

# Balance

Starts

at Home

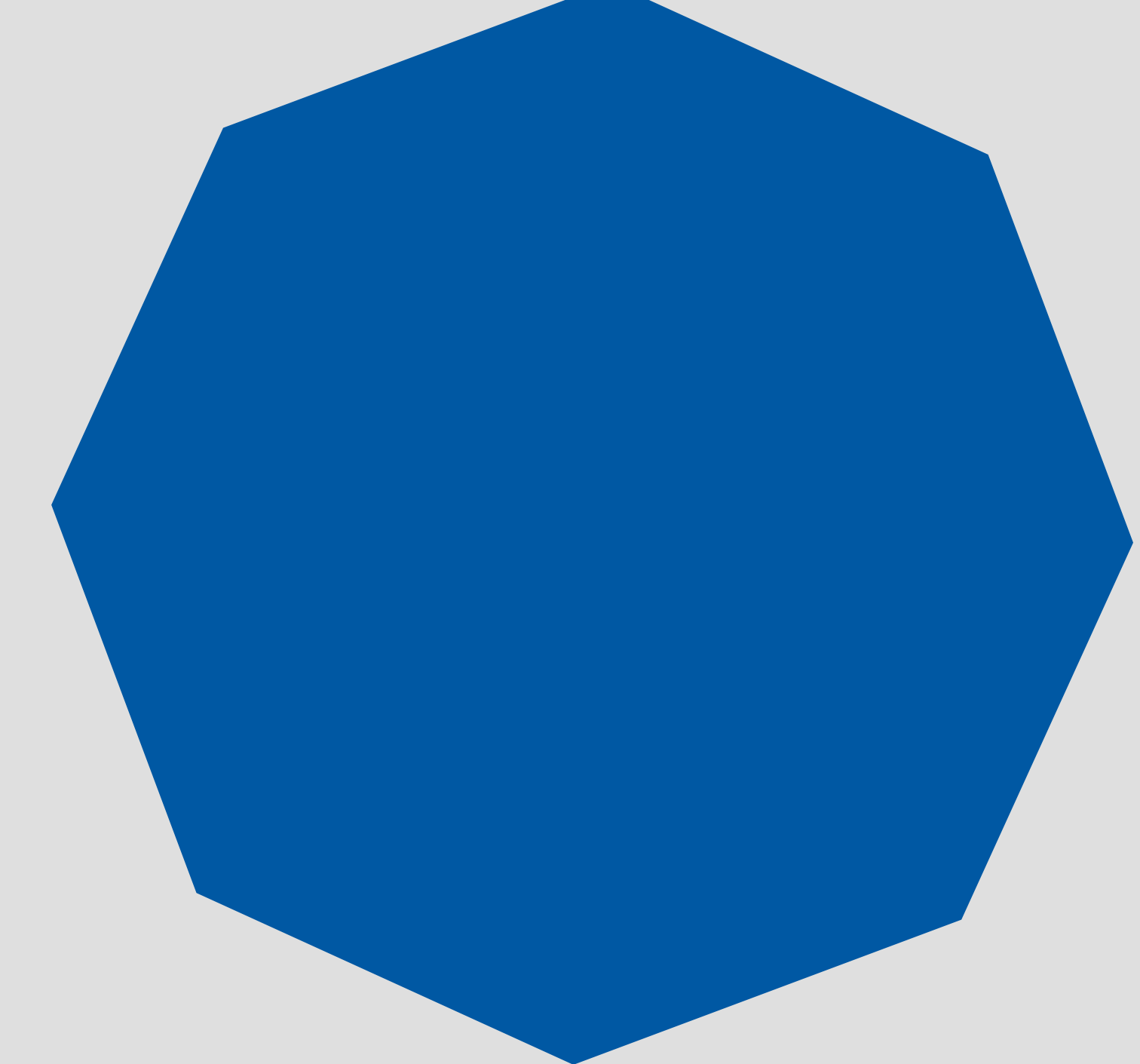




# Introduction

**A balanced approach to mental wellbeing helps us get the most out of life, and we believe that starts at home. A home space for our headspace.**

To learn more, we asked more than 34,000 people to share their thoughts on mental wellbeing and life at home. Here's what we found out...



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# Our findings

After a challenging 12 months, in which 27% of people say their mental health has suffered, our homes and our mental wellbeing have become more intimately connected than ever.

In fact, people now find it hard to talk about one without the other. Through our research, we learned that a home you love can help protect your mental wellbeing.

But there's a flipside. When people are unhappy at home, they are more likely to experience negative mental health impacts.

**40%**  
who felt more positive towards their home also saw a **positive impact on their mental health**

**42%**  
of people say their **relationships with immediate family have improved** over the last 12 months

**73%**  
say they have **spent more time in their neighbourhoods** in the last 12 months

**55%**  
of people say relaxing is the most important activity for helping them achieve a **sense of wellbeing at home**

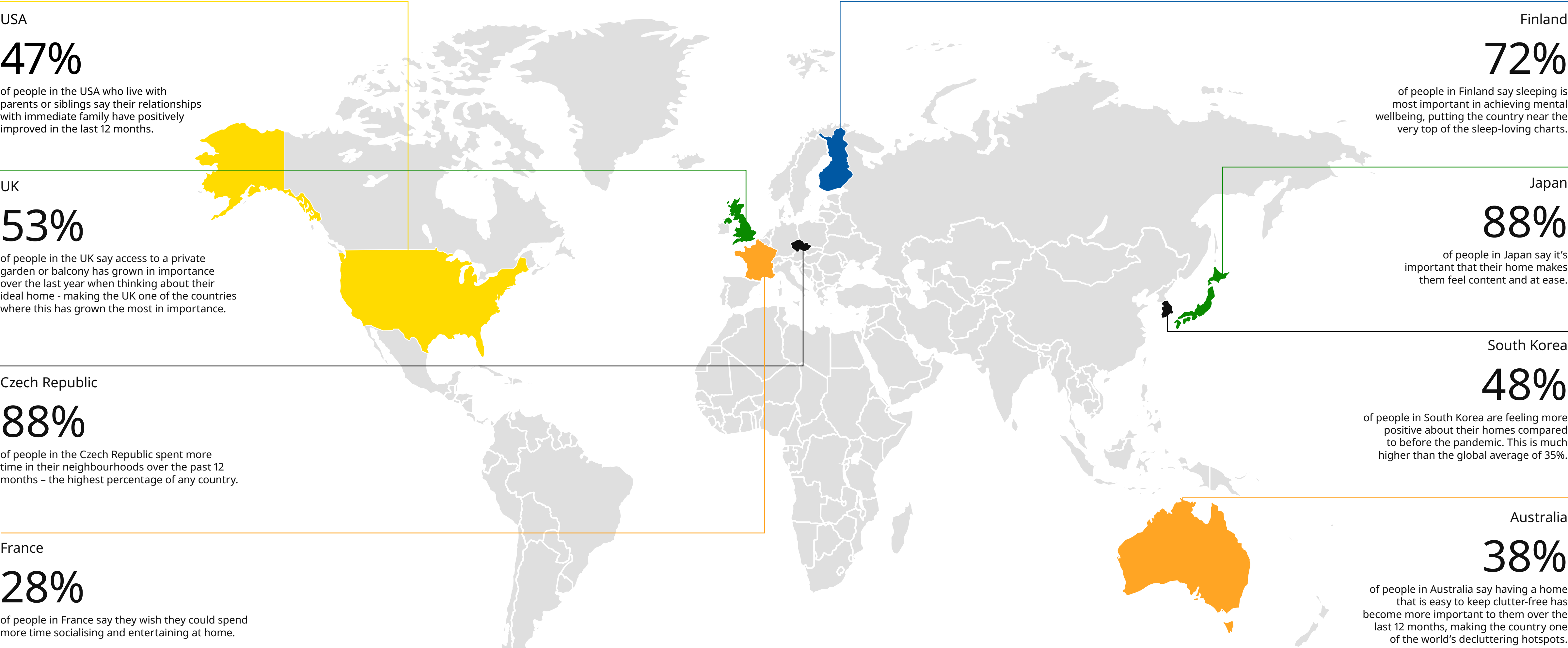
**38%**  
of people feel that the future will be **better than today**

