INAUGURAL EDITION

The 2026 Darkhorse Index of Insurance Agent Independence

What 1,001 U.S. Insurance Agents Say About Income, Control and the Path to Ownership

A national survey of 1,001 U.S. insurance agents conducted by Morning Consult on behalf of Darkhorse Insurance Brokers from June 17 to July 7, 2026.

Published by Darkhorse Insurance Brokers.

DARKHORSE

ABOUT THE INDEX

How to read the Darkhorse Index of Insurance Agent Independence

The Darkhorse Index of Insurance Agent Independence is a composite measure of agent sentiment built from survey responses grouped into five pillars, with each pillar and each underlying item scored from 0 to 100.

The five pillars capture agent sentiment across conditions associated with professional independence. The conditions are room to grow, autonomy over decisions, tools that support efficient operation, an economic stake in the business, and confidence in the agency model's future.

A score of 50 marks the neutral midpoint. Scores above 50 indicate net-favorable sentiment, scores below 50 indicate net-unfavorable sentiment, and the further a score sits from 50, the stronger the sentiment.

The 2026 score of 66.2 sits above the 50-point neutral midpoint and stands as the baseline for future editions of the Index.

Think of the Index as a temperature check on how insurance agents view the opportunities and conditions surrounding professional independence. The score of 66.2 out of 100 reflects an overall positive outlook, but it does not mean agents are "66.2% independent" or that their concerns have been resolved. The five pillars show where sentiment is stronger and weaker, while future editions will track how those perspectives change over time.

INDEX SCORE

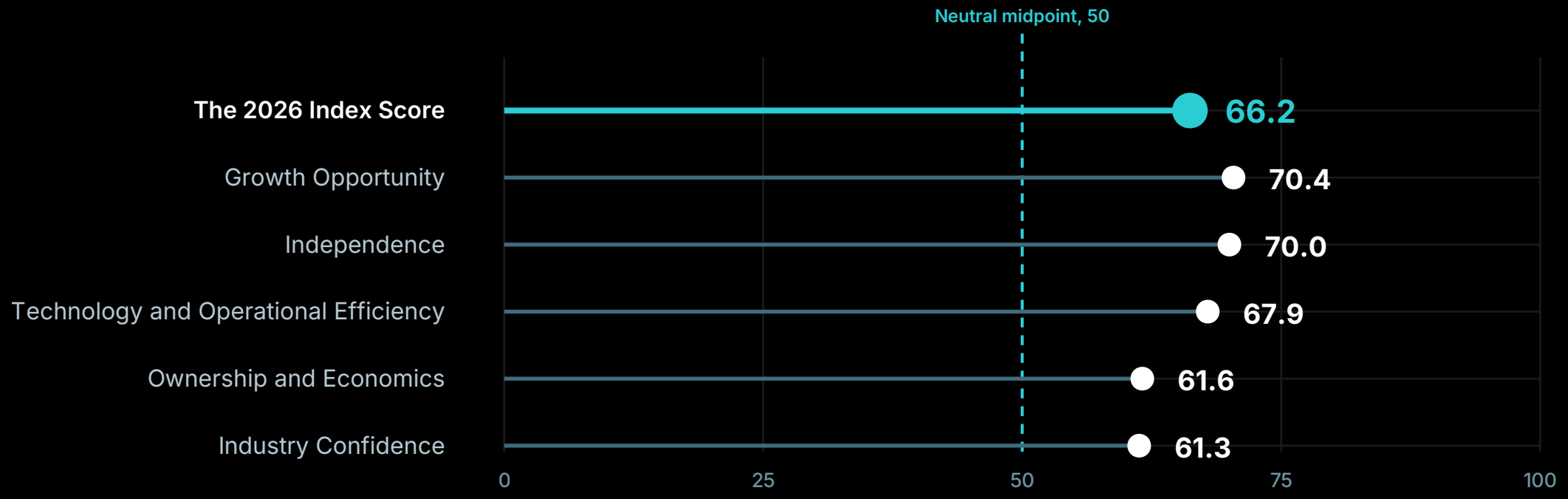
66.2

2026 Darkhorse Index of Insurance Agent Independence score, out of 100

Source: The 2026 Darkhorse Index of Insurance Agent Independence, a study conducted by Morning Consult on behalf of Darkhorse Insurance Brokers. Base varies by question; see methodology and individual chart notes. The base for any finding drawn from a subgroup is stated beneath the chart or finding that uses it.

All five pillars score above the 50-point neutral midpoint

Each pillar combines survey items scored from 0 to 100, where 50 is the neutral midpoint. The Index score is the mean of the five pillar scores.



Full sample, n=1,001.

Source: The 2026 Darkhorse Index of Insurance Agent Independence, a study conducted by Morning Consult on behalf of Darkhorse Insurance Brokers. Base varies by question; see methodology and individual chart notes. The base for any finding drawn from a subgroup is stated beneath the chart or finding that uses it.

Pillars, segments and definitions

THE FIVE PILLARS

Growth Opportunity, 70.4. How agents perceive their ability to grow their business within the current system.

Independence, 70.0. The importance of professional autonomy and control over business decisions.

Technology and Operational Efficiency, 67.9. Satisfaction with the tools and systems agents rely on to operate their businesses.

Ownership and Economics, 61.6. Agent sentiment on ownership of their book of business and overall economic structure.

