WHITE PAPER

Car Brands With the Most Expensive Replacement Keys

An analysis of replacement key pricing across 1,463 vehicle model-years and 26 car brands, showing which brands cost the most to replace a key for — and why the badge matters less than the model year.

KeyMe Locksmiths Research

Executive Summary

KeyMe Locksmiths analyzed replacement key pricing from its Vehicle Product & Pricing Catalog, covering 1,463 unique make, model, and year combinations across 26 car and truck brands, model years 1998 through 2022. The goal: identify which brands carry the highest replacement key prices, and what separates them from the rest.

The answer is less about luxury badges than it first appears. Lexus tops the ranking, but it is followed by Infiniti, Subaru, Nissan, and Toyota — not the traditional American luxury marques. Import brands as a group price roughly 39% above domestic brands, and newer model years cost meaningfully more than older ones.

1,463	$146.82	$200.79	$359.99
Vehicle model-years with replacement key pricing	Catalog-wide average price per model-year	Lexus average, the highest among ranked brands	Highest single listed price (Toyota Highlander)

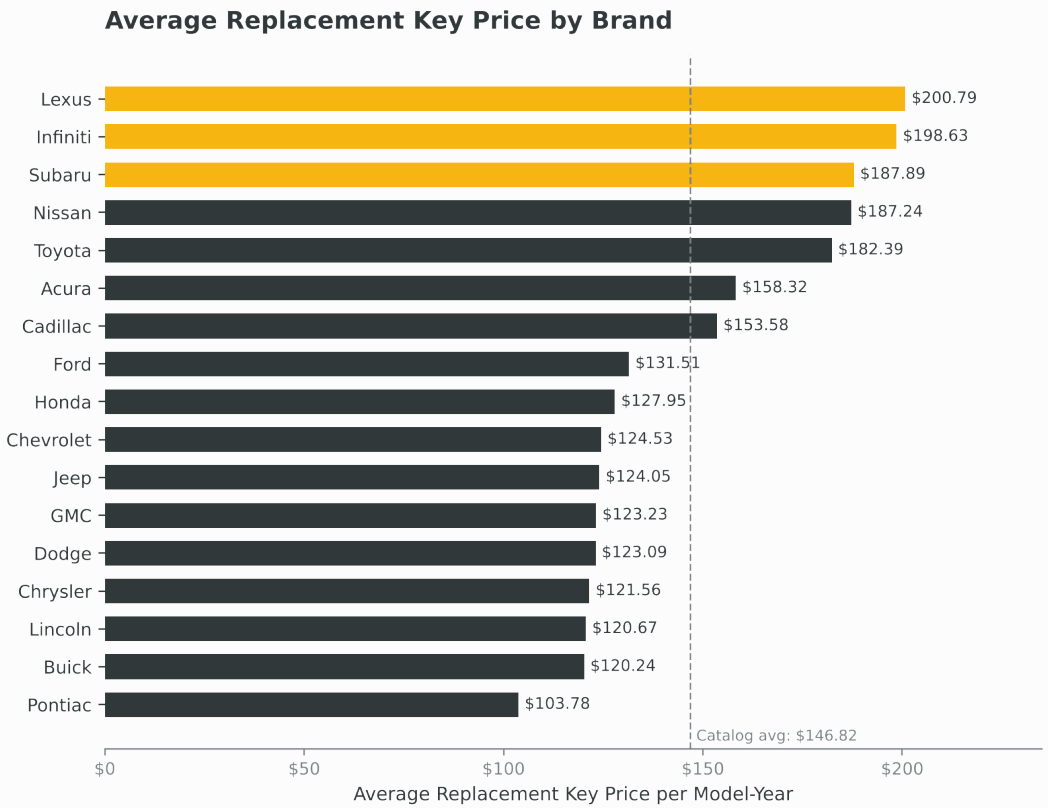
Key Findings

- **Lexus has the most expensive replacement keys** among brands with meaningful catalog coverage, averaging $200.79 per model-year. All 162 Lexus model-years are priced at $199.99 or more, and 155 of them at exactly $199.99.
- **The top five brands are all imports:** Lexus ($200.79), Infiniti ($198.63), Subaru ($187.89), Nissan ($187.24), and Toyota ($182.39). Cadillac is the highest-priced domestic brand at $153.58.
- **Import brands average $176.16 per model-year versus $126.56 for domestic brands** — a premium of about 39%.
- **The single highest listed price is $359.99**, for the Toyota Highlander (2016 and 2019). Toyota also has the widest price range of any brand, from $99.99 to $359.99.
- **Newer vehicles cost more.** Model years 2020–2022 average $170.01, about 28% above the $132.60 average for 2005–2009 model years.

