

WOMEN IN REAL ESTATE

INSIGHTS INTO THE FUTURE OF LEADERSHIP,
PERFORMANCE & PROGRESSION
2026



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BACKED BY INDUSTRY LEADERS



The Women In Real Estate Insights Report is an important piece of work for our industry because it moves the conversation beyond awareness and into understanding. It provides valuable insight into the real experiences, pressures and pathways that shape long term success for women across real estate. More importantly, it gives leaders and businesses the opportunity to reflect on the environments we are creating, the support we are providing, and where meaningful progress still needs to be made. An industry that develops and supports more female leaders will ultimately become stronger, more progressive and better equipped for the future.

Thomas McGlynn | President, REINSW



While this report focused on women, many of the insights apply broadly across the industry. At its core, people need structure, training, and clear guidance - particularly in the early stages of their careers. Most striking is the gap between what we believe we're providing and how that support is actually experienced by our people.

Leanne Pilkington | CEO, Laing+Simmons



An outstanding report and survey into the state of play of women in real estate today. This report has taken a very good look under the surface and has unearthed some critical knowledge that can create a new blueprint for women in real estate to adopt. Discovering the experiences of so many people who have paved the way through a seriously male dominated industry over the past 30 years to where we are today is uplifting and it really shows the resilience and strength of so many who shifted the dial enormously. Plenty more to still do in creating psychologically and physically safe environments for all to thrive in but its work like this that creates that opportunity to happen.

John Cunningham | Managing Director, Cunninghams





Such an insightful report with some incredibly interesting data highlighted throughout, particularly around the environments women need in order to thrive. One of the strongest findings was that the biggest hurdle for women wanting to grow significant businesses is not belief in their capability, but access to capital. There is a very clear blueprint here for organisations wanting to grow more female leaders: education, opportunity, and genuine pathways to capital. A great takeaway for the industry.

Hayley Van de Ven | CEO, REMAX - The Limitless Group



This report highlights an important conversation for our industry. Women make up a significant part of the real estate workforce and bring enormous value through leadership, relationships, performance and client experience. More importantly, the findings provide insight into the environments and leadership approaches that help people perform at their best and build long-term success. There is real value in business owners and industry leaders taking the time to read, understand and apply these insights to strengthen the future of our industry as a whole.

Ewan Morton | Managing Director, Morton



This is a must read report for women working within the real estate industry, those competing with them and the leaders responsible for supporting, mentoring and developing female talent across our profession. It provides meaningful insights into the experiences, ambitions, challenges and opportunities facing women in real estate today and this study reflects both the progress the industry has made and the important conversations still needed to shape its future. This report also provides an insightful 'how to' pave the way for the next generation entering the industry.

Sherrie Storer | CEO, Real Estate Nation

INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION

The Women in Real Estate Insights Report was created to better understand the real experiences of women working across sales in the real estate industry.

There have been surveys and reports created in the past, all valuable in their own way. But I didn't feel any went broad enough or deep enough to capture the full experience of women working across sales, leadership and business ownership, and the unique challenges they face throughout that journey.

Women are a significant and growing part of the industry. We've seen real progress. Women are building careers, contributing to performance, and playing a critical role across sales, property management and leadership.

Yet despite this, they remain underrepresented in sales, leadership and business ownership.

For that reason, this report focuses specifically on those areas.

Property management is a highly specialised discipline, with its own demands, pressures and pathways. It deserves dedicated attention, and a separate conversation focused on its sustainability and long-term success.

This report looks beyond entry. It explores what actually shapes performance, progression and long-term success - and where the friction points sit.

It looks at what helps women succeed, what creates pressure or burnout, where support and leadership break down, and how pathways into leadership and ownership feel in practice.

Across the data, clear patterns emerge.

Performance is not driven by activity alone.

Confidence is not a starting point.

And progression is not as straightforward as it appears.

This is not a report about capability.

Women are already succeeding.

It is a report about conditions.

The environments, structures and support systems that shape whether that success is sustained, accelerated, or lost.

My goal with this report is to provide clear, credible insight that helps the industry better understand what drives performance, progression and retention - and where change is needed to support it.

Because ultimately, understanding the experience is only part of the equation. What we do with that understanding is what shapes the future and as leaders, we have a responsibility not just to recognise the experience, but to shape the conditions that determine what happens next.



Jacqui Barnes

Head of People & Growth,
Laing+Simmons



WHO WE HEARD FROM



WHO WE HEARD FROM

Almost 70% having spent more than 10 years in the industry, with many entering real estate later in life.

The insights captured in this report reflect a broad cross-section of women working across the Australian real estate industry, with contributors spanning every state and territory and representing a diverse mix of ages, career stages, business models and leadership positions.

Half of all respondents were based in NSW, with strong representation also coming from Queensland and Victoria.

The majority of participants were experienced professionals, with almost 70% having spent more than 10 years in the industry, and many entering real estate later in life after careers in other sectors.

Respondents included sales agents, business owners, corporate professionals and associates working across both metropolitan and regional markets, with representation from independent agencies and franchise groups of varying sizes.

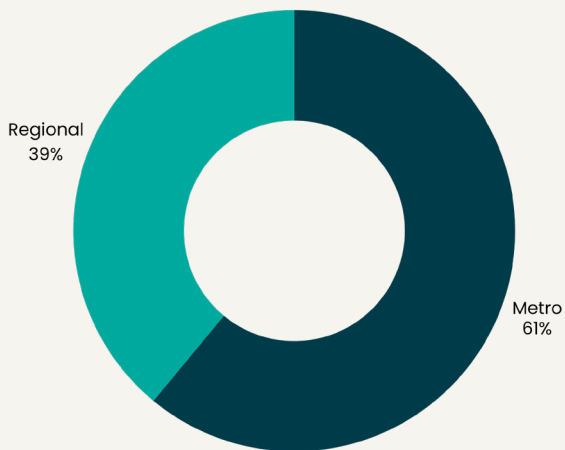
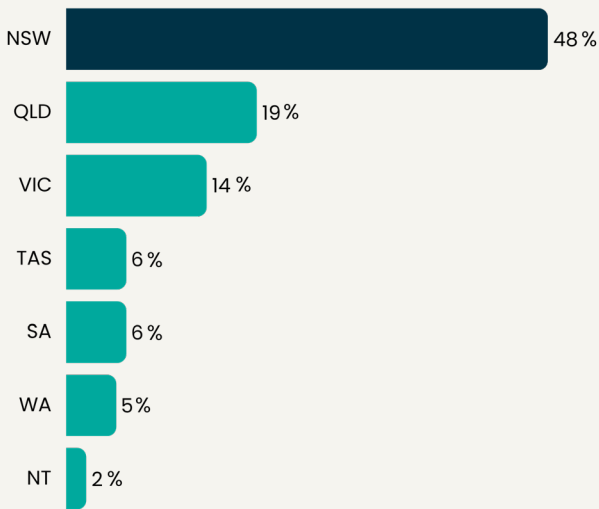
The data also highlights the diversity of engagement structures within the industry, ranging from salaried employees through to commission-only agents and equity partners, providing a well-rounded view of the experiences, challenges and career pathways shaping women in real estate today.



