# NYU & NYFSC Intergenerational Home Sharing Program:
Data Analysis of 2019–2021 Cohorts

New York University's Intergenerational Home Sharing Program, in partnership with the New York Foundation for Senior Citizens, has been placing graduate students ("guests") in need of housing with older adults ("hosts") who have spare rooms to share since 2019. This data brief gives an overview of information on 71 students collected over a three year period in the key areas of academic focus, timing, location, and lifestyle preferences.

Data and Lessons Learned

Academic Focus. Students come from a wide variety of NYU programs with the top three schools being the Silver School of Social Work (31%), the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (25%), and the Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development (13%). Students also come from math and science, performing arts, and professional programs (e.g. dentistry, nursing, and law), among others.
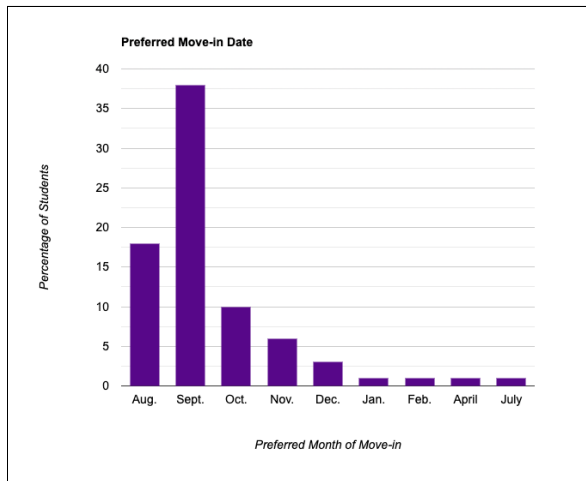

Fig. 1: Preferred move-in date

Timing Preferences. The majority of students (56%) wanted housing at the start of the academic year, specifically at the start of the fall semester *(Fig. 1)*. Others were flexible with their move-in dates. The majority of students (55%) applied within one month of when they needed housing, whereas 41% applied within two weeks of when they needed housing. This information is useful in developing a timeframe for our host recruitment outreach efforts.

Additionally, 76% of students were interested in staying in the program for the full academic year, indicating optimism about the program and potential matches *(Figure 2)*.

However, many of our student participants exited the program early, usually due to some kind of boundary crossing (e.g., older hosts' desire to mentor being perceived as parental or typical roommate disputes such as food, privacy, inviting friends into the apartment, timing of social activities). Better preparation of our participants to set reasonable expectations about the program could help mitigate these kinds of issues and keep students in the program for the full academic year.
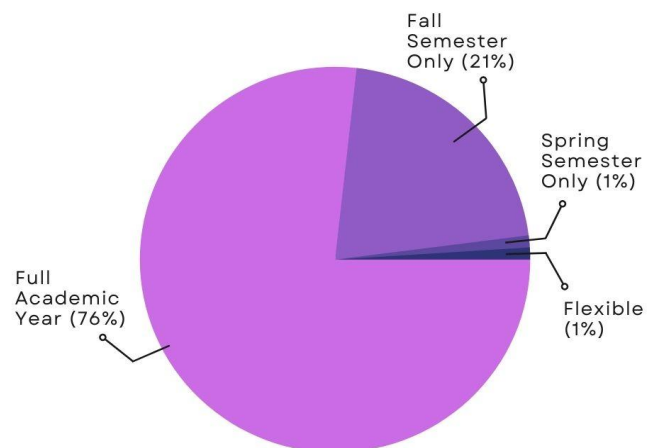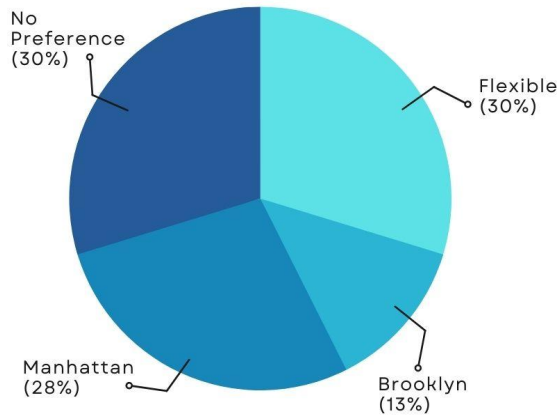

