

For immediate release
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**First date ... Last date?
Britons spend £1.2 billion on first dates
New survey of British singles launches BHF Flirt Walk in association with PARSHIP.co.uk**

New research from PARSHIP.co.uk, the UK's first compatibility-based online dating service, has found that Britain's 9 million singles spent more than £1.2 billion on first dates during 2005, on average going on 1.9 dates each at a cost of £70

With all things equal you would expect the bill at the end of the evening to be split. However only 40% of women were prepared to go Dutch. A massive 42% still expect the man to pay on the first date, yet only 1% of women would be prepared to return the compliment. But when it comes to splashing the cash men on average spend more, totting up £86 compared to £52 spent by women.

London, Britain's lonely hearts capital (with 33 per cent more singletons than any other part of Britain) spent the most on dating, racking up £76.20 per date, while the Welsh spent the least, at £53.70. But the majority never get past that important first meeting, due to mismatches, incompatibility and a lack of social know-how.

The survey launches the British Heart Foundation (BHF) Flirt Walk - an event set to prove the ideal setting for that vital first encounter as 2000 singletons meet in Hyde Park on February 12 to raise funds for BHF Heart Nurses.

Bad breath, scruffiness, chain-smoking and overdone make-up were just some of the major turn-offs for the 1,000 singles polled by PARSHIP. The biggest negative was poor personal hygiene, with over two thirds (77%) claiming that dirty fingernails and greasy hair would immediately spell dating disaster. Smoking (cited by 47%) and over-drinking (33%) would also kill any potential romance.

When it comes to looks and physique, men are the pickiest. 20% insisted on a pretty face, while nearly a third (30%) said that an excessively overweight woman wouldn't stand a chance, although a few curves were attractive. A further 23% of men find a woman wearing too much make-up a sticky prospect.

Women, it seems, set more store by actions than looks. A man who picks his teeth or repeats himself constantly will limit his prospects, since 29% of women find annoying personal habits impossible to overlook. If a man counts his cash on a first date he'd likely to be back to dinner for one, since 22% of women find stinginess a turnoff. 17% will give him minus points for arriving late and if he gets drunk, 42% of women wouldn't want to see him again.

Psychiatrist Dr Victoria Lukats, commented:

“The first date in any relationship is critical: first impressions are durable and can make or break a potential relationship – even at the earliest stage. Any turn-offs can be difficult to rectify, even if you do make a connection, so think ahead, be well prepared and be on your best behaviour.

Even in the current climate of casual dress and behaviour, being well-turned out can only impress your partner, and for women in particular, good manners mean a lot. Listening as much as talking is one of the ways to convince the other person that you are genuinely interested in them.

Appreciation is important for both sexes, so don't forget to compliment your date – as long as it sounds genuine! Do thank your date for a lovely time at the end of the evening, particularly if he or she has paid! A quick follow-up call to reaffirm how much you enjoyed the evening is often a very effective way to get that vital second date.”

Creating a new and congenial context for that important first meeting, the British Heart Foundation (BHF) has teamed up with PARSHIP.co.uk to launch the Flirt Walk, which takes place in London's Hyde Park on Sunday 12th February. This new landmark in the love calendar – billed as the UK's largest-ever outdoor matchmaking event – is the ideal way to find a dream date in time for Valentine's Day. The 5km walk will see 2000 single people hoping to change their own lives by finding a new love – and the lives of other people too by raising £80k to fund BHF Heart Nurses.

Online dating service PARSHIP.co.uk has created a special psychometric compatibility test, to be completed by each Flirt Walker. On the day, each walker will receive a badge that's colour-coded for his or her personality-type. A True Blue should seek out other True Blues, a Cool Green other Cool Greens, and so on. Other Flirt Walk activities include:

- Heart match – Walkers will be given half a heart and told to go in search of the other half.
- Romantic trivia – Walkers can pick their potential paramour's brain – and be in with a chance of winning a romantic dinner for two.
- Carry on flirting – Pubs near the park will be colour-coded to match Flirt Walkers' badges. 'Flirt Cards' will be distributed so that vital contact details can be noted down.

Flirting expert Tracey Cox is backing the event. She said: "I am delighted to be supporting the British Heart Foundation (BHF) Flirt Walk in association with PARSHIP.co.uk. The event is the perfect opportunity to flirt to your heart's content whilst raising funds for BHF Heart Nurses. So whether you're a fearless flirt or a nervous novice, sign up for Flirt Walk and give your heart a flutter searching for the perfect Valentines date".

Tony Blin-Stoyle, PARSHIP.co.uk Country Manager commented: "There are over 8 million singles in the UK actively looking to meet someone, and London has 33% more single people than any other part of Britain. We're sure that the Flirt Walk will raise loads of money for BHF Heart Nurses and hopefully, for those participating, help them find the love of their life.”

The Flirt Walk is part of the BHF's 2006 Valentine Appeal which aims to raise £1 million to fund 30 new BHF Heart Nurses to help thousands more patients across the UK. This Valentine's Day there are several ways of supporting the charity including posting a Love Note in the window of a local BHF Shop for a suggested donation of £1 or buying a gift from the BHF Online Shop.

For further information or to register for the Flirt Walk visit bhf.org.uk/flirtwalk or call 0870 127 6267 (calls are charged at the local rate). For full details of the 2006 Valentine Appeal or to donate, visit bhf.org.uk/valentine.

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