

New Research on How Properties Are Approaching Access Control

BY CARL HANLY

Key and access control technologies have evolved rapidly, giving multifamily properties more options than ever to manage apartment access. But widespread adoption of smart locks isn't happening yet. In fact, traditional keys are here to stay.

A nationwide survey of multifamily professionals, conducted in 2022 and again in 2024 by KeyTrak, revealed three common approaches:

1. **Traditional Keys:** 76% of respondents now use traditional keys exclusively, up from 61% in 2022. Of those, 81% have no plans to implement smart locks.
2. **Smart Locks:** Only 7% use smart locks exclusively, down slightly from 8%.
3. **Hybrid Approach:** Use of mixed methods dropped from 30% to 16%.

While properties often view smart locks as a way to enhance property operations, some of the top reasons for implementing smart locks include avoiding rekeying, standardizing technology and simplifying lockdown situations. Surprisingly, none cited security as one of those reasons.

While smart locks have some advantages, they don't automatically simplify operations. Batteries dying, programming and software malfunctions are all challenges that lead to a negative user experience and ends up increasing the workload for the property's staff.

Traditional keys continue to play a vital role in apartments, even as technology evolves. In addition to primary apartment keys, properties use keys for common areas, offices, storage areas, closets, mailboxes and other amenities - keeping their access control familiar and cost effective for their residents.

Whether using smart locks or traditional keys, operational issues are inevitable. While smart locks require contingency plans for battery failures and system errors, traditional keys need procedures for lost-key incidents and rekeying. With either system, storing keys and fobs in an electronic key control system helps prevent unauthorized access and maintains a full audit trail.

For more findings and insights into multifamily access control trends, download the full report at keytrak.com/access-trends.



Carl Hanly is a regional manager at KeyTrak, Inc.

