

## What Ikea Is Trying to Tell Us about 21st Century Living

Katherine Guimapang

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*Two years ago, the company asked thousands of people about where they felt "most at home." At the time, 20% of subjects said it wasn't the space in which they lived. Two years later, they asked again, and found the number has risen by 15% among people who live in cities. In other words, 35% of people who live in cities don't feel at home in their house or apartment. — [Fast Company](#)*

Ikea, the largest furniture company in the world, may know a thing or two when it comes to styling a home. However, what many Ikea consumers may not know is that alongside its holding company INGKA Holding a yearly research report is conducted studying and identifying how people live. Since 2014, the "Life at Home" report consisted of data associated with kitchen routines, morning regiments, and overall interaction within living spaces. However, both companies decided to shift from their typical report guidelines and take a more reflective, existential approach.

## Home doesn't always feel like home

Most of us believe that it's important for our residential homes to provide these five emotional needs, and in many cases they do that well.

However, we have seen a gap between expectation and reality, particularly amongst those living with friends or strangers. For too many people, home doesn't give them the feeling of home. Today, lots of us are looking to spaces and places beyond four walls to provide us with these emotional needs.

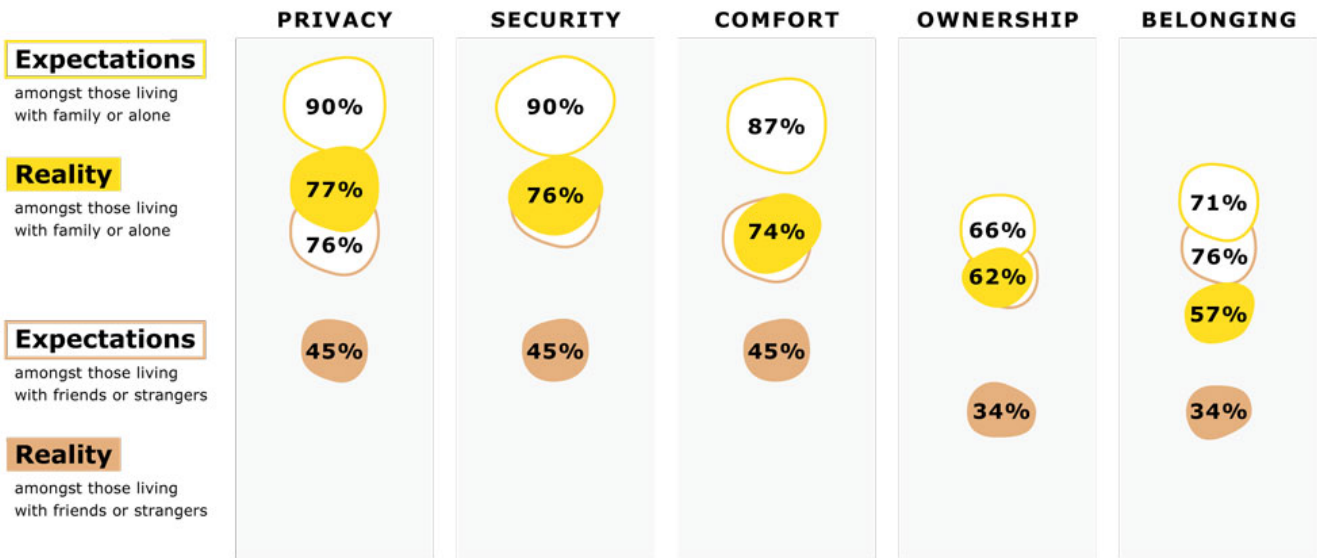
### Pushed out:

Some people are restricted by what their residential home can give them. **"Home doesn't give me mental privacy, so I like to escape onto my balcony to be alone or go and sit in my car on 'my street' in winter."**

Alessandra, Rome

### Pulled in:

Some people are excited by opportunities beyond four walls to enhance their feeling of home. **"The extended home adds the seasoning and spice you can't get at home. Using the extended home imaginatively helps you get the home you want and need, no matter what your home is."** Sarah, London



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## **Image from 2018 Life at Home Report © Ikea**

Instead of focusing on relationships between consumers and products, the yearly report focused on topics such as belonging, loneliness, and what it's like living in a large city. The report indicated that in order for individuals to feel "at home", these five emotional needs must be met: privacy, security, comfort, ownership, belonging. After surveying over 22,000 people living in 22 different countries, results provided an interesting take not only on what people felt but how they defined a home.