> *“What you pay tracks the key more than the badge. Lexus and Infiniti sit at the top, but so do Nissan and Subaru, while a luxury name like Lincoln lands near the bottom of the list.”*
>
> KEYME LOCKSMITHS ANALYST

The Brand Ranking

Among the 17 brands with at least 20 model-years in the catalog, five import brands sit well above the rest, with averages of $182 or more per model-year. Everything else falls between about $104 and $158, led by Acura and Cadillac.



Brand averages are calculated across every model-year the brand has in the catalog, so each model-year counts equally regardless of how many vehicles were sold. The dashed line marks the catalog-wide average of $146.82.

Full Brand Ranking

Rank	Brand	Avg. Price	Lowest–Highest Listed	Model-Years
1	Lexus	$200.79	$199.99 – $229.99	162
2	Infiniti	$198.63	$169.99 – $209.99	22
3	Subaru	$187.89	$99.99 – $229.99	27
4	Nissan	$187.24	$99.99 – $209.99	102
5	Toyota	$182.39	$99.99 – $359.99	80
6	Acura	$158.32	$89.99 – $249.99	36
7	Cadillac	$153.58	$89.99 – $209.99	71
8	Ford	$131.51	$99.99 – $239.99	157
9	Honda	$127.95	$89.99 – $209.99	120
10	Chevrolet	$124.53	$99.99 – $209.99	194
11	Jeep	$124.05	$89.99 – $199.99	66
12	GMC	$123.23	$99.99 – $209.99	70
13	Dodge	$123.09	$89.99 – $219.99	108
14	Chrysler	$121.56	$89.99 – $199.99	36
15	Lincoln	$120.67	$99.99 – $169.99	44
16	Buick	$120.24	$89.99 – $209.99	68
17	Pontiac	$103.78	$89.99 – $119.99	29

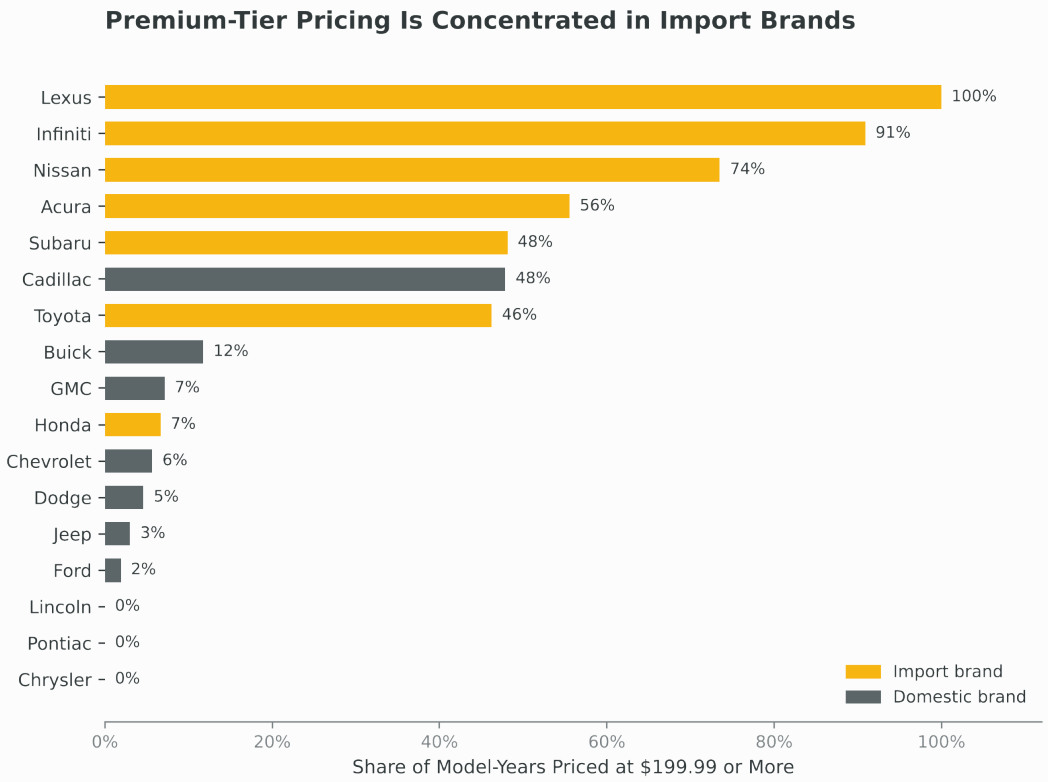
Ranking includes brands with 20 or more model-years in the catalog (17 brands, 1,392 of 1,463 model-years).