**93%**  
think it is important that their home provides them with a **sense of comfort**



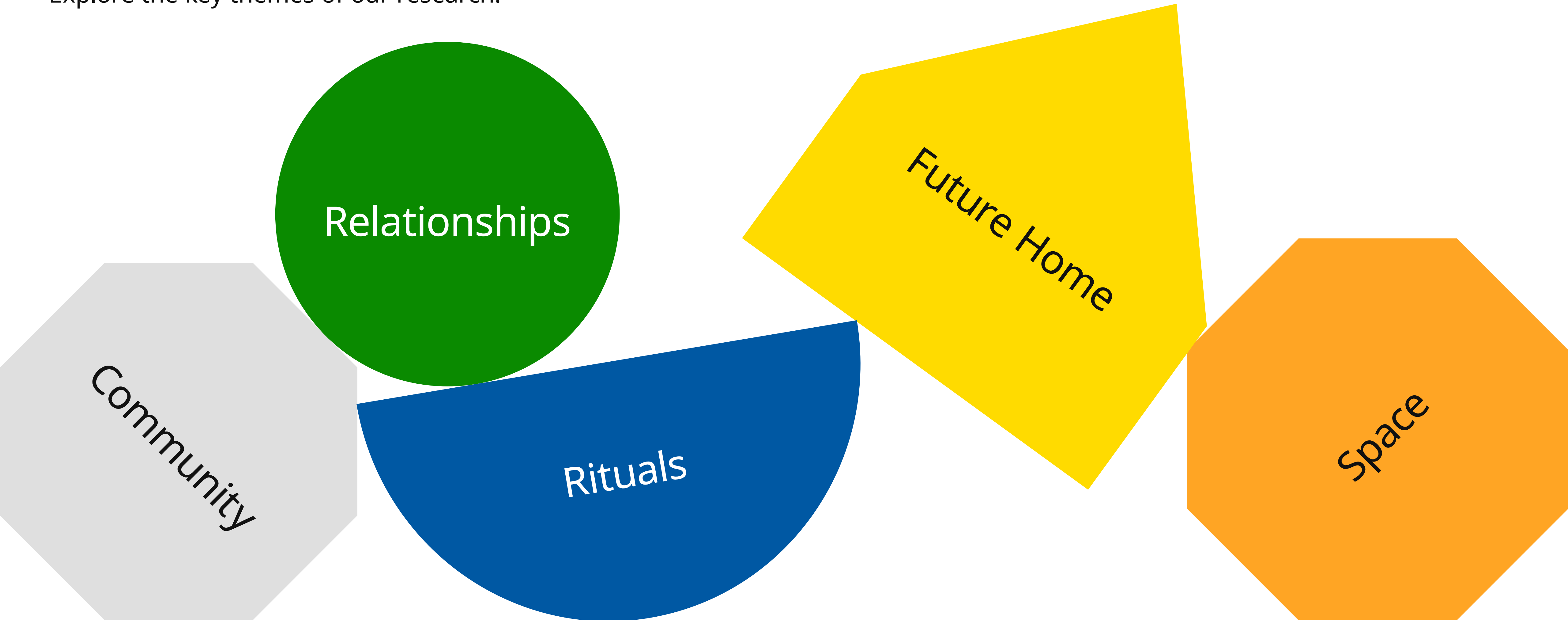
OUR FINDINGS

Over the past 12 months, people’s experiences and needs have changed in different ways around the world.



# Where are you looking for more balance?

Explore the key themes of our research.

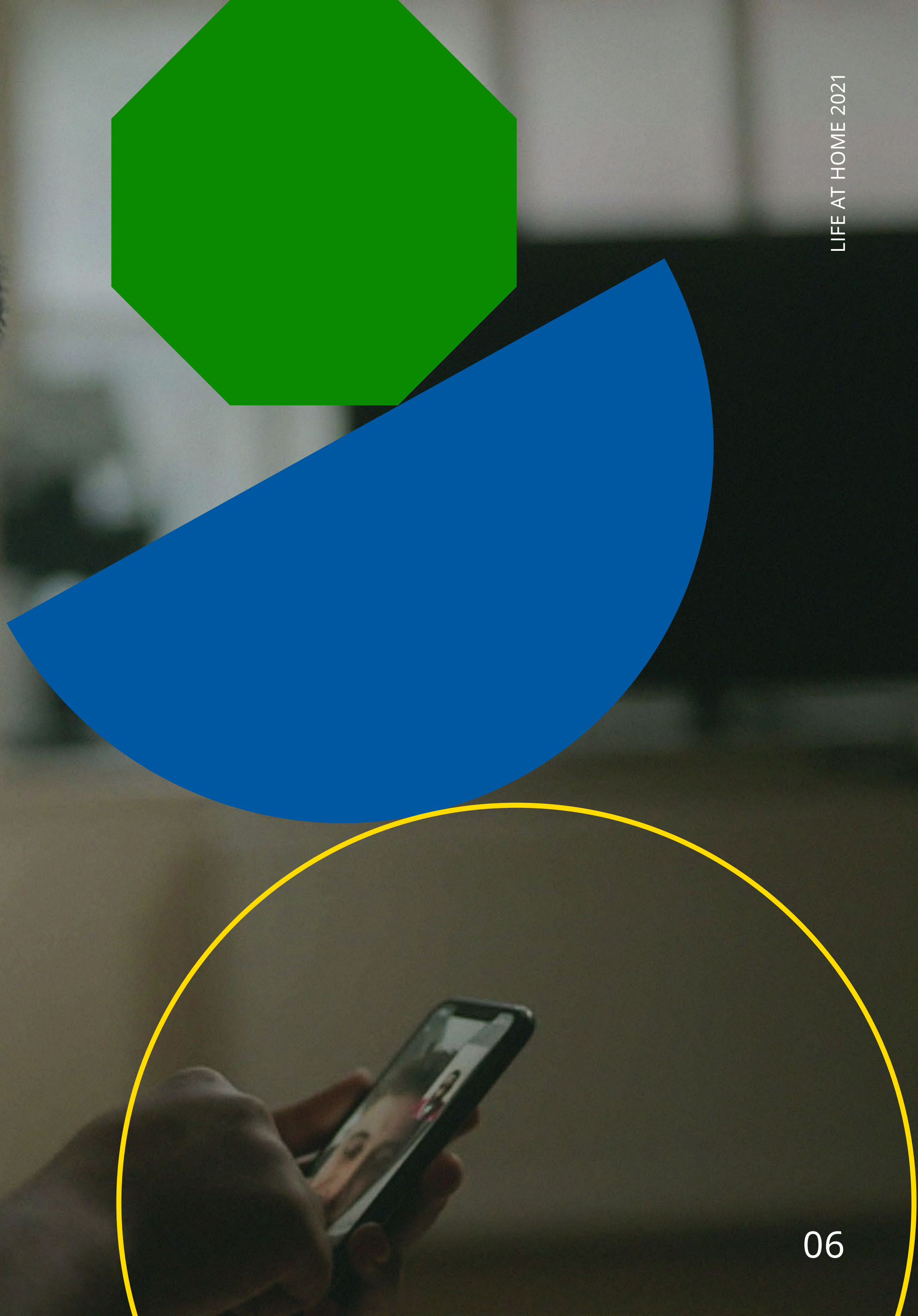




Relationships

# Is home helping or hindering your relationships?

The pandemic has brought many of us closer together — especially families and the people we live with. It has also made us choosier about the friendships we keep. For our mental wellbeing, it's quality not quantity that matters.





# Summary

Families have grown closer over the last 12 months, with 42% of people saying their relationships with immediate family have improved.

While some friendships have also flourished, others have not fared so well. One in five people we surveyed around the world say their friendships have been negatively impacted.

Relationships are vital to our mental wellbeing, especially relationships at home. When discussing our mental health and wellbeing, many of us turn to people we live with. On average, half say they speak to their partner, 22% to a parent and 21% to a sibling.





# Families bonded over shared experiences

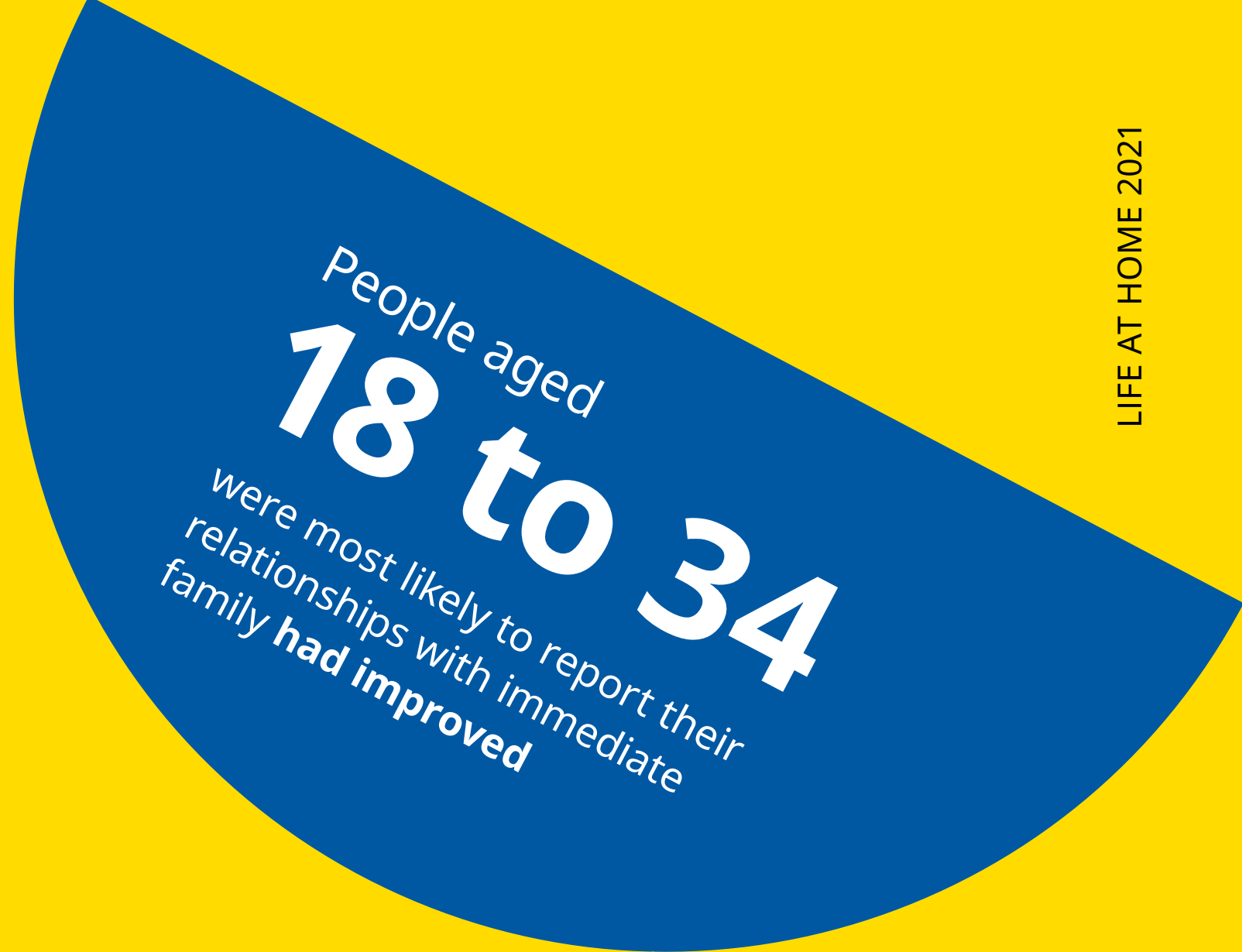
The pandemic has forced many of us to spend more time at home with family and loved ones. Over two-fifths (42%) of the people we spoke to said their relationships with direct family have grown stronger over the last 12 months. This was especially true for people in India (62%), Slovenia (66%) and China (68%). Much less so for those in Sweden (29%), Finland (24%) and Japan (15%).

