



InStyle
DIRECT

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Who Lives in Build to Rent?

*Designing homes for the
changing BTR resident.*

*A practical guide for BTR developers,
operators and design teams*



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WHO LIVES IN BTR

Executive Takeaway

Insights into BTR resident diversity and design

This guide explores the evolving demographics of Build-to-Rent (BTR) residents, focusing on how diverse household types influence design choices in contemporary rental schemes.

Understanding these shifts allows developers and designers to create spaces that cater to varied lifestyles, ensuring homes remain functional and appealing across different resident profiles.



Introduction

Does the traditional BTR resident still exist?

For more than a decade now, Built-to-Rent properties and the sector have presented itself as a strong alternative to the Private Rental Sector (PRS), driven by its centralised management, community living aspects, amenities, and better security of tenure. Part of the popularity is also due to housing affordability issues and a desire for premium, maintenance-free living without the burden of homeownership.

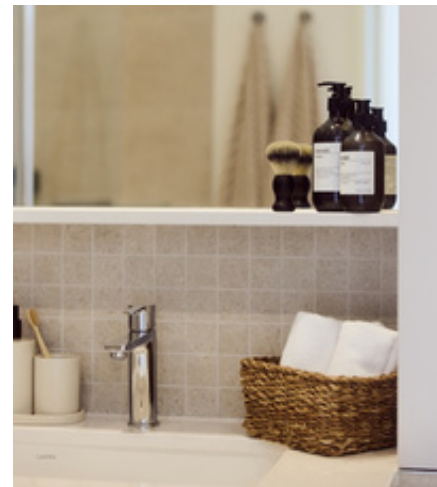
But have you ever wondered: who really resides in a BTR?

You might imagine a young working professional in their late twenties, working in finance or tech, renting a one-bed apartment in a city centre tower with a gym downstairs and a co-working lounge on the ground floor.

It is not a wrong picture. However, this is no longer a complete picture anymore.



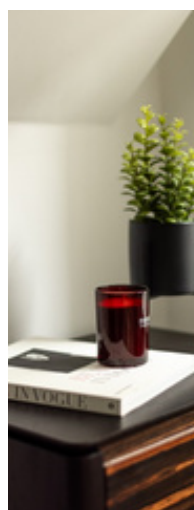
The most detailed answer available is Who Lives in Build-to-Rent, a study run by the British Property Federation with the Association for Rental Living, BusinessLDN and PriceHubble.^[1] It surveyed more than 48,000 renters across almost 33,000 homes in England, roughly 38,600 of them in multifamily apartment schemes and just under 9,800 in single-family rental houses. Across age, income, household type and employment, that is a large enough sample for developers, operators and design teams to test their assumptions against, rather than rely on a general impression of who rents in BTR.



What the study actually shows is more nuanced than either the stereotype or its opposite:

BTR still leans young and still leans towards professionals but it also houses a growing number of couples, sharers, families, key workers and students, alongside a meaningful and rising share of renters over 35. The resident base has diversified as the sector has scaled.

This matters for more than demographic interest. Specify a scheme around a single assumed resident, most often a young professional living alone or with a partner, and you risk getting the basics wrong for a growing share of the people who actually move in. Storage sized for a couple falls short for a family. A studio-friendly furniture package looks stranded in a three-bedroom suburban house. A layout built around one working adult rarely serves two people working from home five days a week.





That does not mean young professionals no longer matter. They remain the largest resident group in multifamily BTR. What has changed is that the conversation around design shouldn't only be limited to young residents only. As the sector has grown, resident profiles have become more varied, with different schemes attracting different types of renters depending on their location, property type and local demand.

This guide looks at what the latest resident data tells us and explores what it means for space planning, furniture specification and interior design.



Sources

1. *Who Lives in Build-to-Rent? An analysis of Build-to-Rent occupancy across England.* British Property Federation, Association for Rental Living, BusinessLDN and PriceHubble, June 2025.

The Scale of Build to Rent



Source-RE UK Build to Rent Q2 2026 Report.

