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Social capital and housing tenure in an Adelaide neighbourhood

Anna Ziersch*
Department of Public Health
Flinders University
GPO Box 2100
Adelaide SA 5001
Australia
Ph: + 61 8 8204 4277
Fax: + 61 8 8204 5693
anna.ziersch@flinders.edu.au

Kathy Arthurson
Centre for Planning & Building Studies &
Social Policy Research Group
University of South Australia
GPO Box 2471
Adelaide SA 5001
Australia
Ph: + 61 8 8302 2232
Fax: + 61 8 8302 2252
kathryn.arthurson@unisa.edu.au

* Author for correspondence

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ABSTRACT

In this paper we compare and contrast elements of social capital across different housing tenures in an Adelaide neighbourhood. Using the results of 530 self-completion questionnaires and in-depth qualitative interviews with 16 people we assess perceptions of conflict across housing tenures and between socioeconomic groups, feelings of acceptance and belonging in the local neighbourhood, and levels of involvement in local formal and informal networks. While only a small number of questionnaire respondents reported negative views of socioeconomic diversity in the area a common theme emerging in the qualitative data indicated that housing tenure was relevant to some of these negative perceptions. Respondents from across different tenure types also reported differences in feelings of acceptance in the neighbourhood, and involvement in formal and informal networks. The study findings suggest that housing tenure is relevant to the development of neighbourhood-based social capital, and that this factor needs to be considered by social planners, housing policy makers and others involved in implementing social mix policies. In addition, the findings indicate the need to consider the community housing and public housing tenures in their own right, given the different models of housing provision, rather than collectively under the common banner of social housing as most research studies do. It is recommended that the full diversity of housing tenure is considered in any future analysis.

Keywords: social capital; housing tenure

Introduction

In this paper, we explore the experiences of residents across a range of housing tenures living in a socioeconomically diverse Adelaide neighbourhood. In particular, we consider three commonly recognised elements of social capital in the literature: social cohesion and conflict; feelings of acceptance and sense of community; and participation in formal and informal networks. We found that some of the elements of social capital differed significantly between housing tenures and that housing tenure was also relevant to negative perceptions of socioeconomic diversity in the area. We argue that housing tenure is relevant to the development of neighbourhood-based social capital and that this needs to be considered by those involved in implementing social mix policies.

What is social capital?

Social capital is a contested term and has been used in a variety of ways. Two main schools of thought influence current debates about social capital and they arise from the work of Robert Putnam and Pierre Bourdieu (Baum & Ziersch, 2003). Putnam defines social capital as the ‘features of social organisation such as networks, norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit’ (Putnam, 1995: 67). He conceives of social capital as a resource that evolves at the *community-level* and is a distinctly social feature that is reflected in the structure of social relationships. Putnam focuses on the capacity of communities to cooperate for mutual benefit and argues that State intervention can be detrimental to the development of social capital. Pierre Bourdieu, in contrast, focuses on the resources that accrue to *individuals* as a result of their membership of social networks. He defines social capital as, ‘the aggregate of the actual or potential resources that are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition’ (Bourdieu, 1986: 248). Bourdieu argues that social capital can facilitate access to a range of other capitals including economic capital and cultural capital (eg. education) which in turn determines an individual’s position within the social structure (Bourdieu 1986). This approach is structuralist,

arguing that social capital will inevitably be differentially distributed and that this distribution reflects broader inequities in other forms of capital due to wider social and economic processes.

This paper draws on Bourdieu's conception of social capital and focuses on the way in which an individual's housing tenure, which is also socio-economically determined, may affect their experience of neighbourhood-related social capital. Bourdieu's framework is more relevant for our analysis because of its theorising of social capital at the individual level rather than the broader community level favoured by Putnam, and its explicit consideration of how social capital can reflect, and also contribute to, inequities.

In terms of considering social capital within neighbourhoods, there has been considerable debate about how to operationalise and measure social capital (Lochner, Kawachi & Kennedy, 1999; Paldam, 2000; Harpham, Grant & Thomas, 2002; Macinko & Starfield, 2001; Stone, 2001; see also Australian Bureau of Statistics website: <http://www.abs.gov.au>). The vast majority of studies have used solely quantitative measures of social capital, with many studies retrospectively using data that was not specifically designed to measure social capital. This has often led to very blunt indicators of complex social processes being used. Within the quantitative tradition there have also been considerable differences in the actual measures of social capital used, with a wide variety of measures spanning voting behaviour, voluntary group membership, trust and informal socialising, through to more complex consideration of social networks and the resources available through them. However, common to many considerations has been an examination of informal and formal networks, social cohesion and conflict, and acceptance and belonging, and these elements are considered below in relation to housing tenure. We draw on established measures of these aspects that have been successfully utilised by us in related research studies (Ziersch & Baum, 2004; Ziersch, 2005; Ziersch & Arthurson, 2005; Ziersch, Baum, MacDougall & Putland, 2005) and include both quantitative and qualitative aspects.

Housing tenure and social capital

There is evidence that housing is an important dimension of people's lives and that there may be an association between housing tenure and social capital. Much of the pertinent research has focused on comparing homeowners with other tenure types, and explores their neighbourhood connections. Some studies suggest that homeowners tend to be more involved in their local community networks through activities, such as joining local organisations (Beekman, Lyons & Scott, 2001 in Hiscock, 2001; Ditkovsky & van Vliet, 1984), working to solve local problems (DiPasquale & Glaeser, 1999) and in local social interactions (Hiscock, 2001). It is argued that homeownership creates incentives to improve one's local area, as the value of the home is tied to the quality of the community (Rohe & Basalo, 1997). It is also contended that homeownership provides a barrier to geographical mobility (Glaeser & Sacerdote, 2000; Reingold, Van Ryzin & Ronda, 2001) and mobility has been found to disrupt access to social support and exchange (Boisjoly, Duncan & Hofferth, 1995). In a UK study, Hiscock (2001) also found that homeowners felt more part of their neighbourhood community than compared to social housing tenants. Likewise, Macintyre and Ellaway (1999), in another UK study, found that those in owner-occupied properties had a stronger sense of neighbourhood cohesion than those in social rented properties. However, other studies have found homeowners to be less involved in the local community. In studies of three social housing estates in Scotland, Kintrea and Atkinson (1998; Atkinson & Kintrea, 2000) observed that compared to lower-income social housing tenants, homeowners carried out most of their activities, including employment, outside of the estates and appeared more detached from their residential neighbourhood.

