

CHART THE COURSE



Boat Buyer Insights

What Kiwi boat buyers are thinking, feeling and doing in 2026



MAPPING THE MODERN BUYER JOURNEY

This report maps the full course to a sale for Kiwi boat buyers. From initial mindset and brand consideration through to online research, first contact, sea trial, purchase and post-purchase experience.

Dealers and brokers that understand each stage are better placed to show up at the right moment.

Whatever your inventory mix, there is practical insight here to act on.

ROBUST DATA AND SCALE YOU CAN TRUST

The findings are drawn from a nationwide survey of 352 New Zealand boat buyers — 264 people actively in the market or considering a purchase, and 88 who bought a boat in the past 12 months. That makes this one of the largest boat consumer surveys conducted specifically for the New Zealand market.

Where a figure comes from the smaller group who dealt with a dealer or broker, the base is noted on the slide.

BUYER MINDSET

What buyers want before they ever contact you

BUYER MINDSET

BUYER RESEARCH

BUYER ENQUIRY

SEA TRIAL

PURCHASE & FULFILLMENT

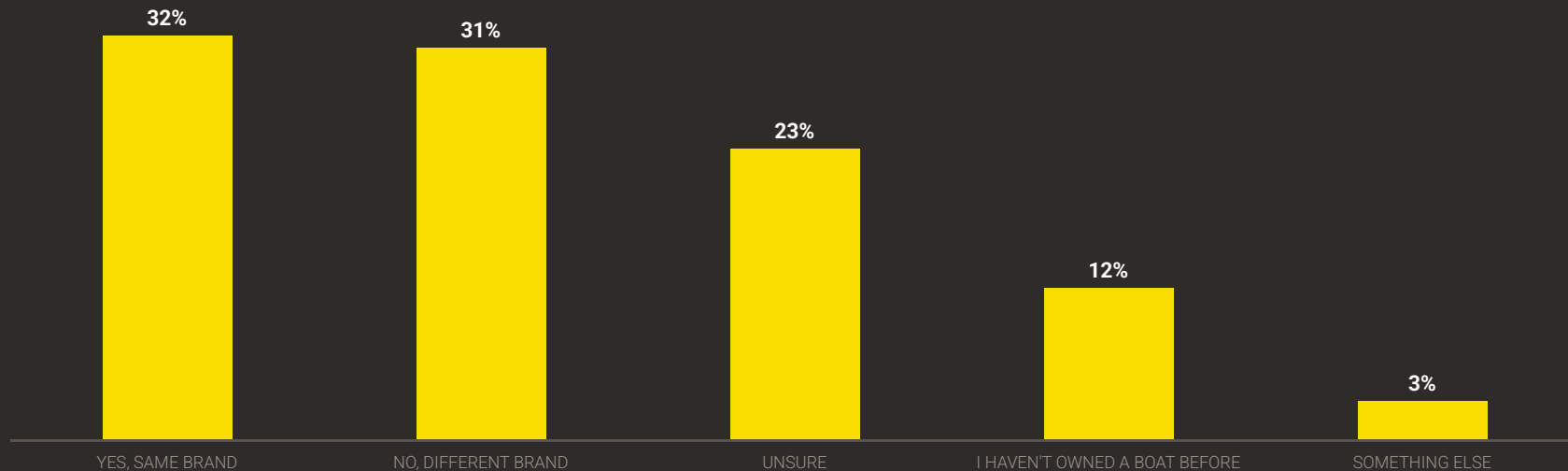
POST PURCHASE

68%

OF BUYERS AREN'T COMMITTED TO THEIR PREVIOUS BRAND

Brand loyalty is soft. Only 32% of buyers intend to return to the brand they own now, while 31% are actively looking to switch and 23% are unsure. The badge on the transom is not what anchors this market — condition, layout and value do. That makes conquest sales one of the strongest opportunities on your floor.

WOULD YOU PURCHASE THE SAME BRAND AS YOU HAVE PREVIOUSLY OWNED?



Base: 262 in-market buyers.

BRAND CONSIDERATION

STOCK BREADTH BEATS BRAND DEPTH

With 54% of buyers either switching or undecided, a narrow one-brand yard is working against the market. Carry a range that allows side by side comparison across hull types, layouts and price points. Variety reflects the exploratory nature of the modern buyer and reduces the need to keep looking elsewhere.

SELL THE HULL, NOT THE BADGE

For buyers who are not locked into a brand, the decision shifts to condition, layout, engine hours and value. Build confidence with proof: high-resolution photos, on-water and walk-around video, full service history, survey reports. Translate specs into benefits — sea-keeping, fuel burn, cockpit space, launching solo.

TARGET THE FIRST-TIME BUYER

12% of in-market buyers have never owned a boat. They have no brand allegiance and are highly receptive to guidance. Explain towing requirements, running costs, mooring options and safety gear. Capturing these new boaters builds relationships that last decades — and brings their wider networks with them.

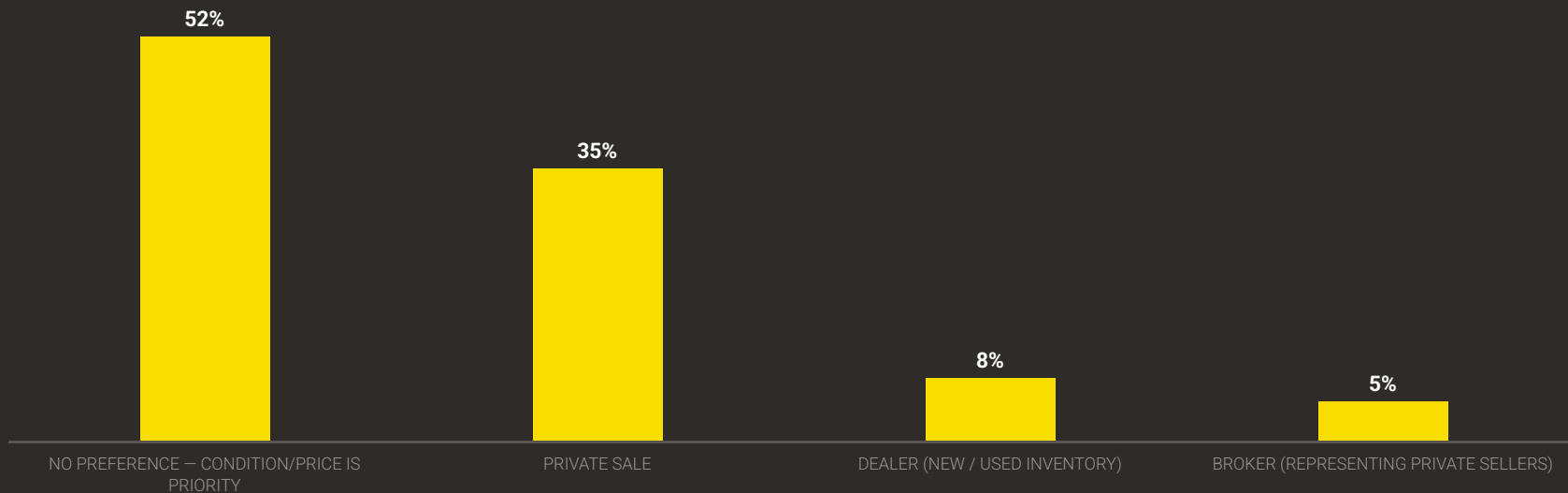
13%

OF BUYERS ACTIVELY PREFER BUYING FROM A DEALER OR BROKER

52% of buyers have no preference at all, price and condition are the main consideration. A further 35% would only consider a private sale, just 8% specify a dealer and 5% a broker.

The good news is that the 52% majority is genuinely winnable: they are not rejecting you, they simply have not been given a reason to choose you.

WHAT IS YOUR PREFERRED SELLER TYPE?



Base: 262 in-market buyers.

SELLER PREFERENCE

WIN THE 52% ON PROOF, NOT POSITIONING

Half the market is explicitly telling you their decision comes down to condition and price. That is a contest you can win, because you can document condition in a way most private sellers will not. Survey reports, itemised service records, engine hours, compression tests and haul-out photos turn a claim into a fact — and a fact is what closes this group.

CONVERT THE PRIVATE-SALE BUYER

35% would only buy privately, usually believing they will secure a better deal. Demonstrate what they are trading away: warranty, a compliant warranted trailer, guaranteed clear title, trade-in, finance, and someone to call in six months. Buyers volunteered fears about stolen boats, unclear title and sellers who disappear after the sale — those are your selling points, rather than theirs.

LOOK AFTER THE LOYAL 13%

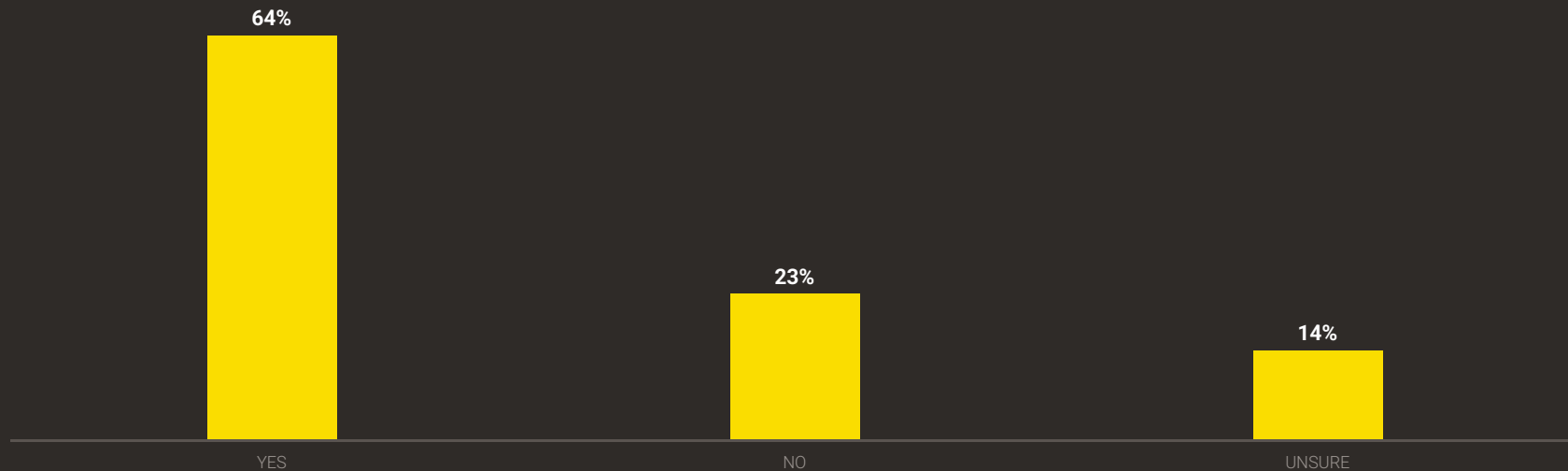
A small but valuable group only considers a dealer or broker. They value security, service and expertise, and they are disproportionately your repeat and referral business. Deliver an exceptional experience, stay visible in local boating and fishing clubs, and keep the relationship warm between purchases with servicing, winterisation and gear.

