

LIFE AT HOME

BEATING THE BATTLES

2017
REPORT #4

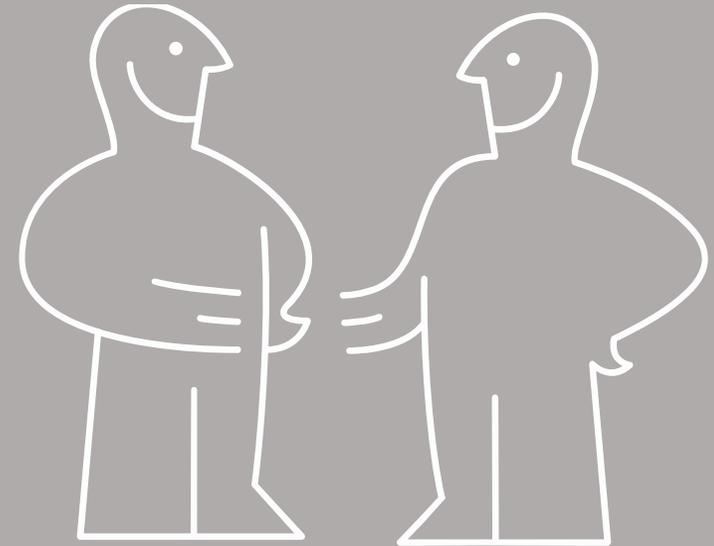


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At IKEA we are guided by our vision to create a better everyday life for the many people.

We believe that creating a **better life** starts with a **better life at home.**

That's why we continually explore **how life at home is changing** – however big or small – by meeting people in and around their homes, all over the world.



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Executive summary



For this year's Life at Home Report, we wanted to go **further than ever before** to understand people's needs and dreams at home.

By using a new **mix of methodologies**, over six months, we stretched ourselves to meet people wherever they are in life and around the world.

Working together with others, we used a mixture of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies to create this report.

- We explored online chatter through **social media listening**
- We conducted **36 in-home interviews** in Austin, Chengdu, Osaka, Copenhagen, Mumbai, and Munich
- We spent 12 weeks collaborating with **18 people living in unusual or creative locations**, via text chats and video diaries, and then we brought these 'Home Pioneers' together for a one-day workshop to understand what better homes feel like
- We **interviewed 4 experts** who specialise in ethnographic research, future archaeology and industrial design, materialism, psychology, and digital and cultural anthropology
- We hosted chats in **online communities in our 7 core countries** (USA, China, India, Denmark, Germany, Japan and Russia) with 650 people; they're defined as **core countries** because they are globally representative
- And finally we **surveyed 21,419 people in 22 countries** to take our insights even further

We've pushed ourselves to get to the heart of what makes a better life at home. We found that most people love their homes - **the majority (55-70%) feel proud, joyful, and peaceful when they think about where they live.**

But life at home is a mix of things which work well, and things which work less well. So this report gets into every corner of people's homes, to understand how they deal with the battles that unite us all no matter where – and how – we live.

Let's create a better life at home!

Summary: Five common tensions

1. The importance of meaningful objects vs. the pressure to declutter

Globally, **27% of people think society puts pressure on us to live minimally. And 49% of people say the main cause of their domestic arguments are due to different feelings about clutter.** We found that buying things that honour experiences can help us view our possessions more objectively, and help us manage our stuff better.

2. The need for our personal space and things vs. the struggle to ask for this

Negotiating what's yours and mine can feel like the ultimate battle. Of all the arguments we have at home, **17% stem from intruding in other people's space. But 42% of people say they find it hard to ask for their own area, so the battle-lines are often unclear.** People are most possessive about **seating**, and a significant number (**40%**) **say that they live with things they hate which belong to other people.** What's more, **about a fifth of people (19%) have thrown away something that belongs to someone that they live with, without telling them!** We found that creating shared value for belongings is the key to fewer fights.

3. The feeling of home starting within us vs. the outside creeping in to distract us

We are often physically present at home, but are we all mentally present? In our seven core countries (Denmark, USA, Germany, China, Japan, India, Russia) **57% of people say they always feel mentally present in the home, meaning that four in ten struggle to maintain that feeling.** Presence is rooted in expressing yourself, our interaction with others, and the kinds of activities we do in the home. We found it can be purposefully designed into our homes through the consideration of things, spaces and nature.

4. The endless possibilities of technology vs. its downsides for home unity

More than a third of people (**36%**) say they are excited to bring technology into their homes to help them feel more connected to the other people they live with. But we can also see that whilst technology offers deeper connections, **another 33% find it challenging to get the right balance at home.** We are still learning how to interact with technology, and balance its effects on relationships in the home.

5. The constantly evolving home vs. the desire for it to be 'finished'

People are aware that their home is a never-ending story. We explored this in last year's report. So we've gone deeper to understand how people feel about this. The picture is complex but reveals some common concerns. We found that **26% of people want to make all their changes at once, but don't feel they have the energy. A further 21% are afraid to start in case they don't finish. And 20% can't figure out how to manage their spaces to make the changes they want.** We found that true 'home comfort' is achieved when a home reflects people's present needs, not their previous or anticipated ones.

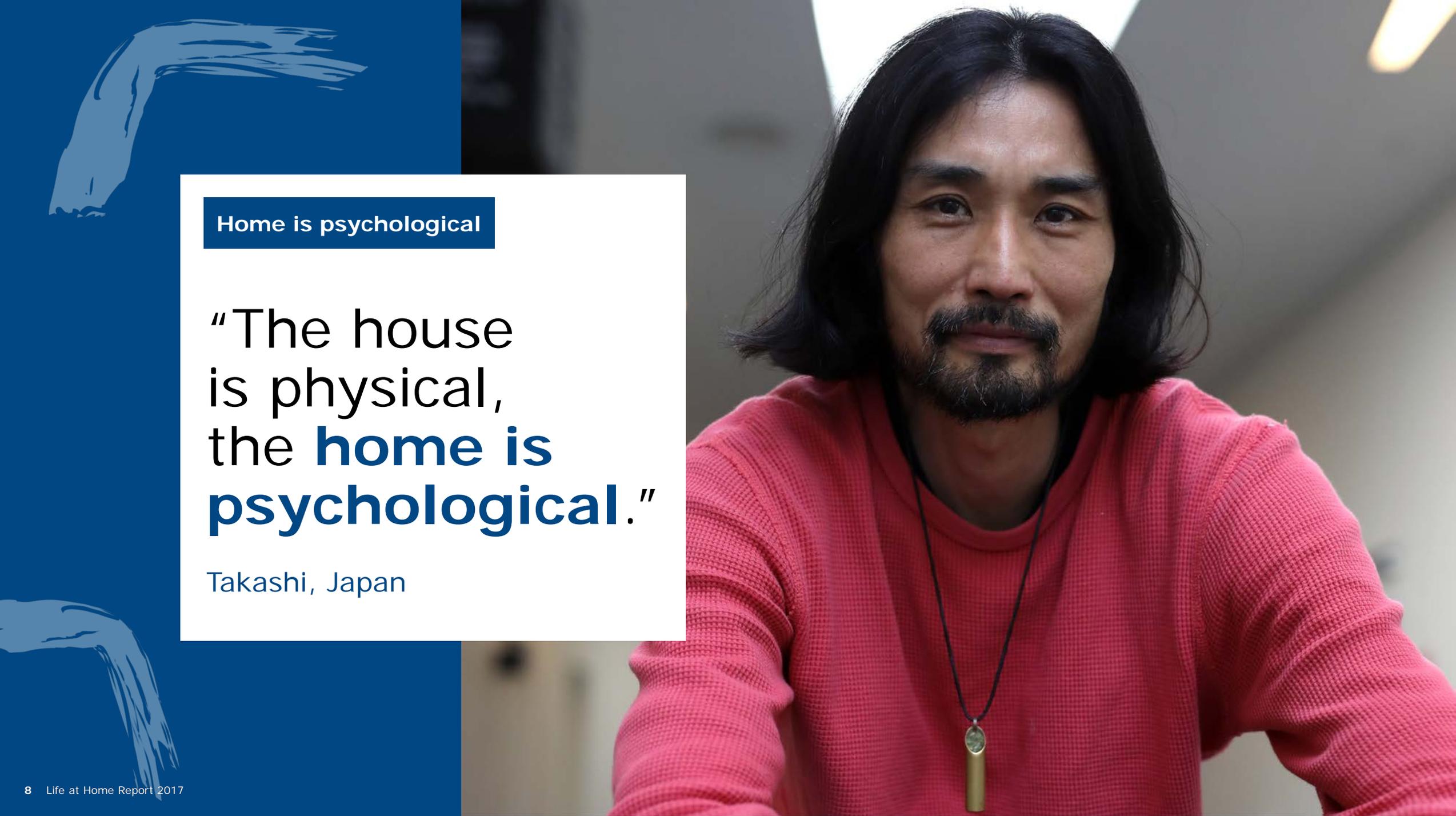
When we explored these five tensions with experts and Home Pioneers, we found inspirational 'hacks' and new ideas which can help us better meet people's needs and dreams. From prioritising rather than minimising, to establishing boundaries around spaces and things – **we all have the chance to create a better life at home.**



Introduction

How we created the Life at Home Report 2017





Home is psychological

“The house
is physical,
the **home is
psychological.**”

Takashi, Japan

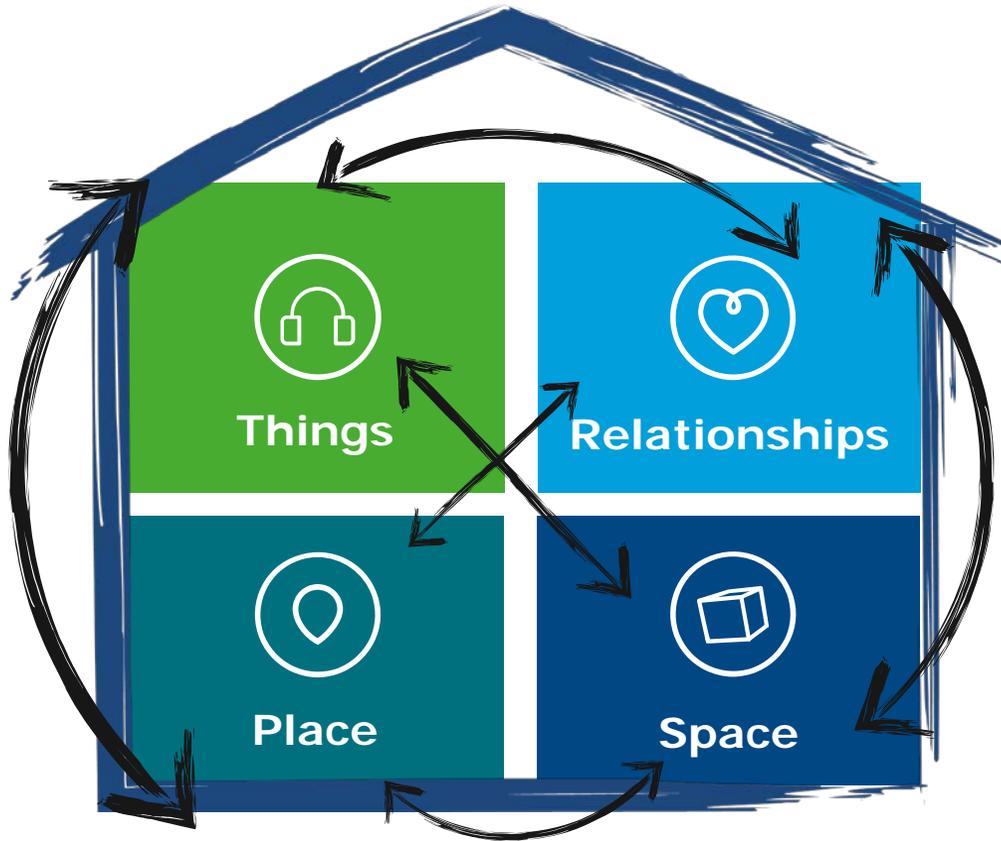
We picked up where **we left off last year**



We have published the Life at Home Report since 2014, bringing together insights from global surveys, home visits, and interviews with experts.

The centrepiece of our work in 2016 revealed, for the first time, that there are four key dimensions to life at home: Relationships, Place, Space, and Things.

We wanted to dig deeper into what makes a **better** life at home



This year, we focused on the interplay between the four dimensions.

This led us on a fascinating journey into how people feel about home, how they behave, what they struggle with, and how they can succeed in **creating a better life at home.**



We were **bigger** and **bolder** in how we created the Life at Home Report 2017

Listening to social media chatter



We toured **54** homes in **7** countries - physically and virtually



6 weeks of text chats with **18** Home Pioneers



We spoke to **650** people online continuously for three months and we had over **5,000** conversations about creating better homes



Web exploration and research review



6 weeks of home made videos with **18** Home Pioneers



We drank over **24** different blends of tea



We spent **874** hours exploring people's lives



Road trip: 36 home visits



1 day Home Pioneer co-creation workshop

We interviewed **4** experts



We carried out a quantitative survey in **22** countries



with **21,419** respondents

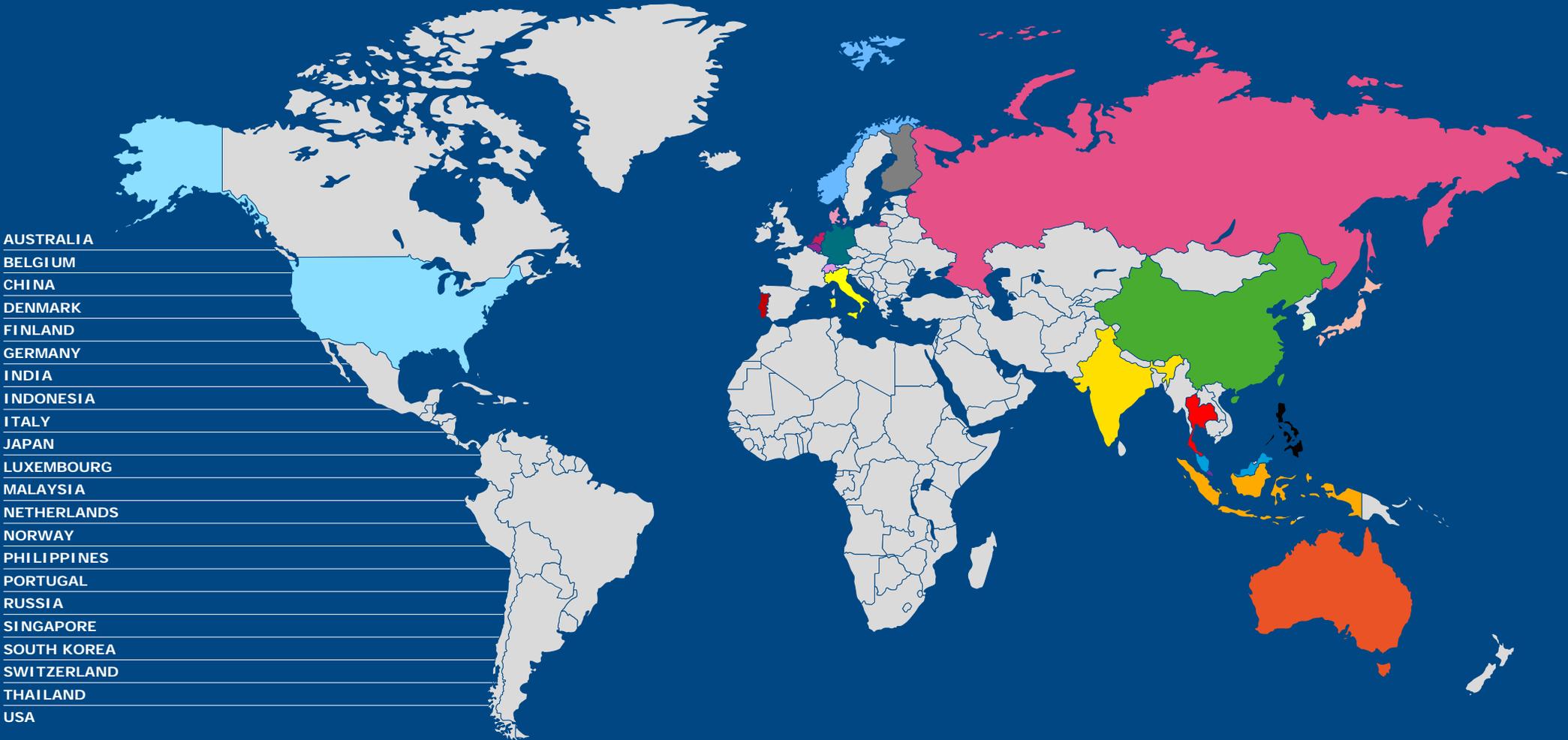


We used a **mix of methodologies**

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- We explored online chatter through **social media listening**
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- We **interviewed 4 experts** who specialise in ethnographic research, future archaeology and industrial design, materialism, psychology, and digital and cultural anthropology
- We hosted chats in **online communities in 7 countries** (USA, China, India, Denmark, Germany, Japan and Russia) with 650 people
- And, finally, **we surveyed 21,419 people in 22 countries** to take our insights even further

We explored life at home in 22 countries



We spoke with **over 21,000** people from all walks of life

Couple in their late 60s living in an allotment house



27-year old woman living with two flatmates, Austin style 'porch' house



44-year old woman with a 10-year old son, two bedroom, one storey house with a backyard



33-year old newlywed man, new-build high rise, one bedroom apartment



25-year old man, living with friends in a rented house that is owned by his best friend





We got inspired by a group we call our 'Home Pioneers'

We set out to connect with people who live in unusual or creative locations.

