

News release

UK’s loneliest region: 1 in 8 people in the East of England has no close friends, study finds

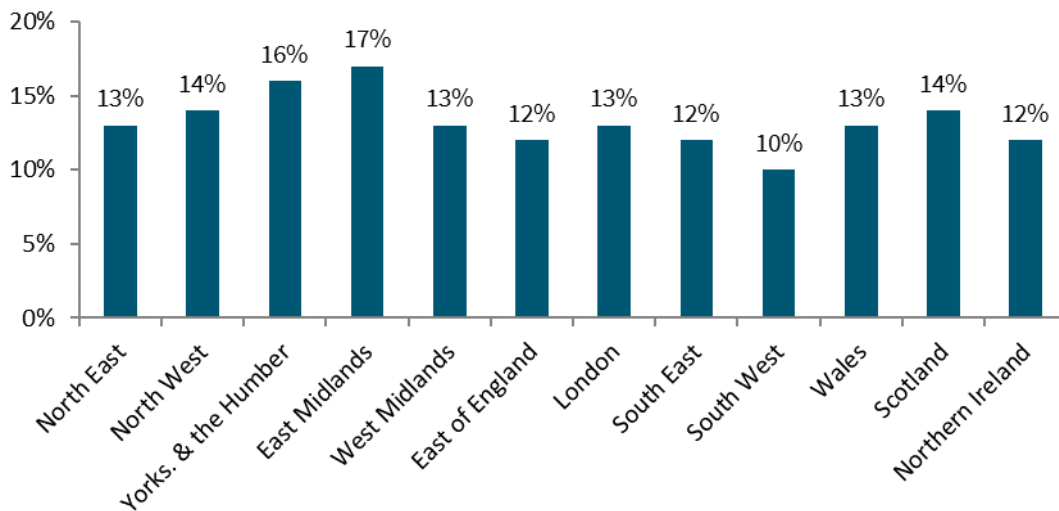
Relate Cambridge offers tips for deepening your friendships

In a UK-wide study looking at the state of relationships with friends and neighbours, 1 in 8 people (12%) living in the East of England reported having no close friends.*

A report on the study’s findings, [You’re not alone – the quality of the UK’s social relationships](#), is released today by national charities Relate and Relationships Scotland. Over 5,000 people were questioned about their relationships with friends and neighbours as part of the study.

In the UK as a whole, 13% of people reported having no close friends, which also equates to 1 in 8. People living in the East Midlands were the most likely to report having no close friends - 17% or 1 in 6. People living in the South West were the least likely to report having no close friends - 10% or 1 in 10.

Proportion of people who have no close friends, by region



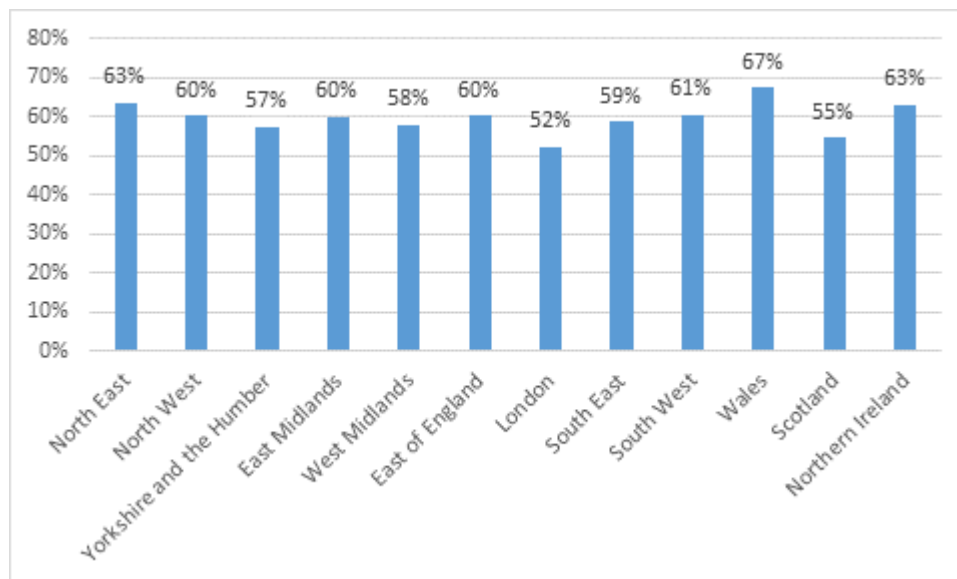
The study found that people with no close friends were two-and-a-half times as likely to say they feel down, depressed or hopeless either often or all of the time (31%) as those with four or more close friends (13%). And people who reported their friendships to be ‘very good’ were more than twice as likely to feel good about themselves often or all of the time as people who said their relationships were ‘average’.