64%

OF BUYERS SAY THEY'D REQUIRE A SEA TRIAL BEFORE PURCHASING

Almost two thirds of in-market buyers say they would not buy without getting the boat on the water. A further 14% are unsure. Yet as section four shows, only around a quarter of recent buyers actually went for one. The sea trial is best understood as an option buyers want available — and a closing tool for the dealers prepared to offer it.

WOULD YOU REQUIRE A SEA TRIAL BEFORE PURCHASING A BOAT?



Base: 263 in-market buyers.

SEA TRIAL EXPECTATIONS

MAKE THE OFFER, EVEN IF THEY DON'T TAKE IT

Offering a sea trial signals confidence in your boat. One buyer's stated concern was simply the "lack of willingness to offer or provide opportunities to take for a test drive." Refusing or making it hard reads as something to hide. Put a clear, no obligation policy on your listings — most will not take it up, but all of them will notice it is there.

REDUCE THE FRICTION OF GETTING WET

A sea trial is logistically harder than a test ride: ramps, tides, crew, fuel and weather. Systemise it. Nominate a launch site, keep boats fuelled and batteries charged, book slots around tide windows, and be honest upfront about what is possible. A trial that takes three weeks to arrange loses to a private seller who can be on the water Saturday morning.

ADDRESS THE UNSURE 14%

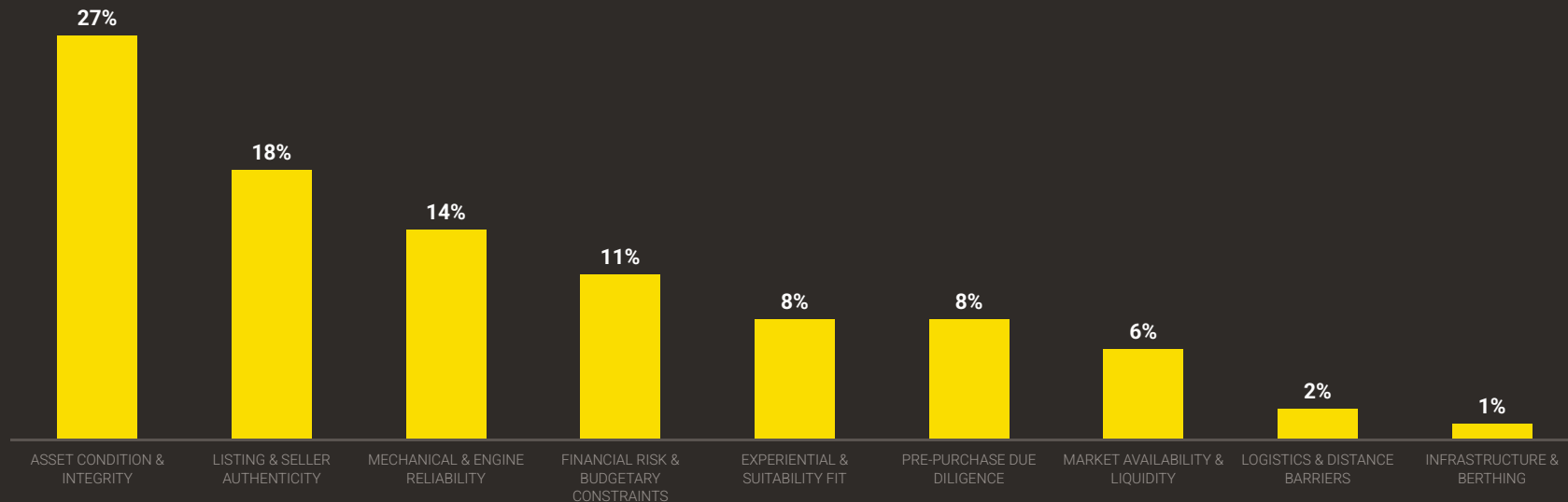
The buyers who are unsure are your swing group. Give them both routes at once: a standing offer of a no obligation trial, plus a digital pack strong enough that they do not need it. Cold-start video, engine hours, compression figures, a recent survey and haul-out photos will settle most of them before they ask.

59%

OF BUYER CONCERNS COME DOWN TO CONDITION, HONESTY AND MECHANICAL TRUST

When asked what worries them most about buying, buyers did not start with price — they started with trust. Asset condition (27%), listing and seller authenticity (18%) and mechanical reliability (14%) together account for almost six in ten concerns. Financial worry sits well behind at 11%. This market's biggest barrier is trust, and trust is the advantage a professional seller can build deliberately.

WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST CONCERN DURING THE BUYING PROCESS?



Base: 198 open-text responses from in-market buyers, themed. Condition, authenticity and mechanical reliability together account for 59%.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

HIDDEN PROBLEMS ARE THE NUMBER ONE FEAR

"Buying a lemon." "Hidden faults." "Buying someone else's problem." Buyers used these words unprompted, again and again. Address the fear directly: publish a third-party survey or detailed condition report on every eligible boat, and disclose the known faults yourself. Volunteering a flaw is one of the fastest ways to be believed on everything else.

THE ADVERT IS ON TRIAL TOO

18% of concerns are about the honesty of the listing and the seller behind it — scams, stolen boats, unclear title, "exaggerated condition explanations". Your listing is the first evidence a buyer has of your integrity. Photograph the flaws as well as the highlights, state hours and year plainly, and confirm clear title on both boat and trailer in the copy.

ENGINE ANXIETY DESERVES ITS OWN ANSWER

Mechanical reliability drives 14% of concerns, and outboards attract particular suspicion — buyers know they cannot see inside one. Pre-empt it with a documented service history, hours, a recent compression or diagnostic report, and a cold-start video. On an older motor, being upfront about remaining life beats letting the buyer imagine the worst.

BUYER RESEARCH

Where they look, and how long they look for



BUYER MINDSET

BUYER RESEARCH

BUYER ENQUIRY

SEA TRIAL

PURCHASE & FULFILLMENT

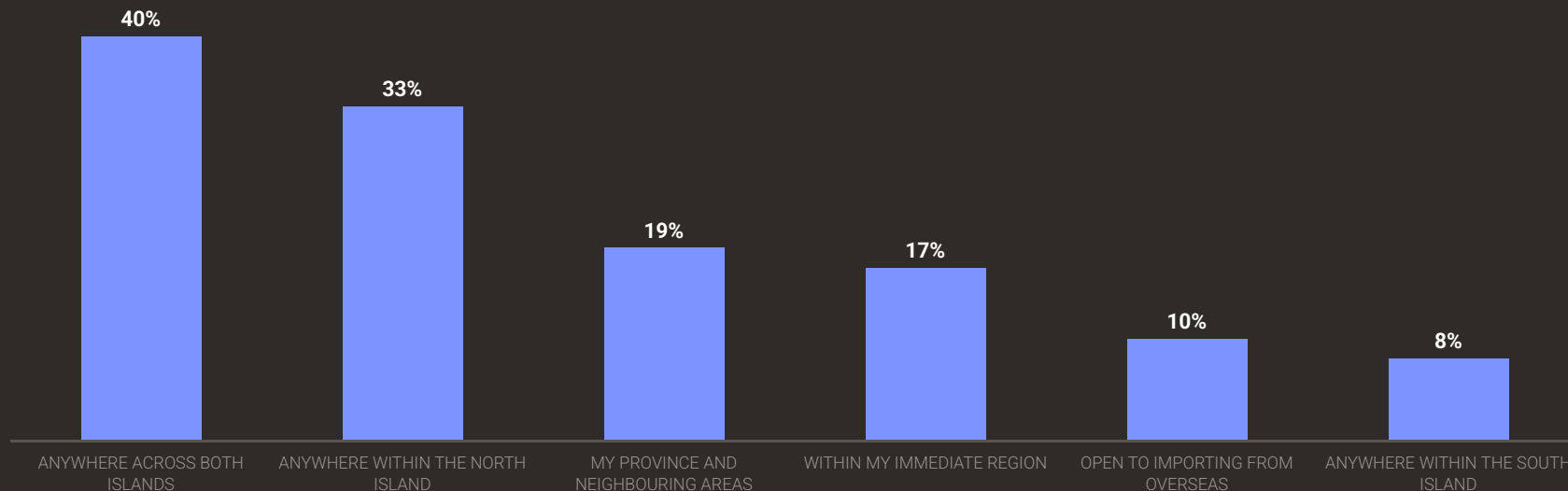
POST PURCHASE

40%

OF BUYERS ARE MONITORING LISTINGS ACROSS THE ENTIRE COUNTRY

Only 17% of buyers restrict their search to their immediate region, while 40% are watching listings across both islands, 33% across the North Island and 10% are open to importing. Your competition is not the local yard — it is every listing in New Zealand. For many of these buyers, your online showroom is the only showroom they will visit.

WHAT GEOGRAPHIC AREA ARE YOU MONITORING FOR LISTINGS?



Base: 264 in-market buyers. Respondents could select multiple answers, so totals exceed 100%.

BUYER SEARCH RADIUS

YOUR PRIMARY SHOWROOM IS DIGITAL

Most buyers who consider your boat will never stand on your hardstand. Every judgment is made from your listing. Invest accordingly: comprehensive photography including engine bay, bilge, transom and trailer; walk-around and on-water video; honest, specific copy. Fourteen photos of a boat planing, and none of the engine room, gives buyers reason to assume something is being hidden.