Some research has found that there are differences in elements of social capital between the non-homeownership tenures. For example, in a study comparing Housing Authority housing, tenant owned cooperatives, community groups and private landlords, Saegert and Winkel (1998) found that residents of tenant owned cooperatives had higher levels of involvement in both tenant associations and

informal social interaction with other residents. Likewise, in a comparison of public and community housing tenancies, Ziersch and Arthurson (2005) found that community housing tenants tended to have stronger ties with their neighbours than public housing tenants. In part, this finding appears to reflect the need for cooperative tenants to collaborate with neighbours in order to undertake the necessary tasks of running the cooperative. As shown in Figure 1 different housing tenures vary in the range of tenant participation and control over their housing. This can be conceptualised in terms of a continuum of tenant participation and control over the administration of the housing. In general, compared to the administration of public housing and low-income tenants in the private rental sector, community housing practices, especially in cooperatives, promote, and indeed rely, on much greater tenant participation and control over the management of their housing. In this attribute, community housing more directly resembles home ownership than public housing or low-income private rental.

[Figure 1 about here]

In addition, some differences in social networks have been found amongst public housing tenants, depending on whether their housing is clustered together or scattered (interdispersed) more widely amongst homeowners. Kliet's (2001) research provides insights into dynamics not before studied in detail in the context of scattered sites. In a comparison study of scattered site and clustered public housing located within one wealthy suburb in Washington DC, she found that residents interdispersed amongst home owners had broader social networks than clustered residents, and that these networks extended beyond the immediate neighbourhood. Alternatively, where public residents were clustered together they were more reliant on those who lived close by. Likewise, Ziersch and Arthurson (2005) found that close proximity of other public housing, facilitated closer ties between public housing tenants. Other than the work of Saegert and Winkel, cited above, we could find no contemporary research that explores evidence regarding private rental tenants and levels of social capital; this constitutes a significant gap in knowledge.

Neighbourhood socioeconomic diversity and housing tenure

There is a broad body of literature that explores socioeconomic mix and housing tenure diversity within neighbourhoods. Of specific relevance to this paper is the literature relating to housing and urban planning policies of 'social mix'.

Contemporary urban planning and neighbourhood regeneration policies have a common aim of balancing 'social mix', or creating communities with a blend of residents across a range of income levels and different housing tenures types, including social housing, private rental and owner-occupied housing. This approach is adopted in anticipation of it assisting to create more socially cohesive communities with a range of networking opportunities than when disadvantaged residents are concentrated together in one place. A continuing theme of the ideals set for social mix from the past to present day is about the need for propinquity between poor and better off residents to enable the poor to become good citizens through the instrument of middle class leadership. This aim anticipates mixing between residents from across different housing tenures (Arthurson forthcoming 2007).

In Australia, three major strategies are commonly adopted to achieve a more balanced social mix. The first is through diversifying social housing tenure on existing social housing estates, in order to increase owner-occupied housing. This is generally achieved through demolition and replacement of obsolete social housing with private housing to attract higher income groups into the areas. In some Australian states regeneration also involves permanent relocation of social housing tenants to social housing in other neighbourhoods (Arthurson, 2002). Second, social mix is achieved through including some low-income social housing in new private housing developments, involving joint ventures between government and private sector developers. Third, the housing authorities purchase small numbers of housing across a range of already established privately developed neighbourhoods for use as social housing..

Housing and planning policy makers and others who are proponents of social mix claim a range of benefits for disadvantaged residents of living amongst homeowners and working residents. At the present time the anticipated benefits that are relevant to our research include:

- access to broader formal and informal networks, for instance, social networks that link disadvantaged residents to job opportunities;
- developing more cohesive communities (Arthurson, 2002); and
- enhancing feelings of acceptance through reductions in postcode prejudice, for instance, by potential employers, and a lessening of the stigma associated with residing in areas that are perceived as negative or undesirable (Kintrea & Atkinson, 1998).

Social mix and social capital

In terms of considering the impact of socioeconomic and housing tenure diversity on elements of social capital within neighbourhoods there is a range of evidence. The research indicates that in areas of socioeconomic diversity there is little interaction between middle-income homeowners and lower-income public housing/social housing tenants. For example, Butler and Robinson (2001; 2003) found that little mixing occurred between different social classes, in particular long-term working class residents and middle class newer residents in gentrified areas of London. Likewise, Atkinson and Kintrea (2000), in studies of social housing estates in Scotland found that homeowners generally leave the estates to work, and participate in various activities outside of the local neighbourhoods. Alternatively, social housing tenants, who often lack access to motor vehicles and jobs, tend to spend more time on the estates and develop their social networks more locally. The authors concluded that, it is one thing to suggest that social networks are important; however, it is quite another issue to propose, as often happens in estate regeneration, that government can rebuild more socially integrated and cohesive communities through making changes to the social mix of the neighbourhood (Atkinson and Kintrea, 2000).

Questions are also raised within the literature about whether socioeconomic diversity enhances neighbourhood social cohesion or raises awareness of class differences, thereby creating tensions, rather than promoting the anticipated social cohesion (Biggins & Hassan, 1998, in Arthurson, 2002). Arthurson (2002) reports on two regeneration projects in South Australia where public housing tenants were relocated to 'dispersed' public housing. The tenants reported feeling socially isolated and dubious about whether incoming more affluent homeowners would want to live next door to them. International studies also find some evidence that locating residents with different income levels in the same neighbourhood may raise awareness of class differences and create tensions, rather than the sought after social cohesion (Page & Broughton, 1997; Jupp, 1999). Another issue concerns the negative impacts of creating social mix in estate regeneration, which can include reductions in the overall levels of social housing stock, through sales of social housing without replacement housing, and the breaking up of long term residents' informal and formal social and support networks (Arthurson, 2002).

In a recent case study of an Australian suburb with a mix of private and public tenancies, Ruming et al (2004) found that while the majority of tenants felt that there was a presence of 'community' in the suburb, over half of the public housing tenants did not feel part of this community. In addition, the majority of tenants saw tenure as contributing to community membership with many residents, both public and private, suggesting that tenure separated and distinguished communities, with public tenants reporting that they were perceived as different and inferior. The authors conclude that in relation to social mix, public tenants are not readily accepted into communities dominated by private owners.

Thus the literature provides some insights into the relationship between social capital and housing tenure and the implications for social mix policies. However, a systematic comparison of a range of aspects of social capital across all of the major housing tenure types has not been undertaken in Australia. In particular, little is known about social capital and private rental tenants, nor differences

between social housing tenants (e.g. between ‘mainstream’ public housing and cooperative housing) in aspects of social capital. These findings provided the starting point for the current research.

