



The GoodHome Report

June 2019



Happiness Research
Institute

GoodHome 
by **B&Q**

“Our home is holding who we are.
Where we can truly be ourselves.
It’s meant to be a place of
restoration. We can completely let
go and be our true selves.”

Lindsay Graham

Psychologist, Research Specialist, Head of The Psychology of Space
The Centre for the Built Environment, Berkeley, USA

This report is a summary of The GoodHome Report.

A full version is available at www.kingfisher.com/TheGoodHomeReport

The report was commissioned by Kingfisher plc, the international home improvement company which operates under four retail brands - B&Q, Castorama, Brico Dépôt and Screwfix.

contents

foreword	3
about our research	5
happiness and the home	7
how we feel about our homes	9
what makes a happy home?	13
who lives in a happy home?	17
where we found the happiest homes	21
how can we make our homes happier?	23

foreword

What makes a house a home? And what makes that home a happy one? These are the questions we have tried to answer.

Despite the fact that most of us spend more time in our homes than anywhere else, the impact our homes have on our happiness has been relatively unexplored. Until now.

Our research shows that often we look for happiness in the wrong places. Sometimes what we think makes us happy and what really makes us happy are not always the same.

Our research builds on the belief that our homes shape our lives. Our homes are where we find comfort and safety. Where we let our guard down and connect with loved ones. In a world demanding more and more of our attention, our homes are where we can retreat to and seek refuge.

The GoodHome Report builds on thousands of voices. Men and women. Young and old. People who live with others and those who live alone. Homeowners and tenants. Home improvers and those who wouldn't know where to start.

Through these many voices, we have learned how we connect with our homes emotionally and what is truly important to achieve happiness in them.

Together, we hope we may improve not only our homes but our quality of life. To paraphrase Winston Churchill: first we shape our homes and then our homes shape us. Homes are where we may not only live, but thrive.



Meik Wiking

CEO, Happiness Research Institute

I was twenty. I was visiting my grandma who had just done up her living room. Standing in her new room, she had a fresh energy and brightness. Seeing her there, happy and energised, convinced me that our homes are one of the keys to happiness.

That's why I've spent my life working in the home improvement industry. It's why at Kingfisher, our purpose is to make home improvement accessible for everyone. Because we believe everybody should be able to have a home they can feel good about.

With this in-depth research report, we've worked with the Happiness Research Institute to explore the emotional connection people have with their homes and what makes their homes special to them.

The research shows that if you're happy with your home, then you're far more likely to be happy in life. The most important factors are not where you live, how big your house is, or whether you rent or own. What matters most is having a home that gives you a feeling of safety, comfort, identity and pride. What matters is putting your stamp on your home, whether that be changing one room, as my grandmother did, or doing up an entire house.

The truth is that many home improvement projects are abandoned. It might be due to lack of inspiration. Too much complexity. Or not enough skill, time or money. Whatever the problem, there are often too many barriers to creating a home we can feel good about.

Which is why we're shaking things up and doing things differently. That starts with making it all a bit more possible. A bit easier, every step of the way. By simplifying home improvement, we can play our part in helping to make people's homes that little bit happier.

Véronique Laury

CEO, Kingfisher



about our research

methodology

From September 2018 to February 2019, we embarked on an exploratory journey to answer two primary questions: what makes a happy home and how can we make more people happier with their home in the future?

We surveyed 13,489 people and conducted 78 in-depth personal interviews with people from across 10 countries in Europe. We analysed these findings in relation to the immense amount of data on the condition of people's home, their demographics and their lifestyle in general.

We spoke to academics and experts from the fields of architecture, psychology, sustainable property development, neuroscience, city planning, and social science.

Additionally, we conducted an extensive study of the social media platform Instagram. We analysed the content of more than 300 social media posts that contained the hashtag #happyhome to see how people express their feelings about their home and show us what makes them proud and what causes them frustration with their home.

“People who feel safe, have a higher quality of life.”

