

Map Your Customer's Journey

Understanding Your Customer to
Deliver Exceptional Service

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CUSTOMER JOURNEY WORKSHOP - J.J. KERCHER

	Contents
Customer Journey Mapping: A How-To Guide	3
Renter's Journey Map Canvas	14
The AppFolio Renter's Experience Report	16
Speaker Biography	38

CUSTOMER JOURNEY MAPPING: A HOW-TO GUIDE

CUSTOMER JOURNEY WORKSHOP - J.J. KERCHER

Customer Journey Mapping: A How-To Guide

Time to Complete: 4-8 hours | Recommended Participants: 5-10 (cross-functional)

What is a Customer Journey Map?

A Customer Journey Map visualizes a customer's experience with a product or service across locations, time, and channels. This holistic view helps promote better understanding of the customer, helps coordinate cross-channel design, and reveals opportunities for new or improved interactions. The experience map is typically a product of deep research into how a product or service fits into a customer's life.

Benefits of a Customer Journey Workshop

Customer Journeys are best developed collaboratively across all roles and functions within a business, and can be a powerful tool to establish deep customer empathy and align internally on your service offering to your customer. Working together creates a shared awareness and understanding, and breaks down the blinders of organizational silos by experiencing the outside-in perspective of the customer.

This workshop is much more about the *activity* than it is the final *artifact*. Working cross-functionally, this tool tells a story with depth and richness around the human experience that will enable your team to collectively feel what it's like to experience every touchpoint.

Stages of the Customer Journey

A brief Google search will provide some examples of how others have categorized each stage of the journey. For example, a typical "buyer's journey" might look something like this:

BECOME AWARE → EVALUATE → PURCHASE → SETUP & ACCESS → USE & ENGAGE → RENEW

Stages will vary depending on the service offering, so listen for these stages during your interviews with customers.



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CUSTOMER JOURNEY WORKSHOP - J.J. KERCHER

Preparing for a Journey Mapping Workshop

Participants

One of the benefits of this workshop comes from creating internal alignment and empathy for the customer, so it's important to have a true cross-functional group. Make sure to have at least one representative from each department and/or functional role (i.e. marketing, leasing, accounting, property management, executive leadership, etc.)

It's recommended, however, to keep the group relatively small. Group size will vary depending on the size of your company and number of functional groups/roles.

Schedule

Journey Mapping takes careful thought and collaboration, and therefore takes time to complete. Be prepared to set aside a minimum of 8 hours to complete the exercise. Some companies will schedule a 1-2 day offsite for a workshop, while others find it easier to schedule several 2-3 hour blocks over the course of one or two weeks.

Keep in mind that the more people in your workshop, the longer the activity will likely take to complete.

Materials

- Large wall and roll of crepe paper, or large Post-It wall pads.
- Masking tape
- 3x3" sticky notes (various colors)
- 1.5x1.5" sticky notes (various colors)
- Pens & Sharpies
- Multi-color dot stickers

Research

The most important aspect of a Customer Journey is that the information should be from the customer's perspective. It's too easy for a business to make dangerous assumptions about what they think is going on with their customers at any particular point, when the only way you can truly understand is to actually ask your customers.

If possible, try to involve other members of your team in the research process. There are many tools for sharing learnings from research activities, but nothing comes close to experiencing it first hand! Plus, there is a lot of value in having a small team to debrief with after interviews to discuss and summarize what you have learned.

There are a variety of different research methodologies, including interviews, surveys, in-home visits, focus groups, and more. Using any combination of these methods, your goal is to listen carefully for recurring themes from your research participants that you will use to build your journey map. Some components of the journey map to listen for include:

- What are the stages of the customer's journey?
- What is the customer doing at each stage of the journey?
- What is the customer thinking?
- What types of interactions are they having? These include interactions with your business, or other relevant interactions they may be having with other people, products, or services.
- What are the moments and experiences where they've felt delighted? When did they feel frustrated or discouraged?

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Interviewing Tips

Meet face-to-face with people in their own context

- Pay attention to their surroundings. What are they doing? What clues does their environment offer that might inform how they think and feel?

Ask meaningful questions.

- Think about the distinction between the question you want the answer to and the questions you will ask to get there. “What factors into how much you are willing to pay for rent” is a much more meaningful question than “Would you pay \$1,500 for this apartment”.

Be willing to go off script.

- It’s important to prepare a set of questions before your interview, but don’t be so rigid that you miss opportunities to dig deeper into a particular issue or insight. Get in the habit of asking “why” after the initial answer.

Writing Surveys

Mix quantitative with qualitative.

- One benefit of surveys is that you can bubble up themes and insights very quickly using multiple choice questions. However, leave plenty of room for (and encourage) open comments to gain a broader understanding of context and emotion.

Choose the right question type.

- It’s a common trap to believe people fit into one box or another, but bear in mind that multiple choice is not always the best option. And if you do go with a multiple-choice question, remember to include an “other” or “not applicable” option.

Be cognizant of time.

- The simpler the survey, the more likely customers are to respond. It’s a good idea to tell customers ahead of time about how long it will take to complete the survey.



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Activity Setup

- Find a large wall and hang up your paper (we recommend paper rolls because they are easily rolled, stored and moved, but Post-It Wall Pads would also work).
- Use masking tape to set up the stages and aspects of the journey:

	awareness	evaluation	purchase	setup & access	use & engage	renew
doing						
thinking						
emotion						
opportunities						
channels & touchpoints						
players						

- Choose one color 3x3" sticky notes for "doing" and another for "thinking". Give one pad of each, along with a Sharpie marker, to each participant.
- Give each participant at least 3 different colors of dot stickers.

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Facilitating the Workshop

Step 1: Share Findings & Set the Stage

Put together a brief presentation (no more than 15 minutes) and include the following:

- Journey Mapping Overview
- Goals and Outcomes
- Journey Map Canvas and Stages (based on research)
- Summary of Research Findings

Consider re-using AppFolio's presentation slides to help frame the activity.

Step 2: "Doing" and "Thinking" Brainstorm

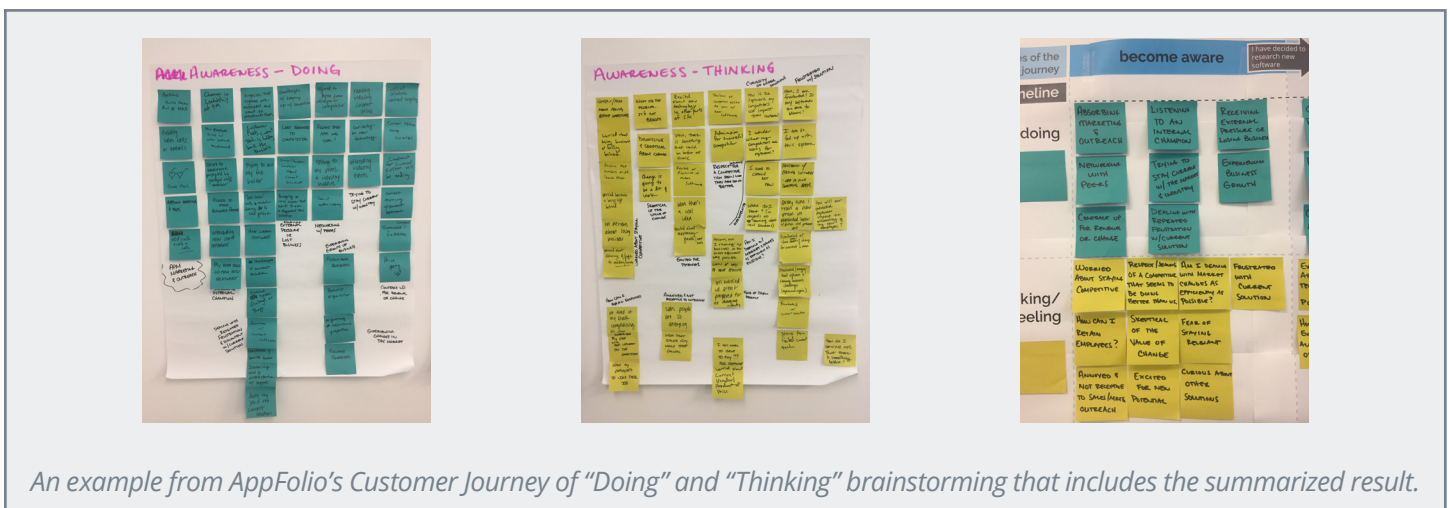
Focusing on one stage of the journey at a time, have your participants brainstorm what types of things (activities, circumstances, triggers, etc.) the customer is **doing** during this time.

- "Cardstorm" individually for 2-3 minutes.
- Next, have each member of the team share their individual ideas, and start to group similar ideas into themes (you can do this on a different wall, the table, or on large Post-It wall pads).
- Then summarize the top themes onto a single sticky note and add those to your canvas.
- Determine the key activities, and add these to your journey map canvas, using one color of sticky notes (at least 5, no more than 10).

For the same stage of the journey, follow the steps above to identify what the customer is **thinking** during this time. Use different color sticky notes to summarize and add these to your canvas.

Example

- "Doing" Example: Getting a new job.
- "Thinking" Example: What if we move and the job doesn't work out?



An example from AppFolio's Customer Journey of "Doing" and "Thinking" brainstorming that includes the summarized result.



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Cardstorming

This technique is a fast and easy way to collect thoughts, ideas, and perspectives from every participant in a brainstorming session (especially those who don't feel comfortable speaking up in group settings).

Participants silently brainstorm their ideas (usually timed at 2-5 minutes), writing one idea down at a time on a sticky note, then moving onto the next. The goal is to generate as many individual ideas as possible for the allotted time box.

Once the time is up, the group collectively synthesizes ideas by sharing what they wrote down individually. One person reads one sticky aloud, and the rest of the group shares whether they have the same or similar idea. This process continues until everyone has shared all of their sticky notes.

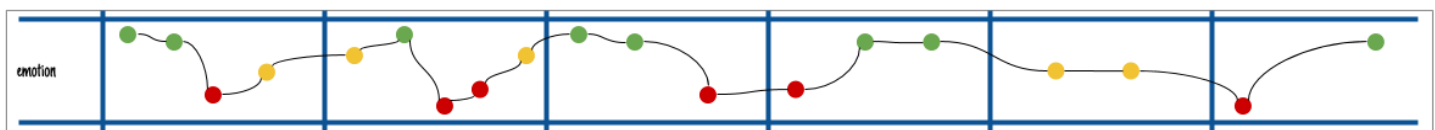
The facilitator tracks the discussion and helps the team group and categorize their ideas.

The last step in cardstorming sometimes involves using dots to "vote" on the ideas the group thinks are the most valuable to pursue (participants are given a limited number of votes).

Step 3: Map Emotion

Next, you'll want to understand the high and low points across the entire customer journey.

- Using one color of dot stickers (we recommend green), have participants come up to the canvas and place dots on any of the doing/thinking sticky notes that can be associated with positive emotion.
- Using another color of dot stickers (maybe red), have participants place dots on points across the journey that might be associated with a negative emotion.
- Use yet another color to identify other points along the journey that might cause pause but may not be necessarily positive or negative.
- After everyone has dot voted, step back and look for clusters of red and green dots.
- On the "Emotion" row, place a green dot at the top of the row to coincide with areas where there are a lot of green dots, and place a red dot where there are clusters of red dots.
- Use a Sharpie to connect the dots.



Step 4: Channels, Touchpoints & Players

The goal of this step is to identify the specific interactions that a customer is having with your business along their journey.

- Determine the various channels with which a customer may interact with your business. (You can either do this as a team during the workshop, or do some research ahead of time to come up with an inventory of channels that your company offers.)
- Write down each channel on 1.5x1.5" sticky notes of the same color, and place them chronologically at each phase of the journey where the customer may encounter them.
- Discuss and take notes to describe the purpose of the touchpoint(s) for each channel you've placed. For example one channel may be the company's website — so during the evaluation phase the touchpoint would

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CUSTOMER JOURNEY WORKSHOP - J.J. KERCHER

be viewing available properties, but while they are living in the unit it might be to submit a maintenance request. Add these notes to another color of 1.5x1.5" sticky notes and place them next to the channel.

