# Home, adulthood, and psychological well-being: a mixed methods study of the meaning of house sharing after 30 years of age

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# Home, Adulthood, and Psychological Well-Being:
# A Mixed Methods Study of the Meaning of House Sharing After 30 Years of Age

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

I, Marie Houghton, declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own.

# Abstract

In recent years, the number of UK adults living in house shares – i.e. living with housemates, rather than living alone or with kin – has increased, especially among people over 30 years of age. However, there has been little research into the impact such living arrangements have on adult identity construction or psychological well-being. This thesis presents four studies that used mixed methods to address this gap.

In studies 1 and 2, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 18 participants who were house sharers aged 30 years or over. Both studies highlighted that experiences of house sharing can vary widely, ranging from very negative to very positive. The inability of house sharers to have full control over their living environment negatively impacted ability to feel at home and well-being for some participants. However, for other participants, the companionship they received from housemates facilitated feeling at home and supported well-being. Some participants felt house sharing precluded them from full adulthood.

Studies 3 and 4 were both quantitative surveys. Study 3 was open to students at Birkbeck, University of London ($N = 215$). Study 4 targeted renters in the general population ($N = 408$). In both studies, analyses showed that house sharers did not face worse outcomes, compared to participants living in other household types, in terms of ability to feel at home or construct an adult identity, or in terms of psychological well-being.

All four studies supported the conclusion that house sharing after 30 years of age is not, in itself, predictive of negative outcomes. The meaning and impact of living in a house share was instead found to be personal, subjective, and context-dependent. Additionally, it is argued that life course theory provides a more useful framework for understanding changes in the transition to adulthood than the theory of emerging adulthood.

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## Chapter 1:
## Introduction

In recent years there has been much media attention on the increase in rates of house sharing among UK adults, with media headlines decrying the "misery of the flat-sharing divorced dads" (Libbert, 2016) and highlighting the plight of "high-earning professional women living like students" (Dickinson, 2015). This chapter introduces the topic of house sharing and discusses recent increases in the number of UK adults who are living with housemates, including among people over 30 years of age. The potential impact and meaning of house sharing after the age of 30 years (the focus of the current thesis) are also discussed. Finally, this chapter outlines the aims of the current thesis and sets out what the following chapters cover.

### 1.1 – The Changing Nature of the UK Housing Market

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the number of households[1] living in the private rented sector (PRS) in England has more than doubled from 2 million households (10% of households) in 2000 to 4.6 million households (19% of households) in 2022 (Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities [DLUHC], 2022b). Rates of renting have seen an even sharper increase in London, with 29% of households in London living in the PRS in 2022, compared to 14% in 2004. This increase in renting has predominantly been driven by declining rates of homeownership: whereas 71% of households in England lived in owner-occupied housing in 2000, by 2022 this had declined to 64% (DLUHC, 2022b).

Over the last few decades, within England, the proportion of adults living in the PRS has increased across all age groups (Office for National Statistics [ONS], 2020). However, the proportion of people in England who are privately renting is highest among younger adults (see Table 1.1). This has given rise to the term 'Generation Rent' which describes the phenomenon of increasing numbers of younger people (typically defined as 18- to 35-year-olds) having to live in the PRS for extended periods of time, and perhaps indefinitely, due to being unable to afford to buy a house (Hoolachan et al., 2017; McKee et al., 2017).

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[1] 'Household' can be an ambiguous term (Clapham, 2002, 2005). The statistics presented regarding the number of households living in the PRS are drawn from the English Housing Survey (DLUHC, 2022b). The English Housing Survey defines a household as: "One person or a group of people (not necessarily related) who have the accommodation as their only or main residence, and (for a group) share cooking facilities and share a living room or sitting room or dining area". This is largely in line with the definition of household used in the UK census as well (ONS, 2014, 2022c). This is the definition of household adopted in this thesis.

However, it is middle-aged people who have experienced the sharpest increase in renting since 2000 (ONS, 2020). Indeed, as can be seen in Table 1.1, the proportion of 35- to 44-year-olds in England living in the PRS more than trebled between 2000 and 2017 and the proportion of 45- to 54-year-olds living in the PRS was more than 2.5 times higher in 2017, compared to 2000.

**Table 1.1**

*Proportion of People in Different Age Groups Living in the PRS in England*

| Age group | Proportion living in the PRS in 2000 | Proportion living in the PRS in 2017 |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 16-24 | 43.0% | 67.8% |
| 25-34 | 19.0% | 43.7% |
| 35-44 | 8.8% | 27.6% |
| 45-54 | 5.8% | 15.8% |
| 55-64 | 4.5% | 9.3% |
| 65-74 | 4.5% | 6.0% |
| 75+ | 4.8% | 5.2% |

*Note.* Data taken from ONS (2020).

In addition, in recent years there has been an increase in the number of people in the UK who are living in house shares (i.e. living with housemates) rather than living alone or with kin[2] (Heath et al., 2018). This increase in house sharing has also not been limited to younger age groups and has been observed amongst older age groups as well. For example, based on data from SpareRoom[3], Collinson (2015) reported that between 2009

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[2] In this thesis, the term 'kin' is used to denote relationships that exist between co-habiting romantic partners (whether legally bound by marriage/ civil partnership or not) or between family members that are related by biology or adoption.

[3] SpareRoom (spareroom.co.uk) is a house sharing website where people can place 'room available' or 'room wanted' adverts. It claims to be "the UK's number 1 flatsharing website" (SpareRoom, n.d.).

and 2014 there was a 186% increase in the number of people aged between 35 and 44 years living in house shares in the UK, while the number of house sharers aged between 45 and 54 years grew by 300% in the same period. These changes form the backdrop for this thesis, which sought to explore what it means to live in a house share after the age of 30 years.

## 1.2 – Defining House Sharing

Before advancing further, it is important to define the terms that will be used in this thesis: what exactly is house sharing? The basic definition offered by Clark et al. (2018, p. 2) is a useful starting point: "Typically, shared housing involves two or more people who share a communal kitchen, bathroom and lounge, with individual bedrooms generally off limits to other housemates".[4] Importantly, in this thesis, the focus will be solely on house sharing that occurs within standard domestic properties. This is in line with the work of Heath et al. who, when describing their research into house sharing, stated: "We also excluded shared living arrangements in institutional or commercial contexts, such as halls of residence, care homes, guest houses, retirement villages or religious communities" (2018, p. 9). Co-housing schemes, in which a community share some communal facilities but each member has their own residence, will also not be included within the scope of this thesis.

The term 'house in multiple occupation' (HMO) is sometimes used to describe house shares. Currently, within England and Wales, a property is legally defined as an HMO if it is rented out to at least three people who do not form one family and where the tenants share kitchen and/or bathroom facilities (UK Government, n.d.; Shelter, 2021). This is a very broad definition that largely overlaps with Clark et al.'s (2018) definition of house sharing offered in the paragraph above. However, within contemporary popular and academic discourse, the term HMO is often used in a more specific way to refer to low quality, shared accommodation at the bottom end of the PRS (including bedsits, B&Bs, and hostels) which houses vulnerable and/or very low income residents (e.g. Barratt & Green, 2017; Irving, 2015). 'HMO' can therefore be an ambiguous term. Additionally, while the legal definition of an HMO only includes properties with three or more tenants, within this thesis households that consist of two or more people sharing will be considered as house shares (as per Clark, Tuffin, Bowker, et al., 2018; Heath & Kenyon, 2001; McNamara & Connell, 2007). Properties that are divided into bedsits, where residents have their own kitchens, will not be considered

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[4] This definition could also be applied to the synonymous terms 'flatting' and 'flat sharing'; however, 'house sharing' is the term that will be used to describe such living arrangements in this thesis, regardless of whether the property lived in is a house or a flat.

as house shares within the scope of this thesis.[5] For this reason, while there is some overlap in meaning, the term house sharing, as used in this thesis, should not be considered to be synonymous with HMO.

While a majority of house shares are within the PRS, with housemates jointly renting a property from a private landlord, house shares may also include properties where there is a resident landlord or where the property is jointly owned by the residents (Heath et al., 2018). People who are house sharing may therefore be homeowners. Similarly, while some house shares may be underpinned by an ideology (e.g. as in the case of communes) or may share a strong sense of group identity or communal life, it is also recognised that some house shares may only share physical proximity, without any sense of a shared life (F. Baum, 1986; Heath et al., 2018). Additionally, while house shares are often described as non-kin households, in line with the work of Heath et al. (2018) and McNamara and Connell (2007), it is recognised that house shares may include people who share bonds of kinship. For example, while the majority of house sharers are single and childfree, people may live with their partner and/or child(ren) alongside friends, housemates, lodgers, and/or landlords (Clark & Tuffin, 2023; Heath et al., 2018; McNamara & Connell, 2007). Additionally, McNamara and Connell (2007) included three households that contained siblings and other unrelated housemates in their sample. Further research by Glick and Van Hook (2011) found that households which consisted of siblings behaved in a similar way to households which consisted of friends, rather than behaving in the way that parent-and-child households did. Therefore, within this thesis, a household that consists solely of two siblings or two cousins will also be considered as a house share.

To summarise, within this thesis, the focus will be on households for whom all of the following criteria apply:

- The household consists of at least two people,

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[5] Within this thesis, a room in a house share is distinguished from a bedsit based on whether the kitchen is shared. Kitchens are focused on due to the fact that not all shared houses have lounges. Additionally, kitchens are distinguished from bathrooms based on the distinction drawn by Kopec (2018) between primary, secondary, and tertiary spaces. Whereas living rooms (primary spaces) and kitchens (secondary spaces) are communal spaces where interaction may take place, bedrooms and bathrooms are private (tertiary spaces). Even if a bathroom is shared, it is only used by one person at a time. However, communal kitchens do not offer the same expectation of privacy. Someone could therefore have an ensuite bathroom and still be classed as living in a house share if they share kitchen facilities.

- At least two household members do not share a kin relationship with each other (unless the household consists solely of siblings or cousins, in which case no other unrelated person need be co-resident),

- The household lives together in a standard residential property (i.e. a house or flat),

- Each household member (who is not in a romantic relationship with another household member) has their own bedroom but the kitchen and lounge, if present, are shared.

If all of the above criteria apply, then the household will be considered as a house share, regardless of the tenure of the property they live in or the extent to which they engage in shared social activities.

### 1.3 – Exploring Recent Increases in House Sharing

Exact figures for the number of people in the UK currently living in house shares are difficult to find (Heath et al., 2018). This is partly due to the informal nature of the shared housing market, where agreements (either between housemates or between landlords and tenants) may be unwritten and lacking in official recognition (Maalsen, 2019). Additionally, census data is often unreliable when it comes to understanding house sharing, as house shares are often combined with other household types, such as multi-generational family households (Clark & Tuffin, 2023; Heath et al., 2018). There is however considerable evidence suggesting that the proportion of the UK adult population living in shared housing has increased in recent years. For example, data from the 2011 UK Census shows that, while the number of households in England and Wales increased by 8% between 2001 and 2011, the number of households classified as 'other households' grew by 28%, the biggest increase of any household type (ONS, 2014). This data does not provide incontrovertible evidence of an increase in sharing because the category of 'other households' comprises all households which are not one-person or one-family households; however, it is certainly strongly suggestive of an increase in house sharing. More recently, data from the 2021 UK Census shows that 1.7 million households in England and Wales were classified as 'other households', compared to 1.4 million households in 2001, showing that the number of people living in such non-traditional households is a not inconsiderable portion of the population (ONS, 2014, 2022c). Additionally, over the last decade there have been numerous reports in the media of increased rates of house sharing among UK adults (e.g. Bearne, 2022; Collinson, 2015; Dickinson, 2015; Morton, 2022; O'Connell, 2012; Spratt, 2019; Wace, 2016). These reports have also been supported by figures from the house-sharing website SpareRoom, which suggest that between 2009 and 2019 the number of people living in house shares in the UK increased by 400% (Spratt, 2019).

Arundel and Ronald (2016) found that, across 14 European countries, the UK had the highest rates of house sharing with 10% of 18- to 34-year-olds in the UK living in house shares, compared to rates as low as 1% in some other countries. Arundel and Ronald saw the higher rates of sharing in the UK as being a product of unaffordable rents and the welfare regime in the UK. However, in recent years, rates of house sharing have been increasing in a number of European countries, such as Germany, as well as in Mediterranean countries, such as Italy and Spain, which traditionally had very low rates of sharing with non-kin (Bricocoli & Sabatinelli, 2016; Gil-Solsona, 2022; Steinführer & Haase, 2009). An increase in house sharing has also been reported in English-speaking countries, such as Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, and the USA (Clark & Tuffin, 2023; Hilder et al., 2018; Maalsen, 2019, 2020; McNamara & Connell, 2007). Additionally, house sharing has become more common in urban areas in several Asian countries, including China, Japan, and South Korea (Cho et al., 2019; Druta & Ronald, 2021; Ge & Kuang, 2020; Grinshpun, 2022; Kim et al., 2020; Oh & Kim, 2021; Woo et al., 2019).

Across these different countries, the growth in house sharing appears to be primarily driven by economic factors, with increased housing costs and declining housing affordability leading to more people having to share accommodation so that they can split the cost of their rent (or mortgage) and bills (Bricocoli & Sabatinelli, 2016; Clark & Tuffin, 2023; Heath et al., 2018; Maalsen, 2020). Across England, the median weekly rent payment for people living in the PRS was £130 in 2009, which rose to £173 a week by 2022 – a 33% increase (DLUHC, 2022b). However, across the same period, the median UK household income (after tax) only rose by 11% (ONS, 2023a). Consequently, privately renting a property on your own, or just with a partner, has become increasingly unaffordable for many people. Furthermore, increases in the cost of buying a property has meant that homeownership has become an unobtainable goal for many, with the average UK house price increasing by 78% between April 2009 and April 2022 (ONS, 2023b). Thus, more people are having to rent for longer periods of time and more people are having to live in house shares while renting (Clark, Tuffin, Bowker, et al., 2018; Cribb et al., 2018; Heath et al., 2018; Maalsen, 2020). Indeed, whereas the house sharers interviewed by Heath and Kenyon in Southampton in the late 1990s viewed their house shares as "time-limited living arrangements prior to living on one's own or with a partner… today's sharers often feel that they have no such guarantees" (Heath et al., 2018, p. 4).

However, it is not just private renters who have experienced housing cost increases that far outpaced wage increases over the past three decades. For homeowners, median

weekly mortgage payments increased by 24% across England, and by 56% in London, between 2009 and 2022 (DLUHC, 2022b). These increases in housing costs have led to more homeowners taking in lodgers and, thus, becoming house sharers (Heath et al., 2018; Heath & Scicluna, 2020). Additionally, within the UK, reductions in the availability of social housing and changes to welfare policy have meant that more people on low incomes or receiving housing benefit are living in the PRS, often in shared accommodation (G. Green et al., 2016; Iafrati, 2021). Indeed, since 2012, people in the UK between 18 and 34 years of age, who do not have dependents, have only been able to claim housing benefit at the Shared Accommodation Rate, which is based upon the cost of a single room in shared housing, leaving them little choice but to live in a house share (Ortega-Alcázar & Wilkinson, 2019, 2021).

Notwithstanding the role of economic factors, social changes have also played a part in the growth of house sharing (Bricocoli & Sabatinelli, 2016; Clark & Tuffin, 2023; Heath et al., 2018; Maalsen, 2019). Increasing numbers of people living as single adults for longer periods of time can be seen to be a contributing factor to increases in house sharing. In large part this is due to the fact that single people have only one wage and are therefore more likely to face difficulty renting or buying a property alone, compared to couples. However, single people may also prefer to share due to the companionship it can offer (Bricocoli & Sabatinelli, 2016; Heath et al., 2018; Maalsen, 2019, 2020). The social conditions brought about by increased casualisation of employment, including more people being employed on precarious temporary or zero-hours contracts and expectations for employees to be geographically mobile, have also been associated with increased rates of house sharing (Bricocoli & Sabatinelli, 2016; Heath & Kenyon, 2001). These social changes, coupled with decreasing housing affordability in both the PRS and for homeowners, have meant that, while house sharing has traditionally been associated with students or those on low incomes, increasing numbers of people in professional or managerial roles are living in house shares as well (Bricocoli & Sabatinelli, 2016; Heath & Kenyon, 2001; Kenyon & Heath, 2001).

**1.3.1 – Increases in House Sharing at Older Ages**

As stated above, house sharing has typically been viewed as something primarily done by young people; however, increased numbers of UK adults over the age of 30 years are becoming house sharers (Heath et al., 2018). For example, figures reported by Morton (2022), and reproduced in Table 1.2, show that, between 2011 and 2021, the biggest increase in the number of people using SpareRoom in the UK was among 55- to 64-year-olds, who showed a huge 239% increase. Additionally, there was a 161% increase among

those aged 65 years or older in the same period. In total, SpareRoom reported that 29% of people using the website in the UK in 2021 were aged 35 years or over (Morton, 2022).

**Table 1.2**

*Figures Showing the Increase in the Number of House Sharers Using Spareroom.co.uk From 2011 to 2021, by Age Group*

| Age group (years) | Increase in usage from 2011 to 2021 |
| --- | --- |
| 25-34 | 65% |
| 35-44 | 106% |
| 45-54 | 114% |
| 55-64 | 239% |
| 65+ | 161% |

*Note:* Data taken from Morton (2022). Number of house sharers based on people who posted 'Room wanted' adverts and all people listed as housemates on 'Room available' adverts.

The figures reported in Table 1.2 include the people listed as existing members of house shares in 'Housemate wanted' adverts, who were therefore living in house shares looking for a new person to move in. The figures also include people who posted a 'Room wanted' advert on SpareRoom. We cannot be certain that everyone in this latter group ended up moving into a house share, but they were taking active steps to find a room in a house share. Such figures do not therefore provide a perfect view of the number of house sharers in the UK. They do however strongly suggest that the number of over-thirties living in house shares has increased over time. Similar trends of people living in house shares at older ages have also been reported in countries such as Australia and Ireland (Garcia, 2016; Maalsen, 2020).

Heath et al. (2018) described how some people choose to house share after 30 years of age, due to a desire for companionship or because of an ideological commitment to communality and/or sustainability. However, for others in Heath et al.'s sample, continuing to share into their thirties (and beyond) was driven by economic necessity. In such cases, Heath et al. observed that "financial pressures and high house prices… *draw sharing out*

across stages of the lifecourse into times of life where it does not (culturally speaking) belong" (2018, p. 102). This sense that living in a house share beyond young adulthood is something that is generally seen as outside the norm and undesirable is reflected in Maalsen's (2020, p. 2) discussion of her own experiences of being a house sharer over the age of 30 years: "as a 24-year old... I remember thinking how I would hate to be sharing in my 30s and 40s".

House sharing after 30 years of age, especially as a single, childfree adult, goes against Western societal ideas of what adulthood, which is traditionally associated with marriage and homeownership, should look like (Maalsen, 2020; Owens & Green, 2020). In some cases this can lead to people who are living in house shares beyond their twenties feeling stigmatised (Heath et al., 2018). In addition to being intertwined with ideas of adulthood, homeownership is also central to normative ideas of home (Després, 1991b; Saunders, 1989; Soaita & McKee, 2019). In this way, house sharing, especially living in a rented house share with non-kin, does not fit the image many people have of home and some people are unable to feel at home living in a house share (Barratt & Green, 2017; Heath et al., 2018; Ortega-Alcázar & Wilkinson, 2021). This is serious, as research has shown that being able to feel a sense of home where you are living is important for psychological well-being (Després, 1991a; Easthope, 2004; Soaita & McKee, 2019; Somerville, 1992). Similarly, feeling that you have not lived up to expectations, or are living in a way that is outside of the norm, can lead to feelings of shame and reduced psychological well-being (Giddens, 1991; Gurney, 1999; McKee et al., 2019). However, research has shown that some people do feel at home living in a rented house share and that the sense of community and support some sharers receive from their housemates can have definite benefits for psychological well-being (Bricocoli & Sabatinelli, 2016; Després, 1991a; Heath et al., 2018; McNamara & Connell, 2007).

Despite the increase in the number of over-thirties who are house sharing, several scholars have noted that there has been little research into the experiences of people living in house shares beyond young adulthood (Clark & Tuffin, 2023; Heath, 2004; Heath et al., 2018; Maalsen, 2020). As noted above, there are reasons to think that living in a house share over the age of 30 years may threaten someone's ability to feel at home and to construct a positive self-image, which may undermine their psychological well-being. However, there are also suggestions that, in some cases, house sharing can offer benefits for psychological well-being in the form of companionship and support. More research is needed to enable a clearer picture to be developed regarding what it means to live in a

house share beyond one's twenties and in which situations this may be harmful or helpful for psychological well-being – the central topic of this thesis.

## 1.4 – Aims of the Current Thesis

The current thesis is aimed at addressing this gap in the literature by exploring the experiences of people aged 30 years or over who are living in house shares. I decided to focus on over-thirties because 30 years of age is often presented as the point by which one should have attained the markers of traditional adulthood, such as marriage, parenthood, and a stable residence (Arnett, 2000, 2007; Arnett et al., 2014). For example, Arnett's (2000, 2007) theory of emerging adulthood describes the period of time in one's twenties as a time of exploration before settling into stable adult roles but this period is seen as coming to an end by the age of 29 years. Indeed, Arnett and Fishel (2014, p. 13) state:

> During the last years of their twenties, most emerging adults make the important choices that will form the structure of their adult lives in love and work. Most are either married or cohabiting by this time, and most of those who are not are hoping to do so before they reach the Age 30 Deadline, the age many have long had in mind as the outer limit of when they want to be married.

This idea of the 'Age 30 Deadline' can be seen reflected in media articles, with headlines such as "I'm still house-sharing at 33. Should I be embarrassed yet?" (J. Nelson, 2022) and "I'm 34 and I have a good job – why am I still stuck in a houseshare?" (Spratt, 2019).

The research presented here focuses on what living in a house share means for people aged 30 years and over, especially in terms of their ability to feel at home, their ability to construct an adult identity, and their psychological well-being. The thesis consists of eight chapters. This introductory chapter has provided an overview of the recent increase in house sharing in the UK, especially among older age groups. In addition, this chapter has outlined why the experiences, meaning making, and well-being outcomes of house sharers over the age of 30 years are an important topic for research. Chapter 2 follows on from this by reviewing relevant academic literature regarding the meaning of home and the nature of adulthood, as well as empirical literature that is focused specifically on house sharing. Chapter 2 finishes with the presentation of the three main research questions that guided my empirical investigations in the field. Chapter 3 outlines the methodological approach adopted in the research conducted for this thesis, including a discussion of the critical realist philosophy underlying the thesis and an exploration of why a mixed methods approach was deemed the most appropriate way to address the research questions.

Chapters 4 and 5 then present the results of two qualitative interview studies that were conducted to explore the experiences of house sharers aged 30 years or over. Following this, Chapters 6 and 7 present the results of two quantitative surveys that were conducted. Both surveys explored perceptions of home and adulthood, as well as employing standardised measures of psychological well-being, to enable comparison of house sharers to participants living in other types of household. The survey presented in Chapter 6 was open to students at Birkbeck, University of London regardless of the housing tenure they lived in and, as such, included people living in rented and owner-occupied accommodation. In particular, the analysis presented in Chapter 6 compared outcomes regarding home, adulthood, and well-being between house sharers and three comparison groups – participants who were living: 1) on their own, 2) just with their partner and/or child(ren), or 3) with their family of origin. In contrast, the sample for the survey presented in Chapter 7 was recruited from the general public and consisted solely of renters. This survey compared perceptions of home and adulthood, as well as well-being outcomes, between renters who were living in house shares, renters who lived just with their partner and/or child(ren), and renters who lived alone. This survey thus sought to examine ways in which the psychological experiences of participants living in shared and non-shared rented accommodation may differ.

Finally, Chapter 8 presents an overall discussion of the findings of the thesis and how these relate to existing literature. The overall strengths and weaknesses of the thesis are also reviewed in Chapter 8, which ends with the proposal of several implications from the findings for the fields of psychology and housing, alongside ideas for future research.

# Chapter 2:
# Literature Review

This chapter is predominantly focused on reviewing theoretical and empirical literature on two key topics: adulthood and home. Relevant literature on adulthood is reviewed first. The theory of emerging adulthood is introduced and evaluated, before being compared to life course theory. Life course theory is one of the key theoretical bases for this thesis and it is argued that it provides a more comprehensive, more useful way to conceptualise changes in the transition to adulthood than emerging adulthood. Literature on home is then reviewed, with key areas of consideration being the meaning of home and the relationship between home and psychological well-being. Finally, the chapter closes by discussing what we already know about house sharing after 30 years of age, what gaps remain in the literature, and the contribution this thesis will make to knowledge.

## 2.1 – Literature on Adulthood and Adult Development

This section reviews literature on the transition to adulthood, overviewing changes in the transition to adulthood in the later part of the 20th century and Arnett's theory of emerging adulthood. Alternative ways of conceptualising changes in the transition to adulthood, which do not rely on stage-based understandings of development, are also considered, including Elder's life course theory and Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model. Research on how adulthood is understood and defined in the 21st century is then discussed, followed by an examination of whether house sharing may hinder or facilitate construction of an adult identity.

### 2.1.1 – Emerging Adulthood

Erikson (1963, 1968) saw human development as happening across the life span, following eight stages, each of which has associated tasks and challenges. Within Erikson's model, adolescence (the fifth stage) is a period of transition between childhood and adulthood. Within adolescence, the focus is on identity formation: the young person has to decide for themselves who they are and how they want to live. After adolescence comes young adulthood, where the main task is to develop intimate relationships and commit to social roles.

In line with such ideas, within the Western world, entry to adulthood has traditionally been associated with the taking on of commitments and responsibilities such as marriage, parenthood, and (for men) full-time work. As Tanner and Arnett (2011) observed, in the 1950s very few people in Western countries went to university. Instead, most people lived

with their parents until they married in their late teens or early twenties, with marriage generally being followed by the birth of a child about a year later. In this way, the majority of people made similar transitions at similar ages and these transitions functioned as markers of attaining adult status. However, in industrialised nations, in recent decades, many young peoples' decisions around, and experiences of, education, entry to work, leaving home, marriage, and parenthood have changed, causing transitions to adulthood to become prolonged and less standardised (Arnett, 2000, 2007; Shanahan et al., 2005). For example, in England and Wales, among the cohort who turned 30 in 2020, only 19% of men and 30% of women had ever been married, whereas among those who celebrated their 30th birthday in 1970, 91% of women and 83% of men had already married (ONS, 2022b). This is partly due to people marrying later. In England and Wales, the mean age at first marriage among people who married opposite-sex partners was 32.1 years for women and 33.9 years for men in 2019, compared to a mean age of 22.4 years for women and 24.4 years for men in 1970 (ONS, 2022b). However, shifting trends in marriage are also due to fewer people getting married at all. Indeed, in 2019, marriage rates for opposite-sex couples in England and Wales fell to their lowest level since 1862 (ONS, 2022b). Similarly, data from the ONS (2022a) show that, in England and Wales, less than half (47%) of women born in 1991 had had a baby by the time they turned 30 in 2021, compared to 82% of women who turned 30 in 1970.

Arnett (2000, 2007) argued that due to such changes, the transition to adulthood for most young people in industrialised countries now takes longer and should in fact be considered as a distinct stage in the life course. Arnett adopted Erikson's stage model but inserted a new stage between adolescence and young adulthood, which he called emerging adulthood and which he saw as lasting from the age of 18 years until one's mid- to late-twenties[6]. Arnett argued that later marriage, parenthood, and commitment to a career allows young people to spend their twenties exploring and experimenting with different roles and possibilities. Emerging adulthood is therefore a time of instability and of frequent changes in work, in relationships, and in residence. However, Arnett stated that by 30 years of age most people will have achieved the traditional markers of adulthood, such as marriage, parenthood, and a stable residence (Arnett, 2000, 2007; Arnett et al., 2014).

Arnett (2000, 2007) argued that emerging adulthood is distinct from adolescence and adulthood, both subjectively and demographically. Adolescents (whom he defined as people

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[6] Arnett originally described emerging adulthood as "the period from the late teens through the twenties, with a focus on ages 18-25" (2000, p. 469); however, in later publications, emerging adulthood is described as lasting from 18 until 29 years of age (Arnett et al., 2014).

aged 10-18 years) are going through puberty, still attend school, live with their parents, and are legally defined as juveniles. Conversely, Arnett argued, the majority of people in their thirties have finished their education and settled into stable careers, are financially independent from their parents, married, and have at least one child. Emerging adults are situated somewhere in between: they have left high school but many are still in education, most have left their parents' house and attained some independence, but it may be some years until they are entirely financially independent. Indeed, Arnett stated: "Emerging adulthood is the only period of life in which nothing is normative demographically" (2000, p. 471). This means that knowing someone is 25 years old does not help you to predict whether they are married, for example, as emerging adults are no longer subject to the norms of adolescence (e.g. being unmarried) but they have not yet reached the stage where the norms of adulthood (including being married) apply. Consequently, many emerging adults feel that they have moved beyond adolescence but have not yet reached full adulthood: emerging adulthood is "the age of feeling in-between" (Arnett, 2007, p. 69).

There are however reasons to question Arnett's (2000, 2007) assertion that emerging adulthood represents a distinct stage of development. For example, Arnett acknowledged: "There are 19-year-olds who have reached adulthood – demographically, subjectively, and in terms of identity formation – and 29-year-olds who have not" (2000, p. 477). Furthermore, Arnett's (2001) own research found that 19% of American 30- to 55-year-olds did not fully consider themselves to be adults. Thus, emerging adulthood perhaps seems to represent a quantitative change from adolescence, rather than a qualitative shift or distinct life stage. For example, Arnett (2000, 2007; Tanner & Arnett, 2011) observed that concerns with identity continue from adolescence into emerging adulthood. Indeed, Arnett described emerging adulthood as "the age of identity exploration" (2007, p. 69). However, the exploratory behaviour described by Arnett as a key feature of emerging adulthood can be seen in Erikson's (1963, 1968) writing about adolescence. Erikson did not specify a fixed age at which adolescence ends and adulthood begins (Smelser, 1980), and stated that there could be "great variations in the duration, intensity, and ritualization of adolescence" both across different societies and between individuals in the same society (Erikson, 1968, p. 155). Additionally, Erikson (1968, p. 156) saw a period of prolonged adolescence as possible, where a young person, who is unready or unable to commit to adult roles, may experience a "psychosocial moratorium" in which commitments are delayed while they experiment with possible roles. Therefore, the phenomena Arnett has described as emerging adulthood would seem to fit within Erikson's original framework and Arnett does not sufficiently demonstrate why emerging adulthood should be considered as a separate stage.

Changes in the transition to adulthood can be seen as part of a broader pattern of increasing destandardisation across the life course. For example, in many countries there is increasing variation in the age at which people retire, with decisions about when (or indeed whether) to retire being determined by individual choice and circumstance (Giandrea et al., 2009; Kloep & Hendry, 2006, 2007). Since the mid-twentieth century, there have also been rapid increases in rates of unmarried parenthood, divorce, remarriage, and step-parenting across many Western nations (Carlson & Furstenberg, 2006; Cherlin, 2013; Noack et al., 2014; Pryor, 2014). However, the theory of emerging adulthood does not enable us to better understand these wider-reaching changes in the way people live their lives. In the face of growing destandardisation of the life course, rather than attempting to adapt stage models to reflect changing realities, it may be that there is a better way to think and theorise about development.

Kloep and Hendry (2011) argued that stage models provided a reasonable way to think about development in earlier times; however, increasing destandardisation of the life course since the mid-twentieth century means that age is no longer a good predictor of life events and stage models no longer provide a reliable way to conceptualise development. Additionally, Côté and Bynner (2008) and Molgat (2007) argued that the behaviours Arnett described as emerging adulthood are not a new developmental phase but rather a reaction to changing economic and social conditions. For example, increased uncertainty in the labour market and high property prices – rather than a desire to experiment or avoid commitment – can be seen to cause many young people to postpone marriage and parenthood as they want to attain a secure financial position first (Arundel & Ronald, 2016; Côté & Bynner, 2008; Hendry & Kloep, 2011; Hoolachan et al., 2017; Molgat, 2007). The current research will therefore adopt a life course perspective (Elder et al., 2003) to enable greater understanding of the impact of context on participants' lives.

**2.1.2 – Life Course Theory**

Life course theory (Elder, 1994, 1996, 1998; Elder et al., 2003) provides a way to examine the impact of context (both immediate and distant, social and historical) on human lives and developmental trajectories. The benefits of adopting a life course approach for understanding behaviours, aspirations, and meanings around housing has been emphasised by Coulter (2023). Elder et al. (2003) identified five core principles of life course theory: time and place, timing in lives, linked lives, human agency, and life-span development. The principle of time and place states that where and when a person is born will impact their life and their development. Thus, the opportunities available to someone are shaped by factors such as the country they live in, technologies available at the time, and incidences of

economic boom, recession, and war (Elder, 1998). Furthermore, as stated by the timing in lives principle, a person's age and stage of life when they experience an event (e.g. recession, war, losing a spouse) will alter the effect that event has on their life (Elder, 1987, 1996). Additionally, a person's life is not just affected by events that happen to them. Indeed, the principle of linked lives highlights that each individual's development is impacted by what happens to those around them, such as their family and friends (Greenfield & Marks, 2006). However, while context and structural constraints may determine the options available to each person, the principle of human agency emphasises that people actively construct their lives by choosing between the options available to them (Gecas, 2003; Hitlin & Elder, 2007). Finally, the principle of life-span development reminds us that development does not stop at age 18 but happens throughout life: even in adulthood, events that happen and decisions we make can re-route previous trajectories and affect our on-going development (Moen et al., 1992).

### 2.1.2.1 – Comparing Life Course Theory to the Bioecological Model

While life course theory has been found to provide a helpful way of understanding changes in the transition to adulthood, it should be noted that other theories also recognise, and provide ways of thinking about, the impact of contextual factors on development. For example, Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model (1994; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) can be seen as sharing some commonalities with life course theory: both explore the impact of context, historical time, and relationships between people on development. Indeed, the bioecological model's description of the various contexts of development as a series of nested systems can provide a useful way to conceptualise the multi-dimensional nature of context and how it operates on different levels, each of which can impact development, including immediate family (microsystem), wider society (macrosystem), and change over time (chronosystem). In this way, some elements of the bioecological model are very much compatible with life course theory.

However, while these systems were a central part of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model as he first developed it in the 1970s, Bronfenbrenner and Morris observed that over time there was "a marked shift in the center of gravity of the model… from a focus on the environment to a focus on processes" (2006, p. 794; see also Tudge et al., 2009). In particular, since the mid-1990s, the bioecological model has focused on how 'proximal processes' shape development. Indeed, Bronfenbrenner and Morris described proximal processes as "the primary mechanisms producing human development" (p. 795). Proximal processes are:

processes of progressively more complex reciprocal interaction between an active, evolving biopsychological human organism and the persons, objects, and symbols in its immediate external environment. To be effective, the interaction must occur on a fairly regular basis over extended periods of time (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006, p. 797).

Examples of proximal processes provided by Bronfenbrenner and Morris included "feeding or comforting a baby" and "playing with a young child" (p. 797). The way context impacts development is through influencing the form and content of proximal processes. For example, the historical period a child grows up in will impact the proximal processes they experience due to beliefs about child rearing at that time.

Because of its focus on proximal processes that happen over an extended period, the bioecological model cannot easily account for the potentially immediate impact of specific events (e.g. being made redundant or a disabling accident) on an individual's developmental trajectory. While proximal processes may impact one's ability to deal with misfortune, to fully understand developmental trajectories it is also necessary to consider the impact of time, place, and structural constraints more broadly. In today's globalised world, events that happen in one country can have dramatic impacts on the lives of people in many other countries (Beck, 1992; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Giddens, 1991). For example, recession in one country can lead to financial crisis and rising unemployment in another, potentially impacting the employment, housing, and retirement options of millions of people. Life course theory can more easily and more fully account for how people's lives are determined by a mixture of human agency, social context, and structural constraint. For this thesis, this is deemed to be an important benefit, as a full picture of changes in the transition to adulthood and people's housing pathways cannot be gained without considering the economic and social context, as well as the agency of individuals.

### 2.1.3 – (Re-)defining Adulthood in the 21st Century

The fact that transitional events which traditionally acted as markers of adulthood (e.g. marriage and parenthood) are happening at later ages, if at all, is leading more people to define their own and others' attainment of adulthood based on psychological factors, such as independence and responsibility (Arnett, 2000; Côté & Bynner, 2008). Unlike traditional markers, these capacities develop gradually and are not marked by specific events (Arnett, 2007). Arnett (1997, 2001, 2003) developed a list of potential markers of adulthood that has been widely adopted in studies of how people conceptualise adulthood, with participants being asked to indicate whether they think each item is necessary (or, in some studies, important) for adulthood. From this list, 'Accept responsibility for the consequences of your

actions' has been the item most frequently endorsed as necessary for adulthood in research conducted in Argentina, Austria, Australia, Canada, Denmark, Israel, Italy, the Netherlands, Romania, Sweden, Turkey, and the USA (Arnett, 1997, 2001, 2003; Arnett & Padilla-Walker, 2015; Cheah & Nelson, 2004; Doğan et al., 2016; Facio & Micocci, 2003; Mayseless & Scharf, 2003; L. J. Nelson, 2009; Piumatti et al., 2013; Sirsch et al., 2009; Weier & Lee, 2015; Westberg, 2004). Furthermore, the same item was the second most endorsed as necessary for adulthood in research with Indian and Nigerian young adults (Obidoa et al., 2019; Seiter & Nelson, 2011). In research conducted with Chinese university students, where factor analysis was used to group the items into five factors, the 'relational maturity' factor (which 'Accept responsibility for the consequences of your actions' loaded onto) was the factor with the highest mean level of endorsement (Badger et al., 2006). Additionally, in research with young adults in Ghana, 'Decide on personal beliefs and values independently of parents or other influences' was the item most endorsed as important for adulthood (Obidoa et al., 2019). This body of research therefore provides strong evidence of psychological characteristics, such as independence, being seen as key markers of adulthood across a range of countries and cultures. In contrast, support for the idea that transitional events are necessary for adulthood was low across all of these studies.

There is however evidence suggesting that role transitions may still shape how young people in Western countries conceptualise adulthood. For example, in research with Canadian young adults, Molgat (2007) found that, while financial independence and taking responsibility for oneself were considered important markers of adulthood, for many participants such psychological characteristics were closely linked with transitional events. Indeed, Molgat observed: "responsibility for self and others is intrinsically related to transitional events: living independently for the first time, finishing post-secondary education, moving in with a partner, having children" (pp. 504-505). Other studies have also found that young adults who were parents were more likely to consider themselves to have reached adulthood, compared to those who did not have children (Arnett, 2000, 2003; Benson & Furstenberg, 2006; Oleszkowicz & Misztela, 2015; Shanahan et al., 2005; Zhong & Arnett, 2014). Furthermore, even in studies that found low levels of support for transitional events being important markers of adulthood, 'family capacities' (i.e. being able to provide and care for a family) generally received a high level of endorsement as important markers of adulthood (Arnett, 2001; Badger et al., 2006; Cheah & Nelson, 2004; Doğan et al., 2016; Facio & Micocci, 2003; Obidoa et al., 2019; Piumatti et al., 2013; Seiter & Nelson, 2011; Sirsch et al., 2009; Weier & Lee, 2015). This suggests that traditional adult responsibilities, or at least a willingness and/or ability to take them on, continue to play a part in whether someone is considered to be an adult.

**2.1.4 – Can House Sharing Hinder or Facilitate Construction of an Adult Identity?**

Within the UK, and in culturally similar countries, renting and, to an even greater extent, house sharing do not fit with traditional ideas of adulthood. In such countries, homeownership is frequently seen as a marker of adult status and having a stable residence is seen by many as necessary for someone to be considered an adult (Arnett, 2000; K. Crawford, 2010; Molgat, 2007). Indeed, Robinson (2016, p. 20) listed "gained a fixed residence" as one of the signs that emerging adulthood has ended. Conversely, people who rent a room in a house share often face instability in their housing, with short-term contracts and frequent changes in residence and/or household composition (Easthope, 2014; Heath et al., 2018; Hoolachan et al., 2017; McKee & Soaita, 2018; McNamara & Connell, 2007; Rolfe et al., 2023). Additionally, research has shown that living in a rented and/or shared property can lead people to delay transitional events traditionally associated with adulthood, such as becoming a parent, because they feel that the insecurity of such living situations is not compatible with having children (Hoolachan et al., 2017; Pennington et al., 2012). Côté and Bynner (2008) argued that delaying parenthood in such situations is a rational and responsible choice; however, being in such a position could also be seen as evidence that one has not achieved the necessary family capacities to be considered an adult (Arnett, 2001, 2003; Piumatti et al., 2013; Sirsch et al., 2009). Therefore, renting a room in a house share could potentially impact a person's ability to successfully construct an adult identity. In line with this, some research has found that people who live with their partner and/or child(ren) may be more likely to consider themselves to be adults, compared to people living with housemates (Molgat, 2007; Oleszkowicz & Misztela, 2015).

Previous literature on house sharing has often portrayed it as something that people are forced into out of economic necessity, meaning it should not be classed as fully independent housing (McNamara & Connell, 2007). This is reflected, for example, in Arundel and Ronald's (2016) description of house sharing as a "semi-dependent" form of housing. However, this formulation ignores the fact that, for many young people, house sharing does represent independent housing. Indeed, Kenyon and Heath found that "few respondents felt that their status as independent adults was compromised by sharing with other single adults" (2001, p. 632). In research, many young people have noted that living in a house share gave them independence and a chance to express their own identity, away from the parental home (Bricocoli & Sabatinelli, 2016; Clarke & Heywood, 2016; Garcia, 2016; Kenyon, 2003; Kenyon & Heath, 2001; Maalsen, 2019; McNamara & Connell, 2007). In this way, for many people, living in a house share can, and does, play an important role in developing a sense of autonomy and constructing an adult identity (Maalsen, 2019). Conversely, living with their

parents can make it harder for young people to consider themselves to be adults (K. Crawford, 2010; Molgat, 2007; White, 2002).

There appears to be no good reason to class house sharing as a less independent state than living as part of a couple (who are also likely to be sharing rent or mortgage payments). Indeed, dependence (for women) is built into the traditional image of the nuclear family household. In contrast, house shares are generally made up of equal members who are each responsible for paying their share of the rent and bills. Indeed, some participants in studies of house sharing felt that living in a house share gave them more independence and autonomy compared to living with a partner (Kenyon & Heath, 2001; McNamara & Connell, 2007). Most of these participants saw sharing as representing a time of freedom before the restrictions of marriage and family. Given that independence and family capacities are both frequently cited as markers of adulthood, despite potentially pointing in different directions, it is possible to debate the extent to which such a mindset reflects attainment of adulthood. However, it at least seems clear that house sharing need not be associated with dependence and can in fact play a central role in a young person's developing sense of independence and adulthood.

It is worth noting however that, for some house sharers, having to continue sharing, when they would like to live alone, can represent a lack of independence and control. For example, in a study of private renters in Ireland, Waldron (2022) observed that while all participants aspired to homeownership, high house prices meant that many were unable to buy, or even rent, alone and were instead left with no choice but to share. This led some participants to feel "stuck" and "to struggle with a sense of diminished independence" (p. 41). Similarly, Garcia (2016) described how, for her participants, moving into a house share represented gaining a greater sense of autonomy and control compared to living in the parental home; however, some participants also felt that living alone would give them a greater feeling of independence and responsibility than sharing could.

### 2.2 – Literature on Home

While deeply connected, it is generally recognised that houses and homes are not the same. Indeed, Fox (2002, p. 590) suggested that home may be conceptualised via the equation "*home* = house + *x*", adding that "the conceptual challenge in relation to home is to unravel the enigmatic '*x* factor'". Within this section, the question of what exactly do we mean by 'home' is considered. The potential psychosocial benefits of home are then discussed, followed by a review of the evidence regarding how housing tenure and household composition relate to psychological well-being. This section then finishes by

considering the extent to which commonly accepted meanings of home can be seen to apply to house shares.

**2.2.1 – The Meaning of Home**

Much has been written on the meaning of home across a variety of academic disciplines (Mallett, 2004). Empirical work and literature reviews published on the meaning of home identify a variety of different possible meanings but there are common themes. Indeed, Somerville stated: "all types of study have revealed the same recurrent meanings of home" (1997, p. 227). I have summarised these themes below, based on meanings of home discussed by Byrne (2020), Clapham (2005), Després (1991b), Dupuis and Thorns (1998), Fox (2002), Gurney (1990), Hiscock et al. (2001), Kearns et al. (2000), Mallett (2004), Saunders (1989), Saunders and Williams (1988), and Somerville (1992, 1997). Home can be:

- **Shelter** – Home is a physical structure which offers protection and safety from the elements and other threats, such as crime.

- **Haven** – Home is a refuge from the outside world, where you have privacy away from surveillance, can relax, and be yourself.

- **Control** – Home is a place that you control, where you have autonomy and freedom. You can do what you want in the property and can also control who enters.

- **Stability** – Home is somewhere that is stable and secure, where you can stay on a long-term/ permanent basis. It is somewhere you can put down roots.

- **Ownership** – Home is yours to do with as you want, including being able to modify the property. Owning and modifying one's home can also be closely associated with feelings of pride.

- **Comfort** – Home is a place of physical and emotional comfort, somewhere that is welcoming and 'homely'.

- **Love** – Home is a place of love and support. It is a space of care and the setting for important emotional relationships.

- **Status** – Home is a way to indicate your social status. This typically centres on ideas of homeownership being a marker of status, but location, décor, and the appearance of the property can also be ways to signal status.

- **Asset** – Home can be an investment and an asset which gives financial security and also provides a way to pass on wealth to the next generation through inheritance.

- **Identity** – Home is an expression of the self. You can put your stamp on it, furnishing and decorating the property in a way that reflects your sense of style. The home also holds meaningful possessions that represent memories and the life you have lived.

- **Belonging** – Home is somewhere you feel that you belong. Often this also includes feelings of belonging in the wider neighbourhood, beyond one's specific dwelling. The creation of memories can contribute to a growing sense of belonging and attachment to home over time.

- **Routine** – Home is a place where day-to-day routines are carried out. In this way, home is a place of familiarity and continuity. Home is also a place of ritualised celebrations for events such as birthdays and religious festivals.

These different meanings of home are often inter-related. For example, Mallett (2004) observed that home being a haven relies on having control over one's environment, so as to be able to shut out the outside world. Home is, generally, centred on a particular building and the physical characteristics of that building (e.g. type of dwelling, size, layout) influence how the people living there interact with the building and each other, impacting the experience of home (Clapham, 2005; Després, 1991b; Saunders & Williams, 1988). However, the home is also socially constructed – it is not just a building, it is something we give meaning to (Després, 1991b; Easthope, 2004). Indeed, the same building will mean different things in different contexts (e.g. historical time, culture, location) and to different people, depending on, for example, their age, lifestyle, and aspirations (Clapham, 2005; Coulter, 2023; Gurney, 1990; Saunders & Williams, 1988). Home, therefore, is a complex, multidimensional concept, which inherently entails different layers of meaning, including social, psychological, material, geographical, cultural, legal, and economic aspects (Després, 1991b; Easthope, 2004; Fox, 2002; Gurney, 1990; Mallett, 2004; Meers, 2021; Somerville, 1992, 1997).

The different dimensions of home can be seen to relate to different needs within Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs. For example, housing can fulfil not only our need for shelter and physical security, but can also help to meet our needs for belonging, autonomy, and self-esteem (Després, 1991b; Perritt et al., 1993). Through providing a space in which we can express creativity and pursue self-growth, home can also potentially help us work towards meeting self-actualisation needs as well. Somerville (1992) emphasised that home

can offer us different forms of security, including physical, emotional, and territorial. However, the form of security that home can offer that has received the most attention in the literature is ontological security.

### 2.2.2 – Ontological Security and the Psychosocial Benefits of Home

The concept of ontological security originated in the work of the psychiatrist Laing (1960/2010), who used the term 'ontological insecurity' to describe symptoms he witnessed in patients with schizophrenia. Laing describes the ontologically insecure individual as: "precariously differentiated from the rest of the world, so that his [*sic*] identity and autonomy are always in question... He may not possess an over-riding sense of personal consistency or cohesiveness" (1960/2010, p. 42). Therefore, within Laing's original work, ontological insecurity was a symptom of serious mental illness (Gurney, 2021; Gustafsson & Krickel-Choi, 2020). Following Laing's work, the concept of ontological security was picked up, and somewhat modified, by the sociologist Giddens (1984). Giddens defined ontological security as "the confidence that most human beings have in the continuity of their self-identity and in the constancy of the surrounding social and material environments" (1990, p. 92). Therefore, according to Giddens' definition, which generally forms the starting point for contemporary discussions of ontological security and home, ontological security is a sense of basic trust and confidence that the world is not just unpredictable and frightening, but rather some personal control and planning for the future is possible.

This sense of basic trust is usually established in infancy through the care we receive from parents/ caregivers (Giddens, 1990, 1991). This caregiving will generally be centred around routines, and it is the consistency and reliability of the care received that is key for establishing ontological security. For this reason, routine and consistency help us to feel secure and to defend against anxiety, even as adults (Giddens, 1990, 1991). However, Giddens (1990, 1991) argued that changes to society over the course of the 20th century have increased risk and uncertainty in the world and we now face new threats to our sense of ontological security. For example, life today provides far more options and opportunities than in previous times, but this means there are also more choices to be made and fewer routinised life paths to fall back on. Things which could once be taken for granted – e.g. "gender, corporeality, identity, religion, marriage, parenthood, social ties" (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002, p. 5) – now have to be consciously thought about and decided on. People need to choose their own lifestyle, their own values, and actively construct their own identity (Beck, 1992; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Giddens, 1992; McAdams, 2001).

Saunders (1984, 1989) proposed that the home, particularly the privately-owned home, may be uniquely well-placed to provide a sense of ontological security. Indeed, Saunders (1989, p. 184) argued that homeownership could represent "an individual or household response to what Giddens (1984) has termed the problem of 'ontological insecurity' in contemporary societies". He saw this as being due to the fact that "The home is where people are off-stage, free from surveillance, in control of their immediate environment. It is their castle. It is where they feel they belong" (Saunders, 1989, p. 184). However, Saunders acknowledged that ontological security was "difficult to define, even more difficult to operationalise" (1989, p. 186). Attempts to research home and ontological security have generally focused on the extent to which the home provided a safe and consistent environment where routines could be performed and the individual had control over their environment (Dupuis & Thorns, 1998; Henwood et al., 2018; Hiscock et al., 2001; Kearns et al., 2000). The extent to which home provides the ability to develop a positive self-image has also been seen as a marker of ontological security (Dupuis & Thorns, 1998; Hiscock et al., 2001; Kearns et al., 2000). However, Gurney (1990) argued that relying on such indirect indicators has at times led to confusion and conflation between ontological security and other concepts such as emotional security or pride. Challenging this conflation between concepts, Gurney (1990, p. 15) stated:

> owner occupiers felt differently about their homes because they derived a sense of pride and self-esteem from them. There is however a fundamental difference between noting the incidence of such feelings and claiming that they are indicative of the fact that home ownership generates a sense of ontological security.

It is arguable that ontological security has become a 'catch-all' term for all of the proposed psychosocial benefits of home, away from its more original focus on meaning and identity. Indeed, Gurney (2021, para. 14) observed that ontological security has become "more or less synonymous with the summation of the various meanings – or attributes – of home". This conflation of ontological security with various different dimensions of home can be seen in the literature. For example, Hiscock et al. (2001, p. 53) stated:

> we have focused on three phenomena which have been called the social-psychological aspects of the home… namely the home as a haven, as a site for autonomy and as providing social status... All three phenomena are also present in Giddens (1991) discussion of ontological security.

For this thesis, it is therefore felt to be more useful to consider discrete benefits of home (e.g. feelings of control, stability, or status) separately, rather than to talk in terms of ontological security. It is hoped this will help to create greater clarity about what home

means for people living in house shares after the age of 30 years and the particular benefits of home they may or may not experience.

### 2.2.3 – Housing Tenure, Home, and Well-Being

In the UK, and in countries with similar housing markets, there are a number of ways in which owner-occupation more closely models cultural understandings of home, compared to renting (Després, 1991b; Saunders, 1989; Soaita & McKee, 2019; Somerville, 1997). Differences between housing tenures with regards to key psychosocial benefits of home (control, stability, and status) and the impact these differences may have on well-being are explored in more detail below.

#### *2.2.3.1 – Control, Tenure, and Well-Being*

Homeownership provides control over one's living space, for example enabling you to personalise or modify the space so it can better suit your taste, meet your needs, and/or express your identity (Dupuis & Thorns, 1998; Saunders, 1989). In contrast, private tenants are often not allowed to personalise their property or have pets, impeding their ability to feel a sense of control over their living environment or to feel at home (Easthope, 2014; Hoolachan et al., 2017; McKee et al., 2020; Rolfe et al., 2023; Soaita & McKee, 2019). Inspections by landlords can also undermine feelings of privacy and control (Owens & Green, 2020; Rolfe et al., 2023). Some tenants have noted that they do not report issues with their property for fear that doing so would lead to retaliatory eviction or rent rises, thus engendering feelings of powerlessness (Chisholm et al., 2020; Fraser et al., 2021; Iafrati, 2021; Irving, 2015). However, even when tenants report issues, it can take a long time for repairs to be done, if they are done at all, causing frustration and undermining tenants' ability to feel comfortable and at home (Chisholm et al., 2020; McKee et al., 2020; McKee & Soaita, 2018; Rolfe et al., 2023; Soaita & McKee, 2019). Finally, and more fundamentally, insecurity of tenure also means that renters do not necessarily have control over key decisions in their life, such as how long to remain living in one place (Byrne, 2020; Dupuis & Thorns, 1998). In 2020, 83% of private renters in England had assured shorthold tenancies, under which, after the first four months, landlords can generally, at any point and for any (or no) reason, give tenants two months' notice to leave (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government [MHCLG], 2021). This creates the possibility of renters being evicted at short notice. Even if tenants are not asked to leave, the fear of eviction can still loom large in their lives, creating feelings of precarity and lack of control (Bone, 2014; Coulter, 2023; McKee et al., 2020; McKee & Soaita, 2018; Morris, 2018; Soaita & McKee, 2019; Watt, 2018).

Research has shown that feeling a lack of control over your life can lead to negative outcomes in terms of health and well-being (Clapham, 2005, 2010; Elstad, 1998; Gecas, 2003; Mirowsky & Ross, 2003). Indeed, analysis of data from 104 countries showed personal control (i.e. the extent to which someone perceived themself as having control over their life) to be significantly, positively correlated with happiness and satisfaction with life, even after controlling for gender, age, marital status, and social class (Nguyen et al., 2020). Additionally, research has shown that the lack of control private renters can experience (e.g. due to insecurity of tenure and inability to personalise their living space) can have negative consequences for mental health, including increased risk of stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms (Bone, 2014; Harris & McKee, 2021; McKee & Soaita, 2018; Morris, 2018; Rolfe et al., 2023; Soaita & McKee, 2019).

### 2.2.3.2 – Housing Stability, Tenure, and Well-Being

Homeownership provides security of tenure. In contrast, as Byrne observes, "insecurity is baked into the DNA of the rental sector" (2020, p. 351). As discussed in Section 2.2.3.1, the vast majority of private renters in the UK have short-term contracts, which can severely undermine tenants' ability to feel secure or at home where they are living (Easthope, 2014; Hoolachan et al., 2017; McKee & Soaita, 2018; Rolfe et al., 2023). On average, renters move more frequently than owner-occupiers. In the financial year 2020-21, 37% of private renters in England had spent only 1 year or less living in their current residence, compared to 8% of owner-occupiers and 14% of social tenants (DLUHC, 2022a). In contrast, 34% of owner-occupiers had lived in their current residence for 20 years or more, compared to 3% of private renters and 19% of social renters. Having to move frequently makes it harder to develop routines and a sense of familiarity in one place. Additionally, insecure, short-term tenancies can impact the ability of private renters to build connections with their local community and develop a sense of belonging (McKee et al., 2020; Pennington et al., 2012; Rolfe et al., 2023).

Research from the UK, Australia, and the USA has found higher levels of housing instability to be associated with lower perceived quality of life and higher levels of psychological distress (Bone, 2014; H. Green, Fernandez, & MacPhail, 2022; Li et al., 2022; Rollins et al., 2012). Additionally, Li et al. found that housing stability (i.e. staying in the same property for longer) was associated with improved mental health for both private renters and owner-occupiers, although the improvement was greater among renters. Indeed, when comparing renters and owner-occupiers who had just moved into a new property, renters were found to have higher levels of psychological distress and worse mental health than

owners, but when owner-occupiers and renters who had not moved for 5-6 years were compared, there was no difference between the tenures in terms of well-being.

### 2.2.3.3 – Status, Tenure, and Well-Being

In the UK, and in many other countries, including Australia, Canada, Italy, New Zealand, and the USA, social norms and government policy have worked to present homeownership as the normative tenure that everyone should aspire to (Blandy, 2018; Bricocoli & Sabatinelli, 2016; Clapham, 2005; Coulter, 2023; Després, 1991b; Dupuis & Thorns, 1998; Gurney, 1999; Hiscock et al., 2001; Mallett, 2004; McKee et al., 2017). Homeownership has been discursively constructed as a sign of success, adulthood, and being a good, upright citizen. In contrast, renting is often presented as undesirable and outside of the mainstream.

Evidence that homeownership, on its own and apart from location and dwelling type, provides a sense of status can be seen from research showing that former council tenants who bought their house through Right to Buy reported gaining more of a sense of pride and status from their home after buying, even though they remained in the same property (Hiscock et al., 2001; Saunders, 1989). For these former tenants, homeownership was a way of demonstrating achievement, success, and progress in life. In contrast, while the majority of people in the UK continue to aspire to own their own home, homeownership has become increasingly unobtainable for many people, due to rising house prices, stagnating wages, and changes to mortgage lending (Coulter, 2023; J. Crawford & McKee, 2018; Hoolachan et al., 2017; McKee et al., 2017; McKee & Soaita, 2018; Pennington et al., 2012; Rugg & Rhodes, 2018). Therefore, many living in the PRS would prefer to own but cannot afford to buy and so have no choice but to rent. Many are also unable to see how their situation will change in the future. This can lead to feelings of frustration, of not progressing in life, and potentially of failure (McKee et al., 2019; McKee & Soaita, 2018).

The potential well-being impact of the relative status of different tenures was demonstrated by Foye et al. (2018) who found that an increase in the importance that peers (i.e. people of similar age and education level, living in the same region) ascribed to homeownership was associated with decreased psychological well-being among renters and increased psychological well-being among owners. This suggests that, when peers place importance on homeownership, owners can gain status from their home, whereas renters may experience feelings of shame and inadequacy (Giddens, 1991; Hiscock et al., 2001).

### 2.2.3.4 – Does Tenure Tell Us Everything?

Studies that have compared psychological well-being outcomes across tenures have generally found that renters experienced lower well-being and poorer mental health than homeowners. For example, research from Canada found that renters experienced higher levels of psychological distress than homeowners and a study conducted in Belgium found that living in a rented property was associated with higher risk of suicide, compared to living in an owner-occupied property (Cairney & Boyle, 2004; Damiens & Schnor, 2022). Furthermore, research from the UK, Austria, and South Korea has found owner-occupiers to have significantly higher life satisfaction than renters (Angel & Gregory, 2021; Kang & Park, 2023). Through analysing longitudinal data from England, Vanhoutte et al. (2017) found that spending more years renting was associated with experiencing more depressive symptoms and lower eudaimonic well-being[7] in later life. However, Vanhoutte et al. did not find the length of time that a participant had spent owning or renting to be related to their level of satisfaction with life. Furthermore, research from the UK, Austria, and New Zealand has suggested that renters and owners do not differ significantly with regards to experience of positive or negative emotions (Angel & Gregory, 2021; Morrison, 2007). There is, therefore, some variation between studies; however, generally results show renters experiencing poorer psychological well-being than owner-occupiers.

Nonetheless, despite potential differences between tenures with regards to control, stability, status, and well-being, it is important to avoid sweeping generalisations. In any given country, cultural norms, the legal and welfare system, housing supply, the labour market, and the general state of the economy can have a big influence over the meaning of different tenures and people's housing aspirations (Coulter, 2023; Després, 1991b; Dupuis & Thorns, 1998; Preece & Bimpson, 2019). For example, renting is more normalised and private tenants enjoy far more security in Germany, compared to the UK (Coulter, 2023; Easthope, 2014). There can also be variations within the same country with, for example, the cultural importance attached to homeownership varying across different regions of the UK (Foye et al., 2018; Hiscock et al., 2001).

Within the UK, some researchers have highlighted that there is growing variation within, rather than between, tenures (Gurney, 1990; Murie, 2019). For example, in recent years, the PRS and social housing have to some extent converged, with many social tenants no longer having the same security of tenure they would once have enjoyed and many

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[7] Eudaimonic well-being is related to quality of life, including the level of autonomy, control, pleasure, and self-realisation that one experiences.

people in receipt of housing benefit now being housed in the PRS (Blandy, 2018; Fitzpatrick & Watts, 2017; Rugg & Rhodes, 2018). Additionally, leasehold ownership, as well as shared ownership schemes, bring into question the association between homeownership and having complete control over one's property (Blandy, 2018). Initiatives such as Right to Buy have also increased variation amongst homeowners in terms of wealth and social class (Hiscock et al., 2001). Furthermore, Gurney (1990, p. 11) has argued that the difference between people who own their property outright and people who own with a mortgage "represents a salient psychological cleavage", which "is of more importance than the owning/renting cleavage… in explaining the incidence of feelings of 'confidence or trust' or 'niche and belonging' with the home". This idea has found empirical support, with some research finding mortgagors experienced higher psychological distress and lower well-being compared to outright owners (Cairney & Boyle, 2004; DLUHC, 2022b). Indeed, in the UK, Angel and Gregory (2021) found no significant difference between renters and mortgagors in terms of satisfaction with life, whereas outright owners experienced significantly higher satisfaction with life than renters.

Resources seem to play a key role in influencing the extent to which owner-occupiers gain a sense of security and control from their home. The cost of maintaining their property may be a source of stress for low-income homeowners, who may find themselves unable to afford necessary repairs or desired modifications, potentially leading to reduced feelings of control and comfort (Gurney, 1990; Hiscock et al., 2001; S. J. Smith et al., 2003). Alternatively, some homeowners may find themselves having to take in lodgers to enable them to pay their mortgage and maintain ownership (Alam et al., 2022; Després, 1991a; Heath et al., 2018). Therefore, while homeownership may represent security and autonomy for some owners, "for others it represents a housing situation of financial uncertainty, worry and lack of control" (Gurney, 1990, p. 8). For this reason, Hiscock et al. (2001) argued that social renting can offer more security than homeownership to some people on low incomes. Additionally, while private renters often experience a lack of control, the extent of this varies according to personal circumstances and resources. In particular, higher income, higher social capital, and having a landlord who is felt to be fair and who fixes problems promptly can help renters to feel in control of their living situation (Blandy, 2018; Coulter, 2023; Irving, 2015; Rolfe et al., 2023; Soaita & McKee, 2021). Clapham emphasised that, while housing is part of how people construct their lifestyle and identity, tenure is only one aspect of this. Indeed, Clapham observed: "Lifestyles also encompass choices about household and family structure and the nature of the relationships involved" (2005, p. 16). The impact of household composition on the meaning and experience of home is therefore explored next.

**2.2.4 – Can a House Share Be a Home?**

There are a number of ways in which sharing a house with non-kin contravenes normative expectations of home, which may make it more difficult for house sharers to feel at home where they are living (Heath et al., 2018). However, despite these potential challenges, research has shown that many people do feel at home when living in a house share (Clark & Tuffin, 2023; Després, 1991a; Heath et al., 2018; McNamara & Connell, 2007). For example, 76% of McNamara and Connell's participants viewed their house share as home, and those who did not had generally lived in their present house share for less than 6 months. Furthermore, many of Després' participants highlighted that, compared to living alone, house sharing made it easier to experience a number of key dimensions of home (including safety, companionship, and togetherness), leading her to conclude that "instead of restricting the feeling of being-at-home, the presence of unrelated adults often reinforces it" (1991a, p. 149). The extent to which traditional definitions of home (discussed in Section 2.2.1) can be seen as applying to house shares is explored below. Questions are also raised about whether family homes always meet traditional definitions of home and, given that many people feel at home in house shares, whether there is a need to problematise and/or expand definitions of home.

**2.2.4.1 – Home Is Private; House Shares may Be Semi-Public Spaces**

Home is generally defined as a private space, in sharp contrast to the world outside the home which is public (Mallett, 2004; Saunders & Williams, 1988). This distinction is central to the idea of home as a haven. However, as Heath and Kenyon (2001) observed, house shares can blur the boundary between public and private space. Indeed, many house sharers live with relative, or even total, strangers, contravening the idea of home as a place where you are "off-stage" (Saunders, 1989, p. 184). Indeed, as Byrne (2020, p. 354) noted, if you live in a house share, "all of the challenges of social relations are incorporated within the home: having to 'deal with' other people, manage conflicts… all of the things home is supposed to enable us to retreat from".

However, the idea of the home as a completely private space, occupied only by the nuclear family, is a relatively new concept, which developed in the West after industrialisation (Mallett, 2004; Somerville, 1997). Prior to the mid-twentieth century, forms of shared housing, such as apprentices or agricultural workers living communally, people taking in boarders, and the wealthy having live-in servants, were not uncommon (Clark & Tuffin, 2023). Furthermore, even as homes became more private, there remained parts of the home (e.g. parlours or reception rooms) that were public-facing and geared towards socialising (Mallett, 2004; Saunders & Williams, 1988). The traditional family home therefore

is not completely private. Moreover, people living in house shares are not without privacy. Research has shown that privacy remains important for many sharers, with the bedroom offering a valued private space (Clark, Tuffin, Frewin, et al., 2018; Després, 1991a; Heath et al., 2018; McKee et al., 2020). Indeed, Heath et al. observed that sharers may enjoy greater privacy within the home than people in nuclear family households as, for example, mothers rarely experience privacy within the family home, whereas house sharers have their own private room which is theirs alone.

### *2.2.4.2 – Home Is a Space You Control; House Sharers Lack Control*

House sharing necessarily involves sharing domestic space, making it impossible for sharers to have total control over their living environment. People renting a room in a house share not only have limitations placed on their ability to control their living situation and environment by their landlord, but also by their housemates (McKee et al., 2020; Soaita & McKee, 2019). Moreover, owner-occupiers who are resident landlords can also experience a lack of control and constraints on their freedom due to living with lodgers (Alam et al., 2022; Heath et al., 2018). This lack of control over one's environment can lead to frustration and/or conflict, especially if different housemates hold differing expectations around acceptable levels of cleanliness, tidiness, or noise (Barratt et al., 2015; Bricocoli & Sabatinelli, 2016; Gurney, 2000; Heath & Kenyon, 2001; Lowry, 1989). Furthermore, sharers cannot have total control over who enters the property or when they will be required to engage in social interaction with housemates (or guests of housemates) in common areas of the house (Barratt et al., 2015; Garcia, 2016; Ortega-Alcázar & Wilkinson, 2019). The lack of control house sharers experience can undermine ability to feel at home (Alam et al., 2022; Heath et al., 2018; Ortega-Alcázar & Wilkinson, 2021).

Nonetheless, it is important to question the extent to which complete control over the home can ever be achieved. For example, Blandy observed that, even in the case of homeownership, "property rights are always 'shared' with the state, which may decide to exercise its rights such as compulsory purchase" (2018, p. 26). Furthermore, even in less extreme examples, property boundaries are always shared and can be penetrated, for example, by noise from neighbours (Blandy, 2018; Gurney, 2000). Additionally, living with kin can still entail arguments around cleaning, being disturbed by unwanted noise from other household members, and having to negotiate schedules around shower usage (Després, 1991a; Gurney, 2000; Heath et al., 2018; Marici et al., 2023). However, in contrast to the discursive construction of sharing with non-kin, the need to sacrifice control and compromise when living with kin is rarely presented as a potential threat to one's ability to feel at home (Heath et al., 2018).

For some people, having to live in a house share represents a fundamental lack of control over a key aspect of their life: where to live and who to live with. For example, young people receiving housing benefit at the Shared Accommodation Rate have no choice but to share and often find the only option available to them is poor quality accommodation, shared with strangers (Cole et al., 2016; Ortega-Alcázar & Wilkinson, 2019, 2021). Additionally, sharing out of necessity is by no means limited to young people, and many people, of all ages, who are on low incomes find themselves with no choice but to live with strangers (Barratt et al., 2015; Iafrati, 2021; Irving, 2015; Ortega-Alcázar & Wilkinson, 2019; Ward, 2015). Nonetheless, for other people, living in a house share is an intentional choice (Després, 1991a; Heath et al., 2018). For example, the majority of participants in Heath and Kenyon (2001), Kenyon and Heath (2001), and McNamara and Connell (2007) would have been financially able to rent, or even buy, somewhere on their own but chose to share for a mix of economic and social reasons (e.g. wanting to increase disposable income and enjoying the company of housemates). House sharers with higher financial and social capital can enjoy more choice over where to live and who to live with (as well as whether to share in the first place) and are therefore more likely to end up living in a positive, non-harmful situation (Barratt & Green, 2017; McKee et al., 2019). House sharers with more resources also have more ability to leave if they find themself living in an unpleasant or unsafe situation. Personal contextual factors, such as preferences around sociability, can also shape whether house sharing is experienced as a product of choice or constraint (Barratt & Green, 2017).

### 2.2.4.3 – Home Is a Family Space; House Sharers Often Live With Non-Kin

For some people, home is almost synonymous with the conceptualisation of the nuclear family. Indeed, Clapham observed: "Home and family are two closely related concepts that are often combined into the one picture of a normative lifestyle" (2005, p. 118; see also Dupuis & Thorns, 1998). However, others have observed that family is a fluid and culturally-relative concept, with Mallett (2004, p. 74) stating: "the nuclear family and the nuclear family house are of limited relevance to the meaning of home and family for many people". Nonetheless, it is important to recognise that supportive relationships are an important part of experiencing a dwelling as home for many people (Gurney, 1990).

Some people live in house shares where there is no sense of community and little, or no, interaction between housemates, which can lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness (H. Green, Fernandez, Moxham, et al., 2022; Waldron, 2022). However, many house sharers enjoy friendly, supportive relationships with their housemates, which can facilitate

feeling at home (Clark, Tuffin, Bowker, et al., 2018; Després, 1991a; Ferrari et al., 2002; Heath et al., 2018; McNamara & Connell, 2007). Furthermore, research from the UK, Australia, Italy, Portugal, and the USA has found that, in some house shares, housemates formed a family of choice, providing an important source of social, as well as emotional, practical, and even financial support for each other (Bricocoli & Sabatinelli, 2016; Després, 1991a; H. Green, Fernandez, Moxham, et al., 2022; Heath, 2004; Heath et al., 2018; Maalsen, 2019; McNamara & Connell, 2007; Raynor & Frichot, 2022; Santos, 2023). Such house shares had rituals and routines, and engaged in similar practices as nuclear family households, such as coming together in the evening to discuss their days and, at least sometimes, eating dinner together. Some of these house shares did all of their food shopping together and many socialised together, celebrated birthdays together, and in some cases collected shared possessions that reflected their group identity. In these studies, living in a house share that felt like a family created a sense of community, of belonging, and facilitated feeling at home (Després, 1991a; Heath et al., 2018; McNamara & Connell, 2007).

### 2.2.4.4 – *Home Is Stable and Permanent; Sharing Is Transitory and Temporary*

Research has suggested that those who are renting a room in a house share move residence more frequently, and experience changes to the composition of their household more frequently, than those who are renting a whole property, either on their own or with a partner (Heath et al., 2018; McNamara & Connell, 2007). Resident landlords, who take in lodgers, are generally far more settled in terms of their location but can still experience a high degree of transience, with frequent changes in who they are living with (Heath et al., 2018; Heath & Kenyon, 2001). The experiences of sharers are highly varied, with some experiencing high levels of stability, residing in the same shared property for 18+ years (G. Green et al., 2016; Heath et al., 2018; Irving, 2015); however, even in house shares where participants were highly satisfied with their living arrangements, there was generally a recognition that house sharing would not last forever. For example, the majority of McNamara and Connell's (2007) participants did not want to be sharing in 10 years and hoped instead to be living with a partner, and perhaps children, in non-shared accommodation.

