VELUX BPIE

Citizens' Survey

Healthy Buildings, Healthy Lives

Understanding citizens' perceptions across Europe

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BPIE (Buildings Performance Institute Europe) is a leading independent think tank on climate mitigation and adaptation of buildings. Our vision is a climate-neutral built environment, aligned with the ambition of the Paris Agreement, and in support of a fair and sustainable society. We provide data-driven and actionable policy analysis, advice and implementation support to decision-makers in Europe and globally. www.bpie.eu

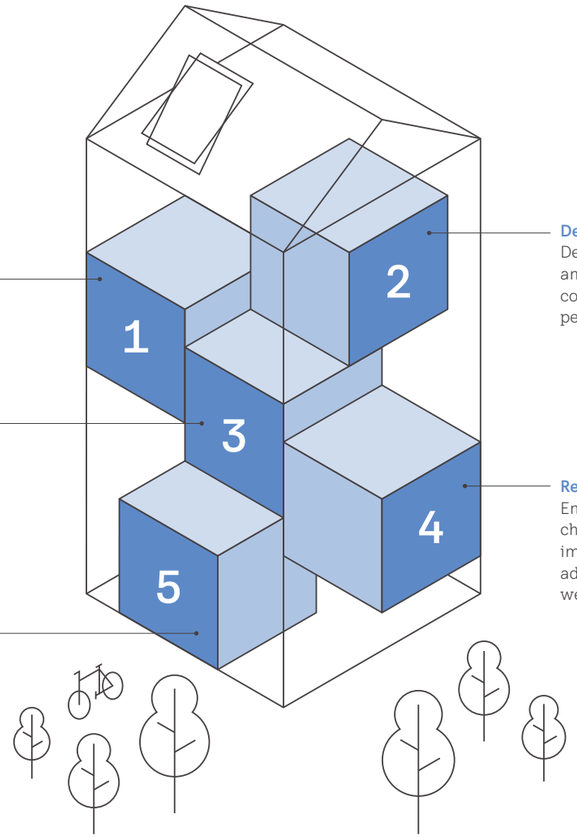
Europeans' perspectives on healthy buildings

Context, survey approach, who we asked, and demographics

Buildings are where Europeans spend most of their lives, making the quality of indoor environments central to public health and everyday well-being. The Healthy Buildings Barometer 2024, developed by BPIE (Buildings Performance Institute Europe) and VELUX, demonstrates how strongly indoor environmental quality shapes physical and mental health, while also highlighting the lack of a clear, common definition of what makes a building truly "healthy."

To address this, the Healthy Buildings Barometer introduces a holistic framework defining five interrelated dimensions of healthy buildings. Together, these dimensions outline what is needed for buildings that genuinely support people's well-being.

Five dimensions of healthy buildings



Improving mental and physical health
Provide better physical and mental health from social, economic, emotional, and environmental aspects via a healthy indoor climate and comfort measures.

Sustainably built and managed
Prioritise sustainable measures across the building life cycle, considering climate protection, resource usage, energy consumption, and carbon emissions.

Empowering people
Empower people with knowledge of healthy buildings through education and communication throughout a building's whole life cycle.

Designed for human needs
Design and understand human needs and behaviours with an inclusive and collaborative approach to suit the people using the building.

Resilient and adaptive
Ensure adaptability to climate change and minimise environmental impact while being contextually adaptable to local climate zones as well as changes in building use.

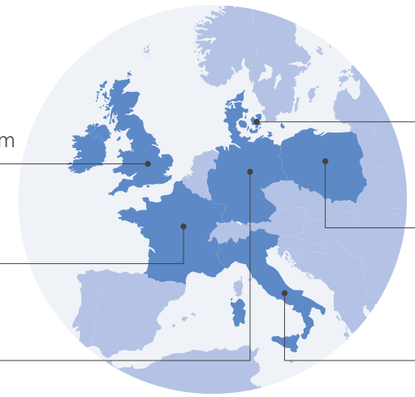
Survey approach

Now it's time to listen to the people. Building on this framework, the **Citizens' Survey** therefore seeks to understand how these dimensions resonate with people's daily lived experiences. The survey explores how individuals across Europe perceive the healthiness of the spaces they inhabit, whether at home, at work, in schools, or in hospitals, and how well these environments align with their expectations for comfort, safety, and well-being.

Its aim is to capture citizens' perceptions, concerns, and priorities regarding healthy indoor environments. It investigates how people themselves define a "healthy building," the extent to which they associate indoor conditions with their physical and mental health, and their satisfaction with key factors such as air quality, temperature, ventilation, natural light, noise, and humidity. Beyond comfort, the survey examines views on resilience, affordability, modern construction standards, and the kinds of policies needed to promote healthier living environments.

