

Data Sheet 1

20 April 2015



Is being able to entertain guests at home important to apartment dwellers?

Australia's housing stock has traditionally been dominated by single detached houses. In the 2006 census data it is recorded that detached dwellings constituted 74% of all Australian homes. With continued population growth and the restriction of the urban growth boundary, this dominance of the detached house will continue to be reduced by the increased construction of higher density options. As Australia becomes increasingly urban it will be imperative that our new higher density building stock meets the needs and wants of the community. High quality design will be crucial to this process.

Our Hypothesis

It is common argument put forward that due to apartment buildings being typically located near centres of urban activity, apartment dwellers do not want or require substantial living or kitchen spaces. This argument suggests that apartment residents would instead prefer to entertain guests in restaurants, pubs, cafes or public spaces. The hypothesis being tested in this study was that being able to entertain guests at home is as important to apartment dwellers as it is to those who live in detached houses.

Our Method

The Rate My Building project website was launched on the 7th of October 2014. Within this website participants are invited to undertake a 5 minute survey to self-evaluate their building. Four surveys for four different building types were initially made available. Within the Rate My Apartment and the Rate My House surveys the following question was asked.

How important to your lifestyle is being able to entertain guests in your home?

The data was then sent to an independent mathematician to analyse and review.

Survey Participants

Survey respondents were encouraged to participate via social media and via promotion on other websites.

There was sufficient data, despite the moderate sample size of 217 responses, for the independent mathematician to be highly confident that the two separate groups, house dwellers and apartment dwellers, were statistically no different in their response to this question.

We can point to the diversity of the responses as an indication of it being representative of the greater population. Responses were received from postcodes in the ACT, New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, and Western Australia. The most common postcodes were in Victoria. Within the apartment survey, there was generally a diverse spread of apartment types in the responses both in terms of number of bedrooms and in the estimated age of the building.

A limiting factor in this test however was the low number of respondents living in studio apartments.

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| Apartment breakdown by type | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Studio | 2.3% | 2 |
| 1 Bedroom | 37.2% | 32 |
| 2 Bedrooms | 47.7% | 41 |
| 3 Bedrooms | 11.6% | 10 |
| 4 or More | 1.2% | 1 |

Survey Responses

| | Not important (1) | Below average (2) | Average importance (3) | Above Average (4) | Very important (5) | Total responses | Average value |
|------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Apartments | 3 | 6 | 22 | 28 | 21 | 80 | 3.73 |
| Houses | 7 | 11 | 46 | 42 | 31 | 137 | 3.58 |

| | Not important (1) | Below average (2) | Average importance (3) | Above Average (4) | Very important (5) | Total responses | Average value |
|------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Apartments | 3.8% | 7.5% | 27.5% | 35.0% | 26.3% | 80 | 3.73 |
| Houses | 5.1% | 8.0% | 33.6% | 30.7% | 22.6% | 137 | 3.58 |

Conclusion

Is being able to entertain guests at home important to apartment dwellers?

Yes this research confirms the hypothesis that being able to entertain guests at home is as important to apartment dwellers as it is to those who live in detached houses.

A Chi Square test was undertaken on the data which determined to a 95% confidence level that people living in houses and people living in apartments think the same way about entertaining guests in their home. Note this result may or may not apply to people living in studio apartments. More research would need to be undertaken to verify for this apartment type.

What does this mean for the design of apartment buildings in Australia?

This research shows that people living within Australian apartments consider entertaining guests in their home is no less important to them than those living in detached houses. This has important ramifications for developers who commission apartments, architects who design them and councils who approve them. Whilst the free market may apply significant pressure on the reduction of apartment sizes, Australians will not be satisfied with apartments where the kitchen and living spaces are so small that they cannot accommodate guests. As architects we would contend that best practice would allow for at least 6 people to occupy the living spaces within an apartment dwelling whilst also offering a communal entertaining area available for larger gatherings. This research also gives significant weight to the argument for minimum apartment standards to safeguard living standards in apartments.

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