support."

- Female, millennial

"Lenders could make the mortgage process better by simplifying the paperwork, explaining terms in clearer language, giving faster updates on application status and being more transparent about fees and timelines."

- Male, Gen Z



2

Affordability



Today's buyers value...

af-ford-a-bil-i-ty
adj. 1. to be able to afford, having a cost that is not too high.

For many Americans, owning a home is something they dream about their entire lives. Yet it's a goal that increasingly feels out of reach. With today's relatively high interest rates coupled with home prices rising by 60% over the last six years,* the question for many Americans remains: Can I afford to buy a home?

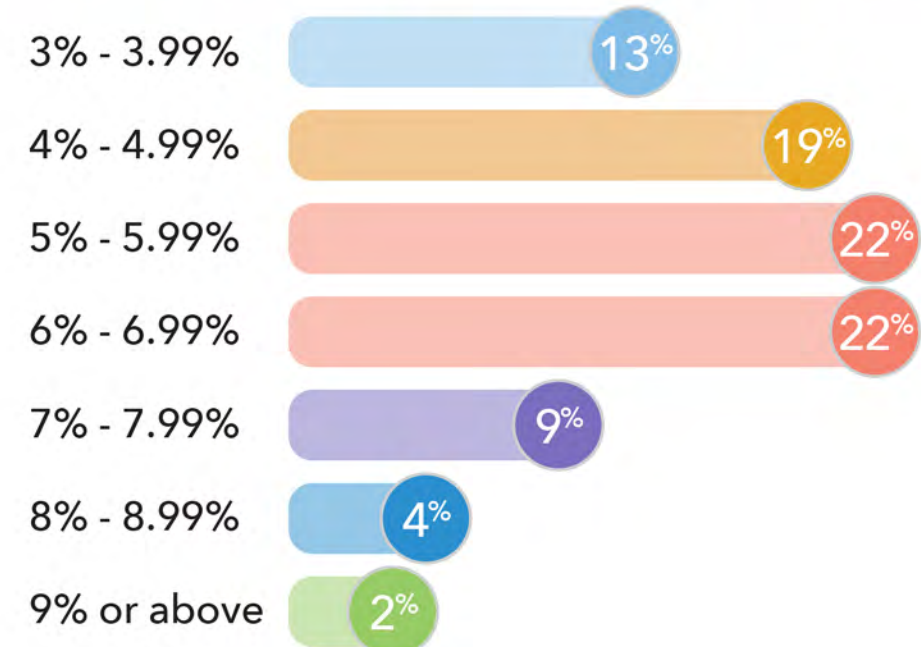
Respondents weren't immune to the high-interest rate environment, with a sizable percentage of them stating their current rates sit somewhere between 5-6.99%. While this is more manageable than the 23-year high of 7.79%** that buyers faced in October 2023, it still looms heavily for borrowers who may be struggling to make ends meet.

INSIGHT • *A deeper dive*

When asked what their main reasons were for buying a home, 39% of respondents said they always wanted to own a home, while 30% said they finally saved up enough money.



Current mortgage rates of respondents



*2025 The State of the Nation's Housing by the Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University
**Bankrate: Mortgage rate history: 1970s to 2025

Rate-resilient: Buyers love to save but remain tolerant

If today's buyers were currently in the market for a new home, many would accept an interest rate higher than what they're currently paying - but not by much. Gen Z and millennials have the highest tolerance for higher rates, where they would accept a 0.5% to 0.7% higher interest rate than they are currently paying. Each generation's tolerance for higher rates has remained relatively the same in the last year.

	Current rate	Current tolerance
Overall	5.4%	5.7%
Gen Z	5.0%	5.7%
Millennials	5.5%	6.0%
Gen X	5.5%	5.7%
Baby boomers	5.7%	5.2%

Despite the increase in mortgage rates over the last three years, many recent buyers say they're happy with their current rate



I'm happy with my rate

64%



I'm unhappy with my rate

24%



I'm indifferent about my rate

12%



In their own words...

While most recent buyers say they're happy with their current rate, many still list lower interest rates, along with lower down payments than required, as things they would change about the mortgage process. These also serve as one of their biggest stressors throughout the homebuying process.