The variations between countries show how different the experience of living together can be. For some, closer proximity creates new frictions. (Who's in charge of the cooking now? Is this a kitchen or an office? When does the workday begin and end?) But it has also given people greater insight into each other, allowing them to build stronger family relationships with better communication and deeper connections.

We see this reflected in people's changing priorities. When asked what they look for in their ideal home, 31% say proximity to friends and family is one of the things that increased most in importance over the last 12 months.

***“Lockdown was a little challenging in the beginning, just because we weren’t so used to being in each other’s space. I was working remote even before the pandemic, but my husband didn’t come home to work until everything shut down. It was kind of a learning curve with us being both here in the space, and we had to do a lot of things to get us to the place we are now. It’s been like a roller coaster.”***

***Liliana, USA***





# Focusing on the friendships that matter

Who do you talk to about your mental health and wellbeing? Many people (41%) say they turn to their friends. But in a year of restrictions, meeting up and socialising has been harder than usual.

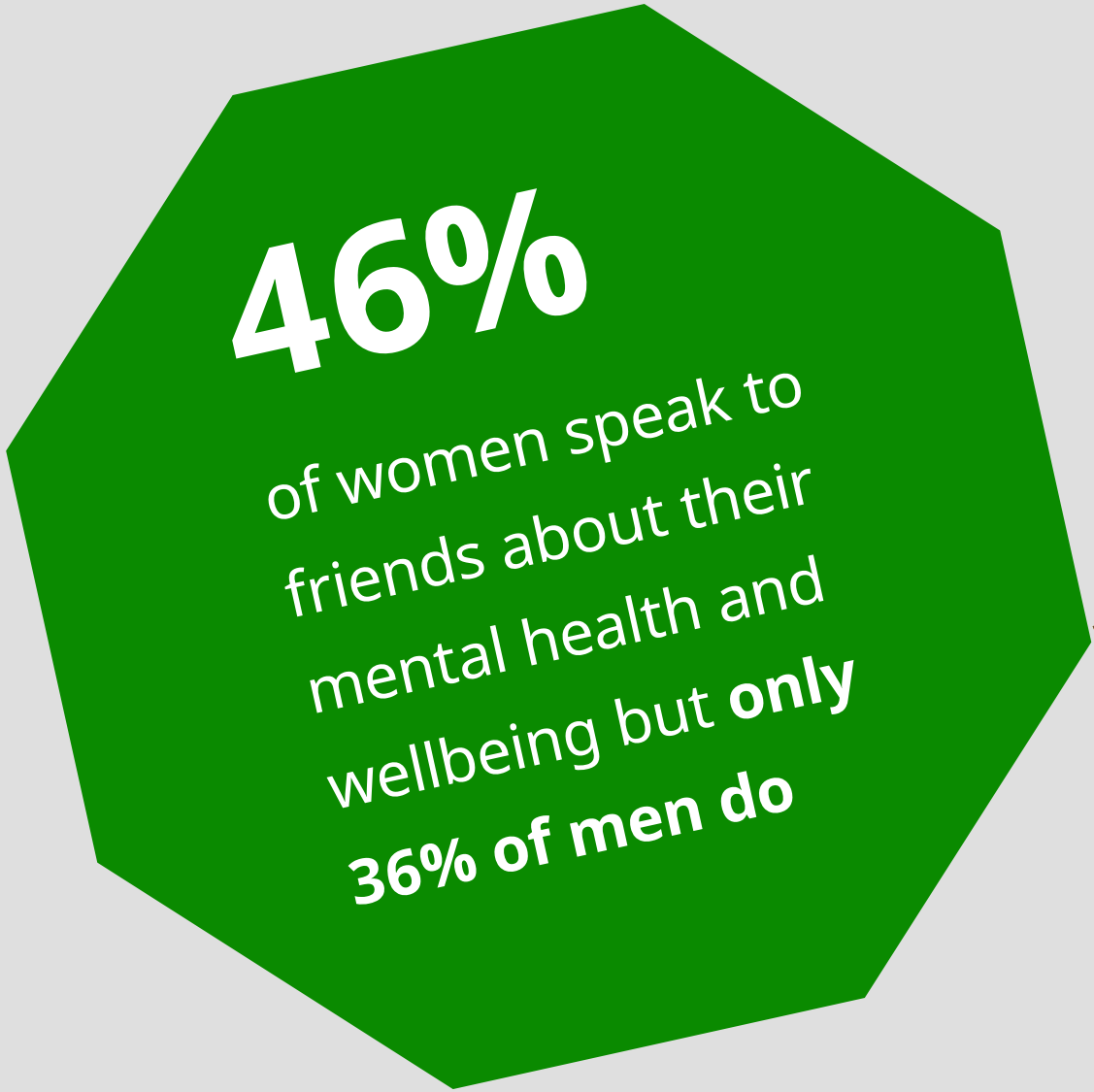
Oscar in China speaks for many of us when he says that video is no substitute for real life. “When you have no way to meet friends offline, it’s an alternative,” he tells us. But: “Face-to-face communication is definitely better because you can see their entire body language. When you are... joking with your friends, you can give them a little kick or hold their shoulders. There are some physical movements [you can do].”

Given these challenges, it’s no surprise that one in five people has seen their friendships suffer over the last 12 months. But those we spoke to did not always see losing friends as a bad thing.

The pandemic has helped people focus on what really matters. Many are now looking for quality not quantity in their relationships, and actively choosing between the friendships they want to maintain and those they are happy to let slip.

***“The [friends] I stayed in touch with through COVID, I feel like we became a lot closer together, whereas... if we didn’t really speak through COVID, that relationship kind of... disappeared a bit.”***

**Abdul, UK**



***“Lockdown has changed my friendship needs. I think our relationships are deeper now. When we see each other, we really spend good nights, we take more time, we spend entire weekends together because it might not happen again...so we organise weekends and see each other for two or three days and we have a good time, we get fresh air together, we do each other good and we tell ourselves that we’re good together and if something happens, everything’s fine, we’re still here.”***

**Sophie, France**





# Nurturing helps us feel balanced at home

It's not just people we build relationships with at home. It's everything we nurture and care for, whether it's greenery, animals or prized possessions.

Anil in the USA sums up the benefits of having plants in your home when he says, "The reason why I keep plants is because it helps me be more responsible. I feel like some of these plants, they speak out to me – and the better the relationship I build with the plants, the more they grow. It's a good feeling."

Pets also give us opportunities to build meaningful relationships. Liliana, also in the USA, told us that her dogs have been the best thing for her mental health during the pandemic. "They are the centre of my world and I love being around them so much. I had a reason to get up every morning and feed them and take them for a walk. So they really grounded me during that time."

## Key takeaways for relationships

1. Achieve balance by prioritising the relationships you have cultivated over the past 12 months.
2. To rebuild relationships with people who matter to you, make sure you are clear about your needs – and they are clear about theirs.
3. Create an environment in which you can nurture and be nurtured.





## Community

# How much do your communities do for you?

Whether it's local neighbourhoods or WhatsApp groups, communities are important to us. They support our practical, social and emotional needs – and we have been turning to them more and more over the last 12 months.

