



**B&Q**

# A Slice of Home Life 2023

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# Adapting our lives, changing our homes

The last few years haven't been easy and as we adapt our lives to the mounting pressures, we're changing our homes too.

At B&Q, we aim to help the nation create a home they desire, that can support their everchanging lifestyles, and ultimately enhance how they live. We're focused on listening to our customers to better understand the challenges they face, as well as the trends in their behaviour, so we can help them make decisions on their future home improvements.

In our second annual Slice of Home Life report, against the backdrop of the collective pressures we're all living with, you'll find insights into how as a nation, we're continuing to evolve our homes as our lives change. It's evident that UK households have a strong desire to innovate, juggling their needs for a multitude of functional spaces (such as areas to work, socialise, exercise, play, and entertain), with their emotional needs for privacy and refuge, and the economic need to manage costs.

All this helps inform how we can help make home improvement easier than most people imagine, so they can live more sustainably and economically.

With this in mind, we've included three areas of focus for this year:

- We know budgets are top of mind for consumers. We're working hard to offer great quality products at low prices to give consumers peace of mind as they complete their projects.
- Our product range is easier than ever to access with over 300 stores around the UK, 1hr Click + Collect, home delivery and other specialist services. We're continuing to expand our marketplace, with an increased choice of products from more sellers at diy.com, to make building a life simpler.
- From introducing peat-free compost in 1991, to being a founding member of the Forest Stewardship Council 30 years ago, we're always looking for ways to build on our heritage of looking after people and the planet. We've recently launched our Energy Saving Service, offering personalised guidance to help people make their homes more energy efficient and save money.

*Thank you to the customers who have contributed to this report by sharing a slice of their home life, providing invaluable insight into how we can help the nation to build a better life.*



Graham Bell, B&Q CEO

## Introduction

- 2023 is proving to be a year of transition for our homes. Covid's aftereffects still linger whilst increases in the cost-of-living have created new challenges that are demanding resilience and flexibility from both ourselves and our homes.

**1 in 5** 

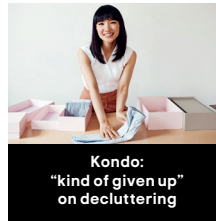
still haven't settled back into a routine post-Covid

- We're asking more of our homes than ever before. Our research reveals four emerging behavioural themes:

The flexible home    We're not for compromising    We start, but don't finish    Accidental sustainability

## We're not for compromising

- Over recent years we've heard a lot about decluttering and minimalism, but when even Marie Kondo gives up on things you know times are changing.
- Truth is, whether it's our pets, friends and family, or possessions we want what makes us 'us' around us. They bring happiness, and define who we are, which is as important as wallpaper and furniture to the feel of a home. The challenge is, where do we fit it all?
- There are no easy answers, but it explains why the utility room is becoming a must-have for many. A place to dry the washing, store the coats and shoes, and generally remove the clutter from our homes is fast becoming 2023's most desired space in the house.



**9 in 10** of us love our things – they make us happy

**38%** have reorganised / restyled their homes to make space for all the items needed for their pet(s)

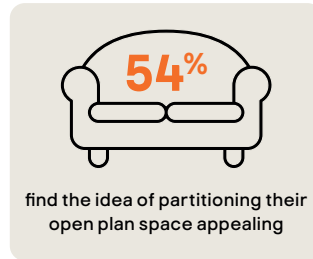
## We start, but don't finish

- Consumers feel busier, more pressured and have less free time than ever before. But this doesn't stop them starting home improvement projects. The desire to upgrade their homes is high, however, finishing a project is a real problem. Life gets in the way and many projects reach a stage of 'close to finished, but never quite done'.

More than **1 in 5** have an unfinished/paused project

## The flexible home

- The kitchen remains the heart of the home. With the addition of soft furnishings and living room furniture, the kitchen is becoming more important than ever, but it's also bringing its challenges around privacy, cooking odours and noise. In response, our research shows that it finally might be all over for the open plan.
- Dream bathrooms? A second micro-bathroom is the dream of many and would solve many an issue in our ever-crowded homes.
- Hybrid working is here to stay. Many of us work from home some of the time, but was the rush to create a dedicated office a mistaken use of space? Our research shows the home office is transitioning into a multi-functional room: part office, part spare bedroom and part dumping ground.



