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Multigenerational households in Australian cities:

Evidence from Sydney and Brisbane at the turn of the twenty-first century

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Project backgrounds

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1. Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Essay (70688)

Multi-generation households in Australian cities

http://www.ahuri.edu.au/publications/projects/p70688

2. Australian Research Council Discovery Project (DP120100956)

Living Together: The Rise of Multigenerational Households in Australian Cities

http://www.be.unsw.edu.au/urban-planning-and-policy/projects/living-together-rise-multigenerational-households-australian

Housing multi-generation households

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- Recent research shows increasing incidence of multi-generation households, with some indicating culture & economics as main factors while others point to wider systemic shifts
  - Mitchell et al. (2002) & Gee et al. (2003)
    - Canada – mix of quant. & qual.
    - Cultural, ethnic & family backgrounds major determinants on timing of first home leaving & 'boomeranging'
  - Chui (2008)
    - Hong Kong
    - Principles of filial piety, reciprocity
  - Izuhara (2004; 2010)
    - Japan & China
    - Principles of reciprocity, 'generational contracts'

Housing multi-generation households

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- Cobb-Clark & Ribar (2009)
  - quant. (HILDA survey)
  - Delayed home-leaving of young adults
  - Personal finance & wider economic situations have significant roles to play in home leaving decisions
- Flatau et al. (2007)
  - quant. (HILDA survey)
  - A gradual increase in age of first home leaving → Fundamental shift in societal norms & values regarding living arrangements
- Liu & Easthope (2012)
  - mix of quant. & qual.
  - changing demographic, socioeconomic and housing characteristics of multi-generation households vs. other household types

Methodology

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- Mixed method approach
  1. Census data analysis
  2. Survey
  3. Solicited diary
  4. Follow-up interviews
  5. Focus groups

- Grounded approach, hypothesising increases driven by:
  - ***Structural changes in Australian society***, notably population ageing, changing employment structures, and constrained housing supply
  - ***Public policy decisions*** about the provision of housing and areas of family significance, e.g. higher education, child care & aged care
  - ***Social & cultural views about the family***, influenced by shifts in the social and cultural makeup of our cities

Methodology

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- 1981, 1986, 1991, 1996, 2001, 2006, & 2011 Australian Census of Population and Housing
  - Age
  - Location
  - Birthplace (by region)
  - Educational qualification
  - Employment status
  - Tenure / Dwelling type / Dwelling size
  - Household size
  - Housing costs

Methodology

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"*Conceptually, standard practices for identifying multigenerational living arrangements and their implications remain elusive*" (Cohen & Casper 2002)

Definition:

- Any household where multiple generations of related adults co-reside in the same dwelling
- The oldest of the youngest generation – be they the children or grandchildren – is 18 years or older

Possible exclusions:

- Three-generation households where oldest of youngest generation is not yet 18 (e.g. grandparents, parents + under-aged grandchildren)
- Multigenerational households that live on the same lot but in different dwellings (e.g. in granny flat)

Methodology

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- Web-based survey
  - 100+ responses (as at January 2013)
  - Section 1 – About the dwelling / household
  - Section 2 – About living together
  - Section 3 – About the individuals (* multiple respondents from same household)

Change in time

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	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011
Number of persons living in multigenerational households							
Australia	3,035,089	3,294,343	3,602,088	3,482,411	3,718,726	3,851,695	4,277,605
Sydney	715,444	790,032	880,359	897,096	957,667	973,618	1,083,220
Brisbane	224,724	251,204	297,660	292,329	319,369	340,970	385,304
As % of total population							
Australia	20.8	21.1	21.4	19.5	19.6	19.2	19.7
Sydney	22.3	23.5	24.9	24.0	24.0	23.5	24.5
Brisbane	21.8	21.3	22.3	19.9	19.9	19.1	19.5

