



HOMELIGHT TOP AGENT INSIGHTS™

2016 Home Seller's Report

America's Top Real Estate Agents Weigh in On How to Sell Homes in Today's Market

Seller's Tips from America's Best Agents

Every day, across the country, HomeLight matches homeowners and prospective buyers with thousands of America's top real estate agents.

Our technology compares agents on their historical performance to find the real estate agents that consistently out-perform all of the other agents in their local real estate market.

We used our algorithm to find hundreds of the best Realtors and real estate agents in some of the hottest housing markets in the United States. Then, we asked them for advice homeowners can use as they think about selling their house in 2017 and beyond.

☐ **Hundreds of Participating Top Real Estate Agents**

☐ **Answers to 27 Frequently Asked Seller Questions**

☐ **Best Practices and Tips for Selling Homes**

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Take action before you show the house with these best practices.

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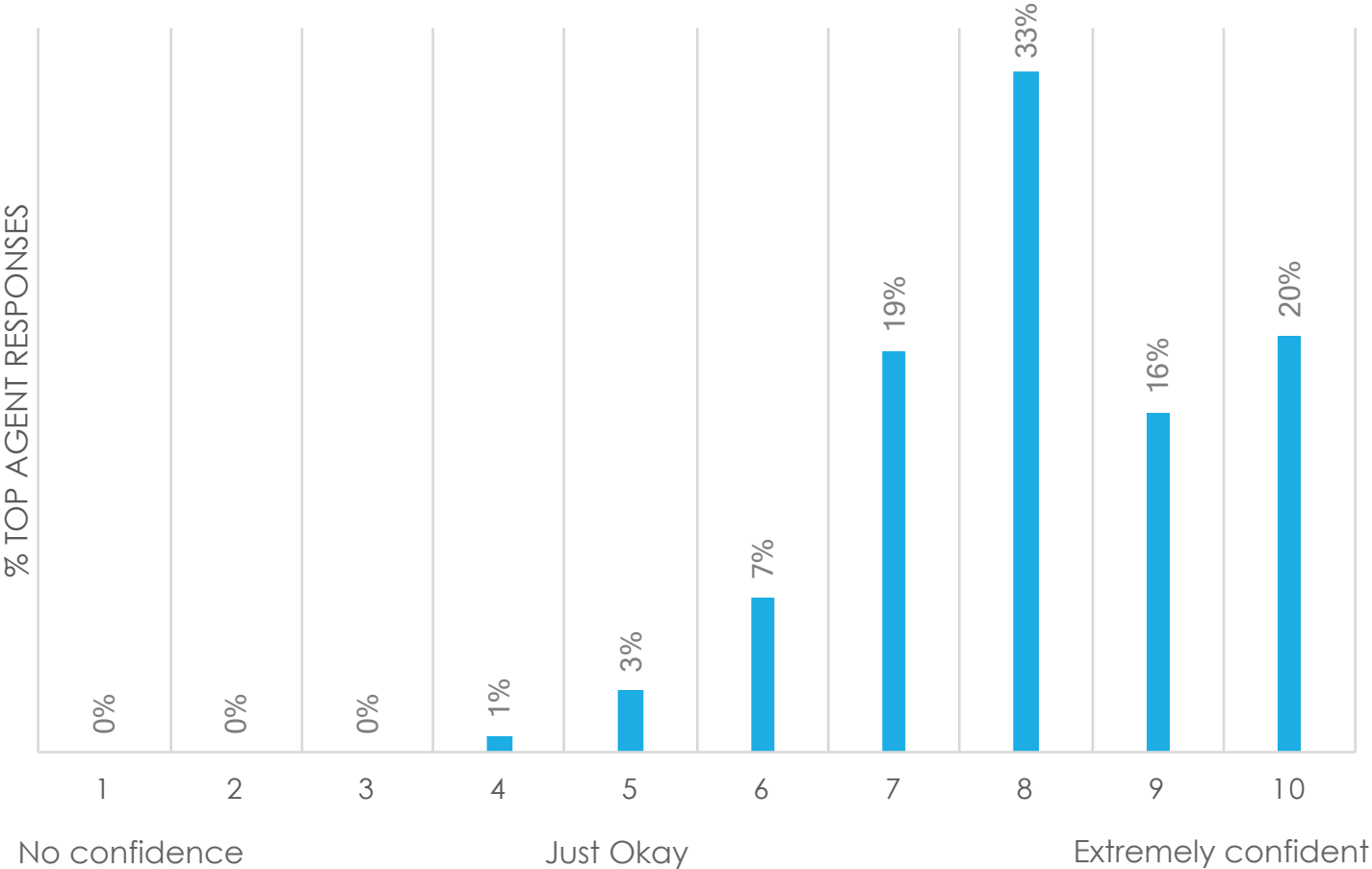
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Ride the Waves of the Market

How do top real estate agents feel about today's housing market and when do they think you should list your home for sale?

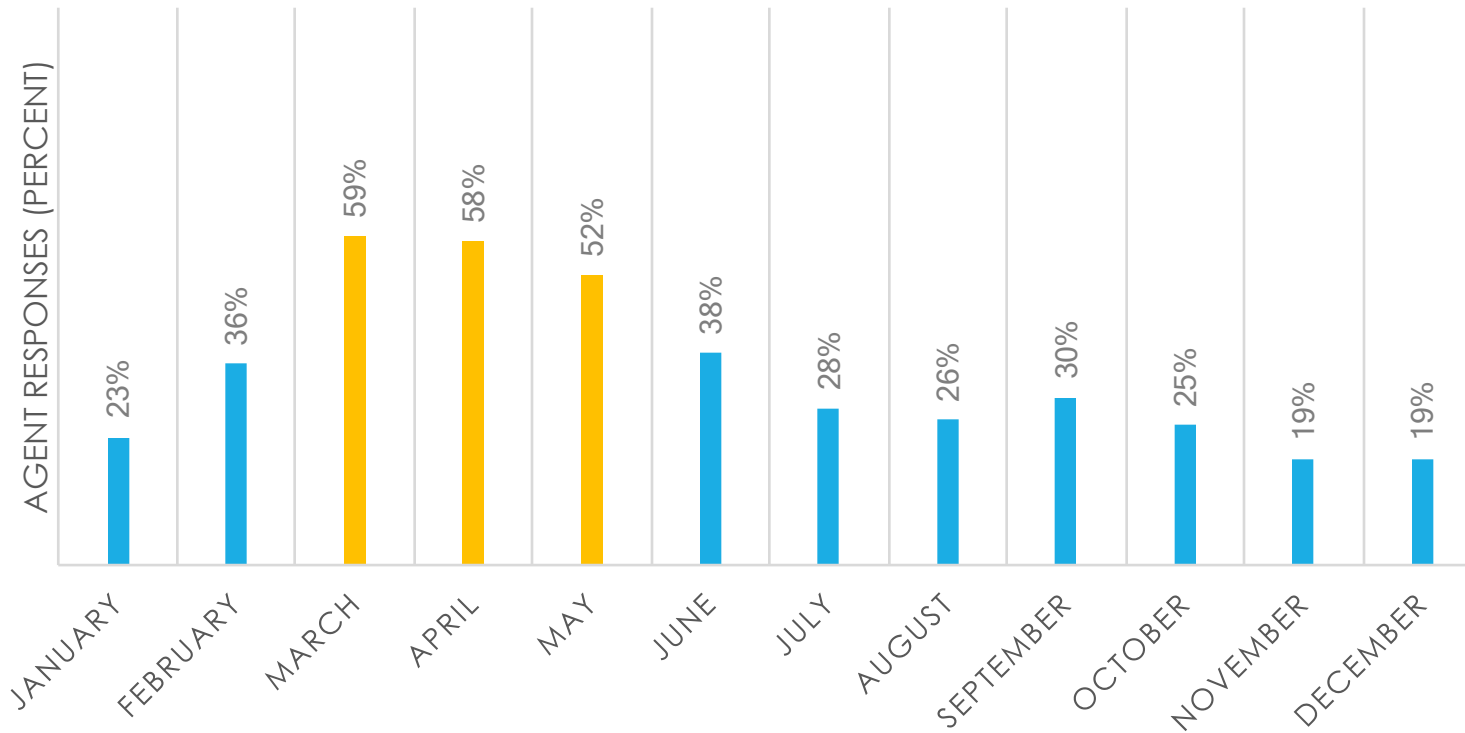
How do top agents feel about the housing market in 2016/2017?



88% of the top real estate agents that participated in our study said that they felt **confident in the strength of the U.S. housing market** in 2016 and 2017.

The next year is looking good for sellers. The more transactions in the marketplace, the easier it is for buyers to secure mortgage loans, the faster your property will sell.

What is the best month to list a home for sale?



- Top real estate agents say that Spring is likely the best time to sell a home.

Unfortunately, the story's not that simple.

- When we checked this recommendation against nationwide housing data from 2015 we found that Spring is a good time to list in most local markets but the best time to list will depend on your local market.

