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Rethink as a circular economy strategy – Assessment of citizens' perceptions and behaviour towards sharing spaces in Greece

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Abstract

The European Union aims for climate neutrality by 2050, emphasising the circular economy as a key strategy, especially in the construction sector, a significant CO_2 emitter. The successful implementation of circular economy practices, such as using low-carbon materials, renovating buildings, and sharing spaces, depends on understanding citizen behaviour and the factors influencing the adoption of these practices. The identification of citizens' perceptions and behaviour is the main objective of this study, which is conducted through an empirical survey involving approximately 500 citizens in Greece. The study analyzes survey results on citizens' attitudes and motivational factors towards sharing spaces, a practice aligned with the "rethink" circular economy strategy. Using descriptive statistics, this research examines citizens' willingness to share office and living spaces, as well as the factors motivating them. The analysis revealed that Greek citizens are positive about sharing office spaces, but rather negative about sharing residences with non-family members. Moreover, regression models identify socioeconomic and other determinants that, on a statistically significant level, influence Greek citizens' willingness to share spaces, such as age, political ideology, residential location, household size, and environmental concerns. The study is considered important for setting the necessary policies to enhance circularity and the adoption of sharing spaces in Greece.

Keywords: circular economy practice, construction sector, sharing office, sharing residence, willingness, survey, climate change mitigation, determinants.

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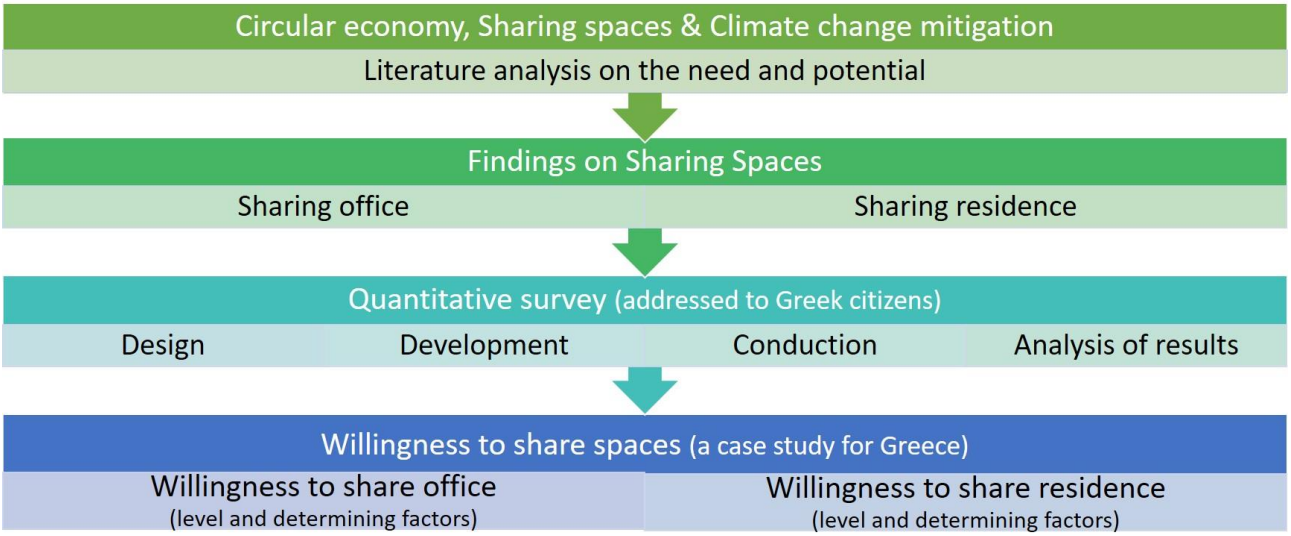
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Graphical abstract



1. Introduction

The European Union has set the ambitious target of being climate neutral - net-zero greenhouse emissions- by 2050, to contribute to the global efforts to tackle climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. To this end, climate change mitigation strategies have been established. Circular Economy is considered a significant approach to climate change mitigation. Since the construction sector is a significant contributor to CO_2 emissions, it is important to apply circular economy principles in this sector (Berges-Alvarez *et al.*, 2022; Luciano *et al.*, 2022; Dubey *et al.*, 2023).