**18%** of home offices double-up as general storage rooms

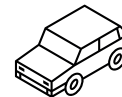
## Accidental sustainability

2023 shows we're making some good decisions for the environment, as well as some bad ones. We've called this **'Accidental sustainability'**

Accidental sustainability is where people make sustainable choices, but not necessarily with the environment in mind. For example, preventing draughts and insulating lofts have positive effects on the environment, but the truth is many made such decisions because of the impact they'd have on energy bills rather than the environmental benefits.

We see it in gardens too, where the pressure on space inside the home has seen us venture outside and turn our gardens into quasi-living areas, to the detriment of grass, bushes and trees, that are a more natural habitat for birds and insects.

**3 million** front gardens have been completely paved since 2005



## What's hot

The 5 most desired features

Houseplants



Utility rooms

Wooden floors



Wall clocks

Kitchen-living rooms



## What's not

The 5 least desired features



Agas

Bar carts/  
drinks trolleys

Statements on walls  
e.g. 'Live, laugh, love'



Artificial grass

Posh paint



# Context

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## Context

Faced with rising energy costs and inflation, it's no surprise that the nation has found the past year a challenge. This is most apparent in our homes, where we're now seeing significant changes in the way we live.



# 01

From our grown-up children who can't afford to buy their own home to pets purchased during Covid, our homes are more crowded than ever.



# 02

We're staying at home a lot more. Our homes are not only where we live, but are increasingly used as places to socialise and fuel our other passions.



# 03

Some of Covid's aftereffects remain, such as working from home. This means our houses are both places of work and play.



“

“I don't know how I feel about it all. There's just no calm anymore. It feels like one thing after another. You just sort of have to get on the best you can, but I do feel unsettled.”

Post-Family, Cambridge

# 1 in 5



still haven't settled back into a routine post-Covid

In response we're asking more of our homes than ever before

In the search for more space to satisfy these increased demands, many of us would choose to move house. Wider economic challenges make that difficult right now, but we're as stoic, practical and resilient as ever.

As a nation of innovators and home improvers we're...



01

**Demanding greater flexibility from our homes.**

02

**Not willing to compromise how we accommodate what we love in our homes.**

03

**Tackling projects and making them work** (though, we're not so great at finishing them).

04

**Accidentally becoming more sustainable** (with still a way to go).

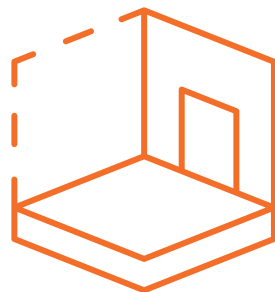
# 01

## The flexible home

From family members to friends and pets, our homes are growing in numbers. Under each roof, we're asking more of our homes and doing more behind closed doors. We're using our homes as workspaces, spending longer in our bathrooms, and watching TV outside in the kitchen. Ultimately, our homes are being asked to flex around our more complex needs. Traditional kitchens, dining rooms and living rooms are becoming few and far between. Today, these communal areas need to be able to evolve on a daily basis.



# Is it all over for the open-plan?



Over the last decade the kitchen-diner became a trend. As the style became more popular, we started cooking, eating and entertaining in this space. This trend has continued to gather pace and softer living room-style furnishings have been introduced to the kitchen. Enter the kitchen-diner-living room: a place for mealtimes, watching TV, doing homework and phone scrolling.

And, so, in 2023, we've seen increasing interest in open-plan rooms that can be flexibly partitioned - closed away when privacy is needed and opened up again when space is needed. Is it the beginning of the end of the traditional open-plan room?

So, how does the dawn of the kitchen-diner-living room affect the traditional living room? It's a case of role recalibration as it becomes the place for what we'd call 'committed relaxation'. The modern living room is becoming a space for studied calm; it's a place to read a book or watch a film in a planned 'by appointment' manner. As such, the style and design of these rooms is increasingly reflecting the role, with darker colours, reclined comfortable seating, and cushions and blankets creating cosy and private sanctuaries.



