

Title: “Not an Asylum-Seeker Crisis, a Housing-Crisis”

What impact does the current housing situation have on the community perception of local asylum-seeker housing in small towns in Ireland?



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Abstract

This thesis aims to find the root causes of the recent anti-asylum seeker housing protests in communities across Ireland. Specifically, whether the current housing situation or so-called 'housing crisis' is impacting the level of community support for local asylum-seeker housing. It aims to achieve this by answering the research question, '*What impact does the current housing situation have on the community perception of local asylum-seeker housing in small towns in Ireland?*' The theoretical foundation of this research is Stephan & Stephan's (1996) integrated threat theory, specifically, the realistic threat theory element. This thesis employs a quantitative cross-sectional survey research of the two towns of Bandon and Clonakilty in West Cork, Ireland. The data was collected using a survey of 100 individuals from each individual town. The data were analysed using hierarchical multivariate regression and several bar and pie charts. The findings indicated that a community's negative experience and perception of the current housing situation does not impact their level of support for local asylum-seeker housing. However, the current housing situation does manifest in feelings of competition and threat over the local housing supply. Additionally, a perception of threat over financial resources influences the community support for local asylum-seeker housing. The research has two limitations, first, due to only having 200 surveyed individuals and the towns having a similar geographical location. The generalisability of results is limited. Second, the quantitative nature of the research results in less information-rich data. This research is scientifically significant as it is the first substantial investigation into the perception of local asylum-seeker housing in small Irish towns. It is societally significant for Ireland as it addresses the root causes of the recent anti-asylum seeker housing protests. This research proposes two policy recommendations for the Irish government. First, community consultation through informing and information on the allocation of local asylum-seeker housing. Second, a complete overhaul of national housing policy. Through increased affordable social and private housing, rental protections, and improved homelessness support services, as well as increased financial support for disadvantaged areas.

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1. Introduction

On November 19th, 2022, the community of East Wall in Dublin took to the streets of their local area to protest against the allocation of an asylum-seeker centre in their community. Residents of the area were angry at the lack of notice the community received regarding the movement of 400 refugees into their locality overnight. Rhetoric like ‘Ireland is full’ and ‘look after our own first’ became key phrases shouted throughout the protest (Keena, 2022). Many protestors were angry at the government for choosing to house asylum-seekers in a vacant office building over Irish people. One protestor stated, ‘It has nothing to do with racism (...) It is the unfairness of it, when you look out at the streets, our own Irish people, born and raised in Dublin, and they haven’t got a place to go, whereas they can turn this ESB building into [accommodation] overnight’ (Keena, 2022). Following the East Wall protests, dozens of similar demonstrations sprang up across the country, from Inch in County Clare, Ballymun in County Dublin to Fermoy in County Cork. Each town and community protesting against the same action, the allocation of an asylum-seeker centre in their community. And each with the same slogan, ‘Ireland is full’ (Carroll, 2023; Michael, 2023).

To fully understand these protests, it is essential to know how the allocation of asylum-seeker housing in communities operates and why attitudes of discontent from communities toward such housing allocation develop. The allocation of asylum-seeker housing in Ireland stems from the national policy of ‘Direct Provision and Dispersal’. The Direct Provision and Dispersal policy was introduced in April 2000 and is a scheme which houses asylum-seekers in privately owned and vacant accommodations. From hotels and hostels to mobile-home sites. Asylum-seekers are housed in such Direct Provision and Dispersal centres while their international protection applications are processed (Breen, 2008; Dunne et al., 2013). Due to the general rise in international protection applicants and the onset of Ukrainian Temporary Protection applicants, the Direct Provision and Dispersal system has become overwhelmed (Cunniffe et al., 2022). All of this has led to the opening of new asylum-seeker centres in communities across Ireland (Brennan, 2023). Many of these communities are the towns partaking in the recent anti-asylum seeker protests.

In Ireland, negative attitudes from communities towards asylum-seekers and the housing of asylum-seekers are not new phenomena. However, the reason for such negative attitudes has changed. Previously, negative attitudes towards asylum-seekers were due to the perceived fear that jobs and economic resources would be under threat (Loyal, 2003). These negative attitudes began during the economic boom of the late 1990s to early-2000s. A period

of time in which Ireland was experiencing its first glimpse of financial prosperity (Loyal, 2003). Evidence of such discontent is clear from the 2004 referendum, where two-thirds of the Irish electorate voted to outlaw *jus soli* citizenship (Fanning & Mutwarasibo, 2007). Today in Ireland, a potential reason for negative attitudes towards asylum-seekers could be explained by the fact that these protests are happening amid a so-called ‘housing crisis’ (Bowers, 2023). The current housing situation is due to inadequate and preferential national governmental housing policy, leading to a lack of affordable quality homes across the country. Resulting in a rise in homelessness figures and emigration levels (Hearne, 2017; 2022). Particularly in communities like East Wall in Dublin, where such anti-asylum seeker housing protests are held (Keena, 2022). Consequently, the topic of this thesis will be to investigate the influence the current housing situation is having on communities’ attitudes towards local asylum-seeker housing.

As illustrated above, this research is highly societally relevant. Across Irish society, in every town and community, individuals have felt the effects of the current housing situation. From rising rents and homelessness to an overall housing stock shortage (Hearne, 2017). Across the country, evidence of this current housing situation is spilling into the rhetoric of anti-asylum seeker housing protests (Keena, 2022). Irish society must get to the root of this problem to overcome this recent wave of hate and division. Therefore, this research is societally relevant as one wishes to investigate how the current housing situation influences Irish society and its recent anti-asylum seeker protests.

Previous literature and research demonstrate the scientific and academic relevance of this topic. Previous research on the current housing situation from scholars like Hearne (2017; 2020; 2022), Byrne & Norris (2018), and Hearne et al. (2018) surround reasons for the current housing situation and solutions to it. However, there is limited research regarding how the current housing situation influences asylum-seekers and asylum-seeker-housing. Existing literature, i.e., Nowicki, Brickell & Harris (2019), surrounds how the current housing situation impacts asylum-seekers in the Irish asylum-seeker accommodation centres of Direct Provision¹. However, no previous literature has investigated how the current housing situation has influenced the public perception of asylum-seekers and local asylum-seeker housing. Previous literature, e.g., Kwak & Wallace (2018), has focused on the influence of economic downturns on the public perception of asylum-seekers. Or how the recent ‘refugee crisis’ influences the public perception of asylum-seekers with Hangartner et al. (2019). Therefore,

¹ The Direct Provision and Dispersal policy is a scheme which houses asylum-seekers in privately owned and vacant accommodations. From old convents, hotels, and hostels to mobile home sites. Asylum-seekers are housed in such Direct Provision and Dispersal centres until their international protection applications have been processed (Breen, 2008; Dunne et al., 2013).

this lack of research on how the current housing situation impacts the public perception of local asylum-seeker housing indicates a gap in the literature and the academic relevance of the topic. Second, previous research on attitudes towards asylum-seeker housing has been of a single case study method of one city or country, i.e., Spinney & Nethery (2012) and Hooghe & De Vroome (2013). However, limited research has been conducted using cross-sectional survey research on two towns within a country. Specifically, the two towns of this research were chosen to investigate whether a difference in support for local asylum-seeker housing arises between communities with or without an already existing asylum-seeker centre. This research is scientifically relevant as it will investigate a gap in existing literature surrounding how the current housing situation influences the public perception of local asylum-seeker housing. Moreover, it will provide a more externally valid analysis through cross-sectional survey research of two towns within a country.

To conclude, the research problem of this thesis is the recent rise in anti-asylum seeker housing protests in communities across Ireland. Such protests are taking place against the backdrop of a worsening housing situation. This housing situation dominates the rhetoric and messaging of many of the protests. Therefore, the research question of this thesis is, '*What impact does the current housing situation have on the community perception of local asylum-seeker housing in small towns in Ireland?*' Both for policymakers and Irish society in general, this question is important. Since to overcome this current societal division between asylum-seekers and Irish communities, we need to understand its root causes.

2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this research begins with an overview of the current housing situation in Ireland. This overview will outline the causes of the current housing situation, i.e., the privatisation, commodification and financialization of housing. As well as the social consequences, homelessness and emigration, the current housing situation is having on Irish people. Furthermore, an overview of the different threat theories, both group threat theory and integrated threat theory of this research, is provided. Additionally, an outline of other social-demographic factors (aside from the current housing situation) in which these feelings of threat could be manifesting.

2.1. Current Housing Situation

The definition of the current housing situation is “a nationwide lack of affordable quality homes resulting in large-scale homelessness and mass emigration due to inadequate and preferential governmental housing policies of privatisation, commodification and financialization in favour of ‘vulture funds, corporate landlords, the banks, and private developers’” (Healy & Goldrick-Kelly, 2018; Hearne, 2017; 2022). This definition can be broken down into causes and consequences. First, what exactly are governmental policies of privatisation, commodification and financialization, and who are these preferential groups? Second, what are the consequences of such preferential policies, and who are they impacting the most?

Following the 2008 financial crash, the Irish government implemented policies supporting large-scale international investment (vulture funds) in the Irish housing supply. These vulture funds view the Irish housing market as an investment opportunity and Irish homes as a commodity to profit (Hearne, 2022). The international vulture funds invest in the Irish housing market by buying properties from the Irish government and selling or renting these properties at a higher price. Through such high rents and housing prices, the amount of affordable quality homes across the country has reduced. In the last decade, both rental and housing prices have doubled (Hearne, 2022). The Irish government demonstrates preferential treatment towards these global vulture funds through bonuses and advantages such as tax breaks to incentivise them to invest more in the housing market (Hearne, 2022). These governmental policies, which have directly led to the lack of affordable homes for the Irish population, are an intentional move by the Irish government. By making homes unaffordable for the everyday individual, the Irish government have made such homes profitable for these global vulture fund investors and corporate landlords (Hearne, 2022).