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), mitigation strategies in buildings are categorised into two groups: technological and non-technological (Cabeza *et al.* 2022). Technological strategies, such as lifespan extension and the use of low-carbon materials, are more often the subject of research in the literature (Cap *et al.*, 2024). However, it is argued that not only technological, but also non–technological strategies should be examined and employed to achieve low-carbon buildings (Shahmohammadi *et al.*, 2024; Cap *et al.*, 2024; Cohen, 2020; Cabeza *et al.* 2022; Kyrö, 2020; Mata *et al.*, 2022; Mi and Coffman, 2019).

Sharing economy strategies in the construction sector, including office and residential space sharing, are recognised as non-technological approaches with significant potential for climate change mitigation within the circular economy. Research findings indicate that these strategies can achieve greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reductions ranging from 25% to 70% (Shahmohammadi *et al.*, 2024; Mata *et al.*, 2022).

Potting *et al.* (2017) developed a conceptual framework comprising 10 "R" circular economy strategies (i.e., Refuse, Rethink, Reduce, Reuse, Repair, Refurbish, Remanufacture, Repurpose, Recycle, and Recover), in descending order of circularity. In this framework, the sharing spaces practice is integrated into the "Rethink" circular economy strategy, which is a strategy of a high level of circularity. The circular economy aims to minimise waste, reduce resource depletion, extend product life through maintenance and repair, and optimise the use of underutilised resources through sharing and remanufacturing (Guyader and Piscicelli, 2019). Sharing practices, such as office and residence sharing, directly contribute to circular economy goals by recirculating resources and reducing the need for new production and construction, thereby reducing environmental impact and resource consumption (Guyader and Piscicelli, 2019; Korhonen *et al.*, 2018; Henry *et al.*, 2021).

To enhance the adoption of sharing spaces circular economy practice, it is important to examine citizens' perceptions and behaviour towards this practice. The investigation of the sharing spaces practice is the main objective of this study, which is conducted through a quantitative survey addressed to citizens in Greece. The level of Greek citizens' willingness to share office space and residences is investigated, along with the factors that influence their behaviour. Empirical studies are essential because they provide objective data, ensuring that strategies are based on actual practice rather than subjective assessments (Mani *et al.*, 2025).

There are a few empirical studies examining citizens' behaviour towards sharing spaces. Regarding sharing residence, Kim *et al.* (2020) and Woo *et al.* (2019) examine perceptions and willingness to pay for shared housing through a survey of 1,000 young, single households in Seoul. Another empirical study in Seoul was conducted by Cho *et al.* (2019). This study examines shared housing as a potential resource for community building among young single-person households in Seoul, Korea, based on a survey of 750 residents. It compares shared housing with other housing types, focusing on residential satisfaction and community attachment.

Empirical studies examining sharing offices are very limited. Bouncken *et al.* (2023) investigate how sharing offices contributes to sustainability and knowledge creation. The researchers used qualitative methods, including interviews, observations, and secondary data, to compare co-working spaces with varying sustainability commitments. Nakano *et al.* (2023) examine how proximity affects knowledge sharing in co-working spaces in São Paulo, Brazil, using responses to 45 questionnaires. Amorim *et al.* (2022), conducted another empirical study examining occupants' perceptions of a specific facility in home offices (i.e., lighting conditions) involving 694 participants across 6 countries in South America, Europe, and East Asia.

Although there are a few empirical studies on citizens' behaviour regarding sharing spaces in various countries, as mentioned above, to the authors' knowledge, no such study has been identified for Greece. The investigation of Greek citizens' attitudes towards sharing spaces through an empirical survey is a research gap that this work aims to cover. The added value of this study includes the exploration of the current state of knowledge on Greek citizens' willingness to share office and living spaces, as well as the determination of the factors that influence their behaviour.

The structure of this paper consists of 6 Sections. Section 1 introduces the research topics, presents the findings of the literature review, identifies the gap, and sets the research questions; Section 2 outlines the research methodology; Section 3 presents the research results; Section 4 discusses the implications; and Section 5 concludes the paper.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. *Survey development and implementation*

The examination of citizens' perceptions and behaviour towards sharing spaces was conducted as part of a survey investigating citizens' awareness, perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours on circular economy and climate change, with a focus on the construction sector.

The questionnaire of the survey was developed in cooperation with experts in the field of circular economy and the construction sector. It included segments on a) respondents' socioeconomic and residence characteristics, b) perceived knowledge and awareness, c) attitudes and motivating factors towards the adoption of the circular economy practices of sharing spaces, repairing, refurbishing, recycling, reusing and refusing, d) respondents' willingness to pay for certain circular economy materials and components, and e) perceptions, attitude, and behaviour to use circular economy products. This research analyzes and presents survey results on respondents' willingness to share spaces and investigates the determinants of their behaviour towards this circular economy practice. Although the survey was conducted in several European countries, this work presents and analyzes the results of the Greek sample.

