2026

The Friction Report

Where property claims slow down and how to keep work moving forward.

ALTIMETER
SOLUTIONS GROUP

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Executive summary.

The managed repair system needs a renovation of its own. While relationships across the system are generally strong and collaboration is productive, friction still emerges as work moves across teams and stages.

This friction consistently appears in three areas: **communication, alignment, and efficiency**—particularly where coordination and handoffs are most complex. Communication is sometimes incomplete or not actionable, alignment is not always consistent, and efficiency is affected by delays, rework, or resets.

As a result, the system loses momentum.

This is not due to a lack of trust or conflicting priorities among stakeholders, but because the process does not reliably support forward progress.

The opportunity is not to repair relationships—they are already sound—but to improve how work flows through the system. Targeted improvements in communication, alignment, and coordination can drive meaningful gains in efficiency, experience, and overall system performance.

The problem & how we researched it.

Anyone working in claims knows how quickly things can go sideways.

A claim that starts out straightforward begins to stall. Communication breaks down. Decisions are delayed. Work gets redone. Frustration builds. What began as smooth progress devolves into chaos.

This isn't an anomaly. Most of us have experienced projects that went wrong. **Where and why these breakdowns occur** are the hardest issues to identify.

We wanted to get *precise* about where the process experiences strain.

- **Where** does friction consistently show up?
- **Who** is most likely to experience it?
- **How** does it impact the movement of work?
- **Where,** in the lifecycle of a claim, is the process most likely to slow down or reset?
- **Why** do some claims move efficiently while others stall?
- **And how** does that experience differ depending on where you sit—whether you're a carrier, a contractor, or a homeowner?

Friction & **momentum.**

In a well-functioning system, a project is carried forward from one step to the next. Decisions lead to action. Work builds on what came before it. **That's momentum.**

But when momentum breaks, work slows down or requires additional effort to move forward.

We wanted to find where momentum is disrupted across the system—and how often. So, we looked at the parts of the process that most directly shape whether work moves forward or stalls:

- Communication
- Alignment
- Efficiency
- Trust
- Mutual incentive

Together, these domains capture the conditions that either allow momentum to carry forward or cause it to break.

Momentum:

Continual forward progress.

Friction:

Progress is disrupted through delays and misalignment.

We examined these across the entirety of the claims lifecycle, and from the perspective of three stakeholder groups: insurance carriers, contractors, and homeowners.

Momentum does not break randomly—it breaks predictably at the intersections of these five domains. By identifying where these conditions weaken, we can pinpoint systemic friction and quantify how often it disrupts progress.

Findings summary.

After analyzing the data, we know that the system is not broken but it is not operating at its full potential.

Across carriers, contractors, and homeowners, the fundamentals are strong:

- Relationships are stable and functional
- Work generally progresses end-to-end
- Stakeholders are able to collaborate effectively
- Trust stands out as a clear strength indicating confidence in good-faith behavior across parties

They tell us the system has a solid foundation—one that does not require rebuilding.

But despite this strong foundation, friction tends to pop up in specific areas, particularly in **communication, alignment,** and **efficiency.** These areas are where coordination is most complex and where work needs to carry forward from one step to the next.

In these moments, communication is not always complete or actionable, alignment is not always precise, and efficiency is disrupted by delays, rework, or resets.

The result is not collapse, but inconsistency. Work moves, but not always smoothly. Progress continues, but with stutters and stops. Over time, those moments accumulate into something more systemic: **a loss of momentum.**

The so-what: Our opportunity is not to fix relationships; they are already working. Rather, it is to improve how work moves through the system, particularly in the moments where momentum is most likely to break.

Friction clusters.

When we looked at the data more closely, a clear pattern emerged: friction is not random. **It clusters.**