Another inadequate governmental housing policy surrounds the lack of protection for individuals in the Irish rental market, specifically, rental protection against eviction notices. Between 2020-2021 there was a sixty-two per cent increase in the amount of eviction notices served to individuals (Hearne, 2022). Furthermore, in the last three decades, there has been a shift in how the Irish government views its national housing allocation policy. From a social housing policy perspective, which responds to the needs and rights of individuals. To a privatised and financialised housing policy perspective that responds to the greed of investors and corporate landlords (Hearne, 2017). Additionally, since the 1980s, the Irish government has alarmingly reduced the amount of social housing it builds each year (Hearne, 2022). Moreover, the Irish government has failed to introduce effective policies to turn vacant properties into affordable social and private housing (Finn, 2022).

Overall, the consequences of governmental policies of vulture funds, reduced social housing, insufficient rental protections, and vacant properties have resulted in reduced amounts of affordable private and public housing. This lack of affordable homes to buy and rent has two social consequences. First, it has increased the number of young people emigrating due to their inability to find a home (Hearne, 2022). Second, it has resulted in increased rates of homelessness across the country. In the last ten years, 15,000 children with their families have been made homeless and forced to live in emergency accommodations (Hearne, 2022). Therefore, it is evident that because of rising rents, a decreasing housing supply, homelessness, and emigration, the current housing situation is having a profound effect on individuals in Ireland. In the last year, such influence is manifesting itself, as outlined in the introduction, in anti-asylum seeker rhetoric. Moreover, due to limited previous research, this research will also assess the degree to which individuals perceive the current housing situation to be a 'housing crisis'. Consequently, through the different threat theories (as illustrated below), this research will investigate how this average Irish individual's experience and perception of the current housing situation has manifested itself into anti-asylum seeker housing rhetoric.

2.2. Threat

Numerous theories explain how individual, or group perception of threat can manifest into negative feelings towards immigrants. For this research, group threat theory and integrated threat theory will be the main theories of this analysis. However, other theories on why individuals feel threatened by immigrants (i.e., Mudde, 2012) will need to be considered to ensure the findings of this research are accurate and not confounding. Mudde (2012) provides five anti-immigrant frames which can explain why individuals feel threatened by immigrants.

From an economic, cultural, religious, and political frame to a security frame. The economic frame demonstrates that individuals feel threatened by immigrants as they believe immigrants will take financial resources (e.g., jobs and social benefits) away from society (Hampshire, 2013). The cultural and religious frames see immigrants as threats to traditional religious and cultural aspects of society, i.e., homogeneity and democracy (Hampshire, 2013). Moreover, from a security frame perspective, individuals view immigrants as a threat to the peace and order of society due to increased levels of criminality (Hampshire, 2013). And finally, the political frame views “immigrants as tools of an international elite, which conspires to undermine the average citizen” (Hampshire, 2013, p. 33). Overall, (as will be outlined below) the main theories of this research will be group threat theory and integrated threat theory. However, other reasons for threat (i.e., economic, cultural, religious, political and security) offered by Mudde’s (2012) theory also need to be considered to ensure the full validity and reliability of results.

2.2.1. Group Threat Theory (GTT)

First theorised by Blumer (1958), GTT presumes “individuals identify with one or more groups, and the diverse interests of different groups generate conflicts that in turn generate negative attitudes” (Hjerm, 2007, p. 1254). The main focus of GTT is the relationship that exists between the ingroup (majority group) and the outgroup (minority group). It outlines the larger the outgroup size in a given area, the greater the threat is felt by the ingroup (Hjerm, 2007). Blalock (1956; 1957) expands upon this by outlining that the larger the outgroup size, the greater the competition over financial or material resources. This fear is heightened further during periods of economic downturn. For instance, the struggle over scarce resources (e.g., money in times of recession) results in individuals favouring their own group’s financial interests over the interests of other groups. Blalock (1967) furthered his contributions to GTT by outlining that such competition has two modes, perceived and actual. Perceived competition demonstrates that it is enough for the ingroup to believe such competition exists for group threats to occur. These feelings of competition and threat that GTT theorise are further advanced by the theory of integrated threat, as outlined below.

2.2.2. Integrated Threat Theory (ITT)

ITT was developed by scholars Stepan and Stephan (1993, 1996). The theory helps explain why prejudicial reactions occur in a defence manner when individuals feel their values and group are under threat. Stephan and Stephan (1993, 1996) outline that prejudice can evolve due

to four types of threats: symbolic threats, realistic threats, intergroup anxiety, and negative stereotyping (Croucher, 2013).

(i) Symbolic Threats

Symbolic threats are related to the difference between groups in terms of attitudes, beliefs etc. This type of threat is seen as a direct threat to the “way of life of the ingroup” (Stephan & Stephan, 1996, p. 418).

(ii) Realistic Threats

Realistic threats can range from threats to the political and economic resource power of the ingroup to the material and physical well-being of the ingroup. An important element of realistic threat is the perception of threat. The actual threat does not have to be real. It merely needs to be perceived as real for it to cause a prejudicial reaction by the ingroup to the other group (Stephan & Stephan, 1996).

(iii) Intergroup anxiety

Intergroup anxiety surrounds the emotional feelings of anxiety and threat ingroup members encounter during social situations with outgroups. These ingroup feelings of threat towards the outgroup stem from the ingroup having a lack of knowledge about the outgroup. As well as competition over resources and feelings of difference etc. Members of the ingroup experience feelings of threat during such social situations with outgroups due to a fear of experiencing humiliation or mortification (Stephan & Stephan, 1996).

(iv) Negative stereotyping

The final threat ‘negative stereotyping’ relates to the above threat of ‘Intergroup anxiety’. Since such intergroup anxiety can stem from the negative stereotyping of the outgroup. Negative stereotyping is when the ingroup assumes the outgroup will “behave in a certain manner” (Croucher, 2013, p. 48).

GTT and ITT have been a backbone to previous research on group perception and threat. In particular, on topics relating to realistic threats regarding economic and financial downturns, as with Kwak & Wallace (2018). However, little to no literature has explored GTT and ITT concerning the influence of housing shortages on the manifestation of feelings of threat between ingroups and outgroups. Therefore, a theoretical and empirical gap exists within the literature on these theories. Hence, due to the nature of its explanatory ability to outline the relationship between resource competition and prejudicial group threat. Realistic threat theory will be the primary theory employed throughout this research.

2.3. Social-Demographic Factors

Apart from the housing situation and threat theory, there are various social-demographic factors one will need to consider when embarking on this research. These social-demographic factors are necessary to ensure that the conclusion of this research is accurate. The most common social-demographic factors that influence an individual's perception are age, gender, and geographical location. Additionally, Dennison and Vranceanu (2022) offer five more specific theories or social-demographic factors which can be used to explain how attitudes to immigration develop. From economic interests, socialisation, psychology and cueing to context and contact theory (Dennison & Vranceanu, 2022). Economic interests outline how increased unemployment and frequent economic recessions can lead to a negative perception of immigration. Most notably, for this research, individuals are less anxious about the negative personal effects of increased immigration on their economic interests. And are more concerned regarding the negative effects increased immigration could have on the economic interests of society as a whole. In terms of the personal economic impact of increased immigration, individuals are influenced more by perceived economic interests and not actual economic interests (Dennison & Vranceanu, 2022). Socialisation theory demonstrates that an individual's perception of immigration can vary based on whether they live in a heterogeneous or homogenous society. Individuals in a more homogenous society tend to have a more negative attitude to immigration, whereas individuals who live in a heterogeneous society have a more positive perception of immigration (Dennison & Vranceanu, 2022). The psychological element of the perception of immigration outlines that individuals who have conservative values hold more negative attitudes towards immigrants. In contrast, those with more universal values are more supportive of immigrants (Dennison & Vranceanu, 2022). Furthermore, cueing outlines that an individual's perspective of immigration can be shaped by the political and public officials from which they trust and receive information (Dennison & Vranceanu, 2022). Finally, contact theory illustrates that the more exposure an individual has to immigrants, the more supportive they will be of immigration (Dennison & Vranceanu, 2022).

Regarding this research, only the economic interests, socialisation and contact theory social-demographic factors put forward by Dennis and Vranceanu (2022) will be considered, as well as the other more common social-demographic factors like gender, age, and geographical location. Notably, this research will explore (as seen with the economic interests factor) if individuals are less concerned about the negative effects of local asylum-seeker housing on their housing situation. And are more anxious regarding the negative effects local

asylum-seeker housing could have on the housing situation of their locality. Without considering these additional social-demographic factors, the conclusion of this research may not be accurate.

In conclusion, previous literature on topics related to this research has employed GTT and ITT within their research. Realistic threat theory indicates how economic and political threats, i.e., the current housing situation, can manifest themselves in a threat felt by the ingroup towards the outgroup. According to this theory, this threat (such as the current housing situation) does not need to be real. It merely needs to be perceived by the ingroup as real for them to have a prejudicial reaction towards the outgroup. Therefore, the realistic threat element of Stephan & Stephan's (1993; 1996) ITT will be the primary theory grounding this research. Specifically, is realistic threat theory present in the relationship between the current housing situation (particularly a community's experience and perception of the current housing situation) and a community's perception of local asylum-seeker housing? All of this is illustrated in the below conceptual visualisation.



2.4. Hypotheses

The hypotheses of this research stem from the above theoretical framework. Each hypothesis will allow one to assess whether realistic threat theory exists within the relationship between the current housing situation and the community perception of local asylum-seeker housing. Or whether other reasons for the perception of threat, i.e., cultural, security or economic, offer an alternative answer for the lack of support for local asylum-seeker housing. The hypotheses of this research are as follows:

H1: Due to their negative experience of the current housing situation, communities are unsupportive of local asylum-seeker housing.

