

INSIGHT AGENT ISSUES INSIGHT

Just who do you think you are?

By Jamie Biesiada   | Jan 11, 2021

Jamie Biesiada

Who was the average travel advisor in 2020?

That is exactly the question Host Agency Reviews answered in its latest report on data from its 2020 Travel Agent Income Survey.

Responses from 771 agents were used to craft the report, which breaks them down into four categories:

- Hosted agents, defined as independent contractors (ICs) aligned with a host agency
- Independent agents, or ICs who have and use their own accreditation number
- Employee agents, or agents employed with a travel agency who are not ICs
- Franchise agents, or ICs who own a travel franchise.

Most respondents (61%) fell into the hosted category, while 19% reported being independent, 8% employees, 7% franchise and 5% hosted and independent (a small fraction of less than 1% reported being hosted and franchise or franchise and independent).

So the average agent, based on HAR's respondents, outside of being hosted, who is she? Well, for starters, she is in fact a she. Overall, 84% of respondents were women.

Broken down by category, gender distribution varied a bit, from at least 79% female for independent agents to as much as 97% female for employee agents.

The average advisor is also probably white.

In total, 79% of respondents reported being white, while 10% identified as Black or African American. Two percent reported being Asian American, and another 2% reported being Hispanic/Latinx/Spanish. Less than 1% reported being American Indian, Alaska Native, native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander or Middle Eastern/North African.

Respondents reported a median of eight years of experience, but that varied greatly by category. Hosted agents were the least experienced, with a median experience level of six years, followed by franchise agents, who had a median of six and a half years of

experience. Independent agents averaged 15 years, while employees topped the list with a median 24.5 years of experience.

Education levels varied widely, too, but most common was a bachelor's degree (36%) followed by some college (20%).

The majority of respondents (69%) had a least one travel-specific certification; independent agents were most likely to have at least one (79%), followed by franchise agents (67%) and hosted agents (66%).

The majority were also likely to be members of a travel association, with 77% reporting they were. The top four memberships were ASTA, CCRA, ACTA and CLIA, in no specific order.

For most (64%), selling travel was their primary source of income. Unsurprisingly, this was most prevalent among employee agents, while the split varied around 60-40 for hosted, independent and franchise agents. Additionally, most (64%) reported selling travel full time.

The average agent is also pretty satisfied with their job. The majority said they would become an agent again in every category (hosted agents were the highest at 91%, while franchise agents were lowest at 78%).

Getting a peek into who the average agent is at any given time is always interesting. But perhaps the most encouraging figure to come out of HAR's data is that the average income of full-time, hosted agents is on the upswing. In 2019, they earned an average of \$64,377, up nearly \$3,000 compared with the prior year.

Of course, this data reflects the "before times," when Covid-19 had not yet ravaged the industry. But it is indicative of the success of the segment, and it offers hope for the future.

"Specifically, for hosted agents, average income has increased steadily, year over year," HAR founder Stephanie Lee said. "These reports mark a critical turning point, not only gauging the travel agent industry's robust pre-pandemic health but also offering an important milestone to mark the industry's eventual recovery."

This week kicks off HAR's first Host Week. The virtual event will run Jan. 10-16 and is designed to celebrate hosted agents. Speakers include industry leaders, host agencies (which will also offer exclusive specials for attendees) and suppliers. The event is free and open to all.

From Our Partners

Copyright © 2021 Northstar Travel Media, LLC. All Rights Reserved. 100 Lighting Way Secaucus, NJ 07094-3626 USA Telephone:
(201) 902-2000

<https://www.travelweekly.com/Travel-News/Travel-Agent-Issues/Insights/Host-Agency-Reviews-data-shows-who-the-average-2020-agent-was>