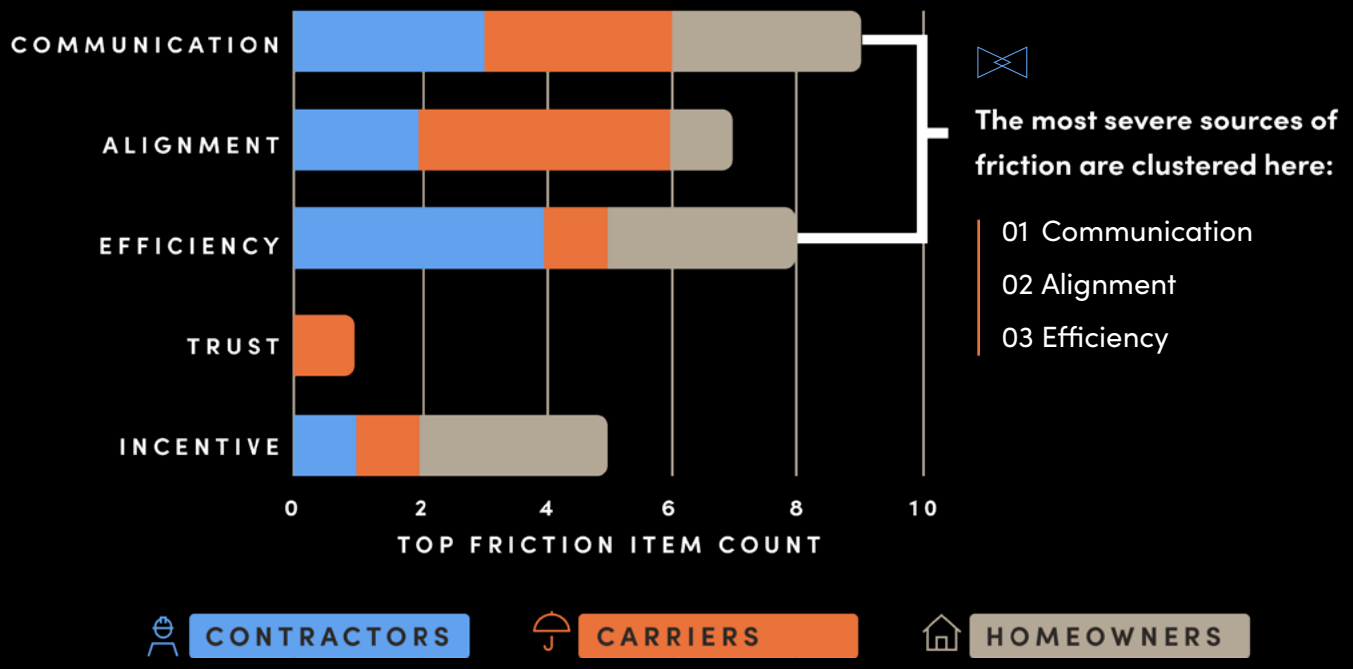
It shows up in specific parts of the process, particularly where **coordination is most complex,** where **multiple stakeholders are involved,** and **where work needs to carry forward** from one phase to another.

These are the moments where momentum is most at risk.

Each represents a different way that momentum can break, whether through incomplete information, imprecise expectations, or disruptions in how work progresses.

And while these patterns are shared across the system, they are experienced differently depending on where you sit.

Where the most severe friction occurs.



The most severe sources of friction are clustered here:

01 Communication
02 Alignment
03 Efficiency

These results reflect the ten highest-friction items identified within each stakeholder group, aggregated by domain.

The most severe sources of friction are not evenly distributed—they concentrate in communication, alignment, and efficiency, where work is most likely to slow, reset, or require additional effort.

Communication

The most friction stems from a lack of communication.

People are talking and information is changing hands. It's just not always complete or actionable on the first pass, meaning work does not consistently move forward without additional clarification. Communication friction is present across all three stakeholder groups.

CONTRACTORS

This shows up at the very beginning of execution.

Initial communication is often not enough to begin work confidently, and contractors report needing to seek additional clarification or involve additional decision-makers to resolve issues.

As a result, work does not begin when it should. It pauses while questions are answered and details are confirmed.

CARRIERS

The friction appears in how communication carries forward.

Responses are not always timely or actionable, and issues often require follow-up rather than being resolved cleanly. Information is not consistently complete on the first pass, which limits the ability of others in the system to act without additional clarification.*