Table 1 presents the main survey characteristics. The survey was conducted in December 2023 and addressed to Greek citizens. The sample comprised 510 completed questionnaires collected by the "Opinion Poll" survey company. The sample was representative of the Greek population in terms of gender, age, and region of residence. The questionnaire was developed in English and translated into Greek for distribution to participants in Greece.

Table 1. Citizens' survey characteristics.

Survey type	Online interviews using a structured questionnaire in a panel of respondents
Surveying area	Greece
Sampling method	Random selection based on quotas from online panels
Survey population	Men & women 18+ years, internet users
Surveying period	December 2023
Sample size	510 participants

2.2 *Statistical methods*

The citizens' survey responses were compiled into a dataset. The statistical analysis of the data was performed using SPSS 20 software, while the corresponding figures were created in Microsoft Excel 2021.

Descriptive statistics were used to analyse and present the citizens' profile, and their perceptions on sharing spaces. The respondents' willingness to share spaces was assessed using a 7-point Likert scale to state the agreement to adopt the circular economy practice of sharing spaces (1 - strongly disagree, 2 - disagree, 3 - slightly disagree, 4 - neither agree nor disagree, 5 - slightly agree, 6 – agree, 7 - strongly agree). Moreover, the respondents were asked to assess the importance of several listed factors that could motivate them to share an office and living space, using a 7-point Likert scale (1 -not important at all, 2 - not important, 3 - slightly not important, 4 - neutral, 5 - slightly important, 6 – important, 7 - very important). Mean values of certain variables were calculated.

The determinants of respondents' willingness to share office space and residence were investigated through linear regression analyses. Two regression models were developed. In each model, the willingness to share variables were the dependent variables, while independent variables comprised socioeconomic, awareness-related, and motivational factors. In the regression model for sharing residence, the independent variables also included the residence characteristic variables.

The results of the statistical analysis of the survey's responses are presented in Section 3. First, the respondents' profiles are analysed. The determinants analysed in Section 3.1 are those selected as potential factors influencing citizens' behaviour towards the adoption of sharing space practices. Then the results on the variables related to citizens' willingness to share office and living space are presented in order to identify Greek citizens' perceptions towards sharing spaces (Section 3.2). Finally, the behaviour of Greek citizens is examined to determine whether the socioeconomic and other

determinants of the citizens' profile have a statistically significant influence on the willingness to share spaces in the Greek sample (Section 3.3).

Table 2. Demographic, socioeconomic, residence and awareness characteristics.

			Value
Demographic & Socioeconomic	Location of residence	Urban	84%
		Suburban	10%
		Rural	6%
	Gender (male)	Male	45%
		Female	55%
		Other	0%
	Age	Mean	44
		Std. Dev.	12.40
		Median	42
		Minimum	18
		Maximum	79
	Education level	Lower than vocational training	10%
		Vocational training degree	23%
		University/ University college degree	43%
		Master degree	21%
		PhD degree	3%
	Occupation status	Self-employed	14%
		Employed	63%
		Not working	23%
	Relevant to the circular economy working experience	Yes	13%
		No	87%
	Income satisfaction	Strongly disagree	10%
		Disagree	12%
		Slightly disagree	14%
		Neither agree nor disagree	20%
		Slightly agree	21%
		Agree	18%
		Strongly agree	5%
	Political ideology	Extremely left	2%
		Left	7%
		Slightly left	16%
		Neither left nor right	46%
		Slightly right	20%
		Right	8%
		Extremely right	1%
	Number of persons in residence	1	16%
		2	26%
		3	25%
		4	26%
		5	5%
		6+	2%
Residence	Residence type	Detached house	20%
		Semi-detached house	14%
		Apartment building	65%
		Other	1%
	Ownership	Privately owned	64%
		Rented	34%
		Other	2%
	Construction year	before 1919	0%