MAKE DISTANCE DISAPPEAR

For a national audience the two hurdles are trust and freight. Solve both explicitly. Offer transparent, fixed-price nationwide transport with an indicative cost by region, and name the carrier you use. "Can arrange delivery" is too vague to act on. Buyers told us the Cook Strait, fuel costs and ferry cancellations shaped their decisions.

DON'T NEGLECT YOUR HOME PATCH

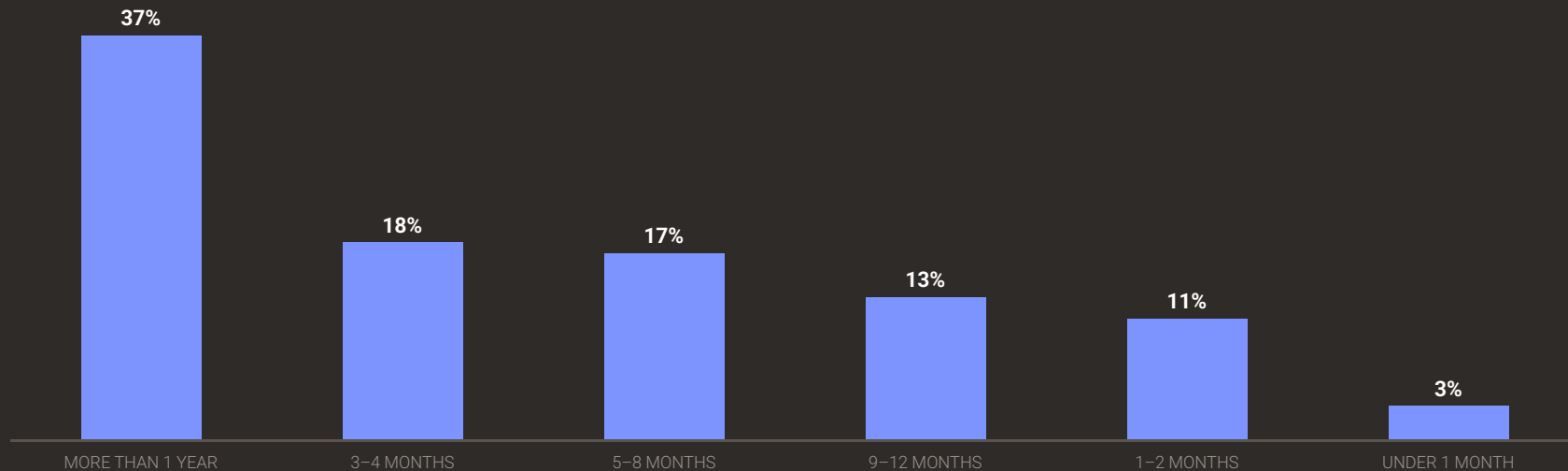
17% search only locally, and — as section five shows — far more end up buying close to home than intended. Own your region. Be the obvious name at the local ramp and club, and promote what only a local can offer: an inspection this week, a sea trial on familiar water, and after-sales service ten minutes away.

37%

OF BUYERS HAVE BEEN ACTIVELY SEARCHING FOR MORE THAN A YEAR

Boat buying is a longer game. 85% of in-market buyers have been searching for three months or more, and more than a third have been at it over a year. Only 3% have started in the last month. These are not idle browsers — they are informed, patient buyers waiting for the right boat. The dealer who stays visible and useful across that window wins the sale at the end of it.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN ACTIVELY SEARCHING FOR A BOAT?



Base: 262 in-market buyers.

RESEARCH DURATION

ASSUME EVERY ENQUIRY IS EXPERT

A buyer who contacts you has, on the balance of probability, been looking for the better part of a year. They know the going rate, the common faults of that model and what else is listed. Vague answers and “I’ll have to check” undermine credibility quickly. Arm your team with the full file on every boat — hours, history, survey, known issues — before it goes live.

LONG SEARCHES ARE A STOCK PROBLEM

When 85% of buyers have been looking a quarter or more, the market is not short of demand — it is short of the right boats. Use listing and search data to identify which hull sizes, layouts and price points have buyers but no supply, and source against that. Nothing shortens a 12-month search faster than being the person who finally has the boat.

NURTURE, DON'T CHASE

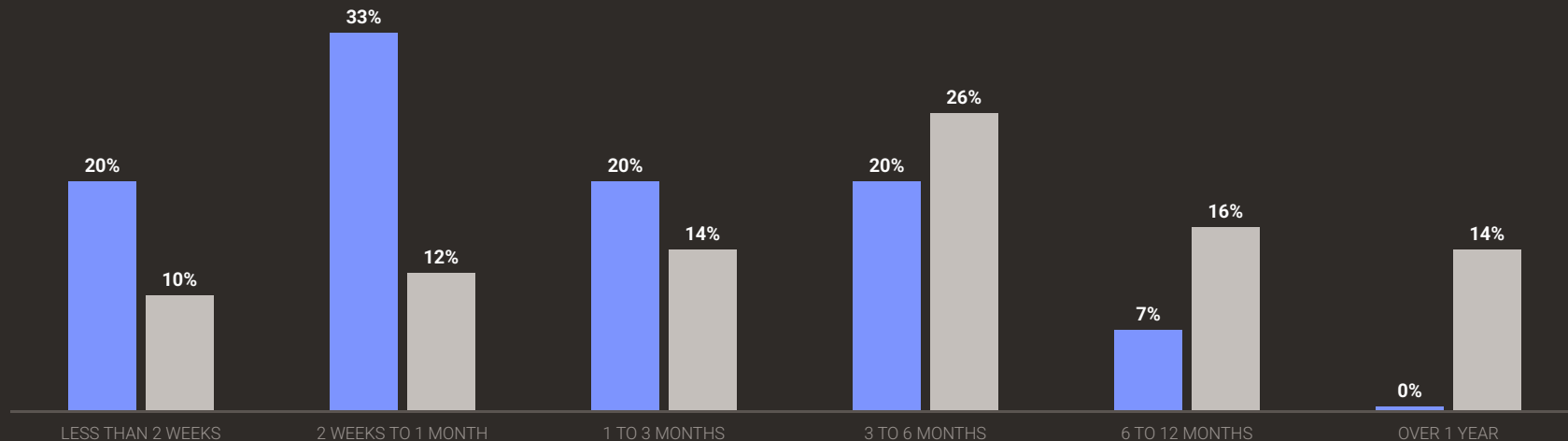
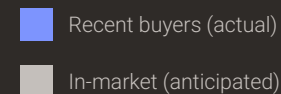
A 12-month buyer cannot be closed on a phone call, but they can be kept close. Offer to alert them when something matching lands, share market commentary, invite them to open days and club nights. Position yourself as a fellow boater rather than a salesperson. When they are finally ready, they are more likely to buy from the person they have been talking to all year.

53%

OF RECENT BUYERS MADE THEIR FIRST APPROACH WITHIN A MONTH

Here's the twist: while in-market buyers expect a long research phase, the ones who actually bought moved fast once they engaged. 53% of recent buyers made their first enquiry within a month of starting to look, and 20% within a fortnight. In-market buyers, by contrast, anticipate a much longer runway — only 22% expect to make contact inside a month. Intent and behaviour do not always align.

RESEARCH PHASE BEFORE FIRST ENQUIRY



Base: 15 recent buyers who contacted a dealer or broker; 111 in-market buyers. Small base — directional only.

RESEARCH TO ENQUIRY

BUYERS UNDERESTIMATE THEIR OWN SPEED

People plan a long, careful search and then move quickly when the right boat appears. That means a lead is rarely as early stage as it may sound. Treat every enquiry as if the buyer is ready to transact this week, because a meaningful share of them are.

SPEED TO LEAD IS THE WHOLE GAME

When a third of buyers make contact between two weeks and a month in, the window to respond first is narrow. Set a response standard measured in hours, not days, and make the first response the complete one — price, hours, history, survey status, freight options — rather than a holding reply.

BE FINDABLE DURING THE QUIET MONTHS

Most of this audience is researching long before they will ever contact you, and doing it silently. Your listings, reviews and content are working on buyers who have not identified themselves. Keep stock listed with complete information even when enquiries are slow — you are building the shortlist you will be called from.

BUYER ENQUIRY

The moment they finally make contact



BUYER MINDSET

BUYER RESEARCH

BUYER ENQUIRY

SEA TRIAL

PURCHASE & FULFILLMENT

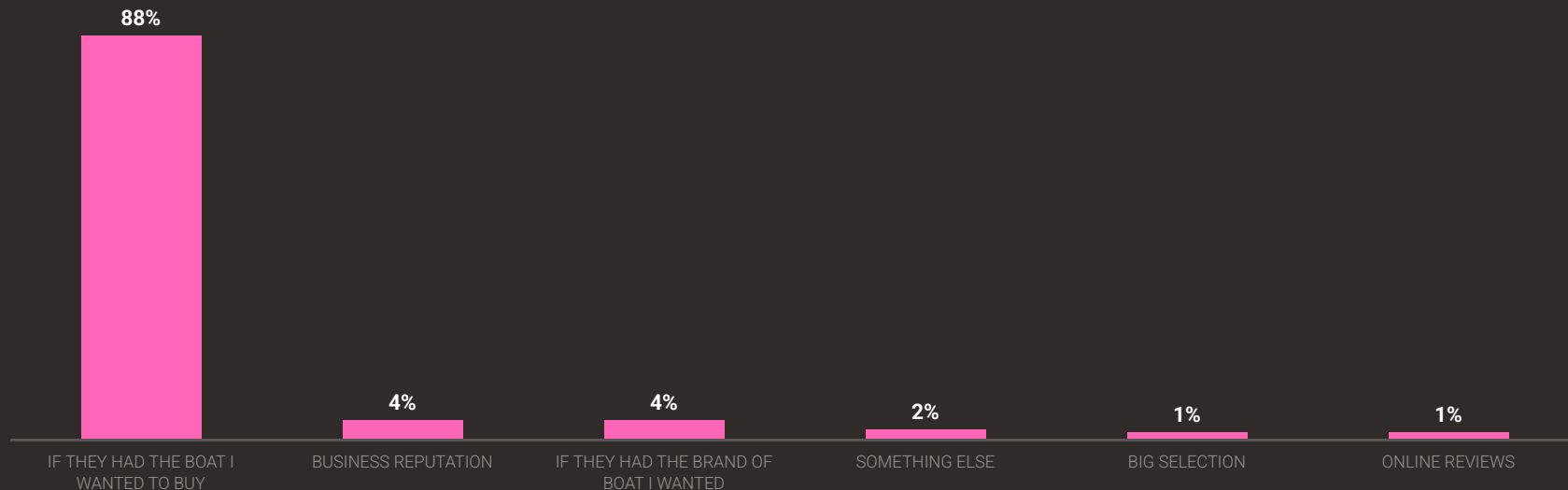
POST PURCHASE

88%

WOULD CONTACT A DEALER OR BROKER FOR ONE REASON: THEY HAVE THE BOAT

Nothing else comes close. Business reputation (4%), having the right brand (4%), a big selection (1%) and online reviews (1%) are rounding errors next to simply having the boat the buyer already wants. Inventory is the key that unlocks the conversation. Everything else in your business determines whether you convert it.