This report captures perspectives from women across every stage of the real estate journey - from new entrants to long-term industry leaders - giving greater depth to the insights that follow.

LOCATION & OFFICE TYPE

Nearly 40% were based in regional markets, reflecting a broad mix of industry perspectives.



INDEPENDENT AGENCY



MAJOR FRANCHISE (40 OFFICES OR MORE)

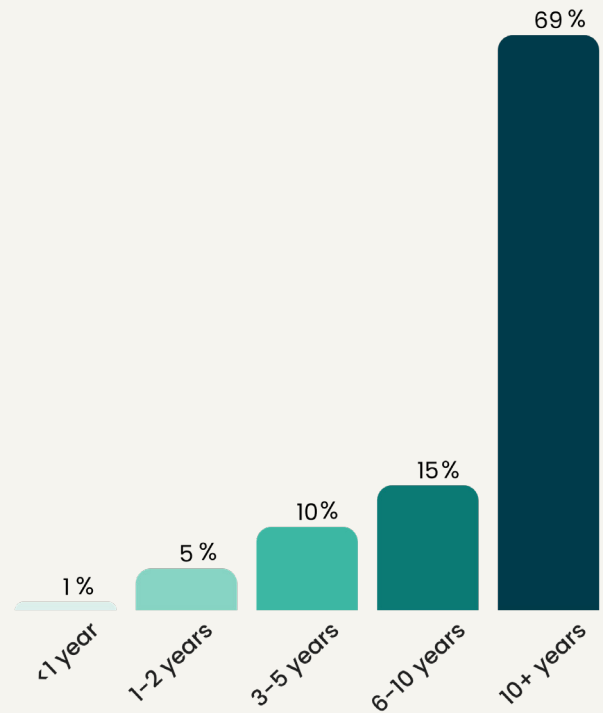


FRANCHISE NETWORK (39 OFFICES OR LESS)



TIME IN INDUSTRY

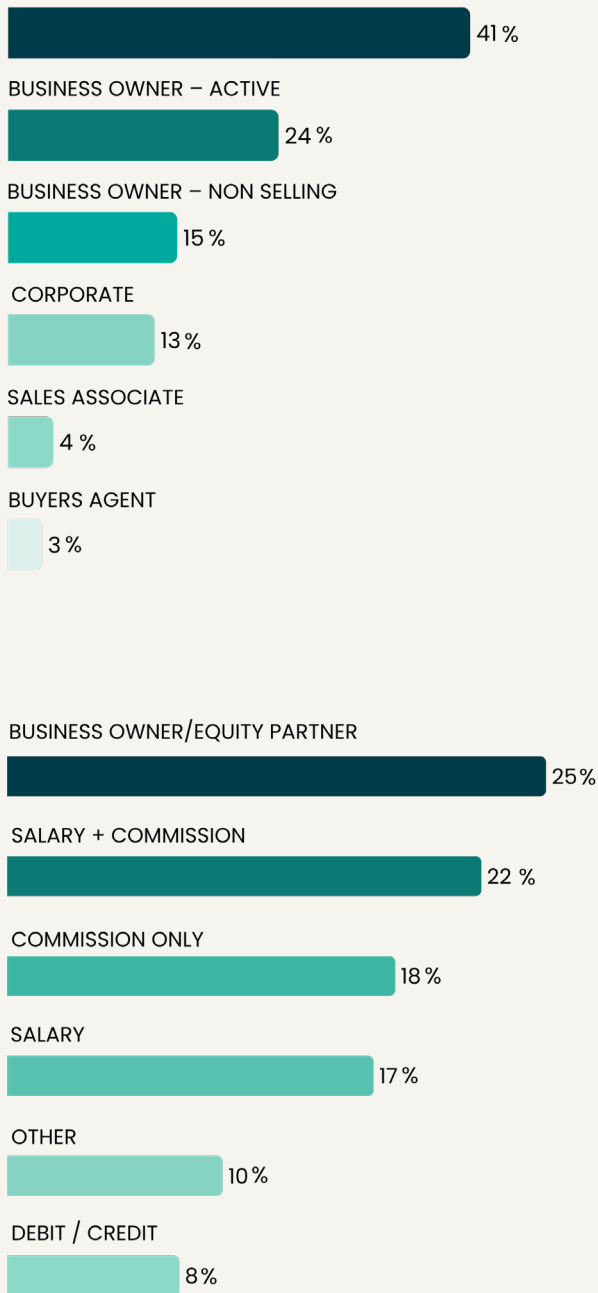
Nearly 70% have worked in the industry for more than 10 years.



For many women, sales was not a first career choice, but a transition, with almost 50% entering the industry after working in another profession.

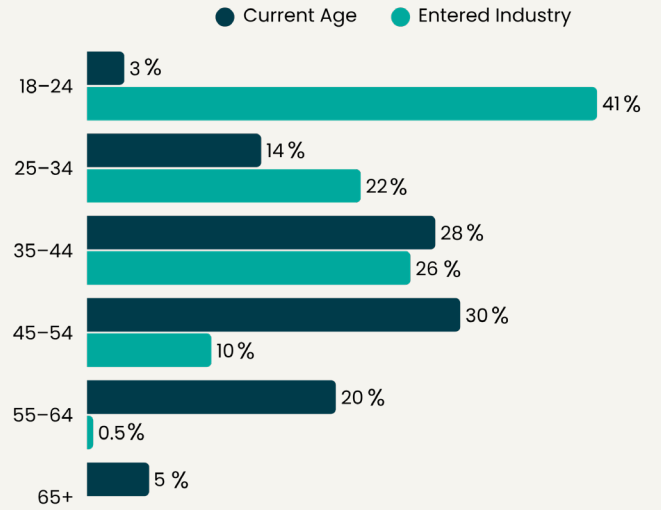
CURRENT ROLE & ENGAGEMENT

More than 40% were actively working as sales agents.