Change in time

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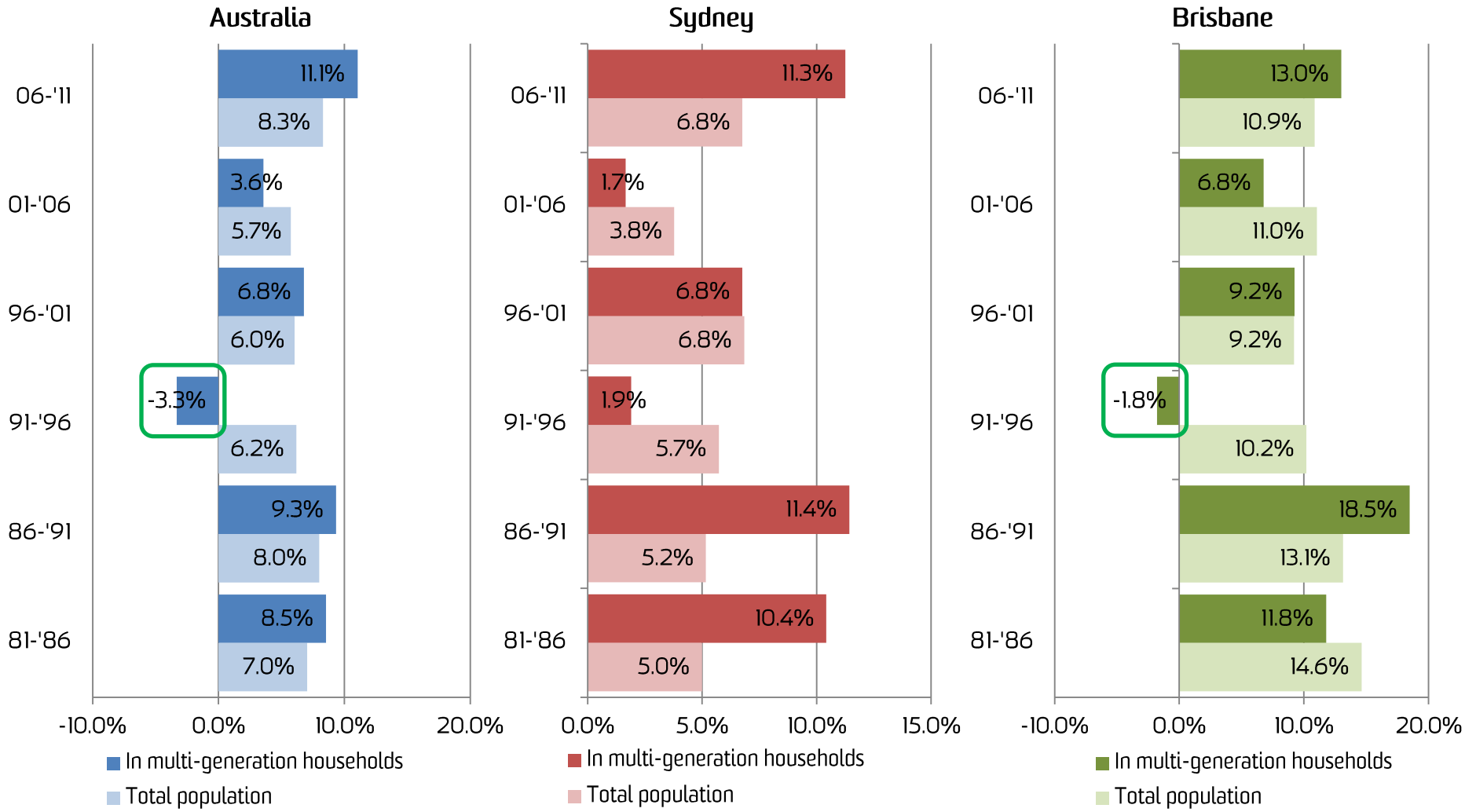