Brands with limited catalog coverage (not ranked): Ram ($204.99, 4 model-years); Hyundai ($198.81, 17 model-years); Kia ($181.87, 16 model-years); Volkswagen ($171.66, 6 model-years); Fiat ($154.99, 2 model-years); Scion ($144.28, 7 model-years); Saturn ($103.07, 13 model-years); Hummer ($99.99, 2 model-years); Suzuki ($99.99, 4 model-years). Ram, Hyundai, and Kia would rank near the top on averages alone, but their small samples make those figures less reliable.

> *“Domestic brands cluster in a tight band around $120 to $130. The import side is much more spread out, from Honda at about $128 up to Lexus at about $201, so for import owners the exact model and year really matter.”*
>
> **KEYME LOCKSMITHS PRODUCT LEAD**

Premium-Tier Pricing: Imports Lead

A second view of the same data: the share of each brand's model-years priced at $199.99 or more, the catalog's premium price tier. Roughly 30% of all model-years in the catalog sit in this tier, but the share varies enormously by brand.

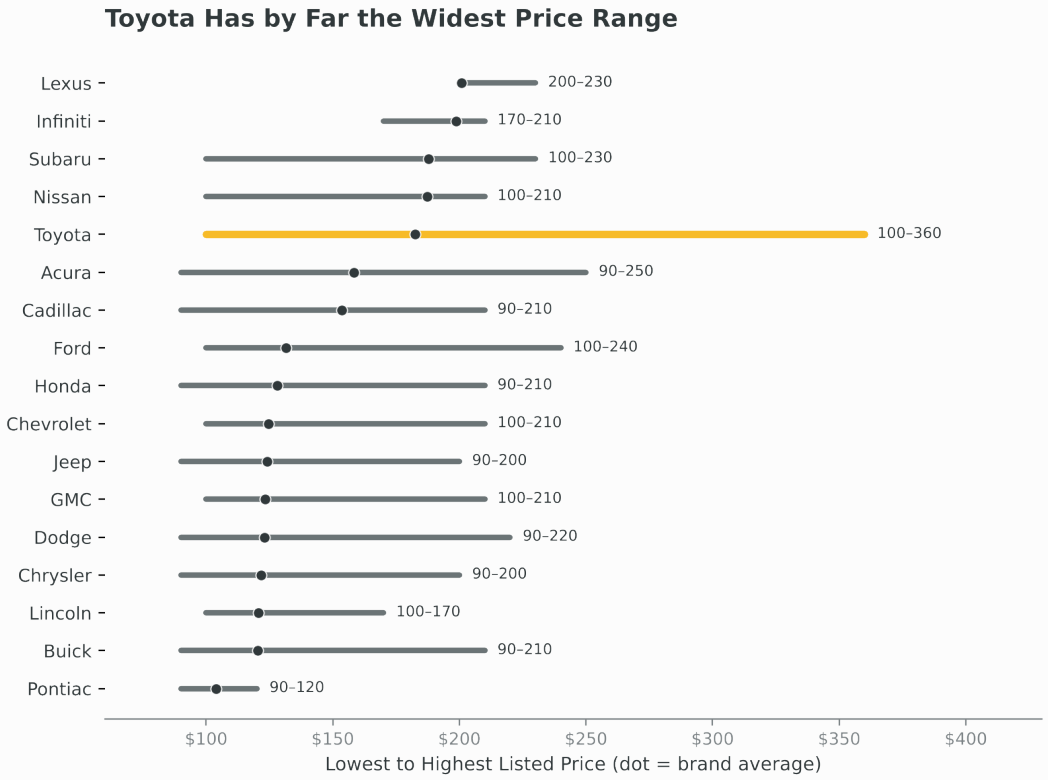


Every Lexus model-year (100%) and 91% of Infiniti model-years sit in the premium tier, along with roughly three in four Nissan model-years. Among domestic brands, only Cadillac (48%) has a substantial share; Ford, Jeep, Dodge, and Chevrolet are all at 6% or less, and Chrysler, Lincoln, and Pontiac have none. Acura is split: 56% of its model-years are in the premium tier, while 36% are priced under $100.