The survey also sheds light on people's willingness and ability to adopt healthier solutions or invest in home improvements, while identifying barriers such as cost, lack of information, administrative complexity, or affordability constraints. Taken together, these insights provide a comprehensive understanding of how European citizens experience and prioritise healthy buildings, and what they expect going forward. These insights also feed into EU-level buildings policy initiatives set to be published or begin implementation in 2026, such as the first European Affordable Housing Plan.

Geographical scope



The survey gathered responses from

6,102 adults across

6 European countries

At least **1,000** respondents per country

Survey demographics

The survey was designed using national quotas to reflect the demographic composition of each country.

52% Women

48% Men

18 – 60+ Years

including a significant share of older adults (34% aged 60+).

Participants represent a wide range of living environments including:

32% Large cities

17% Suburbs

29% Towns

22% Rural areas

The sample also mirrors Europe's diverse housing situations:

56% Homeowners

44% Renters

living in everything from single-family houses to small and medium-sized apartment buildings.

35% Single-family houses

What Europeans told us[1]

Five key findings on healthy buildings

1

Key takeaway

If our buildings can't cope with heat or cold, neither can our people. Resilience starts indoors.

2

Key takeaway

People care about health in buildings – they want action and clearer rules, but they need to be informed about what's already being done.

3

Key takeaway

We don't just need more money for healthy homes – we need better understanding and awareness.

4

Key takeaway

Healthy buildings are not a luxury – they are essential for daily well-being.

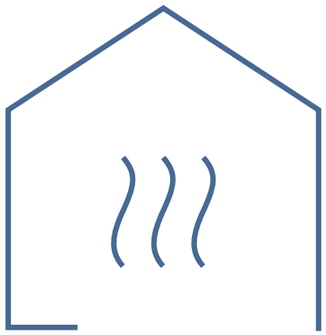
5

Key takeaway

Our attachment to our homes is strong. Healthier living should be achieved through renovation and awareness, not relocation.

1. The results presented here refer to the simple average of the six countries included in the survey: Denmark, France, Italy, Germany, Poland, and the United Kingdom, covering a broad range of major European climate zones.

1 Buildings are not resilient to heat and cold extremes – overheating is a growing concern across all countries and building types



45%

Europeans believe their homes are **not equipped** to handle extreme heat.

This concern is shared **across all regions and building types**, from homes to schools and workplaces, with no clear north–south divide.

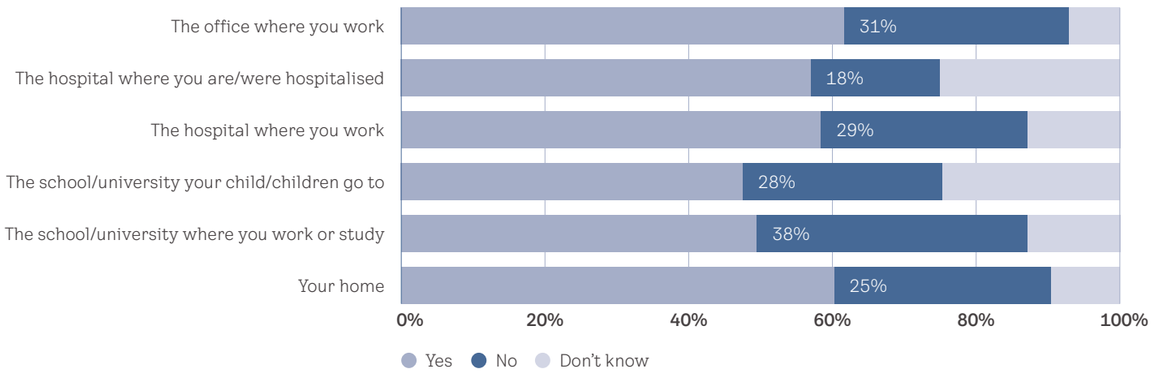
Even in countries with milder climates like Denmark and Germany, concern about overheating is as high as in southern countries such as Italy and France.

Respondents' views on **resilience to cold** vary widely for different types of buildings: 38% of schools and universities are seen as **unable to handle the cold**, while for hospitals the figure is 18%.

1 in 4

believe their homes cannot handle cold weather.

In general, do you think these buildings are suited to handle cold weather?



Key takeaway

If our buildings can't cope with heat or cold, neither can our people. Resilience starts indoors.

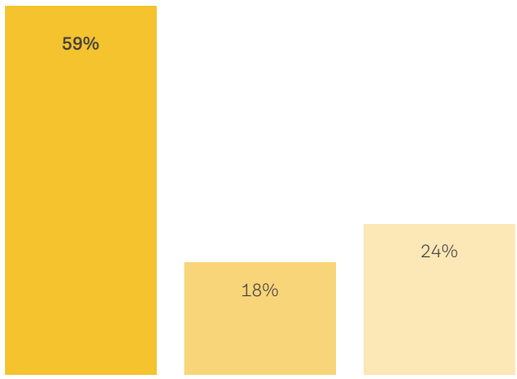
2 People want healthier homes — but awareness, policy action, and financial support remain the missing links

6 in 10

Europeans think there should be **stricter regulations** on how buildings are designed and maintained to ensure they support **health and well-being**.

