

# Making a House a Home in the Time of COVID-19

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It's OK to admit that not all of the pandemic has been terrible. We've gotten out of some of work's most frustrating components – commutes, rushed mornings, uncomfortable work clothes – all gone in a flash. But as we spend more time at home, working or not, we may have started to notice some things about our surroundings that we hadn't before. Is the home office conducive enough to getting things done? Is there a place to go to relax? And, perhaps most importantly, is your home a space you truly enjoy?

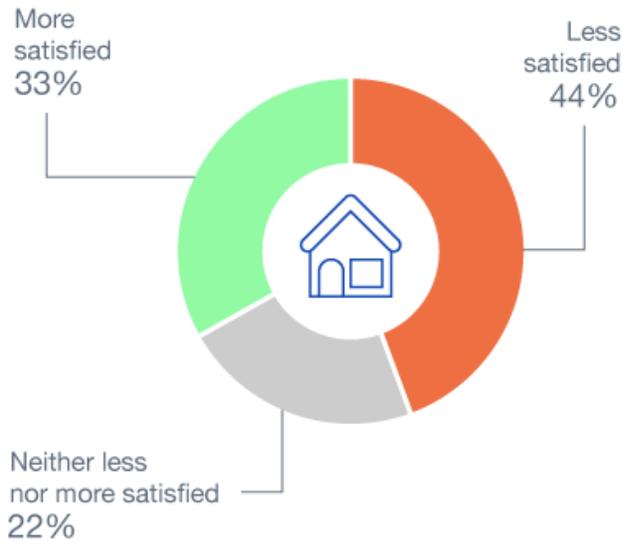
A little TLC on your surroundings is already overdue, but, in waiting to get started, you have the added benefit of learning from others. We recently collected home-improvement data from 1,023 people across the country, all facing the same pandemic. They shared how their spaces are influencing their satisfaction level, the things they do at home to get a little alone time, and even the improvements they most wanted to make. If you're looking around and thinking, "Yes, my space could use a little sprucing up," keep scrolling.

## **Home Satisfaction Since the Pandemic**

In order to see how pandemic space was currently being shared, we included only respondents who were living with at least one other person during this time. We started by asking how satisfied people were with their home compared to before the pandemic struck and found that number of bedrooms and whether children were currently residing in their household played a role.

# ARE YOU MORE OR LESS SATISFIED WITH YOUR HOME

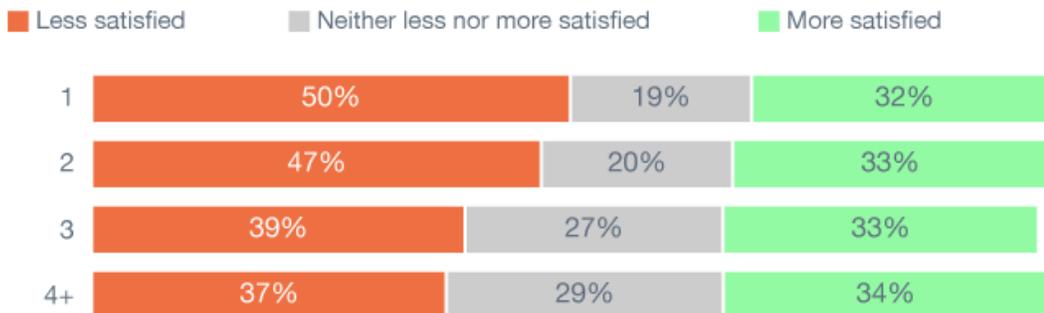
Since the Beginning of the Pandemic?



44% of people were feeling less satisfied with their home since the beginning of the pandemic.

People who lived in homes of less than 1,000 square feet were less satisfied (48%) than people living in homes of 1,000 square feet or more (40%).

