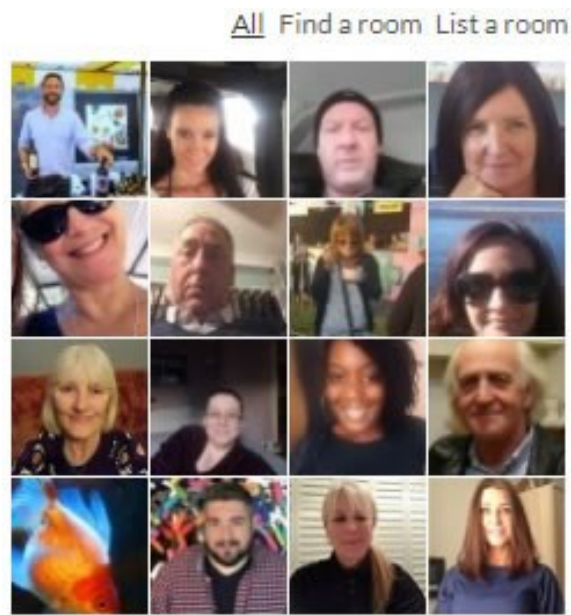




# Cohabitas Report

## UK House Sharing Preferences

Quarterly report: June-August 2020



# Executive Summary

Cohabitas.com is the leading house sharing and housemate finding website for the over 40s, operating mainly in the UK and Ireland.

Cohabitas helps users to find rooms to rent, mainly with private live-in landlords, and to find other like-minded people who might like to join together to rent a house or flat – known as a buddy-up.

Users are asked to state their 'housemate preferences' as a part of the registration process (See methodology section) and this data is analysed each quarter to give a snapshot of the reasons people want or need to share, their current status, COVID safety preferences, WFH preferences and, importantly for developers and planners, which amenities are most important in their shared home.

## Key Findings (Jun-Aug 2020)

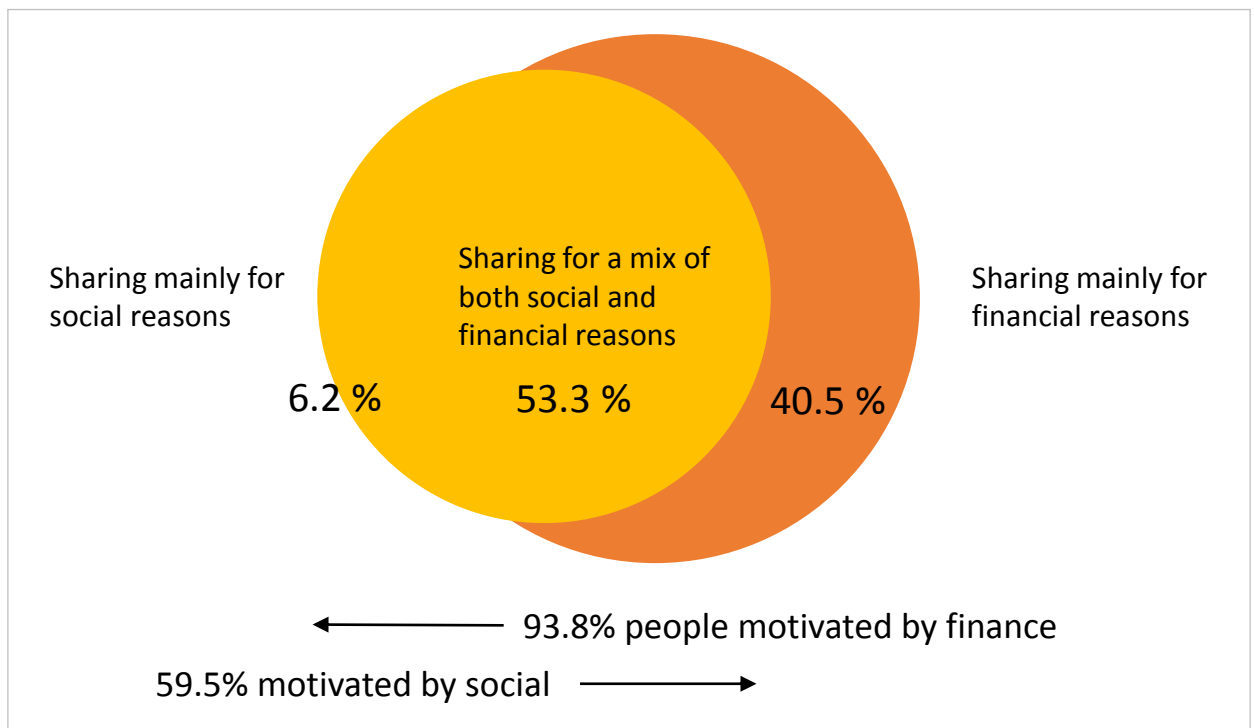
- 40% of respondents house share only for financial reasons, with 53% sharing for both financial and social, and 7% mainly for social reasons.
- 57% of respondents are only interested in renting a room, with a further 39% considering both renting a room or buddy-ups. Only 5% are interested in buddy-ups only – often for the longer-term.
- 61% of registrants are already renting, either alone (19%) or with others (42%). 21% of people are living in a 'family home' prior to sharing.
- Top amenities respondents look for in shared flats and houses are:
  - Ensuite or private bathroom (61%)
  - Access to a washing machine (55%)
  - Good wifi included in the rent (54%)
- 88% of people may need to WFH and 53% of these prefer to work and take calls in a common area, such as lounge or kitchen. Live-in landlords are aligned with these preferences, according to their registered preferences.
- 67% of housemates prefer to live as 'one-household' and to socially distance only outside of the home. 30% prefer no restrictions. Live-in landlords think differently, with a large majority taking a much more relaxed approach.