			Value
		1919 - 1945	1%
		1946 - 1960	5%
		1961 - 1980	31%
		1981 - 1990	23%
		1991 - 2000	14%
		2001 - 2005	11%
		2006 - 2010	12%
		2011 - 2015	2%
		2016 - 2021	0%
		2021 onwards	1%
	Residence size	0 – 50 m^2	11%
		50 -100 m^2	62%
		100 – 150 m^2	20%
		150 – 200 m^2	4%
		+ 200 m^2	3%
Awareness	Circular economy awareness	Nothing at all: 1	19%
		2	16%
		3	16%
		4	22%
		5	17%
		6	7%
		A lot: 7	3%
	Climate change mitigation awareness	Nothing at all: 1	7%
		2	6%
		3	10%
		4	26%
		5	30%
		6	16%
		A lot: 7	5%

3. Results

3.1. *Respondents' profile*

The demographic, socioeconomic, residential, and awareness characteristics of the survey participants are presented in **Table 2**. Most of the respondents live in urban areas (84%). The male participants represent 45% of the Greek sample, while females 55%. The mean age of the respondents is 44 years old. Regarding education level, university and university college degree (43%) and vocational training degree (23%) were the most common responses. A significant percentage of respondents (21%) stated that they have a Master's degree, while only 3% have a PhD degree. The respondents were questioned about their current occupation status and professional experience in the circular economy, environment or energy sectors. Most respondents stated that they are currently employed (63%) or self-employed (14%), while 23% are not working. The majority of respondents (87%) have no previous or current experience in the circular economy, environment, or energy sectors. Respondents were also asked about their level of satisfaction with their household income, with "Slightly Agree" (21%) and "Neither agree or disagree" (20%) being the most common responses. Regarding respondents' political ideology, the most common response was "Neither left nor right" (46%) on a left-right scale. The final socioeconomic question referred to the number of people living in the respondents' residence (including themselves). The most common response to this question is two or four persons (26% in both cases).

The participants were then asked about the characteristics of their residence. The most common response was living in an apartment (65%), followed by living in a detached house (20%) and a semi-detached house (14%). Regarding residence ownership, most participants stated that they privately own the residence where they live (64%). Regarding the year of residence construction, the most common answer was 1961-1980 (31%), followed by 1981-1990 (23%). The participants were also asked about the size of their residences; the most common residence size is between 50 m^2 and 100 m^2 (62%), followed by 100 m^2 to 150 m^2 (20%).

To assess respondents' awareness of circular economy and climate change mitigation, two relevant questions were included in the survey. The most common response to perceived circular economy awareness is "4" on a 1-7 scale (22%), while the perceived awareness of climate change mitigation is "5" (30%).

3.2. *Citizens' willingness to share spaces*

The main objective of this study is to reveal Greek citizens' attitudes towards sharing working and living spaces. In this context, the respondents were asked several questions about their willingness to share spaces and the factors that would motivate them to proceed. In **Figure 1**, the participants' level of agreement in sharing office and living space is illustrated. As shown in this figure, participants responded positively (illustrated in green colour in Figure 1) about their willingness to share an office space (71%) and negatively (in red colour in **Figure 1**) about their willingness to live in a residence that they would share with other people (non-family members) (70%).

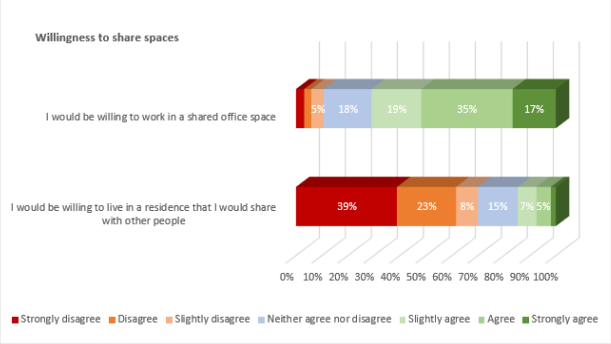


Figure 1. Greek citizens' willingness to share spaces.

To compare respondents' attitudes toward sharing the two types of spaces (i.e., office and living), the mean values for both cases were calculated. **Figure 2** presents the results of this analysis, with respondents' willingness to share spaces ranked on a 7-point Likert scale (1 - strongly disagree, 2 - disagree, 3 - slightly disagree, 4 - neither agree nor disagree, 5 - slightly agree, 6 – agree, 7 - strongly agree). As shown, the mean value for sharing office space is 5.2 (i.e., close to "Slightly agree", equal to 5), while the mean value for sharing residence is 2.5 (i.e., between "Disagree" and "Slightly disagree", equal to 2 and 3, respectively).

