

ring

Coming 'Home Home'



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Introduction

If someone asked you “Where is your home?” you’d likely tell them where you’re living currently. If they then ask you “But where is your home home?” you’d probably give them a very different answer.

Our mission at Ring is to make neighbourhoods safer and help build stronger communities by designing products that help people stay connected to their home from wherever they are. So it’s important that we understand how people use their homes and what their home really means to them. In 2020, we took a look at how spending more time at home had changed our perception of what our homes could be, how they could be used and how they could be adapted to suit our changing lifestyles. This time, we are taking it a step further by digging deeper into the emotional connections that tie us to the place we call ‘home home’.

We teamed up with an independent research group and a team of behavioural science experts to find out what makes a ‘home home’ and what makes that place so special. The resulting interviews and survey of more than 2,000 people present a fascinating picture of what people in the UK consider to be their ‘home home’. What emerges is the impression of a sense of place and security; a unique and warm atmosphere, somewhere we can be ourselves without having to explain who we are. It’s a place many of us yearn to go back to. But most of all, ‘home home’ is about people.

“ The last few years haven’t been the easiest, as so many of us were unable to visit loved ones. It really drew attention to the emotional value that we place on our homes - somewhere we can feel our true selves, in a safe space, together with loved ones. Our research shines a light on this strong attachment, but also encourages those missing out on ‘home home’ to create a feeling of safety and security in their own personal way.”

- Dave Ward, Managing Director, Ring UK & EU





The emotional connection

We have discovered that over a quarter of Brits (27%) feel connected to multiple places in the UK and around the world. But how many of these places are considered a 'home home'? When asked where their 'home home' was located, one in three (35%) said the town where they grew up, whilst 29% said it was the house they grew up in. The importance of family to our concept of 'home home' meant that a further quarter (25%) of Brits listed their parent's home, with one in five (22%) naming the houses where other family members live.

According to our research, younger adults have a strong connection to the home they grew up in, compared to where they currently live, with 18-34 year olds most likely to see their childhood house as their 'home home' (36% compared to 22% of over 55 year olds). Of this younger age group, those who were renting said the 'home' where they live is a transient place, while 'home home' – often their childhood home – provides an extra sense of security and belonging.

How does our 'home home' make us feel?



Relaxed



Happy



At ease



Safe



Nostalgic



Secure

What makes a 'home home'?

We have discovered that there are so many factors that influence our perception of where 'home home' is. Spending time with loved ones (36%) and trips down memory lane (23%) are two things we love about 'home home', but what other factors create this special place?

Let's look more closely at what people say makes their 'home home'.

Rose-tinted memories

During our interviews, a frequent response was that the idea of 'home home' evokes strong memories from childhood. Several said this was a period of their lives that was happy and worry-free, which all helps feed the nostalgic warmth we feel towards our childhood homes.

“ I remember that first house in a very nostalgic way, you almost remember it in a sepia kind of way like you would expect from a film camera or something.”

- Interviewee, 27, Hull

Psychologists describe this sentiment as 'rosy retrospection bias', where people remember past events as being more positive than they were in reality. Dr Simon Moore, Chartered Psychologist and CEO of Innovation Bubble explains the phenomenon: "We overemphasise the positive things we remember from our childhoods, and pay less attention to the aspects of 'home home' that we may have found difficult or frustrating."

The power of our senses

Nearly one in five people (19%) said home-cooked meals were part of the reason they love 'home home'. Food and nostalgia came up regularly as particularly strong themes, with interviewees describing vivid memories of eating together as a family, feeling nurtured through food and drink and the smell of cooking.

“ I love going to my mum's because it means I don't have to cook. I like the experience of being nurtured and looked after through food. I don't think I have ever been able to emulate that with my own family.”

- Interviewee, 43, Hull





“When I go home and lie in my childhood bedroom, the environment reminds me of new memories.”

In the UK, certain smells, such as the scent of fresh coffee (24%) and home baking (36%), are highly evocative of ‘home home’. Unsurprisingly, among the top tastes that reminded people of home are delicacies including cups of tea (37%), a full English breakfast (18%), fish and chips (16%) and curry (8%). This isn’t just the case for young people either - our interviewees over the age of 35 with children could also strongly recall how sensory cues from their childhood triggered familiar emotions and memories.

Dr Simon Moore explains why food holds such strong memories for many of us: “The brain devotes about 80% of its attention to things like vision and smell. This means we’re constantly picking up on sensory cues that arouse emotions that remind us of our childhoods. The sight and smell of food, especially those from our childhood home, are powerful emotional triggers for nostalgia. Food also represents our psychological needs of security, comfort, nurturing and rewards.”

