



The state of shared living

2026

The UK's largest study of shared living. Based on the experiences of 6,387 people, revealing who shares, why they share, what it's really like, and what makes people stay.



FOREWORD

From Vann Vogstad Founder & CEO, COHO



Shared houses are home to millions of UK renters. Everyone has an opinion about them. Almost nobody asks the people who live there.

So we asked. This is the second year of COHO's State of Shared Living survey, now the UK's largest study of shared living, and nearly 7,000 responses came back. Some respondents have shared for over a decade. Others have never shared at all, and told us exactly why not.

The timing matters. The Renters' Rights Act came into force this year, the biggest rewrite of renting in a generation, and this report carries the first data on how its rules are landing in shared homes.

The share of movers who plan to rent alone next fell this year, and nearly half of all sharers told us a shared house was simply the only option they could afford. When politicians debate housing, this is the part of the market quietly absorbing the pressure.

A second year of data lets us measure change. Last year we could describe shared living. This year we can see where it's heading.

The clearest movement is age. Sharers aged 30 or over jumped from 32.4% to 40% in 12 months, the share who would recommend shared living edged up alongside, from 56.7% to 61.0%

One number did not move at all: the 1 in 5 sharers who have felt unsafe because of a housemate. You will find it in this report, given the same prominence as everything else. We publish what the data says, including the parts our own industry will find uncomfortable.

1,504 people wrote to us about their houses, their housemates, and the divorce, or new job, or rent rise that brought them there. Their words run throughout, corrected only for spelling.

Shared living has grown up. The conversation about it should grow up too. Here is a start.

The year in 10 numbers

6,387 UK renters (5,145 current sharers), surveyed 7th May to 31st July 2026

WHO SHARES NOW

40%

are aged 30 or over
up from 32.4% last year

47.9%

moved in because it was the
only affordable option

23%

of movers plan to rent
alone next

WHAT THEY WANT

74.2%

put bills included in their
top five must-haves

61.5%

say housemates affect their
happiness more than their
landlord

40.2%

would pay more rent
for compatible
housemates

HOW IS IT GOING

79.8%

feel safe in their shared
house

61%

would recommend shared
living

42.3%

had no info on who
they'd be living with

01

CHAPTER ONE

Who shares now

House shares are still talked about as a young person's stopgap. The people living in them are older than that, and older than the trend showed last year.

Older than the stereotype

5,145 current house sharers answered this survey. 2 in 5 of them are 30 or over. Nearly 1 in 10 is over 45. The student-house image survives mostly in the heads of people who have never actually lived in one.

The largest single age group is still 18 to 24, at 33.5%. But the balance has shifted. 26.5% are in their late twenties, 16.4% are in their early thirties, and 14.3% are between 35 and 44.

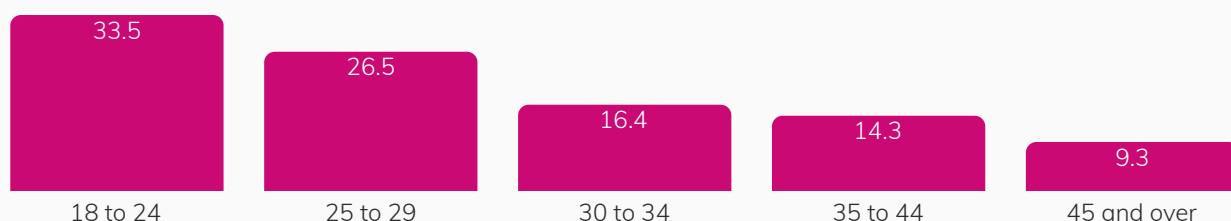
Sharers aged 45 and over now make up 9.3% of everyone in a shared house, a group the market barely acknowledges.

The written answers explain how people get here. Divorce and separation come up again and again. So do relocating for work, and saving for a deposit. When life changes suddenly, a shared house is often the housing that responds.

40.0%

of current sharers are aged 30 or over. Among sharers who aren't students, it's 48.4%. That's up from 32.4% in 2025, the fastest-moving number in this report.

Age of current house sharers



Base: 5,145 current sharers.

Where they are

Respondents named 35 towns and cities. London leads with 1,065 current sharers, followed by Liverpool (612), Manchester (469), Birmingham (266) and Nottingham (236). Beyond the big five, shared living shows up everywhere from Oxford and Bristol to Leeds, Cambridge, Plymouth and Southampton.

The make-up of a house share changes with the city. Oxford and London lean

professional, with half of sharers aged 30 or over. While Liverpool and Bristol lean young, with closer to a quarter in that age group.

Appetite for better housemate matching follows the younger cities, with willingness to pay for compatibility reaching 49% in Liverpool and 47.3% in Leeds, against 35% in London. The appetite is there in every city, but it's strongest in the youngest ones.

Full houses

58% of sharers live with 5 or more other people, and only 8.8% share with just one or two. Most sharers end up in the bigger houses, even if smaller ones are more common.

What matters is that the big house holds up. Feeling safe doesn't fall as households grow. 79.3% feel safe in a house of 6 or more, against 83.1% in a house of two. Peacefulness holds too, at around 70% in the largest homes.

The one thing that softens with size is closeness. In smaller houses 63% count their housemates as friends, compared with 49% in the biggest ones. Scale costs a little intimacy, not safety.

That's the story the numbers tell. For most sharers, the big house is the everyday reality of shared living, and it works. The image of the large shared house as chaotic or unsafe doesn't hold up against the people actually living in one.

58%

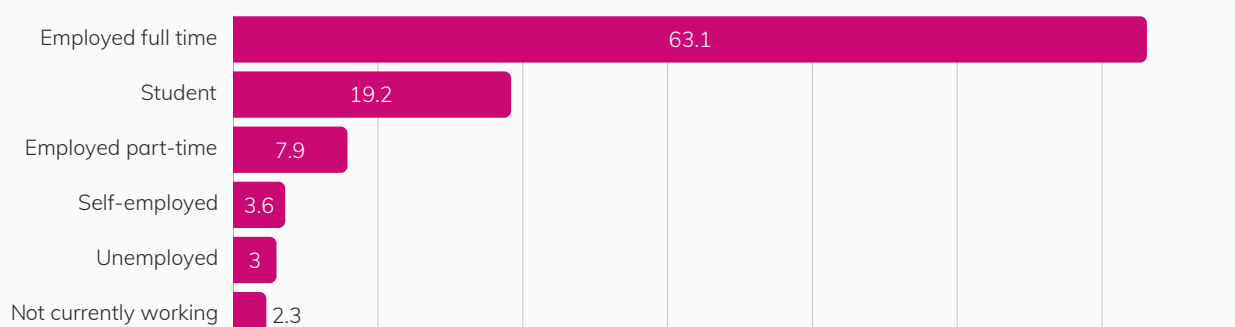
of sharers live with 5 or more other people.

A workforce, mostly

Sharers split almost evenly by gender, roughly 50% male and 48% female. Employment tells the clearer story. 63.1% work full-time, 7.9% part-time, 3.6% are self-employed and 19.2% are students. Only about 5% are outside work or study altogether. That last figure is the one worth sitting with. The image of the unemployed HMO tenant assumes a house full of people on benefits.

Among the sharers we surveyed, that isn't what shows up. These are working renters in privately managed house shares. It's a reminder that the managed end of the market, the part COHO sees, looks nothing like the caricature. Among sharers aged 30 or over, 89% are in paid work.

What sharers do



CHAPTER ONE | WHO SHARES NOW

IN SHORT

The people living in Britain's house shares are older than the stereotype suggests, and the large majority are in work. Most live in sizeable households that function well, in every part of the country. Shared living has become a settled national norm rather than a stopgap.

CHAPTER TAKEAWAYS

40% of current sharers are 30 or over, and 48.4% once students are set aside. The largest single group is still 18 to 24, but the balance has clearly moved.

35 towns and cities are named. This is a national story, not a London one, and the share who feel safe at home stays at or above 75% in every major one.

58% live with 5 or more other people. Big houses are where most sharers actually end up, even if smaller ones are more common.

79.3% feel safe in a house of 6 or more, and 83.1% in a house of two. A bigger house costs a little closeness, not safety.

74.6% are in paid work, and only about 5% are outside work or study. The modern house share is a working household.

89% of sharers aged 30 or over are in paid work. The image of the unemployed HMO tenant is the opposite of who actually lives there.

02

CHAPTER TWO

Why people share

Most sharers arrived for practical reasons. What they found once they moved in is a warmer story.

Affordability opens the door

Ask sharers why they moved in and the most common answer is practical. For 47.9%, a shared house was the only affordable option in the area they needed to live. That points to what shared living does better than the rest of the housing market: it puts a decent home within reach of an ordinary salary, in a place people actually want to be.