## BY NUMBER OF BEDROOMS



## BY WHETHER CHILDREN LIVE IN THE HOUSEHOLD



Note: Percentages may not total to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Survey of 1,023 people in a household consisting of two or more individuals

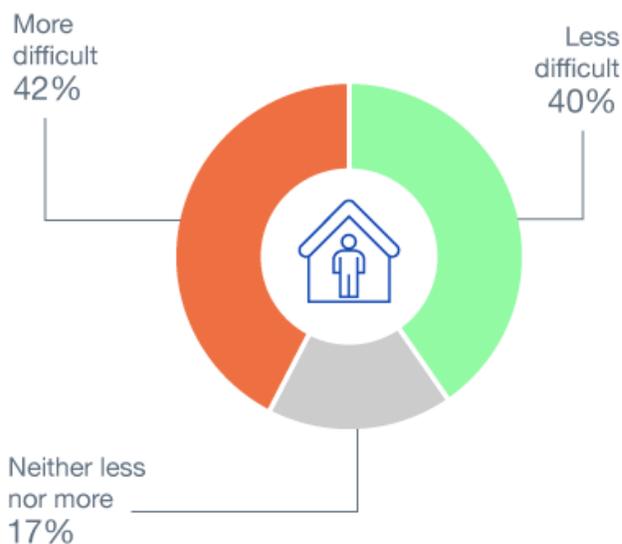
The pandemic put a serious dent in our home satisfaction (among other things). Forty-four percent of people felt less satisfied in their homes today than they were pre-pandemic. Unfortunately, this makes sense: There's a sense of feeling "trapped" when it's required to remain inside; we're missing the venues we used to frequent and perhaps noticing additional flaws of the home while spending more time there. Depending on the living situation, however, things didn't always have to be this way. A substantial portion (33%) of people even managed to become more satisfied with their home during the health crisis. Home improvement, which this study soon dives into, was likely a key factor.

Smaller spaces and children made enjoying the home particularly difficult at this time. Those with children were ten percentage points more likely to feel less satisfied at home, while dissatisfaction got worse as bedrooms became fewer. In other words, the smaller the space, the larger the dissatisfaction. This is not to say that a smaller home is automatically less enjoyable – it just may require more creativity and ingenuity to be included in the third of respondents who reported appreciating their spaces more.

### Homey "Me Time"

Ironically, alone time can be hard to find, even in the age of social distancing. Doctors recommend carving out time and space at home to enjoy this me time. The following portion of the study shows the amount of alone time desired, compared with what respondents were actually able to find at home.

## IS IT MORE OR LESS DIFFICULT TO FIND "ALONE TIME" Since the Beginning of the Pandemic?



42% of people said it is more difficult to find "alone time" since the beginning of the pandemic.

This percentage was higher among women (46%), compared to men (40%).

## HOURS OF ALONE TIME A WEEK

By Gender and Presence of Children in the Household



On average, people reported getting 7.1 hours of alone time a week but preferred 8.4 hours.

Overall, 44% of people said they get less than their preferred amount of alone time a week.

Note: Percentages may not total to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Survey of 1,023 people in a household consisting of two or more individuals

Especially considering that each respondent shared their space with at least one roommate or family member, there was certainly some difficulty in finding quality space to be alone. Forty-two percent agreed that it had become more difficult to find alone time during the pandemic than it had been before. This percentage was even higher among women, to whom the responsibility of child care more often falls. In this study, women with children desired 7.8 hours of alone time, on average, but received just 6.6 hours each week. Men with children received slightly more time to themselves, or 6.7 hours, on average, weekly.

Alone time has been proven to make a person happier, more creative, more productive, and can even strengthen their relationships. To achieve this within your own home, think of how you would create an atmosphere of solitude to match your own preferences. Perhaps this means a few simple bathroom upgrades to encourage more positive self-talk in the mirror as you start your day, or maybe you'd enjoy a quality outdoor lounging area to read a book or listen to some music. Maybe you even have the luxury to invest in the home improvement necessary for additional space. Considering we may be at home for the long haul, it could be well worth the price.

## Carving Out the Space

When respondents did want to find some alone time, they had to get creative. We next asked them what actions they took to find their much-needed alone time – actions you too can try.

