

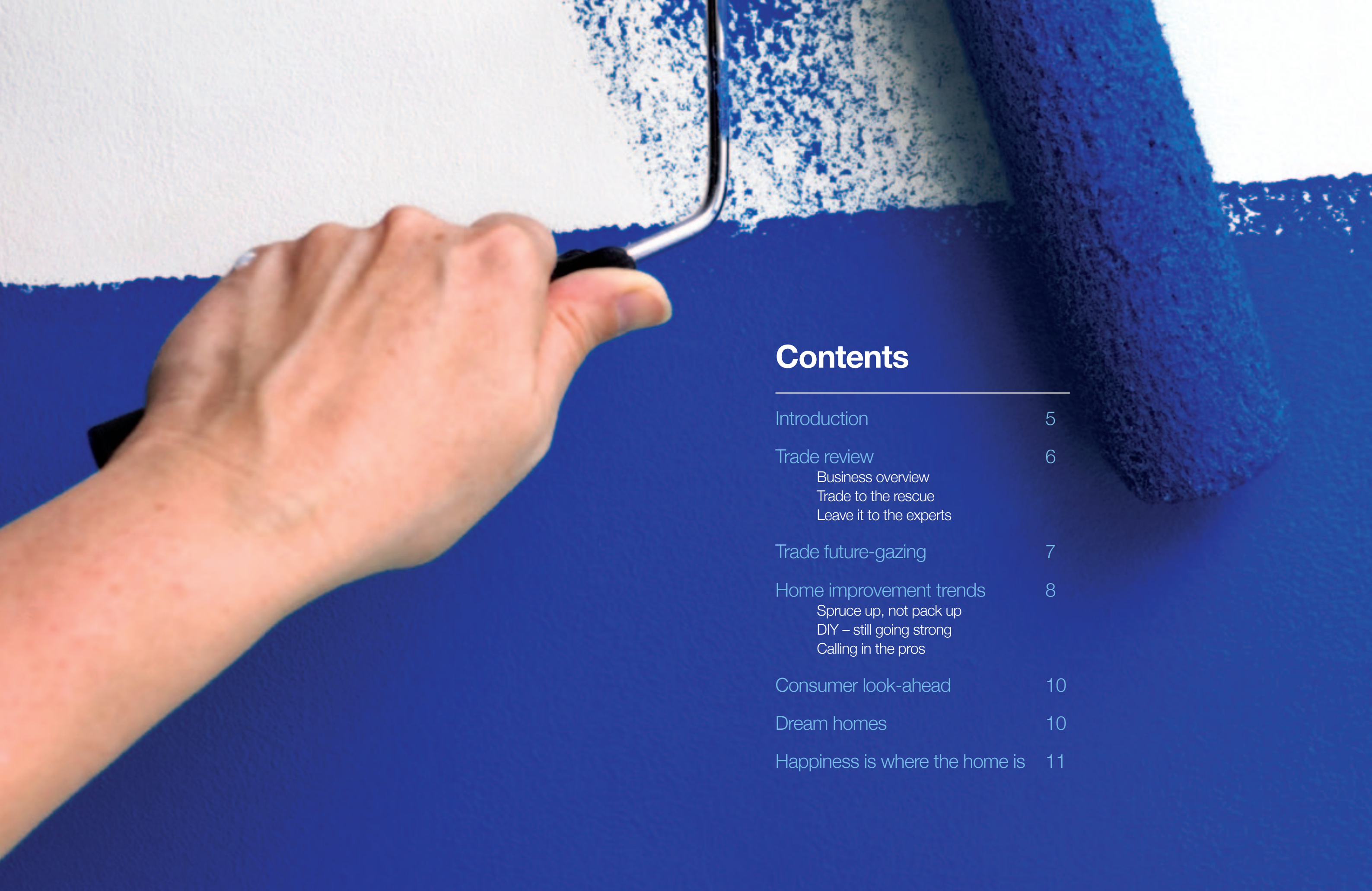
Wickes Home Improvement Report

April 2011



Wickes

It's got our name on it.



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12

months

2,000

homeowners

1,000

tradespeople



Introduction

Welcome to the 2011 Wickes Home Improvement Report, a national snapshot of trade and consumer home improvement trends. The report looks closely at consumer and trade attitudes towards home improvement over the past two years as well as providing insight into forthcoming trends. The Wickes Home Improvement Report will be released annually.

Wickes asked 2,000 UK homeowners about their home improvements – how much they've spent on home improvements in the last 12 months, what this money went on and what they expect to do to their homes in the coming year. Importantly, we've also asked them to explain why they have done this work, or why they intend to in 2011.