Industry Confidence, 61.3. Overall sentiment on the future of the insurance agency model.

Item-level scores range from 78.2 for technology reducing administrative burden to 42.8 for the reverse-scored statement that the industry makes it difficult to build meaningful ownership, the only item-level score below the 50-point midpoint.

SEGMENTS IN THIS REPORT

Captive agent. Contracted primarily or exclusively with one insurance carrier.

Semi-captive agent. Holds a primary carrier relationship with access to some other carriers.

Independent non-owner agent. Places business across multiple carriers without owning the agency.

Agency owner. Owns or operates an independent insurance agency.

Captive and semi-captive agents are reported together throughout. Definitions follow the survey's role question and appear in full on page 26.

TERMS AS USED IN THIS REPORT

The descriptions below were developed by Darkhorse to explain how this report uses these terms. They were not definitions presented to survey respondents. Full descriptions appear on page 26.

Independence. Professional autonomy over carrier and product recommendations, client service, and business decisions.

Ownership. An equity or controlling interest in an insurance agency or book of business.

Structural freedom. The flexibility an agency model provides over how an agent operates, grows, earns income, accesses carriers, and serves clients.

Source: The 2026 Darkhorse Index of Insurance Agent Independence, a study conducted by Morning Consult on behalf of Darkhorse Insurance Brokers. Base varies by question; see methodology and individual chart notes. The base for any finding drawn from a subgroup is stated beneath the chart or finding that uses it.

Key findings

FINDING 1

79%

Agents are more confident in themselves than satisfied with their agency models

79% are confident they will reach their professional goals, compared with 66% who are satisfied with their current agency model. Confidence exceeds satisfaction in every agent segment.

FINDING 2

91%

Agency owners report the highest satisfaction

91% of agency owners are satisfied with their current model, compared with 63% of captive and semi-captive agents and 57% of independent non-owner agents.

FINDING 3

78%

Most agents associate greater freedom with greater earning potential

78% believe they could earn significantly more with greater flexibility over how they operate, grow and serve clients. Meanwhile, the Index's highest-scoring individual item concerns technology's ability to reduce administrative burden.

FINDING 4

32%

Operational burden is as significant a barrier as financial risk

Operational and financial concerns each account for 32% of the barriers agents report. These operational barriers include the complexity of running an independent operation, hiring and retaining talent, back-office support, carrier access, and technology and systems.

FINDING 5

85%

Agents likely to explore greater independence or ownership select a one-to-five-year timeframe

85% of agents who rate themselves likely to explore greater independence or ownership select a timeframe of one to five years if they were to pursue such a move. Overall, 51% of non-owner agents rate themselves likely to explore greater independence or ownership if the right platform, support system and resources existed.

The 85% figure covers the 427 respondents who rated their likelihood 5 to 7 on the seven-point scale, with a margin of error of plus or minus 4.7 percentage points.

Source: The 2026 Darkhorse Index of Insurance Agent Independence, a study conducted by Morning Consult on behalf of Darkhorse Insurance Brokers. Base varies by question; see methodology and individual chart notes. The base for any finding drawn from a subgroup is stated beneath the chart or finding that uses it.

FINDING 1

Agents in every segment are confident they will reach their professional goals, but fewer are satisfied with their current model

Source: The 2026 Darkhorse Index of Insurance Agent Independence, a study conducted by Morning Consult on behalf of Darkhorse Insurance Brokers. Base varies by question; see methodology and individual chart notes. The base for any finding drawn from a subgroup is stated beneath the chart or finding that uses it.