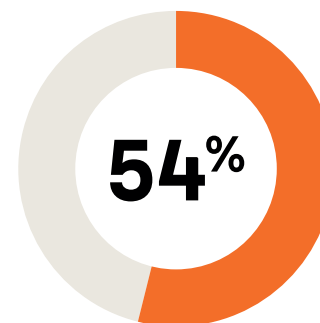
## A room that does it all can bring frustrations:

- More difficult/expensive to heat
- Lack of privacy and too much noise
- Cooking odours drifting from the kitchen

“

“I love having this one space where we can all be together doing different things, but sometimes it gets a bit much. My son's blaring something out on YouTube and I'm trying to work at the table. It's a nightmare. That's why we chucked in those doors that fold out so we can split the room into two when you need a bit of quiet.”

Family, Chelmsford



find the idea of partitioning their open plan space appealing

# Bathroom pressure – time for a second (micro) bathroom

The dream bathroom is a second bathroom

With more adults living under one roof, the pressure on bathrooms has mounted. It's exacerbated by the fact that each of us spends more time in there, as well as owning more toiletries than ever before. Getting the household in and out of the bathroom(s) at the start and end of the day has become an almost impossible task. Miss your slot? Go without a shower or wait for mayhem to commence.

It's no surprise then to see people seeking solutions, with a second bathroom high up on the priority list. Size doesn't matter either - the second bathroom is about efficiency and it can go into any space we can find. Whether it's a tiny en suite, shower room under the stairs or bathroom off the kitchen, compact second bathrooms that help households with the day-to-day are a hot trend for 2023.



56%

would like another bathroom in their home



The top 3 reasons for wanting an extra bathroom:

30%

want more space for their stuff

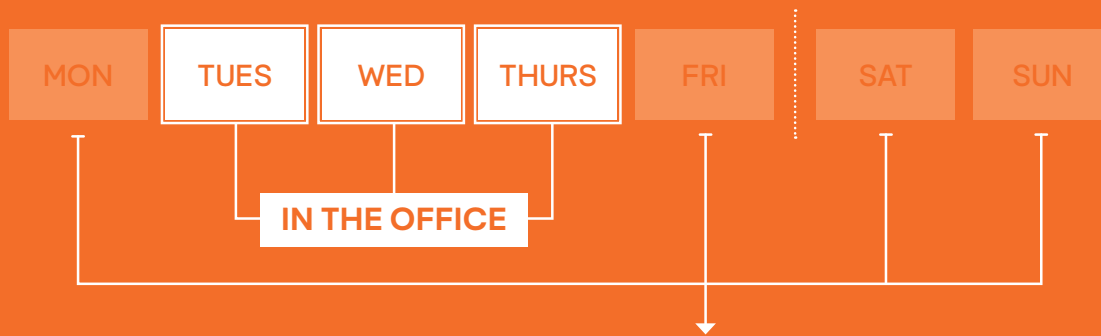
24%

think it would stop queues

21%

think it would help their household get through the morning rush quicker

# The home office – here to stay, but not all week



The home office is now redundant for four of seven days of the week. This is a waste of space and yet at the same time needed. It's no surprise to see this room become a bit of a dumping ground.

## The home office – a necessity in lockdown – is often seen as a poor use of space by those who have now returned to the office for at least some part of the week

Ultimately, we need the ability to work from home but not necessarily a permanent office – flexibility is key. Many home offices are also spare bedrooms (1 in 3), while some are gyms (1 in 10) and playrooms (1 in 20). This means that only one quarter (23%) of home office workers think that their surroundings feel professional. It's hard to be fully comfortable working in a room that is fighting to be something else for half of the week.



Of those who do have a home office, only **26%** get to have it all to themselves. The majority are forced to share it.

