

The logo consists of the letters 'ZE' stacked above 'GO' in a bold, white, sans-serif font, enclosed within a thin white square border.

**ZE
GO**

A *Global Payments*
Company

The year '2026' is displayed in a very large, bold, white, sans-serif font, centered horizontally across the middle of the image. The background is a teal-tinted photograph of three people in an office setting, smiling and looking at each other. A laptop and a pen holder are visible on a desk in the foreground.

**Resident Experience
Management Report**

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Insights to reverse declining retention

Resident retention is shifting at precisely the moment multifamily operators can least afford uncertainty.

After reaching 60% in 2024, average retention rates have slipped to 57%. While a three-percentage-point decline may appear modest on paper, the financial impact is anything but.

Each lost renewal carries the weight of turnover costs, vacancy loss, and the resources required to attract and secure a new resident. Research has consistently shown that turnover costs are approximately \$4,000 per unit! Multiply that across a portfolio, and even incremental declines translate to significant revenue pressure.

Meanwhile, operational costs continue climbing and competition for residents intensifies. The gap between where retention stands and where it needs to be represents both a real challenge and a strategic opportunity for operators ready to act. Some turnover is structural and unavoidable: job relocations, life changes, homeownership. But a meaningful portion of move-outs stems from factors well within an operator's control.

Our research reveals that the difference between properties that consistently retain residents and those that struggle often comes down to alignment—alignment between what property managers believe residents prioritize and what residents actually value most. Perception gaps exist across the industry, and they're quietly costing operators renewals that could have been won. The encouraging news: these are precisely the renewals that can be recaptured. **The perception gaps are identifiable, closable, and well within operators' control to address.**

The *2026 Resident Experience Management Report* delivers the insights multifamily professionals need to strengthen retention and build communities where residents choose to stay. Drawing on comprehensive surveys of both property managers and renters, we illuminate where perceptions diverge from reality and provide a strategic framework to help you bring them into alignment.

We'll dive into the following key findings that emerged from our renter and property manager surveys:

Retention rates & goals

- Average retention has declined to 57%, down from 60% in 2024
- Despite declining performance, 59% of property managers expect retention to improve
- Retention goals above 70% have increased significantly since 2021, yet only 8% of properties achieve this benchmark
- Renewal intent signals an opportunity

Reasons for turnover

- Property managers attribute non-renewals to external factors like job relocation and life changes
- Renters identify expensive rent, poor maintenance, and security concerns as their top reasons for leaving
- Turnover reasons are largely addressable

Rent increase tolerance

- Renters begin reconsidering renewal at an average rent increase of 8%
- A \$90–\$150 monthly increase threshold triggers hesitation across rent levels
- Higher-paying residents are more price-sensitive, not less

Maintenance expectations

- Half of renters lack digital channels to submit maintenance requests
- Most maintenance is not completed within renters' expected timeframe
- Status updates are very important to renters

Rewards programs

- Renters report that rewards programs add meaningful value to their rent
- Rewards programs make renters more inclined to renew their lease
- Referrals are the most commonly rewarded activity, with rent discounts as the primary incentive
- Many renters report no rewards are offered, representing significant untapped retention potential

Community manager expectations

- Problem resolution is the #1 quality renters want in a community manager—outranking all other attributes
- Community manager accessibility is a table stakes quality to renters

Service channel preferences

- Residents prefer human interaction for sensitive tasks: neighbor issues, financial questions, move coordination
- Digital channels lead for routine transactions: rent payment notifications, maintenance tracking
- Residents value channel flexibility across most tasks

In addition to detailed analysis of these findings, this report provides a strategic framework that property managers can implement immediately to improve retention outcomes. Because when operators move beyond assumption to insight—and from insight to action—they create communities where residents don't just live, but choose to stay.

Recommendations for Action

This report concludes with six data-driven recommendations to improve retention:

1. Act on resident feedback, not assumptions
2. Calculate rent increases strategically
3. Prioritize problem resolution as the core community manager competency
4. Deliver frictionless experiences across preferred channels
5. Build a rewards program that residents know about & use
6. Make maintenance resolution a retention priority



About this survey

Zego's *Resident Experience Management Report* shares insights from two separate surveys—one of multifamily renters, and the other, a survey of multifamily property managers. We partnered with [SA Marketing Insights](#) to perform these surveys, both of which took place in early 2026.

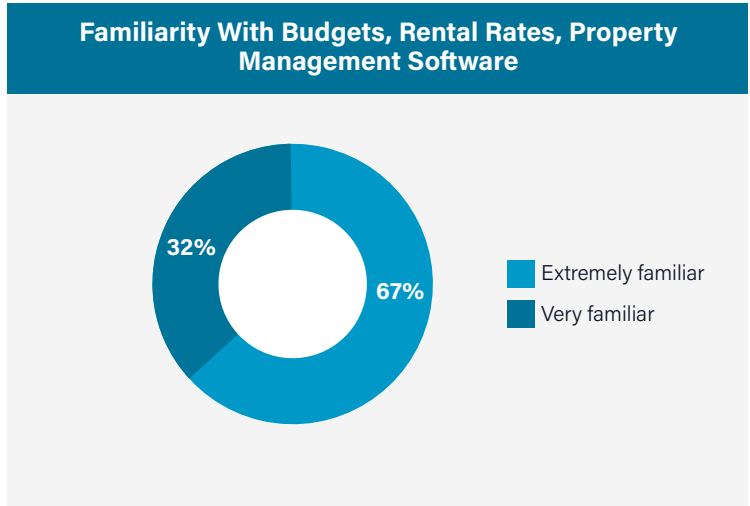
Survey Demographics	
Property Managers	Renters
602 completed surveys	1037 completed surveys
15-minute online survey	15-minute online survey
Research conducted Feb-Mar 2026 by SA Market Insights	Research conducted Feb-Mar 2026 by SA Market Insights

Survey Criteria	
Property Managers	Renters
Must work full-time in multifamily property management	Must be 18 years of age or older
Must manage properties with 250 units or more	Currently renting a multifamily apartment from a property management company — not a private landlord
Must be familiar with budgets, rental rates, and other key stats of their properties	



Property Manager Sample Composition:

Multifamily Property Units Managed	
250 - 499	12%
500 - 999	21%
1,000 - 2,499	29%
2,500 - 4,999	24%
5,000 - 9,999	8%
10,000 - 19,999	3%
20,000 or more	2%