Elaine Taylor, Relationship Counsellor at Relate Cambridge said: “It’s often said that we should be able to count our true friends on one hand, but it’s very concerning that so many people in the East of England and the rest of the UK feel they don’t have a single friend they can rely on. Making friends and keeping them isn’t always easy: it can take time and effort that we don’t always have to spare. Life can take over as we juggle careers with family life, and it might seem as if our social media friend count is high but what’s the quality of those friendships *really* like?”

“There are many reasons why we may lose confidence in those around us and in ourselves as good friends and neighbours. Take a moment to sit and think how you could give the ‘gift of friendship’ and how you could put it into effect.”

Everybody really does need good neighbours, too. The report shows that people who enjoyed better relationships with their neighbours were more likely to feel good about themselves and less likely to feel down, depressed or hopeless. In the East of England, 60% of people reported having good relationships with their neighbours. This was the same as the national figure. People living in Wales were the most likely to report good relationships with their neighbours (67%) whilst people living in London were the least likely to report this (52%).

People reporting good relationships with their neighbours, by region



Relate Cambridge’s tips from deepening your social relationships

To coincide with the report, Relate Cambridge is offering tips for improving and deepening ties with friends and neighbours.

Show an interest in others

Too often, when we meet someone new, we listen just long enough until we think of something we want to say. Really listening means asking follow up questions which deepen the conversation. But, if you feel the chat is becoming one sided, don't be afraid to say: "Now, what do you want to know about me?"

Practice tolerance and forgiveness

All relationships go through low periods. But when we also feel low, we can get stuck feeling that no one likes us and no one cares. Push through the negativity and try to find a way of reconnecting with friends and neighbours, even if there's been some bad feeling. Don't let it fester. Think: "If now isn't the time to forgive and forget, when will be?"

Don't be a phone zombie

We can lose the gift of friendship because we're continually burying ourselves in screens and are not fully present. Turn off those phones and devices for a few hours and see what it's like to be in the moment of now, smiling and making contact with people as you walk around your

neighbourhood. Offer help if you see someone struggling with shopping or children. Notice how good you feel about getting involved.

Something new

Deepen friendships and contacts by suggesting new outings or new ideas. Whether it's a gig, a new exercise class or a book club, be brave and try something you've not done before.

Perseverance brings satisfaction

When we first try something new, we often give up at an early stage because we don't see immediate or amazing results. This can also be true of trying to deepen or improve the quality of relationships. Don't give up too quickly or get downhearted. Just keep doing the best you can and you'll see results.

Remember Relate can help

Relate is best known for couple counselling but 16% of Relate counsellors have also counselled friends in the past year. Individual counselling can also allow people to explore any issues that are impacting on their ability to form, maintain and deepen friendships. Contact Relate Cambridge on 01223 357424 or visit www.relatecambridge.org.uk for more information.

-ENDS-

For all media enquiries contact Relate Cambridge on 01302 347712

*All figures, unless otherwise stated, are taken from *The Way We Are Now* – an annual study of the relationships of over 5,000 people across the UK by Relate and Relationships Scotland. The study was carried out by YouGov. Fieldwork was undertaken between 18th June and 7th July 2016. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults (aged 16+). YouGov is a member of the British Polling Council. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. The same number of close friends question was asked in 2014 and 2015 (also in YouGov polls of over 5000 UK adults) and the responses then were 1 in 10 people had no close friends.

Notes to editors:

- Relate Cambridge celebrated its 70th birthday in 2015.
- Relate and Relationships Scotland have released *The Way We Are Now* report to raise awareness of the importance of relationships for individuals and society. We are working together to let people know how relationship support can help people of all ages, at all stages of their relationships.
- Relate champions the importance of strong and healthy relationships as the basis of a thriving society.
- Relate's couple counselling work delivers an estimated £11.40 of benefits for every £1 spent.
- Relate's services extend beyond relationship counselling to family counselling, counselling for young people, sex therapy and informal courses and workshops and are offered through a network of around 1,700 counsellors across the country. For more information and advice visit: relate.org.uk.
- Relationships Scotland's network provide relationship counselling, family mediation, child contact centres and other family support services across all of mainland and island Scotland. Their work supports individuals, couples and families experiencing relationship difficulties. Around 20,000 people have contact with our services each year.