Nonetheless, studies show that house shares can still be experienced as home, even when they are acknowledged to be temporary or when marriage and a single-family home are aspired to in the future (Després, 1991a; Kenyon, 2003; McNamara & Connell, 2007). This ability of home to be created in a space and form that is acknowledged to be impermanent would seem to go against traditional ideas of home. However, despite the focus on constancy and permanence in definitions of home, it is culturally understood that no

household, even nuclear family households, does, or should, remain the same over time. Children grow up and move out; this does not mean, however, that they are no longer part of the family (McGoldrick et al., 2015). Similarly, while the families of choice that some people form in house shares often co-reside only for a limited period, the bonds between former housemates can continue to exist long after they no longer live together (Heath, 2004). Furthermore, while stability has been seen as a key benefit of homeownership, the idea of home as representing status and progress through life can produce a drive towards instability. Indeed, within their research, Hiscock et al. (2001) found that, on average, owner-occupiers moved more frequently than social tenants, in their pursuit of climbing the housing ladder.

### 2.2.4.5 – Home Is a Place of Safety; Some House Shares Are Unsafe

In research on house sharing, some participants have reported feeling uncomfortable and unsafe where they were living, for example due to conflict or mistrust between housemates (Clark & Tuffin, 2023; Raynor & Frichot, 2022). This was more likely to be the case among people living with strangers (Clark et al., 2017; Harris & McKee, 2021). People on low incomes who find themselves with no choice but to house share with strangers in a large HMO at the bottom end of the PRS can be particularly at risk of living in unsafe situations (Iafrati, 2021; Irving, 2015; Ortega-Alcázar & Wilkinson, 2019; Ward, 2015). In such cases, people typically have no control over who they live with. Additionally, as large HMOs frequently house people with multiple and complex needs, residents may find themselves living with people with untreated mental illness or substance abuse issues who may engage in erratic or worrying behaviour (Barratt et al., 2012, 2015; Iafrati, 2021; Irving, 2015; Ortega-Alcázar & Wilkinson, 2019). Many participants living in such properties reported feeling unsafe due to issues such as drug dealing, violence, theft, or bullying. Living in such conditions made it almost impossible to feel at home and was instead associated with stress, anxiety, and declining mental health (Clark, Tuffin, Frewin, et al., 2018; Iafrati, 2021; Ortega-Alcázar & Wilkinson, 2019).

However, in cases where people were living with housemates with whom they enjoyed friendly, supportive relationships, house sharing could increase feelings of safety and security compared to living alone (Bagnall, 2020; Després, 1991a; Heath et al., 2018). Additionally, in cases where people were living in HMOs that were run well, by managers who did not tolerate anti-social behaviour, it was possible to feel safe (Barratt et al., 2015; G. Green et al., 2016). Furthermore, it is important to note that house shares are not unique in being sites of potential harm. Family homes can be sites of violence, fear, and abuse (Gurney, 1990, 2020; Mallett, 2004). Moreover, as Gurney (1990, 2020) observed, some of

the defining characteristics of home can actually facilitate harm, with, for example, the privacy of home providing an environment, away from scrutiny, in which abuse can occur.

### *2.2.4.6 – Home Provides Status; Sharing Is Often Stigmatised*

House sharing is often seen as an undesirable way to live. Indeed, a survey of 18- to 34-year-olds in Wales found that only 6% described sharing as their preferred living situation (Clarke & Heywood, 2016). Furthermore, Heath et al. (2018) found that some house sharers, especially those over 30 years of age, reported that their friends, family members, and/or colleagues perceived their living situation as something unusual or negative. Barratt and Green (2017) emphasised that house sharing, and in particular living in an HMO, stands apart from homeownership and non-shared forms of renting due to the level of stigma and shame associated with it. Indeed, HMOs tend to be associated with drug addiction, crime, and anti-social behaviour in the popular imagination (Barratt et al., 2015; Barratt & Green, 2017). This led some participants in Barratt and Green's study to feel embarrassed about living in an HMO and to compare themselves negatively to, for example, siblings whom they considered more successful. Furthermore, the poor quality housing people experience in some house shares can lead to decreased self-esteem (Barratt et al., 2012).

Notwithstanding, some people, especially young, single professionals, see house sharing as preferable to living alone (Heath & Kenyon, 2001; Kenyon & Heath, 2001; McNamara & Connell, 2007). Kenyon and Heath discussed how television shows such as *Friends* have helped to reposition house sharing as a desirable way of life to young, middle-class professionals. Similarly, co-living developments (e.g. Old Oak Common in London), which have proliferated in recent years and which provide a combination of community and luxury amenities, have marketed shared living as an aspirational choice (Clark & Tuffin, 2023; Druta & Ronald, 2021). Indeed, homeownership is not the only way to gain status and house sharers can potentially gain, or signal, status via their work, education, and/or other forms of consumption, such as travel (Després, 1991a; Mimoun & Bardhi, 2022). Llamas (2016) argued that freedom can be perceived as a luxury and, while homeownership can provide autonomy, it can also reduce freedom by tying you to one property and monthly mortgage payments. More flexible forms of housing, such as sharing, can potentially offer freedom to travel or pursue self-development goals and can therefore (in some situations) also signal status (Mimoun & Bardhi, 2022).

Additionally, it is important to remember that some house sharers are also homeowners, who may jointly own the property with friends or may be a resident landlord renting out rooms (Alam et al., 2022; F. Baum, 1986; Heath et al., 2018; Heath & Scicluna,

2020; Kenyon, 2003). It is currently unclear from the literature whether living with housemates may reduce the sense of status that homeownership can offer. For example, Alam et al. (2022) found that, for some owner-occupiers, taking in lodgers induced feelings of shame and fear of judgement. However, the rent from lodgers was also necessary for Alam et al.'s participants to be able to pay their mortgage and secure their status as homeowners.

**2.2.5 – Household Composition and Well-Being**

As noted in Section 2.2.3.1, research has shown that a sense of control is important for psychological well-being (Clapham, 2005, 2010; Elstad, 1998; Gecas, 2003; Mirowsky & Ross, 2003; Nguyen et al., 2020). The lack of control house sharers can experience (over their living conditions and over the nature and/or frequency of social interactions) can have negative consequences for well-being (Barratt et al., 2012, 2015; A. Baum & Valins, 1979; Evans, 2003). However, various studies have also shown the importance of social support and psychological sense of community for mental health (K.-A. Allen et al., 2022; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Bess et al., 2002; Clapham, 2010; Evans, 2003; Hombrados-Mendieta et al., 2013). Baumeister and Leary (1995; see also K.-A. Allen et al., 2022) argued that humans have a fundamental need to belong and to develop and maintain interpersonal bonds with other people. Feeling a psychological sense of community is an important way that this need for belonging, acceptance, and connection can be met (McMillan, 1996; McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Sarason, 1974). Sarason (1974, p. 1) defined psychological sense of community as "the sense that one was part of a readily available, mutually supportive network of relationships upon which one could depend". Psychological sense of community and social support can therefore be seen as related but distinct concepts (Pretty et al., 1994, 1996). Research has shown psychological sense of community to have a significant positive correlation to happiness and ability to cope with setbacks (Pretty et al., 1996). Similarly, social support has been shown to help individuals cope with challenging circumstances and can potentially mitigate the negative effects of perceived lack of control on well-being (Elstad, 1998; Mirowsky & Ross, 2003). Psychological sense of community and social support have both been shown to have a significant negative correlation with psychological distress, loneliness, stress, and mental ill-health (Coombs, 1991; Ellaway et al., 2001; H. Green, Fernandez, & MacPhail, 2022; Hombrados-Mendieta et al., 2013; M. E. McCarthy et al., 1990; Pretty et al., 1994, 1996). Furthermore, psychological sense of community has been found to predict depressive symptoms, loneliness, and satisfaction with life even when controlling for demographic characteristics (Parker et al., 2001; Prezza et al., 2001).

Many people receive social support from their partner and/or family members whom they live with; however, research has shown that, for house sharers, housemates can also be an important source of social support and psychological sense of community (Després, 1991a; Ferrari et al., 2002; Heath et al., 2018; Heath & Kenyon, 2001; Kenyon & Heath, 2001; McNamara & Connell, 2007). This may explain why some research has found that living in a house share can offer well-being benefits compared to living alone, including increased happiness, reduced loneliness, and increased feelings of safety (Altus & Mathews, 2000; Clark, Tuffin, Bowker, et al., 2018; de Sousa et al., 2022; Després, 1991a; Martinez et al., 2020; Pynoos et al., 1990).

Nonetheless, the well-being effects of living in different types of household are likely to vary across individuals. For example, Eckermann (2015) reported that living alone can be associated with higher well-being if it is something that is freely chosen by someone who desires the autonomy and privacy it offers. However, living alone can lead to loneliness and depression when it is not chosen and/or does not represent the person's preferred living arrangement (Eckermann, 2015). Similarly, Oh and Kim (2021) found that participants who were living in a house share and who wanted to live in a house share (consonant sharers) were significantly more likely to report that their mental health had improved since they moved into their current residence, compared to participants who lived alone or participants who were house sharing but did not want to share (dissonant sharers). Additionally, dissonant sharers were significantly more likely to show signs of social dysfunction than other participants.

The meaning of home can therefore be seen as subjective and personal, depending on factors such as the person's aspirations, preferences, lifestyle, and past experiences (Clapham, 2002, 2005; Coulter, 2023; Gurney, 1990). Different people value different things in their housing. For example, some people choose to live in rented and/or shared housing because they value the flexibility or lifestyle it affords them and are willing to sacrifice some control for that (Clapham, 2005; J. Crawford & McKee, 2018; Heath & Kenyon, 2001). Indeed, Clapham observed: "What can be a healthy living environment for one individual, may have health-depleting characteristics for that person at another point in their life or for another person" (2010, p. 258). Therefore, it seems that different living situations, whether living alone, with family, or in a house share, can be beneficial or harmful to well-being depending on the extent to which the situation matches the person's preferences and needs, and, if it does not, the extent to which they feel able to change their situation.

## 2.3 – Literature on Sharing in One's Thirties and Beyond

Several researchers have noted that there has been a lack of research into house sharing (Bricocoli & Sabatinelli, 2016; Després, 1991b; Ge & Kuang, 2020; Heath, 2004). Indeed, Maalsen stated "Share housing has received little attention from researchers and has been devalued by societies that ideologue home ownership" (2020, p. 2). With regards to psychology specifically, Clark and Tuffin observed "Human social interaction and connection lie at the heart of the discipline of social psychology… it is somewhat surprising that the discipline of social psychology has overlooked the topic of shared housing" (2023, p. 4). Additionally, Preece and Bimpson noted "there has been little research into the dynamics of shared living and its relationship with mental health" (2019, p. 26). Furthermore, Arundel and Ronald (2016) and Hoolachan et al. (2017) have emphasised that research on emerging adulthood has often paid little attention to the role of housing in the transition to adulthood. Clark and Tuffin have suggested that this "lamentable paucity of research on shared households" may be due to house sharing lacking mainstream social acceptance and being seen only as a transitory form of housing (2023, p. 8; see also Heath, 2004). Additionally, Heath et al. emphasised that the lack of research into house sharing was even more marked at older ages, stating: "relatively little remains known about the everyday experiences of sharers, especially older sharers whose lives are largely unexplored" (2018, p. 8).

To discover the full extent of relevant existing literature, a systematic search for literature which discussed the experiences of house sharers over the age of 30 years, with regards to their psychological well-being and/or their experiences and conceptions of adulthood, was conducted. Google Scholar was used for literature searches as it was recognised that relevant articles could come from a variety of disciplines, meaning it did not make sense to limit searches to a discipline-specific search engine, such as PsycInfo. (A full list of the search terms used is available in Appendix A.) Literature searching was done at various points throughout the course of the PhD; however, a final search of all the terms included in Appendix A was conducted on 2nd June 2023.

In terms of selection criteria, I looked for literature that presented original findings of research where the participants included house sharers who were aged 30 years or over and were living in (and sharing) regular, domestic housing, either as a tenant or resident landlord. Therefore, I did not include research regarding people living in halls of residence, residential care, guest houses, emergency housing, or marginal settlements. I also did not include articles focused on Airbnb or people taking paying guests into their house on a nightly or weekly basis. Additionally, I did not include research that examined multi-generational family households, although situations in which someone was living with their

sibling or cousin (without their parents being co-resident) were considered as house sharing and included. I looked for research that focused on the experiences of house sharers, as well as their well-being outcomes and the identities and meanings they constructed. In this way, I did not include studies that focused purely on architecture, economics, or policy. In total, 66 papers were found that met these criteria. (A full list of the papers that were found is available in Appendix B.)

### 2.3.1 – The Current Extent of Literature About House Sharing After 30 Years of Age

Across the literature that was found, the majority of studies seemed to focus on one of three groups:

1. **Young adult house sharers in their twenties and early thirties (*n* = 22)**
   One-third of the reviewed studies focused on this group.[8] Such studies typically featured participants who were between 18 and 35 years old, often with the majority of the sample being in their early- to mid-twenties and only a small proportion of participants being in their thirties.

2. **Very low income and/or vulnerable tenants living in poor quality, shared accommodation at the bottom end of the PRS (*n* = 11)**
   This group of studies looked at the experiences of low income and/or vulnerable tenants living in large, poor quality HMOs or engaging in practices of room sharing (Barratt et al., 2015; Barratt & Green, 2017; Binch et al., 2022; G. Green et al., 2016; Iafrati, 2021; Irving, 2015; Nasreen & Ruming, 2021b, 2021a; Ortega-Alcázar & Wilkinson, 2019, 2021; Wilkinson & Ortega-Alcázar, 2019).

3. **Older adults and homesharing schemes (*n* = 13)**
   These studies predominantly focused on homesharing schemes in which an agency pairs older homeowners, who have a spare room available, with younger lodgers. Generally the basis of such schemes is that the lodger provides help around the house or a certain number of hours of companionship a week in return for low rent. Some studies focused solely on the experience of homeowners who had found a lodger through such schemes (Altus & Mathews, 2000; Bodkin & Saxena, 2017; McConnell, 1979). Other studies sampled both homeowners and lodgers who had

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[8] Studies that fit this description include: Bricocoli and Sabatinelli (2016), Clark (2017), Clark and Tuffin (2023), Clark and Tuffin (2015), Clark et al. (2020), Clark et al. (2019), Clark et al. (2018), Clark et al. (2017), Clarke and Heywood (2016), Garcia (2016), Heath (2004), Heath and Cleaver (2003), Heath and Kenyon (2001), Kenyon (2003), Kenyon and Heath (2001), McKee et al. (2020), McNamara and Connell (2007), Owens and Green (2020), Santos (2023), Soaita and McKee (2019), Tuffin and Clark (2016), and Waldron (2022).

been matched through homesharing schemes (Bagnall, 2020; Even-Zohar, 2022; Howe, 1985; Labit & Dubost, 2016; Pritchard, 1983; Pynoos et al., 1990; Quinio & Burgess, 2019; Sánchez et al., 2011). The age range of the homeowners in these studies differed but generally the focus was on people over 60 years of age. Generally the lodgers sampled in these studies were in their twenties, although some studies did include lodgers who were over 30 years of age. However, such studies are included here as distinct from other forms of house sharing due to the fact that such homesharing schemes are organised through an agency and lodgers were generally expected to provide services in exchange for/ in addition to rent.

Additionally, two studies were found which discussed the experiences of older (65+ years) house sharers who had not used homesharing schemes and were, for example, sharing with a friend (Goldberg et al., 1986; Nobert & Pelling, 2018).

There were only a limited number of studies that included participants in their mid-thirties to early-fifties who were sharing but had their own bedroom in a standard, residential property (i.e. not a large HMO). Furthermore, of the studies that included participants from this group, there were even fewer that focused specifically on the experiences, needs, challenges, or well-being outcomes that might be particular to this age group.

Some studies have included house sharers in their late-thirties and their forties but these have tended to focus on issues such as motivations for sharing, organisation of life within the house share, and/or satisfaction with sharing, without exploring the implications of sharing for psychological well-being or personal identity (e.g., F. Baum, 1986; Blanc & Scanlon, 2022; Cho et al., 2019; Druta & Ronald, 2021; Ge & Kuang, 2020; Grinshpun, 2022; Kim et al., 2020; Maalsen, 2019; Ruming & Dowling, 2017; Simon & Roederer, 2019).

Després (1991a) recruited a sample of house sharers that included a wide range of ages from 22 to 50+ years (the maximum age is not specified), with a median age of 36 years. The study provides a detailed exploration of the meaning of home for house sharers, although the methodology focused on the extent to which participants agreed with categories of meaning generated by the researcher, rather than allowing sharers to advance their own concepts of home. Moreover, throughout the thesis, Després emphasised the idea that shared housing is transitional in nature and is a strategy that people use to meet their needs at particular times. Most participants over 30 years of age were divorcees or widowers who had generally spent a reasonable proportion of their adult life living in a single-family home

and only started sharing in later adulthood. This is similar to Clarke and Muir's (2017) study of house sharing among non-resident parents who had generally started house sharing after the breakdown of their marriage/ cohabiting relationship, but had before that spent some years living in a single-family home. It is therefore questionable what such studies can tell us about the experiences of people in middle adulthood who have been renting rooms in house shares throughout their adult life and for whom sharing is not transitional.

Heath et al.'s (2018) sociological study of shared housing in the UK is notable as it specifically aimed to recruit older sharers and featured a majority of participants who were in their mid-thirties or older. The study focused on motivations for sharing and management of life within house shares; however, it also addressed questions of ontological security, feeling at home, and stigma. Heath et al. did explore how expectations and experiences of sharing can vary by age. Nonetheless, their study did not directly examine what sharing means for psychological well-being or personal identity. Heath and Scicluna (2020) focused on the experiences of live-in landlords and lodgers in the UK, the majority of whom were in their late thirties or older. The study mostly explored motivations for house sharing and the use of space within the house by different parties, but also touched on feelings of home. Finally, Alam et al. (2022) explored what having a lodger meant for live-in landlords in Australia, in terms of their ability to feel at home and also with regards to processes of stigmatisation. The exact age range of Alam et al.'s participants is not specified but the participants all appear to be in their thirties and forties.

Five studies were found that did explore well-being outcomes for house sharers in their mid-thirties to early-fifties. The first of these, McKee et al. (2019), had a clear focus on the well-being of private renters aged 35-54 years in the UK but only included three sharers. Raynor and Frichot (2022) featured interviews with 20 house sharers aged 21-49 years which touched on questions of psychological well-being; however, it is not clear how many of their participants were in their twenties, thirties, or forties. Similarly, Soaita and McKee (2021) featured a sample of renters aged 18-54 years, which included 13 sharers ($N$ = 33). It is not clear how many sharers fell into which age band within the overall age range; however, details within the article make it clear that at least three participants were sharers over 35 years of age. Neither Raynor and Frichot or Soaita and McKee attempted to differentiate between the experiences and challenges of sharers of different ages. Veeroja et al. (2023) explored the psychological well-being of house sharers in Australia during the Covid-19 pandemic, with participants ranging in age from 18 to 65+ years. In total, 56% of their sample was aged 30 years or over and the study did look at the effect of age on well-being. However, the study focused purely on house sharers, rather than comparing between

different household types. Additionally, their data came from the Australian Rental Housing Conditions Dataset and Veeroja et al. acknowledged that it was likely that the 'shared living' group used it their analysis also included multi-generational family households. Finally, Oh and Kim (2021) looked at the psychological well-being of people aged 20-39 years who lived alone or with housemates in rented accommodation in Seoul. Their study included age as a predictor in regression models predicting well-being outcomes; however, there was no direct comparison of well-being outcomes between older and younger sharers.

There is therefore a small, but growing, body of literature on house sharing. Nevertheless, there is still only very limited research on the experiences of sharers aged 30 years and over, and especially regarding the experiences of house shares aged 35-50 years. Additionally, the research that has been conducted into the experiences of house sharers aged 30 years or over has rarely focused on psychological well-being or personal identity, key topics explored in the current thesis.

## 2.3.2 – What (if Anything) Is Unique About the Experiences of Sharers Over 30 Years of Age?

Veeroja et al. (2023) found no difference in the levels of anxiety or loneliness reported by house sharers according to age. However, existing literature suggests there may be some differences between house sharers over 30 years of age and those in their twenties when it comes to experiences and meanings of house sharing. Thus, the experiences, challenges, and needs of house sharers over the age of 30 years with regards to sociability, choice, stability, and stigma are considered in more detail below.

### 2.3.2.1 – Chosen Companionship or Frustrating Necessity?

Studies with younger house sharers have suggested there are some factors, such as desire for companionship, which may encourage house sharing. For example, the majority of participants in Heath and Kenyon (2001), Kenyon and Heath (2001), and McNamara and Connell (2007), most of whom were in their twenties, chose to share, at least in part, because they preferred to live with other people. This may suggest that, as more people remain single at older ages, increasing numbers of people may choose to live in a house share in their thirties, and beyond, due to social reasons (e.g. desire for company). However, there is evidence that sharing can become less appealing as one gets older. For example, both Clarke and Heywood (2016), whose sample comprised 18- to 34-year-olds, and Oh and Kim (2021) found that younger participants were more positive about sharing. Furthermore, several studies have suggested that, while many sharers appreciate the social benefits of house sharing in their twenties, over time people can grow tired of living with housemates,

due, for example, to the lack of privacy (Clark, Tuffin, Bowker, et al., 2018; Clark & Tuffin, 2023; Clarke & Heywood, 2016; Heath & Kenyon, 2001; Kenyon & Heath, 2001; Waldron, 2022). Simon and Roederer (2019) found that older house sharers tended to find living with housemates more intrusive, compared to younger house sharers. Additionally, issues in house shares, such as mismatched expectations about cleanliness, tidiness, or noise, can become more frustrating for sharers as they get older (Clark & Tuffin, 2023; Clarke & Heywood, 2016; Heath et al., 2018). Such results suggest that the social aspect of house sharing may be a mixed benefit for the over-thirties, offering companionship but also increasing stress. Such results also raise questions about the extent to which house sharing over the age of 30 years may be driven by social motivations or whether it primarily stems from economic necessity.

The extent to which sharing after 30 years of age is a product of choice or constraint has been investigated in the literature. In total, 73% of Després' (1991a) participants and 88% of Maalsen's (2019) participants cited economic reasons for starting to house share. (Both studies included participants over 30 years of age; however, unfortunately neither study included a breakdown of whether motivations for sharing differed by age.) The majority of Alam et al.'s (2022) participants had taken in a lodger due to economic necessity. Additionally, all three of the sharers aged 35-54 years interviewed by McKee et al. (2019) were sharing purely out of economic necessity. McKee et al. also noted that older sharers were more pessimistic than younger sharers as they saw less possibility to change their situation. However, questions about the relationship between income and house sharing have been raised by Heath and Kenyon (2001, p. 87) who observed that house sharers aged 25-29 years old were more likely to have a professional or managerial job, compared to sharers who were 20-24 years old, suggesting that "restricted finances may play less of a role in the decision to share the older one gets". Additionally, Kenyon and Heath (2001) found that most of their participants had gained more choice over where they lived as they advanced in their career throughout their twenties and they had used their increased resources to move to nicer shared properties and/or to increase their disposable income, rather than to stop sharing. Such findings are a useful reminder that the relationship between house sharing and economic privilege is not always straightforward. It is however perhaps less likely to see such trends continuing as participants enter their thirties.

Nonetheless, some people over 30 years of age do actively choose to live in house shares (Després, 1991a; Heath et al., 2018; Heath & Scicluna, 2020). In some cases, the choice to share is driven by an ideological commitment to communality or sustainability. In other cases, participants originally started sharing for economic reasons but continued to

share even when they no longer had a financial need to do so, as they had come to appreciate the social benefits that house sharing offered. Indeed, after living in a house share for a period, 58% of Després' participants said that, at this point in their life, they would prefer to live in a house share than by themself. Additionally, studies have shown that some older homeowners choose to take in lodgers because of a desire for companionship (Bagnall, 2020; Even-Zohar, 2022; Pynoos et al., 1990; Quinio & Burgess, 2019). However, it seems likely that, even when actively choosing to share, many older sharers may have less choice about who they live with, compared to younger sharers. For example, single sharers over 30 years of age may find themselves faced with the prospect of choosing between living with strangers or living alone as friends they had previously lived with stop sharing and move in with partners (Kenyon, 2003).

### 2.3.2.2 – Flexibility vs. Stability

Research has suggested that house sharers often experience higher levels of instability in their housing compared to people living in other types of household (Heath et al., 2018; McNamara & Connell, 2007). Nonetheless, it appears that housing instability may have different meanings at different ages, with instability potentially having a more negative impact on well-being for those over 30 years of age. Saunders (1989) found that desire and willingness to move house declined with age, although it is worth noting that, within his sample, older people had generally spent longer living in their home and were therefore more attached to it, which may explain their greater reluctance to move. More recent research has suggested that housing instability in middle age may have a particularly negative impact on well-being. For example, Li et al. (2022) found that, for both renters and owner-occupiers in Australia, housing instability was associated with significantly worse mental health outcomes for participants aged 35-44 years, compared to other age groups (25-34, 45-54, or 55-64 years). Additionally, research from the UK found that higher levels of housing instability in midlife (30-50 years of age) were associated with lower satisfaction with life in later life (Vanhoutte et al., 2017). Interestingly, Vanhoutte et al. also found that higher levels of housing instability in young adulthood (19-29 years of age) were associated with lower levels of depressive symptoms and higher eudaimonic well-being in later life. They argued that this was due to higher housing instability in young adulthood often being associated with important transitions, such as attending university and moving in with a partner, which are associated with building up financial and social capital.

Some have observed that professional success in today's society often requires flexibility and, potentially, willingness to be geographically mobile (Beck, 1992; Blatterer, 2007; Heath & Kenyon, 2001). It may therefore be the case that some house sharers over

30 years of age are continuing to share because of the flexibility it offers (Heath & Kenyon, 2001; Mimoun & Bardhi, 2022). Indeed, Després (1991a) found that around 20% of her participants enjoyed the nomadic aspect of house sharing and did not want to be tied to a particular property, at least at this point in their lives. This group did not just include young professionals however, but also included some middle-aged participants who had recently separated from their spouse. Nevertheless, a number of studies have shown that the majority of people living in house shares do eventually want to settle down and live with a partner in a single-family, owner-occupied home (Després, 1991a; Kenyon, 2003; Kenyon & Heath, 2001; McNamara & Connell, 2007). Furthermore, at least for some sharers who were renting, it was their inability to access the stability and security of homeownership that was their biggest source of dissatisfaction with their current living situation, rather than the fact they lived with housemates (Després, 1991a; Heath et al., 2018). Some participants in these studies planned to take in lodgers once they were able to buy so that they would be able to combine the social aspects of sharing with the stability and financial security of homeownership. It therefore seems that the extent to which sharers over 30 years of age want stability or flexibility is contingent on multiple factors, including personal preferences, resources, and past experiences. Most house sharers aged 30 years or over are likely to want stability and may be frustrated at their inability to secure it. However, compared to younger sharers, there may be a higher proportion of older sharers who are actively choosing to share because of the flexibility it can offer, as sharers who have a strong desire for stability are more likely to have stopped sharing, if they can, before 30 years of age.

### 2.3.2.3 – Stigmatisation and Adult Identity

It has become increasingly normative to spend a period of time in your twenties living in a house share (Bricocoli & Sabatinelli, 2016; Heath & Kenyon, 2001; Kenyon & Heath, 2001; McNamara & Connell, 2007). However, while short-term sharing in your twenties fits with normative expectations – it is just a transitional phase on the journey to homeownership – long-term sharing and/or sharing at older ages contravenes social norms and expectations (Clark & Tuffin, 2023; Heath, 2004; Heath et al., 2018). Indeed, sharing in one's thirties and beyond can be seen as inappropriate or not socially acceptable, with one 25-year-old sharer interviewed by McNamara and Connell saying: "There's something weird about being 35 and living in a share house" (2007, p. 82).

Pressure to live according to normative standards of housing and family, and the corresponding stigma attached to deviating from those standards, can increase as you age (Heath et al., 2018; McKee et al., 2019). For example, McKee et al. noted that "renting in middle-age was a source of embarrassment, fuelling a sense of failure or feeling like a

'second class citizen'" (p. 12). Several sharers over 30 years of age who participated in Heath et al.'s study reported being judged or stigmatised by other people for living in a house share. Additionally, sharing at older ages could lead to feelings of shame and self-judgement (Heath et al., 2018).

However, while sharing in one's mid- to late-thirties is not culturally seen as normal in the West, one 36-year-old participant in Health et al.'s (2018, p. 102) study said it had become the "new normal" for his generation due to the difficulty many people have experienced buying a house. With sharing at older ages becoming more common, it remains to be seen whether house sharing after 30 years of age will become normalised and accepted as a long-term lifestyle. There appears to be awareness and sympathy among the general public of the issues facing Generation Rent (J. Crawford & McKee, 2018; Hoolachan & McKee, 2019); however, this could serve to reinforce the image of sharing at older ages as always due to necessity and constraint.

The young, affluent sharers studied by Kenyon and Heath (2001) did not see their choice to live in a house share as meaning they were not adults. However, it seems that feeling that one has no choice but to share, beyond the point when one would like to stop, may have more possibility to compromise feelings of independence and adulthood (Garcia, 2016; Waldron, 2022). Additionally, even if they perceive themselves as adults, single, childfree people who are living in house shares after the age of 30 years may sometimes experience problems being perceived as adults by others (Heath et al., 2018; Rosenberger, 2007).

## 2.4 – Research Questions

Based on the discussion above, it seems that there are several unresolved questions regarding the relationship between house sharing after the age of 30 years, psychological well-being, and construction of an adult identity. This thesis aimed to investigate the ways in which companionship and social support, feelings of frustration, lack of privacy, choice, constraint, transience, and stigma interact in the lives of house sharers over 30 years of age to produce positive and/or negative outcomes in terms of personal identity and well-being. The thesis aimed to answer three overall research questions (ORQs):

- **ORQ 1:** To what extent are house sharers over 30 years of age able to feel at home where they are living?

- **ORQ 2:** Does living in a house share after the age of 30 years impact how likely you are to view yourself as an adult?

- **ORQ 3:** Does living in a house share after the age of 30 years impact psychological well-being?

With regards to expectations and predictions, for ORQ 1 it was predicted that the ability of house sharers to feel at home where they were living would vary, for example depending on their relationship with their housemates (Bricocoli & Sabatinelli, 2016; Clark & Tuffin, 2023; Raynor & Frichot, 2022). Nonetheless, it was also predicted that most house sharers would feel at least somewhat at home (Després, 1991a; Heath et al., 2018; McNamara & Connell, 2007). However, in quantitative analyses where comparisons were made between household types, it was predicted that participants living just with their partner and/or child(ren) would be more likely to feel at home, compared to house sharers. This was due to the expectation that people living just with their partner and/or child(ren) would experience higher levels of control and companionship, and lower levels of stigma, compared to house sharers (Barratt et al., 2012; Dupuis & Thorns, 1998; Gurney, 1990; Heath et al., 2018).

For ORQ 2, it was predicted that most participants who were living in a house share after 30 years of age would see themselves as adults (Kenyon & Heath, 2001; Maalsen, 2019). However, it was recognised that some house sharers would potentially struggle to consider themselves as having reached full adulthood due to a perceived lack of control and/or independence (Garcia, 2016; Waldron, 2022). It was therefore predicted that house sharers, as a group, would be less likely to consider themselves to be adults, compared to participants who were living just with their partner and/or child(ren) (Arnett, 2000, 2003; Molgat, 2007; Shanahan et al., 2005). However, it was also predicted that house sharers would be more likely to consider themselves to be adults compared to participants living with their family of origin (K. Crawford, 2010; Molgat, 2007; White, 2002).

For ORQ 3, it was predicted that house sharing would support psychological well-being for some people and undermine it for others, due, for example, to differences in how well house sharing matched their individual preferences (Clapham, 2005, 2010; Oh & Kim, 2021). Within quantitative analyses, it was predicted that participants living just with their partner and/or child(ren) would generally report higher levels of psychological well-being than house sharers. This was predicted due to the expectation that, compared to house

sharers, participants living just with their partner and/or child(ren) would, on average, experience higher levels of control and companionship in their housing and that their lives would more closely conform to normative societal expectations (Clapham, 2005; Gurney, 1990).

However, beyond the above predictions concerning overall trends and the results of univariate statistics, it was also predicted that, when multivariate statistics were considered for ORQs 2 and 3, so as to take into account other factors such as demographic characteristics and a person's satisfaction with their living situation, household type would not significantly predict subjective adult identity or psychological well-being. This prediction was based on evidence in the literature which has suggested that the meaning of home is inherently subjective and that whether a housing situation is harmful or healthful depends on factors such as the individual's needs, resources, and preferences (Clapham, 2005, 2010; Coulter, 2023; Eckermann, 2015; Gurney, 1990). This is a view which finds strong support in existing literature on house sharing, where it has been shown that, for some, living in a house share can be an extremely positive experience which promotes psychological well-being but, for others, living in a house share can be an experience characterised by fear, abuse, and/or declining mental health (Clark & Tuffin, 2023; Després, 1991a; Oh & Kim, 2021; Wilkinson & Ortega-Alcázar, 2019).

## Chapter 3:
## Methodology

This chapter outlines the overall methodological approach adopted in this thesis, starting with the underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions, followed by the chosen research methodology. As both qualitative and quantitative methods were used in the research, the individual methods used and how they fit into the wider research design are then discussed. The chapter finishes with a reflexive discussion of how my positionality and personal experiences of house sharing have shaped the research process.

### 3.1 – Ontology and Epistemology

A person's ontological and epistemological beliefs define how they see the world and what they think it is possible to know about the world. Such philosophical assumptions also have a big impact on how research is conceptualised and the methods of data collection and analysis that are seen as useful or appropriate (Bhaskar & Danermark, 2006; Hastings, 2021; Marsh & Furlong, 2002). The philosophical position underlying this thesis is critical realism. In this section, the key features and assumptions of critical realism are described and contrasted with the tenets of two other commonly held philosophical positions: positivism and social constructionism. The impact of such assumptions on the research process is then considered in subsequent sections.

Critical realism is a philosophy of science associated with scholars including Bhaskar (1978, 1979, 2014), Collier (1994), Sayer (1984), and Elder-Vass (2012). Central to the critical realist view of the world is a belief in the existence of reality (and the reality of existence). There are not multiple realities and reality exists independently of human thought and discourse – even if the way we think or talk about an object changes, this does not alter its nature. However, as we are inside of reality, we cannot stand outside of reality to observe it. Thus, our knowledge of the world is necessarily partial, incomplete, and fallible (Downward & Mearman, 2007; Keller, 1992; Lakoff, 1987; Sayer, 1984). Additionally, any knowledge we have is from a particular perspective and, while this does not mean multiple realities exists, it does mean that the same reality can be viewed from different perspectives (Lakoff, 1987).

Social constructionism shares some features with critical realism, with both philosophies acknowledging the role of subjectivity in how people understand the world. However, there are differences between the positions also. While social constructionism does not necessarily require rejection of belief in an external reality, social constructionists

believe that we cannot have direct access to reality (if it exists) (Burr, 2015; Mills, 2004). Social constructionists see knowledge as being constructed by people together, through social interactions and communication. The discourses – i.e. the ways of thinking and speaking about a particular object (or person/ group/ event/ idea, etc) – that exist within our community therefore shape how we understand the world, making some views seem 'natural' and precluding certain ways of seeing the world (Burr, 2015; Mills, 2004). Furthermore, we can never get outside of discourse, as the way we talk or think about an object is always shaped by our cultural, historical, and social context (Burr, 2015). In contrast, critical realists believe that we can have access to (some aspects of) reality through our senses (Bhaskar, 1978; Elder-Vass, 2012). It is therefore possible to judge positions as more or less accurate based on the extent to which they are internally coherent and, importantly, consistent with our experience of the world (Keller, 1992; Lakoff, 1987; Sayer, 1984). Sayer called this 'practical adequacy', stating: "to be practically-adequate, knowledge must generate expectations about the world and about the results of our actions which are actually realized" (p. 66). Saying an idea has practical adequacy does not guarantee that it is right; however, the fallibility of our ideas does not mean we cannot be confident in saying that some theories are closer to reflecting reality than others.

The concept of practical adequacy does not fit with the relativism at the heart of social constructionism. However, several critical realist scholars (e.g. Bhaskar & Danermark, 2006; Elder-Vass, 2012; O'Mahoney & Vincent, 2014) have highlighted that many social constructionists, at times, behave in ways that do not fit with the ontological assumptions of social constructionism. For example, in an article discussing disability research, Bhaskar and Danermark (2006, p. 285) observed that, despite the rejection of objective truth inherent in social constructionism,

> most constructionists are willing to agree that there are understandings of disability which are more reliable than others. For instance most researchers would agree that the statement that rubella plays a crucial role in causing deafness is a more accurate statement than that deafness is caused by a ''bad-eye''.

I find these arguments to be compelling and feel they highlight potential inconsistencies within social constructionism. The position of critical realism is therefore preferred, not only for its consistency with my personal view of the world but also for its internal consistency.

In contrast to social constructionism, positivism shares its ontological assumptions with critical realism, with adherents to both positions believing that there is a real world and that changes in discourse do not change the nature of reality. However, critical realism and positivism differ with regards to epistemology (i.e. beliefs regarding how we can gain

knowledge of the world). Positivists believe that objective knowledge is possible and that the correct way to gain understanding of the world is through direct observation (Marsh & Furlong, 2002). With regards to causality, positivists tend to believe that if we design a well-controlled experiment and observe a systematic pattern of *y* happening after *x*, we can surmise that *x* causes *y* (Maxwell & Mittapalli, 2010; Pawson & Tilley, 1997). In contrast, the critical realist view of causality emphasises explanation over prediction (Bhaskar, 2014; Maxwell & Mittapalli, 2010). For critical realists, saying '*y* follows *x*' is a description of an outcome; it does not explain *why* such a pattern occurs (Bhaskar, 2014; Pawson & Tilley, 1997; Sayer, 1984). Indeed, observing a regular pattern of *y* occurring after *x* does not tell us whether *x* causes *y* or even whether the relationship between them is necessary or contingent. Therefore, within the critical realist view, to be able to talk about causality, we need to identify the causal (or generative) mechanisms that actually explain the events we observe (Bhaskar, 2014; Elder-Vass, 2012; Pawson & Tilley, 1997; Sayer, 1984).

Generative mechanisms are properties of objects or people that provide certain abilities or causal powers (Bhaskar, 1978; Elder-Vass, 2012; Sayer, 1984). Examples of causal powers that people can possess include "being able to work ('labour power'), speak, reason, walk, reproduce, etc." (Sayer, 1984, p. 95). Such causal powers exist whether they are currently being exercised or not (Collier, 1994; Sayer, 1984). In addition to the causal powers of the individual, there are also underlying structures (e.g. patriarchy) which we cannot observe but which can also exert causal power (Collier, 1994; Marsh & Furlong, 2002; Pawson & Tilley, 1997). When theorising about causal mechanisms, therefore, we need to go beyond what we can observe, which may be misleading, and consider underlying causes that may be operating at deeper levels of social reality (Collier, 1994; Pawson & Tilley, 1997). Furthermore, causal mechanisms can interact and reinforce or counteract each other (Bhaskar, 2014; Collier, 1994; Elder-Vass, 2012; Sayer, 1984). Context also plays a key role in the operation of causal mechanisms, including determining whether mechanisms activate and the effect they have if they activate (Pawson & Tilley, 1997; Sayer, 1984). For example, as Pawson and Tilley observed, gunpowder has the causal power to explode but will only do so if a spark or flame is applied to it and it is dry.

Critical realism therefore permits a more nuanced understanding of causality than is possible within positivism. Within critical realist thought, there is acceptance that a generative mechanism may exist without it (always) causing an effect (Bhaskar, 2014; Elder-Vass, 2012; Sayer, 1984). Indeed, as the social world is an open system, generative mechanisms often lead to 'demi-regularities' or tendencies towards certain outcomes, rather than a clear, unfailing pattern of 'if *x* then *y*' (C. Allen, 2000; Bhaskar & Danermark, 2006;

Collier, 1994; Downward & Mearman, 2007). Therefore, purely relying on observable regularities is not sufficient to enable us to discover generative mechanisms or understand causal processes (Sayer, 1984). The implications of this for the choice of research methods in this thesis are discussed more in Section 3.2.

### 3.1.1 – Appropriateness of Critical Realism for the Current Thesis

To this researcher, critical realism seems like a good fit for research concerning housing, as it allows the physical building, the social relations of the household, cultural norms around housing, and the individual's perceptions of their housing situation to all be considered as meaningful and real. Researchers such as Allen (2000) and Hastings (2021) have highlighted the value of critical realism for studying housing and homelessness. For example, Allen demonstrated that, while causal mechanisms do exist linking housing conditions to health, the relationship is complex and multi-determined, and we do not always see a simple pattern of poor housing conditions leading to ill health. Indeed, housing would seem to be an example of what critical realists have called a 'necessarily laminated system', defined by Bhaskar and Danermark (2006, p. 280) as "a system that refers essentially to several different levels of reality". It seems that there are many different levels that we need to consider when exploring someone's experience of housing, including the physical, the economic, the social, the cultural, and the psychological. The framework that critical realism provides for thinking about society, and causal mechanisms, as existing on multiple levels (some visible, some not, but all real and worthy of consideration) therefore feels useful and important.

Beyond housing, critical realism also aligns well with other aspects of the current research. As discussed in Chapter 2, life course theory provides an overarching theoretical base for this thesis and there are important similarities and shared assumptions between life course theory and critical realism. For example, both emphasise the importance of considering context and of recognising the interplay of structure and agency in determining human behaviour. Furthermore, the ways in which critical realism can be seen to complement the mixed methods approach adopted in this thesis will be discussed in the next section.

### 3.2 – Methodology

The research presented in this thesis was conducted using a mixed methods approach, drawing on qualitative and quantitative methods. The potential value that mixed methods can offer in terms of enhancing one's ability to gain a deep understanding of a topic and to answer research questions has been highlighted by scholars, including Bazeley

(1999), Bryman (2007), and Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004). One of the key ways that mixed methods do this is by enabling us to combine the strengths of qualitative and quantitative approaches, and to avoid their respective weaknesses (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Maxwell & Mittapalli, 2010; Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006). For example, qualitative methods can allow us to gain a high degree of depth and detail about the experiences of a small group of participants, whereas quantitative methods allow us to gather data from a much larger, more representative sample and to examine associations that individuals might themselves be unaware of. Furthermore, as Greene observed, mixed methods studies can allow us to develop results that present "patterns of recurring regularity as well as insight into variation and difference" (2008, p. 7).

The possibility of clashes between the aims and assumptions of qualitative and quantitative methodologies when doing mixed methods research has been discussed extensively in the literature (Greene, 2008; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Pragmatism is often presented as the solution to this potential clash of philosophical assumptions (Bryman, 2007; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). However, critical realism also offers a way to overcome charges of incompatibility between qualitative and quantitative methods (Downward & Mearman, 2007; Maxwell & Mittapalli, 2010). Within critical realism, the potential value of both methodologies is recognised, although each is seen as having a different role to play in the research process. For example, while the benefits of quantitative methods for answering questions of frequency, similarity, difference, and co-occurrence are recognised, statistics are not seen as sufficient, on their own, for making causal inferences (Porpora, 2005; Sayer, 1984). Instead, the depth and nuance that qualitative methods provide are needed for identifying causal mechanisms (Hurrell, 2014; Sayer, 1984). Qualitative methods allow us to explore how causal processes work in the lives of individuals in a way that quantitative methods, with their focus on averages, cannot. The two methodologies can therefore be seen to complement each other (Sayer, 1984). For example, quantitative methods can help us to understand how prevalent particular mechanisms, identified through qualitative research, might be or to test how the effect of a mechanism varies by context (Porpora, 2005; Vincent & O'Mahoney, 2018). Therefore, for the current thesis, it is felt that there is no clash of assumptions between the methods employed and, instead, it is felt that critical realism provides a consistent meta-theory that can underpin all parts of the thesis.

### 3.2.1 – Purpose of Mixing Methods and Research Design

As discussed in Chapter 2, this thesis aimed to answer three ORQs examining whether house sharing after the age of 30 years impacts a person's ability to feel at home,

subjective adult identity, or psychological well-being. Qualitative methods enabled the gathering of detailed information from house sharers aged 30 years or over about their experiences and perceptions of house sharing, as well as their perceptions of adulthood and of home. Such methods allowed a depth of understanding to be gained about how participants felt about being a house sharer and the impact they felt house sharing had had on their life, identity, and well-being. In contrast, quantitative methods enabled comparison of house sharers with people living in other types of households on numerical measures of extent of feeling at home, subjective adult identity, and psychological well-being. Additionally, statistical methods provided a way to test the extent to which being a house sharer predicted negative outcomes in terms of feeling at home, construction of an adult identity, and/or well-being. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were therefore used to address all three ORQs.

The purpose behind the adoption of mixed methods in this thesis was complementarity (Greene et al., 1989; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). As stated by Greene et al., mixed methods studies that aim for complementarity use both qualitative and quantitative methods "to measure overlapping but also different facets of a phenomenon, yielding an enriched, elaborated understanding of that phenomenon" (p. 258). Research that centres complementarity involves looking for areas of agreement and convergence between data collected from different samples and/or using different methods; however, the potential value of divergence or disagreement between studies is also recognised (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2010; Varpio et al., 2017). This is in contrast to an approach such as triangulation, where convergence is seen as the goal and divergence can lead to the validity of one or more studies being questioned. As discussed above, within critical realism there is an acceptance that there can be multiple correct perspectives on a particular issue (Lakoff, 1987; Sayer, 1984). The aim for collecting multiple sources of data was therefore to develop a more comprehensive understanding and analysis, even if this did not lead to convergence (Varpio et al., 2017).

The research conducted for this thesis followed a concurrent, equal status mixed method design (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004), with qualitative and quantitative data being collected and analysed separately. This approach was seen as appropriate because the target sample, aims, and focus of the qualitative and quantitative studies differed quite markedly. However, the relationship between the findings of the different studies conducted as part of this thesis, including any areas of convergence or divergence, is discussed in Chapter 8. This final chapter of the thesis thus enables connections to be made between

studies and meta-inferences to be drawn, integrating the results of the qualitative and quantitative studies (Bryman, 2007; Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006).

### 3.3 – Methods and Studies

The current thesis contains four studies: two of which used qualitative, semi-structured interviews, and two of which used quantitative surveys. Why these exact methods were chosen and the format these studies took are discussed below.

### 3.3.1 – Semi-Structured Interviews

Two qualitative studies were conducted, in which semi-structured interviews were used to explore the lives and experiences of people aged 30 years or over who were living in house shares. In the interviews, participants were asked to discuss not just their experiences of house sharing but to tell the story of their complete housing history. This enabled an understanding of pathways into house sharing to be gained. Such an approach also allowed for a consideration of how participants' experiences of, and the meaning they attached to, house sharing may have changed over time and may have varied depending on context. The value of life history interviews for understanding participants' housing pathways, and the meaning they attach to housing, has been highlighted by Clapham (2002). The potential limitations of such a retrospective approach, such as "possible selective recall of events" (Clapham, 2002, p. 67), were recognised. However, as the key aim of the current research was to explore how participants conceptualised and understood adulthood, home, their housing journey, and their current living situation, rather than to establish 'historical accuracy', it was felt that such an approach was still immensely valuable. This view is in line with Heinz and Krüger's argument that biographical interviews are an important tool for life course research as they help us "to understand individual attitudes, interpretations and activities as well as self-concepts connected with life stages, transitions and durations of status" (2001, p. 31).

Braun and Clarke stated that qualitative interviews are "ideally suited" for research questions that explore individual experience (2013, p. 81). While methods such as focus group interviews would also have allowed data about meanings attached to house sharing to be gathered, one-on-one interviews were felt to be more appropriate due to the greater depth they allowed in exploring the personal narrative of each participant. As there has been little research looking into the psychological experiences of house sharers, especially those aged 30 years or over, the flexibility of semi-structured interviews was also seen as a key benefit due to it allowing participants to bring up issues or topics that had not been anticipated by the researcher (Bryman, 2012).

Both of my interview studies sampled participants who were aged 30 years or over and living in house shares; however, the first study (presented in Chapter 4) was restricted to participants who were psychology students at Birkbeck, University of London. Due to its mission as London's evening university, there are a high proportion of mature students at Birkbeck, so it was felt there would be many potential participants within the university. Additionally, the relative homogeneity of the population (all mature students studying at the same university) was felt to be a benefit in this initial study (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The second interview study (presented in Chapter 5) featured a general population sample and aimed to explore whether similar themes would be identified in a non-student population. Additionally, the study presented in Chapter 5 deliberately targeted the recruitment of participants who had a range of experiences of house sharing, including people living in house shares with their partner or children and resident landlords renting rooms to lodgers, in an attempt to explore how such variations may impact experiences of house sharing. Full details of the sample and interview procedure in each study are available in Chapters 4 and 5.

The data collected were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (RTA), following the approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2022). RTA is a method of thematic analysis that uses a process of coding and theme development to identify patterns in the data. Coding is done inductively, with no pre-determined code book or framework being used, and themes are developed from the codes that the researcher has generated from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2021a, 2022). Therefore, the active role that the researcher plays in shaping the analysis is explicitly recognised within RTA. (More details on how analysis was done in each qualitative study are available in Sections 4.2.3 and 5.2.2.)

RTA was chosen as it was felt to be the most appropriate method of analysis for the two qualitative studies in this thesis. The aim of the studies was to explore personal experience and meaning making, therefore grounded theory, with its focus on questions of social process, was not felt to be the best fit for the current research (Braun & Clarke, 2021a; Charmaz, 2014). Similarly, as the research questions were not focused on how language is used to construct discourses or interpretative repertoires, discourse analysis was not considered an appropriate analytical approach for the current research (Davies & Horton-Salway, 2016). Furthermore, as the aim of the current research was to identify common themes which were shared across a sample that exhibited variation in their experiences of house sharing, thematic analysis was felt to be a more appropriate analytic method than interpretative phenomenological analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021a). Braun and Clarke

(2021a, 2022) distinguished three separate approaches to thematic analysis: codebook, coding reliability, and reflexive. Codebook approaches to thematic analysis start with codes and potential themes being developed a priori, based on existing literature, and then applied to the data (although further codes and themes may be added inductively as the analysis develops). Given the lack of existing literature regarding the experiences of house sharers over the age of 30 years, such an approach was felt to be ill suited to the current research. Coding reliability approaches to thematic analysis use a set list of codes that are then applied to the data by multiple coders, with levels of agreement between coders then being assessed quantitatively. The focus within coding reliability approaches is to try to minimise bias and maximise reliability; however, as argued by Braun and Clarke (2022), this can come at the expense of depth and nuance, as the analysis is constrained by the need to use the agreed list of codes. In contrast to the striving for objectivity found within coding reliability approaches, within the current thesis, in line with the underpinning critical realist philosophy, there was an acceptance of researcher subjectivity. Indeed, the role of reflexivity in this thesis and the potential value of my own personal experiences as a house sharer for the research are discussed in Section 3.5. Additionally, it was felt that there is little that the agreement or disagreement between two coders, in itself, can tell us about whether the ideas developed through analysis are useful or practically adequate (Sayer, 1984). Instead, the tools for evaluating the quality of thematic analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke (2021b) were adopted. Ultimately, it was therefore felt that RTA was the most appropriate method of analysis for the qualitative studies within this thesis.

### 3.3.2 – Quantitative Surveys

Two online, quantitative surveys were also conducted. These studies provided an invaluable way to gather data regarding housing experiences, conceptions of adulthood, and psychological well-being from a far larger and more diverse sample than would have been possible using qualitative methods (Bryman, 2012). In this way, the survey studies offered a breadth of coverage to complement the depth of information obtained via the qualitative interview studies (Kelley et al., 2003). Furthermore, the quantitative surveys allowed direct comparison of groups, making it possible to explore the extent to which house sharers differed from people living in other types of households and to examine whether age interacted with household type with regards to outcomes such as psychological well-being. The numerical data gathered through quantitative surveys also provided a way to test hypotheses and to control for the effect of demographic and housing-related variables (i.e. tenure), enabling greater understanding of the relative importance of household type in predicting outcomes. Additionally, the use of standardised measures, such as the Positive

and Negative Affect Schedule (D. Watson et al., 1988), increased the facility for the results of the survey studies to be directly compared with other research.

The first survey (presented in Chapter 6) was restricted to students at Birkbeck, University of London. Focusing recruitment in this way enabled the adoption of otherwise very broad eligibility criteria, with any student over the age of 18 years being able to take part. This was important as it allowed comparisons to be conducted across different types of households (e.g. house shares, single-person households, family households) and across housing tenures. The second survey study (presented in Chapter 7) recruited a general population sample, allowing the findings to be drawn from a more representative sample, beyond university students. For this study, the decision was taken to focus the sample solely on renters. This was to help facilitate recruitment (i.e. through having a clear target group to advertise the survey to) and also to focus the analysis on comparing participants who were renting a room in a house share with participants who were renting a whole property, either alone or with their partner. Precise details of sample composition and survey content for each study are presented in Chapters 6 and 7.

### 3.3.3 – Timing of Studies

Data collection for the thesis started in October 2018 and finished in November 2021. The timing and sequence of data collection periods across the four individual studies is represented visually in Figure 3.1. With regards to the qualitative studies, all but one of the interviews for Chapter 4 (which sampled Birkbeck students) were done between October 2018 and April 2019. The data analysis for Chapter 4 was under way when data collection for Chapter 5 (which featured a general population sample) started in February 2020. The final interview for Chapter 4 was conducted in July 2020. I was no longer actively recruiting for the study at this time; however, while working as a teaching assistant in the Department of Psychological Sciences at Birkbeck, I discussed the study with some students, one of whom subsequently contacted me to say they were interested in taking part. I was not involved in assessing any of this student's work at any time and had not met them in person due to the module being taught online. The module had finished by the time I interviewed the student. I decided to conduct this interview to boost the sample size to a total of 10 participants. This final interview was coded inductively and the generated codes were then integrated into the theme development process, which was ongoing when the interview was conducted.

**Figure 3.1**

*Gantt Chart Showing the Sequence and Timing of Data Collection Across Studies*

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Duration of data collection for each study chapter (displayed by calendar year and months)** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | **2018** | | | **2019** | | | | | | | | | | | | **2020** | | | | | | | | | | | | | **2021** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Study** | O | N | D | J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D | J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D | J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N |
| Chapter 4 | �(filled Oct–Dec 2018) | | | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ▓ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Chapter 5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Chapter 6 | | | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | |
| Chapter 7 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | | | | | | | | | | | |
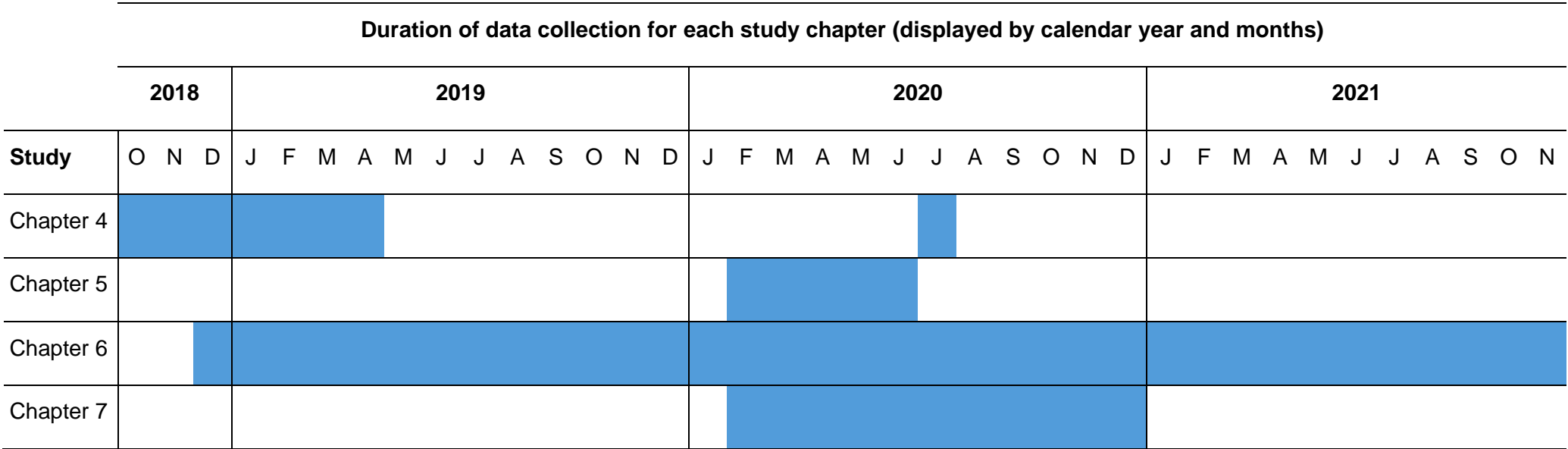
With the quantitative studies, initial analysis of the data that had been collected for the Chapter 6 student survey by 10th May 2019 ($n = 86$) was conducted at that point. This helped to inform the design of the general population survey used in Chapter 7. The surveys used in the two quantitative studies were very similar but there were some differences. Specific details of changes made to the survey used for the study reported in Chapter 7, compared to Chapter 6, are provided in Section 7.2.3.

<div align="center">

**3.4 – Ethics**

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Ensuring each of the studies were designed, conducted, and reported in an ethical way was a key concern throughout the research process. As the qualitative and quantitative studies involved some different ethical considerations, these are discussed separately below in Sections 3.4.1 and 3.4.2. However, the issue of incentives applied across all studies and is therefore discussed here. No payment was offered to participants in any of the studies. This was partly for practical reasons (the researcher was a self-funded PhD student) but also due to ethical considerations and a desire to ensure participation was entirely voluntary (McNeill, 1997). Within the studies reported in Chapters 4 and 6, which focused on Birkbeck students, participants were offered SONA credits in exchange for participation. As part of their studies, first year undergraduate psychology students need to collect 40 credits from participating in psychology research studies via SONA.[9] (One credit is equivalent to 15 minutes of participation time.) However, so as to ensure the right to withdraw was respected, students were awarded credits for participating in a study, even if they withdrew part way through.

### 3.4.1 – Ethics in Qualitative Studies

Key ethical issues considered when planning and conducting the qualitative studies were protecting the participants' and researcher's safety, minimising the potential for participant distress, ensuring informed consent, and safeguarding confidentiality. With regards to the first of these considerations (safety), Birkbeck was the preferred location for face-to-face interviews. This was due to it being a public building, with security on site, but where the researcher could also book a private room for the interview, so the participant's privacy could be protected. If the participant was not able, or did not want, to come to Birkbeck for the interview, another appropriate public location was agreed with the participant, such as a quiet coffee shop. It was decided, when planning the study, that no interviews would be conducted in participants' houses. Alternatively, an interview could be

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[9] Students who are unable, or do not wish, to collect 40 credits via study participation have the option to submit a written assignment instead.

arranged over video call if it was not possible for the researcher and interviewee to meet in person. To ensure everyone's safety, interviews that were conducted during or after March 2020 were done remotely, via video or telephone call, due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

For face-to-face interviews taking place away from Birkbeck, the researcher followed safety procedures as outlined in the Birkbeck Department of Psychological Sciences' code of conduct for field research, such as adopting a 'buddy system' (J. A. Smith, 2018). To ensure the researcher's safety without compromising the participant's anonymity, prior to each interview a designated contact was informed of when and where the interview would take place. The researcher always had a mobile phone on her and called her designated contact once the interview had finished. If the designated contact had not heard from the researcher by an agreed time, they would try to call her and, if they were unable to reach the researcher, they would contact the venue where the interview took place to see if she could be located. If this was unsuccessful, they would then contact the appropriate services. The interviewer and her designated contact also had an agreed code word so she could summon help should she feel uncomfortable or assess the situation as unsafe.

The risk of participant distress was deemed to be fairly low. However, as the interviews featured questions about topics such as home and personal relationships, it was recognised that it was possible they may touch on sensitive issues for some participants. To minimise any risk of distress or discomfort, a copy of the interview schedule and an information sheet about the study were shared with potential participants when they expressed interest in taking part. This meant that all participants were aware of the topics and questions the interview would cover before agreeing to participate. No information was withheld from participants prior to the study. Additionally, at the start of each interview, the researcher went over the information sheet with the participant and emphasised key points, such as that they only needed to share things which they felt comfortable talking about, could decline to answer any question, and could stop the interview at any time.

There was a plan in place of how to react should a participant become distressed. In such a case, the researcher would turn off the recording equipment and the interview would be paused. The researcher would express appropriate sympathy and concern. The participant would then be free to choose to continue with the interview, take a break, or end the interview. In such a case, the participant would be informed that there is help available, either from their GP or from specialist agencies. Furthermore, at the end of each interview, the researcher routinely checked the participant was happy about how the session went, answered any questions they might have, thanked them for their participation, and provided

a debrief sheet that gave details of agencies they could contact if they would like to discuss any of the issues raised in the interview further.

In the case of face-to-face interviews, written consent was obtained by the researcher before the interview began by getting the participant to sign a hard-copy consent form. In the case of remote interviews, participants were sent an electronic copy of the consent form in advance of the interview and were asked, if possible, to print the form out, sign it, scan it, and return it to the researcher via email. However, if a participant did not have access to a printer or scanner, they were asked to write out and sign a statement to confirm that they were over 18, had read the information sheet and consent form for the study, and agreed to take part in the research under the terms outlined in these documents. Participants were then asked to email a photo of the written declaration of consent to the researcher. To ensure participants were happy for their data to be included, there was also a second consent process, with the procedure for this being explained to participants in the information sheet and again at the end of each interview. Once each transcript was typed up, it was sent to the participant who then had two weeks to review it and say if they wanted some or all of their data to be excluded from the study.

To protect confidentiality, at the start of each interview, the participant was asked to choose a pseudonym. It was emphasised that, when choosing a pseudonym, they should avoid any name that may enable someone to identify them, such as a nickname. Participants were only referred to by their pseudonym in interview transcripts, any notes made by the researcher, when recording demographic information, and when presenting the results of the research. The only documents that contained participants' real names were consent forms. Consent forms were stored securely and separately to research data. No reference to the participant's pseudonym was made on the consent forms or in the file name, when consent forms were stored electronically. All interviews were transcribed by the researcher and any potentially identifying information (such as the names of their partner, family members, or friends; where they worked; where they lived; or other identifiable locations) was removed or disguised during transcription, so that such information never made it into the written transcript. Audio recordings were deleted as soon as each transcript was agreed by the participant, or when the two week period allotted for the participant to review the transcript had elapsed.

### 3.4.2 – Ethics in Quantitative Studies

The quantitative surveys were done online, on a device of the participant's choosing. This meant that participants were free to complete the survey at a time and location that

suited them, and they did not need to meet with the researcher, thus minimising risks to the safety of the researcher and participants. Additionally, participants were able to remain completely anonymous, as they were not asked to provide their name, contact details, or any other personally identifying information. Moreover, settings on the SurveyMonkey platform (where both surveys were conducted) were used to ensure maximum anonymity for participants, including not recording IP addresses. Within Chapter 6, participants were recruited via SONA; however, once they had signed up for the study within SONA, they were given a standardised link to access the survey on SurveyMonkey, meaning that their answers within the survey could not be related back to their details within SONA.

Within both quantitative studies, consent was gained electronically. Upon going to the survey link, potential participants were presented with an electronic information sheet about the survey, that explained what taking part would involve and how the collected data would be used. No information was withheld from potential participants. If people wanted to take part after reading the information sheet, they were asked to tick three boxes confirming that they understood the information presented about the survey, were over 18 years of age, and consented to participate. Only after ticking all three boxes were participants able to proceed to the survey. This procedure for gaining consent was preferred over requiring participants to meet with the researcher to provide written consent as it enabled participants to remain anonymous. The procedure described here is also in line with the procedure laid out by Terry and Braun (2017) for obtaining consent electronically during survey research.

It was recognised that some questions in both surveys could touch on subjects which could potentially be linked to negative emotions for some participants, for example if they had a strong desire to buy a house but were unable to do so. To address this risk, it was made clear in the information sheet that the survey would focus on issues related to housing and well-being. Additionally, it was emphasised that participants were free to leave any questions they did not want to answer blank and to stop participating at any time.

Debriefing information was provided at the end of each survey, in which participants were thanked and were reminded of the researcher's contact details so they could get in touch if they had any questions or comments about the study. Information was also provided regarding where participants could access support and advice with issues relating to housing (e.g. Shelter and Citizens Advice), as well as details for who they could contact if they felt the survey had raised issues that they would like to discuss further (e.g. their GP, Counselling Directory, and Mind).

As the surveys were anonymous, this complicated the ability for participants to be able to withdraw their data from the study after completing the survey. It was explained in the information sheet that, within SurveyMonkey, answers are saved each time the participant presses 'Next' to progress within the survey, so even if someone only partially completed the survey, their answers would still be available to the researcher. Participants were therefore given the option to provide a code that would be linked to their answers so that their data could be identified and removed if they chose to withdraw. Advice was provided on how to choose a code that was unique but could not be used to identify the participant. Additionally, it was explained in both the information sheet and the debrief that participants who had provided a code had two weeks after taking part in the survey to notify the researcher if they wanted their data to be removed.

### 3.5 – Positionality and Reflexivity[10]

The importance of reflexivity has been extensively written about and emphasised in literature focused on qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2013, 2022; Finlay, 2002; Pillow, 2003). There has been less discussion of reflexivity within quantitative methods. However, quantitative research is neither an objective nor value-free exercise (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Sayer, 1984). Decisions regarding what to study, which questions to ask, which response options to provide, and which groups to sample all introduce subjectivity into the research process. I have therefore recognised the importance of reflecting, throughout the PhD process, on what I have brought (in terms of experience, assumptions, and positionality) to the research process. I am not practicing reflexivity here in an attempt to make the presented research "more legitimate, more valid, more truthful" (Pillow, 2003, p. 186). Instead, in recognising that all knowledge is from a particular perspective (Lakoff, 1987), I felt it was important to explicitly state what my perspective is and to explore how this may have affected the research process.

The idea for this thesis research project first came to me when studying for my MSc Psychology. I remember being 29, single, and living in a house share, learning about classical life cycle models, such as the family life cycle (McGoldrick et al., 2015), that included many pronouncements about what one's life would/ should look like by 30 years of age. However, the life being outlined in such models did not resemble my life or the lives of many of my friends or people I knew in their late twenties and their thirties. I was therefore drawn to study what it means to be an adult when one does not match society's expectations

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[10] Due to the personal and reflexive nature of the discussion in this section, a conscious decision was made to write this section in the first person. The benefits of using the first person when discussing reflexivity, and qualitative research more generally, have been discussed by Webb (1992).

of what adulthood should look like and being a house sharer over the age of 30 years seemed to encapsulate a number of ways in which someone may be living a 'non-traditional' adult life. For example, house sharing is associated with being single, childfree, and not a homeowner (although people may be none of these things and still live in a house share). I therefore came into this project with two, perhaps contradictory, perspectives of what I wanted to do. I wanted to challenge traditional ideas of what life should look like for one to be considered a 'proper' adult or a success. However, I also wanted to draw attention to the fact that increasing numbers of people were having to live in house shares for longer periods of time, due to the difficulties of buying a property or even renting on their own.

As already noted, I am myself an experienced house sharer. Throughout much of my twenties and the first few years of my thirties I lived in house shares. In just over 8 years of house sharing, I lived in seven properties. Some I stayed in for 6 months, others for 2 years. I lived with a range of different people including a friend I had known for 15 years, some friends of friends, and some complete strangers who I found via adverts on SpareRoom and only met once, briefly, before moving in. In my last experience of sharing (from 31 to 33 years old), my partner and I shared a room in a house share. Throughout these 8 years, I had a mix of experiences of house sharing – some good, some less good. I lived in one flat for 2 years which was beautiful (lots of space, great location). I also lived in houses that were in a bad state of repair, with landlords who did not care and housemates who left cigarette butts in the sink. I had a lot of fun in some house shares, but I have also known what it is like to feel uncomfortable or a bit lonely if you are living with people you do not really 'click' with. (I consider myself fortunate to have never had any scary encounters in house shares I have lived in, although I have close friends who have lived with very difficult people or, in one case, a housemate who went through their things and read their bank statements.) Therefore, I know that sharing can be a positive experience and that it can also be thoroughly miserable. I believe this gave me an important awareness throughout the project that there was unlikely to be one answer of what it means to be a house sharer over the age of 30 years.

While I believe that reflexivity is important for any research project, it takes on a different dimension for qualitative interview studies, where personal interaction between the researcher and the participants is at the heart of the research process (Finlay, 2002). At the start of the PhD and while conducting 90% of the interviews for the mature student interview study (Chapter 4), I was part of my own target group (i.e. over 30 years of age and living in a house share). I did disclose this to some participants, either because they asked or it came up in conversation; however, it was not something I mentioned to all participants. By the time

I was conducting the general population interview study (Chapter 5), I was no longer a house sharer, as my partner and I had bought a house and were living in it on our own. I did not disclose that I was a homeowner to any of the participants. However, some participants in this second study asked if I had experience of house sharing and in these cases I confirmed that I did. In all cases, whether I disclosed my history with house sharing or not, I believe that my experience of sharing helped me to build rapport and to understand, and empathise with, participants' experiences. Disclosing that I was a current house sharer, or had experience of sharing, may have also made some participants feel more comfortable. I recognise that, for a researcher, having similar experiences to your participants comes with the risk that you may take certain things for granted or project your own experiences on to the participant's situation (Chhabra, 2020; Le Gallais, 2008). However, I believe that reflection, focusing the interviews on getting participants to tell their story of house sharing (so events were presented in context, as part of a narrative), and being aware from the start of the project of the wide potential variation in house sharing experiences helped me to guard against this.

With regards to my positionality more generally, I am a White, British woman and was living with my partner at the time of all of the interviews. I do not have any children. In this way, I shared some important identities with my participants, the majority of whom were also White women. However, in other ways there were important differences between myself and some of the participants. For example, half of the interviewees had immigrated to the UK, which had often impacted the way they experienced or perceived house sharing. Additionally, the majority of participants were single, although one participant was married, three were divorced, and one had suffered partner bereavement. With regards to the first interview study, I shared a key identity of being a part-time, mature student in the Birkbeck psychology department with the participants, although we also differed as they were all undergraduate students. Being a homeowner, while conducting the second interview study, certainly put me in a position of privilege compared to some participants who strongly desired to be able to buy a property. However, other participants (in both interview studies) were already homeowners who could afford to live alone but chose to share because they enjoyed it. Additionally, while some participants had had much worse experiences of sharing than me, others had, I believe, had more positive experiences. Therefore, at various points throughout the project, I was both an insider and an outsider.

Le Gallais (2008) has talked about the potential benefits and challenges of doing research as an insider and an outsider. However, in the current research, while the participants shared some characteristics and experiences, they did not form one homogenous group for me to identify with or diverge from. Participants' reasons for, and

experiences of, sharing were varied, and it seems likely that only some of them would adopt the label of 'house sharer', with others being more comfortable seeing house sharing as something they were, by necessity, doing, but which did not form part of their identity. It is therefore questionable how much the idea of belonging to an 'in-group' of house sharers, with a "group or collective identity" (Le Gallais, 2008, p. 146), could apply to the present research, even when I was still living in a house share. Ultimately, as observed by Chhabra (2020) and Le Gallais (2008), when conducting research, things are rarely so simple as being a complete insider or a complete outsider.

### 3.6 – Conclusion

In summary, a mixed methods design was adopted for the research presented in this thesis, underpinned by a critical realist philosophy. In total, four studies were conducted, which are presented in the next four chapters, starting with the two qualitative interview studies, followed by the two quantitative survey studies. The findings from the different studies are then brought together and discussed in relation to each other in the final chapter of the thesis (Chapter 8). Potential causal mechanisms that are suggested by the research will also be discussed in Chapter 8.

**Chapter 4:**

**Qualitative Interview Study 1 – Exploring House Sharing After 30 Years of Age Among Mature Students**

**4.1 – Overview**

As discussed in Chapter 2, despite the increase in house sharing among the over-thirties in recent years, there has been little research into what living in a house share after 30 years of age might mean in terms of ability to feel at home, constructing an adult identity, or psychological well-being. Research with house sharers in their twenties and early thirties has shown that living in a house share can potentially support or undermine a person's psychological well-being, as well as their ability to feel at home and to view themself as an adult (Clark & Tuffin, 2023; Maalsen, 2019; McNamara & Connell, 2007; Ortega-Alcázar & Wilkinson, 2021; Waldron, 2022; Wilkinson & Ortega-Alcázar, 2019). However, questions remain about what the meaning and impact of house sharing after 30 years of age might be.