H2: Due to their negative perception of the current housing situation, communities are unsupportive of local asylum-seeker housing.

H3: Communities who perceive local asylum-seeker housing to be a threat to the local housing supply are less supportive of local asylum-seeker housing.

H4: Communities who perceive local asylum-seeker housing to create competition over the local housing supply are less supportive of local asylum-seeker housing.

H5: Due to other reasons for threat (i.e., economic, cultural, security), communities are unsupportive of local asylum-seeker housing.

H6: Communities which already have a local asylum-seeker centre are more supportive of local asylum-seeker housing.

In short, the above hypotheses will allow one to test for the presence of realistic threat theory within the relationship between the communities' experience and perception of the current housing situation and the communities' level of support for local asylum-seeker housing. The following chapter will outline how such hypotheses and theories will be tested and substantiated.

3. Research Design

The structure of this chapter is as follows, first, an outline of the research question and corresponding sub-questions. Followed by an overview of the case selection, methods, operationalisation table, limitations, and ethical considerations. Moreover, the goal of this chapter will be to illustrate how the research was conducted logically, efficiently, and ethically.

3.1. Research Question

This research topic surrounds the relationship between the current housing situation and the recent rise in anti-asylum seeker housing protests in communities across Ireland. More specifically, the research question for this investigation is ‘*What impact does the current housing situation have on the community perception of local asylum-seeker housing in small towns in Ireland?*’ The research question will analyse the presence of realistic group threat theory in the two towns of Bandon and Clonakilty in Ireland. Several sub-questions arose from the research question that will help guide and shape the research.

1. How do communities experience the current housing situation?
2. Do communities perceive the current housing situation as a national housing crisis?
3. What other factors are influencing the perception of local asylum-seeker housing?
4. What effect does the presence of existing asylum-seeker housing have on a community’s level of support for local asylum-seeker housing?

3.2. Case Selection

The case selection method for this research was the Most Similar Systems Design (MSSD). The MSSD is a method of selecting cases, e.g., countries or, in this case, towns that “share many important characteristics but differ in one crucial respect” (Halperin & Heath, 2020, p. 239). To select the towns of this research, one focused on towns with a similar population size and geographical location. The crucial differing aspect for the cases of this research is selecting one town that currently has an asylum-seeker ‘Direct Provision’ centre and one town that does not have an asylum-seeker ‘Direct Provision’ centre. Therefore, with these characteristics and elements, one selected the towns of Clonakilty and Bandon in the West Cork region of Ireland.

Clonakilty and Bandon are both in the geographical locality of West Cork and have similar population sizes. Clonakilty has 4,449 as of 2022, and Bandon with a population of 6,957 as of 2016 (Irish Census, 2022; 2016). However, both towns differ as Bandon has never had an asylum-seeker ‘Direct Provision’ centre. While Clonakilty has had an asylum-seeker

‘Direct Provision’ centre since 2002 (Clonakilty Friends of Asylum-Seekers, 2023). Therefore, the towns of Clonakilty and Bandon (according to the MSSD method) are suitable cases for this research.

3.3. Methods

To answer the research question “*What impact does the current housing situation have on community perception of local asylum-seeker housing in small towns in Ireland?*” this thesis will conduct quantitative cross-sectional survey research of two communities in Ireland.

3.3.1. Operationalisation Table

The operationalisation table (as seen in the appendix) will operationalise the theoretical concepts of this research. It is broken into four sections and was built from and reflects the research question of this paper. The first section surrounds the current housing situation in Ireland, which has four elements: rental prices, housing supply, homelessness, and emigration. These four elements became the four attributes of this section. The second section outlines the community’s perception of local asylum-seeker housing. This section contains two attributes: supportive perception and unsupportive perception. The third section bridges the initial two sections together by outlining the relationship that exists between both sections. That is the possible threat and competition surrounding housing resources the current housing situation has created. And how that influences a community’s perception of local asylum-seeker housing. This section offers other possible reasons for the presence of threat if the threat over limited housing resources is non-existent, i.e., cultural, religious, economic and security threats. The final section outlines the socio-demographic factors that help to describe a given population. This section has five attributes which stand for the five socio-demographic factors, i.e., geographical location, gender, age, contact and economic interests. Allowing for comparison between how different respondents’ answers vary per such demographic characteristics.

3.3.2. Data Collection

Surveys are the data collection method for this cross-sectional research. Surveys help to develop claims about the perceptions of different sections of a population (Halperin & Heath, 2020). Accordingly, this research aims to explore the perceptions of two communities. The sampling approach of this survey method is as follows. The general population is each separate town. The sampling method is both probability and non-probability sampling, specifically probability sampling. Probability sampling is when through random selection, a sample is

selected from a given population (Babbie, 2014). The probability sampling of this research is systematic sampling. Systematic sampling is when “every k th unit in a list is selected for inclusion in the sample” (Babbie, 2014, p. 208). Non-probability sampling is a sampling method in which each member of the given population does not have a random chance of participating in the research (Babbie, 2014). Regarding this research, the non-probability sampling method employed is convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is when the sample from a given population is easily accessible to the researcher (Halperin & Heath, 2020). The sampling frame for the systematic sampling is individual streets within each town. And the sampling frame for convenience sampling is online social-media groups. The sample size of this research is 100 individuals from each town. Regarding systematic sampling, the sampling process is surveying an individual from every second house on numerous streets. The sampling process for convenience sampling is posting the survey in social media groups that the given population are members of.

The survey has three sections, each with a theme and aim and stems from the operationalisation table of this research. The opening section investigates the socio-demographic features of each respondent. By knowing the different socio-demographic characteristics of respondents, we can contrast how their answers vary per such demographic characteristics. Second, the middle section surrounds each respondent’s personal experience with the current housing situation. From how they are personally affected by the current limited housing supply and high rents to their personal experience and fear of homelessness and emigration. Moreover, their concern for how the current housing situation influences their locality and their general perception of the current housing situation. This section aims to understand how respondents are personally affected by the ‘housing crisis’ and their perception of the housing crisis. As one believes, if an individual is personally affected by the housing crisis, it may influence their support or lack of support for local asylum-seeker housing. Therefore, questions surrounding personal experience with the housing crisis are necessary. Lastly, the final section aims to understand whether an individual believes on the backdrop of the housing crisis that local asylum-seeker housing threatens the local housing supply. This will bridge the gap between a respondent’s personal experience with the current housing situation and their perception of local asylum-seeker housing. For example, if an individual has experience dealing with a limited housing supply and high rental costs, will they also believe local asylum-seeker housing threatens the local housing supply? Finally, this section will aim to understand other factors influencing respondents' feeling of threat surrounding local asylum-seeker housing, i.e., cultural, and economic threats. These final questions are important as the

lack of support for local asylum-seeker housing may not be due to a threat towards housing resources but to other factors like a threat to the culture and economics of the locality.

3.3.3. Data Analysis

The data were analysed using hierarchical multivariate regression to test the hypotheses of this research. Multivariate regression was chosen for two reasons. First, it allows several independent variables to be tested against the dependent variable (Field, 2013). Second, as the dependent variable has a continuous scale measurement, and the independent variables have continuous and categorical scale measurements (Field, 2013). Moreover, the dependent and independent Likert-scale data were converted into continuous scale variables². However, the gender, locality and age variables were kept at a categorical measurement. Both the gender and locality variables were transformed into dummy variables. The locality variable with a baseline of 'Bandon', and the gender variable with a baseline of 'Male'. The age variable remained at an ordinal measurement. Furthermore, hierarchical regression was chosen for two reasons. First, it allows one to control for possible mediating variables, which may be within the relationship between the dependent and independent variables (Field, 2013). Second, it allows for comparison between different groups of independent variables. A comparison is necessary for the testing of the hypotheses of this research (Field, 2013).

The outcome of interest in this analysis is the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. More specifically, whether communities perceive local asylum-seeker housing to threaten or create competition over the local housing supply. And whether this perception of threat or competition results in a lack of support for local asylum-seeker housing. The potential explanatory factor for this outcome to occur (independent variable) is the impact of the current housing situation. Specifically, a community's experience and perception of the current housing situation. For example, their experience with high rental prices, low housing supply, homelessness, and emigration. Moreover, their perception of whether Ireland is currently experiencing a national housing crisis.

3.4. Limitations

Quantitative research, specifically survey-based quantitative research, has several limitations. First, regarding survey research, although it is strong on reliability it is weak on validity. Since an individual's personal opinions on topics rarely only take the form of strongly agree, agree,

² Due to a problem of zero cell frequencies, the data was not analysed using ordinal logistic regression.

neutral etc. Therefore, individuals' "survey responses in such cases must be regarded as approximate indicators of what the researchers had in mind when they framed the questions" (Babbie, 2014, p. 280). Second, as illustrated above, survey-based research allows researchers to develop claims about the perceptions of different sections of a population. However, due to time and resource constraints, each given population in this research (i.e., Bandon and Clonakilty) have only 100 sample responses each. Therefore, this is a possible limitation to the generalisability of results across each town's population (Halperin & Heath, 2020).