Memories create connections

For Brits, our memories of a place (39%) and a feeling of nostalgia (36%) strongly contribute to our feeling of ‘home home’. Our research suggests that both sensory experiences and environmental cues create feelings of relaxation when we think about what home means.

“ When I go home and lie in my childhood bedroom, the environment reminds me of new memories. I don’t know why, it’s so strange. The smell of my home is so nostalgic and relaxing for me.”

- Interviewee, 50, Somerset

Further psychological research (Rosen et al, 2019) supports this, finding that the distinct sensory aspects of our early environment contribute to associative memory, cued attention, and memory-guided attention. In other words, our sensory experiences help create a strong connection to the place that we consider ‘home home’.

A sense of security

“ I always think of a place I can always come back to, like I live in another country and if anything goes wrong, I have a safe place to return to, it is mine, it's our family's. It is my safe port.”

- Interviewee, 35, Basingstoke

‘Home home’ also evokes feelings of comfort (58%) and the feeling of safety (41%). The results of our interviews suggest that ‘home home’ is often used as a ‘secure base’ when people are going through a period of personal hardship.

We also asked about how people felt when they left their ‘home home’ after a visit. Feeling homesick and experiencing a childlike craving to return was a common response. Interestingly, one parent also said she only felt her children were safe when they were with her at home.

We're at ease when we're 'home home'

It comes as no surprise that a common thread throughout this research is that we feel relaxed (54%) and happy (50%) when visiting ‘home home’. It's a chance to be ourselves and to take a break from ‘keeping face’ or maintaining our social status.

“ Going home is a relief. You are comfortable at home, seeing everybody, it feels like a separate space where I don't have to see uni people. It's a separate bubble.”

- Interviewee, 21, Shropshire

However, like most things in life, there are limits! Our research suggests that in order to maintain a positive sense of ‘home home’ and to retain the feeling of relaxation and security when we're there, it's best to keep our stay to two weeks maximum. As one of our interviewees put it: “It's nice to go back for a bit, get my quick ‘fix of home’ and then go back to where I currently live.”



“ Our past research revealed almost half of us are looking for peace of mind and a sense of security in the homes we live in. It's touching that our ‘home home’ already gives us this pronounced feeling of reassurance and comfort. It shows us that a true feeling of safety can come from so many different places, both physically and emotionally.”

- Dave Ward, Managing Director, Ring UK & EU

Not just bricks and mortar

Along with familiarity and a place of security, our ‘home home’ is a core part of our identity that reaffirms our sense of self. Throughout our psychological interviews people often referred to their childhood home as being part of themselves, somewhere they have roots.

This helps explain why, even after moving away from where they grew up, people continue to hold strong emotional and cultural attachments to the places that they come from. It’s easy to see that ‘home home’ is a big part of who we are.

“ We pay a lot of attention to ‘big emotions’ such as excitement, and we don’t tend to think of security and contentment as ‘big’. But being around people who you like and care about – and who like and care about you – is so influential. It shapes our memories, and it shapes who we are.”

- Dr Simon Moore

Our research revealed a strong association between our ‘home home’ and the festive holidays. These associations are often incredibly positive and the thought of not spending the holidays with parents triggered feelings of worry in some.

‘Home home’ for the holidays

Given the powerful pull of our ‘home home’, it’s no surprise that there were 12 million Brits planning to spend some or all of their 2021 holidays there. Our attachment to childhood homes is often closely related to the festive season, with all the excitement and familiarity that comes with it.