"The fear of paying too much or losing the dream home created a high-stakes, no-win pressure."
- Male, Gen X

"High interest rates were the hardest part for us."
- Female, millennial



2 Affordability

Loan officers see affordability as a big concern

38% of loan officers said home affordability, specifically qualifying borrowers for a loan, keeps them up at night.

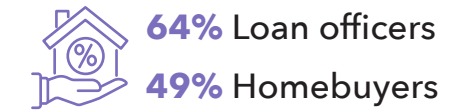
25% of loan officers said volatile interest rates keep them up at night.

Show me the money!

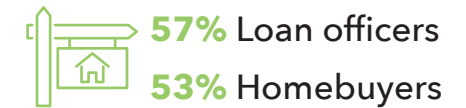
Loan officers and homebuyers agree that finances are one of the greatest challenges of the homebuying process. In fact, loan officers see it as an even bigger challenge for their buyers than the buyers themselves see it.

What are the biggest challenges for today's borrowers?

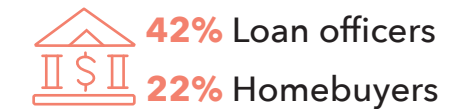
High interest rates



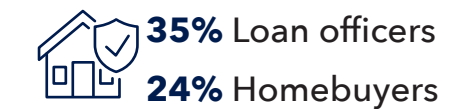
High home prices



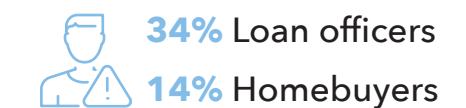
Lack of money for a down payment



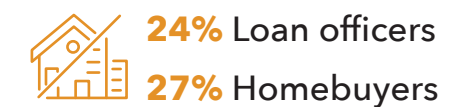
Getting pre-approved for a loan



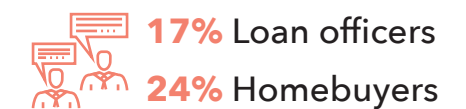
Poor credit



Lack of housing volume



Bidding wars





3 Communication

Communication is the glue that holds the homebuying journey together

Buying a home is one of the biggest, most complex financial decisions most people will make in their lives. So it's no surprise that borrowers are looking for a steady hand to guide them. They want someone they can trust, someone who responds quickly and someone who sets clear expectations up front.

Today's buyers value... 

com-mun-i-ca-tion
noun. 1. the act or process of using words, sounds, signs or behavior to express or exchange information.

Loan officer perspective 

33% of loan officers think the mortgage industry should focus its efforts on better communication from the lender to their borrower.


INSIGHT
A deeper dive

39% of respondents said they would like to see more transparency into the steps and fees. 34% said they would like to see more education from their real estate agent and lender.

3

Communication



In their own words

What are buyers saying?

*"Lenders should offer **clearer communication**, simpler paperwork, faster approvals, helpful guidance and transparent fee explanations to reduce borrower confusion and stress."*

- Male, millennial

*"I feel like having more **clarity** as to why certain things are priced the way they are and more flexibility overall would help."*

- Female, Gen Z

*"Be **available** to answer questions and tell me **upfront** what you need."*

- Female, Gen X

*"Be a lot more **transparent** about all of the hidden fees that come up at closing."*

- Female, baby boomer

*"**Listen** to your customers and what they need."*

- Male, Gen Z

3 Communication

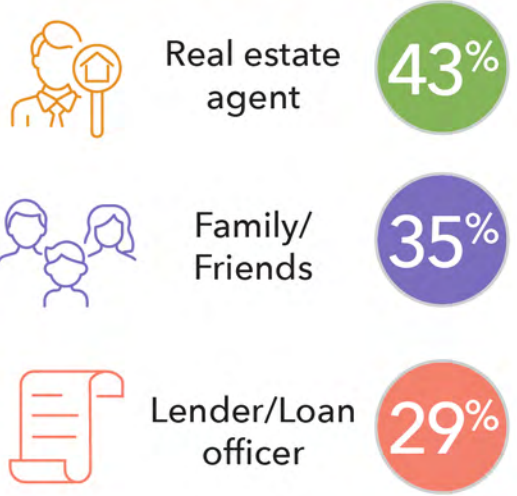


In an increasingly digital world, borrowers still value 1:1 communication

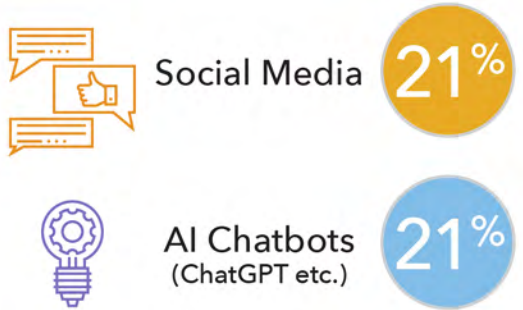
When it came to education, buyers knew where to turn

