

Perceptions of home-sharing

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University of British Columbia – Okanagan campus



Introduction

The goal of this survey is to better understand how residents in Canada perceive home-sharing with a particular interest in intergenerational living arrangements. Intergeneration living arrangements involve a host who is older than 55+ renting a room or a portion of their home to a younger adult (18-34). This survey is part of a research study funded by the National Research Council of Canada and conducted by the staff at Happipad Technologies Inc. and Dr. Eric Li from the University of British Columbia - Okanagan campus (UBCO). The study was carried out in Kelowna, BC with over 70% of participants being residents in the region. A survey questionnaire was distributed through paper copies in letter mail and an online survey link. Kelowna was chosen to be the city for this pilot study due to its age demographics.

According to the 2016 Census of Population from Statistics Canada, the two major age groups in Kelowna are 20 – 34 and 50 – 64, which offers great potential for intergenerational living arrangements.

We received a total of 281 responses of which 209 participants took the survey online and 72 participants filled out the paper survey form.

Definitions

Host – a person who rents out a room in a home he or she lives in

Guest – a person who rents a room in a host's home

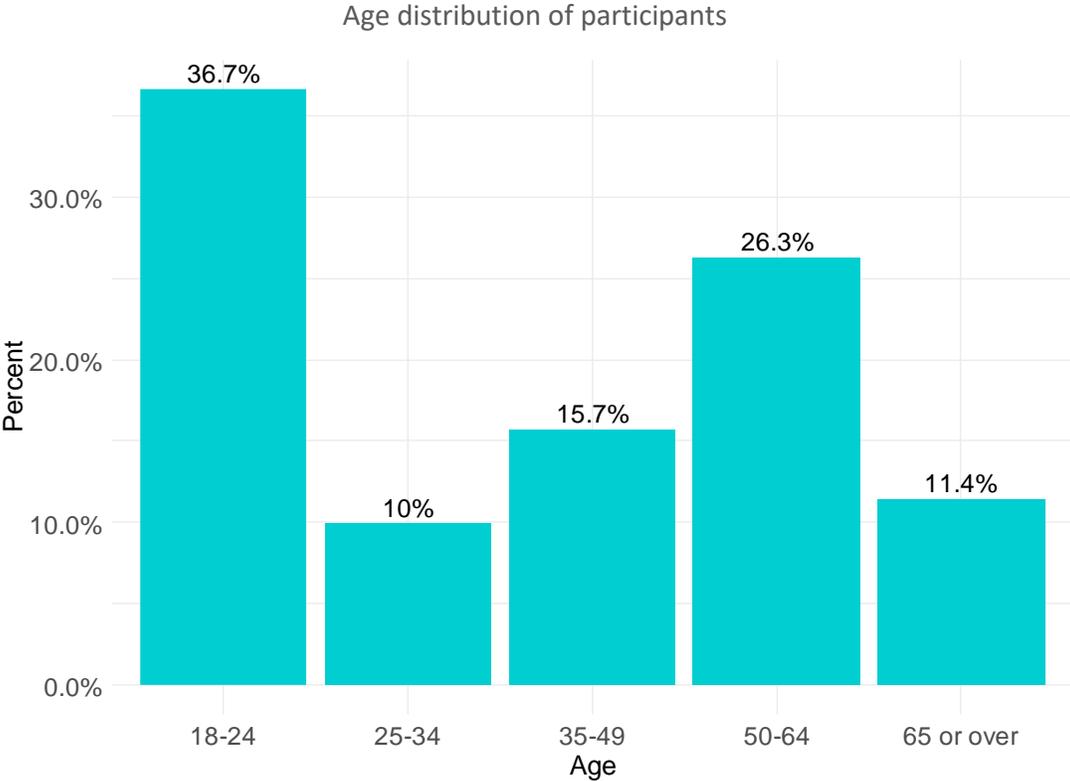
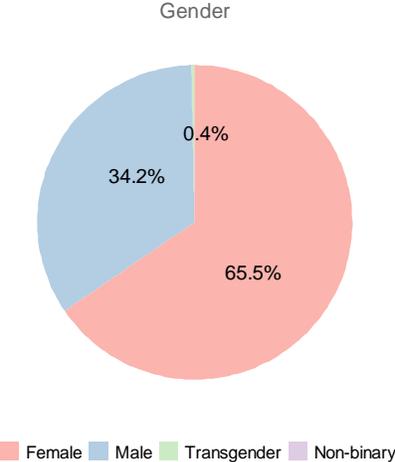
Home-sharing – a long-term living arrangement (over 1 month) where a host and a guest share a home including kitchen facilities and/or a bathroom

Co-living – a living arrangement where two or more people who are unrelated live together and is used interchangeably with “home-sharing” in this report