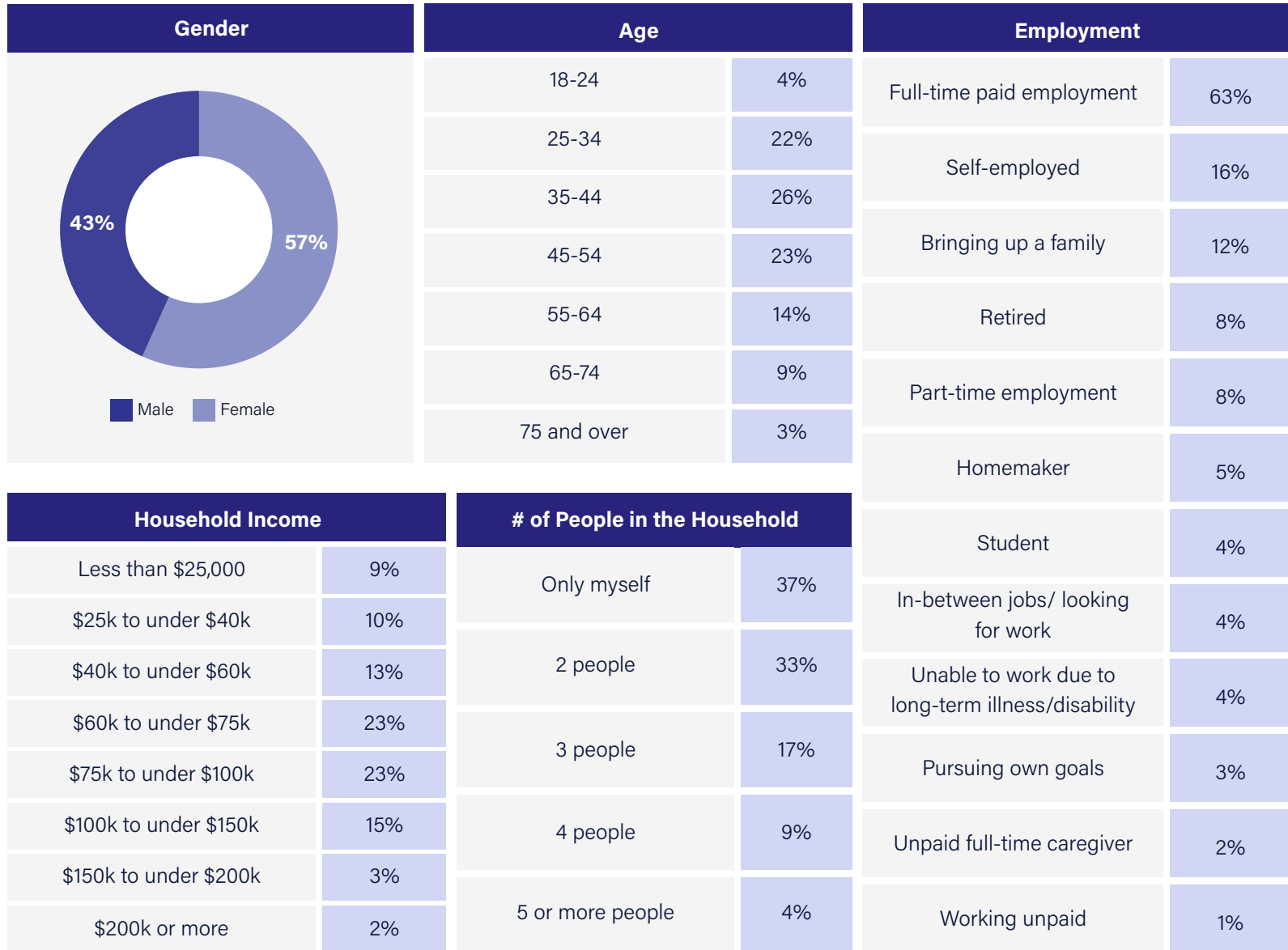
Job Title	
Property Manager	80%
Asset, Investment, Real Estate, or Portfolio Management or Analysis	5%
Owner / President / CEO	5%
Resident Experience	3%
Operations, Business Systems	2%
Leasing / Sales	1%
Accounting / Finance	1%
Marketing	1%

Job Function	
Property Management	61%
Regional Property Management	11%
C-Suite (COO, CMO, CEO, etc.)	9%
Director / Senior Director	8%
Vice President / Senior Vice President	5%
Manager	4%
Analyst	1%

**Note: Total exceeds 100% because respondents selected all that apply*



Resident Sample Composition:



**Note: Total exceeds 100% because respondents selected all that apply*

Survey Findings:

Retention rates & goals

Resident retention rates, goals are declining

Even small shifts in resident retention can have significant financial impacts for multifamily communities. This is why *The Resident Experience Management Report* examines how retention rates and retention goals are changing year-over-year.

In 2026, the average resident retention rate among multifamily companies stands at 57%. While this figure represents a majority of residents choosing to stay, it also means that 43% of units require turnover processing every year—a substantial operational and financial burden.

The distribution of retention rates across the industry reveals where most operators are performing:

25%

of properties report retention rates **below 50%**

43%

of properties cluster in the **51-60% range**

23%

of properties achieve retention **between 61-70%**

8%

Only 8% of properties **exceed 70% retention**

What is your current resident retention rate?						
	2026	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021
Less than 35%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%
35% - 40%	3%	3%	5%	11%	4%	2%
41% - 45%	6%	6%	7%	7%	13%	9%
46% - 50%	15%	15%	9%	13%	13%	20%
51% - 55%	22%	17%	17%	15%	18%	24%
56% - 60%	21%	17%	19%	20%	17%	23%
61% - 65%	15%	17%	18%	18%	15%	15%
66% - 70%	8%	14%	15%	11%	11%	5%
More than 70%	8%	9%	11%	6%	8%	1%
Average	57%	58%	60%	56%	57%	54%

This year's retention data also shows a troubling trend. **After climbing steadily from 54% in 2021 to a peak of 60% in 2024, retention has declined to 57%.**

Equally notable is the shift in distribution over time. Fewer properties are achieving retention rates above 65%, while more are clustering in the 51-60% range. The industry isn't just seeing average performance decline; it's seeing high performers pulled back toward the middle. This suggests that whatever headwinds are affecting retention, they're impacting even previously successful operators.



The financial impacts of a minor dip in retention

At first glance, a 3-percentage-point decline may seem modest. In practice, it represents a dangerous shift in operational burden and financial exposure.

Let's look at this reversal in financial terms: a portfolio of 5,000 units operating at 60% retention in 2024 turned over 2,000 units annually. At 57% retention in 2026, that same portfolio now turns over 2,150 units—an additional 150 turns per year.

Our previous research shows that a single instance of turnover costs multifamily companies approximately \$4,000 per turn. At that rate, the **decline from 60% to 57% costs this 5,000 unit portfolio \$600,000 more annually than it did two years ago.**

The progress made between 2021 and 2024 didn't just stall. It has reversed and the financial consequences are accumulating.



Companies are lowering retention goals

Like retention rates, goals for resident retention are also lowering. After reaching 66% in 2024, the average retention goal for multifamily companies is now 60%.

This recalibration likely reflects a pragmatic response to missed targets—operators adjusting expectations based on actual performance. Yet even at 60%, the average goal exceeds average performance by 3 percentage points, suggesting persistent optimism that improvement is achievable.

Property Manager Response

What is your resident retention goal this year?						
	2026	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021
Less than 35%	2%	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%
35% - 40%	1%	3%	2%	7%	5%	2%
41% - 45%	6%	5%	5%	10%	6%	7%
46% - 50%	13%	11%	7%	12%	12%	14%
51% - 55%	17%	13%	10%	13%	14%	21%
56% - 60%	15%	8%	11%	14%	18%	25%
61% - 65%	13%	13%	16%	14%	17%	16%
66% - 70%	14%	17%	18%	13%	15%	6%
More than 70%	18%	29%	30%	17%	12%	9%
Average	60%	63%	66%	59%	59%	58%

Optimistic expectations for the year ahead

Despite declining performance, property managers express confidence that retention will improve:

