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# Home and its importance in the lives of Poles

## Dom i jego znaczenie w życiu Polaków

### Abstract

*Background. Home is an extremely important place in human life. Its significance in culture is evidenced by the multitude of terms, expressions and synonyms used in Polish to describe a house. The relationship between the institution of home and people over the centuries is unquestionable. That is why it is worth looking at the issues related to the home from the perspective of social sciences.*

*Objectives. The authors drew attention to the various interpretations of the concept of home and its meaning, referring to the image of home in the eyes of Poles. The research results show what Poles associate the word home with and what it means for them from the perspective of meeting the need for security, intimacy and love. The article answers the question of whether these are the concepts that Poles associate with home, as well as family home in which they grew up.*

*Methodology. In the article, the authors present the results of the research conducted in the period of November 24–27, 2020 on a sample of 1072 respondents. The sample was selected on a quota basis, from the SW Panel web panel administered by SW Research. The survey was conducted using the CAWI (Computer-Assisted Web Interview) technique.*

*Results. Research shows that Poles associate the word home primarily with family, security, shelter and intimacy. As many as 84% of Poles surveyed indicated family as a word they associate with the concept of home.*

*For the majority (68%), the family home in which the respondents grew up is associated primarily with a safe haven. This house is associated with joy (62%) and love (63%). It is a house that respondents simply like (67%)*

*Conclusions. A home is primarily a family, it is a place that allows you to feel safe. Less frequently, Poles identify the word home only with a residential building, a place of permanent residence (34%), or symbolically with the homeland (18%). Therefore, the importance of the home from the perspective of the analysis of family life seems unquestionable. An important issue remains the fact that Poles now associate home with positive emotions, security (70%), peace and quiet (54%), and not with noise, understatement, secrecy or a lie (3%).*

*Keywords: home, family, place, space, residential building.*

## **Abstrakt**

*Tłó. Dom stanowi miejsce niezmiernie ważne w życiu człowieka. O jego znaczeniu w kulturze świadczą może wielość terminów, wyrażeń, synonimów używanych w języku polskim do opisu domu. Związek instytucji jaką jest dom z człowiekiem na przestrzeni wieków jest niekwestionowany. Dlatego warto przyrzeć się problematyce związanej z domem z perspektywy nauk społecznych.*

*Cele. Autorzy zwrócili uwagę na różnorodne interpretacje pojęcia dom oraz jego znaczenie odnosząc się do obrazu domu w oczach Polaków. Przedstawiono wyniki badań wskazujące na to, z czym słowo dom kojarzy się Polakom i jakie ma dla nich znaczenie z perspektywy realizacji potrzeby bezpieczeństwa, intymności i miłości. Artykuł odpowiada na pytanie, czy to właśnie z tymi pojęciami kojarzy się Polakom dom, a także dom rodzinny, w którym dorastali.*

*Metodyka. W artykule autorzy przedstawiają wyniki badań przeprowadzonych w okresie 24–27 listopada 2020r. na próbie 1072 respondentów. Próba została dobrana w sposób kwotowy, z panelu internetowego SW Panel administrowanego przez firmę SW Research. Sondaż został przeprowadzony przy użyciu techniki CAWI (Computer-Assisted Web Interview).*

*Wyniki. Badania pokazują że słowo dom kojarzy się Polakom przede wszystkim z rodziną, bezpieczeństwem, schronieniem i intymnością. Aż 84% badanych Polaków wskazało właśnie na rodzinę jako słowo, które kojarzą z pojęciem dom.*

*Dom rodzinny, w którym badani dorastali w większości (68%) kojarzy im się przede wszystkim właśnie z bezpieczną przystanią. To dom, który kojarzy się z radością (62%) i miłością (63%). To dom, który po prostu badani lubią (67%)*

*Wnioski. Dom to przede wszystkim rodzina, to miejsce, które pozwala poczuć się bezpiecznie. Rzadziej Polacy utożsamiają słowo dom jedynie z budynkiem mieszkalnym, miejscem stałego zamieszkania (34%), czy symbolicznie z ojczyzną (18%). Znaczenie domu z perspektywy analizy życia rodzinnego wydaje się zatem niekwestionowane. Ważną kwestią pozostaje fakt, iż dla Polaków obecnie dom kojarzy się z pozytywnymi emocjami, bezpieczeństwem (70%), ciszą i spokojem (54%), nie zaś z hałasem, niedomówieniem, tajemnicą, czy kłamstwem (3%).*

