



Press release

5 October 2007

Traditional forms of social interaction in the community declining, says new research

The Bingo Association publishes new study into the social impacts of club closures today

Traditional forms of social interaction are important for communities but are under threat, according to a new survey commissioned by The Bingo Association. Whilst the vast majority (97 per cent) of people believe that traditional social activities in the UK help foster a sense of belonging in the community, nearly half (49%) say they are in decline and would prefer to stay at home, watch television, or spend time on the telephone with family and friends.

The survey, conducted by GFK NOP across a sample of over 1,000 people in the UK, revealed that more than two thirds of adults agree that, amongst other places, the church, local library, pub, sports and social club provide people with an ongoing sense of belonging in their community. However, when asked which activities they personally prefer, staying at home with friends, watching TV, or spending time on the television are overwhelmingly more popular.

More highlights from the survey include:

- Whilst 70% of all adults believe that going to church is an important community activity, only 31% actually attend.
- Social networking and emailing have now overtaken going to church or to the local sports club in popularity. Three times as many 16-24 year olds use the internet to interact with their family and friends as go to more traditional venues for meeting people. And social networking is fast approaching going to the pub in terms of its popularity amongst people in the UK.
- Watching television scored most highly in terms of preferred leisure activity, according to 85 per cent of women and 78 per cent of men.
- Eating out, emerges as a popular social activity, and a way of keeping in touch with friends and family, but still falls behind watching TV in terms of preference.

Today The Bingo Association is also publishing a new in-depth report written by the Henley Centre Headlight Vision into the 'Social Impact of Bingo Club Closures'. An estimated 3.8 million UK adults (8.1 per cent of the adult population) play bingo and, contrary to popular belief, bingo is also on the rise amongst younger audiences (16% rise for people aged under 41 in the last six years.) And, according to the research conducted by GFK NOP, 48 per cent of the general population view bingo as an important venue for social interaction.

Whilst the bingo industry is adapting to social change, it is estimated that one in three clubs could close within the UK, with up to 180 of these being small, independent venues. This is largely due to the fact that bingo is subject to the highest form of taxation for any form of gaming or gambling, as well as the general squeeze of recent government regulation.

The Henley Centre report reveals that:

- Bingo plays an important role in promoting a sense of belonging to a local community. It is one of the few leisure pursuits that brings together people of all ages
- When a bingo club closes, former patrons can feel isolated and alone, and some even cease to leave their homes altogether
- In comparison with the general population, bingo players spend a great deal of time with their families – 82 per cent of bingo players see their families either every day or a few times a week, compared with an average of 54 per cent among those involved in other social activities.

Paul Talboys, Chief Executive of The Bingo Association, said:

“Both of these pieces of research provide us with a fascinating insight into how traditional community activities and social pursuits are changing. Bingo players feel very strongly about their local clubs and the role that these clubs play is very important in terms of ensuring people retain a sense of belonging in their local community. Whilst bingo is a very popular game, the industry has been heavily impacted by recent regulation which could limit its ability to adapt quickly to the changing shape of local communities and nature of social interaction.”

Dr Carolyn Downs, historian and sociologist at Manchester Metropolitan University, who contributed to the report, said:

“Traditional bingo clubs may play an important role in maintaining a sense of connectedness to the local community amongst both players and staff. This is more likely to be the case in rural or more deprived urban areas. Where there are no alternative social networks, loss of a sense of belonging could have repercussions on both individuals and society as a whole, and might contribute to isolation and social dislocation.”

Ends

For further information, and for a list of club closures by region, please contact:

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Notes to editors

- GfK NOP research was carried out amongst a representative sample of 1,002 adults across the UK via telephone between 28th – 30th September 2007.
- The Henley Centre Headlight Vision in-depth research was carried out using both quantitative and qualitative methods. During the quantitative research, 32 regular bingo members and twelve members of staff were interviewed as part of a group, and participated in paired depth interviews and solus interviews. Two individuals classed as ‘expert witnesses’ were also interviewed via telephone. A quantitative postal survey sent to 1,000 members of bingo clubs that had recently closed was also undertaken.
- The full report from The Henley Centre Headlight Vision is available on request from The Bingo Association (01582 860911).
- The Bingo Association is the trade association of the land-based licensed bingo industry in Great Britain, representing the proprietors of bingo clubs licensed under the Gambling Act 2005.
- The Bingo Association supports responsible gambling, through www.gambleaware.co.uk and is a member of The Responsibility in Gambling Trust (RIGT.)
- There are 109 proprietors in membership and between them they operate 548 bingo clubs. Membership profile ranges from the very large operators, including Mecca (98 clubs) and Gala (170 clubs), to smaller operators and many single unit businesses.

The breakdown of nationally-representative statistics from the GfK NOP survey were as follows:

1. Which of these traditional forms of social interaction, if any, do you think provide local people of adult age with an ongoing sense of belonging within their community?

Post Office:	57%
Library:	68%
Church:	70%
Local sports or football club:	75%
Local bingo club:	48%
Local social/community club:	76%
Local pub:	77%
School/school gates:	73%
Community groups, ie WI:	71%
None of these:	1%
Don't know:	2%

2. Generally speaking, do you think that these types of traditional places where local people have the opportunity to interact in your area are ...

In decline:	49%
On the increase:	15%
Neither in decline or increasing:	29%
Don't have these places in my local area:	1%
Don't know:	6%

3. In your spare time, which of the following social activities, if any, do you enjoy doing the most?

Going to the pub:	41%
Leisure activities such as bingo or bridge:	14%
Going to the local sports or football club:	33%
Eating out:	80%
Going to church:	31%
Entertaining friends at home/ being entertained at friends' homes:	80%
Watching television:	82%
Emailing/social networking:	39%
Telephone/mobile calls:	68%
Other activity:	49%
Don't know:	1%

4. Which of the following activities, if any, do you prefer as a way of keeping in touch and interacting with your family and friends?

Going to the pub:	41%
Leisure activities such as bingo or bridge:	15%
Going to the local sports or football club:	32%
Eating out:	79%
Going to church:	27%
Entertaining friends at home/ being entertained at friends' homes:	80%
Watching television:	58%
Emailing/social networking:	45%
Telephone/mobile calls:	85%
Other activity:	34%
None of these:	4%

5. Generally, how regularly do these activities enable you to spend time with your family?

Everyday/almost every day:	22%
A few times a week:	32%
Once a week:	15%
A couple of times a month:	24%
Almost never/never:	7%

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