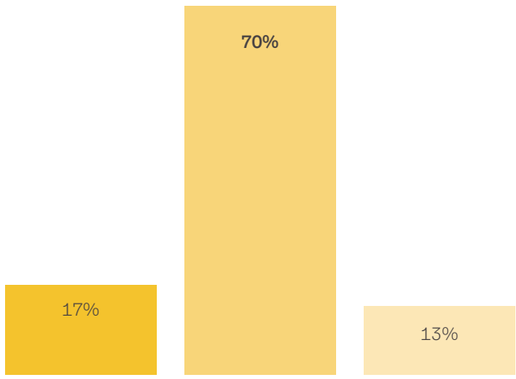
More than half of respondents would support governments reallocating funds to prioritise healthier building renovations.

7 in 10 are not aware of any regulations or guidelines on healthy building standards. Only 17% of respondents are aware, showing a **significant awareness gap**.



Would you support government allocating/prioritising additional incentives or funding for healthier building renovations?

Yes No Don't know



Are you aware of any regulations or guidelines on healthy building standards to assess how healthy your home is?

Yes No Don't know

Key takeaway

People care about health in buildings — they want action and clearer rules, but they need to be informed about what's already being done

3 Financial barriers matter – but lack of knowledge plays a major role too

Main barriers preventing people from improving their indoor climate

31% cite **financial constraints** as a barrier to improving their home's indoor climate.

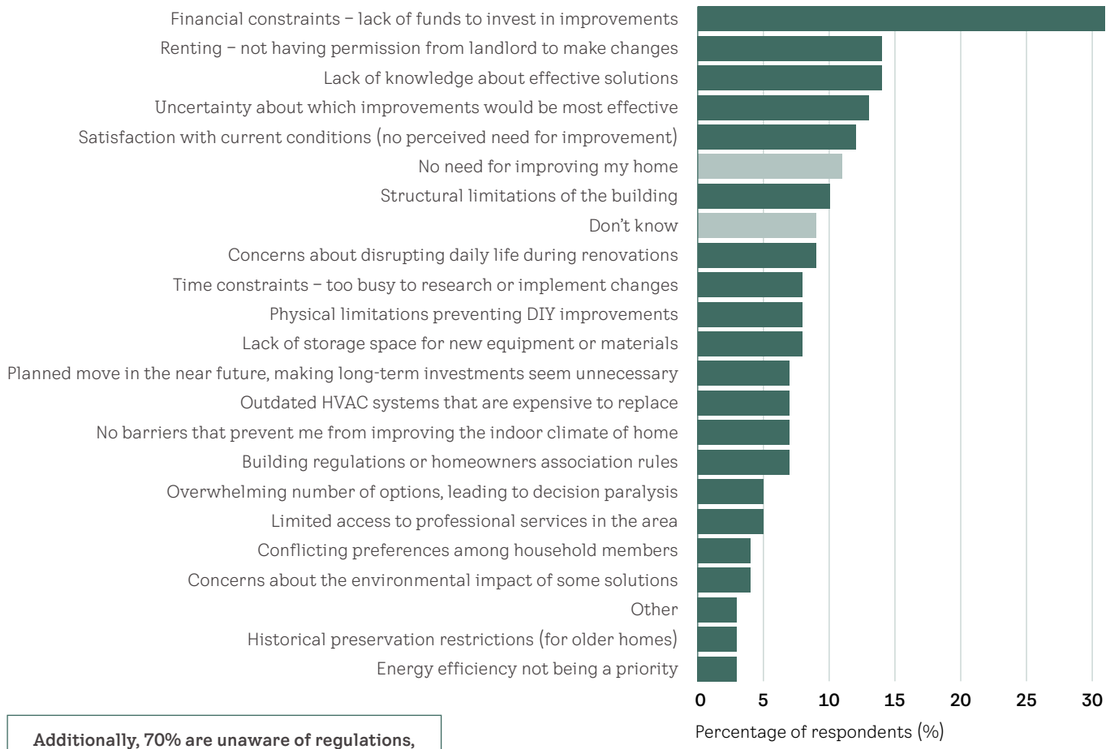
14% rent and **don't have permission to make improvements**, a major obstacle in cities where rental housing dominates.

14% say they **lack knowledge** about effective solutions.

13% **are uncertain** which improvements would be most effective.

Money is the top obstacle – selected more than twice as often as the second most cited barrier.

