

Survey: While Some Brokers Push Private Listing Networks, Most Soon-to-Be Sellers Want their Homes Seen By Every Buyer

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New Zillow poll finds sellers want pre-marketing to the broadest possible audience — at direct odds with a push by some brokers toward limited, private networks

- 85% of soon-to-be sellers are more likely to hire an agent who can pre-market their home to the broadest online audience
- 89% of Americans say real-time buyer demand signals would be valuable before selling their home
- 61% of soon-to-be sellers believe broad online marketing produces better outcomes than a limited private network

SEATTLE, May 15, 2026 /PRNewswire/ -- Some brokerages in the real estate industry are pitching sellers on private listings. Most sellers aren't buying it.

A new Zillow survey conducted by The Harris Poll — released as some brokerages and MLSs move to build out private listing networks — finds that the consumers those networks are supposedly designed to serve want something else entirely.

The pitch from private listing proponents is that keeping a home off the open market is simply "seller choice" — but when sellers are actually given that choice, they choose the opposite. Nearly two-thirds of soon-to-be sellers polled (61%) believe broad online exposure produces better outcomes than a limited private network.

This debate has been playing out in agent pitches and listing agreements across the country [for years](#) as a few of the largest names in real estate have doubled down on marketing saying that keeping a home out of the public eye

is a competitive advantage for sellers. The survey data adds a crucial dimension to that story: sellers, when given a chance to make an informed choice, disagree with this strategy.

Not All Pre-Marketing Is the Same

The real debate isn't whether to pre-market a home — it's who gets to see it when you do. Private listing networks market homes exclusively to buyers working with the same brokerage as the seller, limiting competition to a fraction of the available buyer pool and potentially **leaving money on the table for sellers**. Despite the consumer harm, brokerages are motivated to push this model because it lets them collect commissions from **both the seller and buyer** or use the listings to recruit agents from other brokerages.

By contrast, public pre-marketing introduces a home to the broadest possible audience before it goes live, giving sellers real-time demand signals they can actually use.

When it came to pre-marketing, soon-to-be sellers expressed a clear preference:

- 85% say they'd be more likely to hire an agent who can pre-market their home to the broadest online audience
- 56% would want it to be visible online for all possible shoppers to see
- 60% say real-time pre-market buyer data — views, saves and tour requests — would be extremely / very valuable when selling their home

"When a seller hires an agent, they're placing enormous trust in that person to get them the best outcome," said Errol Samuelson, chief industry development officer at Zillow. "Pre-marketing to a closed network is not the same thing as pre-marketing so the broadest audience in the country can see it for free — and sellers know the difference. They're not asking for limited access. They're asking for reach. Zillow believes every seller deserves that visibility, and every agent deserves the tools to deliver it."

Broad Benefits on Both Sides of the Transaction

The survey also found near-universal agreement among Americans about the benefits of pre-market exposure. A vast majority of Americans polled agree that early online exposure of a home to the broadest audience before it is officially listed for sale would help:

- Reach more buyers (84%)
- Sell a home faster (82%)
- Increase buyer competition (80%)
- Boost confidence in pricing strategy (78%)

- Strengthen their marketing strategy going in (76%)

Demand for early access isn't limited to sellers. Nearly 9 in 10 Americans (88%) expressed interest in viewing pre-marketed homes online if they were buying a home. Among buyers, the top perceived benefits of early listing visibility are more time to research the neighborhood (52%) and more time to get pre-qualified for financing (41%).

Sellers Spoke. Zillow Listened.

Sellers have made their choice clear about how they want to pre-market their home. That's why Zillow built Zillow Preview — and why its reach is about to grow significantly. Zillow and Realtor.com [recently announced](#) a collaboration to display Preview listings across both platforms simultaneously, meaning sellers can now reach the largest combined audience of home shoppers available anywhere online before their listing officially goes live.

Where private networks limit who sees a home and when, and are designed as much to bring new clients to the brokerage as to sell homes, Zillow Preview is different. It's designed to give sellers and agents maximum early visibility, the real-time data to act on it, and the ability to work with the brokerage of their choice. It's a fundamentally different proposition. Pre-marketing done right isn't closed to a select few; it's open to the broadest possible audience.

Survey methodology

This survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Zillow from April 21-23, 2026, among 2,058 U.S. adults ages 18 and older, among whom 211 have sold a home in the past two years (recent sellers) and 198 are currently listing/planning to list their home for sale in the next two years (soon-to-be sellers). The sampling precision of Harris online polls is measured by using a Bayesian credible interval. For this study, the sample data is accurate to within +/- 2.7 percentage points using a 95% confidence level. This credible interval will be wider among subsets of the surveyed population of interest. For complete survey methodology, including weighting variables and subgroup sample sizes, please contact press@zillow.com.

About Zillow Group:

Zillow Group, Inc. (Nasdaq: Z and ZG) is reimagining real estate to make home a reality for more and more people.

As the most visited real estate app and website in the United States, Zillow connects hundreds of millions of consumers with innovative technology, trusted agents and loan officers, and seamless digital solutions. With industry-leading tools and resources, Zillow supercharges real estate professionals so they can grow their businesses and deliver exceptional client experiences. For renters and housing providers, Zillow offers not only a robust marketplace but a set of end-to-end products and services to streamline applications, leases, payments and

more.

Zillow's ecosystem spans the entire home journey — from dreaming and shopping to renting, buying, selling and financing.

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