

More than Housing

Home aloners

The true cost of living alone in Britain today

December 2019

More than Housing

Community Led Homes is launching More than Housing, a campaign to support communities to make supportive, affordable, secure homes, together.

The Home Aloners report explores the impact of a person's living situation on their quality of life. It reveals the findings of a survey, commissioned by Community Led Homes and carried out by Savanta ComRes, which found that 1 in 4 (24%) British adults agree that they feel lonely because of their living situation and a further quarter (23%) say it is not good for their mental health (1). Over 2 in 5 (44%) British adults say they would like to feel more connected to people in their neighbourhood. (2)

Furthermore, findings suggest that living alone is perceived to be more challenging than other living situations. Over a third (36%) of people who live on their own agree that they feel lonely due to their living situations. With more than eight million people now living alone in the UK (3) it uncovers the true extent of the loneliness epidemic.

But the research also found that three out of four (77%) people who live alone say they chose their current living situation - that's more than six million people in the UK (4). And with the number living alone expected to rise to 10.7million by 2039 (3) the accompanying challenges of solo living look set to continue.

With all the benefits of living alone but none of the risks, community led housing is a growing solution to loneliness for those living on their own, as well as helping to combat other challenges of the housing market.

In May 2019, government research revealed that there are plans for over 16,600 community led homes to be developed, this is triple estimates from two years ago (5). Whilst there are different ways of doing community led housing, be it a community land trust, cohousing or a co-operative, the motivations are the same: local people making supportive, affordable, secure homes, together. Community led homes are more than housing.

Real stories

Janet, 73, has lived in North London her whole life. She spent forty years in the same rented council flat until moving to a flat in New Ground Cohousing in January 2017. She has lived alone for over ten years after her daughter moved out.

"I had become quite isolated. All the people I knew had either moved on or had passed away.

I love my home now. There is so much I can say about this community, we share so much of our lives together. I feel as though my life has been completely transformed. I could never imagine living the life I'm living now.

Without a doubt this community is keeping me healthier, happier and more supported."

National findings

Home alone



3m
Nearly 3 million Britons who live alone say they are lonely due to their living situation (7) - more than the population of Greater Manchester. This looks set to grow to nearly 4 million by 2039 (8).



2m
More than 2 million people who live alone (9) say that it is not good for their mental health - more than the population of Paris. This is predicted to increase to nearly 3 million by 2039 (10).



1m
Nearly one million people who live alone in Britain today don't have anyone to call for company (11).



600k
Over 600,000 Britons who live alone have nobody there if they need help and by 2039 it is expected to rise to nearly 900,000 (12).

Living solo



The three most often preferred elements of living alone:

- 75%** like being able to make their own choices such as what to watch on TV.
- 67%** like the peace and quiet.
- 61%** like not having to deal with other people's annoying habits.



74% of people who live on their own say they enjoy their living situation.



77% of people who live alone say they chose their current living situation.

Friends and neighbours



Most commonly selected choices for those who live alone to have in their local area:

- 51%** Half want someone in their local area to ask for practical help if they need it.
- 47%** Nearly half want people in their local area who would know if they were unwell.
- 38%** More than 1 in 3 want opportunities to socialise with others in their local area.
- 37%** More than 1 in 3 want a neighbour to talk to if they have a problem.
- 25%** 1 in 4 want common spaces in their local area to get to know neighbours.

Real stories

Val, 52, lives in East London, West London. She has lived on her own since her last relationship ended nearly a decade ago. Val is a member of a cohousing community, London Older Lesbian Cohousing (LOLC), which is hoping to build 25 homes in North East London.

"I've been single for a little while now and although I always thought I would look forward to being on my own, and for a time it was fine, after a little while I became more and more isolated. Sometimes it can be overbearing to just be on your own.

The idea of a community whereby you can have your own home, can shut your door and you're on your own but at the same time you can open your door and be in the garden socialising with likeminded people; having a meal in the communal space or gardening together; or going out is an idea that I've found, especially in old age, would be beneficial."