Demographics

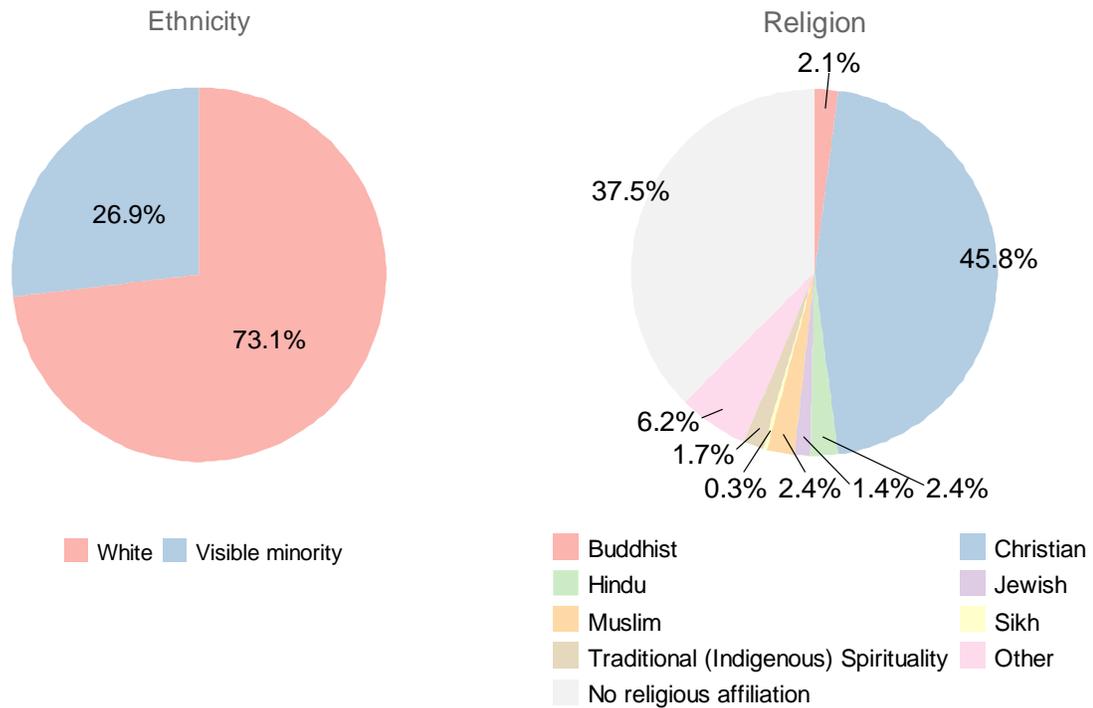
Gender and age

Two-thirds of respondents were female, potentially indicating a stronger interest from this gender group. There are two major age groups in our sample: 18 – 24 and 50 – 64, indicating an unbiased representation of the age demographics in the local community. These two age groups are ideal for intergenerational home-sharing, and the high proportion of responses from these groups may reflect that people in these age ranges are interested in home-sharing.



