



Strictly under embargo until 00:01 on 1 November

21.7 million set to suffer social-shrinkflation due to the cost-of-living crisis as new campaign launches to encourage a winter of friendship

New survey data released today reveals that 21.7 million people* are being forced to shrink their Christmas social plans this year due to the high cost of living, as a new campaign by the Eden Project launches to offer communities easy and affordable ideas to sustain connections during the winter months.

The YouGov poll, commissioned by Eden Project Communities, reports that spending time with others is top of the nation's Christmas list, with 57% of people saying that socialising with others during the festive season is important to their wellbeing, outranking receiving presents (24%) and spending money on treating themselves (19%).

While the UK is a friendly nation, the cost of living crisis is curbing our ability to make connections, with a third of the population (33%) already cutting back on socialising, and a similar number (32%) planning to shrink social plans during a time of year usually full of connection. Of those already cutting down on socialising, around half (49%) say it's left them feeling more stressed than usual, with the same proportion (49%) feeling more anxious.

Concerned that levels of loneliness and the negative impact of financial stress factors on our wellbeing are set to intensify during the colder winter months, organisers behind the poll are encouraging a winter of friendship through community socialising. Responding to the crisis, Eden's new campaign offers easy, scalable ideas to encourage people everywhere to instigate one or more social activities to support and sustain local connections.

Lindsey Brummitt, Eden Project's programme director overseeing the Winter Warmers campaign, said: "When finances are overstretched, people are forced to cut back, but we're urging them not to cut back on friendship! Spending time together can light up the dark winter months, which can feel especially necessary when the weather is cold and the days are shorter. Everyone benefits from human warmth and social connections, so we're encouraging communities across the country to make the effort and plan something sociable this winter."

Winter Warmers ideas are flexible, affordable and scalable. Activities can be run by anyone including neighbours, schools, community projects, care homes, health care providers, councils, charities and businesses.

Running from November through to March, **Winter Warmers** will include **The Winter Dig** to get together outdoors and enjoy some time in nature planting together, **Mince-Hi** to say hello to neighbours over a mince-pie, **Advent Windows** and **Street Light-Ups** to invite

neighbours to decorate their communities, **Reverse Advent** to share and pass on items you no longer need in the run up to Christmas, **The Big Lunch at Christmas** for indoor or outdoor gatherings that share festive friendship, food and fun, and **Winter Walking Trails** to get people out and about taking steps and talking together.

Winter Warmers, made possible by The National Lottery, is an idea from the Eden Project, which is working cross-sector in a bid to create positive change and reach communities where support is needed most.

Iceland and The Food Warehouse are long standing partners of The Big Lunch, and are backing the campaign by providing over 1,000 boxes of their Mince Pies for Mince Hi events hosted by communities, the Eden Project and charity partners.

Richard Walker, Executive Chairman at Iceland & The Food Warehouse, said:

"At Iceland we see our customers struggle to make ends meet amid continuing high living costs, so as well as doing what we can to help in our stores, it's vital that we work harder to support those who need it most in their communities. We're backing Eden Project's Winter Warmers initiative because we agree that the simple act of sharing a mince pie with your neighbours, colleagues or friends could make a real difference to how people cope during the winter months."

The Eden Project will also be working collaboratively with charity partners and councils including Warm Welcome, the campaign that exists to turn poverty and isolation into warmth and welcome through the power of opening local spaces up to the community.

David Barclay, Warm Welcome Campaign Director, said: *"Now that the clocks have gone back, thousands of Warm Welcome Spaces will open their doors to their local community, offering everyone a friendly space to keep warm, connect, and make new friends. We're delighted to partner with Eden Project's Winter Warmers initiative to deliver our shared ambition to turn poverty and isolation into warmth, welcome and meaningful connections. We hope to see thousands of events spreading joy UK wide."*

Councils are also getting on board, including the London Borough of Newham in East London who piloted The Big Lunch at Christmas in December 2022 and are providing grants to community groups hosting events this year, as well as Wigan Council, which will be encouraging its network of Warm, Welcoming Spaces to invite residents in to connect over a mince pie or something to eat as part of Winter Warmers.

Winter Warmers is a seasonal campaign from the Eden Project, who are also behind The Big Lunch and the Month of Community, made possible by The National Lottery, to bring people closer together and strengthen local connections to make life better for everyone.

Find out more and download free Winter Warmers resources at www.edenprojectcommunities.com/winter-warmers

Follow us on X, Instagram and Facebook @edencommunities

Ends

Editors Notes

About the research

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2069 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 24th - 25th October 2023. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults (aged 18+).

*Calculation by Eden Project based on YouGov data, using ONS population estimates for year 2021:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/annualmidyearpopulationestimates/mid2021>

About The Big Lunch

The Big Lunch is the UK's annual community celebration for neighbours and communities bringing millions of people together in a nationwide act of community friendship on the first weekend in June every year since 2009. Her Majesty The Queen has been patron since 2013. It's an idea from the Eden Project made possible by The National Lottery and is supported by Iceland and The Food Warehouse, PG Tips and the Julia and Hans Rausing Trust. To find out more go to www.TheBigLunch.com or follow us on socials on @edencommunities.

About The National Lottery

The National Lottery is the largest community funder in the UK and proud to award money raised by National Lottery players to communities across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. National Lottery players raise £30 million each week for good causes throughout the UK. Since June 2004, they have made over 200,000 grants and awarded over £9 billion to projects that have benefited millions of people.

About Iceland and The Food Warehouse

Iceland is recognised as the UK's leader in frozen food and operates over 1,000 stores across the country and it prides itself on being a convenient and friendly place to do the family's weekly shop. In 2018 it committed to becoming the first major retailer, globally, to eliminate plastic packaging from all of its own label products by the end of 2023, and to remove palm oil as an ingredient from its own label range by the end of 2018.

About Warm Welcome

Warm Welcome, through the collective power of local communities, has provided a warm and welcoming space to over half a million people across 7,000 Warm Welcome Spaces and works in collaboration with over 50 partners.