

Trust in thy neighbour - but not with your spare key

RatedPeople.com research shows Brits suspicious of snooping neighbours

LONDON, SEPTEMBER 2013 – Research from RatedPeople.com has revealed that a fear of neighbours and what they might do to our homes means that more than half (52%) of Brits would be concerned about leaving a spare key with next door as protection should they be locked out. An impressive 80% of homeowners admit that they believe it used to be easier to trust your neighbours.

The top reasons why we're less likely to leave a spare key with our neighbours include:

- Fears that we're imposing (19%)
- Believing that the neighbours pose a security risk (17%)
- Not knowing the neighbours at all (15%)
- Not trusting or liking our neighbours (10%)
- Believing the neighbours will take the opportunity to snoop in our homes (8%)

The research into the views of 1,000 homeowners, by the online trade recommendation website, found that so ingrained is the distrust of our neighbours that 2 in 3 people (66%) would prefer to leave a key with a family member, regardless of how far away they live from one another. In fact, not trusting our neighbours with spare keys could be leaving homeowners open to greater problems as 1 in 5 people (21%) leave a spare key hidden somewhere on the property in case of emergencies, potentially inviting criminal activity and invalidating their contents insurance.

However, it appears that there might be good reason for taking the precaution of hiding a key as more than 1 in 3 people (37%) have been locked out of their home, with the keys never being seen again in 30% of incidences. While a sensible 45% of people said that they wait for someone else to get home if they're locked out; just 11% said that they would call a locksmith for help, which is only slightly more than the 1 in 10 who try to climb in through a window if they find themselves stuck.

Indeed, the research suggested that many homeowners often don't think to reach out to locksmiths should the need arise. 38% of people said they wouldn't even consider calling a locksmith if they were locked outside their house, while over a quarter (26%) said they believe that hiring a locksmith would be too expensive. The concern about cost could be the reason why more than half (53%) of homeowners do not change the locks on a house when they buy a new home, making it hard to keep track on any copies made of keys.

Bill McFadyen, owner of Lockermaster 1, and member of RatedPeople.com commented:

Keep Quiet

"Don't broadcast your whereabouts. Keep the length of your trip and destination under wraps until you come back. Then you can shout about it all you want. Letting everyone know you're about a three week holiday in the Bahamas on social networking sites like Facebook or Twitter could easily attract the wrong attention and by doing so, you put your home at risk."

Be Smart

“Many people don’t feel comfortable leaving a key with their neighbour and instead choose to leave a key under a door-mat or plant pot, which invalidates their insurance policy. I would always recommend installing a security box with a spare key inside, this is a safe and secure method that will save you the time and expense of calling out an emergency locksmith.

Make Your Home Look Lived In

“An occupied home is a busy home. Things like cars move position. Light go on and off and bins go out on a set day. To give the impression that someone is living in your home whilst you’re away, invest in some timers and so that the interior lights go on in the evening. If you don’t trust your neighbour with a key, then maybe ask them to put the bins out the evening before they’re due to be collected and ask them to put them back. These simple steps could act as a deterrent to burglars, who may not want to take the risk if they think it’s possible someone might be at home.”

Keep The Garden Prim And Proper

“One of the first signs of an empty home is an untidy front garden. Whether it be long grass in the summer that desperately needs trimming or fallen leaves scattered over the lawn, messiness is a dead giveaway. The best solution is to hire a gardener to come for an hour once a week to do the job whilst you’re away. Passers-by will see someone on your property and the end result will make people think you’re in.”

Keep It Locked Up

“It seems incredibly simple, but holidaymakers often forget to check that everything, from doors to windows, shed doors to side gates are all secured and locked. If you’ve left something open then you’re inviting burglars into your home. For any entry points you think need an extra level of security, don’t be afraid to add an external lock. The added security will make you sleep a lot better when you’re away simply because you’ll know you’ve done all you could.”

Find A Locksmith You Can Trust

“If you’ve been locked out the basic locksmith fee to gain entry is about £45. This might seem expensive but it’s important to hire someone who is properly certified and has a good reputation. You should always ask to see proof of qualifications, such as a Master Locksmiths Association identification card, to validate that the person who is entering your property has been through the proper training and background checks.

Limit The Damage

“If you’re replacing your locks I’d recommend installing a non-destructive entry system, this prevents a locksmith having to destroy the lock to gain entry if you have simply locked your keys inside your property. If you’ve lost your keys however, the lock will need to be replaced as this is a security risk.”



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NOTES TO EDITORS

About RatedPeople.com

RatedPeople.com is the UK's largest trade recommendation service that connects homeowners with over 30,000 quality, local tradesmen nationwide.

Homeowners who are in need of a tradesman can post jobs for free on RatedPeople.com and receive quotes from up to three interested tradesmen.

Only homeowners who have found their tradesman through RatedPeople.com can leave ratings, so they are always based on genuine experiences from previous customers. These ratings, based on quality, value and reliability, allow other homeowners to confidently hire a tradesman they can trust.

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