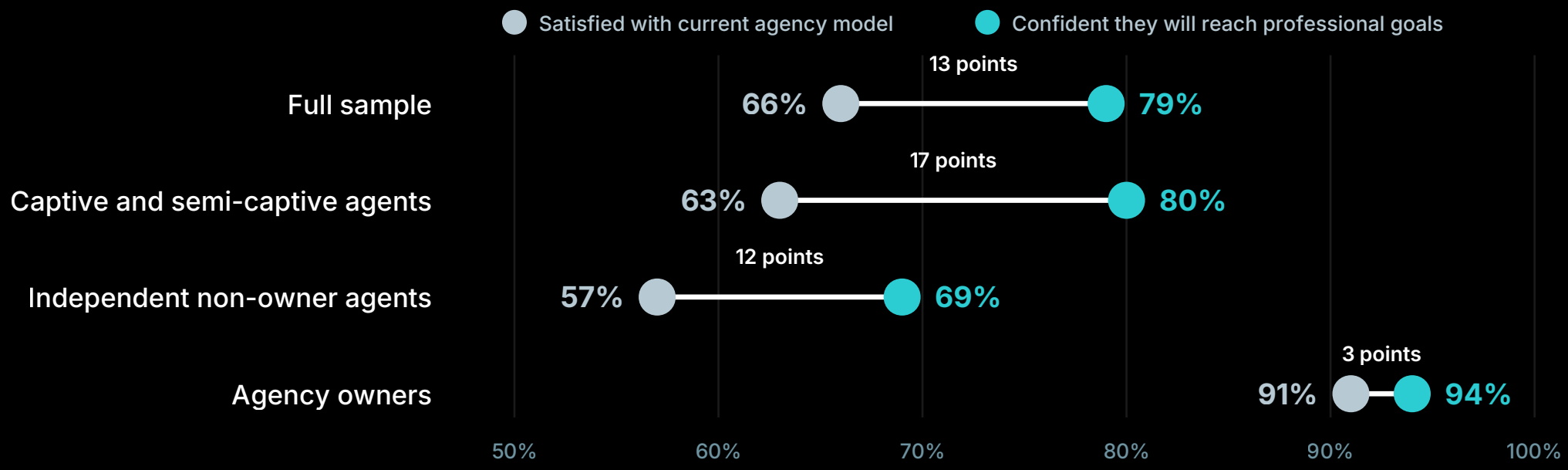
79%

of agents are confident they will reach their professional goals

FINDING 1

Confidence exceeds satisfaction by 13 percentage points overall

Satisfaction with current agency model and confidence in reaching professional goals, each rated on a 10-point scale. Figures show ratings of 7 to 10.



Full sample n=1,001. Captive and semi-captive n=480. Independent non-owners n=347. Agency owners n=174. Overall agency-model satisfaction and professional-goal confidence figures reflect ratings of 7 to 10 on 10-point scales.

Source: The 2026 Darkhorse Index of Insurance Agent Independence, a study conducted by Morning Consult on behalf of Darkhorse Insurance Brokers. Base varies by question; see methodology and individual chart notes. The base for any finding drawn from a subgroup is stated beneath the chart or finding that uses it.

FINDING 1

Agents in every segment are confident they will reach their professional goals, but fewer are satisfied with their current model

Confidence in reaching professional goals is high in every segment, with agency owners reporting the highest confidence at 94%. Captive and semi-captive agents report 80%, and independent non-owners report 69%.

Confidence exceeds satisfaction with the current agency model in every segment, with a spread of 13 points across the full sample that reaches 17 points among captive and semi-captive agents. Independent non-owners show a 12-point spread, and agency owners show a 3-point spread.

Confidence and satisfaction are different measures. Agents express greater confidence in their own ability to reach their goals than satisfaction with their current agency models.

THE 12-MONTH OUTLOOK

Expectations for industry conditions over the next 12 months are divided, with 37% of agents expecting conditions for independent agents and agency owners to improve and 36% expecting no change. The remaining 27% expect conditions to worsen. Captive and semi-captive agents are the most optimistic segment, with 44% expecting improvement, while agency owners are the most likely to expect worsening at 43%.

AGENCY OWNERS

94%

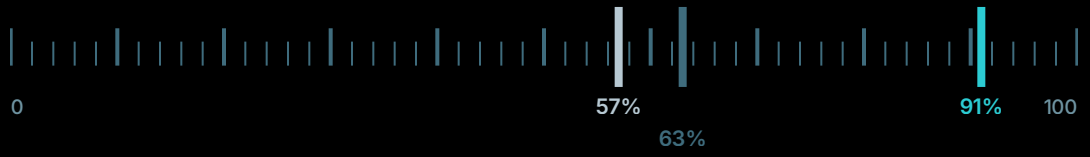
Confidence in reaching professional goals is high in every segment, with agency owners reporting the highest confidence at 94%.

Agency owners n=174.

Source: The 2026 Darkhorse Index of Insurance Agent Independence, a study conducted by Morning Consult on behalf of Darkhorse Insurance Brokers. Base varies by question; see methodology and individual chart notes. The base for any finding drawn from a subgroup is stated beneath the chart or finding that uses it.

FINDING 2

Satisfaction is highest among agency owners and lowest among independent non-owners



91% of agency owners are satisfied with their current model

63% of captive and semi-captive agents

57% of independent non-owner agents

Source: The 2026 Darkhorse Index of Insurance Agent Independence, a study conducted by Morning Consult on behalf of Darkhorse Insurance Brokers. Base varies by question; see methodology and individual chart notes. The base for any finding drawn from a subgroup is stated beneath the chart or finding that uses it.

FINDING 2

Satisfaction is highest among agency owners and lowest among independent non-owners

Client-first flexibility draws the highest agreement of any statement among independent non-owners, with 76% saying their current model gives them the freedom to act in clients' best interest. The same segment reports the lowest satisfaction with equity-building opportunities of any segment, at 40%, on the agreement statement "I am satisfied with my long-term equity-building opportunities in my current structure." This is a separate agreement measure and not comparable with the 57% who report overall satisfaction with their agency model. Satisfaction with income growth stands at 64%, the weakest result among the goals independent non-owners rank most important.

Across the segments studied, satisfaction aligns more closely with ownership status than with reported client-first flexibility. Agency owners report the highest satisfaction. Among non-owner agents, independent non-owners report more client-first flexibility than captive and semi-captive agents but lower satisfaction.

GOAL STATEMENTS AS PRESENTED TO RESPONDENTS

Own My Path. I can recommend the best carrier and product for each client, without restrictions dictating my choices.

Run My Way. I have full control over how I operate, brand, and grow my agency.

Grow My Income. I have real earning potential that isn't capped by a captive structure or fixed compensation model.

Build Real Equity. I am building or working toward ownership of a book of business I can grow, sell, or pass on.

Work Smarter. My technology tools reduce administrative burden so I can focus on clients and growth.

Last the Long Run. I'm building an agency that will be viable and sustainable for decades to come.