HOMEOWNERS

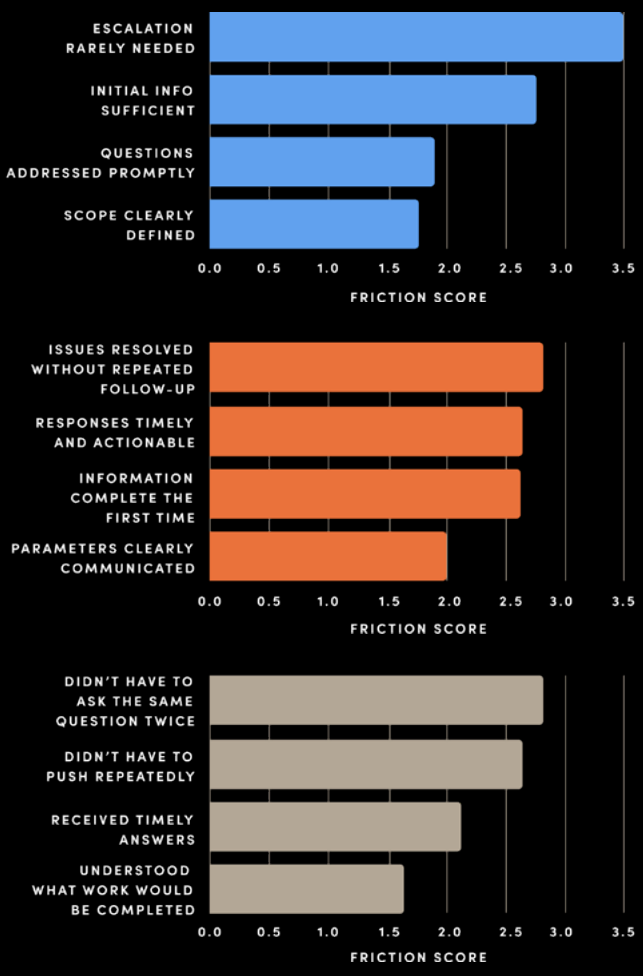
Communication friction shows up as effort.

Homeowners generally understand what is happening and can get answers to their questions. However, communication is not always proactive or fully clear on the first pass. Homeowners often find themselves needing to initiate follow-up or repeat questions.

▶ **The pattern is consistent: communication exists, but it does not always carry work forward efficiently.**

The result is a start-stop dynamic, where progress depends on clarification rather than flowing directly from one step to the next. And because this friction often occurs at the earliest stages of execution, it interrupts momentum before it has a chance to fully build.

Communication breaks down at first-pass resolution.



Across all stakeholders, communication is generally present and understandable. Friction emerges from its inability to resolve issues on the first pass.

Contractors report needing escalation, carriers report repeated follow-up, and homeowners report having to ask again, indicating that communication often requires multiple cycles before work can move forward.

Carriers report the lowest communication scores across all stakeholder groups, likely reflecting their position coordinating across the system without always being embedded in the moments where clarity is required.

Alignment

At a high level, alignment across the system is strong.

Stakeholders generally understand the goal of the process and are working toward the same outcome.

But **when alignment moves from intent into execution, it becomes less consistent.**

CONTRACTORS

Display particularly strong alignment but can be inconsistent.

However, expectations around timelines and deliverables are not always consistent, introducing variability into how work is carried out.

This can affect how smoothly that work progresses; variability at this level can lead to hesitation, duplication, or small adjustments that must be corrected as the process unfolds.

CARRIERS

Roles are not always clearly defined, decision authority is not always explicit and expectations about what should happen next can vary.

Carriers report the lowest alignment scores across all stakeholder groups, suggesting that while the system functions, it does not always provide the level of clarity needed to carry work forward consistently.

HOMEOWNERS

Report a clear sense of who is responsible, what is happening and what comes next.

However, this clarity does not always translate cleanly into execution. When variability appears, particularly around ownership, decision-making or next steps, homeowners often find themselves needing to seek clarification or navigate gaps in understanding.

▶ **The common thread across stakeholder perspectives: alignment exists, but it is not always precise enough to support seamless execution.**

Stakeholders rarely experience catastrophic breakdowns in coordination, but instead see small losses of clarity at the level where work actually happens. Over time, those small inconsistencies accumulate and introduce hesitation, rework, or inefficiencies that interrupt and reduce the system's ability to carry work forward cleanly from one step to the next.

Alignment is strong in intent, but inconsistent in execution.

Alignment across stakeholders is generally strong at a high level.

Friction emerges in the details, particularly around roles, decision authority and expectations, where clarity is not always consistent enough to carry work forward without hesitation.

This pattern is most pronounced for carriers, who report the highest friction across all alignment measures.

Efficiency

Efficiency is where friction becomes most visible as delays, rework, and resets in the movement of work itself.

Problems with efficiency are most apparent in transition points: when work moves from approval to repair, when scope changes occur, or when decisions need to evolve into action. In these moments, progress does not always continue smoothly. Work that should move forward instead slows, pauses or resets.

CONTRACTORS

Their lowest scoring domain. Even after approval, work does not consistently move forward without delay, and revisions frequently introduce rework.

The breakdown is especially visible in the transition from approval to repair, where approval does not always translate into immediate, actionable next steps. When scope changes occur, they often require work to be revisited rather than adapted, resetting progress instead of carrying it forward.