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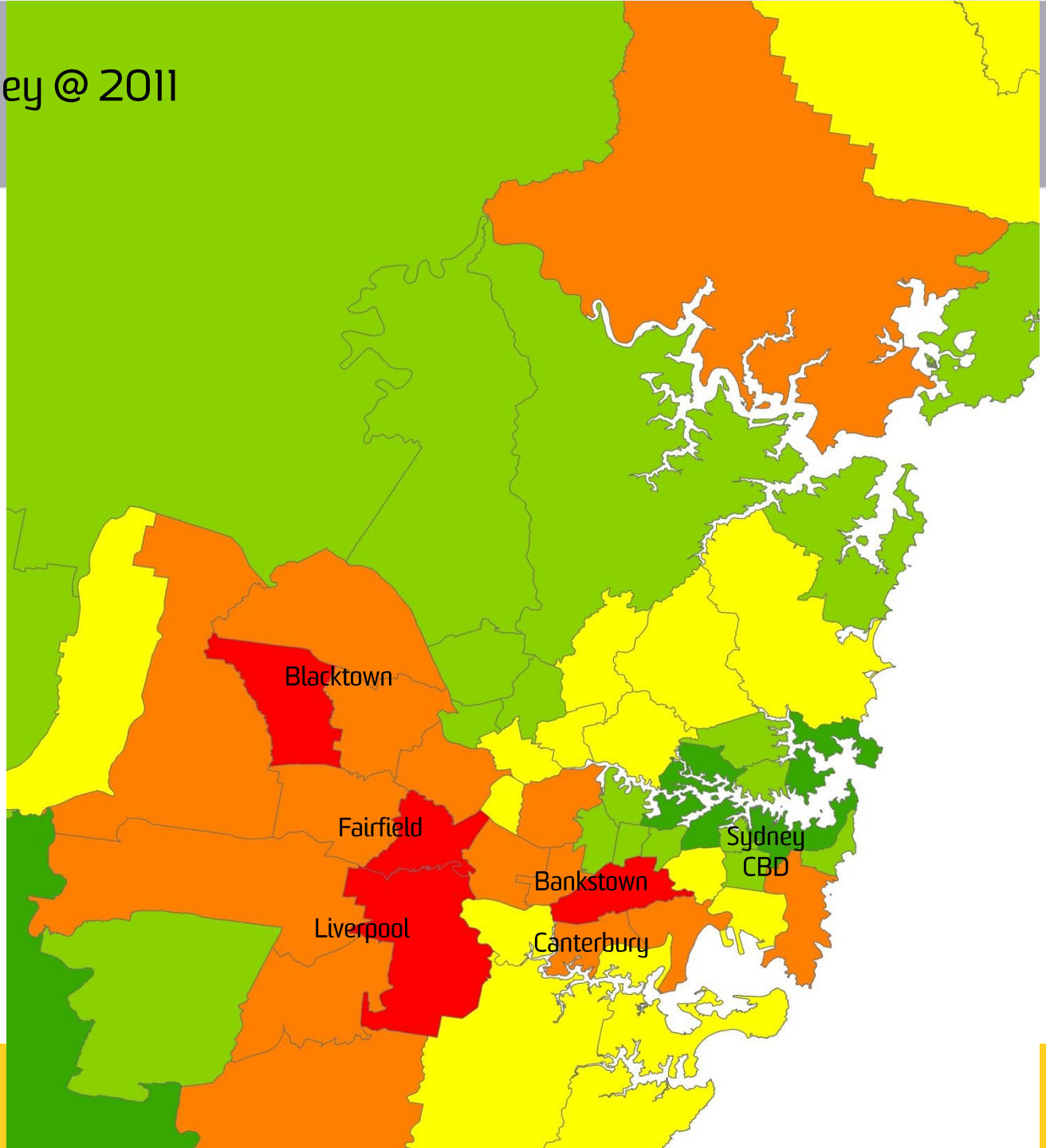
Sydney @ 2011



