

Panoramic Views Or Open Spaces



These days it is becoming increasingly popular to open up the back of our homes to our gardens with either Sliding Patio Doors or Folding Sliding Doors, but which is the best option for you?

Bi-folds Vs Patios

In the 80's literally everyone was installing large sliding patio doors into the backs of their houses. Large doors that opened up onto a clean finished paved patio or beautiful landscape garden. These days with the help of promotion from television programs such as Grand Designs and The Home Show, Folding Sliding Doors, often called Bi-folding Doors, have become increasingly popular. These are two very different products and there are many pros and cons to each of them. Many people find it difficult to get all the right facts, in order to make an educated decision and choose between them. We at [Duration Windows](#) have over 25 years experience in the industry and have written this impartial guide to help you make up your own mind up.

How Much Do They Cost?

One of peoples main concerns is the price. And most people believe that Bi-folding Doors are the more expensive of the two. For the most part this is a fair assumption, however the price variance throughout the industry is vast and in terms of the amount you can pay for either.... the sky's the limit. You will also need to consider that there are large price variances between different materials. Do you want PVC, Wood or [Aluminium](#)? A lot of peoples decisions are dictated by their architects, builders or the salesman that had the best sales pitch, but when making the decision to spend your hard earned cash, you should always make sure you do the research. You wouldn't buy a car without first going to see it. So spend the time, do the research and visit showrooms.

Folding Sliding Doors

[Bifold doors](#) bring the outside in and literally transform your property into a functional and open space for living, working and entertaining. Bi-folding doors are an impressive and aesthetically pleasing alternative to sliding patio doors and many people believe that the extra cost is well worth while. The main draw of folding sliding doors is that they create around a 90% clear opening when all of the door panels have been folded open, providing an impressive feature to your room. This is achieved due to the panels stacking at 90° (perpendicular) from the frame. However we need to remember that this is the UK, and not the Costa Del Sol, so your doors will be closed a lot of the time. If you had already considered this, but still believe that the aesthetic appeal of bi-folding doors outweighs this drawback then bi-folding doors are the choice for you.

Sliding Patio Doors

Some consider [Sliding Patio doors](#) to be outdated, but the truth is that they are back with a vengeance. They will give you a room with a view, providing panoramic views of the outside world. Depending on the size of your aperture Sliding Patio Doors will generally provide the maximum glass area and the minimum amount of frame. They allow for large glass panels and will often result in less vertical bars than a Bifold.



The average residential patio door system can have panels up to 1.5 metres wide, but it is not uncommon for a sliding patio door to have panels of up to 2.5 metres wide or even larger. The advantage of sliding panels is that you do not lose any space from within your room or garden. And you can still create an opening of up to 65% depending on the system, number of panels and the configuration. The main draw of sliding patio doors is large clear glass areas. Sliding patio doors will let in the maximum amount of light and provide almost unimpeded views. If this is your idea of perfection then sliding doors are for you.

Ease Of Access

Most bifold door configurations will provide a traffic door, this is a quick access door that allows for inside and outside access, without having to fold or slide any other panels. A traffic door is a door that can be operated independently, and can function in the same way as any standard back door. These doors also have a latch so that when pushed closed it will stay closed and not swing back open. Sliding patio doors do not have traffic doors and so it is not quite as easy to quickly nip in and out. It can also be more difficult to close the doors behind you, as the door will need to be slid closed.

Flush Floor Levels

Many people are concerned about creating a trip hazard with their new Patio doors. Most Bi-folding Door systems have flush low threshold options, which allow for the bottom of the doors to be completely sunk down into the floor to provide a seamless transition from inside and outside. Some but not all Sliding patio door systems have the option to bring the inside floor level up to the height of the top of the cill or threshold section of the patio doors, nullifying the step over, but there are currently no flush threshold options available on the market, for sliding doors.

Summary

So what is the answer? Bi-folding Doors or Sliding Patio Doors? Ultimately the decision often comes down to whether you are more concerned about having maximum glass area, slim slight-lines and maximising the light into your home or achieving the maximum unobstructed clear opening with flush floor levels. Here are some more factors out-lined below that may help you to make your decision:

Considerations	Sliding Patio Doors	Bi-folding Doors
Flush Floor Levels Inside	Yes	Yes
Flush Floor Levels Outside	No	Yes
Ramped Thresholds Option	No	Yes
Maximum Opening	up to 65%	around 90%
Maximum Panel Widths	2500 mm	1200 mm
Maximum Heights	2700 mm	3000mm
Maximum Overall Widths	7000 mm	12000 mm
Minimum Vertical Bar Sight-lines	38mm	132 mm
Minimum U-value Achievable	1.6 W/M ² K	1.5 W/M ² K
Cost (more stars = a keener price)	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★ ★ ☆
Security (more stars = better security)	★ ★ ★ ★ ☆	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Weather Performance	★ ★ ★ ★ ☆	★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Note: This comparison has been based on the Bi-folding Door and Sliding Patio Door systems that we offer.