**Data source:** Cohabitas housemate registration June 01 – August 31, 2020

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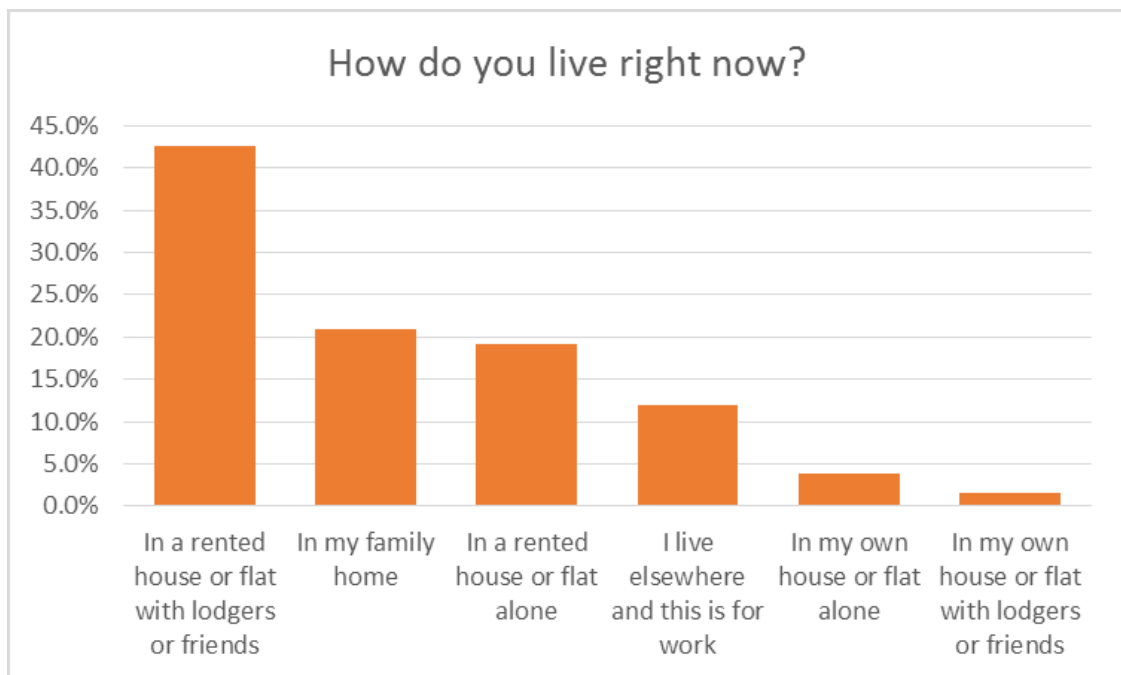
# What is your reason to share?