Barriers to improving the indoor climate of homes (Multiple answers possible)



Additionally, 70% are unaware of regulations, revealing a major communication gap.

Key takeaway

We don't just need more money for healthy homes — we need better understanding and awareness.

4 People recognise the health impact of indoor environments – but awareness varies widely

54%

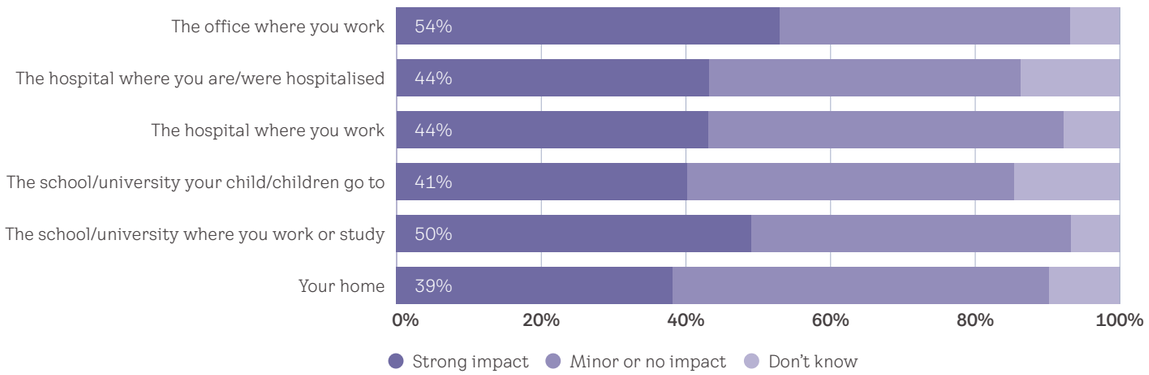
Amongst respondents, **workers are the most affected**. More than half of workers report that the indoor environment in offices strongly impacts their well-being.

39%

of respondents consider that indoor environments have a **strong impact on their physical and mental well-being in homes**.

Parents are the most uncertain group, with **41% saying that the school environment strongly affects their child's well-being,** and 59% do not see or are not aware of any effect. This highlights a major communication gap around building health in educational settings.

How much do you think the indoor environment in the following buildings affects your physical and mental well-being?



Key takeaway

Healthy buildings are not a luxury – they are essential for daily well-being.

5 Many people are attached to their homes – even when healthier options exist

Respondents are showing mixed willingness to relocate despite the health benefits

44%

of people would not consider moving to a different home or neighbourhood

35%

would consider moving

21%

are undecided on the matter

Yes
No
Don't know

Key takeaway

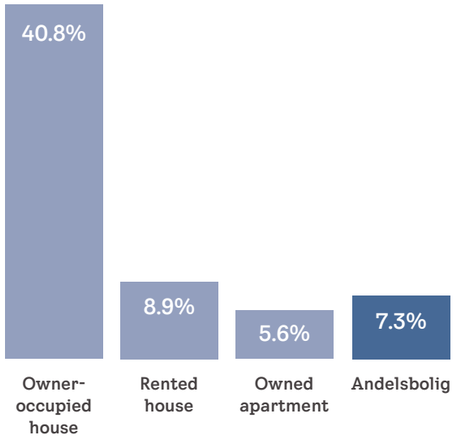
Our attachment to our homes is strong. Healthier living should be achieved through renovation and awareness, not relocation.

Citizens' Survey Report 2025

Country factsheets

Healthy buildings in national focus
Insights from six countries

Denmark – Insights



Distinct housing model: strong owner-occupied houses and co-ops, very few owned flats

40.8% of Danes live in an **owner-occupied house**, and another **8.9%** in a **rented house**.

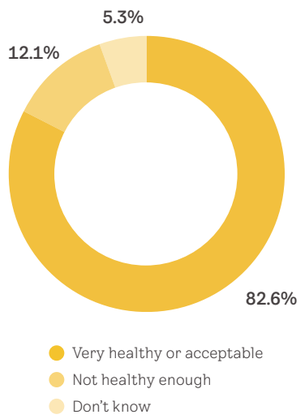
Only **5.6%** live in an **owned apartment** – the **lowest share** of apartment owners among the six countries.

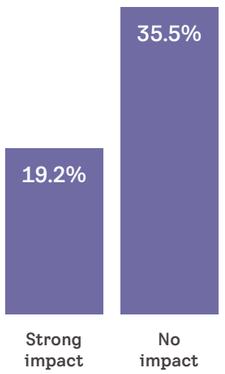
Denmark is also unique for **Andelsbolig** (co-op housing): **7.3%** of respondents live in this type of housing, which is rarely found or inexistent in other countries.

Lowest share saying their home is unhealthy

82.6% of Danes describe their home as **very healthy or acceptable** for daily comfort.