3.5. Ethical Considerations

Ethical research is significantly important and contains several dimensions. The most important when conducting this research was seeking consent and maintaining confidentiality. Collecting information from participants without informed consent, willingness, and knowledge is unethical. Informed consent means ensuring as a researcher that one informs participants about the purpose of the research. Who they are as a researcher. The procedures that follow and that they have the opportunity at any time to withdraw from the research (Halperin & Heath, 2020). The consent of every respondent was collected at the beginning of the research to ensure this research remained ethical. Furthermore, to ensure strong ethical dimensions to this research, one ensured confidentiality was maintained at all times. Confidentiality is protecting the right to privacy of the respondents. This relates to what information the respondent feels comfortable sharing, the respondent's identity, and the respondent's right to anonymity (Halperin & Heath, 2020). Most notably, one ensured throughout and following the research, that no information about the survey respondents was shared with outside individuals for purposes other than research (Halperin & Heath, 2020). Lastly, there were ethical considerations one had to consider as the researcher. They included avoiding bias, incorrect reporting and inappropriate use of information. Avoiding bias means deliberately withholding information or highlighting untrue information. Inaccurate reporting is when a researcher describes findings in a way that distorts them to serve their or someone else's benefit (Halperin & Heath, 2020). And finally, inappropriate use of information is "the use of information in a way that directly or indirectly affects participants adversely" (Halperin & Heath, 2020, p. 180).

4. Analysis

The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate and report the main findings of this research. Specifically, to provide evidence to accept or reject each hypothesis and provide an answer to each sub-question. All of which will amount to achieving the goal of answering the research question, “*What impact does the current housing situation have on community perception of local asylum-seeker housing in small towns in Ireland?*” This will be accomplished through a hierarchical multivariate regression, which will be substantiated by bar and pie charts.

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

Before beginning the main analysis of the data, the descriptive statistics of all variables were calculated. Descriptive statistics provide a clear summary of all the basic information of the variables in the dataset. This allows for a clearer insight into the data and allows one to see possible patterns between different variables (Field, 2013). A report of the descriptive statistics of this research can be found in *Table 1*. The table illustrates that 207 observations were recorded for both towns, 105 for Bandon and 102 for Clonakilty. Regarding social-demographic characteristics, both samples of each town are relatively representative and normal. Across each age group, both samples are similarly representative. However, they differ slightly regarding more 18 to 24-year-olds being represented in Bandon at 51.4 per cent compared to 25.5 per cent in Clonakilty. Such a difference can be explained by the availability of respondents to the researcher. Furthermore, regarding gender, both towns are similarly represented, with 78.7 per cent being female (83.8 per cent for Bandon and 71.6 per cent for Clonakilty) and 21.3 per cent being male (15.2 per cent for Bandon and 27.5 per cent for Clonakilty). Altogether, no missing values were recorded for either town. The measures of central tendency (Mean, Median and Mode) of each variable for both towns together are similar to the same values for each individual town. This demonstrates that concerning each variable, there is little average difference between both towns together and each separate town. Likewise, the measures of dispersion (Standard Deviation and Range) for each variable are similar between both towns taken together and each individual town. Thus, the descriptive statistics offer the possibility that support for local asylum-seeker housing is not influenced by whether a town does or does not have already existing asylum-seeker housing. This will be further investigated in the following sections.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Town	Variable	Obs.	Missing	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Dev	Range
Both	Support	207	0	3.64	4.00	4	1.245	4
	Bandon	207	0	.51	1.00	1	.501	1
	Male	207	0	.21	0	0	.410	1
	Cost of Living	207	0	4.67	5.00	5	.776	4
	Contact with Asylum- Seekers	207	0	2.22	2.00	1	1.354	4
	Age	207	0	2.70	3.00	1	1.654	5
	Perception of Housing Situation	207	0	4.79	5.00	5	.594	4
	Experience with Housing Situation	207	0	3.11	3.14	4	.871	4
	Homeless	207	0	1.48	1.00	1	1.088	4
	Worry others homeless	207	0	4.01	4.00	4	1.031	4
	Worry Others Emigration	207	0	4.11	4.00	5	1.048	4
	Threat to housing supply	207	0	3.76	4.00	4	1.162	4
	Competition over housing supply	207	0	3.54	4.00	4	1.156	4
	Threat of new Culture & Religions	207	0	3.76	4.00	4	1.162	4
	Threat to Financial Resources	207	0	3.09	3.00	3	1.264	4

Band	Support	105	0	3.48	4.00	4	1.287	4
on	Male	105	0	.15	.00	0	.361	1
	Cost of Living	105	0	4.72	5.00	5	.700	4
	Contact with Asylum - Seekers	105	0	1.82	1.00	1	1.090	4
	Age	105	0	2.32	1.00	1	1.566	5
	Perception of Housing Situation	105	0	4.82	5.00	5	.551	4
	Experience with Housing Situation	105	0	3.16	3.29	4	.800	4
	Homeless	105	0	1.33	1.00	1	.967	4
	Worry others homeless	105	0	3.95	4.00	4	1.013	4
	Worry Others	105	0	4.11	4.00	4	1.077	4
	Emigration							
	Threat to housing supply	105	0	3.82	4.00	4	1.036	4
	Competition over housing supply	105	0	3.63	4.00	4	1.103	4
	Threat of new Culture & Religion	105	0	3.72	4.00	4	1.139	4
	Threat to Financial Resources	105	0	3.10	3.00	3	1.208	4

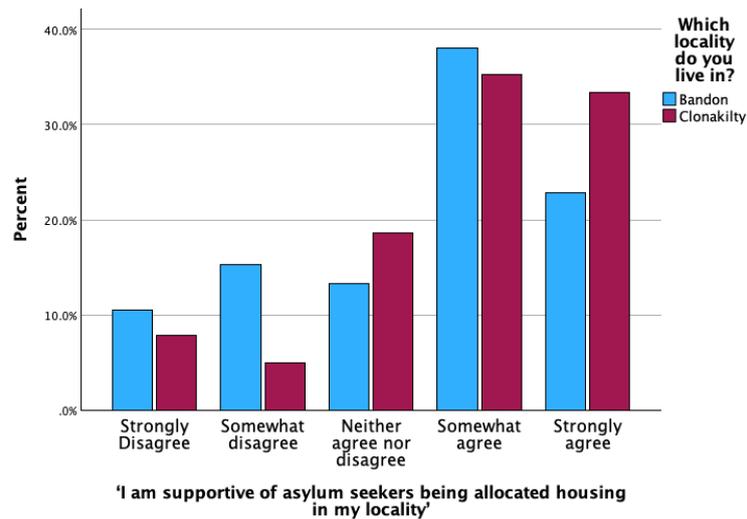
Clona	Support	102	0	3.81	4.00	4	1.183	4
kilty	Male	102	0	.27	0	0	.448	1
	Cost of Living	102	0	4.61	5.00	5	.846	4
	Contact with Asylum- Seekers	102	0	2.64	2.50	1	1.474	4
	Age	102	0	3.08	3.00	1	1.663	5
	Perception of Housing Situation	102	0	4.75	5.00	5	.636	4
	Experience with Housing Situation	102	0	3.06	3.00	3	.940	4
	Homeless	102	0	1.63	1.00	1	1.185	4
	Worry others homeless	102	0	4.08	4.00	4	1.050	4
	Worry Others Emigration	102	0	4.11	4.00	4	1.024	4
	Threat to housing supply	102	0	3.75	4.00	4	1.066	4
	Competition over housing supply	102	0	3.45	4.00	4	1.207	4
	Threat of new culture & religions	102	0	3.79	4.00	4	1.189	4
	Threat to Financial Resources	102	0	3.08	3.00	3	1.325	4

4.2. Visual insight into the Data

To understand the differences between and within the different variables bar and pie charts were computed. Such charts will provide a visual representation of the data. And will allow one to answer several sub-questions of the research. As well as provide much-needed insight to substantiate and add to the findings from the main analysis of the research hierarchical multivariate regression. First, a key factor of this research is whether a difference in support for local asylum-seeker housing arises between towns with and without an existing asylum-seeker centre. The below bar chart provides a visual insight into this question. As one can see from the chart, both towns display similar results. Both carry most of their perception of local

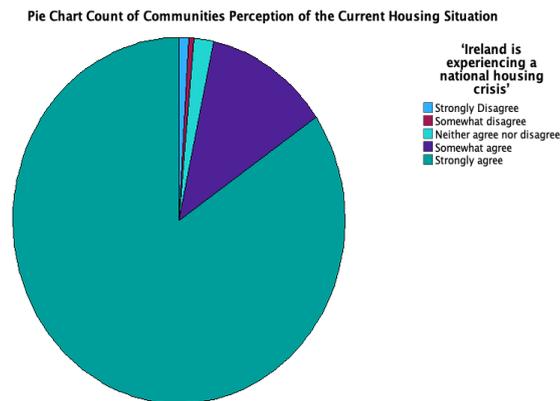
asylum-seeker housing in either ‘somewhat agree’ or ‘strongly agree’. Likewise, both display similar results in the ‘disagree’ and ‘neutral’ categories. Therefore, one can conclude from this chart a difference in support does not arise between towns with or without an already existing asylum-seeker centre.

Figure 2. Communities’ Level of Support for Local Asylum-Seeker Housing



Second, the bar charts (as seen in *Figure 3* in the appendix) illustrate both communities' experience of the current housing situation. A complete overview of both communities' experience of the current housing situation is important to understand before investigating how such experience impacts their level of support for local asylum-seeker housing. It is clear from the bar charts that both communities have had a considerably negative experience with the current housing situation. From their own experience with high rental costs and difficulty finding a home to personal worry about homelessness and having to emigrate. In addition, to worry for individuals in their community experiencing homelessness and emigration. It is clear from these charts that communities have experienced high rental prices (at 52.2 per cent) and have had difficulties finding a home to buy or rent (at 51.2 per cent) as well as a worry surrounding having to emigrate (at 44.5 per cent). Moreover, communities have experienced anxiety about local individuals becoming homeless (at 80.7 per cent) or experiencing emigration (at 83.1 per cent). However, communities' experience with homelessness (at 7.7 per cent) and worry about becoming homeless themselves (at 24.2 per cent) is low. The below hierarchical multivariate regression will illustrate whether this negative experience with the current housing situation impacts communities' perception of local asylum-seeker housing.