Households

- 7145 - 12630
- 4211 - 7145
- 2517 - 4211
- 1291 - 2517
- 358 - 1291

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Change in place

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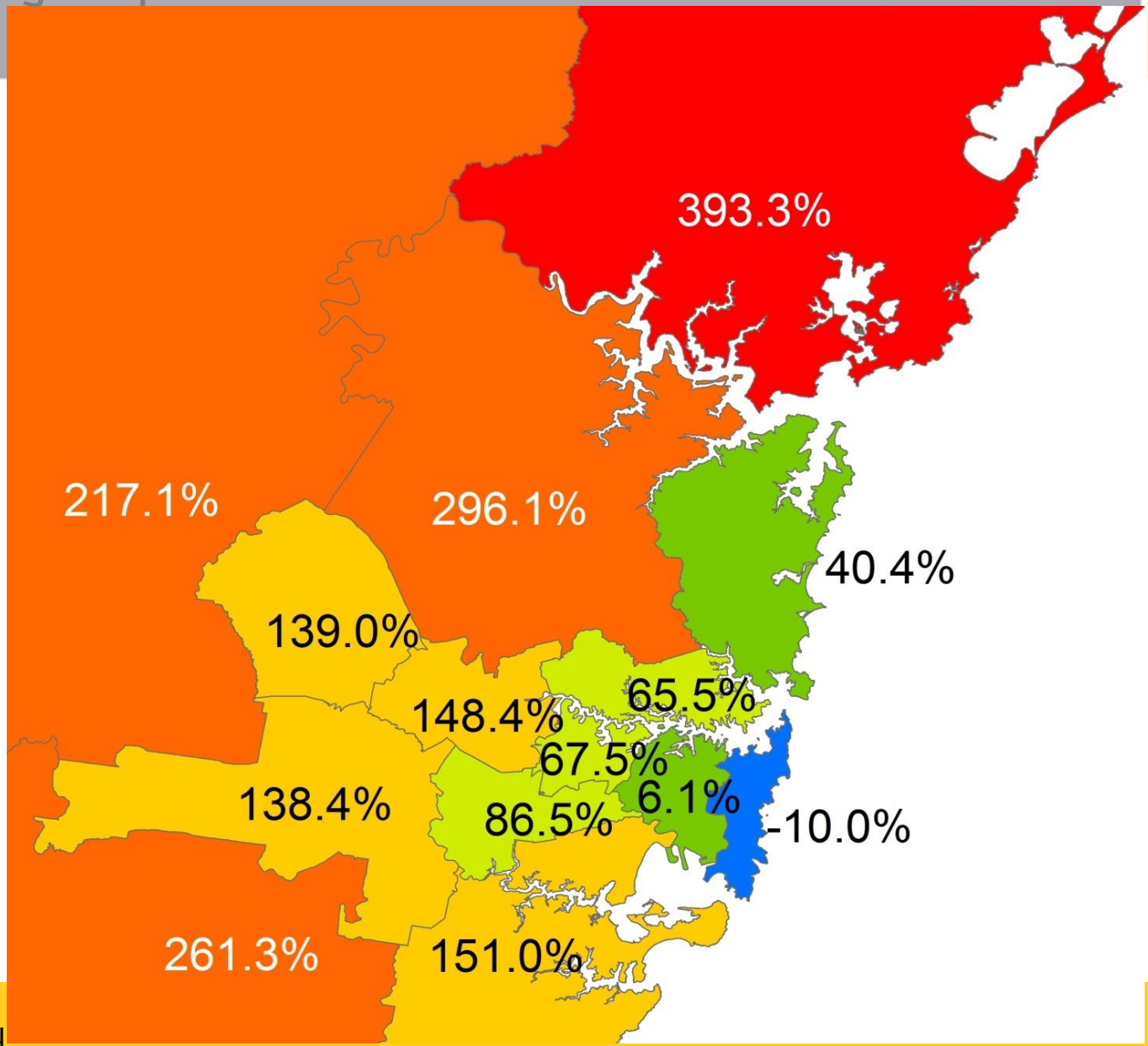

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Change in housing characteristics

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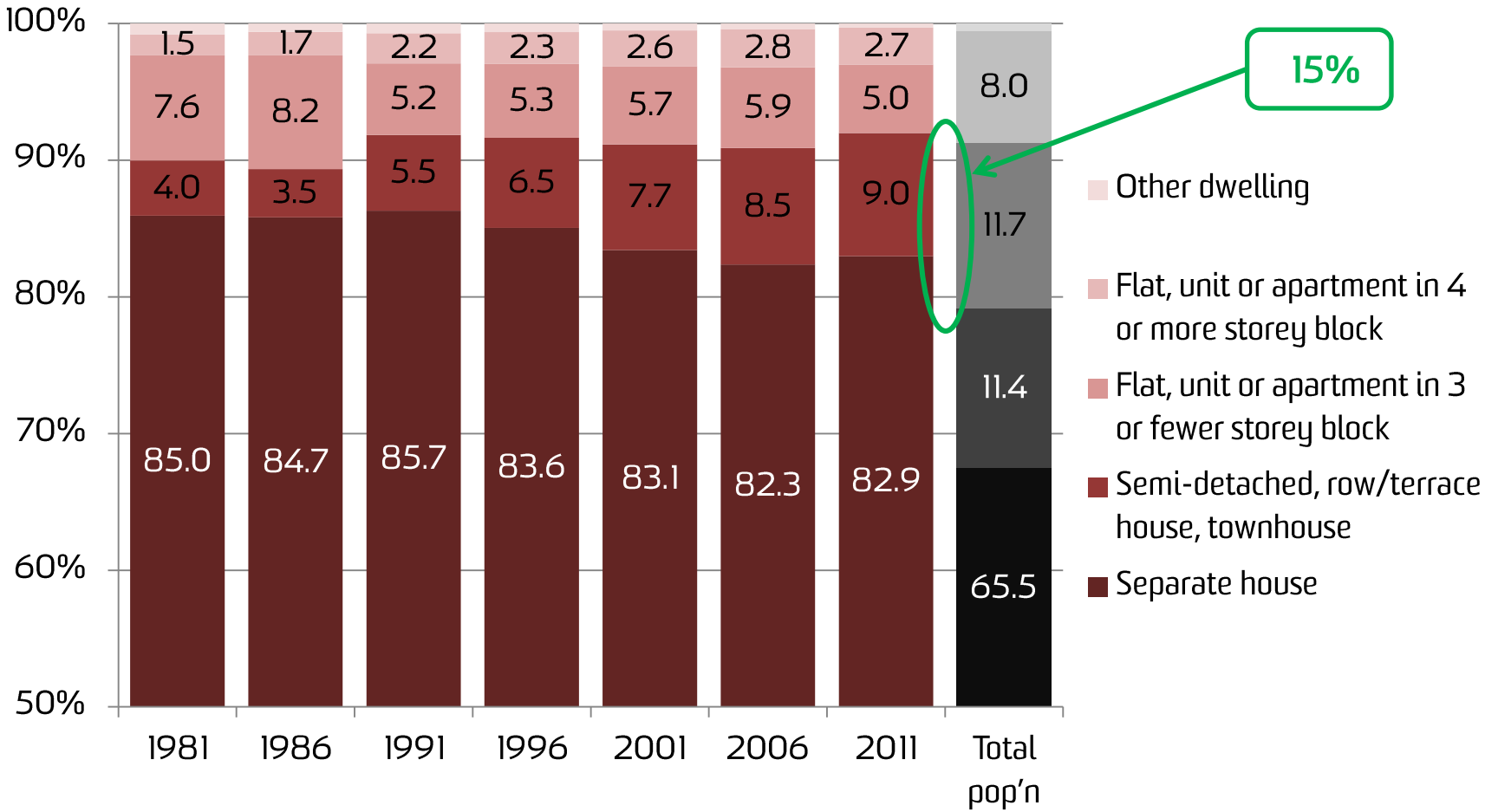
Dwelling structure