WHAT IS THE MAIN REASON YOU WOULD CONTACT A SPECIFIC DEALER OR BROKER?



Base: 170 in-market buyers.

REASONS FOR CONTACT

SOURCING IS YOUR MARKETING BUDGET

An overwhelming 88% of buyers are drawn to you for one reason: what is on your hardstand. That makes sourcing and trade-in acquisition your single most effective marketing activity. Use market data to understand which hull types, sizes and price bands are in demand and undersupplied, and buy against that — not against what is easy to get.

REPUTATION KEEPS THE LEAD

Reputation barely registers as a reason to make first contact, but it is decisive once contact is made. Your stock gets you the enquiry; your credibility converts it. Actively manage reviews, publish customer stories, and demonstrate genuine expertise in the boats you sell — hull design, engine packages, what a given model is and is not good at.

COMPLETE LISTINGS = VISIBLE STOCK

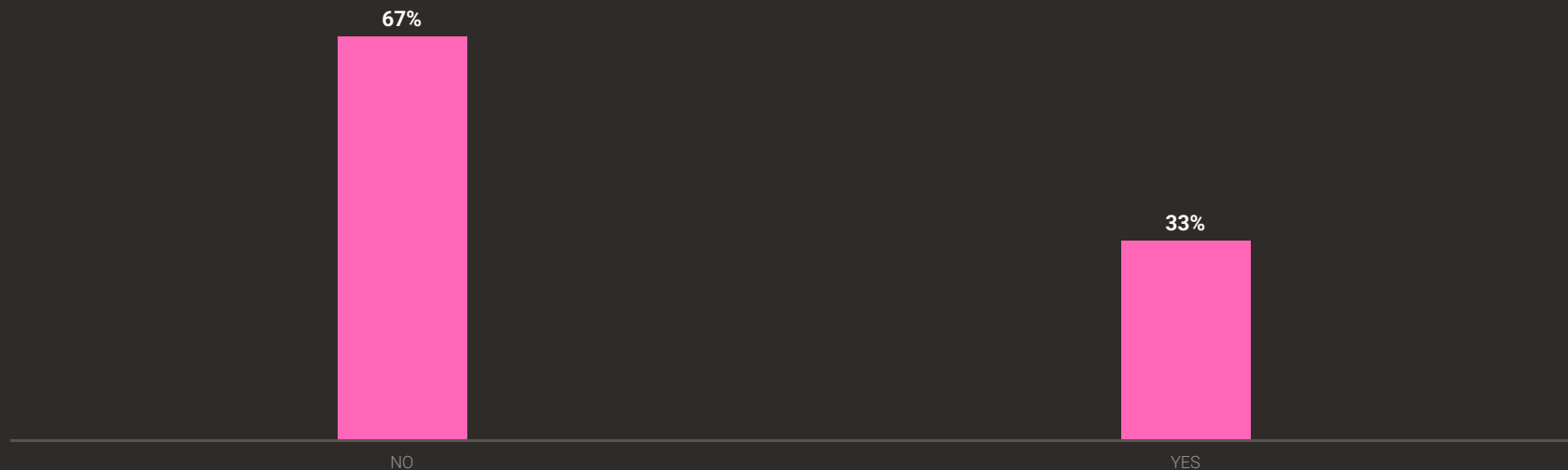
If buyers contact you because you have the boat, then being findable is everything. Incomplete listings hide your stock from the exact buyer looking for it. Specify year, engine make, model and hours, hull material, trailer status and survey history in full — the buyer searching on those terms is the one who was always going to call.

67%

OF IN-MARKET BUYERS HAVEN'T CONTACTED A SINGLE DEALER OR BROKER

Two thirds of the people actively in the market for a boat have not spoken to anyone in the trade. This is the largest untapped pool in the report. They are researching, watching listings and forming shortlists entirely in private — and the trade currently has no visibility of them and no relationship with them.

HAVE YOU CONTACTED ANY DEALERS SO FAR IN YOUR BUYING JOURNEY?



Base: 167 in-market buyers — 111 had not contacted a dealer or broker, 56 had.

THE SILENT MAJORITY

THE FUNNEL STARTS BEFORE THE CALL

Your enquiry volume represents only a fraction of your real audience. Two thirds of buyers are evaluating you without ever announcing themselves. Everything they can see without contacting you — listings, photos, video, reviews, your presence at clubs and shows — is doing the selling. Measure and invest in that layer, not just conversion on inbound leads.

GIVE THEM A LOW-STAKES WAY IN

Many buyers stay silent because contact can feel like commitment. Lower the bar with something useful and obligation-free: a buyer's guide to survey and pre-purchase checks, a "what to look for in a used outboard" explainer, a new-arrivals alert list, or an open day. Capture the contact, then earn the conversation.

BE THE OBVIOUS CHOICE WHEN THEY DO SPEAK

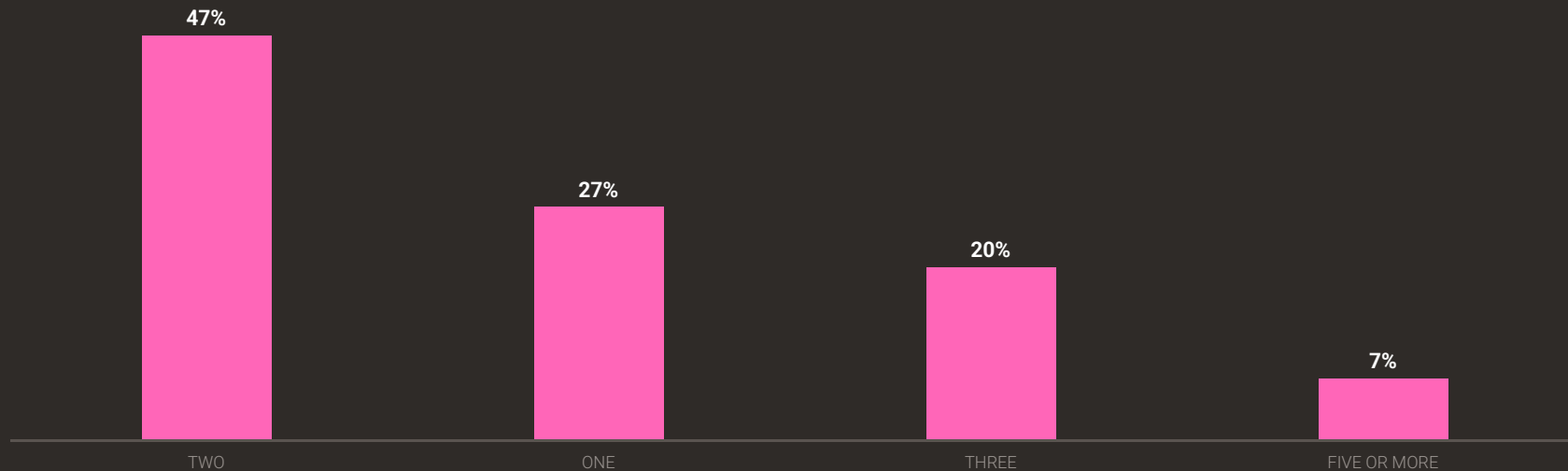
When a silent researcher finally makes contact, they have already decided you are worth talking to. That first exchange is the audition for a decision that may already be largely made. Respond fast, answer everything, and volunteer the information they were about to ask for.

74%

OF BUYERS CONTACTED JUST ONE OR TWO DEALERS BEFORE PURCHASING

For those who do engage the trade, the shortlist is very short. 27% contacted a single dealer and 47% contacted two. Encouragingly, every buyer we surveyed heard back from every dealer they approached — a genuine strength of this category — but with a shortlist that small, a slow or incomplete response can still be the difference between winning and losing the enquiry.

HOW MANY DEALERS DID YOU CONTACT BEFORE MAKING A PURCHASE?



Base: 15 recent buyers who contacted a dealer or broker. Small base — directional only.

DEALER CONTACT

TREAT EVERY LEAD AS A TWO-HORSE RACE

Nearly half of buyers are talking to exactly one other seller. Assume you are in a direct head-to-head and win it on substance and speed: be first to reply, and reply with everything — hours, service history, survey status, freight cost, trade-in indication. Better information, delivered faster, is how this contest is decided.

PROTECT THE 100% RESPONSE RATE

Every buyer surveyed heard back from every dealer they contacted. In other vehicle categories nearly one in five enquiries goes unanswered. That is a category-wide advantage worth defending — but responding is now the baseline expectation, not a differentiator. The advantage has moved to how fast and how completely you respond.

BUILD THE CASE BEFORE THEY CALL

The best way to be the only call they make is to have already answered everything. A listing carrying the survey, the service history, the engine hours, the freight cost and honest photos of the imperfections leaves nothing to shop around for. Buyers phone a second dealer because the first one left a question open.