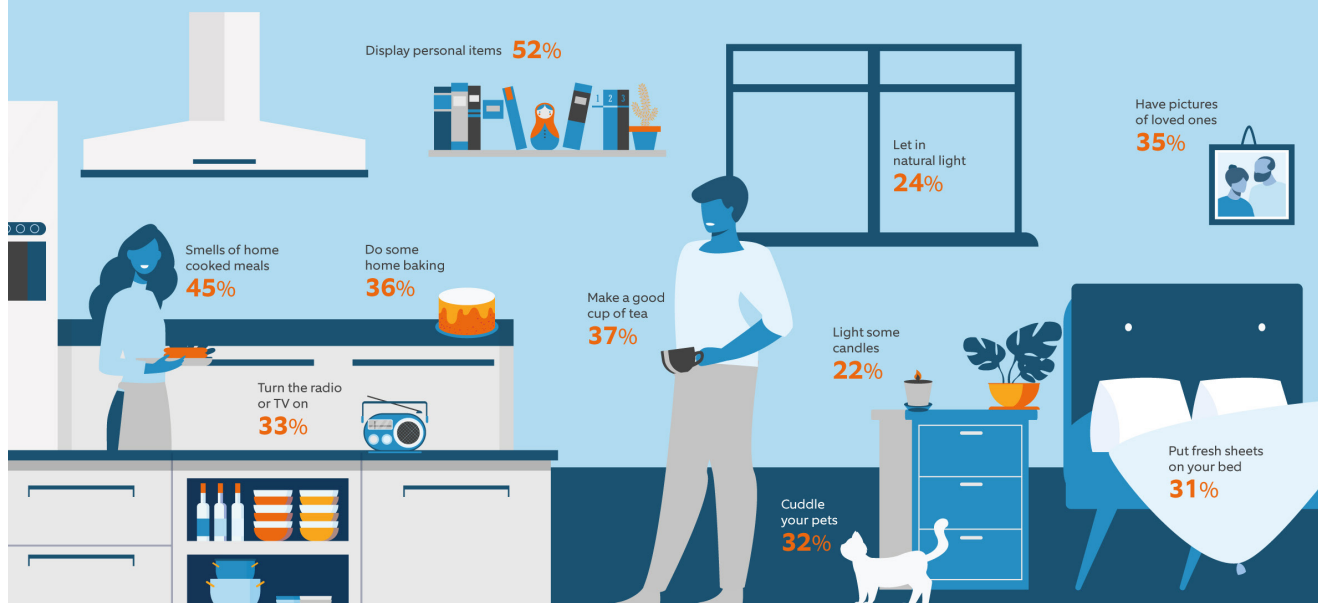


“ I always think about Christmas, I like how my house looks at Christmas, I think it’s very cosy and the excitement of coming home from university. And having two weeks off... my parents are both teachers, so they have two weeks off as well. Everyone is about and Christmas is when my best memories are.”

- Interviewee, 24, Horsham

In 2021, where did we plan to spend our holidays?	Location	% of holidays spent here	% who class this as ‘home home’
	Parent’s house	16%	75%
	Partner’s house	5%	64%
	Friend’s house	8%	47%
	In-law’s house	7%	45%
	Another relative’s house	16%	34%

Ring's 10 ingredients to create your own 'home home'



Why do people leave 'home home'?

If 'home home' is such an important and emotional place, why do many of us choose not live there? Interestingly, our interviews revealed that for some, moving away from home gave them a sense of accomplishment, often linked to getting a new job or going to university. Others talked about wanting freedom, their own space, or a simply more convenient to be nearer their place of work or study.

Unsurprisingly, there is also an element of social pressure for people to move out. In fact, some interviewees who are parents went so far as to say that their children moving away could be seen as a reflection of good parenting.

The ingredients to create your own 'home home'

Our research found that one in five (20%) Brits say they have never had somewhere they would consider a 'home home'. So how can we go about creating one?

“ Currently I am renting a room in someone else's property, it doesn't feel like mine. I also have a live-in landlord, so it doesn't feel like home, it feels like a room in a flat.”

- Interviewee, 21, Leeds

Psychologists at Innovation Bubble reveal that interior design and making a space “aesthetically pleasing” can be key to creating a sense of 'home home'. Others look for a 'home home' that's “full of character” or that has a “soul”.

We also discovered that the strong bonds created by the people sharing a house or flat creates a “house mood” and the presence of children adds a sense of permanence to a place. Clearly, adding personal touches and building bonds with the people you share your space with creates an emotional connection that elevates the place you live into a 'home home'.



Conclusion

For many of us, 'home home' is not simply where we return to each day, it's the place we have a deep emotional connection to, a place of special memories, sights, smells and sounds.

It's also where some of our strongest relationships were formed, creating invisible bonds that anchor us to one special place. As Dr Simon Moore says: "Humans are social creatures, and we tend to feel most comfortable when we're surrounded by people we trust. That's what we get from the places we consider 'home home'."

'Home' may be where we live but 'home home' is where we feel we belong.

About the report

Consumer research commissioned by Ring and conducted by Opinium Research, who surveyed 2,000 nationally representative UK adults (18+) between 26-29 November 2021.

Psychological research conducted by Innovation Bubble chartered psychologists. Interviewed 18 nationally representative adults (18+).

Footnotes

Maya L. Rosen, Andrew N. Meltzoff, Margaret A. Sheridan, Katie A. McLaughlin; 'Distinct aspects of the early environment contribute to associative memory, cued attention, and memory-guided attention: Implications for academic achievement' *Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience*; Volume 40; 2019
49% of people surveyed in consumer research commissioned by Ring and conducted by Opinium Research of 2,000 nationally representative UK adults (18+) between 7-10 September 2021.