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Change in housing characteristics

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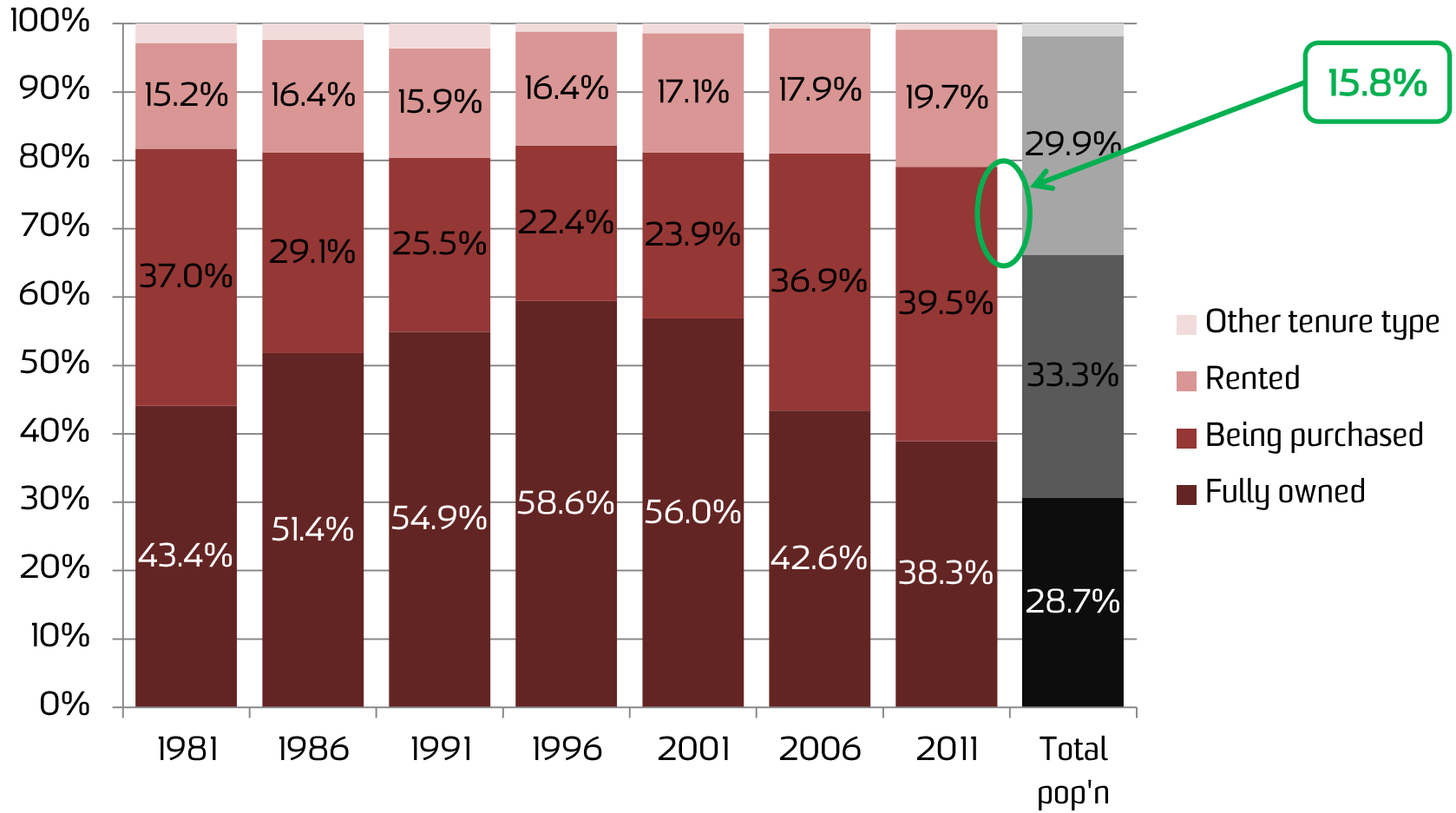
Tenure



