

Managing Shared Responsibilities in a Household

User Research Design - Cian Schneider, Eliana Daugherty, Dechhen Sherpa, Maitri Shah

Fairshare is an app that allows users to combine expense tracking with chore management on a single platform for practical co-living situations.

Brief Description

Users can log shared costs such as rent, utilities, and groceries while also keeping track of recurring tasks like cleaning, car maintenance, and household repairs. The app fosters transparency, accountability, and fairness by integrating expense and task management into a single platform, making shared living more organized and stress-free.

Target group

Our app is designed for individuals in shared living arrangements who seek a streamlined way to manage both expenses and household responsibilities. Its primary target group includes roommates, couples, and families who want to fairly distribute costs and chores while maintaining transparency and accountability. FairShare is especially useful for young professionals, college students, and co-living communities where shared financial and household duties can often become a source of tension.

Recruiting Respondents

Respondents will be recruited through online forums for shared living and/or through in person recruitment in housing settings. Respondents from the same household will be sought out.

Bias

The researchers are students in undergraduate university in the U.S.. The researchers share an American viewpoint of shared expenses and shared expenses may differ based on location. Additionally, the researchers do not speak Czech, meaning the people who can answer the research questions must speak English.

Methodology

We have conducted semi-structured interviews with 6 participants. Participants were selected based on Screener questions.

Basic research questions

1. How do you split expenses and tasks?
2. How do you handle conflicts over chores?
3. What do you split in terms of money and tasks?
4. Are you satisfied with how the work is split in your household?
5. What payment methods do you use with the other members of your household?

Screenener

1. Do you currently live with roommates, family, a partner, or in another shared living arrangement?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If no, disqualify.

2. "Have you been in your current shared living arrangement for over a month?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If no, disqualify

3. Are you responsible for shared expenses (e.g., rent, utilities, groceries) and/or household chores?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If no, disqualify.

Interview questions

How do you split expenses and tasks?

1. Can you walk me through how your household decides who pays for shared expenses and how tasks are assigned?
2. Have you ever had to renegotiate how expenses or tasks are divided? What led to that decision?
3. Are there specific expenses or tasks that cause the most difficulty when splitting? Why?

How do you handle conflicts over chores?

4. Can you describe a time when someone in your household didn't complete a chore they were responsible for? How was that handled?
5. What strategies or agreements does your household have in place to prevent arguments over chores?

6. How often do you and your housemates talk about adjusting the way chores are distributed?

What do you split in terms of money and tasks?

7. Can you describe which household expenses and chores you share with your housemates or family members?
8. How do you typically track shared expenses and responsibilities?
9. Are there any tasks or expenses that you feel should be shared differently? Why?
10. How do you handle unexpected or one-time costs, like household repairs or special purchases?

Are you satisfied with how the work is split in your household?

11. Are there any expenses or chores that you initially planned to share but later stopped? What changed?
12. How do you decide whether a new expense or task should be shared or handled individually?
13. Have you ever felt pressure to contribute more (financially or with chores) than others in your household? How did you handle it?
14. If you could change one thing about how expenses or tasks are divided, what would it be?
15. How do you and your housemates express appreciation for each other's contributions? Does it impact your satisfaction with the split?

What payment methods do you use with the other members of your household?

16. Which payment methods do you commonly use to split expenses with members in your household?
17. What influences your choice of payment method when sharing expenses?
18. Have you dealt with any challenges when using payment platforms for household expenses? Did you resolve them? If so, how?

Interviews

Interview 1

Age: 20

Gender: Male

Household size: 3

How do you split expenses and tasks?

1. Can you walk me through how your household decides who pays for shared expenses and how tasks are assigned?

They split stuff based on what makes the most sense, everyone pays their own rent and utilities, but they might share a grocery run or someone buys something the whole apartment can use. Then they just use Venmo to pay stuff back. Tasks are assigned based on people's schedules and they try to make it fair. Everyone cleans up after themselves and they rotate stuff like taking out the trash.

2. Have you ever had to renegotiate how expenses or tasks are divided? What led to that decision?

They haven't had to.