AGE COMPARISON

There is strong long-term retention, with many building lasting careers after entering the industry early.



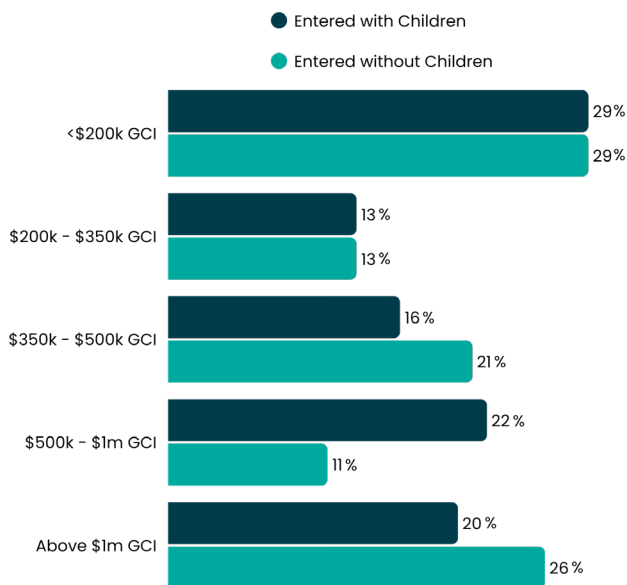
“At 20, I was told I was too young for sales and should move into admin first. Meanwhile, my 21 year old male colleague in the same office went straight into sales”



THE REALITY OF ENTRY



THE REALITY OF ENTRY



Women are not all entering real estate from the same starting point.

For many, entry into the industry happens alongside existing life responsibilities, often as primary carers, managing young or school-aged children, or balancing household demands that do not pause when a new career begins. For others, there may not be children involved, but the experience of entry still reflects a similar pattern. They are stepping into a role that lacks structure, clarity and consistency at a time when stability would make the biggest difference.

The first 12–24 months are consistently described as challenging. Long and irregular hours, pressure to be available, and difficulty maintaining any form of balance show up repeatedly. This is not framed as a short adjustment period. For many, it defines how they enter and learn the role.

What stands out is not just the level of challenge, but the environment in which it occurs. A consistent lack of structure, training and guidance appears across responses. Early success is not simply about capability or motivation. It is shaped by how much clarity and direction someone is given at the start.



You are not losing performance by who you hire. You may be losing performance by how the role is structured.

This is not limited to women with children.

Regardless of life stage, there is a clear pattern. When structure and guidance are present, the experience is more manageable. When they are not, the pressure compounds quickly.

There is also a broader dynamic at play.

The structure of the industry rewards availability. Being always on, always accessible, and able to work evenings and weekends is often what drives early traction. That creates a gap.

Those with fewer external responsibilities, or more flexibility, are better positioned to meet these expectations. Those balancing competing demands are not starting from the same position, regardless of their capability, work ethic or potential. And yet, when we look at outcomes, the difference disappears.

In this dataset, 44% of women who entered with children are now high performers, compared to 37% of those who entered without children.

A similar pattern exists in leadership progression. 42% of women who entered with children are now in business ownership roles, compared to 38% of those without children.

44% of women who entered with children are now in business ownership roles, compared to 37% of those without children.

There is no meaningful difference in performance outcomes between those who entered with children and those who did not.

The implication is clear. The difference is not capability. It is the conditions people are expected to operate within at the start.

Despite this, many women stay. They push through the early years, often without feeling fully in control of their time, income or workload. This raises an important point. Success in this environment may rely less on potential, and more on the ability to withstand the conditions of entry.

Are we rewarding performance, or simply rewarding availability?

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR BUSINESS OWNERS AND LEADERS

Early performance is shaped by structure, not just effort.

Lack of clarity in the first 12 months creates unnecessary pressure.

Availability should not be the primary driver of early success.

Role design has a direct impact on who succeeds and who exits.



CONVERSATIONS THE INDUSTRY NEEDS TO HAVE

What does a high-performing first 12–24 months actually look like when someone is balancing real life responsibilities from day one?

Are the hours we say we work aligned with when performance is actually created?

Does being constantly available drive better results, or just longer working days?

Are we clear on what actually produces performance, or are we relying on time and presence as a proxy?

What would need to be true for us to structure the role differently without compromising performance?

How many capable people are we losing early, not because they lack ability, but because the structure doesn't work?



If we're serious about performance,
we need to be just as serious about how
the role is designed.

WHAT ACTUALLY DRIVES RESULTS



WHAT ACTUALLY DRIVES RESULTS

Performance is driven by relationships, not activity.

65% of business comes from referrals and repeat clients. At the same time, more than 75% of agents describe their prospecting approach as relationship-led. The pattern is clear.

Business is built through relationships over time.

- Activity creates momentum. Relationships create results.
- Personal drive is the engine behind performance. It drives the activity, follow-up and discipline required to stay in motion.
- Activity alone does not produce outcomes.

Outcomes are relationship-based.

- Personal drive creates the activity, but relationships create the outcome.
- This is where many businesses get it wrong.
- We measure activity.
- But results come from relationships.

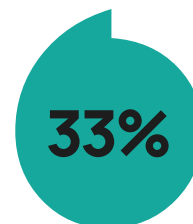
Relationship-driven performance is slower to build.

- Building trust, credibility and a reliable pipeline takes time.
- This is why the first 12–24 months are consistently described as the most challenging
- This is not a capability issue. It is a pipeline that hasn't had time to form.



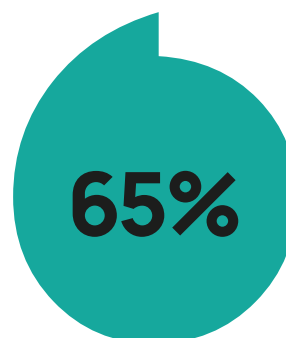
32%

REPEAT CLIENTS



33%

REFERRALS



65%

OF BUSINESS IS
RELATIONSHIP-DRIVEN



Personal drive creates the activity, but relationships create the outcome.

PROSPECTING APPROACH

Many businesses expect early results from a pipeline that does not yet exist.

Without structure and support, this creates pressure, inconsistency and often early exit.

- Once established, performance compounds.
- When relationships are built, performance shifts.
- Pipeline is no longer recreated from scratch. It is reinforced.

Repeat business and referrals create consistency.