SEA TRIAL

What buyers say they need, and what they actually do

BUYER MINDSET

BUYER RESEARCH

BUYER ENQUIRY

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PURCHASE & FULFILLMENT

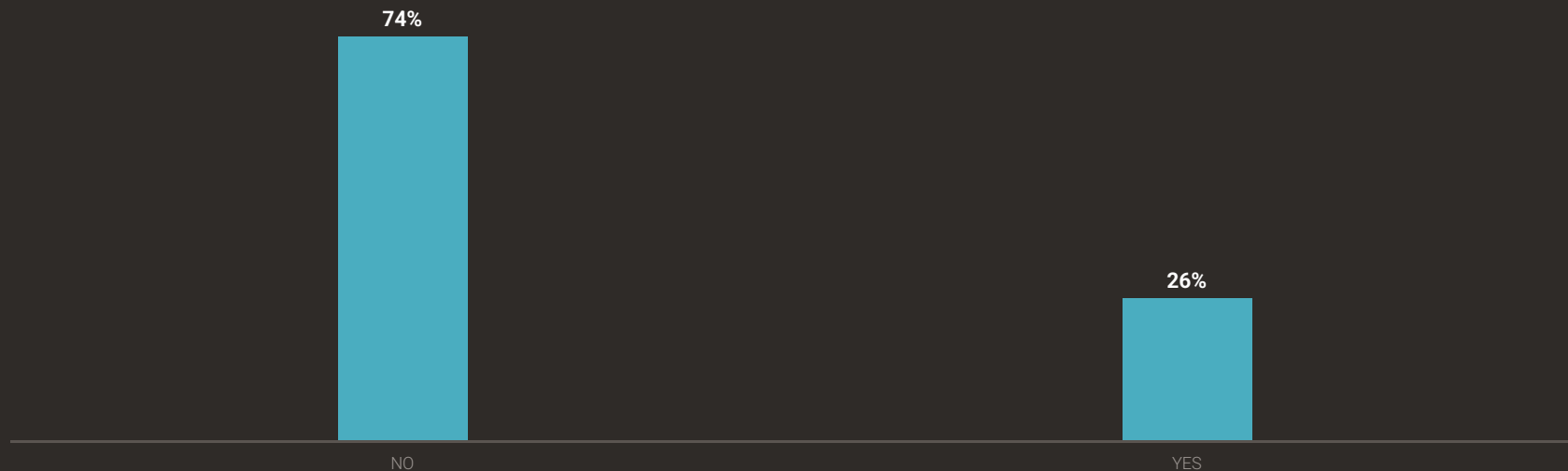
POST PURCHASE

26%

OF BUYERS SEA TRIALLED BEFORE PURCHASE

The intention gap is stark. 64% of in-market buyers say they'd require a sea trial. Just 26% of people who actually bought a boat went on one. Three quarters committed to a significant purchase on the strength of an inspection, a conversation and a set of documents. Whatever the buyer says at the start, the sale is usually won on paper and on the hardstand — not on the water.

DID YOU UNDERTAKE A SEA TRIAL BEFORE PURCHASING YOUR BOAT?



Base: 87 recent buyers. Intent figure (64%) from 263 in-market buyers.

THE INTENTION GAP

YOUR PAPERWORK IS DOING THE SEA TRIAL'S JOB

If three quarters of buyers never get the boat wet before committing, then the service file, survey report and condition disclosure are carrying the entire burden of proof. Build a trust folder for every boat — service records, engine hours, haul-out and antifoul dates, survey, receipts for upgrades — and hand it over on first contact rather than on request.

PRESENTATION IS THE PROOF THEY DO GET

When there is no trial, the physical inspection carries the weight of proof. The boat must be immaculate: hull polished, bilge dry and clean, upholstery sound, electronics powered up, engine ready to start from cold in front of them. A dry bilge and a first-turn start say more about maintenance than any claim you can make.

DON'T WITHDRAW THE OFFER

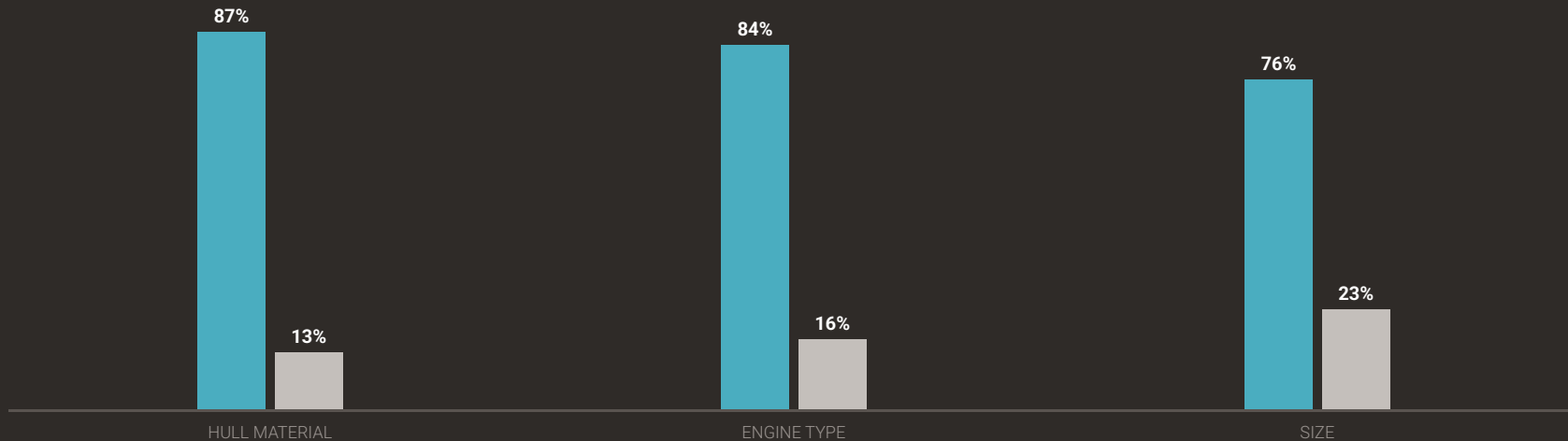
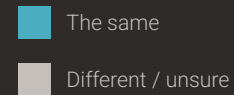
The low take-up rate is not a reason to stop offering. Buyers say they want a trial because they want to know they could. Keeping the offer live requires limited additional effort and removes a stated objection from two thirds of the market — and for the quarter who take it up, the trial is where the sale gets signed.

87%

OF BUYERS BOUGHT EXACTLY THE HULL MATERIAL THEY SET OUT TO FIND

Boat buyers arrive with clear requirements. 87% purchased the same hull material they'd been considering, 84% the same engine configuration and 76% the same size. The specification is often settled long before they contact anyone – which means your job at enquiry is not to redirect them, it is to confirm that this particular boat is the right example of what they have already chosen.

WAS THE BOAT YOU BOUGHT DIFFERENT TO WHAT YOU WERE CONSIDERING?



Base: 82–87 recent buyers. On size, 14% ended up smaller, 7% bigger and 2% were unsure. Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

THE SPEC IS ALREADY SET

VALIDATE, DON'T REDIRECT

A buyer who has spent months deciding on a 6m alloy hull with a single outboard is unlikely to welcome being steered toward a GRP sterndrive. Steering them off their spec reads as a dealer selling what is in stock rather than solving their problem. Confirm the choice, then compete on which specific example of it they buy.

NO MATCH TODAY ISN'T A LOST CUSTOMER

Because the spec rarely moves, a mismatch today is not a lost customer, it is a customer waiting. Record exactly what they want — length, hull, engine, purpose, budget — and call them the day it arrives. This is one of the highest-yield lists in the business, and many yards do not keep one.

SIZE IS THE ONE THING THAT MOVES

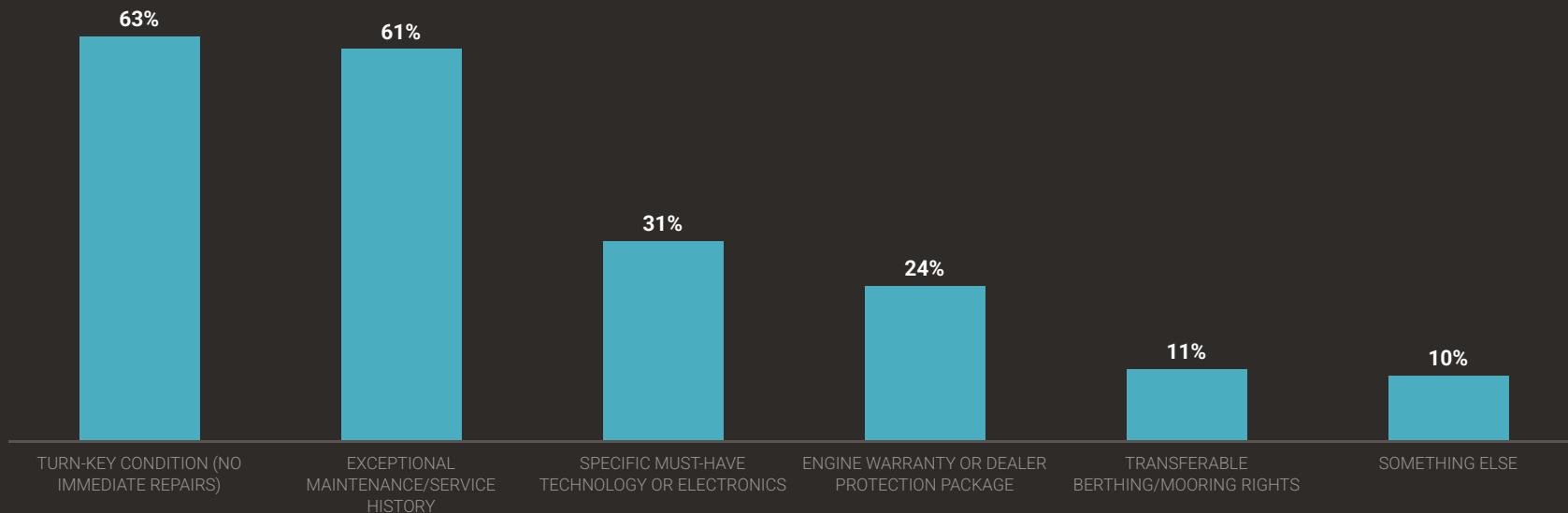
Size is where buyers flex: 14% ended up smaller than planned and 7% bigger. Smaller usually wins because of budget, towing, storage and single-handed launching. If a buyer is stretching for length, make sure the conversation covers tow vehicle, ramp, berth and running costs — the honest version builds enormous trust, even when it costs you a metre.

