70% of Americans Say Outdoor Space Matters More Than Two Years Ago, Study Finds

New research finds 87% would feel exposed without a barrier between their yard and the property next door, while 44% worry their neighbors may be watching.



DeerBusters research finds 87% of Americans would feel exposed without fencing or natural barriers between their yard and neighboring properties.

WAYNESBORO, PA, UNITED STATES, September 15, 2026 / EINPresswire.com/ -- The American backyard has stopped being the space attached to the house and started being part of it. People are relaxing there, hosting there, gardening, exercising, and raising kids and pets there — and as those uses expand, so does the expectation that they stay out of view. A new survey from DeerBusters finds that 70% of Americans with access to outdoor space say the area around their home matters more to them than it did two years ago, with 43% calling it much more important — a figure that rises to 51% among Generation Z.

The survey of 1,000 U.S. adults examined backyard privacy, neighbor relationships, property boundaries, fencing preferences, security concerns, and how economic uncertainty is shaping the way people protect their homes. The findings suggest privacy has become a precondition for using outdoor space at all: 87% say they would feel exposed without fencing, trees, hedges, or another barrier between their property and the homes next door.

Privacy Is About Ordinary Activities, Not Secrecy

Almost no one is seeking seclusion because something unusual is happening back there. They want to do ordinary things without an audience — and when they can't, they use the yard less. Privacy matters most in the quietest moments, with 54% naming it essential while relaxing outdoors and 41% wanting personal conversations to stay personal. It matters when the yard fills up, too: 42% cited hosting friends or family. From there the list runs straight through daily

life — 34% want privacy while exercising, 33% while letting pets roam, and 29% while gardening or working on yard projects, with 28% each naming children playing and music outdoors, and 23% pointing to swimming or using a hot tub. Only 14% say they are comfortable doing all of those things in plain view of their neighbors.

"What stands out is that privacy is not really about avoiding neighbors," said Mark Dayhoff, chief operating officer of Trident Enterprises International, the parent company of DeerBusters. "It is about giving people greater control over how they use their own property — whether they are spending time with family, caring for pets, gardening, or simply relaxing outdoors."

What People Actually Want a Fence to Do

Blocking the view turns out to be the least of it. More than half of respondents (55%) said they would be open to installing new fencing to feel safer and more secure at home, and the reasons they gave run heavily toward protection rather than seclusion. The most common is keeping children or pets safely contained, named by 47% — the same share that pointed to tall, solid privacy fences as providing the strongest sense of privacy and security. Another 29% said a fence clearly defines their property boundaries, 24% said it keeps wildlife out, and 20% said it protects landscaping or garden projects. Financial and social returns follow: 21% cited increased property value, while 16% each said fencing reduces tension over property lines and improves curb appeal.

"People do not call us because they want a wall," Dayhoff said. "They call because the dog keeps getting out, or the deer got into the hostas again, or they are tired of guessing where their property actually ends. A good barrier tends to solve three problems at once, and that is usually what finally gets it built."

Americans Like Their Neighbors and Still Want a Boundary

The desire for separation isn't a symptom of bad neighbors. Forty-three percent say they like the people living nearby and 18% say they love them, with another 30% neutral — only 7% merely tolerate their neighbors and 3% dislike them. Yet 44% still worry at least sometimes that those same neighbors may be watching them outside, and one in five, 20%, have had a disagreement involving property lines, fencing, or yard boundaries.

"Good fences and good neighbors are not opposites," Dayhoff said. "Most of the friction we hear about is not personal. It is two families guessing at the same property line. Once that line is clear, everybody relaxes a little."

A Fence Reads as Peaceful, Not Standoffish

Homeowners who hesitate over how a new fence will land appear to be overestimating the risk. Thirty-eight percent say tall, fully enclosed fences make a home feel peaceful and private and

24% say they make a property feel safer, while just 7% say fencing makes a home feel unwelcoming and 5% think it suggests the resident is hiding something. What actually drives curb appeal is upkeep: 77% say a well-maintained lawn makes a home feel welcoming and 72% say the same of seasonal or friendly decorations. This may reflect that neighbors read maintenance as the social signal and enclosure as a neutral one.

Economic Pressure Is Reshaping What Gets Protected

Most people push ahead regardless of what the neighbors think — 56% say those concerns have not stopped them from adding privacy or security features, though 16% have skipped a tall or solid fence and 15% have avoided security cameras or a video doorbell over how it might be received.

Money weighs heavier. More than half, 54%, say inflation or financial uncertainty has made them more concerned about protecting their home or outdoor space, including 21% who are much more concerned and 33% somewhat more concerned. That pressure lands unevenly by generation: 68% of Gen Z report heightened concern, more than 20 points above Gen X at 46%, with Millennials and Baby Boomers even at 50%.

"When budgets tighten, people get practical," Dayhoff said. "They are not looking for a project. They want the one improvement that keeps the kids and the dog in, keeps the deer out of the vegetables, and settles the property line for good."

Taken together, the data points to a backyard that has been quietly promoted. It is a room now, with the privacy expectations that come with one — and Americans are treating fencing and landscaping as the walls.

Key Takeaways

• 70% say their outdoor space is more important than it was two years ago; 51% of Gen Z call it much more important.
• 87% would feel exposed without fencing, trees, hedges, or another barrier between their yard and neighboring properties.
• Only 14% are comfortable doing everyday backyard activities in plain view of neighbors.
• 55% would be open to installing new fencing to feel safer and more secure at home.
• 44% worry at least sometimes that neighbors may be watching them outside; 20% have had a disagreement over property lines, fencing, or yard boundaries.
• 54% say inflation and economic uncertainty have increased concerns about protecting their home or outdoor space, rising to 68% among Gen Z.

View the full study here:
https://deerbusters.com/blog-and-tips/backyard-property-privacy-study

About

DeerBusters is a leading provider of deer fencing and wildlife exclusion solutions designed to help homeowners, gardeners, and property managers protect their outdoor spaces. The company offers fencing systems, garden protection products, and resources that help customers prevent damage from deer and other wildlife while maintaining safe and functional landscapes.

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