Sharers were asked to pick their single biggest reason for moving into a shared house. The options were: it was the only affordable option in the area, I am or was a student, it suited my lifestyle, I didn't want to live alone, and to meet new people. Around 4% didn't fit any of these and wrote their own reason instead.

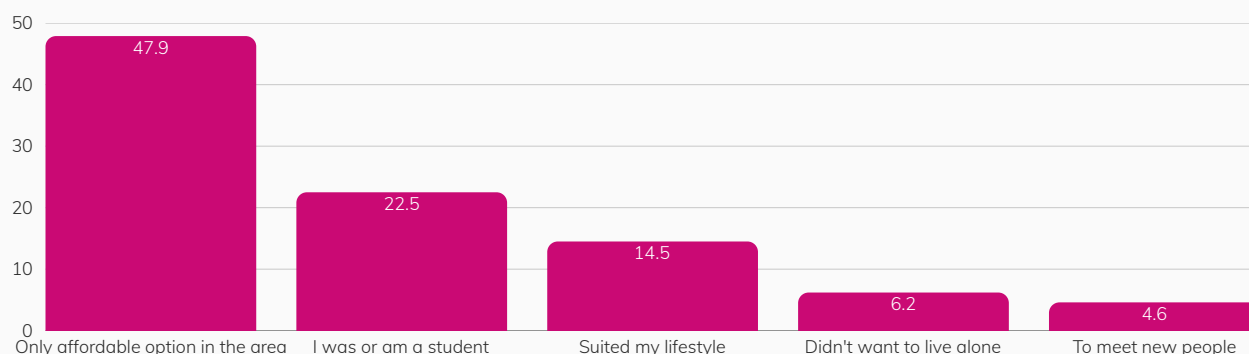
Those write-ins tell the sharpest story. People wrote about divorce and separation. Others about a job in a new city, or covid ending a household that had worked for years. 16 simply wrote that they were homeless. When life changes at two weeks' notice, a shared house is the part of the market that can respond, and for some of the people here it was the housing that caught them.

Affordability gets people through the door. Whether they'd stay by choice is what matters. Asked directly, 55.4% say shared living wasn't a last resort for them.

55.4%

agree they chose shared living and it wasn't a last resort

Number one reason for moving into a shared house



Base: 5,108 current sharers who answered.

CHAPTER TWO | WHY PEOPLE SHARE

What they value once they're in

Sharers were asked what they value most, and could pick more than one answer. Cost wins, as it was always going to. The quieter result is what sits second. Second place doesn't go to location or convenience, it goes to the people. 39% value having others around, second only to cost.

The saving is real. 67% say shared living has saved them money, the second highest agreement score in the survey.

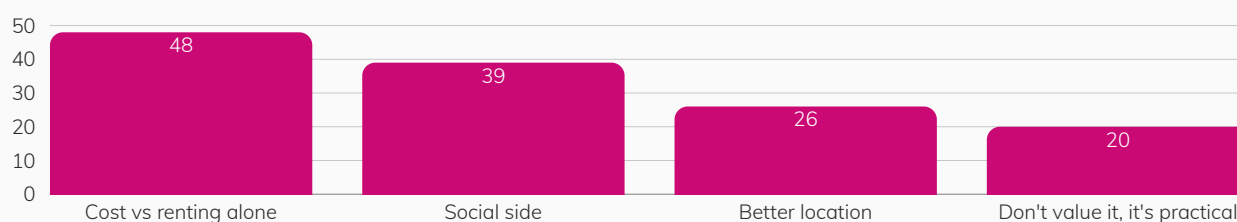
The number that matters most: 57% would choose a shared house again, now they've lived it rather than imagined it.

Age changes the answer completely. For under-25s, the social side is the top thing they value: 58% name having people around, ahead of any other answer, including cost. But that flips with age. For the mid-40s and above, only 22% say the social side matters most, and cost takes over.

39%

value having people around, second only to cost. Shared living sells itself on price, but the social side of it runs close.

What sharers value most about shared living



Base: 5,123 current sharers who answered. More than one answer allowed, so figures don't total 100%

IN THEIR WORDS | WHY THEY MOVED IN

"I never imagined that in my 40s I'd be living in a shared house. Life doesn't always go to plan. It helped me through a time when I needed an affordable place while rebuilding my life. It's reminded me it's never too late to start over."

CHAPTER TWO | WHY PEOPLE SHARE

IN SHORT

Most people arrive at a shared house for the price, and nearly half say it was the only affordable option open to them. What holds them there is something else. A majority say it wasn't a last resort, and most would choose it again once they've lived it. For the youngest sharers, the company is named more often than the cost. People arrive for the rent and stay for the people.

CHAPTER TAKEAWAYS

47.9% moved into a shared house because it was the only affordable option in the area they needed. Affordability is the way in for nearly half.

55.4% say shared living wasn't a last resort. For most, it isn't settling for less.

57% would choose shared living again.

48% name the lower rent as something they value about sharing, and 39% name the social side. Company sits second only to cost.

58% of under-25s value the social side above everything else, cost included. For the youngest, the people come before the price.

03

CHAPTER THREE

Life inside

Most sharers rate the experience as good, and better than they expected. The full picture, including the one number that should worry the industry, is below.

Better than expected, most of the time

Most people move into a shared house braced for the worst. The stories that travel are the passive-aggressive fridge notes and the housemate who never does the washing up, so expectations going in tend to be low. That's what makes the headline result quietly striking.

64.9% rate their experience as good. More striking is that 59% say it turned out better than they expected. People walk in expecting little and come away pleasantly surprised, which tells you the reputation is worse than the reality.

Attitudes are shifting too. 75.6% of sharers now say they're comfortable telling people how they live. Among those who have never shared, only 1 in 10 say they'd feel embarrassed to. That second figure is the telling one. It's the people furthest from shared living, the ones most likely to carry the old assumptions, saying the stigma no longer holds.

The frustration that remains is with how shared living is seen, not with living in it.

50.1% agree that shared houses get an unfair bad reputation, a quiet objection from people who know their own homes better than the headlines do.

The social side is where the report has to be honest. Shared living promises company. The reality is less certain. 48% say they've made real friends through shared living. 51% count their housemates as friends rather than people they happen to share a kitchen with. 44.5% say their mental health has benefited from living alongside others.

These are close to coin-flip numbers, and they're worth sitting with rather than dressing up. For every house where the kitchen chat runs past midnight, there's one where six people pass on the stairs and little else. The company shared living offers is real, but it isn't guaranteed. It comes down almost entirely to who's in the house, which is the thread running through everything sharers told us.

WHAT LANDLORDS CAN ACTUALLY CHANGE

The social side is the part of shared living that landlords and agents can most directly shape, and this survey points to how.

The first thing is information. 42.3% of sharers moved in without knowing who they'd be living with, and telling people who's already in the house is about the easiest improvement a landlord can make. The second is matching. 40.2% would pay more rent to live with housemates who suit them, so the demand for compatibility is clearly there, even if few landlords currently meet it. The third is involvement. 52.5% want a say in who moves in, and the people already in the house tend to know better than anyone who will fit, and who will stay.

The number that refuses to move

One finding in this survey demands more attention than any other. 21.3% of current sharers, have at some point felt unsafe because of another housemate. 1 in 10 feel it strongly. Last year the figure was 21.4%. A year on, it hasn't moved. The rest of the safety picture is reassuring, which is exactly why this number stands out.

79.8% feel safe in their house, and 47.2% feel completely safe. 73.0% call their house peaceful, and 55.7% say falling out with housemates is rare. Shared houses aren't the chaos their reputation suggests.

That is what makes the unsafe figure so hard to set aside.

Women and men report it at the same rate, 20.9% against 21.6%. The risk isn't about who you are, it's about who you're placed with.

Tenants feeling unsafe in their own home, even once, is not something a sector can ignore. The cause points somewhere specific: who gets to move in, and how much say the people already there have.

21.3%

have felt unsafe because of a housemate, unchanged from 2025.

IN THEIR WORDS | ON FEELING UNSAFE

"I've had housemates actively threatened and pressured by other housemates, with no intervention from the landlord..."

"When it works, it's great. Less so when there are clashes of personality, or people whose interests and routines are so far removed from mine."

"I wish they did proper checks on the housemates. Ones I've lived with before were dangerous..."

