

Five missteps homeowners make when selling that could cost them thousands

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New Zillow survey reveals common seller mistakes — and two critical things homeowners get right

SEATTLE, June 26, 2025 /PRNewswire/ -- New Zillow® research reveals the most common misconceptions homeowners have about selling a home that could cost them thousands of dollars.

Selling a home is one of life's biggest financial decisions, but a Zillow survey conducted by The Harris Poll finds that many Americans misunderstand important parts of the process. The new data highlights five things homeowners often get wrong when selling — and what they tend to get right.

1. Investing in the wrong projects

Today's sellers face more competition and need to put in more work to get their home ready for sale. However, investing in the wrong improvements can take a big bite out of the bottom line.

Nearly one-quarter of homeowners (23%) believe building an addition offers the best return on investment when preparing a home for sale. In reality, simple updates like fresh paint and landscaping deliver a much better — and more affordable — return on investment when it comes to resale.

"Many sellers assume that big, expensive renovations will guarantee a higher sale price," said Christina Pappas, president of The Keyes Company and Illustrated Properties in Miami. "In reality, buyers respond more to a thoughtful presentation: smart pricing, polished staging, a high-impact digital presence, and strategic updates like a fresh coat of paint. A strong first impression gets buyers in the door. That's why it's essential to work with an agent who understands what buyers are looking for and how to make a listing stand out online."

2. Ignoring screen appeal

Screen appeal is the new curb appeal. Many buyers make up their minds about a home after viewing it online, yet 40% of homeowners believe great curb appeal makes the best first impression.

Zillow data shows that investing in an immersive online media package pays off. Buyers pay 2% more for homes listed with [Zillow Showcase](#), which features larger high-resolution images, 3D Home tours and interactive floor plans, compared to similar non-Showcase listings.

3. Skipping key steps when hiring an agent

In today's rapidly changing market, sellers need a local expert to correctly price and market a home for sale. Still, one-quarter of homeowners believe they can skip reading online reviews (25%), researching sales history (25%) and interviewing their top candidates (25%) when hiring a real estate agent. These steps are essential to finding the right agent and gaining a competitive edge.

4. Highlighting the wrong features

Nearly half of homeowners (45%) think an open floor plan is the feature most likely to boost a home's sale price if mentioned in a listing description. However, [Zillow research](#) shows that these homes actually sell for 0.2% less than expected. By contrast, homes with natural materials like white oak flooring, walnut cabinets and soapstone countertops can sell for as much as 3.5% more. Only 9% of homeowners recognize this advantage.

5. Misunderstanding seller disclosures

More than half of homeowners (56%) think sellers should hide issues like structural problems (19%), pest infestations (15%), water damage (15%) or asbestos (14%) to sell a home faster. That could put a homeowner on the wrong side of the law. Sellers must disclose known issues to prospective buyers, and a trusted real estate agent can help ensure all legal requirements are met.

What homeowners get right

Sellers today need to be proactive to make sure their listing is seen by as many potential buyers as possible. Nearly 2 in 5 homeowners (37%) know that the most important question for sellers to ask an agent is where they plan to list the home for sale. A large majority (70%) understand that listing publicly on all major real estate portals, such as Zillow, Redfin and [Realtor.com](#), gives a seller the best chance of earning the most money.

Only 8% of homeowners say listing a home privately — only for clients of their real estate agent's brokerage — will give a seller the best chance of selling for the most money. The data backs that up: [Zillow research](#) finds that the typical home seller who did not list on the Multiple Listing Service (MLS) sold their home for nearly \$5,000 less.

In today's dynamic real estate market, homeowners need to stay informed and advocate for their listing. By

understanding these common misconceptions and working with a trusted agent, sellers can avoid costly mistakes and make the most of their home sale. Homeowners should explore a variety of resources to ensure they're putting their best foot forward and getting the most out of their biggest asset: their home.

Survey methodology

This online survey was conducted June 5-9, 2025, within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Zillow. The survey polled 1,387 U.S. adults ages 18 and older who own a home. For complete survey methodology, including weighting variables and subgroup sample sizes, please contact press@zillow.com.

About Zillow Group

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