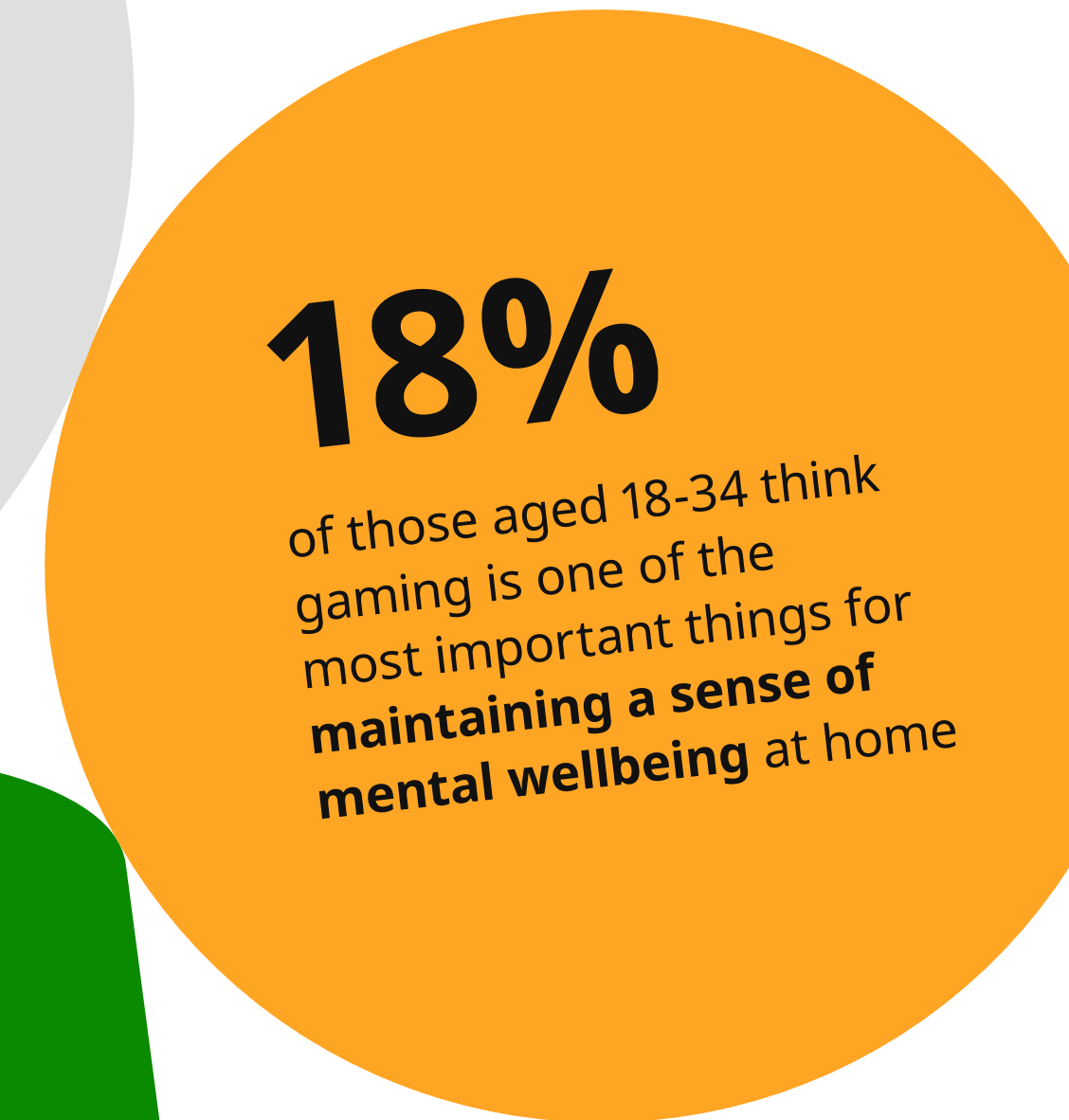
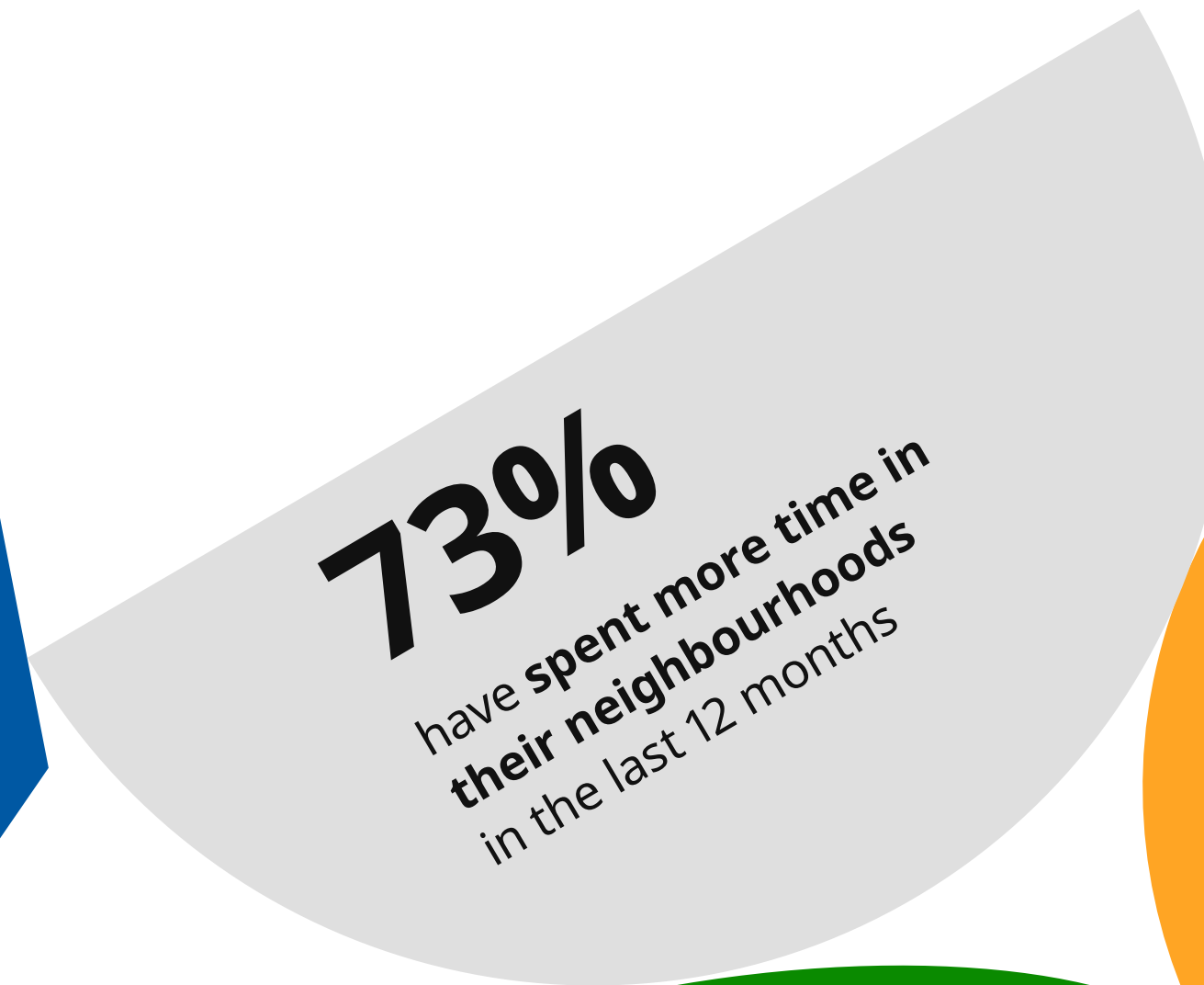


# Summary

Seventy-three percent of people around the world say they have spent more time in their neighbourhoods in the last 12 months.

Connecting with neighbours is important. It has practical benefits, especially when times are challenging, and supports our emotional needs. Sixty-two percent say their mental wellbeing has benefitted from having a sense of belonging in their neighbourhoods.

Community is not just about the houses and streets around us, though. It's also about the communities we create for ourselves with likeminded people, whether online or in person.





# Local communities were there when we needed them

The pandemic has shown us the practical importance of community. Local networks provided vital support.

It has also enabled us to get to know our local communities better. Almost three-quarters have spent more time in their neighbourhood over the past year and 69% have enjoyed socialising with people who live nearby.

Stronger community connections appear to have had a positive impact on mental wellbeing. Sixty-two percent of people say their mental wellbeing has benefitted from a sense of belonging in their neighbourhood. For those living in co-living facilities, the figure is over two-thirds (67%). For example, Abdul in the UK explained to us that several families in his building had experienced loss due to COVID, and that having a sense of

community had been important. “The best thing you can have is people around you that care.”

How long will these connections last? We heard from some that the community relationships built up during the pandemic have already begun to wither. On the other hand, 13% globally say that, when thinking about their ideal home, connecting to people in their neighbourhood is more important now than it was 12 months ago.

***“Everybody comes together to help each other out. They [my neighbours] are super-talkative. They’re social. They just feel like your best friends pretty much. That’s what I like about this community. Everyone is so helpful to each other”***

***Anil, USA***





# Communities grow around shared interests

What does community mean? Through our research, we learned that it's not just about local neighbourhoods. Around the world, people are forming their own wider communities with others who share their interests, values and beliefs.

These communities, many of them enabled by technology, give people new opportunities to build meaningful connections. For example, Abdul in the UK told us how he got into gaming because it helped him work on the social skills he had lost over lockdown.



People in India, China and South Korea are the most likely to **turn to online communities** to talk about their mental health and wellbeing.

They also play an important role in mental wellbeing, especially for younger people. 18% of those aged 18-34 think gaming is one of the most important things for maintaining a sense of mental wellbeing at home. 1 in 10 of those living in university halls or flat shares say they would turn to virtual communities to talk about their mental health and wellbeing (more than twice the global average of 4%).

***"It is possible to use the internet to make you feel that you are still connected to the world. For example... [when] everyone is watching a live broadcast... you feel that these people are connected in some way, even though you don't know who they are."***

***Oscar, China***



# Key takeaways for community

1. Strong community connections can have a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing.
2. We feel like we belong when our communities reflect who we are.
3. Community is not just the people we see and walk past every day – it's also the outdoor and virtual spaces we access from home.



## Space

# Is your home space supporting your headspace?

How we use our spaces has altered over the past year. To achieve balance, many of us have adapted our spaces to match. Sixty percent say they've had to change the way their home is organised to do the activities they want or need to do at home.