The shine wears off

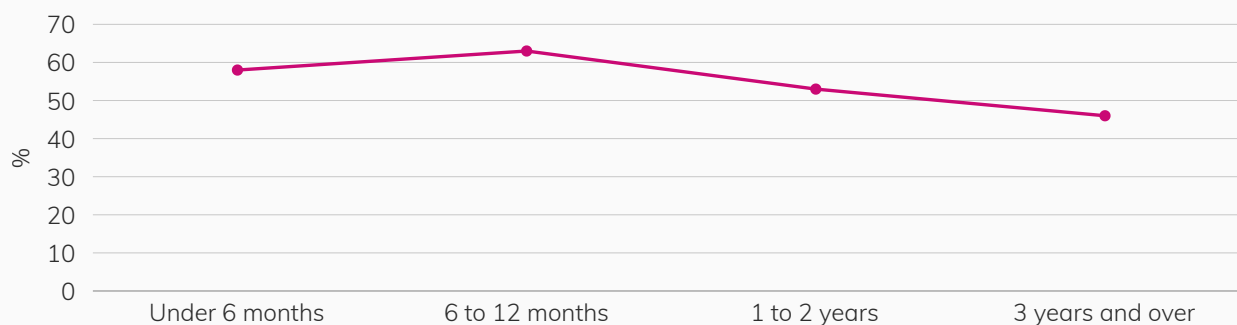
How people feel about a shared house changes over time, and not in the way you'd expect. It doesn't get steadily worse. It peaks near the end of the first year, then fades.

The first few months are about settling in. The high point comes at 6 to 12 months, when 58% call their housemates friends, more than at any other stage. After that it slips. By 1 to 2 years, it's 48%. By 3 years or more, it's down to 43%, and people rate their overall experience lower than any other group.

Why does it fade? Partly because early friendships don't always last. Housemates move on, and the new ones are strangers again. And the people who stay longest are often those with the fewest options, keeping an affordable room rather than a house they love.

For landlords, this is the useful bit. Most attention goes on the first month: the move-in, the welcome. But the real risk comes later, in year two, once the shine has gone and nobody has thought to bring it back.

Housemates seen as friends, by time in the house



Base: 5,035 current sharers who answered.

WHAT LANDLORDS CAN DO TO MAKE IT LAST

Most of a landlord's attention lands in the first month, on the viewing, the paperwork and the welcome. That effort's well spent, but it can't be the only effort. Where it slips is the second year, and that's the part worth caring about. 34.0% of sharers have been in their current house for over a year, and 12.1% for more than 3 years. 40.9% have no plans to move at all. The dip lands on the settled tenants a landlord most wants to keep.

A brief check-in around the 12 to 18 month mark, a bit of thought about who fills a room when someone leaves rather than taking the first application, and a shared space that people actually want to use, all help the good years run longer. None of it is expensive, it's mostly a matter of noticing that a house needs looking after well past move-in day.

CHAPTER THREE | LIFE INSIDE

IN SHORT

Life inside a shared house is mostly positive, and often more positive than the people living in one expected. Most sharers rate the experience as good, and more say it beat their expectations than fell short of them. The social side is less certain, and it tends to fade in the second year rather than the first. The one figure that won't move is safety: 1 in 5 have felt unsafe because of a housemate, the same as last year. Running through all of it is a single variable, which is who ends up sharing the house.

CHAPTER TAKEAWAYS

59% say shared living turned out better than they expected.

75.6% are comfortable telling people they live in a shared house, and among those who have never shared, only 1 in 10 say they would feel embarrassed to.

48% have made real friends through shared living and 51% count their housemates as friends.

21.3% have felt unsafe because of a housemate, unchanged on last year, and notably the figure is no higher for women than for men.

58% call their housemates friends at 6 to 12 months, the high point, falling to 43% by 3 years.

04

CHAPTER FOUR

The housemate lottery

Tenants say housemates matter more to their happiness than the landlord or agent does. Almost nothing in the letting process acknowledges that.

The people matter more than the property

There's a strange gap at the heart of how shared houses are let. The people you live with shape the experience more than almost anything else, yet they're the one thing the letting process barely tells you about. Sharers know this, 61.5% say their housemates matter more to their happiness than their landlord or agent does. And yet, 42.3% of current sharers had no information at all about who they'd be sharing with before they moved in.

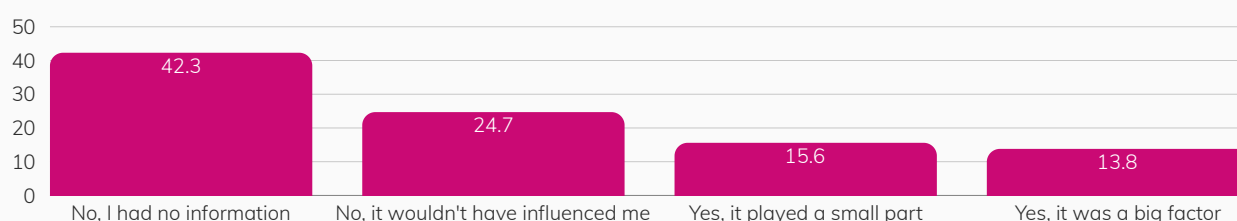
This isn't a hangover from older tenancies. The people who moved in most recently are just as much in the dark, which says the gap is still there in how shared houses are let today.

The result is a quiet, common regret. More sharers wish they'd known about their housemates than about anything else, 59.6%, and twice the share who wanted more about the landlord or agent. Looking ahead, 52.5% want more say in who moves in next.

42.3%

of sharers had no information about who they'd be living with before they moved in.

Did you choose your house partly because of who already lived there?



Base: 5,145 current sharers.

Compatibility has a price, and tenants will pay it

Tenants will pay to live with people who suit them. 40.2% say they'd accept higher rent for compatible housemates, and 8.1% would pay significantly more (10% or more above their budget).

Most operators sell on en-suites and bills, while the thing tenants would actually pay more for, who they live with, is rarely on offer.

The appetite is strongest among the young. 52% of under-25s would pay more for compatible housemates, more than double the 24% among sharers aged 45 to 54. It's the same group that values the social side most, now saying they'd put money behind it.

What does compatible mean? It's not a fixed list of traits. A similar age matters to some, a similar lifestyle to others, each named by around 30%.

36% of sharers name no particular trait at all. For them, compatibility is simpler than a checklist, it just means someone easy to live with. That's harder to match on a form, and easier to judge with a bit of care. One specific need stands out: 16% ask for neurodiversity awareness, which the lettings industry has barely begun to meet.

40.2%

would pay more rent for compatible housemates. 8.1% would pay significantly more.

This chapter and the last describe the same problem from two sides. 1 in 5 sharers has felt unsafe because of a housemate. 2 in 5 moved in knowing nothing about the people they'd be living with. Half would like a say in who arrives next. All of it comes down to a single decision that shapes everything after it, who gets offered the room. It's the one moment where the landlord holds the leverage and the tenant almost none, and too often it comes down to little more than who applied first.

That's understandable. An empty room is lost rent, and the pressure to fill it quickly is real. But the wrong tenant is far more expensive than a slow one, and a bad match tends to cost you the good tenants around it. The care taken at that point is what can protect every other room in the house.

CHAPTER FOUR | THE HOUSEMATE LOTTERY

IN SHORT

The thing that most shapes life in a shared house is who else lives there, and it's the part of letting that gets the least attention. Most sharers moved in knowing little about their housemates, yet compatibility is what they say matters most, and what many would pay extra to get. The demand is real and the bar is modest. What tenants want is someone easy to live with, not a ready-made friend group. It all comes back to a single decision, who gets offered the room, and there's a real opportunity for landlords in giving it more thought.

CHAPTER TAKEAWAYS

40.2%

of sharers would pay more rent to live with compatible housemates, and 8.1% would pay significantly more, making compatibility one of the few things tenants will happily spend above budget on.

52%

of under-25s would pay for a better match, more than double the 24% among sharers aged 45 to 54, so the appetite is strongest in the group that values the social side most.

42.3%

moved in with no information about who they'd be living with, and recent movers were no better informed, so this is a live opportunity rather than a legacy issue.

16%

look for neurodiversity awareness in their housemates, a specific need that landlords who take it seriously can meet ahead of the market.

52.5%

want more say in who moves in next, a simple thing to offer and one that tenants clearly value.

05

CHAPTER FIVE

What tenants want

We gave sharers sixteen features and five picks each. The results tell operators exactly what to build, and what a room really costs in 2026.

Fast, reliable WiFi is the new hot water

When sharers list what they most want in a home, two things sit clear at the top. Bills included in the rent, and fast, reliable internet, finished level, a fraction of a point apart. Both are now expected as standard rather than treated as extras.

What tenants ask for is mostly the absence of friction. Predictable bills, with no surprise at the end of the month. Internet that works when they need it. Space to keep their things, and communal areas that stay clean without anyone having to nag.