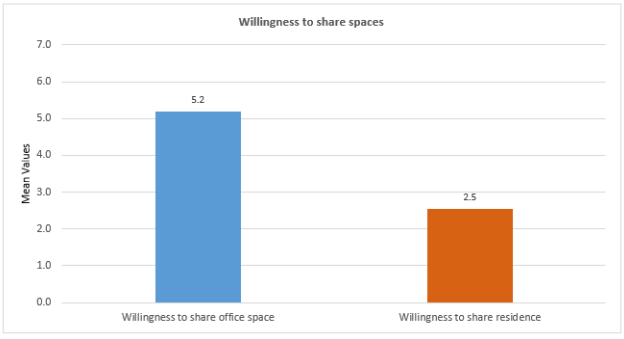


Figure 2. Mean values of willingness to share spaces.

The respondents were then asked about the factors that influenced their decision to share an office space. They were asked to evaluate the importance of four listed factors in case they considered sharing an office space. To ensure a common understanding of the given factors, the following factors and examples for each case were given to them:

- Economic reasons (e.g., higher salary, shared rent, lower transportation cost)
- Social reasons (e.g., socialising)
- Environmental reasons (e.g., energy savings, greenhouse gases emissions reduction)
- Better facilities (e.g., working place, internet, equipment)

As shown in **Figure 3**, the respondents rated "economic reasons" (77% positive responses) as the most important motivational factor among the given ones (economic, social, environmental, and better facilities). The second most important factor was "better facilities" (72%), followed by "environmental reasons" (62%). The least important factor for sharing office spaces was "social reasons" (52%).

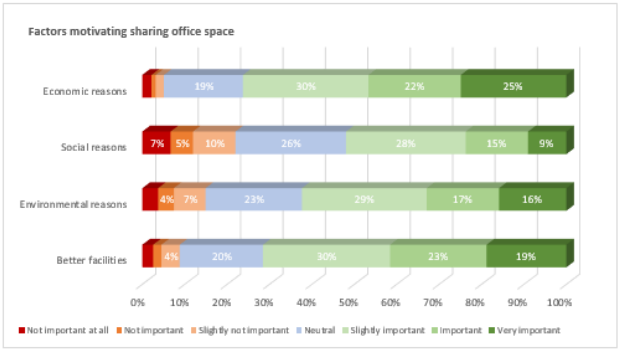


Figure 3. Factors motivating sharing office space.

In terms of factors influencing respondents to share a residence, the respondents were given the following factors, and examples for each case to evaluate their importance, in case they considered sharing a residence with other people (non-family members):

- Economic reasons (e.g., shared rent, shared everyday expenses)
- Social reasons (e.g., companionship)
- Environmental reasons (e.g., energy savings, greenhouse gases emissions reduction)
- Better facilities (e.g., larger residence, household appliances)

In the overall Greek sample, the most crucial factor is "economic reasons" (61%), followed by "better facilities" (53%) and "environmental reasons" (52%). The least important factor for sharing a living space is "social reasons" (45%) (**Figure 4**).

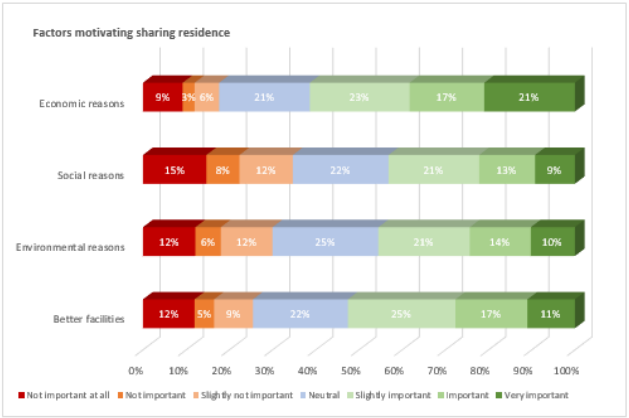


Figure 4. Factors motivating sharing residence.

A comparison of the responses on the importance of each factor for both sharing offices and residences was

conducted based on the mean values for each factor. The values are expressed on a 7-point Likert scale (1: "not important at all" to 7: "very important"). As shown in **Figure 5**, the most important factor in both cases is economic reasons (mean values for sharing offices and residences are 5.4 and 4.8, respectively). The second most important factor in both cases is better facilities (mean values of 5.2 and 4.4, respectively), followed by environmental reasons (mean values of 4.9 and 4.2, respectively) and social reasons (mean values of 4.4 and 4.0, respectively).