63%

OF BUYERS WOULD BREAK THEIR BUDGET FOR A BOAT THAT NEEDS NO IMMEDIATE WORK

Turn-key condition (63%) and an exceptional maintenance history (61%) are far and away the strongest reasons a buyer will spend beyond what they planned. Electronics (31%), warranty (24%) and berthing rights (11%) trail well behind. Buyers are not paying for features — they are paying to avoid a problem. That's a premium you can build deliberately.

WHAT FACTORS WOULD JUSTIFY SPENDING MORE THAN YOUR BUDGET?



Base: 258 in-market buyers. Respondents could select multiple answers, so totals exceed 100%.

JUSTIFYING MORE

SELL THE PEACE OF MIND PREMIUM

The top two budget-breakers are both about confidence, not capability. That means reconditioning is not a cost of sale — it is the product. Bring every eligible boat to genuine turn-key standard, then prove it: itemise the work, date it, price it, and present it as the reason this boat costs more than the neglected one three listings down.

A SERVICE FILE IS WORTH REAL MONEY

61% will exceed their budget for a documented history. That makes paperwork a revenue lever. Chase records from trade-in sellers before you take the boat, reconstruct what you can, and never let a well-maintained boat be listed as though it is not. An undocumented good boat is priced as an unknown boat.

ELECTRONICS ARE A TIEBREAKER, NOT A DRIVER

Nearly a third will pay more for the right sounder, plotter or autopilot — but only once condition and history are satisfied. Fit and promote electronics as the finishing argument between two sound boats, not as a substitute for mechanical confidence.

PURCHASE & FULFILLMENT

What buyers actually did when the money moved

BUYER MINDSET

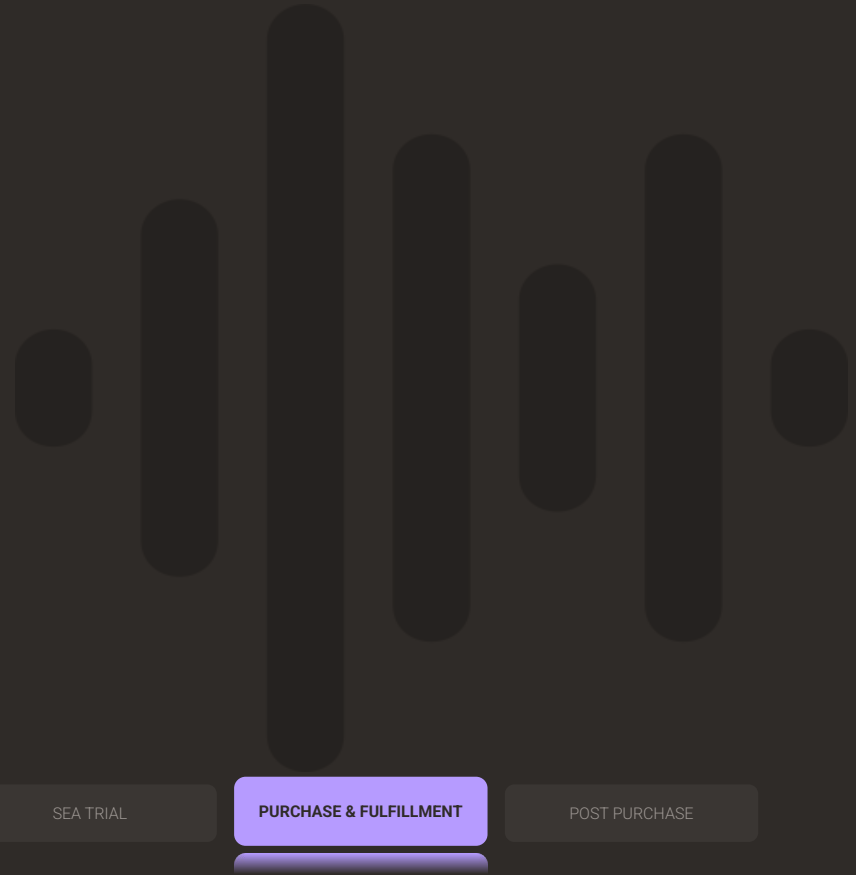
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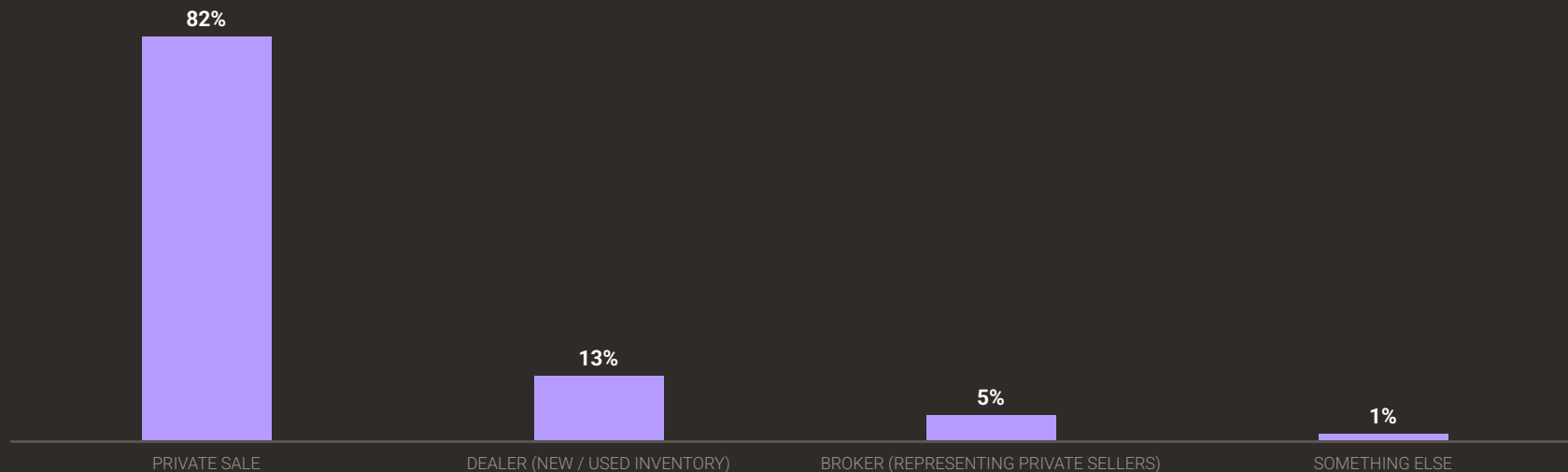


82%

OF RECENT BUYERS PURCHASED PRIVATELY

Only 13% bought from a dealer and 5% from a broker. In this category the private seller is not a fringe alternative — they are the market leader. Every argument you make has to be an argument against a private sale, not just against the yard across town.

WHAT SELLER TYPE DID YOU PURCHASE YOUR BOAT FROM?



Base: 88 recent buyers. Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

COMPETING WITH PRIVATE

COMPETE ON WHAT A PRIVATE SELLER CAN'T DO

A private seller may be able to match your price. They cannot match a warranty, a compliant warranted trailer, guaranteed clear title, a trade-in on the buyer's current boat, finance, or a workshop to call in six months. Lead with those, and price the gap honestly rather than pretending it does not exist.

MAKE THE PRIVATE-SALE RISK VISIBLE

Buyers volunteered exactly what scares them about private purchases: stolen boats, unclear title on the boat or trailer, sellers who disappear after the sale after the sale, and adverts that overstate condition. You do not need to disparage private sellers — simply document what you provide as standard, and the contrast becomes clear.

MINE THE PRIVATE MARKET FOR STOCK

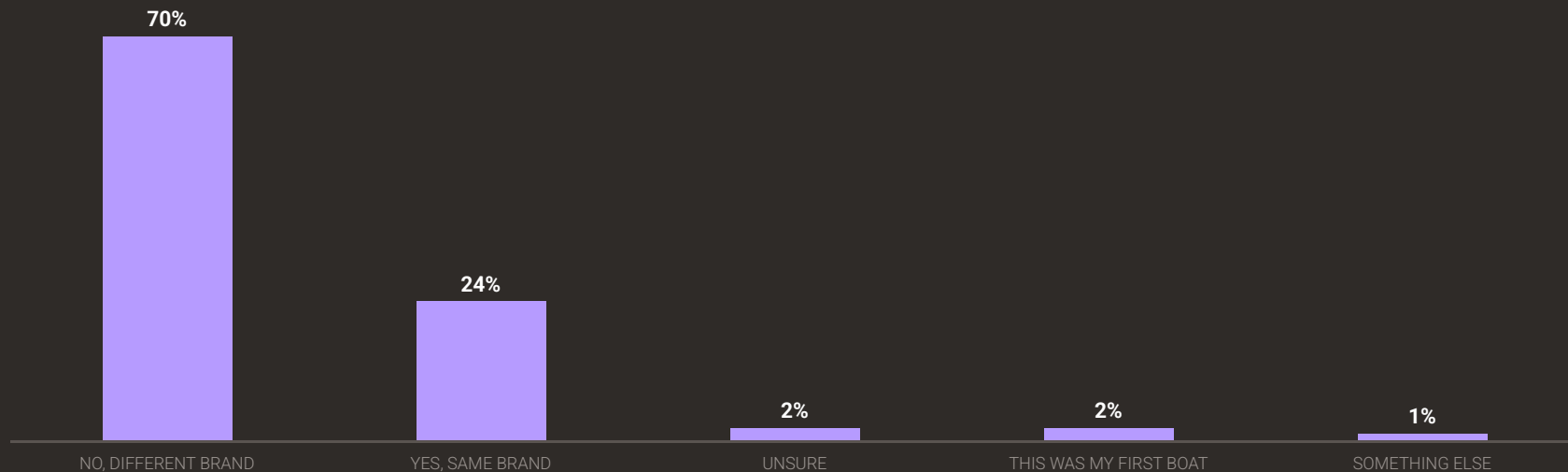
82% of transactions happening privately also means the best used boats are changing hands outside your yard. Be proactive about acquisition: competitive trade-ins, consignment options, and a standing offer on the models you know you can sell. Every private sale you intercept is inventory you could not otherwise buy.

70%

OF BUYERS PURCHASED A DIFFERENT BRAND FROM THEIR LAST BOAT

Stated intention understated the reality: 32% of in-market buyers expected to stay with their brand, but only 24% of recent buyers actually did. Seven in ten ultimately switched. Whatever loyalty exists in this market evaporates at the point of purchase, because buyers are choosing a specific boat, not a badge.