3. Are there specific expenses or tasks that cause the most difficulty when splitting? Why? Groceries are a bit hard because some people want to share groceries while others don't so splitting it can be a hassle. Dishes are also difficult because it's easy to forget and sometimes people leave their dishes for others to clean up.

How do you handle conflicts over chores?

4. Can you describe a time when someone in your household didn't complete a chore they were responsible for? How was that handled?

There were times when people didn't do their dishes, so they just reminded them that they should take care of their own stuff.

5. What strategies or agreements does your household have in place to prevent arguments over chores?

The housemates have an agreement to take care of their own stuff and clean up after themselves in shared spaces.

6. How often do you and your housemates talk about adjusting the way chores are distributed?

They don't really because there's no need to.

What do you split in terms of money and tasks?

7. Can you describe which household expenses and chores you share with your housemates or family members?

Like common household chores: dishes and cleaning and vacuuming shared areas. Expenses: shared things like household supplies (ie toilet paper, groceries, cleaning stuff).

8. How do you typically track shared expenses and responsibilities?

They don't really track responsibilities, it's just something to remember. And they use the group function on Venmo for shared expenses

9. Are there any tasks or expenses that you feel should be shared differently? Why?
No, the participant thinks it's fair.

10. How do you handle unexpected or one-time costs, like household repairs or special purchases?
They split household repairs as long as it wasn't a conscious effort where someone ruined something. Special purchases are only split if everyone agrees beforehand on it.

Are you satisfied with how the work is split in your household?

11. Are there any expenses or chores that you initially planned to share but later stopped?
What changed?
At first they planned to share dishes and cleaning the kitchen but that didn't really work so it turned out as people cleaning up after themselves.

12. How do you decide whether a new expense or task should be shared or handled individually?
For expenses if more than one person is going to use whatever is being bought then they split.
For tasks they share the ones relating to shared spaces or things.

13. Have you ever felt pressure to contribute more (financially or with chores) than others in your household? How did you handle it?
No he hasn't.

14. If you could change one thing about how expenses or tasks are divided, what would it be?
I would like it if they had a clearer way to deal with grocery splits because it usually gets muddled with who owes who what.

15. How do you and your housemates express appreciation for each other's contributions?
Does it impact your satisfaction with the split?
They say thank you or try to do things to help out their roommates. It's always nice to be appreciated so he thinks it doesn't help satisfaction.

What payment methods do you use with the other members of your household?

16. Which payment methods do you commonly use to split expenses with members in your household?
Venmo.

17. What influences your choice of payment method when sharing expenses?
What's easiest to use for splitting payments in one app.

18. Have you dealt with any challenges when using payment platforms for household expenses? Did you resolve them? If so, how?

It does get a bit hard when they're not splitting things evenly, but in that case they just get a receipt and look at that.

Interview 2

Age: 20

Gender: female

Household size: 3 people

How do you split expenses and tasks?

1. Can you walk me through how your household decides who pays for shared expenses and how tasks are assigned?

In terms of buying things, whoever has the time/thinks of it first buys it, electricity is split evenly, as is wifi, chores are also rotated weekly.

2. Have you ever had to renegotiate how expenses or tasks are divided? What led to that decision?

Tasks had to be negotiated as an uneven amount of time was spent per person doing household chores, expenses tend to just be split based on who's using them.

3. Are there specific expenses or tasks that cause the most difficulty when splitting? Why? Groceries sometimes if multiple people are using a food item but others aren't because sometimes one person uses more than the others but it's hard to split cost down based on usage of an item.

How do you handle conflicts over chores?

4. Can you describe a time when someone in your household didn't complete a chore they were responsible for? How was that handled?

They would text in the group chat, and eventually it would get done after a reminder.

5. What strategies or agreements does your household have in place to prevent arguments over chores?

Chore charts and a group chat with reminders.

6. How often do you and your housemates talk about adjusting the way chores are distributed?

At the beginning maybe once every few days but now not so often.

What do you split in terms of money and tasks?