Henrik Mahncke
Head of Analysis, Philanthropy,
Realdania Foundation,
Copenhagen, Denmark



quantitative data

13,489

respondents

10

countries

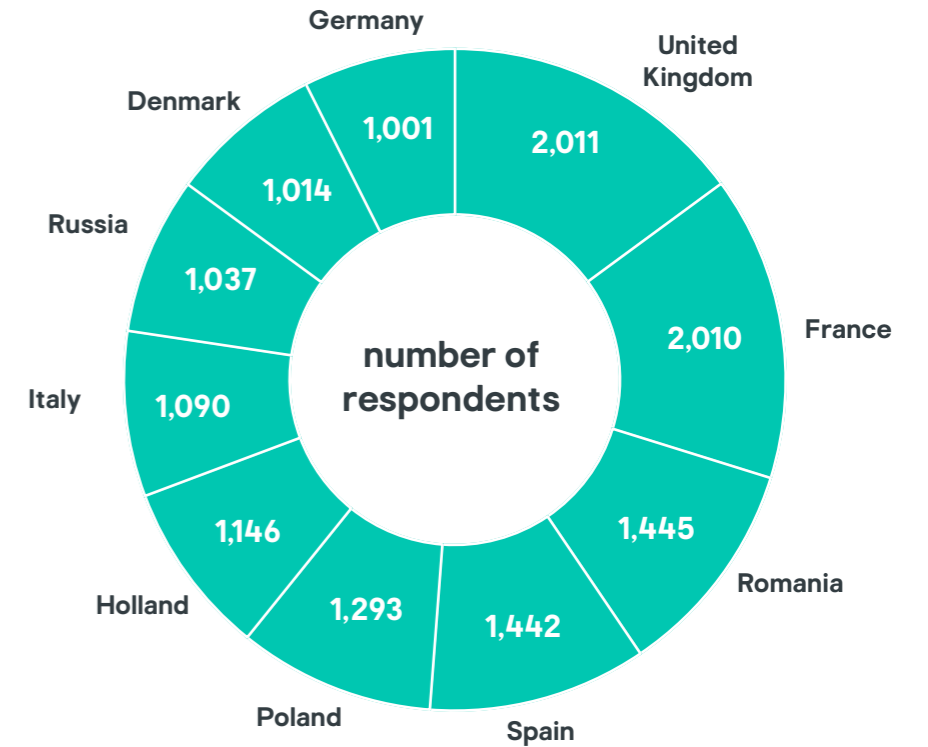
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questions

social media survey of
300 #happyhome tags

593,516

data points



qualitative data

78

interviews

10

countries

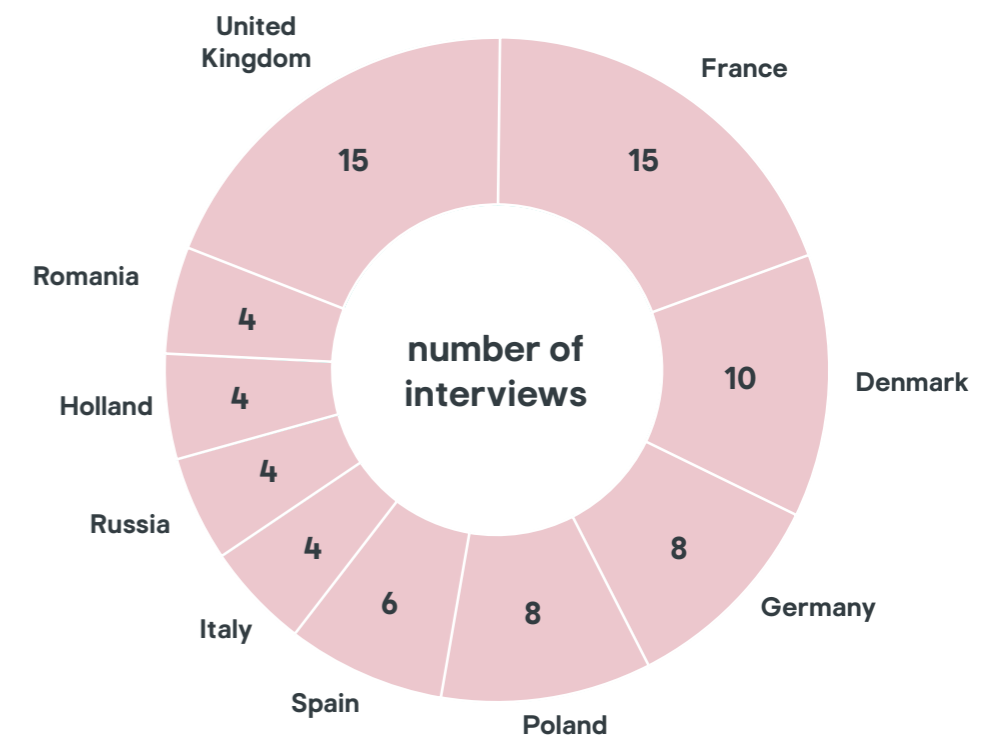
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questions

expert interviews
across academic fields

150,000

words - 470
pages transcribed



happiness and the home

If you are happy with your home, you are almost certainly happy in life. In fact, it may come as a surprise that our homes are more important to our overall happiness than our income or jobs.