Figure 4. Charts illustrating Communities Perception of the Current Housing Situation



We need to understand the communities' perception of the current housing situation before we can interpret the regression to understand the relationship between their perception of the current housing situation and their level of support for local asylum-seeker housing. From the above pie chart, it is undoubtedly clear communities strongly agree Ireland is experiencing a national housing crisis. Therefore, it is clear that communities have a negative perception of the current housing situation in Ireland. This insight will help answer a sub-question and substantiate and add to the findings from the research's main analysis of hierarchical multivariate regression.

4.3. Hierarchical Multivariate Regression

To help answer the research question, a hierarchical multivariate regression was run. This hierarchical multivariate regression aims to investigate the relationship between the dependent variable of *'Support'* and the independent variables. The independent variables are split into three sections based on the survey and the overall aims of this research. First, the locality dummy variable 'Bandon' was solely included to assess whether the presence of existing asylum-seeker housing influences a community's level of support for local asylum-seeker housing. Second, a set of independent variables measuring communities' experience and perception of the current housing situation. The experience variables were transformed into one index variable to provide an average of all experience variables. Allowing one to test the average experience individuals have with the current housing situation. Additionally, individual experience variables, which were highly correlated with the dependent variable, were chosen for interaction effects alongside the locality variable 'Bandon'. Such interaction effects allowed one to assess only the experience variables from the town of Bandon, which had a possible impact on the dependent variable. Moreover, this allowed for an insight into how individual elements of the experience of the current housing situation, i.e., homelessness, impacted

localities specifically. The third section includes a set of independent variables investigating whether there are other reasons, i.e., cultural, religious, economic or security threats, which could be impacting the communities' support for local asylum-seeker housing. Only two possible other reasons for threat, i.e., cultural, religious, and financial, were chosen for the regression as they were the only variables significantly correlated with the dependent variable. Finally, a set of independent variables outlining the different demographic elements of the communities were included. Such variables are important as they provide a more detailed analysis of the data, i.e., if levels of support for local asylum-seeker housing differ across different age groups or genders.

4.3.1. Assumptions

Assumptions must be satisfied to ensure the results of this research are reliable and valid (Field, 2013). All assumptions for this regression were satisfied except for two; the assumption of no outliers and no multicollinearity. According to the standardised method of identifying outliers, no outliers exist within the regression. Due to no figures of standardised residuals falling outside -3 and 3 (Field, 2013). Although, according to the Mahalanobis Distance method of identifying outliers, several outliers exist within the regression. However, when these outliers were excluded from the regression, no significant changes in the data occurred. Moreover, all other assumptions are satisfied. Therefore, the outliers do not have a large enough effect on the analysis to warrant excluding them. The assumption of no multicollinearity was violated due to the inclusion of the interaction effects. Such interaction effects are highly correlated with their corresponding independent variable, 'Bandon'. Therefore, this assumption violation can be ignored. Moreover, such interaction effects are necessary to illustrate the importance of the context-specific locality variable for answering this research. Therefore, it is sufficient to ignore the violation of the assumption of multicollinearity.

4.3.2. Results

The results section begins by evaluating each possible independent variable of this analysis. This evaluation occurred by assessing each independent variable's Pearson correlation coefficient to evaluate which had the strongest effect on the dependent variable. Followed by a review of the overall model fit of the hierarchical multivariate regression of this research. The overall model fit review is necessary to assess whether the chosen regression is suitable for the analysis. As well as evaluate the predictive power of the overall model and if each model provides an accurate comparison. Therefore, ensuring the analysis results are sufficient (Field,

2013). Following the model fit review, a table and summary of the results of the hierarchical multivariate regression are provided. The summary is divided per relevant hypothesis, and the table per model.

4.3.2.1. Evaluation of independent variables

Pearson's correlation coefficient (as seen in *Figure 5* in the appendix) evaluates the effect of each independent variable on the dependent variable 'Support'. Regarding this analysis, this evaluation has three purposes. First, to select which variables to include in the necessary interaction effects of this analysis. This selection was based on which of the 'experience of the current housing situation' variables had the strongest correlation with the dependent variable. A coefficient value close to plus or minus 1 indicates a strong correlation with the dependent variable. The variables chosen for these interaction effects were 'worry about others homeless' with a value of .333 and 'worry about others emigration' with a value of .231. Both of these display a strong positive correlation with the dependent variable 'Support'. Similarly, the variable 'homelessness' has a positive but not as strong Pearson's value of .035. Second, the Pearson's correlation was used to assess which of the other possible reasons for threat variables had the strongest correlation with the dependent variable. Both the 'Culture & Religion' and 'Financial' variables were chosen. They were selected based on the same criteria illustrated above, with 'Culture & Religion' having a strong positive correlation coefficient of .658 and 'Financial' having a negative but strong correlation coefficient of -.531 with the dependent variable 'Support'. This selection was chosen to reduce the number of unnecessary variables included in the analysis. Finally, Pearson's correlation was used to select which variables to input first into the hierarchical regression. Those with the strongest correlation were inputted first into each separate model.

4.3.2.2. Reviewing the Overall Model Fit

Before the interpretation of the regression can begin, all models of the regression need to be evaluated. The evaluation of the models is achieved by looking at the R squared, adjusted R squared, the F-ratio and F-change (Field, 2013). In the first model, to determine the sole influence of the locality variable, only the dummy variable 'Bandon' was included. The Bandon variable explained a small section of the dependent variable's variance ($R^2 = .018$, Adj. $R^2 = .014$, $F(1, 205) = 3.853$, $p = .051$). Only 1.8% of the dependent variable's variance is explained by the control variable 'Bandon'. The explanatory power of the model can be explained by the F-change statistic. The explanatory power of this first initial model was 3.853, indicating that

while controlling for the locality variable ‘Bandon’ the explanatory power of the model is 3.853.

In the second model, following the addition of the perception, experience, and experience locality interaction variables, there was an improvement in the model fit ($R^2 = .095$, $\text{Adj. } R^2 = .068$, $F(5, 200) = 3.399$, $p < .006$). However, regardless of this improvement, still, a small percentage of the variance in the dependent variable can be explained by the addition of these other demographic control variables at 9.5%. The F-change statistic reduced in improvement compared to the last model with 3.399. This demonstrates that while controlling for the experience, perception, and interaction variables, there was a decrease in the explanatory power of the model. In the third model, the communities’ perception of threat and perception of competition over the local housing supply variables were added to the model. Such an inclusion allowed for a significant improvement in the overall model fit ($R^2 = .333$, $\text{Adj. } R^2 = .306$, $F(2, 198) = 35.200$, $p < .001$). Unlike the previous model, the F-change statistic, when controlling for housing supply threat and competition variables, indicated an increase in improvement in the explanatory power of the model with 35.200. Most importantly, the variance of the dependent variable, which can be explained by the experience and perception variables, increased to 33.3%. This is a large improvement in explained variance compared to the previous two models.

In the fourth model, upon the inclusion of the other possible reasons for threat variables (of which were highly correlated with the dependent variable) ‘Culture and Religion’ and ‘Financial’ a significant improvement in the overall model fit was seen ($R^2 = .570$, $\text{Adj. } R^2 = .548$, $F(2, 196) = 54.167$, $p < .001$). The F-change statistic, while adding the ‘Cultural & Religious’ and ‘Financial’ variables to the model, saw the explanatory power of the model rise to 54.167. It allowed the variance explained by the dependent variable to improve to 57.0%, a significant improvement from the last model. Therefore, the inclusion of the ‘Culture and Religion’ and ‘Financial’ variables made a significant improvement in the model. Finally, with the inclusion of the other demographic variables, the overall model fit deteriorated ($R^2 = .575$, $\text{Adj. } R^2 = .543$, $F(4, 192) = .487$, $p = .745$). As the variance explained by the dependent variable decreased to 54.3%. The F-change statistic demonstrated that the addition of the other possible reasons for threat variables saw the explanatory power of the model significantly disimprove by 0.487. Consequently, the final model shows the insertion of other demographic factors disimproved the model considerably. Therefore, compared to the variables in the previous models, demographic factors like gender, age, economic standing and contact with asylum-seekers have less impact on the community perception of local asylum-seeker housing.

4.3.2.3. Interpretation of the Hierarchical Multivariate Regression

Figure 6. Hierarchical Multivariate Regression on Support for Asylum-Seeker Housing

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
(Constant)	3.814*** (.001)	2.361** (.002)	3.360*** (.001)	2.195*** (.001)	2.038** (.002)
Bandon	-.338 (.051)	-.139 .833	-.018 (.975)	-.442 (.338)	-.411 (.386)
Perception of Housing Situation		.179 (.252)	.277* (.041)	.102 (.357)	.066 (.601)
Experience with Housing Situation		.197 (.086)	.223* (.026)	.200* (.015)	.169 (.070)
Bandon*Hom eless		-.358** (.007)	-.244* (.033)	-.134 (.150)	-.123 (.205)
Bandon*Othe rs Homeless		.272* (.049)	.096 (.427)	.095 (.329)	.091 (.366)
Bandon*Othe rs Emigration		-.202 (.121)	-.086 (.447)	-.013 (.888)	-.012 (.895)
Threat to Housing Supply			-.520*** (.001)	-.153* (.043)	-.153* (.045)

Competition over housing supply				-.159*	.112*	.106
				(.018)	(.048)	(.067)
Threat of new Culture & Religion					.438***	.433***
					(.001)	(.001)
Threat to Financial Resources					-.277***	-.287***
					(.001)	(.001)
Male						.071
						(.654)
Cost of living						.086
						(.342)
Contact with Asylum - Seekers						.048
						(.332)
Age						-.017
						(.697)

R2	.018	.095	.333	.570	.575
Adj. R2	.014	.068	.306	.548	.543
N	207	207	207	207	207

H1: Due to their negative experience of the current housing situation, communities are unsupportive of local asylum-seeker housing.