As a result, we found people living in all kinds of curious places – from modern smart homes to restored castles, from sustainable eco-homes to trailers, from converted military landing craft to buildings on stilts over the sea.

We wanted to know what we could learn about life at home from people who live very differently to the rest of us.



"I can't let my house take control of me. I've lived all over the world in many houses, so I'm used to doing this. It doesn't scare me; life throws curve balls, you have to adapt to them."

Jorg, Germany

"I renovate my home every five years, the drive never dies because there is always another project on the horizon."

Christian, Denmark



Home Pioneers feel differently about home

Our Home Pioneers gave us video access to their lives, and then flew across the world to develop their ideas and insights together.

Despite their differences to each other, the fact that they all live in creative ways creates a common mind-set about life at home. And it's different to how most of us think.

This is how we discovered home pioneering thinking. Anyone and everyone can use this approach if we:

- Accept our homes are always evolving
- Embrace change; do what scares us

This unique perspective redraws the battle-lines on the home front.



"We built a round house; next is a square house, and then a triangle house. Building these is my self-realisation."

Nataliya, Russia

We started by asking **how people feel about the four dimensions**

Taking our lead from the conclusion of last year's report, we asked how important and how satisfied people are with the **four dimensions of home**.

We found that health, wellbeing and happiness are the elements which people say are most important about life at home. But when it comes to levels of satisfaction, their **relationships** (the people I live with) and **space** (my home) come up tops. **Place** (the neighbourhood I live in) and **things** (the things I own) rank towards the middle.

This shows us that many people feel a sense of contentment within the four dimensions. But with satisfaction scores being between 49-66%, **there is still a lot more we can do to make life at home better**.

Q11 How satisfied are you with...?	%	Ranking
The people I live with	66%	1
My home	58%	2
My overall happiness	53%	3
The way I live	51%	4
My overall wellbeing	50%	5
The neighbourhood that I live in	50%	6
My physical health	49%	7
The things I own	49%	8
My work/life balance	45%	9
My cultural experiences	42%	10
My economic situation	38%	11

We discovered **five common tensions** between the interplay of the four dimensions



The importance of meaningful objects

VS

The pressure to declutter



The need for our personal spaces and things

VS

The struggle to ask for this



The feeling of home starting within us

VS

The outside creeping in to distract us



The endless possibilities of connection

VS

Its downsides for home unity



The constantly evolving home

VS

The desire for it to be 'finished'

These tensions form the five topics of the **Life at Home Report 2017**

1

The myth of minimalism

Why we're more likely to prioritise, than minimalise

2

I need my space

How we negotiate around personal space and things in a shared home

3

Is anybody home?

The quest for mental presence within the home

4

The (dis)connected home

The pursuit of balance around technology at home

5

The deliberately unfinished home

How to have a home that stays one step ahead of your life



We are endlessly curious about how to make life at home better for the many people.

Most people love the homes they live in. More than 55% of people we've spoken to tell us they feel **proud, joyful, and peaceful** when they think about their present homes.

But life at home is a mix of things which work well, and things which work less well. That's why we've pushed hard on the frustrations people face at home, and how they behave because of them. Because in order to make something better, we need to know what makes it worse, right?

We're hugely thankful to the many people who welcomed us into their homes, both physically and virtually, so we can better understand how they deal with the battles that unite us all no matter where – and how – we live.

Let's create a better life at home!



The myth of minimalism

Why we're more likely to
prioritise, than minimalise

27%

of people say
that **society**
puts pressure
on them to
live more
minimally



Our things are stressful

“Dear home, I still feel frustrated and stressed about you. I know I have bought so many items throughout these years, **some of them may be useless but I don't want to get rid of them** because [...] I think of my past unforgettable memories.”

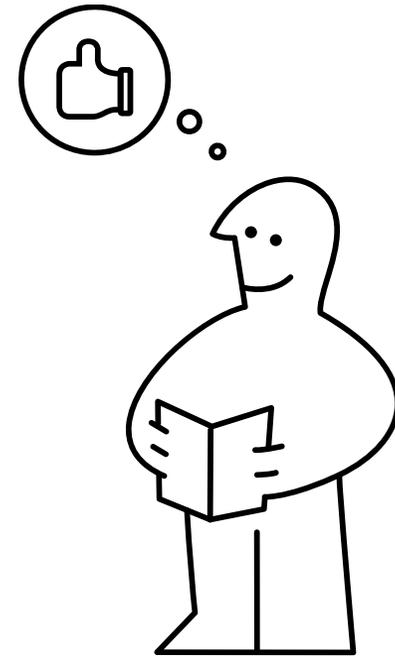
Jia, China



The Life at Home Report 2016 found that people said they wanted to have less stuff in their homes.

This year we dug deeper into how this was playing out.

We discovered that having “too much stuff” was the single biggest cause of stress in the home. So we’ve explored the various coping strategies people use to try and **manage the problem of living with the many things we just can’t seem to get rid of.**



What is **minimalism**?

“Minimalism is a tool to rid yourself of life’s excess in favour of focusing on what’s important – so you can find happiness, fulfilment and freedom.”

Joshua Fields Millburn & Ryan Nicodemus,
The Minimalists

Minimalism has become a popular buzzword, but not everyone agrees on what it means when it comes to life at home.

In Denmark, people told us it’s about living with a total of 100 things or less, or only living with the things that create contentment. Whereas in Japan, we heard that it’s about choosing which items you need at the present moment and which can go into storage.

No matter how you slice it, many of us feel pressured by society to live with fewer things. **In fact, 10% of us go as far as to say we feel anxious because the world wants us to minimalise but we don’t know how.**

But if it’s done well, the simple act of choosing which items we keep and which we discard can free us from guilt and worry, and allow us to focus on what really matters most in life.

We love each of our things but **struggle with them collectively**

The stories we tell about our things become the soundtracks to our home. Nick Gadsby, a material culture and digital anthropologist from University College London (UCL), tells us that “people invent myths around why they chose [and keep] things, and that most of the excitement and discussion of things is in the story that’s supplied.”

Paula Zuccotti (author of *Everything We Touch*) goes further and says “It is typical to have a guitar in your bedroom or living room. You can’t play, but you think one day you will have the time. That object is a dream. If you chuck the guitar away, you’re killing the dream.”

Our connections to our things are profoundly emotional, because they each trigger memories, hopes and dreams that go far deeper than any functional use. This is why we find it so hard to discard of them, even when their presence becomes overwhelming and we feel anxious as a result.

“I am also an emotional pack rat. I donate a lot throughout the year, but **I also keep more than I should.** It’s just so hard to get rid of things when there are memories attached.”

Brian, USA

Our different interpretations of mess cause **most of our household arguments**

We've met people who like to be constantly surrounded by their things. Their items are often out on display, sometimes filling shelves to bursting or sitting in piles around the room. For them this is the perfect level of "stuff".

Other people we've met are at the opposite end of the spectrum, like Dawn in the US:

"I'm a neat freak, so as soon as I'm done using something, it is put away."

How we organise our things is a very personal act, which means there's a good chance that we don't always have the same attitude to what feels like a desirable level of "stuff" as the people we live with. We can see that this is a hot point of friction for the majority of people at home.

Amongst the main cause of arguments in the home

49%

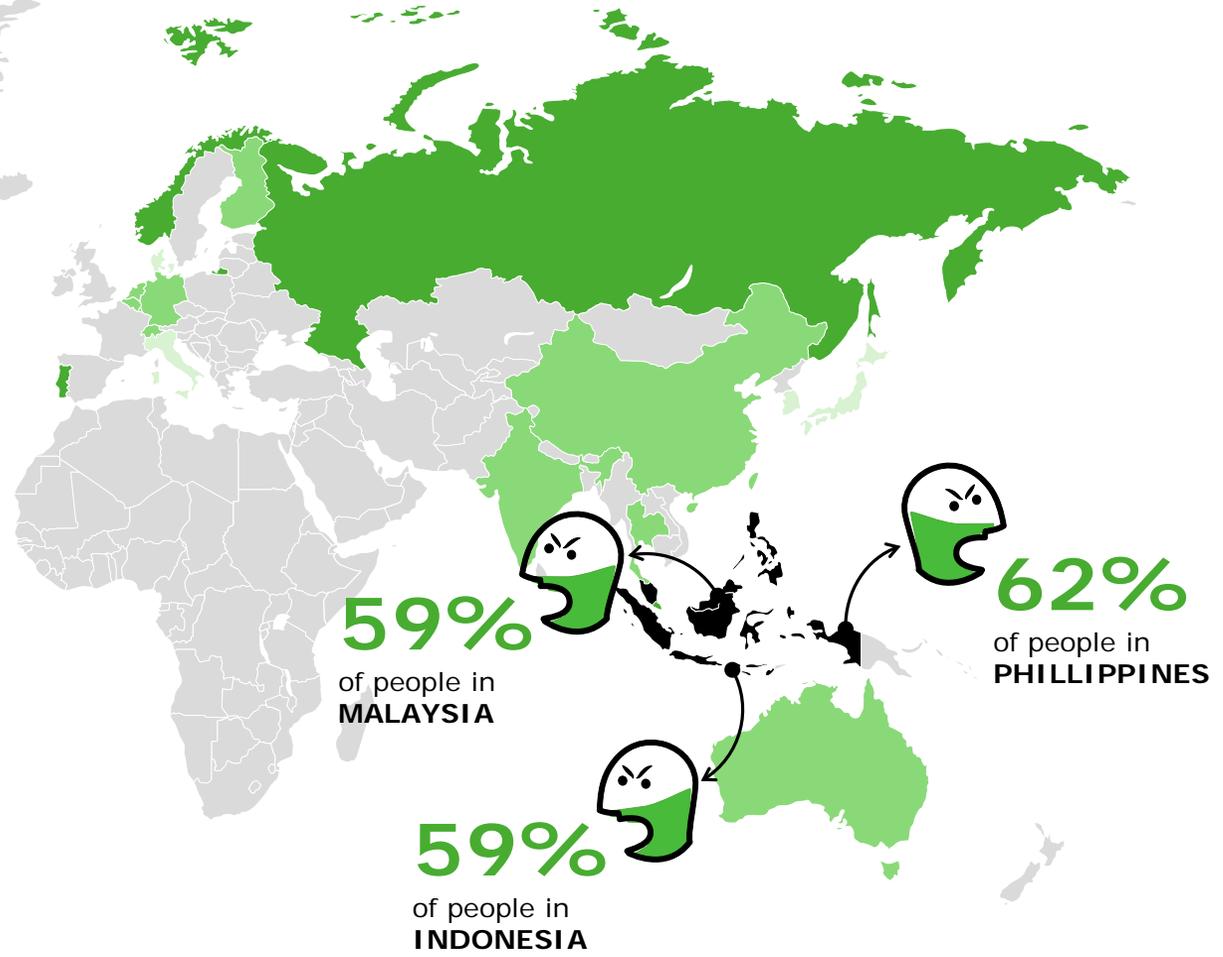
stem from people's different perspectives on what a "mess" actually is.

But some countries are more **argumentative** than others!

Key:

- Top three countries
- 56-80%
- 41-55%
- 25-40%

62%	of people in PHILLIPPINES
59%	of people in INDONESIA
59%	of people in MALAYSIA
58%	of people in PORTUGAL
58%	of people in NORWAY
56%	of people in RUSSIA
56%	of people in SWITZERLAND
54%	of people in SINGAPORE
51%	of people in AUSTRALIA
51%	of people in LUXEMBOURG
50%	of people in FINLAND
48%	of people in BELGIUM
48%	of people in THAILAND
47%	of people in CHINA
47%	of people in INDIA
45%	of people in USA
43%	of people in NETHERLANDS
43%	of people in GERMANY
40%	of people in ITALY
36%	of people in SOUTH KOREA
34%	of people in JAPAN
34%	of people in DENMARK



% of people agreeing with "do you ever have conflicts with [the people you share your home with]"

Sometimes we clear things out, but more often we **prioritise**

The times when we clear all our things out are rare and often sparked by a significant life event, such as a divorce or a disaster (like a leak).

Many forms of disruption – both big and small – can prompt us to take our homes back to basics, and a lot of people say this process provides great relief. But we can see that what passes for “clearing out” is often a process of prioritisation, in which our things are marked for storage in lock-ups, garages, attics, and even our childhood homes. It is very rarely a complete and final clear out, in the way that a minimalist might see it.

How does this make us feel, and how do we prioritise what to keep?

44%

say that clearing out gives them a great sense of relief

A person wearing a denim jacket and an orange top is packing a cardboard box. They are holding a white t-shirt and a patterned bag. The box is open, and the person is looking down at the items inside. The background is blurred, showing a room with wooden floors and a lamp.

We see polarising attitudes to getting rid of our things:

23% of us feel **stressed** because we don't know what to keep

vs.

22% of us feel **excited** to be getting on with it

We choose what to keep for a **number of reasons**

In fact, people tell us there are multiple reasons for why they keep any one thing.

1

44% of us prioritise the things which make us happy



2

31% prioritise the things which make our homes more beautiful



3

30% of us prioritise things which we are proud of



4

27% of us prioritise gifts we have received or things which have been made for us by others (24%)



5

16% prioritise things which make it easier to socialise with others in the home



6

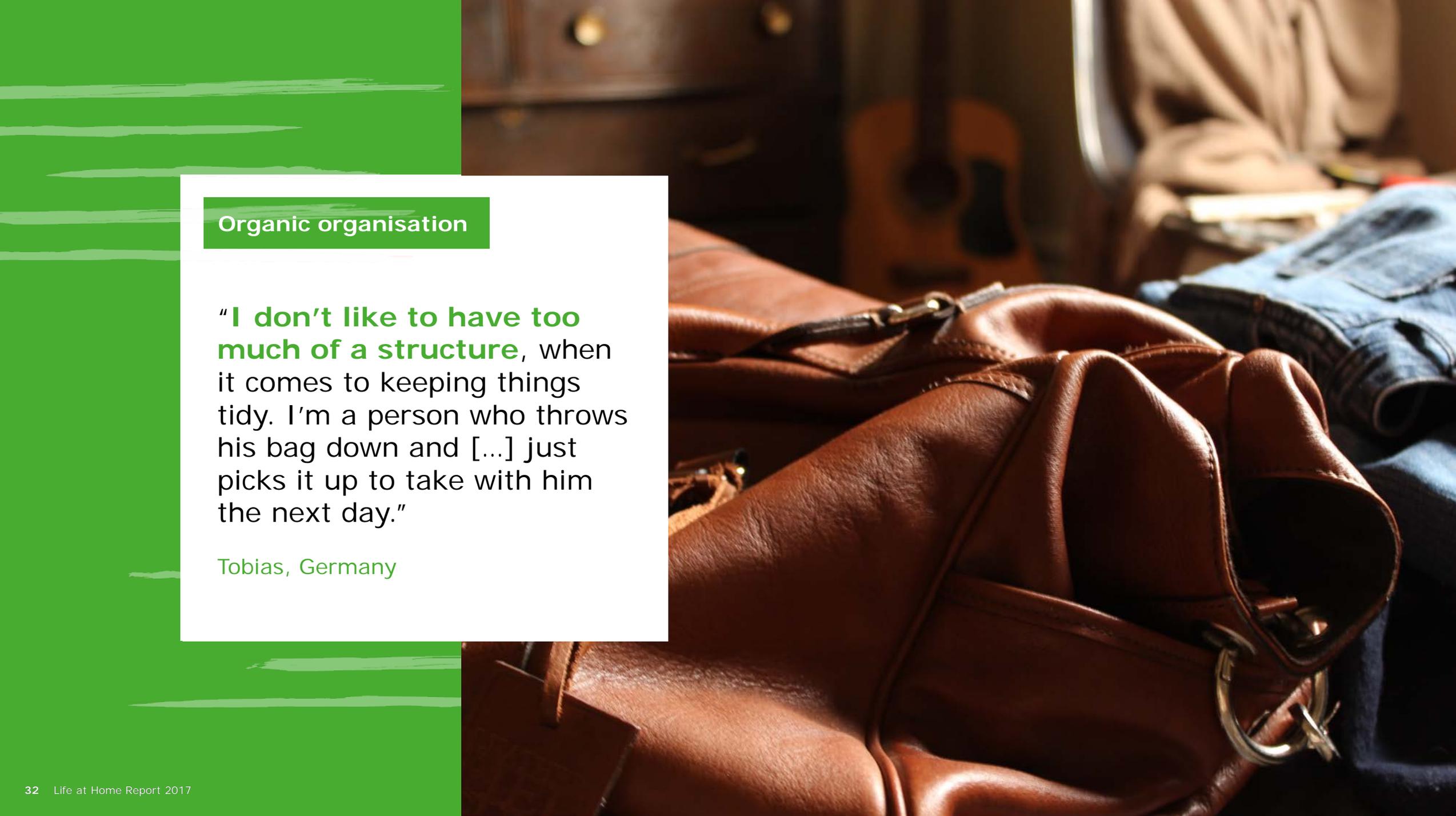
11% prioritise things which help us play more with our children



7

There are a significant minority of us (of which 60% are men) who claim to have never discarded any of their belongings (11%)





Organic organisation

“I don’t like to have too much of a structure, when it comes to keeping things tidy. I’m a person who throws his bag down and [...] just picks it up to take with him the next day.”

