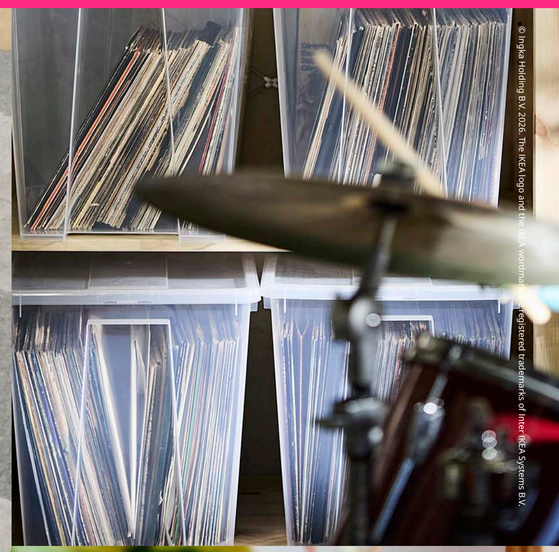
IKEA Store & Organize Report 2026

Finding meaning in the mess

What's on our shelves says a lot about ourselves



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Executive summary

It’s not the stuff filling up our homes. It’s us – our memories, our identities, our relationships.

And while social media says calm and curated, real life says otherwise. We hide things, shuffle things, pretend we know where everything is. We also make space for the things we love.

Our wider Life at Home research shows homes are being asked to work harder than ever; this report goes into one part of that story, the stuff we keep and how we live with it.

Curious about more Life at Home research?
Life at Home research by IKEA offers comprehensive global insights into emotional and functional home needs, including various reports for example the annual Life at Home Report, inspiring solutions for better everyday living. Visit ingka.com for more.

1

Our homes are full of meaning

It’s not only about what’s useful anymore. We’re holding onto stories, hopes and intentions.

2

We’re managing how our homes look for others, not just ourselves

Tidying, hiding, shifting things around – it’s less removing unsightly mess, more appearing to find some order.

3

We're finding our own ways to make home work

From hunting for keys to negotiating shared space, clutter creates small but constant tensions. And instead of fixing the mess, we build workarounds – systems that are “good enough.”

4

A lived-in home is a loved home

Homes are shifting away from picture-perfect towards something more lived-in, where a bit of mess can feel comforting, rather than chaotic.

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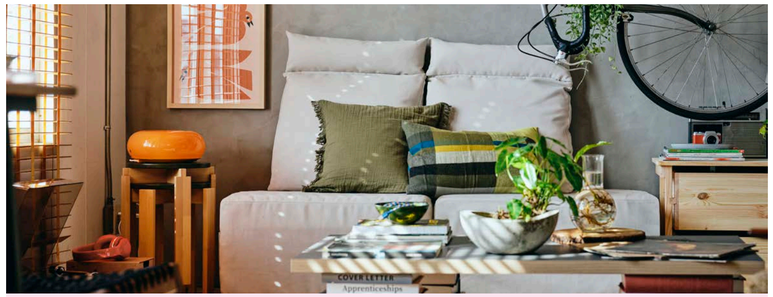
Key cultural signals

A space shift

Feeling the squeeze

Homes are shrinking. In the US, new homes are at their smallest in 15 years, while land pressures in cities in the global North are pushing towards denser, more compact urban living. And in Asia-Pacific, housing demand is increasingly shaped by smaller households, driving a need for more individual units, not larger ones.

A mindset shift



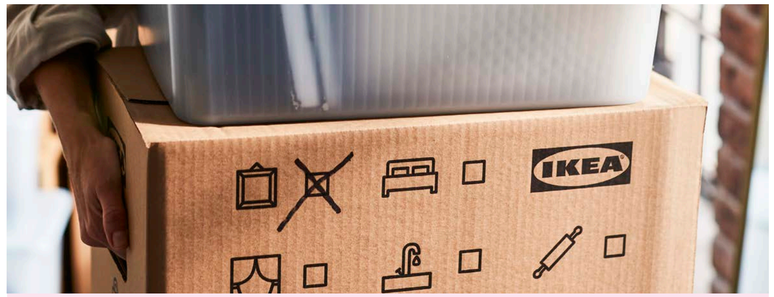
From minimalism to meaningful mess

We’re not owning less – we’re keeping what matters, organized with purpose.
(Yes, “spacemaxxing” is a thing now.)