About "Players"

In larger organizations with many departments, it can be a good idea to identify which department or job role is the "owner" of each interaction with a customer. Many companies find that their efforts might be overlapping, resulting in too many interactions that may overwhelm the customer. For example, if the property manager is emailing renters directly to remind them about an upcoming event and the Marketing team is sending out email newsletters about the same thing, this is a potential area where the renter is being overserved by company communications.

By identifying who owns the touchpoint (the "player"), the rest of the business can adjust their efforts as necessary to keep the experience from becoming overwhelming. You can note the players at each phase (and even specific touchpoint) using 1.5x1.5" sticky notes.

What is a Channel?

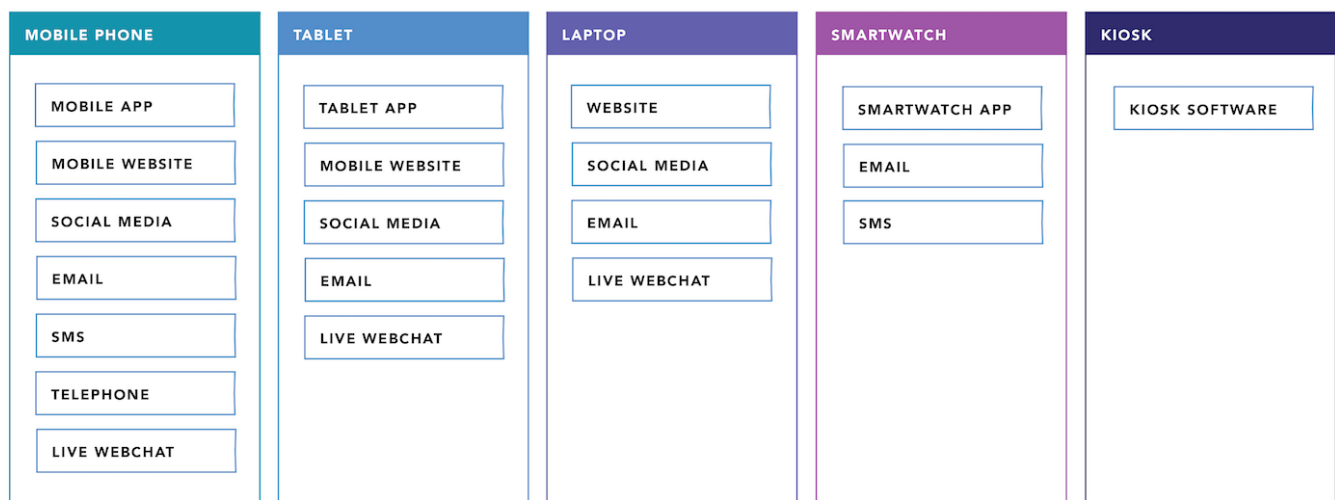
A channel is the medium of interaction between a customer and an organization. There are various types of interaction channels, for example, traditional one-on-one or physical channels such as face-to-face or phone conversations, digital channels such as email, website and SMS, and one-way communication channels such as print advertising.

INTERACTION CHANNELS BETWEEN CUSTOMERS AND ORGANIZATIONS



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EACH DEVICE AFFORDS MULTIPLE INTERACTION CHANNELS



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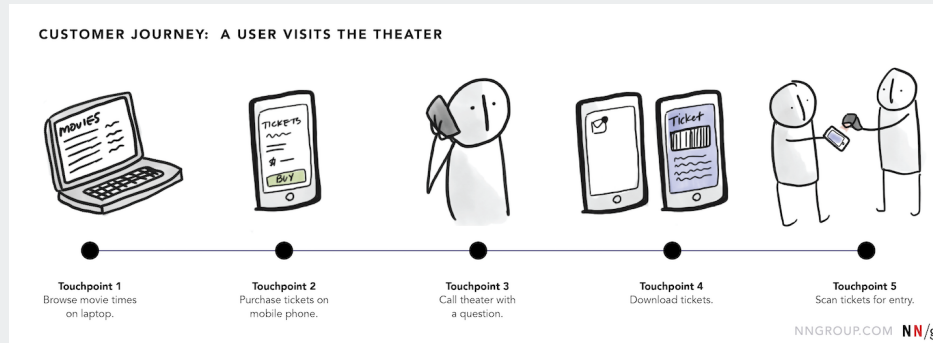


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What is a Touchpoint?

A touchpoint represents a specific interaction between a customer and an organization. It includes the device being used, the channel used for the interaction, and the specific task being completed.



By taking inventory of every interaction your customer is having with your business — and with whom — you will be able to identify gaps and potentially even areas of overlap where you can communicate more efficiently

Step 5: Identify & Prioritize Opportunities

This step is where the magic happens; all your cumulative efforts have led up to this discussion about what opportunities you have to improve the customer's experience with your product or service. This is the point at which you identify key "Moments of Truth" and create an action plan to address those.

What is a Moment of Truth?

The primary goal of this exercise is to identify and understand critical points along the journey that might make or break the customer's experience. These are the emotionally-charged interactions where a customer has invested in a desired outcome which, in turn, are your business' key opportunities to innovate and delight.

One example of a renter's "moment of truth" may be the physical act of packing for a move. There is a hidden opportunity here to offer a dose of delight during a particularly painful or stressful time. Perhaps you can partner with a local moving company to provide special discounts to your renters; or maybe give a package of moving boxes and tape to renters when they sign their lease.

- Cardstorm individually for 2-3 minutes on "moments of truth" along the entire journey.
- Similar to your Doing/Thinking brainstorm, have each team member share their individual ideas on "moments of truth" and start to group similar ideas into themes. Use this method to align on the key moments, and add those to your canvas using sticky notes.
- Have every member of the team "dot vote" on the moments they believe are the most important to address. Do this by having individuals place no more than 3 or 4 colored dot stickers on the sticky notes (they can place more than one dot on a single sticky, if desired).
- As a team, decide on the 1-2 points that you will focus on first, using the cumulative dots to guide the decision.

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Once the team has chosen the 1 or 2 key moments of truth to focus on, they can brainstorm and decide on a strategy to address the opportunity. This can be done as a group, or assigned to a smaller group or department to define a solution.

Step 6: Execute & Measure

Now you understand every step of the customer's journey, and you've identified one or two areas where you want to try something new. But in order to learn whether your new idea will actually make a difference, it's important to find a way to measure the results.

What and how to measure will vary widely depending on the opportunity and proposed solution. Imagine your team has identified that there is too much time between when the property is shown and when a rental application is submitted, so you've decided to have leasing agents carry an iPad so prospective renters can fill out their application on the spot. For this effort, perhaps the measurement could be time between showing and application, or it could even roll up into the overall time it takes to fill your vacancies.

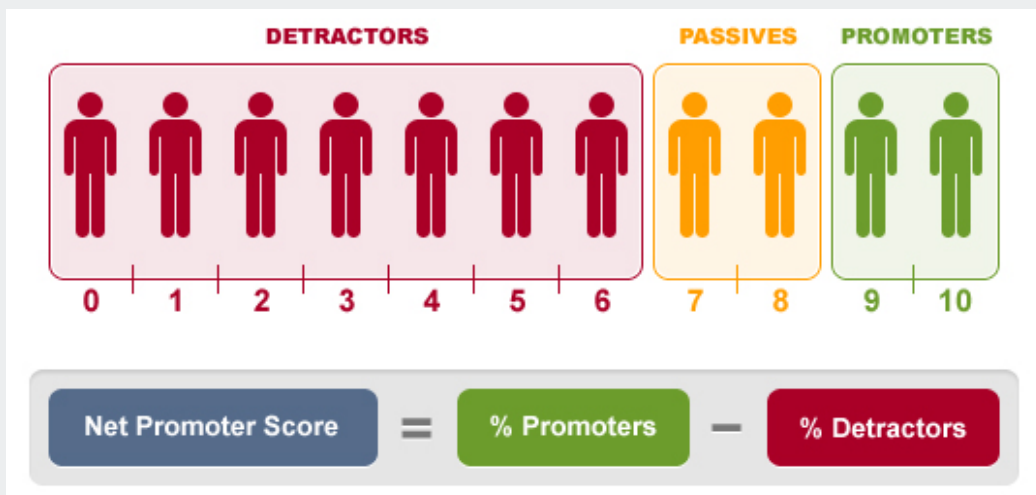
Measuring the Customer Experience

Measuring how people feel about a product, service or brand can be tricky business. Luckily, there are some ways to track and measure sentiment over time. One common way of measuring customer satisfaction is the Net Promoter Score (NPS).

NPS is a survey that you send to your customers periodically, consisting of two questions:

- On a scale of 0-10 how likely are you to recommend our service to a friend or colleague?
- What is the reason for your answer?

NPS responses are broken down into three categories: **Detractors** (0-6 rating), **Neutrals** (7-8), and **Promoters** (9-10). The NPS score is then calculated by subtracting the % of total detractors from the % of total promoters:



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Sharing the Journey Map Internally

The hard work is done and your small team is now aligned around the opportunities and they are excited to get started on improving the customer's journey. The next step would be to compile the content and organize the information into a deliverable that can be easily shared across your organization.

Creating this diagram could be as simple as transferring the information from the physical board to an Excel spreadsheet. However, since the journey map contains a lot of information that can be difficult to consume in a single visual, we recommend working with a graphic designer to help present the content in a more meaningful and interactive way.

Ecommerce Customer Experience Map

Guiding Principles

People choose online shopping because it is convenient, easy and comfortable	www.ecommerce.com is only one touch point of an online ecommerce customer experience	Customers are most apprehensive during this process	People appreciate an experience that is prompt, friendly & timely and then talk about it
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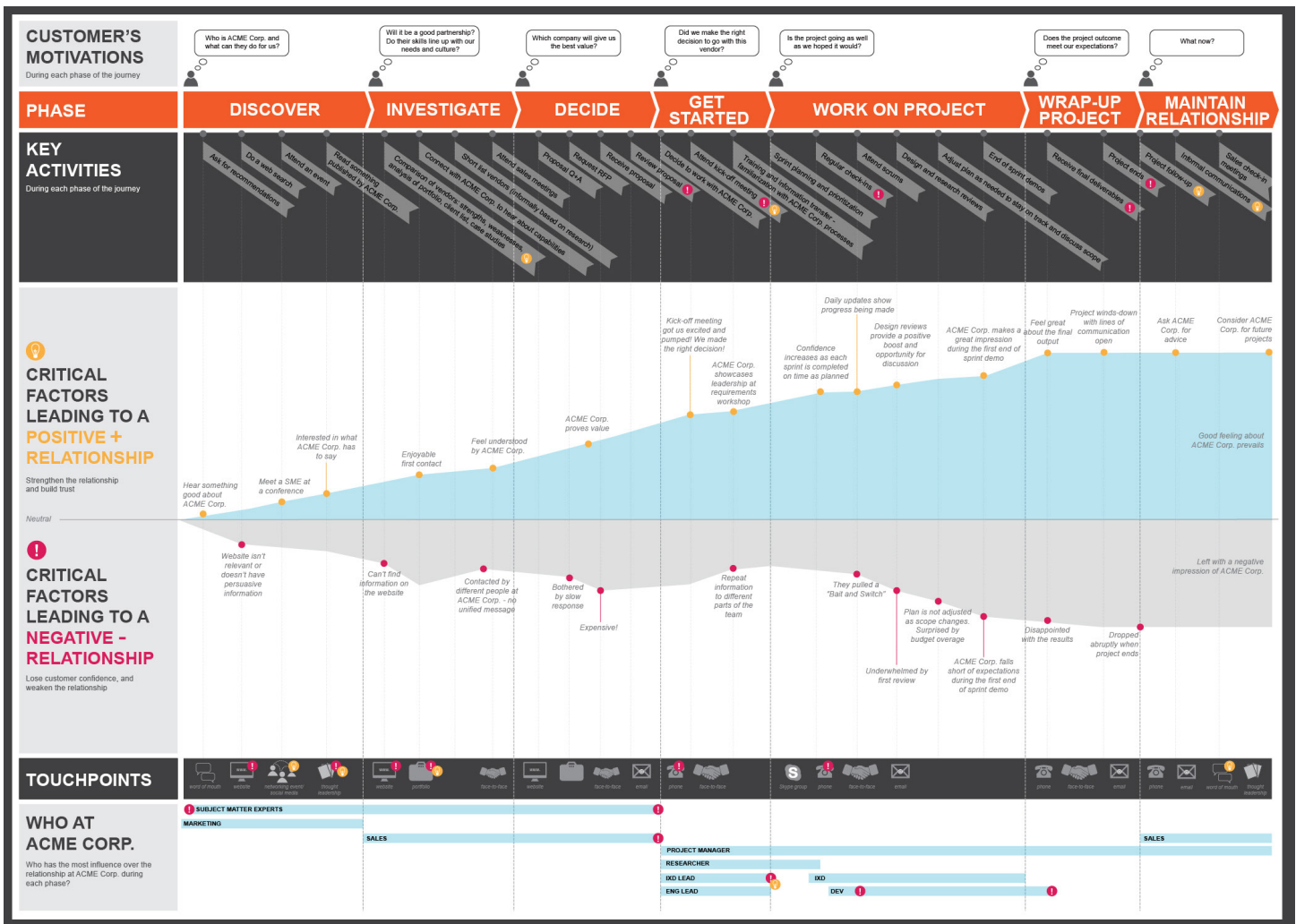
Customer Journey