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Change in housing costs

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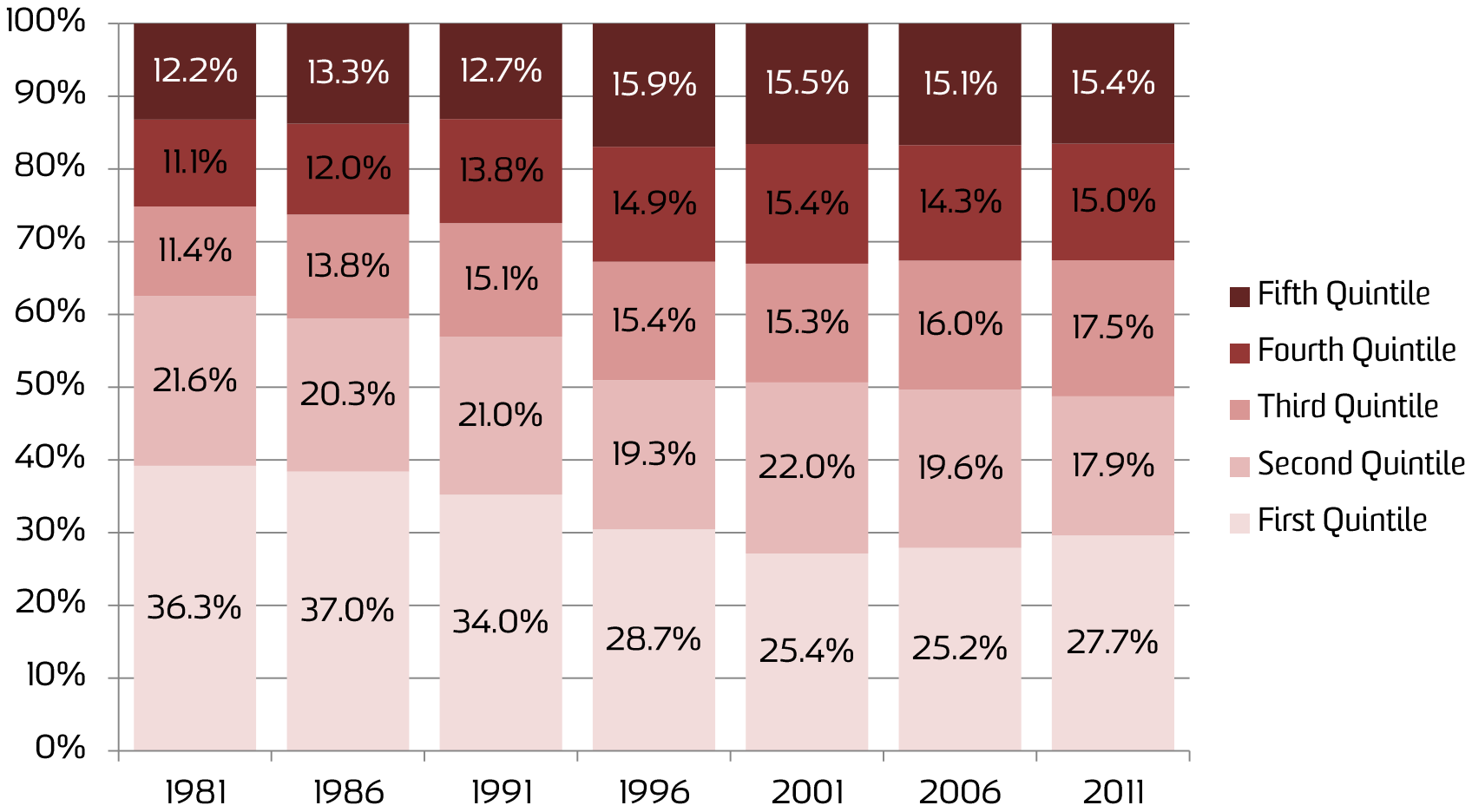
Mortgage quintiles



Why live together?