DID YOU GET THE SAME BRAND AS YOUR PREVIOUS BOAT?



Base: 87 recent buyers.

BRAND SWITCHING

THIS IS A CONQUEST MARKET

With 70% switching, every buyer who walks in — including one with a trade-in of a rival brand — is genuinely available. Stock breadth, honest comparison and expert guidance beat brand exclusivity. Position yourself as the expert on the wider market rather than the advocate for one manufacturer.

ASK WHY THEY'RE LEAVING

A brand switcher is dissatisfied with something specific: ride, layout, fuel burn, dealer support, resale. Train your team to ask “what worked about your last boat, and what didn't?” The answer hands you the exact specification to sell them and turns their frustration with a competitor into your sale.

A WARNING FOR FRANCHISE YARDS

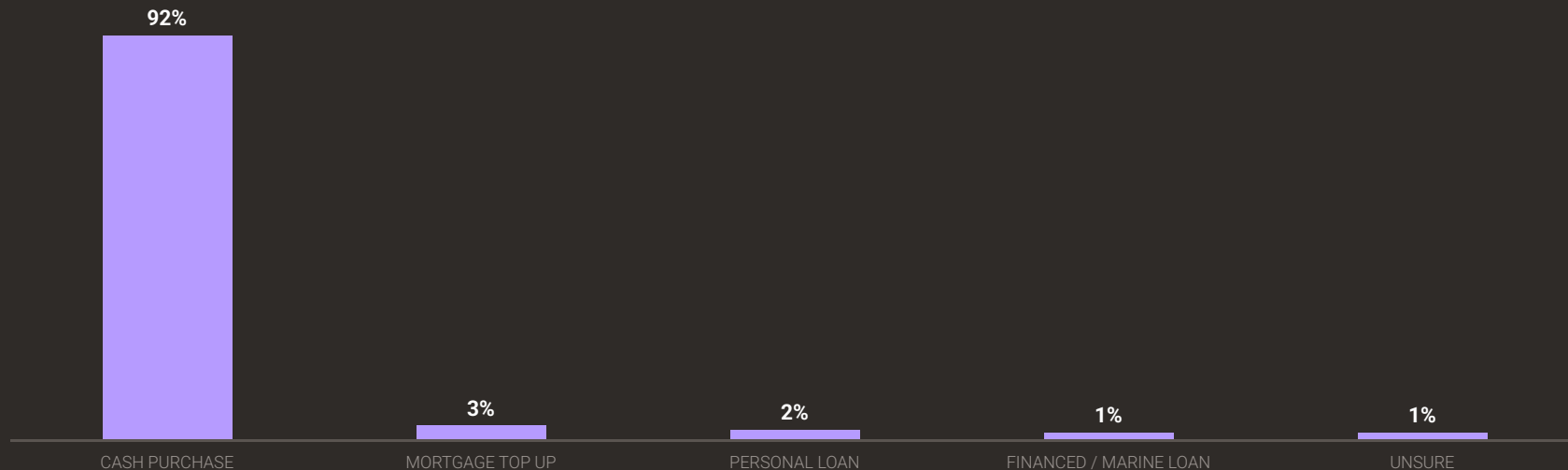
If seven in ten buyers change brand at replacement, then a single-marque business is losing most of its own customers at every cycle. Broadening used stock across brands is not disloyalty to your franchise — it is the only way to keep your customers inside your business when they inevitably want something else.

92%

OF RECENT BUYERS PAID CASH

Boat buying in New Zealand is overwhelmingly a cash transaction. Only 1% used a marine loan, 3% a mortgage top-up and 2% a personal loan. In-market buyers say much the same — 81% expect to pay cash. Finance is not the primary lever that unlocks this market, and a finance-led sales process is solving a problem most buyers do not have.

HOW DID YOU PURCHASE YOUR BOAT?



Base: 88 recent buyers. In-market buyers: 81% cash, 9% unsure, 5% mortgage top-up.

HOW THE MONEY MOVES

DON'T BUILD THE SALE AROUND FINANCE

A cash buyer is not asking about weekly repayments — they are asking whether this boat is worth their savings. Reframe the conversation from affordability to value and confidence: condition, history, running costs, resale. The finance conversation can be offered, but it should not lead the sale.

CASH BUYERS ARE DECISIVE AND UNFORGIVING

With no approval process, a cash buyer can commit the same day — and walk away just as fast. One buyer noted the freedom of it: “with a cash sale, if there was anything that stuck as not what it should be, I could walk away.” Remove every reason to walk before they find one.

THE 9% WHO ARE UNSURE ARE AN OPENING

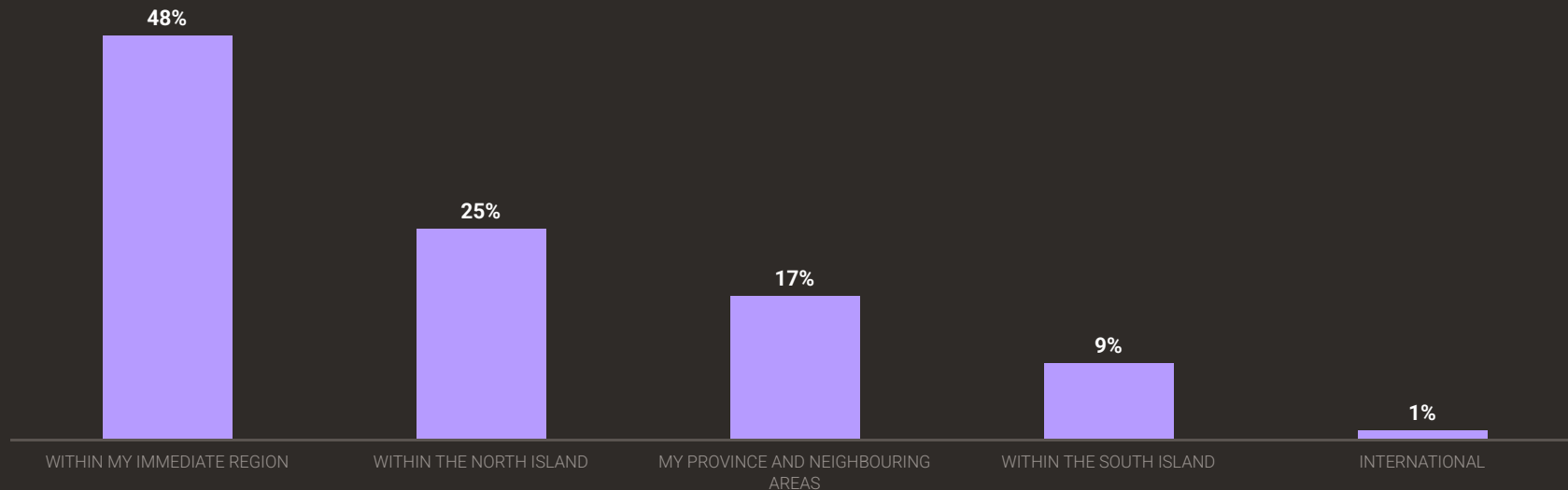
Around one in ten in-market buyers has not worked out how they will pay. That is the group where a clearly explained marine finance option genuinely adds value, particularly for buyers stretching into a larger or newer boat. Offer it selectively rather than universally.

65%

OF BUYERS PURCHASED WITHIN THEIR OWN REGION OR PROVINCE

Buyers search nationally and buy locally. Only 30% of recent buyers were monitoring listings in their immediate region, yet 48% bought there — and 65% bought within their region or neighbouring province. Distance is a barrier buyers will overcome only when the boat is worth it. Your national listing wins attention; your local presence helps close the majority of deals.

WHERE WAS THE BOAT YOU PURCHASED LOCATED?



Base: 88 recent buyers. Immediate region plus province and neighbouring areas together account for 65%.

PURCHASE RADIUS

DOMINATE YOUR HOME PATCH

Nearly half of all purchases happen in the buyer's own region. Be the obvious local choice: visible at the ramp, the club and the fishing comp, with the advantages only proximity delivers — an inspection this week, a trial on home water, and servicing down the road.

INTERCEPT THE BUYER LOOKING 500KM AWAY

A buyer watching a boat in another island will almost always check what is available closer to home before committing. If your listing is complete, competitively priced and easy to find, you will catch them. If your listing is three photos and a phone number, you will not — and they will continue with the distant option.

MAKE REMOTE BUYING EASY FOR THE 35%

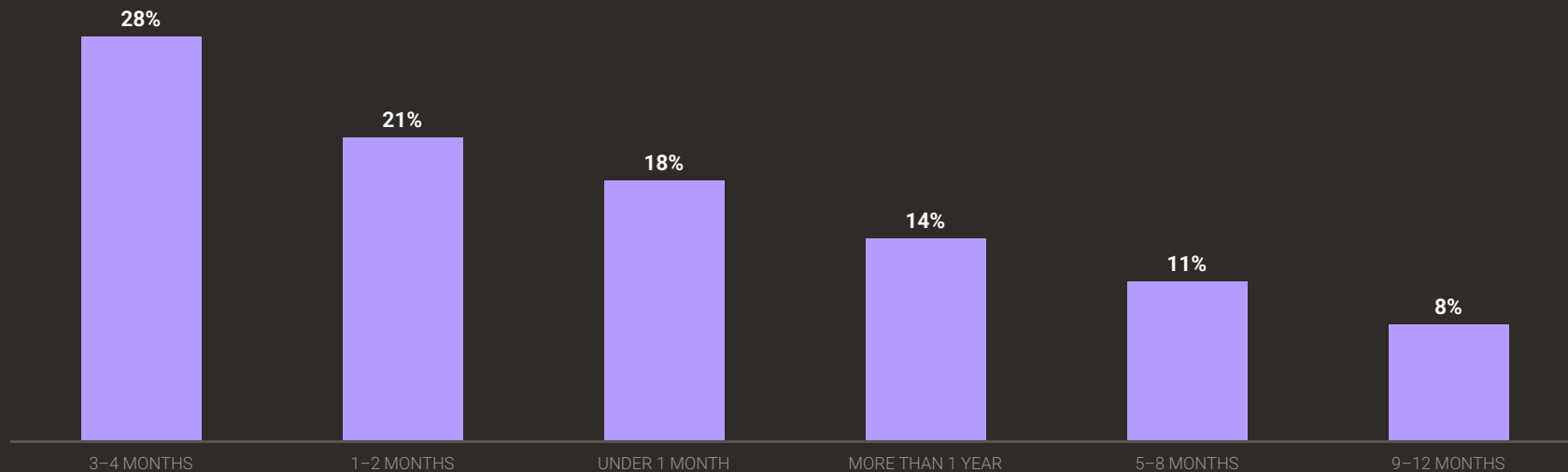
A third of buyers still purchase outside their province, and they are highly motivated — they could not find the boat at home. Win them by removing friction: fixed-price freight quotes, a nominated carrier, a survey they can commission remotely, video walkthroughs on request, and a clear process for payment and handover.