The report also delves into the business side of home improvement, offering observations gained through in-depth trade research. Having questioned a cross-section of 1,000 tradespeople from across the country, the report identifies past and future business trends, including business predictions from those who know best – the builders themselves.

Clearly the economic climate has had some impact on the home improvement trade, which can be seen further on in the report. However, the UK's enthusiasm for DIY seems to be as strong as ever – with even bigger jobs being attempted by homeowners themselves. Reasons range from money-saving to simply wanting to 'face a challenge'. But, tellingly, pride plays a big part – as we'll reveal shortly.

Trade research conducted by Zebra Square between
11 – 28 February 2011 amongst 1,000 respondents

Consumer research conducted by 72 Point between
16 – 20 February 2011 amongst 2,000 respondents

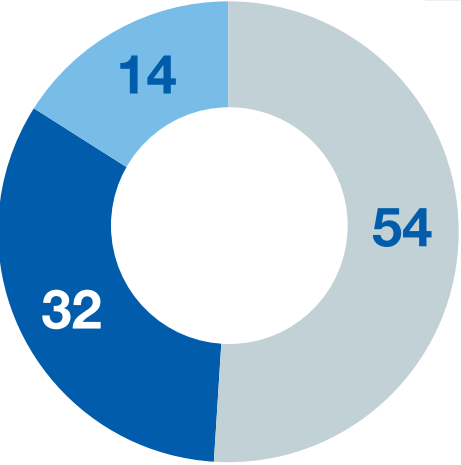
Trade review

Business overview

Of the 1,000 tradespeople questioned in this report, a clear majority told us that they have seen a decrease or stagnation in business over the past two years.

Over half (54%) said that they had seen a decrease in business, while just 14% experienced a lift in trade. 32% had seen neither an increase or decrease in their volume of home improvement work.

Have you seen an increase or decrease in business over the past two years?



Of the 54% who have seen a decrease in trade, 87% attributed this to the recession – with less disposable income available to them, homeowners may be opting to do the work themselves. In fact, 96% of the tradespeople we spoke to believe it is due to homeowners taking on DIY challenges rather than calling in the professionals.

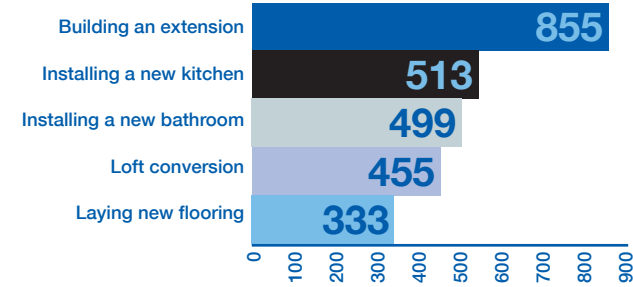
Professionals to the rescue

Over half again (55%) have been called in to rectify botched DIY jobs, indicating that in some cases it is best left to the experts. A further two-thirds have been enlisted to finish DIY jobs that have been left incomplete.

Leaving it to the experts

The jobs most commonly handed to experienced tradespeople to carry out are structural in nature: extensions, kitchen and bathroom installations, and loft conversions. This is also reflected in the consumer research, in which a quarter said they would be calling in a professional to fit their new bathroom in 2011 and 22% will be hiring experts to fit their new kitchen.

Trade jobs most commonly carried out in past two years



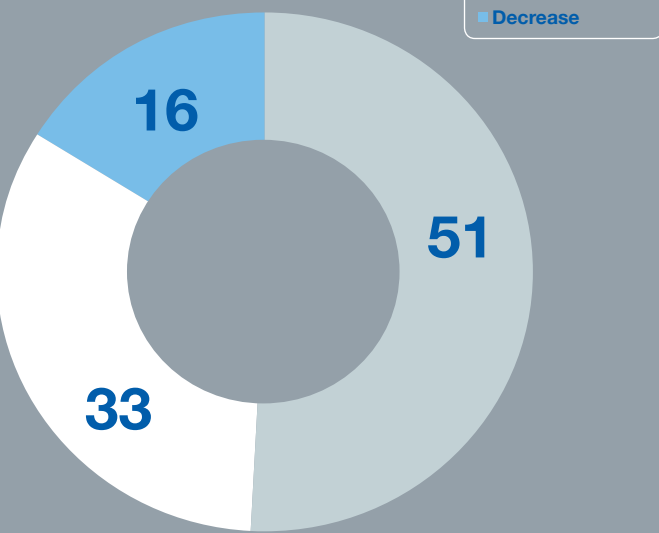
Mark Judkins, a tradesman from Manchester, says:
“Last year was much quieter – we saw a noticeable decrease in the amount of work coming our way. However, 2011 has got off to a great start, and I hope this will continue. People seem to have got their confidence back when it comes to spending on their homes.”