Build-to-Rent continues to grow across the UK. By the second quarter of 2026, the sector had reached more than 310,000^[2] homes across completed developments, construction and planning. Growth is also becoming more diverse. Alongside traditional multifamily apartment schemes, single-family housing and co-living have become established parts of the market, reflecting a wider range of residents and living preferences.

Different locations and different asset types attract different households, making resident-led design more important than ever.

RENTERS' RIGHTS: WHAT IT MEANS FOR BUILD-TO-RENT

The Renters' Rights Act, which came into force on 1 May 2026, has changed how tenancies work across England. The Act has replaced fixed-term assured shorthold tenancies with periodic tenancies, allowing residents to leave by giving two months' notice at any point.

For Build-to-Rent operators, this places even greater emphasis on the resident experience. While professionally managed buildings, strong amenities and customer service remain key strengths of the sector, creating homes that genuinely meet residents' needs is becoming an increasingly important factor in encouraging longer stays and improving resident satisfaction.

That is why understanding today's resident profiles matters. As Build-to-Rent continues to evolve, furnishing and interior design decisions need to reflect who is actually living in each scheme.

Source

2. UK Build-to-Rent Report, Q2 2026. Real Estate UK and Savills Research.

What Does the Latest Resident Data Tell Us?

For years, Build-to-Rent has been associated with young professionals renting city-centre apartments. But the data is showing changes to that.

Residents aged 25 to 34 remain the largest age group across both multifamily and single-family Build-to-Rent schemes. At the same time, the data highlights clear differences in the types of households each model attracts. Multifamily developments continue to appeal to couples and sharers, while single-family schemes are home to a much larger proportion of families.

Rather than one typical Build-to-Rent resident, the evidence points to a sector that is becoming increasingly diverse.

Multifamily BTR



38,638
residents



26,454
homes



97
developments

Single-Family BTR



9,763
residents



6,361
schemes



77
developments

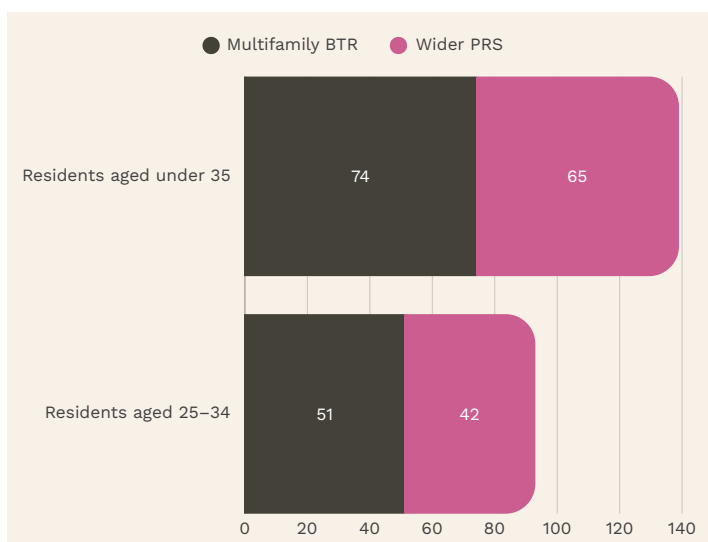
Young professionals remain the largest resident group: Nearly three-quarters (74%) of multifamily Build-to-Rent residents are under the age of 35.

The 25–34 age group: Accounts for 51% of residents in multifamily BTR compared with 42% across the wider private rented sector.

Resident profiles are gradually maturing: The proportion of residents aged 35–44 increased by 3 percentage points over the previous year, suggesting more renters are choosing to stay in Build-to-Rent as their housing needs evolve.

Outside London, the picture remains broadly similar: The age profile changes very little once London is excluded.

Single-family Build-to-Rent tells a different story: It attracts a noticeably older resident profile than multifamily schemes, reflecting its stronger appeal to families and longer-term households.



Age Profile: Young Professionals Still Lead, but the Resident Base Is Broadening

Source: British Property Federation, Association for Rental Living, BusinessLDN and PriceHubble. (2025). *Who Lives in Build-to-Rent? An Analysis of Build-to-Rent Occupancy Across England.*



What This Means For Design?