**32%**  
of those who work full/part-time, work from home at least two days a week

**18%**  
of home offices double up as general storage rooms  
**OCCUPIED**



## Whilst we want a flexible office, we need permanently good Wi-Fi connectivity

Whilst home offices may need greater flexibility, the need for great Wi-Fi is set in stone. In fact, the need for a solid internet connection has only increased, exacerbated again by the presence of more people in a home, all connected online, more of the time. And so, there is now an expectation that every room in every house will have good Wi-Fi. Unfortunately, many homes are not yet capable of delivering this.

Consequently, though it's only small at the moment, we're seeing a growing trend for proper home networking, with cabling built into walls and WAPs (wireless access points) being built in ceilings. These can truly turn a home into a full 100% Wi-Fi zone. This, in turn, facilitates the home becoming a smart home, something consumers are interested in, but don't always believe is achievable.

“

“I bought those extenders and they were a bit better, but then I heard about the idea of putting cables into the walls so that each room had a superpowerful signal. It's a bit of a faff but the difference is huge. Everyone can be online at the same time now and there's no issues which there always used to be.”

# 02

## **We're not for compromising**


Whilst there might be more of us in the home, we're not willing to compromise. We want our homes to accommodate all our needs, all our passions and all our possessions. Whether it's our pets or our stuff, our homes are expected to cope.

We're not for compromising

# Pets take priority

Pet ownership became popular during the Covid pandemic – it now presents a challenge – how can we best accommodate our new friends?

- They come with lots of food and other stuff e.g. leads, toys, bowls that have to be stored
- They need their own (often enclosed) space outside during the summer and inside during the winter

 **No easy solution**



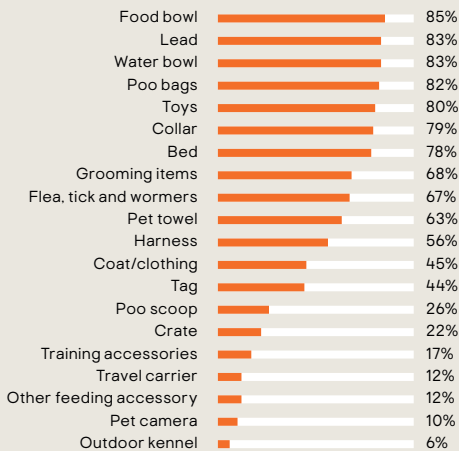
**1 in 5**

pet owners have considered moving house or building an extension to better accommodate their pets

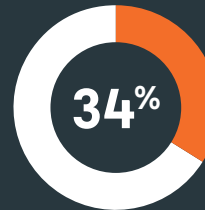
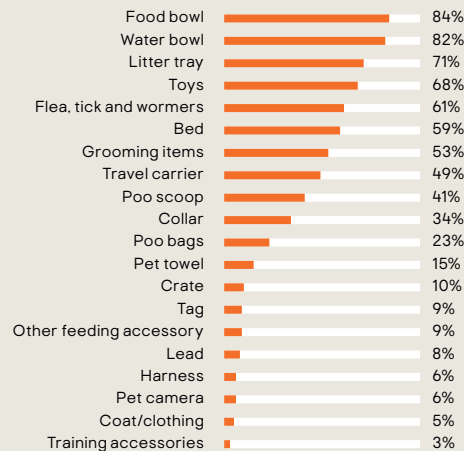
Categories/items that people have for their pets



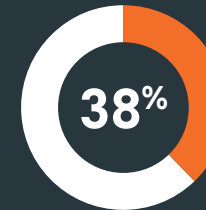
Av. 10



Av. 7



of pet owners feel that their pets dominate their homes



have reorganised/restyled their homes to make space for all the items needed for their pet(s)

“

It's a nightmare. I've built this, but it's right here in the living room. The rabbits have taken over, we need a better plan. Not sure what though.”

Family, Leeds



We're not for compromising

# Life in a cluttered oasis

Our stuff is us – but many of us have too much stuff for our homes

People often talk about clutter and their regret as to the amount that they own. Do they desire minimalism though? Not always. Even Marie Kondo has “kind of given up” on decluttering. People love their stuff and don't want to be rid of it. Nor do they want to store it away in the loft or garage (as we might have done in years gone by). They want to be able to see and access their stuff all the time. It's a reflection of who they are as people, their passions, hobbies and interests.