This is what we found after interviewing more than 13,000 people across Europe about their home, and how happy they are in life.

We found that our home has a big impact on how we feel, bigger than you might expect. Our homes account for 15% of our overall happiness - that's almost three times more important than what we earn and five times more important than our employment status, our relationship status or whether we have children.*

* Happiness with the home accounts for as much as 15% of our overall happiness partly due to the fact that it reflects many basic human needs such as the need for safety and shelter.

“Home. I think of a place I enjoy being in, that makes me glad to be here. My home makes me happy. It is a feel-good place”

Benjamin, 26
Bretagne, France

Our homes account for

15%

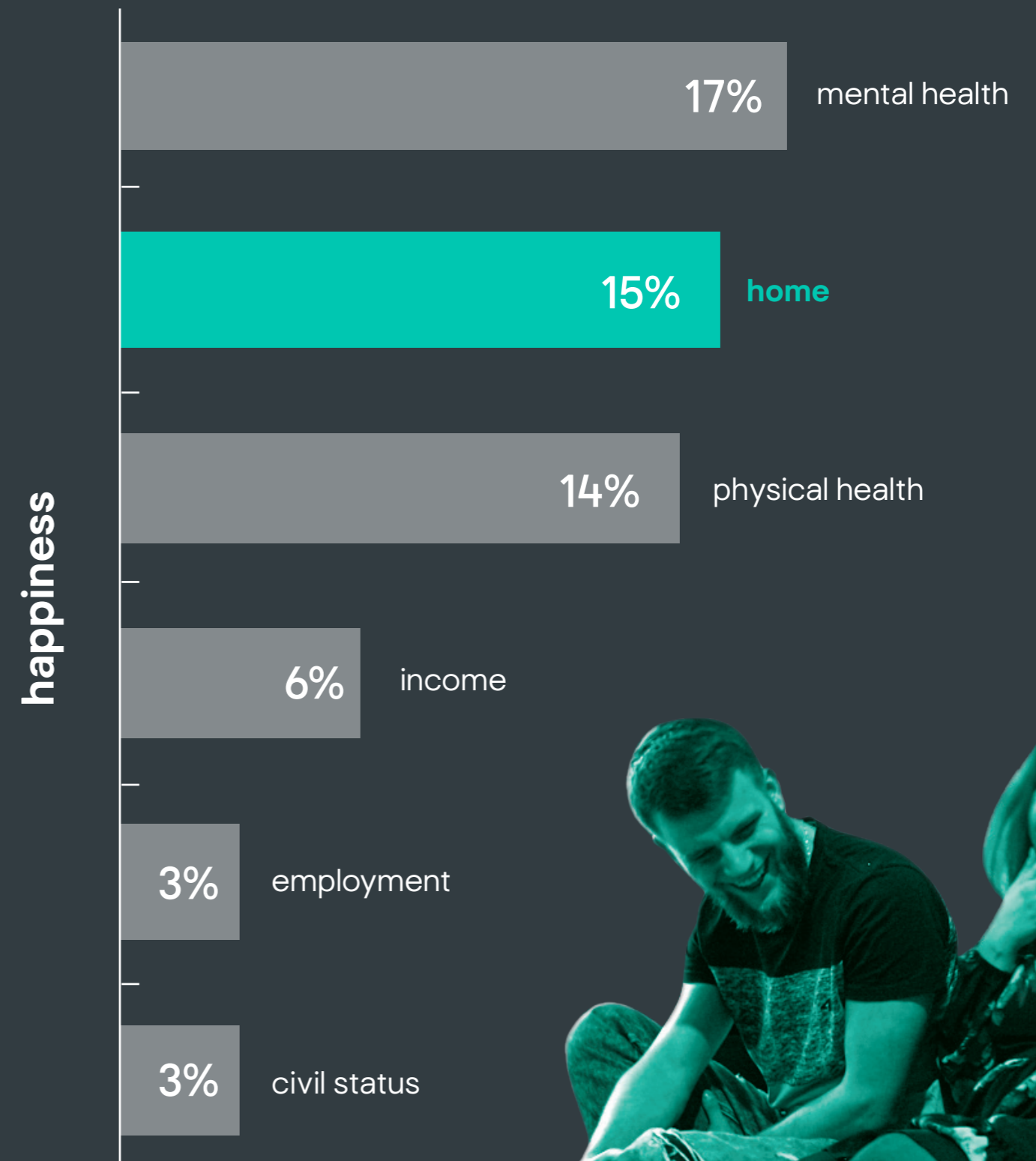
of our overall happiness. Much more than our income or employment status.