There are reasons to believe that house sharers who are aged 30 years or over may be more at risk of experiencing poor psychological well-being and other negative outcomes, compared to younger sharers. For example, house sharing in one's thirties, and beyond, does not fit with normative expectations and can lead to older sharers being judged or stigmatised (Clark & Tuffin, 2023; Heath et al., 2018; McNamara & Connell, 2007). This can have negative consequences for the self-esteem and psychological well-being of house sharers over 30 years of age, as well as potentially undermining their ability to feel at home and to construct an adult identity (Barratt & Green, 2017; Clapham, 2010; Garcia, 2016). Some research has also suggested that, compared to younger sharers, older sharers may find living with housemates to be more frustrating and/or intrusive (Clark & Tuffin, 2023; Clarke & Heywood, 2016; Simon & Roederer, 2019). Additionally, Li et al. (2022) found that housing instability had a more detrimental impact on psychological well-being for those aged 35-44 years, compared to older or younger participants[11]. Given that research has suggested that house sharers often experience higher levels of instability and transience in their housing than people living in other types of household (Heath et al., 2018; McNamara & Connell, 2007), renting a room in a house share in middle age may therefore increase one's risk of experiencing poorer psychological well-being.

The impact that living in a house share has on well-being seems to depend, at least in part, on the extent to which house sharing matches the individual's housing preferences

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[11] The age range of Li et al.'s (2022) sample was 25-64 years.

(Oh & Kim, 2021). Many people living in house shares after 30 years of age are likely to be doing so, at least in part, for financial reasons (Heath et al., 2018; Maalsen, 2019). However, some people in their thirties, forties, and beyond actively choose to house share due to the social benefits it offers (Després, 1991a; Heath et al., 2018; Heath & Scicluna, 2020). Research has shown that house sharing can offer well-being benefits for people over 30 years of age, including companionship, emotional support, and reduced loneliness (Altus & Mathews, 2000; Després, 1991a; Heath et al., 2018). Moreover, rising housing unaffordability and increases in the number of over-thirties living in house shares in recent years may mean that cultural norms around house sharing, and its perceived social acceptability, are changing (Heath et al., 2018; Maalsen, 2020; McKee et al., 2020). Ultimately, more research is needed to explore what living in a house share means for people over 30 years of age, the impact it has on their life, and how this can vary depending on individual and contextual factors.

### 4.1.1 – Aims of the Current Research

The current study used semi-structured qualitative interviews to understand more about the experiences of house sharers aged 30 years or over. In particular, the study was focused on participants' own subjective understanding of their experiences and the ways in which they felt house sharing may or may not have impacted their life, especially with regards to their ability to feel at home, their self-perception, and their well-being. The study aimed to answer three research questions:

- **RQ 4.1:** Did participants feel at home where they were living? Why/ why not?

- **RQ 4.2:** Did participants feel that living in a house share after the age of 30 years had impacted their ability to construct an adult identity? Why/ why not?

- **RQ 4.3:** Did participants feel that living in a house share after the age of 30 years had impacted their psychological well-being, either positively and/or negatively? Why/ why not?

<div align="center">

**4.2 – Method**

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### 4.2.1 – Participants

The study featured 10 participants (9 female, 1 male) each of whom was aged 30 years or over and living in a property they shared with one or more unrelated adults. Demographic information for participants is available in Table 4.1. Participants ranged in age from 31 to 43 years. (Age ranges, rather than exact ages, are provided in Table 4.1 to help protect identities.) All participants were living in London. No participants were cohabiting with

a partner or living with family members. Additionally, no participants had children or lived in households that contained children. Chloe owned the flat that she shared but all other participants were renting their rooms from private landlords or friends. Jane and Jennifer lived in rented properties but each owned a property outside of London that they rented out. No other participants were homeowners. (To protect participants' anonymity, pseudonyms have been used for all participants.)

**Table 4.1**

*Demographic Information for Participants*

| Pseudonym | Age (years) | Gender | Nationality | Relationship status | Income band |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Chloe | 30-34 | Female | EU | Single | £71,000 or more |
| Clare | 30-34 | Female | EU | Single | £0-15,000 |
| Dave | 30-34 | Male | British | Single | £16,000-25,000 |
| Grace | 30-34 | Female | British | Single | £0-15,000 |
| Isabella | 35-39 | Female | EU | Single | £16,000-25,000 |
| Jane | 35-39 | Female | British | In a relationship but not cohabiting | £26,000-35,000 |
| Jennifer | 35-39 | Female | British | In a relationship but not cohabiting | £71,000 or more |
| Mayim | 40-44 | Female | EU | Single | £0-15,000 / £16,000-25,000 |
| Melodie | 30-34 | Female | EU | Single | £0-15,000 |
| Naomi | 40-44 | Female | Non-EU | Divorced | £16,000-25,000 |

*Note.* As Mayim worked as a freelancer, her income varied between two bands.

Eight of the participants were heterosexual and two were bisexual. No participants were transgender. All participants were White, except one participant who was of East Asian ethnicity. Two participants, Mayim and Naomi, considered themselves to be disabled. When

asked if their disability affected their ability to live alone, Mayim said it did not and Naomi said it did to some extent.

Nine of the participants were students at Birkbeck, University of London (five were studying part-time, four were studying full-time). One participant was a recent graduate of Birkbeck who was volunteering at the university as a research assistant. All participants were also in paid employment (six worked part-time, four worked full-time). Participants were recruited via the Birkbeck participant pool, which is managed via the SONA Systems participant recruitment platform. As part of their studies, first year undergraduate psychology students are automatically signed up for the SONA system and are encouraged to collect credits by participating in psychology research studies. However, other Birkbeck students and members of the public can also sign up to join the participant pool and take part in studies via SONA. It is not known how many eligible participants were enrolled in the Birkbeck SONA system at the time the study was launched. Upon logging in to the Birkbeck SONA homepage, members of the participant pool are presented with a list of available studies. They can then read a description of each study and can choose to sign up to participate in any studies they are interested in and eligible for. For the current study, when people signed up to participate, I then sent them more information about the study, as described in Section 4.2.2, and emphasised that they had the right to change their mind and not take part if they no longer wanted to after reading further information about the study. Eight of the participants were first year BSc Psychology students. Two participants were not first year psychology students but were interested in participating after seeing the study advertised on SONA.

Two further interviews, again with Birkbeck students, were conducted but have not been included in the analysis to help create as homogenous a sample as possible. Of these interviews, one participant was married with children and had a friend temporarily staying in their family home, but he was not a permanent or paying lodger. The other participant occasionally rented out their spare room but did not currently have a lodger staying with them.

When thinking about sample size, the concept of information power was instructive (Malterud et al., 2016; Varpio et al., 2017). Malterud et al. advanced information power as a concept for judging the required sample size for qualitative studies, with studies that have higher information power requiring smaller samples. Criteria for judging information power include the aim of the study, sample specificity, and use of established theory. Within the current study, there were several factors that were seen to boost information power. For

example, the sample was specific, with each participant being a member of the target group: house sharers aged 30 years or over. Additionally, each participant had lived in multiple house shares, meaning they each had a variety of experiences of house sharing to discuss and, as a full housing history was gathered from every participant, each interview provided a lot of rich, varied, and detailed data. The study was also informed by existing theory about home, adulthood, and psychological well-being, as discussed in Chapter 2. Beyond this, while the analysis was focused on identifying common themes, the importance of considering those themes within the context of participants' lives was also recognised. Having a sample of 10 participants facilitated this process and helped to ensure the 'big picture' context of the narrative of each participant's life was not lost. Additionally, it enabled details of each individual participant's story to be woven into the presentation of the analysis in Section 4.3, thus allowing nuances and complexities in the experiences of participants to be teased out. It was therefore felt that the sample size of 10 participants provided a good balance between ensuring sufficient information power, while also allowing a level of depth and nuance to be brought to the analysis that a larger sample would have prevented.

### 4.2.2 – Interviews

Potential participants were sent an information sheet about the study and the interview schedule (see Appendix C) before they agreed to take part. Once they had reviewed these documents and confirmed they wished to participate, a time and venue for the interview were confirmed. Before the interview began, consent was obtained and participants were asked to fill out a brief questionnaire capturing demographic information. Key points, such as the fact that they did not have to answer any question that they did not want to and that they were free to stop the interview at any time, without giving a reason, were also emphasised to participants before the interview started. Ethical approval for the study was granted by the Department of Psychological Sciences Research Ethics Committee of Birkbeck, University of London (approval reference number: 171894).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all participants. The interviews were conducted by the researcher between October 2018 and July 2020. All interviews took place in person in a private room at Birkbeck, apart from Jane's interview which was conducted via video call due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Interviews lasted between 50 minutes and 2 hours 15 minutes.

Each interview began with an invitation for the participant to share their story, with a particular focus on (but not limited to) their housing history, their experiences of house sharing, and their goals for the future. Areas of particular interest that were explored with

further prompt questions, when necessary, included how and why participants came to be living in a house share, how they felt about house sharing, whether they felt at home where they were living, what home meant to them, their ideal housing situation, their conception of adulthood, and their hopes and fears for the future.

### 4.2.3 – Analysis

All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Any potentially identifying information was removed or disguised during transcription. Before data analysis began, each transcript was sent to the participant who then had two weeks to review it and inform the researcher if they wanted any information to be edited or removed. (No participants requested for any changes to be made.)

RTA was used to analyse the data, following the method laid out by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2022). Each transcript was coded by hand. Coding was done inductively and focused on the manifest level initially but, as the coding process proceeded, some latent codes were also applied to the data. After each transcript had been coded, that participant's codes were reviewed, with similar codes being combined. Then, after this process had been completed separately for each transcript, the codes from all participants were collated and codes representing similar ideas were grouped together to develop themes that were shared across multiple participants.

To help illustrate the analysis process, a quote from one of the participants is provided below, followed by examples of codes applied to this data extract and how these were used within the theme development process. Within our interview, Chloe said: "I shared in Berlin with another person (…) He didn't really clean, so, but I'm quite, I think because, I'm quite easy-going (…) that's why I actually don't mind living with other people". A manifest code applied to this piece of data was 'Former housemate did not clean' and a latent code applied to the same data was 'Being easy-going makes house sharing easier'. Both of these codes then fed into Theme 1: 'Lack of control can make it difficult to feel at home in a house share'. The manifest code fit with other similar codes to highlight that house sharers cannot have full control over their living environment, due to the actions (or inaction) of their housemates. However, the latent code, along with other similar (latent and manifest) codes from other participants, provides important nuance that there are individual differences between house sharers with regards to how they experience this lack of control. (See Section 4.3.1 for more details.)

<center>**4.3 – Results**</center>

Four themes were developed which were felt to represent key aspects of participants' experience: 'Lack of control can make it difficult to feel at home in a house share', 'People can make sharing a great or terrible experience', 'Sharing can be a product of choice or constraint', and 'Sharing can be a barrier to, but also a facilitator of, adult identity'. Each theme is discussed in more detail below. Quotes from interview transcripts are presented to illustrate each of the themes.[12]

**4.3.1 – Theme 1: Lack of Control Can Make it Difficult to Feel at Home in a House Share**

One of the things participants found hardest about house sharing was that you do not, and cannot, have complete control over your living environment when sharing. For example, Jennifer said that to feel comfortable house sharing

> you definitely have to be (…) willing to not be in control of your immediate surroundings, which is tough. And especially when you're in your thirties, because in your thirties you are gaining control of your life (…) you know what you like, you know what you don't like.

This lack of control could inhibit feeling at home. Indeed, several participants drew explicit links between control and being able to feel at home. For example, when asked what home meant to him, Dave said: "it's just a place (…) that's yours, you can control". Additionally, Dave contrasted house sharing with his previous experience of cohabiting with a partner and spoke about how the sense of control he had felt when living just with a partner had facilitated feeling at home: "You feel more like you're going home (…) there's your stuff around. Every room's kind of yours, your domain. You can decide who you bring in (…) You just get to set the environment a bit better".

*Lack of Control Over Living Environment*

Living in a house share means you have to share control of common spaces with people who may differ from you in terms of the way they want to live. Differing expectations about the home environment, in particular with regards to cleanliness and noise, were identified by all participants as common sources of frustration and/or conflict in house shares. Some participants talked about being woken up by housemates making noise late at night or about being frustrated by messy housemates. For example, Isabella described one

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[12] Within the quotes, pauses are represented by …, the removal of a small amount of text is demonstrated by (…), and information that has been added for clarification or removed to help preserve the participant's anonymity is demonstrated by [text]. Any names of people or places included in quotes have been pseudonymised. Where a participant placed particular emphasis on a word, this is demonstrated through underlining.

former house share as "not pleasant at all" because "none of them cared the conditions they live in, so it was always dirty", leading to "constant fights about clean ups". In contrast, other participants talked about being told to turn their music down by housemates or about having to adopt tidier habits when living in certain house shares. For example, Chloe said:

> you always have to clean the dishes right away and I tend to like to not clean them right away and let them stay there until I come home in the evenings, so sometimes there used to be a bit of trouble when I did that.

Even if all housemates got on well, sharing a property with multiple unrelated adults raised practical issues and there were common annoyances mentioned by most participants, such as having to wait to use the bathroom or kitchen. Indeed, as Isabella noted, "everyone wants the bathroom at 7 am". This meant that participants could not necessarily just do what they wanted when they wanted in their house share. As Naomi stated: "Ok they are cooking, I have to wait. Ok I want to take a shower, but someone is taking a shower, I have no time, I have to go like this". Therefore, participants were not always able to have full control over their own time or schedule. Establishing and keeping a routine could also be challenging. Expressing her frustration about this, Isabella said: "I want to be in charge of my own time. (…) I don't want to wait for someone to have a shower first (…) I'm a grown up". Participants were also not able to control who housemates brought into the property. For example, Jennifer talked about feeling uncomfortable when a housemate invited a married man she was dating to the house share: "we all felt really, really uncomfortable about it because we felt like we were complicit (…) in an affair basically. (…) that comes back to this thing where you can't control who comes into that house". Additionally, some participants felt their freedom to invite their own guests to visit was limited by the need to consider others and work around housemates' schedules. For example, Grace said: "I love hosting people for meals and I'd do a lot more of that if I lived on my own".

### My Bedroom Is the One Space I Control – But There Are Still Limitations

The one space within their house share that participants had sole control over was their bedroom. Having this private space that they could control was something participants really valued. For example, Clare stated: "you can go in there, close your door and (…) people can knock but nobody would like really just walk in there, so you can choose whether you want to be with people or not". Within house shares, the privacy of one's bedroom was an important boundary, and for a housemate to enter someone's room without knocking or asking permission was seen as a violation. For example, Jennifer emphasised: "I haven't lived anywhere where someone's gone in my room. (…) I can't imagine it ever happening". The only time that any participant spoke of someone entering their room without permission

was in the context of Melodie discussing being sexually harassed by a former housemate. She moved out very quickly after that incident.

Having one's own room did give participants some sense of control. Indeed, Jennifer felt that, in some ways, house sharing could provide more privacy and control compared to living with a partner, saying: "when you live on your own in a house share you've got your own bedroom and that's, you can control that". In contrast, Jennifer observed that, when you are living with a partner, "you don't have any of your own space because your bedroom is not your bedroom, you're sharing it with somebody else". However, even within one's bedroom, control was still limited, especially for participants who were renting. For example, Isabella talked about how having only one room for all your things could lead to your bedroom becoming cluttered and, thus, not a comfortable, relaxing space: "it's crowded (…) your stuff is everywhere, it's just, there's no space in general and I think it's really, really draining". Similarly, Grace talked about how a lack of space prevented her from having all of her belongings with her, which limited her ability to feel fully at home:

> it's hard because not all of my possessions and belongings are there (…) there aren't room for them. (…) I think part of feeling at home for me is having all of my stuff that I own there with me and I don't have that here.

Several participants also spoke about how being able to personalise a property was important for feeling fully at home. However, the extent to which participants could exert control over their living environment, including their bedroom, by decorating or personalising it was limited by the fact that most participants were living in privately rented accommodation. As Isabella said:

> when you rent a flat share there is a lot of restrictions (…) you can't put pictures up, you can't repaint it, (…) you're given the furniture (…) you have to make do with things given to you (…) it impacts your, I think, kind of well-being but also, like you can't feel, everything around you tells you it's not yours.

For these reasons, Isabella stated that "you can't feel like at home" in a rented property.

### *Lack of Control Over Where You Live*

Several participants also discussed how the short length of contracts offered to private tenants in the UK meant you have little security as a private renter. Indeed, Chloe stated: "you have no security". Similarly, Clare emphasised that short-term contracts created a feeling of pressure or of time running out: "you can't relax because you already know like oh when that time goes out I might have to find something else". Additionally, the ability of landlords to unilaterally decide to evict tenants or increase rent payments meant participants could not necessarily control how long they were able to stay in a particular property. As

Mayim stated: "you never know when you will be evicted because the house goes to sale or maybe you will have to move out because the rent will go up too much".

Most participants felt that being able to stay somewhere long-term was important for creating a sense of home. For example, Grace listed one of the things necessary for feeling at home as:

> feeling like you're not just going to be told to leave at any moment, because when that's the case sometimes I feel like I can't really invest in a place emotionally (…) So maybe a home is somewhere that's a bit more stable and um… not likely to be whipped away.

Additionally, knowing you might need to move house soon discouraged some participants from engaging in home-making, even in their own bedroom. For example, Clare raised the question:

> is it worth buying a nice cupboard or spending, because I won't, might not be able to take anything with me when I'm going to the next house (…) because a lot of things are furnished so you can't bring your furniture with you.

The insecurity and lack of control over their living situation that people renting a room in a house share experienced could therefore inhibit feeling at home.

It should be noted that not every house share is short-term. For example, regarding the first house share she lived in, Jane said:

> as I was 18, I thought 'Oh I'm not going to be here very long, and then I'm going to find someone, get married, and buy a house' and all those sort of things. But actually I was there for seven years.

Renting from a friend could provide more security. For example, Grace, who was renting her room from a friend, said: "because I know obviously my landlord and she's fairly solid that she's not going to want me out so that's actually given me a lot of more security than I would have had renting it from anyone else". However, renting from a friend did not guarantee security. Indeed, Isabella's friend who owned the flat where she lived was looking to sell the property, meaning Isabella would have to move out: "I'm a bit worried what will happen in a year's time, if my friend sells the place. (…) I don't know what I'm going to do".

### Age and Personality Can Impact How a Lack of Control Is Experienced

The majority of participants talked about how they had not sought stability when they were younger and had been happy to move and to experience different places. (Nine of the participants had lived in more than one country, for example.) However, they now wanted to

settle in one place. For instance, Mayim talked about how the instability and transitoriness of house sharing had become more wearing over time:

> [House sharing] felt interesting in the beginning. I would say the first three house shares felt still interesting (…) I started to get fed up slowly, because you just keep moving, you have no stability (…) the more house shares you change, the more temporary it all feels.

Additionally, several participants spoke about how the home environment, and having a nice, relaxing place to come back to at the end of the day, had become more important to them as they got older. Consequently, not having control over their living space, and having to compromise due to sharing, had become more frustrating over time. For example, Dave said: "When you're younger it's fine because you just don't care about those things, but getting older it's like (…) I just don't want to come home to it being messy or you know just full of people". It therefore seemed that, for most participants, the lack of control inherent in house sharing had become harder to deal with as they got older. However, as a counterpoint to this idea, it is worth noting that Jennifer felt that house sharing had, at least in some ways, become more pleasant as she (and the people she lived with) had got older due to housemates being more considerate of each other:

> When you're in your twenties you just don't give a shit if you get in at three in the morning and make loads of noise (…) in your thirties (…) you're more aware of people, of your impact on other people, which actually you could argue makes house sharing in your thirties a more pleasant experience.

There were also suggestions in the data that some participants found a lack of control over their living environment easier to deal with than others. For example, Chloe, Jane, and Jennifer all described themselves as being easy-going or laid back and they felt that this made it easier to live in a house share. Indeed, regarding a former housemate, Chloe said: "He didn't really clean, but I'm quite, I think because I'm quite easy-going (…) that's why I actually don't mind living with other people".

### 4.3.2 – Theme 2: People Can Make Sharing a Great or Terrible Experience

Participants' experiences in house shares they had lived in ranged from extremely positive to very negative and, at times, frightening. In most cases, whether the experience was positive or negative came down to the person or people the participant was sharing with. As stated by Grace, house sharing "can be a really positive thing if you're with the right person, otherwise it can be an absolute disaster".

***Sharing Can Offer Socialising, Support, and Family***

At its best, house sharing could offer opportunities for friendship, companionship, and support. Almost all participants spoke about making friends through house sharing. Furthermore, all participants talked about enjoying spending time or engaging in social activities with at least one current or former housemate. Indeed, even Isabella (the participant who was most negative about house sharing in general) acknowledged that sharing could be "fun" and "can be a nice experience if you happen to live with people you like".

The house shares participants had most enjoyed living in were those where there was some element of communal life, for example with housemates cooking, eating dinner, or engaging in social activities together. Talking about her first house share, Jane said: "It was absolutely brilliant. I loved it. (…) We just had loads of good times really, of going out and having a few drinks, and getting to know different sort of friendship circles through whoever moved in". Beyond socialising and fun, housemates could also offer practical and emotional support, with Mayim noting:

> I think in a house share you don't feel that lonely really and at night it's less scary, when you know housemates are just next door. (…) when you have some breakage or anything, there are always people to help.

In some cases, participants talked about housemates supporting each other through break-ups and looking after each other when unwell. Jennifer had even cared for a housemate undergoing chemotherapy. There was a strong sense of community in some house shares and several participants likened at least one house share they had lived in to a family. For example, Clare fondly reminisced about a previous house share: "we became really close friends, and we had the same friend group, and there were always people at our house, and we would have dinner and everything together, so it was almost like a replacement family". Furthermore, house shares that were described as being like a family were generally also described as the participant's favourite share they had lived in. For example, discussing a previous house share, Chloe said: "that was my favourite situation (…) Because we just got on really well. And yeah it was kind of like an extended family".

### Balancing the Need for Privacy and Community

Participants who spontaneously described themselves as introverts (Grace, Isabella, and Melodie) struggled at times with the communal aspect of house sharing. For example, Grace described living in a large house share with lots of very sociable people as "painful" and stated: "sometimes you just want to go out and make a cup of tea and not have five conversations". Additionally, Isabella described how the presence of housemates, especially

strangers, in the house made it difficult for her to relax, even in her own bedroom, as the house felt like public, not private, space:

> I started noticing like I can't relax in my own home (…) because it's not my own place and going to the bathroom I have to make sure I'm dressed (…) because you can meet like other people in the corridor (…) it's very stressful but like it's not in your face stress, it just takes a toll on you kind of behind, behind your consciousness.

However, introverted participants had still enjoyed the sense of community they had found in some house shares (generally when living with only one or two other people). For example, when discussing her most positive experience of house sharing, Melodie talked about a time she had lived with two people whom she got on very well with, saying: "we were eating together, cooking together (…) it felt really nice." Currently, Grace, Isabella, and Melodie were all living in house shares where they were able to have some time alone in the property, for example, due to their housemates spending more time out of the house than them. This helped with balancing the need for time alone while still living with a housemate. For example, Isabella said that her housemate "spends the weekends (…) at her boyfriend's place, so it's not that bad. I can have the place still to myself".

More extroverted participants also spoke about the need to maintain the right balance between community and privacy. For example, while Clare recognised the value of having close relationships with housemates, she also stressed the importance of being able to have privacy and time on your own: "you want to have your space where you're like ok I'm in my room and I can read a book without anybody like annoying me or knocking on my door or wanting something from me". Furthermore, Jennifer emphasised that something she had appreciated in all the house shares she had lived in was that "even though we've been very close and it's like a commune-y feel, we're all still individual people with our own lives".

### Community Can Create a Feeling of Home

Therefore, living with people they got on with, in an environment that offered a sense of community but was not suffocating, seemed to play an important role in facilitating feeling at home for some participants. Lack of stability and control undermined some participants' ability to feel fully at home; however, the majority of participants reported feeling at least partly at home where they were living. Chloe reported feeling at home in the flat that she owned. Additionally, of the nine participants who were renting, Jane and Jennifer said they felt completely at home in their house shares, and Grace, Mayim, Melodie, and Naomi reported feeling mostly or somewhat at home. All six of these participants predominantly attributed their feeling of home to the people they lived with. For example, discussing her current house share, Mayim said:

it comes as close to home as a house share can... I think it's hard to feel home somewhere when you only rent one room, everything is communal (…) and you never know really how long will you stay. But really the people are lovely and I make friend in my housemate so now we have sometimes coffee together or cook for each other, so that's nice. So it sort of feels like home.

Additionally, while Clare did not currently feel at home in her house share, as she had until recently been living with two difficult housemates, she had felt at home in previous house shares and said: "I think that the people are much more important than actually the space that you have because once you feel comfortable with the people then that's like coming home, you don't care if you have like a gigantic room".

It therefore seems to be the people you live with, rather than the physical property, that are important for feeling at home in a house share. However, the physical form of a property can impact the way housemates interact. In particular, having a lounge or living room was generally seen as important, so as to enable socialising and the development of a sense of community between housemates. For example, Naomi said: "most places they don't have really living room. After cooking, they bring the food to their room or something. They don't really communicate (…) You don't really socialise so much". Later, she added: "Without social contact, even though you [are] living together, it doesn't feel you are in home".

### *People Can Also Undermine Feelings of Home*

However, while people were the key to positive experiences of house sharing, some participants had also had horrible experiences due to living with housemates whose behaviour was inconsiderate, inappropriate, or frightening. Indeed, four participants described a former housemate as "scary". In the worst cases, such behaviour eroded all possibility of feeling at home. For example, Dave described how he felt "stressed out", "really anxious", and "didn't want to go home" when living with a former housemate whom he felt he had to "walk on eggshells" around, due to her anger and unpredictability. Furthermore, Clare talked about how she "started to have depression" when she was living in a bad situation (one housemate "had drug problems", another was "very manipulative") and was unable to move out: "you feel almost imprisoned in your own house because you don't want to be with those people". In this way, feeling comfortable with the people you live with seemed to be a necessary condition for feeling at home in a house share.

### *Getting on With Housemates Is Down to Luck*

The people you live with therefore have a big impact on your experience of house sharing. However, participants had often found that the extent to which they could ensure they would live with housemates with whom they would enjoy positive relationships was often limited. For those living with strangers, potential new housemates were generally interviewed before they moved in; however, several participants acknowledged that first impressions could be wrong and, as Dave stated, "you just never know who people are" before you live with them. Indeed, Clare noted:

> you might like somebody a lot and you're like 'yeah take the room, move in with me' and you have these dreams that we're going to be, become best friends and then they turn around and then are horrible people.

Some participants expressed a strong preference for living with friends or friends of friends, rather than strangers, as it was deemed to be safer. For example, Melodie stated: "based on my experience, if I don't know the person that I'm going to share with, I don't trust it. (…) I'm not happy to do that with strangers". However, living with friends was not a guarantee of avoiding problems. For instance, Clare had at one point moved in with someone who was already a close friend but who became an increasingly difficult housemate: "at the beginning it was great because we were best friends, but then (…) she started having anger problems so it was like, I was scared in the morning waking up because she would shout at me every time".

The ability to exert control over a key aspect of house sharing (i.e. who you live with and your relationship with your housemates) was therefore limited. Several participants even felt it was largely down to luck whether you ended up living with people you got on with or not. For example, Clare said that house sharing "can be a really great experience. But the chances are 50-50 (…) it's like gambling: you never know what you get". However, sometimes the 'gamble' could lead to very positive results. Indeed, just as living with friends did not guarantee a positive experience, moving into a house share with strangers did not rule out the possibility of companionship and support. Some participants had become very close friends with housemates they had not known before living together and Jennifer went so far as to say: "I've met most of my dearest friends through house sharing".

**4.3.3 – Theme 3: Sharing Can Be a Product of Choice or Constraint**

Most participants were sharing out of financial necessity, but some had chosen to share due to enjoying the social aspects of living with housemates. Overall, the participants who described house sharing as something they were doing by choice were also the ones who were most positive about house sharing. This can perhaps be explained by an observation offered by Jane: "I think that's something just in humans in general (…) any time

where we, the choice is taken out of our hands and it's external (…) we generally don't like it".

### *Sharing Out of Financial Necessity*

The majority of participants were sharing because the high cost of buying, or even renting, a property on their own meant they could not afford to live alone. For example, Grace said that her only option, after moving to London, was to move into a house share: "there would be no other option financially for me". The need to share was also exacerbated for most participants by the fact they were single and therefore could not split the cost of renting or buying a property with a partner. As Clare observed: "you don't have much choice (…) [either] you live in a flat share (…) or you pressure yourself in finding a boyfriend so you can share one flat together, because alone it's impossible".

For some participants, sharing was purely a financial decision. Indeed, Isabella stated that she had never met anyone who was sharing out of choice, rather than by necessity: "it's not something that people do because they want to, at least I've never heard about it". However, several participants, who were now sharing for financial reasons, had initially wanted to share for social reasons. For example, Clare talked about how, at 21 years of age, she chose to move out of her sister's house, where she was living rent-free, to start sharing: "at the beginning it was for social reasons and [I] actually wanted to live with people my age". Nevertheless, over time, as Clare's desire to stop sharing grew but high rents prevented her from living alone, house sharing became something she was only doing because of financial reasons:

> I <u>have to</u> because there's no other way I could afford a place. (…) it becomes a necessity because that's how you can afford to live (…) So it, it started with a social factor and now it's just financial.

### *Dreaming of Stability*

Instead of living in a house share, the majority of participants wanted to live just with a partner (and, for some, in the future, children) in a house they owned. Describing her ideal future living situation, Chloe said: "my dream is to live in the countryside again, have a husband, have two children, (…) [and] a house with a garden". If they remained single, participants generally said they would prefer to live alone than to carry on sharing. For example, Melodie said: "I wouldn't want to stay alone all my life, I would like to have a partner and family. But, when you're single, like right now, I'd rather to be on my own". Some participants were concerned living alone may be lonely but still felt it would be preferable to continuing to house share long-term. For example, Naomi spoke about wanting to live alone

to regain the freedom and control she had experienced previously when living just with a partner:

> even you know that [the people] around you are very nice, you, end of the day you are lying there thinking 'Oh I want to have that freedom. No one disturb me or anything, no one tell me anything' (…) Sometimes you feel lonely because of that living on your own, but I miss that (…) freedom.

Almost all participants who were not already homeowners wanted to buy a property. For example, Dave said "I'd love to own a home". Homeownership was seen by almost all participants as the best (and perhaps only) way to achieve stability and security in their housing. For example, Clare said that she would be happy to be a life-long renter under the German or Austrian rental system, where open-ended contracts mean tenants can stay long-term in the same property. However, in the UK she saw buying as necessary to achieve stability:

> I never thought that I wanted to own a house but now because you have that sharing situation and you have these short contracts (…) I want to own a house so I have something that is a bit more stable.

Nonetheless, buying a property was not something most participants saw themselves being able to do, at least in the near future. Indeed, Isabella said "I think I'm going to rent for probably long, long time to go" and she described the fact that she was still not close to being able to buy a property as "a bit depressing".

Several participants were hopeful of being able to buy in the future, although they were aware that this would almost certainly require them to move out of London and, probably, to compromise on the type of property they would like. For example, Melodie hoped that her current low rent and a potential career change following her degree would enable her to buy a studio flat in the future: "if I continue my lifestyle and if my studies pay back by a nice job (…) in a few years' time I <u>might</u>, maybe think of getting a mortgage on a, even a small studio on my own". However, Melodie said that her dream of buying a house "doesn't seem achievable", adding "if I think about it realistically it's probably only if I win the lottery or marry a rich bloke". Grace was the only participant who did not aspire to homeownership; however, this was at least partly due to the difficulty and expense of buying: "living in the real world, I kind of have to make do with what I think might be achievable". Grace acknowledged that, due to the greater security enjoyed by homeowners, "in an ideal world (…) if you gave me the option between renting or buying… I'd probably choose to buy". Financial constraints therefore stood in the way of realising their preferred living situation for most participants.

### *Sharing for a Mix of Financial and Social Reasons*

Not all participants were sharing out of necessity, however. Some participants had chosen to share or were sharing for a mix of social and financial reasons. For example, discussing her recent move to London, Jane said:

> I didn't actually even think about renting my own place. I mean partly because of money, but also I knew that I was moving to London for the experience of being in London and I, so I wanted people to be a part of that. Because I really do enjoy living with other people. So yeah, I didn't really want to live on my own.

Similarly, Chloe and Jennifer could have afforded to live alone but chose to house share instead. Indeed, Jennifer stated: "I wanted to live in a house share. (…) I could have afforded to live on my own for a while". Chloe and Jennifer both enjoyed the company of other people (Jennifer described herself as "a social person" and Chloe called herself "an extrovert") and, while they recognised that there were inconveniences and annoyances associated with sharing, they felt the positives outweighed the negatives. For example, Chloe said: "if you do live with the right person then it can actually be nicer than living on your own". Nonetheless, there was also a financial aspect to their decision to share. Both Chloe and Jennifer were motivated to share by a desire to save money so that they could afford to travel while also paying to study and, in Chloe's case, to renovate her flat. Jennifer said: "for me, going on holiday and quality of life in terms of being able to go out and de-stress (…) is more important to me than living on my own".

However, even among the participants who were choosing to share, most did not want to continue house sharing long-term. Indeed, Jennifer said that, even though house sharing had been her ideal housing situation for a number of years, over time this had changed: "my ideal is now switched to (…) living as a family, as a grown up in a house with my partner". Jennifer was planning to move out of her house share in a few months time and, while she was currently considering whether to move in with her partner or to spend some time living alone first, she felt "the time has come" to stop house sharing.

Jane was the exception in that she was the only participant who did not express any desire to settle down, at least not yet. (She thought that she would eventually like to settle in one place, but this was more something for the somewhat distant future, rather than anytime soon: "I imagine probably one day I will settle in one home".) Despite being a homeowner, Jane did not want to be tied to one location. Indeed, she said: "I really like the flexibility of house sharing, because I'm not tied anywhere, and I can meet amazing people". However, she still appreciated the security of being a homeowner:

it's a financial security, and also there is that, I don't know, that other security like, yeah if I wanted to have one place to settle in then I could settle there where I know the house, I know the street (…) loads of my friends (…) live 20 minutes away.

Indeed, Jane said of her current situation, where she was renting out the house she owned and renting a room in a house share, giving her both flexibility and security: "I'm very grateful for my current housing situation (…) this is my ideal right now".

### *Choice, Income, and Control*

It is notable that the three participants (Chloe, Jane, and Jennifer) who spoke about choosing to share were all homeowners. They were also the participants with the highest incomes. It seems therefore that having the financial resources to be able to stop sharing if you want can make it easier to embrace house sharing as an active choice. A higher income can also increase the options available to you, regarding type of property and location. For example, Jane said:

I probably have had more privilege to choose where I've lived. So I've chosen nice, like the nicer areas of Sheffield or in central London, because (…) I've always had a really good job. But I suppose if you, yeah if you couldn't choose where you were living, and money was more of a factor, then it might be harder.

In contrast, other participants talked about how their financial situation constrained their options. For example, Clare not only talked about how she had no choice but to share if she wanted to live in London – "it's part of the life if I want to be in this city" – but she also noted that her options of where to live within London were also limited, even when sharing:

financially is like often you get pushed out to further areas in London because of gentrification (…) you might have lived in a borough for five years and you like it and it's your home but you can't afford it anymore because prices just… go up.

The extent to which you feel able to choose your living situation, including whether to share or not, was explicitly linked by some participants to feeling in control of one's life. For example, Isabella said that having to share for financial reasons can make "you feel like you're not in control of your own life (…) because you're forced like that". In contrast, when Isabella had previously been able to choose to live alone, this had made her feel empowered: "once I got a job that I could actually afford living by myself it was the first thing I did. (…) it boost my confidence so much. I felt like I'm in control of my own life".

### 4.3.4 – Theme 4: Sharing Can Be a Barrier to, but Also a Facilitator of, Adult Identity

All of the participants saw psychological characteristics, such as maturity and responsibility, as a key part of what makes a person an adult. When asked what she thought

made someone an adult, Chloe said: "Definitely not the marriage and the things like that".

Instead, Chloe saw an adult as someone who is "reliable, honest, treats others with respect and fairly, is empathetic (…) and responsible". Additionally, independence was seen as being strongly associated with adulthood by several participants. For example, Grace stated: "I think the more independent you feel, the more you do feel like an adult". Participants varied in the extent to which they saw house sharing as fitting with this image of the independent, responsible adult. However, most participants did not see house sharing as something which precluded them from being an adult.

### Sharing After 30 Years of Age Contravenes Norms and Expectations

The association of adulthood with independence and autonomy led some participants to feel uncomfortable about living in a house share, as they saw house sharing as associated with dependence. For example, although she had a good relationship with her live-in landlord, Melodie wanted to stop sharing because

> it always feels like you depend on someone, and you always feel like one day that might change, one day you might have to pack your bags and, so I think… well, I would like to be able to stop house sharing.

For some participants, house sharing was seen as going against their own expectations of what their life, and adulthood, should look like. Indeed, Isabella said "when you get older, in like late twenties, thirties, you expect your life to look a certain way" and for her this expectation included homeownership and did not include house sharing. Similarly, Melodie said "I would have never ever of thought that at the age 34 I will (…) have to rent a room". Further, Melodie stated that it sometimes felt "wrong" to still be sharing at her age, adding:

> like coming back to my age (…) you already should be on your own, so sometimes it feels awkward to tell people that. They're like 'oh where you live?' 'Oh I rent a place with friends'. It doesn't feel comfortable sometimes.

In addition to going against some participants' own expectations, house sharing after 30 years of age could also go against the expectations of other people and potentially lead to older sharers being judged or stigmatised. For example, Grace felt that, although more people are now sharing at older ages, there is still an age limit on when sharing is socially acceptable:

> I just have that notion that the older you get you're expected to either move out and get your own place or you know be married (…) and I feel like you know living in a house share for example when you're in your fortes, fifties would probably be like that's just the oddest thing. So I feel like there's almost a time limit on it, like a time

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when it's acceptable and when it's less so (…) So I feel that pressure of like can't be like this forever.

In contrast, Jennifer said that she had not experienced any stigma due to house sharing, something she ascribed to the fact that sharing at older ages has become more common as housing and homeownership have become less affordable: "I was thinking about has there been any kind of stigma around being older, but I don't think there is because, as we know, it's becoming impossible for people to buy anywhere isn't it". Jennifer had loved living in house shares and described her experience of house sharing as "fantastic". However, Jennifer also felt that it was now time for her to move on from house sharing: "I think now I'm 37, like now I'm just like I need to not do this (…) I need to grow up." When discussing why she felt she needed to stop house sharing, Jennifer said it was partly due to the fact that she wanted to have children, but it was also partly due to an awareness that most people her age were, by this point, married and had children:

> I think it's my body clock telling me that I need to have children (…) it's coming as well from everyone else around you who is also getting older and having children and buying houses with gardens and converting their lofts (…) when I'm really hard on myself it's like have I actually changed at all from being in my twenties?

Therefore, even amongst people who had had very positive experiences of house sharing, there could be a sense that living in a house share did not reflect full or 'proper' adulthood.

### Transitional Events Can Still Be Relevant for Defining Adulthood

Transitional events were therefore still seen as part of defining adulthood, at least for some participants. Several participants saw homeownership as a sign that one had attained full adulthood with, for example, Isabella describing homeownership as "a sign that you know you are adulting well or whatever the term is now". Similarly, even Jane, who had been hesitant to buy a house because she did not want to be tied to one place, said that when she did become a homeowner she felt "elated and happy that I've got my own house and felt like a responsible adult". Additionally, some participants saw parenthood as a marker of adulthood. For example, while discussing what she thought made someone an adult, Jane said: "It's definitely, I think, children. Like most of my friends who have kids have had to become much more responsible. (…) they make a lot of self-sacrifices (…) yeah certainly having kids makes you a responsible adult". The potential interrelation of transitional events and psychological markers of adulthood can be seen here as, for Jane, it was not having children per se that made you an adult but rather the increased responsibilities that parenthood brought.

Interestingly, both Jane and Jennifer stated that they did not consider themselves to be fully adult, even though they were homeowners. For example, while Jane described herself as an adult, she drew a distinction between being an adult and being a *responsible* adult, which she did not consider herself to be. Indeed, when asked if she considered herself to be an adult, Jane replied: "most of the time not really. [*laughs*] Not a responsible adult. (…) I suppose I'd consider myself an adult but perhaps not in the, not the traditional responsible adult". Expanding on this, she said: "I have some very childish [*laughs*] moments of, I suppose because I can still. Because I don't have kids I can do whatever I want to do". Furthermore, Jennifer said: "no I don't think I'm an adult at all (…) and I do think house sharing has something, has played a part in that". However, Jennifer also expressed uncertainty about whether she wanted to be an adult. For example, she described being an adult as:

> being in a routine, waking up on a Saturday morning and doing a renovation on your house, buying doorknobs, yep. Buying bins, but not just buying a bin, deciding which bin you're going to buy. That to me is adulting and I don't want to do that.

### Sharing Can Be a Facilitator of Independence and Adulthood

Nonetheless, for some participants, house sharing was seen as facilitating adulthood. For example, Dave talked about how moving into his first house share at 18 years of age was "definitely something I really, really looked forward to". This was due to the independence and control house sharing gives you, compared to living in your parents' house: "it's living by yourself, it's having your own space, but it's like just control, I don't know, you can have house parties. It's exciting". Jane also felt that leaving your parents' house and moving into a house share "means that you have to become more independent" as, for example, you have to "learn about paying the rent (…) and about bills". This reflected the experience of Grace who had lived with her parents until her mid-twenties due to health issues, noting "I did live at home for longer than I would've ideally liked". Living in a house share was therefore an important sign of independence for Grace:

> I feel much more independent and much more of an adult than I perhaps would feel if I was still at home. (…) it makes me feel more confidence (…) I'm here and I'm doing this and I'm managing my bills and my rent (…) that's a big part of feeling like I'm an adult.

Similarly, when asked if there was a particular point at which she felt like she became an adult, Isabella said: "I think when I split up with my partner (…) I think that's the moment that I felt it and then I was 30". Isabella had gone straight from living with her parents to living with her then partner, which, she said, meant that she "didn't have like the chance to taste like being fully independent and responsible for your own, there's always someone to help

out". It was only when she and her partner split up and she started sharing a flat with a friend that she felt fully responsible for herself for the first time: "I was living with my friend but still I had to pay my bills (…) I had to be responsible fully so for, for myself and make those decisions".

House sharing had therefore played an active part in the construction of an adult identity for several participants. Furthermore, most participants did not see living in a house share as a barrier to considering themselves to be adults. For example, Clare said: "I'm 32, I have a job, I make my own decisions (…) I'm not dependent on my parents anymore, I pay my rent, so yes I think I am an adult". Additionally, even Jennifer, who described herself as not being an adult, argued that house sharing could support the development of characteristics and behaviour that denote adulthood, saying:

> earlier on I said I don't see myself as an adult, but actually the most adult thing I've done [*laughs*] is manage to have successful friendships and relationships with random people that I've lived with (…) that takes negotiation, diplomacy, you know patience, all of that stuff.

## 4.4 – Discussion

Within the current study, participants' experiences of living in house shares after the age of 30 years had varied widely. There was also variation in the meaning that house sharing held for participants and the impact that house sharing had had in their lives, in terms of their ability to feel at home and to construct a positive self-image, and with regards to their psychological well-being.

### 4.4.1 – Feeling at Home in a House Share

Being able to have control over your environment has often been portrayed as a defining feature of home (Byrne, 2020; Dupuis & Thorns, 1998; Saunders, 1989). However, as participants' stories made clear, house sharing necessarily involved not having full control over one's living environment. Living with people whose expectations around cleanliness differed markedly from their own and/or being unable to use the kitchen or bathroom when they wanted were common frustrations discussed by participants in the current study (see also F. Baum, 1986; Blanc & Scanlon, 2022; Clark & Tuffin, 2023; Heath et al., 2018; McNamara & Connell, 2007). For most participants, the lack of control they experienced was also due to living in the PRS which, as previous research has highlighted, was frequently associated with short-term contracts, insecurity, and restrictions on tenants' ability to personalise their living space (Easthope, 2014; Hoolachan et al., 2017; McKee et al., 2020). Nonetheless, living with housemates added extra restrictions to participants' ability to control

their environment and to behave autonomously at home, beyond those driven by their status as private renters. Indeed, even Chloe, who was the only owner-occupier in the sample, described how sharing her flat with lodgers could at times limit her freedom to behave how she wanted. This reflects findings from previous research on the experiences of live-in landlords which found that, while they had more power than their lodgers, sharing space still reduced their control over their living environment and, in some cases, undermined their ability to feel at home (Alam et al., 2022; Heath & Scicluna, 2020).

A lack of control over their living environment undermined some participants' ability to feel fully at home. However, most participants felt at least partly at home in their current house share. Additionally, some participants described feeling completely at home in their current house share and/or in one or more previous house shares. This mirrors findings from previous research that it is possible to feel at home while renting a room in a house share (Clark & Tuffin, 2023; Després, 1991a; Heath et al., 2018; McNamara & Connell, 2007). The relationships that participants had with their housemates had played a key role in whether or not they felt at home in different house shares. Relationships with housemates could represent another lack of control, with some participants feeling it was largely down to luck whether they ended up living with housemates whom they got on well with. Furthermore, relationships that were characterised by conflict or hostility, or which inspired feelings of discomfort or fear, could severely undermine ability to feel at home (see also Ortega-Alcázar & Wilkinson, 2021). However, enjoying friendly, supportive relationships, with housemates they felt safe and comfortable around, enabled some participants to feel at home even though they did not have full control over their living environment and did not plan to remain in the same property long-term, thus mirroring findings from previous research (Clark & Tuffin, 2023; Després, 1991a; Heath et al., 2018; Kenyon, 2003; McNamara & Connell, 2007). The current study therefore highlights the important role that emotional support and practices of care can play in creating feelings of home (Gurney, 1990). Moreover, the current results provide further evidence that such processes do not only occur in households bound by blood, romantic relationships, or legal ties (Heath et al., 2018; Raynor & Frichot, 2022; Santos, 2023).

**4.4.2 – House Sharing and Adulthood**

Most participants in the current study did not see renting a room in a house share as precluding them from being an adult, replicating findings from Kenyon and Heath (2001). Furthermore, several participants spoke about how moving into a house share had played an active role in enabling them to construct an adult identity. For such participants, moving into a house share had represented independence and the taking on of financial

responsibility: although they were living with other people, they were living as independent adults who were individually responsible for paying their rent and managing their lives (see also Maalsen, 2019; McNamara & Connell, 2007).

However, living in a house share after the age of 30 years appeared to have a detrimental impact on the ability of some participants to successfully construct an adult identity. Indeed, for some participants, having to live in a house share created a feeling of dependence which they saw as incompatible with their conception of adulthood. This reflected the finding from some previous research that continuing to share into one's thirties, when one does not want to, could undermine feelings of independence and autonomy (Garcia, 2016; Waldron, 2022). Additionally, some participants appeared to feel a sense of failure, or of not having lived up to their own expectations, due to the fact they were over 30 years of age and renting a room in a house share. Some participants also spoke about how friends, family, and/or acquaintances viewed living in a house share after 30 years of age as something unusual or undesirable. The potential for house sharers aged 30 years or over to face judgement, both from others and in the form of self-judgement, has also been highlighted by Heath et al. (2018) and McKee et al. (2019).

In contrast to some other participants, Jennifer stated that she had not experienced any stigma due to house sharing. As suggested by life course theory, where we live, when we live, and our economic and social context all play a role in shaping behaviours and meanings around housing (Coulter, 2023; Elder et al., 2003). Jennifer's level of economic capital and status as a homeowner may therefore help to explain the lack of stigma she had experienced. For example, it is possible that choosing to live in a house share when one has the resources to do otherwise may be viewed as a sign of individuality, rather than as something that connotes lower social status. However, as Jennifer suggested, the fact that sharing at older ages has become more common may have led to it becoming less stigmatised. It is perhaps worth noting that Jennifer had grown up on the outskirts of London, where her family still lived. Jennifer's family and friends from her hometown were therefore likely to have first-hand experience of shifts in the housing market in London and the South East of England. In contrast, in stories where participants described being judged due to house sharing, this had often occurred in interactions with friends or family members who lived in regions or countries where house sharing was uncommon. In this way, a person's social context, including their location and socioeconomic status, is likely to shape how they experience house sharing and how their living situation is perceived by people around them (Foye et al., 2018). However, it is notable that, despite reporting that she had not experienced stigma due to house sharing, Jennifer seemed to view her own status as a

house sharer as something that prevented her from attaining full adult status, saying she needed to stop house sharing and "grow up".

Participants in the current study saw independence and other psychological characteristics as key things that defined adulthood (see also Arnett, 2000, 2007; Côté & Bynner, 2008; L. J. Nelson & Luster, 2015). However, the data showed that, at least for some participants, transitional events also continued to play a role in how adulthood was understood and conceptualised. For example, Jane saw having children as a key factor in someone becoming a fully responsible adult. However, for Jane, it was not the event of becoming a parent as such that made someone an adult, but rather the responsibilities that parenthood conferred. This highlights the often close relationship between transitional events and psychological markers of adulthood, as emphasised by Molgat (2007). Such findings can also perhaps help to explain the pattern of results found in many quantitative studies where psychological characteristics, such as responsibility, and family capacities have both received a high level of endorsement as important markers of adulthood, while role transitions have generally not been seen as important or necessary for adulthood (e.g. Arnett, 2001; Cheah & Nelson, 2004; Piumatti et al., 2013; Sirsch et al., 2009).

The fact that, within contemporary Western society, there are many different ways to define adulthood may explain why some participants appeared to be somewhat conflicted regarding the interaction of house sharing and their status as an adult. For example, Isabella clearly stated that she considered herself to be an adult and she felt that moving into a house share as a single person, after splitting up with her former partner, had played a direct role in her developing a sense of herself as an independent, responsible adult. However, Isabella, along with several other participants, also saw homeownership as an important (albeit currently unobtainable) marker of gaining full adult status. In contrast, both Jane and Jennifer, who were homeowners, did not see themselves as meeting the criteria for full responsible adulthood. This perhaps reflects findings from Westberg (2004) who found that people who had completed role transitions, such as finishing their education and gaining residential independence, were significantly less likely to see such transitions as important for adulthood, compared to those who had not completed the same transitions. This could perhaps be due to the fact that people may go through transitions (e.g. becoming a homeowner) which they expect to make them feel more adult, only to discover that they still do not feel like an adult. For example, Jane said that, at the time, buying her house made her feel like an adult, but a few years later, at the time of our interview, being a homeowner did not make her feel like a responsible adult. The exception to such dynamics may however be parenthood. For example, in contrast to other role transitions, Westberg found that

parents were significantly more likely to see parenthood as important for adulthood, compared to people who did not have children (see also Arnett, 2003). This may be due to the lifestyle change that becoming a parent entails being far greater than that required for other transitional events.

### 4.4.3 – House Sharing and Psychological Well-Being

Within the current study, some participants shared alarming stories of housemates they had lived with who had engaged in aggressive, frightening, and/or inappropriate behaviour, including bullying, intimidation, verbal aggression, and sexual harassment. Such behaviour led to participants feeling uncomfortable and/or unsafe. Furthermore, several participants spoke about how they had experienced reduced psychological well-being, including stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms, due to living in negative or hostile house sharing situations, thus mirroring findings from previous research (Ortega-Alcázar & Wilkinson, 2021; Wilkinson & Ortega-Alcázar, 2019). Nonetheless, for some participants, even the presence of housemates (especially if they were strangers) could be felt to slowly erode their sense of well-being, even in the absence of hostility or conflict. This was more likely to be the case for introverted participants, who could find the enforced sociality of living with others, especially in large house shares, challenging. The current findings can therefore be seen as fitting into a broad body of literature which has emphasised the importance of being able to feel comfortable and at home where you are living for psychological well-being (Easthope, 2014; Garnham & Rolfe, 2019; Hoolachan et al., 2017; Saunders, 1989; Soaita & McKee, 2019).

While feelings of personal control can be important for psychological well-being, research has demonstrated that social support and psychological sense of community can also play an important role in promoting positive well-being and can potentially help to mitigate the negative effects of a perceived lack of control (Clapham, 2010; Elstad, 1998; Mirowsky & Ross, 2003; Pretty et al., 1996). Therefore, while the behaviour (or presence) of housemates had negatively impacted well-being for some participants in some situations, it is important to recognise that participants had also experienced housemates being a valuable source of care, support, and companionship. All participants spoke about how they had at times enjoyed the social benefits that house sharing can offer, such as engaging in fun social activities with housemates or having someone to talk to when they came home in the evening. Furthermore, some participants had had extremely positive experiences of sharing, becoming close friends with housemates and experiencing a strong sense of community in their house share. Indeed, several participants described at least one house share they had lived in as a family. This reflects findings from several other studies which

have highlighted the potential for house shares to be spaces of care and support (Clark & Tuffin, 2023; Heath et al., 2018; McNamara & Connell, 2007; Raynor & Frichot, 2022). Additionally, several participants within the current study highlighted that, after house sharing, they felt that living alone would be lonely. Some participants also talked about feeling safer living with housemates, rather than alone. This is in line with previous research into the experiences of house sharers, both under and over 30 years of age, which found that living with housemates could alleviate loneliness and increase feelings of security (Altus & Mathews, 2000; Clark & Tuffin, 2023; Després, 1991a).

### 4.4.4 – Choice, Control, and the Role of Contextual and Individual Factors

The results of the current study therefore highlighted a tension at the heart of house sharing: you have to sacrifice control when you share space with people, which can undermine feelings of home and psychological well-being, but sharing with people (if they are the right people) can also create a sense of home and support positive psychological well-being. This reflects the observation of Kenyon and Heath (2001, p. 629) that housemates represent "both the major advantage *and* disadvantage" of house sharing. However, for most participants, it seemed that, over time, the balance had shifted and their desire for control had come to outweigh their desire for company. Most participants no longer wanted to share; however, they had no other option as they could not afford to live alone. This is in line with the findings of previous research which has suggested that, at least for some people, the desirability of house sharing can decline over time and people who previously enjoyed house sharing may reach an age where they no longer want to share (Clark & Tuffin, 2023; Clarke & Heywood, 2016; Kenyon & Heath, 2001; Simon & Roederer, 2019; Waldron, 2022).

Nevertheless, within the current study there were three participants (Chloe, Jane, and Jennifer) who had actively chosen to house share. For each of these participants, their decision to share was partly due to economic considerations (although not economic necessity) but was predominantly driven by social factors: all three participants enjoyed the social aspects of house sharing and liked living with other people. This mirrors findings from previous studies that have highlighted that not all house sharing is driven by necessity and many people choose to house share for a mix of social, economic, and/or ideological reasons (Heath et al., 2018; Kenyon & Heath, 2001; Maalsen, 2019; McNamara & Connell, 2007). Within the current study, Chloe, Jane, and Jennifer were the only participants who were homeowners. All three also earnt higher incomes than the other participants and, in the case of Chloe and Jennifer, the difference was considerable. Chloe and Jennifer both explicitly stated that they could afford to live alone. The financial resources available to these

participants therefore gave them the freedom to be able to choose whether to share or not. In contrast, almost all of the participants who were not homeowners wanted to live alone or with a partner in a house that they owned; however, the cost of living alone and of buying a property meant their housing preferences and aspirations were, at least currently, unrealisable (see also J. Crawford & McKee, 2018; McKee et al., 2017).

Of all the participants, Chloe, Jane, and Jennifer were the most positive about house sharing. This fits with Bricocoli and Sabatinelli's (2016) finding that choosing to live in a house share was associated with more positive experiences of sharing. It seems plausible that there could be a direct causal link between the extent to which living in a house share feels like something that is chosen and the valence of that experience. For example, as Clapham (2010) observed, feeling that one has no choice undermines feelings of personal control and can reduce well-being. This can be seen for example in Isabella's comments regarding how having to house share made her feel not in control of her life. However, the relationship is likely to flow the other way as well, as, for example, in the current study, previous positive experiences of sharing were a key factor influencing Chloe, Jane, and Jennifer's decision to continue sharing. Additionally, both the ability to choose to house share and one's likelihood of having a positive experience of house sharing appear to be closely related to economic and social capital. Those with more resources can be more selective about where they live and have more ability to leave a negative situation if necessary. Personality also appears to plays a role in the interplay between choice and experiences of sharing, with extroverts being more likely to choose to share, and more likely to enjoy sharing, than introverts (Oh & Kim, 2021). This is in line with arguments advanced in the literature that the meaning of home is subjective and the way in which any housing situation may impact a person's well-being depends on the individual's preferences and circumstances (Clapham, 2002, 2005, 2010; Coulter, 2023; Gurney, 1990).

None of this is to suggest that people who need to house share due to economic necessity are doomed to only have negative experiences. In the current study, most participants who were sharing out of necessity still found positive aspects in their experience of sharing and were able to feel at home to some extent. Additionally, choosing to house share does not guarantee one will always have positive experiences. However, it does seem perhaps to be easier to have a positive experience of sharing, that promotes psychological well-being, if living in a house share is in line with your housing preferences (Clapham, 2010; Oh & Kim, 2021).

### 4.4.5 – Strengths, Limitations, and Future Research

The current sample comprised a small group of participants who were all currently, or had very recently been, mature students. During their interviews, some participants spoke of how their decision or need to share was driven, at least in part, by needing to fund their university studies. Several participants also spoke of their hope that completing their degree would lead to new career opportunities that would enable them to stop sharing. Thus, some of the findings may not be generalisable beyond a mature student population.

It is recognised that the sample for the current study was not large; however, it was felt that this offered important benefits in terms of the depth of analysis that was possible with regards to each individual participant's story. The sample contained some variation in terms of income and nationality. There was also some representation of disabled and LGBTQ+ participants in the sample. Nonetheless, the participants were predominantly White and female. This meant that, while a number of participants in the study were migrants to the UK, some of whom discussed how their migrant status had shaped their housing journey, discussions of the ways in which race and ethnicity intersect with experiences of house sharing were largely absent from the current study. The ways in which this is likely to have limited the range of experiences that could be captured in the data are acknowledged. For example, research has shown that people from minority ethnic backgrounds can face racism and discrimination from landlords and housemates, limiting the housing options available to them and increasing their risk of experiencing hostility within house shares (Carlsson & Eriksson, 2015; Clark & Tuffin, 2015; Wilkinson & Ortega-Alcázar, 2017, 2019).

### 4.5 – Conclusion

Within the current study, participants reported a wide variety of experiences of living in house shares. Renting a room in a house share after the age of 30 years was not found to necessarily present a barrier to feeling at home, constructing an adult identity, or enjoying positive psychological well-being. Instead, house sharing could promote positive outcomes in all of these areas. However, the extent to which people may experience beneficial or negative effects due to house sharing appears to depend on a wide range of individual and contextual factors, including housing preferences, financial resources, relationships with housemates, cultural norms, and the physical property itself.

# Chapter 5:

## Qualitative Interview Study 2 – Experiences of House Sharing After the Age of 30 Years in a General Population Sample

### 5.1 – Overview

Chapter 4 presented a qualitative interview study conducted with house sharers who were aged 30 years or over. The data collected contained a wide range of experiences of house sharing, from very positive to very negative. Indeed, across the sample, the data indicated that house sharing could potentially facilitate or undermine one's ability to feel at home, to construct an adult identity, or to experience positive psychological well-being. In this way, the results of the study suggested that living in a house share after 30 years of age is perhaps neither inherently negative or positive but rather is something that can take on a wide range of meanings and valences, depending on a range of individual and contextual factors. Chapter 4 provides evidence that personality, housing preferences and aspirations, income, social capital, relationships with housemates, the physical residence, and social norms may all play a role in shaping how house sharing is experienced and understood. Nevertheless, further investigation is needed regarding the factors that can work to shape whether house sharing is a positive or negative force in a person's life, as well as how these factors may interact.

The participants in the study presented in Chapter 4 were mature students at Birkbeck, University of London and there were hints in the data that the ways in which house sharers who are mature students experience and interpret house sharing may potentially differ from non-students who are living in house shares after the age of 30 years. For example, within the study presented in Chapter 4, some participants spoke of how their decision to share at this stage of their life was driven, at least in part, by the need to fund their studies. Several participants also spoke about their hope that completing their degree would lead to new career opportunities which would potentially enable them to stop house sharing and be able to afford to live alone. Mature students who are living in house shares may therefore be more likely to see house sharing as something that they are doing for a specific reason or for a specific period of time, whereas house sharers who are not students may perhaps have less reason to believe their situation will change dramatically in the next few years. To enable a deeper understanding of the experiences of house sharers over 30 years of age to be gained, the current study aimed to build on the study presented in Chapter 4 by expanding recruitment to the general population. In particular, the sampling criteria for the current study were that participants needed to be house sharers aged 30 years or over who were not currently university students.

### 5.1.1 – Research Aims

The current research aimed to understand more about the experiences of people living in house shares after the age of 30 years and the ways in which participants felt house sharing may have impacted their lives, with a particular focus on their experiences of home, adulthood, and psychological well-being. The current study aimed to answer the same three research questions as the study presented in Chapter 4 (see Section 4.1.1), namely: whether participants felt at home where they were living and whether they felt living in a house share after the age of 30 years had impacted their ability to construct an adult identity or their psychological well-being.

### 5.2 – Methods

### 5.2.1 – Participants

The study was open to people who were aged 30 years or over and living in a house share. Efforts were made to recruit participants via a variety of means, including an advert on the house sharing website SpareRoom, advertising on social media (including through Twitter posts and the creation of a Facebook page), Google advertising, and via word of mouth, including by friends of the researcher sharing details of the study with their friends and by snowball sampling. Within the final sample of eight participants, four heard about the study through word of mouth, three were recruited via SpareRoom, and one participant contacted me after seeing a post about the study on Twitter.

Participants were aged between 30 and 59 years, and all participants had multiple years of experience of living in different house shares. Basic demographic information for the participants is shown in Table 5.1. At the time of the interview, Emma, Nellie, and Ruby were owner-occupiers who rented out spare rooms to lodgers (although they had all lived in rented house shares previously). The other participants were renting rooms from landlords in the PRS. All participants lived in London, apart from Iorek who lived in a town in the South East of England. Bob, Hannah, and Zoe lived in the same property. No other participants lived together.

**Table 5.1**

*Demographic Information for Participants*

| Pseudonym | Age (years) | Gender | Relationship status | Employment status | Income |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Bob | 45-49 | Male | Single | Not currently employed | £0-15,000 |
| Emma | 40-44 | Female | Single | Working full-time | £36,000-50,000 |
| Hannah | 35-39 | Female | Single | Self-employed. Generally works full-time but no contract at the moment | £36,000-50,000 |
| Iorek | 45-49 | Male | Single | Working full-time | £16,000-25,000 |
| Miranda | 30-34 | Female | Married | Working full-time | £26,000-35,000 |
| Nellie | 45-49 | Female | Single | Working part-time | £26,000-35,000 |
| Ruby | 55-59 | Female | Divorced | Working part-time | £0-15,000 |
| Zoe | 30-34 | Female | Single | Freelance but not currently working | £36,000-50,000 |

Miranda was the only participant who was currently in a relationship. She and her husband shared a room in a flat which they rented together with two housemates. Ruby was the only participant to have children. She had three children (in their late teens and early twenties), all of whom lived with her.

Five participants were British, one was Australian, one was Irish, and one was Palestinian. In terms of ethnicity, six participants were White, one participant was Arab, and one was Black British. Seven participants were heterosexual and one was bisexual. No participants were transgender. Iorek was the only participant who reported considering himself to be disabled; however, he noted that his disability did not affect his ability to live alone. The sample was highly educated, with five participants having undergraduate degrees and three having a postgraduate qualification.

It was decided to stop recruiting for further participants after the eighth interview as the researcher felt that similar ideas were coming up in each interview. This was not labelled, or considered, as achieving saturation, nor was saturation the aim of the study. Instead, the argument of Varpio et al. (2017, p.45) that "saturation should not be conceived of as an absolute status that can be conclusively achieved" was accepted. Ultimately, the researcher cannot be sure that other ideas would not have emerged if she had continued to conduct further interviews. However, this study was not designed to provide an objective or generalisable view of the experiences of all house sharers over the age of 30. Instead, it was felt that the study had uncovered some important themes that were shared across the experiences of the interviewed participants, which plausibly could reflect the experiences of at least some other house sharers aged 30 years or over as well. The fact that control and community had been strong themes in the study reported in Chapter 4 and were again key ideas that recurred throughout the interviews conducted for the current study increased confidence about transferability, especially as such ideas are also compatible with existing theory. Therefore, from a practical point of view, it seemed to be better for the thesis as a whole to stop collecting more data and to move on to analysis.

**5.2.2 – Interviews and Analysis**

An individual, semi-structured interview was conducted with each participant. The same procedures around gaining informed consent that were described in Section 4.2.2, such as sharing a study information sheet and the interview schedule with potential participants before they agreed to take part, were followed in this study also. Consent was obtained and demographic information was collected before the interview began. Ethical approval for the study was granted by the Department of Psychological Sciences Research Ethics Committee of Birkbeck, University of London (approval reference number: 192008).

The interviews for this study utilised the same basic interview schedule as used for the study presented in Chapter 4 (see Appendix C). All interviews were conducted by the researcher between late February 2020 and late June 2020. The first interview (conducted with Ruby) took place face-to-face in a coffee shop; however, all other interviews were conducted virtually due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Five interviews were conducted via video call and two were conducted via telephone call due to connection or technical issues prohibiting the use of video call. Interviews lasted between 1 hour and 2 hours 25 minutes.

Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed following the same process as outlined in Section 4.2.3. After each interview was transcribed, the transcript was shared with the participant who then had two weeks to review it. No changes were requested by any

of the participants. Interviews were analysed using RTA, following the same procedure outlined in Section 4.2.3. Again, coding was done predominantly at the manifest level, but some latent codes were also applied to the data. To provide a worked example of how both of these types of coding were used within this study, a quote from one of the interviews is provided below, followed by examples of the codes applied to this data. Within our interview, Nellie stated:

> One of my rules is you just don't bring random hook-ups back to the house (…) it's basically my cats that I'm worried about. You know if somebody's careless with doors, they get out onto the street, whatever. And so people who live with me have some level of investment, but guests tend not to.

A manifest code applied to this piece of data was 'Housemates are part of the household, unlike guests'. This code then fed into Theme 3: 'House sharing requires trust – in people and in luck'. (See Section 5.3.3 for more details.) A latent code applied to this data was 'Live-in landlord creates rules, lodgers have to follow them', which fed into Theme 2: 'House sharing entails a lack of control over your living environment which can hinder feeling at home'. (See Section 5.3.2 for more details.)

## 5.3 – Results

Through RTA, four themes were developed: 'People can make a house share into a home', 'House sharing entails a lack of control over your living environment which can hinder feeling at home', 'House sharing requires trust – in strangers and in luck', and 'There are now many ways to be an adult, yet traditional ideas of adulthood continue to exert influence'. These will each be explored in more detail below. The presentation of quotes from interview transcripts in this section follows the same conventions outlined in footnote 11, in Chapter 4.

### 5.3.1 – Theme 1: People Can Make a House Share Into a Home

Participants had had a wide variety of experiences of living in house shares, which highlighted the positive possibilities and the potential risks of house sharing. Overall, it seemed to be the people a participant lived with that had the biggest effect on whether their experience in a particular house share was positive or negative and whether they were able to feel at home. This was neatly summed up by Hannah: "If you live with lovely people then it's great (…) if you're unfortunate that you don't like living with the people that you're living with then that can be, that can not be good". Similar ideas were expressed in the interviews by all participants.

***Housemates Can Offer Companionship and Support***

Housemates could offer an important source of companionship and several participants spoke about enjoying engaging in social activities with current and/or former housemates. For example, discussing a previous house share, Zoe said: "we had such a great two years there. (…) We had amazing parties. We all got on really well". Furthermore, Nellie spoke about how she enjoyed the social side of having lodgers – including having a "chat over a cup of tea, or the odd theatre trip, odd pub quiz. Little bit of a, you know, shindig at Christmas" – and felt that sharing her house with lodgers contributed positively to her life: "for the most part, I love sharing. I really enjoy it. I get an awful lot out of the people I share with". Additionally, through spending time together, friendships could develop between housemates, which often persisted even after people no longer lived together. For instance, Nellie stated: "I'm on really good terms with a lot of my ex-lodgers. We meet up for drinks and exchange emails". Almost all participants reported making friends through house sharing. Indeed, Bob was still in touch with two former housemates he had lived with over 12 years ago.

Some participants spoke about how living with housemates could combat isolation and/or loneliness. For example, regarding his current house share, Bob said: "London can be a cold, isolating city if you're on your own, but I have a community here". Additionally, when discussing what had initially motivated her to take in lodgers, Nellie recalled: "I think company. I realised I'd become kind of a bit isolated". Indeed, Nellie found just the presence of other people in the house to be comforting: "Just having people coming and going is nice. I just like the kind of background noise, the ambiance, of having (…) people around". Furthermore, in some house shares, a strong sense of community could develop, with housemates offering emotional support to each other and even considering each other as family. This was clearly expressed by Hannah, who stated: "I get support from the people that I live with (…) they are my family and they've become really important people to me". Similarly, regarding his current house share, Bob said: "if I get down, my flatmates will come and knock on the door and ask if I'm alright (…) There is support there".

### A Sense of Community Can Create Feelings of Home

The majority of participants described home as a safe, comfortable place. For example, Emma described home as "somewhere where I feel comfortable, (…) where I feel safe, (…) where I feel happy. It means somewhere where I actually look forward to coming back to". Feeling a sense of community with housemates could create such an environment, allowing participants to feel at home in their house share, even if they were renting. Indeed, Zoe talked about how, for her, feeling at home was tied up with the feeling of community she had enjoyed with housemates:

> So far home has always been about being with friends as well and having some kind of family dynamic, where you can look out for each other and cook for each other and just hang out with other.

Similarly, Bob said: "if you don't like going home (…) then it's not your home, so you avoid it. Whereas here, it's an absolute joy to come back. (…) you look forward to seeing who is at home. (…) it's the people that make the home".

Of the five participants who were renting, Bob, Hannah, and Zoe reported feeling at home in their house share. For example, Hannah said: "I feel really at home here" and this sense of home was fostered by her relationship with her housemates: "Me and my housemates, especially in the pandemic, we've been shopping together and eating together a lot, so that feels really homely". Miranda also reported feeling somewhat, although not entirely, at home in her house share. She had moved into her current house share six weeks before our interview, just before lockdown started in March 2020: "Literally moved in and then the next day the lockdown pretty much was announced". In some ways lockdown had helped with feeling at home, as she had "become more familiar with the space more quickly" and had got to know her housemates well: "we went from hardly knowing these guys, to moving in and being with each other 24/7, which has been really interesting. But it's been really fun". However, the lack of routine during lockdown had also hindered feeling at home, as "it feels like a holiday (…) or just feels really temporary because of the circumstances".

### *House Sharing Can Also Come With Risks*

However, while there were possibilities for support and community, there could also be risks associated with house sharing. In particular, four participants had lived in very difficult situations with housemates who engaged in bullying, intimidation, passive aggression, or violent behaviour.[13] For example, while Iorek was now living in a place where he was happy, the majority of the places he had lived before had been "terrible". Iorek had lived in places where things had been stolen: "Where I lived before, just to go to the toilet you'd have to lock your door, because your stuff would go missing in that brief moment". He had also witnessed violence in some house shares. He described one such incident, where the resident landlady had been attacked by her son, who also lived in the property: "The very first night I got there and I was moving in, he just grabbed her by the throat and (…) was screaming abuse at her and all this". Furthermore, despite being a live-in landlord and therefore someone who was in a position of relative power within the household, Nellie had lived with two lodgers who had made her feel nervous. Describing one of these lodgers, she

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[13] None of the participants were living in a hostile situation at the time of their interview.

said: "He was so paranoid. He was just unpleasant. Very nasty person". Living with such lodgers had made her feel uncomfortable and, at times, scared. Indeed, Nellie described an incident when she had felt scared to go into her living room while one of these lodgers was in there, saying: "I just thought I'm in my own house, I'm afraid to open my bloody door".