7. Can you describe which household expenses and chores you share with your housemates or family members?

Electricity, internet, cleaning products, doing the dishwasher, sweeping, wiping surfaces, and taking out the trash.

8. How do you typically track shared expenses and responsibilities?

They have a whiteboard on the fridge.

9. Are there any tasks or expenses that you feel should be shared differently? Why?

Not really.

10. How do you handle unexpected or one-time costs, like household repairs or special purchases?

Split evenly if needed.

Are you satisfied with how the work is split in your household?

11. Are there any expenses or chores that you initially planned to share but later stopped? What changed?

Groceries but it just became too difficult to split because everyone wanted different things.

12. How do you decide whether a new expense or task should be shared or handled individually?

This depends on who it affects/if it impacts the shared living space/how many people use it.

13. Have you ever felt pressure to contribute more (financially or with chores) than others in your household? How did you handle it?

Not really, only when sometimes the house is really unclean and she'll give up and clean it even when it's not her job which is frustrating.

14. If you could change one thing about how expenses or tasks are divided, what would it be?

More proportional tasks dividing by time, or find a better way to make sure everyone gets their tasks done/pays.

15. How do you and your housemates express appreciation for each other's contributions?

Does it impact your satisfaction with the split?

They don't really do anything other than saying thank you, it doesn't make much of a difference.

What payment methods do you use with the other members of your household?

16. Which payment methods do you commonly use to split expenses with members in your household?

Venmo/Zelle and a calculator.

17. What influences your choice of payment method when sharing expenses?
Who has access to the payment platform.

18. Have you dealt with any challenges when using payment platforms for household expenses? Did you resolve them? If so, how?
Only that someone might not have the same platform that everyone else has so it becomes hard to split the money.

Interview 3

Age: 20

Gender: female

Household size: 4 people

How do you split expenses and tasks?

1. Can you walk me through how your household decides who pays for shared expenses and how tasks are assigned?

Everyone in their household pays for their own things, such as groceries. They cover chores on an as-needed basis, but they do not have a chores list. The participant tried to implement a chores list, but she was outvoted by the rest of the household.

2. Have you ever had to renegotiate how expenses or tasks are divided? What led to that decision?

Yes, she has needed to renegotiate how people do the dishes. Some people would leave them in the sink overnight, so she asked everyone to do their dishes by the end of the day. Since then there have been no more overnight dishes.

3. Are there specific expenses or tasks that cause the most difficulty when splitting? Why?
Taking out the trash causes the most difficulty because she believes some people are unwilling to do it.

How do you handle conflicts over chores?

4. Can you describe a time when someone in your household didn't complete a chore they were responsible for? How was that handled?

The dishes were a problem, but she asked people to get them done by the end of the day so no dishes are left in the sink at night and it hasn't been a problem since.

5. What strategies or agreements does your household have in place to prevent arguments over chores?

The household agreed to communicate any inconveniences as soon as possible to avoid anything building up.

6. How often do you and your housemates talk about adjusting the way chores are distributed?

She implemented a mandatory “Sunday meeting” to check in with everyone in the house once a week. There they discuss any chores that need to be done or any other issues.

What do you split in terms of money and tasks?

7. Can you describe which household expenses and chores you share with your housemates or family members?

They share taking out the trash and purchasing toilet paper and cleaning supplies. They make sure whoever bought toilet paper most recently does not have to buy it again the next time they need it. They do chores on an as-needed basis—if it needs to get done, they do it.

8. How do you typically track shared expenses and responsibilities?

The participant keeps track of what she pays for and ensures that other members of the house are also contributing monetarily or physically.

9. Are there any tasks or expenses that you feel should be shared differently? Why?

She thinks they should have a rotating chores list. Right now it is not a problem, but she thinks it could potentially be an issue if someone is doing more work than others, which can cause resentment.

10. How do you handle unexpected or one-time costs, like household repairs or special purchases?

Her college housing covers repairs, so they do not have to worry about expenses if something goes wrong, such as a clogged sink. The household does not split special purchases, like a lamp. If someone wants a lamp in the living room, they buy a lamp.