Humans are still the go-to source for educational information about the mortgage process

Who buyers turned to



Surprisingly, digital sources ranked slightly lower than their human counterparts



Loan officer perspective

In a comparison of who borrowers turned to for their main source of information, loan officers find themselves to be more helpful than borrowers do. Twenty-nine percent of respondents turned to their lender or loan officer, but loan officers themselves thought that number would be higher, at 40%.

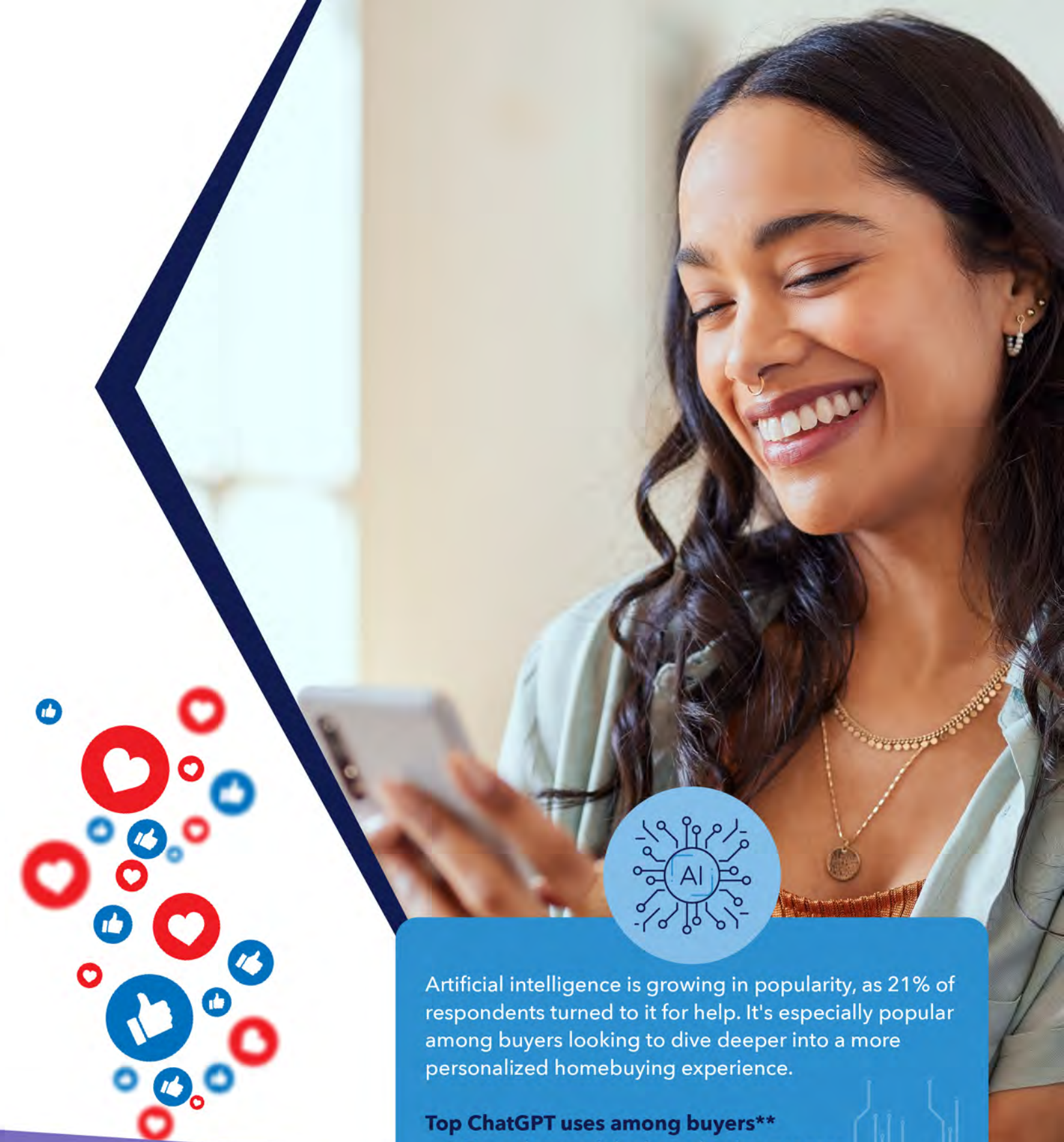
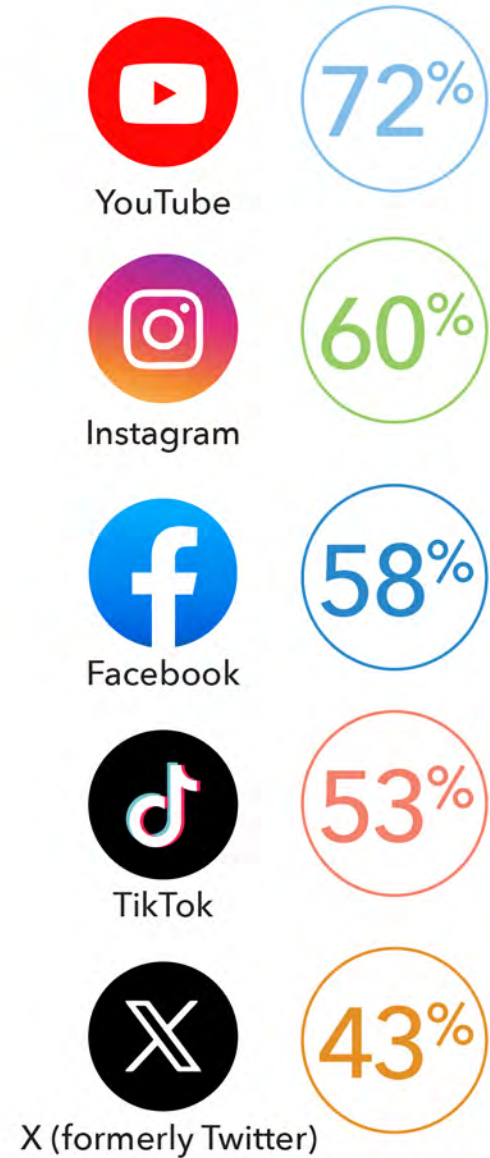
3 Communication