STAGES	Research & Planning	Product Discovery	Ordering Process	Product Shipping & Delivery	Returns	Refunds
ECOMMERCE CUSTOMER	Research products, prices and offers	Enter product name Review offers Click on "BUY NOW" button	Add to Shopping Cart Delivery options Payment options Review & confirm	Wait for products to arrive	Satisfied/unexpected issues with product	Share experience Follow-up on refunds
DOING						
THINKING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the easiest way to get this product? Where should I order it? Which website is giving the best offer possible? What are the specifications of the product? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I want to get the best price, but I'm willing to pay a little more if I can get it fast. Will they deliver it at my house. Are there any other offers that I can get with this product? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can I trust this website? Should I have to pay extra shipping charges? Ecommerce is not answering the phone, how also can I get my question answered? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do I have everything I need? Ecommerce website was easy and friendly, but when an issue came up, I couldn't get help. What will I do if my product don't arrive in time? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There were some issues with my product. What can we do now? Did I get the right product? If not, what next? I want to make more purchases. How do I do that? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trying to return product I was not able to use. Not sure if I'll get a refund or not. My friends may love to order this product Next time, I will check the prices and product details more carefully.
FEELING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I want to buy this product Will this product offer everything I need Will I be able to afford this price? What are friends/blogs/google saying about this product? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The product looks really awesome on the website. Specifications of the product seems to be suiting my requirements. Am I sure this is the product I want to buy? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website experience is easy and friendly! Product is out of stock. Frustrated to not know sooner that - The product is not delivered in my area. - The payment option, I want to use is not available. - Not sure my products will arrive in time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stressed that - My product has not yet come and Ecommerce won't answer the phone. - My order got cancelled without informing me. - I am not aware about the status of my order. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am happy with the product I received. The product that I received is not upto my expectation. Interacting with customer service agents was helpful. I did not get the freebie promised with the product. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excited to share my product experiences with my friends. A bit annoyed to be dealing with refund issues and wasting my time.
EXPERIENCE						

"Ecommerce Customer Journey Map example by Chris Risdon of Adaptive Path"

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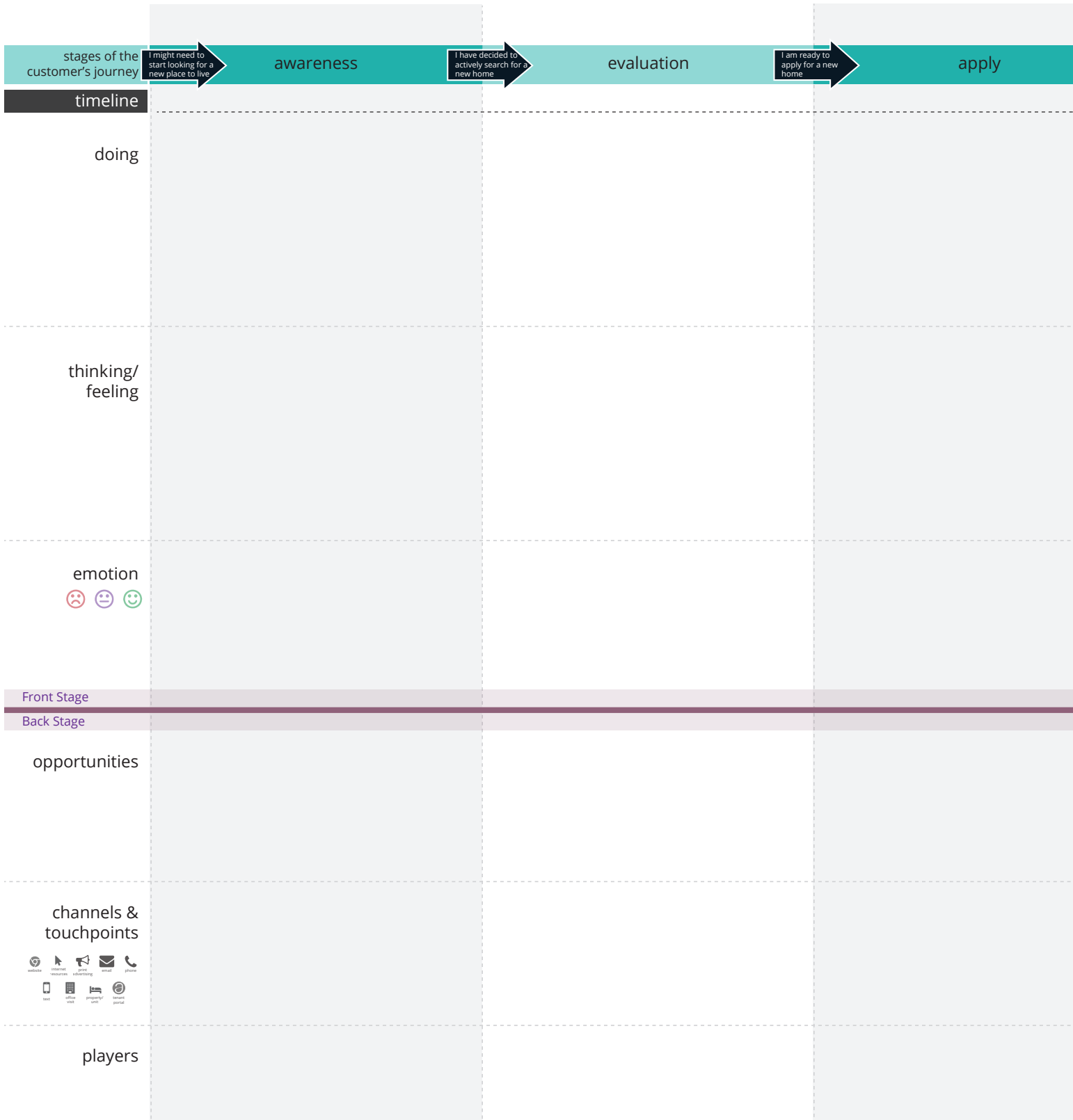


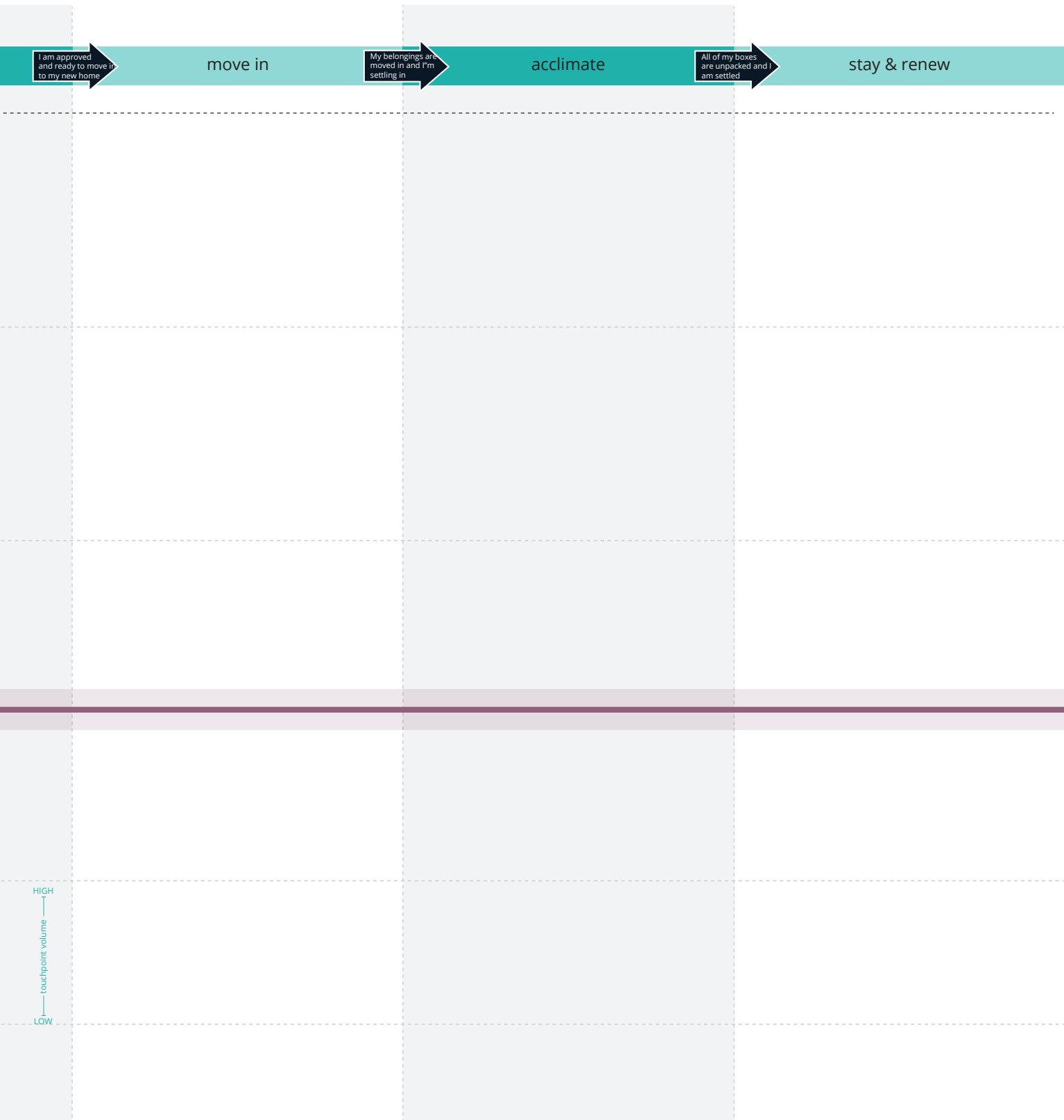
This customer journey map for a fictitious company, "Acme Corp", focuses on positive and negative emotions. Kalbach, Jim. Mapping Experiences: A Complete Guide to Creating Value Through Journeys, Blueprints & Diagrams. Sebastopol: O'Reilly Media, 2016



RENTER'S JOURNEY MAP CANVAS

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THE APPFOLIO RENTER'S EXPERIENCE REPORT

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Introduction

Regardless of industry, improving the experience a customer has with your product or service is arguably the best thing you can do to contribute to the success of your overall business this year. In the Property Management industry, that often means improving the renter's experience. Before taking steps to improve, it's important to first understand their experience in today's market.

AppFolio generated this report in an effort to understand the renter's experience from the time they first become aware a move may be in their future, to when they're fully settled into their new home, and to when they are considering whether or not they will stay.