The latest resident data reinforces that young professionals remain the core audience for multifamily Build-to-Rent. However, it also shows that the resident base is becoming more diverse, with more households staying in rental accommodation through different life stages.

That does not mean multifamily interiors need to abandon the contemporary look and feel that attracts younger renters. It does suggest that schemes should be designed with greater longevity and flexibility in mind.



Choose timeless over trend-led:

Furniture and finishes should feel contemporary without relying on short-lived design trends. Interiors that age gracefully are more likely to appeal to residents at different stages of life, from first-time renters to those settling into longer-term rental living.

Design for longer tenancies, not just first impressions

With lease renewals remaining high across the sector, interiors should continue to perform well long after move-in day. Durable furniture, practical storage and layouts that support everyday living become increasingly important when residents stay for several years.

Support the way people live today:

Many residents now work from home for at least part of the week. Where space allows, incorporating dedicated work areas, good task lighting and accessible power points creates homes that are more practical without compromising on design.

Prioritise everyday comfort:

Comfortable seating, layered lighting, intuitive layouts and furniture that is easy to use benefit residents of every age. These are universal design principles that improve the living experience without tailoring a scheme to one demographic.

Household Composition: It's Not Just About Singles

Household type influences how residents use their homes every day. The latest Build-to-Rent research shows that multifamily and single-family developments attract very different household mixes, helping inform decisions around layouts, furniture and storage.

Household Profile at a Glance

To make retention strategies effective, understanding its core demographic is essential. 2025 BPF and ARL research shows the BTR population comprises:



60%

Couples and sharers dominate multifamily BTR



38%

Families are the largest distinctive group in single-family BTR



20%

Nearly one in five single-family homes are still occupied by single residents.

Source: British Property Federation, Association for Rental Living, BusinessLDN and PriceHubble. (2025). Who Lives in Build-to-Rent? An Analysis of Build-to-Rent Occupancy Across England.



What This Means for Design?

Rather than designing for one "typical" resident, furniture and layouts should respond to how different households use their homes.

Singles Prioritise



- Space-efficient furniture that doesn't overcrowd smaller homes
- Flexible dining that can double as a workspace
- Dedicated home-working space where possible
- Well-planned storage to support longer stays

Why it matters

Single residents often live in studios and one-bedroom apartments where every square metre needs to work harder.

Couples Prioritise



- Storage designed for two people
- Dining tables that comfortably seat two every day
- Comfortable sofas for regular use rather than occasional entertaining
- Balanced bedroom storage on both sides of the bed

Why it matters

Two people sharing a home need more than simply twice the furniture. Layouts should support everyday routines without creating unnecessary compromises.

Sharers Prioritise



- Equal bedroom layouts wherever possible
- Matching storage for each resident
- Durable, easy-maintenance furniture
- Comfortable communal seating
- Good privacy between bedrooms

Why it matters

Shared households function best when spaces feel equally usable and communal areas can withstand heavier daily use.

Families Prioritise



- Durable furniture and washable finishes
- Child-friendly detailing such as rounded edges and stable construction
- Larger, more varied storage solutions
- Flexible rooms that can adapt over time
- Strong connections between indoor and outdoor spaces

Why it matters

Families use homes differently. Furniture and layouts need to support changing routines, growing children and longer-term occupation.

DESIGN

Takeaway



The resident data shows there is no longer a single Build-to-Rent household profile.

Multifamily developments continue to attract singles, couples and sharers, while single-family schemes appeal to a much higher proportion of families. Even so, neither model is defined by just one household type.

For designers and operators, the implication is straightforward. Furniture packages, storage, layouts and shared spaces should be informed by the households a scheme is most likely to attract, rather than applying the same specification across every development. Small design decisions, from wardrobe capacity to dining layouts and flexible living spaces, can make homes work better for the people who actually live in them.

