



STORABLE'S 2026 Moving Forecast

America's Housing Hostages: How Mortgage Rates Are Holding Millions in Place & Reshaping How We Live

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▶ **Millions of Americans want to move, but can't.** Rising mortgage rates and a frozen housing market have left people trapped in homes that no longer fit their lives. Storable's 2026 Moving Forecast, based on a nationally representative survey of 1,000 U.S. adults, reveals the real-life impact of this freeze: delayed life milestones, extended relationships, and a generation increasingly convinced that the American Dream is out of reach.

While economists debate rate cuts and inventory levels, many Americans are adapting to a new reality where their homes have become both a sanctuary and a prison. Nearly half (46%) of all respondents say they feel trapped in their current housing situation. A third have stayed in relationships longer than they wanted because they couldn't afford to leave. And one-in-four homeowners with a low

mortgage rate say there's no amount of money—**none**—that would convince them to give it up. [National housing data shows](#) pending home sales near multi-month lows in early 2026, as mortgage rate lock-in continues to suppress mobility, echoing the paralysis uncovered in this study.

For self-storage operators, these findings signal both challenge and opportunity. When people can't move to homes better suited to their lives, they find other ways to cope. 16% have already rented storage because they're stuck in homes that don't fit their needs. Another 26% are considering it.

The housing freeze isn't just reshaping the real estate market. It's fundamentally changing how Americans relate to their belongings and their living spaces.

Here are the key findings.

Americans Reveal Toll of Housing Crisis on Their Lives

MORTGAGE RATE LOCK-IN IS KEEPING HOMEOWNERS IN PLACE

Among homeowners with mortgages, 73% say they would consider moving if they could transfer their current rate to a new home. 31% would move immediately.

This gets to the heart of the problem: **it's not that people don't want to move, it's that the financial penalty for doing so has become unbearable.**

Housing analysts increasingly describe [mortgage rate lock-in as the defining force of the current housing cycle](#)—even as rates stabilize—explaining why so many respondents refuse to give up low pandemic-era loans.

The attachment to low rates runs deep. When asked how much money someone would have to pay them to give up their current rate for today's rates, 25% of homeowners with rates below 5% said no amount would be enough. Another quarter (24%) said it would take \$200,000 or more.



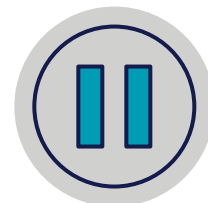
For many homeowners, a low pandemic-era rate feels like a six-figure asset—and they treat it that way.

CAREERS, RELATIONSHIPS, AND KIDS—ALL ON PAUSE

The frozen housing market isn't just about money. It's changing real life decisions.

33% of Americans have stayed in a relationship or living situation longer than they wanted because they couldn't afford to move out. Let that number sink in. A third of the country has made one of life's most personal decisions—who to live with—based primarily on housing economics.

The ripple effects extend to careers, families, and futures. **One-in-five (20%) have already turned down a job, promotion, or career opportunity because it would require relocating.** Another 36% say they would turn down such an opportunity if it arose. That's 56% of working Americans whose career trajectories are being shaped by their mortgage rate rather than their ambitions.



8% have delayed having children because of housing costs or their inability to move. Meanwhile, 14% have put off moving closer to family, 4% have delayed getting married, and another 4% have delayed getting divorced.



THE ANXIETY ECONOMY

Housing anxiety isn't abstract. Among those who want to move, more than half (54%) say housing costs have caused them significant stress or anxiety. Nearly half (46%) feel trapped in their current housing situation. And **48% say the American Dream of homeownership feels out of reach**—with younger Americans feeling it more acutely (54% of those under 45 vs. 41% of those 55 and older).

We are witnessing a fundamental shift in how Americans view their economic futures. When asked whether their children will ever be able to afford a home, only 40% said yes. 40% aren't sure, and nearly 20% said probably not.

RENTERS FACE THEIR OWN REALITY

Many renters expressed the feeling that the path to homeownership has grown more difficult, if not impossible.

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42% need at least \$25,000 in down payment assistance to make buying realistic. But the barriers run deeper than savings. When asked if they believe they will ever be able to afford to buy a home, 25% of renters said probably not or definitely not. Another 21% have stopped aspiring to own altogether—they're not even interested anymore.

That's nearly half of all renters who have either given up or don't believe homeownership is within reach.

The implications extend beyond individual finances. As homeownership becomes increasingly concentrated among those who already own, the wealth gap tied to real estate equity risks becoming permanent. A generation of renters isn't just delaying homeownership—they're redefining what stability looks like.

THE ZILLOW 'DOOM' SCROLL

Perhaps nothing captures the psychological state of today's housing market better than this: **67% of Americans regularly or occasionally browse homes online that are out of their price range.** 16% do it so often they describe it as something they "can't help."