CARRIERS

Highest efficiency scores; generally effective at moving work forward through approvals, documentation, and coordination.

However, this efficiency is dependent on stable conditions; when the process follows a linear path, work progresses reliably. When conditions change, such as shifts in scope or new information, setbacks are more likely to occur.

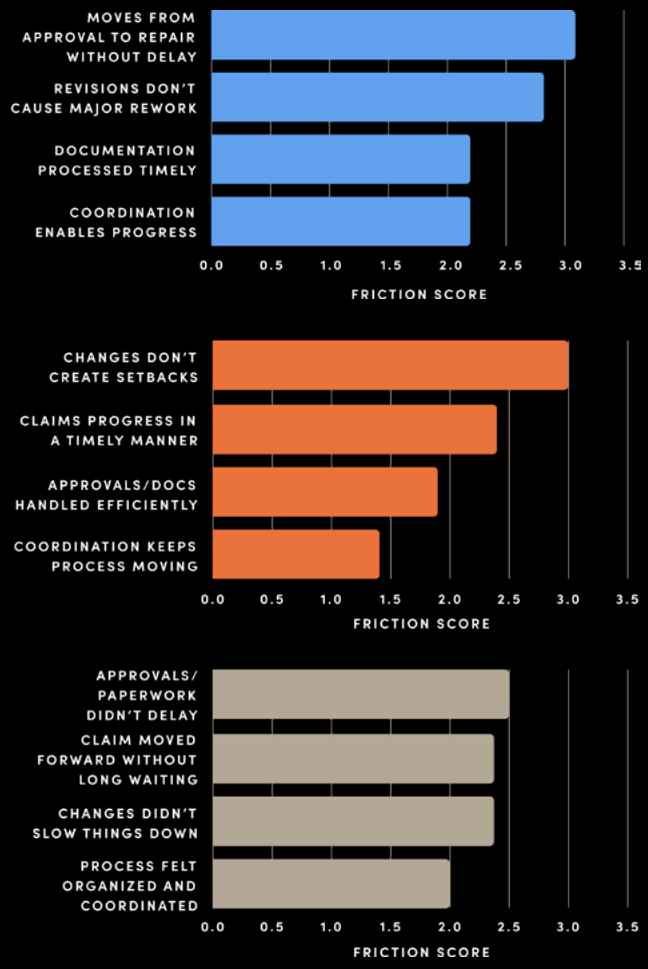
So while carriers are optimized, they are less equipped to adapt when that motion is disrupted.

HOMEOWNERS

Experience friction in efficiency in the form of waiting or delays.

Homeowners generally see the process as organized and coordinated, but not always fast. Delays related to approvals, paperwork, and changes in scope create periods where progress slows or pauses. As a result, efficiency is the lowest-rated domain for homeowners.

Efficiency breaks down when work must adapt.



Efficiency friction is most visible when work must adapt or transition.

Contractors report delays between approval and repair and rework introduced by revisions, while homeowners experience waiting and slowdowns tied to approvals and changes.

Carriers, while effective at moving work forward under stable conditions, report the greatest friction when changes create setbacks, indicating a system optimized for progression, but less equipped to sustain momentum through change.

The common thread: stakeholders see that the system moves, but experience that it does not always carry momentum through change.

Efficiency friction disrupts continuity, introducing delays, resets and additional effort at the points where work should advance most cleanly.

And because these disruptions occur at key transitions, they have an outsized impact on the system's ability to maintain momentum from one step to the next.

Trust & incentive.

Now that we have identified that friction shows up in the moments where work needs to move, we start to see the importance of trust and incentive. Unlike the other domains, **trust and incentive do not show significant friction.**

Trust is consistently strong across the system, and in many cases reaches its highest levels among contractors and homeowners. Incentives are also largely aligned, indicating that stakeholders are working toward shared outcomes rather than competing priorities.

In other words, the system is not breaking down because people are unwilling to collaborate. There is neither a lack of trust nor a misalignment of intent.

In fact, the opposite is true. Stakeholders are, by and large, trying to do the right thing. They are working together, communicating and making decisions in an effort to move the claim forward.

But even with that foundation, friction persists in the system because the process does not consistently support the relationships.

When communication requires follow-up, when expectations are not fully aligned or when changes introduce rework, the system places additional demands on those relationships to compensate.

While those relationships often absorb that strain, they cannot fully overcome it. As a result, work continues, but not as cleanly or efficiently as it could. Momentum is maintained, but not consistently sustained.