59%

expect retention to **increase in the coming year**

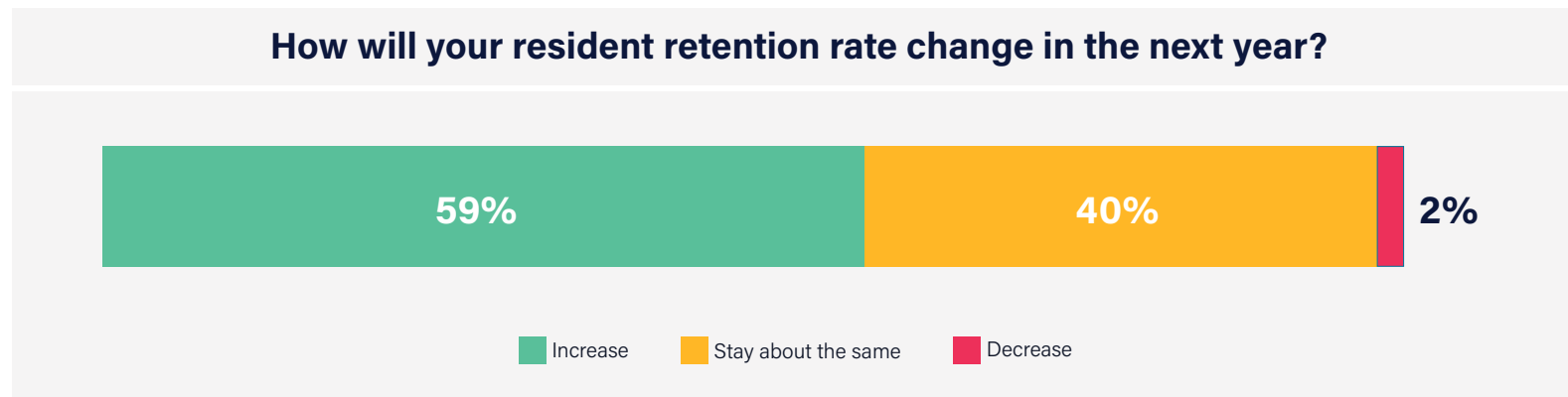
40%

expect retention to **stay about the same**

2%

Only 2% expect **retention to decrease**

Property Manager Response



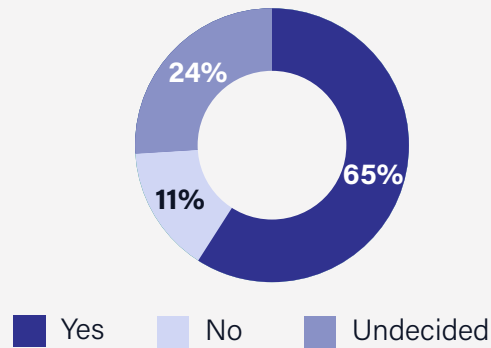
This confidence is notable and potentially well-founded. While the multi-year trend shows declining rates, industry optimism often signals readiness for change. Property managers who expect improvement are likely identifying opportunities within their own operations, whether through enhanced resident engagement, refined renewal strategies, or technology investments that streamline the resident experience. The key is converting that expectation into execution.

Renewal intent signals opportunity

Retention data tells one story. Resident intentions tell another; and the distance between them reveals a critical opportunity. When asked about their plans for the coming year, **65% of renters say they intend to renew their lease.** Another 24% remain undecided, while just 11% have firmly decided to leave.

Renter Responses

Do you plan to renew your lease in the next 12 months?



At first glance, these numbers appear encouraging. Nearly two-thirds of residents express a commitment to staying, and the undecided segment represents potential renewals rather than guaranteed losses. If intentions translated directly to outcomes, retention rates would exceed most operators' goals.



Survey Findings:

Reasons for turnover



Renter, operator reasons for move-out do not align

One of the most revealing survey findings emerges from comparing renters' vs property managers' perspective on the same question: Why don't residents renew? And with retention rates slipping, it's never been more important to understand what is causing turnover in your communities. **Renters feel most frustrated by rising rental prices, poor maintenance, and security concerns, and are driven to move when faced with these issues.**

On the other hand, apartment operators underestimate the weight of those factors. They believe residents move mostly due to reasons beyond the community's control: life circumstances, location, homeownership aspirations. Situations outside of their control (life circumstances, location, and homeownership aspirations) are mostly given as the top reasons they believe residents move. Simultaneously, they underestimate the impact of factors they directly influence: rental pricing, maintenance responsiveness, and property appearance.

What are the reasons for not renewing a lease?

	Management company responses	Renter responses
1	Life changes	Rent is too expensive
2	Purchasing a home / no longer renting	Poor maintenance service
3	Management communication and responsiveness	Safety concerns
4	Rent is too expensive	Poor property upkeep
5	Moving to a more desirable location within the same city	Life changes
6	Moving to a more desirable apartment community	Management communication and responsiveness
7	Poor maintenance service	Issues with neighbors
8	Seeking better floorplan / living space	Moving to a more desirable apartment community
9	Seeking better / different amenities	Purchase a home / no longer renting
10	Lacking a sense of community/connections	Seeking better floorplan / living space
11	Inadequate / outdated technology in the community	Seeking better / different amenities
12	Safety concerns	Onsite staff's ability to resolve issues
13	Property policies	Moving to a more desirable location within the same city
14	Poor property upkeep	Insufficient parking space
15	Insufficient parking space	Property policies
16	Issues with neighbors	Lacking a sense of community/connections
17	Onsite staff's ability to resolve issues	Inadequate / outdated technology in the community

Controllable reasons

Not controllable reasons

Turnover reasons are largely addressable

The conflicting responses from apartment operators and renters present an opportunity to reframe how property managers think about retention. The traditional view often positions turnover as largely inevitable, driven by factors like relocations, homeownership, and life changes that properties cannot control. This isn't wrong; those factors do drive significant turnover.

But this mindset can become a barrier to action. When turnover feels inevitable, investments in retention strategies can seem futile. Why invest time and effort into retention if residents are going to leave anyway?

The 2026 data challenges this. **Controllable factors account for a substantial share of turnover—often half or more of cited reasons.** Property managers consistently underestimate the role of these controllable factors while overestimating uncontrollable ones. This perception gap means that many properties are under-investing in retention strategies that could actually move the needle.

The reframe is straightforward: some turnover is structural and unavoidable, but a meaningful portion is addressable. Properties that accept the structural turnover while aggressively pursuing the addressable turnover will outperform those that treat all turnover as inevitable.

Survey Findings:

Sensitivity to rent increases



Tolerance for rent increases varies

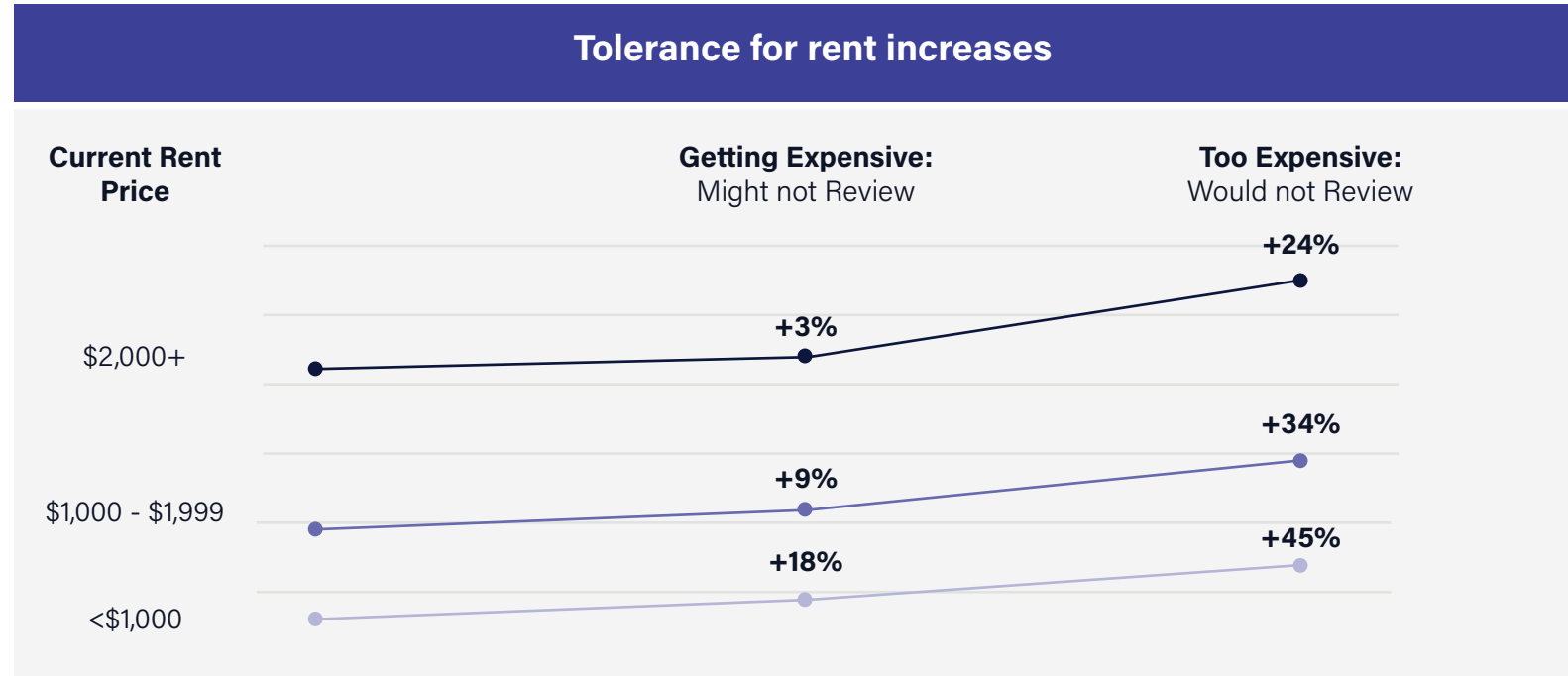
With expensive rent being the top factor behind non-renewals, do apartment operators have to choose between rent growth or maintaining their retention rates? Not necessarily.