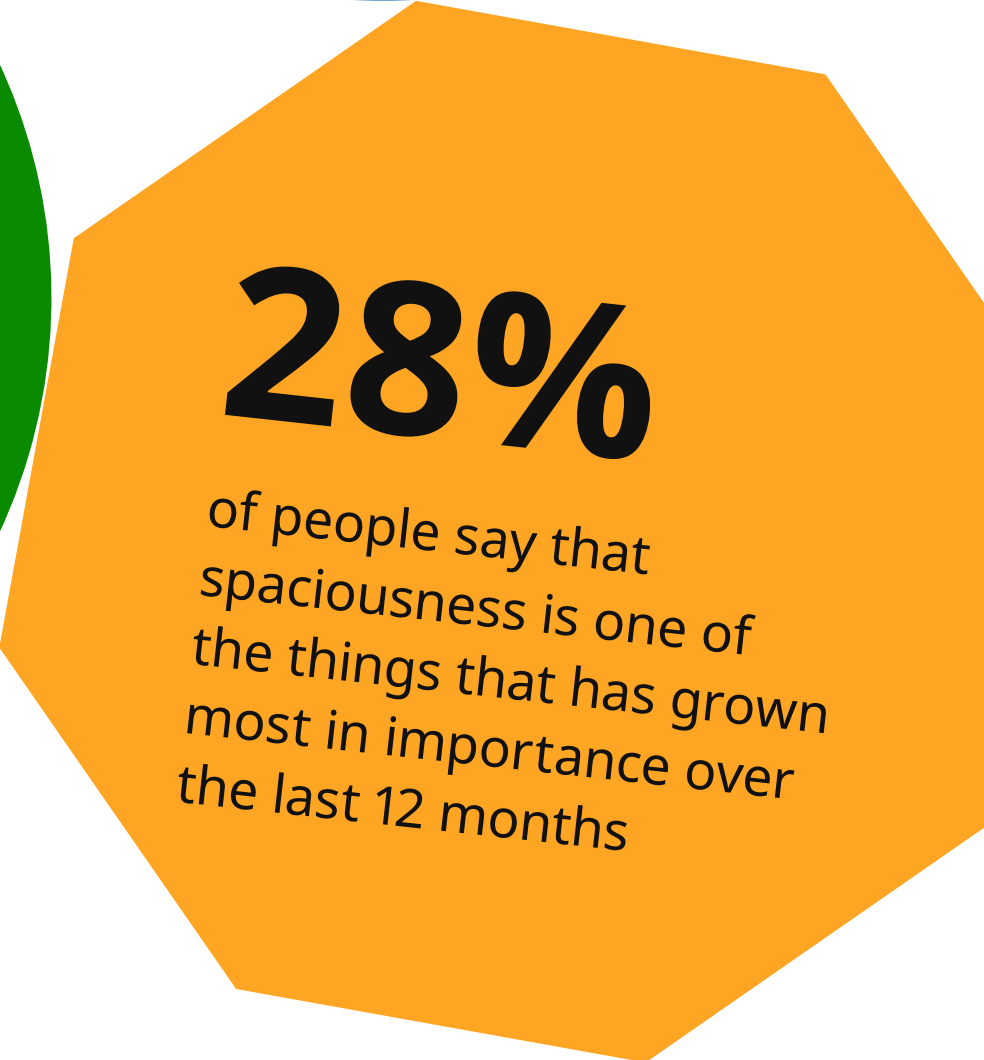
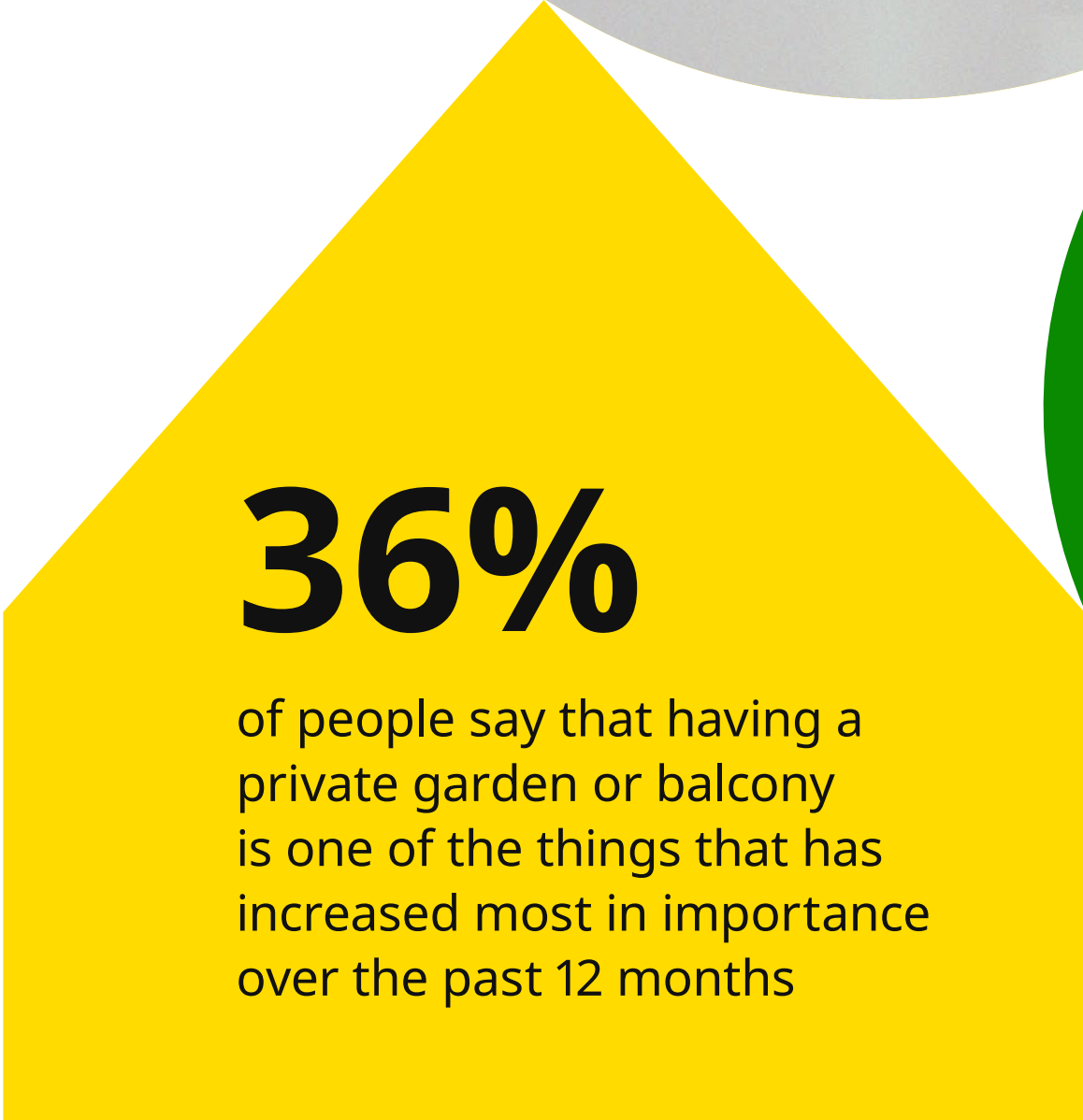
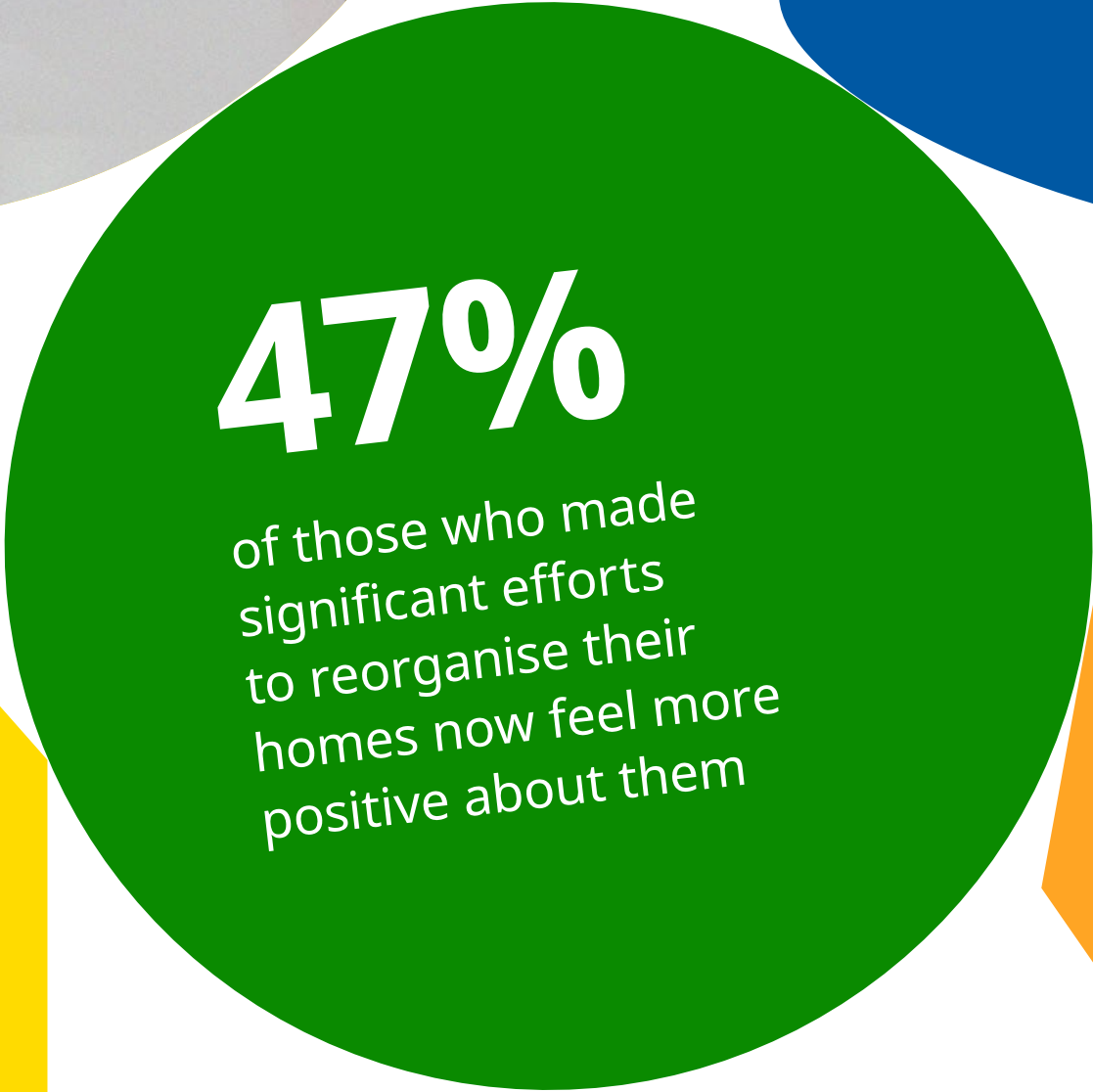