Only **12.1%** say their home is **not healthy enough** – the **lowest dissatisfaction level** across all countries (Poland is highest at 18.2%).





Relatively sceptical about the impact of indoor home conditions on health

Over a third of Danes say their indoor environment has no impact on their well-being, one of the highest shares (France 36.3%, Italy only 17.3%).

Only **19.2%** believe it has a **"strong impact"**, well below Italy (32.2%) and Poland (27.7%).

Denmark – Insights

Very confident about cold resilience, but cautious about heatwaves

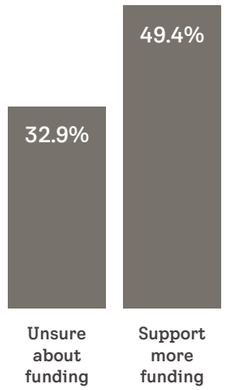
72.6% of Danes believe their home is **suited to handle cold weather**, the **highest share** among the six countries.

Only **42.4%** feel prepared for heatwaves, lower than Italians (51.1%) and Poles (50.6%).

Least likely to plan healthy home improvements

1 in 2 Danes (51.5%) have no plans to improve their home's health — the **highest level** across countries.

Only **29.5%** are taking actions or planning to, compared with **42.7%** in France.



High uncertainty about extra public funding

32.9% of Danes are unsure whether more public budget should go to healthy homes — the **highest uncertainty** in Europe.

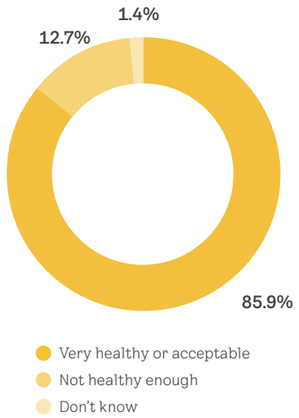
49.4% support more funding, which is clearly below Italy (66.2%) and Germany (65.4%).

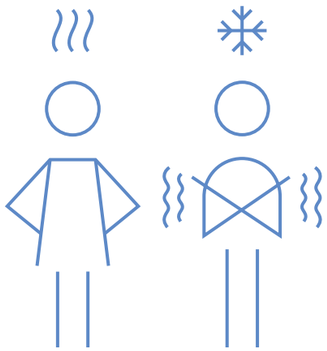
France – Insights

Most positive about their home's healthiness

85.9% of French people consider their home as **very healthy or acceptable**, the **highest share** among the six countries.

Only **12.7%** feel their home is not healthy enough (Denmark is slightly lower at 12.1%).





But most likely to report temperature discomfort

15% report **excessive cold** at home – the **highest** among the six countries.

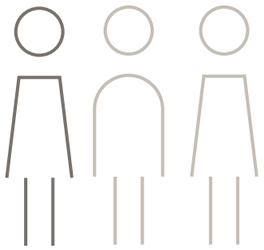
16.5% report **overheating** – again **highest** among all countries.

→ France combines **overall satisfaction** with a clear **thermal comfort problem**, especially important for renovation and climate resilience policy.

Most sceptical that home conditions affect their health

1 in 3 French respondents (36.3%) say their indoor environment has **no impact** on their well-being.

Only **16.9%** feel it has a **strong impact**.

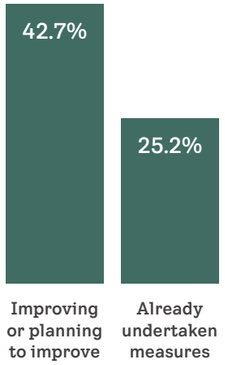


France – Insights

Leading on healthy renovation activities

42.7% are improving or planning to improve their home's health — the **highest level** among the six countries.

25.2% have **already undertaken** measures – again **highest** across countries.



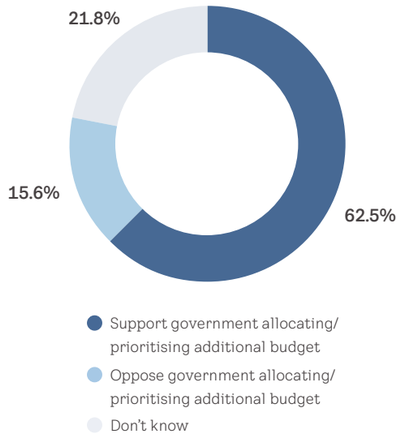
Highest awareness of healthy building regulations

20.5% of French people say they are **aware of regulations or guidelines** on healthy building standards – the **highest awareness level** (Italy 19.5%, Denmark 17.9%).

Very supportive of more public budget for healthy renovations

62.6% support government **allocating/prioritising additional budget** for healthier building renovations.

Only **15.6%** oppose this — among the lowest levels of opposition (UK: 24.2%).