It seems that in 2026, it’s less about owning as little as possible and more about owning and organizing with purpose.

Living etc, 2026

Why we have more



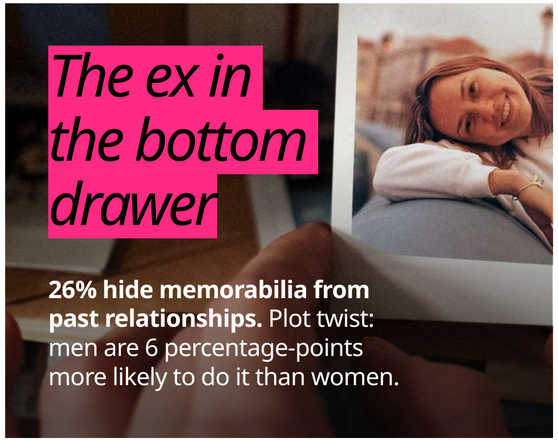
A generational hand-me-down moment

Wealth is being inherited more than ever, along with decades of objects and memories. Homes are becoming places where the past moves in with the present – making them feel fuller and far more meaningful.

Boomers have been quietly amassing one of the largest concentrations of wealth in history. Now that wealth is moving downward and across generations.

Forbes, 2026

Top 10 Store & organize trends



The ex in the bottom drawer

26% hide memorabilia from past relationships. Plot twist: men are 6 percentage-points more likely to do it than women.

82%

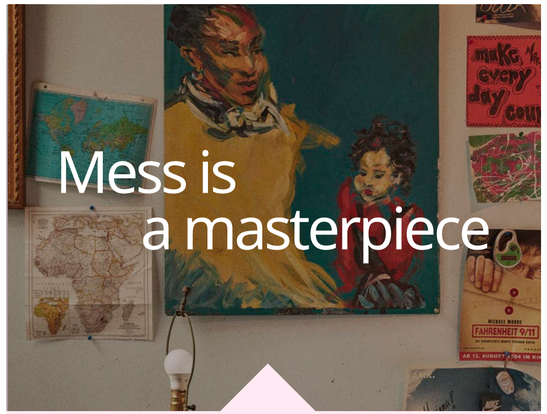
keep things purely for sentimental reasons – even when they're never used or shoved out of sight.

The pre-party panic

1 in 10 of us have cancelled having guests over because of clutter – rising to **28% in China**. And **34%** shuffle clutter from room to room before guests arrive, peaking at **49% in the UK**.

The countertop battleground

The kitchen counter is the **No.1 spot for clutter** (24%) and – would you believe? – **arguments too.**



Mess is a masterpiece

15% globally see clutter as a form of creativity – with **31% in China**, but just **4% in Japan**. Even 12% of those self-described as organized and clutter free.

Cooking up a solution

1 in 10 of us use the oven as storage – rising to just over **1 in 4** if you live in South Korea.

That's how much more time **India** spends a year looking for stuff than **the UK** – 80 minutes a day vs 15!

68% of households have a drawer or box that houses everything without a home. And **54% of Boomer men** keep cables for devices they no longer own! We all know one...

Over

30 minutes

a day is spent by 11% of Gen Z searching for a charger – that's one full week a year, gone.

The silent protest

38% say someone in the household leaves things out in a muted move for someone else to deal with.