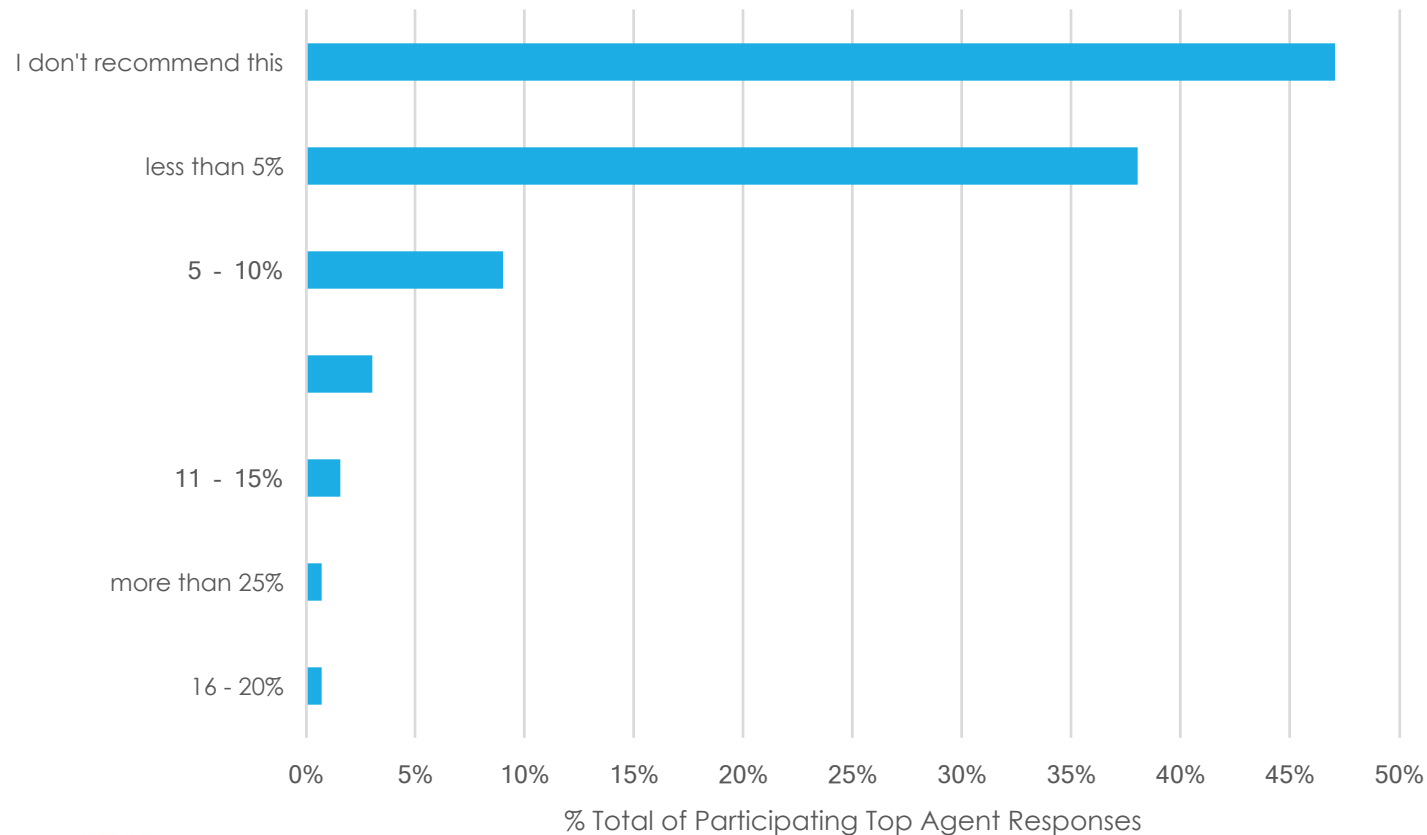
- Read our post to find out what the best time to sell might be in your market:

[We Found the Best Time to Sell A House, and It's Not When You Think](#)

Understand the Home Sale Process

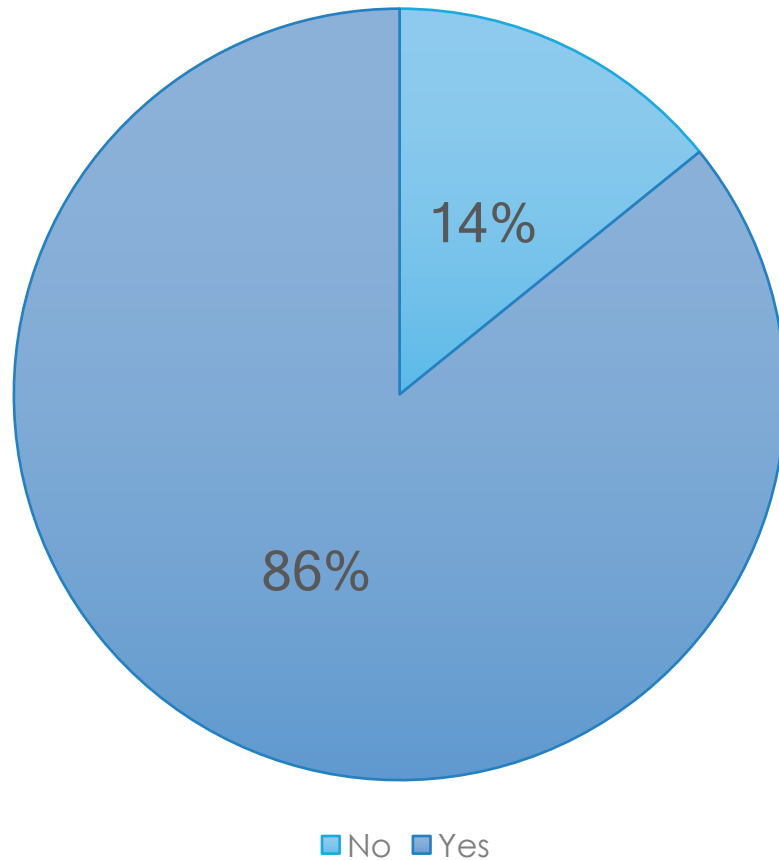
Get down to brass tacks with these insider tips on everything from how to price your home for sale to negotiating with buyers.

How much more do agents recommend pricing a home over the desired price to leave room for negotiations?



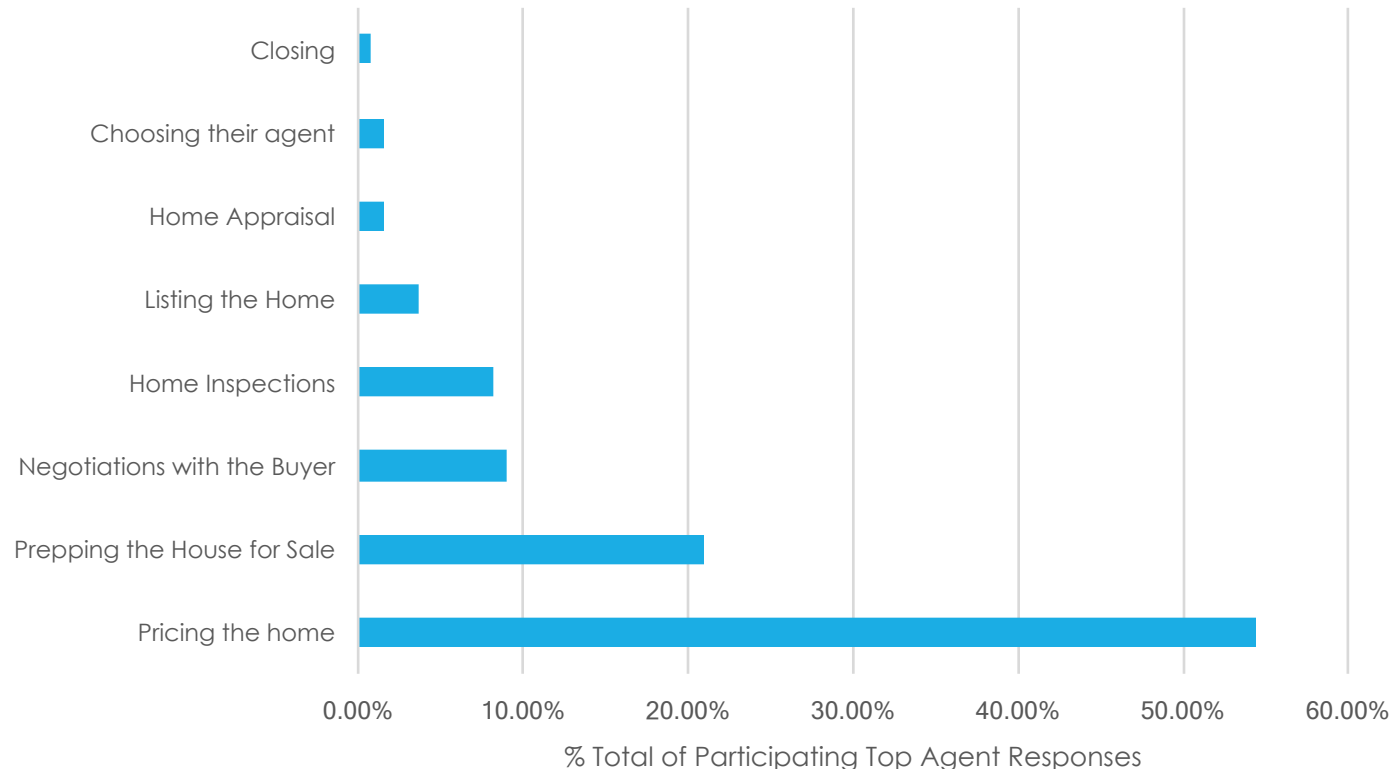
- Contrary to what some sellers believe, most top real estate agents **do not recommend over pricing a home** in anticipation of buyer negotiations.
- All of the agents we spoke with in follow up interviews recommended pricing the home at its fair market value from the beginning.
- There's no need to leave room for haggling.

Do agents recommend that sellers include appliances as part of the sale?