- There is a lot of research about the health, social and financial benefits of sharing a home rather than living alone. (See the Cohabitas 2017 research report - [Attitudes to house sharing among mature adults](#)).
- In this latest research, only 6.2% of respondents say they share mainly for social reasons, with financial considerations being much more important in general.
- Most people recognise that social benefits are a part of sharing a home with 53% saying they 'share for a mix of reasons'. This is supported by feedback from sharers who often focus on finding the right housemates to share with, as much as it is about the room specifically and property in general.
- Cohabitas has a number of articles about how to make a success of house sharing and also asks about housemates' number of years experience, as this is also a consideration.



# How do you live right now?

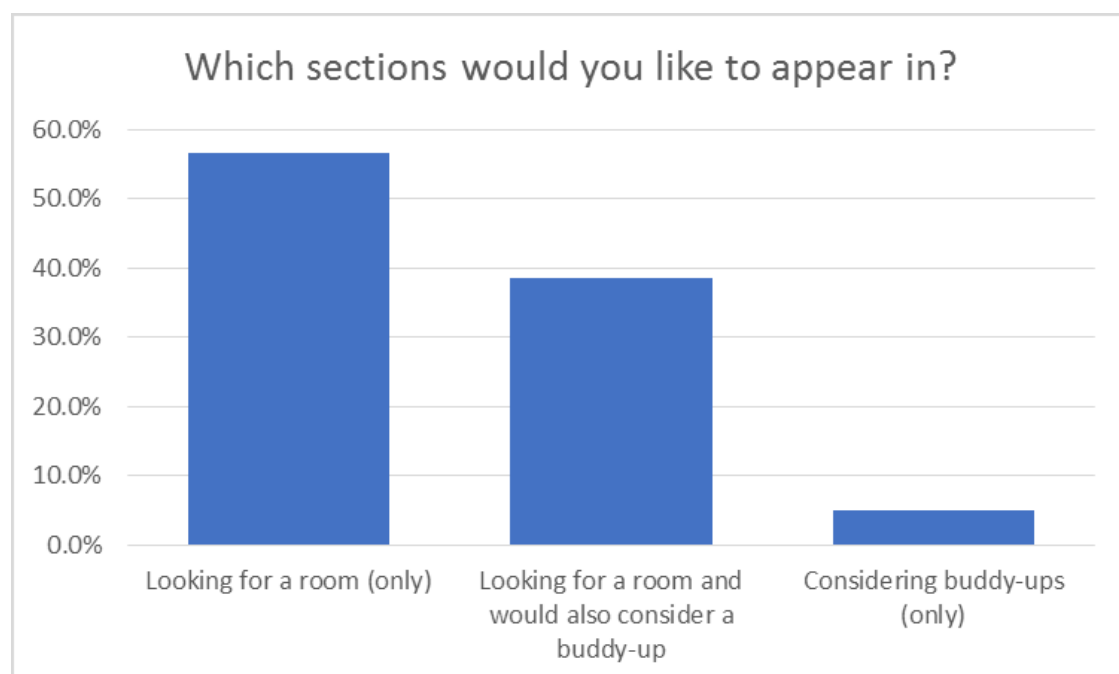
- The majority of respondents are already 'living in a rented house or flat with lodgers or friends' (43%) with a further 19% living 'in a rented house or flat alone'
- Around 21% of respondents are considering leaving their family home for some reason. Normally this is due to divorce, separation or bereavement, but financial pressures can also play a part in this decision.
- A relatively small number of people using Cohabitas (specifically for the over 40s) indicate this is for work and they 'live elsewhere' (11.9%).
- Interestingly a small percentage of respondents own their own property but are considering house sharing in future; possibly due to financial pressures, possibly for social reasons (5.4% in total).