Methodology

The data collection was completed in 2000 in two contiguous suburbs (hereafter referred to as ‘the area’), which are situated on the western fringes of central Adelaide, the capital of South Australia. Although they are two separate suburbs, they have a similar demographic profile, are bounded on three sides by main roads, and have a distinct joint identity (e.g. the local community centre includes the two suburb names in its title). The area has a combined population of approximately 2500 residents. It has had a historically strong ethnic mix with large numbers of Greek, Italian and Yugoslavian immigrants moving into the area from the 1950s and in more recent times immigrants from Vietnam.

The area has been traditionally working class and was considered a slum area in the 1930s. A failed transport plan that identified the area as a potential site for a highway interchange led to the area being rezoned as ‘industrial’ in 1972. After intense pressure from local residents and community development workers the plan was abandoned in 1983. By the late 1970s the area was characterized by a mixture of residential, commercial and industrial establishment.

Alongside these changes to the zoning of the area, the area went through changes in the population in the 70s and 80s, with an influx of community activists, students and artists. The area also has a strong history of civic participation, often relating to resisting industrial expansion, and it was at the forefront of the co-operative housing movement in South Australia, with a strong continuing co-operative housing presence in the area. The area also has a significant number of boarding houses and Aboriginal housing properties.¹

¹ The Aboriginal Housing Authority (AHA) is a Statutory Corporation with the principle role to improve housing outcomes for Aboriginal people in South Australia through providing a range of housing tenures’.

In recent years, the area has been undergoing a process of transformation as industry has been moved out and land remediation has occurred. New housing developments and the fact that it is one of the last remaining affordable inner-city areas have attracted many young professionals and families who own their homes into the area.

The findings presented in this paper are drawn from questionnaire and interview data from a broader case study of the area that focused on neighbourhood life, social capital and health.

The study was approved by the Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee at Flinders University of South Australia.

Questionnaire:

A self-completion questionnaire was hand delivered to the letterbox of every household in the area. The instructions asked the person in the household over the age of 18 who next had a birthday to complete the questionnaire and expressly asked only that person to complete the questionnaire. A letter translated into the three most common local languages was included with the survey offering the assistance of an interpreter to complete the questionnaire over the phone or face-to-face. Three follow-up reminders (including one with a replacement questionnaire) were sent to each address. Of the 1038 questionnaires delivered, 530 were returned, representing a response rate of 50.1 per cent.

Thirty-nine per cent of respondents were male and sixty-one per cent were female. Ages ranged from 18-90 years, with a mean age of 44.5 and a median of 42. Seventy-two per cent were born in Australia and 27 per cent were born elsewhere (7 cases missing). Five respondents identified as Aboriginal and none as Torres Strait Islanders. Thirteen per cent spoke a language other than English at home. The median yearly income category was \$15 600-\$20 799. Forty-eight per cent of the participants were

homeowners, twenty-five per cent were in public housing properties, sixteen per cent were renting privately, two per cent were boarding, with the remainder in 'other' tenure arrangements. Only a small number of those who indicated they lived in 'other' housing gave details of what this was. Those who did were living in their parent's or partner's home or in a boarding house.

Variables used in the questionnaire analysis:

As mentioned previously, the commonly accepted method of exploring social capital has involved examination of informal and formal networks, social cohesion and conflict, and acceptance and belonging, and these elements are considered in this study in relation to housing tenure. The research used established variables to examine these aspects, which have been successfully utilised by us in other relevant studies (Ziersch & Baum, 2004; Ziersch, 2005, Ziersch & Arthurson, 2005; Ziersch, Baum, MacDougall & Putland, 2005) and included both quantitative and qualitative aspects.

Perceptions of socioeconomic diversity: Questionnaire respondents were asked about their agreement that "differences between rich and poor people divide the community in [the area]", with agreement measured on a five point likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5), with high scores indicating perceptions of division in the community. For multivariate analysis using logistic regression, this question was dichotomised into those who agreed or strongly agreed that there were divisions compared with those who disagreed, strongly disagreed or were neutral.

Acceptance: Questionnaire respondents were asked to what extent they agreed that "I don't feel fully accepted as a member of [the area]". Again, agreement was measured on a likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, with high scores indicating low levels of perceptions of acceptance. For multivariate analysis using logistic regression responses were dichotomized into those who disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement (indicating feelings of acceptance) and those who strongly agreed, agreed or were neutral.

Formal neighbourhood networks: Questionnaire respondents were asked if they had been involved in a local formal network in the last 12 months. The groups included were: school/education-related group, community group, ethnic club, social action, justice or lobby group, sports/recreational/hobby group, local government, co-operatives, political party or political campaign, work-related group, and 'other'. Respondents were identified as being in at least one of these groups or not. For the comparative analysis between housing tenures, participation in cooperative groups were removed from the list as housing cooperative tenants may have included their housing as one of these groups.

Informal neighbourhood networks: Questionnaire respondents were asked how often they socialised with neighbours on a scale of 1 to 6 with 1 being 'never' and 6 being 'once a week or more', and high scores indicating high levels of socializing. For multivariate analysis using logistic regression, those who socialised at least monthly with neighbours were compared with those who socialised less often.

Demographic variables: The variable of *housing tenure* was measured in two ways. In the first instance, five tenure types were compared: homeowners, private rental, public housing, cooperative housing and 'other' housing. In the second instance, homeowners were compared against all the other tenancies. *Income* was measured using 14 income categories for individual annual income before tax ranging from 1 (less than \$6 240) to 14 (\$104 000 or more). *Years in the area* were measured using four categories - < 1 year, 1-4 years, 4-9 years, 10 or more years. *Age* was measured in years and *gender* was also considered.

Interviews:

Interviews were also conducted with residents of the area in order to explore the relationships between variables in further detail and to assist in the interpretation of the quantitative data. The role of tenure emerged from the initial phases of the study and was explored further in the interviews. An expression of interest form to participate in an interview was included with the questionnaire. Ninety-three people returned this form and they were categorized on the basis of their feelings of acceptance in the area.

Eight people who felt accepted and 8 who did not feel accepted were randomly selected in order to get diverse views on the social life of the area, and data saturation was also reached at this point. The interviews were semi-structured and participants were asked a range of questions about their experience of life in the area, participation in formal and informal networks, their civic and social participation and health status.