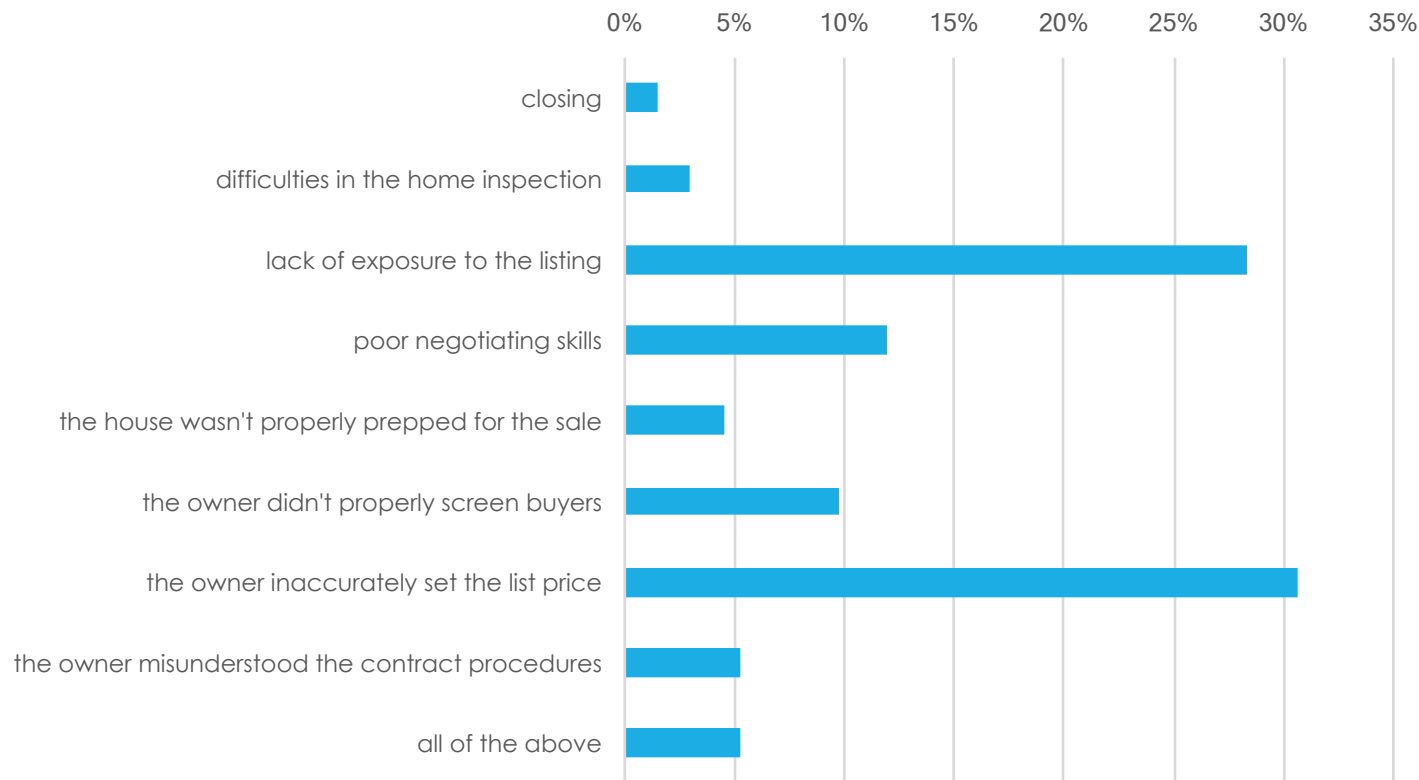
- The vast majority of top real estate agents in our survey recommend that homeowners should include the appliances as part of the home sale.
- Even if you love that new refrigerator, it's probably best if you leave it for the new owner.

At what stage in the sales process are sellers likely to trip up?



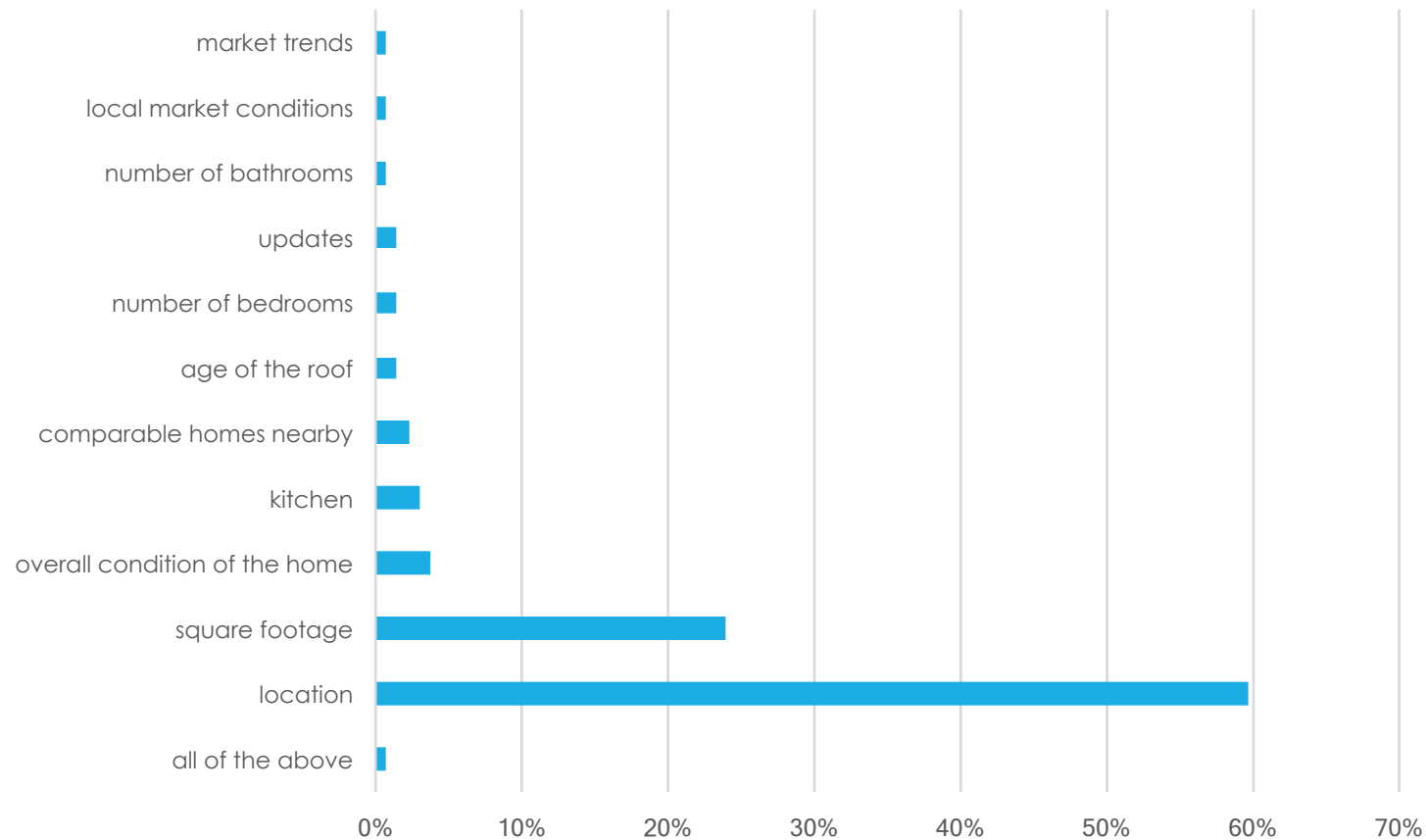
- 54% of our participating top agents said that setting the wrong price for the home is the most common stumbling block for sellers.
- Pricing your home is a complex process of considering things like the market trends, square footage, location, comparable homes in the area, and a whole lot more.
- Take great care to price your home just right. Overprice it and it could sit on the market too long and get stale. Underprice it and you risk losing money.
- Make sure you and your agent properly appraise the value of your home and set a fair price.

What is the most likely reason a seller will fail to sell the house if they don't use a real estate agent?



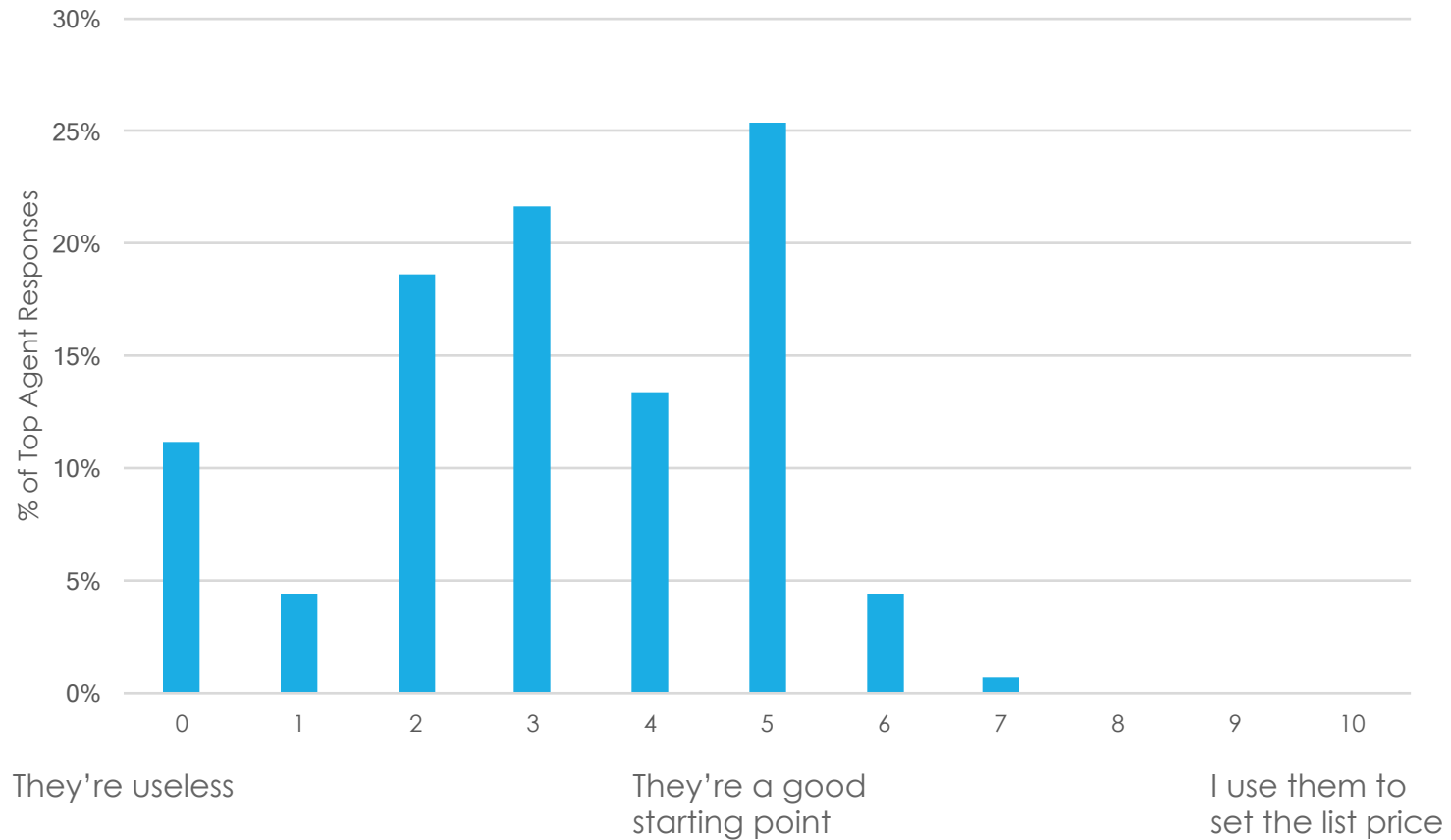
- Once again, top real estate agents suggest that inaccurately pricing the home is one of the main reasons a home sale falls through.
- They also suggest that a lack of exposure to the listing, particularly online, can lead to a longer time on market and fewer bids.