Scrolling for a house?

Buyers turn to social media and AI for Real Estate 101

The average American spends 2.4 hours each day scrolling through social media.* For Gen Z, that number is more than double at 5.1 hours.

Of the 21% of respondents who used social media platforms in their search for homebuying information, YouTube was the clear winner for information seekers.



Artificial intelligence is growing in popularity, as 21% of respondents turned to it for help. It's especially popular among buyers looking to dive deeper into a more personalized homebuying experience.

Top ChatGPT uses among buyers**

1. To understand the homebuying process
2. Budgeting and mortgage planning
3. Researching the market
4. Crafting offer emails
5. Planning for the closing day

*S&P Global Market Intelligence Kagan Third-quarter 2025 US Consumer Insights Survey
**Newhomesource.com



4 STABILITY

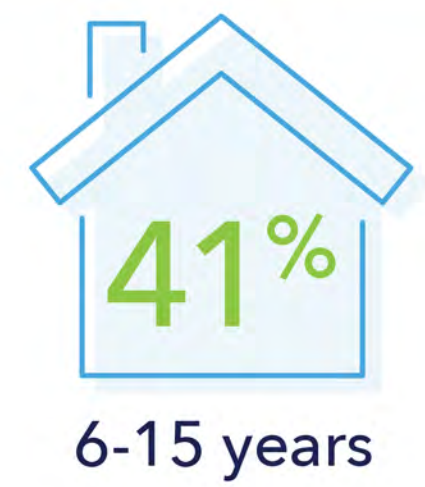
Today's buyers value...

sta·bil·i·ty
noun. 1. the quality, state or degree of being stable, the strength to stand and endure.



Borrowers aren't just thinking about the here and now, they're focused on the future. They want a house that can stand the test of time, build equity and be a place they can call home for many years to come.