- **Our opportunity is to strengthen the system around relationships, so that the momentum created by those relationships is not lost in the process.**

The system is trusted—even when it isn't perfectly aligned.

CONTRACTORS

92% Say the process is fair to all parties.

88% Say commitments are honored.

88% See interactions as good faith.

80% Say carrier decisions are reasoned.

CARRIERS

84% Say the process is fair.

84% Say commitments are followed through.

80% Say interactions with contractors are in good faith.

HOMEOWNERS

88% Say people did what they said they would.

83% Say parties acted in their best interest.

Implications & recommendations.

Our findings point to a clear set of implications for how the system can be improved.

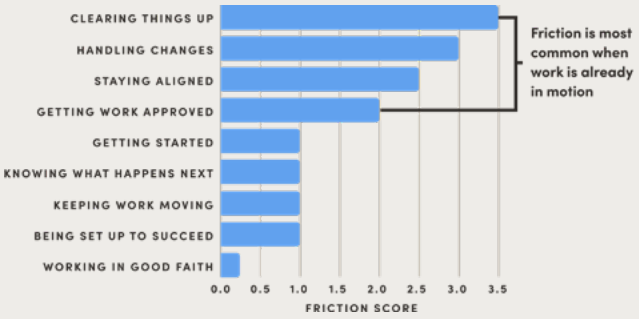
First, friction does not primarily occur at the point where work begins. In most cases, work begins as expected – claims are initiated, scopes are defined, and approvals are granted – indicating that the system is moving forward.

Friction becomes most visible once work is already in progress—particularly at the points where it needs to carry forward, adapt or transition. It's in these moments that communication must be complete, alignment must be precise and decisions must translate cleanly into action.

And it is also in these moments that momentum is most likely to break.

- **The main opportunity is to strengthen how work continues, ensuring that once progress is made, it carries forward without unnecessary interruption, reset or additional effort.**

Where friction occurs in the lifecycle.



Values are normalized based on the number of items assessed within each stage. When adjusted for this, friction remains concentrated in moments where work is in progress—particularly in clarification, alignment and adaptation—indicating that momentum is most vulnerable after work has begun.

With that in mind, we don't need to throw out the whole system. Rather, we can make targeted improvements at the points where momentum is most vulnerable.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Improve first-pass completion.

The first opportunity is to improve the actionability of communication at the point it enters the system.

Across stakeholders, work often slows because information is not sufficient to act on without clarification. Contractors need additional detail before beginning work. Carriers must follow up to resolve issues. Homeowners must initiate communication to maintain progress.

Strengthening first-pass completeness reduces the need for follow-up and allows work to begin and continue without interruption. This requires **clearer standards for what information is shared, by whom, and at what point in the process.**

At minimum, first-pass communication should include the claim context, the cause of loss, the proper loss description, the coverage and policy details relevant to the repair, the roles of each company involved, the expected next steps, and any documentation or process requirements contractors will need to follow. For homeowners, this means receiving a clear explanation of who is involved, what each party is responsible for, and what will happen next. For contractors, it means receiving enough claim and loss context to understand not only the technical scope of work, but what the homeowner has experienced and what needs to be handled with care.

For example, Altimeter supports first-pass communications by standardizing the information that is communicated at key handoff points and enhancing its software to make that information easier to see and act on. This includes more complete role and process explanations, clearer documentation requirements, and more transparent information about the people and teams coming to the home, such as technician names, photos, or company details.

The goal is to ensure that information is precise, complete and immediately usable at the moment it is delivered, so that each party can act with confidence instead of reconstructing context after the fact.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Clarify ownership & decision rights.

The second opportunity is to improve clarity around ownership, decision authority and next steps.

While alignment is strong at a high level, it varies at the level of execution. This introduces hesitation and inconsistency. When it is not clear who owns a decision, who is responsible for action or what should happen next, work slows or requires correction.

Establishing clear and consistent expectations at these points, particularly during transitions, allows decisions to carry forward more cleanly and reduces the likelihood of duplication or delay. To accomplish this, stakeholders - and especially carriers and managed repair programs—should more clearly define the claims process and document which parties are accountable at each point. This includes clarifying who has authority to make decisions, who is responsible for taking action, what information is required, and what the next step should be once a decision is made.

Altimeter makes process and claim information easier for stakeholders to access, search, and apply through our AI-enabled "book of knowledge." This book of knowledge provides stakeholders a reliable place to find process requirements, documentation standards, decision rules, and claim-specific details, ultimately reducing their uncertainty.