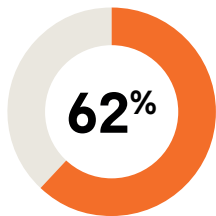
Stylish storage solutions (as important in terms of style as furniture) allow consumers to see their stuff on display and at the same time allow them easy access. Good examples of this can be seen through console/computer game display cabinets as well as other collectable display cabinets. Kids' toys are another category where consumers want open storage to allow quick and easy access.

Truth is, people just really like their stuff

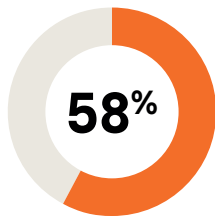
9 in 10

of us love our things – they make us happy

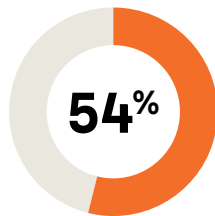
People's stuff outweighs the space they have to keep it – storing it all becomes a conundrum



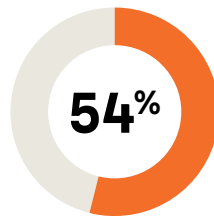
need more storage in their home



desperately need more storage



are constantly trying to find new places to store stuff



are always on the lookout for new storage solutions

More than

1 in 2

agree they have too much stuff (56%)

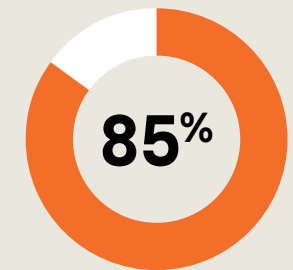
And yet...

66%

hang onto things they never use

51%

struggle to throw things away



of us want to find a way to store our things nicely in our homes, so that we can see them and access them easily

We're not for compromising

# The rise of the utility room

With storage at a premium, a utility room has become the must-have of 2023

Unlike an ostentatious second kitchen, a utility room is a practical space that finally takes the washing machine out of the kitchen. It frees the kitchen up to become the kitchen-diner-living room of our dreams, while providing a space for pets' beds and bowls, hanging up coats, storing shoes (decluttering hallways) and perhaps most importantly – drying washing indoors (removing clothes from racks and radiators all over the house).

Best of all, this can all be done in a room which is tucked away. They're rarely tidy but with the door closed, who cares?



**4 in 10**

of those with a utility room, think it is their most useful room

**1 in 5**

already have a utility room and a further 2 in 5 would add one if they could





# 03

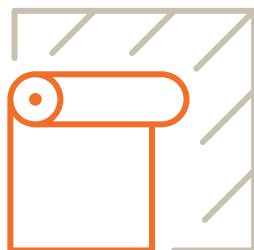
## **We start, but don't finish**

It's unsurprising, considering how much pressure there is on our homes, that the appetite to undertake DIY home improvement projects remains undiminished. But it seems that whilst starting projects isn't a problem, finishing them is.

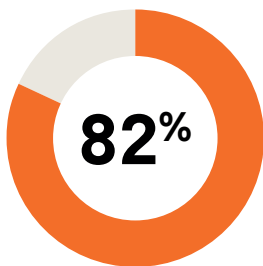
We start, but don't finish

# We're good at starting projects, but not so good at finishing them

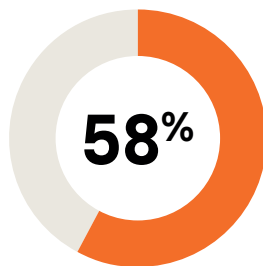
Consumers feel busier, more pressured and time-poor than ever before – but this doesn't stop them from wanting to upgrade their homes



