



Multigenerational households are the fastest-growing household type in England and Wales. Image: Shutterstock

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EXPERT COMMENT: More young people in the UK are living with parents and grandparents – here’s what you need to know if you’re considering it

In an article written for The Conversation*, [Dr Prabash Edirisingha](#), Assistant Professor in Consumer Culture and Marketing at Northumbria University, discusses multigenerational households.

In a recent court case in Pavia, northern Italy, the judge [sided](#) with the

complainant, a 75-year-old woman, and ordered her adult two sons to move out of her home. The woman's case was a last-ditch attempt to get the men to find what one journalist termed, somewhat elliptically, "more autonomous living arrangements".

Italy has long had a [culture of multigenerational living](#). As news reports have rightly [noted](#), however, the cost of living crisis and the jobs market combined have resulted in more and more young professionals living with their parents for longer.

Whether out of preference or by necessity, more and more young adults [in the UK](#) too are living with parents and grandparents.

Being able to pool resources has obvious financial benefits. It eases the pressure you might feel at the beginning of your career or when you're starting a family. It can make things easier for your elders too, especially if they are retirees struggling to make ends meet. And its emotional and relational benefits are clear.

However, living with parents and grandparents is not a commitment to take lightly. [My research shows](#) that tensions can arise when family members across generations with different expectations come together.

Multigenerational households are [the fastest-growing household type](#) in England and Wales.

The benefits of living with your parents

The [sense of financial stability](#) that communal living can bring to individuals and families is noteworthy. Having elderly relatives can make it easier for young parents to [arrange childcare](#). It also makes [organising adult care](#) within the family easier too.

Families can thus save the money that would have otherwise been spent on care services, for children's education, or hobbies and other family activities that [improve](#) their collective quality of life.

Having more time to spend together can also lead to stronger relational bonds. It can foster greater understanding and empathy between family members. Gardening and cooking together can [relieve loneliness](#). It can

provide a sense of security for the young and the elderly alike.

Research shows that for the youngest household members, living communally can nurture a sense of [aspiration](#) and [boost their wellbeing](#). Children, in particular, [have been shown](#) to develop a more resilient approach to dealing with difficulties when growing up within in a multigenerational home.

Challenges of multigenerational living

For most people, there will be a certain amount of anxiety over how much your personal time might be impacted. Being able to set boundaries and protect your physical and emotional privacy is crucial.

In addition, making joint decisions can be confusing, which, in turn, can lead to frustration, or, worse, a lack of trust and confidence. This can impact negatively on family bonds.

If these issues are not adequately addressed, they can result in stress levels harmful to adults and, most importantly, [children](#). Overcrowding, in particular, can have both [emotional and sanitary consequences](#). This was made particularly visible by COVID.

A [research study](#) conducted by the [Centre for Aging Better](#) revealed that 31% of adults in Britain reported having mental and physical health problems during the pandemic. This was the result of the poor-quality housing conditions typical in overcrowded homes.

This chimes with [research](#) from the US, that found that, of 39,923 suspected COVID-19 cases in New York, the adjusted rates of infection increased by 77% for those in multigenerational families.

Overcrowding has been shown to be more [prevalent](#) in black British and British Asian communities. Research has shown that it was harder for family members to [self-isolate and shield from COVID-19](#). Infection rates [were also higher](#) in homes where people live in crowded conditions with shared facilities.

Multi-generational homes

Due to the increasing popularity, there is a [growing demand](#) in the UK for

suitable homes that can accommodate multiple generations.

A [study](#) by the industry research provider, the [National House Building Council](#), identified a potential demand for around 125,000 purpose-built homes in the UK that can cater to intergenerational family needs, such as privacy, freedom and personal space. Developers are duly introducing features like level-access, knockout panels and privacy floors to [purpose-built homes](#).

Nearly half of the 1,019 UK residents [recently surveyed](#) by the insurance providers Legal and General said that multigenerational living had a positive impact on their lives and could help addressing current social problems. A third of the respondents believed that governments should provide [incentives](#) to encourage more people to live in this way.

The Canadian federal government has started to do just that. In January 2023, it introduced a [home-renovation](#) tax credit scheme which provides a [one-time 15%](#) incentive – up to \$50,000 – for families who are looking to expand and adapt their homes for multigenerational living.

In many countries across the world, of course, this type of household is the norm. This is an old but new way of family living. To harness its full potential, you need to consider its potential challenges.

*This article was originally published by [The Conversation](#). Please see [here for republishing guidelines](#).

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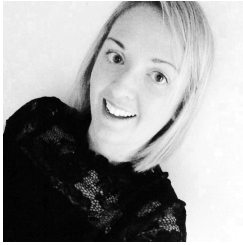
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