Just as good relationships with housemates could foster a feeling of home, negative relationships could undermine or block participants' ability to feel at home. As Iorek put it: "you can't have a place where you live with awful people and go 'This is brilliant'". Zoe talked about how, as her friendship with a former housemate declined, she stopped feeling at home in that house share: "I did [feel at home] when our friendship was good. (…) And then, as it deteriorated, I was looking for a way out really". Furthermore, Iorek described how he had felt very uncomfortable in many previous house shares and had often tried to minimise contact with housemates so as to avoid potential problems or conflict, including "listening at the door to make sure no one is downstairs" before going to the kitchen. In some, particularly bad, places Iorek had also taken steps to avoid being in the house share, such as working double shifts. It is therefore unsurprising that Iorek reported that none of his previous house shares had felt like home: "these are just places you live (…) it's not your house". Iorek thought that if a house share ever could feel like home it would be because of the people; however, he did not see this as a realistic scenario, relegating it instead to the realm of fantasy. In response to the question 'Do you think a house share could ever be home?', Iorek said:

> No. I don't think, personally (…) not when you're just random, you know, people. Unless you happen to hit the jackpot, [*laughs*] the best people in the world who all happen to live in a house, which is like some weird television programme (…) probably a Disneyesque version of it.

Furthermore, some participants spoke about how, in addition to undermining ability to feel at home, living with housemates who made them feel uncomfortable or unsafe negatively impacted their psychological well-being. For example, describing one former lodger, Nellie said: "He was just scary (…) made me very, very, very uneasy. I was treading eggshells (…) I think that that particular one really did traumatise me a bit". Moreover, Iorek talked about the negative effect that living in some house shares had had on his mental health:

> I think I would defy anyone who's lived in house shares for a long time to say it's not affected them, like their morale or their esteem (...) Mentally I think it destroys you bit by bit. (…) When you're just worried about going home (…) in the other place before

this, every day was like 'What am I going to find today?' It is just horrible. Like, or what's going to happen tonight? (…) It just grinds you down.

### *The People You Live With Are More Important Than the Location or Physical Property*

All participants recognised that the physical layout and/or location of a house share can impact how you experience living there. Common things that increased satisfaction with a house share were having a good amount of space (both in the property generally and in one's bedroom), having a garden, and being close to amenities. For example, describing her current house share, Zoe said: "There's plenty of space. There's a big living room and a decent size kitchen, and there's outdoor space. We've all got a decent size double room. Yeah, it's just a really nice place to live". However, while the property and location did influence satisfaction with house shares, the people whom participants had lived with had had a greater influence on how they had experienced the house shares they had lived in. For example, Hannah spoke about how she had had a wonderful time living on a houseboat that was, in her words, "a bit shabby". She said:

> It was a tiny little galley kitchen and the cabins were really quite small (…) it was just very basic (…) But I had an amazing time living on that boat. (…) the other people that were living there at the same time as me were amazing, and we had so much fun.

In contrast, Emma, Iorek, and Zoe recounted times when they had lived in nice properties and/or in good locations but had been unhappy, or found the house share difficult, due to the people. For example, regarding a number of house shares he had lived in, Iorek said: "They could be really lovely houses, and they would be, but it's the people you've let in there".

Nonetheless, it is worth noting that the relationships that formed between housemates could be influenced by the architecture of the shared property. In particular, not having a lounge negatively impacted the ability of housemates to develop a sense of community and to benefit from the social side of sharing. For example, Bob described how he had lived in one house share where there was no lounge ("the landlord was just out to make money, so there was no social area") and, although he lived with a friend (as well as another housemate), the lack of shared space limited their ability to socialise or to enjoy the potential benefits of sharing. Ultimately, Bob had not felt comfortable in this house share and therefore minimised the time he spent there: "although the rent was cheaper, I spent more money going out to the pub because I didn't want to go home because there was nothing there. So I learnt my lesson from that".

**5.3.2 – Theme 2: House Sharing Entails a Lack of Control Over Your Living Environment Which Can Hinder Feeling at Home**

All participants spoke about experiencing a lack of control when house sharing. This could include a lack of control over the physical conditions in which they lived and when they were able to perform various activities. A lack of control could also manifest as a lack of privacy. Furthermore, participants renting a room in a house share could also experience a lack of control over where they lived. Feeling a lack of control over one's living environment could hinder ability to feel at home.

*Lack of Control Over Environment*

When you are house sharing, you cannot have full control over what shared areas of the property look like or the condition communal spaces are left in by housemates. Emma described how she had at times felt a sense of trepidation returning to previous house shares, for example after being away on holiday, because she did not know what condition she would find the house in:

some of the places I lived in the past, if I went away on holiday, you come back and you'll be thinking 'Oh god I wonder what the state of the kitchen's going to be like'. (…) you don't know what you're going to be walking into.

Cleaning was noted as a potential source of tension or conflict in house shares by most participants, especially if housemates had differing expectations around hygiene and cleanliness. Indeed, several participants talked about finding it hard to live with housemates who were not as clean or as tidy as they would have liked. For example, Iorek said: "it's just the cleanliness. I'm not like OCD but I like things to be clean (…) But they don't, nobody cares. Nobody does a thing. It's just like being with little kids". Furthermore, Hannah spoke about how her housemates' lack of cleanliness had impacted her ability to feel comfortable and at home in one house share:

The garden was covered in dog poo so I couldn't go out in the garden. The kitchen wasn't very clean. There was dog hair everywhere. (…) I got on with the people that I lived with, but yeah I didn't feel that comfortable there, in terms of like their cleanliness.

*Constraints on Freedom and the Need to Be Mindful of Others*

Sharing also placed limits on participants' freedom. In part this was due to practical constraints caused by living with other people, such as having to wait to use the bathroom or kitchen. For example, while the rooms Ruby let to lodgers had ensuite bathrooms, the lodgers still shared the kitchen with her and her children, which caused frustrations at times: "Sometimes it caused an issue with the children where they needed to eat so that they can

go to bed". In contrast, reflecting on the benefits of living alone, compared to house sharing, Emma said: "[if] you're desperate to go to the bathroom in the morning, you know, you don't need to worry about oh there's somebody in there taking a shower, you know you can just go whenever you want". There was also a need to consider others when house sharing. For example, four participants highlighted that it was important to clean things straight away after cooking and eating, even if you did not feel like it or were short on time. Discussing a previous house share, Miranda said: "those small little things start to get on each other's nerves (…) like if you didn't wash up straight after [cooking], because there's six of us, we still, we want to use that space".

Constraints on freedom could be even more marked in the case of lodgers living with a live-in landlord. Emma spoke about how, if a housemate asks you to do something, you can say no; however, a live-in landlord is in a position of power, so you have to do what they say: "basically they could kind of like trump you". Emma recalled how this led to her having to follow very specific rules around how to do the washing up when living with a live-in landlord in her first house share:

> he was very fussy about, if you did the dishes (…) he didn't like you to leave them on
> the rack for a long time, so it was like he expected you to then, you know, wipe them
> and put them away.

For this reason, when renting, Emma had preferred living just with housemates rather than with a live-in landlord because, when you are all housemates, "you're all equal".

Interestingly, Emma was herself now a live-in landlord, as were Nellie and Ruby. However, these three participants took different approaches in the rules they had for lodgers. For example, Ruby did not allow lodgers to have visitors, and lodgers were not allowed in the living room, which she kept as private space for herself and her children. In contrast, Emma and Nellie had less restrictive rules. For example, Emma was open to lodgers having visitors, although she set certain parameters:

> it's sort of striking the right balance. (…) if somebody has a partner, I don't mind their
> partner coming over and staying over maybe twice a week (…) but I would prefer not
> to live with a couple, so I'm actually quite clear about that from the offset.

Furthermore, while Nellie had some rules for lodgers (generally "operational stuff", such as "Do your own washing up and don't leave stuff in the sink"), she wanted to create an equitable environment and did not have restrictions on how and when lodgers could use shared spaces: "Everybody can use all the rooms. Everybody can use the outside space, as and when. Nobody's got dibs on it. Not even me". Therefore, while a live-in landlord is in a position of power compared to their lodgers (they have the ability to set rules and to choose

who can live in the property), the extent to which living with a live-in landlord may place greater restrictions on your freedom, compared to living just with housemates, will vary from case to case.

### *Lack of Control Over Where You Live*

Most participants were renters and living in the PRS meant that they could not necessarily control how long they were able to live in a particular property. For example, Bob stated that, when you are renting, "your landlord could just give you notice; it's not your place". Four of the participants had experienced being evicted, a situation which Zoe described as "stressful" and "really sad". For Zoe, being evicted had highlighted how she lacked control as a renter: "I think all those moments where you get evicted or you, you know, have to move, your rent goes up, it's like this feeling of 'Oh, I really don't have any control over this'." (It is recognised that this lack of control, which is due to being a private renter, is of course not unique to house sharing. Indeed, Iorek noted that even if you are renting alone or just with a partner, "you are still renting (…) you're still in that same position".)

Among participants who were renters, the extent to which they felt that they lacked control or security depended on the relationship they had with their landlord. For some participants, enjoying a good relationship with their landlord enabled them to feel secure where they were living. Indeed, Bob said, as a renter "you may normally have less control over your own destiny"; however, he noted, "I don't particularly feel like that here, because I know my landlord well". Bob had been living in his current house share for 12 years and had a very good relationship with his landlord. As a result, he was confident he would be able to stay in the property as long as he wanted.

The amount of control participants felt they could exert over their living situation also varied depending on their income and personal circumstances. For example, Iorek was sharing because he could not afford to live alone: "for the money I earn, which is not a great deal, you can't find a place. There is no one-bedroom places where you can afford it and afford bills as well". Iorek therefore had no choice but to house share. However, beyond this, Iorek also described feeling that his ability to choose where to live, or to be selective when viewing potential house shares, had often been extremely limited due, for example, to only having a short amount of time in which to find a new place: "you hand in your notice at the place for a month and then you just hope that the next place that you can find (…) will be better than the other one. It doesn't always work out like that". For some other participants, their income, or the fact that they had a partner with whom they could split housing costs,

meant that they did not need to house share; house sharing was therefore something they were choosing to do. Being in such a position could provide a greater feeling of control and people who could afford to live alone, or just with a partner, potentially felt more able to be selective when choosing a house share to live in, compared to those who were sharing out of necessity. For example, Miranda noted that living with her husband, and therefore having two incomes, gave them the ability to live alone (which they did for a period). When they decided to go back to sharing, for a mix of economic and social reasons, she was very specific about what she wanted from their next house share:

> I was kind of quite picky (…) I was like 'We can move out just the two of us, I'm happy to do that. If you guys want to live with us, fine, but like I want to be this location (…) I want a big kitchen. I want my own bathroom.' Like I was really picky.

### The House Share as Semi-Public Space

Some participants observed that house sharing means that the property you are living in is not your private space. For example, Iorek noted that there can be a lack of privacy in house shares – "everybody can hear everything" – and you could not necessarily just speak freely "because you don't know who's listening." Similarly, Ruby talked about how having lodgers meant that she and her children had to "literally lock with a key" their bedroom doors, something they had never done before she started renting out rooms. Indeed, describing the experience of having lodgers, Ruby said:

> it's hushed voices, it's smelling somebody else's food. Sometimes not at all pleasant smells. (…) And then you get parcels coming in, and then middle of the night 'Oh my water doesn't work'. And so your house is not really your house.

This quote demonstrates how, for Ruby, despite being an owner-occupier, the lack of control she felt over her home environment due to having lodgers caused her to feel that her house was not fully her own anymore. She could no longer close her front door and have the house as a private place just for her family, instead her home had become a semi-public space.

### Control Is Related to Feeling at Home

A lack of control could therefore undermine ability to feel at home. However, feelings of control appeared to promote a sense of home. For example, a sense of control helped Emma to feel at home in the last rented house share she lived in before buying her own flat:

> it felt like home in the sense that, because I was the longest standing one and everybody else came and went, (…) I was kind of like able to set the tone from the beginning. (…) I'm the one who did the ads to find somebody (…) I kind of like organised everything.

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Emma described this last rented house share as her favourite one because of the level of control she had experienced.

Personalising one's living space could also help to create a greater feeling of control and of home. For example, when asked what home meant to her, Zoe started her answer by saying: "I am generally definitely a nester. So I like my things and I like to have, you know, decorated my room". However, having the ability to personalise a rented house share depended upon one's relationship with the landlord. While people living in the UK PRS have often experienced severe limits on their ability to personalise their living environment, some participants in the current study had landlords that were quite happy for them to make changes to the property. For example, Hannah said: "I'm redecorating the stairwell and I've made cushions for the living room and hung curtains (…) I've definitely like put my stamp on it". Additionally, one's housemates were also an important consideration when it came to personalising shared spaces. For example, in contrast to her current place, Hannah described a previous house share where she had not seen any point in trying to make it nicer or more homely due to living with seven other people:

> when you live with that many people, you don't want to do anything to it like cosmetically, because you kind of think 'What's the point?' Like it's, no one's going to appreciate it. Or they'd appreciate it, but not take care of it (…) you don't want to spend money when it's like shared with that many people.

Even without being able to redecorate, some participants had found ways to personalise shared areas. For example, Miranda talked about "finding a happy medium" with personalisation of shared space in her current house share. Miranda had displayed "some nice pictures and some ornaments" in the living room; however, there were some things, such as wedding photos, which she felt "a bit awkward" about displaying in areas shared with housemates. Indeed, as Bob observed, "if you're living with a partner (…) you can decorate the place more to your liking", compared to what is possible when house sharing. Therefore, even when some personalisation was possible in a house share, a higher level of personalisation would have been possible if participants had lived alone or just with a partner, especially in a property that they owned. For this reason, some participants felt that a place which they owned, and could make their own, would feel more like home, even if they currently felt at home in their rented house share. For example, Hannah observed that sharing means you are "not really able to 100% make a place your own home". Similarly, several participants, including homeowners and renters, felt that owner-occupation gave you an extra sense of control which made it easier to feel at home and/or led to a greater feeling of home. For example, Emma said that, while her last rented house share had felt like home,

"obviously it's not the same as owning it". Furthermore, Iorek felt that somewhere would only be home if he owned it: "Even though I like it here, it's not home. I don't think anywhere will be, unless you actually can physically buy a place."

### 5.3.3 – Theme 3: House Sharing Requires Trust – In People and in Luck

When house sharing, the housemate(s) you live with become part of your household, living alongside you, your possessions, and (if you have any) your children and your pets. This implies the conferring of quite a high degree of trust onto housemates and/or lodgers. This is not to say that full trust is given straight away; however, almost immediately upon a new person moving into a house share, boundaries are re-drawn and lodgers or housemates become part of the household, distinguished from visitors. This is an important distinction because the statuses of household member and visitor generally come with very different rights and responsibilities. For example, Nellie said:

> One of my rules is you just don't bring random hook-ups back to the house (…) it's basically my cats that I'm worried about. You know if somebody's careless with doors, they get out onto the street, whatever. And so people who live with me have some level of investment, but guests tend not to.

However, despite the trust being conferred, it was not uncommon for participants to have only met new housemates for a matter of minutes before they started sharing a house and living their lives in very close proximity to each other.

### *First Impressions Can Be Wrong*

Most participants said that they met potential new housemates or lodgers before it was agreed that they would move in. However, Iorek highlighted that this was not always possible as, in several places he had lived, when a room became empty, the landlord or letting agent would choose who moved in, with no input from current tenants. Iorek said that, in such house shares, who you end up living with "is pot luck and you just hope for the best". However, even when participants did meet, and had a chance to vet, potential housemates or lodgers, these meetings were generally brief. For example, regarding her recent experience of finding a new housemate to replace someone who had moved out, Hannah said:

> It's such a strange process (…) somebody comes round and you speak, you meet them for like 10 minutes, they look around, and then you have to make a decision on that person who you're going to live with, share your space with.

Meeting potential housemates offered reassurance and the possibility to choose someone who seemed like they would be a good fit for the household. Similarity (in terms of

expectations, mindset, lifestyle, and/or interests) was deemed by almost all participants to be a key factor in ensuring a successful relationship between housemates; however, this was very hard to judge from a quick meeting. Indeed four participants spoke about how first impressions of potential housemates or lodgers could be wrong. This could sometimes lead to positive results, with someone becoming an unanticipated friend. For example, regarding a former housemate, Hannah recounted: "I just looked at her and I thought 'I'm not going to have anything in common with her'. (…) But anyway we ended up living together and we ended up becoming best friends". However, mistaken first impressions could also lead to negative consequences. For instance, regarding a former lodger, Nellie said: "He came across as utterly charming, friendly, interesting, and he was an absolute nutjob. (…) he was just bunched up with anger. He made me nervous".

### Friends vs. Strangers

To try and minimise the risks, some participants preferred to live with friends, or people they knew, rather than strangers. For example, Bob said that living with friends could give you "a better quality of life" because "you don't end up with some random person that may rub you up the wrong way". However, it should be noted that, in contrast to the other participants, Iorek said he found it easier living with strangers rather than with friends:

> [I] lived with friends for a little bit, but even that's you know very difficult isn't it? (…) because sometimes you've got things that just don't work very well and you want to say something but, because they're your mates, you're like 'Ooo'. (…) yeah that can be sometimes a bit more difficult than strangers.

The relative benefits and drawbacks of living with friends may therefore differ, depending on someone's personality and communication style.

Miranda was currently living with "two friends of a friend" and felt this was a "good medium mix of like I know them, but I don't know them too much. And I think that's the sweet spot". Her reason for viewing this as the "sweet spot" highlighted the potential risks of sharing with very close friends: "You don't want people that are like your immediate circle, like who are your best, best friends, because chances are you're going to fall out". Furthermore, living with friends did not guarantee that you would avoid problems or poor behaviour on the part of housemates. For example, Nellie had had a bad experience in her first house share in London:

> Had a house share and I hated it. Two girls, one was previously a friend. I got utterly shafted basically. They told me it was a three-bedroom house and that I would have room in my room for a desk (…) and basically I had a box room. There was barely

enough room for me to stand (…) and I was signed in for a year, so that was a fairly miserable year.

Similarly, Miranda had previously lived with a colleague who had spread lies about her at work and at home: "She tried to break my husband and I up. (…) she'd come home and tell him that I was like hitting on another guy or that, and like make up these stories, and tell people at work as well".

### *The Luck of the Draw*

Deciding who to invite to live in your house, or which house share to move into, was therefore no easy task. Nellie spoke about how some potential lodgers would lie and would "probably tell you anything just to get a roof over their heads". Also, further checks did not necessarily help. For example, Ruby said that she checked references of potential lodgers but recognised this was not a failsafe way to avoid problems, saying: "What is a reference going to say? If I choose you as a reference, are you going to say bad things?" Similarly, Iorek said that, while letting agents claimed to vet people before they moved into properties, they often did not seem to detect problems:

They always say 'Oh we've, you know you have to pass a vigorous vetting system'. You've let a guy in who is a psychopath gangster who hasn't worked a day in his life that doesn't involve crime or violence, but you let him in. And when you raise that, 'Well he seemed nice at the time and his references'.

For these reasons Nellie had recently decided to only take female lodgers in future, because it was impossible to tell which men would turn out to be angry and aggressive. She said:

That's why I've kind of gone girls only now. I thought do you know what, I'm done with these aggressive male types. Even though it's very hard to ascertain if they are, because obviously I've had loads of really lovely guys as well.

This provided a way to regain some control. However, as noted above, women could also prove to be difficult housemates, so such an approach could not guarantee that problems would be avoided. Ultimately, therefore, some participants felt it was purely down to luck whether you got on with your housemates. For example, Emma said: "When you are renting with roommates, you never ever know who it is you're going to get. (…) it's almost like the luck of the draw".

### *Lack of Control Over Who You Live With*

For participants renting a room in a house share, there was often little they could do about the situation if they ended up living with a housemate they did not get on with. Hannah recalled speaking to her landlord, whom she had a good relationship with, in one case where

a new housemate had moved into the house share and was not treating other housemates or the property with respect:

> I messaged the landlord (…) we're very close to our landlord (…) and I said it's not working out with Rachel and (…) he said (…) I'm completely happy with you asking her to leave but you have to do the, you have to ask her to leave because you got her in there.

However, this was not the norm and, generally, if they were renting a room and did not get on with another housemate, participants felt they had few options beyond moving out or hoping the other person would move out. Live-in landlords had more control over who they lived with and could, in theory, evict lodgers they did not get on with. Nonetheless, evicting difficult or hostile lodgers could still prove challenging. For example, Nellie spoke about how she had feared negative consequences if she evicted one lodger whom she felt nervous around and was relieved when he gave in his notice, meaning she did not have to ask him to leave: "he's the one that gave notice, thank god! Because he was very um, he would be suing you right, left, and centre".

Several participants also noted that even when you do live with someone you get on with, you have no control over how long they will continue to live in the house share. As Bob emphasised: "there are some things that are outside your control. So, you know, somebody you get on with may move out, if you're sharing, and you get some random person in". Indeed, even in fairly stable house shares, where people tended to stay for a number of years, people would eventually move out and this could lead to a friend being replaced by someone you did not get on with. For example, Hannah had lived in her current house share for seven years and recently one of her housemates, a friend whom she had been living with for six years, had decided to move out. This led to a new person moving in, who Hannah "thought would be really, really lovely" but who turned out to be a lot less considerate than expected. (Fortunately, this housemate had since been replaced by a "lovely person" who was a much better fit.)

### 5.3.4 – Theme 4: There Are Now Many Ways to Be an Adult, yet Traditional Ideas of Adulthood Continue to Exert Influence

Participants generally saw being responsible as the key defining characteristic of adulthood. However, different definitions of what it meant to be a responsible adult were offered by different participants and, in some cases, by the same participant at different points in the same interview. The idea that being a responsible adult meant *having* responsibilities (i.e. marriage, parenthood, and homeownership), made some participants feel that their current situation meant they were not fully adult. However, other participants

considered themselves to be adults based on the fact they behaved in a mature, responsible way, even if they had not undergone any of the role transitions traditionally associated with adulthood.

### Homeownership Is the Normative Expectation

All participants recognised that, in the UK (as well as in Australia and Ireland, for participants coming from those countries), buying a house and being an owner-occupier was the normative thing to do. Indeed, the appeal of homeownership felt almost like a self-evident truth to Emma: "I know it might be obvious to say, but if somebody was given the choice, there's not many people who are going to say 'I prefer to rent rather than own'". Participants had generally grown up seeing homeownership as the norm. For example, Nellie spoke about how "everybody back home owns their house" and so the idea of not being a homeowner "just seems strange". Furthermore, when discussing why she potentially wanted to buy a property, Zoe said: "I think part of it is just that that's what we're told we should be aiming for in life". Consequently, this sense of owner-occupation being the normal, expected thing to do, could lead to feelings of failure for those who were not homeowners. For instance, Hannah said:

> I do feel like I would like to have bought a property definitely before I'm 40, just because I think it's a bit of a milestone (…) I'll feel like a bit of a um, like maybe I've failed at being an adult if I haven't done something responsible by the time I'm 40.

In this way, homeownership was seen as marker of responsible adulthood for some participants.

### Older Sharers Can Be Stigmatised

Participants who were not homeowners were aware of the possibility of being judged or stigmatised for continuing to rent a room in a house share at older ages. For example, Zoe observed that family members and friends from her hometown tended to view her living in a house share as something unusual: "When I think about you know where I'm from, all my extended family and friends, friends that never moved away, I think they think it's a bit weird". Additionally, Bob, who was single, was concerned that his living situation would be viewed negatively by potential partners: "Now you know I'm worried that, if I'm dating girls who are more close to my age, will they go 'Oh well he doesn't have a place of his own, not interested'." Indeed, despite increases in the number of over-thirties living in house shares, several participants felt that there remained a limit on the ages at which house sharing was seen as a socially acceptable way to live. This idea was highlighted by Hannah who expressed concern about still living in a house share after 40 years of age: "I'm nearly 40

now, and I kind of think do I want to be living in a house share (…) when I'm in my forties? (…) it's the like, almost stigma that goes with it".

### *Adulthood Is About Responsibility – But What Does it Mean to Be Responsible?*

It seemed that some participants felt, at least on some level, that house sharing is not what 'proper adults' do. For example, describing her and her husband's decision to stop house sharing for a period, Miranda said: "we'd just gotten married, I was like let's, you know, be adults and try and get our own place." Furthermore, Hannah said of friends from her hometown:

> most of them are married with kids and they're having extensions on their houses (…) and I'm renting a room (…) you sort of think 'Oh should I be, you know, should I be doing this? Should I be being a grown up?'

However, the ideas of adulthood expressed by participants were complex and multiple. For example, later in the interview Hannah said:

> I've been taught to think that being an adult is having a good job, having a husband, having children (…) I guess having responsibility is what being an adult might mean. But I don't look at other people that don't have that and that are older and think that they're not adults. (…) my friend John, he's 50 and he lives on a sailing boat (…) and I don't think that he's not an adult because he lives on a boat. But then he is quite a responsible person who's good with his finances.

Similarly, while comparing herself to her older sister, Zoe said:

> she's ticked off all the boxes of life, at the right time. (…) She got married in her mid-twenties and bought a house with her husband, then had two babies. I guess she's like a proper adult, and I'm not.

Yet, Zoe also stated that there were ways in which she did consider herself to be an adult: "I do feel like an adult in the sense that I've always been financially independent, since I moved into London (…) I've always had a job and been responsible and looked after myself". Such quotes highlight that there can be different ways to be responsible (e.g. responsibility for others, psychological maturity, being financially conscientious) and some participants appeared to feel uncertain about the extent to which these different types of responsibility could or should be considered as markers of adulthood.

Other participants made clear arguments that adulthood was about acting in a mature and responsible way and, therefore, the housing tenure or type of household a person lived in was unrelated to their attainment of adult status. For example, when asked what made someone an adult, Bob said: "Taking responsibility for their own actions. (…) it's changing the behaviour so you're not the centre of the universe, really". Bob wanted to

become a homeowner; however, currently he was not in a financial position to be able to buy a property:

> To save a deposit, as a single working person, is very difficult. I mean I know I've given my landlord what 80, 100 grand over the last 10 or 12 years. But, you know, I didn't have 50 grand spare at any point.

Nonetheless, Bob did not feel that renting a room in a house share precluded him from adulthood, saying:

> I don't feel that I haven't grown up because I'm still sharing. (…) I don't feel that I'm not grown up just because I haven't sold my soul to the bank to buy an apartment that I wouldn't want to live in, just to try and make some money out of it.

Similarly, Emma stated: "I don't necessarily think homeownership makes you an adult, because I was renting for years, and I can assure you I was an adult". In this way, some participants had no problem viewing themselves as adults despite not having attained the traditional markers of adulthood. Conversely, Nellie, who was a homeowner, did not consider herself to be an adult as she felt that to truly be an adult you need to have children. This led Nellie to conclude: "I don't think I'll ever be truly an adult". However, she was happy with this state of affairs and described her current situation of being "unattached and not an adult" as "lovely".

### Caught Between Differing Visions of Adulthood

At the time of their interviews, both Hannah and Zoe had each saved enough money to be able to buy a one-bed place on their own; however, they were both unsure how to proceed. Both participants described feeling somewhat ambivalent and apprehensive about becoming a homeowner due, for example, to the massive expense and responsibility it entailed. Furthermore, while the security of homeownership appealed to both participants, they also expressed concern about the loss of freedom and flexibility that would accompany this security. For example, Zoe spoke about how she had grown up expecting her life to follow a traditional path and now felt mixed emotions about being a single woman in her early thirties, considering buying a property on her own:

> When I was 18, I didn't think I'd be [in my early thirties] and buying a one-bedroom flat by myself. I didn't think this is where I would be. Not that now I want to be married (…) I think you just, especially if you've come from a conventional family (…) you're given this idea of how your life is going to be. Um, and then it's not. So then you have to try and work [out] what it is going to be.

Zoe felt torn between wanting the freedom of not being tied down to a mortgage and of being able to go and work in another city (or country) if she wanted, while also wanting the security of homeownership. She said:

I'd love to have my own flat to decorate and make my own. (…) but it's just really scary as well. (…) I'm scared of feeling trapped by a mortgage (…) It's like a toss-up between having freedom but not having financial stability in the future.

In this way, Zoe seemed caught between past expectations, current realities, and future hopes that sometimes contradicted each other. When discussing what made someone an adult, Zoe said "I think there are all different versions of being an adult now" and it seemed that choosing what type of adult she wanted to be was proving difficult.

## 5.4 – Discussion

Within the current study the experiences of people living in house shares after 30 years of age were found to vary widely, mirroring the findings of Chapter 4. House sharing had had a positive impact on the lives of some participants, with housemates providing an important source of support and even taking on a familial role in their lives. However, for some participants, house shares had been the setting for scary situations and traumatic experiences. Indeed, some participants had experienced both the positive possibilities and the potentially harmful risks of house sharing first-hand. Participants' relationships with their housemates, the extent to which they were able to feel a sense of control with regards to their housing, and contextual factors (including time, place, and the participant's social circle and economic resources) all played a role in shaping experiences of house sharing.

### 5.4.1 – Control, Community, and Home

Two, potentially contradictory, factors seemed to play a key role in influencing whether participants felt at home in their house share: the extent to which they experienced a sense of control and the extent to which they experienced a sense of community. The relationship between control and home is discussed first, followed by a discussion of how psychological sense of community can promote feelings of home.

All participants spoke about how living in a house share necessarily entailed not being able to have full control over your living environment. Having to share control of common areas of the property with housemates had at times led to feelings of frustration and/or discomfort for participants due to other household members leaving shared areas in a messy or dirty state. Living in a house share could also limit one's freedom due, for example, to being unable to use the bathroom or kitchen when you want. Such findings mirror complaints raised about house sharing by participants in Chapter 4 and in existing literature (Blanc & Scanlon, 2022; Clark & Tuffin, 2023; Heath et al., 2018; McNamara & Connell, 2007). Furthermore, as also discussed in Chapter 4 and in previous studies, this lack of

control over their living environment could undermine participants' ability to feel at home (Byrne, 2020; Dupuis & Thorns, 1998; Saunders, 1989).

The participants who were owner-occupiers all felt at home in their properties. This was due to the sense of control and ownership they felt and, in the case of Nellie, the work she had put into renovating the property to create exactly the home she wanted. Such sentiments are in line with previous literature which has emphasised the role homeownership can play in promoting feelings of home (Byrne, 2020; Dupuis & Thorns, 1998; Saunders, 1989). However, owner-occupation did not make live-in landlords immune to sometimes feeling a lack of control due to sharing their home environment with lodgers. In particular, Ruby spoke about how living with lodgers had, at times, caused her to feel her house was not fully her own. This reflects findings from Alam et al. (2022) and Heath and Scicluna (2020) that, in some cases, having lodgers could undermine live-in landlords' ability to feel comfortable or at home in their house.

Ruby's feeling of her house not being fully her own, due to the presence of lodgers, perhaps reflected the fact that house sharing was not something she was doing out of choice. Ruby did not want to take in lodgers and only did so out of financial necessity, as she had struggled to pay the mortgage on her house after getting divorced. While owner-occupation has traditionally been associated with autonomy and control, needing to rent out rooms, when you have a strong preference not to, so as to be able to maintain ownership of your property, could undermine feelings of personal control (Clapham, 2010). In contrast to Ruby, both Emma and Nellie had actively chosen to have lodgers, either to increase their disposable income (Emma) or for social reasons (Nellie). This may help to explain why the approach to creating rules for their lodgers varied so widely between Emma, Nellie, and Ruby. For Ruby, who was already experiencing a lack of control due to having lodgers, setting clear rules and limits regarding which parts of the house lodgers could access may have provided a way to regain some control. Heath and Scicluna (2020, p. 412) also found that live-in landlords differed in how they approached the lodger-landlord relationship and concluded:

> Keeping lodgers at a distance seemed to help the more reluctant group of hosts to mitigate the loss of control that they experienced by virtue of having to rely on a stranger's income in order to retain their home and maintain their lifestyle.

However, it should be noted that, within the current study, Ruby was the only participant to have children and it seems likely that this will have also played a role in the rules she created.

For participants who were renting, finding ways to gain a feeling of control over their living environment and/or housing situation could also promote feelings of home. In Chapter 4, several participants who were renting rooms in house shares spoke about the constraints they had experienced regarding being able to personalise their living space and how this had limited their ability to feel at home. However, within the current study, some participants had been able to engage in personalisation not only of their bedroom but also of shared areas in their house share, either through displaying personal items or redecorating parts of the property. Such processes of personalisation could help to increase feelings of control and home, as suggested in previous research (Easthope, 2014; Hoolachan, 2022; Rolfe et al., 2023; Soaita & McKee, 2019).

Ability to personalise shared spaces in a house share depended on the nature of the relationship between housemates (e.g. would they respect personal items left in shared areas) and, in the case of redecoration, also the relationship between tenants and the landlord. Several participants in the current study spoke about having a good relationship with their landlord which helped to increase their feelings of security and control, for example by increasing confidence that they would be treated fairly and/or reducing the perceived risk of eviction. Being able to choose new housemates, rather than having them selected by the landlord or letting agent, could also help to increase feelings of control for those renting a room in a house share. Therefore, as observed by Chisholm et al. (2020) and Rolfe et al. (2023), there were a number of things landlords could do to help promote feelings of control and home among tenants, which Rolfe et al. argued also benefits landlords due to tenants who feel at home being likely to remain in the tenancy for longer and to take better care of the property.

However, feelings of control were not the only way that a feeling of home could be developed. The results of the current study showed that enjoying friendly, supportive relationships with housemates and feeling a sense of community within one's house share could also promote feelings of home, thus replicating findings from Chapter 4 and from previous research (Ferrari et al., 2002; Heath et al., 2018; McNamara & Connell, 2007). Companionship and community could enable participants to feel at home even though they lacked full control over their living environment. Therefore, in line with findings from Chapter 4 and previous research, several participants in the current study who were renting rooms in house shares were able to feel completely at home where they were living (Clark & Tuffin, 2023; Després, 1991a; Heath et al., 2018; McNamara & Connell, 2007). Moreover, as demonstrated by Nellie in this study, and by Chloe in Chapter 4, companionship from housemates did not just benefit renters but could foster feelings of home for live-in landlords

as well (see also Heath & Scicluna, 2020). It is, however, worth noting that both Nellie and Chloe had chosen to take in lodgers, at least in part, for social reasons and they both enjoyed living with other people. For people who would prefer to live alone and who are sharing purely out of necessity, such as Iorek and Ruby, the presence of housemates or lodgers may potentially represent a lack of control, more than an opportunity for companionship.

Within the interviews, some participants observed that living with family members can entail a similar lack of control and need for compromise as many people experience in house shares. For example, Ruby talked about her daughters being frustrated because her son took a long time in their shared bathroom. However, as observed by Heath et al. (2018), such compromises are rarely portrayed (in academic literature or popular discourse) as something that undermines ability to feel at home when experienced in a family household. Therefore, the idea that care and companionship can facilitate feelings of home and well-being, even in the absence of control, is perhaps not that surprising. Instead, it seems likely that such processes underlie how most people (who do not live alone) manage to feel at home, even if that is not how it is consciously framed. Gurney's (1990, p. 7) argument that control has been erroneously prioritised above care in some definitions of home is perhaps instructive here: "Urban sociology displays a kind of machismo in its avoidance of issues such as love, affection and happiness, yet it is precisely these issues which are important in colouring an individual's experience of home".

Moreover, while housemates could facilitate feeling at home, some participants' stories also highlighted the potential risks of house sharing, with some participants having experienced scary situations in some house shares they had lived in. Furthermore, replicating findings from Chapter 4 and from past research (Ortega-Alcázar & Wilkinson, 2021; Wilkinson & Ortega-Alcázar, 2019), the current study showed that feeling unsafe or scared around the people you live with could have a particularly detrimental effect on one's ability to feel at home. Live-in landlords had more power to deal with difficult situations or hostile lodgers than renters; however, such situations could still prove unsettling for live-in landlords and could potentially undermine feelings of home. Furthermore, having to evict difficult tenants could prove challenging. For example, Nellie spoke about how she feared negative consequences if she evicted one lodger and was relieved when he gave notice that he was going to move out. As soon as that lodger moved out she changed the locks, thus reestablishing a feeling of safety and control.

Nonetheless, while house sharing can entail risks, it is important to note that the possibility of experiencing violence or trauma at home is not unique to house sharing (Gurney, 2020; Mallett, 2004). Furthermore, research has shown that domestic abuse can undermine ability to feel at home for people living in family households, whether as a renter or owner-occupier (L. McCarthy, 2018; S. Watson & Austerberry, 1986). Indeed, living with someone who makes you feel unsafe (whether a housemate, partner, or family member) can perhaps be seen to undermine feelings of home due to representing both a lack of control (due to feeling fear or uncertainty about what someone might do or what might happen) and a lack of community (due to negative relationships representing the opposite of caring, supportive relationships).

### 5.4.2 – Adult Identity and House Sharing

Generally, within the interviews, there was a sense that house sharing becomes less socially acceptable as one gets older. Within the current study, while few participants spoke about concrete experiences of being stigmatised due to living in a house share after 30 years of age, some knew or believed that friends and/or family members viewed their living situation as strange. Additionally, others were aware of the possibility that they could be judged for their living situation. For example, Bob expressed concerns that living in a house share in his mid-forties could make him less desirable to potential romantic partners. Similar worries about the potential to be perceived negatively by others due to living in a house share after the age of 30 were expressed by participants in Chapter 4 and in research by Heath et al. (2018).

For some participants in the current study there was a sense that living in a house share, especially if one is renting, is not what 'proper' adults do. Several participants saw homeownership as a marker of adulthood and responsibility, reflecting findings from Chapter 4 and previous research (K. Crawford, 2010; Molgat, 2007). Additionally, some participants saw parenthood as necessary for someone to be fully an adult. In some cases, such conceptions of adulthood could cause participants to feel they had not reached full adulthood due to their status as someone who was single, childfree, and/or renting a room in a house share. However, other participants did not see house sharing as presenting a barrier to considering themselves to be adults. Instead, these participants saw adulthood as being defined by your mindset and behaviour (e.g. the extent to which you were mature and responsible). From this view, paying one's rent on time and managing one's life in a responsible manner could be seen as markers of adulthood. This reflects findings from Chapter 4 and previous research that, for some people, renting a room in a house share

played an important role in enabling them to view themself as an independent, responsible adult (Kenyon & Heath, 2001; Maalsen, 2019).

Taken as a group, the interviews from both Chapters 4 and 5 showed that there was no one model of adulthood that all participants subscribed to. Some participants were confident they were adults despite not being homeowners, some participants who were homeowners did not feel that they were adults, and some participants were not sure they wanted to be adults at all. This seems to reflect that fact that, although there is increasing individualisation and destandardisation of the life course (Beck, 1992; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Giddens, 1991; Hendry & Kloep, 2011), the culture and society in which we live is still, to some extent, shaped by previous social structures and expectations (Heinz & Krüger, 2001). This means that multiple different, potentially contradictory, ideas and definitions of adulthood exist within society. Indeed, independence, individuality, responsibility, career success, and parenthood can all potentially offer routes to adulthood (Arnett, 2001, 2003; Lowe et al., 2013; Sirsch et al., 2009). The interviews conducted as part of this thesis suggest this can offer exciting possibilities and new ways to envisage one's life, but also has the potential to cause confusion and self-doubt. For example, Zoe felt unsure as to whether she was an adult, as the answer varied depending on the criteria that were used to assess attainment of adult status. Furthermore, Zoe described feeling torn between wanting the security of homeownership but also wanting to maintain flexibility and geographical mobility so as to be able to pursue work opportunities.[14]

### 5.4.3 – Psychological Well-Being Among House Sharers Over the Age of 30 Years

Within the data there was evidence that house sharing could potentially support or undermine psychological well-being, depending on the nature of the relationships that existed between housemates. Most participants describing receiving companionship and social support from their housemates. Furthermore, in some cases, participants had formed close bonds with housemates who provided an important source of emotional support and who they had come to view as family, thus replicating findings from Chapter 4 and previous research (Clark & Tuffin, 2023; Després, 1991a; Heath et al., 2018; McNamara & Connell, 2007). The importance of companionship and social support for psychological well-being has been emphasised in academic literature on mental health (Clapham, 2010; Elstad, 1998; Hombrados-Mendieta et al., 2013; Mirowsky & Ross, 2003). Furthermore, some participants in the current study described how the companionship and support they received from their housemates could help to combat loneliness and bolster their mood during low moments.

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[14] See Blatterer (2007) for more on the idea of flexibility as a marker of adulthood.

The current study therefore adds to the evidence presented in Chapter 4 and in previous studies of the important role that housemates can play in providing social and emotional support and of the benefits that such support can offer for psychological well-being (Altus & Mathews, 2000; Clark & Tuffin, 2023; Després, 1991a).

However, conversely, as discussed in Section 5.4.1, living with housemates can entail risks and, in the current study, some participants discussed the mental toll that living with housemates or lodgers who made them feel unsafe and/or fearful could take. In particular, Iorek described the detrimental impact that living in a number of negative house sharing situations over the years had had on his mental health. There were also suggestions in the data that, for some participants, living in a potentially stigmatised form of housing could induce feelings of failure and/or self-judgement, which previous research has shown to be associated with reduced psychological well-being (Hiscock et al., 2001; McKee et al., 2019; McKee & Soaita, 2018). The results of the current study therefore support the argument put forward in Chapter 4 and in previous research (e.g. Ortega-Alcázar & Wilkinson, 2021; Wilkinson & Ortega-Alcázar, 2019) that living in a house share has the potential to be detrimental to well-being, especially in cases where house sharing does not match the person's housing preferences and/or there is a large gap between how someone would like to be treated by their housemates and the treatment they actually receive.

**5.4.4 – Strengths, Limitations, and Future Research**

This was a small-sample study and, as such, no claims can be made that the results are representative of all house sharers aged 30 years or over. However, the depth of analysis, and the level of emersion in each participants' story, that having a smaller sample enabled is felt to be a strength of the study. Furthermore, a whole housing history was gathered from each participant and, as each participant had lived in multiple house shares, although the sample was small, they had a wealth of experience gathered across a variety of house shares.

Being able to investigate similarities and differences between the experiences of live-in landlords and house sharers who were renters is also felt to be a strength of the current study. Additionally, as the three live-in landlords included in the sample varied with regards to their income, personal circumstances, and motivations for taking in lodgers, this allowed exploration of how feelings of choice, constraint, control, and community could manifest in the lives of both live-in landlords and participants renting a room in a house share and how individual and contextual factors might influence the experience of living with housemates or lodgers.

The study included participants with a wide range of ages (30-59 years); however, the sample only included two male participants. Additionally, while some participants in the current study had experienced being judged for sharing at older ages, there was a recognition that house sharing has become normal in London, in a way that it has not in other parts of the country. As per the life course principle of time and place, such findings highlight that the meaning and experience of house sharing for any individual are likely to vary according to when and where they live (Elder et al., 2003). It therefore seems plausible that over-thirties living in house shares outside of London may be more likely than those living in London to face stigma and/or to engage in self-judgement, both of which may negatively impact feelings of home, self-image, and psychological well-being (Barratt & Green, 2017). In the current study, Iorek was the only participant to live outside of London. In some ways his experience had been different, and more negative, than that of other participants. However, in the current study there is no way to know the role that location, income, or other individual factors may have played in that difference. It is therefore felt that future research exploring the experiences of house sharers aged 30 years or over who live outside of London would be valuable and may help to shed further light on the relative role of some of these factors in influencing the experience of house sharers.

### 5.5 – Conclusion

The current study built on the study presented in Chapter 4 by recruiting house sharers who were aged 30 years or over and were not university students. However, despite the difference in sampling between the two studies, similar themes were developed in both studies. Within the current study, it was found that the lack of control inherent in house sharing could undermine participants' ability to feel at home in their house share. Yet, the sense of community they experienced with their housemates allowed some participants to feel at home, even though they were renting and did not have full control over their living environment. Similarly, living in a house share undermined ability to construct an adult identity and was detrimental to psychological well-being for some participants; however, for others, house sharing presented no barrier to considering themself to be an adult and housemates provided an important source of support and companionship which was beneficial for well-being. It seemed that individual and contextual factors, including income, housing preferences, and one's social context and relationships (with family members, friends, housemates or lodgers and, for renters, their landlord), all played a role in how house sharing was experienced.

# Chapter 6:
## Quantitative Survey Study 1 – The Interplay of Home, Adulthood, and Well-being for a Student Sample

### 6.1 – Overview

As discussed in Chapter 2, there has been little research into what living in a house share after 30 years of age may mean in terms of ability to feel at home, ability to construct an adult identity, or psychological well-being (Clark & Tuffin, 2023; Heath et al., 2018; Maalsen, 2019). There are however reasons to think that house sharers over the age of 30 years may experience worse outcomes in all three of these areas, compared to people living in some other types of household. Below, literature regarding the potential impact of household type on feeling at home is briefly reviewed. Following this, research regarding how demographic characteristics and housing-related variables, including household type, can impact subjective adult identity (i.e. a person's own sense of whether they are an adult) is discussed. Then, literature regarding the relationship between psychological well-being and demographic variables is discussed, followed by consideration of how subjective adult identity may relate to well-being. The relationship between psychological well-being and housing-related variables is then explored. This structure is adopted to ensure that factors that may need to be controlled for in regression analyses are discussed and considered, rather than focusing purely on housing-related variables. Finally, research questions and hypotheses for the current study are presented.

### 6.1.1 – Household Type and Feeling at Home

Factors such as control, stability, safety, and status have frequently been seen as key dimensions of feeling at home (Clapham, 2005; Després, 1991b; Somerville, 1992). However, in contrast with this ideal, house sharers often experience a lack of control over their living environment and a lack of stability in their housing (Barratt et al., 2015; Heath et al., 2018; McKee et al., 2020; McNamara & Connell, 2007; Ortega-Alcázar & Wilkinson, 2021). Additionally, in some cases, people may feel unsafe when living in a house share (Ortega-Alcázar & Wilkinson, 2021). House sharing can also be stigmatised and viewed as something unusual or abnormal, especially at older ages (Barratt et al., 2015; Barratt & Green, 2017; Heath et al., 2018). All of these factors could suggest that house sharers, especially those aged 30 years or over, may struggle to feel at home where they are living.

However, house sharers are not alone in experiencing some of these issues. For example, people living with their parents beyond childhood can experience a lack of control over their living environment and also stigmatisation (K. Crawford, 2010; White, 2002).

Moreover, in addition to the factors mentioned above, relationships, care, and support also play an important role in creating feelings of home for many people (Gurney, 1990; Somerville, 1997). While, on average, people living with their partner or family members may be more likely to receive love and support from the people they live with, research has shown that many house sharers also receive care and support from their housemates and may even view their housemates as a chosen family (Clark & Tuffin, 2023; Heath et al., 2018; McNamara & Connell, 2007). This support and companionship from housemates can facilitate feeling at home and research has shown that many people do feel at home when living in a house share (Clark & Tuffin, 2023; Després, 1991a; Heath et al., 2018; McNamara & Connell, 2007). In contrast, Somerville argued that "households which are not seen as families… (for example, one-person households), may be less likely to feel at home in their current abodes" (1997, p. 237). This suggests that, while people living alone are likely to enjoy a higher degree of control over their living environment compared to house sharers, the benefits of this, in terms of feeling at home, may be somewhat balanced out by a lack of companionship (Després, 1991a; H. Green, Fernandez, Moxham, et al., 2022).

**6.1.2 – Factors Influencing Whether a Person Considers Themself to Be an Adult**

Research has consistently found that people who are older are more likely to consider themselves to be adults (Arnett, 2001, 2003; Arnett & Padilla-Walker, 2015; Galanaki & Leontopoulou, 2017; Kaniušonytė et al., 2022; Lowe et al., 2013; Sirsch et al., 2009; Weier & Lee, 2015). Studies that have compared across countries have also found differences between nationalities with regards to the proportion of young people who consider themselves to have reached full adulthood (Badger et al., 2006; Kaniušonytė et al., 2022). Some studies have found gender differences in how likely participants were to describe themselves as adults, although the results have not always pointed in the same direction (Doğan et al., 2016; Galanaki & Leontopoulou, 2017; Seiter & Nelson, 2011). However, other studies have found no significant differences between genders in terms of subjective adult identity (Facio & Micocci, 2003; Kaniušonytė et al., 2022; Oleszkowicz & Misztela, 2015; Živčić-Bećirević et al., 2020). Similarly, in research conducted in North America, some studies have found differences in how likely someone was to consider themself to be an adult depending on their ethnicity (Cheah & Nelson, 2004; Lowe et al., 2013) but others have not (Arnett, 2003).

To date, there has been very little (if any) research that has explored whether sexual orientation or gender identity impacts how likely someone may be to consider themself an adult (Torkelson, 2012). However, there are reasons to believe that LGBTQ+ people may perceive, or relate to, adulthood differently than their cisgender heterosexual peers due to

many traditional markers of adulthood reflecting cis-heteronormative ideals (Halberstam, 2005; Torkelson, 2012). Similarly, there has been little research into whether disability impacts how likely someone is to consider themself an adult. Some studies have found differences in when, or indeed whether, young adults achieve role transitions traditionally associated with adulthood depending on whether or not they have a disability (Galambos et al., 2007; Holmbeck & Devine, 2010; Krause & Ueno, 2021; Verhoof et al., 2012). However, when achievement of psychological markers of adulthood (e.g. maturity) has been considered, research has not found significant differences between disabled and non-disabled young adults (Chalk, 2016; Galambos et al., 2007). Given that there is evidence that role transitions may still play a role in whether someone considers themself to be an adult (Molgat, 2007; Shanahan et al., 2005), there may be an effect of disability status on subjective adult identity; however, currently this is something that very little research has directly examined.

Several studies have found being in full-time paid employment to be associated with increased likelihood of considering yourself an adult (Facio & Micocci, 2003; Molgat, 2007; Oleszkowicz & Misztela, 2015). Additionally, the fact that research has frequently identified achieving financial independence as an important marker of attaining adult status (Arnett, 2001, 2003; Côté & Bynner, 2008; Molgat, 2007; L. J. Nelson & Luster, 2015), suggests that income may be related to subjective adult identity. Within the UK, and in societies which place similar cultural importance on homeownership, research has also suggested that people who are homeowners may be more likely to consider themselves to be adults, whereas living in the PRS can undermine ability to construct an adult identity (Hoolachan et al., 2017; Molgat, 2007). Furthermore, the fact that many associate adulthood with having a settled residence (Arnett, 2000; Robinson, 2016), suggests that housing stability and feeling at home may be positively associated with considering yourself to be an adult, although this is not something that appears to have been directly tested in research to date.

Marriage and/or cohabitation with a partner, as well as parenthood, has generally been found to be associated with increased likelihood of considering oneself to be an adult (Arnett, 2000, 2003; Benson & Furstenberg, 2006; Molgat, 2007; Oleszkowicz & Misztela, 2015; Shanahan et al., 2005; Zhong & Arnett, 2014). This suggests that people living just with their partner and/or child(ren) may be more likely to consider themselves adults, compared to people living in other types of households.

Research from Australia, Canada, Poland, and the USA has found moving out of the parental home to be associated with increased likelihood of considering yourself an adult

(Benson & Furstenberg, 2006; Molgat, 2007; Oleszkowicz & Misztela, 2015; White, 2002). However, research conducted in Greece and Croatia found no significant relationship between whether participants lived with their parents and subjective adult identity (Galanaki & Leontopoulou, 2017; Živčić-Bećirević et al., 2020). Additionally, Stevens (2019) found that people who left and then returned to the parental home felt less adult due to returning, whereas those who had remained living in the family home without leaving did not see their living situation as an impediment to adulthood. Furthermore, while Oleszkowicz and Misztela (2015) found that Polish young adults who lived alone felt more adult than those who were house sharing, other research has found that house sharing could support construction of an adult identity for some (Maalsen, 2019). However, being forced to share out of economic necessity may undermine a person's ability to perceive themselves as fully adult (Garcia, 2016; Waldron, 2022). It therefore seems that the relationship between household type and subjective adult identity may differ depending on individual context and circumstances.

### 6.1.3 – Predicting Psychological Well-Being Outcomes

Previous research has shown that psychological well-being can vary according to demographic characteristics, such as gender, age, income, immigration status, and ethnicity (Baltatescu, 2005; Batz & Tay, 2018; Kaplan et al., 2008; Moore et al., 2019; Shields & Price, 2005; Weich et al., 2004; Yang & Leone, 2021). Additionally, some studies have found being LGBTQ+ and being disabled to be associated with reduced psychological well-being (Aitken et al., 2021; T. N. Crawford & Ridner, 2018; Lucas, 2007; Przedworski et al., 2015).

As noted by Kins and Beyers (2010, p. 748), "literature on the relationship between the transition to adulthood and subjective well-being is sparse". However, some research has found that, among emerging adults, perceiving oneself as having reached adulthood was associated with lower psychological distress and higher satisfaction with life (Carruthers, 2018; Kaniušonytė et al., 2022; L. J. Nelson & Barry, 2005). However, Živčić-Bećirević et al. (2020) found that subjective adult identity only predicted levels of satisfaction with life, not anxiety or depression.

The ability to feel at home where you are living has been shown to impact psychological well-being, with not feeling at home being associated with feelings of stress, anxiety, and depression (Garnham & Rolfe, 2019; McKee et al., 2020; Ortega-Alcázar & Wilkinson, 2021; Soaita & McKee, 2019). A number of studies have also found housing tenure to be associated with psychological well-being, with renters generally being found to experience reduced well-being compared to homeowners (Angel & Gregory, 2021; Cairney & Boyle, 2004; Damiens & Schnor, 2022; Vanhoutte et al., 2017). However, there is some

evidence to suggest tenure may have more impact on evaluative measures of well-being (e.g. satisfaction with life) rather than the experience of positive or negative emotions (Angel & Gregory, 2021; Morrison, 2007). Additionally, research has found higher levels of housing instability to be associated with higher levels of psychological distress and lower perceived quality of life (Bone, 2014; H. Green, Fernandez, & MacPhail, 2022; Li et al., 2022; Rollins et al., 2012).

Despite it becoming increasingly difficult for large numbers of UK adults to be able to buy a house, most people in Britain continue to aspire to own their own home (J. Crawford & McKee, 2018; McKee & Soaita, 2018; Pennington et al., 2012; Rugg & Rhodes, 2018). This has led to the opening up of a 'housing aspirations gap' between the housing people aspire to and what they can achieve (J. Crawford & McKee, 2018; McKee et al., 2019; Preece et al., 2020). Research participants experiencing such a 'gap' have described their inability to buy a property, despite having a strong desire to do so, as frustrating and depressing, and as something that can potentially lead to feelings of failure (McKee et al., 2019; McKee & Soaita, 2018). Furthermore, research has shown that aspiring to a goal that is unobtainable is associated with increased psychological distress (Carver & Scheier, 1990; Wrosch et al., 2003).

Living in a house share entails a lack of control over one's living environment, which can have negative implications for psychological well-being (Clapham, 2005, 2010; Elstad, 1998; McKee et al., 2020; Mirowsky & Ross, 2003; Nguyen et al., 2020; Ortega-Alcázar & Wilkinson, 2021). Additionally, living in a house share, especially after 30 years of age, goes against normative expectations and older sharers can experience stigma, shame, and reduced well-being (Barratt et al., 2012, 2015; Barratt & Green, 2017; Clarke & Muir, 2017; Heath et al., 2018). Indeed, Barratt et al. (2012) argued that renting a room in a house share may pose a greater threat to a person's mental health than living in other housing situations, due to the lack of control, lack of privacy, insecurity, and stigma sharers can experience. However, living in a house share can also offer social support and companionship which can promote psychological well-being (Clapham, 2010; Clark & Tuffin, 2023; Evans, 2003; Heath et al., 2018; Hombrados-Mendieta et al., 2013; Mirowsky & Ross, 2003).

The way in which household type may interact with psychological well-being is likely to vary between individuals, depending on personal preferences and experiences (Clapham, 2005, 2010; Eckermann, 2015; Oh & Kim, 2021). There can also be important variations within the overarching categories of different household types. For example, within a house share, the relationship that exists between housemates is an important factor in determining

whether living in that household may be beneficial or harmful for well-being. Additionally, the number of people living in a house share may impact the experience of residents. For example, Veeroja et al. (2023) found that, during the Covid-19 pandemic, people who lived with only one housemate were more likely to report feeling lonely, compared to people living with three or more housemates.

**6.1.4 – Research Aims**

The current study aimed to explore whether the type of household a participant lived in was associated with their ability to feel at home, their ability to construct an adult identity, and/or their psychological well-being. In particular, the study aimed to answer three research questions, each of which had specific hypotheses associated with it.

**RQ 6.1:** Are house sharers less likely to feel at home compared to people living in other types of household?

- **Hypothesis 6.1:** House sharers will be significantly less likely to report feeling at home compared to participants living just with their partner and/or child(ren), but will not differ significantly from participants living alone or with their family of origin with regards to feeling at home.

**RQ 6.2:** Does household type predict likelihood of considering oneself an adult?

- **Hypothesis 6.2a:** House sharers will be significantly less likely to consider themselves to be adults compared to participants living just with their partner and/or child(ren) and significantly more likely to consider themselves to be adults compared to participants living with their family of origin. House sharers and participants living alone will not differ significantly with regards to subjective adult identity.

- **Hypothesis 6.2b:** Once demographic and other housing-related variables have been taken into account, household type will not significantly predict likelihood of considering oneself an adult.

**RQ 6.3:** Does household type predict psychological well-being outcomes?

- **Hypothesis 6.3a:** House sharers will experience significantly poorer psychological well-being compared to participants living just with their partner and/or child(ren), but will not differ significantly from participants living alone or with their family of origin with regards to psychological well-being.

- **Hypothesis 6.3b**: Once demographics and other housing-related variables have been taken into account, household type will not significantly predict psychological well-being.

## 6.2 – Methods

### 6.2.1 – Procedure

The survey was open to participants who were living in any tenure or household type, so as to allow comparison across different living situations. The only eligibility criteria were for participants to be aged 18 years or over and a student at Birkbeck, University of London. Participants were recruited via the Birkbeck Department of Psychological Sciences' SONA system. Study participation credits, required by first year psychology students, were offered to thank participants for taking part. The survey was hosted on the SurveyMonkey website and was completed by participants at a time and place of their choosing. Participation was completely anonymous. The average time taken to complete the survey was 31 minutes. Data were collected between December 2018 and November 2021.

Upon going to the survey site, potential participants were presented with information on the survey, including what would be involved in participating, the purpose of the study, potential risks and benefits of participating, and contact details for the researcher and her supervisor (see Appendix D for full text). Participants were only able to commence the survey after ticking boxes to indicate that they had read the information about the study, were over 18 years of age, and consented to take part in the study. After completing the survey, participants were thanked for their participation and reminded of the researcher's contact details and the procedure should they wish to withdraw their data (see Appendix E for debrief text). Ethical approval for the study was granted by the Department of Psychological Sciences Research Ethics Committee of Birkbeck, University of London (approval reference number: 181901).

### 6.2.2 – Measures

The survey opened with demographic questions asking about the participant's age, gender, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, relationship status, highest educational qualification, employment status, current occupation, and income. Participants were also asked whether they had children and whether they considered themself to be disabled. (Full text of the survey is available in Appendix F.)

The second part of the survey covered the participant's current housing situation. Participants were first asked to indicate the number of people (if any) they lived with. Those

who lived with other people were then asked to list their relationship to each person they lived with and how long they had known them. They were then also asked how frequently they ate dinner with at least one other member of their household, on a scale ranging from 1 (never or almost never) to 7 (every day or almost every day).

All participants (regardless of whether they lived alone or not) were then asked a number of questions about their current property, including the first half of their postcode, the amount of time they had lived in the property, and who owned the property. This was followed by asking participants whether they felt at home in their current property (with the response options 'yes', 'sometimes', 'no') and how satisfied they were with their current living situation, on a scale of 1 (completely dissatisfied) to 10 (completely satisfied). This section ended by asking participants how many properties they had lived in during the last 10 years and whether they planned to move house in the future (with eight response options which included increasing time frames for a potential move – from 'yes, in the next month' to 'eventually, but not in the next 10 years' – as well as the answer 'no').

The third section focused on future goals and was based on research by Markus and Nurius (1986) exploring how probable and desirable various possible selves seemed to participants. The section featured six questions asking participants to rate how probable and, separately, how desirable they felt it was that they would become a homeowner, get married, or have children. The scale ranged from 1 (very unlikely) to 5 (very likely) for probability and from 1 (very undesirable) to 5 (very desirable) for desirability. There was also an N/A option for those who had already completed that transition.

The fourth part of the survey explored participants' perceptions of adulthood. Participants were first asked whether they considered themself to be an adult, with response options 'yes', 'in some ways yes, in some ways no', and 'no' (Arnett, 2001, 2003). Participants were then also asked about what they thought made someone an adult.[15]

The survey ended with three psychological well-being measures: the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS), the Three-Item Loneliness Scale (T-ILS), and the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). The PANAS (D. Watson et al., 1988) contains two subscales, one measuring positive affect and one measuring negative affect, with each

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[15] The survey also included some questions regarding the size of the participants' social network. However, these are not discussed in detail here as ultimately the data from these questions was not analysed. This was due to it being felt that the topics covered in the thesis were becoming too diffuse and it was decided to focus purely on the three ORQs listed in Section 2.4.

subscale consisting of 10 items. Participants were presented with the 20 items, randomly ordered, and for each item were asked to indicate to what extent they had felt that way over the last few weeks. The response scale for each item ranged from 1 (very slightly or not at all) to 5 (extremely). A positive affect score was calculated by summing responses to the positively valenced items (e.g. 'enthusiastic', 'inspired', 'proud'). A negative affect score was calculated by summing responses to the negatively valenced items (e.g. 'ashamed', 'nervous', 'upset'). Possible scores on each subscale therefore ranged from 10 to 50. Descriptive statistics and Cronbach's alpha for each subscale based on Watson et al.'s original college student sample are reported in Table 6.1. Also reported in Table 6.1 are UK population norms based on a non-clinical sample aged 18-91 years ($N$ = 1,003) (J. R. Crawford & Henry, 2004). J. R. Crawford and Henry concluded that the two subscales had good construct validity, based on confirmatory factor analysis. Within the current study, Cronbach's alpha was .88 for the positive affect subscale and .86 for the negative affect subscale.

**Table 6.1**

*Population Norms and Reliability Statistics for PANAS*

| Subscale | US college student norms (D. Watson et al., 1988) | | | UK non-clinical population norms (J. R. Crawford & Henry, 2004) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *M* | *SD* | Cronbach's alpha | *Mdn* | *M* | *SD* | Cronbach's alpha |
| Positive affect | 32.0 | 7.0 | .87 | 32 | 31.31 | 7.65 | .89 |
| Negative affect | 19.5 | 7.0 | .87 | 14 | 16.00 | 5.90 | .85 |

The T-ILS (Hughes et al., 2004) offers a brief (three-item) measure of loneliness. Each item takes the form of a question (e.g. 'How often do you feel isolated from others?'), with response options ranging from 1 (hardly ever) to 3 (often). Possible scores therefore ranged from 3 to 9. In their original paper, Hughes et al. reported a mean score of 3.89 (*SD* = 1.34), based on a sample of 2,182 older adults (aged 55+ years) in the USA. Encompassing a broader range of ages, Mullen et al. (2019) reported a mean of 4.2 (*SD* = 1.6) based on a sample of 1,235 American adults aged 18-89 years. Hughes et al. concluded that the study had good construct and discriminant validity based on examination of correlations between T-ILS and other well-being measures. Further, they reported a Cronbach's alpha of .72 in their original paper. In a comparative study that collected data

from 4,816 participants across four countries, Vuorinen et al. (2021) reported alphas for the measure between .81 and .84. Within the current study, Cronbach's alpha for the T-ILS was .83.

Finally, the SWLS (Diener et al., 1985) is a five-item scale measuring the participant's own evaluation of their overall satisfaction with their life (example item: 'In most ways my life is close to ideal'). Response options for each item range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Possible scores therefore ranged from 5 to 35. In research with a non-clinical population in the UK, Maltby and Day (2004) reported a mean of 23.00 among male participants ($SD = 6.8$, $n = 206$) and a mean of 23.65 among female participants ($SD = 6.7$, $n = 214$). After reviewing a range of evidence, Pavot and Diener (1993, 2008) judged the SWLS to have good construct and discriminant validity. Maltby and Day reported that the SWLS had a Cronbach's alpha of .85 in their study. Pavot and Diener (2008) reported alphas between .79 and .89 based on a review of eight studies. In the current study, Cronbach's alpha for the SWLS was .81.

### 6.2.3 – Participants

In total, 255 people answered at least some questions on the survey. The type of household that a participant was living in was a key independent variable for this study. As part of the survey, participants were asked to list their relationship to each of the people they lived with and this information was used to assign them one of four possible household types: living alone, living just with partner and/or child(ren), living in a house share, or living with family of origin. Eight people were excluded from the final data set due to providing incomplete or contradictory information about their living situation, meaning it was not possible to confidently assign them to one of the household type groups. Two further people were excluded due to not listing their age (another key variable for the study).

Participants were classed as living in a house share if they lived with friend(s), housemate(s), lodger(s), or their landlord. In addition, participants who lived with their sibling(s) but not any family members from a preceding generation (e.g. their parents) were classed as living in a house share. In the current study, participants who lived with their partner and/or child(ren) as well as a lodger, friend, or sibling were classed as living in a house share, even if this was not how they described their living situation. Communal establishments owned and operated by an institution or organisation were not considered to be house shares for the purpose of this study. Eleven participants were therefore excluded from the final dataset due to living in halls of residence.

Participants were classed as living with their family of origin if they lived with their parent(s), grandparent(s), aunt(s), and/or uncle(s). To reduce overlap between the categories, five participants who lived with their parents (or grandparents) along with their partner and/or child(ren) were excluded from the final dataset. Additionally, three participants who lived with their parents in addition to lodgers or housemates, and seven participants who lived with their partner and their partner's family of origin, were excluded from the dataset.

The first half of their postcode that participants supplied was used to check whether there were any participants who had completed the survey more than once. If more than one participant with the same first half of postcode was identified, their demographic information was then examined to determine whether it was the same person. In any cases where there were some differences in the demographics, it was assumed that this did not represent a duplicate. Using this criteria, four pairs of responses were identified where there was an exact match between the first half of their postcode and all demographic details (including job title and salary), and these cases were therefore deemed to be duplicates. In one of these cases, the participant had answered more questions on their second attempt, so this set of responses was retained and the first set was deleted. For the other three cases, there was no difference in the number of questions the participants had answered on both attempts, so it was decided to keep their first set of responses.

The final dataset therefore comprised a sample of 215 participants. Across the sample, 59 participants (27%) lived just with their partner and/or child(ren), 49 participants (23%) lived with their family of origin, 27 participants (13%) lived alone, and 63 participants (29%) were house sharing. Additionally, a further 17 participants (8%) lived in a house share with their partner. For the subsequent analyses, participants who lived with their partner in a house share were included with house sharers, taking the total number of house sharers to 80 (37% of participants). It will be noted if the inclusion of cohabiting house sharers in the house sharing group makes a difference to the result of any analyses.

Participants ranged in age from 18 to 61 years. The mean age was 29.40 years ($SD$ = 8.16). Descriptive statistics for age across household types are shown in Table 6.2. There was a significant difference between the groups in terms of age ($p < .001$). Post-hoc Hochberg's GT2 comparisons showed that there was not a significant difference with regards to age between participants who lived alone and those who lived just with their partner and/or child(ren). However, all other pairwise comparisons were significant ($p \leq .01$ for each comparison).

**Table 6.2**

*Descriptive Statistics and One-Way ANOVA Comparing Age Across Household Types*

| Variable | *n* | Living alone | | Living just with partner and/or child(ren) | | Living in a house share | | Living with family of origin | | *F* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | |
| Age (years) | 215 | 32.70[a] | 7.78 | 34.98[a] | 6.97 | 27.68[b] | 6.39 | 23.67[c] | 7.42 | 27.28*** |

*Note.* Means that share superscripts do not differ significantly.

*** $p < .001$ (two-tailed)

In total, 197 participants (92%) lived in Greater London, 11 participants (5%) lived in South East England, and 7 participants (3%) lived in East of England. Other categorical demographic variables are shown in Table 6.3, along with the results of chi-square tests comparing demographic characteristics across household types. There was a significant association between household type and nationality ($p < .001$), ethnicity ($p = .002$), parenthood ($p < .001$), employment status ($p = .03$), and education ($p < .001$). However, household type was not significantly associated with gender or sexual and gender minority (SGM) status (i.e. whether participants were LGBTQ+).

**Table 6.3**

*Comparison of Categorical Demographic Variables Across Household Types*

| Demographic characteristic | Living alone | | Living just with partner and/or child(ren) | | Living in a house share | | Living with family of origin | | Total | | $X^2$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *n* | % | *n* | % | *n* | % | *n* | % | *n* | % | |
| Gender [a] | | | | | | | | | | | 6.86 |
| Female | 16 | 59% | 45 | 76% | 65 | 81% | 39 | 80% | 165 | 77% | |
| Male | 11 | 41% | 14 | 24% | 14 | 18% | 9 | 18% | 48 | 22% | |
| Non-binary | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 1 | 1% | 1 | 2% | 2 | 1% | |
| Nationality [b] | | | | | | | | | | | 33.38*** |
| British [c] | 16 | 59% | 32 | 54% | 27 | 34% | 42 | 86% | 117 | 54% | |
| EU/ EEA | 7 | 26% | 20 | 34% | 42 | 53% | 5 | 10% | 74 | 34% | |
| Non-EU | 4 | 15% | 7 | 12% | 11 | 14% | 2 | 4% | 24 | 11% | |
| Ethnicity [d, e] | | | | | | | | | | | 15.34** |
| White | 21 | 78% | 38 | 64% | 53 | 66% | 18 | 37% | 130 | 60% | |
| Asian | 3 | 11% | 4 | 7% | 6 | 8% | 12 | 24% | 25 | 12% | |
| Mixed | 1 | 4% | 9 | 15% | 5 | 6% | 6 | 12% | 21 | 10% | |
| Black | 1 | 4% | 4 | 7% | 6 | 8% | 4 | 8% | 15 | 7% | |
| Other | 1 | 4% | 3 | 5% | 4 | 5% | 5 | 10% | 13 | 6% | |
| LGBTQ+ [f] | 8 | 30% | 10 | 17% | 15 | 19% | 8 | 16% | 41 | 19% | 2.37 |
| Parenthood [g] | 1 | 4% | 25 | 42% | 2 | 3% | 3 | 6% | 31 | 14% | 51.82*** |
| Disability [h, i] | 1 | 4% | 5 | 8% | 9 | 11% | 5 | 10% | 20 | 9% | |

**Table 6.3** (continued)

| Demographic characteristic | Living alone | | Living just with partner and/or child(ren) | | Living in a house share | | Living with family of origin | | Total | | $X^2$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *n* | % | *n* | % | *n* | % | *n* | % | *n* | % | |
| Employment status | | | | | | | | | | | 13.80* |
| Working full-time | 11 | 41% | 22 | 37% | 32 | 40% | 10 | 20% | 75 | 35% | |
| Working part-time | 9 | 33% | 15 | 25% | 31 | 39% | 15 | 31% | 70 | 33% | |
| Not currently working | 7 | 26% | 22 | 37% | 17 | 21% | 24 | 49% | 70 | 33% | |
| Education [j] | 9 | 33% | 27 | 46% | 12 | 15% | 4 | 8% | 52 | 24% | 27.51*** |

a. Due to the small number of non-binary participants, the chi-square test compared the proportion of male and non-male (combining female and non-binary) participants across household types. Excluding non-binary participants from the analysis did not change the significance of the result.

b. Chi-square test compared British and non-British (combining EU and non-EU nationalities) participants due to small cell sizes for non-EU nationalities.

c. Includes all participants who had British nationality (single or dual nationality).

d. Participants were given a free text box to write their ethnicity and their answers were then coded. It was not possible to code the ethnicity of 11 participants due to the participant writing 'prefer not to say' or not providing sufficient information (e.g. stating belief in Christianity or restating nationality).

e. Chi-square test compared White and ethnic minority (combining Black, Asian, Mixed, and other ethnic groups) participants.

f. Represents the number of participants who were LGBTQ+. Someone was coded as being LGBTQ+ if they were non-binary, trans, and/or not heterosexual. *N* for missing data = 0.

g. Represents the number of participants who reported having children. *N* for missing data = 0.

h. Represents the number of participants who indicated that they considered themselves to be disabled. *N* for missing data = 0.

i. It was not possible to perform a chi-square test to compare the proportion of disabled participants across household types due to the contingency table having 2 cells (25%) with expected frequencies of less than 5.

j. Represents the number of participants who already had an undergraduate or postgraduate degree. *N* for missing data = 1.