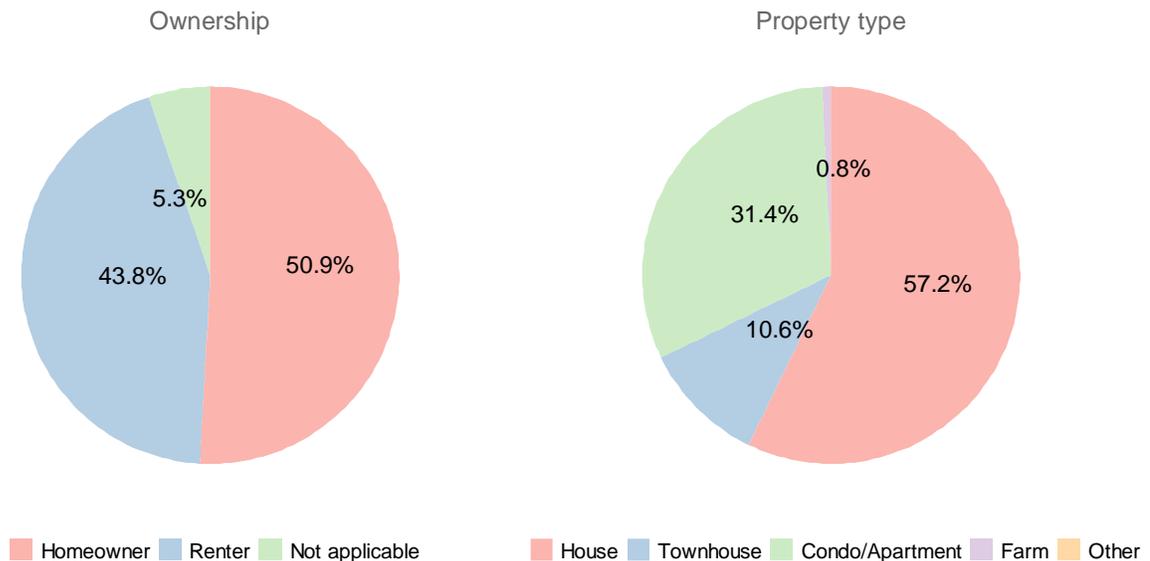
Ethnicity and religion

Three-quarters of our participants are white and a quarter are visible minority. For religious belief, about half of the participants are Christians and three-eighths of them have no religious affiliation.



Ownership and property type

Half of our participants are homeowners, a little under half are renters, and 5% belong to the “not applicable” category (i.e. individuals that live with their parents). These proportions of supplies from home ownership and demands from renters are well-balanced for a healthy home-sharing community. Over half of the participants live in single-family homes, one-third live in condos/apartments, and 10% live in townhouses. In this study, we see that the majority of homeowners in houses, whereas renters are more likely to live in condos/apartments.



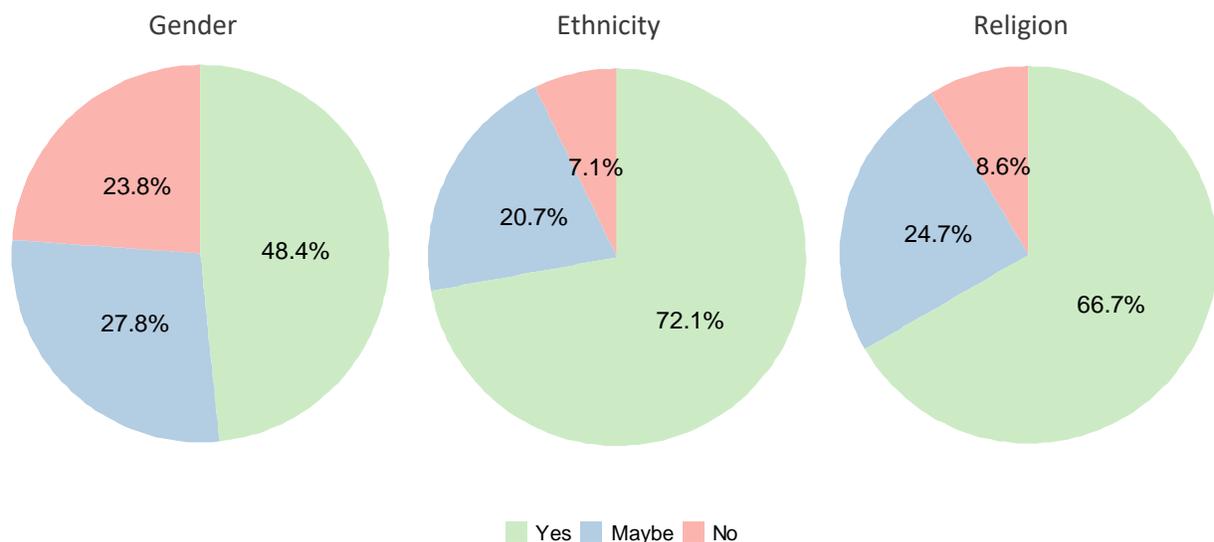
Preferences on home-sharing

Home-sharing is similar to having a roommate, except that the host must be a primary owner or primary renter of the home. In this study, we looked at the participants' opinions on different background, age group, and education level in a home-sharing arrangement.

Home-sharing preferences on gender, ethnicity, and religion

Responses from the survey show that participants are very open to ethnicity and religion where two-thirds of people would definitely consider sharing a home with someone of different ethnic and religious background. Only less than 10% would rule out individuals that differ in ethnicity or religion from themselves, and within this 10%, over three-quarters of them rejected both factors simultaneously. For co-living with someone of a different gender, half of participants would undoubtedly consider it, a quarter may consider it, and the remaining quarter excluded the possibility. A further look into the data shows that females are more reserved in this aspect, reflecting a familiar social behaviour that some females prefer female roommates only. Data from these 3 factors show that the majority of participants accept diversity and are open to co-live with people of different background from themselves.