Regional findings

Region	Number of people living alone	Agree lonely due to living alone	Disagree living alone is good for their mental health	Agree enjoy living solo	Agree chose to live solo
North East	403,903	38%	29%	73%	78%
North West	962,707	39%	33%	63%	72%
Yorkshire & the Humber	684,028	38%	23%	81%	85%
East Midlands	609,378	40%	33%	74%	74%
West Midlands	635,149	38%	24%	73%	81%
East of England	725,926	30%	30%	78%	82%
London	847,417	26%	27%	72%	74%
South East	932,100	37%	30%	69%	73%
South West	728,903	40%	36%	75%	70%

(1) ONS Families and households by English regions and UK constituent countries 2018

Real stories

Amanda, 50, moved into Fishponds Road, a community land trust development in Bristol in May 2016.

"I was really struggling when I was living in private rented accommodation. My mental health was suffering because of the insecurity I felt. The uncertainty just wasn't good for me and didn't work at all.

This is the first time I've ever had my own real home. Having been through the mill a bit and a lot of life stuff, I'm really happy to be where I am now."

About Community led housing

Community led housing is when community groups come together to build and renovate new housing that meets their needs, not for the profit of a private developer. It ensures that there is open and meaningful participation with the local community and that local people consent to the housing that is being created.

Individual homes within the development can be the same or mixed tenure, including private ownership, shared ownership or rented at affordable prices.

As a solution to housing problems groups have created projects where:

- The costs to rent or buy are kept as affordable as possible.
- Members of the community can afford to live locally and local shops, pubs and schools can thrive.
- They are designed for the needs of local people, at a high quality with the right space and amenities.
- Prices are protected forever so future generations will be able to afford them too.
- They bring the residents and community together to make decisions, creating closer connections and ties into the future.
- Housing can include communal spaces to eat, socialise and share amenities.
- Neighbours know each other, look out for another and make friends.

The four types of community led housing

- Co-operative housing**
Housing that is controlled, managed and owned by its residents.
 - Cohousing**
Residents have their own private homes with shared spaces to meet, eat and share resources, when they choose.
 - Community land trusts**
Where whole neighbourhoods come together to act as long-term stewards of housing, ensuring that it remains genuinely affordable, based on what people actually earn in their area, not just for now but for every future occupier.
 - Self-help housing**
Where volunteers repair empty houses to bring them back to use.
- There are thousands of community led homes across the country, with a huge variety of residents - from single people to young families. Some developments are aimed at a specific group or age and others are open to generations and households of all types.

About Community Led Homes

Community Led Homes, a partnership between Confederation of Co-operative Housing, Locality, the National CLT Network and UK Cohousing, was set up to support those creating community led housing. It offers access to funding resources and advice to anyone who is interested in these types of housing - from individuals wanting to find out more to established groups needing funding for their latest project.

References
(1) The original statement was "My current living situation is good for my mental health" - 23% disagree with this. (2) Savanta ComRes interviewed 4,259 British adults aged 16+ online between 30th October and 3rd November 2019. Data were weighted by key demographics including age, gender and social grade to be nationally representative. Savanta ComRes is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules. Full data tables are available on www.comres.co.uk. (3) ONS Families and Households 2018. (4) 77% of 8.01m (those living alone in the UK) is 6,167,700. (5) ONS, The Cost of Living Alone report, April 2019. (6) In April 2019, Homes England issued a call for information on community led housing projects and the expected need for long-term funding. Submissions revealed a potential pipeline of over 16,600 homes. (7) 36% of those who live alone = 2,883,600. (8) 36% of 10.7m = 3,852,000. (9) 28% of those who live alone = 2,242,800. (10) 28% of 10.7m = 2,996,000. (11) 961,200 Community Life Survey 2017/18 own analysis. (12) 640,000 2018 and 856,000 2039 Community Life Survey 2017/18 own analysis.