Tobias, Germany

Our attachment issues and shrinking spaces mean we need to keep **adapting storage solutions**

Small spaces often lack fitted storage, and free-standing storage can make a space feel even smaller. With these limitations, people are endlessly innovating how to store their stuff – like putting clothes in clear plastic wallets, or nailing chairs to the walls to hang the clothes that we can't put anywhere else. Little hacks like these help us store and organise our things better.

"We have no storage place and no attic, no cellar or basement or anything. There's a doorway upstairs that I use as storage. But it all spills out and you can see it, and that's embarrassing."

Anne, Denmark



"Shirts to be stored [...] in a clear file. It saves the space and easy to pull out when I need it."

Tomo, Japan

"I nailed the chairs to the wall to make a holder and a clothes rack. It really saves a lot of space and saves me some extra money."

Feng, China



"The jewelleries I use are hung on the wall. I can choose very quickly, and it doesn't tangle!"

Akira, Germany





How can we help people only live with the things they truly love?

Lack of storage

“I have a set of six prints that my father bought. We moved a lot, as a child, those are always hanging in our home. They give me stability and remind me of family.”

Meet Amy, she lives in Austin, TX, USA. Amy is recently divorced and she has downsized her home. Her current home is temporary, so she doesn't want to get rid of all her stuff just yet but she doesn't have enough space to live with it all right now.

“The things we put in storage were the furnishings. It was a couch, a matching chair, a coffee table and a kitchen table and chairs. I felt like it was important to hang onto those things, for my son to use when he does move out, so that he wouldn't have to re-purchase those things.”

She has no place to store the things she needs right now in her current home.

“There's really no storage to speak of here. There's a very small closet in the hallway but that's about it”

But she has managed to find some hacks and workarounds for her storage issues.

“So I've gotten pretty creative in some of my storage solutions since I moved here. I found narrow shelving on Amazon to fit in the kitchen [and] I put a chest of drawers (I picked up off the side of the street) in the cupboard next to the bathroom for extra storage.”

We use external storage to help relieve the pressure

The use of self-storage containers is on the rise all over the world.

It suggests that whilst we say we feel pressure to minimise, the reality is that we opt for the easiest solution – putting our things “out of sight, out of mind” in storage so that we don’t have to make difficult decisions.

“My last house had a garage, as well as a large storage area, so when I downsized after my divorce – I ended up putting stuff in storage or leaving it at my parents house.”

Amy, USA

The drivers behind self-storage usage in Asia:

Death

40% of Japan’s population will be 65+ in 2060

Divorce

Storage as they get back on their feet

Density

Living space in Tokyo averages about 30m²

Dislocation

Positive life events like marriage, graduation, etc.

2015 CBRE Blueprint Report

Mainland China self-storage industry has grown by

60%

since 2014

IPSOS Mainland China Self-Storage Industry Report 2016



1 in 300

Japanese Households
Rent a self-storage unit

1 in 100

UK Households
Rent a self-storage unit

1 in 10

US Households
Rent a self-storage unit

\$251m

Was spent on self-storage construction in the US in April 2017, the highest month on record.

US Census Bureau

Storage also allows us to **mourn and move on**

Our things form part of our identity. We want the comfort of knowing that if we choose to live without them, they're always there if we need them – so we put them in storage.

Professor Russell Belk, who is the leading expert in the meaning of possessions and collecting, tells us that this is a healthier behaviour than just chucking things out straight away. Because we have such a strong emotional attachment to our things, we need a mourning period for them.

This process of putting our things in storage means we learn to live without them. It helps us reconsider what they mean to our lives and move on when we feel ready.



“Now life is coming under control again, it feels like it’s time to come home.”

Meet Takashi, minimalist and Home Pioneer.

There was a time when he had it all. As product designer for Sony, Tak and his wife were making their home in a converted loft apartment in San Francisco and had surrounded themselves with beautifully designed objects. His life was good and his home was beautiful.

“Belongings are relational, incomplete, and unstable. Foolishly, I was relying on them to create my home.”

But things changed. After a painful divorce, he quit his job and decided to move back to Japan. As life changed so did his idea of ‘home’. Tak put all of his belongings into storage.

Now, as he is beginning to get back on top of his life, he is welcoming some of his belongings back into his life.

“Life is about expansion and contraction. It is this contrast that makes life rich and interesting. I will not collect objects in my home like I used to do, to a point of obsession. I contracted all of my possessions, and Now I feel the cycle is turning towards slight expansion.”

How can we take control of our things so that we can gain control of our lives?



Change

“Find an editorial reason for our lives. Then we can justify not having *everything* by saying, ‘I only buy x...’. And those statements are what you want to tell the world about **where your filter is and where your choice comes from.**”

Paula Zuccotti,
Author of *Everything We Touch*



Experiences give us a healthier way to prioritise our things

We have seen a trend emerging for a number of years – people choosing experiences over material things. However, we have found that more experiences can actually result in us owning more things, because we collect new kit, or bring home new mementos, that relate to the time we spent.

Psychologist Roy Langmaid suggests that this isn't necessarily a problem, and that we should buy things specifically to mark experiences or milestones in life. Then we can view the thing and its meaning objectively, asking "is this event or experience important to me now, at my stage of life?". If not, it will be easier to let go, both of the memory and of the object.



What did we learn?

It's about the meaning, not the thing

Only half of us feel that the things we own really contribute to our happiness, but most of us still hold onto our things because they hold meaning for us, even when we're tight on space.

We deal with this by prioritising what we love or need right now, and we hide away the things we're not ready to let go of.

This emotional backdrop is an important factor when we explore the opportunities within circular economies, and the recycling and reuse of objects as part of a shift towards sustainable systems.

How can our desire to live within the earth's limits align with the meaningful process that many people have to go through, in order to happily let go of their things? **What if we could manage this process better?**

We still need to understand our complex feelings for our things before we can lift the pressure of having too much stuff.



Home Pioneering Hints: How to... declutter while keeping the things you truly love and need

"Talk to your partner about their stuff, decide together what is important in your home... especially when you want to put things into long-term storage, or want to throw things out altogether."

Jiayi, China

What if we prioritised every year not just by what we need, but by what brings us joy right now...

32% of people have things they hide away from others.

30% state this is because others don't understand the significance of those things to them.

What if, when you need a clear out, you make an event of it and vote on what goes into which pile...

What if we went through our stuff together to learn what was important and why...

"As we get older our tastes change... Don't be afraid to replace the things that used to bring you joy with what brings you joy now."

Jasmin, USA

What if we decide to bring those hidden items out and celebrate them with our partners...

"When having a clear-out, make three piles: still needed, can go, unsure. Keep everything in the 'maybe' pile but review a year later. If you have you still not used it, move it to the 'definitely go' pile and throw out."

Xin, China

I need my space

How we negotiate around personal space
and things in a shared home



17%

of all arguments in
the home **stem from**
people intruding on
other people's space





Straight up

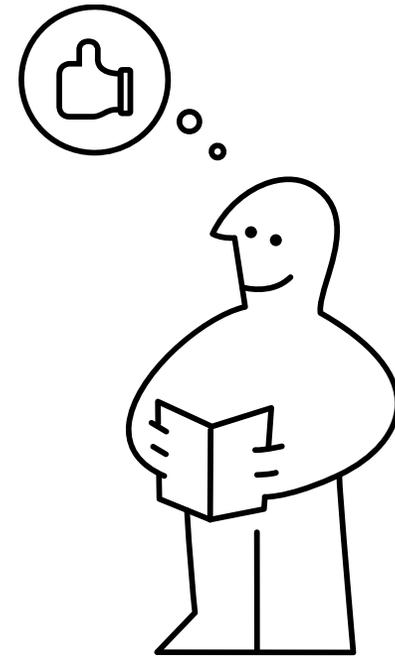
**“Talking straight
needs courage.** But
talking and deciding
together is better
for both of us.”

Izumi, Japan

The Life at Home Report 2016 found that there was an inherent tension between space and relationships – **people longed for more privacy but also wanted to ensure home was a place that facilitated their most important relationships.**

This year, we challenged the idea of ownership of things and spaces, and how that impacts on relationships.

While half of us find this an easy thing to talk about, the rest of us find it awkward. It means many of us live with compromises which make us unhappy, or we argue over boundaries which are not clearly set.



What do we mean by **personal spaces and things?**

When talking to the many people around the world, we identified a clear definition of personal spaces and things.

- **Frequency of use:** how regularly we sit on a piece, or part, of furniture becomes shorthand for ownership, like “watching a film on my side of the sofa”.
- **An expression of self:** we often find ourselves referring to “Dad’s garage”, “Mum’s kitchen” or “the kids’ area”, which reinforces our sense of identity through the spaces we allocate.
- **History:** we feel more connected to heirlooms, furniture and mementos which are passed down from family members, as well as the things that mark an experience we have had.
- **Who paid for it:** Big financial investments in things like sofas, beds, TVs, and so on, make us feel like we own them.

Personal spaces
and things are
usually defined
by their frequency
of use, expression
of self, history, or
who paid for it.

Personal spaces promote happiness in a home, and **some of us negotiate these really well**

During our research, we were struck by just how clearly defined people's homes are, no matter where they are in the world. The more we talked about each space, each room, each chair, each ornament... the more we understood that almost everything and everywhere has an owner.

People that are comfortable with defining their own space (58%) are also more satisfied with the people they live with (77%).

The positive feelings associated with claiming personal space in the home are striking. **Over a third (40%) said it made them feel calm, 26% happy, 27% felt relief (up to 37% in India) and 12% felt excited to have done it – rising to 24% in China.**

The differences lay in whether people consciously agree on ownership or reach agreement another way. During home visits, we found that some people feel very comfortable talking openly with each other about the "ownership" of certain spaces. As a result, they have fewer frustrations in the home about what – and where – belongs to whom.

58%

of people told us
that they were
comfortable defining
their own spaces
within the home



Objects as weapons

“If we do fight, we do it silently. For me, **my plants are my weapons**; I put a plant on another’s ugly piece of furniture...”

Christopher, Germany

We aren't all comfortable with asking for **a space to call our own**

For the 42% of people who are not comfortable talking about how to allocate space within the home, it can cause real anxiety.

Claiming personal space causes stress amongst 15% of people (rising to 21% in Japan) and fear amongst 4% of people (rising to 8% in India).

In homes where these conversations are hard to start, there is evident frustration. People spoke of secret battles for space using their belongings as markers - the plant is moved to a new window ledge, a chair is moved in secret... and then moved back again. When people feel uncomfortable discussing this topic, it usually means it's not discussed at all, and we end up living with a silent compromise that doesn't make anyone happy.

This leads us to consider whether the media fairly reflects our need for personal and shared spaces, when the ideal home is usually portrayed as a shared and harmonious space. And if allocating spaces makes us happier, overall, then maybe the picture of the ideal home needs to change.

40%

of people globally believe that the media never reflects the true reality of sharing a home



Asserting your identity on
another's space

"I moved into his space [and]
it's taken about 9 years of me
taking one small step at a
time, but now **I feel that we
share the space equally.**"

Anonymous, Denmark



44% of people globally believe it feels “wrong” to define your own spaces when you move into someone else’s home.

Hardest of all is when **we move into someone else’s space**

During our home visits, we met a significant number of people who had moved into the homes of their partners. We found that this situation, although relatively common, is harder for people to adjust to than moving into a home that is new for everyone.

Here, where new relationships and spaces collide, it can be hard to ask for what you want without feeling like you are rocking the boat. Our survey shows just how strongly people feel about the need to respect the space of the original occupant, even if that means living in a way which makes us feel less “**at home**” than we would like to be.

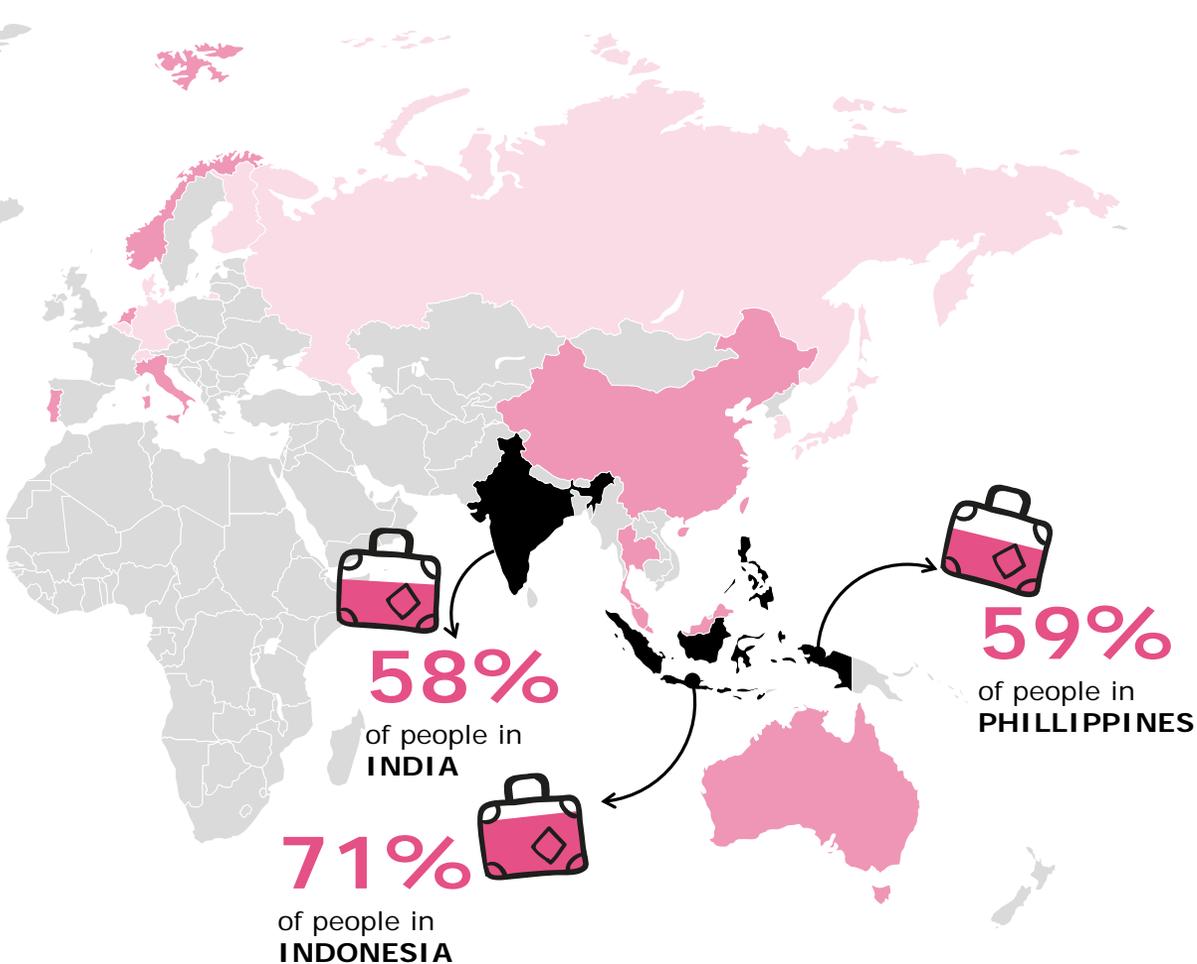
But for many, the frustrations eventually boil over into arguments as the battle for personal spaces and things becomes a new side to the relationship.