### THE MOST COMMON WAYS PEOPLE FIND ALONE TIME

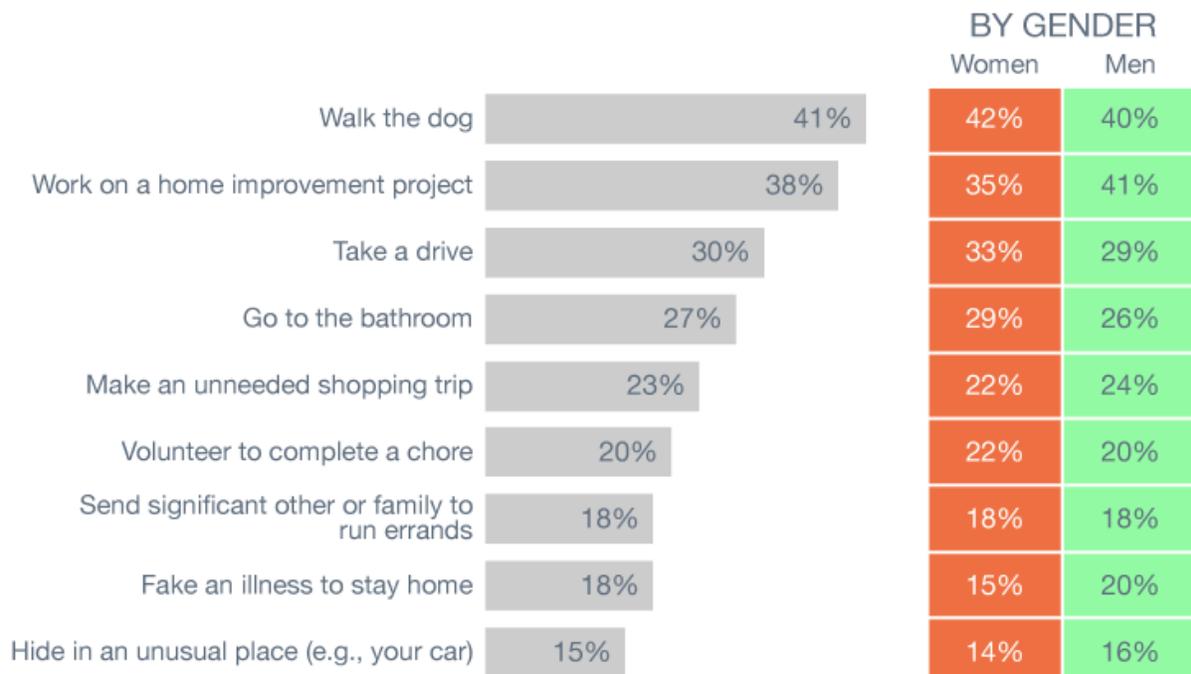
Since the Beginning of the Pandemic



79% of people have told a lie in order to get alone time at home.

People with children were more likely to tell a lie in order to get alone time (85%), compared to those without children (64%).

Men (82%) were more likely than women (75%) to lie in order to get alone time.



Source: Survey of 1,023 people in a household consisting of two or more individuals

For those with dogs, walking a companion was a surefire way to get some time to themselves. Forty-one percent of respondents said they found their alone time this way. But many more had to lie to get it. Eighty-two percent of men and 75% of women fabricated some type of story to get time to themselves, whether that involved the family dog or not. This still seems like a far better option than going to the bathroom – which 27% of respondents tried – or simply hiding from others, a choice for 15%.