Ten of the interviewees were women and six were men, with an age range of 22-78 years. Twelve were born in Australia and four overseas, with three speaking a language other than English. Seven lived in homes they owned or were paying a mortgage for, one was renting privately, six lived in public housing and 2 were in housing cooperatives. The interview sample was not selected to be 'representative' of the area, though it seems to provide a reasonable spread of the demographic characteristics of the area.

The interviews lasted between 1-2 ½ hours and were conducted in the participants' homes. They were tape-recorded and analysed thematically with the assistance of NUD*IST covering themes relating to community/neighbourhood life (Rice & Ezzy, 1999). Responses were compared between the housing tenure types.

In reporting the findings all names used to identify interview quotes are pseudonyms. Questionnaire responses are just labelled 'questionnaire'.

Findings:

Quantitative data:

Perceptions of Conflict:

As noted, one of the biggest changes occurring in the area has been the shift in the socioeconomic mix of the population, with greater numbers of residents of higher socioeconomic status moving into what was once a predominantly lower income area. This has related specifically to changes in the housing

tenure make-up of the area, with a reduction of public housing and an increase in homeownership as new housing developments have been completed. In response to a statement that differences between rich and poor people divided the community in the area, almost a quarter of respondents (24 per cent) agreed with the statement, with 34% neutral and 42% disagreeing (Figure 2).

[Insert Figure 2 about here]

The mean scores of agreement (with high scores indicating agreement that there was division) for the five tenancies (homeowners, private rental, public housing, housing cooperative, other) regarding socioeconomic divisions were not significantly different (Table 1).

[Insert Table 1 about here]

When homeowners were compared with all other tenancies the difference was near significant, with non-homeowners noting greater division (Table 2, $t=1.776$, $df=520$, $p=.076$). When the agreement scores were collapsed to agree versus disagree or neutral, there were no significant differences across the five tenures, and there were no significant differences between homeowners and non-homeowners.

[Insert Table 2 about here]

Feelings of Acceptance and Belonging:

In terms of their own feelings of acceptance in the area the majority of questionnaire respondents felt accepted in the area, with 61 per cent *disagreeing* with the statement that they didn't feel accepted in the area (see Figure 3). However, almost 30 per cent were neutral suggesting that they felt neither accepted nor unaccepted. Fifty people (9 per cent) agreed with this statement, not feeling fully accepted as a member of the local area.

[Insert Figure 3 about here]

There were significant differences in the extent of feelings of acceptance across tenure (with low mean scores indicating higher levels of acceptance, Table 3). Housing cooperative tenants felt the most acceptance, followed by homeowners, then private and public rental tenants reported lower levels followed by 'other' tenancies, which reported the lowest levels of acceptance ($F=4.373$, $d=4$, 504, $p<.002$).

[Insert Table 3 about here]

When responses were dichotomised into agree versus disagree or neutral, the patterns were the same (Table 4, $\chi^2=21.5000$, $df=4$, $p<.000$) and tenure remained significant after controlling for age, gender, years in the area and income (Table 5). When homeowners were compared against all other tenures (Table 6), homeowners reported higher levels of acceptance than non-homeowners in terms of the mean ($t=3.08$, $df=507$, $p<.002$). It was also significant for the agree/other comparison (Table 7, $\chi^2=8.967$, $df=1$, $p=.004$), though after controlling for the other demographic variables it dropped just below significance (Table 8).

[Insert tables 4 to 8 about here]

Involvement in Formal and Informal Networks:

Questionnaire respondents were also asked about their involvement in local formal and informal networks as an indicator of integration into local community networks. Overall, 189 (37 per cent) were involved in at least one local formal group. However, because some housing cooperative tenants may have included their housing cooperative in the category of local group, for the comparative analysis between tenures involvement in cooperative groups was not included in determining whether someone

was in a local group or not. There were significant differences between the tenancies in local group involvement (See Table 9, Chi square 18.288, $df=4$, $p=.001$).

[Insert Table 9 about here]

Owners were more likely to be involved in a local group than private rental and public rental tenants. Those in cooperative housing were the most likely to be in a formal network, even after excluding cooperatives groups from the analysis. Tenure remained significant, even after controlling for age, gender and income (Table 10). When non-homeowners were combined and compared to homeowners there were no significant differences in local network membership.

[Insert Table 10 about here]

Responses to the question about socializing with neighbours indicated two main patterns – either seeing very little of one’s neighbours, or seeing them quite regularly (Figure 4). Overall, a third of respondents never socialized with their neighbours, with almost two thirds socializing less than monthly.

[Insert Figure 4 about here]

Mean regularity of socialising with neighbours (with high scores indicating high socializing, Table 11) differed significantly ($F=7.987$, $df=4,492$, $p<.000$) between housing tenures, with those in cooperative housing socialising much more with neighbours than people other tenures. Those in public rental properties socialised to the same extent as homeowners with private rental and ‘other’ tenants socializing the least.

[Insert table 11 about here]

When the dichotomized socialising variable was used, comparing those who socialized at least monthly with those who socialised less often, at the univariate level the five tenure comparison was again significant (Table 12, chi-square=24.138, df=4, $p<.000$). The greatest proportion of housing cooperative tenants socialising at least monthly, followed by housing trust tenants and homeowners, with the lowest proportion amongst private rental and 'other' tenants. Tenure remained significant, after controlling for age, gender, income and length of residence in the area (Table 13).

[Insert tables 12 and 13 about here]

When non-homeowners were combined and compared with homeowners there were no significant differences in their mean socialising with neighbours, nor in the dichotomous socialising variable.

In summary the quantitative analysis indicated a substantial minority of residents agreeing that there were socioeconomic divisions in the area, though more agreed that there were not, and there were no tenure differences in these responses. While only a small number of people did not feel accepted in the area, there were tenure differences in the degree of feeling accepted, with homeowners feeling more accepted than non-homeowners. Housing cooperative tenants felt the greatest level of acceptance with public, private rental and 'other tenants' feeling the least. Housing cooperative tenants reported the highest level of formal network involvement as well as informal socialising with neighbours. Homeowners were more likely to be in a formal network than public, private rental and 'other' tenants but socialised with neighbours to a similar extent as public housing tenants, while private rental and 'other' tenants were least likely to socialize with neighbours.

Qualitative data:

In this section data from the interviews is reported, in addition to open-ended responses from the questionnaires. Whilst in the quantitative response only a minority of the residents reported

socioeconomic divisions in the area, the recent changes in the socioeconomic make up of the area was raised as a common theme by interviewees and in the qualitative questionnaire responses:

...All new people have moved in and they're really nice people, but they're different from the people that were from here before. They're more middle class, professional kind of people (Elaine, private rental).