# In which category (of housemate) would you like to appear on the site?

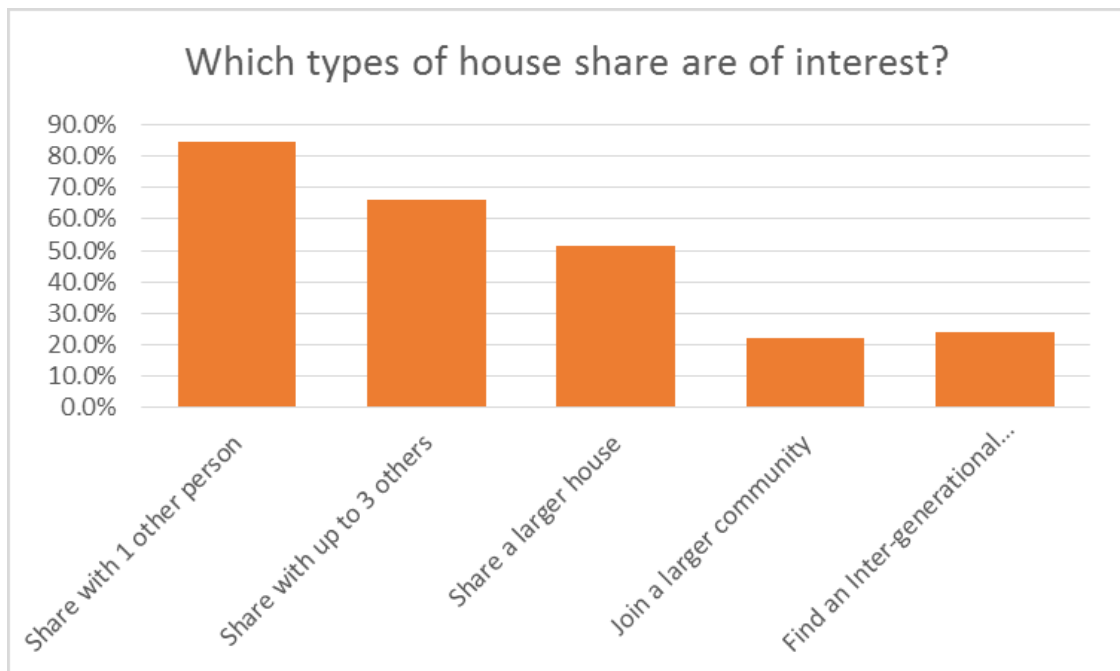
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- Renting a room in someone else's home is the simplest form of house sharing and 57% of respondents are only interested in this option.
- Renting a room does not mean the tenant only has a room of course, but also has access to other rooms and spaces in the home – defined in the lodger or tenancy agreement.
- Preference for only 'renting a room' can indicate it is only for the short-term, or that for the lodger it is more about the room rather than having a house mate. However, renting a room can also be a flexible way for people to try out sharing together and to find people they'd like to share with over the longer-term.
- People considering both rooms to rent and buddy-ups, can be seen to be widening their search to ensure they have the widest choice of options and of course because it depends who is looking in their preferred geographical and budget area.
- Those considering only buddy-ups tend to be more interested in the social and people side of things and are often looking for a longer-term sharing group.