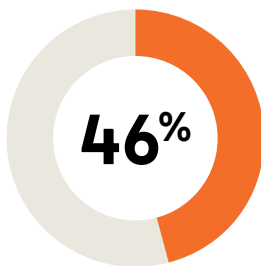
Finishing projects is a real problem – life gets in the way and many projects reach a stage of 'close to finished, but never quite done'



are yet to start a project that needs doing



have completed a project in the last 12 months

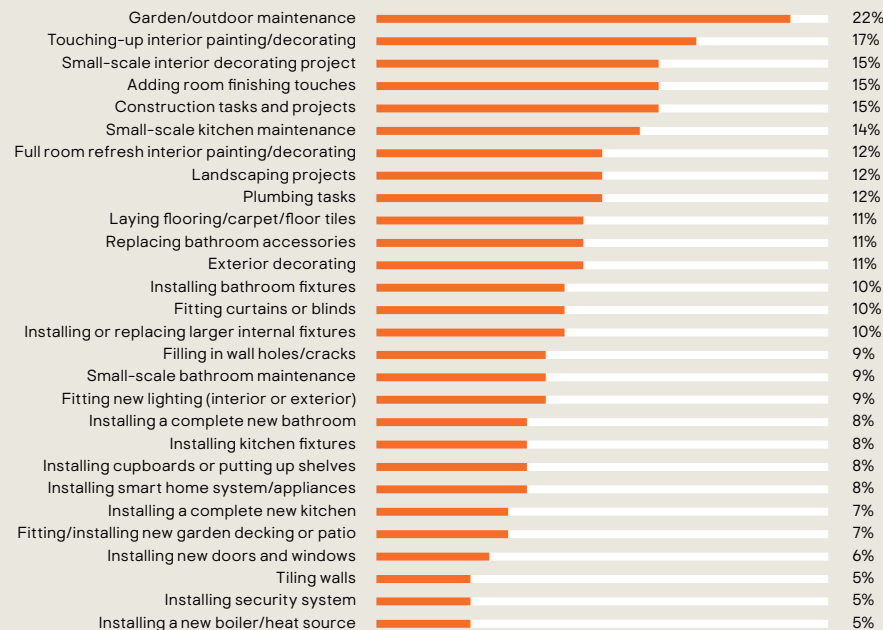


have a project (or projects) in progress



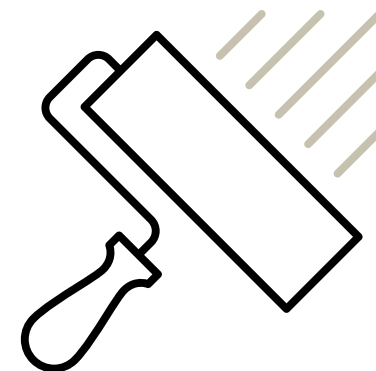
More than  
**1 in 5**  
have an unfinished/paused project

Proportion of projects unfinished



We start, but don't finish

# This doesn't affect people's willingness to start another project though...



One fifth of home improvers have a project on pause or that's unfinished. For the majority, it's down to the fact that they've moved on to their next exciting project, not because they've lost motivation.

More than

**1 in 5**

have an unfinished/  
paused project (22%)



of those

**3 in 4**

have another  
project on the go

Many live with unfinished jobs around the home. The excitement of planning a future project can make it hard to find the motivation to complete the previous one.

There are also cases of the 'forever project'. For example, gardens require year-round maintenance, while paintwork eventually takes knocks and needs touching up.

So, it's no surprise that many decide to finish a project when it starts to provide functional benefits and they've let go of the idea of the final, perfectly completed upgrade e.g. tiling a splashback, but deciding not to do the complex sealant task at the end.