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- Financial reasons
  - *The sale of previous properties enabled the purchase of larger property with granny flat.*
  - *Saving money to buy a place. Sponge off parents.*

- Cultural
  - *Culture. Strong family ties. Support.*

- Care arrangement
  - *I am the only child of an ageing mother; when my husband and I retired from Victoria to Tasmania it seemed appropriate to source a house where my mother could be with us, yet with privacy.*
  - *My wife and I have considerable health issues and having our son, who is in remission from Multiple Myaloma living together creates a safety net for all 3 of us. We have carers come to our home 5 weekday mornings to help us to stay in our home.*
  - *My son has a disability – schizophrenia. My daughter with Down Syndrome lived with me until her death last year at 55 years. I was also her carer.*

Why live together?

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- Starting/continuing education
  - *Son has been a full time student until recently and now looking for fulltime employment in his chosen profession. Can't afford to live anywhere else.*
  - *The cost of living is too high for myself. I am divorced and studying full time. My father assists me with baby sitting and picking up the kids from school. He also helps to pay my mortgage.*

- Relationship breakdown
  - *My son divorced and could not afford to live on his own.*
  - *Marriage breakup - daughter*
  - *Divorce of parents. Mother on her own.*

- Convenience

Roses and trap

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- ✓ *I am immensely grateful for the invitation to live in such a household.*

- ✗ *The fact that my parents are pretty much close to retiring, & the mortgage has yet to be paid off so it's possible that I will have to take over repaying it and be the main financial head of the household thus meaning I will never be able to leave home again and have an independent life, because all other options just can't work. it feels like a trap that I may never be able to leave.*

Roses and trap

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- ✓ Companionship & support
  - *Companionship, care, emotional/other support.*
  - *Always someone to talk to, always active, always fun!!*
  - *I appreciate the bonds of connection and support that exist in living with three generations of our family. It really grounds you. There is good cooperation and a variety of interests to be shared.*

- ✓ Care arrangements
  - *I know that my son is looked after and safe.*
  - *Being able to provide a safe & supportive home for my ageing parents.*

- ✓ Intergenerational solidarity / 'generational contract'
  - *Being able to say to myself that I assisted my son and his wife even if there was some issues for me personally.*
  - *She is my mother and I feel wholly responsible for her, so this is the most convenient way of caring for her.*

Roses and trap

CITYFUTURES

- ✓ Financial benefits
  - *Financial support. It is convenient to have another adult in the household that can do some baby sitting, pick up the kids from school or do some shopping. I can afford to give my children a better lifestyle because it is more affordable to live in a multigenerational household.*
  - *Don't have to pay anything.*

- ✓ Continuing cultural traditions
  - *Enriches my perspective on life and family history.*
  - *I love it. It is my culture!*

Roses and trap

CITYFUTURES

- Lack of privacy
  - *Lack of privacy and quiet time. Clutter generated from shared living spaces.*
  - *The space/rooms shared and privacy, cannot make household changes as it's not yours.*

- Not pitching in / 'pulling their weight'
  - *I end up doing all the work and cooking when I don't feel like eating. I feel I should provide a meal for my son when he has worked all day. He does not respect my belongings. I would like new furniture but my son is not careful with my things.*
  - *More washing, ironing, cooking, cleaning etc. and I find that I worry about my son more when he is living in my home.*

- Stigma of 'living at home'
  - *The social stigma attached to it – never able to have a social life in the house due to the awkwardness of parents and my grandmother around.*

Roses and trap

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- Noise
  - *Different sleeping patterns make the kitchen area stressful as the use of the kitchen at all hours of the night wakes me and the children.*
- Impacts on intra/inter-family relationships
  - *Balancing the needs of my husband and my parents.*
  - *I feel like I'm doing everything without the help of the rest of my siblings. Everything is left up to my husband and I.*
  - *Expectation of other family members that I and my children (her grandchildren) have sole responsibility for my other's care including physical, emotional and financial.*
- Financial constraints
  - *Financially it's challenging for us, paying rent for a house big enough. Previously we have lived in small apartments.*