# Which types of house share are of most interest?

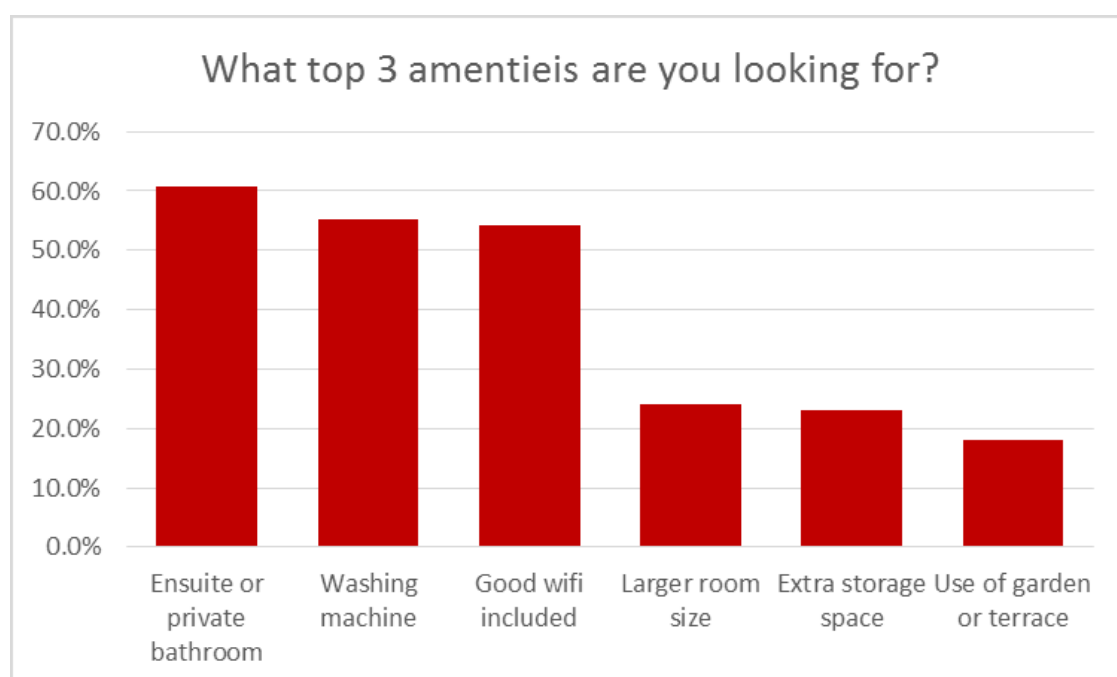
- Sharing with just one other person is the most widely considered option (85%), but is only one of the options considered by many people, with only 21% of respondents considering sharing with 1 other person as their only option.
- Living with up to 3 others (66%) or Sharing a larger house (52%) are also widely considered options.
- Although smaller, a significant number of people are interested in joining 'larger communities' (22%) and 'inter-generational housing' schemes (24%) as an alternative.



