

DIY: Whodunit?

Who's doing the do-it-yourself home improvements? Here's what Arbitron, a major news service, recently revealed:

According to a recent study by Scarborough Research, an average of 49 percent of adults in 75 cities nationwide made some type of home improvements in the past 12 months. The survey results indicate that consumers in smaller markets may be more likely to spend money on home improvements than their big-city counterparts.

Ranking number one among the cities surveyed is Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, where well over half (59 percent) of the residents started a home improvement project in the past year. Following closely on the lead of Harrisburg residents, 56 percent of consumers in Buffalo, New York, and Toledo, Ohio began a home improvement project.

Other cities that hammered and nailed their way into the top 10 include Detroit; Flint, Michigan; Atlanta; Syracuse, New York; Rochester, New York; Indianapolis and Cincinnati. Over half (55 percent) the residents in each of these markets have begun or finished a home improvement project.

Meanwhile, consumers in Honolulu were the least likely to get involved in a home improvement project, with only 37 percent enhancing their homes in the past year, ranking their city number 75 among those in the survey. Other large metropolitan cities whose residents performed less than average improvements on their homes include Fresno, California (40 percent); Las Vegas (40 percent); New York (48 percent); Chicago (46 percent); Miami (45 percent); Los Angeles (44 percent); Washington, D.C. (44 percent); San Francisco (43 percent); and San Diego (42 percent).

"These findings indicate that some exceptional opportunities exist for home service advertisers who want to reach highly motivated consumers that are planning to make home improvement purchases," said Alisa Joseph, vice president, director of Sales, Advertiser Marketing Services, Arbitron Inc./Scarborough Research. "Scarborough is one of the few sources that empowers advertisers to examine specific local-market purchasing behaviors so they can move beyond preconceived notions and spot opportunities that may be less-than-obvious."

The study also concluded that certain types of home improvements were more popular than others. Twenty five percent of consumers had the interiors of their homes painted or wallpapered, or got landscaping work done. In contrast, only two percent had a home security system installed and a scant one percent added a pool or spa to their homes.

In spite of the popularity of smaller home improvement projects, consumers are increasingly willing to spend more to make their homes look and feel better. More than a third (36 percent) of those who become involved in home improvement projects spent over \$3,000, compared to about 30 percent in 1999.

Forty-six percent of the people who began home improvement projects are between the ages of 35 and 54. Close to two thirds (63 percent) are married and 55 percent have household incomes of more than \$50,000 per year.

Other findings from the Scarborough Research study are:

* Consumers who listen to '70s Oldies/Classic Hits, New Country and All Sports radio formats are 14 percent more likely than others to have home improvements done.

* Internet users are more inclined to improve their homes. For example, those who have spent \$1,000 or more online are 19 percent more likely than the norm to initiate home improvement projects. Additionally, consumers who use the Internet to purchase through an auction site, access automobile information or seek financial information/services are between 18 and 20 percent more likely than average to enhance their homes.

* More than half (53 percent) of consumers remodeled their kitchens themselves while only four percent actually hired someone else to do the work for them. Further do-it-yourself home improvements include interior paint or wallpapering (78 percent), landscaping (76 percent) and remodeled bathrooms (61 percent). The home improvements that rank highest among professional labor include installing a home security system (81 percent), heating or air conditioning (76 percent) and carpeting and floor covering (63 percent).