



# WELCOME TO KIDULTHOOD

With half a million Brits over 35 still living with their parents, why are so many of us giving the thumbs down to growing up?

By Aoife Stuart-Madge

'MUM COOKS, CLEANS AND DOES MY LAUNDRY. IT WORKS FOR ME'



Tired of fending for herself, Fleur moved in with her mum Gill

**C**urling up on the sofa, Fleur Piumatti reaches out for the drink that her mum Gill has placed on the coffee table beside her, before grabbing the TV remote to see what shows Gill has recorded for her to watch. As she does so, the smell of home-cooked risotto wafts in from the kitchen. Later, Fleur will leave out her clothes for her mum to wash, then slip into her bed, which Gill, 63, a supermarket worker, freshly made that afternoon.

But Fleur isn't a young child, nor is she being spoilt because she's staying over for the night. She's a 38-year-old woman living permanently at home with her mum in Ashford, Kent.

"I know it sounds like I'm an indulged teenager, but I don't care. I've been living like this for the past five years and I love it," admits Fleur.

And she's not the only one. Two-thirds of British adults describe themselves as "big kids"\*\*, while recent statistics revealed that 57% of stay-at-home adults have never moved out, 34% returned after university and 9%, like Fleur, left "for a while".\*\*\*

"Growing up isn't as simple as it used to be," explains psychologist Marisa Peer. "If you go back 40-odd years, it was expected that once you were a working adult you would be able to afford a car and a mortgage. But it's not like that today. Even people in their 30s still can't afford their own home."

In fact, research by Legal & General this year found that parents helped finance a quarter of all mortgage transactions, giving £17,500 on average. A report by the Resolution Foundation, which analyses living standards, discovered that today's under-35s risk being the first generation to earn less than their predecessors. It also found that a 27 year old currently earns the same as someone of that age did a quarter of a century ago.

Fleur admits that financial difficulties were one of the reasons behind her return home. By 22 she'd moved out of her mum's Staffordshire house to live above a pub she managed in Maidstone. Three years later, she retrained as a beauty therapist and bought a three-bedroom house in Romney Marsh, Kent, with a friend.

However, by 2009, she was struggling to pay her £700 share of the mortgage. "I wanted to set up my own beauty school business, which would cost £10,000, so I decided to sell up and use the money to do that," she says. "But it was still incredibly hard, as I was having to pay rent every month while starting up a business."

During that time, Fleur's mum had gone to live in Wales with her partner. But when the

relationship broke down in 2011, Gill moved to a three-bedroom house in Ashford, Kent, and Fleur jumped at the chance to move in with her.

"For nearly a decade, I'd lived hundreds of miles away from Mum," explains Fleur. "I'd only get to see her during my breaks from work and studying. On every visit, she would do my laundry and cook delicious dinners for me. I'd really missed those home comforts and was fed up trying to fend for myself."

Fleur and her mum now split the rent and bills 50:50. "But aside from that, Mum takes care of everything including cooking, cleaning and the laundry," admits Fleur. "People might think I'm taking advantage, but she honestly loves looking after me and it works for us - we rarely fight. In fact, the only time Mum gets on my case is when it comes to men. She'd love me to settle down, but the one time I did bring a guy back she gave him a real grilling, so I haven't bothered since. I've yet to find a man I think is worth the risk of bringing home to meet Mum!"

**F**or 31-year-old Emma Green, her kidult moment came in 2010 when she realised that becoming a fully fledged grown-up had crept up on her.

"I had a good job running the transport division of an international furniture company, a two-bedroom rented flat full of expensive gadgets and a wardrobe with 150 pairs of shoes," she recalls. "Each month, I spent almost all of my £25,000 salary on clothes and decorating the flat that I shared with my boyfriend of three years, Mark.\*

"I vividly remember when I was 25, trudging into the Peterborough office where I'd worked since I was 16 and feeling a rising panic that I'd be stuck doing the same thing for the next four decades. At home, my expensive possessions began to make me feel claustrophobic. Mark, seven years older than me, was content with our life, but I felt like a trapped animal."

In September 2010, Emma's pressure valve finally burst and the pair split up. That same month, she handed in her notice and moved in with her mum Amanda, 48, a railway worker.

"I sold all my stuff on eBay, took odd jobs doing house renovations and as an office temp, and squirrelled the money away while I figured out my next move," she says.

By the end of 2011, Emma had become overwhelmed with wanderlust. "I spent my time planning road trips around Europe," she remembers. →

Emma and her mum Amanda before she went travelling



'I CAN DO WHAT I LIKE. WHY WOULD I GIVE THAT UP?'

\*Name has been changed



£20

Court Shoes

Selected stores. Subject to availability.