*Słowa kluczowe: dom, rodzina, miejsce, przestrzeń, budynek mieszkalny.*

## Introduction

The home plays an extremely important role in everyone's life, and "the value of the home accompanies us in every dimension of life." (Kaczor, 2012, p. 241) The importance of the home is visible not only on the linguistic level – in language we find many terms for the home, many expressions with extensive synonyms and polysemy. (Handke, 2008, p. 98) It is also visible through the frequent descriptions of the home in literature and art, as well as through the daily conversations Poles have about homes in various contexts of meaning.

This is also confirmed by another researcher of this issue A. Siciński, for whom the multilateral interest in the house may determine the social relevance of the topic (Siciński, 1992, p. 8).

Home is also an important place from the perspective of passing on to the next generations of traditions, values, norms and rules of communication necessary for the efficient functioning in society. An important issue in the sphere of upbringing and development of the youngest family members is played by the atmosphere of the home hearth, affecting the sense of security, love and acceptance. This unique atmosphere of a family home, a family atmosphere, is the basic value of a family home (Wilk, 2016, p. 69). A home can be a unique and exceptional place for the household members, its inhabitants, which allows self-expression and escape from the society (Jewdokimow, 2011, pp. 26–27).

Often, both in scientific and fiction literature, we find references to home as place that served the family to deepen and build family ties, a sense of security and acceptance, passing on tradition, patriotic symbols, family and country history (Tatarkiewicz, 2019; Podkowińska, 2017).

The aim of the article is to draw attention to the importance of home in the lives of Poles and to indicate how Poles currently perceive family home, what they associate the word home with, how they perceive their family home – is home a place for them that gives them a sense of security, joy and happiness, or maybe sadness and lack of love. In order to answer the above questions, the authors will present the results of the research conducted in November 2020 on a sample of 1,072 respondents.

## 1. The concept of home

The concept of home is an ambiguous term and can be interpreted in many ways. (Sixsmith, 1986, pp. 281–282) In the Polish dictionary, a home is defined as:

1. “a building intended for housing, workplaces, institutions, etc.[...]”
2. a flat, living room, place of permanent residence [...]
3. a family, household members; a flat with its inhabitants [...]
4. all family and domestic matters; household [...]
5. lineage, family, dynasty
6. state, social, commercial, etc. institution, usually located in a separate premises or building, in the building in which it is located; plant, enterprise
7. a place where some games start, e.g. side of the pool table” (Dictionary of the Polish language, 1988, p. 422)

In considerations about the family the home is often presented as a place for building family ties, passing on to the next generations the knowledge about the world, tradition and ancestral history. “Children at home, among their relatives, parents and siblings gain knowledge about the world around them, ways and rules of conduct and behaviour not only through observation, but also through conversations, exchange of information and knowledge that are passed on to them by their parents during the communication process” (Podkowińska, 2011, p. 73).

As A. Siciński notes, home is an institution that is characteristic of all human communities, regardless of the time in which people live. Nevertheless, social sciences still lack an unambiguous definition of this concept, as well as its refinement and clarification. And although a lot of space is devoted to social issues, homelessness, families, households, and housing policy, the category of “home” is still not very popular in the field of sociological sciences (Siciński, 1992, p. 8).

When considering issues related to the home and its place in the sphere of development and functioning of the family and its individual members with-

in the place of residence, it is worth paying attention to three basic elements that co-create this institution. Therefore, a home can be considered as a specific place, a certain social community and a certain value (Siciński, 1992, p. 8; Bartoszek, 2012, pp. 186–198).

As A. Siciński notes, a home is a specific place and the matter that marks it out. In this sense, a home is, for example, a flat with its equipment and its immediate surroundings. One can speak of the “material” face of the home. This material sense of the home is visible, for example, in the literature in the description of a specific flat, house and its furnishings. Obviously, a home understood in this way cannot be equated with a residential building, in which there may be many separate apartments in which specific families live. Living in one apartment building, a semi-detached house, different families build their own, unique family houses, with a unique atmosphere of a hearth and a unique family language that distinguishes one family from another.