Germany – Insights

Most "renter-heavy" apartment market

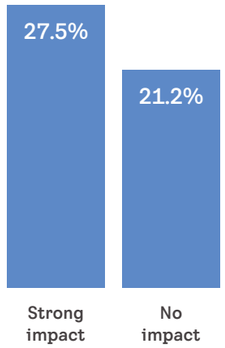
48.2% of Germans live in a **rented apartment**, the **highest share** among the six countries.

Only **30%** live in an **owner-occupied house** and **10.3%** in an **owned apartment**, pointing to a strong **rental market** structure.

Indoor environment is linked to health and well-being in homes

27.5% believe the indoor environment has a strong impact on their well-being — close to Italy and Poland.

Only **21.2%** say it has **no impact**, much lower than Denmark (35.5%) or France (36.3%).



Noise and accessibility stand out as major issues

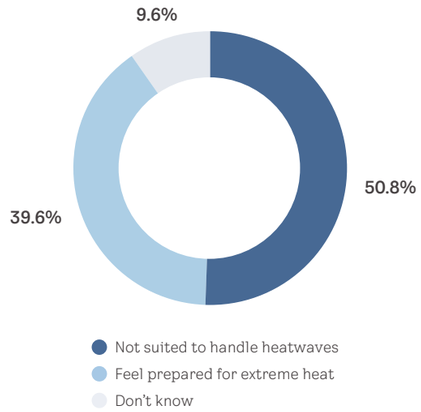
18.6%
Noise pollution

7.1%
Accessibility

Germans report the **highest level of noise pollution at home: 18.6%** cite **noise pollution** as a problem.

They also report the **highest level of poor accessibility at home: 7.1%** mention **poor accessibility** – more than double that of Denmark (2%) and Italy (3.4%).

Germany – Insights



Pessimistic about heatwave resilience

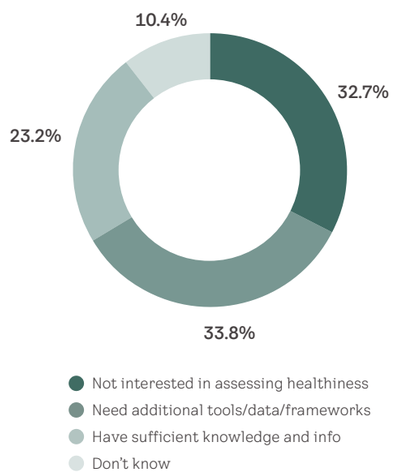
50.8% believe their home is **not suited to handle heatwaves**, one of the most pessimistic views (only the UK is worse at 59.6%).

Only **39.6%** feel prepared for extreme heat.

Strong support for more public funding, but very low regulatory awareness

65.4% of Germans support extra **government budget for healthier building renovations**, second only to Italy (66.2%).

At the same time, **76.3%** say they are **not aware of any healthy building regulations or guidelines**, one of the **highest** unawareness levels (only the UK is higher with 77.8%).



Highest share not interested in assessing their home's healthiness

32.7% say they are **not interested in assessing the healthiness** of their home – the **highest** among all countries.

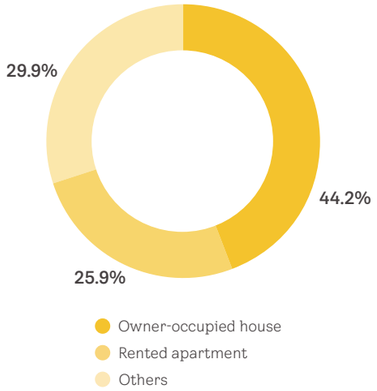
Only **33.8%** say they **need additional tools/data/frameworks**, lower than Denmark (37.9%), France (37.8%) and Italy (41.6%).

Italy – Insights

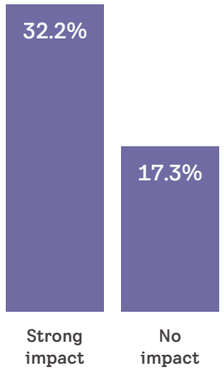
Highest flat ownership, lowest house ownership

44.2% of Italians live in an **owner-occupied apartment** – the **highest share** among all countries.

Only **25.9%** live in an **owner-occupied house**, the **lowest** share of house owners in the sample.



Most convinced that indoor environment affects their health



32.2% say the indoor environment of their home has a **strong impact** on their physical and mental well-being – the **highest** level.

Only **17.3%** say it has **no impact**, the **lowest** among the six countries.

Humidity and lack of social spaces are key home problems

22.7% of Italians report **humidity** as a problem at home – the **highest** share.