Are you satisfied with how the work is split in your household?

11. Are there any expenses or chores that you initially planned to share but later stopped? What changed?

Yes, she made a chores list and wanted a weekly rotating system where each person is assigned a different task for the week. It included things like taking out the trash, cleaning the living room, wiping down the kitchen, and taking out recycling. The only thing they wouldn’t have shared were the dishes.

12. How do you decide whether a new expense or task should be shared or handled individually?

She brings it up with her housemates by asking, texting, or talking about it at the Sunday meeting.

13. Have you ever felt pressure to contribute more (financially or with chores) than others in your household? How did you handle it?

Yes, she has. She thinks it comes with her living there less than the rest of her housemates, so she is still getting used to their dynamic. She is not used to the cleaning style, so she does a lot of cleaning in the evening because she does not think enough has been done. She is aware that she should bring this issue up instead of doing it and being grumpy about it, but she has not talked with her housemates about it.

14. If you could change one thing about how expenses or tasks are divided, what would it be? The participant wants to have a rotating chores list. It would not be strict, but she wants something on paper saying here is what each person needs to do for the week.

15. How do you and your housemates express appreciation for each other's contributions?

Does it impact your satisfaction with the split?

They do not outwardly do anything for each other, but they recognize they take care of the house together. The housemates are all friends and keep each other company, so she would be more mad if she lived with people she did not like/get along with. She thinks that verbal thanks is helpful to hear.

What payment methods do you use with the other members of your household?

16. Which payment methods do you commonly use to split expenses with members in your household?

They use Venmo.

17. What influences your choice of payment method when sharing expenses?

Venmo is the easiest because none of the housemates carry cash. One of the housemates is from the UK, and since Venmo does not exist there, they have to use PayPal for him.

18. Have you dealt with any challenges when using payment platforms for household expenses? Did you resolve them? If so, how?

They have not had any issues with the payment platforms.

Interview 4

Age: 20

Gender: male

Household size: 6

How do you split expenses and tasks?

1. Can you walk me through how your household decides who pays for shared expenses and how tasks are assigned?

No real decision-making process. Wealthier roommates pay for shared purchases without discussion. Rent/utilities are split through Venmo, but no strict tracking. For tasks, I gathered that there is no assigned system. The interviewee takes responsibility for cleaning out of necessity. Roommates ignore messes.

2. Have you ever had to renegotiate how expenses or tasks are divided? What led to that decision?

Never renegotiated in terms of expenses; roommates are financially indifferent. Otherwise the interviewee attempted to renegotiate cleaning responsibilities multiple times. I infer that his roommates agreed but never followed through.

3. Are there specific expenses or tasks that cause the most difficulty when splitting? Why?

No major difficulties for expenses, for tasks cleaning is the biggest issue. Dishes pile up, trash is ignored, and common spaces become messy. Interviewee eventually cleans.

How do you handle conflicts over chores?

4. Can you describe a time when someone in your household didn't complete a chore they were responsible for? How was that handled?

A roommate was responsible for taking out the trash but ignored it for two weeks. Interviewee ultimately took it out, no resolution.

5. What strategies or agreements does your household have in place to prevent arguments over chores?

No formal agreements. I interpret the unspoken rule is that one roommate will eventually clean if the mess becomes unbearable.

6. How often do you and your housemates talk about adjusting the way chores are distributed?

Occasionally discussed when the interviewee gets frustrated, not a lot of changes were implemented.

What do you split in terms of money and tasks?

7. Can you describe which household expenses and chores you share with your housemates or family members?

Rent and utilities are split, and groceries are individual.

8. How do you typically track shared expenses and responsibilities?

Venmo, but informally handled. Sometimes they each forget to pay or just have a running tab in their head, not handled well.

9. Are there any tasks or expenses that you feel should be shared differently? Why?

He strongly believes cleaning should be more evenly distributed but has given up trying to enforce it.

10. How do you handle unexpected or one-time costs, like household repairs or special purchases?

Typically covered by their parents and they switch off who pays, otherwise one pays and they split through Venmo.