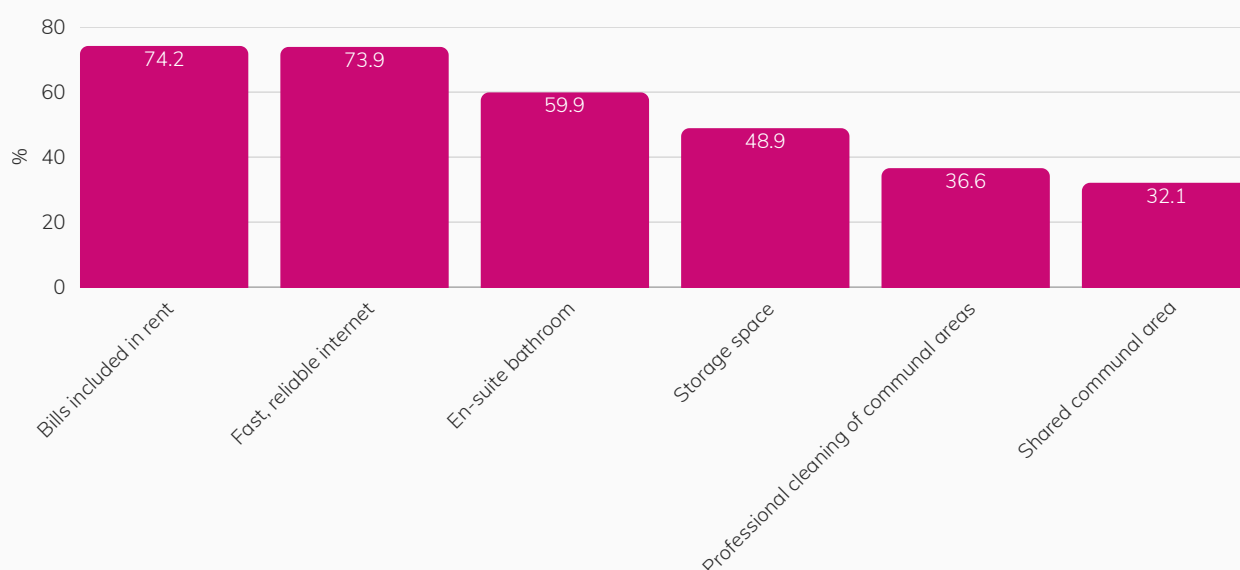
The one genuine premium in the top tier is an en-suite, wanted by 60%. Most sharers live with 5 or more people, and the shared bathroom is where patience wears thinnest.

These preferences carry real weight. 68% of sharers have turned down a room because a feature was missing, and 56.3% would pay more rent for a house that has their must-haves. For a landlord, these features attract tenants, and tenants will pay for them.

68%

of sharers have turned down a room because a feature was missing.

What sharers most want in a home (top 8 of 16 features)



Base: 5,121 current sharers who answered. Five picks each, so figures don't total 100%.

What a room costs

Most sharers pay between £401 and £800 a month for a room. 74% fall in that range, and the most common rent is £601 to £800, paid by 41.8%. Very few sit at the extremes. Only 6% pay more than £1,000, and just 2.4% pay under £400, a cheaper end of the market that has all but gone.

The bigger point is how little a room varies by location. The cost of a whole property moves sharply from one city to the next. A room doesn't. Liverpool and Leeds sit at the lower end, Oxford and London at the higher, but the gap between them is far smaller than it would be for a flat of your own in those same places.

London is the exception worth naming. There, 18% of sharers pay more than £1,000 for their room, against 1.5% in Manchester. So a room in the capital genuinely does cost more. Even so, 46% of London sharers pay £800 or less, and more than 80% pay £1,000 or less. Renting alone in the same city would cost far more than either.

What people pay tracks what they earn, though only loosely. Among sharers earning under £15,000, 13% pay more than £800 for their room. Among those earning over £50,000, that rises to 46%. Higher earners take better rooms. But even at the top, more than half still pay £800 or less. Rent moves with income, just far less steeply, and that is a large part of why a room stays within reach across the income scale.

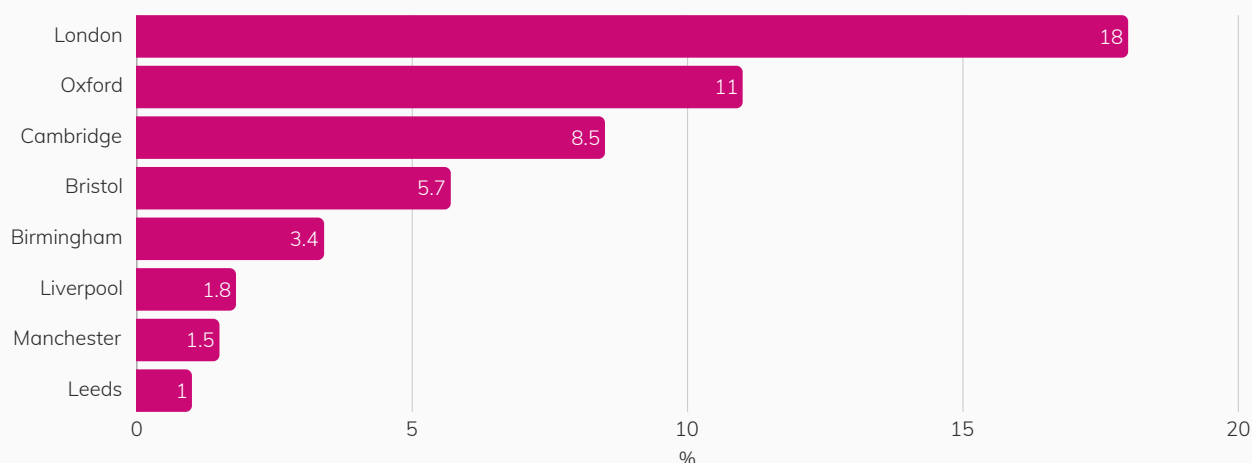
18%

of London sharers pay over £1,000 for their room

1.5%

in Manchester, the pattern almost everywhere outside the south

Share of current sharers paying over £1,000 a month for their room



Base: current sharers who gave their rent. London 1,065, Liverpool 612, Manchester 469, Birmingham 266, Oxford 233, Bristol 230, Leeds 207, Cambridge 165.

CHAPTER FIVE | WHAT TENANTS WANT

IN SHORT

What tenants want from a shared house is straightforward, and mostly about removing friction rather than adding luxury. Bills included and reliable internet sit at the top, both now expected as standard. The en-suite is the one real premium, and it earns its place because most sharers are competing for a bathroom with several other people. A missing feature has cost most sharers a room at some point, and many would pay more rent to get their must-haves. On cost, the picture is reassuringly flat. Room rents move far less from city to city than whole properties do which is much of the reason shared living keeps expensive places within reach.

CHAPTER TAKEAWAYS

74.2%

name bills included and fast, reliable internet as top must-haves, the two features that now sit clear of everything else and are expected.

60%

want an en-suite, the one genuine premium in the top tier, and no surprise given that most sharers live with 5 or more other people.

56.3%

would pay more rent for a house that has their must-haves, so getting the features right lifts what a room is worth, as well as how quickly it fills.

41.8%

pay between £601 and £800 a month for a room, the most common rent in the survey.

06

CHAPTER SIX

Landlord or agent?

Tenants with a direct landlord report a better experience on every measure we asked about. The gap says more about scale than intent.

The management gap

In this survey, 55.5% of sharers say their home is managed by an agent and 22.2% directly by a landlord. Another 17.4% don't know which they have, and the remaining few ticked both.

The survey asked tenants to rate their landlord or agent on six things. Tenants with a direct landlord scored higher on all six.

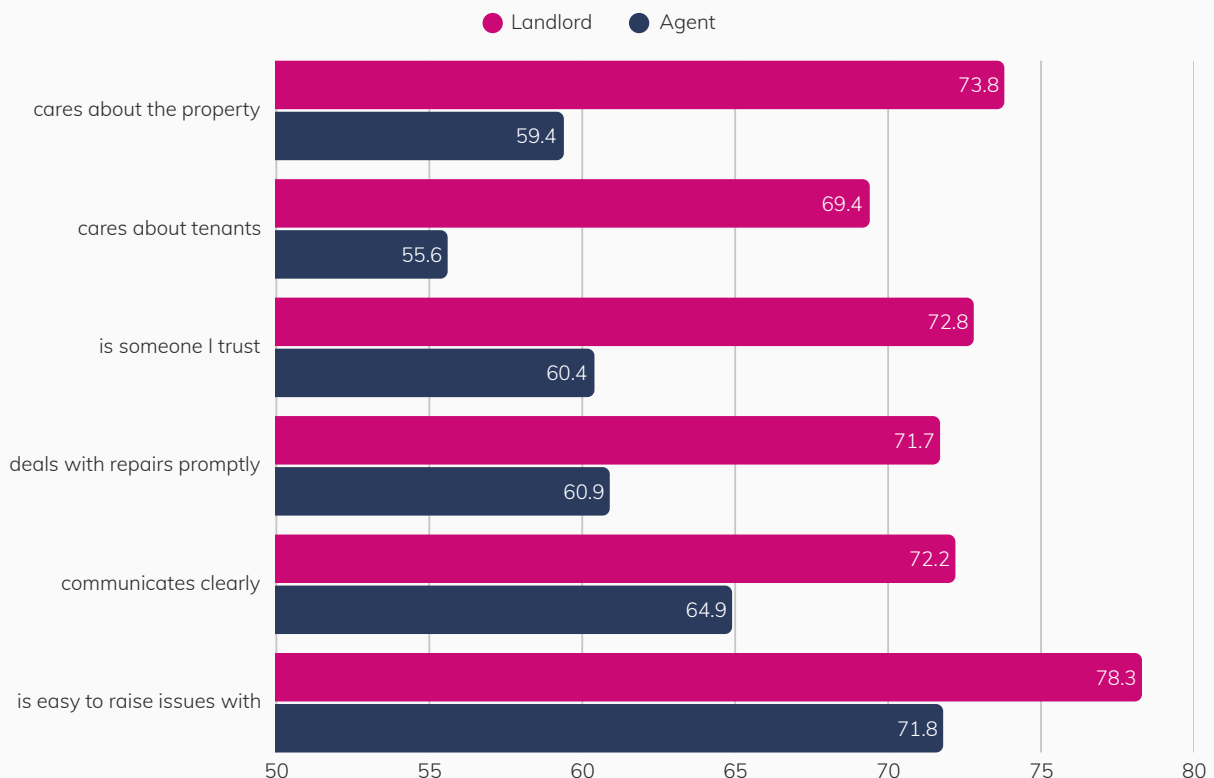
Agents come closest to landlords on the practical things. 64.9% of agent-managed tenants say their manager communicates clearly, against 72.2% for landlords. 71.8% feel comfortable raising an issue, against 78.3%.