Source: The 2026 Darkhorse Index of Insurance Agent Independence, a study conducted by Morning Consult on behalf of Darkhorse Insurance Brokers. Base varies by question; see methodology and individual chart notes. The base for any finding drawn from a subgroup is stated beneath the chart or finding that uses it.

FINDING 2

Owner satisfaction is 91%, against 57% among independent non-owners

Satisfaction with current agency model, rated on a 10-point scale. Figures show ratings of 7 to 10.

91%

Agency owners

63%

Captive and semi-captive agents

57%

Independent non-owner agents

Agency owners n=174. Captive and semi-captive n=480. Independent non-owners n=347.

SEPARATE MEASURE: SATISFACTION WITH EQUITY-BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES

40%

of independent non-owner agents agree they are satisfied with their long-term equity-building opportunities in their current structure.

Source: The 2026 Darkhorse Index of Insurance Agent Independence, a study conducted by Morning Consult on behalf of Darkhorse Insurance Brokers. Base varies by question; see methodology and individual chart notes. The base for any finding drawn from a subgroup is stated beneath the chart or finding that uses it.

FINDING 3

Most agents believe they could earn more with greater structural freedom

[1] Structural freedom, as used in this report, is the flexibility an agency model provides over how an agent operates, grows, earns income, accesses carriers, and serves clients. It does not require agency ownership. See the terms on page 4 and the full definition on page 26.

Source: The 2026 Darkhorse Index of Insurance Agent Independence, a study conducted by Morning Consult on behalf of Darkhorse Insurance Brokers. Base varies by question; see methodology and individual chart notes. The base for any finding drawn from a subgroup is stated beneath the chart or finding that uses it.

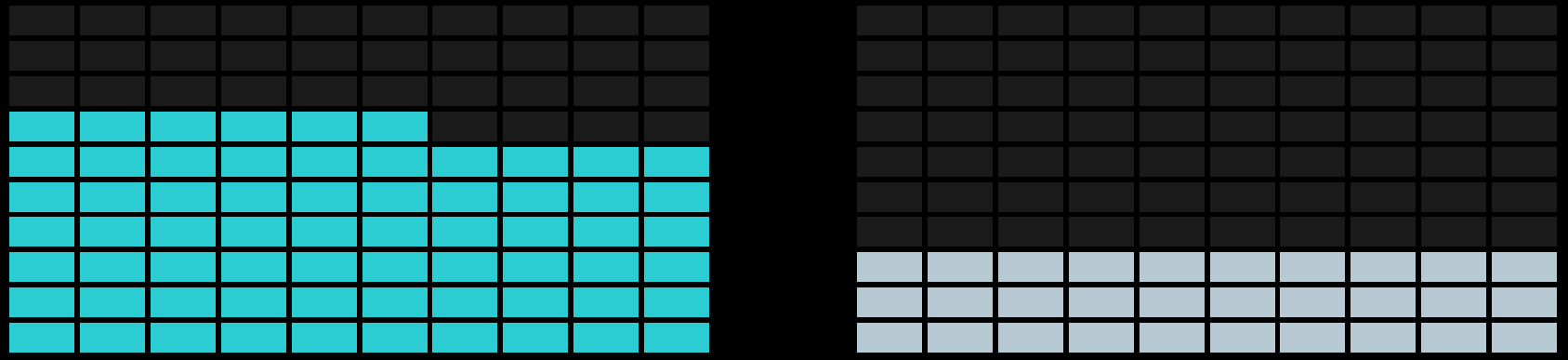
78%

of agents believe they could earn more with greater structural freedom[1]

FINDING 3

66% of captive and semi-captive agents consider agency ownership an important long-term career goal, more than twice the share of independent non-owner agents

Agreement with the statement “Owning my own agency is an important long-term career goal.” Each square is one percentage point. Agreement combines strongly agree and somewhat agree on a five-point scale.



66% Captive and semi-captive agents

30% Independent non-owner agents

Captive and semi-captive n=480. Independent non-owners n=347. The related 78% finding reflects the full sample, n=1,001.

Source: The 2026 Darkhorse Index of Insurance Agent Independence, a study conducted by Morning Consult on behalf of Darkhorse Insurance Brokers. Base varies by question; see methodology and individual chart notes. The base for any finding drawn from a subgroup is stated beneath the chart or finding that uses it.

RELATED FINDING AMONG ALL AGENTS

78%

of all agents agree they could earn more with greater structural freedom.

FINDING 3

Most agents believe they could earn more with greater structural freedom

Agreement that greater structural freedom[1] would raise earnings is the highest of any statement in the study at 78%. Agency owners agree at 82%, the highest reported among the segments studied, and captive and semi-captive agents agree at 79%.

Owning an agency is an important career goal for 66% of captive and semi-captive agents, more than double the 30% among independent non-owners.

Among agents who would choose a different model if starting their career again, 54% prefer full agency ownership and 29% prefer an independent agent or producer role.

[1] Structural freedom, as used in this report, is the flexibility an agency model provides over how an agent operates, grows, earns income, accesses carriers, and serves clients. It does not require agency ownership. See the terms on page 4 and the full definition on page 26.

AGENCY OWNERS

82%

Agency owners agree at 82%, the highest reported among the segments studied, and captive and semi-captive agents agree at 79%.

Agency owners n=174.

