

# Outlook Retail Sentiment Survey

Boots on the Ground: Real-Time Insights from **Levin Management's 125-Property Retail Portfolio**

Our exclusive survey captures direct feedback from store managers across Levin Management's retail portfolio—spotlighting sales and traffic performance, 2026 expectations, pricing and hiring plans, operational shifts, and the enduring advantages of brick-and-mortar retail.





# Key Findings

- **68.6%** expect their location will perform much better or somewhat better in 2026.
- **71.9%** reported holiday sales were the same or higher; **65.3%** said results met or exceeded expectations.
- **64.3%** reported total 2025 sales were the same or higher than 2024, and **65.3%** said traffic was higher or unchanged.
- **71.3%** cite economy/consumer confidence and **69.4%** cite inflation/rising costs as the top expected impacts in 2026.
- **40.9%** say technology investments (AI/automation/payments) lead planned operational adaptations.
- **39.8%** rank in-person customer service and support as the top brick-and-mortar advantage.

# Holiday Performance & Expectations

Coming out of the 2025 holiday season, 71.9% of respondents said holiday sales were the same or higher year-over-year, and 65.3% said holiday results met or exceeded expectations. Looking at full-year performance, 64.3% reported total sales were the same or higher in 2025 vs. 2024, and 65.3% said customer traffic was the same or higher.

- **71.9%** Holiday sales were the same or higher vs. last season
- **65.3%** Holiday sales exceeded or met expectations
- **64.3%** Total 2025 sales were the same or higher vs. 2024
- **65.3%** Customer traffic was the same or higher in 2025 vs. 2024

# Hiring & Growth Plans

Hiring remained active, with **42.6%** reporting they are currently hiring. While major store reinvestment plans were limited, some retailers are still pursuing selective growth—about one-quarter plan to open additional locations, and many remain undecided on location upgrades.

- **42.6%** are currently hiring
- **26.4%** plan to open additional locations in 2026
- **6.5%** plan to expand, renovate, or reformat their location in 2026 (**32.7%** are not sure)



# Adaptations & the In-Store Advantage

On operations, **43.0%** said they have made adaptations recently or plan to do so in the near future. Among those, leading priorities center on technology and the in-store experience. **39.8%** said in-person customer service and support was **#1 Advantage** for brick-and-mortar.

## Operational focus areas (among those adapting):

- **40.9%** Technology investments (AI, automation, payments)
- **34.8%** Customer experience and training
- **34.8%** Loyalty and promotions

## Brick-and-mortar advantage (Top 3 picks):

- **39.8%** In-person customer service and support
- **17.6%** The social experience of in-person shopping
- **15.7%** Brand- and loyalty-building capabilities



# 2026 Expectations and Drivers

When asked how they expect their location will perform in 2026, **68.6%** of respondents said it will perform much better or somewhat better.

## Top Factors Expected to Impact Business in 2026

- **71.3%** Economy / consumer confidence
- **69.4%** Inflation / rising costs
- **36.1%** Labor availability / labor costs



# Pricing Outlook

Pricing actions in the past year were largely moderate, with most reporting no increases (24.1%) or increases under 10% (38.8%). Looking ahead, 35.5% expect to raise prices further in 2026, while 44.9% are not sure.

- **24.1%** No price increases
- **38.8%** Increased prices under 10%
- **35.5%** Expect to raise prices further in 2026
- **44.9%** Not sure about additional increases