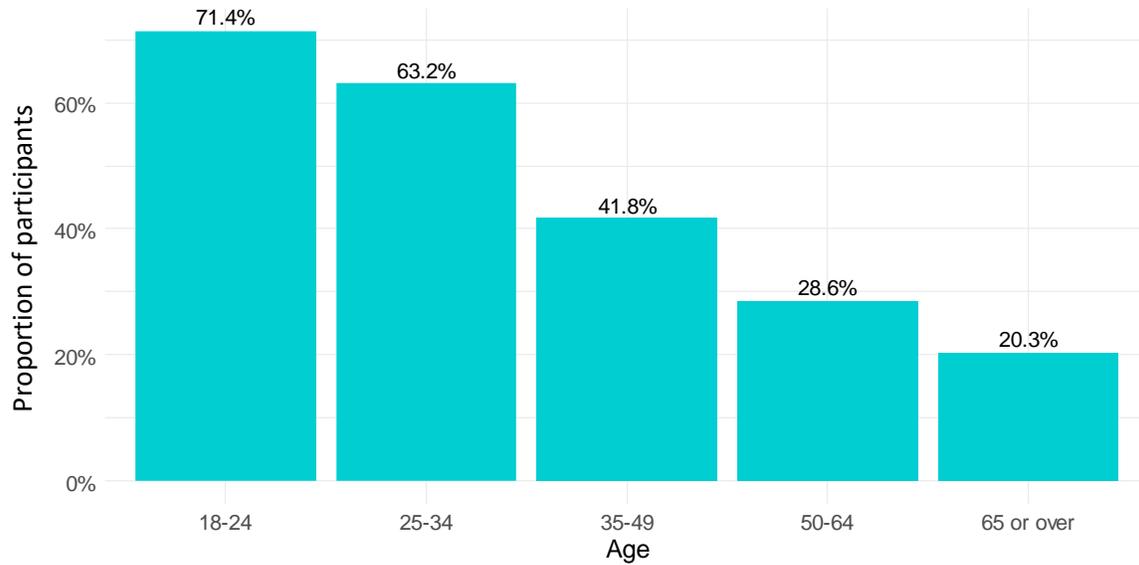
The openness of participants to home-share with someone of different gender, ethnicity, and religion



Home-sharing preferences on age

Participants generally prefer to home-share with young people in the 18 –24 and 25 – 34 age group with 60% to 70% of them open to it. Our statistics indicate that participants are less inclined to co-live with older people, with their openness declines as the co-living person's age increases. Since this study is interested in intergenerational co-living, we will see if this is a viable idea by looking at the participants' perceptions of age compared to their own age.

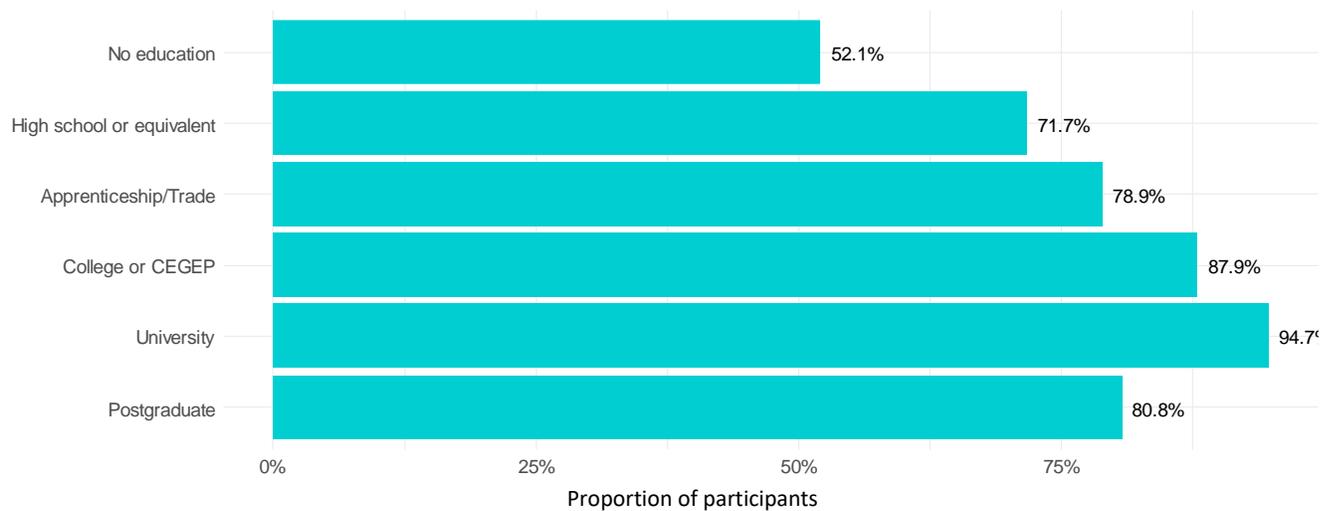
Age groups participants are open to home-share with



Home-sharing preferences on education level

Although half of the participants have no preference on education level, we see that individuals with higher education are more welcomed in home-sharing arrangements. As shown in the figure below, the most widely-accepted group is people who received university education, followed by those who obtained college education.