3.3. *Determinants affecting Greek citizens' willingness to share spaces*

The study also examines the determinants affecting Greek citizens' willingness to share spaces. **Table 3** presents the results of the two regression models examining the factors influencing participants' willingness to share offices and residences, respectively. The residence characteristics variable was applicable only in the second model for sharing residence. The determinants that were found to be statistically significant to at least one model are indicated in **Table 3** in "bold" font.

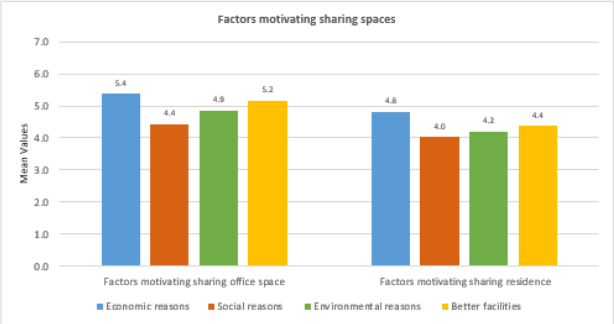


Figure 5. Mean values of factors motivating sharing spaces.

Table 3. Results of regression models on willingness to share spaces.

		Willingness to share office	Willingness to share residence
		B Pvalue indicator	B Pvalue indicator
	(Constant)	2.139	2.950
Demographic & Socioeconomics	**Location of residence** (rural)	-0.072	**-0.676****
	Gender (male)	-0.004	0.252
	Age	-0.001	**-0.028*****
	Education level	-0.032	-0.107
	Occupation status (working)	-0.169	-0.135
	Relevant to circular economy working experience	0.105	**0.481****
	Income satisfaction	-0.012	0.007
	Political ideology (right)	**-0.118****	**-0.112***
	Number of persons in residence	**0.075***	**-0.165*****
Residence	**Residence type** (apartment)	n/a [e]	**-0.375****
	Ownership (private)	n/a [e]	0.106
	Construction year	n/a [e]	-0.042
	Residence size	n/a [e]	0.114
Awareness	CE awareness	-0.020	0.081
	Climate change mitigation awareness	**0.078***	-0.038
Motivational factors	**Economic reasons** [a]	**0.232*****	-0.028
	Social reasons [b]	0.028	**0.167*****
	Environmental reasons [c]	**0.110***	**0.129****
	Better facilities [d]	**0.292*****	**0.136***
Model Summary Table, R Square		0.331	0.263
Model Summary Table, Durbin Watson		2.126	1.838
Variance Inflation Factor		< 3.1	< 3.8
ANOVA Table, Sig. value		Sig. = 0.000	Sig. = 0.000
*p <0.10, **p <0.05, ***p <0.01			

[a] Economic reasons examples given to respondents for sharing offices: "higher salary, shared rent, lower transportation cost", while examples for sharing residence are "shared rent, shared everyday expenses"

[b] Social reasons examples for sharing offices: "socialising", while for sharing residence "companionship"

[c] Environmental reasons examples for both sharing office and residence: "energy savings, greenhouse gas emissions reduction"

[d] Better facilities examples for sharing offices: "working place, internet, equipment", while for sharing residence "larger residence, household appliances"

[e] Not applicable

The first regression model on willingness to share office (dependent variable) includes, as independent variables, demographic, socioeconomic and awareness-related variables, as well as motivational factors that could influence respondents' attitudes towards sharing offices. The model didn't identify any multicollinearity among the predictor variables [Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values range: 1.1 - 3.1]. In addition, no autocorrelation was identified in the residuals of the regression model (Durbin Watson: 2.126). Based on the results presented in **Table 3**, the model indicates that on statistically significant level, respondents with more left-leaning political self-positioning, living in a residence with more occupants (i.e. larger household size), and having a higher level of awareness of climate change mitigation would be more willing to work in a shared office space. The model also shows that respondents who value more economic and environmental reasons, as well as better facilities, are more willing to share an office space.

