The Smart Home Dividend

What the published evidence actually says about smart-home capability, buyer demand, and time on market — and how listing agents can put it to work.

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THE SHORT VERSION

Three things are well supported by independent research. First, buyer demand for smart-home features is broad, mainstream, and rising fast — this is no longer an enthusiast niche. Second, listings that highlight smart-home features measurably sell faster. Third, the effect on *sale price* is real but indirect: it shows up as buyer pull, fewer days on market, and stronger negotiating position rather than as a line item on an appraisal.

That last point is not a weakness of the case — it is the case. A seller cannot renovate their way to a tech premium, but a listing *can* be differentiated for a fraction of the cost of any comparable upgrade. That is precisely the gap a capability layer like PrivateChief fills.

BUYERS WANT THIS

The National Association of Home Builders runs one of the most rigorous recurring surveys of buyer preferences in the country. In its most recent *What Home Buyers Really Want* study, **16 of the 19 home-technology features tested were rated essential or desirable by at least half of all buyers.**[1]

78% of buyers rate a programmable thermostat essential or desirable — the top-rated technology feature. NAHB, What Home Buyers Really Want, 2024	76% want security cameras — a figure that has climbed 36 percentage points in a decade. NAHB, What Home Buyers Really Want, 2024	74% want a video doorbell; 70% want a wireless security system. NAHB, What Home Buyers Really Want, 2024

Adoption is following demand. An independent 2025 survey by Harbor Research for the Association for Smarter Homes & Buildings found household smart-home adoption jumped from **49% in 2024 to 59% in 2025**, with safety and security the top interest area at 56%.[2] And the effect compounds: in a Coldwell Banker–CNET national survey, **81% of people already living with smart-home technology said they would be more likely to buy a home that came with it installed.**[3] Every year of rising adoption enlarges the pool of buyers who treat capability as an expectation, not a bonus.

EQUIPPED LISTINGS MOVE FASTER

Zillow's economists analyze millions of actual sales against the feature keywords in their listing descriptions — not what owners say they value, but what the market does. Their findings on smart features are consistent across years of analysis:

6 days faster — listings touting programmable thermostats, smart sprinklers, or smart lights sold up to six days sooner than expected. Zillow, ~2M home sales, 2023 analysis	**5 days** faster for homes with a doorbell camera — among the cheapest upgrades measured. Zillow, ~2M home sales, 2023 analysis	**33%** of agents surveyed said smart-equipped homes sell faster than homes without; 64% said buyer interest was clearly rising. Coldwell Banker, 513 agents, 2015

Days on market is not a soft metric. A listing that moves nearly a week faster carries less price-reduction risk, less carrying cost, and more leverage in negotiation — which is where the financial value of smart capability actually gets realized.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR VALUE

We will be straight about the limits of the evidence, because your credibility with clients depends on it. Appraisers do not reliably credit smart-home equipment as a line item, and the oft-quoted claims that automation adds three to five percent to a sale price trace back to vendor marketing, not independent research. What the independent record supports is this: smart capability widens the buyer pool, differentiates the listing, and shortens time on market — and Zillow's keyword research shows that features buyers are actively hunting for command measurable premiums when listings highlight them.[4]

> **The practical conclusion:** smart-home capability is the rare listing improvement whose cost is trivial next to its differentiating effect. Nobody should install a $40,000 kitchen to chase a tech premium. Adding an intelligent home layer costs a fraction of a single price reduction.

THE AGENT'S PLAY

Agents who work this evidence use smart-home capability in three ways:

- **Listing differentiation.** "Smart home" is a searchable, filterable term buyers actively look for. A home that can honestly tout an intelligent household system stands out in the same way staging once did — and photographs of a wall-mounted home assistant give listings a contemporary anchor.
- **The move-in concierge close.** A closing gift that manages the household — reminders, scheduling, home control, family coordination — keeps the agent's name attached to the client's daily life long after the transaction, at a price point comparable to a traditional closing gift.

- **The relocation soft landing.** New owners arrive knowing nothing about their home's quirks, services, or systems. An intelligent household assistant configured at handover turns the hardest weeks of ownership into the agent's best referral story.

PrivateChief is built for exactly this: a private household assistant that runs on hardware in the home, manages the family's day-to-day, and controls the home's smart devices — installed and configured as a turnkey, white-glove service. For agents, it converts the demand documented above into something a listing or a closing gift can actually deliver.

PARTNER WITH PRIVATECHIEF

$1,000 flat

Our referral program for real estate agents is deliberately simple: a flat $1,000 referral fee for every household you place with PrivateChief. No tiers, no percentages, no fine print.

There are no codes and no tracking links. Register once at **www.privatechief.com/agents** so we know who you are; when a household you refer books a consultation, they simply mention your name, and the credit is yours.

It starts with a conversation, not a purchase. Book a private consultation — for yourself, or together with your client — and we will walk through the service, the home, and what a white-glove installation looks like: **www.privatechief.com/consultation**

SOURCES

1. National Association of Home Builders, *What Home Buyers Really Want* (2024 edition) — national survey of recent and prospective home buyers. Summary: NAHB Eye On Housing, October 2024. eyeonhousing.org
2. Harbor Research for the Association for Smarter Homes & Buildings (ASHB), *2025 Smart Home Technology Trends Survey* — 611 respondents, U.S. and Canada. Summary: LightNOW, November 2025. lightnowblog.com
3. Coldwell Banker Real Estate & CNET, *Smart Home Marketplace Survey* — national survey of U.S. adults; the 81% figure is among current smart-home technology users. Agent findings (33% sell faster; 64% rising interest) from a 2015 survey of 513 Coldwell Banker agents. blog.coldwellbanker.com · prnewswire.com
4. Zillow Research — regression analyses of feature keywords in listing descriptions against actual sale outcomes: 271 features across ~2 million homes sold in 2022 (doorbell cameras up to 5 days faster; programmable thermostats, smart sprinklers, smart lights up to 6 days faster); ~230 features across 3.1 million homes sold 2020–21 (touted in-demand features commanded premiums up to 3.7%). zillow.com/research · zillow.mediaroom.com

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All figures verified against the primary sources listed above.