...With all the new developments opening up all over the place, you're getting a lot of couples – business type couples purchasing the two-storey places over there off the main road (Beth, owner).

The interview and questionnaire respondents were mixed in their views on the benefits or problems associated with this diversity and their perceptions of how it was dealt with by the residents.

In answers to an open-ended question in the questionnaire about what could improve the area, a question asking for any other comments, and in some telephone calls received from residents during the research, a common theme that emerged was negative views about how socioeconomic diversity was dealt with in the area. In particular, some respondents expressed the view that social divisions were beginning to appear in the area. Tensions were identified between the longer-term, less well off residents and the newer, generally better off residents:

Returning to [the area] after many years feels like moving into a small country town. Those who work have not time and little inclination to communicate with 'the unwashed'. Their [area] is different to the suburb their unemployed/ long term neighbours have lived in for years. They identify with the easy access to city life etc, but not to the hard life (including lack of recognition and caring from govt. level) older residents have lived with for many years (Questionnaire, public housing).

I perceive a social gap developing within the immediate area caused by the development of new housing estates. These estates are bringing high disposable income households into an area that has traditionally been low income,

rental households. Sad to say, the two groups don't mix – it is no-ones fault and I can't imagine anything can be done to improve things (Questionnaire, owner).

The nobs coming to the area would be welcome to mix with the locals instead of thinking they're better. [area] isn't as close a community as it used to be (Questionnaire, public housing).

In the interviews there were also a number of references to a growing conflict between different socioeconomic groups:

It's almost like in this area now, there's kind of like the 'haves' and the 'have nots', and a bit of tension between
(Elaine, private rental).

Elaine went on to describe an incident where a woman driving in her car with her children in the back, was grabbed at through the window by a group of people who had been sitting in their front yard who were calling her a 'bitch'. When the woman asked why they were doing this they replied 'because you're you and we're us' [referring to their lower socioeconomic status compared to the woman]. Elaine also talked about a new house in the area that had had graffiti sprayed on it:

You know, that's that kind of like, yeah, 'there's a kind of new house with the shiny new fence, so let's go and paint stuff all over it'.

There had also apparently been some tension between children in one playground where children from a group of public housing units were battling with other neighbourhood children for control of the space.

In addition, a small number of the interviewees, all homeowners, talked disparagingly about 'rough hood types' (Beth, owner) and 'people who looked like criminals' (Katie, owner), defined largely as such by their low socioeconomic status. On the other hand, one of the interviewees, Rachel, said that she

had 'landed in the sea of yuppies', referring to the way that wealthier home-owning residents treated her, as a public housing tenant.

As indicated above, people's discussions about the socio-economic diversity were often operationalised in terms of housing tenure. In the questionnaire open-ended sections, there were some strong negative views, largely from homeowners, regarding public housing tenants, with some calling for a reduction of public housing in the area. These views related strongly to the overall 'look' or 'status' of the area and a view of public housing tenants as unconnected to the area and hence uncaring, and also often involved in drugs and crime.

...Trust [public]houses should be moved – it's close to town and could be a great area – too many Trust [public] houses – don't care for them (Questionnaire, owner).

My first answer to Q. 52 is as a result of problems encountered with Housing Trust [public] residents, eg. theft, speeding, abusive and bad language, threats to children, not looking after their houses (Questionnaire, owner)

Remove all the Housing Trust [public] people' there is too much 'hoodlum' activity in [the area] – theft, car racing, drunken people (this will ensure that [the area] will never be a sought after suburb); definitely not a suburb to recommend (Questionnaire, owner).

Negative references were also made to boarding houses and 'halfway houses' in the area:

*[Need] **NORMAL WORKING PEOPLE** ... and less half way houses, homes for homeless, Community schools, Aboriginal hostels etc etc. (Questionnaire, owner, original emphasis).*

Closing of halfway houses and boarding rooms where junkies live (Questionnaire, other).

There were also more general calls for ‘scum’ or ‘riff raff’ and ‘low income people’ to be removed from the area:

Scumbags in shitty houses should be evicted (Questionnaire, owner).

Getting rid of some of the riff raff in the area (Questionnaire, owner).

Taking out low income people who don’t work and break into people’s houses (Questionnaire, owner).

Reflecting the diversity of views on socioeconomic divisions in the area in interviews some interviewees felt that there weren’t differences between richer and poorer people in the area or tensions between tenures:

Overall you still live in [the area]. I mean, there probably are different classes of people, you know. Especially with the new housing developments and stuff, for sure...It doesn’t matter where you’re from because you’re still living in this area’ (Grace, public housing).

However, even those seeing few divisions between socioeconomic and housing tenure groups tended to see that the different groups *tolerated* each other, but lived very separate lives:

They [the poor] know there’s a level they can rise to, and a level that the other one can go down to (Frank, public housing).

These interviewees referred to the development of ‘separate’ communities within the area, largely referring to separations on the basis of socioeconomic status, in terms of the newer, more expensive housing developments:

*I reckon there's lots of different communities in [the area] now that's springing up. Especially I think the new dimension is with the new housing developments. I think that's almost like a completely different community'.
(Elaine, private rental).*

In interviews people were also asked about the extent to which they felt accepted and a sense of community and belonging in the area. As in the quantitative data analysis, overall, those who did not feel accepted tended to be renting their homes, and in particular public housing tenants. For example, Christine a public housing tenant, talked about her lack of connections with her neighbours:

If I shifted tomorrow, the man next door would be thrilled to bits. The lady up the corner next door would say 'hello' and 'oh, it's nice knowing you for this time and have a good life'.

She later went on to say *'I mean, I could die and you wouldn't know'.*

Rachel referred to feelings of exclusion by home-owning residents, as she was a public housing resident. She talked about feeling excluded by homeowners from a local gardening programme and also more general feelings of exclusion in the local area, giving an example of a street party held at Christmas where it appeared that those invited were largely homeowners:

Within this square. Within the two side streets. The house on the corner, I don't feel accepted. They're the homeowners and behind there. And [her public housing neighbour] feels the same way (not accepted).

However, while Rachel didn't feel accepted by the homeowners around her home, within the group of clustered public housing homes where she lived she felt very happy, suggesting that feelings of acceptance could be felt *within* the area, but were not necessarily area-wide.