When assessing the value of a home, what takes priority?



- Location, location, location. The old adage still holds true. Almost 60% of the top agents we surveyed said that location is the number one priority when assessing the value of a home.
- While you can't pick up your house and move it to a better location, you can take steps to beautify your neighborhood, support your local community, and get involved in nearby schools.
- As the area around your home improves, so too will your property value.

How much trust do agents put in online home value estimators?



- Top real estate agents don't put much stock in free online home value estimators like Zestimate, Eppraisal, and RealtyTrac.

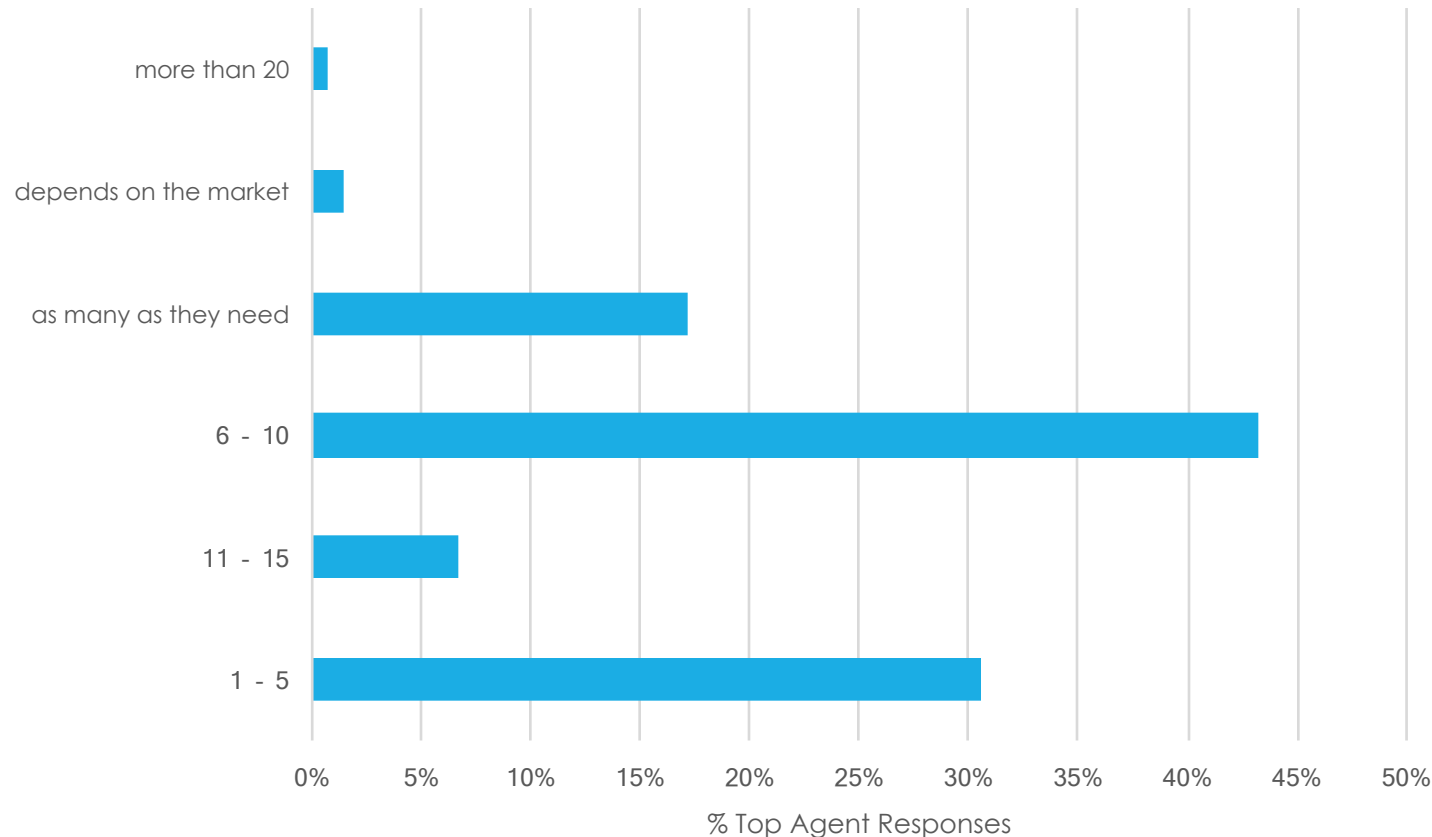
- While these tools are a good starting point to find out what your home is worth, they're often inaccurate or incomplete.

- To compensate for the inconsistencies, we built a home value estimator that pulls 5 of the leading online estimates, compares them, and comes up with what we feel is a more accurate representation of your home's value.

Give it a try, the results may surprise you:

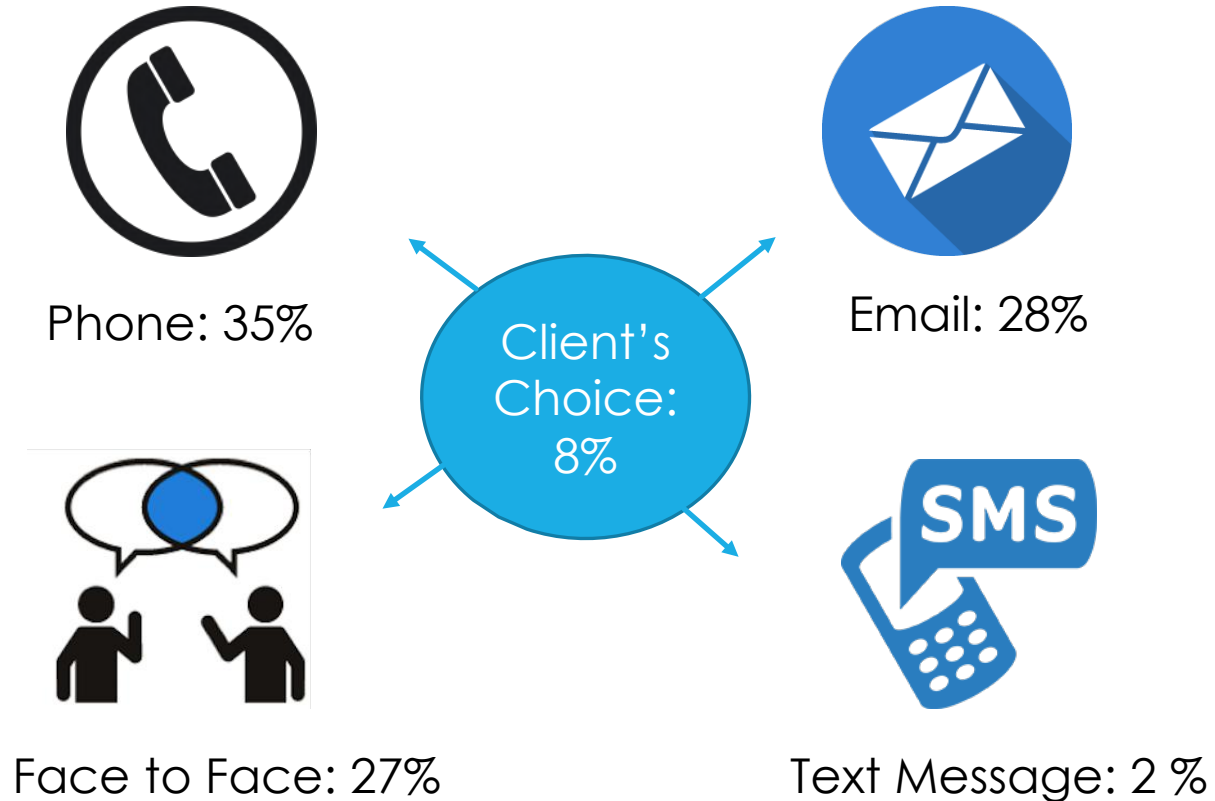
[Home Value Estimator](#)

How many homes should buyers look at before putting in an offer?