Moving into another's space is also harder in some countries

Key:

- Top three countries
- 60-79%
- 40-59%
- 20-39%

- 71% of people in INDONESIA
- 59% of people in PHILIPPINES
- 58% of people in INDIA
- 55% of people in THAILAND
- 53% of people in MALAYSIA
- 53% of people in ITALY
- 52% of people in SINGAPORE
- 50% of people in CHINA
- 47% of people in AUSTRALIA
- 46% of people in PORTUGAL
- 43% of people in USA
- 41% of people in NORWAY
- 40% of people in NETHERLANDS
- 39% of people in BELGIUM
- 38% of people in LUXEMBOURG
- 34% of people in RUSSIA
- 33% of people in FINLAND
- 30% of people in SWITZERLAND
- 28% of people in JAPAN
- 27% of people in DENMARK
- 26% of people in GERMANY
- 21% of people in SOUTH KOREA



% of people agreeing with "it feels 'wrong' to define your own spaces when you move into someone else's home"

“We lived in her old house for 10 years and I never truly felt at home.”

Meet home pioneering thinker Peder and his wife, from Denmark. He and his wife met in their 50s and he moved into the house she had owned for decades on a small commune of allotment houses.

After 10 years together they sold that house and built a new one just 50 metres away on a neighbouring vacant plot, which they planned and designed together. It was only allowed to be single storey and no more than 100m², so they had to plan the spaces they wanted carefully.

“We discussed it a lot and came to the conclusion that in order for us to both feel like we belonged equally we needed to build something together. That’s when we started to plan the home we are in now.”

In spite of the tight space they decided to create two small rooms – one for each of them – in which they had complete control of layout, décor and use.

“These are our hobby rooms. These we can use and decorate how we like and in here I am the ruler. I have the paintings I have collected, my tools and my stand-up desk. In the other rooms are all of [my wife’s] crafts materials, so that she has her own space to be creative.”

How far can we go in designing deliberately personal space?



Defining space can be more challenging in the family home

All of our home visits pointed to a consistent layout where the kitchen and dining room feel like the “heart of the home”, (especially for families with teenagers). Rules and routines are designed to bring everyone back into the home for mealtimes. They also happen to be the second and third most common rooms where arguments happen, particularly for parents with children under the age of 18.

But it’s the living room where the most arguments happen, peaking at 48% for families with children under the age of seven.

This isn’t surprising. The living room increasingly offers up a variety of uses, whether it’s for parents to entertain guests or for kids to play with all their toys. But these different needs can create friction, especially when it’s not clear for everyone how the space is being used at any given moment.

It points to a change in a space that has typically been used for shared family moments, and how it could better meet our needs whether we use it alone or together.



“I call [the living room] our game room, we have a ping pong table right here, a TV, books and games and stuff. It’s the room where I like to sit, read and draw and play with my cat...”

Kristen, USA

“We chose to live together for six months before making big changes.”

Meet home pioneering thinkers Sabine and Nicolai. Their blended family lives in Copenhagen; Sabine and her children moved in with Nicolai and his daughter after just a few months. Their home is steeped in Nicolai’s history but they intend to start afresh through extensive re-planning:

Sabine: “Nicolai had been living in this house with his ex-wife... so we needed a feeling of “this is our home”, not their old home. So you need just to roll the dice once more.”

Pending this change, the first thing they both decided on was that the kids should choose their own spaces, which they did, with the three of them taking over the top floor of the house and deciding where they were each most comfortable.

Sabine: “It was very important for me that they got their own rooms, that they had their own space, that they had all their things with them, and everything seemed like it did before, just in another context.”

The other piece of the puzzle was to work out how they would all feel most comfortable in the space, and they did this by co-creating a set of five rules – which are stuck up around the house – and holding a family meeting once a week to see how everyone is feeling.

Sabine: “They had their own set of rules, but we needed to rethink that, so we just started all over again. One of the rules is that *“we’re going to have fun here, everybody must feel comfortable, and if they’re not then please tell so we can do something about that”*.”

How deliberate can we be about creating new rules for new living constellations?





And that thing *has to go!*

40% of people say that they live with things they hate but can't throw away because they belong to someone else.

But about **40%** of people have thrown away something that belongs to someone they live with, without telling them.





Cohabiting means learning to **live with stuff we might hate**

Keeping the peace

Learning to live with things is tough when we feel like they ruin the look and feel of a space. But sometimes we accept things just to stop another argument and help keep the peace. It means we reach for creative ways to design around them or hide them away.

“My wife hates it, but I’ve had this sofa since I lived on my own. I won’t let her throw it away and it probably causes the most arguments in our home.”

Raminder, India

The strength of “ownership”

We know that when people live together, there’s a belief that common spaces are shared. But even things that are ‘shared’ inevitably get claimed. Habitual use, and inferred ownership, makes us more comfortable in an ever-changing environment.

“When I took a photo of everything my daughter touched in our home, and another of everything my son touched, there was no crossover. You would never believe they were living in the same home.”

Paula Zuccotti, Author of *Everything We Touch*



What happens when we don't follow our instincts and personalise our living spaces?

Negotiation of things is challenging

"I'm not going to force this stuff on people."

This is Celina, hailing from Austin, TX, USA. Her last apartment complex was "super communal". It's great living with lots of different people, but she needs space to express herself, too.

Although she owns many things in her shared home, Celina doesn't always feel like they effectively define a space just for her. Even when sitting on her own couch, it's hard to make her mark.

"These, that, the rug, the couch, that thing, this. A lot of the stuff is mine, but I don't feel, like, a territory to it... you really can't argue when people sit in these chairs, that's what they do."

Without a home that she can create with her own taste and aesthetic, she retreats into fantasy and disappointment.

"I'm not going to force this stuff on people. I fantasise about what I would do differently with this house all the time, but I have to stop myself."

"As a person who I think likes to do design or décor or whatever, I felt a little defeated. I'm like, "I'm not even going to bother trying to make this place look the way I want it to look", so I was like, "I'll just save it"."



My throne

"It stays in the living room and I suppose anyone could use it, but they don't. **They know that it's my chair.** It was passed on to me, for me to use."

Susanne, Germany

Seats are a hot topic

Our research reveals that seats are the most contentious issue, because they have “owners” and they generally take up a lot of space. This makes sense, as Nick Gadsby (anthropologist from UCL) says that people are habitual, and we tend to like our spaces the same way each time.

Seating “says a lot about your taste and your status”. It’s a thing we can mould to us, literally and metaphorically, and when someone else occupies our seat it feels like it doesn’t fit us anymore. This can leave people feeling frustrated, insecure and like they’re losing their safe haven. So no wonder we argue about it!





Some reach breaking point - a surprising number of us have **thrown away things belonging to our loved ones**

One in ten of those things we've chucked were items of furniture or home decoration.

Around an eighth of us (13%) say it's down to personal taste or that it doesn't fit with the style of our house, while the same again (13%) simply do it to make room for their own things.

One in six (16%) thought the owner wouldn't notice it, while a slightly more mischievous 6% did it deliberately to annoy that person!

In households where the negotiation around space and things is not particularly clear, this seems to be the most common approach to dealing with issues of things we no longer want to live with; this seems acceptable for the most part but traumatic to some.

40%

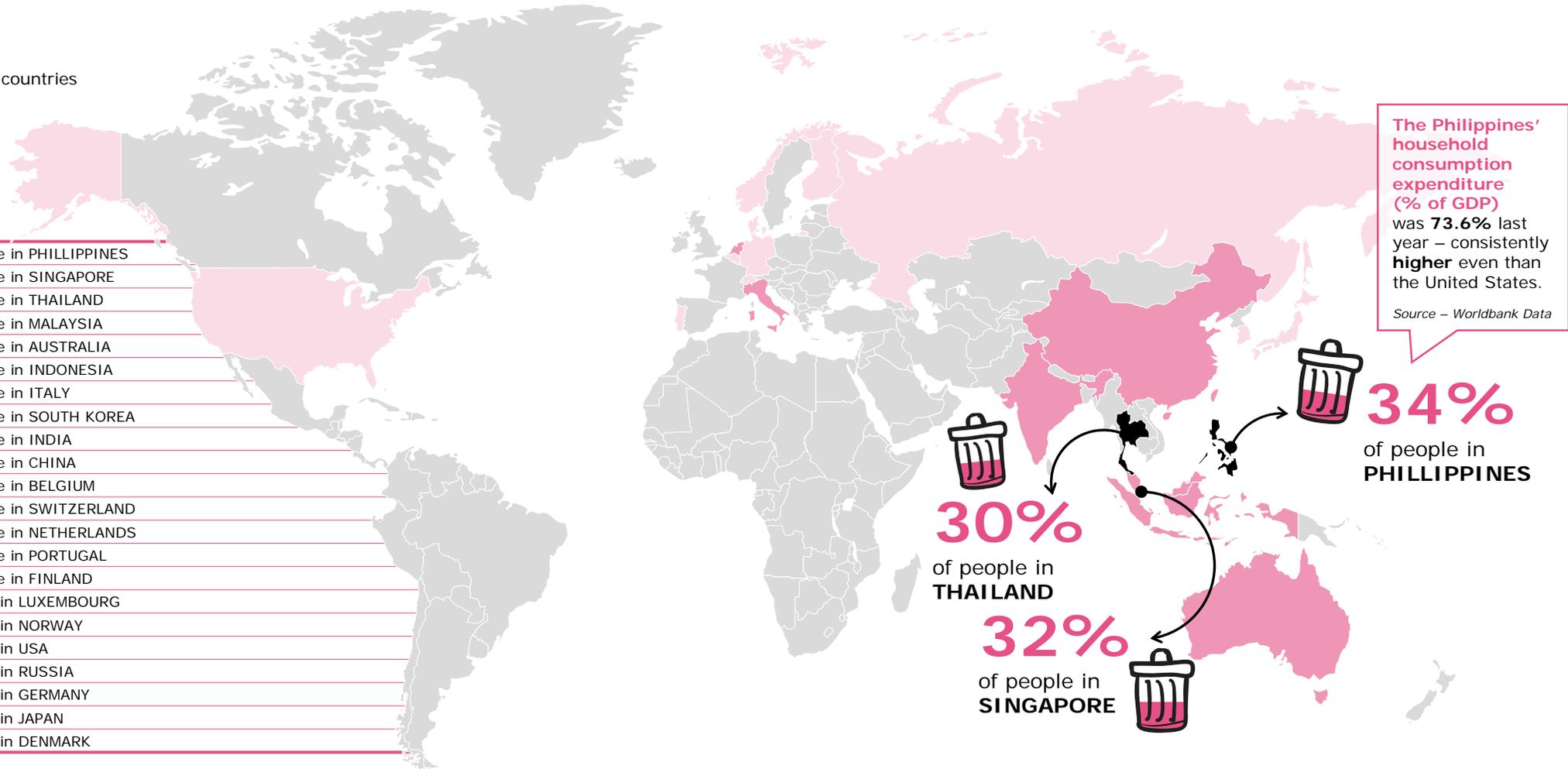
of people have thrown away something that belongs to someone that they live with without telling them

Asia is the highest in **throwing away other people's things that didn't belong to them**

Key:

- Top three countries
- 31-45%
- 16-30%
- 1-15%

- 34% of people in PHILIPPINES
- 32% of people in SINGAPORE
- 30% of people in THAILAND
- 28% of people in MALAYSIA
- 26% of people in AUSTRALIA
- 24% of people in INDONESIA
- 18% of people in ITALY
- 17% of people in SOUTH KOREA
- 17% of people in INDIA
- 17% of people in CHINA
- 16% of people in BELGIUM
- 15% of people in SWITZERLAND
- 13% of people in NETHERLANDS
- 10% of people in PORTUGAL
- 10% of people in FINLAND
- 9% of people in LUXEMBOURG
- 7% of people in NORWAY
- 5% of people in USA
- 5% of people in RUSSIA
- 4% of people in GERMANY
- 3% of people in JAPAN
- 1% of people in DENMARK



The Philippines' household consumption expenditure (% of GDP) was **73.6%** last year – consistently **higher** even than the United States.
 Source – Worldbank Data

34%
of people in PHILIPPINES

30%
of people in THAILAND

32%
of people in SINGAPORE

Getting rid of things with **greater sentimental value causes distress**

It would seem that for the person doing the clean out, there isn't a lot of deliberation about whether the item has sentimental value for the owner. This surprised us, as the reason we hold onto items is precisely because they mean so much.

Even when we don't throw someone else's things out, just putting pressure on them to get rid of the things they love can create arguments.

12% of people say they feel angry because they're forced to let certain things go, and 6% cry because they didn't want to part with something.

We have heard extreme cases of people running to catch up with the rubbish collectors, or going back to the charity shop, once they realise the significance of the thing they have thrown away to the person they love.



10%
of items thrown
away were trinkets
and ornaments



What happens when we choose to live with things which make us uncomfortable?

Living with things we hate but they love

“There are indeed some things [of his] I want to throw away.”

Meet Yin Chen in China. Yin doesn't believe in chucking out someone's things without their permission. But when there is a lot of value placed on something in the home, this can lead to resentment and tension.

For Yin, this feels particularly hard when she thinks about the old love letters that her husband keeps:

“If I could, I would throw away some of my husband's letters... the love letters between him and his ex.”

Throughout our research we heard, time and again, that the most personal items – the ones most likely to be kept hidden away from partners or family – were significant links to the past, just like love letters. Yin feels that the emotions contained within these letters cannot possibly be shared between her and her husband, and they come to represent a gap between them, even in the home they share. Although they have talked about these letters, the presence of something so one-sided is painful for Yin:

“Though I agreed to let him save those a few years ago, I am still unhappy every time I see them.”

Finding “shared value” in other people’s things helps us create a new connection

People have shown us that the best way to achieve harmony in the home is to encourage mutual appreciation of each other’s things. It is about creating shared value, not shared ownership. This is crucial because, as psychologist Roy Langmaid asserts, “there are no such thing as shared things, only shared spaces.”

Professor Russell Belk, an expert in the possession of things, acknowledges the unequal values placed on our stuff, which is why, “it’s important for a two way warming to take place. There needs to be some effort on the partner, the new person, to place their own value on these possessions.”

He concludes, “this will help create a more harmonious life at home, while accepting that something can be mine but also feel like ours at different points in our lives.”

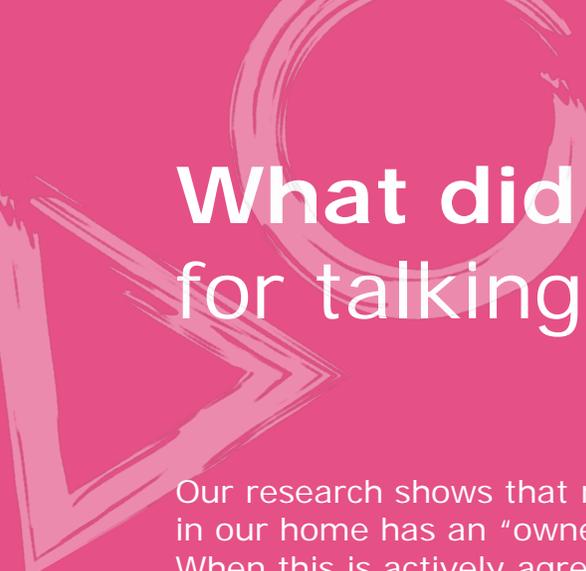




Evolve as you go

“We try to remain constant on compromising but may change a little. **The rules evolve as we evolve.**”

Ilene, USA



What did we learn? There's no substitute for talking about what you need

Our research shows that nearly everything we can see and touch in our home has an “owner”, whether we are conscious of it or not. When this is actively agreed, the happier and less argumentative the home.

People experience varying levels of comfort when it comes to talking about this, and offer different kinds of solutions. But we have to conclude that the best way to manage this frustration is through proactive discussion and, where possible, purposeful planning for what's yours, mine and ours.

When it comes to our things, we're amused (but maybe not surprised) that people throw stuff out which doesn't belong to them. It doesn't feel like the fairest solution – and many clearly find it distressing – but it points to a need within us all to surround ourselves with things we love, and remove the things we don't.

What if we discussed our need for personal things and spaces when we create a home?

Physical ownership can be transferred, but our *emotional* ownership of spaces and things is harder to shift



Home Pioneering Hints: How to... create shared appreciation for individual spaces and things

"My girlfriend is moving in next week so she put sticky notes on all the spaces where she's going to put her things."

Rigobert, Germany

What if we used sticky notes help us start tricky conversations around the home...

What if you take a space or room in their space and re-design it together...

"After I moved in with my wife, I never truly felt at home. Not for ten years. It was only when we built our new home together. Only then did I feel at home."

Peder, Denmark

"We have a conversation that takes place about every two weeks about how things are going in our home and what we all want ..."

Ilene, USA

What if we find fun ways to make sure everyone at home gets a chance to decide how it works...

What if, as our kids grow up, we design ways to attract them back into our communal spaces...

"What we got right was a clear division between work spaces and bedrooms – it gave everyone a sense of ownership, peace, and sanctuary. Now I am creating more 'floating rooms' for us together, I don't want him [my son] to be too separated from me."

Pernille, Denmark

Is anybody home?