The home does not have to be related to the notion of a residential building either. There are people who, when speaking about their home, mean not only the building, but also the beautiful garden surrounding this home. For other people, in different cultures and times, a home could be a hut, a trailer, or an igloo. Therefore, a house is a specific place that a person treats as his own place, calling it a home, regardless of whether it is related to a residential building or not, whether it is built of bricks, blocks, wood, snow blocks or stones.

We can also look at a home as a specific social community. From this perspective, the home appears to us as a certain social community. Household members play specific roles. In this sense, it is possible to look at home through interpersonal relationships, activities undertaken by family members, and communication styles and lifestyles (Izdebska, 2006, pp. 22, 25; Siciński, 1992, p. 8).

It is worth remembering that “the functions of the home are determined by the functions of the family (or other primary group equivalent to it). Therefore, the functions of the home must undergo changes analogous to those that take place in the family itself, changes caused in the first place by processes taking place on the social macroscale. (Rębowska, 1992, p. 141) A home is therefore a family, its members and mutual dependencies between them. However, it should be remembered that in many cases the home is not only the family, but also people who are closely related to the family – other household members, e.g. servants or close friends treated as family members. In this sense, it can be considered that the home is a broader concept than the family, as it also accommodates other household members (Izdebska, 2006, p. 135; Siciński, 1992, p. 8).

Finally, we can look at the home as a certain value – a value that allows for the realization and satisfaction of many needs, including material, social and

symbolic needs. Sometimes, when we think or speak about a home, we point to a specific space or to specific household members. In this sense, the house creates a space for personal development, allowing you to discover yourself, also in personal relationships with other household members (Drożdż, 2012, pp. 31–50).

Therefore, one can speak of the inextricable relationship between man and the institution which is the home, regardless of the times in which man has to live. After all, regardless of the cultural circle, human life is connected with home.

We can look at this home's place from the perspective of a person who perceives it as the centre of the universe. The most important place for a man is often associated with the family area, the family home, to which, even if he has left it long ago, his thoughts go back, longing for what is beloved but lost. Yi - Fu Tuan notes that “almost all human groups tend to treat their homeland as the centre of the world. People who believe that they are in the centre themselves also believe in the unique values of such a place. [...]” (Yi-Fu Tuan, 1987, p. 189) Treating the home as a building, region, country in which a person lives, in the context of a place that is the centre of the world, the centre of life, allowing the achievement of goals, needs and aspirations of a person seems to indicate the importance and value of the home. A home can be the most important place for an individual, a place that gives a sense of security. This own place on earth can be the centre of the world for man. It is the most important and, at the same time, sufficient space, although in the context of the whole world, the universe may seem like an extremely small space. The meaning of the concept of home can also be testified by the large number of synonyms of the word, sayings and proverbs that we find in our language. It is worth noting that for concepts that are of fundamental importance in a given culture, we will find many terms, concepts, expressions in a given language. In the case of the word home in Polish, we can find many different terms, synonyms, e.g. house, household, building, block, villa, segment, palace, townhouse, cottage, manor, real estate, own corner, etc. Similarly, we can list many sayings or proverbs related to home, e.g. my home is my fortress; there is no place like home; a gust in the house is God in the house; a good hostess makes a happy house, etc.

Thus, a home is an extremely important concept and can be seen as “the astronomical centre of a specific spatial system. The vertical axis connecting the sky with the underworld runs through the house. The stars seem to move around the place we live in; the house is the focus of the cosmic structure. This concept of a place should give it the highest value: it is hard to imagine that you can leave such a house.” (Yi-Fu Tuan, 1987, p. 189) However, if in the

course of his life a person is forced to leave home, he will feel a longing for this place that has been lost. And although years later it may turn out that the abandoned house is not the same place that has been retained in memory, it may constitute an image to which people will think back in the future. Such lost places remain in the mind of man, and references to such houses can be found in literature and art.