The Phases of the Renter's Journey

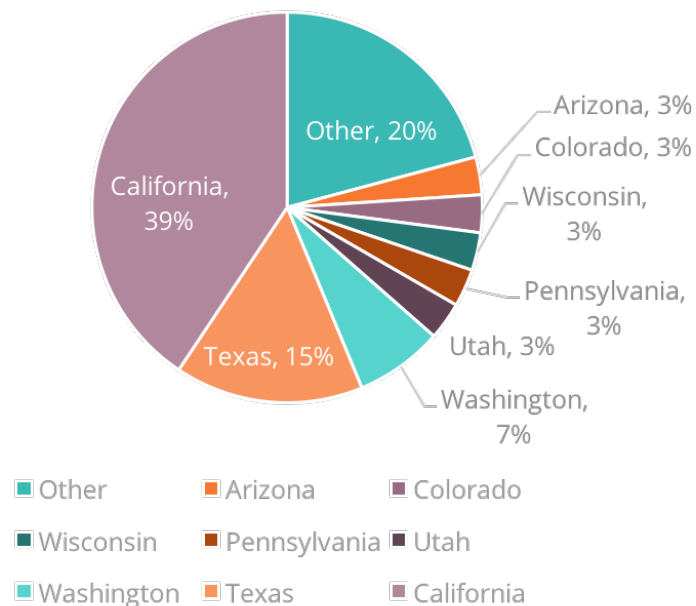


We surveyed 204 renters who had experienced a move within the last 12 months.

40% of survey respondents currently live in California and Texas while the remaining are spread across the U.S. The majority of survey respondents were females between the ages of 18 to 29.

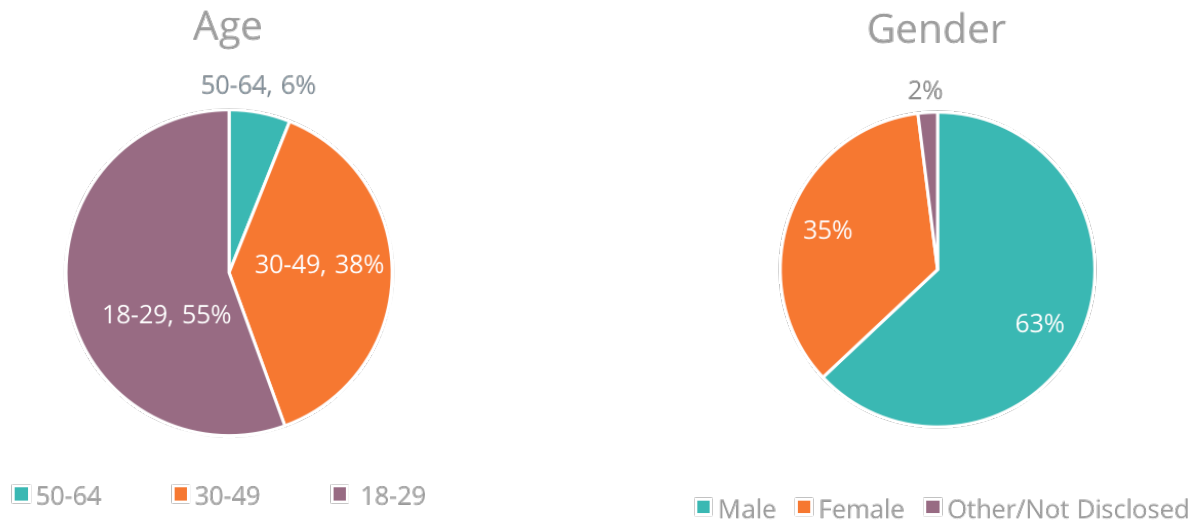
It's important to note that this is not a generalizable sample and may not represent your target market, so we encourage you to use this as a guide to conduct your own research.

State



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Phase 1: Awareness



"I might need to start looking for a new place to live"

This stage starts when the renter first becomes aware that they may need to move from their current home and ends when they decide whether or not to seriously start looking for a new home.

Renters were asked what events might prompt them to start thinking about a move. For many it came down to various changes in their personal life or reasons related to the property they were living in.

What was going on in your world to prompt you to start looking for a new home?	Percentage
New job (yourself and/or spouse)	30%
Life changing events (relationships, children, retirement, etc.)	29%
General interest in change	28%
Having negative interactions with your property manager	20%
Desire for shorter commute	19%
Rent increase	18%
Change in financial situation	15%
Unresolved maintenance issues	12%
Recommendations from others	5%
Threat of eviction	1%

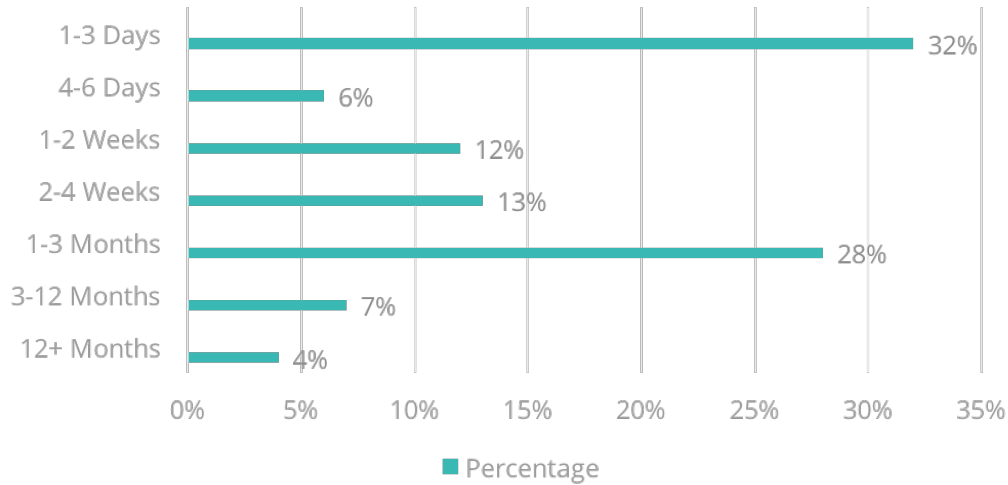


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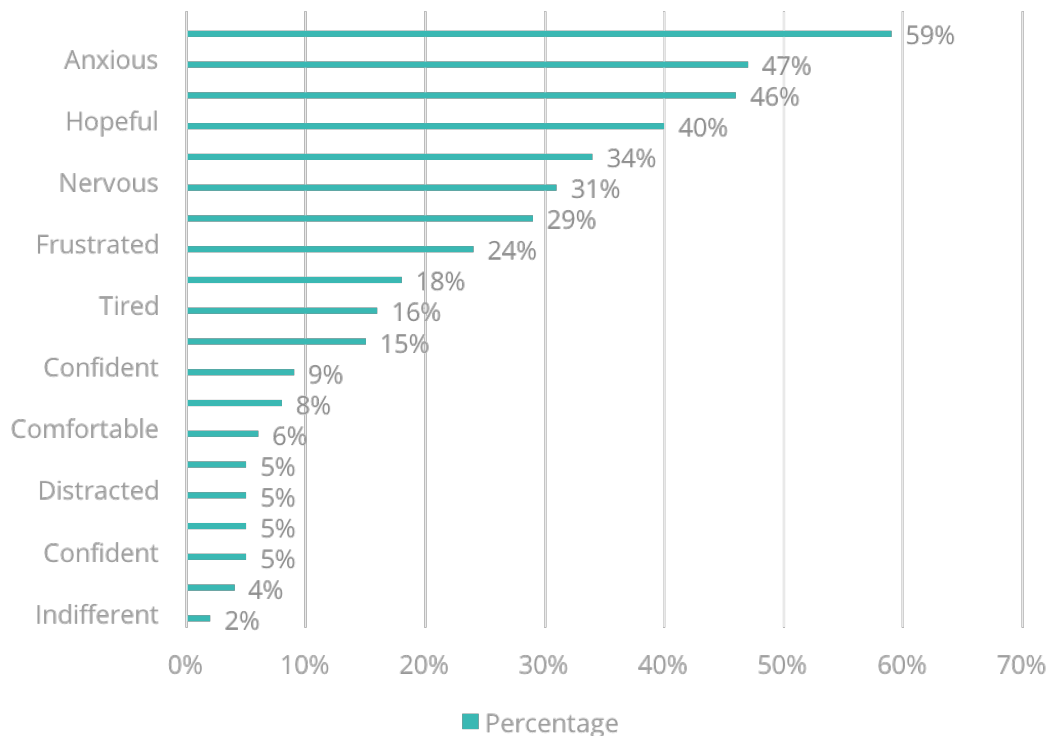
Once they became aware that a move was on the horizon, many started looking seriously right away (1-3 days) while others waited multiple weeks or months.

From the time you realized you might need to move, how soon did you seriously start looking for a new home?



During this time of general awareness, renters most commonly felt stressed and anxious, but also excited and hopeful.

How did you feel about possibly looking for a new home?



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Below are direct quotes taken from renters that completed the survey. Reasons people become aware that they may need to move can be for both positive and negative reasons.

"One of my roommates left us without paying 4 months of rent, so we were being threatened with eviction and things had to move quickly as I had just started a new job as well."

"I started looking immediately because the unit was in such disrepair and the landlord would not even come to look at it. We had water damage that was caused by the landlord's neglect."

"My girlfriend and I had been discussing moving in together for months before actually seriously looking for a place, mostly because she was committed to a lease."

"Moving with a large dog is extra stressful. So many places don't allow them."

"I was so full of dread I didn't know where to begin."

"My building developed a cockroach problem and my landlord wouldn't address it."

"When it's not by your choice the situation is super stressful."

Phase 2: Evaluation



"I have decided to seriously start looking for a new home"

This stage starts when the renter has decided to seriously start looking for a new place to live and ends when they decide whether or not to submit an application for a new home.

In order to evaluate potential new homes, the majority of renters were searching rental listing sites such as Zillow, Apartments.com, Radpad, Craigslist and Property Management company websites.

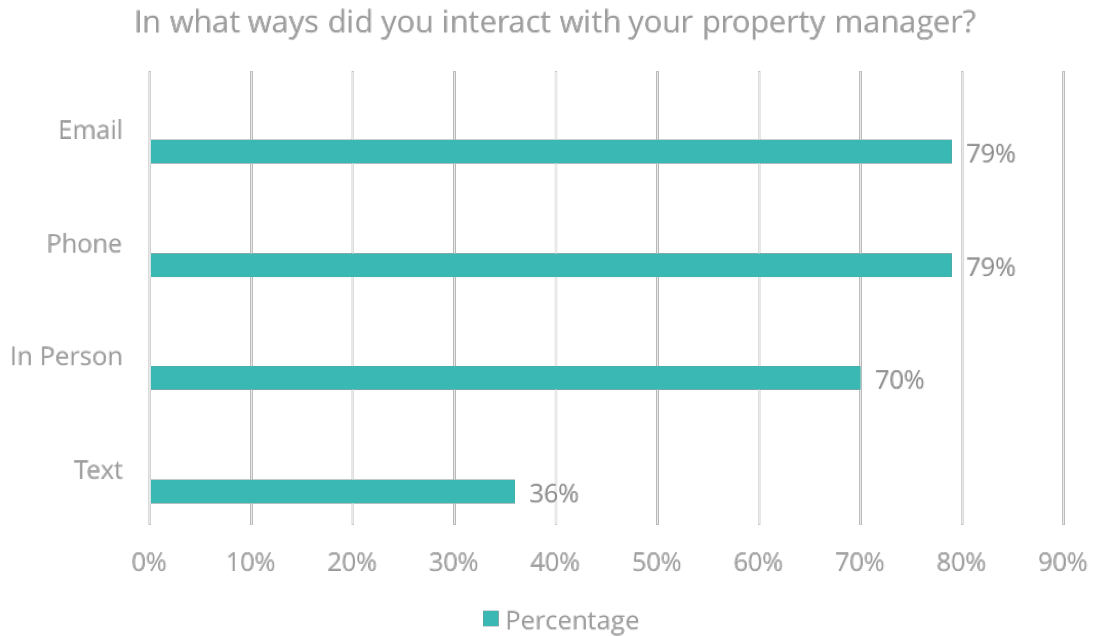
What were you doing to evaluate new homes?	Percentage
Search rental listing sites (Zillow, Apartments.com, Radpad, etc.)	77%
Searching Craigslist	58%
Visiting potential apartments	57%
Visiting Property Management company websites	54%
Talking to friends, family or colleagues	50%
Deciding a move-in date	45%
Driving around neighborhoods	41%
Giving notice to current property manager	40%
Interacting with property managers	35%
Browsing social media	21%
Looking at printed advertisements	10%