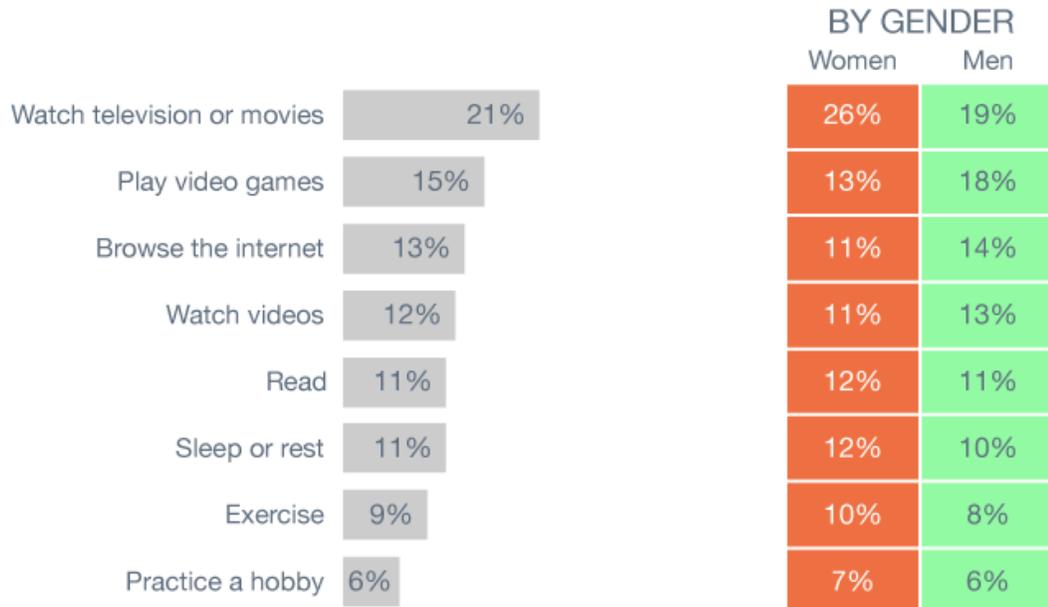
The second most common (and likely the most effective) method for people to get time to themselves was undertaking a home improvement project. More than a third of respondents tried this and considering the potential reward, we'd have to recommend it as well. Studies suggest that the actual activity of home improvement is a direct path to improved mental health, while the fruits of the labor can provide additional health benefits. Making a bedroom more tranquil, for instance, or creating a home garden can provide both enjoyable activities while also creating results that can prove beneficial even after the project is complete.

### **Enjoying the Space**

So you're finally alone. Now what? Respondents were next asked to share some of the top activities they might enjoy doing once they had access to that sweet solo space.

# FAVORITE WAYS TO ENJOY ALONE TIME

Since the Beginning of the Pandemic



Respondents' favorite rooms in their home were the bedroom (41%), living room (32%), and porch/patio (6%).

Source: Survey of 1,023 people in a household consisting of two or more individuals

Desires were ultimately simple and humble. Most just wanted some time to themselves to watch TV (21%). After all, sharing the screen and having to watch someone else's favorite show can get tiresome pretty quickly. The television was also often used, however, for video games, which men used their alone time for almost as often as they did watching TV. As this was people's first choice for how they spend their alone time, it may be a good idea to keep your TV set in good working order in consideration of all of the extra use it may be getting.