The quest for mental presence within the home



People either **never** feel mentally present, or **always** feel mentally present in their homes

Key:

- **Always** feel mentally present
- **Never** feel mentally present

81% of people in **RUSSIA**

68% of people in **INDIA**

67% of people in **CHINA**

59% of people in **USA**

59% of people in **GERMANY**

21% of people in **JAPAN**

12% of people in **DENMARK**

25% of people in **THAILAND**

21% of people in **MALAYSIA**

19% of people in **SOUTH KOREA**

19% of people in **SINGAPORE**

19% of people in **AUSTRALIA**

18% of people in **PHILIPPINES**

18% of people in **INDONESIA**

14% of people in **BELGIUM**

13% of people in **ITALY**

12% of people in **NORWAY**

11% of people in **NETHERLANDS**

11% of people in **LUXEMBOURG**

9% of people in **SWITZERLAND**

9% of people in **PORTUGAL**

9% of people in **FINLAND**

% of people agreeing with "I always feel mentally present..." or "I never feel mentally present..." in their homes

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a dark blue top and a light-colored patterned skirt, is sitting in a living room. Behind her are bookshelves filled with books, a clock on the wall, and a dining table covered with a red cloth. The room is dimly lit, with the primary light source coming from the left, creating a warm and intimate atmosphere.

Presence makes a home

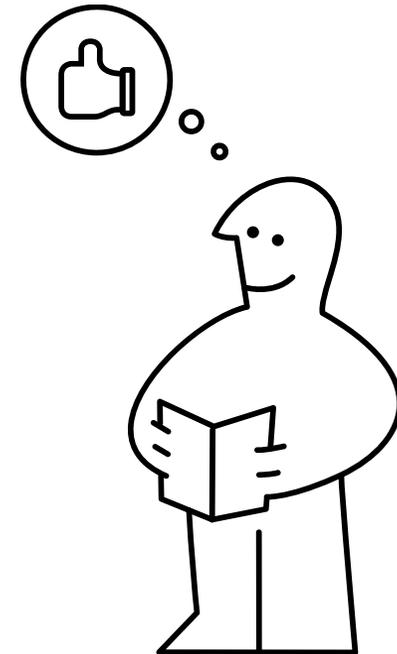
"I find it easy to be present in my home. After all my home is my refuge. It is my safe haven."

Urmila, India

The Life at Home Report 2016 said that home was a haven, a place where we could be ourselves and feel truly present.

This year, we're digging deeper into **what helps and hinders this feeling of presence within our homes.**

We found that presence can feel hard to pin down, **so we've explored the ways people enhance it over the short and long term.**





What is **presence**?

We spend a lot of time being physically present in our homes, but we enjoy them most when we are also *mentally* present.

By “mental presence” we mean:

- **Being in the here-and-now**
- **Engaging with an activity or another person with our whole heart**
- **Moments in which we are consciously enjoying our homes**

However we describe it, it's a feeling we love and one that we seek out, because we enjoy our life at home far more when we feel *mentally* present there.



Why does it **matter**?

We spoke with Nick Gadsby, a material culture and digital anthropologist from University College London (UCL). For him, presence is, “**everything that makes your home, from the colour you paint your walls to the bits and bobs that make it yours.**”

Getting it right actively enables a feeling of mental presence; our homes will become a true partner in our lives. As Nick says, “**you feel you have a relationship with [your home], and it reflects back on you.**”

This means that our relationship with our home is just as important as the one we have with the people within it.



What are the obstacles to being *mentally* present in the home?

The great news is that **the majority of people say that they feel peaceful (69%), joyful (66%) and proud (58%) when they think about their current homes.** All of these are feelings which promote presence.

But anything good and worthwhile isn't always easy to maintain, and positive mental presence in our homes has some powerful counter-forces from the outside.

These forces seem to be common across the world. As life becomes busier and work more demanding, the outside world – often via technology – seeps into our homes like never before.

Work gets in the way of life at home

Through our research, we saw people actively try and not bring work home. Whether it is actual work, or increasingly just the stress of work, bringing it into our homes in an uncontrolled manner can have a dramatic effect on how present we feel.

“Sometimes I have to bring extra / unfinished work home, which makes me unable to enjoy relaxing in home. So even though I am present in home physically, I don’t have the home feeling.”

Jun, China





Fear of missing out (FOMO) distracts us

FOMO feels increasingly real, and can be a big distraction from being in the moment at home.

Whilst we still believe it's important to be connected to the outside when we are at home, these connections can deepen our feelings of FOMO. Simply, the more present we are to those outside the home, the less present we are to those within it.

"People are so scared to miss anything, (I am too), and it makes it hard to focus on the moment, cause what are you missing while you are there?"

Visali, India

47%

of us feel that it's important to still be connected to the wider world when we're at home

Technology can **disrupt** the dynamic between parents and children

Evidence increasingly points to the disruptive effect of technology in the home, especially on children. In instances when technology prevents us from being truly present around our children, it takes something away from life at home. And in some instances it can result in disruptive behaviour.

Through our research, we heard parents say that they felt they spent too much time on their mobiles, distracting them from time spent with their children. Families with older children also say their kids spend more time with their own devices than with their parents or other family members.

“In restaurants our kids are engaging in conversation and I look around and other families are on their phones, even the kids. I’m determined to make their life as pure and organically happy as possible so I do my best to keep the technology limited.”

Jasmin, USA

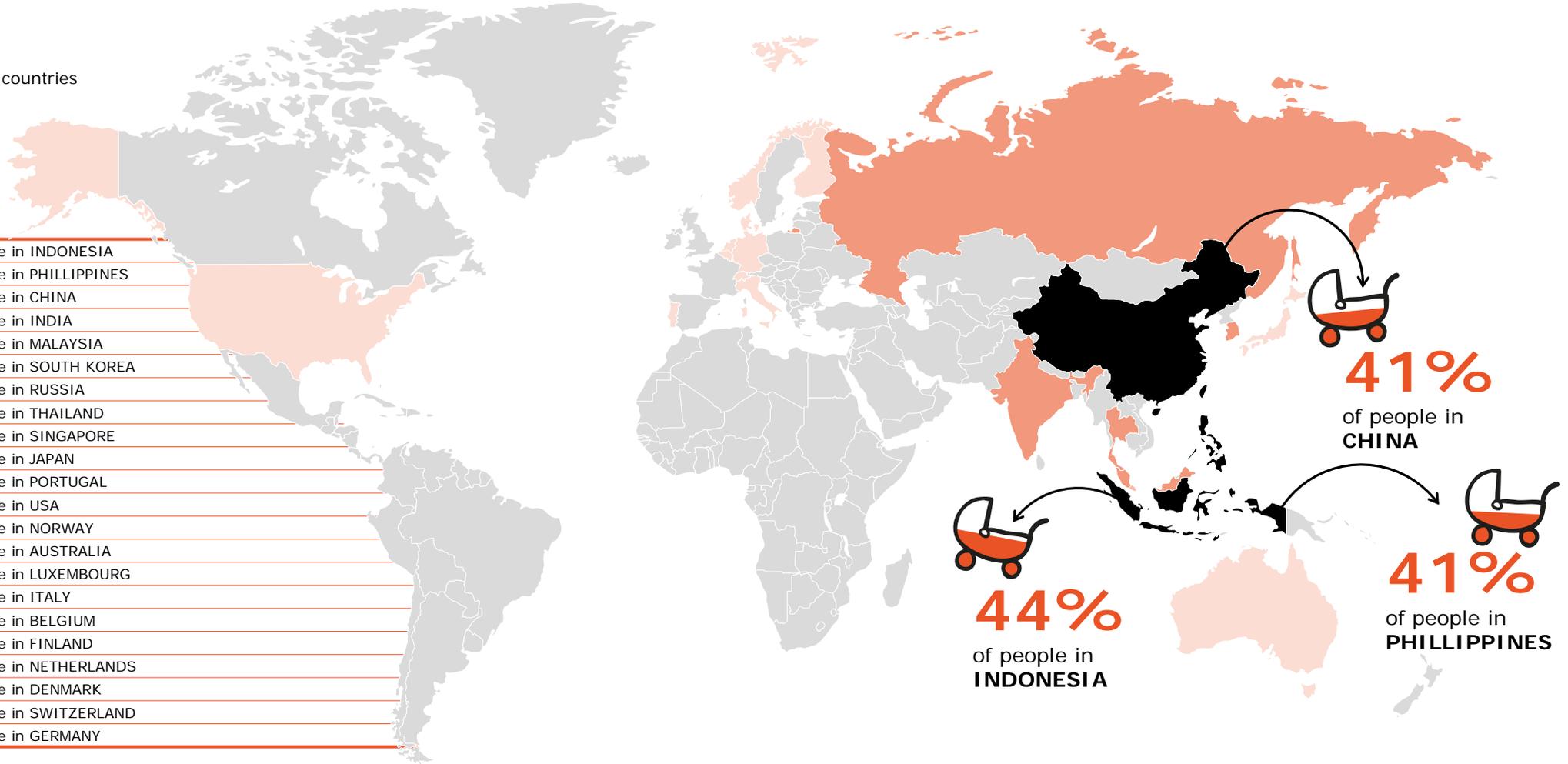
24%
of parents feel
like technology
takes them away
from spending
time with children

Across the globe we worry about balancing our use of technology **when with our children**

Key:

- Top three countries
- 40-54%
- 25-39%
- 10-24%

44%	of people in INDONESIA
41%	of people in PHILIPPINES
41%	of people in CHINA
39%	of people in INDIA
35%	of people in MALAYSIA
34%	of people in SOUTH KOREA
32%	of people in RUSSIA
31%	of people in THAILAND
28%	of people in SINGAPORE
22%	of people in JAPAN
20%	of people in PORTUGAL
19%	of people in USA
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17%	of people in AUSTRALIA
15%	of people in LUXEMBOURG
15%	of people in ITALY
14%	of people in BELGIUM
13%	of people in FINLAND
12%	of people in NETHERLANDS
12%	of people in DENMARK
11%	of people in SWITZERLAND
11%	of people in GERMANY



% of people agreeing with "I feel I should spend more time with my children" in relation to technology



How can we reduce the negative effects of technology on our family life?

Presence is mysterious

“[Technology filled] homes have driven families further apart.”

Amanda, in the US, is typical of the people we met for whom technology in the home can be a destructive force because of the behaviours it can cause.

“Connected homes have driven families apart. My pre-teen has now begun to wear headphones at all times and never hears a word I say. I have to get her attention, sometimes I tap her shoulder, which is insane. Trying to have a casual conversation just isn't realistic with the other person's ear plugged.”

But it's not just new technology – she was not alone in singling out things like dishwashers as reducing time spent talking.

“Even having a dishwasher, however convenient, has discontinued talks. My mom and my sister and I used to have the best talks while washing dishes by hand. Sure we complained at times, but I will have those memories forever! Families now get through the task in seconds and head straight back to their devices, away from everyone else.”



Presence reflects me

“Everyone is on the hunt for the little ‘you are here’ feeling inside your home.

This can be persons who welcome you, a pet, plants or some objects who can tell stories about their time with you.”

Christopher, Germany

Planning for presence

It's not all doom and gloom. We found three ways that people are actively planning for presence in their homes.

1.

Design your home to reflect your personality

The design of a home needs to reflect the personalities of its occupants through furniture, colour, lighting, materials and things that illustrate our hobbies and memories. This makes it easier to relax and feel truly present within it.

2.

Surround yourself with meaningful objects

All objects contain memories, but as Paula Zuccotti (author of *Everything We Touch*) says "to create presence, we have to create a space that reflects the present." This can be achieved by choosing things and creating spaces that contribute to your life right now.

3.

Get as close to nature as the home allows

41% of us describe our home as being in touch with nature. We don't all have gardens, but the fresh air of a balcony, the calm of a local running trail or simply the feeling of tending a house plant brings us right back into the moment, which connects us to our homes.

“Whatever makes you happy – just do it.”

Meet Home Pioneer Christopher, who lives with several people in a large, shared warehouse in Germany. He is someone who is very vocal about the importance of presence.

“Being present at home is really important. In my living situation I’m often confronted with different ways people try to reach their comfortable level of presence.”

He’s learned that everyone has different ways of achieving their version of presence within the home, and how to live with different styles in the same space.

“This leads to a colourful mix of presences in our home - but you have to “work” at it all the time to defend your part of it. This sounds negative, but it’s a crucial part of our living. These “presence-fights” are soft ones and are not fought with words.”

Through this way of living, he has developed a very open and accepting view on what presence means to different people.

“I think the biggest problem lies in people's desire to live up to some predefined rules of what a perfect life and being present is. Spending most of your free time watching television, playing computer games or uploading selfies on social networks could be just as meaningful as practicing yoga five hours a day. Depends on who you are. Whatever makes you happy, just do it.”

How can we encourage activities that promote mental presence in the home?



Presence is interaction

“Interacting with my family members makes me feel that I am present in our home [...] because of them, a home can be called home.”

Zhang, China



Quick fixes to increase presence

There are also three ways that people can quickly bring themselves back into the moment and enjoy their homes.

1.

Take “me-time” – however you need to.

A slice of me-time increases the feeling of presence within the home. This could mean turning up the music, sitting on the balcony, cooking up a storm in the kitchen or reading a magazine on the toilet **(in fact, 38% of us tend to find the bathroom the best place for a quiet moment of reflection!)**.

2.

Interact with family members.

We can see that wholehearted interaction with others is the act that makes us feel most present in our homes - no phones, no distractions, but **shared activities like cooking, cleaning, playing or gardening together.**

3.

Keep the home clean and clutter free.

Surprisingly often, we’ve found **the act of cleaning and tidying the house can promote a feeling of mental presence.** It’s our go-to activity when we want to get back in touch with ourselves and our homes.

What did we learn?

Presence is worth creating and protecting

There was a time when we could easily feel present in our homes, but the connected world challenges this more and more each year.

Feeling present is best achieved by creating spaces that reflect us and contain the things which mean the most to us – from pieces of furniture, to our favourite pictures. But not all of us have the opportunity to create spaces like this, perhaps because we're renting or we haven't negotiated it successfully with our loved ones.

Which is why we've identified more day-to-day techniques - such as cooking, cleaning, tending to plants, or taking time to read a book – which anyone can start doing straightaway. We can also see the rise of rules around screen time and devices (and not just for our kids) to try to protect time when we can be fully present with each other.

What if we designed our homes for mental presence, not just physical?

We all want to feel more 'present' in our homes because it makes us feel happier about the spaces we're in and the people we're with



Home Pioneer Hints: **How to... create presence in the home**

"We didn't make strict rules, we made a game-plan [of how to interact with each other and ourselves]. A sense of social responsibility [is] easier to adapt to than rules."

Nicolai, Denmark

What if everyone in the family creates one "rule" for the others that would make them feel more present...

What if we try to bring nature into every room in the house, especially our most private ones...

"Over the last six months, I increased flowers and edible plants in the home. This relaxes me and makes me be in the present."

Akira, Japan

"The art of cleaning and keeping the home organised makes me present. Too much to do in the house in a given day deters me from being present, though."

Yukihide, Japan

What if we all tried to agree on the level of order that makes us feel most present in the home...

What if we created little places for our kids to "own" that keep them near us when we're busy...

"To help us be present in our children's lives, we allow art supplies at the kitchen table as they spend a lot of time colouring."

Jennifer, USA

(Dis)connected

The pursuit of balance around
technology at home



33%

of people tell us
that it's a challenge
to find **the right
balance when
using technology
in the home**



Tech tension

“Technology definitely makes our lives better and brings more convenience; however it is also decreasing human communication and interaction.”

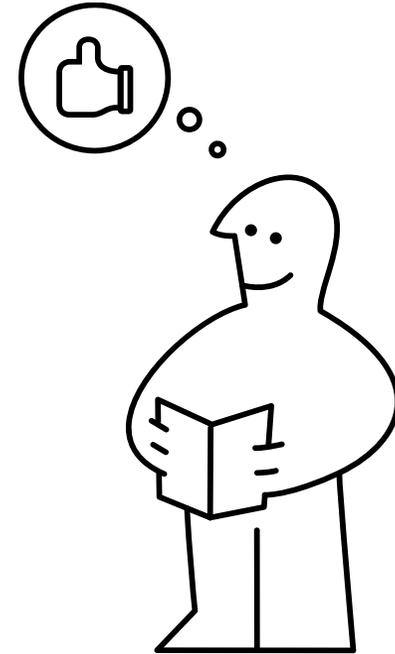
Yong, China



The Life at Home Report 2016 touched on the importance of connectivity within the home.

This year we're **looking deeper into the dark and light sides of the rising influence of technology on life at home.**

We can see that people are ready to integrate technology into their homes, **but don't feel comfortable about the rules of engagement yet.**



Technology and our lives at home: **the dark and the light**

Technology is now as integral to our lives at home as beds and chairs.