Interestingly, Elaine, a private rental tenant, despite feeling quite accepted in general in the area also mentioned that she didn't experience the same feelings with her more immediate neighbours, and attributed this to not owning her home:

I guess when, we feel equal to our friends, but sometimes we do get the sense that, just with our neighbours, that perhaps we are looked down a little bit because we're the only renters.

In the interviews, one homeowner relatively new to the area also expressed a lack of acceptance. Beth, had struggled to get to know her neighbours in the cul-de-sac where she lived, but found that people would not even return a wave, or say hello:

Everyone lives in their own little world. Like where we used to live, I used to go next door, have a cup of coffee with the neighbours and that. And here, no one will invite you in for a cup of coffee (laughs) (Beth, owner).

In summary, emerging themes from the interview and questionnaire open-ended responses reflected the diversity of views, particularly on socioeconomic and housing tenure divisions in the area, but with those perceiving or experiencing division expressing this more strongly than those who saw fewer issues. Tenure was also seen as relevant to feelings of acceptance and involvement in community networks.

DISCUSSION

What do the findings suggest about the relationship between housing tenure and the elements of social capital investigated in our study? Overall the analysis suggests that residents' experiences of socioeconomic diversity in the area, sense of community and acceptance, and involvement in local neighbourhood networks differed depending on their housing tenure.

Whilst only a quarter of the questionnaire respondents agreed that socioeconomic differences, that is, differences between rich and poor, divided the community this emerged as a common theme in the

qualitative responses. There were no statistical differences between tenures in this view, however when respondents operationalised socioeconomic differences in terms of *housing tenure*, in the interviews and open-ended questionnaire responses (which was not expressly asked in the questionnaire), there were clearer distinctions in how diversity was perceived. A number of homeowners expressed negative perceptions about public housing tenants; in turn public housing tenants felt that homeowners were snobbish and unfriendly. This suggests that for some residents socioeconomic *diversity* in the community, is a significant issue that impacts on their lives and represents a potential barrier to social capital development and successful social mix outcomes. These later findings concur with those of several other studies that have evaluated the results of changing the social mix of neighbourhoods through government regeneration projects in South Australia. For example, in a regeneration project in Mitchell Park it was found that public housing tenants felt sceptical about whether new incoming and more affluent homeowners would want to live next door to them (Social Policy Research Group, 1998: 69). The differences between the qualitative and quantitative findings regarding social cohesion and perceptions of conflict may reflect the strength of the statement in the questionnaire which included the term '*divided*'. This may not have picked up broader issues relating to socioeconomic diversity (such as little inter-mixing between tenures) that were raised in the both in-depth interviews and spontaneous responses to the open-ended questions in the questionnaire.

While the questionnaire did not examine socialising *between* tenures a theme emerging in qualitative responses was that there were also suggestions from some respondents that there was little interaction between residents of different tenures and socioeconomic classes. Again, this is consistent with the findings of the literature on social mix, in that residents with differing levels of socioeconomic status tend not to socialize. The questionnaire data on socialising between neighbours indicated that cooperative housing tenants socialized the most with neighbours, followed by public housing tenants and homeowners who socialized to the same extent.

Housing cooperative tenants and homeowners reported the greatest degree of feelings of acceptance in the area, with public and private rental tenants reporting lesser degrees of acceptance. This was an interesting finding given that homeowners and public housing tenants socialised to a similar extent with neighbours. It may be that for public housing tenants informal socialising tended to happen with neighbours living in close proximity or of the same housing tenure, but that this did not provide a sense of acceptance in the broader area.

Consistent with the findings of the literature that homeownership creates incentives to improve one's neighbourhood and leads homeowners to be more involved in voluntary organisations (DiPasquale & Glaeser, 1999; Glaeser & Sacerdote, 2000), our study found that homeowners were more involved in local groups than public housing or private rental tenants. However, a contradictory finding was that tenants in housing cooperatives were the most involved of all the five tenures. Saegert and Winkel (1998) argue that low-income housing cooperatives can constitute a type of 'ownership' and that even though the individual does not own the property: 'the opportunity to control living conditions appears to provide an incentive similar to homeownership, even though financial incentives of homeownership is missing' (p. 50). A recent Australian study also found that the range of activities involved in living in cooperatives, in terms of tenant control and responsibility for managing the housing, makes it more similar to homeownership than other rental tenures (Ziersch & Arthurson, 2005; Arthurson, Ziersch & Long, 2006). In addition, Saegert and Winkel (1998) argue that relationships and norms of trust and reciprocity that develop through these management experiences are the key to making this form of cooperative ownership successful. In the current study, it is also possible that the greater involvement of co-operative housing tenants in local formal networks reflects the strong community housing tradition of the case study area. In particular, the values associated with living in cooperatives that support volunteerism and working together to meet common goals.

Some of the quantitative findings differed depending on the tenure comparison used (eg. tenure was significant for 'acceptance' in the neighbourhood in multivariate analysis when comparing all tenures,

but not when comparing homeowners to non-homeowners). Likewise, our study indicated that patterns of social interaction and feelings of acceptance varied considerably between public and community housing tenants. This factor along with the finding that community housing tenants were more involved in voluntary organizations than other tenures suggests that the two variations of social housing with their different models of management should be considered as separate entities in their own right. Both of these findings suggest that broad comparisons such as homeowner versus non-homeowner or combining public and community housing into the one tenure of 'social housing' may obscure important tenure differences in the development of social capital.

The emphasis of the study was to explore elements of social capital of residents in a range of housing tenures in a diverse area – other more uniform areas may produce different findings. Future research should explore the extent to which similar relationships are found in other populations. It should also be noted that while the focus of this study was on the relationship between housing tenancy and social capital, that other aspects of neighbourhoods (for example, physical layout, demographic profile, or the socio-cultural history of any area) may impact on the social capital of residents.

Conclusions:

Overall the findings indicate that housing tenure is relevant to the development of neighbourhood-related social capital. While most participants did not agree that differences divided the community, for some participants interviewed in the study a mixed tenure community created greater awareness of income and tenure differences, rather than smoothing the way to developing greater feelings of acceptance and belonging in the neighbourhood. There were also differences between tenures in feelings of acceptance and involvement in formal and informal networks.

Private rental tenants fared worst on a number of the social capital indicators. However, there is little contemporary research on social capital that focuses specifically on the experiences of private rental tenants and future research could usefully focus specifically on the experiences of these tenants. Likewise, those in 'other' tenures, whilst only a small group, fared particularly poorly in terms of social capital. However, little is known about these less common tenures. An exploration of this group would also be a fruitful area of further study.