The second regression model examines respondents' willingness to share residence (dependent variable). The independent variables in this model include demographic, socioeconomic, awareness-related, and residence characteristics, as well as motivational factors that may influence respondents' attitudes towards sharing a residence. According to the results, no multicollinearity was identified among the predictor variables [VIF values range: 1.1 - 3.8]. Moreover, no autocorrelation was identified in the regression model (Durbin Watson: 1.838). The model signifies that, on statistically significant level, respondents living in urban and suburban areas, having a younger age, obtaining relevant circular economy working experience, with more left-leaning political self-positioning, residing in households with fewer occupants (i.e. smaller household size), and living in detached and semi-detached houses are more willing to share their residence with non-family members. In addition, respondents who rank higher social and environmental reasons, as well as better facilities, are more willing to share their living space.

4. Discussion

Sharing spaces is a circular economy practice which can significantly contribute to the sustainability and to climate change mitigation. This practice aims to maximise the utilisation of existing office and living spaces, thus reducing the need for new buildings and minimising mineral resource consumption (Jeleniewicz *et al.*, 2025).

To enhance the adoption of the sharing spaces practice, it is important to investigate citizens' perceptions and frame policies tailored to the specific needs of citizens living in each country. In this context, this research conducted a quantitative survey addressed to citizens living in Greece. It investigated the level of willingness of Greek citizens to adopt the sharing spaces practice, both for office and living spaces. It also investigated the determining factors that influence Greek citizens' willingness to share spaces.

It is worth noting that this paper further limits the research topic of sharing residence to sharing living space with non-family members. The specific dimension is rarely met in the literature review since most studies on shared living spaces refer to sharing accommodation using digital sharing platforms, such as Airbnb or sharing daycare facilities spaces, garden, etc. (Lee *et al.*, 2012).

Regarding office sharing, the analysis of the survey results revealed that the majority of Greek citizens were positive about adopting this practice, since 71% of the sample responded that they would be willing to work in a shared office space. On the contrary, Greek citizens were rather negative about sharing residence with non-family members, as indicated by the 70% of respondents who stated that they would not be willing to live in a residence they would share with other people outside their family.

The respondents were then given four categories of motivating factors (economic, social, and environmental reasons, as well as better facilities) and asked whether they considered them important in the adoption of sharing office and living space. In all cases, the given factors were identified as important (see **Figure 5**, where the mean values are 4 or higher). These results align with the literature, which identifies these factors as important (Kim *et al.*, 2020; Cho *et al.*, 2019; Kazana-McCarthy *et al*, 2021).

Regarding the importance of the factors that would motivate them, Greek citizens ranked the factors in the following order: economic reasons, better facilities, and environmental and social reasons for both cases of sharing office space and residence. The level of importance was rated slightly higher in shared offices than in shared residences (**Figure 5**).

This research includes two linear regression models. The first regression model on willingness to share an office demonstrates that, on a statistically significant level, respondents with more left-leaning political self-positioning, who are part of a larger household, and who have a higher awareness of climate change, are more likely to work in a shared office space. Moreover, Greek citizens who value economic and environmental reasons, as well as better facilities, are more willing to share an office space. The influence of economic benefits and facilities on willingness to share office space has been identified in other studies, such as that of Kim *et al.* (2016).

The second regression model examines respondents' willingness to share residence. The model indicates that, on a statistically significant level, respondents living in urban and suburban areas, who are younger, have relevant circular economy working experience, are more left-leaning politically, are part of smaller households, and living in detached and semi-detached houses are more willing to share their residence with non-family members. In addition, respondents who rank higher social and environmental reasons, as well as better facilities, are more willing to share their living space. Several of this model's results align with the literature review findings. The studies conducted by Cho *et al.* (2019) and Kim *et al.* (2020) reveal that shared housing residents were younger, and that citizens who prioritised social relationships in housing choices had a significantly higher willingness to pay for shared housing.

The results of the study will be valuable for designing the appropriate policies to enhance sharing spaces in Greece. For example, since in both sharing offices and living spaces, younger people are more likely to adopt these practices, digitalisation of sharing opportunities could be established.

5. Conclusions

This paper, using an empirical quantitative survey, explores the perceptions, attitudes and behaviour of Greek citizens towards sharing spaces, as well as the factors influencing the adoption of the specific circular economy practices. The analysis reveals that Greek citizens have a positive view of sharing offices but have a negative opinion of sharing residences with non-family members. Regression models were developed to identify the demographic, socioeconomic, residence, and awareness-related characteristics, as well as motivational factors that may influence respondents' attitudes towards sharing office and living spaces. Statistically significant determinants identified by the models include age, political ideology, location of residence, household size, and environmental issues. The study is considered important for developing appropriate policies and initiatives to strengthen circularity and the adoption of sharing spaces in Greece.

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