# Summary

Ninety-three percent of people globally say that it is important that their home provides them with a sense of comfort. But how do we find space for the comfort we need, when we're having to use our homes as offices, schools and gyms?

This year, we have seen a major shift in the way everyone is using and thinking about their homes. In the past, there were some things people only did beyond their four walls. Now, life is more fluid – and our spaces are changing to reflect this.

Control is important. To ensure they can do everything they want and need to do at home, many people are choosing to organise their homes in new ways.



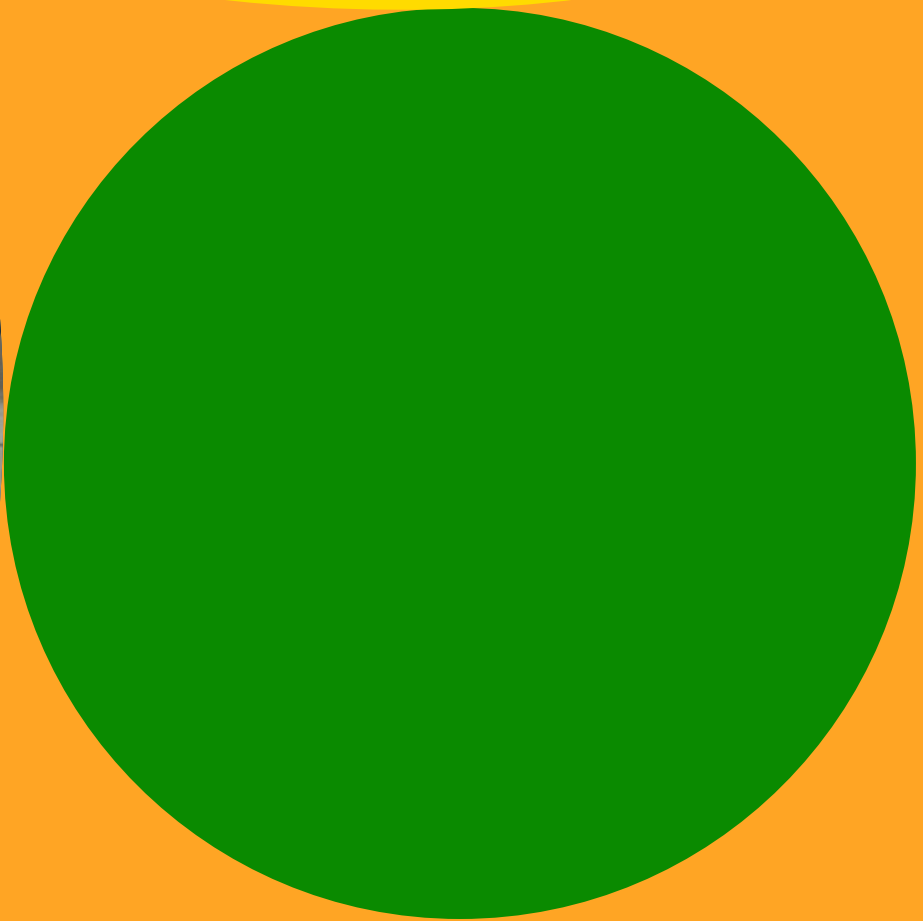


# Making a small home feel bigger

When asked about their ideal homes, 28% of people say that spaciousness is one of the things that has grown most in importance over the last 12 months. But space, as we know, is not easy to come by. Many of the people we spoke to, particularly those who are young and living in urban areas, have adapted their homes to try and make their space work harder.

Some changes we heard about were for comfort or privacy. Some were about creating zones for different activities, so that people had the space they needed to do everything they wanted to do at home. One research participant, Liliana in the USA, told us how she and her partner had experimented with several different home office setups before arriving at an arrangement where both of them could work happily.

Changing our homes helps us feel better about them. Half of those (47%) who made significant efforts to reorganise their homes now feel more positive about them, compared to 1 in 3 (33%) of those who made very little effort or none at all.





# Simpler spaces can be safer spaces

Over the last year, we have seen a rise in the number of people who are keen to create simpler, more organised spaces in their homes. When thinking about their ideal home, more than one in four (27%) say that being 'easy to clean' and 'keep clutter-free' is more important to them than it was 12 months ago.

Many of those we spoke to associated clean, decluttered spaces with a greater sense of calm. Clutter-free equals being in control, which is important for our mental wellbeing.



***"I need my house to be clean more and more. It can't be cluttered. During lockdown, I felt the need to get rid of the unnecessary, even if there wasn't much already. I got rid of some books, I cleaned my basement and got rid of what I didn't use. I felt this need during lockdown, maybe because I had some extra time... to clean, to clear the unnecessary out, to get rid of what I didn't use. Now in my house I only have things I use in everyday life, I don't have unnecessary things."***

***Sophie, France***



# Creating space to breathe

Another way to create a quiet space in the home is through access to the outdoors – something many are now yearning for. When thinking about their ideal home, 36% of people say that having a private garden or balcony is one of the things that has increased most in importance over the past 12 months. This figure is even higher in countries that are densely populated and heavily urbanised such as Belgium and the UK.

People also want green space to be within easy reach. Thirty-five percent say living close to parks and nature has become more important to them when thinking about their ideal home.

***“I just missed...green. I couldn’t go to the park and I missed that. I missed nature since we were stuck at home. So I’ve got a small courtyard where I put trees, so I could get some fresh air, I needed to breathe. It stuck, this need to breathe, to open windows, to see some green... I don’t know, I missed that.”***

**Sophie, France**

**27%**

of people say **accessing green space** is important for helping them maintain their mental wellbeing at home.

***“When I was in a room for a long time, the thoughts I was having were getting negative, negative, negative. When I started going on walks, my thought process changed. I was thinking more positive things. Getting fresh air just makes you feel like a different person.”***

**Abdul, UK**





# Key takeaways for space

1. Taking control of your space can make it a place of greater comfort and safety.
2. Decluttering your home benefits your mental wellbeing.
3. We need access to nature, whether it's by living close to green space or by bringing the outside in.





## Rituals

# How are you living your life at home?

Positive daily rituals are important. Being intentional about how we work, eat, socialise and relax can help us get the most out of our time at home.





# Summary

Throughout 2020 and 2021, the role of the home has been transformed. Now it is a place for activity and productivity as well as relaxation. Finding balance through good daily routines is key for our mental wellbeing.

This means being intentional about how we use our homes – and not just when we’re working or exercising. Sometimes it’s about choosing activities that help us relax, feel centred or achieve balance. Doing less but doing it better.





# The benefits of staying productive at home

Being productive has a positive impact on mental wellbeing. It gives us a sense of purpose. It provides opportunities for self-expression. It allows us to look back proudly on what we've achieved at the end of each day.

This year, homes have been critical in helping us remain productive. Some of the people we spoke with talked about creating new routines to support them to manage their domestic chores and work tasks. But it hasn't been easy. In fact, only 41% of people say their home is meeting their needs for working and studying.

One problem is that we are now using our homes to be productive in so many different ways, whether we're cooking dinner, keeping fit, pursuing a hobby, answering emails or learning a new skill. To maintain control, we need to draw clear spatial boundaries and make conscious choices about how we spend our time at home.