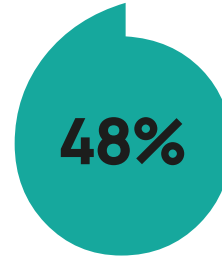
- Activity starts to produce predictable outcomes.
- Performance is no longer linear. It compounds.
- This is where performance moves from effort-driven to momentum-driven.

High performers are not more active. They are more deliberate.

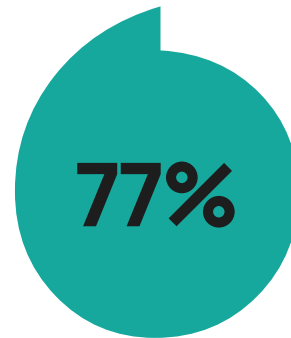
- They treat relationships as a strategy, not a by-product of activity.
- They invest in their database, networks and long-term connections, even when results are not immediate.
- This requires a different mindset: Value first. Results later.



REFERRALS-FIRST



RELATIONSHIP-FOCUSED



TAKES A RELATIONSHIP-LED APPROACH



**We're not failing to create performance.
We're judging it before it has time to exist.**



1

WOMEN **WORK** IN RELATIONSHIPS
(PROSPECTING STYLE)

2

WOMEN **WIN** THROUGH RELATIONSHIPS
(PIPELINE SOURCE)

3

WOMEN **ATTRIBUTE** SUCCESS TO BOTH
(DRIVE + RELATIONSHIPS)



Performance is not accidental. It is built through disciplined, relationship-driven activity that compounds over time.

WHAT DRIVES PERFORMANCE:

Not all performance looks the same.

Some agents operate through volume and speed. Others build through depth and long-term relationships.

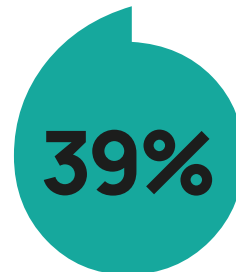
- The difference is not the issue.
- The issue is applying a single model to everyone.
- When performance style is ignored, effort is directed into the wrong activities, and results slow down.



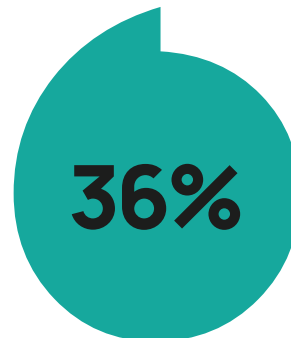
COACHING/TRAINING



LEADERSHIP SUPPORT



STRONG RELATIONSHIPS



PERSONAL DRIVE



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR BUSINESS OWNERS AND LEADERS

Prioritise relationship-building early

If business is relationship-driven, this activity cannot be left to chance.

Measure consistency, not just results

Early performance is not always visible in outcomes. Consistency matters.

Recognise different performance styles

Not all high performers succeed the same way. One model does not fit all.

Make structure visible and consistent

Clarity and accountability drive consistency. Without them, performance varies.

CONVERSATIONS THE INDUSTRY NEEDS TO HAVE

Are we measuring what drives results, or simply what is easiest to track?

If it takes up to two years to build a sustainable pipeline, are we set up to support someone through that period?

How do we know if our KPIs are accelerating performance, or slowing it down?

CONFIDENCE IDENTITY & GROWTH



CONFIDENCE IDENTITY AND GROWTH

Confidence doesn't start strong in this industry.

Most people walk in without it. Yet they stay. They keep showing up, doing the work, pushing through when results aren't there yet. We mistake ambition and drive for confidence.

Confidence is what gets built by doing hard things repeatedly.

The early stage is where this really plays out. Effort is high and results are inconsistent. For a period of time, it can feel like the work isn't working. That's where doubt creeps in. Not "is this the right career?" More "am I actually capable of doing this?"

At the same time, many are deciding whether to stay. Over a third considered leaving within the first two years. For many, it takes longer than that to feel in control and start to see consistency in the work pay off.

That means people are making decisions about their future before they've had enough time, support or traction to judge what they're actually capable of.

Confidence doesn't come from pressure. It comes from doing hard things, seeing progress, and starting to trust your own ability.

This is where leaders can potentially get it wrong.

- We expect confidence early.
- We apply pressure early.
- We judge performance early.

But confidence doesn't come from pressure. It comes from doing hard things, seeing progress, and starting to trust your own ability.

This is exactly where leadership, structure and support matter most.

They may not create confidence on their own, but they create the environment where people feel safe enough, supported enough and clear enough to keep doing the hard things that build it.



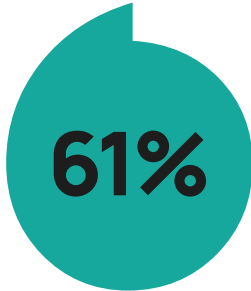
We don't build performance by hiring confident people. We build it by supporting driven people long enough for confidence to form.



WERE NOT CONFIDENT
STARTING

Confidence starts lower than people admit

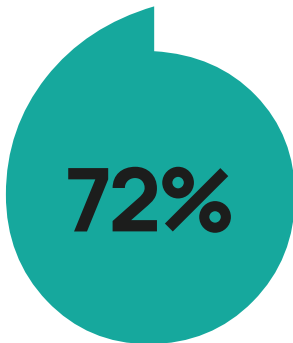
- Only 13% felt very confident starting.
- Most enter the industry without strong confidence, even if they appear confident on the surface.



ARE NOW VERY
CONFIDENT

Confidence becomes very high over time

- 61% were very confident.
- 93% feeling confident overall.
- Confidence is not fixed, it grows significantly over time.



EXPERIENCE
IMPOSTER SYNDROME

Confidence does NOT remove self-doubt

- 72% experience imposter syndrome (sometimes or regularly).
- Only 13% never experience it.
- Confidence and self-doubt coexist with high-performers still questioning themselves.



We don't build performance by hiring confident people. We build it by supporting driven people long enough for confidence to form.

CONVERSATIONS THE INDUSTRY NEEDS TO HAVE

Are we expecting confidence before performance has had time to develop?

Are we losing people before they've had enough time and support to build traction?

Are we creating an environment where people can do the hard things consistently to build confidence?



Growth is what happens between effort and results. It's the period where the work is being done, but the outcomes aren't visible yet. Most people leave in that gap.

WHAT'S NEEDED FOR SUCCESS



WHAT'S NEEDED FOR SUCCESS

The data is clear on what people need to succeed. It is not ambiguous, and it is not new.

