

Manufacturers Struggle With Weak Home Sales

BY JOHN KEILMAN

The good news for appliance manufacturer **Whirlpool** is that when a refrigerator or washing machine breaks, homeowners generally purchase a new one. The bad news: The replacement usually isn't very fancy.

People buy higher-end products when they are remodeling, moving or building a home.

All of those activities have been in a post-Covid trough because of elevated prices, higher interest rates and low consumer confidence. That means Whirlpool's more profitable appliances, which in good times account for as much as 60% of its sales volume, now make up less than 40%.

Many other U.S. manufacturers are in the same position. Companies that make everything from flooring to house paint say consumers are staying put or delaying upgrades.

Carrier Global, which makes heating and air-conditioning units, said net sales declined 3% last year, partly because more consumers decided to stick with what they had.

"The homeowner that's been waiting to buy a new home is a little bit reluctant to have a full replacement a year or two before they sell their home, so they may be waiting and limping along with a repair," Carrier Chief Executive David Gitlin told analysts this month.

Keith Hughes, a building products and durable-goods analyst for Truist Securities, said the remodeling market has struggled for almost as long as it did during the 2008-09 financial crisis, and the numbers show that even basic repairs have been put off.

But as the U.S. housing stock continues to age, he said, a turnaround should be at hand.

"It'll be tremendous when it comes," Hughes said. "You just need that spark to get it moving."

Meganne Wecker, CEO of Illinois-based Skyline Furniture Mfg., said one unusual indicator suggests the spark might have ignited already: The residential market has been domi-

nated for years by cream-colored upholstery, but retailers are now asking for more vibrant colors and patterns—a time-tested signal, she said, that more optimistic days are ahead.

"They're looking for bigger, bolder statement pieces," Wecker said. "When you start to see that happen, you can tell it's kind of swinging back."

[Copyright \(c\)2026 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved. 2/24/2026](#)

[Powered by TECNAVIA](#)

The following is a digital replica of content from the print newspaper and is intended for the personal use of our members. For commercial reproduction or distribution of Dow Jones printed content, contact: Dow Jones Reprints & Licensing at (800) 843-0008 or visit djreprints.com.