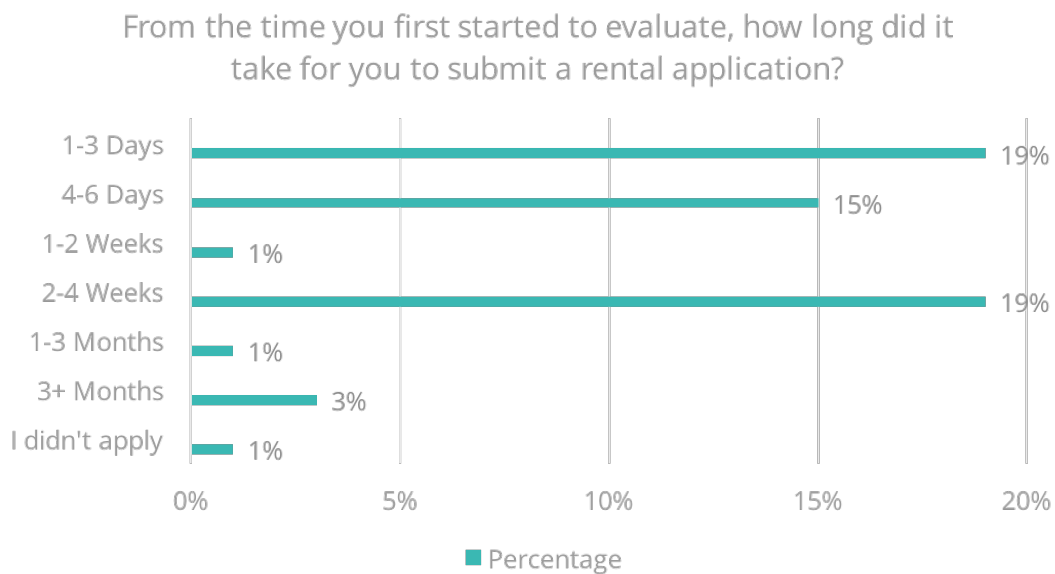
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At this point in the journey, renters are beginning to interact with property managers. This interaction is largely occurring by email, phone, and in person, and a smaller percentage of communication is occurring via text message.



From the time these renters seriously started to evaluate their options, it took them anywhere from 1-3 days to 2-4 weeks for them to submit an application.

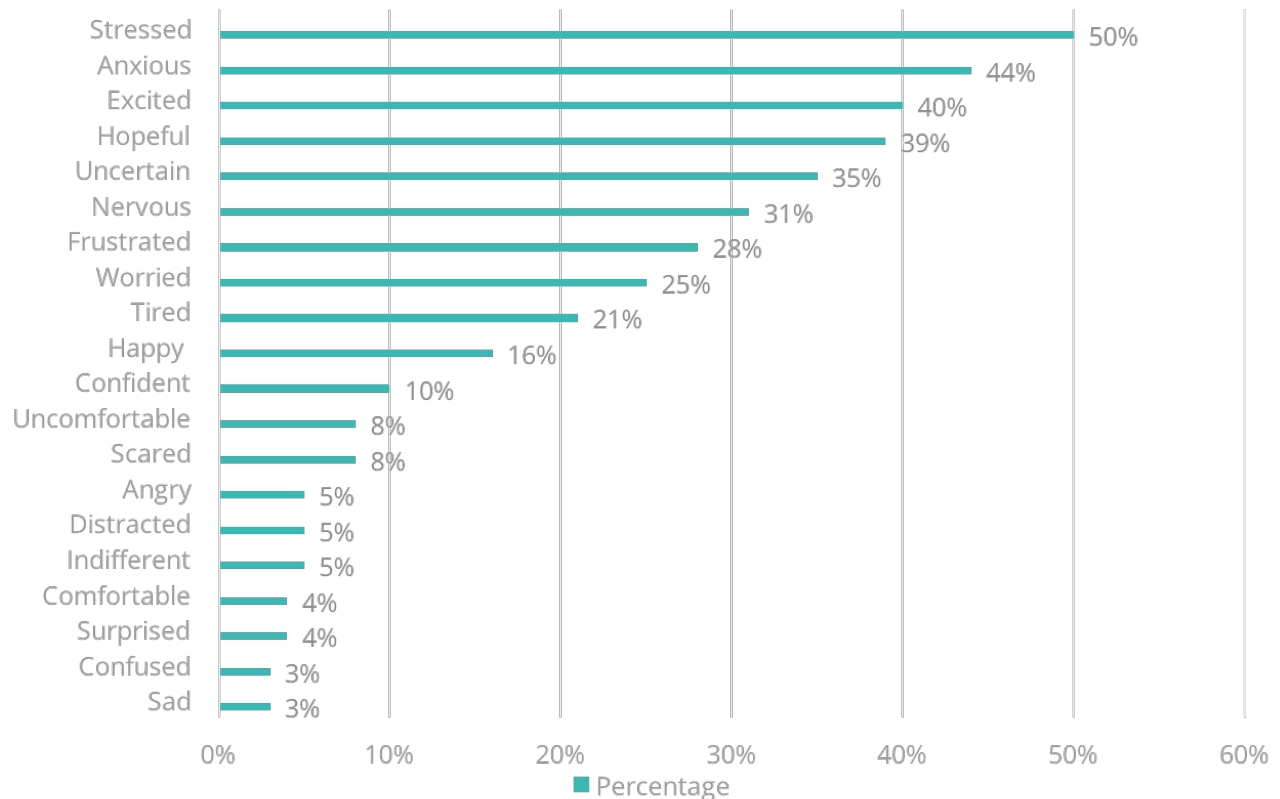


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The process of looking for a new home left renters feeling stressed and anxious, but also excited and hopeful.

How did you feel about the process of looking for a new home to live?



Below are direct quotes taken from renters that completed the survey. Seriously evaluating your rental options can be difficult. This is often due to an in-demand market with prices many aren't able to afford.

"It was really hard to find something in our area that we could afford."

"Searching through rental sites can be very frustrating when there are little to no photos to really get a feel for what the place looks like. I would skip over listings that do not provide enough information/photos with the thought that, 'if they are not putting in a lot of effort to show me the place, I won't put in any effort to look into it myself'."

"The local market is so saturated with renters that good opportunities are few and far between. The good vacancies also fill insanely fast."

"Being disabled it was so hard to find a safe place and make all the trips to visit and apply."

"It is hard to find a landlord or company who is easy to contact and discuss the application process."

"It was tough to find something we were interested in. Plus, rentals were going so quickly and we didn't have the opportunity to apply sometimes because the home had already been rented."

"I hate the process of finding an apartment in a new city, especially when moving across the country."



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Phase 3: Apply



"I have decided to apply for a new home"

This stage starts when the renter submits a rental application for a property they're interested in and ends when they're approved for a property they've applied to.

Once they've been notified their application was approved, renters are commonly finalizing a move-in date while also giving move-out notice to their current property manager. But they may also continue to search and apply for other potential homes.

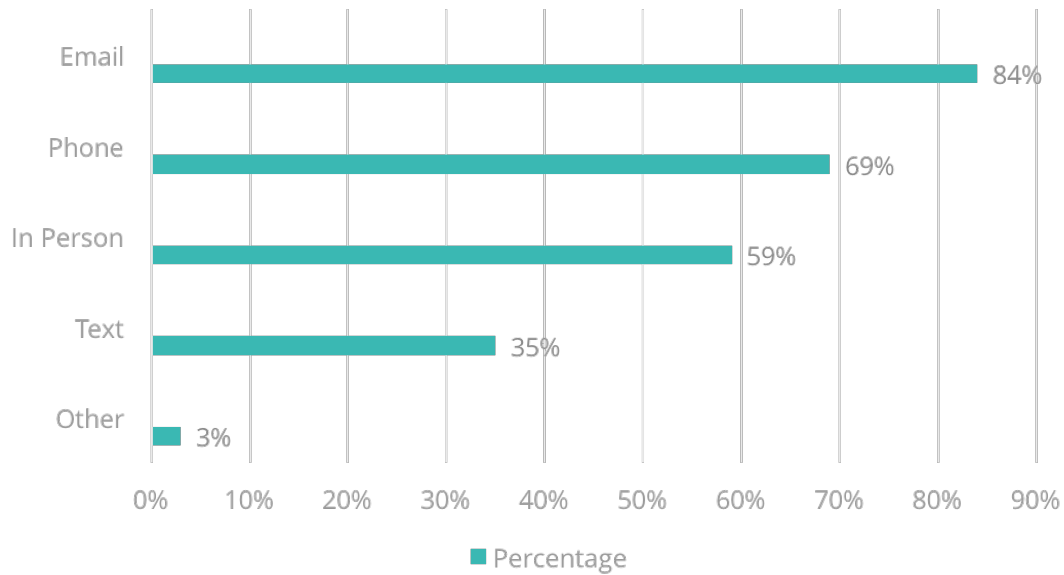
What's happening after submitting an application and notification you were approved?	Percentage
Finalizing a move-in date	54%
Interacting with a property manager	54%
Continuing to search for other homes	40%
Cancelling, moving, or settling up utilities	36%
Giving notice to current property manager	34%
Answering follow up questions about your application	33%
Negotiating with the property manager (rent, discounts, deposit, etc.)	27%
Applying to other homes	23%
Rental application getting denied	4%

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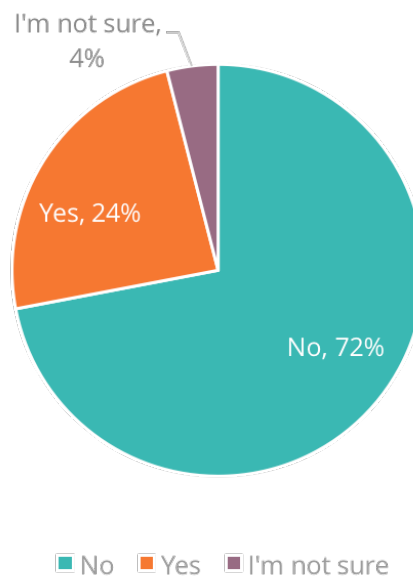
Now that these renters have applied for a new home they're continuing to interact with property managers. This interaction is largely occurring by email, phone, and in person, and a smaller percentage of communication is occurring via text message.

In what ways did you interact with your property manager?



Nearly a quarter of the renters surveyed have submitted a rental application and ended up either not moving into the property they applied for or didn't move from their current home. The most common reasons cited related to the high costs and finding another option that better suited their needs.

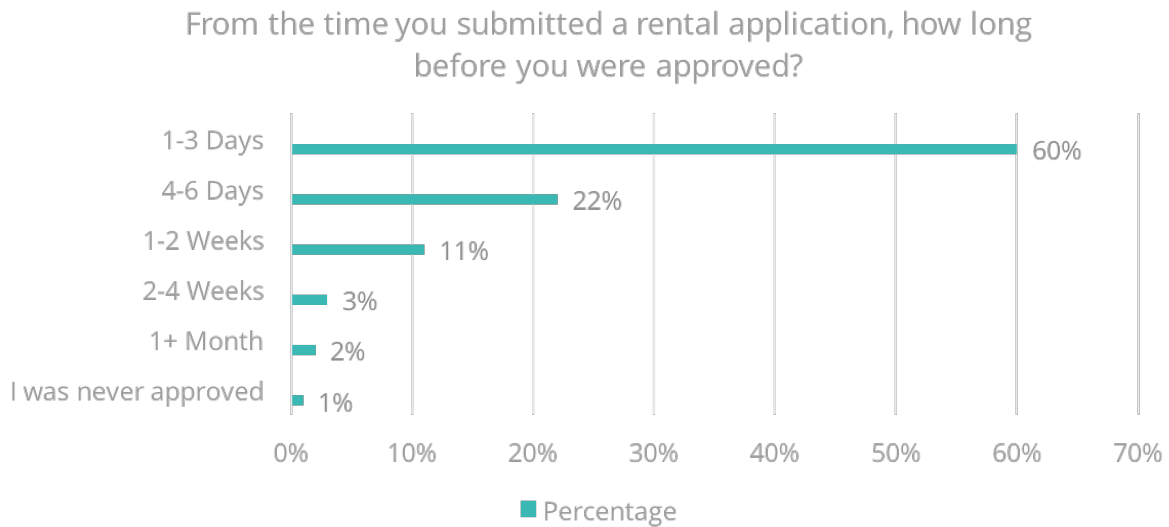
Have you ever submitted a rental application and decided not to move?