73%

of people who are happy at home are also happy in life.

happy home: happy life

our homes are one of the biggest factors in our overall happiness



how we feel about our homes

No matter where we live, our home reflects core emotional needs we all have. Like the desire to feel proud and express ourselves. To feel safe, comfortable and in control.

But what is it exactly that makes a home a happy one?

We wanted to explore the emotional connection we have with our homes. We did this by not only gathering views from thousands of people across Europe, but also by interviewing experts in psychology, architecture, urban development and social sciences.

We all have personal preferences; we prefer different styles, colours and materials in our homes. But we also discovered that there are core emotional needs that we all share, no matter who we are or where we live.

These five emotions ultimately decide how happy we feel at home:

pride

First and foremost, we want a home we can feel proud of. Usually those feelings of pride come from our personal achievements, whether that's a home improvement project we completed, or the time and energy we've invested to make a place feel like home. Pride is the core emotion that best explains happiness in general and happiness in the home.

comfort

The world can be hectic, so it's natural that we want our home to be a stress-free haven. A place where we can shut out the rest of the world, relax and unwind. Many of the people we spoke to talked about their home as a sanctuary or safe haven.

identity

It is important our home feels like an extension of ourselves. Somewhere we can express our own unique personality and sense of identity. Whether it's the colour we paint the walls or the furniture we choose, we want to put our own stamp on the place we live.

safety

We want to feel safe and secure in our homes. That doesn't just mean feeling safe from physical threats. It can also be about the condition of our home, such as whether the structure is sound or if the roof leaks.

control

Control is about the level to which we can decide what happens in our own home. This can be linked to things like budget or whether we rent or own the place we live in. It's ultimately about whether or not we feel on top of things.



Pride accounts for **44%** of our happiness with our home. But it's also the one fewest of us feel.

Whether or not we are able to fulfil each of these emotional needs has a big impact on how we feel about our home.

But one emotion in particular stands out from the rest. **Pride.**

Pride accounts for almost half of our home happiness, far more than any other emotion. Yet it is also one of the emotions the fewest of us feel.

In short, having a home we feel proud of is the single most important thing when it comes to feeling happy at home, but for many people that feels out of reach.

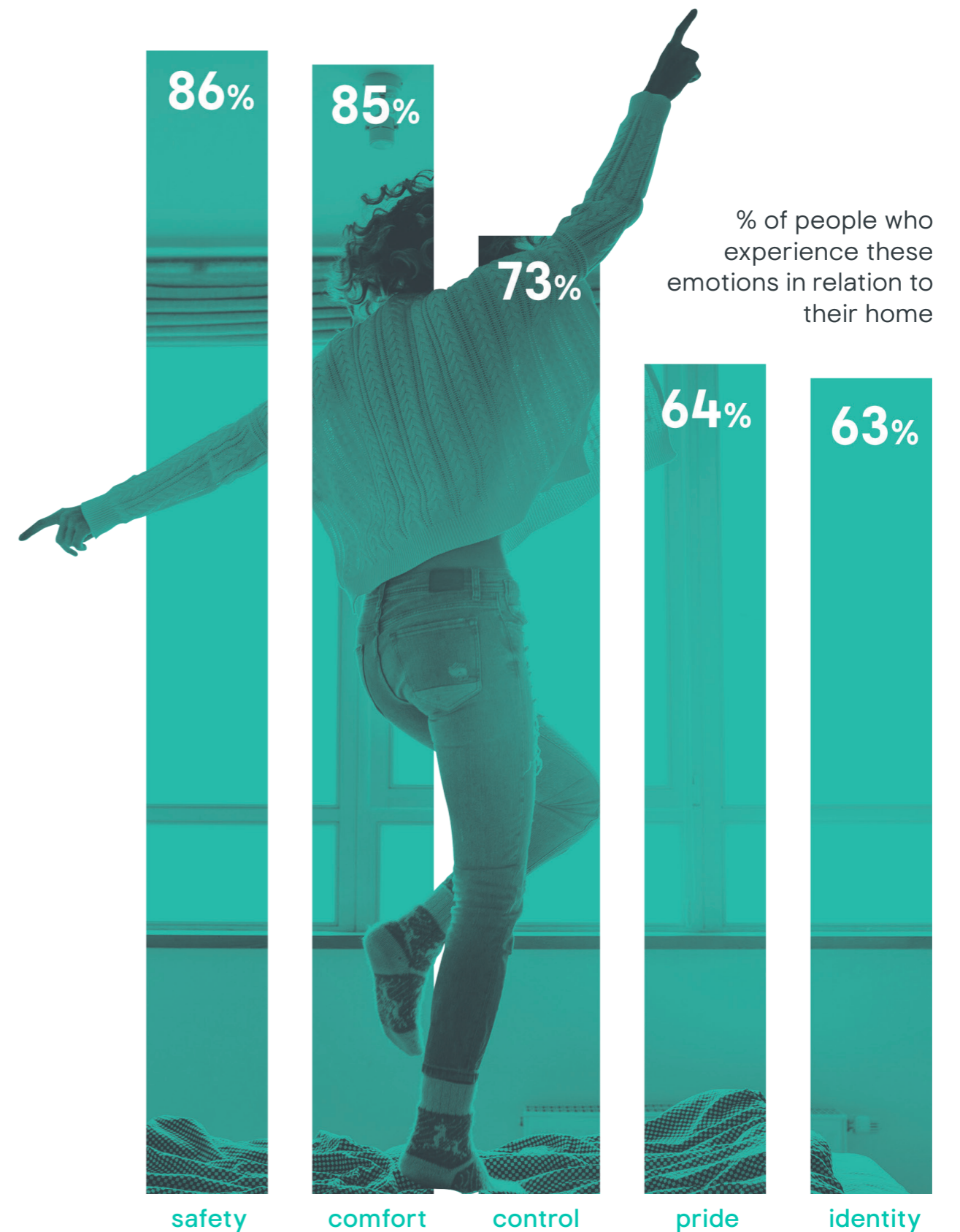
So, how can we feel more proud of our homes? In our study, we found a very clear link between how much pride people have in their homes and the time spent on home improvement. Improving your home, even if you have no actual interest in DIY or interiors, makes you prouder and happier.