Are you satisfied with how the work is split in your household?

11. Are there any expenses or chores that you initially planned to share but later stopped?

What changed?

Initially expected to split cleaning duties, but roommates had a hard time participating.

12. How do you decide whether a new expense or task should be shared or handled individually?

If it's a big cost, it's split. If it's small, they switch off who covers it.

13. Have you ever felt pressure to contribute more (financially or with chores) than others in your household? How did you handle it?

Financially no, but he mentioned chores are not split evenly at all, and he feels like he does the most work, he says he tries to make passing comments but they are not received.

14. If you could change one thing about how expenses or tasks are divided, what would it be?

He is frustrated about the work split, and wants his roommates to contribute a lot more to cleaning the common areas.

15. How do you and your housemates express appreciation for each other's contributions?

Does it impact your satisfaction with the split?

They will occasionally cover each others expenses to show gratitude, he mentioned this is slightly helpful, but he still feels like it doesn't cover all the work he does.

What payment methods do you use with the other members of your household?

16. Which payment methods do you commonly use to split expenses with members in your household?

Venmo is the primary method.

17. What influences your choice of payment method when sharing expenses?

Convenience: all the roommates have it and use it.

18. Have you dealt with any challenges when using payment platforms for household expenses? Did you resolve them? If so, how?

Sometimes they Venmo the wrong split amount or they sometimes have a hard time determining the split, they usually leave it unresolved or just ask the roommate to Venmo more money.

Interview 5

Age: 20

Gender: female

Household size: 4 people

How do you split expenses and tasks?

1. Can you walk me through how your household decides who pays for shared expenses and how tasks are assigned?

When at home, she says her parents typically decide how expenses are shared and tasks are assigned. At college, her apartment splits up their rent/utilities for them. They all buy their own personal items (like food), but switch of buying shared things such as cleaning supplies.

2. Have you ever had to renegotiate how expenses or tasks are divided? What led to that decision?

No

3. Are there specific expenses or tasks that cause the most difficulty when splitting? Why? She said it was difficult to split chores, even though they tried. The chores would only get done when one of the roommates got frustrated enough to clean up the mess.

How do you handle conflicts over chores?

1. Can you describe a time when someone in your household didn't complete a chore they were responsible for? How was that handled?

Typically one of the roommates would just ask said person to complete their chores.

1. What strategies or agreements does your household have in place to prevent arguments over chores?

She mentioned how they have assigned weeks where one roommate is responsible for deep cleaning everything. Besides that, smaller chores are supposed to be split up between the rest of the roommates (trash, dishes, etc).

1. How often do you and your housemates talk about adjusting the way chores are distributed?

They did not talk about it.

What do you split in terms of money and tasks?

1. Can you describe which household expenses and chores you share with your housemates or family members?

Cleaning kitchen, trash, dishes, utilities, cleaning supplies, rent.

1. How do you typically track shared expenses and responsibilities?

They didn't track shared expenses and they had a list on their fridge with chores and an assigned person for that task.

1. Are there any tasks or expenses that you feel should be shared differently? Why?

No

1. How do you handle unexpected or one-time costs, like household repairs or special purchases?

She did not have to deal with this issue.

Are you satisfied with how the work is split in your household?

1. Are there any expenses or chores that you initially planned to share but later stopped? What changed?

They initially had a chore list where each roommate was assigned to a job. However, this eventually stopped working because people would just ignore their tasks.

1. How do you decide whether a new expense or task should be shared or handled individually?

Not really an issue, but she said they would probably talk about it.

1. Have you ever felt pressure to contribute more (financially or with chores) than others in your household? How did you handle it?

Financially no, but she did more chores because she would be more bothered by the mess

1. If you could change one thing about how expenses or tasks are divided, what would it be?

Come up with better system for chores, more accountability, expenses could be logged better (not everyone bought the same amount of stuff).

1. How do you and your housemates express appreciation for each other's contributions? Does it impact your satisfaction with the split?

Yeah, would say thank you or appreciate some gratitude.

What payment methods do you use with the other members of your household?