# 04

## Accidental sustainability

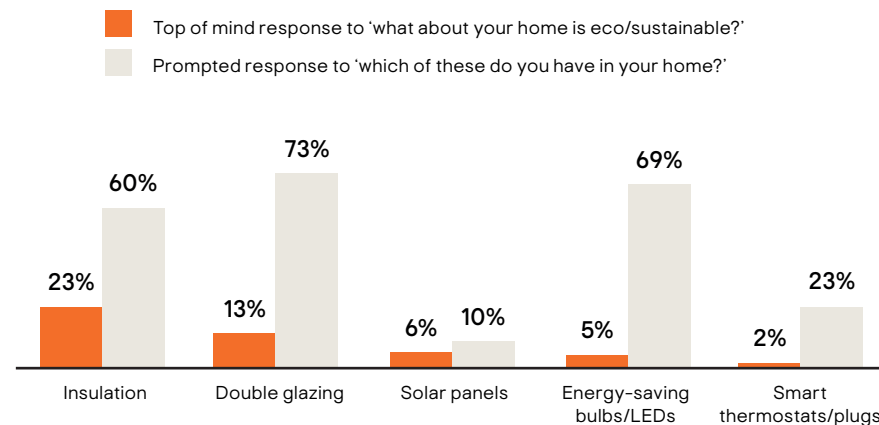
In the last year it seems we've finally turned a corner when it comes to sustainability in the home. But we'd be wrong to think that the UK has had an environmental epiphany. In truth, many sustainable decisions in the last year have been made in an attempt to cut energy costs, with few thinking more broadly of the environment. And whilst this is still good news, the lack of conscious thinking around the environment has meant that whilst we've made some positive, sustainable decisions, we've also been guilty of making decisions that are less eco-focused.

# We're making some good decisions for the environment, without thinking about the environment

Accidental sustainability is where people make sustainable decisions but not necessarily with the environment in mind. Plugging draughts, insulating lofts, turning down the boiler temperature are all positive decisions for the environment that we saw residents take in the last year, but these decisions were often made for their impact on reducing energy bills rather than for the benefit of the environment.

The sudden need for cost saving in winter 2022/23, due to high fuel prices combined with low temperatures, meant that many people had to make quick decisions about how best to keep warm and save money. Consumers made choices using the limited information available at the time, which sometimes lead them to choose expensive solutions, when often cheaper and simpler changes can have the greatest effect.

Because of the severity of the cost of living crisis in 2022, and because home improvers will have a bit more time to do their research, we expect to see more people in winter 2023/24 focusing on permanent, cost-effective and comparatively more sustainable changes.



# 3 in 10

say their homes are extremely/quite environmentally friendly/sustainable (36%), however 7 in 10 said the environment is important to them

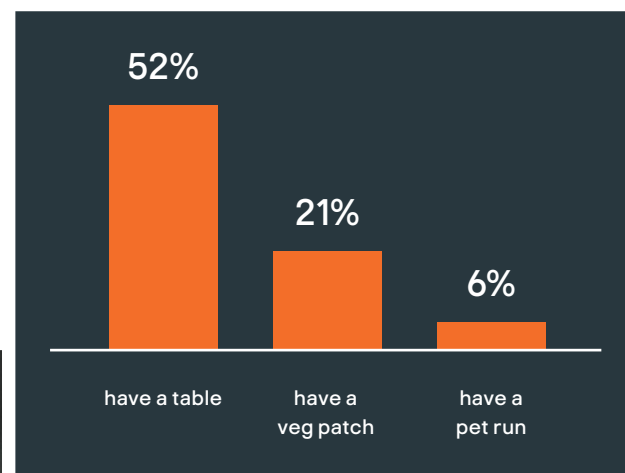
Many have these energy-saving products in their homes, but don't think of them in terms of environmental sustainability, unless they are prompted. This suggests that the items are not necessarily installed because they are the more sustainable choice.

# The home is spilling out into the garden (causing problems for nature)

In our gardens, balancing the needs of nature and ourselves is becoming increasingly challenging. No longer is a garden a lawn, some flowers and a place to hang the washing. It's now an outdoor kitchen, the location for a home office, a football pitch, a golf driving range and an extended living room, in one go, and often at the same time.

Pressures to remove the lawn, trees, bushes, plants, flowers and flower beds impact the garden's role as a natural habitat and as a source of wellbeing for ourselves. Encouraging nature in our gardens is important for us all.

**We're cramming a lot into the garden:**



3 million

front gardens have been completely paved since 2005



36% have a BBQ



“

“I just pulled all the trees and bushes out to create space. I hated the leaves falling down too. This is better, the kids have got some grass to play on and we've got room for this little pub we've put in.”

# Methodology and credits

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This research was conducted by The Source, an independent research agency. 50 in-depth UK home visits were conducted as part of this research in November 2022. 2,000 members of the UK public, aged 18+, were surveyed in January 2023. A further 1,000 were interviewed in February 2023.