

Over half of Brits say they want to make a difference in their neighbourhoods with Neath Port Talbot, Norwich and Dunfermline the most community driven locations in the UK

Submitted by: White London LTD.

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Over the last couple of years we've understood how being a part of a community can help us, from picking up something for our neighbours to chatting over the garden fence. The people we live around are the ones we share the most ups and downs with, and research revealed today has shown that communities are stronger than ever.

The report by community-based retailer SPAR drilled down to find the key elements that make a great neighbourhood. Brits look for good neighbours (28%), feeling a sense of belonging (22%) and free green spaces (11%) - all key elements that helped us through Covid-19 restrictions.

The report went on to show that a huge 61% of people would describe themselves as happy living in their community, jumping to 68% for communities in Wales. An impressive 31% also said they were involved in activities for local causes including improving the area for others, with 18-24 year olds most likely to be involved with local community projects, such as litter pick-ups.

And it seems the joy of being involved in our neighbourhoods has grown in 2022, as the research found that a third of us have lent a hand more since COVID-19, and 28% said the community had grown closer. Nearly half (42%) also felt they had got to know people in their neighbourhood more, including people working in local shops.

Nurturing a neighbourhood and helping it thrive was something that over half (57%) found important, saying they wanted to make a difference and help other people feel like they matter – and the most popular ways to build this sense of community includes coffee mornings (49%), charity jumble sales (43%) and community fun runs or walks (39%).

SPAR, which has over 2,600 stores across the country, commissioned the poll of 3,000 UK adults and also revealed the most community driven locations in the country, including:

1. Neath Port Talbot
2. Norwich
3. Dunfermline
4. Swansea
5. Barnsley
6. Hackney
7. Derry - Londonderry
8. Plymouth
9. Chelmsford
10. Preston

Neath Port Talbot came out top thanks to their focus on community events, with an extremely active Facebook page helping the area come together for events including walking groups, gardening clubs and

activities for kids such as the Buglife project. Norwich followed close behind with over 600 charities registered to the city and a selection of community events that help the residents feel they are part of something, including the Green Film Festival and street food events. Dunfermline came in third and prides itself on outdoor activities in Fife including picnics in the park and coastal walks, as residents say the wide range of events on offer is one of the best things about the community.

It seems we are a nation of bargain hunters as jumble sales and boot sales came out top as the most popular activity across the UK (31%), followed by walking groups (28%) - but the community get together we all love the most is a local pub quiz, with 67% saying they attend.

New community activities have also taken the nation by storm in recent years. Bird watching groups have become more popular with 16% saying they attend. Baby massage & yoga groups are popular (30%), as well as many people joining community gardening groups (49%).

John Drury, a social psychologist, specialising in the study of collective behaviour at the University of Sussex, commented: "These important findings underline the role that local community plays in people's lives, finding a strong association between the number of groups that people were involved in and their increased happiness in living more locally."

"It's no coincidence that the activities that were found to drive happiness most – local get-togethers, pub quizzes and dog walking – are all activities that allow people to extend their social circle and form new friendships. It's also worth noting that some of the most popular activities locally, such as litter picking and community gardening, serve to improve the community environment. They produce a virtuous circle of happiness in the local community."

"It's clear that people have discovered, or rediscovered, their local community through the pandemic. Like others, I got to know people in my local shops and cafes through working from home, and realised what a great community I live in."

SPAR stores are at the heart of the communities they serve, and to give shoppers across the UK the chance to make their community better, SPAR is offering grants to help fund programmes, social clubs and charities that give back to the community. The Community Cashback scheme is giving grants to local voluntary or community organisations and charities who need it most. Successful organisations include Bags Full Of Love, an organisation based in West Dunbartonshire that aims to give every child entering foster care a new backpack filled with new comfort and personal care items, and Northumbria Blood Bikes, a charity run by local volunteers who deliver life saving blood platelets and plasma to hospitals across the region.

Suzanne Dover, SPAR UK Brand and Marketing Director, added "Our SPAR stores around the UK believe in nurturing their neighbourhoods and supporting the communities they serve, and we are delighted to be able to supplement their local efforts with this national campaign. This report shows exactly what makes a community and how important things like links with local shops are to help build this connection. Times are tough for charity and support groups who are looking to fundraise at the moment, and it is great that the Community Cashback scheme can provide deserving local organisations with some extra financial help at this time."

Find out more at <https://www.spar.co.uk/>

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Notes to Editors:

Research conducted by Arlington Research with 3000 UK adults in May 2022

The top ten locations were chosen by analysing happiness ratings, community involvement and in-depth desk research into each area following responses from the 3000 respondents.

About SPAR UK

Leading convenience symbol group SPAR is the world's largest food retail chain. With over 13,000 stores in 48 countries and in the UK alone, around 2,600 stores, with 40,000 friendly staff and a turnover of more than £3bn.

SPAR believes in nurturing our neighborhoods and supporting the communities we serve through programmes like the Community Cashback scheme. We are proud to be a part of your communities. Our convenience stores are owned and run by locals, for locals. We are here to provide the essentials you need but also to support local suppliers, schools and charities. Our mission is to always be there for you, and there for everyone.

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