Fig. 2: Intended length of stay

Fig. 3: Borough preferences

Location Preference. While Manhattan was a clear favorite among students who specified a preferred borough (28% of students versus the 13% who wanted to live in Brooklyn), most students indicated a flexibility between boroughs (30%) or no preference at all (30%) _(Figure 3)_.

About 35% of respondents spontaneously indicated a desire to live close to school, with the vast majority of those students wanting to live near the Washington Square Park Campus. This indicates that the length of commute is more important to students than the exact geographic location of their hosts' homes and means we should continue to focus our host recruitment in the areas immediately surrounding the main NYU campus. It also tells us that as we grow and expand our program, we should start with increasing recruitment in the areas around our other campuses (in Brooklyn, in particular).

Lifestyle Preferences. When asked an open-ended question about general preferences, a variety of answers were given among 42% students _(Fig. 4)_. The most common preference was related to having a short commute. Other comments related to the qualities of the physical space (ex. pet-friendly), the personality of their roommate (ex. LGBTQ+ & BIPOC friendly), and potential house rules (ex. guests okay).
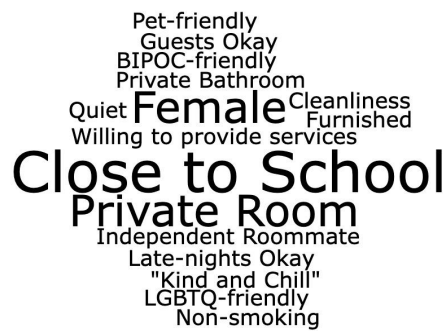

Fig. 4: Lifestyle preferences word cloud

Barriers to Recruitment and Retention

There are a number of psychological, social, cultural, and economic barriers to overcome in order to maximizing the match between students and community dwelling older adults:

(1) _Differences in life stage priorities_. Older adults and emerging adults have different priorities when it comes to their social networks. Older adults prefer developing deep and meaningful relationships and may have difficulty letting go of the material items collected over a lifetime to make room for a new housemate. Students value their independence as an opportunity to develop their identity and may be more exploratory in their relationships (Gonzales, et al., 2021a).

(2) _Difficulties in sharing personal space_. The spare rooms older hosts provide can come with emotional meanings and a strong attachment to little and small items, as they may have previously belonged to a loved one. Deep emotional attachment to these spaces and belongings can clash with students' desires to assert their identity and make the space their own (Gonzales, 2021).

(3) _Differences in interpersonal expectations_. Older hosts often hope to act as mentors to their housemates (Gonzales, 2021). This can contrast with the desires of the students, who prioritize their independence, autonomy, and explore their self-identity (Gonzales, et al., 2021a).

(4) *Public policy*. Tax laws, municipal housing policies, and eligibility requirements for various government benefits programs (Gonzales, et al., 2020; 2021b) can all contribute to making participation in a home sharing program difficult for older hosts.

Implications for Hosts

Data derived from the three cohorts can help us set expectations for potential participants to ensure a successful match:

Timing. Hosts should have their profiles and apartments ready by July and August to ensure an optimal match with student profiles.

Clear Boundaries. Hosts should be aware of the common roommate difficulties experienced in the program and how to easily avoid them. Welcoming a new person into one's life can be a rewarding experience, and preparing emotionally for sharing a home and allowing for flexibility with some living arrangements can greatly increase the chances of a successful, long-term match that can grow into a meaningful friendship.

Conclusion

This brief has explored patterns in the needs, expectations, and use behaviors of interested students; summarized the barriers to recruitment and retention; and specified potential adjustments to improve our host recruitment, increase match satisfaction, and expand our data collection.

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