* $p < .05$ (two-tailed), ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed), *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed)

Of the participants who had children, 25 (81%) stated that their children lived with them full-time, 2 (6%) that their children lived with them part-time, and 2 (6%) that their children did not live with them. Two participants who indicated that they had children did not report whether their children lived with them or not. Of the participants who were disabled, 12 (60%) stated that their disability affected their ability to live alone, at least to some extent, and 8 (40%) said their disability had no effect on their ability to live alone.

With regards to housing tenure, 120 participants (56%) rented from a private landlord, 38 participants (18%) were social tenants, 21 participants (10%) were owner-occupiers, and a further 32 participants (15%) lived in a property owned by a family member or friend. This last group included participants who lived with the owner of the property and participants who lived in a property that was owned by a non-resident family member or friend. This group also included some participants who were paying rent to their family member or friend and others who were not. However, these participants were grouped together as it was felt that they were all likely to enjoy a higher level of housing security compared to participants renting from a private landlord who was not a friend or family member.

The proportion of participants who fell into each income band across the different household types is shown in Figure 6.1. (Twelve participants did not report their income.) The median income band for participants who lived alone was £26,000-35,000, compared to a median income band of £16,000-25,000 among participants who lived in a house share or who lived just with their partner and/or child(ren), and a median income band of £0-15,000 among participants who lived with their family of origin. A median test showed a significant difference between the groups in terms of income ($X^2(3) = 24.18$, $p < .001$) and Bonferroni-corrected pairwise comparisons showed that participants living with their family of origin had significantly lower income levels compared to all other household types ($p < .01$ for each comparison). No other pairwise comparisons were significant.

**Figure 6.1**

*Annual Income Reported by Participants Across Household Types*
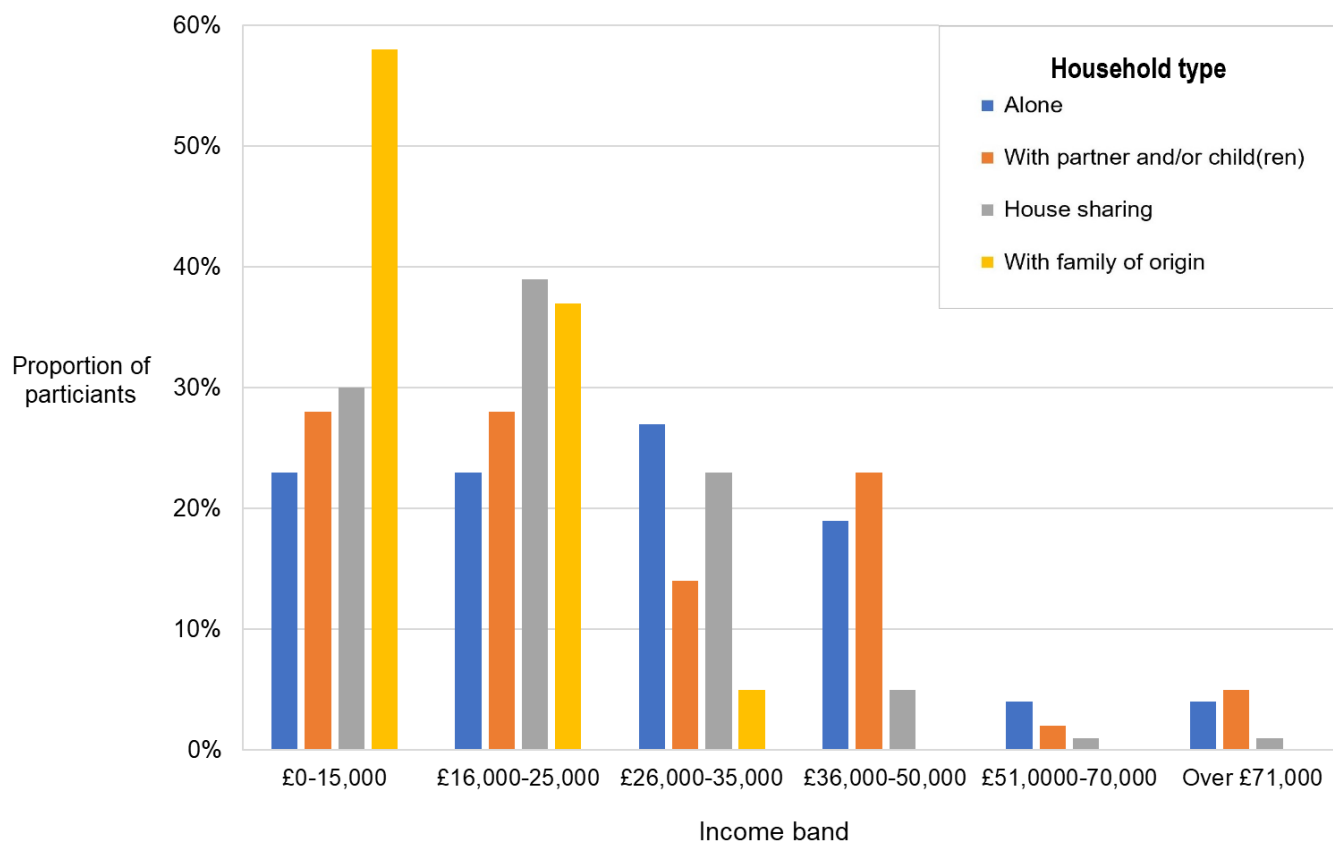


## 6.2.4 – Analysis Plan

The analysis proceeded in three stages, starting by exploring key housing-related variables. Links between housing-related variables and whether participants saw themselves as having reached adulthood were then examined. Finally, the extent to which housing-related variables could be seen to predict well-being outcomes was explored. Each of these stages is described in more detail below.

### 6.2.4.1 – Stage 1: Exploring Key Housing-Related Variables

The analysis started with calculating descriptive statistics for the extent to which participants felt at home. A chi-square test was then used to explore whether there was a relationship between household type and feeling at home.

Due to the number of housing-related variables included in the survey, principal components analysis (PCA) was used to reduce dimensionality among items including satisfaction with living situation, feeling at home, whether/ when the participant planned to move house, length of time in current property, and the number of properties lived in over

the last 10 years. This generated two components, which were labelled 'home happiness' and 'transience'. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests were used to compare scores on these components between household types.

Descriptive statistics were then calculated and comparisons across household types conducted for four further housing-related variables which could not be included in the PCA. First, one-way ANOVAs were used to compare ratings of the probability and desirability of achieving homeownership between household type groups. These two variables could not be included in the PCA as they did not apply to participants who were already homeowners. The difference between these two ratings was also calculated for each participant so as to provide a quantitative measure of the gap between their desire for homeownership and how likely they felt they were to become a homeowner, subsequently referred to as 'homeownership aspiration gap' (J. Crawford & McKee, 2018). A one-way ANOVA was then used to see whether household types differed with regards to homeownership aspiration gap. Finally, a median test was used to explore whether household type groups differed in their frequency of eating dinner with another household member. This variable was not included in the PCA due to it not applying to participants who lived alone.

### 6.2.4.2 – Stage 2: Does Household Type Predict Likelihood of Seeing Oneself as an Adult?

In Stage 2, descriptive statistics were first calculated for the proportion of participants who considered themselves to be adults. Correlation analysis was then used to explore whether age and/or income were associated with subjective adult identity. Chi-square tests were also used to investigate whether there was an association between subjective adult identity and categorical demographic variables, including gender, nationality, ethnicity, SGM status, employment status, and disability status. It was recognised that the fairly small number of disabled participants in the current sample ($n = 20$) would reduce statistical power; however, some papers have reported large effect sizes for the difference between disabled and non-disabled young adults with regards to achieving markers of adulthood (Verhoof et al., 2012). It was therefore decided that it was still worthwhile to investigate whether there was a significant association between disability and subjective adult identity in the current sample.

Next, chi-square tests were used to explore whether household type or housing tenure were associated with subjective adult identity. A chi-square test was also used to see whether the proportion of over-thirties who considered themselves to be adults differed depending on whether participants were house sharers or not. Additionally, t-tests were used

to examine whether scores on the home happiness and transience components differed depending on whether or not participants considered themselves to be adults.

Finally, a logistic regression was performed to predict a participant's likelihood of considering themself to be an adult. Demographic variables that had shown a significant association with subjective adult identity were included in Model 1. Housing-related variables that were significantly associated with subjective adult identity were then added in Model 2.

### 6.2.4.3 – Stage 3: Does Household Type Predict Well-Being Outcomes?

Stage 3 of the analysis started with descriptive statistics being calculated for each the four well-being outcomes (positive affect, negative affect, loneliness, and satisfaction with life). Correlational analyses were used to see whether age and/or income were associated with well-being outcomes. Independent t-tests were then used to compare well-being outcomes across categorical demographic variables (gender, nationality, ethnicity, SGM status, and disability). Despite the small number of disabled participants in the study, it was decided to conduct t-tests to compare well-being outcomes between disabled and non-disabled participants as some studies have reported large effect sizes for the association between disability and psychological well-being (Lucas, 2007; Turner & Noh, 1988). Research has shown that t-tests can be validly applied when samples are very small, even if data are not normally distributed or group sizes are unequal, when the expected effect size is large (de Winter, 2013).

The potential for subjective adult identity to be associated with psychological well-being was explored, with t-tests being performed to compare well-being outcomes between those who considered themselves to be adults and those who did not. Two-way ANOVAs were performed to compare well-being outcomes across household types and to test whether there was a significant interaction effect between household type and age (i.e. whether a participant was under or over 30 years of age) with regards to psychological well-being. One-way ANOVAs were then performed to compare well-being outcomes across housing tenures. Correlation analyses were also used to explore whether there was an association between well-being outcomes and continuous housing-related variables (home happiness and transience component scores, number of people lived with, homeownership aspiration gap, and frequency of dining with another household member).

Finally, four HMR analyses were conducted to predict outcomes on each of the well-being measures. Each HMR proceeded in five steps. Any demographic variables that showed a significant association with at least one of the well-being outcomes were included

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in Model 1. Subjective adult identity was then added in Model 2. Housing-related variables (beyond household type and tenure) that showed a significant association with at least one of the well-being outcomes were added in Model 3. Housing tenure was then added in Model 4. Finally, household type was added in Model 5 to see whether this increased the explanatory power of the analysis, over and above the factors already considered.

### 6.2.4.4 – General Notes on Data Analysis

Due to only two participants being non-binary, the decision was taken to group female and non-binary participants together for the analyses presented in this chapter, with the idea being that both women and non-binary people do not benefit from cis male privilege (Marin-Spiotta et al., 2023). Such an approach is recognised to have severe limitations, as non-binary people face challenges not shared by cis women (Crossley, 2019; Marin-Spiotta et al., 2023). However, research has shown that, during the Covid-19 pandemic, for example, both women and non-binary people reported higher levels of psychological distress than men (Herrera-Añazco et al., 2022; Prout et al., 2020). It was therefore felt that such an approach had support from empirical evidence and was preferable to excluding the non-binary participants from the analysis.[16]

Furthermore, due to the wide range of nationalities that participants reported and the fact that only a relatively small number of participants held nationality from a non-EU country, the decision was made to group EU and non-EU nationalities together. For the purposes of the data analysis, nationality was therefore treated as a dichotomous variable: British ($n = 114$) or non-British ($n = 98$). Similarly, due to the small sample size of some ethnic groups, the decision was made to group all ethnic minority participants together, creating two groups: White participants ($n = 130$) and ethnic minority participants ($n = 74$).

When t-tests, ANOVAs, correlation, or regression analyses were conducted, bootstrapping was performed to make the analysis more robust. Bootstrapping was done according to the bias-corrected and accelerated (BCa) method and was based on 1,000 bootstrap samples. For correlation and regression analyses, bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals (CI) for coefficients are reported in square brackets.

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[16] In cases where excluding non-binary participants would have changed the significance of a test, this is noted in the write up of the analysis.

### 6.3.1 – Exploring Key Housing-Related Variables

This first stage of the analysis explored whether household types differed on key housing-related variables. The extent to which participants felt at home was considered first. PCA was then conducted to reduce dimensionality among housing-related variables. Household types were then compared with regards to scores on the components generated by the PCA and with regards to perceptions of homeownership and frequency of eating dinner with another household member.

#### *6.3.1.1 – Feeling at Home*

As can be seen in Table 6.4, the majority of participants (67% of the total sample) reported feeling at home where they currently lived. This was mirrored across all household types, with a majority of participants in each group reporting feeling at home. Given that only 13 participants said they did not feel at home, a 'does not feel fully at home' group was created by combining participants who answered 'no' or 'sometimes' when asked whether they felt at home in their current property. A chi-square test was used to compare the proportion of participants in each household type who felt at home (answering 'yes') and those who did not feel fully at home. There was no significant association between household type and whether participants felt at home ($X^2(3) = 6.38$, $p = .10$, Cramer's V = .17).[17]

**Table 6.4**

*Frequencies for Participants Reporting Whether They Felt at Home, by Household Type (n = 215)*

| Do you feel at home in your current property? | Living alone | | Living just with partner and/or child(ren) | | Living in a house share | | Living with family of origin | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *n* | % | *n* | % | *n* | % | *n* | % | *n* | % |
| Yes | 20 | 74% | 44 | 75% | 45 | 56% | 34 | 69% | 143 | 67% |
| Sometimes | 5 | 19% | 13 | 22% | 30 | 38% | 11 | 22% | 59 | 27% |
| No | 2 | 7% | 2 | 3% | 5 | 6% | 4 | 8% | 13 | 6% |

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[17] Excluding cohabiting house sharers from the analysis did not change the significance of the overall chi-square test or subsequent pairwise comparisons.

Pairwise comparisons were performed to compare house sharers to participants in other household types with regards to feeling at home. There was not a significant difference in the proportion of participants who felt at home when house sharers were compared to participants who lived alone ($p$ = .10) or to participants who lived with their family of origin ($p$ = .14). Comparing the proportion of participants who felt at home between house sharers and those living just with their partner and/or child(ren) gave a p-value of .03; however, this was not considered significant due to the Bonferroni correction reducing the alpha level to $p$ = .02.

### 6.3.1.2 – PCA of Housing-Related Measures

Correlations were calculated for time in property, number of properties lived in, feeling at home, satisfaction with living situation, plan to move, and number of people lived with (see Table 6.5). With the exception of the number of people the participant lived with, all items correlated significantly ($r$ > .3) with at least one other item. It was therefore decided to perform a PCA on these items, excluding number of people lived with. Sufficient sampling adequacy was demonstrated, with the overall Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure being .61 and the KMO value for each item being at least .57. Additionally, Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($p$ < .001). The assumptions of PCA were therefore met.

**Table 6.5**

*Pearson's Correlation Between Housing-Related Items (n = 200)*

| Variable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Time in property (years) | — | | | | |
| 2. Number of properties lived in | -.48*** | — | | | |
| | [-.53, -.42] | | | | |
| 3. Feeling at home [a] | .14* | -.09 | — | | |
| | [-.01, .27] | [-.25, .07] | | | |
| 4. Satisfaction with living situation [b] | .01 | .00 | .54*** | — | |
| | [-.12, .15] | [-.14, .12] | [.40, .65] | | |
| 5. Plan to move [c] | .28*** | -.23** | .32*** | .32*** | — |
| | [.18, .38] | [-.38, -.04] | [.19, .42] | [.18, .44] | |
| 6. Number of people lived with | .07 | -.12 | .02 | -.06 | -.02 |
| | [-.04, .21] | [-.26, .02] | [-.14, .15] | [-.20, .07] | [-.15, .14] |

a.  Higher values = higher levels of feeling at home

b.  Higher values = higher levels of satisfaction with current living situation

c.  Higher values = longer period of time that the participant planned to remain in their current property

* $p < .05$ (two-tailed), ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed), *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed)

Two components had eigenvalues above 1 and a visual inspection of the scree plot also supported extracting these two components. The two components explained 39.85% and 27.65% of the variance in the data, respectively. Oblique rotation (direct oblimin) was performed and Table 6.6 shows component loadings after rotation. Items with loading values above .4 were interpreted (Field, 2013). Due to the items loading on to each component, Component 1 was labelled 'home happiness' and Component 2 was labelled 'transience'.

**Table 6.6**

*Results From a PCA of Housing-Related Items (n = 203)*

| Item | Rotated component loadings (pattern matrix) | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 |
| | Home happiness | Transience |
| Satisfaction with living situation | **.88** | .17 |
| Feeling at home | **.84** | .00 |
| Plan to move | **.55** | -.38 |
| Time in property (years) | .00 | **-.84** |
| Number of properties lived in over last 10 years | .06 | **.84** |

*Note.* The variable 'time in property' had several outliers, with 6 participants having extreme scores (classed as more than 3 times the IQR above the 3rd quartile). When the PCA was repeated with these 6 scores removed, there was no change to the components that were extracted and only minimal alterations to the component loadings.

Given that the items loading on each component were measured on different types of scales, scores on each item were transformed into z-scores before component scores were calculated (DiStefano et al., 2019). The z-scores for satisfaction with living situation, feeling at home, and plan to move were summed to create the home happiness component score. A higher home happiness component score signified higher satisfaction with living situation, higher likelihood of feeling at home, and/or planning to continue living in one's current property for a longer period of time. The z-score for time in property was subtracted from the z-score for number of properties lived in to create the transience component score. A higher transience component score signified having spent less time living in one's current property and/or having lived in more properties over the last 10 years, compared to someone with a lower transience score. Reliability analysis showed the home happiness component to have a Cronbach's alpha of .66 and the transience component to have an alpha of .65. Following Taber (2018), these alphas were deemed to be sufficient to include the two components in subsequent regression analyses, especially given the small number of items included in each scale. For both components, all items had item-total correlations above .3.

As shown in Table 6.7, home happiness scores did not differ significantly between household types. There was however a significant difference in scores on the transience component according to household type ($p < .001$).[18] Games-Howell post-hoc tests showed that participants living with their family of origin reported significantly lower levels of transience compared to participants who lived alone ($p < .001$, mean difference BCa 95% CI [-3.09, -1.63]), participants who lived just with their partner and/or child(ren) ($p < .001$, mean difference BCa 95% CI [-2.33, -1.16]), and participants who were house sharing ($p < .001$, mean difference BCa 95% CI [-2.97, -1.90]). House sharers also reported significantly higher levels of transience than participants who lived just with their partner and/or child(ren) ($p = .03$, mean difference BCa 95% CI [0.22, 1.14]). No other pairwise comparisons were significant.[19]

**Table 6.7**

*Comparison of Home Happiness and Transience Component Scores Across Household Types*

| Component | n | Living alone | | Living just with partner and/or child(ren) | | Living in a house share | | Living with family of origin | | F |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | |
| Home happiness | 214 | 0.30 | 2.58 | 0.31 | 2.20 | -0.37 | 2.22 | 0.10 | 2.45 | 1.22 |
| Transience | 204 | 0.69[ab] | 1.56 | 0.07[a] | 1.54 | 0.76[b] | 1.09 | -1.67[c] | 1.73 | 30.04*** |

*Note.* Means that share superscripts do not differ significantly.

*** $p < .001$ (two-tailed)

ANOVAs were also performed to compare home happiness and transience component scores across housing tenures (see Table 6.8). There was a significant main effect of tenure on home happiness ($p = .03$). Hochberg's GT2 post-hoc comparisons revealed that owner-occupiers had significantly higher levels of home happiness, compared to private renters ($p = .04$, mean difference BCa 95% CI [0.49, 2.34]). No other pairwise

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[18] Excluding cohabiting house sharers from the analysis did not change the significance of the ANOVAs for home happiness or transience, or of subsequent post-hoc tests.

[19] Due to the assumption of homogeneity of variance being violated, a median test was also run to compare transience scores across household types. The median test and subsequent Bonferroni-corrected pairwise comparisons showed the same pattern of results as the ANOVA.

comparisons were significant. Additionally, there was a significant main effect of tenure on transience ($p < .001$).[20] Games-Howell post-hoc tests showed that social renters reported significantly lower levels of transience compared to owner-occupiers ($p = .008$, mean difference BCa 95% CI [-2.38, -0.76]) and compared to private renters ($p < .001$, mean difference BCa 95% CI [-2.91, -1.62]). Additionally, people living in a property owned by a family member or friend reported significantly lower transience than private renters ($p = .001$, mean difference BCa 95% CI [-2.21, -0.80]). No other pairwise comparisons were significant.

**Table 6.8**

*Comparison of Home Happiness and Transience Component Scores Across Housing Tenures*

| Component | *n* | Owner-occupier | | Private renter | | Social renter | | Property owned by family or friend | | *F* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | |
| Home happiness | 210 | 1.11[a] | 1.99 | -0.36[b] | 2.26 | 0.38[ab] | 2.32 | -0.04[ab] | 2.53 | 2.96* |
| Transience | 200 | -0.01[ac] | 1.52 | 0.72[a] | 1.21 | -1.57[b] | 1.84 | -0.83[bc] | 1.90 | 25.23*** |

*Note.* Means that share superscripts do not differ significantly.

* $p < .05$ (two-tailed), *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed)

### 6.3.1.3 – Perceptions of, and Aspirations to, Homeownership

Participants were asked to rate (on a scale of 1 to 5) the extent to which they felt it was probable that they would become a homeowner (probability of homeownership) and also how desirable they found the idea of becoming a homeowner (desirability of homeownership). The mean rating across the sample for probability was 3.57 ($SD = 1.40$) and the mean rating for desirability was 4.46 ($SD = 0.92$). Participants who indicated that they were already homeowners were excluded from this analysis.

Participants were generally quite confident they would become homeowners, with 37% rating their probability of becoming a homeowner as 5 out of 5 and a further 20% rating their probability as 4 out of 5. Only 12% of participants indicated that they were very unlikely

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[20] Due to the assumption of homogeneity of variance being violated, a median test was also performed to compare transience across tenures. The median test and subsequent pairwise comparisons showed the same pattern of results as the ANOVA.

(1 out of 5) to become a homeowner. However, for many participants, there was a gap between how likely they felt they were to become a homeowner and how desirable they saw homeownership to be. In total, 69% of participants gave the maximum rating, 5, for the desirability of homeownership and only 1% of participants rated homeownership as very undesirable (1 out of 5). A measure of homeownership aspiration gap was calculated for each participant by subtracting their rating for the desirability of homeownership from their rating for the probability of homeownership. A negative score represented an 'aspiration gap', with homeownership being rated as more desirable than probable. Homeownership aspiration gap scores ranged from -4 to 3, with 51% of participants having a negative score. The mean homeownership aspiration gap across the sample was -0.89 ($SD$ = 1.43).

Participants' ratings for the probability and desirability of homeownership, as well as their homeownership aspiration gap score, were compared across household types (see Table 6.9). The groups did not significantly differ on any of the measures.[21] All three ANOVAs remained non-significant when the analyses were repeated with cohabiting sharers excluded.

**Table 6.9**

*Descriptive Statistics and One-Way ANOVAs Comparing Perceptions of Homeownership Across Household Types*

| Measure | n | Living alone | | Living just with partner and/or child(ren) | | Living in a house share | | Living with family of origin | | F |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | |
| Probability of homeownership | 190 | 3.61 | 1.44 | 3.49 | 1.45 | 3.53 | 1.44 | 3.69 | 1.33 | 0.20 |
| Desirability of homeownership | 189 | 4.30 | 0.93 | 4.35 | 1.04 | 4.61 | 0.76 | 4.41 | 1.02 | 1.12 |
| Homeownership aspiration gap | 188 | -0.70 | 1.33 | -0.86 | 1.26 | -1.09 | 1.58 | -0.71 | 1.38 | 0.90 |

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[21] The assumption of homogeneity of variance was violated in the ANOVA comparing desirability of homeownership across household types. A Kruskal-Wallis test (chosen due to all groups having similar, negatively skewed distributions) also showed there to be no significant difference between the groups with regards to desirability of homeownership.

### 6.3.1.4 – Frequency of Eating Dinner With Another Household Member

Participants were asked about their frequency of eating dinner with another member of their household. As this question focused specifically on the participant dining with people they lived with, it was not asked of participants who indicated that they lived alone. A median test was performed to compare frequencies across household types due to the data for house sharers having a bimodal distribution (see Table 6.10).

**Table 6.10**

*Descriptive Statistics and Median Test Results for Frequency of Eating Dinner With Another Household Member Across Household Types*

| Measure | Living just with partner and/or child(ren) | | Living in a house share | | Living with family of origin | | $X^2(2)$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Mdn* | Range | *Mdn* | Range | *Mdn* | Range | |
| Frequency of eating dinner with another household member | 7[a] | 6 | 5[b] | 6 | 6[a] | 6 | 32.31*** |

*Note.* Medians that share superscripts do not differ significantly.

*** *p* < .001 (two-tailed)

There was a significant difference between household types with regards to frequency of dining with another household member (*p* < .001). Bonferroni-corrected pairwise comparisons showed that house sharers ate dinner with another household member significantly less frequently than did participants living just with their partner and/or child(ren) (*p* < .001) or participants living with their family of origin (*p* = .002). The comparison between participants living just with their partner and/or child(ren) and participants living with their family of origin was not significant. Repeating this analysis with cohabiting house sharers excluded did not change the significance of the overall test or pairwise comparisons.

### 6.3.2 – Does Household Type Predict Likelihood of Seeing Oneself as an Adult?

The next stage of analysis looked at subjective adult identity and what may predict whether a participant considered themself to be an adult. Across the whole sample, 141 participants (67%) answered 'yes' to the question 'Do you consider yourself to be an adult?'.

A further 66 participants (31%) answered 'in some ways yes, in some ways no'. Only 5 participants (2%) reported that they did not consider themselves to be adults. It was therefore decided to group participants who had answered 'no' and 'in some ways yes, in some ways no' together to create a 'does not consider self to be fully adult' group ($n = 71$). Subsequent analyses are based on a comparison of participants who considered themselves to be adults ('yes') and participants who did not consider themselves to be fully adult. This mirrors the work of other researchers (e.g. Benson & Furstenberg, 2006; L. J. Nelson & Barry, 2005) who collapsed 'no' and 'in some ways yes, in some ways no' responses into a single group for analysis, so as to allow comparison of those who considered themselves to be fully adult and those who did not.

### 6.3.2.1 – Associations Between Demographic Variables and Subjective Adult Identity

Table 6.11 shows correlations between age, income, and considering oneself an adult. Age was significantly correlated with subjective adult identity ($p < .001$), with older participants being more likely to view themselves as adults. The association between income and considering oneself an adult approached significance ($p = .07$).[22]

**Table 6.11**

*Pearson's Correlation for Age, Income, and Subjective Adult Identity (n = 201)*

| Variable | Correlation with considering oneself an adult |
|---|---|
| Age | .27*** |
| | [.13, .41] |
| Income | .13 |
| | [.00, .25] |

*** $p < .001$ (two-tailed)

Chi-square tests were used to examine whether there was an association between categorical demographic variables and subjective adult identity (see Table 6.12). Participants who were disabled were significantly less likely to consider themselves to be fully adult ($p = .03$). In total, 55% of disabled participants did not consider themselves to be fully adult, compared to 31% of participants who were not disabled. Employment status was also significantly associated with subjective adult identity ($p = .045$), with 45% of participants

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[22] Kendall's tau was also calculated for the association between income and subjective adult identity. The correlation remained non-significant.

not currently in paid employment reporting that they did not consider themselves to be fully adult, compared to 31% of participants who were working part-time, and 25% of participants who were working full-time. The association between SGM status and considering oneself an adult was on the borders of significance ($p = .05$). In total, 46% of LGBTQ+ participants did not consider themselves to be fully adult, compared to 30% of cisgender heterosexual participants. Subjective adult identity was not found to be significantly associated with gender, nationality, or ethnicity.

**Table 6.12**

*Chi-square Tests of Association Between Demographic Variables and Whether Participants Considered Themselves to Be Fully Adult or Not*

| Variable | $n$ | $X^2$ | $df$ | $p$ | Cramer's V |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender [a] | 212 | 0.45 | 1 | .50 | .05 |
| Nationality [b] | 212 | 0.20 | 1 | .66 | .03 |
| Ethnicity [c] | 201 | 0.52 | 1 | .47 | .05 |
| SGM status [d] | 212 | 3.77 | 1 | .05 | .13 |
| Disability | 212 | 4.59 | 1 | .03 | .15 |
| Employment [e] | 212 | 6.21 | 2 | .045 | .17 |

a. Based on a comparison of male and non-male participants. Excluding non-binary participants from the analysis did not change the significance of the comparison.

b. Based on a comparison of British and non-British participants.

c. Based on a comparison of White and ethnic minority participants.

d. Based on a comparison of cisgender heterosexual participants and LGBTQ+ participants.

e. Based on a comparison of participants who worked full-time, who worked part-time, and who were not in paid work at the time they completed the survey.

**6.3.2.2 – Associations Between Housing-Related Variables and Subjective Adult Identity**

A chi-square test was used to compare the proportion of participants who considered themselves to be adults across household types (see Table 6.13). The association between household type and subjective adult identity approached significance ($p = .06$, Cramer's V =

.19). However, when cohabiting house sharers were excluded from the analysis, the proportion of house sharers who considered themselves to be adults fell to 58% and the chi-square test became significant: $X^2(3) = 8.70$, $p = .03$, Cramer's V = .21.

**Table 6.13**

*Proportion of Participants Who Considered Themselves to Be Fully Adult Across Household Types*

| Considers self an adult | Living alone | | Living just with partner and/or child(ren) | | Living in a house share | | Living with family of origin | | $X^2(3)$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *n* | % | *n* | % | *n* | % | *n* | % | |
| Yes | 19 | 73% | 45 | 76% | 52 | 66% | 25 | 52% | 7.53 |

Pairwise comparisons were performed to compare house sharers who were not cohabiting to participants living in other types of household. Non-cohabiting house sharers did not differ significantly from participants who lived alone ($p = .18$) or participants who lived with their family of origin ($p = .53$) with regards to their likelihood of considering themselves to be fully adult. Applying a Bonferroni correction meant that the alpha level was reduced to $p = .02$, so there was also no significant difference between house sharers and participants living just with their partner and/or child(ren) with regards to subjective adult identity ($p = .03$).

When only participants aged 30 years or over were considered, there was no significant difference in the proportion of participants who considered themselves to be fully adult between house sharers and those who were not house sharing (see Table 6.14). Excluding cohabiting house sharers from the analysis did not change the significance of the result.

**Table 6.14**

*Proportion of Participants Aged 30 Years or Over Who Considered Themselves to Be Fully Adult, by House Sharing Status*

| Considers self an adult | House sharers aged 30 or over | | Non-house sharing participants aged 30 or over | | $X^2(1)$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *n* | % | *n* | % | |
| Yes | 22 | 71% | 61 | 79% | 0.85 |

Furthermore, the analysis reported in Table 6.15, showed there was not a significant association between the housing tenure a participant lived in and whether they considered themself to be an adult (*p* = .17, Cramer's V = .16).

**Table 6.15**

*Proportion of Participants Who Considered Themselves to Be Fully Adult Across Housing Tenures*

| Consider self an adult | Owner-occupier | | Private renter | | Social renter | | Property owned by family or friend | | $X^2(3)$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *n* | % | *n* | % | *n* | % | *n* | % | |
| Yes | 17 | 81% | 79 | 67% | 25 | 66% | 16 | 52% | 4.99 |

Finally, t-tests were used to see whether participants differed with regards to scores on the home happiness and transience components depending on whether they considered themselves to be adults or not. As can be seen in Table 6.16, there was no significant difference between the groups on either component.

**Table 6.16**

*Mean Comparison of Home Happiness and Transience Component Scores Depending on Whether Participants Considered Themselves to Be Fully Adult*

| Component | *n* | Does not consider self fully adult | | Considers self an adult | | *t* | Mean difference BCa 95% CI | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | | *LL* | *UL* |
| Home happiness | 211 | -0.36 | 2.31 | 0.18 | 2.33 | -1.58 | -1.21 | 0.11 |
| Transience | 202 | -0.10 | 1.82 | 0.04 | 1.69 | -0.54 | -0.65 | 0.37 |

*Note. LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit.

### 6.3.2.3 – Logistic Regression Predicting Likelihood of Considering Oneself to Be an Adult

Logistic regression was used to develop a model to predict the likelihood of a participant considering themself to be an adult. Demographic variables which were significantly associated with subjective adult identity (age, disability, and employment status) were added in Model 1. Being disabled was chosen as the reference category for disability status and not currently being in paid work was chosen as the reference category for employment status. Household type was then added in Model 2, with house sharing as the reference category.

As suggested by Tabachnick and Fidell (2013), crosstabulations of all possible pairs of categorical variables (predictors and outcome) were checked to ensure adequate expected frequencies for each cell. Across the six tables, all cells had an expected frequency above 1. Two cells (out of 44) had an expected frequency below 5. However, as this represented only 4.55% of cells, the data met the assumptions of the goodness-of-fit test. Additionally, Cook's distance and DFBetas were below 1 in all cases, showing that no individual case had undue influence over the model. In line with what would be expected, only one participant (representing 0.5% of participants) had a standardised residual above ± 2.5 (-2.63). There was a non-significant interaction between age and the log of age, showing that the assumption of the linearity of the logit had been met for age, the only continuous predictor. Additionally, tolerances, variance inflation factors, condition indices, and variance proportions were examined for the predictors and there was no evidence of multicollinearity. Therefore, the data met all of the assumptions of logistic regression. Finally, based on the

work of Peduzzi et al. (1995, 1996), the sample size was deemed to be sufficient, as the number of events per variable (EPV) was above 10. EPV is a widely used measure of sample size adequacy within binary logistic regression and reflects the ratio of the number of people experiencing the less prevalent outcome within the dependent variable to the number of independent variables. In this case, the less prevalent outcome was for participants to consider themselves to be not fully adult (n = 71) and seven predictors were included in the regression model (71/7 = 10.14).

Initial -2LL was 270.37, with Model 0 correctly predicting 66.5% of cases. When demographic variables were added in Model 1, the -2LL was reduced to 242.72, representing a significant improvement on Model 0 ($p < .001$). Model 1 correctly classified 71.2% of cases. The Hosmer and Lemeshow test confirmed that there was no evidence of a poor fit ($p = .68$) and Nagelkerke $R^2$ showed the amount of variance explained by the model to be 17%. However, when household type was added to the analysis in Model 2, -2LL showed only a minimal reduction to 242.54 and the model correctly classified the same amount of cases (71.2%) as Model 1. Model 2 therefore did not offer any improvement on Model 1 ($p = .98$).[23]

Coefficients for individual predictors are shown in Table 6.17. The reported CIs, standard errors, and p-values were obtained by bootstrapping. As can be seen in Table 6.17, age was a significant predictor of someone's likelihood of considering themself to be an adult ($p = .001$ in Model 1, $p = .004$ in Model 2). Both Model 1 and Model 2 show that the odds of someone considering themself to be an adult were 1.08 higher with each additional year of age. Disability was also a significant predictor of likelihood of considering oneself to be an adult ($p = .02$ in Model 1, $p = .01$ in Model 2). Based on Model 2, the odds of someone considering themself to be fully adult were 3.76 times higher if they were not disabled, compared to disabled participants. Working full-time approached significance as a predictor ($p = .05$ in Model 1, $p = .07$ in Model 2) with participants who were working full-time tending to be more likely to consider themselves to be adults compared to participants who were not in paid work. However, in both Models, the bootstrapped CI for the coefficient for working full-time contained 0 and the 95% CI for the odds ratio contained 1, showing that there was not a true association between working full-time and likelihood of considering oneself to be an adult in this sample.

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[23] When the logistic regression analysis was repeated with cohabiting house sharers excluded there was no change in the significance of either model or any individual predictors. Again, Model 2 did not significantly improve on Model 1.

**Table 6.17**

*Coefficients for Predictors in Logistic Regression Model Predicting Whether a Participant Considered Themself to Be an Adult (n = 212)*

| Variable | Model 1 | | | | | Model 2 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *B* | *SE* | Odds ratio | 95% CI for odds ratio | | *B* | *SE* | Odds ratio | 95% CI for odds ratio | |
| | | | | *LL* | *UL* | | | | *LL* | *UL* |
| Constant | -3.24** [-5.09, -1.92] | 0.95 | | | | -3.12** [-5.36, -1.63] | 1.10 | | | |
| Age | 0.08** [0.04, 0.14] | 0.02 | 1.08 | 1.04 | 1.13 | 0.08** [0.02, 0.15] | 0.03 | 1.08 | 1.03 | 1.14 |
| Disability | 1.33* [0.26, 2.81] | 0.63 | 3.77 | 1.33 | 10.66 | 1.32* [0.21, 2.88] | 0.64 | 3.76 | 1.32 | 10.72 |
| Working part-time | 0.60 [-0.15, 1.54] | 0.39 | 1.83 | 0.87 | 3.84 | 0.60 [-0.21, 1.62] | 0.42 | 1.82 | 0.85 | 3.90 |
| Working full-time | 0.72 [-0.02, 1.51] | 0.39 | 2.05 | 0.96 | 4.38 | 0.71 [-0.11, 1.61] | 0.40 | 2.03 | 0.93 | 4.42 |
| Living alone | | | | | | -0.14 [-1.34, 1.34] | 0.84 | 0.87 | 0.30 | 2.54 |
| Living just with partner and/or child(ren) | | | | | | 0.04 [-0.87, 1.11] | 0.49 | 1.04 | 0.43 | 2.51 |
| Living with family of origin | | | | | | -0.12 [-1.02, 0.99] | 0.44 | 0.89 | 0.39 | 2.01 |

* *p* < .05 (two-tailed), ** *p* < .01 (two-tailed)

### 6.3.3 – Does Household Type Predict Well-Being Outcomes?

This final stage of the analysis focused on psychological well-being. Descriptive statistics for the four well-being measures are presented first, followed by analyses exploring whether well-being outcomes were associated with demographic characteristics, subjective adult identity, and/or housing-related variables.

#### 6.3.3.1 – Descriptive Statistics for Well-Being Outcome Variables

Descriptive statistics and inter-correlations for well-being outcomes across the whole sample are shown in Table 6.18. The only measures that were not significantly correlated with each other were positive affect and negative affect. This reflects Watson et al.'s (1988) intention, when designing PANAS, for the two subscales to be independent. Loneliness was significantly correlated with each of the three other well-being outcomes ($p < .001$ for all associations). Additionally, satisfaction with life was positively correlated with positive affect ($p < .001$) and negatively correlated with negative affect ($p = .02$).

**Table 6.18**

*Descriptive Statistics and Inter-Correlations for Psychological Well-Being Outcome Variables*

| Well-being outcome | *n* | *M* | *SD* | *Mdn* | Range | Pearson's correlation | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 1. Positive affect | 205 | 33.54 | 7.83 | 34 | 36 | — | | |
| 2. Negative affect | 205 | 24.65 | 7.88 | 24 | 32 | -.05 [-.19, .09] | — | |
| 3. Loneliness | 211 | 5.60 | 1.92 | 5 | 6 | -.32*** [-.45, -.19] | .34*** [.21, .45] | — |
| 4. Satisfaction with life | 210 | 20.85 | 6.09 | 21 | 29 | .37*** [.24, .50] | -.17* [-.30, -.03] | -.38*** [-.51, -.25] |

\* $p < .05$ (two-tailed), \*\*\* $p < .001$ (two-tailed)

#### 6.3.3.2 – Associations Between Demographic Variables and Well-Being Outcomes

As can be seen in Table 6.19, age was significantly correlated with positive affect ($p < .001$), with older participants reporting higher levels of positive affect. Additionally, income

was significantly related to positive affect ($p$ = .02) and satisfaction with life ($p$ = .009). Participants on higher incomes generally reported higher positive affect and higher satisfaction with life than participants on lower incomes.[24] No other correlations between well-being and age or income were significant.

**Table 6.19**

*Pearson's Correlation Between Age, Income, and Well-Being Outcomes (n = 187)*

| Variable | Positive affect | Negative affect | Loneliness | Satisfaction with life |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Age | .27*** | -.08 | .00 | .06 |
| | [.12, .40] | [-.23, .07] | [-.14, .14] | [-.07, .19] |
| Income | .17* | -.08 | -.12 | .19** |
| | [.04, .29] | [-.21, .05] | [-.27, .02] | [.06, .33] |

\* $p$ < .05 (two-tailed), \*\* $p$ < .01 (two-tailed), \*\*\* $p$ < .001 (two-tailed)

The results of t-tests comparing levels of positive and negative affect across categorical demographic variables are shown in Table 6.20. There were no significant differences in the level of positive affect reported by different groups on any of the variables. The effect of disability on positive affect was marginally significant ($p$ = .05), with participants who were not disabled tending to report higher positive affect than disabled participants. However, the bootstrapped 95% CI for the mean difference [-0.59, 8.18] crossed zero. There were however significant differences in the level of negative affect, depending on gender and disability status. Male participants reported significantly lower negative affect than female and non-binary participants ($p$ = .048, mean difference BCa 95% CI [-5.21, -0.07]). When the negative affect scores of male and female participants were compared, excluding non-binary participants, the result only approached significance ($p$ = .06); however, the bootstrapped 95% CI for the mean difference did not cross zero [-4.75, -0.20]. Additionally, participants who were not disabled reported significantly lower levels of negative affect compared to disabled participants ($p$ = .002, mean difference BCa 95% CI [-9.88, -1.32]). There were no significant differences in levels of negative affect depending on nationality, ethnicity, or SGM status.

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[24] Calculating Kendall's tau for the associations between income and well-being outcomes did not change the significance of any of the correlations.

**Table 6.20**

*Mean Comparison of Positive and Negative Affect Across Demographic Characteristics*

| Demographic characteristic | Well-being outcome | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Positive affect | | | | Negative affect | | | |
| | *n* | *M* | *SD* | *t* | *n* | *M* | *SD* | *t* |
| Gender | 205 | | | 0.88 | 205 | | | -1.99* |
| Male | | 34.43 | 7.85 | | | 22.66 | 7.27 | |
| Non-male | | 33.28 | 7.83 | | | 25.25 | 7.97 | |
| Nationality | 205 | | | -1.30 | 205 | | | -0.45 |
| British | | 32.89 | 7.64 | | | 24.43 | 7.90 | |
| Non-British | | 34.32 | 8.02 | | | 24.93 | 7.88 | |
| Ethnicity | 196 | | | 1.12 | 195 | | | -0.48 |
| White | | 34.15 | 7.56 | | | 24.56 | 7.76 | |
| Ethnic minority | | 32.86 | 8.05 | | | 25.13 | 8.28 | |
| SGM status | 205 | | | 0.04 | 205 | | | 0.56 |
| Cisgender heterosexual | | 33.55 | 7.74 | | | 24.79 | 8.15 | |
| LGBTQ+ | | 33.50 | 8.29 | | | 24.10 | 6.69 | |
| Disability | 205 | | | 1.96 | 205 | | | -3.08** |
| Not disabled | | 33.87 | 7.70 | | | 24.12 | 7.61 | |
| Disabled | | 30.11 | 8.58 | | | 29.84 | 8.77 | |

* *p* < .05 (two-tailed), ** *p* < .01 (two-tailed)

Independent t-tests comparing loneliness and satisfaction with life across demographic groups are shown in Table 6.21. There were no significant differences in the level of either well-being outcome according to gender, nationality, ethnicity, or SGM status. However, participants who were not disabled reported significantly lower levels of loneliness (*p* = .002, mean difference BCa 95% CI [-2.33, -0.39]) and significantly higher satisfaction with life (*p* = .006, mean difference BCa 95% CI [1.38, 6.57]), compared to disabled participants. The effect of ethnicity on loneliness approached significance (*p* = .06, mean difference BCa 95% CI [-1.11, 0.08]), with White participants tending to report lower levels of

loneliness than ethnic minority participants. Additionally, the comparison of satisfaction with life between British and non-British participants was approaching significance ($p$ = .06, mean difference BCa 95% CI [-3.28, 0.05]), with British participants tending to experience lower satisfaction with life.

**Table 6.21**

*Mean Comparison of Loneliness and Satisfaction With Life Across Demographic Characteristics*

| Demographic characteristic | Well-being outcome | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Loneliness | | | | Satisfaction with life | | | |
| | *n* | *M* | *SD* | *t* | *n* | *M* | *SD* | *t* |
| Gender [a] | 211 | | | 0.20 | 210 | | | -0.69 |
| Male | | 5.65 | 1.89 | | | 20.28 | 6.62 | |
| Non-male | | 5.58 | 1.93 | | | 21.01 | 5.94 | |
| Nationality | 211 | | | 1.40 | 210 | | | -1.89 |
| British | | 5.77 | 1.94 | | | 20.13 | 5.79 | |
| Non-British | | 5.40 | 1.89 | | | 21.72 | 6.36 | |
| Ethnicity | 201 | | | -1.89 | 200 | | | 0.79 |
| White | | 5.42 | 1.88 | | | 21.17 | 6.20 | |
| Ethnic minority | | 5.95 | 1.99 | | | 20.48 | 5.62 | |
| SGM status | 211 | | | -0.59 | 210 | | | 0.28 |
| Cisgender heterosexual | | 5.56 | 1.90 | | | 20.91 | 6.17 | |
| LGBTQ+ | | 5.76 | 2.00 | | | 20.61 | 5.81 | |
| Disability | 211 | | | -3.13** | 210 | | | 2.77** |
| Not disabled | | 5.47 | 1.85 | | | 21.21 | 6.09 | |
| Disabled | | 6.85 | 2.13 | | | 17.21 | 4.87 | |

** $p$ < .01 (two-tailed), *** $p$ < .001 (two-tailed)

a.  Re-running the t-tests to compare only female and male participants did not change the significance of any of the results.

### 6.3.3.3 – Associations Between Subjective Adult Identity and Well-Being Outcomes

Independent t-tests were used to compare well-being outcomes between participants depending on whether or not they considered themselves to be fully adult (see Table 6.22). Participants who considered themselves to be adults reported significantly higher positive affect compared to those who did not consider themselves to be fully adult ($p = .009$). The comparison of negative affect between the groups was on the borders of significance ($p = .05$), with those who described themselves as adults tending to report lower levels of negative affect than those who did not; however, the bootstrapped 95% CI for the mean difference crossed zero. Levels of loneliness and satisfaction with life did not differ significantly depending on subjective adult identity.

**Table 6.22**

*Mean Comparison of Well-Being Outcomes Depending on Whether Participants Considered Themselves to Be Adults*

| Well-being outcome | $n$ | Does not consider self fully adult | | Considers self an adult | | $t$ | Mean difference BCa 95% CI | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | $M$ | $SD$ | $M$ | $SD$ | | $LL$ | $UL$ |
| Positive affect | 205 | 31.55 | 8.48 | 34.55 | 7.31 | -2.63** | -5.38 | -0.67 |
| Negative affect | 205 | 26.14 | 8.42 | 23.90 | 7.50 | 1.94 | -0.17 | 4.52 |
| Loneliness | 211 | 5.77 | 1.83 | 5.51 | 1.96 | 0.96 | -0.28 | 0.84 |
| Satisfaction with life | 210 | 20.41 | 5.58 | 21.06 | 6.34 | -0.76 | -2.53 | 1.09 |

*Note.* $LL$ = lower limit; $UL$ = upper limit.

** $p < .01$ (two-tailed)

### 6.3.3.4 – Associations Between Housing-Related Variables and Well-Being Outcomes

Table 6.23 shows descriptive statistics for the four well-being measures across household types, as well as results of two-way ANOVAs testing interaction effects between household type and age. For this analysis, age was considered as a binary variable: 18-29 years vs. 30 years or over.

**Table 6.23**

*Descriptive Statistics and Two-Way ANOVAs Testing Main and Interaction Effects of Household Type and Age on Well-Being Outcomes*

| Variable | Positive affect | | | | Negative affect | | | | Loneliness | | | | Satisfaction with life | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *n* | *M* | *SD* | *F* | *n* | *M* | *SD* | *F* | *n* | *M* | *SD* | *F* | *n* | *M* | *SD* | *F* |
| Main effect of household type | 205 | | | 2.34 | 205 | | | 0.88 | 211 | | | 2.66 | 210 | | | 4.33** |
| Living alone | | 31.88 | 8.09 | | | 23.21 | 6.32 | | | 5.69 | 1.91 | | | 20.73 | 6.24 | |
| Living just with partner and/or child(ren) | | 34.63 | 7.84 | | | 24.63 | 8.25 | | | 5.49 | 1.92 | | | 21.81 | 5.86 | |
| House sharing | | 34.39 | 7.70 | | | 24.22 | 7.52 | | | 5.29 | 1.85 | | | 21.71 | 6.04 | |
| Living with family of origin | | 31.74 | 7.67 | | | 26.08 | 8.66 | | | 6.17 | 1.96 | | | 18.33 | 5.83 | |
| Main effect of age | | | | 12.12** | | | | 0.24 | | | | 0.54 | | | | 0.08 |
| Under 30 years of age | | 31.68 | 8.16 | | | 25.07 | 7.78 | | | 5.69 | 1.93 | | | 20.67 | 6.06 | |
| Aged 30 years or over | | 35.39 | 7.06 | | | 24.24 | 7.99 | | | 5.51 | 1.91 | | | 21.02 | 6.15 | |
| Interaction effect Household type * age | | | | 1.67 | | | | 0.68 | | | | 2.80* | | | | 0.80 |

* $p < .05$ (two-tailed), ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed)

As can be seen in Table 6.23, there was not a significant main effect of household type on levels of positive affect, although the comparison was approaching significance ($p$ = .07). There was a significant main effect of age on levels of positive affect ($p$ = .001), with participants aged 30 years or over reporting significantly higher positive affect compared to participants aged 18-29 years. However, there was not a significant interaction effect between household type and age with regards to positive affect. Additionally, there was not a significant main effect of household type or age (or a significant interaction effect between the two variables) with regards to levels of negative affect.

There was not a significant main effect of household type on levels of loneliness, although the comparison was approaching significance ($p$ = .05). There was also not a significant main effect of age on loneliness. However, there was a significant interaction between household type and age with regards to loneliness ($p$ = .04), which is represented graphically in Figure 6.2. Among participants who lived alone or just with their partner and/or child(ren), those who were aged 30 years or over reported lower loneliness than those who were aged 18-29 years, whereas the opposite pattern was witnessed among house sharers and participants living with their family of origin. Bonferroni-corrected simple effects analysis showed that there were no significant differences in the level of loneliness reported by participants in the two age groups among those who lived alone, in a house share, or with their family of origin. However, among participants who lived just with their partner and/or child(ren), participants who were aged 30 years or over reported significantly lower loneliness compared to those aged 18-29 years: $F(1, 203)$ = 5.16, $p$ = .02.

**Figure 6.2**

*Graph Showing Estimated Marginal Means for Loneliness by Age and Household Type*
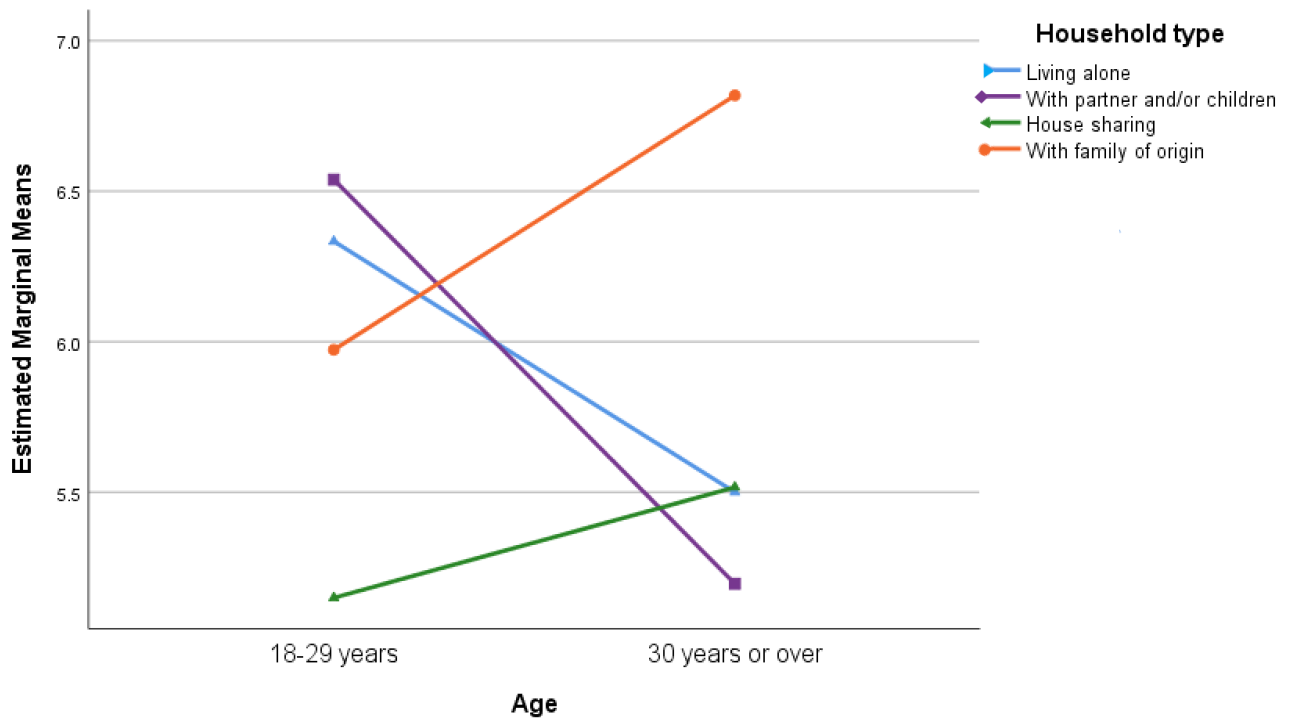


Levels of satisfaction with life differed significantly between household types ($p = .006$). Post-hoc Hochberg's GT2 comparisons showed that participants living with their family of origin had significantly lower satisfaction with life compared to participants living just with their partner and/or child(ren) ($p = .02$, mean difference BCa 95% CI [-5.97, -1.02]) and compared to participants who were house sharing ($p = .01$, mean difference BCa 95% CI [-5.47, -1.15]). No other pairwise comparisons were significant. Additionally, there was not a significant main effect of age or a significant interaction between household type and age with regards to satisfaction with life.

When the analysis reported in Table 6.23 was repeated with cohabiting house sharers excluded, there was no change to the significance of any of the main or interaction effects. However, for satisfaction with life, the pairwise comparison between house sharers and participants living with their family of origin was no longer significant ($p = .09$). This was due to the mean satisfaction with life score among house sharers declining to 21.18 when cohabiting sharers were excluded. The significance of other pairwise comparisons did not change.

As can be seen in Table 6.24, there were no significant differences in the level of positive affect reported by people living in different housing tenures. However, there was a significant main effect of tenure on negative affect ($p$ = .002). Hochberg's GT2 post-hoc comparisons showed that owner-occupiers reported significantly lower negative affect than private renters ($p$ = .02, mean difference BCa 95% CI [-8.81, -2.02]), social renters ($p$ = .01, mean difference BCa 95% CI [-10.99, -2.72]), and people living in a property owned by a friend or family member ($p$ = .002, mean difference BCa 95% CI [-12.78, -4.01]). No other pairwise comparisons were significant.

**Table 6.24**

*Descriptive Statistics and One-Way ANOVAs Comparing Well-Being Outcomes Across Housing Tenures*

| Well-being outcome | $n$ | Owner-occupier | | Private renter | | Social renter | | Property owned by family or friend | | $F$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | $M$ | $SD$ | $M$ | $SD$ | $M$ | $SD$ | $M$ | $SD$ | |
| Positive affect | 201 | 34.40 | 6.89 | 34.09 | 7.98 | 32.17 | 7.11 | 32.23 | 8.75 | 0.92 |
| Negative affect | 201 | 18.84[a] | 6.94 | 24.65[b] | 7.28 | 25.92[b] | 8.38 | 27.13[b] | 8.75 | 5.01** |
| Loneliness | 207 | 4.86[a] | 1.80 | 5.39[ab] | 1.90 | 6.29[b] | 1.89 | 6.13[ab] | 1.82 | 4.10** |
| Satisfaction with life | 206 | 22.05 | 6.48 | 21.44 | 6.09 | 18.41 | 5.68 | 20.35 | 5.98 | 2.72* |

*Note.* Means that share superscripts do not differ significantly.

* $p$ < .05 (two-tailed), ** $p$ < .01 (two-tailed)

As also shown in Table 6.24, people living in different tenures differed significantly in terms of loneliness ($p$ = .007). Hochberg's GT2 post-hoc comparisons showed that owner-occupiers reported significantly lower loneliness than social renters ($p$ = .03, mean difference BCa 95% CI [-2.38, -0.38]). The pairwise comparison between private and social renters also approached significance ($p$ = .07, mean difference BCa 95% CI [-1.62, -0.16]), with private renters tending to report lower levels of loneliness. Bootstrapped CIs also suggested that the difference between owner-occupiers and people living in a property owned by a family member or friend was potentially different from zero (mean difference BCa 95% CI [-

2.30, -0.20]), with owner-occupiers reporting lower loneliness, but this was not reflected in the p-value ($p = .10$).

There was also a significant main effect of tenure on satisfaction with life ($p = .046$). However, no post-hoc comparisons (Hochberg's GT2) were significant. The pairwise comparison between social and private renters was on the border of significance, with social renters tending to report lower satisfaction with life ($p = .05$, mean difference BCa 95% CI [-5.10, -0.99]). Bootstrapped CIs also suggested that the difference in the level of satisfaction with life reported by social tenants and owner-occupiers differed from zero, with social tenants reporting lower satisfaction with life (mean difference BCa 95% CI [-6.76, -0.71]), but this was not reflected in the p-value ($p = .16$).

Table 6.25 shows correlations between well-being outcomes and continuous housing-related variables. Home happiness showed a significant association with negative affect ($p = .02$), loneliness ($p = .001$), and satisfaction with life ($p < .001$), with higher home happiness scores being associated with lower negative affect, lower loneliness, and higher satisfaction with life. Transience was significantly associated with satisfaction with life ($p = .04$), with higher levels of transience being associated with higher satisfaction with life. No other correlations were significant. The number of people a participant lived with was not significantly associated with any of the well-being outcomes.

**Table 6.25**

*Pearson's Correlation Between Housing-Related Variables and Well-Being Outcomes (n = 187)*

| Variable | Positive affect | Negative affect | Loneliness | Satisfaction with life |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Home happiness component score | .03 [-.13, .20] | -.17* [-.30, -.03] | -.25*** [-.41, -.09] | .34*** [.19, .47] |
| Transience component score | .05 [-.09, .19] | .00 [-.14, .15] | -.06 [-.21, .10] | .15* [.02, .29] |
| Number of people lived with | .10 [-.05, .26] | .08 [-.07, .23] | .00 [-.13, .11] | .05 [-.12, .23] |

* $p < .05$ (two-tailed), *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed)

Table 6.26 shows correlations between homeownership aspiration gap and well-being outcomes. These correlations were calculated separately from those shown in Table 6.25 as homeownership aspiration gap could not be calculated for participants who were already homeowners. Homeownership aspiration gap was not significantly associated with any of the well-being measures.

**Table 6.26**

*Pearson's Correlation Between Homeownership Aspiration Gap and Well-Being Outcomes (n = 175)*

| Variable | Positive affect | Negative affect | Loneliness | Satisfaction with life |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Homeownership aspiration gap | .00 | .06 | -.08 | .12 |
| | [-.15, .18] | [-.11, .22] | [-.22, .06] | [-.05, .28] |

Correlations between frequency of eating dinner with another household member and well-being outcomes are shown in Table 6.27.[25] These correlations were calculated separately from the correlations reported in Tables 6.25 and 6.26. This was to maximise the amount of people who could be included in the other correlations, as frequency of eating dinner with another household member could not be calculated for participants who lived alone. Frequency of eating dinner with another household member showed a significant correlation with loneliness ($p$ = .02), with a higher frequency of dining with another household member being associated with lower loneliness. There were no significant correlations between frequency of eating dinner with another household member and the other well-being measures.

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[25] Due to issues with the normality of the data, Kendall's tau was also calculated for the associations shown in Table 6.27, but this did not change the significance of any of the correlations.

**Table 6.27**

*Pearson's Correlation Between Frequency of Eating Dinner With Another Household Member and Well-Being Outcomes (n = 174)*

| Variable | Positive affect | Negative affect | Loneliness | Satisfaction with life |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Frequency of eating dinner with another household member | .00 | .04 | -.18* | .08 |
| | [-.16, .16] | [-.11, .20] | [-.34, -.01] | [-.07, .22] |

* $p < .05$ (two-tailed)

### 6.3.3.5 – Using HMR to Predict Well-Being Outcomes

The next phase of the analysis was to develop four HMR models, one to predict each of the well-being outcome variables. The predictors included in the models were the demographic, adulthood, and housing-related variables that had shown a significant association with at least one well-being outcome.[26] For each HMR analysis, variables were added to the model in five steps, as outlined in Section 6.2.4.3. Private renter was chosen as the reference category for tenure. House sharing was chosen as the reference category for household type. A correlation matrix was created to show associations between the predictors included in the regression models (see Appendix G for full matrix). The strongest association was between living with family of origin and transience component scores ($r = -.55$, $p < .001$). The correlation matrix therefore did not raise concerns about possible multicollinearity in the data. Furthermore, for each HMR analysis, the variance inflation factors, tolerances, condition index, and variance proportions were examined and showed no evidence of multicollinearity.

The Durbin-Watson statistic confirmed that the assumption of independent errors was met for each of the analyses. Additionally, across all of the models, Cook's distance was below 0.10 for all participants and no participant had a standardised DFBeta greater than ±1. Additionally, no participant had a standardised residual beyond ±2.75 for any of the models. Visual examination of scatterplots of standardised residuals against standardised predicted values raised no concerns about heteroscedasticity in any of the HMR analyses.

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[26] The exception to this was frequency of eating dinner with another household member which was not included in the regression analyses, despite being significantly correlated with loneliness, due to not applying to people who lived alone.

Standardised residuals were normally distributed in the regression analyses for positive affect, negative affect, and satisfaction with life, but showed a slight positive skew in the case of loneliness. However, as bootstrapping was performed, the analysis was deemed to be sufficiently robust. For each HMR model, the reported CIs, standard errors, and p-values were obtained by bootstrapping.

Sensitivity analysis conducted using the G*Power software showed that each of the regression analyses reported in this section was sensitive to effects of $f^2 = .06$ with 80% power ($\alpha = .05$). The selection of 80% as the desired power level follows the recommendations of Cohen (1988) and Field (2013). Sensitivity analysis was performed separately for each of the four regression analyses using the relevant sample size and based on there being 13 total predictors and three tested predictors. The three tested predictors represent the three variables related to household type added in Step 5 of each regression analysis, so as to test hypothesis 6.3b. According to Cohen (1988), within multiple regression, an effect size of $f^2 = .02$ can be considered to represent a small effect and an effect size of $f^2 = .15$ represents a medium effect. Therefore, the regression analyses reported in Sections 6.3.3.5.1 to 6.3.3.5.4 were deemed to have sufficient power to detect small-to-medium effects ($f^2 \geq .06$) of household type on the measured psychological well-being variables; however, they were not able to reliably detect effects smaller than $f^2 = .06$.

**6.3.3.5.1 – Regression Analysis to Predict Positive Affect.** Summary statistics for the regression model predicting positive affect are shown in Table 6.28. The model was significant at each step of the analysis ($p < .001$ in Models 1 and 2; $p < .005$ in Models 3-5) and the final model explained 18% of the variance in the data. Beyond Model 1, none of the models significantly improved ability to predict positive affect compared to the previous model, although the change in $R^2$ for Model 5 was approaching significance ($p = .07$).[27]

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[27] Excluding cohabiting house sharers from the analysis did not change the significance of any of the models or any of the individual predictors. As before, after Model 1, none of the models made a significant improvement on the previous.

**Table 6.28**

*Summary Statistics for HMR Model Predicting Positive Affect*

| Measure | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 | Model 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| $F$ | 5.90*** | 4.98*** | 3.55** | 2.95** | 2.87** |
| $R^2$ | .12 | .12 | .13 | .15 | .18 |
| $F$ for change in $R^2$ | 5.90*** | 1.27 | 0.09 | 1.50 | 2.37 |

** $p < .01$ (two-tailed), *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed)

As can be seen in Table 6.29, which shows the coefficients for individual predictors, age was a significant predictor of positive affect in all models ($p \leq .005$ in all models), with older age being associated with higher levels of positive affect. Disability was also a significant predictor in all models ($p < .01$ in Models 1-3 and Model 5; $p = .02$ in Model 4), with disabled participants generally reporting lower levels of positive affect than participants who were not disabled. Being a social renter approached significance as a predictor in Model 4 ($p = .05$) and became a significant predictor in Model 5 ($p = .04$), with social renters generally experiencing lower levels of positive affect than private renters. Finally, living alone was a significant predictor in Model 5 ($p = .04$), with living alone being associated with lower levels of positive affect compared to living in a house share.

**Table 6.29**

*Coefficients for Predictors in HMR Model Predicting Positive Affect (n = 182)*

| Variable | Model 1 | | | Model 2 | | | Model 3 | | | Model 4 | | | Model 5 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *B* | *SE B* | β | *B* | *SE B* | β | *B* | *SE B* | β | *B* | *SE B* | β | *B* | *SE B* | β |
| Constant | 25.87** [21.75, 29.63] | 2.30 | | 25.71** [21.30, 29.50] | 2.33 | | 25.75** [21.27, 29.64] | 2.35 | | 25.94** [21.71, 29.93] | 2.32 | | 25.01** [20.33, 29.39] | 2.50 | |
| Age | 0.24** [0.09, 0.39] | 0.07 | .24 | 0.22** [0.07, 0.36] | 0.07 | .22 | 0.22** [0.07, 0.37] | 0.07 | .22 | 0.24** [0.08, 0.43] | 0.08 | .25 | 0.32** [0.16, 0.51] | 0.09 | .33 |
| Income | 0.60 [-0.29, 1.51] | 0.44 | .09 | 0.57 [-0.30, 1.48] | 0.44 | .09 | 0.53 [-0.37, 1.43] | 0.44 | .08 | 0.57 [-0.31, 1.43] | 0.45 | .09 | 0.76 [-0.15, 1.62] | 0.47 | .12 |
| Gender | -0.29 [-3.15, 2.73] | 1.48 | -.02 | -0.38 [-3.30, 2.66] | 1.49 | -.02 | -0.37 [-3.34, 2.70] | 1.50 | -.02 | -0.19 [-3.02, 2.91] | 1.50 | -.01 | -1.04 [-3.80, 1.92] | 1.49 | -.06 |
| Disability | -5.34** [-8.98, -1.26] | 1.85 | -.19 | -5.00** [-8.70, -0.85] | 1.86 | -.18 | -5.00** [-8.98, -0.89] | 1.89 | -.18 | -4.74* [-8.58, -0.80] | 1.94 | -.17 | -5.18** [-9.28, -1.15] | 1.96 | -.18 |
| Consider self an adult | | | | 1.39 [-1.19, 3.96] | 1.28 | .08 | 1.36 [-1.23, 4.00] | 1.29 | .08 | 1.30 [-1.34, 3.82] | 1.32 | .08 | 1.33 [-1.22, 3.84] | 1.31 | .08 |
| Home happiness | | | | | | | -0.01 [-0.52, 0.59] | 0.28 | .00 | 0.03 [-0.46, 0.58] | 0.27 | .01 | 0.10 [-0.41, 0.71] | 0.27 | .03 |
| Transience | | | | | | | 0.14 [-0.59, 0.82] | 0.35 | .03 | -0.25 [-1.06, 0.49] | 0.40 | -.06 | -0.03 [-0.92, 0.79] | 0.44 | -.01 |
| Owner-occupier | | | | | | | | | | -2.33 [-6.38, 1.73] | 2.10 | -.09 | -1.74 [-6.49, 2.75] | 2.28 | -.07 |
| Social tenant | | | | | | | | | | -3.34 [-6.15, -0.17] | 1.71 | -.16 | -3.65* [-6.75, -0.41] | 1.76 | -.17 |
| Property owned by family or friend | | | | | | | | | | -2.37 [-5.34, 0.86] | 1.71 | -.11 | -2.76 [-6.14, 0.74] | 1.72 | -.13 |
| Living alone | | | | | | | | | | | | | -4.55* [-8.49, -0.80] | 2.07 | -.19 |
| Living just with partner and/or child(ren) | | | | | | | | | | | | | -2.25 [-5.29, 0.73] | 1.49 | -.13 |
| Living with family of origin | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0.90 [-2.56, 3.92] | 1.80 | .05 |

* $p < .05$ (two-tailed), ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed)

**6.3.3.5.2 – Regression Analysis to Predict Negative Affect.** Summary statistics for the regression analysis for negative affect are shown in Table 6.30. The model was significant at each step ($p \leq .005$ in all models) and the final model explained 17% of the variance in the data. None of the models offered a significant improvement on the preceding model; however, the change in $R^2$ was approaching significance for Model 3 ($p = .07$) and Model 4 ($p = .05$). Coefficients for individual predictors are shown in Table 6.31.

**Table 6.30**

*Summary Statistics for HMR Model Predicting Negative Affect*

| Measure | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 | Model 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| $F$ | 3.93** | 3.50** | 3.30** | 3.16** | 2.66** |
| $R^2$ | .08 | .09 | .12 | .16 | .17 |
| $F$ for change in $R^2$ | 3.93** | 1.69 | 2.64 | 2.61 | 1.01 |

** $p < .01$ (two-tailed)

As can be seen in Table 6.31, gender was a significant predictor of negative affect in all five models ($p = .02$ in Models 1, 2, and 5; $p < .01$ in Models 3 and 4). Male participants generally experienced lower negative affect than female and non-binary participants.[28] Disability was a significant predictor of negative affect in Models 1-3 ($p = .01$ in Model 1, $p = .03$ in Model 2, $p = .045$ in Model 3), with disabled participants generally reporting higher levels of negative affect than participants who were not disabled. However, disability only approached significance as a predictor once tenure and household type were added to the model ($p = .09$ in Model 4, $p = .07$ in Model 5). Home happiness was a significant predictor in Models 3-5 ($p = .01$ in Model 3, $p = .03$ in Model 4, $p = .02$ in Model 5), with higher home happiness being associated with lower negative affect. Being an owner-occupier was also a significant predictor in Model 4 ($p = .02$) and Model 5 ($p = .01$), with owner-occupiers generally reporting lower levels of negative affect than private renters.

When the analysis was repeated with cohabiting house sharers excluded, all models remained significant. It also remained the case that none of the models offered a significant improvement on the previous model. The only change to the significance of an individual predictor was that home happiness was only approaching significance in Model 4 ($p = .07$) and Model 5 ($p = .06$).

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[28] Gender remained a significant predictor in all models when the analysis was re-run with non-binary participants excluded.

