

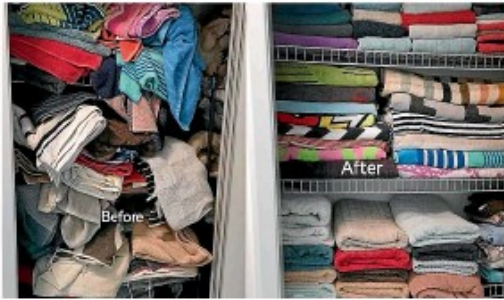
- House cleaning

How to eliminate nearly half your housework

The more things you have, the more you have to clean, organise and manage, explains Sharon Stephenson.

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Want to eliminate up to 40% of your housework? The experts say having less stuff will do it.



What does your home say about you? That you covered yourself in glue and sprinted through a shopping mall? Or that you are a serene being who prizes order and minimalism above all else? Most likely, you are somewhere in the middle.

Wherever you sit on the clutter spectrum, you might be interested in a 2022 global survey where 94% of respondents admitted that a clutterfree home was important to them.

The survey, conducted by US company Organise My House, also showed that 69% confessed to having an issue with clutter.

Kiwi households were included in the survey, which looked at how much “stuff” people have in their homes and how often they declutter.

Not surprisingly, a whopping 99% of people reported feeling better after decluttering.

But clearing the mess isn't just about having a tidy, Insta-ready interior. Numerous studies show the correlation between disorganisation and clutter and mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression and stress.

“Our brains like order,” reports psychologist Kristi Phillips.

“And we know that having less stimuli around us helps promote relaxation, improves mood, increases self-worth and increases productivity.”

Another statistic: in 2019, the US National Soap and Detergent Association ran a study which found that getting rid of clutter eliminates 40% of housework in the average home.

So, better mental health and less housework in one go.

“Why wouldn't you get rid of all that stuff then,” asks Siobhan Reilly. The Auckland-based professional organiser/founder of Spruce knows a thing or two about decluttering, having run her home organisational business for three years.

“You don't have to go all Marie Kondo on your space and have the kind of home where guests feel uncomfortable in case they mess it up,” she says. “But it is important to recognise that everything you bring into your home takes up some of your time, energy and space. The more things you have, the more you have to clean, organise and manage.”

Having a strong mental game is key to decluttering, Reilly believes. “It is about choosing your time wisely when you feel energised and excited for change and keeping in mind all the benefits that will come with the process, such as an easier home to tidy and maintain, less stress and having everything in its place.”

One of Reilly's key decluttering hacks is to be honest about your style as that will help to decide what to keep and what to throw.

“Knowing your specific tastes and the colour scheme for your home and wardrobe will massively help your decision-making. Picture your desires and anything that does not fit gets the boot.” We are not going to lie, decluttering your home can be overwhelming. So overwhelming in fact that we either don’t start or give up. The trick to staying on track, says Reilly, is to tackle one room at a time.

“And have a plan for each room, whether that is starting in the centre and working your way out or focusing on half of the room at a time. That way you will more clearly see the progress you are making.”

One quick and foolproof way to make your home look less cluttered is to clear everything from flat surfaces such as kitchen counters, the dining table and bedside tables.

“Put everything on the floor and only add back the essentials.

“Then, corral the rest in drawers or clear storage bins, hang them from hooks or stick them in baskets, which can be a declutterer’s best friend.”

Making the most of under-utilised storage spaces can also be a oneway ticket to tidiness, such as under the bed, behind doors, under stairways and above headboards where shelves or built-in drawers can be added to help manage the clutter.

Once you have made headway, Reilly suggests keeping on top of it by doing things such as making your bed every day and spending 10 or 15 minutes each night doing a quick tidy-up.