***“Before the pandemic, the places where you work, live and entertain are separated. For example, you work in the office, then study in the library, and entertainment in the bedroom at home. Now, these things seem to be... lost.”***

***Oscar, China***

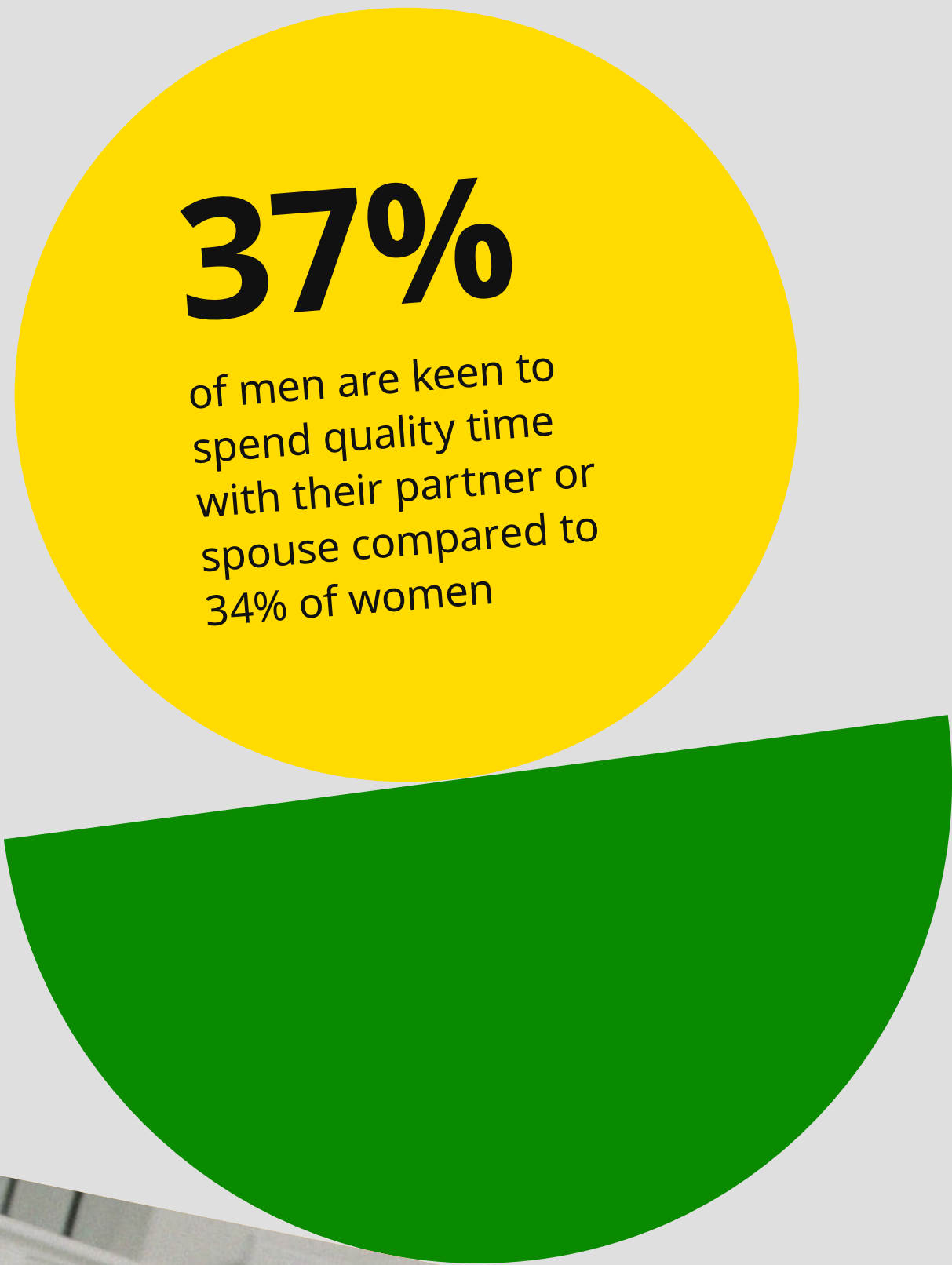




# Creating space for the self at home

Home is an ideal place for caring and nurturing. But is it providing us with enough opportunities to look after ourselves?

Many of those we spoke to were looking for more “me” time at home, although which specific activities they wanted to do varied according to gender. Women are more likely to want to devote more time to self-care (24% compared to 9% of men). Men are more likely to want more time for gaming (12% compared to 5% of women). They are also more keen to spend quality time with their partner or spouse (37% of men compared to 34% of women).



The activities we do for ourselves at home are particularly important for our wellbeing. They allow us to learn about ourselves, build our identities and engage in self-expression. Just over a quarter (26%) globally say that doing hobbies or personal projects is important for helping them maintain a sense of mental wellbeing at home. This is even more important for people aged over 55 (30%), those living in their parents’ home (29%) and those living alone (29%).



# Finding time and space for relaxing at home

What are the most important activities for achieving a sense of wellbeing at home? While the answers to this question vary slightly from country to country, the two most common globally are sleeping (55%) and relaxing (53%), for example by reading, watching TV or listening to music.

Home has always been the centre of these activities – and always will be. But with everything else that’s going on within our four walls at the moment, we can’t afford to take them for granted. In China, just 53% of people say their home meets their needs for sleeping and 52% say it meets their needs for relaxing. We see a similar picture in Japan, where just 51% of people say their home meets their needs for sleeping and 49% say it meets their needs for relaxing.



For many people, the secret to finding time and space for relaxation is to treat it as a ritual rather than an activity. For example, Liliana in the USA told us about the one day each week when she puts on her headphones and goes out to work on her plants. It’s a weekly ritual that she says is critical for her mental wellbeing.





# Key takeaways for rituals

1. Creating boundaries around activities can help you make the most of your time at home.
2. Carving out space for self-care and self-expression is important for mental wellbeing.
3. Do less but do it better - develop rituals around relaxation.





Future home

# How close are you to your dream life at home?

People are clearer than ever about what they want and need from where they live. Having a home that makes us happy will be critical in the future.





# Summary

Life used to be predictable. Now we all have to be adaptable. There is no “new normal” and the future is in a constantly evolving state.

This has led many people to reassess their relationship with home. Eighty-four percent now say it is important to have control over the place where they live. We know our needs are likely to change in the future and we want to be able to adapt our space accordingly.

At the same time, home will remain the one constant in our lives. A place to be calm and centred, whatever happens outside. This is reflected in what has grown in importance for people over the last 12 months when they think about their ideal home. Space for downtime. Space for nature. Space for doing the things they love.





# Making space for doing what we love

What is home for? Home is where we live. But it’s also where we do – work, exercise, hobbies, relaxation. And many of us are starting to pay closer attention to how our homes can support these varied needs.

We want work-from-home solutions that make us more efficient and productive. We want spaces where we can pursue hobbies and personal projects. We want opportunities to exercise, be entertained and relax. We want hybrid spaces for hybrid lifestyles.

As people become more conscious and intentional about wellbeing, it is important that home supports us in doing all the things we love.

32%

want to spend more time doing hobbies and personal projects



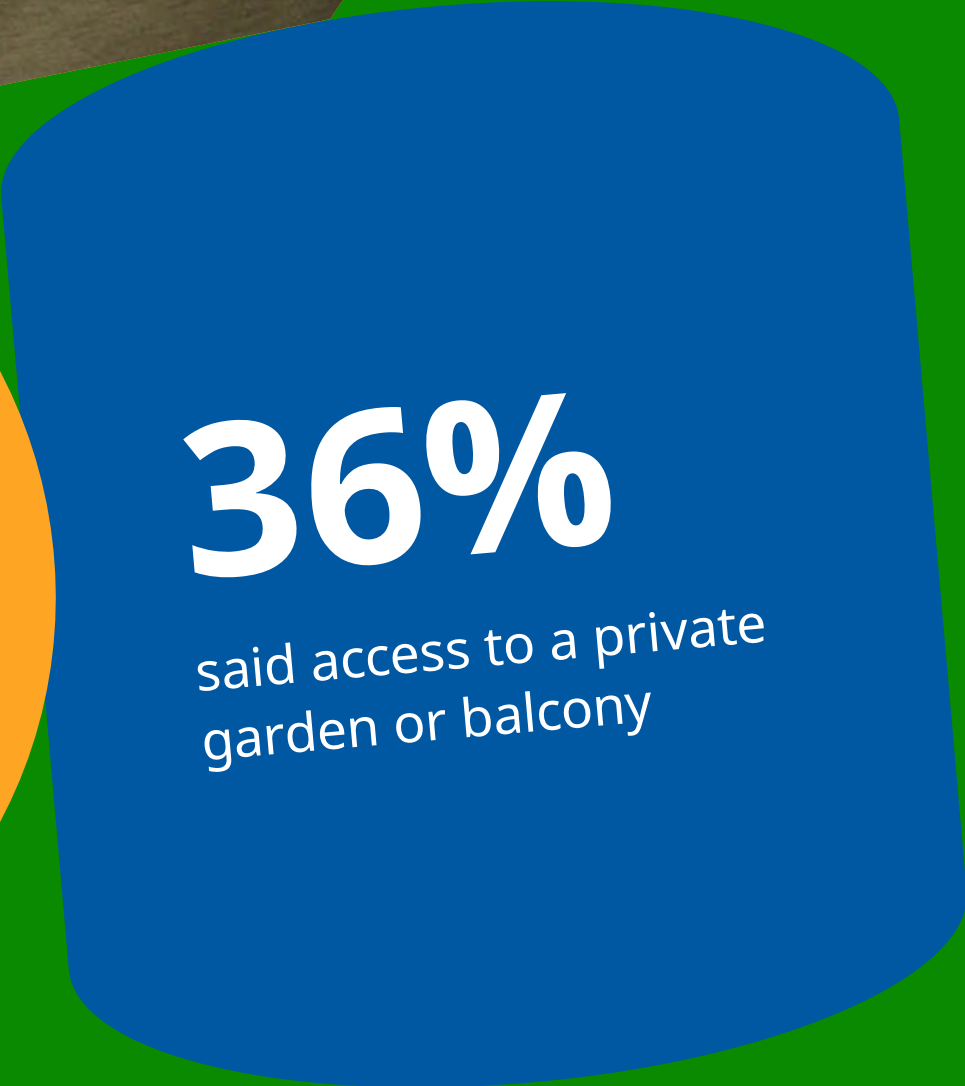
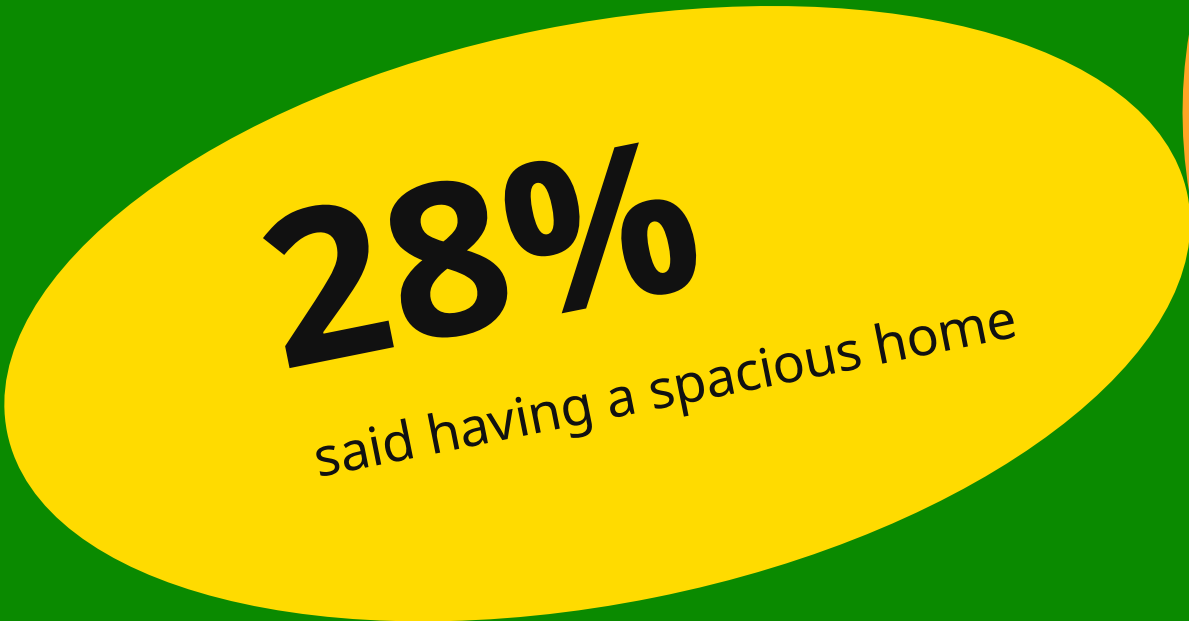