“For me, my house is my sanctuary. My home is an extension of my soul.”

Diana, 36
Bucharest, Romania



despite its importance, pride is an emotion we are less likely to feel



what makes a happy home?

Our research shows that common wisdom about what makes us happy in our home is often wrong.

There are some universal living conditions that we all need in order to feel happy with our home. But these are not always what we think, and many of us end up looking for happiness in the wrong places.

you don't need to own your home


For many of us, the dream home is one we own. Yet owning your home is not amongst the most important conditions to feeling happy at home. That means renters can be just as happy with their homes as owners, so long as they feel a degree of control over home improvements and tenure.

Having an adaptable home is seven times more important for having a happy home than home ownership.

bigger homes are not always better

Another myth our research overturned is the idea that the larger our home, the happier we are in it. In fact, we found that the feeling of spaciousness is three times more important than the actual size of our home, number of rooms, or how many people share them. Regardless of the actual size of our home, 20% of us say we lack space. This is the single most common problem people experience. More than problems around air quality, temperature and humidity or natural light. It is also the problem that has the biggest impact on how we feel.

Whether our home feels spacious is three times more important than its actual size.



“Our home spaces are a collection of our lives and who we are and where we’ve been.”

Lindsay Graham

Psychologist, Research Specialist and Head of The Psychology of Space The Centre for the Built Environment, Berkeley, USA

“You can change the house. You can make it fit the different stages of your life. That’s related to quality of life. And the fact that you are the master.”

Henrik Mahncke
Head of Analysis, Philanthropy,
Realdania Foundation, Denmark



we need homes that change with us through life

Our lives are always changing, so a happy home is a lifetime project. A home that meets our needs now, may not do so in a few years’ time. Having an adaptable home is important and all five core emotions are dependent on this; four out of five of the people who feel proud of their home also live in a home they consider adaptable.

location doesn’t matter, green space matters

We found that whether we live in the city or the countryside makes no significant difference to our happiness. But having access to some kind of green space, like a garden or balcony, is universally important. We are significantly unhappier with our homes when we don’t have this. And yet 10% of people have no outdoor access at all.