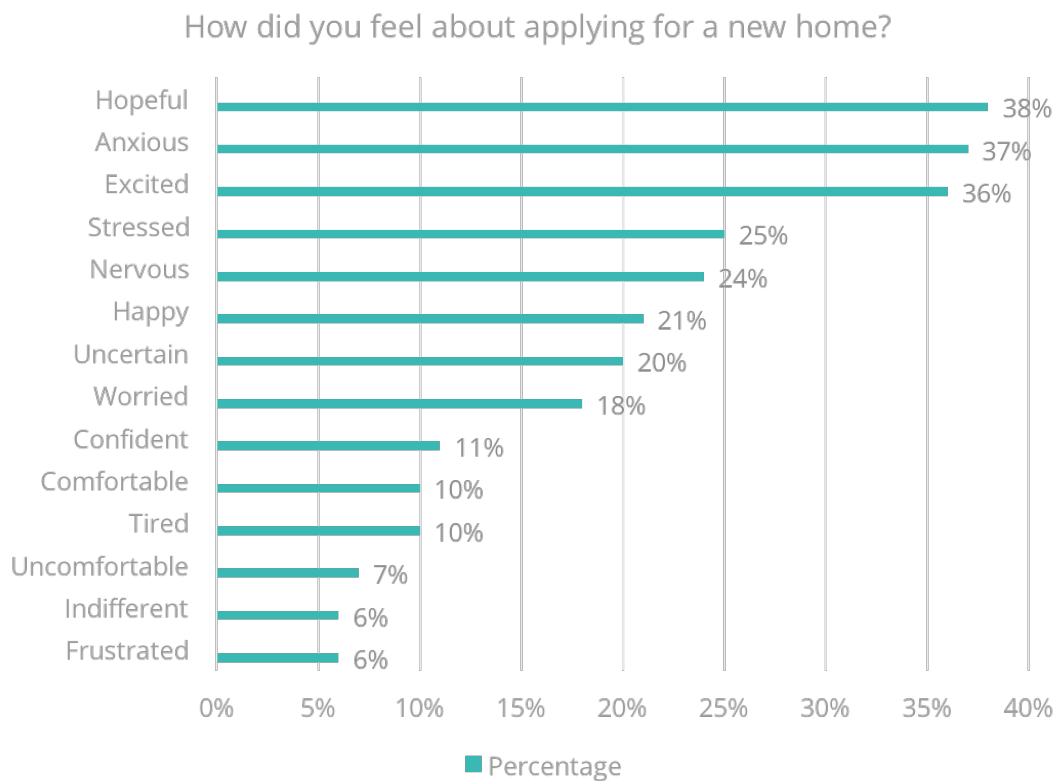
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Most renters were approved 1-3 days after submitting their application. Nearly a quarter of renters heard back within the week and a very small portion had to wait longer than a week for approval.



After applying, renters are most commonly feeling hopeful, anxious, excited and still stressed.



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Below are direct quotes taken from renters that completed the survey. Renters applying for a new home know the competition is stiff, and that can often add to what is likely already a stressful experience.

"The criteria required with submitting the application was unclear and that meant a lot of back and forth was required."

"Our landlord was very upfront with us that we would almost certainly get the apartment, the only thing left to do was have our credit checked. It was nice knowing exactly what the status was with the application from the get-go."

"It was income restricted and I was worried about being near the max."

"The process was online and required multiple electronic documents--copy of drivers license, job offer. But the process was very smooth and quick."

"A lot of anxiety, even when you know nothing on your side will prevent the rental. You hope no one else got their materials to the owner/landlord first!"

"We applied for multiple properties that fit our desired criteria."

"We were #4 on the list of applicants, so we went through the extra effort to pull our own credit and include it with our application to help make their decision an easier one."



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Phase 4: Move In



“My application has been approved and I’m ready to begin the process of moving into my new home”

This stage starts when the renter begins the process of moving into their new home and ends when they’re completely moved in.

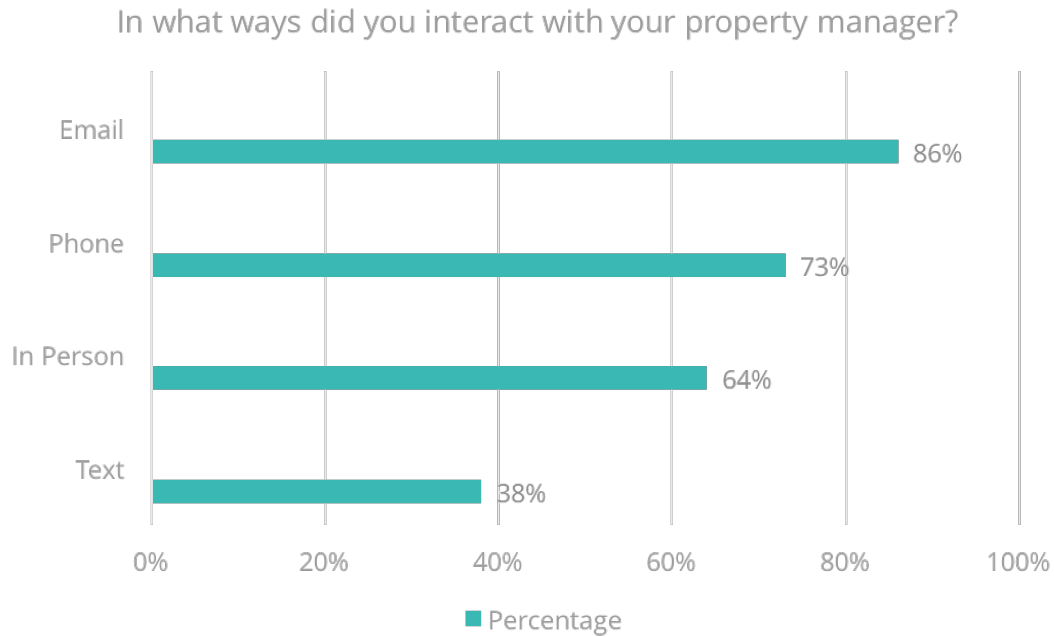
As they start thinking about moving, there are a lot of things happening. Many are packing up their current home and cleaning it ahead of moving out while also setting up or canceling utilities, signing their new leases, and setting a move-in date.

What's happening between being approved and moving in?	Percentage
Packing up your current home	79%
Cleaning your previous home	68%
Cancelling, moving, or setting up utilities	68%
Renewing/signing the lease and other documents	67%
Setting a move-in date	54%
Interacting with your NEW property manager	49%
Shopping for furniture and/or home decor	44%
Doing an inspection of your new home	40%
Interacting with your CURRENT property manager	38%
Selling furniture and/or home decor	38%
Giving notice to current property manager	37%
Hiring movers	29%
Negotiating with CURRENT property manager (rent, move out details, deposit)	25%
Requesting maintenance work on your new home	23%
Negotiating with your NEW property manager (rent, discounts, deposit amount, etc.)	16%
Hosting a garage/yard sale	7%
Applying to other homes	2%
Continuing to search for other homes	2%

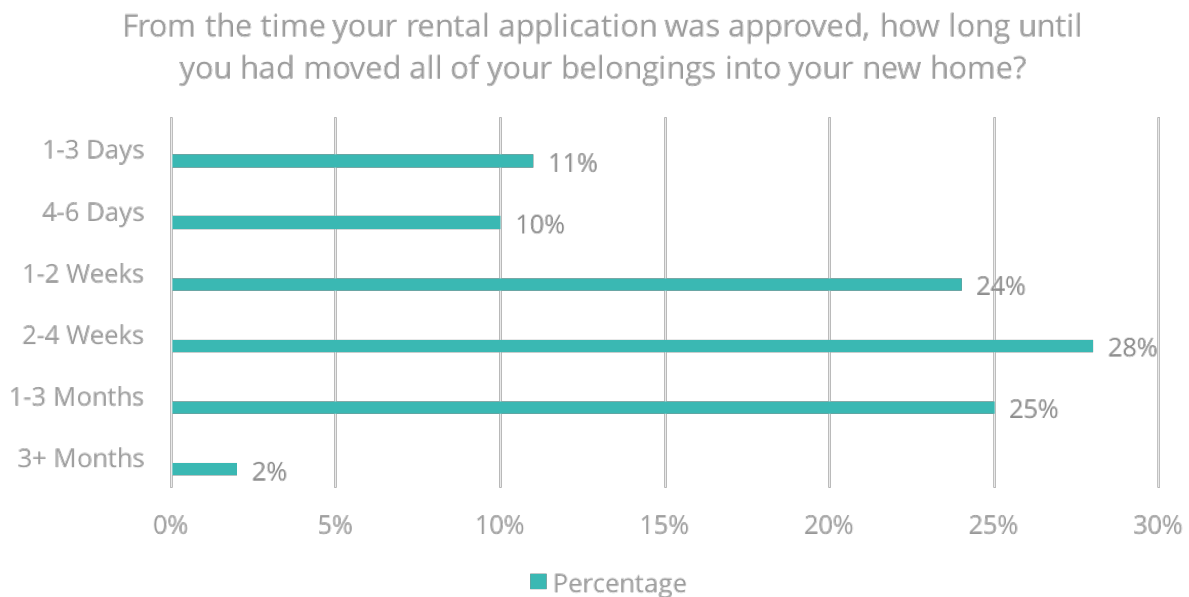
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At this point in the journey, renters are largely interacting with property managers by email, phone, and in person, and a smaller percentage of communication is occurring via text message.



From the time their rental application was approved, there's a wide range for how long it takes to move all of their belongings into their new home. The large majority of renters are moved within a month, but for the remaining 27% it takes longer than a month.

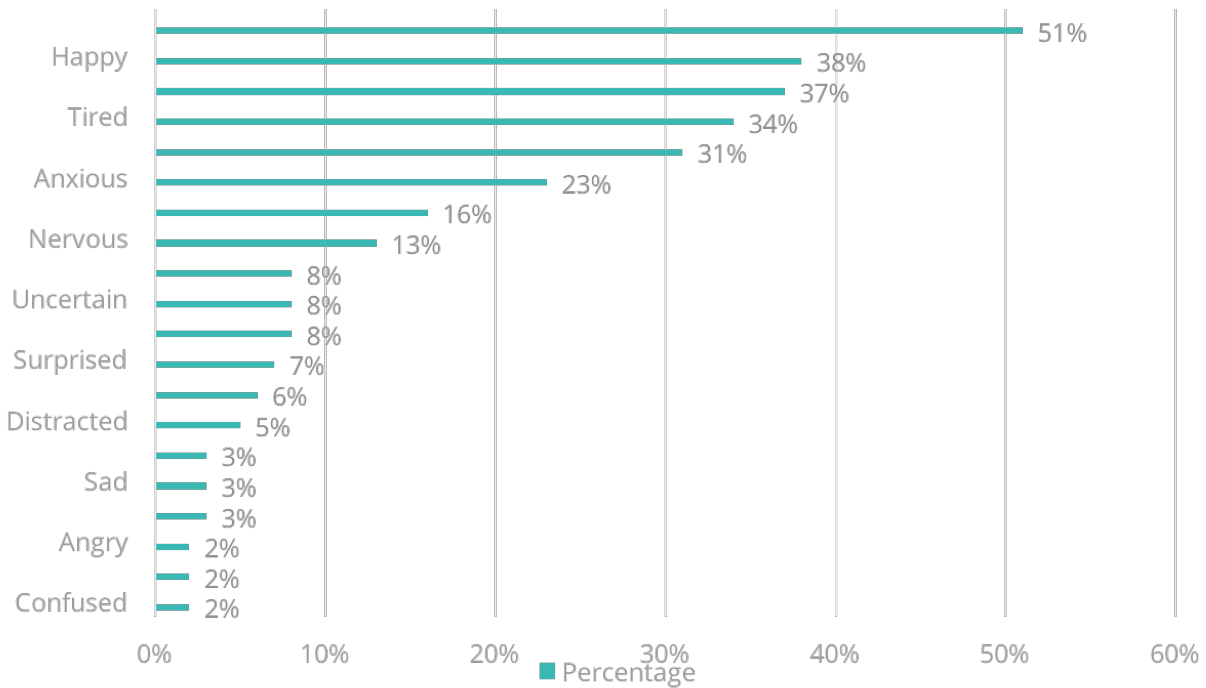


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After moving into their new home, many renters are feeling very happy and excited. Others are feeling stressed and tired.