Trade future-gazing

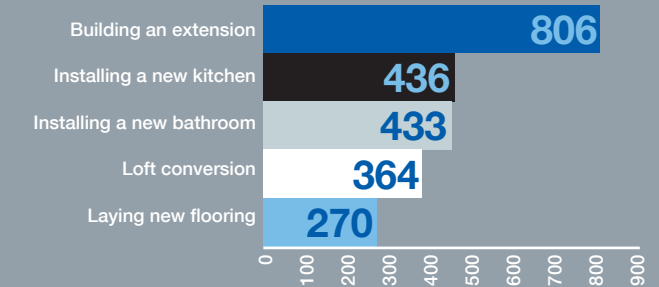
The general feeling by the domestic building trade is that business levels will remain the same throughout 2011. However, a third (33%) believe that business will increase – despite only 14% claiming to have seen an increase in 2010. Just 16% think they will see less work coming their way in the coming year.

What are your predictions for business in 2011?



In terms of job predictions for the coming 12 months, the consensus is that it is likely to remain much the same as 2010.

Which home improvements do you predict that you will be carrying out most in 2011?

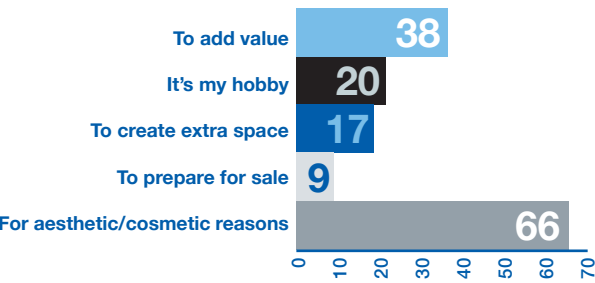


Home improvement trends

Spruce up, not pack up

Brits appear to be maintaining their caution when it comes to moving home. A huge 66% (two-thirds) of respondents told us they gave their homes a face-lift last year with a lick of paint, while 29% have overhauled their garden. The main reason given for these updates was for cosmetic purposes – in fact seven times as many people (66%) gave this reason over preparing their home for sale (9%). This indicates that we are currently more concerned with making ourselves comfortable in our existing homes than gearing up to move on.

What are the main reasons for spending money on home improvements?

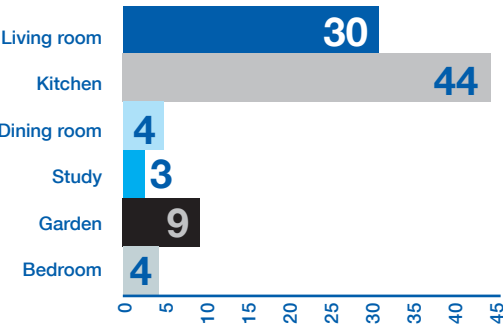


Estate agent Mark Sumray, says:
“Taxation on property purchases (Stamp Duty Land Tax) means that, if you are not moving up or down the property ladder, it is very expensive to move sideways - especially if you add in legal fees, estate agents and surveyors. The money saved can be used to upgrade and improve the existing, making your current property more attractive, efficient and valuable.”

However, as a nation we are still exerting caution when it comes to spending on home improvements, with an average spend of just £1,793.37.

We might be wise to invest this money on our kitchens if we are intending to sell-up in 2011, as this was deemed the most important room in the house when looking to purchase a new home (44%) followed by the living room (30%).

Which room/area would be most likely to impact on your decision to buy a house?



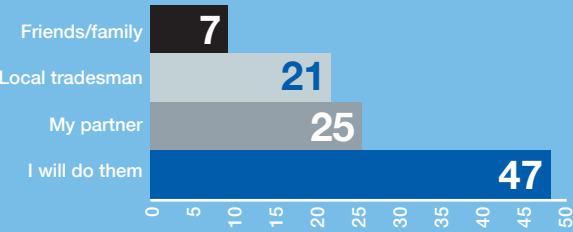
Estate agent Mark Sumray, says:
“The kitchen is a major factor to consider when buying a new home. We all have ideas and lifestyles but very few have the time and energy to install a kitchen. Being able to move into a new home with a luxury kitchen already fitted takes out the hassle and disruption.”