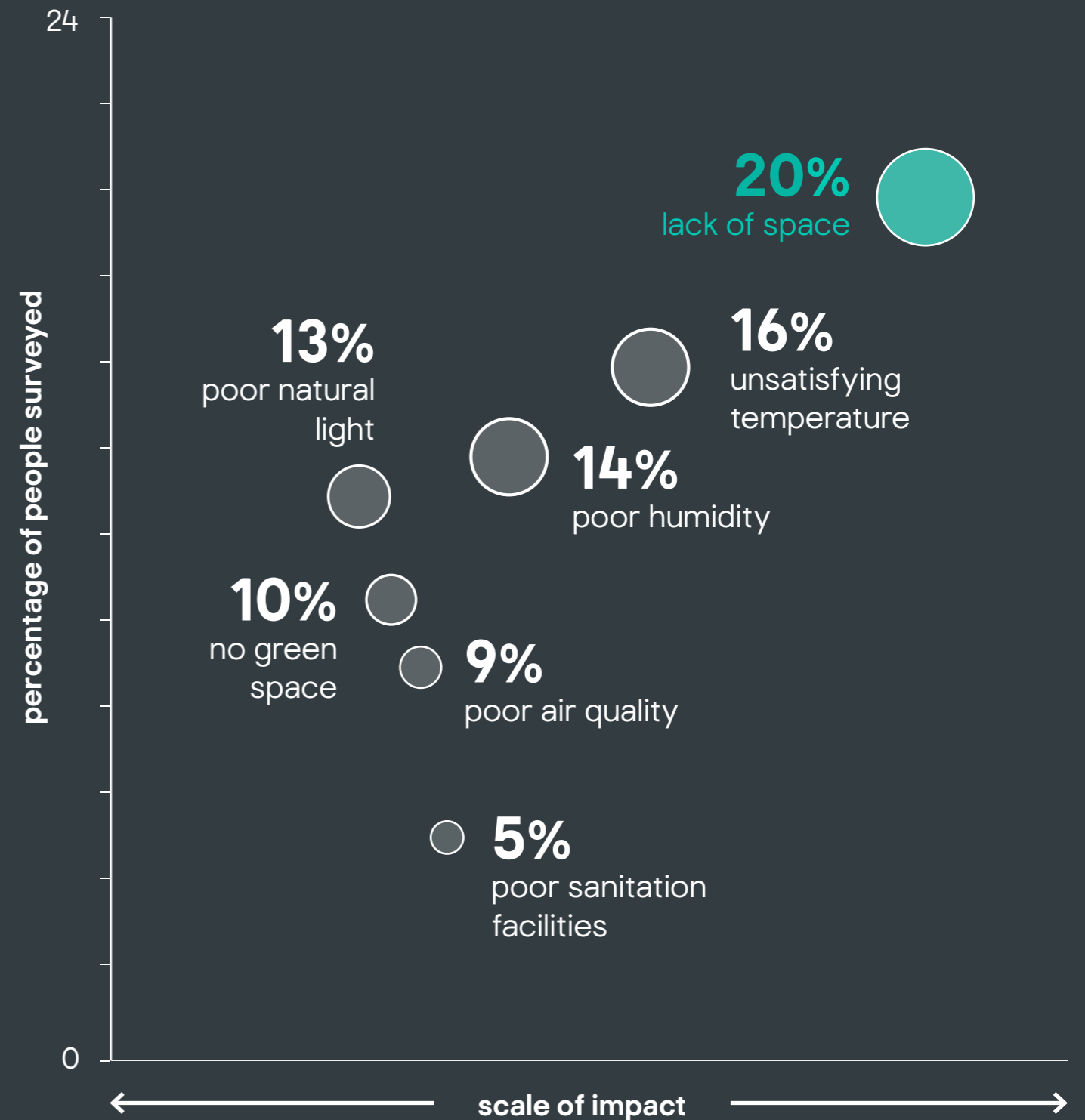
keeping up with the neighbours can make us unhappy

Since our expectations are influenced by how the people around us live, our neighbours are another important factor to consider. We found that people can be happier with their homes than we would expect if they have more than their neighbours, but the opposite is also true.

For example, if you rent your home, but most people around you own, you are more likely to be unhappy with your home. However, if a high proportion of people rent their home, for example in a country like Germany where around 50% of people rent their home, then renters are more likely to be happy.

what are the biggest problems with our homes?

We tested how lack of space undermines how happy we are with our home relative to other fundamental problems such as poor natural light and poor air quality.



who lives in a happy home?

A happy home isn't just down to material conditions. It's also about personal circumstances. Our life stage, the way we use our homes and the plans we have for them all affect our happiness levels too.

getting settled

The longer we can see ourselves living in a place, the more likely we are to be satisfied with it. For example, if we can imagine ourselves staying in our home for 10 years or more, we're much more likely to be happy with it than if we think we'll only be staying there for a short length of time.

It's all about getting settled. If we view our home as somewhere we will live for a long time, we are more likely to become emotionally attached to it, increasing our feelings of identity and pride in our homes.

“I am going to live here forever. That is fantastic. I don't have to think about anything. When I was younger I was thinking about [the uncertainty of where to live] a lot. But now we are here, and it is all good.”

