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MILLIONS of young adults are being forced to move back into their parents' homes due to rising house prices and crippling debt, the latest research has revealed.

An estimated 4.3 million British "boomerang kids", aged between 25 and 50, have moved back to the family home after being unable to afford to live alone, according to dating firm Parship.com.

Four out of ten single people questioned said high house prices meant the property ladder was out of reach, while "unrealistic" charges on one-bedroom apartments meant they could not afford to rent. Many young people have substantial debts and more than half who live at home owe between GBP 10,000 and GBP 20,000 in unsecured debt, while 21 per cent owe between GBP 20,000 and GBP 50,000 on credit cards, overdrafts and loans.

Cary Coope, Professor of Organisational Psychology and Health at Lancaster University, warned that a return home would have a psychological impact on both children and their parents.

He said: "For the person who comes home it is an admission of defeat, a loss of identity and relying on somebody else. That is not healthy.

"It's very bad news for the parents as well. They want their own lives and to develop their own relationships.

"It saps the self confidence of the child and it makes them less motivated to get up and do things for themselves. It is far healthier for them to do it on their own and it makes them feel better about themselves and become more resilient. When you become dependent you take less initiative."

Men are more likely to live at home than women, with 26 per cent of single men living with their parents, compared with only 15 per cent of women.

The research, using figures from a YouGov poll, found that 42 per cent of single people in the UK lived by themselves, compared with an average of 56 per cent across Europe, rising to 81 per cent in Switzerland,

Scotland has a higher rate of single people living alone at 62 per cent because of cheaper housing prices.

However, the number of first-time buyers in Scotland is at a record low, down 9 per cent from 2004-5 and it takes four years on average to save for a deposit. Edinburgh was the least affordable property location in Scotland, with prices almost eight times average incomes.

Tony Blin-Stoyle, UK director of Parship.co.uk, said:

"With no real assets, just a growing burden of debt, their only chance of a parent-free existence is to plunge into more debt, or form a relationship with someone who is willing to share the rent or has the assets to buy a property."