As is shown in the bar charts of *Figure 3* (in the appendix), both communities have extensive negative experiences with the current housing situation. From experience with high rental costs to difficulty finding an affordable home to buy or rent. Moreover, communities display worry for others in their locality experiencing homeless and emigration. As well as personal worry about themselves having to emigrate due to an inability to find an affordable home to buy or rent. Model 2 provides a necessary outline of how such experience impacts the communities' level of support for local asylum-seeker housing. The experience index variable outlines an average of all the individual variables which measure a community's experience of the current housing situation. The index varies from a negative experience to a positive experience of the current housing situation. However, the experience index variable does not have a statistically significant relationship with the dependent variable ($\beta = 0.197, p = 0.086$)³. Consequently, the average community's experience of the current housing situation does not influence the communities' perception of local asylum-seeker housing.

The experience index is broken down into different interaction variables. Between the dummy locality variable 'Bandon' (chosen specifically due to its lack of an existing asylum-seeker centre) and experience variables. From this breakdown, different inferences can be drawn. First, there is a significant interaction effect between Bandon and an individual's experience of homelessness on the dependent variable of 'Support' ($\beta = -.358, p < 0.007$)⁴. This negative interaction effect indicates that for Bandon, a one-point increase in experience of homelessness results in a -.358 decrease in the level of support for local asylum-seeker housing. Therefore, for the town of Bandon, having experience with homelessness will result in a more unsupportive perception of local asylum-seeker housing. Similarly, there is a significant interaction effect between Bandon and the independent variable of 'I worry that others in my locality will become homeless' on the dependent variable of 'Support' ($\beta = .272, p < 0.049$)⁵. However, unlike the previous interaction, this interaction has a positive effect on the dependent variable. Therefore, for the town of Bandon, a worry that others in the locality will become homeless will result in a .272 increase in the level of support for local asylum-seeker housing. Thus, communities' experience with the current housing situation does not result in them

³ holding all other variables constant.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

having a more unsupportive perception of local asylum-seeker housing. Aside from individuals who have experienced homelessness. Therefore, one can reject the first hypothesis.

H2: Due to their negative perception of the current housing situation, communities are unsupportive of local asylum-seeker housing.

As was identified in *Figure 4* communities' have a negative perception of the current housing situation as they agree that it is a 'housing crisis'. However, how does this negative perception of the current housing situation influence communities' level of support for local asylum-seeker housing? Model 2 of the hierarchical multivariate regression shows that the perception variable also does not have a statistically significant relationship with the dependent variable ($\beta = 0.179$, $p = 0.252$)⁶. This means communities' negative perception of the current housing situation does not influence their level of support for local asylum-seeker housing. Therefore, one can also reject hypothesis two. As there is statistically no relationship between the perception of a current housing situation and the level of support for local asylum-seeker housing.

H3: Communities who perceive local asylum-seeker housing to be a threat to the local housing supply are less supportive of local asylum-seeker housing.

Whether communities perceive local asylum-seeker housing to be a threat to the local housing supply is outlined in model three. Contrary to the above analysis, the variable measuring threat does have a statistically significant relationship with the dependent variable 'Support' ($\beta = -.520$, $p < 0.001$)⁷. Additionally, such a relationship has a negative effect on the dependent variable. This means that a one-point increase in the independent variable 'Threat' results in a decrease of $-.520$ in the dependent variable 'Support'. Thus, the more a community believes local asylum-seeker housing would threaten the amount of housing available to local individuals, the less support there is for local asylum-seeker housing. Therefore, one can accept hypothesis three.

H4: Communities who perceive local asylum-seeker housing to create competition over the local housing supply are less supportive of local asylum-seeker housing.

Model three provides an overview of whether communities believe local asylum-seeker housing would create competition between asylum-seekers and individuals over the local housing supply. Similar to the perception of threat variable, the variable measuring the

⁶ holding all other variables constant.

⁷ Ibid.

perception of competition has a statistically significant negative relationship with the dependent variable 'Support' ($\beta = -.159, p < 0.018$)⁸. Outlining that a one-point increase in the independent variable 'Competition' results in a decrease of -.159 in the dependent variable 'Support'. Consequently, if a community believes local asylum-seeker housing will create competition between asylum-seekers and local individuals over the local housing supply, the more unsupportive communities are of local asylum-seeker housing. Therefore, it is clear that the communities of this research, due to their perception of competition, will be less supportive of local asylum-seeker housing. For that reason, one can accept hypothesis four.

H5: Due to other reasons for threat (i.e., economic, cultural, security), communities are unsupportive of local asylum-seeker housing.

Model four provides an alternative answer to what communities' perception of local asylum-seeker housing depends on. Through analysing the correlation diagnostics of all five alternative reasons for threat variables, i.e., crime, cultural and religious differences, financial, jobs and local services. Two alternative reasons for threat were found to be highly correlated with the dependent variable and were thus inputted into the analysis. The positive influence of cultural and religious differences and a threat to financial resources. First, the variable measuring whether communities perceive local asylum-seeker housing to have a positive influence on the locality (due to the introduction of new cultures and religions) is statistically significant with the dependent variable 'Support' ($\beta = .438, p < 0.001$)⁹. More specifically, this independent variable has a positive influence on the dependent variable. Therefore, this demonstrates that a one-point increase in communities' perception that local asylum-seeker housing would have a positive influence on the community (due to the introduction of new cultures and religions) results in an increase of .438 in support for local asylum-seeker housing. All of this indicates that the more communities perceive local asylum-seeker housing to have a positive influence on the locality (due to the introduction of new cultures and religions), the more supportive communities are of local asylum-seeker housing.

In contrast, the variable measuring threat regarding financial resources paints a different picture. Similarly, to the cultural and religious threat, the financial threat variable is statistically significant with the dependent variable 'Support' ($\beta = -.277, p < 0.001$)¹⁰. However, the financial threat variable has a negative influence on the dependent variable. Meaning that a

⁸ holding all other variables constant.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

one-point increase in the independent financial threat variable results in a decrease of -.277 in the dependent variable. This can be interpreted as meaning that during the current cost of living crisis, more communities perceive local asylum-seeker housing to be a threat to their financial resources. The more unsupportive of local asylum-seeker housing communities will be. The above paragraph demonstrates that cultural and religious difference was not seen as a threat by communities which would result in a negative perception of local asylum-seeker housing. However, the financial threat did result in a lack of support for local asylum-seeker housing. Therefore, due to the perception of financial threat, one can accept hypothesis five.

H6: Communities which already have a local asylum-seeker centre are more supportive of local asylum-seeker housing.

Model 1 illustrates the relationship between the independent dummy variable ‘Bandon’ and the dependent variable ‘Support’. This model allows for an overview of whether locality plays a significant role in determining support or lack of support for local asylum-seeker housing. From this model, it is clear the locality variable ‘Bandon’ has a statistically insignificant relationship with the dependent variable ($\beta = -.338, p = .051$)¹¹. Therefore, it is clear from Model 1 that the level of support for local asylum-seeker housing is not influenced by being from a specific locality. For that reason, whether an individual is from ‘Bandon’ or ‘Clonakilty’ does not determine whether they are more supportive or less supportive of local asylum-seeker housing. This finding from the regression is supported by the bar chart in *Figure 1*, which illustrates that the level of support is the same across both towns. Therefore, from both regression model one and the bar chart in *Figure 1*, one can reject hypothesis six.

The findings from the analysis are as follows, whether a community has or does not have an already existing asylum-seeker centre does not influence their perception of local asylum-seeker housing. Moreover, regardless of both communities’ experiences and perceptions of the current housing situation. This experience and perception do not impact the communities’ perception of local asylum-seeker housing. However, a communities’ perception of threat and competition over the local housing supply and the perception of increased competition over financial resources can lead to communities being unsupportive of local asylum-seeker housing. In contrast, the possibility of the introduction of new religions and cultures into the

¹¹ holding all other variables constant.

locality can lead to a supportive perception of local asylum-seeker housing. The meaning of these findings will be discussed further in the following section.

5. Discussion & Conclusion

The goal of this chapter is to outline an answer to each sub-question. As well as the main question of this research “*What impact does the current housing situation have on community perception of local asylum-seeker housing in small towns in Ireland?*” Furthermore, the answer to the main research question will be linked back to the theoretical foundation of this research. Moreover, the significance and limitations of this research will be illustrated.

Foremost, an answer to each sub-question of this research will be provided. By doing so, a sufficient and logical answer to the research question can be constructed. As outlined by Hearne (2022), the current housing situation has a detrimental impact on individuals in Ireland due to declining private and public housing supplies, rising rents, mass emigration and homelessness. The findings of this research confirm that evidence of this impact is visible within the communities of this analysis. Therefore, answers to the sub-questions ‘*How do communities experience the current housing situation?*’ and ‘*Do communities perceive the current housing situation as a national housing crisis?*’ can be provided. Both communities had considerable experience with having difficulty finding an affordable home to buy or rent and with high rental costs. Additionally, the communities experience worry for themselves and others having to emigrate due to an inability to find an affordable home to buy or rent. Both communities also worry for others in their locality experiencing homelessness but have no personal experience or worry about homelessness themselves. Furthermore, both communities unanimously agreed that the current housing situation in Ireland is a housing crisis. Therefore, this illustrates that the communities of this analysis have a negative perception of the current housing situation. This evidence of a negative experience and perception of the current housing situation stemming from this research substantiates and expands upon Hearne’s (2022) outline of the current housing situation. As it illustrates how the current housing situation specifically affects small towns in Ireland.