1. Which payment methods do you commonly use to split expenses with members in your household?

Venmo.

1. What influences your choice of payment method when sharing expenses?

Easiest option and everyone has it.

Have you dealt with any challenges when using payment platforms for household expenses? Did you resolve them? If so, how?

No issues.

Interview 6

Age: 20

Gender: Female

Household size: 3

How do you split expenses and tasks?

1. Can you walk me through how your household decides who pays for shared expenses and how tasks are assigned?

They split rent and utilities pretty simply but they usually will have to split groceries together after someone pays on one grocery trip. They split chores by whoever can do it first.

2. Have you ever had to renegotiate how expenses or tasks are divided? What led to that decision?

Yes they have talked about tasks division after some people felt it wasn't split properly during certain weeks.

3. Are there specific expenses or tasks that cause the most difficulty when splitting? Why? Groceries are difficult to split and chores like dish washing and sweeping are hard when everyone is busy.

How do you handle conflicts over chores?

4. Can you describe a time when someone in your household didn't complete a chore they were responsible for? How was that handled?

Usually people remind each other when they see each other.

5. What strategies or agreements does your household have in place to prevent arguments over chores?

It comes to mutual agreement.

6. How often do you and your housemates talk about adjusting the way chores are distributed?

Not that often but we do ask each other to pitch in.

What do you split in terms of money and tasks?

7. Can you describe which household expenses and chores you share with your housemates or family members?

Sweeping, wiping down surfaces, cleaning the bathroom. Split cleaning products and paper products and groceries.

8. How do you typically track shared expenses and responsibilities?

Not really tracked but we will split on venmo.

9. Are there any tasks or expenses that you feel should be shared differently? Why?

Not really.

10. How do you handle unexpected or one-time costs, like household repairs or special purchases?

We will talk about what to buy before we split a big purchase.

Are you satisfied with how the work is split in your household?

11. Are there any expenses or chores that you initially planned to share but later stopped? What changed?

They sometimes forget what to split and don't end up splitting it. They will also sometimes pick up others chores when they are forgotten.

12. How do you decide whether a new expense or task should be shared or handled individually?

If multiple people plan to use it usually it is split.

13. Have you ever felt pressure to contribute more (financially or with chores) than others in your household? How did you handle it?

Not really but sometimes when things are left out she picks them up.

14. If you could change one thing about how expenses or tasks are divided, what would it be? If there is an easier way to remember what to split and reminders on what tasks people have.

15. How do you and your housemates express appreciation for each other's contributions? Does it impact your satisfaction with the split?

Yes usually they thank each other on doing certain things.

What payment methods do you use with the other members of your household?

16. Which payment methods do you commonly use to split expenses with members in your household?

Venmo.

17. What influences your choice of payment method when sharing expenses?

Easiest payment method for everyone and what everyone has already.

18. Have you dealt with any challenges when using payment platforms for household expenses? Did you resolve them? If so, how?

They have dealt with some people forgetting, I get the feeling this frustrates her a lot more than her roommates.

Conclusion

Our research indicates chore distribution remains a problem and a source of frustration for many households. We observed various chore distribution methods, from informal methods where roommates agreed to clean up after themselves to some households implementing chore charts and check-ins. We also noticed a pattern of households that implemented chore schedules and later neglected to maintain them. We have noticed that people in households that implemented a structured system for tracking expenses and chores tend to experience fewer conflicts and greater satisfaction with their living situation. The driving factors we have noticed are effective communication and mutual appreciation, and we believe households have difficulty

implementing consistently without external guidance. Also, financially, we noticed most households rely on Venmo or Zelle to split expenses. While financial responsibilities among those in shared spaces are generally well-organized or individualized, a few of our interviewees mention they have a more challenging time determining how to divide the groceries they share. Our research into the viewpoints of different members of the same household indicates that they all can recognize a problem in sharing expenses and chores but it is a difficult one to confront. We have found that usually the split does not end up being evenly distributed and rather on the first person to be able to complete the task. Our research shows that households would benefit from a more organized structure of logging payments, and chores as well as a notification or reward system on completion.