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Does your property add up to a waste of space?

Be happy in your home and make it all your own or risk losing up to £100,000 over the next 25 years. Mandi Millar reports on the latest chilling property survey...

ULSTER home-owners are happiest in their kitchens, though keener than their UK counterparts elsewhere to add a home gym, according to a recent survey.

But the statistics, from Ikea, also found that most homes add up to a waste of space – wasting up to £100,000 in mortgage payments over the course of 25 years.

The survey found that our poor use of space squanders the equivalent of a whole room in our homes.

Across the UK, the average cost of that wasted space over a 25-year mortgage is an eye-watering £54,290, though in Northern Ireland we're slightly behind at £45,343. So, where are we wasting space, and money, in our homes?

Well, we might love the kids equally, but it seems we don't love our rooms equally. While 47 per cent of people said the lounge was their favourite room, 25 per cent like it best in the bedroom.

And energetic young householders (18-24 years old) spend a lot more time in the bedroom – 49 per cent of them named it their favourite room.

Perhaps worryingly for their partners, almost 10 per cent of men said their happiest room is the home office/study. Another 5 per cent even favoured the loft, spare

bedroom, utility room, garage or shed (we assume these guys probably don't have a partner!).

The survey also showed that residents in Northern Ireland are the most likely to be happy in their kitchens. In addition, they are also the keenest in the UK when it comes to the idea of adding ensuite bathrooms and are the most likely to want to add a home gym.

Whether it's loving the living room, or lusting for the bedroom, the 'happy rooms' in the home justify their share of the mortgage costs. They also give us the emotional payback of a happier home.

But if we don't love it, we don't use it. Around 16 per cent of us can't stand the kitchen and 9 per cent absolutely dread the spare bedroom.

Also, 77 per cent of us have a big problem with clutter in our homes with valuable space around the house is being used as an untidy dumping ground for anything and everything.

The survey highlights that while we're wasting a room in the house, we're also dreaming of adding a new one.

But that apparent contradiction does make sense. It shows that householders are realising that their rooms need to work smarter for them.

Dream home additions include

home gyms, entertainment rooms and spare bedrooms (all, presumably, clutter-free). And the creative types are even thinking of music and dance studios.

By switching the use of an existing room they can create a great addition to their family's lifestyle. And it also makes financial sense.

Property specialist Roger Southam explains: "IKEA's findings are very revealing, and never forget, absolutely every square inch of your home costs you money. If you're not using it, you're losing it."

"Firstly, don't automatically use rooms the way they've always been used. Think of them as blank spaces and work out which room types actually suit your family's needs.

"Then get rid of the clutter by using smart storage systems and making better use of space. The result can be anything from creating a family entertainment room, which saves on spending going

out, to creating a room to rent, which actually brings money in. Whatever you choose, focus on making every room in the house work for you."

Home and lifestyle commentator Lindsay Blackman emphasises how the right rooms will deliver emotional returns too: "Proper not only a vital financial in

ment, it's an emotional investment too.

“A house is all about creating a home and developing the lifestyle your family wants and enjoys.

“The survey shows that instead of simply worrying about house price movements, many of us could easily make a bigger emotional return on our homes through relatively simple and inexpensive changes.

“By aligning your home more closely to your own specific needs and making it work better for you, it will actually improve the quality of family life.”