The sub-question, ‘*What other factors are influencing the perception of local asylum-seeker housing?*’ was necessary to ensure an accurate answer to the research question could be provided. The analysis found that three of Mudde’s (2012) five anti-immigrant frames are impacting the communities’ perception of local asylum-seeker housing, aside from the current housing situation (Hampshire, 2013). First, communities’ positive perception of the introduction of new cultures and religions to the locality leads to communities’ having a

supportive perception of local asylum-seeker housing. However, communities do believe local asylum-seeker housing would be a threat to the financial resources of the locality. For that reason, only the economic element of Mudde's (2012) theory can be put forward as an alternative reason (other than the current housing situation) for this manifestation of feelings of threat (Hampshire, 2013). Finally, an answer to the sub-question, '*What effect does the presence of existing asylum-seeker housing have on a community's level of support for local asylum-seeker housing?*' is as follows. As seen in the regression, whether an individual is from Bandon does not influence their level of support for local asylum-seeker housing. Additionally, from the bar chart in *Figure 1*, it is clear that no difference in the level of support emerges between Bandon and Clonakilty. Therefore, no the presence of existing asylum-seeker housing does not affect a community's level of support for local asylum-seeker housing.

Through answering, the sub-questions and hypotheses of this research, an answer to the research question "*What impact does the current housing situation have on community perception of local asylum-seeker housing in small towns in Ireland?*" was developed. Additionally, evidence of the theoretical foundation of the research, GTT and ITT, specifically realistic threat theory, was confirmed and substantiated. Both negative experiences and perceptions of the current housing situation do not impact the communities' perception of local asylum-seeker housing. However, the current housing situation does manifest in feelings of threat and competition over the local housing supply. As seen with previous literature on GTT and ITT, the ingroup (the communities), due to their negative experience of the current housing situation, perceive the outgroup (asylum-seekers) as a threat to their already scarce housing supply. The ingroup perceives a competition over housing resources with the outgroup. This results in the ingroup favouring their housing interests over the housing interests of the outgroup (Stephan & Stephan, 1996; Blalock, 1967). This ingroup favouring of housing interests manifests in communities having less support for local asylum-seeker housing. The perception of threat and competition is significant as, with realistic threat theory, it merely needs to be perceived as such for a prejudicial reaction to occur (Stephan & Stephan, 1996). Significantly, the findings of this research contribute and further the existing literature and theorisation of this topic. As with Kwak & Wallace (2018) and Vogt Isaksen (2019), the presence of the perception of immigrant threat has been previously researched during financial downturns. Therefore, this research contributes a new area of analysis to the existing literature by testing for realistic threat theory during a national housing crisis. To assess the impact of housing shortages on the manifestation of feelings of threat between ingroups and outgroups.

The above research has both scientific and societal significance. Scientifically, its importance is evident for two reasons. First, it is one of the first substantial investigations into the influence of the current housing situation on the public perception of local asylum-seeker housing in Ireland. Research that in the past has focused on financial or security-related impacts on public perception. Therefore, it fills a significant research gap. Second, and most importantly, it is one of few extensive examinations of the perception of towns on asylum-seeker housing in Ireland. Previously, research has focused on the country as a whole or individual cities, avoiding towns. Therefore, this investigation is scientifically significant as it sheds light on under-researched but essential cases. Fundamentally, this research is societally significant given the current societal relevance of this research topic in Ireland. This research aimed to understand the root cause of the recent anti-asylum seeker housing protests that have been taking place in communities across Ireland. As one strongly believes that without understanding the root cause of such protests, no solutions can be proposed. A root cause which we now can recognise as a manifestation of feelings of threat and competition over the local housing supply and financial resources of communities. Therefore, this research is highly societally significant, particularly for communities in Ireland.

Nevertheless, this research has limitations. First, regardless of both towns having small populations, only over 200 individuals from both towns were surveyed. Therefore, this limits the generalizability of results across both towns. Second, due to geographical constraints, both towns selected for analysis were in similar geographical areas, thus, limiting the generalizability of results for other towns across Ireland. Finally, a quantitative analysis was chosen to reach a larger sample size. However, this is also a limitation of this research because a qualitative analysis may have offered a more information-rich analysis. Hence, one would recommend the following to future researchers of this topic. First, to extend the sample size to have higher generalizability of results. Second, to increase the number of towns as populations of research and ensure such towns are in geographically different parts of the country. Finally, choose a mixed-methods analysis approach with qualitative and quantitative research methods to achieve generalisable and information-rich results.

The above research illustrates that the current housing situation impacts the communities' perception of local asylum-seeker housing through the manifestation of feelings of threat and competition over the local housing supply. Aside from the current housing situation, this research also offers financial threat as another possible reason for the lack of community support for local asylum-seeker housing. Therefore, this research has achieved its aim of

establishing the reasons for the recent rise in anti-asylum seeker housing protests in Ireland. The following chapter will illustrate policy recommendations to address such causes and halt this wave of anti-asylum seeker housing protests.

6. Policy Recommendations

The above research has aimed to investigate the root causes of the recent and rising problem of anti-asylum seeker housing protests in communities across Ireland. This chapter will outline the policy recommendations that have stemmed from such research.

Through investigating the recent anti-asylum seeker housing movement in Ireland, one key policy recommendation emerged, the need for community consultation. Across the country, community consultation on local asylum-seeker housing has been a demand echoed by protestors and migrant and asylum-seeker advocacy groups (Halloran, 2023). The type of community consultation this paper recommends has two elements. First, it would involve informing communities about local asylum-seeker housing before asylum-seekers are located in a community. Second, providing information to communities about what this allocation will entail for asylum-seekers and the community. However, a quote from the Irish Taoiseach Leo Varadkar encapsulates an important element of this policy recommendation on community consultation that needs to be highlighted. “I think we need to be very careful not to make the mistake of confusing consultation and information with communities (...) the idea that any community can have a veto on the kind of people who get to live in their area. That’s not right” (Devane, 2022). Community consultation on local asylum-seeker housing is merely to inform and provide information. It does not allow communities to veto local asylum-seeker housing.

The second policy recommendation put forward by this research paper is to address the financial and housing concerns of the communities such protests are taking place in. To address such concerns, improved policy in both areas needs to occur. The findings of this research illustrate feelings of threat and competition over the local housing supply and financial resources as two reasons for the lack of support for local asylum-seeker housing. Moreover, most anti-asylum seeker housing protests are held in largely working-class or disadvantaged communities (Fetherstonhaugh, 2023). Such communities feel the current strain of financial and housing pressure. This pressure would be susceptible to manifesting into feelings of threat and competition over housing and financial resources. Therefore, such communities need increased support through adequate housing and financial policies. For example, an increase in affordable social and private housing, rental protections for those in the private rental market

and increased homelessness support services (Hearne, 2022). Without the complete transformation of the current housing policy and increased financial investment, these communities will continue to be forgotten. This abandonment will manifest in feelings of threat and competition, as seen in the recent protests.

Therefore, the policy recommendations of this research paper are community consultation through informing and information as well as improved financial support for disadvantaged communities. With a complete overhaul of the current governmental housing policy. Through increased affordable social and private housing, rental protections, and improved homelessness support services (Hearne, 2022).

7. Bibliography

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8. Appendix

Operationalisation Table

Theoretical Concept	Definition	Attributes	Source of Data	Indicators	Operational Definition
Current Housing Situation (independent variable)	A nationwide lack of affordable quality homes resulting in large scale homelessness and mass emigration due to inadequate and preferential governmental housing policies of privatisation, commodification and financialization in favour of 'vulture funds, corporate landlords, the banks and private developers' (Healy & Goldrick-Kelly, 2018; Hearne, 2017; Hearne, 2022).	Rental Prices	Survey	Likert scale examining respondents' experience with high rental prices (Hearne, 2022).	Individuals are affected by the current housing situation based on their experience or lack of experience with high rental prices.
		Housing Supply		Likert scale to measure the degree of difficulty respondents have when finding a house to rent (Hearne, 2022).	Individuals are affected by the current housing situation due to the degree of difficulty in finding a house to rent.
				Likert scale to measure the degree of difficulty respondents have finding a house to buy (Hearne, 2022).	Individuals are affected by the current housing situation due to the degree of difficulty in finding a house to buy.
				Likert scales examining respondents' reasons for not being able to find an	For a variety of reasons from lack of housing supply and

			affordable home to buy or rent (Hearne, 2022).	high rents to insufficient economic resources, individuals are unable to find an affordable home to buy or rent and are thus affected by the current housing situation.
		Homelessness	Likert scale examining respondents experience with homelessness due to their inability to find an affordable home (Hearne, 2022).	Individuals are affected by the current housing situation due to their experience with homelessness as a result of their inability to find an affordable home.
			Likert scale examining respondents fear of becoming homeless due to their inability to find an affordable home (Hearne, 2022).	Individuals are affected by the current housing situation due to their fear of becoming homeless as a result of their inability to find an affordable home.