**Table 6.31**

*Coefficients for Predictors in HMR Model Predicting Negative Affect (n = 181)*

| Variable | Model 1 | | | Model 2 | | | Model 3 | | | Model 4 | | | Model 5 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | B | SE B | β | B | SE B | β | B | SE B | β | B | SE B | β | B | SE B | β |
| Constant | 24.30** [19.49, 29.35] | 2.60 | | 24.52** [19.67, 29.55] | 2.62 | | 24.19** [19.44, 29.04] | 2.58 | | 22.14** [17.10, 27.47] | 2.63 | | 22.51** [16.76, 28.08] | 2.96 | |
| Age | -0.05 [-0.24, 0.11] | 0.08 | -.05 | -0.03 [-0.21, 0.15] | 0.08 | -.03 | -0.02 [-0.19, 0.15] | 0.08 | -.02 | 0.05 [-0.14, 0.23] | 0.09 | .05 | 0.01 [-0.19, 0.21] | 0.09 | .01 |
| Income | -0.39 [-1.27, 0.54] | 0.47 | -.06 | -0.34 [-1.25, 0.62] | 0.47 | -.05 | -0.31 [-1.23, 0.69] | 0.46 | -.05 | -0.19 [-1.14, 0.73] | 0.45 | -.03 | -0.24 [-1.18, 0.67] | 0.45 | -.04 |
| Gender | 2.81* [0.32, 5.25] | 1.23 | .15 | 2.86* [0.41, 5.27] | 1.20 | .16 | 3.01** [0.54, 5.50] | 1.19 | .16 | 3.11** [0.63, 5.31] | 1.19 | .17 | 3.14* [0.61, 5.52] | 1.28 | .17 |
| Disability | 5.95* [0.97, 10.35] | 2.28 | .22 | 5.49* [0.49, 9.82] | 2.37 | .20 | 4.85* [-0.27, 9.07] | 2.49 | .18 | 4.15 [-1.17, 8.60] | 2.52 | .15 | 4.42 [-0.82, 8.83] | 2.51 | .16 |
| Consider self an adult | | | | -1.63 [-3.96, 0.51] | 1.26 | -.10 | -1.52 [-3.88, 0.67] | 1.25 | -.09 | -1.54 [-3.86, 0.48] | 1.26 | -.09 | -1.49 [-3.75, 0.46] | 1.27 | -.09 |
| Home happiness | | | | | | | -0.58* [-0.99, -0.16] | 0.23 | -.17 | -0.48* [-0.92, -0.02] | 0.22 | -.14 | -0.52* [-0.94, -0.07] | 0.23 | -.15 |
| Transience | | | | | | | -0.14 [-0.75, 0.51] | 0.33 | -.03 | -0.09 [-0.83, 0.65] | 0.38 | -.02 | -0.07 [-0.89, 0.77] | 0.44 | -.02 |
| Owner-occupier | | | | | | | | | | -5.29* [-9.45, -1.24] | 2.24 | -.19 | -5.66* [-10.15, -1.55] | 2.28 | -.21 |
| Social tenant | | | | | | | | | | 0.24 [-3.71, 3.75] | 1.76 | .01 | 0.02 [-3.66, 3.47] | 1.71 | .00 |
| Property owned by family or friend | | | | | | | | | | 1.48 [-1.58, 4.40] | 1.66 | .07 | 1.49 [-1.78, 4.55] | 1.68 | .07 |
| Living alone | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0.18 [-2.90, 3.48] | 1.60 | .01 |
| Living just with partner and/or child(ren) | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2.44 [-0.42, 5.14] | 1.45 | .14 |
| Living with family of origin | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0.50 [-2.93, 4.24] | 1.88 | .03 |

* *p* < .05 (two-tailed), ** *p* < .01 (two-tailed)

**6.3.3.5.3 – Regression Analysis to Predict Loneliness.** As can be seen in Table 6.32, the regression model predicting loneliness was significant at each step of the analysis ($p < .005$ in Models 1 and 2, $p < .001$ in Models 3-5). Furthermore, Model 3 was a significant improvement on Model 2 ($p = .001$). Models 2, 4, and 5 did not offer a significant improvement on the preceding models. The final model explained 19% of the variance in the data.

**Table 6.32**

*Summary Statistics for HMR Model Predicting Loneliness*

| Measure | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 | Model 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *F* | 4.54** | 3.63** | 4.84*** | 4.00*** | 3.15*** |
| $R^2$ | .09 | .09 | .16 | .19 | .19 |
| *F* for change in $R^2$ | 4.54** | 0.10 | 7.23** | 1.88 | 0.45 |

** $p < .01$ (two-tailed), *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed)

Table 6.33 shows the coefficients for individual predictors in the HMR regression analysis predicting loneliness. As can be seen from this table, disability was a significant predictor of loneliness in all models ($p < .005$ in Models 1 and 2, $p = .01$ in Model 3, $p = .02$ in Model 4, $p = .009$ in Model 5), with being disabled being associated with experiencing higher levels of loneliness, compared to participants who were not disabled. Income was also a significant predictor of loneliness in Models 1 and 2 ($p = .04$ in both models), with higher income being associated with lower levels of loneliness; however, income was no longer a significant predictor once housing-related variables were added in Model 3. Home happiness was a significant predictor in Models 3-5 ($p < .005$ in all models), with higher home happiness being associated with lower loneliness. Additionally, being a social tenant was a significant predictor in Model 4 ($p = .04$), with social tenants generally reporting higher levels of loneliness compared to private renters. However, being a social tenant was only approaching significance as a predictor in Model 5 ($p = .08$).

Excluding cohabiting house sharers from the analysis did not change the significance of any of the models and it remained the case that Model 3 made a significant improvement on the predictive power of Model 2 ($p = .002$). With regards to individual predictors, income was now only a marginally significant predictor in Models 1 and 2 ($p = .06$ in both models). Additionally, disability was only bordering on significance in Models 4 and 5 ($p = .05$ in both models) and being a social tenant was only approaching significance in Model 4 ($p = .07$).

**Table 6.33**

*Coefficients for Predictors in HMR Model Predicting Loneliness (n = 187)*

| Variable | Model 1 | | | Model 2 | | | Model 3 | | | Model 4 | | | Model 5 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *B* | *SE B* | β | *B* | *SE B* | β | *B* | *SE B* | β | *B* | *SE B* | β | *B* | *SE B* | β |
| Constant | 5.78** [4.55, 7.04] | 0.61 | | 5.79** [4.54, 7.03] | 0.61 | | 5.66** [4.56, 6.74] | 0.58 | | 5.33** [4.15, 6.51] | 0.61 | | 5.21** [3.95, 6.69] | 0.71 | |
| Age | 0.01 [-0.03, 0.05] | 0.02 | .05 | 0.01 [-0.03, 0.05] | 0.02 | .05 | 0.01 [-0.03, 0.05] | 0.02 | .05 | 0.02 [-0.03, 0.05] | 0.02 | .06 | 0.01 [-0.03, 0.06] | 0.02 | .05 |
| Income | -0.24* [-0.45, -0.03] | 0.11 | -.15 | -0.24* [-0.46, -0.03] | 0.12 | -.15 | -0.19 [-0.42, 0.03] | 0.12 | -.12 | -0.18 [-0.39, 0.02] | 0.11 | -.11 | -0.19 [-0.41, 0.02] | 0.12 | -.12 |
| Gender | -0.11 [-0.81, 0.60] | 0.34 | -.02 | -0.10 [-0.81, 0.63] | 0.34 | -.02 | -0.05 [-0.75, 0.71] | 0.33 | -.01 | -0.07 [-0.79, 0.64] | 0.34 | -.02 | 0.00 [-0.75, 0.74] | 0.37 | .00 |
| Disability | 1.70** [0.52, 2.75] | 0.57 | .25 | 1.67** [0.46, 2.73] | 0.57 | .25 | 1.36* [0.36, 2.32] | 0.53 | .20 | 1.27* [0.30, 2.17] | 0.53 | .19 | 1.31** [0.39, 2.17] | 0.52 | .20 |
| Consider self an adult | | | | -0.10 [-0.65, 0.52] | 0.30 | -.02 | -0.04 [-0.58, 0.51] | 0.28 | -.01 | -0.04 [-0.59, 0.53] | 0.28 | -.01 | -0.04 [-0.59, 0.54] | 0.29 | -.01 |
| Home happiness | | | | | | | -0.22** [-0.36, -0.10] | 0.06 | -.27 | -0.22** [-0.35, -0.09] | 0.06 | -.26 | -0.22** [-0.35, -0.10] | 0.06 | -.27 |
| Transience | | | | | | | -0.11 [-0.28, 0.08] | 0.09 | -.10 | -0.01 [-0.20, 0.18] | 0.10 | -.01 | 0.00 [-0.21, 0.20] | 0.11 | .00 |
| Owner-occupier | | | | | | | | | | -0.16 [-1.24, 0.83] | 0.51 | -.03 | -0.27 [-1.33, 0.76] | 0.55 | -.04 |
| Social tenant | | | | | | | | | | 0.85* [0.13, 1.59] | 0.43 | .17 | 0.79 [-0.04, 1.59] | 0.45 | .15 |
| Property owned by family or friend | | | | | | | | | | 0.59 [-0.12, 1.29] | 0.38 | .11 | 0.50 [-0.31, 1.36] | 0.44 | .10 |
| Living alone | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0.47 [-0.52, 1.55] | 0.54 | .08 |
| Living just with partner and/or child(ren) | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0.31 [-0.44, 1.05] | 0.38 | .07 |
| Living with family of origin | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0.29 [-0.75, 1.19] | 0.51 | .06 |

* $p < .05$ (two-tailed), ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed)

**6.3.3.5.4 – Regression Analysis to Predict Satisfaction With Life.** The summary statistics for the regression model predicting satisfaction with life (see Table 6.34) show that the model was significant at each step of the analysis ($p < .01$ for Models 1 and 2, $p < .001$ for Models 3-5). Additionally, Model 3 was a significant improvement on Model 2 ($p < .001$). Models 2, 4, and 5 did not significantly improve on the predictive power of preceding models. The final model predicted 23% of the variance in the data.

**Table 6.34**

*Summary Statistics for HMR Model Predicting Satisfaction With Life*

| Measure | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 | Model 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| $F$ | 3.98** | 3.18** | 6.90*** | 5.07*** | 4.06*** |
| $R^2$ | .08 | .08 | .21 | .22 | .23 |
| $F$ for change in $R^2$ | 3.98** | 0.05 | 14.96*** | 0.85 | 0.77 |

** $p < .01$ (two-tailed), *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed)

As can be seen in Table 6.35, income was a significant predictor of satisfaction with life in Model 1 ($p = .009$) and Model 2 ($p = .01$), with higher income being associated with higher levels of satisfaction with life. However, income was only marginally significant in Models 3-5 ($p = .09$ in Models 3 and 5, $p = .07$ in Model 4). Disability was a significant predictor in all models ($p = .001$ in Models 1 and 2, $p = .01$ in Model 3-5), with having a disability being associated with lower levels of satisfaction with life. Home happiness was also a significant predictor of satisfaction with life in Models 3-5 ($p = .001$ in all models), with higher home happiness being associated with higher satisfaction with life. Additionally, transience was a significant predictor in Model 3 ($p = .007$), with higher levels of transience predicting higher levels of satisfaction with life. However, transience only approached significance in Model 4 ($p = .09$) and was not significant in Model 5.

When cohabiting sharers were excluded from the analysis, all of the models remained significant, and Model 3 remained the only model that made a significant improvement on a previous model ($p < .001$). The only change to the significance of an individual predictor was that disability only approached significance in Model 4 ($p = .05$) and Model 5 ($p = .06$).

**Table 6.35**

*Coefficients for Predictors in HMR Model Predicting Satisfaction With Life (n = 187)*

| Variable | Model 1 | | | Model 2 | | | Model 3 | | | Model 4 | | | Model 5 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *B* | *SE B* | β | *B* | *SE B* | β | *B* | *SE B* | β | *B* | *SE B* | β | *B* | *SE B* | β |
| Constant | 18.29** [14.58, 22.08] | 1.87 | | 18.32** [14.61, 22.10] | 1.89 | | 18.94** [15.34, 22.62] | 1.77 | | 18.75** [14.95, 22.85] | 1.87 | | 19.92** [15.15, 25.49] | 2.41 | |
| Age | 0.01 [-0.09, 0.11] | 0.05 | .01 | 0.01 [-0.10, 0.12] | 0.06 | .02 | 0.03 [-0.09, 0.12] | 0.06 | .03 | 0.05 [-0.07, 0.14] | 0.06 | .06 | 0.03 [-0.12, 0.13] | 0.07 | .04 |
| Income | 0.96** [0.23, 1.80] | 0.37 | .19 | 0.96* [0.23, 1.82] | 0.37 | .19 | 0.65 [-0.10, 1.46] | 0.37 | .13 | 0.68 [-0.08, 1.50] | 0.37 | .13 | 0.67 [-0.14, 1.51] | 0.38 | .13 |
| Gender | 0.75 [-1.55, 2.99] | 1.19 | .05 | 0.77 [-1.58, 3.02] | 1.19 | .05 | 0.56 [-1.45, 2.58] | 1.07 | .04 | 0.66 [-1.31, 2.47] | 1.07 | .05 | 0.50 [-1.66, 2.49] | 1.12 | .03 |
| Disability | -4.21** [-6.53, -1.89] | 1.25 | -.20 | -4.27** [-6.71, -1.89] | 1.27 | -.20 | -2.92* [-5.22, -0.74] | 1.15 | -.14 | -2.88* [-5.12, -0.61] | 1.17 | -.13 | -2.95* [-5.14, -0.59] | 1.17 | -.14 |
| Consider self an adult | | | | -0.23 [-2.07, 1.63] | 0.95 | -.02 | -0.53 [-2.32, 1.29] | 0.86 | -.04 | -0.51 [-2.26, 1.17] | 0.86 | -.04 | -0.52 [-2.29, 1.27] | 0.88 | -.04 |
| Home happiness | | | | | | | 0.96** [0.55, 1.37] | 0.19 | .36 | 0.99** [0.60, 1.39] | 0.19 | .37 | 0.98** [0.59, 1.37] | 0.19 | .36 |
| Transience | | | | | | | 0.72** [0.17, 1.22] | 0.24 | .20 | 0.52 [-0.14, 1.18] | 0.29 | .15 | 0.40 [-0.32, 1.07] | 0.34 | .11 |
| Owner-occupier | | | | | | | | | | -1.76 [-5.29, 2.29] | 1.81 | -.08 | -1.44 [-5.03, 2.89] | 1.84 | -.07 |
| Social tenant | | | | | | | | | | -1.83 [-4.54, 1.07] | 1.32 | -.11 | -1.40 [-4.17, 1.68] | 1.27 | -.08 |
| Property owned by family or friend | | | | | | | | | | -0.72 [-3.24, 1.90] | 1.21 | -.04 | -0.02 [-2.32, 2.70] | 1.18 | .00 |
| Living alone | | | | | | | | | | | | | -1.52 [-4.59, 1.61] | 1.55 | -.08 |
| Living just with partner and/or child(ren) | | | | | | | | | | | | | -0.36 [-2.46, 1.85] | 1.06 | -.03 |
| Living with family of origin | | | | | | | | | | | | | -1.84 [-4.82, 1.01] | 1.55 | -.12 |

* *p* < .05 (two-tailed), ** *p* < .01 (two-tailed)

**6.4 – Discussion**

**6.4.1 – Feeling at Home, Stability, and Household Type**

Across the whole sample, the majority of participants felt at home where they were living. Additionally, 56% of house sharers stated that they felt at home where they were living and only 6% of sharers said they did not feel at home at all. The proportion of participants who reported feeling at home did not differ significantly by household type. Additionally, scores on the home happiness component (which comprised satisfaction with living situation, feeling at home, and how long the participant planned to stay in their current property) did not vary significantly according to household type. This was contrary to hypothesis 6.1 in which it was predicted that house sharers would be less likely to feel at home than participants living just with their partner and/or child(ren). However, such a finding does fit with previous research which has shown that living with housemates need not present a barrier to feeling at home and can in fact facilitate it (Clark & Tuffin, 2023; Després, 1991a; Heath et al., 2018; McNamara & Connell, 2007).

There was a significant difference in scores on the transience component (comprised of time in current property and number of properties lived in over the last 10 years) between household types. People living with their family of origin had significantly lower transience scores than participants in all other household types. Additionally, house sharers had significantly higher levels of transience than participants living just with their partner and/or child(ren). There was no significant difference between house sharers and participants who lived alone with regards to transience. This largely concurs with previous literature which has suggested that house sharers experience greater levels of housing insecurity than people living in other household types (Heath et al., 2018; McNamara & Connell, 2007). However, the results of the current study also suggest that people who are living alone, and therefore have only one salary from which to pay for housing, may experience levels of housing instability similar to house sharers.

**6.4.2 – Household Type and Subjective Adult Identity**

The majority of participants viewed themselves as adults, with 67% answering 'yes' to the question 'do you consider yourself to be an adult?'. Among house sharers, the proportion was 66%, although this fell to 58% when cohabiting house sharers were excluded. Contrary to hypothesis 6.2a, there were no significant differences between house sharers and participants living in other household types with regards to subjective adult identity. Additionally, when only participants aged 30 years or over were considered, there were no significant differences between house sharers and participants who were not house sharing with regards to how likely they were to consider themselves to be adults. This

indicates that, for many people, living in a house share does not present a barrier to considering oneself an adult (see also Kenyon & Heath, 2001; Maalsen, 2019). Additionally, the finding that, compared to house sharers, participants living with their family of origin were not significantly less likely to consider themselves to be adults suggests that, for many, living in the parental home does not necessarily undermine ability to develop the psychological characteristics (e.g. independence) that are frequently seen as defining markers of adulthood in contemporary Western society (see also Stevens, 2019).

Within the logistic regression model that was developed to predict a participant's likelihood of considering themself to be an adult, age and disability were significant predictors, with older age and not being disabled both predicting higher likelihood of considering yourself to be an adult. As predicted in hypothesis 6.2b, the variables associated with household type were not significant predictors of someone's likelihood of considering themself to be an adult; furthermore, adding household type to the regression model did not improve its predictive power, compared to only including demographic variables as predictors. Moreover, within univariate analyses, housing tenure and scores on the home happiness and transience components were not found to be significantly associated with subjective adult identity. Therefore, within the current chapter, there was very little evidence to suggest any relationship between living situation and whether participants considered themselves to be adults. This may be because, as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, there are now many different ways to define adulthood and, while housing may play a role in developing a sense of oneself as an adult for some people, there are also ways to construct an adult identity that do not rely on homeownership or cohabitation with a partner (Blatterer, 2007; Maalsen, 2019).

### 6.4.3 – Predicting Well-Being Outcomes
As predicted in hypothesis 6.3a, there were no significant differences between house sharers and participants living alone with regards to well-being. Furthermore, and against the expectations of hypothesis 6.3a, there were also no significant differences in well-being outcomes between house sharers and participants living just with their partner and/or child(ren). However, participants living with their family of origin reported significantly lower satisfaction with life compared to house sharers (contrary to hypothesis 6.3a). Based on evidence from existing literature, this could potentially be due to participants living with their family of origin feeling that their autonomy and/or independence was curtailed by their living situation (Kins et al., 2009; White, 2002). However, it is also noted that, within the current study, participants living with their family of origin were not found to have lower home happiness or to be significantly less likely to consider themselves to be adults, compared to

participants in other household types. There were not found to be any significant interaction effects between household type and age with regards to positive affect, negative affect, or satisfaction with life. There was however a significant interaction between household type and age with regards to loneliness. Simple effects analysis showed that, among participants living just with their partner and/or child(ren), those aged 30 years or over reported significantly lower loneliness than 18- to 29-year-olds. Level of loneliness did not significantly differ by age for house sharers or for participants living alone or with their family of origin.

When HMR analyses were conducted to predict psychological well-being outcomes, there was only one example of a variable associated with household type being a significant predictor in any of the four models. In the HMR model for positive affect, living alone was found to predict significantly lower positive affect compared to living in a house share, even when demographic characteristics, subjective adult identity, and other housing-related variables had been controlled for. Nonetheless, in line with the expectations of hypothesis 6.3b, in each of the four HMR analyses, adding household type to the analysis did not significantly improve the predictive power of the model, beyond what could be achieved through considering demographic characteristics, subjective adult identity, and other housing-related variables (i.e. home happiness, transience, and tenure). This supports the idea that no household type is innately harmful or healthful, but rather the meaning and impact of living in different household types depends on individual preferences and circumstances (Clapham, 2005, 2010). It is recognised that, due to limitations of statistical power, the current analysis cannot rule out the possibility that household type could have a small effect on psychological well-being ($f^2 < .06$). However, the current study does enable us to conclude that there is no evidence that household type has anything other than a minimal effect on well-being, and that other factors related to demographic characteristics and the participant's housing situation are instead far more useful in terms of predicting well-being.

Being disabled predicted experiencing significantly lower positive affect and satisfaction with life, and significantly higher loneliness, compared to participants who were not disabled, even when other demographic factors, subjective adult identity, and housing-related variables had been controlled for. Disability was also a significant predictor in the first three steps of the HMR analysis for negative affect, with being disabled predicting higher negative affect; however, disability was no longer a significant predictor of negative affect once housing tenure and household type were added to the model. Age was a significant predictor of positive affect, with older age predicting higher positive affect even when all other demographic-, adulthood-, and housing-related variables had been controlled for.

Gender was a significant predictor of negative affect, with being male predicting lower negative affect even when all other variables included in the HMR analysis had been controlled for. Additionally, higher income predicted lower loneliness and higher satisfaction with life in the first two steps of the respective HMR analyses; however, once housing-related variables were added to the models, income was no longer a significant predictor of loneliness or satisfaction with life.

Once all other variables included in the HMR analysis had been taken into account, being a social tenant predicted experiencing significantly lower positive affect compared to renting privately. Additionally, in step 4 of the HMR analysis for loneliness, living in socially rented housing predicted experiencing significantly higher levels of loneliness, compared to living in the PRS; however, once household type was added in step 5 of the analysis, social renting was no longer a significant predictor of loneliness. This is in line with findings from previous research, which has found that social tenants experienced poorer psychological well-being than private renters (DLUHC, 2022b). Furthermore, after controlling for demographic characteristics, subjective adult identity, and other housing-related variables, including household type, being an owner-occupier predicted experiencing significantly lower negative affect, compared to being a private renter. This mirrors the findings of some previous studies that found renters experienced higher levels of psychological distress than owner-occupiers (Cairney & Boyle, 2004; Damiens & Schnor, 2022). It is noted that some other studies have not found tenure to predict the experience of positive or negative emotions but have found owner-occupation to be associated with higher levels of satisfaction with life, compared to renting (Angel & Gregory, 2021). Within the current study, although there was a significant main effect of tenure on satisfaction with life, in post-hoc tests no pairwise comparisons between different tenures were significant. This may have been due to the low number of owner-occupiers in the sample reducing statistical power to detect differences between the groups.

Nonetheless, despite some variables related to tenure being significant predictors of some well-being measures, within each of the four HMR analyses predicting well-being outcomes, adding tenure to the analysis did not significantly improve the predictive power of any of the models, beyond what could be achieving just by considering demographics, subjective adult identity, home happiness, and transience. This finding supports the idea that the well-being impact of living in any particular housing tenure depends on the individual's context and circumstance (Clapham, 2005, 2010; Coulter, 2023; Gurney, 1990).

Home happiness was not significantly associated with positive affect. However, home happiness was a significant predictor of negative affect, loneliness, and satisfaction with life, with higher home happiness predicting lower negative affect, lower loneliness, and higher satisfaction with life, even after controlling for all other variables in the HMR analyses. This adds to existing evidence regarding the important role feeling happy, secure, and at home where you are living can play in supporting psychological well-being (Easthope, 2014; Garnham & Rolfe, 2019; Hoolachan et al., 2017; Saunders, 1989; Soaita & McKee, 2019).

Transience did not predict levels of positive affect, negative affect, or loneliness. There was however a significant association between transience and satisfaction with life, with higher levels of transience predicting higher levels of satisfaction with life. Given that much of the literature has highlighted the potentially negative effects of housing precarity and insecurity for well-being (H. Green, Fernandez, & MacPhail, 2022; Li et al., 2022; McKee & Soaita, 2018), this may seem like a surprising result. However, for example, Vanhoutte et al. (2017) found that higher housing instability in young adulthood was associated with lower levels of depressive symptoms and higher eudaimonic well-being in later life. They believed this was due to higher housing instability in young adulthood reflecting life course transitions which could lead to greater social and economic resources in later life. It therefore seems that for some people and/or in some situations, higher levels of housing security are not necessarily associated with higher psychological well-being and lower levels of transience may reflect inability to move. However, within the current sample, transience was no longer a significant predictor of satisfaction with life once tenure and household type were added to the HMR model. It seems likely that this was due to the fact that social tenants and participants living with their family of origin experienced significantly lower levels of transience compared to, respectively, participants in other tenures and in other household types.

Most participants saw homeownership as highly desirable. Indeed, 69% of participants gave the maximum rating for the desirability of homeownership. A majority of participants (57%) were also confident that they would become homeowners (rating their probability as 4 or 5 out of 5). However, 51% of participants rated the desirability of homeownership more highly than they rated their likelihood of achieving homeownership, representing a 'homeownership aspiration gap' (J. Crawford & McKee, 2018; McKee et al., 2019). Within the current survey, there were no significant differences between household types with regards to ratings of the probability or desirability of homeownership or with regards to homeownership aspiration gap. Furthermore, homeownership aspiration gap was not significantly associated with psychological well-being. This went against findings from

previous research that feeling unable to achieve a valued goal can result in reduced well-being (Carver & Scheier, 1990; Wrosch et al., 2003). However, given that the mean homeownership aspiration gap across the whole sample was only -0.89 (representing an average difference of less than 1 point between ratings for the probability and desirability of homeownership), it may be that a larger homeownership aspiration gap is needed before associations with well-being outcomes become apparent. As all participants in the current study were university students, it is possible that they were more optimistic about their future ability to become homeowners than the average person would be. A lower average rating of probability of homeownership (and thus more negative homeownership aspiration gap scores) may therefore be seen in a general population sample.

Participants living in house shares ate dinner with another member of their household significantly less often than participants living with their family of origin or just with their partner and/or child(ren). Frequency of dining with another household member was not significantly associated with positive affect, negative affect, or satisfaction with life; it did however show a significant negative correlation with loneliness. This is in line with Russell et al.'s (1980) finding that loneliness correlated with how often participants ate dinner alone. However, within the current survey, as this question focused specifically on eating dinner with another member of one's household, it was not asked of people who lived alone. The decision was therefore made not to include this variable in the HMR analyses predicting well-being outcomes, as this would have led to one type of household being excluded from the analyses. (This limitation was addressed in the general population survey presented in Chapter 7 by instead asking participants about their frequency of eating dinner alone.)

In univariate analysis, participants who considered themselves to be adults reported significantly higher positive affect compared to participants who did not consider themselves to be fully adult. However, subjective adult identity was not significantly associated with other well-being outcomes. This provides a partial replication of findings from Carruthers (2018), Kaniušonytė et al. (2022), and Nelson and Barry (2005). Nonetheless, subjective adult identity was not a significant predictor of any of the well-being outcomes once demographic characteristics had been controlled for.

### 6.4.4 – Strengths, Limitations, and Future Research

The sample showed a good level of diversity in terms of ethnicity, nationality, SGM status, and employment status. However, there were some variables where more diversity would have been beneficial. The sample was predominantly female; additionally, the fact that there were only two non-binary participants meant that gender could only be considered

in a binary way. The study would also have benefitted from the sample including more disabled participants. However, despite the loss of statistical power associated with the relatively small number of disabled participants ($n = 20$), disability status was still found to be significantly associated with a person's likelihood of considering themself to be an adult and their psychological well-being, suggesting that the size of these effects are large. Similarly, significant differences were found between owner-occupiers and participants living in other tenures with regards to negative affect and loneliness, despite the small number of owner-occupiers in the sample ($n = 21$). However, having a larger number of owner-occupiers in the sample would have increased the statistical power of analyses involving tenure and would have enabled firmer conclusions to be drawn.

Whether or not cohabiting house sharers were included in the house sharing group for analyses generally did not impact the significance of the results. However, there were a few instances where excluding cohabiting sharers altered the results of an analysis. For example, when cohabiting house sharers were excluded from the analysis, the proportion of house sharers who considered themselves to be fully adult declined, leading to the association between household type and subjective adult identity becoming significant (although subsequent pairwise comparisons did not find a significant difference between house sharers and participants living in other household types). Similarly, when cohabiting sharers were excluded, the mean satisfaction with life score among house sharers declined and house sharers were no longer found to have significantly higher satisfaction with life compared to participants living with their family of origin. While it is not possible to draw firm conclusions from the current study, these results hint that there may possibly be differences between cohabiting and non-cohabiting house sharers which it would be interesting to explore in future research.

Within the current study all of the participants were students at Birkbeck, University of London. Due to the nature of Birkbeck's student population, 68% of the participants were engaged in paid employment alongside their studies and 79% of participants were aged 22 years or over. However, it is recognised that having a sample comprised purely of students from one university limits the generalisability of the results. Nonetheless, the narrow focus of the sample also provided a useful opportunity to explore the ways in which participants, who shared important similarities with regards to their role as Birkbeck students, differed due to their living situation.

**6.5 – Conclusion**

Participants living in house shares were not found to differ significantly from participants living in any other type of household with regards to their likelihood of feeling at home or of considering themselves to have attained adult status. Household type was generally not significantly associated with psychological well-being outcomes; however, in the small number of comparisons where there was a significant difference between household types, it was participants living with their family of origin who had the poorest well-being outcomes. Ultimately, the current study presented no evidence that house sharing predicted poorer outcomes, compared to living in another household type, with regards to ability to feel at home, subjective adult identity, or psychological well-being.

# Chapter 7:

## Quantitative Survey Study 2 – Understanding the Experiences of Renters in the General Population

### 7.1 – Overview

This survey was conducted with the aim of building on the survey presented in Chapter 6, which targeted a student population, to see if the findings would be replicated in a general population sample. As discussed in more detail below, some of the findings reported in Chapter 6 were unexpected, so the survey presented here provided a valuable opportunity to test such effects further. Additionally, the current survey focused specifically on renters, so as to allow more exploration of within-tenure differences. The analysis presented in Chapters 4 and 5 highlighted that, while there are challenges (e.g. a potential lack of control) that are shared by all people living in rented accommodation, there are additional challenges that people renting a room in a house share face which are not experienced by people living in non-shared rented accommodation. Therefore, this chapter aims to examine whether people renting a room in a house share face worse outcomes, with regards to feeling at home, constructing an adult identity, and/or psychological well-being, than people living in non-shared rented accommodation.

### 7.1.1 – House Sharing, Renting, and Home

Research has shown that people living in the PRS often face challenges (e.g. insecurity of tenure and inability to personalise their living situation) which can undermine ability to feel at home (Byrne, 2020; Easthope, 2014; Hoolachan et al., 2017; McKee et al., 2020; Rolfe et al., 2023). However, there is also evidence to suggest that people renting a room in a house share may face additional challenges, compared to renters who are living in non-shared accommodation. For example, renters living in shared housing may experience higher levels of transience and instability in their housing, are more likely to lack control over their living environment, and may also experience higher levels of stigma (Barratt et al., 2015; Barratt & Green, 2017; Heath et al., 2018; McKee et al., 2020; McNamara & Connell, 2007). This may make it harder for people renting a room in a house share to feel at home, compared to people who are living in the PRS but not house sharing (Byrne, 2020; Dupuis & Thorns, 1998; Saunders, 1989). However, other studies have found that many house sharers do feel at home where they are living due to the companionship and support they experience from housemates (Clark & Tuffin, 2023; Després, 1991a; Heath et al., 2018; McNamara & Connell, 2007).

At the end of Chapter 2, it was predicted that house sharers would be significantly less likely to feel at home compared to participants living just with their partner and/or child(ren). However, in the analysis presented in Chapter 6, no significant differences were identified between household types with regards to feeling at home. Indeed, fewer than 10% of participants across each household type reported not feeling at home where they were living. This could suggest that most people are able to experience a good enough sense of home while living in a house share and it is perhaps only in a minority of cases (e.g. where people feel unsafe where they are living, as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5) that house sharers are unable to feel at home. However, it could also be that the participants in Chapter 6, who were students, were more positively disposed to house sharing than the average person due to it suiting their needs while they were studying. Thus, further investigation was needed to examine the extent to which house sharers who were not students were able to feel at home.

### 7.1.2 – House Sharing, Renting, and Subjective Adult Identity

Within Chapter 2, it was predicted that house sharers would be less likely to consider themselves to be adults, compared to participants living just with their partner and/or child(ren). This was due to research which has shown marriage and/or cohabitation with a partner, as well as parenthood, to be associated with increased likelihood of considering oneself to be an adult (Arnett, 2000, 2003; Molgat, 2007; Shanahan et al., 2005). Additionally, some research has suggested that house sharing may, in some cases, undermine feelings of adulthood or make it harder to be perceived as an adult by others (Garcia, 2016; Heath et al., 2018; Rosenberger, 2007; Waldron, 2022). However, within the student sample discussed in Chapter 6, no significant associations were found between household type and subjective adult identity. This is in line with other research which has shown that living in a house share need not undermine feelings of adulthood and may, for some, actually support the construction of an adult identity (Kenyon & Heath, 2001; Maalsen, 2019). However, being a student may have impacted the way that some participants in Chapter 6 viewed house sharing, for example making it seem more normative (due to their student status) or more transitional. It was therefore felt that this is a topic that needs further research with a general population sample.

### 7.1.3 – House Sharing, Renting, and Psychological Well-Being

Previous literature has highlighted that both feelings of control and social support can offer important benefits for psychological well-being (Clapham, 2010; Mirowsky & Ross, 2003). Within Chapter 2 it was predicted that participants living just with their partner and/or child(ren) would experience significantly better psychological well-being, compared to house

sharers, due to the former being more likely to experience higher levels of both companionship and control within the home. However, against expectations, within Chapter 6, house sharers were not found to differ significantly from participants who lived just with their partner and/or child(ren) on any of the well-being measures. Additionally, adding household type to the HMR analyses predicting well-being outcomes did not improve the explanatory power of the model for any well-being outcome, beyond what could be achieved through considering demographic characteristics, subjective adult identity, and other housing-related variables. However, within the HMR model for positive affect, living alone predicted significantly lower positive affect compared to living in a house share.

Therefore, there was no evidence within the data presented in Chapter 6 that living in a house sharing was associated with reduced well-being. It was felt that this was likely to be due, at least in part, to the fact that the meaning and experience of any living situation appears to vary depending on the individual's preferences and circumstances (Clapham, 2005, 2010; Eckermann, 2015). Indeed, research has suggested house sharing may support or undermine well-being depending on whether the person wants to live in a house share (Oh & Kim, 2021). However, further research is needed, especially with house sharers who are aged 30 years or over and/or are not students, to enable firmer conclusions to be drawn regarding the ways in which house sharing and psychological well-being may or may not be related.

### 7.1.4 – Variation Between Renters

Finally, while the current survey was focused specifically on renters, it is important to remember that variations exist within the wider category of renting. For example, Watt (2008; see also Foye et al., 2018) argued that, in contemporary British society, social tenants have been discursively constructed as an 'underclass' in a way that private tenants have not. Additionally, some research has found that social tenants reported higher levels of anxiety and lower levels of happiness and satisfaction with life, compared to private renters (DLUHC, 2022b). In Chapter 6, within HMR analyses, being a social tenant predicted lower positive affect and higher loneliness compared to renting privately. Type of landlord will therefore be an important variable to control for in regression analyses predicting well-being outcomes in this chapter, in addition to the demographic characteristics, subjective adult identity, and other housing-related factors discussed in Section 6.1.3.

### 7.1.5 – Research Aims

Therefore, this study aimed to answer three research questions, which are presented below. The hypotheses associated with each question are also presented below. Some of

these hypotheses contradict some of the findings from Chapter 6; however, given that the focus on student participants in Chapter 6 may have impacted the results of that study, the original predictions presented in Section 2.4, based on existing literature, are retained here.

**RQ 7.1:** Are house sharers less likely to feel at home than other renters?

- **Hypothesis 7.1:** House sharers will be significantly less likely to report feeling at home compared to participants living just with their partner and/or child(ren), but will not differ significantly from participants living alone with regards to feeling at home.

**RQ 7.2:** Does household type predict likelihood of considering oneself an adult?

- **Hypothesis 7.2a:** House sharers will be significantly less likely to consider themselves to be adults compared to participants living just with their partner and/or child(ren). House sharers and participants living alone will not differ significantly with regards to subjective adult identity.

- **Hypothesis 7.2b:** Once demographic and other housing-related variables have been taken into account, household type will not significantly predict likelihood of considering oneself to be an adult.

**RQ 7.3:** Does living in a rented house share predict poorer psychological well-being compared to living in rented, non-shared accommodation?

- **Hypothesis 7.3a:** House sharers will experience significantly poorer psychological well-being compared to participants living just with their partner and/or child(ren), but will not differ significantly from participants living alone with regards to psychological well-being.

- **Hypothesis 7.3b**: Once demographics and satisfaction with living situation have been taken into account, household type will not significantly predict psychological well-being.

## 7.2 – Methods

### 7.2.1 – Recruitment

Data were collected between 16th February 2020 and 24th December 2020. The survey was advertised in a number of ways to try and increase the diversity of the sample. For example, the researcher posted about the survey on social media, including Facebook (both on the researcher's feed and in a number of groups focused on renting), Twitter,

Instagram, and LinkedIn. A Facebook page was also created to advertise the survey. A number of tenants unions were approached asking them to share the survey with their members, which led to at least one such group tweeting about the survey. Friends and contacts of the researcher were asked to share the survey with people they knew who might be interested in taking part. In addition, paid advertising was used to promote the survey on Facebook, callforparticipants.com, and via Google Ad.

### 7.2.2 – Procedure

The survey was open to anyone aged 18 years or over who was living in rented accommodation. The survey was online and completely anonymous. Participants were able to complete the survey at a time and place of their choosing. The survey was hosted on SurveyMonkey and the average completion time was 14 minutes.

Upon going to the survey site, participants were presented with information on the survey, including what would be involved in participating and the purpose of the study. (See Appendix H for full text.) They were required to tick boxes indicating that they had read the information about the study, were over 18 years of age and currently living in rented accommodation, and consented to take part in the study before being able to participate. After completing the survey, participants were thanked for their time and reminded of the researchers' contact details. Potential sources of support for anyone dealing with housing problems or who felt affected by issues raised in the survey were also listed. (See Appendix I for full debriefing text.) Ethical approval for the study was granted by the Department of Psychological Sciences Research Ethics Committee of Birkbeck, University of London (approval reference number: 181901).

### 7.2.3 – Measures

The current survey (see Appendix J for full text) was largely based on the survey used for the study presented in Chapter 6, which targeted students at Birkbeck, University of London. However, in view of the fact that the current study was aimed at a general population sample, efforts were made to streamline the survey in places. The ways in which the two surveys differed are outlined below. For clarity, within this section, the survey discussed in Chapter 6 will be referred to as the Birkbeck survey. (Full text of the Birkbeck survey is available in Appendix F)

With regards to the demographics section, changes were made to the format of the question asking about participants' ethnicity. Within the Birkbeck survey, Q.3 provided a write-in response box for participants to describe their ethnicity in their own terms. This

approach was preferred to providing pre-set response options (e.g. reflecting the categories used in the census) as it was felt that such an approach, which requires some people to tick a box labelled 'other', could potentially be alienating. However, some participants appear to have been unsure how to respond to this open question and, for example, repeated their nationality or stated their affiliation with a particular Christian church, rather than describing their ethnic background. For the current survey therefore, to try and minimise missing data, the decision was made to switch from a write-in response to tick boxes, using the options provided in the ethnicity question in the 2011 UK Census. (This formed Q.9 in the current survey due to some reordering of the demographics questions.) It was clearly stated in Q.9 of the current survey that the response options were taken from the census and such categories were likely to be familiar to many UK-based participants due to their frequent use in equality monitoring (e.g. Advance HE, 2022). Additionally, questions regarding whether the participant was a student at Birkbeck, University of London and whether they were studying part-time or full-time (Q.12 and 13 in the Birkbeck survey) were not included in the current survey.

At the start of the second, housing-focused section of the survey (Q.19 in the Birkbeck survey, Q.17 in the current survey) participants were asked to tick the box (or boxes) that described their living situation (e.g. 'I live on my own', 'I live with friends', etc). In the current survey, an extra response option of 'I live in student accommodation' was added as it was felt that the other options may not fully capture the unique elements of living in halls of residence. Additionally, the format of the question regarding who participants lived with (Q.21 in the Birkbeck survey, Q. 19 in the current survey) was changed so that participants could tick boxes to indicate their relationship (e.g. 'partner', 'friend', etc) to the person (or people) they lived with, rather than having to write their relationship to each co-resident.

The question 'In the past 2 weeks, on how many nights have you eaten dinner alone?' was added to the current survey (Q. 20). This question was used previously in research by Russell et al. (1980) and, by not focusing on frequency of eating dinner with another household member, enabled participants who lived alone to be included in analysis of whether frequency of eating dinner with other people was associated with well-being.

Within the Birkbeck survey, Q.25 was an open question asking participants to 'Please describe the property you live in. (For example, is it a house or a flat? What rooms does it contain?)'. Within the current survey (Q.21), this was changed to: 'Which of these best describes your living situation? Please tick the option which best completes the sentence 'I rent...' (or 'Myself and my partner/ my family rent...')' with tick-box response options (e.g. 'a

room in a house or flat', 'a 1-bedroom house or flat') provided. This aimed to make the survey quicker and easier for participants to complete.

As the Birkbeck survey was open to participants living in any housing tenure, Q.26 asked 'Do you or someone who you live with own the property you live in?'. As the current survey was targeted specifically at renters, this question was cut and replaced with two separate questions: 'Who do you rent from?' (Q.22) and 'Do you currently own any property?' (Q.26). Several tick-box response options were provided for each question.

For questions regarding future goals, e.g. probability and desirability of homeownership, in the Birkbeck survey (Q.33-38) participants were asked to respond on a scale from 1 to 5 (with 1 being very unlikely/ undesirable and 5 being very likely/ desirable). However, within the current survey (Q.32-37), participants were asked to respond on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being 'I do not think there is any chance I will become a homeowner' (or, in the case of desirability, 'I have no desire to become a homeowner') and 10 being 'I am sure I will become a homeowner' (or, in the case of desirability, 'I have a very strong desire to become a homeowner'). This was to improve the discriminant ability of the homeownership aspiration gap measure (Coelho & Esteves, 2007). Additionally, the question 'Thinking about the next 10 years, what are your main goals and things you would like to achieve?' (Q.39 in the Birkbeck survey) was not included in the current survey so as to help streamline the survey.

Finally, questions that had been included in the Birkbeck survey on the participant's social network (Q.43-54) were left out of the current survey. Additionally, to help further streamline the current survey, the T-ILS was not included. However, the PANAS and SWLS remained in the survey as well-being measures. Within the current sample, Cronbach's alpha was .90 for both the positive affect and negative affect subscales from PANAS. Alpha was .89 for the SWLS.

### 7.2.4 – Participants

There were 481 people who answered at least some of the survey questions. Of these, 29 participants were excluded from the final dataset due to not providing key pieces of information needed for the analysis (such as their age or information about their current living situation). The decision was made to restrict the final sample to participants based in the UK and Ireland, due to important differences that exist between rental markets in different countries. This led to 13 participants who lived outside of the UK and Ireland, and 16 participants who did not indicate where they lived, being excluded from the final dataset.

Two participants who lived in halls of residence were also excluded to enable a clearer focus on participants who were living in regular, domestic properties. Finally, due to the small number of participants in the sample who lived with their family of origin, the decision was made to focus the analysis on three household types: participants who lived with just their partner and/or child(ren), participants who lived alone, and participants who lived in house shares. This led to nine participants who lived with their parents or with their partner's parents being excluded from the final dataset.

Following the procedure outlined in Section 6.2.3, the data was checked to look for participants who may have completed the survey more than once. Through this, four pairs of responses were identified as duplicates. In two cases the participants had completed more of the survey on one of their attempts, in which case the set of responses that was more complete was retained. In two cases the participants had completed the whole survey both times, so the decision was made to retain their first set of responses. The final sample, after these exclusions, totalled 408 people.

The categorisation of participants into one of the three household type groups was primarily done by examining the types of people (if any) that each participant reported living with. Participants were classified as living in a house share if they lived with friend(s), housemate(s), lodger(s), or their landlord. Participants who lived with their sibling(s), without their parent(s) being co-resident, were classed as living in a house share. Participants who lived with their partner and/or child(ren) as well as housemates or lodgers were also classed as house sharers.

Across the sample, 96 participants (24%) lived alone, 229 participants (56%) lived just with their partner and/or child(ren), 70 participants (17%) lived in a house share (not with a partner), and 13 participants (3%) lived in a house share together with their partner. For the subsequent analyses, participants who lived with their partner in a house share were included in the house sharing group ($n = 83$). It will be noted if their inclusion makes a difference to the significance of any results.

Participants ranged in age from 18 to 78 years, with a mean age of 38.16 years ($SD = 11.89$). As can be seen in Table 7.1, there was a significant difference between household types with regards to age ($p < .001$). Post-hoc Games-Howell tests showed that all three

groups differed significantly from each other ($p < .005$ for all comparisons).[29] (Excluding cohabiting house sharers from the analysis did not change the significance of the overall test or the pairwise comparisons.)

**Table 7.1**

*Descriptive Statistics and One-Way ANOVA Comparing Age Across Household Types*

| Variable | *n* | Living alone | | Living just with partner and/or child(ren) | | Living in a house share | | *F* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | |
| Age (years) | 408 | 43.48[a] | 12.76 | 38.56[b] | 11.12 | 30.89[c] | 9.04 | 28.71*** |

*Note.* Means that share superscripts do not differ significantly.

*** $p < .001$ (two-tailed)

The characteristics of each household type group across categorical demographic variables are shown in Table 7.2. The majority of participants across all household types were female, White, and British. The sample was also well educated, with 31% having an undergraduate degree and a further 31% having a postgraduate degree. Household type was however significantly associated with nationality ($p < .001$), parenthood ($p < .001$), disability status ($p < .001$), employment status ($p = .03$), and education ($p = .009$). Additionally, when non-binary participants were excluded from the analysis, the proportion of male and female participants differed significantly by household type ($X^2(2) = 6.14$, $p = .046$).

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[29] Due to the assumption of homogeneity of variance being violated, a median test was also performed which showed the same pattern of results with regards to the main effect and pairwise comparisons.

**Table 7.2**

*Comparison of Categorical Demographic Variables Across Household Types*

| Demographic characteristic | Living alone | | Living just with partner and/or child(ren) | | Living in a house share | | Total | | $X^2$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *n* | % | *n* | % | *n* | % | *n* | % | |
| Gender [a] | | | | | | | | | 5.87 |
| Female | 70 | 73% | 185 | 81% | 56 | 67% | 311 | 76% | |
| Male | 22 | 23% | 37 | 16% | 23 | 28% | 82 | 20% | |
| Non-binary | 3 | 3% | 6 | 3% | 3 | 4% | 12 | 3% | |
| Nationality [b] | | | | | | | | | 24.23*** |
| British [c] | 64 | 67% | 183 | 80% | 56 | 67% | 303 | 74% | |
| EU/ EEA | 3 | 3% | 11 | 5% | 16 | 19% | 30 | 7% | |
| Non-EU | 2 | 2% | 4 | 2% | 6 | 7% | 12 | 3% | |
| Ethnicity | | | | | | | | | 2.45 |
| White | 88 | 92% | 209 | 91% | 79 | 95% | 376 | 92% | |
| Ethnic minority | 5 | 5% | 19 | 8% | 3 | 4% | 27 | 7% | |
| LGBTQ+ [d] | 19 | 20% | 56 | 24% | 29 | 35% | 104 | 25% | 5.26 |
| Parenthood [e] | 23 | 24% | 130 | 57% | 2 | 2% | 155 | 38% | 86.89*** |
| Disability [f] | 31 | 32% | 43 | 19% | 7 | 8% | 81 | 20% | 16.63*** |

**Table 7.2** (continued)

| Demographic characteristic | Living alone | | Living just with partner and/or child(ren) | | Living in a house share | | Total | | $X^2$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *n* | % | *n* | % | *n* | *n* | % | *n* | |
| Employment status | | | | | | | | | 10.99* |
| Working full-time | 46 | 48% | 118 | 52% | 53 | 64% | 217 | 53% | |
| Working part-time | 12 | 13% | 39 | 17% | 16 | 19% | 67 | 16% | |
| Not currently working | 37 | 39% | 72 | 31% | 14 | 17% | 123 | 30% | |
| Education [g] | 50 | 52% | 138 | 60% | 61 | 73% | 249 | 61% | 9.42** |

a. Chi-square test compared male and non-male participants.

b. Chi-square test compared British and non-British participants due to small cell sizes for non-EU nationalities.

c. Includes all participants who had British nationality (single or dual nationality).

d. Represents the number of participants were LGBTQ+. Someone was coded as being LGBTQ+ if they were non-binary, trans, and/or not heterosexual. *N* for missing data = 12.

e. Represents the number of participants who reported having children. *N* for missing data = 2.

f. Represents the number of participants who described themselves as disabled. *N* for missing data = 2.

g. Represents the number of participants who had a degree. *N* for missing data = 2.

* *p* < .05 (two-tailed), ** *p* < .01 (two-tailed), *** *p* < .001 (two-tailed)

With regards to the type of landlord participants rented from, 348 participants (85% of the sample) were renting from private landlords, 45 participants (11%) were renting from social landlords (including local councils, housing associations, and charities), and 14 participants (3%) were renting from a family member or friend.

The proportion of participants from each household type who were in each income band is shown in Figure 7.1. The median income band across the whole sample, and within each household type, was £16,000-25,000. A Kruskal-Wallis test showed that there was a significant difference between household types: $H(2) = 9.97$, $p = .01$. Bonferroni-corrected pairwise comparisons revealed that participants who lived alone had a significantly lower average rank with regards to income, compared to participants who lived just with their partner and/or child(ren) ($p = .007$). No other pairwise comparisons were significant.

**Figure 7.1**

*Annual Income Reported by Participants Across Household Types*
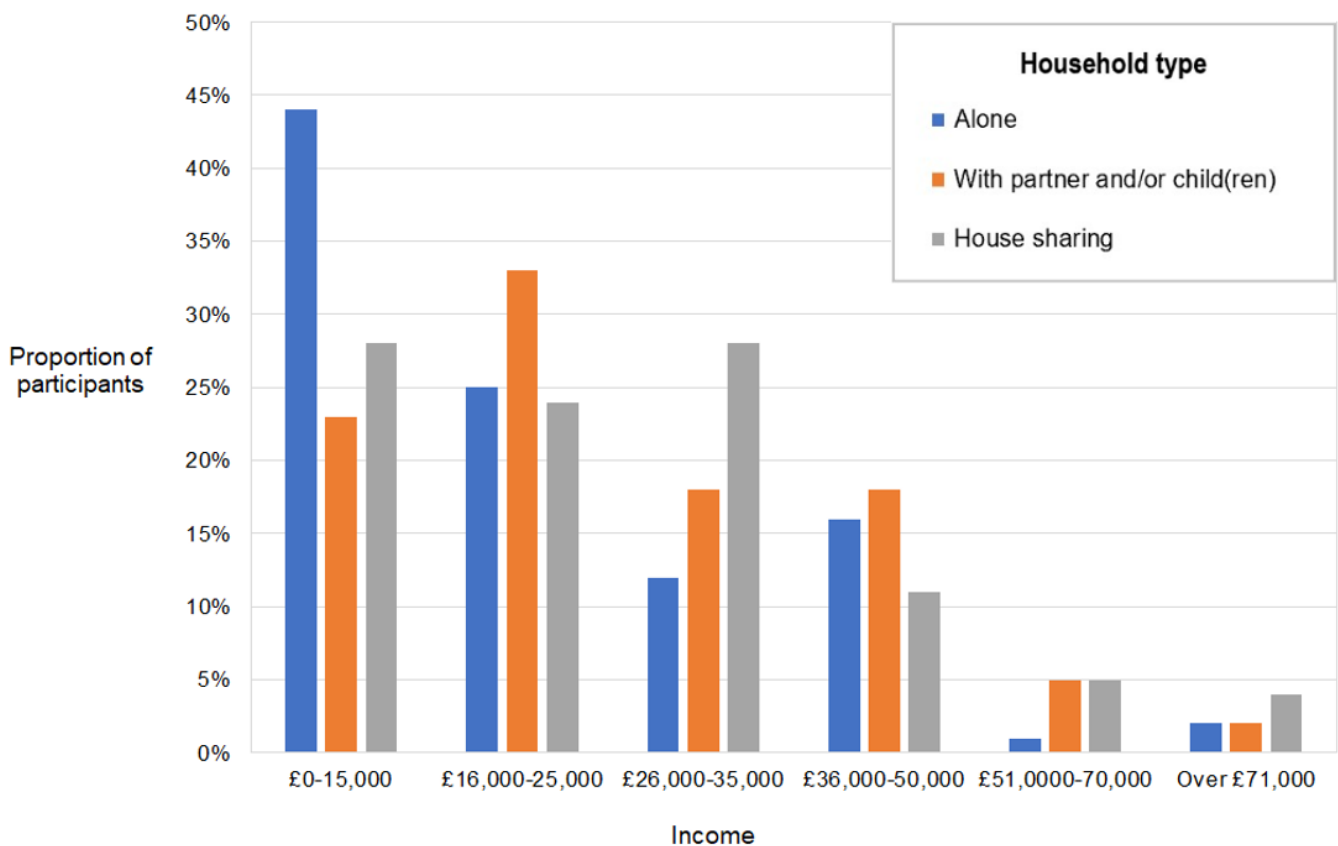
In total, 38% of the sample had children. Of the participants who did have children, 72% reported that their children lived with them more or less full-time, 2% reported that their children lived with them part-time, and 26% reported that their children did not live with them or only lived with them rarely. Furthermore, among the participants who were disabled, 54% said that their disability impacted their ability to live alone, at least to some extent, and 46% said it did not impact their ability to live alone.

With regards to location, 34% of participants lived in Greater London or the South East. A further 12% lived in the South West, 9% lived in East of England, and 8% of participants lived in each of the following regions: North West England, West Midlands, and Yorkshire and the Humber. East Midlands was home to 6% of participants and 2% lived in North East England. The majority of participants lived in England; however, 6% lived in Scotland, 5% lived in Wales, 1% lived in Northern Ireland, and 1% lived in Ireland.

### 7.2.5 – Analysis Plan

The analysis for the survey proceeded in a similar fashion to Chapter 6, following the same three stages. These are outlined briefly below. Additionally, the same procedures around bootstrapping described in Section 6.2.4.4 have been followed in this chapter also.

### 7.2.5.1 – Stage 1: Exploring Key Housing-Related Variables

Descriptive statistics were calculated for the extent to which participants felt at home. Following this, a chi-square test was used to evaluate whether there was an association between household type and feeling at home.

A homeownership aspiration gap score was calculated for each participant by subtracting the rating given for desirability of homeownership from the rating given for probability of homeownership. ANOVAs were then used to compare probability of homeownership, desirability of homeownership, and homeownership aspiration gap across household types.

Frequency of eating dinner alone was found to have a bimodal distribution, so a median split was performed to turn this into a dichotomous variable. A chi-square test was then used to explore whether frequency of eating dinner alone was associated with household type.

Finally, PCA was used to reduce dimensionality among housing-related variables. ANOVAs were then used to compare scores on the developed components across household types.

### 7.2.5.2 – Stage 2: Does Household Type Predict Likelihood of Seeing Oneself as an Adult?

Descriptive statistics were first calculated for the proportion of participants who considered themselves to be adults. Pearson's correlation was then used to assess whether age and/or income were associated with subjective adult identity. Additionally, chi-square tests were used to see whether the proportion of participants who considered themselves to be adults differed according to categorical demographic variables.

Chi-square tests were also used to explore whether household type was associated with subjective adult identity and to examine whether house sharing was associated with a reduced likelihood of considering oneself an adult among over-thirties specifically. Additionally, t-tests were used to assess whether there was a significant difference in scores on the home happiness and transience components depending on whether participants considered themselves to be adults or not.

Logistic regression was then used to develop a model to predict how likely a participant was to consider themself an adult. Demographic variables that univariate analyses had shown to be significantly associated with subjective adult identity were added in Model 1 and housing-related variables that were significantly associated with subjective adult identity were added in Model 2.

### 7.2.5.3 – Stage 3: Does Household Type Predict Well-Being Outcomes?

For this final stage, descriptive statistics and inter-correlations for the three psychological well-being outcomes (positive affect, negative affect, and satisfaction with life) were calculated. This was followed by correlational analyses to assess whether age and/or income were associated with well-being outcomes. Additionally, t-tests were used to compare well-being outcomes across categorical demographic variables and to see whether there were differences in psychological well-being between participants depending on whether they considered themselves to be adults.

Two-way ANOVAs were performed to compare well-being outcomes across household types and to test whether there was a significant interaction effect between

household type and age (i.e. under or over 30 years of age) with regards to psychological well-being. Additionally, t-tests were conducted to compare well-being outcomes between participants renting from different types of landlord, and between those who ate dinner alone with above or below average frequency in the two weeks prior to taking the survey. Pearson's correlation was then calculated to assess whether psychological well-being was significantly associated with continuous housing-related variables (home happiness, transience, and homeownership aspiration gap).

Finally, HMR analyses were used to predict scores on each of the three psychological well-being measures. Demographic variables that showed a significant association with at least one well-being outcome were added to each model at step 1. Subjective adult identity was then added in step 2. At step 3, housing-related variables (apart from household type) that univariate analyses had showed to be significantly associated with at least one well-being outcome were added to the models. Then, in the fourth step, household type was added to the models.

## 7.3 – Results

### 7.3.1 – Exploring Key Housing-Related Variables

Descriptive statistics were calculated for the extent to which participants felt at home in their current property, the ratings they gave for the desirability and probability of homeownership, and how frequently they had eaten dinner alone in the two weeks prior to completing the survey. Analyses were then conducted to see whether these variables differed by household type and a PCA was performed to reduce dimensionality among housing-related variables.

#### *7.3.1.1 – Feeling at Home*

The majority of participants reported feeling at home where they were living, at least some of the time (see Table 7.3). Across the whole sample, almost half of participants (46%) reported feeling at home in their current property and a further 34% reported feeling at home sometimes. When looking just at house sharers, 35% of participants stated that they felt fully at home where they were living and 39% said they felt at home sometimes.

**Table 7.3**

*Frequencies for the Extent to Which Participants Felt at Home, by Household Type (n = 385)*

| Do you feel at home in your current property? | Living alone | | Living just with partner and/or child(ren) | | House sharing | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *n* | % | *n* | % | *n* | % | *n* | % |
| Yes | 41 | 46% | 109 | 51% | 28 | 35% | 178 | 46% |
| Sometimes | 30 | 33% | 68 | 32% | 31 | 39% | 129 | 34% |
| No | 19 | 21% | 39 | 18% | 20 | 25% | 78 | 20% |

A chi-square test was used to compare whether there was an association between the type of household a participant lived in and whether they reported feeling fully at home (answering 'yes') or not (answering 'sometimes' or 'no'). When all three household types were compared, the result approached significance: $X^2(2)$ = 5.27, $p$ = .07, Cramer's V = .12. (When cohabiting sharers were excluded, the result remained non-significant.) Pairwise comparisons were also performed to compare house sharers to each of the two other household types. (A Bonferroni correction was applied, reducing the alpha level to $p$ = .025.) These tests revealed that participants living just with their partner and/or child(ren) were significantly more likely than participants living in house shares to report feeling fully at home: $X^2(1)$ = 5.25, $p$ = .02, Cramer's V = .13. However, this result became non-significant when cohabiting sharers were excluded ($p$ = .12). This difference was due to the high proportion of cohabiting sharers who reported not feeling fully at home where they were living. When house sharers and participants living alone were compared there was no significant difference in how likely they were to report feeling at home: $X^2(1)$ = 1.78, $p$ = .18, Cramer's V = .10. This result remained non-significant when cohabiting sharers were excluded from the analysis.

### 7.3.1.2 – Perceptions of, and Aspirations to, Homeownership

The majority of participants aspired to homeownership. Indeed, 52% of participants rated the desirability of homeownership as 10 out of 10, compared to only 16% who rated the desirability of homeownership as 5 out of 10 or lower. However, 37% of participants rated their own probability of achieving homeownership as 1 out of 10, and 65% rated their probability as 5 out of 10 or lower. Only 10% of participants rated their probability of

achieving homeownership as 10 out of 10. The mean rating across the sample for probability was 4.24 ($SD$ = 3.21) and the mean rating for desirability was 8.19 ($SD$ = 2.54).

As shown in Table 7.4, there was a significant effect of household type on the ratings participants gave for how likely they were to achieve homeownership ($p$ < .001) and how desirable they found the idea of homeownership to be ($p$ = .006).[30] Post-hoc Games-Howell tests showed that participants who were living alone gave significantly lower ratings for their probability of becoming homeowners compared to house sharers ($p$ = .001, mean difference BCa 95% CI [-2.54, -0.69]) and compared to participants who were living just with their partner and/or child(ren) ($p$ < .001, mean difference BCa 95% CI [-2.28, -0.75]). Participants who were living alone also gave significantly lower ratings for the desirability of homeownership compared to participants living with their partner and/or child(ren) ($p$ = .02, mean difference BCa 95% CI [-1.75, -0.39]). No other pairwise comparisons were significant. (Excluding cohabiting house sharers from the analyses did not change the significance of the main effect or subsequent post-hoc analyses for probability or desirability of homeownership.)

**Table 7.4**

*Descriptive Statistics and One-Way ANOVAs Comparing Perceptions of Homeownership Across Household Types*

| Measure | $n$ | Living alone | | Living just with partner and/or child(ren) | | House sharing | | $F$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | $M$ | $SD$ | $M$ | $SD$ | $M$ | $SD$ | |
| Probability of homeownership | 366 | 3.03[a] | 2.62 | 4.58[b] | 3.37 | 4.68[b] | 3.07 | 8.28*** |
| Desirability of homeownership | 365 | 7.44[a] | 3.05 | 8.47[b] | 2.30 | 8.29[ab] | 2.41 | 5.15** |
| Homeownership aspiration gap | 365 | -4.41 | 3.63 | -3.87 | 3.84 | -3.61 | 3.57 | 1.01 |

*Note.* Means that share superscripts do not differ significantly.

** $p$ < .01 (two-tailed), *** $p$ < .001 (two-tailed)

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[30] Due to the assumption of homogeneity of variance being violated, Kruskal-Wallis tests were also performed to compare probability and desirability of homeownership across household types. (Kruskal-Wallis tests were chosen as the data was similarly distributed across household types in both variables.) For both variables, the Kruskal-Wallis tests showed the same pattern of significance in terms of main effects and pairwise comparisons as reported above for the ANOVAs.

Homeownership aspiration gap scores ranged from -9 to 7 and 73% of participants had a negative score, signifying that they viewed homeownership as more desirable than it was probable. The mean aspiration gap across the whole sample was -3.94 ($SD = 3.74$). There was no significant difference between household types in terms of homeownership aspiration gap (see Table 7.4). Excluding cohabiting house sharers from the analysis did not change the significance of this result.

### 7.3.1.3 – Frequency of Eating Dinner Alone

When asked on how many nights they had eaten dinner alone over the last two weeks, 21% of participants reported they had eaten dinner alone every night and 34% of participants reported that they had not eaten dinner alone on any night. Across the dataset, this produced a strongly bimodal distribution. The decision was therefore made to median split this variable and treat it as a dichotomous variable, with those who had eaten dinner alone six nights or fewer being classed as having below average frequency of eating dinner alone and those who had eaten dinner alone seven or more nights being classed as having above average frequency of eating dinner alone. Across the whole sample, 37% of participants were classified as eating dinner alone with above average frequency.

As shown in Table 7.5, there was a significant difference between household types in terms of frequency of eating dinner alone ($p < .001$, Cramer's V = .70). Participants living alone were significantly more likely than participants living in house shares ($p < .001$) and participants living just with their partner and/or child(ren) ($p < .001$) to have eaten dinner alone with above average frequency in the two weeks prior to completing the survey. Additionally, house sharers were significantly more likely to have eaten dinner alone with above average frequency, compared to participants living just with their partner and/or child(ren) ($p < .001$).[31]

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[31] Excluding cohabiting house sharers from the analyses did not change the significance of the overall chi-square test or the subsequent pairwise comparisons.

**Table 7.5**

*Percentage of Participants Who Ate Dinner Alone With Above Average Frequency in the Two Weeks Prior to Completing the Survey, by Household Type*

| Frequency of eating dinner alone | Living alone | | Living just with partner and/or child(ren) | | House sharing | | $X^2(2)$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *n* | % | *n* | % | *n* | % | |
| Above average | 83 | 92%[a] | 23 | 10%[b] | 44 | 53%[c] | 197.56*** |

*Note.* Percentages that share superscripts do not differ significantly.

*** $p < .001$ (two-tailed)

### 7.3.1.4 – PCA of Housing-Related Measures

Given the number of housing-related items included in the survey, correlations between these items were investigated to see if there was evidence that it may be possible to reduce dimensionality (see Table 7.6). Due to the numerous significant correlations between the items, the decision was made to conduct a PCA. Homeownership aspiration gap and frequency of eating dinner alone were not included in the PCA due to having no correlations above $r = \pm.3$ with any of the other variables. The remaining five housing-related items were included in the PCA. The overall KMO measure was .58 and the KMO value for each item was at least .52, demonstrating sufficient sampling adequacy. Additionally, Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($p < .001$).

**Table 7.6**

*Pearson's Correlation Between Housing-Related Items (n = 321)*

| Variable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Time in property (years) | — | | | | | |
| 2. Number of properties lived in | -.49*** [-.54, -.44] | — | | | | |
| 3. Feeling at home [a] | .06 [-.04, .16] | -.06 [-.15, .05] | — | | | |
| 4. Satisfaction with living situation [b] | -.04 [-.15, .08] | .04 [-.07, .14] | .70*** [.63, .77] | — | | |
| 5. Plan to move [c] | .20*** [.08, .32] | -.18** [-.28, -.08] | .35*** [.25, .43] | .38*** [.28, .48] | — | |
| 6. Homeownership aspiration gap | -.18** [-.29, -.06] | .10 [-.02, .21] | .21*** [.10, .32] | .18** [.07, .28] | -.19** [-.29, -.08] | — |
| 7. Frequency of eating dinner alone [d] | .10 [-.01, .20] | -.03 [-.13, .09] | -.20*** [-.31, -.09] | -.18** [-.29, -.08] | -.09 [-.20, .02] | -.17** [-.26, -.08] |

a. Higher values = higher levels of feeling at home

b. Higher values = higher levels of satisfaction with current living situation

c. Higher values = longer period of time that the participant planned to remain in their current property

d. Below average frequency of eating dinner alone = 0, Above average frequency of eating dinner alone = 1

** $p < .01$ (two-tailed), *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed)

 

Two components with eigenvalues greater than 1 were obtained, explaining 40.2% and 30.3% of the variance in the data, respectively. Visual inspection of the scree plot also

supported the decision to retain these two components. Table 7.7 shows component loadings for each item after rotation (direct oblimin). The items loading on Component 1 match the items that loaded on the home happiness component developed through PCA in Chapter 6 and the items loading on Component 2 are the same as those that loaded on the transience component in Chapter 6, so the labels home happiness and transience are retained here.

**Table 7.7**

*Results From a PCA of Housing-Related Items (n = 346)*

| Item | Rotated component loadings (pattern matrix) | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 |
| | Home happiness | Transience |
| Satisfaction with living situation | **.91** | .19 |
| Feeling at home | **.88** | .04 |
| Plan to move | **.62** | -.26 |
| Time in property (years) | -.04 | **-.85** |
| Number of properties lived in over last 10 years | -.02 | **.85** |

*Note.* The variable 'time in property' had several outliers. Of 369 participants, 10 were identified as extreme outliers (classed as more than 3 times the IQR above the $3^{rd}$ quartile). The PCA was repeated with these 10 scores removed; however, this did not change the components that were extracted and caused only minimal alterations to component loadings.

The z-scores for satisfaction with living situation, feeling at home, and plan to move were then summed to calculate each participant's home happiness component score. The home happiness component had a Cronbach's alpha of .72. Transience component scores were calculated by subtracting the z-score for time in property from the z-score for number of properties lived in. The transience component had a Cronbach's alpha of .65. Additionally, for each component, all items had item-total correlations above .3.

One-way ANOVAs were conducted to compare home happiness and transience component scores across household types (see Table 7.8). There was a significant difference between the groups in terms of home happiness ($p = .001$) and in terms of transience ($p < .001$). Post-hoc Hochberg's GT2 comparisons showed that participants living in house shares had significantly lower home happiness compared to participants living just with their partner and/or child(ren) ($p = .001$, mean difference BCa 95% CI [-1.65, -0.29]) and compared to participants living alone ($p = .03$, mean difference BCa 95% CI [-1.71, -0.59]). House sharers also had significantly higher transience scores compared to participants living just with their partner and/or child(ren) ($p < .001$, mean difference BCa 95% CI [0.58, 1.75]) and compared to participants living alone ($p < .001$, mean difference BCa 95% CI [0.49, 1.36]). Participants living alone did not differ significantly from participants living just with their partner and/or child(ren) on either component.

**Table 7.8**

*Comparison of Home Happiness and Transience Component Scores Across Household Types*

| Component | *n* | Living alone | | Living just with partner and/or child(ren) | | House sharing | | *F* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | |
| Home happiness | 385 | 0.09[a] | 2.51 | 0.29[a] | 2.35 | -0.86[b] | 2.25 | 6.84** |
| Transience | 368 | -0.35[a] | 1.97 | -0.10[a] | 1.54 | 0.82[b] | 1.69 | 11.31*** |

*Note.* Means that share superscripts do not differ significantly.

** $p < .01$ (two-tailed), *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed)

Excluding cohabiting house sharers from the analysis did not lead to any changes in the significance of the main effect or subsequent pairwise analyses for transience. With regard to home happiness, the main effect remained significant ($p = .007$), as did the pairwise comparison between house sharers and participants living just with their partner and/or child(ren) ($p = .005$). However, the pairwise comparison between house sharers and participants living alone now only approached significance ($p = .08$) (although the bootstrapped 95% CI for the mean difference did not cross zero [-1.61, -0.11]). This change was due to the mean home happiness score of house sharers increasing when cohabiting sharers were excluded, thus reducing the difference between house sharers and participants

in other types of households. Compared to a mean home happiness score of -0.77 among non-cohabiting house sharers, cohabiting house sharers had a mean home happiness score of -1.29. However, given the small number of cohabiting house sharers in the sample ($n =$ 12), it is not possible to draw any firm conclusions about whether there are differences between the two groups of house sharers.

**7.3.2 – Does Household Type Predict Likelihood of Seeing Oneself as an Adult?**

Only nine participants (2%) reported that they did not consider themselves to be adults. This is in comparison to 77 participants (20%) who reported that they considered themselves to be adults in some ways but not in other ways, and 291 participants (77%) who stated that they considered themselves to be adults. For subsequent analyses, 'no' and 'in some ways yes, in some ways no' responses were grouped together to make a 'not fully adult' group, which was compared to the 'yes, I am an adult' group.

***7.3.2.1 – Associations Between Demographic Variables and Subjective Adult Identity***

As can be seen in Table 7.9, there was a significant correlation between age and whether a participant considered themself to be an adult ($p < .001$), with older participants being more likely to view themselves as adults. Income was not significantly associated with subjective adult identity.[32]

**Table 7.9**

*Pearson's Correlation for Age, Income, and Subjective Adult Identity (n = 372)*

| Variable | Correlation with consider self an adult |
|---|---|
| Age | .21***<br>[.11, .29] |
| Income | .08<br>[-.03, .17] |

*** $p < .001$ (two-tailed)

Chi-square tests were used to examine whether there was an association between categorical demographic variables and whether a participant considered themself to be fully

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[32] Calculating Kendall's tau for the association between income and subjective adult identity did not change the significance of the correlation.

adult (see Table 7.10). The only variable that showed a significant association with subjective adult identity was SGM status ($p$ = .003). In total, 81% of cisgender heterosexual participants considered themselves to be adults, compared to 66% of LGBTQ+ participants.

**Table 7.10**

*Chi-square Tests of Association Between Demographic Variables and Whether Participants Considered Themselves to Be Fully Adult or Not*

| Variable | $n$ | $X^2$ | $df$ | $p$ | Cramer's V |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender [a] | 375 | 0.19 | 1 | .66 | .02 |
| Nationality [b] | 320 | 1.46 | 1 | .23 | .07 |
| Ethnicity [c] | 372 | 0.12 | 1 | .73 | .02 |
| SGM status [d] | 366 | 8.70 | 1 | .003 | .15 |
| Disability | 375 | 0.20 | 1 | .66 | .02 |
| Employment [e] | 377 | 2.33 | 2 | .31 | .08 |

a. Based on a comparison of male and non-male participants. When the analysis was re-run excluding non-binary participants, the result remained non-significant.

b. Based on a comparison of British and non-British participants.

c. Based on a comparison of White and ethnic minority participants.

d. Based on a comparison of cisgender heterosexual participants and LGBTQ+ participants.

e. Based on a comparison of participants who worked full-time, who worked part-time, and who were not in paid work at the time they completed the survey.