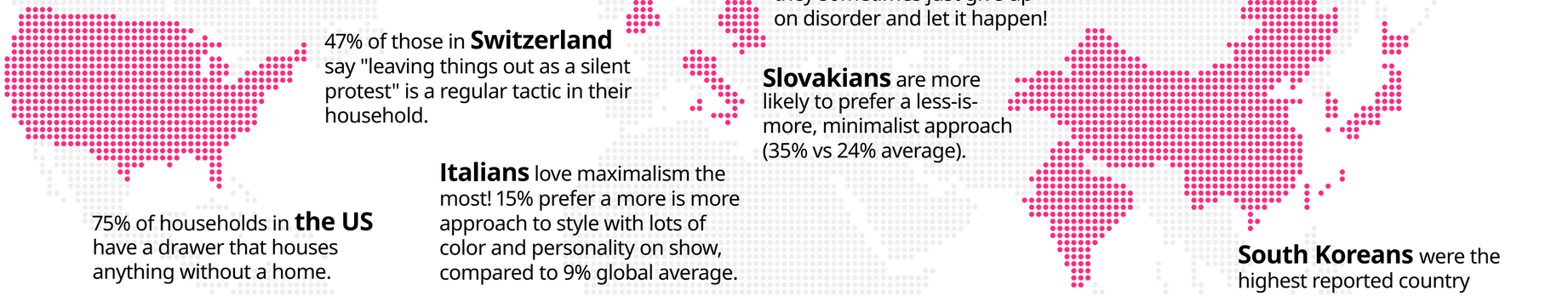
Don’t judge. It works (mostly).

Storage is something many of us are still figuring out.

For instance, there’s the bold 1 in 10 who have turned the oven into a (rather risky) cupboard. While 16% of us have bought an item a second time, simply because the original had gone missing in the mess.

And then, of course, there’s the drawer of doom. 68% of households have one – that box or drawer where everything that has nowhere to go, goes.

One way or another, most of us find a place for the things that matter.



Sweden love their kitchen jars for storage (49%).

Finland love their decorative baskets (46%).

36% of those in **the UK** use suitcases for storage.

40% of those in **Poland** say they sometimes just give up on disorder and let it happen!

China report highly (42%) for old furniture being repurposed for storage.

Japan (35%) reported high rates of "none listed above" when asked what they use for storage, leaving us to question how are they storing their items?

47% of those in **Switzerland** say "leaving things out as a silent protest" is a regular tactic in their household.

Slovakians are more likely to prefer a less-is-more, minimalist approach (35% vs 24% average).

75% of households in **the US** have a drawer that houses anything without a home.

Italians love maximalism the most! 15% prefer a more is more approach to style with lots of color and personality on show, compared to 9% global average.

59% of those in **India** say their household uses “decoy” organizers to make it look like they’re tidy.

South Koreans were the highest reported country to use their oven (21%) for storage.

Around the world in 80 drawers

Methodology

31,448
people shared their storage and organization habits

31
IKEA markets

This research was conducted online with YouGov, using national consumer research panels to recruit respondents in 31 markets where IKEA is present. All markets have been weighted equally in the global figures. The samples were designed to be nationally representative as far as possible by gender, age, and region using online panels.

Fieldwork was conducted in April 2026.

Nationally representative sample weighted by gender, age, and geography.

Markets
Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, China, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, UK, US.

Chapter 1.

The things we can’t let go of

For many, minimalism lacks meaning. And what we keep instead – unloved gifts, exes in drawers, the “just in case” pile – says more about who we are than how tidy we look.

The stuff of secrets

Objects have a funny way of holding onto us long after we've let go of what they meant.

Take exes: 26% of us hide memorabilia from past relationships, secretly clinging to emotional weight that's long outlived its relevance. Plot twist: men do this slightly more than women (a 6 percentage-point gap).

Other objects work differently: less about the past, more about a future we haven't reached yet. More than 1 in 5 of us keep gear for hobbies we've never started (and let's be honest, probably never will) as we hold onto a version of ourselves we haven't quite become.

And sometimes, what we keep doesn't match who we think we are. 21% of Gen Z own items that would surprise the people who know them, versus 16% on average and 13% of Boomers. Signs that the version of us at home isn't always the one we show the world.

