

Swearing, litter, queue jumping and mobile phones: the disrespect that galls the British

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Swearing, litter, queue jumping and mobile phones: the disrespect that galls the British

Ipsos MORI's latest analysis reveals the disrespectful behaviour which most galls the British public. Swearing in public, dropping litter, jumping queues and inconsiderate use of mobile phones are just some of the things which annoy British people.

The new research from Ipsos MORI - which precedes the launch of the government's Respect Action Plan next week - shows more than nine in 10 people are irritated by queue jumpers (91%), people dropping litter (93%), urinating, vomiting or spitting in public (96%), people either not giving up a seat to an elderly/pregnant person on a train/bus (91%) or not saying please, thank you or sorry (92%).

Other behaviours are found irritating by at least three-quarters of the public: obscene gesturing by drivers (76%), swearing in public (83%), using mobile phones in public without consideration for others (74%), or impatience and subsequent rudeness in public (83%).

Ben Page, Chairman of the Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute said: "Despite much hand wringing over the collapse of manners in modern society, our research suggests that most people of whatever age find disrespect and bad manners irritating. Our research suggests that people are keen to see a change - and most of those who admit doing these things say they find it offensive when others do!"

Whilst the majority of British people say they are irritated by disrespectful behaviour, many admit to it doing it themselves. Most of those who admit to disrespectful behaviour say they find it irritating when others behave the same way:

Two-thirds (66%) of those who admit to having made an obscene gesture while driving in the past few months find such behaviour irritating in general

Three-quarters (75%) who admit to swearing in public do not like it when others do the same

Almost two-thirds (63%) who have not considered people around them when using their mobile phone say they find it irritating when others are similarly inconsiderate.

There appear to be even starker double standards when it comes to dropping litter and jumping queues: 83% of those who admit to dropping litter in the past few months are irritated by others who do the same, whilst 84% of people admitting to having jumped a queue are annoyed by others behaving in a similar way.

The research also reveals that:

Men are more likely to make obscene gestures while driving and swear in public (32% of men, compared to 24% of women). Men are also more likely to drop litter (21% vs 13%) and queue jump (26% vs 19%).

At least three-quarters of British people find each of the behaviours irritating, but the proportions admitting to this behaviour in the past few months includes 17% (dropped litter), 22% (queue jumped), 28% (obscene gesture while driving), 33% (used a mobile phone without consideration of others), 35% (become impatient and been rude to a stranger in public) and 46% (swearing in public). The majority of people who admit to these behaviours say they have only rarely done them, although minorities do admit to doing them often.

Londoners are most likely to say they have become impatient and spoken to someone rudely (45%) or lied for their own interest (45%). Those in the North East are most likely to say they are irritated by people who jump queues or drop litter (98% and 99% respectively), whilst swearing in public is most likely to be found irritating in the West Midlands (92%).

The research also reveals that some people are more irritated than others by disrespectful behaviour. Younger people are more tolerant of swearing in public and people using mobile phones (57% and 58% of 15-24 yr olds respectively say they find these irritating, compared to 83% and 74% overall), but they are just as likely to be irritated by those who fail to give up their seat to the elderly/pregnant or by people who do not say please, thank you or sorry.

Women are less tolerant of various types of behaviour including obscene gestures from drivers (80% of women find irritating, compared to 72% of men), swearing in public (87% vs 79%), people who become impatient and speak rudely to others in public (87% vs 79%), those who do not give up their seat to the elderly/pregnant (94% vs 87%), and not saying please, thank you or sorry (96% vs 88%).

However, far more say they have done something respectful. The research shows that more than nine in 10 people (92%) have held a door open for someone they did not know, or given money to charity. What's more, 73% have helped look after an elderly neighbour/friend, 71% have given up their seat to an elderly/pregnant person, 69% have picked up litter that someone else has dropped in the street, 64% kept conversations on their mobile phone in public to a minimum out of consideration for others, and 55% have asked someone they did not know to stop behaving rudely.

There are significant numbers of people who engage in both respectful and disrespectful behaviour. Two out of three people (66%) who admit to having dropped litter have also picked up somebody else's litter from the street.

Those in the West Midlands are most likely to say they feel they are treated with respect and consideration (91%, compared to 83% overall).

Home Office Minister, Hazel Blears, said:

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"This survey shows that most people know what constitutes bad behaviour, but all too often we expect someone else to take responsibility for doing something about it. The Government cannot take responsibility for everything - but we can

highlight that this is an issue that strikes at the chord of our values.? What we can also do is ensure that the out-of-control behaviour of a small minority of people does not ruin the lives of the majority.

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"We will shortly be publishing the Respect Action plan which will set out a range of measures to tackle anti-social behaviour and build a culture of respect in society.? Given it is so important to people we want to initiate a national discussion about how we all foster a culture of mutual respect in a modern society.

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"Most people know how to and do behave well - the survey confirms that there are significant numbers of people who engage in positive behaviour.?? The challenge is to ingrain within society a consideration of others and an awareness of the consequences of our actions. This is what Respect is about and what the action plan and debate will seek to achieve."

Journalists can download our presentation giving more details of this research from

<http://www.mori.com/polls/2005/respect.shtml>

Technical details: Ipsos MORI interviewed a representative sample of 1,003 adults (aged 18 and over) across Great Britain.? Interviews were conducted by telephone using CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) between 2nd and 4th of December 2005. At the analysis stage, the data were weighted to the profile of all adults aged 18+.? Data were weighted by sex, age, social class, household tenure, work status, terminal education age, number of cars in the household and whether or not respondent has taken a foreign holiday in the last 3 years. Where figures do not sum to 100 percent, this may be due to computer rounding, multiple codes or the exclusion of "don't know/not stated" response categories. Results are based on all unless otherwise stated. The sampling tolerance that applies to a random sample of 1,003 respondents is ?3 percentage points.

Ipsos MORI is the sum total of two successful research companies, Ipsos UK and MORI, which joined together in October 2005 to create the second largest research company in the UK. With a focus on Social Research, Media and Corporate Reputation, the company's 850 staff offer a full range of quantitative and qualitative research services, as well as extensive international research capacity thanks to strong links with Ipsos companies around the globe. Working with hundreds of clients in both the private and public sectors, Ipsos MORI embraces both traditional and innovative research methods.