Dorthe, 52
Island of Zealand, Denmark

50

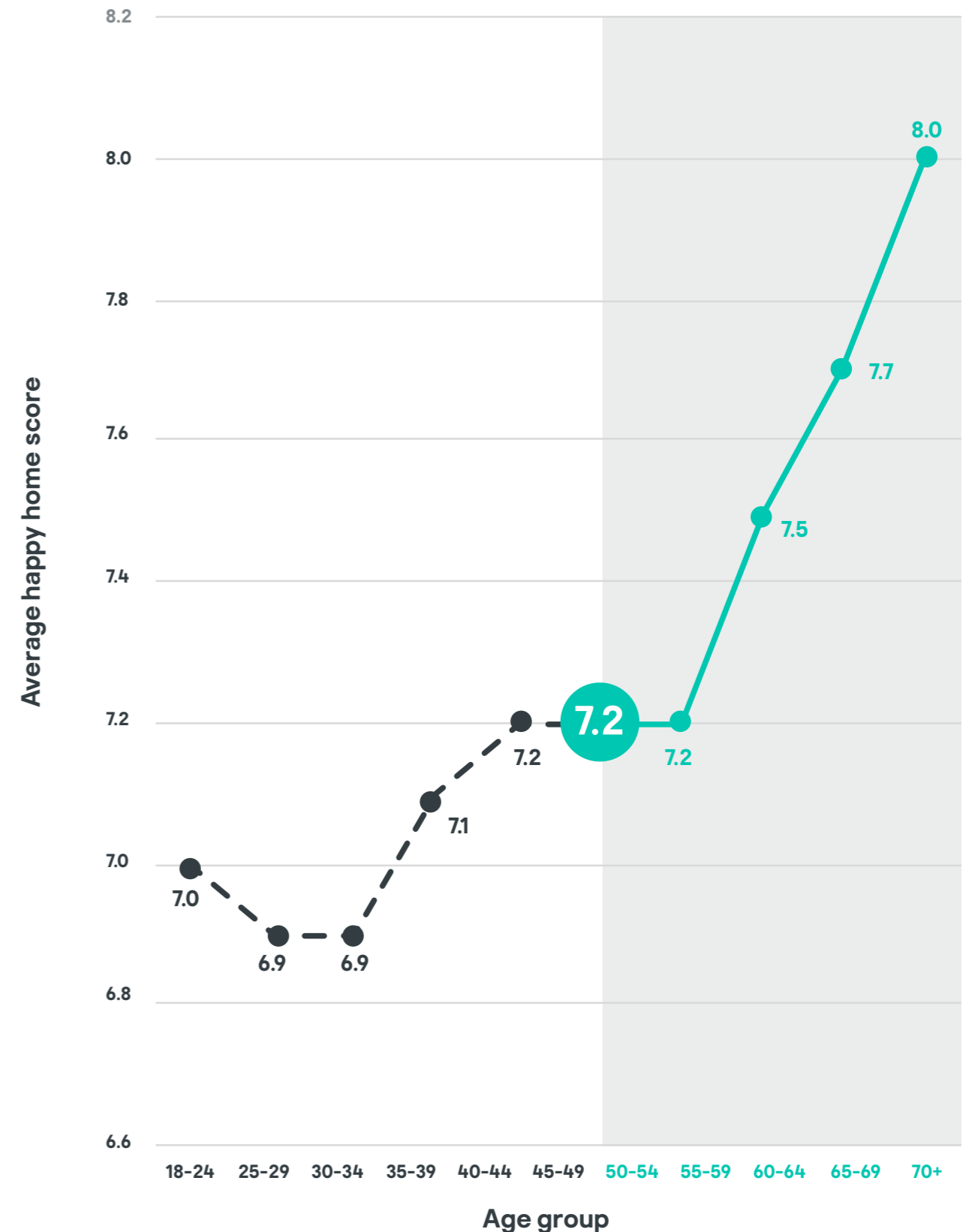
is the magic number

In our research, we found that our home happiness also increases with age. In fact, after we have turned 50, our home happiness only increases.

This is partly to do with the fact that as we grow older, we're more likely to feel settled in our home. There's a greater chance that we'll have found the place we want to call home for good.

And because we've found the home we can see ourselves staying in forever, it's also the age at which we're most likely to invest time and energy into our home. 50 is the age at which we found the average number of home improvements significantly increases.

after we turn 50, our home happiness increases



happy homes are social homes

One of the most consistent findings in happiness research is that strong social connections are crucial for our fulfillment, and we found that the same is true when it comes to our home. Of course, we all have our personal preferences and some of us prefer to keep our home private as a space to escape the stresses of daily life, or for some all-important 'me time'.