### 7.3.2.2 – Associations Between Housing-Related Variables and Subjective Adult Identity

As shown in Table 7.11, the proportion of participants who described themselves as adults differed according to household type ($p$ < .001, Cramer's V = .23). Subsequent pairwise comparisons showed that house sharers and participants who lived alone did not significantly differ with regards to subjective adult identity ($p$ = .25). However, participants

who lived just with their partner and/or child(ren) were significantly more likely to consider themselves to be adults, compared to participants who were house sharing ($p < .001$). Excluding cohabiting sharers from the analysis did not change the significance of the main effect or subsequent pairwise comparisons.

**Table 7.11**

*Proportion of Participants Who Considered Themselves to Be Fully Adult Across Household Types*

| Consider self an adult | Living alone | | Living just with partner and/or child(ren) | | Living in a house share | | $X^2(2)$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *n* | % | *n* | % | *n* | % | |
| Yes | 61 | 71% | 182 | 85% | 48 | 62% | 19.06*** |

*** $p < .001$ (two-tailed)

The proportion of participants aged 30 years or over who considered themselves to be fully adult was also compared depending on whether participants lived in a house share or not (see Table 7.12). Amongst the over-thirties, there was no significant difference between house sharers and those not living in house shares in terms of the proportion who considered themselves to be adults. Excluding cohabiting house sharers from the analysis did not change the significance of this result.

**Table 7.12**

*Proportion of Participants Aged 30 Years or Over Who Considered Themselves to Be Fully Adult, by House Sharing Status*

| Consider self an adult | House sharers aged 30 or over | | Non-house sharing participants aged 30 or over | | $X^2(1)$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *n* | % | *n* | % | |
| Yes | 30 | 73% | 200 | 82% | 1.90 |

Finally, t-tests were used to see whether participants' scores on the home happiness and transience components differed depending on whether or not they considered themselves to be fully adult (see Table 7.13). There was a significant difference between the groups with regards to both home happiness ($p$ = .02) and transience ($p$ = .008). Participants who considered themselves to be adults reported significantly higher levels of home happiness and significantly lower levels of transience, compared to those who did not.

**Table 7.13**

*Mean Comparison of Home Happiness and Transience Component Scores Depending on Whether Participants Considered Themselves to Be Fully Adult*

| Component | *n* | Does not consider self fully adult | | Considers self an adult | | *t* | Mean difference BCa 95% CI | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | | *LL* | *UL* |
| Home happiness | 374 | -0.49 | 2.23 | 0.18 | 2.43 | -2.28* | -1.24 | -0.13 |
| Transience | 338 | 0.49 | 1.66 | -0.12 | 1.80 | 2.68** | 0.16 | 1.04 |

*Note. LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit.

\* *p* < .05 (two-tailed), \*\* *p* < .01 (two-tailed)

### 7.3.2.3 – Logistic Regression Predicting Likelihood of Considering Oneself to Be an Adult

Logistic regression was used to develop a model to predict whether a participant considered themself to be an adult or not. As age and SGM status were found to be significantly associated with subjective adult identity, these demographic variables were added in the first step of the regression (Model 1). Then, home happiness and transience were added in Model 2. Finally, household type was added in Model 3 as two dummy variables, with house sharing as the reference category, to see if any variance would be explained by household type once the other variables had been taken into account.

Crosstabulations of all possible pairs of categorical variables (predictors and outcome) were checked to ensure adequate expected frequencies for each cell (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). All cells had an expected frequency above 5, so the assumptions of the goodness-of-fit test were met. When the analysis was initially run, one participant had a

Cook's distance of 1.05, suggesting that they had undue influence on the model. (This same participant also had a standardised residual of -4.36, seemingly due to the fact that they were 78 years old and reported that they did not consider themself to be an adult.) This participant was therefore excluded, and the analysis was re-run.

When the analysis was re-run, no participant had a Cook's distance above 0.21 or a DFBeta greater than ±1, showing that no individual case had undue influence over the model. The assumption of the linearity of the logit was checked using the Box-Tidwell test and was found to have been met due to none of the interaction terms between each of the three continuous predictor variables (age, home happiness, and transience) and the log transformation of that variable being significant.[33] Additionally, tolerances, variance inflation factors, condition indices, and variance proportions for the predictors showed no evidence of multicollinearity. The data can therefore be seen as meeting the assumptions of logistic regression. Moreover, the sample size was deemed to be sufficient as it exceeded the minimum recommended EPV of 10 (Peduzzi et al., 1995, 1996). The less prevalent outcome with regards to the dependent variable was for participants to not consider themself to be fully adult ($n = 77$) and six predictors were included in the model. Therefore, the EPV was (77/6 =) 12.83.

Summary statistics for the analysis are available in Table 7.14. The model was significant ($p < .001$) at each step. Additionally, the Hosmer and Lemeshow test was not significant at any step, so there was no evidence of poor fit.

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[33] As home happiness and transience included negative values, a constant was added to each score before the log transformation (5 in the case of home happiness, due to the smallest home happiness score being -4.96, and 7 in the case of transience, due to the smallest transience score being -6.48). This is in line with the recommendations of Field (2013).

**Table 7.14**

*Summary Statistics for Logistic Regression Model Predicting Likelihood of a Participant Considering Themself an Adult (n = 325)*

| Step | -2LL | % correctly classified | Nagelkerke $R^2$ | Summary statistics for step | | | Summary statistics for overall model | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | $X^2$ | df | p | $X^2$ | df | p |
| 1 | 327.01 | 77.2% | .13 | 28.87 | 2 | < .001 | 28.87 | 2 | < .001 |
| 2 | 323.51 | 78.2% | .14 | 3.51 | 2 | .17 | 32.37 | 4 | < .001 |
| 3 | 313.43 | 76.6% | .18 | 10.08 | 2 | .006 | 42.45 | 6 | < .001 |

*Note.* Initial -2LL = 355.88. Model 0 correctly classified 76.3% of cases.

The coefficients and odds ratios for individual predictors are shown in Table 7.15. Age was the only significant predictor in any of the models (*p* = .001 in each model). Across all three models, the odds of someone considering themself to be an adult were 1.07 higher with each additional year of age. Adding home happiness and transience in Model 2 did not significantly improve the model. Model 3 represented a significant improvement on Model 2 (*p* = .006). However, with regards to individual predictors, living alone was not a significant predictor and living just with one's partner and/or child(ren) only approached significance (*p* = .08). Excluding cohabiting house sharers from the analysis did not change the significance of any of the models or individual predictors.

**Table 7.15**

*Coefficients for Predictors in Logistic Regression Model Predicting Whether a Participant Considered Themself an Adult (n = 325)*

| Variable | Model 1 | | | | | Model 2 | | | | | Model 3 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *B* | *SE* | Odds ratio | 95% CI for odds ratio | | *B* | *SE* | Odds ratio | 95% CI for odds ratio | | *B* | *SE* | Odds ratio | 95% CI for odds ratio | |
| | | | | *LL* | *UL* | | | | *LL* | *UL* | | | | *LL* | *UL* |
| Constant | -1.12* [-2.15, -0.19] | 0.50 | 0.33 | | | -0.91 [-2.03, 0.09] | 0.59 | 0.40 | | | -1.34* [-2.57, -0.28] | 0.63 | 0.26 | | |
| Age | 0.07** [0.04, 0.10] | 0.01 | 1.07 | 1.04 | 1.10 | 0.06** [0.03, 0.10] | 0.02 | 1.07 | 1.03 | 1.10 | 0.07** [0.04, 0.11] | 0.02 | 1.07 | 1.03 | 1.11 |
| SGM status | -0.35 [-0.89, 0.25] | 0.29 | 0.70 | 0.40 | 1.25 | -0.32 [-0.87, 0.27] | 0.29 | 0.72 | 0.41 | 1.29 | -0.31 [-0.87, 0.29] | 0.30 | 0.74 | 0.41 | 1.33 |
| Home happiness | | | | | | 0.09 [-0.03, 0.23] | 0.06 | 1.10 | 0.97 | 1.23 | 0.07 [-0.06, 0.22] | 0.07 | 1.08 | 0.95 | 1.21 |
| Transience | | | | | | -0.09 [-0.29, 0.09] | 0.10 | 0.92 | 0.75 | 1.12 | -0.08 [-0.28, 0.12] | 0.10 | 0.93 | 0.76 | 1.13 |
| Living alone | | | | | | | | | | | -0.52 [-1.38, 0.28] | 0.45 | 0.60 | 0.26 | 1.37 |
| Living just with partner and/or child(ren) | | | | | | | | | | | 0.59 [-0.08, 1.29] | 0.35 | 1.81 | 0.93 | 3.53 |

* *p* < .05 (two-tailed), ** *p* < .01 (two-tailed)

Despite Model 3 representing a significant improvement on Model 2, the number of cases correctly classified by the model actually declined between Model 2 (78.2%) and Model 3 (76.6%). This seems to be due to the difficulty the model had in correctly predicting who would give a 'not fully an adult' response. Indeed, the proportion of 'not fully adult' responses correctly classified was 3.9% in Model 1, 10.4% in Model 2, and 13.0% in Model 3. When examining residuals, 10 participants (3% of cases) had standardised residuals beyond -2.5. Furthermore, two participants (0.6% of cases) had standardised residuals beyond -3. Of these two participants, one was 39 years old and living with her children and the other was 43 years old and living with his wife. In both cases, the model wrongly predicted they would consider themselves to be adults. Both participants wrote comments to explain why they had responded 'in some ways yes, in some ways no' and these comments reflected a sense of still feeling young or childlike in some way, at least in some aspects of their life. For example, one of the participants wrote "I am a big kid at heart" and the other said that they "still feel like a teenager most days!". Therefore, although Model 3 represented a significant improvement on Model 2, the ability of the model to correctly classify people who did not consider themselves to be fully adult remained limited.

### 7.3.3 – Does Household Type Predict Well-Being Outcomes?

In this final stage of the analysis, descriptive statistics for the psychological well-being outcomes measured by the survey are presented first. This is followed by analyses exploring whether psychological well-being was associated with demographic characteristics, subjective adult identity, and/or housing-related variables.

#### *7.3.3.1 – Descriptive Statistics for Well-Being Outcome Variables*

Descriptive statistics and inter-correlations for the three well-being measures are shown in Table 7.16. Both positive affect and satisfaction with life showed a significant negative correlation with negative affect ($p < .001$ for both correlations). Additionally, there was a significant positive correlation between positive affect and satisfaction with life ($p < .001$).

**Table 7.16**

*Descriptive Statistics and Inter-Correlations for Psychological Well-Being Outcome Variables*

| Well-being outcome | *n* | *M* | *SD* | *Mdn* | Range | Pearson's correlation | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 1. Positive affect | 353 | 28.90 | 8.38 | 29 | 39 | — | | |
| 2. Negative affect | 358 | 24.74 | 8.81 | 24 | 40 | -.35*** <br> [-.44, -.26] | — | |
| 3. Satisfaction with life | 359 | 17.42 | 7.57 | 17 | 30 | .50*** <br> [.40, .59] | -.44*** <br> [-.52, -.34] | — |

*** *p* < .001 (two-tailed)

### 7.3.3.2 – Associations Between Demographic Variables and Well-Being Outcomes

Correlations between age, income, and well-being outcomes can be seen in Table 7.17.[34] Age showed a significant negative correlation with satisfaction with life, with older people generally reporting lower satisfaction with life (*p* < .001). Additionally, there was a significant association between income and positive affect (*p* < .001) and between income and satisfaction with life (*p* < .001). Participants who earned a higher income generally reported higher levels of positive affect and satisfaction with life. No other associations were significant.

**Table 7.17**

*Pearson's Correlation Between Age, Income, and Well-Being Outcomes (n = 340)*

| Variable | Positive affect | Negative affect | Satisfaction with life |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Age | -.06 <br> [-.17, .06] | -.06 <br> [-.16, .03] | -.20*** <br> [-.30, -.08] |
| Income | .22*** <br> [.11, .33] | -.09 <br> [-.19, .02] | .26*** <br> [.15, .36] |

*** *p* < .001 (two-tailed)

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[34] Calculating Kendall's tau for the associations between income and well-being outcomes did not change the significance of any of the correlations.

Results of t-tests comparing well-being outcomes across categorical demographic variables are shown in Table 7.18. There was a significant difference in levels of positive affect depending on gender, with male participants reporting significantly higher levels of positive affect than female and non-binary participants ($p < .001$, mean difference BCa 95% CI [1.32, 6.37]). Male participants also reported significantly higher satisfaction with life compared to female and non-binary participants ($p = .01$, mean difference BCa 95% CI [0.55, 4.22]). When non-binary participants were excluded from the analysis, the same pattern of results was found, with male participants having significantly higher positive affect ($p < .001$) and satisfaction with life ($p = .01$) than female participants. There was a significant difference in levels of negative affect depending on SGM status, with cisgender heterosexual participants reporting significantly lower negative affect, compared to LGBTQ+ participants ($p = .008$, mean difference BCa 95% CI [-5.05, -0.63]). Additionally, participants who were disabled had significantly worse outcomes on all three well-being measures. Participants who were not disabled reported higher levels of positive affect ($p < .001$, mean difference BCa 95% CI [1.76, 5.48]), lower levels of negative affect ($p < .001$, mean difference BCa 95% CI [-6.94, -2.29]), and higher levels of satisfaction with life ($p < .001$, mean difference BCa 95% CI [3.20, 7.07]) compared to disabled participants. There were no significant differences in any of the well-being outcomes based on participants' nationality or ethnicity. However, the effect of nationality on negative affect approached significance ($p = .08$, mean difference BCa 95% CI [-5.91, 0.24]), with British participants tending to report lower levels of negative affect than participants who were not British.

**Table 7.18**

*Mean Comparison of Well-Being Outcomes Across Demographic Characteristics*

| Demographic characteristic | Positive affect | | | | Negative affect | | | | Satisfaction with life | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | n | M | SD | t | n | M | SD | t | n | M | SD | t |
| Gender [a] | 351 | | | 3.65*** | 356 | | | -1.52 | 357 | | | 2.52* |
| Male | | 32.14 | 8.87 | | | 23.38 | 8.42 | | | 19.50 | 7.97 | |
| Non-male | | 28.13 | 8.08 | | | 25.14 | 8.89 | | | 16.98 | 7.39 | |
| Nationality | 304 | | | -1.53 | 307 | | | -1.74 | 307 | | | -1.43 |
| British | | 28.50 | 8.22 | | | 24.51 | 8.86 | | | 17.11 | 7.46 | |
| Non-British | | 30.72 | 7.83 | | | 27.25 | 8.88 | | | 19.06 | 8.58 | |
| Ethnicity | 349 | | | -1.33 | 354 | | | -0.62 | 355 | | | -0.12 |
| White | | 28.74 | 8.32 | | | 24.65 | 8.69 | | | 17.41 | 7.66 | |
| Ethnic minority | | 31.08 | 8.64 | | | 25.83 | 10.40 | | | 17.61 | 6.43 | |
| SGM status | 344 | | | 0.45 | 350 | | | -2.67** | 350 | | | 0.05 |
| Cisgender heterosexual | | 29.14 | 8.75 | | | 23.97 | 8.66 | | | 17.62 | 7.31 | |
| LGBTQ+ | | 28.70 | 7.47 | | | 26.77 | 8.85 | | | 17.57 | 8.17 | |
| Disability | 351 | | | 3.73*** | 356 | | | -4.04*** | 357 | | | 5.20*** |
| Disabled | | 29.66 | 8.53 | | | 23.73 | 8.22 | | | 18.44 | 7.39 | |
| Not disabled | | 25.99 | 7.16 | | | 28.29 | 9.84 | | | 13.42 | 7.05 | |

** $p < .01$ (two-tailed), *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed)

### 7.3.3.3 – Associations Between Subjective Adult Identity and Well-Being Outcomes

As can be seen in Table 7.19, participants who did not describe themselves as adults reported significantly higher levels of negative affect, compared to participants who considered themselves to be adults ($p$ = .01). There were no significant differences in levels of positive affect or satisfaction with life depending on subjective adult identity.

**Table 7.19**

*Mean Comparison of Well-Being Outcomes Depending on Whether Participants Considered Themselves to Be Fully Adult*

| Well-being outcome | n | Does not consider self fully adult | | Considers self an adult | | t | Mean difference BCa 95% CI | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | M | SD | M | SD | | LL | UL |
| Positive affect | 353 | 28.40 | 7.93 | 29.05 | 8.52 | -0.61 | -2.46 | 1.40 |
| Negative affect | 358 | 26.92 | 8.53 | 24.08 | 8.80 | 2.59* | 0.72 | 4.95 |
| Satisfaction with life | 359 | 16.85 | 7.89 | 17.60 | 7.47 | -0.80 | -2.75 | 1.31 |

*Note. LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit.

* $p$ < .05 (two-tailed)

### 7.3.3.4 – Associations Between Housing-Related Variables and Well-Being Outcomes

Descriptive statistics for well-being outcomes across household types are shown in Table 7.20. There was not a significant main effect of household type on levels of positive affect or negative affect. Additionally there was not a significant interaction effect between household type and age (based on a comparison of participants aged 18-29 years and those aged 30+ years) with regards to positive or negative affect. There was however a significant difference in levels of satisfaction with life depending on household type ($p$ = .004). Post-hoc Hochberg's GT2 comparisons showed that participants who lived alone had significantly lower satisfaction with life compared to participants living just with their partner and/or child(ren) ($p$ = .002, mean difference BCa 95% CI [-5.17, -1.50]) and compared to house sharers ($p$ = .045, mean difference BCa 95% CI [-5.25, -0.41]). House sharers and participants living just with their partner and/or child(ren) did not differ significantly in terms of satisfaction with life. There was also a significant main effect of age, with participants who

were aged 18-29 years having significantly higher satisfaction with life, compared to those aged 30 years or over ($p$ = .02). However, there was not a significant interaction effect between household type and age with regards to satisfaction with life. Excluding cohabiting house sharers from the analyses reported in Table 7.20 did not change the significance of any of the main effects or interaction effects. However, in post-hoc comparisons, house sharers no longer differed significantly from participants who lived alone with regards to satisfaction with life. This was due to the mean satisfaction with life score among house sharers declining to 17.18 when cohabiting house sharers were excluded. There were no other changes to the significance of any pairwise comparisons.

**Table 7.20**

*Descriptive Statistics and Two-Way ANOVAs Testing Main and Interaction Effects of Household Type and Age on Well-Being Outcomes*

| Variable | Positive affect | | | | Negative affect | | | | Satisfaction with life | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *n* | *M* | *SD* | *F* | *n* | *M* | *SD* | *F* | *n* | *M* | *SD* | *F* |
| Main effect of household type | 353 | | | 0.78 | 358 | | | 1.14 | 359 | | | 5.57** |
| Living alone | | 28.65 | 8.80 | | | 24.89 | 8.80 | | | 14.95 | 6.88 | |
| Living just with partner and/or child(ren) | | 28.70 | 8.39 | | | 24.00 | 9.09 | | | 18.30 | 7.31 | |
| House sharing | | 29.68 | 7.94 | | | 26.57 | 7.82 | | | 17.81 | 8.44 | |
| Main effect of age | | | | 0.29 | | | | 0.13 | | | | 5.84* |
| Under 30 years of age | | 28.70 | 7.61 | | | 25.66 | 8.65 | | | 19.90 | 7.46 | |
| Aged 30 years or over | | 28.96 | 8.63 | | | 24.43 | 8.85 | | | 16.59 | 7.44 | |
| Interaction effect Household type * age | | | | 0.52 | | | | 1.20 | | | | 2.30 |

* $p < .05$ (two-tailed), ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed)

Participants renting from private landlords were compared to all other participants (combining social tenants and participants renting from friends or family) with regards to well-being outcomes (see Table 7.21). There were no significant differences between the groups in terms of any of the three well-being measures. However, the comparison of levels of satisfaction with life approached significance ($p = .08$).

**Table 7.21**

*Mean Comparison of Well-Being Outcomes According to Type of Landlord*

| Well-being outcome | $n$ | Renting from private landlord | | Renting from social landlord, family, or friend | | $t$ | Mean difference BCa 95% CI | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | | *LL* | *UL* |
| Positive affect | 352 | 29.05 | 8.33 | 28.04 | 8.77 | 0.81 | -1.41 | 3.59 |
| Negative affect | 357 | 24.51 | 8.61 | 25.81 | 9.78 | -0.98 | -4.38 | 1.45 |
| Satisfaction with life | 358 | 17.73 | 7.55 | 15.80 | 7.59 | 1.73 | -0.05 | 3.98 |

*Note. LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit.

The analysis in Table 7.21 was re-run excluding participants who were renting from family or friends ($n = 14$), so that private tenants could be compared purely to participants renting from social landlords. There remained no significant difference in terms of positive and negative affect. However, when private and social tenants were compared, there was a significant difference between the groups in levels of satisfaction with life: $t(343) = 2.95$, $p = .003$, mean difference BCa 95% CI [1.27, 6.20]. Private renters experienced significantly higher satisfaction with life compared to social tenants. This change in the significance of the result was due to social tenants having a mean satisfaction with life score of 14.05 compared to a mean score of 21.31 amongst participants renting from family and friends.

Associations between continuous housing-related variables and well-being outcomes are shown in Table 7.22. Home happiness was significantly correlated with all three well-being outcomes ($p \leq .001$ in all comparisons), with higher levels of home happiness being associated with higher positive affect, lower negative affect, and higher satisfaction with life. Transience was not significantly associated with positive or negative affect. However, there was a significant correlation between transience and satisfaction with life, with higher levels

of transience being associated with higher satisfaction with life ($p = .002$). Additionally, homeownership aspiration gap was significantly associated with all three well-being outcomes, with a more negative aspiration gap score being associated with lower positive affect ($p = .001$), higher negative affect ($p = .002$), and lower satisfaction with life ($p < .001$).

**Table 7.22**

*Pearson's Correlation Between Housing-Related Variables and Well-Being Outcomes (n = 296)*

| Variable | Positive affect | Negative affect | Satisfaction with life |
|---|---|---|---|
| Home happiness component score | .19** | -.26*** | .34*** |
| | [.08, .29] | [-.37, -.15] | [.24, .44] |
| Transience component score | .07 | .04 | .18** |
| | [-.04, .18] | [-.06, .15] | [.08, .27] |
| Homeownership aspiration gap | .19** | -.18** | .46*** |
| | [.08, .31] | [-.29, -.08] | [.36, .55] |

** $p < .01$ (two-tailed), *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed)

Finally, as can be seen in Table 7.23, participants who ate dinner alone with above average frequently had significantly worse outcomes across all three well-being measures, experiencing lower positive affect ($p = .04$), higher negative affect ($p = .03$), and lower satisfaction with life ($p < .001$) compared to those who had a below average frequency of eating dinner alone in the two weeks before completing the survey.

**Table 7.23**

*Comparison of Well-Being Outcomes Depending on Whether Participants Had Eaten Dinner With Above or Below Average Frequency in the Two Weeks Prior to Completing the Survey*

| Well-being outcome | *n* | Below average frequency of eating dinner alone | | Above average frequency of eating dinner alone | | *t* | Mean difference BCa 95% CI | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | | *LL* | *UL* |
| Positive affect | 349 | 29.58 | 8.66 | 27.69 | 7.70 | 2.11* | 0.03 | 3.79 |
| Negative affect | 354 | 23.97 | 8.62 | 26.14 | 9.08 | -2.24* | -4.11 | -0.14 |
| Satisfaction with life | 355 | 19.24 | 7.42 | 14.27 | 6.72 | 6.29*** | 3.45 | 6.65 |

*Note. LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit.

* *p* < .05 (two-tailed), *** *p* < .001 (two-tailed)

### 7.3.3.5 – Using HMR to Predict Well-Being Outcomes

HMR analyses were used to develop models to predict of each of the well-being outcomes. The demographic variables that univariate analyses had shown to have a significant association with at least one of the well-being outcomes (i.e. age, income, gender, SGM status, and disability) were added to the model first (Model 1). Then subjective adult identity was added in the second step. Housing-related variables that had a significant association with at least one well-being outcome (i.e. home happiness, transience, homeownership aspiration gap, frequency of eating dinner alone, and type of landlord) were then added in Model 3. Finally, household type was added in Model 4, with house sharing as the reference category.

When intercorrelations between the predictor variables were examined, there was no evidence of multicollinearity as no correlations were stronger than *r* = .65 (see Appendix K for full matrix). Additionally, the variance inflation factors, tolerances, condition index, and variance proportions for each regression analysis showed no evidence of multicollinearity. The Durbin-Watson statistic confirmed that the assumption of independent errors was met for each of the regression analyses. Examination of Cook's distances and standardised DFBeta statistics also confirmed there was no evidence of any particular case having undue influence on any of the analyses. The residuals for the models for positive affect and

satisfaction with life were normally distributed. However, the residuals for the negative affect model showed a slight positive skew. There was also evidence of slight heteroscedasticity in the model predicting satisfaction with life. Bootstrapping was therefore performed to produce robust CIs for the coefficients. The p-values and standard errors reported for the regression analyses were also calculated via bootstrapping.

Sensitivity analysis conducted using G*Power showed that each of the regression analyses reported in this section was sensitive to effects of $f^2 = .03$ with 80% power ($\alpha = .05$, number of tested predictors = 2, total number of predictors = 13). Therefore, the regression analyses reported in Sections 7.3.3.5.1 to 7.3.3.5.3 were deemed to have sufficient power to detect small effects ($f^2 \geq .03$) of household type on the measured psychological well-being variables (Cohen, 1988). However, these analyses were not able to reliably detect effects smaller than $f^2 = .03$.

**7.3.3.5.1 – Regression Analysis to Predict Positive Affect.** In the HMR analysis predicting positive affect, three participants (1% of cases) had standardised residuals over ± 2.5, the largest of which was -2.64. No participants had standardised residuals beyond ±3. As can be seen in Table 7.24, which shows summary statistics for the four steps of the analysis, the model was significant ($p < .001$) at each step and the final model explained 14% of the variance in the data. After Model 1, none of the models represented a significant improvement over the previous model. However, the change in $R^2$ between Models 2 and 3 was approaching significance ($p = .07$).

**Table 7.24**

*Summary Statistics for HMR Model Predicting Positive Affect*

| Statistic | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| $F$ | 5.55*** | 4.69*** | 3.55*** | 3.33*** |
| $R^2$ | .09 | .09 | .13 | .14 |
| $F$ for change in $R^2$ | 5.55*** | 0.44 | 2.09 | 1.94 |

*** $p < .001$ (two-tailed)

Coefficients for individual predictors are shown in Table 7.25. Income was a significant predictor of positive affect in all 4 models ($p = .002$ in Models 1 and 2, $p = .02$ in Model 3, $p = .01$ in Model 4), with participants who had higher incomes generally

experiencing higher levels of positive affect compared to participants on lower incomes. Gender was also a significant predictor in all models ($p$ = .001 in Models 1 and 2, $p$ = .005 in Models 3 and 4), with male participants generally experiencing higher positive affect than female and non-binary participants.[35] Additionally, home happiness was a significant predictor in Models 3 and 4 ($p$ = .01 in both models), with higher home happiness being associated with higher positive affect. Finally, frequency of eating dinner alone was a significant predictor of positive affect in Model 4 ($p$ = .03), with eating dinner alone with above average frequency predicting lower positive affect compared to eating dinner alone with below average frequency. Household type did not significantly predict positive affect.

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[35] Gender remained a significant predictor ($p$ < .005 in all models) when non-binary participants were excluded from the analysis.

**Table 7.25**

*Coefficients for Predictors in HMR Model Predicting Positive Affect (n = 284)*

| Variable | Model 1 | | | Model 2 | | | Model 3 | | | Model 4 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *B* | *SE B* | β | *B* | *SE B* | β | *B* | *SE B* | β | *B* | *SE B* | β |
| Constant | 31.47** [27.24, 35.35] | 2.12 | | 31.18** [26.87, 35.22] | 2.17 | | 31.62** [27.01, 36.34] | 2.34 | | 32.82** [28.30, 37.48] | 2.38 | |
| Age | -0.04 [-0.12, 0.04] | 0.04 | -.06 | -0.05 [-0.14, 0.03] | 0.05 | -.07 | -0.02 [-0.12, 0.08] | 0.05 | -.03 | -0.02 [-0.12, 0.08] | 0.05 | -.03 |
| Income | 1.08** [0.34, 1.69] | 0.34 | .18 | 1.07** [0.32, 1.68] | 0.34 | .17 | 0.86* [0.12, 1.54] | 0.36 | .14 | 0.90* [0.14, 1.58] | 0.36 | .15 |
| Gender | -4.16** [-6.65, -1.78] | 1.23 | -.20 | -4.15** [-6.64, -1.71] | 1.24 | -.20 | -3.72** [-6.17, -1.40] | 1.22 | -.18 | -3.54** [-6.01, -1.17] | 1.25 | -.17 |
| SGM status | -0.38 [-2.50, 1.56] | 1.03 | -.02 | -0.34 [-2.50, 1.62] | 1.04 | -.02 | -0.06 [-2.17, 2.00] | 1.06 | .00 | -0.12 [-2.15, 1.91] | 1.04 | -.01 |
| Disability | -0.99 [-3.08, 1.02] | 1.08 | -.05 | -1.00 [-3.12, 1.00] | 1.09 | -.05 | -0.64 [-2.64, 1.45] | 1.04 | -.03 | -0.77 [-3.03, 1.48] | 1.11 | -.04 |
| Consider self an adult | | | | 0.77 [-1.61, 3.02] | 1.17 | .04 | 0.26 [-2.00, 2.47] | 1.14 | .01 | 0.53 [-1.67, 2.74] | 1.14 | .03 |
| Home happiness | | | | | | | 0.50* [0.14, 0.86] | 0.19 | .15 | 0.49* [0.12, 0.87] | 0.20 | .14 |
| Transience | | | | | | | 0.01 [-0.66, 0.64] | 0.33 | .00 | -0.02 [-0.70, 0.60] | 0.32 | -.01 |
| Homeownership aspiration gap | | | | | | | 0.21 [-0.06, 0.49] | 0.13 | .09 | 0.19 [-0.08, 0.46] | 0.14 | .08 |
| Frequency of eating dinner alone | | | | | | | -0.90 [-2.84, 1.03] | 1.02 | -.05 | -2.76* [-5.32, -0.19] | 1.36 | -.16 |
| Type of landlord | | | | | | | -0.26 [-3.35, 2.80] | 1.58 | -.01 | -0.12 [-3.10, 2.94] | 1.55 | .00 |
| Living alone | | | | | | | | | | 1.16 [-2.50, 4.69] | 1.78 | .06 |
| Living just with partner and/or child(ren) | | | | | | | | | | -1.96 [-4.88, 0.78] | 1.44 | -.12 |

* *p* < .05 (two-tailed), ** *p* < .01 (two-tailed)

The regression analysis was re-run excluding participants renting from friends or family. This did not change the significance of any of the models. The only change to the significance of an individual predictor was that frequency of eating dinner alone only approached significance in Model 4 ($p$ = .07). The analysis was also separately re-run excluding participants who were living in a house share with their partner. This did not change the significance of any of the models; however, frequency of eating dinner alone only approached significance in Model 4 ($p$ = .05). There was no change in the significance of any other predictors.

**7.3.3.5.2 – Regression Analysis to Predict Negative Affect.** In the HMR analysis predicting negative affect, three participants (1% of cases) had standardised residuals above ±2.5, the largest of which was 2.98. No participants had standardised residuals beyond ±3. As shown in Table 7.26, the regression model was significant at each step of the analysis ($p$ = .045 in Model 1, $p$ = .049 in Model 2, $p$ < .001 in Models 3 and 4). The final model explained 12% of the variance in the data. Adding housing-related variables (apart from household type) to the analysis in Model 3 led to a significant improvement in the model, compared to Model 2 ($p$ < .001). However, adding subjective adult identity in Model 2 and household type in Model 4 did not significantly improve the model.

**Table 7.26**

*Summary Statistics for HMR Model Predicting Negative Affect*

| Statistic | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| $F$ | 2.30* | 2.14* | 3.36*** | 2.94*** |
| $R^2$ | .04 | .04 | .12 | .12 |
| $F$ for change in $R^2$ | 2.30* | 1.34 | 4.65*** | 0.68 |

* $p$ < .05 (two-tailed), *** $p$ < .001 (two-tailed)

As can be seen in Table 7.27, disability was a significant predictor of negative affect in Model 1 ($p$ = .04) and Model 2 ($p$ = .045), with disabled participants generally experiencing higher levels of negative affect than participants who were not disabled. However, once housing-related factors were added to the model, disability only approached significance as a predictor ($p$ = .09 in Model 3, $p$ = .07 in Model 4). Home happiness was a significant predictor in Models 3 and 4 ($p$ < .005 in both models), with lower home happiness being associated with higher negative affect. Additionally, homeownership aspiration gap was a significant predictor in Model 3 ($p$ = .01) and Model 4 ($p$ = .02), with a more negative homeownership aspiration gap score predicting higher negative affect. Household type did not significantly predict level of negative affect.

**Table 7.27**

*Coefficients for Predictors in HMR Model Predicting Negative Affect (n = 289)*

| Variable | Model 1 | | | Model 2 | | | Model 3 | | | Model 4 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *B* | *SE B* | β | *B* | *SE B* | β | *B* | *SE B* | β | *B* | *SE B* | β |
| Constant | 25.01** [20.72, 29.91] | 2.28 | | 25.57** [21.33, 30.70] | 2.31 | | 24.94** [20.24, 29.94] | 2.49 | | 25.18** [19.59, 30.69] | 2.68 | |
| Age | -0.06 [-0.15, 0.02] | 0.05 | -.08 | -0.05 [-0.15, 0.04] | 0.05 | -.06 | -0.09 [-0.19, 0.02] | 0.05 | -.12 | -0.07 [-0.17, 0.03] | 0.06 | -.10 |
| Income | -0.18 [-0.82, 0.44] | 0.35 | -.03 | -0.16 [-0.80, 0.48] | 0.35 | -.03 | 0.18 [-0.52, 0.89] | 0.38 | .03 | 0.15 [-0.57, 0.88] | 0.38 | .02 |
| Gender | 1.80 [-0.44, 4.06] | 1.17 | .08 | 1.76 [-0.43, 3.95] | 1.17 | .08 | 0.89 [-1.32, 3.06] | 1.11 | .04 | 1.03 [-1.19, 3.27] | 1.14 | .05 |
| SGM status | 1.36 [-0.84, 3.51] | 1.16 | .07 | 1.28 [-1.00, 3.53] | 1.15 | .07 | 0.68 [-1.46, 2.82] | 1.15 | .04 | 0.68 [-1.48, 2.88] | 1.15 | .04 |
| Disability | 2.81* [0.08, 5.62] | 1.42 | .13 | 2.81* [-0.03, 5.74] | 1.42 | .13 | 2.41 [-0.43, 5.20] | 1.45 | .11 | 2.63 [-0.21, 5.53] | 1.47 | .12 |
| Consider self an adult | | | | -1.40 [-3.67, 0.74] | 1.19 | -.07 | -0.72 [-2.74, 1.20] | 1.12 | -.04 | -0.79 [-2.69, 1.09] | 1.11 | -.04 |
| Home happiness | | | | | | | -0.74** [-1.15, -0.28] | 0.20 | -.21 | -0.70** [-1.11, -0.22] | 0.20 | -.20 |
| Transience | | | | | | | 0.13 [-0.53, 0.77] | 0.34 | .03 | 0.09 [-0.60, 0.76] | 0.35 | .02 |
| Homeownership aspiration gap | | | | | | | -0.39* [-0.70, -0.08] | 0.15 | -.17 | -0.38* [-0.67, -0.07] | 0.15 | -.17 |
| Frequency of eating dinner alone | | | | | | | 0.51 [-1.46, 2.50] | 1.01 | .03 | 0.88 [-1.98, 3.74] | 1.46 | .05 |
| Type of landlord | | | | | | | 1.18 [-2.15, 4.58] | 1.75 | .05 | 1.07 [-2.31, 4.56] | 1.78 | .04 |
| Living alone | | | | | | | | | | -1.97 [-5.14, 1.14] | 1.60 | -.10 |
| Living just with partner and/or child(ren) | | | | | | | | | | -0.92 [-3.82, 1.94] | 1.39 | -.05 |

\* *p* < .05 (two-tailed), \*\* *p* < .01 (two-tailed)

The analysis was re-run excluding participants who were renting from friends or family. After this change, Model 1 and Model 2 became only marginally significant ($p = .05$ in Model 1, $p = .06$ in Model 2). Additionally, disability was only a marginally significant predictor in Model 1 ($p = .05$) and Model 2 ($p = .06$). The significance of other predictors and of Models 3 and 4 did not change.

Separately, the regression analysis was re-run excluding cohabiting house sharers. In this analysis, Model 1 was only approaching significance ($p = .09$) and Model 2 was not significant. The significance of Models 3 and 4 did not change compared to the original analysis. Disability only approached significance as a predictor in Models 1 and 2 ($p = .07$ in both models). The significance of other predictors did not change.

**7.3.3.5.3 – Regression Analysis to Predict Satisfaction With Life.** In the HMR analysis predicting satisfaction with life, only one participant had a standardised residual beyond ±2.5. The standardised residual for this participant was 3.16. However, as there was no evidence of them having undue influence over the model (Cook's distance was 0.06 and all standardised DFBetas were below ±1) it was decided to proceed with this participant in the analysis. Summary statistics for the models created by the HMR are shown in Table 7.28. All four models were significant ($p < .001$ for all models) and the final model explained 41% of the variance in the data. Adding housing-related variables (apart from household type) in Model 3 led to a significant improvement in the predictive ability of the model, compared to Model 2 ($p < .001$). However, adding subjective adult identity to the analysis in Model 2 and adding household type in Model 4 did not significantly improve the model. Coefficients for individual predictors are shown in Table 7.29.

**Table 7.28**

*Summary Statistics for HMR Model Predicting Satisfaction With Life*

| Statistic | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| $F$ | 9.24*** | 8.15*** | 16.98*** | 14.51*** |
| $R^2$ | .14 | .15 | .40 | .41 |
| $F$ for change in $R^2$ | 9.24*** | 2.49 | 23.63*** | 0.97 |

*** $p < .001$ (two-tailed)

**Table 7.29**

*Coefficients for Predictors in HMR Model Predicting Satisfaction With Life (n = 288)*

| Variable | Model 1 | | | Model 2 | | | Model 3 | | | Model 4 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | B | SE B | β | B | SE B | β | B | SE B | β | B | SE B | β |
| Constant | 21.44** [17.77, 25.27] | 2.05 | | 20.85** [17.00, 24.67] | 2.11 | | 21.62** [17.80, 25.63] | 1.88 | | 22.32** [18.11, 26.39] | 2.03 | |
| Age | -0.12** [-0.20, -0.04] | 0.04 | -.19 | -0.14** [-0.22, -0.05] | 0.04 | -.21 | -0.01 [-0.09, 0.07] | 0.04 | -.02 | 0.00 [-0.08, 0.08] | 0.04 | .00 |
| Income | 1.22** [0.65, 1.85] | 0.31 | .21 | 1.19** [0.61, 1.85] | 0.31 | .21 | 0.40 [-0.17, 1.01] | 0.30 | .07 | 0.39 [-0.17, 1.02] | 0.30 | .07 |
| Gender | -1.99 [-4.09, 0.14] | 1.09 | -.10 | -1.96 [-4.11, 0.17] | 1.07 | -.10 | -0.52 [-2.01, 1.02] | 0.80 | -.03 | -0.36 [-1.98, 1.18] | 0.82 | -.02 |
| SGM status | 0.02 [-1.81, 1.93] | 0.96 | .00 | 0.12 [-1.76, 1.98] | 0.97 | .01 | 0.83 [-0.82, 2.47] | 0.84 | .05 | 0.81 [-0.86, 2.41] | 0.84 | .05 |
| Disability | -2.54* [-4.80, -0.26] | 1.12 | -.13 | -2.54* [-4.89, -0.13] | 1.12 | -.13 | -1.69 [-3.69, 0.44] | 1.06 | -.09 | -1.57 [-3.56, 0.43] | 1.06 | -.08 |
| Consider self an adult | | | | 1.63 [-0.62, 3.89] | 1.10 | .09 | 0.39 [-1.53, 2.31] | 0.94 | .02 | 0.48 [-1.44, 2.40] | 0.94 | .03 |
| Home happiness | | | | | | | 0.88** [0.56, 1.19] | 0.15 | .28 | 0.91** [0.59, 1.21] | 0.15 | .29 |
| Transience | | | | | | | 0.37 [-0.13, 0.79] | 0.24 | .08 | 0.33 [-0.16, 0.77] | 0.24 | .07 |
| Homeownership aspiration gap | | | | | | | 0.74** [0.53, 0.94] | 0.10 | .36 | 0.74** [0.54, 0.94] | 0.11 | .36 |
| Frequency of eating dinner alone | | | | | | | -3.40** [-4.97, -1.84] | 0.76 | -.21 | -3.89** [-5.95, -1.75] | 1.11 | -.24 |
| Type of landlord | | | | | | | -1.41 [-3.55, 0.56] | 1.19 | -.06 | -1.46 [-3.64, 0.56] | 1.18 | -.06 |
| Living alone | | | | | | | | | | -1.00 [-3.67, 2.02] | 1.34 | -.05 |
| Living just with partner and/or child(ren) | | | | | | | | | | -1.50 [-3.69, 1.03] | 1.11 | -.10 |

\* *p* < .05 (two-tailed), \*\* *p* < .01 (two-tailed)

As can be seen in Table 7.29, several demographic characteristics were significant predictors of satisfaction with life in Models 1 and 2. Older age was a significant predictor of lower satisfaction with life in the first two models ($p < .005$ in both models). Lower income also predicted lower satisfaction with life in Models 1 and 2 ($p = .001$ in both models). Disability was a significant predictor of satisfaction with life in Model 1 ($p = .03$) and Model 2 ($p = .04$), with disabled participants generally experiencing lower satisfaction with life than participants who were not disabled. Additionally, gender approached significance in Model 1 ($p = .07$) and Model 2 ($p = .08$), with male participants tending to report higher satisfaction with life compared to female and non-binary participants.[36] However, no demographic factors remained significant once housing-related factors were added in Model 3. Across Models 3 and 4, home happiness, homeownership aspiration gap, and frequency of eating dinner alone were the only significant predictors of satisfaction with life ($p = .001$ for all variables in both models). Lower home happiness, more negative homeownership aspiration gap scores, and eating dinner alone with above average frequency were all associated with lower satisfaction with life. Neither subjective adult identity nor household type significantly predicted satisfaction with life.

The regression analysis was re-run excluding participants who were renting from friends or family. This did not change the significance of any of the models or predictors. Additionally, re-running the analysis with cohabiting house sharers excluded did not change the significance of any of the models or individual predictors.

### 7.4 – Discussion

**7.4.1 – Household Type and the Experience of Housing and Home**

Across the whole sample, 46% of participants reported feeling at home where they were living and a further 34% said they sometimes felt at home. With regards to house sharers in particular, 35% reported feeling at home where they were living and a further 39% stated that they sometimes felt at home. This supports the idea that feeling at home does not necessarily depend on homeownership and it is possible to feel at home when renting a room in a house share (Clark & Tuffin, 2023; Després, 1991a; Heath et al., 2018; McNamara & Connell, 2007). Nonetheless, within the current survey, over half of participants did not feel fully at home where they were living, reflecting potential difficulties renters can face in feeling at home (Byrne, 2020; Easthope, 2014; Hoolachan et al., 2017). In line with hypothesis 7.1,

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[36] When non-binary participants were excluded from the analysis, gender became a significant predictor in Models 1 and 2 ($p = .04$ in both models); however, the bootstrapped 95% CI for the coefficient did cross zero ([-0.16, 4.31] in Model 1, [-0.10, 4.26] in Model 2). Gender remained non-significant in Models 3 and 4 when non-binary participants were excluded.

participants living just with their partner and/or child(ren) were significantly more likely to report feeling fully at home compared to house sharers. However, there was no longer a significant difference between participants living in house shares and those living just with their partner and/or child(ren) when cohabiting house sharers were excluded. Additionally, as predicted in hypothesis 7.1, there was no significant difference between house sharers and participants living alone with regards to likelihood of feeling at home.

Compared to participants in other household types, house sharers had significantly lower scores on the home happiness component (which comprised feeling at home, satisfaction with living situation, and how long the participant planned to stay in their current property). Such findings are in contrast to Chapter 6, where home happiness was not found to differ significantly by household type. This could suggest that house sharing had a more detrimental effect on housing satisfaction and ability to feel at home (relative to living alone or with a partner) among the current participants, who were not students, compared to the student sample in Chapter 6. This could be because house sharing was perhaps more in line with the needs and expectations of student, rather than non-student, participants (as suggested in Section 7.1.1). However, it is worth noting that the finding that house sharers experienced lower levels of home happiness than participants living alone seems to have been driven by the low proportion of cohabiting house sharers who reported feeling at home as, once cohabiting house sharers were excluded from the analysis, levels of home happiness were not found to differ significantly between house sharers and participants who lived alone.

In line with findings from Heath et al. (2018) and McNamara and Connell (2007), house sharers had significantly higher scores on the transience component (comprised of time spent in current property and number of properties lived in over the last 10 years) compared to other renters. This also mirrors the finding from Chapter 6 that house sharers experienced significantly higher levels of transience than participants living with their family of origin or just with their partner and/or child(ren). However, it is noted that, in Chapter 6, house sharers were not found to differ significantly from participants living alone with regards to transience.

The majority of participants saw homeownership as something that was highly desirable but which they were unlikely to achieve. Indeed, 73% of participants had a negative homeownership aspiration score, signifying that they viewed homeownership as more desirable than it was probable. This supports findings from researchers such as J. Crawford and McKee (2018) that there is a growing gap between the housing people aspire

to and what they can achieve. There were no significant differences between household types with regards to homeownership aspiration gap scores. This was due to the fact that, although participants living alone gave significantly lower ratings for their probability of becoming homeowners compared to other participants, they also gave the lowest ratings for how desirable they perceived homeownership to be. The reasons for this are currently unclear. It could be that people who live alone are hesitant to take on the responsibilities of homeownership on their own. Alternatively, it may be that the increased difficulty people who live alone would be likely to face in trying to buy a house (due to being unable to split housing costs with another household member) may lead to homeownership appearing less desirable to some people who live alone. Indeed, it has been observed that people's housing aspirations generally reflect what they deem to be achievable (J. Crawford & McKee, 2018; Preece et al., 2020).

Additionally, participants living alone were significantly more likely than participants living in other types of households to eat dinner alone with above average frequency. House sharers were also significantly more likely to have an above average frequency of eating dinner alone, compared to participants living just with their partner and/or child(ren). However, it must be remembered that the data analysed in the current chapter were predominantly collected during the Covid-19 pandemic, with all its associated restrictions. In normal times, people who live alone or with housemates may also regularly meet friends or family members they do not live with for dinner and/or other forms of social contact.

### 7.4.2 – Housing and Subjective Adult Identity

The majority of participants (77%) considered themselves to be adults. Additionally, only 2% of participants stated that they did not consider themselves to be adults in any way. Therefore, despite the fact that homeownership is often seen as a marker of adulthood (K. Crawford, 2010; Molgat, 2007), renting did not seem to prevent most participants from viewing themselves as adults. Among house sharers, 62% described themselves as adults. In line with hypothesis 7.2a, house sharers did not differ significantly from participants who lived alone in terms of subjective adult identity. Nonetheless, as also predicted in hypothesis 7.2a, house sharers were significantly less likely to consider themselves to be adults compared to participants living just with their partner and/or child(ren). Within Chapter 6, once cohabiting sharers were excluded from the analysis, there was a significant association between household type and subjective adult identity; however, none of the subsequent pairwise comparisons between non-cohabiting house sharers and other household types were significant. Drawing the sample for the current study from the general population, rather than university students, may have led to a more pronounced difference between

house sharers and participants living just with their partner and/or child(ren) with regards to subjective adult identity. Nonetheless, in Chapters 6 and 7, when looking just at participants aged 30 years or over, there was not a significant difference between house sharers and participants who were not house sharing with regards to the proportion who considered themselves to be adults.

While renting did not seem to preclude most participants from considering themselves as adults, within the current study there was some evidence that housing stability and feelings of home were associated with subjective adult identity. Indeed, participants who considered themselves to be adults had significantly higher home happiness scores and significantly lower transience scores, compared to participants who did not consider themselves to be fully adult. This is in line with the work of Arnett (2000) and Robinson (2016) who described having a stable residence as a marker of adulthood. However, in the logistic regression to predict likelihood of considering oneself to be an adult, the only significant predictor was age, with older age being associated with increased likelihood of considering yourself an adult. Adding home happiness and transience to the analysis in step 2 did not significantly improve the model and neither variable was a significant predictor of subjective adult identity. Interestingly, and somewhat at odds with the prediction of hypothesis 7.2b, adding household type to the logistic regression in step 3 did lead to a significant improvement in the model. However, in the current study, as in Chapter 6, none of the dummy variables representing household type were significant predictors of a person's likelihood of considering themself to be an adult. Additionally, the ability of the model to correctly classify participants who did not consider themselves to have reached full adulthood remained severely limited. Indeed, the final model only correctly classified 0.3% more cases than the initial model, which correctly classified 76.3% of cases simply by predicting that everyone would consider themselves to be adults (the most prevalent response). The difficulty the model had in correctly classifying people who did not consider themselves to be adults seemed to be due, at least partially, to participants defining their attainment of adulthood based on psychological characteristics and the extent to which they felt like an adult, rather than role transitions or demographic factors (as per the argument of Arnett (2000, 2007) and Côté and Bynner (2008)).

The fact that adding household type to the logistic regression analysis predicting likelihood of considering oneself an adult led to a significant improvement in the model suggests that further research into the nature of the relationship between household type and subjective adult identity would be beneficial. However, within the current study there was

little evidence to suggest that living in a house share after the age of 30 years impedes one's ability to construct an adult identity.

### 7.4.3 – Predicting Well-Being Outcomes

There were no significant differences between house sharers and participants living just with their partner and/or child(ren) on any well-being measure. This finding is contrary to hypothesis 7.3a which predicted that house sharers would experience significantly poorer psychological well-being than participants living just with their partner and/or child(ren). However, this finding does concur with the findings of Chapter 6, which also found no significant difference between these groups with regards to psychological well-being. Additionally, participants living alone reported significantly lower satisfaction with life compared to participants living in other household types, although there was no longer a significant difference between house sharers and participants living alone when cohabiting sharers were excluded from the analysis. This finding went against expectations, as hypothesis 7.3a predicted that there would be no significant difference between sharers and participants living alone with regards to well-being. Such a finding may have been due to participants who lived alone experiencing lower levels of social support and/or companionship, compared to those living with other people (Daniel et al., 2023; H. Green, Fernandez, & MacPhail, 2022). Therefore, across Chapters 6 and 7, house sharers were not found to have worse outcomes on any well-being measure, compared to participants living other household types. Additionally, within the current study, there were no significant interactions between household type and age with regards to well-being outcomes.

As predicted in hypothesis 7.3b, once multivariate statistics were considered, the household type that participants lived in did not significantly predict psychological well-being. Furthermore, as was also the case in Chapter 6, adding household type to the HMR analyses predicting well-being outcomes did not significantly increase the explanatory power of any of the models, beyond what could be achieved by considering demographic characteristics, subjective adult identity, and other housing-related variables (e.g. home happiness and tenure). Sensitivity analysis showed that the HMR analyses predicting well-being in this chapter were sensitive to small effects ($f^2 \geq .03$) with 80% power. The current analyses therefore compare favourably to the HMR analyses aiming to predict well-being in Chapter 6, which were only sensitive to small-to-medium effects ($f^2 \geq .06$). Consequently, the results of the current study provide no evidence that household type is significantly associated with psychological well-being once other demographic and housing-related factors are taken into account. Additionally, the results suggest that, if such an association were to exist, the associated effect size would be very small. The current study therefore

adds weight to the argument that the impact that living in a house share, or in any household type, may have on a person's psychological well-being will vary between individuals, depending on personal and contextual factors (Clapham, 2010; Oh & Kim, 2021).

Income and gender were significant predictors of positive affect, with higher income and being male predicting higher positive affect, even when other variables related to demographic characteristics, adult identity, and housing were controlled for. With regards to negative affect, in the first two steps of the HMR analysis, being disabled predicted experiencing significantly higher negative affect, compared to those who were not disabled. Similarly, age, income, and disability status were significant predictors of satisfaction with life in steps 1 and 2 of the HMR analysis, with older age, lower income, and being disabled predicting lower satisfaction with life. However, no demographic factors remained significant predictors of negative affect or satisfaction with life once housing-related variables were added to each model.

Scores on the home happiness component significantly predicted scores on all three psychological well-being measures. Even when demographics, subjective adult identity, and all other housing-related variables had been controlled for, higher levels of home happiness predicted higher positive affect, lower negative affect, and higher satisfaction with life. This finding is in line with a broad body of literature that has highlighted the well-being benefits of feeling at home and satisfied with one's living situation (Easthope, 2014; Garnham & Rolfe, 2019; Hoolachan et al., 2017; Saunders, 1989; Soaita & McKee, 2019). Furthermore, this finding adds to the evidence from Chapter 6 regarding the value of home happiness for predicting well-being outcomes.

Homeownership aspiration gap correlated significantly with all three well-being outcomes, with a more negative homeownership aspiration gap score being associated with lower positive affect, higher negative affect, and lower satisfaction with life. Additionally, in the regression analyses, homeownership aspiration gap was a significant predictor of negative affect and satisfaction with life even when demographics, subjective adult identity, and other housing-related variables were taken into account. This is in line with the work of Carver and Scheier (1990) and Wrosch et al. (2003) who highlighted the negative impact of unattainable goals on well-being. Homeownership aspiration gap did not predict well-being outcomes in Chapter 6 and this difference in the results seems to be due to participants having, on average, considerably more negative homeownership aspiration gap scores in this chapter ($M = -3.94$, based on a 10-point scale) compared to Chapter 6 ($M = -0.89$, based on a 5-point scale). These findings seem to support the idea, put forth in Section 6.4.3, that

students may be more optimistic than people in the non-student population about their future ability to attain homeownership. Furthermore, as also suggested in Section 6.4.3, it appears that a negative relationship may not have been observed between homeownership aspiration gap and psychological well-being in Chapter 6 as the average homeownership aspiration gap score may not have been large enough to cause distress.

Participants who ate dinner alone with above average frequency experienced significantly lower positive affect and satisfaction with life, and significantly higher negative affect, compared to participants who ate dinner alone with below average frequency. Furthermore, in HMR analyses, frequency of eating dinner alone was a significant predictor of positive affect and satisfaction with life, even when all other demographic-, adulthood- and housing-related variables had been controlled for. This adds to the work of Russell et al. (1980) who found frequency of eating alone to be significantly correlated with loneliness. Such findings also support the idea expressed by, for example, Clark and Tuffin (2023) that living in a house share where housemates engage in social activities, such as eating dinner together, can support psychological well-being.

Participants renting from different types of landlord did not differ significantly with regards to positive or negative affect. Private renters were however found to have significantly higher satisfaction with life compared to social renters. This supported findings from DLUHC (2022b) that social tenants experienced poorer psychological well-being than private tenants. Nonetheless, type of landlord was not a significant predictor in any of the HMR analyses predicting well-being outcomes, once demographic and other housing-related factors were considered. Additionally, in both the current study and in Chapter 6, adding tenure to the HMR analyses predicting well-being outcomes did not significantly improve the predictive ability of any of the models.

Transience was not significantly associated with positive and negative affect. However, higher levels of transience were associated with higher levels of satisfaction with life. The results of the current study therefore provide further evidence in support of the idea, discussed in Section 6.4.3, that experiencing some instability within one's housing pathway is not always a negative thing, and can instead be associated with positive life transitions such as embarking on a new job or moving in with a partner (see also Vanhoutte et al., 2017). However, in HMR analyses within both the current study and Chapter 6, once demographic characteristics, adult identity, and other housing-related variables were controlled for, transience was not a significant predictor of satisfaction with life. This is likely

due to the fact that the meaning and impact of housing instability varies according to demographic factors, such as age and income (Vanhoutte et al., 2017).

Participants who did not consider themselves to have reached full adulthood reported significantly higher levels of negative affect compared to those who described themselves as adults. This is in line with findings from Carruthers (2018), Kaniušonytė et al. (2022), and Nelson and Barry (2005). However, in contrast to the findings of these previous studies, within the current sample, subjective adult identity was not significantly associated with positive affect or satisfaction with life. Additionally, in the current chapter and in Chapter 6, subjective adult identity was not found to be a significant predictor of well-being outcomes once demographic characteristics had been controlled for.

Within the current study, the regression model for satisfaction with life explained 41% of the variance in the data, a far greater proportion than was explained by the regression models for positive affect (14%) or negative affect (12%). This suggests that factors related to housing may have a greater impact on satisfaction with life than the experience of positive or negative emotions. This reflects a distinction between evaluative well-being, which refers to the individual's subjective overall judgement of how satisfied they are with their life, and hedonic well-being, which refers to the emotional states people experience (National Research Council, 2013). Measures of hedonic well-being generally ask participants to consider a relatively short period of time and are therefore more likely to fluctuate according to specific recent events (National Research Council, 2013). In contrast, measures of evaluative well-being ask participants to take a broader, longer-term view. For example, as highlighted by National Research Council: "for individuals at work, their reported affect is likely related to the immediate task at hand and not to broader issues such as the state of their marriage or their financial circumstances – topics that typically fall more squarely into the evaluative well-being domain" (p. 31). In most cases, therefore, we may expect someone's housing and living situation to be more strongly associated with evaluative well-being, rather than hedonic well-being. Indeed, in line with this expectation, Angel and Gregory (2021) found tenure to be significant associated with satisfaction with life but not hedonic well-being. However, in cases where someone is in a particularly negative or hostile housing situation it seems likely this may negatively impact their hedonic, not just evaluative, well-being.

### 7.4.4 – Strengths, Limitations, and Future Research

With regards to the limitations of the current survey, it is important to remember that the majority of the data was gathered during the Covid-19 pandemic. Indeed, of the final

dataset of 408 responses, 323 were received after 26th March 2020, when the UK entered lockdown for the first time. The majority of responses were therefore received under some form of restriction due to Covid-19. This may have had an impact on participants' well-being scores, particularly among those who lived alone who may have been isolated from support networks outside of their household which they normally rely on.

The sample included a reasonable level of diversity with regards to age, sexual orientation, disability status, and employment status. However, the sample was predominantly White, female, and well-educated. In particular, it is regrettable that there was not more ethnic diversity in the sample, especially as research has shown that racial discrimination can impact the housing choices and experiences of people from minority ethnic backgrounds (Clark & Tuffin, 2015). Finding ways to increase the ethnic diversity of the sample would benefit future research.

Generally, it did not make a difference to the results of the analysis whether participants living with their partner in a house share were included in the house sharer group or not. This is likely due to the fact that many of the potential challenges (e.g. lack of control over one's living environment) and benefits (e.g. friendly social contact) of house sharing are experienced by cohabiting and non-cohabiting sharers. However, when cohabiting house sharers were excluded from the analysis, sharers were no longer found to be significantly less likely to report feeling fully at home compared to participants living just with their partner and/or child(ren). This could perhaps suggest that some cohabiting house sharers were frustrated with their living situation and wanted to live just with their partner. However, conversely, when cohabiting house sharers were excluded, house sharers were no longer found to have significantly higher satisfaction with life compared to participants living alone. Ultimately, there were too few cohabiting house sharers in the current sample ($n$ = 13) to allow any firm conclusions to be drawn. However, the findings of both the current study and Chapter 6 suggest that experiences of cohabiting with a partner in a house share, and how this may (or may not) differ from living in a house share as a single person, would be an interesting avenue to explore in future research.

Similarly, recruiting more people who are renting from family or friends would allow this group to be systematically compared to other tenants. In the current data, there are perhaps hints that the experiences and/or well-being outcomes of participants renting from family and friends may potentially differ from those of participants renting from private or social landlords. However, the current group of participants renting from family or friends ($n$ = 14) is too small to allow these results to be confirmed.

Finally, as with any research of this nature, the sample only includes participants who were willing to take part in a survey on their experiences of renting and who had the necessary literacy skills and internet access to enable them to participate. Due to the survey predominantly being promoted on social media and through word of mouth, there is no way to know how many people saw an advert for the survey and therefore non-response rates cannot be tracked (Wright, 2005). Additionally, due to the survey being advertised in some tenant groups on social media, it is possible that people who were experiencing issues with their housing may have been more likely to see the survey being advertised and/or to participate. No claims are therefore made that the results are representative of all renters. However, as these recruitment-based limitations apply across the entire sample, it is felt that the data still provided a valuable opportunity to explore differences between participants in varying types of households. Additionally, the sample does have the benefit of reaching beyond current university students and of including participants from a broad range of ages, income levels, and regions of the UK.

## 7.5 – Conclusion

Within the current study, house sharing did not appear, in itself, to be predictive of negative outcomes, either in terms of ability to construct an adult identity or psychological well-being. Instead, it seemed that participants' individual circumstances and how they felt about their living situation played a more important role in shaping outcomes, rather than the type of household they lived in. This supports the argument that the meaning and experience of housing and home is inherently subjective and personal, shaped by the individual's context, preferences, and past experiences (Clapham, 2005, 2010; Coulter, 2023; Gurney, 1990).

**Chapter 8:**

**Discussion**

This thesis has presented four studies, two qualitative, two quantitative, that sought to better understand the impact that living in a house share after the age of 30 years might have on a person's ability to feel at home and/or to construct an adult identity, as well as their psychological well-being. In this chapter, the main findings of the thesis are summarised first, followed by a discussion of how the results relate to life course theory. Strengths and limitations of the thesis are then discussed, as well as ideas for future research.

### 8.1 – Main Findings

The three main findings of this thesis, each of which integrates insights from the qualitative and quantitative studies, are presented in this section. These are, namely:

- House sharing after the age of 30 years need not lead to negative outcomes,

- The meaning of house sharing after 30 years of age is subjective and individual,

- House sharing after the age of 30 years remains outside the mainstream.

Each finding is discussed in more detail below.

### 8.1.1 – House Sharing After 30 Years of Age Need Not Lead to Negative Outcomes

Within this sub-section, the extent to which house sharing after the age of 30 years could be considered to predict negative outcomes in terms of feeling at home, adult identity, and/or psychological well-being is discussed. Results related to ORQ 1, which explored the extent to which house sharers aged 30 years or over were able to feel at home, are discussed first. This is followed by a discussion of results related to ORQ 2 and then ORQ 3, which explored, respectively, whether living in a house share after the age of 30 years impacted ability to construct an adult identity (ORQ 2) and/or psychological well-being (ORQ 3).

#### 8.1.1.1 – House Sharing and Ability to Feel at Home

Results from all four studies showed it was possible to feel at home when living in a house share, whether as a live-in landlord or when renting a room, thus confirming findings of previous research (Clark & Tuffin, 2023; Després, 1991a; Heath et al., 2018; McNamara & Connell, 2007). Within the quantitative studies, there was some evidence that people living just with their partner and/or child(ren) may be more likely to feel at home where they are

living, compared to house sharers. However, within both surveys, house sharers did not significantly differ from participants who were living alone in terms of the extent to which they felt at home. Additionally, when house sharers were compared to participants living with their family of origin (in Chapter 6), the two groups were not found to differ significantly with regards to feeling at home. Therefore, the results largely supported the hypotheses put forward in response to ORQ 1.

Within the interview studies, the extent to which participants felt at home in their house share seemed to be shaped by the extent to which they experienced a sense of control and/or a sense of community in their living situation. Participants were not able to have full control over their living environment due to sharing space with housemates, which undermined ability to feel at home for some (see also Byrne, 2020; Dupuis & Thorns, 1998; Saunders, 1989). However, the companionship and support they received from their housemates enabled some participants to feel at home even in the absence of total control, thus mirroring findings from previous research (Clark & Tuffin, 2023; Després, 1991a; Heath et al., 2018; Kenyon, 2003; McNamara & Connell, 2007). Live-in landlords generally felt at home due to the sense of control they experienced thanks to their owner-occupier status. Nonetheless, some live-in landlords also reported that companionship from lodgers could enhance feelings of home. Participants living in the PRS could experience a lack of control due to short-term contracts and power imbalances between landlords and tenants. However, some renters were able to gain feelings of control through, for example, personalising their living space, which could facilitate feeling at home (see also Easthope, 2014; McKee et al., 2020; Rolfe et al., 2023; Soaita & McKee, 2021).

Both control and emotional support have been flagged as important aspects of home (Gurney, 1990; Saunders, 1989); however, the two can be contradictory. Indeed, in a similar fashion to house sharing, living with kin can provide care and support, but also limits any one person's ability to have control over their living environment (Després, 1991a; Heath et al., 2018). It therefore seems plausible that feelings of control and community may act as mechanisms that can generate a sense of home for people living across a range of different household types. For example, the fact that house sharers and participants living alone were not found to differ significantly with regards to feeling at home in either survey could be due to the former experiencing a higher degree of companionship but lacking control, whereas the latter lacked companionship but experienced a higher degree of control. Furthermore, across both surveys, there was no household type where all participants felt at home or where no participants felt at home, suggesting that any household type can potentially feel

homely or unhomely, depending on the specific details of the individual's circumstances (see also Mallett, 2004; L. McCarthy, 2018).

### 8.1.1.2 – House Sharing and Adult Identity

In line with findings from Kenyon and Heath (2001), there were participants in all four studies who rented a room in a house share and who considered themselves to have fully reached adulthood. This thesis therefore provides strong evidence that, for many people, living in a house share was not seen as precluding someone from being an adult. Furthermore, several participants in the interview studies spoke about how living in a house share had directly helped them construct an adult identity, due to the increased sense of independence and autonomy it offered compared to living with one's parents or, in some cases, with a partner, thus replicating findings from Maalsen (2019).

Within the general population survey, house sharers were significantly less likely to consider themselves to be adults, compared to participants living just with their partner and/or child(ren). However, house sharers did not differ significantly from participants living alone with regards to subjective adult identity in either survey. Additionally, within both surveys, when only participants aged 30 years or over were considered, there were no significant differences between sharers and non-sharers with regards to subjective adult identity. The results were therefore mostly in line with the hypotheses associated with ORQ 2. The exception was that, against expectations, within Chapter 6, participants living with their family of origin were not found to differ significantly from house sharers with regards to subjective adult identity. This suggests that, even though some people living with their family of origin may experience a reduced sense of autonomy (White, 2002), living in the parental home does not necessarily present a barrier to developing a sense of independence and adulthood (Stevens, 2019). Additionally, the results provide further evidence to support the argument that more importance is placed on psychological characteristics, rather than transitional events, as markers of adulthood in contemporary Western society (Arnett, 2000; Côté & Bynner, 2008).

### 8.1.1.3 – House Sharing and Psychological Well-being

Almost all participants in the qualitative studies stated that housemates could provide companionship and that living in a house share could be associated with making friends and/or engaging in fun social activities. Furthermore, some interviewees, in the qualitative studies, described how their housemates had taken on a familial role in their life and provided an important source of social and emotional support. The role that companionship could play in supporting well-being was highlighted in the general population survey, where

frequency of eating dinner alone was found to be a significant predictor of positive affect and satisfaction with life. Additionally, interview participants described how living with housemates could potentially offer substantial benefits for their psychological well-being, including bolstering mood, reducing loneliness, and increasing feelings of security. Such findings mirror the results of previous studies, which have highlighted the potential well-being benefits house sharing can offer (Altus & Mathews, 2000; Clark & Tuffin, 2023; Després, 1991a).

Across both surveys, there were no examples where, as a group, house sharers reported poorer psychological well-being than participants living in another household type. Furthermore, within Chapter 6, house sharing was found to predict significantly higher positive affect compared to living alone, even when demographic characteristics, subjective adult identity, and other housing-related variables had been controlled for. The results were therefore largely in line with the hypotheses associated with ORQ 3. However, it was not predicted that house sharing would predict higher positive affect, compared to living alone. This finding may have been due to participants who lived alone experiencing a lower level of social support and companionship (Altus & Mathews, 2000; Coombs, 1991; Hombrados-Mendieta et al., 2013). Further empirical investigation to test whether this finding can be replicated when social restrictions related to the Covid-19 pandemic are not in place would be beneficial.

### 8.1.1.4 – Assessing the Impact of House Sharing After 30 Years of Age

Therefore, when household type groups were compared, there was no evidence that house sharers suffered worse outcomes with regards to feeling at home, subjective adult identity, or psychological well-being than participants who lived alone or with their family of origin. Furthermore, and in line with expectations, adding household type to the regression analyses performed on each survey dataset did not significantly improve ability to predict participants' likelihood of considering themselves to be adults or their scores on psychological well-being measures, over and above simply taking into account demographic characteristics and other housing-related variables (e.g. home happiness, tenure). Taken together, the results of the different studies show that living in a house share after the age of 30 years did not, in itself, predict negative outcomes.

### 8.1.2 – The Meaning of House Sharing After 30 Years of Age Is Subjective and Individual

The stories told by participants, during the two qualitative studies, showed that experiences of living in house shares after 30 years of age could range from wonderful to

terrible. The valence of any house sharing experience seemed to depend, at least in part, on the nature of the relationships that existed between housemates. However, a range of other factors, including the individual's housing preferences and aspirations, their personality, their financial and social capital, the physical property, and the social and cultural environment the individual existed in, all potentially influenced the meaning, experience, and impact of living in a house share.

Relationships with housemates played a key role in shaping experiences of house sharing. As discussed in Section 8.1.1, friendly, supportive relationships with housemates were associated with positive experiences of house sharing and could facilitate feeling at home, as well as bolstering psychological well-being. However, several participants in the qualitative studies spoke about very negative situations they had experienced in some house shares due to living with housemates whom they felt unsafe or uncomfortable around. Living with such housemates undermined participants' ability to feel at home and was instead associated with experiencing increased psychological distress (see also Wilkinson & Ortega-Alcázar, 2019). Additionally, for participants renting a room in a house share, their experience was also shaped by their relationship with their landlord. Indeed, as highlighted by previous research, the decisions and actions of landlords with regard to, for example, maintenance, inspections, and the tenant's ability to personalise the property, could promote or undermine feelings of control and home for tenants (Chisholm et al., 2020; Rolfe et al., 2023).

Furthermore, within the qualitative studies, participants seemed to differ in the extent to which control and/or community were important to them. Some participants seemed less perturbed by a lack of control over their living environment, whereas, for others, the compromises and lack of control inherent in house share had become increasingly difficult to accept over time. Similarly, for some participants, living with other people was an integral part of feeling at home, but, for other participants, just the presence of housemates (even if there was no conflict or hostility) made it difficult to relax or feel at home. The meaning and impact of living in a house share are therefore likely to vary by personality, with several participants in both interview studies highlighting that introverts can find house sharing more challenging (see also Oh & Kim, 2021).

Similarly, participants' housing preferences, and the extent to which they were able to achieve them, could have an important influence over the way house sharing was experienced. For example, within the qualitative studies, several participants were, at the time of our interview, having to house share out of economic necessity, despite having a

strong preference to not live with housemates. This could reduce feelings of personal control and could potentially undermine self-esteem and psychological well-being (Clapham, 2010; Oh & Kim, 2021). However, in contrast, some participants in both qualitative studies spoke about how they had actively chosen to share, despite being able to afford to live alone. Choosing to share was generally associated with more positive experiences of sharing, mirroring findings from Bricocoli and Sabatinelli (2016). This association was likely due to a range of factors, including financial resources and personality; however, in itself, whether a person feels they were able to choose to share (or not) is also likely to influence how they experience house sharing and the impact living in a house share has on their well-being (S. Green & McCarthy, 2015; Ortega-Alcázar & Wilkinson, 2021). Furthermore, within the quantitative studies, there were also suggestions that the extent to which a participant's living situation matched their preferences and aspirations predicted psychological well-being outcomes. For example, across both surveys, higher home happiness scores were shown to predict higher positive affect, lower negative affect, lower loneliness, and higher satisfaction with life.

