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## Sellers want max exposure for their listings, survey finds

Most sellers don't know much about MLSs or private listing networks — but they want an agent who can get their listing in front of the largest pool of buyers.



AJ LaTrace



Amie Fisher

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### Key points:

- Zillow surveyed more than 2,000 people about listings access and found that it's a topic few understand.
- Most sellers said their agents encouraged the use of private listing networks, but didn't necessarily explain what they were.
- Nearly 90% of those surveyed said all for-sale listings should be viewable for free, and more than 80% would want their home listed on a public consumer website.

Over the past several months, many industry leaders have taken a stand on [NAR's divisive Clear Cooperation Policy](#), which requires agents to add a listing to the MLS within one day of publicly marketing the property. Opponents argue that the policy [denies sellers the choice](#) of how and where to market their homes.

So what do sellers actually want? And are they even aware of their options?

Earlier this month, Zillow conducted a survey to help answer those questions. The findings, based on responses from over 2,000 U.S. adults (including more than 1,200 previous home sellers), [were released this week](#) and shed some light on how consumers feel about access to listings and private networks.

## **MLS — what's that? Most agents aren't explaining**

Most of the survey respondents had a limited understanding of MLSs, with only around a quarter of 18 to 44-year-olds and a third of 45 to 54-year-olds saying they knew exactly what an MLS was.

While the oldest age groups were more familiar with the MLS, fewer than half — 42% of 55 to 64-year-olds and 49% of those 65 and older — were confident in their knowledge.

Private listing networks were an even bigger unknown. When asked if they knew what that term meant, fewer than 1 in 5 respondents expressed certainty. The older age groups were least familiar, with just 14% of those over 65 indicating they knew what a private listing network was.

Given these knowledge gaps, are agents taking the time to educate clients about listing platforms? In most cases, the answer seems to be no. Of the survey respondents who had worked with an agent, 68% said their agent did not explain the difference between the MLS and private listing networks when discussing ways to market a home.

## Agents are pushing PLNs — but sellers want maximum visibility

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This appears to be a recent trend — of those who sold more than five years ago, just 18% said their agent suggested using a PLN.

The survey didn't address why agents tended to recommend PLNs, but sellers may be seeking something different. Asked to rate the most important quality in a listing agent, the top factor — selected by 52% of respondents — was the agent's ability to get the home in front of the largest pool of interested buyers, while only 21% considered access to an exclusive buyer network to be a priority.

### More sellers ultimately choose the MLS

If their agent recommended using a PLN, sellers generally took their advice — just 20% opted to go with the MLS instead. But more than 40% of those who initially listed on a private network said they eventually switched to the MLS, while 35% stuck with the PLN.

Among all respondents, when asked whether they would prefer to list their home on a consumer site versus a private network, consumers were almost evenly split, with 39% preferring a public site, 31% preferring a PLN and 31% having no preference.

But after they were shown [data suggesting that homes listed on the MLS sold for more](#) than those that were not, more than half of the PLN group (56%) changed their minds, with younger respondents most likely to switch their preference. [Those results are consistent with a November survey from 1000WATT](#) that found most people choose the MLS option after seeing sale-price data.

### Consumers want their homes to be seen

The survey posed some theoretical questions as well. When asked where they'd want their listing to appear if they were selling a home, most respondents (81%) said it was "somewhat" or "very" important that the listing be publicly viewable, for free, on a consumer real estate website, such as Zillow (which commissioned and reported the survey) or Redfin.

A higher share — 86% — said all for-sale home listings should be viewable for free, and 73% somewhat or strongly agreed with the idea that limiting listing access to certain subsets of shoppers could lead to discrimination.

Most respondents (81%) also felt that bidding wars were more likely if home listings were viewable to more buyers.

## 'A wonderful marketplace'

Zillow leadership has been vocal in its support of Clear Cooperation. In October, then-President [Susan Daimler told Real Estate News](#) that "private listing networks are terrible for both consumers and for agents" and are "anti-transparency" — [a stance reiterated by CEO Jeremy Wacksman](#) during Zillow's November earnings call, and again this week [from the stage at Inman Connect](#) in New York.

"The vast majority of sellers want their home on the internet," Wacksman told the audience, citing the company's recent survey.

"One of the great things about this country, unlike other countries, is the MLS structure provides a wonderful marketplace," Wacksman said. "That's part of why Zillow supports the ability for all data to flow to the marketplace, because transparency benefits everybody."

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Write to [AJ LaTrace](#), [Amie Fisher](#).



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AJ LaTrace

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