Through a [Van Westendorp Price Sensitivity Model](#), renters shared their tolerance levels for increases and how much of a rent hike would drive them to move. The data reveals renters are willing to pay more. But their tolerance varies significantly based on the amount they are currently paying.

The key threshold: When rent increases start to trigger non-renewal risk

Across all renters surveyed, the average point at which **residents would consider not renewing occurs at an 8% rent increase**. Beyond percentages, the survey shows that any rent increase of roughly \$90–\$150 can lead renters to consider non-renewal. This dollar-based threshold is particularly important because residents budget in real dollars, not just percentages. Even a modest percent change can feel significant when paired with rising costs in other areas.

Renter Responses



For operators, this is where resident experience becomes an essential retention strategy. When residents feel confident that their community is well-managed and responsive, they're more likely to view an increase as a reasonable market adjustment rather than a breaking point.

Higher-paying residents are more sensitive to rent increases

One of the most counterintuitive findings involves the relationship between current rent levels and increase tolerance. One might reasonably assume that residents paying higher rents are less price-sensitive—that their ability to afford more demonstrates greater financial flexibility.

The data reveals the opposite.

Residents paying \$2,000 or more per month demonstrate the lowest tolerance for percentage-based increases.

While they may have higher incomes, they also have higher expectations, more options, and greater sensitivity to the absolute dollar impact of increases.



Survey Findings:

Maintenance expectations



Most maintenance is not completed within renters' expected timeframe

Maintenance issues are the second-most-common controllable reason residents choose not to renew their leases—trailing only rent pricing concerns. Not only that, but renters have consistently stated that maintenance is [the most important element of the apartment living experience](#).

When residents evaluate their overall satisfaction and weigh renewal decisions, how their property handles maintenance requests carries significant weight. That's why we dug into what renters expect about maintenance resolution and compared it with what property managers say is standard in their community.

Half of renters lack digital channels to submit maintenance requests

The way residents initiate and manage maintenance requests shapes their overall experience. The survey data reveals a notable gap between what properties offer and what residents experience. [Digital submission options](#)—online portals and community apps—have become standard offerings for most property managers. Yet a significant portion of residents either lack access to these tools or remain unaware they exist.

Methods for reporting maintenance issues		
Submission Method	Property Managers Offering	Residents Reporting Access
Online portal	69%	50%
Community app	60%	9%
Contact community manager directly	74%	47%

While 69% of property managers report offering an online portal, only 50% of residents indicate this as an available option. The gap widens dramatically with community apps: 60% of properties offer them, yet just 9% of residents report having an app available for maintenance tickets.

Resolution timelines show renters want faster turnaround

Alignment breaks down even further in how quickly residents expect issues to be resolved versus what properties typically deliver.

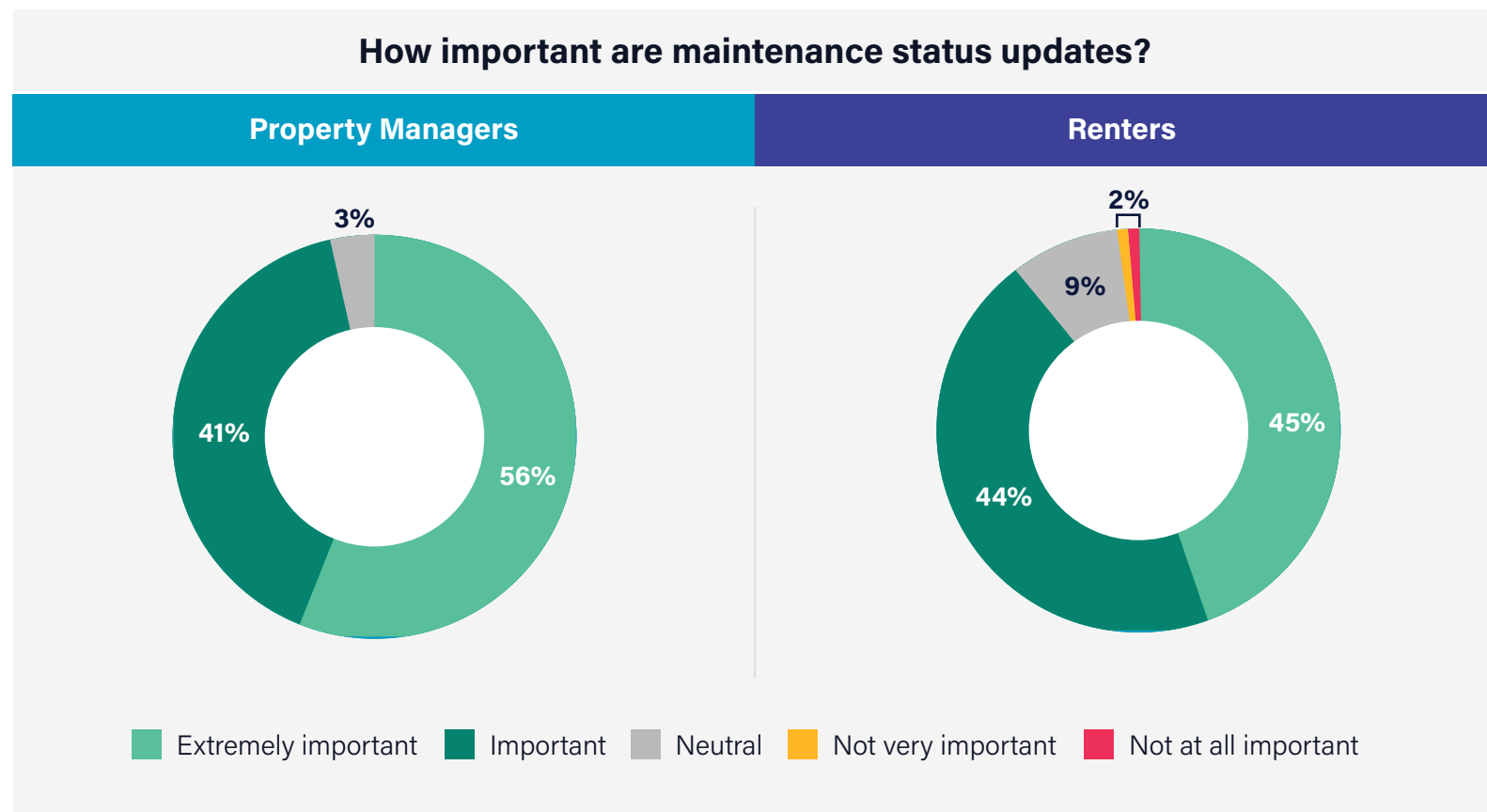
Expected turnaround time for maintenance issue to be resolved		
	Property Managers	Renters
Same day	7%	11%
1 - 2 days	49%	60%
3 - 5 days	44%	21%
6 - 7 days	1%	3%
More than a week	0%	5%

The majority of renters (60%) expect maintenance issues resolved within two days, while 11% want a same-day resolution. Only 7% of property managers strive for same-day resolution, and most (49%) say 1-2 days is the norm. Almost the same number of property managers (44%) say issues typically require 3-5 days—a timeline only 29% of residents consider acceptable.

Properties operating at this timeline may view it as operationally reasonable, but unfortunately, residents often perceive it as falling short.

Status updates: communication matters

Resolution speed tells only part of the story. How properties communicate during the maintenance process significantly impacts resident perception—sometimes as much as the resolution itself.



The resident perspective leaves little room for interpretation: **89% of renters rate maintenance status updates as important or extremely important.** This near-universal expectation means that communication isn't optional—it's a fundamental component of acceptable maintenance service.

Luckily, many companies communicate frequently once they have received a maintenance ticket. However, over one-third of properties (37%) communicate only weekly or upon task completion. For issues requiring multiple days to resolve, this communication gap can leave residents feeling uninformed and uncertain whether their request is being addressed.