Meanwhile, 11% have stopped looking at real estate listings entirely. Not because they're not interested, but because it's too frustrating to see what they can't have.



The Stuff Problem: How the Housing Freeze Is Driving Storage Demand

When people can't move to bigger homes, they don't simply accept living with less space. They adapt. And increasingly, that involves self-storage.

HALF OF AMERICANS SAY STUFF IS A FACTOR IN THEIR MOVING DECISION

Half of Americans say having too much stuff factors into their decision about whether or not to move. For 16%, it's a major factor and a significant reason they haven't moved. For another 33%, it makes moving harder even if it's not the primary barrier.

This represents a fundamental shift in how Americans think about their possessions. When Storable and [SpareFoot](#) teamed up to release [The Real Cost of Clutter](#) report, they found that 21% of Americans dedicate over 500 square feet—roughly the size of a small apartment—purely to storage, while over half (54%) sacrifice between 100–500 square feet to house possessions they rarely use.

Now, **Americans are telling us that these possessions are an obstacle to moving at all.** And when the bigger home isn't coming, they're looking for alternatives.

THE STORAGE SOLUTION

16% of Americans have rented self-storage specifically because they can't move to a home that fits their needs.

This isn't using storage to prepare for a move or a renovation. It's storage as a coping mechanism for the housing freeze.

Another 25% are considering getting a storage unit to make room for their overflowing household goods. Combined, that's 42% of Americans who have either turned to storage or are thinking about it because the housing market won't let them into homes that fit their lives.

So what are people doing instead to free up space at home? 32% have renovated or remodeled their current home. 22% have converted rooms to different uses—turning garages into offices, dining rooms into bedrooms.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR THE STORAGE INDUSTRY

The frozen housing market hasn't slowed storage demand. It's redirected.

The housing market will eventually thaw. Rates will stabilize or decline. Inventory will grow, and when it does, the pent-up demand underscored in this study will be unleashed.

73% of mortgage holders would move if they could keep their rate. 30% would move immediately. Among 25–34 year olds, that number jumps to 43%. For those 55 and older, it's just 17%. When even a fraction of these households finally transact, the storage industry will see corresponding demand: for moves, for transitions, and for the millions of Americans who've been adapting to too-small spaces and will finally have options.

What Would It Take to Move?

THE MAGIC NUMBER

The survey asked respondents at what mortgage rate they would seriously consider buying a home or moving. The answer reveals just how far rates would need to fall to unlock the market.

Moving or buying a home based on mortgage rates	
PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE	MORTGAGE RATES
38%	4.5%
17%	4.5–5%
2%	6%+

38% need rates below 4.5%. Another 17% need them between 4.5 and 5%. Only 2 percent say 6% or higher would be fine. And 28% say mortgage rates don't affect their decision.

The math is stark. With current 30-year mortgage rates lingering in the low-to-mid 6% range, **more than half of would-be movers are waiting for a drop that may never come.**



WHAT PEOPLE WOULD SACRIFICE

The survey asked homeowners what sacrifices they would accept to keep their current mortgage rate. The responses reveal how deeply rate lock-in has distorted decision-making.

25% would live farther from their family than they want. 22% would stay in a home that's too small for their needs. Another 22% would delay retirement by five or more years. 11% would delay having children. 10% would stay in a neighborhood where they don't feel safe.

The most striking responses sit at the extreme end. 8% would stay in a relationship they want to leave rather than give up their rate. 6% would skip or delay medical care.



39% said none of these—they wouldn't make any of these sacrifices. But the fact that 6 out of 10 of homeowners would accept at least one of these tradeoffs shows the psychological hold that low mortgage rates have established.



The Path Forward

The 2026 Moving Forecast shows a housing market on pause. More than half of Americans would rather live somewhere else. Nearly one-in-three feel stuck. Just 11% are actually moving.

That pause has consequences. People are putting off major life decisions, staying in relationships longer than they want, and turning down job opportunities. They're remodeling, repurposing rooms, and renting self-storage for overflow possessions. Some keep scrolling listings they can't afford. Others stop looking altogether.

In that reality, storage has taken on a different role. It's no longer just part of a move. For many households, it's how they make space when moving isn't an option. That's already true, and could be so for more Americans the longer the housing freeze continues.

For the storage industry, demand isn't just about moves anymore. It's coming from people staying put and trying to make homes that no longer fit actually work.

The housing market will eventually thaw. Rates will ease. Inventory will return. And when it does, the pent-up demand in this report will surface. And when it does, Americans will finally have the mobility they've been waiting for.



SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Sample Characteristics

[Total Respondents](#) 1000

[Country](#) USA

[Age Range](#) 25+

[Gender](#) Male & Female

The sample was weighted to be nationally representative by homeownership status. The margin of error for the full sample is ± 3 percentage points.

Data Collection

Survey conducted in January 2026.