Structure, leadership, training and support consistently appear as the factors that drive performance and retention. These are not differentiators. They are the baseline requirements for building capability and sustaining results.

Most businesses would say they provide these things. In many cases, they are in place.

But the experience reflected in the data suggests a disconnect.

More than a third of women considered leaving sales in their first 12-24 months.

“There was no clear structure or plan in the beginning - you just had to figure it out.”

“Having someone to show me what to do and hold me accountable made the biggest difference.”

“Once I had a strong leader and support around me, everything changed.”



If the environment doesn't consistently build capability, performance becomes accidental.

Burnout, loss of confidence and early exit are not individual weaknesses.

The gap between what's said and what's felt

Structure, leadership and training continue to appear as some of the most common gaps, particularly in the first 12 months. This indicates that while these elements may exist, they are not always experienced in a way that is consistent, visible or effective.

This is not a question of whether these elements are present. It is a question of how they are delivered, and whether they are landing in practice.

What emerges is a gap between intention and execution.

This data reflects the experiences of women, but the patterns identified relate to leadership and environment factors that influence performance regardless of who is in the role.

Burnout, loss of confidence and early exit are not individual weaknesses. They are indicators of an environment that is not consistently building capability.

At the same time, the factors that keep people in the industry are equally clear. Stability, progression, leadership and culture are not separate from performance. They are what enable it.

Key early challenges included lack of structure, training and guidance, financial pressure, and expectations around constant availability.

"I didn't have anyone guiding me. It was sink or swim."

"It wasn't the work - it was the lack of direction and support that made it hard."

"Training was inconsistent. You were expected to perform without really knowing how."





If success relies on resilience, what does that say about the environment people are working in?

What would have accelerated success:

- Clear plan and structure
- Strong leadership
- Regular skills training
- Mentorship
- Prospecting support

What drives performance now:

- Sales coaching and training
- Leadership clarity
- Admin and operational support
- Peer support

What risks retention:

- Burnout
- Loss of passion
- Financial instability
- Lack of support

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR BUSINESS OWNERS AND LEADERS

Structure, training and leadership are not differentiators - they are baseline requirements.

Inconsistent delivery of support creates inconsistent performance.

Early-stage success depends on clarity, not just capability.

Retention is directly linked to how support is experienced, not whether it exists.

CONVERSATIONS THE INDUSTRY NEEDS TO HAVE

Where is the gap between what we believe we provide as leaders and what our people actually experience?

Do our best performers succeed because the environment supports them, or because they are capable enough to push through it?

How many capable people are we losing early, not because they lack potential, but because the environment doesn't develop it?

What does "good" look like in the first 90 days - and how clearly is that defined?



When we say support exists, how do we know it is actually being felt?

What would change if onboarding, coaching and leadership were treated as core drivers of performance, not add-ons?

When someone doesn't succeed in the first 12 months, how often do we look at the environment before the individual?



Women do not need a special environment to succeed. They need an effective one.

SAFETY, BEHAVIOUR & CULTURE



SAFETY, BEHAVIOUR AND CULTURE

The data highlights a clear pattern between experience and response.

More than half of respondents have experienced gender bias, and over a third have experienced sexual harassment within the industry. The consistency and scale of responses suggest this is not isolated.

There is also a noticeable shift in how this behaviour is described.

Some respondents still report clear and overt forms of sexual harassment, including physical misconduct and explicit verbal behaviour. While these experiences appear less frequent in more recent years, they have not disappeared and remain part of the lived experience for some.

Alongside this, many responses suggest that the nature of behaviour has evolved.

In more recent times, it is often more subtle. Comments on appearance, being asked about relationship status, being asked out on dates, being approached in a professional setting, or being perceived differently based on presentation are recurring themes. These interactions may be positioned as harmless or well intentioned, but they still occur within a workplace context.

The behaviour has not disappeared. It has shifted in how it shows up.

The behaviour may not always be clearly inappropriate in isolation, but over time it shapes how individuals experience the workplace, how they are perceived, and how comfortable they feel.

There is also a broader context in which this sits.

Real estate is a performance-driven environment.

At the same time as navigating these experiences, individuals are expected to prospect, compete, convert and deliver results at a high level.

The behaviour has not disappeared. It has shifted in how it shows up.

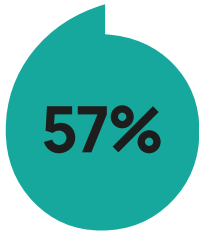
Some responses suggest that behaviour from clients, colleagues or competitors is managed as part of the role, rather than addressed directly. This can include inappropriate comments, uncomfortable interactions, or conduct that would not be acceptable and should not be acceptable in professional environments.

In some cases, this extends into competitive behaviour. There are indications that female agents may be treated differently in sales environments, including how they are approached, challenged, or undermined.

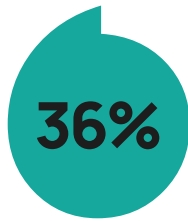
This creates an additional layer. It is not just about managing the role. It is about managing the environment in which that role is performed. At the same time, most incidents are not formally reported. Nearly two-thirds of those who experienced an issue chose not to report it.



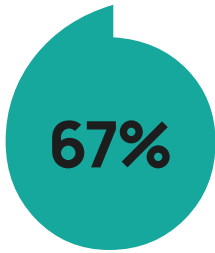
When behaviour becomes expected,
it becomes tolerated.



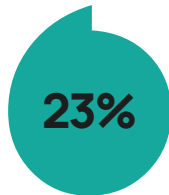
HAVE EXPERIENCED GENDER BIAS



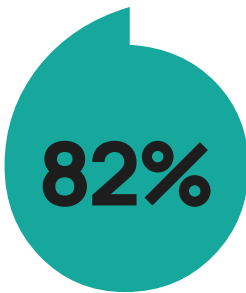
HAVE EXPERIENCED SEXUAL HARASSMENT



DID NOT REPORT THE INCIDENT



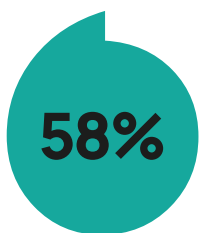
REPORTED THE INCIDENT



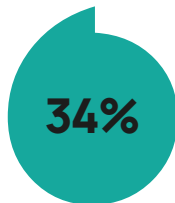
SAY THEY WOULD FEEL CONFIDENT REPORTING TODAY



SAY THEY WOULD NOT FEEL CONFIDENT REPORTING TODAY



FEEL "MOSTLY SAFE" DOING INSPECTIONS



FEEL "ALWAYS SAFE" DOING INSPECTIONS

"Comments on appearance... you just ignore it"

"You don't even think to report it - it's too common"

"I didn't report it - I didn't think anything would happen"

"It's casual. Comments on appearance or asking if I'm single - it's a workplace, not appropriate"

"It's just part of the job"

"I told my boss and was told to ignore it"

"There were inappropriate comments and physical behaviour. I didn't think I would be believed."