The resident who receives acknowledgment upon submission, an update when service is scheduled, and confirmation upon completion has a fundamentally different experience than one whose request disappears into silence. Building proactive communication into maintenance workflows—whether through automated systems or staff protocols—addresses a clear resident expectation while differentiating the property's service quality.

Frequency of maintenance status updates		
	How often property managers provide status updates	How often renters expect a status update
Once a day or more	19%	17%
Multiple times a week	42%	15%
Once a week	22%	10%
Less than once a week	2%	4%
Whenever a task has been accomplished with the request	15%	35%
Never	0%	13%

Survey Findings:

Renter rewards programs

Rewards programs create tangible value for renters

Loyalty and rewards programs have become ubiquitous across virtually every consumer experience. From coffee shops and airlines to grocery stores and credit cards, consumers expect to be recognized and rewarded for their spending. These programs have proven so effective at driving engagement and retention that they've become table stakes in most industries.

Yet multifamily housing—despite representing the single largest expense in most renters' monthly budgets—has been slow to adopt this proven strategy. The average renter spends more on housing than on any other category, often by a significant margin. If a \$5 coffee purchase earns points toward a free drink, why shouldn't a \$1,500 rent payment generate meaningful rewards?

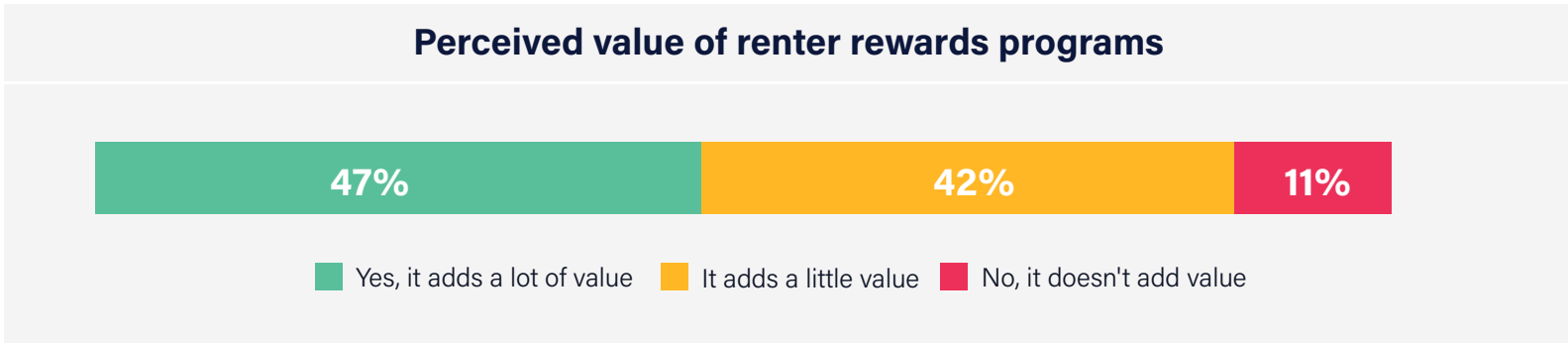
This disconnect is beginning to close. Forward-thinking property managers are recognizing that the same loyalty principles driving retention in retail, hospitality, and financial services apply equally to multifamily. Renter rewards programs have emerged as a compelling strategy—one that transforms routine resident behaviors into opportunities for recognition and value creation.

The 2026 data confirms what these early adopters have discovered: **rewards programs resonate with residents and influence their perception of value and their likelihood to renew.**

Residents see value in rewards

Consider the consumer mindset: residents already participate in rewards programs across dozens of brands and spending categories. They understand how these programs work, they appreciate the value exchange, and they've come to expect recognition for their loyalty. When that same framework is applied to their largest monthly expense, the response is predictably positive. When residents with access to a rewards program were asked whether it adds value to the rent they pay, the response was decisively affirmative.

Renter Responses



Nearly nine in ten residents (89%) report that a rewards program adds value to their rental experience. Close to half (47%) indicate it adds "a lot" of value—a strong endorsement for a program that, when structured effectively, can operate at relatively modest cost to properties.

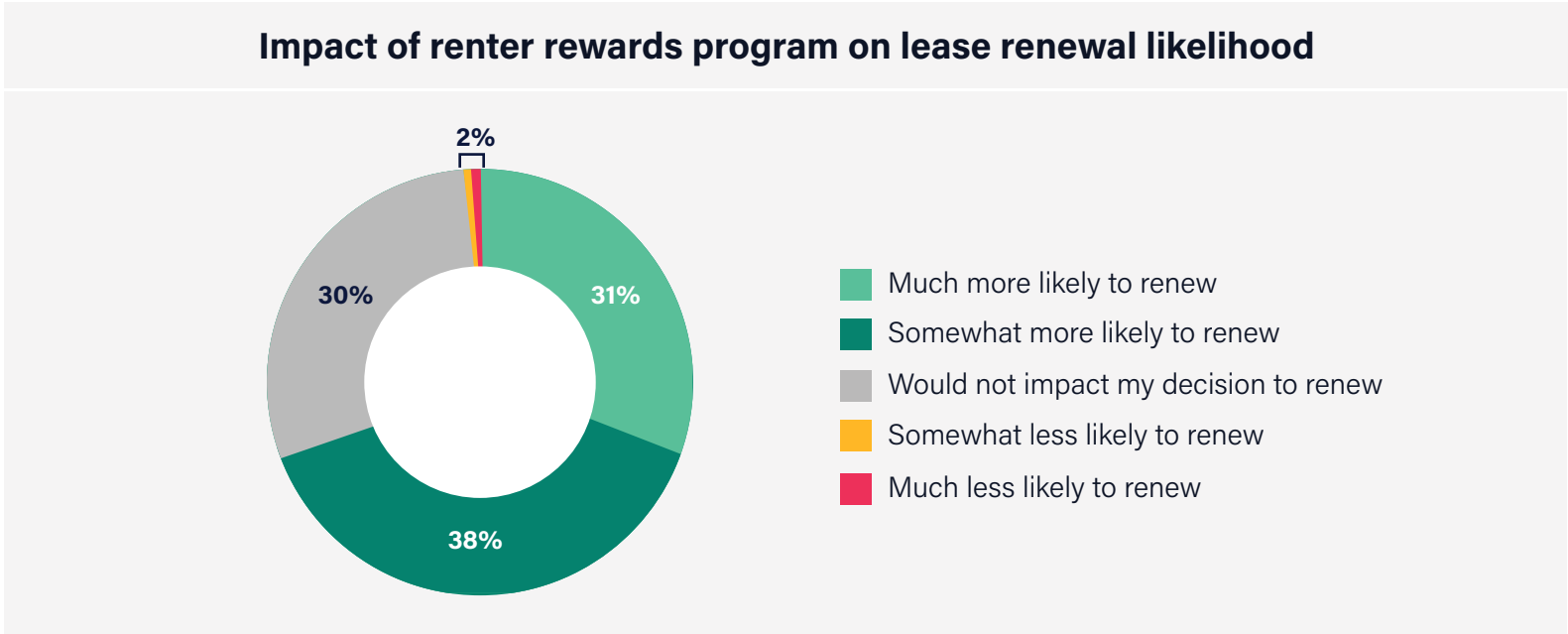
This perception matters. Residents are accustomed to being rewarded for spending far smaller amounts elsewhere. When their largest financial commitment—their rent—comes with similar recognition, it signals that the property values their tenancy in a tangible, familiar way. In an environment where residents are increasingly cost-conscious and evaluating whether their rent delivers sufficient value, rewards programs provide a proven mechanism to tip that calculation in a positive direction.



Rewards influence renewal decisions

Beyond perceived value, the data reveals a direct connection between rewards programs and retention outcomes.

Renter Responses



More than **two-thirds of residents (69%)** indicate that a rewards program would make them more likely to renew their lease, with nearly one-third (31%) saying it would make them "much more likely" to do so.