39%

OF BUYERS PURCHASED WITHIN TWO MONTHS OF STARTING TO LOOK

Set against 37% of in-market buyers who have been searching over a year, this is the market's central tension: a large group moves very quickly, and a large group takes much longer. 18% bought within a month and 21% within two, while 14% took more than a year. There is no single sales cadence that serves both — you need two.

HOW LONG DID YOU LOOK BEFORE PURCHASING A BOAT?



Base: 87 recent buyers. Under 1 month plus 1-2 months together account for 39%.

SPEED OF DECISION

WIN THE SPRINT

Nearly two in five buyers complete the whole journey in eight weeks. They value availability and responsiveness above everything. Listings must be complete from the moment they go live, and enquiries answered within hours. This group does not wait — they buy the first sound boat that answers all their questions.

RUN THE MARATHON TOO

The single largest group takes three to four months, and one in seven takes over a year. Do not write these leads off. Log what they are looking for, keep in touch without pressure, and be the person who calls when it arrives. Patience is a valid strategy here, not a failure to close.

MATCH FOLLOW-UP TO THE BUYER

A standard 14-day follow-up sequence fits neither group. Ask early how long they have been looking. A buyer three weeks in needs speed and availability; a buyer eleven months in needs a specific boat and a reason to trust you. The question costs nothing and changes everything about how you handle the lead.

POST PURCHASE

What happened after the money changed hands

BUYER MINDSET

BUYER RESEARCH

BUYER ENQUIRY

SEA TRIAL

PURCHASE & FULFILLMENT

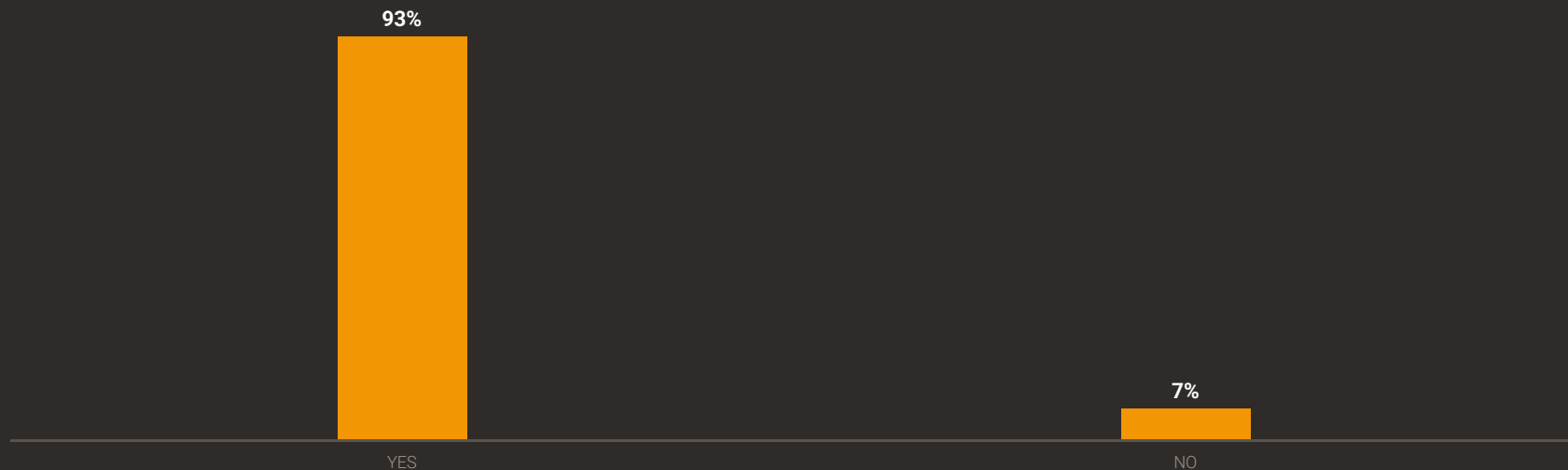
POST PURCHASE

93%

OF BUYERS WOULD PURCHASE FROM THE SAME DEALER AGAIN

Where the trade does get involved, it performs. Every buyer heard back from every dealer they contacted, and 93% would go back to the same one. Satisfaction is not this category's problem. The problem is that only 18% of buyers went to a dealer or broker in the first place — the trade is performing well for a small share of the market.

WOULD YOU PURCHASE FROM THE SAME DEALER AGAIN?



Base: 15 recent buyers who purchased via a dealer or broker. Small base — directional only.

SATISFACTION ISN'T THE PROBLEM

THE ISSUE IS REACH, NOT SERVICE

An excellent experience delivered to 18% of the market is a growth problem, not a quality problem. The strategic priority for the trade is not improving the sale — it is being considered at all. Everything that makes you visible and credible before the enquiry is where the growth is.

SATISFACTION ISN'T RETENTION

Motorbike buyers reported the same thing — high satisfaction, low actual return rate — because past happiness does not beat a competitor who happens to have the right boat. Do not wait for your customers to come back. Know what they own, anticipate what they will want next, and call them when it lands.

YOUR DATABASE IS A SOURCING BRIEF

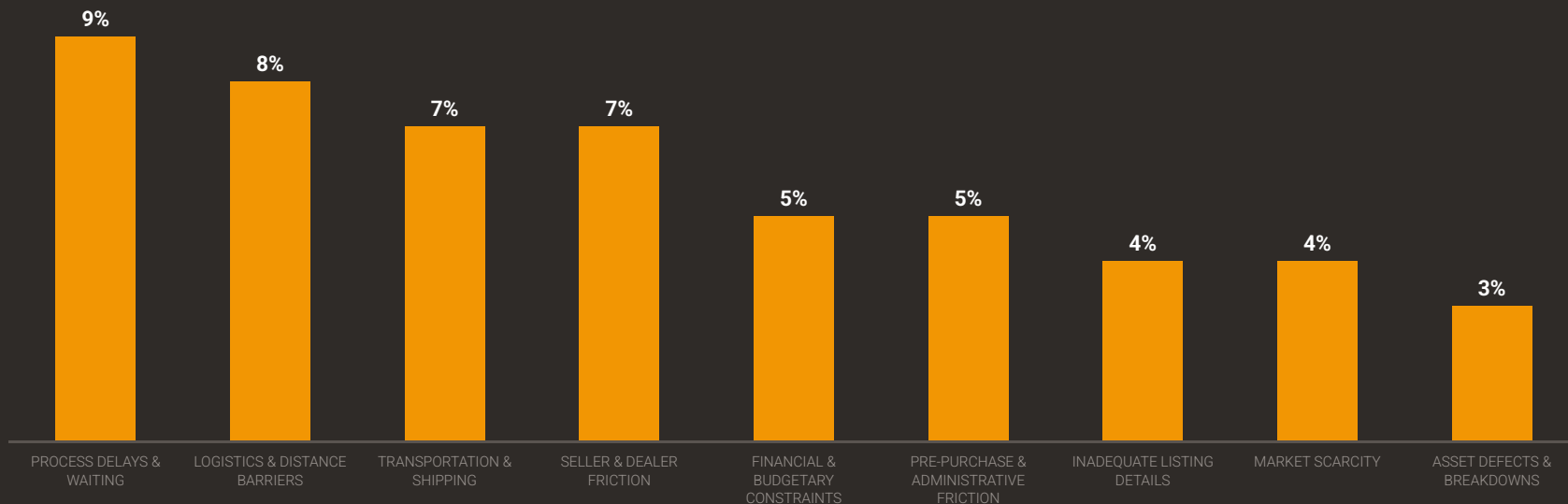
You already know what your past customers own, how they use it and what they paid. That is a sourcing brief. When a trade-in or new listing matches a past customer's likely next step, a single phone call — “something's just arrived I thought you'd want to see” — can outperform paid advertising.

15%

GETTING THE BOAT HOME IS THE SINGLE BIGGEST FRUSTRATION

Asked what frustrated them most, buyers pointed at logistics. Distance barriers (8%) and transportation and shipping (7%) together make up 15% of all frustrations — the largest cluster — followed by process delays and waiting (9%) and friction with the seller (7%). Notably, the boat itself barely features: only 3% cited defects or breakdowns. The product is fine. The process is not.

WHAT WAS THE MOST FRUSTRATING PART OF THE PURCHASE PROCESS?



Base: 65 open-text responses from recent buyers, themed. A significant share reported no frustration at all. Logistics and transportation together account for 15%.

FIXING THE LAST MILE

SOLVE FREIGHT, SOLVE THE BIGGEST COMPLAINT

"Getting it from Nelson to Auckland." "Cost of travel to Auckland and Tauranga." "It was 400km away and Christmas." Buyers are managing this themselves and finding it frustrating. Offer a fixed-price delivered option with a nominated carrier and an indicative price by region on every listing. It converts your single biggest frustration into a reason to buy from you.

DELAYS AND SILENCE COST YOU GOODWILL

Process delays (9%) and seller friction (7%) are entirely within your control – "having to remind the dealer of the things they said they would do", "timings of vendor availability". Set expectations, then beat them. Proactive updates during the wait are low cost and disproportionately valued.

BAD LISTINGS OUTLIVE THE SALE

"Poorly worded ads and exaggerated condition explanations." "Almost all listings did not specify how much fuel and water vessels held – lots of useless photos of the boat going flat out and not many, if at all, of the engine room." Specify capacities, hours, dimensions and trailer status, and photograph the details that matter.



INSIGHTS

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