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Zoopla Study Reveals Sellers Trust Local Presence Over Price

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New research from Zoopla has revealed that homeowners choosing an estate agent are more likely to be swayed by local reputation and visibility than by the promise of a high sale price.

A YouGov survey commissioned by the property platform, based on feedback from 1,000 homeowners who sold a property within the past five years, found that a good local presence was the top reason for selecting an agent. In fact, 20% of sellers chose agents who were actively listing properties in their neighbourhood. Another 13% were influenced

by agents who were known locally for their experience and property expertise, often via word of mouth.

This preference contrasts sharply with what many estate agents believe motivates sellers. A separate poll of 100 estate professionals, carried out by Opinium, found that agents were more likely to think sellers were focused on price negotiation or mortgage assistance. Both of these factors were ranked as top priorities by 11% of the agents surveyed. However, these assumptions do not align with consumer behaviour.

The research indicates that sellers are placing greater trust in visible and familiar agents in their local communities, rather than those who merely promise to negotiate the best price. Support with mortgages and financial services, often promoted by agents, came in last when sellers were asked to rank what mattered to them when making their choice.

Trust also plays a central role in how sellers come to choose an estate agent. Nearly one-third of respondents (30%) said they returned to an agent they had used in the past, while 14% said their decision was based on recommendations from friends or family members. These results point to the long-term value of reliable service and a well-regarded track record.

There was some agreement between sellers and agents when it came to valuations. Both groups acknowledged the importance of getting multiple opinions before making a decision. Around 49% of homeowners said they would invite three agents to value their property, while 54% of estate agents said sellers should do the same. Despite this, 15% of sellers still opt to go with the first agent they contact, suggesting that strong first impressions remain key.

The findings serve as a clear message to agents who continue to rely heavily on low fees or financial service offerings to attract clients. While these may play a role, they are far from the deciding factor for most homeowners. Instead, establishing trust, demonstrating local knowledge, and delivering good service remain the core of what sellers value most.

Rich Hayes, Chief Operating Officer at Zoopla, commented: “Our latest research powerfully highlights what’s driving vendor decision-making in today’s market and underscores the pivotal role of a valuation. It highlights that local presence, expertise, and reputation are far more crucial to consumers, and it really is about building trust with vendors from the outset,

not just promoting low fees. Agents that are growing the fastest are shifting their mindset, and leading with marketing, data, and service to justify a higher fee.”