These findings, like some of the previous studies challenge the continuing theme within the ideals set for social mix, that propinquity between poor and better off residents creates greater feelings of acceptance and belonging, generating social capital and more cohesive neighbourhoods. In terms of the implications for housing and planning policy makers, the results of the current study suggests that these are aspirational goals, rather than being achievable in practice through changing levels of social mix.

The current study has also identified an important oversight, in that the research in general tends to compare homeowners with other housing tenure types, and combines public housing and community housing under the common category of social housing. Our study indicates that the development of social capital varies between public and community housing tenants. This suggests the need for more nuanced understanding with studies that consider the community housing and public housing tenures in their own rights

Acknowledgements:

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TABLES & FIGURES

Table 1: Mean agreement with statement regarding divisions between rich and poor in the area, all tenures

Tenure	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Homeowner	2.66	249	1.09
Private rental	2.83	85	1.02
Public housing	2.88	128	1.13
Housing co-operative	2.53	34	1.16
Other	3.08	26	1.32
Total	2.75	522	1.11

Table 2: Mean agreement with statement regarding divisions between rich and poor in the area, homeowners and others.

Tenure	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Homeowners	2.66	249	1.09
Other	2.84	273	1.12

Table 3: Mean agreement that don't feel fully accepted as a member of the area, all tenures

Tenure	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Homeowner	2.00	243	1.11
Private rental	2.49	85	0.93
Public housing	2.26	122	1.13
Housing co-operative	1.88	33	1.05
Other	2.35	26	1.09
Total	2.16	509	1.10

Table 4: Proportion agreeing that feel accepted compared to those disagreeing or neutral, all tenures

	Owner	Private rental	Public housing	Housing Co-Op	Other	Total
Feel accepted	164(68%)	37(44%)	68(56%)	26(79%)	14(54%)	309(61%)
Other	79(33%)	48(57%)	54(44%)	7(22%)	12(46%)	200(39%)
	243(100%)	85(100%)	122(100%)	33(100.0%)	26(100%)	509(100%)

Table 5: Logistic regression results for feelings of acceptance, all tenures

	B	Odds Ratio	95% CI	Sig.
Age	.010	1.010	.994-1.026	.208
Income	-.003	.997	.931-1.068	.935
Gender – female	.204	1.226	.818-1.837	.324
Years in area				*.001
<1 year	-1.153	.316	.151-.660	.002
1-3 years	-.714	.490	.265-.905	.023
4-9 years	.080	1.083	.628-1.868	.773
Tenure				*.040
Private rental	-.413	.662	.366-1.197	.172
Public housing	-.631	.532	.309-.916	.023
Housing co-op	.603	1.828	.710-4.705	.211
Other	-.064	.938	.368-2.394	.893
Constant	.436	1.546		.449

Chi-square=43.799, df=10, p<.000, Nagelkerke R Square=.123, *significant variable

Table 6: Mean agreement that don't feel fully accepted as a member of the area, homeowners and others.

Tenure	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Homeowners	2.00	243	1.11
Other	2.28	266	1.08
Total	2.16	509	1.10

Table 7: Proportion agreeing that feel accepted compared to those disagreeing or neutral, homeowners versus others

	Other	Homeowners	Total
Feel accepted	145(55%)	164(68%)	309(61%)
Other	121(46%)	79(33%)	200(39%)
	266(100%)	243(100%)	509(100%)

Table 8: Logistic regression results for feelings of acceptance, homeowners versus others

	B	Odds Ratio	95% CI	Sig.
Age	.008	1.008	.993-1.023	.304
Income	-.004	.996	.931-1.065	.903
Gender – female	.257	1.293	.868-1.928	.206
Years in area				*.001
<1 year	-1.117	.327	.162-.661	.002
1-3 years	-.623	.536	.298-.965	.038
4-9 years	.114	1.121	.655-1.919	.676
Tenure	.376	1.456	.945-2.245	.089
Constant	.091	1.096		.859

Chi-square=36.247, df=7, p<.000, Nagelkerke R Square=.102, *significant variable

Table 9: Involvement in at least one local formal group, all tenures

	Owner	Private rental	Public Housing	Coop	Other
In a local group	91 (38%)	25 (29%)	37 (30%)	30 (94%)	6 (22%)
Not in a local group	146 (62%)	60 (71%)	88 (70%)	2(6%)	21 (78%)

Table 10: Logistic regression for being in a local group, all tenures

	B	Odds Ratio	95% CI	Sig.
Age	-.006	.994	.978-1.009	.427
Income	.028	1.028	.960-1.101	.429
Female	.257	1.293	.858-1.949	.219
Years in area				.268
<1year	-.318	.728	.335-1.583	.423
1-3 years	-.460	.631	.334-1.192	.156
4-9 years	.071	1.074	.632-1.823	.792
Tenure				*.023
<i>Private rental</i>	-.326	.722	.387-1.349	.307
<i>Public housing</i>	-.271	.762	.440-1.320	.333
<i>Housing co-op</i>	.968	2.633	1.162-5.966	.020
<i>Other</i>	-.746	.474	.165-1.360	.165
Constant	-.427	.652		.472

Chi-square=21.400, df=10, p=.018, Nagelkerke R Square=.063

Table 11: Mean socialising with neighbours, all tenures

Tenure	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Homeowner	2.88	234	1.899
Private rental	2.27	83	1.774
Public housing	2.88	121	2.058
Housing co-operative	4.36	33	1.655
Other	2.27	26	1.373
Total	2.85	497	1.934

Table 12: Proportion socialising with neighbours monthly or more, all tenures

	Owner	Private rental	Public housing	Housing Co-Op	Other	Total
Socialise monthly or more	76(33%)	18(22%)	41(34%)	22(67%)	5(19%)	162(33%)
Socialise less often	158(68%)	65(78%)	80(66%)	11(33%)	21(81%)	335(67%)
Total	234(100%)	83(100%)	121(100%)	33(100%)	26(100%)	497(100.0%)

Table 13: Logistic regression for socialising monthly or more, all tenures

	B	Odds Ratio	95% CI	Sig.
Age	.007	1.007	.991-1.023	.388
Income	-.065	.937	.871-1.008	.081
Gender - female	.180	1.197	.777-1.845	.415
Years in area				.132
<1 year	-.571	.565	.239-1.335	.193
1-3 years	-.169	.845	.443-1.608	.607
4-9 years	.295	1.343	.781-2.308	.286
Tenure				*.006
Private rental	-.274	.760	.385-1.503	.430
Public Housing	-.066	.936	.539-1.628	.815
Housing co-op	1.375	3.957	1.684-9.298	.002
Other	-.671	.511	.163-1.607	.251
Constant	-.799	.450		.185

Chi-square=36.506, df=10, p<.000), Nagelkerke R Square=.109, *Significant variable.