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## Life at home is a network of places and spaces

The boundaries are blurring between what we do at home and what we do beyond four walls. Our daily routines are changing as we take traditional home activities into other spaces and places, and bring more of the outside in.



For me, it's all about the area. I love living in Astoria and it's so multicultural and I feel alive when I walk around. I'd rather live here in my not-so-perfect flat than in a luxury flat in a shabby area.

Stephanie, New York

With home activities shifting between locations, it's clear that our neighbourhoods and communities play an increasingly important role in our homemaking experiences. In some instances, they can provide us with more opportunities to create a better life at home than the space we live in.

In fact, 64% of us say we would rather live in a small home in a great location compared to a big home in a less ideal location.

**1 IN 4 WORK  
MORE FROM HOME**  
than ever before



**OVER A 1/3 OF US  
SHOWER OR BATHE  
OUTSIDE OF  
THE HOME**  
multiple times a week



**NEARLY 1/4**  
of people living  
with strangers use  
AirBnB to **MAKE  
MONEY FROM  
THEIR HOME**

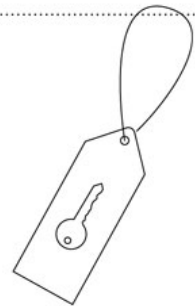


Image from 2018 Life at Home Report © Ikea

Results from reports taken over the past few years have highlighted that with an increasing change

in home and work activities, the relationship between a person and their place of living shows more of a binary exchange. Instead of exuding a level of permanence, homes have now been recognized with a transitory perspective. "Living spaces are increasingly tied to peoples' livelihoods, often directly generating income." Nearly 1 in 4 people work from home, and those who lived with roommates rented their space out on Airbnb. Yet, despite the social changes affecting homes, many surveyors expressed that home has become a more pliable term.



## We are living in a new era of life at home

**When we talk about what makes a home, we talk about the four dimensions that are shared by everyone, no matter where or how we live - space, place, relationships and things.**



For some people, 'my home begins at my front door.' For other people 'my sense of home begins when I am within this area, around the estate within which I live.' It's that sense of a wider, more expansive notion of home."

**Dr Alison Blunt**

Co-director of the Centre for Studies of Home,  
and expert contributor to the Life at Home Report 2018

These dimensions help us explain how our homes are organized and what kinds of activities we do there.

In the past couple of years, we have been digging deeper into the emotions of home and how they interact with these dimensions. How can we describe the feeling of home? Why does home feel different to me than it does to you?



During our research we learned that life at home is changing, profoundly, all over the world. Our physical homes are getting smaller, smarter, busier and noisier... All of this impacts on how successfully a single space can deliver what we need from it – functionally and emotionally. When we can't get what we need at home, we head outside.

In short, life is on the move, and home needs to catch up. Life at home is becoming a network of places and spaces, and the feeling of home can be found in more than one location.

For lots of people, this bigger understanding of life at home presents new opportunities.

**This is a new era of life at home, and it's taking place within and beyond four walls.**

**Image from 2018 Life at Home Report © Ikea**

Has Ikea's existentially themed report provided us with a reason to rethink what homes mean? The definition of a home constantly changes and is dependent on several factors. However, what

companies like Ikea are striving to learn is not only how to "sell a better couch" but how basic human interaction and self-assessment can help architects and designers shape living spaces.



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