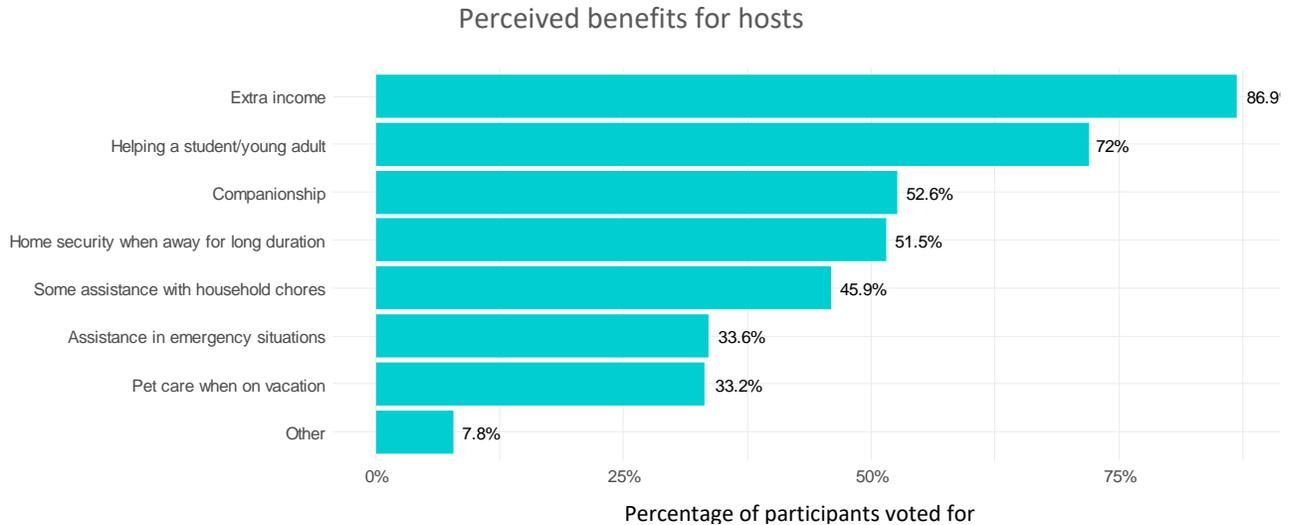
Education level(s) participants would home-share with



Perceived benefits and concerns

After all, home-sharing is about co-living with someone you do not previously know. We surveyed participants on the benefits and concerns related to these shared living arrangements.