Discover a world of  
**SHOES**

"Then I spied a van for sale on the roadside in March 2012. I decided it would be my getaway vehicle from a 'grown-up' life. I handed over the £500 asking price on the spot."

A month later, Emma set off on a coastal tour of the UK, which eventually took her to France. "I lived very cheaply - spending around £1,700 a year - cooking on my camping stove, wearing no make-up and showering at beaches," she says. "My days were spent climbing mountains in the Alps and swimming with dolphins in the French Riviera. After sunset, I slept in a sleeping bag on the beach. When I went home to Peterborough for Christmas, I was already planning my next trip."

**W**ith her thirst for travel, Emma is just one of the 65% of 18-34 year olds who've decided to spend their money on real-life experiences - which they believe are more important in life - instead of possessions.†

But while it seems an amazing life, according to psychologist Marisa, it's also a very selfish way of living. "Kidults are the 'me, me, me' generation who have been taught they can have or experience anything they want - often instantly," she says. "They're not worried by debt because they know they have their parents to fall back on. But the only reason they can do that is because their parents didn't quit. They were brought up believing you provided for your family, so worked hard to do that."

Marisa adds that it will be interesting to see how the children of the current generation cope in later life. "One theory is that when kidults have their own children, it might make them grow up, because having someone else to look after will force them to get on with it," she says. "I'm not so sure, as we're already seeing a glut of kidults relying on their parents for childcare, and children starting school not toilet trained."

**Emma in Cassis, France**



**Btw**

60%

of women surveyed by Kids' TV channel Tiny Pop still have one of more of their childhood toys.

84%

of parents with grown-up children at home do laundry for them, while a quarter even tidy their bedrooms.\*\*\*

50%

of 18-34 year olds living at home pay no rent and don't contribute to the food bills.\*\*\*

£8k

A typical person born between 1980 and 2000 earns £8,000 less per year than those in the previous generation, according to the Resolution Foundation.

1/3

of adults in England and Wales have never been married. This is up three percentage points from 10 years ago, a report by the ONS found.

Additional words: Morgan Reardon. Images created by Cristian Gicetto and posed by models. Sources: \*\*Tiny Pop \*\*\*ThinMoney.co.uk. Eventbrite Visit: MarisaPeet.com

The worry is that these children might grow up to behave even worse, as they've never had a responsible role model."

Since her first adventure, Emma's travelled for six or seven months every year, returning home to work as a PA for a family friend when her money runs out. "I know friends and family worry I'll never settle down," she admits. "But I haven't ruled out finding a relationship and even having kids in the future, but it would have to be with someone who wanted the same kind of nomadic lifestyle as me."

Fleur's mum worries, too. "I know Mum's desperate for grandkids," says Fleur. "I would like to meet someone, and I do worry about my biological clock. But I'm having such a nice time with Mum, it will have to be someone very special to take me away from her."

For Emma, it's being away from home that makes her kidult life complete. "I can do what I like, when I like," she says. "I have absolutely no responsibilities - why would I ever want to give that up?" **F**

### 'I'M A SERIAL JOB-HOPPER'

**Danielle Moubarak, 35, is single and lives in Slough.**

**She says:** "Two months ago, after being told off by my manager for something trivial, I stood up from behind my desk and stormed out of the casting agency where I worked. It wasn't until I got home that reality hit - I'd quit yet another job."

It was just the latest in a long line - I've had around 50 jobs since I was 18 - and I'd been there for just three months.

Over the last 17 years, I've worked as everything from a lifeguard to a barmaid and even talked myself into being a director's assistant. With every job, I promise myself I'll try to stick at it. But I hate being told what to do, so when some pushy jobsworth is rude to me - whether it's a bar manager telling me off for misplacing a fork or a film director expecting me to pick up after his dog - I see red and quit. Plus, as I'm desperate to become a singer-songwriter, I need time to make demos and tour pubs and clubs. I've never lasted more than four months in any job.

My long-suffering parents always bail me out financially. They even gave me a deposit for a two-bedroom flat when I was 25, but I was unable to renew my mortgage last year because I couldn't afford the payments. Mum and Dad bought the flat from me for £200,000 with their retirement fund and I now live there, paying rent to them when I can.

I feel bad, but I know I'll be able to pay them back one day when I'm famous. I'm just about to release a single on iTunes. While friends and family have told me it might not be successful, I don't like to think like that. Failure isn't an option."



**'I FEEL BAD THAT MY PARENTS BAIL ME OUT - I'LL PAY THEM BACK WHEN I'M FAMOUS'**

£30

Leather Chelsea Boots



Selected stores. Subject to availability. Online delivery charges may apply.

**George.**

Shop in store and online