Taken together, the results of the four studies suggest that house sharing promoted feelings of home and positive psychological well-being for some participants but undermined feelings of home and well-being for others. Indeed, across both surveys, despite some examples of household type being significantly associated with well-being outcomes within univariate statistical tests, adding household type to the HMR analyses predicting well-being outcomes did not significantly improve the predictive ability of any of the models, above and beyond what was possible simply by considering demographic factors, subjective adult identity, and other housing-related variables. This indicates that no household type is inherently beneficial or harmful to well-being but instead the meaning, experience, and impact of living in any household type is shaped by a range of factors, including the individual's personality, preferences, and social and economic circumstances, and the composition/ nature of the household they are living in (see also Clapham, 2005, 2010; Coulter, 2023; Eckermann, 2015; Gurney, 1990).

**8.1.3 – House Sharing After the Age of 30 Years Remains Outside the Mainstream**

As discussed in Chapter 1, within the UK, in recent years, it has become more common for people over the age of 30 years to live in house shares (Heath et al., 2018). However, within the current thesis, for most participants in the qualitative studies, there was still a sense that house sharing becomes less socially acceptable as you get older. Some interviewees described being judged for living in a house share after the age of 30 years and others were aware that they could be judged or viewed as unusual because of their living

situation (see also Heath et al., 2018; McNamara & Connell, 2007). Living in a type of housing that is stigmatised or considered as representing lower social status can negatively impact psychological well-being (Foye et al., 2018; Hiscock et al., 2001). Furthermore, even in the absence of experiencing concrete examples of stigmatisation, anticipating possible future judgement or rejection has been shown to be associated with increased psychological distress (Meyer, 2003).

Most participants in the interview studies saw psychological characteristics, such as being independent and responsible, as playing a key role in what made someone an adult (see also Arnett, 2000; Côté & Bynner, 2008). However, for some participants, traditional ideas of adulthood (which centred role transitions such as marriage, parenthood, and homeownership) were still influential. For example, several participants in both interview studies saw homeownership as an important marker of adulthood, mirroring findings from K. Crawford (2010) and Molgat (2007). Additionally, some participants saw being a parent as something that was necessary for someone to be considered an adult. Indeed, it seemed that, for some interviewees, psychological markers of adulthood had not replaced more traditional role-based conceptions of adulthood but instead the two existed side-by-side. This could be seen in the fact that there were several participants who, within our interview, expressed multiple different ideas of adulthood and seemed uncertain about which criteria to judge their own attainment of adulthood against. For example, while Zoe felt that she was an adult in the sense that she was financially independent, she also felt that she was not an adult in comparison to her sister who had fulfilled the role transitions traditionally associated with adulthood.

Additionally, some participants seemed to feel torn with regards to their plans for the future: they felt they should fulfil traditional role transitions but were also unsure that they wanted to, as they felt other paths could potentially offer more in terms of independence or career success. This reflects insights from writings on postmodernism, individualisation, and life course theory that, in contemporary Western society, there are fewer agreed upon norms and people have to play more of an active role in shaping their identity and life path, resulting in more options and opportunities, but also potentially more confusion (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Côté & Bynner, 2008; Giddens, 1991; Heinz & Krüger, 2001; McAdams, 2001). However, the choices available are not unlimited, as society continues to be shaped by existing cultural norms and social structures (Côté & Bynner, 2008; Elder et al., 2003; Giddens, 1990; Heinz & Krüger, 2001).

The continuing influence of traditional ideas of adulthood led some interview participants to see living in a house share after the age of 30 years as not what a 'proper' adult should do. Viewing house sharing as incompatible with adulthood could potentially lead to feelings of failure and/or self-judgement, especially among participants who were renting a room in a house share (see also Heath et al., 2018; McKee et al., 2019). Such feelings have been shown to have a detrimental impact on psychological well-being (Hiscock et al., 2001; McKee et al., 2019; McKee & Soaita, 2018).

In contrast to renting, homeownership has been discursively constructed as a sign of responsibility, adulthood, and success (Gurney, 1999). However, homeownership has become increasingly unobtainable for many people, leaving a gap between people's housing aspirations and the housing they can afford (J. Crawford & McKee, 2018; Preece et al., 2020). Within the interview studies, few participants wanted to carry on house sharing in the long, or even medium, term. Additionally, in all four studies, the majority of participants who were not already homeowners aspired to homeownership. However, many felt this was unlikely to be achievable, at least in the near-to-medium term. Indeed, in both surveys, a majority of participants rated the desirability of homeownership more highly than they rated their probability of achieving homeownership, creating a 'homeownership aspiration gap'. Furthermore, within the general population survey, having a more negative homeownership aspiration gap score (representing a bigger gap between how desirable and how attainable the participant saw homeownership to be) predicted significantly higher negative affect and significantly lower satisfaction with life.

It was not the case that every participant had experienced stigma or engaged in self-judgement due to living in a house share. For example, as discussed in Section 8.1.1.2, defining adulthood in terms of psychological factors, enabled some participants who had not undergone the role transitions traditionally associated with adulthood to construct an adult identity for themselves based upon their independence, autonomy, and/or responsible behaviour. However, it is perhaps instructive to note that, while Jennifer had had a very positive experience of house sharing and also reported not experiencing any stigma due to her living situation, she still spoke about feeling that it was time to stop sharing and "grow up".

Nonetheless, it is worth noting that, although renting a room in a house share did not seem to fit with mainstream aspirations or views of adulthood, within the general population survey there was not a significant interaction of household type and age with regards to psychological well-being outcomes. Within the analysis presented in Chapter 6, there was a

significant interaction effect between household type and age with regards to loneliness. However, there was no significant difference in the levels of loneliness reported by house sharers aged 18-29 years and house sharers aged 30 years or over. The results do not therefore provide evidence that living in a house share after the age of 30 years was more detrimental to well-being than house sharing in one's twenties. It is possible that this may be due to the proportion of people who were choosing to share being higher among house sharers aged 30 years or over, compared to those aged 18-29 years. For future surveys, including one or more question(s) about motivations for house sharing and/or the extent to which house sharing participants felt that they were sharing out of choice, would help to further investigate this. Another potential reason could be that, in some cases and/or for some people, house sharing can become more pleasant over time. For example, in our interview, Jennifer observed that house sharing had, at least in some ways, become more pleasant as she had got older due to housemates being more considerate of each other. However, more research is needed to better understand such effects and whether there are situations in which house sharing after 30 years of age may be more likely to be harmful or beneficial for well-being.

## 8.2 – Link to Life Course Theory

The current research clearly demonstrates the utility and value of the principles of life course theory (Elder et al., 2003). Firstly, considering the impact of time and place can help us to better understand the housing behaviour of participants and the impact of housing on their well-being. For example, the UK housing market is currently characterised by growing unaffordability of homeownership and low availability of social housing, meaning many people have no choice but to live in the PRS and, potentially, to house share (Hoolachan et al., 2017; McKee et al., 2017; McKee & Soaita, 2018). However, following the expansion of homeownership during the 1980s, many people in the UK have been socialised into viewing homeownership as achievable, and the norm; consequently, many people continue to aspire to buying a property, even though changing economic and social conditions mean homeownership is no longer obtainable (J. Crawford & McKee, 2018; Preece et al., 2020). Such a backdrop is important for understanding not only why so many participants exhibited a homeownership aspiration gap but also why not attaining homeownership could lead to feelings of failure and reduced psychological well-being.

The importance of considering timing in lives was demonstrated by the fact that several participants in the qualitative studies talked about how the meaning of house sharing had changed for them over the years. For example, in the mature student interview study, Clare talked about how house sharing had gone from something she had chosen to do for

social reasons to something she was now only doing out of financial necessity. This reflects Clapham's (2002, 2005) observation that housing preferences and the meaning attached to home can change over time, depending on circumstances and life stage. Additionally, what people look for in a house share can change as they age, with living in a 'party house' generally being seen as less desirable as one enters one's thirties (see also Clark & Tuffin, 2023).

Within the interview studies in particular, participants talked about the role other people had played in their housing pathway, thus showing how the linking of lives shaped their developmental trajectory. For example, several participants in both interview studies spoke about how their housing pathways had at varying points been shaped by the presence or absence of a romantic partner. A number of participants had spent periods of time living just with a partner but had then moved back to house sharing following the breakdown of the relationship or, in the case of Mayim, following the death of her partner. Additionally, several interviewees spoke about how events that had happened to their housemates (e.g. getting a new job or deciding to cohabit with a partner) had also had a big impact on the participant's life too, potentially leading to them having to move house as well (see also McKee et al., 2020).

The interplay of agency and structure could be seen as playing a key role in participants lives. Indeed, participants' lives were shaped by factors such as social norms and the constraints of the housing market, but participants also exercised agency. For example, several interview participants spoke about how their decision to live in London was a key factor in why they had to house share, as housing was so expensive in the city. They had chosen to move to London due to the career opportunities it offered (although the relative lack of job opportunities, in some careers, outside of the capital, meant that the decision to live in London was not always experienced as a completely free choice). Moreover, participants who experienced a greater sense of agency, for example due to seeing house sharing as a lifestyle choice, rather than as something forced upon them, generally reported more positive experiences and outcomes (Clapham, 2010; Gecas, 2003).

Finally, the interview studies demonstrated the importance of considering development across the lifespan. Past housing experiences (e.g. living with a partner or living with a housemate they had had a particularly positive or negative relationship with) and future housing aspirations shaped the way that participants understood their current housing situation (see also Clapham, 2005). Additionally, housing trajectories should not be assumed to only go in one direction. Several participants had gone from living in a house share to

cohabiting with a partner, or even a spouse, and had then gone back to house sharing. This highlights the value of taking a life course approach, which can accommodate the complexity of human lives, rather than thinking in terms of housing careers or developmental models that progress through a series of pre-defined (and unidirectional) stages (Coulter, 2023).

### 8.3 – Strengths of the Current Research

Across all four studies, it was felt that each sample displayed a reasonable degree of diversity on some dimensions, particularly with regards to age, which was a key variable in this thesis. In Section 2.3.1, it was noted that there had been very little previous research into the experiences of house sharers aged 35-50 years. It is therefore felt that the current interview studies (in which 10 of the 18 participants fell into the 35-50 years age range) make a valuable contribution to knowledge in the field. Additionally, both surveys sampled participants with a broad range of ages (18-61 years in Chapter 6, 18-78 years in Chapter 7).

The use of mixed methods gave a wide scope to the research questions that could be asked and the conclusions that could be drawn within the thesis. The use of quantitative surveys allowed for a systematic examination of the extent to which house sharing after 30 years of age may lead to positive or negative outcomes (whether with regards to home, adult identity, or well-being), while also taking into account other contextual factors, such as demographic characteristics and housing tenure. It would have been difficult to fully grasp the unique contribution that house sharing might make to shaping outcomes without being able to draw upon statistical comparisons between house shares and other household types. In addition, the thesis also provided in-depth insights into the lives of house sharers aged 30 years or over through qualitative interview studies that allowed deeper understanding of the ways in which the meaning, experience, and impact of living in a house share after the age of 30 years may be influenced by contextual factors, linked lives, and personal agency.

Within the current thesis, the results from the different studies are felt to be fairly consistent, thus increasing confidence regarding the transferability of the findings; however, it is recognised that consistency is not proof of validity or inference quality (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006). Additionally, there are some ways in which the results gathered through the different methods differed, which can be seen to further highlight the value of mixing methods. In particular, the interviews highlighted that the experiences of house sharers varied widely but, when looking at a group level, this variation is lost as only the average is considered. Taken on their own, the quantitative results would suggest that there is little difference in the experience of people living in different types of households; by also looking at individual stories we can gain a much fuller understanding of the unique opportunities and

challenges different household types can offer. Such an approach can be seen to follow Clapham's (2002, 2005) argument that, while it can be valuable to try to identify patterns across the housing pathways of individuals, so as to allow broader generalisations to be made, when doing so we also need to retain an understanding of individual subjectivity, meanings, and agency.

It is thought that the inclusion of different types of participants (i.e. students and non-students, lodgers and landlords, renters and owner-occupiers) increases the transferability of the findings. However, it is recognised that there are elements of the results that will be specific to the UK in the early 21st century. Nonetheless, it is felt that the finding that the balance of control and companionship experienced in a house share can shape ability to feel at home and well-being outcomes, has wider transferability, potentially to other geographical settings and to other household types. The compatibility of this finding with existing theory increases confidence in its transferability (Clapham, 2010; Gurney, 1990); however, the extent of the transferability of the findings of this thesis does remain to be tested empirically.

### 8.4 – Limitations of the Current Research

Within the current thesis, no claims are made as to the representativeness of the sample. All of the studies used non-random samples. Additionally, the studies presented in Chapters 4 and 6 specifically targeted students at one London university, although this limitation was addressed through the recruitment of general population samples for the studies presented in Chapters 5 and 7. Nonetheless, it is recognised that, across both qualitative studies, almost all of the participants lived in London. Across the thesis, participants were also predominantly White and female. Furthermore, with the general population survey in particular, due to advertising the survey through at least one tenants' union and in Facebook groups focused on giving advice to renters experiencing issues, it may be that participants who had recently had negative experiences of renting are over-represented in the sample.

The nature of the samples recruited across the studies do limit the ability to make statistical generalisations about the wider population of house sharers. However, the sampling techniques are not seen as presenting a barrier to considering the transferability of the findings or of considering possibilities for theoretical generalisation (Sayer, 1984; B. Smith, 2018). The value of such approaches is also recognised within critical realism, where the aim of research is seen to be analytical generalisation and theory development, rather than the generation of universal laws via the empirical observation of patterns in one sample (Bhaskar, 2014; O'Mahoney & Vincent, 2014).

The concurrent nature of the mixed method design meant that the qualitative and quantitative studies could not inform each other. This meant that some of the potential benefits of a mixed methods design could not be realised within this thesis. In contrast, adopting a sequential design, for example, could have allowed hypotheses to be developed based on initial qualitative studies and then tested in subsequent quantitative studies. However, adopting a concurrent design was necessary due to the time constraints inherent in doing a PhD.

## 8.5 – Ideas for Future Research

With regards to future research, conducting interviews with house sharers aged 30 years or over who are: living outside of London, and/or male, and/or from an ethnic minority background will be important for gaining a fuller understanding of what it means to live in a house share after the age of 30 years and how such experiences can vary depending on individual and contextual factors. Additionally, for future quantitative surveys, it would be useful to include measures of personal control and/or self-efficacy, as well as questions that aim to measure the level of choice a participant feels they have over their living situation, so as to allow more direct investigation of how such factors may play a role in shaping outcomes for people living in house shares and other household types. Additionally, working to recruit more participants who are living in a house share along with their partner and/or child(ren) would allow greater understanding to be gained of how their experiences and outcomes may or may not differ from single, childfree house sharers.

## 8.6 – Conclusions and Implications

The results of the thesis can therefore be seen to demonstrate that house sharing can offer definite benefits for some participants, including companionship, social support, fun, friendship, and feelings of home and family, which can also support positive psychological well-being. However, house sharing can also entail risks. Additionally, these risks are not evenly distributed, with people who have fewer resources and/or who are renting a room in a house share at the lower end of the PRS often having a higher chance of experiencing negative outcomes.

Currently, within the UK, people under 35 years of age can only claim housing benefit at the Shared Accommodation Rate, leaving potentially vulnerable young people with no choice but to house share, often with strangers and in situations that feel unsafe (Cole et al., 2016; Ortega-Alcázar & Wilkinson, 2019, 2021; Wilkinson & Ortega-Alcázar, 2017). The lack of choice and control over their housing that young people in such situations experience can

have negative consequences for their well-being and mental health (S. Green & McCarthy, 2015; Ortega-Alcázar & Wilkinson, 2021; Wilkinson & Ortega-Alcázar, 2019). However, research has shown that, with support, house sharing can potentially be a viable and positive option for some vulnerable people (Batty et al., 2015; S. Green & McCarthy, 2015; Ortega-Alcázar & Wilkinson, 2019). For example, schemes run by housing charities that work to match young people with a suitable shared house, and then support the household in managing issues that arise, can increase the likelihood of positive outcomes and can lead to some young people feeling at home in their house share, even though they experienced little choice over where or how to live (Ortega-Alcázar & Wilkinson, 2019). Increasing the amount of money that young people receiving housing benefit can claim would increase the amount of agency and control they could exercise over their housing and would reduce the risk of harm vulnerable young people face in their housing (Ortega-Alcázar & Wilkinson, 2019). However, if this is not seen as possible or politically desirable, then more funding should be provided for schemes run by charities and local authorities to support housing benefit claimants who are living in shared housing (Batty et al., 2015; Ortega-Alcázar & Wilkinson, 2019).

For many people renting a room in a house share, and for private renters more generally, insecurity of tenure can severely undermine feelings of home, control, and well-being (Bone, 2014; McKee et al., 2020; Morris, 2018; Soaita & McKee, 2019; Watt, 2018). Reforms to the PRS, such as abolishing Section 21 'no fault' evictions, as proposed under the Renters (Reform) Bill[37], would help to provide private tenants with more security (DLUHC, 2023). However, even in the absence of legislative change, landlords can play a role in facilitating feelings of control and home for tenants, for example through conducting repairs in a timely manner and allowing tenants to have pets or to engage in some personalisation of the property (Rolfe et al., 2023).

Finally, it is felt that, just as discourses around housing normalise and valorise homeownership (Gurney, 1999), currently the single-family household is discursively constructed as the ideal embodiment of home. Some literature has worked to push for greater recognition of the fact that the family home is not always a place of safety (Gurney, 1990, 2020; Mallett, 2004). However, more widespread acknowledgement that control is also limited within the family home, not just house shares, would be a useful step towards removing some of the stigma that can be associated with house sharing (Heath et al., 2018).

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[37] The Renters (Reform) Bill was introduced to the UK Parliament in May 2023 but has not yet, as of late July 2023, received its second reading.

This would benefit people who are currently house sharing but may also help more people to consider house sharing as a viable option. House sharing will not suit all people at all stages of their life but, for many people, house sharing could potentially offer real benefits, in terms of companionship, support, feelings of home, and psychological well-being. Greater cultural recognition of this may help more people to embrace, or at least consider embracing, what house sharing has to offer.

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# Appendices

# Appendix A

## List of Search Terms Used in Literature Search

- "house sharing" AND ("well-being" OR "mental health" OR wellbeing)

- "flat sharing" AND ("well-being" OR "mental health" OR wellbeing)

- "flatting" AND ("well-being" OR "mental health" OR wellbeing)

- ("housesharing" OR "flatsharing" OR "homesharing" OR "house sharer" OR "house sharers") AND (wellbeing OR "well-being" OR "mental health")

- ("house in multiple occupation" OR "houses in multiple occupation" OR "house of multiple occupation") AND ("mental health" OR "psychological well-being" OR "psychological wellbeing" OR depression OR anxiety)

- ("house of multiple occupancy" OR "houses of multiple occupation" OR "houses of multiple occupancy") AND ("mental health" OR "psychological well-being" OR "psychological wellbeing" OR depression OR anxiety)

- ("home of multiple occupancy" OR "homes of multiple occupancy" OR "home in multiple occupation" OR "homes in multiple occupation") AND ("mental health" OR "psychological well-being" OR "psychological wellbeing" OR depression OR anxiety)

- ("flat share" OR "house share" OR "shared house" OR "share house" OR "shared flat" OR "shared housing" OR "shared apartment" OR "apartment sharing") AND ("psychological well-being" OR "psychological wellbeing")

- ("house sharing" OR "flat sharing" OR "flatting" OR "house sharer") AND ("adult identity" OR "adult status")

- ("housesharing" OR "homesharing" OR "flatsharing" OR "house-sharing" OR "flat-sharing" OR "home-sharing") AND ("adult identity" OR "adult status")

- ("house in multiple occupation" OR "houses in multiple occupation" OR "house of multiple occupation" OR "house of multiple occupancy" OR "houses of multiple occupation") AND ("adult identity" OR "adult status")

- ("houses of multiple occupancy" OR "home of multiple occupancy" OR "homes of multiple occupancy" OR "home in multiple occupation" OR "homes in multiple occupation") AND ("adult identity" OR "adult status")

- ("house sharing" OR "flat sharing" OR "flatting" OR "house sharer" OR "housesharing" OR "homesharing" OR "flatsharing" OR "house-sharing" OR "flat-sharing" OR "home-sharing") AND "transition to adulthood"

- ("house in multiple occupation" OR "houses in multiple occupation" OR "house of multiple occupation" OR "house of multiple occupancy" OR "houses of multiple occupation") AND "transition to adulthood"

- ("houses of multiple occupancy" OR "home of multiple occupancy" OR "homes of multiple occupancy" OR "home in multiple occupation" OR "homes in multiple occupation") AND "transition to adulthood"

**Appendix B**

**List of Articles That Explore the Experiences of House Sharers Over the Age of 30 Years**

**Table A1**

*Full List of Articles Reviewed That Explore the Experiences of House Sharers Over the Age of 30 Years*

| Author(s) and year | Title |
| --- | --- |
| Alam et al. (2022) | Risks and informality in owner-occupied shared housing: To let, or not to let? |
| Altus and Mathews (2000) | Examining satisfaction of older home owners with intergenerational homesharing |
| Bagnall (2020) | Final report: Leeds Homeshare local evaluation |
| Barratt and Green (2017) | Making a House in Multiple Occupation a home: Using visual ethnography to explore issues of identity and well-being in the experience of creating a home amongst HMO tenants |
| Barratt et al. (2015) | Mental health and houses in multiple occupation |
| F. Baum (1986) | Shared housing: Making alternative lifestyles work |
| Binch et al. (2022) | Photo elicitation to explore health and social exclusion with rooming house residents in Ottawa, Canada |
| Blanc and Scanlon (2022) | Sharing a home under lockdown in London |
| Bodkin and Saxena (2017) | Exploring home sharing for elders |
| Bricocoli and Sabatinelli (2016) | House sharing amongst young adults in the context of Mediterranean welfare: The case of Milan |
| Cho et al. (2019) | Shared housing as a potential resource for community building |
| Clark (2017) | Striking the balance: The social dynamics of shared household living among young adults in New Zealand |
| Clark and Tuffin (2023) | House sharing and young adults: Examining successful dynamics and negative stereotypes |
| Clark and Tuffin (2015) | Choosing housemates and justifying age, gender, and ethnic discrimination |
| Clark et al. (2020) | Managing conflict in shared housing for young adults |
| Clark et al. (2019) | Rosters: Freedom, responsibility, and co-operation in young adult shared households |
| Clark et al. (2018) | Housemate desirability and understanding the social dynamics of shared living |

Clark et al. (2017)          Shared housing among young adults: Avoiding complications in domestic relationships

Clarke and Heywood (2016)    Feasibility study of the prospect of developing a viable housing model for those entitled only to access the shared accommodation rate

Clarke and Muir (2017)       Non-resident parents and shared housing

Després (1991a)              The form, experience and meaning of home in shared housing

Druta and Ronald (2021)      Living alone together in Tokyo share houses

Even-Zohar (2022)            The "At Home" program: Students residing with older adults

Garcia (2016)                Coping and suicide amongst the lads: Expectations of masculinity in post-traditional Ireland

Ge and Kuang (2020)          Perceptions on shared accommodation: A sample from China

Goldberg et al. (1986)       Spouseless, childless elderly women and their social supports

G. Green et al. (2016)       Control and care: Landlords and the governance of vulnerable tenants in houses in multiple occupation

Grinshpun (2022)             Crafting a new home: Shared living and intimacy in contemporary Japan

Heath (2004)                 Peer-shared households, quasi-communes and neo-tribes

Heath et al. (2018)          Shared housing, shared lives: Everyday experiences across the lifecourse

Heath and Cleaver (2003)     Young, free and single? Twenty-somethings and household change

Heath and Kenyon (2001)      Single young professionals and shared household living

Heath and Scicluna (2020)    Putting up (with) the paying guest: Negotiating hospitality and the boundaries of the commercial home in private lodging arrangements

Howe (1985)                  Homesharing for the elderly

Iafrati (2021)               Supporting tenants with multiple and complex needs in houses in multiple occupation: The need to balance planning restrictions and housing enforcement with support

Irving (2015)                Housing as a means, not an end: The health and wellbeing of HMO residents in Newcastle-upon-Tyne

Kenyon (2003)                Young adults' household formation: Individualization, identity and home

Kenyon and Heath (2001)      Choosing this life: Narratives of choice amongst house sharers

Kim et al. (2020) — Is shared housing a viable economic and social housing option for young adults?: Willingness to pay for shared housing in Seoul

Labit and Dubost (2016) — Housing and ageing in France and Germany: The intergenerational solution

Maalsen (2019) — I cannot afford to live alone in this city and I enjoy the company of others: Why people are share housing in Sydney

McConnell (1979) — House sharing: An alternative living arrangement for the elderly

McKee et al. (2020) — 'Generation rent' and the emotions of private renting: Self-worth, status and insecurity amongst low-income renters

McKee et al. (2019) — Beyond Generation Rent: Understanding the aspirations of private renters aged 35-54

McNamara and Connell (2007) — Homeward bound? Searching for home in Inner Sydney's share houses

Nasreen and Ruming (2021b) — Shared room housing and home: Unpacking the home-making practices of shared room tenants in Sydney, Australia

Nasreen and Ruming (2021a) — Informality, the marginalised and regulatory inadequacies: A case study of tenants' experiences of shared room housing in Sydney, Australia

Nobert and Pelling (2018) — The social life of heatwave in London

Oh and Kim (2021) — Relationship between mental health and house sharing: Evidence from Seoul

Ortega-Alcázar and Wilkinson (2021) — 'I felt trapped': Young women's experiences of shared housing in austerity Britain

Ortega-Alcázar and Wilkinson (2019) — Housing benefit and age discrimination: Young women living in shared accommodation in the private rental sector

Owens and Green (2020) — Performing millennial housing precarity: How (not) to live together

Pritchard (1983) — The art of matchmaking: A case study in shared housing

Pynoos et al. (1990) — Supportive relationships in shared housing

Quinio and Burgess (2019) — Is co-living a housing solution for vulnerable older people?: Final report

Raynor and Frichot (2022) — Sharing and caring: Housing in times of precarity

Ruming and Dowling (2017) — PhD students' housing experiences in suburban Sydney, Australia

Sánchez et al. (2011) — Much more than accommodation in exchange for company: Dimensions of solidarity in an intergenerational homeshare program in Spain

Santos (2023) — Sharing is caring: Living with friends and heterotopic citizenship

Simon and Roederer (2019)    When social intrusiveness depletes customer value: A balanced perspective on the agency of simultaneous sharers in a commercial sharing experience

Soaita and McKee (2021)    Researching home's tangible and intangible materialities by photo-elicitation

Soaita and McKee (2019)    Assembling a 'kind of' home in the UK private renting sector

Tuffin and Clark (2016)    Discrimination and potential housemates with mental or substance abuse problems

Veeroja et al. (2023)    Private renters in shared housing: Investigating housing conditions and mental well-being in Australia during COVID-19

Waldron (2022)    Generation Rent and housing precarity in Ireland: A report for the Housing Agency

Wilkinson and Ortega-Alcázar (2019)    Stranger danger? The intersectional impacts of shared housing on young people's health & wellbeing

**Appendix C**
**Interview Schedule**

The interview will begin with an invitation for the participant to share their life story, with a particular focus on (but not limited to) their housing history, their experiences of house sharing, their future goals, and their conceptions of adulthood:

*"I would like to hear your story of how you came to be living in a house share and how that fits with your past, present and future. I'd like to hear about your current housing situation and the places you have lived previously, about your family and other people you have lived with. I'd like to explore how you feel about house sharing and your goals for the future. There is no right or wrong way to go about this; I just want to hear your story. Please take your time and just tell me as much as you feel comfortable to do so."*

The participant will be encouraged to share their story, with the researcher asking further questions only as necessary to prompt continuation of the narrative or to gain clarity or further detail on areas of central importance to the research question.

Areas of particular interest to explore with further prompt questions if necessary:

- How did you come to be living in a house share?

- How do you feel about house sharing and why?

- Do you feel at home in your house share? Why?

- What does home mean to you?

- What would be your ideal housing situation?

- How do you think your life would be different if you were living in a property you owned or rented independently?

- To what extent do you see becoming a homeowner as probable and/or desirable? Why?

- What are your hopes and fears for the future?

- Have your hopes and fears changed over time?

- Do you consider yourself to be an adult?

- What makes someone an adult?

**DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCES**
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# Exploring the relationship between housing, identity and well-being

Thank you for considering taking part in this survey. Before you decide to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. A member of the research team can be contacted if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

**Purpose of the study:** This survey is aiming to examine the relationship between housing and well-being and to explore whether where you live and who you live with can impact how you feel about yourself and how you think about the future.

**Who can take part?** The survey is open to all Birkbeck students over 18 years of age.

**What will participation involve?** You are free to complete the survey at a time and place of your choosing. It is estimated completing the survey will take around 30-40 minutes.

Some questions in the survey are multiple choice, others will require you to write your response. The survey will provide instructions on how to answer each question.

**Possible risks and benefits of taking part:** By participating in the survey and sharing your views you will be helping to further knowledge and understanding of how people are living today. We also hope you will enjoy taking part. We do not anticipate there to be risks associated with participating.

**Arrangements for anonymity and confidentiality:** You will not be asked to provide any personally identifying information and all information you do provide will be kept confidential.

When the research is written up, short quotes from written answers may be included. In such a case, any information that could potentially be used by someone else to identify a participant will be removed or disguised (although participants may sometimes be able to recognise their own quotes by the particular words they used). Only the immediate research team will have access to the collected data.

**Right to withdraw:** Although we would like to have as many completed surveys as possible, you are free to skip any question(s) you would prefer not to answer. You are also free to stop answering questions and leave the survey at any point.

Responses are saved each time you press 'Next' to progress to the next question, not just when you finish the survey. At the start of the survey you will have the option to provide a code which will be linked to your answers. If you decide that you want to withdraw answers you have already submitted you will just need to email me your code within 2 weeks of participating in the survey and I will remove your answers from the dataset.

**When will the study be completed?** The aim is for this particular study to be completed by July 2019 and a summary of the findings of this study will be available shortly after. This study forms one part of a PhD which is due to be completed and written up in 2021.

**What will happen to the results of the research project?** The results will initially be written up as part of the researcher's PhD thesis, but may also later be submitted as an article for publication in a journal or book, or be presented at a conference.

**Ethical review:** This project has received ethical approval from the Department of Psychological Sciences Research Ethics Committee of Birkbeck, University of London

**Should you have any questions, concerns, or need any further information please contact:**

Marie Houghton (researcher) - [mhough01@mail.bbk.ac.uk](mailto:mhough01@mail.bbk.ac.uk)

Dr. Fiona Tasker (dissertation supervisor) - [f.tasker@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:f.tasker@bbk.ac.uk), 020 7631 6207
Office: Room 521, Department of Psychological Sciences, Birkbeck, University of London

**To begin the survey, please read the following statements and tick the appropriate boxes:**

☐ I have read and understand the above information regarding the survey and the aims of the research.

☐ I am over 18 years of age.

☐ I agree to take in the survey under the terms outlined above.

**Appendix E**

**Debrief Information Given to Participants in the Survey Aimed at Birkbeck Students**

Thank you very much for taking the time to participate in this study: Exploring the relationship between housing, identity and well-being. I hope you found it to be an interesting experience.

Support and advice with issues relating to housing are available at www.housing.london.ac.uk, www.shelter.org.uk and www.citizensadvice.org.uk

If this survey has raised any issues that you feel you would like to discuss further, short-term counselling is available to Birkbeck students via the Birkbeck Counselling Service who can be contacted at counselling-services@bbk.ac.uk or 020 3907 0700. More information is also available at www.bbk.ac.uk/student-services/counselling-service

Further information, help and support are also available at www.counselling-directory.org.uk and www.mind.org.uk

If you have any questions or concerns about the survey you can contact the research team at:

- Marie Houghton (researcher) - mhough01@mail.bbk.ac.uk

- Dr. Fiona Tasker (supervisor) - f.tasker@bbk.ac.uk , 020 7631 6207
Office: Room 521, Department of Psychological Sciences, Birkbeck, University of London

If over the next 2 weeks you decide you would like to withdraw your data from the study please contact Marie Houghton and let her know the code you chose at the start of the survey. After 2 weeks it will not be possible to remove your data.

If you would like to receive a copy of the summarised findings of this research study or if you would be interested in participating in an interview study on this topic please email Marie at mhough01@mail.bbk.ac.uk

**Thank you again for your participation and help with this research, it is very much appreciated!**

*[Explanatory note – Text in red italics explains the use of skip logic within the survey. This text did not appear in the survey that participants completed.]*

# Exploring the relationship between housing, identity and well-being

If you would like, you are welcome to choose a unique identifying code that can then be linked to your answers should you decide, at any point in the two weeks after you complete the survey, that you wish to withdraw your data from the study. The code should be something that will be unique to you but not something that could be used to identify you, such as your name. A possible format for the code could therefore be the first 2 letters of your mother's name and the last 3 digits of your phone number. However, you are free to use whatever code you would like.

If you do choose to supply a code, please note it down in case you would like to use it later.

If you would like to choose a unique identifying code please list it here: _____

## Demographics

*Your answers to these questions will help me to understand more about the characteristics of people participating in this survey and to present a general summary of my sample when writing up the research.*

- Q1. What is your age? _____

- Q2. What is your nationality? _____

- Q3. How would you describe your ethnicity? _____

- Q4. How would you rate your English language ability?
    - ☐ English is my first (native) language
    - ☐ Fluent
    - ☐ Very good
    - ☐ Good
    - ☐ Limited

- Q5. How would you describe your gender?
    - ☐ Female

    ☐  Male

    ☐  Non-binary

    ☐  Other (please specify): _____

- Q6. Do you identify as transgender?

    ☐  Yes

    ☐  No

- Q7. What is your current relationship status? (Please tick all that apply)

    ☐  Single

    ☐  In a relationship but not cohabiting

    ☐  Cohabiting

    ☐  Married or in a civil partnership

    ☐  Separated

    ☐  Divorced

    ☐  Widowed

    ☐  Other (please specify): _____

- Q8. Do you have any children?

    ☐  Yes

    ☐  No

- Q9. If yes, do these children live with you? (Please tick all that apply)

    ☐  Yes, more or less full-time

    ☐  Yes, part-time

    ☐  No or rarely

- Q10. How would you describe your sexual identity?

    ☐  Heterosexual

    ☐  Gay

    ☐  Lesbian

    ☐  Bisexual

    ☐  Other (please specify): _____

- Q11. What is the highest educational qualification you have achieved so far?

    ☐  No qualifications

    ☐  GCSEs, O-levels, Level 2 NVQ, or equivalent

&#9633; A-levels, International Baccalaureate Diploma, Level 3 NVQ, or equivalent

&#9633; HNC, HND, Level 4 or 5 NVQ, or equivalent

&#9633; Bachelor's degree

&#9633; Master's degree, PG Dip, PGCE, or equivalent

&#9633; PhD

&#9633; Other (please specify): _____

- Q12. Are you currently a student at Birkbeck?

    &#9633; Yes

    &#9633; No

- Q13. Are you studying full-time or part-time?

    &#9633; Full-time

    &#9633; Part-time

- Q14. Are you currently in paid employment?

    &#9633; No

    &#9633; Yes, I work part-time

    &#9633; Yes, I work full-time

- Q15. If you are currently working, or have worked previously, please write your current or most recent job: _____

- Q16. What is your total yearly income (including any benefits) to the nearest thousand?

    &#9633; £0 to £15,000

    &#9633; £16,000 to £25,000

    &#9633; £26,000 to £35,000

    &#9633; £36,000 to £50,000

    &#9633; £51,000 to £70,000

    &#9633; £71,000 or more

- Q17. Do you consider yourself to be disabled?

    &#9633; Yes

    &#9633; No

- Q18. If yes, does your disability affect your ability to live on your own?

☐ Yes

☐ To some extent

☐ No

Please explain:

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│                                                         │
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│                                                         │
│                                                         │
│                                                         │
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**Housing**

*These questions focus on your current housing situation. If you live at different addresses during term time and the holidays please answer according to the address you spend most time living at.*

- Q19. How would you describe your living situation? (Please tick all that apply)

  ☐ I live on my own

  ☐ I live with friends

  ☐ I live in a house share

  ☐ I live with my partner

  ☐ I live with my children

  ☐ I live with family

  ☐ I am a lodger

  ☐ Other (please specify): _____

*If participants say they live alone use skip logic to take them straight to the question about where they live.*

- Q20. How many people do you live with? (Please choose from dropdown menu)
  ➤ [Dropdown menu listed numbers from 1 to '20 or more']

*Use skip logic to take participant to a page with the relevant number of people for the next question – e.g. if they indicate they live with 2 people they will be taken to a page that asks them to describe the 2 people they live with*

- Q21. For each person you live with please answer the following questions

**Person 1**

Their relationship to you: _____

Their age: _____

Their gender: _____

How long have you known this person? _____

*(This question block will be repeated for as many people as the participant indicated they live with in the previous question)*

- Q22. How often do you and at least one other member of your household eat dinner together?

    - ☐ Every night or almost every night

    - ☐ A few times a week

    - ☐ Once a week

    - ☐ A few times a month

    - ☐ Once a month

    - ☐ A few times a year

    - ☐ Never or almost never

- Q23. Where do you live? (Please write the first half of your postcode): _____

- Q24. How long have you lived in your current property? _____

- Q25. Please describe the property you live in. (For example, is it a house or a flat? What rooms does it contain?)

- Q26. Do you or someone who you live with own the property you live in?

    - ☐ Yes, I am the sole owner of the property

    - ☐ Yes, I am the joint owner of the property
      (Please specify below who you own the property with – names are not necessary but please write the number of people and your relationship to them)

    - ☐ Yes, someone I live with owns the property
      (Please specify your relationship to the owner(s) below)

    - ☐ No, the property is rented from a private landlord

    - ☐ No, the property is rented from the local council/ a housing association

    - ☐ No, the property is a halls of residence

☐ Other (please specify below)

Please add any comments here:

> * Q27. What were the main factors that motivated you to choose to live in your current property?

> * Q28. Do you feel at home in your current property?

>> ☐ Yes

>> ☐ Sometimes

>> ☐ No

Please explain:

> * Q29. How satisfied are you with your current living situation? (Please rate 1-10, with 1 being completely dissatisfied and 10 being completely satisfied)

| Completely dissatisfied | | | | | | | | | Completely satisfied |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Please explain:

> * Q30. What would be your ideal living situation?

- Q31. Do you plan to move house in the future?

  - ☐ Yes, in the next month
  - ☐ Yes, in the next 6 months
  - ☐ Yes, in the next year
  - ☐ Yes, in the next 2 years
  - ☐ Yes, in the next 5 years
  - ☐ Yes, in the next 10 years
  - ☐ Eventually, but not in the next 10 years
  - ☐ No

- Q32. How many properties have you lived in over the last 10 years? _____

**The Future**

- Q33. To what extent do you feel it is probable that you will become a homeowner in the future? (Please rate 1-5, with 1 being very unlikely and 5 being very likely)

| Very unlikely<br>1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Very likely<br>5 | Already a<br>homeowner<br>N/A |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |

Please explain:

- Q34. How desirable do you find the idea of becoming a homeowner? (Please rate 1-5, with 1 being very undesirable and 5 being very desirable)

| Very undesirable<br>1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Very desirable<br>5 | Already a<br>homeowner<br>N/A |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |

Please explain:

- Q35. To what extent do you feel it is probable that you will get married in the future? (Please rate 1-5, with 1 being very unlikely and 5 being very likely)

| Very unlikely 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Very likely 5 | Already married N/A |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Please explain:



- Q36. How desirable do you find the idea of getting married? (Please rate 1-5, with 1 being very undesirable and 5 being very desirable)

| Very undesirable 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Very desirable 5 | Already married N/A |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Please explain:



- Q37. To what extent do you feel it is probable that you will get have children in the future? (Please rate 1-5, with 1 being very unlikely and 5 being very likely)

| Very unlikely 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Very likely 5 | Already have children N/A |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Please explain:



- Q38. How desirable do you find the idea of having children? (Please rate 1-5, with 1 being very undesirable and 5 being very desirable)

| Very undesirable<br>1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Very desirable<br>5 | Already have<br>children<br>N/A |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |

Please explain:

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- Q39. Thinking about the next 10 years, what are your main goals and things you would like to achieve?

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## Conceptions of Adulthood

- Q40. Do you consider yourself to be an adult?

  ☐ Yes

  ☐ No

  ☐ In some ways yes, in some ways no

Please explain why you feel this way:

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- Q41. What do you think are the most important things that make someone an adult?

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- Q42. Please indicate whether you think each of the following items must be achieved before a person can be considered an adult.

| | Yes, this is necessary for adulthood | No, this is not necessary for adulthood |
|---|---|---|
| Financially independent from parents | | |
| Become employed full-time | | |
| Avoid drunk driving | | |
| Have at least one child | | |
| If a man, become capable of running a household | | |
| Have obtained driver's license and can drive an automobile | | |
| Committed to a long-term love relationship | | |
| If a woman, become biologically capable of bearing children | | |
| Avoid committing petty crimes like vandalism and shoplifting | | |
| Accept responsibility for the consequences of your actions | | |
| If a man, become capable of caring for children | | |
| Establish equal relationship with parents | | |
| Avoid use of profanity/vulgar language | | |
| Become less self-oriented, develop greater consideration for others | | |
| If a woman, become capable of running a household | | |
| Not deeply tied to parents emotionally | | |
| Make life-long commitments to others | | |
| If a woman, become capable of caring for children | | |
| Settle into a long-term career | | |
| Use contraception if sexually active and not trying to conceive a child | | |
| If a man, become capable of keeping a family physically safe | | |
| No longer living in parents' household | | |
| Avoid illegal drugs | | |
| If a woman, become capable of supporting a family financially | | |
| Have had sexual intercourse | | |
| Decide on personal beliefs and values independently of parents or other influences | | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Learn always to have good control over your emotions | | |
| If a man, become capable of supporting a family financially | | |
| Reached age twenty-one | | |
| Purchase house | | |
| If a woman, become capable of keeping a family physically safe | | |
| Married | | |
| Avoid becoming drunk | | |
| Have no more than one sexual partner | | |
| If a man, become biologically capable of fathering children | | |
| Reached age eighteen | | |
| Drive safely and close to speed limit | | |
| Finish education | | |
| Grow to full height | | |

**Your Social Network**

*This section explores who you would turn to if you needed various kinds of help or support.*

*For each question list the person or people you would turn to for that kind of help, support or engagement. You may want to list someone in answer to more than one question or you may have different people for each question. You are free to add as few or as many people as you would like.*

*In each instance, please just list the person's initials. You do not need to give their full name.*

*We are asking for initials so that we know if there are people who are included in your answer to more than one question. Therefore, if you want to list someone who has the same initials to someone you have already included in answer to that question or an earlier question in this section, please distinguish them by adding a number to their initials.*

*You are free to disguise initials or refer to people by a code name if you prefer.*

- Q43. Who would you turn to for emotional support, for example if you felt down and wanted to talk to someone, or if you wanted some encouragement?

**Person 1**

Initials: _____

Their relationship to you: _____

Do you live with this person? (Yes/ No): _____

**Person 2**

Initials: _____

Their relationship to you: _____

Do you live with this person? (Yes/ No): _____

**Person 3**

Initials: _____

Their relationship to you: _____

Do you live with this person? (Yes/ No): _____

**Person 4**

Initials: _____

Their relationship to you: _____

Do you live with this person? (Yes/ No): _____

**Person 5**

Initials: _____

Their relationship to you: _____

Do you live with this person? (Yes/ No): _____

- Q44. Would you like to add more people?
    - ☐ Yes
    - ☐ No

*If yes, go to a new page with the same layout so the participant can list more people (but labelled person 6-10).*
*If no, skip to the next question.*

- Q45. Who would you ask if you needed practical help, for example if you needed help moving house or needed someone to look after your pet while you were on holiday?

**Person 1**

Initials: _____

Their relationship to you: _____

Do you live with this person? (Yes/ No): _____

**Person 2**

Initials: _____

Their relationship to you: _____

Do you live with this person? (Yes/ No): _____

**Person 3**

Initials: _____

Their relationship to you: _____

Do you live with this person? (Yes/ No): _____

**Person 4**

Initials: _____

Their relationship to you: _____

Do you live with this person? (Yes/ No): _____

**Person 5**

Initials: _____

Their relationship to you: _____

Do you live with this person? (Yes/ No): _____

- Q46. Would you like to add more people?

  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No

*If yes, go to a new page with the same layout so the participant can list more people (but labelled person 6-10).*
*If no, skip to the next question.*

- Q47. Who would you ask if you needed financial assistance, for example if you needed to borrow some money?

**Person 1**

Initials: _____

Their relationship to you: _____

Do you live with this person? (Yes/ No): _____

**Person 2**

Initials: _____

Their relationship to you: _____

Do you live with this person? (Yes/ No): _____

**Person 3**

Initials: _____

Their relationship to you: _____

Do you live with this person? (Yes/ No): _____

**Person 4**

Initials: _____

Their relationship to you: _____

Do you live with this person? (Yes/ No): _____

**Person 5**

Initials: _____

Their relationship to you: _____

Do you live with this person? (Yes/ No): _____

- Q48. Would you like to add more people?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No

*If yes, go to a new page with the same layout so the participant can list more people (but labelled person 6-10).*
*If no, skip to the next question.*

- Q49. Who would you ask if you wanted guidance or advice about a problem you were having?

**Person 1**

Initials: _____

Their relationship to you: _____

Do you live with this person? (Yes/ No): _____


**Person 2**

Initials: _____

Their relationship to you: _____

Do you live with this person? (Yes/ No): _____


**Person 3**

Initials: _____

Their relationship to you: _____

Do you live with this person? (Yes/ No): _____


**Person 4**

Initials: _____

Their relationship to you: _____

Do you live with this person? (Yes/ No): _____


**Person 5**

Initials: _____

Their relationship to you: _____

Do you live with this person? (Yes/ No): _____

- Q50. Would you like to add more people?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No

*If yes, go to a new page with the same layout so the participant can list more people (but labelled person 6-10).*
*If no, skip to the next question.*


- Q51. Who would you get in touch with if you wanted to engage in a fun, social activity, for example going out for dinner or to the cinema?

**Person 1**

Initials: _____

Their relationship to you: _____

Do you live with this person? (Yes/ No): _____


**Person 2**

Initials: _____

Their relationship to you: _____

Do you live with this person? (Yes/ No): _____


**Person 3**

Initials: _____

Their relationship to you: _____

Do you live with this person? (Yes/ No): _____


**Person 4**

Initials: _____

Their relationship to you: _____

Do you live with this person? (Yes/ No): _____


**Person 5**

Initials: _____

Their relationship to you: _____

Do you live with this person? (Yes/ No): _____

- Q52. Would you like to add more people?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No

*If yes, go to a new page with the same layout so the participant can list more people (but labelled person 6-10).*
*If no, skip to the next question.*

- Q53. Who would you turn to for help or support in a time of crisis or severe stress?

**Person 1**

Initials: _____

Their relationship to you: _____

Do you live with this person? (Yes/ No): _____

**Person 2**

Initials: _____

Their relationship to you: _____

Do you live with this person? (Yes/ No): _____

**Person 3**

Initials: _____

Their relationship to you: _____

Do you live with this person? (Yes/ No): _____

**Person 4**

Initials: _____

Their relationship to you: _____

Do you live with this person? (Yes/ No): _____

**Person 5**

Initials: _____

Their relationship to you: _____

Do you live with this person? (Yes/ No): _____

- Q54. Would you like to add more people?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No

*If yes, go to a new page with the same layout so the participant can list more people (but labelled person 6-10).*
*If no, skip to the next question.*


**Well-being**

Q55. This scale consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Read each item and then choose the appropriate answer to indicate to what extent you have felt this way **during the past few weeks**.

| 1<br>Very slightly or not at all | 2<br>A little | 3<br>Moderately | 4<br>Quite a bit | 5<br>Extremely |
|---|---|---|---|---|

- Interested
- Distressed
- Excited
- Upset
- Strong
- Guilty
- Scared
- Hostile
- Enthusiastic
- Proud
- Irritable
- Alert
- Ashamed
- Inspired
- Nervous
- Determined
- Attentive
- Jittery
- Active
- Afraid

Q56. The next questions are about how you feel about different aspects of your life. For each one, tell me how often you feel that way.

| 1<br>Hardly ever | 2<br>Some of the time | 3<br>Often |
|---|---|---|

- How often do you feel that you lack companionship?
- How often do you feel left out?
- How often do you feel isolated from others?

Q57. Below are five statements with which you may agree or disagree. Using the 1-7 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by choosing the appropriate number. Please be open and honest in your responding.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Slightly disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Slightly agree | Agree | Strongly agree |

- In most ways my life is close to my ideal.
- The conditions of my life are excellent
- I am satisfied with my life.
- So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.
- If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.

**Final comments**

Please use the space below if you would like to make any comments or add any thoughts you may have about the survey or in reference to any of the questions.

In the future I will be doing further research on similar topics, so it would be really useful to have your feedback on the survey – e.g. what you liked, what you didn't like, any other questions you think I should have included. Any feedback would be very much appreciated!

**Table A3**

*Pearson's Correlation Between Predictor Variables Included in Regression Analyses of Psychological Well-Being Outcomes (n = 188)*

| Variable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Age | — | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Income | .36*** [.21, .51] | — | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. Gender | .01 [-.16, .17] | .09 [-.06, .21] | — | | | | | | | | | |
| 4. Disability | .10 [-.09, .28] | -.04 [-.15, .09] | .08 [-.07, .20] | — | | | | | | | | |
| 5. Consider self an adult | .27*** [.12, .40] | .16* [.04, .29] | .04 [-.09, .18] | -.13 [-.28, .01] | — | | | | | | | |
| 6. Home happiness | .01 [-.13, .16] | .06 [-.07, .20] | .04 [-.11, .17] | -.16* [-.28, -.03] | .06 [-.07, .18] | — | | | | | | |
| 7. Transience | .01 [-.11, .13] | .21** [.09, .34] | .01 [-.11, .13] | -.05 [-.20, .10] | .09 [-.06, .24] | -.19** [-.33, -.05] | — | | | | | |
| 8. Owner | .37*** [.24, .48] | .23** [.06, .40] | .05 [-.10, .17] | -.04 [-.12, .08] | .12 [-.01, .21] | .16* [.03, .28] | -.01 [-.14, .13] | — | | | | |
| 9. Social renter | .05 [-.09, .18] | -.09 [-.23, .07] | .04 [-.10, .17] | .06 [-.08, .19] | .01 [-.14, .16] | .06 [-.08, .19] | -.43*** [-.55, -.28] | -.15* [-.20, -.10] | — | | | |
| 10. Property owned by family or friend | -.14 [-.29, .02] | -.08 [-.19, .03] | -.01 [-.16, .12] | .07 [-.08, .25] | -.13 [-.30, .02] | .02 [-.13, .17] | -.21** [-.35, -.07] | -.14 [-.19, -.09] | -.19** [-.25, -.14] | — | | |
| 11. Living alone | .17* [.04, .30] | .17* [.02, .32] | -.21** [-.38, -.03] | -.07 [-.14, .05] | .07 [-.07, .21] | .03 [-.14, .19] | .17* [.06, .28] | .15* [-.03, .33] | -.13 [-.19, -.04] | -.03 [-.15, .10] | — | |
| 12. Living just with partner/ children | .39*** [.25, .53] | .20** [.05, .36] | .01 [-.14, .15] | -.04 [-.16, .09] | .13 [-.03, .27] | .09 [-.07, .23] | .01 [-.12, .14] | .23** [.06, .39] | .04 [-.11, .19] | -.14 [-.25, -.01] | -.24** [-.30, -.19] | — |
| 13. Living with family of origin | -.38*** [-.51, -.23] | -.33*** [-.41, -.24] | .05 [-.09, .17] | .05 [-.09, .21] | -.19* [-.34, -.01] | .02 [-.13, .17] | -.55*** [-.66, -.44] | -.18* [-.23, -.12] | .31*** [.14, .46] | .41*** [.24, .56] | -.21** [-.26, -.15] | -.34*** [-.41, -.27] |

* *p* < .05 (two-tailed), ** *p* < .01 (two-tailed), *** *p* < .001 (two-tailed)

**DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCES**
**BIRKBECK UNIVERSITY OF LONDON**

# Home, happiness, and well-being: Exploring the experiences of renters

Thank you for considering taking part in this survey. Before you decide to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. A member of the research team can be contacted if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

**Purpose of the study:** This survey is aiming to examine the relationship between housing and well-being and to explore whether where you live and who you live with can impact how you feel about yourself and how you think about the future.

**Who can take part?** The survey is open to anyone aged 18 or over who is living in rented accommodation.

**What will participation involve?** You are free to complete the survey at a time and place of your choosing. It is estimated completing the survey will take around 15 minutes.

Some questions in the survey are multiple choice, others will require you to write your response. The survey will provide instructions on how to answer each question.

**Possible risks and benefits of taking part:** By participating in the survey and sharing your views you will be helping to further knowledge and understanding of how people are living today. We also hope you will enjoy taking part. We do not anticipate there to be risks associated with participating.

**Arrangements for anonymity and confidentiality:** You will not be asked to provide any personally identifying information. All information you do provide will remain anonymous and will be used for this study only.

When the research is written up, short quotes from written answers may be included. In such a case, any information that could potentially be used by someone else to identify a participant will be removed or disguised (although participants may sometimes be able to recognise their own quotes by the particular words they used). Only the immediate research team will have access to the collected data.

**Right to withdraw:** Although we would like to have as many completed surveys as possible, you are free to skip any question(s) you would prefer not to answer. You are also free to stop answering questions and leave the survey at any point.

Responses are saved each time you press 'Next' to progress to the next question, not just when you finish the survey. At the start of the survey you will have the option to provide a code which will be linked to your answers. If you decide that you want to withdraw answers you have already submitted you will just need to email me your code within 2 weeks of participating in the survey and I will remove your answers from the dataset.

**When will the study be completed?** The aim is for this particular study to be completed by October 2020 and a summary of the findings of this study will be available shortly after. This study forms one part of a PhD which is due to be completed and written up in 2021.

**What will happen to the results of the research project?** The results will initially be written up as part of the researcher's PhD thesis, but may also later be submitted as an article for publication in a journal or book, or be presented at a conference.

**Ethical review:** This project has received ethical approval from the Department of Psychological Sciences Research Ethics Committee of Birkbeck, University of London

**Should you have any questions, concerns, or need any further information please contact:**

- Marie Houghton (researcher) - mhough01@mail.bbk.ac.uk

- Dr. Fiona Tasker (supervisor) - f.tasker@bbk.ac.uk, 020 7631 6207

Office: Room 521, Department of Psychological Sciences, Birkbeck, University of London

For information about Birkbeck's data protection policy please visit:
http://www.bbk.ac.uk/about-us/policies/privacy#7

If you have concerns about this study, please contact the School's Ethics Officer at:
ethics@psychology.bbk.ac.uk

School Research Officer
School of Science, Department of Psychological Sciences
Birkbeck, University of London
London, WC1E 7HX

You also have the right to submit a complaint to the Information Commissioner's Office
https://ico.org.uk/

**To begin the survey, please read the following statements and tick the appropriate boxes:**

□   I have read and understand the above information regarding the survey and the aims of the research.

□   I am over 18 years of age.

□   I am currently living in rented accommodation.

□   I agree to take in the survey under the terms outlined above.

**Appendix I**

**Debrief Information Given to Participants in the General Population Survey**

Thank you so much for taking the time to complete our survey which we hope will help us know more about how people in rented housing feel and some of the reasons for this.

Support and advice with issues relating to housing are available at www.shelter.org.uk and www.citizensadvice.org.uk

If this interview has raised any issues that you feel you would like to discuss further, help and support are available. Speaking to your GP may be a good place to start. You can also find details of counsellors available near you at www.counselling-directory.org.uk or by contacting Mind on 0300 123 3393 or www.mind.org.uk

If you have any questions or concerns about the survey you can contact the research team at:

- Marie Houghton (researcher) - mhough01@mail.bbk.ac.uk

- Dr. Fiona Tasker (supervisor) - f.tasker@bbk.ac.uk , 020 7631 6207
Office: Room 521, Department of Psychological Sciences, Birkbeck, University of London

If over the next 2 weeks you decide you would like to withdraw your data from the study please contact Marie Houghton and let her know the code you chose at the start of the survey. After 2 weeks it will not be possible to remove your data.

If you would like to receive a copy of the summarised findings of this research study or if you would be interested in participating in an interview study on this topic please email Marie at mhough01@mail.bbk.ac.uk

For information about Birkbeck's data protection policy please visit: http://www.bbk.ac.uk/about-us/policies/privacy#7

If you have concerns about this study, please contact the School's Ethics Officer at: ethics@psychology.bbk.ac.uk

You also have the right to submit a complaint to the Information Commissioner's Office: https://ico.org.uk/

Thank you again for your participation and help with this research, it is very much appreciated!

*[Explanatory note – Text in red italics explains the use of skip logic within the survey. This text did not appear in the survey that participants completed.]*

# Home, happiness, and well-being: Exploring the experiences of renters

If you want, you can choose a unique identifying code that can then be linked to your answers should you decide, at any point in the two weeks after you complete the survey, that you wish to withdraw your data from the study.

The code should be something that will be unique to you but not something that could be used to identify you, such as your name. A possible format for the code could therefore be the first 2 letters of your mother's name and the last 3 digits of your phone number. However, please feel free to use whatever code you would like or to not use a code at all.

If you do choose to supply a code, please note it down in case you would like to use it later.

If you would like to choose a unique identifying code please list it here: _____

**Demographics**

*Your answers to these questions will help me to understand more about the characteristics of people participating in this survey and to present a general summary of my sample when writing up the research.*

- Q1. What is your age? *(Please write)* _____

- Q2. How would you describe your gender? *(Please tick)*
    - ☐ Female
    - ☐ Male
    - ☐ Non-binary
    - ☐ Other (please specify): _____

- Q3. Do you identify as transgender? *(Please tick)*
    - ☐ Yes
    - ☐ No

- Q4. What is your current relationship status? *(Please tick all that apply)*

- [ ] Single

- [ ] In a relationship but not cohabiting

- [ ] Cohabiting

- [ ] Married or in a civil partnership

- [ ] Separated

- [ ] Divorced

- [ ] Widowed

- [ ] Other (please specify): _____

- Q5. Do you have any children? *(Please tick)*

  - [ ] Yes

  - [ ] No

- Q6. If yes, do these children live with you? *(Please tick all that apply)*

  - [ ] Yes, more or less full-time

  - [ ] Yes, part-time

  - [ ] No or rarely

- Q7. How would you describe your sexual identity? *(Please tick)*

  - [ ] Heterosexual

  - [ ] Gay

  - [ ] Lesbian

  - [ ] Bisexual

  - [ ] Other (please specify): _____

- Q8. What is your nationality? *(Please write)* _____

- Q9. What is your ethnic group?

*These options are taken from the 2011 Census. Please tick one box to best describe your ethnic group or background.*

White

- [ ] English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British

- [ ] Irish

- [ ] Gypsy or Irish Traveller

- [ ] Any other White background (please specify): _____

Mixed/ multiple ethnic groups

    ☐  White and Black Caribbean

    ☐  White and Black African

    ☐  White and Asian

    ☐  Any other Mixed/ multiple background (please specify): _____

**Asian/ Asian British**

    ☐  Indian

    ☐  Pakistani

    ☐  Bangladeshi

    ☐  Chinese

    ☐  Any other Asian background (please specify): _____

**Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British**

    ☐  African

    ☐  Caribbean

    ☐  Any other Black/ African/ Caribbean background (please specify): _____

    ☐  Arab

    ☐  Any other ethnic group (please specify): _____

- Q10. What is the highest educational qualification you have achieved so far? *(Please tick)*

    ☐  No qualifications

    ☐  GCSEs, O-levels, Level 2 NVQ, or equivalent

    ☐  A-levels, International Baccalaureate Diploma, Level 3 NVQ, or equivalent

    ☐  HNC, HND, Level 4 or 5 NVQ, or equivalent

    ☐  Bachelor's degree

    ☐  Master's degree, PG Dip, PGCE, or equivalent

    ☐  PhD

    ☐  Other (please specify): _____

- Q11. Are you currently in paid employment? *(Please tick)*

    ☐  No

    ☐  Yes, I work part-time

    ☐  Yes, I work full-time

- Q12. If you are currently working, or have worked previously, please write your current or most recent job: _____

- Q13. What is your total yearly income (including any benefits) to the nearest thousand? *(Please tick)*
    - ☐ £0 to £15,000
    - ☐ £16,000 to £25,000
    - ☐ £26,000 to £35,000
    - ☐ £36,000 to £50,000
    - ☐ £51,000 to £70,000
    - ☐ £71,000 or more

- Q14. Do you consider yourself to be disabled? *(Please tick)*
    - ☐ Yes
    - ☐ No

- Q15. If yes, does your disability affect your ability to live on your own? *(Please tick)*
    - ☐ Yes
    - ☐ To some extent
    - ☐ No

Please explain:

```
[blank text box]
```

**Housing**

- Q16. How many people do you live with? *(Please select from dropdown list)*
    - ➢ [Dropdown menu provided an 'I live alone' option and then listed numbers from 1 to '20 or more']

- Q17. How would you describe your living situation? *(Please tick all that apply)*
    - ☐ I live on my own
    - ☐ I live with friends
    - ☐ I live in a house share
    - ☐ I live with my partner

☐ I live with my children

☐ I live with family

☐ I am a lodger

☐ I live in student accommodation

☐ Other (please specify): _____

- Q18. Who do you live with?

*Below are a list of the types of people you might live with. Please tick **all** the boxes that apply so that all that the different types of people you live with are included.*

☐ My partner

☐ My child and/or step-child

☐ Friend

☐ Housemate

☐ My parent and/or step-parent

☐ My sibling and/or step-sibling

☐ Lodger

☐ Landlord

☐ My aunt and/or uncle

☐ My cousin

☐ My niece and/or nephew

☐ Partner's parent and/or step-parent

☐ Partner's sibling and/or step-sibling

☐ My grandparent

☐ My grandchild

☐ Other (please specify): _____

- Q19. How often do you and at least one other member of your household eat dinner together? *(Please tick)*

☐ Every night or almost every night

☐ A few times a week

☐ Once a week

☐ A few times a month

☐ Once a month

- □ A few times a year

- □ Never or almost never

- Q20. In the past 2 weeks, on how many nights have you eaten dinner alone? *(Please select from dropdown list)*
  - ➢ [Dropdown menu provided every possible answer from '0 nights' to '13 nights' as well as 'every night']

- Q21. Which of these best describes your living situation?

  *Please tick the option which best completes the sentence 'I rent...' (or 'Myself and my partner/ my family rent...')*
    - □ a room in a house or flat
    - □ a studio flat and have access to a shared kitchen and/or communal living space
    - □ a studio flat with no access to a shared kitchen and/or communal living space
    - □ a 1 bedroom house or flat
    - □ a 2 bedroom house or flat
    - □ a 3 bedroom house or flat
    - □ a 4 bedroom house or flat
    - □ a 5 bedroom house or flat
    - □ a 6 bedroom house or flat
    - □ Other (please specify): _____

- Q22. Who do you rent from? *(Please tick)*
    - □ A private landlord
    - □ The local council or a housing association
    - □ A family member or friend I live with
    - □ A family member or friend I do not live with
    - □ My university or a student housing provider
    - □ I pay rent on part of my property under a shared ownership scheme
    - □ I am not currently renting
    - □ Other (please specify): _____

- Q23. Where abouts do you live? *(Please write the first half of your postcode if you live in the UK or the name of your town/city if you live outside the UK)*

  _____

- Q24. How long have you lived in your current property? *(Please write the number of months and/or years)*

_____

- Q25. How many properties have you lived in over the last 10 years? *(Please write)*

  _____

- Q26. Do you currently own any property? *(Please tick)*
  - ☐ Yes, I own part of the property I live in under a shared ownership scheme
  - ☐ Yes, I am the sole or joint owner of a property which I do not currently live in
  - ☐ No
  - ☐ Other (please specify): _____

- Q27. What were the main factors that motivated you to choose to live in your current property? *(Please write)*

  ```



  ```

- Q28. Do you feel at home in your current property? *(Please tick)*
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ Sometimes
  - ☐ No

Please explain:

```


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- Q29. How satisfied are you with your current living situation? *(Please rate 1-10, with 1 being completely dissatisfied and 10 being completely satisfied)*

| Completely dissatisfied | | | | | | | | | Completely satisfied |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Please explain:

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- Q30. What would be your ideal living situation? *(Please write)*

- Q31. Do you plan to move house in the future? *(Please tick)*

  - ☐ Yes, in the next month

  - ☐ Yes, in the next 6 months

  - ☐ Yes, in the next year

  - ☐ Yes, in the next 2 years

  - ☐ Yes, in the next 5 years

  - ☐ Yes, in the next 10 years

  - ☐ Eventually, but not in the next 10 years

  - ☐ No

**The Future**

- Q32. To what extent do you feel it is probable that you will become a homeowner in the future? *(Please rate 1-10, with 1 being 'I do not think there is any chance I will become a homeowner' and 10 being 'I am sure I will become a homeowner')*



Please explain:

- Q33. How desirable do you find the idea of becoming a homeowner? *(Please rate 1-10, with 1 being 'I have no desire to become a homeowner' and 10 being 'I have a very strong desire to become a homeowner')*

| No desire to become a homeowner | | | | | | | | | Very strong desire to become a homeowner | Already a homeowner |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** | **9** | **10** | **N/A** |
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Please explain:

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│                                      │
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- Q34. To what extent do you feel it is probable that you will get married in the future? *(Please rate 1-10, with 1 being 'I do not think there is any chance I will get married' and 10 being 'I am sure I will get married')*

| Don't think there is any chance I'll get married | | | | | | | | | Sure I'll get married | Already married |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** | **9** | **10** | **N/A** |
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Please explain:

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- Q35. How desirable do you find the idea of getting married? *(Please rate 1-10, with 1 being 'I have no desire to get married' and 10 being 'I have a very strong desire to get married')*

| No desire to get married | | | | | | | | | Very strong desire to get married | Already married |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** | **9** | **10** | **N/A** |
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Please explain:

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- Q36. To what extent do you feel it is probable that you will get have children in the future? *(Please rate 1-10, with 1 being 'I do not think there is any chance I will have children' and 10 being 'I am sure I will have children')*

| Don't think there is any chance I'll have children | | | | | | | | | Sure I'll have children | Already have children |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** | **9** | **10** | **N/A** |
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Please explain:

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- Q37. How desirable do you find the idea of having children? *(Please rate 1-10, with 1 being 'I have no desire to have children' and 10 being 'I have a very strong desire to have children')*

| No desire to have children | | | | | | | | | Very strong desire to have children | Already have children |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** | **9** | **10** | **N/A** |
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Please explain:

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**Conceptions of Adulthood**

People vary as to when they think of themselves as having become an adult – experts also disagree! So next I'd like to know what you think…

- Q38. Do you consider yourself to be an adult? *(Please tick)*

    - ☐ Yes

    - ☐ No

    - ☐ In some ways yes, in some ways no

Please explain why you feel this way:

<br>
<br>
<br>

- Q39. What do you think are the most important things that make someone an adult? *(Please write)*

<br>
<br>
<br>

- Q40. Next, here is a list of items that others have come up with. Please indicate whether **you** think each of the following items must be achieved before a person can be considered an adult. *(Please tick yes or no for each item)*

|  | Yes, this is necessary for adulthood | No, this is not necessary for adulthood |
|---|---|---|
| Avoid committing petty crimes like vandalism and shoplifting |  |  |
| Drive safely and close to speed limit |  |  |
| Establish equal relationship with parents |  |  |
| Learn always to have good control over your emotions |  |  |
| Use contraception if sexually active and not trying to conceive a child |  |  |
| Reached age eighteen |  |  |
| No longer living in parents' household |  |  |
| Make life-long commitments to others |  |  |
| Avoid illegal drugs |  |  |
| Be capable of keeping a family physically safe |  |  |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Be capable of running a household | | |
| Be capable of caring for children | | |
| Be capable of supporting a family financially | | |
| Purchase a house | | |
| Married | | |
| Have at least one child | | |
| Accept responsibility for the consequences of your actions | | |
| Financially independent from parents | | |
| Become less self-oriented, develop greater consideration for others | | |
| Avoid drunk driving | | |
| Reached age twenty-one | | |
| Become employed full-time | | |
| Not deeply tied to parents emotionally | | |
| Finish education | | |

**Well-being**

Q41. This scale consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. **Read each item and then choose the appropriate answer to indicate to what extent you have felt this way <u>during the past few weeks</u>.**

| 1<br>Very slightly or not at all | 2<br>A little | 3<br>Moderately | 4<br>Quite a bit | 5<br>Extremely |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |

- Interested
- Distressed
- Excited
- Upset
- Strong
- Guilty
- Scared
- Hostile
- Enthusiastic
- Proud

- Irritable

- Alert

- Ashamed

- Inspired

- Nervous

- Determined

- Attentive

- Jittery

- Active

- Afraid

Q42. Below are five statements with which you may agree or disagree. **Using the 1-7 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by choosing the appropriate number.** Please be open and honest in your responding.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Slightly disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Slightly agree | Agree | Strongly agree |

- In most ways my life is close to my ideal.

- The conditions of my life are excellent

- I am satisfied with my life.

- So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.

- If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.

**Final comments**

Please use the space below if you would like to make any comments or add any further thoughts about your experiences of renting or any other topic the survey has covered.

# Appendix K – Correlation Matrix for Predictors of Well-Being Outcomes in the General Population Survey

**Table A5**
*Pearson's Correlation Between Predictor Variables Included in Regression Analyses of Psychological Well-Being Outcomes in General Population Survey (n = 299)*

| Variable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Age | — | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Income | -.04 [-.16, .06] | — | | | | | | | | | | |
| Gender | .05 [-.05, .16] | -.11 [-.25, .03] | — | | | | | | | | | |
| SGM status | -.19** [-.27, -.09] | .00 [-.11, .12] | -.04 [-.16, .07] | — | | | | | | | | |
| Disability | .23*** [.11, .37] | -.18** [-.27, -.07] | .03 [-.09, .14] | .18** [.06, .30] | — | | | | | | | |
| Consider self an adult | .27*** [.19, .34] | .04 [-.07, .13] | -.02 [-.12, .10] | -.10 [-.21, .02] | .04 [-.08, .15] | — | | | | | | |
| Home happiness | -.03 [-.15, .08] | .09 [-.03, .20] | -.09 [-.19, .01] | -.09 [-.20, .03] | -.10 [-.22, .01] | .11 [.01, .21] | — | | | | | |
| Transience | -.47*** [-.53, -.40] | .19** [.09, .31] | -.07 [-.17, .03] | .04 [-.08, .15] | -.28*** [-.40, -.16] | -.18** [-.26, -.09] | -.13* [-.25, .00] | — | | | | |
| Homeownership aspiration gap | -.27*** [-.37, -.15] | .24*** [.13, .35] | -.17** [-.30, -.04] | -.01 [-.12, .10] | -.12* [-.24, .00] | .01 [-.12, .12] | .06 [-.03, .17] | .16** [.02, .26] | — | | | |
| Frequency of eating dinner alone | .15** [.04, .26] | -.16** [-.26, -.05] | -.04 [-.16, .09] | -.04 [-.15, .08] | .06 [-.06, .16] | -.09 [-.20, .03] | -.20*** [-.32, -.08] | -.07 [-.19, .06] | -.17** [-.29, -.05] | — | | |
| Type of landlord | .17** [.05, .30] | -.21*** [-.29, -.11] | .10 [.01, .18] | .11 [-.02, .24] | .16** [.02, .30] | .18** [.11, .23] | .05 [-.08, .17] | -.26*** [-.41, -.11] | -.07 [-.19, .04] | .02 [-.09, .13] | — | |
| Living alone | .29*** [.16, .41] | -.15* [-.25, -.04] | -.02 [-.14, .10] | -.04 [-.14, .07] | .18** [.06, .29] | -.06 [-.18, .07] | -.02 [-.15, .10] | -.19** [-.31, -.07] | -.10 [-.20, .02] | .60*** [.52, .68] | .02 [-.09, .12] | — |
| Living just with partner and/or child(ren) | .02 [-.09, .14] | .08 [-.04, .20] | .13* [.01, .24] | -.02 [-.14, .09] | -.01 [-.12, .11] | .17** [.05, .29] | .14* [.03, .26] | -.10 [-.20, .00] | .04 [-.07, .16] | -.64*** [-.72, -.54] | .06 [-.05, .17] | -.60*** [-.67, -.54] |

\* $p < .05$ (two-tailed), \*\* $p < .01$ (two-tailed), \*\*\* $p < .001$ (two-tailed)