The wider gaps are about the person. 59.4% of agent-managed tenants think their manager cares about the property, against 73.8% of landlord-managed ones. On caring about the tenants it's 56% against 69%. On trust, 60% against 73%.

The strongest answers show it best. 47.2% of landlord-managed tenants gave the top mark for caring about the property. For agent-managed tenants it was 31.9%.

The same gap shows up in what tenants say about their home. 64.2% of landlord-managed tenants would recommend it, against 57.7% of agent-managed ones.

My landlord or agent...



Base: 1,134 landlord-managed and 2,835 agent-managed current sharers. Figures show the share agreeing, scoring 2 or 3 out of 3. Axis starts at 50%.

Where the gap comes from

Agents and landlords in this survey run much the same houses. 29% of agent-managed sharers live with 6 or more people, against 26% of landlord-managed ones. So the gap isn't explained by the kind of property each one looks after.

It isn't the size of the household either. We looked for the gap inside every age band, every length of tenancy, students against everyone else, and houses from 2 sharers up to 6 or more.

It runs the same way every time, and in houses of 2 it's widest of all, at 22 points on whether anyone cares about the tenants.

The difference sits with the manager, not the house. A landlord has one set of tenants to know. An agent has far more and no way to know them all as well.

WHAT AGENTS CAN DO

72% are comfortable raising an issue with their agent, close to the 78% landlords manage. The problem is what happens after they do. Only 61% say maintenance is dealt with in a reasonable time, against 72% for landlords. Agents are good at hearing about the problem but slower at fixing it.

That's also where the trust and care scores come from. A tenant who reports a problem and hears nothing back thinks nobody cares. 56% of agent-managed tenants think their manager cares about the tenants, against 69% for landlords.

Agents also tell tenants less about who they'll be sharing with. 45% of agent-managed tenants moved in with no information about their housemates, against 38% of those with a landlord. It's the cheapest gap in this chapter to close, and Chapter Four showed it's what tenants care about most.

WHAT LANDLORDS CAN DO

Landlords are furthest ahead of agents on the things tenants value most. 74% of their tenants say they care about the property and 73% trust them. That comes from being known to the people in the house, and it's worth protecting.

The clearest gain left is in who joins the house. 38% of landlord-managed tenants moved in with no information about their housemates. Chapter Four showed what that's worth: 52.5% of sharers want a say in who moves in next, and 40.2% would pay more rent to live with people who suit them. The tenants already living there usually know who will fit, and asking them costs a conversation.

CHAPTER SIX | LANDLORD OR AGENT

IN SHORT

Tenants with a direct landlord rate their management higher on all six measures we asked about. Agents come closest on the things a process handles, being reachable and easy to approach, and fall furthest behind on trust and on whether anyone seems to care. It isn't explained by the kind of house each one manages, because agents and landlords run much the same properties. The likeliest explanation is how many tenants sit behind a single manager. What tenants ask for in return is specific and small: repairs that get closed rather than logged, and knowing who they'll be living with before they move in.

CHAPTER TAKEAWAYS

55.5%

of sharers say their home is managed by an agent and 22.2% directly by a landlord. Agents run the majority of shared houses in this survey.

47%

of landlord-managed tenants give the top mark for caring about the property, against 32% of agent-managed ones.

64%

of landlord-managed tenants would recommend their home, against 58% of agent-managed ones.

45%

of agent-managed tenants moved in knowing nothing about their housemates, against 38% of those with a landlord.

07

CHAPTER SEVEN

Staying and leaving

Sharers move between houses far more often than they leave shared living. Most of what would make them stay is in the manager's hands.

A market in constant motion

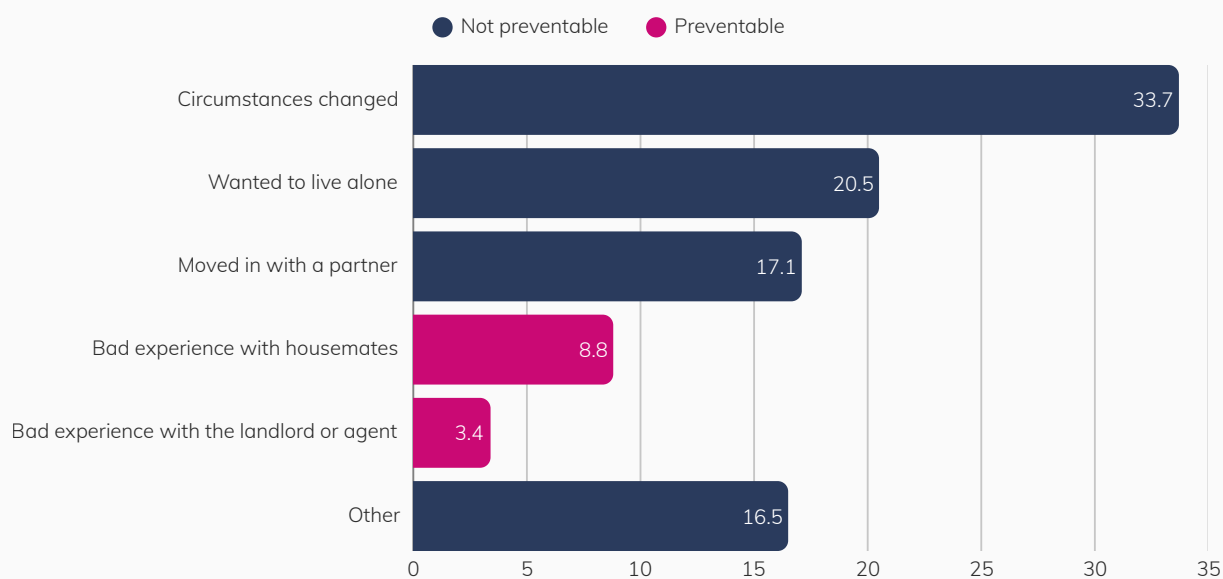
66% of sharers have lived in their current house for less than a year, and 24.9% expect to be gone within 3 months. Rooms turn over fast, and every turn is a void for somebody.

They rarely leave shared living itself. Among sharers planning a move, 35.2% are going straight into another house share, 22.8% plan to rent alone and 8.8% expect to buy. The tenant one operator loses is usually the tenant another one gains.

Past sharers show where the exits come from. 33.7% left their last shared house because their circumstances changed, 20.5% wanted to live alone and 17.1% moved in with a partner. No operator prevents any of that.

But two reasons are preventable: 8.8% left over a bad experience with housemates and 3.4% over the landlord or agent. Roughly 1 exit in 8 was within management's control.

Why past sharers left their last shared house



Base: 668 past sharers. Magenta marks the two reasons within a manager's control.

35.2%

of sharers planning to move are going to move into another house share

The retention playbook, written by tenants

We asked current sharers what would make them stay in their house longer. Lower rent leads, as it always will, at 58.3%. 25.7% said nothing, they're happy as they are. Everything else on the list is operational.

Set rent aside and a short list remains. 27% want maintenance resolved faster. 18.4% want better communication from their landlord or agent. 15.9% want a say in who moves in next, which is the demand that ran through chapter four, where 40.2% said they would pay more rent to live with people who suit them.

The tenants who have stayed longest are the ones with most at stake. 68% of sharers in their first 6 months rate the experience good, and after 3 years it's 54%.