Source: The 2026 Darkhorse Index of Insurance Agent Independence, a study conducted by Morning Consult on behalf of Darkhorse Insurance Brokers. Base varies by question; see methodology and individual chart notes. The base for any finding drawn from a subgroup is stated beneath the chart or finding that uses it.

FINDING 4

Operational burden is as significant a barrier as financial risk

Source: The 2026 Darkhorse Index of Insurance Agent Independence, a study conducted by Morning Consult on behalf of Darkhorse Insurance Brokers. Base varies by question; see methodology and individual chart notes. The base for any finding drawn from a subgroup is stated beneath the chart or finding that uses it.

OPERATIONAL AND FINANCIAL CONCERNS

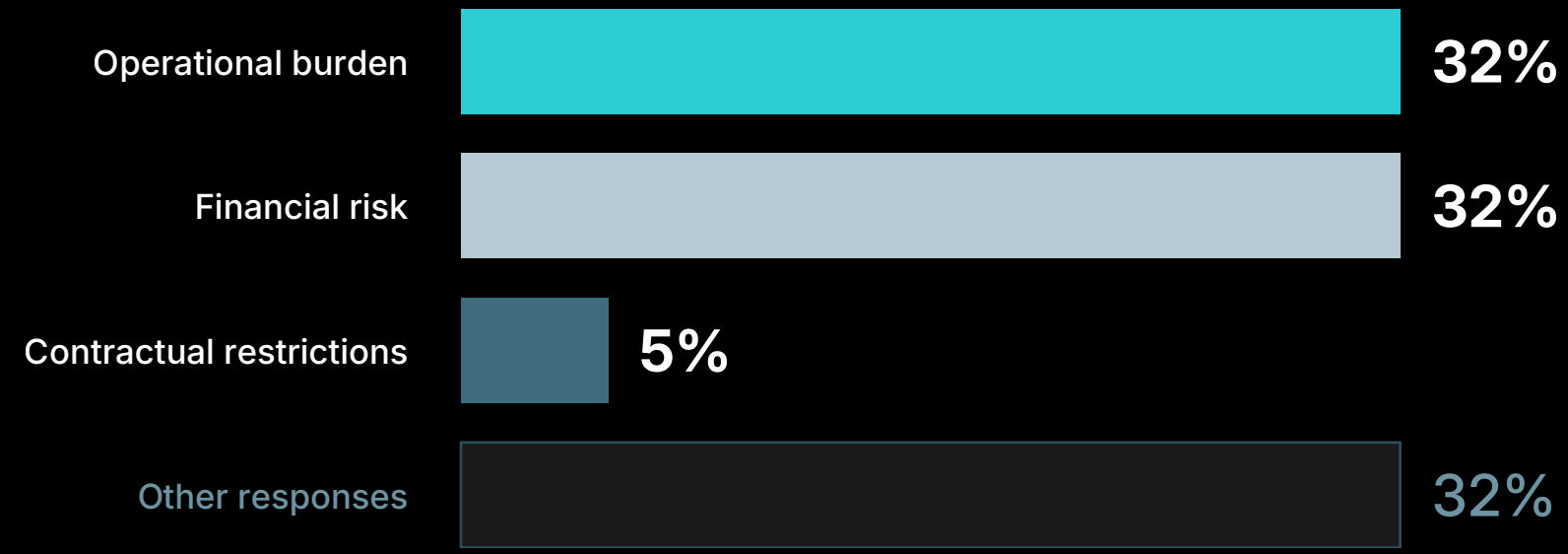
32%

Operational and financial concerns each account for 32% of the barriers agents report.

FINDING 4

Operational burden is as significant a barrier as financial risk

Single biggest barrier to achieving your ideal agency model. Responses grouped into categories.



Full sample, n=1,001, single response. Financial and operational categories represent Darkhorse's grouping of individual survey responses. Totals may differ from the sum of displayed percentages due to rounding. Percentages do not equal 100% due to rounding.

Source: The 2026 Darkhorse Index of Insurance Agent Independence, a study conducted by Morning Consult on behalf of Darkhorse Insurance Brokers. Base varies by question; see methodology and individual chart notes. The base for any finding drawn from a subgroup is stated beneath the chart or finding that uses it.

LEADING INDIVIDUAL BARRIER

20%

The risk of losing current income or stability is the leading individual barrier at 20%.

FINDING 4

Operational burden is as significant a barrier as financial risk

FINANCIAL RISK

Financial risk accounts for 32% of barrier responses. The risk of losing current income or stability is the leading individual barrier at 20%, and startup or transition costs follow at 12%. The share naming income or stability risk is 22% among independent non-owners and 26% among agency owners. Independent non-owners cite startup or transition costs at 20%, which brings financial barriers to 42% of that segment's responses.

OPERATIONAL BURDEN

Among all barrier responses, complexity of running an independent operation is the largest operational component at 10%. Difficulty hiring, attracting, or retaining talent follows at 7%, and lack of operational or back-office support accounts for 6%. Limited access to carriers or markets accounts for 5%, and lack of technology, systems, or operational resources accounts for 3%.

Among agency owners, operational complexity and the risk of losing current income or stability are tied as the leading individual barriers, at 26% each.