Interior Designer John Amabile, comments:
“Homeowners are most definitely improving not moving. A general spruce up can be like a spring clean and breathe new life into your home. From simple painted accent walls or an attractive feature light, quick fixes can give your home a brand new look.”

DIY – still going strong

Perhaps a further indication of our reluctance to splash out this year – while retaining a desire to improve our homes – is the high proportion of respondents who claimed that they will be carrying out their own home improvements in 2011.

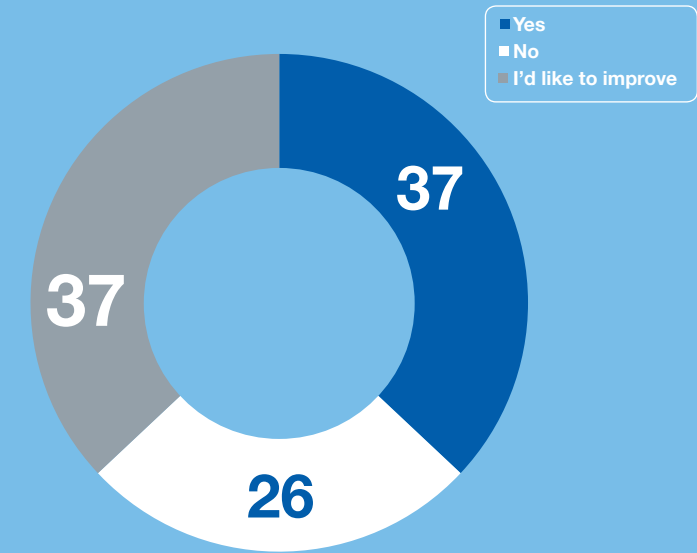
Who will be making the improvements to your home in 2011?



And it appears that women might be taking the lead when it comes to home improvement this year, with 73% of female respondents saying that they like to get their hands dirty with DIY – compared to 66% of male respondents.

However, according to 71% of women questioned, DIY skills are ‘very’ or ‘quite’ important in a prospective partner. This may be cause for concern for British men with a quarter (26%) stating that they are ‘unhappy’ with their DIY abilities and a further 37% claiming that they would ‘like to improve’.

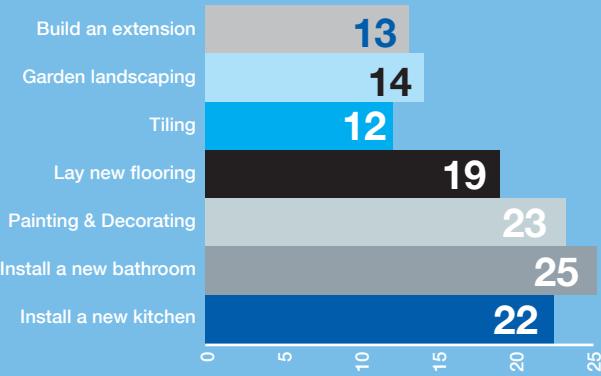
Are you happy with your current DIY abilities?



Calling in the pros

There are a number of jobs that we acknowledge are still best left to the professionals, including fitting kitchens and bathrooms, laying new flooring and garden renovation.

What will you be paying a skilled tradesman to do?



Interior Designer John Amabile, says:
“Even the most accomplished DIY-er would be best suited to employ professional kitchen fitters. The important task of creating your dream kitchen should have the back up of being fitted to perfection by experienced craftsmen. It’s beneficial to ensure your kitchen is expertly installed so that it is seamless to look at.”

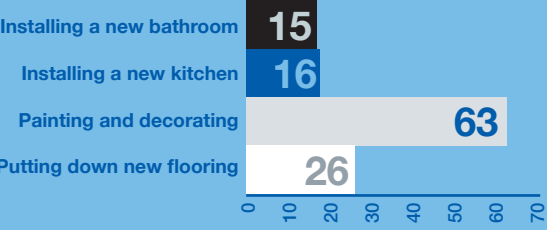
Another reason for calling in the professionals is to rectify DIY jobs that have gone wrong – one in five (20%) of those questioned have had a DIY disaster and of those, over a third (34%) enlisted the skills of a local tradesman to correct it.

Tradesman Craig Weatherington from the West Midlands, says:
“We’ve seen a marked increase in the number of call-outs we’re getting to rectify DIY that has gone wrong. Just recently I had to remove all the tiles from a bathroom wall as the homeowners had left the grout on instead of wiping it off straight away. It’s a false economy – people try to save money by doing it themselves, but it can cost much more in the long run.”