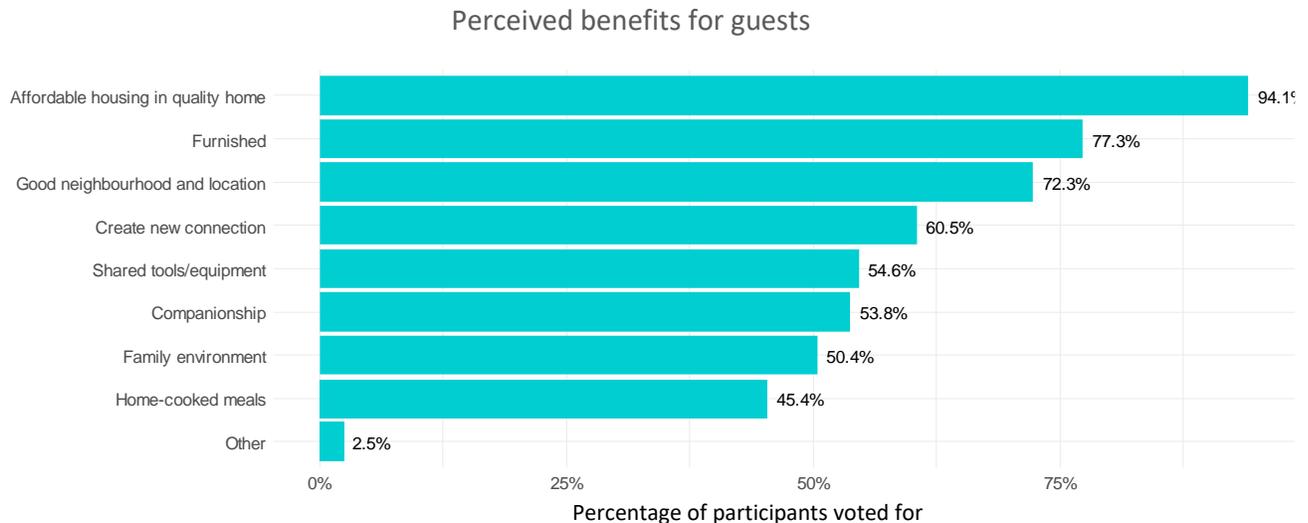
Perceived benefits for hosts



Economic incentive is the most perceived benefit for hosts with close to 90% of participants endorsing “extra income”. One of our participants stated “to have 600 CAD per month is huge different” as additional comment to this topic. This demonstrates home-sharing could be an attractive income generator for homeowners. The second most acknowledged benefit is “helping a student/young adult” with three-quarters of total number of possible votes, which shows that participants see that providing affordable housing to the younger generation is a way of providing support to others. Some participants also identified that home-sharing is providing community and belonging, less risky than market rentals, and a great way for cultural exchange. In addition, it was indicated by some respondents that individuals who live alone (and especially seniors) may benefit most from these shared living arrangements. Factors such as “pet care when on vacation” and “assistance in emergency situations” are less perceived as a benefit with only one-third of the participants endorsing them. However, some of the additional comments collected in our survey did articulated the important of home-sharing in addressing these issues:

“... my aunt (over 80) has shared accommodation in the past, and with success, of ESL students from a church, however, not as many coming over now. She needs the extra income and would appreciate the company - as would her family. She has always been single, no children, so care is becoming a bit of an issue, although homecare is providing service to monitor her medications twice a day. She is less mobile but still drives - things like carrying heavy items from the car would be a tremendous help for her!”

Perceived benefits for guests

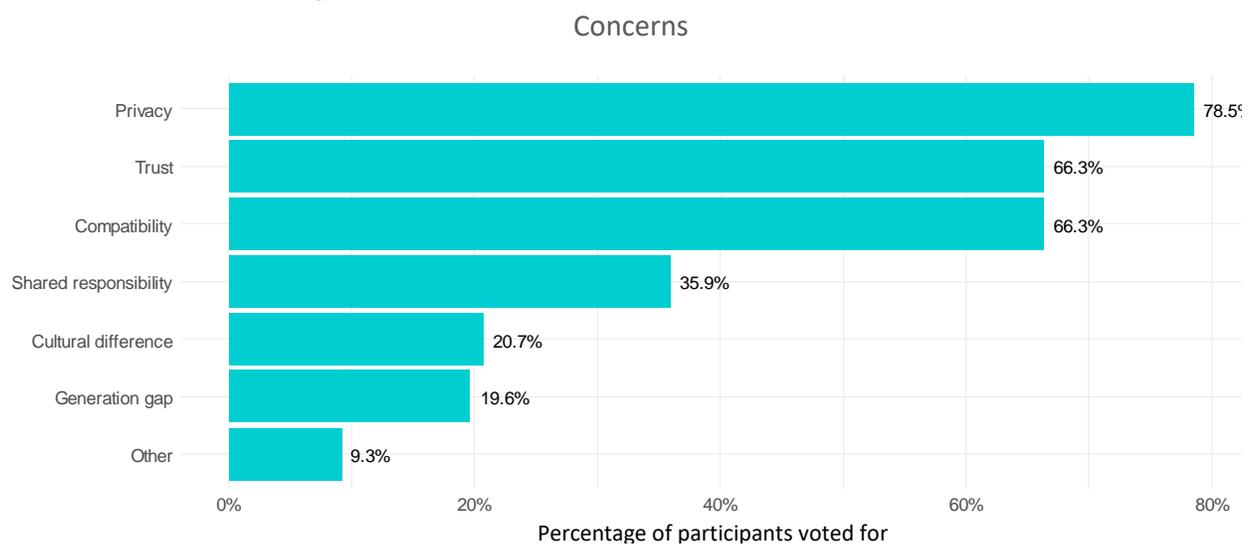


Economic benefit is, again, the most recognized benefit for guests with 95% of participants acknowledging home-sharing can provide “affordable housing in quality home”. One participant embraced the value of home-sharing:

“I think home-sharing is a great idea considering how expensive rents are now. It isn't good for students and people on low income and some seniors. In a home-sharing situation it would be nice if they also had disabled units as well.”

Benefits of “furnished” and “good neighborhood and location” came second with three-quarters participants endorsing them. The most recognized social benefit is “create new connection” with close to two-thirds of total number of possible votes. The least perceived benefits are “home-cooked meals” and “family environment”, but they still earned half of the total number of possible votes. Some participants also identified security and reduction of loneliness as benefits for guests.