Storing emotional baggage

What we keep says something about who we are. Memory, identity and the stories we attach along the way shape our choices as much as function does, and it shows up in how we like our homes to look. 59% of us prefer a lived-in feel over a minimalist one (24%).

Holding onto things often comes from something sentimental. Globally, 82% of us keep items purely for that reason, even when they're rarely used or kept out of sight – and 18% mostly put them on display.

Gen Z are 5 percentage-points more likely than Boomers to keep sentimental items in plain sight, hinting at a generational shift toward wearing identity and emotion more openly.

"People are no longer aiming for a perfect home. People still want a calm and organized space, but they don't want it to feel like a showroom. They want their homes to reflect who they are. That could be a vintage piece they found by chance, something inherited from family, or a collection they've built over time."

Queenie Lee
Home Furnishings Leader, IKEA

Minimalist **24%**

Lived-in **59%**

Maximalist **9%**

The just-in-case collection

Our homes can tell honest stories about who we care for.

Almost 1 in 5 of us hold onto gifted items we don’t like, just in case the giver expects to see them again, with India the keenest not to offend. The same goes for hand-me-downs: 19% of us are reluctant to part with inherited items in case it upsets family, rising to 25% in Serbia.

Some things we hold onto quietly. A drawer left unopened, a cupboard door we walk past without a second thought. Gen Z are twice as likely as Boomers to have a space like this, 15% versus 7%, and those who feel disorganized or cluttered are 12 percentage-points more likely to as well. It's largely because the contents feel emotionally overwhelming, suggesting we get more comfortable with our own relics as we age. Decluttering our stuff, it seems, can mean decluttering our emotions as well.

And then there’s the ultimate just-in-case object: the cable. Boomer men are far more likely than anyone else to hold onto cables for devices they no longer own (54%). We all know one...

Chapter 2.

Behind closed drawers

Many of us want a home that feels calm and in control. But in reality, most of us are just performing it – tidying, hiding, rearranging for an audience – while the real story plays out backstage.

The house of clutter

Mess is a hot topic in most homes. But as this map shows, some spots are hotter than others...

Refrigerator = Keeping things cool.
The refrigerator is relatively hard to clean but not the biggest cause of arguments.

Dining area

11% Clutter — 32% Arguments

Kitchen

Countertops = Danger!
Hardest to keep clutter free AND most likely to cause arguments.

24% Clutter — 37% Arguments

Bathroom

16% Clutter — 35% Arguments

Living room

Arguments run high here, as it's most commonly our household's shared space.

16% Clutter — 36% Arguments

Wardrobe

23% Clutter — 32% Arguments

Wardrobes are one of the hardest areas to keep clutter free, but not the biggest causes of arguments. Is this because they tend to be individual spaces?

Hallway

8% - 26%
Clutter Arguments

Hallways are easy to keep clutter free, but cause arguments – likely because it's an area we all need to use regularly!

Bedroom

15% Clutter — 30% Arguments

The countertop conflicts

It's no secret we've all got a bit of clutter in our homes.

Globally, 22% of us admit to being somewhat or very disorganized – rising to 34% in Japan and 32% in India.

Shared homes don't just mean shared mess, they can bring shared tension, too. The kitchen countertop is the biggest source of clutter-related arguments (37%). And surprise, surprise: most of these arguments happen with partners (21%).

Zoom out, and the picture shifts by country: India argues a lot over most spaces while Denmark and Japan are less likely to say a space causes arguments.

A lot of us don’t just argue, we play games: 38% of households say someone leaves things out as a silent protest, hoping someone else deals with it. 36% of households say someone buries things that should’ve been chucked at the bottom of the bin so no one notices.

Maybe it’s not mess that causes the friction, but deciding whose mess it is?

38%

of households say someone leaves things out as a silent protest

More than meets the guest

Admit it: you have two homes, don't you? The one you live in – and the one you present when the doorbell rings…

We start the home edit long before guests arrive. 32% of us hide things that don't fit the image we want to give off with 39% hiding dirty laundry in particular. Even snacks aren't safe: 38% hide treats, and 17% of us admit hiding them from ourselves.

