



## **DANGER AT AMERICA'S DOORSTEP: WHO HAS KEYS TO YOUR HOME?**

*Study Shows Majority of American Homeowners Have Wandering House Keys That Leave Their Homes and Lives Open to Potential Intruder Risk*

**MILWAUKEE (March 22, 2006)** – One of the easiest ways to deter a potential home intruder is to keep your doors and windows locked at all times. But, what can you do to safeguard your home if your house keys accidentally end up in the wrong hands? That's a question that nearly two out of every three American homeowners should consider closely, according to a new study.

The study, ***Danger at America's Doorstep: Who Has Keys to Your Home?***, conducted by Customer Profiles, Ltd. and Master Lock Company L.L.C., looked at how homeowners protect – or fail to protect – their house keys and safeguard their home. Key findings include:

- A majority (64%) of American homeowners have knowingly circulated their house keys outside of their immediate family.
  - Nearly one-third (27%) of American homeowners have given out a key three or more times
  - Almost 20 percent (17%) have four or more keys floating around out there
  - Nearly 15 percent (13%) have given out five or more keys!

### **And who has those keys?**

- While it seems common practice to give a key to a neighbor or friend (73%), nearly 20 percent of respondents (18%) have given a key to workers in their home – including contractors, painters, service men.
- Some 12 percent of homeowners have also given keys to cleaning workers; and 10 percent to boyfriends or girlfriends.

In each case, these homes become more and more vulnerable to a potential invasion with every key their owners allow to wander.

However, most at risk are the 68 percent of American homeowners who reported that they have allowed *unintended* access to their house keys, including instances where total strangers ended up with access to their homes.

- Nearly half (49%) of the survey respondents realized that relatives or acquaintances of those they've given a key to – people they do not know and have never met – have had access to that key.

Even more troubling, homeowners are giving direct access to their house keys to strangers like mechanics, valet parking attendants, cleaning workers and first-time babysitters. This sends an alarming message that many individuals simply aren't doing enough to protect their keys and are opening their doors to potential threats to their home and family.

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## **Burglars Find a Way to Exploit Security Weaknesses**

Every 15 seconds a burglar breaks into a U.S. house, apartment or condo, according to an FBI study, contributing to an estimated 2.1 million burglary offenses and an estimated \$3.5 billion in losses in 2004.<sup>1</sup> And, in an effort to avoid suspicion or awkward entry into a home, burglars are often quick to attack its easiest point of entry, and nothing’s easier than unlocking a front door with a set of original keys.

“Home security often becomes an issue of perception versus reality,” says John Heppner, President and CEO of Fortune Brands Storage and Security, including Master Lock Company L.L.C. “The perceived protection value of a \$10,000 home security system can lull a homeowner into a false sense of safety. But, that equipment is only as effective as it is used properly. Homeowners can never stop being diligent against protecting their houses as long as their front doors still swing open to anyone who has access to their keys.”

## **What are Americans Doing to Avoid Potential Risk?**

It is clear that American homeowners are not even thinking about the risk. While 10 percent of qualified survey respondents reported that someone had entered their home illegally with a key – the majority more than once – 77 percent failed to be concerned about the risk. Even more worrisome, nearly one-third (32%) did not think that anyone, ever, had had access to their keys – a troubling, potentially mistaken belief.

Nearly half of those who have given a key or keys or admitted to allowing unintended access (44%) have done nothing to ensure no one enters their home. About one-third (35%) merely asked for a key to be returned which does not address the risk of copies being made. Only a little over one in 10 (13%) changed the lock and a surprisingly-low eight percent used an additional lock.

“Too many Americans underestimate the potential risks they invite to their homes when they let their house keys wander. However, always an innovator in security products, Master Lock is committed to protecting homeowners from the threat of unlawful keyed entry with the introduction of the Master Lock NightWatch™ Deadbolt,” Heppner said.

## **The Most Secure Solution**

The Master Lock NightWatch Deadbolt is the only deadbolt designed to prevent an intruder from entering your home... even if they have your key.

It looks and works just like a standard deadbolt lock, but with a powerful new security feature found in no other lock. The NightWatch Deadbolt features a patented blocking function that locks out all keys.

To activate, owners simply lock the deadbolt as they would a standard deadbolt and then pull the lever towards them, while depressing a safety release that prevents accidental activation. This simple motion locks the deadbolt into an “engaged” position, marked by a red ring around the lever’s cylinder. In this position, the deadbolt is in NightWatch mode and blocks out any key. The lock is also impossible to pick when this function is engaged.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius\\_04/](http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius_04/)

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The NightWatch Deadbolt can only be engaged or disengaged from indoors, so it offers homeowners unmatched entry-door security while at home, and it’s impossible to accidentally engage the NightWatch feature to lock yourself out of your house.

At a retail price of less than \$29.99, the NightWatch Deadbolt is priced competitively against standard deadbolts but is a significant advancement over any other deadbolt technology currently on the market. And, it installs like any other deadbolt, requiring just a Phillips screwdriver.

The “Danger at America’s Doorstep” study was conducted with a representative sample of 912 homeowners, and a sub-sample group of 510 homeowners who admitted to having given a key or allowed unintended access to their key. The study was fielded through an online survey conducted by Harris Interactive in February, 2006.

### **Keys to Better Home Security:**

The addition of a NightWatch Deadbolt to your home’s front and back doors is one easy way to make your house less susceptible to invasion, but also keep these tips in mind when it comes to limiting outside access to your home.

1. Handle your house keys with care! If you’re carrying keys outside of the house, keep them secured somewhere where they won’t be forgotten or left behind. And when you leave your keys at home, keep them stored in a place that cannot be seen through your windows.
2. Don’t hide your keys in "secret" places outside your home – experienced burglars can usually find those places with ease.
3. Give your keys a low profile. Never attach your keys to anything that lists your name, address or phone number, and never leave them behind in a locked (or unlocked) car.
4. Always separate your house keys from your car keys each time you valet your car, or drop it off for maintenance – even if you’re only leaving them in someone else’s care for a few minutes. It takes just a matter of seconds to duplicate a key, and several of these services are likely to have your home address in their files.
5. If you must let someone else watch over your keys, give them to someone that will watch over them as if they were their own. And, remember that there is always an inherent risk of leaving your keys anywhere except in your own hands.

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### **About Master Lock**

Master Lock is the world’s largest manufacturer of padlocks and related security products providing innovative security solutions for home, automotive, campus, power sports, bike, and storage security needs for consumers and contractors alike. Master Lock’s Door Hardware Group brings industry-leading innovation and the recognized qualities of strength and security to the category of entry and interior doors. Its products can be found at key retailers and commercial distributors nationwide by visiting <http://www.masterdoorlock.com> and are sold by trusted e-tailers worldwide.

Master Lock Company L.L.C. is an operating unit of Fortune Brands, Inc., a leading consumer brands company with annual sales exceeding \$7 billion. Headquartered in Lincolnshire, Ill., Fortune Brands (NYSE: FO), is included in the S&P 500 Index.

For more information on Master Lock door hardware products and home security tips, visit [www.masterlock.com](http://www.masterlock.com) and [www.masterdoorlock.com](http://www.masterdoorlock.com).