AGENCY OWNERS

26%

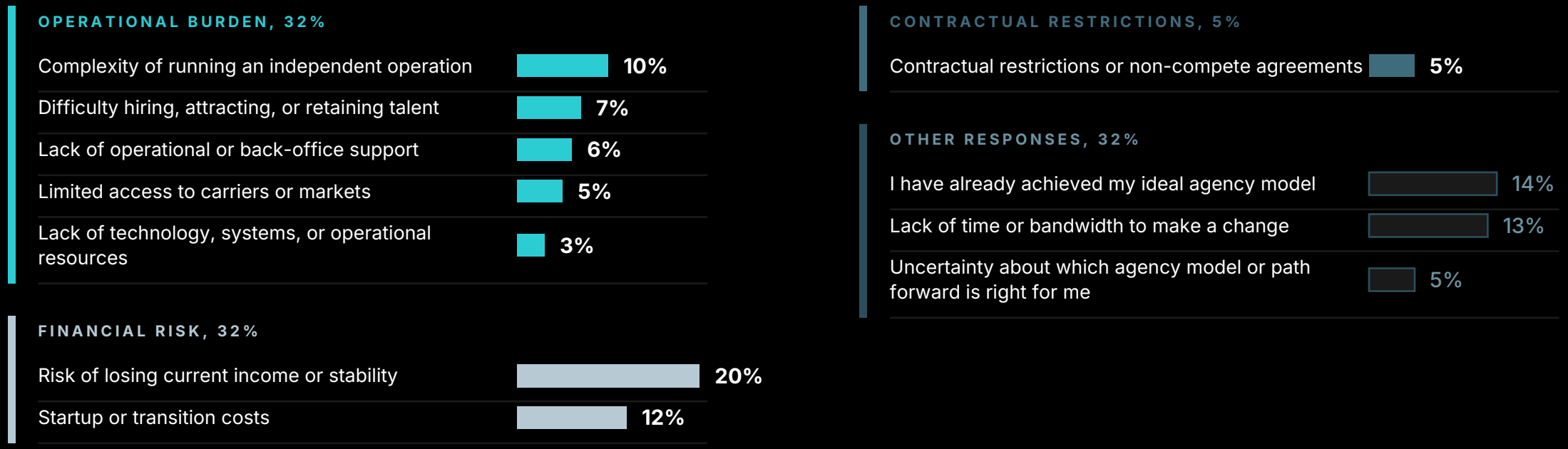
Among agency owners, operational complexity and the risk of losing current income or stability are tied as the leading individual barriers, at 26% each.

Agency owners n=174.

Source: The 2026 Darkhorse Index of Insurance Agent Independence, a study conducted by Morning Consult on behalf of Darkhorse Insurance Brokers. Base varies by question; see methodology and individual chart notes. The base for any finding drawn from a subgroup is stated beneath the chart or finding that uses it.

FINDING 4

Five operational challenges collectively account for 32% of reported barriers



Full sample, n=1,001, single response. Segment figures for income or stability risk are 22% among independent non-owners (n=347) and 26% among agency owners (n=174). Owners name complexity of running an independent operation at 26%.

Source: The 2026 Darkhorse Index of Insurance Agent Independence, a study conducted by Morning Consult on behalf of Darkhorse Insurance Brokers. Base varies by question; see methodology and individual chart notes. The base for any finding drawn from a subgroup is stated beneath the chart or finding that uses it.

FINDING 4

Operational burden is as significant a barrier as financial risk

CONTRACTUAL RESTRICTIONS

Contractual restrictions or non-compete agreements draw 5% of barrier responses, and on a separate agreement measure, 17% of agents agree they feel locked in by contract or carrier restrictions in their current role.

HOW THE GROUPINGS ARE CONSTRUCTED

Financial and operational categories represent Darkhorse's grouping of individual survey responses rather than categories respondents evaluated directly. The financial grouping combines income or stability risk and startup or transition costs. The operational grouping combines operational complexity, hiring, back-office support, carrier access, and technology resources. Totals may differ from the sum of displayed percentages due to rounding.

Outside the three groupings, 14% of agents say they have already achieved their ideal agency model, and 13% cite lack of time or bandwidth to make a change. A further 5% are uncertain which agency model or path forward is right for them.

Among the 521 agents who already moved into an independent role or agency ownership, higher earning potential is the most common primary motivation at 28%, followed by long-term financial security and succession planning at 22%.

Financial and operational concerns outweigh contractual restrictions among the barriers agents report.

CONTRACTUAL RESTRICTIONS

17%

On a separate agreement measure, 17% of agents agree they feel locked in by contract or carrier restrictions in their current role.

Full sample, n=1,001.

Source: The 2026 Darkhorse Index of Insurance Agent Independence, a study conducted by Morning Consult on behalf of Darkhorse Insurance Brokers. Base varies by question; see methodology and individual chart notes. The base for any finding drawn from a subgroup is stated beneath the chart or finding that uses it.

