

WANT A FAVOUR? ASK A MIDDLE AGED NEIGHBOUR

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Everybody needs good neighbours – but it helps if they're over-45, says new research.

Those approaching middle age or beyond are far more likely to be helpful and friendly. They're more likely to clear snow as a favour, sweep leaves, collect shopping or check on the elderly.

And there's a much better chance that they'll know your name, and will happily chat over the garden fence.

Research into British community spirit by CORGI HomePlan has shown that four out of five over-45s (81%) say they'll check on neighbours if they've not seen them for a few days, compared to 56% aged 25-44 and 52% aged 18-24.

One in four (26%) over-45s have picked up shopping on behalf of neighbours, compared to one in ten (12%) aged 25-44 and one in ten (11%) aged 18-24.

And almost a third (30%) of over-45s say they know their neighbours very well and are on first name terms.

That's DOUBLE what 25-44 year olds (14%) admit to, and SIX TIMES more than those aged 18-24 (5%).

Notably, with the cold winter weather back with a vengeance over large parts of the country, 63% of over-45s feel responsible for keeping an eye on elderly neighbours, compared to 47% aged 25-44 and 36% aged 18-24.

In fact, three in ten over-45s will regularly check in on vulnerable residents during bouts of bad weather, to see if they can help with shopping, keeping warm and to simply offer company.

Perhaps aware of their increasing age and vulnerability, 29% of homeowners aged over 45 leave a key with a neighbour, compared to just 19% aged 25-44 and 18% aged 18-24.

And today it's most likely to be those over-45 who drop in to borrow a cup of sugar or a lawnmower – rather than cash-strapped younger neighbours.

One in five over-45s (21%) admit to popping next door to borrow milk, sugar and teabags, compared to just 15% of 18-24 year olds.

One in five (22%) are comfortable asking next door for a lift, compared to just one in ten aged 25-44 (12%) and one in ten aged 18-24 (8%).

While 37% would borrow a DIY tool such as a lawnmower, nearly double the number of 18-24 year olds (20%).

However, traditional British reserve means that all neighbours, no matter what age, draw the line when it comes to more intimate acts of friendship.

Only one in 20 of those surveyed would borrow money from a neighbour to pay a window cleaner.

Only 35% would ask to use next door's loo if theirs was out of order, on a par with 30% aged 25-44 and 27% aged 18-24 who would prefer to drive to a local café or shop.

Just 14% of over-45s would use a neighbour's shower if their boiler was broken. This prudish reluctance was mirrored in the younger generations with only 16% aged 25-44 and 13% aged 18-24 willing to strip off in next door's house.

And it's the 18-24 year old children and grandchildren of the friendly middle aged neighbours - the so called "millennials" - registering the lowest levels of community spirit.

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Asked to score the community spirit in their area out of ten, those under 25 thought it was a four, compared to those aged 45+ rating it a six.

One in five say they do not know a single neighbour's name. One in four admit they have never talked to any of their neighbours. While one in two reveal they wouldn't consider borrowing anything from next door.

The research has been compiled to launch CORGI HomePlan's 'How Safe Is Your Street' campaign, which encourages people to check up on vulnerable neighbours in difficult times. Visit www.corgihomeplan.co.uk/how-safe-is-your-street for more information on how to get involved and to get practical tips on how to help your neighbours.

Dr Sandi Mann, behavioural psychologist from the University of Central Lancashire, explains: "Due to the changes in the job market over the past 50 years, people often end up living significant distances away from their parents. However as their parents age, the middle aged neighbour is becoming increasingly worried about what might happen when their mum or dad needs help.

"This makes them more sensitive to the needs of vulnerable older neighbours who might also lack family close by; by keeping an eye out for them, they hope that others will do the same for their own parents in a neighbourly 'pay it forward' scheme.

"CORGI HomePlan's How Safe Is Your Street campaign reminds us that simple steps such as checking on elderly or vulnerable neighbours should not be the domain of the middle aged. It should be the norm in a caring society and we can all do small things to reach out to neighbours who might just need a helping hand."

Kevin Treanor, director of CORGI HomePlan, says: "We're encouraging people to not close their doors at the end of the day - but knock on their neighbour's. The reality is, people who live a metre away might need help. And it's not just the single mum who might need a lift to take their kids to school but the elderly neighbour who might have pipes damaged by bad weather, an overblown fence you can resurrect or a faulty radiator which you could easily help to fix.

"The CORGI name means safety and we take that responsibility very seriously. We already keep many thousands of homes safe up and down the country and are now urging everyone to take small steps to keep their communities safe, too. Together, we can all play our part."

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