				Likert scale examining respondents fear that others in their locality will become homeless due to their inability to find an affordable home (Hearne, 2022; Dennison & Vranceanu, 2022).	Individuals are affected by the current housing situation due to their fear that others in their locality will become homeless due to their inability to find an affordable home.
		Emigration		Likert scale examining respondents fear of having to emigrate due to their inability to find an affordable home (Hearne, 2022).	Individuals are affected by the current housing situation due to their fear of having to emigrate due to their inability to find an affordable home.
				Likert scale examining respondents fear that others in their locality will have to emigrate due to their inability to find an affordable home (Hearne, 2022; Dennison & Vranceanu, 2022).	Individuals are affected by the current housing situation due to their fear of others in their locality having to emigrate due to their inability to find an

					affordable home.
		Perception of the housing crisis		Likert scale examining respondents perception of the housing crisis (Stephan and Stephan, 1996)	The level at which individuals perceive the current housing situation to be real or not, impacts how much their perceptions are influenced by it
Community perceptions of local asylum seeker housing (dependent variable)	Individuals perception of the allocation of asylum seeker housing in their local community (Zorlu, 2016)	Supportive perception of local asylum seeker housing	Survey	Likert scale analysing the degree of respondents support for local asylum seeker housing (Zorlu, 2016).	Individuals have a positive and supportive perception of the allocation of asylum seeker housing in their local community.
		Unsupportive perception of local asylum seeker housing		Likert scale analysing the degree of respondents support for local asylum seeker housing (Zorlu, 2016).	Individuals have a negative and unsupportive perception of the allocation of asylum seeker housing in their local community.
Threat	Realistic Threat: (Perceived) competition	Housing resources threatened	Survey	Likert scale analysing respondents perceived or	An individual in the community'

	<p>n over scarce resources i.e., houses and the perception that these resources are threatened by outsiders (Velasco Gonzalez, Verkuyten, Weesie & Poppe, 2008)</p>			<p>lack of perceived feelings of threat over housing resources (Velasco Gonzalez, Verkuyten, Weesie & Poppe, 2008).</p>	<p>s perception/lack of perception of competition over scarce housing resources and believe/in believe that such housing resources are threatened by asylum seekers being located in their local community.</p>
		<p>Competition over housing resources</p>		<p>Likert scale analysing respondents perceived or lack of perceived feelings of competition over housing resources with asylum seekers (Velasco Gonzalez, Verkuyten, Weesie & Poppe, 2008).</p>	<p>An individual in the community's perception/lack of perception of competition over scarce housing resources and believe/in believe that such housing resources are threatened by asylum seekers being located in their local community.</p>

		Other reasons for threat		Likert scale examining the other reasons (aside from the current housing situation) that make respondents feel threatened by the allocation of asylum seeker housing in their local area (Hampshire, 2013).	Aside from the current housing situation, other reasons i.e., increase in criminality, different culture, competition over local services, loss of job opportunities, economic threat, may explain why individuals feel threatened by the allocation of local asylum seeker housing in their community.
Social-Demographic Factors	Social-demographic factors are general characteristics of a given population (Check Market, 2023).	Geographical Location	Survey	Nominal question indicating which town, Bandon or Clonakilty, the respondent resides in.	The impact of the current housing situation on a community's perception of local asylum seeker housing may be different depending on the town. As

					one town Clonakilty has an asylum seeker centre and the other town Bandon does not have an asylum seeker centre.
		Gender		Nominal question indicating the respondent's gender (Field, 2013).	The impact of the current housing situation on a community's perception of local asylum seeker housing may be different depending on the gender of individuals within the community
		Age		Ordinal scale indicating a respondent's age (Field, 2013).	The impact of the current housing situation on a community's perception of local asylum seeker housing may be different

					depending on the age of individuals within the community
		Contact & Socialisation		Likert scale analysing the amount of personal contact respondents have had with asylum seekers (Dennison & Vranceanu, 2022).	The level of personal contact or socialization an individual has had with asylum seekers impacts their perception of asylum seekers
		Economic Interests		Likert scale analysing respondents' level of personal perception of the current cost of living crisis (Dennison & Vranceanu, 2022).	An individual's perception of the cost of living crisis impacts their perception of asylum seekers

Figure 3. Bar Charts illustrating Experience with the Current Housing Situation.

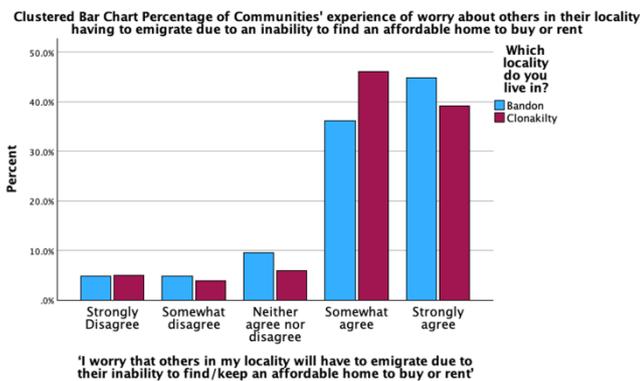
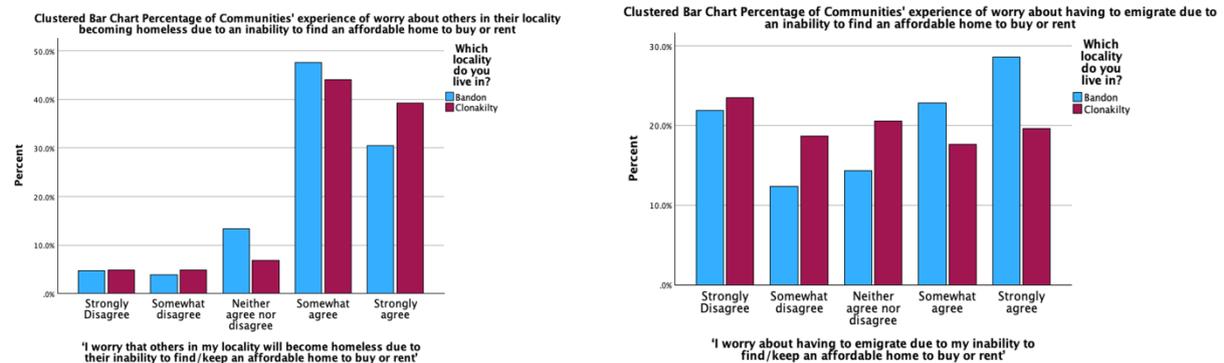
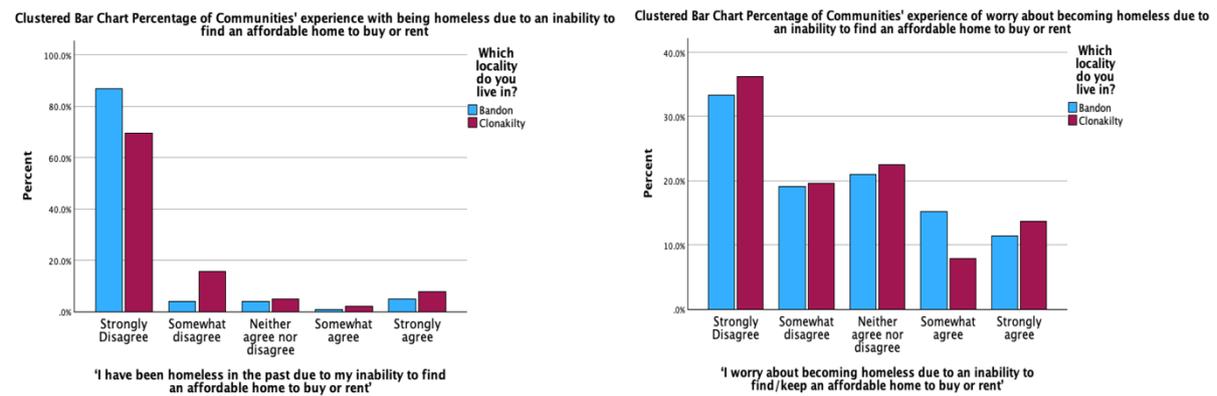
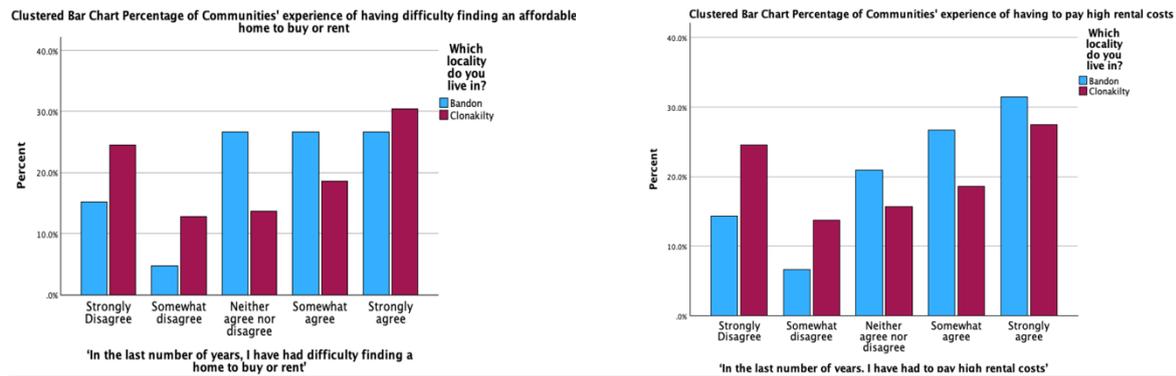


Figure 5. Correlation between the independent and dependent variables.

Independent	Pearson Correlation
Bandon	-.136
Age	-.077
Cost of Living	.142
Male	-.145
Contact with Asylum-Seekers	.114
Perception of Housing Situation	.133
Experience with Housing Situation	.129
Difficulty finding a home	.088
High Rental Costs	.083
Homeless	-.106
Worry about own homelessness	.035
Worry others homelessness	.333
Worry about own emigration	.010
Worry others emigration	.231
Threat to housing supply	-.471
Competition over housing supply	-.317
Threat of increased Crime	-.428
Threat of new Culture & Religions	.658
Threat to Local Services	-.307
Threat to Jobs	.280
Threat to Financial Resources	-.531