FINDING 5

Agents likely to explore greater independence or ownership select a one-to-five-year timeframe

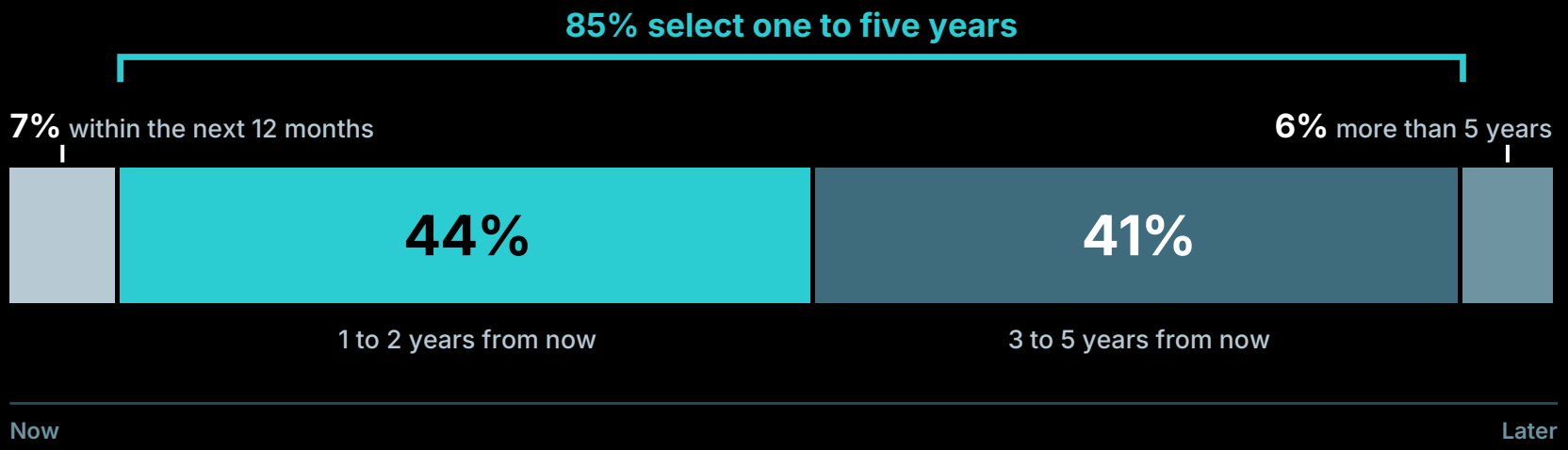
85%

of the 427 agents who rated themselves 5 to 7 on the seven-point likelihood scale selected a timeframe of one to five years

Source: The 2026 Darkhorse Index of Insurance Agent Independence, a study conducted by Morning Consult on behalf of Darkhorse Insurance Brokers. Base varies by question; see methodology and individual chart notes. The base for any finding drawn from a subgroup is stated beneath the chart or finding that uses it.

FINDING 5

Among non-owner agents likely to explore greater independence or ownership, 85% select a one-to-five-year timeframe



OTHER RESPONSES

2% not planning to pursue

less than 1% not sure

n=427, the respondents who rated their likelihood 5 to 7 on a seven-point scale from 1, very unlikely, to 7, very likely, out of the 834 respondents asked the likelihood question. Margin of error plus or minus 4.7 percentage points. Results are unweighted. The 85% combined figure is computed from unrounded percentages. Question wording. If you were to pursue greater independence or agency ownership, in what timeframe would you most likely do so?

Source: The 2026 Darkhorse Index of Insurance Agent Independence, a study conducted by Morning Consult on behalf of Darkhorse Insurance Brokers. Base varies by question; see methodology and individual chart notes. The base for any finding drawn from a subgroup is stated beneath the chart or finding that uses it.

FINDING 5

Agents likely to explore greater independence or ownership select a one-to-five-year timeframe

Among agents who rate themselves likely to explore greater independence or agency ownership, 85% select a timeframe of one to five years. The figure covers the 427 respondents who rated their likelihood 5 to 7 on the seven-point scale. Within that group, 44% select one to two years and 41% select three to five years. A further 7% select within the next 12 months as the timeframe in which they would most likely act if they pursued such a move, and 6% put it beyond five years. Only 2% say they are not planning to pursue the move, and fewer than 1% are not sure.

Across non-owner agents, 51% rate themselves likely to explore greater independence or agency ownership if the right platform, support system, and resources existed to make the transition manageable. The share is 57% among independent non-owners and 46% among captive and semi-captive agents.

Among all non-owner agents asked the timeframe question, not planning to pursue the move is the most common single answer at 35%. Among independent non-owners, the leading answer is one to two years from now.

Among captive and semi-captive agents, 46% say they are likely to explore independence, while 43% say they would not consider leaving their current model.

Among agents who would choose a different model if starting over, greater earning potential is the most common factor at 53%, followed by long-term career sustainability at 52%. Respondents could select more than one factor. Equity-building and technology access rank well below those two factors, drawing between roughly 15% and 19%.

Source: The 2026 Darkhorse Index of Insurance Agent Independence, a study conducted by Morning Consult on behalf of Darkhorse Insurance Brokers. Base varies by question; see methodology and individual chart notes. The base for any finding drawn from a subgroup is stated beneath the chart or finding that uses it.

FINDING 5

AGENCY OWNERS

98% of agency owners would choose the same agency model if starting their career again

91%

are satisfied with their current model, the highest reported among the segments studied

98%

would choose the same agency model if starting their career again

59%

agree the industry makes it difficult for agents to build meaningful ownership, the highest reported among the segments studied

Agency owners n=174.

Source: The 2026 Darkhorse Index of Insurance Agent Independence, a study conducted by Morning Consult on behalf of Darkhorse Insurance Brokers. Base varies by question; see methodology and individual chart notes. The base for any finding drawn from a subgroup is stated beneath the chart or finding that uses it.