How did you feel about the process of moving into your new home?



Below are direct quotes taken from renters that completed the survey. The process of moving can be very exciting but it is often exhausting as well.

"I needed to clarify with my existing landlord what he expected the tenants to do in a move-out."

"Many items will remain in storage as this apartment is small. I plan to purchase a house in two years."

"It is a crazy time of activities and it helps when people are organized and follow through from all parties involved."

"Very exciting time!"

"Label your boxes :)."

"Just glad I got in."

"I had to sleep on an air mattress and use plastic bins as a table until I could afford to get my furniture out of storage."

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Phase 5: Acclimate



"I have completely moved all of my belongings from my old home"

This stage starts when all of the renter's belongings have been moved into their new home and they are getting settled in and ends once they feel settled in their new home.

After moving into their new home, a large majority of renters are unpacking boxes. Many others are shopping for furniture and home decor while also still setting up or canceling their utilities.

What's happening between moving in and feeling settled in your new home?	Percentage
Unpacking boxes	83%
Shopping for furniture and/or home decor	57%
Cancelling, moving, or setting up utilities	55%
Interacting with your NEW property manager	46%
Requesting maintenance work on your new home	41%
Doing an inspection of your new home	38%
Cleaning your previous home	31%
Selling furniture and/or home decor	24%
Interacting with your PREVIOUS property manager	22%
Hosting a housewarming party	21%
Negotiating with your NEW property manager (rent, discounts, deposit amount, etc.)	7%
Hosting a garage/yard sale	3%

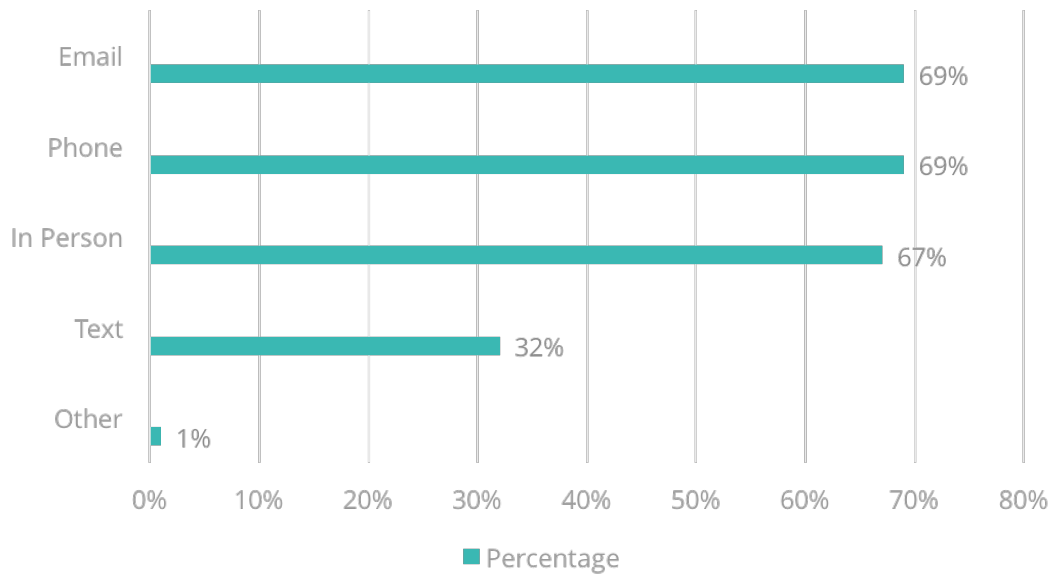


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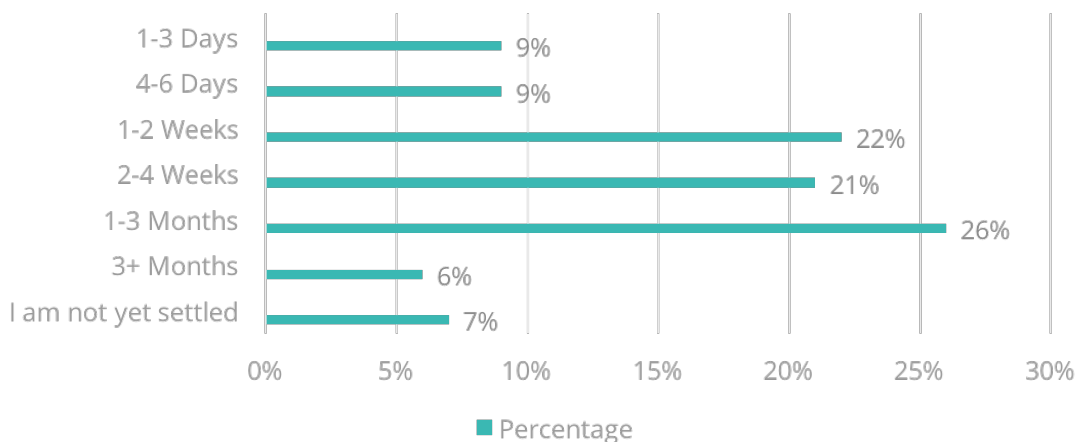
At this point in the journey, while renters are still settling in, they're still interacting with their property managers. This interaction is largely occurring by email, phone, and in person, and a smaller percentage of communication is occurring via text message.

In what ways did you interact with your property manager?



From the time they moved in, 18% are feeling settled within a week, another 43% within a month, and another 32% are feeling settled within 1-3 months.

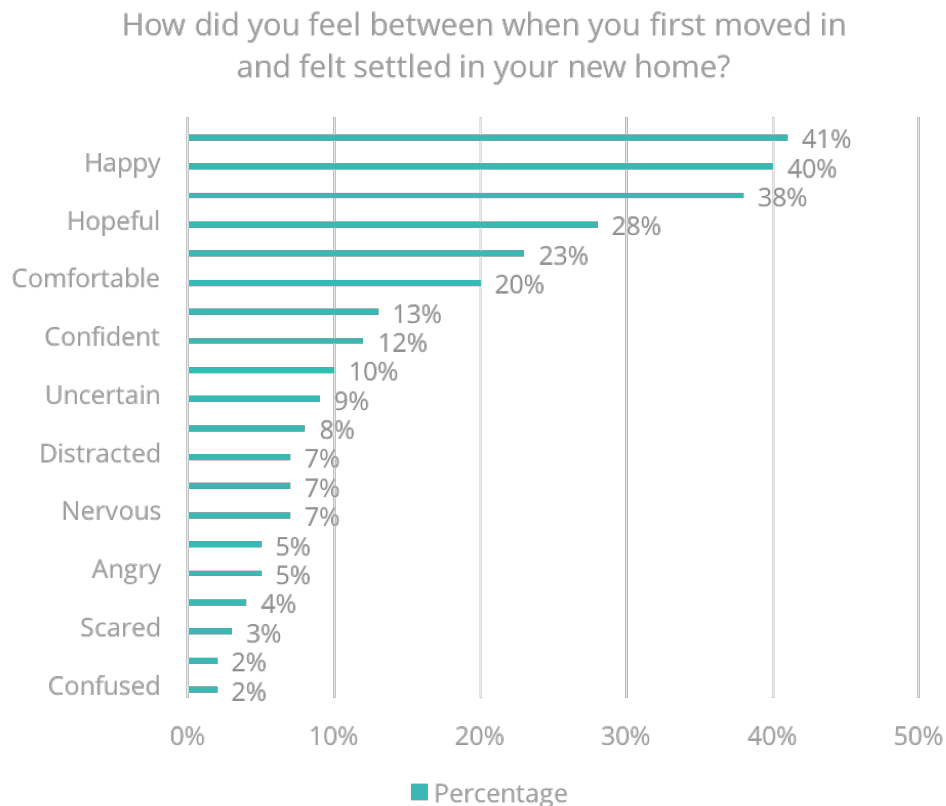
From the time you moved in, how long until you had actually felt settled in your new home?



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Once renters move in and are feeling fully settled, they're excited, happy, tired, and hopeful.



Below are direct quotes taken from renters that completed the survey. Now that the move has occurred, settling into their new home can take time and often needs to be done while also starting a new job and may include expensive purchases.

"Moving is scary sometimes especially when it's to a brand new area and you don't know anyone."

"We had boxes in the hallway for months after we moved in."

"This process takes some real time."

"I've been here a little over a week. I've finally unpacked most of the boxes and figures out where the furniture goes. But there are big items I need to buy--a couch, tv, and coffee table--before I'll feel settled."

"I was starting a new, intense job, so it took some time to settle in. My parents came to visit and helped hang art and shelves. That really helped."

"I was surprised to see the actual space and very upset that the tenants above us smoked. The smoke traveled through the vents into our apartment and made living there frustrating."

"I moved to a bigger place so I needed to fill it with more furniture and other items so it didn't feel so vacant"



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Phase 6: Stay & Renew



"I'm now settled into my new home"

This stage starts when the renter feels fully settled into their new home and ends when they start to become aware a move may be in their future.

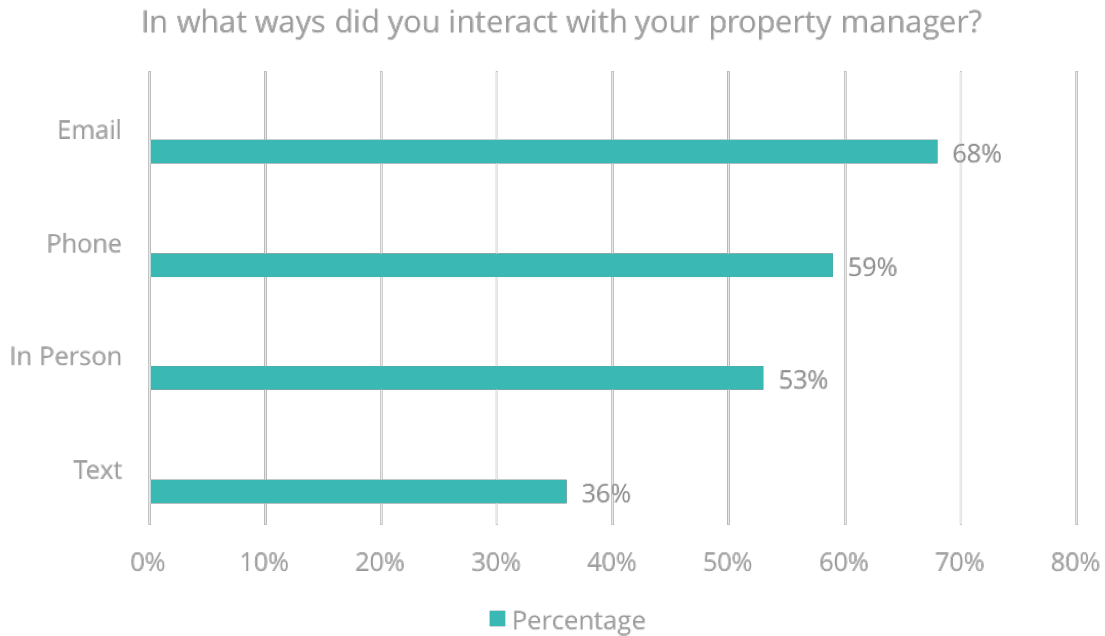
The first year of being in their home, many are shopping for furniture and home decor and befriending their neighbors. Many renters are also interacting with their new property manager and requesting maintenance on their new home.