Both in European and Polish culture in detail, the memory of home is still relatively alive, but it is gradually becoming blurred. The drama of losing it proves how significant this value is. The protagonist of the Iliad, Odysseus or the biblical Prodigal Son are examples of enormous longing for home, to which they long for and return. Soplicowo in the epic of Adam Mickiewicz becomes a bastion of patriotism, and Maria Konopnicka in “The song about home” asks the question about the value of the home in its almost eschatological dimension (Duda, 2011, pp. 76–77).

Tadeusz Śliwiak draws attention to this longing for home, the lost family home, the home that has been portrayed in his poem “Home”. Many changes that affect a person in his life – changes related directly to him, but also to his place of residence and stay, sometimes after many years it is impossible to find or recognize a place so dear to the heart, which is the family home. It is this “lost home” that Tadeusz Śliwiak writes about, a fragment of the poem below

„Przyszedłem dom zobaczyć  
 Nie powiem nikomu  
 że byłem nie zastałem  
 nie ma w domu w domu”

(“I came to see the house, I will not tell anyone that I was there and did not find it, there is no home at home”).

People miss their family home when they associate this place with a sense of security, joy, warmth and love. It remains interesting, therefore, whether for Poles the home appears to be a place associated with what is good, warm, positive – and therefore with love, a sense of security and intimacy.

The ubiquitous processes of globalization and the technicization of life have an impact on the reference to home, which becomes merely an instrumental commodity. Even recent houses that invite you inside give way to the deepening processes of distancing people from each other. Until recently, living in the countryside, today they become people with a different way of thinking and different attitudes: they live more and more not “with each other”, but “next to each other” (Flasza, 2008, p. 12 nn).

## 2. The image of the house in the opinions of the Poles

Home is a place where a person grows up and learns to function in society. It is a place that should be associated with safety, a sense of acceptance and the warmth of a home. Relating the concept of home to family, it can be said that it is an environment in which both children and adults can have their needs met. (Kardis, Balogová, 2017, p. 168) It is a place that is inextricably linked with human life, the realization of his goals and needs. On the other hand, “a person without a roof over their head cannot satisfy their essential needs.” (Balogová, Jašková, Sabolová Fabianová, 2021, p. 23) The results of the research presented below make it possible to answer the question whether such needs as the need for security are satisfied by owning a house and what do Poles associate a home with? Is it a sense of security, intimacy? Is the family home for Poles a home full of love and joy, or a home full of sadness and understatement? The main aim of the research was to answer the question of how Poles perceive home and what do Poles associate with the concept of home?

In order to answer the above questions, the authors present the results of the research conducted in the period of November 24–27, 2020. The survey was conducted using the CAWI technique (Computer-Assisted Web Interview) on a sample of 1,072 respondents. The sample was selected on a quota basis, from the SW Panel web panel administered by SW Research.<sup>1</sup> (Table 1)

Table 1 Profile characteristics:

<b>Gender</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Male	515	48
Female	557	52
<b>Age</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
18-29	339	32
30-39	274	26
40-49	197	18
50-59	156	15
60+	106	10
<b>Voivodeship</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>