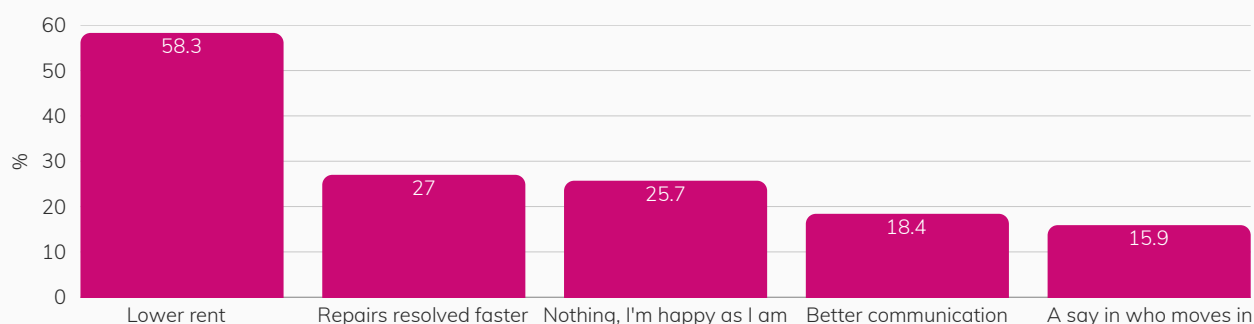
They're also the group most likely to want a say in who moves in next, rising from 13.9% in the first six months to 22.7% after three years. The longer someone lives in a house, the more they care who joins it.

IN THEIR WORDS | ON WHO MOVES IN

"Shared living is never going to be perfect, I do however feel like the estate agents could vet their tenants more thoroughly, potentially putting it to the existing housemates before confirming new tenants."

"I love my room and the neighbourhood where I live. The room is lovely and spacious, we also have a lovely garden and the kitchen is great. New tenants have moved in and they are super nice. I am planning to stay here for a long time."

What would make sharers stay longer



Base: 4,954 current sharers. More than one answer could be chosen, so the figures don't total 100%.

CHAPTER SEVEN | STAYING AND LEAVING

IN SHORT

Shared houses turn over fast. 66% of sharers have lived in their current home for less than a year, and 24.9% expect to be gone within 3 months. Almost all of that movement stays inside shared living, so the tenant one operator loses is usually the tenant another one gains. Most exits are life stages nobody can prevent, but roughly 1 in 8 was within management's control. Asked what would keep them longer, tenants name rent first and then three things an operator decides: repairs resolved faster, better communication, and a say in who moves in next.

CHAPTER TAKEAWAYS

66%

of sharers have lived in their current house for less than a year, and 24.9% expect to be gone within 3 months.

35.2%

of movers go straight into another house share. People leave houses far more often than they leave shared living.

58.3%

say lower rent would keep them longer.

27%

want repairs resolved faster, 18.4% want better communication, and 15.9% want a say in who moves in next.

08

CHAPTER EIGHT

Shared living vs the stereotypes

People speak confidently about shared houses without ever having lived in one. We asked 572 of them what they believe, and 5,145 sharers what it's actually like.

CHAPTER EIGHT | SHARED LIVING VS THE STEREOTYPES

THE CLAIM

They're full of unemployed people

94.6% of current sharers are working or studying, and 63.1% work full-time. Measured the way the ONS measures it, unemployment among sharers is 3.8%, against a UK rate of 4.9% (ONS, March to May 2026).

3.8%

sharer unemployment, against 4.9% UK rate

THE CLAIM

They're for young people and students

40% of sharers are 30 or over, and 9.3% are 45 or over. Students are 19.2% of the total. Among people who have never shared, 22.6% still believe shared living is for students and young people.

19.2%

of sharers are students

THE CLAIM

They're chaotic and unsafe

23.3% of people who have never shared expect noise and chaos, and 13.9% expect shared houses to be unsafe. The people living in them report otherwise. 73% call their house a peaceful place to live and 79.8% feel safe in it.

73%

call their house peaceful

THE CLAIM

They're bad for the area

64% of sharers say their house is a positive presence in the area it sits in, and 50.1% think shared houses carry an unfair bad reputation. 73.5% of them earn under £35,000, and almost all are working or studying.

64%

say their house is a positive presence

09

CHAPTER NINE

Pets and the RRA

The Renters' Rights Act arrived on 1st May 2026 promising tenants a fairer hearing on pets. Here is the first data from shared housing.

Pets and the right to ask

The Renters' Rights Act gave tenants the right to request a pet from 1st May 2026, and landlords a duty not to refuse without good reason. This survey opened 6 days later, so it's the first look at how that right is landing in shared houses.

Almost nobody has used it. 2.4% of sharers have had a pet request turned down since the Act came in, and 4.6% live in a house with a pet, most often a cat.

That reads like a rule working, until you look at who wanted one. 24.5% of sharers say they would be more likely to choose a house that allowed pets. 26.6% say their landlord or agent doesn't allow them, and named it as something that shaped their search.

The demand isn't universal, 38.3% of sharers don't have or want a pet, and another 37.2% say a pet-friendly house would make no difference to them. Age barely moves any of it.

What's left is a clear quarter of the market that is currently unserved, and 11.8% of sharers say pets played a part in choosing their current house, with 5.5% calling it a major factor. Among houses that do allow them, cats lead at 36% and dogs at 21%.

Where a request has been turned down since May, it was more often by a direct landlord than by an agent, 3.4% against 1.7%. The numbers behind those percentages are small, so they're a signal rather than a verdict, but the direction is worth noting. The manager closest to the property is the one most likely to say no.

IN THEIR WORDS | ON PETS

"Pets are beneficial for mental health assistance and this has not been accessible for houseshares. Children actually do more damage to properties than animals!"

"The reason why I have not got a pet is that in this HMO, there is not enough room for a pet and I must respect others who moved into this HMO who chose a pet free household."

"I found the process of bringing a pet with me to be quite easy. Open communication with the other tenants, agent and landlord allowed a smooth transition. With my pet being quite friendly, he helped ease any potential worries and now seems to be a welcome addition to the place!"

10

CHAPTER TEN

The people who've never shared

572 respondents have never lived in a shared house. Their reasons are more practical, and less hostile, than the industry assumes.

The people who haven't shared yet

572 people in this survey have never lived in a shared house. We asked them why, and what would change their mind.

Very few had rejected the idea. 1 in 10 said they actively chose against it. The most common answer, from 4 in 10, was that they lived with family instead, and others moved in with a partner or could afford to rent alone. For most of this group, shared living was never a decision they had to make.

14.9% now say they wish they had considered it earlier.

Cost is starting to force the question. 59.5% say the price of renting alone has made them reconsider, and half of those have thought about it seriously. That doesn't mean they will move into a house share. It means the question is open for a group that never had to ask it.

80.1%

of people who have never shared would consider it if they were matched with compatible housemates in advance. Only 19.9% would rule it out entirely.

The under-25s are closest to considering it

Openness to shared living falls with age. Among people who have never shared, 74.4% of 18 to 24 year olds say cost has made them reconsider. Among 35 to 44 year olds it's 27.1%.

The same gap shows up in what would persuade them. 91.9% of under-25s would consider sharing if they were matched with compatible housemates in advance, against 62.8% of 45 to 54 year olds. The people most open to shared living are the ones who haven't started yet.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR LANDLORDS AND AGENTS

The people who have never shared are not a lost audience. What stops them is specific: 54% name sharing a bathroom and 49.4% name not knowing who they would be living with. An en-suite answers the first. Telling applicants who is already in the house answers the second. Both are decisions made when a house is specified and let, not attitudes that need changing.

What would change their mind

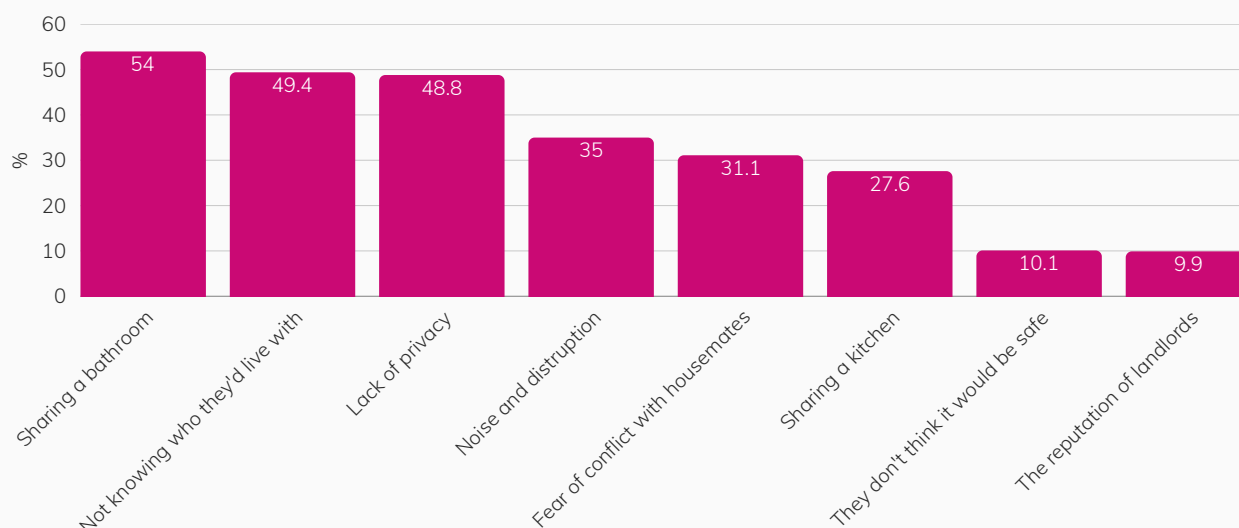
Two things came back clearly.