What activities are happening during the first year in your new home?	Percentage
Shopping for furniture and/or home decor	62%
Befriending neighbors	51%
Interacting with your new property manager	41%
Requesting maintenance work on your new home	38%
Having a housewarming party	27%
Participating in community events	26%
Casually looking at rentals and broader market	24%
Starting to look into purchasing a home	21%
Selling furniture and/or home decor	14%
Negotiating with your NEW property manager (rent, renewals, additional charges, etc.)	9%

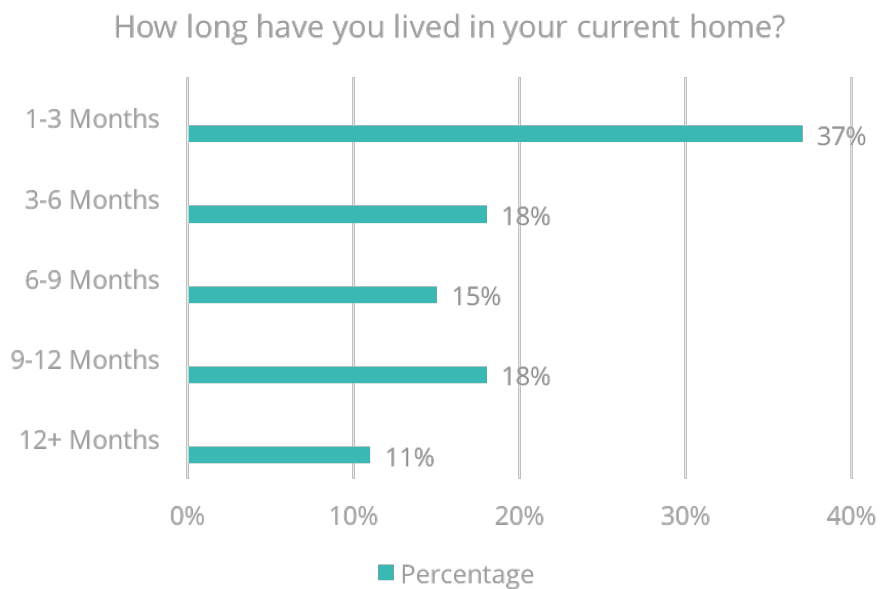
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Now that they're settled into their home, renters are still interacting with their property managers. This interaction is still largely occurring by email, phone, and in person, and a smaller percentage of communication is occurring via text message



Over half of the renters surveyed have lived in their homes for less than 6 months and only 11% have lived in their current home for longer than a year.

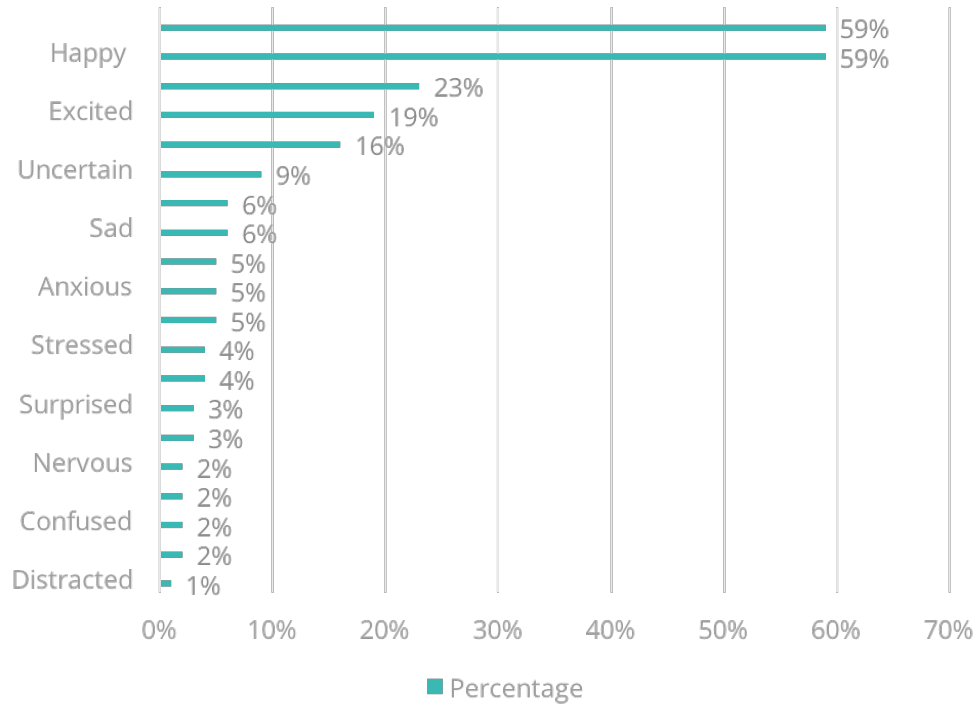


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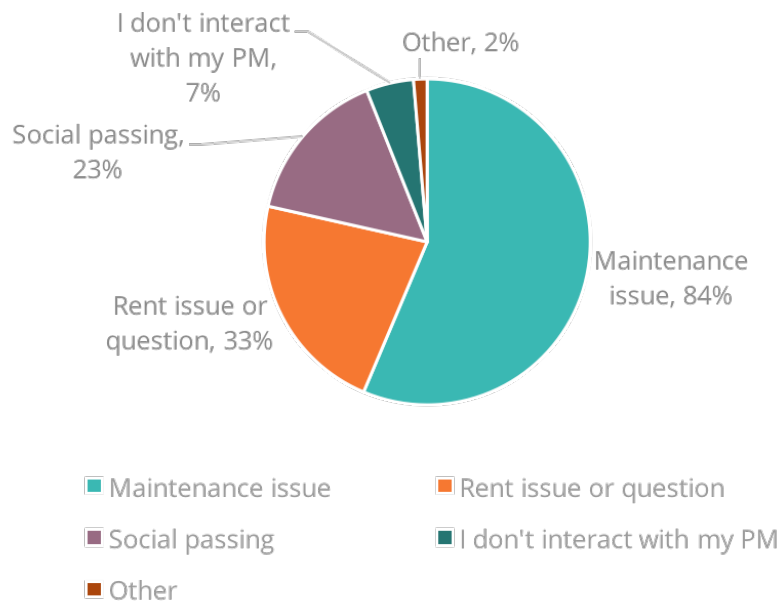
Many renters report positive feelings toward their current home; comfortable, happy, confident, excited, and hopeful.

How do you feel about living in your current home?



The main reason these renters interact with their property managers is for maintenance-related issues and over one-third have rent related issues or questions.

What are the most common reasons you interact with your property manager?

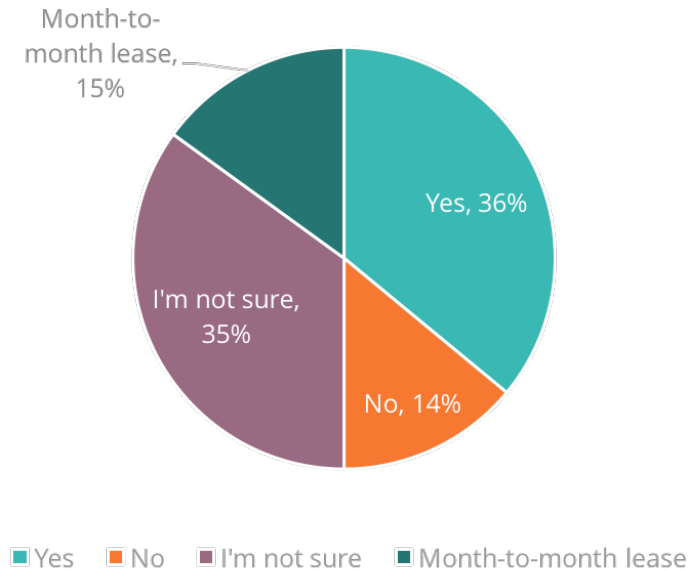


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When it comes to renewing their lease 36% have already decided they will, but another 35% aren't sure.

When the time comes, will you renew your lease?



Below are direct quotes taken from renters that completed the survey. Some are looking to the future with plans to buy a home, while others are looking to move elsewhere. There are a number of reasons renters may move, some of which may have to do with negative experiences they have having with their property manager.

"Renewal depends on the possibility of having another baby, otherwise we have no plans to move."

"After 3 years we're about ready to buy a home."

"We will renew as long as rent doesn't increase significantly."

"I've been really happy with the place that I live in now: the community is safe and quiet, and management has been receptive to any concerns that I have. Maintenance is prompt and responsive whenever I need them."

"The landlord has been a nightmare. She constantly comes on property without permission. She refuses to fix anything. She's rude."

"I have already made the choice to not renew when the time comes. This is entirely because of my landlord."

"Some owners are slumlords even in mid level to upper end houses. They also lack the understanding of rental law and it is easier to move than to deal with them in court."



Property Manager Impact on Renter Retention

Having a good relationship with their property manager positively impacted the renter's likelihood to renew their lease or remain with their current property management company. Renters mentioned that if their property manager was friendly, helpful, quick to respond to requests, prompt when fixing maintenance issues but not intrusive they were likely to renew their lease. There were also common themes around staying due to reasonable rent, or because they love the home and/or location.

"I really like my property manager. She is professional but not stiff. She is very kind to my dog."

"Any concerns or issues I have are dealt with in a timely and professional manor. The building is well maintained."

"Easy to communicate with and noninvasive."

"I love my home. It's spacious enough for my family, it's in a good location, and the amenities are great."

"No rent increases, timeliness and responsiveness to requests, giving us privacy."

Reasons a renter may consider looking elsewhere often have to do with price sensitivity. This was a major factor in what prompts a renter to start looking for a new home from a different Property Management Company. If their rent was going to increase, or if they had the opportunity to find lower rent they would consider moving. Unresolved maintenance issues and lack of communication from their property manager is another big reason they may start to look for a new home.

"A large rent increase."

"Rent increase/can't afford rent."

"Unresponsiveness."

"They won't allow me to have a cat."

"The apartment is run down and many things need to be replaced, like the flooring."

"Rude, unresponsive."

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Conclusion

The experience of moving into a new home is a very busy time and is stressful for most renters. Due to this reality, there are a number of opportunities to improve the experience.

Key Takeaways

- Personal life changes (new job, change in relationships, financial situation, etc.) are the most common reasons for an upcoming move, but many are also moving due to negative interactions with the property manager or unresolved maintenance issues.
- The majority report feeling stressed throughout their journey until they start to settle into their new home, but most also associated feelings of hope and excitement.
- 77% of renters use rental listing sites to search for a new home. If the listing doesn't include photos or key details, renters are likely to ignore it and move on.
- The majority of rental applications were approved within a week after being submitted, but at least 16% of renters waited longer to hear back on the decision. 40% of renters continue searching for other homes even after their application is approved.
- While 73% of renters move into their new home within a month of their rental application being approved, 23% reported waiting 1-3 months.
- It can take weeks or months for renters to completely settle into their new home. 43% of the renters felt settled within the first month, but for 26% it took up to 3 months.
- At least 35% of renters are unsure whether or not they will renew their current lease. Many cite negative interactions with their landlord or property manager as a reason they won't renew.
- At least 32% of renters are communicating with their property managers via text, with the majority of communication happening via email (over 65%).



SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY

CUSTOMER JOURNEY WORKSHOP - J.J. KERCHER



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J.J. is currently the Director of Customer Experience at AppFolio, where she leads a team of designers and researchers passionate about making every customer interaction an awesome one. AppFolio's CX team strives for consistency and continuity across devices within the product, and at every touchpoint across the entire customer journey from sales to product onboarding to support and loyalty.