What the findings suggest about the agency market

The findings point to financial risk and operational burden, rather than contractual restrictions, as the most significant reported obstacles between interest in ownership and action.

Agency owners report satisfaction of 91%, the highest reported among the segments studied, and 98% say they would choose the same agency model again. The same segment reports the highest agreement that the industry makes ownership difficult to build, at 59%.

Captive and semi-captive agents weigh several definitions of progress at once, with Work Smarter, Own My Path, and Build Real Equity each named the most important goal by roughly one in five. Independent non-owners center on income and efficiency, with Grow My Income and Work Smarter accounting for roughly 70% of their most-important-goal responses. Agency owners focus on durability and the value of the business they have built, and Last the Long Run narrowly leads as their most important goal.

Three figures from this edition establish a baseline for future editions of the Index, beginning with the Index score at 66.2 and the 13-point gap between confidence and satisfaction. Among agents likely to explore greater independence or ownership, 85% select a timeframe of one to five years.

The industry does not appear to face a shortage of interest in ownership. It faces a transition challenge: helping agents pursue ownership while managing the financial risk and replacing the infrastructure and support they currently depend on.

Source: The 2026 Darkhorse Index of Insurance Agent Independence, a study conducted by Morning Consult on behalf of Darkhorse Insurance Brokers. Base varies by question; see methodology and individual chart notes. The base for any finding drawn from a subgroup is stated beneath the chart or finding that uses it.

Methodology

The 2026 Darkhorse Index of Insurance Agent Independence is based on a survey conducted by Morning Consult on behalf of Darkhorse Insurance Brokers. The survey was conducted through computer-assisted telephone interviewing from June 17 to July 7, 2026, among 1,001 U.S. insurance agents.

Results from the full sample carry a margin of error of plus or minus 3.1 percentage points. Subgroup margins of error are wider because each segment base is smaller.

Captive and semi-captive agents, n=480, plus or minus 4.5 percentage points

Independent non-owner agents, n=347, plus or minus 5.3 percentage points

Agency owners, n=174, plus or minus 7.4 percentage points

Respondents qualified by identifying their current role in the insurance industry as one of four options, captive agent, semi-captive agent, independent agent or producer who does not own the agency, or independent agency owner or principal. Results are unweighted.

Respondents work across multiple lines of business, including personal lines at 86%, commercial lines at 80% and life and health at 70%, as well as specialty lines, financial services and employee benefits. The findings therefore are not limited to property-and-casualty agents.

Overall agency-model satisfaction and professional-goal confidence figures reflect ratings of 7 to 10 on 10-point scales. Agreement figures combine strongly agree and somewhat agree responses on five-point scales, and likelihood figures reflect ratings of 5 to 7 on a seven-point scale.

Percentages are rounded to whole numbers. Category totals are computed from unrounded percentages and may differ from the sum of rounded components.

The Index comprises five pillars, each scored from 0 to 100 with 50 as the neutral midpoint, and the overall Index score is the mean of the five pillar scores. Negatively worded statements were reverse-scored before being incorporated into the pillars, so agreement with a statement unfavorable to independence lowers the score.

Definitions

Segment definitions follow the survey's role question, under which a captive agent is contracted primarily or exclusively with one insurance carrier and a semi-captive agent has a primary carrier relationship with access to some other carriers. An independent non-owner agent places business across multiple carriers without owning the agency, and an agency owner owns or operates an independent insurance agency. Captive and semi-captive agents are reported together throughout this report.

TERMS AS USED IN THIS REPORT

The following descriptions were developed by Darkhorse to explain how this report uses these terms. They were not definitions presented to survey respondents.

Independence. An agent's ability to exercise professional autonomy over carrier and product recommendations, client service, and business decisions without being limited exclusively to one carrier or agency structure.

Ownership. Holding an equity or controlling interest in an insurance agency or book of business, including the ability to build transferable long-term economic value.

Structural freedom. The degree of flexibility an agency model provides over how an agent operates, grows, earns income, accesses carriers, and serves clients. Structural freedom does not necessarily require agency ownership.

Resources

Detailed Methodology

Questionnaire and Topline Findings

Press materials

MEDIA CONTACT

Shayna Zeigen, Perception Public Relations,
shayna@perceptionprllc.com

Published by Darkhorse Insurance Brokers.

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ABOUT DARKHORSE INSURANCE BROKERS

Darkhorse Insurance Brokers is an Agency Ownership Platform that helps qualified insurance professionals build, own, and grow independent agencies. Darkhorse combines carrier access, operational infrastructure, onboarding, training, business guidance, and ongoing agency-success support to help owners move forward with greater clarity, confidence, and momentum. Agency owners build and operate their own brands while benefiting from Darkhorse's experience and infrastructure. Learn more at darkhorseinsurance.com.

ABOUT DAN GARZELLA

Dan Garzella built a scratch captive agency into one of the top five Farmers Insurance agencies in the country before entering the independent market and building Garzella Group, a portfolio of five insurance businesses that includes Darkhorse Insurance Brokers. With firsthand knowledge of what successful agency ownership requires, he founded Darkhorse to give ambitious insurance professionals the carrier access, operational foundation, and practical guidance to build and grow agencies of their own.