> *“Lexus is almost a flat price: 155 of its 162 model-years sit at exactly $199.99. If you drive one, there's very little surprise in the quote.”*
>
> **KEYME LOCKSMITHS ANALYST**

How Much Does Price Vary Within a Brand?

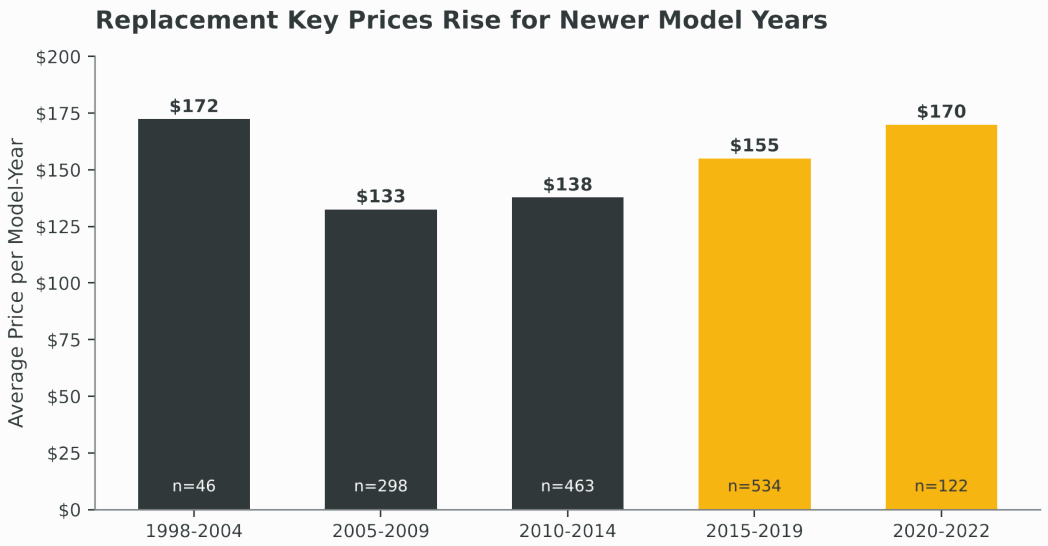
Brand averages hide a lot of variation. Some brands, like Lexus and Pontiac, have tight price ranges. Others span a wide gap between their cheapest and most expensive model-years.



Toyota is the standout, with listed prices running from $99.99 to $359.99 — a spread of $260, far wider than any other brand. The highest prices belong to the Highlander (up to $359.99 for 2016 and 2019 model-years) and the Sequoia ($349.99 for 2020 and 2021). At the model level, the Highlander has the highest average in the catalog among models with at least five model-years ($232.21), ahead of the Avalon ($223.32) and Prius ($218.32). The catalog does not indicate why prices differ within a brand.

Newer Vehicles Cost More

Across all brands, replacement key prices have risen with model year since the 2005–2009 low point, with the newest vehicles in the catalog carrying the highest averages.



The average rises from $132.60 for 2005–2009 model years to $137.78 for 2010–2014, $155.10 for 2015–2019, and $170.01 for 2020–2022 — a 28% increase over the full span. The oldest band (1998–2004) averages $172.38 but covers only 46 model-years, so it should be read with caution.