Multifamily and Single-Family BTR Require Different Design Responses

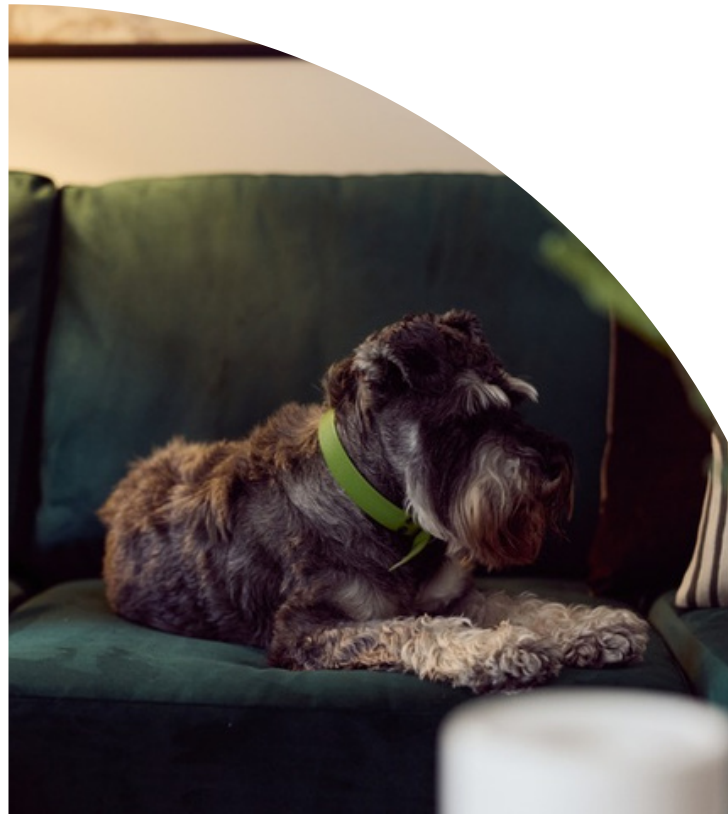
Multifamily and single-family developments serve different residents, support different lifestyles and require different priorities.

Multifamily schemes

are typically apartment-led developments in urban locations, where layouts need to make the most of compact spaces and shared amenities.

Single-family

Build-to-Rent is more commonly made up of suburban houses, attracting a broader mix of households, including a much higher proportion of families.



The design brief should respond to the intended residents of each scheme rather than applying the same furniture package or specification across every development.



Design Consideration	Multifamily BTR	Single-Family BTR
Setting	Urban apartments close to transport, work and amenities	Suburban houses in established residential neighbourhoods
Households	Singles, couples and sharers	Families, couples and longer-term households
Design priorities	Flexible layouts, space-efficient furniture and integrated storage	Family living, adaptable spaces, generous storage and durability
Furniture specification	Compact proportions, multifunctional pieces and coordinated finishes	Larger-scale furniture, practical materials and layouts that support everyday family life
Shared spaces	Amenity areas, co-working, lounges and social spaces	Private gardens, dining areas and flexible rooms for changing needs
Specification approach	Consistent, repeatable packages across multiple apartment types	Greater flexibility to respond to different house layouts and household types

Students Are One of the UK's Largest Rental Communities

Every year, hundreds of thousands of students begin university in the UK, creating one of the country's largest annual waves of residential demand. In 2024/25, there were 2.86 million³ students studying at UK higher education providers, including almost 686,000 international students, who made up 24% of the total student population.

For many of these students, accommodation is their first experience of living independently. Whether they choose Purpose-Built Student Accommodation (PBSA), university halls or shared private housing, their homes need to support studying, socialising and everyday life, often within compact spaces and on limited budgets.



Why PBSA Needs a Different Design Response

Student accommodation is not simply BTR with a younger resident profile. Students often use their homes for studying, sleeping, relaxing and socialising, sometimes within a single compact room. Many are also living independently for the first time, while international students may be arriving in a new country and city.

What Do Students Typically Need?

01

A place to study

A dedicated desk, ergonomic seating and good task lighting help create spaces that support concentration and everyday academic work.