# Which top 3 amenities are you looking for?

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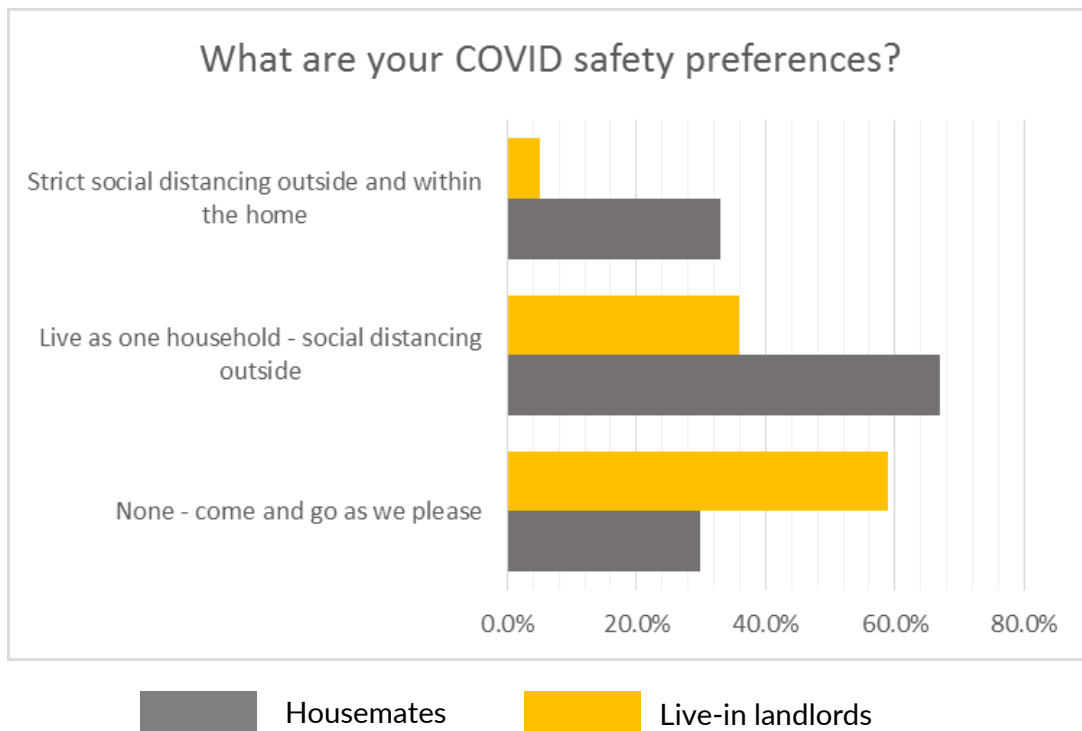
- As identified in the Cohabitas 2017 [‘Attitudes to house sharing in mature adults’](#) research, having an Ensuite or private bathroom remains the most important amenity that mature sharers are looking for (61% of respondents).
- The two other most popular amenities are access to a washing machine and ‘good wifi included’ (in the rent).
- Surprisingly, having a larger room, extra storage space and use of a garden or terrace are much less sought after. We suspect this may vary with age and we will investigate further, but it probably also reflects the anticipated higher rent of a room in a property with a garden, especially in central London (32% of registrations).



# What are your COVID safety preferences?

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- Sharing a home with others now brings up issues around COVID safety which prospective landlords and tenants need to agree, so is included as a question in registration, with a default to 'None - come and go as we please'.
- 67% of respondents are happy with 'living as one household' and practicing social distancing outside the home.
- However, not surprising perhaps because of the age group (all over 40, average age 54), fully 1/3 would prefer to practice 'strict social distancing at home' as well.
- Our thought is that there is no difference in the risk associated with living in a household defined as shared, and in fact less risk than living with younger more socially active age groups.
- Interestingly we ask live-landlords/home owners the same question (about 70% of our registered landlords), so can compare the expectations of each party.
- Live-in landlords appear more relaxed about COVID safety, with only 5% expecting strict social distancing at home and the majority (59%) allowing a 'come and go as we please' approach.
- This could reflect the financial need of the live-in landlord to rent the room and not them wanting to deter applicants in what has been an increasingly tight market for landlords. Or they might just be less likely to change the default response.