NATURE OF BEHAVIOUR	WHERE IT OCCURS	REPORTING BEHAVIOUR
<p>Experiences range from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inappropriate comments and advances • Ongoing harassment • Physical misconduct 	<p>Reported across:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership and business owners • Colleagues • Clients 	<p>Many incidents are not reported</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where reporting does occur: • Outcomes are inconsistent • Some respondents report no action or negative consequences

This creates a tension.

While a large majority of respondents say they would feel confident reporting inappropriate behaviour today, the data shows that in practice, most do not. This suggests the barrier is not awareness, but belief in what happens next.

Workplace safety reflects a similar pattern. The most common response when asked if women feel safe conducting open homes is “mostly safe”, rather than “always safe”. This indicates that while environments may feel safe in general, there are still situations where that safety is not guaranteed.

The data suggests a gap between policy and lived experience. This is not simply about whether processes exist. It is about whether they are trusted, consistently applied, and effective in practice.

If “mostly safe” is the benchmark - what does that say about the standard we’ve accepted?

Power dynamics also play a role. A number of responses indicate that the behaviour involves individuals in positions of authority or influence, which can affect whether it is challenged or reported.

Some responses suggest elements of this behaviour are being normalised, particularly where it is described as part of the job or not formally addressed.

Early career stages appear to carry additional risk. Lower confidence, greater reliance on leadership, and less certainty around what is acceptable behaviour can increase exposure and reduce the likelihood of speaking up.

This data reflects the experiences of women, but the patterns identified relate to leadership, culture and environment factors that influence how behaviour is addressed in any workplace.



When people choose silence over reporting, what does that say about the system, not the individual?



CONVERSATIONS THE INDUSTRY NEEDS TO HAVE

Where is the gap between the standards we believe we uphold and what people actually experience day to day?

Why does the responsibility to act so often sit with the person experiencing the behaviour, rather than the environment preventing it?

How do we ensure accountability when the behaviour involves high performers or leadership?

What behaviours have become normalised simply because they are not formally reported?

What experience are we creating in the early stages of a career, and who is responsible for protecting that standard?

If nothing changes, what kind of environment are we reinforcing over time?

If most incidents are not reported, what does that say about how safe the reporting process really feels?

What does “safe” look like in practice, and where are we accepting less than that as part of the job?



If nothing changes, what kind of industry are we actively choosing to build?

THE COST OF VISIBILITY



THE COST OF VISIBILITY

As the industry pushes agents to build personal brands through social media, particularly video, one factor is consistently overlooked - the experience of visibility is not the same for everyone.

There is a growing pattern across platforms, particularly Instagram reels, where female agents - especially those earlier in their careers - are receiving commentary that is not related to their work. Instead of engagement about the property or campaign, comments often focus on appearance, include unsolicited or inappropriate remarks, and in some cases cross into offensive or explicit territory.

It's important to acknowledge that negative commentary is not exclusive to women. Male agents also experience criticism - often directed at their professional decisions, marketing style, or perceived competence. This can include public critique of how they present, how they sell, or how they run their campaigns, and at times extends into trolling intended to undermine their professional reputation.

The distinction is not the presence of negativity, but the nature of it.

Where the experience diverges is that commentary directed at women is more likely to shift away from professional critique and toward personal or appearance-based remarks. This changes not just the tone of engagement, but the conditions in which visibility is experienced.

The distinction is not the presence of negativity, but the nature of it.

For agents being encouraged to build their personal brand as a pathway to growth, this matters. It influences who is willing to show up consistently, how individuals present themselves, and the confidence with which they engage publicly. In effect, it introduces an unspoken cost to participation that is not currently acknowledged in how we talk about performance.

This report did not capture data on this experience directly. However, the consistency of this observation raises a clear question:

Are we designing performance expectations without fully understanding the conditions people are operating in?

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR BUSINESS OWNERS AND LEADERS

If visibility is now part of the job, then leaders need to consider:

What are we asking people to step into?

Are the conditions the same for everyone?

What responsibility do we have to address the gaps?



We tell agents to build their personal brand.
We haven't stopped to ask whether the
experience of building that brand is the
same for everyone.

Looks really good, and I'm not talking
about the house 🙄

You're the real beauty home

I want this house can I have your number

"I did an 'about me' reel, 60
seconds of an introduction sharing
that I am a local resident, wife
and mum to two kids and a puppy
and that I love my job listing and
selling real estate and helping my
clients on their property journey..."

...I received two inappropriate
calls offering me \$2,000 to spend
the night."



“Sooooo what do you do for work beautiful”

U da real premium inclusions ❤️

Anywhere, anytime

U the real avenue

You da real estate

u the real long game only

↳ worth a shot bro

↳ im telling you bro she wants you bad.

Come sell my bedroom next

↳ Ikk bro the hints she’s giving me is insane

I’d inspect that

No bloke was listening to the market update

She’s only getting listings because of her looks

Can you show me privately 😊

Wow you look pretty

How much for dinner instead?

↳ u the real demand

↳ She knows it

I’d let her sell me an overpriced house 😊

LEADERSHIP, PERCEPTION & BIAS



LEADERSHIP, PERCEPTION AND BIAS

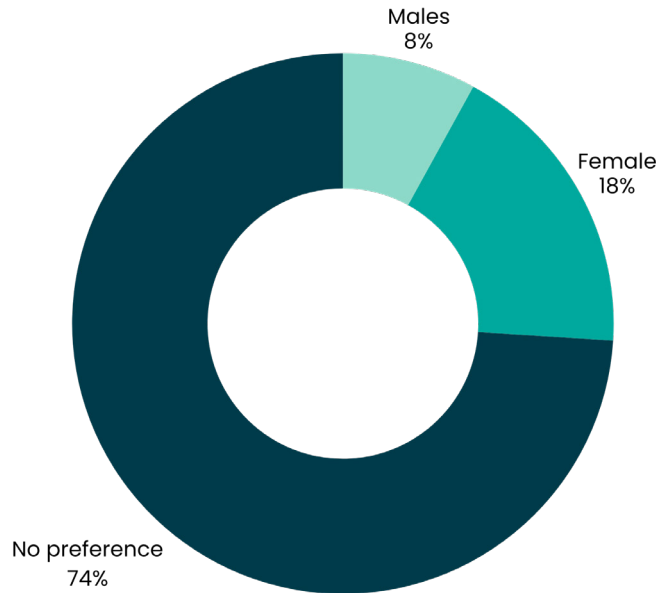
Leadership preference, perception and the language used to describe women in leadership.

