

NB: This is not a word for word transcript

Jennifer: Hello and welcome to 6 Minute English from bbclearningenglish.com. My name is Jennifer and with me in the studio is Neil. Welcome, Neil!

Neil: Hi there Jen. In this programme, we take a look at a topic in the news and learn some new vocabulary and phrases from it.

Jennifer: In this programme, we're talking about the growing number of people living in very tiny places. How big is your house, Neil? I bet you live in a castle!

Neil: I wish! No, I live in a small, two-bedroom flat, which is not big enough because there are four of us in it! How about you, Jen?

Jen: Well, my house is very small indeed, but I do feel grateful to have it, particularly as Britain is experiencing **a housing crisis** at the moment.

Neil: There's a shortage of houses in Britain and this has meant that the price of houses has become very expensive.

Jennifer: The prices have become so expensive that people can't afford to buy their own home. A popular way to describe buying your first home in English is **'to get a foot on the property ladder'**.

Neil: Even if you can afford to buy your own home, you might find that your money doesn't buy very much. Research out this week has revealed that the UK has some of the smallest properties in Europe.

Jennifer: I'm glad you mentioned that, Neil, as it reminds me: I haven't asked you the quiz question yet!

One European country has new homes which are, on average, almost 80% bigger than the homes in Britain. Is it:

- a) Ireland
- b) The Netherlands
- c) Denmark

Neil: I don't really know and I'm going to guess that it's b) the Netherlands.

Jennifer: Well, we will find out if you are right at the end of the programme. So, we know that there is a housing crisis in Britain, and we also know that many of the new houses which are **on the market**, or for sale, are very small. A typical one-bedroom home in Britain is just 46m².

Neil: That is tiny! You could say 'you wouldn't have **room to swing a cat**': now don't take that phrase literally; it simply means that a room is very small.

Jennifer: The people building the houses are trying to meet the demand for properties, so they are building houses with two or three bedrooms, but those rooms are much smaller than anywhere else in Europe.

Neil: And that's an interesting difference between Britain and the rest of Europe. Here in the UK, houses are sold according to the number of bedrooms they have. Elsewhere, people pay more attention to the measurement of the floor space.

Jennifer: You're right, Neil. The number of bedrooms you have in your house is very important to many people in Britain. Now, according to research from the Royal Institute of British Architects, lack of space is the most common cause of dissatisfaction that people have in relation to their homes and it can be really frustrating.

Neil: Yes, especially if you have a lot of belongings and kids **to squeeze** into a small space! So what can you do to make a small space more habitable, or easy to live in?

Jennifer: Well, the design of your house can make a difference. If you have a **minimalist** approach it can make your house feel bigger. Listen to this clip from BBC correspondent Jennifer Pak. She describes a man in Hong Kong who has transformed his small living space to make it multifunctional...

BBC correspondent, Jennifer Pak:

Architect Gary Chang lives alone. He has created a walk-in closet, with the help of sliding walls. This apartment is only 30m², but, using tracks on the ceiling and wheels, Mr Chang can transform it into a linen closet, a bathroom, and even a full-size kitchen behind the television set. But the renovation cost as much as the flat itself, so for other homes in the territory, it's a constant battle against clutter.

Jennifer: So Mr Chang has modified, or changed, his tiny apartment using sliding walls. That's great if you've got the skills to do that, but lots of people won't be able to.

Neil: As we heard in the report, other people have a real battle against clutter. If you **de-clutter** your house, you get rid of lots of things that you don't need, like ornaments, books or CDs.

Jennifer: It's not so bad nowadays – you can store all of your music and books digitally, which does save a lot of space.

Neil: Many people who live in small places will buy gadgets which save space and make their lives easier. Here's Jennifer Pak again, describing a multifunctional cooking gadget:

BBC correspondent, Jennifer Pak:

Maple Ma likes to make food. This pot can grill, bake, fry and steam using a halogen lamp to cook. It replaces her oven, microwave and stove. The Hong Kong company that

makes this pot, German Pool, says its best sellers are gadgets that perform multiple functions.

Neil: An oven, microwave and stove, all in one! That's really handy for small spaces.

Jennifer: Now, we've heard a lot about small homes in Britain, it's time to go back to our quiz question from earlier. I asked you which European country's homes are almost 80% bigger than those in the UK.

- a) Ireland
- b) The Netherlands
- c) Denmark

Neil: And I said b) the Netherlands...

Jennifer: And you were wrong! It's homes in Denmark which are, on average, 80% bigger than those in the UK. Homes in the Netherlands are 53% bigger and in Ireland they're 15% bigger.

Neil: So, all in all, living space is pretty small here in the UK.

Jennifer: Yes, if you want more space, you'll have to move abroad. We're almost out of time now, so Neil, could you remind us of some of the words and phrases we've heard today?

Neil: Yes. They were:

housing crisis

to get a foot on the property ladder

on the market

room to swing a cat

to squeeze

minimalist

de-clutter

Jennifer: Do join us again for another edition of 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English. Bye for now!

Neil: Goodbye!

Vocabulary and definitions

housing crisis	shortage of houses / high prices of houses available to buy
to get a foot on the property ladder	to buy your first house
on the market	available to buy
room to swing a cat	lots of space
to squeeze	here: to push into a small space
minimalist	having no more than what is necessary
de-clutter	get rid of things you don't want or need

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