

Study Shows Few People Speak to Neighbours – Linked to Poor Health

The latest research from Relationships Australia has revealed a low level of community participation among survey respondents, which, in other research, is linked to poor physical health and mental well-being.

According to Alison Brook, National Executive Officer, Relationships Australia: “The February community participation survey revealed that 65% of people responding never, rarely or only occasionally chatted with their neighbours and a similar proportion never, rarely or only occasionally attended events or meetings that bring people together.”

“It’s a major concern that so many people are not connecting with their neighbours and only 40% felt a strong sense of identity with their local community and neighbourhood,” Ms Brook said.

The online survey, conducted in February attracted over 2,000 respondents, with 78% identifying as female. The community participation questions selected were adapted from the Household Income and Labour Dynamics Survey of Australia.

It’s well known that community participation activities such as taking an active interest in current affairs; regularly socialising with household members, friends, extended family and neighbours; and taking part in organised community activities is associated with improved wellbeing.

“Neighbour Day is our annual reminder of the importance of getting to know your neighbours and connecting with the community. As the home of Neighbour Day we strongly encourage all Australians to get out and about, say hi to a neighbour, organise a casual catch-up or a street party. Good relationships with neighbours can and do change communities and can make a real difference to people’s wellbeing,” Ms Brook said.

Neighbour Day promotes the benefits of well-connected, resilient communities and great relationships between neighbours everywhere. As this year’s Neighbour Day falls on Easter Sunday many people are choosing to celebrate on another weekday or weekend that may suit better. The supporting theme is – *Every day is Neighbour Day*, so people can choose to connect with their community in whatever way and at whatever time suits best.

Neighbour Day Ambassadors who support the message of community connection include:

- Natalie Ahmat, journalist and presenter of NITV News
- Hon. Fred Chaney AO, 2014 Senior Australian of the Year
- Nick Duigan, co-host of Hook, Line and Sinker on the Seven Network and Fox Sports
- Costa Georgiadis, host of the ABC Gardening Australia program
- Julie Goodwin, Australian cook, winner of the inaugural season of MasterChef
- Andrew Heslop, the founder of Neighbour Day
- Hugh Mackay, social researcher and author of ‘The Art of Belonging’
- Sophie Thomson, presenter on the ABC Gardening Australia program.

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Everything you need to help facilitate your Neighbour Day event is now available on the neighbourday.org website and everyone is encouraged to follow Neighbour Day on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram to let us know about your neighbourly plans. People should register their Neighbour Day event at neighbourday.org.

You can contribute your Neighbour Day story to the [Tell Us Your Story](#) competition to win great prizes.

“The community you want starts at your front door.”™

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About the survey

The Relationships Australia monthly survey provides a snapshot of how Australians are feeling about issues related to families, community connection, relationships and mental health. The survey is self-initiated and accessed via the Relationships Australia website.

More than 2,000 people responded to the Relationships Australia online survey in February 2016. Around four in five survey respondents (78%) identified as female, with more females than males responding in every age group. Just under eighty-five per cent of survey respondents were aged between 20-59 years, and almost 40 per cent of respondents comprised women aged between 30-49 years (inclusive). A full survey report is available [here](#).

References

Australian Bureau of Statistics (2008). Australian Social Trends, cat. no. 4102.0

Berry, H.L. & Shipley, M. (2009). Longing to belong: personal social capital and psychological distress in an Australian coastal region. *Social Policy Research Paper No. 39*. Canberra.

About Relationships Australia

Relationships Australia is a leading provider of relationship support services for children, adults, families and communities. We are a community-based, not-for-profit Australian organisation with no religious affiliations. Services and programs are provided from more than 110 centres nationally by our 2,000 staff. Relationships Australia is the home of Neighbour Day.

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