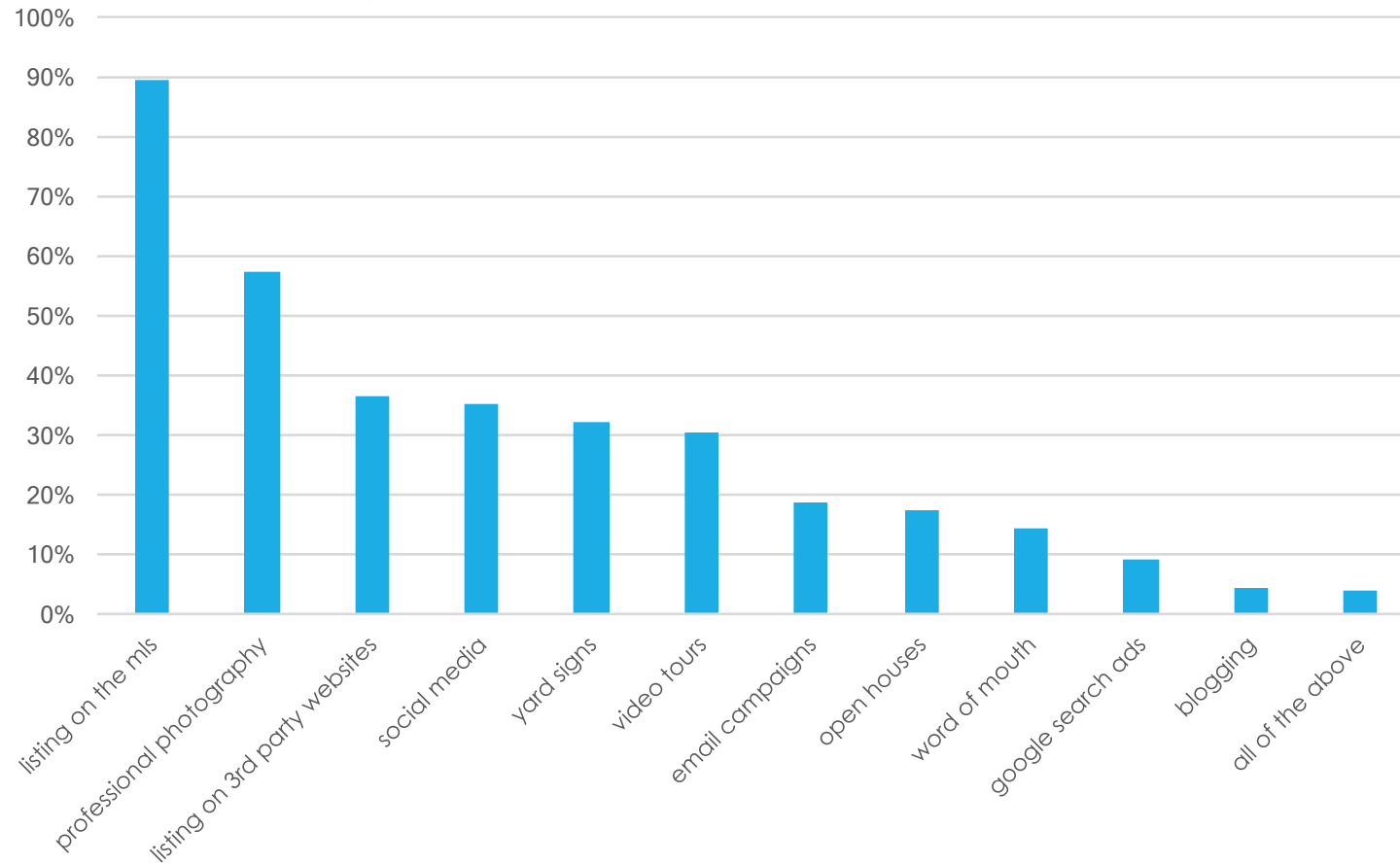
- Shopping for a home? Try to make time to see at least 5 or 6, according to top real estate agents.
- While every shopper is unique and we recommend touring as many homes as you need, to get a true understanding of what's available and what your needs are, you should see a handful of properties.
- If you see multiple homes before making any offers, you're better positioned during negotiations.

How do agents prefer communicating with their clients?



- The more you can do to improve your working relationship with your agent, the easier it will be to sell your house faster and for more money.
- If you're trying to get in touch with your agent, go for the phone first, email second.

What is the most effective form of advertising for a home's listing?



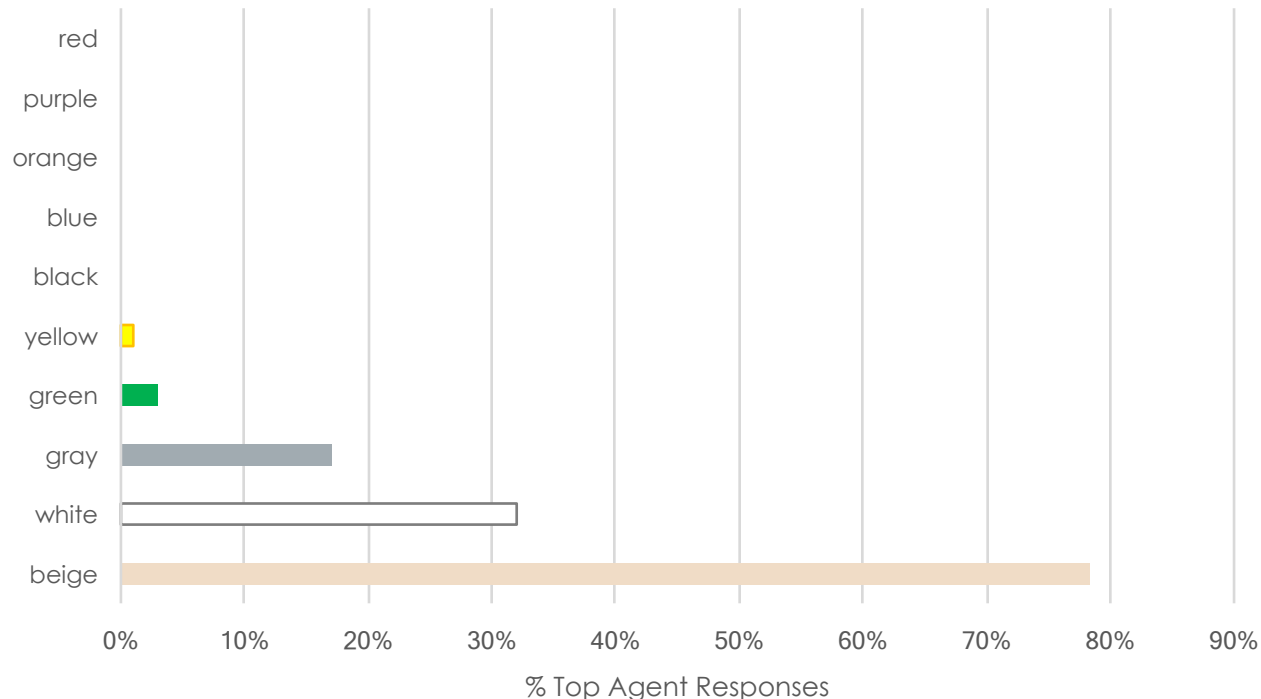
- The Multiple Listing Service (MLS) is one of the most valuable resources for seller's agents.
- The MLS is the first place a buyer's agent turns to when they're looking to schedule home tours.
- Every agent will leverage the MLS to sell your house but top agents know that it's only the beginning.

You need to use everything from great photos and video tours, email campaigns and blog posts, and even Facebook to sell your home in today's housing market.

Do More to Prepare Your Home for Sale

Take action to improve curb appeal, declutter, clean, and freshen up your home before any prospective buyers see it.

What shade of color do top agents recommend sellers paint their interior walls?



- All of the top real estate agents we spoke to agree: put a fresh coat of paint on those walls before you show your house!

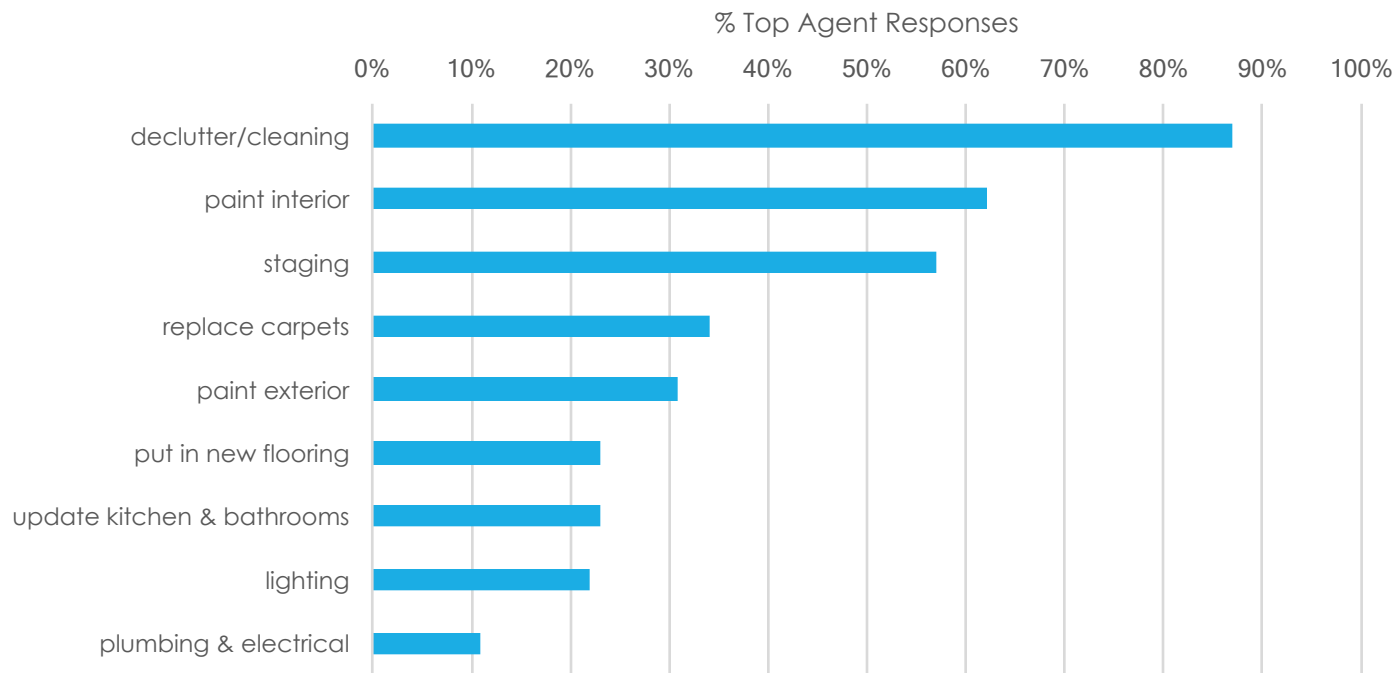
- **78%** of top agents suggest painting with a soft, warm, **beige color**.

- It's not just agents either, science and psychology back up their color recommendation.

