

A Friend In the Hand Is Worth Two In the Bush

Britain is a much more sociable nation than was previously thought. According to a recent study, the average Briton claims to have 14 **(a)** _____ and most have at least one **(b)** _____.

The findings are from the British Social Attitudes survey, an annual study of Britain's views and habits. "One of the traditional stereotypes is that the British are not as sociable or friendly as some other nationalities," said Alison Park of the National Centre for Social Research and leader of the study. "This survey shows that friends play a very important role in people's lives."

The study asked 1,000 people across the United Kingdom how many close friends they had and whether or not they had a best friend. The respondents decided for themselves the meaning of *close* and *best*. The average figure of 14 close friends was much higher than expected. "It reflects recent changes in lifestyle. People are marrying later in life and adults today spend much more time going out socialising in pubs, clubs and restaurants," said Park. "This means that there is more time to **(c)** _____ people and **(d)** _____." The increase in the use of email, mobiles and text messaging has made it easier to **(e)** _____ with old friends and to keep friendships alive.

80% of respondents said they had a best friend and 60% said they try to see that person at least once a week. Interestingly, 90% of women have a best friend compared with only 80% of men. The survey also revealed that men generally have a wider **(f)** _____ and **(g)** _____ while women prefer to have a smaller number of closer, more trusted friends.

Activity 1

Check the meaning of these words and expressions in the Macmillan Online Dictionary. Then use the words to complete the article.

acquaintances best friend circle of friends close friends
get to know keep in touch make friends

Activity 2

Work in pairs to answer the following questions using the vocabulary in Activity 1.

a. How would you define a close friend and a best friend?

b. Do you think the lifestyle changes and the consequences described in paragraph 3 are the same in your country?

c. Why do you think the differences between men and women described in paragraph 4 exist? Do you think this is the same in your country?

d. Have you got a wide circle of friends and acquaintances or just a few close friends?

e. How often do you speak or meet with your old friends?

f. Do you consider yourself a very sociable person?

Activity 3

The words and expressions below are all stages of a romantic relationship. Check their meaning in the Macmillan Online Dictionary. Then put the events into the most likely order and share your answers with a partner.

ask out chat up cheat on fall in love with fall out with get divorced
get married go on a date live together propose to split up

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____

For discussion

a. Think of some past events related to friendship or a romantic relationship you would like to share. Tell your partner about it using learned vocabulary as much as possible.