

News release

Family time tops Christmas lists in the East of England ***New Relate survey reveals the region's festive hopes and worries***

- 94% of people in the East of England said spending time with immediate family is important to them for a happy Christmas this year*
- 87% of people in the East of England rated avoiding family arguments as important to them for a happy Christmas
- The most commonly reported worry was the cost of Christmas*** (41%)
- 10% of people in the East of England said they were worried about feeling lonely this Christmas

Argument-free family time comes top of most people in the East of England's Christmas list this year, reveals a survey released today by leading relationships charity Relate Cambridge. With Christmas fast approaching, 94% of people in the East of England asked by YouGov said that spending time with immediate family was important to them for a happy Christmas (respondents were given a list of options to choose from). Interestingly, more than four out of five people (87%) also rated avoiding family arguments as important.

The survey also showed that people seem to prioritise their closest family members during the festive season, with less than half of those asked (47%) rating spending time with extended family as important.

In fact, of the options listed, the only thing less important than spending time with extended family was receiving the right gifts** - with a third of people saying this was important for a happy Christmas (31%). And when it comes to gifts, it seems giving is better than receiving, as 83% of people in the East of England said getting the right gifts for others was fairly or very important for a happy Christmas.

When asked what they were worried about this Christmas, the top answer was the cost of the celebrations (41%).

The second and third biggest worries at Christmas*** were meeting other people's expectations (16%) and having different priorities from others (15%). Cooking and hosting Christmas, however, seems to be a walk in the park for many, with only one in ten (9%) saying they were fairly or very worried about hosting and 7% saying they were worried about cooking.

Relate Counsellor Elaine Taylor said: "Christmas can be a great chance to spend time with loved ones, but it can also be really stressful. High expectations, money worries and family tensions can put a real strain on celebrations. It can seem impossible to please everyone and sometimes the family home can feel like a simmering pot just waiting to boil over.

"But simple techniques like thinking about what you want to say before voicing any concerns can really help to cool things down. And some frustrations or arguments can be headed off before they ever

happen by making sure that everyone gets a chance to air hopes and worries before the season gets into full swing. So get talking now!”

The poll also suggests that not everyone has a network of people to share celebrations with: 10% of people in the East of England are concerned about feeling lonely this Christmas. Elaine continued: “Whilst it may seem like a struggle to include extended family and friends in your celebrations, you might be able to make a huge difference to someone who’s feeling lonely at this time of year.”

Here are Relate Cambridge’s five top tips for ensuring everyone has a happier Christmas:

- Start talking early. Encourage everyone to be honest about their festive hopes and fears.
- Don’t overpromise. If something is impractical, or too expensive, it’s ok to explain why it can’t happen.
- Try to compromise. For example, your partner might want to spend a cosy Christmas alone together, whereas you might want to be with your wider family. Compromise by waking up together and having a special breakfast before joining the family for Christmas dinner.
- It’s ok to say ‘no’. If someone’s wishes can’t be accommodated, explain why and see if it’s possible to do something similar at a later date.
- Enjoy yourself! Take a step back and try not to get too bogged down in the organisation.

Relate Cambridge offers information, advice and counselling for all relationships, including family counselling. Call 01223 357424 or visit www.relatecambridge.org.uk for more information on how Relate Cambridge can support you and your family this Christmas.

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For all media enquiries contact Elaine Taylor on **01302 347712**
LIKE us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/RelateCambridge>

Relate Cambridge – supporting relationships at every stage of your life

* All figures are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size for the North of England was 162 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 30th - 31th October 2014. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults (aged 16+).

**Out of eight options that were asked about.

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