Read more:

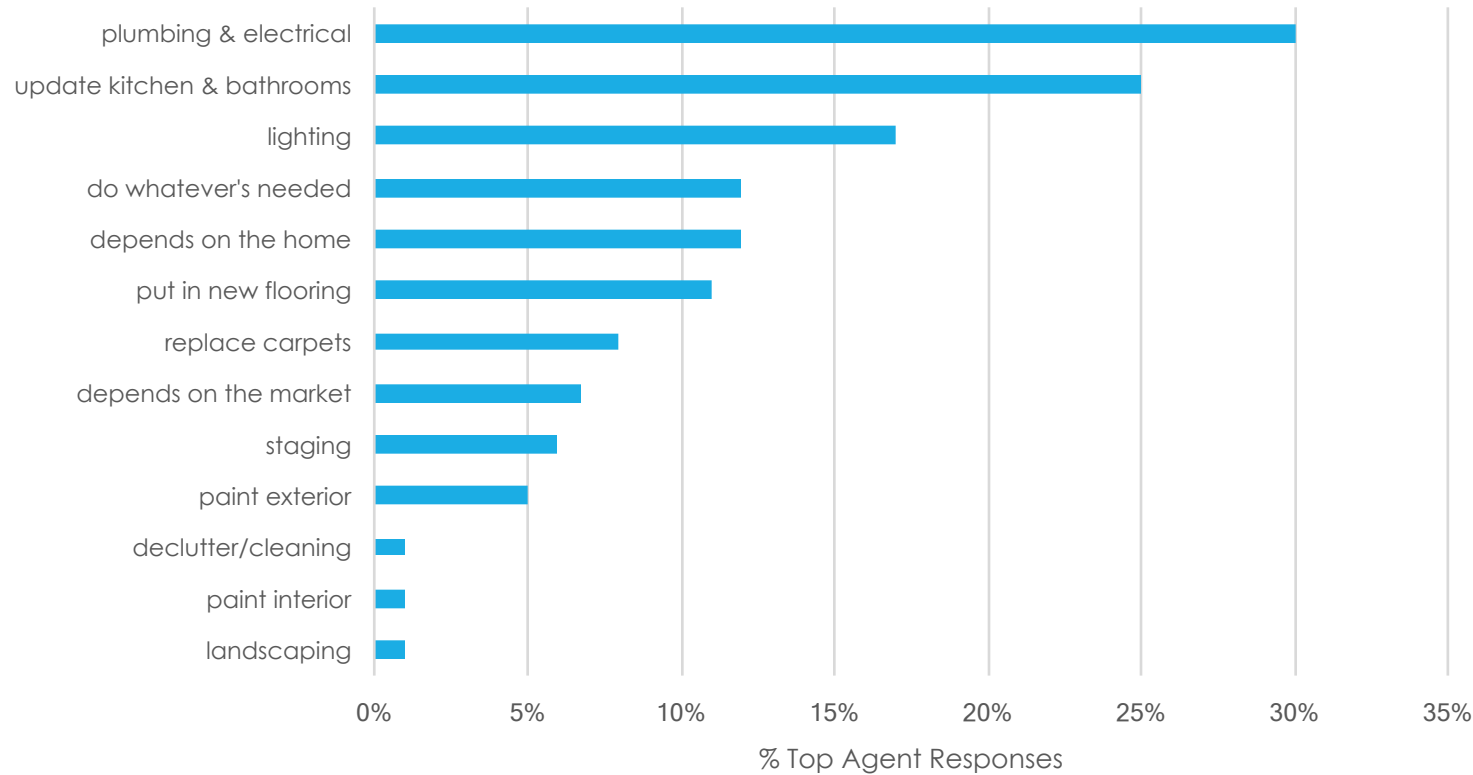
[Gray is Out, Beige is In: Don't Trust Current Home Color Trends](#)

Which home improvement projects do agents often recommend sellers take on before showing the house?



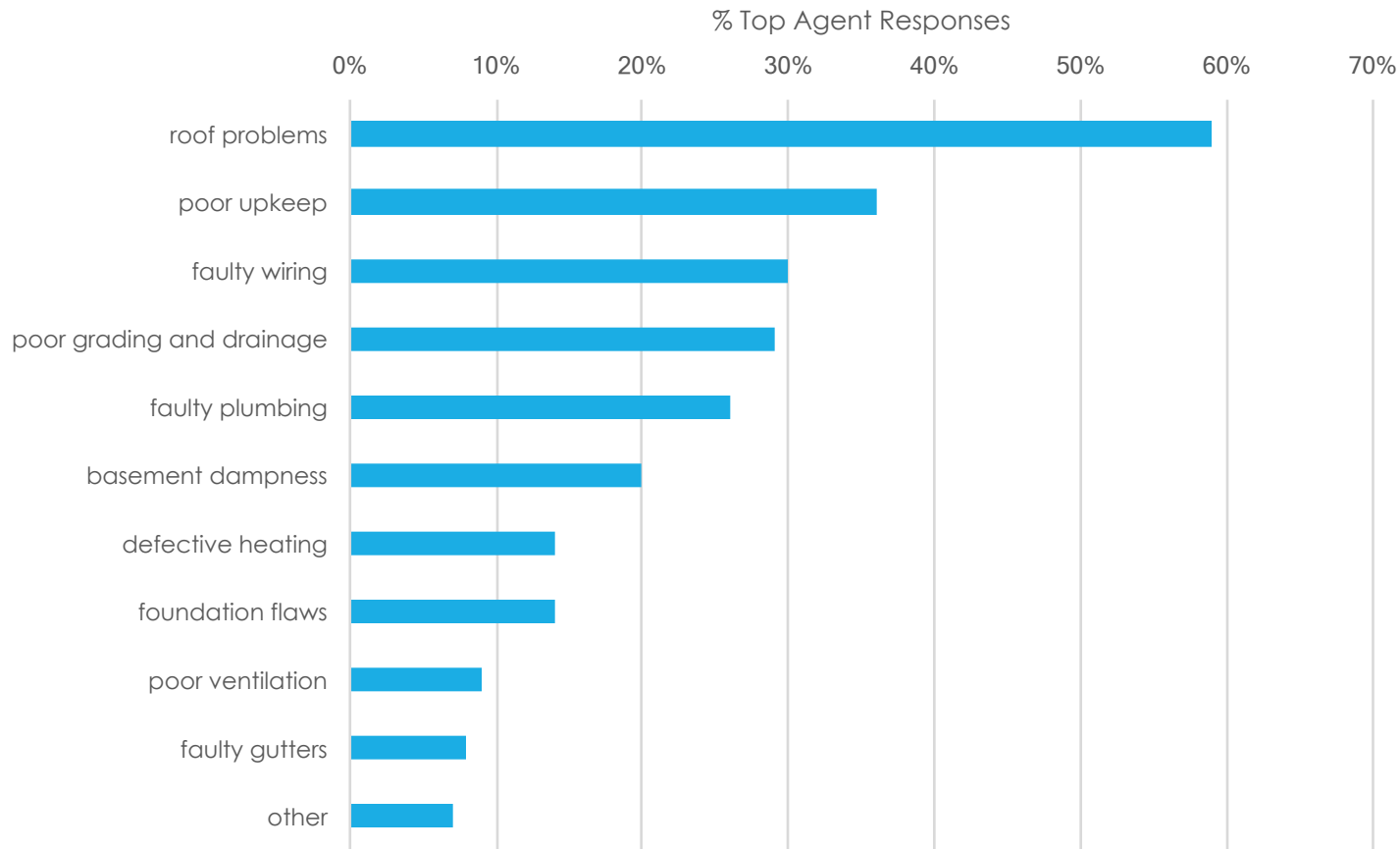
- Before you show your house to potential buyers, you absolutely **MUST** declutter and clean.
- If you want to go the extra mile, do a fresh coat of paint (in a beige tone), hire a professional stager to arrange the furniture, and consider tossing those old carpets.
- Don't go updating the kitchen or rewiring the house just yet though, make sure that any home improvement project you take on will show a positive return on the investment once the sale goes through.

Which home improvement projects would top agents recommend sellers skip all together?



- Response to this question was a little mixed. All of the top real estate agents we spoke to told us that it really depends on the conditions of the house and the trends in the local market.
- Having said that, please think twice before you rewire, replace old pipes, or remodel the kitchen and bathrooms. You probably won't get a strong return on the investment.

What are the most common issues that come up during a home inspection?



- If you run into a problem during the home inspection, chances are it's with the roof.
- 59% of the top real estate agents we polled list "roof problems" as the most common issue to come up in a routine home inspection. Poor upkeep came in 2nd.
- Keep your roof in good shape over the years and add value to your home.

Show Your House in the Best Possible Light

Find out what top real estate agents think you can do to get more potential buyers in the door and more offers on the table.

Do agents always recommend sellers stage their homes for showing?

YES!

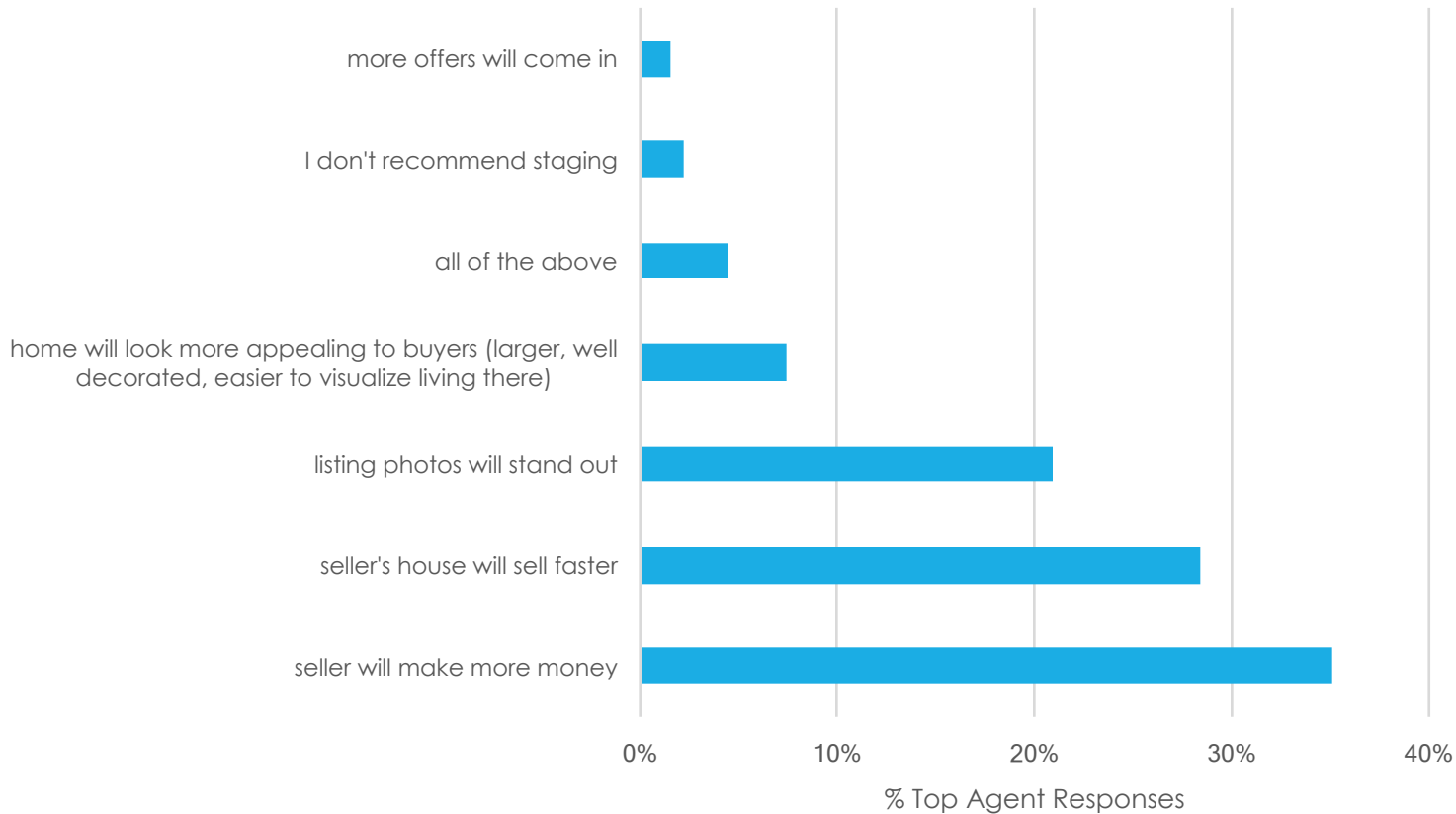
65.67% of top real estate agents **always recommend staging**