The first is knowing who they would live with. 81% would consider shared living if they were matched with compatible housemates in advance, and 19.9% rules it out whatever the circumstances.

The second is the house itself. Around half name sharing a bathroom as something that would put them off, and around half name a lack of privacy.

Both point at levers this report has already identified. An en-suite answers the bathroom and privacy objections, and Chapter Five showed it is the one feature sharers will pay more to get. Telling people who is already living in the house answers the other, and Chapter Four showed 42.3% of current sharers moved in without that information.

What would put them off shared living



Base: 557. More than one answer allowed, so figures don't total 100%.

One caution

The people who have left shared living are its least enthusiastic advocates. 48.3% of past sharers rate their experience good, against 64.9% of current sharers, and 53.6% would recommend it against 61%.

Those questions were asked in the past tense of a different group, so some of the gap is memory rather than decline. It is still the sector's own alumni giving it the lowest marks in this survey.

CHAPTER TEN | THE PEOPLE WHO'VE NEVER SHARED

IN SHORT

The people who have never shared are not opposed to it. Most simply never had to consider it, because they lived with family, moved in with a partner, or could afford a place of their own. Cost is now putting the question in front of them, and it lands hardest on the young: 74.4% of under-25s who have never shared say the price of renting alone has made them think again. What would move them is not a discount but certainty. 8 in 10 would consider sharing if they knew their housemates suited them, and the practical objections that remain, the bathroom and the loss of privacy, are the same things the better end of the market already solves.

CHAPTER TAKEAWAYS

9.8%

of people who have never shared actively chose against it. 39.9% simply lived with family instead.

59.5%

say the cost of renting alone has made them reconsider shared living, and 28.4% have considered it seriously.

74.4%

of 18 to 24 year olds who have never shared say cost has made them reconsider, against 27.1% of 35 to 44 year olds.

80.1%

would consider shared living if they were matched with compatible housemates in advance. Only 19.9% rule it out entirely.

54%

name sharing a bathroom as something that would put them off, and 48.8% name a lack of privacy.

48.3%

of past sharers rate their experience as good, against 64.9% of current sharers. The sector's alumni are its least enthusiastic advocates.

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

Year on year

Last year this survey could describe shared living. With a second wave it can measure movement.

The year the market aged

32.4% of sharers were 30 or over last year, this year it is 40.0%.

The change came from across the age range rather than one group. The two youngest bands shrank and all three bands above 30 grew.

It shows up city by city too. Sharers aged 30 or over went from 32.6% to 49.7% in London, 32.0% to 50.2% in Oxford, 24.8% to 36.4% in Nottingham and 31.8% to 42.1% in Birmingham.

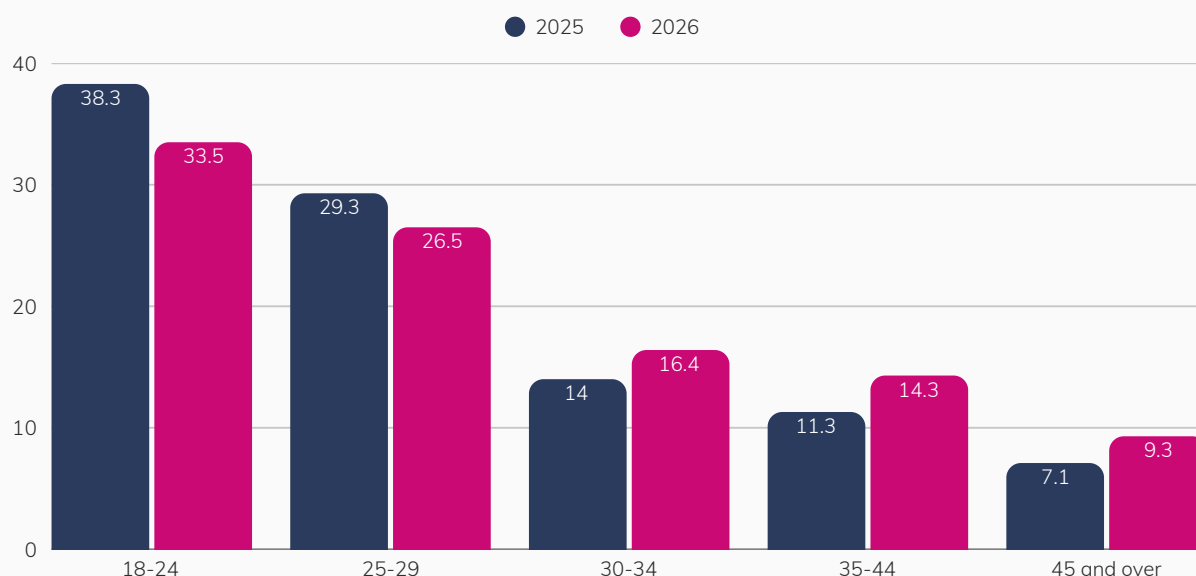
Seven of the eight cities large enough to compare moved this way. Leeds is the exception, falling from 45.6% to 40.1%.

Older sharers want a different house. Chapter Five found 70% of sharers aged 35 to 44 name an en-suite in their top five features, against 46.5% of under-25s, and that professional cleaning of communal areas divides the market more sharply than any other feature.

40.0%

of all sharers are 30 or over. Last year it was 32.4%

Age of current sharers, 2025 against 2026



Base: 4,061 current sharers in 2025, 5,145 in 2026.
2025 ages were collected as a number and banded to match 2026.

Fewer are in their first months

Last year 49.9% of sharers had lived in their house for less than 6 months. This year it is 29.2%. Most of that moved one band along rather than into long tenancies.

The 6 to 12 month group nearly doubled, from 19.8% to 36.8%, while the share who have been in their house more than a year rose from 30.3% to 34.0%. 66% of sharers are still inside their first year.

49.9%

of sharers were in their first 6 months last year, this year it's 29.2%.

Fewer expect a place of their own

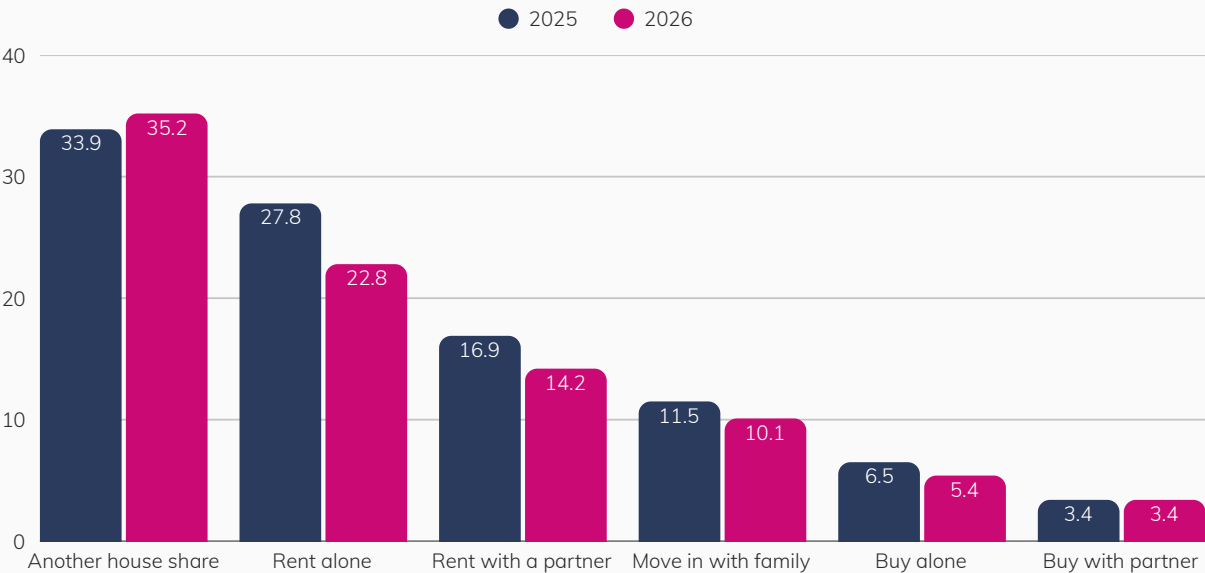
Among sharers planning a move, another shared house is where most expect to go, up from 33.9% to 35.2%. It is the only destination that grew.