> *“Newer vehicles cost more. The average 2020-and-newer model year runs about 28% above the 2005 to 2009 group, which is consistent with more complex keys becoming standard.”*
>
> **KEYME LOCKSMITHS PRODUCT LEAD**

Consumer Insights

- **Check your exact model and year, not just your brand.** Within a single brand, listed prices can differ by well over $100. Toyota's range alone runs from $99.99 to $359.99.
- **If you drive a Lexus, Infiniti, Nissan, Subaru, or Toyota, expect a higher-than-average price.** These five brands average $182 to $201 per model-year, compared with a catalog-wide average of $146.82.
- **Domestic brand owners generally face lower and more predictable pricing.** Most domestic brands average between about $120 and $132, with very few model-years in the premium tier. Cadillac is the main exception.
- **A luxury badge doesn't guarantee a high price.** Lincoln averages $120.67, below Ford, while non-luxury brands like Nissan and Subaru price well above it.
- **Newer vehicles generally cost more to replace a key for.** If you're buying a recent model, factor a spare key into the purchase budget, since replacing all keys later is typically the more expensive route.

Frequently Asked Questions

Which brand has the most expensive replacement keys?

Among brands with at least 20 model-years in the catalog, Lexus, at an average of $200.79 per model-year. Ram has a slightly higher average ($204.99), but it has only four model-years in the catalog, so it isn't ranked.

Why is Toyota's price range so wide?

Listed prices vary by model and model year, with the Highlander and Sequoia carrying the highest prices ($349.99 to $359.99) while other Toyota models start around $99.99. The catalog doesn't explain the reason for the differences.

Are BMW, Mercedes-Benz, Audi, and other European luxury brands included?

No. The pricing tab used for this analysis covers 26 brands, mostly American, Japanese, and Korean. European luxury brands do not appear in it, so they are not ranked.

Are these the prices I will actually pay?

These are catalog prices as provided, shown per model-year. Final quotes can differ based on the specific key type needed and other factors, so treat them as a guide to relative cost between brands.

Do the rankings reflect the most popular cars?

No. Each model-year counts equally, so a brand with many niche model-years carries the same weight per entry as a best-seller. The rankings reflect catalog pricing, not sales volume.

Methodology

This analysis is based on KeyMe Locksmiths' Vehicle Product & Pricing Catalog, using the tab labeled "AKG," which we treat as replacement-key pricing for vehicles where no working key is available. The tab contained 2,505 rows; after removing 181 exact duplicate rows, 2,324 rows remained, representing 1,463 unique make, model, and year combinations across 26 brands and model years 1998 through 2022. Brand names were standardized to a single format.

About 36% of model-years (532 of 1,463) list more than one price, reflecting multiple options for the same vehicle. For these, the model-year figure is the average of the listed prices, and brand averages are the average across a brand's model-years. The "Lowest–Highest Listed" column shows the full spread of listed prices for the brand.

Brand rankings include the 17 brands with 20 or more model-years in the catalog (1,392 of 1,463 model-years). Nine brands with smaller coverage are reported separately and not ranked. For the import-versus-domestic comparison, domestic brands are Ford, Chevrolet, Jeep, GMC, Dodge, Chrysler, Lincoln, Buick, Cadillac, and Pontiac; import brands are Lexus, Infiniti, Subaru, Nissan, Toyota, Acura, and Honda. The premium tier is defined as a model-year averaging $199.99 or more.

These are catalog prices, not transaction data, and are not weighted by vehicle sales or the number of keys sold. The catalog does not include model years after 2022.

A second tab in the workbook (labeled "AnF") was reviewed but not used for brand rankings. It contains over 36,000 rows that mix cars with motorcycles, ATVs, recreational vehicles, forklifts, and non-U.S. models under the same make names, along with 2,421 blank prices and 3,978 prices of $0.00. Brand averages from that tab could not be reliably separated by vehicle type.

Interpretive statements, such as the link between higher prices and more complex key technology, are presented as reasonable explanations consistent with the data, not as findings verified through key-type or cost records.