NO.

34.33% of top real estate agents **do not** always recommend staging

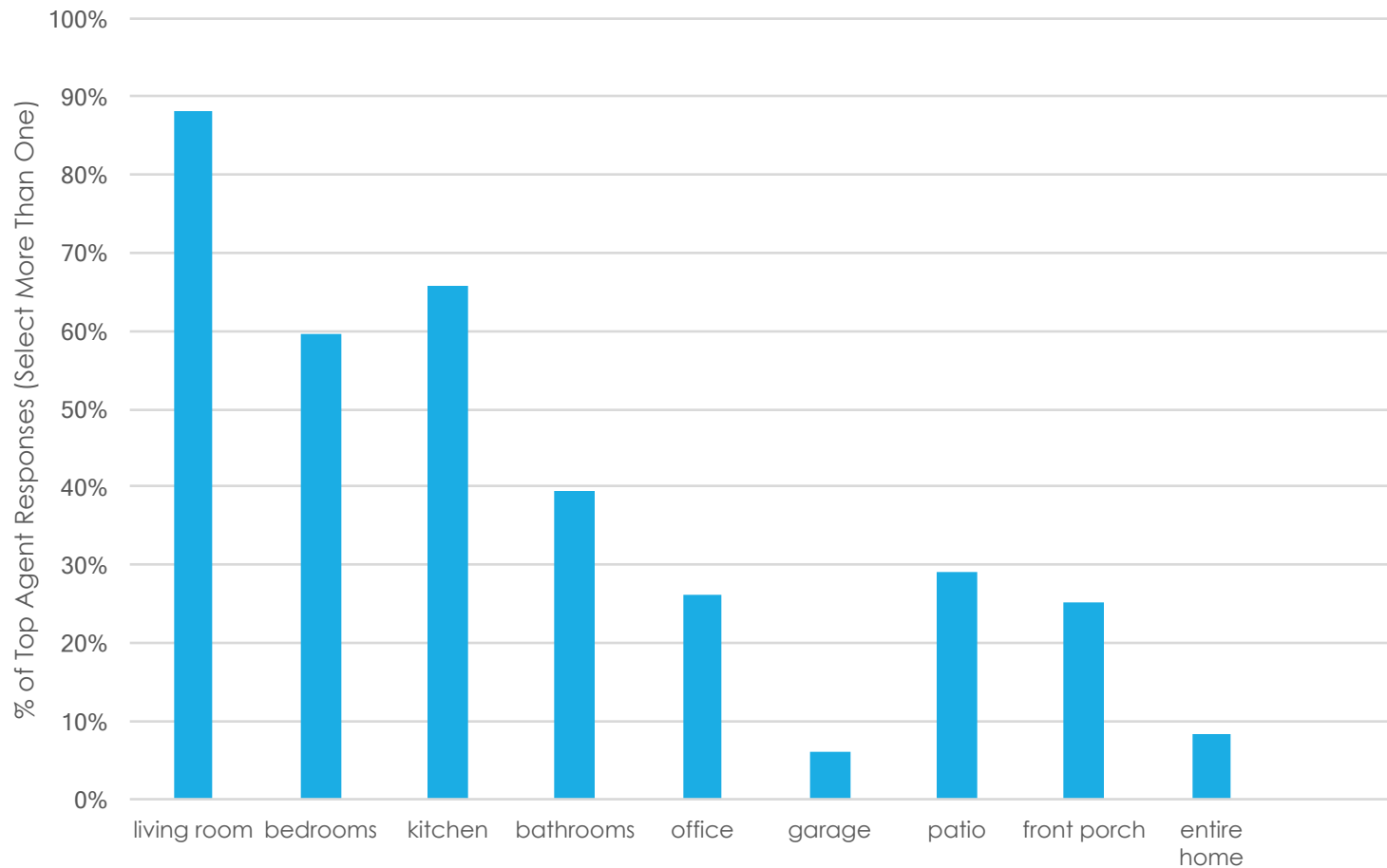
- According to the National Association of Realtors, 96% of Realtors that typically represent buyers report that some buyers are affected by home staging.
- 47% report that **most** buyers are affected by it.
- That extra bit of influence over the buyer explains why **65.67% of top real estate agents always** recommend that their clients stage the home.
- Whether you bring in a professional for the job, or take your cues from Pinterest, we highly recommend staging the home to optimize its appeal.

Why do agents recommend staging a home?



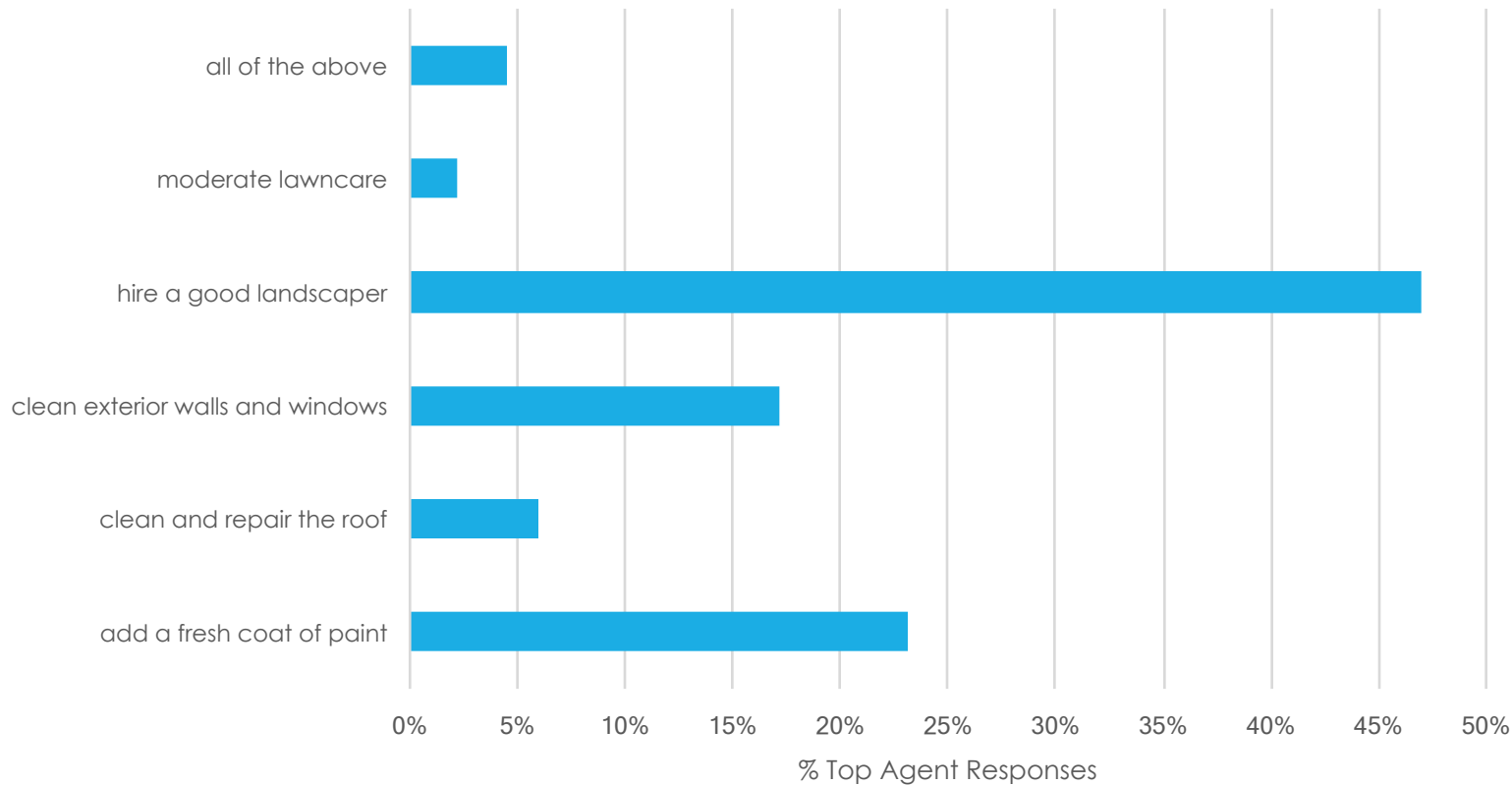
- When over 65% of the top real estate agents always recommend that seller's stage their homes, it's important to understand why.
- The #1 reason most agents recommend staging is that the seller stands to make more money on the sale.
- A well staged home will create better listing photos for ads and better experiences for prospects during open houses and tours.
- The easier you make it for buyers to visualize themselves living in the home (and loving it!) the more offers will come in.