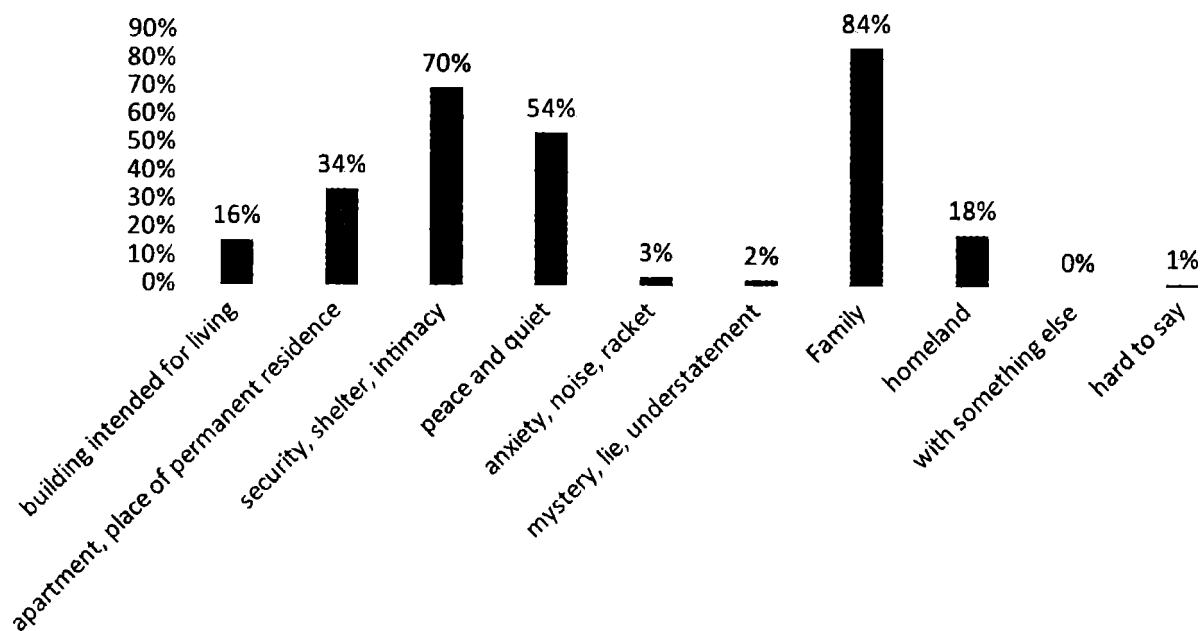
<sup>1</sup> The research results presented in the article were conducted under the supervision of Dr hab. Monika Podkowińska, prof. SGGW and were financed under the Support System for Scientists and Research Teams of SGGW.

Lower Silesia	77	7,18
Kuyavia-Pomerania	58	5,41
Lublin	74	6,9
Lubusz	16	1,49
Lodz	74	6,9
Lesser Poland	95	8,9
Mazovia	157	14,6
Opole	35	3,26
Subcarpathia	64	6
Podlasie	34	3,17
Pomerania	59	5,5
Silesia	128	12
Holy Cross	31	2,89
Warmia and Masuria	28	2,6
Greater Poland	102	9,5
West Pomerania	40	3,7
<b>Place of residence</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Village	379	35
City of up to 19,999	121	11
City of 20,000 -99,999	221	21
City of 100,000 -499,999	209	19
City o over 500 000	142	13
<b>Education</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Primary	13	1
Middle school	36	3
Basic vocational	93	9
Secondary	535	50
Higher undergrad- uate	127	12
Higher master's	261	24
Doctorate	7	1

Stan cywilny	N	%
Single	429	40
Married	558	52
Divorced	64	6
Widower/widow	21	2

An important issue is how Poles interpret the word home and what they associate this word with. A home is primarily a family and a place that gives you a sense of security. When asked what the word home is primarily associated with, as many as 84% of respondents indicated family, and 70% security, shelter and intimacy, peace and quiet. More than half of the respondents (54%) indicated peace and quiet.

Chart 1. What do you primarily associate the word home with?



\*Possibility to choose up to 3 answers

Table 2 What do you primarily associate the word home with? (more than one correct answer)

Answer	Number of responses =3012 N=1072	Share in the number of responses (%)	Participation in the number of N (%) (answers do not add up to 100%)
Building intended for living	175	5,8	16
Apartment, place of permanent	362	12	34
Security, shelter, intimacy	746	24,8	69
Peace and quiet	574	19	53
Anxiety, noise, racket	27	0,89	3
Mystery, lie, understatement	24	0,7	2
Family	896	30	83
Homeland	196	6,5	18
With something else	3	0,01	0,27
Hard to say	9	0,3	0,83

Table 3 Descriptive statistics for the gender category (more than one correct answer)

What do you primarily associate the word home with?	Number of responses =3012 N=1072		Participation in the number of responses (%)		Participation in the number of N (%) (answers do not add up to 100%)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Building intended for living	94	81	3,12	2,69	8,76	7,24
Apartment, place of permanent	183	179	6,07	5,94	17	17