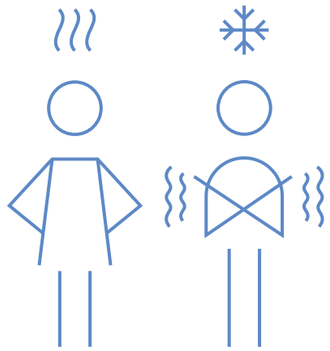
7.5% mention **inadequate social spaces** at home – also the **highest** level in the sample.

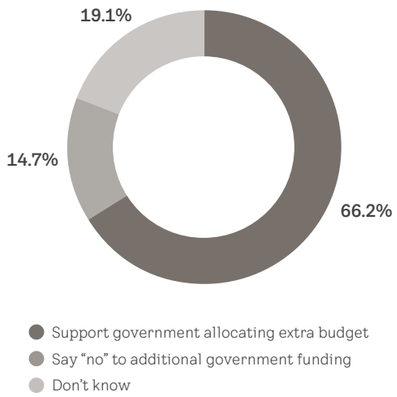
Italy – Insights

Relatively confident in climate resilience of homes

51.1% believe their home is **suited to handle heatwaves**, the **highest share**.

70% say their home is **suited to handle cold weather**, close to Denmark (72.6%) and Poland (71.2%).





Strongest support for extra public budget for healthier buildings

66.2% of Italians support **government allocating/prioritising additional budget** for healthier building renovations – the **highest** level across all countries.

Only **14.7%** say **no**, the lowest share of opposition.

Highly motivated to act – and focusing on heating & humidity upgrades

While 34.2% are improving home healthiness (already done/ongoing/planned works), priorities differ.

Priorities are:

- **Heating and cooling system upgrades** – the highest across countries
- **Moisture/humidity control** – also the highest share across countries

56.7%
Have upgraded their heating/ cooling systems

45.3%
Have improved moisture/humidity control

Poland – Insights

High apartment ownership, many young adults living with parents

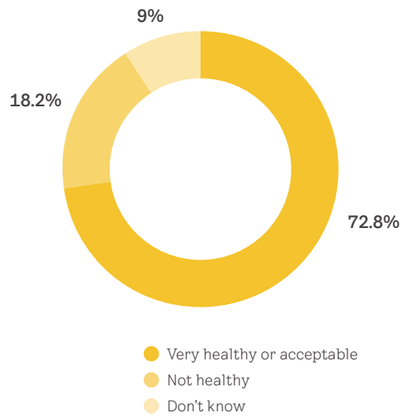
33% of Poles live in an **owner-occupied apartment**, a relatively high share.

12.3% live in their **parental home**, the **highest** among all countries (UK: 10%, Italy: 7.1%).

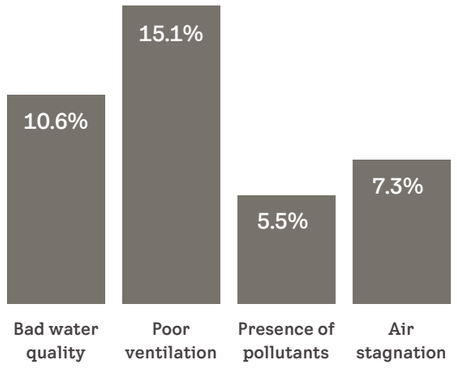
Most critical about their home's healthiness

Only **72.8%** of Poles rate their home as **very healthy or acceptable**, the **lowest** rating among the six countries.

18.2% say their home is not healthy enough — the **highest** dissatisfaction level.



Concentration of indoor air and water problems



Poland stands out for several key problems at home, with the highest levels of reported:

- **Bad water quality**
- **Poor ventilation**
- **Presence of pollutants**
- **Air stagnation**

These combined issues point strongly to **indoor air and water quality** as a policy priority in Poland.

Poland – Insights

Fairly confident in resilience to both heat and cold

50.6% say their home is **suited to handle heatwaves**, just behind Italy (51.1%) and above Denmark, France, Germany, and the UK.

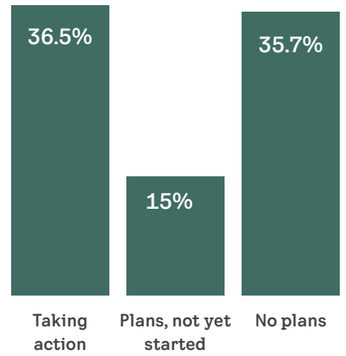
71.2% consider their home **suited to cold weather**, close to Denmark (72.6%) and higher than France (61.1%) or Germany (62.5%).

Active and planning-oriented on improvements

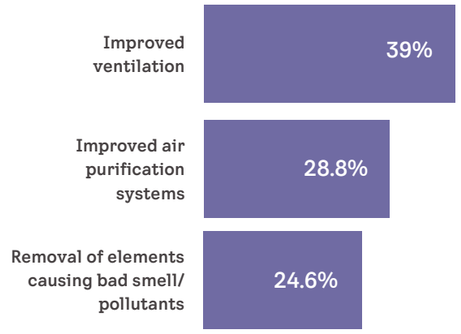
36.5% are taking actions or planning to.