But having guests take it to another level – and a different room, with 34% shuffling clutter from one to another before guests arrive. UK leads the way at 49%, while Hungary, Germany and Poland barely bother at 21%.

If cleaning doesn't cut it, we can always cancel. 1 in 10 have done just that because the house felt too messy, rising to 28% in China.

Even when guests leave, the performance moves online. Gen Z are 10 percentage-points more likely than Boomers to cancel plans because of mess, and admit their social posts make their home look tidier than it really is. Better to go viral than vacuum, apparently.

"Storage-related content on social media largely focuses on "photo-ready" rooms. As a result, many people tend to judge storage by how a space looks, rather than how effectively it supports daily life. Remember to focus on storage that solves the problems vs. just a visible lifestyle statement."

Queenie Lee
Home Furnishings Leader, IKEA

1 in 10
have cancelled guests due to mess

Owning more stuff than places to keep it has turned leaving the house into a daily game of hide and seek. And weirdly, the chaos has its own charm...

Chapter 3.

At home with the chaos

Hide & seek

Be honest: how long did it take you to find your keys this morning?

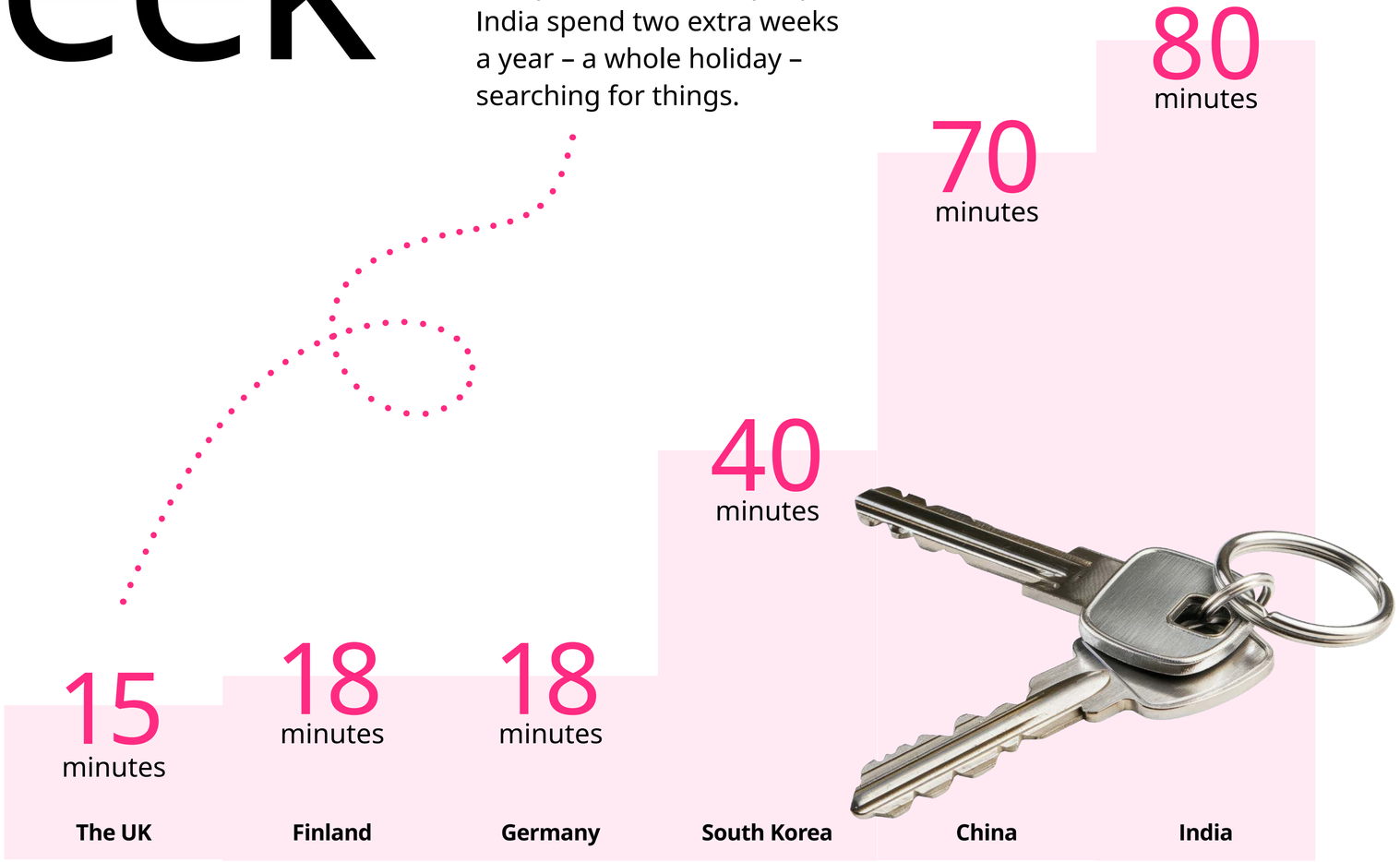
If you’re anything like the rest of us, longer than you’d like to admit. While 74% of us say being able to find things easily really matters, we spend just over a day each year hunting for essentials before we can even get out of the door. And on average we lose 29 minutes a day to searching for keys, wallets, chargers – whatever someone in the house needed five minutes ago.