# Cleaner, greener, airier

Opinions about what makes an ideal home are changing dramatically around the world.

Urban life and commuting distances are less important than they were. People are now thinking about a healthy, happier future - for themselves, their families and the world around them. They are looking for cleaner, greener, airier spaces where they can feel secure and in control.

When we asked our survey respondents to think about their ideal home, and tell us what factors had increased the most in importance in the past 12 months:



*“I can’t breathe properly until I’ve cleaned my house. It’s not dirty and no one has been in my house but I still need to clean and tidy everything and then I know it’s clean and I’m in control of everything again. I feel good.”*

**Sophie, France**

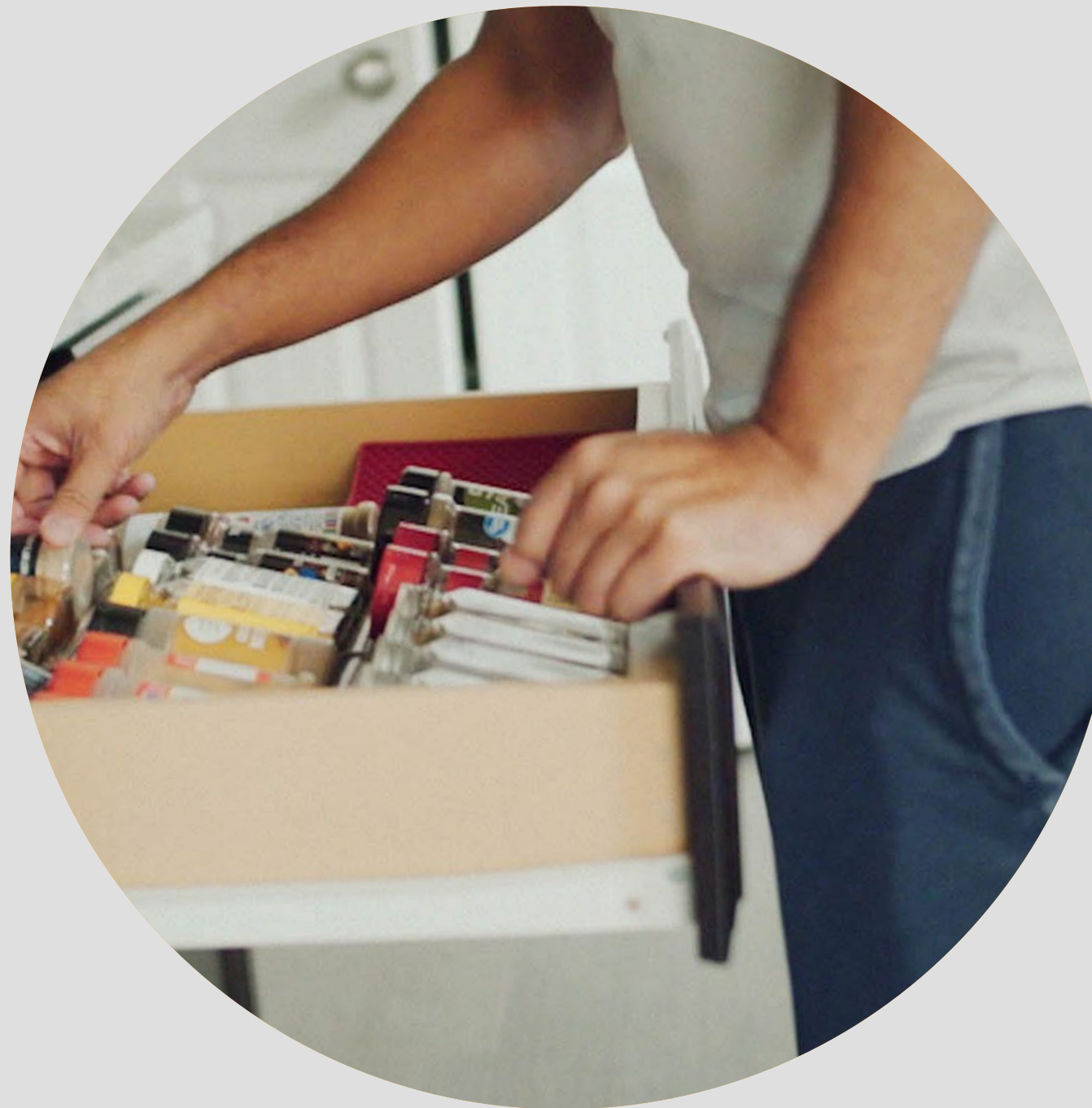


# Finding meaning at home

This has been a time when people have been asking themselves what really matters to them. Connecting with nature? Pursuing a passion? Performing at work? Increasingly, these are things we are all doing at home.

In part, it's about prioritising our own needs and aspirations. Home reflects our identity, now more than ever. It's a place where we can devote time to our interests, express ourselves and invest in our own wellbeing.

But it's also a place where we can find meaning in our connections to others. In a year when many of us have grown closer to family and loved ones, there is a growing desire to put these relationships front and centre in the future.



***"With everything being closed, I was pretty much stuck inside my house. But it was like a learning experience for me, you know, I was able to seek new passions and, kind of, practice and apply."***

**Anil, USA**

***"I find it very important to live near my family and friends, it's vital. I'm single, I'm alone during the week and you need other people to feel good, to recharge your batteries, to share with, to be entertained and get stability. So it's important to see your family and to live near them."***

**Sophie, France**



# Key takeaways for future home

1. We want our homes to be clean, healthy places with wellbeing built into the design.
2. Hybrid spaces serve our hybrid lifestyles better.
3. Many people believe that tomorrow will be better than today.





# A home you love



is more  
important

# than ever

The last 12 months have been challenging for many of us. 27% of the 34,000+ people we surveyed tell us that their mental health has suffered.

At the same time, 40% who felt more positive towards their home also saw a positive impact on their mental health. So we know our homes can help protect our mental wellbeing. The key is achieving balance – in our relationships, our spaces, our communities and our rituals.

**Find out more at [lifeathome.ikea.com](https://lifeathome.ikea.com)**



# Appendix

## Technical note

The quantitative research was carried out by YouGov on behalf of Ingka Holding B.V. – IKEA Group. YouGov is an international research and data analytics group. YouGov interviewed a total sample of 34,387 adults aged 18+ in the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Ireland, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Austria, Switzerland, Belgium, Netherlands, Russia, Poland, Czech Republic, Romania, Hungary, Serbia, Croatia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, China, Japan, South Korea, India and Australia. The survey was conducted in 34 countries between 24 June and 28 July 2021, via online panels for each country. Quotas have been applied on gender, age and region, and data was weighted according to the dimensions of gender, age and region on the basis of an ideal weighting from statistics in each country, so that the results are representative of the population in regard to the target group.

## Bases

All adults = 34,387



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