How long do you plan to stay in your home?



The younger generations, Gen Z and millennials, are the most likely to stay in their homes for six to 15 years (both at 48%, respectively), while baby boomers (42%) see this as their possible forever home, saying they plan to stay 16-plus years in the home they bought in the last two years.



Inside the motivation: The top forces fueling homebuying right now

When it came to buying a home, many respondents cited their driving force was not only the American dream, but the benefit of stability for many years to come

What were your main reasons for buying a home?

39%

Always wanted to own a home

30%

Finally saved up enough to buy a home

27%

Wanted to move from a rental property into a residence I owned

26%

Wanted a bigger yard, more outdoor space

20%

Wanted to be closer to family

20%

Wanted or needed to move to a new city or area

Long-term benefits of owning a home*



Building equity and wealth



Savings



Appreciation in value



Predictability



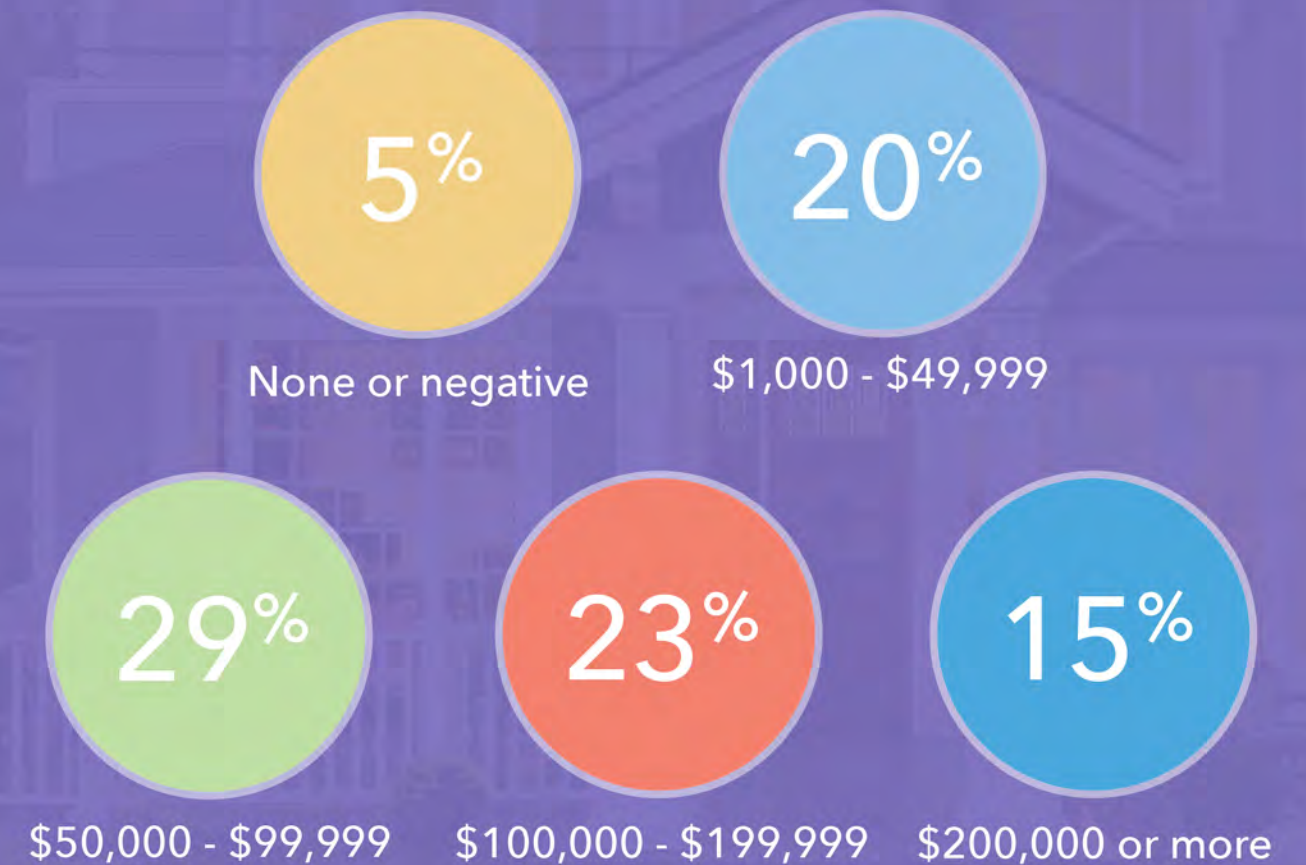
Tax benefits



Freedom

Recent homebuyers – those who purchased in the last two years – are already building equity. The majority of those surveyed indicated that they already have between \$50,000 and \$99,999 in equity in their home.