Concerns for hosts and guests



Close to 80% of participants are concerned about “privacy”, which is closely followed by “trust” and “compatibility” with two-thirds of total number of possible votes. These three factors are tied to the fundamentals of human interaction which are mandatory in a comfortable relationship. Factors such as “generation gap” and “cultural difference” are relatively less of a worry with only one-fifth of participants recognizing them. These two factors are related to the difference in upbringing of human beings and may require some accommodation. Note that cultural exchange was seen as a benefit according to some participants. Other concerns raised by a small fraction of participants include cleanliness, lifestyle, and safety. The data again indicates the respondents’ openness to diversity and a focus on interpersonal relationship in home-sharing.

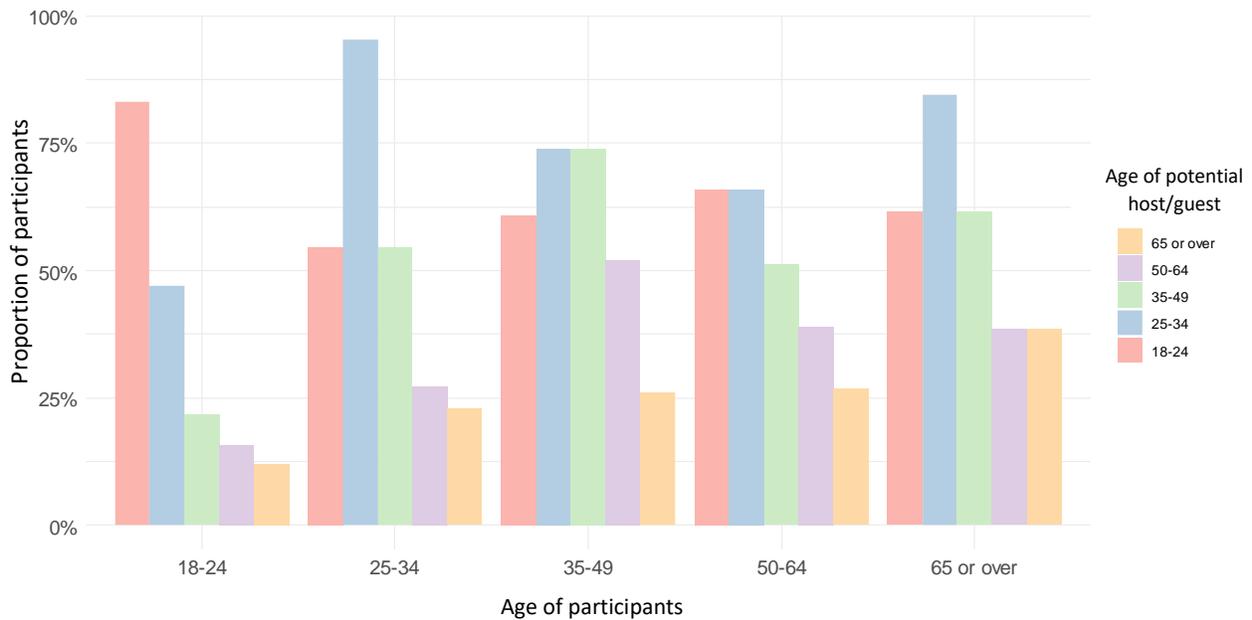
Intergenerational home-sharing

One of the major goals of this study is to determine whether intergenerational home-sharing is a viable concept. We looked at the age group of participants together with the age group that they are willing to co-live with. Referring to the figure below, we see that over three-quarters of the participants in the “18 – 24” age group would home-share with people in their same age group, in which case it will be comparable to a roommate situation for young people. Their openness to home-sharing decreases as the age of the potential host/guest increases. Similarly, most participants in the “25 – 34” age group prefer to co-live with people in their same age group with over 90% acknowledgement, and over 50% of them would home-share with someone between 18 to 24 and 35 to 49 years of age. Looking at age 35 and above, participants have similar age preference profiles. They are generally quite open to co-live with people younger than themselves, and their openness decreases as the age of the potential host/guest increases. One participant shared his/her experience of co-living with university students:

“I have home shared with a European university student and the experience was great for both parties. I have also hosted 2 foreign high school students and although the experience was okay, there was a significant amount of responsibility for them as you become more of a parent away from the parents. Home sharing with young adults doesn't put responsibility on the host to act as a parent, instead, you become somewhat of a mentor and friend.”

Although the 65+ age group is consistently the least preferred by all age groups to co-live with, acceptance to co-live with 65+ does increase with age, showing greater tolerance and appreciation of elders as people get more mature.