Consumer look-ahead

People are intending to continue with their home improvement plans this year with 61% of people asserting that they'll be making changes to their home - and the majority of those (63%) are planning on aesthetic changes.

What home improvements do you intend to conduct in the coming 12 months?

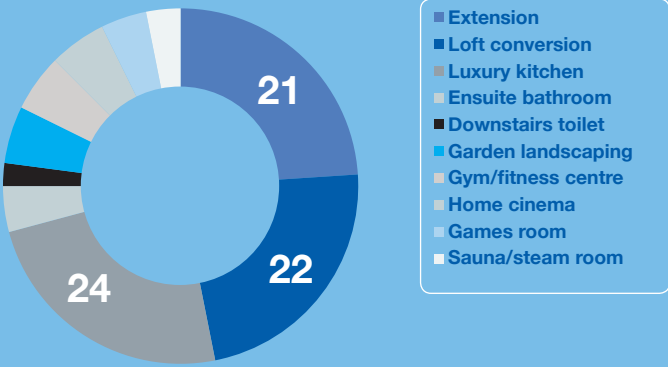


Dream homes

If money were no object, it seems a luxury kitchen would be number one on the wishlist. Almost a quarter (24%) of consumers named this as their 'dream' home improvement. This was closely followed by the desire to create more space if the cash was available – 22% would love to convert their lofts while 21% would invest in an extension.

Interior Designer John Amabile, says: “The kitchen can be the most expensive and difficult to coordinate design project for the home, yet is the room which families are favouring more and more for socialising. Many of us are also enjoying what is now one of the nation’s most popular pastimes – cooking – and so spend even more time in this area. From sleek worktops to stunning splashbacks, this really is the room for the Jones’ to keep up with – and every prospective home buyer can breathe a sigh of relief when their new home has a dream kitchen already installed.”

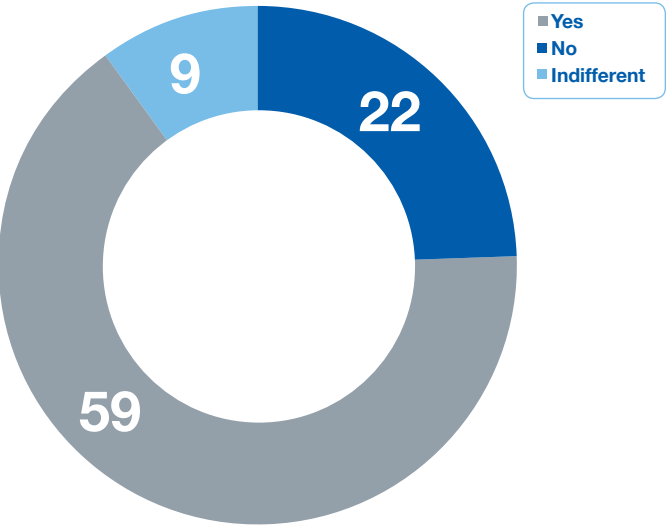
If you could have any dream improvement done to your home, what would it be?



Wickes Design Consultant Jake Clifford, says: “Customers this year are showing a tendency towards accessorising with dramatic lighting choices. This is a relatively inexpensive way of bringing the ‘wow’ factor to the kitchen with the added advantage that LED lighting is economical to run.”

Happiness is where the home is

Are you proud of your DIY achievements in the last 12 months?



We’re evidently a nation of home lovers with well over half (59%) of people saying that they are proud of their DIY achievements this year.

Interior Designer John Amabile, concludes: “Home improvements can lift the spirits as we all enjoy living in beautifully creative surroundings. Change is always good when you are physically adding to the biggest asset you own, and we get a real sense of pride when we are feathering our nests.”

About Wickes:

Wickes has over 190 stores nationwide and is an established brand within the UK DIY Market. Wickes stores are designed to appeal to serious DIY customers who carry out more complex projects and tradesmen who undertake general repairs, maintenance/improvement projects for households. Wickes also offers a design and installation service for kitchens and bathrooms.

Our experts:

Mark Sumray is an Associate Director at independent estate agency Benham and Reeves (www.b-r.co.uk)

John Amabile is an interior designer best known for his television work on '60 Minute Makeover' and many TV lifestyle programmes. He is also co-director and co-founder of Amabile Design (www.amabiledesign.com).

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For more information about Wickes please visit:
www.wickes.co.uk

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