Managed repair programs can also work with contractors and carriers to reduce unnecessary back-and-forth during estimate review and approval. When appropriate, creating more direct collaboration around estimates with those who have decision authority can help resolve questions faster, reduce rework, and keep repairs moving.

This strengthens the system's ability to maintain momentum across handoffs by making it clearer who owns the next action, who can make the necessary decision, and what must happen for the work to continue.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Design for adaptation.

The third opportunity is to improve how the system responds to change.

Our data suggests that the system is effective at moving work forward under stable conditions, but less effective when conditions shift. Changes in scope or new information often introduce rework or reset progress rather than enabling efficient adaptation.

Designing processes that anticipate and absorb change can significantly reduce disruption and maintain continuity. To accomplish this, stakeholders should establish clearer expectations for how changes are identified, communicated, reviewed, and resolved.

Contractors play an important role by communicating scope or schedule changes to managed repair providers and homeowners as quickly and clearly as possible. When repair conditions shift, timely communication helps prevent uncertainty from spreading across the claim and gives other stakeholders the information they need to respond.

Managed repair programs and carriers can support this by reviewing scope changes promptly and identifying situations where small or straightforward adjustments can be resolved without requiring a full supplemental estimate. Faster review pathways can reduce administrative delay and prevent manageable changes from becoming momentum-breaking events.

Strengthening the technology that supports changing conditions, particularly during surge events, will improve the system's ability to adapt. When volume increases or repair conditions become more complex, technology should help adjust requirements, surface exceptions, and support faster decision-making rather than adding rigidity to the process.

Finally, all parties should provide open and honest assessments of changing conditions and communicate those realities clearly to homeowners, especially during surge events. Homeowners need to be kept in the loop, understanding what changed, why it changed, and what will happen next.

This shifts the system from one that progresses linearly to one that can sustain momentum even as conditions evolve. The goal is not to prevent change, but to make sure change does not force the process to start over.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Reduce effort required to maintain progress.

The fourth opportunity is to reduce the amount of effort required, particularly from homeowners, to keep work moving.

Homeowners report needing to follow up, ask questions, and navigate gaps in communication to maintain progress. While the system is generally understandable, it is not always proactive or seamless.

Reducing this effort helps ensure that momentum is maintained by the system itself, rather than by individual stakeholders. To accomplish this, stakeholders and managing systems can make claim progress, documentation, timelines, and next steps more visible and accessible to homeowners throughout the repair process.

One opportunity is to provide an insured portal where homeowners can view relevant documentation, track progress, understand expected next steps, and see where they are in the process.

This should include not only claim-specific updates, but also a clear explanation of the typical managed repair process, including common actions, milestones, timelines, and responsibilities.

Another opportunity is to reduce homeowner effort through proactive check-ins. Periodic communication with homeowners can help identify confusion, delays, or unresolved issues before they require the homeowner to follow up. This surfaces opportunities to intervene earlier, resolve gaps promptly, and maintain forward progress.

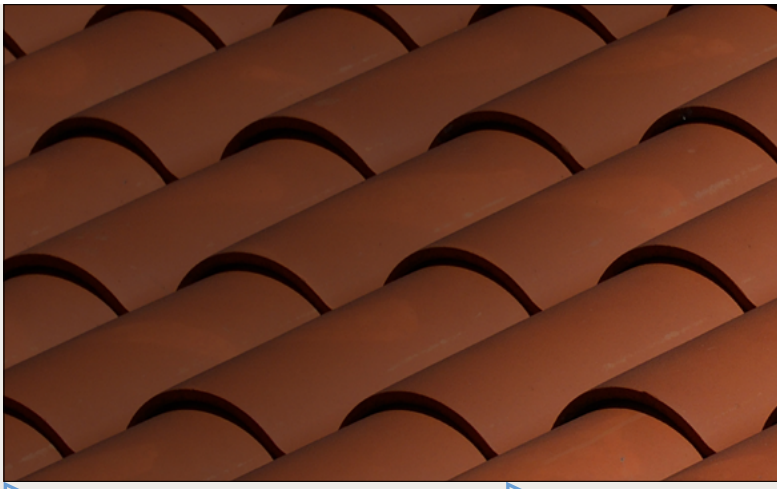
Contractors also play an important role in reducing homeowner effort by communicating clearly with both homeowners and managed repair programs about anticipated completion dates, job progress, schedules, material ordering, and any changes that may affect timing.

Together, these steps improve both efficiency and experience without requiring fundamental changes to the underlying relationships. The goal is to make progress easier to see, easier to understand, and less dependent on the homeowner having to chase it.