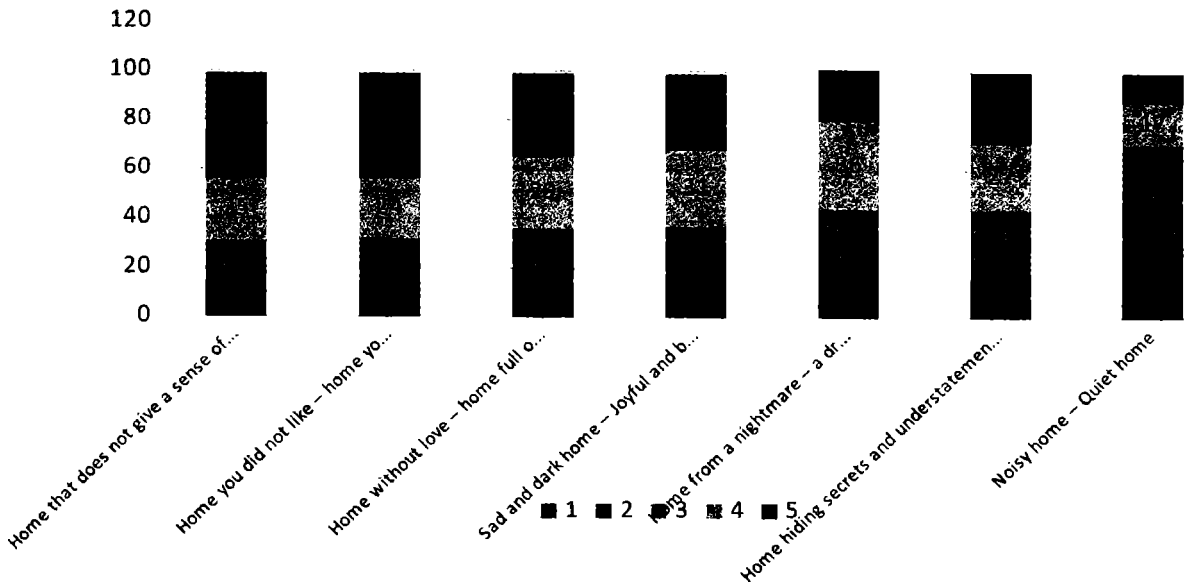
Security, shelter, intimacy	331	415	11	13,8	30,8	38,7
Peace and quiet	263	311	8,7	10,32	24,5	29
Anxiety, noise, racket	14	13	0,46	0,43	1,6	1,4
Mystery, lie, understatement	15	9	0,49	0,3	1,2	0,8
Family	417	479	13,8	16	39	44
Homeland	117	79	3,88	2,62	11	7
With something else	1	2	0,03	0,06	0,09	0,18
Hard to say	5	4	0,16	0,13	0,46	0,37

Therefore, most Poles associate home with family, security and intimacy. It is a place where you can find peace and quiet, and therefore a place where you can relax after the hardships of everyday life. This is confirmed by the answers to the next question indicating how Poles define and describe home in which they grew up in. For most Poles, the home in which they grew up is primarily a home that gives a sense of security, i.e. a home that is a safe haven (68%) and a home that most Poles like (67%). Most Poles also describe the family home as a home full of love (63%), a joyful and bright home (62%). More than half of the respondents indicate the home they grew up in as a dream home (57%) and an honest and open home (56%).

It is worth noting that Poles do not associate home with anxiety, noise, lie or understatement, only 3% and 2% of respondents, respectively, indicated this type of associations. Poles also rarely associate home with a building intended for living (16%), although slightly more people associate home with an apartment as a place of permanent residence (34%). Interestingly, only 18% of respondents associate the word home with their homeland. A symbolic view of home from the perspective of the homeland is not frequent.

Taking into account gender, it is worth noting that among people who associate the word home with homeland, there are more men than women. Similarly, when looking at a home as a building intended for living, slightly more men than women indicated this association. On the other hand, women more often identify the word home with security, shelter, intimacy.