We all hear a lot about how technology is changing our lives at home, so we've explored it on a deeper level. How does everyone *feel* about these changes? Does the influx of technology into our homes excite or worry us?

It matters to us at IKEA how home feels, not just how it looks or functions. We have a deep interest in how home can nurture:

- **Relationships**
- **Wellbeing**

This is why we explored what technology positively brings to these two elements, and what we risk losing in return.



The dark side to **relationships:** Loss of **conversation** and **warmth**

In every country there are people who feel that digital connectivity kills conversations in real life. They often feel that something is lost, especially amongst families, when anyone can constantly connect with the outside world. People talk about family members isolating themselves in their rooms, or even when sitting amongst their loved ones by wearing headphones. There's a feeling that this is damaging the warmth and connection at the heart of relationships in the home.

Around one in six (17%) of us feel guilty about the amount of time we spend on social media. More than a quarter say that because of their use of technology they spend less time with their partners (27%).

We can see the emergence of fairly simple rules to help combat this, such as regular family meetings and dining together, to ensure that everyone feels connected and heard.



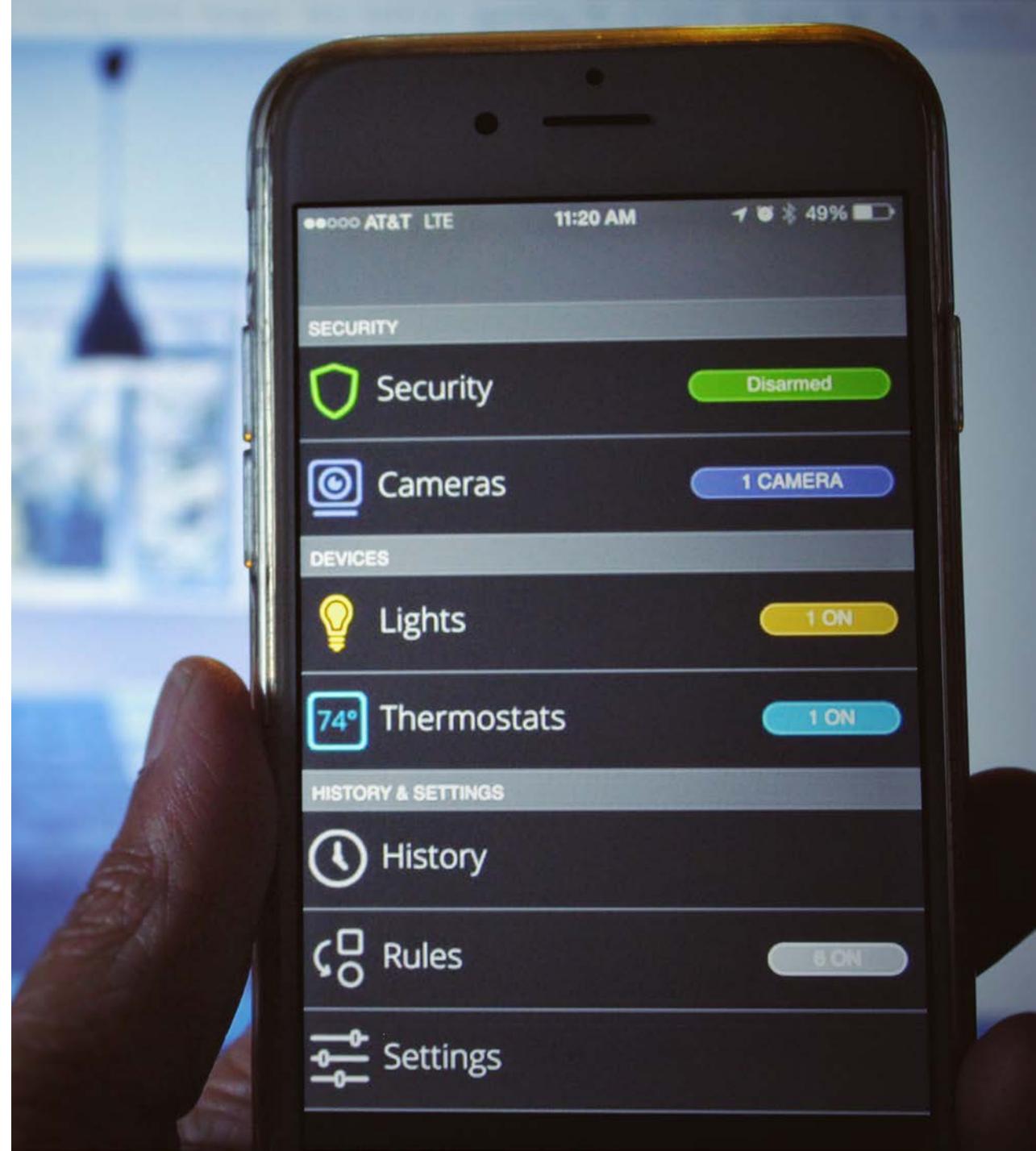
**47% of people
ban phones at
the dinner table
and 30% put
limits on screen
time at home**

The dark side to wellbeing: Abuse of security and lack of activity

People in Germany and Russia are far more worried about the potential misuse of smart-home technology by unknown “others” than their counterparts in the US and India.

Most of their worries are about what happens to our home if someone is able to hack into it and take control – opening our homes to potential threats, which we feel we can do little about.

Through online chats we heard that there is also a concern that home automation may be making us lazier, solving issues which aren't really issues in the first place. After all, the motion-sensor light switch doesn't quite compare to the washing machine in terms of liberating our free time.





How do we create safe connected homes?

Tech as a security risk

“A connected home is a security risk”

Roland is from Germany. He knows that having “smart” connected appliances would make life easier. But frequent media coverage of hacking means he has no peace of mind:

“Any computer system is vulnerable. A hacker, once he has access to the system, can control and monitor everything.”

It is easy for Roland to imagine a scenario in which his usual everyday activities and habits are tracked, and his privacy compromised for alarming purposes:

“It is then easy for him to determine whether someone is at home or not and whether he has enough time to clear the apartment. He could then enter the apartment comfortably ... with the words of adverts: ‘Alexa, please open the door’.”

Home should feel like your safest space: totally secure and under control. So it can be frightening to feel anything less than fully in charge.



The light side to **relationships**: Technology is **deepening our connections**

In every country there is a large group of people that believe **technology in the home helps them to foster better relationships with the people living under the same roof.**

We found that technology nurtures relationships in two clear ways:

1. **We're home when we're away:** we can be digitally present when we're not able to be physically present at home
2. **Opportunities for play:** we have discovered new ways of bonding and spending time together

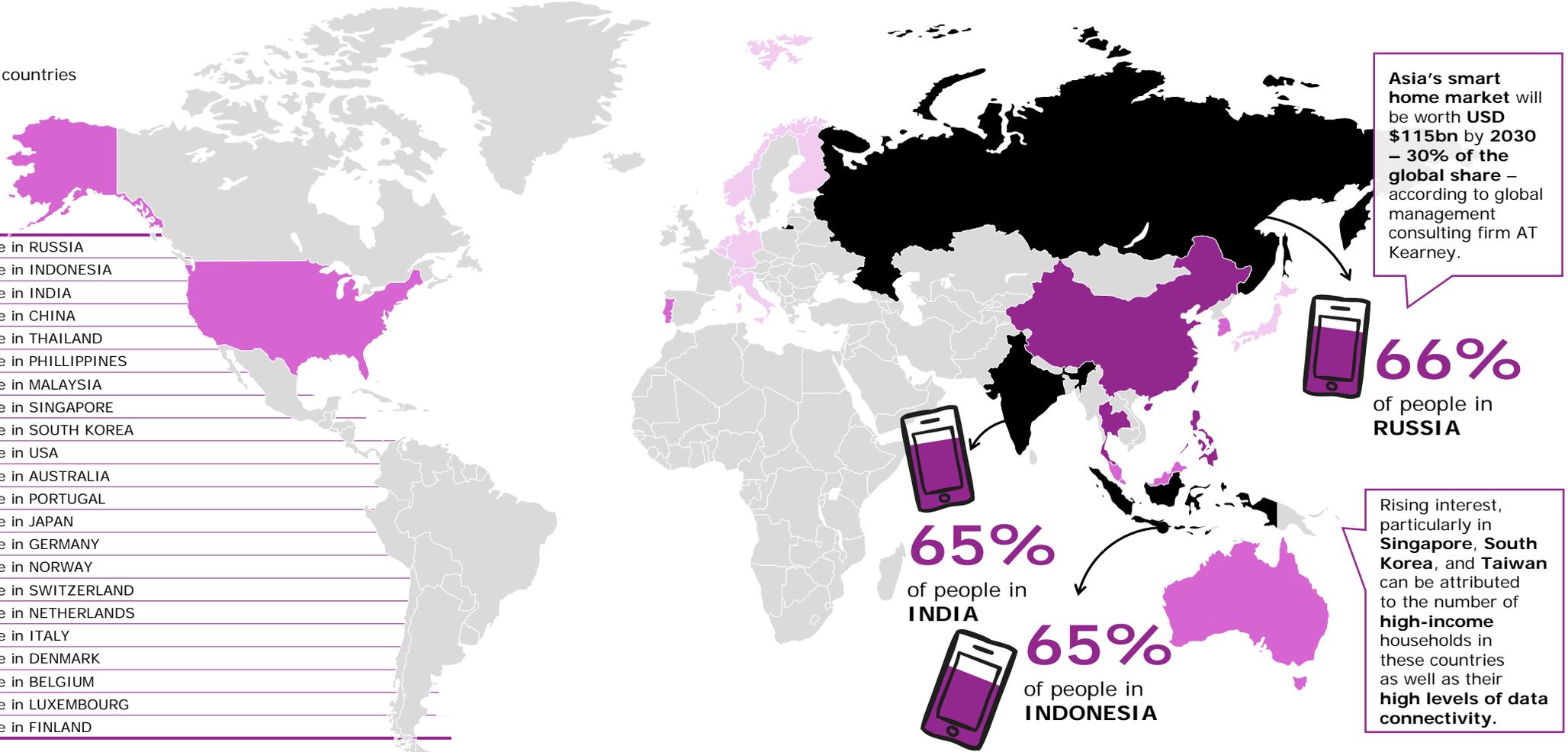
36%
**are excited to
bring technology
into their homes
to feel more
connected with
the other people
they live with**

People differ in how they feel about using **new home tech to connect** with people in their homes

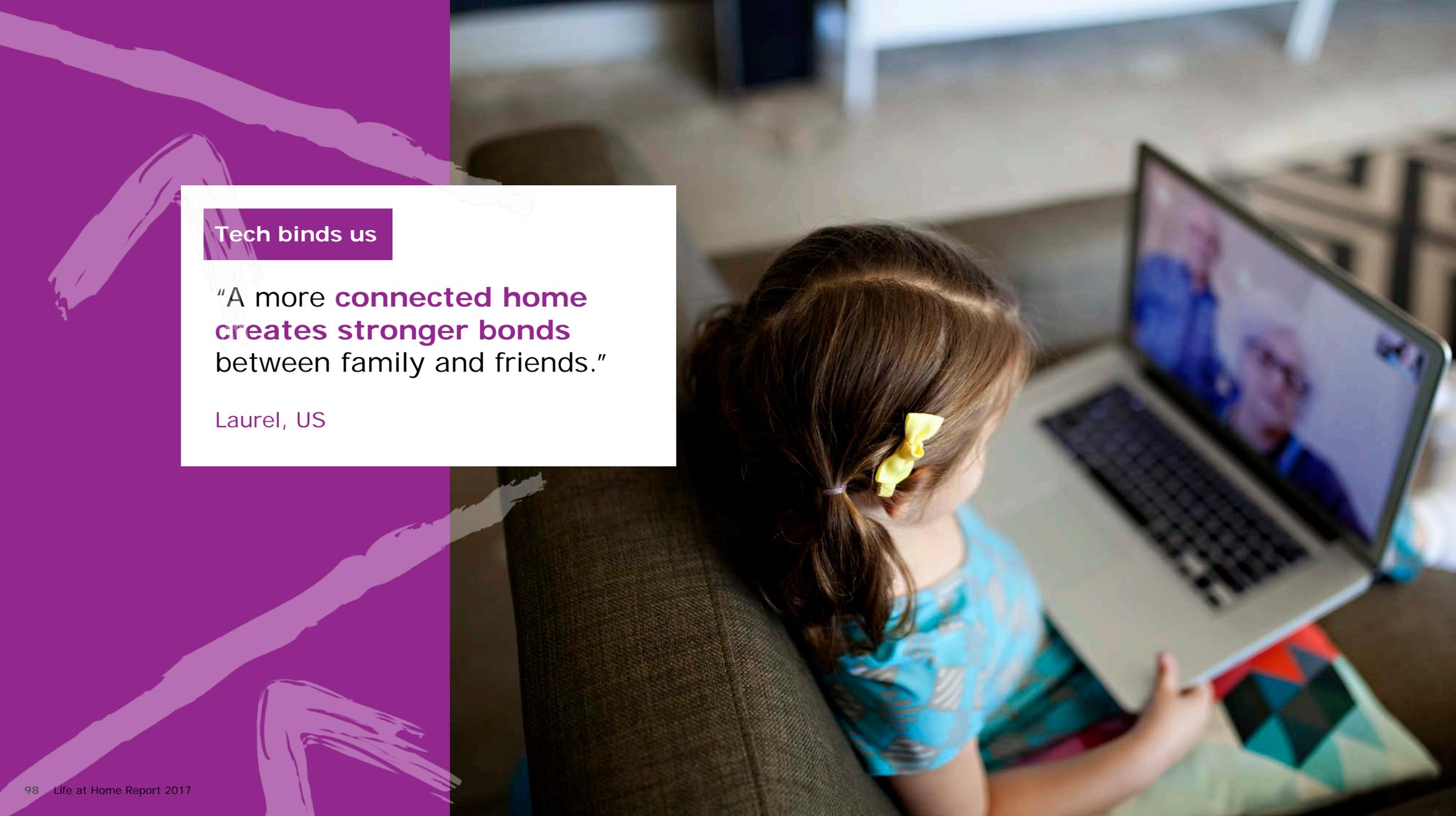
Key:

- Top three countries
- 50-69%
- 30-49%
- 10-29%

- 66% of people in RUSSIA
- 65% of people in INDONESIA
- 65% of people in INDIA
- 64% of people in CHINA
- 63% of people in THAILAND
- 58% of people in PHILIPPINES
- 47% of people in MALAYSIA
- 40% of people in SINGAPORE
- 38% of people in SOUTH KOREA
- 37% of people in USA
- 32% of people in AUSTRALIA
- 30% of people in PORTUGAL
- 26% of people in JAPAN
- 25% of people in GERMANY
- 21% of people in NORWAY
- 20% of people in SWITZERLAND
- 19% of people in NETHERLANDS
- 19% of people in ITALY
- 19% of people in DENMARK
- 18% of people in BELGIUM
- 15% of people in LUXEMBOURG
- 13% of people in FINLAND



% of people agreeing with "I'm excited to bring future tech into my home, to feel more connected to the people in my home."



Tech binds us

"A more **connected home**
creates stronger bonds
between family and friends."

Laurel, US



We're home when we're away

Whether it's technology that allows entrepreneurs to get away from work in time for dinner, or apps that let relatives share moments with their families living far away, there's no doubt that technology is changing life at home for the better for many people.

But home isn't always a family affair. There are many homes around the world where people live alone, either out of choice or necessity. Solitude is on the rise, especially in countries like China and India, and for many it can create a feeling of isolation. **We can see how new, simple-to-use technologies chip away at loneliness and create connections which transcend walls and borders.**

"In the restaurant business it's busy at lunch / dinner, so my husband was never home for lunch/dinner. So he installed a CCTV camera in his restaurant [...] He is with us for dinner now."

KVS, India

Tech bonds us

“We started playing music [and] games together as a family on our phones. **In a time when I thought I was losing connection with my girls I just had to figure out** how to interest them.”

Melissa, USA





We have new opportunities to play

There's been a huge change in what passes for entertainment in our homes, brought about by the ready availability of wirelessly streamed music, film, gaming, and so on. But we're starting to see that this doesn't have to be the end of family fun and activities.

Lots of families find new ways to spend time together through technology. Maybe it's streaming music from their devices into the kitchen whilst they're cooking, or singing and dancing together to their karaoke apps in the front room.

We can also see the use of connected technology to start conversations, rather than letting devices stifle them, such as asking 'Siri' or 'Alexa' to tell a joke before dinner.

“Having a connected home allows my family to feel closer together; we too are more connected”

Meet Home Pioneer Pavitar from India. He has transformed his own flat and his relatives' homes into smart homes over the last few years: wiring, coding, and connecting them himself.

“For us, being connected to home helps us to feel more present. The whole family knows each others' whereabouts; technology brings us closer together and assures us all that everyone else is fine...”