None of these opportunities require rebuilding the system from the ground up.

In fact, the strength of the system lies in the relationships that already exist: trust is strong, incentives are aligned and stakeholders are working toward shared outcomes.

The opportunity is to better support those relationships by improving how work moves between them. Because when momentum is preserved—when work carries forward productively from one step to the next—the system, and the relationships that hold it together, perform at their full potential.



Conclusion

The claims process breaks down in the moments where work fails to carry forward.

This research shows that the system is, in many ways, already working. Relationships are strong. Trust is present. Stakeholders are aligned in their intent and committed to moving work forward.

And yet, friction persists. Not as isolated failures, but as a pattern—appearing in communication that is not quite complete, alignment that is not quite precise, and efficiency that falters when work must adapt or transition.

These moments interrupt the system. Work slows. Progress resets. Momentum has to be regained. And over time, these small interruptions accumulate, shaping how the system performs as a whole.

The system needs to be supported differently.

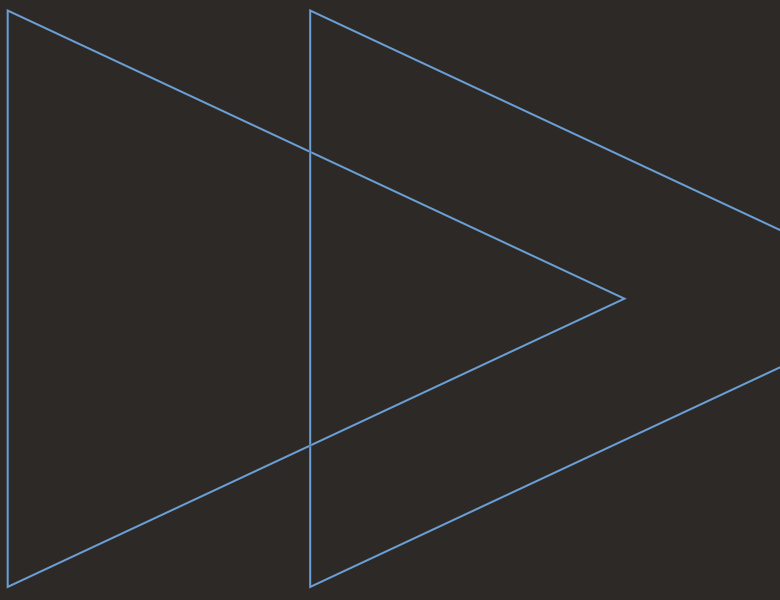
The opportunity is to focus on the smaller moments between big steps: the handoffs, the transitions, the points where work either carries forward cleanly or begins to break down.

This is where outcomes of the claims lifecycle are determined. When those moments are managed well, the process feels smooth—even invisible. Work moves forward without hesitation. Progress builds naturally from one step to the next. When these moments are mismanaged, everything downstream feels the impact.

These changes stand to create and maintain momentum. That's what we should experience when a system is truly working.

Our system is capable of creating momentum.

▶ **Our mission now is to ensure it's never lost.**



Appendix

Methodology

This study was designed to better understand how work moves through the claims process, and where it is most likely to slow down or require additional effort.

SAMPLE

Data was collected from three primary stakeholder groups involved in the claims and repair process:

- Insurance carriers
- Contractors
- Homeowners who had recently experienced a claim

These groups were selected to reflect the different perspectives that shape how work progresses through the system, from coordination and decision-making to execution and lived experience.

Responses were collected across a range of roles, levels of experience, and claim contexts to capture variation in how the process is experienced in practice.

Research approach

The study used a structured survey designed to assess how work moves through the claims process, with a focus on identifying where progress is most likely to slow, reset, or require additional effort.

Friction was defined in practical terms as delays, confusion, rework, distrust, or misalignment that disrupt progress.

Participants were asked to evaluate their experience across five domains that shape how work is carried forward:

- **Communication —** How clearly information is exchanged and understood across parties.
- **Alignment —** Clarity and agreement around who is responsible for what, who has decision authority, and what happens next.
- **Efficiency —** The degree to which claims move smoothly, predictably, and without unnecessary delay from initiation to completion.
- **Trust —** Perceived fairness, honesty, and reliability across interactions.
- **Mutual incentive —** The degree to which goals and success metrics reinforce rather than undermine collaboration.

Each domain was assessed through a series of statements reflecting real moments in the process, including how information is shared, how decisions are made, and how work progresses from one step to the next.