Chart 2 Using the scale from one to five, please specify home in which you grew up and were brought up



\*Data in percentage

Table 4 Using the scale from one to five, please specify home in which you grew up and were brought up - Home without love | Home full of love

N=1072 (of which on a scale of 1 to 5 1=57, 2=89, 3=250, 4=311, 5=365)	Mean	Median	Standard deviation	Variance	Minimum	Maximum
		3,78	3	1,157	1,338	1

Table 5 Using the scale from one to five, please specify home in which you grew up and were brought up - Home that does not give a sense of security | Home that is safe haven

N=1072 (of which on a scale of 1 to 5 1=63, 2=88, 3=187, 4=270, 5=464)	Mean	Median	Standard deviation	Variance	Minimum	Maximum
		3,92	3	1,208	1,459	1

Table 6 Using the scale from one to five, please specify home in which you grew up and were brought up – Home hiding secrets and understatements/ Honest and open home

N=1072 (of which on a scale of 1 to 5 1=65, 2=127, 3=277, 4=291, 5=312)	Mean	Median	Standard deviation	Variance	Minimum	Maximum
		3,61	3	1,192	1,421	1

Table 7 Using the scale from one to five, please specify home in which you grew up and were brought up – Sad and dark home/ Joyful and bright home

N=1072 (of which on a scale of 1 to 5 1=56, 2=86, 3=258, 4=337, 5=335)	Mean	Median	Standard deviation	Variance	Minimum	Maximum
		3,75	3	1,134	1,285	1

Table 8 Using the scale from one to five, please specify home in which you grew up and were brought up – Noisy home | Quiet home

N=707 (of which on a scale of 1 to 5 1=92, 2=94, 3=215, 4=119, 5=157)	Mean	Median	Standard deviation	Variance	Minimum	Maximum
		2,97	3	1,165	1,357	1

Table 9 Using the scale from one to five, please specify home in which you grew up and were brought up – Home you did not like| Home you liked

N=677 (of which on a scale of 1 to 5 1=27, 2=22, 3=86, 4=184, 5=358)	Mean	Median	Standard deviation	Variance	Minimum	Maximum
		3,92	3	1,201	1,443	1

Table 10 Using the scale from one to five, please specify home in which you grew up and were brought up – Home from a nightmare/ A dream home

N=677 (of which on a scale of 1 to 5 1=32, 2=25, 3=143, 4=265, 5=212)	Mean	Median	Standard deviation	Variance	Minimum	Maximum
	3,61	3	1,051	1,105	1	5

## Summary

Home is an extremely broad concept in the sphere of interpretation of its meaning. “The home is a concept with many different connotations.” (Gram-Hanssen, Darby, 2018, p. 95) This concept is interpreted in various ways, but despite so many meanings attached to this term, home is a place often described in fiction. Many references to home can also be found in popular science and scientific literature. The relationship between man and home is undeniable.

Despite such various interpretations, it should be noted that Poles associate home primarily with family and positive feelings – with what is safe, i.e. with security, intimacy, shelter, peace and quiet.

National research shows that a home for teenagers is a place where they feel happy and understood (<https://brpd.gov.pl/2021/10/25/wyniki-badan-naukowych-w-polskiej-rodzynie-jest-milosc-ale-brakuje-czasu/>).

Much less often, this word is associated only with walls, a building, a place of permanent residence. Home is created by people, so it does not seem surprising that it is the people, relatives, and families that most Poles associate with the word home. It should also be noted that home is associated with the positive and good and evoking positive feelings.

Words evoking negative associations, negative emotions, such as anxiety, noise, racket, understatement, lies, secrecy are less often identified with the word home. This is confirmed by the results of CBOS research, which indicate that negative associations related to the term home appeared in the answers of the respondents sporadically – less than 1% (CBOS, 1998; Mariański, 2021, pp. 40–641).

It can also be indicated that the family home in which Poles grew up is a home that the vast majority have good memories of. It is a home that evokes positive emotions. It is a home that for the Poles was – and that’s how they describe it – as a home that is a safe haven. For most people, home is a place they like. Poles asso-

ciate the family home with words evoking positive associations. The vast majority describe the home as a joyful, bright, loving place, but also as a dream-like, honest and open home. Therefore, one can risk a statement that for most Poles, the family home is a good home, to which one gladly returns in their thoughts and which evokes positive emotions. However, it should also be emphasized that slightly more than a third of Poles associate a family home with a home devoid of life, a sad and dark home.

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