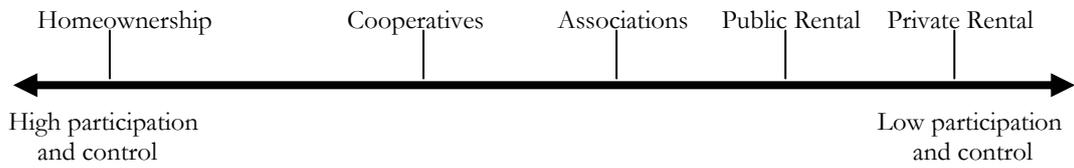


Figure 1: Continuum of tenant participation/control over housing (source: Arthurson et al, 2005)

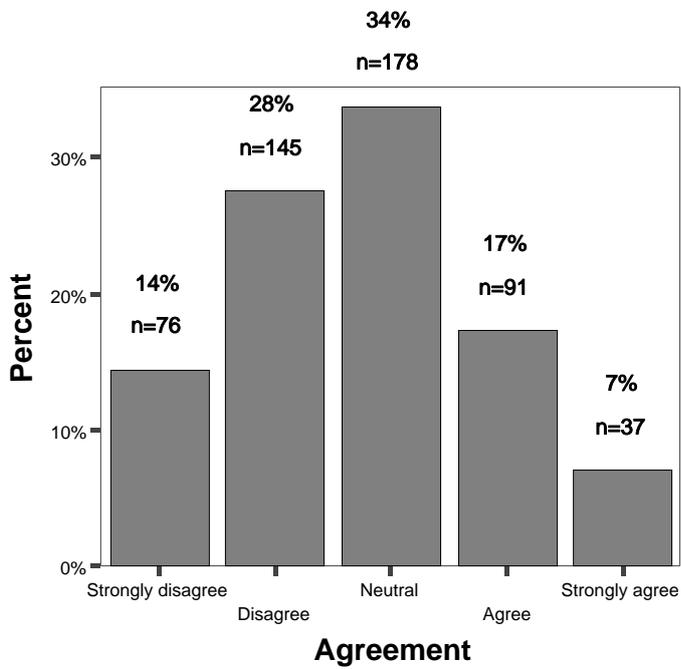


Figure 2 : Extent of agreement with the statement: 'Differences between rich and poor people divide the community in [the area]'

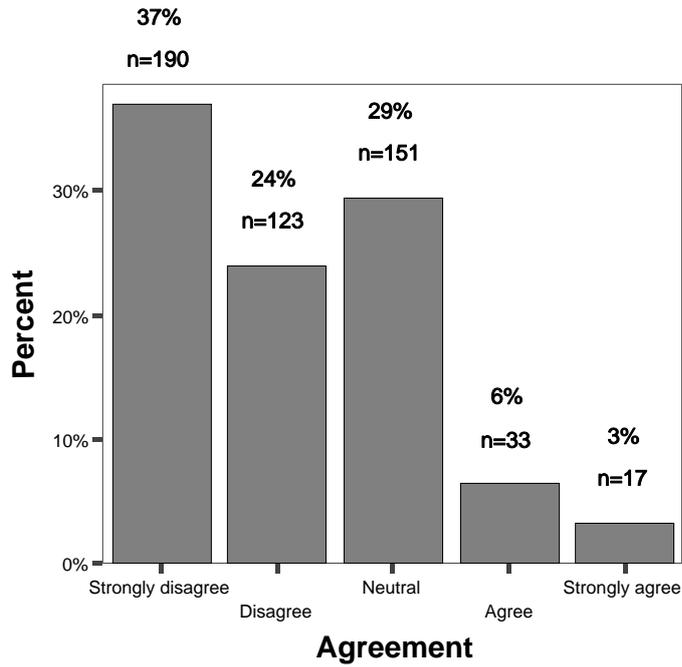


Figure 3: Agreement that 'I don't feel fully accepted as a member of [the area]'

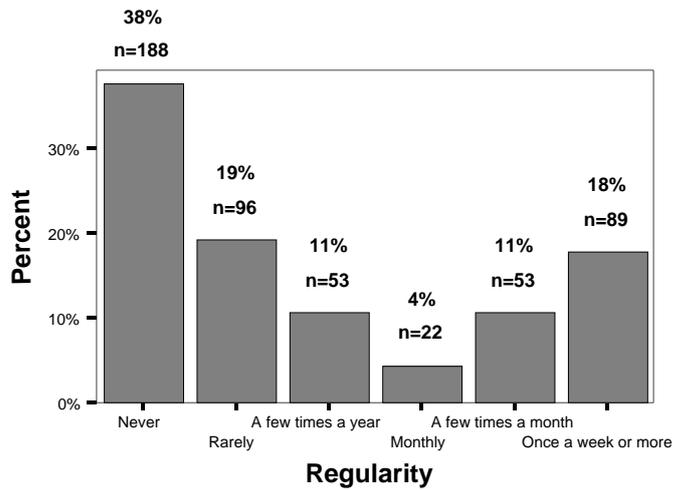


Figure 4: Regularity of socialising with neighbours

TABLE CAPTIONS

Table 1: Mean agreement with statement regarding differences between rich and poor in the area, all tenures

Table 2: Mean agreement with statement regarding differences between rich and poor in the area, homeowners and others.

Table 3: Mean agreement that don't feel fully accepted as a member of the area, all tenures

Table 4: Proportion agreeing that feel accepted compared to those disagreeing or neutral, all tenures

Table 5: Logistic regression results for dichotomised acceptance variable, all tenures

Table 6: Mean agreement that don't feel fully accepted as a member of the area, homeowners and others.

Table 7: Proportion agreeing that feel accepted compared to those disagreeing or neutral, homeowners versus others

Table 8: Logistic regression results for dichotomised acceptance variable, homeowners versus others

Table 9: Involvement in at least one local formal group, all tenures

Table 10: Logistic regression for being in a local group, all tenures

Table 11: Mean socialising with neighbours, all tenures

Table 12: Proportion socialising with neighbours monthly or more, all tenures

Table 13: Logistic regression for socialising monthly or more, all tenures

FIGURE CAPTIONS

Figure 1: Continuum of tenant participation/control over housing

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