Measurement

Responses were captured using a standardized rating scale to allow for comparison across stakeholder groups and domains.

Results were analyzed to identify patterns in how friction appears across the lifecycle of a claim, and where it is most likely to interrupt momentum.

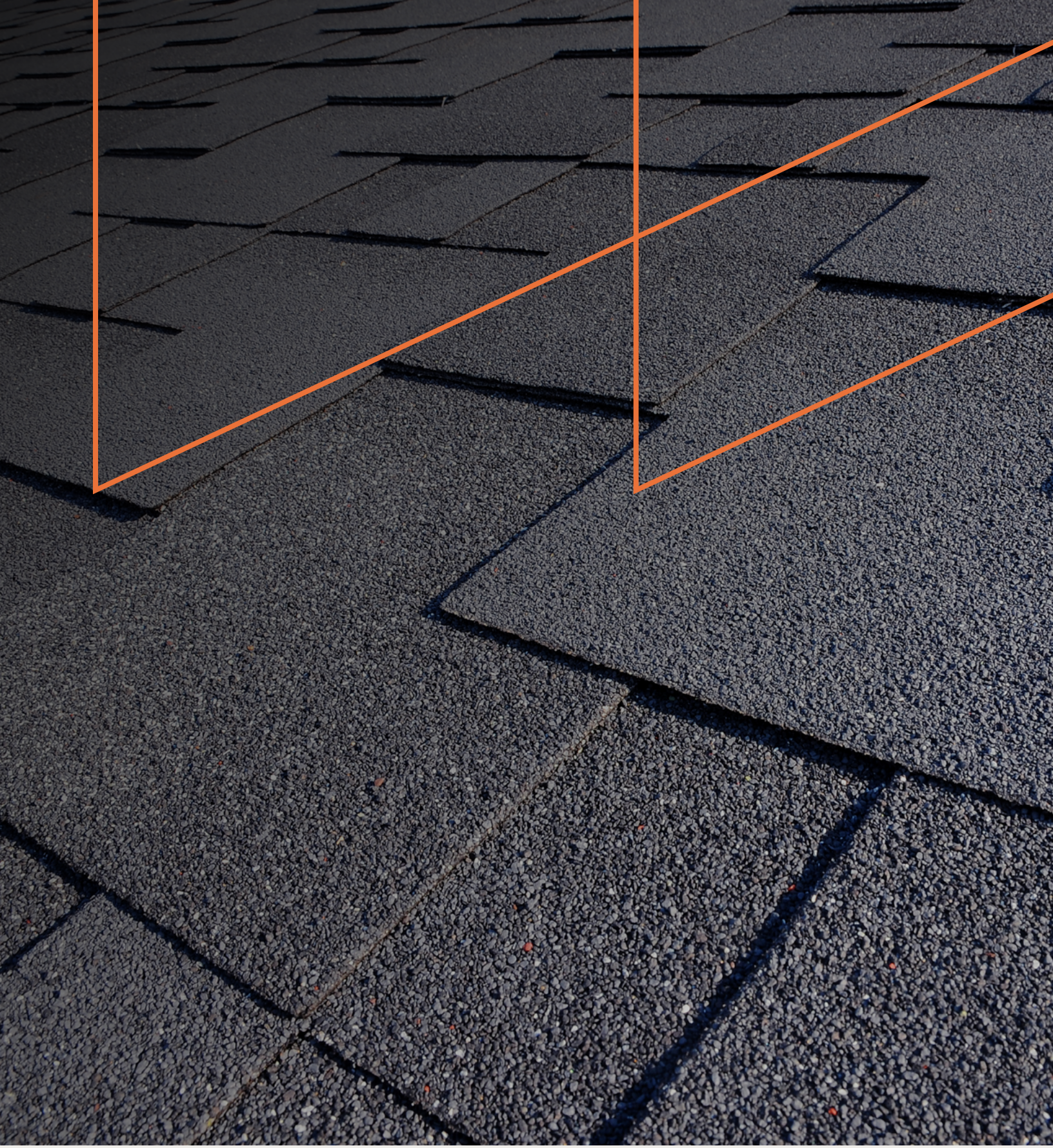
Rather than focusing on individual responses, the analysis emphasizes consistent patterns across groups and stages of the process.

Scope and Interpretation

This research is intended to provide a system-level view of how work moves through the claims process.

It does not evaluate individual organizations or performance, but instead identifies common patterns that emerge across stakeholders and contexts.

The goal is not to diagnose isolated issues, but to understand how friction accumulates and how it affects the system's ability to carry work forward.



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