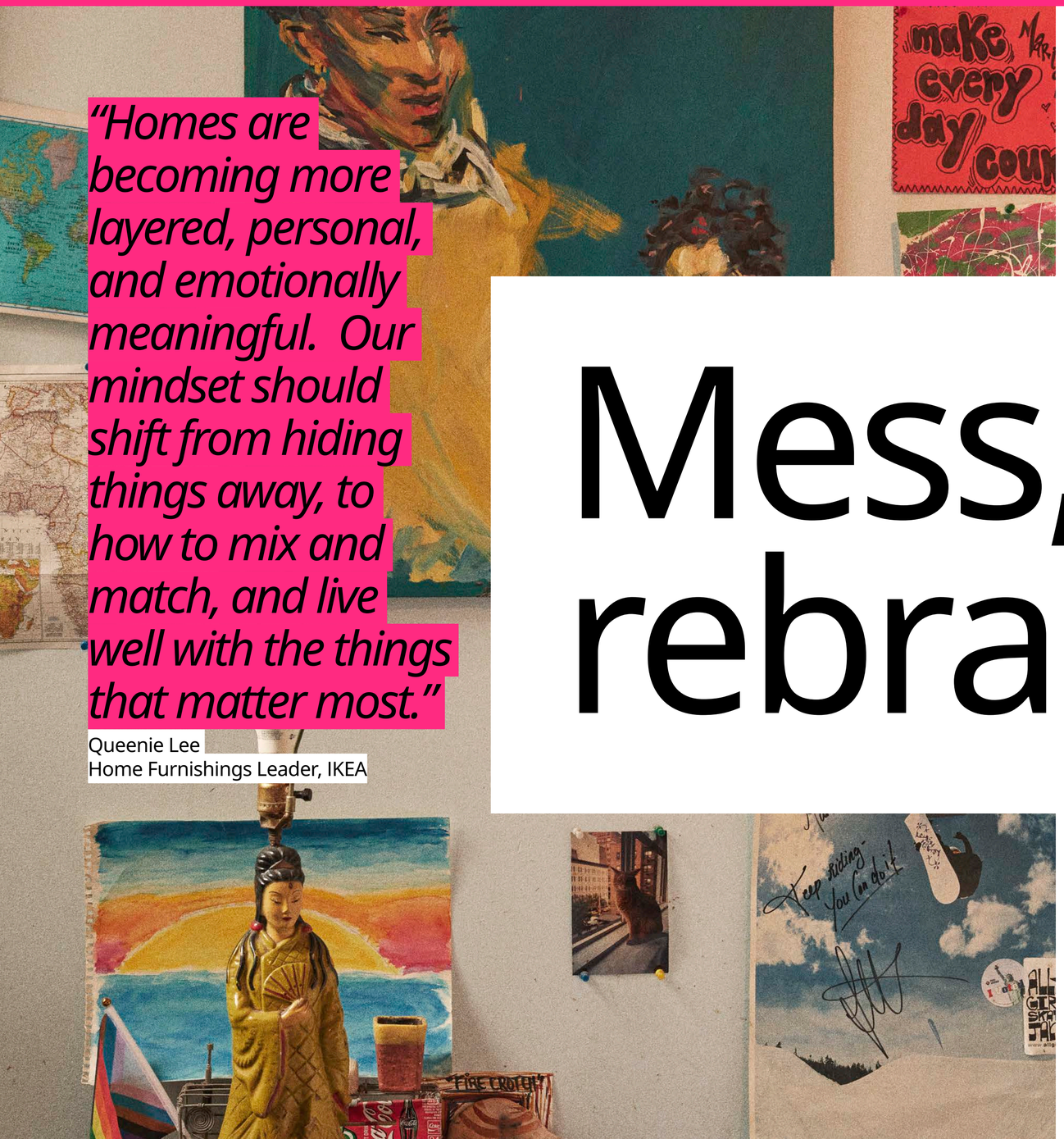
But some of us are losing our things (and presumably our minds) more than others. 11% of Gen Z spend over 30 minutes a day hunting for a charger – a full week a year, lost to one cable. And if you live in India, you’re spending 80 minutes a day on the hunt. Somewhere out there, someone’s entire morning is looking like... looking.