These findings position rewards programs as a low-risk, high-potential retention tool. The upside is substantial: meaningful influence on renewal decisions for a majority of residents. The downside is negligible: virtually no residents view rewards programs negatively. For properties seeking levers to improve retention rates, few initiatives offer this combination of broad appeal and minimal risk. Other industries learned this lesson long ago—multifamily is now catching up.

Properties incentivize a wide range of activity

Property managers are deploying rewards programs across a range of resident activities. The most common programs incentivize behaviors that benefit both the resident and the property.

Referral rewards lead the list at 34%, reflecting the dual benefit of acquiring new residents while recognizing current ones. On-time rent payment rewards (31%) and automatic payment enrollment incentives (29%) address a core operational priority—consistent, predictable rent collection—while giving residents a reason to adopt behaviors that simplify their own financial management.

Property Manager Response

Activities that properties offer rewards	
Referring a friend	34%
On-time rent payments	31%
Signing up for automatic rent payments	29%
Posting a property review	28%
Signing a new lease	28%
Renewing lease early	28%
Paying rent in advance	28%
Maintaining the property in excellent condition	27%
Lease renewals	26%
Staying beyond certain tenancy duration	25%
Reporting maintenance issues promptly	24%
Shopping at partner business	24%
Completing surveys	23%



Types of rewards offered and what residents actually want

When properties do offer rewards, they draw from a consistent set of incentive types.

Rent discounts and gift certificates or cash emerge as the most popular reward structures, each offered by approximately 45% of properties with rewards programs. Amenity reservation discounts (42%) offer an alternative that keeps value within the property ecosystem, encouraging residents to utilize on-site amenities while rewarding positive behaviors.

But what do residents themselves prefer? The answer is unambiguous.

Rent discounts dominate resident preferences by a decisive margin. **More than three-quarters of residents (77%) identify a rent discount as the most appealing reward.** While the majority of renters favor a rent discount, for property management firms who cannot provide this, a substantial amount of renters value gift certificates, cash, in-unit upgrades, and other rewards.

Property Manager Response

Most common reward types offered by properties	
Rent discount	46%
Gift certificates or cash	45%
Discounts on amenity reservations	42%
Discounts with other businesses	41%
Free gift	40%

Which of these rewards are most appealing to you?	
Rent discount	73%
Gift certificate or cash	12%
In-unit upgrades or services	7%
Free gift	4%
Discounts on amenity reservations	2%
Discounts with other businesses	2%

The preference for discounted rent aligns with the logic of where rewards programs originated. Consumers earning airline miles want free flights. Coffee loyalty members want free coffee. Renters earning housing rewards want relief on housing costs. **The most effective rewards programs have always understood that the reward should connect directly to the spending that earned it.**

For properties structuring or refining their rewards programs, this data provides actionable direction. While gift cards and amenity discounts have their place, rent discounts deliver what residents value most. When they are most likely to influence their perception of value and their renewal decisions.

Resident participation indicates clear room to grow

While rewards programs show strong potential, current participation rates suggest opportunity for expansion.

Among residents surveyed, approximately half report having received a reward from their property. This indicates that while many properties have implemented programs, significant portions of the resident population either lack access to rewards or haven't engaged with available programs.



Which of the following activities, if any, have you personally received a reward or incentive for?	
Referring a friend	6%
On-time rent payments	7%
Lease renewals	5%
Signing a new lease	5%
Paying rent in advance	5%
Renewing lease early	5%
Signing up for automatic rent payments	4%
Maintaining the property in excellent condition	4%
Posting a property review	2%
Reporting maintenance issues promptly	1%
Completing surveys	3%
Shopping at partner business	1%
Staying beyond certain tenancy duration	1%
None of these	67%

For properties without rewards programs, the data makes a compelling case for implementation. For those with existing programs, the opportunity lies in expanding awareness, and ensuring residents understand how to participate.

Survey Findings:

Community manager expectations



Problem resolution ranks as most important trait for community managers

Community managers occupy a unique position in the resident experience. They serve as the human face of the property, the point of contact when issues arise, and often the deciding factor in whether a resident feels valued or overlooked. But what exactly do residents want from this critical role?

The 2026 data provides a clear answer—and it may challenge assumptions about what makes a community manager effective. While friendliness and communication skills matter, residents prioritize something more fundamental: the ability to solve problems and deliver results.

The qualities that matter most to renters

When residents were asked to identify the most important qualities in a community manager, a clear hierarchy emerged—one that emphasizes outcomes over activity.

Renter Responses

Community manager qualities that are most important to renters		
Quality	Most important	Highly important
Resolves problems effectively	27%	79%
Keeps the property well managed and organized	18%	74%
Coordinates repairs effectively and in a timely manner	16%	70%
Is easy to reach by phone or text	11%	66%
Is available onsite and easy to reach in person	11%	52%
Communicates clearly about issues, policies, and updates	10%	66%
Is easy to reach by mail or online portal	5%	53%

Problem resolution stands alone at the top. More than one in four residents (27%) identify it as the single most important quality—significantly ahead of the next closest attribute. When expanded to include those rating it "highly important," the figure climbs to 79%, representing the highest combined score of any quality measured.

This finding carries significant implications. Properties often emphasize friendliness, responsiveness, and accessibility in hiring and training community managers. These qualities do matter. But they are not what residents prioritize most. A community manager who is easy to reach but ineffective at resolving issues will ultimately disappoint residents. One who consistently delivers solutions builds lasting trust.



Secondary qualities that matter to renters

While problem resolution leads decisively, the supporting qualities reveal what enables effective resolution:

Keeps the property well managed and organized

18% most important, 74% highly important

Residents recognize that organized, well-managed properties experience fewer problems—and when issues do arise, organized community managers are better equipped to address them systematically.

Coordinates repairs effectively and in a timely manner

16% most important, 70% highly important

Given the prominence of maintenance in resident satisfaction, it's unsurprising that repair coordination ranks highly. This quality connects directly to problem resolution—many of the "problems" residents need solved involve their physical living space.

Is easy to reach by phone or text

11% most important, 66% highly important

Residents can't have problems solved if they can't reach someone to report them. Phone and text accessibility serves as the gateway to resolution.

Communicates clearly about issues, policies, and updates

10% most important, 66% highly important

Effective communication ensures residents understand what's happening with their issues, when to expect

Is available onsite and easy to reach in person

11% most important, 52% highly important

While in-person availability matters to some residents, it ranks lower on the "highly important" measure than other accessibility channels, suggesting that physical presence is less critical than effective communication through any

Is easy to reach by email or online portal

5% most important, 53% highly important

Digital accessibility ranks lowest among the qualities measured, though a majority still consider it highly important. This suggests that while residents appreciate digital communication options, they value more direct

The pattern is clear. Residents want community managers who resolve problems, keep properties organized, coordinate repairs effectively, and can be reached when needed. Accessibility enables resolution, but resolution is what residents ultimately value.

Accessibility is table stakes

It's worth noting that while accessibility measures rank lower than problem resolution in the "most important" category, they still score highly on the "highly important" measure. This suggests that accessibility functions less as a differentiator and more as a baseline expectation.

Residents assume they should be able to reach their community manager. When they can, it doesn't generate exceptional satisfaction, it simply meets the minimum standard. When they can't, it generates frustration.

Properties should view accessibility infrastructure—staffing levels, communication channels, response protocols—as foundational requirements rather than competitive advantages. The advantage comes from what happens after contact is made: whether problems get solved.



Survey Findings:

Service channel preferences



Renters have strong preferences for both human & digital assistance depending on the task

The question of digital versus human service delivery often gets framed as an either/or proposition. Should properties invest in technology or staff? Should residents use the portal or call the office?

The 2026 data reveals that this framing misses the point entirely. Residents don't want exclusively digital or exclusively human service delivery. They want the right channel for the right task—and they have clear, nuanced preferences about which tasks call for each approach.

Properties that understand these preferences can optimize their service delivery model, deploying technology where residents prefer self-service and reserving human interaction for the moments that demand it. The result is better resident experiences and more efficient operations.