Roses and trap

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- Housing matters
  - *Works fine with an understanding of each other's needs and providing some private space for each generation.*
  - *I love living with my grandson and seeing him grow everyday. But our house is small.*
  - *It is a factor of the size of our house. If we lived in a 2 or 3 bedroom house then I would not find out current situation agreeable.*

Roses and trap

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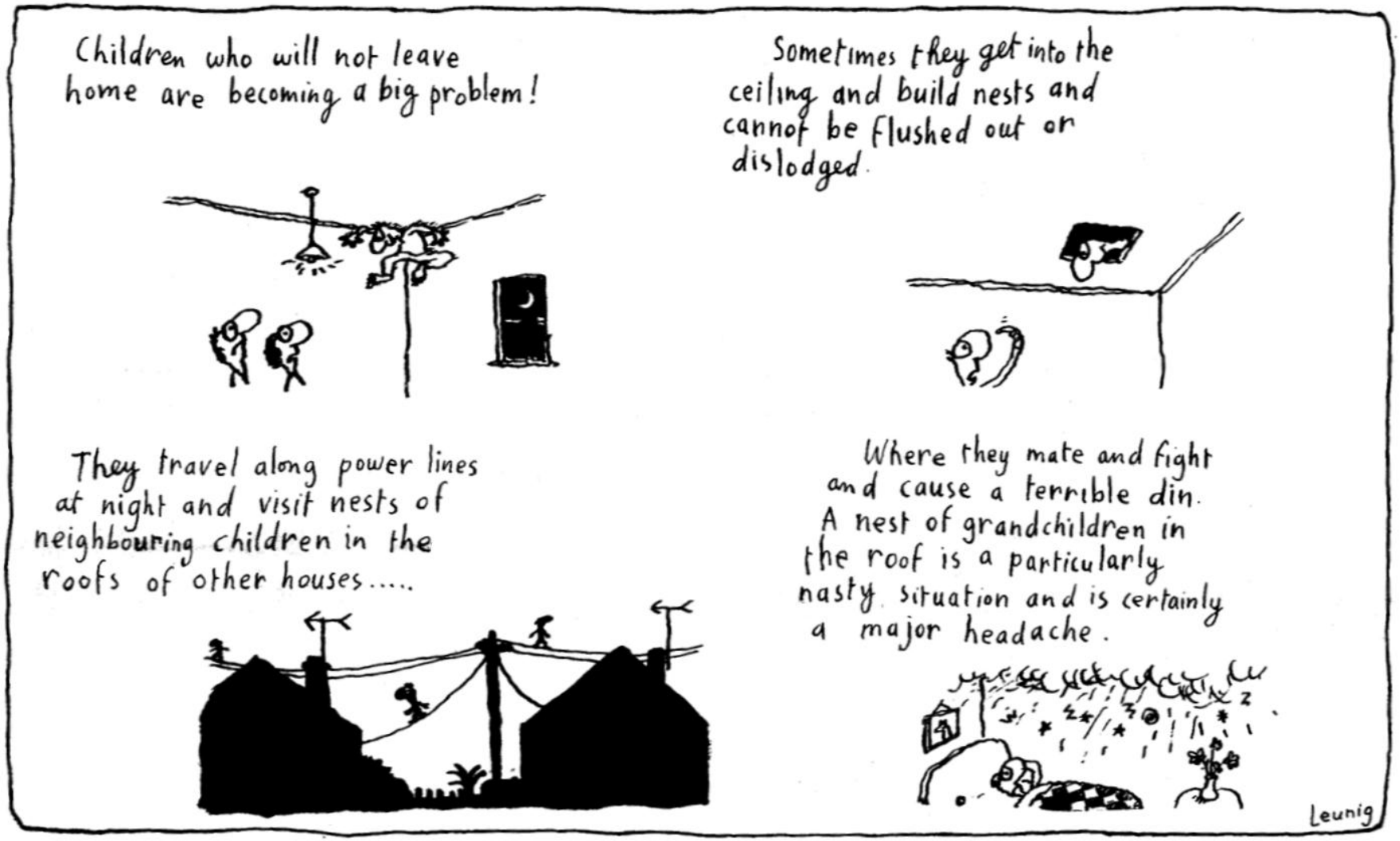

Source: Leunig 1996