Give India a break

Compared to the UK, people in India spend two extra weeks a year – a whole holiday – searching for things.

The league of lost things





“Homes are becoming more layered, personal, and emotionally meaningful. Our mindset should shift from hiding things away, to how to mix and match, and live well with the things that matter most.”

Queenie Lee
Home Furnishings Leader, IKEA

Mess, rebranded

Clutter isn't always something to fix. For some, it's a way of expressing who we are.

15% believe clutter can be a positive form of creativity – although that belief swings wildly by geography (31% in China, just 4% in Japan).

In fact, many are literally overflowing with creativity, as 24% admit that if we had 20% more space, someone in the household would simply fill it. It seems that storage isn't just a solution – it's a creative opportunity.

Even the tidy ones are on board: 12% of self-described organized, clutter-free people still admit mess can be a positive expression of creativity.

And with more than 1 in 5 of us having thrown in the towel when it comes to clutter, it seems that if we can’t beat them, we’ll simply join them instead.

Looking → ahead

What if organization was designed for how we really behave?
Spaces for the “drawer of doom”, the midweek drop zone, the things we’ll deal with later.

What if clutter became something to curate, not eliminate?
Helping people proudly display what matters, while quietly storing what doesn’t.

What if we designed for emotional storage, not just physical?
Solutions that help people navigate memory, inheritance and letting go, not just where to put things.

What if the home became less about looking tidy... and more about feeling right? Where comfort, personality and practicality matter more than perfection.

With this in mind, what key takeaways are we ready to unpack?

Case (just about) closed

For years, many of us were sold an idea of a "perfect home". But homes have shrunk and lives have grown, and that fantasy is starting to look less like a goal and more like a chore nobody has time for.

Because behind every "clutter problem" is something far more human: often a memory we're not ready to let go of, a life stage we're growing into (or out of), a routine that's just a little bit chaotic. None of that is a failure. It's just life, doing what life does.

So no, we're not getting that drawer to make sense. We will still lose the charger. We will move clutter five minutes before guests arrive, forever. And that's fine, because the goal was never a perfectly organized home. It's a perfectly liveable one.

The future of storage isn't about having less, or more, stuff. It's about making more space: for life, for meaning and for all the little things in between.

Because in the end... it was never just stuff.

Make space for what you love

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