15% have plans but have not started improvements yet – the most common scenario amongst those who have planned projects.

Only **35.7% have no plans** to improve home healthiness – the **lowest** among all six countries.



Improvement efforts focused on ventilation, purification, and pollutant removal



Among those who took measures, the key dwelling improvements were:

- **Ventilation**
  – one of the highest along with Denmark
- **Air purification**
  – the highest share
- **Removal of elements causing bad smell/pollutants**
  – also the highest among the six countries

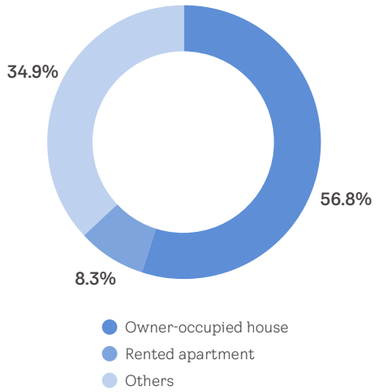
This shows a strong **air quality–driven renovation profile**.

United Kingdom – Insights

Housing dominated by owner-occupied houses, very low apartment renting

56.8% of UK respondents live in an **owner-occupied house** – the **highest share** among the six countries.

Only **8.3%** live in a **rented apartment**, the **lowest** proportion of apartment renters.



Fewer reported issues at home overall – but natural light remains a key concern

When presented with a list of home problems, **49.2%** of respondents selected **none** of them. This suggests fewer self-reported issues in the UK.

However, they also report the **highest level of insufficient light/lack of natural lighting: 9.6%** mention this as a problem at home.

Most pessimistic about climate resilience — yet strongly supportive of stricter building regulations

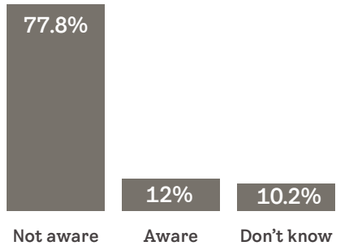
Only **31.4%** believe their home is **suited to handle heatwaves**, the **lowest** share.

For cold weather, **65.6%** say their home is suited, but **29%** say **"no"**, one of the highest shares of concern after France (31.6%).

78% want stricter regulations for how buildings are designed and maintained to support health and well-being — one of the strongest pro-regulation signals in the whole survey.

Citizens' Survey Report 2025

United Kingdom – Insights



Largest knowledge gap on healthy building regulations

77.8% of UK respondents say they are **not aware of any healthy building regulations or guidelines**, the **highest** level of unawareness.

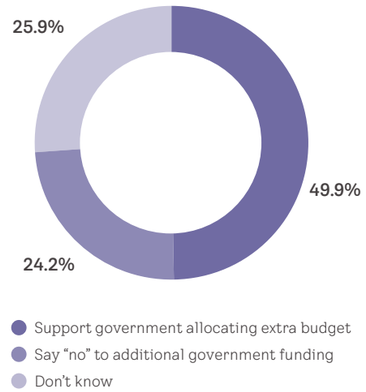
Only **12%** say they are **aware**, the **lowest** share across all countries.

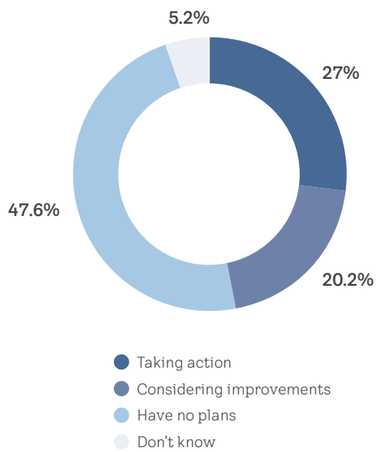
Financial constraints are the main barrier — and opposition to public funding is highest

Financial constraints are the **#1 barrier** stopping UK households from improving indoor conditions.

49.9% support government **allocating extra budget** to healthier building renovations – similar to Denmark (49.4%) but lower than all others.

24.2% explicitly say **"no"** to additional government funding, the **highest level of opposition in the sample.**





Lowest share already acting, many considering improvements

Only **27%** are taking actions for improving the healthiness of their dwelling – the **lowest** among the six countries.

However, **20.2%** say **they are considering improvements** — the **highest share**, indicating a significant **"movable middle"** that could respond to targeted incentives or information campaigns.

66

Investing in healthier buildings will improve the lives of Europeans. Fewer worries about rising energy bills, healthier homes and a fairer society: this is the path to a future-proof Europe.

Oliver Rapf,
Executive Director at BPIE

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