Whilst there are many reasons that he began this process, for him the most important outcome has been the increased connection he feels to his otherwise distant family.

He can see why some people view technology as a negative, but to him it's all about fully embracing its potential and discovering its benefits first-hand.

“If you just stare at a screen, for sure technology can be bad. But if you really use it, nothing gives you more presence to your home.”

How can technology bring us closer together at home?





The light side to **wellbeing**: Technology is making us *feel freer*

Technology drives up the comfort we feel in our home by taking on more of our everyday tasks, and in doing so it makes the home a “better partner” for us in our lives.

The reported benefits of these technologies are felt in two main ways:

- **Giving back time** – shifting our available hours from dull tasks to fun activities
- **Protecting our home** – increasing our ability to monitor our homes remotely and make them safer

Tech = easy life

"Home connectivity helps us to lead an easy life. It gives more time for family [and] opens the door of knowledge."

Visali, India



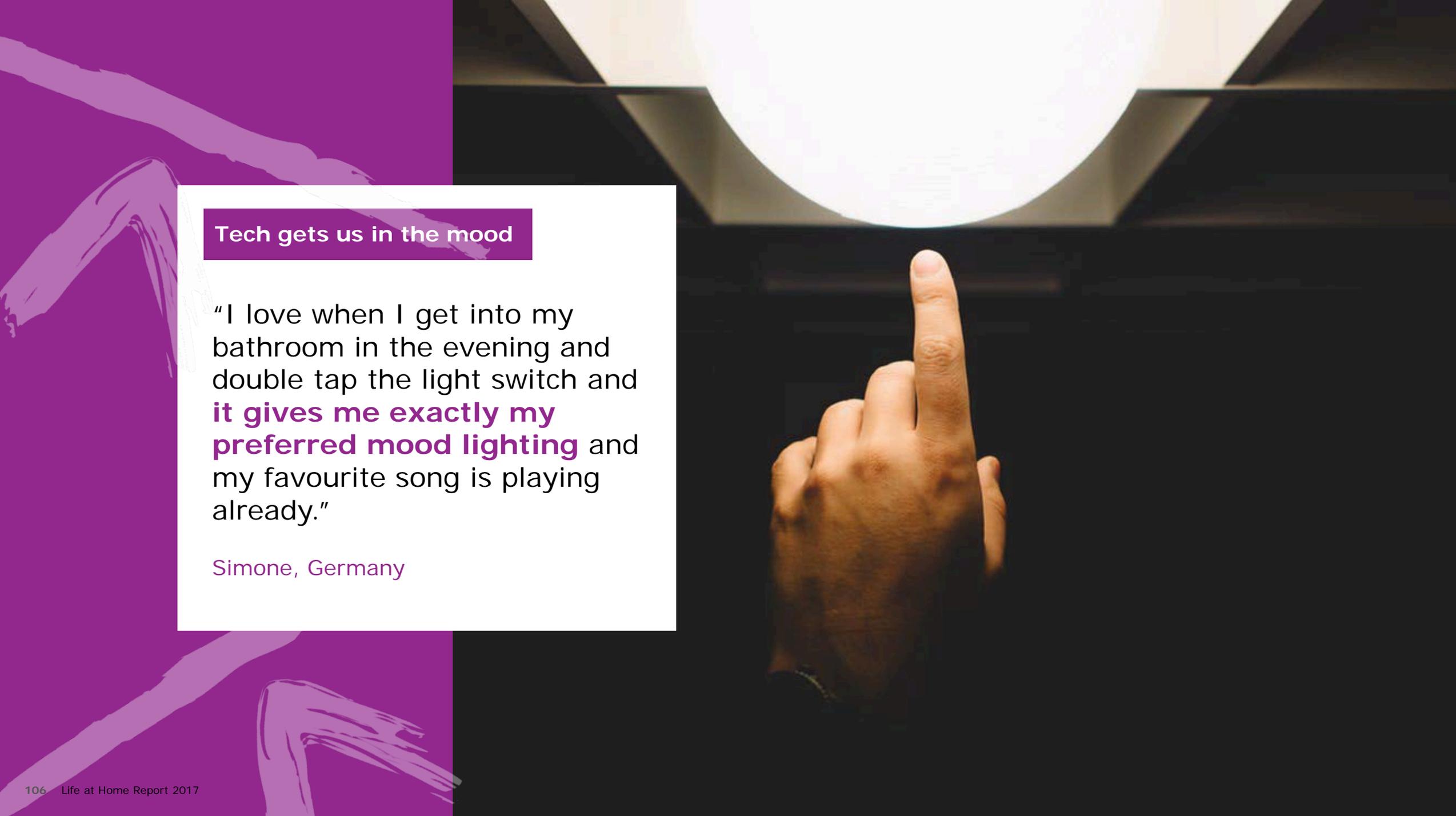
Giving time back

Household chores are often a source of conflict in many homes, so any technology (dishwashers, robotic vacuums, washing machines, etc.) that cuts down on housework ultimately leads to fewer arguments and gives us more time for fun stuff.

The next wave of home technology – the “smart home” – is being adopted on both sides of the world at almost the same rate. **We hear as much excitement about smart home technology from the people we meet in India as we do in the US.**

Those who experience the benefits say they are most excited about spending more time with their families, as well as creating a home which feels more responsive to their needs.



A hand is shown in the foreground, pointing upwards towards a large, glowing circular light fixture. The background is dark, suggesting a bathroom at night. The light fixture is a prominent feature, casting a soft glow. The hand is positioned on the right side of the frame, with the index finger pointing towards the light.

Tech gets us in the mood

“I love when I get into my bathroom in the evening and double tap the light switch and **it gives me exactly my preferred mood lighting** and my favourite song is playing already.”

Simone, Germany

“I love my dropcam! I **get to watch my house all day** [...] and see how much fun my dogs are having or how lazy they are. I can also **make sure that my home is safe.**”

Stacey, USA

Protecting the home

We often worry about our homes when we leave for the day, but smart home technology gives us peace of mind when we can't be there to physically check on things.

During our visits to people's homes, across Europe, the US and parts of India we have found more and more people talking to us about their love of technology that allows them to remotely monitor their homes.

Whether these systems are being used to check on deliveries, pets, kids, childminders or elderly relatives, overall they make us feel calmer about the safety of our homes and the people in them.

What did we learn?

Technology is about the “now”, not the future

Technology can make it easier for people to feel safe and present in their homes, right here and now. This isn't just about the rapid rise of smart technology, but the growing sales of standard domestic items, like washing machines and vacuum cleaners, which continue to liberate free time in countries like China and India.

The flip side to this is that whilst technology creates more individual and constant connections to the world around us, it can make people feel like they are less connected to the people they live with. Some people also worry about becoming lazier.

Most of us are still learning how to behave with the technology around us, but there is a general recognition that when it is used well, it can help nurture life at home and the quality of the relationships we have within it. **What if, together, we could bring the light side of technology to life at home?**

The connected home is already here for a lot of people – and those who love the benefits, *really* love them



Home Pioneering Hints: How to... balance the pros and cons of technology in the home

"My family makes a rule that on every Saturday, we disconnect from technology for two hours and only play games and talk with each other."

Guanjie, China

What if we create a moment in the week that is technology-free...

What if we identify spaces and things in the home that make technology seamless and accessible to all of us...

"I don't like to stay alone. So you need mobiles, iPads. WLAN. And we also use Sonos for music and radio. This modern technology helps for 'presence'."

Jorg, Germany

"At times I need to message someone and my kids are pulling at me, and I say, *"This is important"*. But that is like telling them they are not, in that moment, important."

Tish, USA

What if we looked at our technology use through our kids' eyes, and changed our habits...

What if we let the kids create rules for our technology use...

"If I'm checking my phone all the time, she's [my daughter] very aware of it and will ask me to put it away. Sometimes I can't because I'm in the middle of work. But it's not always work."

Anne, Denmark

The deliberately unfinished home

How to have a home that stays one step ahead of your life



21%

**of people fear
starting in case
we can't finish**



Embrace change

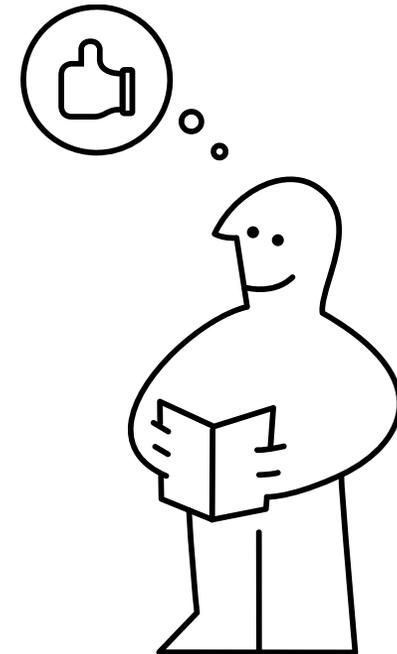
"**Change** is the only constant in our homes."

Izumi, Japan



The Life at Home Report 2016 talked about home as a never-ending story. **We discovered that home reflects how the changes in the world around us impact our lives at home.**

This year we delved deeper into home as a 'never-ending, constantly changing idea' **to understand more about what that means in practical terms, and how people cope with it in reality.**



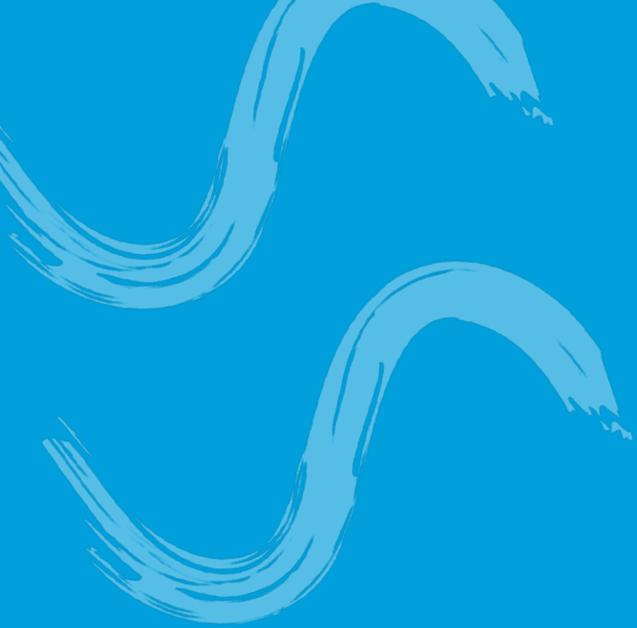
Our homes need to **change and evolve with our lives**

Throughout our research, we found that many people aspire to have a “forever home”. But life is not static – children grow up, needs change – and “forever” can look different depending on the time of day.

As psychologist Roy Langmaid says “**our identity is an emerging property – and so should be our home.**” When we open ourselves to a home that constantly evolves, we are better equipped to manage the changes in our lives too.

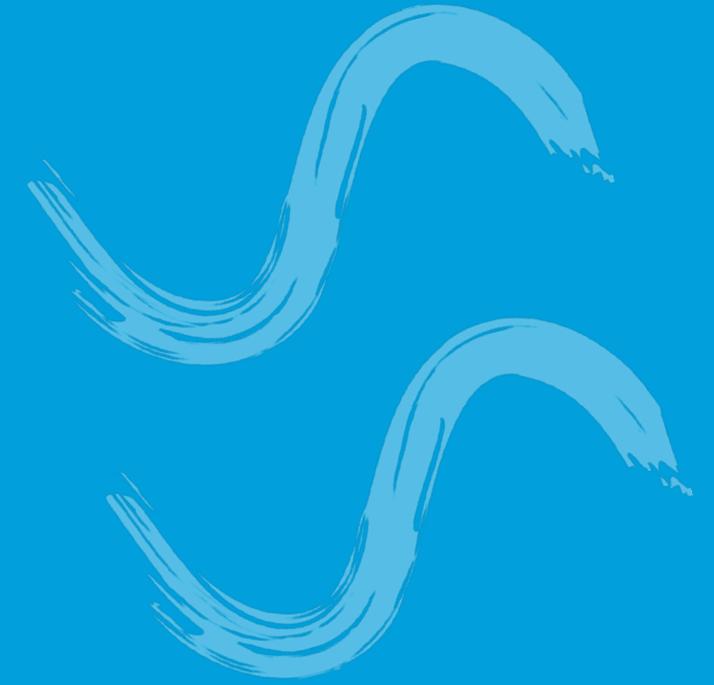
But there are battles when it comes to creating an ever-changing home. We are at the whim of the forces within and outside our home that feel beyond our control, and for many of us accepting and embracing these changes requires a completely new perspective.





“Identity is a narrative; people tell their story (past, present, and future) through the objects that surround them. Home is a story and the objects inside are containers of parts of your past self. So when people change the objects in their home, they are changing their **‘story’.**”

Roy Langmaid, Psychologist



Lack of time and energy

“My frustration at home is its old decoration style - the wall papers have been cracked and lost its original colours. **I really want to change them, but it could be very time-consuming and labour-intensive.** I have more important things to do.”

Shuang, China



Change can feel like a **constant battle** against the odds

Lack of space

The most concrete issue we found is the recurring problem of space.

One in five (20%) put off home projects because they have no room to manoeuvre and no space to put their things while they are working.

As Jennifer from the US told us “when I try to start a project I pile up all of the stuff from one room in another room, and then my kids and husband just add things to the pile. It ends up getting so out of control that I have to give up what I started. And now I just tend not to start at all.”

Can't afford it

We don't all have the luxury to live in multiple homes, or move whenever we feel like it. We have bills to pay, mouths to feed, and kids to put through college. A lack of money can feel like a big barrier to change, especially if we dream of big renovations. As Jennifer says, “I have some ideas, just not enough money to do them just yet.”

The people that facilitate a better life at home realise that small, affordable hacks can have a big impact on our lives, and a lack of money can be a liberation - not a restriction - if you change your mind-set.

Not allowed to do it

Renting is on the rise, especially in countries like India, USA and the UK. In countries like Germany and China it is a normal state of affairs for long-term living.

But renting can mean you lack control over the fabric of your home - like Erin, from India, says, “I could not paint the walls the colours I wanted. I have to ask permission before I hang a picture, put up a shelf.”

Because people instinctively think about long-lasting updates when they dream of changing their home, renters feel like they face an additional battle.

Fear and lack of energy can stop change in its track

Doing work on our homes can be exhausting, and many of us simply don't have the energy. So we choose to prioritise activities that come more easily to us, like playing with the kids or having some "we" time with our loved ones.

From our survey and conversations online, we can also see that many people are *afraid* to make changes to their homes. **This is a complex picture, ranging from the fear of starting in case we can't finish (21%) to worrying that we'll regret our choices so it's best not to do anything (19%).**

But no matter how you look at it, when we don't make the practical changes we need, we end up making life at home harder.