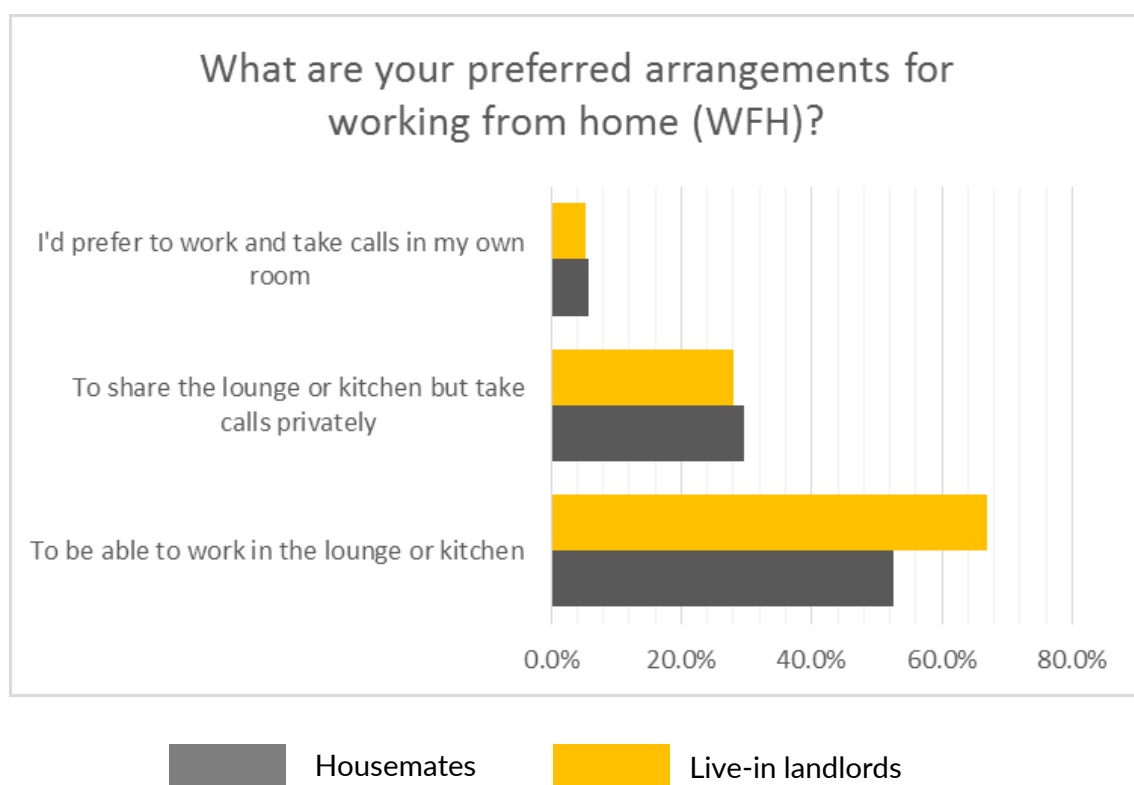




# What are your preferred arrangements for working from home (WFH)?

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- Only 12% of respondents said they did not need to work from home.
- Of those people that do need to WFH, the majority are happy to share their space, being able to work in the lounge or kitchen (53%), with a further 30% happy to work in shared spaces with the exception of work related calls.
- On this basis shared living does not seem to interfere too much with the need to WFH, although landlords need to decide what access they can provide.
- Interestingly we ask (mainly) live-landlords/home owners the same question so can compare the expectations of each party. Registrations show that Live-in landlords are more or less aligned with their tenant's expectation regarding WFH.



# Methodology

It is free to register on Cohabitas.com and users are asked to complete a registration form and either a Housemate or Room to rent listing. Home for 'housemates' is a privately rented house or flat, shared with other, hopefully like-minded, individuals and in many cases the landlord will be the live-in owner or lead tenant simply renting out a room(s), so they have an interest in who will live with them.

Besides providing personal details about age, budget and ideal location to help prospective landlords and housemates gauge compatibility, users are asked some generic 'market research' questions as part of their free registration.

These questions have been designed to help Cohabitas in designing services, but will also be of interest to developers, planners and landlords interested in meeting the needs of this large and growing cohort of private renters; the over 40s.

The data are collected on a continuous basis and it is hoped will grow into a sizeable dataset with both longitudinal and regional reports being possible in time.

The sample for this pilot is n=371 housemates (users who fully completed a housemate listing) and n=226 Live-in landlords (users who fully completed a room to rent listing) and each question is noted on the specific slide.

## Contact

If you would like to research a specific question or location, or would like to speak to someone about other Cohabitas community-wide data, please send an email to [admin@cohabitas.com](mailto:admin@cohabitas.com)

Note: The site is GDPR compliant so only anonymised site-level data collected specifically for market research purposes can be used in analysis. We do have a range of newsletters and advertising options available to reach site users and can address specific questions to our users via newsletter and website.

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