How much equity respondents say they have in their homes



*NAR Client Education Handout for Buyers

When equity grows, so does homeowner stability

With equity rising, more respondents are considering taking out a home equity loan in 2026 (36%) than the prior years' survey respondents (24% in 2025). Gen Z (48%) and millennials (42%) are the most likely to tap into their home equity with a loan or line of credit, while baby boomers indicated they are not nearly as interested.

Primary motivations to take out a home equity loan or line of credit



To have extra money to make home improvements



To pay off other debt (student loans, bills, etc.)



To start a business



To fund a vacation

Lender learnings

What lenders can teach vs. what lenders can learn

Teach the process, transform the experience



Decode the documents

Complex paperwork was named as one of the top stressors among borrowers, so lenders have an opportunity to meet buyers at their point of vulnerability. With a general lack of understanding around the documentation involved in a purchase transaction, lenders can improve the borrower experience by taking additional time to clarify legal jargon and offer step-by-step guidance. Digitizing paperwork and providing other educational resources could go a long way in delivering clarity and developing trust.



Unpack the price tag

Respondents were vocal about “hidden fees” and “fees being higher than anticipated.” These unexpected fees erode trust and diminish confidence. With today’s buyers, your typical cost sheet may not be enough. Consider spending more time educating borrowers on the various fees, which ones are negotiable and which ones could fluctuate. Borrowers want clarity and they want the final price tag. Communication and transparency in this area is key for borrower satisfaction.



Help buyers shop with confidence

Loan officers in the study raised red flags about borrowers financially overextending themselves. To combat that, consider starting financial wellness conversations earlier in the process. Shift the buyers’ thought process from “How much can I be approved for?” to “How much can I reasonably afford?” Due to high home prices, provide them with a “safe buying range” and then help them see how their lifestyle and savings goals factor into homebuying - going a step beyond the debt-to-income ratio (DTI) conversation.

What lenders can teach vs. what lenders can learn

Learn the trends, adapt to buyer behaviors



A new tempo of homebuying

As mentioned in the study, younger borrowers, while they may not be as experienced in homebuying as their older counterparts, expect to close on a home quickly. Despite the 30-40 day average, results indicate Gen Z and millennials are more likely to think it's possible to purchase a home in 1-2 weeks. This expectation, however unrealistic it may be in certain circumstances, is an area where lenders can both attempt to meet their needs but also set clear expectations up front. For lenders who are unsure where to start, a strong, tech-focused vendor partner can help speed up turn times and improve borrower satisfaction.



Sharing the keys

Largely due to high home prices, homebuying has turned into a family and friend affair. Gen Z and millennials were most likely to borrow from or pool money with family and friends to purchase a home over the past two years. This co-buying trend has been growing in popularity but could lead to complex legal and financial implications down the road.



More tech, less friction

The availability of mortgage technology has grown over the years, but today's buyers expect it to be a part of their experience. In fact, they're looking for lenders that offer eSign technology, virtual closings and the ability to digitally schedule key milestones for the exact date and time of their choice. In short, borrowers desire the simplicity, speed and transparency that today's tech offers.



2026 ServiceLink State of Homebuying Report

Methodology

The 2026 ServiceLink State of Homebuying Report reveals fresh, timely insights drawn from two robust surveys of key industry voices: consumers and loan officers. The consumer survey, conducted November 17 - December 8, 2025, captures the perspectives of 1,554 U.S. residents (18+) who purchased a home within the past two years. Complementing this, the loan officer survey - fielded November 27 - December 8, 2025 - reflects input from 507 loan officers with at least three years' experience. Together, these surveys, conducted in partnership with Sago, provide a focused look at the psychology of today's homebuyers.

The opinions expressed in this survey are for general informational purposes only. The findings represent a random sample of consumer and loan officer responses and do not necessarily support or reflect the opinions or views of ServiceLink.

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