02

Space that works harder

Many student rooms combine sleeping, studying, dining and storage within a relatively compact footprint. Furniture often needs to serve more than one purpose without making the room feel crowded.

03

Practical storage

From suitcases and sports equipment to books and seasonal clothing, students accumulate more belongings than room sizes often suggest. Thoughtful storage helps smaller rooms remain organised throughout the academic year.

04

Community yet privacy

Students value private bedrooms but also spend significant time in shared kitchens, lounges and study spaces. Designing communal areas that encourage interaction while supporting quieter activities contributes to a better living experience.

05

Lasting furnishing

Student accommodation experiences higher resident turnover. Furniture should be durable, easy to maintain and capable of performing across multiple academic years.

A Practical Checklist for Operators: Design around the resident

This guide points to one thing: that every scheme is unique and there is no single BTR resident who fits every scheme. Age, household type, income and lifestyle can vary significantly between locations, unit types and between multifamily and single-family homes.



A Quick BTR Design Checklist That Operators Should Know

01

KNOW WHO YOU'RE DESIGNING FOR

Start with the local market, not a generic BTR resident. Look at age, income, household type, employment, rental demand and the needs of the area.

02

MATCH THE HOME TO THE HOUSEHOLD

A studio, two-bedroom apartment and three-bedroom house will not be used in the same way. Consider who is most likely to live in each unit type, then plan the furniture and layout around them.

03

MAKE EVERY SPACE WORK

Ask the practical questions: Is there enough storage? Can residents work from home? Can two people eat comfortably? Does the furniture fit without making the room feel crowded?

04

DESIGN FOR REAL LIFE

Choose furniture, finishes and layouts that can handle everyday use. Think beyond the first viewing to comfort, durability, maintenance and how the home will perform over time.

05

LEARN FROM THE PEOPLE LIVING THERE

Once residents move in, their feedback, maintenance requests and leasing data can tell you what worked and what didn't. Use those insights to refine future phases and specifications.





Conclusion

The BTR Resident Is Changing. *The Design Brief Should Too.*

While young professionals undeniably remain an important part of the sector, particularly in multifamily BTR, the latest resident data also shows a much broader picture. Couples, sharers, families, older renters and students all form part of today's rental landscape, with different needs across different homes and locations.

The takeaway is simple: design for the people most likely to live there, not the resident you assume will live there.

That means looking at age, income, household composition and lifestyle alongside the location, unit mix and type of BTR scheme. The result is not a promise of higher occupancy or longer retention. It is a more considered approach to creating homes that are practical, appealing and appropriate for the people they are intended to serve.

Turning that understanding into a practical specification is where good resident insight becomes good design.



How InStyle Direct Helps?

Knowing who is likely to live in a scheme is the starting point. The next step is turning that insight into furniture, layouts and specifications that work in the real world.

At InStyle Direct, we work with BTR developers, operators, asset managers and project teams to take a project from the initial brief through to installation and ongoing support.

01

UNDERSTAND THE BRIEF

We start with the development, unit mix, target residents, budget and operational requirements. This gives the design team a clear foundation for the specification.

02

DESIGN AROUND THE RESIDENT

Furniture, layouts and finishes are tailored to the type of home and the people likely to live in it, whether that means compact multifamily apartments or larger single-family homes.

03

SPECIFY FOR EVERYDAY LIVING

We balance design, functionality, durability and cost to create interiors that look good but also work for daily use. Packages can be tailored by unit type and scaled across larger developments.

04

DELIVER AT SCALE

From procurement and sampling to phased delivery and installation, we manage the practical side of furnishing a BTR scheme. Our in-house delivery and installation teams support projects from individual properties to large rollouts.

05

KEEP IT PERFORMING

Our support continues after installation, with replenishment, asset tracking and aftercare helping operators maintain consistent standards across units and portfolios.

The result is a furnishing approach built around the people, property and practical requirements of each scheme, rather than a one-size-fits-all resident profile.



READY TO SEE YOUR BTR SCHEME PERFORM?

Explore our BTR furnishing services or talk to our team and learn how we can take your BTR scheme to the next level.

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