26%

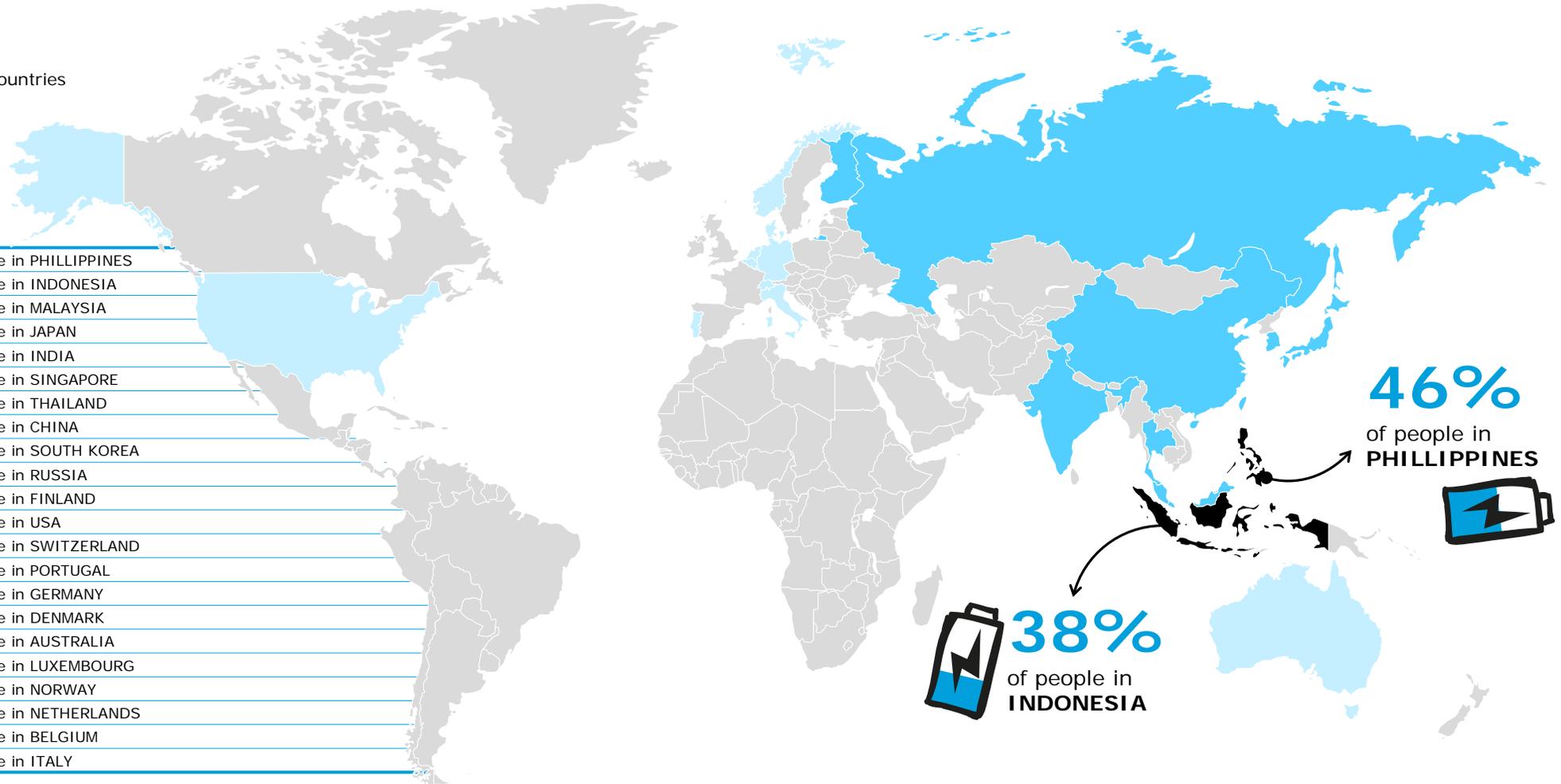
tell us that they want to make all the changes in their home at once but they simply don't have the energy

Across the globe a lack of energy can get in the way of change

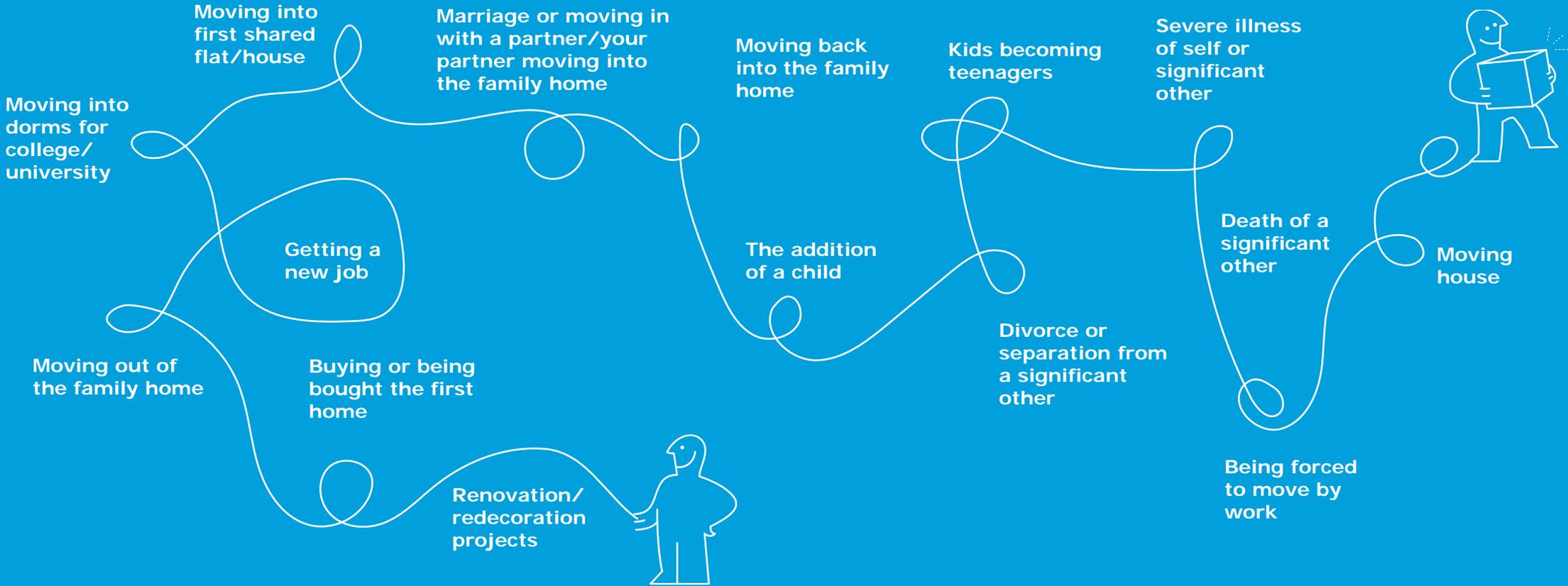
Key:

- Top two countries
- 40-54%
- 25-39%
- 10-24%

- 46% of people in PHILIPPINES
- 38% of people in INDONESIA
- 34% of people in MALAYSIA
- 34% of people in JAPAN
- 34% of people in INDIA
- 33% of people in SINGAPORE
- 32% of people in THAILAND
- 31% of people in CHINA
- 25% of people in SOUTH KOREA
- 25% of people in RUSSIA
- 25% of people in FINLAND
- 21% of people in USA
- 21% of people in SWITZERLAND
- 21% of people in PORTUGAL
- 21% of people in GERMANY
- 21% of people in DENMARK
- 21% of people in AUSTRALIA
- 20% of people in LUXEMBOURG
- 19% of people in NORWAY
- 19% of people in NETHERLANDS
- 17% of people in BELGIUM
- 12% of people in ITALY



Unless an 'inciting incident' occurs – a moment or event in life that **propels us to make changes in our homes**



We tend to see and **feel change** in two different ways

We have discovered that there are two types of people in the world: **drivers and drifters**. But what type are you?

Pick the three that relate to you... be quick and don't overthink it!

RISK-TAKER



LAID BACK



STRONG-WILLED



MEDIATOR



CREATOR



COMFORT CREATURE



If you answered majority **blue**, you're similar to the **23% of us that like to experiment**, explore and embrace or create change

You're most likely to say *"The next thing I'm going to do with my home is..."*

If you answered majority **yellow**, you're similar to **63% of us who prefer stability**, regular routines and feel uncertain about what change means.

You're most likely to say *"If only my home was (or had) then we would be able to do ..."*

If you couldn't choose either way, then you are like **14% of us that are undecided**.

You're most likely to say *"I don't want to be put in a box anyway..."*

“Perfecting my future home is how I am perfecting my future self.”

Home Pioneer Nataliya, from Russia, crafted an eco sky-dome in the woods. It’s a home made from the same woods in which it lives, surrounded by, and in complete harmony with, nature.

“I have always dreamed of living in a forest, and in a house made of the forest. Chasing this dream home has been my drive in life. I was never afraid of it.”

And she pursued that dream with her husband doggedly until they made it a reality.

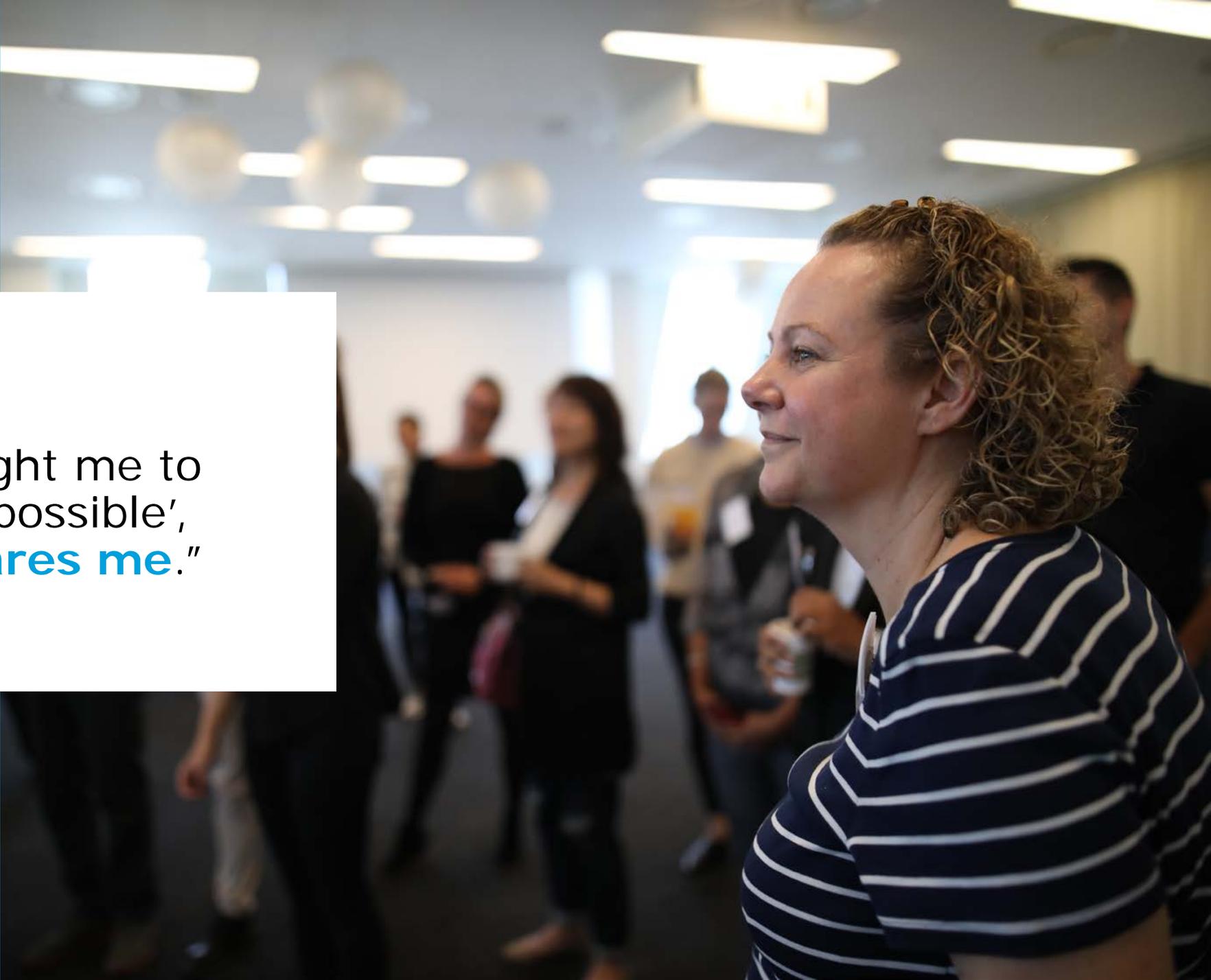
“We built something which is a part of the environment, and something which is off the grid so that we would not be dependent on anyone else.”

When she got the chance, she not only built just that, but did so in a way to inspire others to do the same.

“I want to show others that they can achieve their dreams. That their home doesn’t have to be a square with a triangle on top. It can be whatever they like. We have 15,000 followers on Instagram, I want them all to come and see our house.”

What can happen when we pursue our dreams without fear, rather than stopping ourselves before we start?



A woman with curly hair, wearing a blue and white striped shirt, is shown in profile, looking towards the left. She is in a social setting, possibly a conference or networking event, with other people blurred in the background. The background features bright, rectangular ceiling lights.

Drive never dies

“My dad taught me to question ‘impossible’,
nothing scares me.”

Pernille, Denmark



Drive: this is the area that our **Home Pioneers stand out the most** from the many people

Across the world, people are aware that their home either helps or hinders our life changes. The main difference between us seems to be our willingness and ability to do something about it.

It's a well-worn phrase, but the thing we heard the most from our Home Pioneers is that **the only constant in their home is change**. Often this means they make big changes to help them create spaces that move them towards the next step of their lives – creating hobby rooms, new bedrooms, open living rooms, or changing the layout of their home to help pull isolated teens and their friends back into the heart of the home.

But not everyone can do this easily, whether it's down to money, skill, space, courage or knowledge. Many of us find ourselves stuck with spaces which worked for the last phase of our life, but risk holding back the next one.

10%

of people say they don't know where to go or who to ask for the tasks they can't do themselves

“Home is an ongoing process of improvement and change.”

Meet **Christian, a Home Pioneer** from Denmark. Using his carpentry skills and passion for floating homes, he spent years painstakingly converting a former military landing craft into his home. For him, the chase for the perfect home was not just personal, its professional too.

“Rarely do my clients let me create perfection. Making my own home allowed me to do this, to create my version of perfection.”

“I wanted the challenge, I built a round kitchen specifically because it is one of the most difficult things you could ever ask a carpenter to do. Now, if I can get clients to my home, I always get the job”

But even after carving out his perfect home once, Christian is still eager to do more.

“I just wanted to show what was possible with enough vision, time, energy, and resource. Then it’s about moving on to the next thing.”

What happens when we see our home as the canvas for our creative freedom?





“Change is actually about re-creating, **redefining what the rooms are.**”

Takashi, Japan

Home pioneers see change differently

When Home Pioneers talk about an ever-changing home that facilitates a better life, they talk about redefining spaces based on purpose-matching needs.

It isn't about redecoration for the sake of it, it's far bolder than that.

They showed us why it's important to redefine what change means when it comes to the boundaries of our home. Then we are able to truly assess what role a space can play in making our life at home better.

Change

“I had a romantic idea of buying a fire pit. So I bought it. Now we’re shifting there in summer evenings. But if I didn’t purchase the fire pit, it would be harder to ask everyone to come and sit outside with me. **By introducing the object, it gives a purpose to our behaviour and the space.**”

Start with something small, project the idea and buy it, without imposing it. Then the purpose of your space will change because our behaviour does.”

Paula Zuccotti, Author of *Everything We Touch*



What did we learn?

Our changing lives are helped by our changing homes

Our Home Pioneers taught us a lot about finding comfort with constant change. When we treat our homes as a partner, and not just a place to live or do battle with, then the changes we experience as we grow will be supported by the life we lead at home. It can help avoid the “if only...” scenarios that we heard throughout our research.

With a clearer view on what separates the drivers and drifters, we can break down the barriers that so many people face when it comes to making a change to life at home.

Much more can be done to support the people who are put off from making changes because they are afraid they won't be able to finish, they lack the skills or expertise, they are restricted by their space, or they believe it is unaffordable. **What if we could view an ever-changing home as an exciting and easy prospect?**

There are too many of us living in homes which were great for the last phase of our life but might be holding back the next one



Home Pioneering Hints: How to... understand the home is deliberately unfinished

"I have a rolling programme to completely renew all the rooms in the house every ten years. I look not just at decoration, but at what they are for, and how they could be used better for the family."

Peder, Denmark

What if you created a rolling programme – design what it would look like and get the family involved...

What if you create a list of the five ways you want to live in the future and design a space around them...

"We should organise our home according to our lifestyle - how we live now and how we might live in the future. Doing this should simplify our home and not complicate it."

Eloise, USA

"Start with the basics, add to them when you need, but look for things that can be modified or altered later. [Have] furniture with shorter life when starting out so they can be replaced guilt-free. Make regular minor changes to your home."

Yang, China

What if, during your next big home purchase, you buy something that's temporary or easy to change...

What if you create temporary storage hacks for when you want to create change ...

20% of people feel blocked from starting any changes to their homes because they have no room to manoeuvre or move their things.

How do we beat the battles?

Creating a better life at home

Better homes...

are ultimately never truly finished...



What have we learned overall?

The four dimensions of home are true for everyone, but we all feel differently about the five common tensions that arise when they overlap. Regardless of location, size and occupants, our homes are steeped in meaning and personal identity.

This is why it's important to ask how we *feel* about home, and not just what we do when we're there.

It is not surprising, therefore, that relationships come out strongly as the most important feature about life at home. Our relationships weather the storms of all our feelings, our ever-changing needs, and our hopes and dreams. They are touched by all the issues that we have explored in this report.

But it doesn't need to be a battle. We believe we can help people fight their frustrations at home, by using some home pioneering thinking to design solutions that ease tensions and build better relationships on the home front.

Whether it's yours, mine or ours – everyone has the chance to create a better life at home.



What's next for life at home?

We're hugely thankful to the many people who welcomed us into their homes, both physically and virtually, so we can better understand how they deal with the battles that unite us all no matter where – and how – we live.

Much of what we learned has affirmed how positively we view our homes and the role they play in our lives.

Where we found common tensions, we also sought to highlight some of the solutions which people have devised. We hope that many of us will be inspired to try them out.

We will take all our rich insights and continue to design for the ever-changing nature of life at home for people all over the world.

From integrating technology, to unpicking our feelings from our clutter – many things still remain to be done.







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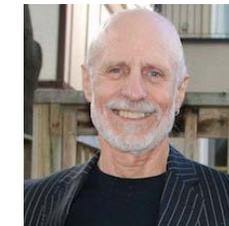
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