Renting alone fell furthest, from 27.8% to 22.8%. Renting with a partner went from 16.9% to 14.2% and moving in with family from 11.5% to 10.1%.

Buying alone slipped from 6.5% to 5.4%, while buying with a partner held at 3.4%.

2026 offered 'move in with friends' as an answer and 2025 did not. It took 8.9% this year, so every other 2026 figure sits a little lower than it otherwise would. The movement worth reading is that a shared house gained ground while renting alone lost it.

Where sharers plan to move next, 2025 against 2026



Base: sharers who are planning a move 2,505 in 2025, 3,040 in 2026.

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CHAPTER TWELVE

Voices

1,504 sharers wrote to us. Their words, corrected only for spelling, deserve a chapter without our commentary.

CHAPTER TWELVE | VOICES

ON STARTING AGAIN

I never imagined that in my 40s I'd be living in a shared house. Like many people, I thought this stage of life would look very different. But life doesn't always go to plan.

ON GOOD HOUSEMATES

"When the right housemates move in, the whole experience becomes a million times better. Living with people you get along with makes it more enjoyable and creates a real sense of home."

ON TAKING THE RISK

"Took a risk at moving into a house where I knew nobody, but took the time to get to know people on a deeper more personal level. Enjoyed getting to know them and now have a really nice friendship with them."

ON SHARING CULTURES

"My housemate was celebrating Holi and shared some of the traditional foods with me and invited me to join the celebration."

"I came from the Philippines, currently I'm living in a multicultural household... being a cook and having food as my love language, I love it when my housemates share their food and techniques on how to cook it. Likewise as I love sharing Filipino dishes."

ON THE GOOD NIGHTS

"Me and a couple of flatmates got drunk in the kitchen and ended up chatting for like four hours and it felt like nothing."

"In the summer all housemates get together and sit in the back garden, have a drink and play games until the early hours of the morning. It's very fun."

ON WHAT IT TEACHES YOU

"Shared living has taught me resilience, patience, and how to adapt to different people and situations. It has its challenges—lack of privacy, different lifestyles, and learning to compromise—but it has also helped me through a time when I needed an affordable place to live while rebuilding my life."

CLOSING

Everyone has an opinion about HMOs. Councils license them, neighbours object to them, headlines describe them as overcrowded and badly run. Almost none of that comes from the people living inside, and almost nobody asks them.

We asked 6,387 of them.

64.9% rate their experience good. 59.4% say it turned out better than they feared. 94.6% are working or studying. 73.0% call their home peaceful. And among people who have never shared a house, only 1 in 10 say they would be embarrassed to. The reputation describes a version of shared living that only a very small minority now live in.

Read the written answers and it goes further than statistics. People wrote to us about divorce, bereavement, leaving an abusive relationship, arriving in a new country, and starting over at 50. A shared house caught them. Not a policy, not a waiting list, a room and 5 strangers who turned out to be fine. This is the part of the housing market that absorbs what the rest of it can't, and it does that without credit.

That's what shared living gets right. This is where it still needs to improve.

21.3% of sharers have felt unsafe because of a housemate. Last year it was 21.4%. More than 1 in 5 people, in their own home, frightened by someone a stranger put in the room next to theirs. Almost everything else in this report moved over 12 months. That one did not, and it will not, until who gets offered a room is treated as carefully as who gets offered a tenancy.

The Renters' Rights Act arrived in May, and this report carries the first data on how it's landing in shared homes. On pets it shows something worth watching. The right to ask now exists, but 26.6% of sharers say their home doesn't allow pets and 24.5% would choose one that did. The right only applies once someone has a tenancy, but most people who want a pet never get that far, because they ruled those houses out while they were searching.

Shared living has grown up. 2 in 5 sharers are 30 or over, and almost half the non-student market is. They're not passing through on the way to somewhere better, because for a lot of them there is nowhere better to pass through to. They deserve houses designed for the people actually in them, and a say in who they live with.

The survey runs again in 2027. Same months, same questions, so next year we can show you what changed.

To everyone who answered, and to the 1,504 of you who wrote to us about your home, thank you.

METHODOLOGY

The survey

The State of Shared Living 2026 ran online from 7th May to 31st July 2026.

It was promoted through COHO's own channels, including in-app prompts, the COHO website, email, and shares from tenants and landlords. It was also promoted by two micro-influencers on Instagram and TikTok, and through Native to students at Liverpool John Moores University and the University of Salford.

Respondents were not paid. Entry to a prize draw was optional and held separately from the survey answers.

Who answered

6,713 responses were received. Repeat email addresses were removed, keeping the first submission from each address, which leaves 6,387 people. Every figure in this report is calculated on the deduplicated base of 6,387 unless stated otherwise.

Those 6,387 divide into three groups, and most questions were asked of only one of them:

- 5,145 currently live in a shared house
- 670 have lived in one but don't now
- 572 have never lived in one

Chapters 1 to 7 and Chapter 9 draw on current sharers. Chapter 8 compares people who have never shared with current sharers. Chapter 10 reports the 572 who have never shared.

Where this report refers to sharers who aren't students, that means everyone whose employment answer does not mention studying, including those who wrote their own answer such as 'student and working part time'

Bases

Not everybody answered every question, so the base for each figure is the number of people who answered that question, not the size of the group. Bases are printed under every chart. Where a base falls below 100 the finding is described as indicative rather than reported as a percentage.

Scales

Statements were rated on a four-point scale from 0 to 3. Throughout this report, "agree" means a score of 2 or 3, and where a top score is quoted it means 3. Several questions allowed more than one answer. On those, percentages add to more than 100, and this is noted in the chart caption. Percentages are rounded to one decimal place, or to the nearest whole number where the decimal adds nothing.

Written answers

1,504 people wrote something in their own words. Quotations in this report are reproduced as written, with spelling corrected and nothing else changed. Where a quote has been shortened, it is shortened only at the start or the end. All quotations are anonymous unless the respondent gave permission to be named.

Comparing with 2025

The 2025 wave ran from August to November 2024 and received 6,129 responses, which becomes 5,748 after the same deduplication rule. 4,073 of those were current sharers.

The surveys ran at different points in the year, so the two samples caught the market at different moments. Several questions also changed wording or scale, including overall experience, sense of community, and the rating of landlords and agents, none of which can be compared this year.

The 2025 wave identified non-students by the type of house they lived in, and 2026 by whether the respondent is a student, so the two are not compared in this report.

Where this report gives a year-on-year figure, both waves asked the question in the same way. Age was collected as a number in 2025 and in bands in 2026, so the 2025 ages have been banded to match.

From 2027 the survey will run in the same months each year, with a fixed set of questions carried forward unchanged, so future comparisons will not carry these limits.

ABOUT COHO

COHO is the UK's platform for shared living, used by landlords and agents to run their property portfolios and by tenants to find the right room and the right housemates.

We built it because running a shared house is a different job from running a single let, and nothing on the market treated it that way. COHO handles single lets and mixed portfolios too, so nobody has to keep two systems going.

Most property software is created for just landlords or agents, we build for both sides of the front door. Landlords and agents get what they need to run a house properly. Tenants get an account of their own, so they know who they will be living with, have a say in who joins them, and can sort things out without chasing anybody. That is the whole idea, a shared house works when the right people are in it and somebody is looking after it. Neither side manages that alone.

Shared houses take people in at the point when other housing turns them away. A divorce, a new city, a job that pays enough for a room and not a flat. They also work as a choice. Plenty of people share because they would rather come home to a full house than an empty one, and stay years longer than they planned to.

They are somebody's business too, run by people who are rarely given credit for doing it well and rarely asked what the job actually involves.

All of that gets overlooked, usually by the same conversation. That is why we work on this, and why we publish what we find rather than keeping it.

Why we run this survey

Everyone has an opinion about shared houses. Licensing decisions, planning objections, headlines, policy. Almost none of it comes from the people living in them.

We can reach thousands of renters, so once a year we ask them. This is the second year, and it is the largest study of shared living in the UK. We publish what comes back, including the parts that are awkward for the industry we sell to.

How to use this report

Every figure is free to use with credit to the COHO State of Shared Living 2026. Every chart carries its base, and the methodology on page 47 shows how we calculated things, so you can check us.

The full dataset is also online. You can filter the findings by age, gender, city and how long someone has lived in their house, and see the numbers for the group you actually care about rather than the national average. If you manage houses in Liverpool, or let mainly to over-35s, that view is a few clicks away.

We run it again in 2027, same months, same questions.