Which areas of the house are you most likely to stage?



- Make sure you stage the furniture in your living room.
- The living room, the bedrooms (especially the master bedroom), and the kitchen get the most scrutiny from buyers and the most foot traffic during a home tour.
- They're also the rooms with the most flexible layout options.

What can a seller do to have the most impact on their home's curb appeal?



- Want to improve your home's curb appeal and make it more attractive to potential buyers?

- **Hire a good landscaper.**

- 45% of top real estate agents recommend that sellers hire a landscaper to groom the outside of the house before showing it to buyers.

- First impressions are extremely important in the sales process. The better your house looks on the outside, the better reception it will receive once a buyer steps inside.

Do agents always recommend sellers host an open house?

YES!

37% of top real estate agents **always recommend hosting an open house.**

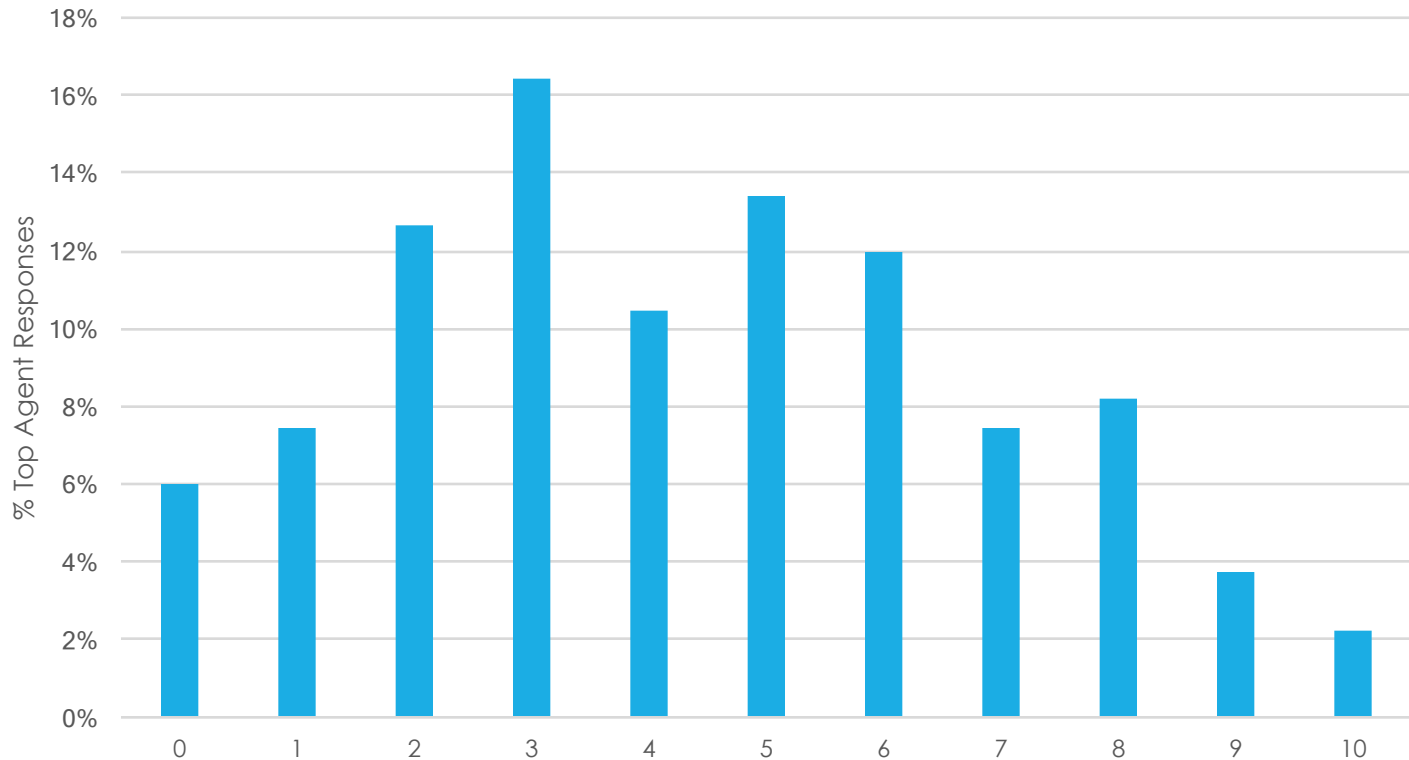
NO.

63% of top real estate agents **do not** always recommend hosting an open house.

- Open houses have been the accepted method of marketing a home since the early days of home ownership, but top real estate agents want to dispel that myth.
- Open houses may be an opportunity for prospective buyers to get up close and personal with a property, fall in love with it, and put in an offer.
- That can happen sometimes, but, according to 63% of top real estate agents, **open houses don't always help sell a house.**
- Read more:

[Why Open Houses Aren't Worth it for Sellers](#)

How effective do you feel open houses are for selling a house?

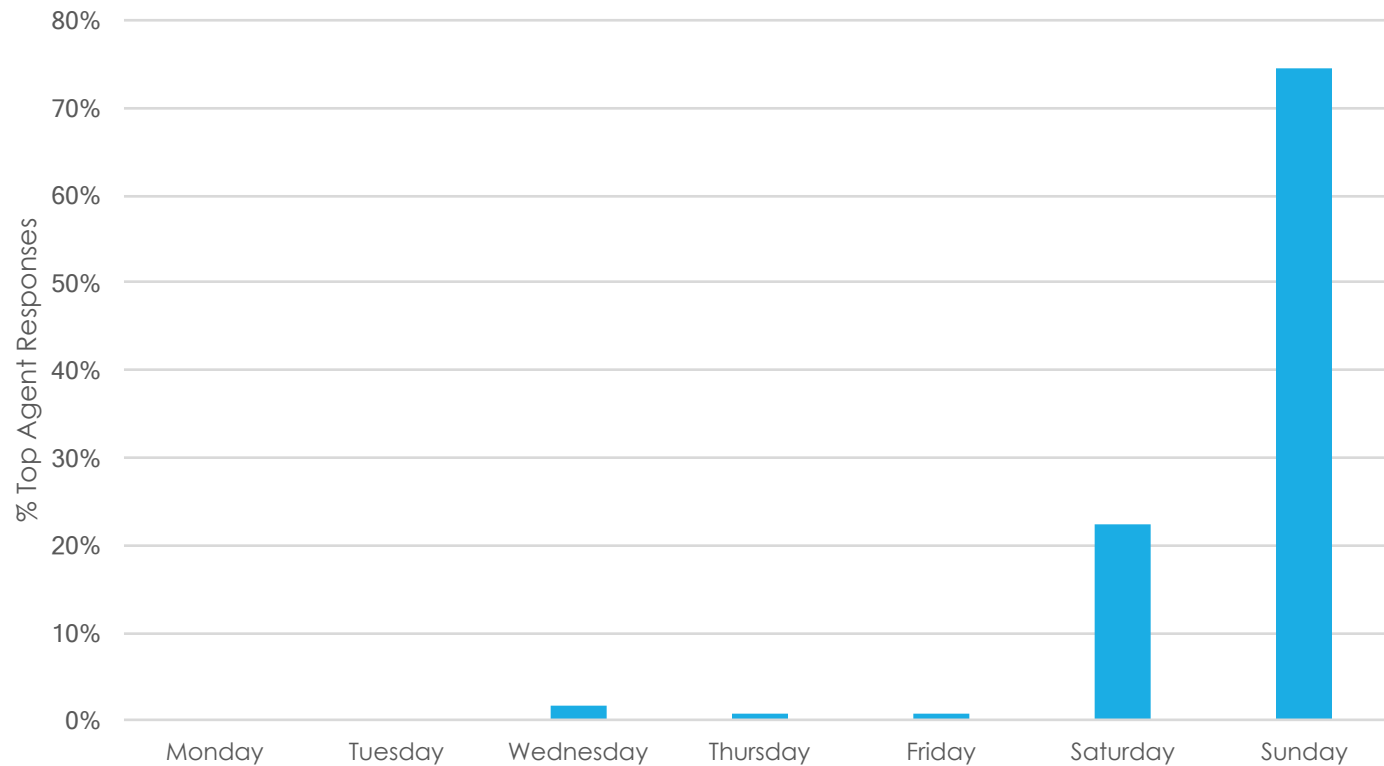


They're useless

Open houses are essential if you want the house to sell

- On average, agents voted open houses a 4.4, where 0 was “completely useless” and 10 was “absolutely essential to sell.”
- The highest percentage of agents rated open houses a 3 on that question.
- 52% rated open houses below five. At least half of the top real estate agents who responded to our survey think **open houses are not useful.**

If you do host an open house, what's the best day of the week for it?



- We still haven't convinced you to cancel that open house next week?
- If you're absolutely determined to host an open house, the best day for it is Sunday.
- That's when the majority of prospects are available and looking for something to do before they go back to work on Monday morning.
- Elizabeth Weintraub, a real estate agent who ranks in the top 1% of agents in Sacramento, even calls Sunday open houses "America's religion."

Thank You to All Participating Agents!

HomeLight Top Agent Insights Survey: 2016 Seller's Report

Top Agent Insights Methodology

HomeLight compared over 2 millions real estate agents across the United States and 200,000 brokerages on their historical transaction history.

Top performing agents were identified by comparing of a number of metrics including average days on market, total number of sales, average sale to list price ratio, and other proprietary data points.

Hundreds of agents responded to complete the entire survey of 27 questions. HomeLight then conducted follow up interviews with the participating agents in order to collect additional context and insight into the survey data.

About HomeLight

HomeLight is passionate about making real estate better.

That's why we've built the best new way to find a real estate agent, and it works by matching you with agents based on their actual skills and experience.

Imagine interviewing someone for a job without a resume; that's how most people find a real estate agent. With over two million agents in our database, we give you the 'resume' of an agent before you decide to work with them.

Buying or selling a home is often the largest financial transaction of one's life, so don't trust that to just anyone. Having the right agent (with the right resume) can make a huge difference.

Find a top real estate agent in your area.

**Give us a call:
(888) 998-1909**