Renters want the right channel for the right moment

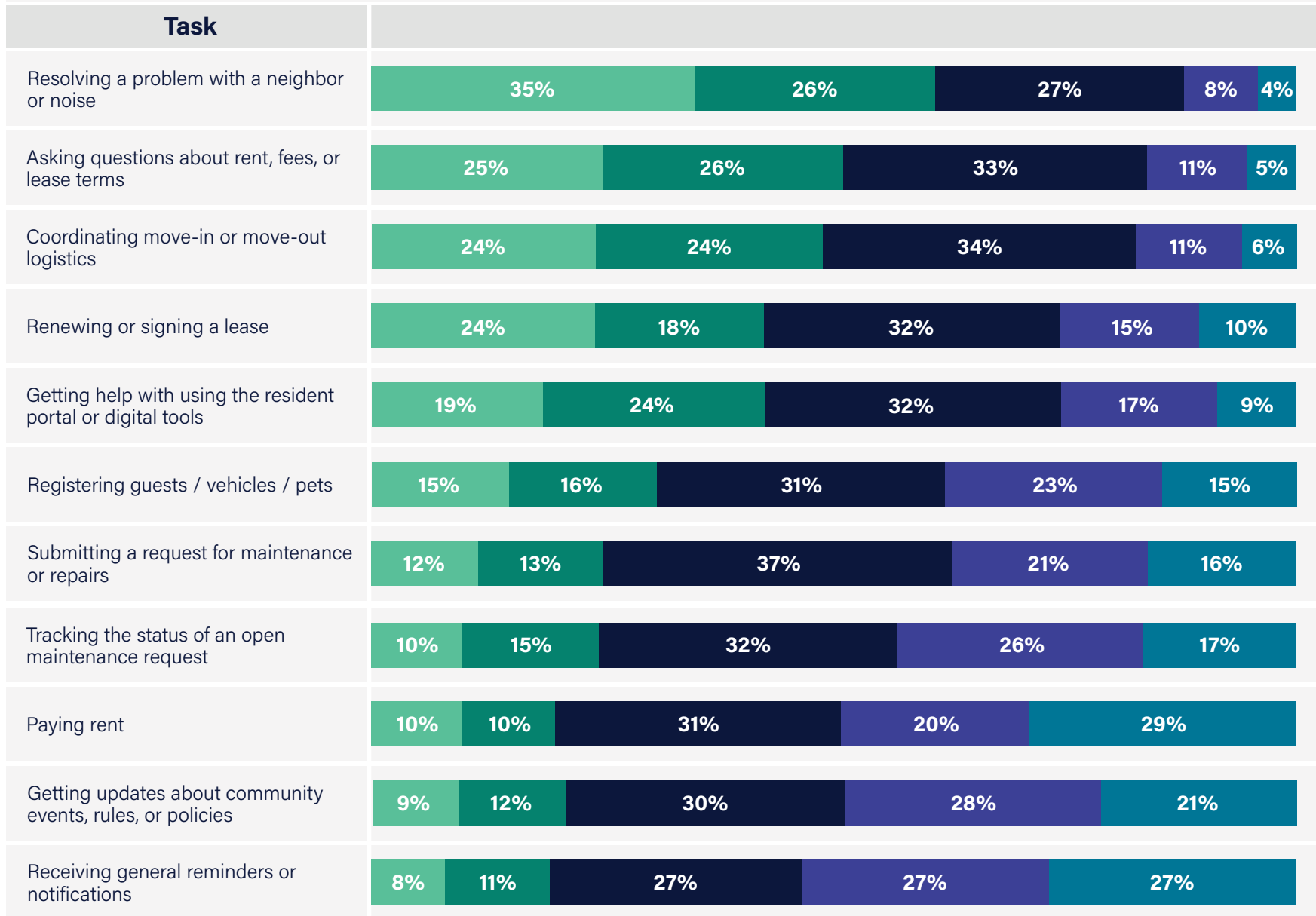
When residents were asked how they prefer to complete various property-related tasks, they were given five distinct options:

- Community Manager / Humans Only
- Mainly Community Manager / Human
- Both
- Mainly Online / Digital
- Online / Digital Only

This five-point spectrum captures not just the direction of resident preferences but their intensity. A resident who wants "human only" interaction for a sensitive issue has fundamentally different expectations than one who "mainly" prefers human contact but remains open to digital options. Understanding these distinctions enables properties to design service experiences that truly align with resident expectations.



When it comes to managing your living experience, which types of tasks would you expect to handle through a community manager vs. online or digitally?



■ Only community manager / humans
 ■ Mainly community manager / human
 ■ Both
 ■ Mainly online / digital
 ■ Only online / digital



Tasks that demand **human interaction**

Renters in the survey showed strong preferences for human involvement on certain tasks. While many feel ok using digital channels in these areas, the majority have a firm expectation that these matters will be handled person-to-person.



Neighbor/Noise Issues

This is the highest "human only" preference of any task. Residents facing conflict need to feel heard, understood, and assured; not processed through a ticketing system.



Questions about rent/fees/lease

When money is involved, residents want explanation and reassurance, not documentation. They expect someone who can clarify, investigate, and resolve.



Move In/Out Coordination

Moving often comes with high-stress moments with multiple variables. In these moments, residents don't want a chatbot, they want someone who can be personally accountable.



Signing/Renewing a Lease

Major commitments warrant conversation. One quarter of residents reject digital-only lease processes entirely.



Help with resident portal or digital tools

When technology creates friction, residents want human guidance, not more self-service options.

Tasks where digital-only leads

For some tasks, renters stated that digital self-service is far preferred over human help. Properties should invest in making these digital experiences seamless, recognizing that residents will judge the property partly on how smoothly routine interactions flow.



Rent Payments

The strongest digital-only preference. Routine, recurring transactions demand speed and convenience, not conversation.



General Notifications

When it comes to simple information transfer, residents want timely, accessible alerts they can reference when convenient.



Community Updates

Residents want to stay informed without scheduling conversations. Digital delivery satisfies this efficiently.



Maintenance Submission & Tracking

Renters can log issues at any hour, include photos, and gain visibility into their request without calling.



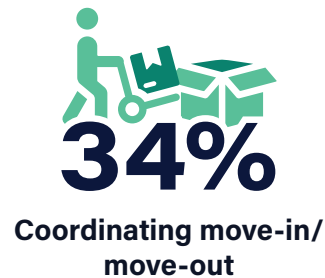
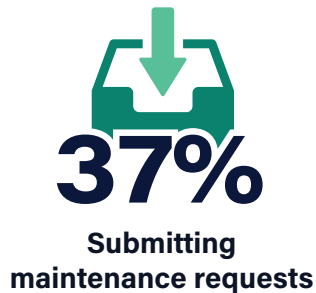
Car/Guest/Pet Registrations

Straightforward data entry. Residents complete these faster online than through staff.

Tasks where **optionality** matters most

Across nearly every task surveyed, the "Both" category captures between 27% and 37% of residents. This substantial middle group doesn't lean strongly in either direction; they genuinely value having options.

These residents are channel-agnostic in the best sense. They'll use the portal when convenient and call the community office when preferred. For tasks with high "Both" percentages, properties should ensure comparable experiences across channels, recognizing that residents will use both and judge accordingly.





Turning insight into action: six strategies to improve retention

Our survey data shows that retention challenges stem from addressable gaps between what residents value and what properties deliver. The following recommendations translate this report's findings into concrete actions that drive measurable improvement.

1. Act on resident feedback, not assumptions

Our Findings:

A significant perception gap exists between why property managers believe residents leave and why residents actually leave. Managers point to external factors: job relocation, life changes, home purchases. Residents cite controllable issues: rent increases, maintenance failures, and safety concerns.

The Action:

Most properties already gather resident feedback through surveys, reviews, and move-out interviews. The differentiator isn't whether your communities collect this data. It's how you act on it. Consider going a step further by establishing a structured review process that surfaces resident-identified issues to decision-makers. Ideally, this is done on a regular cadence. Any issue that appears repeatedly (especially those that are within the community's control) should be treated as strategic priorities requiring attention.

Challenge your assumptions about turnover directly. When reviewing non-renewals, resist the instinct to categorize departures as "unavoidable" without evidence. Ask: Did this resident cite controllable factors at any point during their tenancy? Did we have an opportunity to address their concerns before they decided to leave?

