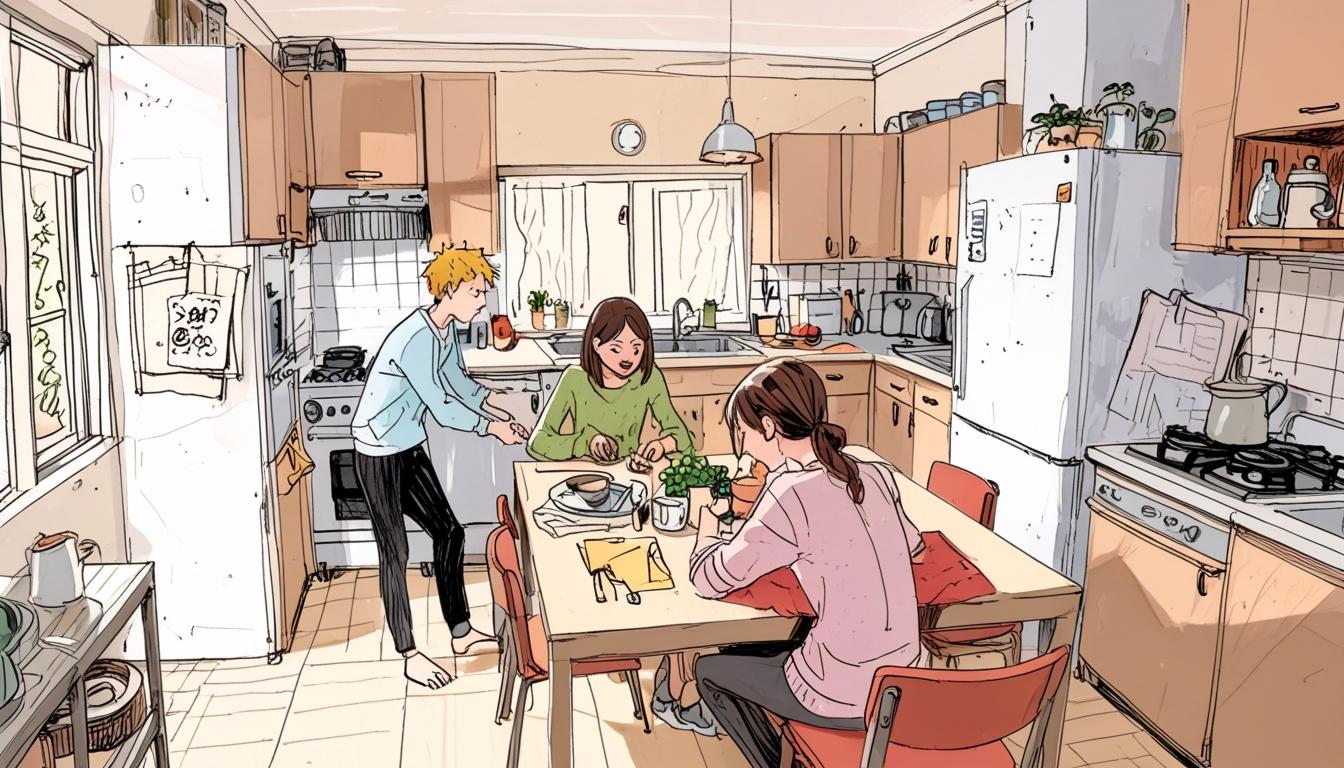
# Growing trend in UK housing leaves renters without communal living spaces



New research reveals a growing trend in the UK housing market that is leaving millions of renters without essential communal living spaces. According to a study by SpareRoom, nearly half of all flatsharers in the UK now reside in properties lacking a living room, a significant shift that has arisen as landlords convert these spaces into additional bedrooms to maximise rental income.

The findings indicate that over 400,000 households, affecting up to 1.5 million people, are coping without a living room. As the average flatshare now accommodates 3.9 individuals, the discomfort is felt widely among tenants. The trend comes amidst rising rental prices, which have surged by 29 per cent since April 2020, with the average monthly rent reaching £1,326 as of March.

Hannah Carney, a 26-year-old flatsharer from North London, highlighted the drawbacks of this living arrangement. “It would definitely benefit us all to have a living room,” she said in statements made to The Independent. Currently, Carney and her two flatmates share a small kitchen with a £2,400 monthly rent but have no space to relax or socialise comfortably. She expressed a desire for her bedroom to serve primarily as a private area for rest and reflect on the importance of communal spaces for overall mental well-being. “I think communal spaces are important for mental health and that rents should reflect the amount of space you have,” she added.

The SpareRoom survey, which included over 2,000 flatsharers, found that nearly half of those living without a lounge opted for these properties in the hopes of achieving lower rental costs. However, 43 per cent reported that their rent did not reflect the absence of a living room, suggesting a disparity between expected savings and actual expenses. Furthermore, more than half of the respondents indicated that the lack of a communal area has harmed their relationships with housemates, while 44 per cent felt their mental health has been adversely impacted.

Matt Hutchinson, director of SpareRoom, remarked on the sociability of shared living, stating, “One of the top benefits of shared living is how sociable it is. People meet their friends and partners and make life-changing connections through flatsharing. But take away the communal spaces, and those moments may never happen.” He further elaborated that foregoing a living room for lower rent might lead to unexpected financial burdens as individuals are compelled to socialise outside the home more frequently.

As the issue of rental properties without communal spaces continues to emerge, the National Residential Landlords Association emphasised that the majority of shared houses typically include communal facilities. A spokesperson indicated that houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) are governed by strict regulations, which may not apply to lodgers renting from individual householders.

The research arrives during a turbulent period for the UK rental market, following proposals for Labour’s Renters’ Rights bill aimed at changing landlord-tenant dynamics. Concerns have been raised over landlords potentially exiting the rental sector, with industry figures warning that policies in the bill, such as the abolition of Section 21 eviction notices, coupled with increasing operational costs, could drive rents even higher.

Chris Norris, policy director of the National Residential Landlords’ Association, previously articulated apprehension regarding the potential rent increases that may follow these legislative changes. “Many property owners are preparing to ‘price in’ additional costs to the monthly rents they charge,” he noted, alluding to the likelihood of substantial rent increases due to the new regulatory environment.

The combination of rising rents and the absence of living rooms in shared housing represents a significant challenge for many UK renters, with implications for their social lives and mental health, as they navigate an increasingly competitive rental market.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.globalpropertyguide.com/europe/united-kingdom/price-history> - Corroborates the context of a competitive UK housing market and mentions increasing interest rates affecting housing. It discusses challenges in the rental market, such as high rental costs and changes in buyer behavior.
* <https://www.nerdwallet.com/uk/mortgages/house-prices/> - Supports the discussion of rising costs in the UK housing market, including increased rents and house prices across the UK.
* <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/housepriceindex/december2023> - Provides data on UK house prices, which is relevant to understanding the broader context of housing and rental trends.
* <https://landlordzone.co.uk/author/national-landlords-association/> - Although this URL is not explicitly mentioned in the search results, it generally aligns with statements from the National Residential Landlords Association regarding concerns over rental regulations and potential rent increases.
* <https://www.spareroom.co.uk/> - As the source of the study mentioned, SpareRoom would likely provide data or articles about UK flatsharers and shared living conditions.