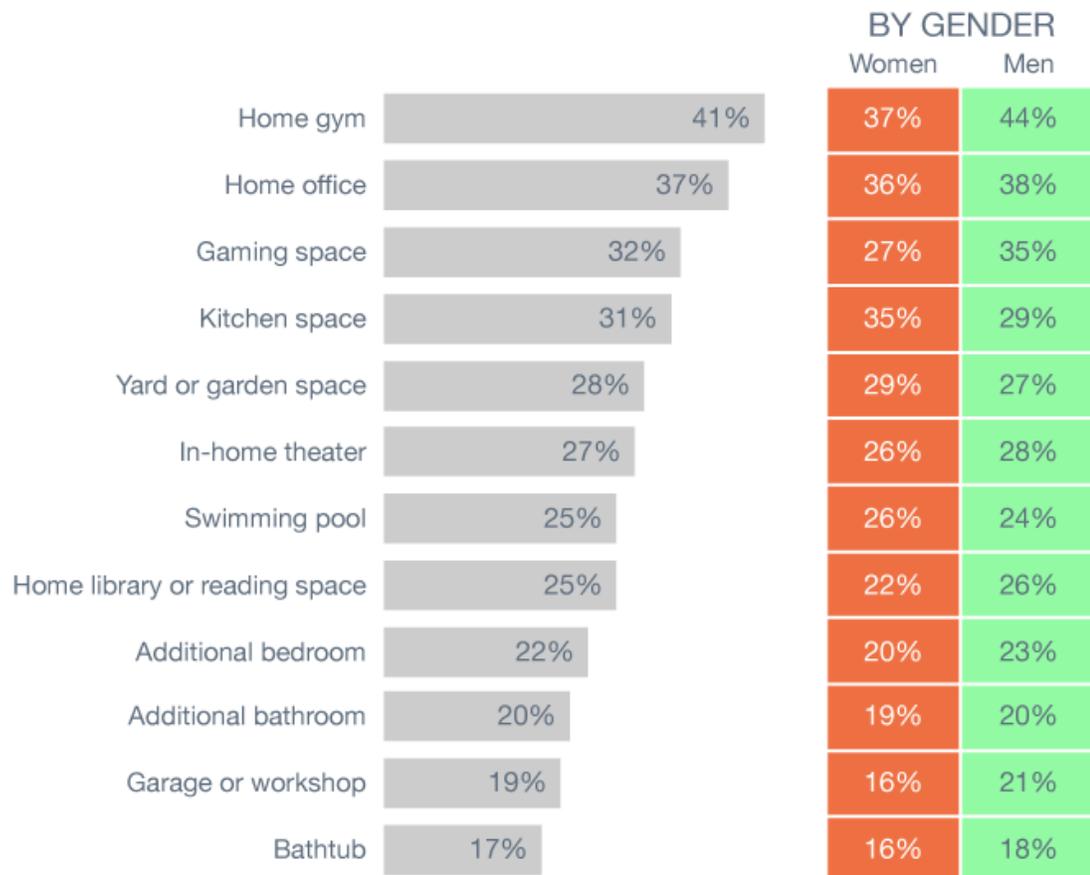
Even though sleeping was only considered the best use of alone time for 11% of participants, most still wanted to spend the time they had to themselves in the bedroom (41%). Perhaps participants wanted to continue watching TV in bed or browse the internet (13%). Even though most experts suggest keeping the screen out of the bedroom, we won't tell if you want to set up a gorgeous new entertainment system at the foot of the bed.

### **Fix Up Features**

If you could make one improvement to your home, what would it be? Respondents thought about this question and shared some of their top answers. The good news is that most of their favorite picks can be implemented at an affordable price, if you just know where to look.

# THE TOP FEATURES PEOPLE WANT TO ADD TO THEIR HOME

Since the Beginning of the Pandemic



Respondents' most desired home features were a home gym (18%), gaming space (13%), and home office (12%).

Source: Survey of 1,023 people in a household consisting of two or more individuals

Even though very few respondents used their sacred alone time for exercise, 43% said their top desired feature was a home gym. Maybe this means that people actually do want to exercise but simply haven't set up the space to do so. Because health is so vitally important during a time like this, we'd suggest following through on the home gym fantasy, especially since creating one of your own actually requires very little elbow grease and even less financing.

While not top of the list, nearly a third of respondents said they wanted a kitchen update. From trying a new recipe or enjoying meals with the family, many Americans are spending more time than ever in the kitchen so it makes sense many want to do some updating. At Sears Home Services, we offer customized [kitchen remodel consultations](#) free of charge or commitment. From new cabinets to updated islands, our team of professionals can help plan your dream kitchen.

### **Maintaining At-Home Happiness**

The more time you spend with something, the more you get to know it. With much of the world spending a highly unusual amount of time at home, we're finding the things we want to improve but also benefiting more from those improvements. We may want to consider that we're in this new lifestyle for the long haul, and it's time to make the most of it.

Remember that Sears Home Services can help you with everything from window installation to flooring, countertops, and repairs. Both phone and in-home consultations are completely free and available on your schedule.

### **Methodology and Limitations**

We conducted a survey of 1,023 people who lived in a household with at least one other individual. We then asked them questions about their home satisfaction and experiences finding alone time. Alone time was defined to survey respondents as, "leisurely time spent by oneself apart from other members of your household."

Sixty percent of people identified as men, 40% identified as women, and less than 1% identified as a gender not listed by the study. Seventy-four percent of respondents had children, and 27% of respondents did not have children.

Respondents ranged in age from 18 to 72 with an average age of 37 and a standard deviation of 11.

Data are based on self-report, which could be prone to issues, such as recency bias and exaggeration. With a larger sample size of certain demographics, it is possible we may have been able to gain better insights into the opinions and experiences of respondents. The results on this page are based on means alone and, as such, are presented here for informational purposes.

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