While many respondents stated they have no preference when it comes to working for a male or female business owner, the commentary tells a more complex story.

There is a clear tension between what people say they believe and how behaviour is actually described.

Across the responses, there is a clear tension between what people say they believe and how behaviour is actually described. Leadership is often positioned as being about capability, integrity and communication, regardless of gender. Yet within the same set of responses, women are described as “too emotional”, “too personal”, or more difficult to work with, while similar behaviours in men are rarely called out in the same way.

LEADERSHIP GENDER PREFERENCE



What emerges is not necessarily a conscious bias, but a pattern in how behaviour is interpreted. The same traits, directness, competitiveness and assertiveness, appear to be received differently depending on who is displaying them. This is not about whether those traits are right or wrong. It is about the lens through which they are viewed.

These perspectives reflect lived experience and highlight that how behaviour is interpreted can matter as much as the behaviour itself.



If the behaviour is the same, why is the label different?



PREFERRED A
FEMALE LEADER

“Our boss takes the time to listen and understand us. She leads from the front with skill, style, grace, empathy and strength.”

“She doesn’t just guide people - she understands them, supports them, and inspires them.”



PREFERRED A
MALE LEADER

“Women can be too emotional and this reflects poorly in their behaviour and decision making”

“Females can be too personal and emotional in the workplace”

CONVERSATIONS THE INDUSTRY NEEDS TO HAVE

Are we assessing behaviour consistently across our teams, or interpreting it differently depending on who it comes from?

What language do we use to describe performance, and does it change depending on gender?

Are we giving the same feedback to men and women, or adjusting expectations based on perception?

Are business owners and leaders aware of how these patterns show up in their own teams?



If we want more women stepping into leadership, we need to look closely at how leadership is being interpreted in the first place.

STEPPING INTO LEADERSHIP & OWNERSHIP



STEPPING INTO LEADERSHIP AND OWNERSHIP

Interest in leadership and ownership isn't low, it's strong. A clear majority of women in this data want leadership, and more than half are interested in business ownership. Even among those who aren't there yet, many are still considering it. That makes one thing very clear; the issue isn't ambition.

What sits in the way is something else. Financial risks shows up first, followed by access to opportunity, then time, family responsibility, confidence and mentors. It's not one barrier, it's a stack that layers and it tends to show up at the exact point someone would need to step up.

Have we designed leadership and ownership as something people can realistically access?

We often talk about leadership and ownership as though they are the natural next step. Perform well, build momentum, and eventually you move into it. But this data challenges that idea. Because stepping into leadership or ownership isn't just about being capable enough, it's about whether that step is actually accessible when the moment comes - financially, practically and personally.

That's where the gap sits. Not in ambition, but in the space between wanting it and being able to act on it. The gap isn't about intent, it's about access. Interestingly, that space isn't neutral. It's shaped by how opportunities are offered, how visible they are, how much risk is carried, and how much support exists around it.

Confidence shows up in this data, but it's not where the story starts. Confidence isn't what gets people into leadership or ownership. It's what gets built once they're in it and starting to see it work. So when confidence is named as a barrier, it's often pointing to something underneath it - a lack of access, a lack of clarity, or a level of risk that feels too high without enough support.

So the question isn't why more women aren't stepping up. It's this: **Have we designed leadership and ownership as something people can realistically access? Or is it something they're expected to push their way into?**

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR BUSINESS OWNERS AND LEADERS

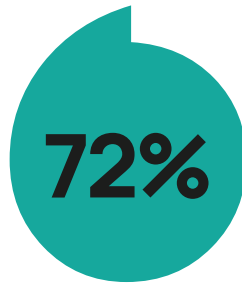
Progression into leadership and ownership needs to be visible and intentional.

Financial and structural barriers should be acknowledged and actively addressed.

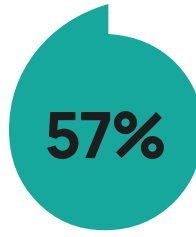
Access to opportunity should not rely on individuals pushing their way into it.

Leadership pathways should be designed, not left to chance.

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP ROLES:

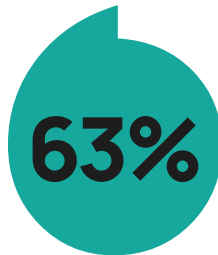


ARE INTERESTED IN LEADERSHIP ROLES

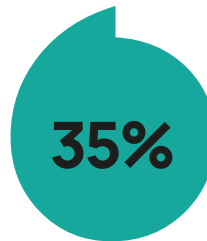


ARE INTERESTED IN BUSINESS OWNERSHIP

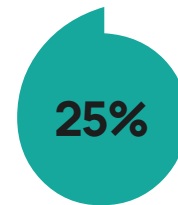
AMONG NON-OWNERS:



WANT LEADERSHIP

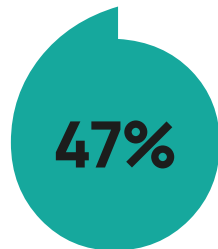


WANT OWNERSHIP

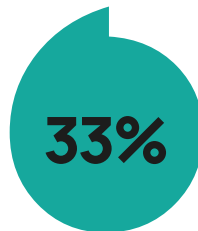


ARE CONSIDERING OWNERSHIP

THE BIGGEST BARRIERS TO OWNERSHIP:



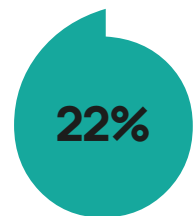
CAPITAL / FINANCIAL RISK



LACK OF OPPORTUNITY

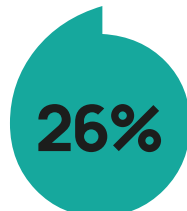


TIME & FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY



CONFIDENCE

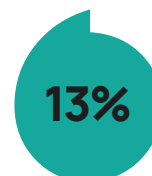
WHAT WOULD MAKE OWNERSHIP MORE LIKELY:



ACCESS TO CAPITAL



A CLEAR PATHWAY



PARTNERSHIPS



COACHING OR MENTORING



CONVERSATIONS THE INDUSTRY NEEDS TO HAVE

What would need to feel true to have more women feel comfortable taking the leap in to business ownership?