Create closed-loop accountability. When residents identify problems, document both the issue and the resolution. Track whether operational changes correlate with improved satisfaction scores over time. Communities with higher retention do more than just listen to residents. They demonstrate responsiveness through visible action.

2. Calculate rent increases strategically

Our Findings:

Residents begin reconsidering renewal at an average 8% rent increase. The \$90–\$150 monthly threshold triggers active hesitation across rent levels, and notably, higher-paying residents demonstrate more price sensitivity, not less.

The Action:

Steady rent growth remains a goal for every multifamily company, especially amid rising operational costs. Most operators already leverage revenue management platforms that analyze market conditions, demand signals, and competitive positioning to guide pricing decisions. These tools bring valuable discipline and data to what was once guesswork.

But algorithmic recommendations optimize for revenue, not retention. The platform doesn't know that a resident in Unit 412 has been a reliable, low-maintenance renter for three years. It doesn't weigh the cost of turnover against the incremental gain from an aggressive increase. That contextual judgment remains a human responsibility.

Use revenue management insights as a starting point, not a final answer. When platform recommendations push increases toward or beyond resident sensitivity thresholds, layer in retention considerations. Calculate the full financial picture. Turnover costs (marketing, vacancy loss, unit preparation, administrative time) often exceed the annual revenue gained from aggressive increases. A slightly lower increase that secures renewal may outperform a higher increase that triggers departure.

For renewals approaching or exceeding the 8% threshold, pair the offer with deliberate value communication. Highlight recent community improvements, service enhancements, or loyalty incentives that justify the adjustment. Residents who understand the value they receive tolerate increases more readily than those who see only a higher number.

The most effective pricing strategies blend data-driven market intelligence with resident-level retention insight. Let your revenue management platform inform the decision—but don't let it make the decision for you.



3. Prioritize problem resolution as the core community manager competency

Our Findings:

When residents identify the most important quality in a community manager, one attribute stands decisively above the rest: effective problem resolution. More than one in four residents rank it as the single most important quality, and 79% rate it as highly important—the highest score of any attribute measured. Communication and responsiveness matter, but they serve a larger purpose: delivering solutions that make residents' lives easier.

The Action:

Reorient community manager training and evaluation around problem resolution as the primary success metric.

Responsiveness and communication are essential, but only as enablers of effective resolution. A community manager who responds quickly but fails to solve problems will ultimately disappoint residents. One who consistently delivers solutions helps to establish a positive community living experience.

Equip your team with the authority and resources to resolve issues without excessive escalation. When community managers must navigate bureaucratic approval processes for routine problems, resolution slows and resident frustration grows.

Empower your on-site teams to act decisively within defined parameters.

Celebrate and reward those who demonstrate consistent problem-solving effectiveness. Rather than focusing primarily on response times or ticket volumes, **properties should track resolution rates and timeframes as key performance indicators.** These metrics keep the focus on outcomes rather than activity, reinforcing a problem-solving culture. The resident experience rises or falls on whether issues get resolved—make this the standard by which your team is measured.



4. Deliver frictionless experiences across preferred channels

Our Findings:

Resident channel preferences vary dramatically by task. For neighbor conflicts and financial questions, 61% and 51% respectively prefer human interaction. For rent payment and general notifications, nearly half prefer digital-only options. A substantial segment (27-37%) values flexibility across most tasks, judging properties on how well each channel performs.

The Action:

Audit your service delivery model against resident preferences. Then, go further by ensuring each preferred channel delivers a frictionless experience.

For sensitive matters—neighbor issues, lease questions, financial concerns—ensure that residents can easily reach an on-site team member without navigating phone trees or waiting days for callbacks. These interactions should feel personal and attentive, never rushed or dismissive. Train staff to handle emotionally charged situations with empathy and clear next steps.

For routine transactions where residents prefer digital efficiency, eliminate friction relentlessly. Review your resident portal and payment systems with fresh eyes: How many clicks does it take to pay rent? Can residents easily track maintenance requests?

Do digital processes work seamlessly on mobile devices? Every unnecessary step or confusing interface erodes the convenience residents expect.

For the substantial segment comfortable with either channel, invest in channel parity. Ensure consistent information, comparable resolution times, and seamless handoffs when issues require escalation. Residents who switch channels mid-interaction should never need to repeat themselves or start over.



5. Build a rewards programs that residents know about & use

Our Findings:

Multifamily companies are increasingly offering loyalty rewards programs. Renters say rewards programs provide more value for their rent, yet many have not been active participants. Rent discounts and gift cards rank as the most compelling incentives. Residents are willing to earn these rewards through behaviors that benefit the community: on-time rent payment, lease renewals, and resident referrals.

The Action:

If you haven't implemented a rewards program, the data supports doing so. Structure the program around high-impact behaviors that directly improve retention and community health. Emphasize rent credits and renewal bonuses—the incentives residents value most.

But program design is only half the equation. **A rewards program delivers value only when residents know it exists and understand how to participate.** Many residents in our survey reported that no rewards were offered at their property—representing significant untapped retention potential. Don't let your program become one of the invisible ones.

Promote the program at every touchpoint: during lease signing, in welcome materials, through portal notifications, in common area signage, and in community manager conversations. **Clearly communicate all qualifying activities**—residents can't

earn rewards for behaviors they don't know are rewarded. Send periodic reminders highlighting accumulated points or available redemptions. Celebrate residents who earn significant rewards, creating visible proof that participation pays off.

The goal is simple: every resident should know the program exists, understand exactly how to earn rewards, and feel motivated to participate. Awareness drives participation, and participation drives the renewal behaviors that improve retention.



6. Make maintenance resolution a retention priority

Our Findings:

Poor maintenance ranks among the top controllable reasons residents leave. Yet property managers consistently underestimate its impact. When residents experience slow repairs, unresolved issues, or lack of communication about maintenance status, they remember it at renewal time.

The Action:

Conduct an honest assessment of your property's maintenance operation. Review request data for patterns: What's the average time from submission to resolution? Which issue types consistently take longest? Are there recurring problems that suggest deferred maintenance or systemic failures? The answers reveal where improvement will have the greatest retention impact.

Set clear turnaround time targets by issue type—and measure performance against them rigorously. Emergency repairs demand same-day response. Routine requests should resolve within 48-72 hours when parts and scheduling allow. When delays are unavoidable, proactive communication becomes essential.

Residents tolerate reasonable wait times far better when they understand what's happening. Implement status updates at key milestones: request received, technician assigned, parts ordered, appointment scheduled, work completed.

Whether through portal notifications, text messages, or personal calls, keep residents informed throughout the process. Silence breeds frustration; communication builds patience.

Maintenance may lack the appeal of flashy amenities, but the data confirms it carries more weight in renewal decisions. Treat maintenance responsiveness as what it is: a core retention strategy, not a back-office function.



Ready to create extraordinary resident experiences?

With the help of [Zego's product platform](#), multifamily communities can differentiate themselves by offering tools and solutions that create better living experiences for their residents, ultimately driving retention rates. Zego allows community managers to refocus their attention away from administrative tasks and onto resident retention and satisfaction. Zego automates workflows and improves apartment-related tasks that traditionally cause friction between residents and community managers. Thanks to better staff workflows, intuitive self-service options for residents, more transparent communication tools, and portfolio insights, you'll retain (and attract) more residents and employees. [Schedule a consultation](#) to find out how Zego will improve life in your communities.



A **Global Payments**
Company

Zego is a property management automation company that simplifies cumbersome yet critical workflows for managers and associations. Our modern platform accelerates NOI growth and mitigates risk, helping clients to scale resources, build trust, and make data-backed decisions. From payments and utility management to resident engagement, Zego's automated workflows seamlessly integrate with leading property management systems giving users real-time and accurate information at their fingertips.

Since its inception in 2003, Zego (a Global Payments company) has evolved from a leading payments provider to a comprehensive property management automation platform. With more than 350 employees, Zego serves 7,000 residential real estate companies and over 15 million units nationwide. Learn more about what makes Zego one of the best workflow automation platforms for property management at gozego.com.

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