Participants' openness to home-share with different age groups

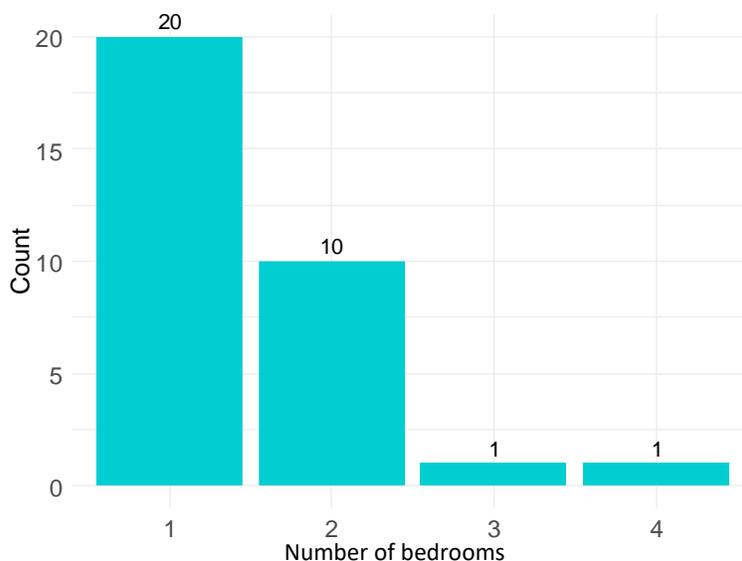


Outlook on home-sharing

In this study, we looked at participants' interests in a potential home-sharing program. Out of the 106 homeowners who indicated they have spare rooms in home, one-third of them are interested in renting out their spare rooms in a home-sharing program, which would open up 47 bedrooms to potential guests. The majority of them would rent out one bedroom in their home.

Average rent of a room is perceived to be between \$500 and \$800, which is well below the average rental cost of a one-bedroom apartment in Kelowna at \$1200. This agrees with previous result where most participants see that home-sharing provides great affordable housing.

Number of spare bedrooms participants would rent out in a home-sharing program



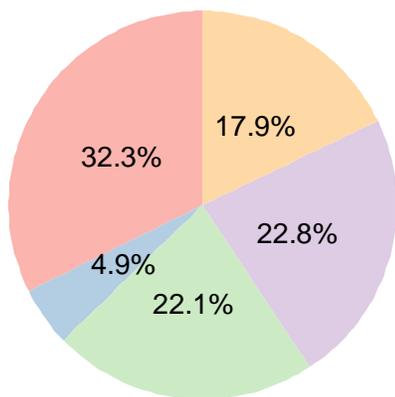
Average rent of a room as perceived by participants



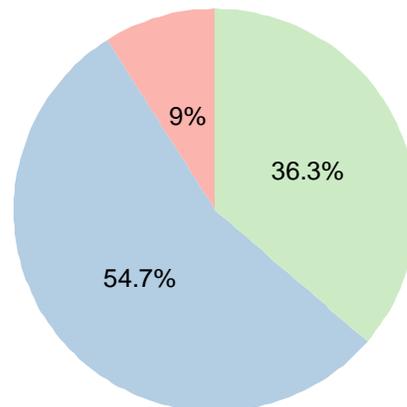
Two-thirds of participants expressed interests in participating in a home-sharing program, and among them, two-thirds would do it without any doubt. Some individuals indicated that they would have to discuss with other family members before making a decision. One-third of participants indicated they are not interested in joining such program. This data indicates that there is the potential to open approximately 20% of owned residential properties in Kelowna for home-sharing and hence it may be a solution to the problem of housing affordability in Canada.

When asked about whether participants would recommend a home-sharing program to their family/friends, over one-third of them would do so without hesitation, and over half of them would consider spreading the word to their close ones. Only less than 10% of them expressed no interest at all in sharing such information.

Interests in participating in a home-sharing program



Recommend family/friends to a home-sharing program



- Yes, as a host
- Yes, as a guest
- Maybe, as a host
- Maybe, as a guest
- No

Conclusion

In this study, we received overwhelmingly positive responses from participants on their perceptions of home-sharing. Over two-thirds of participants expressed interests in joining a home-sharing program, and over 90% of them would consider recommending such a program to their family and friends.

When sharing a home with a stranger, most participants are open to co-live with someone of a different ethnic and religious background, and over three-quarters of them would consider co-living with someone of a different gender. Furthermore, most participants recognized that hosts and guests will benefit economically from home-sharing arrangements, where hosts will earn extra income by renting out spare rooms and guests will have great options for affordable housing. Social benefits such as companionship and new connections are endorsed by over half of the participants. Main concerns of these living arrangements include privacy, trust, and compatibility.

For intergenerational home-sharing arrangements, it is shown in this study that mature people (age 35 and above) are very open to sharing a home with someone younger than them, whereas young people (age 18 to 34) generally are more open to co-live with someone close to their own age.

This study covered a wide range of issues related to perceptions of home-sharing and we identified areas that need further research. It is crucial to dive into details of specific topics in order to gain a better understanding of this subject.

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