At what point does interest in leadership or ownership start to drop off, And what is happening at that point?

Who is most likely to step into leadership or ownership, and what conditions are true for them that may not be true for others?

Is progression into leadership and ownership something that happens by design, or by who is willing and able to take on the most risk?



We've treated leadership and ownership as something people step into, rather than something they need to be able to access.

THE FUTURE



THE FUTURE

There are more women entering the real estate industry than ever before. Women now make up close to half of the broader workforce, and in some areas, like property management, they are the majority. At the top end, female agents are already performing at a high level. However, the underrepresentation is still very clear.

Not because it's easy. Not because it's consistently rewarding. But because something starts to shift.

So the pipeline into the profession is changing.

But the pipeline into leadership and ownership is not shifting at the same pace. And that matters.

Because it means the industry is not just facing a recruitment challenge. It's facing a progression and retention challenge.

The question of whether women stay in real estate isn't simple.

Most don't make a clean decision to stay or leave. They sit somewhere in the middle, reassessing at different points whether the effort, pressure and inconsistency is worth it.

We've already seen that over a third considered leaving in the early stages, that is significant because it shows how fragile that period is. But what's more interesting is what happens after that, many stay.

Not because it's easy. Not because it's consistently rewarding. But because something starts to shift.

They begin to see traction. They build momentum. They start to believe that the work they've put in will pay off.

And that belief is important to understand because staying isn't just driven by outcomes. It's driven by whether people can see a future that feels worth continuing. However, belief isn't the only thing keeping people in.

"It finally started to take off."

"I was frustrated that I could feel it so close. I didn't want to walk away when I knew I could do it."



The future of the industry won't be defined by who enters it, but by who finds it sustainable enough to stay.

Key drivers for staying:

- Seeing progress and early traction
- Building momentum over time
- Financial responsibility and commitment

Key drivers for leaving or considering leaving:

- Inconsistent income
- High pressure without support
- Difficulty balancing work and life stage

For some, staying is also driven by pressure, responsibility and the need to make it work.

What keeps women in the industry isn't just success.

It's whether the career becomes sustainable.

Seeing progress, building consistency, feeling more in control, and having the right support around them all contribute to that.

What pushes them out is just as clear.

Inconsistent income, high pressure without enough support, difficulty balancing work with life stage, and environments that make the job harder than it needs to be all start to stack over time.

This is where the future risk sits. If the early and middle stages feel unstable, unsupported or unclear, even capable, driven women will begin to question whether it's worth staying.

Not because they can't do the job, but because the conditions around them make it harder to sustain.

Not because they can't do the job, but because the conditions around them make it harder to sustain.

"Sheer determination... I had a mortgage and two young children. Failure was not an option."



CONVERSATIONS THE INDUSTRY NEEDS TO HAVE

At what point in a career are we most at risk of losing good people - and why?

What actually happens at those moments that makes someone decide this career isn't worth continuing?

Are we designing environments that are sustainable long-term, or expecting people to push through indefinitely?

If retention doesn't improve, what does that mean for the future leadership pipeline of the industry?



Are we building a stronger entry pipeline, while quietly weakening the future leadership pipeline?

"You don't fail because you can't do it. You fail if you stop before it starts working."

"It's not about confidence at the start. It's about backing yourself before you have any real proof."

"I wish I focused earlier on building relationships, not just chasing results."

WHAT WOMEN WISH THEY KNEW

"It's not the work that's hard. It's the inconsistency that gets to you."

"I thought success would come from doing more. It actually came from doing the right things consistently."

"Consistency matters more than motivation. The days you don't feel like doing the work are usually the ones that matter most."



THE VOICES OF THE WOMEN WHO PARTICIPATED

These reflections capture what women wish they understood earlier and the realities of building a career in real estate that only become clear through experience.

“Don’t wait until you feel confident. You won’t. Just keep doing the work.”

“Focus on relationships early. That’s where your business will come from long-term.”

“I wish I understood how long it actually takes to build momentum. It’s not months, it’s years.”

“Find the right environment. Who you work around matters more than you realise.”

“When it starts to work, it really works - but you have to stay long enough to see it.”

“Give it time. It takes longer than you think, but when it works, it works.”

“Be consistent, even when it feels like nothing is happening. That’s the phase most people quit in.”

“Back yourself earlier. Most people leave before they’re actually close.”

FINAL REFLECTION



THIS WAS NEVER ABOUT WHETHER WOMEN CAN SUCCEED

That question has already been answered.

Women are building strong careers, driving performance, and contributing meaningfully to the industry.

What this report shows is something different.

It shows how that success is built, how long it takes, and what sits in the way.

It shows that performance is not just about activity, confidence is not a starting point, and progression into leadership or ownership is not as straightforward as we assume.

Across every section, one thing becomes clear.

This isn't just about individuals, It's about the environments they operate in.

- Women are entering the industry.
- They are building traction.
- They are proving capability.
- But not all are progressing at the same rate.
- And not all are staying long-term.

That's where the real question sits.

Not whether women are capable of succeeding.

But whether the conditions around them make that success sustainable - and whether the path forward is clear enough to take.

One thing becomes increasingly clear across all of this.

Progress doesn't happen in isolation.

It happens faster when there is access to people who can guide it, challenge it and support it in real time.

Mentorship plays a critical role here. Not as a support layer, but as a way to accelerate learning, build confidence through experience, and make the next step feel more visible and achievable.

Without it, progression is slower, less certain, and often left to the individual to figure out. Having access to a mentor that women can identify with has never been more important.

Because the future of the industry won't be defined by who enters it.

It will be defined by who stays, who progresses, and who steps into leadership and ownership.



The opportunity isn't just to bring more women into the industry. It's to ensure they can build a future in it.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



JACQUI BARNES

Jacqui Barnes is Head of People & Growth at Laing+Simmons, where she works closely with business owners and agents to build high-performing real estate businesses.

Her work focuses on recruitment, leadership development and performance strategy, giving her a clear view of what drives success, progression and retention across the industry. She is widely recognised for her work in developing people and performance within real estate businesses.

Jacqui is the creator of the Women in Real Estate Insights Survey, a national research initiative designed to capture the real experiences of women working in real estate. The findings from this report aim to provide practical, data-led insight into how the industry can better support performance, progression and long-term careers.

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