But, our analysis showed that people who place an importance on socialising at home tend to be much happier with their homes, especially when they regularly invite friends and family over.

In short, our pride in our home is likely to be at its highest when we feel able to share it with others.

home improvement also improves happiness

Taking the time to improve our home also has a positive impact on home happiness, regardless of whether we enjoy the process itself.

Our research found that

74%

of people who are both interested in and spend time doing home improvements are proud of their home.

This holds true even for people who are not keen home improvers: the majority (51%) of people who have no interest in home improvement but still do it, are also proud of their home.

In contrast, only 36% of people who neither have an interest in, nor spend time doing home improvement are proud of their home.



“I think home is somewhere you are proud to bring your friends and family back to.”

Stefan, 30
Berkshire, UK

where we found the happiest homes

We found that when it comes to having a happy home, we have lots in common.

No matter where we live, our homes drive emotional needs like the desire to feel proud, the need to unwind, to express our sense of identity, and whether we feel safe and in control. However, regardless of these similarities, we found that in some countries, people tend to be happier with their homes than in others.

When it comes to Europe's happiest homes, the Netherlands comes out top, followed by Germany and Denmark.

Higher standards of living and lower income inequality in these countries contribute to the idea that people are likely to be happier in general. But another factor that makes these countries stand out from the rest is space. Our research found that in the top three countries, people are much more likely to view their home as spacious, even when their home is relatively small.

Towards the bottom of the scale, the reverse is true: residents of lower ranking countries often feel as though their home doesn't have enough space.



countries with the happiest homes in Europe

In the top three countries, people are much more likely to view their home as spacious, even when their home is relatively small.

1		Netherlands	7.69
2		Germany	7.60
3		Denmark	7.47
4		United Kingdom	7.40
5		Spain	7.22
6		France	7.17
7		Romania	7.11
8		Italy	7.02
9		Poland	6.92
10		Russia	6.57

The happy home score is derived from the question: **On a scale from 0 to 10, how happy are you with your home?** An "unhappy home" or a "less happy home" is a score of 6 or below.

how can we make our homes happier?

Our research has found that common wisdom about what makes us happy in the home is often wrong. So what can we do to make our home happier?

We've found that our home is an important aspect of our wellbeing, and that being happy with our home makes us much more likely to feel happy in general. Investing time and energy in our home is therefore one way to boost our overall happiness, and there are steps that we can all take to improve our happy home score.

re-arrange space

1 Whilst the actual size of our home is less important, feeling like we don't have enough space was one of the basic needs found to have the greatest impact on the happy home. Rearranging and improving our homes to create a greater sense of space could therefore be an easy way for many of us to boost our happiness levels.

make time for change

2 We've found that taking the time to improve our homes has a positive impact on home happiness, regardless of whether we enjoy the process itself or not. This means that investing time and energy into updating our homes and adapting them to suit our changing needs is also an investment in our happiness.

invite people in

3 Our homes are happier when we invite people to share them with us. This increases our pride in our homes, as well as the emotional connection we feel with where we live. Both of these factors are important drivers of home happiness.

get green-fingered

4 No matter where we live, access to green space makes a big difference to our happiness levels; we found we're significantly unhappier without it. Even if we don't have a garden or balcony, bringing some greenery into our homes will improve our overall wellbeing.

put your own stamp on it

5 Whether we rent or own, what matters is that we identify with our homes and feel settled there. Finding ways to add personality to where we live will create a home we feel more happy with.



recommendations for policy makers

Beyond what we can all do in our own homes, there are also some areas that policy makers, architects and other influential decision makers should consider to help us build happier homes in our towns and cities.

stable tenures

1

Whether we rent or own is not what matters most when it comes to our overall happiness, but what does matter is having a sense of control. This sense of control is harder to achieve in rental markets that are relatively unregulated, where tenancies tend to be shorter and tenants are less able to make improvements to the property. Encouraging longer, more stable rental tenures, such as those common in Germany, where a high proportion of renters also score highly for home happiness, could be one way forward.

adaptability

2

Adaptability is one of the most important factors explaining why some people are happier with their homes. It's about being able to change rooms and layouts when life circumstances change. Early on in the design process, we should be considering how we can make the space in the homes we build as flexible as possible for the future.

green access

3

Having access to green space, whether a communal space or a private garden, almost always improves happiness. Planning or opening up more easily accessible outside space in our towns and neighbourhoods is a way for planners and developers to improve future residents' home happiness.

skills and training

4

Developing home improvement skills as part of a school education or training is one way to give people the confidence to make changes to their homes and equip them with the knowledge and know-how to do so.





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