

News release

Wednesday, 15 July 2020

For immediate release

Embargoed until 00:01 Monday 20 July 2020

New statistics show East Midland's lockdown 'relationship realisations'

New researchⁱ released today by Relate, the leading relationships charity, paints a divided picture of relationships in the East Midlands and the rest of the UK as lockdown is eased. Across couple, family and social relationships, people have had a range of 'relationship realisations' – many wholly positive and some more challenging. A heart-warming 63%ⁱⁱ of respondents in the East Midlands said that lockdown has made them realise relationships are the most important thing in their lives and nearly half (48%) of respondents in the East Midlands who have parents feel emotionally closer to them.ⁱⁱⁱ Sadly, nearly a fifth (18%) of respondents living in the East Midlands who have a partner have struggled to support them emotionally during this time^{iv} and 4% noted that lockdown has made them realise they need to break-up, divorce or separate.^v

The poll of 2,058ⁱ UK adults found that under three-in-five (58%) respondents in the East Midlands said their relationships with loved ones have helped them get through lockdown^{vi}. As Relate launches its first ever Relationships Week (20-26 July), Relate Derby & Southern Derbyshire is asking people to share their #RelationshipRocks via social media – with a picture or video and a short message about how someone has been a 'rock' to them lately.

Claire Rintoul, Interim CEO of Relate Derby said: "Most of us can't remember a sustained period of pressure on every aspect of life on such a scale. Relationships are central to health and wellbeing and we want to raise awareness of their power to protect and sustain us in the worst of times. Relationships are now in the spotlight more than ever so we want to grasp this opportunity to encourage everyone to talk about them more openly – the good, the bad and the ugly. That's why today marks the start of our first-ever Relationships Week and we're calling on people in Derby, Southern Derbyshire and East Staffordshire join in the conversation."

Make or break time for couples

When it came to couple relationships almost a fifth (18%) of respondents in the East Midlands who have a partner said they have struggled to support their partner emotionally during lockdown, which is just below the UK average of 23%. One-in-seven in the region (14%) were anxious about how their relationship with their partner will change when lockdown ends^{vii}, compared to 17% across the rest of the UK. Of respondents in a relationship living in the East Midlands, more than one-in-eight (12%) said lockdown has

made them realise they want to propose to their partner^{viii}, while 4% came to the conclusion during lockdown that they need to end their relationship.

Socially distanced but emotionally closer to family and friends

While we may have been practising social distancing during lockdown, many have realised their emotional bonds with loved ones have strengthened. For example, nearly half (48%) of respondents in the East Midlands who have parents said they felt ‘emotionally closer’ to them as a result of lockdown. This compared to a UK average of 43%. Despite this, over a third (35%) of respondents in the East Midlands who have parents have argued or had a disagreement with them during lockdown.

Looking at other relationships in the East Midlands, 42% of respondents who have a sibling felt emotionally closer to their siblings since lockdown^{ix}, 26% of respondents felt closer to their neighbours and 25% felt closer to their friends.

Relationship hopes post-lockdown

Lockdown has made many people experience first-hand the benefits of quality time. Just under three-in-five respondents in the East Midlands (59%) agreed that the experience has inspired them to make more effort with loved ones in the future.^x When asked exactly what lockdown relationship habits people would like to continue with in the future, family walks or spending time outdoors came in top (31%), followed by spending more quality time with family (29%), spending more quality time with their partner (22%), and having regular chats with neighbours (22%).

Claire Rintoul, Interim CEO of Relate Derby concluded: “This Relationships Week, we want to help everyone in Derby, Southern Derbyshire and East Staffordshire celebrate the best of their lockdown relationship realisations and address the more difficult ones. We have a unique opportunity here – the role of relationships is clearly front-of-mind for many. We’re encouraging everyone to start a conversation about their relationships this week, whether it’s to thank someone for their support during lockdown or to begin addressing issues that have been swept under the carpet in recent months.”

Relate is offering a free course on communicating more effectively; tips for dealing with social anxiety and a range of other issues as lockdown eases; and online counselling, sex therapy and mediation sessions. Please visit www.relate.org.uk/relationships-week.

Relate Derby is also offering free counselling for couples and young people age 16-18, please visit <https://www.relatederby.org.uk/freecounselling.html>

ENDS

For all media enquiries (including interviews with a Relate counsellor) contact Gopa Nath, Marketing & Fundraising Officer [07741193484](tel:07741193484) or gnath@relatederby.org.uk or Claire Rintoul, Interim CEO, [07741193480](tel:07741193480) or claire.rintoul@relatederby.org.uk. For urgent out of hours enquiries call 07875 049415.

Notes to editors:

- Relate is a registered charity number 207314.
- Relate champions the importance of strong and healthy relationships for all as the basis of a thriving society.
- Relate provides impartial and non-judgmental support for people of all ages, gender identities and sexual orientations at all stages of couple, family and social relationships.
- Over four million people every year access information, support and counselling from Relate but it's clear many more would benefit from support.
- For more information visit relate.org.uk.

^{i i} The research was conducted online from 26 June- 3 July 2020 by Censuswide, with a sample of 2,058 adults (aged 16+), 147 of which were in the East Midlands. The sample was weighted to be nationally representative.

ⁱⁱ Combining respondents who strongly agree and somewhat agree with the statement 'Lockdown has made me realise that relationships are the most important thing in my life'. Compares to a UK average of 61%.

ⁱⁱⁱ Combining respondents who answered much more close and slightly more close to 'Do you feel more or less emotionally close to the following people since lockdown happened?'

^{iv} Combining respondents who strongly agree and somewhat agree with the statement 'I have struggled to support my partner emotionally during this time'.

^v Combining respondents who strongly agree and somewhat agree with the statement 'Lockdown has made me realise we need to break-up/ divorce/ separate'.

^{vi} Combining respondents who strongly agree and somewhat agree with the statement 'My relationships with loved ones has helped me get through lockdown'.

^{vii} Combining respondents who strongly agree and somewhat agree with the statement 'I'm anxious about how my relationship with my partner might change when lockdown ends'.

^{viii} Combining respondents who strongly agree and somewhat agree with the statement 'Lockdown has made me realise I want to propose to my partner'.

^{ix} Combining respondents who answered much more close and slightly more close to 'Do you feel more or less emotionally close to the following people since lockdown happened?'. UK averages: 36% of respondents who have sibling felt emotionally closer to their siblings since lockdown, 34% of those with grandparents felt closer to their grandparents, 31% of all respondents felt closer to their neighbours and 30% felt emotionally closer to their friends.

^x Combining respondents who strongly and somewhat agree with the statement 'This experience has inspired me to make more effort with loved ones in the future.'